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WESTCOAST LIGHTING INSIDER



Three Next-Gen California Lighting Designers, Learning OTJ

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The 40under40 lighting designers honored at the [Lighting Design Awards 2019](#) are among the most talented and promising individuals working in the industry. Three young California professionals – Vasudha Rathi of HLB Lighting Design, and Becky Yam and Michael Lombardi from Sean O'Connor Lighting – were among the honorees. In recent years they have been developing their skillsets, collaborative techniques, and lighting design sensibilities.

All three were kind enough to write something about their professional evolution; to share a single project that informed and inspired them. They will carry these lessons into future projects, as they become leaders in the lighting design profession and major influencers in architectural lighting.



VASUDHA RATHI joined **HLB Lighting's** San Francisco office in 2011 and has progressed to associate. She has been working on multifamily housing projects (both affordable and market-rate), tenant improvements, landscape lighting, and managing design-build projects. She earned a bachelor's in architecture from Aayojan School of Architecture, in India, and then the Master of Building Science from the University of Southern California. She started in lighting as an intern at Francis

Krahe's office.



The historic renovation of the lobby of 140 New Montgomery in San Francisco required improved illumination and visual balance while maintaining cohesion with the original intent of this iconic, art deco gem. The HLB team, led by former Principal Angela McDonald, spent a great deal of time and energy to internalize the intent of the original building architects in terms of place and time and the historical importance of the former Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company Building. We used this historical research to inspire and develop lighting concepts for the lobby that utilize modern-day technology while remaining true to the architecture and interior

design of the space.

One of the biggest challenges was to retrofit and preserve the historic pendants in the space. We worked with [Perkins+Will](#) and the client, providing them with ideas on how to integrate LED sources while maintaining the aesthetics of the fixture and the quality of light coming from it. The lovingly restored pendants helped the project earn recognition at the IES San Francisco's SF-LUX awards in 2016. The overall lighting design implemented in the lobby creates an experience that is truly remarkable – reviving the once-dormant magnificence of San Francisco's first skyscraper.



As an associate at [Sean O'Connor Lighting](#) in Los Angeles, **BECKY YAM** emphasizes collaboration throughout the lighting design and construction process. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design from Seattle Pacific University, and has developed a strong technical ability with deep experience lighting residential, retail, hospitality and tenant-improvement projects.



The Edgar N. Putman Event Pavilion at the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, PA, taught me that simplicity is often the most elegant, cohesive, and flexible solution – but it's not always easy. The pavilion is surrounded on three sides by a 20 ft-tall glass curtain wall, which faces an equally high perimeter stone site wall

about 7 ft away from the glass. The illumination of the stone wall is critical at night as it becomes a visual extension of the space. A grazing solution with a narrow distribution and warm color temperature highlights the stone. After a series of mock-ups, we worked with the fixture manufacturer to create an uplight with a custom 2 degree tilt. The budget did not originally allow for the number of fixtures required to evenly illuminate the entire length of the wall, but we fought for this effect. The client ultimately raised funds by providing donors with an engraved brick placed next to the fixture their donation supplied.

With the impressive stone wall as backdrop, it was imperative to maintain clean architectural lines in the interior. A series of linear slots conceals surface-mounted downlights, along with retractable mounts for theatrical light fixtures and AV gear, as well as other building systems. This project involved close collaboration with the architects, [KieranTimberlake](#), as detailing and mock-ups were essential. We shared a similar aesthetic that prioritized lighting and architectural integration, which resulted in a cohesive final outcome.




MICHAEL LOMBARDI is an award-winning lighting designer with work across Europe, Asia and the Mideast. He holds a Bachelor of Architectural Engineering from The Pennsylvania State University, which led to an internship at Fisher Marantz Stone in New York City. Now a senior associate at [Sean O'Connor Lighting](#), Michael has designed a variety of hospitality, civic, retail, and daylighting-intensive projects.




The renovation of a historic 1920s neoclassical building, the former Bank of Italy in Downtown Los Angeles, into The NoMad LA offered a unique learning opportunity in the dance between preservation and present-day. The contemporary design sensibility of the hotel, created and managed by the Sydell Group, required high-caliber lighting and design skills: carefully introducing architectural lighting suited to hospitality, preserving the historic Italianate inspiration, meeting Title 24, and a limited budget.

To convert the entry space into a restaurant and lobby, the building was stripped to its original architecture. Working with the architect, [KFA Architecture](#), and historic team, we installed custom monopoints within the beautifully detailed historic ceiling; after conducting mockups to perfect the design. A sophisticated lighting control system in the guestrooms helps meet Title 24 requirements. Custom low-voltage keypads with metal faceplates provide a simple control interface. The system offers the advantages of networked lighting, with a straightforward guest experience.

To adhere to the prescribed budget, the team conducted a detailed and conscientious value engineering exercise during design. This project's delicate balancing act – a journey of discovery, really – was honored with a 2019 Lumen West Award of Excellence from the IES Los Angeles Section.

 About the Author

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