



WHEN FILM FOLLOWS "FORM": FILM AS COMPOSITION

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Abstract:

"Form follows function" is one of the well-known mottos for those who are involved in the field of architecture. It is also a well-known fact that Frank Lloyd Wright had felt the necessity to further the Sullivan's saying, as "Form and function should be one, joint in a spiritual union". The relation between film and form can be investigated from a similar point of view and one can discuss the subject matter within the context of cinema.

Departing from Wright's words can we say, "Film and form should be joint in a spiritual union"? The answer may be yes or no, depending on the definition of form; to clarify the issue we can start with questioning whether 'film' corresponds to 'function' and/or they are comparable on the same basis. Both building as the object of architecture and film as the object of cinema perform a certain function. As long as we can talk about the form and the function of a film independently we can hardly discuss if film follows form or form follows film. Form and function are two complementary entities to be unified during the process of any artistic creation, one of which being filmmaking. So we will define form as the visual manifestation of content and/or function, achieved after a series of abstract rules thus introduce the concept of *composition*. When we define composition as the orderly arrangement of elements/components and consider film a composition, it is the process of creation to be investigated; hence we call talk about 'designing a film'. Consequently *fundamental principles of design*, which constitute the foundation of architectural design education, can be recognized as a common ground to construct a prolific debate on any artistic product and/or its process of production.

By means of *fundamental principles of design* one can develop the ability of organizing number of things, in other words making *composition*. In the case of architecture it is the spaces to be organized with respect to their properties, whereas in cinema organization of images comes into the scene. In both cases rendering of elements and their orchestration requires an underlying system of rules to integrate all sorts of complex relations into a unified whole; the final form of a building or a film owes its quality to the designer(s)'concern for this. The advantage of employing the fundamental principles of design is that they offer a universal system of comprehension due to the fact that they can be discussed on an abstract and conceptual basis.

This presentation aims to demonstrate the compatibility between the two realms when we consider the final product of both a *composition*. In order to disclose the possibility of referring to the fundamental principles of design during filmmaking, the *types of organization* as defined in the field of architecture according to the generating agent (point, line and co-ordinate system) will be compared to the *types of plot structures* (situational, climactic and episodic) in cinema. We will elaborate on the ordering principles of design such as *unity, balance, harmony, contrast, repetition, dominance* and *hierarchy* with concrete examples from both fields. The significance of attributes that facilitate perception such as *similarity, continuity, proximity* and *closure* as utilized in cinema will be mentioned. By means of this assertion we also aim to initiate a



constructive discussion with reference to the title of the conference: "What is it that we call *form* within the context of cinema?"...

Keywords: *"design as forming element", composition, fundamental principles of design*