

La habitación oscura

The Dark Room



UK panel's choice Year 2014

Author: [Isaac Rosa](#) [1]

Publisher: [EDITORIAL SEIX BARRAL, S.A.](#) [2]

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A group of young people decide to construct a "dark room": an enclosed space into which light never enters. In the beginning they use it to experiment with new ways of relating to each other, to have anonymous, free sex, and for a mixture of play and transgression. As they have to face maturity, with all its decisions, disillusion and setbacks, the darkness becomes a sort of relief for them. With the passage of time, social uncertainty and personal vulnerability enter their lives and the dark room begins to feel like a refuge. As reality slowly seeps through into that interior space, some of the youths believe that these are times to carry out a counter attack rather than hiding away, even if their decisions endanger the rest of the group.

UK panellists opinion:

"Unusual", "Intriguing sounding" and "Thrilling" are some of the epithets used by the panellists to describe "La habitación oscura". They particularly like the fact that it deals with a topical subject, the financial crisis, and how the characters evolve through time.

The Dark Room tells the story of a group of friends now approaching their forties who in their early twenties began jointly renting a small former community centre as a place to study, work, enjoy their hobbies and socialise away from the constraints of their home lives. One Saturday night, while they're all drinking and smoking together, the liberating darkness of a sudden power cut leads to an unanticipated, brief but intense near-orgy. Surprised and enticed by the freedom offered by the darkness and the potential for similar encounters, they build a dark room in the basement of the building, removing all potential sources of light and forbidding speech, thus allowing them to remain anonymous during any time spent there(...)

The Dark Room is an intense, compelling and absorbing read. Following an intriguing initiation into the creation and atmosphere of the dark room, Rosa quickly and effectively involves the reader in the story, making them part of the group through his insistent, inclusive use of the collective 'we' and addressing them directly and giving them agency through the singular 'you'. As you learn progressively more about the characters, the trajectory of their lives and the role the dark room plays for them, it is easy to succumb and feel you are almost becoming a character yourself (...)

Rosa alternates smoothly between the history of the dark room and its users and their current situation, skilfully weaving in brief, puzzling descriptions of unknown computer users from the perspective of a webcam. While the reader is unaware of the relevance of these interludes for much of the book, the sudden realisation of their significance is an inspired element of the powerful and unpredictable conclusion of an intense and thought provoking reading experience.

The Dark Room is likely to translate well in terms of both language and culture. The Indignado and 15M movements received considerable coverage in the UK press and, although the financial crisis and the

extent of its impact in Spain and Britain are not necessarily directly comparable, it would be a familiar phenomenon to UK readers. (From the reader report by [Isabelle Kaufeler](#) [3])

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"Without doubt one of the best novels of the year." Ricardo Senabre, El Cultural.

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