

Lighting 'makes or breaks' space

By Doug Funke
staff writer

All too many homeowners fail to put their houses, furniture and works of art in the best possible light due to inadequate lighting systems.

That's what some interior designers and retailers of fixtures in the lighting industry say.

"Lighting is just a way to make your home comfortable," said Nancy L. Burns, manager of the lighting lab program for Lightstar, a fixture manufacturer headquartered in New Jersey.

"The biggest mistake is people use one fixture to light an entire room," Burns said. "The end result is the room is flat, visually dull and appears smaller rather than spacious. Lighting can certainly enhance the space."

Recessed and track lighting systems now can be angled and adjusted in intensity with dimmers to create a variety of effects. Halogen bulbs, becoming increasingly popular, produce a whiter light than incandescent bulbs.

BURNS, AN interior designer who has won national awards for her work with lighting, was in Birmingham last week to host an open house at Michigan Chandelier on Telegraph at Maple. The store has the only lighting demonstration room in the area.

"My career started on a sentence I still believe in — lighting can make or break your space," Burns said.

Gone are the days some 30 years ago when all lighting fixtures in a new starter home could be had for \$10.95, said Herb Arndt, manager at Michigan Chandelier.

Now, we're talking about chandeliers, track lighting, recessed lights, dimmers and halogen bulbs separately and in combination.

Chandeliers can cost thousands of dollars. Recessed and track lighting fixtures can average \$100 apiece. The trick is to maximize choice — and ambition — without spending a fortune.

"SOMETHING MOST people can do is add a dimmer. Immediately, it gives you flexibility for quiet when you're with that special person or more light when playing cards with the kids," Burns said.

"A place I like to use a dimmer is in the bathroom. When that alarm goes off in the morning, I don't want to be blasted by light," she said.

"Lighting trends include more sophisticated dimming controls," Burns said. They're more convenient to use, more styled in appearance.

Recessed or track lighting can be used to enhance objects like floral arrangements on tables or photographs and paintings on walls. They can be especially effective when used with chandeliers and dimmers.

The earlier in the planning process decisions can be made, the easier and less expensive will be the execution.

Consumers are becoming more aware but don't know all of the options when it comes to lighting.

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"MOST PEOPLE want recessed rather than track," she said of today's buyer. "They don't want tracks running across the room. Recess is less obtrusive; they're not following a line in the room."

But for a remodeling job in a colonial home, recessed lighting may be cost prohibitive, she said.

Martha Noonan, an interior designer from Rochester Hills, also prefers recessed to track lighting. She's also charmed by the possibilities of softer halogen bulbs.

Although more expensive than incandescent bulbs, halogen bulbs last longer and are more energy efficient, designers said.

Education is the key. Consumers can read about lighting and talk about it, but really need to see it to get the brightest possible picture, those in the business said.

"People need to be exposed by some matter or means to even know about these things," Noonan said. "Unless they're working with someone like a lighting designer, architect or interior designer, they won't know how to go about it."

said Linda Shears, an interior designer at Modern Studio of Interiors in Birmingham.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Dimmers and secondary sources like recessed and track fixtures can enhance chandelier illumination, maintains Nancy L. Burns, an interior designer and lighting specialist.

4 projects earn awards

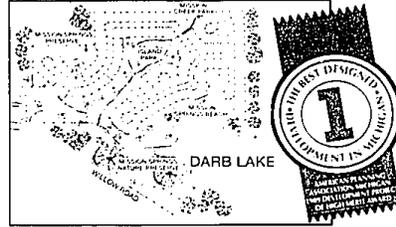
Three local architectural firms have been recognized for masonry design excellence in the 15th annual M Awards program, sponsored by the Masonry Institute of Michigan, based in Farmington.

They are: Hartley Ellington Pierce Yee Associates, Southfield, for the Willard H. Dow Laboratory, University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; Kenneth Neumann/Joel Smith and Associates, Southfield, and Henning, Durham & Richardson, Dallas, for the Oakland County Jail — south addition and renovation; Minoru Yamasaki Associates, Troy, for Columbia Center and Long Lake Crossings, Troy.

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