

ARCHITECTURAL STORYTELLING

A NEW WAY OF SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES
AND UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to expose people to the major influence that film has on our opinions, beliefs, and preference in the ways we engage with architecture. An architectural experience in film is curated, vicarious, and restricted by the demand of narrative. A filmmaker's priority is to engage the audience in their story. This often involves the usage of subjectivity, perception, and the establishment of place. What cinema requires the viewer to do is to cast away their immediate senses and substitute them with a more vicarious experience. This thesis also details different filmmaking techniques and their contribution to narrative. Production design, film composition and color palette are all techniques of filmmaking that combine to communicate these narratives.

This study revolves around the following three questions: Do we develop stereotypes of spaces based on what we see in film? What can we learn from places being portrayed in film? Does depicting a place in a certain genre promote harmful ideas? As a primarily visual medium, cinema has an ideal platform to express ideas about a place. Film forces people to view things in a specific way. This allows for vicarious subjectivity but denies people's sense of agency. This thesis uses various methods such as scenic diagramming of extant films and original work, as well as filmmaking, and storyboarding. Given that this thesis is a theoretical analysis, it is limited to relying on qualitative data. This study uses a phenomenological lens that has been established by philosophers Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It is limited in this way, but this does not invalidate insight that can be gained from this study. Experimental exercises have been utilized to delve deeper into the process of filmmaking and production design. The value in this study lies in how it dissects the way narratives define and often dictate our perception of place.

THESIS STATEMENT

The specific topic that will be explored is the craft of architecture and how it is reflected in cinema and used to relay messages to the audience. Production design is the overall aesthetic of the world being portrayed in a film which is often done through a strategic use of architecture. This form of architecture can contribute to the cinematic experience by affecting the overall tone and verisimilitude – the appearance of authenticity. The way we as humans often engage with the world is often through our immediate sense of perception. What cinema requires us to do is to cast away our immediate senses and substitute them for a more vicarious experience. Production design, narrative, cinematic composition, and subjectivity all combine to create narratives that contribute to how we perceive place. The goal of this investigation is to show the major influence that film has on our opinions, beliefs, and preference in the way we engage with architecture. People experiencing architecture by way of film is curated, restrictive, and vicarious by the demand of narrative.

This thesis topic will use two conceptual frameworks. The primary framework used on this topic will be an Interjective/Contextual framework. The Interjective/Contextual framework will be used to explore the socio-cultural aspects of the films being analyzed. Another framework that will be used in this body of work will be a Perceptual/Subjective framework that shows how films can have meanings that vary from person to person.

The objective of my thesis is to investigate the role that cinematic narrative plays on our perception of architecture in the real world. University of Florida Professor and Graphic Designer Maria Rogal defines “narratives” in her essay, *Decolonizing Graphic Design*, “Representations, when repeated, create a narrative which becomes our understanding of the ways things are. Representations construct our reality” (Rogal 1). The same can be applied to film.

The theoretical and philosophical sources are utilized in research such as Phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of phenomena

and objects through direct experience. Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology claims that naturalistic methods such as the hard sciences are distractions that are derivative of true experience. In the context of this research, Phenomena are defined as experiential essences and not determined by facts or metaphysics.

French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, follows Husserlian phenomenology but alters it by adding his own unique contribution, often referred to as the Body-Subject. This claims that humans are always embodied in the world and through this embodiment is how we perceive the world and give things meaning. Experience is always being interpreted as our body moves through the world encountering phenomena. One of the most common phenomena that every human interacts with is architecture.

The research questions of this thesis revolve around the human perception of film and architecture and how our perception is affected through the medium. The discussion revolves around the following three questions: Do we develop stereotypes of spaces based on what we see in film? What can we learn from architecture being portrayed in film? Does genre placement promote harmful ideas? ex: Horror based movies?

The goal of this investigation is to show the major influence that film has on our opinions, beliefs, and preference in the way we engage with architecture. Cinema informs our social and cultural norms. It is imperative to ask these questions to explore the reality of cinema influencing our perception of architecture like other aspects of our daily lives.

The central argument being made is that film is an expressive artform that affects the way people see the world. This creates a lot of opportunity for bias and manipulation of narratives. Considering that architecture is a craft that the entire world engages in, it is always included in cinema. Narratives created by humans can perpetuate an unhealthy lens through which we view place.

Analyzing and annotating clips and photos from films have been used as short exercises. Sketches, storyboards, and filming exercises are used as supplement to replicate metaphors or messages about inequality, social class, and housing. The final method to test the evidence of thesis will be to write and create a short film. A designed installation can be used for the

setting. This setting has been filmed in multiple ways to experiment with how the same space can be falsely portrayed in contrast to a more neutral view.

An obvious critique of the approach can be that it is too subjective. What I am researching is the effect of how cinema warps perception of reality by pushing narratives. Even though the narrative may be intended by the filmmaker, this does not guarantee that the narrative is being received that way by the audience. Everyone has a different preference or perception of architecture/place. Having a perspective is often a result of people's embodiment or subjectivity in the world.

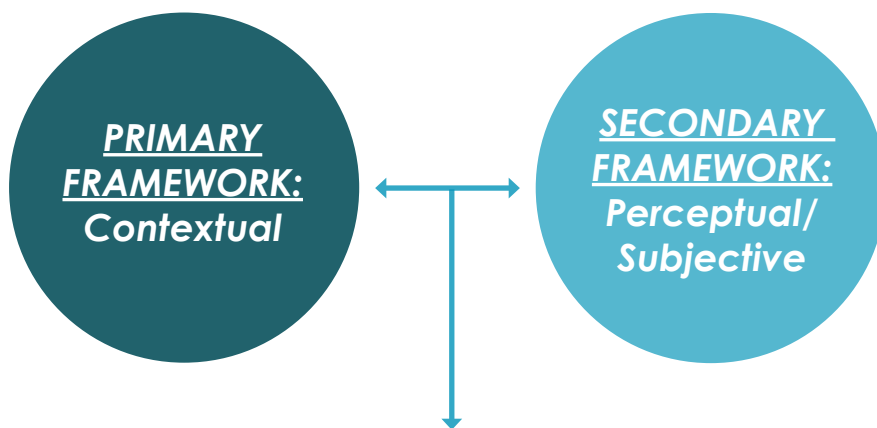
The theoretical and subjective nature of this thesis is an acceptable critique. A lot of the conclusions that I made often are made through research that are anecdotal. Cinema is a subjective media and supporting research can often be difficult to connect how the technical aspects of filmmaking and storytelling intersect. This thesis is a theoretical analysis. Therefore, it is limited in this way, but this does not invalidate the information or insight that can be gained from this study.

This study is valuable because it dissects how narratives define and often dictate our perception of space. Film can often be a manipulative artform. The relevance of this can be to bring self-awareness of how the audience can fall for propaganda about spaces. Architecture is a major part of filmmaking that allows for social critique and may even function as a reflection of the audience's bias.

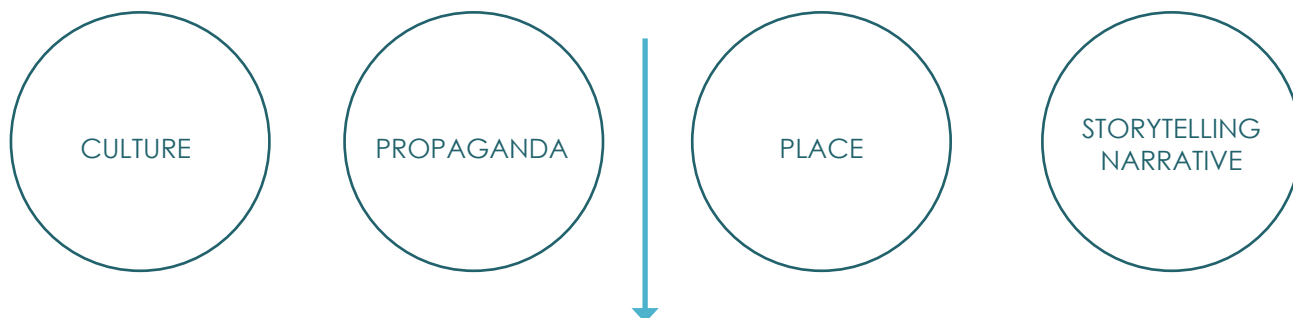
This process of how film and architecture correlate is a bi-lateral process where one seems to compliment the other across the threshold-- the viewer's perception. In conclusion, it is possible to argue that production design (set design) individually is not a complete comprehensive understanding of the relationship between film and architecture. These separate elements such as storytelling, aspect ratio, production design, subjectivity, and cinematography merge to create singular experience. Film is one of the only media where we are not free to experience architecture at our own will. We are forced to be manipulated by the narrative created by the filmmaker's vision of space. Film forces people to view things in a specific way, thus losing our sense of agency.

CONCEPTS + FRAMEWORK

FRAMEWORK



CONCEPTS



QUESTIONS



01 Narratives

The objective of my thesis is to investigate the role that cinematic narrative plays on our perception of architecture in the real world. University of Florida Professor and Graphic Designer Maria Rogal defines "narratives" in her essay, *Decolonizing Graphic Design*, "Representations, when repeated, create a narrative which becomes our understanding of the ways things are. Representations construct our reality." The same can be applied to film and similar media.



Fig. 1.1

Vantage Point (2008)

Journalist

Fig. 1.2



Policeman



Assassin



One of the most influential films of this thesis is Vantage Point (2008). The premise of the film is the following of an assassination attempt of the U.S. President during a speech in Spain. This event is captured from the perspective or "vantage point" of multiple characters. Some of these characters are witnesses while others are more involved in the event. Narratives are important as the view of the interpretation audience changes with the introduction of the new characters. Context is continuously added, giving more depth and understanding to the situation.

The most impactful perspectives that were analyzed from this movie were the journalists, policeman, and the assassin. These drastically different perspectives create a storyline with a constantly shifting narrative where everyone's motives are interconnected. This film served as inspiration for the final deliverable of this

study; a short film Where the Walls Talk (2023). Using Vantage Point (2008) as a precedent, the plot revolves around a group of characters that have different perspectives and experiences of the same situation.

Fig. 1.3



“Film Tells Can Us How Things Are and How Things Can be”

- Jacinta Leong

In a 2021 interview, Fabian Dejtiar describes Jacinta Leong a “Production Designer who enjoys the creative and collaborative process of designing environments for narratives.”(1)

In reference to a movie, she completed working on her most recent sci-fi film, 2067(2021), Fabian asked her how she got the inspiration to design what the future looks like in the film.

“It is interesting how the future is portrayed differently in different movies; Writers, Directors, Production Designers have different visions of what the future looks like. And that's the beauty of our creative Art of Filmmaking.”(1)

“Film Tells Can Us How Things Are and How Things Can be” (1)

It is imperative to understand that people use film as a medium to communicate their own ideas and thoughts. The people most directly responsible for this are the production/set designers for film.

The Kuleshov Effect

Narrative 01



Narrative 02



Beginning + End

Another aspect of cinematic narrative that is often overlooked is the arrangement of images. This element is explored with the Kuleshov Effect. The Kuleshov Effect – theory created by Soviet Union Filmmaker Lev Kuleshov. This theory claims that the audience derives new interpretations from the composition and sequence. In fact, the interaction between shots can change the meaning altogether. The simple act of shifting around images is enough to communicate contrasting narrative to viewers.

In 1918 this was demonstrated when Kuleshov edited a short film with actor Ivan Mosjoukine. The process involved using expressionless shots of Mosjoukine and intercutting them with some contextualizing shots such as, a bowl of

soup or a girl in a coffin. Famed director Alfred Hitchcock described his view on the Kuleshov Effect in his interviews with François Truffaut, and Fletcher Markle. He described the theory on the CBC television series, Telescope - A Talk with Hitchcock (1964)



Shift

Fig. 1.4

A + B + C = "SENSITIVE OLD MAN"

A + B + C = "CREEPY OLD MAN"

"Pure cinematics ... the assembly of film and how it can be changed to create a different idea. We have a close up. Let's assume he sees a woman holding a baby in her arms. Now we cut back to a reaction to what he says, and he smiles. What is he? He is a kindly man, a sympathetic character." - Alfred Hitchcock

"Next, you take the middle piece of film away – the woman with the child. But leave his two pieces of film as they were. Now we will put in a piece of film showing a girl in a bikini. The man looks at the girl in the bikini and he smiles. What is he now? A dirty old man! No longer the benign gentleman who loves babies. That is what film can do for its audience." - Alfred Hitchcock

02 Production Design

Production Design is visual storytelling. The production designer is the responsible for the look and style of the film. The designer is also responsible for researching examples in the world to create a sense of authenticity. Methods that designers use to explore ideas include creating models, sketching, taking photographs and even storyboarding.

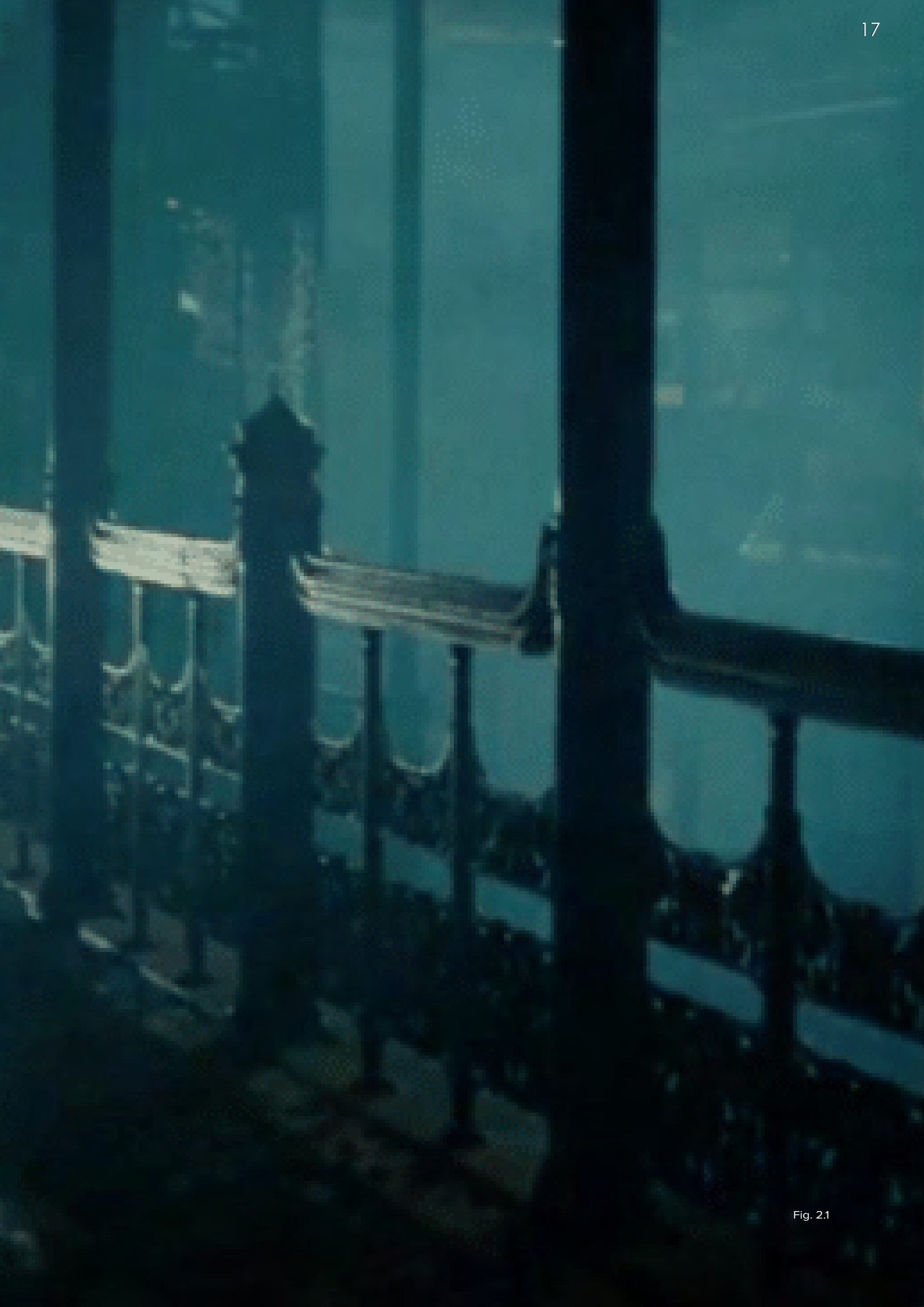


Fig. 2.1

History & Context



Cabiria (1914)

Fig. 2.2



Cabiria (1914)

Fig. 2.3



The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)

Fig. 2.4



The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)

Fig. 2.5

In the early days of creating motion pictures, production design was not used. Instead, filmmakers used painted backgrounds that were accompanied by props to establish setting. In the 1920's and 1930's when art direction became a sophisticated system that created realistic visualization. Production design functions to serve the story and maintain the illusion of fantasy. Early filmmakers maintained a theatrical style of set design, using painted backdrops. Production design shifted when Georges Melies a former magician, applied his stage craft stunts of trap doors and flats, and architectural elements to cinema.

Cinema further changed with the Italian Production of *Cabiria* (1914). This film required

the construction of stairways, platforms, and walls made from wood and plaster materials. The film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) also shows how production design could be used to exaggerate and create a nightmare world of Caligari's reign.

Modern Examples



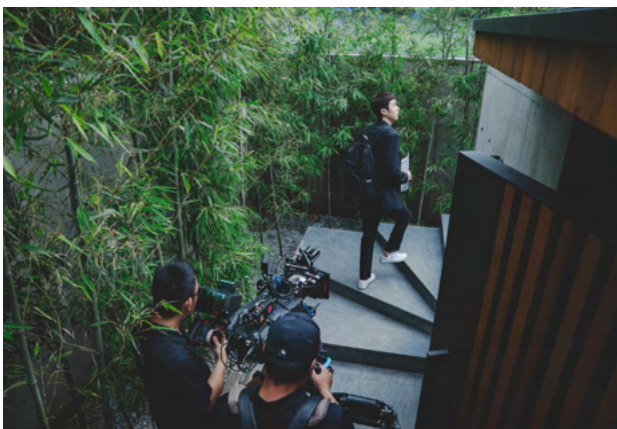
Harry Potter (2001-2011)

Fig. 2.6



The Shape of Water (2017)

Fig. 2.7



Parasite (2019)

Fig. 2.8



The Tragedy of Macbeth (2021)

Fig. 2.9

Some modern examples include the Harry Potter franchise the shape of water parasite and the tragedy of Macbeth Harry Potter franchise utilizes built sets within a studio environment and combines them With authentic site locations Alwick castle and the Gloucester cathedral.

The shape of water 2017 feature set pieces that evoke emotions oh crapness and confinement spaces are usually dark and Deteriorated the Korean film parasite 2019 contrast two different lifestyles of characters by juxtaposing a semi basement apartment with a post-modernist style mansion the set pieces are designed in a way that obviously displays wealth. The tragedy of Macbeth 2021 takes more of a scenic design approach using more abstract set pieces that

are less realistic. This ties back to the theatrical roots of the original play by Shakespeare. The film is shot in black and white exacerbating the shadows created by the set pieces.

Design Metaphors

Fig. 2.10 *Spellbound (1945)*



A series of doors opening imply that there is now a giant revelation.

Fig. 2.11 *Lord of the Rings (2001-2003)*



The hobbit's doorways are circular and follow the lines of curvy hills, symbolizing the hobbits

Fig. 2.12 *The Night House (2021)*



Beth is framed within a single panel of the window glazing, Symbolizing separation and loneliness

Design metaphors are communicated to the audience to help symbolize parts of the story. A visual metaphor in production design may only be accessible to a critic or theorist, but not always the general audience. The metaphors are a conduit for various design decisions like color, space, texture (etc.) There is a psychological nature to production design- metaphysical impacts that can make the views feel uneasy, dread doom (etc.) Atmospheric qualities of Production Design establish mood and feeling to a film.

Pathways & Entrances

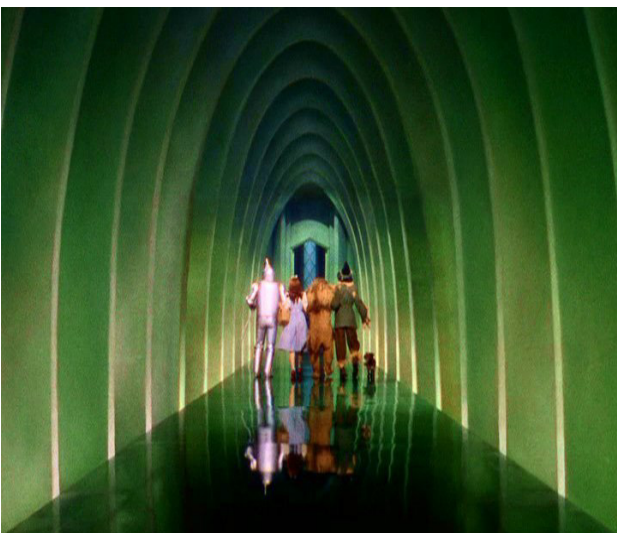
Fig. 2.13 *Candyman* (1992)



Fig. 2.14 *Rear Window* (1954)



Fig. 2.15 *Wizard of Oz* (1939)



Doorways and windows suggest transition when the threshold between interior and exterior are seen as two different worlds. Windows, Corridors and Staircases also serve a purpose of creating a functioning boundary. Similar to 15th and 17th Century painting, windows help frame and contextualize the world. Open and closed doors are used to represent trust or lack of it.

Corridors are used to prolong the transition from one place to another and can play time and space. Staircases and lifts are used as metaphors for the rise and fall of a character. Choosing to use an exterior space can suggest freedom and adventure.

Recreation, Conceptualization & Everything In-between

Designer Kamalavinayagam Ganapathy, states that there are two approaches to production design, which are recreation and conceptualization. Recreation is recreating a real-life location at any point in time while conceptualization is creating fantasy from the creator's imagination.

While films such as Passengers(2016) and Star Trek(2009) use pieces that are completely fictitious there are other set pieces that

are almost exact replications of their real-life counterparts. However, the Grand Budapest Hotel is a mixture of the two both conceptualization and recreation. Production designer Adam Stockhausen and director Wes Anderson found an abandoned shopping mall in Gorkitz Germany that captured the essence of the space they wanted to create. The shopping mall was then remodeled and redesigned to create a hotel that fit the setting of early 20th century Europe.

Conceptualization

Fig. 2.16



Star Trek (2009)

Recreation

Fig. 2.17



The White House - Jackie (2016)

Fig. 2.18



Universal Studios Lot – New York Street- Used in Various T.V. Shows and movies (1942-Present)

Bad Things Happen in Scary Places

Sequence 01



Sequence 02



Sequence 03



Fig. 2.19

Candyman, the antagonist of the film, originates from the Cabrini Green housing projects during the early 1990's. The Cabrini Green projects was a series of 23 high rise towers and row houses. By the 1990's they declined to their worst condition, lacking utilities, and overrun with waste. These spaces of the look dark and abandoned which gives the audience an unsettling impression that echoes throughout the rest of the film. The setting not only serves as the home of the antagonist but also represents the embodiment of the fear that people have towards low-income housing.

In 1995, the U.S. department of Housing and Urban Development decided to demolish the Cabrini-Green projects in favor of a "Plan for Transformation." This plan included demolishing

all of the complex and replacing it with mixed-income development. Re-development is still in progress.

Modernism & Villainy



Fig. 2.20

Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, the Vandamm house is one of the most iconic houses in Cinema. This film indulges in the Hollywood trope that murderers and monsters hide out in high-style modernist homes that embody a sense of "elevated separateness." The decades following the release of *North by Northwest* (1959), filmmakers adopted Hitchcock's architectural precedent, therefore continuing to craft modernistic structures for villains to inhabit in cinema. Hitchcock manipulated our collective memory and the language of building design to create built expressions of human emotions. He viewed settings as not just scenic devices but as active participants in the narrative.



Fig. 2.21 Falling Water - Frank Lloyd Wright

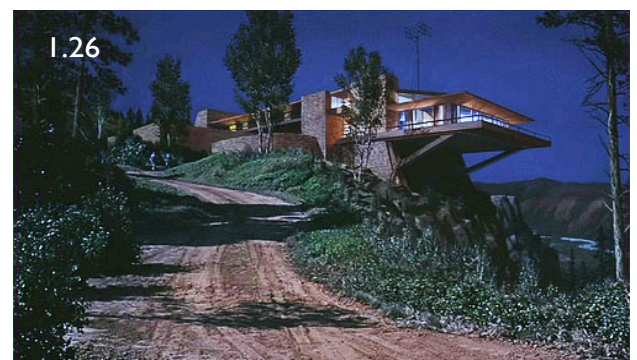


Fig. 2.22 Vandamm House

Architectural Inequality



Fig. 2.23

A luxurious post-modern style home in South Korea becomes a symbol that exacerbates the status struggle of two families in *Parasite* (2019). The film juxtaposes the homes of the Kim family and the affluent Park family. The Parks dwell in the post-modern home while the Kim's live in a cramped basement apartment. The film may suggest that social class is associated with living below or above grade. The architecture exposes the inequality of class. Those semi-basement apartments are called "Banjihwas" and as of 2015, more than 360,000 families lived in them across South Korea, according to a report by the Los Angeles Times. Seoul has committed to improving the living conditions of 1,500 households living in semi-basement apartments.

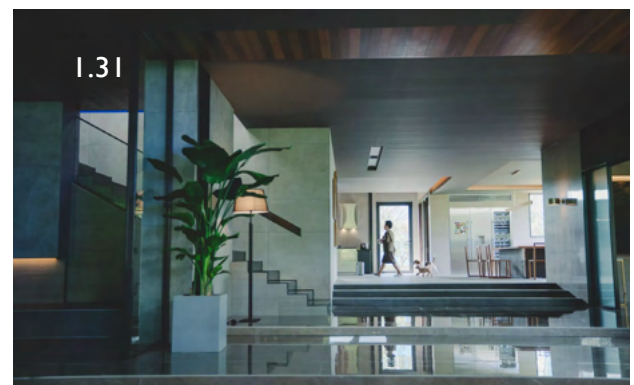


Fig. 2.24 Park Family House- interior



Fig. 2.25 Kim family basement apartment -Interior



03 Urban Context: Detroit

To further the investigation, films were observed that depict an urban landscape such as Detroit. This direction was chosen to study the perception that can be gained from films that all convey narratives of certain place. All the following films including *RoboCop* (1987), *It Follows* (2015), *Brick Mansions* (2014) and *8 mile* (2002) dealt with issues of crime, isolation, abandonment, fear or dystopia. This is common motif of Detroit portrayed through cinema.

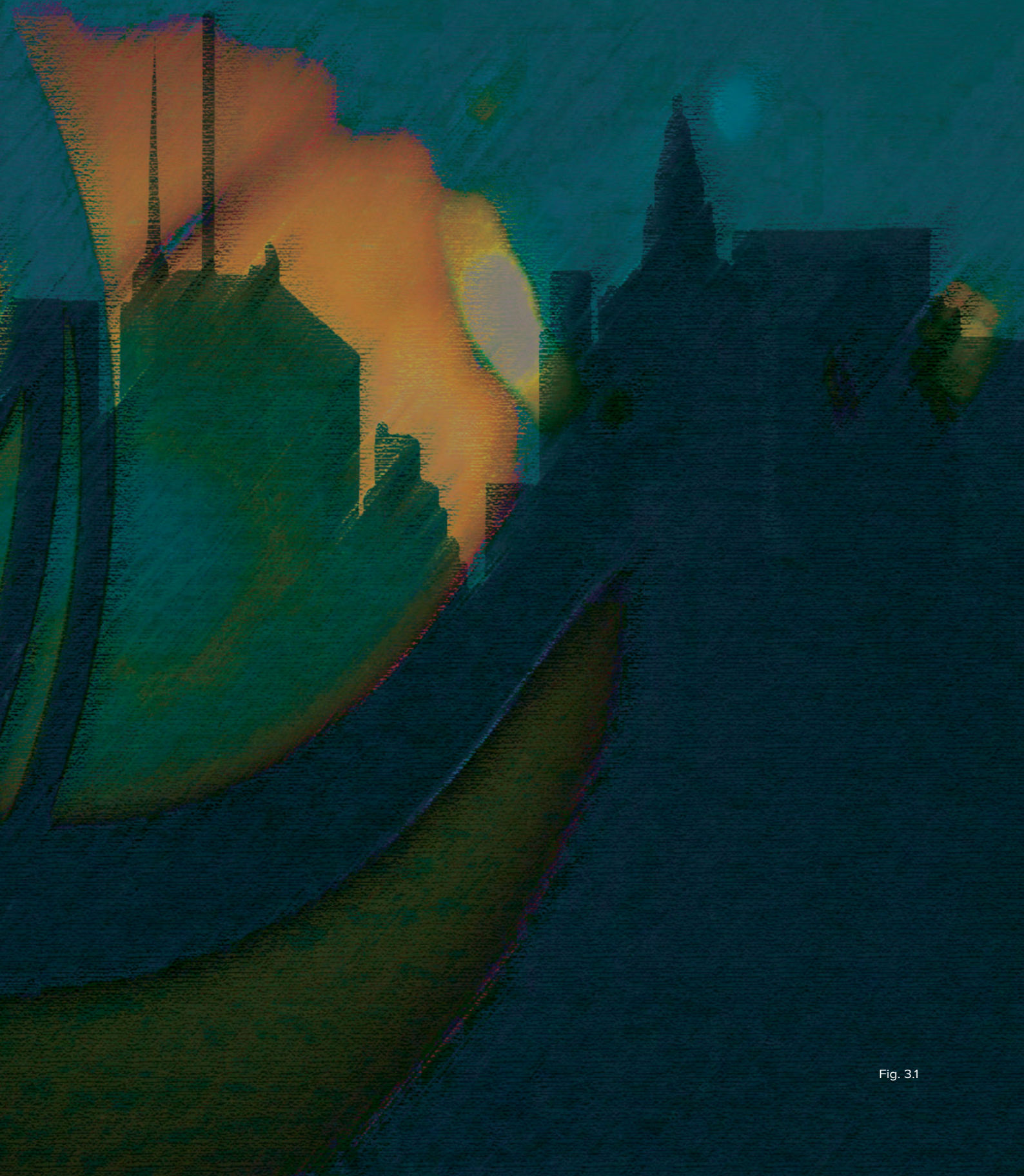


Fig. 3.1



ROBOCOP (1987)

Fig. 3.2

The Defective Model

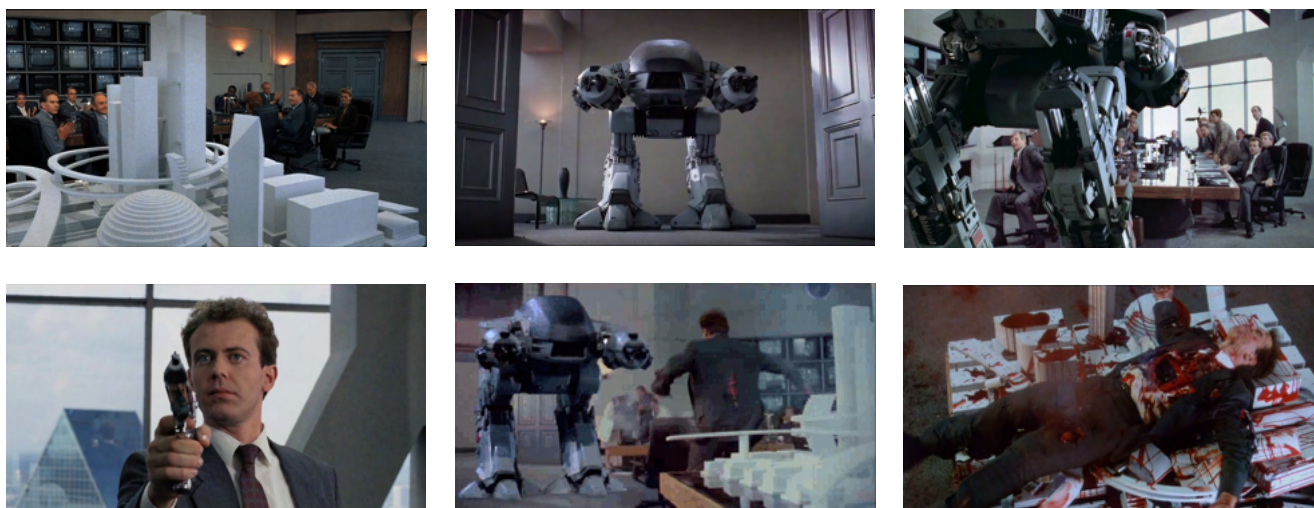


Fig. 3.3

The "Silver Lining"

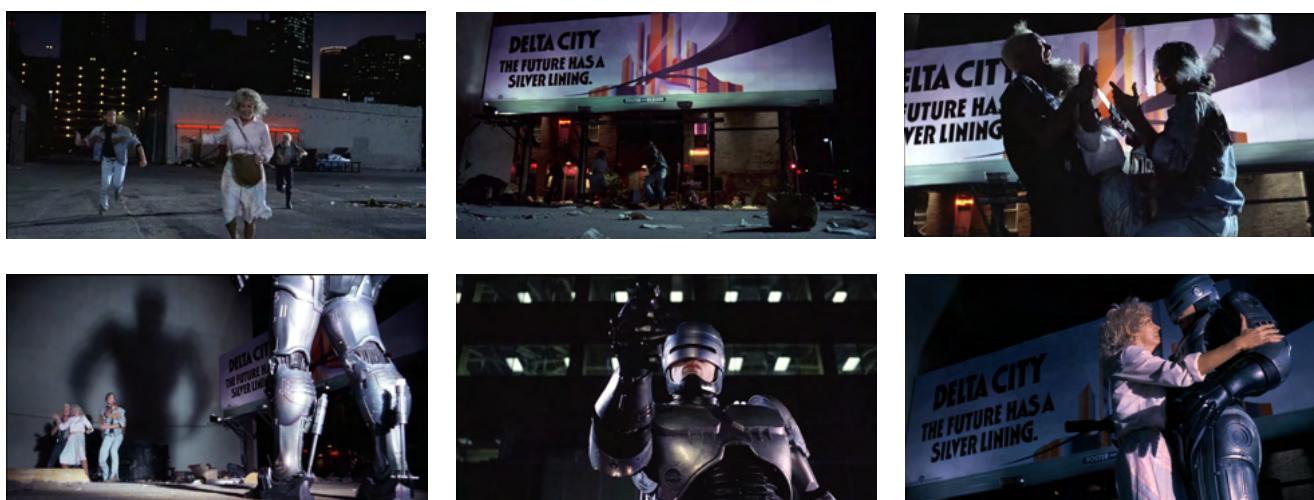


Fig.3.4

Delta City Model is presented as new way of re-shaping Detroit and importing "two million new workers. This will be achieved after curing the "cancer that is crime." Solution to Crime is a cold -unthinking and unfeeling machine. OCP's solution to a human problem is to use militaristic machines. (for profit) This symbolizes that the idea of Delta City. The Architectural model is destroyed by the dead body of the OCP employee, and it is very ironic. Symbolizes how corporate attempts of revitalizing of Detroit often has the opposite effect. This demonstrates that OCP's plan is malicious and may have some collateral damage.

This brings about a broader social topic about how attempts to revitalize Detroit are often corrupt and militaristic. The silver lining is another interesting scene from RoboCop (1987). This is the scene that features a woman fleeing from thugs in an abandoned parking lot and just as they catch up to her we can see in the background a billboard advertising delta city which says delta city the future has a silver lining. Obviously, this is not a mere coincidence. This scene suggests that even though there is new development that the solution of delta city is only superficial it's not actually helping the city of Detroit or decreasing the crime rate.

The Height of Intentions

Fig. 3.5



Dallas City Hall (OCP Headquarters) is edited to appear taller and domineering than it is in reality. This represents the power and presence of capitalism looming over the city. The suggested height allows the audience to imagine the height of the skyscraper. The actual height is suggested. At this point on the O.C.P.'s intentions are somewhat still unknown. The height is implied through the interior with the elevator scene. It is briefly mentioned by the automated elevator voice that the characters are arriving at "95th floor." As the plot progresses the movie increasingly reveals increasingly more of the building.

Halfway through the movie the actual height of the O.C.P. building is revealed paralleling their true intentions. Also helps juxtapose the scale of the building within the surrounding context. The O.C.P. headquarters proudly towers over every other building in Detroit.

What the filmmakers have creatively done to achieve this effect is disguising the height of

the O.C.P. headquarters by constantly keeping it out the frame in most of the scenes. The viewers only see it at the base so therefore the audience has to imagine it stretching beyond the edges of the screen this creates a sense of anticipation. This anticipation leads to that final revelation. The O.C.P. headquarters in reality is the Dallas City Hall located at 1500 Marilla, Dallas, TX. The triangular base at the bottom is the actual extent of the building what the production designers have done is to stretch the top of it beyond the podium to extend beyond the frame-- making this short angular building into a more oppressive structure.

In the final confrontation of the film, the audience fully gets to experience the 95-story structure. The primary antagonist is shot and forced out of a window where he falls to his death. From this angle, there is a downward angle perspective. His body slowly shrinks in the distance as he plummets to his death. This resembles a literal downfall of corruption.

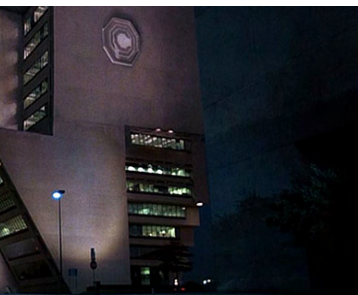
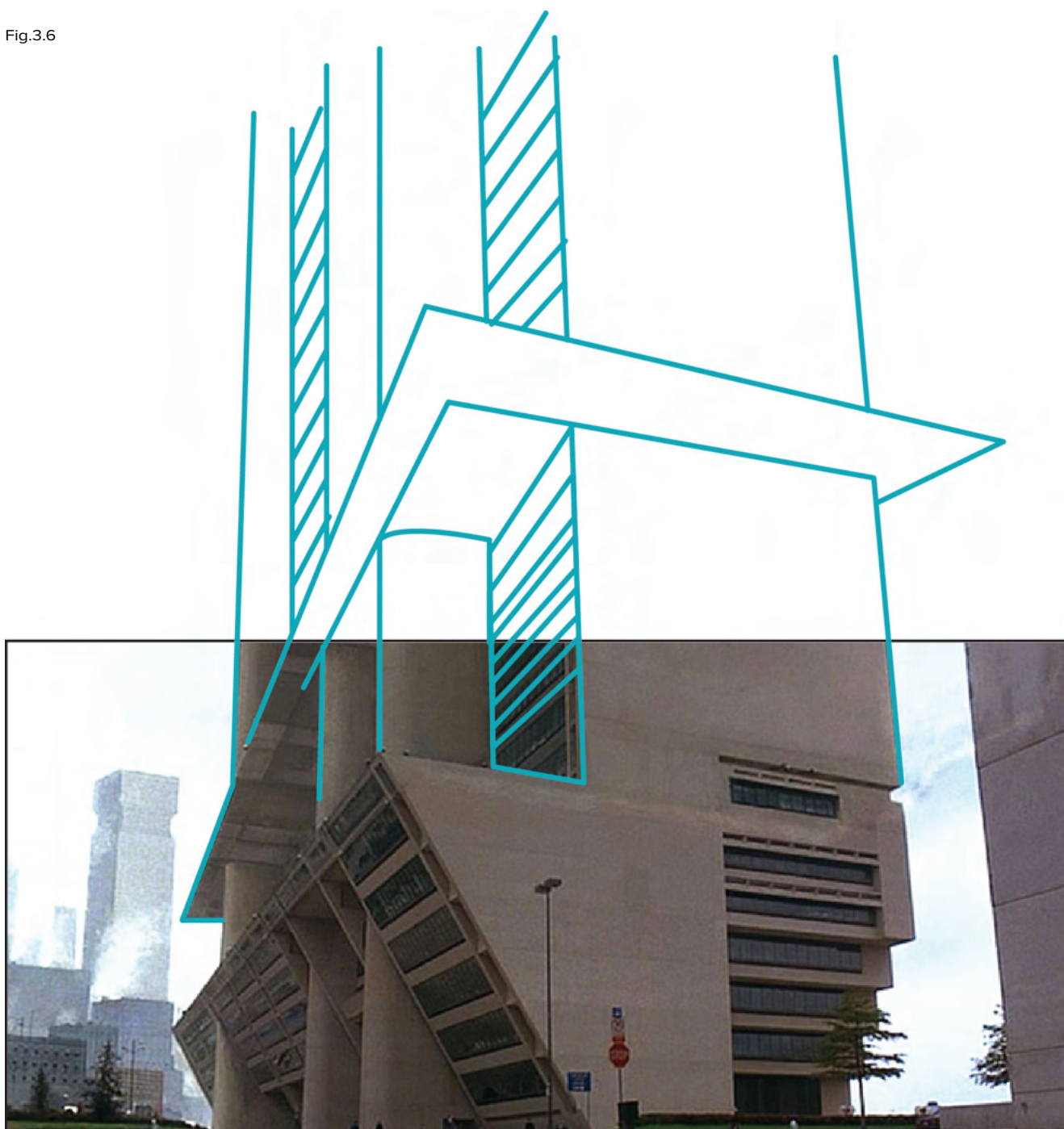


Fig.3.6





8 MILE (2002)

Fig. 3.7

The Free World

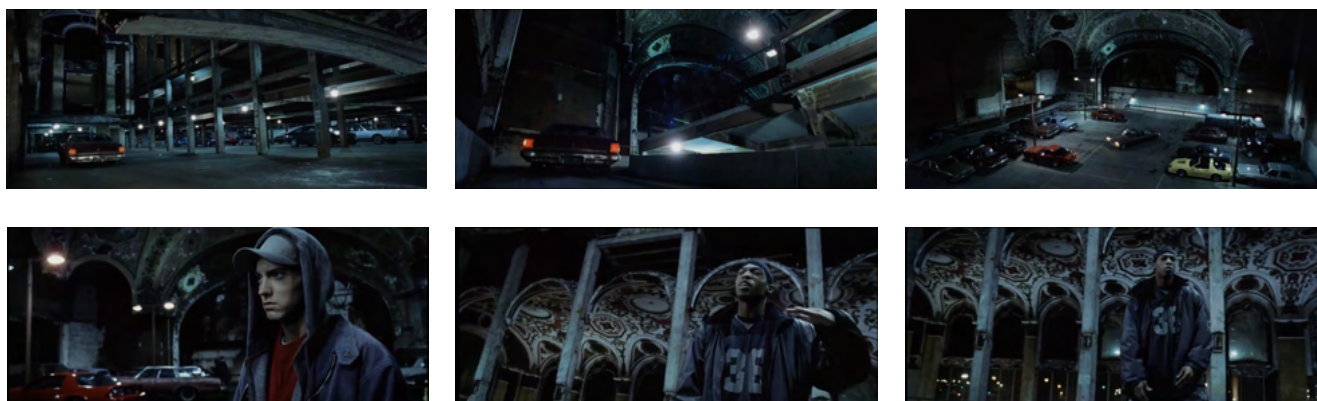


Fig. 3.8

Burning the Memory



Fig. 3.9

This film was initially not seen as a helpful addition for the thesis process. *8 Mile* (2002) when compared to other Detroit-based films is quite uneventful. A major contributing factor to this can be the surreal authenticity.

However, it is necessary to document that this is one of the only films to depict Detroit in a neutral way. The architectural landscape is not exaggerated. As previously mentioned, the filmmakers, especially production designers tend to impose their own narrative and metaphors onto a place or setting. However, as both a viewer and a native Detroiter, it seems this movie seems to have the least amount of social or narrative imposition.

Spaces are portrayed authentically and without

bias. Unlike other Detroit films, the narrative is heavily projected in the landscapes and spaces. For example, one of the first rap battle scenes take place in the Michigan Building parking garage. By using a Detroit historical building, the film is already setting itself apart from its counterparts. This is due to the repurpose of space. Instead of an old parking garage being used as a tertiary space. In the context of the movie, it has now been repurposed into a stage of sorts for our characters to display their rap skills. However, this is also the scene where the initial rivalry is initiated.

This space is neutrally lit and shot from multiple high and low angles. This is where we are first introduced to the main antagonist gang "The Free World." The grey and blue tones of the color

palette create a bleak tone, but not necessarily depressing.

Later in the film, the group of protagonists decide to burn down an old, abandoned house in a nearby neighborhood. Their rationalization frames around. A story of a girl who was assaulted there. "Isn't that where that little girl got raped?" and "Do you think that house would still be up if it were on the other side of 8 mile?" Later on, when our protagonists are at the abandoned house, they sneak in and. B-Rabbit realizes that there was a family that used to live here as he picks up and old photo. They look happy and carefree. For a split second, this calls into question rather the story about the girl was actually true. This suggests that perhaps the abandonment itself is not the problem, but more of the stories that people project onto it.

As the scene carries on, the crew burns down the house, almost trapping B-Rabbit inside. He narrowly escapes out of the second story window, and they all watch outside as the house burns down in the distance. Clearly, there is a

metaphor that the abandonment in Detroit is an old memory that needs to be burned away.



BRICK MANSIONS (2014)

Fig. 3.10

Hallway Escape



Fig. 3.11

Leaps and Bounds

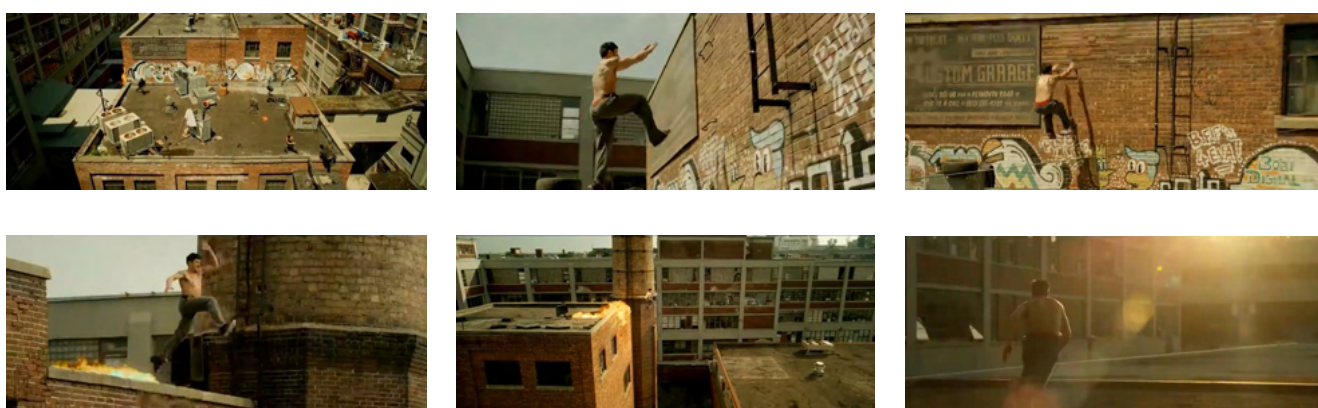


Fig. 3.12

The film *Brick Mansions* (2014) takes place in a dystopian era Detroit. The “Brick Mansions” are city projects used to wall off the most dangerous areas of Detroit. *Brick Mansions* is considered the “No-Go Zone.” 40 feet tall, heavily guarded walls separate the criminals from the rest of society. *Brick Mansions* (2014) was filmed in Montreal and Quebec, Canada. *Brick Mansions* was filmed in Montreal, but it looks like Detroit. The architecture style is the same as the Model-T Factories and Brewster Douglas Projects. While the “Brick Mansions” are fictional, the inspiration is very authentic. In this film, architecture and production design are heavily used as an interactive part of the action. The protagonist, Lino uses his parkour skills to chase scenes to avoid danger. Instead of serving as a backdrop the brick architecture

acts as an antagonist that provides extra obstacles Lino must navigate through. The first scenes of the movie start with a gang ready to capture Lino outside his apartment. Before they get a chance to barge in, Lino breaks the door down beginning opening the chase sequence. Throughout the scene Lino runs using walls, light fixtures ziplines and other architectural elements to outmaneuver and escape his enemies. In some instances, he uses random objects as well as architecture to directly fight off the gang members. Toward the end of the long sequence where Lino must make one final jump. It is during this scene where a large portion of the complex was revealed. The architecture style is the same as the Model-T Factories and Brewster Douglas Projects. While the “Brick Mansions” are fictional, the inspiration is very authentic. The the sheer size

of the complex is also seen from high camera angles, showing that the mansions take up a significant portion of the city.

Architecture vs Action

District B13 (*Architecture*)

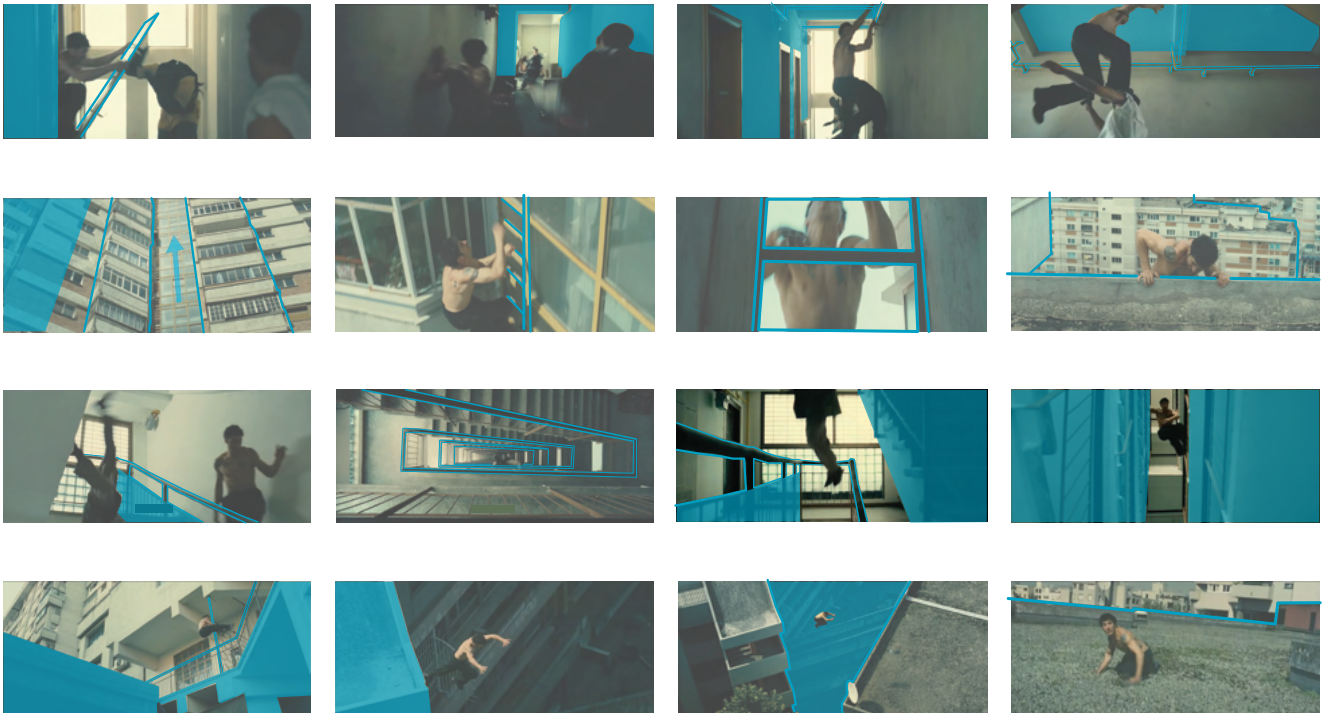


Fig. 3.13

Brick Mansions (2014) is an American remake of the French film District B13 (2004) that was released 10 years prior. The plots are identical. The major difference is that the French version takes place in Paris while Brick Mansions (2014) is set in Detroit.

For a direct comparison District B13 (2004) is a far superior film for the way that integrates that architectural storytelling. In Brick Mansions (2014). Many of the set pieces, despite being more action packed add no depth or weight to the story as a good production design should.

To further highlight these differences scenic diagrams were made comparing the opening parkour chase scene of both films. Despite the scenes and plot the being identical, the execution was the key difference. Brick Mansions (2014) relies more heavily on action by

expanding the 3-minute opening chase scene to being 5 minutes. In this scene Lino is outrunning gang members who are trying to catch him.

In the original 2004, Leito escapes the gang by using his parkour to out-manoeuvre them through an apartment complex. However, in Brick mansions (2014). This concept is not executed simply, there are several unnecessary jump cuts and fight choreography that break up that architectural chase. Meanwhile the original parkour chase scene is effective because there is simply no need for any physical combat; the possibility of falling is enough to engage the audience. The original better utilizes its time better, focusing on the quality of the set pieces instead of the sheer quantity of stunt gimmicks. Effectively, District B13 is more impactful. The audience feels every fall and every fatality. One slip or step in the wrong direction means death.

Brick Mansions (Action)

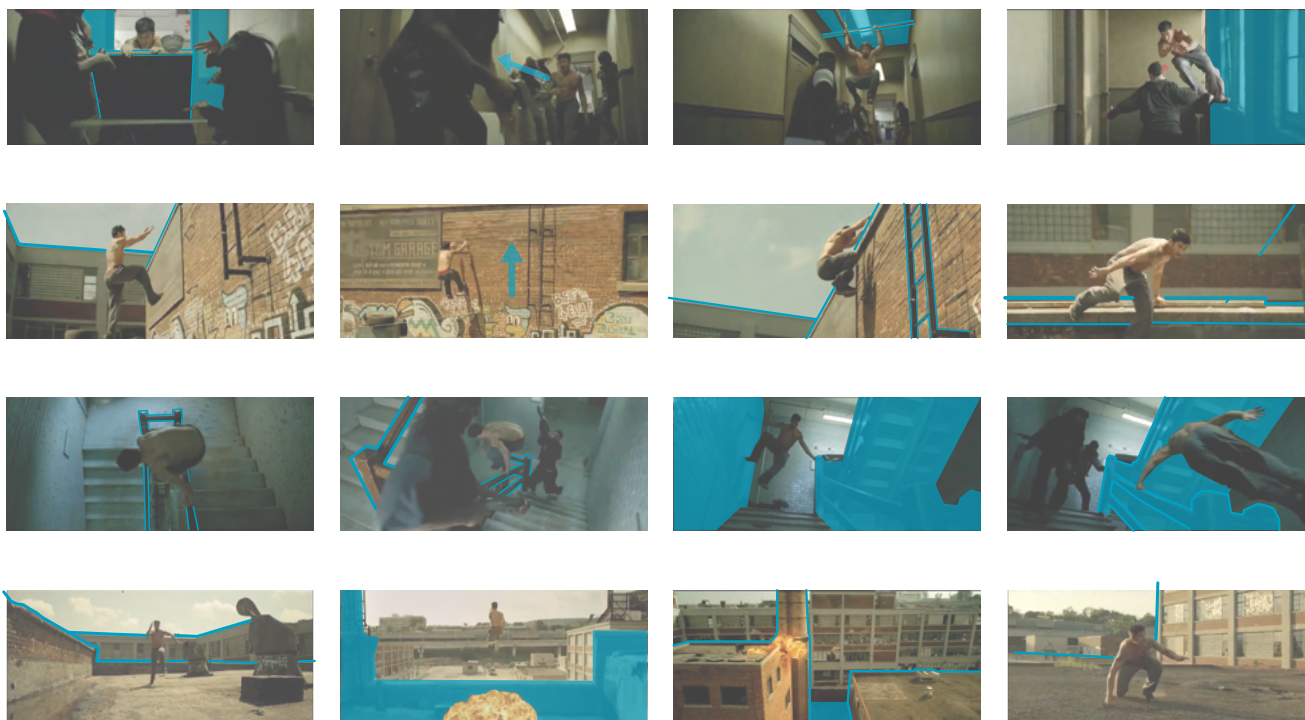


Fig. 3.14

Overall, Brick Mansions comes off as the inferior counterpart with its architectural storytelling. A story that is heavily based on architecture should have scenes that serve the visual storytelling as much as possible. This could be a contributing factor as to why Brick Mansions is not as critically acclaimed as the District B13. Perhaps this is due to creating an adaptation of a clearly architectural concept without proper utilization.



DISTRICT B13 (2004)

Fig. 3.15

Going Up

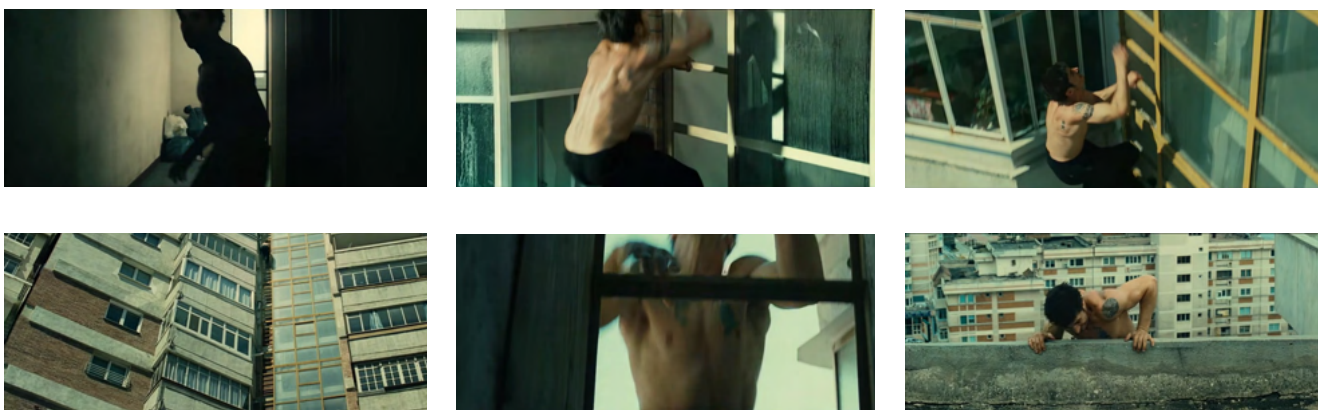


Fig. 3.16

Going Down



Fig. 3.17

The original film for which *Brick Mansions* (2014) is based. In the opening parkour chase scene, Lieto flees aging members across an apartment complex within the restricted district of B13. In this sequence there is a lot of potential danger. This is demonstrated explicitly in two interactions within this parkour chase scene. The first instance is when Lieto jumps out window and climbs up a ladder that spans several stories. The camera transitions from and up close and personal angle to showing wide, expansive shot. This exacerbates the intensity of the height of building. The other instance is where a gang member tries to capture Lieto on the staircase but is thrown over the railing. There are direct one-point perspective shifts of the gap in between the stair ways. The guy falls several levels and bounces from railing to railing on

the way to down. In this instance the film fully utilizing it's spatial setting. The viewer's get to first-hand see the consequences of any slip or mistake. It is immediately understood that a lack of skill is fatal.

Danger is shown personally, up close and in the third person. It can show you depth and execrable the seriousness of the situation. Lieto's danger becomes the audience's danger. Due to changes in perspective, context is always constantly changing. In film architecture to be experienced through forced interaction. Unlike real life, we are not free to experience space at will or choose when and how the viewer moves through space, that is dictated through the perspective of the camera. *District B13* (2004) takes advantage of this conceit.



IT FOLLOWS (2014)

Fig. 3.18

Don't Look Back



Fig. 3.19

The First Following



Fig. 3.20

In this Detroit based Horror film, a girl (Jay) is plagued with visions of a shapeshifting strange figure that stalks her with the intent to kill. The shapeshifting figure is the result of a sexually transmitted curse that she contracts from her boyfriend while in the city. It is in an old, abandoned parking garage where the shift of the curse begins. The film does make a few references to the historical migrations surrounding the city while also using vacancy as a positive as a lack of people/crowds is the only way to truly distinguish the monster from a regular person before it's too late. One of these movies uses the University of Detroit Mercy Campus for one of its scenes. The UDM Engineering building is used for one of the chase scenes *It Follows* (2015). In this scene Jay is being stalked by a vision of an old lady as she rushes through the

school hallways. The intention of this scene is to illustrate the slow stalking danger that takes no regard for witnesses.

These examples relate back to one of the original research questions: "Do we develop stereotypes about the spaces/place based on what we see in film?" This may also develop further questions such as: "Do these narratives create a form of propaganda?"



BARBARIAN (2022)

What Lies Beneath



Fig. 3.22

The latest Detroit-based Horror film explores the idea. It uses generic horror movie tropes that often involve a scary old house. A woman (Tess) books an Airbnb in Detroit, and then soon realizes something sinister lurks beneath it.

Tess descends into the lower levels below the house, looking for her missing friend Keith. There is a slow build-up as the secret hidden rooms and spaces appear to get more and more elaborate. It is finally revealed that there is a creature lurking in tunnels below the house.

At first Tess steps into the basement and opens a secret door which has a flight of steps leading down to a hallway bedroom. The hallway in between the bedroom leads down into second flight of steps that descend into total darkness. Tess eventually finds Keith only to realize that a grotesque inhuman creature lives beneath the house.

04 Being Framed

Aspect Ratio - Proportion of the height and width of the screen.

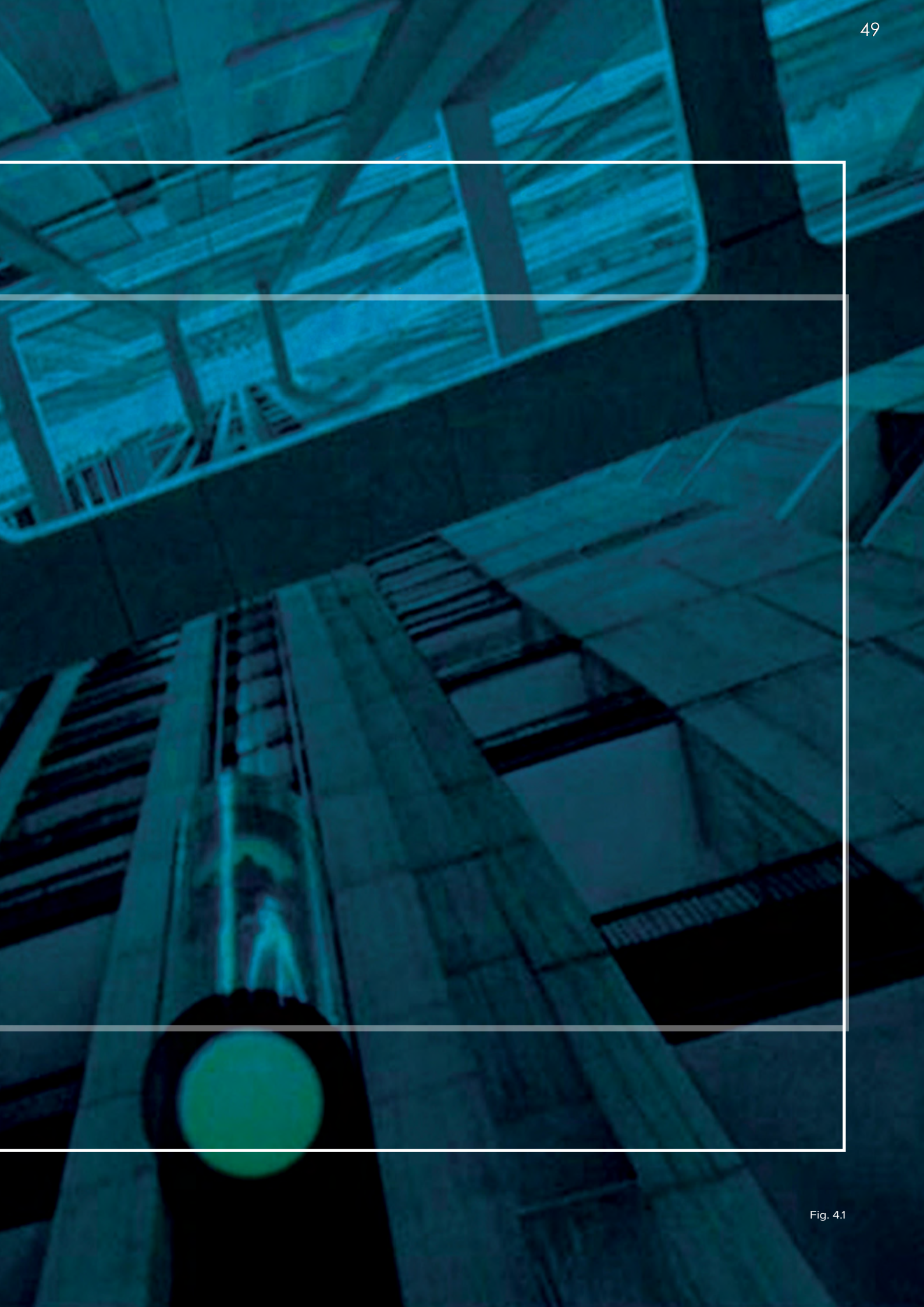
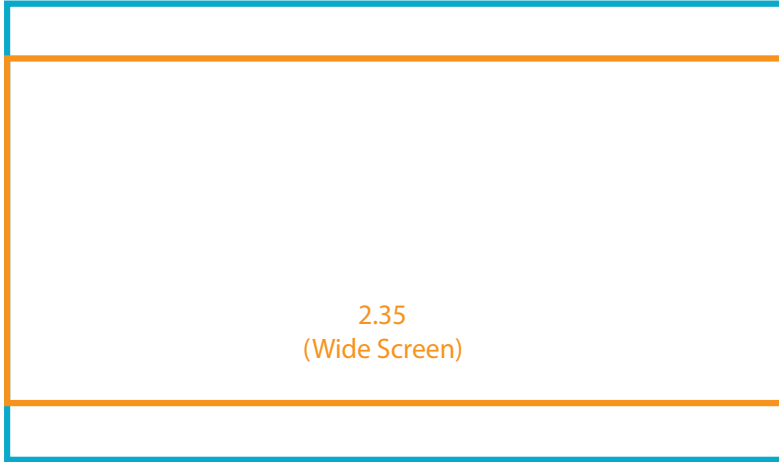


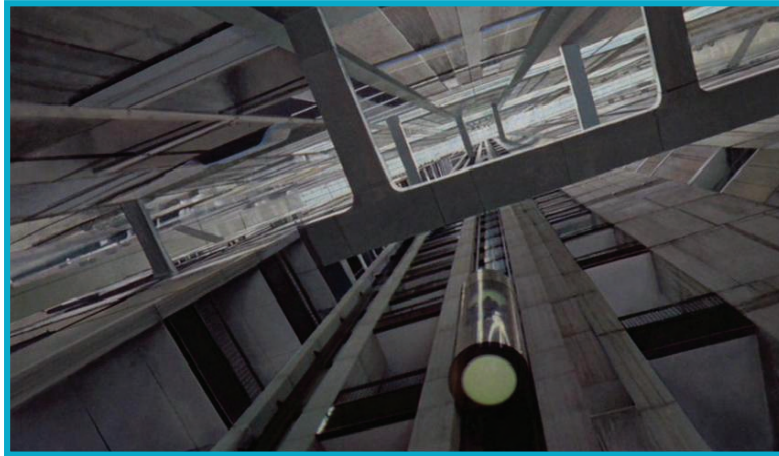
Fig. 4.1

Aspect Ratio

1.85
(Full Screen)



1.85
(Full Screen)



2.35
(Wide Screen)



Fig. 4.2

Utilization of the viewer's imagination. the composition of the low- camera angle exacerbates the height of the building. The height of the building breaches the boundary of the screen.

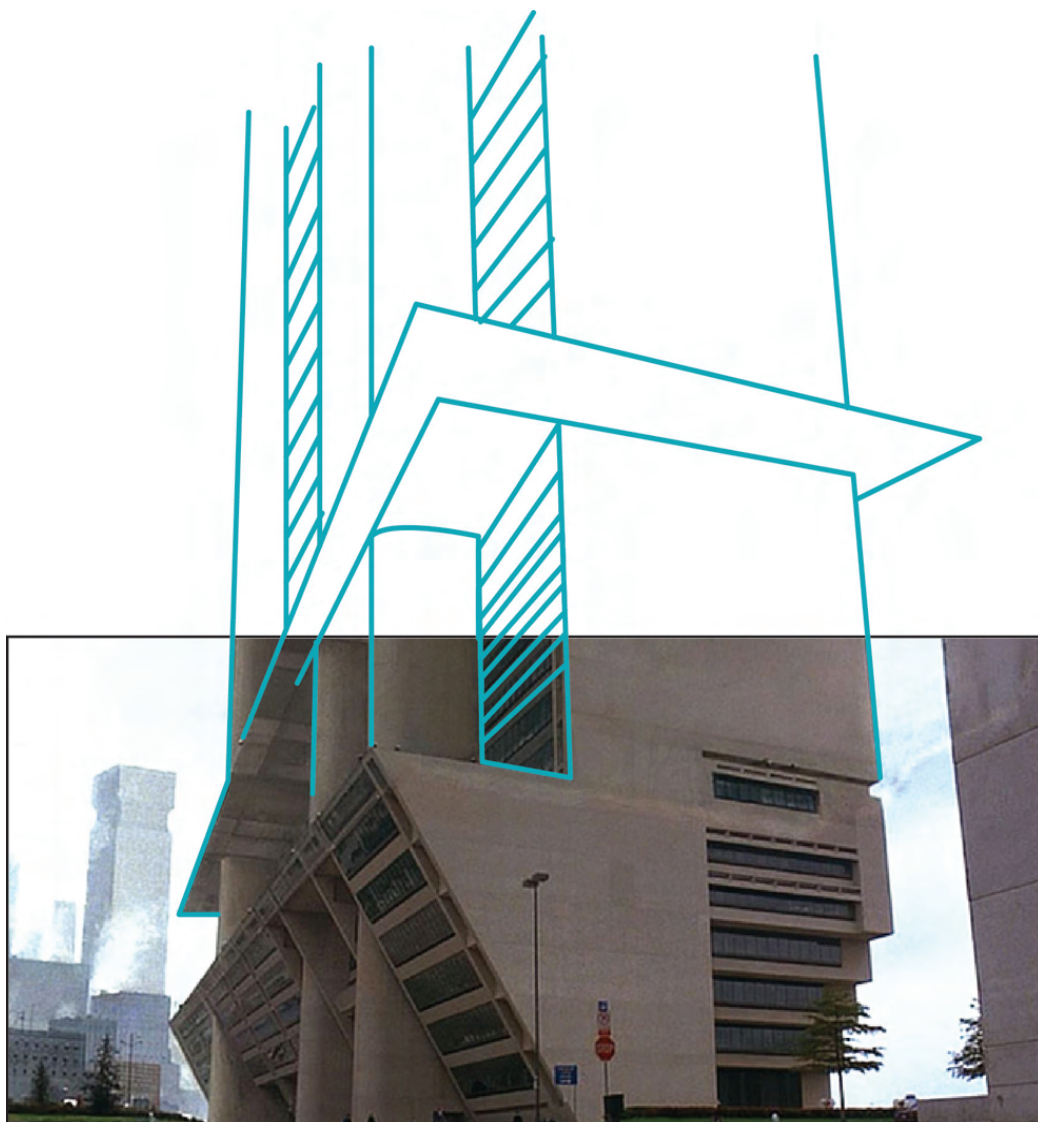


Fig. 4.3

The Aspectacle

Field of Vision

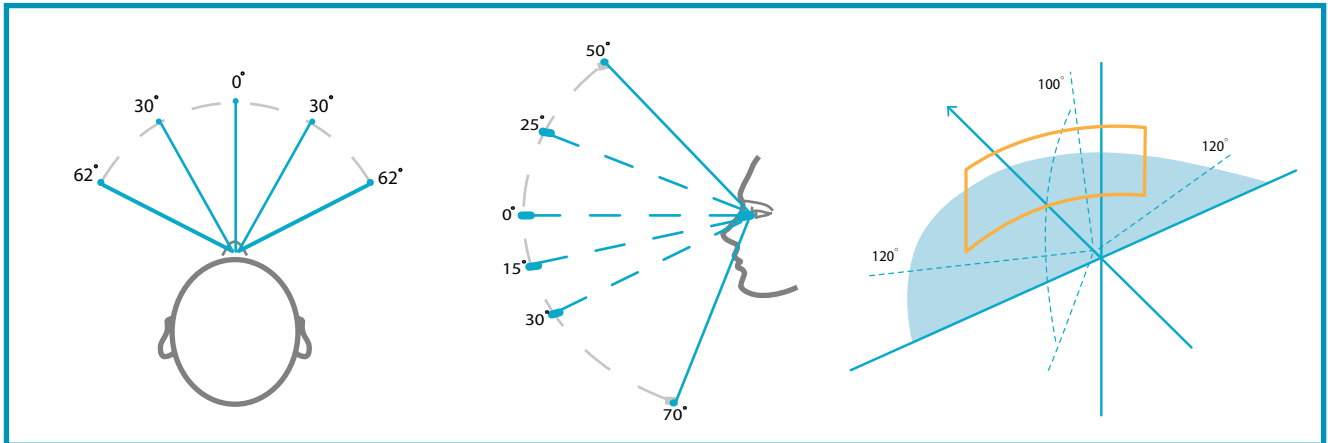


Fig. 4.4

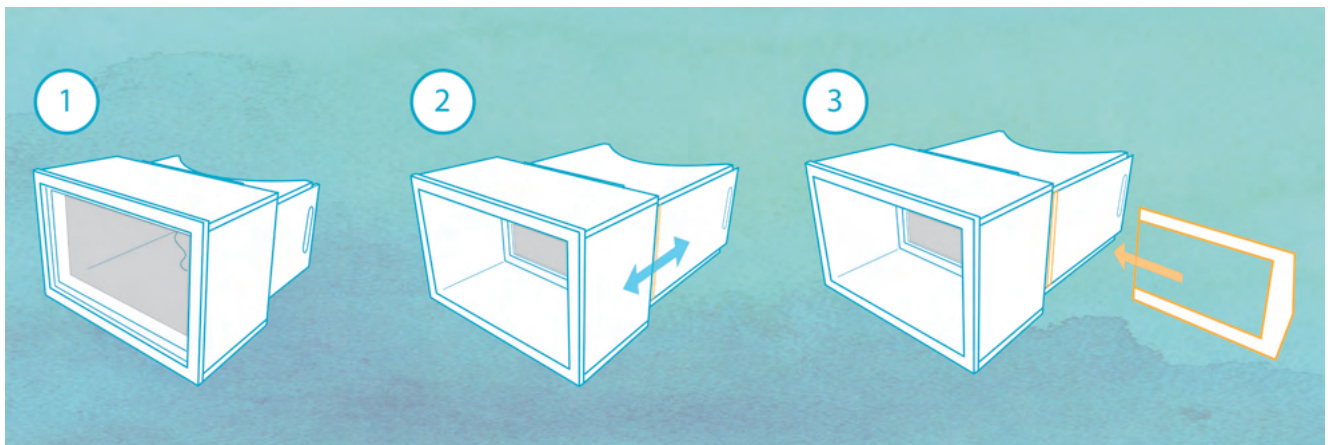


Fig. 4.5

According to ocular studies, the maximum human field of vision is approximately 120 degrees both horizontally and vertically. As humans our sight is limited by our binocular vision – [both eyes in front of our head] Aspect ratio serves as the viewer's eyes when watching the film. Therefore, it was imperative limit people's field of vision when developing the Aspectacle. The function of the device is to limit our field of vision to that of cinema or television screen.

Models



Fig. 4.6

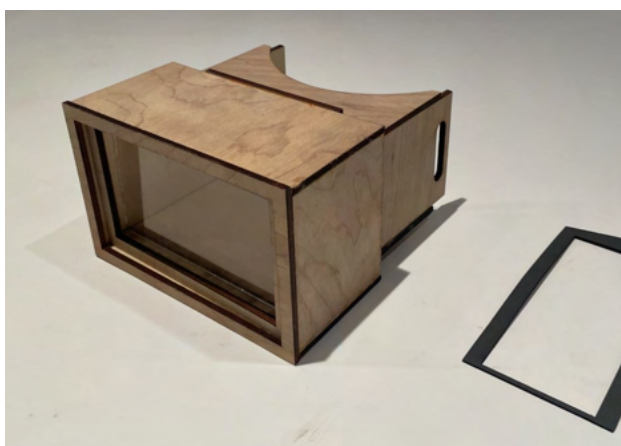


Fig. 4.7



Fig. 4.8

When people are watching a film, architecture is experienced through forced interaction. Unlike real life, we are not free to experience space at will or choose when or how we move through that space. You see only what the filmmakers and production designers want you to see and how they want you see it. Aspect ratio is one the ways that depth or exploration through space is limited. Aspect ratio is the size of the rectangular frame that you look through when watching a film. The aspect ratio for a feature film is typically 2.35 or 1.85. This is what most people refer to as "Fullscreen" and "Widescreen." The aspect ratio is our eyes that we use to live vicariously in that fictional world. To explore this concept

in more depth, a pair of goggles was designed that act in a comparable way. I call it the "Aspectacle." The purpose of the Aspectacle is to give that power and autonomy back to the viewer that is usually limited. I wanted to explore would happen if people experienced three-dimensional space through the lens of movie. People's lives will become a movie where they are the protagonist and can experience architecture as they see fit.



05 Perspective and Subjectivity

Phenomenology



Fig. 5.2

Edmund Husserl
(1859-1938)

[Phenomenology](#) is the study of phenomena and the objects through direct experience. [Edmund Husserl's](#) Phenomenology claims that naturalistic methods such as the hard sciences are distractions that are derivative of true experience. Phenomena are defined as essences and not determined by facts or metaphysics.



Fig. 5.3

Maurice Merleau-Ponty
(1908-1961)

[Maurice Merleau-Ponty](#) follows Husserlian phenomenology but alters it by adding his own unique contribution, often referred to as the Body-Subject. This claims that humans are always embodied in the world and through this embodiment is how we perceive the world and give things meaning. Experience is always being interpreted as our body moves through the world encountering phenomena.

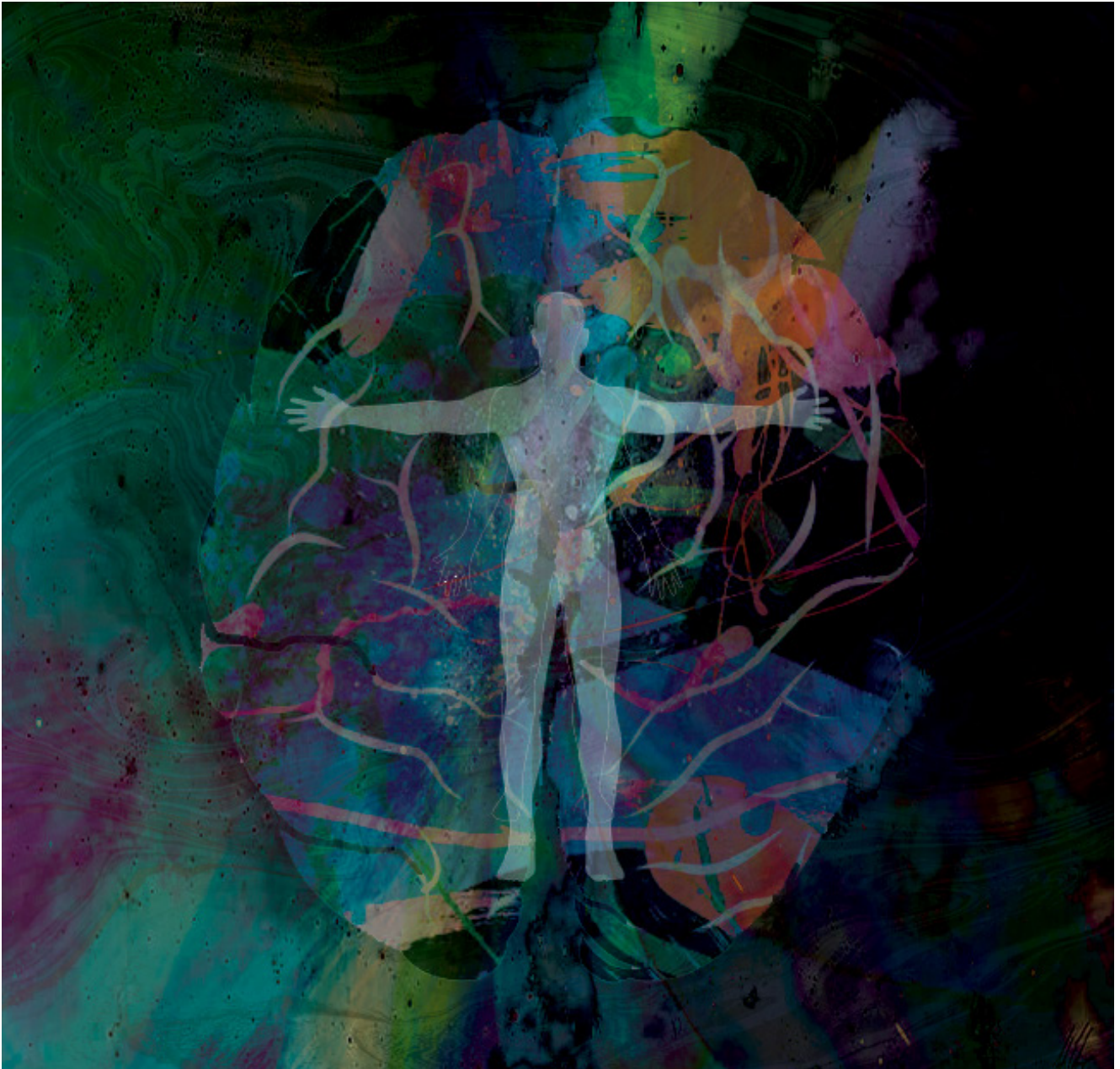


Fig. 5.4

The way we as humans often engage with the world is often through our immediate sense of perception. What cinema requires us to do is to cast away our immediate senses and substitute them for a more indirect experience -- [Vicarious Subjectivity](#) Production design, narrative, cinematic composition and subjectivity all combine to create narratives that contribute to how we perceive place.

What Does it Mean to have an Experience?

The techniques of phenomenology were used to explore the audience's response to represent architecture in film. In many films that feature architecture prominently, these settings make a major contribution to the narrative. I want to probe more deeply into the essence of cinematic architectural storytelling, and its social implications. To support these claims, *Parasite* (2019) was analyzed. Architectural design metaphors are displayed on not only a larger scale but even in smaller ways. It can be manifested in the appearance of an entire cityscape or be subtle as a doorway transition. The more subtle metaphors mostly occur during "Mis en scene" -- the arrangement of scenery in a set. For example, doorways and windows suggest that transition between interior and exterior. This is more than just a change of location but perhaps a metaphor for piercing the threshold between worlds. Large exterior spaces can suggest freedom and adventure. Windows, corridors, and staircases also serve the purpose of creating a functioning boundary. Open and closed doors can be used to represent trust between characters. Corridors are used to prolong the transition from one place to another warping time and space. Staircases and lifts are used as metaphors for the rise and fall of a character. *Parasite* (2019) utilizes these elements in way that are seamlessly interwoven into the plot.

The influence these elements have on viewers changes how they interpret the world around them, especially pertaining to design. Once these issues were brought to the forefront, re-development was initiated to combat these issues. These implicit metaphors point to the

flaws of architecture in our society while also inspiring innovative design.

Film serves not only just a medium but also a way to express the ideas about society. Overall, cinema serves as a societal critique, and it is imperative to see what we can extract from them.

This study is being conducted with both filmmakers and architects in mind. Despite them being two separate artforms, they often merge creating a singular expression. There is something that people from both professions can learn from the converging mediums.

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena and objects through direct experience. German philosopher Edmund Husserl claims that naturalistic methods such as the hard sciences are distortions that are derivative of experience and are defined as essences and not determined by facts or metaphysics. From a more phenomenological perspective, the connection between cinematic architecture and real-life architecture is a bilateral process in which one seems to compliment the other across a threshold, our perception.

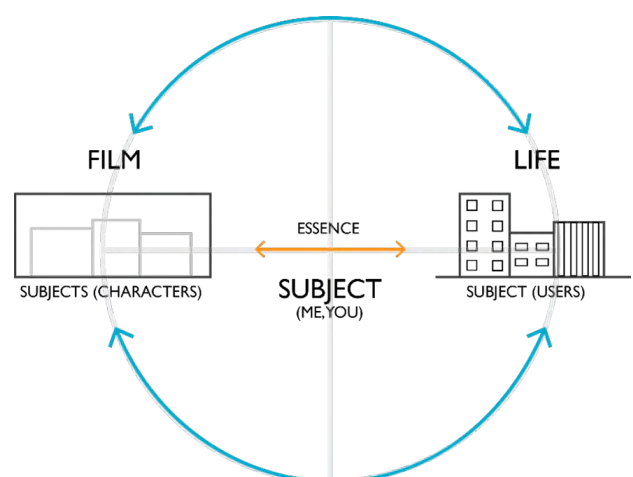


Fig. 5.5

As previously mentioned, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty follows Husserlian phenomenology but alters it by adding his own unique contribution often referred to as the body subject. The body subject claims that humans (subjects) we are always embodied in the world and through this embodiment is how we perceive the world and give things meaning. *Parasite* (2019) follows the tension between the Wealthy Park family and the destitute Kim family. The Kim family (father Ki-taek, mother Chung-sook, daughter Ki-jung, and son Ki-woo) live a small semi-basement apartment that is scarce on utilities. As a proposal to get out his situation Ki-woo speaks to his wealthy friend, Min-hyuk. Min-hyuk proposes as that Ki-woo fake his identity posing as an English tutor for the daughter of the Park family. After creating a fake alter-ego, Ki-woo uses this to his advantage to make money for his family. Over the course of the film, the Kim family conspires to get the working staff of the Park family fired. One by one they all replace the existing staff and assume fake identities to slowly infiltrate the Park family's luxurious lifestyle and enjoy their home. This is all undenounced to the Park family that they are all secretly related. The film suggests that social class is associated with living below or above grade. The architecture exposes the inequality of class. Those semi-basement apartments are called "Banjihwas" and as of 2015, more than 360,000 families lived in them across South Korea, according to a report by the Los Angeles Times. Seoul has committed to improving the living conditions of 1,500 households living in semi-basement apartments.

The experience that was phenomenologized

about is the experience watching a *Parasite* (2019). The architecture is used in the story and through metaphors is projected to inspire architectural change. The way that people typically engage with the phenomenon of watching cinematic architecture is to completely ignore the setting and usually focus on the characters. They usually do not engage with the architecture unless it is pronounced within the film. After some reflection, the phenomenon began to appear in its own terms. The terms that came to mind were: "inspired design, subjectivity, cinematic."

Furthermore, the phenomenon engages my senses of the of sight and hearing. When watching a film people typically retain most of the information through visuals and some dialogue. At an emotional level watching the film, the feelings of claustrophobia and horror were experienced. Spaces made me feel happy or scared for a character in a certain space. I will now set aside the typical facts, history, and context that are committed to memory; architecture in film is often created through production design (set design), feature films are usually between 90mins- 2hr and motion pictures have been around since the late 19th century. What remains is that a person is viewing an alternate reflection of reality that calls out societal issues within an industry or practice. There is a meaningful way that we engage with the phenomenon.

We as the subjects engage with the phenomenon of cinema inspired designing through our sense of hearing and sight. Once we recognize commonalities between realities, this vision is

how we truly immerse ourselves in the film. There is a sense of connecting our subjectivity in the real world with that of the subjectivity found in the film. For example, the Kim family financially struggling will make the viewer empathize with their plight. Through this "Vicarious Subjectivity" is how we truly interact with the phenomenon (object).

To alter the situation, the form of media can change to music instead of film. Often music is another medium that is used to express issues or social ideas. The same issues that deal with inequality and housing can easily be expressed through a song. However, if this is the case, the listener is only engaging with one sense, their hearing. In terms of visualizing the space, the listener or audience will have to use their imagination which is dependent upon how detailed the description given by the musician is.

To refine the analysis, the study concludes: Cinema inspired problem solving is the idea of communicating a reflection of reality that capitalizes on vicarious subjectivity to inspire change. Architecture is a tool that is used to actively shape fictional landscapes that parallel our own. This is how worlds of fiction are carefully crafted to tell a story. These often happen in ways that incorporate real life elements, locations, motifs, and themes that are interweaved into the plot. These moments create awareness and bring about social commentary. Both the implicit or direct metaphors appeal to our "Vicarious subjectivity." Bodily subjectivity is the way that we experience the world. After identifying with the narrative that reflects real life issues,

innovative design is encouraged as a response in the real world. A lot of the success of this film can be attributed to the use of perspective to obtain vicarious subjectivity. For example, on a cloudy day in the afternoon you and a friend are at the park laying in the grass. You both have a perfect view of the sky painted by fast moving clouds. You may just think of them as these arbitrary white puffs that float in the sky. We both know they come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. Depending on the color, they tend to have white or even a dark grey appearance and create rain. After all, these are condensed groups of water suspended in the air. Now, let us put that aside for a moment. Your friend points up at one and says, "that one looks like an elephant." You disagree and say "no it looks like a rocket ship to me." No matter how the observed phenomena changes, the point of view is always subjective, whether it be architecture, food, or an interpretation of a film. Neither person is wrong, their perspectives are a matter of how things appear in it's givenness based on that person's senses.

In natural terms perspective can be defined or expressed as a way of seeing and thinking. Perspective is the way individuals see the world. All senses are engaged to formulate this. Sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell are all ways that we embody ourselves in the lived world. Perspective has no color, texture or manifestation in the physical world but is a behavior we engage in to perceive our surroundings.

Furthermore, the event of watching a film alters this perspective. As previously mentioned, people usually achieve subjectivity by engaging with the world around them, direct experience.

someone is watching film, that direct experience is now substituted by watching characters interact with their surroundings. Filmmaking has a way of taking us places almost forcefully to the point where our experiences are synonymous with the protagonist, assuming their point of view. The character's experiences in the film now become ours. This relieves people from the confines of their own body. Throughout *Parasite* (2019) there are several scenes that allow to the audience to transcended beyond our body. The first space that is introduced is the semi-basement apartment. The key element that is being highlighted in the semi-basement apartment is the kitchen window.

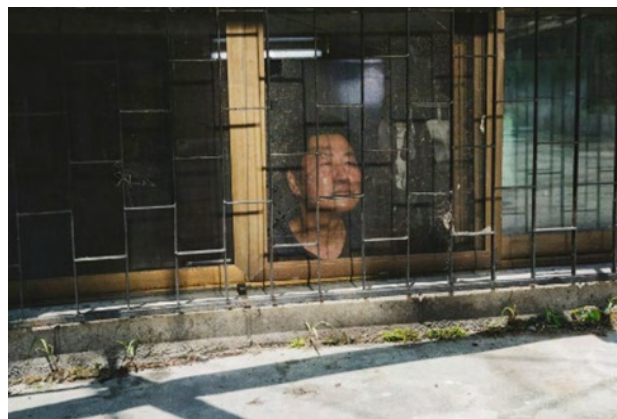


Fig. 5.6

Fig. 5.7



Repeatedly there are point of view shots (POV) where the camera is aimed directly at the window, and frankly the view is unflattering. We only get a view of everything at a ground level looking at people's feet. There is a sense that although the Kim family is literally living below grade, that they are also figuratively looking up at the world. This also means that for the outside world to acknowledge the Kims, they must look down on them. We assume the role of the Kim family, and deal with the same sense of powerlessness that they feel.

When we are first introduced to the Park family house, Ki-woo does what most of us would visiting luxurious home. He looks approaches slowly, takes his time, and even and turns around to admire the landscaping. To create this first-person perspective the camera pans around yard mimicking Ki-Woo's head movement. By the filmmakers choosing this technique we live vicariously through Ki-woo. In conjunction with the panning, there is also a repeated use of over the shoulder shots. Over the the shoulder shots are camera angles where the camera is placed



Fig. 5.8

around the back of the shoulder. This gives us the appearance that we are in the front yard with him.

Fig. 5.9

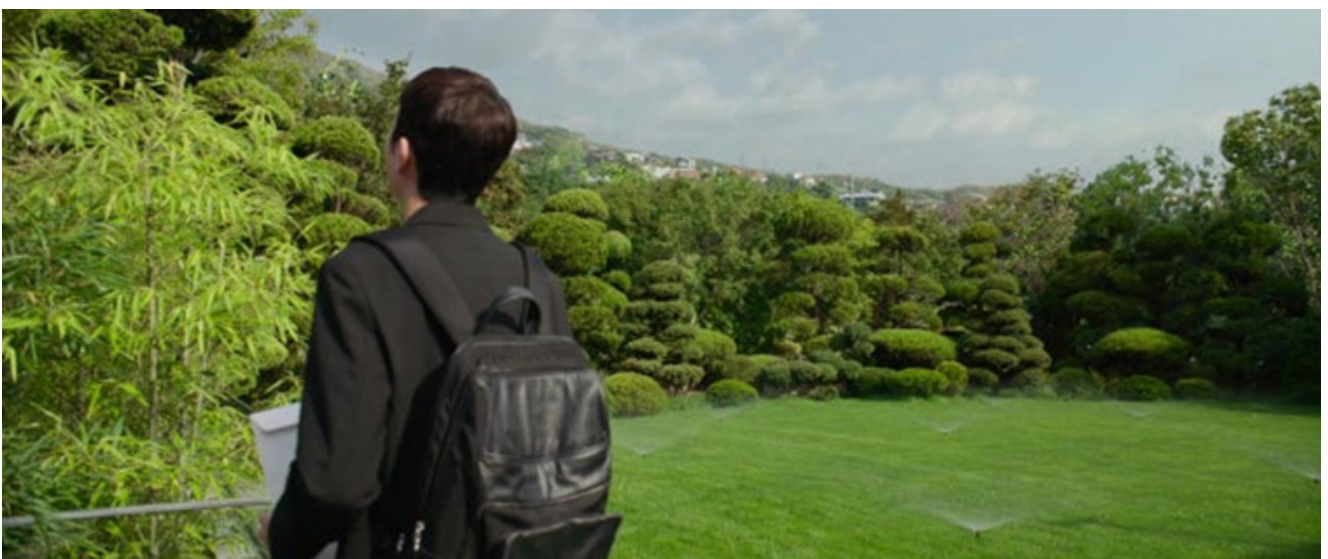




Fig. 5.10

This scene is where the first subtle metaphor for the class disparity is within the first the housekeeper Moon Gwang goes outside to inform Mrs. Kim of Ki-woos arrival. Ki-woo watches from the inside through the glass. The two panes of glass meet separating the two women, showing there is a clear delineation in hierarchy. Once again, the scene is shot from behind and from a low angle where everything is below eye-level. This communicates a “fly on the wall effect” where the viewer can enter the space without disputing the interactions in the scene.

A more direct metaphor although expressed verbally is very powerful. When Mr. and Mrs. Park's son Da-Song points out that most of the service staff all have a similar funny smell. This starts to put a hole in the Kim family's façade. Later, back at the basement, The Kim family discuss strategies to get rid of the “funny smell”, thinking it's the soap they use. Ki-Jung then says “That's not it's the semi- basement smell. We need to leave this home to lose the smell.” This

could work as a double entendre, proposing two interpretations; the obvious being that Kim family literally need to move in order smell better and the idea that the space they inhabit is a stain of poverty they can never truly escape.



Fig. 5.11



Fig. 5.12

A great juxtaposition is made about the way we see the Kim family finally comfortable in the absence of the Park family while they are on vacation. The Kim family lounge around the living room. While enjoying some snacks, they sit and gaze in the view of the window, providing one of the most memorable shots of the film. This is clearly juxtaposed with the POV shot of the window view from the semi-basement apartment. Like the Kims, we are now treated to

a beautiful, unobstructed view of the expansive front yard.

While the Park family is on vacation, the Kim family also find that they are not the only "parasites" that inhabit the Park residence. They find that the previous housekeeper, Moon Gwang's husband Geun Se lives in a secret underground war bunker beneath the house. For years he has been surviving off of food stolen

from the kitchen. Tension and blackmail ensue between the Kim family and the couple. People try to desperately hold on to their position and keep appearances. Kim Ki-taek asks Geun Se "How can you live in a place like this? Geun Se responds, "Lots of people live underground especially if you count semi-basements." This short piece of dialogue suggests that there is not a clear difference in two lifestyles while also once again reminding us that this type of living is common in Korea.



Fig. 5.13

Conclusion- Final Essence Statement

Parasite (2019) is not asking the audience to do anything exhaustive, but just to understand and empathize. On some level, the Kim family's situation should be relatable regardless of the intensity. Some people may never know what it is like to struggle to care for their family, but we all know what it is like to have financial trouble in some form. On the low end of the spectrum, we all know what is like to reach in your back pocket for your wallet only to discover that it is not there. The more extreme side of this spectrum can be someone losing their home. There is this commonality of requiring a necessity and not being able to access it which is universally relatable. In the case of the film, the necessity we cannot access is a functioning comfortable home. Architects can utilize the film industry as a platform to expose issues within the practice. There are various forms of media outlets that can cover these problems issues, but they do not

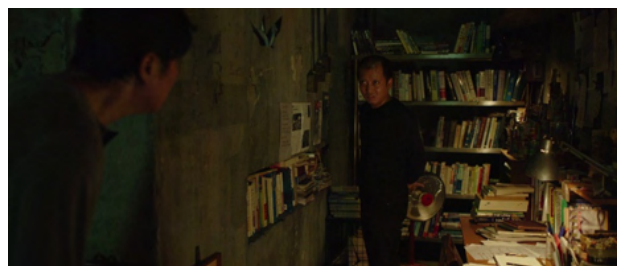


Fig. 5.14

have the same cultural longevity or relevance that cinema does. A documentary or news headline may be a great way to draw attention to an issue although it seems that entertainment may be more likely to hold people's attention span. Parasite (2019) takes an enormous effort in calling out a huge necessity that is not being met. Architectural and social metaphors are brought to the forefront in a way that is relatable by appealing to our perspective and vicarious subjectivity. Perhaps more cinematic explorations can emulate this strategy and can do the same.

06 Filmmaking

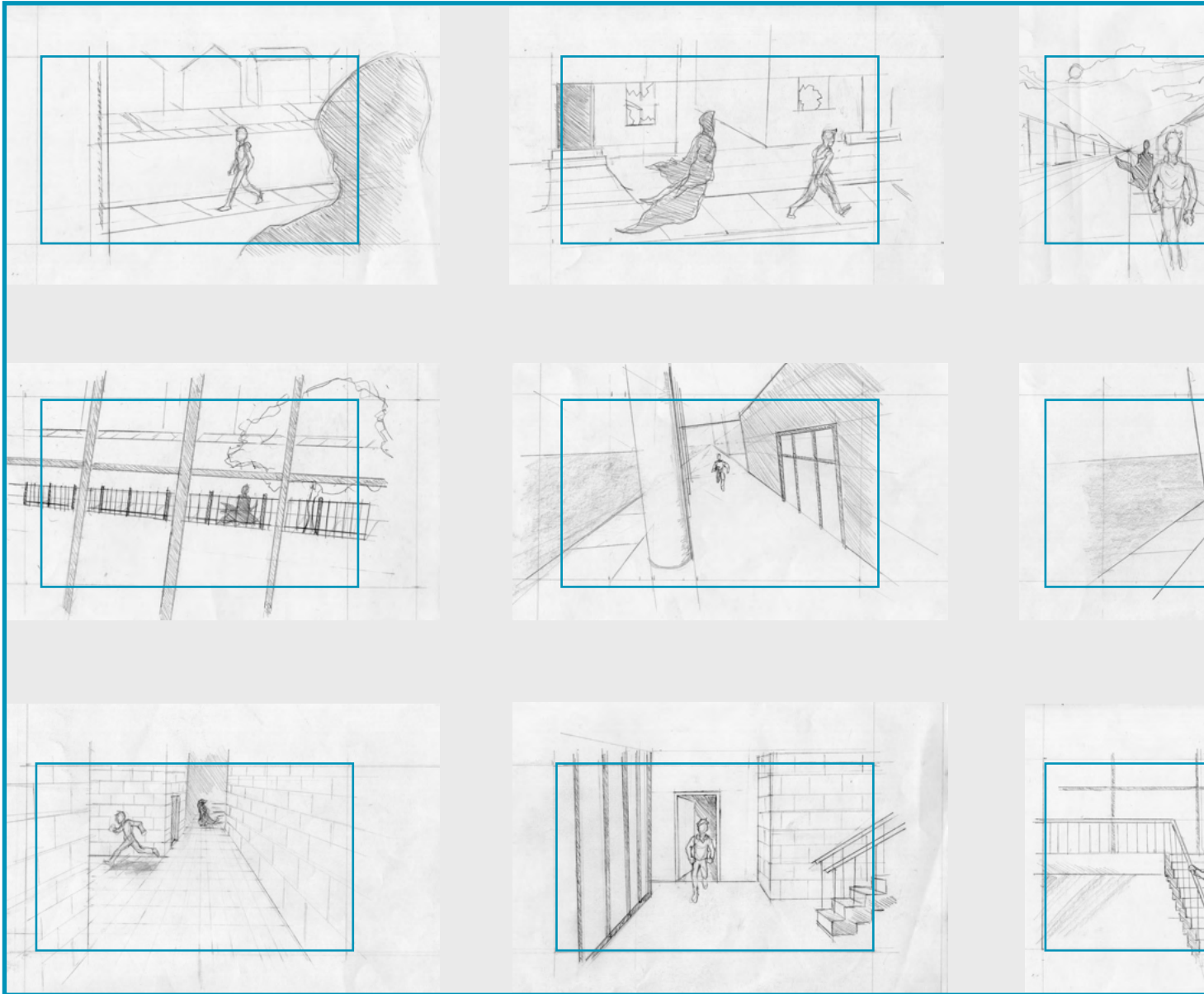
"You cannot learn about Filmmaking by reading books" -Wladyslaw Fuchs





Fig. 6.1

The Abandoned (2022)- Illustrated Storyboard



The phrase "spur of the moment" accurately describes the making of this short film. *The Abandoned (2022)* was the first short film developed for this thesis. It literally started with a phrase "Hey do you guys want to make a movie." This all started with a vague idea, no script, no concrete idea, and no set location. From that point on is where the true cinematic journey began. Due to the strict deadline, and coordination the schedule of the actors, the window of completion was small. The entire film was written, storyboarded, and filmed in the

span of one weekend.

This film has some vague ideas but not a concrete concept to ground itself. This film takes vague inspiration from film precedents *Candyman (1992)* and *It Follows (2015)*. The overall premise is that there is a student who walks past an abandoned building and from that point on is followed by a mysterious hooded figure as shown in the illustrated storyboard. The mysterious reaper/phantom is supposed to represent how people perceive abandoned

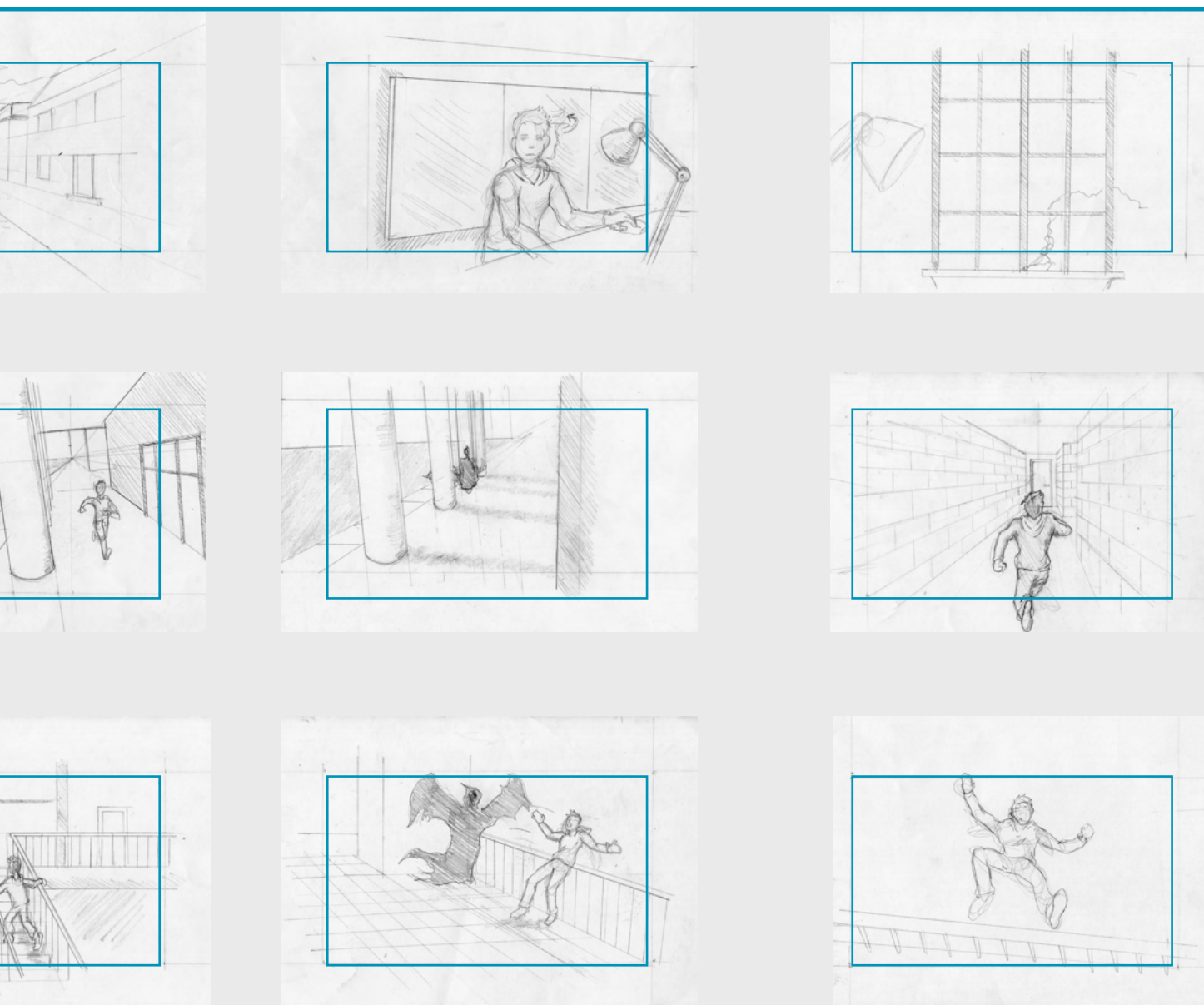


Fig. 6.2

structures as a threat to society and represents unsafety. This is a common theme in reference to the city of Detroit. This film had the liberty of using a metaphor and exaggerating those ideas literally.

With this short film, there is an attempt at a social critique of how abandoned architecture can be. The intention was to have some social awareness yet remains somewhat comical and quirky.



THE ABANDONED (2022)

Fig. 6.3

Watching from the Shadows



Fig. 6.4

Off the Rails

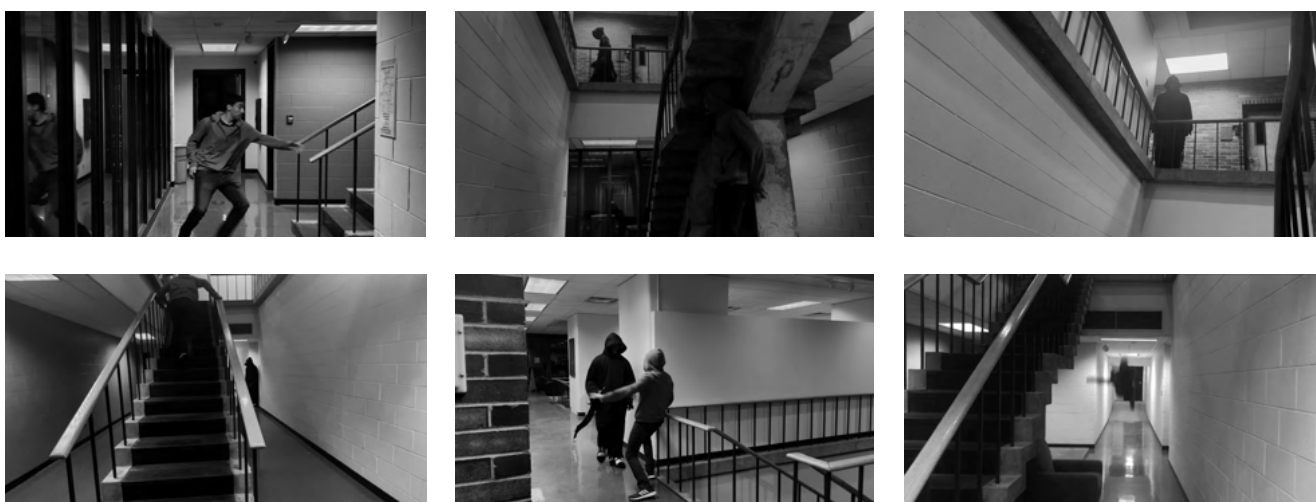


Fig. 6.5

The most impactful parts of the film were the beginning and in the conclusion. The initial chase scene is not much of a chase at all. It is more of slow following that goes completely unnoticed by the protagonist. The student suddenly walks by this abandoned structure completely oblivious that he is being watched by something or someone. Slowly throughout the film, the phantom gets closer and closer, even following him back to campus.

He eventually meets his demise after getting trapped in a maze of tunnels, not being able to escape the phantom at every turn. It is

apparent that our protagonist is trying to outrun the inevitable and eventually falls over the railing of a balcony. This film is a collage of a lot of architectural themes and narratives. The *Abandoned* (2022) was the first test for the limits of filmmaking for this thesis.

Action Packed Maze



Fig. 6.6

Narrative is defined as a story of a series of related events or experiences. It can be nonfiction or fictional. Narrative is a major factor in storytelling that determines how we receive information from the media. Film is a medium that a lot of people engage with and receive information from. The new direction my thesis is going in is to examine how spaces/architecture can be portrayed in a certain way based on narrative. For this short film a dynamic setup of bulletin boards was organized to create a "maze" of walls. This is an example of amateur but effective production design. The idea for this sketch problem was to include a subject interacting with the maze and

film it two different ways to see how the same space can be portrayed in two different ways to convey differing themes. There are 3 sequences in total. The first and second sequences show a person navigating through the maze while the last one features both in a split screen to directly show the similarities and differences.

Derrick - Maze Map

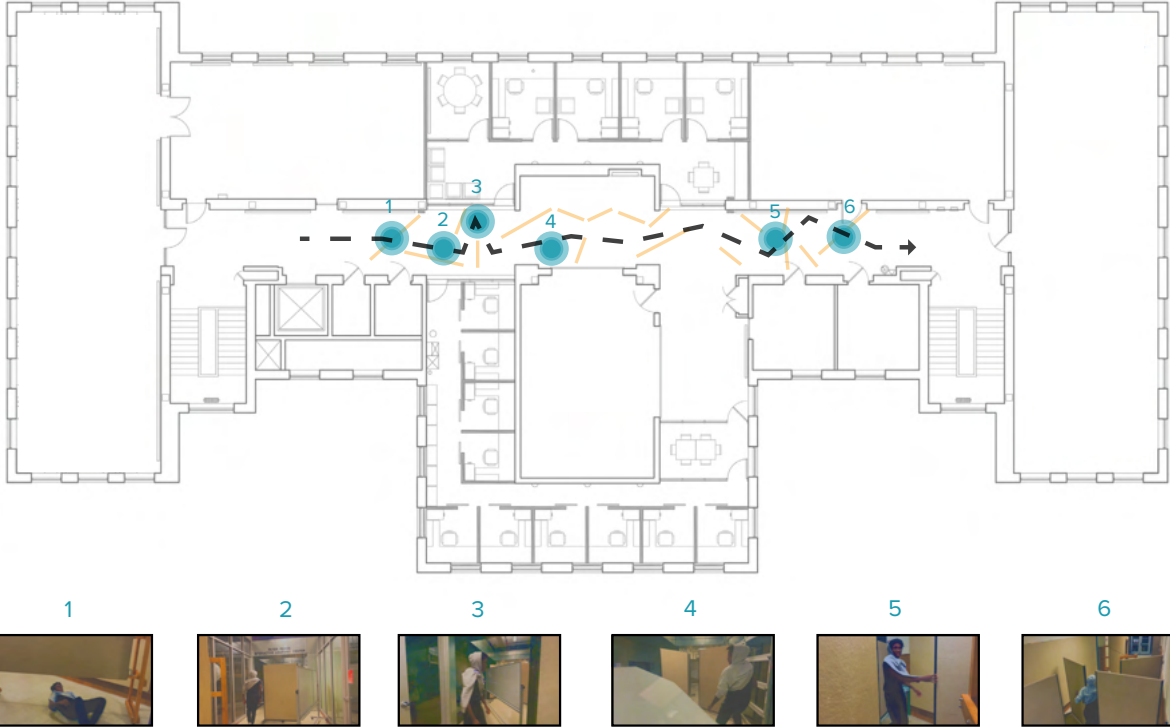


Fig. 6.7

Suspenseful Maze



Fig. 6.8

This is where the idea of dual narratives first came into play. The two sequences were split into the two actors Derrick and Andres. Derrick handled approaching the maze as a fun obstacle course with no sense of caution. Sometimes the panels and bulletin boards be moved by other members of the crew without warning. The idea was to get away from the idea of “acting” to get more authentic and genuine reactions caught on camera.

Andres followed the same path the Derrick, but he circulated through the maze with more caution. This was unprompted and not with any

direction. After collecting the footage, based on their performances, their ideas were edited to create different narratives. Derrick's took on a more playful action and adventure style of film while Andres's was more suspenseful. It is critical to look at how the same space can be perceived differently based on the color palette and overall way people interact with eth setting.

Andres - Maze Map

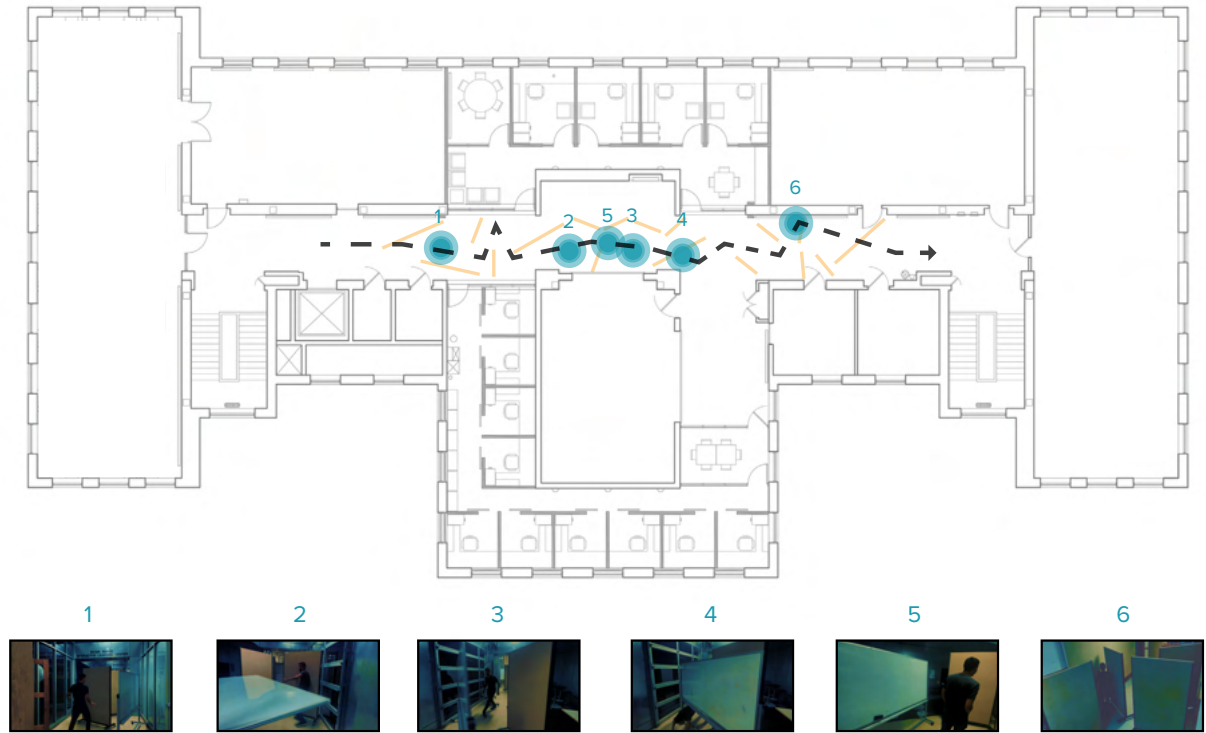
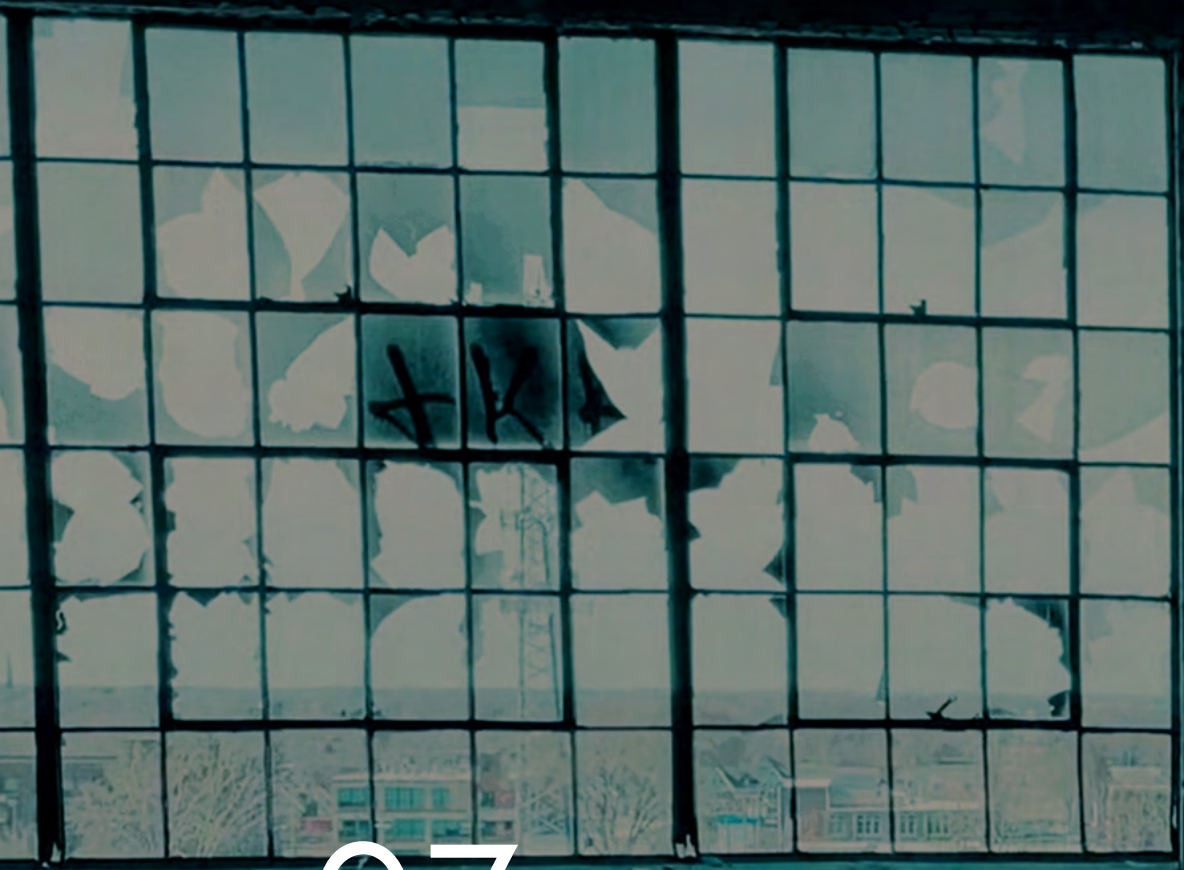


Fig. 6.9



07 Where the Walls Talk



Fig. 71



WHERE WALLS TALK

Fig. 7.2

Where the Walls Talk (2023)

Director: Deven Johnson

Actors

Andres Kusiak
Derrick Williams
Eleasa McKinney
Maximilian Flaga

Synopsis

A group of four friends wander into an abandoned building to practice their graffiti. At first things appear to be normal. Later they realize that they are not the only ones occupying the building as they had thought and that they might have some supernatural company. There appears to be a presence that causes the walls to talk. Through a journey of twists and turns they realize that everything is not what it seems.

Scan Here to Watch



History + Context



Fig. 7.3

Choosing a site for the final film proved to be extremely difficult. This was mostly during the phase when the theme and part of the film were just vague ideas. They were only abstract concepts that have not been fully fleshed out; not even a working title. The main objective was to have a place that conveyed a “typical” narrative of a horrifying space. The three requirements for a successful film site were to have ample space, availability, low cost, and no legal constraints regarding trespassing.

The Fisher Center was built in 1919 for the Fisher Company formed in 1908 by Albert Fisher. Fisher eventually expanded to over 40 plants across cities such as Detroit, Cleveland Detroit, Cleveland, Flint, and Ontario. This six-story building as designed by renowned Detroit architect Albert Khan. During the 1920's it focused on producing bodies for Cadillac and Buick Vehicles; particularly stamping. General

Motors and Fisher Body companies merged in 1926. In 1982, General Motors announced that they were closing the #21 Body plant and moving production to Flint, MI. It closed in 1984. The Carter Color Coat Company purchased the plant in 1990. Late the Carter Color filed for bankruptcy in 1993, thus reverting the ownership back to the city of Detroit in 2000.

According to the Detroit Free Press, Fisher Body Plant will be transformed into over 400 apartments and retail space. This will be a \$134 million project, called Fisher Lofts 21.

Fig. 7.4



First Impression



Fig. 7.5



Fig. 7.6

Upon surveying the site, it was evident that this would be the correct location to film *Where the Walls Talk*. The term “abandoned” was a vast understatement when said to describe this plant. To start the site is fenced. There were large gaping holes in the walls, and no doors.

The entrance welcomes visitors with a large fence with huge gaps barren of warning signs. How were people to “break and enter” without any barriers to break into? A decent portion of the building itself has collapsed towards the west wing. The interior was deteriorated, like something straight out of an apocalypse film. The stairways that go up to floors were devoid of hand railings past the first floor, often making it a nauseating experience.

Based on this impression it was clear that the perfect setting for a horror film was finally acquired. However, upon further inspection, it appears that one could misjudge the building

based on its current condition. Visiting the site a second time, things were noticed that were overlooked before. For example, the decades of rust, mold, rubble and puddles, definitely made a large impact on the aesthetics of the space. This is merely a distraction away from the more recent view of the space.

Almost every foot of the interior of the plant is tagged with graffiti. Obviously, there are the typical profanities and phrases but what was surprising was the depth to some of the murals.

A lot of the art was dedicated to people's loved ones. Often one could see a name of somebody on a nearby wall, “R.I.P. Jimmy” followed by the birth and death dates. Unfortunately, the distance between some of those dates ranged from 25 - 30 years of age. This makes the space even more haunting, yet ethereal. There are also commemorations of couples.

On the upper levels, you can find graffiti on the floor saying people's names encircled by a heart.

Clearly there probably is more cultural significance to this space than can be assumed just on a surface glance. Even though this site is desolate, abandoned and devoid of its intended purpose, perhaps it may serve a new one. This new purpose can be a place to express themselves and serve as a public, secret canvas for only those who are aware.

Where The Walls Talk (2023)

Act I - Story Board

Fig. 7.7



1 Gang enters the building.



2 The gang travels through the second floor.



5 Emma enters the tunnel. Voices amplify and the shadows collapse on her.



6 Emma emerges from the tunnel.



9 Anthony gets possessed.



10 Eric sees the demon mural of the wall. Upon seeing the mural, Eric screams



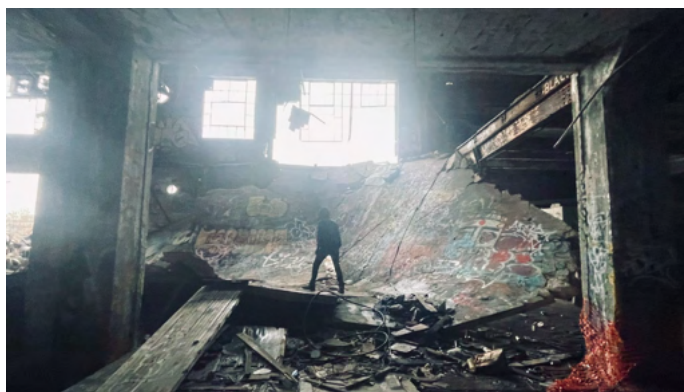
3 Talking, laughing echos throughout the elevator shaft.



4 The gang rest in an open room before splitting up.



7 Eric walks around looking for Emma.



8 Anthony plays in the rubble and debris



11 The sound of Eric and Emma screaming merges with the mysterious whispers.



12 The sound of everyone screaming amplifies and can be heard from the exterior of the building.

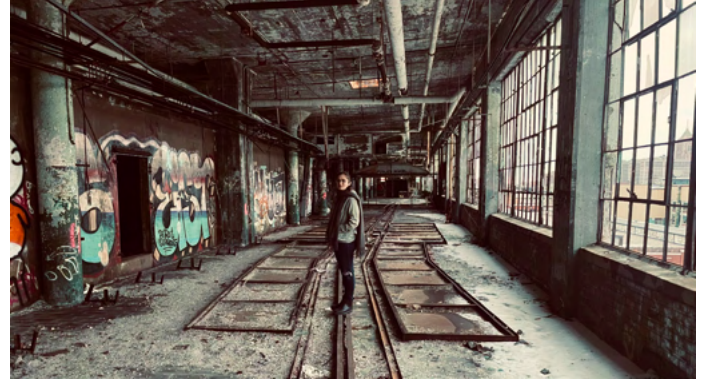
Where The Walls Talk (2023)

Act II - Story Board

Fig. 7.8



1 Gang enters the building.



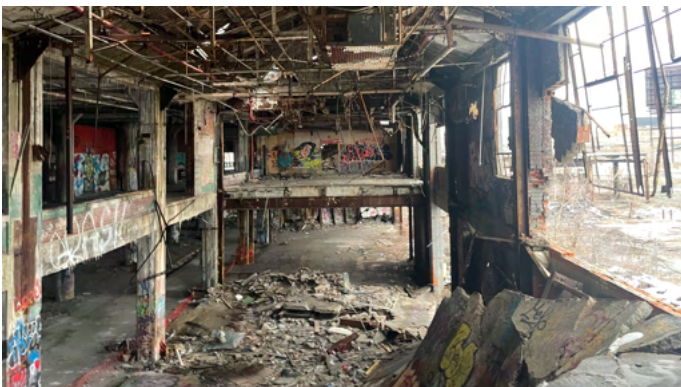
2 The gang separates. Emma ventures out on her own.



5 The gang relaxes



6 Emma emerges from the tunnel.



9 Ghost voices amplify and reverberate throughout the building.



10 Voices continue to amplify.



3 Mysterious voices appear again.



4 The echoing travels along the tunnel.



7 Emma looks out the window.



8 Anthony and Eric walk around.



11 The ghostly voices (spirits) push out of a window, escaping the building.



12 The voices disappate as they flow towrds the city in the distance.

Screen Test Day - Reflection

The first day of filmmaking was very difficult as forewarned by thesis external advisor Enrique Ledesma. On the Friday of that weekend, we discussed all of the technical difficulties that come with filmmaking. These are little things that the average “layperson” does not think about. Since we were filming in the Fisher Body Plant, with no available access to power, this presented a unique issue of its own. There were already apparent issues such as numerous safety hazards including rust, debris and unsafe stairways. Navigating the dangerous terrain of the building was at least somewhat of a benefit due to it being the perfect setting for the project. However, not having a place to charge phones, cameras and other equipment was an unforeseen obstacle.

Although my ideas for the film were high and ambitious, I soon realized that they might not

have been completely realistic. In preparation an 8 page screenplay was written with two separate acts. This would mean that the film itself would have to be around 8 minutes in length based on the rule that screenplays are typically 1 page per 1 minute. Also, unlike the other experimental films, this one had sound, music, and character dialogue. When filming began on Sunday, February 27th all the predicted issues came to fruition. Instead of using filming equipment, I decided to use just my cell phone to record footage as per my other films. Due to the previously mentioned obstacles, it would be better to use that day as a “test-shoot” just to see what it looks like.

There were several difficulties while filming now that dialogue had been added to the characters. The actors often did not remember their lines and did not understand the context

Fig. 7.9



of the script. It seemed to cause a lot more confusion. As an amateur director, it was really hard to keep members team on task and not deviate from the written material. This was a primary precursor to the decision to limit the amount of dialogue. After a meeting with Studio Advisor Wladyslaw Fuchs, it was decided to pull back on the amount of dialogue and put more focus on the architecture.

Fig. 7.10



Filming Day 01 - Reflection

The second attempt at filming was a lot easier than the screen test day. With lines and dialogue being reduced and, in most scenes, completely removed. This made filming a more seamless experience.

However, the weather was colder on this day and still made the production of scenes very tedious. It was obvious the fact that the harsh 20-degree weather might have negatively impacted the acting performances. Despite the cold temperature the actors would often get distracted and begin exploring the building. At times actors would also deviate from the script. Although this cut time away from completing scenes, it was much needed in order to reduce the stress level and agitation of the production crew. Breaks are necessary when handling a project of this magnitude.

A key take away from this experience would be to remember that all of the people working on this final film are unpaid professionals. Everyone is a student that graciously dedicated their time and energy to a project without any compensation; just to help a friend in need. Patience is imperative.

Filming Day 02 - Reflection

The second day of filming ran even smoother than the first day of production. Due to one of the actors, Maximilian Flaga having cancelled due to other engagements, Max was playing one of the main characters, Eric. This caused a need for major readjustments to the script once again.

Due to this unforeseen issue, this was a day where improvising was relied on the heaviest. In order to compensate, the remainder of Max's scenes were shifted to Andre's character Steve. Once again, we were deviating from the screenplay by shifting the actions of characters around. This worked out fairly well, given that the significant portions of Max's scenes were completed on the previous shooting.

Improvising was a fun and exciting process because it is the rare occasion where all the production crews' ideas get to merge. There was a new stunt where "Steve" would slide down a collapsed floor plate during a chase scene. It was this experience that allowed the group to decide to move forward with a more free form approach to filming instead of being rigid and restricted. The screenplay and shot list were referenced, but not at all explicitly followed. This made filming a lot more fun and easier on the production crew.

Filming Day 03 - Reflection

The final of filming was both rewarding but also challenging. Upon filming, more parts of the building were discovered by the crew. This often distracted them from filming. Instead of immediately filming, scenes were delayed by discovering new spaces that could be utilized. It seemed that the more of the building that was explored, more ideas spawned. This made filming the conclusion very tedious. Too many options and indecisiveness was the heaviest obstacle of the final stretch of filming. Finally, an open hallway space was decided on to shoot the scenes for that day. Overall, the results were satisfactory.

Fig. 7.11



Writing on the Wall

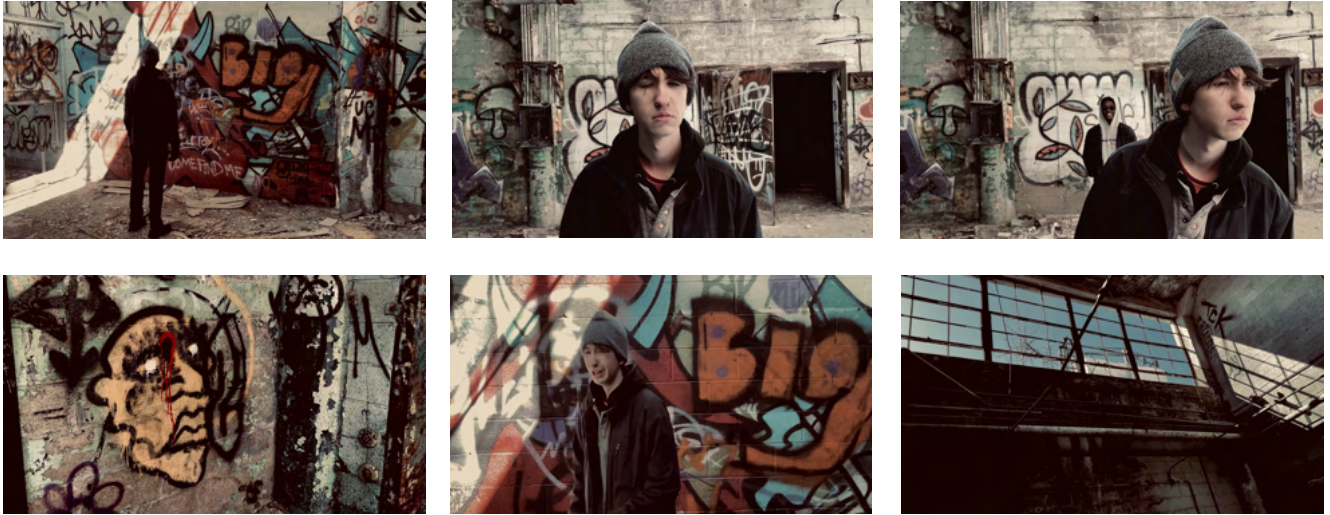


Fig. 7.12

Tunnel Vision

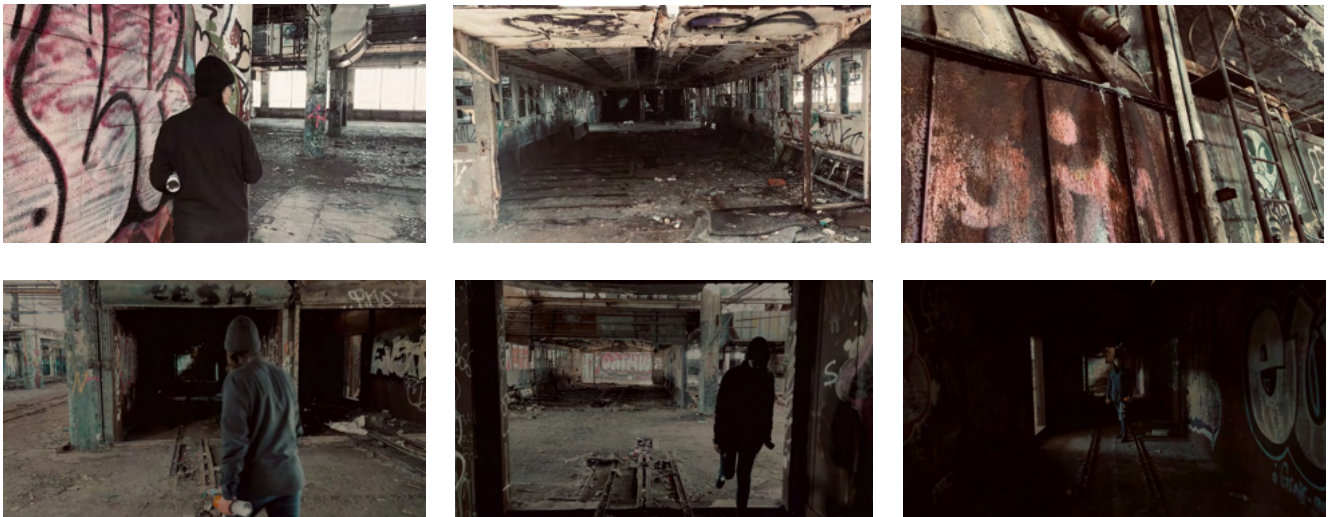


Fig. 7.13

People often label the Fisher 21 Body Plant as an “old, abandoned building between where I-75 and 94 intersect.” However, when filming it was revealed to be a lot more than that. Every weekend when we showed up to film me and the crew were not the only people there. Despite being abandoned, the building was never completely vacant. Every time there were people also filming, recording, painting. The abandoned plant worked as a sort of canvas/gathering space. It was a secret gathering space for the artist of the city to enjoy. During the filming process several other people were encountered such as: rappers, parkour artists,

foreign tourists, and mechanics. There is more a cultural influence than meets the eye. Murals and graffiti stretch across almost every inch of the building. A lot of those murals were commemorating lost loved ones. In my film, I tried to every include facet/section of research in the process of making it.

So, in reference of the movie, I approached with one narrative as indicated by the separate acts in the storyboard. The first narrative being exactly what most people would think at first glance: “Its scary and abandoned” playing off the typical horror movie trope you might also

Slip and Slide

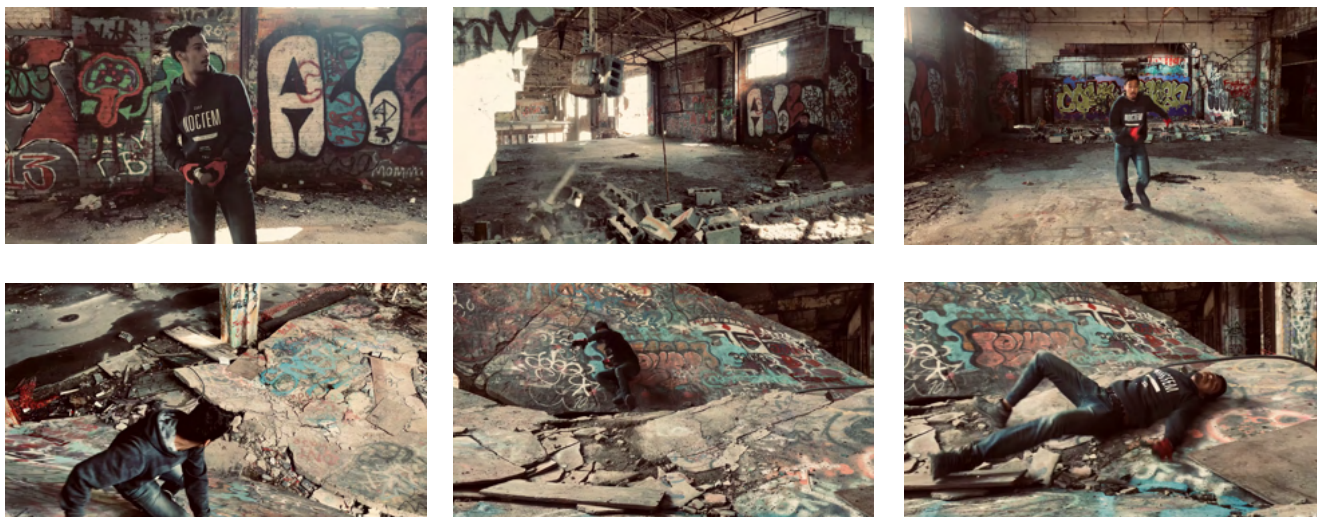


Fig. 7.14

Flashback

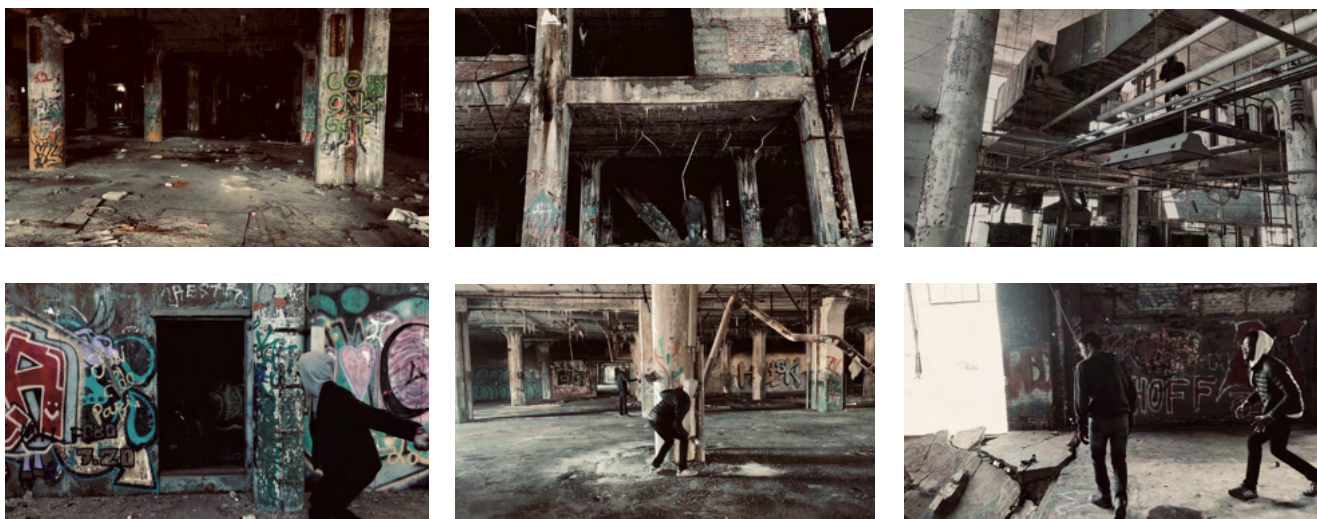


Fig. 7.15

see in other movies about the city. That two-act structure then was minimized into a simple twist. This gave all the supernatural things a rational explanation with flashback sequence with Derrick's character Anthony harassing the rest of the characters. Showing our characters are not victims of a haunted old structure but just another person like them and their own imaginations. They fall victim to the ideas that they project onto the space.

To show that shift of the first "horror" narrative spaces were shot in way that highlighted the beauty in the space with explosive colors. Scenes

were also filmed a lot of scenes following from behind the characters to recreate that sense of vicarious experience to put the audience in the character's shoes. They are the conduit through which the audience experiences the space this space.

Vicarious Subjectivity



TRACKING P.O.V.

Tracking camera follows from behind the subject.



P.O.V. Dolly Zoom

Camera zooms in on the subject and the wall.



DIRECT P.O.V.

Camera shows the direct line of vision of Steve. Subjects enter the frame.



DIRECT P.O.V.

Camera transitions from having subjects/people present to just showing space without them

Fig. 7.16

The Dual Narrative



Fig. 7.17

Concluding Thoughts

Cinematic narrative can influence the perception of a place. It does this by neglecting the context surrounding a site or structure. That context can be historical or cultural. Although film is an extremely visual and explorative medium, it cannot substitute for true firsthand experience. To understand place and the full proper context, immediate subjectivity is needed. To gain a true and unbiased story, one must be the author of their own narrative.

Just like in the film created for this study; The audience was subject to see everything the way it was intended by the filmmaker's vision. To understand place and the full proper context, immediate subjectivity is needed. To gain a true and unbiased story, one must be the author of their own narrative. Cinema narrative intentionally tries to skew people's perception. Designers and civilians must be careful about this as we might be projecting false or biased

ideas on spaces structures and even cities without understanding the full picture. It is imperative for people to see and experiences things for themselves. This thesis can challenge people across all interests and occupations to go explore space productively. With bodily subjectivity and firsthand experience people can touch every wall and climb every step. This goes beyond just the Fisher 21 Body Plant body; it can be applied to all places. Although this thesis has come to a conclusion, the core concepts and ideas shall continue to live on through future endeavors.

Fig. 7.18



THANK YOU

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Figure 4.1 Photo from Robocop (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson, image retrieved at youtube.com on Sep.25,2022.

Figure 4.2 Aspect Ratio Diagram based on Robocop (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson, base image retrieved at youtube.com on Sep.25,2022.

Figure 4.3 Photo from Robocop (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson, image retrieved at texas.gov on Sep.25,2022.

Figure 4.4 Field of Vision Diagram. Credits: Deven Johnson.

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Figure 4.6 Aspectacle Cardboard Sketch Model. Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 4.7 Aspectacle Cardboard Sketch Model. Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 4.8 Person wearing Aspectacle. Credits: Deven Johnson.

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Figure 5.10 Photo from Parasite (2019). Credits: Retrieved at thefilmmagazine.com on Dec.12,2022.

Figure 5.11 Photo from Parasite (2019). Credits: Retrieved at sinegang.ph on Dec.4,2023.

Figure 5.12 Photo from Parasite (2019). Credits: Retrieved at architectural-review.com on Dec.12,2022.

Figure 5.13 Photo from Parasite (2019). Credits: Retrieved at whatculture.com on Dec.12,2022.

Figure 5.14 Photo from Parasite (2019). Credits: Retrieved at screenmusings.org on Dec.12,2022.

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Figure 6.2 The Abandoned illustrated storyboard. Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 6.3 Photo from The Abandoned (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 6.4 Watching from the Shadows based on The Abandoned (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson

Figure 6.5 Off the Rails based on The Abandoned (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson

Figure 6.6 Action Packed Maze based on The Maze (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson

Figure 6.7 Derrick- Maze Map based on The Maze (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson, Base safety plan retrieved from University of Detroit Mercy: School of Architecture and Community Development on Jan.27,2023

Figure 6.8 Suspenseful Maze based on The Maze (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson

Figure 6.9 Andres- Maze Map based on The Maze (2022). Credits: Deven Johnson, base safety plan retrieved from University of Detroit Mercy: School of Architecture and Community Development on Jan.27,2023

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Figure 7.12 Writing on the Wall based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 7.13 Tunnel Vision based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 7.14 Slip and Slide based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 7.15 Flashback based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 7.16 Vicarious Subjectivity Diagram based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

Figure 7.17 The Dual Narrative Diagram based on Where the Walls Talk (2023). Credits: Deven Johnson.

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