



SHINE A LIGHT



Art lighting is a specialist profile, and can elevate any artwork to magnificence. Signature spoke to **Harry Triggs** and **Andrew Molyneux**, founders of **TM Lighting**, for tips that can give your home display the gallery experience

How we view art is the cornerstone of any décor, because art has the power to take an ordinary space and transform it. Choosing artwork is a very personal process that often elicits an emotional response. That's why it is important to spend time thinking about the best way to present and showcase the work once you take it home so that the experience continues beyond the gallery.

Presenting your artwork to its full potential at home relies heavily on lighting techniques and new technology. Till recently, high-grade lighting was often inaccessible for private homeowners, because the sheer scale of old technologies was not suitable for homes. Now, however, anyone with a love of art has access to museum-grade lighting, thanks to LED. In the past, art was lit with Halogen and other incandescent light sources, emitting infrared, ultraviolet and a great deal of heat – a harmful combination that is incredibly

damaging to paintings, oils and particularly delicate colour pigments. The principal benefit of using LEDs is that the harmful rays are minimised – no UV, infrared or forward heat is emitted onto the work. This is crucial when lighting delicate items such as watercolour paintings or textiles and fabrics over a sustained period of time. In addition, LED products have the added benefit of dramatically reducing energy consumption and maintenance costs.

New lighting products create real and uninterrupted colour renditions; a “colour temperature” that considers the immediate environment and the nature of artwork being lit; and a colour consistency that matches the

visual across an entire work. Once you select the right lighting solution, there are a few elements you should keep in mind.

The foremost are presentation techniques. Lighting has a direct impact on the atmosphere of a room. You can create drama with the way you illuminate specific pieces. It helps to visualise the space like a theatre stage and to handpick pieces in the space that will become focal points in order to create life and movement.

Three easy techniques achieve very different atmospheres in the room... the first is a “casual solution”. Pick out a key picture within the group and light only this and let

the light spill onto other works. The second is the “intermediate solution”, where you use accent lights to project a pool of light onto the group of artworks. The last is the “serious collection solution”. In this method, you need to light every piece specifically using individual lights per artwork. With all of these solutions, Triggs and Molyneux recommend creating a secondary layer of vertical illumination. This provides the warmth of the reflected colour of the artwork into the room and adds depth to your lighting scheme.

The next element to consider is how you wish to light art in different environments. In a contemporary environment, there may





be more flexibility to use a discreet track and spotlight solution. This will give greater flexibility in the lighting scheme particularly if you have a rolling/curated art collection. In a classical setting, consider using picture lights instead of spotlights. Both approaches have their own benefits but the use of picture lights provides a more precise lighting tool in comparison with spotlights, which can create scallops of light above the artwork.

The finish of the lights should also be taken into account. If using picture lights, consider using a finish to match other features in the room such as door handles and other light fixtures. Alternatively, match the finish of the picture light to the frame or wall colour in order to create a subtle, seamless look. All solutions will work equally well in both settings if the finishes are correctly selected for the environment.

When lighting 3D artwork such as sculptures and vases, Triggs and Molyneux suggest using spotlights in specific positions, thereby working with light and shadow to accentuate the form of the sculpture. Poorly positioned lighting on sculpture can completely change the intent of a piece – a face could look sad or happy just from an incorrectly positioned light.

Of course, when it comes to lighting there are some common faux pas that you must avoid. The primary error is positioning artwork in natural light that is high in UV radiation during the morning and high in Infrared radiation during the evening. These wavelengths are outside of the visible light spectrum but are damaging to delicate pigments in artworks. Therefore, hanging in a position where light spills directly from the window onto the canvas can fade artwork. This is a common mistake that a lot of art owners make, and it would be best to plan your layout keeping natural light in mind.

Also, you should avoid placing artwork directly between large windows, as your eye will struggle to see the artwork during daytime without significant artificial light levels to counter the contrast levels.

Further, artworks with reflective glass, or a high gloss level should not be mounted directly opposite large windows in order to prevent undesirable reflections. For best effect, pick a lighting range that dramatically improves light quality and plan for a distribution of artworks around the room so that it looks fuller and richer, without the space looking cramped.



For see the full range of TM Lighting's specialist art lighting solutions, visit www.tmlighting.com. To enquire about custom solutions, email info@tmlighting.com or call +44 2072781600