

Looking into the light

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When deciding about the two different exhibitions I wanted to include in this essay, I decided to vary the pieces, I am going to look into a sculpture piece and a painted piece as the lighting for both of these could be drastically different as they are displayed differently. The two exhibitions I decided to look into are Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* and an installation by Olafur Eliasson called *The Weather Project*, due to the fact the installation is lit within the exhibition instead of lights aimed at the exhibition, while the *The Starry Night* is 2D with no bends and less likely to have as many shadows, however there will still be shadows present due to the natural and artificial light that will be in the exhibition room.

At first I didn't know the different ways that artworks could be lit and I did some research into this. I learned that art lighting refers to light used for both pictures on the wall and sculptures, this means that both the exhibitions I am looking into could use the same lighting but with different sizes in order to create more light. I also learnt that improper lighting, like direct sunlight or fluorescent light, can potentially damage the work.

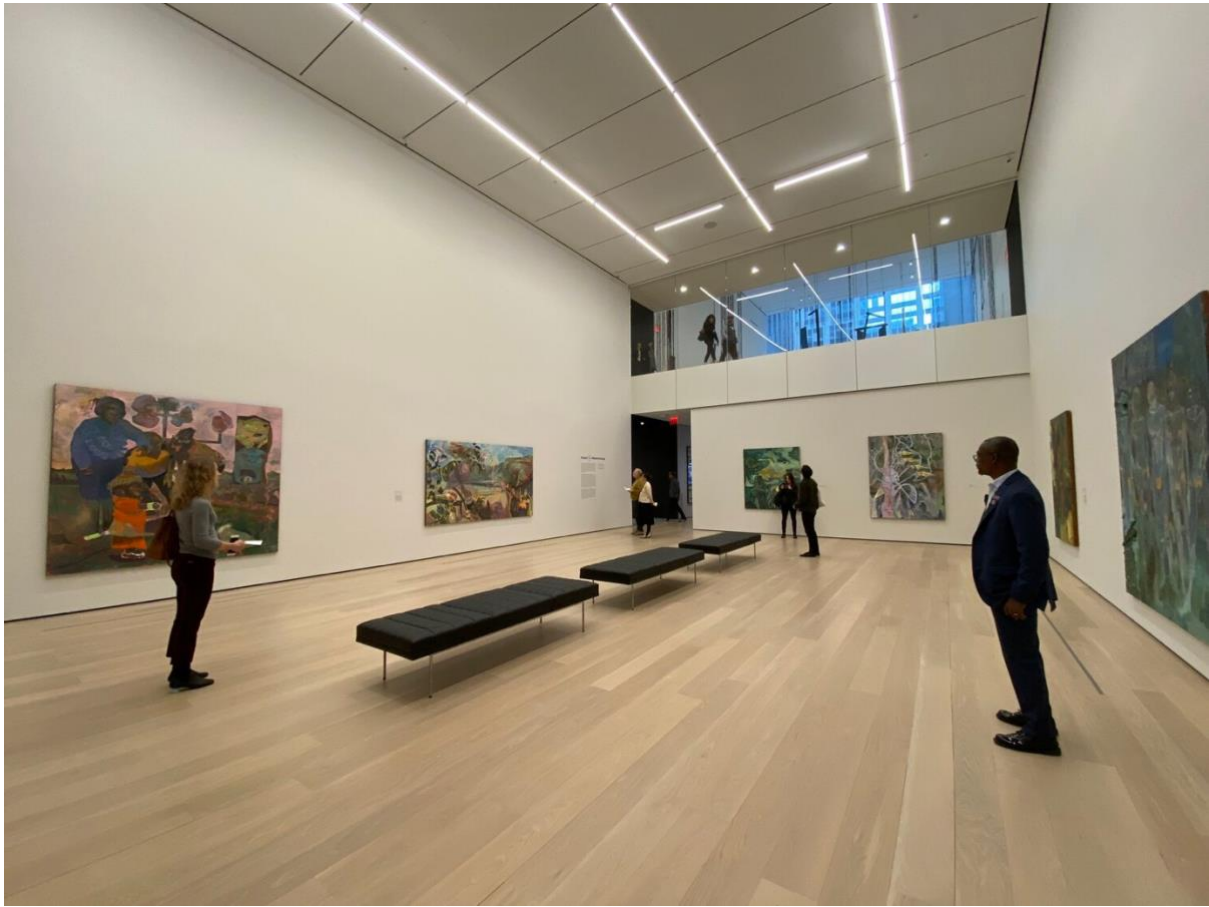
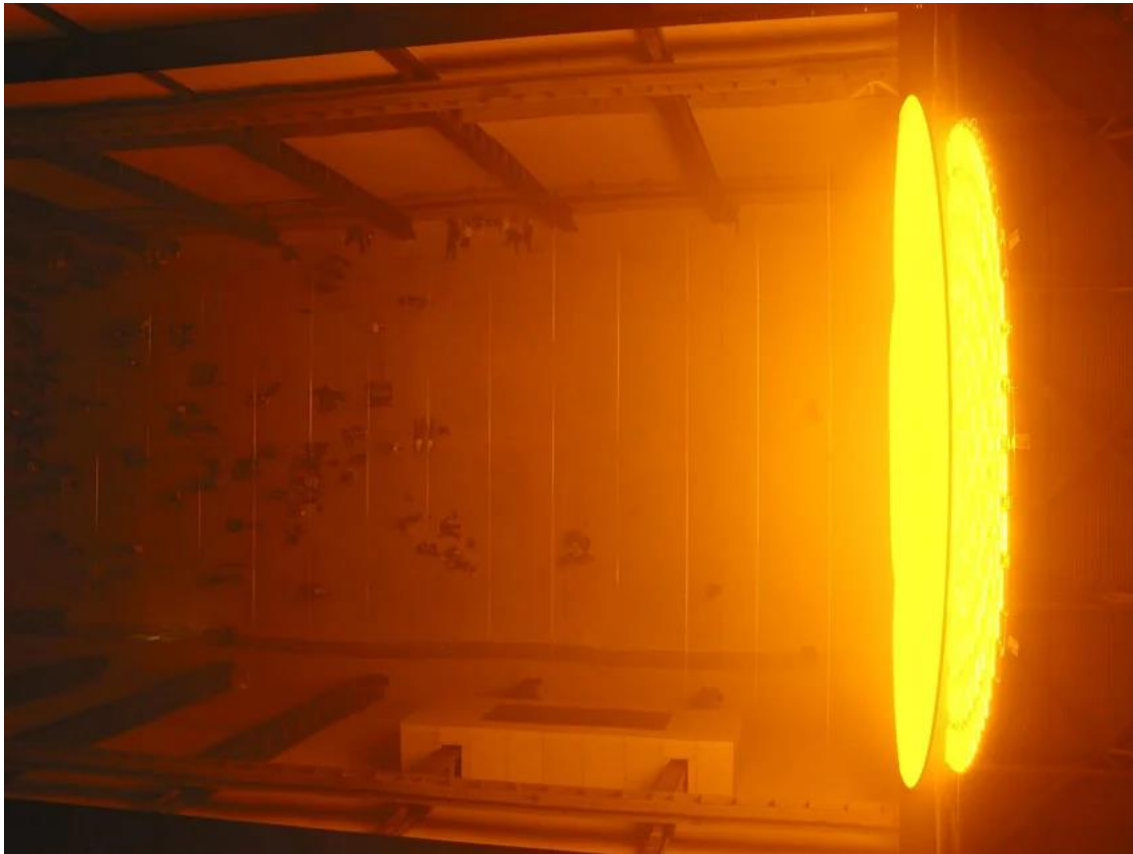


Photo taken by Iwan Baan

When looking into the lighting on *The Starry Night* I notice that in the Museum of Modern Art the artwork isn't surrounded by any lights but instead the museum designed the rooms lighting to highlight all the pieces in the exhibition space as whole instead of lighting each one individually. The room was designed using an inset gridded track system, spaced in such a way that where the spotlights are placed illuminate all artwork cohesively. The way the lights are placed are flexible, they can be dimmed and rotated in a way that makes sure that all exhibitions that are held in these rooms are sufficiently lighted to highlight each piece.



I also looked into how the Tate Modern lights their exhibitions, they use a lighting company called Lightwaves who have been commissioned by the gallery since early stages of opening the gallery. However, *The Weather Project* is lit within the work, representations of the sun and sky dominate the expanse of the Turbine Hall. A fine mist permeates the space as if creeping in from the environment outside. Throughout the day, the mist accumulates into faint, cloud-like formations, before dissipating across the space. Overhead the space reveals that the ceiling of the Turbine Hall has disappeared, replaced by a reflection of the space below, this also helps the light bounce back onto the artwork, this gives the light a chance to bounce elsewhere on the artwork. At the far end of the hall is a giant semi-circle of hundreds of mono-frequency lamps. The arc repeated in the mirror overhead produces a sphere of dazzling radiance bounces off of the reflection. To create what can only be interpreted as the sun, Eliasson used mono-frequency lamps,

which emit light at such a narrow frequency that colours other than yellow and black are invisible. The hall is therefore transformed into a vast duotone landscape, bathing visitors in a light akin to that of a sunset.

In comparison the two works vastly differentiate in lighting, *The Starry Night* was lit with overhead lighting that had nothing to do with the painting itself but more to light at work that is exhibited in the space, meaning the space is art lighted with no regard to what art is in the room as the flexibility of the lights highlight all the pieces in the room, meanwhile *The Weather Project* was lit in a way that was only for the installation and no other art pieces were taken into consideration as the focus was solely on lighting the 'sun' and the surrounding area in the room, to create a warm atmosphere with yellow/orange lighting, compared to one coloured light solely used to light the room.

Taking into account what I've learned about light this semester and when researching into the comparison of the two exhibitions, I used this to compare two of my own pieces I have created as to how I would hypothetically light my pieces in an exhibition space. I chose two pieces to compare in this essay, one is a drawing while the other is an installation, these two art pieces are needed with varying light as the drawing would be in a well lit exhibition room without any additional lighting, while my installation piece would need to be in a dark exhibition room with lighting added in, in order to create the installation itself.

When researching what lights I would want to use I came to learn there are four main light fixtures for artwork lighting. Firstly picture lights, these are the most specialised art lighting option, it sits directly above a painting, it's a small covered lamp that is angled down at a slight angle to light the artwork. There are accent lights, these are ceiling mounted lights that illuminate artwork from above. Track lights are the most well used option of art lighting as they can light all artworks without each piece individually needing a light fixture as you can easily adjust the position of the lights. Lastly, there are wall washers, these are individual or strips of light positioned directly above or beneath a wall to wash it in light.



Unlike in MoMA I would use two different forms of lighting, I would use picture lights that would be placed along the top of the wall mounted drawing as the lights in the exhibition would light the piece however would undoubtedly cause unwanted shadows due to the amount of different directions the light would come from. A picture light would erase any forms of shadow as the light would solely be focused on the art piece and would be in close range compared to track lights that most exhibition spaces now have in galleries.



For my second piece which is an installation I would want this to be placed in a corner as seen in the picture shown however I would like the balls of tissue that are crunched up to be elevated on a glass stand as I would then use wall washer lights to place underneath the glass stand, this would give enough light to travel through the pieces of crunched up tissue to create the shadowed effect on the wall above which is the desired installation piece. It would also be beneficial for this piece as it is interactive, you can move the tissue around to create different shaped shadows however having these on a glass stand with the light indentation would prevent any

damage coming to the light as there would be a barrier of glass above it.

In conclusion I have looked into both professional exhibitions and hypothetically explained how I would light my personal art pieces, they all used very different forms of light sourcing. What I concluded was that unless the work needs to be lighted from within like *The Weather Project*, or lit from beneath in a rack room like my interactive installation was, then you could use multiple light to illuminate the art pieces. I learnt through this essay that all artworks can be lit using different art fixtures and lighting however can still give the same result, my drawing could be lighted using track lights like how *The Starry Night* was exhibited, however as an artist I would prefer picture lights, it is all an artist or even the gallery the exhibition is happening at choice. Give one painting to five people and they may light it five different ways as art is such an open concept so is the way we light the art pieces.

References

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