

## chapter 3

### **Casting Lights and Shadows on Designed Spaces**

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I see designers as people who are capable of setting the stage for the space we live in. Just like a stage setting, the mood has to be set and the actors/ users of a space should be allowed to contribute to the overall mood of the play. Before we proceed further, let us delve into the aspects of light for theatre. Four controllable qualities of light are the prerequisites for lighting required for stage. The four qualities are Intensity, Colour, Direction, and Movement. Intensity is a light source which can vary from near total darkness to painfully bright, while Colour can play a major role in creating a mood and can be conceived through the use of lighting gels or electronic means. The area from which the light approaches the stage is called Direction. Light can come from below, directly above, or anywhere in between. Each combination of direction has its unique effect on the highlights and shadows produced. The last controllable quality is Movement, which refers to the changing in the lights, whether it be a change in intensity, colour, or direction of origin.

These qualities will influence the four functions of stage lighting which are Mood, Selective Focus, Modeling, and Visibility. These four qualities especially the use of colour in lights can be a major player in creating moods. Visibility is the primary function of stage lighting: making sure the audience can see parts of the stage that the director and/or the lighting designer want them to see. The Modeling function includes creating a realistic view of the world of the play. This is done by strategically placing lights above, below, to the side, in front, and behind the actors. The last function is Selective Focus which is the function of “forcing” the audience to look where it is desired for them to look through the use of high/low intensity and changes in intensity.

Similarly, the five artefacts categorised under the green and design chapter produced by architects, landscape

architects, and engineers have shown a relation in conforming to the use of light especially in creating spaces for people to use. The ‘Felicity of Fractals’ is a study on fractals and the use of lights to emphasise the different shape of fractal patterns. This approach can be compared to the Modeling function whereby lights are strategically placed in the vertical glass jar to project mesmerising reflections of the natural fractals. Intensity found in the gap between the canopy and direction on the source of light can best describe how the artefact ‘Light Gap Forest’ creates a dramatic scene through the canopy of trees. In ‘LightBOX’, the type of light can influence mood through the use of different light intensities. These aspects can be seen in relation to Selective Focus used in stage lighting through the application of high/low intensity. The stage was clearly set to spark interest in the work ‘Light Music’ where the combination of Colour, Movement, and also Selective Focus was clearly featured. The synchronised light pattern is mesmerising and can be seen as a potential hardscape structure in an urban setting. Visibility is clearly the function in the artefact ‘Maze Warriors’. The light is directed with the intention of drawing our attention to a target. This is in a way to give focus on how light can be manipulated as a tool for a game.

The controllable qualities as well as the functions of light for stage are evidently seen in the artefacts exhibited. Lights play a part in creating mood, providing therapy, happiness, added focus, and to heighten curiosity among viewers. The potential of transferring these aspects into spaces for people to use is immense.

To all designers, engineers, scientists, and other professionals working with lights, the stage is set and let the show begin!