

# Lighten the Mood

by **Alexandra Matisoff-Li**

**Lighting a home** properly these days is more complicated than simply keeping the cupboard stocked with 60-watters, hitting the dimmer switch for your favorite television programs, and leaving the porch light on for the kids. Interior and lighting designers have taken the art of illumination to a new level.

These days, lighting concerns often stretch beyond the living room into the far recesses of the garden, and down the stepping-stone path. At its best, well-planned lighting design helps create a mood, calms the nerves, spotlights favorite works of art or softens the features of your dinner companions.



**Proper lighting can bring a room to life, soften shadows on your dinner companion's face, and create an ambient glow that fills a space with warmth**

people on a budget. Her mom still lives in Concord, in exactly the same house Anderson left when she was 17 to attend a junior college and then San Francisco

State, where she studied modern dance and choreography. After four and a half years traveling the world—Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica,

Spain, Majorca, Greece, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, and Czechoslovakia—Anderson returned to the Bay Area, and while she still choreographs from time to time, interior design fulfills her creative bent.

Anderson says she never begins work on designing a space without first considering the lighting. "The purpose of proper lighting is to make what you have better, and you can't have a completed design without lighting," she says. "You can have the most beautiful couch in the world, but if the lighting is

wrong, or if there's a lot of daylight fighting the lights, it won't look right and you won't feel comfortable." Anderson says lighting also helps impact scale, bringing rooms down to a more human size so people don't feel lost within the space.

Anderson designs her rooms to dovetail with the artful lighting effects created by Bay Area lighting designer Randall Whitehead. The results can sometimes be dramatic.

They are proponents of the collaborative art of interior design, rather than working in isolation. "I really believe in the team approach," Whitehead says. "When we're all sitting down together batting back and forth ideas, we get a much more cohesive design."

Whitehead says ideally, lighting should be layered for maximum effect. These layers should perform four main functions:

**Decorative Light:** One source in a room should not provide the real light source for the space, but rather, create the "sparkle for a space."

**Accent Lighting:** This highlights accents on tabletops, sculpture, or artwork in a room, creating depth.

**Task Lighting:** For specific functions, such as the light next to your favorite reading chair, or over kitchen counters.

**General Lighting:** Whitehead says this type of lighting is the most critical element, the soft-fill light that provides a room with an ambient glow, softening the shadows on people's faces, "even making people appear more good-looking." This is best achieved through bouncing light off ceilings, using torchères and wall sconces. "If you can only afford one type of light, this is the one to go for," he says. "What you really want is for people to see the art, the architecture, and the people lit as attractively as possible in the room," he says.

*Randall Whitehead's The Art of Outdoor Lighting and The Art of Lighting are available from Rockport Press. For a peek at some of Katie Anderson's interior design work with lighting accents, check out her website at [www.archidigm.com/KAD](http://www.archidigm.com/KAD). ▲*