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Profiles

We chat to key figures at three highly creative studios that straddle art and design to create extraordinary bespoke products and lighting installations



This image Inoca Fall is a bespoke sculpture located in the atrium space of the Conrad Hotel in Chicago. It features a spiralling flurry of 1,300 suspended porcelain leaves, a reference to the famous winds that blow through the city

Top middle Canopy, in floorstanding and pendant versions, evokes the dappling of sunlight

Top right The Frequency Vortex light sculpture was created in collaboration with photographer Julian Abrams



‘We believe light is a transformative power in the world, helping to transform our experiences of the spaces we occupy. We challenge what is possible with light. We avoid a house style as we are happy to work in any material; it depends on the nature of a project. What binds our work together is the playful experimentation that we weave into the design process, resulting in high ambition applied to each new design opportunity. We apply this methodology to large-scale sculptural projects and also to product development – both share the same level of expectations. Although technology has advanced in tremendous leaps regarding lighting and lighting control, we find it essential always to bring design back to a human-centred experience. Through exploring how light can communicate on a more fundamental level we can make connections, prompt questions or instil a sense of wonder in the viewer.’

HABERDASHERY is an award-winning London-based design studio that specialises in ‘a poetic approach to lighting’. With a 25-plus team qualified in industrial or product design, engineering, research, and product development, it has delivered more than 450 projects in over 30 countries in the past decade or so. ‘We all share a love of light and push ourselves to find new ways to harness it to transform how we perceive space, colour and form,’ says creative director and co-founder Ben Rigby.

The studio’s work splits into three areas: products, sculptures and collectables. Its client list is as diverse as its output, ranging from Heston Blumenthal to Newnham College, Selfridges to Stella McCartney. ‘We push hard to find the true potential of each new project,’ says Rigby. ‘Through this ambition, we create unique design challenges every time. By championing a “what if” attitude we challenge clients to expect more and raise their expectations for a project.’

The Amaranthine, the light sculpture created for British Land’s Mayfair Clarges development (lighting design by StudioFractal), won an IALD award last year, the judges describing it as an ‘ingenious work of light and art’. The designers wanted to echo the rich colours of the sunlight outside the building. The oval dome structure features 40,000 hand-adjusted miniature reflective surfaces. By varying the angle of each tab, the sculpture reveals different light and shadow images through LED lighting. Additional lighting that spreads out from the central structure adds dynamism. Light, colour and tone adjust every hour, evoking the exterior weather and lighting.

Internal research projects also provide creative impetus and take the studio into new territory. The Helio Ray project, for instance, explored using heliostats and evolving reflective surfaces to redirect sunlight down from the top of tall buildings to daylight-deprived areas in the community. ‘We prioritise creative thinking based on research and experimentation so that our designs feel original and challenge conventions,’ says Rigby. ‘Every design to come out of our studio is based on sound engineering mixed with the inspired handling of light as a medium.’

Haberdashery

Ben Rigby, creative director and co-founder at the company, talks about challenging clients to expect more and raise their own expectations



CLIENTS INCLUDE

- British Film Institute
- Buckley Gray Yeoman
- Changi Airport Group
- Foster + Partners
- Gettys
- Heston Blumenthal
- HBA
- Katharine Pooley
- MGM Resorts
- Newnham College
- One Hyde Park London
- Qatar Airways
- Selfridges
- Squire & Partners
- Stella McCartney
- The Shard
- The Wellcome Trust
- Virgin Airways

Even the studio’s standard products are anything but standard. Canopy, in floorstanding and pendant versions, evokes the dappling of sunlight, while the geometric planes of the After Dark pendant with its bokeh coloured light effect suggest city lights.

‘We are stimulated by moments that make the hair on your neck stand up; when time slows down and you can lose yourself in a moment,’ says Rigby. ‘As a universally understood medium, light has the ability to communicate with all sorts of audiences. Through colour and tone we can reach into the subconscious and draw on memories, challenge learnt responses, and question preconceived ideas regarding what we need light for, and what its potential uses are.’
haberdashery.com