

BLINDNESS /// Nightscape

LECTURE SYNOPSIS: *The nocturne evokes imagination, emotion, and memory; surrounded by seemingly less in the dark, one's brain is able to become more active and creative, shedding light on the idea that less information does not necessarily mean less meaning. Architecture shrouded by night beckons the soul to start to come alive, so this looming potential makes the architect wonder: how does one design for night? The illumination of cities has made moments of complete darkness rarer, and more beautiful than they've ever been, attracting photographers to manipulate night to combat the "everydayness of life [that] gets in the way of the eternal" (George Tice).*

SCREENING SYNOPSIS: *Chris Downey described his life as a juxtaposition of "sighted" and "unsighted" experiences; remarkably he observed that the latter proved to be a much more multi-sensory existence—one where he became aware of the sun warming half his face and the rapidity of his city changing before him. He discussed the idea that cities are good for the blind, and the blind are good for cities because they become more accessible, equitable, and well-connected places to accommodate all.*

READING SYNOPSIS: *Borges lost the "visible world" yet he voices his optimism by stating that blindness is a way of life—an instrument—that is not entirely unfortunate, for misfortune transforms us so that we may aspire to make things that are truly eternal. Tanazaki writes of the change of the quality of light which has led to an experiential and cultural loss for the Japanese. The Japanese cherish the "glow of grime" which is formed from time and touch, and the richness of the traditional lacquer which is meant to be seen by candlelight—in darkness does it truly look beautiful. Even a murky bowl of miso transforms to a thing of mystery and depth in darkness.*

CONCLUSION + REFLECTION: *The readings were fascinating: urging me to see a different perspective and revealing the high level of intentionality of cultural architecture. The lectures engaged my experiences with darkness; I remember running down to the river with my brother, the lack of visibility triggered our memory of the landscape, and sharpened our senses—I can still recall the feeling of the crisp night air—it felt quite eerie but extraordinary at the same time. Finally, I discovered the importance of designing beyond the "2 PM hour", so that architecture may age gracefully and intentionally, and gain a quality that outlives the "immediacy of now".*





BLINDNESS /// ain't it nice? PART I

It is night in Franklin, Tennessee. I love Franklin. But tonight it sucks. It's the last place I want to be.

I see the stars, playing tag with the moon as they race throughout the sky. I hear the crickets and cicadas, it's July 30th in Middle Tennessee. I touch the roof of my Jeep, I'm laying down on top as the sun finally sneaks away. I smell the fresh mud in the field I'm illegally trespassing and driving in, it has just rained. I taste a medium Coke from Sonic, an almost nightly tradition that summer.

There are some 6,700 nights I could talk about. But just as Jorge Luis Borges had those nights of going to the library or rediscovering the language of his ancestors, I have had those nights. Nights of beauty and inspiration, they are countless to me.

Night brings out something different in me. In the void of darkness, I've never failed to find a light of creativity and inspiration. Just as Le Corbusier found it in Buenos Aires, I found it in New York City in 2017.

I am in Greenwich Village on a weekend trip with my parents and

brother. It is my first time in New York and I'm taking everything in. The towering buildings, the lights, the magnificent feeling that you, yes, you, are at the center of the world. It is midnight and the wind blows cold so we walk into a restaurant, the only place open we can find.

It is dark out, rendering us blind. But it is somehow inspiring. It reminds me of Borges or Le Corbusier, who were inspired even when they couldn't see (that being literal blindness or just the night sky).

I walk to the bathroom and I pass a piece of art of the block we're on. I quickly lock myself in the stall and jot a poem down on a piece of tissue paper and a pen

Ain't it nice?

To walk these streets

To smell her perfume

To hear her necklace

To feel her hand

As it reaches for yours





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NYC, THE EAST VILLAGE - NYC, THE OCULUS - FRANKLIN, SUNSET OVER THE FIELD
JACK /// BRADFORD_BLINDNESS.PDF /// WALLACE

BLINDNESS /// i am still scared of the dark

LECTURE SYNOPSIS. Often times, blindness is associated with the darkness of night. Night is considered to be lonely and oppressive. This notion is, naturally, wrong. Darkness, after all, is the natural state of the universe. We just got lucky that a sun was nearby.

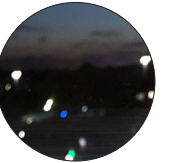
When our natural sun is gone, our artificial ones are waiting just outside my window. I am never in the dark anymore. The darkness used to be overwhelming, so often compared to blindness. This darkness brought human connection, a sense of shared humanity through this instinctive fear of the dark. This natural tendency has always been there, but it has only become more overpowering. Now, we can't be in the dark. Now, we can't be bored. Now, we can't be alone.

EXERCISE SYNOPSIS. Blindness, to people who are not blind, is scary. Most people see it as infinitely lonely and frightening to not be able to see. This makes sense due to most of our input being visual. But blindness can also be unifying. Disabilities like blindness cut across other dividing lines. Something about being vulnerable leads to further human connection. In the end, there are those with disabilities and those that haven't found them yet anyways.

READING SYNOPSIS. Blindness is not a limiting factor. If anything, it provides the opportunity to enrich learning and growing. There is a great contrast in being blind and being unable to make sense of the world around you or the days of old. The loss of one of the core senses enlightens you to appreciate what you still know and what you still have. Shadows are consistent through time and through sightedness. You just have to know what to look for.

CONCLUSION + REFLECTION. We must reclaim the dark. Part of this comes from accepting out instinctive fear of the dark. I am still scared of the dark. You are still scared of the dark. We are all still scared of the dark. There is a peace in the darkness, in the unknown. We must come to accept loneliness, boredom, darkness.

How else can we remember the beauty of light?





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PED WALKWAY @ NIGHT; SUNSET IN ANTIGUA; A CONCERT
JAMIE CAHILL /// CAHILL_BLINDNESS.PDF /// CAMERON DAVIS

BLINDNESS /// soul of the nocturn

There was a time when, at night, scouts stood in the woods, listening for the smallest crisp movement to cock their heads that direction. I do not remember. So I peer into the stories in Remington's art and listen too.

There was a time when meals were consumed in candlelight, allowing aromas and flavors to be "meditated upon" without interference of fluorescence. Lacquerware glistened in the harmonious dim glow. I do not remember. So I read Tanazaki and praise the curious shadows that I do not understand.

There was a time when stories passed down generations around the campfire's smiling glow. In the flames and chilled night air, imaginative tales took hold. I do not remember. So I listen to bedtime stories from my grandmother with my eyes closed as I imagine the scenes for myself as I try to sleep.

I remember a time when my house was at the edge of the neighborhood. Beyond laid uncharted woods, a place for exploration during the day and mystery at night. At night I stared at the stars as I looked out my window, incorrectly guessing which complied the big dipper. I remember. Construction gave birth to overillumination. Now all I have are the memories and stars are so hard to see that I wonder if they are there.

In a state of blindness "shared humanity and togetherness" are revealed. Disability is inclusive and cuts across all lines of what makes people different from one another. Architect Chris Downey explains that he views "the city" in a new sensory way as a blind man.

I imagine blindness as a world of black, but Borges assures me I am wrong. With his contradictory gifts of a library at his fingertips, yet no way to see words on a page, he found an aural, musical understanding of literature. Tanazaki also praises the soul of the nocturn, and claims that in the "secrets of shadows" reside the truest, fullest experience of eating a meal or inhabiting architecture. In blindness and darkness, one can truly see. A culture different from our own emerges and we look inward.

I have traveled a lot, but wonder if I have truly seen these places without walking around at night? Brassai's photographs of Paris after dark and the Notre Dame show me an inversion of a city I know by day and allow me to see "beyond the moment" (George Tice). The soul of the nocturn holds true mystery and imagination. As I type this and look around my dark room, the moonbeams project onto the wall as I sit in my computer's artificial shine. The room is alive.





BLINDNESS /// Blinded by the light

LECTURE SYNOPSIS. *Darkness gives us a unique understanding of architecture. What is seen in the day cannot necessarily be seen in the night, but what is felt, what is heard, what is smelled overshadows everything seen in the light. Capturing architecture at night has become almost obsolete. It doesn't capture the true form or the true beauty. It captures more. It captures the allusion, the eeriness, and the mystery within. Night is not only what's seen, but it is also what is understood. The amount of attention you pay to the environment around you and underneath you is far greater when you cannot see it. Blindness captures far more from architecture than anything our eye can see.*

EXERCISE SYNOPSIS. *Without the ability to see, you begin to appreciate your other senses more. You learn to rely on touch and sound to know what's around you and where you're going. Only then do you appreciate the architecture around you. When we can see we get distracted by everything surrounding the form. When our sight is taken away we are forced to let the form control us. It dictates where you go. It dictates where you are and how you got there. While we feel like we have the power over a building, it ultimately encapsulates us.*

READING SYNOPSIS. *Even when we're unable to see, we aren't completely blind. We learn to adapt to the built environment and appreciate its form, not its appearance. This extends to all aspects of life, not just design. What is seen with the eye is deceiving. It is manipulative and unfaithful. The eye can always be tricked, but once we learn to feel in a different way we are no longer fooled. Each of the readings discusses how we see without sight. Blindness changes our lens we use to see the world. We cannot see, so we must feel. In architecture, we feel the form and the function of building, sidewalks, stairs, and all aspects of what is built. In life, we feel what something or someone does to our soul, not to our eyes. The distraction is removed and we then understand what's around us.*

CONCLUSION + REFLECTION. *Understanding the built environment should never stop with the eye. Understand what is felt when all sources of light are taken away. Never are we truly limited by darkness. It is only a state of mind that can always be overcome. In a sense we are blinded by the light; what is seen distracts from what needs to be understood.*





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[L+R] FARNSWORTH HOUSE W/RED ACCENT, ILLINOIS; LOS ANGELES SKY SCRAPERS
JOEL /// WORTHAM_BLINDNESS.PDF /// JESSICA RICE