

MATT MURPHY

EVENT LIGHTING

the right lighting is everything



By Phoebe Rice

Matt Murphy, a Southampton based lighting designer and owner of Matt Murphy Event Lighting, has been lighting the exclusive tented soirees dotting the Hamptons' social scene for the last decade. Known for his soft, subtle, organic designs, Murphy counts some of New York's top interior designers, event designers, floral designers and a bevy of socialites and celebrities among his clientele. He finds himself highly sought after by fashion conscious clients who understand the importance of lighting and how it can not only transform cavernous tents into warm inviting spaces, but more importantly can also make these stylish hosts and their guests be seen looking their most beautiful.

Of course, Murphy takes pains to make the tent look spectacular, but it is his concentration on enhancing people's beauty that sets him apart. Murphy, a former model, knows better than anyone the importance of lighting. "There are certain lights and colors that are more flattering on people than others. Early in my lighting career I had a client ask for green lighting.

I tried to talk her out of it, but she demanded it and I ultimately gave in despite the fact I felt it would make people look ghastly. In the end, she wasn't happy and I was mortified. At that point, I made up my mind that I would never compromise my skill and artistic judgment again. So, now if someone asks me to do something I know will be unbecoming, I just turn the job down. I refuse to be a part of something I don't believe in. I won't compromise my design or my reputation."

It's no secret that beautiful lighting creates a mood, enhances a space, hides any flaws and makes people look and feel their best. That's precisely why Murphy feels it should not be overlooked when planning a party. "Harsh light sucks the ambience out of a room. When lighting illuminates every line and mark on people's faces, it literally and figuratively makes people run for cover. The wrong lighting at a party is event-suicide."

Murphy, who got his start working for acclaimed landscape lighting designer Greg Yale, attributes many of his techniques to his training with Yale. "Greg has a phenomenal eye. I personally think he elevated landscape lighting to an art form. I learned everything from how to flush out a tree's canopy to illuminate every leaf, to how to hide your cables so that they are

undetected, to how to mimic the appearance of moonlight. I also learned the importance of subtlety, the idea that less is more. This philosophy has defined my career."

When asked how his company differs from other event lighting companies, Murphy explained how big bulky fixtures, metal trusses and light trees seem to be the industry standard. He rejects this approach. "I believe a party or wedding shouldn't look like a big technical production. I use sleek fixtures. I blend my equipment in with the surroundings by using white wires and fixtures where I can. I am meticulous. My goal is that you don't see where the light is coming from. You shouldn't be aware of all that's involved. You should just look and feel sensational." ●

