

CHRISTIE'S
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Objects, art & ideas





OPPOSITE, HARRY TRIGGS
AND ANDREW MOLYNEUX
OF TM LIGHTING AT
APSLEY HOUSE IN LONDON

Age of enlightenment

The old-fashioned picture light has had its day, thanks to the bright ideas of a company using LED technology to create museum-quality illumination for the home. By Lisa Johnson

Andrew Molyneux opens his laptop to show me two images of the same painting under two different picture lights. In the first, a ball of orange light sits at the top of the image, like a setting sun that has photobombed a holiday snap, obliterating everything. In the second, the light is clean and serene and evenly distributed down the painting, with every detail clearly visible.

'No one has ever lit art particularly well with a picture light before,' says Molyneux, who founded TM Lighting with Harry Triggs in 2012. 'With most old picture lights you just get a little glow on the frame. And the colour temperature is too warm – the light injects an orangey hue and there's no definition.'

Molyneux and Triggs first met in the late 1990s as industrial design students at Brunel University, but it was only after Triggs had returned from a spell in Australia that they decided to pool the complementary expertise they had acquired in the interim – Molyneux as a product designer, Triggs as a lighting consultant.

With a shared passion for art, they set out to become the 'go-to people for lighting art', throwing their all behind the new light-emitting diodes (LEDs) – or at least those that offered the colour rendition they were after. 'Where most LEDs fall down is with the richer colours,' explains Triggs. 'Regal reds and royal blues go flat with a poor-quality LED, while a good one will really lift them and give definition.' Again, Molyneux provides a demonstration by holding up two lights to a portrait of a woman. In the TM light, which reproduces 100 per cent of the colour spectrum, the red of the woman's dress and gold in her hair are much more vibrant than in the other light, which reproduces only 80 per cent.

Now with a team of nine and an office and workshop near Russell Square in London, TM has created an impressive set of picture lights and spotlights – all of them designed to be discreet rather than decorative ('We want people to see the artwork, not what's lighting it,' says Molyneux), all of them adjustable to meet client preferences and museum guidelines. Projects are bespoke and range from a Conrad Shawcross installation for the National Gallery's multi-arts project *Metamorphosis: Titian 2012* to paintings at Goodwood House and Weston Park, several Christian Louboutin shoe studios, and Antony Gormley's Room at The Beaumont hotel in London, a cavernous bedroom inside a sculpture of a crouching giant, where Molyneux and Triggs spent 'hours working with Sir Antony to get the precise light level so that the form would take exactly the right amount of time to reveal itself'.

'It was an incredible project,' says Triggs. 'You lie on a bed that is crisply lit and framed out, and look up into this void that is four storeys of Gormley sculpture, and the lights slowly fade and your eyes adjust to the darkness, and you think you're in the pitch-black, but after about 15 to 20 minutes your eyes start to see the space as it is revealed around you.'

He and Molyneux clearly love what they do. One introduction through Christie's brought them face to face with a post-impressionist collection worth a billion pounds. 'Taking a priceless piece of art and transforming it so the client sees it in a different way is a joy,' Triggs says. 'They may not always be verbose in their praise, but you usually get a little twinkle that tells you you've done a good job.' ♦
tmlighting.com

Tips for lighting interiors

01

Create layers of light

Triggs and Molyneux are not fans of gridding out a ceiling with downlights. 'You don't need to light the whole space,' says Triggs. 'Start at ceiling level with something that lights key furniture arrangements, mantelpieces or credenzas. Think of the room as a stage and light the locations in which the action takes place. Coming down to wall level, use something like picture lights to lower the apparent height of the ceiling, create a cosy ambience and bring out the colours in any artworks. Finally, add table lights and floor lamps around the room's focus areas to draw people to them.'

02

Switch to LEDs

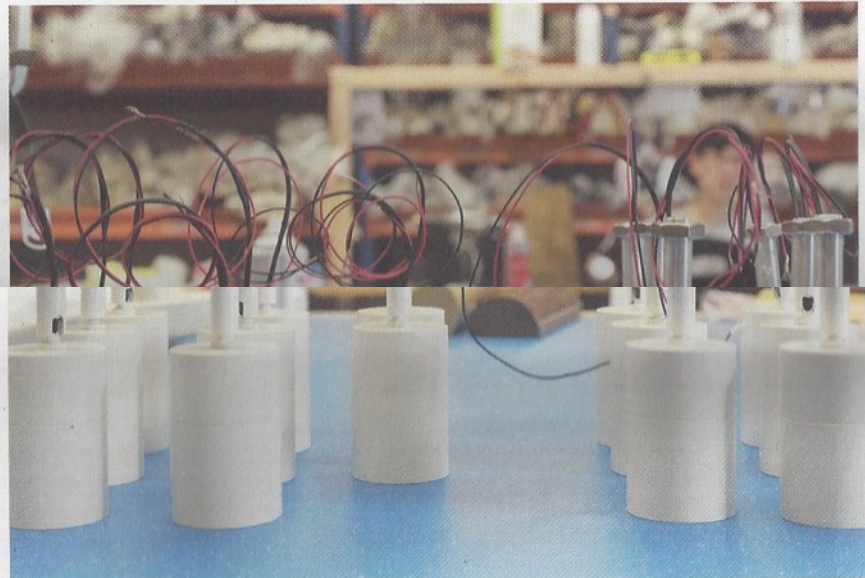
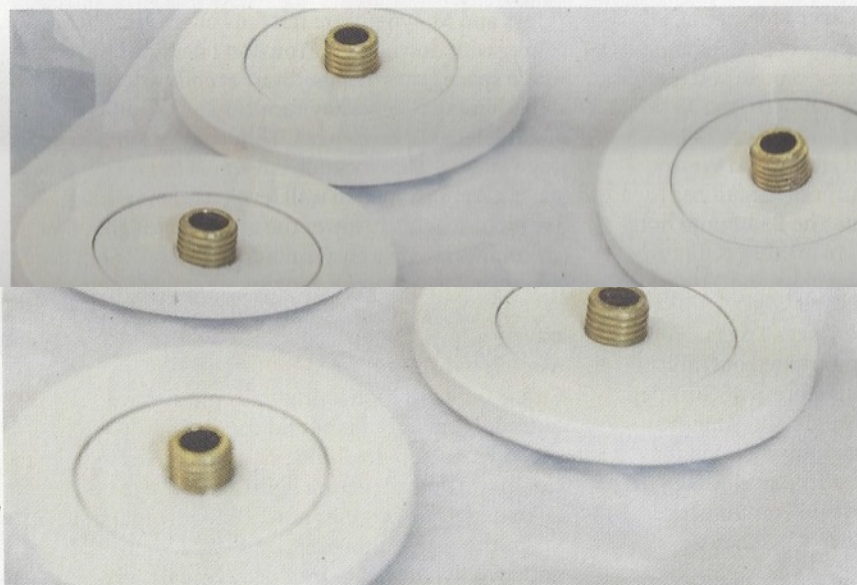
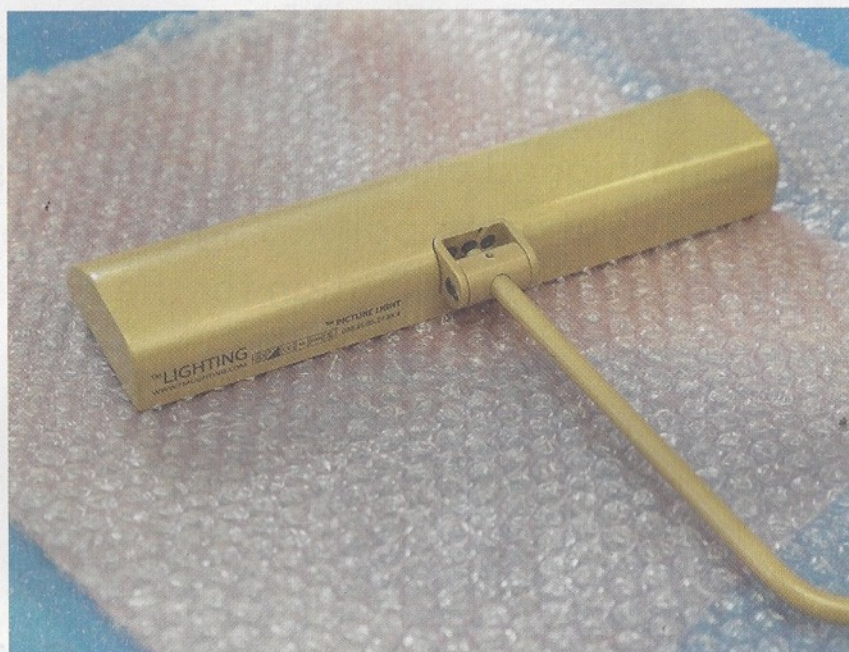
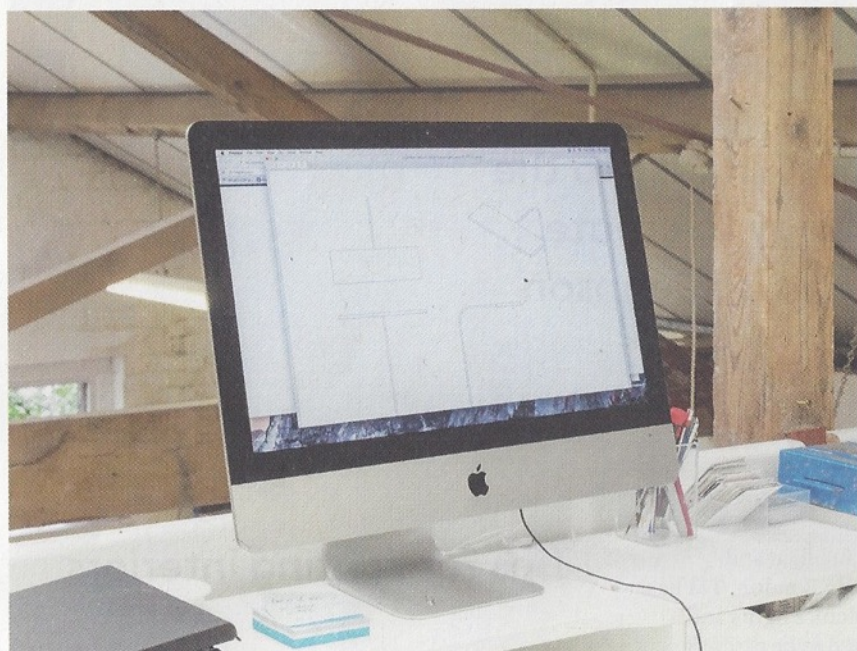
European legislation is gradually phasing out incandescent light bulbs and the S15 bulb used in most picture lights, says Triggs, so as stocks run out, all picture lights will have to be upgraded. On a brighter note, LEDs do not emit the infrared and ultraviolet rays – and, more importantly, the heat – produced by halogens and other incandescent bulbs, which can damage delicate artworks. Other benefits include significant energy savings, lower costs and better light distribution. As Molyneux explains: 'If the light intensity at the top of a painting is within three times that at the bottom, the eye tricks itself into thinking that the painting is evenly lit.'

Try these...



MORE DETAILS AND
LOTS ONLINE AT

“
 Richer colours – regal reds and royal blues – go flat with a poor-quality LED, while a good one will really lift them and give definition
 ”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DESIGNING ONSCREEN AT TM LIGHTING; ONE OF THE COMPANY'S LED PICTURE LIGHTS; SPOTLIGHTS AND FITTINGS

03

Position art carefully

Don't hang paintings in direct natural light – the UV and infrared radiation can fade them. And think before you position them between large windows, as the eye will struggle to see the art during the day.

04

Picture light or spotlight?

The main difference is that a spotlight creates a pool of light over an artwork, whereas with picture lights there is a more definite cut-off. Otherwise, it depends on client preference: TM picture lights come in a range of shapes, sizes, finishes and colours to work equally well in contemporary or traditional homes. In a minimalist space, however, a client might prefer a track and spotlights system, 'which creates a gallery feel and offers flexibility,' says Triggs, especially if the client has a collection that changes regularly. And in a house with beams across a low ceiling, says Molyneux, 'a picture light might look too cluttered, while a mini spotlight would be discreet as well as flexible'.

05

Chose the right LEDs

A poor-quality LED can create a pallid, sickly light, 'like a doctor's waiting room,' says Triggs. For the right quality of light in a home environment, he advises a colour temperature of 2,700K, a colour rendering index (CRI) of 95 or above and a reputable manufacturer to ensure the consistency of both qualities from one LED to the next.

06

Downlight or uplight?

TM Lighting tends to downlight works of art. 'Uplighting artworks with big decorative frames creates scary shadows above the paintings, like in horror movies,' says Triggs. Some paintings lend themselves well to uplighting, however. 'One client had a three-metre-high canvas by Hendrick ter Brugghen, with a fire in the bottom that lit the faces above,' says Molyneux. 'In this case, lighting it from the bottom enhanced the way the scene in the painting itself was lit.'

07

Don't feel you need to light every work

This depends on the nature of the collection. One TM commission involved 43 Picassos, all of which had to be beautifully lit. But as Molyneux says, 'Some works of art don't have the same presence as others, or are in a position where lighting them won't add to the atmosphere in the room as a whole.'

08

Set light levels for night-time

According to Triggs, this will also lift an artwork off the wall during the day. 'You want the work to be lit, but you don't want it to look as though it's for sale in a gallery.'