



New lighting from ERCO for the Baroque Hall of the Abbey Library of St Gall:

In one of the oldest and most important libraries in the world, ERCO lighting solutions present valuable manuscripts in compliance with heritage protection requirements.

The Abbey Library of St Gall preserves numerous key works of European intellectual history. The heart of the collection is its corpus of early medieval manuscripts dating from the 8th to the 11th centuries, most of which were created on site. Added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1983, the Abbey Library is now one of Switzerland's leading museums and attracts almost 200,000 visitors each year. In the Baroque Hall, ERCO LED spotlights mounted on custom-made track illuminate both the valuable book collection and temporary exhibitions.

Project data

Project:
Abbey Library of St Gall, Switzerland

Lighting design:
Andreas Gut, St Gall, Switzerland

Control:
Studio Tschümperlin, Alpthal, Switzerland

Photography:
David Schreyer

The Baroque Hall of the Abbey Library was built between 1758 and 1767. It is considered the finest non-ecclesiastical Baroque interior in Switzerland and one of the most perfectly conceived library buildings in the world. The hall takes the form of a five-bay wall-pillar hall. A gallery runs around the room at mid-height. Along its length, bookcases and window niches alternate in a wave-like rhythm. The pillars project into the hall and are reinforced at the corners with decorative Corinthian columns. Between them and the flat

pilasters, the books are housed in barred bookcases. The historic floor is especially worthy of protection, which is why the hall may only be entered wearing felt slippers.

The challenge: Making the entire room visible without direct light falling on the centre of the hall

The Baroque Hall is crowned by a magnificent ceiling decorated with elaborate stucco work and vaulted paintings, making it the brightest surface in the room. The ceiling is both a

visual focal point and a reflector that brightens the centre of the space. Because particularly light-sensitive exhibits are displayed in showcases in this central area, it must not be directly illuminated for conservation reasons. "So we developed lighting that, so to speak, 'clings' to the walls and ceiling without directly illuminating the centre of the room", says lighting designer Andreas Gut, who was responsible for the library's new lighting concept. "The heritage authorities also required uniform lighting for the Baroque Hall using luminaires that were as unobtrusive as possible."

Andreas Gut achieves this by using numerous individual spotlights to accentuate the historic furnishings and bookshelves, creating a uniform overall impression. In close consultation with the heritage authorities, he opted for the smallest available ERCO LED spotlight family, which offers a range of light distributions within a consistent design language. Black [Eclipse 48V spotlights](#) in size XS illuminate the bookshelves and the valuable documents they contain throughout in warm white 3000K light. The spotlights are mounted on a specially manufactured curved [Minirail 48V track](#) along the underside of the gallery. With the "[ERCO individual](#)" service, tailor-made solutions can be developed to meet special project requirements.

ERCO Eclipse with interchangeable optics: One spotlight family for maximum flexibility

"The spotlight system with interchangeable Spherolit lenses offers a high degree of flexibility, especially for the changing temporary exhibitions in the hall," says the lighting designer, explaining the decision to use ERCO products. "It was important that people perceive the light, not the luminaires." The slender black [Minirail 48V track](#) disappears discreetly behind the surrounding wooden trim at the lower edge of the gallery and adapts perfectly to the curves of the Baroque architecture.

"Only in the very tight radii did we have to interrupt the track and continue the power supply discreetly with cables", says Andreas Gut. On the gallery, Eclipse spotlights were recessed into the wooden floor using Minirail point outlets and protected from foot traffic with metal housings. The floor is not as old and thus not a heritage element.

Because the overall lighting level in the room is relatively low, the small spotlights were sufficient. "For conservation reasons, 50 lux was specified as the maximum limit for manuscripts and sensitive exhibits", explains Silvio Frigg, Head of Conservation and Security at the Abbey Library, who supervised the project on site. All of the lighting – consisting of [Eclipse spotlights](#) on track around the gallery, a few existing spotlights on the railing, and linear luminaires for the ceiling – can be adapted to different usage scenarios via Casambi Bluetooth control.

"We can choose between preconfigured settings for general museum operation, for events such as concerts or readings, or even for guided tours on specific themes", says Silvio Frigg. And although there is now more light in the room overall than before the new lighting was installed, energy consumption has remained roughly the same – underlining the energy efficiency of ERCO lighting solutions.

Luminaires used in the project



Eclipse 48V

About ERCO

ERCO is an international specialist for high-quality and digital architectural lighting. The family-owned company, founded in 1934, operates globally in 55 countries with independent sales organisations and partners.

ERCO understands light as the fourth dimension of architecture – and thus as an integral part of sustainable building. Light is the contribution to making society and architecture better and, at the same time, preserving our environment. ERCO Greenology® – the corporate strategy for sustainable lighting – combines ecological responsibility with technological expertise.

At the light factory in Lüdenscheid, Germany, ERCO develops, designs and manufactures luminaires with a focus on photometric

optics, electronics and sustainable design. The lighting tools are developed in close collaboration with architects, lighting designers and electrical designers. They are used primarily in the following applications: Work and Culture, Community and Public/Outdoor, Contemplation, Living, Shop and Hospitality. ERCO lighting experts support designers worldwide in transforming their projects into reality with highly precise, efficient and sustainable lighting solutions.

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