PALERILL

DESIGN JOURNAL
ISSUE ONE · 2026



THE METHOD BEHIND THE ROOM

The Layered Room

Five rooms, one way of building light.

A chandelier is not a lighting plan. This issue is about the two layers underneath it — the ones nobody photographs, and everybody notices.

CONTENTS

Issue One

03 **Light in three layers**
Why one fixture cannot do the work of three

05 **The dining room**
Diameter, drop, and the 300 mm that matters

07 **Double height, single drop**
Scale, weight, and the fixing nobody sees

09 **Three materials, three characters**
Crystal, art glass, metal

10 **Colour temperature is a decision**
2700 K is not a default

11 **Nine questions before you specify**
A page to take to your contractor

A NOTE FROM THE STUDIO

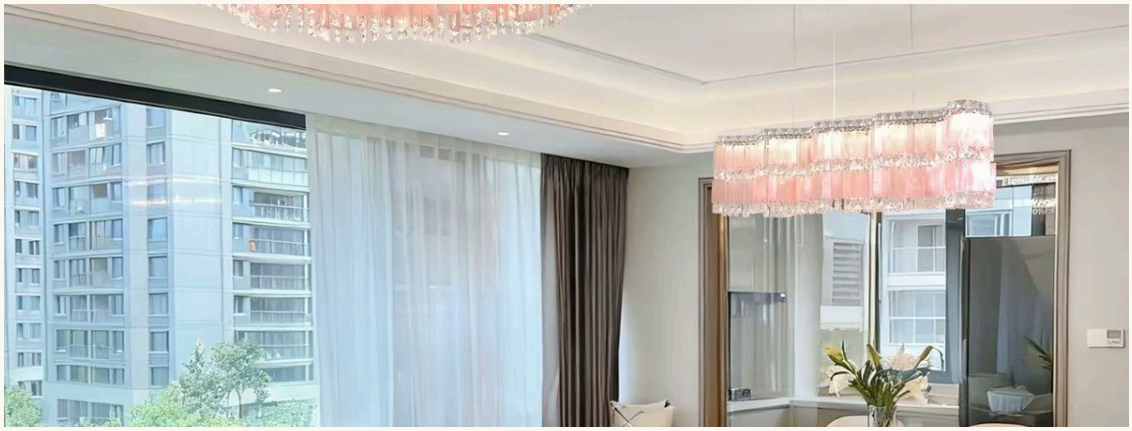
The question we are asked most is not which chandelier. It is where the light should come from.

Most rooms are lit by a single fixture in the middle of the ceiling. It is switched on at dusk and off at midnight, and everything in the room — the grain of a table, the depth of a corner, the face of the person across from you — is rendered by one flat source from above.

This journal is our attempt to describe the alternative, in the order we would actually specify it: the ambient layer first, then the task layer, then the object that everyone thinks of first. Five rooms, photographed as they were built, with the numbers we used.

There is nothing to buy on these pages. If a page is useful, take it to your contractor.

PALERILL · Lighting studio
Made to order · palerill.com



Two fixtures, one ceiling plane: a round body carries the living zone, a linear bar carries the dining nook. Neither is asked to light the whole room.

Light in three layers

A room is not lit by a chandelier. It is lit by three layers, and the chandelier is the last of them.

Ambient. The general wash that makes a room navigable: recessed downlights, cove lighting, a pair of wall washers, the diffuse half of a large fixture. Ambient light should be boring. Its job is to remove darkness, not to attract attention, and it should be dimmable to about a third of its output for the evening.

Task. The light that falls where work happens: a table, a counter, a page. Task light is directional and close, which is why it is almost never the ceiling. A pendant hung low over a dining table is task light. So is a reading lamp whose shade sits at eye level when you are seated.

Accent. The layer that gives a room depth. Accent light is narrow, aimed, and deliberately uneven: a wall wash behind a sculpture, a picture light, the low pool under a sideboard. Without it, a well-lit room still looks flat, because flatness is a lighting problem, not a furniture problem.

What a chandelier actually does depends on how it is hung. Over a table, at 750–900 mm above the surface, it is task light with presence. In a double-height void, seen from below and from the landing, it is accent — an object first, a light source second. The same fixture can be both; what it cannot be is the whole plan.

The mistake we see most often is a beautiful fixture doing all three jobs badly: too high to light the table, too bright to be atmospheric, too central to leave any corner alone. The fix is rarely a bigger chandelier. It is usually two more circuits and a dimmer.

LAYER	WHAT IT IS FOR	TYPICAL FIXTURE
AMBIENT	Removes darkness; makes the room usable at night	Recessed downlights, cove, wall washers
TASK	Puts light where the work is, close and directional	Low pendant, table lamp, picture light
ACCENT	Creates depth and hierarchy; gives the eye a destination	Aimed spot, wall grazer, sculptural pendant



The accent layer, doing nothing useful: two botanical glass pieces, switched on after dark. This is the layer most rooms skip, and the one that makes a photograph look lit rather than bright.



PLATE ONE — OPEN-PLAN APARTMENT

One ceiling, two zones

A round body over the seating, a linear bar over the table, both fixed to the same slab. Nothing here is a lighting plan in the architectural sense — and yet the two fixtures divide a single open room into two places to be, which is what a layer actually does.

PALERILL · private apartment, 2026 · round crystal body 800 mm, linear bar 1,200 mm · both on separate circuits

The room where light is measured in millimetres

A dining table is the only place in a house where everyone sits in the same relationship to the light. That makes it the one room where the numbers are worth getting exactly right.

Diameter. A working rule: add the room's width and length in feet, and read the number as inches. A 12 ft × 14 ft room wants a fixture around 26 in across. Over a table, the fixture should also be narrower than the table by at least 300 mm on each side, or people will lean away from it.

Drop. The bottom of the fixture sits 750–900 mm above the tabletop. Lower reads as intimate and lights the plates; higher reads as formal and lights the room. Anything below 700 mm is a head collision waiting to happen.

Clearance. Underneath, keep 2,100 mm from the floor so people can walk the perimeter without ducking. In a room where the table is against a wall, measure from the table edge, not the wall.

Dimming. One circuit, on a trailing-edge dimmer rated for the load. A dining pendant at full output is for homework; at 20 per cent it is for dinner. If the fixture takes replaceable lamps, choose 2700 K and a CRI of 90 or above, so the food looks like food.

The 300 mm that matters. The gap between the fixture's widest point and the sightline of the person opposite. Below 300 mm, the light sits in the middle of the conversation.

Fixture diameter	**(room width + length in ft) in inches**
Height above table	**750 – 900 mm**
Floor clearance	**2,100 mm minimum**
Colour temperature	**2700 K, CRI 90+**
Control	**one circuit, trailing-edge dimmer**



A pendant 800 mm above the table produces a pool roughly 1.6 m across — enough to light six place settings and leave the corners of the room alone. PALERILL, private residence.



PLATE TWO — DINING ROOM

Daylight is the first layer

This room is photographed at four in the afternoon with every light in it switched off. What you are seeing is the ambient layer at its best — and the reason the fixture can be large without being bright: it has to hold its own against a wall of windows for two hours a day, and disappear into the ceiling for the rest.

When a room is this bright by day, specify the fixture for the evening. Crystal reads as grey in strong daylight; it comes alive after sunset.

Double height, single drop

A chandelier sized for a 2.7 m ceiling disappears in a 6 m void. Not because it is too small, but because the eye reads it against the volume, not the floor.

Scale is a ratio, not a diameter. In a stairwell or foyer, the fixture should occupy roughly a third of the visible height between the floor and the ceiling it hangs from. In a 6 m void, that is a 2 m body; in a 9 m stairwell, closer to 3 m. Anything under a fifth reads as a pendant that got lost.

The drop is a composition. Hang it so the lowest crystal sits at or just below the level of the first-floor landing, around 2.2–2.4 m above the ground floor. Higher, and it belongs to the ceiling; lower, and it blocks the stair. Where the fixture is seen from a gallery, the interesting part should be at eye level from that gallery, not above it.

Weight is a structural question. A three-metre crystal body can weigh 80–150 kg. That load does not go into plasterboard: it goes into a joist, a steel spreader, or a purpose-made ceiling box, and it is signed off before the ceiling is closed. Ask for the fixing drawing before you approve the finish.

Access for cleaning. Crystals need washing once a year. If the fixture cannot be reached from a ladder on the landing, plan a winch or a lowering system at the specification stage — retrofitting one is a scaffold job.



Two storeys, one drop: the cascade is hung from a steel spreader above the ceiling line, with the lowest tier at landing height.

THE THREE NUMBERS TO SETTLE FIRST

1 · Finished floor to fixing point — measured on site, not from the drawing. Slab thicknesses lie.

2 · Height of the landing or gallery — this sets the bottom of the drop.

3 · Weight of the specified body, plus 20 per cent — the number your engineer needs.

If a supplier cannot give you a weight and a fixing drawing before you order, that is the answer to the question.



Where the weight actually goes: a ceiling rose is decoration, the fixing is behind it. On a three-metre body, the engineer wants the drawing, not the render.



PLATE THREE — STAIRCASE

At night the stair becomes the room

A stairwell has no furniture to organise, so the fixture is the composition. Here the cascade is the only source after dark: no downlights, no wall lights, nothing to compete. The handrail is lit by reflection, which is enough.

PALERILL · six-tier cascade, 2,400 mm body · 132 kg · steel spreader above ceiling

Three materials, three characters

The same silhouette in crystal, art glass and metal will produce three different rooms. The material decides what the light does after it leaves the lamp.



CUT CRYSTAL

Sharp, cool, deliberate. Facets split the light into spectrum and throw small bright marks across the ceiling. Best where there is something to reflect — plaster, lacquer, stone. In a soft, fabric-heavy room it can read as jewellery that arrived by mistake.



ART GLASS

Warm and diffuse. Hand-cast glass carries bubbles and slight thickness variation, so the light leaving it is uneven in a way that reads as hand-made rather than faulty. The right choice for a room that is already busy, or for anyone who finds crystal too formal.



METAL AND GLASS

Graphic and quiet. A metal frame does the drawing and the glass does the glowing; the fixture reads as architecture rather than ornament. In a low room, a linear fixture is often the only shape that does not crowd the ceiling.

Finishes change the temperature. A warm brass frame pushes a 2700 K lamp towards amber; polished nickel pushes the same lamp towards white. If you are matching existing hardware, match the finish before the lamp.

Weight follows material. A crystal body of a given size is roughly twice the weight of the same body in glass and three times a metal frame. That difference is a fixing decision, not a taste decision.

Cleaning is part of the specification. Cut crystal with open facets collects dust on every surface; a smooth glass shade takes ten minutes with a microfibre cloth. If nobody in the house is going to wash four hundred crystals, choose the glass.

Colour temperature is a decision

Two fixtures of identical shape and identical output will make two different rooms if one is 2700 K and the other 4000 K. This is the single most common specification error we are asked to fix.

2700 K is the colour of a filament lamp: warm, slightly amber, flattering to skin, wood and fabric. It is what most residential rooms want in the evening, and it is the safe choice for a chandelier.

3000 K is a half-step cooler. Still warm, but cleaner — useful in kitchens, bathrooms and any room with a lot of white marble, where 2700 K can look yellow.

3500 K and above belongs to retail and workspaces. In a residential room it reads as an office, no matter how good the fixture is.

CRI matters more than Kelvin. A 2700 K lamp with a CRI of 80 makes reds look muddy. Ask for 90 or above; on a crystal fixture the difference is visible in the reflections.

Dimming changes colour. A dimmable LED that keeps its colour temperature as it dims (dim-to-warm) will drift towards 1800 K at low output, which is what a filament lamp did naturally. It is worth asking for, particularly over a dining table.



Living and dining	**2700 K · CRI 90+**
Kitchen and bathroom	**3000 K · CRI 90+**
Stair and hallway	**2700–3000 K · dimmable**
Dimmer type	**trailing-edge, LED-rated**



Warm white at dusk: the same fixture at 3000 K would read cleaner and colder. Colour temperature is a decision, and it is written on the lamp, not on the fixture.

APPENDIX

Nine questions before you specify

Print this page. Take it to the contractor, the electrician and the person holding the budget. If a supplier cannot answer four of them, keep looking.

01 **WHAT IS THE FINISHED FLOOR TO FIXING POINT?**
Measured on site with a laser, not read off the architect's section.

02 **HOW MUCH DOES THE FIXTURE WEIGH?**
Body plus crystals plus packaging, and what the ceiling can take.

03 **WHAT IS THE FIXING DRAWING?**
Spreader, box, joist or steel — before the ceiling is closed, not after.

04 **WHERE IS THE DIMMER?**
On the wall by the door, rated for the load, trailing-edge if the lamps are LED.

05 **HOW MANY CIRCUITS DOES THE ROOM HAVE?**
Two is the minimum for a layered plan: ambient and accent.

06 **WHAT COLOUR TEMPERATURE, AND WHAT CRI?**
Written on the order, not assumed. 2700 K / 90+ for living and dining.

07 **CAN IT BE CLEANED FROM A LADDER?**
If not, what does the lowering system cost, and who installs it?

08 **WHAT IS THE LEAD TIME, IN WRITING?**
Made-to-order bodies are weeks, not days. Plan the plaster around it.

09 **WHAT IS EXCLUDED?**
Bulbs, dimmer, delivery to site, installation, scaffolding. The exclusions are where budgets go.

One more. Ask to see the fixture lit, at the height it will hang, in a room of roughly the same size. A showroom ceiling is almost always lower and brighter than the room you are buying for — which is why so many chandeliers arrive looking smaller than they did on the screen.

PALERILL

If this issue was useful, the next one is free too.

We publish one journal a year and a short technical note when something is worth saying. No daily email, no discount countdowns.

$50 off your first order over $300

Your code came with the email that delivered this issue. It applies once, to any order over $300, and it does not expire.

SHOP	palerill.com
SIZING GUIDE	palerill.com/pages/chandelier-sizing-guide
WHATSAPP	+1 346 846 9968
EMAIL	sales@palerill.com

PALERILL

The Layered Room — PALERILL Design Journal, Issue One, 2026. Written and produced by the PALERILL studio. Measurements and guidance are general; they are not a substitute for a site survey, a structural calculation or a licensed electrician. Photographs show private commissions and made-to-order pieces; finishes and proportions vary with each specification. © 2026 PALERILL. All rights reserved.