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LIGHTING IN ARCHITECTURE

# Magnum Opus

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# Bright Ideas

For the new Spielfeld Digital Hub in Berlin – a space that fuses event and workspace lighting – Studio De Schutter sought to use light as a means to inspire innovation.

PROJECT DETAILS

Spielfeld Digital Hub, Berlin, Germany  
 Client: Spielfeld Digital Hub  
 Lighting Design: Studio De Schutter, Germany  
 Architect: LXS, Germany  
 Photography: Ishootbuildings, Studio De Schutter



Previous Page Spielfeld Digital Hub fuses open, flexible workspaces with events spaces in an environment atypical to the usual office space - the goal was to have a space that "promotes innovation". This Page Track lighting from formalighting, alongside hanging pendants from R2B and LEDs C4 illuminate the space as part of a lighting scheme that is entirely Bluetooth controllable - thus enabling more flexibility for the end user.

**F**or many modern workspaces, one of the key ambitions for clients is to have a space that will foster creativity and inspire innovation. But how can lighting design help to create such an environment? This was the challenge that Studio De Schutter was tasked with, working alongside architects LXS Y on the Spielfeld Digital Hub in Berlin, Germany. Situated in a former post office, Spielfeld Digital Hub combines open work areas with event spaces in an environment atypical to the usual office space. With the brief for an office that "promotes innovation", Sabine De Schutter, Founder of Studio De Schutter, explained how this impacted on the lighting design: "Our design process is about understanding user needs. Our key takeaway, from the design sessions with the client, was the need for flexibility. "Innovation is an unpredictable, agile process that requires adaptability. From an architectural and lighting point of view, this is allowing the user to adapt their space. Secondly, changing the space should be super convenient otherwise no one does it. For us, this meant looking at systems that would allow both the hosts of the space and the workshop teams to adapt the lighting in brightness, orientation and location." To create this flexible scheme, De Schutter ensured that the entire lighting system is Bluetooth controllable, meaning that the lighting can be dimmed via an app, as well as traditional switches.

Meanwhile aimable spots and tracks offer an infrastructure that can expand and change - all of which contributes to an extremely user-friendly set up that De Schutter feels will help in the client's ambition to use the space to inspire innovation. "To facilitate innovation, you need multidisciplinary teams, collaborative workflow and flexible workspaces," she said. "Lighting helps in this process by creating moods. The settings you use can make a team feel more aligned and have a positive impact on collaboration. Creating that atmosphere to collaborate, communicate and concentrate is something that lighting has the potential to do." Throughout the design process, Studio De Schutter worked closely with LXS Y - an architecture firm that De Schutter has worked with on a number of projects - collaborating to develop a space that matched up to Spielfeld's aspirations. "We have worked with LXS Y on a number of projects. We know each other's process and have a common goal: participatory, user-centred design that aims to think differently," De Schutter explained. "We all bring ideas to the table, whether they are about materials or colours or how to integrate or mount something, and in our collaboration we both influence each other. "It was very clear from the start that the client wanted to differentiate themselves from the usual Berlin start-up co-working space, not the coffee shop style bare bulbs or the usual office-like



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**“As lighting designers, our goal is to make the architecture stand out and to make the user feel good. The better we are at our work, the less people notice us, unfortunately!”**

*Sabine De Schutter, Founder, Studio De Schutter*

lighting. Through our collaborative process with the architects, Spielfeld and their clients, we found a direction and style.”

The style that the design team opted for became cleaner and more minimal over time, bringing a contemporary feel to the listed building, while still paying homage to its historical status. By revealing the original structure inside, and using a clean, simple colour palette, the architects and the Department of Listed Buildings hoped to bring back the historical charm of the space. Further to this, the lighting was used as a means of complementing the architecture, rather than taking focus away from it.

“The idea was to be minimal and not compete with the building,” De Schutter continued. “The spaces themselves are very flexible, and we provided very flexible lighting. As lighting designers, our goal is to make the architecture stand out and to make the user feel good. The better we are at our work, the less people notice us, unfortunately! All they notice is that they feel good in a particular space.” However, because of the listed status of the site, it complicated matters for De Schutter when it came to actually installing the lighting fixtures.

“Working within an existing building does have its limitations, and keeping the character of the building while changing its ultimate purpose was a challenge. Naturally, we could not mount any fixtures on the exposed pillars and beams,” she said. “Also, there are no recessed ceilings, except

for the event space, to maintain the character of the building. Therefore integrating fixtures was not even an option. Our entire lighting system is surface-mounted, from fixtures to plugs to Bluetooth modules.

“Surface-mounted lighting also means surface-mounted cabling. So in projects like these, we even design the cable layout, making sure that this was out of view and not left to change.”

Throughout the space, Studio De Schutter used surface-mounted track lighting in the form of its 3-phase track and Zero Compasso 66 directional spots, alongside RZB’s Levido Round downlights, both complemented by LEDs, C4’s Pipe and Circular pendants.

This combination of lighting options helped the design team to facilitate an environment that combines both traditional workspaces with event spaces – a hard balance to reach, but one that De Schutter feels will become a lot more prevalent in the workspaces of tomorrow.

“The combination of workspaces with event spaces is something that we see more and more of in contemporary workspaces. Offices in general are less a space to produce work and more a space to exchange ideas and meet your team. Lighting is less something that is purely functional and follows norms, instead it becomes more an element that reflects the identity of a company. The track fixtures help here to create an intimate



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1. Housed in a former post office, the design for Spielfeld Digital Hub pays homage to the building’s historical status, while still adding a contemporary feel, with a simple, clean colour palette and sparse furnishings.  
2. As workspace design continues to evolve, De Schutter believes that lighting will become less about being purely functional, and instead become an element that reflects the identity of a company.



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1. The use of curtains and bright rods help to define areas within the Spielfeld Digital Hub, guiding and offering flexibility to the user to expand and merge the spaces as and when they need to.  
2. The use of subtle track lighting with spots acts as a spine throughout the workspace. While the option to add further spots or pendants is an example of how Studio De Schutter has aligned its lighting concept with the vision of the architects, and the needs of the client.

and warm mood, away from the standard office lighting.”

As specialists in creative workspace lighting, Studio De Schutter is used to developing lighting designs that eschew the traditional template for offices, instead creating more fluid schemes in line with modern workspace requirements. “It’s all about understanding what flexibility means for the client,” De Schutter explained. “It’s not about having tracks and spots, it’s about providing different lighting layers and an appropriate infrastructure. We think about lighting in terms of scenarios, and as part of the user experience. “With lighting, we aim to add some ‘Corpitality’ to the workspace. This is hospitality mixed with the values and corporate identity that the workspace represents. It’s not just about adding the logo somewhere. For Spielfeld Digital Hub, the lighting is an extension of the way they work, of the affinity for digital tools and their values.”

At the time of writing, the world is slowly starting to return to normal following the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing global lockdown. However, one factor that will invariably be different in the future will be the role of the workspace, with workspace design no doubt changing drastically. However, De Schutter feels that this change is something that started before the pandemic even struck. “The role of offices is going to change in general, but the trend already started some time ago, with co-working,” she said. “Co-working

spaces will now have more private and less open working areas. They will become hubs for larger corporations. In terms of lighting, this will mean catering to this typology, and to different clients in one building.

“Also, workspaces will be more for teams and to create and foster team spirit, instead of a representative space for clients. I believe that we will see more creative lighting solutions, instead of traditional office lighting.”

Creative lighting solutions like that found at the Spielfeld Digital Hub. Throughout the building, while the lighting clearly serves its functional purpose, it doesn’t call to mind the stale, boring, traditional office lighting of the past. Instead it is an altogether more modern, inviting scheme that creates a feeling of warmth and creativity – an approach that De Schutter feels will be essential to the workspaces of the future.

“The lighting design for Spielfeld is warm. What I like is, you wouldn’t associate this atmosphere with office lighting,” she exclaimed. “There is no diffuse lighting at all. We want to create workspaces that don’t want to be ordinary! “For us, design is about creating meaningful spaces that positively affect people’s lives. We love working on workspace lighting because most people spend the majority of the day in boringly lit, functional spaces. We think it’s time to change that.” ■

[www.studiodeschutter.com](http://www.studiodeschutter.com)

■ LIGHTING SPECIFIED

formalighting 3 phase track  
formalighting Zero Compasso 66  
LEDs C4 Circular  
LEDs C4 Pipe pendant  
RZB Levido Round