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An Understated Texas Lighting Brand Makes a Splash in Milan

Known for unobtrusive architectural illumination, San Antonio's Lucifer Lighting takes a bold yet elegant foray into decorative design.



STELLARIS

On Dundas Street in downtown Toronto, the long block between McCaul and Beverly belongs to Frank Gehry. The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) meets the south side of the street with a sinuous sweep of glass, setting the stage for the cultural and architectural showpiece within. At the front door, Gehry's signature swoops and curves continue with a wooden ramp that leads visitors into the body of the museum. Here, the striking interior architecture takes centre stage, elegantly illuminated by the discreet pin-hole fixtures that almost disappear into the ceiling. For San Antonio-based Lucifer Lighting, it fits a pattern.

Renowned for their exceptionally precise architectural lighting, the manufacturer is a global leader in versatile high-performance luminaires that eliminate glare and shadows while ensuring an optimal colour temperature — all while maintaining a rigorously sleek, minimal profile. Established in 1979, the family-owned company initially carved out a niche in lighting for high-end retailers and department stores, though the portfolio has since evolved to encompass spaces ranging from cultural hubs like San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and London's Museum of Natural History, to offices, hotels and hospitality settings around the world, including legendary Manhattan restaurant Eleven Madison Park. As at the AGO, the all-but invisible fixtures quietly elevate the beauty of their surroundings. At this year's Euroluce, however, Lucifer Lighting debuted a sculptural statement piece.



A trio of Stellaris lights (installed as both pendants and surface mounts) were debuted at Salone del Mobile's Euroluce ahead of a September launch.

A striking decorative fixture, Stellaris is a lithe yet unapologetically eye-catching design object. Designed in collaboration with Gensler's New York-based product development team, the delicately rounded luminaire deftly harnesses its organic form to conceal its sophisticated inner mechanics. Featuring three independent light sources — which can all be individually controlled — Stellaris is engineered to provide both volumetric and directional illumination. According to Lucifer Lighting's Roselyn Mathews, the design expression emerged from an aspiration for versatile functionality. "We found the concept provocative that one luminaire could both deliver task lighting, while also offering ambient illumination," says Mathews.



To ensure even light distribution across the undulating profile, Stellaris utilizes a bespoke version of acrylic glass — a unique formulation of synthetic polymer PMMA — patented by Lucifer Lighting. “We are fascinated with this ‘waveguide’ material that transmits and absorbs light, and can be both transparent and opaque depending on whether it has been illuminated,” says Mathews. Imbuing a subtle theatricality to a flip of the switch, the delicately rounded membrane appears transparent when turned off yet turns opaque when lit.



Lucifer Lighting's patented "waveguide" ensure exceptionally even luminosity across the rounded membrane.

Stellaris represents the company's second foray into decorative lighting, building on the design language, PMMA "waveguide" innovation and dual light source configuration previously established by the 25-centimetre Stellr ceiling lights. For Lucifer Lighting, it all entails a significant evolution. "We are experts at making things hidden, which is to a degree at odds with designing a decorative luminaire meant to be seen," Mathews explains.



Stellr.

While the striking Stellaris is a seeming departure from Lucifer Lighting's minimalist heritage, the expressive design nonetheless retains a judiciously pared-down and rational character. As Mathews puts it, form still follows function. "In our school of thought, if something is visible, it must be for a reason that aids the function of the fixture," she explains. And Stellaris is no exception. The luminaire's sculptural quality draws from the same well of functionalist design principles that have defined the brand for 46 years. After all, evolution is a product of history.