

vendor story: museumlight company

An innovative approach to image reproduction shines a light on creativity.

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The first MuseumLight was created by Brian Acworth, who had an idea for a new way of looking at art. Instead of putting a printed art reproduction into a flat frame, Acworth’s idea was to put the reproduction into a cylindrical frame and illuminate it from within.

An Englishman, Acworth enjoyed making things, so the first MuseumLights were offered as a kit—a lamp you assembled yourself. Later, responding to market demand, MuseumLights were sold as fully assembled table lamps that combined beauty with function along with a collection of images for the customer to choose from.

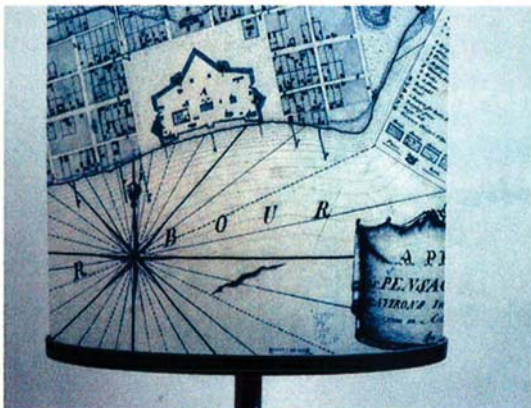
MSA member Patti-Jo Alesci was an early addition to the staff, and among her many functions, she continues to be the main liaison between the customer and the production team, including designer Christi Farina-Romano.

Alesci tells us the Museum Store Association has been an important part of the story of MuseumLight from the very beginning. MuseumLight was first introduced to the museum store market at the 2012 MSA Expo as a Buyer’s Choice nominee, which gave the company great exposure. “The work we have done with museums has been our calling card and mark of quality as we have broadened into other markets,” Alesci says.

Beautiful images of all varieties inspire the work. “A MuseumLight can capture that moment when you see a work of art for the first time and you are captivated,” Alesci says, “and we are not limited to fine art. We love working with any source material we receive—photos, maps, dresses—we’ve created memorable, good-selling lamps from a postcard! We can also create and illuminate design features that highlight a particular location. We are continually inspired by the knowledge and creativity that museum store buyers bring to a job with ever-expanding responsibilities and budgetary limits.”

If they don’t think a particular image will work well as a custom MuseumLight, they won’t make it, but they do enjoy a challenge, and some of these more difficult projects are among Alesci’s favorites. “An example would be when we worked with the Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens [in Washington, DC] to create an enchanting lamp from the lacework on a dress to be exhibited,” she says. “We have had great success illuminating historical items, including buildings and maps of all types and styles. Paintings with lighting in them, like *The Lantern Bearers* in the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art [Bentonville, Arkansas] collection, also look particularly beautiful when lit.”

This MuseumLight, made for the University of West Florida Historic Trust, features a 1778 map of Pensacola.



For the Statehouse Museum Shop, MuseumLight reproduced an image of the Ohio Statehouse from a postcard.



The Lantern Bearers by Maxfield Parrish as reproduced on a MuseumLight for the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.



MuseumLight created a lamp using the colors and lace details of a gown in the collection of the Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens.



MuseumLights make a nice focal point in a store display, and each includes information about the image and, if custom, the museum as well. The images are giclée printed using pigment-based, archival inks and high-resolution computer-controlled technology at 1,440 x 720 dots per square inch—each dot is a specific combination of 10 separate ink colors. This process yields remarkable color reproduction and crisp images, maintaining excellent highlight and shadow details.

When it comes to working with nonprofit institutions, the company tries to make it easy for museum stores to carry their product. "We have no minimum order," Alesci says. "We understand stores have to respond to budgetary challenges. Plus, we will waive the one-time \$100 setup charge on new custom orders of six or more units." In addition, buyers can send an image they are considering, and MuseumLight will create a virtual sample at no charge, so buyers can get an idea of what the product will look

like and then decide if they want to continue with the project.

"We enjoy researching upcoming exhibitions, looking through them for images that we know will be striking when illuminated and then bringing them to the attention of the buyers," Alesci says. "We love the relationships we have built, meeting and working with buyers who send us their prized custom images, helping to find the best way to display them. Seeing the final product come to life is a thrill." 🌟