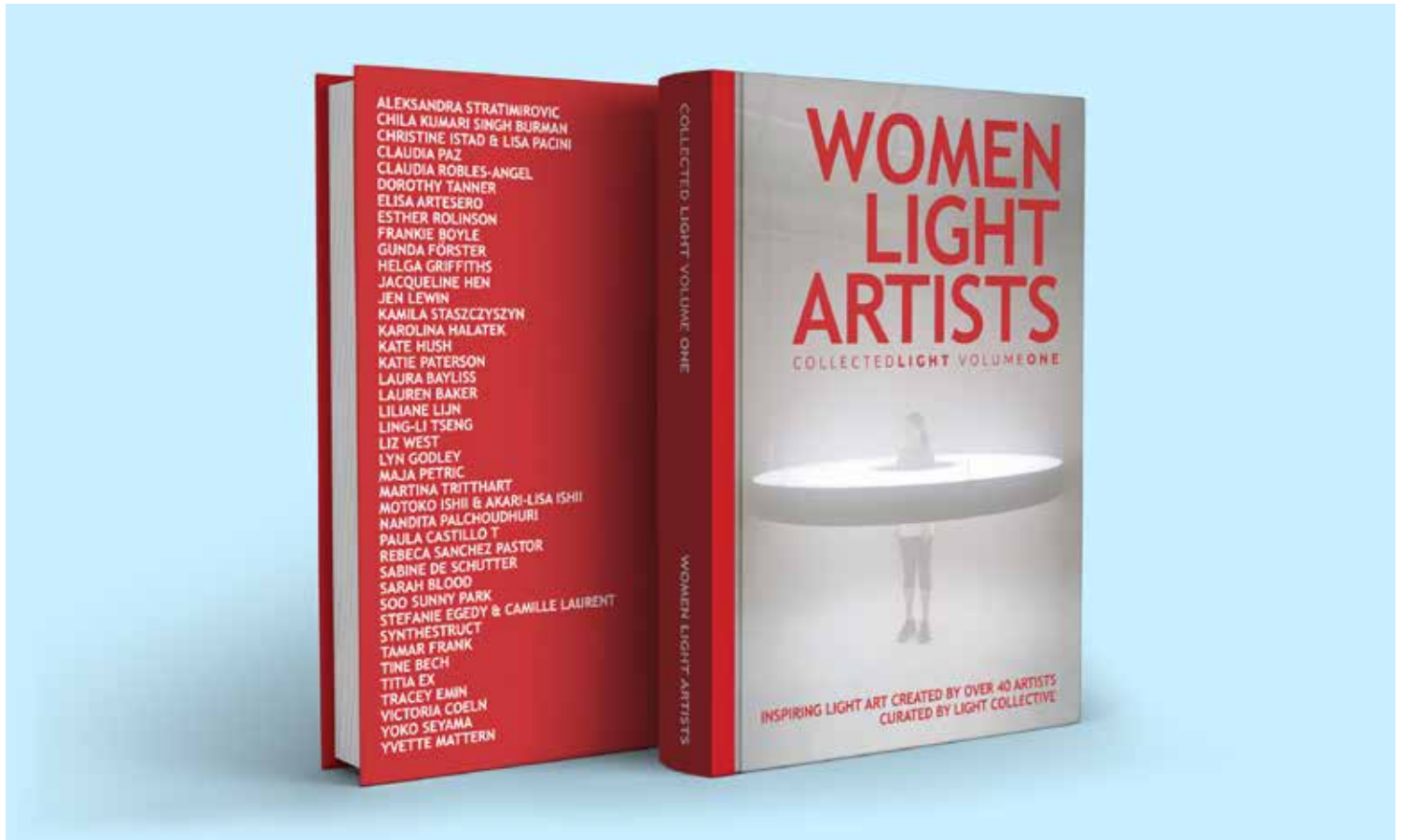


Read On: Light

Jess Gallacher provides the go-to reading list for those interested in light



Collected Light Volume One: Women Light Artists by Light Collective, 2023

What not to read

When I told a friend I was putting together some suggested reading for urban designers interested in light, their immediate reaction was ‘*In Praise of Shadows* is number one on the list, right?’ and another friend’s instant response was ‘You must include the British Standards’. This split between inspirational and technical is commonplace in the lighting industry, and so much of our work is about finding a balance between art and science. We aim to find the sweet spot that blends the best of both worlds, so that our practice is meaningful and

makes a tangible impact in shaping better places for people to live in, work in and enjoy.

In Praise of Shadows (1933) is the default book that lighting designers will tell you about. If I don’t add it to my list, everyone will ask me why not. It is a very reflective essay and admittedly it does contain gentle thoughtfulness about beauty and light and how they are related. But I’m sure that more people have recommended it to me than have actually read it, and most don’t realise it contains racist and misogynistic content, as well as a very long section about toilets. So it didn’t make it onto my list. Welcome to 2024!

The British Standards are really the lowest common denominator when it comes to lighting design. They have an important function, and several excellent people have volunteered and toiled for hours, weeks, months and years to create and update them. At this moment, any number of them are being revised. Expert witnesses stand in court and refer to them. It’s right and important that they exist and are respected. But they also didn’t make it onto my list because if you are at that stage of a project, you should be talking to a qualified competent lighting professional, and they should know the relevant codes and standards. In addition to the

British Standards, it is worth looking at the Institution of Lighting Professionals' *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light* (2021) and all publications from Institution of Lighting Professionals and Society of Light and Lighting.

Essential wider reading

After telling you what I don't recommend, let me quickly tell you what I do recommend but not about lighting. I will assume an urban design professional working in the built environment will already have read these, but let's make sure that we are all on the same page: *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez (2019), *Feminist City* by Leslie Kern (2020), *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge (2017), and *Show Me The Bodies: How We Let Grenfell Happen* by Peter Apps (2022). All are the must-read books for our time if we are to work collaboratively across professional boundaries, with integrity and responsibility, to deliver better places for people.

What to read about Lighting

Urban Lighting for People: Evidence-Based Lighting Design for the Built Environment

Dr Navaz Davoudian, 2019, RIBA Publishing, ISBN 978 1859468210

As a senior researcher at UCL's Institute for Environmental Design and Engineering, Navaz has created this very accessible book by drawing on research in lighting science and human-centric design principles, with contributions from academics and practitioners in the lighting world. Each chapter stands alone as a source of expert information,

for example: *The Social Study of Urban Lighting* by Elettra Bordonaro, Don Slater and Joanne Entwistle; *Urban Lighting Masterplans* with Karolina M Zielinska-Dabkowska; *Older People and Urban Lighting*, *Lighting for Reassurance* by Jemima Unwin; *Wayfinding and the Hierarchy of Urban Elements at Night*, *Interaction of People, Light and Public Space* with Isabel Kell; finishing with *Learned Lessons from Design Projects* by Dan Lister and Emily Dufner.

It's an ideal starting point for anyone new to the topic from another discipline, and also for those of us who have been around for a while but could do with a reminder of why what we do matters.

It Is What It Is

Writings on Dan Flavin since 1964, 2004, Thames & Hudson, ISBN 0500 97644 9

With this series of essays, my recommendation is to start at page 209 with *Pink, Yellow, Blue, Green and Other Colors* in the work of Dan Flavin. Marianne Stockebrand absolutely nails it in her insightful analysis of Flavin's work, which links his pioneering exploration of light as an art medium with wider societal, cultural and psychological themes. Flavin's minimalist sculptures using fluorescent light tubes challenged conventions and inspired new ways of perceiving and experiencing light in built environments.

Understanding light art history and culture is valuable for urban designers seeking to create public spaces that are not just functional, but artistically profound and resonant with human experiences. A fun fact: the town of Marfa, Texas, home to several of Flavin's sculptures, was founded by the great-grandfather of Leo Villareal. Villareal's *Illuminated River* is the world's longest free public artwork spanning

London's Thames River, demonstrating the powerful impact that ambitious urban lighting projects can have.

Only light can take us from high-end exclusive art with the wealthy Marfa set to the shabby Cannon Street railway bridge so transformed by light that I have seen it used as a spot for marriage proposals.

Collected Light Volume One: Women Light Artists

Curated by Light Collective, 2023, Light Collective, ISBN 978 1739141615

This collection brings together amazing, inspiring and immersive light art created by 44 international female artists. It is such a treat for the eyes and the soul - a glorious collection of images of wonderful art, with great explanations of the ideas behind each artwork.

It celebrates the growing prominence of women in the light art world and provides a rich source of inspiration for urban lighting designers. The featured public realm installations demonstrate how light can transform spaces, evoke emotions and create shared experiences that bring communities together.



Spread from *Collected Light Volume One: Women Light Artists* by Light Collective, 2023



Spreads from *Collected Light Volume One: Women Light Artists* by Light Collective, 2023

All Through The Night: Why Our Lives Depend on Dark Skies

Dani Robertson, 2023, HarperNorth, ISBN 978 0008586720

Dani’s words are poetic, persuasive and positive, as she makes a compelling case for preserving and protecting dark night skies in the face of increasing light pollution. With great humour and personal anecdotes, Dani combines storytelling, scientific research and policy analysis to highlight the importance of dark skies for human health, ecological preservation and our cosmic connection to the universe. Too often the dark skies movement highlights the issue, but leaves the audience feeling somewhat hopeless. This is the opposite, showing us that there are many things that we as urban designers can do to create more sustainable and environmentally responsible schemes.

Dark Skies: Places, Practices, Communities

Nick Dunn, 2003, Routledge, ISBN 978 1032528021

Nick is Professor of Urban Design and Executive Director of Imagination, the design and architecture research lab at Lancaster University. He is also the founding Director of the Dark Design

Lab, and a Director of DarkSky UK. Nick has brought together the ultimate who’s who of experts to write about their work, examining the rich potential of dark skies and their relationships with place, communities and practices.

This book therefore brings together knowledge and perspectives on darkness from the arts, humanities and social sciences. You can find new insights and a level of understanding on the importance of darkness for the world in an era of climate emergency and environmental degradation.

A Cities’ Guide to Smart Lighting

Lighting Urban Community International, 2021, Imprimerie Brailly, ISBN 978 2953820133

As we grapple with smart technologies, intelligent lighting systems present opportunities to improve energy efficiency, enhance public safety, and create more responsive and dynamic urban environments. Sorting the wheat from the chaff in this context can seem like a tall order.

This white paper from the Lighting Urban Community International (LUCI) association is one of the best written sources on the potential of smart lighting strategies, data-driven lighting management, and the integration of lighting

with other smart city infrastructure. While addressing privacy and security concerns, the paper provides a roadmap for urban designers to make responsible use of technology to create more liveable, sustainable and future-ready cities.

Illuminations: Living by Candlelight

Wally Arnold, 2001, Chronicle Books, ISBN 978 0811830720

Every lighting designer should have a library for inspiration as well as for technical reference. We could so easily lose this if we lose our shared workplaces and only work from home, so it always gladdens my soul to have a face-to-face meeting in a lighting design practice. Even more so when I get to browse their office library. This book is a gem which I chanced upon at MBLD. Amongst various better known books, this is an unapologetic tribute to candles.

It is dated and full of 1990s nostalgia, written I believe by a candle-seller, you will turn page after page of pretty much nothing but candles in different retro settings. and might wonder why I recommended this book. Candles are heart-warming, reassuring, dependable, but also alive and vibrant. There is no shame in professional practice harking back to simple methods, to remember the basic fact that we are designing for people. I’m not advocating candles in the public realm (although they have been used very well in Bournemouth), but acknowledge that better places might be those that feel wholesome, nurturing and safe.

These books have been chosen to inform, educate and inspire you. If so, please get in touch with the authors, engage with the lighting community, and don’t stop learning. ●

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