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*a*rchitecture in antonioni

Abstract

The analysis brings the filmography of Michelangelo Antonioni, Blow-up and The Passenger mainly, closer to contemporary architecture through the thoughts of Team 10's director and architects. The chromatic treatment of the films, as well as the separation between the images and the context, is similar to the attitude of the architect's group that search for a new language to Architecture. This study is aimed at extending the amount of the architect vision through the appropriation of cultural production process of other areas.

Keywords

Architecture. Team X. Antonioni, Michelangelo (1912-2007). Cinema.

ARQUITECTURA EN ANTONIONI

ARQUITETURA EM ANTONIONI

Resumen

El análisis se aproxima a la filmografía de Michelangelo Antonioni, principalmente de las películas " Blow-up" y "Reportero de Profesión", con la arquitectura contemporánea través de pensamiento del director y de los arquitectos del Equipo X. Los colores de las películas, así como el despregamiento de las imágenes con el enredo, son similares a las posiciones del grupo de arquitectos que buscan un nuevo lenguaje para la arquitectura. El estudio tiene como objetivo ampliar el alcance de la visión del arquitecto apropiándose de los procesos de producción cultural en otras áreas.

Palabras clave

Arquitectura. Team 10. Antonioni, Michelangelo (1912-2007). Cinema.

Resumo

A análise aproxima a filmografia de Michelangelo Antonioni, principalmente os filmes *Blow-up* e *Profissão repórter,* com a arquitetura contemporânea através do pensamento do diretor e dos arquitetos do *Team 10.* O tratamento cromático dos filmes, assim como o despregamento das imagens com o enredo são similares às posturas do grupo de arquitetos que procuram uma nova linguagem para arquitetura. O estudo visa ampliar a abrangência da visão do arquiteto através da apropriação de processos de produção cultural de outras áreas.

Palavras-chave

Arquitetura. Team X. Antonioni, Michelangelo (1912-2007). Cinema.

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A film explained in words
is not a true film
Michelangelo Antonioni

Modern architecture emerged associated with other arts, both temporal and visual arts. Literary, plastic, graphic or cinematographic movements have expanded by several areas, and shared similar purposes, as well as languages ??that have appropriated of the various lexicons in order to enrich the vocabulary. In Brazil, Athos Bulcão, Di Cavalcanti, Bruno George are common names in the field of architecture, as many architects are known for visiting other arts, is important to mention two striking examples: Burle-Marx, one of the most significant artistic expression from Brazil, who was landscape designer, painter, architect and singer, and Le Corbusier, who is famous for his work in urban planning, exceeded his limits for other arts as painting, architecture and mathematics. The dialogue between the arts has yielded good results among them, and it could have not been different analyze Michelangelo Antonioni's cinematography (1912-2007) from the perspective of architecture. Specifically looking at two of the films produced by this economist-filmmaker, *Blow-up* and *The Passenger,* in which architecture plays an important role not only in the scenography but also in the script.

Antonioni strongly believed cinema is a form visual art. In the play of light and shadows, the imaginary penetrates in the gaps between the frames. The director created his language based on the relationship established between script, characters, images, sounds and rhythm, highlighting a suggestive profusion of signs, and which therefore established shades of connotation. Script is considered the backbone of the cinema and everything corroborates to its development; in European cinema the story is relative; in both Impressionist and Surrealist cinema plot undertakes a secondary importance, which is reestablished to the primary importance in the Italian Neorealist. The films of Michelangelo Antonioni are aesthetically complex; scripts are less relevant, and therefore images take an important role as the structure to define his cinematography.

Blow Up final scene

Antonioni begins his career associated to neorealism, and builds up his autonomous language over the seven films. In 1964, he directs his first feature colored film *The Red Desert*, the stunningly industrial landscapes images and heavy mist dialog with Virna Lise. One of the most anthological sequences in the film, six actors are inside a log cabin and use part of the wooden wall trying to warm themselves, nevertheless this implicitly works as a pretext for the orange background become red, and establishes a moment of dramatic density, not so much explicit in terms of action, however outstanding in terms of images, it suggests to the viewer a possible nudity of the main character, despite what is seen is the dismantling of the walls. The characters do not assemble as bodies that reflect the psychological or moral aspects; there are not good or bad characters, they are almost indefinite figures. "However, the characters are the main link through which the filmmaker structures his narrative – the camera follows them most of the time". (MATOS, 2007, page. 23).

London 66

In 1966, London brought together an intense cultural activity with Beatles, Rolling Stones, Carnaby street culture and the glamour of marquee, and there is the location where Antonioni films his remarkable film Blow-up based on a novel by Argentinean writer Julio Cortazar. The project brings together an all-star cast such as Redgrave, David Hammings, top model Verushka and Jane Birkin who exhibits the first frontal nudity in film history; the ban Yardbirds performs without the presence of Eric Clapton; scoring practically launches the young jazz pianist Herbie Hancock. Blow up won the Cannes Palme d'Or and had two Oscar nominations.

The script is not very clear. It begins with actor David Hammings who originally thought to be with the group of the homeless, leaving a hostel in a cloudy morning. Surprisingly one of the beggars gets inside a conversible Rolls Royce, places a sophisticated photographic camera in the glove box, drives through the city streets, passes by a group of white-faced and masked group of pantomiming mimes who seem to be enjoying themselves, and the film camera follows the group towards a set of modern buildings.

The model Veruska and David Hammings in Blow Up

The script reveals later that the protagonist (whose name is not mentioned in the film, although the audience got used to call him David) is an eclectic photographer who is taking pictures of beggars in a hostel and a little later arrives to his studio where he also plays a fashion photographer. By chance (chance is almost a character) strolling through Holland Park he sees a middle-aged couple and therefore decides to shoot them. Without clarifying, Vanessa Redgrave who has been photographed goes in search of him in order to recover the film rolls. This sharpens David's curiosity, who processes and enlarges the photos until the picture pigmentation blows up, and reveals a dead body lying between the vegetation of the park.

The images run through a sequence unusual as well as sophisticated, some models wearing clothes and extravagant hair, models what is most advanced in fashion. Beautiful young women dressed in geometric shapes curl in such fancy colors scenario mix with the background paper at the same time as they are getting undressed.

A famous sequence shows Vanessa Redgrave who is offering to David and exposes her breasts in a nonsensical dialogue, however full of insinuations.

The film ends with the protagonist's reunion with the group of clowns playing tennis without the ball on a green lawn that had to be painted for the final scene after a frost, which changed the color of the lawn in earlier take.

> Francis Vanoye believes the work of Antonioni is another way to see the world; stepping further from the story and characters, in a way it renounces the realm of things. Seymour Chatman believes that the Italian director is not just one of the great masters of visual composition who can be compared to Eisenstein, Von Sternberg, Kurosawa and Welles, but raises the cinematic image component to a high level. (MATOS, 2007, page.7)

Several critics attribute Antonioni the reinvention of cinema. Gilda de Melo e Souza uses this expression in "O Olhar" (NOVAES). However, it would not be attribute to all arts reinvent themselves constantly? Such primacy of the image would not be a return to stereokimia or, as pointed Bérgson (DELEUZE, 2005, page. 47), would the moving image be a real matter in itself? That is to say, the valorization of image is the revaluation of cinematography. In other words, Antonioni's vanguardism is identified in the radicalization of his language.

Looking at the moving image, he leaves gaps upon history, which are filled by the viewer, as it happens to the technical side of cinematography, which suggests that Antonioni's filmography does not represent the image as independent of the plot. On the contrary, Antonioni adds structural elements in the plot, which collaborate with the others elements in cutting edge syntax, where the placing of the elements overlaps any of them. The gaps in the plot function as the spaces in between each grain from the enlarged photographs of David, who coincidentally was dealing with diffuse images. He builds the story of an imaginary murder, full of gaps that remain unresolved with the few elements that have been presented to him. Reality, fact and phenomenon are fine lines between what we see and what we imagine to see, and therefore the spaces occupied by the characters leave traces on the way, and for this reason give meaning to these spaces turning them into places. Scenario that also turns into a character when inherits the signs of the characters, hence continent becomes content.

There are syntactic and semantic similarities between film and architecture. Some critics analyze the work of Antonioni referring to locations such as random places. In 'A Aventura', Milan's cathedral partially emerges, almost unnoticed in an unimportant scene, without frame, without revealing the surroundings, but it is there where subtly signals to the background and takes our full attention. In 'A Noite' and 'A Aventura', one of the characters is the city, which rebuilts in inhospitable suburbs. Depersonalized architecture appears in Italy's post-war and follows a storyline in which a man, or more often a woman, does not integrate with the environment. Dissociation is a recurrent theme not only in the images but also in the plots. Antonioni's movies evolve in two directions: the exploitation of past and everyday banalities, and from the movie 'O Eclipse', handles extreme situations that take the characters to dehumanized landscapes, empty spaces, dead architecture that devour the characters and their actions, in which one can only derive descriptions spatio-temporal and abstract sensations. Deleuze echoes such interpretations, in which this modern fragmentation is expressed in images and plots that do not connected, nevertheless they surprisingly maintain the same syntax. Blow Up is a different movie from its predecessors. As the filmmaker reveals in an interview for Playboy magazine in November 1967:

In my other films, I tried to prove the relationship between one person and another – more precisily their loving relationship, the fragility of their feelings and so on. In this film none of those issues matter. On the contrary, the relationship is between an individual and the reality - those things that are around him. There is no love story in this film, even if we see glimpses of relationships between men and women. The experience of the protagonist is not sentimental or loving, nevertheless a gaze in their relationship with the world and the things that he finds face to face. He is a photographer. One day, he photographs two people in a park, an element of reality that appers to be real. And it is indeed. But reality has a quality of freedom, which it is difficult to explain. This film, perhaps, is like Zen; you ended up deluding when attempting at explaining. In other words, a film that you can explain in words is not a movie. (CARLO DI CARLO, ANTONIONI,1994, page. 149)

The Economist Building complex, Peter and Alison Smithson's project - London 1965

The filmography of Antonioni develops a intimate relationship between architecuture, literature and film. The building that appears in the beggining of Blow-up, which appears in the scene that shows anarchy street mimes in an open Jeep careening through the streets, was designed by architects Peter and Alison Smithson. Such building was inaugurated in 1965, one year prior the completion of the movie, and had a frisson not only in the international architectural environment but also in various cultural backgrounds. The building was comprised of various innovative proposals in both technical and constructive aspects – has brought to London a critical architecture, despite modern, it has broken with the canons of the modern movement, consequently brought to debate issues that troubled part of the intelligentsia of the time. One of the

issues involving the architects of the Neorealist was related to the Rural Exodus in Europe, which happened after World War II. It was believed that the trauma of changing from the traditional environment to the city should have been minimized, restoring some spatial values ??of small provincial cities, such as the reestablishment of the street as a fun and social interaction; the use of sloping roofs made with wood and brick; the integration of multi-use spaces such as trade, residence and recreation. These were also Antonioni's concerns which were disclosed in his previous films.

The new housing, which was impersonal, inhuman and inhospitable had elements that helped to compose an image shift between the protagonist and the world or between the protagonists. The recurring theme of his work, as to say the distance between man and his surroundings, seems to specialize in modern housing projects. In Blow-up, the protagonist calls his agent when driving through Chelsea close to Holland Park and comments about the horrible architecture they are doing there.

ARCHITECTURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY

The opening scene of the lost beggar in West End refers to an exhibition of the photographer Nigel Henderson. He was one of the architects of inspiring group called Team 10, which had English couple Peter and Alison Smithson as its startling defenders. The couple along with Jacob Berend Bakema and Van Den Broek, and later John Voelcker, William and Jill Howell, Shadrach Woods, Georges Candilis and Giancarlo de Carli formed the group that presented at the IX Congress of the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) in Aix-en-Provence in 1953. A scenario focused on a picture of Nigel Henderson of a blown face was in fact a sign of an installation "Avant La Letre". The work compose a group of one critical framework proposed in the previous congresses, either as a manifestation or in curriculum that the congresses had been assuming, and engaged in an ambiguous thought since its origins between the reverence of technological progress and social criticism, in which the city was geometrized, hierarchized and separated into sectors, expanding the projective methods of architecture into urban with peripheral inclusion of social, cultural and historical issues. This group of young architects was in charge of organizing X Dubrovnik Congress, in 1956, what made them know as Team X. At the time, when post-war resulted in the assumption that the established values in the previous congresses had all conditions to impose the reconstruction of Europe, new elements have come to interfere, questioning the ideas of progress, modernity and scientistic view,

Fotography of Nigel Henderson used in 9th CIAM Expo by Team X

co-responsible for war atrocities. Critics sought alternatives to the modified functionalism of old school as well as Le Corbusier's idealism. However, Swiss master perceived new ideas blossomed in the congresses as the more orthodox proposals from the modernism disturbed the rebellion of young talented artists. Le Corbusier mentions the group and interpreted both as much ironic criticism as remarkable, however his innovative spirits brings no doubts:

> *The forty-years old generation, born around 1916 during the World War and revolutions, and the ones who were not even born but are 25 years old, the ones who were born in 1930, during the preparations for a new war and in the middle of a deep economic crisis, social and political, live at the innermost of this present time, are the only individuals ale to feel, personal and deeply, the concrete problems, the objectives to be followed and the means to achieve them, and the pathetic urgency of the present situation period. They are the ones who know. Their predecessors were excluded and forgotten; they are not subjected to the immediate impact of the situation* (Le Corbusier, *apud* FRAMPTON, 2008)

The unusual in the group was to formulate a systematic criticism to the modernism from its essence, without appealing to criteria of taste and adequacy or other useful means of the reactionary criticism. They did not present an impact group of works that affected the architectural culture, when compared to modernist masters, however this attitude had the freshness of your time and germinate ideas for the news propositions in a cultural scenario which showed signs of saturation. The relevance of urban life for Team 10 plays an important role in the organization of architecture, outlining the excellence of the urban environment in the architectural work. When Le Corbusier outlines units *Domino* lifting slabs on pilotis, establishes the autonomy relationship with its surroundings. The release of the ground is also the independence of the work on the territory. Pilotis enable the typology to settle on any topography environment, and with that it determines its '*modus pensantis*' to the city.

The issues raised in the post-war period were added to French existentialism and therefore the problem of alienation and reification of merchandise (drawn from Marxist jargon). English architects linked urban studies to sociology and privileged social concepts to spatial forms, seeking escape from the geometric rigidity through the expansion of the formal syntax, including strange shapes in the modern lexicon.

The Economist group of 1965 by Alison and Peter Smithson and set in the South Bank, London, represented one of the landmarks of these proposals. Core Wall building by Bakema and Van Den Broek in Tiburg Holland, featured a wall aspect, the color and diversity of the facade as well as innovation, nevertheless still keep some of the principles of rationalism, as the concrete and the large glass windows, contributing to both the Dutch tradition and the Modern movement. Innovated with the colors on the facade, the irregularity of the profile, the asymmetry, the floors occupied and an attempt to dialogue with the urban that would go beyond the rational purposes, privileging the street to the detriment of neighborhood units.

The Economist group was built in industrialized concrete with the forms of metal and glass panels, carefully linked with the structure and regular molds, not orthogonal as in modern orthodoxy, but rather prisms and triangles that

allowed the contact of the central square in the street creating an interrelated area between private and public space, as a star that depending on the angle opens completely to the outside or closes in a traditional Baroque square. While Bakema and Van Den Broek used the curves of the topography and urban trace to configure their set, the Smithson came across an unusual geometry to configure internal and external spaces.

The Existentialist thought unveiled the experiential aspects, which were obscured by the rationalism, mainly under the influence of Sartre. In the post-war period, the feeling of rediscovering life under the European rubbles marked much of the intelligentsia. Wandering around the streets did not represent the *flâneur* from the past century, but the interaction between the individual and the world, relations between the private and the collective, present in the books of Luckáks, Garraudy and Sartre. The search of Aura was present in the pictures of Nigel Henderson, in which by exploding the graininess of the photo until the limit of visibility as an attempt to escape the superficial appearance and the search for the fundamental existence.

Architecture does not lead to a dialogue with the sophisticated concepts of philosophy, and thereby resents when exposing its formal results. The works did not always represent clearly such thoughts, and the repercussion did not expand to the extraprofessional means of its time, however it meant a long way for the young Brazilian students outside the modern canons dominated by the present masters.

Only after a certain time, the young students published their reviews and stories about Team 10 in order to establish a place in the formation of architectural thought in the second half of the 20th century. Reyner Banham, Kenneth Frampton, Jose Maria Corsini and other theorists have contributed to this revaluation by placing the group between the main references for the various currents of architectural thought they succeeded. Corsini (2004) sees in the Team 10 possibilities for both semantic currents, which have been developed from the post-warm modernism, as for the syntactic currents based on its analytical vision. Frampton (*op. cit.*) gives them a special role in the history of architecture and urbanism, with solid arguments that protect their fellow citizen.

The political movements from the 60's did not intend to power, neither stop the war in Vietnam nor vanish the Brazilian military totalitarianism, however they transcended the boundaries and cultures, and the forms of domination of the State that marked the entire second half of the century. As well as the important American Beat movement did not produce a literary work to compare to that of a Flaubert or Proust, it still influenced deeply art and literature. The abandonment of the *gran-finale* was not a contingency but a line of thought that ended in being as opposed to means to an end.

Antonioni's filmography embodies issues such as alienation, loneliness and the individual's detachment from society. The elements light, color and time are prioritized among details and literary components with respect to the structure of linear or positive thinking. The idea of departure and arrival is developed in both architecture as well as cinema; the revelations are not in the dramatic end, but in the lyrical course of the secondary discoveries. Antonioni considers the image as the protagonist, and therefore innovates to re-qualify

background and figure, form and content, script and scenario. Only few remember the story of Blow-up, however the majority certainly recalls the green lawns of Holland Park, in the final scene when the pantomiming mimes play an invisible game of tennis with an imaginary ball.

The film brings to cinema the English point of view that musicians had already foreshadowed. Attitude transcends character, as well as image to plot, time to project; individual blends to the collective and results in a character that wants to differentiate without realizing the differences between being and existence. Images are dislocated in defiance to action, as well as disconnection between feelings of the characters and their attitudes. The conflict in the plot is not unveiled until the end. It is not known why Vanessa Redgrave wanted the negative; it is unknown whether she was involved in the man's death, revealed in the blown up photograph, or who the corpse is. It is not relevant to seek the answer as whether or not there is ball in the game of tennis. The scene in the park has an imagistic importance that overlaps literary. Jane Birkins and the black girl wrapped in the colored scenic paper are part of a plot of colors and movements. The green of the English park is also a significant character of the film. The filmmaker works with visual emotions; music is not used, on the contrary, is only added when it becomes the central point in the plot. Motion pictures that dissipate in time try to show the disconnection between people and things.

Antonioni devoted his last years to painting. Elderly and sick, he dedicated to the colors that were painted from his assistants. In his last exhibition in Rome, the color was a central theme of his paintings as he had done in his films. Deleuze had already noticed in "L'image-mouvement" that he was one of the greatest colorists of cinema. Antonioni understood color as an element capable of producing affection as central point to his images. That is to say, broad and long-lasting effect. Antonioni himself revealed in an interview with Beppe Sebaste, "there is no such thing as pure color, as this is always in relation between viewer and object, object and the rays of light that shape it" (Sebaste, 2006). Another example that expressed how much Michelangelo Antonioni cared with color was his passion for the abstract and colorful paintings of the American painter Mark Rothko.

The artist who worked with movie and canvas did not separate platforms in different languages; on the contrary, history, literature, art, music and film were one united way to manifest the new boldness that open to those who could recognize the possibilities of existence.

THE PASSENGER 1975

In the first twenty minutes of the film, the character played by Jack Nicholson wanders by the African desert. Silence reverberates amid Tuaregs asking for cigarettes, and sounds of the environment where clothes were not imposed with the weather or with colors of the landscape. When he arrives at the hotel the audience can hear a dialogue coming from a recorder between David (Nicholson's character) and the body, his former room neighbor. Without logic, the reporter (played by Jack Nicholson) exchanges identity with former arms dealer. He exchanges a stable and successful career by the eschatological

Jack Nicholson in The Passenger

life of a dealer linked to Chadian rebels. The plot is not clear, but the images and the colors describe their own history. In the first twenty minutes one can see pale sand between dunes and rocks confronting a blue, clean and clear sky. The image of black Tuaregs dressed in white robes, as well as the green Jeep and a red plaid shirt worn by the reporter contrast with this duality.

When Jack Nicholson arrives at the hotel, he sees blue walls and sandy doors. The flat background scene and equivalent figure complete the picture where the sand draws the wind, the emptiness, pure scene or structural element of the film: silence and movement. Sand becomes background and action. The blue sky has few clouds as well as the sand that is interrupted by rocks or people. Unforeseen happenings are drawn in the landscape. David Locke is looking for that pictorial duality between sky and sand that Richardson has in clothes: beige trousers and a blue shirt. They change clothes as well as roles, characters in irrational chain that travels the tragic landscape. The reporter, who is away from normal life, wants to enter into the violent and rustic scene that surrounds him. The search of rebels reinforces what Richardson had found, meaningless life without moral or objective. He does not find the rebels, but colors among the belongings of the arms dealer. He engages with the inexorable tragic to have a moment of harmony with the world, the scene becomes blue and sand.

Jack Nicholson meets Maria Schneider, who is an architecture student in the Güell Palace, one of the most emblematic works of Catalan Art Nouveau architecture. They wander through the roof of Mila house and the Gothic quarter of Barcelona. The architecture fascinates the eyes, and there in the red, which initially was among the reporter's shirt, intensifies the hue, while the yellow merges the blue and turns into a living green, intense, present in the windows of the Hotel De La Gloria, or even in the vernacular architecture of the village, the gathering of Motácar on the Costa Brava. As the plot develops, red takes place in the life of David Locke / Richardson: car upholstering, the burgundy shirt and especially the red leaflet crushed in white lime framed with the green window on the right and the vase on the left. It is the same green in the continents where the plot develops. The reporter dresses in red and white when lies in the hotel with white walls and seven windows of the same green. In this clash between colors, takes place the conflict between the bars of the

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hotel window and passers-by who draw on the frame random lines with some signs that relate to the plot: a police car arrives, the expressions of Maria Schneider, a red boy who crosses the scene, grabs a ball and returns. Rule and happening are the base of art and architecture and merge into a slow motion with a duration of seven minutes panning from sophisticated engineering becoming an icon of cinema history.

Cinema is movement, "cinema is truth twenty-four times per second" (Jean Luc Godard) and other illusions take place in the seven minutes that the plot reaches its maximum time and, through the bars, the camera shows the green shutters on a sky that becomes red. The passenger, which could be the passage of chance on the regular geometric shape, could also be the passage of reporter for the traveler, but the filmmaker's vision can also be the passage of sand as color and from blue to red.

Brazilian modern architecture works with primary colors, resists the shades or nuances of semitones. Some of the modern venture, the Expressionist architects of the early 20th century or the postmodern, used color in abundance. The housing complex of CECAP, named Zezinho Magalhães, in Guarulhos, project coordinated by Vilanova Artigas, risked individualized painting of units in panels that formed a whole compositional in different blocks. Nowadays, a dark and homogeneous green replaces the entire striking varied of colors. When Antonioni quoted Gaudí, he must have referred to the colors of the tiles that cover the peaks of the towers of Mila house, the Park Güell and the dome stained glass of Güell Palace. It seems that again there is an emphasis of colors.

Between the rote along Barcelona and Tangier, the couple goes through outstanding examples of architecture such as the green water hotel where they have lunch, the construction of arches made with bricks, the hotel where they stay, the streets white-washed of the medieval villages along the Mediterranean and in the bull riding square between Moorish, Arabic and Roman, scenes shown in the last panning.

The images of architecture are at the same time background for action and element of the script. The architecture student enters through the historic buildings and blends with the bold forms of Gaudi. She appears by a large glass window in a brick wall and reveals the landscape as another architectural element. Looking at architecture in this way leads to the thinking that the activity can concede the main role in the construction to become element, the

Final scene of The Passenger
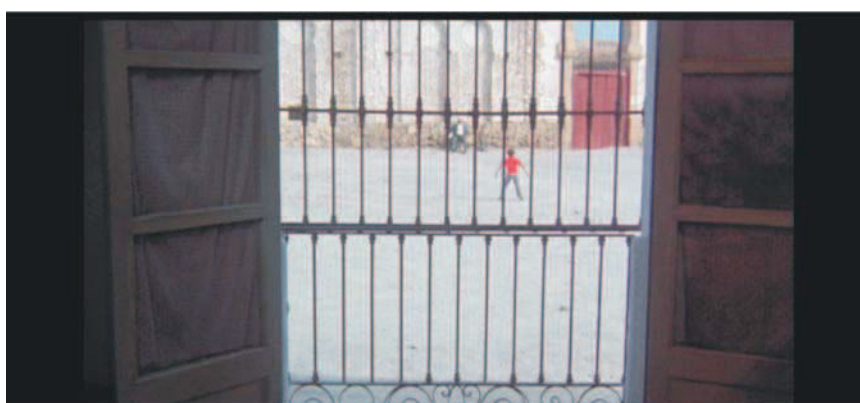
scene, the building elements and the users share a space where dialogue between them, without privileges, enriches all making the architectural design appear as a constituent of the place next to the group of elements where the project belongs and highlights. Abandoning the primacy of the script in the cinema is equivalent to dereliction of functional or structural discourse in architecture leaving the various elements just "there", expecting signs to proliferate to the extent that they constitute a plot and a scene for the life flow.

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