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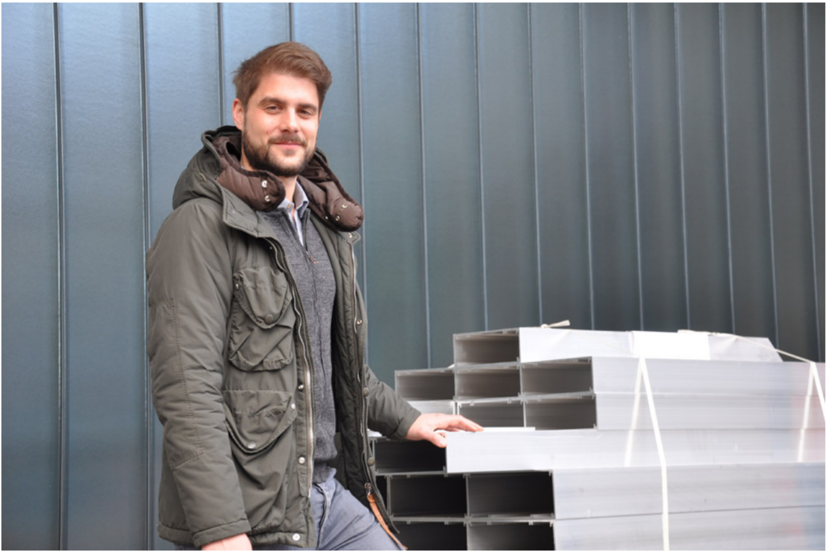
STYLEPARK x TRENDSPOT DESIGN

Slender head, large impact

Interview with: Hannes Wohlgemuth
02 March 2016

The headquarters of lighting technology corporation Ewo are located between the orchards with their straight rows of apple trees south of Bolzano in northern Italy. The specialist family-owned company produces LED luminaires for outdoor purposes and runs its worldwide activities from its base in the hamlet of Kurtasch: Its ingenious lenses and LED modules illuminate the apron at Melbourne Airport, St. Mark's Square in Venice and the plaza in front of the new

"St. Martin Tower" in Frankfurt. At the Light+Building 2016 Ewo will be presenting its new "GO" luminaire line; it was developed together with designer Jörg Boner and is ideal for illuminating streets, parks and plazas. In conversation with Sandra Hofmeister, Hannes Wohlgemuth, Head of Marketing at Ewo and son of the company's founder Ernst Wohlgemuth, explains the background to the development effort.



Hannes Wohlgemuth is Head of Marketing at Ewo and son of company founder and Managing Director Ernst Wohlgemuth, whose first and surname were abbreviated to create the firm's name. Photo © Robert Volhard, Stylepark

Sandra Hofmeister: Your new range, the "GO" luminaires, was designed by Jörg Boner. How did the collaboration with the Zurich-based designer come about?

Hannes Wohlgemuth: Five years ago we hosted one of our first "ewoLAB" projects – which we hold regularly to engage with artists, designers, and creative minds – together with the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL). At the time, Jörg Boner was a professor at the ECAL and our contact. Which is how we came to know each other and we have worked together ever since. In 2012 we presented the jointly developed "UN" luminaire. And this year we are launching our second line of Jörg Boner luminaires in the form of "GO". He also advises us on various other projects and products, as we've been in constant contact ever since the ECAL project.

Lighting for outdoor areas does not always have an easy time of it in design terms. The luminaire usually recedes behind the impact of the light. The design thus becomes invisible as it were …

Hannes Wohlgemuth: In recent years we noticed exactly that trend. As part of the “ewoLAB” series we collaborated with architects such as Plasmastudio and Julien De Smedt and focused specifically on the formal, expressive impression the lights make. However, as regards outdoor luminaires that angle is not enough in the longer term. Our products are always used in a specific context, and in the final instance the light effect and the context are more important than a striking luminaire design. Which is why our objective is to design luminaires that harmoniously and unobtrusively blend with their surroundings. This also means that a unique design should try and foreground itself. We want to find restrained, well-designed solutions that fit in every context.

„We are broadening our portfolio with GO to include another interesting product with a diverse range of uses, which is state of the art and able to meet formal requirements”, emphasizes ewo’s head of marketing, Hannes Wohlgemuth. Photo © Oskar Da Riz/ ewo

Jörg Boner is renowned for his precise and sober designs – and his style is recognizable with “GO”, too. From your viewpoint as manufacturer, what was the challenge of combining LED technology with good design when it came to luminaires for outdoor applications?

Hannes Wohlgemuth: We have taken a completely new design approach in the case of “GO” and have chosen a shape that has not yet been seen in this sort of setting. We wanted to ensure the luminaire’s body was out of sight as far as possible and therefore strongly scaled back its dimensions. The LED technology was a help in this regard and we completely exhausted the advantages. In general, it is very important when using LEDs to lay the technical foundations for the technology to come fully into its own. You need maximum efficiency as regards heat dissipation from the lighting source to guarantee a long service life for the LEDs. Moreover, the cone of light has a specific beam distribution and that in turn predefines the actual dimensions of the lamp head. The flatter the light beam is meant to be, the broader the lamp head. In the case of “GO” we managed to reduce the lamp head to a mere ten centimeters in breadth and nevertheless ensure the light effect we needed.

One of the key areas of Ewo expertise is modularity, enabling different optical components to be used and combined depending on the light effect desired. Is this also true of “GO”?

Hannes Wohlgemuth: Here again, depending on the location and situation, be it a park, a plaza or a street, different lenses can be used, each being optimal for a particular context. At the moment we’ve also designed a lens specially for cycle paths – it has a long and slender light cone. All of these versions formed a key precondition when developing the casing for “GO”. Because all the optical components had to be integrated into the small lamp head and function properly. Moreover, additional elements from the set of modules can also be used. Light strength, for example, can be regulated by the number of technology modules taken and the light can be controlled by software. The reduced shape of the body of the luminaire always remains the same, whereas the technology can vary depending on the context.

Since 2012 EWO coperate with Jörg Boner – they matched at an “ewoLAB” project at ECAL in Lausanne. Photo © Tamara Larcher/ ewo

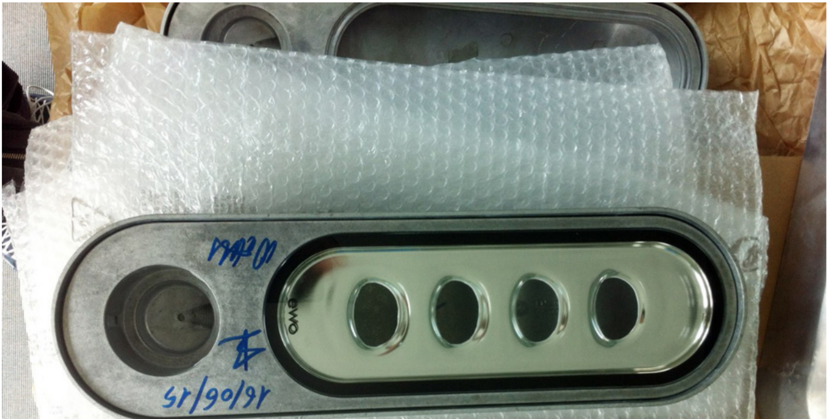
“GO” is a luminaire for different outdoor settings. To what extent does its design fit a changing urban context?

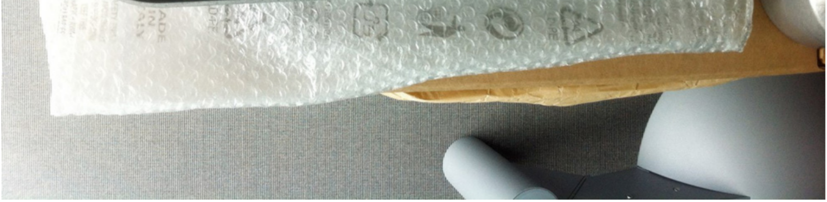
Hannes Wohlgemuth: We felt it important to enable formal coherence within the urban space. As a rule, urban space can differ greatly as regards the various lighting requirements. There are park settings, paths and traffic intersections… each requires a specific type of light. The light “GO” produces can respond to all these different situations and can be directed very precisely depending on the context. Despite the variety, the shape of the casing remains the same whatever the application – meaning you do not need different luminaires for changing situations.

The lamp head is made of die-cast aluminum, the poles from metal. Why this choice of materials?

Hannes Wohlgemuth: We fully exhausted Ewo’s in-house potential for processing sheet metal – we laser, weld and bend sheet metal into all manner of shapes. But for “GO” we wanted a lamp head that was softer and rounder in formal terms than is possible using sheet metal. For that reason, we developed special tools for die-casting aluminum and opted for mass production of a specific type of casing. I’m very happy with the results – the luminaire is very restrained and does not try to be obtrusive. It melds with any context, is small and yet very versatile because it can generate different lighting situations.

www.joergboner.ch
www.ewo.com





Various light distributions for street, path or square lighting are possible at „GO“ – housing accommodates up to 1 LED lighting units.
Photo © Tamara Larcher/ ewo

„GO“ is conceptualized as a family of products. Available as standing lamps and wall lamp. Photo © Tamara Larcher/ ewo