

Functional task lighting used to be the solution when it came to illuminating the home, but today's switched-on homeowners are splashing out on eye-catching lighting akin to sculptural artwork. With advances in materials and technology sparking innovative ideas, designers are creating decorative lighting that looks as good turned off as it does lit.

One of the best places to discover the latest trends is the biennial Euroluca show, which takes place during Milan's annual Salone del Mobile Internazionale. Around 300,000 visitors flocked to its 2011 presentation, and earlier this month 450 exhibitors focused on energy-saving, sustainability and combating light pollution, as well as creative design. 'We find Euroluca an incredible source of inspiration and suppliers,' says Karen Howes of Chelsea-based interior design company Taylor Howes. 'We also enjoy the imaginative lighting installations projected in Milan's city centre throughout the event.'

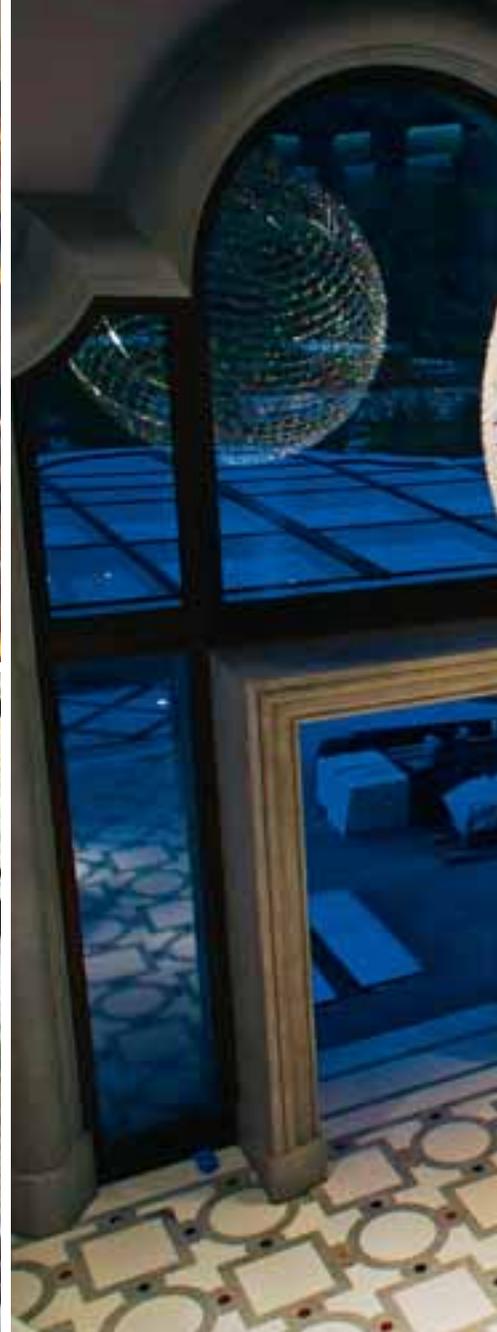
Homeowners' demands for statement lighting are increasingly sated by bespoke designs. 'Sculptural chandeliers and glamorous light installations are a great way of creating a luxury feel as well as softening the illumination,' says Howes. 'Bespoke pieces can fill the void on a staircase, bring drama to the dining table or brighten up a breakfast bar. Increasingly, clients want something truly unique – a one-off piece that doubles as a fabulous artwork.'

STATEMENT CHANDELIERS

Interior designer Fiona Barratt-Campbell agrees: 'People are prepared to pay more for a large, central chandelier – often between £10,000 and £15,000. They want a bold statement piece and every detail must look good.' She recently designed a dramatic pair of lanterns for the kitchen of a Grade II-listed Georgian house. 'It's a 26ft-high space, so we made the lanterns 6.5ft tall, giving them a simple steel frame with a base plate that holds the light bulbs,' she explains.

Meanwhile, a Sixties Murano clear-glass chandelier, sourced from Alfies Antique Market in London, 'looks perfect with the living room's traditional Georgian features and modern furniture'. But many clients still request contemporary designs, so Barratt-Campbell plans to add bespoke lighting to her debut furniture collection, which will launch at the new FBC London store in Pimlico Road, SW1, in June.

An intriguing response to the clamour for contemporary chandeliers was unveiled at this month's Euroluca by Bocci, a Vancouver- and Berlin-based design studio. 'Most chandeliers



Light fantastic: clockwise from top left, Flowers and Hellbob, both by Windfall; Baroncelli lighting; Cell by Tom Dixon; Bocci's 57; Baby Candy Lamp by Jaime Hayon; a Fiona Barratt Interiors design. Previous page, Cluster lights by Bocci



The chandelier draws on the tiered flounces of historic dresses

► the hand-crafted, leaf-shaped Bacchus wall light (£680) all demonstrate the company's expertise at contemporising a traditional craft technique. The designs are displayed at Milan's avant-garde showroom Spazio Rossana Orlandi this month, alongside a spectacular wall installation of discarded glass flowers and leaves taken from vintage chandeliers salvaged from Baroncelli's Murano workshop.

CRYSTAL FLAMES AND WATERFALLS

'As technology moves forward and task lighting becomes more architectural, with recessed fittings and LEDs, there's a new freedom in the design and use of chandeliers and lanterns,' says London-based lighting specialist Charles Edwards, whose tiered, hanging Greenwich lanterns (from £7,380) are currently proving popular.

Indeed, lighting designers Roel Haagsmans and Clarissa Dorn founded their Munich-based company, Windfall, in 2004 with the intention of reinventing the classic crystal chandelier. Their imaginative, bespoke pieces grace private residences from London to Moscow and from Los Angeles to Shanghai. Windfall's latest design, Jewel 5, was unveiled at Milan's Palazzo Durini earlier this month. It comprises a spectacular chain of oval, interconnecting rings sparkling with baguette-cut crystal prisms. Like the previous designs in the Jewel series of contemporary downlighting, it is as dramatic as it is glamorous.

Windfall has cleverly developed a special technique that shapes crystal lights into 'flames', 'waterfalls' and other 'floating' forms, such as the large, spherical Hellbob pendant. Tubees reinvents the chandelier as a series of horizontal tubes containing crystal beads, while Flowers, a gorgeous 9.5ft drop of 222 individual crystal elements, offers a softer look that's perfect for stairwells. John Cullen's London showroom is the place to go for these and other custom-made designs. As Sally Storey, John Cullen's design director, observes: 'Good lighting makes a room

feel luxurious. It highlights the materials and textures of the furnishings, making even simple finishes appear more expensive, and enhancing the atmosphere.'

FAR-REACHING FLAIR

Anyone looking for decorative inspiration should also check out the latest collection by French crystal specialist Baccarat. Just launched at Milan's Palazzo

Morando, these glamorous, bespoke pieces were created by top designers, including Philippe Starck, Fernando and Humberto Campana, Arik Levy, Philippe Nigro, Louise Campbell, Jaime Hayon and Jean-Marc Gady.

'The designs suit any scenario, mood or space and double as beautiful artworks,' says Baccarat's Sophie Cotelle. Highlights include the Campana brothers' reinterpretation of Baccarat's classic Zenith chandelier in an unusual mix of bamboo, rattan and recycled crystal. Two table lamps, also by the Brazilian duo, are shaded by long, loopy rattan strands, while bamboo latticework lends an eastern feel to two pendant ceiling lights.

Asian shapes also inspired Nigro's Celestial crystal wall sconce and ceiling lights, while Gady's Lady Crinoline chandelier draws on the tiered flounces of historic dresses. Arik Levy has created a playful mobile hung with mini lamps and a contemporary chandelier surfaced with gleaming crystal tiles. Philippe Starck, meanwhile, presents urn-like crystal lamps inspired by Baccarat's Marie-Louise vase, and a prototype interactive chandelier incorporating LEDs and a video spotlight projection. He describes it as 'a chandelier haunted by a ghost'.

Piero Gandini, creative director of trendsetting Italian lighting specialist Flos, similarly refers to one of his new lamps as a 'ghost'. Created in collaboration with British designer Paul Cockledge, its bulb is wrapped in thin paper and, according to Gandini, 'translates technology into poetry'. Other new Flos designs that were launched recently at EuroLuce include IC, a family of halogen lights sparkling with 'tiny, elegant elements of light' and LED-powered String lights, all designed by London-based Michael Anastassiades. 'Technology is revolutionising lighting design,' declares Gandini. And homeowners are taking a shine to the results.

Glass act: Lady Crinoline by Jean-Marc Gady

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