



“In lighting, the trend is going both ways: digital and analogue.”



Interview:
Dick Spierenburg

Lighting is very much “in” at the moment, both with furniture labels and with architects and technology fans. The Dutch designer Dick Spierenburg, Creative Director of one of the world’s biggest furniture trade fairs, explains why, and gets us excited about two types of lighting that will be presented at the next imm cologne: decorative analogue and digitally connected.

Why is light such an exciting topic in interior design at the moment?

The short answer is that several things in the furnishing world are merging together at present. There is less separation between ranges, and light is increasingly understood as an integral part of furniture or as a congenial addition to them, as you see when fashionable furnishing brands introduce lamps. This inter-connection between furniture, fittings and lamps can be seen particularly clearly in a number of the traditional Scandinavian furniture companies that come to Cologne, such as Gubi or Artek, as well as in relatively new brands such as &Tradition or Muuto. But the factor that injects even more dynamism into all these developments is advancing inter-connection through digital technology.

Don’t consumers still have initial reservations with regard to that complicated topic?

Of course, it’s a long process. But more and more architects and interior designers are bringing the topic to the attention of builders and renovators. They function as mediators. We need more

platforms and communication opportunities to provide a more holistic idea of light in the field of furnishing – both the possibilities offered by consistent design concepts with original lamps and the possibilities of light solutions related to architecture and home decoration. At imm cologne we speak in terms of “decorative” and “technical” light.

As the Creative Director of imm cologne you are responsible for the conception and organisation of various formats in the design area of the trade fair, known as the Pure Halls. How is the Cologne trade fair responding to these developments?

Basically, we at imm cologne want to reflect all the segments of the furnishing sector – and above all we want to demonstrate how everything is connected. Alongside textiles, we believe that lighting is one of the most important topics in furnishing. It is a multi-faceted subject and imm cologne was quick to include it. But for us as a trade fair company the time has come to fully integrate the topic of lighting at imm cologne.



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Will there be a hall dedicated exclusively to lighting?

No, we're interested in lighting in context. While other trade fairs present the topic mainly from a technical or fashion perspective, we look at it in the context of furniture and spaces, thereby addressing our target group of interior design architects and end consumers.

How exactly will that be executed?

In the Pure Area we have developed a new concept for Hall 4.2. In future, this is where all the topics will be presented that are important in interior design but that cannot be understood as a single unit with furnishing: bathrooms, floors, walls and, above all, light. So all the elements of room architecture, but within the context of furniture and furnishing trends, presented compactly in a mixture of freely designed stands and themed areas. Decorative light will still be in the other Pure Areas, where the focus is on lamps and lamp design – i.e. on the lamp as an item of furniture. But here too we will be putting a special focus on the subject of lighting next year, and a number of interesting brands will be presenting lamp ranges in Halls 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2. In Pure Editions we're putting "Das Haus" 2018 in the hands of a light designer: Lucie Koldova will present a very exciting concept of holistic living that specifically takes the role of light as its theme.

On top of that we're injecting a new creative impulse into the Featured Editions exhibition. I can tell you this much: Ten lighting installations will be presented in transparent pyramid-shaped display frames. And because these installations will have a highly experimental character, we have decided to call them "Light Labs". We want to make light an experience.

You spoke of architects and interior designers as mediators when it comes to lighting. How do you intend to persuade them to take on that role?

We are addressing them in a targeted way and are offering them inspiration and information on the possibilities of holistic design. Furthermore, at imm cologne they will find both aspects of light-

ing. On the one hand, Pure and Pure Editions exhibits evocative, atmospheric decorative light in various furnishing contexts; on the other hand Pure Architects presents technical light with a focus on system solutions, on structurally integrated light systems, and on the inter-connection, digitalisation and control of light – via smartphone, for example. And with that we're already deep into the topic of the smart home.

You are consciously involving the end consumer?

Yes, that has proven to be a successful approach and will be developed further. I believe that now is a good time because people who are currently engaging with the topic of furnishing are urgently looking for an overview. And they won't find a better overview than at imm cologne. You have to show people the connections between light and furniture, between light and textiles. And we do that best.

Doesn't the new focus on technical light go against the "Haus" and decorative light, as you call it?

No, the trend is going both ways: digital and analogue. Technically minded people who appreciate the convenience and the inter-connection with media and domestic technology will love the ideas we exhibit in the Smart Home. But there are also a lot of people – including many young people, by the way – who view the increasing technologisation of their lives with scepticism, and they are keen to keep their homes as free from digital media and devices as possible. Apart from their smartphones and digital work devices, of course – everyone appears to agree on that. These people are drawn to the concept realised by our guests of honour in "Das Haus" last year. So far, it has always been an analogue house and "Das Haus" 2018 by Lucie Koldova will continue that tradition. But I guarantee that there will be an unbelievable variety and depth of light exhibited.