Shade, and shadow in particular, are phenomena that describe darkness architecturally; to a certain degree they can be controlled, thus enabling them to be used as an important element of architectural creation. From a spatial point of view, shadow determines the position of an object in space. It links the object to its surroundings, to its ground. Shadow also puts an object into the context of daytime and season. There are ancient and modern sundials all over the world, devices that project shadow’s relationship to time. A shadow creates a rhythm and evokes dynamics. The living room in Tadao Ando’s Kusunokyo House is never the same because of the large diagonal stripe of shadow daily crossing its bare concrete wall. The “undulatory glass surface” of Le Corbusier’s Convent de La Tourette has similar qualities, yet in a more filigreed manner.

Shifting from a two-dimensional object to a three-dimensional one: a shaded floor plan on a blueprint literally “pops up” into the third dimension. The shade “gives” it a feeling of thickness. Articulation is also an important architectural process within a composition that can be improved and emphasized by adroit use of shadow. Cafés, restaurants, bars, and brasseries protected by large umbrellas and pergolas on many streets in Mediterranean towns merge into one long stripe of shadow offering shelter from the summer heat. A distant dark place of the building makes us inquisitive and sometimes evokes irrational questions: what is hidden in that shadow. Again, La Tourette: two shadowed walls and a concrete beam frame a beautiful view of the landscape. A dark background behind white statues under the dome of Berlin’s Altes Museum makes the statues appear even whiter and vice versa, the whiteness of these statues emphasizes the darkness of the green wall behind; here there is a symbiosis of opposite poles!