The course is designed to introduce students to some key texts and themes in architectural critical theory, while simultaneously addressing the issues on hand through their cinematic equivalents. In this way students are offered both an insight into the theories they might not have encountered before, relevant to the architectural discourse, as well as a way of constructing theoretical links between film and architecture through adequate cinematic representations of buildings/cities/spaces.

The course is structured around a series of concepts, grouped in thematically corresponding pairs: object and movement, vision and power, event and simulation, text and body. These concepts are accompanied by the following films: Jacques Tati’s Playtime (1967) and Dziga Vertov’s The Man with the Movie Camera (1929); Alfred Hitchcock’s Rear Window (1954) and Mathieu Kassovitz’s La Haine (1994); Federico Fellini’s La Dolce Vita (1972) and Mamoru Oshii’s Ghost in the Shell (1995); and finally, Chris Marker’s Sunless (1982) and Bill Viola’s The Passing (1981).

timetable:

Wed 01 Feb 2006
Room
17.00-18.30 Lecture 3
VISION
18.30-20.00 Lecture 4
POWER

Wed 08 Feb 2006
Room
17.00-18.30 Lecture 1
OBJECT
18.30-20.00 Lecture 2
MOVEMENT

Wed 15 Feb 2006
Room
17.00-18.30 Lecture 5
EVENT
18.30-20.00 Lecture 6
SIMULATION

Wed 22 Feb 2006
Room
17.00-18.30 Lecture 7
TEXT
18.30-20.00 Lecture 8
BODY

Wed 01 Mar 2006
Room
17.00-18.30 Seminar 1
Lectures 1+2+3+4
18.30-20.00 Seminar 2
Lectures 5+6+7+8

Wed 15 Mar 2006
Room
17.00-20.00 Seminar 3
Students Presentations & Tutorials

Wed 19 Apr 2006
School Office
ITTA Final Course Submission

Wed 24 May 2006
Room M140
10.00-12.00 ITTA Course Feedback

sessions 1+2
vision / power
This session starts with an introduction to some of the basic questions regarding the construction of theoretical links between architecture and cinema. It discusses the three main approaches that are in use among theorists of film and architecture today: the question of representations of cities – the way in which cinema has become one of the most easily definable artistic practices to depict situations which mould the contemporary urban condition; the notion of space, its representational and corporeal aspects, and the forging of the link between two apparently distinct media, architecture and film; and finally, film addressed in the context of architecture as the practice of the built, material object. This introduction also provides a brief overview of the major 20th Century theories in critical theory and film studies.

The first couple of themes deals with one of the most prominent questions both in architectural and cinematic theories – that of visual representation, and its implications. These are observed through the examples of Alfred Hitchcock’s Rear Window and Matheu Kassovitz’s La Haine (Hate), which illustrate the notions of viewing and optical regimes specific to architecture and cities, but also crucial to the act of cinematic viewing itself, both within the framework of film as a spatial visual practice and as a physical experience of spectatorship.

The questions posed here show how the study of film has been addressed through the theories of the visual; some of the major conceptualisations of vision in the context of critical theories are introduced: the discussion of mise-en-scene as the key concept of visual aspects of cinema; the questions of socio-political notions of vision; the notion of the gaze (psychoanalytic theory and the construction of the human subject through vision); and the question of spectatorship in the context of cinema as spatial and architectural practice. All of these aspects raise the questions of the second concept on hand, power, which is drawn out in particular in relation to social and political implications.

**Films:**
- Rear Window (1954), dir. Alfred Hitchcock
- La Haine (1995), dir. Matheu Kassovitz

**Key texts:**

**Sessions 3+4**

**Object / Movement**

These two sessions discuss film in the context of architectural theory through the notion of the architectural object, one of the enduring subjects in architectural theory. This concept is derived from and discussed through the example of Jacques Tati’s 1967 film Playtime, which helps set up some of the basic questions instrumental in understanding architecture and urban environments. Alongside Tati, Dziga Vertov’s The Man with the Movie Camera (1929) is positioned as a somewhat different cinematic take on modernism, metropolitan life and, importantly, dynamism of the urban condition. It introduces the second concept in this double session, movement.

Both films are read in the context of some of the seminal 20th century texts in architectural theory: Georg Simmel’s ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’; Le Corbusier’s ‘The City of Tomorrow and its Planning’; Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’; and aided with Marc Augé’s Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. The questions raised attempt to show the basic premises of our understanding of buildings and cities of modernism – and its subsequent heritage.

**Films:**
- Playtime (1967), dir. Jacques Tati
- The Man with the Movie Camera (1929), dir. Dziga Vertov

**Key texts:**
- Benjamin, Walter, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’

**Sessions 5+6**

**Event / Simulation**

The question of the event has been part of the architectural discourse as an inherent critique and distancing from modernism for a
few decades now. It represents the key term when it comes to linking architecture to the contemporary philosophical understandings of time, space and experience. The main film utilised to discuss the notion of the event is Federico Fellini's La Dolce Vita from 1961, one of the seminal cinematic works to address the notion of the social event in an urban environment. Guy Debord's understanding of the term spectacle, as well as Bernard Tschumi's discussion of the concept of the event are filtered through the reading of the film in order to tease out a number of interpretations.

This film is contrasted with a seminal example of contemporary Japanese animation, Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell, an example both of the ultimate in cinematic representation – removal from the domain of the quotidian through animation – and of an alternative take on the question of the metropolitan condition, represented through the genre (science-fiction), and testing the liminal conditions in contemporary urbaniy. The film is discussed in the context of the notion of simulation as developed by Jean Baudrillard, and ultimately questions the realm of reality – as opposed to that of representation. The example on hand helps cast specific light on this debate, and is further enriched through the discussion of Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, in an attempt to show a different way of theorising the question of the simulation.

**Films:**
- La Dolce Vita (1961), dir. Federico Fellini
- Ghost in the Shell (1995), dir. Mamoru Oshii

**Key Texts:**
- Deleuze, Gilles, with Felix Guattari, 'Event' in What is Philosophy? London and New York: Verso, 1994
- Baudrillard, Jean, Simulacra and Simulation (excerpt)

**Sessions 7+8**

**Text / Body**

The final couple of concepts are linked to the practice of so-called 'essay film'-making, as well as experimental video art (and its cinematic procedures). The two essay films, London by Patrick Keiller and Sans Soleil (Sunless) by Chris Marker help address the notion of text, architectural and other, and its related term, narrative, and how the two affect both the experience of film and architecture itself. The key texts are Michel de Certeau's 'Spatial Stories', from The Practice of Everyday Life and Jennifer Bloomer's Architecture and the Text: The (S)crypts of Joyce and Piranesi.

The notion of the text is then confronted, through examples of experimental video art (most prominently Bill Viola's The Passing) with the notion of the body, its relation to perception and space, as well as more specifically the question of tactility, which stands at the intersection of the body with its environment – the object, the city.

**Films:**
- Sans Soleil (Sunless), dir. Chris Marker (1982)
- London (1993), dir. Patrick Keiller
- Bill Viola (1979, etc.)

**Key Texts:**
- Bloomer, Jennifer, Architecture and the Text: The (S)crypts of Joyce and Piranesi (excerpt), New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993

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