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THE JOYOUS INNER LIFE OF A LIGHTING DESIGNER

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Evaluating the good and the beautiful through lighting is the belief behind Charles G. Stone's success. He understands the role of light in transforming architecture to expand spaces and cultivate personal experiences.

President at Fisher Marantz Stone Inc., Charles developed a passion for lighting at an early age in the theater, leading him into a successful career as an architectural lighting designer. Planning renowned projects such as Carnegie Hall, the Washington Monument, the American Museum of Natural History and the Hong Kong Airport, he joins MiND Magazine now as an upcoming speaker on April 3rd at ROAD: Retail Design Show – “Space and Possibilities” at the Galata Greek School.



“The power of light to transform architecture and enrich the human experience is unmistakable”



Tribute in Light | New York City



Many lighting designers we have interviewed on MiND come from a theatrical background. Is there any truth to developing theatrical lighting training first?

CHARLES STONE: One can easily argue that all lighting design is about bringing theatrical drama and delight to the luminous environment. And, it is true that my own fascination with light began backstage at the theater. But the theater is not the only way that people come into architectural lighting design. Our studio includes artists, interior designers, industrial designers, architectural engineers, and photographers. I think lighting is a “big tent” profession.



M Why did you move into architectural lighting?

CHARLES STONE: While there's nothing quite like the exhilaration of opening night in the theater, it is a fact that most productions that I was involved with only ran for a couple of weekends. Buildings on the other hand, may stand and "play to audiences" for lifetimes. I think I was drawn to the more durable promise of architectural lighting.



Hong Kong International Airport

M Where do you derive inspiration from? Do you find yourself looking at other lighting designs or is your inspiration completely organic?

CHARLES STONE: It is essential to stay excited about one's work so that ideas are fresh and fun. I like to look at paintings and all sorts of art. I like to travel. My wife doesn't stand next to me in museums because I'm always looking up at the lighting and then at the painting and then at the lighting – as though I was planning something. And of course, I look carefully at the other work done by architectural lighting designers from all over the world.



M What is the best career advice you've ever been given?

CHARLES STONE: A mentor of mine once told me that it's important to be as excited to go to work in the morning at age 60 as you were at age 25. I tell people that if they are not passionate about lighting design, then they shouldn't do it. Their mothers probably wanted them be doctors and lawyers anyway. As for me, I cannot wait to go to the studio in the morning.

M You have won numerous awards for projects in the lighting world. What would you say your greatest achievement is to date? Any goals you are reaching towards next?

CHARLES STONE: I am most proud of the studio that we have built over decades. I'm surrounded by people who are smarter and more creative than I am and it shows in the work every day. I couldn't pick one particular project that is a favorite. Meeting the challenges posed by rapidly changing lighting technology is what excites me these days.

M What do you feel is the greatest challenge when it comes to designing the lighting of a space?

CHARLES STONE: Successfully inhabiting the mind of the architect.



Chanel | Soho



What's the one item you can't work without?

CHARLES STONE: A sepia coloured marker pen.

“Follow your passion”



What advice would you give to someone who wants to get into lighting?

CHARLES STONE: Work for and with the best people you can find. Don't be afraid to work long hours. It's okay if they ask you to make a coffee and operate the copy machine. Most importantly, follow your passion.



What is the main thing you want the audience to take away from your talk at Space and Possibilities, titled, Powerful Light: the Coruscant and the Transformative?

CHARLES STONE: When someone opines that the lighting for a particular building or space is beautiful, my first reaction is always to ask them "Why do you think that?"

I began thinking about this talk because of that question. So I hope my audience will gain some insight into why certain kinds of spaces are so delightful.