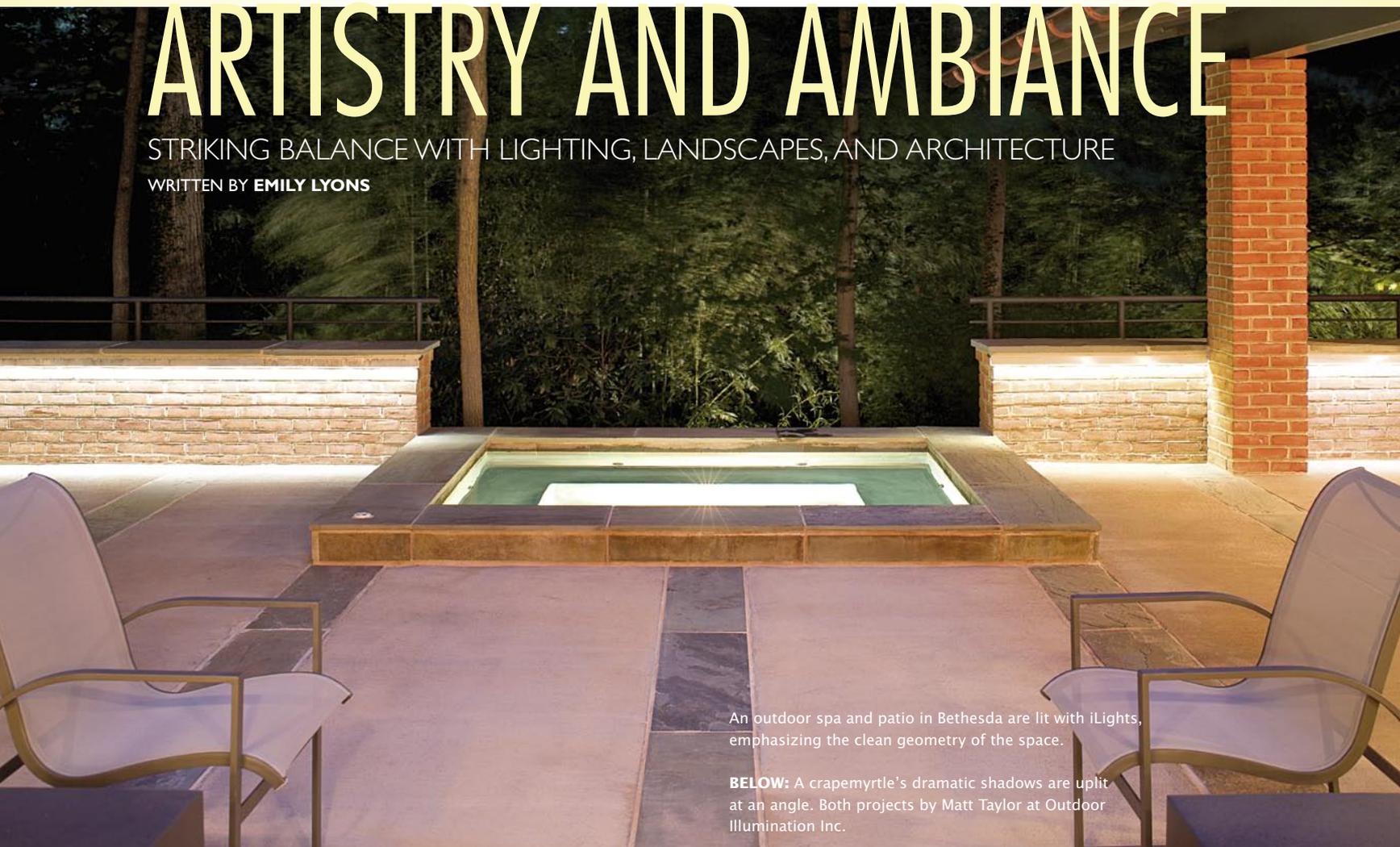


# ARTISTRY AND AMBIANCE

STRIKING BALANCE WITH LIGHTING, LANDSCAPES, AND ARCHITECTURE

WRITTEN BY EMILY LYONS

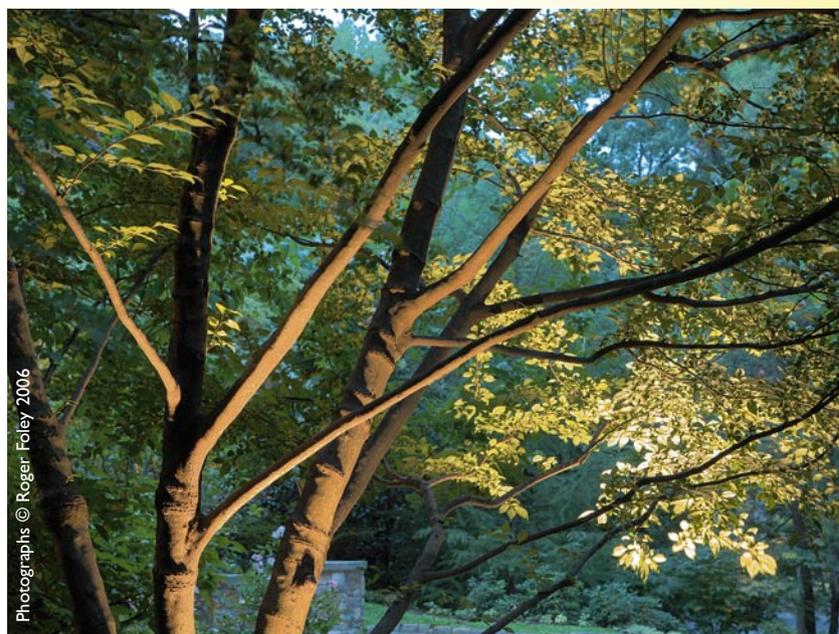


An outdoor spa and patio in Bethesda are lit with iLights, emphasizing the clean geometry of the space.

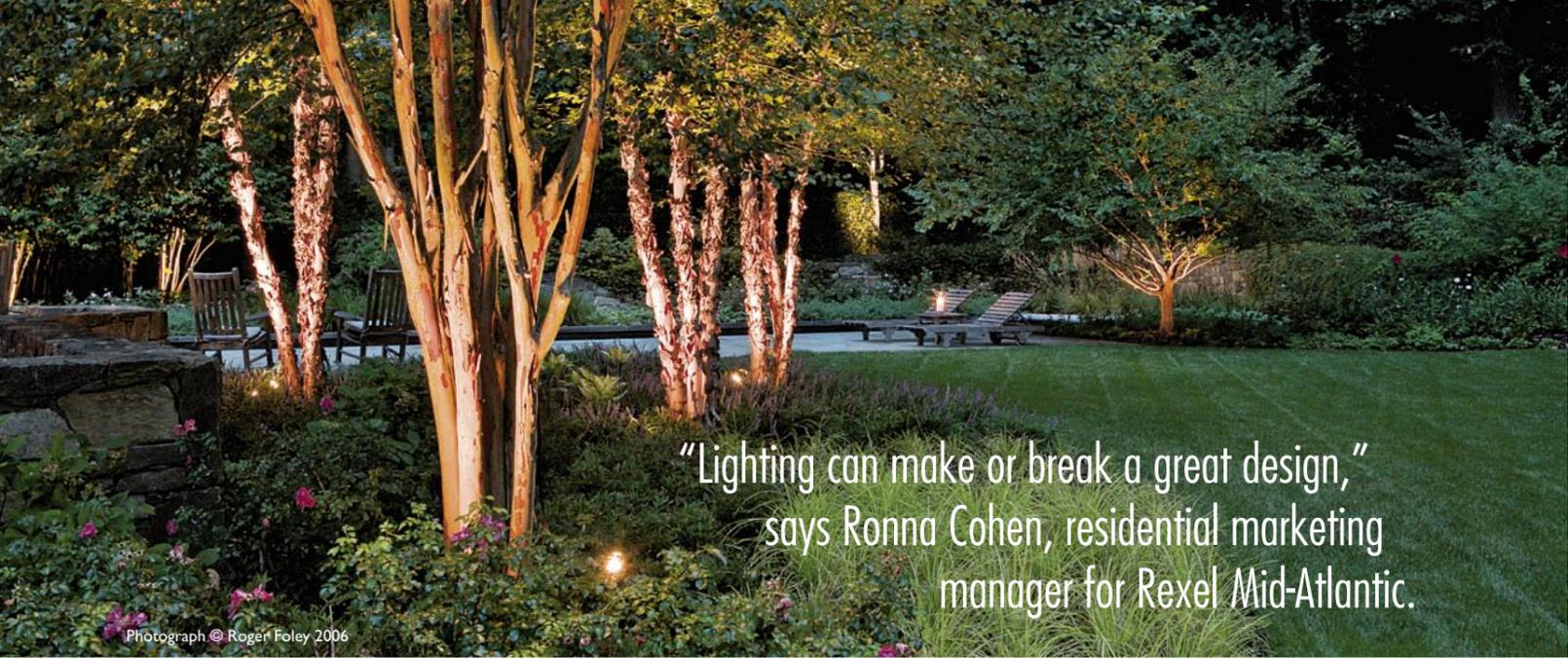
**BELOW:** A crapemyrtle's dramatic shadows are uplit at an angle. Both projects by Matt Taylor at Outdoor Illumination Inc.

It's twilight, and the river birches and crapemyrtles are taking on a subtle, warm glow. The Bethesda property is landscaped beautifully and the lighting is well-concealed. It doesn't feel like a production; it's not ornate. It just feels right.

One of the foremost concepts in both indoor and outdoor lighting design is that of concealment. People don't want to see bulbs and glare. It should seem as if the light in a space is somehow naturally emitted from shelves, partitions, water features, landscape elements, and recesses in ceilings – as if there's no wiring and the things just glow by themselves. As technology improves and awareness of energy consumption increases, we're more sensitive to spaces that are over-lit, and achieving an understated sort of brilliance is something that can often be done easily and cost-effectively with a bit of expertise and forethought.



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“Lighting can make or break a great design,” says Ronna Cohen, residential marketing manager for Rexel Mid-Atlantic.

Photograph © Roger Foley 2006

**The Possibilities**

The newest options in lighting are driven by two factors: technology and form. “LED technology is everywhere,” says Mark Oxley, president of Outdoor Illumination Inc. LEDs (light-emitting diodes) are popular for their very concentrated output of light that requires little energy to produce. They are versatile, powerful, and the color of the light is well-controlled.

Concealed strip lighting is a way to enhance edges, to showcase the forms within the space. Matt Taylor, senior designer for Outdoor Illumination Inc., used iLights along the edges of the patio and outdoor spa of the Bethesda home shown on the previous page, emphasizing the clean geometry in a soft, effective way.

The cutting edge of lighting design is occupied primarily by Italian companies such as Artemide, SystemaLux, and Viabizzuno, and simple forms for architectural lighting are most desirable, says Quinn Murph of Illuminations Inc. in Georgetown.



Photograph by Emily Lyons

**The Value**

“Lighting can make or break a great design,” says Ronna Cohen, residential marketing manager for Rexel Mid-Atlantic. “Poor lighting can destroy even the best of efforts.” People often see lighting design as an added expense without seeing its complete value. Average lighting in a beautiful home is a missed opportunity. People are taking a sincere interest in the designs and finishes in their homes, but because builders don’t often press the issue of lighting design, many homeowners don’t contemplate it. “A lot of people say, ‘oh, I wish I’d known that I could do this,’ ” says Jane Blumberg, a lighting designer for Rexel’s Lighting Design Center in Rockville.

Rather than having track lighting that shoots a downward column in the center of a room, an angled light might be used to reflect light onto a wall, serving the dual purpose of highlighting the architecture and bringing in soft light. Rather than flatly uplighting every tree, designers are strategically placing angled lights that showcase the most beautiful lines of select trees. As Taylor says, you shouldn’t notice the light source; just its effect.

**The Exterior**

Particularly in winter, when trees are skeletal and you can see their structure clearly, landscape lighting can be dramatic. With outdoor lighting, the idea is to enhance sculptural elements of the landscape as well as the lines of the home’s outer shell. The key, says Pat Harder, president of Outdoor Lighting Perspectives, is to “redirect the light” so that the source is concealed and the landscape retains the appearance of depth at night. Multiple lights will often be used to achieve a three-dimensional effect. Taylor agrees, saying he prefers to start small, with just a few lit areas. He can then determine where depth must be added, where “the voids are.”

**ABOVE:** River birches and crapemyrtles are aglow in a Bethesda backyard. Lighting design by Matt Taylor at Outdoor Illumination Inc.

**LEFT:** Quinn Murph of Illuminations Inc. loves this fixture’s exquisite form and the fact that it’s nearly invisible when not lit. The fixture is Surf by Artemide.



1



3



4



2



5

**The Interior**

Indoor lighting is more task-oriented than outdoor lighting. It’s important to consider how you and your family spend the bulk of your time, what makes your home unique, and what moods you want to be able to create. Versatility and layering is important in the design, whether achieved with dimmers, multiple sources, natural light, or indirect light that reflects from surfaces.

In both contemporary and traditional homes, recessed lighting is popular, and the trend is toward a square-shaped recess rather than a circle, because most rooms are squarish and it works better with the design. Many different edges are available, from a completely clean edge to something more embellished.

“Flexibility is key,” says Debra Gilmore, principal of Gilmore Light in Rockville. She adds that manufacturers are offering plenty of electronic living systems these days. People are finding their comfort levels with regard to technology, and they’re willing to accept more options, even if it means a little bit of initial confusion.

Consider the feeling you want from each indoor space. In areas where people are looking at each other, says Gilmore, a softer quality of light will minimize the shadows on people’s faces. Consider what “temperature” you’d like your home to have (cooler or warmer) and how much variance you expect to need. Scott M. Watson, principal of Scott M. Watson Incorporated, says he’ll ask clients what their furniture plans are, and what their favorite pieces and spaces in the home are (or are expected to be).

**FROM LEFT:** 1 Enchanted Oaks Three Light Pendant with Glass by Tracy Porter, 2 Kyoto Table Lamp by Deirdre Jordan for Boyd Lighting Company, 3 Globe Pendant by Doyle Crosby for Boyd Lighting Company, 4 A Hinckley chandelier available at Burgess Lighting & Distributing Inc. and 5 Altamont Wall Sconce by Darryl Carter for The Urban Electric Company.

“We’re beginning to rethink the traditional crystal chandelier,” says Debra Gilmore, principal of Gilmore Light.



Da Vinci with clear crystal pendants by Schonbek.

BELOW: Refrax in Jaguar crystal by Schonbek.



## The Future

In 20 years of lighting design, Watson says the industry has seen many changes. Light fixtures are smaller now. Energy conservation is a relatively new factor in design. Technology is improving the look and quality of fluorescent bulbs, and they will likely be featured more prominently in the future as new ways of manipulating light

are invented. Gilmore says she’s seeing people experiment indoors with fixtures made of crystal. “We’re beginning to rethink the traditional crystal chandelier,” she says.

At Illuminations Inc., which favors the minimalist look, a Philippe Starck hanging fixture and some simple geometric wall pieces that all but disappear into their surfaces are some of Murph’s personal favorites.

Whatever style, effect, mood, or temperature you prefer, a little bit of thought and time can make a world of difference in the relationship between lighting, landscaping, and architecture. Planning lighting from the start is essential, Murph says, so that each space may have the magic it deserves. **ws**

### RESOURCES

- **Boyd Lighting Company**  
415.778.4300  
boydlighting.com
- **Burgess Lighting & Distributing Inc.**  
703.385.6660  
burgesslighting.com
- **Gilmore Light**  
301.309.8210  
gilmorelight.com
- **Illuminations Inc.**  
202.783.4888  
illuminc.com
- **Outdoor Illumination Inc.**  
888.336.4999  
outdoorillumination.com
- **Outdoor Lighting Perspectives**  
703.929.1726  
outdoorlights.com
- **Rexel Lighting Design Center**  
301.762.8100  
rexelusa.com
- **Schonbek**  
518.563.7500  
schonbek.com
- **Scott M. Watson Incorporated**  
301.869.8800
- **The Urban Electric Company**  
843.723.8140  
urbanelectricco.com