TO LOOK, TO WANDER: CINEMA IN INSTALLATIONS

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This essay deals with the processes of the relocation of screens. The purpose is to examine a case study, in order to understand how the filmic device adjusts itself as it changes but at the same time how it remains strongly linked to its cinematic identity. One of Peter Greenaway latest work out, *Blow Your Trumpet! 2000 Years of Italian Design*, which presents the combination of relocated screens and museum-space, has been chosen. The installation is used as an *overture* at the Milan Design Museum, which was established in December 2007 in the Triennale building, and placed at the Museum entrance.

When Greenaway states that «the context of the object is as relevant as the object itself»[1], he means to underline the original proposal of the Museum, which is not perceived as an "archaeological" space, but as an area where new installations are continously set up. The main intention is to create a dynamic museum «which is able to change continuously and to offer visitors different points of view and original visits, where objects and icons of design will play a very important role in installations»[2], a museum whose subject will change every 12-18 months. Apart from the planning and the mission of the museum, it is worth focusing on the dynamism shown in choosing cinema and its moving images as a main topic. This is properly what actually gave rise to the conception of the first exhibition of the Milan Design Museum called *What Is Italian Design?*, created by Peter Greenaway and the Italian architect Italo Rota, which stems from the necessity to merge languages and arts. Their aim is to show the objects of Italian design from the twentieth century in their own original context. Despite this purpose, Greenaway's installation does not include the images of the objects that theoretically it should celebrate. It is itself the first design element the visitor runs into as he enters the museum: the artist does not perform the universe of objects he brings us into. To confirm this tendency he said in an interview:

> *A museum of objects without objects! To show a multitude of products means to build supermarket's shelves; is this what we want? A deadly boredom? What we intend to do here is to place each object within its human and social context using technology linked to fiction*[3].

In order to achieve his goal he uses screens with particular shapes and forms, endowed with their own evocative ability.

> *Five senses – sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch. And four elements – fire, water, air, earth. These are facts. We could add gravity, temperature, speed and text. We might provide you with five landscapes – the frame (we are actually giving you three frames where you*

could put anything), the tower aiming to reach Heaven, the triumphal arch (to celebrate our victories), the wide horizon (to satisfy our need to explore) and a segment of the earth (to make sure we always know where we are). This is enough to cover everything in design[4].

And this is enough to have a proper landscape, as well (Figs. 1-2).

Fig. 1 – Overview of the installation (the picture is part of the press release).

Fig. 2 – Partial view of the installation (the picture is part of the press release).

The introduction of the screens indeed creates a new landscape. As Francesco Casetti has pointed out[5], the screens find themselves in the middle of a process, which leads them out of their own original context and sets them away from the traditional fruition patterns. They are relocated, that is to say they are set in new spheres and thus they come into contact with different disciplines and languages. *Blow Your Trumpet* shows us how cinema interacts with installations for the benefit of design, in a space planned and dedicated to modern decorative arts, thus giving birth to differ-

ent experiences, which influence each other in form and content. In other words, the filmic device goes out of the moving theatre and starts wandering, reorganizing the spaces it enters. As Lury and Massey clearly explained, space is something transitory, not still, and arises from what it hosts[6]. The screens' surfaces become part of the extension[7] of pure space. As far as *Blow Your Trumpet* is concerned, Greenaway's screens gain back their own surface and extension, spreading their own reflex within the space and – at the same time – attracting portions of light in the surrounding area. Furthermore, the screen not only offers to the public its own image and other images, but it also reflexes the same images on other surfaces. The result is that new territorial maps are born, along with new landscapes and brand new space fruition.

As has already been pointed out, screens place themselves within a new space: just because they are vision tools, the space which contains them becomes the space of a new scopic experience; moreover, they fill the whole exposition's area thus becoming the visitors' main focus. The presence of the kaleidoscope made up by these images is therefore associated to a certain type of vision, even though the visitor knows he is not in a movie theatre and he is not supposed to watch a film. This means that the screens implicitly communicate a certain formality to assume in front of them, their presence defines anyway the space in which they are located; in this sense, they re-articulate this space, since they shape it into a particular geography. This is the reason why Greenaway chooses particular shapes for his screens: three visual perimeters in the foreground that, in combination with a tower and a triumphal arch, outline a precise landscape of which the horizon line – split into eight screens and inserted onto the planet Earth (which symbolizes the human sphere) – is given too (Figs. 3-4).

The screens as the frames of images, and the space containing them as the installation's frame, stand for the physical and symbolic context, where both the vision and the artistic-aesthetic experience take place. The videos in *Blow Your Trumpet* are not only shown on the screen's surface but also on the support ones; considering the three frames, the tower and the triumphal arch, which are standing on the ground, it is easy to notice how the video is visible on the floor at 90º towards the image. In this case, the filmic device places itself within the surrounding space. This
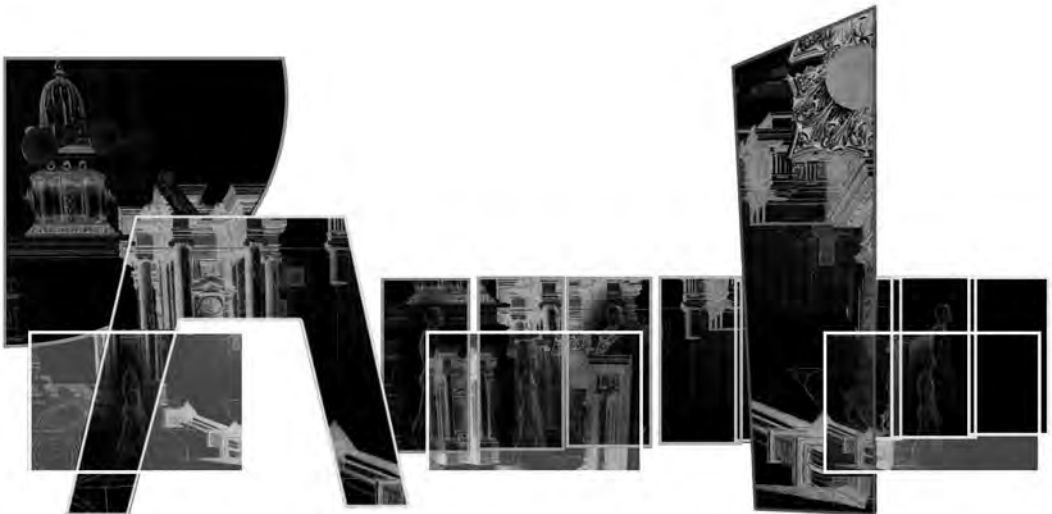

Fig. 3 – Screens' shape development on surface level (the graphic elaboration is mine).
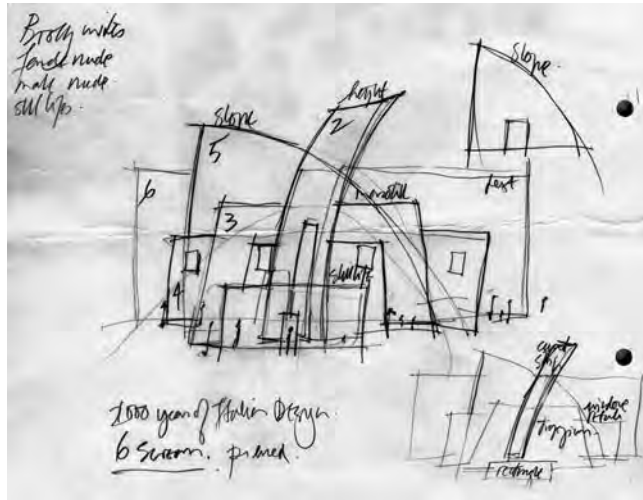
Fig. 4 – Greenaway's sketch of the screens (the image is part of the *Triennale*'s press kit).

underlines how the borders are less defined: due to the language of moving images, cinema merges with other forms of expression. On the one hand these screens make non-cinematographic environments suitable for the vision, and on the other the filmic experience partly alters its own nature when it comes into contact with this space. Obviously, this does not mean that the museum turns into a movie theatre: what the visitors are witnessing here is a coordination between different precincts. The screens are in the middle of a complex process characterized by reflexes and refractions, which could be analyzed on three levels:

1) on a *situational level*: the installation gains significance within the context, because there are refractions coming from a wide setting. It is from this wider area (the museum space), that the installation's space is first conveyed; in other words, it gains substance as it is an *overture*;

2) on a *relational level*: the screens absorb all the reflexes that are usually scattered, i.e. if I stand right in front of the screen, in a certain way my reflected image enters the screen itself and is superimposed on the ones that are shown. This reveals an analogy with the mirror and so reminds us of the notion of heterotopy, as Foucault puts it[8];

3) on a *functional level*: since the screens are devices that refer to cinema, they are able to turn the context into a place of scopic experience; but at the same time the installation of which they are part introduces the public to the dimension of aesthetic contemplation. Both the filmic device and art video, even if they maintain their own characteristics, meet the new requirement to celebrate the Italian design, which confers to them a new value and promotes different types of experience. Their space is gathered in one specific context, the design's context; quoting Foucault, the visitor finds himself in front of a juxtaposition, because he is «in a single real place [composed of] several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible»[9].

Blow Your Trumpet reveals the link between the filmic device and the installation, even if there are some differences concerning the classic idea of film experience, due to the wandering of the screens. As has already been pointed out, «due to a change, to a movement, cinema invades new parts of the world, fixes new borders, modifies its features, and last but not least, readjusts it to its characteristic and to the experiences it holds and conveys»[10]. A new concept of place thus

comes to light, a new topology which connects installation and set design, the filmic device and art video. In this way, what strongly arises is the space of intersections.

The idea of connecting different devices does not only refer to the concept of relocating but represents one of the characteristics of Greenaway aesthetics: the artist, as the supervisor of the exibition and a film-maker, often tends to put heterogeneous elements together. The idea of using the device of multiple screens broadens the gaze, increasing the number of potential points of view, creating a sort of multiple-vision. This technique (used in many works, among which *The Pillow Book* and *The Stairs*[11]), works like a form of editing, which adapts the images to the frames of the screen. Even though the pictures are static, nevertheless they create an explosion of images, a harmonic movement, a balanced and theatrical whole[12].

Greenaway uses the collage method at the level of contents, too. In *Blow Your Trumpet* he adopts an inter-textual language, where the application of different art forms gives rise to a stream of accumulated, integrated and transformed images. The final effect is, as Giuliana Bruno maintains, «an incorporation of painted, architectural and literary figures»[13], and one should add of sculptural forms, photographic, choreographic and calligraphic representations, thus «revealing an omnivorous appetite for inter-textual: it is a diffusion of architectures created in a wandering collected works, re-organized in a non-stop *mise en cadre*»[14]. It is actually worth thinking this fragmentation over; Greenaway gives quite precise indications about this point, since he says:

> *I've always been fascinated by that peculiar excitement arising from the sense of place, or the recollection of a particular genius loci. [This is true if the place is] real, but it is beyond doubt true even though the location has been made up through words, in a painting or in a movie*[15].

So, what Greenaway states is that within the arch, the tower, the horizon and land-shape frames different forms of art and languages intermingle. A topological and symbolic map thus appears. In this way, the "sense of place" expresses its deep meaning, resembling not only a combination of geographic locations, landscapes and architectures, but also a mixture of sense. The result is a map which communicates through a sort of "artistic Esperanto", characterized by the interaction of several registers and elements from different disciplines. In fact, the map outlined by Greenaway is composed of background music, archaic Pompeian frescos, Renaissance paintings like the Botticelli's *Venus*, Neoclassical sculptures, naturalistic views, the perspective plans of buildings and sections. There are furthermore several writings on the background of images and along a display that frames the installation, behind the tower and the horizon line, which contains various quotations. The map outlined by Greenaway is completed by the images of naked bodies[16] placed in the foreground, which create a sequence of static, almost photographic images; the image, split in several frames, appears on each screen showing different movements of the subjects, granting dynamism to the installation and thus reminding the visitor of dance choreography.

The connection between all these elements, each with its own language, represents the synthesis of different disciplines and becomes the hub of the installation. Architecture, painting, sculpture, calligraphy, photography and cinema meet within the art video domain. The installation thus becomes both inter-medial and inter-textual object[17], at one and the same time. Inter-medial because several forms of art merge in a new one; inter-textual because the disciplines Greenaway quotes acknowledge each other, turn into one another and are side by side within the video installation.

All these different images are shown in a detached way. The architectonical pictures, the neoclassical sculptures and the nakedness of the moving subjects do not show any particular *nuances*. They are placed in the installation as symbols, as *exempla* for each discipline, and so they act as general iconographies of various types of art. The artist's aesthetics, in fact, is built on a specific

archive cataloguing: Greenaway uses exemplary images to create a visual encyclopaedia, where «each image functions as the crystallization of a rich and identifiable aesthetic system»[18]. These crystallized images turn the work of art into a neat deposit of expressive languages as they denote archetypal forms, *root-images* or – as Didi-Huberman calls them – *images-matrices*[19] (Fig. 5).
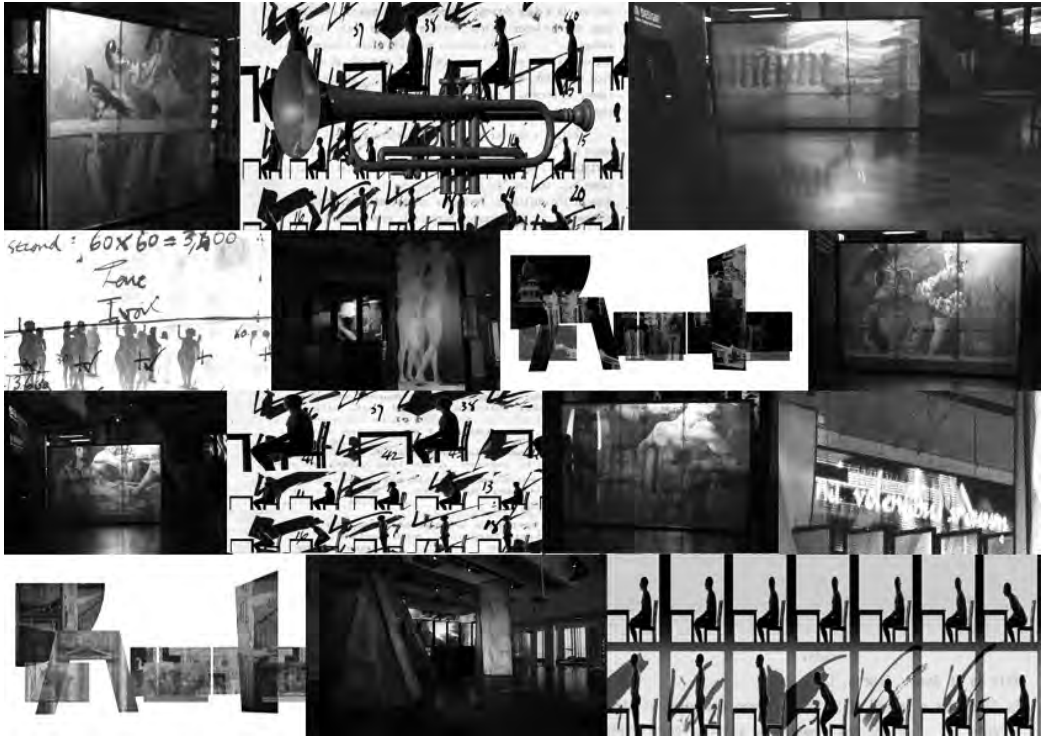

Fig. 5 – Naturalistic view, music, calligraphy, sculpture, architecture, painting, photography, frescos, choreography: Greenaway's "visual encyclopaedia" (my pictures and elaboration).

The installation is thus composed of a taxonomy of images and a superimposition of artistic layers that, if individually considered, end up disclosing the autonomy of each work of art. The idea of these layers placed over one other is quite clearly linked to the notion of *eterochrony*, as Foucault puts it. The images of paintings and sculptures, the frescos and the drawings create "time-cuts"[20], they are set inside an anachronistic dimension[21], where time is out of joint. Although they are born in precise chronological contexts, they enter society, which embraces them within its significances' tank, it spreads them, keeps their memory, and finally adopts them like *exempla*. The images thus survive the passing of time and become matrixes. As they are eterochronical, they grow to be archetypes: they convey culture, tradition, art and aesthetics which are not only unalterable but also reinterpreted through the different ages. In *Blow Your Trumpet* the landscape develops along a space-time outline: a new temporality characterized by the blares of trumpets shapes up. This time does not intend to be eternal but – on the contrary – craves to enhance its temporariness and the most important moments for figurative art, architecture, sculpture and design: time is abolished, «as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge»[22].

It is actually because of the will to organize this knowledge, that Greenaway presents the images as they were collected inside an archive. In fact, he has argued:

I believe in every case my artworks show a wish to order, or a wish to discuss or contemplate order, an independent desire for structure to accommodate the vast amounts of information that is present in the world[23].

To an author fascinated by cartography, who collects maps, creates cartographical works, draws serial paintings and landscapes in which grids and crossing lines often occurs[24], the installation stands for a sort of catalogue (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 – Encyclopaedic aesthetics: Greenaway's archive is to be found both in the installation and in other previous works (my elaboration).

«Greenaway works with the ability of the maps to cross different times and spaces»[25], and this mapping work presents a topological and symbolic space where the visitor could enter as in a "cultural journey". The organising principles of knowledge follow a personal path, so that within the installation it is possible to spot Greenaway's encyclopaedia. This is a recurring idea in the artist's works. As the voice-over of *A Walk through H*[26] well explains, the territory is created as the subject walks through it. The *Overture* thus turns into a space in which the visitor can build his own archive. The ensuing geography is thus controlled by the subject: it traces a path that follows the lived experience of the subject. It draws «a cartographic journey that outlines architec-

ture's experience, landscape's design and other surfaces in the way they are used, lived and crossed»[27]. A place, whose shape derives from the surrounding space, thus appears. *Blow Your Trumpet* builds his/her world through the subject who lives it and conveys its own experience, that is to say, the installation is a medium through which the space becomes place.

Space and place: these two terms particularly reveal their significance when considered as Martin Heidegger defines them in his essay *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*[28]. In fact, in his work, the German philosopher distinguishes the two concepts in the perception of *dwelling*. The notions of space, place and dwelling could also be useful under the circumstance in elaborating an interpretation of Greenaway's installation, as well.

Heidegger states that space is a natural and undifferentiated environment, where no organizing principles are present; while place is a space that has been modified and marked by a methodical principle, i.e. an organized space. Place is thus connected to the action and the presence of the individual: its core «is always a determined that modifies the space, collects and characterizes it, using its own precise proportions»[29]. It reveals itself as an expression, that is as a manifestation within the pure and plain space dimension concerning a particular being essence. In other words, place is the space dwelled by man, the space of his experience. As a consequence, dwelling means turning the space into place, through our own experience. The dwelling subject exercises his sovereignty over the world, as Greenaway does through his ordering power and his encyclopaedic view of the world. In *Blow Your Trumpet* images and languages turn into the map of a place that determines them in order to illustrate the artist's experience. Greenaway's screens thus become the "dwelling devices" able to characterize space and reproduce the place inhabited by the individual. They fix their mark on space and make it inhabitable.

Assuming Heidegger's categories, two dynamics seem to come to light in the installation: the first establishes new vectors of awareness and shapes the topological system, thanks to the introduction of screens within the space; the second is performed by Greenaway's cataloguing aesthetics. As result, a series of images is traced, where the constitutional elements of the installation acquire a new order. The space, that has been given a new shape through the screens' relocation and the encyclopaedic cataloguing, modifies the experience which organizes and dwells within the world.

In conclusion, wondering about the filmic device within this new context, it would be possible to argue that the filmic device could be considered as a *dwelling device*: it wanders and enters new contexts, it plunges in a new space of vision, it takes possession of this space and turns it into a place, it organizes it making it inhabitable and – finally – dwells within it.

1 Press release published for the opening of the Milan Design Museum, available to download on Triennale's at the address website http://www.triennale.it/repository/triennale_design_museum2/cartella_stampa _eng.pdf, p. 7.
2 Silvana Annichiarico, "Un museo mutante", in *L'Europeo*, special edition *Design Museum/Triennale*, no. 6/VI, December 2007, p. 40 (my translation).
3 Interview to Peter Greenaway by Virginio Briatore, in *Interni*, no. 577, December 2007, p. 44.
4 Press release published for the opening of the Milan Design Museum, cit., p. 8.
5 See Francesco Casetti, The Last Supper *in Piazza della Scala*, the opening intervention of this publication.
6 «Philosophically […] no spaces are stable, given for all time; all spaces are transitory and one of the most crucial things about spatially […] is that it is always being made». Karen Lury, Doreen Massey, "Making Connections", in *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1999, p. 231.
7 On this issue, see Malte Hagener, "Kaleidoscopic Perception. The Multiplication of Surfaces and Screens in Media and Culture", in *Cinéma & Cie*, no. 8, Fall 2006, pp. 37-48.

8   See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", in *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, Spring 1986, p. 24.

9   Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", cit., p. 25.

10 Francesco Casetti, *L'esperienza filmica e la rilocazione del cinema: una traccia di lavoro*, lecture notes for Pragmatica della Comunicazione Mediale, 2007/2008 (unpublished text), p. 7 (my translation).

11 In *The Pillow Book* (1996), Greenaway gathers three different screens in size and type joined together in images' superimposition. In *The Stairs 2: Projection* (Munich, 26th October-19th November 1995), as it happens at the Milan Design Museum, a set of screens was arranged in order to display images in different ways.

12 The dialectics between moving and static images is settled through the combination of these aspects; as Yvonne Spielmann argues, «Greenaway produces a new type of image through the simulation of movement when he electronically animates single frames of phase photography». Therefore, the result is a combination of still pictures brought back to life and moving images continuously flowing, which creates a sequence effect. See Yvonne Spielmann, "Intermedia in Electronic Images", in *Leonardo*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2001, p. 55.

13 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlante delle emozioni. In viaggio tra arte, architettura e cinema*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2006, p. 264 (my translation).

14 *Ibidem*.

15 Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs 1: Geneva – the Location*, Merrell Holberton, London 1994, p. 79.

16 Naked body images are frequent in Greenaway's poetic; on their significance in the author's aesthetics see Alan Woods, *Being Naked Playing Dead: the Art of Peter Greenaway*, St. Martin's, New York 1997.

17 On the distinction between inter-textual and inter-media see Yvonne Spielmann, "Intermedia in Electronic Images", cit.

18 Will Straw, "Proliferating Screens", in *Screen*, vol. 41, no. 1, Spring 2000, p. 118.

19 See George Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, Minuit, Paris 2000.

20 See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", cit.

21 See George Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, cit.

22 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", cit., p. 26.

23 Paul Melia, *Artworks*, Lindau, Torino 2000, catalogue of the retrospective about Peter Greenaway, which took place in Parma from 21st October to 10th December 2000, p. 51.

24 The technique is to be found, for example, in *Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) and in the installation *The Last Supper* (Milan, Palazzo Reale, 16th april-6th september 2008), where a grid is projected above and around Christ and the Apostles.

25 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlante delle Emozioni. In viaggio tra arte, architettura e cinema*, cit., p. 273 (my translation).

26 On *A Walk through H* (Peter Greenaway, 1978), see http://petergreenaway.org.uk/walkthroughh.htm, 25 May 2007.

27 Giualiana Bruno, *Atlante delle Emozioni. In viaggio tra arte, architettura e cinema*, cit., p. 274 (my translation).

28 See Martin Heidegger, *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*, in Otto Bartning (ed.), *Darmstädter Gespräch, Mensch und Raum*, Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, Darmstadt 1952.

29 Silvano Petrosino, *Capovolgimenti. La casa non è una tana, l'economia non è il business*, Jaca Book, Milano 2008, p. 9 (my translation).