

LEADING LIGHTS

Text: Gemma Balmford

Lighting helps visually connect the brand with consumers, while bringing the retail space to life like a piece of theatre, finds Retail Focus.



From interactive pavilions and multisensory installations to inspiring talks and new product launches, last month's London Design Festival 2018 was teeming with creative and innovative lighting design. At the V&A - the hub of the festival - composer Arvo Pärt and Arup presented an installation entitled 'Memory & Light', inspired by Arvo Pärt's famous words: 'I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colours. Only a prism can divide the colours and make them appear: this prism could be the spirit of the listener'. Meanwhile, in Shoreditch, Universal Design Studio partnered with The Office Group and Speirs + Major to present 'Framework For Exchange', a two-storey temporary pavilion designed to stimulate interaction, collaboration and community through different forms of exchange.

Product launches taking place across the capital during the festival included the third and final instalment of Lee Broom's Observatory lighting collection, and Aquiline, the debut collection from Gestalt Lighting (a new brand conceived under the creative direction of acclaimed designer Christopher Jenner). Nulty Bespoke - a division of lighting design practice Nulty - also used the occasion to showcase a selection of its custom, handcrafted luminaires produced for various high-profile clients over the past year, including a five-star hotel and international department store.

'This year was a better festival than ever before, with shows ranging from Darc room to Design Junction and Decorex,' says Paul Nulty, founder of Nulty Lighting. 'It was very exciting for us to showcase the product range, skillset and service we can provide as Nulty Bespoke.'

Above: Nulty Lighting created an LED lighting scheme for the new eyewear destination at Selfridges.

LIGHTING THE WAY FOR A BETTER EXPERIENCE

Nulty recently worked alongside Alex Cochrane Architects and FDA to create an entirely LED lighting scheme for the new eyewear destination at Selfridges London. The consultancy focused on integrating light into joinery, walls, feature display cases, shelving and mirrors, resulting in a space that's bright and well illuminated with ambient and flattering light levels.

The current trend in retail lighting is clearly towards experience, claims Nulty, but it's about using technology to help bring that experience to life.

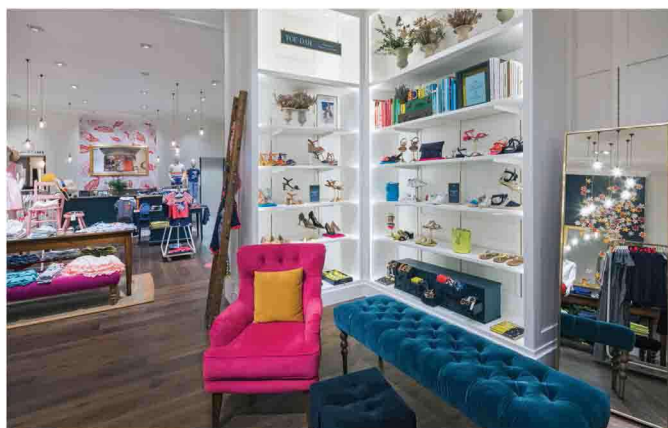
'Consumers continually want more for their money, and I'm not just talking about bigger and better products,' says Nulty. 'What they want is an entire shopping experience. Experiential retailing puts the relationship between the brand and its consumers first and the actual act of selling second. For lighting designers it's about understanding the emotional connection between the brand and its consumers, and then reinforcing it.'

'Lighting helps set the tone, mood and atmosphere of a space, and helps visually connect the brand with the clients, whilst bringing the space to life like a piece of theatre,' continues Nulty. 'It makes the environment become "the world of the brand". Ultimately, if experience is important, then lighting is >

'FOR LIGHTING DESIGNERS IT'S ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BRAND AND ITS CONSUMERS, AND THEN REINFORCING IT'

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Below: Ansong designed and implemented the lighting concept for Boden's Westfield London store.



also important.'

Russell Ford, director at Into Lighting, agrees that lighting plays its part in selling the brand as a whole, rather than just product: 'Retailers are now looking for the lighting to add a bit of theatre to the brand experience, with accent lighting and focus not just on the product displays but the interior as a whole.'

Into worked alongside design agency Brinkworth to provide the lighting design for the ASICS Regent Street store, which opened last year. The scheme needed to be as energy efficient as possible, all LED, and tailored to different product types and displays to help

zone areas and to create a theatrical environment. 'The lighting concept is tailored to suit each of the ASICS brands within the store, further enhancing their own visual identity whilst the overall scheme provides a homogenous lighting design creating theatre and providing the desired ambience throughout,' explains Into Lighting project director, Darren Orrow.

The store includes a large-scale wow factor bespoke kinetic lighting installation which comprises a series of suspended RGB LED tubes on winches, controlled via DMX to enable infinite colour change, chase patterns and a kinetic effect.

THE CHANGING FACE OF FITTING ROOM LIGHTING

Buying decisions in fashion stores are generally made in the fitting rooms, however for a long time, retailers neglected to include this space in the shopping experience. 'There are numerous examples of very creatively designed retail store interiors which are let down by poorly thought out lighting, usually for cost reasons,' says Gary Campbell, partner at dpa lighting consultants. 'One very obvious example of this would be in fitting rooms, where in most stores the lighting consists of a harsh ceiling light centred right over the customer's head, making them feel uncomfortable and appear unflattering in the mirror. And it really doesn't have to be like that with a bit of thought.'

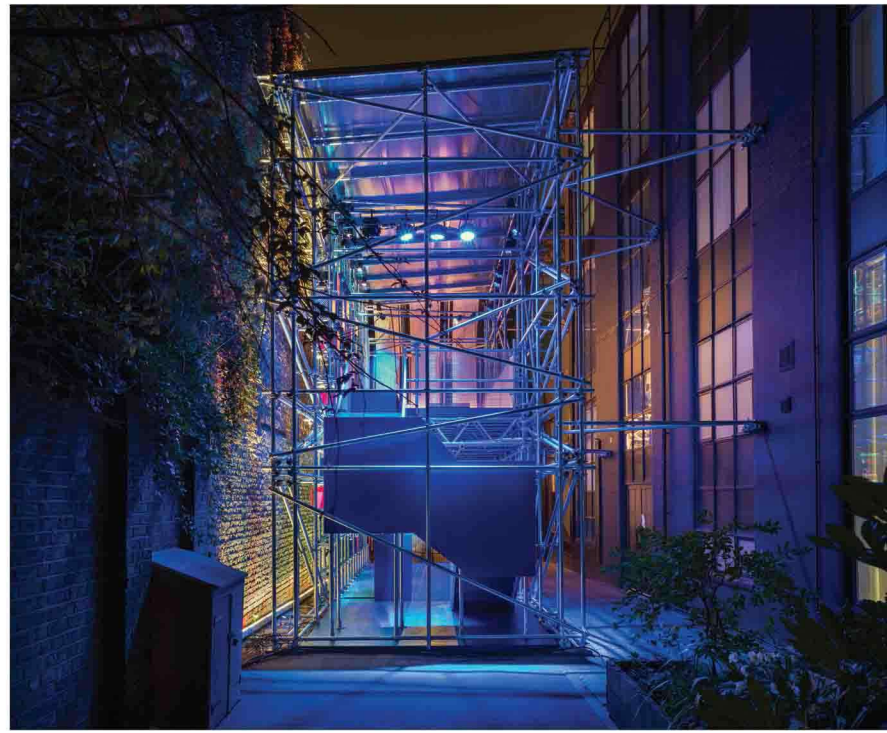
'With 60 per cent of buying decisions made in the fitting room, retailers need to make sure the customer experience is at its best here,' agrees James Bennett, commercial director, retail and hospitality at Signify. 'Lighting in the fitting room can play a huge role, helping provide an accurate and positive impression of how clothing fits and looks.'

Retail lighting specialist Ansong has addressed the problem of shadow-casting downlights in fitting rooms by developing Youzon, a fitting room concept with various light sources that provide a personal stage for consumers. The design features three central lighting modules: lightpanel, bodylight and prooflight. The lightpanel in the ceiling immerses the fitting room in soft and clear basic light, while bodylight provides indirect lighting via one or two reflectors, adding dimension to flat structures. Prooflight is positioned on each side of the mirror at the back, bathing the customer in flattering, indirect light that emphasises garment fit, as well as fabric, pattern, colour and buttons in close up. The number of light modules can be individually defined and the colour of the light can be selected depending on the type of garments.

'Some fashion stores have now realised that the real POS is the fitting room, because it's the place where buying decisions are made,' says Eva Danischus, marketing director at Ansong. 'According to a representative survey commissioned by Ansong, 40 per cent of consumers don't buy products at fashion stores because they don't like the fitting room [while] over 72 per cent of them said that they were frustrated by poor fitting room lighting.'

Ansong designed and implemented the lighting concept for Boden's Westfield London store, which opened in May. The company developed a lighting scheme that emphasises the store's living room atmosphere and harmonises with the fixtures and fittings, as well as providing pleasantly soft lighting in the fitting room area.

With a trend towards energy saving, Nulty has noticed more tuneable LEDs in fitting rooms as well as make-up areas. 'We are using colour changing or tonal change to help tell a story or sell a product, whether that is to make skin tone look better or the human



Top left: Nulty created a lighting solution for Azzedine Alaïa on Bond Street.

Left: Into Lighting worked alongside Brinkworth to provide the lighting design for ASICS, Regent Street.

Above: Universal Design Studio partnered with The Office Group and Speirs + Major for an installation at LDF.

'IF EXPERIENCE IS IMPORTANT, THEN LIGHTING IS ALSO IMPORTANT!'

PAUL NULTY

form more flattering.'

Today, retail is very much about the overall experience and so, if a retailer values the design of their store and how it represents them, it's naive to think they shouldn't have someone looking after the lighting design as well, claims Nulty. 'The most successful retail stores have almost always employed the services of an independent lighting designer. Retailers should be setting budget aside to bring in a lighting specialist who can help create the right experience.' **RF**

LUXLIVE 2018

LuxLive returns to ExCeL in London next month with eight free conference tracks and 20 feature areas. The annual lighting event takes place from 14-15 November and will include a conference zone dedicated to lighting for retail and hospitality. To view the full programme and to register for a free entry badge, visit www.luxlive.co.uk



Above: The new eyewear destination at Selfridges, with lighting design by Nulty.