



As Saint-Louis launches its modular Folia collection of lighting installations, we speak with the French glass manufacturer's CEO Jérôme de Lavernolle about this pristine art

AT SAINT-LOUIS' BOOTH AT DOWNTOWN Design this year, a verdant garden awaited visitors. It was bedecked with the iconic French glassmaker's new lighting collection Folia, each piece is a work of art that cast dancing shadows on the walls. Inspired by the Vosges forest in France that's the home of Saint-Louis, the line depicts the maison's timeless aesthetic vocabulary and legacy that spans over 400 years.

"The forest is very important to us for geological reasons," Jérôme de Lavernolle, CEO of Saint-Louis, tells *Villa 88*. "First, for the wood, which was used for furnaces. Second, the ferns, which we burn and mix with water to produce potash, which is essential to decrease the point of fusion for crystal. Third, for the water from the rivers in the forest, which is necessary when you cut the crystal. And last, for the sand that comes from rocks in the forest," he explains.

The modular collection offers a wondrous marriage of crystal and wood, as imagined by master designer Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance.

ST LOUIS

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Intricately designed, each piece from the collection features organic, geometric bevel cuts that summon up the image of an enchanting forest. All pieces are customizable, which, Jérôme notes, is to cater to the ever-evolving Saint-Louis customer, not only in the Middle East, but across the world.

"What's very interesting is how people purchase, because today, people want more and more to be part of 'the dream,'" he elaborates. "They want something customized just for them. They want to participate in the decoration of the object itself. It wasn't like that in the past."

For a brand that has existed for more than four centuries, Saint-Louis

has been remarkably foresighted about its foray into the digital age, especially with the brand's My Saint-Louis app, which takes customization to a new level.

With his eyes glistening, Jérôme walks us through the innovative and user-friendly app, and with a few deft strokes, a 24-light chandelier transforms; its branches grow and shrink, and change color, then return to clear glass, only to have shades added onto them, which are immediately changed to hurricane lights.

And then, in a remarkable show of innovation, we can see how the chandelier we've just designed looks when it's lit up. "And then you say, 'That's perfect,'" Jérôme leans back, smiling. "You want the references to be sent to your house? I only need your mailing address." Now, who wouldn't want an immersive experience like this?