

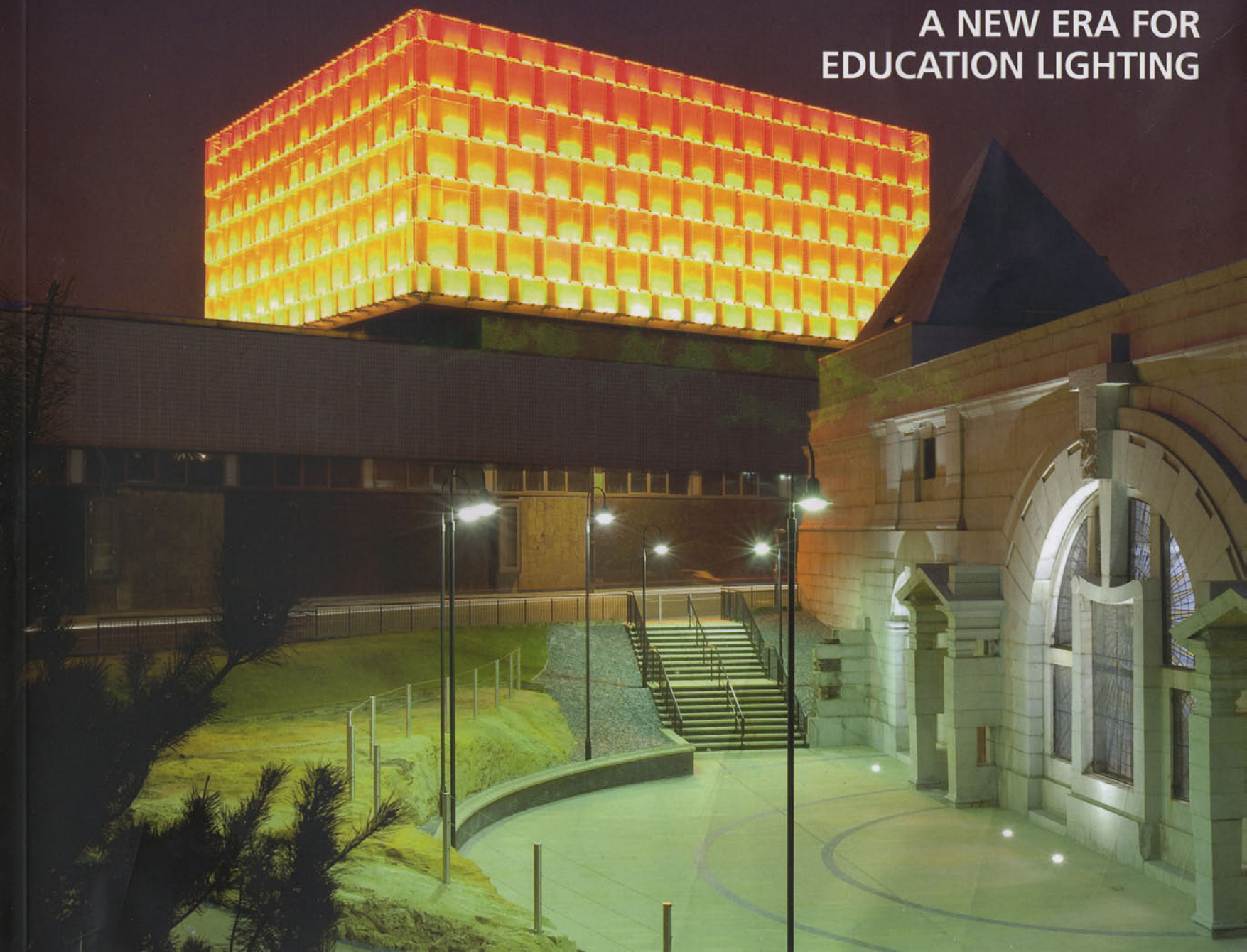
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THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

A NEW ERA FOR
EDUCATION LIGHTING



DESIGN FILE...

GIOVANNI CORRADO



"When I come across the seed of an idea, I first imagine what it might look like suspended from a ceiling."

Giovanni Corrado, Creative Director at Mediterraneo, spent most of his formative years bouncing around the globe. Born to Italian parents in Madrid in the 1970's, he went on to live in Mexico City, San Francisco, Barcelona and Switzerland before the family finally settled in the UK where Giovanni finished school. Mediterraneo - the renowned producers of Murano glass - was very much the family business but it was never presumed that Giovanni would end up there and the fact that he read International Relations at the London School of Economics is a clear indicator of this.

As it turned out, his first involvement with the company came when he designed their website but he enjoyed the environment and, after some negotiation, was given the opportunity to explore some of his ideas.

Of course, what sets Mediterraneo apart from most of the lighting companies featured in these pages is their manufacturing technique, which is deeply rooted in the artisanal world of glassblowing. So, how does a creative process such as this compete in the modern age?

"Traditional manufacturing techniques struggle to compete with mass-produced products where

the same product can be made by either process," Giovanni explains. "In this case the cost benefit of mass-produced products is likely to outweigh any value added by traditional craftsmanship. Every business must learn to play to its strengths - for mass manufacturing this is low cost and uniformity, resulting from high volumes and limited choice. If a client is in the market for a £100 chandelier we will never be able to compete with this, so the important thing for us is to NOT make a chandelier which could be mass-produced for £100.

"Our strengths are that we are able to adapt existing designs to suit client requests without difficulty and most often without cost implications. We are also able to take on bespoke projects of all sizes and apply our creativity and ingenuity to every client who requests it. We are also lucky to work with a particular craft tradition that is globally recognised. This tends to create an understanding in our clients of why our products are precious."

This clearly makes sense but surely the very nature of glassblowing limits what can be created. Is this not a source of frustration to a creatively minded person?

"Murano offers both a great

breadth and depth of glass blowing skills. I spend much time researching techniques and finishes which have not been used for some time, and look to apply these in different ways or combine them in unusual formats. I like to create pieces which inspire our clients to see beyond the vernacular of traditional Venetian Glass."

He also explains that his peripatetic upbringing has had an influence in this regard, "I recognise that whilst we [Italians] are usually artisans of impeccable quality, and often architects of innovative ideas, we are rarely great consumers of Design. How design is edited in London, by interior architects and designers, journalists and stylists, retailers and hoteliers encouraged me to challenge what Venetian Glass could offer in the 21st century. London showed me there is a way to tread the fine line between respect for traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design ideas."

Mediterraneo produce a wide range of furniture as well as lighting, but at first glance it seems that Giovanni has pinned his colours to the lighting mast. Would this be fair to say? "When I began to introduce designs into the company portfolio my remit was to build upon our reputation





for translating ideas into glass, whatever their function. In fact some of our more popular furniture designs are among my earliest pieces or variations thereof. I enjoy learning how to work with new materials – there will be, for example, a new console this September introducing fine joinery work together with Murano glass. Having said this, when I come across the seed of an idea, I first imagine what it might look like suspended from a ceiling. On a personal level it is still the childlike wonder of being able to look up at something which instinct tells me should have fallen down. I think it is the placement which fascinates me most – that this idea can grow to become a sculptural form suspended in space.

"Glass is all about light – how it

reflects it, colours it, refracts it ... and so combining a light source with a suspended piece intensifies its beauty and enhances its function."

In terms of the future, Giovanni feels that the company should preserve the intimacy they enjoy with their clients. Commercially, this will be helped by the fact that he has noticed a marked increase in the size, scope and individuality of the projects coming their way over recent years, allowing for a manageable growth. Giovanni concludes: "As for my own designs, I can only hope to continue to challenge the preconceived ideas that exist both of Venetian Glass and of Mediterraneo, not least in myself."

www.mediterraneodesign.com

