

Layering Light

We speak to a selection of lighting designers about how to flawlessly layer ambient, task and accent lighting to achieve the perfect illumination across a variety of spaces.

Hazel Park,
Senior Lighting Designer at
John Cullen Lighting:



“Combining ambient, task and accent lighting layers achieves the perfect illumination across a variety of spaces and rooms in the home.

Ambient lighting makes up the majority of light in most spaces and tends to be quite soft. It’s like your base layer of light, giving a lovely overall glow. We might start our ambient layers from the top down, by installing beautiful decorative pendants in a living room or over a kitchen island to create a soft general light. We would then layer this with some miniature low-glare downlights, such as our Polespring 40s. This all builds up soft indirect general light. Some downlights are very glaring on the eye and wouldn’t be suitable for ambient lighting – likewise with a pendant; it needs a good shade to be ambient.

Task lighting is used to perform a particular task. This may be the light needed to help you prepare food on a kitchen worktop, or an adjustable reading light. Task lighting is sometimes the one that is done wrong. For example, having a standard lamp beside your bed rarely actually highlights a book you’re trying to read. We’d recommend instead using decorative reading lights fixed to your headboard or either side of it. There are always good task lighting options for both traditional and contemporary styles.

Accent lights are more like feature lights, which come into full focus in the evening and



complement the ambient light. In a living room for example, you can use accent lighting to bring attention to a feature fireplace, the focal point of the room. I might recess a miniature Lucca 30 uplight into a hearth to frame the jambs of the fireplace and really bring it to life. Many of my clients have wonderful joinery pieces so I accent key objects using miniature spotlights and LED strips built into the shelves too.”

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Images courtesy of John Cullen Lighting.

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Hazel Park, Senior Lighting Designer, John Cullen Lighting.



Marketa Rypacek,
Managing Director at Industville Ltd:

“Lighting is one of the most important aspects to think about in any space, as the right light can change the dynamics of a room to create the perfect ambience. The three main types of lighting: ambient, task and accent, each add a different layer to the interior.

To accomplish a well-thought-out and welcoming space, you need to embrace the complete range of lighting sources available. From pendant lights, recessed lights and chandeliers to track lighting, floor lamps, table lamps, under cabinet lighting and other spot lighting. My advice is to vary the lighting sources to create little pockets and pools of illumination. Ambient lighting is the most prominent type as it sets the mood and overall atmosphere of a space, whilst providing a room with sufficient lighting. Task lighting helps to accomplish daily activities such as preparing food for example or lighting up a workspace in a commercial setting. Accent lighting can then be used to highlight points of interest in a room such as artwork, plants, or architectural features. This type of lighting requires three times as much light as the surrounding areas to create a focal point.

Think about the function of the space and how you could enhance or complement it. Would you like

warm lighting to create a cosy atmosphere in a home environment, or a cooler gallery style lighting for a shop floor or cafe? Would you like the lighting to wash the wall in a decorative fashion or do you need focused task lighting over a countertop or desk space for example? Different functions will demand different types of lighting. It is also important to ensure the lights are independently controlled, as well as installing dimmer switches for each light source, to allow for a wide variety of moods to be created throughout the day.

The correct blend of layered lighting is vital to get right as it influences human moods and emotions. From a commercial perspective, the correct lighting can have huge benefits on business. Within an office setting, for example, lighting can improve employee’s health and wellbeing, which in turn will increase positivity and productivity within a business. Whereas, in a restaurant, the lighting can help set the mood, ensuring customers enjoy their experience and ultimately spend more time and money within the establishment.”

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Below - image courtesy of Industville Ltd.

Images courtesy of dpa lighting consultants.

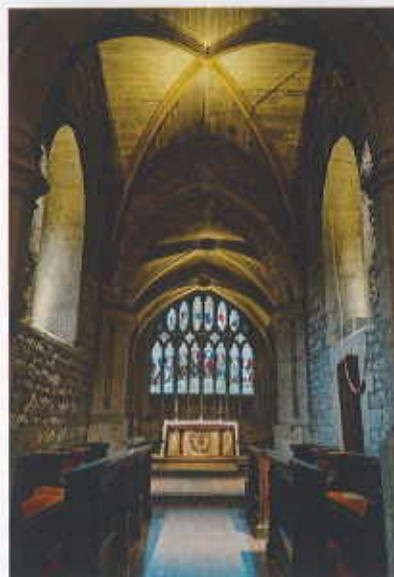
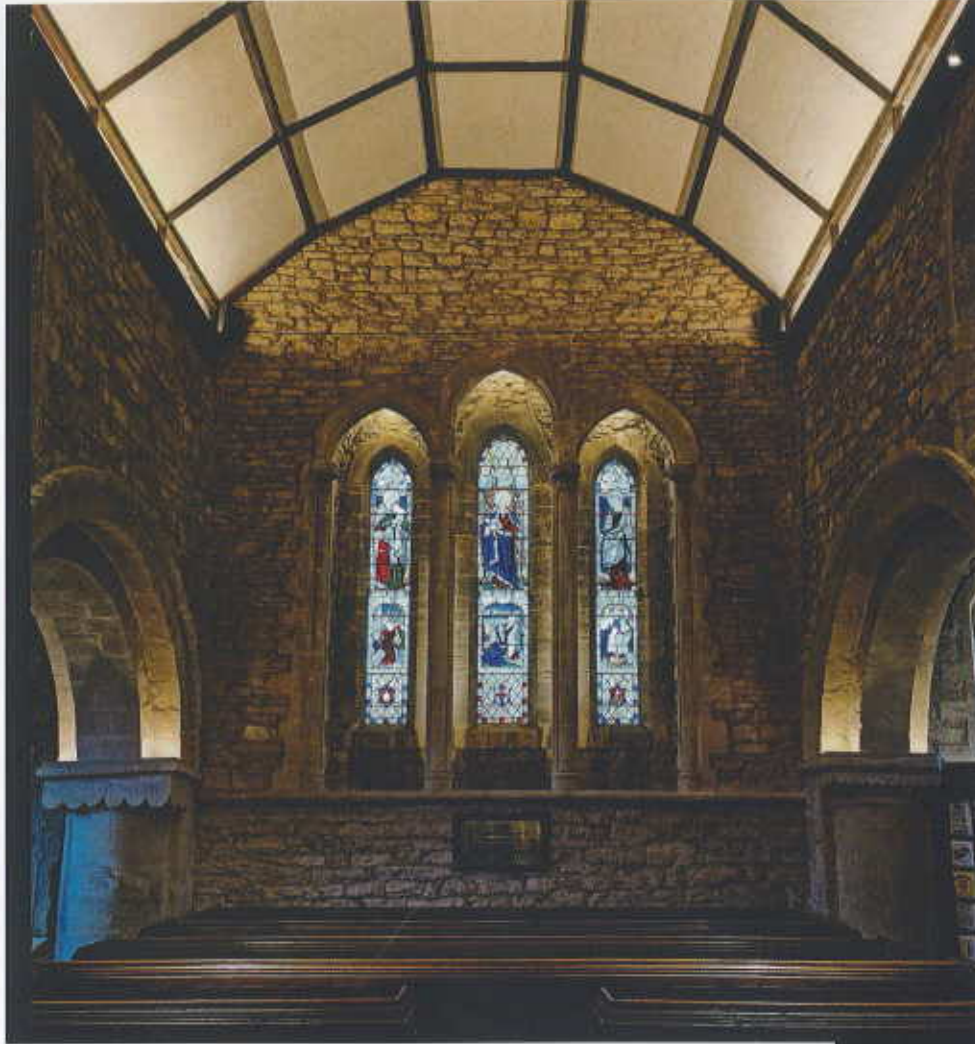


Richard Bolt,
Partner at dpa lighting consultants:

“dpa lighting consultants were commissioned to design the lighting for a beautiful Grade 1 listed church set in a picturesque Cotswold stone village dating back to circa 1040, when the massive double row of stone columns was erected. The chancel is an excellent small scale early English example: vaulted roof and delicate tracery, carved bosses and capitals and elegant lancet windows. In the 14th century north and south aisles were added, the roof of the nave raised and the clerestory windows above the columns enclosed inside the building.

The design brief was to greatly improve the functional lighting levels, whilst sympathetically articulating a selection of architectural elements for visitors to enjoy. Through various lighting trials and close collaboration with the project team, a highly successful scheme using energy efficient 2700K LED sources has been skilfully implemented, controlled by an architectural control system, using under 1200w of energy.

The lit result is composed of varying layers of indirect ambient, accent and direct task lighting techniques, appropriately articulating the architecture whilst providing a good base level of task lighting for the congregation and performers to read by. Invariably, each layer serves more than one purpose, for instance, the uplighting to the nave ceiling both expresses the interior volume, whilst ensuring that a sufficient level of ambient indirect illumination is achieved. This is also the case at the altar



end with reflected light from the stone apex. Focused task lighting is implemented through a neatly integrated and low glare spotlight layer, whilst there are numerous features accentuated through concealed light sources, the nave arch uplighting detail and west window opening for example.

The key was to harmoniously blend together these lighting layers, whilst ensuring individual control of each component, so as to balance the intensity to coincide with the various functions, performances and services held within the space.”

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