

contemporary details

THE DEFINITIVE INTERIOR DESIGN SOURCEBOOK

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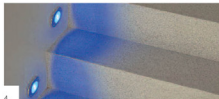
staircases/details – lighting

Nowhere is lighting more important than on stairs. Lighting stairs used to mean, at best, inset wall lights behind glass panels at various points along the flight, but new materials, such as electroluminescent (EL) film glued onto stairs, or prism-cut fibre optics, which delineate each tread without adding to the weight or bulk, have radically changed the illumination of stairs.

Light Graphix invented the new high-output, side-emitting, fibre-optic tube, coated in transparent Teflon, which provides continuous light through a 60-degree output angle – at least five times brighter than conventional side-emitting fibre optics. Phosphor ink silkscreen printed onto polyester film called electroluminescent film (EL), plugged into an electrical socket and used as integrated lighting strips on stairs, radiates enough light to be visible from a considerable distance. An alternative to LEDs, incandescent and neon EL is ultra thin, lightweight, flexible, and can be cut and

pasted on site. The disadvantages are that it is expensive and needs an inverter to operate the lamp because EL film works only on AC. Austrian company Light & Motion Lichttechnik designed stairs using EL for a Dutch theatre set and called them "Stainway to Heaven".

High-tech projects such as this – and fittings such as the Muvis "Magritte" (see picture 4) – offer consumers the possibilities and technologies that are typical of the lighting systems designed for theatre and movie sets.



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1

"Blue Step" lighting from 1 Light Graphix uses cold, intense, light-emitting diodes, (LEDs), in a range of fixtures manufactured from stainless steel and die-cast aluminium, which can be set flush, recessed, or inclined.

"Night & Day" from Albin 2 & Fontanot's "Sconik" collection of straight and spiral stairs highlights the dramatic, slim profile of open treads.

This dramatic, stainless-steel and glass staircase with oak treads was designed by Bosca for a large London home. To maximize natural light, a toughened float-glass wall lines the stairwell between the basement and ground-floor level to a height of 4.5m (14ft 9in) and balustrades are of 12mm (1/2-in-) thick, clear, toughened glass. Inset floorlights on the basement floor beam light up the flight.



3



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A floor lamp from the 4 Muvis "Magritte" collection highlights these helical stairs. An inbuilt mechanism allows the light source to be galled along two axes, each having a range of motion of more than 180 degrees. Beams of light can be adjusted in size, their intensity regulated and colour changed. A tiny but powerful chip enables each lamp to be operated from a remote control within a distance of 40m (130ft). The system can command up to 128 lighting

fixtures in the same area and can be used with lamps already in the home. Each lamp comes equipped with energy-saving devices and there are no special installation requirements.

A panel of six spotlights 5 inset below the staircase where the stairs hit the landing are concealed by a tread in a refurbishment by Pella Associates over seven floors of the SEB bank in the City of London. Boundary Metal upgraded a 1960s staircase, leaving the standard uprights to support the handrails and sliding sleeves of steel over them like fins to rig with steel cable and lighten up a dark staircase.