

Winning Women

Launched on International Women's Day, the Women in Lighting Awards aims to shine a light on the achievements of women and those that support them in the lighting industry. Here, Women in Lighting's Sharon Stammers reveals the winners of the inaugural awards.



We are delighted to finally announce the winners of the first ever Women in Lighting Awards.

There are many international awards programmes in the lighting industry, and they all play their part in promoting light and lighting to a wider world and driving up professional excellence, but none of them are specifically about people and the things they achieve on an everyday basis. With that in mind, and after a year that was truly awful for everyone, we took inspiration from the Maya Angelou Poem, "Still I Rise" and established the WiL Awards, to seek out and celebrate women's achievements and the achievements of those who support them.

In 2020, we had to deal with issues that had never come our way before in 2020. But despite adversity, we were still able to achieve and make great things happen.

Nominations were invited for accomplishments large or small, for people that did something special in 2020 under the categories of Achievement, Initiatives and Supporters. The aim was to give the nominees some recognition and allow us together, to acknowledge their successes. Some of our ambassadors created a panel to pick out specific high achievers, top supporters, and favourite initiatives so that we could honour them in more detail but in truth everyone nominated is a winner and we celebrate you all.

Entries opened on 8 March, on International Women's Day and a total of 180 nominations were made. This resulted in 141 nominees from 36 countries. Our three panels have deliberated, with two winners selected for each category.

Deciding which nominations were more favourable was extremely difficult; Sharon Magnaghi from WiL supporter formalighting said: "Each highly respected nominee likely had to overcome various challenges to reach such professional achievements and make these remarkable contributions to the industry. Exemplary talents who inspire us all to just keep at it."

In the Initiative category, we wanted to highlight new ideas and initiatives that sit alongside the lighting industry, celebrating ideas that push the lighting profession forward or use light to help in the wider community. We asked the jury to consider originality, unity, service, benefit, and scalability when looking at the initiatives proposed. The project Equity in Lighting, with its active goal to increase diversity in the New York lighting community; Melissa Mak's Let There Be Light photo initiative to bring joy on LinkedIn; Alexandra Manson's new festival of light in Stockholm, nobelweeklights; the educational Light Drops course taught via WhatsApp in Brazil; and Kelly Roberts, a driving force behind the amazing WILD in the USA were runners up in this category but the two winning initiatives were Light for Lebanon



and Light Reach, led by Manal Kahale and Nathalie Rozot respectively. Both of which are intertwined with each other.

Shortly after the devastating explosion in Beirut in August 2020, Lebanese lighting designer Manal Kahale partnered with the global charitable initiative Light Reach to launch “Light for Lebanon.” Using Light Reach’s three-tiered solar lighting model, the programme supports residents’ everyday lighting needs, whether practical, social or cultural, both indoors (with portable solar lanterns) and outdoors (with solar security lights and solar streetlights for building entrances, streets, historic building façades, playgrounds and public spaces).

To date, Light for Lebanon has raised US\$75K and already afforded the purchase of almost 1,500 solar lights. Kahale’s ground team has provided lighting to the Beirut Fire Brigade and distributed solar lanterns to residents plunged into darkness and to address immediate safety and security issues. Spearheaded by Kahale, the programme continues to grow into an impactful lighting initiative.

Nathalie Rozot nominated Kahale without realising that she too would be nominated for this and her previous work with Light Reach: “Kahale, whose social engagement and dedication to the sustainable rebuilding of Lebanon is exemplary, is an inspiring young woman in the lighting profession and she fully deserves to be celebrated

with a special recognition.”

Light Reach was set up by Rozot, and is a solar lighting initiative by lighting think-tank PhoScope, designed to leapfrog over utility grids to light work and play, and to boost the wellbeing and economic growth of underserved communities worldwide. As well as supporting Lebanon, they have also worked on projects in Puerto Rico. Light Reach is a WiL partner, and any profit from the sale of WiL T-shirts is forwarded on to help fund its projects. The next category enabled us to celebrate achievement – big or small. We asked the jury to consider impact, inspiration, challenges and how the nominated initiative resonated with them on a personal level. Top level scorers included Agneta and Jan Ejhed who, within the innovative lighting school of KTH in Sweden, have inspired and turned out many futures designers; Jesica Elizondo for her book about 50 Mexican artists on light and dance; Armaghan Ahmadi Venhari, founder of Light-Life online academy in Iran; skilled designer and role model, Florence Lam, global leader of lighting at Arup; Kristina Allison in the UK for her work at the Society of Light & Lighting and her passion for the circular economy; and Henrika Pihlajaniemi for her work in light education on Finland.

Despite education being a highly prized achievement in this category, the two winners are both women with long careers in lighting, incredible designers, and a massive inspiration

Manal Kahale (left) and Nathalie Rozot (right) were the two winners in the Initiative category for their work with Light for Lebanon and Light Reach respectively.



to female lighters everywhere. We are proud to announce Barbara Horton and Motoko Ishii as our highlighted achievers. Barbara Horton retired a few months ago having spent 40 years as a lighting designer, rising to CEO of Horton Lees Brogdon, and enabling it to become the largest female-owned company in the USA during her tenure. She has mentored many young professionals, is a Past President of IALD and one of the founders of the Women In Lighting Design (WILD) movement. When we started WiL, she said to us: “Women in lighting design have somehow broken the glass ceiling in many parts of the world by creating their own destiny, starting their own firms and being recognised for their achievements. With more awareness, communication and mentoring we can continue to educate and support those who still struggle and ensure future generations will continue to succeed in lighting design and other parts of the industry.”

Motoko Ishii was accorded the highest accolade in Tokyo on 1 October, 2020, when she was named as a Tokyo Honorary Citizen and commended by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government as someone who has contributed to the rise of Japanese social culture. She has had a 52-year career in lighting and has achievements too numerous to mention – in short, she is a lighting legend.

Ishii also kindly supplied a quote for the WiL website when we launched: “I am very glad to say to all the people who are engaging in lighting business that the highest position of Japanese mythology is a Goddess called Amaterasu. She is the Goddess of Light and her power is falling all over the world. Please read Japanese mythology and recognise women’s power.”

These two women and their incredible careers continue to inspire us all.

The last category shone a spotlight on those who have helped us in our lives – people who enable us to keep moving forward and have mentored us or supported us in some way. We asked the jury to consider the nominees impact, influence, and level of support. An almost impossible category to judge, we had to rely on what stories resonated the most with our jury. Top scorers included UK-based Mary Rushton-Beales, nurturer and mentor to many lighting designers; Liliana Gonzalez for her support to all women in lighting in Mexico; Tina Aghassan, fundraising ambassador in support of Light for Lebanon; Giacomo Rossi for his support of the WiL project and women in lighting in Italy; and Thomas Schielke for his continuous dedication to education and mentoring.

The people the jury chose to highlight in this category are Chiara Carucci, Italian lighting



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designer based in Sweden; and Lisa Reed, a lighting designer in the USA.

Founder of the IALD Nordic chapter and, together with Giacomo Rossi, founder of the Facebook group “Italian Lighting Design promotion group”, which is aimed at spreading the culture of light and promoting lighting design in Italy, Carucci also supports and publishes WiL events on social networks and collaborates with the WiL ambassador in Italy in the organisation of various initiatives. These are some of the comments nominees said about her: “She welcomed me and believed in me, supporting me but also letting me fly.”

“Chiara is always there when one of us needs help, always available to answer questions or send useful material, very competent and very helpful.”

“Chiara has always been supportive, ready to encourage and celebrate my first steps in the lighting design world. She’s a giver, a real mentor!”

“One of the most caring and willing to help people in the industry, especially in the time of a pandemic.”

Lisa Reed has an extensive professional resume of awards and is known for her altruistic character and dedication to helping others. She founded Ladies of Lighting in St. Louis, helped expand

WILD across the USA and is a passionate advocate for diversity in lighting. She received the 2014 IES Presidential Award for her work with Emerging Professionals and in 2020, she was named as one of the top 20 women in construction in St Louis. She also co-authored the survey *Why Women Leave Design and how to Keep Them* and presented the results at IALD Enlighten 2018.

Nominees said of Reed: “You know a person is special when you remember the exact moment you met them. Lisa Reed is one of those people. I first met Lisa over 7 years ago at an IALD conference and was instantly inspired by this vibrant, passionate woman who had young kids, her own thriving lighting business and yet still volunteered in the community and enjoyed running. At the time I was a new mom, struggling to find my identity as a working mom and lighting designer. She was so kind, considerate, and inspiring and not only gave sound advice, but she was actively role modelling that advice. Whenever I have needed advice, she has made time to listen and provide unparalleled support and advice.” ■

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Lighting design icons Barbara Horton (1) and Motoko Ishii (2), were honoured in the Achievement category for their stellar careers in lighting design, while Chiara Carucci (3) and Lisa Reed (4) won in the Supporters category.

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