

FIGHT CLUB

Opened earlier this year, the Anthony Joshua-backed BXR London is the first high-end, boutique boxing gym to open in London, and is a champion in understated, modern industrial design, with DHA Designs delivering a knockout blow with its spectacular lighting design.





Pic: Peter Fordham



Pic: Gilles Bonugli Kalli

Previous page: The full-size boxing ring is the centrepiece of the BXR London gym.

Left: 500mm diameter aluminium spun pendants, that Peter Fordham of DHA Designs first spotted in Factorylux's van in Shoreditch, illuminate the ring. *Below left:* Factorylux's new Track Pipe system and internally wired lighting bars from Doughy complete the industrial look in the ground floor gym.

When he's not winning title fights in the ring, IBF and newly crowned WBA heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua has been striving to make a name for himself as a businessman too. This reputation has been boosted recently with the opening of BXR, London's first high-end, boutique boxing gym. This facility, backed by Joshua, is the first fitness facility of its kind to operate a members-only gym, as well as a pay-to-train boutique fitness concept.

Designed by Marie & Albin interior designers and Studio Webb architects, the facility covers the ground and lower ground floor of a residential development on Chiltern Street in Marylebone, London. The project includes state of the art gym equipment on the ground floor, along with three studio spaces, a juice bar, saunas and changing facilities on the lower ground floor. But the site's centrepiece is no doubt its full-size boxing ring, which adds a rawness and authenticity to the venue.

The lighting design for this space was carried out by DHA Designs and led by Peter Fordham, partner and director at the London-based design firm, from its conception right through to completion in January of this year, just months before Joshua's epic heavyweight title bout with Wladimir Klitschko at Wembley Stadium in April.

DHA Designs was first introduced to the client, BXR Limited, back in April 2016, through interior designer Marie Soliman. The gym was always intended to be a 'fast-track' project, and for the client, it was their first experience of working with a lighting designer, as Fordham explained: "When we first met, it was clear that the client had not worked with a lighting designer before.

"So we needed to start from first principles and explain why they should consider a lighting designer in the first place. And explain that we don't supply any light fixtures!"





Pic: Gilles Bonugli Kalli



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The initial brief for DHA Designs was to design the architectural lighting for all of the public spaces at BXR London, together with some 'show' lighting for the boxing ring area and 'Zen-like' lighting for the three studio spaces.

"The show lighting included a couple of moving head fixtures and RGB floods," Fordham explained. "The moving heads didn't make it through VE, but we held onto the RGB floods each side of the ring. We also included a facility for plugging in a lighting desk at a DJ station for controlling colour change, plus a couple of extra positions on the pre-wired lighting bars for hired moving-head fixtures, again controlled by DMX from the DJ desk.

"As for the Zen-like studio lighting, this part of the brief went through many, many changes, mainly due to the final choice of gym equipment that was being purchased for each studio space."

However, by the time that fit-out and electrical contractors, WFC Contractors

and HMS Electrical respectively, had been brought in, budgets for the project were starting to be tightened and the lighting design, like everything else, needed some fine-tuning in order to bring it in line with the available cost plan.

Apart from the ever-evolving brief and VE exercises, DHA Designs did experience some difficulties during the construction phase, particularly between the client and the building's landlord that needed to be overcome. Fordham continued: "BXR London is located in the basement of a high-end residential development in London, and the apartments were fully occupied during the construction. So the contractor needed to be extra careful not to inconvenience tenants.

"Also, there were some issues with obtaining the landlord's permission to penetrate through existing external walls to provide power for external lighting. Unfortunately these elements of the lighting design had to be dropped due to



Pic: Peter Fordham



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Previous page: The rugged, urban industrial BXR gym is backed by IBF and WBA Heavyweight champion, Anthony Joshua.

Top left: The gym area features 20-ft wall murals of boxing icons Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Sugar Ray Leonard.

Bottom left: The initial brief from BXR Limited for DHA Designs was to design the architectural lighting for all public spaces, together with some 'show lighting' for the ring area and 'Zen-like' lighting for the three studio spaces.

Centre: Each of the murals in the gym are illuminated by two Philips Color Kinetics ColorBlast Powercore gen4 luminaires, fading between red and blue light.

Above: DHA Designs used EcoLED ZEP6 LED downlights to illuminate the bespoke 'rope wall' in the lower ground floor, that separates the 'Joe & The Juice' bar and changing rooms.

these difficulties."

The tight time frame set out from the beginning also played an important role in DHA Designs' sourcing of lighting manufacturers for the project, as Fordham elaborated: "We selected a group of key manufacturers to work with, who could meet a demanding specification on a tight time scale.

"Factorylux was an obvious choice for its industrial style fixture detailing, which fitted in well with the chic New York/Fight Club spin on the BXR interiors."

DHA Designs made use of Xicato LED modules in the Factorylux luminaires to ensure colour consistency and dimming stability, and instead of using a conventional lighting track, the lighting designers selected a combination of Factorylux's new Track Pipe system (a pre-wired 20mm conduit with fixed DALI outlets) and internally wired lighting bars from Doughty to complete the industrial look in the ground floor boxing and gym areas.

Elsewhere, a combination of Margo and 99 spotlights were used with 2700K Xicato LED modules to light the gym equipment and training areas.

"Over the boxing ring, we used Factorylux's 500mm diameter aluminium spun pendants, supplied with concentric louvres, which I had first spotted in the Factorylux van in Shoreditch, London," added Fordham.

EcoLED supplied the majority of the architectural lighting in the lower ground floor, as Fordham used a combination of its recessed ZEP6 LED downlights, along with the linear DecoLine 15s LED strips, all in 2700K. And Fordham was full of praise for the work done by EcoLED. "EcoLED really stepped up to the mark with competitive pricing, and was extremely flexible with fixture finishes and optics available in its downlight range," he said. "Its linear LED profiles fitted into even the tightest of details, providing dot-free illumination for the stairs, changing rooms and studios.

"The architect described our lighting





design as very 'Tron', which I took as a complement!"

DHA Designs turned to Architainment Lighting to provide the lighting control and dynamic lighting elements for the project. The lighting control is engineered around the Philips Dynalite solution, and each floor uses a custom-built control enclosure, made by Architainment.

A Philips Dynalite AntumbraDisplay user interface at the facility's main reception has been designated as a master controller, and allows for full control of all lighting on site. Additional AntumbraDisplays are located in the three basement studios and each treatment room, enabling the lighting in each room to be independently adjusted as required.

Alongside this, the LCDs of all user interfaces are branded with the BXR logo, and are prevented from unauthorised use by a 'lock out' feature. Once unlocked, a series of icons are displayed, providing

users with intuitive operation.

The exposed brick walls on either side of the boxing ring feature 20-ft murals of Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Sugar Ray Leonard, and to accentuate these works of art, each wall is illuminated by two Philips Color Kinetics ColorBlast Powercore gen4 luminaires, fading between red and blue. These are programmed to come on in the evenings, as the gym closes to the public, and run a series of dynamic effects, which are visible outside through the six-metre-high, triple glass frontage on Chiltern Street.

An input panel for external DMX control has also been provided beside the boxing ring, and provides local control of the ColorBlast Powercore gen4 units for special events. The system also takes advantage of any natural light that comes into the venue via the front glazing, using daylight harvesting to adjust the light levels in the gym accordingly.

As well as working closely alongside DHA Designs throughout the project, Architainment Technical Services commissioned the complete solution into operation, and provided training for the client, "and what a great job they did too," said Fordham, "particularly during the commissioning and programming."

Towards the end of the construction phase, once the lighting had been installed, it took a long time on site for the lighting to get the spaces together, as Fordham explained: "The contractor completed the upper ground floor areas first of all, but by the time we had completed our first focus of the lighting, the client's team had decided to rearrange the gym equipment, requiring a re-focus.

"During this stage, the basement space was a construction site. But in the last few days before the handover, the site began to settle down and we were able to set up the lighting to maximise the full potential of



Pics: Gilles Bonugli Kalli

Previous page: A look through the rope wall into the Joe & the Juice bar, showcasing the combination of architectural lighting and Factorylux's decorative fixtures.

Left and lower middle: A combination of 99 and Margo spotlights from Factorylux were used with 2700K Xicato LED modules to light the gym equipment and training areas.

Above and top middle: BXR London is the epitome of urban industrial design, capturing the 'Fight Club chic' aesthetic, while still maintaining an element of high-end, boutique sophistication.

the interiors."

A key highlight of which was, in Fordham's eyes, getting the ColorKinetics RGB floods to light onto the side wall murals each side of the boxing ring. "That was quite a moment," he said. "And the evening when the security film was removed from the external glazing was quite an event, allowing a brilliant view into the gym at night from the street."

The end result is a brilliant facility that perfectly captures the urban industrial aesthetic that it set out to achieve. However, Fordham added that he is disappointed that the project had to lose some elements along the way. "I don't think I would change anything in the boxing ring and gym area," he said. "Although it would have been great to have kept a couple of moving head fixtures in the scheme on a permanent basis.

"It was also a shame to have lost the feature RGB lighting to the three studio

spaces due to VE and issues with the landlord. Ironically, as soon as the training staff had been hired for BXR, the first thing they requested was additional coloured lighting in all of the studios. So much for the Zen lighting brief!"

The project still remains a knockout though, certainly befitting of World Heavyweight Champion Joshua. With many stand-out features throughout the site, including the combination of architectural lighting and Factorylux's functional decorative fixtures, and the view from the street into the gym and boxing ring at night, Fordham concluded: "It was great to work with a new client in BXR Limited, especially since it was their first experience working with a lighting designer. This project was my first high-end boxing gym, but it hopefully won't be the last."

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PROJECT DETAILS

BXR London, London, UK
 Client: BXR Limited
 Architects: Studio Webb
 Interior Design: Marie & Albin
 Lighting Design: DHA Designs

LIGHTING SPECIFIED

Luminaires
 EcoLED DecoLine 15s LED strips
 EcoLED ZEP6 LED downlights
 Factorylux Track Pipe System
 Factorylux Margo spotlights
 Factorylux 99 spotlights
 Hera cabinet/display lighting
 Tryka cove lighting
 Xicato LED modules

Lighting Control (by Architainment Lighting)
 Philips ColorKinetics ColorBlast Powercore gen4 luminaires
 Philips Dynalite AntumbraDisplay
 Philips Dynalite DALI dimming system