

Illuminating Five Points of Light

By Ken Nisch, Chairman – JGA

Without light, design doesn't exist; it cannot be seen or experienced. Increasingly, light goes beyond purely function, increasingly performing an aesthetic role in assuming center stage. Much of this enhanced role is a byproduct of almost limitless possibilities in its placement or flexibility, changeability and even practicality of using light sources in places and ways that were previously inconceivable. Five new ways to think about light include Changeability, Contrast, Pop, Texture, and Pattern. Light is no longer just about seeing, but increasingly about being seen as an integral design tool to creating exciting retail environments.



About the Author and the company:

Kenneth Nisch is Chairman of JGA, a branded environments and retail experience firm in Southfield, Michigan. Nisch applies his knowledge and entrepreneurial insight to create concept and prototype development, and brand image positioning. JGA's clients include Big Bazaar, Parx, Baggit, Linen Club, StudioWest at Westside, Fantasy World (Kuwait), Cacau Show (Brazil), The North Face, Sundance, and Hershey's Chocolate World (global).



Changeability

Change allows lighting flexibility whether to create mood and daypart within spaces -- from a romantic evening to a sun-filled morning, a dramatic and bold up-lit feature or backlit execution, through to a cool and starkly lit futuristic space. Changeability allows the designer to be much more of a "conductor," leading an orchestra of light through a symphony of moods, tones, and emotions. Whether this composition involves the changing of color, direction of light, brightness, and either perceivable or unperceivable motion, or taking a neutral landscaping form and shape, light can dramatically reshape the experience and perception of space.



Contrast

Today with the changes of size, format, and configuration, Contrast lighting is increasingly being incorporated into fixtures, architectural elements, flooring, and soon even in the products the retailer sells. This will allow light to be more focused, directed and discreet, rather than the previously more scattershot approach to ambient lighting that most designers relied on. By putting light at the point of a product, the inherent qualities of product, whether color, texture, form, reflectivity, or even brilliance in the case of jewelry (by restricting the ambient foot candles and focusing the light source on product), today's designer can do much more with less in terms of energy and "wasted" lighting.



Sundance, Edina MN Photo by Troy Thies Photography



Soft Surroundings, Scottsdale, AZ Photo by Colortek- Studio C

Texture

When specifying materials and hardscapes, often the “value” of the material is underleveraged through lack of appropriate lighting. The ability to graze dimensional materials, to heighten the shine and shimmer of polished or honed materials, and to bring out the glow and the warmth of found and natural materials; all rely on lighting to optimize their natural beauty. In the placement of lighting whether internal to create patterns and shadows, or behind to bring out the material’s natural warmth and inherent detail, Texture brings the products to life through imaginative placement of light sources.

POP

While much has been done to conceal and hide the new flexible light sources which allow the fixture to be much more discreet, Pop permits lighting to “shine” and be a star in its own right. This may be uniquely done through futuristic or retro bulbs, the use of lighting to create a sense of space, or even as a welcoming element of warmth in fitting rooms to “pop.” Or as Tom Bodett so famously said, “Leave the light on” for the guest to view the store after closing while enjoying a post-dinner stroll.



Andiamo, Detroit Metro Airport Photo by Laszlo Regos Photography

Pattern

Lighting is Pattern because of its inherent elements. Creating Contrast and Pop, lighting becomes a natural choice when looking to establish strong patterns for walls or ceilings. A pattern helps draw attention, creates rhythm and movement, and helps define and separate zones and areas of the store without the barriers of walls and physical dividers. In looking at pattern, its use takes lighting layout from the hands of the engineer into the hands of the designer, still satisfying the basic practical needs of lighting, but creating a 1+1 = 3 situation.

By leveraging the enormous variety of lighting fixtures, whether linear, pendant, or planer, these elements define space and create visual interest through repetition and geometry. As one ancient lighting designer once said, “Let there be light!” •