

Caltrans Building

Los Angeles

Horton Lees Brogden

Lighting by Horton Lees Brogden reveals the many facets of Morphosis's Caltrans Building

By William Weathersby, Jr.

In Los Angeles, the city's car culture has merged with experimental architecture at a building for the state transportation agency. The \$170 million California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 7 Headquarters Replacement Building serves as a major link in the architectural renaissance of the Civic Center area [record, January 2005, page 120]. Created by a design-build team led by Morphosis, the 1.2-million-square-foot, 13-



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story building emphasizes sustainable design and energy conservation within an expressive, aluminum-skinned office block. Helping to stay within the spartan construction budget imposed by the state (hard costs barely reached \$145 per square foot), architectural illumination by Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design polishes the building's many facets and brings luminosity to the governmental workplace, all within the state's tight energy-usage codes. Along its north facade, the Caltrans headquarters employs the first of a number of moving lines of light to make a boldly scaled gesture toward City Hall situated diagonally across the street. Projected below a 7-story block of windows, a horizontal "lightbar" evokes a sense of movement parallel to the street. Simple industrial fluorescents placed behind the architectural element's frosted-glass panels can be accessed for maintenance from an interior catwalk.

The western edge of the "lightbar" protrudes past the building envelope, signaling a four-story outdoor entry plaza around the corner. The complex's L-shaped footprint frames the 328-square-foot plaza, which is wrapped with a kinetic neon installation, *Motordom*, by artist Keith Sonnier. Evoking the streaking taillights of cars moving in traffic, the neon tubes turn on and off in a looped sequence keyed by color to suggest movement. Consulting with Sonnier, the lighting designers ensured that proper ambient light would support security cameras and pedestrian safety while allowing the artwork to take center stage as a compelling icon. "The strategy was to light the plaza without overpowering the public art," says principal lighting designer E. Teal Brogden. Fluorescent illumination is integrated into architectural elements such as benches, catwalks, and plinths that facilitate garage exhaust. A supergraphic Caltrans sign draws pedestrians toward the entry and provides illumination for a handicapped ramp tucked behind it. Where the internal luminaires are visible through the clear lettering of the sign, perforated metal panels create an added play of light and shadow. Metal-halide downlights tucked into canopy elements border the plaza.

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the People

Owner

State of California Department of General Services

Lighting designer

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Lighting design project team

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Senior Designer:

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Designer:

Emily Koonce

Architect

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Project Manager:

Sylvia Kuhle

Project Architect:

Pavel Getov

Job Captain:

Anthony Mrkic

Associate architect(s)

Gruen Associates
www.gruenassociates.com/

Electrical engineer(s)

Arup
www.arup.com

Dynalectric
www.dynalectric.com/

Consultant(s)

Light Sculpture:
Keith Sonnier

Programming and Design/Build Criteria:

AC Martin
www.acmartin.com

Developer

Urban Partners

the Products

Lighting

Interior ambient lighting:

Ledalite Ergolite (indirect/direct at all office spaces)\nwww.ledalite.com

Downlights:

Kurt Versen
www.kurtversen.com/

Daybrite

www.dcolighting.com

Exterior:

Paramount Craft Light

Other (neon, custom, etc.):

NSI (neon sculpture)

Prudential (at resin wall)

www.prulite.com/

Focal Point (4' diameter conference room light)

www.focalpointap.com

Paramount Craft Light (wall mounted stair light)

Osram-Sylvania (lamps)

www.sylvania.com

Controls:

Ledalite
www.ledalite.com

Lutron

www.lutron.com

www.urbanpartnersllc.com

General contractor

Clark Construction Group
www.clarkconstruction.com

Photographer(s)

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www.eagleeyeimages.com

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