HOMEWORKS

INSPIRATION IMPROVEMENT STYLE



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The Independence of Light

PHOTOGRAPHY: **STEFANO DALL'OSSO**

THE ELEMENT THAT MAKES ONE HOME MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN THE NEXT, THE ELEMENT THAT IS HARD TO PUT YOUR FINGER ON... THE ELEMENT OF LIGHT. MILAN BASED LIGHTING DESIGNER **STEFANO DALL'OSSO** TALKS TO HOMEWORKS ABOUT THE ART OF, AND IMPORTANCE OF, GOOD LIGHTING.

How did you specialise in lighting design? Was it something you always wanted to do, or was it a progression?

In life one feels a certain aptitude that often remains hidden and very often it's a question of bringing it out. That was what happened in my case: it was mere chance. In 1986 I knew a lighting designer who had designed the lighting equipment for a small commercial space, in which I was interested in for personal reasons. I was charmed by the power and glamour of light. Between one light designing job and another I accepted the truly adventurous challenge to become the promoter of lighting equipment. I knew nothing in this field. On my part, the determination and curiosity towards the novelty was there, and I hoped for a bit of luck. I worked with dedication and wanted to learn; while I sold the product I looked for new lighting ideas. From a promoter I soon became a consultant for a number of important Italian firms. After sixteen years of working experience your future choices are no longer driven by the cause: the turning point comes from the awareness of what you want to do. In 2000 I opened my own office. Today, this office is managed by an extraordinary team of architects, designers and technicians.

Many don't realise just how important lighting is. In a city such as Milan detail is everything. Can you describe how essential lighting is to the look and feel of a space?

Light livens up spaces and very often you build them physically. In this sense, light is a new material for architecture; it is a dimension, which is added to the three dimensions of volumes. Yes, in a city like Milan the particular is everything, but this is also true for everything else here in Milan, that everything is distinctive. Light has many functions and is the protagonist every time. Light reveals architectural details and feelings, transforms the buildings, the squares, the streets into scenarios and "moods". Light, in a city, is a guide – it offers security; it even purges the dullness of solitude.

We perceive the world because we can see it through light, simply giving importance to the artistic distribution of light and darkness, in dim light. With artificial light we cannot do otherwise but lengthen the cycle of natural light, that glows, but also softening, sunrise and sunset, dawn and twilight. When light is projected well, it lights and at the same time illuminates the things and the surroundings, just like what happens in nature.

What is the recipe for good lighting and what is the most important factor?

To light up well it's fundamental to have an empathic relationship with the environment, to establish feelings. It is necessary to learn to interact with that which we must illuminate. It begins from a very personal sensation, but then it is necessary to listen immediately, to listen to what the client wants and the needs of the environment and of the places that need to be lit up. It may seem paradoxical, but before you see the light, you need to listen to it. A good project exists only if there is harmony between understanding and knowing. One needs to consider all the various elements: the lighting equipment, the sources of light, the rules for safety and environmental protection, the function of illumination and the perception of the observer. There are quite a few variables! ▶



Tell us about your designs and your most recent work.

I would like to dwell on a recent project, in which my co-workers and I were deeply involved: the Basilica of Saint George, in Victoria, Gozo. It is a 15th century building called "the Basilica of Marble" because its internal walls are covered with this strong material. Before the project we had to comprehend the story, the art, the architecture, the religion, the liturgy and the people that visit the cathedral. All the pieces of lighting equipment had to be specifically designed and made for this place, considering the various lighting effects and shades of colour on the many surfaces and its different architectural elements. The result is that all the lighting equipment had to be placed "behind the scenes", because the main objective was the light itself, as opposed to the lighting equipment.

Which of your designs has given you the most satisfaction and why?

They are many, but I wish to cite Nut, a line of lighting equipment designed for Quattrobi, an innovative and growing company in Milan. Nut has created a lighting device called "peanut", which is used to light up squares, streets, the facades of churches and of palaces, monuments, parks, cycle lanes; it is can be fixed on a pole, on the wall and on the floor. The satisfaction comes from the versatility of Nut, which technically offers various uses preserving its soft and harmonic design. It is ideal for most environments because it coordinates artistically.

What is your advice to those who don't know where to begin with lighting in their home?

To light an environment well it is not enough to fix a chandelier to the ceiling or to arrange a beautiful lamp on a bedside table or on a table. Light is, as I already said, feeling, but it is also a physical element that conditions our body, especially sight. An ugly light ruins our ideas and is bad for our health. My advice is to seek a light professional, as the results will be better.



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