



Urban Illumination

Guest topic editors Sharon Stammers and Martin Lupton emphasise the far-reaching impact of well-designed lighting

The International Lighting Design Survey 2024, published by darc media, lists around 225 lighting design consultancies in the UK. This includes practices who specialise in all areas of lighting, including city strategies, street lighting, heritage, transport, art, community and dark planning. By involving an educated and experienced lighting designer in an urban design project, cities can become more liveable, functional, attractive and sustainable environments. Collaboration can help to develop comprehensive design strategies that address the multifaceted lighting needs of modern urban spaces alongside other considerations.

Specifically, lighting designers can help to create visually appealing spaces that attract people and enhance their experience of the urban landscape. Through strategic lighting, urban spaces can be transformed into vibrant areas that people want to visit, live in and enjoy, both by day and at night.

Lighting plays a pivotal role in defining the visual quality and atmosphere of urban environments. It can highlight architectural details, landscapes and landmarks, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the city. Lighting designers can help urban designers to use light to evoke emotions and create unique identities for different areas. Well-designed lighting can also boost economic development by extending the hours during which commercial activities can take place. It encourages people to spend more time outdoors after dark, patronising restaurants, shops and cultural events.

Lighting designers are knowledgeable about the latest energy-efficient and smart lighting technologies that can significantly reduce energy consumption

and carbon footprints. Lighting technology is rapidly evolving, and integrating technology will aid the creation of more sustainable and environmentally-friendly urban spaces.

Good lighting is also essential for ensuring the safety and security of urban spaces. Well-lit streets, pathways and public areas can significantly reduce accidents and deter crime. Lighting helps people to feel safe within cities at night, making urban areas more accessible and liveable. At the same time, lighting can be used strategically to facilitate wayfinding and navigation, guiding people through urban spaces and highlighting paths, entrances, exits and important landmarks, making the city more user-friendly.

Well-designed lighting can also have positive effects on public health and wellbeing. It can promote outdoor activities after dark, and by considering the intensity and colour temperature of lighting, can help to mitigate adverse effects on human health and circadian rhythms. Lighting designers understand the need to minimise light pollution, ensuring that urban lighting does not interfere with nocturnal wildlife or the enjoyment of the night sky. They can design lighting schemes that provide necessary illumination without contributing to skyglow or glare.

Good lighting design can make urban spaces more inclusive and accessible for everyone, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. It ensures that public spaces are navigable and comfortable after dark, promoting social interaction and community engagement. Modern lighting technologies allow for dynamic lighting solutions that can change in response to specific events or needs. This flexibility can help

urban spaces to serve multiple purposes and adapt to different uses throughout the day and night, maximising their utility and efficiency.

In summary, the consideration of lighting is fundamental in creating urban spaces that are safe, beautiful, functional and sustainable. Collaborating with lighting designers from the outset of a project can ensure that urban environments meet the needs of their inhabitants and visitors, both now and in the future, and that the right light in the right place at the right time is implemented.

This issue draws together an international mix of designers to share their expertise and thoughts, and their articles cover a wide spectrum of issues and opportunities to help encourage further co-operation and better urban illumination everywhere. ●

Sharon Stammers and Martin Lupton, guest topic editors, lighting designers and co-founders, Light Collective

Going Dark, image by Matteo de Bernardini

Going Dark is an annual workshop, created by Traverso-Vighy and Light Collective in Italy. It aims to promote responsible lighting practices and demonstrate the use of appropriate lighting equipment that reduces unnecessary external illumination and minimises the negative impact of light on human health and the natural environment.