



# *The Architecture of Space and Light*

by Scott Hendershot



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## Commentary

Anybody can photograph what is there. But not every photographer is equally skilled at photographing what is *not* there — a talent that separates the average architectural photographer from those of distinction.

Consider this project by Scott Hendershot titled *The Architecture of Space and Light*. The title itself tells us that he is not photographing bricks and wood, steel and glass. The subject of his photographs is not what we *see* but rather is what is not present — three-dimensional space — a particularly challenging subject for a two-dimensional medium. How do you photograph what isn't there, a blank without definition, essentially air that cannot be seen?

One key is to consider this example from his portfolio. The bright patch of filtered light on the wall hints at its three dimensionality which in turn gives us a path to walk up the stairs. It's that potential of *movement* that provides the visceral sense of three dimensionality in this photograph.

Also, there is this arched doorway — which *could* be considered the subject of the photograph. The arch creates a hole in the wall. The photograph is thereby visually divided between the light area on the far side of the hole in the wall in the dark area on our side. We can reach through, both with our eyes and with our imagination.

This is a classic case of Yang and Yin. There is a

consistency in those who teach art that the Yin should not be ignored, indeed, it might be the most important of the two opposites. Calligraphers are taught to watch the paper, not the ink; sculptors are taught to pay attention to the space, not the marble; musicians are taught not to disregard the silence in between the notes. As Laotzu advised some 2600 years ago:

“Thirty spokes are joined together in a wheel, but it is the center hole that allows the wheel to function.

“We form clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that makes the vessel useful.

“We fashion wood for a house, but it is the emptiness inside that makes it livable.

We work with the substantial, but the emptiness is what we use.”

The photographic equivalent is to pay attention to the air which almost always comprises the largest portion of the three-dimensional space in our photographs. Mountains are small compared to the sky; space is vast compared to the building; pay attention to the Yin where the essence of the image lives.