

Featuring 2,000 Decorative Lighting Suppliers Worldwide

# Susanne Nielsen

## Ebb & Flow

Susanne Nielsen, founder of Danish decorative lighting brand Ebb & Flow, spent many years working in sales and marketing prior to becoming a designer. Working actively in design came quite late in her career and her interest in lighting design specifically emerged when she set up the company 'Who Found Otto', sourcing and selling vintage furniture, glass and other unique finds, 12 years ago.

Having studied international business and marketing in Denmark, Nielsen then moved to London straight after graduation. There, she worked in marketing for companies such as Fruit of the Loom and Carli Gry - a Danish fashion company. From there, Nielsen worked for eight years as an agent for Lisbeth Dahl, a Danish home accessories company. It was during this period that the seeds really started to grow and Nielsen knew she wanted to set up her own company, with it taking a further four years for the contours and concept of Ebb & Flow to take shape.

Having lived in London for 16 years, for Nielsen, this experience, combined with the minimalist pared-down Danish design philosophy has liberated her and allowed her to pursue both instincts, creating lighting designs that are very personal. "I have always wished to bring more feminine-driven design forward," she tells **darç**. "And believe that lighting should always be beautiful as well as functional."

With Ebb & Flow's most well-known project to date the 120 Club at Wembley Stadium in the UK, which uses the Lute pendant, for Nielsen: "Lighting should bring atmosphere and warmth to a space. It doesn't matter whether this is someone's private home or a restaurant, the lighting should always make you want to spend more time in the space. If it achieves that, people might want to take dessert or an extra glass of wine and this is how lighting can become a direct or sometimes, subtle tool to use. I think moving forward, we're going to see the relationship between architectural and decorative lighting start to overlap more and more - there is definitely a need for architectural lighting to become



more decorative and vice versa."

Commenting specifically on her experience of being a female product designer, Nielsen says: "I have never come across problems but then, I do have my own business and am free to make my own decisions. In the industry as a whole though - I don't come across that many other female-owned lighting companies and I'm not entirely sure why... Perhaps lighting is perceived as being very technical (which it is) and therefore more of a 'man's thing', but my message in response to this would be, don't let that be a hindrance! You don't need to be technical, you just need to surround yourself with people that are.

"Habits are hard to break and lighting is undoubtedly a masculine world - perhaps so because it has often been the technical aspects of a design that have dominated over the decorative design. This is my own observation of course, but I do believe it has kept women from entering this world."

[ebbandflow.dk](http://ebbandflow.dk)

# Nicky Dobree

Nicky Dobree is an award winning international designer. After studying French and Italian at Bristol University and a stint in publishing, Nicky retrained in interior architecture and design. She worked with Taylor Howes before setting up her London based design practice in 2000.

Having grown up in Paris and Vietnam and travelled extensively, her inspiration has come from all corners of the globe. Her reputation has continued to grow over the last 20 years and has established her as an international designer with clients across Europe and North America. Creating eye-catching interiors with a strong sense of place, she fuses modern lines with traditional vernacular, while introducing contemporary details to timeless effect. Here, she shares her thoughts on the role lighting plays in her designs.

"It is one of the most important aspects of every interior and should never be underestimated," she says. "Light has the power to change our perception of the world. It can influence and alter behaviour. How we work with it within an interior is a vital part of the design process and it is an essential component of each and every space that we design.

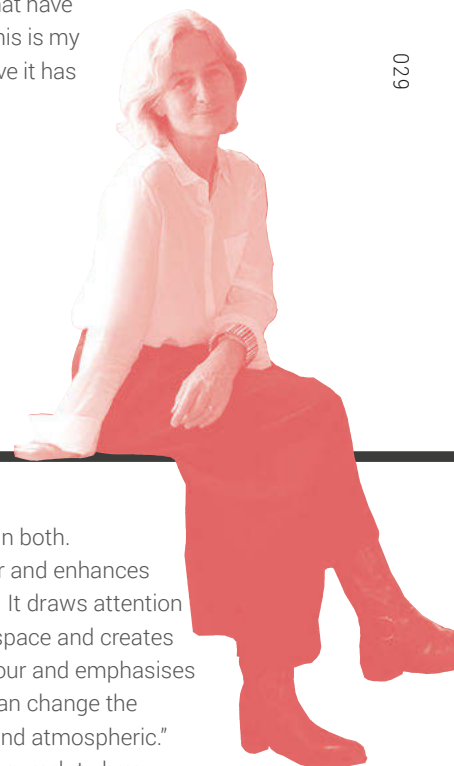
"I have always believed that interiors can change the way that we think and feel. They have huge potential to improve our lives and to make us better. Our moods are enormously influenced by the quality of our surroundings so helping to enhance people's daily lives through design is a huge motivation. For both lighting and design we constantly strive to create the best possible ambience that makes spaces look beautiful, timeless and elegant. The quality of the materials that we



use drives the quality of the experience in both.

"Lighting creates the magic in an interior and enhances the mood and atmosphere of the space. It draws attention to textures, colours and forms within a space and creates dynamic visual statements. It alters colour and emphasises texture; lighting is a powerful tool that can change the atmosphere from functional to moody and atmospheric."

With an innate love of design and lucky enough to have grown up abroad, travel extensively and be exposed to multiple styles and cultures, the design seed was sown from a very early age. It's a passion that Dobree says she "lives and breathes every day." And for Dobree, the interior design industry has always been very supportive of female designers, with her experience reflecting a female dominated studio in some cases. "One thing we can do to support women more - as an industry and more specifically within organisations - is to encourage flexible working hours," she says. "I know from my own experience how important this has been in order to raise my family at the same time. It's an ongoing process, we need to continue to review the structure and way that we work."



## Sabrina Masala

For Italian architect Sabrina Masala, her interest in light has developed over her 20 year career spanning hotels and restoration design. "My first chandelier was developed during the renovation of the 'Torre del Saracino', a two Michelin star restaurant on the coast of Italy," Masala tells **darc**. "The chandelier took inspiration from the sea, using jellyfish that were seemingly swimming to the music in the restaurant - they dominate the ambience with their delicate reflections. "While the restaurant version used 100 pieces of suspended glass, I went on to develop several reduced versions of the fixture, trying different light sources, glass colours, suspension wires and so on. These experiences were instructive and pushed me to design a table lamp version. "The Jelly 1 and Jelly 2 table lamps used a terracotta base, handmade with an antique technique that gives them a stepped shape. This contrast gives the idea of earth offering you the light of the sea. "During their production I realised I needed to choose more consistent crafting methods if I was going to produce more than a couple of lamps and so partnered with Blue Side, a company that has experience in special glass parts for scientific labs - all handmade by skilled artisans but to a greater level of compliance. This newer version of the lamp 'Medusa Soffio di Luce' features a rechargeable battery and lighter base and I'm really proud that it now features in Mauro Uliassi's three Michelin stars restaurant. "My experience in custom design for high-end spaces sees me gravitate towards products that want to communicate something special, something that you wouldn't find in commercially available furniture or lighting fixtures. One would usually say that lighting dictates how the space is perceived, but I wanted my light sources to be the protagonist, giving their emotional contribution to the space that they illuminate -



something to remember in a room, rather than an aid in sight.

"Once you decide to include a decorative light fixture in a space you must treat it like a piece of art that your space has to contain. Had you chosen to include a statue or an important painting in a space, it would be clear that the whole room has to deal with it, to give it the needed space, to resonate around it. Decorative lights should be treated as the art pieces that they are."

Reflecting on her experiences as a female designer, for Masala there have been times where she's felt she's had to work twice as hard to gain the same amount of respect a male counterpart would receive by default, "this means I'm even prouder of what I've achieved," she says.

"I once designed a wine bar and at the end of the renovation I was told that the owner of the venue had been telling clients that he in fact had designed the bar. I felt embittered that my involvement was so under appreciated that he would not mention it, but at the same time, he was so proud of the final result. The difficulties faced by women in the design industry are mostly down to common conceptions that do not relate us to this world. It makes it harder to gain the needed respect - particularly in the world of architecture. But if we can just be seen in our jobs, I'd like to think people won't be as surprised to find us there in the first place."



## Celia Chu

Interior designer Celia Chu creates elegantly contemporary hospitality and upscale residential projects with a flair of sophistication and layered richness. Inspired by her passion for art and design, Chu combines practical functionality and her unique expression in design sensibilities to form a holistic approach to all her projects.

Born and raised in Taipei, Taiwan, Chu has always been immersed in the creative arts, which eventually led her to pursue further education in New York City. After graduating from the Parsons School of Design, she stayed in the US to join one of the top interior design firms in the world, marking the beginning of her distinguished career in the world of hospitality design. Since 2007, after launching her namesake interior design firm in Taipei, Chu has led a team of talented design professionals to collaborate with a roster of national and international clients on many prestigious design assignments.

Having known she wanted to become a designer from a young age, Chu tells **darc** how she would spend a lot of her childhood "imagining how people live in rooms, developing ideas for my own room. There was a children's newspaper that I would read," she says. "While everyone else was more focused on the stories, I would focus on the apartment advertising section!" Later in life, Chu decided on a hands-on approach to her learning and worked in various design firms across Taipei. "I would sometimes design entire projects by myself and present them to my boss; I knew design

was what I wanted to do," she says. "My hopes from the beginning weren't so grandiose... I simply loved design. But my hopes developed over time and now focus on environmentally-friendly design. Not just regarding saving energy or renewable materials, but also supporting local markets and economics."

In terms of her work with light, for Chu, her philosophy is to make sure it's a highlight of any space. "It has to be a key performer within the space," she says. "It accentuates key features, almost like a spotlight on a performer and it expresses each chapter of any design.

"I've always had an interest in lighting - it can't be separated from design. It's another layer that will create an ambience and mood - used to tell a narrative within the interior design. We have worked with many different lighting products and manufacturers within our projects, but one particular collaboration that stands out to me, was with Lasvit. Their craftsmanship and enthusiasm have continued to impress me over the years and they have never stopped pushing the boundaries, by ensuring they work with many notable designers."

As a female interior designer, for Chu her gender hasn't ever really been an issue, telling **darc** that "the industry has been receptive and I have never noticed a difference between male and female designers in terms of support received. We're all creators and our art is what speaks to people at the end of the day," she says. "I think as artists and designers the industry focuses on our ability first and foremost.

"In terms of supporting women in design though, organisations should prepare an environment for designers to grow and develop their design skills irrespective of gender; it's important to focus on a designer's ability as I feel if we overly focus on gender, it can actually be detrimental to women."

