

MADE IN UTAH

LIGHT SHOW

Made in Salt Lake City, Hammerton's custom decorative lights meld the artistry of old world craftsmanship with the innovation and bold designs of today.

BY BRAD MEE

Hammerton Studio's Two-Tiered Glacier Chandelier reflects jewelry's influence on the company's designs. Remnants from the glassblowing operation sparkle like diamonds on bracelets of hand-polished metal teamed with LED lights.



Metalworker turning raw material into a custom fixture.



Like many artists and designers, Levi Wilson became captivated with his medium—in this case, metal—long before he began turning it into art. Wilson was all but raised in his father's ornamental iron fabrication shop, so the art of metalcraft is part of his DNA. In 1995, he cofounded Hammer-ton—a custom decorative lighting manufacturer based in Salt Lake City—and has been part of illuminating spectacular spaces with indoor and outdoor fixtures ever since.

“When I started the company, everything was very rustic, and that was our niche,” says Wilson, whose early lodge-meets-cabin designs were primarily commissioned for heroically scaled second homes in Park City. Over the years, business grew nationwide and design preferences shifted to Old World European

Clockwise from top left: A skilled craftsman blowing glass; Blown glass formed to replicate natural quartz; Levi Wilson, VP of Design; Raw metal takes form in the hands of a talented artisan.

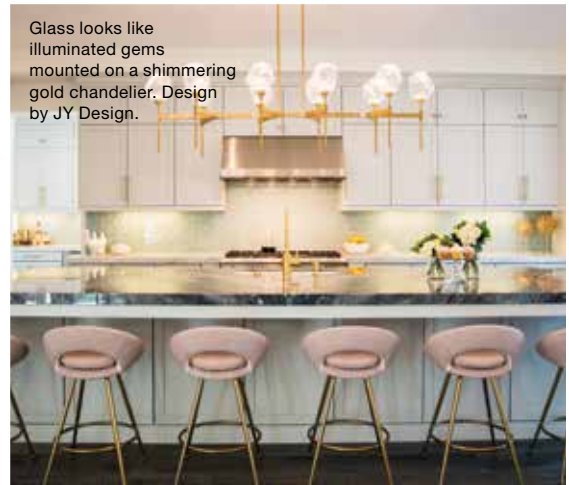
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Measuring 27 feet in diameter and weighing over 3 tons, this sculptural chandelier illuminates the upscale Tysons Galleria located just outside of Washington D.C. Hammerton worked with Illuminating Concepts to design and fabricate this exclusive piece.



Blown glass taking form.



Glass looks like illuminated gems mounted on a shimmering gold chandelier. Design by JY Design.



Hammerton's Rock Crystal Chandelier captures the raw beauty of natural quartz in artisan-blown glass.

and then to the modern and contemporary styles we celebrate today. All the while, Hammerton's designs remained on the leading edge, and as consumers' tastes and wants changed, so too did the company.

"Lighting has become increasingly important in high-end design," says Nancy Shott, who along with her husband Bill, joined Hammerton's leadership in 2005. Teaming with Wilson, their goal from the get-go was to provide designers and their clients with custom, artisan-made lighting that illuminates spaces beautifully and efficiently. To do this, Hammerton expanded its operation and offerings. By 2010, glass elements moved from a secondary to a primary part of high-end light fixtures, so Hammerton purchased an Oakland-based glass company and relocated the kilns and glassmakers to its SLC workshop. By 2016, the team brought hand-blown glassmak-

ing under roof, as well. During that period, the primarily-to-the-trade company also developed Hammerton Studio, a retail line of fixtures of comparable quality.

At a time when computers and high-tech machinery define most manufacturing facilities, Hammerton's local workshop—where master craftsmen and their apprentices create individually designed, one-off fixtures by hand—might seem endearingly archaic. Hammerton is fine with that. "Artisanship is highly valued today," says Wilson, who is proud of melding modern processes with old-world artisanship. "Our pieces are individually made, so no two are identical." Wilson works with the firm's in-house designers and engineers to create detailed illustrations and engineering drawings from his sketches. These move to the 50,000- square-foot workshop where craftsmen use the plans



Crafted of steel rings with gleaming windowpanes, a pair of contemporary tiered chandeliers deliver striking contemporary forms to a Jackson Hole home. Design by KAM Designs.

PHOTO SARGENT SCHLITT PHOTOGRAPHY

to create lights of all sizes, ranging in style from ultra sleek and shimmering chic to elegantly traditional and rustically contemporary. "Everything is built to order," Nancy says.

Many things inspire Wilson's designs, including past eras. "Mid-century is very popular right now, and we're starting to see an influences from the '70s and '80s," he says. Hammerton's Sputnik-like Rock Crystal Starburst Chandelier reflects the former while a new series of more nature-inspired, asymmetric forms addresses the latter. "These meld organic shapes with contemporary designs," he says. "Demand

is also growing for colored glass in earthy shades like gold and smoke," he says.

Jewelry also influences Wilson's creations, as is evident in the top-selling Parallel Ring Chandelier. Like an enormous, gleaming bracelet, the elegant fixture features linked curved panels of kiln-fused glass innovatively illuminated by integrated LED-lights. "LED technology is constantly evolving, and we choose the best for clear, consistent light," Nancy says.

Touring Hammerton's Salt Lake workshop is a sensory-loaded experience: the hammering of metal shaped on anvils, the glow of molten glass formed on rods,

the heat and aroma of 2000-degree furnaces, and the team of craftsmen turning raw materials into works of art destined to illuminate spectacular spaces worldwide. Hammerton's output is notable and its innovation and offerings continue to grow. "Every week, we blow nearly one ton of glass and create 130 custom fixtures," Nancy explains. Still, in a day of computer-driven everything, it's the craftsmanship that inspired Hammerton's creation nearly 25 years ago that's most remarkable. Wilson says proudly, "You can see the marks of an artisan on each and every piece." ■