



LIGHTING CAN TRANSFORM AN ENVIRONMENT DRAMATICALLY. ABSOLUTE ACTION'S
EMMA DAWSON-TARR ENLIGHTENS US AS TO THE POTENTIAL OF FIBRE OPTIC LIGHTING.

LIGHTING THE WAY

As many a designer will know, lighting can transform an interior from a bland, lifeless environment to one which sparkles with animation, colour and excitement. Perhaps less well known are the abilities of the newer technology of fibre optic lighting to enhance these effects still further, although increasing numbers of specifiers are beginning to understand and use this form of lighting on their projects.

So what has fibre optic lighting to offer in the leisure environment? Energy saving lighting is now a pre-requisite and fibre optic lighting satisfies this probably more than most – for instance, as many as fifteen separate light outputs can be run from a single 150w lamp projector. The light outputs themselves are completely cool to the touch, as the light is transmitted along fibre optic cables some distance away from the projectors. This means that the light is free of electricity and thus completely safe, allowing the system to be used even in wet leisure environments such as bathrooms, swimming pools and spas. And depending upon the application, some light output fittings can be miniaturised down to a mere 25mm diameter making the systems almost unobtrusive, yet still with the right lighting performance. With light outputs remote from the light source projectors, maintenance is greatly simplified with lamp changing only taking place in a handful of locations, when necessary.

With such a perfect lighting solution available, you may be tempted to ask if there is a downside. Well, if there is one, it would be in the careful planning and commissioning of fibre optic lighting systems, yet this is a small investment in time, for a solution that has a very long lifespan and is virtually maintenance free.

A few examples illustrate well the application benefits of fibre optic lighting in the leisure environment. A number of pubs and clubs in and around London already enjoy the benefits of fibre optic lighting, notably a flagship Fullers pub, and recently a growing number of BAR 38 and Rat & Parrot outlets from London to Manchester to Scotland. Various nightclubs too, use fibre optic lighting to achieve a star like effect.

In a display or retail context, fibre optic lighting is similarly used to add drama and excitement to merchandise and add value to the products on display. Recently, such systems have been used to light cosmetics at Ruby Millie's, fashion at Jigsaw, and cigars and wine at Heathrow airport Duty Free, in the later case, ensuring that the red wine doesn't cook whilst on display!

Fibre optic lighting is also widely used in hotels and health clubs. Fibre optics have been specified for a £1m health spa at the Royal Crescent Hotel. Here, fibre optic lighting has really come into its own for use in all the wet areas of the pool, cold plunges, showers and saunas, and at the same time, provides a dramatic form of lighting to enhance the natural

● ABOVE LEFT: ROYAL APPROVAL...FIBRE OPTICS ENHANCE THE NATURAL FINISHES OF BAMBOO AND STONE AT THE ROYAL CRESCENT HOTEL HEALTH SPA.

● ABOVE RIGHT: ALL CHANGE...THIS CHIHYU GLASS SCULPTURE IS LIT BY FIBRE OPTICS PROVIDING SEQUENTIAL COLOUR CHANGING FOR A STUNNING EFFECT.

interior finishes of bamboo and stone.

In museums and galleries both in this country and in America, fibre optic lighting is frequently the preferred form of illumination. The George Washington museum exhibits are lit entirely by fibre optics, as is the museum in Virginia dedicated to the life of General Lee. The lighting is used also in exterior applications for both the Korean and African American Civil War memorials in Washington DC. Here in London, various displays are illuminated at the Imperial War Museum and the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection in Kensington Palace uses the technology to great effect. For this, a completely new dimming system is operated by hand held infra red controllers for enhanced illumination of costume displays and improved conservation control.

And so to the future. Even with this advanced lighting technology there are new developments under way all the time. Fibre optic cables of even greater efficiency and new more powerful lamp types are sure to bring the systems into more frequent and popular use in all manner of new and refurbished buildings serving the leisure market. ■