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Dark Adaptation

Chris Gehman

2016, color, 14 min., without dialogue. **Producer** Chris Gehman. **Production company** Kitab Al-Manazir (Toronto, Canada). **Music** Graham Stewart. **Editor** Brian Kent Gotro.

Chris Gehman, born in 1966 in Chicago, USA, is a filmmaker, curator, and writer based in Toronto. His films have screened at venues worldwide. He has worked as a programmer and editor for Cinematheque Ontario/TIFF Cinematheque and was Artistic Director of the Images Festival (Toronto) from 2000 to 2004. His writing on experimental media has appeared in periodicals such as *Cinema Scope* and *Millennium Film Journal*, and he has edited or contributed to a number of anthologies on experimental media.

Films

1987: *Cityscape* (4 min.), *Destruction of a House by Fire* (4 min.). 1991: *Collage No. 1* (7 min.). 1996: *First Dispatch From Atlantis* (5 min.), *Non-Zymase Pentathlon* (6 min.). 2000: *Contrafacta* (15 min.). 2008: *Rostrum Press: Materials Testing* (4 min.), *Refraction Series* (8 min.). 2016: *Dark Adaptation*.

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Dark Adaptation extends the exploration of experimental optical techniques begun by Chris Gehman in *Refraction Series* (2008). Working with simple, everyday materials, Gehman produces rich and surprising images of pure prismatic color in motion. Rooted in the scientific experiments and writings of Ibn al-Haytham and Isaac Newton, these films apply optical phenomena familiar from everyday life – such as thin-film interference, chromatic splitting, and refraction through glass – to the cinema. The results of Gehman’s experiments in the studio are structured as a form of visual music, complemented by a soundscape composed by musician and composer Graham Stewart.

The film’s title refers to the human eye’s adaptation to conditions of darkness by becoming more sensitive to low levels of light. Working in a darkened studio with a single light source and shooting on 16mm reversal film, Gehman explores visual phenomena at the edge of perceptibility, creating analogues for images experienced with the eyes closed. The film proposes that powerful images can be generated by the body’s own systems; in this sense, *Dark Adaptation* represents an epic interior journey.