



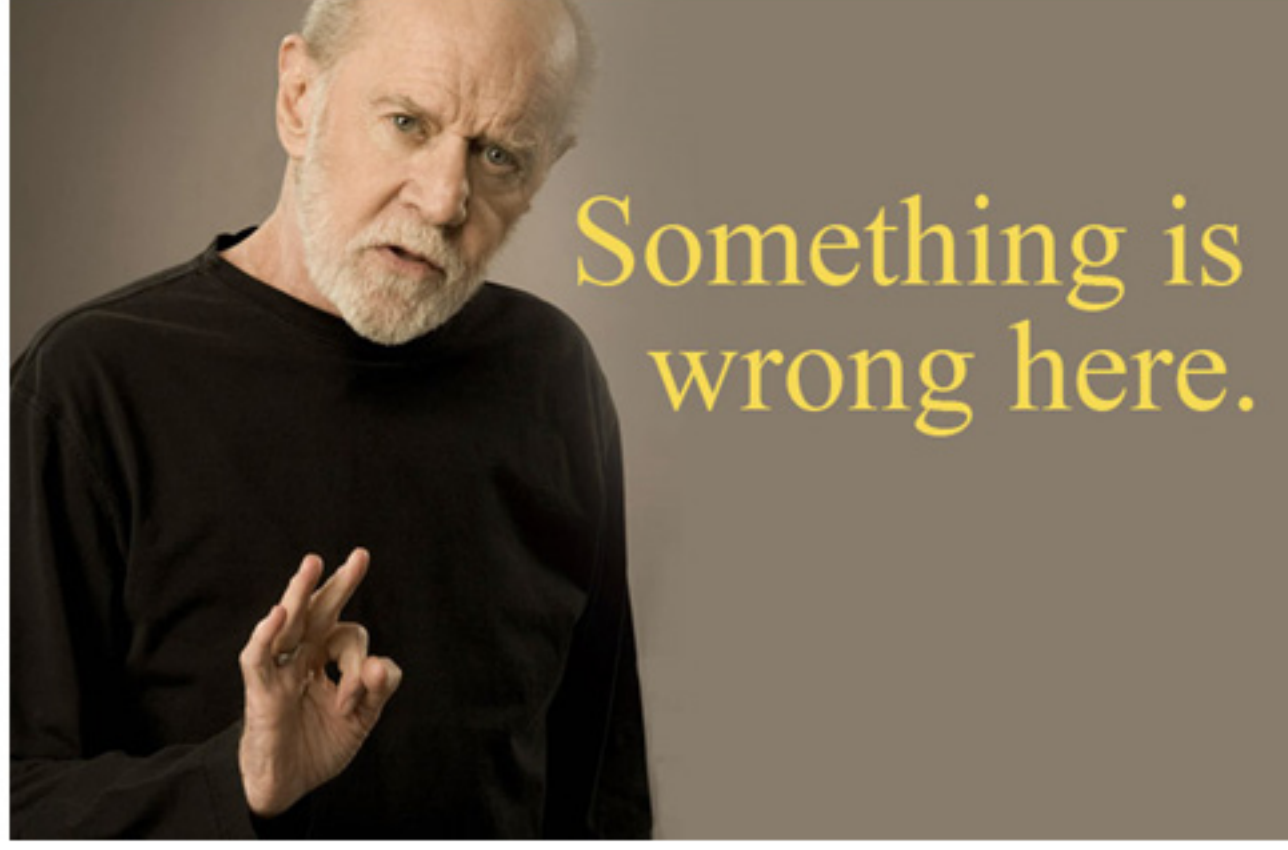
april inspiration...lighten up!

The late comedian, George Carlin, did a riff on America's obsession with bottled water. After doing a long drawn out tirade about carrying bottled water in our cars, on our person and to our beds, he would then yell out, *"When did America get so f***** thirsty?!?"*

I think if George were around today, he surely would still be standing on a stage somewhere, sunglasses perched on the tip of his nose, looking straight at his audience and on another one his famous tirades. However; I think that his 2017 version might be, *"Have you noticed how bright everything is? Do you have to wear your sunglasses to bed, to the supermarket, to pump your gas? ... I ask you, when did America become so f**** blind?"*

I was a big fan of George. His take on everyday situations and his ability to "observe the absurd" was his genius. Over the past few years, I think I have been channeling him as I hear his voice almost daily, in a low whisper but still ranting, questioning the state of our lighting- both indoor and out. *"Something is wrong here"*, he chants, and in my head I hear myself whispering back, *"I know George, I know."*

Is it just me, or have some of you noticed that our world has gotten brighter? Brighter, not in a happy or joyful sense, but brighter in the amount of wattage (or lumens to be correct) that we live with daily? Do you find yourself sleeping with a slumber mask, covering your digital equipment with your clothing or wearing your sunglasses at the bank or the mall?



The problem, as I see it, is that we are now living in a world of LED -(Light Emitting Diodes) and most of us do not have a very in-depth understanding just how the *wattage* of our old fashioned incandescent bulbs convert to the new world of *lumens*.

It has been a very subtle and sneaky transition and it has taken over so silently and so quickly, it was barely noticeable. Then one day, we woke up, and like the movie, *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, we realize we have been taken over by incredibly bright and glaring light with little or no chance of going back.

During one of my recent riffs about indoor lighting (as I jumped up from the dinner table for the 4th time in order to get just the "right" ambiance for our family meal), my husband commented, "Think about the transition from candlelight to electric light. People got used to it and so will you."

I ask you, what the heck kind of answer is that? Then again, my family has been listening to me chew the "lighting" bone for years, and as a result, they turn a deaf ear when I complain.

In my opinion, because the environments in which we work and live have become so over lit, it seems that a lot of us have gotten used to lighting that is too bright. The crux of the problem as I see it, is that LED is not the same lighting as incandescent. It casts a brighter and harsher white light. It is certainly not as flattering as good old incandescent bulbs, and it affects the colors of the paints, finishes and fabrics that we designers so painstakingly select. In addition, we need to learn how to convert the bulbs of old to the new more 'energy efficient' ones.

Buyer Beware

Don't be fooled. It's not really as easy as following a chart. We all subconsciously know how bright a 40/60 or 100 watt bulb is, but halogens and LED's are different. We may be able to convert the brightness of the light, but we also have to consider the difference of the color of the light. A bright white light from an LED bulb is different from the warm incandescent light we might be used to. It appears much brighter. Sometimes the conversion chart might need additional personal tweaking until you find what is right for your space.

Brightness	220+	400+	700+	900+	1300+
Standard	25 W	40 W	60 W	75 W	100 W
Halogen	18 W	28 W	42 W	53 W	70 W
CFL	6 W	9 W	12 W	15 W	20 W
LED	4 W	6 W	10 W	13 W	18 W

To make it even more confusing, not all LED bulbs are dimmable. It is important to read the packaging to make sure you are purchasing dimmable bulbs. If not, don't be surprised when you try to dim your lights and they literally ***snap, crackle and pop!***



I've got that one down and learned that lesson. As a result, I now habitually read the packaging on all the LED bulbs I purchase. I noticed on the packaging of the last bulbs I ordered from Amazon, it specifically says that they last 22.8 years. LASTS 22.8 YEARS? I? Are they *kidding*?!?

Think of the possibilities! If you replace a light bulb the day a baby is born, it is altogether possible that she might be past her 22nd birthday before she actually has the opportunity to screw in a light bulb!

A plethora of updated light bulb jokes come to my mind. I can only imagine what George would have to say about that!

I have to admit, when it comes to lighting, I have no problem taking things into my own hands. My clients and friends have learned (and hopefully understand) that I will probably arrive at their homes and without permission, proceed to adjust their lighting. It is something I just cannot control and no one has ever seemed to mind my rudeness, or if they did, they were too polite to tell me to stop.

Recently, however, I embarrassed myself at my monthly book group gathering. While our hostess was in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on dinner, I quickly ran about and dimmed the lights in her dining room and living room to what I perceived as the correct amount of illumination for a tete a tete amongst friends. I completely forgot about the whole thing until, during the discussion regarding our latest read, we noticed our hostess walking about the living room with a table lamp, cord dangling. Suddenly, the conversation stopped and someone in the group asked her what she was doing.

She said, "I'm so sorry! I just don't know what is wrong with the lighting tonight- it's so dim in the apartment!" I was mortified as I had to fess up to my uncouthness and in front of a bemused audience tweak all the light switches. (My sincere apologies to my very gracious hostess, you know who you are....)

Outdoor Lighting

I cannot sign off without commenting on outdoor lighting.

Here is my question, *Why is it that men who think they can barbeque, also think that skill applies to outdoor lighting?* Show me a man that barbeques and I will show you a man who thinks he did a great job lighting his exterior. *Just sayin'*

I have to admit, ranting about something that really gets under your skin makes you feel sooooo much better. I highly recommend it. Hopefully, the wattage/halogen/lumen snafus will work themselves out. Either that, or my husband might be right and we might just give up and slowly get used to the change. I get a headache just thinking about it.

But while the jury is out, I think I'll just stop my beefin' and get to work on a few new light bulb jokes.

Now where did I leave my sunglasses...

President

Debra Blair Design
dblair@blairdesignnyc.com
917-717-5020

