Lights in Alingsas

communities embracing an urban lighting culture

Author: © James Wallace MIES, ELDA

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Occasion: IES-the lighting society
General Meeting
Perth, Australia

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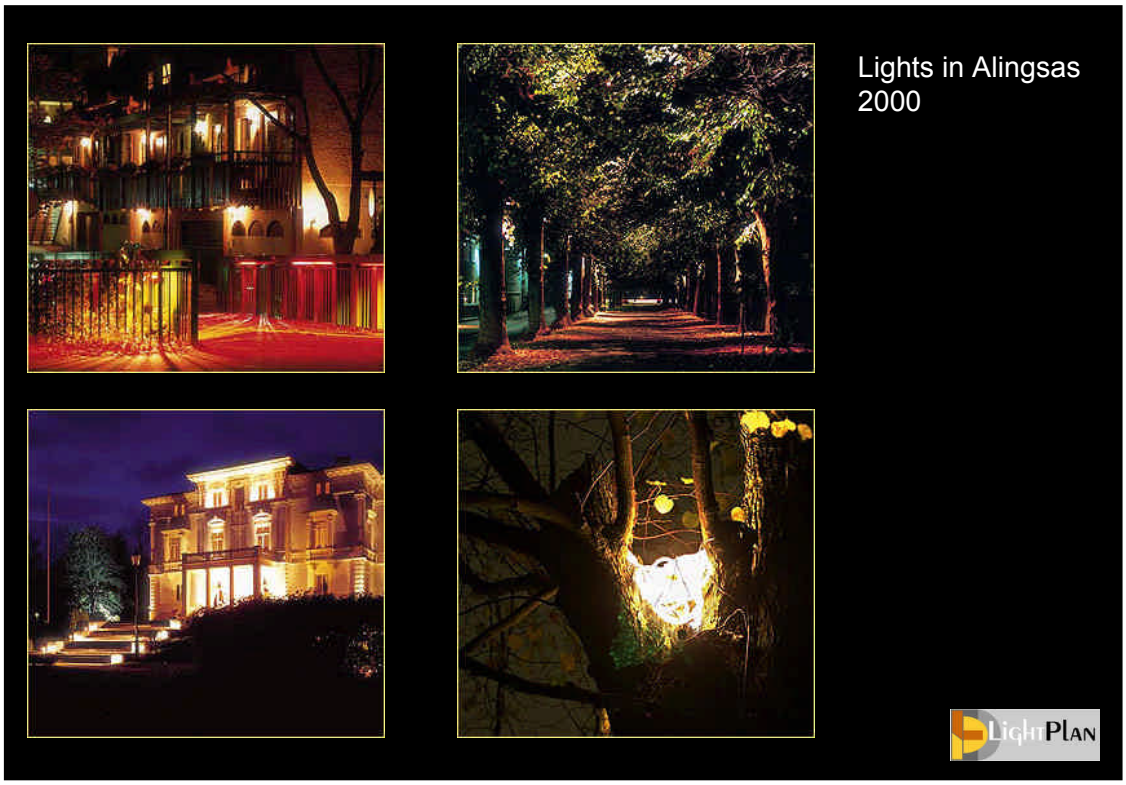
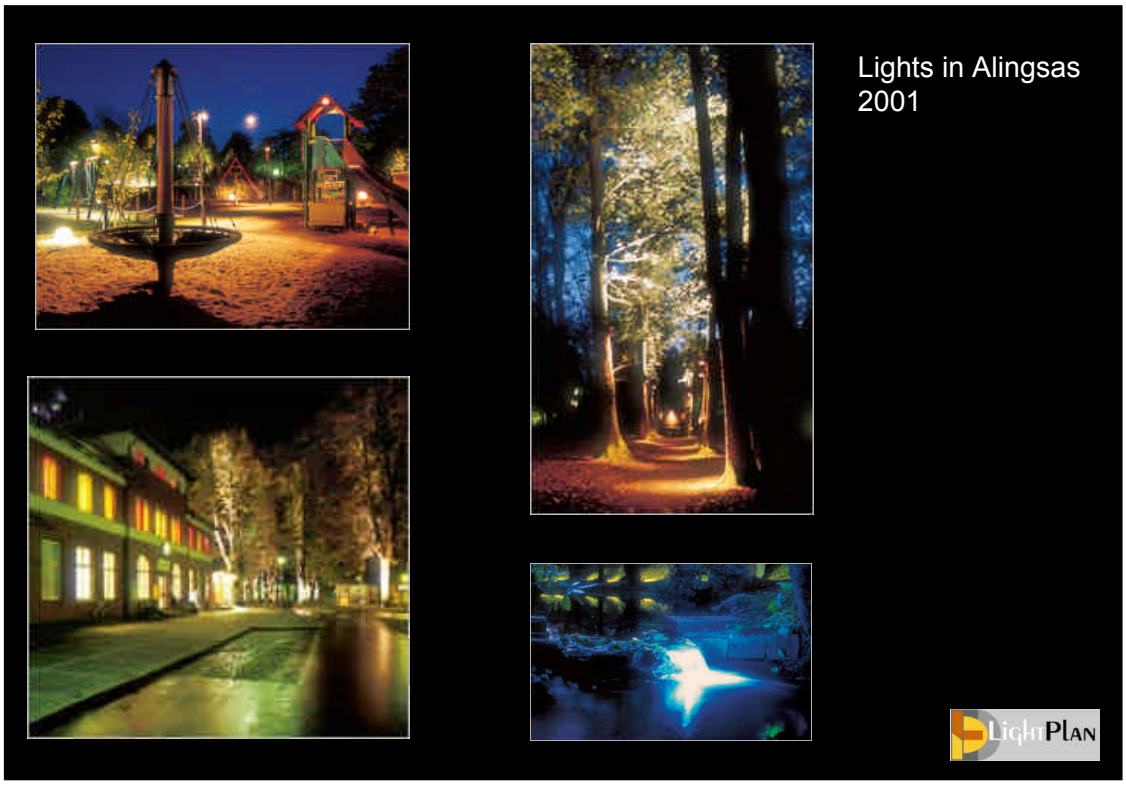


Every October since the year 2000, a small group of professional lighting designers from all over the world, meet at Alingsås in Sweden. “Lights in Alingsas” is billed as northern Europe’s largest event featuring the experimental illumination of public places.

Each lighting designer has pre-selected a project site in advance, and has undertaken to create an innovative lighting design assisted by the students attending their workshop.



Their brief is to transform autumnal darkness and mundane outdoor locations into exciting and evocative works of light.

Anonymous, rain-beaten building facades become warm and colourful. Woodland lakes turn into futuristic runways. And new, welcoming meeting places are created in oases of light in the town.

In addition to people from the lighting industry, more than 30,000 visitors come to see the illuminations and experience the temporary installations operating for a period of only one month.

As well as the walks and guided tours between the lighting realisations, there is also a Seminar for people involved in the lighting industry, and courses in garden lighting for the general public.

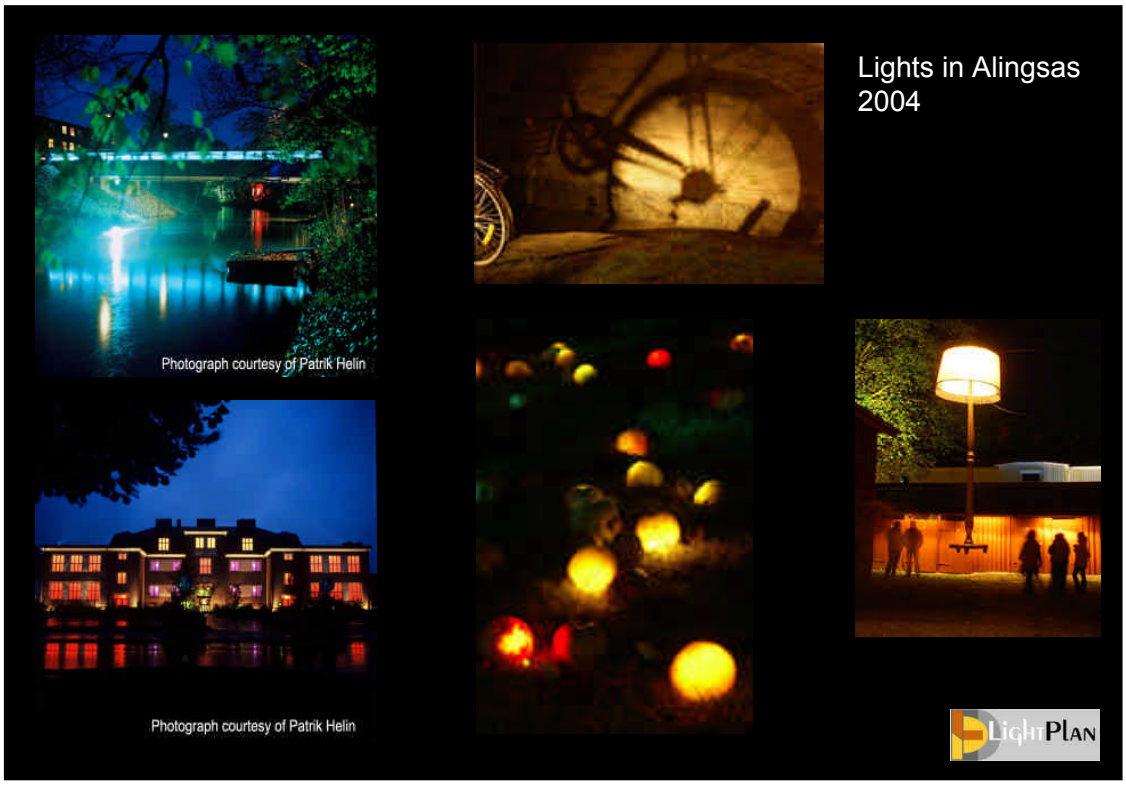
In the evenings there are escorted night walks along mysteriously lit paths, cultural exhibitions and concerts on the theme of light and, for coffee enthusiasts, the popular cafés of Alingsås.

This ongoing project is an integral part of the “Vision 2010” strategy, which aims to develop the Municipality's housing, education, infrastructure and commercial sectors.

Their vision is that, “Alingsås is the pleasant wooden town with a vivid countryside. A regional location gives Alingsas all the benefits of a small town, and at the same time the possibilities of the big city. By the year 2010, the municipality focus is on knowledge with growth, in a unique environment with 40,000 inhabitants”.

The task of illuminating Alingsås starts with a Workshop one week before the event opens to the public, when the invited lighting designers join forces in the town with some sixty students from all over the world to enhance various outdoor locations. The total number of participants and staff swells to around 100 for the workshop week.

Over the years, projects have included viaducts and sports centres, parks and weirs, buildings facades and courtyards – in fact, all the kinds of environments to be found in and around a town.



For the students, who are often studying subjects such as architecture and the various design disciplines, the workshop week is an important part of their training.

It gives them the opportunity to work in a practical “hands on” environment and at full scale, with ample resources and design professionals to instruct them in the art and science of lightning design.

Volunteer electrical apprentices from the local Technical Collage are involved in running cables, making connections, and providing the participants with technical assistance during the week, which gives them unbeatable practical and theoretical knowledge.

The project is essentially a partnership between the Municipality of Alingsås and ELDA (European Lighting Designers´ Association), of which I am a member, an organisation that works to promote lighting design and the understanding of its importance in architecture and design.

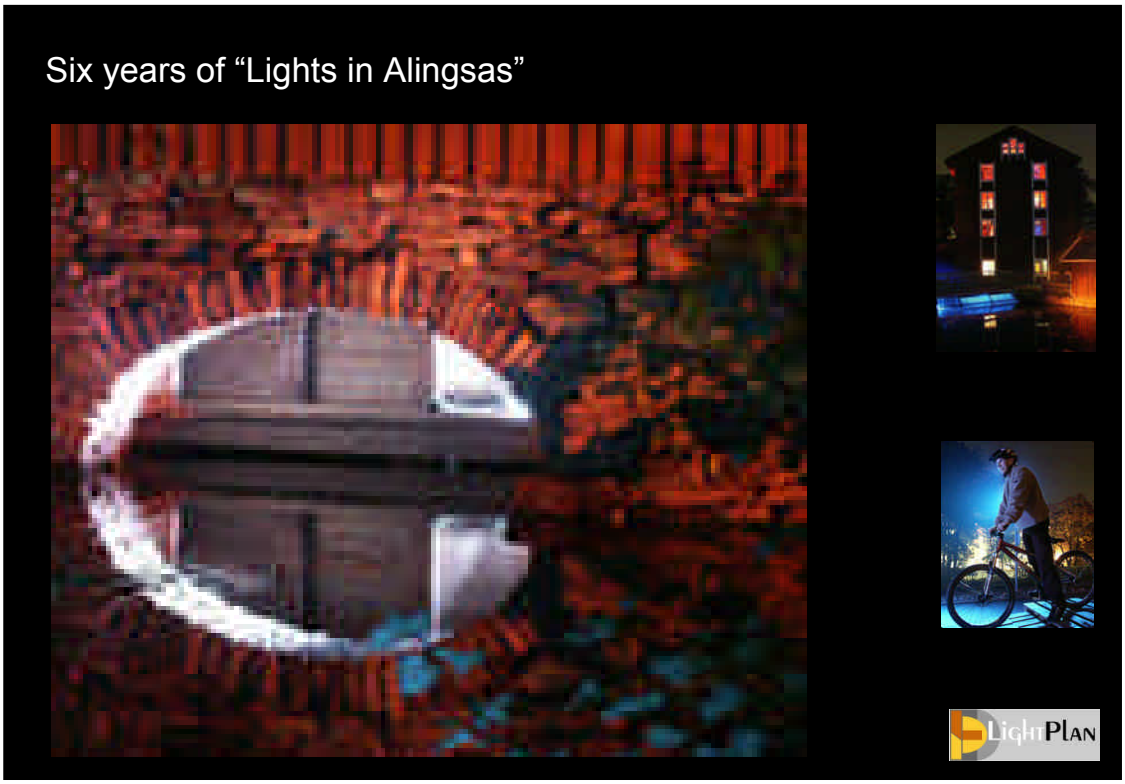
Last year I was invited to Alingsas, and had the privilege of being one of six Heads of Workshop for Lights in Alingsas 2005.

The remainder of my presentation will look at:-

• an overview of how "Lights in Alingsas" is organised, and why it has become so successful in a short period of time

•my personal experiences and observations from being involved in an established, professionally organised, international lighting workshop, and

•the lighting design process my group applied to realise our project



The Municipality of Alingsas, with its 36,000 inhabitants, has made lighting design in public spaces a central theme and core concept of their urban development strategy as a means of counteracting the dwindling number of inhabitants.

The Town is investing to enhance the quality of life in the Municipality.

The latest results to hand confirm that:-

- The birth rate has never been higher.
- More people are moving to the Municipality and setting up home there.
- Within a few years the Town has recorded an increase in the population of 1,000, which is equivalent to a growth rate of 3%.
- That means 300 new dwellings and thus an investment of 35-45 million euros in the area. (A$58-75 million)
- This is fantastic news for the Town, the Councillors, the Mayor, and the politicians.

Negotiations are held between ELDA and the Municipality (Alingsas Kommun) about 12 months before the next workshop is due to be held. The Workshop Heads are not personally involved in this Phase, however I am able to outline the Goals that are set and re-evaluated at the onset of the negotiation session.

The Goals of the "Lights in Alingsas" event are simply split into two areas:-

Education:- involves

1) education of participants, mainly students of lighting design and related design professions
2) education of clients (the Town Councillors, staff, and suppliers as the partners of the workshop)
3) education of the general public (both resident in Alingsas and visitors)

Marketing:- involves

1) marketing of the lighting design profession and ELDA+ as an active association
2) marketing of the individual ELDA+ members
3) broadening the market for lighting design and lighting designers
4) providing examples of good lighting design to a client who is then in a position to market themselves (the Town and the lighting installations)
5) experimenting with products and providing feedback for lighting equipment manufacturers (this is taken very seriously)

Phase 1: Discussion with City

….signed agreement about 9 months before workshop

A signed agreement is prepared about 9 months before the date of the Workshop.

This agreement embraces the education and marketing goals, and of course the funding arrangements to achieve them.

Phase 2: Preparation

….from March 2005

The invited Lighting Designers arrive in Alingsas most (including me) for the very first time, for a 3-day Preparatory Meeting in late March, being about 6 months prior to the scheduled date of the Workshop.

Ref map.

The Preparatory Meeting is held over a weekend. It started on a Friday morning and finished up on the Sunday, so I flew into Gothenburg, Sweden on the Thursday (the day before) and travelled the 45 kms by taxi to the Town of Alingsas.

Arriving one day early gave me an opportunity to realign my circadian clock and acclimatise to the Scandinavian springtime!!!

This is the scene that greeted me as I arrived in Alingsas……

Our weekend had a tight but comfortable schedule.

Essentially the time revolved around identifying 6 projects sites that the Town could work with so as to create a manageable and interesting tour for visitors.

Incidentally, all of the sites shown here (and more) were considered as possibilities for realising a lighting scheme.

The next few pictures will give a further impression of the Town and immediate landscapes.

We undertook walks during the daytime. By about midday it was often sunny with blue skies ……even though the temperature was a little chilly at about zero degrees.

We also walked in the dark after dinner to gain important night-time perspectives of the sites under consideration……..I was told by the locals the temperature was minus 10 to minus 15 degrees during these walks.

We walked to Alingsas Energy and were shown through the location that would be transformed into the “Lights in Alingsas Headquarters” in 6 month’s time.

Bottom left – our storage workshop & workrooms

Top right – “The Pumphouse” – for our daily morning co-ordination meetings between Workshop Heads, the Workshop Co-ordinator, ELDA management, Alingsas Energy staff, various support staff, invited suppliers’ lighting technicians, and guest observers….everyone except the student participants.

As part of the prelim meeting schedule, the invited LD's take part in a media interview and a number of photo-shoots for future publicity.

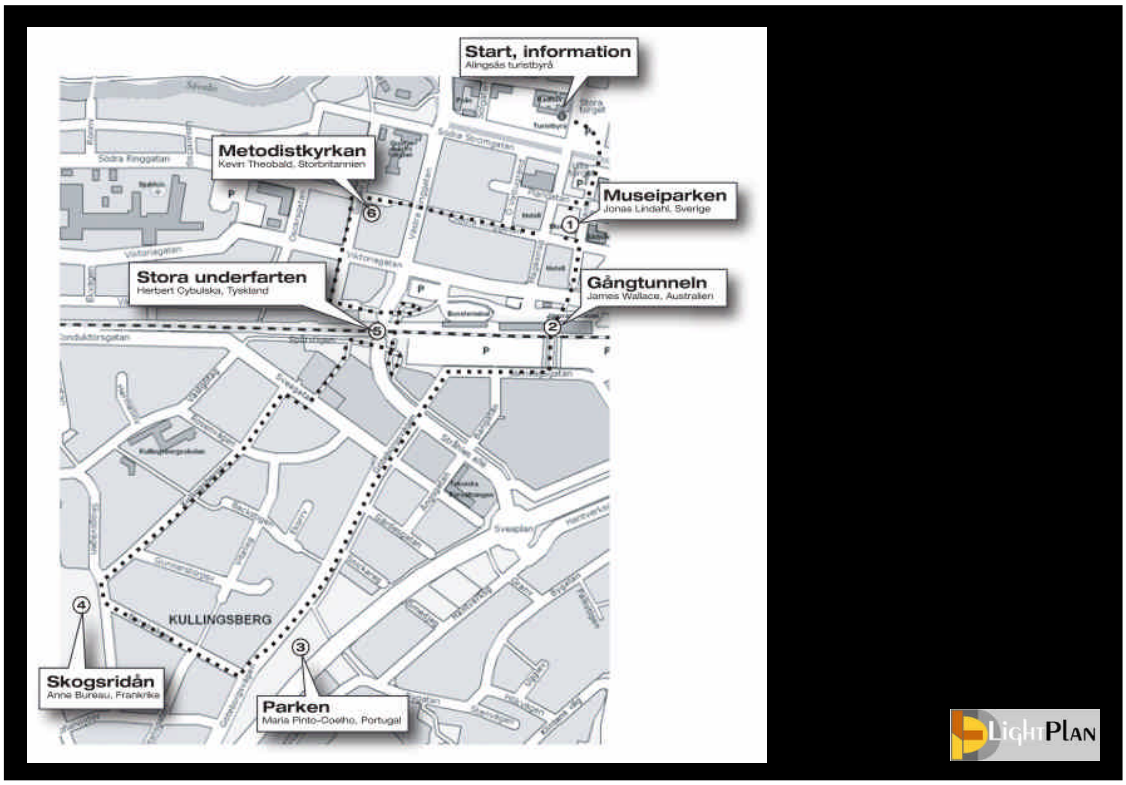
Here we are……. And the "rugged-up" look doesn't go unnoticed.

1. Jonas Lindahl/Swe
2. myself/Aus (James Wallace)
3. Maria Pinto-Coelho/Port
4. Anne Bureau/Fr
5. Herbert Cybulska/Ger
6. Kevin Theobald/UK

By late Saturday afternoon, after sitting in on a number of organisational briefing sessions, day and night walks, much discussion, negotiating between Workshop Heads, and of course plenty of Swedish hospitality……..we hammered out and agreed the 6 sites for Alingsas 2005, and most importantly, which LD would take which site.

The final agreement went like this:

1. Museum Park - Jonas Lindahl
2. Tunnel Opening – myself (James Wallace)
3. Empty Space – Maria Pinto-Coelho
4. Shakespeare's Forrest – Anne Bureau
5. Concrete Jungle – Herbert Cybulska
6. Methodist Church – Kevin Theobald



A few weeks later the graphics and marketing people produce a colour brochure with a location map of the sites and a suggested tour route.

Next 6 months: behind the scenes

….April to Sept 2005

Workshop Heads and ELDA management leave Alingsas not to return again for 6 months when the workshop week begins.

During this time we have to produce an equipment list based on a number of anticipated concepts that the Workshop Head believes could be devised by the participants……this is truly a “crystal ball-gazing” exercise.

The list includes:-

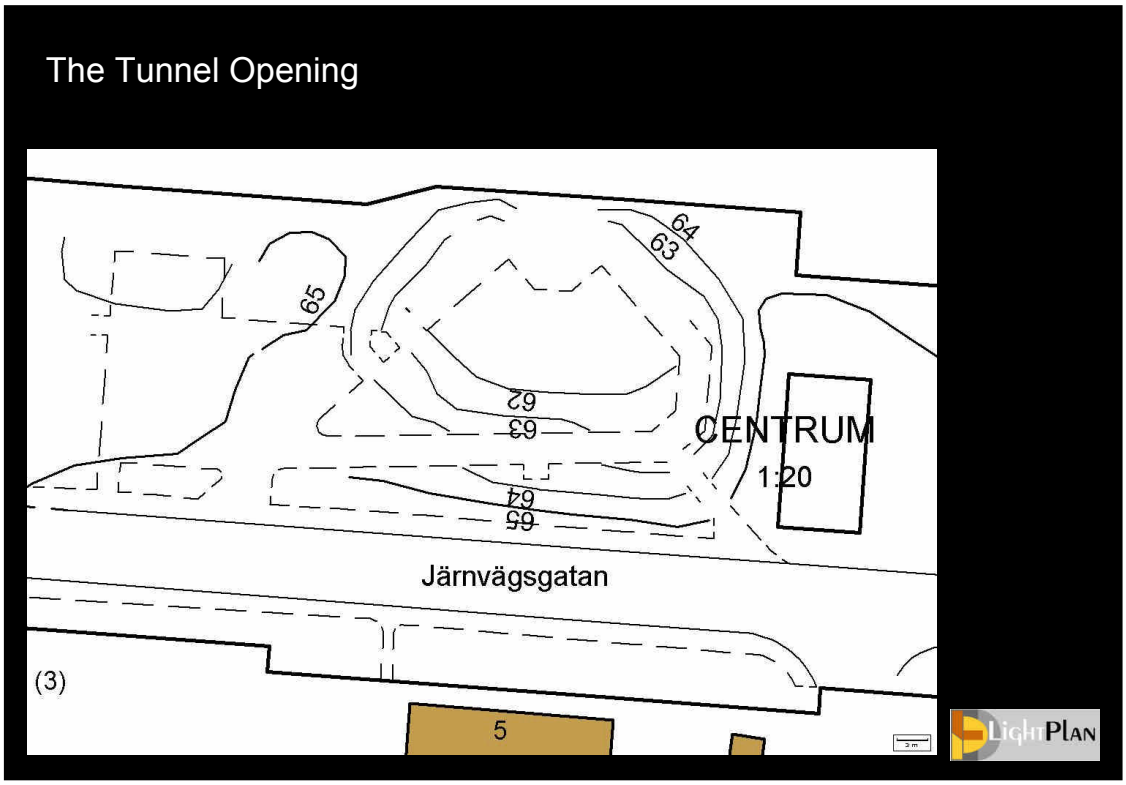
•All required luminaires & accessories (about one third to half actually end up being used)

•Fixing devices such as steel pipes and pipe clamps, timber stakes, wire ropes, cable ties, chains & padlocks, ladders, concrete bases.

•Special fixings that require pre-fabrication or special materials.

We also had to nominate the number and location of electrical power supplies, the number of portable switchboards and splitter boxes that would be required. The power supplies would be arranged and activated by the staff of Alingsas Energy just prior to the workshop commencement.

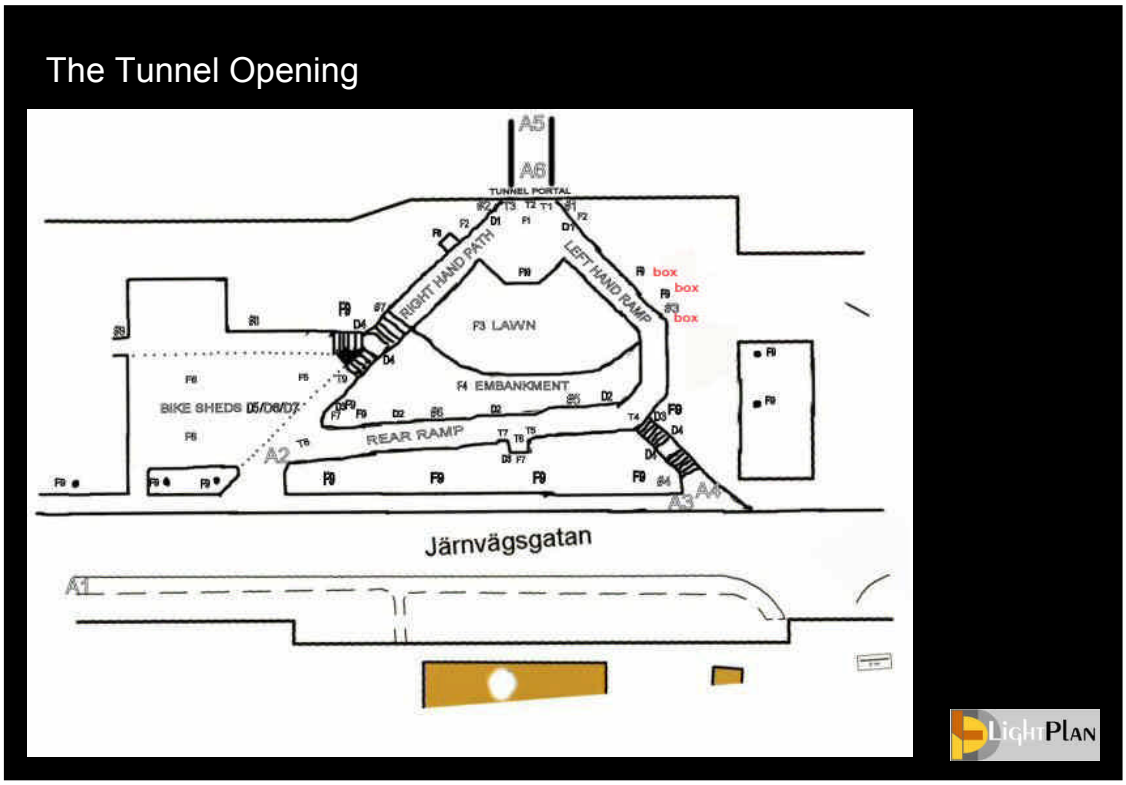
Although the workshop participants will design and install the lighting, it became clear during the prelim meeting that in order for the Workshop Heads to do this, we were expected to have a very clear idea as to what could practically be achieved at our respective site, and maybe more importantly, what couldn’t be achieved!



and back in Australia this is what I was sent as a base plan…in pdf format!!.....

The moral of the story here is that we should always conduct a thorough photo-shoot of our outdoor sites (both day and night shots) and take time-out to sketch and dimension the site…even if we just pace out the distances……which fortunately I did.

While I was there, I couldn't help thinking that, "it's a long way back to conduct a site check!!"



So this became my provisional Site Plan, at least for the next 6 months until my participants would produce something more professional to be used during their Seminar presentation of their lighting design for the Tunnel Opening.

For my own purposes, I decided to utilise my photo-shoot to the max and produced a hard-copy working document describing:-

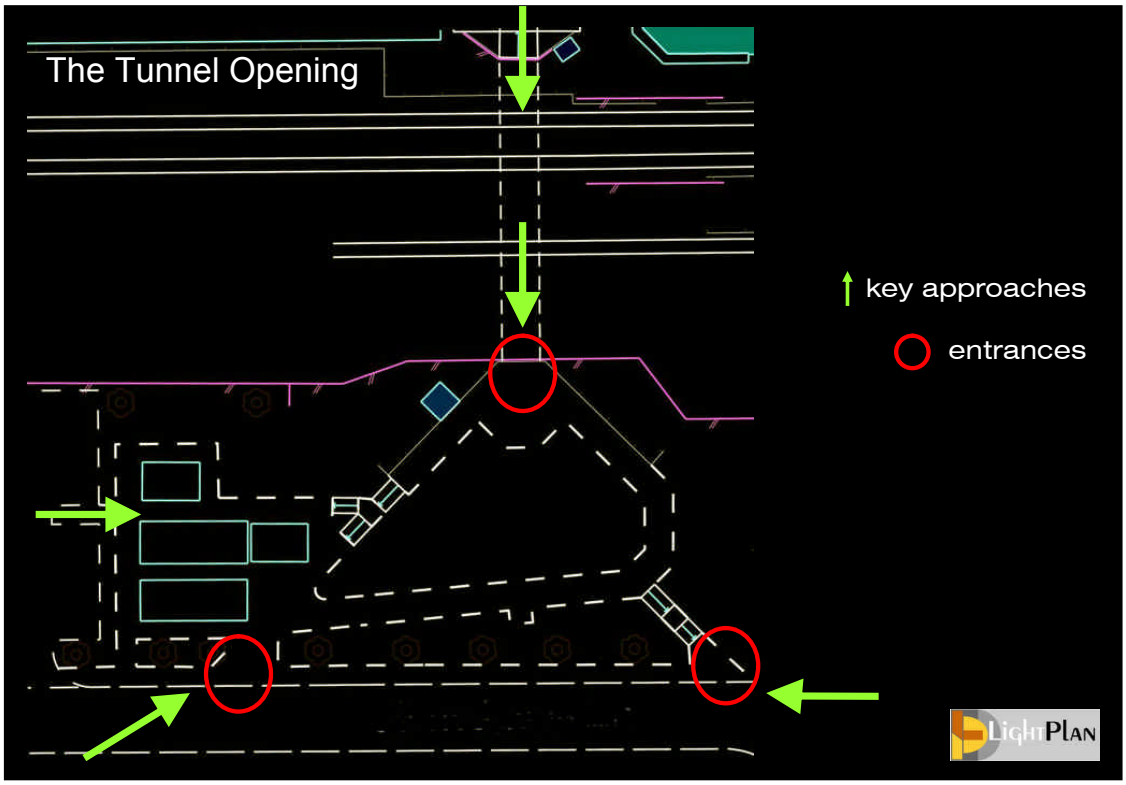
•Key Approaches to the Site (A1 to A6) or View Corridors

•Traversing Views Within the Site (T1 to T9)

•Features Within the Site (F1 to F10)

•Details Within the Site (D1 to D8)

Although not shown here, this document became an invaluable tool as the provisional lighting design options materialised into the equipment list.



….. and here's the Site Plan prepared by the participants during the workshop 6 months later in October.

I'll use their version of the Plan to briefly explain the general layout of the site.

Street on near side at normal ground level

Mainline railway track and station on the far high side, also at normal ground level

In between, an excavated punchbowl-type topography leading down to a pedestrian tunnel under the tracks to the station platforms and access to the Town's CBD on the far side.

Access to and from the nearside street and carparks via a flat paved path with steps, or via a paved incline for the mobility-challenged.

Bike Sheds on left

Lawn in the centre

Later on at the commencement of the workshop, the Town's historian presented a short history of the Tunnel Opening.

This is taken from my notes at the time……..

Brief Site History:

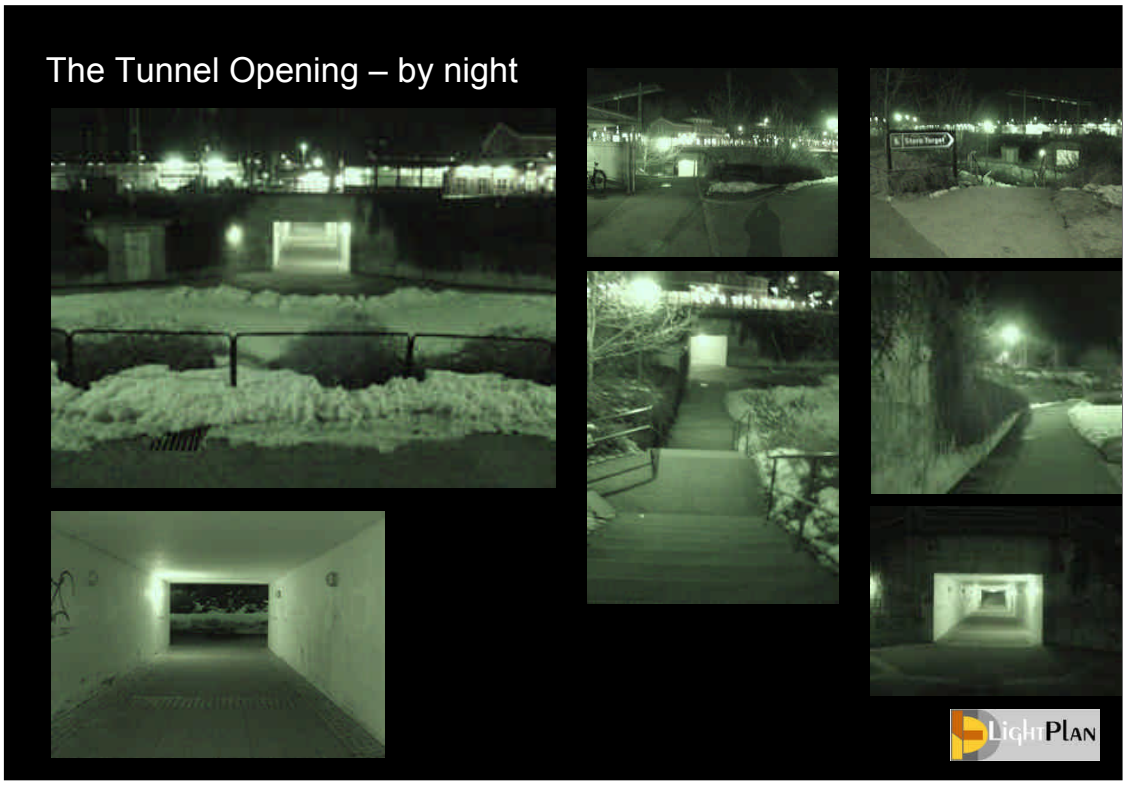
In 1855 a railway line was built through the Town of Alingsas.

This allowed local industry to move their raw materials and manufactured goods freely on the mainline from Gothenburg to Stockholm.

At the time, a set of crossing gates were installed.

Although the Town appeared to be divided into two halves by the railway track, the station became a popular meeting place.

In 1990, the gates were removed and a pedestrian underpass was completed which opened-up the two sides of the Town, as it remains today.



I thought it would help the workshop participants if they had some idea of what sort of scope they could expect if they decided to join my group.

As I said to the students 6 months later on the 1st day:-

• it's essentially a blend of urban hardscape and landscape

• a major pedestrian route in Alingsas

• one half of the Town's people, who either live or work in Alingsas, will pass through this site if they use the train or need to do some shopping, carry out business, or socialise in the centre of town

• the site has a high rate of exposure in a pedestrian context, and is a known habitat for vandals

• it's going to be seen and be the subject of social comment

Later for my report, I drafted a brief project description that went simply like this…..

Description of Project:

"The Tunnel Opening is a temporary lighting project addressing the night-time revitalisation of an urban public space comprising landscape, hardscape, and mundane building elements. The space serves as a significant collection point for pedestrians who wish to access and egress the underpass".

Phase 3: The Workshop

….Sept 2005, Alingsas

In the previous 6 months there has been continued activity with :-

•Workshop Heads refining and negotiating equipment lists

•Site access negotiation by the Town's staff

•Solving logistical and equipment challenges set by LD's

• Marketing of the event

•Processing participant applications

•PR work

•Acquisition of sponsors

•Detailed preparation for the workshop and seminar with the Town's management and technical staff

• and so the list goes on…….

One week prior to the workshop, all delivered equipment is checked and technical preparations are checked (with German & Swedish efficiency I might add).

After 6 months, and one day before the Workshop week commences, the LD's arrive again in Alingsas for a gruelling all-day co-ordination meeting. The first one of many. The rest of the meetings are scheduled for one hour each morning before the workshop participants arrive.

Here we are sitting down in The Pumphouse, slaving away without a break……going through the latest updates and changes before the big day tomorrow!

We have an opportunity to check our equipment.

Has it arrived?

Why can't I find my 150m length of fibre optic cable and colour-changing light generator, or where is the 130 metres of Chain Light I ordered?

If so, is it what I asked for?

Is it still in one piece or are their pieces missing?

Each Workshop Head is issued with a mobile phone for communication (sometimes at all hours) along with the Co-ordinator and support staff during the rest of the week.

Day 1: The Participants Meeting

•information session

•workshop heads present their project sites

• tour of all six sites

•dividing into workshop groups

•group bonding – moving into workrooms, inspect luminaires/equip

•night work at HQ – test & trial luminaires, basic technical information

•night work at site – first view of site at night

•early to bed

Day 1: The Participants Meeting (Monday)

•information session
•workshop heads present their project sites
• tour of all six sites
•dividing into workshop groups
•group bonding – moving into workrooms, inspect luminaires/equip
•night work at HQ – test & trial luminaires, basic technical information
•night work at site – first view of site at night
•early to bed (can you believe it after all that?)

Everyone meets at the local Technical College for an Information Session

This time there were 60 participants enrolled.

Explain slides

Workshop Heads then present their selected project sites to the participants…. this is firstly “a sell job” so as to ensure we get enough interest from a reasonable number of participants, say between 4 -10 per site depending on the degree of anticipated complexity.

and secondly, we articulate the appeal of our project site and the type of challenges ahead in order to gain a high level of individual interest and input.

We then all go for a walking tour of the 6 sites and each Workshop Head (at the top of their voice) presents a little more detail relating to their respective site.

After completing the circle of sites, all return to the College, and the vote begins……

After what seemed like a long process of preferential voting, I ended up with 9 enthusiastic participants + 2 apprentice electricians, who were allocated to our group the next day.

Workshop Participants:

We became known as Group #2, and this group picture was taken during our initial "getting to know each other" session at the Tech College.

I planned to spend as much time as was needed for this session because the culture we created together here would impact on the rest of the workshop week.

Briefly describe each one:-

- Maria/Swe
- Katrin/Ger
- Florence/Swe
- Anna-Karin/Swe
- Mari/Swe
- Lina/Swe
- Helene/Swe
- Paulo/Neth
- Stina/Swe
- Marielle & Peter (apprentice electricians)

Establishing the Concept:

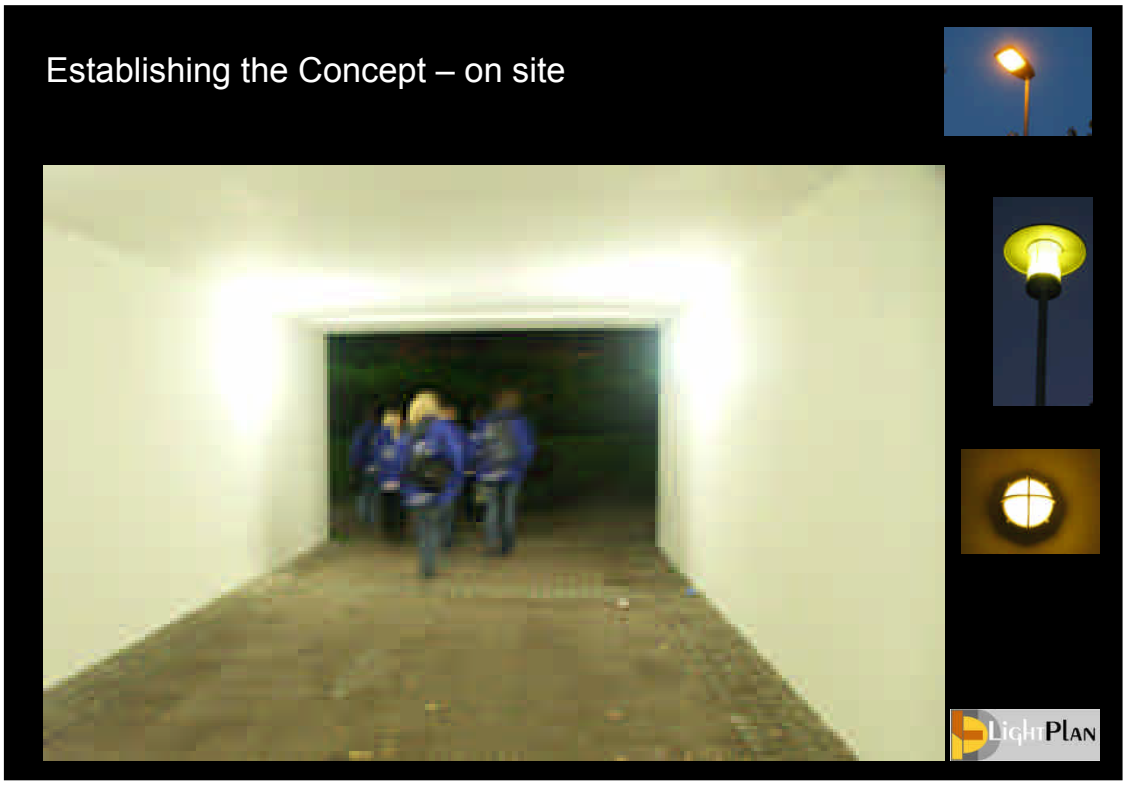
We visited the site in the late afternoon of the 1st day (Monday) to prepare an inventory, and consider the major view corridors. This was achieved via a combination of photo-shoots, sketching, and writing notes.

(note the difference in the project site between winter and summer)

Headquarters:

Back at Headquarters the participants settle into our workroom and familiarise themselves with the facilities.

We then reviewed and discussed our lighting equipment together in order for them to grasp what they would be working with over the next few days & nights.



Establishing the Concept:

After tea, we returned that same night and observed the movement of people through the space, and then spent time discussing our personal experiences and feelings as we moved about the space. The short-comings of the existing lighting installation were noted.

At this early stage, our agreed aim was to create a pleasant environment where people could not only feel secure, but also enjoy and look forward to the experience of passing through the space.

Headquarters:

After the night-time site inspection, we walked back to Headquarters for some lighting trials.

This involved mocking-up and trying out various lighting techniques in the warehouse, and outside in the carpark.

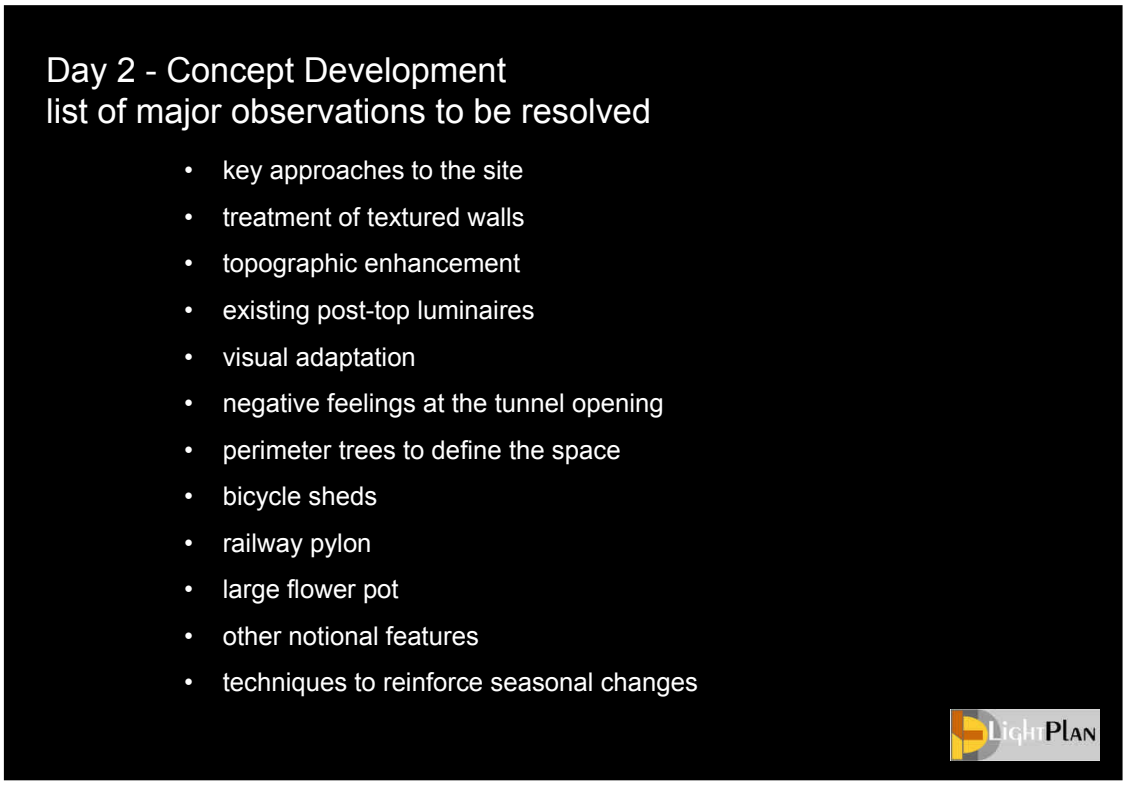
This gave the participants (in some cases) their first hands-on practical lighting lesson in techniques such as wall-washing, grazing, uplighting, and accenting.

We also worked with various floodlight beam patterns, also observing the different colour temperatures available from the lamps.

Establishing the Concept:

The half-bowl topography of the landscape led us to visualise the space as an amphitheatre, with the imaginary stage located in front of the tunnel opening. The locations of trees, variety of vegetation, plus the surprise appearance of a feature pot-plant, were seen as interesting assets.

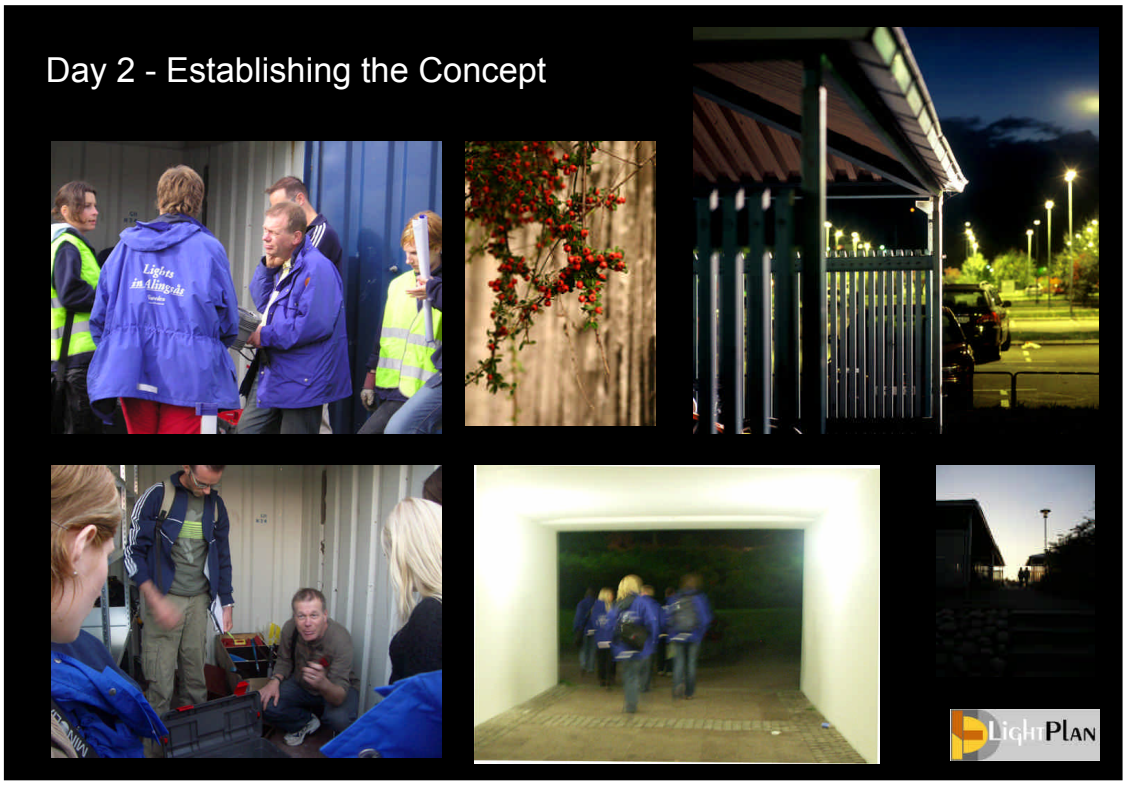
These core ideas were discussed, expanded, and agreed during Concept Development sessions over the course of the next 1½ days.



Concept Development:

By lunchtime on the 2nd day (Tuesday), through a group discussion session, we had prepared a "List of 23 Observations" to be addressed. This dealt with issues such as:-

- the key approaches
- treatment of textured walls
- topographic enhancement of the natural lay of landscape
- form & function of the existing post-top luminaires
- adaptation issues for people using the tunnel
- negative feelings generated at the tunnel opening
- use of perimeter trees to re-define the space
- the role of the bicycle sheds in the luminous mix
- the railway pylon
- the large flower pot (later to be given a stage role)
- plus other notional features
- lighting techniques to reinforce interesting seasonal changes
- and 11 other issues of a more minor nature

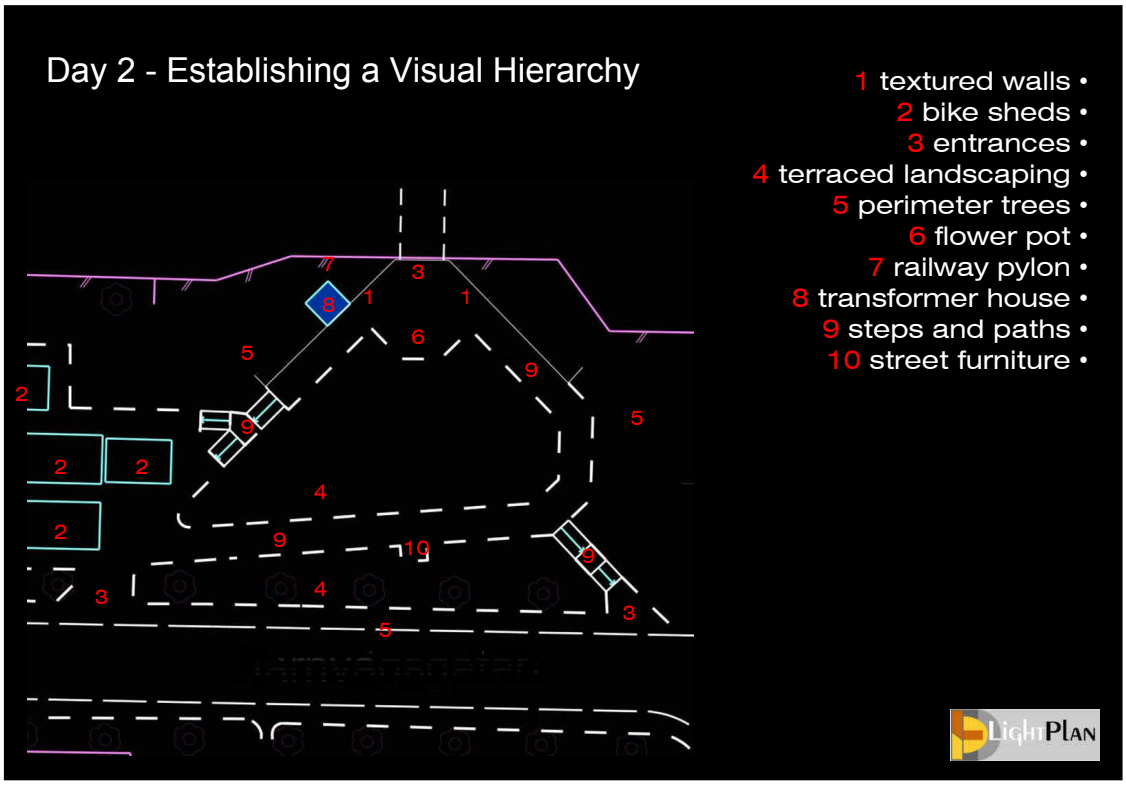


Concept Development – The Design Process:

During the afternoon of Day 2, we worked through “The Design Process”, a set of printed notes each participant was given which I had prepared prior to the workshop.

Focussing mainly on the Information Gathering Phase and Design Concept Phase, I led them through the steps as we “thrashed out the issues” until an agreed set of design goals were reached.

A night-time site visit followed to refresh and consolidate ideas.



Concept Development: Establishing a Visual Hierarchy

As a result, by the 3rd morning (Wednesday) a **Visual Hierarchy** was established and documented, which, in hindsight, became a key success-factor during the installation phase of the project:

(1 is highest on the scale and 10 is lowest).

1. textured walls
2. bike sheds
3. entrances
4. terraced landscaping
5. perimeter trees
6. flower pot
7. railway pylon
8. transformer house (later discarded)
9. steps and paths
10. street furniture

Project Name:- the tunnel opening

Concept:- “the seasonal stage”

a synergy of creative lighting design and spatial planning....
a traversing experience of inspiration and contemplation.....
a “dancer in the dark” welcomes you to the Seasonal Stage.
lighting techniques influence human movement...
a heightened sense of safety and well-being....
seasonal changes ..... are clearly expressed...
a playful juxtaposition of bike sheds masquerading as party tents.

Although the project site was named The Tunnel Opening, we were driven towards describing our direction of the lighting design by giving the lighting concept itself a unique name.

We decided upon **“the seasonal stage”.**

Our Lighting Design Statement read like this:

“In this small public open space, a synergy of creative lighting design and spatial planning has resulted in a traversing experience of inspiration and contemplation. A “dancer in the dark” welcomes you to the Seasonal Stage. Planned lighting techniques influence human movement and provide a heightened sense of safety and well-being. The seasonal changes of trees and vegetation are clearly expressed at night, against the playful juxtaposition of bike sheds masquerading as party tents”.

Implementing the Concept:

My participants indicated they felt clear about the lighting design goals, and I'm pleased to say this was evident during the remainder of the workshop week, and in their Seminar presentation.

In short, we had very little confusion on site in terms of the direction of the work, and the completed vision.

In most cases, the site installation work became divided into "lighting categories" rather than specific site locations.

I believe this was largely due to the focus on lighting techniques during the first days of planning, rather than lighting hardware.

The participants' preferences (sometimes their passions) were largely based on their level of individual contribution to a particular concept, and the decision as to "who does what" seemed to occur by osmosis, rather than by formal allocation of duties.

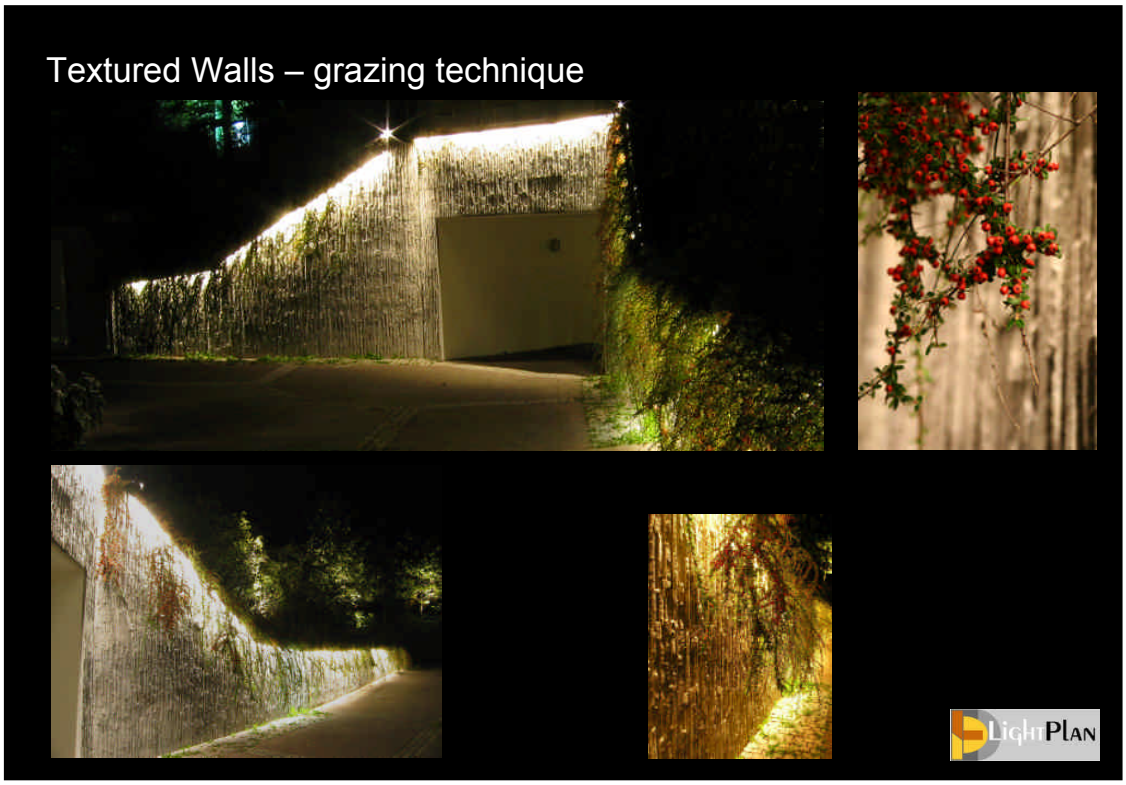
Textured Walls & Transformer House – grazing technique

Maria & Florence formed the core partnership here after their successful night-time trialling on the 2nd night. Stina formed a reliable back-up as work became physically difficult. I was particularly impressed by their willingness to keep going, both day and night, in the face of hard work lifting the Targetti 2 x 21w T16 “Lineos” luminaires, one by one, into the correct position and inclination at the top of the wall.

Textured Walls & Transformer House – grazing technique

Once the raw materials arrived, a flood-lit production line was set up on site. They cut the timber sticks to pre-determined lengths and used hand-knives to sharpen one end to create over 40 ground stakes. At the same time, with the assistance of one of our trainee electricians, long “U” shaped steel profiles (with slotted sides) were also cut into shorter lengths using an electric angle-grinder, to serve as the horizontal connection between the luminaire and the ground stake. With the help of nails and nylon cable ties, these fabrications formed the fixing mechanism to secure each Lineos luminaire solidly into position on top of the wall. This was an outstanding achievement in teamwork and dedication to the job.

From inception, the Transformer House was seen as an integral part of the Textured Wall, so we decided to reinforce the ownership of this element by using the same colour of light as used on the Railway Pylon.

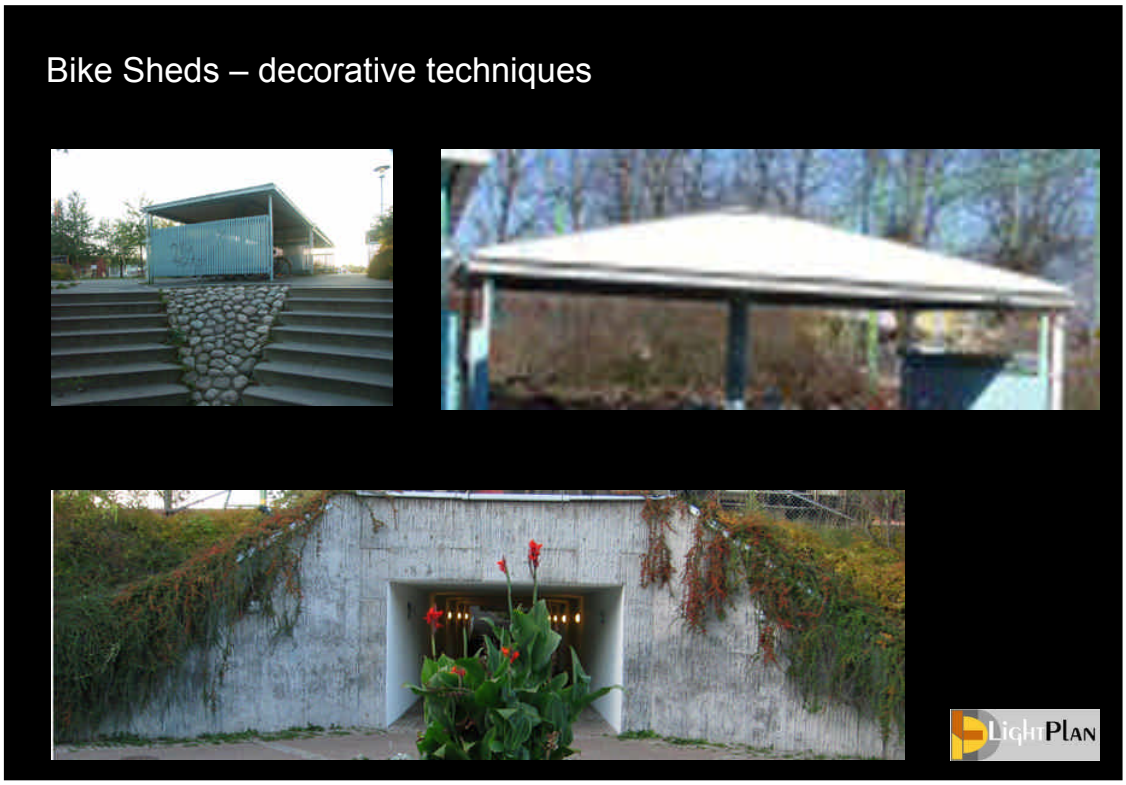


Textured Walls & Transformer House – grazing technique

By the 4th night, after a series of trials, the Transformer House proved to be an inappropriate feature and the group decided to remove it from the visual hierarchy list.

The graffiti-covered door thus receded into shadow.

The result!

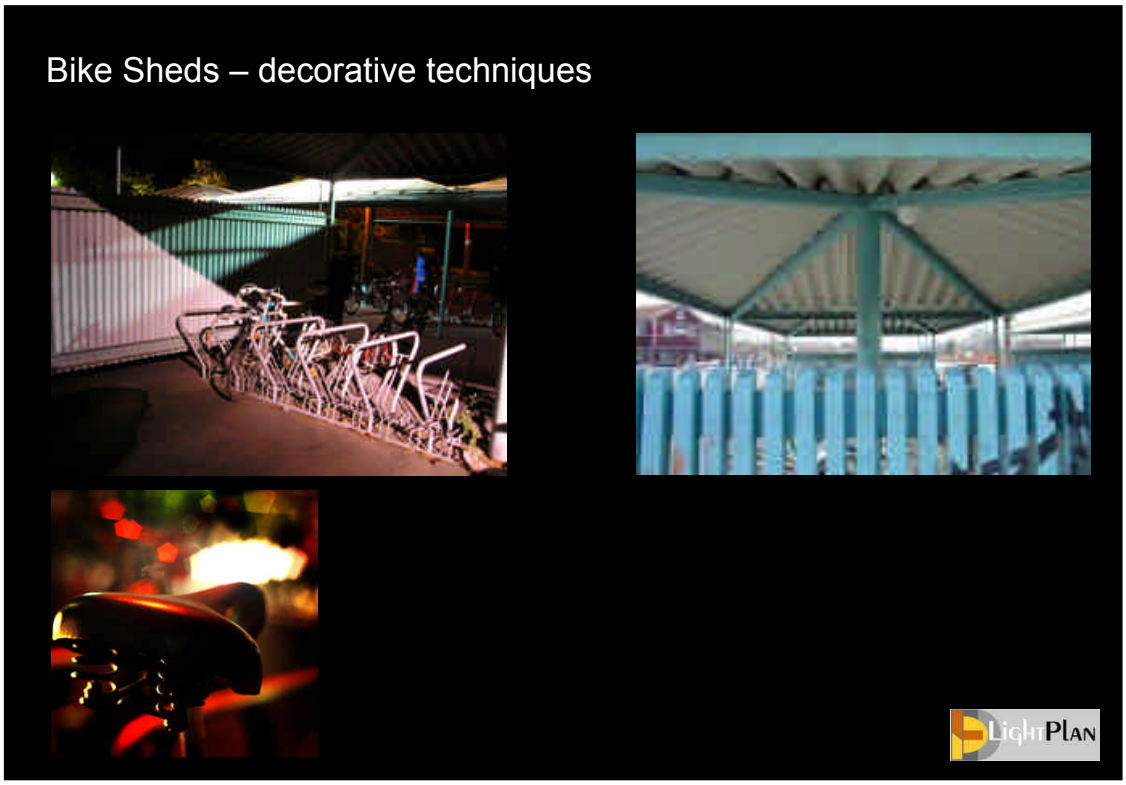


Bike Sheds – decorative techniques

Early in the observation sessions, some noticed the repetition of triangular built elements throughout the space, and they persuaded the group to reinforce this at night in some way.

Note the pattern between steps, and bike shed roofs have a triangular theme.

Even the textured wall has triangular themes within the overall shape.

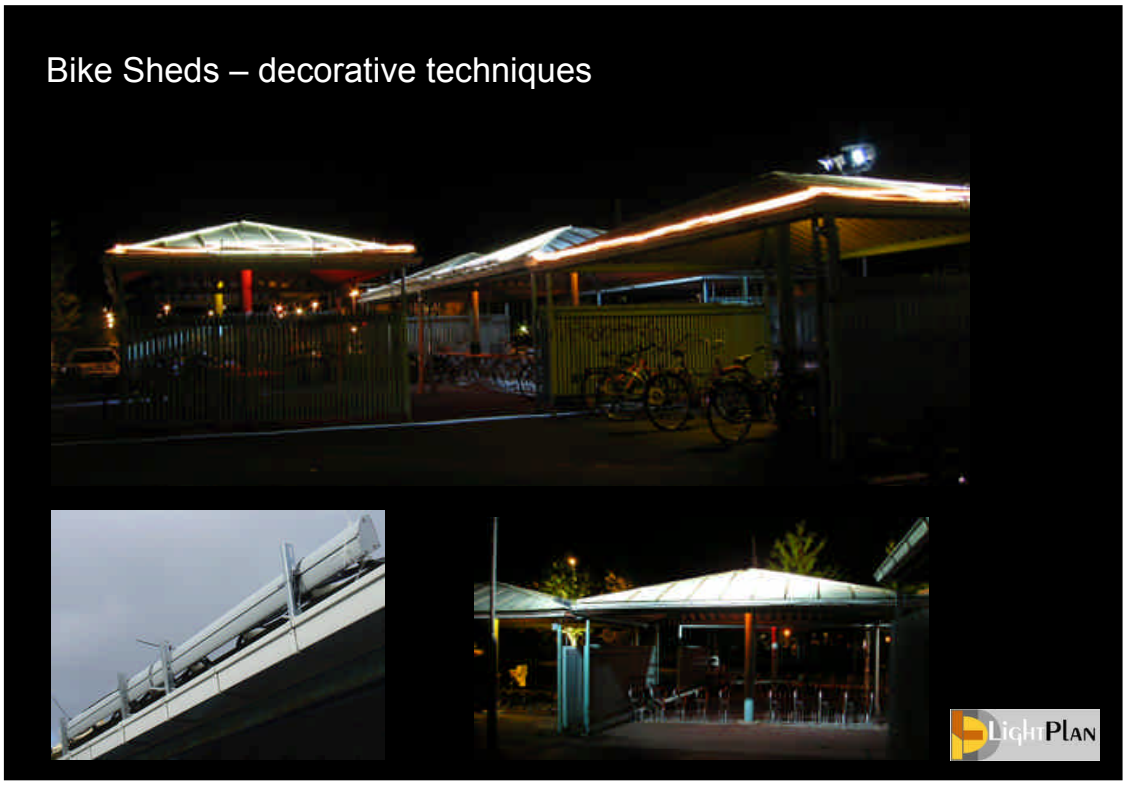


Bike Sheds – decorative techniques

A trio formed by Helene, Stina and Katrin saw the sheds as a design challenge, particularly once we had identified and integrated the sheds into the design concept as juxtapositions, with the potential of using light to create an architectural counterpoint of Party Tents, when compared to the softer style of lighting agreed for the main project area.

For the bike shed interiors, they wanted to aim two ground-mounted spotlights, each with an opposing colour primary gel, onto each of the existing blue-painted timber slotted walls, thus achieving a 3rd colour via the “shadow mix” cast through each slot. Although I encouraged them, and allowed time and free reign to trial this creative colour mixing idea, by the end the 3rd night (Wednesday), and after a number of previous interventions and suggestions, it became clear we were having difficulty dealing with a major design constraint, being the high risk of vandalism. It was explained there was no more time for experiments, and that all light sources should be in elevated positions.

Although disappointed, the trio discarded the idea and inserted coloured gel material into the existing interior bulkhead luminaires, this being the fall-back position for the inside of the sheds.



Bike Sheds – decorative techniques

They then worked at resolving the exterior roof lighting issues for the bike sheds. They wanted to fix Targetti Lineos luminaires to the sheds' steel gutter profile so as to up-wash selected triangular sections of roof sheeting. In response to no other solution being offered, this trio then designed and trialled a purpose-made bracket so as to hold the luminaire in position at the correct angle of inclination. Once proven to work, the steel and timber bracket components were cut and manufactured on site with assistance from one of our trainee electricians.

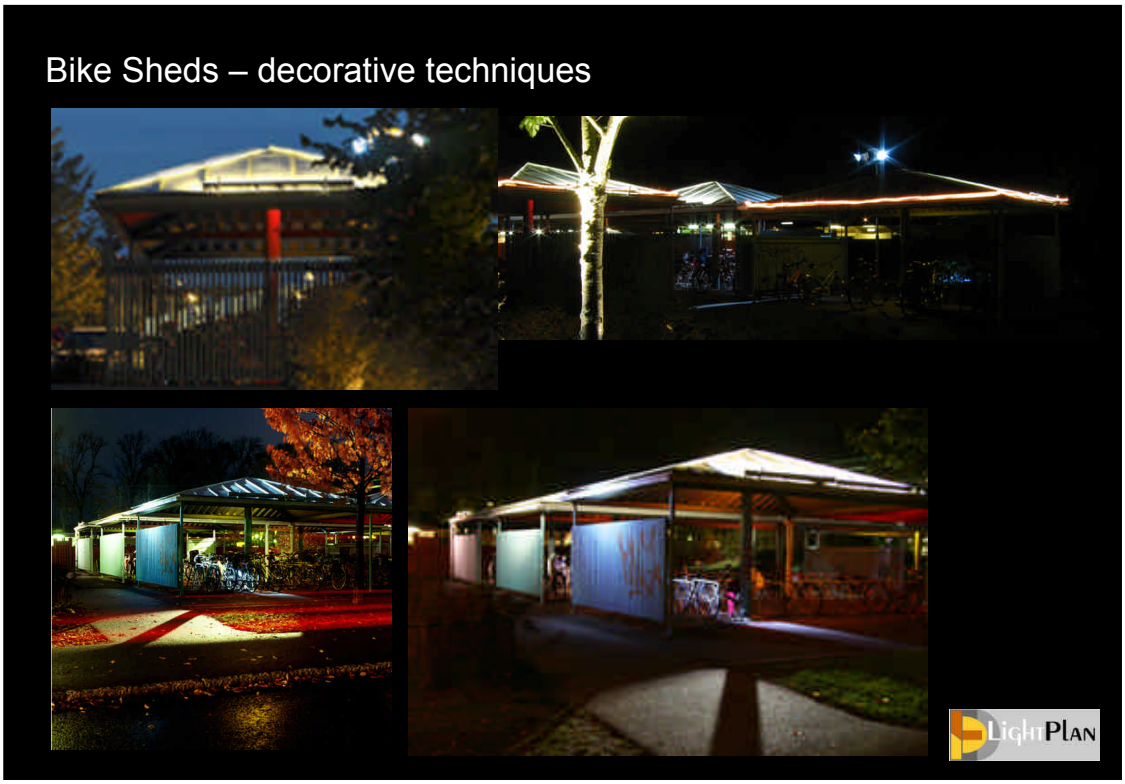
Other roof sections were to be colour-washed using a total of five We-ef FL7 150W MH floodlights with spread lens and a pastel coloured gel, mounted on three existing poles located around the perimeter of the sheds. Rather than repeating the up-washing method all around, this elevated idea was introduced in an effort to express a greater sense of dynamism across the roofs, thus evoking a greater feeling for fun and frivolity throughout the party tents.

Bike Sheds – decorative techniques

Upon first inspection on the 4th night (Thursday), glare from the floodlights was a concern. This was reduced later the same night by installing an anti-glare louvre (concentric rings type) on each.

We worked until 2.30 the next morning until the floodlights had been adjusted and re-aimed.

Again, I was impressed.



Bike Sheds – decorative techniques

During the design concept phase, Rope Light was selected to delineate the circumference of the party tents, and somehow we would attach it to the gutters.

By mid-week the trio were told the Rope Light was unavailable.

Despite disappointment they worked positively on other aspects of the party tents.

Late on Thursday (4th day) I was informed that Rope Light could be made available the following day if required, so I took the decision to recommend that we order it.

A fixing solution was suggested by the Co-ordinator, and the required lengths of timber and screw hooks delivered to site. After the Seminar (5th day) all participants joined in and worked hard to install it in the two hours before the Grand Opening ceremony.

I was particularly impressed by their innovation, along with their positive response in the face of some obvious disappointments, and the shear determination to make this part of the whole project work.

Entrances & Steps – indirect & moonlighting techniques

The two Entrances from the street were identified early as being of high visual importance. Paulo chose to work on these with the added help of Katrin when needed.

For the East Entrance (shown here) he trialled a number of ideas but the one that worked most effectively was an indirect technique.

We-ef FL7 70w & 150w MH floodlights with frosted lenses were strategically placed deep inside bushes adjacent to the steps.

At this stage, it was felt the indirect component was sufficient.

Entrances & Steps – indirect & moonlighting techniques

The start of the West Entrance off the street was already well lit indirectly from one of Lina's perimeter street trees (which we'll see later).

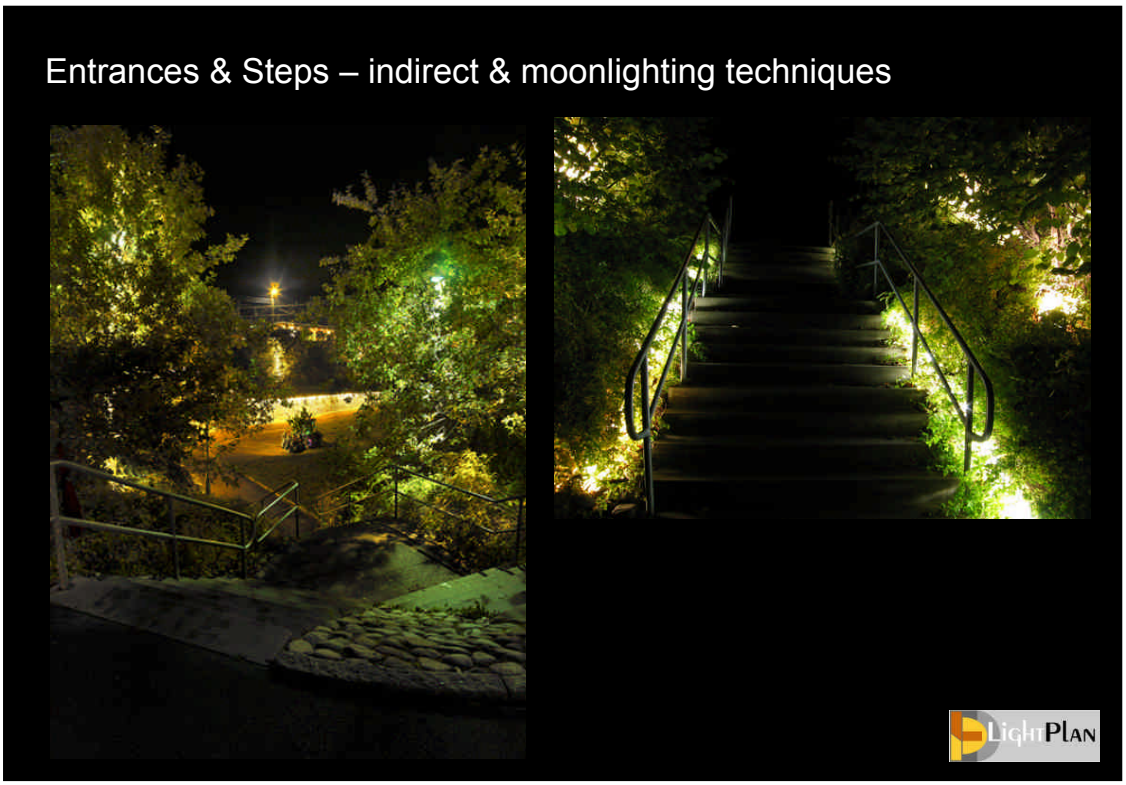
The Inner Entrance Steps (triangular forms adjacent to the Bike Sheds), were more of a challenge to highlight as there was little ground vegetation to conceal linear fluorescents.

A moonlighting effect was therefore trialled.

Paulo spent a lot of time hanging around in trees at this point.

We-ef FL7 floodlights were selected and hoisted up to Paulo for attachment.

One tree was so high that in the end we asked Norbett from Alingsas Energy, to install it using his cherry picker.



Entrances & Steps – indirect & moonlighting techniques

It was at this point on Thursday (4th day) when the existing post-top luminaires were switched off as requested, that the resultant effect was first seen on the 4th night.

I felt the levels of illumination on the East & West Entrance Steps were insufficient for public safety and asked all concerned to start installing extra luminaires in both areas.

We added ground-mounted linear fluorescent luminaires to the Eastern Steps, and tried to improve the level of moonlighting on the Western Steps.

Late that night, the Co-ordinator felt we had done enough and it would be sufficient.

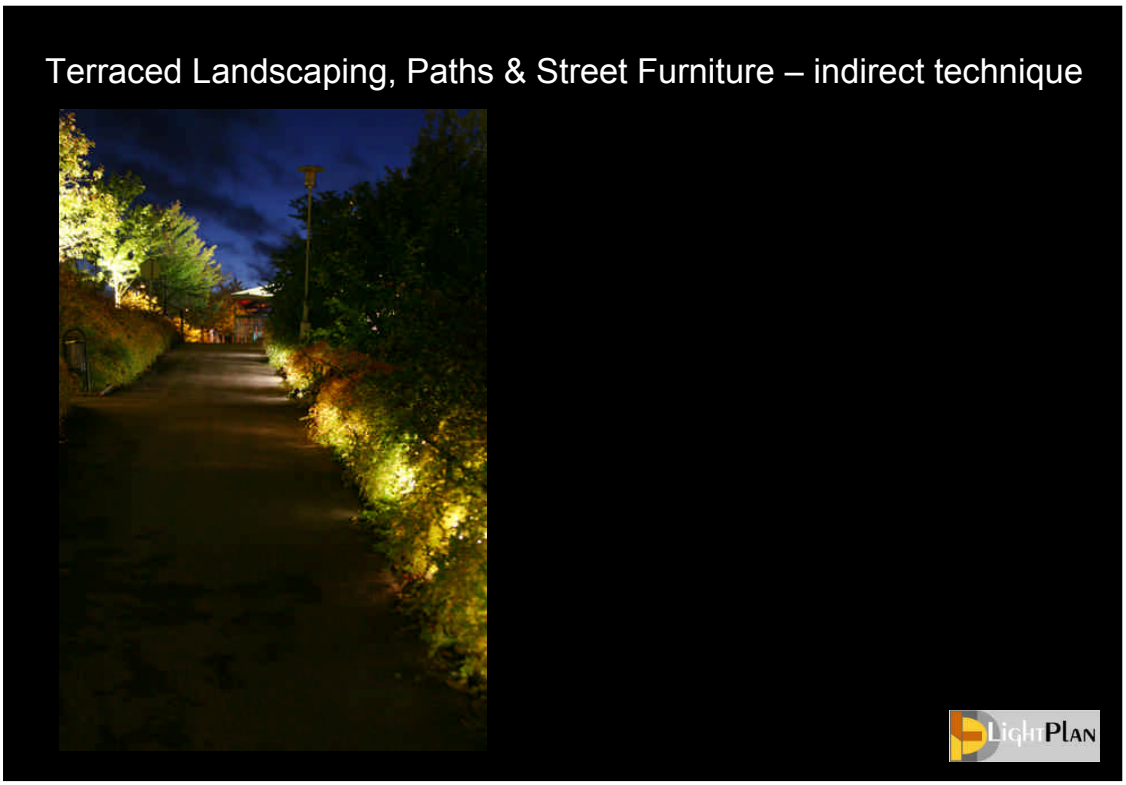
Terraced Landscaping, Paths & Street Furniture – indirect technique

Mari & Anna-Karin worked on these elements, sometimes together when they needed to confer, and individually during installation and wiring.

During concept stage, linear delineation of the Terraces was favoured. The intention was to use a technique that would send a strong visual cue of the bowl-like shape of the landscape, yet maintain the medium level (4) of visual hierarchy overall.

Encapsulite MT 50 1x35w T16 luminaires were trialled and gave best effect when the main intensity was directed into the vegetation, away from the observer, thus being an indirect type of lighting technique.

The vegetation appeared to glow in a continuous line when the luminaires were connected end-to-end.



Terraced Landscaping, Paths & Street Furniture – indirect technique

So this configuration was decided as being ideal. It was also decided to use the same technique for delineation of the Rear Ramp.

Behind the scenes, a lot more Encapsulite luminaires then had to be sourced than what were anticipated. We also supplemented these with additional Prisma linear fluorescent luminaires.

Terraced Landscaping, Paths & Street Furniture – indirect technique

The only Street Furniture finally selected for enhancement consisted of a bench seat located mid-way along the Rear Path, and another at the Entrance near the Bike Sheds.

Again, an indirect lighting approach was taken by inserting floodlight luminaires into the adjacent vegetation, thus allowing the vegetation to glow and diffuse the light over the seats and immediate areas only.

We anticipated the seasonal change of the vegetation during the month of October, and our final lighting techniques would feature the vegetation no matter the seasonal condition, colour or shape.

Perimeter Trees – Uplighting

During the first night's site visit, we noted that the area required opening up, and during concept stage it was decided to feature the Perimeter Trees to extend the visual limits of the site.

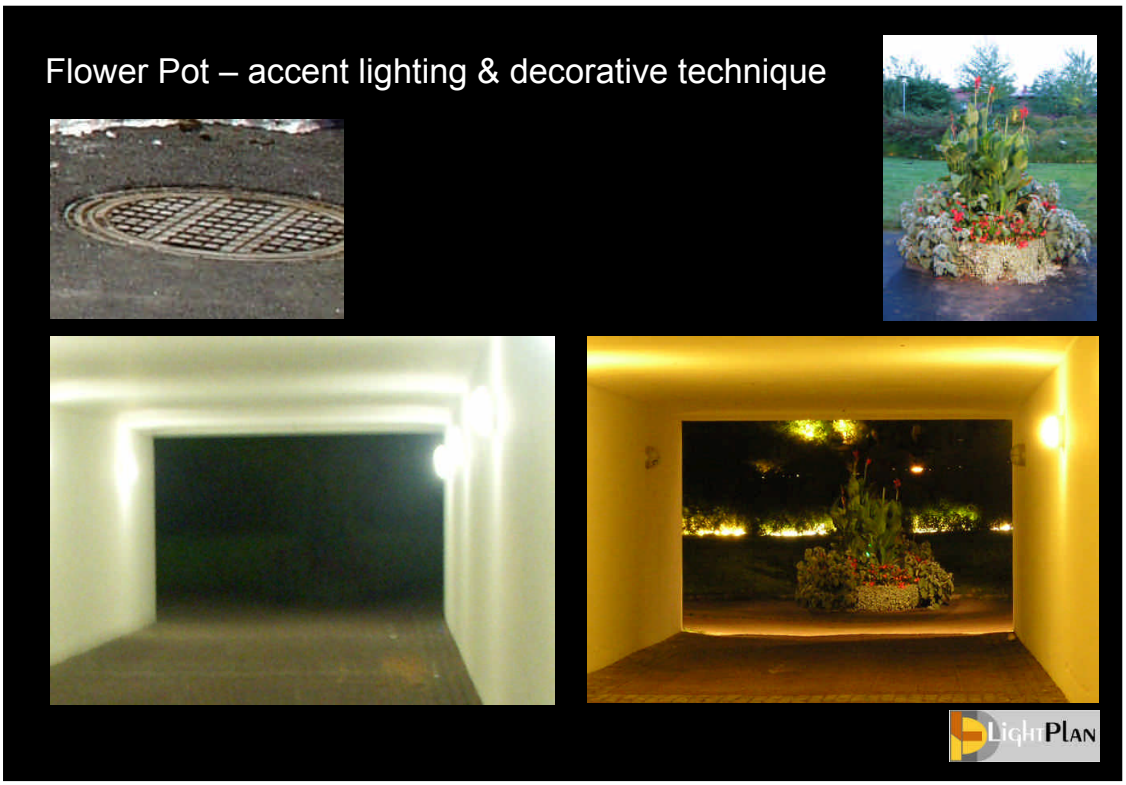
Lina was interested to work with tree uplighting effects and took on this part of the project single-handedly.

We-ef FL7 35w MH floodlights with ground-mounted concrete bases were used exclusively along with the selection of accessories available.

Perimeter Trees located on the street alignment were lit back and front with two luminaires due to their dual view corridor, whereas trees with a single view corridor had one luminaire.

Later, with the street trees only, she experimented with coloured gels and their interrelated effects on foliage and form. After her trials, we concluded that of the two luminaires, only the street-side would have a green pastel colour gel.

When viewed from the Tunnel Portal, the trees took on a stunning three-dimensional appearance. With the use of flood and sculpture lenses, Lina was able to adjust the light pattern to the size and scale of each tree. Anti-glare shields were installed on all floodlights, where needed.



Flower Pot (dancer in the dark) – Accent lighting & decorative technique

A feature flower arrangement installed near the Tunnel Portal by Alingsas Kommun was a surprise when I inspected the site this time in September. In winter there had been nothing there except the bare paving and a grid cover over a drain.

After completing the Terraces & Rear Path, Mari focussed her attention on this surprise feature which the group had agreed should become a focal centre in the design. During conceptual design discussions, she had already suggested we name this flower arrangement “dancer in the dark”. Additionally, the focal adaption of pedestrians entering and egressing the Tunnel was already identified as being an issue on the first night and was discussed during the conceptual design stage. To achieve the important adaptive balance within the Tunnel, the first four bulkhead luminaires inside the Opening were made redundant (lamps removed). This had the effect of lowering the level of adaptation while inside the Tunnel as one walked towards the threshold, thus creating a visual clarity of the illuminated scene outside as one nears, then passes through the portal.

If the Flower Pot was to be a bright feature, it should be so, but should not detract from the luminous vista beyond.

It was therefore agreed to give it a ranking of 6 (out of a scale of 10) on our visual hierarchy list. Mari took charge and after some night trials we selected two We-ef FLC141-T/E-150 H/EE narrow beam spotlight luminaries and positioned them high on top of the Tunnel Portal wall.

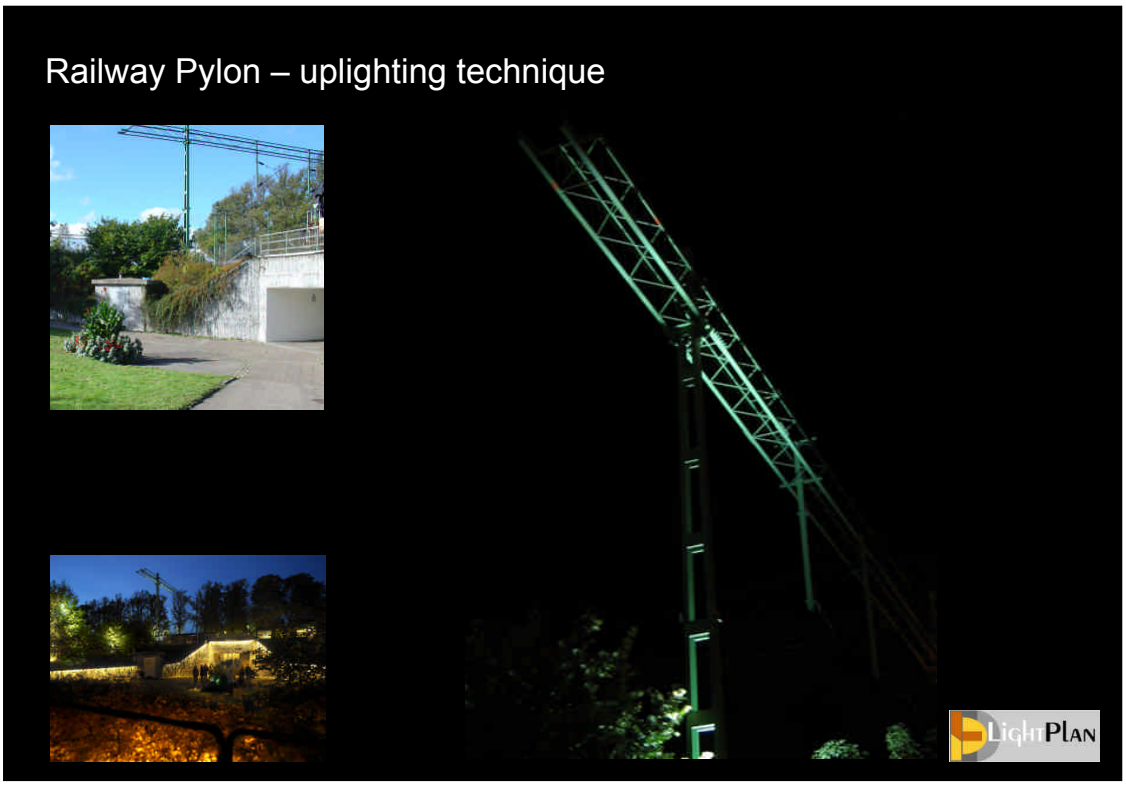
A long anti-glare snoot was cut and formed with matte black aluminium sheet and attached to each luminaire. During the final night trail Mari had to reduce the diameter of the aperture a number of times until the obtrusive light was substantially reduced to a comfortable limit.

Note the faint impression from the two spotlights on the portal wall.

This accent lighting treatment took care of the approach from within the Tunnel.

Mari resolved the treatment for the approach as seen from the Paths by using three Thorn low-voltage halogen spotlight luminaires concealed within the Flower Pot.

Coloured gels added decoration and a sense of mystery to the effect.



Railway Pylon – Uplighting technique

Late in the conceptual design discussions and after a couple of night's observations, some in the group felt that we should create a greater visual link with the railway.

Paulo suggested the idea of highlighting the Railway Pylon as a visual cue, and everyone seemed happy for him to work on this single-handedly.

We selected one Bega 9277 parallel beam 150w MH floodlight luminaire in a ground-mounted uplighting position at the foot of the Pylon. It worked beautifully. It not only lit the vertical section but interpreted the large horizontal section across the railway tracks.

Concerns were raised about the proximity of the luminaire to railway infrastructure, and this was resolved by the Co-ordinator placing an insulating barrier between the floodlight and the steel pylon.

Unfortunately, we had to release the Bega 9277 to another group and select a symmetrical beam compromise. The effect was reduced and lacked the desired dramatic impact.

Late afternoon on the 4th day (Thursday), Workshop Heads took a break from their group's site work, to attend a scheduled VIP Reception and Press Conference held at the Alingsas Kulturhaus.

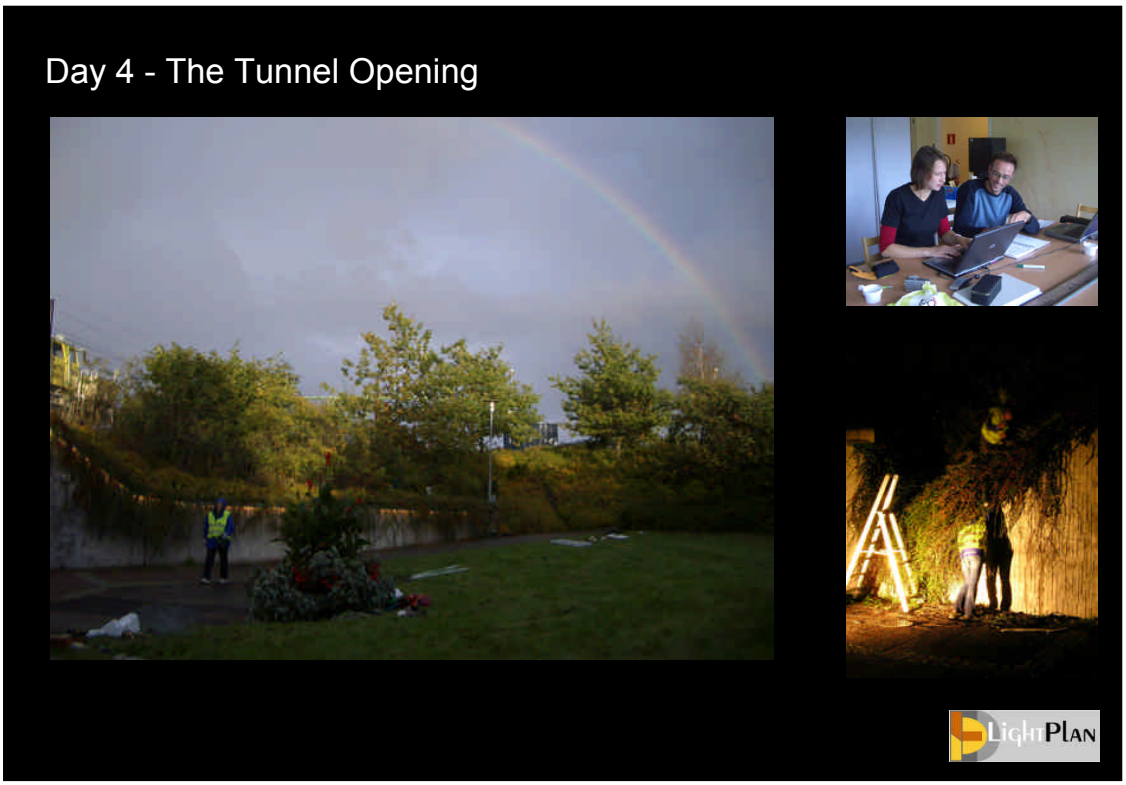
The Kulturhaus holds the Alingsas public library on the ground floor, and has an art gallery space on the 1st floor. This particular space makes an excellent venue for receptions.

Workshop Heads first mingle with invited guests from the Town of Alingsas, civic dignitaries, stakeholders, heads of business, tourism representatives, ELDA management, and of course, members of the media.

After a while we are ushered into a private area where representatives of the press and media are given a joint address by the Town and ELDA, after which, each Workshop Head is introduced and invited to explain their group's lighting installation.

The press is than invited to ask questions.

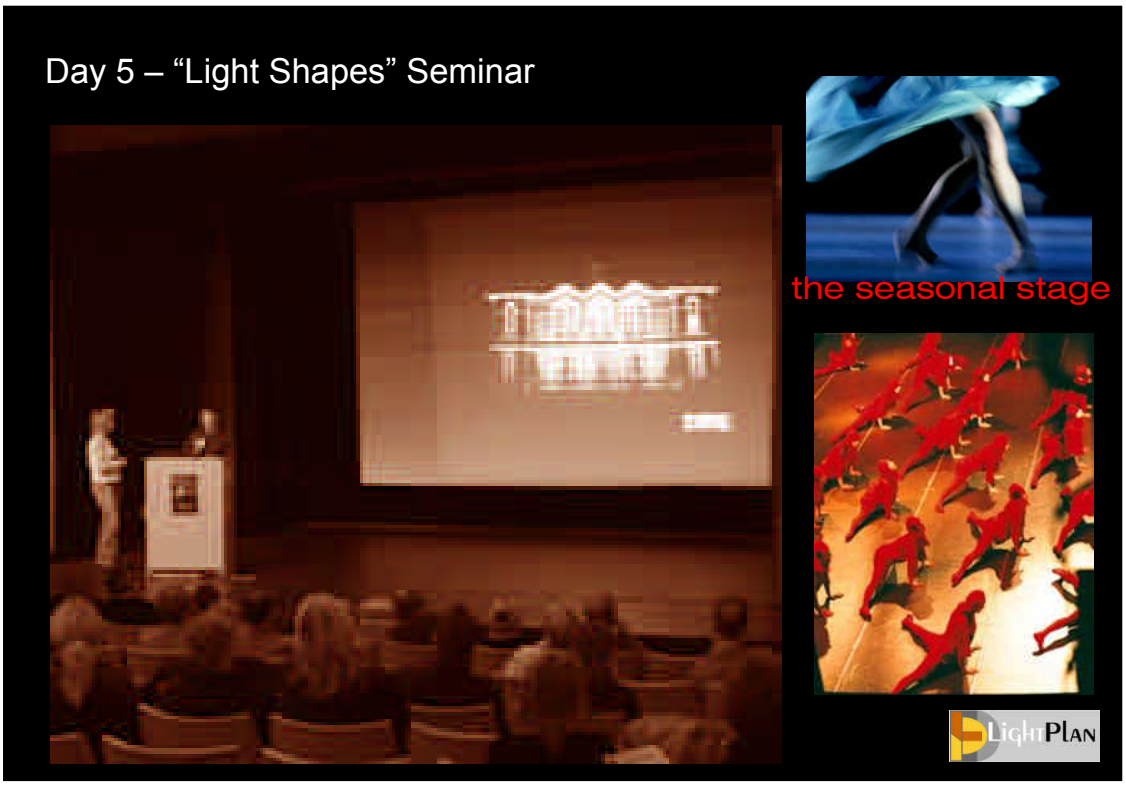
Finally, the VIP's and Press are invited to preview the 6 installations on the understanding that work is not yet complete and finishing touches, like aiming and installing antiglare shields, are still being worked on.



Back at the Tunnel Opening there was still installation work to be done……but a reassuring rainbow greeted us and spurred us on toward our goal.

Earlier in the week I called for a volunteer to prepare the group's Seminar Presentation. Paulo and Katrin both put their hand up for it, so today they stayed back at Headquarters to develop the power point presentation.

We were now minus two workers on-site and the deadline drew closer as we continued working late into the night and into the early hours of next morning .



Day 5 (Friday) is dedicated to attending the Seminar which this year was titled “Light Shapes”.

International & local guest speakers (including two of the Workshop Heads) presented on various topics along the Seminar theme.

Then, the 6 workshop groups in turn presented their project to the audience.

After the Seminar finished at 5.00 pm, I gathered my group together for a final site work session to install the “Rope Light” that had been specially couriered at the last minute to delineate the bike sheds.

In just over 2 hours it would be time for the Grand Opening ceremony. My group busily installed while I attended to the site handover inspection conducted by the Town’s Chief Electrical Inspector and ELDA.

About 3,000 local residents gathered in the evening in the Town Square of Alingsas to partake in the Grande Opening.

After speeches by the Mayor and the Town’s Project Manager, each Workshop Head was welcomed onto the stage and responded in the best way we could to the applauding crowd.

After more speeches, the Alingsas Youth Marching Band paraded through the Square and beat a rhythm for the crowd to follow them to the first lighting installation at the Museum Park.

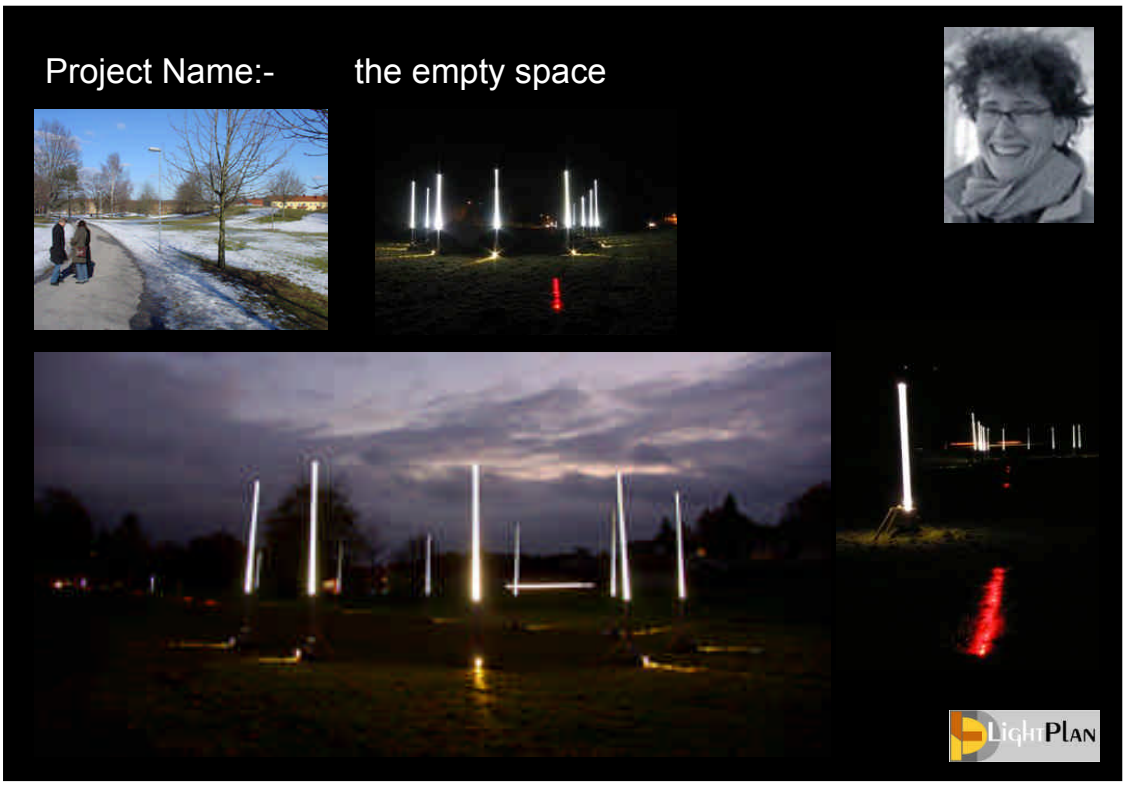
Imagine (if you can) 3,000 people then squeezing through the Tunnel Opening.

Well they did it in shifts, and waited in the tunnel until I had explained the lighting design to the first group, and then moved in to replace them as the first group moved off to the next installation.

Here is the overall result at the end of Day 5 (Friday).

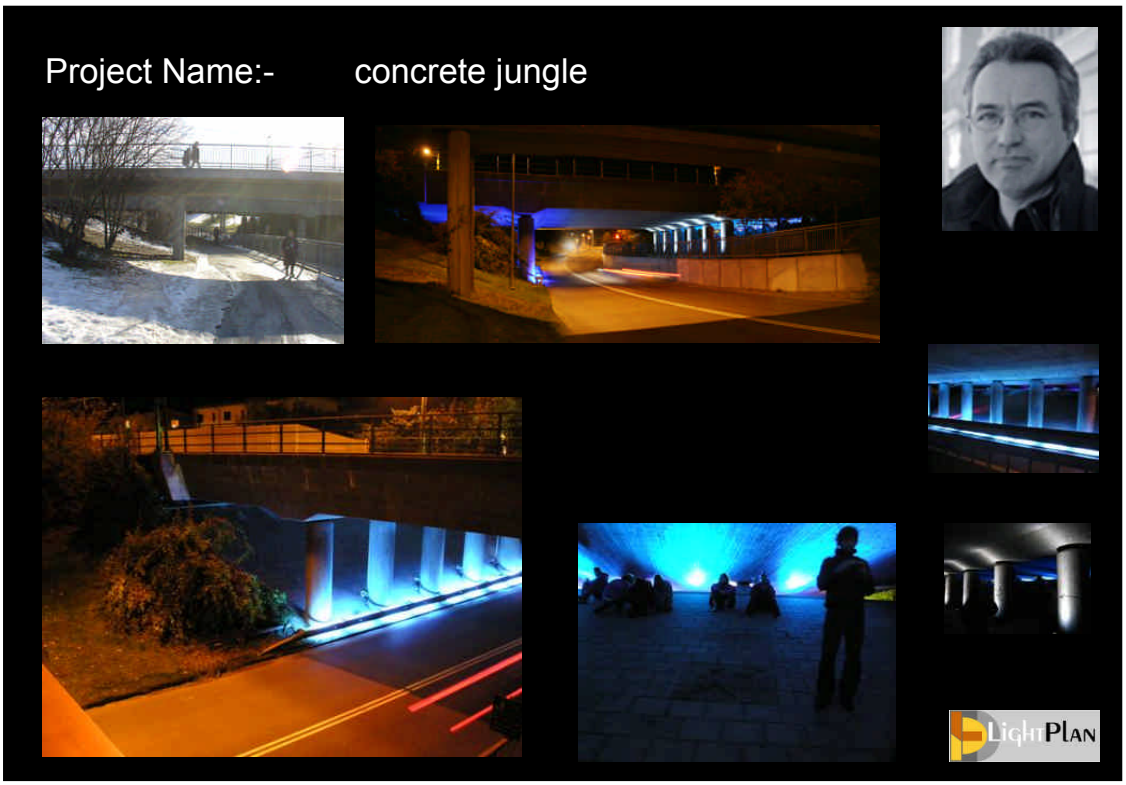
I think it’s now an appropriate time to take a quick tour around Alingsas to look briefly at the other installations, and to see how my five colleagues interpreted their sites ……

The Museum Park



The Empty Space

Shakespear’s forest



Concrete jungle

Methodist church

The Party - afterwards

I was very proud to have such a wonderful group of participants.

Many times I felt they went beyond what I expected of them.

The morning of the last day (Day 6) was spent dragging ourselves to Headquarters where Workshop Heads were supposed to give a de-briefing session to their respective group, and all had to help with a clean-up. Some were more successful at this than others.

Certificates were then awarded to each participant by their Workshop Head.

By lunchtime, it was time for the last “good-bye’s” as participants dispersed for travelling home.

In the Pumphouse during the rest of the afternoon, ELDA management and the Workshop Head discussed the events of the week with input from each as to how we could improve things for next year.

……and by now, I understand the arrangements for next year’s “Lights in Alingsas” are well underway.

END

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