

INTERVIEW

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Light + Building: What was, what is, and what will be?

Mario Arnold
Tel. +49 69 75 75-51 88
mario.arnold@messefrankfurt.com
www.messefrankfurt.com

As of July 2020 Maria Hasselman has passed on the baton for Light + Building to Johannes Möller. And – just as it should be in high-performance sport – at a sprint. Nevertheless, the present and future head of this leading international trade fair have taken some time out – to give an interview, together.

Johannes Möller:

Maria, when the ZVEI and ZVEH decided in 1999 to support an event in Frankfurt, Light + Building was born. You were involved in these events from the start. What does the creation of a leading international trade fair feel like?



Johannes Möller – Brand Management Light + Building (from 2020)
Source: Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH / Pietro Sutura

Maria Hasselman:

At that time I was a sales agent and could follow from the front row how Light + Building was created – product categories, special shows, top themes. And, in a metaphorical sense, it was electrifying.

Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH
Ludwig-Erhard-Anlage 1
60327 Frankfurt am Main



Maria Hasselman – Brand Management Light + Building (2000 – 2020)
Source: Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH / Pietro Sutera

Johannes Möller:

What impressed you most at the time?

Maria Hasselman:

Actually two things: on the one hand I found – and find – the daring with which the industry has built up an international platform for the sector in the shape of Light + Building, and consistently supported it, to be admirable – indeed visionary. On the other, I am glad that the concept goes down so well with the visitors. The thirst for new ideas and developments on the part of the trade, the planners, the architects – and of course the retail sector – is unstoppable; in these times of coronavirus, perhaps even stronger.

Johannes Möller:

Can you give an example of a product which, in the 20 years of Light + Building, has most obviously evoked amazement among the visitors?

Maria Hasselman:

To pick a specific product from out of such a vast range – I would find that difficult. But certainly LED technology has left quite a few people open-mouthed. These light-emitting diodes did exist as early as the Sixties, but only in the new millennium were they developed to such an extent as to become an adequate replacement for lamps in everyday use. Major contributing factors have certainly been the ban on incandescent bulbs and, subsequently, on halogen lamps.

Johannes Möller:

What made LEDs so attractive as opposed to traditional lighting – the low electricity consumption?

Maria Hasselman:

Yes, that was certainly one of the things. It depends very much on how you look at it. From the point of view of architects and designers, for instance, LED suddenly made it possible to realise completely new lighting installations. Previously super-flat installation depths or particularly delicate or slender devices had been only possible under severe limitations. At the same time, from the very start, Light + Building

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has stood for energy saving in buildings. It is a topic still at the top of the agenda today and will certainly be staying with us for some years to come. For by optimising existing technology further, and of course by developing new technology, it will be possible to open up new potential in the realm of energy previously unimagined. Digitalisation, which is making every further strides, will play a key role in this. Why? Because it will make it simpler and simpler for the various different trades to connect their technologies with each other. We shall be seeing a strong force for synergy here.

Johannes Möller:

From the very start Light + Building represented both lighting and building technology equally. We have already spoken about LED. What have you found most exciting in terms of building-services equipment?

Maria Hasselman:

Oh, a whole series of products and applications. If I take what just comes into my mind, however, I would say smart-home applications. That was something really new. And of course, in terms of building-services equipment, the Energy Conservation Regulations, and the legislation resulting from them, has been a significant driver for the industry. The events in Fukushima and the German government's decision to withdraw from atomic energy also created important momentum. The vital factor, however, was the growing demand for forms of renewable energy and the decentralisation of power supply associated with this. So, beginning in 2012, every two years we have set up a special show on the subject at Light + Building: in 2012, "Buildings as power stations on the smart grid", in 2014, "Smart-powered building"; in 2016 "Digital building: networking of trades and IP standards", in 2018 "Secure: integrating safety-technology applications with the other trades." Today the charging infrastructure in and on buildings is playing a pioneering role in expanding and scaling electro-mobility.

Johannes Möller:

What other technologies were drivers – in the years afterwards, too?

Maria Hasselman:

Basically the digitalisation of buildings was THE driver. It was from digitalisation that almost every other innovation proceeded. You just have to imagine: suddenly you could operate sensors and actuators via a central control unit. By networking them with BUS systems, it is possible to realise highly complex systems. Cabling has led constantly to unity of control. It is via this unity of control that the different functions have been managed.

Johannes Möller:

So you are saying digitalisation was THE big topic. What was the next?

Maria Hasselman:

Digitalisation! It hasn't stopped. Over the last few years we have seen how more and more building functions have been digitalised. Beginning with, let's say, electric window blinds, then heat and light control, to awnings. At the same time we have seen how functions are networked

intelligently with each other. So, when the sunlight is intensely shining, the sunshade system rolls down and, if needed, an awning is spread open, before the air conditioning actively cools down the interior. The effects are cost savings, less use of resources, easier operability, and plenty of convenience.

But, if you know about the potential offered by digitalisation, that is all rather mundane.

Johannes Möller:

What do you mean by that exactly? What will be possible in future?

Maria Hasselman:

In future application scenarios for buildings and urban areas will be limited only by our imagination. For this to happen, though, all electronic components will have to be connected digitally with each other and speak the same language. To take one example: if a street lamp sees that an electric vehicle is parked in front of a house, parking charges will be applied, the charging process launched, the path to the house illuminated dynamically, the front door opened by facial recognition, and the lighting level suitable for the day, plus the owner's favourite music, will be turned on.

Johannes Möller:

That sounds spectacular.

Maria Hasselman:

Yes, it is. For you it will, I am sure, be as exciting a time as it was for me at the beginning of the Noughties. For since the start of June you have taken over the baton for Light + Building from me. How do you feel about it?

Johannes Möller:

Delighted. I couldn't imagine a more exciting field of work. I mean, just think of increasing affluence and urbanisation, everywhere on the planet. Buildings form one of the areas in which the greatest potential lies.

Maria Hasselman:

A good point – potential. What opportunity do you see for buildings of the future?

Johannes Möller:

I am assuming that urban space will become ever more scarce globally. At the same time, what people expect of it, and thus what they expect of buildings, will grow more. So it will be a question both of smart grids and of predictive maintenance, or intelligent street lighting, in exactly the way you have already described. At the same time the basic needs for water, heating, electricity, light, movement and security must be met.

Maria Hasselman:

The fate of Light + Building hangs in your hands. What for you is the particular characteristic of this leading international trade fair?

Johannes Möller:

Networking. And at two levels. Firstly of course it is all about networking building-services equipment together – of course we must include lighting in our considerations here. As you said a moment ago. Digitalisation is bringing completely new opportunities. And it is at Light + Building that you can find out about them. On the other hand, this fair is designed for networking its exhibitors and visitors. And not just across dozens of national boundaries, but across professions, too. For me, this combination makes Light + Building unique.

Maria Hasselman:

Never has the question of whether you can also run trade fairs purely digitally been posed so vehemently as in 2020. The background needs no explanation. How do you see it?

Johannes Möller:

Personal meeting and contact are irreplaceable. How else would we build up business relationships in which we could trust, how else investigate product qualities, analyse competitors, make contact in short time with multiple markets or disciplines and find what we have not been looking for?

Maria Hasselman:

I know you are planning some things for Light + Building. Here, too, the subject will be that of digitalisation. Will you give us a brief sketch of what you have in mind?

Johannes Möller:

But of course, I'd be glad to. Light + Building has long been more than just a purely physical event. For years you yourself have been making every effort, for example, to enshrine top topics from the whole industry – and been doing so months before the start of Light + Building. For this you have used both the website and social media. The benefit: orientation. Visitors find it so much easier to navigate later physically through a range of exhibits with a size of 52 football fields. And it is exactly this effect that we want to strengthen in future. So we are planning a digital service, which will create added values for visitors and exhibitors in the years between the events, too.

Maria Hasselman:

Can you give me some concrete idea of what that will be like?

Johannes Möller:

Actually I am not going to reveal too much. But this much I will say: we shall be using various different channels to publicise opinions and best-practice examples, or to indicate trends and product news. Putting it a bit over-simplistically: soon you will be able to find out the latest news from the sector even when working in the garden.

Maria Hasselman:

That sounds like podcast?

Johannes Möller:

Yes, that's right. We are planning a whole series. But videos and forums will also be part of the new portfolio.

Maria Hasselman:

I see. You can't resist letting a few things out. For when are you planning these new developments?

Johannes Möller:

We shall be publishing the first aspects of the supplementary digital services on the Light + Building website in July.

Maria Hasselman:

I shall look forward to that. Thank you for the interview.

Johannes Möller:

And thank you.

+++ Light + Building with Intersec Building will be held in Frankfurt am Main from 13 to 18 March 2022. +++

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For more information, please visit our website at: www.messefrankfurt.com

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