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Interview with Markus Gabler, w40 Architekten, Wiesbaden

Interview

How can I best avoid artificial light during the day? A very important factor is to use dimmable luminaires so the light sources produce a pleasant ambience suited to the relevant occasion in the evening - dinner or meeting, sales situation or display window at night.

Artificial light, on the other hand, can be used to create constantly new scenes. With the ERCO Spherolit lenses, for instance, I can highlight a wedding ring as easily as an evening gown or a running shoe, using just the light to engage the customer emotionally. And all that with a single spot!

Is it not just as easy to produce good light with conventional luminaires? What exactly, in your view, makes LED light the ideal solution?

Efficiency and durability, for a start. LED light is sustainable and technically brilliant. I opted for ERCO to illuminate our office because of the many and diverse possibilities of the LED luminaires. The toilets in our office, for instance, are deliberately kept in dark grey - from floor to ceiling. This means you are in a completely dark room with white bathroom facilities. Therefore, we used an ERCO luminaire with 7W - and the room is now illuminated perfectly. You can see absolutely everything: yourself in the mirror, the washbasin, and the toilet. The rest recedes into the background. If we had used conventional luminaires, we would have needed 70W to 150W for that small space!

It is still a common prejudice that LED light is far too cold ...

LED light is not cold. You see - my office is equipped completely with warm white LEDs at 3000K - and we get many compliments for it.

You have a quote in large letters at the entrance to your office, which says, "We believe that brand design is about content, emotion and engagement". What does that mean for your everyday work?

When you are an architect or interior designer working in the retail sector, you need to approach these tasks with great passion. The result must also stir emotions: Three-dimensional branding combines artwork, light and materials with the product to create a spatial experience. Be it for Nike or Lego: Every design needs to have a content-driven concept that appeals to the target group. And it must be updated regularly so as to keep the customers fascinated for the long term.

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Brand architecture is an exciting field for creative designers. What role does light play in shop architecture?

Regardless of the budget, the truth is, if a product is not properly illuminated, the customer will not feel drawn to it. If Nike launches a new football boot, it cannot just sit somewhere on a shelf, it must be accentuated precisely with a spot. The challenge is to bring home to the merchandiser, after finalising a store concept, that it is his or her job now to get the light exactly onto the product. There is no use in us doing it - the client, personally, must have understood the whole point of effective lighting for his brand.

How do you manage to promote yourself as brand w40?

With great diligence, flexibility and trust - which we reciprocate with the quality of our work. Our office premises are not covered with pictures of our projects, I don't want to clutter them. But I am currently planning more typography on the walls to reflect the w40 philosophy.

Office design is increasingly about flexibility at the workplace. It must be a place for concentrated working, but also provide communicative space. How can these divergent requirements be aided by light?

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With a sophisticated lighting design. Light can be used to emphasise different zones of the room so as to ensure good orientation and a pleasant ambience. The area of our office kitchen, where we all cook together, and the kitchen zone, where our team eats, is illuminated effectively using a lighting control system. So, too, the conference room: As long as there are design drawings on the table, the table must be illuminated brilliantly, whereas the uniform illumination of the wall creates a nice ambience. The light can also be dimmed as required, to emphasise the conference or dining table, or even to watch football together in the evening.



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