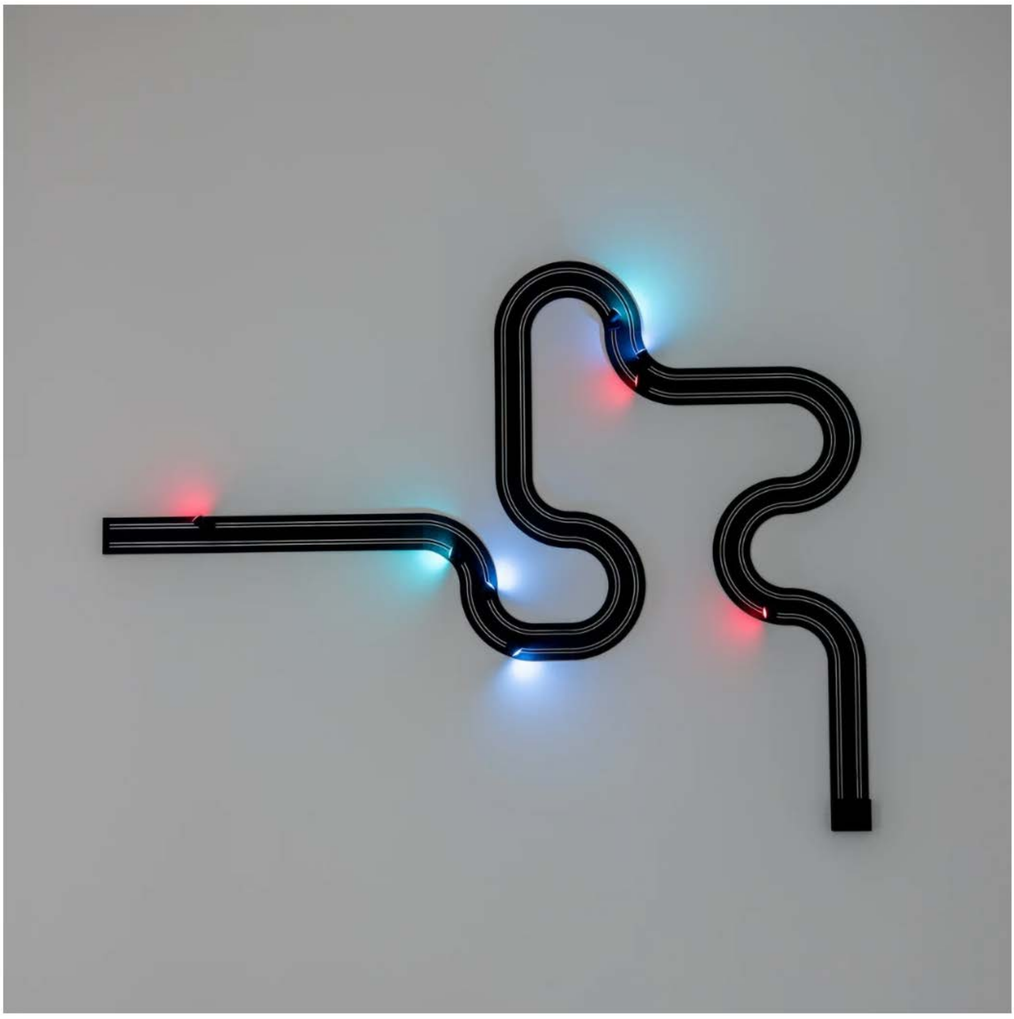
THE ITALIAN LAMP THAT USES TOY RACE CARS AS LIGHT BULBS

BY IDA TORRES / 08/17/2026

Most lighting gets chosen the same way people pick curtains: functional, inoffensive, and quickly forgotten. You walk through a showroom, you point at something that won't clash with the sofa, and that's more or less the end of the design conversation. That's not a criticism of how people live; it's just an observation of how light, despite being the single most transformative element in any space, rarely gets to have fun.

Davide Groppi's Race of Lights is the exception to all of that. The Italian lighting brand, based in Piacenza and known for making some of the most quietly radical lamps in contemporary design, released Race of Lights in 2025. On paper, it is a modular wall lamp. In reality, it is a slot-car racing track that someone decided should also be your light source, and the whole thing somehow works beautifully.

Designer: Davide Groppi



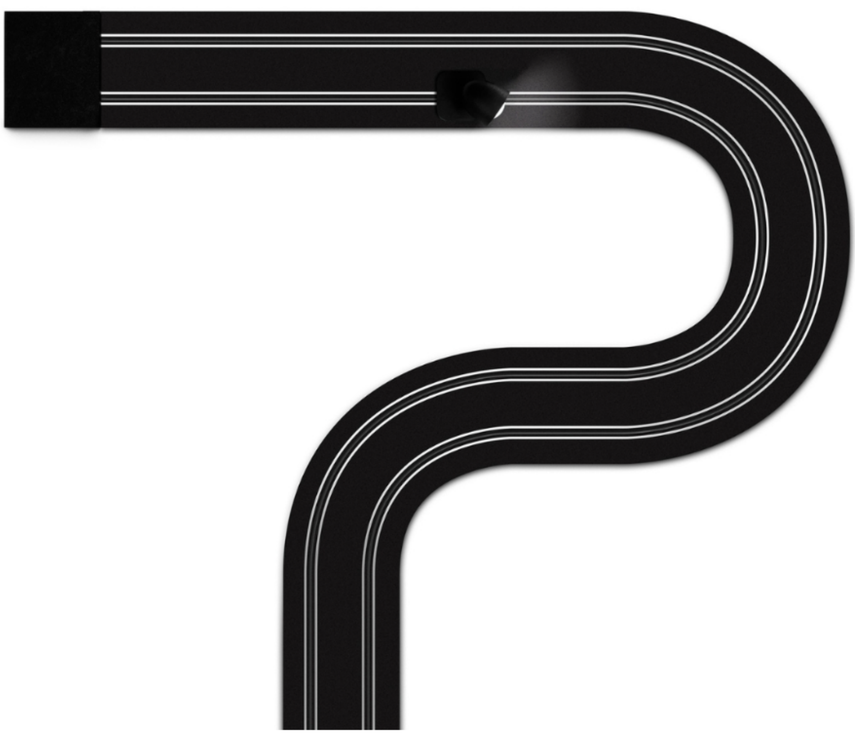
The concept is exactly what it sounds like. An electrified track, made from textured matte black polyethylene, gets mounted on the wall in whatever configuration you want. The track carries current, and the light sources are tiny car-shaped spotlights that snap into place magnetically and can be moved, repositioned, or rearranged any time the mood strikes. The basic kit includes two short straight modules, four longer sections, six curves, and four colored light-cars in green, white, blue, and red. The whole system can run up to five metres across your wall and power up to eight spotlights, each with an adjustable head so you can direct the beam exactly where you want it. This is, objectively, absurd. It is also one of the most genuinely exciting things to come out of the lighting world in years.

What makes Race of Lights so interesting to think about is how it sits within Davide Groppi's broader body of work. This is a designer who built his reputation on doing less. His lamp Nulla, which won the Compasso d'Oro in 2014, measures just 18 millimetres in diameter and is practically invisible in a ceiling. The name literally translates to "nothing." The philosophy has always been that the lamp should disappear so the light can remain. Race of Lights does not disappear. It sits on your wall, looped and curved, with little colored cars parked along the track. It makes a statement in the exact opposite direction of everything Groppi has been doing, and yet it makes complete sense.

Because the brand has never really been about minimalism for minimalism's sake. The design language has always carried a sense of emotion. Groppi has spoken about light as a tool for seduction and curiosity, about design emerging from the heart as much as the mind. Race of Lights just takes that emotional dimension and makes it literal. The inspiration was childhood, specifically the memory of electric slot-car racing sets, the kind where small cars zip around a winding track spread across the living room floor. The track moves to the wall; the cars stay put and illuminate. Play becomes design, and the object retains the spirit of the original thing it was borrowing from.

The result is a piece that functions as a legitimate lighting solution and as a conversation starter and as something closer to a sculptural installation. You can compose it in a new shape whenever you want. That kind of flexibility tends to age well in a space, because you never quite exhaust the possibilities.

Cynics will say it is a gimmick. I understand the instinct, but I think that reading misses the point. Good design has always borrowed from play. The best chairs make sitting feel effortless. The best lamps make light feel intentional. Race of Lights makes light feel like something you chose with genuine enthusiasm rather than resigned practicality.



Lighting does not have to be a decision you make and then stop thinking about. Davide Groppi has spent decades proving that point in quietly different ways. Race of Lights is just the first time the argument came painted in red, white, blue, and green, with tiny cars attached.