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"Every text, after all, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work. What a problem it would be if a text were to say everything the receiver is to understand - it would never end."

Umberto Eco, Six Walks in the Fictional Woods

by

Nikolai P. Nikolov

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Master of Architecture

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Houston, Texas
April, 2002
April, 1998

abstract

"Every text, after all, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work. What a problem it would be if a text were to say everything the receiver is to understand - it would never end."

Umberto Eco, Six Walks in the Fictional Woods

by

Nikolai P. Nikolov

We all have the desire for architecture that is fleeting, that is not fixed, hard to capture, even impossible to master. And build.
But we also have the desire, the impulse, to surpass that impossibility, to dwell in our imagination.

In Umberto Eco’s opinion, the only place where this is possible is fiction. In order to understand stories I need to construct their architecture and at the same time, in order to understand architecture I need to place a story in it.

In this film the project pursues the desire for an animate architecture. Like the impossible desire of the would-be lovers in the play The Malady of Death by Marguerite Duras, this desire also proves impossible; the architecture is found in that impossibility.
The movie has to suffer from the same malady of impossible yearning.
This film is a lazy machine - asking the viewer to construct the space of the narrative.
acknowledgements

Fares el-Dahdah - the man! The one that made it all come together! The one that always saw the light! The one that brought back fun and meaning into architecture, again!

Keith Krumwiede - hard as a rock, cool and invincible, integral part of it all, the die-hard critic.

Luke Bulman - the eye that sees all, energy without limits, fresh and always ready.


Ozge Zoralioglu, Dave DaPonte, Fani Qano, Alistair Lucks, Brian Heiss, Taryn Kinney, Kristin Schuster.

And most of all – Mom and Dad, Emo!
We all have the desire for architecture that is fleeting, that is not fixed, which is hard to capture, even impossible to master. And build. But we also have the desire, the impulse, to surpass that impossibility, to dwell in our imagination. This is not an easy to satisfy desire. Many of our efforts to accomplish the translation from the imaginary into the real have been either wasteful or have failed.

There is a design exercise that we all have done – when reading fiction, to construct in our imagination the space of action.

In Umberto Eco's opinion, the only place where this is possible is in fiction. In order to understand stories I need to construct their architecture and at the same time, in order to understand architecture I need to place a story in it.

In this Diagram: scenarios, cinematic scripts, are implicit in every piece of architecture. At the same time all narratives in film practice are architecturally dependent.

There is another side to Eco's words, in fiction facts are more solid than in real life. For instance, Napoleon did not die on the island of St. Helena; he died in a boat going to France.

As Eco writes once again, historical fact is not as solid, it yields to fiction. From here the primary assumption of the project is that what makes fictional fact solid is that it is subtle, fleeting. Historical fact is not as subtle. The conclusion that we can make is that the desire for things to happen can actually be far subtler in fiction than outside fiction.
In fiction you can get things done. The fact is that they can remain subtle, while outside fiction.

So this project formed itself around this pursuit of the desire for an animate architecture.
Starting with a text – The Malady of Death by Marguerite Duras. Given the difficulty of the text, I could have chosen some other text more susceptible to spatial manipulations.
This story is about a man and a woman. A man who has never known but those like him, and a young woman bound to him by a paid contract for a few nights - to spend her nights with him in a desperate effort to fall in love, to love a woman. The action remains exclusively between the two characters; the physical space does not intervene in the their interaction, it remains undetermined and in the background, passively staging the unfolding of the narrative.

In Eco's words: Every text, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work. In film you can get to do architecture in a way that you cannot do elsewhere.

In this film the project pursues the desire for an animate architecture. Like the impossible desire of the would-be lovers, this desire also proves impossible; the architecture is found in that impossibility.
The movie has to suffer from the same malady of impossible yearning.
This film is a lazy machine – asking the viewer to construct the space of the narrative.

With this I would like to start the short – it is 12 min roughly.

12.00 pm, 18 January 2002,
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CD-ROM - Windows 95 (or later) and Mac OS 8 (or later) compatible, ISO 9660
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Frame Rate: 24.00 fps

Audio: 32000 Hz - 16 bit - Stereo