

Sussex Lighting

From Recession To a Shining Light In Horsham town

It feels lazy to refer to Sussex Lighting as an 'Aladdin's Cave.' It's a term too often used to describe any shop with a modest scattering of quirky or exotic odds and ends.

It is a term that should be saved for truly fascinating shops, in which every nook and cranny is filled with something unusual or extraordinary.

Sussex Lighting certainly falls into that camp.

It's nothing out of the ordinary for people to spend two hours browsing one item after another.

Whether it's chandeliers of hand-shaped rock crystal, extravagantly decorated wine glasses by Kolarz, aluminium models of spitfires, remarkable Portuguese lighting sculptures or beautiful glassware by Timothy Harris, you'll find it here.

Of course, you might just want a 60W screw cap bulb!

Andy Coe, who co-owns *Sussex Lighting* with his wife Suzannah, said: "In our stock room, we have all manner of old light bulbs, as well as drawers full of tiny items, from circuit breakers to Earth rods and pull chords.

"People are amazed that we have these things, as modern lights use LED technology, but we take immense satisfaction from helping people with their lighting issues, even if it means they only spend 50p!"

'We buy the things we like'

At a glance, it might look as though the shop is an intriguing bazaar of unrelated oddities; but that is not the case.

Everything has been carefully selected by Suzannah and Andy,



'We place objects that might not necessarily work together, but might inspire an idea.'

with one simple rule.

"We're not too concerned about catering for all tastes," said Suzannah.

"Our rule is, if we like it, we bring it to the shop.

"Increasingly, we are being a little more adventurous.

Sometimes, we suspect something might not actually sell well, but we like to showcase different options that give people ideas and inspiration for their home.

"That is why we mix things up in the shop, constantly moving items around and placing objects that might not necessarily work together, but might inspire an idea.

"That could be a small table with an owl on top, or a combination of colours you wouldn't naturally combine,

yet could catch someone's attention."

'People thought we were crazy'

Such a shop is not built up overnight.

Andy and Suzannah opened at the height of the recession, as they felt that the location was perfectly attuned to their vision for a lighting shop. Situated at West Point, where London Road meets Springfield Road, the shop's huge windows have been exploited for all their worth. Hundreds of lights, hanging from a specially-created, reinforced metal structure, help to form what must be



DID YOU KNOW?

This iconic Tiffany Wisteria Lamp, created in 1905, is one of the most expensive lights in the world. It was auctioned by Sotheby's in 2010, selling for \$1.5 million.



Suzannah Coe

the most visually impressive window display in the town!

It is a combination of both Suzannah and Andy's knowledge and experience. When *The Creative Assembly*, a video games company she co-founded, was sold to *Sega* in 2005, Suzannah was looking for a new challenge that could incorporate her passion for interior design.

Andy already had experience as an IT manager as well as a lighting retailer, having previously run *Sussex Lighting* at a smaller unit in South Street, Horsham.

"We invested heavily in the shop, at a time when a lot of retail outlets were going out of business," recalls Andy. "People were telling us that we were crazy but with the free car parking spaces and the



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Andy Coe with a Tiffany light

'Some find that the cut crystal lights are simply too 'bling'

fantastic shape of the shop, Suzie had the vision to make it work. She keeps trying to give me equal credit, but it's really not true.

"However, what we all do here – whether its me, Suzie, our fantastic assistant manager Tash Morley, or the rest of the team

- Dan Felicity, Julia and Alannah - is provide very good customer service.

"We also price our items honestly. We do have some wealthy and well-known clients, from all over the country and even from Russia and Hong Kong. But that does not mean

they pay over the odds for anything; if they can find an item cheaper elsewhere – and with the internet, people will explore - then they will.

"We are fair, and that is why we have very loyal customers."

'I like the natural crystal look'

Over time, *Sussex Lighting's* collection has become

increasingly diverse and eclectic.

Some of the items may be familiar to readers. The striking *Tiffany* lights, for example, featuring multi-coloured glass sections welded together, and the decorative glassware from the renowned *Isle of Wight Studio Glass*.

Suzannah's love of nature is evident throughout, with everything from brass owls to

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It's a sad fact that most of us are touched in some way by cancer.

It may be a family member, neighbour or someone at work and it can be really hard to cope – not just with the routine of hospital visits and treatment but with the emotional strain and worry. Sometimes the practical tasks – shopping, cooking, even driving - can be just overwhelming.

"I cannot thank you enough for the lovely lady who visits me – she is kind, understanding and willing. This past month has been difficult due to my husband's death –she is a pillar of strength to me"

A Brigitte Trust volunteer offers respite for a carer and the chance to share some of the many feelings and concerns serious illness brings. Our volunteers support people facing any life-threatening condition when it's increasingly

hard to cope at home, and also offer bereavement visits if requested. We're looking for male and female volunteers in Horsham and Crawley to support local families.

Join one of our new volunteer taster sessions on July 4th and 5th to learn more about our work. Free training courses start in September.

Volunteers visit the same client for four hours each week and build up relationships at a time when routines are often dictated by medical needs. Sitting and listening can be the most valuable help of all. We are often told how our volunteers really make a difference, not only by the families but by the medical teams, who can see the real need for support at home.



Please call Sharon today on 01306 881816 to book your taster session and visit www.brigitte-trust.org to see our new videos, featuring Nicholas Owen.





A rock crystal chandelier

elephants carved in furniture. But still, it is the ceiling lights that hog much of the limelight. Suzannah said: "We tend to find that most high street retailers buy their lights from the same suppliers. "We cater for a different market, although we do have hundreds of mid-range lights that are affordable and yet still have fantastic design. "In terms of the wow factor, it is usually the Swarovski crystal lights that attract the most attention.

"What is fascinating though is how different people have different tastes. I like the natural look of the rock crystals, because it's authentic and provides a vintage effect. "Some people don't like rock crystals at all, because they do not provide the same level of reflection as the cut crystals. "Yet these bright crystal lights are simply too 'bling' for some

tastes. "Whatever your personal preference may be, we display everything in the shop, because you do not begin to get an understanding of the effects from a photo in a brochure."

'A light brings a room to life'

Some of the items unearthed by Andy and Suzannah have been found close to home. Several finely-crafted nautical and aviation models on display are actually created by Southwater-based *Authentic Models*, whilst Claire Harrison's paintings, inspired by the natural world, hang on the walls. You might also spot embroidery work by Worthing-based Lara Sparks, and Highland Bull footstalls by Horsham craftsman Alex Ansell. Other designs have been



A striking design by Portuguese designer Serip



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Many think that you cannot have a mortgage later in life. And, on the high street, this may still remain true in some cases as these lenders generally allow a mortgage term to last until the applicants retirement age. This used to be 65, officially it's now 67, but the reality is it can be much later.

Most lenders have their maximum age, at the end of mortgage maturity, at age 70. However, we all know that people are working a lot longer now and repayment of such a large amount of money may not be possible in these restrictive conditions. So the option is to raise further finance to repay the original loan or sell the property.

Thankfully, the first option is less onerous as it used to be. Many non household named lenders will look at lending to customers to a lot later in life, assuming the customers can prove their continued ability to pay. This can take the maturity age up to age 80, 85 or even 90 and above.

If the customer has a good and regular amount of income, a high level of equity in the property and can satisfy the lenders affordability requirements, then some lenders will be happy to lend.

Have you heard of the Dudley Building Society? What about the Buckinghamshire, Harpenden, Marsden, National Counties, or Newbury Building Societies? Not necessarily well known names, but not ones to be ignored either.

We are seeing these, and a lot more like them, launching innovative products to help all ages. Not looking for huge volumes, but looking to fill gaps in the market and this should be applauded.

As always, seek specialist advice from someone who offers a range of lenders from 'whole of market', not just a restricted panel or the high street.



'Many lenders will look at lending to customers a lot later in life, assuming the customers can prove their continued ability to pay'

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sourced from further afield, such as the distinctive nature-inspired organic shapes from *Serip*. Suzannah and Andy first came across Serip's sculptured lights whilst on holiday in Portugal, where Serip creator Mario J Pires is based.

Andy said: "What appealed to us was the fact that, not only were they striking, but they created beautiful reflections.

"The idea of a light is to bring a room to life; Something that brings out the colour of your floor, your walls, your furniture, your decorations.

"You can do that, essentially, with a blob on the ceiling, but people are increasingly looking for lighting that is in itself a feature of the room.

"They want lights that will be a feature even when they're switched off. What we do is find those lights that have that artistic, creative element.

"I think that is what makes us a 'destination' shop."

REPORT: BEN MORRIS

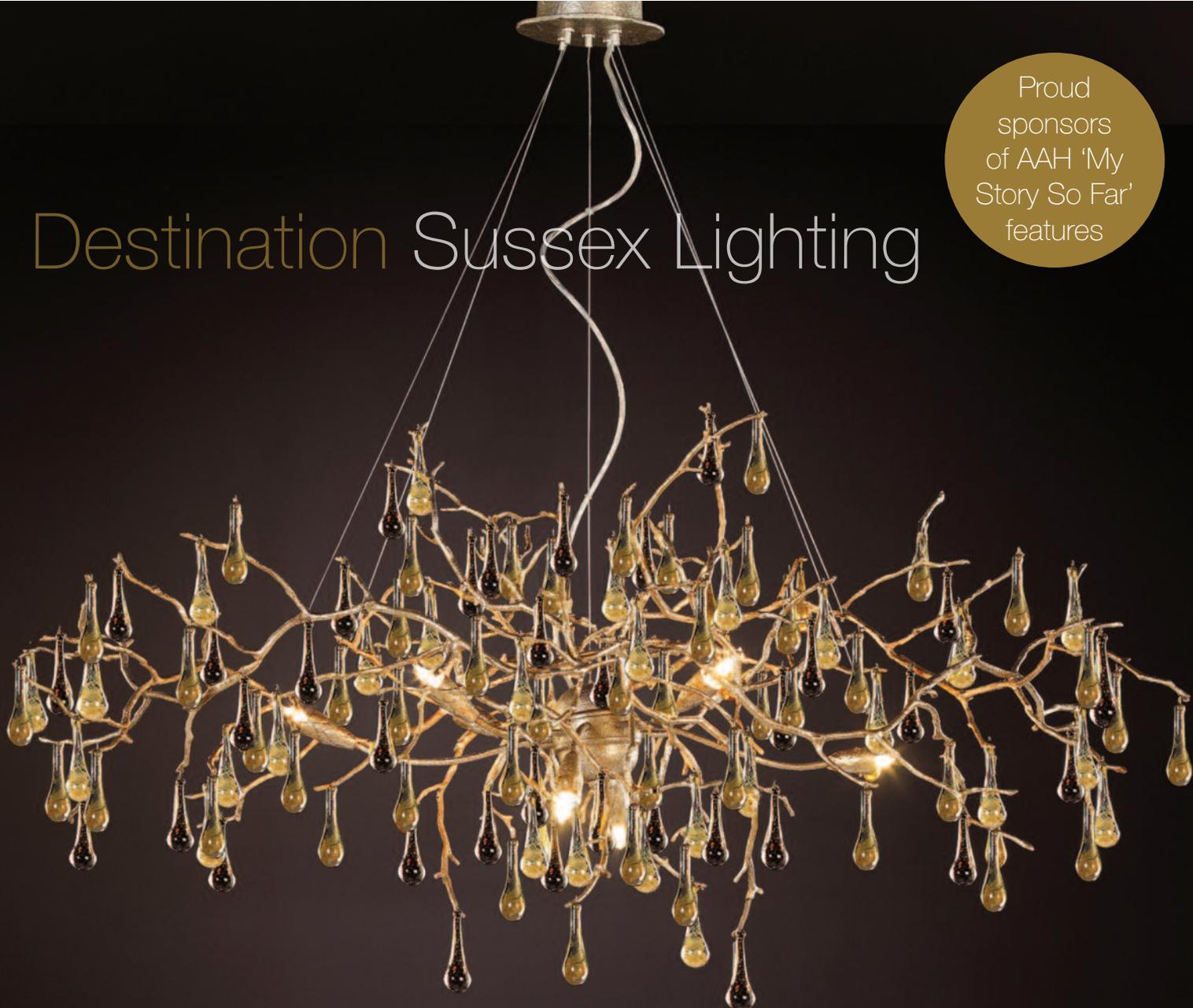
PHOTOS: TOBY PHILLIPS



- You can visit the shop at West Point, Springfield Road, Horsham, or view the website at www.sussexlighting.co.uk Suzannah and Andy also offer a Sussex Lighting Consultancy Service. Details of that are also online

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Sussex Lighting provides high quality lighting, as well as a wide range of unique interior solutions and gift ideas. Our product range covers all styles from the contemporary to the traditional.

We boast some beautiful hand-made glassware, art and mirrors that are sure to enhance the beauty of your home. Our aim is to provide a friendly, relaxed, inspirational shopping experience in our spacious, stylish surroundings. Open 7 days a week with customer parking.



 **Sussex Lighting** & interiors

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