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How to spend it

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LUX LARGESSE
DINING ROOMS
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upscale lights to dine for

Chain mail or cherrywood, aged brass and painted glass: whatever the materials, outsized dimensions define the new lighting style for dining rooms. Jenny Dalton dishes up a feast of bigger-means-better designs

Lighting creator Sharon Marston has just returned to her studio after four days spent installing a lamp in a new interior-designed apartment in Hyde Park. It was a feat she couldn't have done alone. The lighting piece in question – positioned over a huge, oval dining-room table in the apartment – is “almost 3m in length, with applied gold-leaf and five different types of glass components within it; 200 glass drops altogether”. The elements – for the most part – have to be connected onsite and then hung by a team of four.

Not so much a lamp, then, but a piece of lighting sculpture, the size and complexity of which is nothing out of the ordinary for Marston, whose bespoke above-dining-table chandeliers for private residences make up approximately 20 per cent of her workload, and for which the typical outlay is between £30,000 and £40,000.

“These days we don't do anything smaller than 700mm in diameter,” explains the designer. She says the naissance of the bigger-means-better over-dining-table lamp began around six years ago, and has been on the rise ever since. “The barriers of lighting have been thrust wide open, and such are the materials we use now – from woven textiles to polymers and fibre optics – there are no limits. We even recently created a chandelier for an architect-designed house on the Hudson River in New York, which cascaded down a double-height void to eye-level, above the dining table. All the detail was around the bottom so you could see it while eating. The table itself was around 3m long, the light 6m in height.”

The size of the dining table and the lamp above it go hand in hand, says Marston. She will invariably be sent an image of a room's

table scheme, before designing the lamp around the piece of furniture. Often the shape will echo the table itself – a round for a round, an oval for an oval. “My clients will invariably have extremely large and luxurious dining areas and tables,” she says. “This is due to the fact they entertain large numbers on a regular basis, but also because the dining table has become a statement piece and they want a statement light above it.”

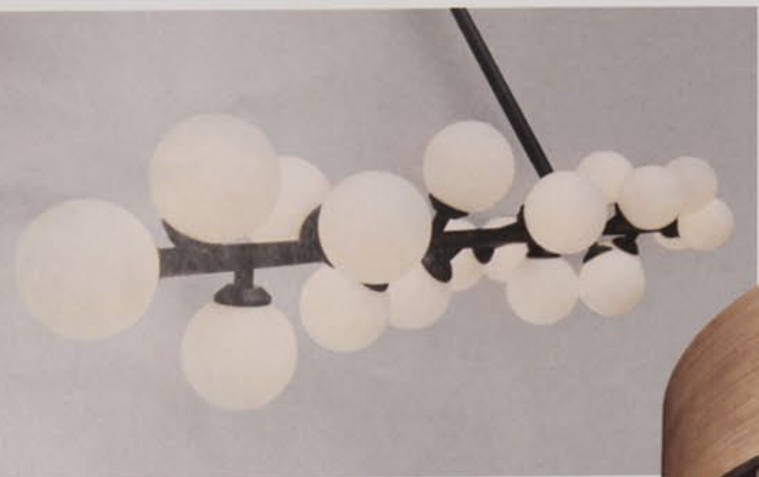
Fiona Barratt-Campbell, an interior designer renowned for her glamorous yet comfortable domestic interiors, confirms that the dining-table light is potentially one of the most important requirements – and biggest spends – of her clients today. “Where lights used to be about task, now people treat them almost like a piece of art – and the spend can be similar,” she says. “They want the wow factor.”

This can mean bespoke fittings from the likes of Ochre (example pictured right) or Willow Lamp, where the average cost is well over £10,000. And that doesn't include the work often required to add structural supports to the ceiling. In her own Cheyne Walk home, Barratt-Campbell's over-dining lamp – a chain-mail chandelier weighing 100 kilos – needed such a reinforcement. These requirements tend to be standard. “The lighting companies aren't launching small fittings anymore,” she says. “And the average lighting from 20 years ago would look ridiculous today; as rooms are getting bigger, you need bigger fittings.”

One of Barratt-Campbell's recent projects was at a 24,000sq ft Harrogate family home, where she has just installed a couple of large chain-mail chandeliers, designed by South African company Willow Lamp, over a big dining table. Alongside these, the designer added a 2m-wide steel-framed pendant light above an open-plan kitchen-dining space, designed to hang from a sloping ceiling that is 9m high at its peak.

Right: over-table chandelier designed by Fiona Barratt Interiors and produced by Ochre





From top: Mimosa ceiling light from Atelier Areti, £1,750. LZF Spiro large cherrywood shell suspension, £3,200. Ochre bronze and glass Seed Cloud chandelier, £29,400



The best over-dining lamps should function in a similar way to jewellery, "to create drama and mood"

proximity to the designers and artisans who create the items you live with," says Hendifar.

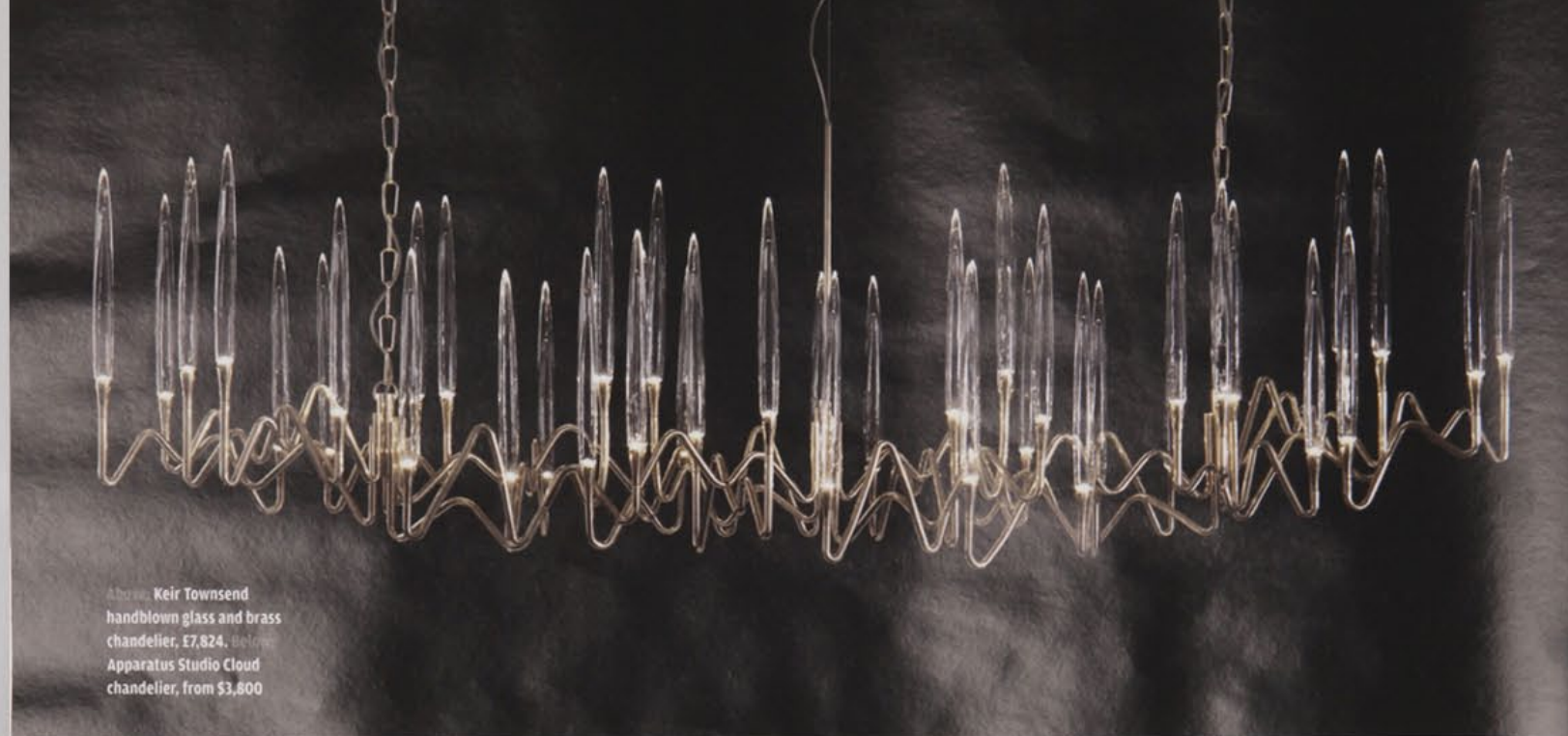
Furniture and lighting outfit Ochre also provides adjustable hanging heights for its designs, even with its stock chandeliers (many of which measure up to a metre in width). A 1m-diameter drop-pendant Chainmail chandelier (£14,214) was recently made for Kelly Hoppen's own apartment and hung above her dining table. "What they created for me was amazing," says Hoppen, who has since sold the property, complete with chandelier. "The people who bought the apartment really wanted it – I miss it terribly." Today, Ochre's bespoke chandelier service – which creates pieces of any configuration and size – now makes up 40 per cent of all its chandelier sales, which are up 15 per cent on last year, and 50 to 60 per cent of which are specified for over dining tables.

While bespoke is the way forward if your budget allows, contemporary design houses are offering larger and larger off-the-peg lights in order to compete with those that are made-to-measure. Keir Townsend – which recently opened a new showroom on Old Brompton Road – offers a Tuscan-made, horizontal chandelier comprising dozens of hand-blown, LED-lit glass "candles" for over the dining table, which in its largest incarnation measures 2m in length (£7,824, pictured on next page). German design outfit Studio Dreimann has just launched a new 117cm over-table lamp, Aki, with Italian manufacturer I Tre, which is made from seamless layers of polished wood and emits LED light along its joined up branches (£1,416). Atelier Areti's extremely pretty new Mimosa pendant – like a large illuminated floral branch spreading across your table – measures 1m (£1,750, pictured top). And the award-winning Spanish lighting house, LZF, which specialises in inventive wood-veneer lamps, has just released a number of larger pendants, including the swirling Raindrop design, 96cm wide and 150cm in height (£3,900), and the rather remarkable Spiro, which features a number of concentric

made up of either 19 or 37 frosted glass orbs hung from aged brass fronds (from \$3,800, pictured on next page), and the exposed bulb and brass-arm Compass chandelier (from \$2,900). But the duo also do a lot of bespoke work: recent installations of versions of their designs have included a double Compass chandelier for a home in East Hampton, specified by interior designers Bryan Graybill and Eric Dare, and a number of Compass chandeliers in the M Glamour Bar in Shanghai. The draw for their customers is the handmade-in-New York aspect of the lighting collection. "In an age of mass production, real luxury lies in your

"There wasn't a standard fitting big enough for it on the market," she says. "But every company will work on bespoke designs now – you can get anything you want."

Apparatus Studio is one such company. Run by the New York duo, Gabriel Hendifar and Jeremy Anderson, the company creates painted glass and brass designs that are intended to emit "a warm glow that is both time-worn and thoroughly modern". According to Hendifar, the best over-dining lamps should function in a similar way to jewellery. "It is a way to punctuate an interior design, create drama and mood," he explains. The company's portfolio includes the mesmeric Cloud light,



Above: Keir Townsend handblown glass and brass chandelier, £7,824. Below: Apparatus Studio Cloud chandelier, from \$3,800



circles of curvy wood-veneer inside a large circle, and is also 96cm wide (£3,200, pictured on previous page). The effect is of warmth and movement, and the lamps are, as with most of LZF's pendant offerings, designed to work brilliantly as a single entity or as clusters.

Indeed, the cluster is the newest watchword in pendant lighting – and for good reason. Barratt-Campbell says that a grouping of the same or similar pendant lamps can be a "really beautiful and more affordable way" to create an impact over a dining table, particularly when those tables aren't super-sized. Thomas Housden, who creates beautifully modern pendant lamps with a slightly rustic feel for his new

label Hand & Eye, agrees. "A cluster of smaller lamps can actually sometimes be a better option," he says. "A very big lamp can make a space feel top-heavy or even a little oppressive." To date, Housden's largest design is the Portobello, a hand-turned tulip timber shallow dome with a red flex that measures 50cm (£800). Although he has made larger sketches, he says, "For us, if a lamp is going to get really big then it should nearly become like a room, by creating its own sense of enclosure."

This is precisely the effect a number of designers are going for. Ochre's newest pendant chandelier, Seed Cloud, is a mass of organic-looking cast-bronze buds,

Low is key with impact lighting. Fiona Barratt-Campbell favours a hanging height of 180cm off the ground

each housing a tempered glass drop illuminated by LEDs. These can be arranged in anything from threes to dozens, and placed vertically or horizontally (from £978 to £49,380; example on previous page, £29,400). According to Ochre's Joanna Bibby: "As well as being a light source, it can help to act as a soft room-divide without blocking the spacious feel of an open-plan space, but it still has a wow factor." Indeed it does, especially when hung low.

Low is the key with the new impact-driven lighting. Barratt-Campbell favours a hanging height of 180cm off the ground. "It is quite low," she says, "but as long as it's fully over a table no-one is going to bang their head." And Ochre's Harriet Maxwell Macdonald, who runs the company's New York operation, recommends going "quite considerably lower than one that's in the middle of a room, so that it's related to a table". She also has sage advice for lighting a dinner. "You must have your lighting on a dimmer switch. Bright light is incredibly off-putting when you're eating, and horribly unromantic. If you can just about see your food, I always think that's ideal." ♦

LEADING LIGHTS

Apparatus Studio, 134 West 26th St, Suite 400, New York 10001 (+1646-527 9732; www.apparatusstudio.com), by appointment only.
Atelier Areti, 07792-968 735; www.atelierareti.com. **Cameron Peters**, The Old Dairy, Home Farm, Ardington, Wantage OX12 8PD (01235-835 000; www.cameronpeters.co.uk). **Do Shop**, 34 Shorts Gardens, London WC2 (020-7836 4039; www.do-shop.com). **Fiona Barratt Interiors**, The Library, The 1927 Building, 2 Michael Rd, London SW6 (020-7731 3600; www.fionabarrattinteriors.com). **The French House**, 50 Lamb's Conduit St, London WC1 (020-7831 1111; thefrenchhouse.net). **Hand & Eye**, 020-8522 0587; www.handandeyestudio.co.uk and see The French House. **Keir Townsend**, 142 Old Brompton Rd, London SW7 (020-7746 2442; www.keirtownsend.com). **LZF**, www.lzf-lamps.com and see Do Shop. **Ochre**, 46-47 Britton St, London EC1 (020-7096 7372; www.ochre.net), by appointment only. **Sharon Marston**, Studios F34A & C31 Parkhall, 40 Martell Rd, London SE21 (020-8670 4644; www.sharonmarston.com). **Studio Dreimann**, Eleonorenstr 21, 30449 Hanover (+49511-6421 4250; www.studiodreimann.com). **Willow Lamp**, www.willowlamp.com and see Cameron Peters.