

PARFect Solution to Light Sistine Chapel Replica

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A recent life size replica of the Sistine Chapel was built in the heart of Mexico City adjacent to the “Monumento a la Revolución” (Monument to the Revolution). Housed in a temporary structure, this unique project was the brainchild of creative director Gabriel Berumen and his brother Antonio of event production company B-Productions, in collaboration with technical solutions provider Vatel Producciones headed by Miriam Villalobos. Photos by Louise Stickland

The project was Vatican approved, and over 2.8 million photos were involved in recreating one of the world’s greatest heritage sites that enabled up to 25,000 public a day to appreciate the magnificent renaissance artworks – frescos, decorations and sculptures – originally created by *Michelangelo* in 1512 in the real Sistine Chapel – that feature on the roof and walls of this 1:1 model. The initial month long expo in CDMX was so successful that it was extended by another 4 weeks ... with plans now being discussed to tour the concept to other cities in Mexico and worldwide.

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Lighting the space was a delicate and intricate operation achieved using 40 x Robe PARFect 100s and 20 x LEDWash 300s in a scheme designed by Gaston Forti. All lighting, audio and video equipment for the Mexican replica was provided by Vatel.

Lighting the replica was even more challenging due to the fact that the lighting in the real Sistine Chapel is completely different, very low key so as not to damage the priceless works and there is no audio.

A different approach was required for this idea to work as an atmospheric visitor experience that also needed to inform people about the art and relevance of what they were about to see and feel once inside.

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An LED solution was proposed to be efficient on power, low on heat and need minimal maintenance, and Robe fixtures were chosen as the best options for their reliability and for the quality of the light output.

The initial specification was evolved by the LD and product specialist Alberto Garcia of Robe's Mexican distributor Vari Internacional, and the luminaires were purchased by Vatel for the project. Vatel already has Robe Pointes and other fixtures in their rental stock, so they didn't need any additional reassurances it was the right choice of brand!

It was essential that the lighting was reverential and in keeping with the aura and drama of the real Sistine Chapel environment.

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The PARFects and LEDWash 300s – split equally in numbers – were positioned on a ledge 9 metres off the ground running down the two 40 metre long sides of the 18 metre high walls of the replica structure.

This was recommended by the LD as the optimal position to mimic the lighting in the real Sistine Chapel, and from here they could light the entire space and the floor in zones which illuminated according to an audio narrative explaining the various components of the art.

A team from the Vatican was in attendance for consultancy throughout the installation and everyone was delighted with the results.

“This is a massive achievement for everyone involved and we are immensely proud to be able to share the end results with so many,” stated Gabriel. B-Productions organise and produce all aspects of multiple genres of events and this year’s portfolio has included handling Pope Francis’ visit to Mexico in February.

In addition to supplying the primary lighting installation, Vatel also delivered an L-Acoustics sound system for the main chamber and the video projections and lighting in the annex where guests entered and watched a video briefing on the basics and history of what they were about to see. This area was also installed by Vatel in collaboration with Vari Internacional, and Vatel Producciones assisted in producing the video content.

Future installations will see around 20 more PARFects added to the lighting scheme.

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Miriam Villalobos (Vatel Producciones) on the left with creative director Gabriel Berumen

Gabriel co-ordinated all the organisations and individuals needed to realise the project - including finding sponsors and getting government backing. All of the structure was proudly constructed in Mexico - the metalwork, all the scenery and cloth work and props. Two universities were involved, the Instituto Politecnico Nacional which designed the structure and the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas which made the scenery.

A separate event space at the back of the structure was available for sponsors use.