ARE 361: Fundamentals for Lighting Design
HW #1: The Raisin Observation

Assigned: Period 1.1
Due: Period 1.2

OBJECTIVE
This exercise is intended to focus your mind on the present moment using all your senses. It is intended to illustrate that, when you are mindful, you have the capacity to elevate your awareness of your surroundings and appreciate them more fully.

BACKGROUND
For normally sighted people, eighty percent or more of perception, learning, cognition, and activities are mediated through vision. Yet, when you look and see, are you seeing with full awareness, or simply going through the motions? Lighting professionals should have a heightened awareness of light in the built environment. Such heightened awareness can be learned and developed with practice.

Rather than focusing only on vision, this exercise is intended to focus your mind on the present moment using all your senses. The instructions below are adapted from the book “Mindfulness” by Mark Williams and Danny Penman.

ASSIGNMENT
Set aside five to ten minutes when you can be alone, in a place, and at a time, when you will not be disturbed by the phone, family, friends, or pets. Switch off your cell phone. You will need a few raisins or other dried fruit, or you could use nuts or something similar. Your task will be to eat the fruit or nuts in a mindful way. You are asked to write a brief reflection and submit via Canvas afterwards.

Read the instructions below to get an idea of what is required. Reread them only if you really need to. The spirit in which you do this activity is more important than covering every instruction in minute detail. You should spend about twenty to thirty seconds on each of the following eight stages:

1. Holding
Take one of the raisins (or your choice of dried fruit or nuts) and hold it in the palm of your hand. Focusing on it, approach it as if you have never seen anything like it before. Can you feel the weight in your hand? Is it casting a shadow on your palm?

2. Seeing
Take the time to really see the raisin. Imagine you have never seen one before. Look at it with great care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it. Examine the highlights, the darker hollows, the folds and the ridges.

3. Touching
Turn the raisin over between your fingers exploring its texture. How does it feel between the forefinger and thumb of the other hand? Do both hands have a similar sensation of touch?

4. Smelling
Now, holding it beneath your nose, see what you notice with each in-breath. Does it have a scent? Let it fill your awareness. And if there is no scent, or very little, notice this as well.

5. Placing
Slowly take the raisin to your mouth and notice how your hand and arm know exactly where to put it. Then gently place it in your mouth, noticing what the tongue does to “receive” it. Without chewing, explore the sensations of having it on your tongue. Gradually begin to explore the object with your tongue, continuing for thirty seconds or more if you choose.

6. Chewing
When you’re ready, consciously take a bite into the raisin and notice the effects on the object and in your mouth. Notice any tastes that it releases. Feel the texture as your teeth bite into it. Continue slowly chewing it, but do not swallow it just yet. Notice what is happening in the mouth.

7. Swallowing
See if you can detect the first intention to swallow as it arises in your mind, experiencing it will full awareness before you actually swallow. Notice what the tongue does to prepare it for swallowing. See if you can follow the sensations of swallowing the raisin. If you can, consciously sense it as it moves down into your stomach. And if you don’t swallow it all at one time, consciously notice a second or even third swallow, until it has all gone. Notice what the tongue does after you have swallowed.

8. Aftereffects
Finally, spend a few moments registering the aftermath of this eating. Is there an aftertaste? What does the absence of the raisin feel like? Is there an automatic tendency to look for another?

Now take a few minutes to reflect on what you noticed when you were doing this activity. Some people have reacted with statements like: “The smell was amazing—I’d never noticed the smell of a raisin before”; “I felt pretty stupid”; “I tasted this one raisin more than the twenty or so I usually stuff into my mouth without thinking”; “I thought how ugly they looked … small and wrinkled, but the taste was very different from what I remembered a raisin tasting like. It was quite nice actually.”

DELIVERABLES
To receive credit, please upload your written reflection to Canvas by navigating to the Assignments tab. The written portion of this assignment can be brief, from a few sentences to no more than a half page.