

Title: Consilient Discrepancy: Porosity and Atmosphere in Cinema and Architecture

Author: Michael Tawa

Architecture_media_politics_society. vol. 11, no. 3.

March 2017

Affiliation: The University of Sydney

Abstract

Cinema constitutes a way of looking at the world, at *a* world – its aspect, its appearance; but it also presents how that world looks, its prospect – by the prospective glance it throws back toward us. The “look” of a film – its mood, ambiance or atmosphere – eclipses formal and aesthetics registers. It is fundamentally world-forming, and therefore both cosmogonic and ethical: cosmogonic because it produces a world in the midst of, *and as*, the temporality that devolves through its passage; and ethical because the world it brings about is an inhabited world, a conjugation of people and place that constructs particular ways of being-there-together.

The premise here is that atmosphere, ambiance and mood have never been vague categories for cinema and need not be for architecture: rather, that they are in fact producible through deliberate organizational strategies – kinematic and narrative in film, tectonic and material in architecture – according to what might be called “consilient discrepancy” – the coexistence of disseveral systems in unaligned multiplicity that, while never fusing, resonate to produce emergent conditions. Cinema offers architecture an accessible and instructive instance of such consilient discrepancy, because, in it, atmosphere is more fully captured and the conditions that create it more evidently analyzable. To that extent, cinema provides architecture with comparative grounds for engaging with atmosphere through a properly tectonic practice that can potentially enrich the design and experience of architecture.

Consilient discrepancy is evident across multiple registers in film. It can function at the level of narrative, space and time and thus puts into question verisimilitude, causality, situational and

DOI: 10.14324/111.444.amps.2017v11i3.001, © 2017, The Author. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

durational veracity. An example of this is the constitutive disjunctions of Jean-Luc Godard's jump cut montage where sampled film sequences, film and photographic stills, texts and citations, ambient sound, spoken word and music, build into complex assemblages of sense (*Histoire(s) du Cinema*, 1998). It is evident in Nicholas Roeg's multiple, simultaneous temporalities where past and future events interpenetrate and mutually condition the narrative present (*Bad Timing*, 1980). Similarly, we can find it in Michelangelo Antonioni's sequence shots that traverse multiple timeframes across the same space – a technique that enables past and present to communicate and amplify the affective, foundational value of the unseen and off-frame (*The Passenger*, 1975). Another example would be David Lynch's labyrinthine existential settings, constituted of interminable slippages between indeterminable and infinitely potentialized spaces of dreams, imagination, memory and reality (*Mulholland Drive*, 2001). Likewise, we could cite Michael Hanake's persistent displacement of causality and verisimilitude through ambiguous narrative viewpoints (*Caché*, 2005), and Roy Andersson's radically liminal settings and characters whose lives constitute larval pre- and/or post-human states of existence (*A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence*, 2014).

This paper will foreground two foundational characteristics of atmosphere in cinema, as evident in the works just cited, and explore their applicability to architecture. The first characteristic is the consilient discrepancy outlined here by way of introduction, and the second, related characteristic, is a spatiality of porosity and occlusion. The provisional aim of comparing cinema and architecture according to this tectonic logic is to go beyond typical ways of understanding cinema's formal engagement with architecture. For this purpose, a detailed analysis of Béla Tarr's film *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) will serve as a case study for how the medium of cinema generates atmosphere, ambiance and mood through visual language. This will be followed by a similarly detailed consideration of concomitant qualities created in two recent works by the architects Flores Prats, the *Mills Museum* and *Casal Balaguer*. Functioning as exemplars of how cinematic qualities can be made manifest in architecture, these precedents will further substantiate the cinematic–architectonic proposition ventured in this paper.

Title: Consilient Discrepancy: Porosity and Atmosphere in Cinema and Architecture

Author: Michael Tawa

Architecture_media_politics_society. vol. 11, no. 3.

March 2017

Consilient Discrepancy from Cinema to Architectural Form

Cinema constitutes a way of looking at the world, at *a* world – its aspect, its appearance; but it also presents how that world looks, its prospect – by the prospective glance it throws back toward us. The “look” of a film – its mood, ambience or atmosphere – eclipses formal and aesthetics registers. It is fundamentally world-forming, and therefore both cosmogonic and ethical: cosmogonic because it produces a world in the midst of, *and as*, the temporality that devolves through its passage; and ethical because the world it brings about is an inhabited world, a conjugation of people and place that constructs particular ways of being-there-together.

The premise here is that atmosphere, ambience and mood have never been vague categories for cinema and need not be for architecture: rather, that they are in fact producible through deliberate organizational strategies – kinematic and narrative in film, tectonic and material in architecture – according to what might be called “consilient discrepancy” – the coexistence of disseveral systems in unaligned multiplicity that, while never fusing, resonate to produce emergent conditions.¹ Cinema offers architecture an accessible and instructive instance of such consilient discrepancy, because, in it, atmosphere is more fully captured and the conditions that create it more evidently analyzable. To that extent, cinema provides architecture with comparative grounds for engaging with atmosphere through a properly tectonic practice that can potentially enrich the design and experience of architecture.

Consilient discrepancy is evident across multiple registers in film. It can function at the level of narrative, space and time and thus puts into question verisimilitude, causality, situational and durational veracity. An example of this is the constitutive disjunctions of Jean-Luc Godard’s jump cut montage where sampled film sequences, film and photographic stills, texts and citations, ambient sound, spoken word and music, build into complex assemblages of sense (*Histoire(s) du Cinema*, 1998). It is evident in Nicholas

Roeg's multiple, simultaneous temporalities where past and future events interpenetrate and mutually condition the narrative present (*Bad Timing*, 1980). Similarly, we can find it in Michelangelo Antonioni's sequence shots that traverse multiple timeframes across the same space – a technique that enables past and present to communicate and amplify the affective, foundational value of the unseen and off-frame (*The Passenger*, 1975). Another example would be David Lynch's labyrinthine existential settings, constituted of interminable slippages between indeterminable and infinitely potentialized spaces of dreams, imagination, memory and reality (*Mulholland Drive*, 2001). Likewise, we could cite Michael Hanake's persistent displacement of causality and verisimilitude through ambiguous narrative viewpoints (*Caché*, 2005), and Roy Andersson's radically liminal settings and characters whose lives constitute larval pre- and/or post-human states of existence (*A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence*, 2014).

The following paper will foreground two foundational characteristics of atmosphere in cinema, as evident in the works just cited, and explore their applicability to architecture. The first characteristic is the consilient discrepancy outlined here by way of introduction, and the second, related characteristic, is a spatiality of porosity and occlusion. The provisional aim of comparing cinema and architecture according to this tectonic logic is to go beyond typical ways of understanding cinema's formal engagement with architecture. For this purpose, a detailed analysis of Béla Tarr's film *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) will serve as a case study for how the medium of cinema generates atmosphere, ambiance and mood through visual language. This will be followed by a similarly detailed consideration of concomitant qualities created in two recent works by the architects Flores Prats, the *Mills Museum* and *Casal Balaguer*. Functioning as exemplars of how cinematic qualities can be made manifest in architecture, these precedents will further substantiate the cinematic–architectonic proposition ventured in this paper.

Harmonia Mundi: Cinematic Ambiance and Atmosphere Through Light and Dark

In its instantiation of potential architectonic ideas, Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) is a useful precedent. The film overlays multiple discrete registers; some material and viscerally affective, others abstract or metaphorical; some explicit and obvious; others faintly sketched or concealed. These several registers remain suspended, postponing any reconciliation or closure of meaning. As such, they make possible an interminable deferral and conjugation of sense that is pivotal to the film's ambiance and atmosphere. The first register involves the dramatization of an old tale – the “harmony of the spheres,” played out here as a solar eclipse.² A second register relates to music, this time to the difference between “just” and “equal temperament,” which are two distinct means of tuning an instrument.³ A third register is

historical, technoscientific and biopolitical and refers to Russia's invasion of Hungary after the First World War.⁴

Amid these multiple registers and potential readings, this paper will limit itself to a fourth – the one that is most relevant and provides the most direct implications for architectonics: a distinctive relationship between space and light. The spatiality of the film is not derived formally, geometrically or with an emphasis on lineaments, edges and borderlines. Rather, it emerges as a function of the play between light and dark, shade and shadow, illumination and obfuscation, revelation and concealment. The boundaries of space are not given by material limits but by variable densities of atmosphere. A pervasive mist of exterior settings is matched by the infiltrating glare of interiors or the scintillation of dark surfaces glanced by indirect light sources.

Further, the architecture of the city and the various buildings depicted in the film are never given as any kind of totality. In this way, Béla Tarr frames a specific conception of the outside. Interiors have no antinomical counterpart – no domestic outside (the outlook from windows is exclusively drowned in either the blackness of night or the vaporized glowering of day). Similarly, there is no civic outside (the public realm is invariably ringed by buildings that give no access to any “beyond”). Alternatively, it is tangled in the contained, intestinal porosity of occluded streets and laneways, leading only to indefinite circuits without escape. In Figure 1, the light that illuminates interiors arrives through opaque surfaces of glare that give no prospect to an exterior world. In Figure 2, the labyrinthine, aporetic street has no exit, the market square is ringed by facades, and the forked road has two vistas disappearing into an ever-present middle ground. The vectors of this pervasive atmospheric and tectonic glare diffract and effectively unsettle the Cartesian coordinates of normative space, threaten scenographic stability, and serve to amplify the narrative's evident political tenor.

Béla Tarr's manipulation of light as a cinematic tool effectively creates space by pushing away darkness, whose inevitable reflux returns to smother it once more. The play of light, shade and shadow conveys to this darkness a kind of insistent luminosity. Sometimes, light is directed from off-screen and from concealed sources to skim dim surfaces and cause their crepuscular materiality to shimmer or phosphoresce. The camera is made to move either toward or away from the light. It is not set up as the aperture of a generalized, objective looking – disengaged from the characters and settings before it. It is, in fact, imbricated into the contours, the material texture, the grain of bodies and the geometries of their encounters. This is so much the case that the camera functions as the front line of either a luminous dilation or darkening inveiglement. Tarr's cinematographic technique is mobilized to tightly control the quality, direction and intensity of light, the boundaries of spaces and the material qualities of surfaces that receive and reflect it, in order to intensify the atmosphere and mood of each scene as well as the human/political narrative of the film. This kind of cinematographic tectonics is instructive for architecture since the latter, too, must deliberately organize space,



Figures 1 and 2. Béla Tarr, *Werckmeister Harmonies*, 2000. Produced by Göess Film (Budapest), Von Vietinghoff Produktion (Berlin) and 13 Production (Paris). Supported by Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary. Distributed by Artificial Eye: ART417DVD.

determine its boundaries, construct orientations, create porosities that link interiors and exteriors, admit light of various kinds and have it interact with space and materials, in order to produce atmospheres and prompt distinctive ways of reading and engaging with the world.

Time and again, Tarr has the characters in *Werckmeister Harmonies* retreat into or advance out of black to such an extent that the semantic registers of light and dark become interchangeable and radically ambiguous.⁵ This darkness, rendered in aerated grainy blacks, functions to produce intermediate zones of various kinds: thresholds and disjunctions between states of being, lives, atmospheres, spaces and rooms. There is a recurrent conspiracy between the moving camera and the atmospheric resistances it meets as it shifts from inside to outside, from light to dark, from room to room. There are scenographic moments redolent of de Chirico's imbricated spatialities and ambiguous temporalities of impending dread. Examples include indirectly lit street scenes shot so that prospects are barred, stairs wind up and out of frame, and the borderlines of urban settings are out of frame and thereby

sequestered from the wider world. Everywhere is subject to the fluxions of external and unknown or unknowable forces. Even the temporality of the film is liminal – Tarr lights it so that it appears to take place in the twilights. Jacques Rancière has called this intermedial spatiality a “shared, felt tissue” (*un tissu sensible, commun*):

a milieu that is not between a beginning and an end, (but) that is given across ... an ensemble of points through which pass a global affect: and that is what Béla Tarr’s sequence shots (*plan sequence*) construct; ... a cutting up of space by time, but which is no longer defined by an action to be accomplished, a time that no longer measures actions but functions as a felt milieu, without name, without qualities, out of which sensations and emotions can be ... we have to understand it in the sense of the transformation of temporal structure; no more history means no more beginnings and ends, but instead simply doors and windows which no longer serve, as before, to introduce human actors and characters into the story, they are rather thresholds, thresholds across which the exterior penetrates into the interior, or enclosures isolate spaces in which this penetration condenses and diffracts itself, since the milieu is not an encompassed that in turn encompasses by way of a panoramic gaze... The film will be constructed in blocks of time; if there is a cinema of (Deleuze’s) time-image this is where it exists, with Béla Tarr.⁶

The spatiality framed in *Werkmeister Harmonies* is a fabricated milieu of emergence. The physical determinants of scenography – walls, floors, ceilings, thresholds, windows, doors, facades, streets, and so forth – are pretexts to Béla Tarr’s cinematic immaterial spatiality. This latter is constituted of an indeterminate exchange between light and dark, the glare of day and of artificial light and the consuming or looming blackness of night. Particular settings are constructed so that they seem to emerge as momentary turbulences, assemblages or alignments of the virtual conditions presented by this ground. The same conditions might, a few moments later, appear to recombine into different assemblages, characterized by different moods, attunements or atmospheres. Here, light is less a “light source” than an incandescent presence, produced by and experienced as diffraction or interference within the ambient milieu. Compounding this affect is a light whose source and provenance are contrived to seem insistently uncertain and indeterminate.

What is produced from Tarr’s use of light is a species of a-formal *topos* – a space characterized by relative grain, texture, density, viscosity, porosity and permeability of precipitated luminosity; a space not defined by the constraining shape of a predetermined container upon a contained emptiness, but by the fulgurations of darkness meeting the resistance of its own materiality. This atmosphere, ambiance and mood is made possible through the uses of the cinematic medium that sees and manipulates light and dark as immaterial tools or substances to be molded into and from space.

Incavation: Architectural Ambiance and Atmosphere Through Porosity

There is a long history of architecture being inspired by, and drawing upon the cinematic medium and its various qualities – whether formal, atmospheric or narrative. However, architecture is not able to carry the kinds of narrative layers possible in cinema. As a result, the link between the two disciplinary practices can arguably only ever be metaphorical at best. Yet, there is in architecture a capacity to engage with, thus emphasize or construct, the ambiguities, ambivalences and discrepancies that, in film, yield conditions of atmosphere and ambiance. This capacity – exercisable through the tectonic crafting of form, materials and light – can produce affective environments of consilient discrepancy in which anticipated stability and resolution are challenged by a wavering spatiality that promotes and maintains narrative tension and drive.

Consilient discrepancy is evident across multiple registers in architecture: geometrical, proportional, spatial, formal, material, technological, programmatic, typological, functional and so forth. The coincidence of multiple irreconciled geometric systems, metaphorical references, programs of use, building typologies and the like can so destabilize an architectural setting that it begins to waver and become indeterminate. Such indeterminacy keeps the semantic fabric of architecture in suspense, enabling it to stay indefinitely open to interpretation, reconstitution and emergent sense. It is evident in medieval architecture, for example, where, commonly, it occurs in the interstices between rational and irrational geometric systems, for example when ratios such as 1:1, 1:√2, 1:√3 and 1:√5 that are intrinsic to the cube are overlaid to produce a kind of indeterminate energy and liveliness that can be sensed within the space.⁷ It can also be produced by spatial containment and materiality as, for example, at Chartres Cathedral where a discrepancy exists between the telluric density and deep gloom of the building and the subaqueous crepuscular deliquescence delivered by its windows, which suspend one's experience between two dissonant extremes of atmosphere.

These sorts of consilient discrepancy are not restricted to medieval architecture, however. Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvaar Alto's residential projects deploy multiple, simultaneously overlaid axial orientations, symmetries, degrees of containment and variabilities to produce complex, interwoven relationships that build a consilient whole out of discrepant systems and components. The work of Sigurd Lewerentz provides other instances of consilient discrepancy, as at *St. Peter's*, Klippan (1963–1966). Here, the major space appears square and geometrically rational, but is not. The tactics that produce this effect give the space a double quality of apparent stability tempered by barely perceptible instability, and thus a degree of indeterminate vacillation. In a similar vein, Peter Markli's *La Congiunta*, Giornico (1992) overlays several geometrical alignments and symmetries within a disarmingly

simple, axial basilican form. Again, the outcome produces an ambiguous and tremulous space that contributes greatly to its atmosphere.

Peter Zumthor's *St. Benedetg*, Sumvigt (1988) can also be read in terms of consilient discrepancy working across several registers – notably semantic or symbolic and technical or architectonic. The building's encircling columns appear to be in suspension and the floor plane to hover, unfixed and mobile, within the space. The interior is sequestered from its surrounding context, except for a continuous highlight of zenithal light. The roof is detailed to resemble an upturned wooden boat. These architectural qualities contribute to the ambiance of the room. However, they also produce implicit semantic resonances that refer to the Church's origins in the Judeo-Christian Tabernacle and "tent of meeting," as well as to its metaphorical function as a vessel that carries the faithful to "yonder shore." The discrepancy between them affords a condition of anticipated emergence as various layers of the assemblage come into relation and begin to conjugate sense.

Sitting in the context of this tradition in architecture – and architecture's ability to engage with the ambient effects of film – is recent work by Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats.⁸ This work, it is suggested, exemplifies architecture's capacity to produce atmosphere through consilient discrepancy and deep materiality, and is thus exemplary for a reconsidered tectonic relationship between architecture and film. At both the *Mills Museum* and *Casal Balaguer*, Flores Prats play out a tectonic of porosity through which space and materiality are thoroughly worked-into and relieved of gravity and mass (see Figures 3 and 4). Ostensibly, these projects are renovations. The *Mills Museum*, situated in an old miners' neighborhood, called for the recuperation of a ruinous seventeenth-century flour windmill and its conversion into a regional museum. The key architectural intervention involved capitalizing on existing cavities and perforations within the existing fabric by "rebor-ing" them and adjusting their positions and dimensions to create altered light sources and expanded clearings for new exhibition chambers. The technique recalls the rebor-ing of woodwind instruments to alter and perfect their tuning and timbre; or indeed of the cylinders of internal combustion engines to heighten their performance. By working-into the masonry fabric of the building, easing into existing openings, shafts and hollows, and folding surfaces into and out of the walls, the architects have created new light sources, light shelves, recesses, pedestals and screens that function internally for illumination and display, and externally for benches, ledges and steps within a reactivated public domain.

These interventions literally "breathe-into," aerate and leaven the mass. Surgically incised into the existing fabric they do away with the need for internal divisions, since spatial zoning is achieved virtually by a repartition of light and dark. These latter function as foundational architectonic materials that organize the spatial narrative and exhibition sequence. The net effect is of an interior in an interminable process of being turned inside out. The density and weight of walls and vaulted roofs is dematerialized by the in-folding and



Figure 3. Flores Prats, Mills Museum. Palma de Majorca, 1999–2002. Interior.
Photograph by Duccio Malagamba.

exfoliation of surfaces. Inside and outside faces become indeterminate; the boundary is rendered as a zone of indiscernibility; and the substance of the architectural fabric is vaporized by a pervasive, illuminated porosity of incisions, cuts, slits and notches. The provenance of light is masked by multiply folded surfaces of different shades of illumination – as it is by the multiple reflections and refractions which together imply that it is the material of the wall itself producing and emitting light.

Likewise, at *Casal Balaguer*, the existing fabric dating back to the tenth century is subjected to the insertion of a new circulation network, geometrically continuous but experientially discontinuous. It punctures the building, first horizontally then vertically through to the roof by appropriating an existing, smaller courtyard. In this case, the intervention functions as an apparatus to interconnect different programs for the new exhibition and concert center (see Figure 5). However, it also creates gaps – new light wells, skylights and windows – that effectively disassociate and articulate the multiple histories and styles of construction that had merged over time.

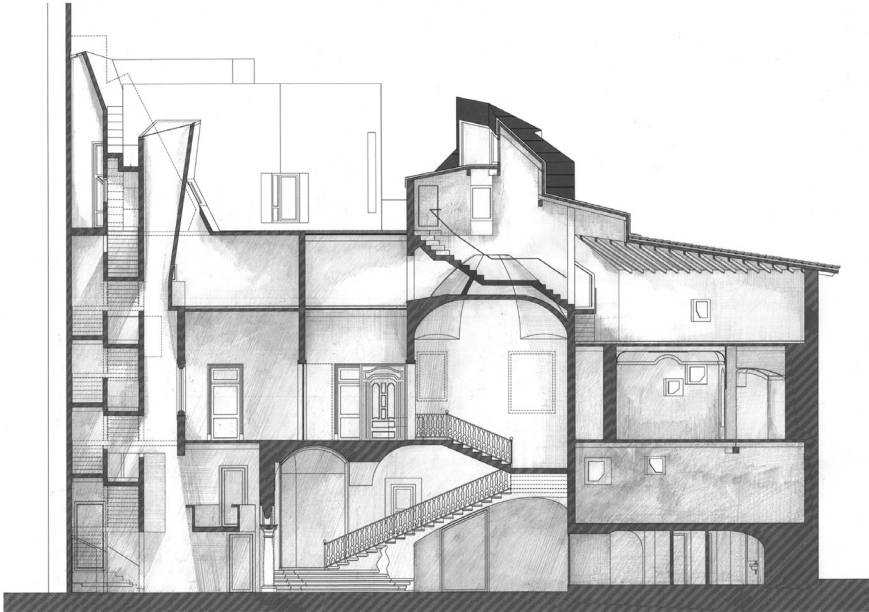
The play of light, shade and shadow puts into relief and relieves the building's different zones and narratives from a palimpsest in which they had become buried. New interstitial volumes render the building porous, perforate and ultimately aporetic (see Figure 6). All is passage within a generalized impasse that both promotes and blocks any way through. The resulting spatiality is one of folds and returns that occlude any direct prospect, any



Figure 4. Flores Prats, Mills Museum. Palma de Majorca, 1999–2002. Detail of light modulation through external masonry walls and integration with recesses and ledges for display. Photograph by Hisao Suzuki.

vanishing point – a spatiality of stairs, balusters, surfaces and passageways that lead and disappear through clefts and fissures into unknown recesses.

The captivation of space into its own materiality and substance produces a significant ambiguity. Void space, which commonly lies over and against



16

PROYECTO EJECUTIVO DE REHABILITACIÓN DEL
CASAL BALAGUER
 C. UNIÓN 3. PALMA DE MALLORCA
 SECCIÓN A.
 TRANSVERSAL POR TORRE Y CÚPULA.
 DE SUZU, RICARDO FLORES, XOSCO PEÑA Y EVA PRATS. ARG. 0.
 DICIEMBRE 2010
 0 1 2
 metros en el exterior

Figure 5. Flores Prats. Casal Balaguer (2009–). Cross section through new circulation and light wells.

mass, and functions to foreground it, is here itself massified and rendered substantial. Likewise, light, which commonly counterpoints darkness and functions to indicate the lineaments of form,⁹ is here identified with the void that it suffuses and condenses into palpable atmosphere. The indeterminacy between mass and void, darkness and light, destabilizes and dismantles the formal and material grounds of the building.¹⁰ The absence of prospect, and the identity of space with the exfoliation of perforate matter, also contests normative distinctions between form and context that are here indistinguishably and simultaneously produced out of the one luminous substance.

As in *Werkmeister Harmonies*, concatenated spatiality is built out of light, shade, shadow and darkness – out of degrees of gloaming. These projects by Flores and Prats evidence an extraordinary tectonic work of crafting space from crepuscular materiality that is both radiant and dim. It produces sufficient discrepancies to complexify the architectural encounter and cause our reception of it to waver. Some of this ambiguity is inherent in the semantic



Figure 6. Flores Prats. Casal Balaguer (2009–). View into new circulation, balconies and light well. Photograph Adrià Goula.

potential of the components that make up the architecture. The relative status of walls, windows, doors, passages, shafts and wells are integral to a complex of meanings that could be usefully read in terms of etymology – specifically the etymons *WEL, meaning “to turn, roll, fold, wind” (wall, welt, weal, wealth, well(up), fold, flatten, field), and *PER, meaning “through, lead, passage” (port, portal, porosity, bore, pierce, aperture, periphery, perimeter, border, fjord, forest, ford, afford).¹¹ These senses circulate in Flores and Prats’ incisive formal and material program as a kind of tectonic atmosphere, though they are never explicitly named and always subsist as discrepant subtexts and undertones open to indefinite conjugation.

There are other, implicit, less obvious layers too. Flores and Prats’ longstanding, pedagogically innovative, project *Through the Canvas* provides such an instance.¹² Initiated at The University of New South Wales in 2004 and since offered over many iterations internationally, this design studio prompts two kinds of practice: *reading-into* a series of seventeenth-century Dutch interior paintings, in particular those by Pieter de Hooch, and then *drawing-out* from these interiors a framework for spatial narrative and design that exceeds the limits of the spaces depicted. The architects see it as a process of enlarging and completing the houses, which are only partially described in the paintings. Yet these incomplete descriptions imply an indefinite series of completions, so that the possibilities are fundamentally innumerable, and the process fundamentally interminable. What the canvases show of mundane domesticity – a fireplace, a window, a doorway, a shadow, spaces, people, surfaces, forms, colours, events – are not parts of an organic or hierarchical totality. Rather, they constitute discrepant fragments that are each a point of departure open to elaboration, both individually and as a network of possible places or worlds, each with their own interconnected geometries, forms, materials and tectonics. As Deleuze read it in terms of the cinema of Eisenstein, the parts trigger a *reciprocal causality* whereby they are produced one by the other in an ensemble that also reproduces itself in every part.¹³

In the deep shadows of this hovering spatial setup, elements are open to shift in intensity and scale. A fireplace becomes monstrously large; a panel conceals a secret chamber; something lurks behind the bulge in a wall; the under-surface of a stair intrudes into a lower room. These kinds of obscured, imposing presences, harbored and absorbed within the architectonic fabric of rooms and houses, are all in various states of immanent arrival. The places depicted hover in the ambit of indiscernible transition zones where space and time are suspended. Nothing much happens, but at any time, anything is bound to. Hence the uncanny character of everyday domesticity that is simultaneously mundane, extraordinary and unsettling. Hence, also, the *surrealist* register of Flores and Prats’ work, in which we can detect characteristic tropes of disjunct assemblage, syncretic logic, and exaggerations of scale operating together with the oneiric reverie and disquiet that accompanies their conjugated, aporetic, intermedial setting.

In Media Res: Ambiguity and Undecidability as Conditions of Atmosphere

In media res, in the middle of things: we are always in the midst, *interstitium*, between the walls. The texture of this intermittence is permeable and permeating. It is made of interminable folds, intervals within intervals and interludes where sense is dramatized and played out. This kind of wound-up, intervallic topography and spatial structure foregrounds the being-together-*there* of human-being, its *placedness*. Here, tectonics engages with ethics, the atmosphere of space with the dispositions of solicitude, care and attentiveness to the other in its arrival. The topography of the porous, the interstitial and the inter-ludic must be resolutely ethical; and its ambiance suffuses *Werkmeister Harmonies* as much as the interiors of Flores and Prats. Both settings foreground adjacency and intimacy – the nearness of beings to each other and to the worlds they simultaneously find themselves in and produce.

Werkmeister Harmonies is characterized by a palpable ambiguity of boundary conditions. The profiles and borderlines of characters, rooms, streets and squares are effaced by an undecidability in the provenance of light and dark which are deployed interchangeably, so that darkness appears not as an absence but as an excess of light, as a play between gloom and glare. This orchestration of luminous intensity effectively dissolves the normative determinants of space and form – the liminal corners, edges and surfaces that distinguish an inside from an outside. The containing framework of settings in the film does not reflect or absorb light; rather, it is suffused by it – its mass irradiates. Likewise, the streets and squares of the town in which the action unfurls do not differentiate a public from a private domain. They lead nowhere – or rather, they lead nowhere other than into the labyrinthine materiality of the urban fabric, into an ineluctable aporetic condition that is, tectonically and politically, an irreparable entrapment.

In a different register, the incavated spaces of *Mills Musem* and *Casal Balaguer* also orchestrate an ambiguous play between inside and outside, between mass and hollowness, and into the porosities of matter that vaporize the architectonic mass. Again, the interactions between darkness, shadow, light and glare are mobilized to render the borderlines of spaces ambiguous and indeterminate. The outside is not another world visible beyond the walls. Rather, the interval is all there is, and this interval is not a third zone between one boundary and another. It is the necessary condition of space itself, of space as spacing and porosity through which it constantly defers closure and maintains its infinite finishing.

Consilient discrepancy – the coexistence of disseveral systems in unaligned multiplicity that, while never fusing, still resonate to produce emergent conditions – is a quality of cinema and, as indicated here, can equally be one in architecture. The unresolved state of those systems constitutes an essential prerequisite for atmosphere and ambiance – a state of indeterminacy that

keeps a system from closing, and therefore keeps it open to interpretation and engagement. In the cinema of Béla Tarr and the architecture of Flores Prats, the orchestration of light and dark – kinematic in the first instance, tectonic in the second – produces environments in which the boundary between opposites wavers and becomes indeterminate. Such tectonic moves are not limited to the instances and works cited here, but are adaptable and open to multiple filmic and architectural scenarios as indicated by the examples given earlier in this paper.

The undecidability between black and white, gloom and gleam, glare and clarity in *Werkmeister Harmonies* situates the action in a marginal world hovering between reality and virtuality, actuality and potentiality. In this liminal cinematic ambiance, the philosophical, political, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the narrative assume heightened presence and confer on the film a distinctive atmosphere. In a different but related order, the spatial tactics evident in the two projects by Flores Prats likewise show us how we can mobilize the darkness and light, density and porosity, gravity and levity possible in film, within an architectural context. Here, architectural space is less a case of sedimentation, construction and assemblage than it is of a hollowing, disgorgement and evisceration of matter. Here, consilient discrepancy lies in the palpable and apparently contradictory coincidence of gravity and porosity, blockage and access. The interior is turned inside out and delivered over to a circumambient, unseen luminosity that both surrounds and permeates. These tactics and affects – forming part of an *architectonics of atmosphere* – imply for the broader world of cinema and by extension architecture, ample domains of unexploited expressive potential that need not be sourced in the extraordinary or the spectacular – but rather, and properly – *radically*, within their core conditions.

Notes

- 1 I have elsewhere shown how this consilient discrepancy functions in cinema and architecture to produce the kinds of ambiguous indeterminacies necessary to atmosphere and to the expansion of semantic potential. For an instance of musical figures that contribute to cinematic narrative, see my “Vaporous Circumambience: Towards an Architectonics of Atmosphere,” *Interstices 15*, accessed November 13, 2015, <http://interstices.aut.ac.nz/ijara/index.php/ijara/article/view/194> For a more general treatment of the productive agency of discrepancy in cinema and architecture, see my *Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 258–309.
- 2 The occultation of the sun is described by the protagonist as drawing everything into an “infinite sonorous silence” until an “incomprehensible dusk” and “weight of darkness” descends to still all beings and project them into a space of immanent, impending catastrophe. Cinematically, this catastrophe works principally by occlusions that parallel a statist breakdown, threatened by violent occupation of the town where the film is set, together with a breakdown of civic space.

- 3 The shift from just to equal temperament in the sixteenth century was driven by a compulsion to tune keyboards so as to play music tunefully in the majority of keys, and evidenced foundational calculative tendencies familiar to modernity: rationalization, homogenization, elimination of complexity, avoidance of contingency, a predilection for efficiency and economies of time.
- 4 This political action brings with it a new order, metaphorically conveyed by the surreptitious arrival of a “circus” in the dead of night, carrying a taxidermied whale incarcerated in a mobile shed.
- 5 The light and dark registers can be described as the expanding, uncluttering, radiant character of the first, and the contracting, occluding and smothering character of the second.
- 6 Jacques Rancière. “Béla Tarr,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMwHjXx52zk>, accessed 13 November 2015.
- 7 See John James, *Chartres, The Masons Who Built a Legend* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).
- 8 See Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats, *Thought by Hand: The Architecture of Flores Prats* (Mexico City: Arquine, 2014).
- 9 As Le Corbusier had it in his “First Reminder: Mass”: “Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of volumes brought together in light. Our eyes were made for seeing forms in light; shadow and light reveal forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders and pyramid are the greatest primary forms that light reveals well; the image is clear and tangible for us, without ambiguity. That is why these are beautiful forms, the most beautiful forms.” Le Corbusier, *Toward a New Architecture*, trans. John Rodker (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), 29.
- 10 As in the materiality of a sponge, everything is opening: doorway, mouth, channel, access; and in a sense, the *ostia* of sponges, their constitutive orifices, parallel the *osteria*: hostels, hospitality – associated with Hestia, goddess of the hearth – cognate terms drawn from the etymon *WES, “to dwell.” Dwelling is not incarceration but the condition of having access. In this respect, Walter Benjamin’s reading of Naples, and by implication of the city, is instructive. See Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacin, “Naples,” in *Reflections*, trans. Edmond Jephcott (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1978), 163–73. See also Benoît Goetz, who cites Henri Gaudin, from *Seuil et D’ailleurs* (Paris: Les Editions du Demi Cercle, 1992), 122: “Cities are enormous madrepore in whose tangle, and in the midst of whose concrete or chalky matter, there will never pass enough passages and bridges and canals and ventilating chimneys and flowing spaces and interstices and clearings.” Benoît Goetz, *Théorie des Maisons: L’habitation, la Surprise* (Édition Verdier, 2011), 113–36.
- 11 See my “Mortarium: A Provisional Lexicon for Masonry,” in *Materiality: Brick and Block in Contemporary Australian Architecture*, ed. Ron Ringer (Horsley Park: Dry Press Publishing, 2015), 540–53.
- 12 See my “Reading into: Drawing out from,” in Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats, *Through the Canvas: Architecture inside Dutch Paintings* (Barcelona and Sydney: ACTAR and The University of New South Wales, 2008), 112–115.
- 13 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema, L’Image mouvement, vol. 1* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983), 57.

Bibliography

- Bad Timing*, directed by Nicholas Roeg, produced by Rank, 1980.
- Benjamin, Walter and Lacis, Asja. "Naples." In *Reflections*, edited by Edmond Jephcott, 163–73. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1978.
- Caché*, directed by Michael Haneke, produced by France 3 Cinéma, Canal+, Bavaria Film, Wega Film, 2005.
- Delanda, Manuel. "Emergence, Causality and Realism," *Architectural Theory Review* 17.1 (2012): 3–16.
- . *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London and New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema, vol. 1. L'Image mouvement*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983.
- . *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Khora." In *On the Name*. Translated by David Wood, John P. Leavy Jr., and Ian McLeod, 89–127. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Flores, Ricardo and Prats, Eva. *Thought by Hand: the Architecture of Flores Prats*. Mexico City: Arquine, 2014).
- . *Through the Canvas: Architecture inside Dutch Paintings*. Barcelona and Sydney: ACTAR and The University of New South Wales, 2008.
- Gaudin, Henri. *Seuil et D'ailleurs*. Paris: Les Editions du Demi Cercle, 1992.
- Goetz, Benoît. *Théorie des Maisons: L'habitation, la Surprise*. Paris: Édition Verdier, 2011.
- Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977.
- Histoire(s) du Cinema*, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, produced by Canal+, ARTE and Gaumont, 1988–1998.
- James, John. *Chartres, The Masons Who Built a Legend*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Le Corbusier. *Toward a New Architecture*. Translated by John Rodker. Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1989.
- Mulholland Drive*, directed by David Lynch, produced by Universal Pictures, 2001.
- The Passenger*, directed by Michelangelo Antonini, produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1978. *A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence*, directed and produced by Roy Andersson, with co-producers, Société Parisienne Production, 4½, and Essential Film Production.
- Plato, "Timaeus." Translated by Benjamin Jowett. In *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, 1151–211. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Rancière, Jacques. "Conférence de Jacques Rancière sur Béla Tarr." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMwHjXx52zk> Accessed November 13, 2015, <http://interstices.aut.ac.nz/ijara/index.php/ijara/article/view/194>

- Tawa, Michael. *Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
- . “Mortarium: A Provisional Lexicon for Masonry.” In *Materiality. Brick and Block in Contemporary Australian Architecture*, edited by Ron Ringer, 540–53. Horsley Park: Dry Press Publishing, 2015.
- . “Vaporous Circumambience: Towards an Architectonics of Atmosphere.” *Interstices* 15 (2014). <http://interstices.aut.ac.nz/ijara/index.php/ijara/article/view/194> Accessed November 13, 2015.