# ADATO <sup>2—18</sup>

Architecture
+
Projection

I want my opera house!
This church remains closed until this town has its opera house.
[*shouting and ringing the church bells*]

# INHALT
## *CONTENT*

Film Still, Christopher Nolan. 2010.
Inception.

One of the first things Dyas did was create a 60-foot scroll that captured the history of 20th-century architecture, from the initial skyscrapers of the Bauhaus, to Gropius, to Le Corbusier.
(...)

But its chronological layout actually ended up inspiring one of the film's most astonishing designs—the dream city built by Cobb and his wife in their subconscious.
(...)

When Cobb returns with Ariadne to the dream city, however, they find it in total disrepair—again a design concept with a specific idea behind it: *The mere fact that they were eroding away into the sea, and the sea was eating into these buildings, was another visual method of showing that he was losing his mind*, he says."

out of *Inception* Production Designer Guy Dyas: *"Only 5 Percent of Our Scenes Used Green Screen"* by John Lopez for Vanity Fair, 2011

# EDITORIAL

Gleich vorweg: ADATO *Architektur + Projektion* wird natürlich über Film sprechen; über inszenierte Räume, die vielleicht besonders von Architekten und Weggefährten geliebt werden. Der kryptische Titel – weil wir die Auflösung der *vierten Wand*, jener unsichtbaren Trennfläche zwischen Schauspiel und Zuschauer, zwischen Theater/Film und Realität, als Resultat künstlerischen Bestrebens und des technischen Fortschritts, zum übergeordneten Thema dieses Heftes gemacht haben.

Seit den Anfängen des bewegten Bildes, Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts, teilen sich die Baukunst und der Film die analoge Kulisse, das Set. Dabei wandeln sich die erträumten Welten mit den stetig und unaufhaltsam voranschreitenden Visualisierungstechniken. Die Einführung eben dieser aus Film und Animation stammenden Softwares in die Architektur brachte eine Angleichung der Formensprache mit sich - was einst als Science-Fiction im Kino zu sehen war, ist heute gebaute oder zumindest 3D-modellierte Realität.

Right at the start: ADATO "Architecture + Projection" will of course talk about film – about stage-managed spaces, worlds that are also – and perhaps especially – loved by architects and fellow-travellers. The cryptic title – because we have taken as the overriding theme of this issue the dissolution of the "fourth wall", that invisible, separating skin between actor and audience, between theatre or film and reality, as the result of artistic endeavour and technical progress.

Ever since the beginnings of the moving picture in the late nineteenth century, architecture and film have shared an analogue scenery: the set. Here, the worlds that were dreamed of were transformed parallel to the ever advancing and unstoppable progress in design and visualisation techniques. It is only natural that the introduction into architecture of this very software from film and animation has made languages merge as well – what was once seen in the cinema as science fiction is today actual, built reality, or at least 3D modelled fact.

So the new issue will on one hand cast a glance behind the technics; we talk to authors such as the architects Cenk Güzeliş ("The Aleph", 2016) and the film maker Jeff Desom ("Rear Window Timelapse", 2012) about the formation process of their works' content, from concept to realisation.

Moreover, imaging processes from medicine and the military, from MRT to laser scanning, have for decades been opening up new possibilities of stock taking, of investigation and ultimately also of design. Here, ADATO is interested in the potentials of the moving picture, or the perspective of the machinic gaze for architectural production. Finally, "Architecture + Projection" addresses the necessity of a deeply thought-out approach to these new capabilities of architecture imported from ancillary disciplines, combined with a political positioning.

After the redesign of ADATO at the beginning of this year, in this issue we are venturing to take the plunge into a new format also in content: with a first proposition "Architecture + Projection", we are opening up scope for voices from architecture and the visual and performing arts. ADATO sees itself here as a platform for the presentation and discussion of innovative works and positions.

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Das neue Heft wird zunächst einen Blick hinter die Technik werfen. Wir sprechen mit Autoren wie dem Architekten Cenk Güzeliş (*The Aleph*, 2016) oder dem Filmemacher Jeff Desom (*Rear Window Timelapse*, 2012) über den Entstehungsprozess ihrer Arbeiten, von der inhaltlichen Ebene, über das Konzept bis hin zur Realisierung. Des Weiteren eröffnen uns seit Jahrzehnten bildgebende Verfahren aus der Medizin (z.B. MRT) und vom Militär (z.B. Laserscan) neue Möglichkeiten der Bestandsaufnahme, der Investigation und schließlich des Entwurfs. Dabei interessiert ADATO welche Potentiale das bewegte Bild oder der vom menschlichen Körper losgelöste Blick der Maschine, für die Architektur birgt. Darüber hinaus thematisiert *Architektur + Projektion* die Notwendigkeit eines reflektierten Umgangs mit diesen neuen, aus Nebendisziplinen, importierten Fähigkeiten der Architektur und einer politischen Positionierung.

Nach dem Redesign der ADATO zu Beginn dieses Jahres wagen wir nun mit diesem Heft auch inhaltlich den Sprung zu einem neuen Format: Mit einer ersten These *Architektur + Projektion*, öffnen wir den Raum für Stimmen aus Architektur, bildender und darstellender Kunst. ADATO versteht sich dabei als Plattform zur Präsentation und Diskussion innovativer Arbeiten und Positionen.

Anna Valentiny

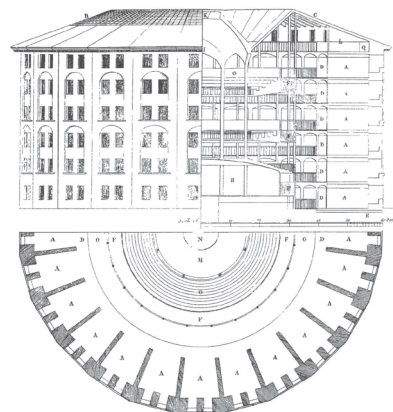Film Still, Christopher Nolan. 2010. Inception.

**02 - PART 1**

# "The only place on earth where all places are — ..."

**Jérôme Becker and Anna Valentiny for Adato in a talk with Vera Kumer and Cenk Güzeliş on laser scan aided investigation and design techniques, drones and the machinic gaze, trans-humanism and google maps.**

Film Still, Cenk Güzeliş. 2016. The Aleph.

Panopticon Sketch,
Jeremy Bentham, 1791

*Yes, the only place on earth where all places are*
*— seen from every angle, each standing clear, wi-*
*thout any confusion or blending. I kept the disco-*
*very to myself and went back every chance I got.*
*As a child, I did not foresee that this privilege was*
*granted me so that later I could write the poem.*

*The Aleph*, Jorge Luis Borges, 1945

**Cenk Guzelis is a master of architecture student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Currently working on constructing neural optical machine vision to help people dealing with PTSD. He worked in Computer Aided Manufacturing at the Platform for Analog and Digital Production, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Led LiDAR and animation workshops in Denmark and Austria. In 2016, in the team of LAAC, he worked on the animation film for the Montenegro pavilion at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale. His shorts were screened and awarded at festivals in Europe and USA (Ars Electronica Festival , Philip K. Dick Film Festival New York & Cologne, One day Animation Festival in Vienna and in London). In 2016 his film Aleph received the Best Animation FX award at the 45th Boston Sci-Fi Film Festival. His point cloud VR project Theophil Hansen Revisited - a digital museum of Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna - was awarded twice for the Carl Appel Prize.**

Cenk Güzeliş

**Anna Valentiny** *The Aleph* is a short story written by Jorge Luis Borges and first published in 1945. It starts with the initial conflict of the protagonist's lover's death. The grieving Borges - a fictionalized version of the author - made it a ritual to pass by Beatriz Viterbo's family house every year on the 13th of April. It's here, where he makes the acquaintance of Carlos Argentino Daneri, Beatriz's cousin and poet, that made it his life goal to write the one poem that contains it all. Throughout the story the reader learns that in order to do so, Daneri thinks he is dependent on the Aleph, one of the points in space that contains all other points, and which he claims to be located in his cellar in Garay Street.
Cenk, a few years ago, you made a short movie based on Borges's narration. Maybe you want to say something more general on the concept of the Aleph and what it means to your work.

**Cenk Güzeliş** Today Borges and his short stories are considered relevant to architecture and film. From today's point of view, I find it fascinating that he, who was a director of the national library of Argentina and who had lost his sight, could foresee the future in such a precise way. His powerful writing style was my first inspiration.
It is actually really hard to deal with Borges's stories. The power of language as a medium is so strong that you can't visualize it. Especially this narration about the Aleph is relevant today, as it refers to the digital age we live in. As individuals we can have access to our Aleph, which is the World Wide Web. It gives a freedom on the one hand. On the other, the fact that you have to see the world from this point is a prison.

**Vera Kumer** I think there is also a strong reference to mass surveillance. (...) And that criss-crossing between past, present and future...

**CG** ...that all collapses in one point...

**Jérôme Becker** Vera, can you relate the notion of the Aleph to your theoretical research, which names the topic of visibility already in its title *Making the invisible, visible*?

VK I am doing my PhD in media theory at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. The title of my thesis is, as you just said, *Making the Invisible Visible. Non–Cinematic Visualization Techniques of Power and Control.* I am trying to show parallels and mutual influences of concepts and ideas from media sciences and architecture theory regarding the execution of power and control via media and space. I do think that the spatial aspects of concepts in visual studies, for example regarding the discourses on the dispositifs of production and reception, is much neglected. Therefore, I look at visualization techniques of control from two sides – from architectural theory, and from media theory.
To get back to your question: what strikes me when thinking of the concept of Borges's Aleph is its strong reference to cinematic dispositif, which can be described briefly as an axial arrangement of an untouchable screen, the audience in the darkened space of the cinema, fixed in its position, unable to move, and a hidden projector behind the audience, projecting the film onto the screen. Besides this simplified spatial setup, there is an extensive discourse on the cinematic dispositif's institutional, sociocultural, political, gender aspects etc. According to this, I see various

forms of a dispositif in the Aleph, also a strong cinematic dispositif indeed. The protagonist is asked to look at the nineteenth step when in the cellar. In doing so, his gaze is very much controlled, his position is fixed down there on the floor of the basement. Consequently, I see a clear reference to the cinematic dispositif as it is defined in film studies.
Regarding the Aleph from the point of view of my research and the machinic gaze of control and power, I define it as a metaphor: the protagonist gains access to all information, to things he wants to see as well as to things he doesn't want to see. Here, the Aleph is the perfect metaphor for the kind of machinic gaze that I deal with in my writings. The gaze of visibility and control that we find in medicine (and military applications), for example the X-ray, just to name one of many, penetrates the body, it turns the inside to the outside, it makes us see the truth. Truth with a capital "T" was an important issue in Modernism at the turn of the last century. Contrary to today, where I rather see a blurring of information, and a flooding of our brains with different kinds of truths; filtered information, and filtered truths. So, what struck me most was the Aleph's total darkness, the immobility of the protagonist, the ocular adjustment, where I see a clear parallel to the cinematic dispositif. Yet, the quote *Yes, the only place on earth where all places are* – references to drone vision, another visualization dispositif of power and control.

**AV** Maybe Cenk you would like to say something about the digital media that you used in your visual reinterpretation of Borges' Aleph, for example the laser scanning technology?

**JB** ... and how you are integrating it in your artistic expression? I think there is a concept behind it, right?

**CG** I visited the site on Gallitzinberg a couple of times and documented it in my own way. In the beginning, I took photographs and the second time I used my voice recorder and film camera. I started to see that specific architectural body of the bunker as a kind of portal to the Aleph. It is like an inverted version of the panoptical view. This time you are capsulated, centralized in a concrete body which has four openings, four stripes that you have gaze through to your environment.

I decided to take this architectural body designed for one soldier as a portal to the Aleph. What I wanted to create was a transition, or blend from reality to an imaginary world. For that purpose, I used laser scanning technology which would enable my digital camera to fly and see the environment in impossible ways. I'm not a fan of photorealism but I like the way that laser scanning technology can abstract the physicality. It creates a digital model rich in detail but without any geometrical information. Consisting in a million of points that contain on their behalf all information and coordination, the model itself is already an Aleph.

**JB** So the point cloud allows you to see the digital model from many different perspectives and not only from those angles, where the scanning device has been positioned.

**CG** There is one specific scene where I actually used a point cloud model for exactly that reason. There is a transition for blending from the real footage, from the movie image to the image of the digital model. The camera detaches itself from the body and thus from the human perspective to become a digital camera, liberated from reality and the laws of physics. This scene marks the step from reality into imaginary worlds.

**JB** Vera, the very starting point of your research is also a strong interest in different imaging methods. On which techniques are you focusing in your thesis and what is the common point you are analysing them for?

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Cenk Güzeliş

**VK** As I said before, I write about visualization techniques that execute power and control. The techniques I am working with are based in medicine and military applications. As much as the X-ray or an MRI (magnetic resonant image) penetrates or slices the body of the ill, the eyes of a drone high up in the sky somewhere in the Middle East scans the landscape with IR-cameras and thermo-spectography devices, for example. So, by establishing parallels between the body that is examined in hospital, and the land that is visually occupied by a gaze from above, I developed the concept of *the body as territory* and *the land as territory* of observation. This concept helps me to reference these two very distant scientific fields to each other. In this way, the body and the landscape become part of a production dispositif, part of the institutional, political, socio-economic, spatial, temporal etc. arrangement of the production of the image.

The dispositif of production is "my Aleph", where these different visualization techniques, media, history, the body, and space blend together. Precisely here is the point, where architecture theory, space, urbanism, city planning, and media studies can be combined and compared with each other, in order to analyse the disciplines mentioned above and the inherent aspects of space, vision, and power from different points of view respectively.

**CG** I like it when you talk about the migration of military and medicine tools into arts ...

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Vera Kumer

**VK** If you really get it down to the media specificities of the production of the images, you can find amazing references to media types developed in the 19th century. Borges's narration of the Aleph interested me because it contains so many media-archaeological approaches.

**CG** Can I ask you a question: I like the way we architects can update our brushes or tools of imagination by adopting tools from the mentioned neighbouring

**Vera Kumer (*1979)** studied architecture in Vienna and New York. Since 2016, she has been working on her PhD at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna in the department of media theory. Her thesis "making the invisible visible – post-cinematic visualization strategies of control" examines concepts of visibilities and invisibilities in medicine, the military, architecture, and urban planning and frames distinctive similarities, parallels, and contradictions regarding the execution of control and surveillance. Vera Kumer teaches in the department of building construction and design – HB2 (TU Vienna). She is head of the HB2-mediaLAB and evolves her teaching around media, film, space, and architecture. She works as a self-employed film maker and media artist.
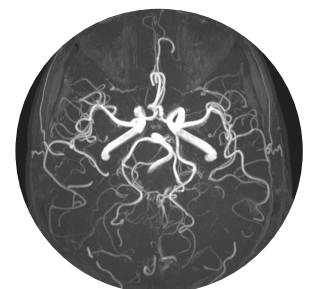


Vera Kumer

disciplines. But do you think these instruments are productive in order to derive a new design method from it or to change the way we perceive? For my part, I cannot yet see a potential in these technologies in order to make a radical change in a design process.

**VK** For me, the so-called digital turn was rather disappointing, in the way that it didn't really change the way we "produce" architecture in many cases. It did make many things easier and quicker to handle, but simultaneously they became more complex. I miss the radical change in the design process, to use your expression. I wouldn't know how these visualisation techniques could change the method of producing architecture, but it does change the way of perceiving space. An example might be infrared thermography, a technology that is used to form heat zone images of a building.

*Isn't the drone the perfect disciplination machine in a Foucaultian sense? Here, a single gaze can make everything visible for all times.*

Vera Kumer

**JB** Which is a very technical way to analyse the performance of a building. The technical device is used to visualise quantified data.

**AV** I would like to take the discussion for a moment back to the past. When we were talking about laser scan technology it brings me to Lidar scan – a technique developed for land surveying and used today in modern archaeology. The technology creates 3D topographical models and, by using a special algorithm, it is able to recognize and delete vegetation, leaving us with the naked skin of the earth and the remnants of human activity that were covered for thousands of years by nature. The use of Lidar scan over the rain forest of Guatemala revealed for instance huge Maya structures suggesting a much higher number of the estimated indigenous population living before the invasion of the conqueror of the new world in America. This way a technique becomes a political instrument for securing of evidence. In that context I would also like to mention Forensic Architecture...

**VK** I think it is very valuable what they do... To use these tools for humanitarian issues puts the tools that we as architects use into the public sphere and opens up new fields of discussion.

**CG** It is a way to escape from the eye of the power. It is the only way where you can find an exit to the outside... because as far as I know there is no outside in biopolitics, right? We as architects, we know how to use those kinds of software and hardware for our artistic purpose or our own purposes so we can reveal invisible, hidden stories to public...

**AV** Cenk, in your narration you are switching the home of the Aleph from a cellar to a bunker. Does it do something to the narration?

**CG** The panoptic prison model locates the eye of the power that sees everything in its center. Contrary to this, in the one man bunker you are prisoner of this concrete body and at the same time you have these openings to all sides...

**VK** ... so you are the eye and the prisoner in one...

**CG** ... so this is somehow a contrast to the concept of power...

**JB** ... yes and somehow not. When you are outside you still don't know if you

are being watched or not. Because of the potential presence of an observer, who is not visible from the outside, there is an asymmetric relation of power, in the same way actually as in the panopticon. Both models work without the presence of an observer in the centre.

**CG** That was something that struck me intensely when I saw the bunker first. It is hidden in nature. I entered a couple of times to imagine how it feels... I'm not sure if it is claustrophobic but you feel that you are in a point and you have no influence on your environment. (...) There was one individual in the physical space of the bunker. I relate that to this age, because we are individual bodies and we have our ghosts wandering around in the digital world. And that's why to me the Aleph fits that portal. That was why I wanted to change the location of the Aleph from the cellar of Borges's narration to the bunker.

**VK** Did you go to Gallitzinberg in order to find a place to visually narrate the story of the Aleph?

**CG** No.. it just happened. I went there a couple of times with my friend for a walk and when I saw this bunker I started to read the book *Der Schirach Bunker* by Alexander Haide. The more I got to know about it the more I became interested in the specific history of that place. It was absurd that Schirach was hiding treasuries and art collections in an underground bunker.. that was my inspiration.

**VK** When you mention the art collection I think about that storage space *Freeport*, I think in Geneva. Somebody once said it is the biggest exhibition, the biggest museum in the world but you can't see the art work, it is invisible.

**JB** I would like to put two quotes next to each other and hear your opinion on them. The first one is from Borges:
*Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe.*



Remnants of the Schirach Bunker in the woods of Gallitzinberg

The second one is out of Foucault in Discipline and Punish (1975):
*Der perfekte Disziplinarapperat wäre derjenige, der es einem einzigen Blick ermöglichte dauernd alles zu sehen.*

**VK** Regarding the disciplination apparatus Foucault is talking about, visibility is treated as an ambivalent topic. While the panopticon is a machine to make the prisoner visible, the guard is invisible. In this case visibility is a trap, to quote Foucault. Isn't the drone the perfect disciplination machine in a Foucaultian sense? Here, a single gaze can make everything visible for all times. Additionally, even if it is not there, above you, the mere possibility of its presence has a dis-ciplinating effect! Another example is the laptop camera that today everybody covers with a sticker, just in case someone is watching. The way this dispositif of control takes on a life of its own fascinates me! The Borges quote makes me think of a room covered in mirrors, where you can see infinity at all angles. And that's a different situation. I think Borges approaches the term of visibility from a uni-dimensional and monistic perspective – the person in the cellar with his own perception of the world – , whereas Foucault deals with visibility in this an-tagonistic way, taking institutional, political and historical aspects into account.

**JB** The topic of visual perception has always been treated in a dualistic way. On one hand, it is understood as an objective process of gaining reality. The eye as a purely receptive instrument. And on the other side it has been considered as a very subjective process. Everybody has his own filters and is perceiving things differently. What I think is that between these positions there is another layer. In every society, there seems to be a certain kind of gaze, a collective code of perception.
This gaze is not defined by the visual apparatus of the human body. It is formed by the *Zeitgeist* of a generation. So, it is neither a purely objective nor subjective way of visual perception.

**VK** Our gazes are very much controlled. What and how we see, is based on a continuous development and influences. They are trained very well in how to see something precisely. I don't think we are so aware of that. The scientific gaze, medicine and military respectively, blends into another spectrum, but there is much more user awareness of how the machine shapes the production and perception of the specific image than in everyday life.

Regarding our own perception, experiences, age, culture etc. shape our vision. The machinic gaze is shaped by an algorithm behind it. But referring to the machinic gaze and its inherent "high-tech flavour", it might not be as "new" as we sometimes think it is. Especially, if we cut it down to the very specificities of the different media types and the way the images are produced and consumed. Think of visual toys of the 19th century for example, which had to be driven by hand cranks since there were no motors available, yet we see a very strong involvement of the user's body and the machine while producing the image. Or, think of the camera obscura, also a "machine" of its own kind: a machine that incorporates, it "swallows" the body of the user completely. By using this special device, his or her body becomes an integral part of the apparatus, it doesn't "work" if nobody is using it. Today, I see much less embodiment and much more abstraction when thinking of the machinic gaze. There is a different way of how to relate to each other.

**JB** So you would agree that technological change is shifting the way we are perceiving the outside world?

**VK** Totally. The internet, to mention just one example, is a medium to another world. We live three lives a day. And you see that people are experiencing a city completely differently. Sometimes you are at a concert and people are filming that and you are, like, *Wouldn't you like to listen to the concert?*
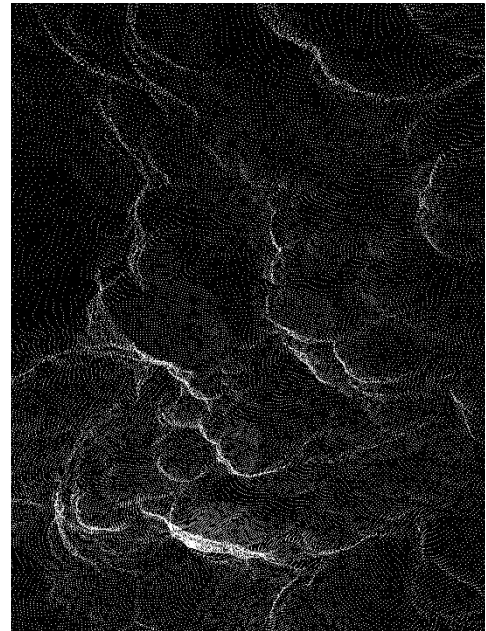


Point Cloud Cave

**JB** I was thinking about the example of a city where you haven't been yet and you want to get to a very specific spot and in order to do so you plan your way via Google maps. Even after you have switched off your phone you perceive the way to the point you want to get in a very different way because you once had the photo-realistic Top View.

**VK** ... and you didn't have to work yourself through the surroundings or orienta-te yourself in the streets. I think something gets lost.

**CG** I don't see it that negative. You do orientate yourself but with the help of the machine. The eye of the camera is like an extension to our body. Of course, the fact that Google maps give you the fastest way to drive from A to B is a program of our control society that wants to increase efficiency.

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Jérôme Becker

**AV** It is a detail of your work, Cenk, but there is a moment at the beginning of your movie when the spectator sees the machine and sees the baby.

**CG** Every individual is a production of a specific time and its mindset. That is also what the bunker refers to. When you are inside, you are part of the history but you are not active. You are frozen in that minute.

**AV** I cannot remember. What was first: the machine or the baby?

**CG** The scene starts in that the machinery makes the baby. (....) I would say the human was there first.

**JB** And who will be the last?

**CG** The machine will be the last. (...) Borges's story can be seen today as trans-humanism... I see it like that. As an age of singularity, of technological development, when one will be able to transcend, detach his body from his mind and be in this crowd where he can see everything without distortion or confusion. He will become one.

**JB** That reminds me of the last *Blade Runner*, where the villain transforms into a kind of cyborg, after he lost his sight... He has that digital head of Medusa, a swarm of cameras spreading around his head, which is kind of first step towards a total view. There are some parallels to Borges.

**JB** I have a last question to you... one of your favourite movies?

**VK** *Decasia* by Bill Morrison from 2002. It is a movie that was developed as visuals for an opera. Morrison got the material from old Nitro films from archives (which were discontinued as they are very dangerous because of self-ignition when stored above 50° Celsius). You can see the decay of the material of the filmstrip. Sometimes the state of the material becomes part of the narration, for example in the case of a scene with the boxer who fights against a mysterious enemy, the decay of the film. These images fascinated me.

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>
> Cenk Güzeliş

**CG** My favourite film is *Matrix*. I love the whole trilogy but the first one is my top top top. Nr. 2 is *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* from Godard...

**JB** Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*. I really like the aesthetics of the 70s and this crazy dada narration which I think is really unique.

**AV** *Ulysseus Gaze*... it's about this filmmaker, who crosses the Balkans on his way home. It's war time and he's searching for three lost reels of the Manaki brothers... the region's first gaze.

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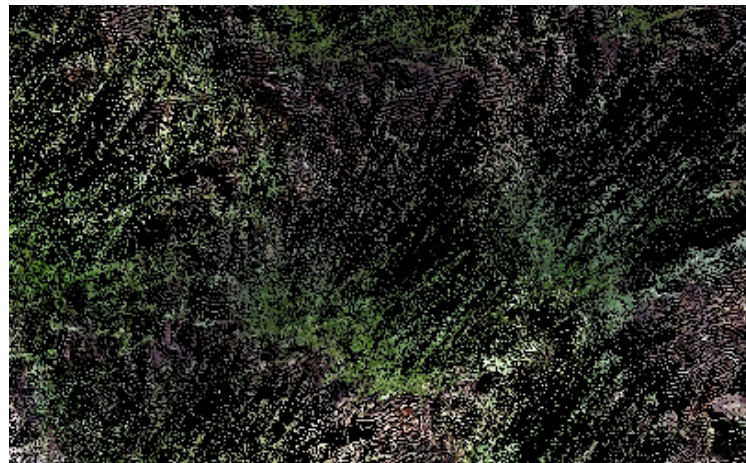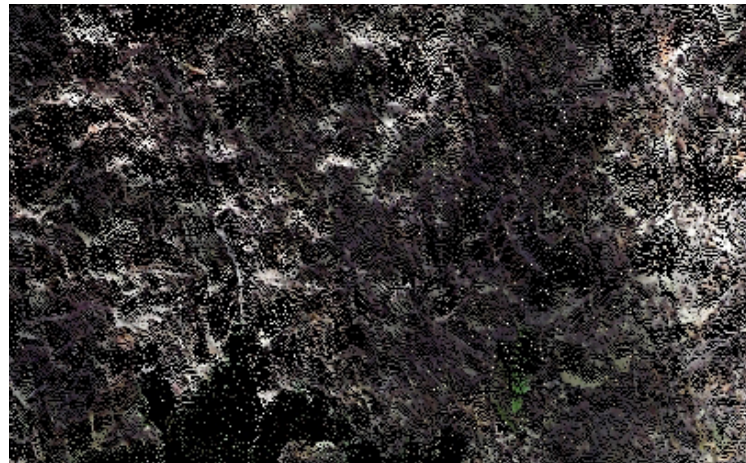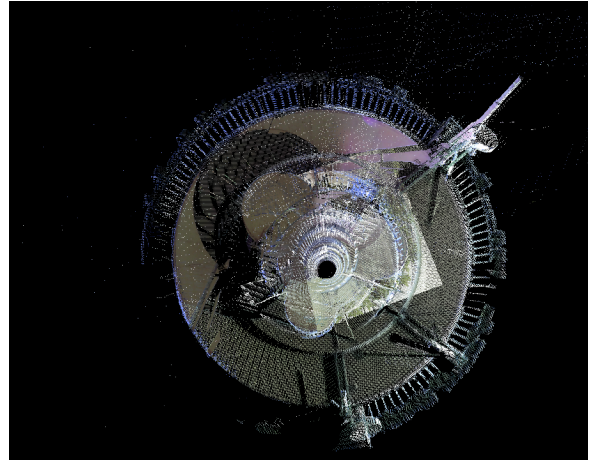
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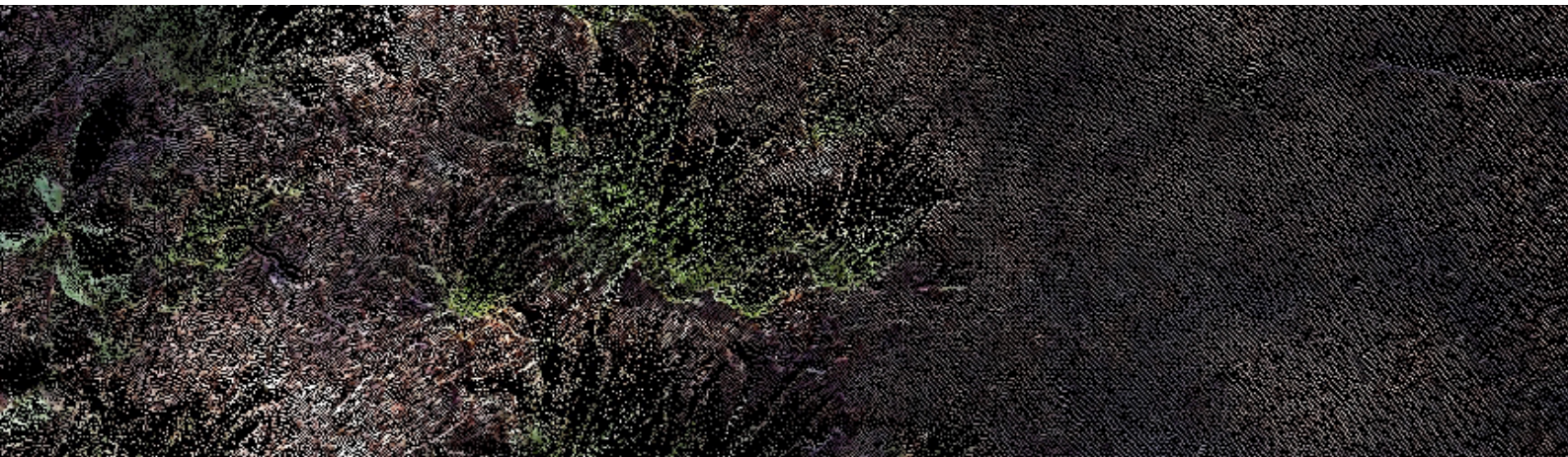




Point Cloud Details of the Forest Floor of Gallitzinberg,
Shadows and Vegetation

# "Films are like four dimensional puzzles..."

05

**Anna Valentiny and Jérôme Becker in an interview with the Luxembourgish filmmaker and author Jeff Desom**

Jeff Desom is a writer, film director and visual effects artist. Combining live-action, found footage and digital effects, his work has been selected and awarded at a number of festivals around the world. He works between Luxembourg and Los Angeles.

Jeff Desom

Holorama: An Optical Theatre, 2015

*From my point of view as a filmmaker, architecture can serve a few purposes: It can be the extension of acharacter's inner state. It can be an arena that physically pins a set of characters up against each other. Or it can be a purely atmospheric presence. Technically speaking it is the stage and as such it plays an integral part in how you block a scene.*



https://vimeo.
com/37120554

WATCH THE MAKING OF

Rear Window Timelapse, 2012

**Adato** In architecture, design techniques have in recent years fundamentally changed with the introduction of 3D software from film and animation. The theme of this Adato, however, is also based on an interest in film that is shared in general on the architecture scene. Do you as a film maker keep up with what's happening in contemporary architecture?

**Jeff** There is definitely a strong feedback between the two art forms. From my point of view as a filmmaker, architecture can serve a few purposes: it can be the extension of a character's inner state. It can be an arena that physically pins a set of characters up against each other. Or it can be a purely atmospheric presence. Technically speaking it is the stage and as such it plays an integral part in how you block a scene. When it comes to contemporary architecture I would have a hard time naming a particular style or movement. But I do take notice of it when I see it. Especially in films and more specifically the science fiction genre. Of any genre, sci-fi has the most vivid dialogue with contemporary architecture. I would be interested to know in how far films that depict the future are influencing the aesthetics of up and coming architects. A lot these films reflect the *Zeitgeist* and happen to be very cold and dystopian. Sometimes when I drive past a newly constructed house, I try to imagine it with wear and tear a few years down the line. In some of those buildings you can definitely see a hint of dystopia. Especially in the range of affordable housing, I'm sometimes shocked at how beauty has been sacrificed over functionality. It shouldn't be a luxury. We need beauty around us, it is inherent to our well-being. If only there were more films like Spike Jonze's *Her*. It's a rare display of future living spaces that feel very warm and optimistic.

> *It (Architecture) can be the extension of a character's inner state.*

**Adato** We can observe an actually very architectural approach in your *Rear Window Time Lapse* (2012): a reconstruction of the always fragmentarily rendered background in Hitchcock's film. You collaged the windows of an a priori chronologically developed narrative into a panorama of swarming simultaneous stages, you made a totality out of parts.
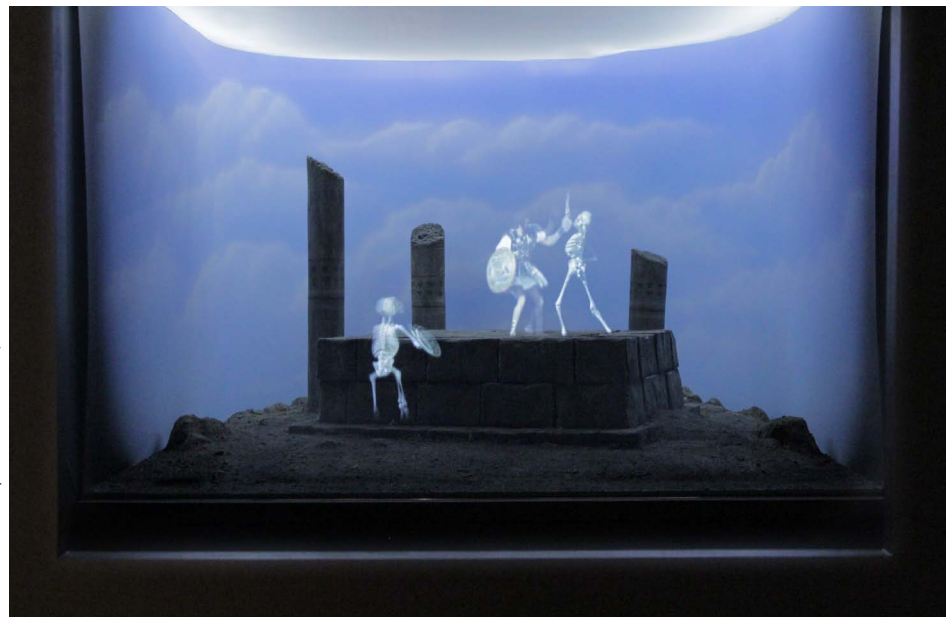


Holorama: An Optical Theatre, 2015



Holorama: An Optical Theatre, 2015

**HOLORAMA (2015)**
Inspired by the great tradition of optical theatres, Holorama brings several iconic scenes from the history of cinema back to life. From Twin Peaks to Apocalypse Now, from E.T. to The Big Lebowski via Jason and the Argonauts, Holorama gives these famous scenes a third dimension using a simple holographic process based on a semi-transparent screen, mixing the image of an extremely faithfully built model with the characters extracted from the original scene. A new perspective and a tribute



Holorama: An Optical Theatre, 2015

**Jeff** Films are like four dimensional puzzles that we put together in our heads. However, the nature of time and space makes it impossible for us to ever see all the pieces at once. The bigger picture only exists in your mind and even then, it is subject to flaws in your memory. As I was revisiting *Rear Window*, this incompleteness became an itch I couldn't scratch. And so, I set out to reconstruct a whole from the fragments that Hitchcock had left us. I like to compare it to a form of film restoration or even archaeology. You carefully dig up the pieces of the puzzle and then try to reassemble them in a way that seems closest to the original state. On a purely spatial level, Hitchcock was extreme in that his camera never changes position when he looks out into the courtyard. The camera pans and tilts, but it does so from the exact same spot. This eliminates any parallax and makes it possible to reconstruct the space as if it had been scanned. A process not very different from the way you would shoot a panorama on your phone.

*Films are like four dimensional puzzles that we put together in our heads. However, the nature of time and space makes it impossible for us to ever see all the pieces at once.*

**Adato** What role does the analogue model play in your work? In the installation *Holorama* (2016) or the music video *Mr. Tillman* for *Father John Misty* (2018), the function of the model goes beyond that of a purely ancillary and representational medium and becomes part of the scenario.

**Jeff** My fascination with miniatures goes way back to a time when I would play with *Märklin* trains and build those little model houses. I could see myself drive these

trains and live inside those houses. Come to think of it, most toys are mini-versions of daily objects from the world of grown-ups. From a young age, we are conditioned to use our imagination and pretend that these placeholders are as fully functional as the thing they represent. It's not surprising that we start to project our dreams and desires into these objects. The same self-projection mechanism kicks in when we watch a film. To me miniatures and films are very similar in that regard. It only made sense to combine the two and play with that flaw in our perception.

**Adato** What dos the relation between analogue and digital mean for your work?

**Jeff** It's a question that looms over many of the decisions we as filmmakers face today. Do you shoot film or digital? Is this a practical effect or will it be a computer-generated image? Every project is different and requires tailored solutions. In an ideal world, you make a choice based on certain aesthetics that you want. But when it comes down to it, time and budget tend to make those decisions for you. In my experience, the digital wins that battle ninety percent of the time, but when I get to work with installations it's a different story. There's more room for experimentation. And since my roots go back to a time before digital, I always look for ideas where both worlds, the digital and the analogue, complement each other. With new technologies emerging every day, it's easy to forget the ingenuity that existed many years before computers were able to create images.

**Adato** A theme that has kept recurring in your works right from the beginning is your treatment of different film tricks. Where does this fascination for torpedoing real conditions come from and how have you acquired the necessary skills?

**Jeff** When I became serious about filmmaking, DVDs started to replace VHS as a new way of experiencing movies at home. Not only could you skip to any point in the timeline, but there were also these wonderful supplements like making-offs, deleted scenes or director's commentaries. They really opened my eyes to a whole new world I didn't know was out there. It was like a magician showing you how the trick

Video Still, Jeff Desom for Hauschka. 2012. Radar.

WATCH THE VIDEO

https://vimeo.com/
50779179

WATCH THE MOVIE

**X ON A MAP (2009)**
A short film about eggs and maps. It's not easy being a great discoverer when everything has been mapped out. starring Sean Biggerstaff, Vicky Krieps & Jean-François Wolff as Christopher Columbus written & directed by Jeff Desom produced by Bernard Michaux, Lucil s.àr.l. cinematographer Jean-Louis Schuller production designer Christina Schaffer editor Amine Jaber music André Mergenthaler

Film Still, Jeff Desom. 2009. X on a Map.

works. It was addictive. Later the advent of the internet brought forth tutorial videos and forums that allowed me to learn pretty much any skill I needed. For me, a lot of that was visual effects and special effects related. With a computer and the right software, I was able to make my zero budget DIY home-video production truly shine. It felt very liberating and to this day I keep searching for ways to use visual effects in unusual ways.

*It's the mystery that draws us in as we continue to seek out fictional worlds and accept them as alternate realities even though their artificiality is proven knowledge.*

**Adato** The visual effects you used in *Mr. Tillman* are not simply part of an augmented representational technique which aims to pretend the reality of the fictive. From that moment on, in which the scenery floats like a little island in a vast nothing, the illusion is explicitly treated as illusion. Can we read that as a manifesto for the artificial element in film?

**Jeff** Indeed *Mr. Tillman* is very explicit about its artificiality. It riffs on a very common motive: the frame within a frame. In fact, it is something that you see a lot of in *Rear Window* and that has probably influenced me. It poses the question where reality ends and where the illusion begins. Is the theatre screen that border? Or is it your eye's retina. Or is the border even further within your mind. Film is a safe place to teeter on the edge of those questions. It's the mystery that draws us in as we continue to seek out fictional worlds and accept them as alternate realities even though their artificiality is proven knowledge.

**Adato** How do you see the contrary positions, such as in the *Dogma 95* movement, that bans all tricks and special effects in order to counteract an increasing alienation from reality in the cinema?

**Jeff** Since its earliest beginnings cinema has tricked us into believing that a series of still images are moving. To say one makes films without the use of tricks is an illusion in itself. *Dogma 95* brought forth some terrific films but as a movement it always seemed like more of a stunt to me. They proclaimed rules to break rules, we call that trolling today. I do understand the frustration that a movement like *Dogma 95* was born out of. In fact, I'm not seeing enough counter-movements in response to the current state of an industry dominated by blockbusters. However, I don't think that the use of effects is indicative of falseness. If a film manages to elicit something that rings true to us, does it matter what tools were used in order to do bring forth that sense of veracity? Look at *2001 A Space Odyssey*. Kubrick's masterpiece is widely considered one of the greatest achievements in cinematic history. From sets to costumes, almost everything you see on screen was manufactured in one way or another. The film also pioneered a great number of visual effects. And yet, to this day, it deeply resonates with the human experience.

**Adato** With the development of ever higher-performance software packages for digital image synthesis, the entire potential in film has long been exploded. Everything imaginable seems to be representable. How do you cope with this situation of potential limitlessness?

**Jeff** It is true that processors have become more powerful but at the same time resolutions for deliverables have grown exponentially. I still feel like I waste the same amount of time waiting for the computer to render as I did ten years ago. Truly limitless resources still heavily rely on a generous budget and an army of CG artists. I can't say that I have access to those kinds of means yet. Even if I could produce every image my mind conjures, I think the sheer mass of mediocre imagery in my head would deter any viewer. As storytellers, it is our job to filter out a lot of that junk before we have something half-way ok to show for. Limitations can be annoying but they help make choices and create a point of view that is unique to us.

**Adato** You are an author, film maker … do the projects you develop and realise on your own have priority, or those during which you are integrated into a team? At what point in the production process is know-how demanded, and how might we imagine an average working day of yours?

**Jeff** It really depends on the project and no two projects are the same. Sometimes I am the one to initiate a project from the ground up, other times I come on board after a script has already been written. In my day to day, I'm usually working on a few projects that are at varying stages of the process. I might pitch a music video while I'm in pre-production on a TV pilot and also give my notes on visual effects for a commercial in post. Production itself is a more irregular occurrence. On days

when I'm out and about on a film set I have barely any time for other projects. Collaborating with a team is intense and requires my undivided attention. In that time, you come across a lot of very unique challenges and you have to constantly think on your feet to come up with solutions. The clock is ticking and you can quickly waste a lot of resources making a bad decision. But if everything works out more or less it's a blissful experience.

**Adato** Your website includes after *Music Videos, Short Films and Commercials* the category *Installations*. What is left of film when the camera is left out?

*It is true that processors have become more powerful but at the same time resolutions for deliverables have grown exponentially. I still feel like I waste the same amount of time waiting for the computer to render as I did ten years ago.*

**Jeff** Good question. The camera is the most obvious tool in a filmmaker's kit. You can even recognise certain directors by the way they compose a shot or how they move the camera. It's a well-known observation brought forth by the auteur theory. Part of the fun in my installation work is to strip away that sense of authorship and give some control back to the viewer. Hitchcock would probably turn in his grave if he saw what I did with *Rear Window*. Without a camera, the viewer's role becomes a much more active one. By extension we also loose the cut, the least obvious but most quintessential property of film. What we are left with is something that has a lot more in common with virtual reality than film.

**Adato** In your work we've seen homages to Méliès, Kubrick and of course Hitchcock. Are there any contemporary authors, film makers or artists who inspire you or with who you'd like to work with in the future?

**Jeff** Currently, I find computer games to be the most exciting domain in the arts. I don't play much myself but I keep a close eye on what game designers are creating. If the opportunity ever arose I would definitely consider a collaboration with an artist in this field.

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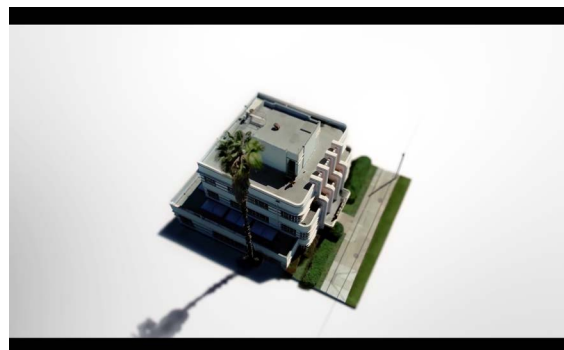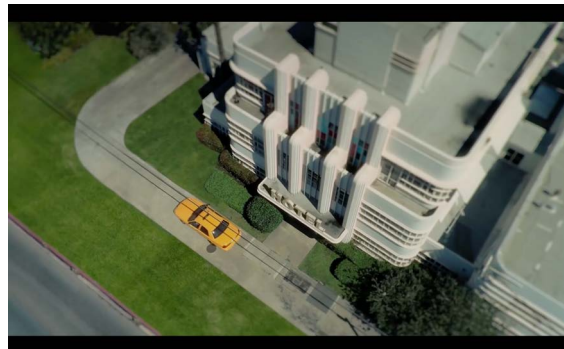
Video Stills, Jeff Desom for Father John Misty.
2018. Mr. Tillman.

WATCH THE VIDEO



https://www.youtube.
com/watch?v=j5B5IG-
qyy2s

# ADATO <sup>3—18</sup>

*PREVIEW*

Ende des Sommers erreichte uns die traurige Nachricht vom Ableben zwei der einflussreichsten Denker des 20. Jahrhunderts: Der Philosoph und Medienkritiker Paul Virilio verstarb am 10. September in Paris. Acht Tage später folgte ihm der US-amerikanische Architekt und Theoretiker Robert Venturi.

Virilio erlebte als Kind in Nantes Bombardierungen durch die alliierten Truppen. Ein Trauma, das ihn zeitlebens prägen und seine Arbeit beeinflussen sollte. 1975 erschien mit *Bunkerarchäologie* sein wohl bekanntestes Werk.

Architecture
+
Archeology



Cover of the German Version of
*Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott
Brown, Izenour (Original: 1972)

Venturi gelang 1972 mit *Learning from Las Vegas*, das in Zusammenarbeit mit Denise Scott Brown als Reisedokumentation entstand, der internationale Durchbruch. Es handelt sich um eine Case Study. Am Beispiel besagter Wüstenstadt und durch die Imagination einer Handvoll Studenten wurden neue Wege gefunden die moderne amerikanische Stadt, die des Autos, zu kartographieren. Darüber hinaus emanzipierte sich *Learning from Las Vegas* zum Standardwerk der Postmoderne, die in ihrer oft ironischen und noch öfter sehr ernst gemeinten Formenspielerei bis heute keinen wirklichen Abschluss gefunden hat.

*As fundamentally different their themes might seem at the start, Venturi and Virilio both dealt with buildings, with architecture, with typologies, one time on the coast of Brittany, another in the Nevada Desert, which, as if hurled onto the planet by extra-terrestrials or ruins of a lost and forgotten civilisation, seem stranded at the end of the world. At first glance, context-less, incomprehensible.*

*They made an attempt to decode the archetypes of the bunker or billboard as cultural (out)growths. Like archaeologists, they dissected the strata of cultural reminiscences in the endeavour to grasp the essence of the found products – the "detritus" – of human life on earth.*

*YOU CAN FIND US ON*

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