

A·L

ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING

INSIDE: QUANTIFYING
CIRCADIAN LIGHT • URBAN
ADVOCACY • LONDON'S
GASHOLDER PARK • ROGER
NARBONI ON THE FUTURE
OF THE CITY AT NIGHT •
LINNAEA TILLET



LINNAEA TILLETT

“There’s tension in this idea of urban lighting as being a one-off and what it really means to take on issues of putting in things that will last.”



Linnaea Tillett is a landscape lighting designer. It is a point she makes very clear and it stems from the seriousness with which she approaches her work. Growing up in New York City, Tillett was curious about everything around her, and it was that innate curiosity that led her to lighting. Intrigued by storefronts and display lighting, she worked for a time with Brian Thompson before establishing her own firm in 1983. But she wanted to move beyond interiors and understand more about the public realm. That led her back to school to get her Ph.D. in environmental psychology. Today, her portfolio features a diverse set of projects with leading architects and landscape architects that all have a common thread—the responsibility that comes with working in the public realm and illuminating spaces that people use at night.

How do you view the relationship between architecture, lighting, and landscape?

I don't know how you could teach lighting designers to be landscape lighting designers if you didn't teach landscape; they're linked, different phases of the same experience.

How do you think about the night?

When you are designing for spaces that people occupy after hours you have to understand it's a different psychological and perceptual space. The night is a realm with its own rules. It's a process not an event.

What are the challenges of working outdoors?

You need to be flexible and adaptable. There are some things, such as the weather, that you just cannot control.

How has your practice changed?

Clients have a greater awareness about the issues we are dealing with such as color temperature and light trespass. They engage in the project dialogue differently as a result.

Do you have a design philosophy?

Find the poetry in the landscape and amplify it. Pay exquisite attention to function and support it. Make absolutely sure the public nighttime space feels right.

What advice would you give a young designer?

Go out and look. Look at the ground and understand what it is, how it shifts. Look at trees and how roots grow under pavement. Look at the landscape and embrace it. •

interview by Elizabeth Donoff
photo by Jesse Dittmar