Moving Images - Static Spaces: Architectures, Art, Media, Film, Digital Art and Design

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Central Park in Film: Architecture as the Structure of Desire

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Penn State University

• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present in person (with a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):
This paper examines the representations of New York's Central Park in a number of movies and argues for its fundamental role in the narrative of these films. The aim here is to study not the spatio-cinematic qualities of Central Park per se, but how filmmakers use them to turn Central Park into a spatial structure for the filmic form and development. In doing so, they create mediated Central Parks that become representative of its conception as an ideological fantasy.

Central Park illustrates the visual status of postwar American culture and society. Inseparable from this culture is the ongoing capitalist rhetoric generating forms of desire. This desire circulates at the intersection between the manicured nature of Central Park and the construction of a global metropolis ready to be consumed as an image. Manhattan’s soaring skyline together with the lush Central Park nature creates cinematic landscapes that dovetail with the cultures of modernity. In this
dematerialized state of culture, multiple views of Central Park exist that are significant for the understanding of the city, and this research aims to propose a filmic-driven methodology of exploring these views through an analysis of movies.

Discussing films such as Marathon Man, Manhattan and Wall Street, the paper provides explanation of filmic techniques and dissection of the films’ structure and form. It describes not only relationships between characters, space and the storyline, but also how they operate in the depiction of Central Park as an active agent in and ultimately in larger narratives of Modern urban-scapes and spectatorship in the city.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Biographical Statement

Sadra Tehrani is a Graduate Candidate of Architecture at Penn State University. His research involves a cross-analysis of architecture, city and cinema and investigates the representation of urban space and the transformation of Modern cityscapes in film. He has received a Graham Endowed Fellowship award in 2016 and a Graduate Student Travel Grant in 2017, and directed two documentary films during his studies as an architecture student.