

New England HOME

Connecticut

Celebrating Fine Design,
Architecture, and Building

Delightful Diversity

The perfect touches of
this and that combine for
chic, easygoing looks



Fall 2015

\$5.95US \$6.95CAN

53 >



Display until January 18, 2016
NEHOMEMAG.COM

IN OUR BACKYARD



Living by His Own Lights

A designer who saw gaps in the lighting market has filled them with elegance and style.

//////////
BY MARIA LAPIANA

LEFT: This modern box lantern from CL Sterling's Tiverton exterior lighting collection was designed for both form and function. It comes in brushed nickel, brushed brass, and dark bronze finishes. BELOW, LEFT: The Lancaster sconce from the Archer collection is simple and versatile. BELOW, RIGHT: A detail from the Six Arm Silvered Glass Chandelier.

Carlson's frustration, and together they decided to design and fabricate the kind of lighting that was missing: architectural, unadulterated, and well crafted, of only the finest materials.

Carlson launched CL Sterling & Son out of a barn behind his house, but soon outgrew the space. He moved the operation to Niantic, where it remains today. The company is small (Carlson, the CEO and sole designer, has seven employees), but it's successful by any standard. CL Sterling supplies lighting internationally for discriminating, upscale clients—99.9 percent of them architects and designers—and has showrooms in several major U.S. cities as well as in Canada, Asia, and Australia.

The manufacturing process proved challenging, initially. Carlson reached out to regional factories, only to be told the work would be outsourced to China. "I was not interested in that option," he says.

He found his solution in an unlikely place: a small town on the coast of Portugal. There, he connected with two family-run companies whose owners understood his sensibility.

CL Sterling offers fifteen collections, from chandeliers to exterior path lights. All components are cast in brass and welded together with silver solder. They're then plated in a variety of finishes.

Peter Carlson saw the light in 2001, precisely because he didn't.

At the time, he was working as an interior designer, having recently moved from Los Angeles to Lyme with his then-wife and young son. He had plenty of business, working with "very nice clients," but time and again found himself stymied by lighting—or rather, the dearth of it.

"I was frequently frustrated by the lack of simple, practical, well-made light fixtures," he remembers. "There are many situations where you need a light—not an event or a song and dance—so I found myself designing fixtures for common applications."

One particular client understood



IN OUR BACKYARD

RIGHT: The Arts & Crafts-inspired Hadley table lamp. FAR RIGHT: The Rock Crystal Hanging Bowl is made from recycled glass. FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: The Round Upright Hanging Sconce from the Brockway collection. TOP RIGHT: Clear cast glass and mercury glass go into the Braga table lamp. BOTTOM: A Six Arm Silvered Glass Chandelier on display at a trade show in Paris.



"The simplest shapes are difficult to produce because they must be precisely fabricated, and any flaw would be glaring," says Carlson.

Carlson says he "works with fundamentals," that his fixtures aren't "a reproduction of anything." That his products have a clean, unfussy look belies the challenge of manufacturing them. "The simplest shapes are difficult to produce because they must be precisely fabricated, and any flaw would be glaring," he explains.

New to Sterling is the Rock Crystal collection, which is in fact made of recycled glass. "This is a case of inspiration from refuse," Carlson says. He reclaims the glass that drips to the bottom of kilns, tumbles it in sand to ease

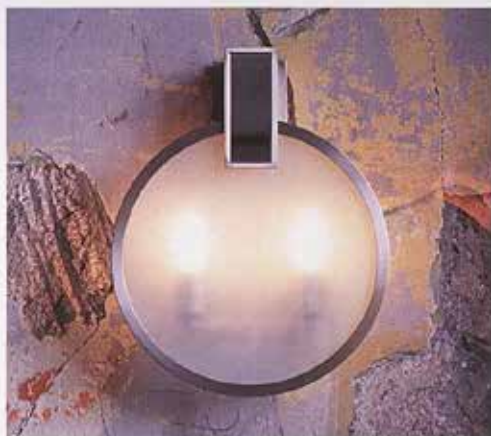
the sharp edges, then hand-wires the nuggets to silver-plated glass forms to create fixtures that glow with refracted light. Rock Crystal has proved to be one of the company's most popular offerings. "It is perhaps a cliché," says Carlson, "but I firmly believe that less is generally more and



that, on balance, simplicity is elegance."

While Carlson is the creative force behind his company, he values input from his staff. "Although I think I'm pretty good at this, it's possible to come up with some bad ideas, and the people I work with keep me honest in that regard," he confesses.

At sixty-one, Carlson says he continues to look forward to working with new



to see his own name in lights tells the story: "As an interior designer, I never cared to specify furnishings or fixtures named for other designers. It just seemed wrong, like a kind of competition."

Still, he knew he had to call his new company something. Around the time he was pondering this, he was also conducting research on the antique house he'd bought, and found that a man named Sterling had once lived there. Sterling. He liked it. Not long after, while sorting through some of his own family's vintage papers, he discovered he



had a relative by the name of Charlotte Lavinia Sterling. CL Sterling. Even better. Kismet? Perhaps. In any case, it was, to Carlson's mind, not unlike his work—simple, elegant, and quite perfect. •

materials and combining things in different ways. "I love designing lights. I love seeing what you can do with the quality of light, how you can change it, through the vessel," he says. So who is this CL Sterling? The man who never wanted

CL STERLING & SON
Niantic
(860) 739-2720
clsterling.com