

The Cinematic Approach to Architecture:

How Images Communicating Emotions in Film

Informs the Multisensory Experience of Spatial Atmospheres

Carl Glosenger
Tyler Nguyen

keywords

architecture — film — atmospheric quality — emotions — generators of atmosphere — universal atmospheres — central vision — peripheral perception — spectators — agents

abstract

This paper compares the atmospheric quality of film and architecture. Film is a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story; it is imbued with totalities which unify a diversity of impressions into overall experiences. Film influences architects to frame moments within their settings, to select design elements that support the affective affordances embedded in space. Directors and architects are both priming the emotions of people, but their toolkits are different. In film, a series of uninflected images, or seemingly unrelated shots, are placed in front of spectators with sound, allowing them to fill in the story of each scene. Film relies on generators of universal atmosphere to evoke specific emotions from a wide group of spectators. This is a different experience than what we feel in architecture. When interacting with a building, the agents are impacted through all of their senses for a total body experience. People may focus on one thing in a space, but it is the constant flow of information outside of our central vision (feeding our peripheral perception) that orchestrates the complete story of a space. In architecture, agents have a subjective experience that often differs from the designer's intent. Identifying and understanding the film director's generators of universal atmosphere helps architects stage better atmospheric experiences.

