

how to spend it

Mirrored art

Artist-designed mirrors run the gamut from poetically beautiful to conceptually intriguing, says Lucia van der Post



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Mirrors have always been a wonderful way of adding instant glamour to an interior. Anyone familiar with the work of the great early-20th-century interior designer Elsie de Wolfe will recall her penchant for conjuring up old-style Hollywood elegance and mirrors were central to her repertoire. There is nothing like them for creating a sense of light, space and, yes, sumptuousness. Mirrors can also, of course, add contemporary allure – at Kit Kemp’s Ham Yard Hotel, in London’s Piccadilly, mirrored glass is set into vast marble window frames from India. And while traditionalists may turn to classic Venetian mirrors as their surefire route to adding magic, there are many more innovative options too, as inspired artists and designers turn mirrored glass into captivating works of art.

“Mirrors can bring a feminine, poetic and even witty touch to a home,” says Rabih Hage, who

has been commissioning pieces by ceramicist and glass artist Véronique Rivemale for his interiors for nearly a decade. Indeed, I first saw Rivemale's distinctive work (€8,000) in a house designed by Hage – in the cloakroom was an enchanting circular mirror, beautifully embellished with a frame of white flowers and leaves. Her work is also much loved by cult architect Peter Marino, who has incorporated her pieces into several Dior boutiques around the world. Rivemale can be commissioned directly through Hage or through Galerie Mougín in Paris; her mirrors start at €6,000.

More conceptual are the mirrors by Cuban artist Jorge Pardo, who has held exhibitions at some of the world's most prestigious galleries and whose pieces reside in some of our greatest museums (Tate Modern and MoMA among them). Pardo fuses traditional craftsmanship with computer technology. Last October, his *Meretricious* exhibition at the David Gill Gallery included a series of 14 imposing oval mirrors (£84,000 each) framed within a constellation of swirling, concentric patterns, cut on a CNC router, that represent a cross-section of the skulls of four critics Pardo admires (including the curator and art historian Hans-Ulrich Obrist), their abstract nature amplifying the natural irregularities of the skulls.

British sculptor Sam Orlando Miller's fascination for mirrors stems partly from his family's silversmith business. "The skill of working with silver is the understanding of reflection," he tells me. "When you make an object in silver, you need to know how it captures the world around it." He made his first mirrored piece to infuse light and bring animation into a rather dark space in his home in Italy and has since developed pieces that are collected around the world. Currently at Gallery Fumi is Miller's *Cascata d'Acqua* (from £14,400) – string-like slivers of coloured mirror hung vertically to echo water running down a wall. Just as beautiful are the elliptical mirrors in his *Untitled* series (from £18,000), constructed out of patinated shards of mirrored glass in pink, green, obsidian silver and amber. "Miller's *Untitled* pieces have an antique quality," says Sam Pratt of Gallery Fumi, "and their faceted forms are reminiscent of jewels, the surfaces cut to expose an internal order and beauty."

Marianna Kennedy's use of colour is just as compelling. She works out of a small atelier in London's Spitalfields and her mirrors (price on request) – either one-of-a-kind or in a limited edition of two – can take up to a year to make. The circular *Fetters of Gold* series (price on request), for example, features glass tinted shades of candy pink, bright blue, even black, set within handcarved cherrywood frames of twigs and flower buds painted gold, silver or black. (The black version, *Fetters of Gold Noir*, is a singularly atmospheric piece, inspired by Yves Saint Laurent, Jeff Koons and Irish designer Eileen Gray). Kennedy sells through Galerie Chastel-Maréchal in Paris, but interested buyers in London are welcome, by appointment, to visit her Spitalfields atelier.

At Vessel Gallery in London, Suffolk-based Laura Hart creates charming mirror-glass art using traditional techniques allied with state-of-the-art 3D computer software. She loves the natural world and often takes flowers – lilies, poppies or orchids – and butterflies as inspiration (though past works have included an 8m-high mirror-tiled skull for Kylie Minogue's 2008 world tour). She uses backlighting to illuminate the fine details of petals, which are fired multiple times to incorporate the many hand-cut fragments of glass. At the time of writing, the gallery has a circular mirror (£7,900) featuring backlit glass orchids on a delicate iron branch (Hart also works to commission). More lyrical still – and exceptionally striking – is Vessel Gallery's *Celestial* mirror (£3,500) by Jacomb & Rutecki Design, in which glass birds in a rainbow of colours swoop across an inky-blue sky.

One of the most poetically beautiful mirrors I have come across is by renowned Australian artist Rosslynd Piggott. She fell in love with the decorative possibilities of engraving glass sheets while

doing a residency at the Berengo studio in Murano, Venice, and started working with Onvaro e Fuga, an established mirror-making workshop, as well as engraver Maurizio Vidal, to develop her ideas. Taking discarded glass fragments found at the Berengo furnace, she created mirrors (from \$30,000) that explore the fragile beauty of flowers, inspired by her travels through Japan, Australia and Italy – all one-of-a-kind, all beautiful. Her work is shown at Melbourne's Sutton Gallery.

Mint Gallery has long specialised in enterprising design and here you'll find mirrors that challenge the notion of what mirrors are supposed to do. Seeing Glass (£3,500) by Sabine Marcelis is an irregular oval with a strange reflective surface made using a complicated process involving sandblasting, UV bonding and colour overlays to create something unexpected. The quirky Fossil mirror (£1,600) by Massimiliano Adami is part mirror, part sculpture, incorporating found objects set into polyurethane foam and acrylic glass, while the Jigsaw (£1,950) from BD Barcelona consists of seven square mirrors of different sizes that can be installed vertically or horizontally to reflect aspects of the surrounding space. For something less overtly strange but just as interesting there is the Convex mirror (from £1,200) from Zieta consisting of highly polished stainless steel that has been inflated to give it a convex shape.

BD Barcelona, www.bdbarcelona.com and see Mint Gallery. **David Gill Gallery**, 2-4 King Street, London SW1 (020-3195 6600; www.davidgillgallery.com). **Galerie Chastel-Maréchal**, 5 Rue Bonaparte, Paris 75006 (+331-4046 8261; www.chastel-marechal.com). **Galerie Mougín**, 22-30 Rue de Lille, Paris 75007 (+331-4020 0833; www.galeriemougin.com). **Gallery Fumi**, 16 Hoxton Square, London N1 (020-7490 2366; www.galleryfumi.com). **Jacomb & Rutecki Design**, www.lukejacomb.com and see Vessel Gallery. **Jorge Pardo**, www.jorgepardosculpture.com and see David Gill Gallery. **Laura Hart**, www.hartglass.com and see Vessel Gallery. **Marianna Kennedy**, www.mariannakennedy.com and see Galerie Chastel-Maréchal. **Massimiliano Adami**, www.massimiliano.it and see Mint Gallery. **Mint Gallery**, 2 North Terrace, London SW3 (020-7225 2228; www.mintshop.co.uk). **Rabih Hage**, 24 Brook's Mews, London W1 (020-7823 8288; www.rabih-hage.com). **Rosslynd Piggott**, www.rosslyndpiggott.com and see Sutton Gallery. **Sabine Marcelis**, www.sabinemarcelis.com and see Mint Gallery. **Sam Orlando Miller**, www.samorlandomiller.co.uk and see Gallery Fumi. **Sutton Gallery**, 254 Brunswick Street, Melbourne 3065 (+613-9416 0727; www.suttongallery.com). **Véronique Rivemale**, see Galerie Mougín and Rabih Hage. **Vessel Gallery**, 114 Kensington Park Road, London W11 (020-7727 8001; www.vesselgallery.com). **Zieta**, www.zieta.pl and see Mint Gallery.

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