

ROSEBANK LINK TAKES LED TO NEW HEIGHTS

The façade of the recently-completed office building development, Rosebank Link, situated in the heart of Joburg's trendy Northern Suburbs, has been transformed into an innovative out-of-home advertising platform by Primary Colours, a local digital display solutions provider.

AV Integration spoke with Primary Colours co-founders, Grant Neill and Ashendra Singh, about the project in a recent interview.

THE NEW JEWEL OF ROSEBANK

The recently-completed commercial high-rise, Rosebank Link, has redefined the skyline of one of Johannesburg's trendiest suburbs. Towering an impressive 15 storeys high, the Rosebank Link consists of two basement parking levels, a pedestrian walkway with ground floor retail space, a five-level parkade and eight storeys of rentable office space. Conveniently situated at 173 Oxford Road, in the heart of Rosebank's business district, the Rosebank Link offers direct access to the Gautrain station, The Zone and Rosebank Mall, and has been designed to offer tenants the infrastructure needed to realise a smart and ecologically-friendly working environment.

The Rosebank Link was completed in December 2018 and

features a breath-taking design that is both elegant and edgy. According to Paragon, who served as architects on the project, the façade of the Rosebank Link consists of a steel-clad shell with articulated strip windows that allow natural light to filter into every office module. "The faceted East and West Façades have a visual quality emphasised by articulated strip windows, which transform from day to night, and the flush, glazed North and South Façades allow for views over the greater urban area of Rosebank," says Paragon in its description of the project design.

FROM BILLBOARD TO BRILLIANT

According to Neill, who has extensive experience in outdoor advertising, rapid developments in LED technology and the digitisation of media have provided advertisers with new platforms to reach potential customers that transcend the limitations of traditional broadcast and large-format print advertising. He points out that traditional outdoor advertising solutions, such as printed billboards, are expensive to produce and require constant manual replacement.

"Large-format commercial LED displays offer an attractive alternative, both for advertisers and for property developers, especially as LED technology is developing at a rapid rate and is becoming more affordable. Property owners are starting to cotton on to the fact that they can erect a screen on their building and create a new revenue stream from hosting

Publication: AV Integration
Date: Friday, March 01, 2019
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Photo by David Cornwell

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– **Grant Neill, co-founder of Primary Colours**

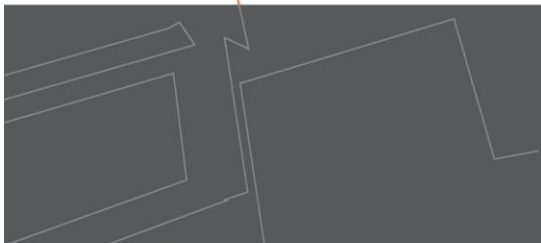
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- Ashendra Singh, co-founder of Primary Colours

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out-of-home advertising campaigns. Architects also realise that incorporating a screen into the building design at the initiation of a project makes it a lot easier to achieve an aesthetically pleasing result," says Neill.

The property developers involved in the project identified the location and visibility of the Rosebank Link as an ideal opportunity to incorporate an out-of-home advertising platform into the façade of the building from the outset.

"During the conceptualisation phase of the project, we were approached with a concept of how to incorporate a large-format LED screen into the façade of the Rosebank Link. The Primary Colours team consulted with architects working on the development, and we came up with the idea of making the screen asymmetrical to compliment the design of the street-facing façade of the building," Neill explains.

Once the design for the LED screen was decided, the concept took a completely novel turn, with Neill proposing to incorporate a video-based architectural lighting effect, using LED strips, to accentuate the striking lines that dominate the façade of the Rosebank Link.

"Grant came up with the concept of using LED strips to create a wash light effect across the façade of the building. Once they saw our concept, architects proposed integrating the LED strips in a highly creative way to emphasise the unique angles that are one of the defining features of the Rosebank Link," says Singh.

Neill explains: "My idea was to use video lighting as a wash light on the building, and then tie that wash into the content as it displays on the screens. I got our production department to model the building from the architectural drawings, and we put in the LED strip lighting. I took the model to a meeting and showed it to the client, and they were instantly sold on the idea."

THE TECH SPEC

Once Primary Colours' ambitious concept and design for the Rosebank Link out-of-home advertising solution was accepted by the client, Neill and Singh set about sourcing the technology that would enable them to bring their idea to life.

The installation called for a large-format LED screen that would provide a high-quality picture during daylight and after dark. Additionally, viewing angles on the screen needed to account for the fact that the façade of the Rosebank Link is rarely seen from the front, as motorists on Oxford Road approach the east-facing façade of the building on the way to Hyde Park and Sandton in the north, or while heading south towards the Joburg city centre.

After extensive research and consultation, Neill decided to specify the DigiLED 10mm SMD Screen. Neill explains that some modifications needed to be made by the manufacturer to achieve the desired effect, the most important being configuring the screen to provide extra-wide viewing angles. "When you drive down Oxford Road, you never see the building head-on, but rather from an angle. So, it was very important that we found a product with very good horizontal and vertical viewing angles – which DigiLED could provide."

With HD 720 resolution and the ability to display 16 million colours, the LED screen that has been built into the façade of the Rosebank Link measures 18 metres wide and seven metres high (1,728 pixels wide x 745 pixels high). Geometrically patterned cladding was used to underline the fact that the screen is an authentic part of the building's fabric.

"Using DigiLED's new technology, we have been able to create an exceptionally flat screen that offers maximum viewing angles to both pedestrians and drivers," explains Singh. "With no off-angle colour shift, the screen offers advertisers a unique way to tell their stories, in the most impactful way possible."

COMMERCIAL LIGHTING

STRIPPING THE SKYRISE

While the impressive screen that dominates the façade of the Rosebank Link represents cutting-edge technology, it is the building's strip lighting that sets this project apart. Most impressive when viewed at night, the ribbons of coloured video displays are designed to reflect from the building's edges, giving a more harmonious "wash" effect. This "smart lighting" spans a total length of 226 metres and stretches across 15 floors of the building.

"What you see on the screen is integrated with the lighting strips so that the advertising you see matches the lighting that you see across the entire building. The net result is that one can use the entire building as an advertising space because we can address the lighting aspect as though it was a screen," says Singh.

Primary Colours used hundreds of meters of DigilED LED strip, together with 38 control boxes, intricately designed cabling and state-of-the-art media servers and control software to achieve the desired effect.

"One of the biggest challenges was installing the control boxes across 15 floors to ensure that all of the strips could be operated together with the screen from a single control point. We needed to attach the LED strips to the Rosebank Link via watertight perforations in the building's façade and connect them to the control boxes, which took an enormous amount of planning and careful design to achieve," Singh points out. "In the end, we are extremely proud of what we have achieved and are confident that we have set a new standard for out-of-home advertising solutions in the country," he concludes.

A COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

Primary Colours have achieved a unique out-of-home advertising platform that offers advertisers a breath-taking canvas while also adding to the overall aesthetic of the iconic Rosebank Oxford Road strip. Neill points out that key to the success of the project was the high level of collaboration between themselves, the property developers, architects and engineers, from conception to completion.

"Usually what happens is that screens are an afterthought in a project and there are a few problems with that. One is that, architecturally, the screen does not fit in with the building design, and the other problem is having a retrofitted screen approved after a building has been completed. If you design the building with the screen in place from conception, it is much easier to have it approved together with all of the other structural aspects of the building," Neill explains.

The partnership between the stakeholders involved in the Rosebank Link project continues to flourish, as Primary Colours currently provides after-sales services through a service-level agreement that covers both technical and operational support.

"Advertisers send their ad content to our design team, who then ensure that content for the LED strip is developed to enhance their campaign material," Singh goes on to explain that the installation is



network-enabled, and therefore content can be uploaded and changed instantaneously and remotely. "We have all of the control and monitoring software installed on the media players, and if anything goes wrong, we can monitor the system remotely from anywhere with an internet connection."

Neil confirms this, saying: "With a simple internet connection, we can make changes to the content, turn things on and off and nobody has to be on-site – except to fix a physical problem, which we can identify through remote monitoring of the hardware."

According to recent research published by Forbes, as much as 90% of all the data in the world has been created in the past two years. As a result of this phenomenal acceleration in content generation, people are being bombarded with advertising every time they connect to a digital device. Very soon, all of the marketing messages, spam and pop-ups become "noise" that is easy to ignore. The out-of-home advertising solution realised by Primary Colours for the developers of the Rosebank Link provides a canvas that is so immense and visually appealing that it is almost impossible to disregard, and it is a great example of the power of professional audiovisual project implementation to produce results that test the boundaries of what we think is possible. ☑

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