

# LIGHTING— A Critical Design Element

By Penny K. Bartlow, ASID, CID

**H**ow many houses can you think of with quality lighting design? If you are like most people, probably not many. But if you're asked to think of the number of houses you have visited with poor lighting, you are likely to think of several. When lighting is good, you tend not to notice, but when lighting is bad, everyone notices. Good lighting design will not only improve the aesthetic quality of a space, it will also enhance function and comfort. Lighting is one of the most critical elements in an interior environment; it can completely transform a space and affect people's emotions, thoughts, and actions.

There are three types of lighting: ambient, task, and accent. Ambient lighting is the general illumination of a space. Task lighting provides ample light for a task such as reading or cooking, while accent lighting highlights a particular item. The best lit interior incorporates all three categories of lighting and gives the homeowner flexibility in control.

Light sources come in many forms. Effective lighting may be a fixture that makes a decorative contribution to the room or fluorescent bulbs concealed in a soffit. Fluorescent lighting has been gaining popularity in the residential market. These bulbs now produce a clearer whiter light and are available in a compact version that will fit in most incandescent fixtures. A fluorescent bulb also has the added benefit of being more energy efficient and lasting approximately ten times longer than an incandescent bulb. Whatever your requirements, a qualified interior designer can help you develop a lighting plan that will improve the comfort and efficiency of your home. ♦



Multiple light sources, including recessed, wall sconces, and undercabinet, provide control over light levels for cooking, entertaining, or making a late night snack. Interior Design by: PKB DESIGN, LLC

**Right: This home theater, showcasing FORTRESS home theater seating, utilizes dramatic lighting to enhance the homeowner's movie watching experience. Photo courtesy of: ASL Home Entertainment Group.**



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