

Making light of it: Schätti

If light is one of the fundamental elements of architecture, then Swiss lighting brand Schätti is laying the foundation.

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Schätti has metal in its blood. And we're not talking just iron levels.

When it comes to the innovation-led transformation of metal into a diverse range of products, the premium Swiss manufacturer – now in its third generation of family ownership – knows its stuff. Call them modern-day alchemists.

Take their ongoing lighting brand Schätti Leuchten – developed from a collaboration with award-winning Zurich-based product designer Jörg Boner. Launched in 2012 and positioned squarely in the workspace and architectural-lighting markets, the brand has transformed the formal linearity of sheet steel, with its relative thinness, into a considered and consistent design language for an LED-powered lighting collection – one characterised by reduction, line and a visual lightness.

‘Our luminaires are reserved,’ explains Schätti MD Thomas Schätti. ‘Yes, design plays an important role, but not in the foreground. For us, design is about integration. Our lighting products always find themselves in a space that already accommodates other things, objects, colours, materials. Depending on the choice of colour, more or less visual weight can be given to the luminaire.’

In a way, what do you expect? Discretion has long been one of Switzerland’s brand values. Schätti has deployed precision Swiss production, often involving expert handwork, to create a convincing and varied product portfolio that’s, in turn, eminently deployable in a range of interior-architectural typologies – and all attended by supreme lighting comfort and energy efficiency. Its ceiling, floor, wall and pendant luminaires – which differ in form but share the same pared-down design lexicon – have been

specified for a raft of workplace, educational, as well as healthcare settings.

But while the products may be reserved, the company isn't, driven as it is by passion and a commitment to its craft. The same applies, needless to say, to its chief collaborator Jörg Boner. For him, the shift in the industry to LED lighting was a major opportunity to steal a march. 'As it was such a drastic change in technology, every company in the market found itself at the same point for a short moment – as if they all had to start from scratch almost. So, we took a close look at the market and drew some conclusions from it. The success of the Schätti collection proves we rethought the right points. We focus strongly on the tasks that light has to fulfil in architecture.'

Witness Boner's Circular light – available in ceiling, pendant and floor variants and in various diameters – as a prime example of this thinking. Geometrically perfect, the continuous, precise line of its slightly conical, metal band delineates the field in which the light source sits. On a functional level as a luminaire, the piece serves to support and enhance architecture, while at the same time being a piece of micro-architecture itself.

For Boner, the stakes are high in lighting design. 'A light isn't just for decorative purposes. It's primarily a device. And a device meets needs; it has to work. So, a luminaire is, therefore, a small machine. Developing one requires the meeting of poetry, mechanics and electronics. I find this fascinating. It's something you don't necessarily find in other forms of product design.'

But, it's not just the products that are on the table, according to Thomas Schätti. The company offers design professionals its valuable know-how, too. 'We already have many architects who rely on Schätti,' he explains. 'Something first has to attract them, of course, but then they get the expert advice they need. So, we place a lot of importance on consulting. And, as part of this, responding to the individual needs of our clients, where required, through custom-made, special solutions.'

Never was lighting so illuminated.

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