

Laura de Santillana
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The sun never knew how wonderful it was until it fell on a wall of a building. (Louis Kahn)
MA is maintained by absolute darkness.

(Arata Isozaki)

Look at this surprising flower, which cannot be seen and yet its fragrance cannot be hidden.
(Bahauddin Walad)

*Our ancestors contemplated the night sky without the use of telescopes and with no knowledge of cosmology. Under the names of constellations, they distinguished groups lacking all physical reality, each formed of stars that the eyes perceive as being on the same plane, even though they are located at fantastically different distances from earth. The error can be explained by the distance between the observer and the objects of observation. It is thanks to that error, however, that regularities in the apparent movement of the celestial bodies were identified early on. For millennia, human beings used them—and continue to use them—to predict the return of seasons, to measure the passage of time at night, and to serve as guides on the oceans. (Claude Levi Strauss, *The hidden face of the moon*)*

I remember the first time I met Gembei-san in his atelier in Kyoto. I was struck by the intricacies of the textiles he was showing me. There were many levels of visual appreciation in his obis and the way the textiles were treated created depth in the designs. He told me he would have liked to show our works together, and his image of the exhibition was: in Nara, *in the night*, in a temple. His intricate textiles and my clear glass works, as opposites.

Now, instead, we are going to share an exhibit in his home, and I am very honored by this. In a way, each man's home is his temple, and I was invited into Gembei's temple. The theme of this exhibition is a poem that speaks about the moon, and the starry sky- *a nocturnal poem*- darkness and shadows.

The traditional Japanese house, like Gembei-san's, is made of a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows, It has very little or no furniture, the walls are usually naked. The light coming from outside is dimmed by the shoji. The light from the garden is

also dimmed by the *engawa* that runs on the outside of the building. The works are going to live in this lack of clarity.

Glass lives through light, but despite what people think it does not need a lot of it. In fact too much light kills the nuances. You have to hide in order to discover. A detail you had missed completely can become alive when it is struck by a small ray of sun or the light of a candle. Even moonlight can be a sufficient source of light to capture the subtlety of a clear/colorless glass piece.

The works I am showing here took a slightly different direction though. There are some clear/colorless pieces, but also some very light grey, and some very dark blue. Metals are applied to the surface of the works, they are brushed on the hot glass to incorporate them. Some metals are so soft that when they touch the glass they become liquid. The thick Japanese silver leaf that I used, maintains its shape and design. Gold leaf cracks in a sublime way.

The glass tablets are envelopes in which the light lives and refracts; there is the surface work, a skin. This light that is incorporated in the object becomes the body of the object. Light is not outside, it's inside, a liquid frame between the inside and the outside. So here I think we are talking about the ephemeral, the secret, the hidden. The discovery. The hidden part of an object, the hidden face of the moon.

Many a time have I gazed at the moon

But never so poignant did it seem

As amid tonight's star-strewn skies

Poem by Kenreimon-in Ukyō no Daibu (ca. 1157 – ca. 1233),

Japanese noblewoman, Heian Period (794 – 1185)

Sono oggetti di luce, fatti di luce e non più di materia, materia luce.

La luce che è incorporea

Questa luce che emana dagli oggetti ne costituisce la natura

Un confine molto più liquido tra interno e esterno