



Helena van Vliet Architect, LLC

Restorative Biophilic Design

December, 2016

Dancing Shadows

"You can only come to the morning through the shadows" ~ J.R.R. Tolkien.

Gratitude for shadows. Gratitude for the light, which makes them dance.
Candlelight. Firelight. Patterns and textures revealed, deepened, clarified. Glow.
Intensity of heat, color and light. Sharpness of contour. Mutable form. Heightened
contrast of light and dark. Image appears. Essence made visible. Fluid transitions,
layers of depth. Ambiguity.

In the dancing shadows possibility lives.

Mesmerized focus subsumes peril. Silence fills with hope. Joy.



Photos above at our home.



Mystery Permits Imagination

As humans, we admire mystery. It engages us, makes us feel alive, delights us. The mystery revealed in dancing shadows is a playful-one. Deepened by a touch of peril. Akin to yin and yang, the interplay of light and shadow addresses the rational as well as the intuitive in us, the active as well as the contemplative aspects of our brain, our physiology, our psyche.

In 'The Significance of Shadow,' Juhani Pallasmaa writes: "Deep shadows and darkness are essential, because they dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous, and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy...." He continues, "Homogenous bright light paralyses the imagination....and wipes away the sense of place...."



The Social Element of Fire

Anthropologist Christopher Lynn's research suggests, "that we may have evolved to enjoy **being around fires** because they were historically important means of fostering social cohesion."

"Archaeological evidence suggests ancestors probably started using fire thousands of years before they figured out how to start one," Lynn explains. "Therefore, especially in the colder climates, sitting around a fire to keep it going would have been a very important job. Collecting kindling, keeping the fire going, cooking — all these things required cooperation, at least when conditions were poor. Those groups more successful at keeping the fire going would have had an advantage over groups that didn't."



At our home.

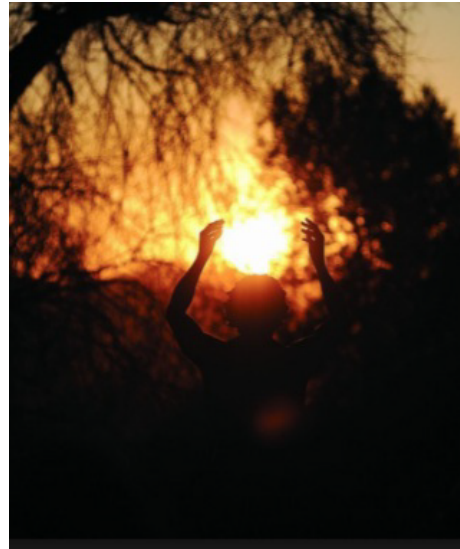
Amber Light

Research is mounting that our physiology, indeed our hormonal and circadian balance depend on the prevalence of warm amber light in the evening hours. Apps such as **F-lux** can help tone down and warm up **electronic devices**.

In keeping with our evolutionary birthright, however, let's re-tune, and let's restore ourselves through the mystery and delight of evening's dancing shadows.

Happy Winter Solstice

As 2016 draws to a close, I would like to thank my clients, colleagues and tireless BioPhilly Team members for their trust, professionalism, inspiration and indeed their friendship. It's been a happy year filled with beautiful biophilic adventures. Exciting speaking opportunities, from educational to corporate, have taken me from NYC to DC. And I look forward to teaching Biophilic Design at Pratt Institute in NYC in 2017. Happy Holidays everyone and "Guten Rutsch!"



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The biophilic community, indeed the world, **lost a shining star** and one of my heroes on November 27th, when Stephen Robert Kellert lost his courageous battle with multiple myeloma. I was honored to have met him at our 2nd BioPhilly conference last May. We will strive to carry on his work to the best of our abilities.

Nature in the News

The Black-Capped Chickadee,
Curious and Congenial

Winners of the 2016 National
Geographic Nature
Photographer of the Year
Contest

It's Time for Doctors to
Prescribe Outdoor Therapy



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