

Principles to Design Urbanism in Cinema; An Aesthetic Study on Identity and Representation of a City in a Movie

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Abstract : 'The Cities' and Cinema have a history going as far back as silent films; however, the standards of picturing a city in a film are somewhat vague. 'Genius Loci' of a city can be easily described with parameters that architects have detected; nevertheless, the genius loci of an 'urban movie' is untouched. Cities have been among the provocative matters that pushed filmmakers to ponder upon them and to picture them along with their urban identity thoroughly in their artworks, though the impacts of the urban life on the plot and characters is neglected, and so a city in a movie is usually restricted to 'the place where the story happens'. Cities and urban life are among those that are in constant change and ongoing expansion; therefore, they are always fresh and ready to challenge people with their existence. Thus, the relationship between the city and cinema is metamorphic, though it could be defined and explored. The dominant research on the idea of urbanism has been conducted by outstanding scholars of architecture, like Christian Norberg-Schulz, and the studies on Cinema have been done by theorists of cinema, like Christian Metz, who have mastered defining their own realm; still, the idea to mingle the domains to reach a unified theory which could be applied to 'urban movies' is barely worked on. In this research, we have sought mutual grounds to discuss 'urbanism in cinema,' the grounds that cinema could benefit from and get to a more accurate audio-visual representation of a city, in accordance with the ideas of Christopher Alexander and the term he coined 'The Timeless Way of Building.' We concentrate on movies that are dependent on urban life, mainly those that possess the names of cities, like 'Nashville (1975), Manhattan (1979), Fargo (1996), Midnight in Paris (2011) or Roma (2018), according to the ideas of urban design and narratives of cinema. Contrary to what has often been assumed, cinema and architecture could be defined in line with similar parameters, and architectural terms could be applied to the research done on movies. Our findings indicate that the theories of Christopher Alexander can best fit the paradigm to study an 'Urban Movie', definitions of a timeless building, elaborate on the characteristics of a design that could be applied to definitions of an urban movie, and set a prototype for further filmmaking regarding the urban life.

Keywords : city, urbanism, urban movies, identity, representation

Conference Title : ICCFMS 2024 : International Conference on Cinema, Film and Media Studies

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : May 23-24, 2024