

HOME & DESIGN

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TRENDS

PRODUCT
DESIGN
SPECIAL

ADAPTING
A CLASSIC
Alessandro
Mendini's
Poltrona
di Proust
armchair

INTO THE LIGHT
NIKHIL
PAUL

Products for
the Future

Benjamin
Hubert



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PROFILE IMAGES: ANKUSH MARIA
PRODUCT IMAGES: PAUL MATTER

LIGHT years ahead

Nikhil Paul is blazing paths and sparking important conversations in the field of lighting design through his sophisticated and timeless illuminators



It may take two to tango, but for New Delhi based light designer Nikhil Paul, it just took one namesake collection to leave a mark on the global design map. When his first collection of Tango lights made their way to the Internet, little had he anticipated the overwhelming response the maiden offering from his young studio, Paul Matter would receive. That was back in 2016 and since then, Paul and his studio have not looked back.

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I'm interested in understanding how societal factors gave rise to design movements like Bauhaus, Memphis and Modernism.



(Preceding page) *Tango 3*
(Facing page) *Satellite 1 and 2*
(Above) *Overlay 1*
(Following page) *Goddess Sconce*

Paul established Paul Matter, a light design studio in 2016. Over the years, he has dabbled in several types of lights – wall mounted, chandeliers, sconces and floor and ceiling lamps. The studio, known for its sleek offerings featuring a trademark orb at the end, shot to fame with its first ever product – Tango. Launched in the same year, these brass lights were offered in three variants and featured a glass sphere at the end of a brass stick, with or without a satellite-like dish, that could pivot about an elbow to illuminate in various directions.

“It was overwhelming. We weren’t expecting this kind of response and had to jump into production right away,” recalls Paul. “Our main concern at this point was not even to get a second collection out, but to deliver a quality product designed and manufactured in India.” Today, variations of his Tango lights occupy pride of place in galleries, homes and restaurants across the world, from Mumbai and Seoul to London and Brussels.

The story however starts when this design maverick was just stepping out into the world. Hailing from a family of

doctors, Paul was expected to follow one of two frequently tread paths – medicine or engineering. He chose the latter, but within six months, Paul realised that his heart lay with the creative field. So, he flew halfway across the globe to Italy, to study Master of Art in Business Design.

After graduating, Paul spent a good five years working towards helping brands tap opportunities for creative problem solving, identifying potential areas where products could be developed to better human lives. Little did he know that the knowledge he accrued then would help him propel his own studio a few years down the line.

Paul Matter isn’t this creative’s first foray into the world of design. Previously, he set up the online portal WeMakeLove, a curated platform that dealt in gifting items, creative finds and design objects. This provided the perfect segue for him into the world of product design, though by his own admission, he started only because he couldn’t find the perfect lights for his studio, and so took up the task of making them himself. That’s how Tango was born.

Paul's creations are sophisticated, suave and in a league of their own. Their no-frills appearance is the result of Paul poring over his designs and reducing them down to their basic structure, thereby eliminating any unnecessary embellishments. "I used to believe that form follows function, but I feel differently now. I think what is most important is capturing the essence of the product – whether it's the form, function or both together." A great instance of this is his latest creation, the God and Goddess sconces. These delicate lights have been imagined without any joineries – no screws, bolts or nuts. Launched at Salone del Mobile.Milano, it comprises two parts that balance on each other, adhering to the principles of gravity.

These elemental designs are also at par with the studio's sustainability tenets. Though a young firm, Paul Matter is conscious about the impact it has on the environment. Paul works with only energy saving LED lights and has updated all his designs to toe this line and reuses his own materials as much as possible. Further, he only sources from vendors who are as conscious about the planet as him. He ensures the companies he sources from have replanting or reforestation programmes. He also chooses to not work with plastic.

This is also partly due to his belief that plastic is a passing trend, a train he isn't too keen to board. So, a limited material palette of brass, leather, stone, mouth-blown glass and silver dominate at Paul Matter. "We choose to work with these as they age well. They have an inherent quality that helps them become more beautiful with the passage of time," avers Paul. Porcelain, ceramic and terracotta though, are high on the list of materials he's exploring and experimenting with.



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Light has an intangible quality that can transform a place. It has endless possibilities.

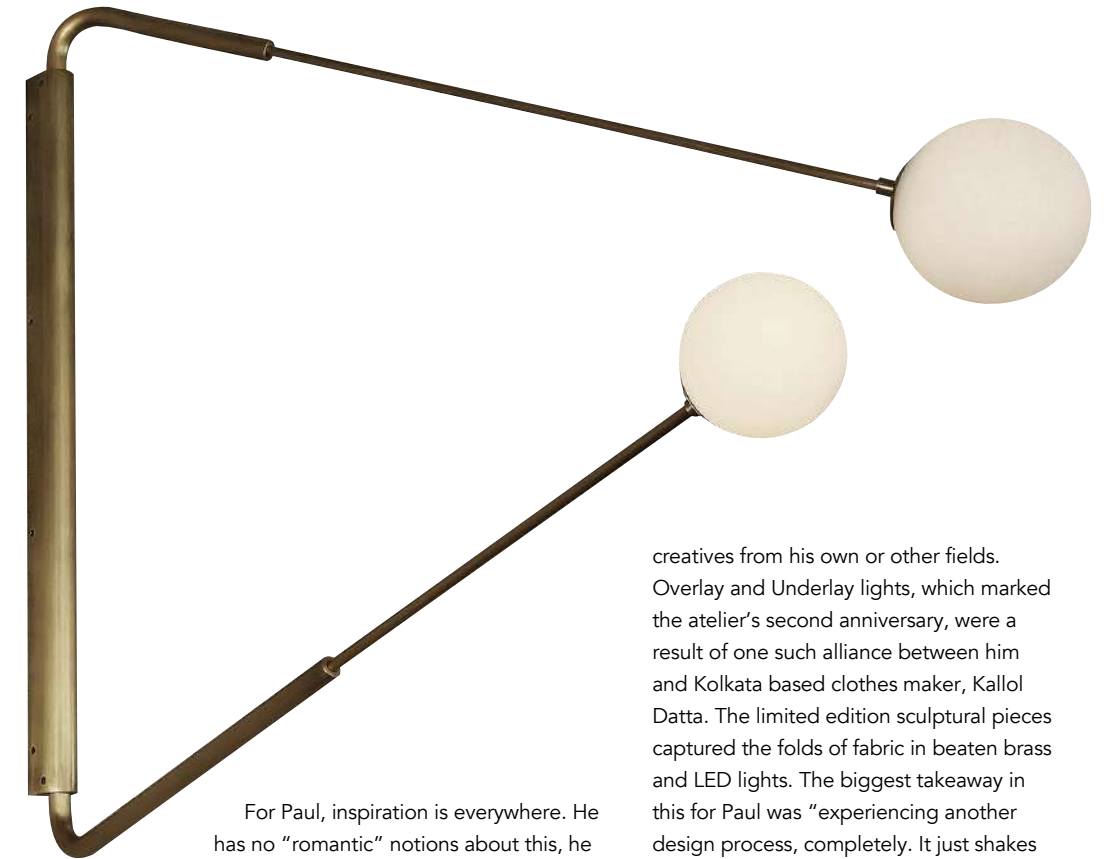




ANDREA WYNER

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It's exciting how interior designers use our lights in their spaces. Sometimes they look great and sometimes we learn.



For Paul, inspiration is everywhere. He has no “romantic” notions about this, he laughs. He recognises that being inspired is a continuous process and so, everyday observations play a key role for him. “It could come from travelling, reading a book, seeing something an artist has done or even from the paradoxes that arise in our own studio while working on a design. We may realise the object now or even two years later. It’s a constant process,” he elaborates. His upcoming Tryst chandelier, he reveals, was inspired by their learnings of intertwining and overlapping from the God and Goddess sconces, which in turn were inspired by his observations of sancha artisans on his visits to a few villages.

Unlike most designers, Paul loves to co-create. He strongly believes in the power of collaboration – be it with his team, artisans he works with or like-minded

creatives from his own or other fields. Overlay and Underlay lights, which marked the atelier’s second anniversary, were a result of one such alliance between him and Kolkata based clothes maker, Kallol Datta. The limited edition sculptural pieces captured the folds of fabric in beaten brass and LED lights. The biggest takeaway in this for Paul was “experiencing another design process, completely. It just shakes you up a bit.”

According to Paul, India is still in the nascent stages of lighting design. “It’s gaining ground as people are realising the importance of light in a space - whether it is exhibitions, shows, gallery or retail spaces or a home. They just don’t know exactly how to go about it,” explains the designer. There’s also been a rise in homeowners making conscious choices towards the fixtures they use in the home, as they recognise that it serves a higher purpose than just shedding light. This has also led to interior designers working closely with light designers. But while they may know that light is the secret ingredient to opening up a space, this young torchbearer is at the front and centre of unravelling its mysteries and illuminating the way forward.

(Facing page) Tango 5
(Above) Flutter 1