

The Design of Light: A Q&A with Lighting Designer Lauren Wylonis of KingsHaven

With an eye on global design, Lauren Wylonis collaborates with far-reaching artisans to create handcrafted lighting fixtures out of natural materials.

Light is the backdrop of our lives, acting as a canvas for special moments that positively affect people's lives. From sunlight streaming through a windowpane to the warm glow of a table lamp on a dark evening, light yields a sense of indulgent comfort. When light is captured by an object of beauty, as with a distinctive light fixture, we see how even electric light can be strikingly illuminating.

Beautiful lighting is the domain of Lauren Wylonis, the chief executive officer, lighting designer and curator at KingsHaven, a high-end maker of light fixtures, furniture, accessories, art, and home décor. Her works range in mood from historic reproductions to transitional styles, proving that every decade retains style for miles.

Masterful at design collaboration, KingsHaven (www.kingshaven.com) works with artisans around the world to create its exquisite lighting designs. These creations, born of a harmonious mélange of exotic woods and hand-forged iron, can be easily customized, a boon for imaginative architects, interior designers and other clients as well as homeowners with discerning taste.

With years of residential real estate development expertise through Wylonis' KingsHaven Properties (www.kingshavenproperties.com) business as well as interior design experience from her design firm, KingsHaven Design (www.kingshavendesign.com), KingsHaven's first step in product design was to open an elegant showroom in Paoli, a suburb of Philadelphia.

The European-inspired store marks the terminating spot of the famous Main Line railroad track, a region populated by long-standing generations of significant families. The success of the retail space convinced Wylonis and her business partner, Ed Wylonis, who is also her brother, to expand nationally, shedding light on those who view lighting as a material component that imbues any space with luminous magic.

A day in the life and work for Wylonis is nothing shy of resplendence in terms of her creative vision for bespoke product design and managing a burgeoning national business.

1. Tell us about your background and why you chose lighting and interior design as part of your career?

Art has been a passion of mine since I was a child. From studio drawing to watercolor and oil painting, throwing pottery, and designing tiles, I have always found that creating art was a fulfilling way to make my world a more satisfying and beautiful place. As an adult, college courses at Johns Hopkins University in studio drawing and classic art history fueled my interests in architecture and design. Collecting art pottery, antique wood boxes, marine art, and abstract paintings were just some of the ways art was an everyday pursuit for me before I founded a company that rejuvenates historic estates.

While working on several of our large residential design projects, we could not locate the types of creative lighting and furniture we desired. Not being available in stores, we

designed unique pieces of our own. After frequent requests for the items we made for these projects, we founded our retail store where we sell these designs and create new custom lighting, furnishings and objets d'art for our clients.

My work with KingsHaven takes me to countries around the globe to collaborate with artists and artisans, and I bring back unique pieces that add a richness and patina to the design projects of our clients.

2. What led to KingsHaven being launched and developed into a national manufacturing and retail business that, in part, specializes in lighting design?

Our handcrafted lighting, home furnishings and home décor have been extremely well received in the Greater Philadelphia region, and we are frequently sought out by designers and clients from other states. We have product designs that work for every space and design aesthetic, and we specialize in custom options to meet the lighting needs of truly any designer, architect or customer.

As we grew quickly, our chief operating officer, Ed Wylonis, suggested we progress to serving a broader, national client base. Along with our design director, Mimi Boston Johnson, and our team, I thought that transition made logical sense.

3. KingsHaven's lighting, lamps, sconces, lanterns, and chandeliers are not the only products the brand offers. Tell us brief highlights about your other product categories.

We have handcrafted iron, wood, glass, and marble occasional and cocktail tables as well as handcrafted décor items including sculptures, handcrafted candlesticks, alpaca blankets, throws, pillows, and pottery. I also carefully select furnishings and original art to accompany these items in our showroom and online commerce center, so our customers can furnish a whole home or hospitality space through KingsHaven if desired.

4. How do you make informed and creative decisions regarding the curation of KingsHaven products and collections?

We search for, choose and design products that are handcrafted pieces of art, of beautiful and unique textures, and superb quality. Our products are crafted by hand often by several artists or craftsmen, and they are a collaboration between our KingsHaven team and other artisans. This results in lighting and home furnishings that are truly different and unique in every detail.

The highest level of customization is quickly becoming the brand moniker for KingsHaven, which allows designers, architects and clients to participate in the creation of artful lighting. They can illuminate a project with their own brushstrokes, artistic styles and desired moods, which translates to our lighting pieces often being one-of-a-kind creations.

5. Could you explain the overall essence of KingsHaven's lighting designs?

Our lighting not only beautifully illuminates a space, but contributes a rich character of design to a room. The beautiful details and fine materials add a patina and depth unlike other lighting I have seen.

We offer a wide selection to address various stylistic design trends. One example, KingsHaven's 17 estate lanterns blend with any antique version. We can almost always change the sizes or details of fixtures to make them work seamlessly for challenging design projects.

6. What makes KingsHaven unique as compared to other lighting brands in the marketplace?

Every KingsHaven fixture has been designed and created with the detailed attention of an artist. Our expansive ability to customize allows our clients to participate in the creation of art and truly put their individual stamp on the light fixtures. In addition, we pride ourselves on excellent customer and client assistance in the process.

7. From where do you glean inspiration to design lighting products?

I can find inspiration in something as simple as the shape of a glass sitting on my kitchen counter or in the shape of a face in a painting at the Musée de l'Orangerie. My love of English, Scottish and French antiques and antique lighting has been another inspiration. Certainly, the colors and shapes of the mountains and rainforests in South America and the seas of the Great Barrier Reef have inspired me.

My extensive travel to visit artisans around the world is yet another inspiration. I enjoy learning about the art created by other cultures. This appreciation has led me to collaborate globally with artisans to create unique pieces that add a richness and patina to design projects.

8. Could you explain how KingsHaven's lighting fixtures go from design conception to showroom?

We start with one of my or our team's design sketches which are conceptualized in terms of luxury space design. We then work directly with craftsman to build a sample of the drawing in the field.

Sometimes, we create a CAD drawing to create dimensions for different sizes of the same fixture. Changes, at times, are made in some or all aspects of the fixture until we feel satisfied it is the very best embodiment of the drawing that it can be.

9. The design and construction of KingsHaven lighting products have a consistent subtle elegance, giving them a sense of being markedly stylish, yet are rife for use in many settings. How did you achieve this?

Our entire team works effortlessly to ensure our fixtures are designed with artistic lines, fine detail, quality materials, and remarkable textures. These characteristics are at home

in any style or design of space, and they add the essence of quality and luxury to any setting.

10. The Luna Globe is one of your most popular lighting fixtures. What are the qualities of this product, and how did you conceptualize its design?

The Luna is most simply a light fixture inspired by the shapes in the night sky, a sight visible all over the world. Handcrafted out of iron and an exotic wood, this fixture is available as a chandelier, pendant, table lamp, or semi-flush fixture in virtually any color of wood and finish.

It is a particularly special light fixture to me, as it reminds me the same view can be interpreted, understood, valued, and depicted so differently by various people and cultures. The flexibility of this fixture is remarkable, in that, it is as beautiful in our large chandelier size with a charred iron and natural laurel finish in an expansive living room, as it is white with a lightly blue or grey stained laurel installed in a cozy bedroom.

11. KingsHaven creates lights with iron, brass, wood, and other natural materials. What is most appealing to you in using these materials?

I find naturally occurring materials such as iron and exotic woods are the most artistically beautiful because every square inch is slightly different and unique. They are also timeless, and are materials that are beautiful in any style of room. I find the unique and individual are the most special and beautifully appealing.

12. What is an example of when KingsHaven customized lighting for a client / customer?

A designer client of ours was working on the design for a new home. Her client had found an antique fixture she had hoped to somehow replicate for new exterior fixtures.

Our client found one fixture on eBay that was similar, but it was not the same as the homeowner desired and was in very poor shape. In addition, our designer felt the style was a little too traditional for the style of this particular new home.

We were able to work with the designer and her client to create a new set of 12 companion fixtures that were a sleeker and more transitional version of the antique fixture in an exterior sconce, hanging fixture and post mount fixture, all in sizes and finishes that were perfect for the house's style. This is the level of customization for which the KingsHaven name is becoming known in the country.

13. What do you believe great illumination and lighting design does to create atmosphere?

I have always believed for every design style, details make a space, and I think that is especially true in lighting. Whether it is a simple square box of a light fixture, that is artistically hung in a minimally designed room or an elegant and detailed French Reproduction Chandelier in a French Manor, the vision for the design aesthetic is strengthened by consistent, functional and beautiful lighting. Great illumination and lighting design that is consistent with the vision of a space creates a perfectly designed dream space.

14. If you were to recommend one thing interior designers and architects should be careful not to overlook about lighting for their projects, what would it be, and why?

I think designers and architects should be careful not to overlook the opportunity they have to infuse the lighting of a project with their vision for the project. There are many companies that provide fixtures that work well in a room. However, selecting a fixture that offers easy customization allows the hand of the designer or architect to illuminate a project with his or her own creative approach, artistic style and desired mood.

15. What is the most common question interior designers and architects ask you about lighting, and what is the answer?

The most common question we are asked by interior designers and architects is if we can change the size or a detail of a fixture for a very specific project. Our answer is nearly always, yes!

Learn more: www.kingshaven.com.

###

Notes to the Editor:

- **See the photos accompanying this Q&A.**
- ***This content and the photos (and others) are available for editorial / credited use, planning, edited versions, and / or other creative collaborations, such as interviews or photos shoots with Lauren Wylonis, by contacting Eberly & Collard Public Relations.***

Don Eberly
deberly@ecpr.com
404-574-2900

- ***Thank you for considering this information and expert design source for your readers or viewers.***