

PARTICULAR PASSIONS

When enormously creative people find their *raison d'être*, magic can happen. We found five such individuals working here in New England, perfecting and pushing the limits of their craft. Among them they have resurrected a piece of the past, turned a back lot into an exotic Eden, lit up a city, and created works of extraordinary art. They have us under their spell.

WHEN DAVID BERMAN first moved into his 1910 Queen Anne Shingle-Style house in Plymouth, Massachusetts, he worked with J.R. Burrows & Company of Rockland, Massachusetts, to reproduce C.F.A. Voysey's "The Stag" wallpaper, which graces his front hallway. Berman (FACING PAGE), who also built the tall case clock, now reproduces Voysey papers and textiles in his in-house studio.

Photography by Eric Roth



◆ David Berman was a high school student in Brooklyn, New York, when he was smitten. The class was English literature, but it was a room pictured in his textbook that he found himself studying. The space was the work of C.F.A. Voysey (1857–1941), the iconoclastic, if slightly obscure British architect known for his signature Arts and Crafts wallpapers and textiles. “I thought, ‘What a lovely looking environment,’” says Berman, now 56. From that encounter grew Berman’s fascination, some might say obsession, with all things Voysey. At Trustworth Studios, Berman’s Plymouth, Massachusetts, atelier, Voysey’s timeless fabrics

and wall coverings are reproduced for a small but steady stream of cognoscenti, celebrities, design purists, and delighted newcomers to the world of Voysey.

David Berman

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Though currently focused on textiles and wall coverings, Berman has over the years designed Voysey-inspired furniture, light fixtures, and clocks, and by the end of the year, he will have introduced a line of reproduction door hardware. But while outfitted in the manner of medieval artisans (he dons a cotton-canvas smock to work), he introduces contemporary colorways to the papers he produces on the most modern of computer-driven printers.

Voysey’s legacy is often described as the bridge between English Arts and Crafts and Modernism. “He was very green for his time,” says Berman of his inspirational mentor. “He designed practical, light-filled houses, and his architecture appealed to the most interesting people: Aldous Huxley’s mother was a client. When H.G. Wells made his first money, he had Voysey do his house.”

Of his textiles and wallpaper, Berman notes, “Voysey was the master of simple — even childlike — but studied design. He drew on nature and myth in original, joyful ways.” Featuring such elements as children’s-story characters, animals, flowers, and lyrical landscapes, the designs are deceptively simple and highly entertaining. One pattern, for example, looks like an abstract background until closer examination reveals bats and poppies. Studying the work is fascinating, almost hypnotic. No wonder Berman got hooked.

— REGINA COLE





THE LIGHTING ON the Evelyn Moakley Bridge is one of the permanent installations from Illuminale Boston (illuminaleboston.com), the five-day festival that ran in October. The search lights in the distance are part of the installation at Rowe's Wharf. Just beyond the bridge is the red glow from lights on the Northern Avenue pedestrian bridge. Organizer Lana Nathe stands in front of South Station (BELOW RIGHT), another Illuminale installation site.

Photography by Tim Gray



◆◆ When a sewage pipe backs up and water floods Lana Nathe's office just days before the opening of Illuminale Boston, the citywide outdoor lighting festival that Nathe, the principal of Light Insight Design Studio in South Boston, has been championing for almost two years, her response is both spirited and spiritual, much like Nathe herself. "It's a sign that I must really be shaking things up," she says. "The universe is responding."

Universe, buckle your seat belt. Originally trained in architectural interior design, Nathe was attracted to lighting design during an apprenticeship in Germany with renowned lighting engineer Hans T. von Malotki. She views light

as the central nervous system of architecture;

Lana Nathe

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without it, a structure becomes lifeless. "Lighting design is technology and art and energy," she says. "To be a lighting designer, you have to have passion." With passion aplenty and the energy of a 160-watt bulb, Nathe seems particularly suited to a career dedicated to illuminating the lives of others. She loves to learn about people — their stories, how they got where they are — and attributes much of her success to asking those she admires for advice about how to get to the next level.

Having designed the lighting for hundreds of residential projects, as well as everything from corporate offices to houses of worship, Nathe might think that her career had finally reached a comfortable plateau. But never one to sit still, she recently pushed herself even farther, uniting politicians, building owners, the business community, and artists to bring what she says is the first-ever outdoor lighting festival in America to Boston. And she shows no signs of stopping. "There's always 'What's next?'" she says with a twinkle in her eye.

Universe, hold tight. — JENNIFER BLECHER

