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THE RED NARRATIVE CINEMA: AN URBAN MONTAGE IN MOSCOW

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Statement of the problem. The article explores the concept of transformation as an invisible and constructive key element in narrative films in close relation to its architectural reflections in the Red Narrative Cinema reconstructed as a new shell for the Pushkinsky Cinema Hall, built in 1961 in Moscow's Pushkin Square. This article does not intend to analyze or re-read a certain type of narrative film, but instead attempts to explore how filmic architecture is transformed into narrative cinema in relation to Pushkin Square as a public space in which the Red Narrative Cinema is located.

Results. The building offers the constructs of narrative film, defined as a representational, organizational film that tells its audience or spectators a fictional story or narrative. Thus the building, as a stimulating entity, narrates a sensory perception of gathering for an important event that can be visually experienced by spectators, passers-by, and local residents within a juxtaposition of two different materials that wrap the building in a layered structure. Through the use of a continuous change of colour that gradually turns from transparent to red as a sensory pattern and coincides with the cinema event time, the building is able to signify a familiar but diminished pattern in urban space. The building acts as a visual stimulus that reminds people of an event through the use of a dynamically shaped narrative and concretizes montage theories in cinema into space, thus bridging the classical narrative and the narrative of transformation through which the urban space's meaning is symbolized as a grounds for creating debate on the formation of its backbone.

Conclusions. Depending on the structure of the *fabula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot of a narrative) as two essentials of narrative film defined by the Russian Formalists, the Red Narrative Cinema embraces the spectator in Pushkin Square and urban life by recalling cultural memory through its transformation of light during the daytime as a visual stimulator for residents and introduces a new language of systems. The findings of the research have important implication for ways of finding correlations between montage and urban narrative, as the building underlines that there is no specific or formulaic approach in montage as in the thoughts of Eisenstein.

Keywords: Narrative film; transformation; fabula; syuzhet; montage; Moscow.

Introduction. Narrative is both a part of our culture and a method of storytelling. It is located, as Roland Barthes states, in the form of 'a causally-linked set of events [1].

¹ The Red Narrative Cinema is the name of the design given by the author to the transformation of Pushkinsky Cinema Hall.

It appears everywhere, in every place and in every society, from literature to art, and from film to media. Every narration is a transmission from the sender to the recipient that both depends on linguistic codes and possesses discursive cues that deliver story information to the spectator or reader. The spatio-temporal structure, expression, and process form the narrative, and through the transmission of linguistic codes, “knowledge is articulated and communicated in society in the form of narratives” [2].

Narrative is primarily related to the history of humankind and human actions, events, and modes of production. It is a type of text that functions and exists in its own history with its own stylistic options. Narrative is “a departure from structuralist, formalist, or hermeneutic models, and it is a fundamental spatio-temporal structuration, expression and a process” [3]. Therefore, “human beings understand the construction of an idea of the present, past and future through their use of narrative” [4].

In cinema, the key element of the structure is the narrative, which can be analysed through two constructs: visible and invisible. The narrative is revealed visually, kinaesthetically, and audibly as an interface to either construct or deconstruct these layers’ overall meanings. The visible elements are the overlapping story, music, scenarios, and other possible components of cinema, whereas the invisible element appears in the form of the narrative in the film’s structural characteristics. Meaning is constructed through different layers of a film or fragments that overlap each other. Therefore, these visible and invisible elements and the relationship between narrative film fragments and the montage are similar to constructing both narrative and spatio-temporality in different scales of entities in architectural space.

A narrative film is defined as a representational, organizational film that tells its audience or spectator a fictional story or narrative, informing us about other stories, other possibilities of interrelation [5]. Narrative films can be extended from drama, melodrama, epics, folklore, games, animation, and so on. Narrative films are distinguished by certain shared, generic story events and discursive strategies. A narrative film serves to transform the division between the rational subject’s eye and its object through fragments. In films, the border between the individual and the world disappears within signs and representations. Meaning is produced through the connections of a chronologically altered time and space. Destroying the continuity of time and space in narrative film is the order in the realm of the mind, and camera movement and editing play an essential role in creating and heightening the communication of this meaning [6].

There are parallel relationships between cinema and architecture in the sense that they either construct or deconstruct meaning and thus form space-time relationships. The links among

film, architecture, and urbanism were discussed by early Russian Constructivists in terms of their meaning in architecture and cinema. In the modern era, the filmmakers perceived the mutual relationship between cinema and architecture because of the former's architectonic properties. The film can "construct its own architecture within light/shade/scale and movement" [7]. Narrative is about either spatial experimentation or a film's spatio-temporality. Regarding the relationship between film and architecture, Bernard Tschumi focuses on the impact of space on visual representation in the *Manhattan Transcripts*. According to Tschumi, the relationship between architecture and cinema is a "frame-by-frame technique, where spaces are not only composed but also developed from shot to shot, so that the final meaning of each shot depend" on its context [8]. This signals a cinematic perception that is similar to constructing collages, event-space, and space-time.

Today, what distinguishes new narrative films from classical narratives is the alternative plotting that deconstructs traditional cinematic storytelling and provokes a change in the spectator's perception. In other words, the power of meta-fiction lies in its ability to enable the spectator to enter or leave a particular narrative convention. Certain contemporary narrative films whose spatio-temporal characteristics play differently appear to break the static relationship between the spectator and the object through montage, playing with time, mind, or memory. In such films, fiction and montage form the narrative in a manner similar to how the architectural ideas and fragments of urban space are constructed. Since the earliest days of the medium, the trend seems to have gained momentum, partially thanks to films such as Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006). These films, along with their antecedents, use a specific style to signify not only the advent of changes in cinema or production techniques regarding manifestos, but also a diverse interrelation of the subject and object relations, approaches, and a narration signalling its open style.

Derived from constructing narrative in films, this article focuses on the invisible constructive elements that are displayed in the Red Narrative Cinema, which raises the issue of how a narrative can be formed architecturally by linking Russian film theory to architecture.

1. The Red Narrative: Diagnosis and need for a new stimulator in urban narrative. The Red Narrative Cinema is designed as a reconstruction of an existing cinema building that was originally called the Pushkinsky Cinema Hall and renamed the Rossiya Cinema in 2012. The building was erected in 1961 by Soviet architects Yu. N. Sheverdiayev and D. S. Solopov and was the first major large-format cinema in the country. As the first modern post-war building, the Pushkinsky Cinema Hall remains a cultural icon and has been of great significance to both

the cinematic development and the culture and construction of cinemas in the USSR and contemporary Russia [9]² (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).



Fig. 1. Pushkinsky Cinema Hall, built in 1961.

Pushinsky 2011. Accessed May 11 [9]



Fig. 2. Pushkinsky Cinema Hall, in 2011.

Pushinsky 2011. Accessed May 11 [9]



Fig. 3. Pushkinsky Cinema Hall, view from street level.

Pushinsky 2011. Accessed May 11 [9]

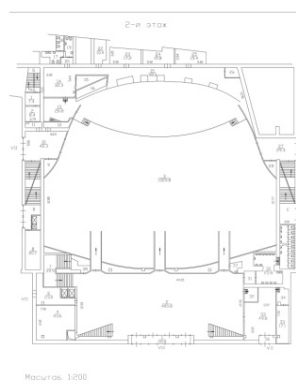


Fig. 4. Pushkinsky Cinema Hall plan,

Pushinsky 2011. Accessed May 11 [9]

That said, there is a problem with the Pushkinsky Cinema's current location. After the cinema's construction, its entrance was directly linked to Pushkin Square. Although this bridge provides direct and convenient access to the building from Pushkin Square, it creates a discontinuous visual and sensory perception that lacks integrity. However, there is a larger issue

² The Red Narrative was designed as a new facade for the Dupont "Changing the Face" competition in Moscow in 2011. The aim of the competition was to redesign and reconstruct the facade of the Pushkinsky Cinema Hall, located in Pushkin Square, Moscow, and to create an organic relationship with the square. The iconic status of the existing building was marred by rapid growth in the urban space and the subsequent multiple annexes that were built with low-quality facade materials. In 1997, the building was refurbished and equipped with a sound and projection system. To engage the old use of the building, Dupont held a competition. To provide a formal multi-function, the building's framework was to remain.

related to the current building's emerging narrative and its context in the recent transformation of Moscow's urban fabric. These problems outline some of the positive and negative traits of transformation in the Muscovite urban fabric, where the government takes different restructuring approaches (Figure 6).

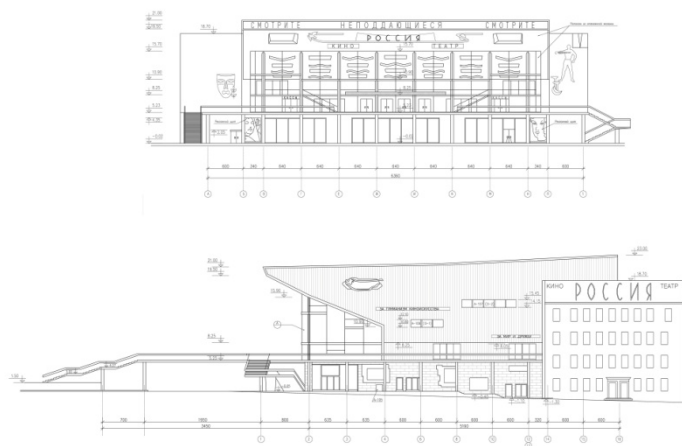


Fig. 5. Pushkinsky Cinema Hall façade, Pushinsky 2011. Accessed May 11 [9]



Fig. 6. New site plan. Rendering by Burak Akpulat developed after the competition.

In Moscow, the urban space transformation began in the late 1980s. The concentration of political, economic, and financial power in the city and its integration into the international network of metropolises separate Moscow from the regional and national economic system. The changes in the liberal economy, new collective spaces of consumption, and the speed and reflection of power currently transform urban spaces [10]. Moreover, the rise of multi-complexes as displays of a market-oriented economy triggers this transformation. The Russian economy's transformation and internationalization, and its reflections in the new post-industrial processes, gave rise to new tendencies in urban development [11] and as such, a spatial pattern emerged out of a new urban economy. However, in certain cases of uncon-

trolled urban sprawl and the resulting discord and lack of integrity in urban space, buildings such as the Pushkinsky Cinema may be isolated urban elements.

In Moscow, the concept of urban transformation is referred to as the growth machine, a term related to how the city is exploited as a means of speculative growth that gives new meaning to the entrepreneurial character of post-socialist urban patterns [12]. Gritsai discusses Moscow's restructuring, which requires different montage techniques:

“It has also always been characterized by a very chaotic land-use structure: under central planning, the mechanism of functional renewal did not exist and new functions simply co-existed in space with the old ones. In this context, we can assume that the spatial pattern of post-industrial restructuring in Moscow is likely to be of a traditional mono-centric type but should be very differentiated within the areas of concentration of new activities, following the differentiation of space accumulated through history” [13].

Pushkin Square has had an important place in Moscow's changing spatial patterns. Derived from a need to revive and reveal the genius loci of this urban space, the Red Narrative Cinema was designed as a critical display of the transformation of the existing cultural icon, the reflections of the growth machine in the public space, where that transformation can be undertaken and perceived differently by residents. To revive its existential meaning in Russian cinematic culture and as an initial cultural milestone in cinema culture, the design transforms the character of the cinema. The Red Narrative Cinema aims to construct new relationships related to the memory of urban space and to stimulate the idea of Pushkin Square as a collective. The building transforms urban fabric into a unified structure through a new narrative by creating a visual and sensory perception in the existing urban narrative of Pushkin Square that provides spectators with different sensory layers, as in constructing narrative in cinema.

2. Constructing the narrative in films and architecture. The characteristics of a narrative depend on the characteristics of the montage. In the early Russian cinema of the 1920s, montage was accepted as a basic principle. According to film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, who was a former architect, there were multiple types of montage: metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtonal, and intellectual [16]. However, Eisenstein refused to recognize the “brick by brick montage” (shot by shot) used by his contemporary Lev Kuleshov, known as the father of Soviet cinema, who placed shots one after another in a sequence to form a serial montage [17]. For Eisenstein, this montage technique had the potential to become a dead formula rather than a dynamic one [18]. Eisenstein found similarities between theatre and cinema. In his article “Montage of Attractions” (1923), he viewed cinema through its close links to theatre. He focused on creating emo-

tion, whereas his contemporary Dziga Vertov focused on the idea of motion [19]. Theatre and cinema had a common purpose: they “influenced the audience in the desired direction through a series of calculated pressures on its psyche” [20]. Instead, Eisenstein stated that “Montage is an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots”, which could also be opposite one another, and he developed the idea of the dramatic montage [21]. For him, montage was “not from the mechanical process of editing, but from any thematic connection with the actors” [22]. For Eisenstein, fragments of juxtaposed montages demanded an activity in which the spectator was active rather than passive. He focused his research on the audience because he was interested in how ideas were transferred to them from the narrative [23]. His montage views were not static or formulaic, which brings us to the ideas of Bazin, later to be undertaken by Deleuze. For Bazin, a montage of shots manipulates the spectator and reduces choice, activity, and freedom, which he thought spectators should have as they do in the theatrical aesthetic.

For Deleuze, who follows the ideas of Bazin, “the cinema itself is a philosophical instrument, a generator of concepts and a producer of texts which render thought in audiovisual terms, not a language but in blocks of movement and duration” [14]. ‘Film restores the real rather than represents it. The frame, for Deleuze, is unstable, dissolvable into the flux of time: time leaks out through the borders of the frame’ [15]. Therefore, in contrast to the structuralist view of cinema, a Metzian view holds that the grammatical rather than purely linguistic, Deleuzian view of cinema depends on a form of becoming. Following Deleuze’s ideas on becoming, the Red Narrative Cinema renders ideas about urban fabric not only in visual terms but also in different levels of perception. The building becomes a transformative act of different urban fragments in Pushkin Square rather than a grammar or a language. The spectator, as a perceiver, is transformed among urban history, tradition, and memories and new forms of urban life.

Derived from the idea of montage theories in cinema, the Red Narrative Cinema is situated on the borders between what has slightly diminished and what is emerging in the urban space of Pushkin Square. It acts as a transformative idea of the collective in Moscow’s emerging urban space. The city’s market-oriented economy and ‘transition into a post-industrial type of economic development’ transform it whilst creating separate spatialities in different parts of the city. Both approaches lead to modifying population social patterns [24]. It is within these emerging fragments that residents encounter a new spatiality in Moscow that imparts something individual whilst also reflecting the residents’ daily experiences of the space.

The first issue is centered on the concept of the growth machine — i.e., the story or the scene depicted to the spectator, which is similar to the fabula in narrative cinema. The second issue

is how residents form these different fragments and spatialities that emerge in the city and that signify *syuzhet*. Therefore, similar to a narrative film, the Red Narrative Cinema depends on the two essentials defined by the Russian Formalists: *fabula* and *syuzhet*. The *fabula* is the story in which a narrative is depicted, and *syuzhet* is how this narrative is applied or realized. In structuralist theory, the *fabula* and *syuzhet* take the name of story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting), and a plot discourse (discourse-discourse in French tradition) that is the expression and the means by which the content is communicated [25]. The *fabula* is a pattern formed through the spectator's assumptions and inferences. The form of picking up narrative cues, applying schemata, framing, and testing hypotheses are variables in the *fabula*. It is the order of the appearance (of the events) [26] and a pattern for creating assumptions and inferences.

Syuzhet, the second essential of narrative film, is a story patterning that refers to a film's actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula*. The *syuzhet* is an abstract concept, one that arranges components and story events according to specific principles; it is a system that arranges a film's elements. The theoretical concept of the *syuzhet* offers a way to analyze the aspects of the film that the spectator organizes into an ongoing story [26]. In narrative films, constructing time and space relates the *syuzhet* to the *fabula* and serves to connect with the spectator's internal perceptions. The narrative process occurs throughout the filmmaking procedure, from staging and shooting to editing and sound mixing. Time and space are particularly fractured and disrupted, but the spectator constructs *fabula* time and space according to hypotheses, cues, and patterns that are already fixed. The connection between the *fabula* and *syuzhet*, in other words, narrative logic, time, and space structuration, is formed through short cuts. Because short cuts provoke a different *fabula* for each spectator, the relationship between *fabula*, *syuzhet*, and style in the film fulfills a complete perception. Style, as a systematic use of cinematic devices, "encourages the spectator to construct a coherent, consistent time and space for the *fabula* action" [27].

In classical narrative films, this assemblage has a causal linear structure and serves as a mimetic representation of reality and film technique that is seen as a vehicle for the *syuzhet*'s transmission of *fabula* [28]. Analogically, the Red Narrative Cinema concretizes montage theories in cinema into space, thus bridging the classical narrative and the narrative of transformation through which the urban space's meaning is symbolized as a grounds for creating debate on the formation of its backbone. The departure point of the idea of this new space is to create a perception of the continuous fading away of light and to reveal the urban space's

meaning whilst advertising the activities and events that it holds. The building offers the constructs of narrative film, defined as a representational, organizational film that tells its audience or spectators a fictional story or narrative, informing us about other stories and other possible interrelations. It acts as a visual stimulus that reminds people of an event through the use of a dynamically shaped narrative that gradually turns from transparent to red, signifying the cinema's event time. The depth of the structure's color symbolizes the start of the event. When the building is in its reddish stage, the event has started, and the idea of gathering has taken place in the urban space. It transforms the idea of a framed building with facade components into a diverse mode of narration within the translucent fiberglass web in which the building is wrapped. The construction of this new narration is achieved within a juxtaposition of two different materials that wrap the building in a layered structure. The two layers connect and intersect at various points designed for public interaction and serves as a space for vertical circulation. This type of wrapping displays in vitro the building's essence (Figures 7, 8a, 8b, 9a, 9b). Thus the building, as a stimulating entity, narrates a sensory pattern and a perception of gathering for an important event that can be visually experienced by spectators, passers-by, and local residents. Through the use of a continuous change of color that coincides with the event time, the building is able to signify a familiar but diminished pattern in urban space.

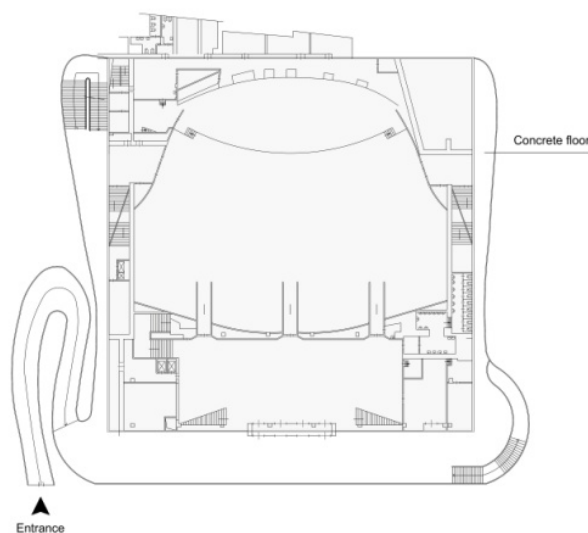


Fig. 7. Intervention in the building plan. The inner layer of the flooring border is covered with an acid-etched Sentryglas interlayer of 2 m x 2 m panels throughout the building, with aluminum profiles from the facade to the roofing. The outer layer, consisting of a Teflon-coated translucent fiberglass structure is a three-dimensional wrapping embedded with light-emitting diode (LED) sensors that control light transformation during the daytime and encases the first layer like a web



Fig. 8a. Daytime view. Rendering by Burak Akpulat developed after the competition



Fig. 8b. Daytime view. Rendering by Burak Akpulat developed after the competition



Fig. 9a. Transforming into red: Nighttime view of the building. Rendering by Burak Akpulat developed after the competition



Fig. 9b. Transforming into red: Nighttime view of the building. Rendering by Burak Akpulat developed after the competition

One can argue that the *fabula* becomes the functional use of the building and that the *syuzhet* is the constantly changing perception of the spectator. However, these are not separate constructions: there is a gift relationship between them, as Deleuze explains in his example of a dialogue between a woodworker, a tool, and wood. A woodworker reads signs in the wood (the space) and interprets them. The wood's qualities "envelop a potential", and the woodworker "brings the qualities of the wood to a certain expression", extracting the traces that he observes in the wood that are not passive. The signs in the wood become more active through the use of the tool, and the encounter overpowers the other [29].

Depending on the structure of the *fabula* and *syuzhet*, the Red Narrative Cinema embraces the spectator in Pushkin Square and urban life by recalling cultural memory through its transformation of light during the daytime as a visual stimulator for residents and introduces a new language of systems. Similarly, the use of color is an important layer in a montage because it

resembles an emerging feeling of synaesthesia, as in the montage theories of Eisenstein: “color in nature has an “indefinite status quo”; it only acquires meaning and expression through “the conscious and volitional impulse in the one who uses it” [30]. Eisenstein notes that the use of color in cinema has synaesthetic importance. Color is a layer — just like music or sound — and is an abstraction from nature, which results in its ability to create meaning and expression [31]. Here, montage is maintained as a tool for emotionally and intellectually stimulating the viewer in the manner of Eisenstein’s montage. The building invokes a signal of the presence of time and transforms space and time through the use and change of color and acts as a dynamically and globally rendered *fabula* for the inhabitants.

3. The emergence of transformation between narrative fragments. The Red Narrative Cinema closely links architecture and narrative cinema, and this relationship can be deciphered through transformation as a construct of narrative cinema; this construct also exists in contemporary architecture. Within these two key elements of narrative film, we are introduced to a new language of systems, a transformation, and a diverse mode of narration.

The process by which a narrative event is expressed is its “transformation” [32], and transformation occurs through the juxtaposition of fragments in a narrative film. It is the change between each fragment and the idea that emerges from the film as a whole with the spectator’s involvement. The Red Narrative Cinema embodies a transition from time image to movement image: “A movement-image expresses a whole which changes, and becomes established with objects” [33]. The continuous movement of light related to the event time combines the moment of time; therefore, rather than simply being a show that displays or represents the cinematic event, the transition becomes an “interval”, as Deleuze notes, a moment of differentiation [34]. The narrative of the Red Narrative Cinema’s space changes as a film changes through images, sounds, and movement. The transformative power of narrative film lies in its ability to shock its spectator, who is also transformed within the idea, the arrow of the film. Upon positioning the spectator within the narrative process, there arises a problem of reading or accomplishing the spectator’s diverse narratives if no element is fixed in narrative films. The editing leaves some spaces unknown, and the spectator either fills them in or participates.

Transformation is an important key element of narrative film, and it is related to the concept of narration, which outlines different frames of life and conditions. The term awakens the need for fragmentation, which is therefore the essential form of a cinematic construction and relates to how a narrative is constructed with its own spatio-temporality — i.e., how images, events, and parts are joined or overlapped to make sense of a meaning. The film first decon-

constructs temporal and spatial happenings through fragments or episodes in a context and then re-constructs them, sometimes with the help of the spectator. The spectator is constructed and deconstructed through the process of fragmentation. Transformation as an estimated invisible construct of narrative film brings a film closer to the architectural construction of space and time.

It can be estimated that a film that remarks upon the construction or deconstruction of its narrative has a distorted time and space relationship, has breaks in continuity, and needs a different perspective from the spectator instead of a fixed point of time and space. Transformation designed as part of a narrative structure exceeds the general space determined by the frames in the films.

Today, we are transformed through a type of perception that simultaneously invokes philosophy, image, sound, and movement at every level of a film. Contemporary cinema is experiencing an autonomous expression, and this transformation acts as an important marker and portrayal of a contemporary visual perception in architecture and urban space. In contemporary cinema, narrative has come to the foreground much more than in previous art practices, due to the special need for a more fragmented perception and construction by the spectator. In this way, the narrative can be more open and left to the spectator's imagination, choice, and desire. In contemporary approaches, the fixation point of a film's design has transformed into a more layered and fragmented form. This appears to occur because our engagement with a digital culture is rife with the non-linear temporality of events and sensations. The key element of this approach lies in its ability to shock and interrogate its existence. Cinema's fragmentary approach appears to raise this complex narrative. What has changed in the contemporary narratives compared with the classical narratives is the appearance of narrative form and content, which signifies certain possibilities of reality, spatio-temporal constructions, and the condition of the spectator. The narrative's form emerges in a more designative way. Space and time displace spectators and transform them within the montage.

Re-reading the patterns in a narrative film is a way to dissolve the transformation of its own structure throughout the movement and the systematically organized space and time and becomes a communication tool between the spectator and the built space. In the case of the Red Narrative Cinema, the narrative is formed by spectator as well as the pattern of the city and it derives from a body of form and structure, both of which shape it, which appears within the overlap of time, positions, and events. The cinematic construction of space and time displaces the spectators, transforming them into flâneurs who wander in the montage. The communication between the space and the spectator evokes and signals syuzhet. Through re-reading the

fabula, a spectator can observe the patterns of the syuzhet that compose the characteristics of the narrative.

The use of time not only “determines the movement of bodies, but also the shape of space as it contracts and expands, curves and approaches, turns and recedes”, as Gessner mentions and which is “the essence of motion pictures and of all art”. Rhythm organizes space and coordinates objects and light in terms of speeds and directions and conversely, space consists of objects and light coordinated by time (rhythms) [35]. The Red Narrative Cinema thus becomes a “spatialization of time” [35] with an aim to create condensed space, time, and information in urban space.

Conclusions. In the context of architecture as a narrative space, this article has addressed the problem of transforming the Red Narrative building into a dynamic and contemporary urban landmark, undertaking the problem of transformation in narrative films through montage and its reflections in architecture. The Red Narrative Cinema underlines that there is no specific or formulaic approach in montage as in the thoughts of Eisenstein.

Narrative frames a meta-language that signifies transparent access to another world of pending meanings. Spatio-temporal structuration, expression, and process are fundamental for forming a narrative. A new sense of place and a sense of changing urban fabric contain and connect the temporal structures of past and present. Contemporary narrative reflects the heterogeneity of life, and new modes of perception engage with and feed from the dynamics of urban life. When the montage of a space is left to the viewer or the spectator, it opens new ways of perception and the possible engagement of possible uses. Opening up the narrative to the spectator as a stimulus creates undetermined ways to enable perception in contemporary narrative, which transforms every aspect of everyday existence. Through the temporal expression of the content, the narrative is embodied for a communication through which the inside and outside collide into an urban text that can be only dissembled by the spectator.

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