

William Brand poses with Flintstone, the size-adjustable, 'stick and stone'-inspired floor lamp he designed with his own apartment in mind.



No two alike, Flintstone features a stone that functions as a counterweight to the lamp's branch-shaped arm.

Rock



Star

I T ' S a rather gloomy day as we travel to Brand van Egmond in Naarden, a small Dutch town just outside Amsterdam. The company's headquarters are visible a mile away, however, thanks to a galaxy of lights twinkling behind translucent curtains. Once we're inside - and have put professional interest temporarily aside - it's hard to look at anything but the gleaming chandeliers looming above. Visitors certainly won't spend much time looking at the rest of the building, which is exactly the way William Brand wants it. As owner and chief designer of Brand van Egmond, not only is he responsible for the lighting around us; he also designed the building we're in.

In fact, Brand began his career as an architect, designing interiors for fashion brands. His former work is very different from the design of eye-catching lights, though. Currently, restraint and functionality are his watchwords. 'I'm a very minimalist architect. I seek to create a contrast with a super-ornamental object that gives the entire space an identity.'

William Brand, owner and head designer of Brand van Egmond, uses ornamental lights to give identity and emotion to spaces.

WORDS Will Georgi
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Brand combined both disciplines for ten years until the success of his chandeliers enabled him to concentrate on lighting full time. Nowadays his designs shine in interiors across the world. 'We get requests from all kinds of customers for all kinds of spaces, from royal palaces, private residences and public institutes to casinos and even a cheeky gentlemen's club. Whoever it's for, I relish the challenge. My creative palette grows with every project, and practice makes perfect in terms of technique. I never have *one* idea for *one* lamp; six or seven are always floating around, ready to become a collection. I work with authentic feelings that we all share and that I attempt to translate into a product.'

Brand's hands-on managerial approach means that this process takes place in what he calls his 'laboratory', a workshop littered with welding tools, crystals and piles of metal. 'Of course I draw concepts as well - we even write them down sometimes - but once I have a concept, I hurry to the workshop to develop the sculpture by hand. This generates totally



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BRAND VAN EGMOND

Website brandvanegmond.com **Established** 1989 **Number of employees** 70-80
Location Naarden, the Netherlands **Products** Lighting (handcrafted wall lights, commissioned tailor-made installations and more) **Bestselling products** Kelp, Delphinium, Hollywood, Arthur, Sultans of Swing **Pictured** Arthur (1), Fractal (2), Kelp (3), Delphinium (4)
Core markets Germany, UK, USA, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium



Preferring welding tools over a computer screen, William Brand lends shape to his lights in a workshop that he calls his 'laboratory'.

'The power of my objects isn't in the value of precious materials, but in the shape and the sculptural emotion'

different results than those I'd get by sitting at a computer all day. If you do that, you're basically just extracting from 2D, and I'm not smart enough to carry that off. I work much faster in the workshop, cutting wire and playing with a light source and different finishes, like a sculptor.'

The fruits of his labour are on display in the showroom upstairs. The plan is for Brand to give us a tour of the entire premises, but we don't get very far, as he stops at each of his products to tell us the story behind it. The slow pace is not a problem, though, because whether he's relating how he discovered on a TV programme that will.i.am has one of his lamps or unravelling the origins of a lacy chandelier now hanging in the aforementioned gentlemen's club, Brand is engaging and passionate about his work.

'I think it's typical of Dutch design. If you compare us with Italian designers, we're storytellers, whereas Italians are led by aesthetics. That's why I think Dutch design is so successful, because we want to communicate

a story. I try to combine both elements by mixing a strong aesthetic impulse with a good story.'

These qualities run through his latest lamp, Flintstone. 'It was designed for a special client: me.' Brand chuckles self-deprecatingly. 'It's the first time I've designed something for myself. My new apartment is too small for my chandeliers; they're too big and overwhelming. But I needed light, so I designed a size-adjustable floor lamp. The concept is based on a stick and a stone, pure elements that mankind has used since we lived in caves. You can turn the branch to direct the light wherever you want, over the dining table or a chair if you want to read. Not only that, you can specify the size of the branch and choose any colour you want, as long as it's black, white or nickel.' He laughs again. Brand is not your stereotypic, somewhat standoffish CEO. He's willing to talk about anything, from politics to London pubs.

'It might sound strange, but I'm not a dictatorial designer. I believe I'm good at

listening to clients, and I work hard to make sure they're happy with what they get. I'm not going to make things I don't like myself, but I bend towards the client to find a solution that we're both happy with. This is not a search for compromise, but a journey in which we're looking for the best. I see solutions, not problems.' He turns to a chandelier behind him to illustrate his point. 'This is a nickel light I made years ago. The original was made for a Belgian architect who asked me for a golden lamp with crystal. I disliked those materials, because the power of my objects isn't in the value of precious materials but in the shape and the sculptural emotion.

I recommended another designer, but the architect was very persistent. So I concentrated on the simple essence of a chandelier, a group of candles, combined them with filigree, and placed the crystals on sticks to make them explode from the candles like fireworks. And there you have it.' Proof, as if he needed it, that when it comes to lighting, not all that glitters is gold. ✕