

Layers of lighting key to beauty, expert says

Decide function before choosing fixtures for task or display, C Lighting owner advises.

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For the Journal-Constitution
Monday, April 20, 2009

If you're looking for a way to spruce up your home without the expense of serious renovations, consider lighting. Choosing the right lighting for your home can be a challenge. One basic problem is that people often choose fixtures for how they look instead of how they function.

Yaacov Golan, a lighting designer and owner of C Lighting in Buckhead, says he often hears customers complaining that they have many fixtures but little light. The problem is they've given little thought to what they need light for in their homes.

"What function does it fill," Golan says of home lighting, "and what tools do I need to fill that function?"

Answer those questions, he thinks, and you'll have a good idea of what sorts of fixtures you'll need to properly light your home.

Then you're ready to start thinking about layers of light, a design technique that Golan says is the key to beautiful and functional lighting.

Here are some tips he offers that you might consider if your house is dim and you're thinking of brightening things up.

General lighting

In his own words: "During the day, nature gives us light in all directions. Now how do we duplicate that indoors?"

The goal: Finding fixtures that diffuse light in all directions.

What works: Ceiling fixtures, lamps or cove lighting — hidden fixtures that bounce light off ceilings and walls.

What doesn't work: Recessed fixtures.

Task lighting

In his own words: "If you have a space with all dark colors, no matter how much you light it, it will still feel dark.

The goal: To brighten up areas where you spend lots of time and do specific tasks — kitchen island, work desk, table in breakfast room.

What works: Lamps, down lights, directional lighting.

What doesn't work: Fixtures that provide soft, diffused light.

Display lighting

In his own words: "Each layer should be controlled separately."

The goal: To highlight paintings, sculpture and other architectural elements.

What works: Track lighting and rail systems.

What doesn't work: Lamps providing soft light filled with shadows.

TIPS FROM YAACOV GOLAN

> Decorative lighting: Think of table lamps and other such fixtures as pieces of art, a reflection of your taste and style.

> High and low: A good dimming system, one of the biggest trends in home lighting today, can create dramatic, even theatrical effects in your home.

> Day and night: Don't forget about your windows. During the day you'll need to find a way to cool them down — sheer curtains offer one solution — and diffuse natural light from outside. And at night, windows become large black holes in your interior. You might consider landscaping lights to brighten the view.

> Plan ahead: Figure out your needs before you begin any work. It's much easier to take care of problems at the beginning of a project instead of fixing things when you'll nearly finished.

> Flat vs. glossy: Consider using lighter colors and a flat wall paint when painting a room. Glossy surfaces are not good at diffusing light and generally cause hot spots and glare.