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Crafting Light: Custom Lighting Design by Adam Jackson Pollock and Fire Farm

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"I started recognizing light as a medium in and of itself," recalls artist [Adam Jackson Pollock](#), whose career in custom lighting design grew out of his early years in photography and stage lighting. Fascinated with the ways light can alter or even create an environment, he says "I realized you could use it to paint emotion and experience into space."

Soon the San Francisco-based artist found himself fashioning "light sculptures," commissioned by interior designers and architects to meet the Dotcom era's demand for innovative residential design. Later, asked to produce pieces for retail, Pollock assembled a team of artists with whom to collaborate. As business grew, however, their respect for the integrity of the art in their design never wavered. Aware that each piece would enter and alter a home, Pollock says, "we cared about the quality of the light, the shadows it cast, the color of the light. It was never just about the form of the object. It was about the whole impact it had on the space." [Fire Farm](#) creations balance between the world of art, theater, and sculpture and the practical world of product design. The sculptural explorations and expressions kept Fire Farm's work fresh and appealing to its clientele. Then came the end of the 1990s and, with it, warming trade relations with China. Container ships of inexpensive items ("imported landfill," Pollock calls it) flooded the market. The prospect of manufacturing his own designs overseas, to remain competitive, left him underwhelmed. When a visit to his mother-in-law's hometown of Elkader, IA presented an altogether new direction, Pollock thought, "let's change it up." Within months he and his family had relocated from the bustling San Francisco Bay Area to a Midwestern town of fewer than 1,500 residents.



Ringz is one of Fire Farm's most successful modular designs. The pendants are available singly or can be purchased in groups to create dynamic and dramatic orbital shapes.

The change did him -and business- good. Having participated in the early years of Silicon Valley's [Maker Movement](#), Pollock relished the ample space in which he could assemble a "playground for exploring different materials." Lower costs and a committed local workforce allowed them to compete against the onslaught of overseas competition by once again producing one-of-a-kind pieces for interior designers and architects. The diversity of requests and challenges presented by the interior design community fueled ever-expanding experimentation into new materials and techniques. "We really just approach each assignment as artists and try to figure it out. In some ways, we are curators of light." The scale of the creations grew as [Fire Farm](#) was asked to create fixtures for ballrooms and corporate atriums. The desire to explore, play and invent continuously reinvigorated the creative process leading to numerous industry awards and acknowledgments for the originality they brought to the field of decorative lighting.



Madge is a sculptural fixture with a fine metallic mesh diffuser and a free organic form, qualities which hearken back to the original lighting designs on which Fire Farm was founded.

their Elkader, Iowa facility. The variety of onsite techniques include metalworking, welding, powder-coat painting, plastic thermoforming, lamination, laser cutting and more. Whether producing custom ballroom fixtures or bespoke lighting solutions, Pollock says “our explorative, creative approach has served us well.”

Custom Lighting Design for a Variety of Needs

Emblematic of Fire Farm’s bold innovations are their light sculptures formed out of extremely fine wire cloth mesh. Used ordinarily for filtration or to insulate from radio waves, the material, Pollock

discovered, has an extraordinary effect on light. Flexible as fabric, the sculpted metal can capture light mid-air and diffuse it through glowing, diaphanous veils “The effect is almost like smoke,” Pollock says of Fire Farms’ free-form pieces such as *MADGE*, *BUBBLICIOUS*, and *JELLYFISH*, made from a choice of stainless steel, bronze, or copper. “You can barely see it yet it captures the light.”



Rose is a ceiling element made of panels of hand formed acrylic plastic. It can be lit various ways to create muted or direct effects, and the design is easily scalable to fit spaces individually or in groups.

Equally dramatic are Fire Farm’s innovative designs wrought from thermo-formed acrylic plastic. Challenged to design a versatile lighting system for a *hotel’s multi-use ballroom*, they created *Rose* out of white hard plastic and installed them onto the ceiling. When illuminated overhead by down-spots, the silvery petals appear translucent as moonlight, casting dappled shadows onto a dimly lit floor. When side-lit from cove-mounted lamps, each petal turns an opaque white, bouncing a bright and even light that is fit for a conference setting. Achieving such versatility of function was a turning point for Pollock. “By simply dialing in the dimmer on

Achieving Beautiful Function with Responsive Design

Pursuing the notion that lighting designs can fulfill additional environmental needs, Pollock's recent projects take responsive design to new levels. The award-winning lighting design *BELLE*, for example, pairs a nostalgic aesthetic with innovative sound and light management. A dome of riveted blackened steel with its gold leaf interior contains vintage looking LED bulbs. Suspended over a matching red leather ottoman, it makes for an inviting station for socializing. Part steampunk, part high-tech, the dome's acoustical affect amplifies conversations, allowing for intimacy in the midst of a populated space.

Continuing to push the boundary of form and function, Fire Farm is now partnering with a low-based industrial lighting company to "make beautiful lighting that can be part of the Internet Of Things." Recent ventures experiment with integrated speakers, data-programed LEDs, and sensors that monitor and respond to ambient light and even air temperature. "The light fixture becomes intelligent and responsive. You can control it through your data system and have it respond to the environment or user automatically. Pollock says these intelligent designs, "will keep us at the front end of technology and allow us to make objects that are beautiful, smart, and also provide a new level of energy efficiency and comfort. We are leading the way beyond lighting as a 'fixture' and taking it into the realm of a dynamic participant of its environment."



Belle and Otto are paired here to create an intimate environment where private conversations are bathed in the light and sound reflected from the Belle's gold leafed interior.

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