



VINCENT VAN DUYSSEN

Chandelier and Installation: Cascade, Frost

Vincent Van Duysen, architect and designer seldom seen without his beloved Dachshund, Gaston, is internationally regarded for creating buildings, designs and products that exhibit a unique sense of quietude and tranquillity. His primary design language is that of sensuous forms, subtle textures and natural materials that age with beauty. He seeks to create simplicity and comfort using as few ingredients as possible.

It is interesting to note that, although his architectural and interior projects artfully manipulate and sculpt light to define space, he has rarely designed actual light fittings, let alone such an extrovert as the chandelier. As he observes, “Chandeliers were originally designed to be beautiful, grand, ornamental objects full of glitter and glamour. Because of their form and presence you expect something more emotional. They belong to another world.” He admits—unsurprisingly, considering his sober catalogue of refined, purist pieces for the likes of Modular, Poliform, B&B Italia and Cappellini—that he prefers lights that are “not too dominant in their formal presence, that are reduced to an essential form”. He continues, “In general I am not a big fan of artificial light. I prefer soft, indirect, natural light, rather than the glaring sort.”

In contrast, ‘Cascade’, the chandelier he created for Swarovski Crystal Palace in 2003, was a magnificent torrent of light tumbling onto a table positioned below. Described as “a decomposed classic chandelier”, this decadent waterfall of crystal was composed of delicate chains of stones intermingled with strands of LED lights, creating a real look-at-me spectacle. For Van Duysen, the massing of the crystal was the point. He deliberately resisted interpreting crystal as individual jewels, and strived instead to interpret an abstraction of the material. “Cascade was almost like playing with crystal”, he says, “it was very free, not controlled in terms of form and dimension. I wanted to scatter light all over the table.”

While this project inspired him to loosen his grip on his normally restrained *modus operandi*, seven years later he presented ‘Frost’. Essentially an internally illuminated beam encrusted with randomly selected crystals set in resin, ‘Frost’ speaks more of the familiar lean, formal language more usually associated with Van Duysen. “I wanted to limit myself a bit more”, he explains, “this was definitely a project that related to my architecture. It is more linear. I obliged myself to be more rational.” However, ‘Frost’ is also intended to be extremely tactile, mobile and flexible. He invites you to lay it flat, lean it against a wall or place it across a table. It is a piece defined by the user, whereas ‘Cascade’ is something to be observed.

In fact both creations succeed in being quintessentially Van Duysen: simple, striking and inspiring. He sees design as a process of “progressive refinement in which the raw material is gradually purified and ordered until it reaches a final point of stable

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Studied: Higher Institute of Architecture, Ghent, Belgium

Based: Antwerp, Belgium

Chandelier: Cascade

Launched: Salone del Mobile, Milan, Italy, 2003

Installation: Frost

Launched: Salone del Mobile, Milan, Italy, 2010

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geometric equilibrium". It is a process made explicit in these two pieces—we see him move from an explosive revelling in the massing of crystal through to a gentler more ordered use. It is reductionist design at its sensuous best.

Tell me five words to describe yourself. Intuitive. Energetic. Dynamic. Emotional. Straightforward. *How would you summarize your design philosophy?* I want to be modern, but still classic. Timeless. Durable. Emotional. Tactile. *Which world problem would you most like to design a solution for?* I would like to design temporary shelters for use in areas of natural disasters, a solution like a movable camp to claim the right of a roof above everyone's head. It could be equipped with utilitarian showers and kitchens where at least the basic needs in life could be fulfilled. I would also like to design a utilitarian social housing project for minority groups such as orphans as a contribution to human rights. *What ambition are you yet to realize?* A great ambition of mine is to realize a project that involves nature and contemplation in some way. A sanctuary where one could meditate and find peace, completely surrounded by nature, a place in the middle of nowhere. It would also be exciting to design a yacht, a hotel or a museum. *Why did you want to be part of the Swarovski Crystal Palace project?* I loved the idea of reinventing the chandelier. It is such an archetypal lighting object. *How did working with crystal affect you creatively?* It made me think! Initially I wasn't really a crystal fan, but the idea of creating an abstraction of crystal was very exciting. I liked the idea of the crystal being the protagonist. *Does Swarovski Crystal Palace benefit design in a wider context?* I think it most definitely has had an impact. It has evoked creativity. Crystal used to be associated with a dream world, palaces and chandeliers, a playground for the elite. However today it has become more universal and modern. Due to the influx of new designers, new shapes and forms have been developed. The application of new technology such as LEDs has led to innovation too. *How comfortable are you with notions of luxury?* Well, I don't agree with what the majority defines as luxury. To me luxury is not at all about glamour and gold but rather about comfort. For instance, a soft navy blue cashmere jumper would be a luxury to me. It is a comfortable and functional item. Discreet in a certain way, but luxurious in its comfort. *Did this collaboration with Swarovski change the way you design in any way?* When designing objects I always start from an architectural vocabulary. In this case it was quite a challenge to apply this to a light object using crystals. And it was very intriguing to see how the crystal impacts on the shape and form of the object. *What did you learn from the project?* I learned about the beauty of crystal. It surprised me that it had so much to offer. *Is your chandelier design or art?* I don't think in terms of art. I am an architect. I like the beauty of objects and their functionality. My chandeliers belong to a space. They are not overly poetic even though they are emotional. *If you were a piece of design what would you be?* Most definitely a vintage Ferrari 250 GT Berlinetta Passo Corto 1959!





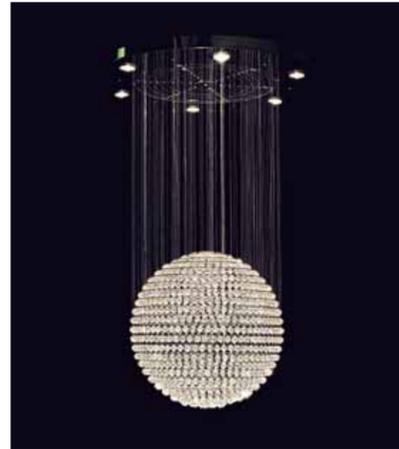
TOKUJIN YOSHIOKA



Born: Saga, Japan, 1967
Studied: Kuwasawa Design School, Tokyo, Japan
Based: Tokyo, Japan
Chandeliers: Stardust, 2005; Eternal, 2008; *Installation:* Stellar, 2010

Tokujin Yoshioka admits that he is “always working. When I am eating, driving, when I go to bed ... even when I am sleeping!” For him, design is an opportunity to transcend the banality of the everyday. Whether creating shop windows for Hermès, or projects for companies such as Muji, Nissan, Shiseido, Driade and Peugeot, his goal is “to surprise people, in a simple way”. He opened his studio in 2000, having studied at length with the late Japanese architect Shiro Kuramata, followed by several years apprenticed to the equally exacting Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake, with whom he still collaborates. Many of Yoshioka’s subsequent pieces exhibit an obvious confluence of these two masters’ inspiration: Kuramata’s joyful experimentation with materials and design vocabulary of transparency, and Miyake’s technology-driven clothing designs.

www.tokujin.com



TOM DIXON



Born: Sfax, Tunisia, 1959
Studied: Art Foundation, Chelsea School of Art, Chelsea, UK (left after six months)
Based: London, UK
Chandeliers: Ball, 2002; Bang, 2005

Tom Dixon was awarded an OBE for services to British Design and Innovation in June 2000. He is best known to the wider public through his creative association with Habitat (he was appointed Head of Design at the British retailer in 1998). At the time, Dixon’s appointment courted controversy—doubters questioned his competence because of his absence of formal design training. However, three years later he was Habitat’s Creative Director. He has described his lack of official training as a “liberation” that allowed him “to experiment without constraints”. It was a starting point with no rulebook. Indeed one of Dixon’s greatest strengths is his constant desire to question the norm and defy convention.

www.tomdixon.net



TORD BOONTJE



Born: Enschede, The Netherlands, 1968
Studied: Industrial Design, Design Academy Eindhoven, The Netherlands; Industrial Design, Royal College of Art, London, UK
Based: London, UK
Chandeliers: Utitars, 2002; Blossom, 2002; Ting Ting Ting, 2004; Ice Branch, 2005
Furniture: Crystal Ice Furniture, 2009

Tord Boontje believes that design should be “as exciting and thrilling as a great film or book” but at the same time, “it should communicate not only who we are, but how we would ideally like our world to be”. As a designer poised somewhere between design and craft, he is well placed to make this happen. The words frequently used to describe his work are decorative, whimsical, ornamental and feminine ... adjectives not often heard in the same breath as modern, uplifting and accessible, which also apply to his work. Rizzoli published a major work “Tord Boontje” in 2007 and Boontje was appointed two years later as Professor and Head of Design Products at the hugely influential Royal College of Art in London.

www.tordboontje.com



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Based: Antwerp, Belgium
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Vincent Van Duysen, architect and designer, is internationally regarded for buildings, designs and products that exhibit a unique sense of quietude and tranquillity. Citing inspirations such as the influential Mexican architect Luis Barragán and the simplicity of Greek houses, Van Duysen rejects the ephemeral and the transient. His vision is a resolutely singular one: “Architecture has allowed me to express myself in all of the directions of creation, but I could have been a photographer or a painter, even a fashion designer. I consider all my projects in the same way. Whether it is a high-rise building or a doorknob, they are all objects. It is just a matter of mastering scale.”

www.vincentvandyussen.com



YVES BÉHAR



Born: Lausanne, Switzerland, 1967
Studied: Industrial Design, Art Centre College of Design, Pasadena, USA
Based: San Francisco, USA
Chandeliers: Nest 2004, Voyage, 2005; Morpheus, 2006; Amplify, 2010

Yves Béhar is the founder of ‘fuseproject’, an industrial design and branding agency dedicated to the development of products that make a difference ... “As a designer, I believe my role is to show by example: to build new ways of working that match the big ideas we need to consider,” he says, by which he means serious global concerns such as the environment, poverty, education and inequality. “My design language is not about style or trends, it is about ideas and how to realize those ideas in the most beautiful and communicative way. I often say if it’s not ethical, it cannot be beautiful ... and if it’s not beautiful, it probably shouldn’t be at all.”

www.fuseproject.com



ZAHA HADID



Born: Baghdad, Iraq, 1950
Studied: Mathematics, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; Architecture, Architectural Association, London, UK
Based: London, UK
Chandelier: Light Sculpture, 2008

Zaha Hadid was the first female architect to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, architecture’s equivalent of the Nobel Prize, in its 26-year history. Before this lofty honour was awarded in 2004, she had been robustly denigrated as a paper-only architect on account of so few of her proposals being realized. In fact she has numerous, impressive buildings on her résumé, including the wildly curvaceous Maxxi art gallery in Rome, dedicated to 21st-century architecture and art, and the Aquatics Centre in London commissioned for the 2012 Olympics. Hadid doesn’t believe her purpose is to present familiar themes. She champions the unimagined and challenges us to change the way we think about space. When forced to describe her work, she describes it as “a virtuoso of elegance.”

www.zaha-hadid.com