

# POETRY OF LIGHT

## ARTIGO



**Eli Sirlin**

**First Photo: “Llueve” with Gabriela Prado, Eugenia Estevez and Luis Biasotto (dance-theater) . Directed by Gabriela Prado and Eugenia Estevez | Photo by Eli Sirlin | Second Photo: “Zeppelin” (ballet) Coreography of Carlos Casella and Guchi Lesgart | Ballet Contemporáneo del Teatro San Martín | Third: “El cordero de ojos azules”, Carlos Belloso and Leonor Manso (theater) . Directed by Luciano Caceres | Theatre: Teatro Regio | Forth and fifth: “Fulanos”, Directed by Gerardo Hochman (cirque) | Theatre: Teatro Ribera | Photos by Carlos Furman.**

All these words build images and allow us to project sensations and emotions.

Can light generate an imaginary of the same power as that proposed by the word?

Light does not have visibility by itself. This is something that very few people remember or take into account, perhaps because it is an abstraction that only becomes reality when “something” becomes visible. And that something is not light but that which reflects it. Light describes the appearance of things, what is shown and what is hidden. Gestaltendes licht - “The light that reveals the form” - as Adolphe Appia dreamed it.

The primitive approach to the light sensations that determine our perception of the world and reality, confronts lighting designers to the challenge of appropriating an expressive tool of incredible

intensity and complexity, that will allow us, precisely, to expand the limits and scope of our original perspective.

The light as language, when it flows into a space, excites us or tells a story. It can be constituted in “dramatic action” even without the presence of actors. Just as in a dawn or in a twilight the sun is the great protagonist, whether we see it or not, light can also become the main “actor”. His presence transforms everything we see, brings magic and mystery, and has a great capacity for expression and power of evocation.

Its narrative possibility is given through the articulation of its diverse properties, allowing to structure a narrative line, with beginning and end, in the same way in which we construct meaning in a text.

When I speak of properties, I refer to the qualities of light: position, form, intensity, color

and its variations in spatiality and temporality.

Light builds discourse, narration, but it also builds metaphor and therefore it is also capable of generating access to experiences that, like poetry, transcend the word ... and the materiality of images.

We say that poetics is built from the sublimation of the anguish that generates the impossibility of seeing the real.

For this we take as a metaphor the Platonic myth of the cave.

In this allegory, Plato imagines men chained from birth and with their eyes fixed on a wall. Behind them there is a bonfire, which illuminates in backlight other men who carry objects, in such a way that their shadows are projected on the wall that the prisoners contemplate. Plato argues that those men chained are us, human beings, always prone to consider as real and credible



something that is nothing more than a deceptive shadow. This fiction projected by the light of the bonfire -the philosopher warns- distracts men from something that is real: the cave in which they remain chained. However, if one of the men got rid of his chains and could look back, reality would confuse him. The light of the fire would blind his eyes, and the blurred figures he could see would seem less real to him than the shadows he had seen all his life.

Light constitutes a language comparable to that of poetry and music.

We can speak of a light poetic, with its limits, scope and own resources.

Our tools of work are the articulators of the language of light, our letter, word and sentence, to combine them in structures that allow us to experience the metaphorical intervention from the luminous, generating in the observer a construction of meaning, which can lead to an aesthetic experience and / o emotive, with its different levels of abstraction and realism.

We work with the light object and the illuminated object, visible and not visible. With space-light and with the concepts of presence-absence in the same sense in which music works with notes and silences.

Mobility and concealment are essential modalities for the construction of the metaphorical space through the light design. Space is a trap that unveils and hides light and the elements that produce and distort it.

Immanuel Kant, in his Critic of the Judgment (1790) writes: *“The beauty of nature refers to the shape of the object, which consists in its delimitation. The sublime, on the other hand, can be found in*



*an object without form, as in it, or caused by it, the absence of limits is represented”.*

Light constitutes a universe of layers of sense and perceptive states that substantially modify the perceptive activity of the viewer.

Light has the particularity of having a temporary character and one of its qualities is based on the infinite possibility of transformation, of synchronization, establishing special emotional conditions between the perceived object and the spectator, in a process of great experiential intensity that leaves traces and continues to resonate even after the experience is over.

In addition, the subtle quality of light allows us to operate directly in the synchronization of our consciousness with the archetypal dimension and the unconscious

Being light the constitutive

medium of the possibility of visualization is then also the cognitive medium.

Light is the substratum on which perception constructs its ideological universe, understood as an ideological function when our psyche connects with the dimension of universal archetypes, beyond the simple personal unconscious.

Through the set values / archetypes we can peer into the unconscious and we can observe how intuition happens. The invisible nature of light allows us to think that there can be a connection in the field of subtle manifestations, evoking the infinity of the unconditioned and producing the experience of the sublime, understood from the Kantian point of view. Under the hypothesis that light allows to establish the control of the experiential intensity we understand that through the light and its operation on the visible we

can disturb the seeing, since when the eye is anguished, it becomes aware of itself, or it is seen overcome by experience, and allows that approach to the sublime.

Analyzing the act of seeing from the conceptual point of view, we can trace several experiences that offer ways mediated by light:

The light detached from the visible.

The look in the invisible.

The possibility of perceptive deconstruction from experiences of overstimulation or sub-stimulation.

On these experiences, the light action and the activating effect on the perceiver can be evaluated. And on this basis we can detect parameters of non-volitional behavior of perception under the mandate of the light action. Also to establish particular constructions of metaphorical sense from

the intervention of light. In this metaphorical construction we find an equivalent to the poetic language.

In my experience of working with light on stages, with actors, dancers or performers, I have practiced these experiences, tracing a parallel path with light to the different languages that intersect to achieve the artistic fact (text, music, action, movement). The layers of language generated by each of the interventions can remain autonomous and at times merge, achieving in the viewer projective responses of high emotionality.

The job of lighting designer is to detect the sensitivity needed to perform this articulation, and what is the most appropriate resource to achieve it.

And so we return to the start question:

Can light generate an imaginary

of equal power as that proposed by the word?

Here I dare to say that its potential is even greater, due to its archetypal resonance, which links us to the collective unconscious. As it is also similar in its projective aspect. If light manages to vibrate and generate a projective empathy with those who experience it, its potential will depend exclusively on the sensitive quantum with which it can be synchronized. This is a potential presumption, of course, but light has the given conditions to achieve profound impact and open apparently unfathomable doors in those who experience and perceive it. But for that we need, like any artist, the knowledge and management of the tool and its language, the exact combination that allows us to display the magic of light as the good poet does. ■

