

TITLE

Penumbra as a starting point

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ABSTRACT

“Even space intended to be dark should have just enough light from some mysterious opening to tell us how dark it really is.” (Louis I. Kahn, cited in McCarter 2005, p. 136)

This paper concerns strategic design principles arising from the study of solid light in space through the interstitial presence of penumbra. Penumbra (from Latin *paene*, „almost“ y *umbra*, „shadow“) is understood and presented as the space of soft shadow between light and total darkness, an area where it is difficult to define the ending of one presence and the beginning of another. The paper questions various processual modes that approach light as matter and posits the thesis that penumbra is a fundamental medium for understanding and approaching the phenomenal inseparability of light and shadow.

Through the work and reflections of Tadao Ando, Louis Kahn and Campo Baeza, the paper reviews the connotations of spaces conceived from the shadow, its characteristics as void, the role of penumbra as core element for holding content, the role of inner form for reinforcing syntax and the use of chiaroscuro for encouraging contemplation and movement. All principles are observations emerging from architecture in service of the phenomenon of light.

The paper concludes by stressing the role of penumbra when approaching design processes as well as presenting the idea of palimpsestic projections as a platform for creating correspondences between architectural processes and the manifestation of space.

