Interstices, Issue 27: Darkness

Deadline: Mar 31, 2027

Carl Douglas

Interstices: Journal of Architecture & Related Arts – Issue 27: Darkness.

"The darkness is our comfort, yet we continue to repulse it. The darkness that had defined our form has been replaced with space" (i).

Architects have often upheld the value of light: illumination, vision, clarity, comprehension, and publicity. According to a powerful prevailing metaphor, light is knowledge and seeing more is knowing more. In counterpoint, darkness has often been treated as subversive or threatening; a place of obscure dangers or vague mysteries. In an age of mandatory optimism and relentless publicity, it is a great sin to be gloomy or obscure. At the same time however, darkness fascinates. Dark imaginaries thrive in art, fiction, film, games, and popular culture. For this issue of Interstices, we ask: what is the agency of darkness in architecture? That is, what does darkness do in, for or through architecture? Contributors could address:

— Dark architecture: What are the architectural uses of darkness, dimness, blackness, night, or shadow? What are the materiality and aesthetics of “spatial darkness”? (ii)

— Te kore, te pō: In te ao Māori, darkness is manifold and rich with potential. Te Kore is the void of death, but also “a state through which we move in order to enter the future” (iii). It marks both a limit and a perpetual origin.

— Productive unknowing: digital techniques and pressure for quantifiable outcomes seem to require more data, more resolution, more publicity, and more transparency. But is knowing more and seeing more always better? How can architecture work productively with unknowing?

— Architectural drawing and imaging: Black marks can assert determination or implacable mass, but also indicate repeated revisions or redactions. Sfumato “mobilizes [our] projective faculty” and poché persists in the dark spaces of a digital point-cloud (iv).

— Blackness: As Franz Fanon demonstrated, blackness is a colonial construction that becomes lived experience (v). How has racialised darkness operated in architecture?

— Depression: How have architects worked against, into, or through dark mental states? How might architecture resist or reinforce the contemporary “privatisation of stress” described by Mark Fisher (vi)?

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Submissions:

Submit your abstract (300-500 words) by Wed 31 March, 2027 to carl.douglas@aut.ac.nz

Submissions must comply with Interstices' AI policy: "human authors are solely responsible… written content generated by AI must be declared".

Style Guide and AI Policy: https://interstices.ac.nz/index.php/Interstices/Style_Guide

If selected, full paper submission (up to 5000 words) due Thu 15 July, 2027
Publication in December, 2027.

References:

i) Hereaka, Whiti. Kurangaituku. Huia Publishers, 2021. p.10
ii) Riegl, Aloïs, and Benjamin Binstock. "Excerpts from 'The Dutch Group Portrait.'" October 74 (1995): 3–35. https://doi.org/10.2307/778818. p.10
iii) Nepia, Moana. "Te Kore. Exploring the Māori Concept of Void." PhD Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2012. p.63
iv) Gombrich, Ernst H. Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation. Princeton University Press, 2000. p.222. Young, Michael. Reality Modeled after Images: Architecture and Aesthetics after the Digital Image. Routledge, 2022. p.51
v) Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin, White Masks, Grove Press, 2008. p.84
vi) Fisher, Mark. Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? Zero Books, 2009. p.19

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Reference:
CFP: Interstices, Issue 27: Darkness. In: ArtHist.net, Nov 20, 2026 (accessed Nov 20, 2026),

<https://arthist.net/archive/57162>.