

Welcome everyone to today's session which is to celebrate a big milestone: the 5th anniversary of the WIL project. I am Sharon and this is Martin and we are Light Collective.

Most of you know that Martin and I started this project because of a mistake we made and a challenge we received to right it. That mistake was the impetus to create the Women In Lighting initiative and to address the gender imbalance that we saw in our industry. On International Women's Day in 2019, the WIL Project embarked on a transformative journey with a vision to create a more inclusive and diverse lighting community.

It set out to shine a spotlight on the previously often-underrepresented talents and voices of women in lighting. Since then, the project has been a beacon of inspiration and empowerment and has illuminated the path of 100's of women in lighting and its associated fields, highlighting their achievements, challenges, and contributions to our industry.

We stand in complete awe of how this project has grown and evolved to create an international connected community involving 79 countries so far. The ever-expanding global network has not only provided a platform for women to share their stories and insights but has also fostered support, mentorship, collaboration, and innovation across continents. It has become a source of inspiration for both emerging and established professionals, encouraging a dialogue that transcends both borders and disciplines within lighting.

Whilst the project started off in architectural lighting, it has grown to encompass all areas of lighting creating a cross-pollination between women who work as light artists, engineers, in education and in entertainment plus any other areas where light is the prime medium. In making these connections, the project creates further opportunity to share knowledge, inspiration and achievements.

Women In Lighting is supported by communications company, Archifos, and has a project sponsor in the form of Hong Kong based architectural lighting manufacturer, formalighting and an entertainment lighting sponsor, French manufacturer, Aryton.

Alongside the website resource and archive of 100s of interviews, WIL has hosted hundred of events, conferences, awards programs and many more local initiatives.

Personally, there have been many moments where I have felt very proud or humbled by things that happen. I love seeing a random photo on social media with someone wearing a WIL T-shirt or looking around a room at a WIL event and seeing so many countries represented and sitting together. Being able to connect people together professionally or support someone who has personally reached out, make this such a valuable initiative. Being able to celebrate amazing women in the form of giving awards, create an initiative that kept us connected during covid or try something new, like curate a book to promote women light artists has made this an exciting personal journey.

During covid, WIL created a one-day virtual event for International Women's Day, the Global Gathering. Throughout the day, the event shifted focus from Asia Pacific to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas. The Global Gathering ran again in 2022.

Last year, we undertook a "Global Gathering" of data on the lighting industry. Women In Lighting launched a survey aiming to look at the lighting profession in the context of theme of International Women's Day 2023 - Embracing Equity. We wanted to gather a really comprehensive impression of the lighting industry both in terms of where it was doing well and where it need to improve. The results of the survey are now available and we hope that the results are a really valuable contribution to the profession as a whole. Martin is going to talk briefly on the findings.

We are often asked, Whats the point of WIL? Or I don't get it or isn't it time to stop going on about women or its divisive...

We disagree. Our digital platform is celebratory. The aims of the project have always been to try to do something that is primarily positive - we didn't want to create a forum for negativity and felt that the best thing we could do was showcase the amazing work of women working in lighting from around the world.

We felt that this would create visible role models for others in the industry who might be looking for people like them with the objective of encouraging and improving the diversity of all areas of the lighting industry.

Women In Lighting has used social activism to highlight and challenge unconscious bias in the industry via a strong social media presence that has built a large following. 10K on IG!

The project is also supported by individual women around the world. Ambassadors for WIL are a driving force for the project and create stand alone local initiatives and partner globally for broader initiatives.

The call for everyone to embrace feminism stems from a fundamental understanding of what feminism truly represents: the belief in and advocacy for equality of the sexes, encompassing not only women's rights but also challenging systemic inequalities that affect people of all genders. We should all be feminists.

Feminism is not just for the benefit of women; it is a universal call to action for a more fair, inclusive, and equitable society. Its principles benefit everyone by challenging outdated norms, promoting equality, and advocating for the rights of all individuals.

Today is of course, International Women's Day and the theme for 2024 is Inspire Inclusion. Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated.

Together we can forge women's equality. Together, we can celebrate women's achievement and together, we can raise awareness about discrimination. We can all Inspire Inclusion.

The main focus of the WIL project has always been the website - www.womeninlighting.com. This is where you can see the interviews, upload your own interview, find an ambassador and access everything the project has achieved.

You can also sign up for two newsletter options - the WIL general newsletter and the focussed entertainment lighting WIL newsletter. Signing up for the newsletter is great as it enables us to keep everyone up to date with all the latest plans from all over the world. We are also on LinkedIn, Instagram and even Facebook still...with many dedicated local social media groups too.

There is no membership, anyone is welcome to join the community and that offer is also extended to male supporters.

We welcome everyone to join and to be part of inspiring women everywhere and helping us to grow the network wider, ultimately supporting diversity and equity in all aspects of lighting.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and strides made towards gender equality in our field. The Women in Lighting Project has brought to the forefront the exceptional work of women designers, engineers, artists, and educators, reminding us of the richness and diversity that inclusivity brings to our creative endeavours.

But it is not just about looking back; it's also about envisioning the future. The journey towards equality and diversity in lighting design is ongoing, and the Women in Lighting Project plays a crucial role in steering this journey forward. As we move ahead, let us commit to supporting, uplifting, and amplifying the voices of women in our industry, recognising their invaluable contributions and potential to shape the future of lighting design.

In closing, we would like to thank all the ambassadors, contributors, and supporters of the Women in Lighting Project. You have not only made this initiative a success but have also ignited a global movement that continues to inspire and empower. We hope that the WIL project continues to shine brightly, guiding us towards a more inclusive, diverse, and vibrant future in the lighting industry.

