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Light effects as if from Caravaggio: Travelling exhibition "Matthew Penn - Illuminating Characters"

- **"Matthew Penn - Illuminating Characters"**

Exhibition in the Palau Robert, Barcelona
23 September - 9 October 2016

Venue

Palau Robert
Passeig de Gràcia 107
08008 Barcelona
www.palaurobert.gencat.cat

Opening times

Monday - Saturday: 10.00 am - 8.00 pm
Sunday and public holidays: 10.00 am - 2.30 pm

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The penetrating life-look that fixates visitors from the darkness of the wall-mount could be unsettling in its intensity, yet it is only upon much closer observation of this over-sized portrait that it becomes clear that the artwork is not a photograph but rather an oil painting. The almost sculptural effect of the hyper-realistic artwork of Matthew Penn is the pinnacle of complete perfection in the Chiaroscuro style, which naturally works with dramatic contrasts between light and dark, helped, with excellent effect, by the precision accentuation delivered by ERCO spotlights. Matthew Penn is now proud, as is ERCO, that these exhibits are to be showcased at an event in the historic rooms of the Palau Robert in Barcelona from 23 September - 9 October 2016.

In striking similarity to the works of Caravaggio, Rembrandt and Titian, people in Matthew Penn's focus seem almost to jump off the canvas in extremely directional light projected onto a dark background. The 27-year-old self-trained artist uses techniques of Chiaroscuro defined by Tenebrism, itself a style that arose initially around 1600 and was later perfected during the renaissance. In this style, light finds a new, dramatic role, and with an expert use of strong contrasts between darkness and light, the personalities and the body language of the characters is emphasised giving the spatial depth of the artwork even more power.

Matthew Penn regards light holistically and as an integral component of all his artwork. This does not only apply to the technique in its own right, but also to his creative process. The portraits' almost hypnotic qualities are only revealed with the right lighting systems in place. Not only does Matthew use

ERCO lighting in his atelier, but he also equips every piece of his artwork with ERCO spotlights - these, in turn, emphasise the Chiaroscuro effect thanks to their incredibly precise accentuation. The goal is simple - collectors should be able to enjoy the artwork with exactly defined illumination, and in this way, the artist can be sure that the full power of his work can be enjoyed.



"Illuminating Characters" - Impressions of the exhibition with works by British artist Matthew Penn. Top to bottom: Openings at the ERCO showrooms in London and Paris. Photo: Giles Toller, Canterbury

"This way of lighting does not just display the art but enhances it and becomes part of the art itself."

Lighting technology as if from Caravaggio - sculptural portraits in ERCO light

The exhibition space in which the artistic project by Matthew Penn, "Illuminating Characters", will take place is a temporary black cubicle room. ERCO Pollux spotlights will be used here, either with 2W narrow spot distribution or as 6W contour spotlight, which will be ideal for the illumination of the three extremely large paintings. "I use the Pollux lights because they allow me to sculpt the light on the painting with more control and a refined definition," Matthew reported in this interview. He uses ERCO lighting tools to deliver very targeted accent lighting onto specific details, lending further depth, and beyond that, true emotion. In order to achieve this goal, ultimate precision of the photometric technology is key to avoid spill light on unwanted areas of the artwork. The light is, one could almost say, painted into place.

A further very important theme was the selection of colour temperature. The artist selected Pollux luminaires in warm white, with 3000K, in order to emphasise faces, skin, hair and even wrinkles. Artistic lighting within the paintings is highlighted in neutral white, at 4000K, which creates a very life-like and almost three-dimensional effect. Matthew Penn explained, "This way of sculpting and manipulating the light on the painting enhances it to complete the piece. The combination of lighting and finished hyper-realistic painting takes the work into a mesmerising and engaging darker atmosphere where the viewer is transported and immersed within the portrait - a way of lighting not just to display the art but to enhance it and become part of the art itself."



Artist Matthew Penn has equipped his studio in Kent with ERCO spotlights. Photo: Frieder Blicke, Hamburg.

Travelling exhibition for a new approach to art

"Matthew Penn - Illuminating Characters" represents a new collaboration between the artist himself and ERCO. The highlights of the exhibition are the artistic approach and the significance of light in Matthew Penn's creations. Designed as a travelling exhibition, it has previously been on view at the ERCO showrooms in London and Paris and will shortly tour other international ERCO locations. If you want to find out more about Matthew Penn and his life and works, please refer to our report at ["Matthew Penn's sense of light"](#).

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