

Space is nothing until interrupted. Light is invisible until interrupted by a surface, line, or point, thus made visible. In dealing with our visual environment, the psychological sensations can be broken down into three elements of visual design.

They are: focal glow, ambient luminescence, and the play of brilliants.

Focal glow is the campfire of all time, the glowing embers around which stories are told, or the football rally bonfire. It is the light burning at the window or the welcoming gleam of the open door. Focal glow is the limelight of aphorism and the follow spot on the modern stage, or an aircraft beacon. It is Klieglight on a theatre facade or flashlight on a stair. Focal glow is the sunburst through the clouds and the shaft of sunshine that warms the far end of the valley. It is the movie screen in the theatre, the pool of light at your favorite reading chair, your airplane seat light. Focal glow is the Harvest Moon, matchlight on a face, a bombursa. Focal glow is the end of the rainbow. The attraction of focal glow commands attention and creates interest. It fixes the gaze, concentrates the mind, and tells people what to look at. It sells merchandise. Focal glow separates the important from the unimportant. It establishes precedence, can induce movement, and direct and control traffic. Focal glow helps people see.

Ambient luminescence is a snowy morning in open country. It is twilight haze on a mountaintop, or a cloudy day on the ocean. It is underwater in the sunshine, or in a white tent at high noon. Ambient Luminescence is the full cyclorama of the open theatre and a brilliantly lighted white room without visible lights. It is vaporous light and all we can sense of indirect lighting. Ambient Luminescence minimizes the importance of all things and all people. It fills people with a sense of freedom of space and can suggest infinity. It is usually reassuring and is restful. The background of ambient luminescence is created at night by fixtures that throw light to walls, curtains, screens, ceilings, and over floors for indirect reflection from these surfaces. A background of ambient luminescence is created by using light colored walls, curtains and ceilings as part of the lighting fixtures. Even light colored carpet has reflecting surfaces to light.

Play of brilliants is the aurora borealis. It is a cache of diamonds in an opened cave or the Versailles hall of mirrors with its thousands of candle flames - a ballroom of crystal chandeliers. Play of brilliants is Times Square at night. It is night automobiles at a busy-running cloverleaf or a night city from the air. It is sunlight on a tumbling brook, sparkling fountains against a hedgegrowth or a water fight at high noon. Play of brilliants is the heaven full of stars. It is summer lightning or a swarm of lightning bugs - the phosphorous waters in the churning wake of a motor boat. It is birch trees interlaced by a car's headlights. Play of brilliants is the magic of the Christmas tree, Fourth of July skyrockets, and torchlight parades. It is the fantasy excitement of carnival lights, and restrained gaiety of Japanese lanterns at a fete. These brilliants are the jewels worn by your home. A play of brilliants excites the optic nerves, in turn stimulates the body and spirit and charms the senses. It creates a feeling of aliveness, alerts the mind, awakens curiosity, and sharpens the wit. Play of brilliants quickens the appetite and heightens all sensation. It can be distracting or it can be entertaining.¹²

RICHARD KELLY

¹²"Statement to Mrs. Edward Emerson", editor of *The Bulletin*, after a talk at Garden Club of America Forum in New York City - November 15, 1962