

“Our lighting is all about creating the perception of well-being”

Peter Andres

Hamburg, Germany

“Why my fascination with light? That’s difficult to explain,” says Peter Andres, founder of Berantende Ingenieure für Lichtplanung in Hamburg. “If you are walking around, you see daylight. If I go into a room, I first automatically check and feel the atmosphere in my inner brain, but then, within two seconds, I try to explain it: what materials are used, what kind of light, what causes the perception I have?”

And so I learn. I learn from morning to evening in every single room, in every situation. It never stops. I am constantly learning new things, new atmospheres, new perceptions.”



Peter Andres

Education
Engineer

Design experience
30 years

Lighting association
LITG, PLDA

Field of work
Indoor and outdoor projects

Projects discussed
Phaeno Science Centre Museum,
Wolfsburg, Germany (2009),
Pier Bar, Hamburg airport,
Germany (2008),
Pfalzgrafenstein Kaub castle,
Rhine river, Germany (2009)

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Model of the Pier Bar, Hamburg airport, Germany

Did you study lighting design?

“I studied electro-technology in Innsbruck and my teacher there taught me about lighting technology, not design. I became involved in the lighting design for a church in New Zealand. I had the idea of illuminating the roof of the church – the shape was diametric, a very special form. This was the beginning of my interest in lighting design. That was back in 1974. My study was all about calculating lux, calculating the area of a street or street systems. I then worked with Christian Bartenbach for six years – incidentally, he had also studied with the same teacher as me in Innsbruck – and then I moved to a company producing special lighting fixtures. In January 1986, I started my own lighting practice. I think from then on it was largely self-instruction.”

How would you describe your approach to lighting, your style?

“Our lighting design is all about well-being. Creating the perception of well-being for each person. Regardless of the project. But our aim is always the same: to create an atmosphere which engenders well-being. We focus on four areas in our work: innovation, functionality, harmony and integration. And through this focus, to give people a sense of well-being. It is not our intention to make dramatic statements that can be seen 300 metres

away. We are not artists, we are lighting designers. The techniques we use for bringing light into a room are different, but there is still that necessity for well-being. People need to feel this in a room as well. You know the typical Italian ice bar? It’s very cool, and that is perfect at midday, but in the evening it’s too cold. Or a restaurant, which has an intimate, romantic atmosphere during the evening, but is not inviting during the day, unless you can sit next to the window. Spectrum and correct lights are the basics for our work.”

Can you explain that?

“Let us take an example: we have been asked to redesign the lighting of the Phaeno in Wolfsburg. Originally the area was illuminated with blue fluorescent lamps and this, in combination with the concrete and asphalt made it impossible to create the right atmosphere. We have created a new design, using the existing openings in the ceiling.

We did a daylight investigation. We can see the daylight from the façade to the inner area.

There you have only 10% daylight factor and in the centre even farther away less than 1%. Knowing this is important to get the right design for the artificial light compare to daylight. We have created a transition from very diffuse light, to slightly more



Pfalzgrafenstein Kaub castle, Rhine river, Germany

direct light, to even more direct light, and finally to absolute direct light. If we are correct, I am thinking about sunshine and good weather; alternatively, I’m thinking about Germany and rainy days and clouds.”

And how does this help create well-being?

“We try to create an environment where people feel comfortable without thinking about why. It gives a better feeling. Light is not the most important thing that you see. The most important part is the people. If you see people in a diffused light, then the lighting is the most important thing. Now that you have more light, your skin looks a little fresher, and thanks to people moving around, this creates a new atmosphere. The people become the most important thing that you see. It’s a bit like sunshine. Not too much, but somehow more correct, because of the associations with sunshine. And in the evening, we use a different, warmer light. More low level. I believe that warm lights are better, more human in the evening, but during the day I prefer white light. We adopt the same approach in airports. In daylight you have a lot of light in airports, so if you need, for example, to get a good perception of say fruit in a restaurant, you need a lot of artificial light to counteract the light from outside. But in the evening, we can switch off the white light and switch on the warm, lower level light. It happens automatically. It’s almost as if the sun is going down.”

When you handle exterior projects, is well-being still your focus?

“Certainly. But it is harder to design atmosphere to engender well-being outside. It’s all about the temperature of the light, of not having glare from the light, the feeling of security, of not being afraid. I suppose it is... romantic.

“We did the lighting for a small castle in the middle of the Rhine. We created a very warm and romantic light. It was my immediate reaction when I first saw the castle – that it needed that type of light. There is a curve in the street and then you see the castle, like a ship in the middle of the Rhine. It was very beautiful. And then I thought, if this building were a sensitive person, it would be wrong to use hard light. We built a model so that we could check our lighting design in simulation. The authorities stipulated that they did not wish the technical system to be visible. We use a beam system embedded in the rocks, and we can then adjust the distance to the surfaces being illuminated to create different types of light. The result highlights the difference between harder direct light and softer, cosier, more romantic reflected light from the stone surfaces and from the trees. It is romantic. “And it creates, I am convinced, the feeling of well-being that is a signature of our style.”