

## The Insignificant: Curating "Everyday" Lights in Bangkok

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## Abstract

The “insignificant” in this article is not meant unimportant, but a neutral state of the subject waiting to be acknowledged by the observer. This concept is based on the theories of “everyday life,” proposed by Charles Baudelaire and Maurice Blanchot. In “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), Baudelaire redefined art as the object of everyday, while Blanchot’s “Everyday Speech” (1959) described the everyday as something difficult to grasp, yet existed along the urban streets.

This article is the exploration into everyday lights and darkness in different architectural scales and cultural contexts. The exploration is classified through scholarly texts from *Electric Light: An Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt in Urban Night, “Silence and Light” - *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* by Robert Twombly and *In Praise of Shadows* by Jun’ichiro Tanizaki in Architecture of Light and Shadow, and *The Room of One’s Own* by DOGMA in Light in Domestic Space.

The findings suggest that the *flâneur*, as a process of work, can be thought of as a study of urban life. “Splendid moments,” as Blanchot suggested, are curated to represent the everyday of Bangkok’s streets, architecture and domestic spaces. The significance is to exhibit the perception of lights in the mind of Bangkok’s inhabitants in a more sentient way.

**Keywords:** insignificant, *flâneur*, everyday life, light, Bangkok

## Introduction

The “insignificant” is a category describing a neutral state in which the subject is waiting to be acknowledged by the observer. To acknowledge something is to recognize and give attention to its existence. We don’t constantly think about the sun, the first order, just like how we don’t constantly think about breathing. It just happens. Light and darkness in this study are equally important. Reflecting on Genesis, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:1-4, NIV (The Holy Bible, 2011)), we are reminded of the existence of darkness before light. Darkness and light are essentially tied together; one cannot exist without the other. This points to other subjects that revolve around light and support each other’s existence, such as the electric light at night time, the shadow during the day.

This article is the study of the notion of the insignificant in relation to urban life. It is a supplement to the discussion on “everyday life” by proposing that lights and darkness can be thought of as the subjects of work and as “means of production of perceptions” (Chitrabongs, 2022: 12). The light of nature may be the first to come to mind when we think of light, but in a world full of urbanized settings and artificial constructs, electric light plays an indispensable role in shaping modern life. Electric light has become so embedded in the everyday of our contemporary life that we may not notice it. To understand why, the study draws on the artistic view of the discussion on “everyday life,” developed by Charles Baudelaire and Maurice Blanchot.

## 1. Theoretical Frameworks

### 1.1 *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* by Charles Baudelaire

Charles Baudelaire, a French poet and art critic in the 19th century, in “The Painter of Modern Life” (Baudelaire, 1863/1964), saw meaning and beauty in ordinary moments. Maurice Blanchot, a French writer and philosopher, later deepened this view in “Everyday Speech” (Blanchot, 1959/1987), describing the everyday as a space where subtle, poetic experiences can emerge. Rooted in the end of 19th-century and mid-20th-century France, their ideas cut across places and time, remaining relevant to the analyses of Bangkok’s street today.

In “The Painter of Modern Life,” Charles Baudelaire questions what art is. He challenges classical notions of art by calling on artists to turn their attention to the present. Baudelaire writes: “The pleasure which we derive from the representation of the present is due not only to the beauty with which it can be invested, but also to its essential quality of being present” (Baudelaire, 1863/1964: 1). To him, drawing attention to the importance of the present, which will soon be the past, is to place an emphasis upon the time that should not be taken lightly. While classical art has value in its historical and biblical contexts, there are much rooms left for interpretations. Its value, and this is Baudelaire’s argument, lies in the fact that the portrait of the past once belongs to the present. Artists of the modern life, rather than drawing on historical or mythological themes of the past, should capture the fleeting beauty of contemporary moment.

To illustrate this, Baudelaire distinguishes between two types of artists: the “painter of eternal,” dealing with grand, unchanging subjects, and the “painter of the passing moment” attentive to the shifting

rhythms of modern urban life. The second type is drawn to the city's energy, its streets, and the crowd, committed to observing and capturing the ordinary, yet meaningful, fragments of everyday existence (Baudelaire, 1863/1964: 4–5). Constantin Guys serves as Baudelaire's model of the modern artist. Celebrated for his ability to document the subtle details of urban life, Guys is described as “a passionate lover of crowds and incognitos” (Baudelaire, 1863/1964: 5). He moves through the city like a *flâneur*, immersing himself in the flow of modernity while quietly recording it. This dual role of observer and interpreter allows the artist to find poetry in what most pedestrians would ignore.

In short, Baudelaire's concept of everyday life celebrates the fleeting nature of the present, encouraging artists to find value in what is often dismissed as insignificant. This perspective shaped later artistic movements such as Impressionism, with its focus on light and atmosphere, and Symbolism, which sought emotional depth in ordinary experiences. His redefinition of art had a lasting impact, reshaping modern aesthetics and setting the stage for later thinkers like Maurice Blanchot to deepen the exploration of the everyday.

### 1.2 “Everyday Speech” - *Yale French Studies* by Maurice Blanchot

Maurice Blanchot describes the traits of the everyday, defines where it belongs, and the concept of insignificance. Blanchot thinks that the “everyday” is not merely an event. It doesn't belong to history. The everyday, to Blanchot “belongs to insignificance, and the insignificant is without truth, without reality, without secret, but perhaps also the site of all possible signification” (Blanchot, 1959/1987: 14). Blanchot challenges the idea that the significance can only be found in the extraordinary. To him, the everyday is not a blank or meaningless backdrop, but a space where subtle beauty quietly resides. What appears insignificant, like fleeting encounters of a circus or an elephant walking along the street, can be worthy of a pause to observe. Blanchot suggests that these seemingly trivial moments are not lacking in meaning, but are instead filled with potential, waiting to be noticed. The “splendid moment” in Blanchot's view, seems ordinary at the first glance yet through mindful observation is thought-provoking holding hidden and ephemeral beauty. The splendid moment does not arrive from outside the ordinary but emerges from the ordinary within it, often when we are most attuned to the present. While becoming more attentive to the unnoticed rhythms of everyday life, we begin to see how the ordinary holds its own kind of miracle, giving an ephemeral moment a value worthy to be remembered.

## 2. Literature Reviews

With Baudelaire and Blanchot's ideas on everyday life in mind, we now turn our attention to existing scholarly works that express viewpoints towards natural light, electric light, darkness and shadow. These works are classified through the writers' professions, namely art historian, architect, artist, novelist and philosopher (see Table 1). Georges Bataille, for an example, rejects bourgeois values, including the idealization of nature such as daylight. Bataille embraces irrational aspects of life, the dark (Bataille, 1927). Jun'ichiro Tanizaki is in favour of shadow, aesthetics of the east. He criticizes electric light as something

overpowering the beauty of shadow. Architects, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the importance of natural light. Louis Khan called it a “the giver of all presences” (Twombly, 2003: 228). The perception of lights is individualistic and at the same time individualism can be understood by the general public.

This article is an attempt to introduce the idea that art exists in everyday life. To recognize art, it requires us to notice the insignificant that is memorable and personal to oneself. In *Sousou no Frieren* (Yamada & Abe, 2020) written by Yamada Kanehito, one chapter portrays the view of sunrise. The point lies in the moment when a character realizes that sharing the scenery with someone is more important than the beauty of the scenery itself.

Table 1 Scholar’s notion on Lights, Shadow and Darkness

Collection of works for literature review				
This table exhibit a list of works that show several aspect of natural light, electric light, shadow and darkness perceived by people of different profession collected from all kind of sources available to the author. Then few works with insights that provide fresh perspectives on how electric light shapes our perception of space and experiences were selected.				
Profession	Name	Reference work/material	What the work says regard light	Chosen
Art historian	Sandy Isenstadt	Electric Light: An Architecture History, 2018	He argues that electric light should be perceived as a new architectural material, that it shape the mood of the space changing from one to another.	○
Architect	Tadao Ando	The Colours of Light, 1996	Light is not merely an ornament that use to decorate a building but should be considered as an active element use to activate architecture.	
	Juhani Pallasmaa	The Eyes of the Skin, 1996	Modern architecture rely heavily on the sense of vision which implies the existence of light as the main activation element, arguing that in order to enrich sensory depth the design should engage in all other sense like touch, sound and smell.	
	Rem Koolhaas	Delirious New York, 1978	Artificial light was discussed as a part of new technologies allowed for extensions of height and generated new forms of experience, which would naturally involve transformations in how light was used and experienced within this urbanized landscape.	
	Louis Kahn	Louis Kahn: Essential Texts, 2003	Kahn defined light as “the giver of all presences” revealing a space’s essence. He viewed electric light as static and valued shadows as being a part of the light. Architecture can’t exist without light.	○
	Richard Kelly	The Structure of Light Richard Kelly and the Illumination of Modern Architecture, edited by Dietrich Neumann, 2010	Kelly pioneered architectural lighting, emphasizing electric light’s psychological impact. Light is a fundamental design element and not merely an accessory. The book focuses on Kelly’s three principles of light—focal glow, ambient luminescence, and the play of brilliants.	
	Pier Vittorio Aureli	The Room of One’s Own, 2017	The book focuses on the architectural and conceptual evolution of the room and its relationship to broader social structures. The documentation of rooms allow us to observe the potential relationship of light in a private space to the inhabitants’ way of life.	○
Artist	Claude Monet	Impression, Sunrise, 1872	Monet’s work highlights the changing nature of light throughout the day, showing how it transforms objects and colors. It captures the fleeting atmosphere of a sunrise over the port of Le Havre, prioritizing the artist’s subjective feeling and the transient effects of light and atmosphere over precise detail.	
	Pierre-Auguste Renoir	Luncheon of the Boating Party, 1881	Renoir’s approach to light is warm and joyful, with its source comes from the large opening in the balcony, creating a natural, dappled effect as the sunlight filters through depicting his friends enjoying a relaxed summer day on the balcony of the Maison Fournaise restaurant, celebrating friendship, leisure, and sensuous pleasures.	
	Mark Rothko	Rothko’s Chapel, 1971	Rothko’s paintings in the Chapel were designed with artificial lighting to create an emotional, immersive atmosphere. The controlled lighting is key to experiencing his abstract works, which aim to evoke heightened emotions through light manipulation.	
Novelist	Jun’ichirō Tanizaki	In Praise of Shadows, 1933	Tanizaki favors shadows, celebrating the beauty of dim light. He critiques electric light for overpowering and erasing the beauty of shadows.	○
Philosopher	Georges Bataille	The Solar Anus, 1927	This essay rejects bourgeois values, including the idealization of nature and daylight. Bataille embraces the dark, irrational aspects of life that natural light may hide.	
	Jean-Paul Sartre	Nausea, 1938	In this novel, Sartre explores perception and alienation, where the protagonist’s experiences are detached from the natural world, with artificial lighting playing a more significant role in shaping his inner world.	

Source: by the author

From the list of existing scholarly works on natural light, electric light, darkness and shadow, the author selects the insights that provide fresh perspectives on how electric light shapes our perception of space and our emotional experiences. This is often overlooked, yet it has a profound impact on how we feel and interact with the world around us. Through this lens, we explore how electric light has been discussed in literature, examining its influence on modern life and everyday life experiences.

## 2.1 Urban Night - *Electric Light: an Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt

In *Electric Light: An Architectural History* (Isenstadt, 2018), Sandy Isenstadt explores how electric lighting reshaped modern architecture, urban space, and human perception. He argues that electric light is more than a technological tool. It functions as an architectural element that transforms spatial aesthetics and emotional experience. As an active material, it turns ordinary environments into dynamic, evolving spaces, making the city itself a site of living artwork.



Figure 1 (left) *Prometheus*, 1919, by Maxfield Parrish. Oil on Panel.

Source: *Electric Light: an Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt

Figure 2 (right) *Street Light*, 1909, by Giacomo Balla. Oil on canvas.

Source: *Electric Light: an Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt

The transition from gaslight to electric light marked a major shift in the urban experience (Isenstadt, 2018: 9–11). More than just improved visibility, it redefined how people interacted with public space. Gaslight, used since William Murdoch's invention in the early 1700s, offered a warm, flickering glow but had limited reach and required manual operation. By the late 1800s, electric light introduced greater control and immediacy, allowing streets to be illuminated at the *flip of a switch*. This change not only improved efficiency but also transformed the city's atmosphere, turning night into an active, social, and theatrical setting. The impact of these changes left an impression on observers who were there, who heard and learned of such moments. They then captured and expressed these changes in the form of art, like how Maxfield Parrish in his painting compared Thomas Edison to Prometheus, a divine being who stole the light from the gods and bestowed it to the hands of man (see Figure 1). Giacomo Balla's 1909 painting *Street*

*Light* demonstrated the electric glow overpowering moonlight (see Figure 2), symbolizing the move from natural to human-controlled illumination



Figure 3 (left) *Cristo Redentor* illuminated with new lighting equipment on December 31, 1965, by Pope Paul VI from the Vatican. Photograph by Dia Mundial do Diabetes.

Source: *Electric Light: an Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt

Figure 4 (right) *Lighted commercial speech* in Times Square, ca. 1923. Photograph by Unknown maker.

Source: *Electric Light: an Architectural History* by Sandy Isenstadt

There are two examples that Isenstadt gave to illustrate the changes of city dwellers’ perception of the night and the emergent of electric light into the urban street. In Chapter 2, “At the Flip of a Switch,” he describes the 1965 moment when Pope Paul VI illuminated the *Cristo Redentor* statue in Rio de Janeiro from the Vatican (see Figure 3). This act, to flip a switch, demonstrates two main benefits of electric light. The first improvement is how effortless it is compared to the earlier systems that required manual operation and the physical presence of the lamplighter to light each and every lamp on the street. The second advantage is the further distance it can cover in one single movement of a finger. In Chapter 5, “Electric Speech in the City,” attention turns to electric signage and its influence on perception. The term “Great White Way” (see Figure 4), was used to describe the glowing expanse of Broadway and Times Square, capturing how illuminated advertisements transformed everyday streets into “a river of light,” a vibrant, theatrical experience (Isenstadt, 2018: 24–26, 154–178). Animated signs with moving words and pictures blurred the line between cinema and street. As one moviegoer noted, he “perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left.” These developments didn’t just light up the city, they altered how people felt, moved, and imagined urban space.

Isenstadt’s study of the shift from gaslight to electric light reveals how electric light became an architectural material that reshaped urban perception and atmosphere. While his focus is on large-scale transformations, our theories put more emphasis on each little moment in everyday life as described by the moviegoer. With this understanding, we then examine how light is perceived and engaged with at the scale of architecture where individual encounters with light unfold more intimately.

## 2.2 Architecture of Light and Shadow -

“Silence and Light” - *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* by Robert Twombly

*In Praise of Shadows* by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki



Figure 5 (left) The arch made of bricks from *The Indian Institute of Management* (1962-74).

Designed by Louis Kahn.

Source: <https://images.adsttc.com/media/images/5037/e620/28ba/0d59/9b00/0337/slideshow/stringio.jpg?1414231163>

Figure 6 (right) *Ichiroan room* (n.d.) [Photograph].

Source: <https://uzofusui-warajiya.kyoto/>

The intention of this section entitled Architecture of Light and Shadow is to observe how a well-known architect like Louis Kahn perceives light and shadow in comparison to Jun'ichiro Tanizaki under the overall theme of art in everyday life. Louis Kahn, known for his monumental and philosophical approach to architecture, define light as “the giver of all presences.” In the “Silence and Light,” he describes architecture as a dialogue between the void “Silence” and the presence “Light,” where structure becomes the maker of light (Twombly, 2003: 228). Kahn believed that elements like columns not only support space but also shape how light and shadow define it, as seen in his Indian Institute of Management design (see Figure 5) (Twombly, 2003: 231, 250). Kahn strongly favored natural light, criticizing reliance on electric light. Kahn wrote: “But architects in planning rooms today have forgotten the faith in natural light depending on the touch of a finger on a switch, satisfied with only static light...” (Kahn, 2003, pp. 231–232). While poetic, his view reflects the technological limitation of his time. Modern innovations like tunable LEDs now offer dynamic lighting that mimics natural light, allowing contemporary architects to echo the qualities Kahn once attributed only to sunlight.

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki might be a representative of Eastern aesthetics that celebrate shadows. In *In Praise of Shadows* (Tanizaki, 1977/1933), Tanizaki reflects on the quiet beauty of shadows and expresses concern over how electric lighting, particularly Western in origin, disrupts the subtle atmosphere of traditional Japanese spaces. He contrasts the soft, changing qualities of natural light with the harsh, static brightness of electric light, which he sees as diminishing the depth and texture of everyday life. Shaped by Japan's modernization, Tanizaki's view is nostalgic, treating shadow as an essential element of space. This



is illustrated in his visit to the Kyoto restaurant Waranjiya (see Figure 6), where the replacement of candlelight with electric light, due to customer complaints, ruined the magical effect of lacquerware (Tanizaki, 1977: 12–13).

Both Jun'ichiro Tanizaki and Louis Kahn criticized the presence of electric light from different cultural and historical contexts. Their concerns reflect the limitations of their time, whereas today, electric light can subtly preserve shadows and evoke similar atmospheres. Now, let us turn to the account of an architect and educator who explores how domestic spaces shape our perception of light in everyday life.

### 2.3 Light in Domestic Space - *The Room of One's Own* by DOGMA



Figure 7 Sixty-Four Room Plans (2017) exhibiting the development of room [Illustration]. Drawn by DOGMA

Source: retrieved from *The Room of One's Own* by DOGMA

DOGMA, led by Pier Vittorio Aureli, explores the room (see Figure 7) as both a physical space and a reflection of identity. In *The Room of One's Own*, Aureli argues that the room, the most “obvious form” of architecture, reveals emotional and psychological states of mind through its structure and condition (DOGMA, 2017: 4). The illustrated rooms in his book, often without windows to overlook the view of the

outside, invite readers to imagine how light shapes the space. For example, in Giorgio Morandi's Bedroom/Studio, unseen natural light might have subtly influenced his still-life compositions, creating an introspective atmosphere (DOGMA, 2017: 69, 111).

This highlights how light, whether natural or artificial, shapes both space and experience. From the earliest form of a room, the cave, with one opening that acts as a single entrance for the inhabitant and light. Providing the sense of security and comfort throughout its development until now. As electric light evolved, it transformed how rooms are perceived, raising questions about our shifting relationship with light in modern life, especially in the context of contemporary Bangkok.

Electric lighting was first brought to Bangkok during the reign of King Rama V, led by Choem Saengchuto or Field Marshal Chao Phraya Surasakmontri, a nobleman known as the "father of Thai electricity." The installation of electric lights began in the throne hall and expanded to public spaces. The public first saw electric light in 1884, but due to high costs and unstable infrastructure including machine failures, wire theft, and a lack of skilled workers, this resulted in limitation usage. The failure of the Siam Electricity Company in 1892 led to the government taking over (Deong, 1991). By 1917, electric light had reshaped Bangkok, turning it into a vibrant night city with roads, clubs, restaurants, and cinemas replacing its water-based lifestyle (Virayuth Peesalee, 2014). Like in the West, electric light redefined nightlife and transformed darkness from something to be feared into the opposite, a pleasure of life.

### 3. Exhibition of Bangkok's Everyday Lights

Insofar as the attempt to capture everyday lights and therefore darkness in Bangkok is concerned, the following exhibition of works are the results of the author's own experiences of wandering around the city. The search is to paint the "passing moments" in Baudelaire's term, to capture the "splendid moments" in Blanchot's words and to identify "love at the last sight" as written by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1999: 165). The emphasis of this article is placed on lights and darkness, which can be perceived as a supplement to theoretical frameworks mentioned above.

The search for everyday lights and darkness in Bangkok took over a span of six months. Inspired by the concept of the *flâneur*, the observer of the crowd, the author chose to observe electric light in its most pervasive state within darkness at night. Instead of choosing to capture the well-known monuments of Bangkok at night, such as the Temple of Dawn, the overlooked landscapes of Bangkok are selected. Monument, in this sense, is the structures of Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS), also known as Bangkok Skytrain.

### 3.1 Night in the urban



*Figure 8 Video Frames of the Siam BTS mega structure getting bill board light casted on it changing how we perceive it by seconds*

*Source: Video taken by the author*

The moving pictures of Bangkok Skytrain at night are captured for its ability to reveal two key transformations, a shift in time and a shift in perception (see Figure 8). As day turns to night, natural light fades and electric light gradually takes over, creating a brief moment where both light sources blend. In the evening, the structures of BTS at Siam Square are lit by the changing colors of the Siam Center Department Store’s billboard from blue, red, to green casting a fluid glow over the concrete mass and making it feel alive. Yet, despite its visual beauty, the passerby might not notice this production of perception. Routine, noise, and urban distractions might occlude the vision, steering our mind away from the beauty of the insignificant.

This observation highlights the fragile boundary between presence and absence in everyday perception. A visually striking event holds no value unless it is consciously noticed. The transformation of BTS Siam becomes a quiet aesthetic event, one that exists on the edge of awareness, disappearing if left unrecognized. This act of observation becomes a form of discovery, revealing how electric light shapes not only urban space but also our emotional and subjective experience. It reinforces the idea that meaning is not fixed, but is shaped by the observer's attention, background, and way of life.

### 3.2 Architecture of darkness



*Figure 9 Collection of electric lights in the darkness of the night in the suburban village in the city*

*Source: Photograph taken by the author*

Louis Kahn and Jun'ichiro Tanizaki criticized the presence of electric light. Our selection of darkness in architecture is to celebrate the electric light, a modern Prometheus. Exploring how different types of light reflect cultural values and shape sensory experiences in Bangkok, darkness becomes essential. It frames and reveals electric light's presence and vice versa. The familiar places in Bangkok turn to be unfamiliar, under the blanket of darkness and light bulbs (see Figure 9). Silence is another attribute to the architecture of darkness. Within a space of stupa, soft whisper can be heard, we chose to be quiet (see Figure 10). Architecture can change human behavior. Throughout the search for darkness, Bangkok Planetarium appeared in our mind. Built in 1962 as a part of the Science Museum, the aged structures are filled with antiquated charm. The staff at the ticket selling booth does not speak to please the visitors. She gives polite and direct information, and this is one characteristic of the old service in Bangkok. Only a few staffs are visibly operating the planetarium from ticket taker, narrator, janitor and security. The overly cold atmosphere from the roaring air condition units combined with the narrator's gentle calming voice inducing you to fall asleep. To our surprise, the use of advanced projection technology, the Christy projector (Kenika Ruaytanapanich, 2020), highlights how control over light quality and timing creates not only visual clarity but also an emotional and symbolic experience, one that reminds us of our power to simulate the stars in the middle of a bright urban day (See Figure 11).

The works exhibited below are to present lights that are insignificant and will stay insignificant until they are noticed, observed, and acknowledged. In the next section we still continue to examine the relationship between light, its beauty, and how it is being perceived but this time in the scale closest to all of us, the domestic space.

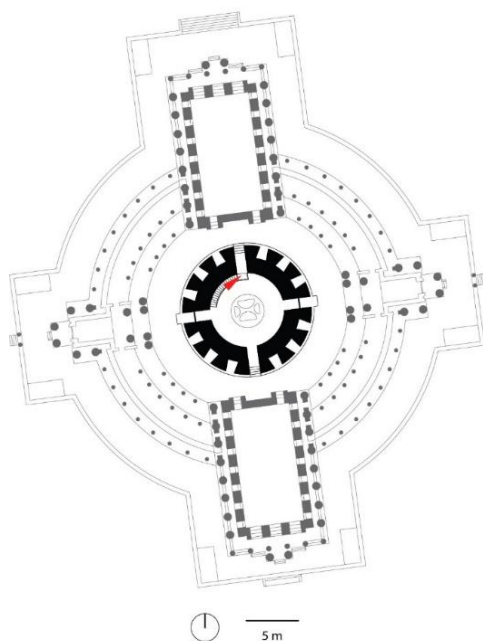


Figure 10 Plan of Wat Ratchabophit with red arrow indicating the viewpoint of the photograph of the second floor's opening as the sunlight reflected through it into the dark space inside

Source: Taken by Atipat Swaengphol Drawn by the author



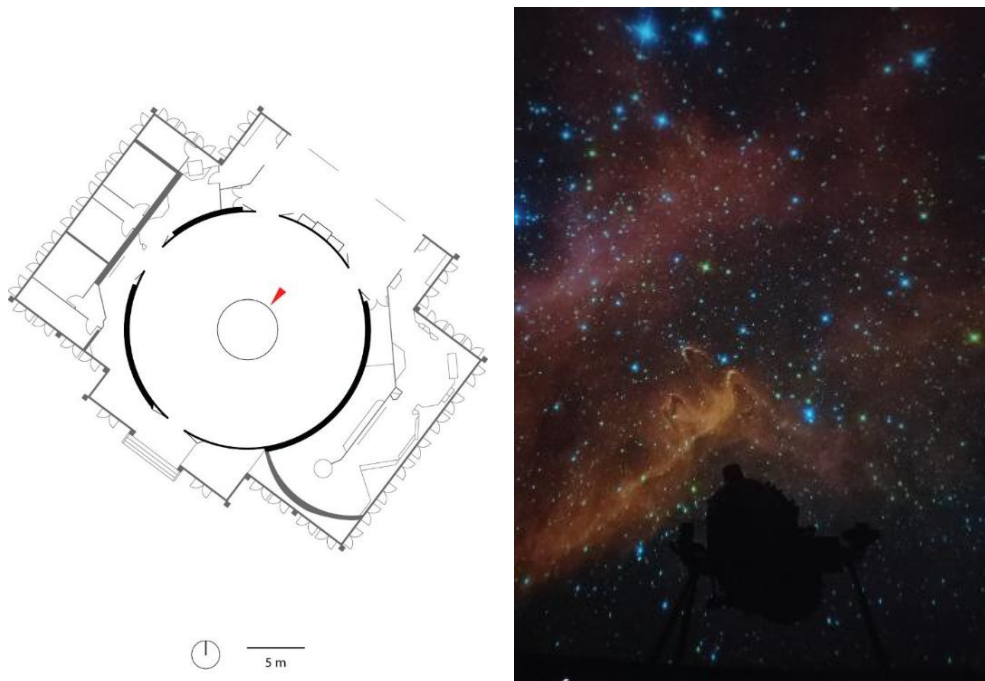


Figure 11 Plan of Bangkok Planetarium with red arrow highlight the viewpoint of the photograph of the center projector as it projected the artificial night sky upon the dome

Source: Taken by the author Drawn by the author

### 3.3 Ten rooms of one's own

Ten Rooms of One's Own takes inspiration from DOGMA's *The Room of One's Own*, led by Pier Vittorio Aureli, adopting a similar method of analyzing how rooms reflect and shape the lives of their inhabitants. Building on this, the author focuses on how the inhabitants perceive electric light in their own spaces in relation to other elements like natural light, shadow, and darkness. The author observes, measures, sketches, takes photos, and interviews each one of them to analyze and reveal the relationship between the inhabitant and the lighting in the room. How one affects another and why, in the observer's eye, it is worthy of being documented.

From the interview, the author noticed a few words that were commonly used to describe the relationship of nowadays inhabitant with an essentially indispensable element of urban life like dark, cozy, comfortable, convenient, reflection, separate, dim, hinder, brighten, and safe. Going beyond these words is how they are being used to describe not only the usage of electric light to brighten or dimming down the space, but also the unexpected effects that occur only in the city at night, like how the city's light penetrates the space, reflecting onto the white wall inside the room, or how, in terms of meaning, it helps separate the work life and private life of the inhabitant. To be more specific, from ten interviews, five rooms were selected for further elaboration below.

Participant A, an accountant who works from home, shared that "I don't need the sunlight because I have a virtual meeting" (personal communication, October 22, 2024). By "virtual meeting," he referred to

using Gather, a digital workspace where users simulate office life. His day takes place largely within this virtual space, rendering natural sunlight unnecessary. His room, (see Figure 10) though physically real, is shaped to support this lifestyle, with sunlight blocked by blinds, and a dim electric light that maintains a dark, distraction-free atmosphere. This deliberate lighting setup enhances his immersion and illustrates how his environment reflects the demands of his digital routine.

Participant B, shared her fondness for a dim lit space, saying, “I want a cozy space to teach, dim light where we can talk” (personal communication, October 23, 2024). As a teacher, she values creating a calm, inviting atmosphere where students feel comfortable speaking. Rather than brightness, she appreciates how natural light appears as shadow from sunlight diffused through blinds (see Figures 11). This interplay of shadow and subtle illumination is supported by electric light, which sustains the dimness throughout the day. Her space becomes a quiet choreography of light and darkness, where electric light complements rather than replaces the sunlight.

Participant C, described a strong desire to escape sunlight, which she associates with reality, time, and work. An attitude clearly reflected in how she designed her room. As she stated, “My room is my safe haven. A place where I can truly feel safe and delve into my own world that I have crafted” (personal communication, November 1, 2024). Her space, shaped as a retreat, is completely shielded from daylight by thick black curtains that have been left untouched for so long that dust has settled beneath them. She avoids white downlights, instead favoring soft ambient glows from screens and decorative lights. Dominated by shades of pink, the room expresses her personal aesthetic and forms a deeply private world (see Figure 11). Though ordinary to her, the gradual shift from darkness to a gentle pink glow reveals something uniquely intimate and expressive.

Participant D, shared her discomfort with a room surrounded by glass walls that allowed excessive sunlight to enter, making the space feel like an oven. Despite using curtains, light still seeped in (see Figure 11). Interestingly, her solution was to introduce more light, explaining, “it might be counterintuitive to introduce more light to make it feel more dark but it did bring me more comfort” (personal communication, November 14, 2024). This paradoxical effect reveals a perceptual shift by adding stronger artificial light, her eyes adapted to the higher contrast, making the overall room feel dimmer.

The author (self-reflection, January 24, 2025) expressed a lack of interest in the natural light, claiming through his experience of spending his daytime at night and his nighttime during the day for at least three years. This lifestyle placed significance on the existence of electric light allowing his everyday life to continue.

Together, these cases show how deeply our relationship with light is influenced by both personal preference and lifestyle, reinforcing the notion that light is not merely a physical presence but a subjective experience that shapes our understanding of time, space, and self.

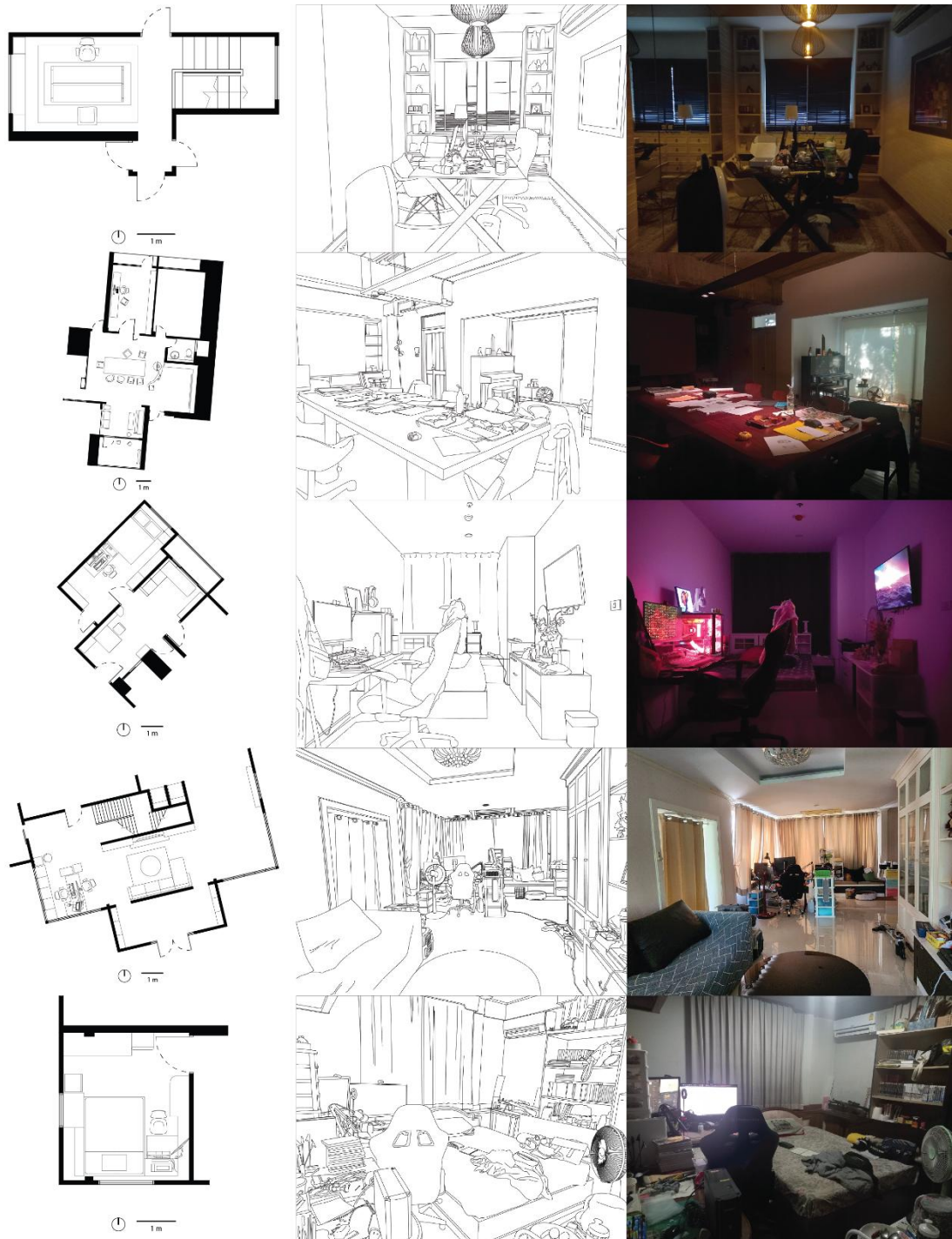


Figure 12 Plan, perspective drawing and photograph of the inhabitants' room from participant A to D and the author

Source: Measured and drawn by the author



## Conclusion

This article explores light as one facet of the “insignificant” in everyday life. Drawing on Baudelaire and Blanchot’s theories of “everyday life,” as well as architectural and literary perspectives from Isenstadt, Tanizaki, Kahn, and DOGMA, light emerges not merely as a functional necessity but as a poetic force shaping space, time, and atmosphere. Isenstadt views electric light as a building material while exploring its development in the West. Tanizaki laments the loss of shadows in traditional Japanese interiors under the glare of Western electric light, while Kahn elevates natural light as a spiritual presence. DOGMA reveals how light, as a part of domestic space, reflects the inhabitant’s personality. Serving as the evidence of their life. Together, these viewpoints remind us that ordinary shifts in light and shadow, whether from sunlight filtering through blinds or the glow of electric lamps, can profoundly influence the observer’s feelings and behavior.

The objective of this article is not to invent something new, but rather to point out the possibilities of experiencing a moment that captures a bodily relation to the objects in real life. This is a benefit of this study. It is a life-long learning process to see splendid yet temporal details that may pass by without a notice. This article is a contribution to the study of architectural perception, often seen in the works of architects who think about everyday life. Diller Scofidio + Renfro, a New York-based interdisciplinary design studio, has successfully exaggerated an everyday element, namely the water. The architects managed to turn the spray of mist into the overwhelming fog that hides the entire structure of the building itself. This atmospheric project is called The Blur Building. The pavilion is an open-air, disk-shaped lightweight tensegrity structure supported by four columns on the lake bed built for the Swiss National Exposition in 2002. The visitors are not only subjected to the obscurity of vision, but also to the ambiguity of meanings. That is to perceive the pavilion as a building, a structure, or a water bar that provides drinking water for consumption (Diller & Scofidio, 2002). The Blur Building drags out the splendid moment and puts it on a plate ready to be served to the visitors. Contrast to the mentioned project, this study points to the insignificant, hidden in our everyday life in Bangkok ready to be discovered.

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