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Editorial

The issue of the relationship between film and architecture is so broad and so evocative that the research that can be done on it is practically limitless.

Film functions as a mirror through which we can analyze our collective imaginations and the symbolic appropriation of public and private spaces. In it, we confirm preestablished roles, systems of domination, the definition of the other and the prejudices of current societies. Through film, narrative features in particular, we can understand the modernization process and the way in which it has affected individual stories. Film also documents the existence and use of architecture and spaces that have disappeared or been radically transformed.

In film, architecture has served as a laboratory for the exploration of the built world, sometimes anticipating future forms of architecture and urban design; others containing imaginative spaces that can only exist in cinematic space. The ability of film to construct its own architecture of light and shadow, of form and movement, has led to the superimposition of these two spatial arts. In the relationship between the two, we find the limits of each one.

Of all the arts, architecture has been the one with the most privileged, but also the most difficult, relationship with film. Since the birth of modernism, the arts have tried to capture recent discoveries regarding space-time, an intrinsic characteristic of modernity. The most static arts tried to imitate film in order to reproduce effects or techniques of movement and the interpretation of space and time - the collapse of time into space - even reproducing cinematic montage, the method of combining on a single plane (the screen) a sequence of juxtaposed images consisting of a variety of elements or fragments of a phenomenon that were filmed in different dimensions and from different perspectives. The Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein felt that, despite its many attempts, painting had been incapable of the total representation of a phenomenon in all its multi-dimensionalism and that only the film camera was able to resolve this problem on a single surface. Nevertheless, he considered architecture to be the unquestionable predecessor of film in this respect.

Film thus became the preferred artform of the avant-garde. This medium offered novel perceptual experiences that promised to express the dynamism of the metropolis, a reality composed of fragments and made up of different points of view; this new art could represent the collisions and shock effects characteristic of urban modernity in a more genuine perspective to that of a fixed angle in which it is the object that moves. In contrast with the condition of free exploration, the spectators of a cinematic architectural promenade are limited to selected views offering restricted angles that will never have the reach of the human eye. We could verify this for ourselves in this issue, in which we constructed a sort of primitive montage: the sequence of photographs that pass by rapidly if one flips through the pages of the magazine, which depicts a cinematic architectural promenade of the building designed by Jorge Rubio, Eugenio Urquiza and Carlos Barabari Zetina as the Central Clubhouse of the UNAM campus.

A film montage can represent, for example, a mental journey through multiple phenomena, separated in time and space but brought together in a certain sequence as part of a single concept, filmed with camera movements and framings that distort space to freely spark emotions and construct realities, all of these distinct impressions pass before the eyes of an immobile spectator. Due to this perception of cinematic space, films involve discontinuous spaces - no spectator has a clear mental image of the spaces they are seeing on screen. This reinforces the idea that, in film, it is the story that is important, with space being used, above all, to create psychological atmospheres. Cinematic spaces are new creations, existing outside of any architectonic logic.

Reflecting on film and architecture could help us to formulate design processes based on experience and temporal sequence, planned out like a screenplay instead of as an organized list of scientific needs. It also allows us the possibility of interpreting those projects that increasingly seem to be immersed in the field of the cinematic imaginary. Today, the most famous architects continue to find ways to represent movement and temporal succession in architecture, and so they continue to turn to the avant-garde tradition, which, in turn, was shaped by the impact of cinematic techniques.

Cristina López Uribe