



Pics: Edmund Sumner

Transmission UK

Architectural lighting specialist Seam Design has partnered with lighting experts TM Lighting to light Ross Lovegrove's installation *Transmission*, presented by Alcantara at the V&A as part of London Design Festival 2017.

Transmission was a collaboration between Alcantara and British designer Ross Lovegrove, on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Tapestry Room for London Design Festival, held from 16-24 September. Inspired by the 15th century Devonshire Hunting Tapestries at the V&A, Lovegrove created a spectacular 21-metre-long fluid and freestanding three-dimensional tapestry, which is made entirely from Alcantara, the renowned Italian material. Tactile and pliable materials, the soft undulating folds of the installation reflect and highlight both colours and forms of the medieval tapestries. The versatility of the material is highlighted in the different methods of treatment, including colouring and embellishment. Championing innovation and excellence in lighting design, Seam Design has created the lighting for a number of landmark installations at the museum since 2011. Following three previously successful

world-class lighting designs at the V&A with TM Lighting, they embarked on a new collaboration for Lovegrove's visionary installation to provide LED accent spots to illuminate the installation. Choosing TM Lighting is a result of their continued research and investment into a range of products that matches and often surpasses museum-grade lighting in terms of light quality and light distribution. "We're excited to be invited once again by London Design Festival to provide specialist art lighting at The V&A in collaboration with Seam Design," said Harry Triggs, Founder and Director of TM Lighting. "This year, to illuminate Ross Lovegrove's *Transmission*, we've utilised our new TM Zero 150 gallery LED spotlight which provides a focused beam ideal for museum ceiling heights to beautifully highlight the undulating folds and loops in Alcantara's unique textural material, framing scenes within the V&A's historic tapestries, while also considering conservation light levels to preserve the delicate fabrics."

The design concept was to provide specialist lighting that would bring out the rich colours within

the unique fabric, which has been specially dyed to colour-match tones within the surrounding tapestries, and delicately light the top edges in the loops of Alcantara where viewers can intuitively consider the tapestry through the evocative folds of the material.

The design of the artwork frames particular themes and scenes within the tapestries to view through the folds, creating an interactive experience for visitors, which merges design, creativity and art. It was therefore important for the lighting to be carefully positioned, working within tight angles to highlight the textures and faces of the frames only, and not the sides of the folds. Through a simple system, the lighting provides multi-layered experiences of the *Transmission* as the centrepiece by illuminating the continuous ribbon of fabric as well as the surrounding historical tapestries in the room. It's shaped to create a continuous curtain of light that falls on the edges of the folds on both sides of the sculpture, where visitors can appreciate and experience the piece in its finer details.

"The aim of the design was to not detract from the tapestries themselves, whilst focusing the attention on *Transmission*," added Marci Song, Director at Seam Design. "The challenge was to feature the installation as a centrepiece and connect it to the tapestries, to create an artistic ambiance.

"Whilst *Transmission* is the singular sculptural object in the room, it also invites visitors to experience the tapestries in a different way by framing elements of their compositions through the loops. The balance of the light projecting onto the centrepiece and tapestries helps to tie these pieces together to create an immersive art experience."

The lighting makes the colours rich and vibrant, highlighting the gold thread detail that creates a beautiful undulating highlight of continual light along the top of the folds, where a 2700k warm light level was implemented to work with the dimly lit serenity and stillness of the Tapestry room. Providing a bespoke lighting solution that brings art to light, the installation sees the launch of the new Gallery 150 accent spotlight, which features snap-in lenses that allow for changing the beam width with ease and simplicity. Local dimming allows for ultimate control to set exact Lux levels, especially important in light sensitive spaces. Available with nine, 25, 36, 60 and linear spreader lenses, the ultra-narrow beam of nine degrees allows more precise control for tall ceiling spaces, typical in museums and galleries. As with TM Lighting's full range of LED luminaires, the Gallery 150

ensures no forward heat throw or UV rays that can be potentially damaging to works of art. The design is entirely focussed on the installation and not the delicate tapestries where careful monitoring of the ambient light levels is in place to ensure levels do not reach beyond 50 lux. The 15th century tapestries are priceless pieces of art, which are therefore sensitive to UV light. This design consideration was accommodated by using the best choice of spotlights and UV levels. Warming filters were also utilised to draw out the depth and richness of the colours and textures of the fabric to create a 'light curtain' across the folds of the sculpture. This accentuates the continuous ribbon that occupies the length of the Tapestry Room.

The result is a balance between the lighting of the tapestries and lighting for the sculpture that creates an interaction between *Transmission* and the tapestries, where the tapestries can be viewed in a new dimension. Sometimes their beauty and detail is overlooked, but the lighting design has brought a new way of viewing the pieces, showcasing the beautiful colours, textures and detail that invites the viewer to appreciate these aspects in a way that has gone unnoticed.

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