



Lighting Design

Firstly, without light – there is only darkness. We need light to see. It is a natural phenomenon vital to our very existence, but with the extensive range of electric light sources available, it means we are today much less dependent upon light from the sun, moon, stars and combustible fuels (natural lighting).

Since the discovery of electricity, we use artificial lighting to:

- Help us find our way around
- Provide a safer environment
- Increase productivity
- Display objects and / or their appearance

- Attract attention
- Improve working conditions.

It is important that any lighting system is fit for the purpose intended. The definition of lighting design is often incorrectly considered to be simply the selection of the lighting equipment for a specific environment. While this is important, they are just the tools. To achieve true lighting design involves assessing and meeting the needs of the people who use the space, and balancing function and the aesthetic impact supplied by the lighting system.

Lighting is an art as well as a science. This means there is more than one ideal or optimum solution to a lighting problem. There is NO substitute for experience, careful planning, assessment and analysis, as the lighting designer is confronted with a set of conflicting requirements for which priorities must be allocated before a satisfactory compromise can be found. The upheaval triggered by the switch from incandescent to solid state sources (LEDs) and the increased sophistication of electronics is probably the most tangible catalyst for the continuing shift in the way we light our buildings and environment.

Lighting design has become a specialised field that requires it to be not only practical, but theatrical as well.

Architainment is a general term generally used when architectural lighting and entertainment lighting come together. Being under threat of e-commerce, developers and shopping centres are pressurised to attract customers to retail environments, making sure of more consistent “feet”, keeping consumers entertained in “fun” centres for longer to facilitate greater spending. The pressure is not limited to retail as even corporate companies are extending their branding efforts by lighting up their building exteriors to ensure a presence at night.

LED has dominated all things lighting and this technology has inspired several trends, including more flexibility where architectural details can be highlighted with relative ease. A big positive is energy saving and although initially a more

expensive investment, LED lighting allows for massive savings on running costs and maintenance.

Architectural lighting design focuses on three fundamental aspects of the illumination of buildings or spaces. The first is the aesthetic appeal of a building – an aspect particularly important in the illumination of retail environments. Secondly, the ergonomic aspect – measuring how much of a function the lighting plays. Thirdly is energy efficiency, ensuring that light is not wasted by over illumination which occurs either by illuminating vacant spaces unnecessarily or by providing more light than needed for the aesthetics or the task.

Most interior designers would agree that you need more than one source of light in a room. Every room should have a mix of lighting, including overhead, accent and task lights. Light is such a powerful thing – the right light lifts

the mood, inspires productivity and motivates us.

Ergonomic and individual workplace design has long been recognized as a key advantage in the competition for maximum employee motivation and dedication, no matter whether the workplace is a flexible desk in an open-plan office, in a comfortable two-desk office or a modern open space executive corner office. No wonder that light is a key factor in self-evaluation of a working environment.

Feature lights are also a great way to add a touch of flair to your garden, should you consider lighting your garden or outdoor areas – keeping in mind that a little light goes a long way at night. Use lighting selectively and remember that darkness can also be used to great effect – to conceal any less attractive areas. Consider lighting up key features such as walkways, stairs, water features, walls, trees, shrubs or outdoor umbrellas to create a relaxing mood.

Interestingly, lighting and health have become a very interesting topic of discussion as extensive research on “how light can affect circadian cycles” (both positively and negatively), have a lot of people paying serious attention. dw

