

Lighting up our ways

Dar Tal-Providenza
Designed by Galea&Galea Architects
Lighting by Elektra



Archetype: What is the most important thing in lighting?

Gabriella Cuschieri: The light effect itself and not so much the fitting, unless it's just for decoration. Application comes first then the form. It's always a big challenge to get into the architect's design and to be able to highlight the best features and hide the less attractive ones. What is great in today's world is that architects, lighting artists and others involved in the design of buildings work with people like us so that the lighting is devised at planning stage. This makes it all better and easier.

Without light, our world would still be in the shadow of the dark ages. Light, whether natural or artificial, makes everything more interesting. Buildings, homes and artefacts are enhanced by Quality lighting, an art based on scientific and objective qualities. **Archetype** steps into the light with lighting artist **Gabriella Cuschieri**, who owns and runs Elektra and is highly involved in designing light solutions for homes, commercial outlets and projects and also teaches lighting techniques and basics.

A: Lighting is an art. How can it fuse with art itself?

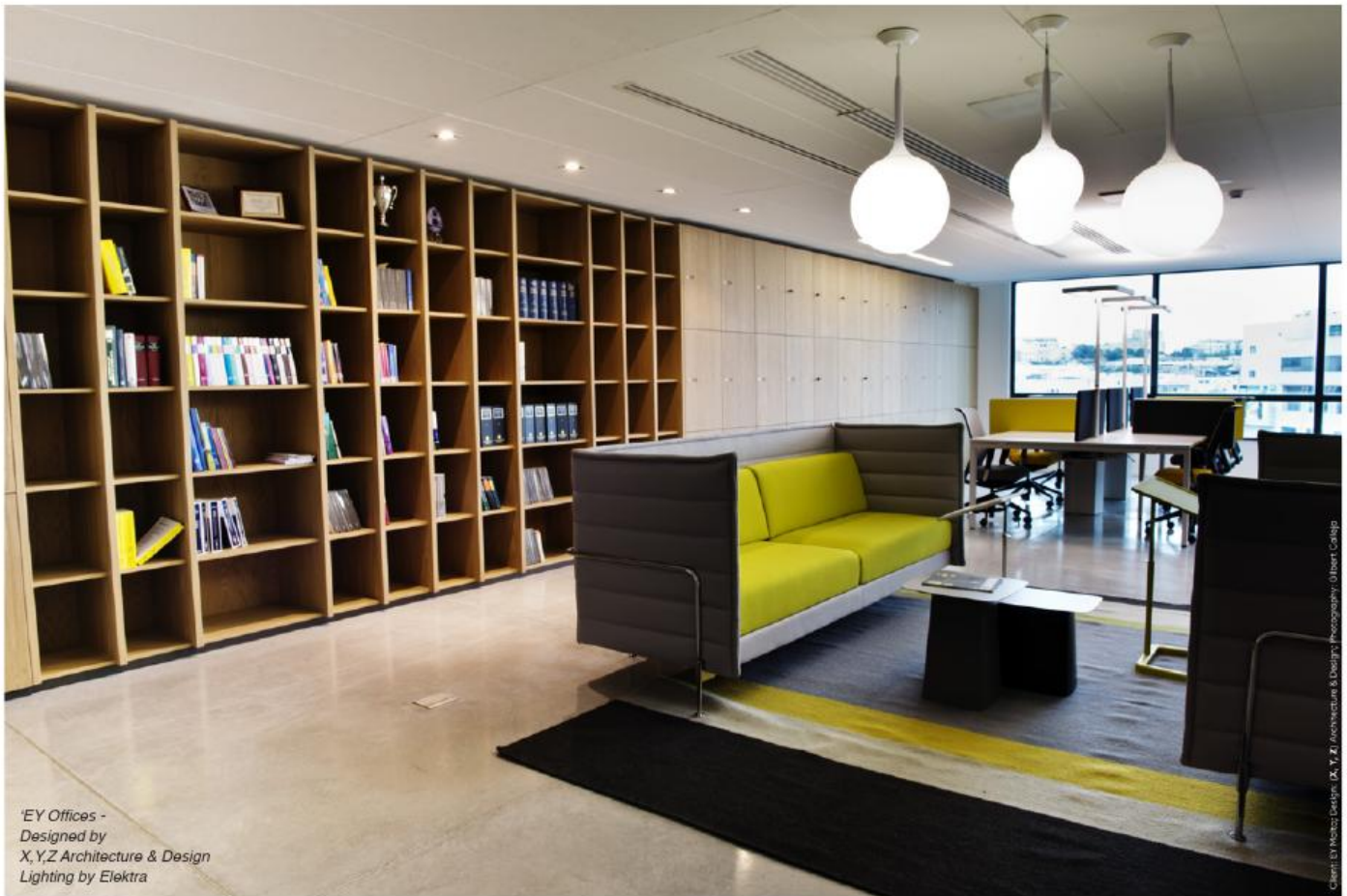
GC: Everything can be improved by quality lighting. Colour, texture and luminance, which can be also be controlled, can help make objects and buildings look better. By seeing the redeeming features and emphasising them, lighting seems to create new aspects. Something drab or unremarkable can be brought back to life while buildings can also be given a new perspective. Consider space, shadow and application in order to create a fluid design.

A: Even with old buildings you can have new lighting and give the buildings new life?

GC: I believe so. All lighting experts work towards that goal: to regenerate buildings, help breathe new life into them and embellish

them. We work hand in hand with other experts – including architects, engineers and interior designers – to achieve this. We try to accentuate the beauty of buildings in all possible ways while avoiding damage at all costs. I don't believe lighting, or for that matter anything, should damage buildings to make them look better.

In old buildings the lighting must obviously be installed after planning stage, unlike a new project which can have the lighting fitted in and devised at planning stage. This can be tricky or more challenging. We treat each project individually and consult experts whenever we need.



'EY Offices -
Designed by
X,Y,Z Architecture & Design
Lighting by Elektra

Client: EY; Interior Design: X, Y, Z Architecture & Design; Photography: Robert Colquhoun

A: How essential is light in our life?

GC: Light is seen by many as a key tool for life improvement. From a biological aspect, research shows that light exposure affects us all. We might not realise this but the way light is distributed or shaded affects our moods and productivity. A person is likely to remain longer in a space that feels safer and is lit comfortably. Light needs to speak to our senses and it has to be seen as enhancing the aesthetics around us.

A: Besides the aesthetic element, are there other issues you need to keep in mind when planning any lighting strategy?

GC: The obvious issue is always the running costs and maintenance after the lighting is installed correctly. What you plan and put into practice needs to be sustainable and well thought out so that long-term maintenance can be done easily and additional costs eliminated.

Cleaning is also an important factor. As little power as possible should be used along with gradual brightness and dimming to avoid

over-lighting at the wrong time. But the main thing to keep in mind is that light pollution should be kept to a minimum. There are ways – such as avoiding light being directed upwards wherever possible – to make its impact less intrusive

A: Is there enough general awareness about lighting and do architects and interior designers always give good advice? Also, how essential is it for lighting experts to be involved at planning stage?

GC: We are generally involved at planning stage. Architects today involve us more and the end-results are so much better for the client as well as for the designers and architects themselves, and even more economical. When we are involved at the planning stage, everything is so much easier. Even to suggest the best in environmentally-friendly and quality products, being involved at planning stage gives us great advantages, creating eco buildings.

A: Bastions, palaces and historic buildings look wonderful when lit up. Is Malta investing more in effective lighting design?

GC: Except on the odd occasion, on the whole we are in the right lighting direction. There is more subtlety in lighting, more than just a look-at-me attitude. Lighting as an art takes time to believe in, but once you do there is or should be no turning back. And the country has made great strides. We take more pride in how we light up big and small projects. On a national level, I am very happy although, as with everything, more can be done and more can be learnt.

At Elektra we try to do all this and more as we learn more and assist all who use our services to create a feel good factor and enjoy their surroundings in better-lit ways.