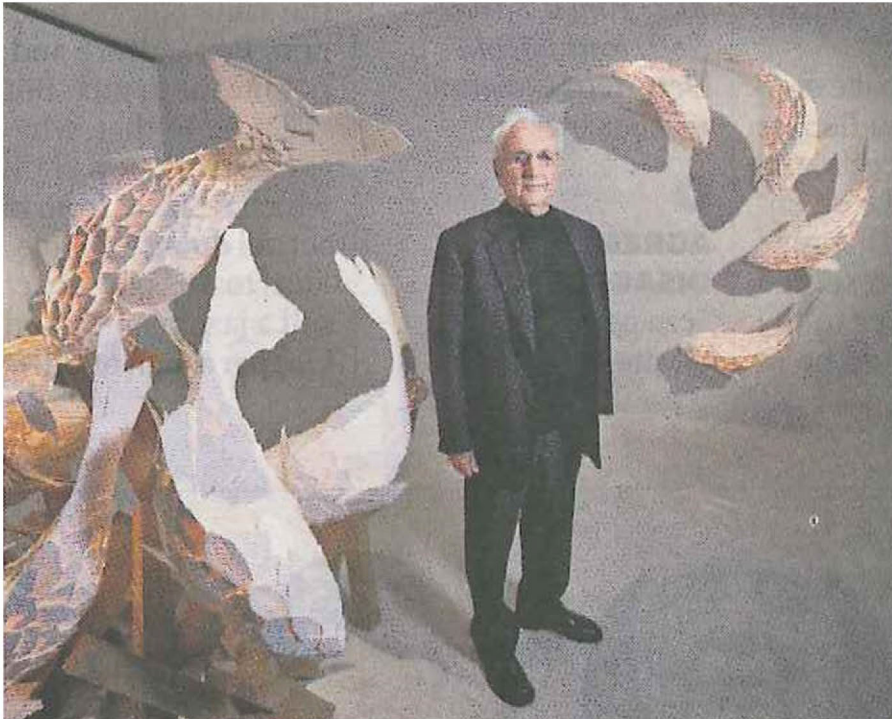


## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

THE   
INDEPENDENT

### Hooked on Gehry's bright ideas

JAY MERRICK



*Light fantastic:  
Frank Gehry with  
his Fish Lamps at the  
Gagosian Gallery in  
London's Mayfair*

JOEL RYAN/INVISION/AP

Can lamps possibly be worthy of exhibition by the most powerful dealer in the art world – Larry Gagosian? They can if they're designed by Frank Gehry, one of the world's handful of ultra-stellar architects – in 2010, *Vanity Fair* magazine declared that he was "the most important architect of our age".

Mind you, it was Gehry's grandmother who gave him the essential idea for the Fish Lamps, currently on show at London's Gagosian Gallery. The lamps are handmade of wood and shards of plastic laminate. Some are fixed to pedestals, some are wall sconces, while others hang as elaborate chandeliers.

Gehry has always experimented with sculpture and furniture. Starting in the late 1960s, he played with blocks of industrial corrugated cardboard to create his Easy Edges and Experimental Edges series of chunky chairs and tables. And in the 1980s, the architect was commissioned by the Knoll furniture company to create a bentwood furniture series.

The Fish Lamps series evolved from a literally shattering mistake in 1983, after Gehry was commissioned by the Formica Corporation to create objects from the then-new plastic laminate, ColorCore. After accidentally fracturing a piece of the material while working on it, he was inspired by the shards, which reminded him of fish scales. The first Fish Lamps, which were fabricated between 1984 and 1986, used wire armatures that were moulded into fish shapes – and shards of ColorCore were painstakingly glued on to the armature.

Fish, says Gehry, have perfect forms, and you can see this idea expressed in buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Marqués de Riscal Vineyard Hotel in Elciego, Spain, and, most obviously, in the huge fish sculpture at Barcelona's Olympic Village. But it was the carp that his granny Caplan kept fresh in the bathwater on Friday's, prior to cooking, that remain as one of the two key images in the architect's creative mind.

In the 1930s, when he was a boy in Toronto better known as Frank Owen Goldberg, he loved watching the shape and movements of the carp in the water almost as much as playing with the bits of scrap wood and shavings that granny Caplan encouraged him to form into buildings and small cities.

Meanwhile, next up from Gehry's Santa Monica studio is the Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation in the Bois de Boulogne, Paris, which will be completed in 2014 – and which will resemble a chopped-up glass fish.

*'Fish Lamps' by Frank Gehry, Gagosian Gallery, London W1 (www.gagosian.com) to 21 December*