

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Soulful Light in Smart Cities

- **Format:**

Written paper

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Light in cities has served both practical and symbolic functions. On the one hand, lit streets heighten sense of safety. In the medieval European cities, pedestrians were required to carry a lantern to make their faces visible to others. On the other hand, the lantern created a moving light that identified the presence of a soul in the darkness. Furthermore, urban citizens have used light as a form of communication. Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserable* opens with the street child Gavroche breaking a street lamp, symbolizing rebellion against the authorities. In the recent past, residents of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing smashed corridor ceiling lights, which made crimes less visible to the police and subsequently heightened the sense of danger.

As cities across the globe announce ambitious plans to build smart cities, what and how does urban light communicate about the city? As safety, efficiency, and sustainability dominate the rhetoric of smart cities, how could cities maintain the transgressions and idiosyncrasies that characterized cities of the past? Brighter, uniform lighting is not necessarily safer. This paper examines opportunities for light in smart cities to capture

and communicate ethos of their places – to be soulful as well as practical, offering safety while capturing people's imagination.

Soulful urban light is carefully calibrated to the dimensions and characters of each district, block, or building. Furthermore, it has a capacity to be idiosyncratic and transgressive. Experimental lighting projects in cities such as Rotterdam and New York suggest that light in cities could be participatory, revealing souls of individuals previously represented by hand-held lanterns. Jane Jacobs's analysis of city block organization as the foundation of urban connectivity and Umberto Eco's notion of open work offer lenses through which to see new possibilities in urban light.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Aki Ishida is Assistant Professor of Architecture at Virginia Tech, where is also a Fellow of the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from University of Minnesota and an MSAAD from Columbia University. Prior to Virginia Tech, Aki taught design studios at Rhode Island School of Design, The Pratt Institute, and Parsons. Aki's work is centered around light and temporality in architecture. Interactive audio-visual installation *Lantern Field*, a project she led at the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery in Washington, DC, was one of a dozen international winners of 2013 Architectural Lighting Design Award. She is the founder of Aki Ishida Architect and has previously worked at I.M. Pei Architect, James Carpenter Design, and Rafael Vinoly Architects. Her work has been supported by grants from Japan Foundation New York, the Graduate Kinne Traveling Fellowship from Columbia University, Stewardson Keefe LeBrun Travel Grant from the AIA New York Chapter, and fellowships from The MacDowell Colony and the Baer Art Center. Most recently, she was recognized nationally as one of 25 Most Admired Educators for 2016 by *DesignIntelligence* and received the 2016/17 New Faculty Teaching Award from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

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