

# The Dark Art at PLDC 2013

## The Dark Art Manifesto.

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*During the last few years there have been a growing number of voices within our profession who have promoted the use of darkness in lighting design, proposing philosophies and technical methods which define new forms of understanding light and darkness.*



*For three years The Dark Art movement has promoted the positive use of darkness in lighting design. The movement has attempted to understand the human relationship with both light and darkness by looking at our evolutionary past and how it has shaped our social understanding of these two elements.*

*Light as a representation of all that is good, and darkness as a negative quality is a simple yet powerful concept that is deeply embedded in our consciousness and is clearly evident in existing standards and regulations.*

*Current regulations, guidelines and environmental standards demonstrate a preference for high illumination levels, an excessive use of uniformity and a fear of contrast. Even when not mandatory, this framework has a subconscious influence on designers who work with light.*

### PLDC Copenhagen 2013

On 2. November, 2013 The Dark Art had the opportunity to participate at PLDC in Copenhagen and bring experts together to explore the positive attributes of darkness and develop these concepts further. The Dark Art invited five talented and accomplished guest speakers to join with us to elaborate and present their unique perspectives on darkness and design:

- ⇒ Edward Bartholomew: Journey to Darkness
- ⇒ Eduardo Gonçalves: Adaptive lighting in urban space
- ⇒ Paulina Villalobos: Light Pollution and dark sky, influence on animals and people
- ⇒ Christopher Cuttle: Ridding ourselves of the barriers to darkness in lighting design
- ⇒ Koert Vermeulen: Darkness is more important than ever

Following each of the short papers (see PLD #89) a lively discussion took place in which the audience and speakers exchanged opinions. The discussion covered design hierarchy and narrative, dynamic adaptive lighting, perceived adequacy of illumination, lighting standards, emotive design, dark skies, and effects on creativity at low light levels.

Light and darkness fascinate us, and we have been inspired by the level of enthusiasm from the design community to pursue these topics further. The community's input through opinions, comments and constructive criticism have allowed for us to solidify our objectives in the form of a manifesto which is published here for the first time.

### The Dark Art Manifesto

The Dark Art is a movement that explores the relationship between darkness and light within the context of architectural lighting design. Our aim is to create a lighting design philosophy that promotes a balanced view of light and darkness to enhance creative freedom whilst incorporating rational standardisation.

### Darkness defined

Darkness is a subjective term for perceived reduction in brightness. The term encompasses shade, shadow and the absence of visible light. It is a subjective quality that is relative to the adaptation of the human eye and is accentuated through contrast or comparable brightness.

### The Dark Art Principles

- ⇒ Light and Dark Design – Light and dark were created equal; the properties of darkness are in symmetry with those of light. It is the lighting designer's responsibility to explore the full light-to-dark spectrum.
- ⇒ Natural focus on light – As lighting designers, we tend to instinctively focus on light. However, darkness, shadow and contrast have an aesthetic significance that is essential to the design of inspirational spaces.
- ⇒ Culture – Our culture is influenced by the primitive evolutionary concept that Light is Good and Darkness is Evil. It is necessary to surpass this misconception to master the art and science of lighting design.
- ⇒ Standards – Within the framework of lighting standards, the evaluation of lit space utilises metrics and methods which restrict the use of darkness and contrast. This may unintentionally result in spaces which are aesthetically deficient and energy inefficient.
- ⇒ Sustainability – A lighting design palette that includes darkness and contrast provides opportunities to create sustainable spaces.
- ⇒ Visual Adaptation – The lighting design profession should acknowledge the capability of the eye's adaptive response, ensuring visually rich environments that are inherently more natural to humans.
- ⇒ Design Hierarchy – Aesthetic design requires narrative and visual hierarchy. Uniform lighting is in direct conflict with this principle.
- ⇒ Development of the Profession – The lighting design profession is not static. New emerging methods of understanding light and darkness must be explored.

### The Dark Art pledges

- ⇒ To promote the positive use of the full light-to-dark spectrum in lighting design.
- ⇒ To encourage the design of sustainable spaces in terms of energy use, human inhabitability and aesthetic quality.
- ⇒ To encourage the evolution of the lighting design profession towards better methods of understanding light and darkness.
- ⇒ To co-operate with groups, associations and individuals to develop the profession.
- ⇒ To share knowledge.

These ideas are published for consideration, debate and the progression of our profession. Join us for the discussion.

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