



Words **Nonie Niesewand**

## Charge of the light brigade

It's taken just four years for the brilliant chandelier makers Windfall to be thrust under the design world's spotlight

A great glacial fall of Swarovski crystals, lit from above and skimpily covered in sheer pink organza, is a crazy idea for a chandelier. Yet 'Scarlett' (after the heroine of *Gone With The Wind*), by Munich-based chandelier makers Windfall, exhibits just the kind of audacity that has propelled their chandeliers onto centre stage in huge projects all over the world.

Windfall lighting is one of the truly great commissions in Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5. Peter Younie of Cameron Peters Fine Lighting, who can take credit for commissioning them, says: 'Something happens when you switch on their lights. Their work has a magical effect. It pings through the eyeballs straight through to the heart.'

The two founders of Windfall, Roel Haagmans and Clarissa Dorn, met

just four years ago when they both worked for traditional craft-based companies: Clarissa in mosaics and Roel making chandeliers. Sharing the same vision to break out of the classical mould, they came together to make artistic installations rather than replicas of a bygone era.

'Our inspiration comes mainly from water, light, the weather, the skyline at night as you make the approach in a plane,' says Roel. 'And we use ornamentation from different cultures like Arabic florals and geometrics, too.' They also explore new materials, like laser-cut stainless steel and silicone, on their innovative forms. The sparkle of Swarovski Strass crystals is a source that allows them to get the lightness they seek.

Not since seventeenth-century baroque has there been such a role for chandeliers to light up vast

public spaces – Windfall designed the biggest chandelier in the world for a mosque in Abu Dhabi. Nor has there been so much attention from celebrity architects who used to like their lights low-profile, low-voltage and preferably hidden in the ceiling: David Chipperfield commissioned the couple to design a great helix of pendant crystals swirling across the ceiling of Rena Lange's couture shop in Germany, and SSH architects liked their meteoric 'Hellbobs' spinning in space so much that they bought a galaxy for a designer client in London. Now they have massive international projects, working with Las Vegas-based designer Paul Steelman on lights for casinos, and lightening up Cartier shops around the world. All in just four short years. [Windfall \(+49 89 28 80 79 20; windfall-gmbh.com\)](http://Windfall (+49 89 28 80 79 20; windfall-gmbh.com))

### Profile

**Who** Clarissa Dorn and Roel Haagmans

**Born** 1960 and 1965 respectively

**Studied** Munich University, Germany; Groningen University, Netherlands

**Career highlight** Their Terminal 5 commission at London's Heathrow



**above from top** The Hellbobs chandeliers, made with Swarovski Strass and available in 13 colours; a helix of pendant crystals for David Chipperfield; the couple's radical Scarlett design

Craft