



IN THE SOFT IMAGE OF THE CITY: MIES VAN DER ROHE AND CINEMATIC TIME

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Abstract

My general research project, of which this paper is a small part of, aims to develop a theoretical and genealogical framework within which the relationship between the architectural avant-garde and the culture of cinema can be analyzed. As both these terms are contested and, each taken for itself, has generated a vast amount of literature, every attempt to arrive at a conclusive understanding of the affinity between "architecture and cinema" is prone to fail. For this reason the different chapters present case studies which each will focus on a clearly defined aspect concerning the ties between the moving image and the architecturally shaped space. My approach tries to identify the historical occurrences of overlap and reciprocal influence of these two artistic practices in order to then, in a second step, suggest a theoretical foundation a) for an understanding of the evolution of modernist conceptions of space from the perspective of the new medium cinema and b) for proposing a genealogical trajectory pertaining to the present day dominance of digital image-based media key constitutive for the ways of producing and perceiving our built environment.

The present essay argues that Mies van der Rohe's conception of architectural space as it developed during his pre-war Berlin period, was significantly influenced by the culture of cinema. By cinema I do not merely understand the profilmic or the typology of the film theatre, but a 'second space' or installation shaped through animate images in time that belongs to a parallel history of mechanical, popular and illusionist art – that of phantasmagorias, panoramas and film. On a theoretical level, I argue that Mies develops an architecture of temporalized space, a space "built" with images made of time. His architecture regains meaningfulness by coinciding with the temporality of the subject's perceptive faculties. At the same time the paper makes an attempt to provide historical material that substantiates Mies's affiliation with the theories and designs of Adolphe Appia, with avant-garde filmmakers like Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, as well as his active participation in institutions related to cinema.

Keywords: *Mies van der Rohe, early work, Modernist Avant-garde and film, Early Cinema, Cinematic time and architectural form, Deleuze, theory of cinema*