

The hospitality of their Georgian hosts was something for which Pedota and Weller were very grateful. Here they are dining al fresco with Badri Samsonadze, Head professor, Faculty of Architecture, Tbilisi State Academy of Arts; and Nina Samsonadze, Programming Director at the Georgian National Museum.

Teaching Lighting in Georgia



Overlooking Tbilisi, Georgia, the site of a cultural and educational exchange revolving around architectural lighting.

Two U.S.-based lighting designers traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia to expose architects, engineers, city officials, and students to the importance of lighting design, and to pass along their own practical knowledge. The IALD-sponsored program was a significant step forward for lighting education, as well as an important cultural experience for all.

Today's best lighting designers see their profession as a global one, and have a commitment to educating the next generation of lighting professionals—wherever they happen to be. Which helps explain why Sherry Weller and Giulio Pedota found themselves in Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia, on the east coast of the Black Sea, to conduct a series of architectural lighting seminars.

The main organizer of the event was the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, with assistance from the Georgian National Museum, the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, and the IALD, Chicago. The workshops were conducted in the Georgian National Museum Auditorium, and the attendees included city officials, architects, engineers, designers, and students from the academy. A professional translator was used.

Rich in history

Tbilisi has an old and rich cultural and artistic history, which made it a fitting choice for an international exchange on architectural lighting. Located strategically at the crossroads between Europe and Asia and lying along the historic Silk Road routes, Tbilisi has literally

been fought over for centuries by rivaling powers and empires, and its history can be traced through its architecture.

Broad avenues contrast with narrow streets dating back to Medieval times. Mosques and synagogues are situated side-by-side in one district, although the city is overwhelmingly orthodox Christian. Tbilisi is demographically diverse and has, throughout its history, been home to people from different cultures, religions, and ethnicities. It boasts a number of museums and art galleries, and several famous artists reside there.

Perhaps most importantly, Georgia is now enjoying the economic benefits of being an independent state, free from the influence of the Russian government, and is emerging as an important transit route for global energy and trade projects.

"We found the participants, even the younger students, to be very well-educated in general," said Pedota.

"They were very curious, they wanted to fill in the voids in their knowledge," said Weller. "We started with the basics: light and color, how it influences vision and perception,



Sherry Weller giving a workshop. A professional translator interpreted for the benefit of the participants.

Students standing in front of a façade during a Mock-Up demonstrating a grazing technique.



what makes it so important, etc. Then we got to practical matters such as glare, adequate illumination for particular tasks, why some things work and others don't, and so forth."

Ten workshops stretched over four days, with plenty of time for discussion, tours of buildings, and lighting mock-ups arranged by the guests (for a list of the workshop topics, see sidebar). Also, since Tbilisi is famous for its hospitality, food, and wine, the work was frequently broken up by meals and entertaining.

A meeting with the city's electrical engineers was arranged for Weller and Pedota to advise on the lighting of current projects, including the new Ministry of Defense building, and other significant city projects.

The guest designers soon found that the engineers were adept at producing great Photoshop renderings of the buildings being illuminated. However, they lacked the fixture expertise to execute their designs. Weller and Pedota made several recommendations to help the engineers achieve their objectives. The team discussed how the emphasis needs to be on lighting the architecture in order to enhance the building, not detract from it. Most

of the buildings illuminated by the engineers placed a lot of emphasis on the fixtures and/or the beam distribution (hotspots that detracted from appreciation of the architecture).

Cultural clash over color?

According to Pedota, several of Tbilisi's most historic buildings were being lit with color-changing fixtures. This included the Parliament of Georgia building, which has a rather somber history (several people were killed there during the Russian occupation), achieving—in the Americans' eyes—a carnival-like effect that was quite out of step with the history and architectural tone of the building. There were some spirited, yet diplomatic, discussions about alternatives to the colored lights that would accentuate the facades of these important buildings in a dignified manner.

Weller and Pedota also met with architects and exhibit designers for the new museum currently being renovated. Most of the meetings were comprised of a review of the project and the current lighting design (if any), and providing recommendations as required to solve specific lighting-design

challenges. Fixtures from the U.S., especially fixtures manufactured by the event's sponsoring manufacturers, were recommended as part of the design solution.

The Mock-Up

Lighting mock-ups were conducted by Weller and Pedota on real-life venues with the equipment donated by the sponsoring manufacturers. Fixtures were mounted on top of the buildings to illuminate sculptures and a cable car in one city plaza. Demonstrations of facade lighting were also conducted. Techniques such as grazing facades from below, or lighting facades from other buildings across the plaza, were employed. According to Weller and Pedota, the use of ceramic-metal-halide lamps to achieve this effect delighted their audience, who had never seen the warm color temperature and color rendition of such a source.

"This was one of the highlights of our experience in Tbilisi," said Pedota. "To see the effect of the ceramic-metal-halide lights on the structures, and the students' reactions to it, made us realize that we had exposed them to something completely new, that they had

Participants ready lighting on a building façade for one of the Mock-Ups, intended to demonstrate various types of architectural illumination.

Even some important historical government buildings in Tbilisi have been lit with color-changing fixtures, which to the American eye tend to give them an inappropriately carnival-like impression.



never seen before," stated Pedota.

The two guest designers toured old and new buildings throughout the city. At the new building of the Ministry of Defense, they provided recommendations during the walk-through. Another highlight was the newly opened Russian Occupation Exhibit at the Georgian National Museum. Weller and Pedota were given a private tour by the exhibit designers, who had three months to complete the exhibit, a request that came from the current president.

"I was extremely impressed by the Russian Occupation exhibit, both the setup, and the somber mood achieved through the lighting, particularly in view of the fact that the exhibit designers had only three months to pull it together," said Pedota. "They worked with what they had and created an exhibit that will give visitors a stark impression of what life was like during the occupation."

As the visit came to an end, Weller and Pedota were proud and satisfied with their accomplishments. "We left all of the participants with our contact information should they want to remain in touch," said Weller.

"While they can certainly feel free to call on our expertise for future projects, I feel confident that eventually the architects, engineers, contractors, and students of Georgia will create and execute their own lighting design projects, now that they know what technology is out there, and how to use it. On the other hand, there is still a lot we can do to help Georgians increase their capacity to meet today's lighting design standards," said Pedota.

The two guest designers are also grateful for the enormous hospitality they received during their visit—the food and wine, according to Weller, were exceptional. "We would like to toast this great nation, its people, its generosity and hospitality, as well as the generosity and commitment of everyone who made this trip possible. May the Georgians learn the art and science of Lighting Design," concluded the pair's report. ▲

Editor's note: Sherry Weller and Giulio Pedota wish to thank the following people whose help was instrumental in making the Tbilisi project a success: Natia Trapaidze, Public Affairs/Cultural Asst. at the U.S. Embassy, Tbilisi; Nina

Samsonadze, Program Director at the Georgian National Museum; Badri Samsonadze, Head professor, Faculty of Architecture, Tbilisi State Academy of Arts; Julie Blankenheim, Committee Chair, IALD; David Ghatan, and Michael Nishnianidze, interpreter.

The Participants

Speakers: Giulio Pedota, Schuler Shook; and Sherry Weller, Weller Design Architectural Lighting

Venue: Georgian National Museum Auditorium

Attendees: Tbilisi city officials, architects, engineers, designers, and students from the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts.

Organizers: U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, assisted by the Georgian National Museum, the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, and IALD.

Sponsors: Acuity Brands Lighting, Atlanta; Belfer Group, Farmingdale, NJ; Cooper Lighting, Peachtree City, GA; Focal Point LLC,

Within the newly opened Russian Occupation Exhibit at the Georgian National Museum, spotlights illuminate the jail doors where Georgia's political prisoners were incarcerated by the Russians.



The two guest designers toured the Tbilisi Ministry of Defense building, currently under construction, and gave recommendations on lighting design.



The guest designers toasting their hosts



Chicago; IO Lighting, Vernon Hills, IL; Kurt Versen Co., Westwood, NJ; Lightolier, Fall River, MA; LSI Industries Inc., Cincinnati; Lumascape, San Carlos, CA; Lutron Electronics Co. Inc., Coopersburg, PA; Schuler Shook, Chicago; *Specified Lighting Design*, Barrington, IL; Traxon USA Inc., New York City; Visa Lighting, Milwaukee; Winona Lighting, Winona, MN; Zumtobel Lighting Inc., Highland, NY.

Georgian workshop topics:

Here are the seminar topics presented by Sherry Weller and Giulio Pedota:

- Light and Color
- Light, Vision, and Perception
- Psychology of Light
- Light Sources
- General Types of Lighting Applications
- Luminaires
- Lighting Calculations
- Lighting Applications – Interior and Exterior
- Lighting Documentation for Construction
- The Profession

The Instructors

Sherry Weller had been working as an architect for 10 years when she became interested in lighting design, and now has been working as a lighting designer for 17 years. She received a M.A. in Architecture from the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1988 and also has a B.A. in Conceptual Design. She has worked as an independent lighting consultant on projects for UC Berkeley, the Steinhart Aquarium, Maui Ocean Center, and Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. For the past six years, Sherry has taught architectural lighting design at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco and has managed her own lighting-design business, Weller Design, San Rafael, CA, since 2001. She has been involved in a variety of lighting projects including concert halls, houses of worship, retail, commercial, museum exhibits, and private art collections. Sherry's background in architecture has been key in the way she approaches lighting design. Her strength is in combining her architectural background with her experience in lighting design to generate skillfully executed environments.

Giulio Pedota began his career as a lighting designer at the national theatre of Caracas, Venezuela, his native country. His passion for lighting eventually brought him to Schuler Shook, Chicago, where he has made use of his theatrical and engineering experience to work on a wide variety of architectural lighting projects. He enjoys the collaborative process among the different disciplines in the field and sees this interaction as an opportunity to discover the world and grow in every aspect of life. Giulio is the current president of the Chicago Section of the IESNA. He has been a guest lecturer at the Chicago AIA, the IESNA National Conference, Illinois Institute of Technology, Columbia College, and The Art Institute of Chicago, to name a few. Significant projects in the City of Chicago alone include The Chicago Board of Trade Building, The Palmolive Building, Loyola University Museum of Art, Loyola University's Madonna Della Strada Chapel, Museum of Science and Industry, The Art Institute of Chicago, Lincoln Park Zoo, DePaul University, and The Field Museum.