

ILLUSION: Grand chandeliers appear to light the room, but carefully concealed downlights are actually doing the job.

At Yvonne's supper club in Boston, a designer demonstrates the way to create an opulent and sexy space with lighting. **By Gina LaVecchia Ragone**

LIGHTING DELIVERS THE DRAMA

In Boston, the 100-year-old space that was the former Locke-Ober restaurant was recently purchased by restaurateurs Chris Jamison and Mark Malatesta and transformed into a lush supper club called Yvonne's. To honor its grand old rooms, the owners decided to buck the fine dining trend toward sleekness and simplicity and instead took the opulence already inherent to the space up a serious notch.

While lighting often goes unnoticed by the guest, it's an incredibly important design element on a subconscious level.

"Light has the ability to take diners, from the moment they step off the street, from the ordinary to the extraordinary," says Ryan Fischer, the senior lighting designer at Focus Lighting in New York who created Yvonne's lighting plan. "It seems subtle and psychological, but [lighting] has an impact on everything that happens in a restaurant. Ultimately, great lighting helps create memorable experiences that guests will want to share with others and relive again and again."

Fischer explains how he created a lighting plan for Yvonne's that achieves a sense of drama, history and luxury.

The first step was to light the dining room's tables and bar tops. For this, Fischer chose functional and discreet downlights. In addition to providing necessary dining room illumination, this light reflects off of the white marble surface of the bar. "Light from the ceiling bounces off of it and creates a soft glow on the face. It fills in the shadows and makes everyone feel warm and great." (The small lamps along the bartop serve the same function.) The room's dramatic chandeliers are the apparent source of light for the room, but they're more of a decorative statement that reinforces the history of the space. Careful concealment of the recessed features provides the illusion that the chandeliers are lighting the room. Warm-hued lights were chosen throughout to mimic candlelight and gaslight.

A final tip from Fischer: Dim your lights in stages as the night goes on. People subconsciously expect a space to be fairly light at happy hour and gradually fade to nearly dark around midnight.

Wall Fixtures as Wall Art

This wall fixture in the lounge was repurposed from vintage chandeliers and wall sconces salvaged from the 100-year old space during renovations. "We re-formed it into a centerpiece. It [serves as] a layer of ambient light as well as a wall surface feature," says Fischer. The details of the piece are brought out by a hidden row of small black track lights hidden in the ceiling coffers themselves add a unique lighting layer to the room. Each recessed square features a cut-crystal light bulb in the center.



Library Highlighted

In the library, LED tapelights line the inner edge of each bookshelf. A one-inch gap between the wood trim and the shelves themselves allows the tapelights to pool on the shelves above and below. In the coffers, warm-toned rope lights bounce off the brushed metal finish.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN FISCHER

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Don't Forget Vertical Surfaces

Fischer carefully layered lighting around the perimeter of each room. "We light walls and vertical surfaces so that the room is welcoming," he explains. "Instead of a blank, dark space, those surfaces become an object on which your eye can rest." In the photo above, five concealed layers of light work to highlight the intricate details of a 140-year-old, hand-carved back bar. Track accents hidden behind a dropped soffit graze the textured cabinet doors and griffin sculptures from above, while LED tapelight integrated into stemware cases and bottle risers creates hundreds of sparkle points in the crystal and glass. Failing to light vertical surfaces is a common mistake, especially if there are interesting details along the walls. "Always consider what's in your view from every table or bar," says Fischer. 



Work with the Architecture

Fischer incorporated lighting into the existing architecture in a playful way. Here, rope lights that end in a single bulb come from the mouth of this carved lion. "We look for ways to create something special, something memorable to a specific location that gives a sense of place, sticks in your memory and is Instagram-worthy," says Fischer.