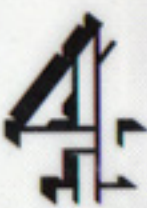


GRAND DESIGNS



Words **Camille Jackson** Portrait **Andrew Hayes-Watkins**

Trade secrets

Profile

Who Aline Johnson
Born 1962, Holland
Studied Central St Martins College, London
Career highlight Commission for the British Embassy in Qatar

Glass act

A playful and eclectic approach to contemporary glassware design is key to Aline Johnson's success

When she was 12, Aline Johnson cut fabric into patterns to make outfits for her Barbie dolls. This artistry eventually led her to Italy, where she set up her own knitwear collection, back to native Holland and finally to London, establishing herself as a leading designer-maker of beautiful contemporary glassware.

'I suppose we were a creative family,' recalls Aline. 'My father taught art and my mother always used her hands creatively.' As such, her foray into fashion design seemed a natural one, and Aline moved to Italy and then travelled in the Far East. Following the arrival of her two children, she decided her hectic career had to stop, but she still 'itched' for a creative outlet.

After a post-graduate course in glass design, Aline has based herself at London's Cockpit Arts for eight years, creating everything from candy-stripe platters to cascading chandeliers of leaves and feathers. 'The candy-stripe pieces are inspired by the paraphernalia you find at the beach,' she explains. Aline selects fine strips of coloured glass, which are then fused onto a clear sheet of glass in a kiln at 800°C for 14 hours. The glass is then sandblasted, giving it a matt finish.

For her cascading chandeliers (from £1,200), Aline melts glass into plaster moulds of feathers or leaves, which are then suspended by tiger tail – a translucent, vinyl-coated wire. 'I used to use fishing wire, but often found myself in a tangle,' she laughs. 'Not a good idea!' When it came to her Desert Leaves commission for the British Embassy in Qatar, she looked to nature as her inspiration and installed a stunning chandelier of 130 iridescent glass leaves in fabulous oil-spill colours.

The one thing that's always present in her work is an element of fun: her Hanky vases (from £180) can be turned upside down into a table lamp, and for four years she has made the trophies for the Channel 4 Political Awards – 'to give politics a lift,' she says.

And the future? 'Bookends! I'm hunting for old, leather-bound books to inspire a range of glass bookends that light up.' A truly luminary idea.

07775 616 868; alinejohnson.co.uk



above Aline Johnson and her Candy pendant ceiling chandelier **right** Candy-striped Hanky vase **far right** Her customised chandeliers are inspired by nature

