# FROM CINEMA TO THE SCIENTIFIC THEATER•

## An Exercise on the Architectural Composition of a Scene

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Samuel Iuri,
Vittoria Umani.

**Exhibition
of didactic works
of architectural composition**

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UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI TRIESTE

Dipartimento di
**Ingegneria
e Architettura**

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After a series of introductory lectures on the relationship between **cinema**, **literature**, and **architecture**, the students were invited to choose a film from those presented during the course and extrapolate its fundamental concepts through the creation of a **three-dimensional model**, made to an appropriate scale and with materials of their choice.

Since these were first year students, this presented itself as their first design experience useful to understand fundamental concepts such as: the development of an idea, the scale of representation, the architectonic reference, the concepts of drawing and modeling; essentially the basics of **composition**.

# FROM CINEMA TO THE SCIENTIFIC THEATER •

The cinematic work, then, was in this case used as a tool to introduce students to architecture, allowing them to understand its importance and complexity. Inspired by the example of Aldo Rossi's *Teatrino Scientifico* (Scientific Theater), the students were invited to think of their own *teatrino* (or small theater) where they could stage the synopsis or interpretation of a movie chosen by them from the ones presented during the lectures, first creating drawings which they would then translate into a **three-dimensional model**.

From these premises, each one of them, assisted by the teaching staff, was able to develop and represent their own idea, thus acquiring the fundamental rules and basic principles of the **architectural discipline**.

**Gianfranco Guaragna**
Architecture Theory
and Composition

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As it is known, there is a close relationship between **cinema•** and architecture, as well as between **cinema•** literature and architecture that occupies a central role in this triad, since the link between film and novel cannot disregard it. It is known that "scenario" is what allows stories to unfold, and the relationship between scenario

## CINEMA •

## Architecture Between Cinema and Literature

and action is as close as that of stage and play, as written by Amitav Gosh. Furthermore, there is a gradual entrance into the scenario as the spectator himself becomes part of it, when it begins to seem real. This is the reason why "the sense of place" is notoriously one of the great magic tricks of the novel form. Whether it is described in the pages of a book or filmed in movie sequences, architecture, as the perfect setting, represents an indispensable element of narration and when the story is returned to us through cinematographic technique, it shows how it objectively plays an exclusive role.

After all, one just needs to think of a film like *Le Mépris*, by Jan Luc Godard, based on the novel by Alberto Moravia and entirely shot in Villa Malapate on Capri. It should be specified that the novel's inspiration is itself a cinephile, not only because Moravia worked for the **cinema•**, but because he intended entrusting the hypothetical screenplay to Vitaliano Brancati. There are many examples of novels transposed into cinematic language where architecture takes on a mandatory role, for example, years before Gae Aulenti realized her project for the Musee d'Orsay, Orson Welles shot most scenes for the film adaptation of Kafka's *Le Procès* in the same disused train station; a 1962 film starring Welles himself.

Then there is *Blade Runner*, by Ridley Scott, loosely inspired by Philip K. Dick's novel, where in a dystopian Los Angeles, the replicant Roy Batty recites the famous monologue on the roof of the Bradbury Building, that also houses replicant designer for Tyrell Corporation J.F. Sebastian, while the hunter of replicants played by Harrison Ford, lives in Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House. Or, *A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film, based on the novel by Anthony Burgess, where one of the fundamental scenes, the sequence of the brutal rape and beating, was filmed in the Jaffe House, one of Team 4's first designs.

But one needs to be careful, because when François Truffaut, in a 1958 writing, talks about literary adaptation to **cinema•**, he states that between fidelity to the letter and fidelity to the spirit, there cannot be any rule and that each case is particular, everything is allowed, besides trivialization, impoverishment and sugarcoating. We know that it is rare for a film to remain faithful to the novel and the results do not always satisfy the expectations of the book's author. However, this depends on the film and the director, according to David Lynch, a book or a screenplay is nothing more than a skeleton to which flesh and blood must be given; whether one wants to remain faithful to the story or not. In this context then, architecture takes on a symbolic function into which to concentrate hidden contents and psychological implications of the story.

**Gianfranco Guaragna**
Architecture Theory and Composition
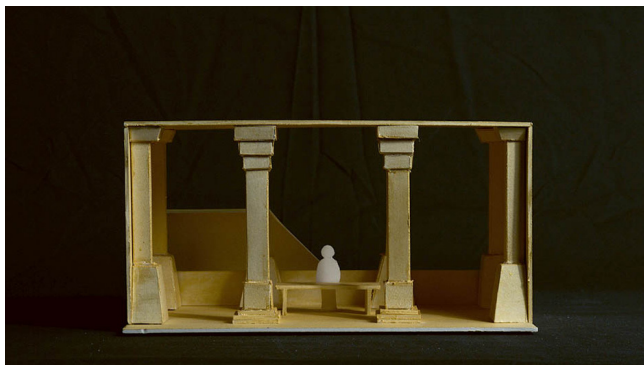
Silvia Sauro, *Tyrell Corporation*, extrapolation from *Blade runner,* 1982



Eleonora Tedesco, *Family House*, exrapolation from *The Godfather-Part II,* 1974



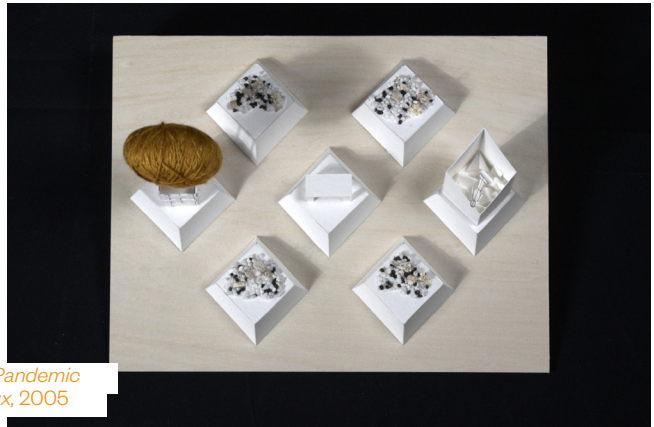Letizia Dal Lago, *The Lost Shadow of the Third Floor Window* extrapolated from *Le Locataire*, 1975

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Lorenzo Dequal ,*The Bowling Alley*
Extrapolated from *The Big Lebowski*, 1998

Asya Cleva, Reality and Change
extrapolated from Slumdog Millionaire, 2008



Alessandro Mattivi, *Clone Pandemic*
extrapolated from *Æon Flux,* 2005



Anna Pernarcich, *The Portal*
extrapolated from *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me,* 1992

# 8

The architecture discipline revolves around creating spaces for people to live in. Each person, with his own personal story inevitably shares a number of places with other people, intertwingling then each story with another and together, each experience writes the story of a place. An architect can design a story with its project about the people who will inhabit them, the culture they represent, the historical context from which it emerges.

## STORYTELLING •

Architecture then, just like the cinematic discipline, aims to convey narratives, evoke emotions and create unique experiences for their audience. Although the mediums utilized are different, physical or visual representations of space and place are key aspects of **storytelling•**, able to shape our understanding of reality.

Architecture uses space, light, texture, color and materials to arouse emotional responses and allow us to deduce the story. The way light filters through a window, the thickness and texture of a wall, the height of a ceiling, they all can shape our emotional response and evoke a sense of serenity, anguish, tranquility, uneasiness, contemplation.

Even the most functional aspects of design can also contribute to its **storytelling•**, the layout of a hospital, can tell a story of efficiency but also of care, just like designs for prisons or jails can intimidate and control the human spirit. Whether the story is planned or not, architecture narrates it anyway.

By embedding stories into architectural elements, every structural element, detail, material choice, can be designed to communicate and symbolically reference various disciplines and evoke archetypal images and their corresponding emotions. This can transform the consequent designs into vibrant and meaningful places, significant not only for their functionality and technological implementations, but able to express artistic, cultural and historical significance over the years.

Daniel Libeskind's design for the extension of the Jewish Museum in Berlin for example, proposes a series of spaces constructed to symbolically portray and cause in the observer emotions that accompany the strong and sensitive narrative of the museum contents.

He uses the architectural expression of deconstructivism to emotionally guide the visitor through sharp forms, angular walls, unusual openings and disconcerting spaces fueled by conceptualizations of void.

Similarly, Jhon Heiduk and his Victims, project for the 1984 Prinz-Albert-Palais competition in Berlin for the construction of a memorial park, also chooses to embed his design with **storytelling•** elements expressed by each architectural structure and their embodied character. Each of these characters, are not given direct representative correlation of human form, nor of the symbols they are supposed to embody. Each of their identity is shaped by the relationships with their environment and their neighboring structures. Also for other projects situated where a strong collective memory is present, Heiduk utilizes the "Masques" or characters to inhabit their potencial state. Each project, the story it brings to life, and the emotions it evokes becomes the instrument that funnels the spirits of the inhabitants of the past, the present and the future of that place. The component of time then becomes essential, as each character of the design is allowed to exist in his own time and slowly create relationships with the newcomers.

Both these examples show how Architecture, through its **storytelling•** character, shapes the world around us, and with its evocations it is able to speak of the past while existing in the present and simultaneously projecting us into the future.

**Vittoria Umani**
Architecture Theory and Composition

Astrid Tomasi, *What if she was dead...*, extrapolated from *Il Vedovo,* 1959



Federico Bastiani, *Second Vision*, extrapolated from *TNuovo Cinema Paradiso,* 1988



Mădălina Toma, *Sweet Architecture*, extrapolated from *The Grand Budapest Hotel,* 2014

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Few things seem to have less to do with the cinema than **darkness•** From the constellation of spotlights that surround the camera to the beams that pour out of the projector, the entire dynamics of the image-movement would seem to be governed by light – and so, it actually is. This light, however, is not shapeless and in the very movement of its transpo-

## DARKNESS•

## A Semantic Shift Between Darkness, Concealing and Shielding

sition – of being captured and reproduced, as Benjamin puts it – it is precisely **darkness•** that shapes the appearance of the image. If we think about it, it is already in its historical origin that this process takes place in a negative way: light – and with it the image it bears – at first captured and then projected, re-materialises through an exemplary double-negative operation, physical as much as logical, in which light and dark form dyads of void-and-matter, as well as presence-and-absence; in doing so, they outline each other and define the contours of the other element, forming the overall puzzle of the photographic image.

Comparing **darkness•** to emptiness or absence, however an effective metaphor, is semantically inaccurate; in fact, the etymology of the word *oscuro* refers more to the action of concealing, shielding, covering than to that of excluding, and it is precisely for this consideration that a bizarre logical short-circuit can be seen happening on the film set. In fact, the word *scena* finds its root in the same conceptual field, that is, the primordial bounded space within which the action unfolds, and which be-

comes a shelter, a safe place harbouring the magic of representation. This construction hosts a reassuring **darkness•** then, while in its essentiality, it recalls what for Laugier is the most authentic form of architecture.

The dark side of cinema therefore opens up to a reading of the seventh art as a synthesis of a double operation of "covering", one physical and the other conceptual – the first given as the definition of the space of action and the second as a necessity inherent in the mechanism of representation. This duality between physical space and virtual image resonates with the one already theorised by Athanasius Kircher in his Ars magna, where lights and shadows are the devices that once again transpose the representation of an "other" reality into a "dark" space; and this otherness, in the case of cinema, is again a form "**darkness•**" – the one inherent to the set.

In these terms, the exercise between architecture and cinema offers itself as an opportunity to read the represented in its spatial and semantic qualities, each of them characterised by a series of invariants and variable data; these are the elements that, filtered through the subjectivity of the viewer, allow us to reconstruct the physical geometry and meaning conveyed in this game of obscuring-revealing.

**Samuel Iuri**
Architecture Theory and Composition

Johanna Kerschbaumer, *Contrasts and Oxymorons,* extrapolated from *Zabriskie Point,* 1970



Veronica Zanella, *Black Angel,* extrapolated from *Boom!,* 1968



Valentina Zanella, *The ideal and the Imperfect,* extrapolated from *The Belly of the Architect,* 1987

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Michelle Dalle Nogare, *The Scythes*,
extrapolated from *Metropolis*, 1927

Erika Palmas, *Outside my Window*
extrapolated from *Viaggio in Italia,* 1954





Emily Rossett, *The Dreamer,*
extrapolated from *La Città delle Donne,* 1980

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Miriam Antonaci

Lorena Barbara

Federico Bastiani

Matteo Cacciapaglia

Aurora Cantarutti

Asya Cleva

Alice Conte

Letizia Dal Lago

Alessandro De Chiara

Sabrija Debora

Lorenzo Dequal

Lucia d'Esposito

Arianna Forte

Giacomo Fusari

Anita Gregorutti

Bojana Jurisic

Johanna Kerschbaumer

Alessandro Mattivi

Davide Morassut

Michelle Dalle Nogare

Erica Palmas

Anna Pernarcich

Elena Plesnicar

Giulia Pozzar

Leonardo Prisacaru

Emily Rosset

Valentina Russian

Debora Sabrija

Silvia Sauro

Eleonora Tedesco

Mădălina Toma

Astrid Tomasi

Letizia Turcinovich

Lorely Valci

Ilaria Vivoda

Valentina Zanella

Veronica Zanella

Veronika Zaytsev

Arianna Forte, *The Imposed Order*
extrapolated from *Æon Flux,* 2005



Veronika Zaytsev, *Trasparency*
extrapolated from *Malcolm & Marie,* 2021

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*pamphlet 03*

**FROM CINEMA
TO THE SCIENTIFIC THEATER•**
An Exercise on the Architectural
Composition of a Scene

**Exhibition of didactic works
of architectural composition**

from March, 2024
to April, 2024
Library Hall of the Gorizia University Branch,
18 Alviano Street, Gorizia.

**Elements of Architectural Composition
module of the Laboratory of Composition,
Theory and Representation
of Architecture I
A.Y. 2023-2024**

Coordination, overall curatorship
of the exhibition and scientific
responsibility:

Gianfranco Guaragna
Samuel Iuri
Vittoria Umani

Cover image:
Anna Pernarcich, *The Portal*
extrapolated from
*Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me,* 1992

ARCHITETTURA•

Master's Degree Course in **ARCHITECTURE•** University of Trieste