

# *(folio)* insight





# ENLIGHTENING DESIGN

FROM DAVID TRUBRIDGE TO PETER ZUMTHOR, DESIGNERS AND ARCHITECTS AROUND THE WORLD ARE LOOKING TO NATURE TO FIND INSPIRATION FOR THEIR LIGHTING DESIGNS. REGARDLESS OF FORM, THE OVERRIDING DESIGN CONSIDERATION IS STILL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

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In 18th century Gothic literature, authors often used light as a metaphor for knowledge. Fleeing a foe down a dark passage, a heroine might run past a row of lit candelabras – the twinkling lights symbolising her psychological emancipation. These days, lighting is still enlightening. Architects and designers of the 21st century are constantly dreaming up new ways to light up spaces, with the greatest challenge being to balance rapidly changing technology with the increased demand for sustainable design.

An emerging trend is design inspired by nature – either by shape or by function, with the recent Building Code of Australia changes that restrict the use of traditional halogens having a strong impact on the latter. Tessa Roulston, senior associate interiors Melbourne, at Rothelowman, says, ‘Our challenge is to think outside the square. It’s all about trying to push the boundaries and exploring how to use the restrictions.’

Designers are now using alternative energy efficient sources such as LED and fluoro in order to achieve the same effect as numerous downlights. ‘At our development Riva, we designed linear fluoro wall lights above the bed, so there are no downlights in the ceiling. We think this is really exciting,’ she says.

Roulston predicts the next trend will be integrating light with other objects, such as furniture and joinery. For example, the practice is proposing to design LED lighting rods as part

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of the lobby in its Habitat building in South Melbourne. It also uses LED downlights in kitchens in another Melbourne project, The Hawksburn. ‘We are currently prototyping a medicine cabinet where the light is contained within the mirrored cabinet. It’s mounted so light shines through the mirror when you flick a switch,’ explains Roulston.

The technology is being used in the commercial sector too. Developed by The Stable Group, Lifestyle Working Brookvale in New South Wales harnesses natural light to create a sustainable, low-cost environment. It also uses surface benefit T5 lights and supplementary task lights, instead of 750 desk height task lights, to provide 260 lux illumination across its 164 office suites. ‘So the collective light source combined delivers 450 lux illumination,’ says Ed Horton, chairman of The Stable Group, ‘and provides a much greater level of choice and flexibility to the tenant or the owner to manage their own workspace.’ Lifestyle Working Melbourne is currently under construction.

Danish furniture designers, Bo Strange and Morten Kjær Stovegaard of FurnID, take the concept of natural light a step further. In Melbourne for the opening of Great Dane Furniture’s Fitzroy store, Strange spoke about their new My Buddy light. ‘A psychologist found that the lack of the sun’s presence in northern Europe was contributing to a “winter depression” and that light was proven to help people feel better naturally.’



Hermès Paris retail interior by Denis Montel of RDAI.

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The psychologist invited designers to create a light, and FurnID came up with the winning design. 'My Buddy light is a little friend to keep people company when they are feeling lonely or sad because of the weather,' says Strange. Inspired, in part, by the Earth's shape, My Buddy comprises a back shell of moulded aluminium and a semi-transparent front shell. It features LED light across three modes – cosy, work and mood – which glow to suit the user's different needs.

As for shape, Swiss architect Peter Zumthor references a flower in his new lamp, Campanula. He also questions the way we use light between dusk and dawn and how we want to illuminate our houses, cities and landscapes. Now available at Viabizzuno, the lamp is designed from one continuous piece of extruded aluminium and follows the graceful shape of a mountain flower. Its smooth curves complement the gentle expansion from the mounting rod to the open face of the luminaire, which in turn reflects the bell-shaped flower of its namesake.

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Campanula is used as an exterior wall lamp to illuminate building perimeters and pathways. Zumthor says, 'I think of these lights not as an attempt to oust the night, but rather as an accentuation of the night, as intimate places of light in the obscurity created by man. Then they take on a beautiful quality and can reveal their magic.'

Designed by Carlotta de Bevilacqua and Paolo Dell'Elce for Artemide, the new Copernico lamp extends the spherical theme. 'With nine rings like the planets in the solar system, the arrangement of the [lamp's] elements in space and the overall geometry of the appliance take inspiration from, and pay a tribute to, certain sculptures of Russian constructivist artist, Aleksander Rodchenko,' says de Bevilacqua.

As the rings are mobile and rotate fully, the design allows the user to take an active part in the lighting experience, by physically grasping it and moving it to configure the light. This then, according to de Bevilacqua, 'acts as a true interface





The new Copernico lamp for Artemide.



Coral lightshade by David Trubridge.



Koura lightshade by David Trubridge.

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— DAVID TRUBRIDGE

between man and space'. Copernico uses LED technology too; the spot-source evenly spreads the light flow so as to reduce glare and ensure visual comfort. 'The luminous flow can either be evenly spread to all directions or focused on individual parts of the environment,' says de Bevilacqua.

New Zealand designer David Trubridge ties it all together. His celebrated holistic approach features designs both inspired by and constructed from nature. A recent design is his Koura lightshade, inspired by the woven trap used to catch small fresh water shrimps. Its intricate criss-cross pattern is made of eco-friendly plywood timber as part of his Kitset collection. 'It's the borderline between humans and nature that interests me most – nature has worked it all out in the simple structures you see occurring,' he says. The Koura lightshade also inspired a series of lattice timber domes featured in Hermès' new Paris store, by architect Denis Montel of RDAI.

Now using LED in some of his designs, Trubridge is noting a big shift in the way people are thinking about design. 'People used to buy more freely, but that is changing. They want products with different stories, and I think that's great,' he says. Trubridge is passionate about communicating sustainable design. 'It's in our hands as designers to be environmentally responsible and that has to be the overriding factor.' (*inside*)

> [rothelowman.com.au](http://rothelowman.com.au)

> [furnid.com](http://furnid.com)

> [viabizzuno.com](http://viabizzuno.com)

> [artemide.com](http://artemide.com)

> [davidtrubridge.com](http://davidtrubridge.com)