

A reflection on cinematic architecture through light, poetic imagery, narrative and social issues

Keiichi Ogata* 

Abstract

The Light and its Disappearance in the Darkness; The chapter begins with the question of what can be found in the integration of architecture and cinema and continues exploring light in the context of cinematic architecture theory. This is followed by a discussion of the illusions of light that emerge in spaces where cinema and architecture meet. The thought then reaches Paul Virilio's conception of the aesthetics of architecture as a metaphor for cinema from the experience of space, the image of disappearance. It suggested I make a film work, 'Hiroshima Through Light', in the AA. *The Experimentation in the AA Diploma Unit 3*; This chapter describes the exploration of cinematic architecture under the tutelage of Pascal Schöning, a unit master of the AA, which includes philosophy, aesthetics, and challenges to urban and social issues, along with his unique methodology. He explains to his former students the importance of a more philosophical approach to the notion at the end of Diploma Unit 3. That is when I see Juhani Pallasmaa's description of the need for architects to look at people's daily lives and society through a phenomenological approach, like filmmakers. My awareness moves on to a study of the architects depicted by filmmakers. *Image of Architects Depicted in Film*; The images of architects in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, Terrence Malick and Hirokazu Kore-eda are discussed. It indicates that they are entrusted with a role of building human relationships. *Cinematic Architecture Tokyo*; This chapter outlines activities in Japan that are being rolled out in the form of workshops, lectures and exhibitions to develop the theory of cinematic architecture. The theme of the workshops held in the Hokuriku region was the revitalisation of declining local urban communities, which is also related to the previous chapter on "building human relationships". This year, the projection attempted to embody poetic images to illuminate memories that are being lost. *Conclusion*: In addition to reflecting on essential elements such as the aesthetics of disappearing light, memory, history, poetic imagery, narrative and social issues, adding a focus on the significance of communication design, fields of sense and spatial quality, could bring new perspectives to the integration of architecture.

Keywords: aesthetics of light, architect in film, cinema and architecture, narrative, social issue

1. The Light and its Disappearance in the Darkness

What can we discover by looking at architecture and cinema not separately but by transcending their boundaries and integrating them? It begins with a contemplation on light in film and architectural space. Towards the end of Hirokazu Kore-eda's first feature film, *Maboroshi* (1995), there is a scene where a young woman who marries for the second time in a small fishing village stands still, fascinated by the faint light drifting beyond the dark seaside of twilight as if it were the soul of her dead ex-husband (Figure 1). Takeshi Kitano's film, *HANA-BI* (1998), tells the story of a retired detective who sets off on a journey with his nearly dying wife in a van. The ephemeral nature



of human life is felt through the bereavement of the people he met, and the memory of happy days with his wife are metaphorically represented as fireworks (the title means flowers and light) that shine for a brief moment (Figure 2). Why are we attracted to lights that do not settle, keep shifting and eventually fade away in the darkness?



Figure 1 A small fire by the sea in *Maboroshi*



Figure 2 Detective's wife and the fireworks in *HANA-BI*.

Junichiro Tanizaki asks us in his *In Praise of Shadows* (1933/1984) whether the faint light that reaches the secluded room of a temple building is perceived as something profound and different from ordinary rays of light; whether we do not feel a kind of Thanatos-like fear of "eternity" as if we have lost track of time and the years flow by without our knowing (Figure 3).

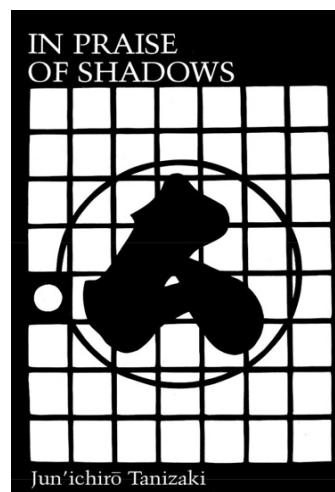


Figure 3 *In Praise of Shadows*, Junichio Tanizaki (1933).

While acknowledging Tanizaki's nostalgia for ancient Japanese architectural space, architect Arata Isozaki (1997) adds that this fascination with light and shadow Tanizaki admired comes from all that is left behind when light passes through darkness and that light therefore cannot be absolute but always temporary and exists only to disappear. The dark space is a living entity, deep, directly touching and enveloping the person inside (Vidler, 1992). To feel the fascination of flickering lights in the dark space is a cinematic experience, which Roland Barthes calls the "cinematographic cocoon", and those lights are hypnotic (1989). The transformation from illusion to reality, the awakening felt as one leaves the dark space, is the essence of the spatial experience of cinema.

Furthermore, Anne Friedberg (1993) says that there is a relationship between "virtual gaze" and "virtual mobility" in the moving images within the frame of the film screen, where the images created by the illusory light are projected in a dark space, and in the gaze of the audience who follow them with their eyes. She goes on to elaborate:

This newly wrought combination of mobile and virtual visualities provided a virtual mobility for immobile spectators who witnessed movement confined to a frame. As cinema "spectators" we sit immobile in front of moving images; our bodies do not move, but our "point of view" may change.... As a viewer of virtual images, the moving-image spectator has a bodily presence in material architectural space yet engages with virtually rendered immaterial space framed on the screen.... the cinema freed its spectators not only from the bindings of material space but also from the bindings of time.

(Friedberg, 2006, pp. 5-6)

If we focus on "movement", the combination of the spectator's move and the shifting landscape frames of architecture and objects is a projection of cinematic narratives of architecture. Not only the Parc de la Villette, a "cinematic promenade" (Tschumi, 1996), but also the harmony between garden and architecture in landscape gardens, such as the Shugakuin Rikyu Imperial Villa (Figure 4) and the Katsura Rikyu Imperial Villa in Japan, and Stourhead (Figure 5) and Stowe in England, are projections of cinematic narratives of architecture. The same applies to the fantasy journey of Michael O'Hara, the protagonist of the film, *The lady from Shanghai* (Welles, 1947) (Figure 6), who keeps roaming around the crazy house. Examples of "movement" being linked to "memory" and "narrative structure" are the films *La jetée* (Marker, 1962) and *the limits of control* (Jarmusch, 2009). The former is an experimenter travelling through time and space in the present, past and future, and the latter is a sniper travelling around Spain, but these narratives have a narrative structure that can be visualised in the viewer's mind, making them feel as if they are experiencing a virtual space journey. And a kind of combination of these elements is *Last year in Marienbad* (Resnais, 1961).



Figure 4 Shugakuin Rikyu Imperial Villa, Kyoto, Japan. (Construction: 1653-1655) (Photo by the Author)



Figure 5 Stourhead, Wiltshire, UK (construction: 1741-1780) (Photo by the Author)



Figure 6 Michael O'Hara wanders in the crazy house in *The Lady from Shanghai*.

In the film *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) (Figure 7), which has a vital element of “illusion”, detective Rick Deckard uses a three-dimensional photoscope in his investigation, with the ability to project an out-of-frame image of a single photograph across time and space. It has both “virtual gaze” and “virtual mobility”, projecting into Deckard’s consciousness an illusion of a female Replicant on the run and directing him towards their narrative quest to explore the reasons for the Replicant’s obsession with life. Fantasy is what reality can be confused with (Gabriel, 2017). It is also reminiscent of what a famous dramatist is believed to have said in 18th century Japan, before the birth of cinema: “Art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal” (Keene, 2008, p. 389)¹. Cinematic fantasy is inextricably linked together with reality, but films are finite and always have an end.



Figure 7 The three-dimension viewer (above) finds a female Replicant behind a male from a still photograph in *Blade Runner*.

As for buildings, their lifespans are also finite and transitory. While there is a gradual destruction process of weathering, we know that there is also sudden death. When we look back on a vanished

¹ Chikamatsu, Monzaemon (1653-1725) was a Japanese dramatist, who wrote mainly for the Joruri, or the form of traditional puppet stage.

or destroyed building in retrospect, it is as if we have seen a kind of illusion. From the images of destroyed buildings delivered from Ukraine to the rest of the world after 24 February 2022, some people may recall pictures of their personal memories. It may be the planned destruction for development purposes close to one's home, decaying houses in a depopulated area, the elementary school that collapsed after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 (Figure 8), the World Trade Centre in New York City destroyed in the September 11 attacks (Jencks, 1977)², the planned demolition of the high-rise flats in Glasgow in the early 2010s (Leslie, 2016) (Figure 9)³. Facing and being captured by the illusion of images in this way is similar to the experience of solitude that Juhani Pallasmaa describes when we face architecture:

An architectural experience silences all external noise; it focuses attention on one's very existence. Architecture, as all art, makes us aware of our fundamental solitude. At the same time, architecture detaches us from the present and allows us to experience the slow, firm flow of time and tradition.

(Holl, S., Pallasmaa, J., & Pérez-Gomez, A., 1994, p.31)



Figure 8 The earthquake-ravaged elementary school building in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. (Photo by the Author)



Figure 9 View from the Sight Hill Residential Flat in Glasgow. (Photo by Chris Leslie)

Architecture, too, dies, and at the ever-accelerating pace of the modern city, it is all the more short-lived. Nevertheless, architecture continues to tell us the memory of our spatial experience and the cinematic story of its life as an afterimage. Paul Virilio predicted 30 years ago the world that would come afterwards:

The aesthetic of construction is dissimulated in the special effects of the communication machines, engines of transfer and transmission; the arts continue to disappear in the intense illumination of projection and diffusion.... we are now in the time of cinematographic factitiousness; literally as well as figuratively, from now on architecture is only a movie.

(1991, pp. 64-65)

Pascal Schöning, who was a master of Diploma Unit 3 of the Architectural Association School of Architecture, quoted this text by Virilio at every opportunity when I was in his unit and stated in his writing: "The very essence of cinematic architecture is nothing less than the complete transformation of solid-state materialistic architecture into an energised ever-changing process of illuminated and enlightening event appearances" (2009, p. 16) (Figure 10). He also said, "It is when we touch the depths of personal and collective memory that architecture and cinema reveal their constructive force" (2009, p. 116). Digging into these words in my own way enhanced the motivation and imagination of my film project in the AA, and the result is my work, *Hiroshima through light: From light to silence, silence to light*, which is about the momentary collapse of a city

² Charles Jencks (1977) said, "Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972, at 3.32 p.m....when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme...were given the final coup de grâce by dynamite" (p. 9). The building was designed by architect Minoru Yamasaki who also designed the World Trade Centre, so the narrative is that the death of modernism in architecture continued until 2009.

³ Disappearing Glasgow website: <https://www.disappearing-glasgow.com/portfolio/introduction/> (accessed 29.08.2022)

(Figure 11)⁴ The work speaks of sympathy and empathy with collective memory, exploring the meanings of light, shadow, city, architecture, and cinema.



Figure 10 Cinematic Architecture, Pascal Schöning (2009).



Figure 11 Hiroshima Through Light: From Light to Silence, Silence to Light, Dir. by the Author. (1995/2018)

2. The Experimentation in the AA Diploma Unit 3

Pascal Schöning, a Berliner who taught Diploma Unit 3 at the AA from 1993 to 2008, was an educator, a philosopher, an artist, and a creative agitator (Figure 12)⁵. He proclaimed cinematic architecture at the AA after several years of creative struggles through trial and error since he started teaching in London.



Figure 12 Pascal Schöning in Metz, France, in 2015, near Unité d'Habitation in Briey-en-Forêt where he lived after his retirement. (Photo by the Author) <https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/obituaries/pascal-schoning-1939-2016>

Initially, there was a period of creative exploration in his unit, using a more artistic methodology leading up to cinematic architecture. For example, students analysed the works and words of

⁴ Hiroshima Through Light: From Light to Silence, Silence to Light (1995-96/2018 revised) Dir. by the Author. <https://vimeo.com/137228178/89c027b00c> The concluding words of the work overlap with the illusionary image of a film actress who disappeared with the light of the atomic bomb: "Hiroshima was born from shadows, and the future of the city is revealed by light". <https://vimeo.com/137228178/89c027b00c>

⁵ <https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/obituaries/pascal-schoning-1939-2016> (Accessed in 9.09.2022)

writers and philosophers as well as architects, filmmakers and artists and applied such a critical approach to designing solutions for urban issues. The approach at that time could be succinctly described as “conceptual”. In the later phase, the unit also focused on a process that pursued a kind of logic and spatiality with artistic manipulation tinged with philosophy and narrative, the results of which logically led to a definition of architecture. The discussions by Pascal and his students lasted late into the night over coffee and cigarette smoke, especially during the jury sessions, sometimes joined by his friends or professors and assistants from other units. The topics ranged from the words of contemporary thinkers to art criticism, current affairs and gossip. Some joined the conversation; others did not and continued to create silently. Some talked and created architectural spaces using only words (Figure 13).

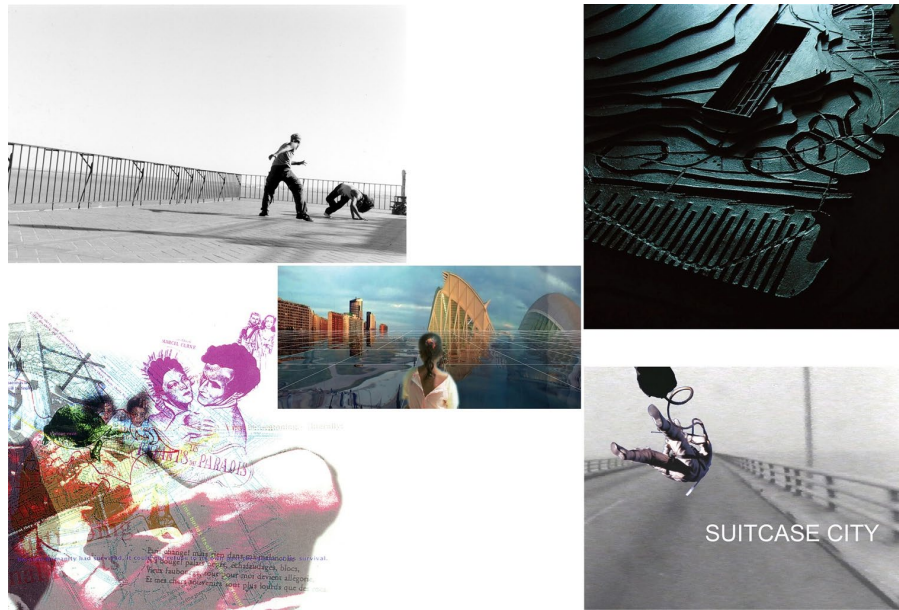


Figure 13 Student’s works from the AA Diploma Unit 3 by Julian Löffler, Jean Tark Park, Clara Kraft, Stephan Doesinger and Takanao Todo. (Clockwise from right to left)

Inspired by even these seemingly futile conversations, the students worked on their projects of experiment combining various ideas with narratives of urban reality using the unit's own jargon, techniques and methodologies (e.g., books for narrative composition, filmmaking, collage, overlaying, impressions, contradiction, mise-en-scène, camera-stylo, urban projection, reflections on memory and poetic expression). What was finally proposed included a transient event, an act that triggers a phenomenon, a place that means something, or an installation that unfolds within a space; they could be described as something close to media art. Regardless of the scale of the project, it was required to raise social issues and suggest solutions to them without becoming too personal. As Brian Hutton, who teaches at the AA, later pointed out, careful consideration of the filmmaker's mise-en-scène was also emphasised in the unit⁶. Essay films and narrative films by Chris Marker, Andrei Tarkovsky, Michelangelo Antonioni, Wim Wenders and Patrick Keiller, just to name a few, were discussed. By examining these filmmakers' perspectives on cities, people and the environment, their methods of analysis and how to address social issues, it became clear that their perspectives on cities have much in common with those of architects, highlighting the need for architects to play a role as social activists.

In addition, the cities featured in the unit represented challenges to urban and social issues, such as resistance to the loss of memory of Hiroshima 50 years after the atomic bombing and the

⁶ In 2018, at the symposium “Film, Space, Architecture”, coordinated by Brian Hatton, Schöning's Unit 3 was introduced as one of two units in the AA that actively incorporated film into education, Schöning's Unit 3 was introduced, along with Diploma Unit 10, formerly taught by Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates. The relationship between cinema and architecture, in addition to its technical aspects, was presented, from the narrative paintings before the Lumière brothers' first film to smartphone images in the digital age, plus a discussion on the possibility and necessity of integrated education in cinema and architecture in the future. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4fkhpsj4gl&t=7126s>

involvement of architects in places like war-torn Sarajevo at the time, which led to intense and creative discussions between students with different backgrounds (I remember being part of these discussions). This must have made the students even more aware of the role of architects in society and the community. I left the unit in the first half of this experimentation in the late 1990s. The AA subsequently began to ask the unit to design physical buildings, and the focus shifted to the ordinary and idyllic cities⁷. At the symposium in London in May 2009 held on the occasion of Schöning's retirement, he was recognised for his achievements, including his teaching methods that incorporate filmmaking⁸.

At the closure of the unit in 2009, former unit students reflected with Schöning on the evolution of the unit's experiments and research up to that point. The main objective of the unit was not whether there would be a physical architecture in the end. For cinematic architecture, "the best projects were composites where the intervention and the film completed each other without one being the representation of the other" (Schöning, Löffler, & Azevedo, 2009, p. 189). There were also conversations about the significance of the education in Unit 3, which was not to look at political projects such as Hiroshima and Sarajevo from a conceptual point of view, but rather to discover their own involvement and perspective (without being too much of a detached observer), and to face the real world by bringing their theoretical approach to architecture into the political realm. Although at first glance it would appear to be the culmination of Unit 3, Schöning did not call it final at that point, saying that it should be viewed as more philosophically. I take it that he left a room for further exploration.

Later, I came across Juhani Pallasmaa's view that architects, like filmmakers, should take a phenomenological approach to the world they encounter and be interested in people and their everyday lives, an insight that I found relevant to the learning at Unit 3. Turning from this, I became interested in the architects and the roles entrusted to them as portrayed by the filmmakers.

3. Image of Architects Depicted in Film

Many architects are interested in film and incorporate filmic language, narrative and spatial theory into their designs and philosophies. What about filmmakers? Except for Sergei Eisenstein, Wim Wenders and Peter Greenaway, not many filmmakers have revealed an interest in or affinity for architecture. It may be because, for filmmakers, architecture is inescapable and always present in their frames⁹. In this chapter, I will focus on the filmmakers' portrayal of architects and the role entrusted to them. The images of architects addressed here are the protagonists in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, Terrence Malick, and Hirokazu Kore-eda.

3.1. *L'avventura* (1960)

Michelangelo Antonioni has portrayed architects (twice, if you count a female architecture student in the passenger), photographers, journalists, writers, film directors, and other creators and expressionists as protagonists.

One of his key films, *L'avventura*, follows the protagonist, architect Sandro, on a contemplative journey to repair the relationship between the three of them, as he searches for his missing girlfriend, Anna, with her best friend Claudia. Sandro and Claudia continue to search for Anna in Sicily, not knowing whether she is alive or dead. Sandro is impressed and overwhelmed by the beauty of the architecture and urban design he sees in Sicily (Figure 14) and the imagination of the architects who designed it, and he says that he will seriously try his hand at architectural design again. Claudia also encourages him, but then he makes a weak comment as if he is giving up because of the shortened life span of buildings these days.

⁷ Architects such as Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, who were at the Cooper Union around that time, stated that they were not architecture-oriented in the academy and were aiming for a freer expression such as films and multimedia installations ("Interview", 2019).

⁸ The colloquium "Cinematic Architecture Conference" was organised on the occasion of Schöning's retirement from the AA on 15 May 2009. The transcript was included in his third book on cinematic architecture, *Everything in Life is as Much Fiction as It is Fact*.

⁹ Nigel Coates said, "There could be no film without architecture, no architecture without film" in the symposium "Film, Space, Architecture (part 2/3)". <https://youtu.be/pjL51GibT5A>

On how the Sicilian urban design represents Sandro's feelings in this scene, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (1989) notes that "art in Sicily is baroque: in other words, movement, instability, the constant search for an impossible balance, like the spiral of the fountain in front of which Sandro lingers and becomes gloomy" (p.194). In front of the overwhelming perspective of the architecture, Sandro moves in a spiral trajectory while conversing with Claudia. What this implies is that it is extremely difficult to challenge or resist the great beauty of the past, and to repair the relationship between the three of them. His vague search continues in Anna's footsteps, as if he were sketching abstract lines on a blank canvas or drawing board. Film critic Sam Rohdie (1990) pointed out that:

Most narratives move forward consequentially, causatively, and within predetermined structures. Antonioni's films are different from this; they seem to move, or rather to oscillate, not between event and event, but between narrative and its absence. (p. 176)

For Sandro, love is uncertain, sterile, and he realises that it is in a realm that cannot be defined or repaired as simply a conventional relationship. Nevertheless, he will continue to explore, spiralling and pondering, in the hope of a solution (Figure 15).



Figure 14 Architect, Sandro in *L'avventura*



Figure 15 Sandro and Claudia in *L'avventura*.

3.2. *The Tree of Life* (2011)

Terrence Malick's film is an epic tale of time and life contrasted with depictions of God, nature, the universe and prehistoric creatures. The protagonist, Jack O'Brien, is an architect who works for a large design firm in Houston and is highly respected by his colleagues. But he has complex problems in his family. Maybe it is because the weight of love comes from strong domestic intimacy. Joshua Nunziato (2016) mentioned:

Time is the problem of The Tree of Life: Time borne in the intimacy of the family. The problem of the family is the problem of history, the problem of life, the problem of the cosmos itself. (p. 224)

Here, as in Antonioni's *L'avventura*, the architect is with time. Jack's perspective, which continues to search for the Tree of Life in his mind, begins with memories of his past with family, goes back in time and space to prehistoric times, and then flashes to the present. On the other hand, Renée Tobe pointed out that "the film is all about trees, tree houses, and glades of trees, with patches and patterns of shadow. The tree represents the uncorrupted state of childhood" (2017, p. 139). And the natural trees of his childhood are juxtaposed as symbols of Jack's presence in his ultra-modern design office made of steel and glass in the urban landscape of Houston (Figure 16).

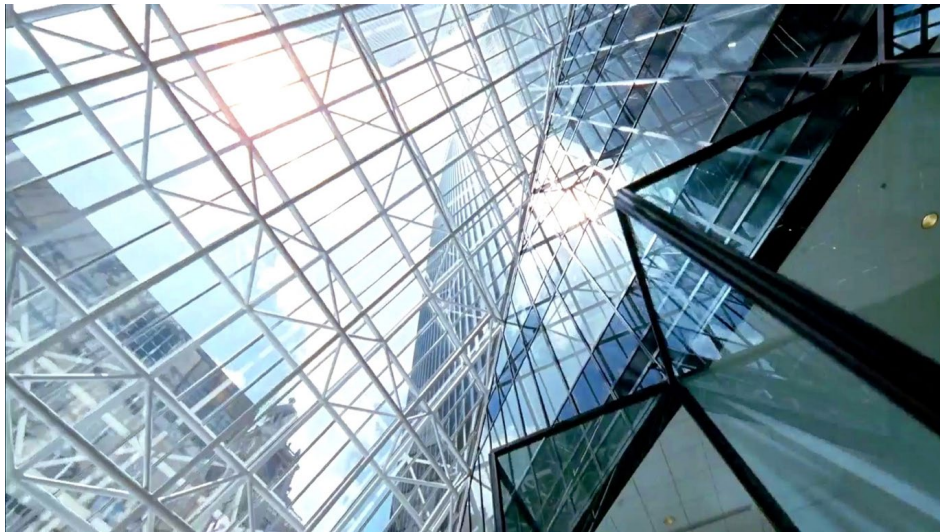


Figure 16 The steel and glass-made building where Jack works looks like trees and branches or a forest in *The Tree of Life*.

The story revolves around Jack and his complex relationship with his father Mr O'Brien and mother Mrs O'Brien with his brothers. Jack seems to have lived quietly his life without resistance, with his strict father as his antagonist. His father's strict teachings were: "Don't give up, don't say you can't do it." On the other hand, his kind-hearted mother continually tells him to "help each other, love others and be tolerant", quoting words from the Bible, but these are also too heavy for him. Jack has lived his life conscious of his inability to inherit harshness from his father and kindness from his mother while feeling remorse for his coldness toward his younger brother, who died at the age of 19. In his mind, he roams the deserts and seashores, continually asking God what humanity is for and if it is enough just to exist. The perspective of his search traces the prehistoric Earth from outer space. It then leads to memories of his personal development from infancy. Eventually, Jack opens a door connecting to the water of the shore as if he is guided by God, where people in his lifetime so far are walking through (Figure 17). He kneels in amazement. There are two questions coming out here: Why did director Terrence Malick give Jack the role of the architect as a seeker of the ascetic and sublime world? Why did Jack choose the profession of architect after growing up with such parents? The only thing I can say is that he is an architect who has thoughtfully constructed a story of one life and its connections as the Tree of Life. Perhaps the only way to draw and connect these lines to link our eternal question, "where have we come from and where are we

going?" is to continue to philosophically question the meaning of the existence of others, which is the role that Malick entrusted to him as an architect.



Figure 17 Architect, Jack O'Brien in *The Tree of Life*.

3.3. *Like Father, Like Son (2013)*

The protagonist of Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Like Father, Like Son* is Ryota Nonomiya, a talented architect. He is a decisive and arrogant man who believes that the only way for his six-year-old son to succeed is to leave childcare to his wife, a housewife, live in a skyscraper and provide a high-quality education (Figure 18). There should be no fault. Ryota is satisfied with his son's accurate and impeccable answers in the private primary school entrance exams. Even though he knows it goes too far and probably wrong, he feels he has no choice but to be on the winning side of life (that is, to live on the upper floors of a high-rise building, which is clearly visualized) because in today's competitive society, being too nice will cost you. Ryota's over-the-top design toward the son is very similar to that of Mr O'Brien in the tree of life. The three of them appear to be acting out false happiness. Their happiness is nothing more, nothing less.



Figure 18 The architect's family lives in a high-rise condominium in the middle of Tokyo as if they look things down from the sky.

One day, they are informed that their son was mistaken for another baby at the hospital he was born, and Ryota is surprised that his real son is being raised by a seemingly dowdy and unreliable couple. Here, Kore-eda sets a small, shabby appliance repair shop for the other parents in contrast

to the architect's high-rise condominium apartment (Figure 19), but their way of life is very human and Ryota's real son seems to live a carefree and joyful life. As the two couples interact with each other, Ryota and his wife are confronted with the question imposed by Kore-eda: can they love their real son because of their blood ties or accept the switched son because of the time together (Kore-eda, 2016). Then, he realises that both of his sons are no longer connected to him in any way. He begins to think about his real son's life, then about his switched son's, and both. And finally, he thinks about the true happiness of the switched son he has spent the past six years with and dares to walk separately on parallel paths (the sequence is visually striking) (Figure 19). He started drawing one strong line six years ago, and he realises that he may not see the path of his switched son walking that line again. What he has drawn is not a straight but a circular line that circled like a spiral eventually returning to the origin of his inherent conscience.



Figure 19 Another family lives in a shabby old house on the ground in a rural area



Figure 20 Architect Ryota finally draws the line of his thought on their sons.

3.4. Architects who build human relationships

All these protagonists are placed in a solitary situation by the filmmakers. In the beginning, they are not aware that they are dealing with a collective or social problem but take their personal feelings as the starting point for their thoughts and explorations. They then understand the

difficulty of solving the problems and eventually realise the philosophical propositions from their own standpoint, face them, struggle and try to present messages. The stage where the message is presented is society, the community. In a book co-written with Ken Loach, *Kore-eda (2020)* says: "I don't explicitly state the point of my anger in my films because it is frightening for a filmmaker to offer any solutions or suggest something" (p. 29). However, in Kore-eda's film, and in the other two films as well, there seems potentially more active "problem posing" about human relations and society by the directors to the viewers. It is the protagonists, the architects, who confront the problems. If the issues raised have depth, the audience will accept them and begin to think on their own. That is a kind of resonance and empathy of the film. The architects portrayed by these filmmakers are entrusted with the social role of building human relations, bringing imagination to the viewers and engaging them in the narratives¹⁰. The discussion in this chapter has contributed to and helped to enhance the activities described in the next chapter¹¹.

4. Cinématique Architecture Tokyo

The main objectives of launching Cinématique Architecture Tokyo (abbreviated CAT) (Figure 21)¹² in 2014 were: 1) to delve deeply into and embody the cinematic architecture theory developed in the Diploma Unit 3, 2) to explore the idea of architecture not merely as physical building design but in a broader sense, and 3) to discuss the role of architects who build human relations. Seminars and workshops have been organized in major cities such as Tokyo and Yokohama, and in regional cities. In addition, I had the opportunity to hold workshops and lectures at McGill University in Montreal (Figure 22) and Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok (Figure 23).

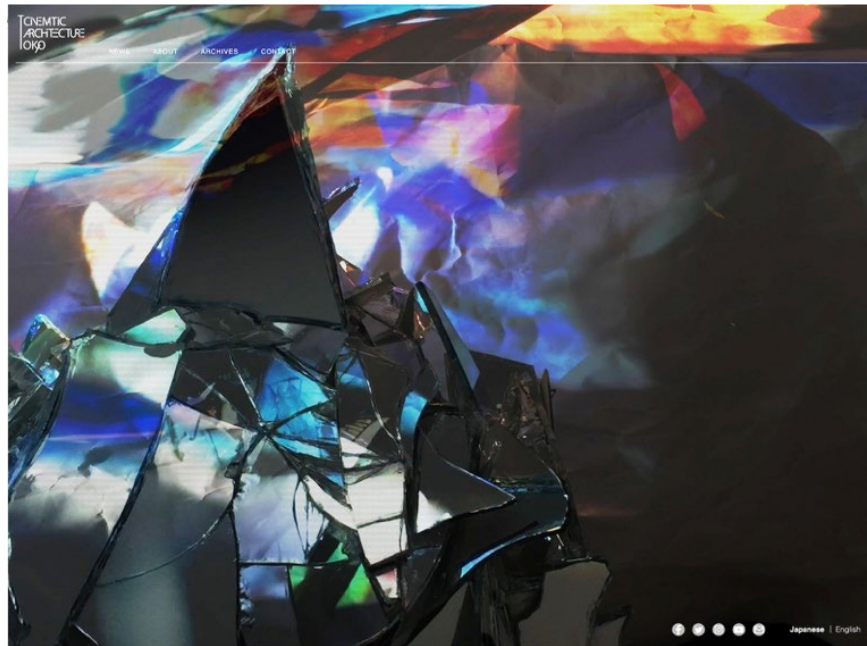


Figure 21 Cinématique Architecture Tokyo website

¹⁰ Juhani Pallasmaa pointed out that [the narratives of Antonioni] "create associative fields or clusters of poetic images, which tend to play down the dramatic tension and open up the narrative to interpretation. The viewer turns from a passive onlooker into an active participant who appears to have an moral allegiance with the story" (2007, p.8).

¹¹ I would like to further develop the theme of 'depicted architects' in this chapter. For example, in the symposium "Film, Space, Architecture", Renee Tobe discussed *The Belly of an Architect* (1987) directed by Peter Greenaway, a wide-ranging examination of Roman history, geography and iconography from the perspective of a Roman architect. <https://youtu.be/pjL51GibT5A>

¹² Cinématique Architecture Tokyo website: <http://cinematicarchitecturetokyo.com/>



Figure 22 Workshop and lecture in the studio of Professor Ipek Tureli of McGill University in Montreal, Canada, in January 2019.

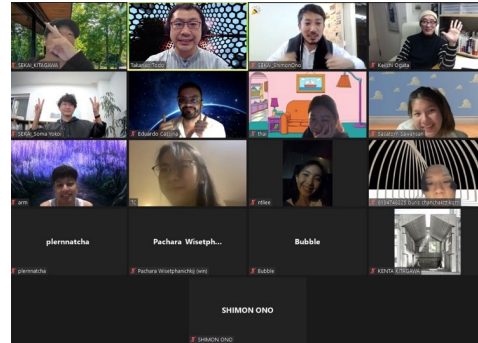


Figure 23 Lecture and a student's work from the workshop, "Funeral of Architecture" organised by adjunct Professor Tadao Tado, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2021.

4.1. Workshop Series "Alchemy of Architecture" in Tokyo

"Alchemy of Architecture" (2015-present) is a project re-evaluating the architects' potential as "alchemists in the contemporary city". A historical street near the University of Tokyo is designated as the site, where each participant researches the works of famous writers, artists, architects, films, literature, philosophy, geography, urban archaeology and other references related to the site, extracts elements of interest and creates a video work, focusing on intuitive sense. The video is then freely transformed into different media, such as text, performance or installation, in an experimental attempt to expose the narratives and aesthetics hidden in the streets to the outside world (Figure 24).



Figure 24 Workshop series "Alchemy of Architecture" and participants' work.

The programme focuses on the production process. It uses an assemblage methodology that mixes as many different things as possible, taking advantage of the freedom of ideas, spontaneity and inspiration to broaden the scope of expression. While considering what is needed in the city, the creator does not decide on the final form at an early stage but focuses on the experience of fresh surprise when the final form is emerged. This production process itself then becomes a narrative. The participants have developed expressions that are not necessarily architectural but have what Giuliana Bruno calls, "a materiality, like cinema or architecture, which rather needs a screen in an age of widespread virtual media" (2014, p. 3) or include media art mixing architecture and art.

The project context involves an experimental exploration of cinematic architecture theory. It is an experiment in crossing boundaries from the integration of cinema and architecture to the more contradictory concept of fusion. The project attracted multinationals living in Japan and guests from abroad including the visit by Rolf Gerstlauer's studio at AHO, Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway. In 2015, CAT participated in the exhibition at the National Conference of Urban Planning in Tokyo¹³.



Figure 25 Workshop series “Look at the Crystal Ball!” and participants’ work.

4.2. Workshop Series “Look at the Crystal Ball!” in Yokohama

The workshop series in Yokohama “Look at the Crystal Ball!” (2017-2021) is about observing the city, exposing representations of the past and present, and looking at the city of the future. The project aims to create a visual representation of near future landscapes with narratives by studying and overlaying the urban landscape and architecture of Yokohama, the most advanced city in Japan in terms of urban planning, with works depicting images of Yokohama's future, including science fiction works. In recent years, Yokohama has been the subject of urban planning controversy due to the attraction of casinos, the redevelopment of landmark areas and the backlash from citizens against it. The workshop has a programme more akin to urban conceptual design (Figure 25).

4.3. Community Event “Cinematic Café in Musashino” in Tokyo

The art café “Cinematic Café in Musashino” (2019-present), with the support of the local municipality Musashino City, attempts to discover possibilities within the fragmented communities in contemporary Tokyo through casual conversations that intersect film, architecture, art, literature and subcultures. It is an attempt in the role of architects to build relationships between people involved in arts and culture that may be of little interest to many (Figure 26).

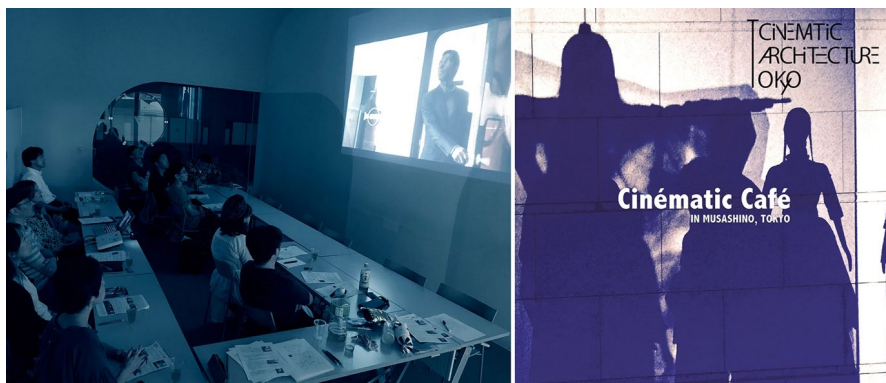


Figure 26 Discussing Jim Jarmusch’s *the Limits of Control* in the Cinematic Café in Musashino. / The poster for the “Shadow” Session.

¹³ Exhibition “The World Projected by Cinématique Architecture Tokyo” in the National Conference of Urban Planning 2015, held at University of Tokyo 3-4 October 2015.

4.4. Workshop Series “For the Sake of Anyone Whom We Might Not Have Seen Yet” in Toyama

In Japan, where the population is declining rapidly¹⁴, the economy continues to decline like a sinking vessel. As a result, cities decline and communities fragment. Divisions in terms of gender, education, wealth and ideological differences become apparent. Rural areas lose their uniqueness and exhibit increasingly postmodern representations, for example, Tokyo-like giant shopping malls (Figure 27). It has been pointed out that serious problems such as the falling birth rate, the ageing population and the hollowing out of city centres are more pronounced in regional cities¹⁵. This workshop, which is set in Takaoka City, Toyama Prefecture, a city in the Hokuriku region, is a project that addresses both experimentation in expression and human relations building. Specifically, it aims to discover site-specific narratives that can provide hints for community revitalization.



Figure 27 Shopping mall on a 205,000 square metre site in Takaoka City.

In the methodology here, the creation of poetic images is the key to narrative discovery. It was inspired by Schöning’s words that “What I propose is a poetic logic, a poetic intelligence, a multidimensional energetic combination of contradictory elements governed by a logical singularity” (2006, p.15) and Pallasmaa’s “Poetic images are condensations of numerous experiences, percepts and ideas” (2007, p.9). The title of the workshop, For the sake of anyone whom we might not have seen yet, comes from a quietly poetic phrase in a novel set in the local area¹⁶.

Supported by civic action NPO that has been working for gender equality and social participation in this conservative locality for over 30 years, the workshop focuses its research on films,¹⁷ literature, manga and anime set in the region and the reality of the background (Figures 28, 29). Referring in particular to works depicting women facing gender issues and “women’s way of life” problems related to conservatism and imposed mores specific to regional cities, the participants think about the role of the female characters’ ways of life, ideas, goals, dreams, resistance and actions in the stories. Contrasting these with the reality represented in the city, hints for future

¹⁴ According to the Population and Social Security Research Institute, by 2050, Japan’s population will have decreased by 20 million people in 2025. The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research website: https://www.ipss.go.jp/p-info/e/S_D_1/Indip.asp#t_2 (Accessed in 5-9-2022)

¹⁵ Hidetoshi Ohno, an architect who has been conducting research and making proposals on urban issues for many years, says: “What we need to do today is not to create the optimistic visions of the 1960s but to employ new ideas and methodologies in the planning and administering of cities” (2016, p.3).

¹⁶ The phrase is from Satoko Kizaki’s novel *The phoenix tree* (1990, p.187). It is a quietly poetic phrase muttered by a dying woman who decides to break with the traditional customs of the region.

¹⁷ One of the films made in the region is *Ballad of Orin* (1977), directed by Masahiro Shinoda, which is the story of a woman who belonged to a mutual voluntary aid organisation of blind female minstrels in the region in early 20th-century Japan.

communicative design, possibilities for placemaking, critical factors (Figures 30, 31, 32)¹⁸ and values that cannot be obtained with money, i.e., wellbeing, are also extracted and expressed.



Figure 28 Blind female minstrels of the mutual aid organization. From *Ballad of Orin*.

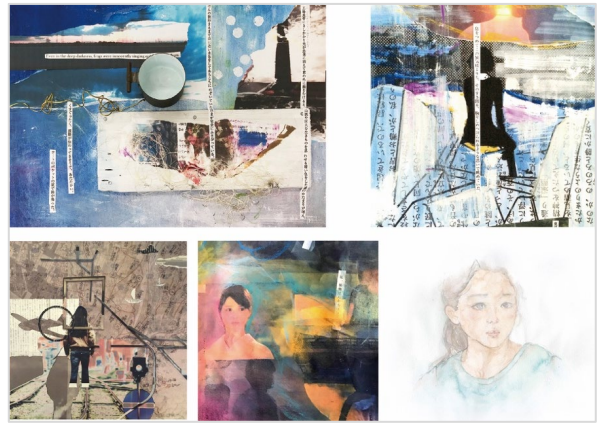


Figure 29 Expressions from the Hokuriku region workshop “For the Sake of Anyone Whom We Might Not Have Seen Yet” since 2016



Figure 30 Sculpture by Spanish architect Enric Miralles was removed in 2014.



Figure 31 Daniel Libeskind’s object placed deep in the mountains of Toyama prefecture.



Figure 32 Artworks as a response to the Machi no Kaozukuri project in Toyama.

¹⁸ It can also be a tribute or irony to something that has been lost. One such example is the “Machi no Kaozukuri” [creating the face of the town] project produced by Arata Isozaki in the 1990s. Overseas architects (Ron Herron, Daniel Libeskind, Enric Miralles, Cesar Portela, and others) were commissioned to design symbolic buildings and follies symbolising areas in Toyama Prefecture, but it is questionable whether these are still recognised as originally intended today. Miralles’ sculpture was demolished in 2014 due to development, and Libeskind’s object is located deep in the mountains.

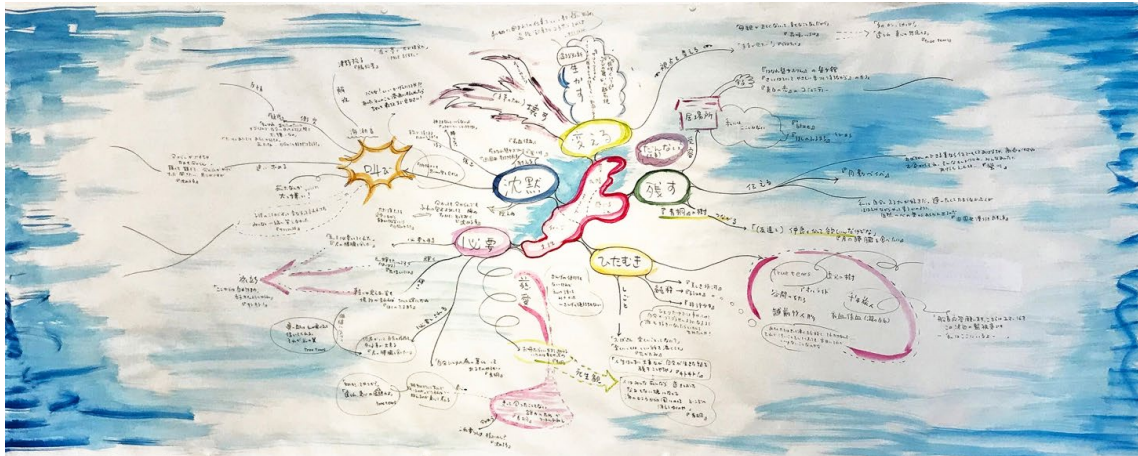


Figure 33 Narrative collage out of Hokuriku media made in the workshop coordinated by Tomko Shoji.

The presentation of the expression has so far taken the form of exhibitions in local galleries and municipal museums, projections on historical buildings and gatherings for conversation. As a result, a small local network of art and culture enthusiasts has been formed¹⁹. The most recent workshop, held in autumn 2022, featured a projection as a finale that transformed the participants' words and artwork compositions into “poetic images” (Figure 34). It was a projection onto one of the old houses scattered in the countryside. It evoked what Mark Cousins, who is a film historian and was an advisor to Diploma Unit 3, had said: “Film constitutes a kind of memory palace for the fear and loves and above all for the loss of architecture” (1998, p.18).



Figure 34 Projection event in the workshop “For the Sake of Anyone Whom We Might Not Have Seen Yet”.

The opportunities for dialogue and expression in this series of activities are spaces for empathy and sharing, which will contribute to creating what neo-existentialism calls a “field of sense”. To help “big cities and the countryside can work well together” (Jacobs, 1961), CAT will continue to develop community design ideas that can be used in both by linking the efforts to tackle the problems of the local cities to those of the metropolitan area.

¹⁹ Workshop participants also discovered the pleasure of “pilgrimages” to visit local places that have been the setting for novels and films. “These seemingly ordinary urban sites are nodes that are linked to a narrative” (Koeck, 2013, p.47), leading to the discovery and reaffirmation of local attractions.

5. Conclusion

Hiroshima Through Light, which I produced while enrolled in Diploma Unit 3, concludes with the words: "Hiroshima was born from shadows. And the future of the city is defined by its desire for light" (Ogata, 2001, p. 187). This work is just one of the attempts to realise the term "illuminated and enlightening event" (2005, p. 1) in Pascal Schöning's definition of cinematic architecture. And the projection performed in autumn 2022 is just another milestone in a trial-and-error process about film and architecture.

To further the exploration, it may be necessary to move back and forth between unbiased thinking from architecture to film and from film to architecture, including conceptual and stimulating experiments such as the "clash between architecture and film" advocated by architect Ryoji Suzuki (2013, p. 52).

I will keep considering the significance of memory, history, poetic imagery, narrative, the image of architects and social issues, communication design, place-making for the field of sense, and spatial quality. The essence of cinematic architecture will appear more clearly by integrating film and architecture when these explorations reach the next level.

As one of the methodologies to search for truth and essence in this chaotic and uncertain world, the theory of cinematic architecture, which is pluralistic thinking, may be applicable in various ways. This is the significance of continuing further discussion, experimentation and practice.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Işıl Baysan Serim of SINETOPIA Architecture, City and Film Atelier and Professor Gül Kaçmaz Erk of Queen's University Belfast for the opportunity to write this piece.

References

- Antonioni, M (Director). (1960). *L'avventura* [Film].
- Antonioni, M. (1996). Di Carlo, C., Tinazzi, G., & Cottino-Jones, M. (Eds.). *The architecture of vision: Writings and interviews on cinema*. New York: Marsilio Publishers.
- Barthes, R. (1989). *Leaving the movie theater*. In *The rustle of language* (R. Howard, Trans.)(pp. 345-349). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Bruno, G. (2014). *Surface: Matters of aesthetics, materiality, and media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coates, N. (2012). *Narrative architecture*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Cousins, M. (1998). *Alchemy of architecture*. In Schöning, P. (Ed.), *Holding the universe onto the earth* (p. 18). Linz: HfG Linz.
- Deleuze, G. (2001). *Cinema 2: The time-image* (H. Tomlinson, & R. Galeta, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- De Bleekere, S., & Gerards, S. (2017). *Narrative Architecture: A designer's Story*. New York: Routledge.
- Face of the town project in Toyama. (1993, January 1). *Global Architecture Japan*, (Winter 1993), pp. 217-245.
- Friedberg, A. (1993). *Window shopping: Cinema and the postmodern*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Friedberg, A. (2006). *The virtual window: From Alberti to Microsoft*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Holl, S., Pallasmaa, J., & Pérez-Gomez, A. (1994). *Questions of perception: Phenomenology of architecture*. Tokyo: A+U Publishing Co., Ltd.
- An interview with the partners of DS+R: Democratizing space. (2019, June). *A+U Architecture and Urbanism*, (2019:06 No.585), pp. 7-17.
- Isozaki, A. (1997). *Kukan e [Towards the space]*. Tokyo: Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage Books. (Originally published by Random House in 1961)
- Jarmusch, J. (Director). (2009). *The Limits of Control* [Film].
- Jencks, C. (1977). *The language of post-modern architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.
-

- Keene, D. (Ed.) (2008). *Anthology of Japanese literature: From the earliest era to the mid-nineteenth century*. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing.
- Kizaki, S. (1990). *The phoenix tree and other stories*. (C. A. Flath, trans.) Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Koeck, R. (2013). *Cine-scapes: Cinematic spaces in architecture and cities*. London: Routledge.
- Kore-eda, H. (Director). (2013). *Like Father, Like Son* [Film].
- Kore-eda, H. (2016). *Eiga o tori nagara kangaeta koto [What I thought about while shooting the film]*. Tokyo: Mishimasha Publishing Co.
- Kore-eda, H., & Loach, K. (2020). *Kazoku to shakai ga kowareru toki [When family and society break down]*. Tokyo: NHK Publishing, Inc.
- Leslie, C., Rodger, J. (Ed.) (2016). *Disappearing Glasgow: A photographic journey*. Glasgow: Fright Books.
- Malick, T. (Director). (2011). *The Tree of Life* [Film].
- Marker, C. (Director). (1962). *La Jetée* [Film].
- Markus, G. (2017). *Why the world does not exist (G. Moss trans.)*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mostafavi, M., & Leatherbarrow, D. (1993). *On weathering: The life of buildings in time*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Moure, J. (2018). *The Endless Endings of Michelangelo Antonioni's Films*. In Christie, I., & van den Oever, A. (Eds.), *Stories: Screen narrative in the digital era* (pp. 111-118). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Nunziato, J. (2016). *Eternal flesh as divine wisdom in the tree of life*. In Johnston, R., & Mitchell, J. (Eds.), *Theology and the films of Terrence Malick* (pp. 218-231). New York: Routledge.
- Ogata, K. (2001). *Hiroshima through light: From light to silence, silence to light*. (I. von Essen, & E. F. Ogata trans.) *Mānoa*, 13:1, 180-187.
- Ohno, H. (2008). *Shurinkingu nippon [Shrinking Japan]*. Tokyo: Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Ohno, H. (2016). *Fibercity: A vision of cities in the age of shrinkage*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Pallasmaa, J. (2007). *The architecture of image: Existential space in cinema*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Publishing.
- Resnais, A. (Director). (1961). *Last Year at Marienbad* [Film].
- Rohdie, S. (1990). *Antonioni*. London: British Film Institute.
- Ropars-Wuilleumier, M-C. (1989). *L'avventura*. In Chatman, E., & Fink, F. (Eds.), *L'avventura: Michelangelo Antonioni, director* (pp. 191-195). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Schöning, P. (2006). *Manifest for a cinematic architecture*. London: AA Publications.
- Schöning, P., Löffler, J., & Azevedo, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Cinematic architecture*. London: AA Publications.
- Schöning, P., Löffler, J., & Azevedo, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Fact & fiction*. London: AA Publications.
- Scott, R. (Director). (1982). *Blade Runner* [Film].
- Shinoda, M. (Director). (1977). *Ballad of Orin* [Film].
- Suzuki, R. (2013). *Kenchiku eiga materiariu sasupensu [Architectural cinema: Material suspense]*. Tokyo: LIXIL Publishing.
- Tanizaki, J. (1984). *In Praise of shadows*. (T. J. Harper, & E. G. Seidensticker, trans.) Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. (Original work published 1933)
- Tobe, R. (2017). *Film, architecture and spatial imagination*. New York: Routledge.
- Tschumi, B. (1996). *Architecture and disjunction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vidler, A. (1992). *The architectural uncanny: Essays in the modern unhomely*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Virilio, P. (1991). *The aesthetics of disappearance*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Welles, O. (Director). (1947). *The Lady from Shanghai* [Film].

Resume

Keiichi Ogata, educator, architect and urbanist based in Tokyo and Director of Cinematic Architecture Tokyo. He studied film at the Nihon University School of Art and the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA Diploma Hons 1996). His research interests are film, architecture, art and sub-cultures.
<http://keiichiogata.space/>
