



nachtaktiv

“Let there be Light...”

Above: St. Galler Kantonalbank, Zurich. Architect: stemmle ++ architekten. Photo: Bruno Helbling
Far right: St. Gallus Catholic Church, Zurich. Architect: BKG Architekten AG. Photo: Reto Marty

Usually, we do not give much consideration to light. Which is a big mistake according to Swiss architect and lighting designer Reto Marty. His lighting design firm **nachtaktiv** in Zurich specializes in customized architectural lighting solutions and is an expert in achieving a sophisticated dialogue between light and space.

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Already in the early days of his professional career, Reto Marty was fascinated by the multiple possibilities lighting design offers: “Light affects people in three different, important ways. Light determines how we perceive our environment, in the way it reflects on surfaces and creates contours and shadows. Our perception of space and material is steered by light. Secondly, light creates a certain atmosphere which is essential for our emotions and wellbeing. And last but not least, light influences our health. Today, there is an ongoing discussion about how light regulates the human biorhythm. That is why it is so important to plan lighting professionally.”

Reto Marty founded his agency **nachtaktiv** in 2005 and today, his experience covers cultural, hospitality, retail and office schemes as well as residential and infrastructure developments. His work showcases how light can take on a multitude of roles in architecture and built environments; the projects represent architectural lighting at the top of its game.

One of **nachtaktiv**'s flagship projects is the planning of the lighting in the St. Galler Kantonalbank in Zurich (former Hyposwiss Private Bank); as a result, **nachtaktiv** sought to put people into the focus of all planning. On the one hand, it is of great importance

how clients perceive the bank and experience the building when they enter the bank. On the other hand, the wellbeing of the employees is a decisive factor for their commitment. Throughout the building, the lighting is subtly integrated into the architecture. In certain areas it supports the function of the rooms. The representative grand customer foyer is lit by a glass chandelier, whereas floor lamps with fabric lampshades create a homely atmosphere in the clients' meeting rooms. The office space has a pleasant working light through the integrated lamps in the ceilings. Thereby, the whole lighting system is extremely energy efficient.

Light and its effect on buildings and spaces always held a fascination for Reto Marty. Before founding his agency, he took a degree in architecture and completed training as a lighting designer. “The right lighting supports the architecture and that is why it is so important to have an expert knowl-



edge about architectural structures,” explains Reto Marty. “Besides, many of my clients are architects or I work very closely together with them so you need understand their language.”

A successful project proving **nachtaktiv**'s creativity and competence is the lighting redesign in the Catholic church of St. Gallus in Zurich. This project was all about creating the right atmosphere for the services and prayers. At the entrance, the worshipper is welcomed by subdued light in a warm atmosphere. Processing further, the nave with the magnificent stained glass window leaves a strong impression. In spite of the high, spacious nave visitors feel sheltered in the warm light of the pendant luminaires.

But Reto Marty is not only an expert in interior lighting; his portfolio shows some extraordinary solutions for external lighting. The ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute for Technology) trusted **nachtaktiv** to plan its urban university district thus supporting the extensive urban structure of the area and giving orientation and security at the same time. The basic idea was to deliver an optimal experience of night-time by using as minimal a light intensity as possible. In several steps the exterior lighting of the whole area has been renewed and supplemented by using street lamps and bollards from the same design family. Additionally,



Reto Marty created a special atmospheric shade luminaire for the project.

Again, the realization of the ETH Zurich project is proof that sustainability and energy efficiency are not just empty phrases for **nachtaktiv**. In spite of installing 19 additional lights the electricity consumption is now lower by 75%. **nachtaktiv** is fit for the future: “In Switzerland we care a lot about sustainability, energy saving and light pollution by night. Professional light planning also means directing the light where it is

needed and using exactly the necessary light intensity. The lighting industry made huge progress there and it is very exciting to work in this field.”

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Bottom right, clockwise: Dos Verandas, Erlenbach. Architect: gus wüstemann architects. Photo: Bruno Helbling
Kulturachse, Winterthur. Photo: Stadtwerk Winterthur
Tramtunnel Schwamendingen, Zurich. Architect: raumgleiter GmbH. Photo: Christoph Altermatt
ETH Hönggerberg, Zurich. Photo: Milo Keller

