

The Interaction of Architecture and Cinema: A Phenomenological Analysis of Cinema Buildings

Summary

This article examines the role of cinema architecture in shaping the experience of cinema as an art form. While objectivist approaches tend to define architecture in terms of its physical, stylistic, or functional characteristics, they often overlook the experiential and sensory dimensions emphasized by phenomenological thought. Drawing on the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, and Juhani Pallasmaa, the article adopts a phenomenological perspective to investigate how cinema buildings become an inseparable part of the film experience – actively engaging the viewer’s perception and embodiment within space. The cinematic experience, it is argued, begins with intention and unfolds as a spatial continuum. As visitors enter the

cinema, they undergo a transformation – from the sensory overload of the urban environment to the contemplative silence of the auditorium and emotional immersion in the film. This transition is orchestrated by architectural elements such as the façade, lighting, entrance, lobby, and interior, which gradually guide the senses into the world of the film. Focusing on historically and culturally significant cinemas in Kaunas, the article reveals a long-standing and harmonious relationship between cinema and architecture. In the contemporary context – where cinemas are increasingly integrated into commercial shopping centre – it calls for renewed attention to the subjectively lived experience of cinema as a distinct architectural and cultural phenomenon.

Keywords: cinema, architecture, space, aesthetics, phenomenology, experience.