

A TRAFFIC-STOPPING

LIGHTING JOB

IN NEW JERSEY

The design firm Signature Lighting works with manufacturer CAST Lighting to increase visibility and traffic for a restaurant that had been performing below its potential.

By Steve Parrott, CAST Lighting

For 15 years, Ruga, a fine eclectic Oakland, N.J. eatery with a loyal following, was a successful business. But many nights found her ample dining space with tables left empty.

The owners thought they knew why. Although the location is ideal—a few feet off a major thoroughfare—the restaurant's understated building was nearly invisible, veiled by its buffer of landscaping. Passersby simply didn't know that behind the neatly groomed plant life and humble edifice, could be found the perfect pheasant, a succulent filet mignon or shrimp risotto-stuffed pumpkin. Alas, often the motorists didn't notice and continued home to their leftover casseroles.

To rectify the problem, John Quinn and Mark Speight, the co-owners, sought out the expertise of Mike Lenyk and



Top: A bank of staked uplights can be seen illuminating the shrubs at left in this view, which shows the restaurant at rear. Well lights, which are buried flush with the surface, illuminate the tree at center. Both take a range of bulbs up to 50 watts.

Above: A series of path lights illuminates low-growing foliage in front of the restaurant, with the walls blazed by MFI-16 Bullet lights. Both are held in place by corrosion-resistant stakes that are attached to each unit.

Right: A close-up of the China Hat model path lights used in the planter at the front of the restaurant. The fixtures take 20-watt halogen bayonet lamps.

Below: Staked lamps illuminate the restaurant's side in this view. The degree of beam spread is determined by choice of lamp, which is the industry term for "bulb."

his company, Signature Lighting. Mike built his reputation as much on his artistic lighting design sense as on his technical skills. He addressed the challenge by using 65 landscape lighting fixtures strategically placed among the flowerbeds and surrounding bushes. Mike also lit the Ruga sign and the building itself.

Lest the reader imagine such a large number of lights as overly Disneyesque—on the contrary, Mike's lights are small in size and carefully hidden.

Each one is designed to project the ideal level of carefully controlled light. The overall effect is not garish; it is simply striking, bringing out the natural beauty of the plant material and highlighting the architectural features of the building, thus creating one cohesive three-dimensional lighting scene.

Mike takes pride not only in the final effect, but also in the quality and durability of the fixtures themselves. "There's a lot of effort and art that goes into a lighting project like the one at Ruga. I need to work with products that can handle the task, and to know that my efforts here are going to last for years to come— for this project and others of this scope I rely





Using just three types of lights, the job dramatically highlights the restaurant's walls and landscaped areas. The effect is colorful, but the bright tones are derived exclusively from the neon sign and wall paint.



Ruga's sign is lit by Bullet lights hidden in the foliage at its base. They are the same type of light that is visible at bottom left.

on the quality and durability of the manufacturer's line of fixtures and system components." Mike Lenyk is one of a growing number of leading lighting designers that exclusively use the New Jersey-based brand of lighting components. An inspection of the fixtures used at Ruga show them to be constructed of solid bronze.

Mike explains that using these hand-made fixtures in combination with tin-coated wire and advanced power supplies ensures that the lighting system will survive the elements into the next century.

The Ruga staff are delighted (pardon the pun) with the results. Since the lights have been in place, business has picked up. Every day new patrons arrive with some variation of the following comment: "I drive by every day, but I never knew you were here."

The owners are also pleased with savings in the electric bill. Despite the fact that the number of lights has increased, they are all low voltage and consume one-third the electricity of high-voltage security lighting.

David Beansoleil, founder and president of CAST Lighting is pleased with Mike Lenyk's design at Ruga. "Mike used lighting techniques that not only draw attention to the restaurant, but infuse an almost magical feel to the property. His design succeeds in directing the viewers experience from the initial stage of 'recognition', to 'invitation' then to 'welcoming' as the motorist enters the property. The overall look and feel is dramatic, yet sophisticated and subtle—enhancing the beauty of the landscape rather than detracting from it. This is a vast improvement over the high voltage flood lights that previously washed out the entire property."

Ruga is one of a growing number of businesses beginning to realize the benefits of a professionally-designed, low-voltage landscape lighting system. CAST Lighting, working closely

LEARNING THE BUSINESS

The landscape lighting industry is in the midst of phenomenal growth. Now is an obvious time to explore expanding a contracting business to include this profitable specialty. The competition is relatively low, the demand is high and the profit potential is even higher.

New Jersey-based CAST Lighting offers an effective and efficient training program. Thousands of landscape professionals have taken these classes over the past six years. A large percentage of those trained have gone on to start successful landscape lighting businesses.

There is no better way to learn installation than by actually putting in a job, and that's exactly what happens in these hands-on seminars. From the design, fixture selection, installation, wiring and testing, each participant learns by doing.

To support the training, CAST hands out a 40-page manual that goes through every step of the design and installation, exactly as it's taught in the seminar.

For even more support, one of the seminar leaders becomes a personal lighting coach for each student. When the seminar is over, whether it be the next day or six months later, students can call their coach to help them get through their first job, or to help them get their first job. All the seminar leaders are not only technically-proficient, they have been trained as business coaches—experts in giving novices a kick start or in sorting out what to do next.

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with lighting designers such as Mike Lenyk, is poised to deliver these systems while the viewing public reaps the visual rewards. **CAST**

Ruga is located at 4 Barbara Lane in Oakland, NJ. For reservations or in-home dining call (201) 337-0813. Ruga's website is at www.rugarestaurant.com.

Mike Lenyk of Signature Lighting can be reached at (973) 633-0309.

Information about CAST Lighting can be found at www.cast-lighting.com or by calling (800) 914-CAST.

Lighting the plant material adjacent to Ruga's relatively small sign dramatically increases the restaurant's visual impact for passing motorists.

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