

## DESIGN &amp; DECORATING

THAT'S DEBATABLE

## Are Massive Lights the Next Big Thing?

Some designers use gigantic fixtures as functional art. Others relegate them to hotel lobbies. Here, experts illuminate both sides.

**YES** MAMMOTH modern light fixtures might evoke an alien invasion, but fans of oversize lanterns swear by their ability to soothe the puny humans below them. In the vacation home at right, Mexico City designer Olga Hanono painted the walls and double-height ceiling of the living room white, à la a Greek Island getaway. But the space, grounded by an oat and white sectional, lacked intimacy. Mrs. Hanono hired local artisans to handcraft a sisal dome 90 inches in diameter that cocoons everyone beneath. "I firmly believe we all have, inside of us, an energy," said Mrs. Hanono, "and this chandelier is like a container. Otherwise the room would be very open," and, in her view, let that energy dissipate. When lit, the woven hemisphere casts shadows that exude a "fireplace coziness," she said.

Even a low ceiling can accommodate a fixture large enough to visually balance a massive sectional. But to avoid a sensation of living morosely under heavy, dark clouds, stick to a white palette. In a room with 11-foot, white ceilings, Los Angeles interior designer Adam Hunter hung a white-plaster chandelier by Stephen Antonson, a shallow, 62-inch circle layered with subtly concave disks. The fixture gives definition to the bowling-alley-like, open-concept room. "It feels like a hug in



**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE SISAL KIND**  
A handcrafted dome 90-inches in diameter looms over a vacation-home living room designed by Mexico City's Olga Hanono.

the middle," said Mr. Hunter.

Raili Clasen, an interior designer in Newport Beach, Calif., said a recent project's high-ceilinged kitchen simply begged for the seven giant concrete bell-shaped domes she hung there. "If you have 20-foot ceilings, all your action is in the 10-foot-and-down range—furniture, countertops, appliances. The airspace gets overlooked in those circumstances." The 24- and 36-inch-wide clothes from Santa Monica's Buzzell Studios act as an art installa-

tion to animate the room's dead upper reaches.

And sometimes the middle of the ceiling is the only spot left for a wow moment. In a Napa Valley indoor-outdoor living room by San Francisco designer Nicole Hollis, ebonized cabinetry, a fireplace and glazed doors occupied every wall. So she installed a 60-inch wide amorphous fixture of coiled cotton cords by Doug Johnston. "It was a way to bring a textural, sculptural element to the space," she said.

**NO** OTHER designers prefer chandeliers that don't make such deafening statements. "Lighting should not be the first thing you see when you walk in," said Cindy Rinfret, an interior designer in Greenwich, Conn. "[Your reaction] shouldn't be 'Wow, look at the light.' It should be 'Wow, look at the entire room.'" In a library annex she recently designed, Ms. Rinfret hung a birdcage-sized candelabra lantern that maintains discreet, dip-

lomatic relations with the décor rather than stealing the show. Both the subtly striped wallpaper on the ceiling and the views through the room's windows are visible through the fixture's glass panes. While Ms. Rinfret endorses the theatricality of giant lighting in a bar, restaurant or hotel lobby, in a residence, she maintained, it should be "a supporting player."

Erin Coren of Curated Nest, also in Greenwich, Conn., notes that grand

chandeliers can steal focus from architectural details or custom furniture "that you spent a lot of money and effort in creating." Instead, Mrs. Coren layers in sconces, table lights and floor lamps along with non-monstrous chandeliers to avoid marginalizing such touches as the texture of a mohair sofa or the burl wood of a coffee table.

Some designers object to the price of massive fixtures. "A more standardized light fixture could end up costing around \$5,000, while one that is fully customized to a large scale can cost 10 times as much," Mrs. Coren said. And that's not factoring in the expense of proper installation, which may require bolstering the ceiling with supportive framing. Is it worth it to spend that much on fixtures that work best for ambience, not as a primary light source? Mrs. Clasen's concrete domes trickle "beautiful, romantic, yellow dim light," she said, but she recessed barely-there high-hats into the ceiling for utility when the homeowners are actually cooking.

Mrs. Clasen also cautions that if a design has a lot going on—upper and lower cabinets of different tones, for example—it's best to stick with fixtures that blend. "You're probably OK without all that personality [above], even in a high-ceiling situation," she said.

—Yelena Moroz Alpert

FRANK LYNNEN



Naomi Mathis

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THE ARRANGEMENT



FLOWER SCHOOL

## Rings in the New Year

Moved by a bubbly Vasily Kandinsky canvas, Lindsey Taylor whips up an ebullient bouquet

**STEPPING INTO** 2022, I decided to let an optimistic-seeming work by Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) guide my January arrangement. "Several Circles" (1926), a playful, 4½-foot-square oil on canvas, was created when the Moscow-born painter and art theorist—part of the European modernist movement—was teaching at the Bauhaus School in Germany. It's on view until Sept. 5 in a show called "Vasily Kandinsky: Around the Circle" at New York's Guggenheim Museum.

Kandinsky believed circles were a perfectly harmonious form and that each color not only activated a spiritual and emotional response but evoked a particular sound.

The vivid rounds in this work, which overlap and dance on a black background, create an otherworldly effect and, if you stop to look and "listen," a musical vibrancy.

I started with two cylindrical vessels, one matte, the other glossy, by ceramist Marité Acosta. Both sprout an array of tubular openings to hold individual stems. I nudged the vases, themselves studies in circles, together so they touched and appeared to be merging. A deep blue hyacinth, cut short and beautifully bulbous, grounded the display as the largest circle in the painting does. Yellow and pink ranunculus lent their color and abundant disc-like petals. Next came golden orbs of ilex berries, pink dahlias

both open and closed, rosehips and wispy stems of verbenona bonariensis and sanguisorba all cut to various lengths so they would visually cavort and fill in the negative space. The vases held the stems in place but also allowed them to burst out, creating a deconstructed arrangement like fireworks exploding in a night sky.

THE INSPIRATION



Ilex berries, rose hips and ranunculus, with rounded petals (top), dance in the dark like the orbs in "Several Circles" (1926) by Vasily Kandinsky.

Vessels: Stem Vessel, from \$425, [mariteacosta.com](http://mariteacosta.com)