



Beautiful Renders Within Reach

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What makes this render beautiful?



1. Objective Answer — This render is beautiful because of its light, materials, composition, and technical quality.
2. Realistic Answer — The question is like asking what makes a delicious meal or a sad song. Every 3D render is nuanced in its beauty (or lack thereof) and what’s considered “beautiful” between one architect and another can vary, sometimes dramatically.

Some architects and designers are immediately drawn to the sheer attractiveness of the image. They see the pagoda engulfed in a peaceful, late-afternoon light on what seems to be a brisk, lovely evening. Others see the realism of the image, defining the render’s beauty by its aged stone, the wood reflecting the soft natural light, or, perhaps most vividly, the [transparent curtains flowing gently in the wind](#), a feature that’s actually pretty easy to implement.

Despite differing opinions on what makes an attractive image, one thing’s clear: a beautiful render is like an iceberg. Above the surface, you have a stunning 3D image from a specific viewpoint that highlights the beauty and the story that the render tells. The bulk of the iceberg below the surface holds the elements of beauty that you’ve put into the render, ranging from things like materials and light to the emphasis and/or subtlety associated with each element.

So, the question isn't "what makes a beautiful render?" Instead, it's how do I go from this...



[...to this?](#)



As an architect, you understand what's needed to capture a vision, communicate its intent and mimic the sense of realism that's often vital in this field. Here are a few easy considerations that put beautiful renders within your reach.

The Importance of Realistic Lighting

Look around you and pay close attention to the tiny changes of light. Objects simultaneously reflect light and create shadows, combinations of interior and exterior light enable unique tones and shades, and small differences in light color can have a huge effect on the room's mood.

Indoor or outdoor, natural or artificial, creating stylish, [realistic lighting](#) is one of the core elements of a quality, beautiful render. Often, when you have realistic lighting in your render, the viewer recognizes the type of lighting and associates an emotion or feeling with the spaces they see.



In this stylish meeting room, for instance, the warm interior lights are responding realistically and consistently off the conference table. Those strong reflections on the table give a sense of sophistication, perfect for board meetings and other, corporate events. This scene also [implements area lights and spotlights](#) along with beautiful materials (refer to the red couch), which adds both style and ambience.

Lighting must be fluid, yet precise. It must interact with objects, materials, and buildings to give realistic context and scene, such as in this tribute to Mies van der Rohe (by Kristijan Tavcar).



Getting Your Materials to Look Just Right

Next to customizing the lighting settings for your 3D render, it's also essential to get your materials to look just right. Fortunately, [creating convincing and realistic materials](#) and object surfaces can be quite easy, and it has a massive impact.



For instance, look at the surface of the pool beneath the pagoda. Not only does the water surface accurately reflect the wavy curtains, but ripples in the water distort this reflection. With regards to the translucent, flowing curtains, you can also see that the curtain materials have absorbed the warm light of the evening sun.

Remember, your materials are part of the scene and must be adjusted accordingly to reflect this. In this Spanish home, the wall materials represent an older building with vines crawling upwards.



Look a little closer and a [rusty, weathered fence](#) emphasizes the visible effects that time has on objects and materials.



Lastly, consider leveraging the age and the imperfections of your materials to tell a story. Imagine how the next image would look if the bedsheets were flat, tucked in, and perfect.



It's those subtle ripples that turn this render from a 3D scene into a work of beauty.

Adding Context to Create Dramatic Scenes

In both real-life and 3D renders, buildings and objects don't exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are (or represent) real environments. Beautiful renders capitalize on photo-realism in the scene's context to bring realism and a sense of "feeling" to the main focus of the render, whether that's an office building, a residential home, or anything else.

Take away the people from the following render, and you lose a sense of the bustling corporate energy surrounding the office complex.



Trees and outdoor elements are also crucial to the style, mood, and overall story within a beautiful render.



The focus of this render is definitely the beehive villa, but it's the [placement and realism of the shrubs and trees](#), as well as the wet asphalt, that give the villa a real-life environment you can feel, smell and hear.

Choosing a Viewpoint

The point-of-view (camera position) you choose in a 3D render, like in photography, has as much of an effect as lighting, context and materials. The viewpoint of your rendered image, or the videography used in videos, is the invitation you're offering others to analyze your scene. For architects and designers, their composition depends on the viewpoint, and it is this viewpoint that tells the story of the project.



In the image above, there are palm trees and the sun in the focal point. The linear geometry of the buildings and their reflective surfaces, although attractive on their own, draw the viewer's eyes to this palm tree, and what you have is a story of tropics, warm weather, sandy beaches and luxuriously modernist properties.

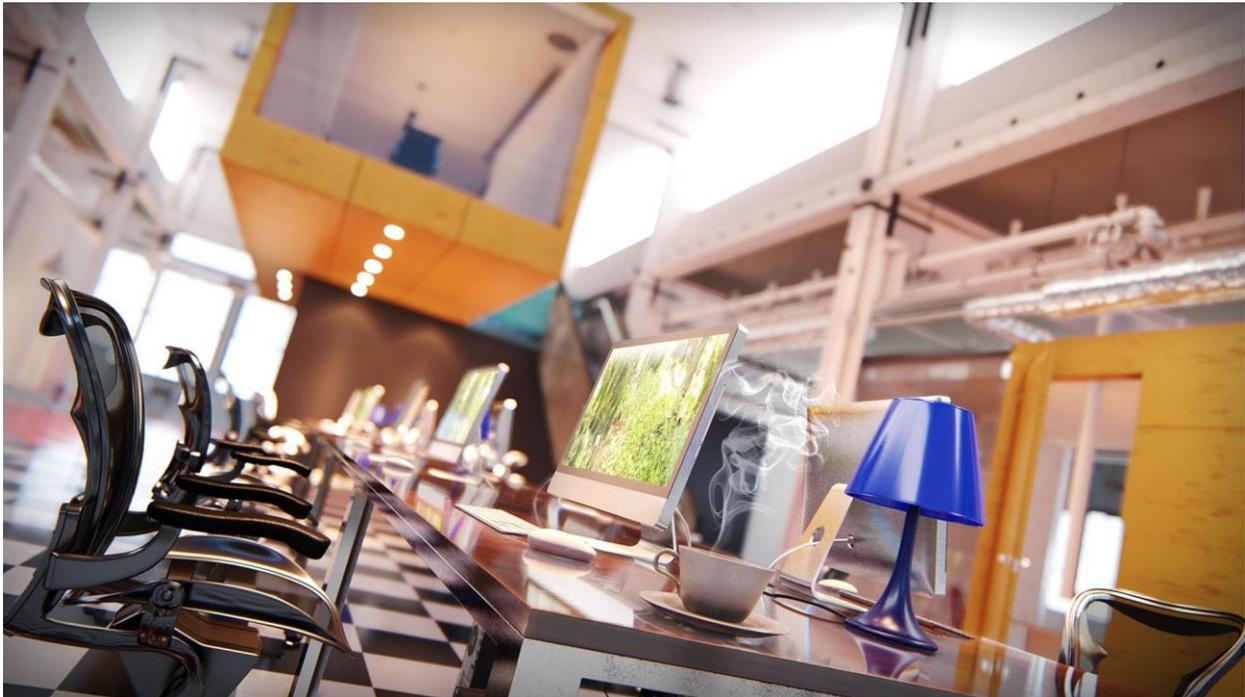
When rendering, ask yourself, “What is the story being told here?”

“How does the viewpoint help tell this story?”



Creating beautiful renders means having complete control of your perspectives, allowing you to find an ideal shot that perfectly captures the story you're trying to tell. It is also incorporating the composition rules of photography, such as showing a scene from eye-level, following the rule of thirds and so on.

A little risk in your viewpoint can produce amazing 3D renders, but some can find creative camera angles to either be incredible or completely disorienting. That's a judgment call.





To start creating beautiful renders, you don't have to be a creative whiz with a superb eye; these technical qualities can be studied, worked on and improved.

[Download a free trial of Lumion](#) and see for yourself how cool and easy it is to start making your best and most beautiful 3D renders yet. In the coming weeks, we'll also be exploring the topic of making beautiful renders and the techniques you can employ in creating them. Make sure to check back for discussions about using live previews of your models, creating context and landscape in your renders and more.

** All images were made with Lumion 7*