



**Copacabana
Palace Hotel**
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

To commemorate its centenary year, the Copacabana Palace Hotel has undergone a renovation of its beautiful Art Deco façade, with lighting design from **LD Studio**.

Situated on the lively Copacabana Beach waterfront in Rio de Janeiro, the Copacabana Palace Hotel has long stood as an iconic, Art Deco landmark for the Brazilian capital. Opened in 1923, the property celebrated its centenary year with a dramatic renovation of its façade lighting.

To do this, the hotel owners turned to local lighting design practice LD Studio, itself celebrating its 26th anniversary, to create a new lighting scheme that would “preserve the fabled tradition” of the famous hotel, while also presenting something new and unique. The studio has a longstanding relationship with the hotel, having worked together since 2004, previously renovating the lighting in the hotel’s interiors, most recently in the theatre space in 2022.

Monica Luz Lobo, Founder and Creative Director of LD Studio, explains the approach for the building’s illustrious façade: “As we have this close contact with the hotel design team, the idea to review the façade lighting is an old plan, but the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the hotel was the catalyst to make it a reality. The Divisional Director of Engineering – Americas, Paulo Pozzobon, asked us to renew the lighting of the main façade, adding the ability to address colour on special occasions.

“It was quite a simple approach: make the hotel shine bright, and give the possibility to play with colour in a way that we didn’t need to hire scenic lighting that is expensive and damaging to the façade.”

With Pozzobon’s briefing, and the understanding of the importance of the building to Copacabana Beach’s night scene, Lobo explains that the lighting concept for the façade was “to celebrate the legacy, reveal its soul in all its splendour, while showing its contemporary relevance using the latest technology to make it communicative and accessible by displaying scenes that show inclusion, joy, disruption, innovation, dynamics, and celebration”, all the while retaining the elegance and glamour of the hotel.

“Our idea was to create a way for the hotel to dialogue with the city. We aimed to bring joviality and modernity to this centenary monument without betraying its original characteristics,” she adds. To bring this fusion of modernity and heritage to life, Lobo tells arc that this was a “hugely collaborative work”, in which a number of parties were all pulling in the same direction – particularly the design studio’s close work with lighting manufacturer TRYKA.

“We had a great team that was united to build the best version possible of this renovation,” she says. “The Director of Engineering, the project director, relied on us fully to make it happen. We also had the collaboration of national and local heritage teams, and the full partnership of the contractors. “One decisive addition was the collaboration of TRYKA and its team. This was key to make sure that we could count on efficient, seamless, and intelligent equipment. From the first studies, we planned to build a mock-up on a whole vertical length of the building that could give us the certainty that we would achieve a soft light

distribution and composition, considering it is all done through grazing effects.”

Speaking of light composition, Lobo explains that the approach was “to reveal and highlight the rhythm and details of this eclectic façade”, while assuring an elegant composition and perception of the whole building.

The lighting designers opted for a warm 2700K during standard scenes, to emphasise the elegant nature of the hotel, while also bringing an inviting and warm ambience to Copacabana Beach’s night scene. On top of this, the placement of the fixtures, as well as their addressable possibilities, gave LD Studio the option to design graphically with colour, while also preserving the identity and elegance of the building.

“We programmed 14 scenes, working in collaboration with the hotel design and marketing teams,” Lobo adds. “The majority of the scenes bring very precise and graphic areas of specific colours that connect with the desired messages. Just one specific scene – carnival – disrupts the whole thing and brings a luxurious festival of colours to the whole façade, intentionally. This is the nature of carnival; a special period where you can transform yourself into something else in your dreams – an apotheosis.”

A combination of TRYKA’s Continuity, Stripline45, Stripline AG, Aura 5 and Aura 7 fixtures were used to bring the new light to the hotel’s façade, with custom glare shields, which also housed the LED drivers, designed and supplied by the manufacturer. These were finished in a custom-selected RAL to match the design and shade of the newly-renovated façade.

The lighting was commissioned with a control system that brings the 14 different scenes to life; all luminaires are individually addressed on a DMX system, controlled by an LPC2 from Pharos Architectural Controls, while ECS controls provided programming services.

Alongside the façade itself, the centre and rooftop sign have also been given a new glow, as have the flagpoles and flags erected in front of the hotel. All the changes were made taking into account the knowledge and support of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN). Lobo adds: “We are aware of the importance and historical value of the Copacabana Palace Hotel, and its symbolic role in Rio de Janeiro. It is important to cherish this heritage and keep this jewel as it is. “Since 1997, LD Studio has been working with preserved works, interfacing with heritage agencies. We are absolutely aware of the respect that one must have when working with listed assets, even more so when it holds an important place in the carioca’s affective memory.”

In addition to the new lighting system from LD Studio, the hotel’s façade was also physically restored, receiving a new coat of paint, bringing back the “Pearl Palace” – a shade of pearly white unique to the property. Other treatments included the restoration of room windows and the maintenance of the original colour of the handrails and vertical structures, and bringing back the exposed metal of the Juliet balconies.



Monica Luz Lobo, Creative Director at LD Studio, reserved special praise for the “anonymous lighting heroes” who rappelled down the side of the Copacabana Palace Hotel to focus the newly installed luminaires.



Some elements also underwent structural interventions, while window frames were also restored and repainted.

Despite the grandeur and cultural significance attributed to the hotel and its recent renovation, Lobo explains that this aspect of the project had a very short turnaround time – something she feels was both a blessing and a challenge. “We were hired in May 2022 to deliver the renovation and get everything up and running by August 2023 – it was a rush, but we were blessed to have a great and engaged team, from the hotel side, through to the design, management, and construction side – it was an awesome, collaborative process.

“As a studio, we have worked on several big heritage and cultural projects, including the Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro and the Igreja da Antiga Sé (the first cathedral of Brazil). Those projects always take years to be developed, so this one was a record, and a challenge. However, it was made possible because of our years of partnership with the hotel design team, and the bond of trust that we have built with them over time.”

Indeed, it was this sense of collaboration, teamwork and trust that Lobo believes is the essence of the project’s success.

“The success of this project, especially given the short deadline, relied on all partners working symbiotically,” she says.

“The history of trust that we have built up with the building owners, through almost 20 years of collaboration, was certainly of great benefit to the final outcome. All teams involved have worked

together previously in the same spirit and have faced the challenges and risks due to the tight schedule with passion and lightness. Although our relationship with TRYKA was new for this project, they have engaged perfectly into this spirit, partnering up with local distributor e.light following our introduction.”

Lobo also reserves special praise for the lighting technicians who rappelled down the side of the building to carry out the focusing of the luminaires – the “anonymous lighting heroes” that only added to the hugely collaborative process of the project. Unveiled in the winter of 2023, the new-look illumination of the façade will ensure that the hotel’s beauty and renowned architecture can be appreciated after dark – with some of the more refined and unique details now explored in a soft and elegant manner; while the added colour changing dynamics allow the building to be adorned with colour for special events.

The hotel’s transformative overhaul has ensured that the location remains vibrant and attractive, and aligns with the positivity and hopefulness of the city itself.

Lobo concludes: “The Copacabana Palace Hotel is undoubtedly glamorous and sophisticated, yet it represents a piece of all of us. It celebrates Rio as a city, the Brazilian way of life, our history, and our future. As a must-see destination for visitors to Rio, we are thrilled to have been part of this beautiful project.”

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Client: Belmond Copacabana Palace Hotel

Lighting Design: Monica Luz Lobo, Daniele Valle, Jordan Rocha; LD Studio, Brazil

Architect: Ivan Rezende Arquitetura, Brazil

Lighting Suppliers: ECS, e.light, Pharos Architectural Controls, TRYKA

Photography: Andrés Otero