

# Chapter 7

## A Sequel About the Expansion of the Cinematic Universe: An Analysis on *Avatar: The Way of Water*

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### ABSTRACT

*The narrators and the designers of the art of cinema build a universe from scratch according to the scenario. In the construction of this universe, cinematographic elements must reach a harmonious unity. The universe should not only contain content within itself, but also new and original content according to the previous design. Avatar, which was released in 2009, presented the planet Pandora in which the story takes place and its own universe with many elements to the audience. Avatar: The Way of Water, which was released in December 2022, also shows that this created universe has many more parts waiting to be discovered. The main purpose of this research is to reveal how Avatar: The Way of Water, which was shot as a sequel, uses methods in the expansion of the cinematic universe. This study, designed as an exploratory field research with descriptive analysis method, proves how the sequel structure of a universe created from scratch can be enriched in itself.*

### INTRODUCTION

All works of art go through a process of starting from an idea, using different forms and techniques in harmony and then presenting it. This process is also a preliminary study of the new cinematic universe to be revealed in the film. The creation of this universe can be produced partially or completely in today's digital production period, not only before and during the shooting, but also during the post-production phase.

At this point, the role of the director is extremely important. The director's dominance over the entire film and his harmony with the integrity of his own filmography will also come into play here. A director will be more memorable as long as he makes his own cinematographic understanding felt in composition, mise-en-scène, camera movements, editing, visual design, lighting, use of color, costume

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design and many visual design elements. The works of some directors are only focused on doing a job. Doing work in accordance with the scenario and budget is the first target, and visuality, mise-en-scène and other cinematographic elements remain in the background. When we look at the history of world cinema, productions in which the director dominates the entire creative process in both mainstream and non-mainstream productions can take place in higher levels in terms of visual and taste.

The first way to create a universe is to construct a new mise-en-scène over real spaces, and the other way is to produce the real-looking mise-en-scène in a studio environment. Apart from that, it is completely based on creating a dream world with unprecedented designs. *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977-2005), *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979-2015), *The Matrix* (Wachowski Brothers, 1999-2021), *The Lord Of The Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), *The Hobbit* (Peter Jackson, 2013-2015). Some of these productions are literary adaptations and have depicted the world described in the novel. Some of them have gone to create a universe from scratch, with themes such as fantasy, science fiction, and dystopia. *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) also appears as a production that creates a new universe within itself and uses cinematic technique and technology both before and after production by directing it.

The concept of a sequel also gains a different importance at this point. Sequels can take place in different genres or themes, as well as a continuation of content with a completely re-created universe can be brought more easily. *Avatar* (2009), the main universe of the research, is the work of James Cameron, a filmmaker who works meticulously in each of his films, spreading the process over time to improve the quality of the film. As a writer, director, and producer, Cameron has produced films with more sci-fi and action themes, and with *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), one of the films he shot before *Avatar*, he signed the highest-grossing film in the history of cinema. *Avatar*, on the other hand, is a film whose production process takes a very long time, and it is a product in which the universe created by the director in his own fantasy world must be designed from scratch. It is obvious that the universe created in the movie that has been released may have other elements that will arouse curiosity, and that the story has the potential to continue. The question of how the cinematic universe can expand is the main starting point and aim of the research.

## BACKGROUND

Right after the invention of cinema, one of the first questions asked by both theorists and people working on images in practice is what is the meaning of a piece of image (plan) in itself. It is obvious who has emerged victorious from the questions of whether it is just an invention with no future, as the Lumières say, or whether a new form of expression is a greeting to humanity, with the desire of Méliés, who saw the big picture at that very moment, to use this device as a creative tool. Méliés has been one of the first examples of the creation of the cinematic universe by using many elements such as theatre, mise-en-scène, costume, make-up, decor, place, magic and fiction. Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith, who animate the camera and attempt a new breakthrough by adding close-up plans to the narrative form, have also been added to Méliés, who started to tell a story by combining these image pieces by making different designs within themselves.

The resulting formal experience will become more diversified with each new cinematographic element, and will even continue to this day, and will probably reveal a never-ending personal narrative style (style). Names such as Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov, who are the representatives of Soviet montage theory, who will take silent cinema to a different point,

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