

Trade Secrets | The Best Light in the World

DOMESTIC BLISS

HOW CAN SOMETHING AS TRANSIENT AS A MOMENT OF GLORIOUS LIGHT LINGER SO LONG IN THE MEMORY? TEN EXPERIENCED OBSERVERS NAME THEIR FAVORITE PLACES FOR MEMORABLE LIGHT BY SHAX RIEGLER

1 Anna Deavere Smith Playwright and actor. "The most beautiful light I've experienced was at **VICTORIA FALLS** in Zimbabwe. It cracked my heart, opened my consciousness, and will stay with me forever. The confidence with which light hits the rock, the democratic way it finds its route to the smallest splash of water, and then the relentless, consoling insistence of its power coming through the trees as one walks up out of the gorge are spirituality in action. The light is so powerful that it is louder than the water itself. It is operatic."

2 Jean-Georges Vongerichten Chef-restaurateur. "The sunset in **BORA BORA**, where I went on my honeymoon a couple of years ago."

3 Paola Antonelli Curator of architecture and design, Museum of Modern Art. "**MANHATTAN** in late August around sunset, from the West Side Highway, when the buildings downtown take on all different tones of gold and bright orange. I've hardly ever seen such perfect light in such a perfect place."

4 Tim Gunn Chair, fashion department at Parsons: The New School for Design; cohost of *Project Runway*. "**SAINTE-CHAPELLE**, built on the Île de la Cité in Paris in the 1240s as the private



1 VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

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chapel of Louis IX. One enters on the lower level, a small but stunning room of red and blue archways with gold fleurs-de-lis on almost every surface. 'Ah,' I thought, 'truly magnificent.' Little did I know. I ascended a narrow, winding stone staircase and had my breath taken away: this single room of 360-degree stained glass is so beautiful as to render one speechless. I've visited Sainte-Chapelle in blazing summer, rainy spring, and snowy winters, and the light is always otherworldly in quality and tonality. I'm not a religious guy, but Sainte-Chapelle could transform me."

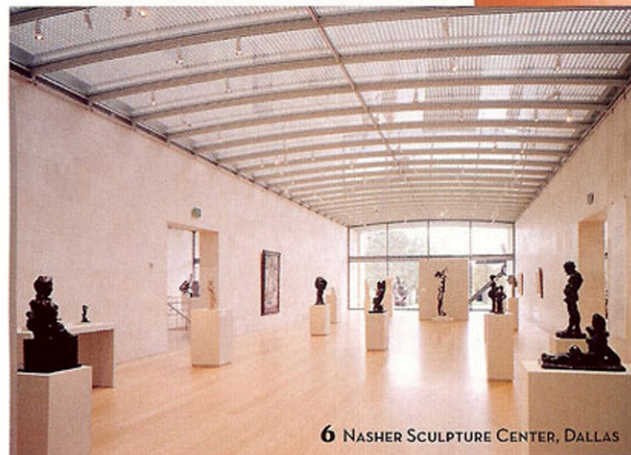
5 Isaac Mizrahi Fashion designer. "Everyone looks great at [the Manhattan



5 LA GRENOUILLE, NYC

rugged landscape seems to magnify this effect. I think of looking down toward the sea on the Isle of Arran, where the amberlike light fossilizes the fleeting effervescence of summer."

8 Sheila Bridges Interior designer. "I think the most beautiful and atmospheric quality of light is in my own backyard: the natural light in the HUDSON RIVER VALLEY, which I take in from my porch. This ethereal light had such a powerful impact on 19th-century painters like Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and many others that it helped shape an entire genre of American art."



6 NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER, DALLAS

restaurant] LA GRENOUILLE. It's the eye-level pink light. They have these pink lampshades on the little table lights. Richard Avedon did that in his photography—shoved lights right in people's faces. It makes everyone look good."

6 John Guare Playwright. "At the NASHNER SCULPTURE CENTER in Dallas, the light gave the impression I was seeing the artists' original intention. What was the source of this ravishing light? I looked up. The architect, Renzo Piano, had installed what looked like egg cartons in the ceiling, placed at such an angle to allow a constant stream of ideal northern light. It's a work of art in itself."

7 Julia Glass Novelist, *Three Junes* and *The Whole World Over*. "In my experience, there's no more beautiful light than the low, late evening summer sun in coastal SCOTLAND. I suspect this is true of many northern places. When the sun takes so long to set, it casts a lingering golden haze across land and water alike. Scotland's lush,

9 Bonnie Burnham President, World Monuments Fund. "My first visit to St. Petersburg was during the White Nights. The light, the beautiful buildings, and the landscape all seemed to merge and to animate the people there. Something similar happened when I visited ANTARCTICA two years ago to see Shackleton's hut. With the sun circling perpetually overhead, casting long shadows, it seemed to embody the idea of arrested time."



7 ISLE OF ARRAN, SCOTLAND



9 CAPE ROYDS, ANTARCTICA

10 David Rockwell Architect. "When I was 11, my family moved to GUADALAJARA, MEXICO, from Deal, New Jersey, and that exuberant new world ignited my interest in architecture. In the open-air markets in Guadalajara, the sunlight filtered through the stalls and transformed the entire marketplace into a magical public theater."