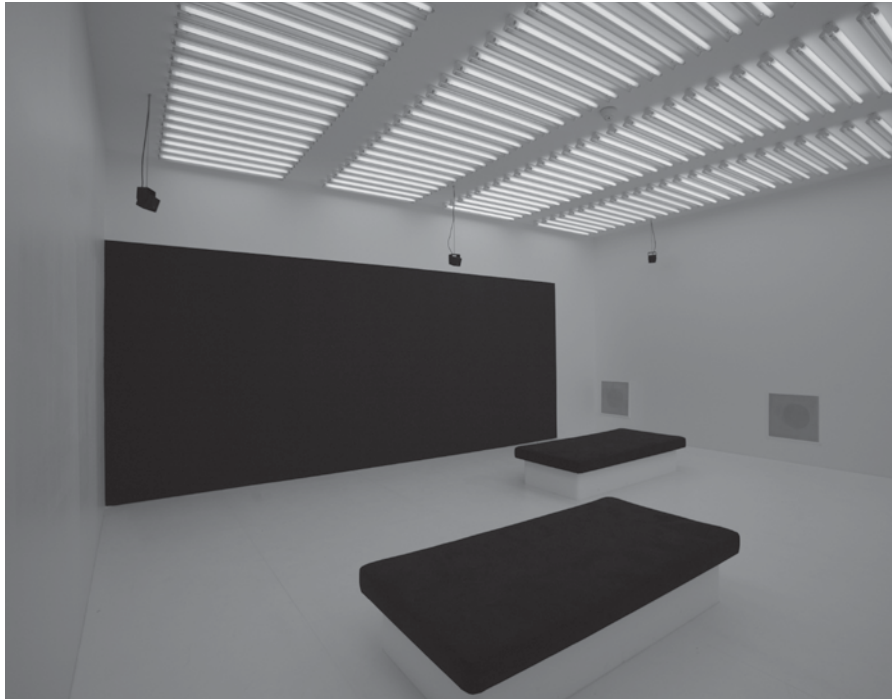


Diurnisme, Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, Airs de Paris Group show 2007, Curators: Alfred Pacquement, Christine Macel, Daniel Birnbaum, Valérie Guillaud Photos: Adam Rzepka, Centre Pompidou

The project is to reinvent a new form of night in the continuous artificial day of modernity. It is to produce the night during the day, physically. It's a reversed answer to the perpetual day created by modernity, the internet and contemporary globalization, a second perversion. A bright orange-yellow light which emits wavelengths over 570 nanometers is perceived by the body through melatonin rhythm as a true night. The room becomes a paradox between the visible and the invisible, the visual and the physiological: a night which looks like a bright day. Reversed "nocturnes for the piano" by the early 19th century Irish musician John Field, the inventor of this "form" of music, are diffused in the space.



# Interview with Philippe Rahm

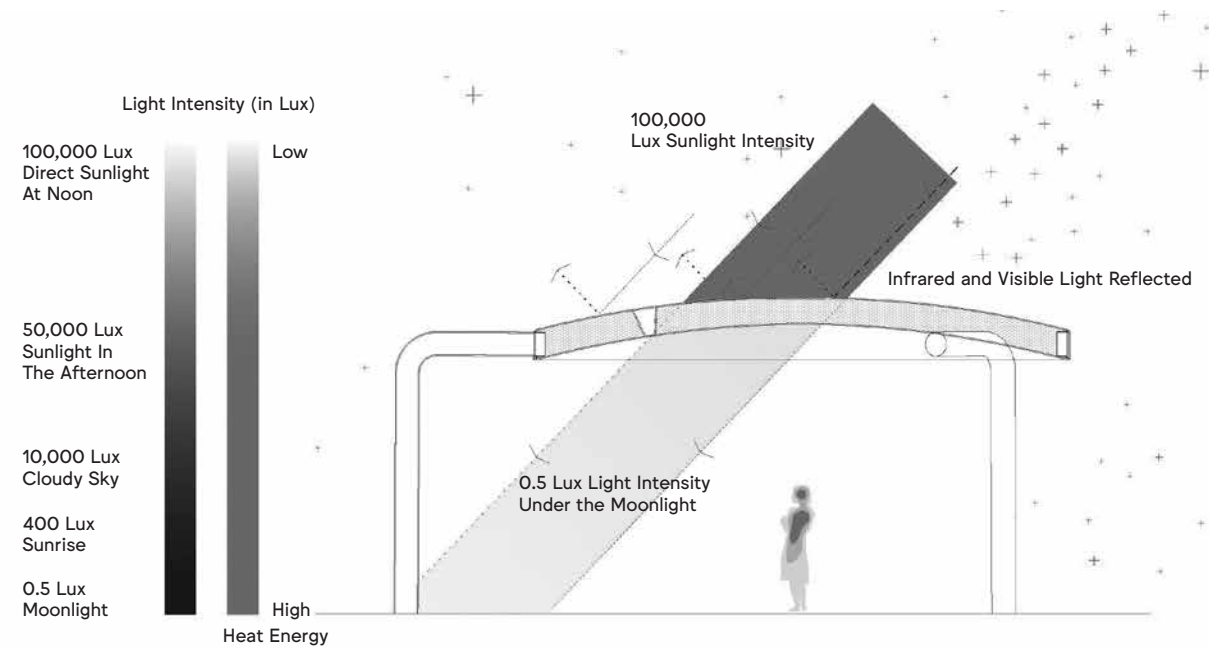
Christie Pearson for Scapegoat Journal

Scapegoat Journal: This issue of Scapegoat is about the night, and in particular the ways in which the diurnal seeks to intrude upon the nocturnal and night's resistance. I thought of your project Diurnisme, which seeks to reclaim the experience of the night within the false day of electric light.

Philippe Rahm: The first project we made about night was for a competition in Poland. It's called Jour Noir, or Black Day, the opposite of the Nuit Blanche, when you don't sleep, staying awake and partying all night. So we were thinking about the street in Poland, and we started to imagine. In the street one of the main elements is the lighting, and we started to become interested in the candelabra, which dates from the early nineteenth century. Before that, in the middle ages for example, the city was completely dark, and in Paris it meant that everybody was sleeping. You slept during the night, and it was a little dangerous to go out in the dark. London introduced the the first gas street lighting in 1813. Gas, and then electric, lighting completely revolutionized the city because people were suddenly able to safely go outside during the night. It's like the natural rhythm is day and night, light and darkness, and to create light in the darkness is something that goes against god—you change the natural rhythm. It reminds me of Coal City, from Jules Verne's 1877 novel Les Indes noires, an underground city where they create an

artificial sun and artificial stars. For Verne, street lighting created a completely artificial human world; there was no more god. This period was also the moment of Chopin's piano Nocturnes (1827–1846), inspired by the Irish composer John Field, who was the first to title such pieces "nocturnes." During the day you could play a little nocturne, and there was a distortion of time. You could create day during the night, by evoking the night atmosphere, like adding lighting in the street. When they held the competition for the Eiffel Tower, there was a project for a bright light that would illuminate the whole city of Paris, like a tower with a big sun on top. From a philosophical point of view, this is related with modernity because the root word "mod-" implies the transformation of the world for human activities. There is a critique from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who was a little reactionary: he was not for the future, but more for the past. He was right-wing during the Second World War, against modernity, and he said that what we should do is have the day during the day and the night during the night, the winter during the winter and the summer during the summer—not change the natural cycle.<sup>1</sup> What I understand from this is that during the twentieth century there has been an attempt to create an endless day.

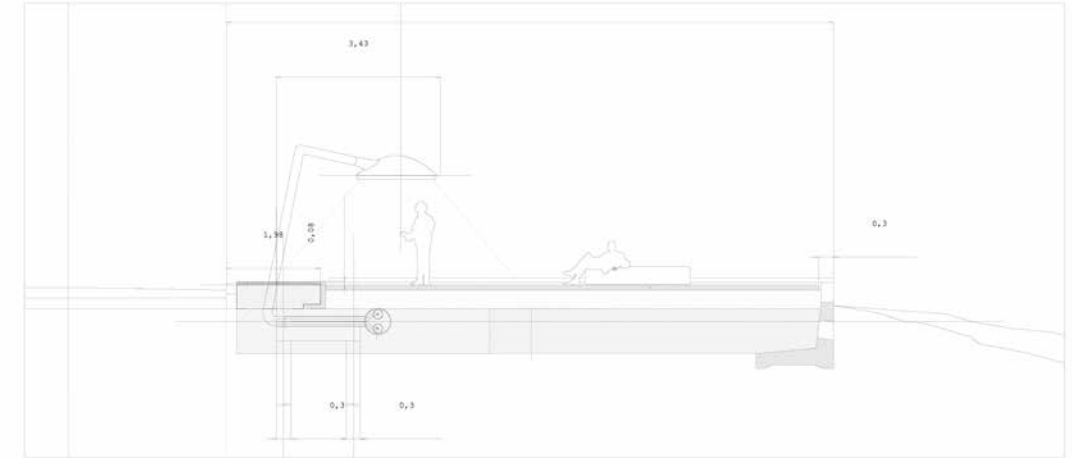
This project in Poland, Jour Noir, was a kind of critique of the endless day. But not to go back and say that we have to switch off the light during the night, but to go beyond and say, well, if modernity wants to create day during the night, then is it possible to create night during the day? So the first project was



Jade Echo, Cooling device for Jade Echo Park Taichung, Taiwan, Under construction, Philippe Rahm Architects, Mosbach Landscape Architects, Ricy Liu & Associates

The ambition of the project is to create exterior spaces where the excesses of the subtropical climate are lessened. The design composition is based on augmenting existing climatic variations mapped by computational fluid dynamics simulation to create a diversity of microclimates and sensual experiences for park users to choose and appropriate as they desire. Design elements include natural and artificial “trees”, “breezes” and “clouds” and “eclipses” to cool, dry, and clean the atmosphere. The image shows the reflecting cooling device Moon Light that filters sunlight and its heat. Bodies heat up not only from warm air temperatures,

but also through absorption of direct electromagnetic radiation transformed into heat energy through contact with a solid surface. Moon Light provides a barrier to the sun’s radiation for park patrons and prevents bodies underneath from absorbing radiant heat energy; however, a crescent moon-shaped hole at the top of the device lets through a narrow ray of light. The surface area of the opening is calculated to emit light with the same intensity at which natural moonlight hits the earth (0.1–0.5 lux). Thick, violet-tinted glass in the opening transmits only violet light, the least amount of energy in the visible spectrum (390–450 nm). The undersurface of the device is painted black to absorb the full spectrum of visible light, similar to the nighttime sky.



Jour Noir, Project for the City of Gdansk Outdoor Gallery Gdansk, Poland, Built 2006 Collaborators: Cyrille Berger, Alexandra Cammas, Irene D’Agostino

Traditional outdoor lighting, like a mini-sun, emits a visible radiation of light like artificial electromagnetic radiations of the sunlight. This outdoor lamp emits an invisible and cold electromagnetic radiation, like that emitted by the night sky. It consists of a diffuser like a mini night celestial vault, cooled by the flow of glycolic water at the temperature close to 2° C. Its surface is black, absorbing the whole of the luminous spectrum. Our body at 37° C will lose energy by infrared radiation in direction of this cold vault and cool by thermal phenomenon of balance. 5 lights are accompanied by 5 urban beds for sleeping

during the day in the streets of the city. At the head of the bed, two loudspeakers diffuse some “Nocturnes for piano” of the famous polish musician Frederic Chopin and also from Debussy, Glinka and John Field, the inventor of the Nocturne at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The lamps are made with radiator tubes, curved to create a black vault running glycolic water at 2° C, generated by a dry cooler. The lamp exterior is glossy white stainless steel, with the interior thermo painted matte black. They will function only during the day and only when the temperature of the outside air is over 5° C.

to create a cold, black “night vault.” Because the night sky emits cold radiation, and it’s black. Lighting is like a micro-sun, and so here the idea was to create a kind of micro-night during the day. So we proposed a night vault, cooled with cold water and emitting a cold radiation, a black radiation, like a night lamp radiating night during the day. It was like an umbrella; everything was black inside. It was one piece of furniture, and an accompanying piece was an urban bed in the street. So it was possible to sleep, to have the night during the day.

For Diurnisme, the idea was similar, but with light, because it produces melatonin. We know that light with wavelengths higher than 550 nanometers, i.e. orange-red light, doesn’t affect the production of melatonin in the body. Under orange light your natural cycle of melatonin will still go on, which means that for the physiological body it will be like the night. The light that wakes you up is the blue light in the visible spectrum. Diurnisme was a room in which we had orange light, a little like creating a fake night inside the fake day inside the real night. First there’s the night, then as a result of modernity an artificial day, so we proposed the creation of an artificial night inside the artificial day, inside the real night.

SG: I’ve seen a nineteenth-century engraving depicting night swimming by electric light at Coney Island in NYC. They used arc-lamp electric lighting on poles by the beach in 1878, the same year as the invention of the incandescent bulb and the Edison Electric Company. What would electricity be good for? Obviously, swimming in the ocean at night! It’s a surging dark ocean surrounding a small area of illumination, as if to protect the swimmers...

PR: We’re doing a project in Taiwan for a park now, and one thing we’re doing is called Moonlight. It’s a black umbrella with a small light going through, small but intense, like under the moon at night. We want to

reproduce a kind of night during the day in Taiwan, where when it is too hot you want to go into the night to protect yourself from the heat of the sun.

SG: What will the park be like at night?

PR: The lighting we’ve proposed responds to light pollution. On the road we need white light due to regulations, but inside the park we use 500-nanometer orange light for the animals. And there’s a gradient, made with LEDs. The first is the road: near the street the light contains all the colours of the rainbow, which makes it white. Then we remove the blue, then the green, and the farther you go into the park the more orange the light becomes, so that it won’t disorient the animals’ biorhythms. It should be complete by summer 2017.

SG: Fantastic!

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For example, “Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest.” Martin Heidegger “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971), 328.

#### QUOTATION

“If death is anything like night, it will be exquisite.”  
– Somerset Maugham