

## **At Home**

### **See the light**

**It 'makes or breaks your best design'**

**By Alexis Blue**

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advertisementBefore Janice and Terry Donald remodeled their home, the bulbs on their overhead ceiling fan were the main source of light in the kitchen. With their headachy strobe effect, they were not the best lighting for reading a cookbook or enjoying a nice dinner.

It became apparent as they began the remodeling process that they would need new and improved lighting to match their new and improved kitchen, so the couple, who own a home-remodeling company called Eren Design and Remodel, turned to David Rishor, president of Light Composers, for help.

Now their kitchen dazzles with a variety of illumination options: two rail systems of adjustable lights on the ceiling, pendant lights over the center island, an antique chandelier above the dining table and square recessed lights overhead. (The square shape is emerging as a popular alternative to the traditional round recessed cans, Rishor said.)

Even the kitchen shelves and cabinets are expertly lighted, accentuating the brightly colored dishes inside.

And everything is dimmable to create the desired mood in the room.

"Lighting makes all the difference in the world in a home," said 61-year-old Janice Donald, who spent about \$3,000 on lighting design and installation for her home's kitchen, powder room, laundry room and exercise room. Donald said her remodeling business often works with Light Composers, a lighting design and installation company.

"Lighting is the fourth dimension of architecture. It makes or breaks your best design," said Rishor, who has worked in the lighting and electrical industry for more than 30 years.

Though it sounds simple enough, choosing the right light for a room is not always an easy task. That's where the experts come in.

Cynthia Morton, a lighting consultant and owner of Lightstyle of Tucson, said there are many elements to consider when planning a home's lighting, including the rooms' ceiling heights, paint colors, flooring, furnishings and what the light needs to accomplish.

A common mistake is relying on one lighting fixture in the center of the room to light the whole space, Morton said. For more versatility and dimension, lighting should be "layered," or come from a variety of

sources in the room. It also should be used to accentuate specific pieces in a home, such as artwork, Morton said.

In Martha and Bill Sampson's Catalina Foothills home, where Morton designed the lighting, concealed rope lights cast a soft glow on the deep blue ceiling of the great room, and artwork throughout the home is spotlighted as if it were ready for a gallery showing.

Light fixtures themselves can lend character to a space. In the Sampsons' game room, a system of curving metal rails with bright bulbs snakes across the ceiling above the pool table and pinball machines, for a modern, playful look.

Martha Sampson, 53, compared lighting a home to accessorizing a nice outfit with the perfect jewelry. It just makes it that much better, she said.

Pros in the lighting industry also can help eliminate the clutter of switches on a home's walls.

Automated lighting systems that give homeowners plenty of control over their lighting are a big trend, Rishor said.

Thanks to advances in technology, homeowners can control lighting throughout the whole house from a single programmable keypad. Homeowners can even program one-button access to "scenes," or specific lighting combinations.

Remote control of the lights also is possible, and key-chain remotes can be used to turn on house lights as homeowners pull into the driveway, so they don't have to walk into a dark home.

Outdoor lighting is important, too, because it's often the first thing your guests see, Morton said.

Thomas Black, who began building his sprawling, 8,000-square-foot Old World-style home a little more than a year ago, enlisted Morton to design the lighting not only for the inside of his home — where there's no shortage of impressive chandeliers and illuminated eclectic art — but also for the outside.

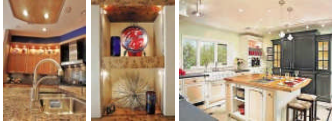
It was no surprise that 55-year-old Black, as owner of Plants of Distinction, 6930 E. Tanque Verde Road, wanted his backyard garden to glow, so Morton devised a system to shed light on the plants and trees at night.

"Lighting is such an amazing medium," said Morton, who charges around \$1.50 per square foot on average for her design services. "It sways people's moods. It can make guests feel invited, and a good lighting consultant is going to know what it does for a space."

- Alexis Blue is a local freelance writer.

The Sampsons' pool table is illuminated by both ceiling lights on a rail system and pendant lighting above.

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### » RESOURCES

- Light Composers, 797-0070, [www.lightcomposers.com](http://www.lightcomposers.com).

### » GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

As in many areas of home improvement, one of the biggest trends in lighting is going "green."

Fluorescent bulbs and LED lights, which use less energy and have longer lives than traditional incandescent bulbs, are big sellers.

Though they may cost more at the outset, they quickly pay for themselves by conserving energy, experts in the lighting business say.

While a standard-size incandescent light bulb might cost as little as 50 cents, a fluorescent bulb might be \$5 to \$15, and LED bulbs can start around \$25, said Cynthia Morton, owner of Lightstyle of Tucson.

A compact fluorescent bulb uses about 75 percent less energy than a standard incandescent bulb and can last up to 10 times longer (between 8,000 and 15,000 hours). LED bulbs use even less energy and can last 50,000 to 60,000 hours.

At Sun Lighting, 4545 E. Broadway, one of the top-selling items is a \$120 LED retrofit lamp that can be used in any standard 6-inch recessed-lighting can.

The dimmable lamp uses only about 12 watts of power, compared with a 65-watt incandescent lamp, and has an average life span of 50,000 hours (or about 20 years), compared with the equivalent incandescent lamp's 2,500-hour life, said Sand Zaspel, Sun Lighting's commercial manager.

And because the more energy-efficient LED lights don't emit heat, using them in place of incandescent lights can cut home air-conditioning costs by as much as 50 percent, Zaspel said.

Sun Lighting also offers a bulb buyback program that purchases people's incandescent bulbs (working or not), recycles them and gives customers credit toward buying new fluorescent bulbs. Learn more at [www.sunlighting.net](http://www.sunlighting.net).

Heat occupancy sensors are another simple energy-saving tool, said David Rishor, president of Light Composers. Unlike motion sensors, they react to a body's heat instead of its movement, and turn lights on and off automatically when a person enters or leaves a room. They work particularly well in spaces

such as closets and pantries, where homeowners may spend only short amounts of time and often forget to turn off the light, Rishor said.

» **LIGHTING RETAILERS**

- Sun Lighting, 4545 E. Broadway.
- Illuminations, 3527 E. Fort Lowell Road.
- Northside Lighting & Fan, 699 E. Fort Lowell Road. The store's modern showroom is Tucson Contemporary Lighting, 3321 N. First Ave.