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# MEETING *OF THE* MINDS

THE PROLIFIC DESIGN TEAM BEHIND CHICAGO'S LAKE + WELLS  
CREATES LIGHTING AND PRODUCTS WITH A TIMELESS PRESENCE.

WRITTEN BY TARYN BICKLEY / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JORGE GERA



Lighting designers Mark Kinsley and Tamera Leigh Staten (right) launched their company, Lake + Wells, with the Oona lamp, which contains an Edison-style lightbulb (above). The company's logo can be seen stamped on their pieces (top). The duo takes different creative approaches when designing their many offerings (opposite).



*"WHILE I CREATE AND DEVELOP PRODUCTS, IT'S TAMERA'S STORYTELLING AND ARTISTIC SOUL THAT GIVES THEM DEPTH, COLOR AND RICHNESS."*

-MARK KINSLEY

Mark Kinsley had just launched Lake + Wells with his Riveli shelving system in 2010 when he ran into his now business partner and wife, Tamera Leigh Staten. Friends as children, they were reintroduced and in an instant a personal and artistic connection was born. "The collaboration between us is truly unique," says Staten, who worked as a lighting restorer at the time. "Lake + Wells is not a collective of two individual designers, rather it's the result of our collision."

Kinsley, a trained industrial designer and the engineer behind their line, sees a colorful, organic dichotomy as what defines their work. "We often have two perspectives on each piece and kind of meet in the middle," he says. Kinsley brings a technical artistry and the functional know-how, while Staten creates the dialogue, the stories and the idea of what's to be. "We both share a vision and an affinity for precision and detail," he says, "but we each come at it differently."

This has been their approach since the very beginning. For example, their first fixture, Oona, combines high-end artisan lighting with elements

of beauty and intention. Inspired by a ring Staten recalled from her childhood, the duo together sketched their vision on paper. "It's two different elements that when placed together just right, create a perfect whole," Staten says.

While the pair's ascent into collaborative design began in 2013 with the launch of Oona, their individual influences trace further back. Staten previously apprenticed for an antiques dealer helping to restore European fixtures, and Kinsley had worked on modern lines for both Tech Lighting and Holly Hunt. Their unique and varied backgrounds have led to a signature aesthetic that embraces form and function with a dreamy, alluring magic. "While I create and develop products, it's Tamera's storytelling and artistic soul that give them depth, color and richness," says Kinsley. As Staten explains, "I think for him, the art is in the outcome, and for me, the art is also in the process."

Although their work styles differ, Kinsley and Staten agree that it is imperative for their work to celebrate materials. Their fixtures contain a mixture of brass, stained wood and cast concrete, along with blown-and-cast glass, to achieve an



heirloom-like quality—living materials, as Kinsley calls them, that weather and patina with age. Also present is a nod to past relics reimagined. In their newest line, for instance, crystal pays homage to Staten’s former restoration days; the mix of brass and cut prisms illuminated from within. “I wanted the crystal to interact directly with the light source,” she says. “It’s a nod to traditional chandeliers, reinterpreted in a modern form.” The pair debuted this line at WantedDesign during NYCxDesign this past May.

Today, the duo—whose work is represented in Chicago by Atelier Gary Lee showroom—works from their 427-square-foot apartment studio, the building dating back to 1929. Its significance is both memorable—Staten moved in when they got married—and indicative of their adherence to a mix of processes and tastes. While the outside of the building is Art Deco, inside you’ll find a modern environment brimming with prototypes from Kinsley’s days at Holly Hunt and a nod to Bauhaus. It is, in a sense, a marriage of both personalities. “Lake + Wells would definitely not be a company without both of us,” says Kinsley. “We both bring in completely separate elements and skills that only become truly useful once combined.”



The hand-hammered copper “eyelid” of the Oona Mini pendant rotates around a handblown glass form, revealing the polished finish of the lid’s interior. All of the couple’s pieces, including the Jax light fixture (shown opposite, bottom) are hand-assembled in their studio.

**LAKE + WELLS**

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lakeandwells.com

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