

DESIGN FOCUS

lighting up your home



One half of *The Block*:
Glasshouse's winning duo,
Shannon Vos of VosCreative,
voscreative.com.

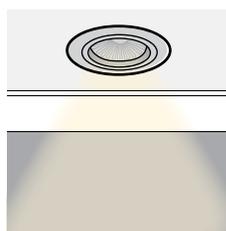
Each issue, designer Shannon Vos will be taking a detailed look at a particular design feature. First up is his plan of attack for lighting WORDS SHANNON VOS

SHINE ON In the living area of a Melbourne family home, designer Taylor Reynolds (taylorreynolds.com.au) chose this intricate Ilanel 'Kahdu' lamp. The light offers a warm filtered glow, while also playing on the different lines and forms found in the zone's design elements.



When it comes to renovating, designing a lighting plan is often left to the last minute. You're tired – and tired of making decisions – which means you focus on getting the job done rather than making good choices. In fact, lighting plans should be up there with spatial plans and furniture selection. You could have the best design in the world, but if your spaces are inadequately lit, it's all worthless.

While it may seem daunting – or even boring – a considered lighting plan not only helps your home function and enhances a room's features; it will create atmosphere, which is the best bit! Too many times I've seen beautiful homes feel cold and dull due to poor choices. So, keeping in mind the basic formats – task, feature, wash and mood – let's go through each to help you tackle that lighting plan you've been putting off. And don't forget, you don't have to commit to just one type: a combination of up, down and even horizontal light is the best way to evoke a great atmosphere.



downlights

Originally designed for task or spot lighting, these days they're completely overused. In most cases, they don't create mood and can be clinical so should be used sparingly. In some instances though, they're a necessity. If you must have them, keep in mind that downlights

throw a very specific beam and, until recently, only threw a narrow beam of 60 degrees.

One of the most understated 'pros' of downlights are that they are discreet. Without taking your eye from the main focal point of a room, they can be used as an effective light source to highlight artwork, a feature wall or furniture. In this kind of layered design, it's important to consider what you're actually trying to illuminate, rather than the fitting itself.

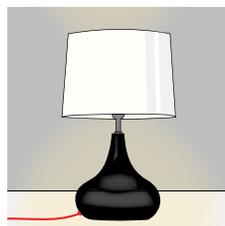


floor lamps

Blurring the lines of all four lighting types, floor lamps are so aesthetically pleasing and versatile, they're often chosen as features themselves. Before you buy one, consider the lamp's purpose and the light it will throw, whether it's cool or warm and bright

or soft. For example, a cool bright light could be used for reading, as opposed to a warm soft option for setting the mood. Also, think about the height of the globe and how the shade angles the light. If it's up, it won't be good for reading; if it's isolating it down, the lamp is going to work more like a downlight. Arched floor lamps are great for general lighting, while a column floor lamp will give you a more contained and direct beam.

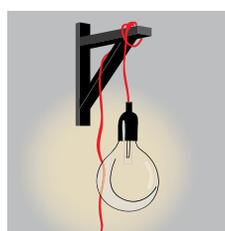
Be aware that floor lamps often end up not being turned on due to tricky access (switches are usually in the corner of a room), so integrating its use into a light switch on the wall or implementing a smart-phone operated system could be a useful option.



side lamps

Side lamps are generally used in just a few specific locations, such as on bedsides, desks, hall tables or next to a sofa. Like a floor lamp, they're available in a variety of shapes and sizes, making them perfect for adding detail to whatever style you're going for. In the bedroom or study, side

lamps are predominately used as task lighting, but they're also great for creating mood in a hallway or a living area. Again, like floor lamps, light can be dispersed in a range of directions, so make sure the one you choose fits into your plan.



wall lights

Usually found outside, wall lights can offer a creative solution to general and specific lighting needs. The most common internal use of a wall light is in a stairwell, illuminating the treads, but I think they can be used beautifully in most rooms. In fact, using referred

light (light bounced off an object, like a wall), wall lights can make a great feature of a textured surface and, if used on a plain wall, they can offer a soft cast. You'll notice in loads of restaurants and hotels that wall lights create a better mood than a bunch of downlights. Again, changes in how the light is dispersed can vary, depending on location and use.

The big consideration with wall lights is that they're somewhat ineffective as task lighting. Being mounted, they aren't great for accommodating changes in your plans and could get in the way of furniture, artworks or other elements down the track.



pendant lights

Sexy bloody pendant lights. Even turned off, a good pendant lamp can be a feature and a statement in itself – one could even go as far as to say they're 'art'. Go big and go bold! A pendant is an obvious choice for mood lighting as they can be hung at any height – this enables you to

control the angle of the light being emitted. Pendants can also be used as task lighting, such as over a kitchen benchtop; just make sure the light is focused downwards and not up at the ceiling. As wash lighting – where light is cast onto a surface for a specific effect – pendants are brilliant in the centre of a room (normally in period homes with an individual light fitting in each room), and hung at the right height, a chandelier can give an even spread to 360 degrees of a room. A beautiful pendant can transform a space – they're a brilliant choice for bathrooms and bedrooms. Just don't diminish the value of a lamp by overusing a few.

real-life lighting scenarios

Working as a painter for 15 years and a designer for the past couple, I see a lot of finished houses and rooms. And for my money, people just don't put enough effort into lighting plans. Here are some solutions to common problems.

Hallways On many projects, I've seen five or six downlights in a row, flooding a hallway with light. Instead of filling the skinny ceiling of a hallway with umpteen downlights, focus on what's in the room. Usually hallways house art, photographs or sculptures, so instead of downlights in the centre, try installing them over to the side of the wall where the frames are located. And instead of focusing the beam downward, tilt the globe to the wall and beautiful washes of light will illuminate the wall, the artwork and, in turn, the whole space.

Take it a step further and have either wall lights - high or low - and table lamps if the space permits. Wall lights create so much more of an atmosphere than a plain downlight and, placed correctly, even a boring ceiling can have an uplight to make it more interesting.

Referred light is less harsh on the eyes and creates a feature, but just be mindful that lighting up walls can draw attention to dodgy paintwork or bad plaster joints, so make sure your finishes are top notch. A hallway is the first thing you see on entering a home, so give it the impact it deserves.

Open-plan living/dining zone

I'm steering clear of the kitchen, because it needs a whole magazine of its own, so let's focus on where we spend (or wish we could) most of our time. Again, people usually go for bucketloads of downlights and given the fact that there is a lot of open ceiling space, I can see why it's the default option - but I'd try something different.

Floor and table lamps are great for highlighting different zones - just make sure you use globes that aren't too white

and bright, and dimmable switches are always a good idea. Sam Buckby from Buckby Electrical (buckbyelectrical.com.au; our electricians on *The Block: Glasshouse*) wired all of our lighting to be controlled from an iPad. We used a C-bus system, which meant we could control floor and table lamps that were plugged into a powerpoint.

Also, commit to a lighting hero for the room. Usually an oversized pendant over the dining table is a better idea than above the coffee table. That said, if you have pendants in the kitchen, a dining pendant may not work as they could be too close and may crowd the space. Wall lights, up lights and downlights ranged close to walls are a better idea than downlights in the centre of the room - this combination will make the space feel softer. You want to create a calming aesthetic overall, with your specific task lighting being a minor element. Over-lighting a space as popular as the living/dining area is a common mistake, so remember less is always more!

Bedrooms My big issue with bedroom lighting is seeing four downlights in a square on the ceiling. I hate it... where's the creativity? Again we want to set a mood - it is the bedroom after all. Task lighting may be needed for reading and such, so either wall lights, pendants or table lamps can be present beside or just above the bedhead. If you have mirrors, downlights can be used to assist putting on makeup and getting changed. Just make sure the fitting is not too far from the mirror - otherwise, it may render it useless.

Warning: don't over-light your bedroom. Soft downlights against walls to highlight art can create atmosphere, as can wall lights. Go out on a limb and have an uplight throw a beam from the floor against a wall. This referred light is sexy as hell, but make sure the light is warm and that the globe won't get too

hot. Kids' rooms may not need as much task-oriented light, but you may need a night-light for the little ones. Keep it soft - we do not want them over-stimulated before bedtime. If you have a baby, a task light may be needed for changing and feeding, but keep it specific. As a rule in general, ask yourself 'what do I want lit in the room?' before you make the trek to the lighting store.

So, when it comes to your lighting plan, get on to it early and even better, talk to your sparky! They've done it a thousand times and will have some great ideas. Sam, our electrician on *The Block*, created a plan with us, instead of Simon and I telling him what we wanted and how we wanted it. They're the experts, and if you're not confident with them, give me a call. I'm happy to pop around for a cuppa and we can smash out a plan together!



FLOOR SHOW Use your floor lamp as an opportunity to add a complementary detail to suit the room's overall scheme.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ARMELLE HABIB. STYLING: HEATHER NETTE KING. ARTWORK: GRAHAM FRANSELLA



Follow Shannon and VosCreative on Instagram @shannonjvos