

a debate *¿Qué es lo patrimonial en el cine: la película, la sala... o el ritual?*

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Film editing as heritage: a reflection on the intangible value of film language

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URL de la contribución <www.iaph.es/revistaph/index.php/revistaph/article/view/6010>



Film Editing | foto filmingilman

The relationship between cinema and architecture has been the subject of numerous theoretical reflections, focused on the construction of space, visual perception, and narration. However, in a heritage context, it is necessary to question what, within this interplay, deserves to be preserved, protected, and transmitted.

This contribution proposes a reflection on film editing as a technique and language that, in its dialogue with architecture, can be considered intangible heritage. Editing not only structures filmic space but also reflects historical modes of representation and meaning-making, which evolve over time and contribute to collective memory.

Cinema, through the techniques of montage and collage, emerges as a powerful tool for constructing architectural imagery and environments as images. It is not merely an aesthetic matter but a true visual mode of thinking, capable of generating meaning, evoking emotions, and shaping spatial perception.

Collage creates nonlinear visual narratives by assembling heterogeneous and seemingly unrelated materials. In architecture, this technique finds a parallel in conscious restoration, where old and new elements meet, dialogue, and overlap. Collage embraces fragments of reality that tell multiple stories, preserving the aura of the work and stimulating contemplation. In this regard, it is cinematic montage that emerges as the true protagonist.

Sergeij Ejzenštejn (1923) defines it as a succession of meaningful moments, capable of constructing sense through rhythm and juxtaposition (Ejzenštejn y Montani 2001). Montage does not merely show: it guides the viewer, immersing them in a visual flow that replaces thought with image. Walter Benjamin (1936) observes that, unlike painting, cinema does not allow for contemplative fixation: the image changes continuously (Benjamin y Valagussa 2014).

Cinema and architecture share this tension between staticity and movement. Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben (1998)¹ emphasize that cinematic images are gestures, not fixed poses. Contemporary architecture, as seen in the works of Zaha Hadid, likewise proposes a dynamic reading of space, conceived as a visual and bodily flow.

To support the concept of heritage, we can draw extensively on the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Cultural Heritage, which also encompasses intangible heritage – namely, practices, representations, and knowledge that communities recognize as part of their heritage. From this perspective, film editing can be considered a cultural practice worth preserving: not merely a technique, but a language that has shaped our way of seeing and narrating the world– a true heritage.

It is argued that montage carries historical memory: from Ejzenštejn's early experiments to contemporary cinema, it reflects aesthetic, technological, and ideological transformations. Preserving montage means safeguarding a mode of visual thinking that has influenced not only cinema but also architecture, photography, and the visual arts.

Film editing, in its dialogue with architecture (and beyond), represents a form of intangible heritage that deserves attention and protection. It is not merely a technique but a language that has contributed to the construction of the visual and spatial memory of the twentieth century. Many intellectuals, paraphrasing Vertov argue that “we have seen –and continue to see– through devices that allow us to mediate perception”. In a heritage context, recognizing the value of montage means enhancing a practice that has shaped our way of seeing (Berger y Nadotti 2015), remembering, and representing space. Its preservation cannot be separated from a critical reflection on its historical and cultural role, opening new perspectives for education, research, and the safeguarding of cinematic practices.

NOTES

1. The text of the lecture was later published, together with three other essays, in the form of a book: Agamben 1998.

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