

Products of the imagination

Jill Entwistle talks to luminaire luminary David Morgan



David Morgan is something of an eminence grise in luminaire design. He is the man behind countless classic products over the years, including the iF award-winning Sunflood halogen floodlight for Thorn Lighting and Holophane's Teralux bollard.

If they seem rather workaday examples, he also collaborated with Kreon founder and famed eccentric Jan van Lierde to design the Index series of architectural wall lights, striking in their geometric simplicity.

Many British manufacturers have a tendency to stereotype designers as somewhat precious beings, but David Morgan is anything but. Generally speaking, he says, 'the most satisfying designs have an understated elegance, something which is memorable, but discreet.'

A graduate in physics from London University and an M Des from the Royal College of Art, Morgan began his career with Thorn in 1976, moving on to work with FM Design in London before founding his own company, David Morgan Associates, in 1980. He has a core team of four people, calling on a network of freelance

talent according to the scale of the project.

His latest luminaire, a projector flood for Louis Poulsen, with whom he has worked for more than a decade, perfectly sums up his approach. A shape only achievable using CAD, a cylinder is tapered to the rear to produce an unusual, but unpretentious profile. For 20W/35W/70W and 70W/150W ceramic metal halide lamps respectively, the SP12 and SP14 have been designed as high-performance exterior fittings.

In addition to a variable focus facility on the larger version, the projectors have a range of carefully considered features that help both with installation, discreet mounting and adjustment.

To describe David Morgan as a designer, however, is something of an understatement and underestimates the rigorousness of the product development process.

Each new project begins with intensive research into existing products, brand identities, marketing and technical data, as well as human and environmental requirements. The design process itself moves from brainstorming to CAD and non-working models, at which point user research will be carried

out. 'The design process is based on continuous consumer and technical testing during product development,' says Morgan.

Then comes engineering development (including final production costing) and testing and certification (working with independent test houses). DMA also offers a project management service which includes tooling supervision and on-site liaison.

Morgan is reluctant to broach the hoary topic of UK companies' deficiencies when it comes to design. 'I don't want to make cheap statements about manufacturers and design,' he says. However, he clearly thinks that many companies are missing a trick.

'Although there is an enormous amount of creativity here, there has been a failure of imagination on the part of UK industry. There's a hesitancy about design in this country. It's seen as being too much of a definite statement. It's symptomatic of that relaxed, laissez-faire English culture.'

And it doesn't have to be about the more overt design statement that the Italians are famous for, he maintains. Designplan, with whom he has 'a very nice relationship', is a classic example.



Facing page, from left: David Morgan; the Calisto fitting for Designplan; Holophane's Teralux bollard. This page, clockwise from left: the SP14 for Louis Poulsen; from the Kreon Index series; the Biobrite Sunrise alarm clock (with sunrise and sunset lighting effects); Thorn Lighting's Sunflood

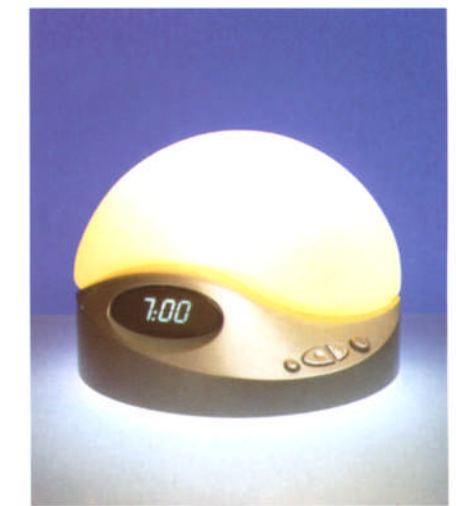
'Designplan is not seen as being design-led, but we've nevertheless created products which are beginning to sell into the architectural lighting community.'

So far, DMA has concentrated more on business with manufacturers but has worked with specifiers on customised projects. Morgan likes the idea of longevity that a catalogue product has, to say nothing of the royalties which a longer-term project yields.

He slightly sidesteps the question of what he feels is the best product he has ever created, with the reply that it is usually the last one. So for now, it is the Louis Poulsen projector. He does voice a preference for category of product, however.

'I've probably had a crack at just about every type of product. We don't do too many downlights because they're not the most exciting thing. Where I'm most happy is with products that you can pick up and play with. So I don't really get involved with recessed fittings - there has to be some kind of visual element' ●

See next issue for a review of the Louis Poulsen SP12 and SP14 projector flood



Awards

Braun Prize, iF award, Philips PL Lighting competition, British Design in Japan Award, Light Show Innovation Award, American Business Designers Award, Light magazine product design award

DMA clients

Alto, Belfer Lighting, Cooper Lighting, Daiko Japan, Designplan Lighting, Endo Japan, Holophane, Kreon, Lightolier, Louis Poulsen, Matsushita Electric Works (Panasonic), Philips Lighting, Schreder, Thorn Lighting, Thorlux