

## Artificial Light Rant

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**“Light:** Electromagnetic radiation that has a wavelength of about 3,900 to about 7,700 angstroms and may be perceived by the unaided, normal human eye.”

Above is the definition of light from my trusty American Heritage Dictionary. I quote it because in the next few paragraphs I would like to address the nature of light, its qualities and terms that we choose to describe it. Please feel free to refer back to this definition as we move along.

The term “artificial light” has always bothered me. Light is light. If it is visible to the “unaided, normal human eye”, it is light. Just because the light is generated from something other than the sun, it has no less value to the eye. In this brave new world of 90 series fluorescent phosphors, the light from a fluorescent lamp is likely much better than that of twilight in terms of color rendering. Yet, most of us refer to the twilight as “natural” and the fluorescent lamp with 90 CRI as “artificial”.

“Natural light” sounds so organic, so natural. But sunlight filtered through a smoggy sky, glowing red-orange at the end of a summer day is just as unnatural as the light of an HID lamp. The spectral distribution is limited and discontinuous in both cases. But both are visible to the “unaided, normal human eye”. They are both light.

I suggest that we use the terms “daylight”, “sunlight” and “electric” light when we need such distinctions. The terms are much more descriptive of what we are describing and don't demean our efforts to bring quality to electric lighting.