



Manhattan At Night — circa 1945: High-angle view of Manhattan skyscrapers, including the Empire State Building, lit up at night, looking south from the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center, New York City. (Photo by Lawrence Thornton/Getty Images)

Inside and out, it is light — artfully and skillfully integrated with architecture — that brings vitality to the streets and buildings of New York City; it is light that brings this town to life, defining, sculpting, and chasing away the darkness.

The bright lights of Manhattan have been a mecca for tourists and natives out on the town for more than a century. Only the threat of U-boats during World War II sent such landmark attractions as Times Square into darkness — a situation long since remedied.

Today, decorative exterior lighting contributes to the dramatic skyline. Although this type of architectural lighting is not new to NYC, the present nightscape traces its roots to the “Spruce Up, New York” campaign in 1976, when Douglas Leigh, chairman of City Decor, illuminated city fountains and the Empire State Building in red, white and blue to welcome the Democratic Convention and Bicentennial visitors. It hasn’t been the same since.