

MB&F M.A.D.Gallery Introduces Nebula Hive, a Celestial Light Fixture by Kinetic Artist and INK Co-founder Ivan Black

British sculpture artist Ivan Black has a deep-rooted passion for kinetics and a talent for turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. This gift is perfectly illustrated in Nebula Hive, a 1 m high x 0.75 m wide luminous vortex of kinetic energy that slowly transforms into countless celestial forms, captivating the observer with each twist and turn: this is a traditional chandelier for the 21st century.

The M.A.D.Gallery is honoured to present in exclusivity a Nebula Hive limited collection of 18 hand-polished and nickel-plated pieces, created by Ivan Black through his lighting sculpture brand INK. Between the motion of this spiralling work of art and the light emanating from it, it's very difficult to resist its allure.

Nebula Hive

At first glance, Nebula Hive's design and cutting-edge lighting commands attention: its luminous qualities fill its surroundings with an untouchable aura. Pushing past the scope of pure illumination, Black uses the power of mathematics and inspiration from naturally occurring shapes to create a twirling masterpiece of light, art, and motion.

Black's minimalistic style is illustrated in his work. "I'm always looking to put the movement of the work front and centre. I'm fascinated by natural geometry, the mathematics that underpin and define the natural world; spirals and fractals exist everywhere in nature, these geometric archetypes have inspired and informed my ideas for patterns of form and motion," he explains.

Nebula Hive has an integrated motor that initiates a burst of power, setting the chain mechanism in motion. Imagine the chain mechanism as a spine positioned at the core of the kinetic sculpture and consisting of connected components – or vertebrae – that govern a succession of seductive movements. The energy vacillates through the centre, smoothly guiding a playful and hypnotic performance with illuminated and outstretched brass arms, even when the motor is off. As the mechanical energy dissipates, Nebula Hive continues to morph into shapes reminiscent of a double helix or a distant celestial orb before settling back into its lustrous original state.

Another dimension of Nebula Hive emerges at nightfall when the layered structure recedes into darkness while the glowing lights perform a spectacle as if it were a distant elliptical galaxy of stars. Whether day or night, moving or immobile, Nebula Hive infiltrates the mind's eye, stimulating the imagination with its dynamism.

For the tech savvy living in a connected home, Nebula Hive connects to a proprietary iOS app to control luminosity, speed, direction, and patterns of rotation with the swipe of a finger. Need to establish a window of time for it to operate independently? No problem: the app is also equipped with a programme-setting function.

Architecture

Nebula Hive is a labour of love. In seeking excellence, it underwent countless hours of research and testing, especially as Black designed the electrical component within the chain mechanism

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and identified LEDs possessing the ideal combination of brightness, colour temperature, and wide-viewing angle.

“The addition of light to my kinetic sculptures opened up new dimensions of artistic expression, but also new challenges in design and construction,” says Black. “I had to learn about electronics and research a range of new techniques and materials to bring the ideas to life.”

This work of art contains more than 2,000 bespoke components either handmade by Black or sourced from trusted, local British craftspeople and artisans. Each component is machined from solid brass and then impeccably hand-polished and nickel-plated prior to assembly. Additionally, every LED is carefully encapsulated in a clear acrylic sphere.

Black takes pride in finding quality materials sourced locally in Britain. “I have personally selected and designed every component of Nebula Hive, from stock components to its many bespoke parts. We work with a wonderful team of British manufacturers, from mechanical engineers to metal polishers, to achieve the high level of finish required.”

A wide range of tools and machinery are used throughout the construction process, although Black and his team use the most versatile of tools – their hands – along with a range of grips, pliers, crimps, and soldering tools for wiring the fixture. From start to finish, the construction takes approximately 12 weeks, mostly due to the time-consuming process of hand-assembling the kinetic work.

Background

Established in 2016 by Ivan Black, an artisan with almost two decades of experience in constructing kinetic objects, INK is a British design studio merging art, design, and technology to create interactive kinetic lights. Located on the most south-western tip of Wales along the famed Pembrokeshire coast, the studio is a fully functional workshop equipped with a wide range of tools and machinery, and possessing vaulted ceilings ideal for displaying and testing suspended kinetic sculptures.

At an early age, the careers of Black’s parents had an impact on his own future. His mother, working as a kinetic artist, introduced him to the beauty of moving forms, while his father ran a Persian carpet business in London, teaching him the precision that went into the creation of those pieces. Black emerged from childhood with a fascination for repeating patterns and a strong sense of the dedication and skill that was required to bring works of high quality into the world. He also travelled extensively across Asia and India, absorbing local art and making many of his own pieces along the way before returning to London to formally begin his career.

“I have always loved working with my hands and showed an affinity for craft skills from an early age. I first became interested in making sculptures in my early teens and almost immediately began to incorporate moving elements; as an inherent problem solver I took pleasure in setting myself challenges,” Black divulges.

Black’s kinetic works have been exhibited in galleries and sculpture parks around the world from the Peggy Guggenheim Museum and Cass Foundation to Flowers East, Interart Sculpture Park, and Palmyra Sculpture Centre. They have also found homes in private collections.

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