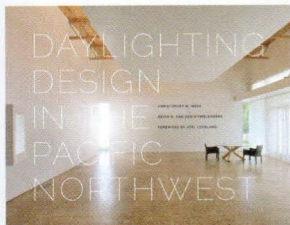


# BOOK REVIEW

by Fred Oberkircher



**Daylighting Design in the  
Pacific Northwest**  
By Christopher Meek and  
Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg  
University of Washington  
Press-2012  
ISBN# 978-0-295-99206-8  
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**"T**o live in the Pacific Northwest is to know summer's long low light and winter's long dark nights. To live with this light is to understand one's place in the landscape, and to design with it is to sense how the rhythm of light defines the rhythms of our lives." Joel Loveland's poetic introduction appropriately frames the essence of this beautiful book that deals with daylight within a specific geographical and cultural context.

The book is divided into four sections. The introduction is poetic, sensitizing the reader to the unique geographic and lighting characteristics of the Pacific Northwest. Abundant moisture, dense vegetation and mild temperatures combine to create the "ever-changing steely silver-gray and muted violet" lighting condition known locally as "oyster light." In the same manner that Richard Kelly through his Lighting Trilogy was able to poetically capture that which was unavailable through technical prose, this description seems to capture the essence of a localized lighting condition much better than one more reliant on technical language. One wonders what might be the result of this poetic approach expanded to the rest of the country. Possibly a more delicate and sensitive approach to light, architecture, people and even energy.

The majority of *Daylighting Design in the Pacific Northwest* is dedicated to case studies within the region. The projects range from high-end museums and libraries to a more utilitarian recycling transfer station. While both images and prose appropriately serve their intended purposes, the authors themselves beg the question by stating: "Many readers will see the images and say, 'This is just one moment in time. How does the space perform in the late afternoon in December?' " And, therein lies the issue that plagues books on daylighting. The very dynamic qualities of

light—color, texture, intensity—are only really understood through the lens of time. Removing that lens reduces the beauty of localized lighting conditions to the universality of all.

In the third section of the book, the authors provide 10 practical points that will lead to more successful integration of daylighting into architecture. Key points such as "put daylight where it is needed most" and "bring in light from above whenever possible" conclude with "integrate electric lighting into the dynamic scene" and "address the whole building energy performance through integrated design." While seemingly simple, these are exactly the types of recommendations that can more easily be transferred into designs that are actually built.

The fourth section offers a subtle challenge. The Pacific Northwest Daylighting Lab at the University of Washington has become the center of regional daylighting research and investigation. The introduction of the poetic term "oyster light" with its implications of unique regional lighting conditions leads one to ask if we should have other regional lighting institutions that honor and support the qualities of light unique to their respective regions? Could we create a better connection between architecture and people that recognizes and values those characteristics? And could we do this in a way that beautifully values both architecture and energy? The Pacific Northwest Daylighting Lab thinks so.

**BUY IT.** . If you're interested in putting poetry back into daylighting.

**DON'T BUY IT.** . If you see no value in dynamic light.

*Fred Oberkircher, Fellow IES, Ed. IALD, LC, past-president IES, is Book Review Editor for LD+A.*

## SOLVING THE DAYLIGHTING RIDDLE

**D**aylighting is like mom and apple pie. Who doesn't like the way it can reduce energy and make our building occupants happier and more productive? But despite their affection for daylighting, "designing effective, comfortable daylit buildings remains outside the capabilities of most designers," says **Christopher Meek** of the University of Washington. Meek and **Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg** of the University of Idaho, will aim to fix that problem during a seminar entitled, "**An Ecology of Light: Ten Steps to Daylighting Success**" (Wednesday, April 24, 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.).

Daylighting is much like piecing together a puzzle, Meek adds. "Effective daylighting design is a tough thing to do. There are so many inter-related pieces: relationships to the sky, site, apertures, glazing, interior surfaces, workstations, patterns of occupancy and use, plus the complexities of dynamically responsive electric lighting. It really touches on all aspects of building design and engineering and it takes a concerted team effort to get it right."

In the spirit of *showing* rather than *telling*, the speakers will rely on case studies to illustrate their 10 steps to good daylighting. Says Meek: "We chose each of the projects because they emphasize a specific dimension of daylighting design in a particularly effective way. We want to show daylight as being about ambient lighting and energy savings, yet also about drama, experience and dynamism."

While virtually all building types repre-

sent opportunities for daylighting, Meek says "commercial building owners 'get' that daylight and views are part of a high-quality interior environment. The research over the past 10-15 years has accelerated that perception, especially in schools and office buildings. Typically, making the case for daylight and views is easiest in owner-occupied buildings—for obvious reasons—but we are seeing motivation in developers who are seeking an advantage in attracting high-quality tenants."

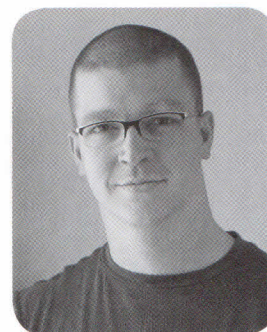
The interior design or occupant task can also make commercial buildings an easier target for daylighting, but any building is a contender. "Certainly in commercial buildings there is a little more to work with in terms of having a better sense of the occupied times and the types of tasks that are happening, where people are likely to spend most of their time. From my experience, daylighting can be done well in almost any building type. The key is getting the initial programming and building organization right at conceptual design. If those pieces are in the right place, any building type can be conducive to good daylighting and sun control."

For those curious about some of the 10 steps, Meek and Van Den Wymelenberg leave us with this one to whet the appetite: *Focus on distributional quality before illuminance levels (lux/footcandles).*

—Paul Tarricone



**Christopher Meek**



**Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg**