



**Light Congress 2005
Lighting Future opening speech by Leni Schwendinger**

Today I would like to introduce four speakers representing two light sources – a point and a plane, a power delivery system...and the ultimate, ubiquitous power and light source...the sun.

What is the future?

Will we “Go forth and meet the shadowy future” as Longfellow predicted? Or, is it true that, as the playwright Bret Harte opined, “Behind the curtain’s mysterious fold, the glowing future lies unrolled”?

Futurism at the turn of the 20th Century – starting in Italy – gave expression to the dynamism and energy of the *mechanical* processes through art, music and literature. Today our cultural expression focuses on *connections*, networking, and webs of interrelationship.

My translation of this cultural moment leads to a vision of malleable lighting – versatility and flexibility are the characteristics that are sought today. For example, work spaces that allow for free movement and exchanges between departments, flexible floorplans. We are seeing historic and adaptive reuse and a need to repurpose infrastructural sites – as diverse as water treatment plants and underpasses – enhanced with illumination environments. Lighting technologies and designs are sought which are practical, utilitarian and efficient *and* have superior design qualities.

Whereas in the past, utility and design were antagonists, today we can imagine (and will see in the next presentations) a fabric of light – in fact, lighting so discrete that the sources are not seen because the hardware is completely integrated into the physical built environment.

Transparently synthesized form and function is the future.

These new technologies and approaches allow for richer designs – the restrictive envelopes of the past – related to scale, airflow requirements, and power delivery are disappearing – increasing opportunity for creative design.

What will we do with this newfound freedom?

I believe the key to future lighting lies with an interdisciplinary approach and, indeed, creating a new language. In this future vision not only do designers and engineers collaborate, but also we are seeing scientists, artists, historians, and others, joining in the fray. And of significance, the entry of social science methodologies, that is, a focus on people...those inhabitants of our designed -sites and -spaces.

Our new language places emphasis on the interaction between people and the physical landscape. The vocabulary acknowledges our intent to create aesthetic and responsive spaces. This brings us back to my guiding concept for today: malleability, forming luminous environments that value the needs of people – their health, at work and play.

Our challenge is to raise the bar – working together – manufacturers and designers – to improve the quality of our visual landscape; that which affects private and public domains – for ourselves, the citizens of planet Earth.

It is my pleasure to introduce a group of panelists who are doing just that: forming the future today.