Revelation by illumination

Inverse Lighting set out to make the most of the contemporary architecture of this home in southwest London – using concealed lighting

Photo: Markus Bstieler

In a different light: blue LEDs uplight to vertical louvres contrasts with warm ambient lighting inside

Corridor curves: hidden lighting in the corridor skylight and flush recessed uplights illuminate the curved wall

The principal challenge for Bernhard Bstieler and Inverse Lighting when illuminating this home set on a slope opposite Wimbledon Park was to reveal the modern architectural features with light.

Despite restricted site conditions, Inverse chose to conceal the lighting. Low brightness downlights are used only where directional light would benefit the ambient lighting.

This contemporary building is laid out quite differently from a typical home. There is a large open-plan living area and a triple-height staircase that links the entrance hall at the lower level to the bedrooms on the top level.

The triple-height entrance hall is 10 metres high, and lighting creates a feeling of lightness and reveals the volume and flow of the space. The spiral staircase is the striking main feature. It is suspended from a central column and a clear glass balustrade makes the stairs appear to float.

Slim and long-life fluorescent lighting is integrated into the minimal stair tread detail for ambient lighting and to give the stairs 'visual lightness'. A subtle curved down stand along the perimeter of the ceiling created just enough space for Inverse to hide long-life cold cathode lamps for continuous illumination of the curved wall.

Another significant feature is the sculpture that transforms the central column by concealing its entire length with translucent blue acrylic. Flush wall-recessed spotlights supply precise accent lighting for the sculpture.

Night light: concealed lighting to the window wall and accent lighting from downlights to the artwork in the master bedroom

At night, blue light from the LED uplights that illuminate the vertical louvres on the façade spills into the interior, creating colour contrast with the warm ambient light inside.

The exterior of the building is a series of pure forms and clean lines. While the straight lines provide the main visual structure, the elegant curved wall of the staircase softens the overall appearance.

At the rear of the main building, a glazed façade connects the interior of the building to the garden, and lighting the landscape was an important part of the project. At night,

in-ground uplights to the canopy and lighting to the garden visually link the interior space with the garden beyond.

A summer house at the bottom of the garden – but the top of the hill – is another highlight of the scheme. It is visible from the living room and rooms on the top floor.

A curved pathway leads to the summerhouse and is illuminated by custom-made wooden bollards with compact fluorescent sources. The distance between the bollards increases further from the building to acclimatise vistors to the darker surroundings.

Buried uplights, with sodium and warm white metal halide light sources, illuminate the trees with layers of light and add a three-dimensional aspect to the landscape.

The summer house itself has a completely glazed front façade that boasts an enviable view of the garden and the main building. During the day, a rectangular roof light provides natural light, while blue light from concealed fluorescent creates a glow that contrasts with the warm white light along the curved wall.

A concealed blue light illuminates the glass top of the skylight, which also serves as a table for the roof terrace above. This glowing effect supplies ambient light without disturbing the night view from the terrace.

Controls for all the lighting in the main areas is controlled by a Lutron HomeWorks system, which stores a number of 'mood' scenes as well as an economy setting. The control system also communicates with the blind control, the AV system and the security system. ◼

Make the connection: bespoke bollards and uplights to the trees visually link the main house with the summerhouse

Leading the way: recessed low-level wall lights lead up to the main entrance, and wall washers emphasise the texture of the stone-clad wall