

# LEARNING FROM MUSEUMS

An exhibition becomes a display window, a display window for orchestration purposes, orchestration of the exhibition. Types of buildings such as museums and shops, which at first are so very different do actually have quite a bit in common, not only in terms of lighting technology.

Carla Wilkins

Selling is all about presentation. And presentation is the essence of museums. The purpose of museums is to preserve a product, in this case cultural assets in its different guises, to present it correctly, provide visitors with the relevant information, and put the product in context with regard to the history of art. Light plays a pivotal role in this. The highest demands are made of the right lighting, far beyond the reproduction of colours and the strength of the lighting in question. The presentation of the relevant objects can take different forms, from documentary to orchestrated. At Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin, Berlin's Museum of Arts and Crafts, the architects Kühn Malvezzi opted for presentation in the form of a display window.

In the world of retail what is important is the optimum presentation of a product. The objective is to grab the attention of the viewer and potential purchaser. The first step is to command the viewer's visual attention and to focus it on the article. The emphasis here is on materiality, volume and quality. For the first few seconds, the associations the customer makes

when looking at the product trigger emotions and memories, rendering the next step possible – further interest. The experience surrounding the product is intended to play a communicative role. As part of the Leica Camera project in Wetzlar with architects Gruber + Kleine-Kraneburg, the aesthetics of the Leica brand are transferred to architecture and the type of sequences of rooms that people are allowed to experience. The Leica leitmotifs – a focus on essentials, attention to detail, a love of precision and design – become tangible. The viewer has an opportunity to gain access to the product at his own pace. Light planners are aware of the components for optimum illumination of rooms and objects, of the exact proportions between the intensity and quality of light in the interplay of volume and materiality. In retail, the presentation of products is determined by the brand's aesthetics and the outlook on life that it wishes to convey. The lighting interprets these parameters, becoming the tools for creating the appropriate atmosphere.

Exhibition or shop? A museum with display window character.



Perfect presentation evokes memories and a desire to buy, or rather a desire to find out more about a product. The possibilities the world of online shopping offer are calling this classic approach into question. In this case excellent product photography orchestrates the visual stimuli that light produces and fosters, with customers buying and taking advice from the digital community. By way of contrast, the real world of shopping has the advantage that customers receive direct feedback based on their own values and quality standards. This, however, is no longer enough. The interior design in retail premises make it possible to relate a brand's history, with lighting guiding shoppers' perceptions. It is about communicating a product or a group of products and expressing a certain attitude to life. The messages sent out to the customer need to be controlled. Here, economy of attention is becoming increasingly important. The sensory and informational overload as a result of a surfeit of visual impressions requires curatorial direction. In other words, alongside

the pleasure of touch, the real in-store purchasing experience needs additional value added. In future it will be important to create a personalized interface between the worlds of the digital and analogue shopping experiences. The progress in lighting technique offers enormous opportunities here; LEDs have become well-established. Over the past years light planners and the luminaire industry together emphasised the main points. After the initial euphoria, the lifespan of LED light bulbs has proved to be reliable, with new technologies allowing their performances to be monitored, such that project-specific and increased lifespans can be guaranteed. Ballast units are currently the difficulty, but this problem is well-known and is being addressed and improved by industry. The output and the available lumen packages allow use in most applications. Even beam angles in the region of less than 10° appear, at the moment, increasingly likely. However, there is currently still room for development. With the constant improvements to LED modules, even the size of the cooling

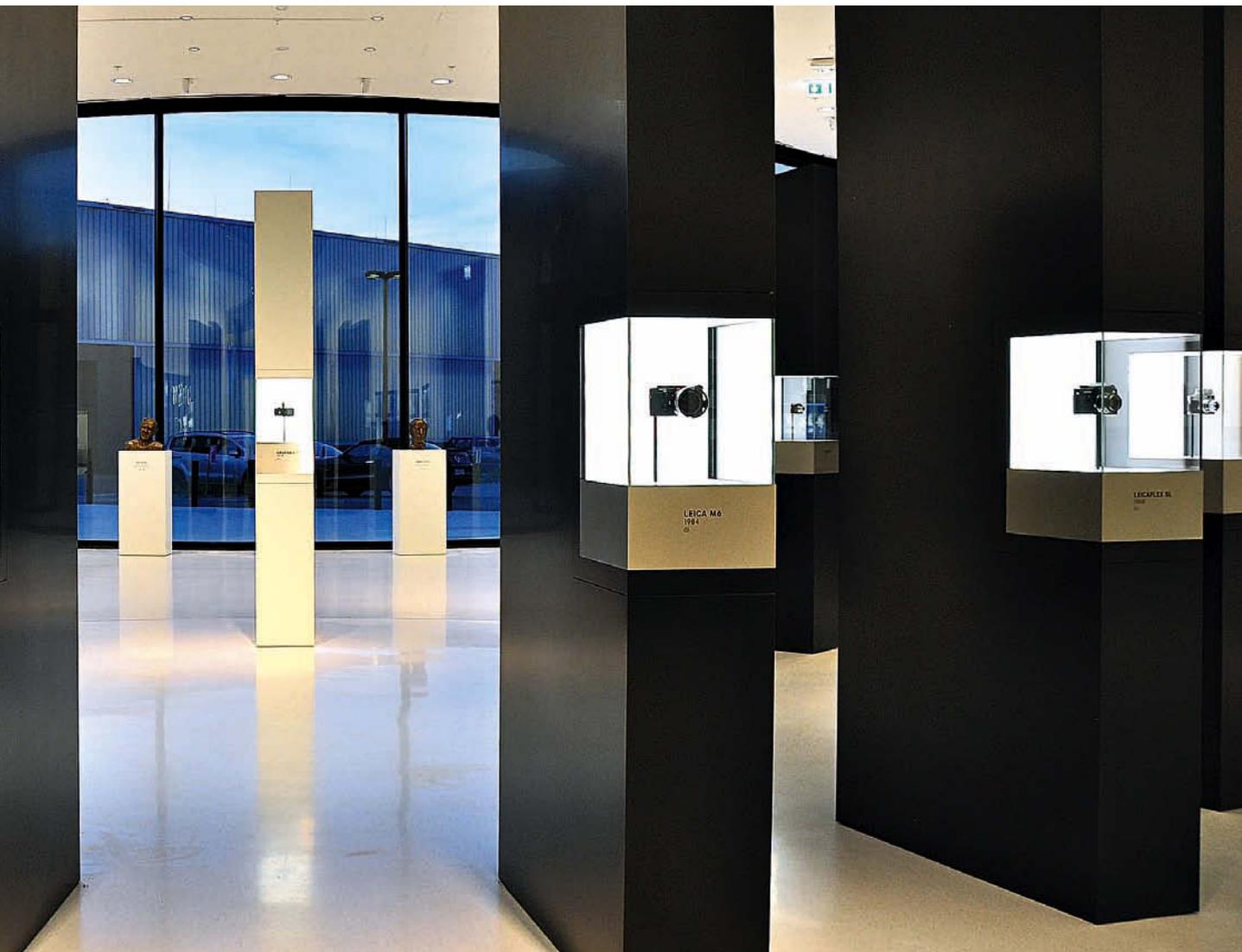
Retail or museum? The new headquarters of Leica Camera AG in Wetzlar offer not only exhibition space but also a flagship store.



Photo: Ulrich Schwarz, Berlin

element can be reassessed; an intelligent constellation allows for further miniaturization of the technical elements. This component has a major impact on the size and design of luminaires. The importance of the quality standard of a very good colour rendering index ( $R_a$ ) larger than 90 is no longer a niche product but is reflected in many of the portfolios in the lighting industry. Here, the trend is towards a detailed examination of the individual reference colours. Moving away from the classic average value using the 14 reference colours, lighting planners' requirements are developing in such a way that each individual value must reflect a colour rendering index of more than 90. The discussion about the tolerance is becoming increasingly important. This is the only way that the observer's comparing eye can comprehend and evaluate tolerances in the light on materials, because different LED lights made by various manufacturers with the predefined colour temperatures of, for example, 3000 K may possibly vary slightly. The influence on the perceived result might

confuse the viewer and impact negatively on presentation. For this reason the problem should be pointed out and, in future, be taken into better account in the tolerances. LED technology has now reached a point where it can allow various different colours of light to be placed on a chip; RGBW modules offer a possible way of taking account of the targeted use of colours and shades of colour in the relevant concepts. Lighting technology must promote these individual criteria and concentrate them for the lighting modules. What is important in this respect is that in practice great flexibility is called for, but as far as handling is concerned the maxim "keep it simple" must be abided by. The light fixtures are only one component of the lighting concept. Operating the lighting will play an increasingly important role on the sales floor. This allows not only for azimuth-dependent lighting scenarios in interiors parallel to our perception of the shifting light of day, but also for dynamic lighting colour designs, as in the A10 shopping centre in Wildau. The future lies in the creation



of interactive possibilities, for example, being able to offer customers in shop changing rooms different lighting moods with lighting technology that replicates differing everyday scenarios. Moreover, there are other areas, such as, for instance, display windows that can be given more value added by means of dynamic lighting technology. Involving customers by means of interactive controls allows for additional new design scenarios. Lighting planners curate the options lighting-technology provides, evaluate and prioritise them for the shop floor or for the sequences of shop floors. Working as a team, architects and interior designers, plans for an appropriate light-orchestrated rhythm for the world of the shopping experience need to be drawn up. In this respect, economic and responsible plans with regard to energy and material resources should be a matter of course. The objective is to create a place for and with the product, that strengthens the brand and remains in people's memories in a positive way – so that the product a buyer and vice versa.



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studied Architecture and has been working in lighting planning since 1989. After stints in New York and Berlin she was a founding partner of the international planning studio Lichtvision Design & Engineering GmbH. Here she is primarily responsible for concepts and designs. She is a member of Werkbund Berlin and of IALD, the International Association of Lighting Designers, and she gives regular lectures on the subject of lighting design. [www.lichtvision.com](http://www.lichtvision.com)