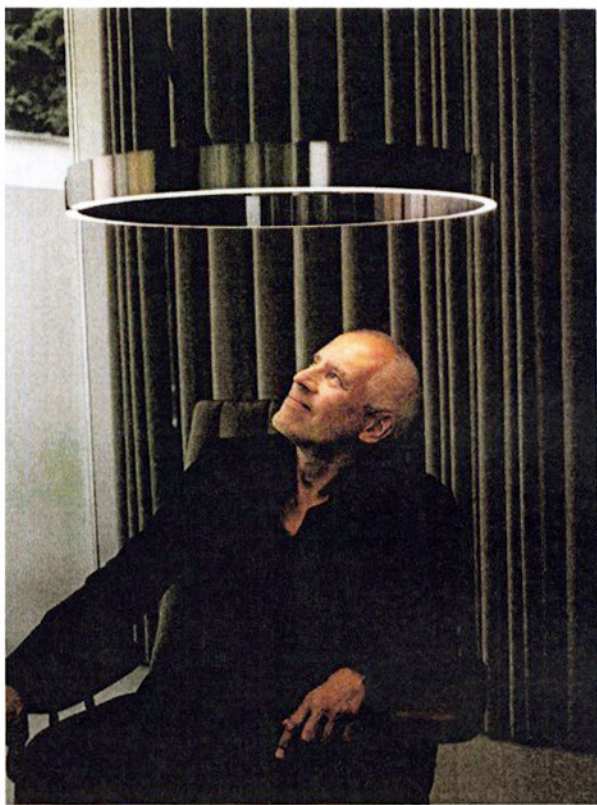


2 DESIGN: Lighting

Bright sparks

Global

There are companies out there that take lighting very, very seriously – and rightly so. Good lighting isn't just important for aesthetic purposes; it can also help to boost our mood and even our health. Here's how.



Well-thought-out lighting can improve the quality of design in any space. And it's an area of product and technological development that's rapidly improving thanks to innovations that have narrowed the gap between incandescent bulbs and LEDs. MONOCLE profiles five brands that are leading lights in the field. — 

Bespoke brightness

Occhio, Germany

"It's just like magic," says Axel Meise as he holds his hand near a circular light fixture, called Mito, that's hovering above a table in his Munich office. The light dims and Meise, the founder of German lighting company Occhio, which makes Mito, explains the logic of its design. "You can be the director of your atmosphere: with a simple gesture, you can decide the intensity, colour and where you want to position the light."

This, he says, is the power of the brand's technology. And it's a technology that sets Occhio apart from its competitors: the Bavarian operation has an in-house team of engineers developing its own electronic systems to work with its luminaires. Such a set-up is unusual in the lighting world but Meise explains to MONOCLE, when it visits Occhio's HQ, that it was a necessity born out of a number of challenges the brand has faced since its early days.



1. Occhio's rotatable and dimmable Lei luminaire
2. Axel Meise
3. Mito lights

"In the 1990s I was working as a lighting dealer and saw that architects and interior designers wanted the right quality of light for every room but for the luminaires to be consistent in terms of design concept and materiality," says Meise. "That didn't exist." In response, Meise established Occhio in 1999 and launched his first product line, Puro, a modular system of luminaires with interchangeable heads that, despite being limited in range, could be combined in many ways. It was a hit and Occhio's star product line in these early years.

However, Puro's reliance on incandescent bulbs meant that when the EU began phasing out the light source in the early 2010s, Meise had to either shut up

shop or develop a new product built around LEDs. “Back then the light quality of LEDs was not acceptable and I could not, in good conscience, sell it to our customers,” says Meise. “People would go to their favourite restaurants and couldn’t work out why they suddenly felt so wrong.”

Patiently waiting for quality to improve (and it has, slowly, with colours under some LEDs now close to natural lighting conditions), Meise set to work on the development of his own technology. “We knew that LEDs didn’t work without electronics. So while it was a painful, expensive and time-consuming process, we developed our own technology that would allow us to decide how big we would make our lights, their power and functionality.”

The result? The development of a number of LED-led lighting series, from Sento and Più (which refract the light through lenses rather than bulbs to limit glare) to Occhio’s headline act, the Mito, which launched in 2017. All, like the Puro, retain the brand’s trademark modularity, and can now be adjusted with touchless controls (users are able to change colour, height, diffuse and direction with hand gestures or a bluetooth app).

“Occhio’s lights give you the options to influence your atmosphere and affect your feelings and emotions based on mood,” says Meise, stressing that his systems aren’t just about turning lights on and off but allowing people to create a bespoke atmosphere in their homes and offices. “Light can change everything. You feel it if it’s not right. Good light is the ultimate luxury.” — NM

occhio.de

