

Cultural Daily

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ENCOUNTER POINTS with the sounds of silence

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, February 1st, 2017

Poetic evocations of the “sounds of silence”

The poetry of Paul Simon’s song “The sounds of silence” and the one of Alexis Fancher’s photographs of LA at night under the rain, are *at the origin of this post*.

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The former because of its reference to neon signs that “... *said, the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls, And tenement halls, And **whispered in the sounds of silence**...*”

The latter because out of the photos of bright city lights, and their reflections under the rain, I could almost hear the swish of the wipers on the windshield, and the crissing of the tires on the wet pavement ... *as so many “**whispered**” sounds of night lights*.

I would venture to say that, in both cases, the sounds were heard in a mind’s ear of sort ... by power of suggestion or simple act of imagination and projection.

Encounter points with the “sounds of silence”

Images do not emit sounds, but the very absence of such can paradoxically suggest their presence in the photographic particularities of their subject.

Spurred and inspired by the above mentioned poetics I will present some of my own images of the city at night time.

1- In the **feature image**, for instance, *the interior warm lighting of the Place des Arts mezzanine lobby is almost in aural contrast with the mute, cool, but persistent presence of the city art district lit up in winter blue, and seen from behind the lobby silvery lace curtain.*

2- In the **image of the first quarter of the moon**, taken from my rear yard balcony, the impressive presence of our satellite, seen in such detail, caused me *to sense its own silence reaching out to me along something like the invisible pathways of gravity ... of gravitas?*



silent moon whispering gravity

3- The image of a **snow cleared service back alley**, seen from behind sound insulating plate glass, *speaks of silent encounters between the various light sources and between the bulky mass and fancy street light posts of the museum and the residential scale of its immediate neighborhood, with its Hopper-like lighting.*

A service van entering the relative darkness of the back alley, with its bright head lights on, is the only thing to break that silence by virtue of its moving.



back alley dialogue of lights

4- In the image of a **moon lit edge of park, buffered by a row of trees from the brightly lit busy thoroughfare**, two separate worlds seem to co-exist: one with a *Blow Up* like mysterious aura of dark undergrowth, the other with the crude street lights and neon signs and, in between, a tree-and-bench-lined walkway where the crunch of footsteps of two summer promeneurs can be heard with our tuned-in mind's ears.



silent walk

5- In the image below, the **three outdoor projection booths** sitting atop the administrative wing of our Place des Arts, seem to gaze at the very images they project on a nearby building. Through a lone window the turned off desk light stands in visual and aural contrast. Across the street I stand, in the heart of winter, mesmerized by the eeriness of the scene.



Silent night

The sounds of silence are poetic messages to be heard in Simon's lyrical evocation of "subway walls and tenements halls", or in the light reflections of Alexis' photographic paeon to a parched city suddenly drenched by rain ... or in the audibly insistent silent play of light sources in my city at night to which I have responded photographically.

Cerdt all images Maurice Amiel

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