

Interview with lighting designer

Bogdan Ursa

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BIOGRAPHY

Bogdan Ursa's approach to lighting can be defined as the creation of unique visual experiences. In the last 7 years with Signify, he has explored different roles – from engineer to lighting designer, and now, as Lighting Consultant, he's working mainly on flagship projects.

As a Lighting Consultant for interior and exterior lighting, he has been involved with several high-impact, large-scale Color Kinetics projects.



What made you choose a lighting design career?

My first connection with light in a professional way was during the classes at The Technical University of Cluj-Napoca where I was studying Civil Engineering.

From a romantic perspective, I can say that everything started in my childhood, when I used to spend the summers in the Transylvanian Mountains, at my grandparents' where in the evenings I sat on wooden blocks, watching the sunsets followed by a clear night sky full of stars.

Being attracted to engineering and architecture, I believe that lighting design combines very well science with creativity in a way that suits me, and I can't imagine myself doing something else.



What is your motivation?

A few years ago, during the final lighting tests on a shopping mall façade I was designing at that time, the project manager who was involved right from the beginning in developing the lighting design asked me the same question while he was unable to take his eyes off the building. I looked at him and answered, "This expression, on your face, when you are staring for the first time at the effects created by the light, motivates me and makes me happy"

To have the chance to make people look at something not only because it is shiny or because the light attracts the eyes, but to stare for a while, to make them get lost in thoughts as they are when watching a painting or a sunset, this makes me feel like an artist who is painting with light.



Can you tell us more about your latest Color Kinetics projects?

For a designer, it doesn't matter in what area he is designing, it is important to use the best tools and materials, and, of course, the technology that resonates best with him/her.

From my perspective, by using Color Kinetics - the best products on the market - I am confident about the results, and I also have lots of options, from a good quality color chemistry to very diverse optic systems and from high-end network connectivity to maximum flexibility, besides lots of possibilities of the

light effects and scenarios. I can give an example of a 1900s iconic eclectic architecture building in Bucharest, for which the design part lasted almost 1 year by carefully handling all the aspects and challenges that a Class A monument project must take into account.



As a lighting designer, the most important is the lighting effect, but this wouldn't be not enough. You have to understand, besides the architecture, all the materials on the building, to agree with electrical designers, with the specialist in stone, and with the metal engineer, to understand all the legislation and norms for monuments and to design everything and find the best solution by keeping your concept in order to obtain the approval of the Ministry of Culture.

For these kinds of projects, when the lighting is the main scope, everything starts from the lighting design, by adapting and using the best technologies, and based on the capacity of creating customized products and dedicated solutions to achieve the best results.



I'm always saying that, in architectural lighting and as the light is so subjective from one person to another, one must always execute at least one mock-up and always pay attention to both professional designers and people who are not really involved in the design process and could have an out-of-the-box opinion.

We are not designing for ourselves, and the reactions and feedback from others always matter.



How important are interactivity and connectivity in your lighting projects?

In lighting design, everything is perceived in a subjective way, so we can't expect that everyone will interact and react to the lighting concepts or lighting effects.

More than that, in today's dynamic changes around us, we've become more demanding, and we got used to everything much quicker, especially with shapes and architecture.

Through connected lighting using the power of LED flexibility, we can create almost unlimited solutions from different types of white light to color combinations, bigger contrasts between façade details and general shape, dynamic lighting effects to improve the interaction with people and all this can bring a landmark to life and to 'breathe' in the rhythm of the community it serves.

How do you push boundaries with your lighting design?

Especially in architectural lighting, where I prefer to express myself the most, each project is different, and each building or landmark has another story.



I believe that the better I understand the architectural meaning, the social impact in the community, the local cultural history and its impact on the actual society, and the story of lighting and its purpose, the better I will be able to understand the sense of it, the power it gives. Combining all those in one vision, together with passion, each solution should have a unique flavor in revealing the story.



How do you use the power of light to bring people together?

Everything around us is happening because of the light and the lighting designers only modulate the lighting beside the functionality in an artistic method by combining forms, colors, brightness, and contrast, a play between darkness, shadows, and light, and if the final effect makes people react to it, the solution becomes a landmark or an art piece.

For me this is the goal, to mark a common spot around us in the middle of something, a point of interest, a 'must-see' place and a better place to live.



What is not yet possible in lighting architecture that you would like to see become reality in the future?

In terms of technology, nobody can tell us at this moment what will come after LED or how much more the automation can innovate. Wondering myself what will be in the future, I recall the workshop about “How will the lighting be in 2025,” which happened in 2015 in a summer school educational program for young professionals, organized by The City of Green Buildings, an NGO which I founded together with other passionate university classmates.

For 2 days, 15 young professionals had the task to imagine and explain how the lighting will be in the future and the results were complex and interesting. But one idea really has made me think more intensively during the last years, and it refers to combining emotion with lighting around us. Going more deeply into the thoughts, I imagine a future where the lighting system in our houses not only feels our feelings and our moods but reacts to them and interacts with them.



Photography: © Dragos Asaftei

“We can create and build everything, but without proper light no architecture and design will exist.”

Future plans?

I will continue to create concepts, share my experience with connected and flexible lighting solutions and, together with architects and investors, to transform our imaginations into reality.

In lighting, each project has different challenges and a different approach, and this increases my steady motivation.

I am developing and I am involved in different workshops and educational programs for students, young professionals, and architects for knowledge promotion and transfer from my experiences in the lighting field.

I will always invest a part of my time in these kinds of activities. Regarding today's challenging environment, I am assuming a bigger role and I am eager to continue to develop myself in sustainability and energy efficiency by designing in a smart and responsible way.

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