

Topic 034

Lighting designers know how to make the best use of the subtle and powerful medium of light, creating effects that can be changed at will to match the mood of the action.

The lighting designer begins by reading the script to be produced noting the type of light it calls for in each scene. Designer and director share their ideas about how light could be used to enhance the production concept at their first meeting. Early meetings with the set designer are also important because the set and lighting designers must collaborate on how to achieve the desired "look" for the play. The plan for the set may influence the placement and direction of the necessary lighting instruments, so flagging any potential problems in this area as early as possible makes sense.

Lighting designers attend rehearsals to get a feel for the lighting cues and to plan how to light the actors as they move from place to place on stage. When the blocking is set, the lighting designer can start to work out which lighting instruments will be used and where each one will be located.

Lighting designers usually combine both direct and indirect light to illuminate the actors and objects on stage. Direct lighting comes from a definite location and illuminates specific areas; indirect lighting washes over the entire area to be lit and doesn't appear to come from any one specific location.

The amount of light needed to clearly illuminate an object on stage depends on the objects:

- Reflective properties
- Color
- Contrast with its surroundings
- Size
- Distance from the person looking at it.

There are some important questions that should be considered when planning a new project, specifically: Is "good" illumination important to your project? What is good lighting design and how is it achieved?

- Light is a technically difficult yet astonishing medium that requires mastery of varied and continually evolving disciplines. A lighting design practice integrates the arts, sciences and business of illumination design and implementation far beyond concerns of visibility and horizontal footcandles.
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- Lighting designers work as part of a design team and, like architects, charge fees for services rendered. Professional lighting designers bring solid technical acumen and sensitive design technique to architectural and landscape projects. But the value-added services they provide can make or break the success of a project and, therefore, outweigh, the impact of their fee.
- An owner or project designer may be unaware of the advantages an independent lighting consultant can bring to today's design and construction processes. For example: what is the difference between the services provided by a lighting professional versus an electrical engineer or interior designer? The electrical engineer specified lighting because it was part of the electrical system, and the interior designer selected decorative lighting equipment. Right? So what has changed to create a profession that specializes in lighting?
- **Technology**
Lighting equipment and controls technologies are developing at light speed: hundreds of new products are introduced to the marketplace annually. To provide proper design solutions that make use of the latest, most-cost-effective technologies, lighting professionals must attend national trade shows and continually update product information and samples from hundreds of manufacturers. Keeping abreast of newest weapons in the lighting arsenal has become time intensive and more essential. Independent lighting consultants do not sell or install equipment, nor do they depend on

the recommendations of lighting salespersons. So the client receives a lighting design based on research and expertise -- free from conflicts of interest.

- **Technique**

Illumination is the ephemeral partner of architecture. Light is invisible until it strikes an object or surface. And it is controlling this difficult, transitory medium that gives the lighting "artist" the ability to create hierarchies, dynamics and mood. Lighting design has become a creative extension of architectural design, improving visibility and complementing form, program and color. Experience and, of course, talent create patterns of illumination that seamlessly support overall project goals.

- **Education**

Knowledge of physics, optics, electricity, ergonomics, business, codes, environmental issues, construction, vision and the art of design are all essential to creating great lighting solutions. Lighting professionals must be well grounded and continually educate themselves to provide the best possible service. They do so in many ways including networking, reading trade magazines and journals, attending and presenting seminars. This sort of give and take, along with healthy competition, forwards the profession as a whole.