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THE PLAYTIME ISSUE

LBP 15 000 / AED 37 / QAR 37

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SPHERICAL POINTS OF LIGHT

by Sophie Grimshaw

London-based designer **Michael Anastassiades** infuses poetry into his distinctive light fixtures

“There’s nothing that remains anymore of my home or my office or my studio,” says Michael Anastassiades, gesturing around the smart central London HQ of his eponymous lighting and design brand. “It has all blended into one. It started off just me working on my own, and it grew and grew.” We’re talking in his living room, while, downstairs, his staff is packing the new collection to go to the annual furniture fair in Milan. The new work is instantly recognisable as that of Anastassiades – his clean, contemporary designs are centred on semi-opaque spheres of mouth-blown opaline glass, often set on a polished brass base. The new releases include more mounted wall lights than we’ve seen from him in the past, and extend his range of minimalist, modernist chandeliers.



Michael Anastassiades,
Portrait by H el ene Binet

Anastassiades’ premises are on a little street called Lower Marsh. Five minutes’ walk from Waterloo Station, Lower Marsh is one of London’s more esoteric

shopping streets, enjoying semi-protected status as a home to independent businesses, from a flute shop, to a fetish clothing store, to a high-end greengrocer, where the likes of Kevin Spacey and Prince Charles have been spotted. Anastassiades’ storefront bears

just his name and one or two design objects at any given time, with a discreet bell to accommodate his customers, who visit by appointment only.

A broad-shouldered, bearded Cypriot, Anastassiades studied industrial design and engineering at the Royal College of Art and Imperial College and has a determined but gentle manner. “The fact that I created the brand by myself was partly out of choice but, also, that I felt I had no choice,” he says of founding the

business in 1994. “I was feeling very frustrated as a graduate of design, because big companies want to work with established names and as a young designer it was hard to break into that inner circle... I thought, ‘I have these great ideas and I’m not going



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Mobile Chandelier 6,
photography by
H el ene Binet

below:
Wall Mounted *Tip*
of the *Tongue*

opposite page:
Mobile Chandelier 10,
photography by
Héliène Binet



to sit and wait for someone to do it all for me. I have to make these designs, whether they're commercially successful or not."

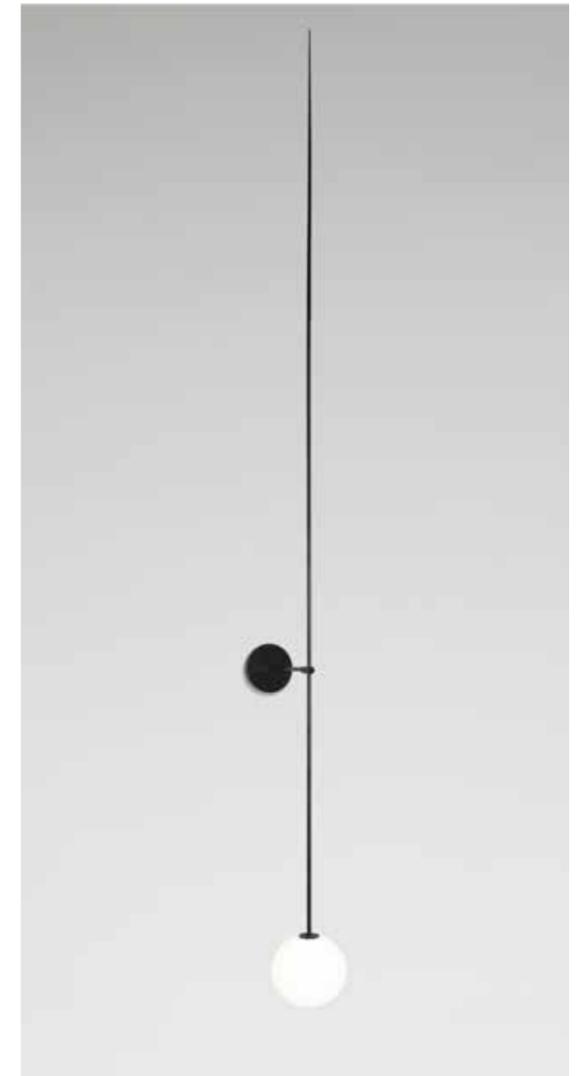
Today Anastasiades is one of the leading names in lighting, which constitutes the vast majority of his brand's output. It's fair to say that his 2013 'The Tip of the Tongue' pedestal table light became that rare thing – an instant design classic. Like a lot of memorable objects, it's deceptively simple; a perfect glass orb, perpetually seemingly about to roll off its polished brass base. He makes furniture, too, from tables to art-object-like "meditation stools" in polished marble.

"Design has to be more than finding a solution to a small problem," he says firmly. "I believe in lightning, and in design that has the potential to extend beyond the superficial practical role into a different kind of functionality, maybe an emotional functionality. It's interesting to explore the psychological relationship between the user and the object; it's almost like a form of companionship. You buy a piece of good design and it's a bit like buying a piece of art." 4

Indeed, there's seemingly much more of the restless artist than the entrepreneur to Anastasiades' drive and way of working, though his success has come from marrying the two.

He has worked with everyone from fashion designer Hussein Chalayan, a fellow Cypriot, to Swarovski, but his most frequent design collaborations are with the manufacturer Flos, which also commissions lighting by everyone from Philippe Starck to Marcel Wanders. "I first met with Flos' CEO four years ago," says Anastasiades. "For him, I was a discovery, and for me, it was an amazing connection to a company on an industrial level that has a lot of iconic pieces by design masters. And I think very few people, still, realise the power of lighting and the poetic qualities of it."

As for the future, Anastasiades will soon be expanding to new premises, in addition to the Lower Marsh HQ, as his business grows. "I don't want to be greedy," he says. "I'll carry on for as long as I have something different to say. The light fixtures that I do all revolve around the sphere, and there's repetition with that, but it's such a pure form that I feel I haven't really exhausted it yet." ■



michaelanastasiades.com