



Oversized pendant lighting from Robinson Lighting & Bath.

# You Light Up My Life

The newest technology and hottest trends in lighting right now

by STACEY MCLACHLAN

**W**hether you're an architect, designer, builder or homeowner, one thing is clear when you walk into a room: lighting completes a space. It sets a mood and tone for a room, and, of course, helps you actually see what you're doing. So while lights may sometimes get categorized as a decor accessory or an afterthought, in reality, they can make or break the look and feel of a room.

It's no wonder that the lighting industry is constantly researching and developing new technologies to improve control and effectiveness, that the interior design world thoughtfully considers the impact of shape and finish, and that manufacturers are improving energy efficiency at lightning speed. With light products developing at such a rapid rate, next year is shaping up to be a truly illuminating year.

Though function is obviously key when it comes to picking the right light for a space, homeowners are looking for pieces that will make a statement about their personal style. And when it comes to the trending designs of lamps, pendant lights, chandeliers and sconces, it's lighting retailers who have their fingers on the pulse.

"Whether it be designers or homeowners or architects, everybody kind of wants the latest and the greatest," says Jim Ormshaw, manager at Robinson Lighting & Bath. "There are always the same requests from all the different people in the field. Builders always say to us, 'What's new? What trends are there right now? What finishes?' So we try and provide them with that information." This year, that means going big with pendant lights, embracing multi-finish designs and looking to vintage designs for inspiration.

Oversized pendants for hanging over the kitchen islands have been hot in the past, and remain a popular look for the future – and sometimes that even means multiples clustered together. "People are looking to do two and three oversized pendants, whereas in years previous they opted for mid-sized pendants," says Ormshaw. "That's one of the trends that everyone seems to be going to." Finishes that mix-and-match various metals and colours in one piece are another on-trend option for kitchen designs right now. "The fixture may be black but it's going to have either polished brass or chrome accents. It's two-toned or three-toned, where you'd have a polish brass fixture and it might have a nickel trim on it or something."

The vintage-style lightbulbs that have been popping up everywhere are still going strong for 2017 and 2018, says Ormshaw. "Now they're coming out with multi-sizes. You can get them in 12 and 15 inches, instead of the previous standard of four inches." It's a serious trend for bars and restaurants, where many establishments will hang multiple bulbs throughout, but homeowners and other commercial spaces can get on board with this look easily.

There are a variety of overall interior design trends that are heavily influencing the lighting world, says Brittany Rudder, showroom manager for Ocean Pacific Lighting. "Another strong trend is a more modern style with clean lines and a slightly more minimalist look." She also points to a decade with more of a maximalist style as another direction lighting designs have gone: "The 70's have also had a definite influence in the design of fixtures in the last year, too."



Vintage lightbulbs from Robinson Lighting & Bath.



Recessed lighting from Ocean Pacific Lighting.

Even the most commonly used fixtures are being reinvented and reimagined for the specific uses of today's consumer. With a continued trend towards blending indoor and outdoor spaces, suppliers and manufacturers are starting to focus on fixtures that feature interior stylings, but are designed to withstand outdoor conditions. That means glamorous fixtures on patios that are wired to handle damp conditions, wind and rain.

The ever-ubiquitous recessed lighting is even getting a chance for a fresh look. Recessed lighting designs have come a long way in recent years, explains Rudder: "There have been new developments with recessed lighting becoming more decorative instead of just purely functional."

Vintage-inspired warm metallic finishes are coming back in to add a hit of glamour or industrial cool to spaces big and small. You'll see the market full of copper and brass, "and lots of it," says Ormshaw. "It was trendy years ago, and everybody got rid of them because they hated them, but now they're back." Gold is another metal that's making a comeback right now, in lighting fixtures as well as hardware and plumbing. "It's done in a more tasteful way this time around," says Rudder.

Metals aren't the only finish trending right now. The wood look that's taking over kitchens has made its way into the world of light fixtures, too. At Robinson Lighting & Bath there are now multiple options for wood-finished lights. This look finds its roots in Europe, suggests Ormshaw. "Of course with the Internet, where everybody's finding trends online, we have to stay up-to-date with what's in demand. They're seeing stuff from overseas."

Whatever the fixture design, it's all about those LED bulbs. "They're here to stay. Everybody wants it; most manufacturers are coming out with LED; we sell a ton of it. Everyone wants to save energy," says Ormshaw. And with rebate programs

(depending on what province you live in) it's easy to see why the technology is increasing in popularity. "Current trends and new technologies always play a part in the decision making process," says Rudder. "Since LED is also the most energy efficient choice the majority of our customers are using it more and more."

Improved technologies around LED and supporting components mean that bulbs are continuing to grow in efficiency. But for Jonathan Labbee, executive VP of SACO Technologies, it's the quality of light that LEDs are now able to achieve that's the real advancement. "In the past, everyone was working to get more lumens out of the LED chips," he explains. "However, now that we are at a point where efficiency versus brightness is acceptable, high CRI and colour rendition is really where the focus is for the near future."

As a frequent advisor on efficiency for projects, Martino Fanfani, branch manager at Williams Engineering, is very familiar with today's top technological advancements, and knows that lighting is a key element in creating a sustainable building. "There's a lot of technology available to help with that process. The way the technology works has changed a bit over the years," says Fanfani. "Here in B.C., there's a big focus lately on building sustainable large-scale buildings. Builders before focused on efficient mechanical and electrical aspects, whereas now they pay attention to the building envelope itself. There's a better balance between the different components of the building system."

For commercial projects, it's often the cost-savings that are more important than design. "Definitely the economic factor is always a driver," says Fanfani. "It's a very competitive market, especially the location where we are. The results of the final outcome, in regards to the resources that are taken, are something that we strive to perfect." Luckily, producing LED lights are cheaper than ever and production costs will only get lower as time goes on, so more often, these energy efficient lights will become the choice for big builders.

#### GROUND CONTROL

Standard switches and dimmers are increasingly being traded in for more high-tech control solutions, for residential use and beyond. For some homeowners, that may mean using smartphone apps to activate and control lighting systems (and even other functions of the home). SACO Technologies, which is focused on commercial and specialized architectural use, recently updated its award-winning Shockwave line to add a new Switch app to allow full control of lighting and media elements. "The software is very intuitive and offers interactivity with a variety of feeds and sensors," explains Labbee. "The addition of Switch is part of our continued mission to make innovative lighting and media products accessible to a larger part of the professional market."

For SACO, it's all about education. The more designers know about the possibilities of control systems, the more they'll be perpetuated into new builds and inspire more questions and creativity. "As we continue to educate architects on new methodologies and possibilities, the architectural community hungers for innovation and solutions that are well integrated within and on their structures," says Labbee. "I think that technology has evolved to a point where there is no longer an excuse to have to compromise in order to achieve a result. Products and solutions that offer the flexibility to easily integrate is key to the modern architect."

Between exciting new design options, smart control systems and an ever-increasing access to energy-efficient products, it's easy to see that the lighting industry is well on its way to lighting up the future of residential design and architecture alike. **A**



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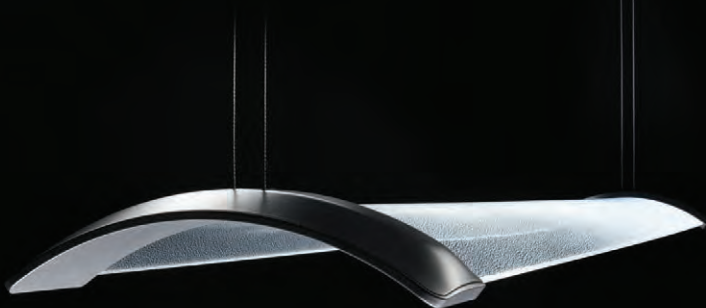
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