

# Bright on Presidio offers clever, customizable European lighting

By Lydia Lee, Sunday, November 16, 2014



The brightly colored Murano glass lamps in the front window, like many of those at Bright on Presidio, have a surprise twist. Created by glass artist Paola

Petrobelli, they are composed of glass disks, which can be reordered like a child's stacking toy. Inside the pleasantly uncluttered shop, there's a Baltensweiler floor lamp with a base that lets you wind extra loops of power cord around it. Toward the back of the shop, a small Occhio pendant, suspended from a wire, can be pulled down or reeled back in as needed. These are lights that have been thoughtfully designed.

But if you've never heard of Petrobelli, Baltensweiler or Occhio, you're not alone. The shop specializes in just a handful of select European brands, discovered by owners Ellen and Jacques-Alban Callies during two decades of expatriate life in Asia and Europe.

When they decided to move their family to San Francisco, they spotted a business opportunity. "Lighting is very expensive, and the quality of what you can get here didn't seem that great," says Ellen, who used to be a buyer for a major retail company. "We wanted to offer lights from these small European manufacturers, which can often be customized for our clients."

Architects in particular have gravitated to German company Occhio's sconces and recessed lights. The technologically savvy line features high-quality LEDs that output the correct color temperature and are outfitted with lenses that can shape the light. "It's a more contemporary approach to lighting, where you are more focused on the quality of the light rather than just the fixture itself," says Ellen.

However, many of the fixtures do entice with their sculptural shapes and creative use of natural materials. There are lamps of luminous strips of unglazed porcelain (from British company Boatswain Lighting), colorful bent rattan (from Italy's Vittorio Bonacina) and enormous bubbles of hand-blown glass (from Brokis in the Czech Republic).

Exclusive to the store are table lamps that combine the glazed ceramic vases of Christiane Perrochon with custom shades made of watercolor paper, a project that Ellen took on after visiting the ceramicist at her atelier in Tuscany. "I admire small enterprises," says Ellen, who delights in sourcing products. "And I'm fascinated by the hunt."

*344 Presidio Ave., San Francisco; (415) 901-3404. Mon.-Fri. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., until 5 p.m. Sat. [www.brightonpresidio.com](http://www.brightonpresidio.com).*

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