

AVAILABLE LIGHT

Giant Ocean Tank • New England Aquarium

Boston MA



From its inception in the 1960s, the Giant Ocean Tank was conceived as a glowing lantern at the “heart” of the aquarium. Any modifications required by the new renovation had to remain true to that vision. Unlike most modern day aquaria, a visitor viewing platform exists above the surface of the water. To create a more enjoyable experience, the architectural team proposed an overhead architectural domed ceiling, and although major scenic changes were not planned for the penguin habitat surrounding the tank, the lighting system was upgraded to be more exciting, robust, sustainable, and easily maintained.

Both white light and customized color-mixing luminaires were outfitted with deep snoots to minimize glare and spill. Varying beam spreads added depth and drama to the exhibit. Narrow beam “fingers” of light pierced through the water creating the effect of sunlight streaming in from above. Every effort was made to keep light off the walls of the tank to enhance the illusion of an unending horizon. In the Penguin area, LED spots were used in conjunction with custom fixtures adding color-toning to the area. Unlike fish, penguin biology is keenly affected by 24 hour light exposure. Consequently, penguin lighting was programmed to provide a more naturalistic circadian cycle for the animals.



Architect: Cambridge 7 Architects
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Photos: Sebastien Raciot and Kewsi Arthur