

A Report from Light+Building 2006

BY DANIELA RATZEL

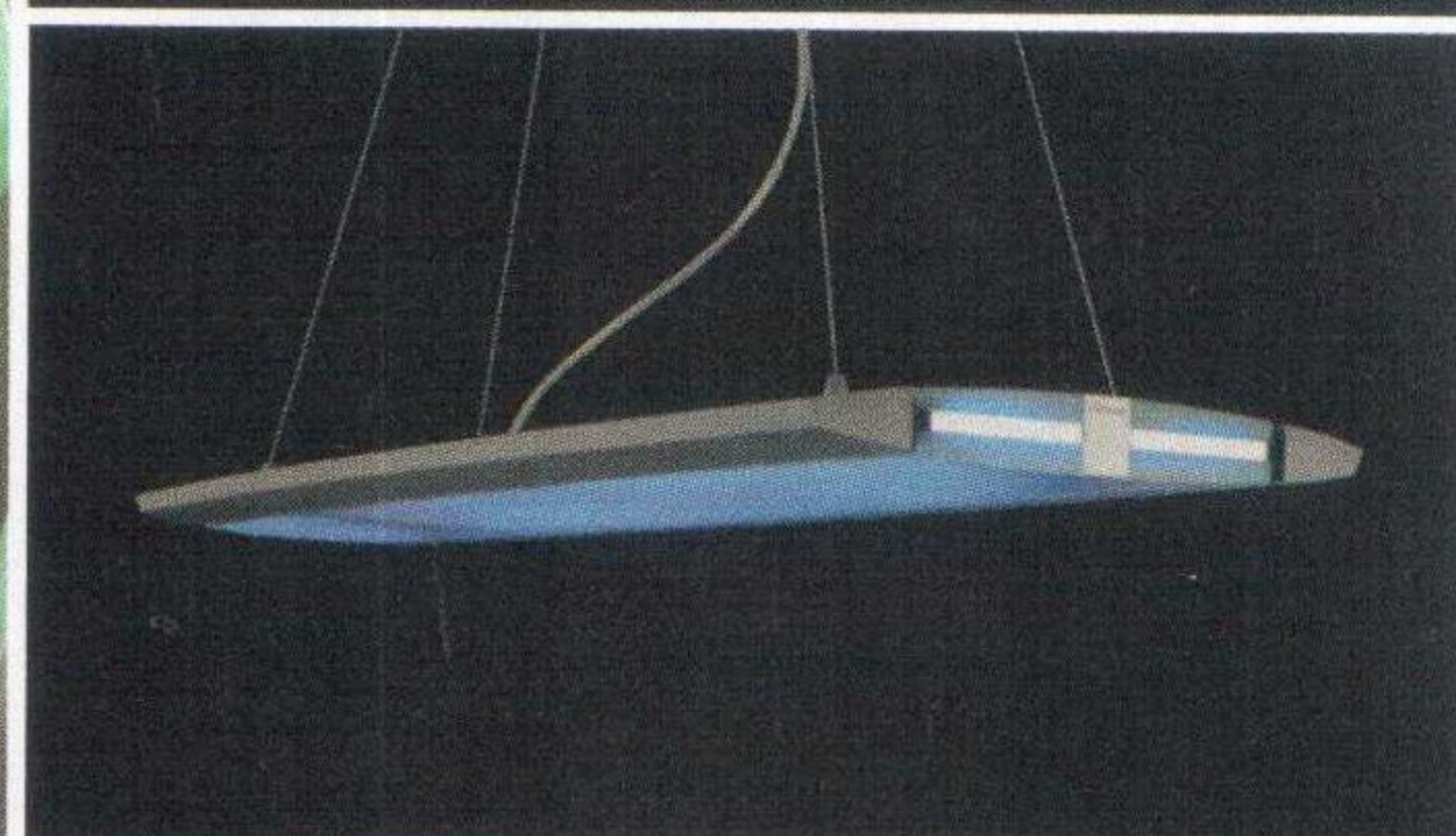
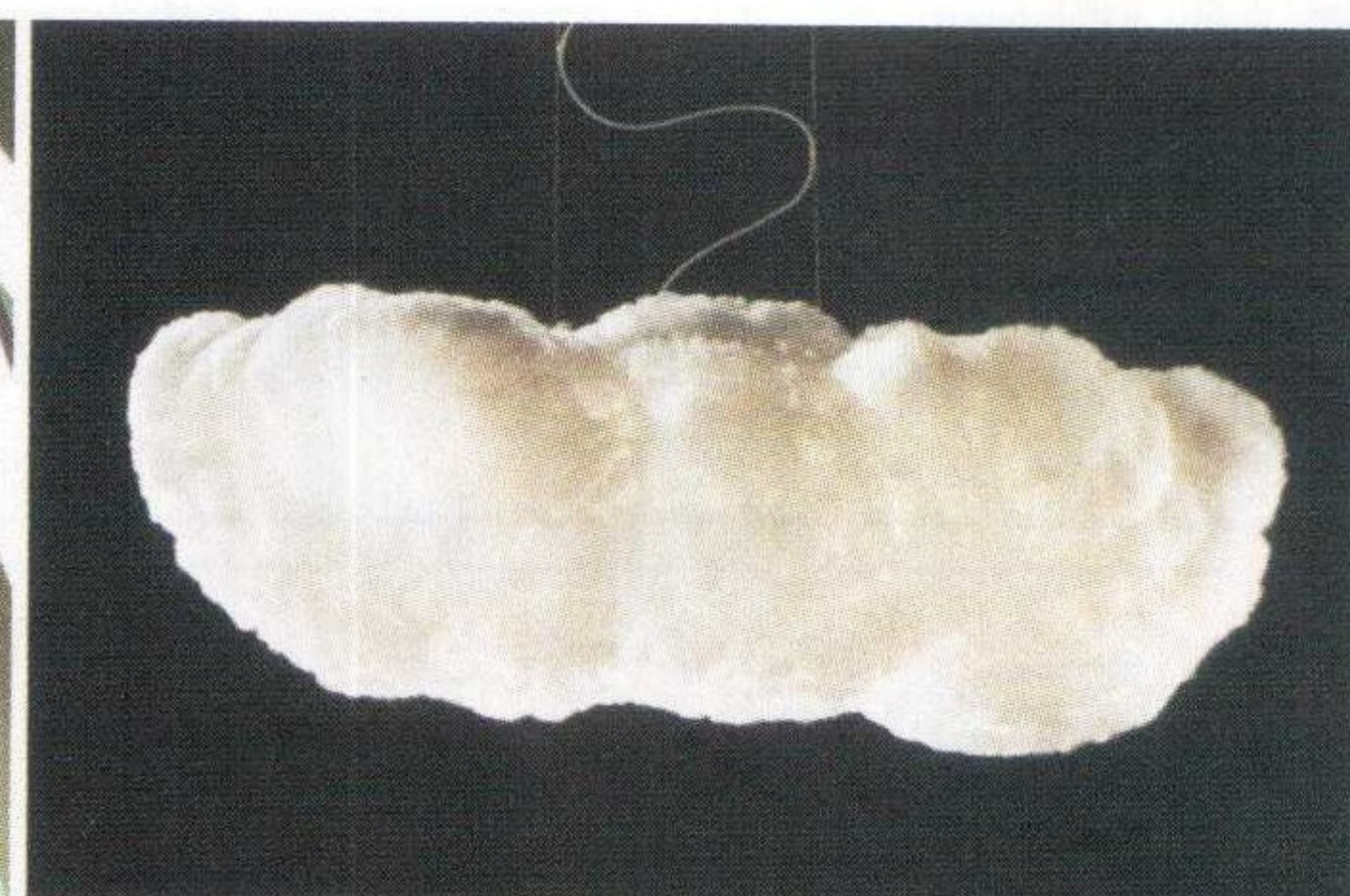
EVERY OTHER YEAR, ONE EVENT IN PARTICULAR enlightens and illuminates Frankfurt, Germany. This year, Light+Building was held from April 23 to 27. Its content not only lit the halls, but with enormous visitor numbers (over 134,000, according to Messe Frankfurt), also brought a smile to the fair organizers' faces. Indeed, attendees from all over the world got their money's worth: after a full day of trade show activities, visitors were treated to lighting-related events in the city through the Luminale program and numerous after-fair parties.

Light+Building is the yardstick for developments in the international architectural lighting arena: products presented there often indicate trends in the making, both aesthetic and technological. The former is a function of "fashion"; the latter tends to be a logical evolution of existing technologies.

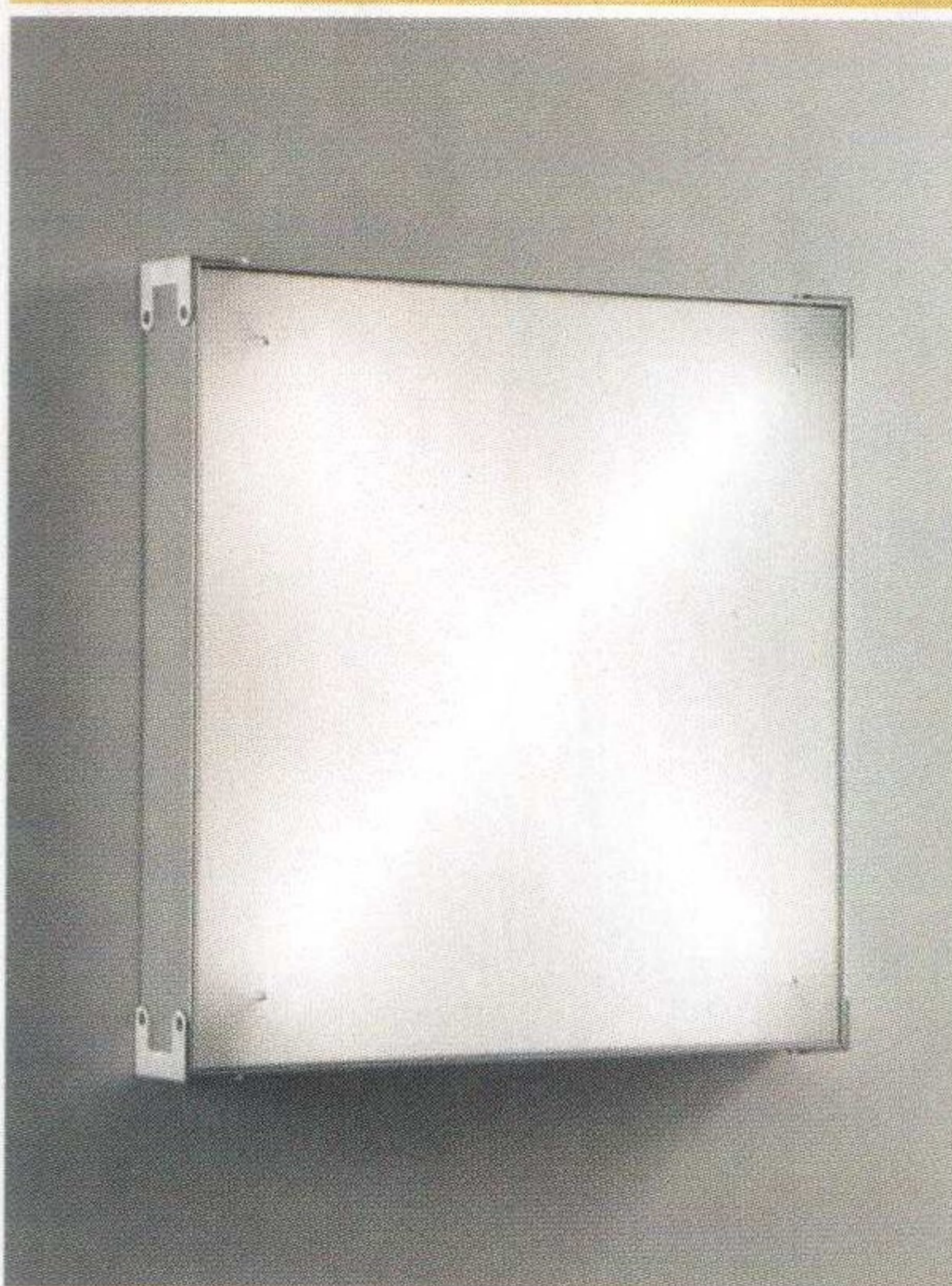
"Anything and everything that pleases" was the apparent motto for decorative luminaires on display at the show, and as there is no accounting for taste, there were no boundaries when it came to form and material. Especially apparent was the return of the chandelier; once reviled as old-fashioned, the fixture type has been updated, almost to the level of pop art. Many, such as Artemide's Nemo and the LED-illuminated color-changing Vortexx pendant designed by Zaha Hadid for Zumtobel, challenged traditional notions of the "stuffy" chandelier.

Experimentation with materials and a decreasing dependency on the incandescent lamp have allowed heat-sensitive components like wood, paper, and fabric to find their way into luminaire production. Anthologie Quartett exhibited Illustri, illuminated balls artfully draped with wood shavings. Ingo Maurer's Luxury Pure fixture features a lacquered paper shade. Material novelty alone did not satisfy Studio Italia Design: its Nuvola fixture's fabric-covered motorized metal frame moves to capture the essence of a cloud.

In other decorative products, the lamp itself became the focus: manufacturers, such as Delta Light with its Climax fixture, deemphasized the luminaire housing and instead celebrated the source. A similar trend was apparent among offerings for office environments, though in these, the lamp remained concealed in order to control glare. Instead, luminaires like Siteco's



Many trends characterized Light+Building 2006: Chandeliers, like Vortexx from Zumtobel (above left, CIRCLE 150) and Nemo from Artemide (below right, CIRCLE 151), embraced pop culture. Shades found expression in unusual materials, including washable fabric (as on Studio Italia Design's Nuvola luminaire, top, CIRCLE 152). LEDs made early strides into a luminaire intended for office environments, Siteco's Sky.Lab 1.0 pendant (above right, CIRCLE 153). Meanwhile, lamps suggested themselves in fixtures like Climax from Delta Light (below left, CIRCLE 154).



Novaluna were imagined as a suspended transparent body of diffuse light with a minimal housing. Innovations in lamp technology (namely miniaturization) have also dictated form, since if the light source is smaller, the luminaire is less confined by the dimensional requirements of the bulb. Case in point: Dot Spot from Zweibrüder.

The lighting industry's technological focus remains fixed on LEDs, and the

dynamic light control and color capabilities that go hand-in-hand with that source. Many exhibitors at Light+Building were experimenting with color, which is finding its way into all areas of lighting, interior and exterior. LEDs are also beginning to assume the tasks of traditional sources like fluorescents, which in turn is encouraging the development of LED-based fixtures for applications formerly not associated with

this source. Siteco, for example, combined high-performance LEDs with proprietary lens technology to create, claims the company, "the first ever" suspended LED-lamped luminaire for office environments—its Sky.Lab 1.0. Fixtures presented for such applications are still in an embryonic stage, however, with generally low illuminance lev-

els and cool color temperatures.

Additionally, there is ongoing experimentation with white light. Osram introduced a new lamp, the Lumilux Skywhite T5HO, which generates an extremely cool light (8000K); it is unclear, however, what the purpose of such a product might be. Asked about appropriate uses, the manu-

facturer says it sees potential for the lamp in light therapy or night-shift applications; though, these claims seem to necessitate additional research.

Developments like the 8000K lamp make one wonder what practical benefits some technical "innovations" offer. Many products answer questions that were never asked; that is, they lack a concrete purpose. As is the case in various industries, manufacturers tend to be influenced by each other, copying or interpreting the ideas of their competitors—a natural process. However, regarding colored light, many manufacturers seem to perpetuate the idea without a definitive objective. Here, sense and nonsense must be divided. Beautiful and decorative, colored light is also thought to be connected to human health. The fact that it might do harm if used carelessly is too often neglected.

Time will tell how these trends are ultimately applied. We look forward to an update with Light+Building 2008.

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Experimentation with materials takes decorative fixtures in a new direction: Illustri from Anthologie Quartett. **CIRCLE 155**