



Residential Radiance

Rebecca Weir is Creative Director and founder of Light IQ, an award-winning London-based practice which specialises in international lifestyle projects. Following Weir's recent book release *The Languages of Light: A Creative Approach to Residential Lighting* here, she takes us through a journey of residential lighting design and the importance of understanding the client.

I believe deeply that in this crazy world the home should provide a sanctuary, a retreat from the madness and stimuli that threatens our existence. We live our lives at a frantic pace, switched 'on' to every new development whether in global politics or the changing nuances, loves and limitations of our friends and family. We should not have to find solace in a yoga studio, or on holiday but create that same wonder within our own world, the one we inhabit every day - our homes. For many years residential lighting has been seen as the underdog within the design community, not quite as sexy as lighting those large public spaces, even the awards ceremonies often fail to recognise the small achievements in creating these perfect places for families. Yet I believe that by changing the lives of one you change the lives of many. The inspiration provided to a person in their own home will often lead to commissions in their work place and to the wider community. My views on lighting may seem extreme, but I passionately believe that lighting impacts us in ways we are yet to fully comprehend, perhaps further than our imagination will take us. For years we have known that we often feel better in summer than winter, that it is harder to get up on those dark winter mornings and at long last we have

the knowledge to understand it. I believe science will shortly reveal more; why some of us are drawn to purple and others red, why young boys often prefer blue and girls pink - these views are often found under the psychology of colour but with a little more understanding and research our intuitive responses will be founded on empirical data. It is easy for the quiet minimalist, cool in their white cave to turn their nose up at colour, just as I once did. French Post-Impressionist Paul Cezanne wrote, "Colour is the place where the mind and the universe meet". Never have I felt more passionately about this; daylight is dynamic in its essence full of hues of varying qualities, from the warmth of the setting sun to the crisp coolness of the northern light on an overcast day - forever changing, forever colourful, mesmerising and invigorating. Should our homes not reflect this? Interior designers are often inspired by the palette and variance of nature. So too are lighting designers who look to the sun as their source. It has taken years for me to see the true value of colour in a home, as I love the peace white brings, whether it is with light, paint or bed linen. However, through the eyes of my clients, who have often employed me to bring colour into their lives

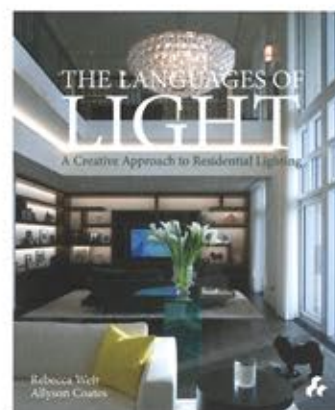
I have had to revisit my views and learn to 'see' as they do. I have noted that people often need the stimulus of colour just as others need more light in winter. It is a deep primal need. We are lucky that with today's advances in technology a rich palette of colours is nothing more than a dmx interface away. With so many easy to use standalone systems, clients are able to play to their hearts content through a multitude of shades.

An intimate relationship often develops when lighting a family's home, secrets are often shared to ensure needs are met. I recently worked for a famous couple whom I had incorrectly supposed shared the master bedroom. When I asked which side of the bed the lady of the house slept I was shown through to an adjoining suite. Another example is the beautiful young client who recently married a much older man, she discretely asked for a night light - I had assumed it was for the soon to be pattering of tiny feet. It was in fact for her ageing husband's frequent visits to the bathroom. It is easy for us to make assumptions. We often do about many aspects of life and particularly the people we meet. A great lighting designer I know stated very clearly at a lecture recently, "Assumptions are there to trip you up, the M... F... 's of Design," I could not have put it more succinctly. Light in all its magnificence informs our world. From dawn to dusk the sensational play of the sun creates theatre by manipulating our senses, stimulating our

responses and shaping our perception of space. Many of our clients see lighting as a key component to the success of their home whereas others have the architect and finances but need educating. There are many mediums in which we can encourage them to think of the importance of light in their lives. One is their use of language and their often unconscious responses; common phrases such as 'light of my life' or 'light hearted' illustrate the positive associations between light and people. It is our job as lighting designers to realise and make visible that intangible link, to create the magic, the sparkle and the brilliance. The greatest lighting designers have a keen eye for detail and an empathy with their clients. Lighting is intimately tied to the architecture and its historical context. However, the real needs of a project are met through the careful consideration of every action and every task to be undertaken and the focus on the ergonomic relationship to the position of every switch. Once the smallest details have been considered and the requirements of the family understood then the layering of light within a room becomes infinitely easier. When designing the lighting for someone's home you are creating an emotional medium, a sanctuary in which to meet their psychological and physiological needs. By understanding the importance of this we are able to embrace a design philosophy that enables us to unlock the exceptional power of light.

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The Languages of Light: A Creative Approach to Residential Lighting is Weir's first book and was written to provide the student, interior designer or enthusiastic home owner with an inspirational and visual guide to the creative process of lighting. The philosophical and human-centric approach incorporates a journey through understanding light as a basic tool, unveiling the emotional and physical responses to light, case studies and lighting effects. Lighting principles and practicalities are seamlessly illustrated through stunning photography. The fundamentals of lighting are clearly conveyed, showing how contemporary technology can assist in driving the creative process.



Left Recessed uplights set within the window frames draw the eye to the decorative plasterwork. **Centre** The warmth of the fireplace is accentuated by the soft hues of the lighting scheme. **Right** The Swarovski ceiling provides a hypnotic and peaceful nighttime effect.



Peter Leonard design
Pic: Richard Bryant



C.W. Eisner Inc
Pic: Laura Kelly



Peter Leonard design
Pic: Richard Bryant