

Product design



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Anglepoise lamp
adjustable metal 'limbs', springs
1933
George Carwardine for Anglepoise Ltd.
www.anglepoise.co.uk
www.designmuseum.org/design/anglepoise

Designed by the automotive engineer George Carwardine, the ANGLEPOISE lamp is based on the ability of a new type of spring invented by Carwardine in 1932 to remain in position after being moved in every conceivable direction. Efficient and energy-saving, the Anglepoise has remained in production ever since.

Many inventors produce ingenious ideas because they set themselves a goal – such as improving the performance of a particular product or finding a new means of tackling a problem – and set their sights on achieving it. Yet the Anglepoise lamp, was invented by accident, as a by-product of an earlier invention.

The Anglepoise lamp was designed by George Carwardine (1887-1948), an automotive engineer who owned a factory in Bath which developed vehicle suspension systems. He loved to tinker in his workshop and especially enjoyed developing different types of springs. During these experiments, Carwardine designed a new type of spring which could be moved easily in every direction yet could also remain rigid when held in position.

Carwardine eventually found a suitable use for his spring – a lamp which, supported and balanced by a sequence of springs, could be constantly repositioned to focus the light in specific directions.

Inspired by the constant tension principle of human limbs, Carwardine developed a lamp which could be both flexible and stable, like a human arm. He designed a heavy base to stabilise the lamp, and a shade which could concentrate the beam on specific points without causing dazzle. This focused beam enabled the lamp to consume less electricity than existing models. Carwardine thought it would be useful for the workmen in his factory to illuminate particular components or parts of suspension systems, but he soon realised that it would be equally suitable for illuminating the papers and books lying on office desks.