Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for controlling directional visibility through a switchable window located between a first space and a second space, the window having a transmitting condition, in which there is visibility through the window, and a non-transmitting condition in which there is reduced visibility through the window, the method comprising:

providing a first switchable light source in the first space and a controller for controlling switching of the first switchable light source and the switchable window; and

synchronising switching of the first light source, between an ON condition and an OFF condition, to switching of the window to control visibility from the first space into the second space, wherein the first light source is switched to the ON condition depending on whether the window is in the transmitting condition or the non-transmitting condition, wherein the synchronized switching is at a rate greater than a frame rate of a human eye and wherein the controller provides a modulation signal to the first light source causing the first light source to blink at a frequency that is the rate greater than the frame rate of the human eye, and the controller provides the modulation signal to the switchable window causing the switchable window to switch between an opaque state and a transmissive state at the frequency of the light source blinking that is the rate greater than the frame rate of the human eye.

2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein synchronising switching comprises selectively switching the first light source such that it is in the ON condition when the window is

in the non-transmitting condition, to provide visibility from the first space into the second space and to inhibit visibility from the second space into the first space.

3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein synchronising switching comprises selectively switching the first light source such that it is in the ON condition when the window is in the transmitting condition, to inhibit visibility from the first space into the second space and to provide visibility from the second space into the first space.

4. A method according to Claim 2, wherein synchronising switching comprises controlling switching of the first light source and window so that visibility from the second space into the first space is substantially prevented.

5. A method according to Claim 3, wherein synchronising switching comprises controlling switching of the first light source and window so that visibility from the first space into the second space is provided.

6. A method according to any preceding claim, wherein synchronising switching comprises switching the first light source such that a length of time the light source is in the ON condition is longer than a length of time the light source is in the OFF condition.

7. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, wherein

synchronising switching comprises switching the first light source such that a length of time the light source is in the ON condition is shorter than a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition.

8. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, wherein the switching step comprises controlling a length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, depending on a lighting condition in the second space.

9. A method according to Claim 8, wherein controlling the length of time comprises increasing the length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, as lighting in the second space reduces.

10. A method according to Claim 8, wherein controlling the length of time comprises decreasing the length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, as lighting in the second space increases.

11. A method according to Claim 8, wherein the first space is a space internal to a building, and the second space is a space external to the building, and controlling the length of time comprises increasing the length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, during night-time,

and decreasing the length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, during daytime.

12. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

providing a second switchable light source in the second space; and

synchronising switching of the second light source, between an ON condition and an OFF condition, to switching of the window to control visibility from the second space into the first space, and wherein the synchronized switching is at a rate greater than a frame rate of a human eye.

13. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

providing a second switchable light source in the second space;

controlling switching of the first light source and second light source so that the lighting cycle of the first light source is the same as the lighting cycle of the second light source; and

controlling a length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the second light source is in the ON condition such that visibility from the first space into the second space differs from visibility from the second space into the first space.

14. A method according to Claim 11, wherein the first light source and the second light source are in the ON condition when the window is in the non-transmitting condition.

15. A system for controlling directional visibility between a first space and a second space, the system comprising:

a switchable window located between the first space and the second space, the window having a transmitting condition, in which there is visibility through the window, and a non-transmitting condition in which there is reduced visibility through the window;

a first switchable light source in the first space; and

a controller for controlling switching of the first switchable light source and the switchable window,

wherein the controller is configured to synchronise switching of the first light source, between an ON condition and an OFF condition, to switching of the window to control visibility from the first space into the second space, so that the first light source is switched to the ON condition depending on whether the window is in the transmitting condition or the non-transmitting condition, wherein the controller switches the window and the first light source between respective said conditions at a rate greater than a frame rate of a human eye, and wherein the controller provides a modulation signal to the first light source causing the first light source to blink at a frequency that is the rate greater than the frame rate of the human eye, and the controller provides the modulation signal to the switchable window causing the switchable window to switch between an opaque state and a transmissive state at the frequency of the light source blinking that is the rate greater than the frame rate of the human eye.

16. A system according to Claim 15, wherein the controller is configured to synchronise switching of the first light source such that it is in the ON condition when the window is in the non-transmitting condition, to provide visibility from the first space into the second space and to inhibit visibility from the second space into the first space.

17. A system according to Claim 15, wherein the controller is configured to synchronise switching of the second light source such that it is in the ON condition when the window is in the non-transmitting condition, to inhibit visibility from the first space into the second space and to provide visibility from the second space into the first space.

18. A system according to Claim 15, wherein the controller is configured to control a length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the first light source is in the OFF condition, depending on a lighting condition in the second space.

19. A system according to Claim 15, further comprising a second switchable light source in the second space, wherein the controller in configured to control switching of the second switchable light source between an ON condition and an OFF condition, at a rate greater than the frame rate of the human eye, such that when the second light source is in the ON condition the switchable window is in the transmitting condition, and when the second light source is in the OFF condition the switchable window is in the non-transmitting condition.

20. A system according to Claim 15, further comprising a second switchable light source in the second space, wherein the controller is configured to control switching of the first light source and second light source so that the lighting cycle of the first light source is the same as the lighting cycle of the second light source, and is also configured to control a length of time the first light source is in the ON condition when compared with a length of time the second light

source is in the ON condition such that visibility from the first space into the second space differs from visibility from the second space into the first space.

21. A wall separating a first space from a second space, the wall comprising a body between the first space and the second space, the body comprising a system according to any one of Claims 15 to 20.

22. A building comprising a wall according to Claim 21.