

Illuminating History

THREE COMMEMORATIVE STRUCTURES EXPLORE OUTDOOR LIGHTING SOLUTIONS.



The National World War II Memorial (above) sits on the National Mall and features 56 granite pillars (top right), one for each state and territory from that period and the District of Columbia. The Freedom Wall (bottom right) emerges from the memorial's reflecting pool and features 4,048 gold stars, each representing 100 American lives lost during WWII.

WASHINGTON, D.C., OUR NATION'S CAPITAL, PLAYS HOST TO AN IMPRESSIVE LINEUP OF MONUMENTS

and memorials that celebrate our country's history and recognize major milestones. While most people visit these landmarks during the day, the structures also are viewed at night as tourists and residents alike see them illuminated from afar, the handiwork of the lighting designers behind each project whose task it was to give each structure a presence at night.

Lighting designers face numerous challenges in designing for exterior conditions: the dreaded elements such as wind and water, wildlife (bugs in particular), along with safety and security issues. In addition, multiple voices are involved in the design and construction of monuments and memorials—including but not limited to fine arts commissions, monument committees, political appointees for the project, and the National Park Service—who can all weigh in on the design and maintenance of these built outdoor objects and spaces, further affecting the end result.

The lighting schemes for three commemorative structures in the Washington, D.C., area—the National World War II Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the U.S. Air Force Memorial—each had a specific set of challenges and requirements. The result is a trio of unique design solutions that respond to the individual sites and programs for each structure.

NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Located on a Congressionally approved site on the National Mall—the Rainbow Pool at the east end of the Reflecting Pool between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument—the National World War II Memorial was erected in memory of the 16 million Americans who fought and served in World War II. Composed of three main features—curving rampart walls, the Rainbow Pool fountain, and a “Freedom Wall” with its own reflecting pool—the memorial spans more than 7 acres.

The lighting scheme—subdued, discreet and controlled—aimed to echo the memorial's sentiment: Darkness of global conflict and a light of freedom. “We wanted to reveal form in a different way and create simple, elegant lines,” explains Barbara Horton of New York City-based Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design, the firm responsible for the memorial's lighting. The client, the American Battles Monument Commission, wanted the memorial to evoke a warm feeling and as a result insisted on the use of incandescent sources. To keep light levels low and provide necessary control and dimming, low-voltage PAR36 and AR111 lamps were selected to obtain the desired effects. To provide a sense of animation at night, the Rainbow Pool is illuminated with PAR56 lamps with narrow beam spreads precisely aligned to follow the individual water arcs, of