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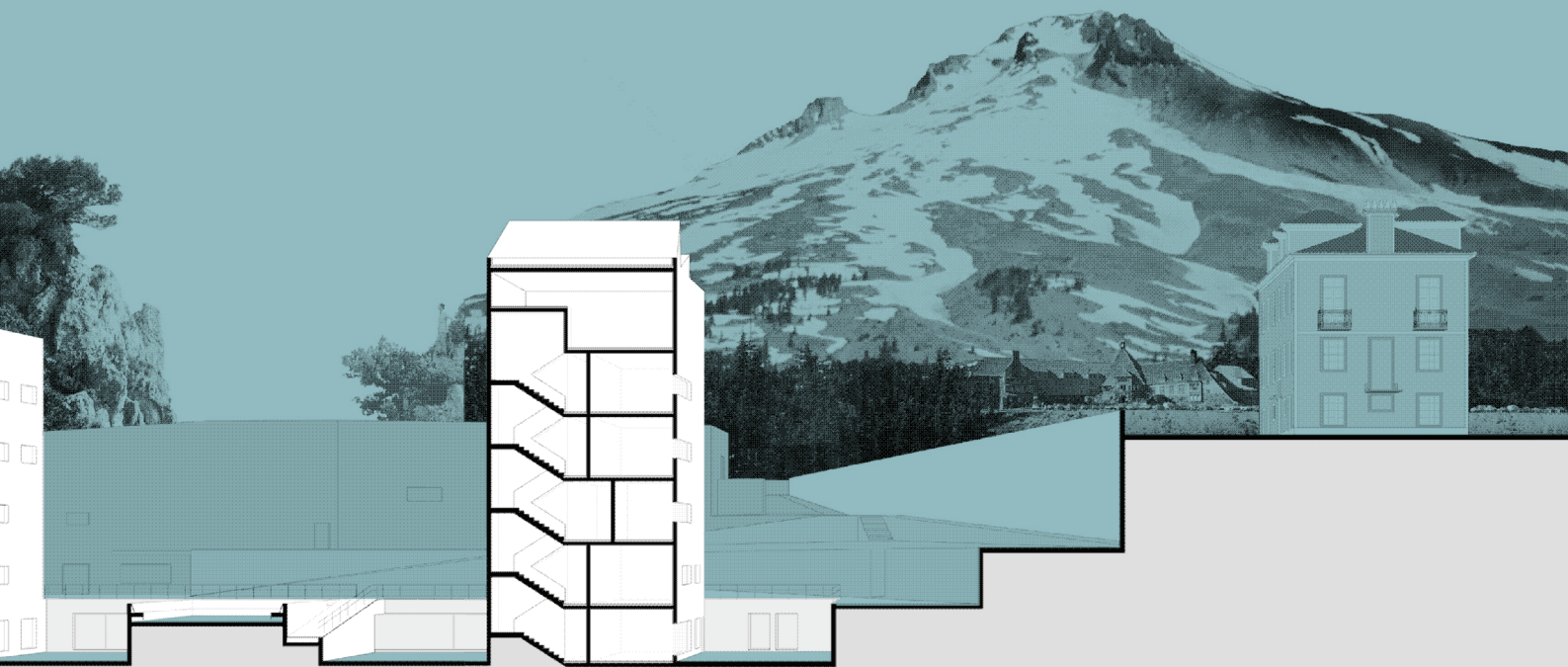
A CONFERENCE ON ARCHITECTURE, CITY AND CINEMA

PORTO SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE   11TH 12TH 13TH SEPTEMBER 2013

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O Recado, José Fonseca e Costa, 1971
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FILM AND HERITAGE:
The reflected image
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Abstract

The relationship between cinema and heritage can be approached from two perspectives, an intrinsic reflection on the film itself as a heritage and an extrinsic vision to study the point of view that cinema offers from heritage. This paper focuses on this second look, showing a mirror image of heritage from cinema.

The assumption is that cinema attracts us do to its ability to make us travel with the imagination, either to real or fictional places that become part of our visual imaginary. Insofar as we know them formerly, there will be a personal link during the screening of the film that will make us to appropriate it. That's why we think that many films are located in landscapes, cities and monumental buildings.

This presence of heritage in cinema can be given in many ways. This creative look of film is recognized when:
- Spreads consolidated elements
- Documents representative places that no longer exist or have changed
- Revaluates as emerging heritage elements that had gone unnoticed
- Transfers values from the real place to the fictional scene and vice versa
- Monumentalizes other kinds of heritage and even imaginary elements

The expected result is to study theses phenomena (reality, transformation and invention) to evaluate the transference of significance between cinema and heritage.

Keywords: film, heritage, reality, transformation, invention.

Cultural heritage is constituted by all cultural goods, material and immaterial, that reveal an artistic, historical, archaeological, ethnological, documentary, bibliographic, scientific or industrial interest (LPHA, article 2). This definition reflects a paradigm shift inasmuch as we have moved from the idea of monument to cultural good; and it also reveals a change of scale inasmuch as we have passed from isolated element to the context. This has been

possible when we have put in crisis traditional valuation criteria that made protagonist of heritage to the object rather than to the subject, opening the possibility of incorporating elements not valued in the past and even contemporary. Thus it is apparent that when we speak about cinema and heritage we think, first, on the cultural legacy of the film industry: movies not only for its artistic, documentary or material value (Paini, 2005, p. 38) but also the scripts, photographs, posters, projection instruments, costumes, sets and new architectural typologies -screening room, studio, film library- for their technical or industrial value (Gorostiza, 2005, p.85)... In short, the so-called film heritage could be classified within the architectural real estate goods, the documentary movable goods and the intangible items associated with the rituals, crafts and modes of expression; it would participate in cultural institutions such as museums, archives and libraries; and it would enjoy effective protection, based on the safeguard, conservation, investigation, documentation, valorization and spreading.

Examples of such heritage interest to the cinema are the French Cinematheque founded in 1936 to conserve, restore and show films in the broadest sense of the concept of a museum, the UNESCO Declaration of 1980 on the "preservation and conservation of the images moving, the Federico Fellini Foundation created in 1995 to preserve the legacy of the artist and become a reference center studies, the rationalist building Cinema Torcal de Antequera (Antonio Sánchez Esteve, 1933) listed in the General Catalogue of Andalusian Historical Heritage in 2001, the film *Los olvidados* (Luis Buñuel, 1950) recorded in the Memory of the World Register of UNESCO at the request of Mexico in 2003, or the dedication of October 27 as World Day for Audiovisual Heritage from the year 2005. Apart from the official recognition, cinema itself is aware of this intrinsic value as equity when the film directors incorporate in their works fragments of other films as an homage -in *Play It Again, Sam* (Woody Allen, 1972) the protagonist's vital reference is *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) and *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) hoards a scene from the musical *Hello Dolly* (Gene Kelly, 1969) as the last humanity creative witness- or they recall the own history of cinema -*Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988), *Hugo* (Martin Scorsese, 2001), *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011)-. Even the public wants to preserve that memory of cinema when promotes an expedition to the mountains of Andes to deposit a copy of *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946), retained in case of a nuclear disaster.

A second look at the relationship between cinema and heritage reveals the film as a resource able to generate heritage (intangible), beyond mere object able to become heritage (tangible), insofar as it contributes to the recognition and generation of cultural values on existing elements and, in its way, it registers and preserves them for the future; without being necessary to be limited to historical or documentary gender. Once the heritage has passed to be understood as a social construction by which people identify with certain items of the past who want to enjoy and keep for the future, it arises a conceptual link with cinema as a creative activity that builds imaginary, much in the sense of past memories or incoming wishes for the future.

This interest from cinema towards heritage is verified with the significant presence of cultural goods in either the title of the film, the content of the argument or the atmosphere in landscapes, cities and monumental buildings. Consider the importance of historical cities in Wim Wenders' work (*Lisbon Story, Palermo Shooting*), the way in which Peter Greenaway presents the mounting of an exhibition about the architect Boullée at the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome in *The Belly of an Architect*, the vocation in archeology that has promoted an american archaeologist like Indiana Jones in a generation or the exciting chase at the Guggenheim Museum in New York at *The International* (Tom Tywker, 2009).

This deliberate choice is not necessarily accompanied of a cultural purpose but the spreading and documentary functions derived from it are unavoidable. We think the film directors do it with the aim of connecting with the viewer in the most immediate way possible, using sensory and emotional attraction that usually occurs with these memory places. But the significant capacity of the cinematographic work and its impact on cultural goods can go beyond the claims of the creator; as all artistic creation is also subject to the interpretation of the viewer in terms of their spatial and temporal context.

This is the approach about cinema that we are interested to develope from the analysis of the phenomena associated to heritage and the cultural values that it builds:

1. Spreads consolidated elements:

Cultural objects which appear more recurrence in movies are always the most popular. It is an undeniable fact that we could find numerous examples, not necessarily of a particular monument or building, but a street, a square, a garden, really a landscape. Think of how

many movies are filmed at the Champs Elysees in Paris, St. Peter's Square in Rome, the gardens of the Alhambra in Granada, the bay of Rio de Janeiro...

The fact that the viewer may have a previous and positive experience in a place with such a density of meaning makes easy to empathize with the film; the memory of the visit adds the reunion through film: we begin to look at details we had gone unnoticed, we identify prospects movie, we check what's real and invented... All this gives familiarity to what happens in the movie because we have been there formerly. But it does not matter that the viewer has not ever been there; he always will have the reference of someone close, the curiosity to compare with other films, the consolation of meeting that place at least in this way, the willing of see for himself when he will travel there... And in that time we give life (faces, stories) to places that, maybe, only for this reason are closer to us than others.

Thus, the first induced phenomenon is film tourism, made possible by the democratization of the means of transport and the policy of film offices. The principle that characterizes this initiative is that it's not enough for us to be in these memory places but we must experience them as if we were in the movie. We visit the filming locations looking for the experience of reliving our favorite scenes. It can be a feeling as simple as desiring to ride a Vespa as Audrey Hepburn during her *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler, 1953), to have *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986) in Florence or to be accompanied in the Hermitage Museum by the French diplomat of the *Russian Ark* (Alexander Sokurov, 2002). Cinema adds value to places that, by themselves, already had before the charm necessary on the screen.

It is fundamentally historical cities that are recreated from different perspectives. It's not the same to visit the irreverent Fellini's Rome that the suffering Rossellini's Rome. Nor it's the same classical Rome made by papier-mâché in *Quo Vadis?* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951) that the digitally reconstructed in *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000). As the cinematographic time moves away from the chronological time, that is to say, as the setting of the film moves away from the present, it happens a second phenomenon that transforms our understanding of the heritage from the cinema. It arises the risk of building a distorted picture of History when the imaginary of different movies overlap about the same period. For example, the Baroque France of *The Three Musketeers* (George Sidney, 1948) is not the same of *Tous les matins du monde* (Alain Corneau, 1991). Beyond a question of authorship or style it's a matter of historical accuracy how to make use of these monuments -to contextualize the situation of the film- and of cinematographic keys -offered to the public for his understanding and

enjoyment-. Consider two different attitudes but of impeccable coherence between historical accuracy and the interpretative key: the one of Pilar Miró when she shoots *El perro del hortelano* at the Palace of Sintra, from a historicist approach (verse dialogues of Lope de Vega and decoration, costumes and music of the period) for diving us into the greatness of a culture; and the other one of Andrei Tarkovsky when in the epilogue of his *Andrei Rublev*, filmed in the city of Suzdal (World Heritage Site), looks for a setting supposedly decontextualized from archaeological or museological referents, for avoiding a chronological distance between mentalities or ways of life because he doesn't want to film a biography of a medieval russian monk but the life experience of a timeless artist.

For all this we can say that when cinema makes use of these historical spaces with an artistic aim, it not only benefits of them but also it influences on their cultural value when it mediates the way we travel, it rework our memories and it even projects an image of History.

2. Documents representative places that no longer exist or have changed:

It sometimes happens that the best record in an historical place that has changed or disappeared is not a documentary shot specifically for this (what we call cinema as object) but tracking the different films that have chosen it as location (cinema as a resource). For example, we can analyze Berlin if we compare the expressionist Berlin of *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Walter Ruttman, 1927) with the neorealist Berlin of *Germania Anno Zero* (Roberto Rossellini, 1948) or with the Berlin prior to the fall of the Wall in *Wings of Desire* (Wim Wenders, 1987). Or we can compare the state of Havana just in the rise to power of Fidel Castro in *Our Man in Havana* (Carol Reed, 1959) with his last period in *La vida es silbar* (Fernando Perez, 1998)

The use of films as a contemporary witness of what no longer exist is less conditioned than documentary genre, given that films doesn't have to prioritize or filter the message so explicitly. We can extract information about urban landmarks, the state of preservation of monuments, the use of public spaces, housing typologies, patterns of social relationships...

Normally we refers to films made at present, that make use of the space in its current configuration without resorting to recreations; evidently they all represent their own space as such, without simulate another. However, with a rigorous methodology, it is possible to analyze even movies where the chronology is unclear or that simulate a site that it's not the original (a question which we will develop in section 4). Be the case of Sergei Paradjanov, a

master of cinema that not only exceeds its expressive possibilities but he also shows the values of the monumental and vernacular armenian heritage, recognized by UNESCO, for which his work serves as testimony to a culture that deserves to be preserved and spreaded. In *Sayat Nova he* shows the wealth contained in the image of a storm-soaked books within the niches of a monastery and later dried by the wind on the decks, the craft heritage present in a carpet laid in vertical as a theater backdrop, the symbolic value of a rural church invaded by a flock of sheep around a recumbent bishop... The decontextualisation and timelessness of their personal environments does not diminish the heritage value of the represented element.

3. Revaluates as emerging heritage elements that had gone unnoticed:

Emerging heritage means those elements of culture that begin to be valued at present, but have always existed, and for whom begin to be promoted its effective protection. They are primarily contemporary buildings, industrial equipments and ethnological places. The cinema, with a huge insight into this potential identity and communication, has managed to use them to create new icons.

Consider New York City, a monument in many movies and that, without having visited, we can all say that we know the Statue of Liberty, Fifth Avenue, Central Park, the Empire State Building, Wall Street or the Brooklyn Bridge... These contemporary elements would have gone undetected if we wouldn't have appropriated the characters and stories. It will be probably difficult for us to recognize that bond with other contemporary buildings around us, although they will be more valuable from an architectural, technical, documentary or anthropological point of view.

Another example is the Vienna Giant Ferris Wheel, built in 1897 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the reign of Francis Joseph of Austria and considered the tallest Ferris wheel in the world until 1985. Despite these singularities that over time we forgot, we didn't notice it until Orson Welles confesses Joseph Cotton, in one of their cabins, at the time of climax of *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949), that he deals with adulterated penicillin. From there, this element becomes known and it serves as a claim in other films such as *The Living Daylights* (John Glen, 1987) or *Before Sunrise* (Richard Linklater, 1995).

It becomes such a degree of identification between the heritage object and its cinematographic representation that sometimes it's not clear if it must be protected the film

that generates the memory of the place or instead it must be protected the place that inspires the film; the one is the register of the each other. The advantage is that, in this case, it would be satisfied the principle that there is no need of legal protection for these items because there is an awareness of its value that it actively preserves and spreads them.

4. Transfers values from the real place to the fictional scene and vice versa:

A singular phenomenon of crossing of meaning between the object and its representation happens when it's not between the film and the place filmed but between two different locations, the real one and the substitute one in the scene. The reasons are several, usually related to a logistics issue: difficult access, problems with permits, lack of infrastructure for shooting or bad weather; it is understood that the team of James Bond in *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori, 2002) preferred Cádiz rather than Havana by political difficulties.

Other times the reason is as obvious as that the scene takes place in an imaginary site that forces to build a movie set or take advantage of some real locations unknown to the public; like the planet Tatooine from *Star Wars* when in truth it is the troglodyte village of Matmata in Tunisia. It is striking the versatility of some spaces to feign different things; such as the Square of Spain in Seville that appears as such in *Pan, amor y Andalucía* (Javier Setó, 1959), it serves as the headquarters of the British Army in Cairo with *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962) and it represents the palace of planet Naboo in *Star Wars II* (George Lucas, 2002).

However, the most interesting examples are those in which scenes can be shot at real sites but the film director prefers another site to enrich the nuances of the film. Thus, Pier Paolo Pasolini films *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in Morocco and southern Italy. From a neorealist recreation of the environment, he prefers the resemblance with present to the reconstruction of the past so that he doesn't want that the show overlaps the Gospel. He also moves away from the stereotypes set in the films of Hollywood and he looks for his cultural roots in the painting by Piero della Francesca (for his dressings) and music (from Bach to the Missa Luba).

And above all, *Othello* of Orson Welles is the film that brilliantly takes advantage of this resource, making a virtue of necessity. Welles himself, years later, filmed a documentary where he explained the creative process of this movie… The complexity of a shooting in different locations is solved by a master assembly that gives cinematographic continuity to

spaces distant in reality; between a plane and the other one is a jump of kilometres and months. It makes us realize that various cities of Morocco (the coastal path of Essaouira and the cistern of El Jadida) are the Island of Cyprus... The scene more meaningful is filmed in the cistern of a fortified city in the atlantic coast of Africa: ancient portuguese city of Mazagan in Marocco, currently El Jadida (what means The New), inscribed as World Heritage Site in 2004. It remembers a renaissance convent or a palace chamber due to the beauty of its forms. Orson Welles knew the artistic and emotional potential of an evocative place like this and so he decided to become this silent cistern into something completely opposed, as the scene of a riot in the exotic Island of Cyprus... What a contrast between the two images!: The first, as such repository, transmits balance and stillness through the static presence of water, which favors the development of backwater lichens -which impart a green-colored patina on the stone- and allows the reflection mirror as a vaults -that seems to echo his own silence-; whereas the second, as a place where begins a betrayal, it's all dynamism by a black and white photograph -which shows the polarity of sentiments in Othello- and angle shot frames -which give prominence to the oculus through which light enters and leaves the confusion noise when water is agitated-.

5. Monumentalizes other kinds of heritage and even imaginary elements:

At this point we understand that movies can come to value other kinds of heritage, such as natural. Again, film tourism breaks when tour operators offer new products as a route in New Zealand by the landscape of the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002, 2003) or in the desert of Tabernas in Almería where was filmed *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (Sergio Leone, 1966).

And we could talk about so many places and buildings that could become heritage if it were not for the evidence that they are imaginary: the city of *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) and contemporary city, the village of *Der Golem* (Paul Wegener, 1920) as an ethnological place, the Eye of Sauron as a historic site...

In conclusion, the cinema is a creative way to project the reality so that, when a film shows us heritage, it also transforms our perception and evaluation on this. Sometimes it may be more banal and other absolutely great, but what is interesting is to be able to detect these phenomena (direct/indirect, univocal/reciprocal, reality/transformation/invention) related to heritage.

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Book

Title: Proceedings Book - Inter[Sections]. A Conference on Architecture, City and Cinema
Production: Ruptura Silenciosa
Published by: AMDJAC
Edited by: Luís Urbano
Designed by: Marta Alves
ISBN: 978-989-98494-3-3

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