

Onsjö LED, IKEA.



# Light Up Your Life

The right chandelier can be the glittering jewelry of a space, an architectural complement or a whimsical aside

by BARBARA S. TAPP

Its very name is glamorous and French, like the character Lumière in Disney's animated movie "Beauty and the Beast." But the chandelier, translated from French to literally mean "something that holds candles," began as a rather crudely made wood or iron fixture with pickets or spikes to hold candles in the 12th and 13th centuries. No glamour here: In fact, early chandeliers were probably responsible for many a medieval fire. D

Stix Pendant, Charles Loomis Inc.





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## Form Trumps Function

Let's face it: Any light fixture will shine where needed. However, a chandelier combines illumination with great style. International designer Kevin Reilly of Kevin Reilly Lighting reached back into the fixture's origins to create chandeliers and other lamps based on wax candles. He carves out the inside of each candle and inserts a special bulb that does not melt the wax. The resulting warm glow combines the ambience of yesteryear with the technology of today.

Although distinctions are made between chandeliers and pendants, lighting designers are taking great liberties in their creations, broadening the term "chandelier." "Unlike pendants, chandeliers have arms," explains Laura Loomis of Charles Loomis Inc. in Kirkland, Washington. "This gives them their

distinctive look, from traditional and contemporary to informal."

Whatever their particular form or color, chandeliers are the go-to item for many designers, whether the setting is residential or commercial. "Very often, I begin my design process with an overhead light fixture, such as a signature chandelier," says La Jolla, California, designer Andrea Schuman. "A well-chosen chandelier can certainly be the focal point." Other designers concur. "Chandeliers are usually the first element that I begin with when designing a room," says New York City designer Jamie Herzlinger. "A chandelier sets the tone of the space, but they have to be functional. I hate when a chandelier is just put up without any relationship to anything going on in the room."



Dramatic lighting in a Dallas estate by Kari Whitman Interiors.



Mother  
Chandelier,  
Baylar Atelier.



Pallina  
Pendant,  
Charles  
Loomis Inc.

## Materials that Run the Gamut

We marvel at the creativity of designers, especially when it comes to chandeliers. More traditional models come in crystal, glass, brass and iron. Yet, even fashioned in their more conventional materials, there are surprising adaptations. Bijan, designer of menswear, jewelry, watches, fragrances and accessories, had Baccarat create a show-stopping chandelier composed of 1,100 Bijan perfume bottles for his famous by-appointment-only showroom on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, California.

Rustic lodges customarily have antler chandeliers as complements to their architecture and setting. And no animals need die for their antlers. Most lighting companies now offer chandeliers made of naturally shed antlers or faux antlers, cast in various materials. Prices vary widely: We saw one on eBay, "Antique Fabulous Mansion Size Moose Elk Antler Chandelier," listed at \$9,000.

Ocean and beach themes prevail in chandelier design. All manner of shells are used in a decorative *mélange*—capiz, scallop, conch, oyster, cowrie, abalone, cockle, clam, bubble and myriad others. And the color palette for these can be as broad as the ocean itself.

Glass (cut, blown or Murano), crystal (Or Bohemian, Swarovski or rock crystal), gem metal (iron, sterling silver, bronze, aluminum and others) and beads number the "ingredients" of formal chandeliers. For the more fashion-forward, there are fixtures incorporating feathers, porcelain and acrylic elements. London designer Jeremy Cole has won design awards for his dramatic White Flax, which consists of handcrafted ceramic leaves, and the Cyclone Chandelier, made from eight up-lit porcelain cymbidium orchid stems.

Barlas Baylar, designer and creative director at New York City's Hudson Furniture Gallery, produces chain chandeliers. His Mother Chandelier, several miles of jewelry-quality, faceted metal hand-draped over a stainless-steel frame, with its flowing movement and graceful shape has become a popular fixture, keeping his metal foundry busy with production on this and on custom designs in finishes that include polished bronze, stainless steel and black nickel.



Reflective Flow,  
Beau McClellan  
Design.

## Noteworthy and Record-Setting

The world's most famous chandeliers range from the historic to the cutting edge of contemporary. You'll find the former in Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, Turkey. The largest chandelier in the palace was also the world's largest for years, weighing in at 4.5 tons. Made in the late 1800s and presented to Sultan Abdülmecid by Queen Victoria, this Bohemian crystal beauty boasts 750 lamps. The palace also reportedly has the largest collection of Bohemian and Baccarat chandeliers in the world.

Closer to home, the White House has 21 chandeliers, part of what is said to be the largest collection of 18th- and 19th-century English cut-glass lighting fixtures outside of Great Britain. The largest, 79 by 36 feet, reigns over the Blue Room and was rumored to have once belonged to Napoleon.

The current record-holder among contemporary chandeliers is Reflective Flow, listed in Guinness World Records. Created in 2010 by renowned lighting designer Beau McClellan of Scotland, this 19-foot mega-watt fixture at 39,683 pounds and lit by 165,000 LED units winds through the soaring atrium in a commercial building in Qatar. ▷



## Chandelier 101

Whether historic or contemporary, armed or pendant, chandeliers can cast a spell in any room in the house, or in restaurants, hotels and office lobbies. There are few rules and rather flexible guidelines.

**Dining room:** The bottom of the chandelier should hang between 30 and 36 inches from the tabletop. Some designers recommend that for each additional foot above an eight-foot ceiling height, add about three inches to suspension height.

**Foyer:** The general rule here is to have the foyer chandelier about seven feet above the floor and centered in the space. The higher the ceiling, the taller the chandelier should be for better visual balance. Again, add about three inches for each additional foot in ceiling height.

Just don't underestimate size. The chandelier is definitely the diva of light fixtures