

CULTURE



A living room outfitted with pieces by designer Vincenzo de Cottis, including a showpiece chandelier

Illuminating Design Artists and artisans around the globe are transforming light fixtures into opportunities for creative expression. *by Tom Burson*



From far left: Greek artist Kostas Lambridis and his *Kepler-60e* chandelier; a view of Vincenzo de Cotiis's ongoing *Éternel* exhibition at NYC's Carpenters Workshop Gallery



"I create a sculptural presence in the space that at the same time illuminates," says William Brand

WILLIAM BRAND is careful to call his monumental lighting fixtures "sculptures". "I create a sculptural presence in the space that at the same time illuminates," says the Dutch designer at the head of Amsterdam-based Brand van Egmond, a lighting atelier (brandvanegmond.com) where Brand handcrafts his statement fixtures which have popped up everywhere from the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles to Louis Vuitton boutiques, Four Seasons hotels and standout private residences across the globe.

"What is a chandelier? It is a bunch of candles, and the light is caught by crystal and polished metal," he says with his usual Dutch directness. "I use the same ingredients but compose it in a completely different way. The best interiors are, I think, when you only have one fantastic painting on the wall, or a chandelier in my case, and the rest is more or less the framework of the art piece."

Brand's approach to creating his monumental objets d'art centres on blurring the line between fine art and functional design. Lighting, in this respect, is an underrepresented – or, perhaps, underexposed – sector in the world of interiors, and a smattering of designers across the globe are crafting museum-worthy pieces that are more than just glimmering chandeliers.

To Aiden Bowman, one of the masterminds behind Trueing, a lighting studio in New York City (trueing.co), he's helping create "moments of joy. They are things that light up figuratively and emotionally

when you walk into a room." Along with his partner Josh Metersky, the two have brought a much-needed whimsy to the often-staid world of lighting. In their most recent release, Metersky, a mechanical engineer who launched his career with stints at Bec Brittain and Ladies & Gentlemen Studio, and Bowman, who studied Art History at St Andrews in Scotland before relocating to New York City to work at Bjarke Ingels Group, partnered with celebrated Japanese glassblower Baku Takahashi to inject an extra dose of puckishness into their exquisite lamps and chandeliers through an exclusive line of seven bespoke fixtures, where Trueing's technical engineering tames Takahashi's vibrant glass confections. Metersky rhapsodises on their collaborator's skill: "His is all done by hand! He uses shears and tongs, but there are no precision tools. What's so crazy about his work is that you'd never know it's a handmade piece just by looking at it, because it's so perfect."



The Totem table lamp, from Trueing's collaboration with Baku Takahashi



Above: a custom brass chandelier by Brand van Egmond; right: William Brand at work



Elsewhere, standing lamps have proved especially attractive to gallerists – perhaps because they don’t require, as Brand’s sculptures do, a room to be designed around them. At the Patrick Parrish Gallery in New York City, an exhibition featuring Chris Beeston showcases the artist’s kitschy-chic lamps crafted out of everyday utilitarian objects like a dime-store Tupperware container, a Similac bottle or even

a cardboard Amazon box. At Paris’ Galerie Scène Ouverte, meanwhile, the twenty-something sculptor Léa Mestres – whose résumé already includes shows at Design Miami and Unique Design in Shanghai – presents an array of bubbly, colourful fixtures. And in Florence, Galerie Philia, renowned for merging all manner of contemporary design and modern art, is currently hosting French fashion designer-turned-ceramicist

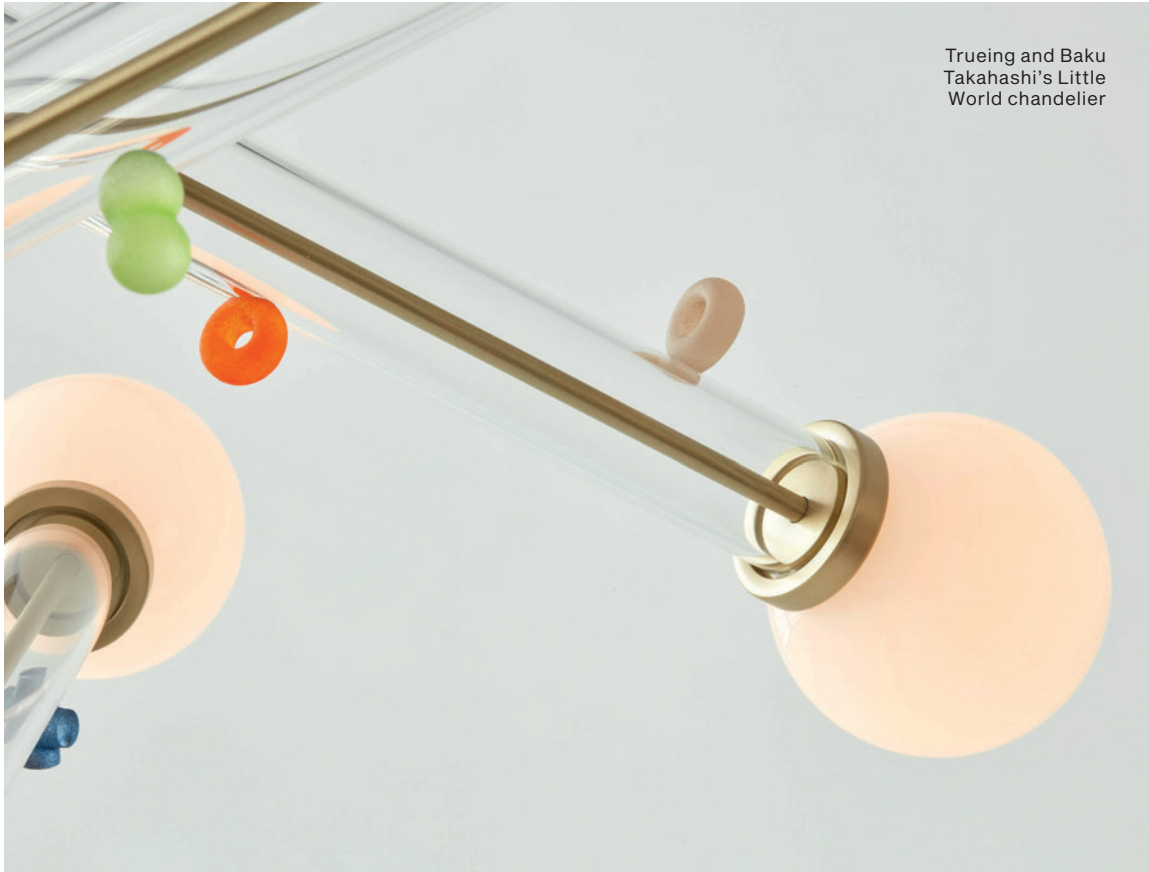
Elisa Uberti as part of a residency in advance of its Transhumances II exhibition. Uberti moulds clay into shapes inspired by everything from Cro-Magnon caves to the fossilised stamps of microorganisms, and like William Brand, she’s cognisant to refer to her creations as “more like light sculptures”, explaining that light emphasises the shape and texture of the clay, which “brings something warm and mysterious into a room”. to refer to her creations as “more like light sculptures”, explaining that light emphasises the shape and texture of the clay, which “brings something warm and mysterious into a room”.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: © KABAZ, COURTESY BRAND VAN EGMOND, COURTESY ELISA UBERTI (2)



Elisa Uberti (right) creates one of her Refuge lamps (left)





Trueing and Baku
Takahashi's Little
World chandelier

"I like to play with reflecting materials and see how the sun changes the whole mood," says Vincenzo de Cotiis

For a glimpse into the crème de la crème of the latest in functional art, a trip to the Carpenters Workshop Galleries (in London, Paris, New York City, San Francisco) will guide you through this artisan savoir-faire, and, recently, lighting objects have taken centre stage. At the Paris location, the up-and-comer Kostas Lambridis seeks to create order out of chaos through an exhibition dedicated to manipulating and reinterpreting discarded materials. Perhaps more impressive is a set of massive experimental chandeliers as well as a table lamp, each of which are constructed from materials like recycled stained glass, acrylic glass, brass and aluminium found at second-hand shops, antiques shops and even scrapyards. While at the *Éternel* exhibition premiering in the Manhattan gallery (*until 15 September; carpentersworkshopgallery.com*), interior-design luminary Vincenzo de Cotiis presents a foray into some of



Architect and designer
Vincenzo de Cotiis

his most visceral, highly collectable creations, notably a series of Japanese-inspired lights handblown from Murano glass.

"Light is fundamental in my interior projects," says de Cotiis. "I like to play with reflecting materials like silvered-brass, glass, fibreglass, and see how the sun changes the whole mood and creates abstract reflections, and how the colours change during the day."

For artists like Brand, Lambridis, de Cotiis and Trueing, crafting a fixture is often less about form than its magnificent presence, a throwback to the days when a chandelier was the focal point of a European palace, or the way daylight suffused cathedrals, pre-electrification, with an ethereal glow through their stained-glass windows.

"It gives the emotion to a space," says Brand. "If you want to talk about expression, the most rewarding space is in the room – in the middle of the air."