

Chapter 2

Beyond the Haze of Carnival Candles: Cinematic Space in Architectural Design Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses new approaches for design and production practices by applying film as a medium and production design techniques as a method in (interior) architectural education. In various courses and formats with international students on Bachelor and Master level, the author is exploring cinematic tools for phenomenological analysis, scenographic reinterpretation, and architectural storytelling in order to expand the range and toolbox of contemporary academic teaching in the architectural context. The common ground of architectural and cinematic space goes back much further than the history of film itself. But despite comprehensive literature on both the topic of sequence in architecture and fundamental film theoretical writings on cinematic space, we are still the men who stare at static representations. Off the beaten path of tried and tested design methods and beyond Gottfried Semper's "haze of carnival candles," cinematic methods are providing valuable tools for the creation, evaluation and representation of spatial designs in (interior) architecture.

INTRODUCTION

This Case Book Chapter is dedicated to new approaches for design and production practices by proposing the application of film as a medium and production design techniques as a method in interior architectural education. It comprises a series of case studies conducted with students of architecture and interior architecture of Technical University of Darmstadt, University of Kaiserslautern, Technical University of Dortmund, Technical University of Munich and Technology University of Applied Sciences Stuttgart. In various courses and formats on Bachelor and Master level, the author is exploring cinematic tools for

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phenomenological analysis, scenographic reinterpretation, architectural design and storytelling in order to expand the scope and toolbox of contemporary academic teaching in the architectural context. The common ground of architectural and cinematic space reaches back much further than the history of film itself. But despite comprehensive literature on both the topic of sequence in architecture and fundamental film theoretical writings on the relationship of architectural and cinematic space, it is observed that this field is subordinated by contemporary design. Therefore, it needs to be studied in detail.

The dogma of the tried and tested two-dimensional drawing and static image as the ultimate instance of architectural design decisions still prevails in the architectural mindset, despite the continued rise of digital technologies during the first two decades of the 21st century. In this context, the digital three-dimensional model represents a powerful resource and since its advent in the professional practice has evolved from an auxiliary primarily used for computerized-numerical-control manufacturing and digital visualization towards a tool of computational design, for instance for the parametric, generative and algorithmic definition of geometries. In more recent years, Building Information Modeling is gaining momentum as a method of networked planning, execution and management of buildings in a growing number of offices. The majority of these digital applications is emphasizing aspects of efficiency and precise control. However, the subject of interior architectural design is the creation of a complex entity which is by definition imprecise, hazy and not necessarily “efficient” in the common understanding during the design process. Teaching experiences frequently show that students are getting lost in abstraction and that good intentions result in a blatant discrepancy between the desired or alleged architectural phenomenological qualities and the actual project outcome. As an alternative methodology for understanding the architectural experience as a sensual and time-based event which is key to the design process, the author proposes the implementation of various tools from the field of cinematic production design. This allows for creation, evaluation and representation of spatial designs in interior architecture off the beaten path of traditional design methods.

In his *magnum opus* „Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder Praktische Ästhetik” (Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts, or, Practical Aesthetics), Gottfried Semper concludes “I think that dressing and the mask are as old as human civilization, and the joy in both is identical with the joy in those things that drove men to be sculptors, painter, architects, poets, musicians, dramatists, in short, artists. Every artistic creation, every artistic pleasure presupposes a certain carnival spirit, or to express myself in a modern way – the haze of carnival candles is the true atmosphere of art.”

Despite some common ground with recent digital design practices which are emphasizing the role of the digital model and timeline simulations in the design process, the proposed approach is focused on both analog and digital tools inspired by professional cinematic practices. Aiming beyond the mere “haze of carnival candles”, i.e. beyond architectural representations and visualizations ranging from photorealistic to spectacular surreal effects, students are sensitized for a more profound understanding of architectural qualities than static conceptions of space are capable to deliver.

BACKGROUND

In the context of the production, representation and reception of their buildings, architects tend to refer to the atmosphere of a project. The desire for a distinctive, bespoke and unique spatial mood is deeply rooted in teaching and in the self-image of the profession: after all, it is the conscious control of these qualities which is characteristic for what is considered a main feature of “good architecture”. Apart

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