Tron and Tron: Legacy, The Epic Struggle of Non-Places

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Film has long-offered a rich medium for spatial design provocations, and re-combinations of the built environment, but what status does the (un)built environment hold at the juncture of augmented and virtual reality? The ‘coordinated juxtaposition’ of audio and visual sensation forming cinematic space has been written about with satisfying rigour, yet the dialogue between spatial design within film and the (un)built environment is less well documented. In the first quarter of the twentieth century many designers and commentators observe an ambiguous territory for spatial design, a liminal territory at the interstices of filmic space, architectural and digital design. This paper investigates the transforming status of digital space in two films spanning almost three decades of development in the field: Steven Lisberger’s Tron (1982) and Joseph Kosinski’s Tron: Legacy (2010). The progressive representations of the two films’ virtual and augmented
space are shown to be contemporaneous with the theories of digital space through discussion of the discrete literature and practice contexts within which each film is situated. Analysis of the two films’ dynamic spatial arrangements, human experience, interfaces, enclosures, and artefacts both identifies the films’ critical representation of the access, hierarchy and politics of digital space, and the exchange of ideas between film and the (un)built. In conclusion, the analysis of these phenomena informs an argument for the speculative and critical potential of the building information model, and a threshold concept for transformational, spatial design and the civic realm.

Keywords:
Augmented Reality; Virtual Reality; Spatial Design; Architecture; Film

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

Toby Blackman is an architect and Assistant Professor in Architecture at the Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Nottingham. He lectures in the field of materials and technology, and led a Design Studio, UNit5a The Creative Commons: Disruptive Innovation from 2013 until 2016. He enjoyed a long career in practice with the RIBA Stirling Prize nominee, Allies and Morrison prior to academia, following roles with RIBA Manser Medal winning practices Studio Bednarski and Robert Dye Associates. He has previously been an advisor to the RIBA, sitting on the National Building Specification [NBS] Panel, 2010-2012, and he is a current member of the RIBA Validation Panel for Schools of Architecture.

Toby supervises both Masters and PhD students in the fields of Architecture and Urbanism. He is currently active in research lying at the interstices of spatial design, materials and technology, and his publications include Aluminium and Durability: Towards Sustainable Cities, edited by Michael Stacey (World Aluminium and the IAI 2015), and Matt, Smooth, Shiny, Textured: Describing the Material Surface after David Pye (S.ARCH 2018).

Toby studied at the University of Edinburgh, graduating in 2000 and earning a RIAS Portfolio Commendation for his final year thesis project.