

No Eye-shadow

Grand Central Optical
New York, New York
Freeman & Pizer, Architect
Ann Kale Associates,
Lighting Designer

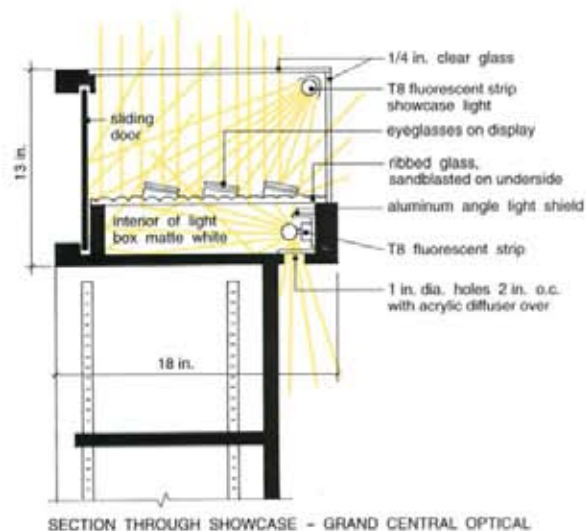


The recent makeover of an optician's shop, Grand Central Optical, is a real eye-grabber. It has to be to capture the attention of commuters scurrying down a dark concourse in Grand Central Terminal, either to catch a train or make it to the office on time. Ann Kale and Associates' lighting design for the space is the very picture of simplicity and economy, but when combined with the sparkle of glass and stainless steel, one cannot help but notice this gleaming shop standing out among the famous station's assortment of grimy, anonymous doughnut shops and newsstands.

The front windows of the shop are backed by display cases, lit by MR16 spots placed 6 inches on center, pushed toward the shop windows. "When you're lighting something like eyewear and lenses," says Ann Kale, "you have precious little material to hit, so you have to hit it hard. We placed the fixtures a little off-center (photo opposite) to get the light in front of the objects we're trying to light." As a bonus, some of the display light spills onto the concourse floor (photos bottom and middle right). Warm 3500K, T8 fluorescent strips concealed in the top of these front cases are used to give the ceiling in the front of the shop some additional glow. "We definitely intended to create a contrast between warm light on the eyewear and the cool metal of the display cases and walls throughout the store," adds Kale.

Ambient light for the shop is provided by a row of 20-inch-diameter semi-recessed discs lamped with compact fluorescents. Kale reused two rows of existing light track to light displays on the back wall, and center display cases. She replaced 10-year-old low-voltage track heads with line-voltage fixtures that hold small PAR16 lamps. "Store owners like them because they have longer lamp life than MR16s, and when you don't need the precise focus of an MR16, they work just as well."

The waist-high display case in the center of the store (photos opposite and top right) is illuminated by two 3500K T8 fluorescent lamps (see detail below). One is located on the customers' side of the case, tucked inside the case where its glass top and sides intersect. This lamp is shielded by a brushed stainless-steel reflector that matches the back walls of the shop. A second lamp backlights a shelf of sandblasted, ribbed glass—the ribs line up pairs of glasses with soldier-like precision. One-inch holes were drilled in the bottom of the chase where the concealed lamp is housed, so that vertical beams of light may play across the front of the case. *Charles Linn*



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The lighting design for an optician's shop in Grand Central Terminal is simple, energy efficient, low budget, and elegant.

Credits
Grand Central Optical
New York, New York

Owner: Grand Central Optical
Architect: Freeman & Pizer Architects
Lighting Designer: Ann Kale Associates—Ann Kale, principal; Holly Shanahan, project manager
Contractor: C.S. Yuan