memory[architecture]film

THREE CINEMATIC EVENTS IN THE CITY

Magdalena Egues

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Jaan Holt

Committee Chair

Paul Emmons Ph.D.

Committee Member

Susan Piedmont Palladino

Committee Member

Marcia Feuerstein Ph.D.

Committee Member


Copyright: Magdalena Egues
Cities involve several systems that work together as a network of urban relationships. These systems are in balance, and they work as a whole that articulates urban life.

But what makes a city memorable and special are its **events**: those magical situations where the uniformity of the experience stops and something unique arise.

Those are the moments where our memory is deeply engraved by a particular situation that will come back in our dreams and imaginative processes as an agent image.

**abstract**

**Four urban events** – a space for film edition and writing, an urban stage, a footage archive and park, and a projection space - whose locations have been determined by a Cartesian game dictated by the Plan of Washington DC; and one common discipline, Film, will be the main focus of this research and a way of understanding the relations among Memory and its spaces, Architecture and Film in the City. Each event will respond to the particularities of its context by understanding first the sites and their relation with the city. These sites will be located in the four quadrants of Washington DC- NE, SE, SW and NW- and they will be consider as different communities that, by keeping their own idiosyncrasy, create one city.

The question of urban **scale** as well as the concept of **detail** as part of an architectural cosmology will be present throughout the process of the thesis by the alternation of micro and macro analysis of each stage of the research. The question of scale will be present as well when comparing the four projects with their differences in shape and size.

Characterization and monstrosity as architectural concepts will be incorporated into the project too, by understanding the role of Architecture in the city and what it wants to show or “monstrare” to its inhabitants.
THANKS TO

[my family]
Carlos, Betty, Emilia, Nicolas, Francisco Egues

[my Thesis Committee]
Jaan Holt
Paul Emmons Ph.D.
Susan Piedmont Palladino
Marcia Feuerstein Ph.D.

All Faculty Members at The Washington Alexandria Architecture Center. Virginia Tech
for their support, dedication and creativity

[Special Thank to]
Henry Hollander
Nestor Cerami
Ziad Demian
Angel Puente

[my boyfriend]
Ignacio Guisasola

[my friend]
Carolina Dayer

[my friends and supporters]
Adrian Oggero, Alejandro Santos, Liz Waites, Benjamin Butz, Elena Parodi, Martin Perez Cespedes, Rodrigo Bensaden, Gustavo DeJong
Eleonora Corti, Francisco Esteller, Florencia Conalbi, Juan Jose Izquierdo, Mario Gonzalez, Bjoern Steudte, Sebastian Andia,
Rio Saito, Po Hao Chen, Lesley Golenor, Thomas Burnworth
The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes. 1

1. By Marcel Proust
Architecture and Memory have been deeply related since Antiquity with the learning of what it was called the Art of Memory. Students were trained to create imaginary spaces to store ideas (things or words) through agent images. These spaces or logis were detailed and clearly understood by the orator, who was able to walk through the rooms in his mind collecting the main ideas of his speech. Memory was part of the study of rhetoric described by Cicero (Italy 106 BC–43 BC) in De Inventione, along with invention, disposition, elocution and pronunciation. The Art of Memory was a communication tool as well as an architectural experience.

Imagination was always present during the process of remembering, as a new unreal world was the stage that contained the memories. The person experienced a surreal view of vivid images, were the illumination, the colors and the details of each were of extreme importance when it came to remembering. It was a magical wandering through the mind and its creations.

The story of Simonides is considered the beginning of the art of memory, were a room and the location of the guests in a diner was the first situation where memory and architecture were related:

"At a banquet given by a nobleman of Thessaly named Scopas, the poet Simonides of Ceos chanted a lyric poem in honour of his host but including a passage in praise of Castor and Pollux. Scopas meanly told the poet that he would only pay him half the sum agreed upon for the panegyric and that he must obtain the balance from the twin gods to whom he had devoted half the poem. A little later, a message was brought in to Simonides that two young men were waiting outside who wished to see him. He rose from the banquet and went out but could find no one. During his absence the roof of the banqueting hall fell in, crushing Scopas and all the guests to death beneath the ruins; the corpses were so mangled that the relatives who came to take them away for burial were unable to identify them. But Simonides remembered the places at which they have been sitting at the table and was therefore able to indicate to the relatives which were their dead. The invisible callers, Castor and Pollux, had handsomely paid for their share in the panegyric by drawing Simonides away from the banquet just before the crush. And this experience suggested to the poet the principles of the Art of Memory of which he is said to have been the inventor"[1]

Although Architecture was a tool to remember, the process can be reversed. Architecture can take advantage of Memory to construct its qualities.

The characteristics of certain spaces can develop special memories of the experiences in such spaces. Those places will surely have a dream quality that will remain in our minds making that situation special, out of the ordinary.

According to Paul Valery there are two kinds of memory. One is the ordinary memory, that records all aspect of the everyday life: it is a short time memory. The second is the intelligent memory, that, through a forgetting process leave place to important events that are retained for a longer period. Architecture can be one of the factors that determine which memory will last, and which one will be forgotten.

The play between virtual Architecture (in our minds) and real Architecture, the one that may create the memory than then will become an agent image to be storage in the Virtual Architecture, becomes of great interest. In this game of real and virtual Architecture will find its essence and materiality.

Cinema can be considered an analogy of memory and forgetting. A real situation is absorbed by the brains' camera, which process the information converting it into something different from the original. That information may be forgotten/ stored, obtaining new qualities as well. Once is reveled to the external world, a new essence is given to it. That story becomes a memory, that story becomes a film.

Early Soviet filmmakers of the beginning of the 20th century developed a technique for edition called montage, were the juxtaposition of different shots created a new meaning when being seen together. This dialectical method worked with the idea of collision between images that demanded the audience to search for new understandings of the whole scene. The difference between shots was emphasized. As in a memory process, different ideas were put together to create a story.

In both processes: film and memory- Architecture plays an important role: is the container and setting of such creation. And although it may be real, virtual, magical or unconscious, it will always be a strong and memorable presence in our experience of the world.

memory logi
ideas remembered
agent images

[the Alhambra]
[teeto, art and critic of forgetfulness by Harald Weinrich]
[collage]

conceptual research

mnemotechnic drawings
memory log ideas remembered [the Alhambra, art and critic of forgetfulness by Harald Weinrich]

agent images [collage, conceptual research]

mnemotechnic drawings
A medical research directed by Roger Pitman, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, revealed the possibility of controlling memory and forgetting through science.

The so called Therapeutic Forgetting is being tested in patients who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and it seems that the possibility of wiping out parts of human memory to “help” people forget is not science fiction anymore.

In the study the doctors are using a beta blocker called Propranolol, used before for Hypertension, and it has been defined as a safe drug for treatment.

Besides the medical possibilities of such discovery, aren’t our memories -good and bad ones- the ones that define us? Our memories allow us to learn, grow and evolve, and they let us look back to analyze our past to be able to understand our present.

Each person, naturally, erase certain memories that are not significant, leaving place for those that are more important for him or her. But that mechanism, that is part of our human nature, can’t be altered randomly by science. We never know when we will need to remember what we have forgotten.
[Poliphilo, this is the customary manner of entry into the venerable presence and sublime majesty of our Queen. This first and principal curtain will not allow any to enter unless he is admitted by a simple and vigilant maiden portress, called Cinostia. And she, hearing us arriving, immediately appeared and courteously opened the curtain; and so we went in. Here there was a closed space divided by another curtain, nobly and artistically designed, dyed in every colour and embroidered in an unusual way with signs, shapes, plants and animals. As we came up to it, a similarly curious lady immediately presented herself, named Indalomena, who freely drew aside her curtain to admit us. There was the same distance between the second curtain and a third, extraordinary one, which was marvelously embroidered with speeches and reasoning, and which depicted in vermiculate style a mass of ropes, nets, and ancient instruments for grabbing and grappling. Without delay, a third hospitable lady quietly presented herself to us and received us graciously; her name was Mnemosyna.]

DCI: extraordinary point of view
a changing [flexible] memory

a division hold together by the divided

specpting [di] vision

memory has a hidden space forgotten within its folds

Character[ ] a mark impressed, engraved or otherwise formed, a brand, stamp.

3. Oxford English Dictionary

DC | extraordinary point of view
the History of H+8th street

H + 8th street
existing conditions

[All I have to do is take some detail I've decided on in advance that will signify the whole image] [I only try to single out one detail I'll need in order to remember a word]4
looking for the hidden elements in the sites. remembering the forgotten
looking for the hidden elements in the sites. remembering the forgotten
Throughout the Twentieth Century Architecture, the most public of the Arts, and Film, the most popular, have done much to enhance and reinforce each other’s image. Film alone can simulate the experience of walking through architectural space, and Architecture - real or virtual - can enhance any narrative.

Clare Carolyn and Rob Wilson
The program defines a discontinuous and not always linear succession of individual events that are linked, not necessarily formally but by means of infrastructure and separated rhythmically by variable intervals of time and linger and shorter intercidence.

An event in Architecture is like a beat in the heart.

Event forms part of a process and at same time appears as a discontinuous and not always linear succession of individual events that are linked, not necessarily formally but by means of infrastructure and separated rhythmically by variable intervals of time and linger and shorter intercidence. An event, exciting and causing excitement, like a wave, expansive and extensive. A local incident of global repercussion: special (specific) and general (generic) and symptomatic.
first concepts
First concepts

Design research

Into the projects
The exquisite Corpse:
Each player receives a sheet of paper and folds it into equal sections, as many as there are players, and usually with the lines horizontal to the proposed picture. The sheets are smoothed out and each player draws whatever he will in the top section, allowing the lines to cross the crease by a few millimeters. The sheet is then refolded back onto this crease to conceal the drawing and passed to the next player who begins the next section from these lines. And so on, until the last section, when it is unfolded and the result revealed.
montage

scaffolds

to the projects II

design research
Design research into the projects II

Container

Periscope

un
use of Vision Toys (1) Stereoscopic- Praxinoscope- Kinetoscope- Thaumatropes- Zoetrope- Phenakistoscope- Periscope
Telescope- Microscope- Kaleidoscope
Positive of the negative
design research

Into the projects III

Edited house
Shakespeare in the Backstage Alley

Design research

into the projects III

Design research
Into the Projects III

Design research
The gate keeper

Design research into the projects IV
the gate keeper

into the projects IV

design research
the gatekeeper

into the projects IV

design research

32
[Memory Loci must not be two brightly lighted for then the images placed on them will glitter and dazzle, nor must they be too dark or the shadows will obscure the image.]

a memory of a pin up
a memory of a pin up
These drawings are the first Architectural lines drew for each project including functionality, proportions, materiality and the program; always considering the concepts already exposed. They were completed once the pin up was finished, by including images and words that represented the different comments and feedback received from the Faculty.

They became a work in progress that remembered in its incompleteness all the goals to achieve in the next drawings and they represent the stage where professors and student thought together in an architectural reality.
Performance does not ask how a form looks like, but what it enables....
...It does not focus on what process was used to make a design, but on what the process was able to generate in the design...

...Architecture as the characters...
casting the projects

...thus Performance shifts the focus of interest from essence to effect...
Film Editing is the art of connecting different shots to create a sequence, and the linkage of such sequences to create a film. Edition is unique to cinema and defines its quality and complexity. The editor works with different layers of information combining them in a specific way, and working with a workprint - a positive copy of the film negative - given by the director. In his work, the editor often "re write" and "re direct" the film, by defining the location of each scene in the story. The resulting juxtaposition of shots determined how creative and thoughtfulness the film will be.
Exhibition space [] Writing room [] Edition area [] Meditation space [] Experimentation areas [] Expansions [] Services [] Storage

NE editing house
NE editing house

change quality
Scaffolds dramatically change the conditions of the object onto which are juxtaposed. Scaffolds generate intermediate spaces that modify the feeling of the space, as well as its anatomy. They are extremely ephemeral, changing in time and space as it is needed, and they can provide to the city with a new space of interaction, expression and communication. These elements, considered today as residual, can become a new field of action for the inhabitants of the city, a new container of art. They are flexible and movable; they support and complement the Architecture.
Stock Footage or Archive Footage is a piece of film that is not custom shot for use in a specific film. It can be part of any story and represents the most generic kind of film. Some common footage images are moving images of cities, landscapes and natural environment as well as historic data. Footage image can play the role of what it really is, or be used as a representation of something else. Micro and Macro images can be easily confused; for example the lunar surface seen through a telescope can be very similar to a cell seen through a microscope.

Footage can be characterizing a part in the movie; just like an actor.
Green spaces [ ] Seating areas [ ] Waiting areas [ ] Water mirror [ ] Entrance to archive [ ] Services
Public Entrance [ ] Catalog Area [ ] Research niches [ ] Private entrance [ ] Employee halls [ ] Storage
SW park [ar] chive

transversal sections
Mirrors produce specular reflection, where a ray of light from a single incoming direction is reflected into a single outgoing direction. When something is reflected, a virtual version of the real image is created, multiplying its existence.
NW projecting box

front elevation

change quality

NW projecting box
scenarios that continuously need to be reconstructed and reinterpreted through transitive projections made of real interactions in the place and virtual relationships with other places.

From the Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture.
This Thesis project tries to address the connection between multiple events that, although they respond to the specific needs of each of the sites chosen, they may become -by been considered together in our memory, through our imagination or by walking the city- a system of activities that will help to consider Washington DC as a whole.

The design and functionality of the projects was based in a research in Memory and Cinema as a collective thinking and a combination of Word and Image in the Urban Landscape. They were thought to be constructed in different materials and with different qualities and scales (respecting and activating each community identity), but being part of a common network, a network of Agent places with the potentiality to stimulate interaction among the inhabitants and visitors of the city.


Richardson Phyllis. SX Big ideas Small buildings. University Publishing, October 2001

Francesco Colonna. Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. Thames & Hudson, June 2005


Hooke Robert. Micrographia or some physiological description of minute bodies. Cosimo Classics, November 2007

Perez Gomez, Albert. Chora. Mc Gill- Queen’s University Press, September 1999


Nelmes, Jill. Introduction to Film Studies. Routledge; fourth edition, April 2007

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Washington Alexandria Architecture Center

Master of Architecture II Program  
January 2005- May 2008

Graduate Teaching Assistantship  
August 2005- November 2007

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Washington Alexandria Architecture Center

Exchange Program- 5th Year and Undergraduate Thesis  
January 2004- May 2005

University of Mendoza, School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism

Architecture Professional Degree  
April 2000-June 2005

Padre Claret School, Mendoza Argentina  
November 1999

Bachelor - High School Studies

awards

Kyrus/ Wheeler Award. Washington Alexandria Architecture Center. Virginia Tech  
May 2007

Honorific Invitation to join Tau Sigma Delta National Honor Society for Architecture and Allied Arts  
2007

Scholarship for exchange program at Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center, selected by the Academic Council of Architecture, Mendoza University

languages

Native Spanish Speaker

English Study Program finished, in Instituto Cultural de Mendoza  
November 1998

First Certificate Exam. Grade B  
December 1999

TOEFL Computer based test. Total score: 277  
August 2005

certificates

Seminar in Wine Architecture. Mendoza, Argentina  
2003

Seminar “The city, a place for all” Mendoza, Argentina  
2000

Participation in Architecture Student Competition “CLEFA” selected by the Academic Council Of Architecture, Mendoza University  
2003

3rd year Project selected in order to participate in exhibition for RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architecture)  
2002

Participation in “21st century painting room” organized by Consejo Profesional de Ciencias Economicas  
2001

Participation in “Carlos Ojam Taller” painting exhibitions  

Skills

AutoDesk AutoCAD  
Photoshop, InDesign  
3d Studio Max  
Ms Office  
Hand drawing, model making, drafting, painting

professional experience

Curricular Practical Training. Demian/ Wilbur/ Architects  
May 2007- August 2007

Undergrad. Practical Training. Demian+St Leger Architects  
May 2004- Dec 2005

Undergrad. Practical Training. Ignacio Campoy Architects  
Dec 2002- Sept 2003

contact  
megues@vt.edu  
cel 703.587.5351