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SESSION 6
15:30 - 16:30

ROOM B - SALÓN DE GRADOS

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**Experimenting with film
techniques and cinematic
expression within the case
study of Sulphur Baths in
Split: “The Architecture of
Healing: Sulphurous
Scapes”**

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Keywords: architectural cinematic space, diegetic space, film architecture

This research challenges the boundaries of architectural understanding, questioning conventional interpretations and representations of architecture. It delves into the portrayal of architectural space within moving images — the architecture of imagery independent from the conventional realm of architectural practice — 'architecture in cinema' and 'cinema in architecture' — the constructed space created under the influence of film. The research operates on the premise that architectural cinematic space can be interpreted both as representational and performative, encompassing both physical and mediated dimensions. By highlighting the use of film techniques and cinematic space as tools for critical research in architectural design, this study explores the formal and programmatic aspects of cinematic architecture. It raises questions and speculates on the opportunities that film techniques present to architects, enabling them to mentally or physically construct space. One of the main aims is to broaden the horizons of architectural design thinking by identifying interaction patterns that could serve as models derived from representations, reinterpretations, and insightful analyses of cinematic spaces within architecture and landscape contexts. Additionally it endeavours to systematise and establish a more defined theoretical framework for the interactions between architecture and film.

Cinematic space, whether imagined, real, or hybrid, exists as a nexus between constructed and lived realities, intertwining elements of the mundane with the extraordinary. And as architect Juhani Pallasmaa notices: "The architecture of cinema does not possess a utilitarian or inherent value — the

characters, events and architecture interact and designate each other."¹ Consequently, one might wonder what implications arise when physical architecture begins to align with the characteristics of cinematic space? What could happen if built architecture starts to reflect the qualities of cinematic space? To comprehend this concept visually, it is essential to understand the nature of cinematic space and the specific spatiality — spatial dimensions — it encompasses. Cinematic space, primarily assembled by montage techniques—whether formal or physical—conveys stories through spatial manipulation frequently contrary to the usual understanding of built architecture—diverging from traditional architectural interpretations and challenging conventional perceptions of architectural design. Therefore, montage has the potential to enhance or even facilitate a 'performative aspect of space', particularly

in today's context where engagement with architecture is increasingly mediated rather than solely based on direct experience. As our lives increasingly unfold within digital realms, architecture becomes more than just physical structures; it also encompasses a collection of mediated realities.

For Jacques Lévy, a geography and urbanist professor, cinema is made up of a 'number of languages that are spatial by definition in that they consist first and foremost of images.' According to him, cinematic space shows the presence of 'space as environment' but also 'spatiality as action,' as he broadens the definition set forth by André Gardies encompassing the four types of cinematic spaces that contribute to the spatial essence of a film: 1. 'Cinematographic space' as the 'institutional' setting (the movie theatre, domestic environments containing screens, etc.), in which viewers are immersed in or exposed to; 2. 'Diegetic space' — space as environment — is what the film establishes as a reality independent — distant — from the story — film's geographicity, a space as a set or context — 'anecdotal space'; 3. 'Narrative space' relates to the specific spatiality of the characters, which gives substance to the story — as a framework for the action and 4. 'Viewer space' — the spatiality produced by the mode of communication that the film adopts towards the viewer — the very subjective quality of space based on personal associations.

This paper seeks to correlate concepts from both André Gardies and Jacques Lévy emphasising the importance of cinematic space (Fig. 1).

Among cinematic spaces, mentioned by Gardies, diegetic space—as an environment—emerges as a notably compelling domain for experimentation. Such diegetic spaces can defy architectural accuracy, may challenge architectural norms, or more precisely can be 'architecturally incorrect' especially considering that a city is a multifaceted geographical system or entity not solely defined or shaped by the activities of its transient inhabitants. Within such cinematic realms, the city or room is tailored to fit the practical limitations of filming, the chosen means of expression, or the narrative requirements, achieved through the art of montage. Thus, the next step would be to experiment with conceiving new spaces through cinematographic diegetic approaches.

In a recent case study of Sulphur Baths building in Split, reflection is conveyed through the experimental essay film titled "The Architecture of Healing: Sulphurous Scapes (43° 30.547' N, 16° 26.22' E)". The primary objective of experimenting with film form was to reinterpret spaces within existing architecture. Probing and reshaping its structural components, thereby addressing the inherent 'architecture of the film' itself. One could perceive it as the preliminary step preceding the process of conceiving new spaces (Fig. 2).

1. Pallasmaa, Juhani. (2008) *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a6100b-0f14aa191e1ab0947t/5e6979e27e1d0b209126d185/1583970871368/PALLASMAA_CINEMA.pdf (Accessed: 2.1.2024.)

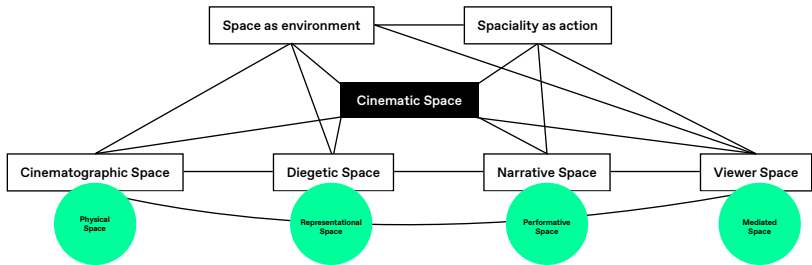


Fig. 1 André Gardies's four kinds of cinematic spaces correlated with Jacques Lévy's concepts of space



Fig. 2 Still from the film *The Architecture of Healing: Sulphurous Scapes* (43° 30.547' N, 16° 26.22' E), 2023
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsiUN-m9cXw>

A short reflection on the importance and role of EXPERIMENTATION in the research project:

Indistinct boundaries between architectural exploration and cinematic experimentation

The research uses film techniques as additional elements or supplementary contributors enriching architectural paradigms. Exploring through — and in — the medium of film, static and moving images are used as tools, and as a research method through which one can confirm or disprove an initial hypothesis.

Moving beyond conventional historical narratives and representations of architecture, the experimental essay film “The Architecture of Healing: Sulphurous Scapes (43° 30.547' N, 16° 26.22' E)” centers on the Sulphur Baths in Split — a space dedicated to the well-being of the body and spirit. It resides on the boundary between ‘order’ and ‘disorder,’ involving self-preservation that isolates or connects with others — duality that gives rise to what we term a liminal space. The work is structured around three interwoven thematic segments. One relates to historical and spatial narratives, combining fact with fiction. The mythological part focuses on representations of both diseased and healthy bodies in art and medicine, while the natural theme examines sulphur in its various forms through a lens of popular scientific discourse. As the human body undergoes deconstruction, it gives rise to remarkable architectural forms, with sulphur standing out as the catalyst for specific types of architecture. By exploring the architectural dimensions of the building, and correlating them with the human body and sulfur, the viewers delve into the inherent ‘architecture of the film’ itself.