

WESTERN ART & Architecture

From Cowboy to Contemporary

Momentum: Painter Ron Hicks
At Home with Glenna Goodacre
Nature's Architecture: Patrick Dougherty

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The Bauhaus: Reflecting on 100 Years of Influence

Perspective: Renaissance Man Jo Mora [1876–1947]

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THE ART OF LIGHTING

Levi Wilson and Bill Shott are the creative and business visionaries behind Hammerton in Salt Lake City, Utah

WRITTEN BY Eliza Cross

Fresh out of college, Levi Wilson decided to drive up the West Coast in his van. The trip would be a chance to unwind and see some sights before he settled down to adult life.

He had grown up around his dad's ornamental iron fabrication shop, so when he pulled up to the historic Timberline Lodge in Mount Hood, Oregon, his eye was naturally drawn to the retreat's hand-forged metalwork. He had already traveled extensively around Europe while studying architecture and ornamental ironwork in college, photographing metalwork details in countries like the Czech Republic, Austria, France, and Germany. But the ironwork he saw when he pulled the van off the road in Oregon was decidedly different.

"The Timberline Lodge was built in 1937, during the Depression era," he says. "The craftsmen didn't have

extensive equipment or expertise, so their designs were more rustic. I really enjoyed seeing the contrast between the American Old West aesthetic verses the more elegant European style."

Little did he know that these visits would have a lasting impact on his future career as the founder and vice president of design at Hammerton, a lighting manufacturing company.

After returning to Utah, Wilson joined his friend's fledgling business, fabricating custom car bumpers and SUV roof racks out of a garage. "Six months in, we realized it was a terrible business model," Wilson says. "The potential for liability was constant, and every car was different, so we couldn't scale any of the designs."

Some of their clients began asking for more specific items, like wrought iron railings and fireplace screens, so, in 1995, Wilson and his



Opposite page, from top: With lines that reference the room's vertical windows, a custom Hammerton chandelier of hammered steel and artisan kiln-fused glass casts a warm glow in a Jackson Hole, Wyoming, home. | A Craftsman-inspired chandelier of finely woven mesh and mica hangs in the home's stairwell. Photos: Karl Neumann Photography **This page, clockwise from top left:** Modified to nearly twice the standard size, a box-style, linear fixture from Hammerton Contemporary illuminates a kitchen island in a modern Seattle, Washington, home. | A drum fixture from the Hammerton Studio Tempest collection is handcrafted in layered bands of 12-gauge steel. | Decorative fixtures in blown glass and fine mesh add textural interest to the great room of a modern farmhouse in Northern California. | A pair of ring chandeliers in a California home are made of kiln-fused glass from Hammerton Studio's Parallel collection.



This page, clockwise from top: A Tahoe lakefront estate features glass and steel fixtures in an Old World style from Hammerton's Chateau collection. Outdoor mounts with clear seeded glass illuminate a pathway leading to the home. | The entry chandelier has an onyx acrylic dome and blackened steel finish, and the front door is flanked by wall sconces with ivory candle covers. | A chandelier lights the kitchen island, and a trio of lighting pendants over the breakfast bar feature blackened steel and mica light diffusers. **Opposite page:** A blackened steel chandelier with frosted glass shades of varying heights creates an artistic statement in the home's stairwell.

partner at the time created a small catalog of accessories and named the company Mountain Moose Design.

When interior designers began requesting rustic, hand-forged fixtures to embellish the log homes being built in the mountains around Salt Lake City, Wilson pulled out his images from Europe and Mount Hood and started designing. He later renamed the company Hammerton. "The hammer is the common tool that every craftsman uses, and it speaks to the heritage of metalworking," he explains.

A number of significant design trends emerged after Wilson started his business in the mountain resort market. "A European influence brought a shift to more stonework in high country homes, so we developed our Chateau line," he says. "Then, we saw a renewed interest in the Arts and Crafts style and created our Craftsman collection. Around 2000, we started seeing more of a contemporary influence and began selling more of our modern designs in urban areas."

As the business grew, Wilson's role expanded. "I wore every hat in the early years, and sometimes found myself being both a fabricator and janitor in the same day," he says. "What I really longed to do was spend more of my time designing and strategizing."

Meanwhile, a seasoned Silicon Valley executive named Bill Shott was looking for a new opportunity. After 25 years in the tech industry, founding and managing two venture-backed software companies, Shott wanted to invest in a U.S.-based manufacturing company. "I build furniture in my spare time and have my own woodshop at home, so a company in the home furnishings industry was especially appealing to me," he says. "When I met with Levi, Hammerton felt like a natural fit."

Shott became Hammerton's president in 2005, providing the business expertise to grow the company so that Wilson could focus on design. Today, Hammerton has more than 100 employees working out of a 50,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Salt Lake City. "We're all under one roof, and I'm out in the shop daily," Shott says. "I know the names of all the employees and appreciate their abilities and everything they do. We're also in direct touch with our customers through our inside sales force, so we stay very close to the market."

Every Tuesday, the design team has a product development meeting. "One of the key things that is different about Hammerton from a lot of other companies is we are more of a design company that happens to manufacture lighting," Shott says. "We don't outsource design; it's an evolutionary organic process that's the result of our team meetings. We're constantly innovating and conceptualizing new products and developing prototypes."

The company's individual collections feature hand-crafted fixtures like chandeliers, pendants, sconces, flush mounts, and outdoor lighting, along with such home accessories as mirrors and fireplace screens. Hammerton is the company's luxury, made-to-order custom line, sold primarily through high-end residential designers. And Hammerton Studio offers a more affordable price point and is sold mainly through lighting showrooms. "Many of our Hammerton Studio designs, including all of our glass designs, were inspired by custom Hammerton work we've done for leading interior designers over the years," Shott says.





Clockwise from top: Adding volume to a spacious living area, the 60-inch Nested Ring chandelier from Hammerton Contemporary features custom ribbed glass and a flat bronze finish. | Just inside the entry, a fixture from Hammerton's Fusion collection features blown glass cylinders enclosed by a geometric cage in a bronze finish. | The bold dining chandelier in kiln-fused glass was custom-designed exclusively for this project. Photos: Sargent Schutt Photography

Suspended from the vaulted ceiling of a Northern California home, the Parallel Multi-Port Chandelier, with kiln-fused glass, illuminates a large kitchen island.

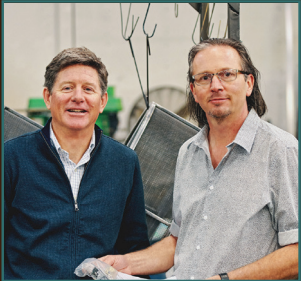
As design styles have moved in a more modern direction, lighting materials and bulbs have also changed and evolved. “The integrated LED has revolutionized the lighting industry,” Wilson says. “The technology has allowed designers to develop exciting new forms and different ways to illuminate shapes.”

Wilson has come a long way from the days of road tripping in his van, but he still feels a thrill when something sparks his imagination. “I get to work with some of the best interior designers in the entire country,” Wilson says. “They are always challenging me to come up with new and creative ways of doing something different.” ■

Eliza Cross is a senior contributing editor for *Western Art & Architecture* and the author of 15 books, including the award-winning *Family Home of the New West* (Cooper Square Publishing). She has written hundreds of articles for a variety of national and regional publications; elizacross.com.

WA & A wants to know:

Hammerton partners Levi Wilson and Bill Shott share an insider's perspective on high-quality lighting...



Bill Shott (left) and Levi Wilson

Authentic Materials

If possible, examine the fixture in person. The materials should feel solid in weight and thickness, and they should be utilized in proportion to the style and size of the fixture.

Meticulous Fit and Finish

How does the piece look when you get close to it? Examine the welds and how the seams are finished; the metal should look like one continuous piece instead of two sections joined together.

Custom Options

A bespoke fixture allows you to have a one-of-a-kind piece designed and fabricated to your exact specifications of size, glass, finish, and style.

Enduring Design

Look for sculptural designs with clean lines and a timeless aesthetic that won't go out of style.

Heirloom Craftsmanship

The ultimate definition of quality is that something is made so well that it lasts a lifetime and beyond. It's designed and built in such a way that people want to keep it or pass it on to the next generation.