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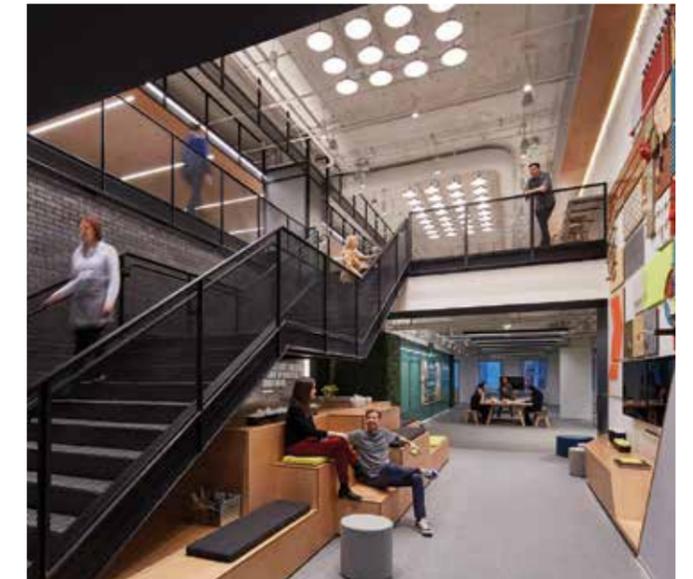
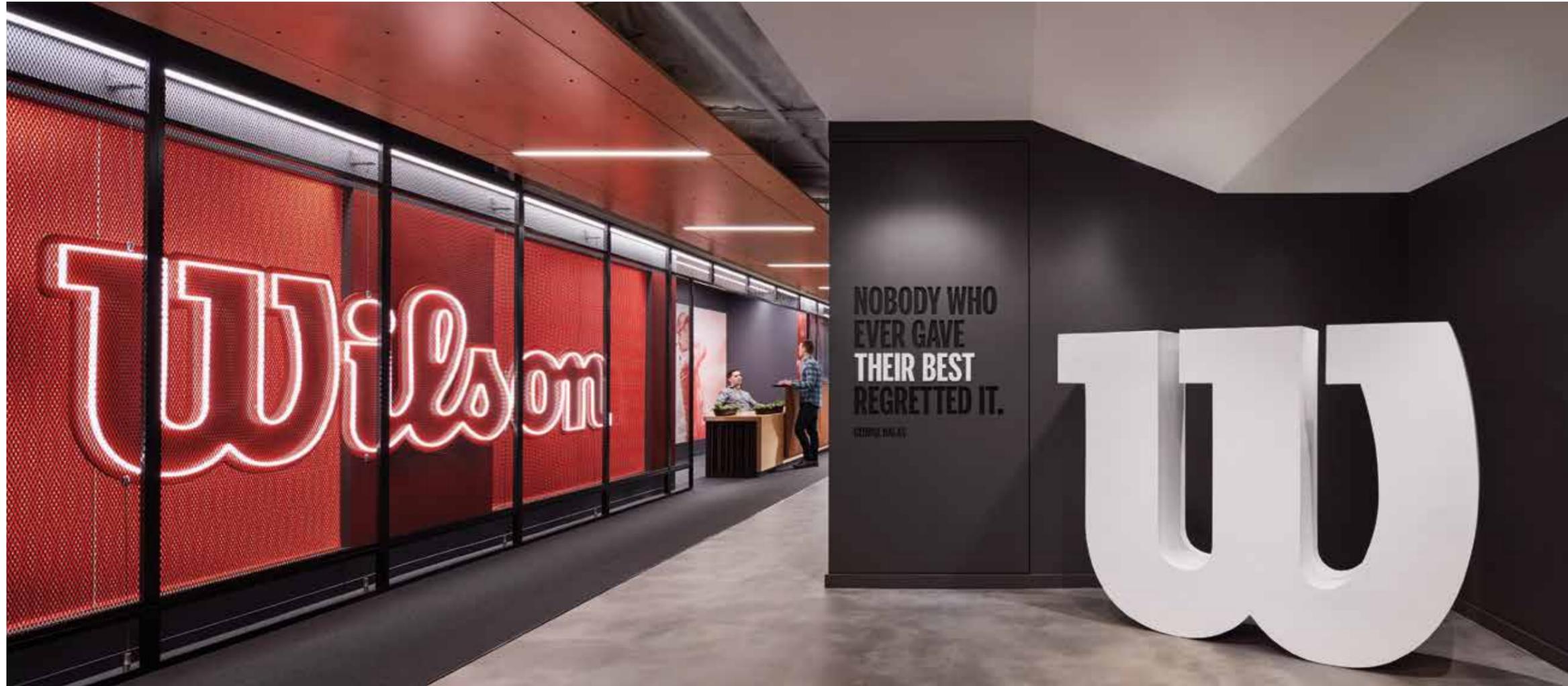
GREAT LAKES **BY**
DESIGN

Functional art

Joseph Jeup Inc., a Michigan-based couture furniture designer, is redefining luxury and craftsmanship in the furniture industry.

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Paint by light

BY R.J. WEICK

Light: it can transform, enhance, create, dramatize, and define spaces in the built environment through a careful marriage of technical expertise and creative vision. It is both a medium of artistic expression and a mechanical solution of tangible fixtures that ultimately influence human and spatial experience.

“It is about the collaborative effort of making art and creating an environment that makes people enjoy their spaces and makes an experience out of it,” said Gwen Grossman, IALD Professional, IES, LC, principal and founder of Gwen Grossman Lighting Design, in reference to design. “It is people coming together to create something long-lasting and it is having a thought

behind your actions: a purposeful paint-brush stroke as it were.”

Gwen Grossman Lighting Design, or GGLD, is Chicago-based, award-winning lighting design firm drawing upon the diverse backgrounds of its team members to deliver innovative solutions for client projects. Since its establishment in 2010, the Women’s Business Enterprise firm has been recognized with approximately 12 IES Illumination Awards and has developed a portfolio of local and national projects ranging in scale and typology, such as: hotels, hospitality, education, corporate interiors, and exterior landscaping and facades.

Grossman, who has approximately 24 years of experience in lighting design and

has received nearly 16 IESNA Lighting Design Awards throughout her career, initially started in theatrical lighting before working with architectural lighting firms both in New York City and Chicago, which ultimately led to her launching her own business. With creativity and collaboration at the foundation of the firm’s philosophy, the team works to bring innovative solutions of balanced composition, harmony, and drama to architectural spaces.

“Our firm is very diversified with backgrounds in theatrical lighting, architecture, interior design, and fine arts, so we bring a lot to the table that has different perspectives,” Grossman said. “I think it makes us really stand out and we approach things

with not only what could be cutting-edge and different, but also I'm constantly asking myself and them: what could go wrong, what could we do better—because you can always learn from that experience for the next time.”

When partnering with architects, interior designers, developers, and engineers to bring light and life to projects, Grossman noted the firm is typically given materials, whether it is a written document describing the building and spaces, a basic schematic plan of a proposed layout, or the site location at the onset of the process. If it is an existing site, the team will visit the property to capture the sense of space at the designated location; otherwise GGLD will start by meeting with the architect to understand the design goals of the project, the vision of the client, and how the space will be used.

“We want to find out initially about the client and their needs, and then we want to find out from the architect their direction for the building. Do they have an overall

concept that we can jump on board with, or are they still trying to work out some of the spaces?” Grossman said. “It varies with every project where we come in.”

In the case of the Wilson Sporting Goods Headquarters project in Chicago, a nearly 90,000-square-foot facility designed by Gensler and comprising themed vignettes of open office space, gathering areas, conference rooms, the concept was bold and celebratory. Wilson posters, scoreboards wrapped in ivy, tennis rackets, golf clubs, posters, court lines, and dynamic graphics found throughout the headquarters are supported and enhanced by the intentional use of linear, utilitarian, hanging fixtures, and striking LED neon in the welcoming Wilson logo.

“It is a very cutting edge design with a lot of contrast and bold statement. I think it is what has carried their sporting goods company throughout the years,” Grossman said. “There was a lot of graphics, a lot of visuals to the space, and what was on the

wall surfaces were equally as important as the utilitarian lights. Lighting—especially in the opening entry—the walls and leaving the corridors as more secondary was really our goal to pop the graphics.”

Beginning with an analysis of the different spaces, the lighting design team compiled concept designs and lighting layouts, and presented the lookbook, or sketchbook, to the clients.

“We are trying to get the conceptual mood and feel of the space first before we figure out the technical mechanics,” Grossman said. “It is more about how it should look and feel.”

In the open office space, the team utilized high bay fixtures, or a more sporting-inspired type lighting, to create a sense of delight through the unexpected; lit the walls in the conference meetings rooms to highlight the baseball hats, shoes, and other equipment adorning the walls; and used a tight beam wall grade light underneath the stairs in the two-story-tall space to high-

light quotes and details .

“In some of the more utilitarian rooms, like private offices, we let the design be more utilitarian with standard office fixtures so we could spend the money on the whole opening sequence, lounge space, and the client interactive areas,” Grossman said.

“I think it is very bold and that is very much our style. We used all dark black fixtures and the black fixtures against the white open ceiling basically created its own ceiling layer. Using the fixtures not only to obviously light the space, but also as part of the design of the space—how they fit in the space and how they looked and contrasted the ceiling—is unique,” Grossman added.

When collaborating with Gary Lee Partners on the Hyatt Centric The Loop Chicago Hotel, which renovated a 1920s building into a contemporary art deco-inspired boutique hotel with touches of local artistry, Grossman said one of the biggest challenges with the project was the historical nature of the site.

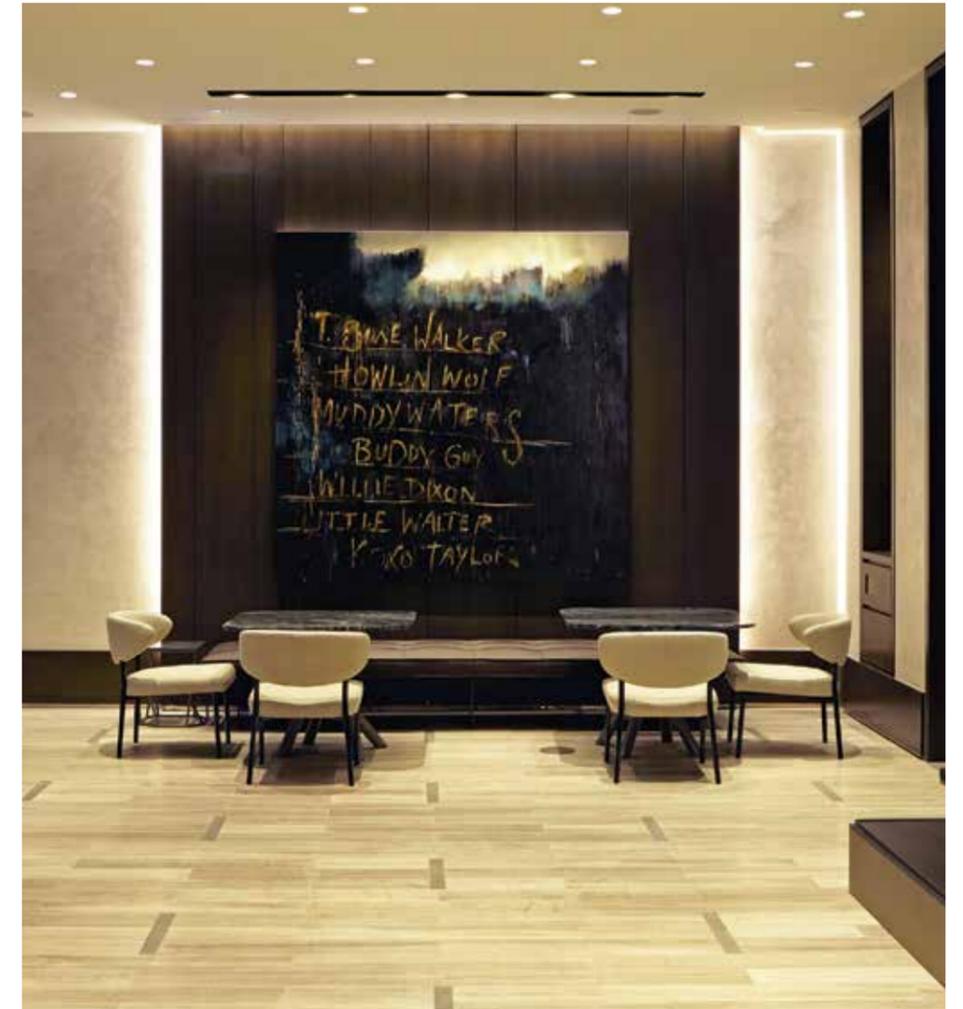
“This was a building that had historical ceiling elements that could not be touched and wall finishes. In the meeting rooms, all of the wood walls are historical and only so much could be done with where the ceiling was and how it interacted with those walls,” Grossman said. “It was a challenge to figure out those details and we had a lot of mechanical issues as far as fixtures fitting in the ceilings that I think we had to make some onsite decisions.”

In the lobby of the Hyatt Centric The Loop Chicago, custom black slots of light with individual fixtures are aimed at artwork, while outward-facing cove details highlight the wall behind the artwork near the door to accent the piece, and inward-facing cove details create a frame of light wrapping the art behind the reception desk.

“There is a connecting stair between the first and second floor, and that ceiling was historical. There was a spot for two decorative fixtures. If you think back historically, spaces were lit very differently using more decorative fixtures like ballroom-type spaces. Now, we expect a higher light level and we have a certain expectation of all the lighting is coming from the ceiling down,” Grossman said.

“We flipped it. I put the light that runs around the brick, so it was celebrating the historical architecture, it was bringing light in an unusual way to that space, and dealing with the fact we couldn't have any typical down-lighting scenarios,” Grossman added.

While the creative side of lighting design plays a critical role in delivering dynamic and engaging spaces, the GGLD team also spends a significant amount of time work-



ing through the technical aspect of lighting after the conceptual phase. Fixture specifications, drawings, illumination and energy calculations, daylight harvesting solutions, cost estimation, control system design and programming, site supervision of fixture aim, and sustainable design strategies are then used to support the more artistic side of the process.

“It is a beautiful marriage of both of those things. I personally have always been drawn to light on more of the creative side—it can accentuate architecture or art, it can create the ceiling and actually define the space, or it is there for functional purpose. Light is the paintbrush I use in these spaces,” Grossman said.

“Then on the other side, once we have our concepts solidified, there is a whole very technical side to what we do. They definitely go hand-in-hand, and for me it is using both sides of the brain. I really like that,” Grossman added.

Whether bringing an innovative solution or touch of the unexpected to corpo-

rate interiors, or using creative strategies to highlight historical architecture and address project challenges, Grossman noted one of the aspects of the process that draws her to the field is working with architects and interior designs to collaboratively brainstorm new and out-of-the-box ideas to help influence the architecture.

“I love doing restaurants, because it is almost theatrical where you can do lighting more to create the mood. I don't want someone to go in a restaurant and go ‘wow, look at the lighting.’ It is about creating an experience through that collaboration with architects and interior designers, so we are all working together to create one unified space. That is what gets me excited,” Grossman said.

“It is creating, definitely sculpting the architecture, but also creating the mood of ‘we want you to feel excited when you come in this space,’ or ‘you should really feel subdued and somber.’ Lighting is a huge part of that experience,” Grossman added.