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ART OF FILM – A WAY OF ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNICATION

BY

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Abstract. The art of film, the most popular art of the 20th century, can represent for architecture a means of teaching and promoting its specific values, an inspirational source and a good example of efficient and accessible cultural communication.

The architecture presents many resemblances with the world of film regarding the concept and space exploring for communicating some ideas or concepts. Both film and architecture have narrative qualities, work with the world of illusions and representations and compose various elements in order to carry on certain significances.

The film makers are making available the suggestive and semantic potential of architecture to render states and attitudes, to outline certain meanings or to emit opinions and comments on political, psychological and social issues.

Key words: accessible and efficient cultural communication; resemblances between architecture and art of film; space and light as vehicles of meanings; spatial stories; spatial show; illusion; emotional atmosphere; social and political significances.

1. Introduction

An important segment of the modern and contemporary culture – the film, is considered the most popular and the most genuine art of the 20th century. The cinema has a high potential to communicate with the masses, being one of the artistic media overcoming the class, education and cultures [1, p.71].

For architects, the art of film is a good example of efficient and accessible cultural communication for all understanding levels but is also a source of inspiration for the way it manages to exploit common and simple things at a high artistic level (Fig. 1).

The architecture has many resemblances with the world of film regarding the concept and space exploration to communicate ideas and concepts.



Fig. 1– Image from the movie *Frida* directed by Julie Taymor.

2. Contents

The film maker who became architect, Rem Koolhaas, considered that he is now still a kind of a script writer: “there are surprisingly few differences between one activity and the other. I believe that the art of scripts is to conceive sequences of some episodes that generate suspense and a chain of events... now, the most significant part of my work is a montage... a spatial montage” [2]. As the architecture composes, like the film, a spatial rhythm of sensations, Koolhaas states: “sometimes it seems to me that working to a building is like writing a script. It’s a matter of tension, atmosphere, rhythm, suitable sequence of spatial impressions” [3].

Both the film and the architecture have narrative qualities, utter spatial stories from the perspective of narrator–creator, work with the world of illusion and representations and compound various elements for transmitting certain ideas. Similar to the architectural composition in space, the montages and the frames group more various segments in order to create new concepts and

images destined to psychically and affectively influence the spectator. Both in film and architecture, the change of view angles, perspective, movement in space, acoustical qualities of spaces, light and shade play, colours and textures of surfaces are destined to create a spatial show with a certain emotional atmosphere and intensity that can communicate messages to the public (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 – Images from the movie *Gattaca*, directed by Andrew Niccol.

The film rebuilds and reinvents the space, it dynamically and realistically renders it on the screen and, thus, it introduces sensorial perceptions resembling in many aspects to the ones of direct experimentation. If a static image privileges the surface and reduces the real depth of the space, the movie transforms it and confers it life and profoundness. The image gains vibration and depth, and beyond the image, there are many other images in succession or simultaneousness. By various types of planes, centering and filming angles, an extremely complex state of the visual fields is obtained, offering an extensible spatiality, visible in one moment [4]. By focalization (a photo-video procedure that intentionally cuts off a fragment of the visual field), the movies has the ability to outline suggestive architectural scenes and details. Like architecture, the filming should be carried out with the sense of scale and with the intention to create the psychological feeling of interior or exterior, as it is the case.

The art of film rediscovers and semantically reinterprets the architecture, enriching it with new senses. The architectural spaces of films are spiritualized spaces, psychologically built, and formed of walls, colour, sound, light and shade. The film architecture is one of significances; each element in the frame is important and has something to say [1, p.13].



Fig. 3 – Images from the movie *Frida* directed by Julie Taymor.

The film makers use architecture in order to transmit certain concepts and exploit suggestive and semantic possibilities of architecture, carefully selecting ambience, light and view angle to render states and ideas. The built environment in which film actions are running is a background, a setting that surrounds the stage and the actors like a defined and perceptible spatial atmosphere. The architecture and the ambience communicate us the place and the historical period of the plot, the social class of the characters, their thoughts and feelings.

The architecture sensitivity intensifies the artistic expression of the film; the more intense, brighter and more melancholic the ambience is, the more powerful the effect in movie is. As in the movie *Frida*, directed by Julie

Taymor, the exuberant and poetic frames, emotional and full of colour illustrate the spirit and culture of South America (Fig. 3), but also the intense and tumultuous life of the artist. In the *Memoirs of a Geisha*, directed by Rob Marshall, the tragic and romantic scenes are composed on the background of a specific Japanese atmosphere, formed by elements of landscape art and traditional architecture (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – Images from the movie *Memoirs of a Geisha* directed by Rob Marshall.

In many artistic movies, the architecture and environment of the city are part of the game, elements of the scripts or even characters with an important role in modeling the people's life. The cinema actually evolved as an "urban" art, developing its histories in a metropolitan way, investigating power and weak points of the cities. The film has approached an innovative and suitable way of analysing the urban life; it has made an analysis of complex relations between space, time and human activity organization within the cities [1, p.46].

The movie *Cidade de Deus*, directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, pictures severe consequences on social level that the isolation of some disfavoured social strata in a precarious physical environment could have. In a corrupt society, the Brazilian neighborhood of the 60's *City of God*, in the social ghetto abandoned by the authorities, the small children become true dangerous gangsters. A shocking movie, based on true events, shows us how a very poor and overcrowded life frame creates conditions for transforming the childhood innocence in criminality (Fig. 5).

The film makers often used the architecture and the space of the city to outcome significances and metaphors regarding the human and society nature or to emit opinions and comments on political, psychological and social matters [1, p.13]. In *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle, images are presented that illustrate the existing contracts in Indian metropolises among the ghetto misery and the welfare of the developing city (Fig.6).

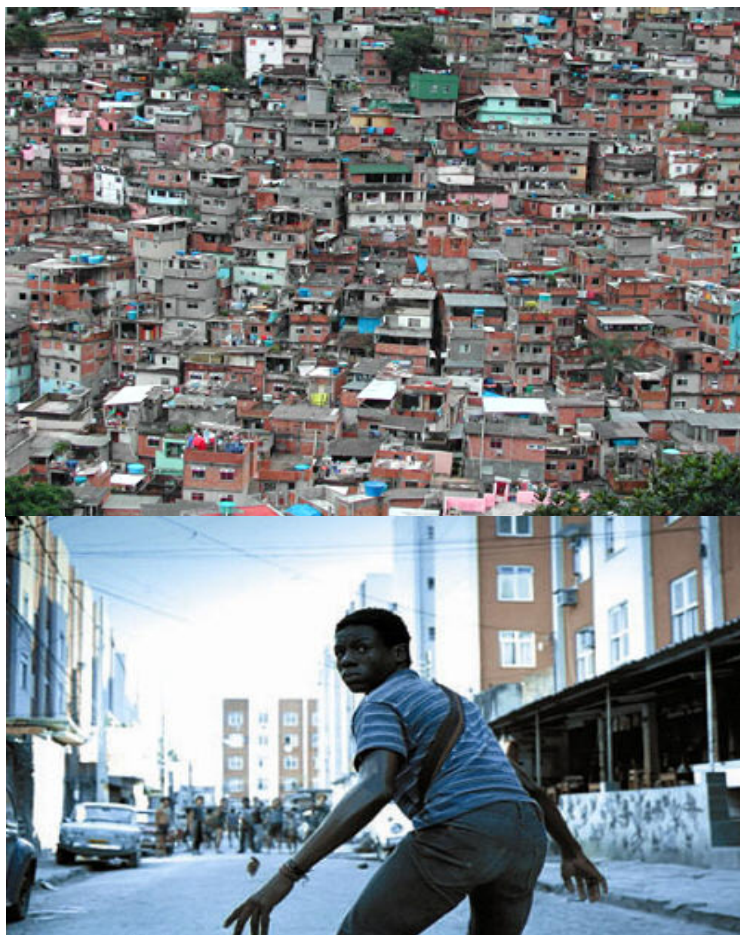


Fig. 5 – Images from the movie *Cidade de Deus* directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund.

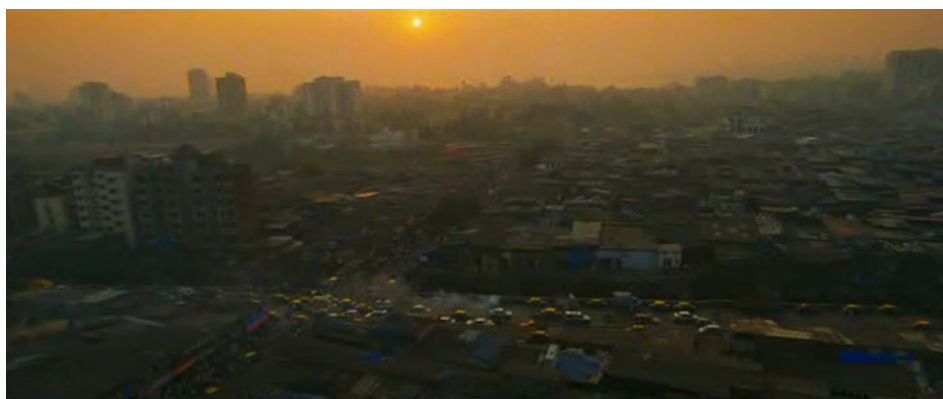


Fig. 6 – Image from the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle.

Hans Poelzig transmitted by the mystical architecture in expressionist manner of the houses designed for the movie *Golem*, the privations and the tension in which the characters live, the restraints of their depressive social climate. By the frame created for the movie, he manifested his sympathy for the community of Prague fighting to maintain its identity and authenticity in the middle of turmoil of the whole society.



Fig. 7 – Images from the movie *Golem*, directed by Paul Wegener and Carl Boese, scenography created by Hans Poelzig [5].

In the movie *Golem*, the architecture plays a dramatic, multiple role, its visual power dominating almost every still. Made of clay and wood structure, the fifty-four three-dimension buildings, each of them with a distinct character, with deformations and dynamic applications on ribbings and posts, express the fear and the restlessness in the ghetto. By exaggerated sceneries of the dominant class palace, Poelzig illustrates a decadent and superficial world [5, p.17] (Fig. 7).

The movies that exploit new forms of expression and realism, where the power of imagination can reach, can be a source of inspiration for real world architecture. The development of digital technique allowed in recent years the imagination and exploration of some new physical frames for the world of film. The techniques and processes are the same with the ones used for designing buildings: geometrical modeling of space and shape, detailing and processing the applied textures, all for creating realistic images for fictitious spaces. At present, with the help of computerized graphics, abstract and surrealist scenes are created that can not be made in real life with current physical techniques, as in *The Fifth Element*, *Matrix* or *Blade Runner*.

4. Conclusions

Both architecture and art of film have narrative qualities, they compound various elements, they work with space, light and ambience with the world of illusions and representations in order to transmit significances.

The movie can be a teaching means and a way of promoting the architectural values, a communicational vehicle efficiently intermediating messages of the built environment.

The semantic and expressive potential of architecture is exploited by the movie makers in order to communicate certain ideas and concepts or in order to render states and feelings.

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ARTA FILMULUI – MOD DE COMUNICARE ARHITECTURALĂ

(Rezumat)

Arta filmului, cea mai populară artă a secolului XX, poate constitui pentru arhitectură un mijloc didactic și de promovare a valorilor sale specifice, sursă de inspirație și un bun exemplu de comunicare eficace și accesibilă.

Arhitectura prezintă multe similarități cu lumea filmului în ce privește concepția și explorarea spațiului în scopul comunicării unor idei sau concepte. Atât filmul, cât și arhitectura au calități narative, lucrează cu lumea iluziilor și a reprezentărilor și compun diverse elemente pentru a transmite anumite semnificații.

Realizatorii de film valorifică potențialul sugestiv și semantic al arhitecturii pentru a reda stări și atitudini, pentru a contura anumite sensuri sau pentru a emite opinii și comentarii asupra problemelor politice, psihologice și sociale.