



Mary Wallis at UrbanGlass: Sculpting in Neon



The Agnes Varis Art Center at UrbanGlass in Fort Greene has put forth a beautifully concise exhibit focused on the role glass plays in lighting. “Illuminate: Design in Light” features nine New York-based designers, including three featured in Design Brooklyn (Mary Wallis, Bec Brittain, and Jason Miller). The designers in the show have either created glass pieces in the UrbanGlass studio or have had elements of their designs fabricated there. For Mary Wallis, UrbanGlass was where she first learned how to bend neon.

“To show here is a way of coming home,” Wallis says. “It completes the circle between their educational program and the gallery space.”

Wallis, who like Bec Brittain apprenticed with Lindsey Adelman (whose work also shines in the show), has for some time turned her attention to the special properties of neon, its unique form and illumination. She implements elegant neon tubing either on its own, in the Neon Table Lamp, or as a wraparound element juxtaposed with white glass and aluminum, in the Neon Lantern.

“My aim with neon is to take it off the wall and use it in three-dimensional space. Neon is such a pure line of light. Why not draw in 3D?” she contends.



“I like to subvert your expectation of a traditional chandelier.” Mary Wallis, “Neon Lantern,” hand-bent neon, glass, aluminum



Mary Wallis, “Neon Table Lamp,” hand-bent neon, aluminum

Both pieces in the exhibition subvert one’s notion of a traditional lamp or chandelier, yet the original forms are still very much present. By stretching the boundaries of what neon can do, Wallis fashions modern reinterpretations of classic forms. For the 2014 Milan Salone del Mobile, Wallpaper* Magazine commissioned Wallis and Suzanne Tick to create the neon piece “Entangled Light,” which will appear in the Wallpaper* Handmade show in New York in May.



Left to right: “Vise” by Bec Brittain, “Knotty Bubble Pendant” by Lindsey Adelman, “Modo Chandelier” by Jason Miller

“I think I am just beginning to explore the boundaries of neon,” says Wallis. “With each project we push further technically and aesthetically.” --DESIGN BROOKLYN