

COVER STORY

By CARLA GROSSETTI



CHRISTINE FRANCIS



Industrial designer Christopher Boots redefines residential lighting with an artistic, forward-thinking touch, top and above.

OUR COVER

Lighting by Christopher Boots, design by Alexandra Kidd, photo by Justin Alexander.

Shining the light fantastic

As LED technology improves, lighting is being considered as an art form. From a pendant lamp made from palomino horsehair to an illuminated circle of quartz that hovers over a kitchen bench like a space craft, the light narrative in 2017 is about shining attention on technology and fixtures that make a statement.

“Attitudes around lighting have evolved and our clients are looking for contemporary pieces that push the boundaries of design,” says Melbourne industrial designer Christopher Boots.

Boots, who won the Interior Design Excellence Award 2017 for his whimsical Hermes New York installation, says while light will always be used primarily to define spaces for social interaction, recreation or contemplation, technology has created more capabilities than ever for radical experimentation.

He says lighting in 2017 is as much about form as it is function and he regards it as a flexible and sensual medium. “Lighting is more than just a functional aspect of the home. Homeowners want a bespoke light fixture to have a sense of scale and grandeur and make a statement, much like a piece of heirloom jewellery. My niche is in lighting as art that is reflective of someone’s home and life.”

Boots, who trained under the legendary designer, the late Geoffrey Mance, is regarded in design circles as somewhat of a maverick for producing works such as the Triptyx, which flips the concept of a traditional pendant.

Boots says he is very process-driven and found designing the piece creatively fulfilling. “The design-savvy want lighting that is a fusion of art and design,” he says.

“LED has given light artists the ability to work in any shape or form and that enabled me to play with new versions of lighting shapes to produce the Triptyx, which is based on an iteration of a section of a triangle.”

Boots predicts an even bigger buzz around high-tech lighting systems this year as new technologies continue to develop and splash light over places and spaces with the single click of a button.

“2017-18 is going to be all about home automation, technically oriented lights that we can control from our smartphones. You can program when the lights turn on, tweak the intensity of colour and create different moods all from your smartphone or tablet.”

Boots says pendant lights over the kitchen bench will remain popular simply because they create practical task lighting while also putting the focus on family and social interaction around the kitchen bench.

BRIGHT IDEAS

Look up

Floor lamps can help to establish a soft ambient light that is perfect for quiet conversations and contemplation. The effects are simple but powerful.

Be bold

Don't rush into lighting up your house. Take time to reflect how you will use each space and consult a lighting expert. Make a statement. Be brave. Engage a designer to create a statement piece that will be custom-made to complement the character of your home. Go back to nature – green is the colour of choice when it comes to design trends for 2017.

Dim and dimmer

A dimmer allows you to modify the mood and transform the ambience of a space with the flick of a switch.



FELIX FOREST

A Pyrmont, Sydney, home designed by Arent & Pyke, right and below.



TOM FERGUSON

“Lighting is more than just functional ... My niche is in lighting as art that is reflective of someone’s home and life.”

“When it comes to finishes and tones, fake copper lighting fixtures are finished. Brass doesn’t date, and silvers are coming back in. Chromes and palladium tones are very forward as they can be polished like jewellery, which means they age gracefully,” he says.

Boots, who has more than 100 projects on the go, says he finds much of his inspiration in nature. He says those who are looking for an edgy modern look should move away from last season’s obsession with rose gold and consider going green.

“I am looking into materials that have a green patina. Mossy greens, sage greens, acidic greens, and the patina that you find on brass, which is beautiful,” Boots says.

“I’m really inspired by nature and am into textured finishes, which is in direct response to the fact we spend so much time on screens that we need that tactile experience.”

Arent & Pyke principal Juliette Arent, agrees green is the new hue because it takes its cue from nature and softens spaces by bringing the outdoors in. The interior designer says she has noticed a rebellion against minimalism as more and more clients request spaces that are curated to connect with nature.

“Lighting has the greatest impact on the ambience and mood of a room. Using bright hues like deep greens is a great way to inject personality into an interior and the layering of a furnishing scheme often depends on that,” she says.

“With lighting, we’ve noticed our clients are requesting more colour, more texture, more tactile and textured materials. There’s a fabulous pendant light from Apparatus that uses horsehair, which is a big statement and a material we haven’t seen before.”

Arent says she has noticed Australians are also thinking about the placement of lights to bring a space to life. “A space works best with a mix of floor lamps, pendants that drop down over a dinner table, a lamp light that is at eye level.”

Consultant at Custom Lighting Brett Ronald-Howell says when choosing lighting, everything from the room’s dimensions to the functional needs of the space must be considered. He says the general rule of thumb is to use warm white light in rooms intended for comfort and intimacy and a cooler white light in spaces such as the kitchen, garage and bathroom where you need the functionality of a bright light.

“The number one thing I recommend is to include dimmers, which play with the level of light you want and give you flexibility,” Ronald-Howell says. 