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DESIGN LEGENDS





# GABRIELE CHIAVE

By Jen Woo

At a time when many members of the global design community pride themselves on becoming experts in specific disciplines, Gabriele Chiave—the creative director overseeing product design, interior design, and art direction at Marcel Wanders studio—is a devoted generalist. A perpetual student, Chiave feeds his inquisitive nature by studying culture, materials, and processes, and by tapping into the “irrational, uncontrolled, and emotional sides” of people with the goal of expanding the human experience through design.

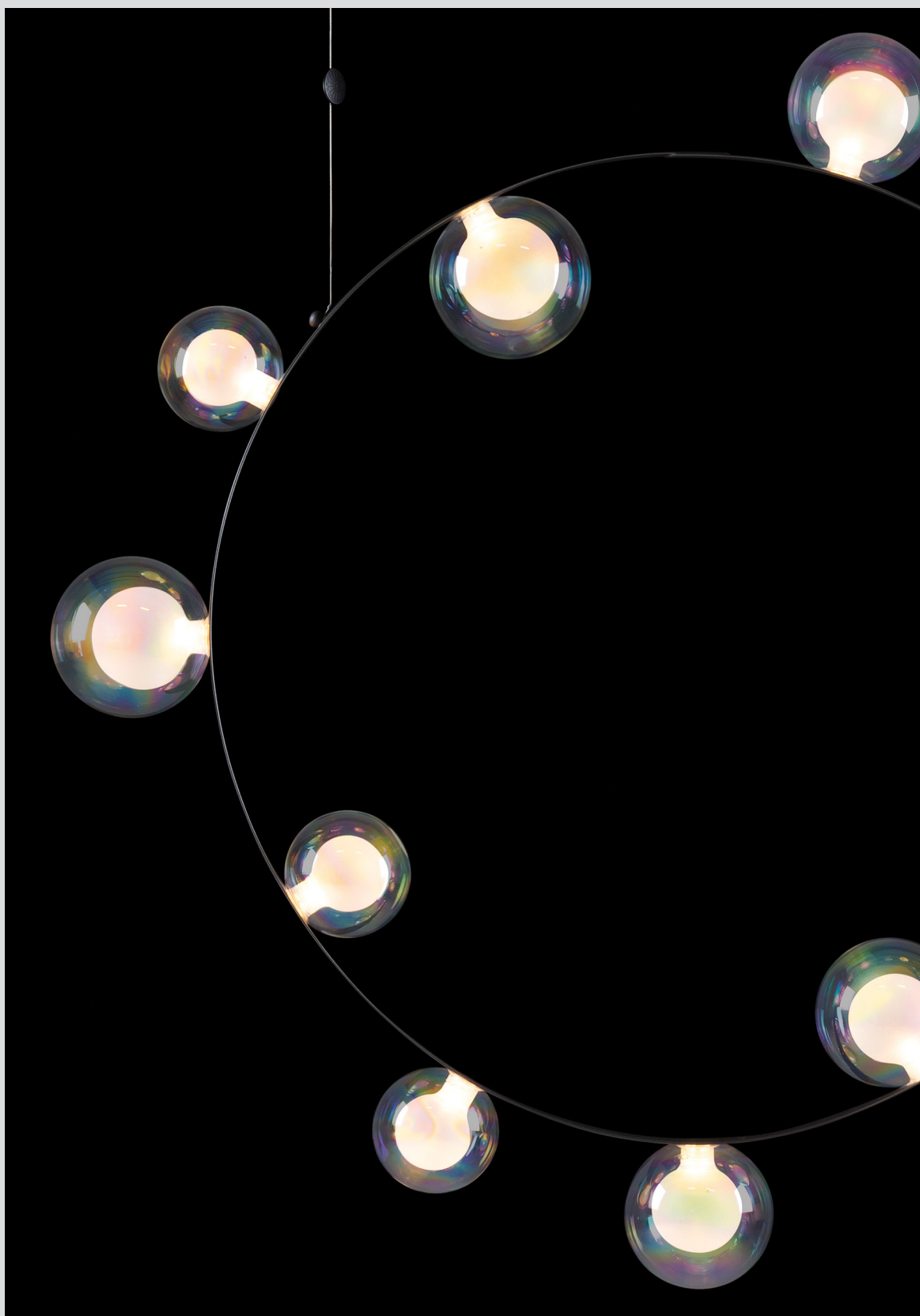
His design process involves setting the stage for consumers to experience the poetry and emotion behind the functionality of the studio’s designs and allowing these users to explore the many wonders of

the world, from natural phenomena and historical events. With the Hubble Bubble lamp he designed for sister company Moooi, for example, he invites users to relive the childhood joy of blowing bubbles. Every project is driven by finding connections (with people, history, art, and nature) and evoking emotions, which for Chiave, is the ultimate goal. “A chair needs four legs to stand, but you don’t buy a chair for the four legs,” he says. “You buy it because you fall in love with it.”

With Chiave at the helm for the past 14 years, the Marcel Wanders studio has also become known for integrating technology (often hidden) into its products to realize its designers’ poetic visions. Innovations include Moooi’s proprietary Electro-

sandwich technology, which allows for fixtures without internal wires; the Button, a small, round, device that attaches to any product, giving retailers and consumers the ability to check authenticity with a quick scan; and a printed wallpaper that looks like dimensional, carved marble. According to Chiave, April 2022 will mark the debut of the studio’s “most exciting” Salone del Mobile presentation yet. There, Marcel Wanders studio will introduce new products from more than a dozen clients.

Lately, Chiave has been considering the best means of conveying a message. “Designing is communicating,” he says. “Instead of words, we use materials, colors, and shapes like ingredients in a recipe that you have to calibrate [to] achieve a certain reaction.” In addition to designing products, he also orchestrates photography, branding, advertising, and (for some clients) store design and display to tell the story of each product as it travels from sketchpad to retail shelves. His process demonstrates the multidimensional nature of a designer’s work today. “A product travels from your hand around the world,” he says. “If you just design it and send it out, there is only half of what you meant.” ✱



**ABOVE:** The Hubble Bubble suspension lamp, designed by Marcel Wanders studio for Moooi in 2020, evokes the freedom of blowing bubbles and running barefoot in the open air. **OPPOSITE:** AQ Meliority Cream Baccarat Edition crystal jar and resin spatula designed by Marcel Wanders studio for Decorté in 2021.