



ENLIGHTENING YOUR VISION

With today's consumer looking for the 'experience', shopping centers can tap into emotions through attractive lighting displays and decorations that tell stories and actively engage them.



Mall of Africa, Waterfall City, South Africa



Saks Fifth Avenue 611, New York, USA

"THROUGH LIGHTING AND STORIES, WE CAN ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE AND TAP INTO THEIR EMOTIONS"

IMAGES: MK ILLUMINATION

Thomas Mark, President of MK Illumination, talks in an ACROSS interview about why decoration and especially lighting play a vital part in sparking emotions.



ACROSS: WHAT DOES FESTIVE DECORATION MEAN FOR MALLS TODAY? AND TO WHAT EXTENT CAN FESTIVE DECORATION REALLY GENERATE TRAFFIC?

THOMAS MARK: Lifestyles are changing and today's consumer wants a shopping 'experience'. People go shopping to meet friends, enjoy restaurants, and to entertain the family. The successful shopping center must now offer an interesting, interactive and, above all, inviting atmosphere. We are naturally drawn to what is visually attractive. Decoration and especially lighting play a vital part in sparking emotions. And it is creativity and originality in these decorative concepts that draw crowds and invites them to take the selfies that encourage their friends to come and share the experience. Shopping centers now need their festive lighting concepts to become 'festivals'. Decoration and lighting must be themed, seamless and inviting. Calling in specialists and creating an attractive, interactive concept can transform the festive season into a bonus year for profit.

ACROSS: WHERE DOES YOUR FOCUS LIE? AND WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOOD DESIGN?

MARK: We are first and foremost a design-oriented company that uses very particular technology to turn designs into experiences. For us, the production of extraordinary lighting concepts is all about the successful combination of design, top-quality materials, and technology. Each element is critical.

Light is an incredibly important design element for us, and it is essential if we want to connect with people's emotions.

It is fantastic to be able to combine lighting with festive stories because festive occasions like Christmas awaken strong emotions in us all. Through lighting and stories, we can engage with people and tap into their emotions.

ACROSS: HOW RELEVANT IS INNOVATION IN THE AREA OF FESTIVE DECORATIVE LIGHTING?

MARK: For us, lighting, design, creativity, and innovation are inextricably linked. In order to continually engage people, we not only create exceptional lighting displays, but we constantly push boundaries and use new technologies and features that are innovative and, increasingly, interactive



THOMAS MARK
President of MK Illumination:
"Decoration and lighting must be themed and seamless and above all, inviting."

instead of static. We did this recently in a shopping center district in Beijing, where we installed floating lanterns above an illuminated tree for Chinese New Year. By striking a gong, visitors triggered a wave of color that rippled through the lanterns and the tree, sending their new year's wishes into the sky.

Innovation is not just about making everything interactive, though. Sometimes innovation is about presenting a traditional theme in a striking and memorable way. A good example of this is our herd of 18 flying deer in MyZeil shopping center, where we took an innovative approach to a traditional lighting display that attracted visitors and inspired them to get involved and take thousands of pictures that they posted on social media.

ACROSS: LET'S TALK ABOUT ORIGINALITY: YOU HELP MALLS TELL COMPELLING – AND UNIQUE – STORIES USING CUSTOM LIGHT MOTIFS. GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF THIS.

MARK: Master storyteller Walt Disney once said, "Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it they will want to come back and see you do it again and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do."

This quote is both our motto and our motivation. We live by it. We have become master storytellers ourselves, who use lighting and festive decoration to tell our customers' stories. Each location is different: each mall has a different history, a different demographic and a different message that they want to share, and we work closely with customers to help them tell their unique tale.

For example, in Dresden's Elbepark we designed festive lighting for their trees using symbols from their city, like the "Frauenkirche" and the "Semperoper". These symbols are unique to Dresden and by using them, we helped them tell a story that the people of the city could connect with and support.



MK Illumination creates tailor-made experiences that connect with people's emotions through festive lighting, decoration and interactive worlds.



Le Forum des Halles, Paris, France



Antara Fashion Hall, Mexico City, Mexico



The 15 meter high interactive tree from MK gave the visitors to the Taikoo Li Sanlitun special moments.



Traditional and modern: Christmas ornaments in the MK style.

SHARE YOUR LIGHT AT TAIKOO LI SANLITUN

An interactive Christmas experience at the Chinese shopping center encouraged visitors to become involved instead of just watching.

IMAGES: MK ILLUMINATION



A truly exceptional project with regard to festive Christmas decorations was recently implemented by MK Illumination in Beijing, China, in the shopping center Taikoo Li Sanlitun. The centerpiece was a 15-meter-high tree made of polished steel and hand-made especially for this location. The 72 large panels, covered with more than 1500 meters of glittering glass pearls, also ensured a unique luxury and festive mood during the day. After dusk, more than 30,000 intelligent points of light, each of which could be individually controlled, lit up the night sky around Taikoo Li Sanlitun. At the top of the tree, there was a 200-cm-large LED bauble with more than 185,000 pixels and this gave visitors a special kind of experience. "The topic of interaction was important in this project," says Thomas Eisner, Head of MK in China. And what is more: "The shoppers were invited to become part of the production."

In line with the motto "Share your light", spectators had the opportunity to have the tree lit up in four different light moods. If a visitor came by, he or she could say: "Oh, I feel like luxury today!" and touch the panel for Enchanted glamour;

a shower of sparkling glitter and champagne bubbles then turned the tree into gold. The other choices were Dreamlike Wonder for a colorful magical theme, Holiday Warmth for a traditional family feeling and then Be Sanlitun. Be Sanlitun was the tailor-made theme that matched the venue and reflected the highly individual and creative environment. It is therefore not surprising that MK's interactive tree was rated by many visitors as the finest tree in China.

The decorations produced individually for the Taikoo Li Sanlitun Center were perfectly supplemented by creative ornaments in the outdoor area. Ornaments have been simple icons of holiday cheer since the 16th century. MK Illumination changed the scale and sculptured a stainless steel bauble over six meters in height. The handcrafted and hand-polished stainless steel ornament enabled visitors to enter into a magical space, a space allowing everyone to be literally part of the oldest tradition of winter season tree decorations.



HOW A MALL DECORATION BECAME A LANDMARK

IMAGE: MK ILLUMINATION

Illuminated deers up to six meters in height once roamed throughout avant-garde MyZeil in Frankfurt.

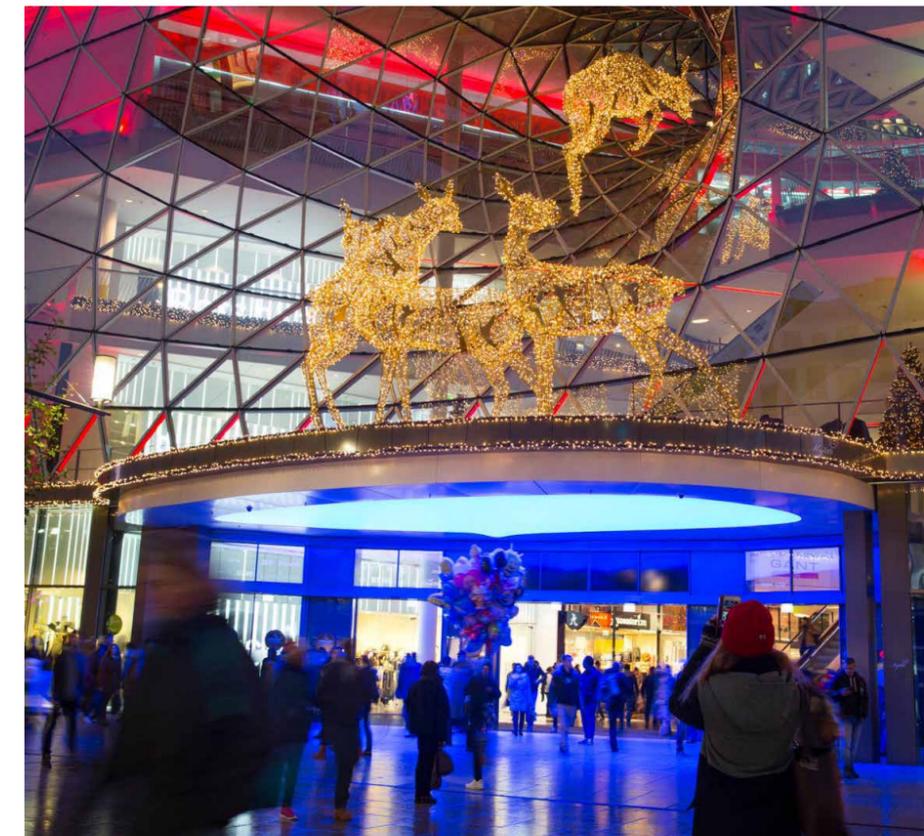


The setting for the spectacle is the five shopping floors under the open glass dome of MyZeil. Huge stags appear unexpectedly out of the "magic forest". They twirl in and through the facade and then across the mall, with a pull effect included. On the top floor, a Christmas deer bends majestically over the setting where presents are given, which also serves as a photo point. The scene benefits from the ingenious contrast between the animals and the futuristic architecture of the building.

The switching on of the center was celebrated on November 23, 2016. The center management had already launched this event with a social media campaign in the run-up to the event. Marcus Schwartz, Center Manager at MyZeil, looks back: "We had an overwhelming response. Firstly, the take-up of the topic was huge in the German press; secondly, the Christmas decoration was the talk of the town and a sought-after motif for photos."

The idea for the Christmas magic came during a meeting between MK Illumination and Schwartz at Christmasworld. With regard to the technical implementation in light decorations, an entirely new dimension of life-like Christmas productions opened up here. "We definitely see ourselves as first movers," says Schwartz proudly.

The 19 stags are to adorn the MyZeil, which is managed by the ECE, for five seasons, during which time the display may be further refined and perfected. The animals may be filled with



Flying deer at MyZeil in Frankfurt

Christmas tree baubles. This is not surprising because Christmas decorations are extremely important in the shopping center industry, as Schwartz emphasizes: "This consideration of tradition is hugely important in our cultural area. We also have to position ourselves vis-à-vis e-commerce."



A GOOD-LUCK CHARM FITTINGLY SETS THE SCENE FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR

A gigantic, golden dragon that makes thousands of lights shimmer and glitter captivated the visitors to "The Shops at Crystals" in Las Vegas.



IMAGE: THE SHOPS AT CRYSTALS LAS VEGAS WESTERN DESIGN LLC / WESTERN PHOTOGRAPHY

The unique dragon from MK Illumination welcomes visitors to the mall "The Shops at Crystals" and is a good-luck charm at Chinese New Year.*

"We are a destination for visitors from all over the world, many of whom celebrate Chinese New Year."

Lea Willingham, General Manager of "The Shops at Crystals"

*MK Illumination USA designed and produced the golden dragon for Western Design LLC in a long term cooperation for their clients The Shops at Crystals, a Simon Property.



It is an impressive seven meters high, 16 meters long, weighs 1,300 kilograms, glitters, twinkles and welcomes the astonished visitors to the mall "The Shops at Crystals" with a huge red pearl in its mouth. MK Illumination's* mythical creature from Chinese mythology is thus rightly seen as a masterpiece of decorative festival lighting. "We are a destination for visitors from all over the world, many of whom celebrate Chinese New Year. We wanted to celebrate the important Holiday with them", commented Lea Willingham, General Manager of "The Shops at Crystals".

The Innsbruck-based company produced the dragon on behalf of Western Design LLC for the

customer Simon Property. The client wanted a dragon that would help to celebrate Chinese New Year and complement the mall at the same time. Not an easy undertaking because the dragon firstly had to correspond to Chinese culture, above all with regard to color, symbols, positioning and line of vision. Secondly, the design was to fill the existing space in an imposing manner, without appearing too obtrusive and too overloaded. It was to fit perfectly into the overall concept of the shopping center and not dazzle the sales space of the 50 luxury brands. Throughout the entire design and production process, designers, artists, technicians and cultural advisers were in permanent exchange with one another in order to guarantee the cultural appreciation and the traditional presentation. MK Illumination collected the know-how for this, among others, at the University of Shanghai.

For instance, the number "eight" which is generally seen as a lucky number in China is a fundamental design element of the figure. In accordance with this number, the dragon's curved tail is shaped dynamically and elegantly. 28,880 points of light also give the mythical creature a mythological aura and will, if everything goes according to plan, ensure the project has an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. Also remarkable: The unique dragon stands proudly in the middle of the shopping center "The Shops at Crystals". It is looking northwards, which is also a lucky symbol in Chinese culture, towards the Las Vegas Strip. It is laughing, holding a red pearl in its mouth, suggesting a long and fulfilled life. Moreover, the dragon shines in gold and symbolizes the color of the sun, wealth and a happy future, which the beholder also inherently benefits from.



In the forest in the water area of the Mall of Scandinavia, there are, among others, seven penguins hidden.



The Earth area in turn is characterized by a seven-meter-high tree with a hummingbird hovering nearby.

DRAMA IS KEY!

Visitors to the Mall of Scandinavia expect no less than complete sensational experiences. The Christmas decoration met this requirement.



IMAGES: MK ILLUMINATION

It was November 12, 2015 when Unibail-Rodamco opened the largest shopping center in northern Europe, the Mall of Scandinavia in Stockholm. On 101,000 sq m of GLA, it houses international flagship stores with well-known domestic and international brands, plus state-of-the-art entertainment and food service facilities. "The mall is simply impressive. Not least because of its special architecture that is divided into the areas of Water, Wind and Earth," enthuses Camilla Eriksson, Concept Designer in Sweden at MK Illumination.

"The expectations of the representatives of Unibail-Rodamco were high with regard the choice of decorations used to mark Christmas, and concepts needed to reinforce the motto 'Lagom (which means average) is dull, drama is key!'. As a result, our mission was to create the most thrilling Christmas decorations. Simply because the shoppers here expect no less than complete sensational experiences," recalls Eriksson.

In light of this, MK Illumination took up the topics of the different mall areas "Water, Wind and Earth". They were associated with terms such as

bold, vivid, grand, alluring, different, daring and sparkling; and presented in the form of bespoke elements produced by the company's craftsmen in Slovakia. What did that mean in practice? At the Wind node, a whirlwind of magic crystal lights and mirrors reflected the movement of the asymmetric, organic architecture and created a striking connection between levels. At the Earth node, an eco-tree 7 meters high and 10 meters in circumference with roots in the podium of level 0 grew up towards level 1. Red decorations in abstract shapes teased the imagination while a vibrant hummingbird hovered nearby.

According to Eriksson, the visitors were most inspired by the Water area where jets of light created a sensational effect over a sparkling, frozen pond at the edge of an amazing winter forest. "We made it snow artificially there every hour. That was the biggest challenge in the project," says the concept designer in Sweden, taking stock. There was a great response to the snowfall, just as there was to the animals that were unexpectedly hiding in the forest. The seven penguins, one of which was dancing out of line, proved to be particular favorites with the general public.



A WINTER FAIRYTALE WITH A SAXON LINK

The designers at MK Illumination wrote a Christmas fairytale for Elbepark Dresden. Local sights and animals are the mainstay of the story.

IMAGES: MK ILLUMINATION



The six-meter-high deer at the main entrance looked majestically into the distance. The contour lighting of the logo cube on the roof guaranteed visibility up to the access road.



The flying buttress was decorated by local motifs such as the world-renowned "Frauenkirche" and the no less well-known "Semperoper".

"At the end of the day, the challenge with the project was to embed a traditional Dresden winter landscape into our modern shopping center."

Gordon Knabe, Center Manager of the Elbepark



The cultural hotspot of Dresden is associated with the Semperoper, the Frauenkirche ("Church of Our Lady"), the town hall and the equestrian statue of King John of Saxony. Special designs based on these tourist attractions became part of the winter fairytale that MK Illumination created for Elbepark Dresden. To make the link to the state capital of Dresden perfect, the local fauna and flora were integrated into the decoration concept. For instance, the visitors to the info point spotted a herd of shy deer. Other stops on this winter fairytale and fir forest were a 5.6-meter-high majestic deer, a mischievous squirrel and, last but not least, a cunning fox.

The stops made it possible for the visitors to make an emotional journey through the various areas of the shopping center which was opened in 1995

and was totally revitalized in 2008. Both the indigenous forest animals as well as the sights of Dresden fitted harmoniously into the winter fairytale thanks to their autonomous decoration approach. Furthermore, each stop acted as a fully fledged photo point thanks to a huge 3D highlight motif, which allowed family and friends to participate in the festive shopping experience via social media. "I was particularly delighted that especially children made active use of these photo points", reports Gordon Knabe, Center Manager of the Elbepark. And he adds: "At the end of the day, the challenge with the project was to embed a traditional Dresden winter landscape into our modern shopping center. We have succeeded in doing that with MK Illumination."



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