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STEERING THE COURSE
FOR ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING

LYTEHOUSE

BLOORVIEW KIDS REHAB
TORONTO, ONTARIO

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Design Beacon // Ellen Godson

Lighting in an Evolving World



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SERENDIPITOUSLY “FALL” INTO THE CAREER OF YOUR DREAMS? IF YOU’RE **ELLEN GODSON**, YOU BECOME AN AWARD WINNING LIGHTING DESIGNER. DURING A CAREER THAT SPANS MORE THAN A QUARTER CENTURY, ELLEN HAS LIT UP ROOMS, HALLWAYS AND EXTERIORS RANGING FROM RESTAURANTS TO CHURCHES, BANKS TO HOTELS, GROCERY STORES TO HOSPITALS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.

A senior consultant and Manager with Toronto’s Angus Lighting, Ellen is Lighting Certified by the National Council on Qualifications for the Lighting Professions (NCQLP), served as the Education Chair and is now a Board Manager for the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) Toronto Section. Recently, we had an opportunity to sit down with her and talk about her career and where the future of lighting is headed.

NOW YOU HAVE WON SEVERAL DESIGN AWARDS, OF WHICH ARE YOU MOST PROUD? Again, I’d have to say Bloorview Kids Rehab.

YOU’RE VERY PROACTIVE IN HEALTHCARE LIGHTING DESIGN. HOW HAS THAT INDUSTRY SHIFTED OVER TIME? As designers, I believe we’re becoming more aware of environmental and healthcare issues. SARS was a huge influence on infection control issues. Now, when we discuss healthcare lighting with our clients, circadian rhythms and daylighting become part of our lingo. LEED has also been a huge influencer with energy concerns and the new ASHRE code for watts/m².

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE LIGHTING DESIGN INDUSTRY? Educating clients on evolving technologies. Everyone knows a bit about LED’s, but often not enough. The technology still presents some pitfalls if not implemented correctly or used for the wrong application.

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR PASSION FOR LIGHTING DESIGN? Interestingly, I never woke up one morning and thought, ‘Hey, I want to get involved in lighting design.’ I just applied for a job one day and this is the direction I ended up following. It seems to me that the majority of lighting professionals I know fell into lighting, but once they got involved in the industry, they never left!

“People are becoming very interested in how lighting affects them physically and mentally. I believe this will continue to be the case...”

WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR DESIGN MENTORS? I would say that Ken Loach (Lighting Designer for over 40 years) has been my biggest mentor. His work has influenced my designs and he has always been my greatest source of knowledge.

HOW DO YOU SEE LIGHTING TRANSFORMING THE SCOPE OF YOUR FIELD? ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE RAPID EVOLUTION OF SOLID STATE LIGHTING? Lighting as an industry will always be changing. Even Solid State Lighting will eventually evolve. This is what makes life interesting! It also makes our projects challenging, but the key is not to be afraid of the changes, but to embrace them.

HOW DO YOU SEE DESIGN CHANGING IN THE FUTURE? Hopefully we’ll see more natural daylighting in buildings and owners who consider the people who live and work in their spaces, rather than just dollar signs. I also don’t think the current energy crunch is going away, so a lot of pressure will be placed on lighting manufacturers to come up with even better technology for the future. As I mentioned earlier, lighting will never stop progressing and changing.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE PERSONAL FAVOURITE PROJECTS AND WHY? Number one would be the work we did at Bloorview Kids Rehab. This was the first major project I worked on at HH Angus and the one that has meant the most to me. Everyone really put their heart and soul into the job. Sadly, one of the project’s architects, Chris Klemt, passed away just after the Centre opened, but I feel he left a fantastic legacy for the children with disabilities who use the facility.

IN RECENT YEARS, WE’VE SEEN A HOLISTIC DESIGN SHIFT. HOW DO YOU SEE THIS EVOLVING? People are becoming very interested in how lighting affects them physically and mentally. I believe this will continue to be the case so we need to accept that these issues will have a place in the forefront in our designs.

WHERE DO YOU SEE LIGHTING IN THE FUTURE? Fortunately humans will always need artificial lights to see once the sun has gone down. Personally, I’m very interested to see where organic LED’s will take us and any other new technologies that pop up that we haven’t heard of yet. Who knows, lighting may go to the stars and beyond! It’s a very exciting time to be a lighting designer. //

