



# How to tell a story with light

SUBMITTED BY KEVIN CAWLEY

The following project is an example of how lighting designer Kevin Cawley gets his message across to the public using the art of light to tell the story of pain and pleasure in a garden.

**T**ake a second look" - Ellerslie International Flower Show, Christchurch

This garden is designed to raise awareness of children's arthritis by demonstrating the reality of the obstacles these children suffer daily living with arthritis. They may look the same as the next child on a good day, but on a bad day their joints become stiff and swollen, they feel fatigued and simple movements are painful. "Take a second look" refers to a child's playground by its physical appearance. These two identical children's playgrounds stand side-by-side. By taking a second look you will see that they are not the same. On a good day the playground offers enjoyment and relief and encourages mobility. On a bad day the playground becomes an obstacle. Simple tasks are taken for granted and are painfully impossible to these children. The planting was

very different in the two playgrounds. For example, a tree log replaces a normal fireman's pole. This evokes the sheer difficulty and pain if you were to slide down. The hard rock replaces the soft rubber tyres. This is to symbolize the hard impact on the knees and joints. A bed of roses with their thorns, evokes the pain in landing and getting up off the slide.

Working with landscape designer Bayley Luu Tomes and using light, I wanted to create the story at night that reinforced the difference between the two identical children's playgrounds; I wanted to accentuate and demonstrate that there was pleasure in one playground and pain in the other. The inspiration came from an 11 year old called Alisha. She is one of over a thousand New Zealand kids living with arthritis. This garden tells her story and those of others. It demonstrates the challenges these

ABOVE LEFT:  
The warm, inviting appearance encourages mobility.

ABOVE:  
The steel-cold, uninviting feeling created in the painfully impossible area.



**TOP:**  
Two identical children's playgrounds stand side by side.

**ABOVE:**  
The neutral space between the two playgrounds.

kids go through and when arthritis becomes a handicap.

In the playground that was pleasurable to use, I concealed small LED floods and used a warm colour theatre gel and focused the luminaires to create a warm inviting feeling to the area. In the playground that was painful to use, I concealed small LED floods and used a cold colour gel and focused the luminaires to spread a steel-cold, uninviting feeling. Between the two playgrounds I created a neutral look using a blue gel and

focused on the water feature. Light came from an in-ground source, through fibre inserted in the clear glass lilies that the water travelled through. To frame both playgrounds I used 2700K LED strip for the warm and 6000K for the cold. Colour temperature was the key to this lighting design.

This design was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate how colour temperature can influence what we see and how we feel. It also showed how lighting can reinforce a message. ■