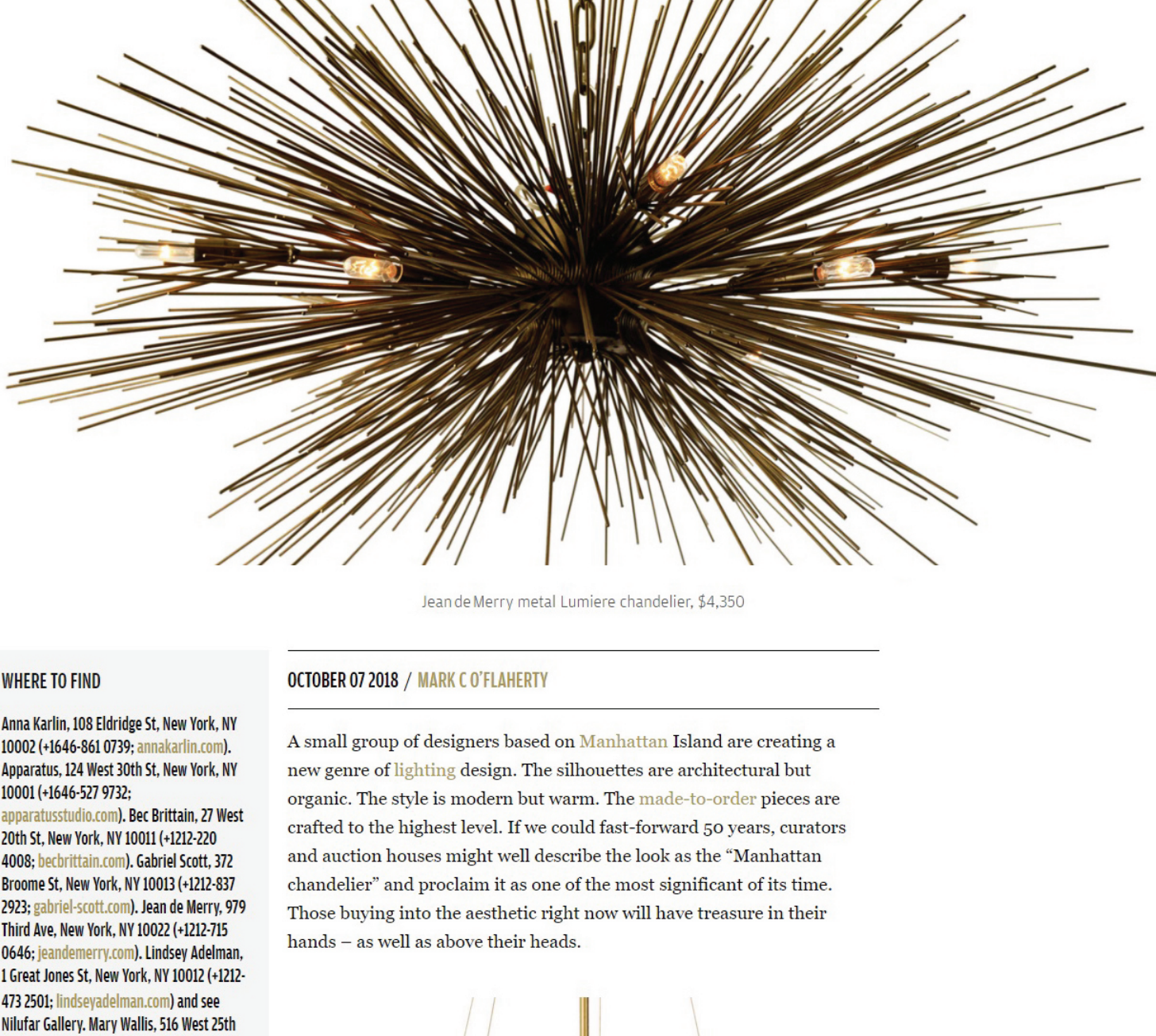


The new leading lights of New York design

New York's coolest creatives have evolved a signature new style of chandelier that fuses organic simplicity with urban sass. Mark C O'Flaherty turns the spotlight on the "Manhattan chandelier"



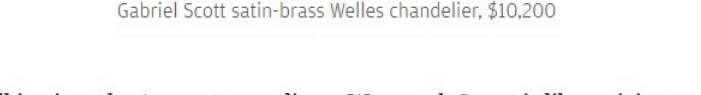
Jean de Merry metal Lumiere chandelier, \$4,350

WHERE TO FIND

Anna Karlin, 108 Eldridge St, New York, NY 10002 (+1646-861-0739; annakarlin.com), Apparatus, 124 West 30th St, New York, NY 10001 (+1646-527-9732; apparatusstudio.com), Bec Brittain, 27 West 20th St, New York, NY 10011 (+1212-220-4008; becbrittain.com), Gabriel Scott, 372 Broome St, New York, NY 10013 (+1212-837-2923; gabriel-scott.com), Jean de Merry, 979 Third Ave, New York, NY 10022 (+1212-715-0646; jeandemerry.com), Lindsey Adelman, 1 Great Jones St, New York, NY 10012 (+1212-473-2501; lindseyadelman.com) and see Nilufar Gallery, Mary Wallis, 516 West 25th St, New York 10001 (+1212-625-1230; marywallis.com), Nilufar Gallery, Via Della Spiga 32, 20121 Milan (+39-2-780-193; nilufar.com), Pelle, 56 West 22nd St, New York 10010 (+1212-445-2602; pelledesigns.com), Roman and Williams Guild, 53 Howard St, New York 10013 (+1212-852-9099; rwguild.com), Workstead, 232 Third St, New York 11215 (+1347-689-2766; workstead.com).

OCTOBER 07 2018 / MARK C O'FLAHERTY

A small group of designers based on Manhattan Island are creating a new genre of lighting design. The silhouettes are architectural but organic. The style is modern but warm. The made-to-order pieces are crafted to the highest level. If we could fast-forward 50 years, curators and auction houses might well describe the look as the "Manhattan chandelier" and proclaim it as one of the most significant of its time. Those buying into the aesthetic right now will have treasure in their hands – as well as above their heads.



Gabriel Scott satin-brass Welles chandelier, \$10,200

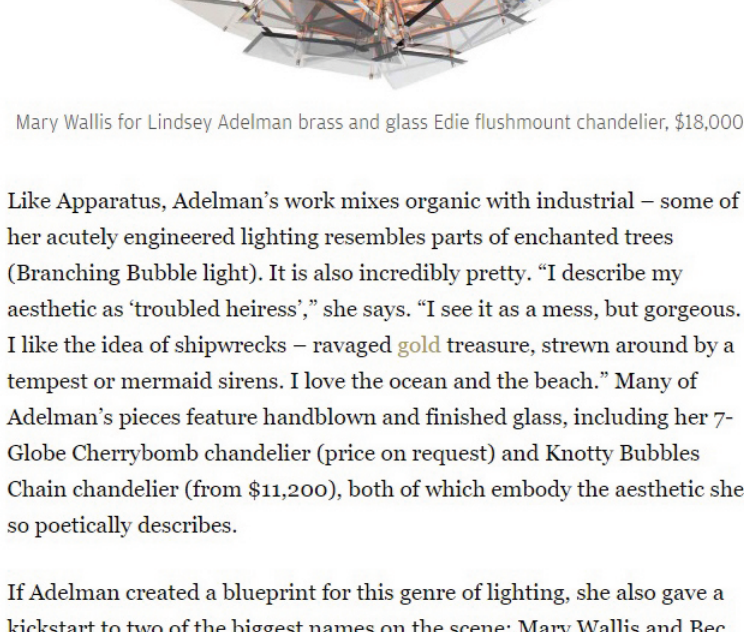
Walking into the Apparatus studio on West 30th Street is like arriving at a Fritz Lang film set by way of Halston, with every character styled by Rick Owens. The 929sq m space was once the gymnasium within a school that occupied the site and today houses the design studio, showroom and manufacturing facility of the company, which was launched by Jeremy Anderson and Gabriel Hendifar in 2012. It's lavish, but this is heavyweight high-end design and the studio only ships around 150 products a week.

The aesthetic is a mix of geometry and nature, infused with a sense of ritual, even a touch of the mystical. New pieces are inspired by Persian khatam marquetry and Hendifar's Iranian heritage – the Median table lamp (\$3,900), for instance, incorporates discs of translucent alabaster and looks as ancient as it does futuristic. Walking around the showroom, as we pause at collections of horseshair pendant lights (from \$12,200) and the studio's Cloud XL chandelier with its much-copied cluster of hand-frosted glass orbs (from \$13,450), Hendifar tells me what he thinks unifies his neighbours and peers. "We are all inside the same zeitgeist, the same ideas bounce around," he says. "Also, we're working with the same materials – brass, glass, porcelain, lacquer and wood. Materials that humans have been trying to make things out of for centuries."



Anna Karlin brass and glass lantern sconce, \$3,095, and steel and glass pendant light, \$3,750

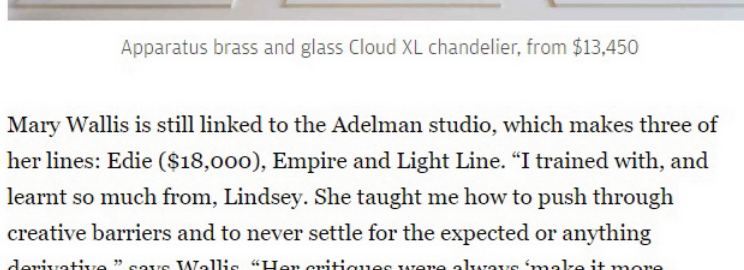
Hendifar believes that it was fellow New York lighting designer Lindsey Adelman who paved the way for a new wave of designers in the city. "She made the blueprint we are all following," he says. "I see it as a mess, but she demands a certain kind of conversation around it." Adelman operates out of a smaller, more relaxed studio some 30 blocks south of Apparatus HQ. Inside, 35 craftspeople sit assembling elaborate pieces of work, while breezy pop plays on the stereo. Adelman has risen to the top of her game since launching 12 years ago. "We only make around 1,000 pieces a year," she says. "Our goals have always been about quality and we wouldn't want to spike the quantity to change that." Adelman attributes much of her success to the energy of New York. "It doesn't exist everywhere," she says. "Nor do the opportunities in terms of the clients we have. I totally disagree with the phrase: 'If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere.' I think if you can't make it in New York, there's something wrong with you."



Mary Wallis for Lindsey Adelman brass and glass Edie flushmount chandelier, \$18,000

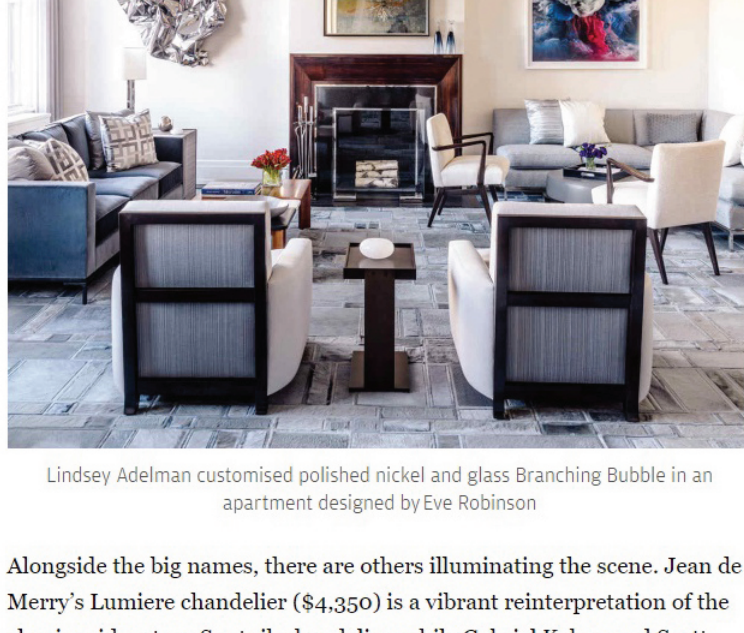
Like Apparatus, Adelman's work mixes organic with industrial – some of her acutely engineered lighting resembles parts of enchanted trees (Branching Bubble light). It is also incredibly pretty. "I describe my aesthetic as 'troubled heiress'," she says. "I see it as a mess, but gorgeous. I like the idea of shipwrecks – ravaged gold treasure, strewn around by a tempest or mermaid sirens. I love the ocean and the beach." Many of Adelman's pieces feature handblown and finished glass, including her 7-Globe Cherrybomb chandelier (price on request) and Knotty Bubbles Chain chandelier (from \$11,200), both of which embody the aesthetic she so poetically describes.

If Adelman created a blueprint for this genre of lighting, she also gave a kickstart to two of the biggest names on the scene: Mary Wallis and Bec Brittain who both worked in her studio; the latter now has her own atelier with five people making around 150 pieces a year. "I spent years in a very academic architecture school," says Brittain, explaining her aesthetic, "and I think in terms of systems. I get really excited about how things join – the engineering – but I also spend an inordinate amount of time watching nature documentaries. At the end of the day, I just want to make pretty things." Brittain's work is often crystalline in structure and her modular designs include the simple, beautiful lines of Sly (\$13,900). If her work can border on the esoteric, it is all the better for it. Take Flags (\$12,800), a bold design consisting of three sheet-glass, flag-like shapes incorporating LED beam lights.



Apparatus brass and glass Cloud XL chandelier, from \$13,450

Mary Wallis is still linked to the Adelman studio, which makes three of her lines: Edie (\$18,000), Empire and Light Line. "I trained with, and learnt so much from, Lindsey. She taught me how to push through creative barriers and to never settle for the expected or anything derivative," says Wallis. "Her critiques were always 'make it more extreme', 'make it bigger'." The Melbourne series of stark, simple, linear pendant lights (from \$2,000) embody what much of contemporary New York lighting design is about – it taps into the dark edge of 1930s Gotham, but it is also warm and luxurious. "Those lights actually began as an experiment with neon," says Wallis. "I began by splicing different colours together, inspired by neon signs. The lines of the Melbourne series have a graphic quality that is a reflection of the urban environment."



Lindsey Adelman customised polished nickel and glass Branching Bubble in an apartment designed by Eve Robinson

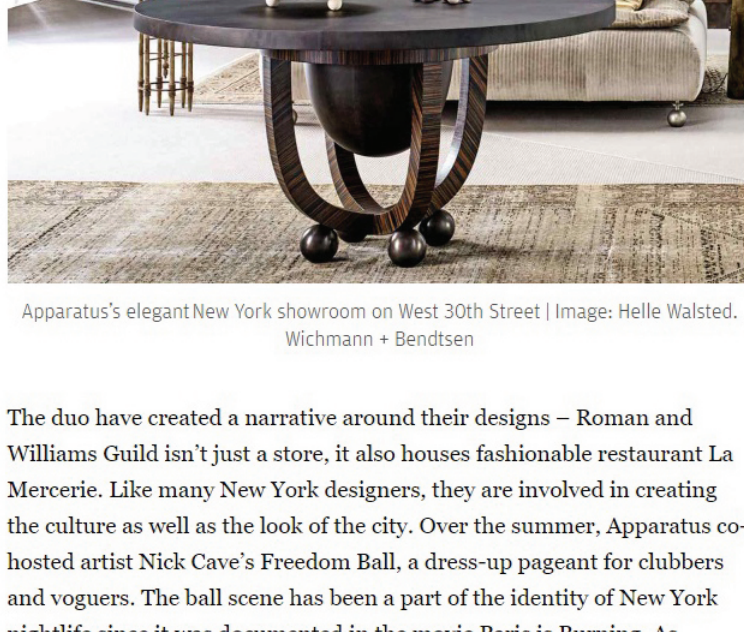
Alongside the big names, there are others illuminating the scene. Jean de Merry's Lumiere chandelier (\$4,350) is a vibrant reinterpretation of the classic midcentury Sputnik chandelier, while Gabriel Kakon and Scott Richler of Gabriel Scott describe their work as "bold yet delicate, hard yet soft, heavy yet light". Like other New York designers, they have developed pieces that can be expanded modular style, based on a single shape to fill any size of space – their Welles chandelier (\$10,200) was installed in a 15.24m hallway at 1 World Trade Center and was also commissioned to fill a five-storey residential staircase. Similarly, Pelle's Pris designs (from \$1,800) range from a single brass light bar constructed as a sconce to elaborate crystalline chandeliers – while everything remains modular in fashion. Riffing on the same theme, but using pale waxed wood in a totally distinctive way, Workstead's Lodge chandeliers (from \$1,950) take their inspiration from midcentury Danish and Swedish design reinterpreted in an urban and angular way.

Much of the lighting coming out of New York today resembles contemporary jewellery. Those horseshair pendant lights look a little like the necklaces from the catwalk of Ann Demeulemeester or Maria Cornejo. Anna Karlin is a jewellery maker who also designs lights – her lantern sconces (\$3,095) and pendants (\$3,750) mix brass with frosted glass in an elegant, updated deco shape that would look great scaled down on the body.



Bec Brittain brushed-brass Sny 2 chandelier, \$13,900

When design firm Roman and Williams showed the SoHo lighting design and Williams Guild last December, they opened new store designs alongside more familiar pieces. The studio has done more than most to redefine the look of the city in recent years – its hotels and restaurants take vintage Manhattan tropes and make them modern and luxe. Its Lab desk and freestanding lamps in brass (from \$3,030), also available in gilded rose gold, nickel, pewter and silver, recall wonderful set pieces from a classic film noir or a majestic midtown private library. "This collection stems from 15 years working together in New York," says co-founder Robin Standerfer. "The city demands a lot. The work needs to be street-smart and cool but also sharp and intelligent." Her partner Stephen Alesch sees the designs as part of the broader movement in lighting. "There is a shift towards traditional and vernacular detailing and form – albeit with a refinement of detail," he says. "Careful proportion and symmetry appear to be back in style, while period fluff is being eliminated."



Apparatus's elegant New York showroom on West 30th Street | Image: Helle Walsted, Wichmann + Bendtsen

The duo have created a narrative around their designs – Roman and Williams Guild isn't just a store, it also houses fashionable restaurant La Mercerie. Like many New York designers, they are involved in creating the culture as well as the look of the city. Over the summer, Apparatus co-hosted artist Nick Cave's Freedom Ball, a dress-up pageant for clubbers and voters. The ball scene has been a part of the identity of New York nightlife since it was documented in the movie Paris is Burning. As Hendifar explains, Apparatus's involvement is significant to its brand. "We have the opportunity to tell a larger story," he says, "and I think we have a distinctly queer sort of identity. Being a culture player in the city feels as important to me as making beautiful things. When you think about the work will be significant in 50 years, what was happening around the designs will be significant – people will ask what were the cultural conversations, what was happening politically?" Just as the Bauhaus had its radical modernist day, and postmodernist design was defined by 1980s Rubik's pop colours and an MTV low-res VHS edit of classic forms, the current New York lighting design movement is of its time. That time is definitely now.