Setting the Scene: Cinematic Syntax as a Way of Forming Identity in the Generic City

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

There is a syntax that exists in film, architecture, and the city, elements that come together to form a language. This language creates a relationship between different components, forming a point of view, through space and time, that develops into a narrative. This syntax can be used as a way for an auteur to create an identity for themselves and their work. The identity becomes more unique through the use of the uncanny within the syntax. By creating these unexpected elements, a more memorable experience is formed. This thesis will look at the City Place condo development in Toronto, a place that lacks a sense of identity. It will also explore the cinematic syntax of director Wes Anderson, which adds surreal and kitsch elements to the everyday. By translating Anderson's cinematic syntax into architecture, these elements will be imposed onto City Place development, forming identity in the generic city.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to extend my thanks to Michael Putman and Catherine Venart, for guiding me through this process and offering their wealth of knowledge and creativity to my project.

To Dr. Barbara Falk, for your time and all of the helpful insight and clarity that you brought to this thesis.

To Taylor, for always reassuring me and for always making time to read through my work.

To my parents, for always supporting me, even when they don't understand what I'm working on.

Finally, to anyone who has had the misfortune of watching a film with me since I started working on this project. I'm sure my commentary was insufferable.

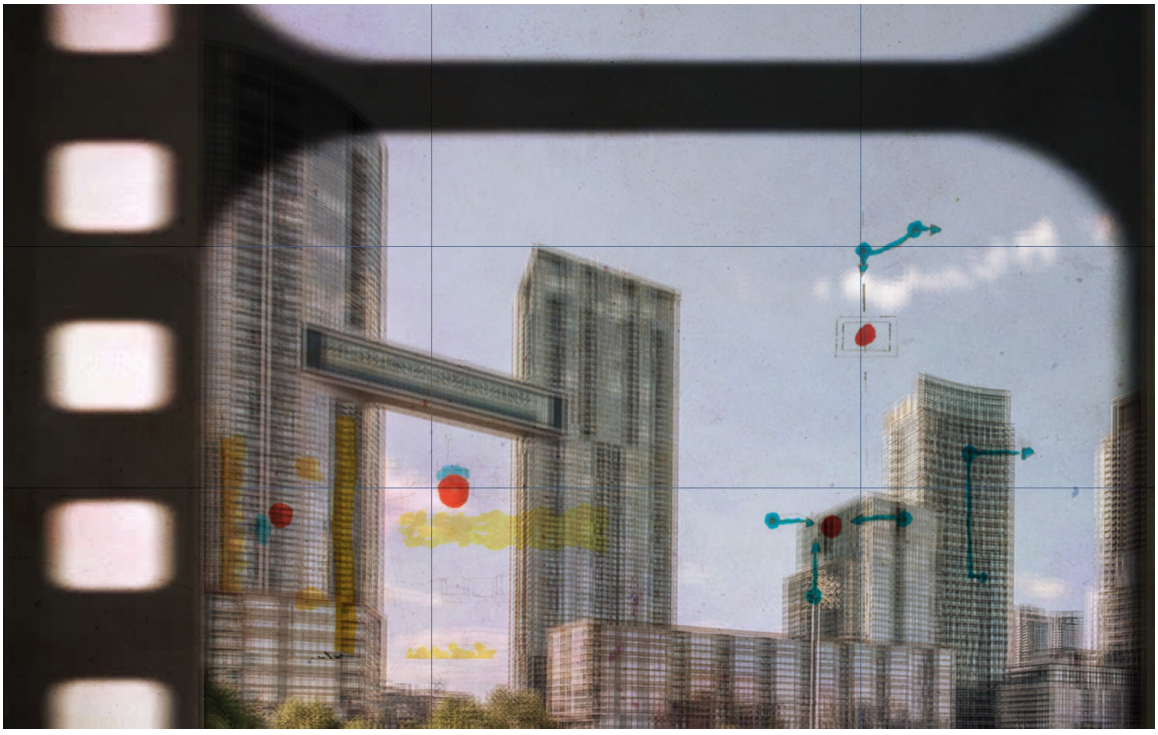
Chapter 1: Introduction

Thesis Question

Can cinematic syntax be translated into architecture as a way of forming identity in the generic city?

Architecture and Film

Of the visual arts, architecture seems to marry itself best with film. It is easy to join the two, as they both deal with the relationship between time and space. The main difference lies in the amount control the creator has on the viewer's perception of their work. Where a filmmaker can precisely control and manipulate every element seen by the viewer, architects can only encourage how their spaces are experienced (Toy 1994). Unsurprisingly, the two mediums have had a profound influence on each other. Architecture creates a real space for films to take place, a backdrop for



The generic city: a place without identity. How can cinematic syntax be implemented on it?

the filmic imaginary. Film, on the other hand, offers a visual of what architecture could be, were it unconstrained by real life, it is “a vision of the fusion of space and time” (Vidler 1993, 48). This thesis looks at the relationship between these two mediums in establishing a syntax to form identity in the generic city.

Syntax

Syntax is the elements that come together to form a language. In writing, syntax are the words coming together to form sentences and paragraphs. It also exists in film, architecture, and the city. Syntax is something that is personal to the creator of a work, it “is a result of the usage, not a determinant of it” (Monaco 2000, 172). That is to say, syntax is the result of elements coming together.

Unlike with writing, syntax in film, architecture, and the city is not linear. It must consider spatial compositions as well as development in time. In film, the modification of space is referred to as mise-en-scène, which translates to “putting in the scene”. The modification of time is referred to as montage, which translates to “putting together” (Monaco 2000). These two elements come together to form cinematic syntax. Since architecture and the city both also exist in space and time, these elements of mise-en-scène and montage can theoretically be applied to their syntax as well.

Mise-en-scène deals with the framing of a shot, which elements are included, and which are purposefully left out, how those elements are in relation to each other and to the viewer. This is where camera angles, lens types, depth, and planes of vision may come into play in the cinematic syntax. There are ten areas of concern in regard to mise-en-scène according to Rudolf Arnheim: Balance, Shape,

form, growth, space, light, colour, movement, tension, and expression (Monaco 2000). Mise-en-scène creates our perception of space. Montage deals with how those frames come together. It is often associated with how a film is edited and cut. It can be used to seamlessly transition between scenes, or it can be used to create a juxtaposition between them. These two examples would express something very different within the film. James Monaco outlines eight different types of montage in his book *How to Read Film*: the autonomous shot (sequence shot), the parallel syntagma (parallel editing), the bracket syntagma ("a series of very brief scenes representing occurrences that the film gives as typical examples as a same order or reality"), the descriptive syntagma (establishing), the alternate syntagma (alternate sequences), the scene, episodic sequence, and ordinary sequence (Monaco 2000). Montage creates our perception of time. In translating cinematic syntax into architecture, both mise-en-scène and montage must play a role in order to express that translation through both time and space

Narrative

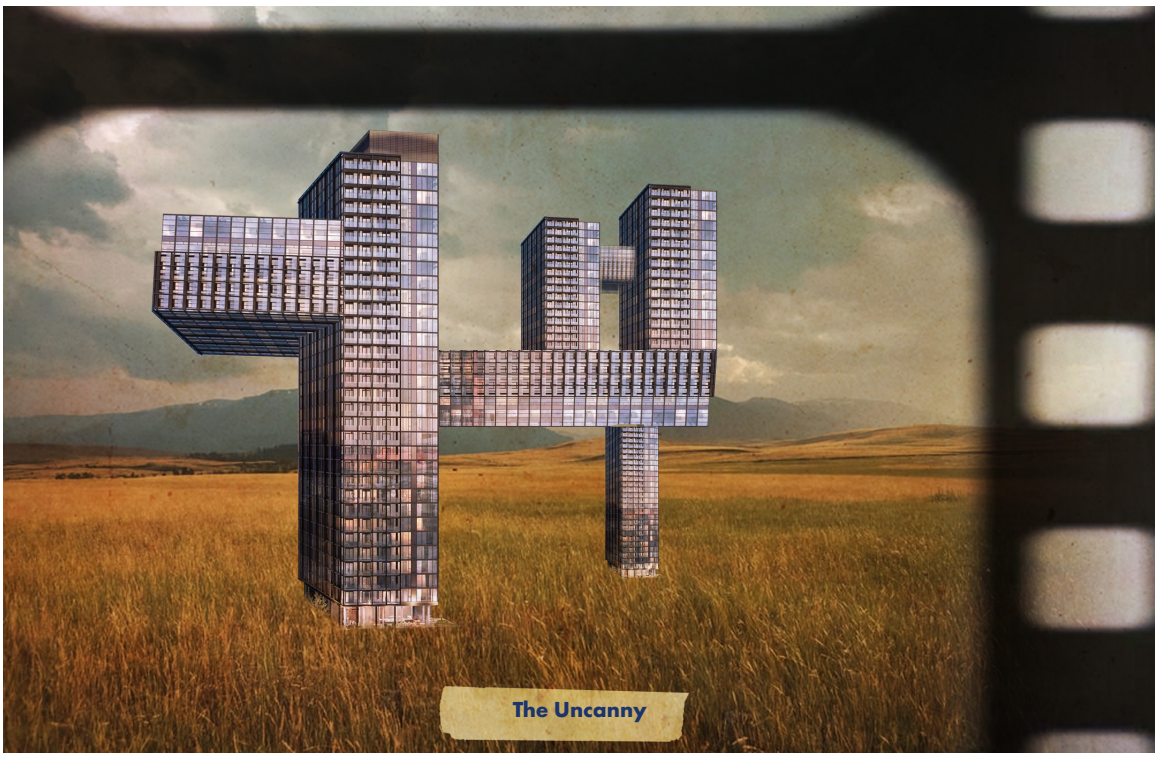
Film has a very clear *narrative* that the director is guiding the viewer through, the camera is a tool to direct attention to what they want you to see. Directors also have the advantage of using scripts and actors as a way of clarifying and expressing their narrative. Narrative is much less obvious in the built world but can be expressed by means of mise-en-scène and montage, suggesting pathways and points of view while the user is travelling through a space.

Uncanny

The *uncanny* is rooted in literature, specifically in the genre of horror. Freud wrote "the 'uncanny; is that class of

the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar. How this is possible, in what circumstances the familiar can become uncanny and frightening" (Freud 1976). This definition has adapted over time, into something less frightening, but the uncanny still describes something familiar that has been tampered with or adjusted in some way that changes our perception of it. The feeling of uncanny is something that is odd or out of place, there is an uneasiness, it draws our attention and is held in our memory (Vidler 1992).

The uncanny is much easier to express through film than it is through architecture and the city. In film the image can be manipulated into something that doesn't look real, this type of manipulation is much more difficult in the built world, a place that is very much rooted in reality.



A visual representation of a generic architecture made uncanny.

Director Wes Anderson’s cinematic syntax uses unexpected and uncanny elements in order to create an identity in his work. My goal is to translate this cinematic syntax into an architectural language, through form and programming, as a way of shifting perspectives and forming an identity in the generic city.

Chapter 2: Translation

Translating Film to Architecture

Wes Anderson and Rem Koolhaas

In translating Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax into architecture, I have identified Rem Koolhaas as an architect whose work exemplifies elements that are present in Anderson's syntax. Interestingly enough, Koolhaas started out his career as a scriptwriter before moving into architecture (Toy 1994), while Anderson wanted to be an architect growing up (Frearson 2015). I will go into further detail on their respective work later in this chapter, but first I would like to discuss filmmakers and architects who came before them. Anderson and Koolhaas did not simply come up with their individual syntaxes. They evolved from the creators that came before them. Anderson learned from the work of filmmaker auteurs such as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, and Stanley Kubrick, whose work can be translated into the architecture of Adolf Loos, John Hejduk, and Aldo Rossi respectively.

Orson Welles and Adolf Loos

Orson Welles was an active director from the years 1941-1973. His work is known for it's use of point of view and masterfully executed tracking shots, within the genres of drama and science fiction (Kolker 2016). Welles' use of point of view was shown prominently through deep-focus shots, where the focus of the shot could reach from the front to the back of a deep space, showing a depth of detail. Another typical Wellesian point of view is a tilted low angled shot, which disorients the viewer (Monaco 2000). As with

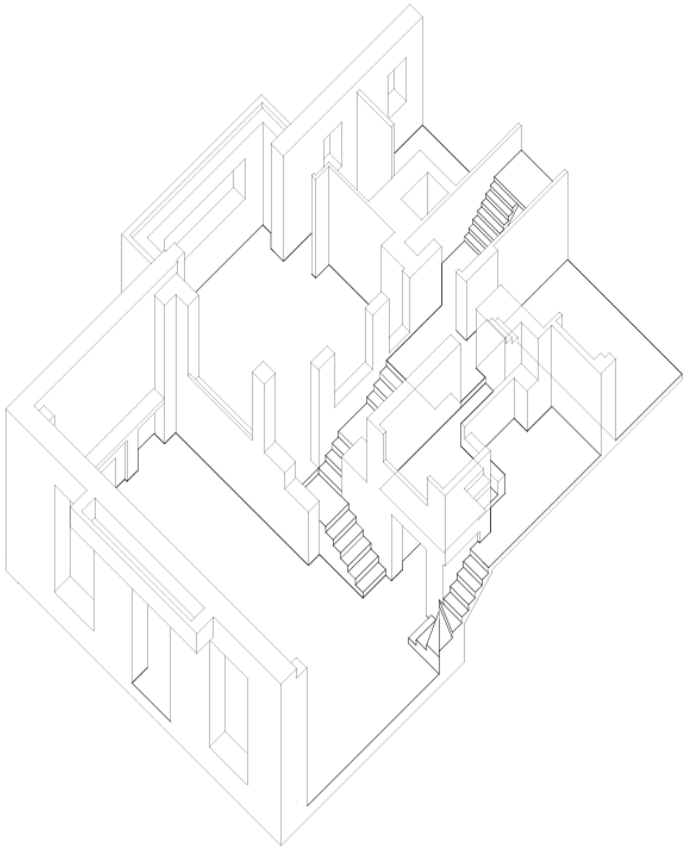
many directors, Orson Welles has a profound impact on Anderson's career:

> Orson Welles powerfully influenced Anderson's conception of what a director does and is; Anderson is far from the first auteur to incorporate aspects of Welles's persona and working methods, as Welles's legend remains so potent that it is virtually impossible for moviemakers not to absorb aspects of his work and life. . . . Anderson evokes many Wellesian signatures, including the use of extreme wide-angle lenses (often placed at a low angle so that ceilings are visible in the shot) and fantastically complex extended tracking shots through geographically tricky locations. (Seitz 2013, 126)

Still from Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane:* A typical Wellesian deep-focus shot (Welles 1941).

Adolf Loos was working, on what many categorize as post-modern architecture, long before Orson Welles, but his work can still be viewed as a translation of Welles' cinematic syntax. Like Welles, Adolf Loos' work deals a lot with ideas of point of view and of procession. Similarly, the disorientation produced by the Wellesian low angle tilted point of view, Loos creates facades that play with framing symmetry and asymmetry and uses irregularity in a way that destabilizes the architectural object (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020). The spatial organization used by Loos is the raumplan, where spaces are organized on a path that moves users through the building

(Eisenman and Iturbe 2020). This type of procession that is created can be considered a translation of the procession created in one of Welles' tracking shots. Both Orson Welles and Adolf Loos use similar ideas of procession and point of view in their work and show how these aspects of Welles's cinematic syntax could be translated to architecture.



Drawing showing different paths of travel in Adolf Loos' *Villa Muller* (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020).

Alfred Hitchcock and John Hejduk

Alfred Hitchcock's extensive list of films spans from the years 1927–1976. He is known for creating thrillers, with lots of attention being paid to the details within his compositions (Kolker 2016). Hitchcock was successful not just because of the subject of his films, but because he was very careful with how each shot was set up, ensuring that each detail would

add drama to the film, he had a cinematic intelligence that wasn't present in the work of other directors (Monaco 2000). Perhaps Hitchcock's most famous shot was from the film *Vertigo*, where he used technology and ingenuity to create the feeling of vertigo while looking down a stairwell. He used the details within this shot as a way of conceptually capturing the psychological feelings associated with vertigo (Monaco 2000). Hitchcock also uses colour dominance as a way to tell the stories in his films, it is this somewhat unnatural detail that helps to subconsciously direct the attention of the viewers where he wants it (Monaco 2000). There is an artistry and a stray from realism in the details of Hitchcock's films that give them a kitsch and dreamlike feel:

> For the dream sequences in Spellbound Hitchcock hired Salvador Dalí to design the sets; for Vertigo a Walt Disney animator supplied the images of opening and fragmenting flower petals. Bernard Herrmann supplies what Royal S. Brown calls a "grotesque reworking of the habanera for Carlotta Valdes." This gives the dream an element of kitsch, as if within the horror of Scottie's experience there is some small revelation of the nonsense of Elster's plot. (Kolker 2016, 114)

Still from Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*: The dream sequence, with an uncanny set designed by Salvador Dali (Hitchcock 1945).

Wes Anderson similarly strays from reality in the details of his films, using unnatural colours, painted backdrops, and stop motion in that same dreamlike manner.

The architect John Hejduk's work began at the end of Hitchcock's career and can be seen as a translation of his cinematic syntax into architecture. Like Hitchcock, Hejduk pays a lot of attention to the details of his projects to highlight the conceptual aspects of his work. An example of how he does this can be seen in his Texas House series and his Wall House series. Both are a critique on modernism, but he uses column types to differentiate types of modernism. In the Texas House series Hejduk uses square columns, to criticize the gridded spaces of Mies van der Rohe, while the Wall House series uses round columns implying a criticism of the fluid spaces of Le Corbusier (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020). Like in Hitchcock's films, Hejduk also plays with colour in a way that could appear as kitsch and subconsciously focuses the viewers eye where he wants it. Alfred Hitchcock's dreamlike cinematic syntax can be translated into the similarly symbolic details of John Hejduk's architecture.

John Hejduk's *Wall House II.* Uses colour to direct attention to the odd forms.

Stanley Kubrick and Aldo Rossi

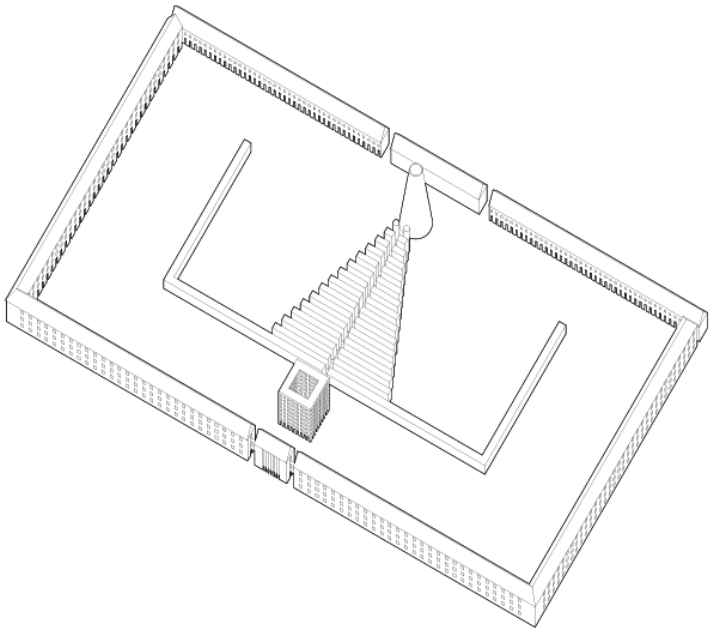
Stanley Kubrick worked as a director from 1953–1999. He is known for creating eerily uncanny horror and science fiction films with a distinct composition style (Kolker 2016). It is easy to see the influence that Stanley Kubrick had on Wes Anderson's films. It is particularly easy to compare Kubrick's *The Shinning*, to Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, both of which take place in a hotel and feature similar compositional techniques. Kubrick was trained as a photographer before he got into filmmaking, and it shows in the way that he sets up his shots. Unlike other filmmakers, Kubrick's compositions were often head on, flat, and symmetrical, set up how you would a photograph, not typically a moving image. These flat symmetrical compositions were uncanny, as they didn't look like images that appeared in real life:

> Symmetry within the image and in the narrative structure of a film is Kubrick's way of maintaining control over content, character, and viewer. It allows him to emphasize the artificiality of the image— the photograph of the photograph— and to communicate the essential uncanniness, the familiar made to appear unfamiliar, that is at the core of his work. (Kolker 2016, 96)

Still from Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey:* An uncanny shot because of how flat and symmetrical it is (Kubrick 1986).

These types of uncanny compositions are similarly featured heavily in Anderson's work, and he has leaned into them more

as his career has progressed. Kubrick and Anderson are also both perfectionists when it comes to their compositions and plan them out in detail before they ever arrive on set through storyboarding. Both filmmakers show up prepared, with no intention to make anything different from what they have planned (Kolker 2016; Seitz 2013).



Drawing showing the flatness and symmetry in Aldo Rossi's *San Cataldo Cemetery* (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020).

Aldo Rossi, who worked during the same time period as Kubrick, is considered a post-modernist architect and has a classicizing tendency in his work (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020). Kubrick's cinematic syntax translates into the architecture of Aldo Rossi through its flatness and symmetry. Like in the work of Kubrick, Rossi shows perfectionist tendencies in his work. These principals of Rossi's architectural syntax can be seen in his project San Cataldo Cemetery, a project that is mirrored on a central axis. Every piece of this project is made up of flat planes, on right angles (Eisenman and Iturbe 2020). There is a striking symmetry and flatness in the entire complex, that matches the cinematic syntax of Stanley Kubrick.

The Films of Wes Anderson

I was first introduced to the work of Wes Anderson at a friend's birthday in 7th grade where we watched *The Royal Tenenbaums*. I didn't understand the plot of the film at that age, but I was struck by the imagery. Despite not understanding what had happened, this movie stuck with me. I revisited his work in high school and watched all of his films while working on my portfolio for architecture school.

Anderson's work spans from the year 1996 (with the release of the short film bottle rocket, which would later be made into a full-length feature) to present day. The majority of his films are live action, but he has also done two stop motion pictures. For my analysis I have decided to focus on his live action films, particularly looking at three that I believe were defining in his career and his style. The first film I am going to look at is *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), which was Anderson's first critically acclaimed film. The next film I am going to study is *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), where Anderson started using more elements of the unnatural in his films. Finally, I will be analysing *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), which because of its distinct style, is often referred to as being "peak Wes Anderson". This is the film where he leaned the most into his own style.

The Royal Tenenbaums

Narrative

The Royal Tenenbaums follows the Tenenbaum family, Royal (Gene Hackman) and Etheline (Angelica Houston), and their 3 children: Chas (Ben Stiller), Richie (Luke Wilson), and Margot (Gwyneth Paltrow). As children, the three were incredibly gifted, but after their parents separated the family

all parted ways and the children's talents burnt out due to neglect. Years later, after hearing news that Etheline may remarry, Royal decides to bring his family back together by conning them. He tells them that he has stomach cancer. The family all moves back into their old home, and over the course of the film they reconcile with past family drama and issues within their relationships (Anderson 2001).

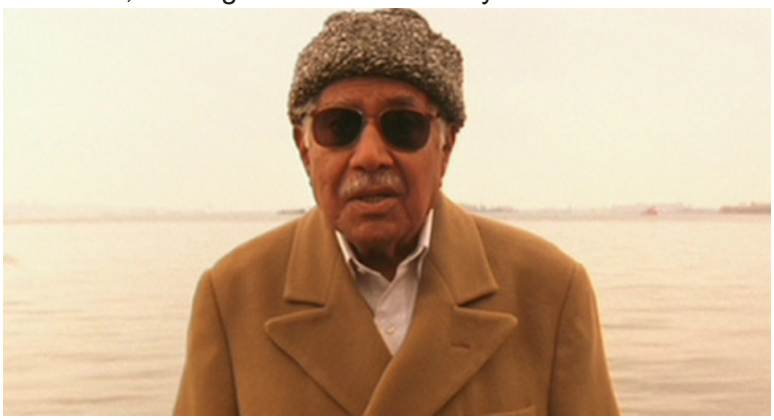
This film deals with issues of childhood trauma, suicide, and love. Despite the heaviness of the issues in the film, Anderson manages to keep the film light and funny. This is done through the use of the uncanny within his cinematic syntax, making nothing in the film feel real.

Location

The Royal Tenenbaums is set in New York City, specifically the New York of Wes Anderson, who grew up in Texas. His image was stemmed from watching movies set in New York and reading The New Yorker magazine, an idealized fantasy of the city (Seitz 2013). Despite being filmed on location in New York, there are no clear indicators or monuments to signify the city. The Tenenbaum home is a Harlem mansion, neither its form nor its surroundings would give any indication that this home is located in New York. The hotel that Royal Tenenbaum is living in before he moves back to the family home is located in The Waldorf Astoria, an iconic New York City hotel. Anderson chose to cover any mention of The Waldorf Astoria, and instead named the hotel The Lindbergh Palace (Seitz 2013).

Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* The Lindbergh Place Hotel, filmed at the iconic Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The actual identity of the hotel is hidden to give no sense of place (Anderson 2001).

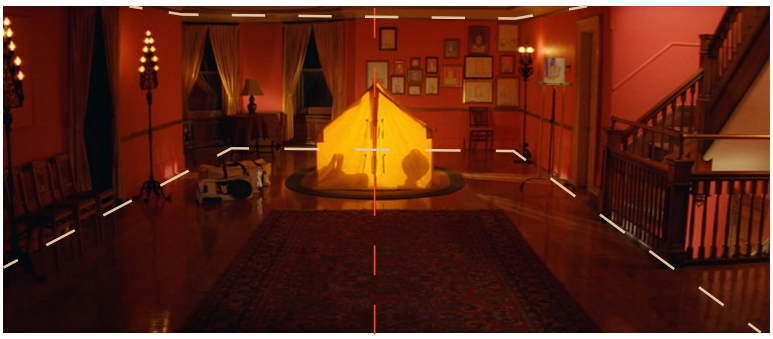
There is even a scene in the film that was shot in Battery Park. Anderson specifically placed an actor in front of the Statue of Liberty so that it wouldn't be visible. Anderson hoped to invoke the feeling of New York, without ever giving the viewer a clear idea of where they were (Finn 2022). Throughout the film, real locations are decorated to match Anderson's idealized version of the city, despite appearing to be real, nothing is situated in reality.



Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* Actor Kumar Pallama standing in front of the Statue of Liberty (Anderson 2001).

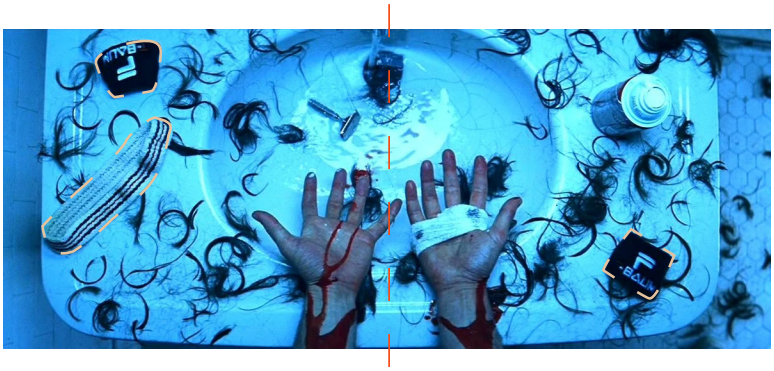
Frames

This section will show stills from *The Royal Tenenbaums* that are dissected in order to analyse Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax

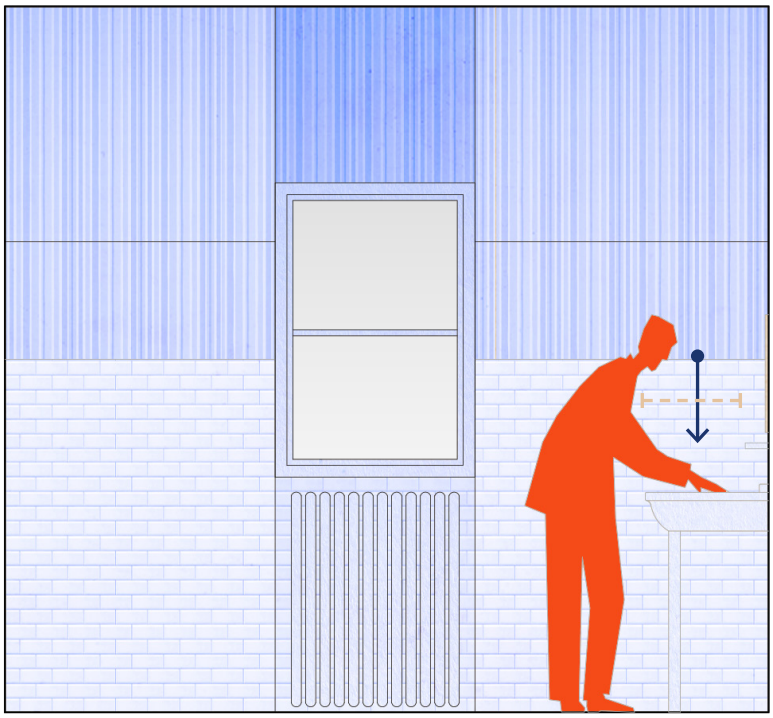


Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* This shot uses an anamorphic lens and the camera is aligned closer to the ground. This gives us a view of more details within the room and allows us to see both the floor and ceiling. This shot is also mostly symmetrical, giving it an unnatural look (Anderson 2001).

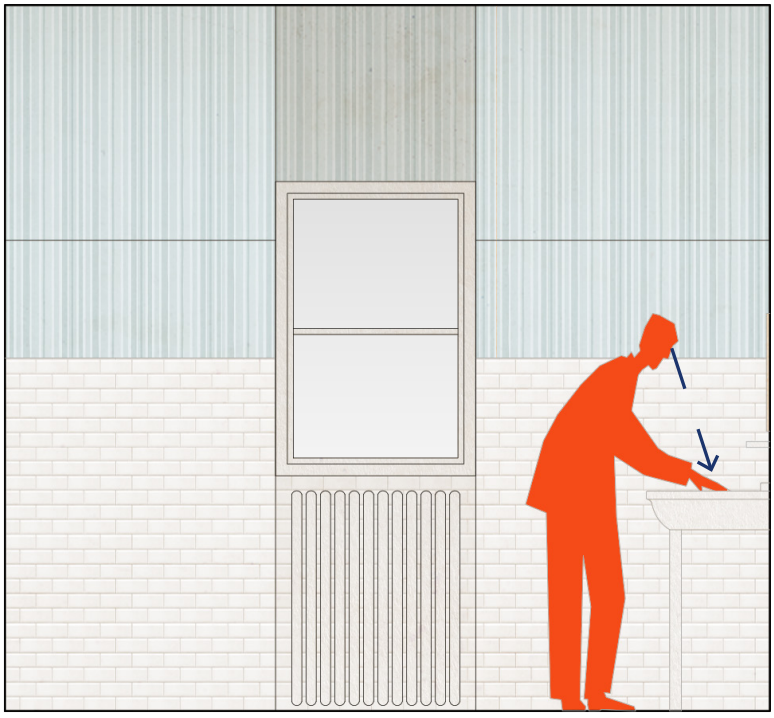
Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* This shot uses an anamorphic lens which distorts the view in an unnatural way. Symmetry is also used as a classical element. The two characters are framed to concentrate the focus onto them (Anderson 2001).



Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* This shot uses a god's-eye-view that puts you in the position of the character. Symmetry is once again used as a classical element. The contrast of colours between the blue and the red blood create drama. Objects and hair are placed artfully around the scene, in an unnatural way (Anderson 2001).



Perception



Reality

The perception vs. the reality of the bathroom shot from *The Royal Tenenbaums.*

Still from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums:* The characters all have uniforms that are worn throughout the film. Somewhat out of the ordinary clothing that becomes memorable.

Characters

The members of the Tenenbaum family are based loosely on the family in JD Salinger's novel Franny and Zooey (Seitz 2013). There is a deadpan and uninterested manner in how they interact with each other. The Tenenbaum children are particularly interesting, because of the uniforms that each of them wears throughout the film. First is Chas Tenenbaum, a financial whiz who is struggling to recover from the sudden death of his wife while raising their two sons on his own. He aims to be in control of his own life and the lives of his children. Chas and his son's wear a uniform of red adidas track suits. Next is Richie, a depressed, washed-up tennis pro. For the majority of the film, he wears sweat bands, aviator sunglasses, a scarf, and a long haircut with a beard. When Richie attempts suicide, he shaves his beard, cuts his hair, and loses the uniform. This signifies a major change in his life. Finally, there is Margot. Margot is a very secretive, washed-up playwright, with a hidden smoking habit. She hides behind a uniform of tennis dresses and a mink coat. Her eyes are always outlined in a thick kohl liner. Each sibling's uniform is somewhat outlandish, but they represent who the characters are and leave the viewer with a very memorable visual.

The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

Narrative

The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou is the story of renowned oceanographer Steve Zissou (Bill Murray), who is joined on an adventure to enact revenge on a 'Jaguar Shark' who killed one of his crew members by Ned (Owen Wilson), who believes that Steve is his father, Jane (Cate Blanchette), a pregnant journalist, and Eleanor (Angelica Houston),

his estranged wife. They, along with additional crew, face pirates, a rival oceanographer, and the dreaded ‘Jaguar Shark’ in this adventure movie (Anderson 2004).

This is a film that deals with issues of love, loss, grief, revenge, and childhood trauma. Once again, the heaviness of the subjects is obscured by the absurdity of Anderson’s uncanny cinematic syntax.

Locations

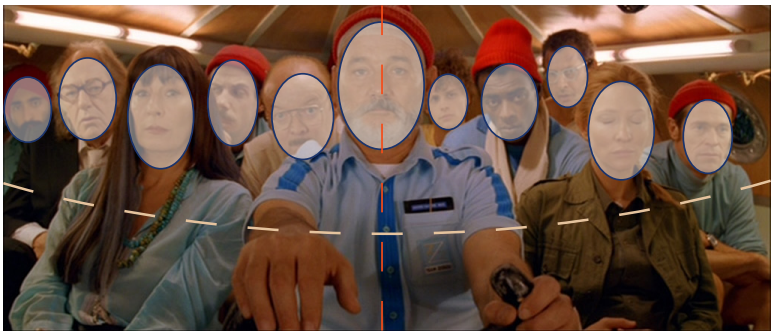
The Life Aquatic takes place in Italy, but a lot of the exact locations are vague or fictional. The majority of the film takes place on set, on a boat that has been cut in half, exposing all of the spaces and their relationships to each other. As the camera moves between spaces, in one of Anderson’s “dollhouse shots” (Seitz 2013), it feels unreal to the viewer.

Still from Wes Anderson’s *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou:* A portion of the film is located on the fictional ‘Pescespada Island’ (Anderson 2004).

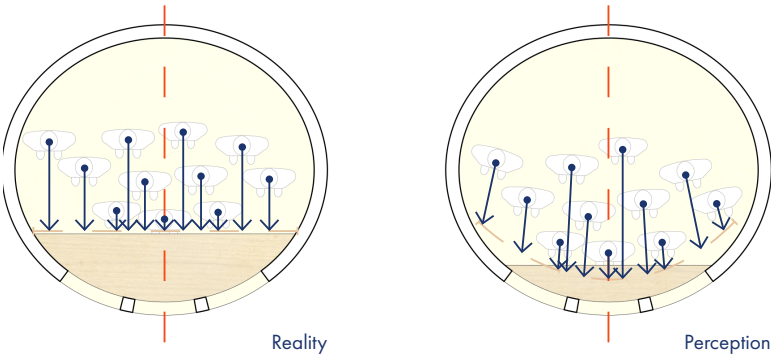
Set from Wes Anderson’s *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou:* A boat sliced in half to allow camera movement between rooms in a way that is unnatural (Anderson 2004).

Frames

This section will show stills from *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* that are dissected in order to analyse Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax.



Still from Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou:* The use of symmetry and an anamorphic lens distort the view in an unnatural way. The characters are layered so that each face is visible, showing maximum information and creating depth (Anderson 2004).



How the anamorphic lens distorts the view.

Characters

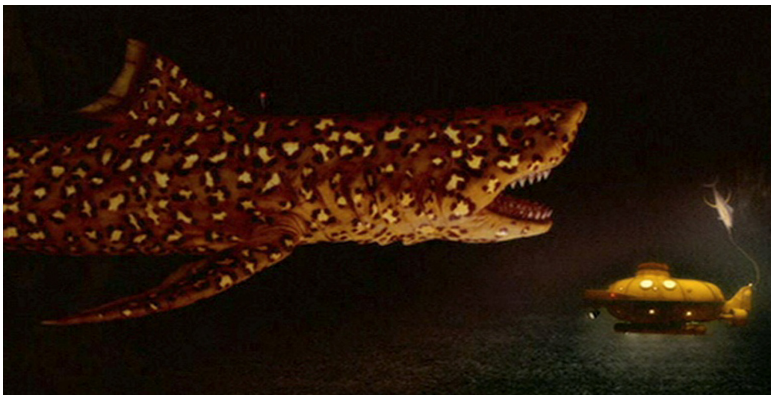
Left: Jacques Cousteau (The Denver Post 2016) Right: Bill Murray's character of Steve Zissou is a caricature of Jacques Cousteau (Anderson 2004)

Steve Zissou's team is made up of an eccentric group in blue uniforms with red caps. The outfit is based on the outfits of Jacques Cousteau, who Steve's character is modelled after, and the film is dedicated to. It is presumed that Ned is Steve's son in the film, and like the son of Jacques Cousteau, Ned dies in a helicopter accident. Of Steve's crew, there is one who doesn't dress in the matching uniform, and that is Jane,

Left: Jane Goodall (Jane Goodall Institute 1965)
Right: Cate Blachette's character of Jane Winslett-Richardson is a caricature of Jane Goodall (Anderson 2004)

the pregnant journalist. Instead, her outfit is based on that of Jane Goodall (Seitz 2013). These characters become caricatures of real life adventurers.

Another set of characters in this film is the sea creatures that are encountered. Anderson made the decision to use stop motion animation for all of the creatures and invented new forms of sea life for this film (Seitz 2013). This adds another unnatural and uncanny element to the film, as he has no intention of making any of the creatures appear real, instead he creates a fantastical underwater world.



Still from Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*: Anderson created the stop motion 'jaguar shark' for his film (Anderson 2004).

The Grand Budapest Hotel

Narrative

Based on the writings of Austrian author, Stefan Zweig (Seitz 2015), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is a story, within a story, within a story. It is fragmented recollections of events being passed on between characters, set in three different time periods. In the 1980s the author (Tom Wilkinson) tells the story of visiting the Grand Budapest Hotel in the 1960s. In this time period the author (now played by Jude Law) meets Mr. Moustafa (F. Murray Abraham), the owner of the hotel, who tells him the story of the hotel when it was in all of

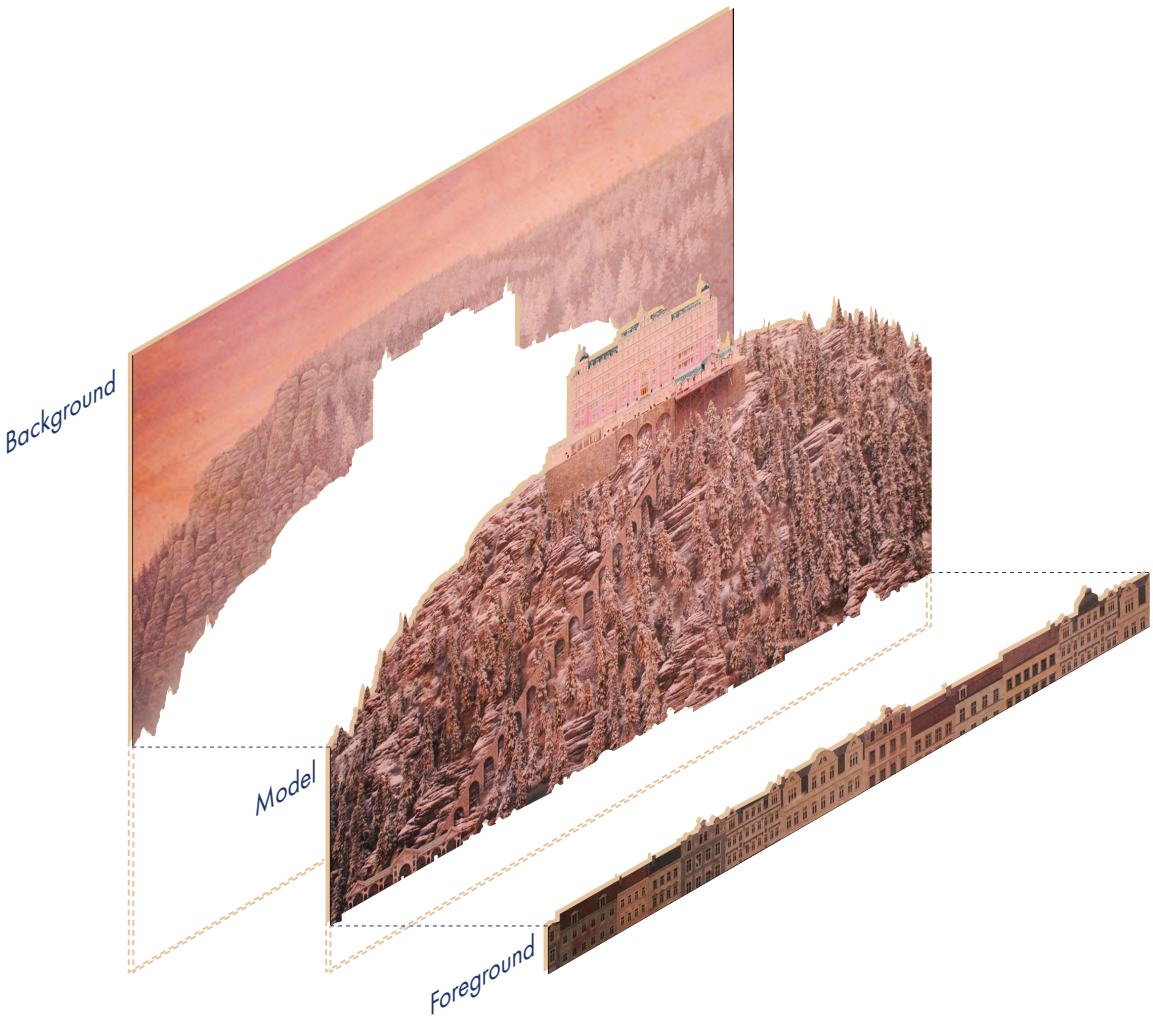
its glory in the 1930s. In this time period we are introduced the M. Gustave (Ralph Fiennes) the hotel concierge and his protégé Zero (Tony Revolori) the lobby boy (who we later find out is Mr. Moustafa). When M. Gustave's elderly lover Madame D. (Tilda Swinton) dies mysteriously she leaves him a priceless painting in her will, and he becomes the chief suspect in her murder. The story involves a prison escape, robbery, war, and a hitman chasing the protagonists (Anderson 2014).

This is a wartime film that showcases multiple murders, and yet it still manages to be a light comedy because of how Anderson uses bright colours and fluffy sets within his cinematic syntax to remove the viewers from the reality of the story and places them in a lighter place more reminiscent of a children's film.

> Anderson has taken the dark sorrow of Stefan Zweig and joined it to his own sly melancholies to make a film that moves us because it is infinitely capable of disarming before it wounds us. In creating an imaginary world to speak about the end of illusion, Anderson courts a kind of literary double jeopardy. As with the best fables, however; his unreality is more emotionally vibrant than the truth. (Seitz 2015, 11)

Location

This film is set in the fictional Eastern European country, The Republic of Zubrowka, with an entirely fictional history. The hotel itself was built as a model and placed against a painted background. There was no intention to make it look real.



The model for The *Grand Budapest Hotel*, sandwiched between a painted foreground and background.

Frames

This section will show a series of stills from *The Grand Budapest Hotel* that are dissected in order to analyse Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax.

Still from Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel:* The use of symmetry with one character out of place draws the viewers' attention to that character. The framed scene in the background adds depth of information (Anderson 2014).

Still from Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel:* The shop is organized very classically using the rule of threes. Characters are layered in an unnatural way so that every face is visible, this is used to add depth of information (Anderson 2014).

Still from Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel:* Showing M. Gustave and Zero in their hotel uniforms (Anderson 2014).

Characters

The majority of the film focuses on Zero and M. Gustave as they are both working at the Grand Budapest Hotel. Because of this, they spend the majority of the film wearing purple hotel uniforms. Zero has on a comical yet demeaning hat that says "Lobby Boy" across the front, while M. Gustave has on a three-piece suit. The difference in their uniforms shows their standing and that M. Gustave is in charge of Zero. Zero looks up to M. Gustave, both literally and figuratively, and draws on a mustache to try and match that of his boss.

Anderson's Cinematic Syntax

There are some key elements that contribute to Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax: anamorphic lens, low camera, whip pan, colour pallets, symmetry, planimetric shots, framing, layering, rule of threes, dollhouse shots, God's-eye-view, placelessness, and repeating actors.

Anderson's use of the anamorphic (or wide angle) lens in the majority of his films is fitting for his uncanny syntax. This type of lens, as the name suggests, is able to capture a wider angle and show more of the subjects, but it also distorts our linear perception of a space, curving the outside edges and giving the shot a sort of fish-eye effect (Monaco 2000). It shows the viewer an image that they would never be able to actually see with their own eyes. Anderson also places his camera at a lower height than other directors. He places his viewer below eye level, again creating a visual that an adult would not see naturally. The use of whip pans is also very prevalent in Anderson's work. During conversations, instead of cutting between the faces of different characters, Anderson will quickly pan the camera between them.

Though panning may seem to be the more natural, it is not perceived that way to the viewer.

> When we redirect our attention from one subject to another we seldom actually pan. Psychologically, the cut is the truer approximation of our natural perception. First one subject has our attention, then the other; we are seldom interested in the intervening space, yet the cinematic pan draws our attention to just that (Monaco 2000, 172).

Like the aforementioned elements of Anderson's syntax, the whip pan is uncanny in that it removes the viewer from reality.

Throughout his career, Anderson has played with a lot of dream-like colour palettes in his films, ones that would feel out of place if we were to see them in the real world. They last throughout his films, and aid to add playfulness to his otherwise serious stories. Furthermore, Anderson composes his shots using symmetry, planimetric (flat/parallel) shots, framing, layering, and the rule of threes to create a very specific focus and balance within his frame. All of these elements are used together as a way of directing the viewers eye and create views that would likely not appear naturally, and often have the actors looking, unnervingly, directly into the camera.

Some of the most distinct types of shots that Anderson uses in his films are *dollhouse shots* and *god's-eye-view shots*. The first is a shot that quite literally appears like looking into a dollhouse, the camera is placed in a room in a way that it can capture three walls, the floor, and ceiling. The camera moves between spaces with cutaway walls, showing them as boxes side-by-side (Seitz 2013), it is a playful and surreal way of showing how different spaces are directly connected to each other. The god's-eye-view shots, on the other hand, are shot directly from above. It is as though the viewer is

levitating above the shot, looking down at an unnaturally flat angle, one that would not naturally be seen (Seitz 2013).

As shown through the examples of Anderson's work, there is a real sense of placelessness that he portrays. He makes up a lot of his locations or bases them on ideas of cities instead of the reality. There is a familiarity, but it cannot be placed on any exact location. This same sense of familiarity is used in Anderson's casting decisions, where he uses the same actors over and over in his films. This is similar to how old Hollywood studios used actors repetitively and is a sort of playful move that connects Anderson's films to each other.

Finally, Anderson uses elements that are unnatural and unbelievable to portray the uncanny. This is done through the use of colour, mixing stop-motion with film, interesting costumes, and unbelievable, precarious architecture. These elements that seem out of place in an otherwise rather believable world.

Anderson's cinematic syntax removes us from reality, he adjusts our perception of space in a way that is uncanny. The earlier analysis shows how a cinematic syntax can be translated into architecture. In the next section I will look at the architecture of Rem Koolhaas as a translation of the uncanny that is visible in Anderson's cinematic syntax.

The Architecture of Rem Koolhaas

The Architecture of Rem Koolhaas

Rem Koolhaas started his career in film, as a scriptwriter. He saw scriptwriting and architecture to go hand-in hand, saying "there is surprisingly little difference between one activity and the other. . . . I think the art of the scriptwriter is to

conceive sequences of episodes which build suspense and a chain of events. . . the largest part of my work is montage… spatial montage" (Toy 1994, 7). Like Wes Anderson, Rem Koolhaas' work exemplifies ideas of the uncanny, his work can be seen as a translation of Anderson's cinematic Syntax.

The Prada Foundation

The Prada Foundation, a museum for Miuccina Prada (chief designer at Prada)'s art collection (Betsky 2018), is located in a former gin distillery in Milan that dates back to 1910. OMA's renovation and addition at the distillery was completed in 2018, adding 3 structures to the existing 7. The new structures included a podium with space for temporary exhibits, a cinema, and a 9-storey tower with space for permanent exhibits (OMA 2018). Unlike other art galleries, the Prada Foundation's architecture does not take a step back for the art, instead, Koolhaas created a variety of spaces that could interact with the art. "By introducing so many spatial variables, the complexity of the architecture will promote an unstable, open programming, where art and architecture will benefit from each other's challenges" (OMA 2018).

Model of the Prada Foundation (OMA 2018)

Koolhaas has designed something rather mundane for the Prada Foundation, in his choice of form and materiality that recalls a not-too-distant past. The entire complex seems to recall memories and references, yet Koolhaas makes small shifts or fades that make the viewer second guess what they are seeing (Betsky 2018). This slight shift from the ordinary is similar to what is seen in Wes Anderson's work and is what makes it uncanny. The architecture, while creating montages that recall the past, will also sometimes show the viewer how it is in fact constructed using modern techniques, similarly to a film set where you can see the construction methods once you are behind the scenes.

The Prada Foundation's exposed structure (OMA 2018)

> What all these gestures—both small and large—or faints from the ordinary have in common is that they give you the sense that you have wound up on a stage set. Objects, whether art or architecture, and you are posed against these shifting planes that seem at times to construct a fragment of a modernist utopia from the past, when we thought all buildings would be made of human-made materials and would soar over our heads. But the illusion is never complete. At times, Koolhaas makes you feel as if you are behind the scenes, looking at how the effect is created. The staircase in the new tower is a double scissor, only one side of which you use (the other is the fire escape), while windows show you the other, inaccessible, run. The walls here are covered in particleboard, while at the landings you look through a metal screen at an unfinished wall, complete with all the painting marks on the drywall, lit like a work of art. (Betsky 2018)

Ironically, the Prada Foundation also contains a café designed by Wes Anderson called Bar Luce, that itself acts as another film set within the building. Anderson designed this café to recreate the atmosphere seen in typical cafes in Milan. He took iconic imagery from around the city and from Italian neorealism, and recreated it in the café (Frearson 2015), while using one of his typical playful colour palettes to bring a sense of fun and uncanny into the space.

The Wes Anderson designed Bar Luce at the Prada Foundation (Frearson 2015)

Utopia of Normality tunnel (OMA 2021)

Utopia of Normality

Utopia of Normality was a set for the Prada Spring/Summer 2022 menswear show, built on a beach in Sardinia, Italy, on the Mediterranean. It was designed by AMO, the research branch of OMA (OMA 2021). A bright red tunnel as well as a series of bright red platforms were set up along the beach, a stark and uncanny image against the natural surroundings. Like Anderson's films, this project uses unexpected elements, such as colour, to create an uncanny experience for the viewer. By locating the project on the seaside, a familiar landscape, our perception is then shifted by that which is not familiar, the red structures.

> Walking down a meandering red tunnel, we are brought to a new yet familiar environment. Lying in the sand among granite boulders, or floating on the clear sea, seemingly stranded red objects enjoy the pristine landscape–a surreal encounter with nature, seaside infrastructure of another kind. (OMA 2021)

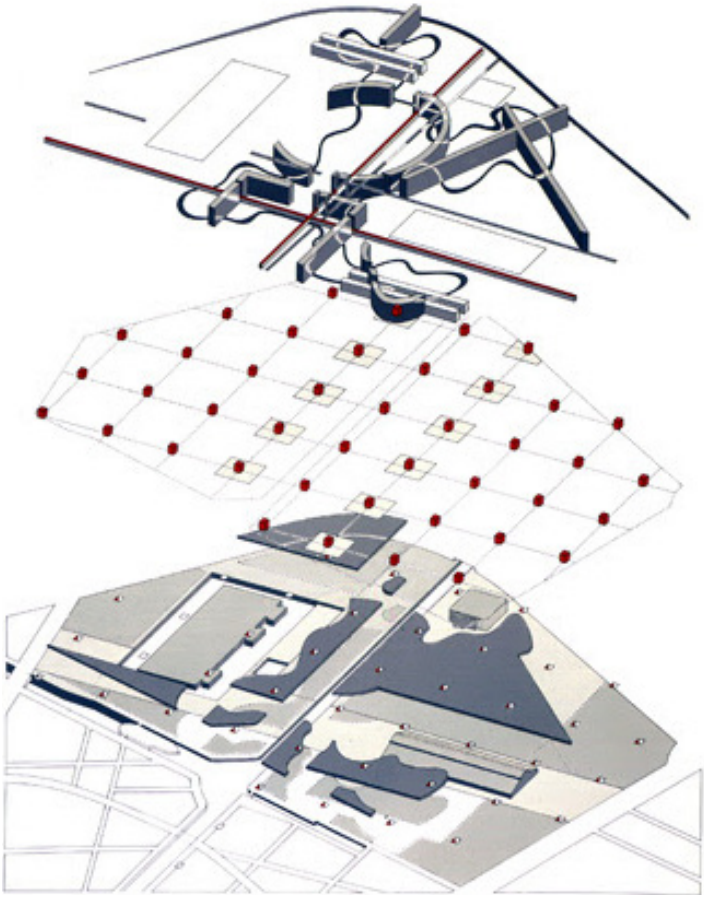
Model existing the Utopia of Normality tunnel (OMA 2021)

Case Studies

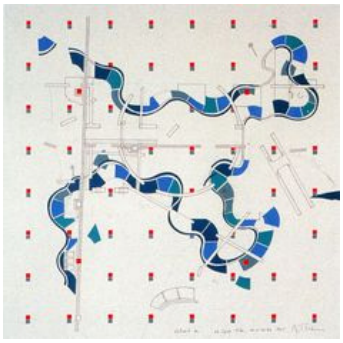
There are some examples of architecture that takes its queues from cinema and even theatre, in a way that adjusts our perception of space. This section will look at some of these examples.

Parc de la Villette – Bernard Tschumi

Bernard Tschumi's winning competition entry for Parc de la Villette was designed to prove that a complex architectural organization could exist without following traditional rules of composition, hierarchy, and order. Instead, three organizational systems were superimposed on each other: points, lines, and surfaces. By dismantling architectural conventions, Tschumi had to reference concepts from outside of architecture, including cinema. Film was a convenient reference for this idea of superimposition because film was the first discipline to introduce "discontinuity–a segmented world in which each fragment maintains its own independence, thereby permitting a multiplicity of combinations" (Tschumi 1987, VI).



Points, lines, and planes at Parc de la Villette (Tschumi 1987)



Cinematic Promenade at Parc de la Villette (Tschumi 1987)

> The Park is a series of cinegrams, each of which is based on a precise set of architectonic, spatial or programmatic transformations. Contiguity and superimposition of cinegrams are two aspects of montage. Montage, as a technique, includes such other devices as repetition, inversion, substitution and insertion. These devices suggest an art of rupture, whereby invention resides in contrast–even in contradiction. (Tschumi 1987, VI)

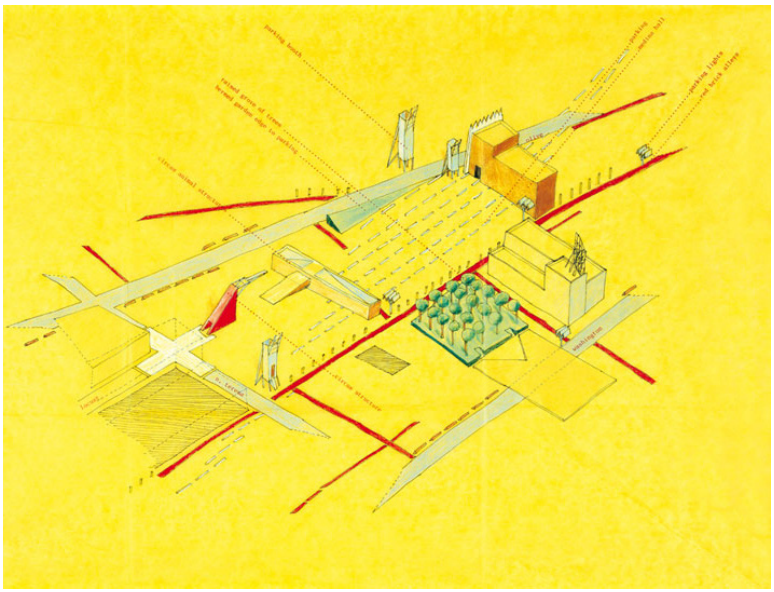
With this connection to film, a key element of the parc is the Cinematic Promenade. “It is conceived along the analogy of a film strip in which the sound-track corresponds to the general walkway for visitors and the image-track corresponds to the successive frames of the individual gardens” (Tschumi 1987, 12). In this project the frame is each segment in a sequence, and each frame is defined by a garden. Different viewpoints show the frames in relation to each other, so that, like in film, they can be mixed or superimposed on each other. Tschumi creates relationships between frames or sequences that are similar to those in film, allowing for devices such as cuts, dissolves, and flashbacks. He uses lines of trees as cuts between segments, and elements of memory between them (Tschumi 1987).

The Park does not formally speak to its context, but the program does respond to the needs and limitations of the city (Tschumi 1987).

Grand Centre – Studio Works, Mary Miss, and James Turrell

Grand Centre was a project by Studio Works Architects and artists Mary Miss and James Turrell in St. Louis, Missouri. They were looking at revitalizing an old neighbourhood which had once been known for its theatres and night life. The group worked with the idea of using “architectural event” and light as a way of highlighting the peculiarities in the existing neighbourhood. They treated the neighbourhood

like a big film set, and the interventions created an image of front of house and back of house. The front of house portion of the project becomes a ‘grand parade’. “In this public space project, the architecture was de-monumentalized through the notion of the visual and acoustic event; visitors/ spectators were urged to become the protagonists on the stage” (Frac Centre-Val de Loire n.d.).



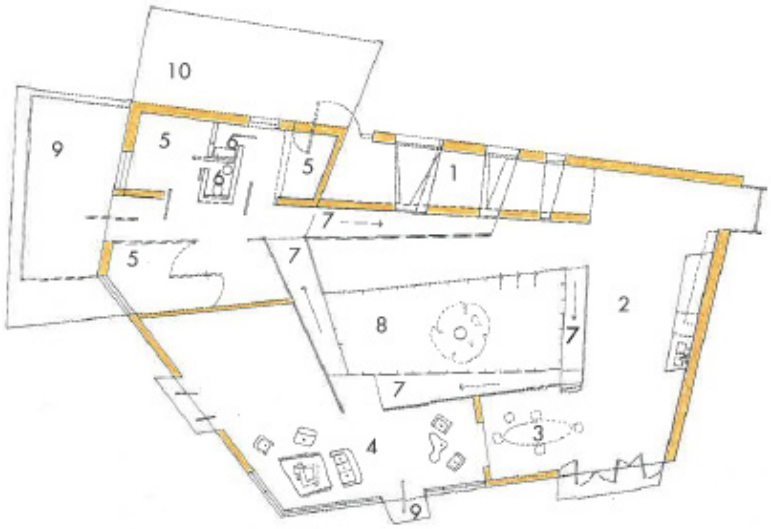
Sketch of Grand Centre, drawn by Studio Works (Frac Centre-Val de Loire n.d.)

Isle of Man House – Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects

This project is located on the coast of the Isle of Man. Instead of forming obvious relations between the house and the ocean, it is set up as a series of mise-en-scene, narratively connected by a ‘cinematic ramp’ that travels through the house. The ways of framing both hide and show different views as you make your way along the path, the architecture surprises you along the journey (O’Herlihy 1994b).

The architect, Lorcan O’Herlihy wrote about architecture and film, saying “the architecture of the frame celebrates specular space and acknowledges blind space. Film succeeds when

we are held between these spaces” (O’Herlihy 1994a). This is clearly displayed in the Isle of Man House.



Plan of the Isle of Man House: 1 entry gallery; 2 kitchen; 3 dining; 4 great room / living room; 5 bedrooms; 6 bathrooms; 7 cinematic ramp; 8 courtyard; 9 viewing deck; 10 studio / editing room below (O’Herlihy 1994b).

Chapter 3: Place

Toronto

In choosing a location for my thesis project, I wanted to choose a location I was familiar with and felt a strong connection to. Having grown up in Toronto, it has a very clear identity to me, which may not be obvious to an outsider. However, an outsider may be able to reveal elements of Toronto's identity that are hidden to me by my own experiences. In the book *Place and Placelessness* E. Relph writes, "we may know our home town as dynamic and full of meaning, yet be quite capable of also viewing it as professional planners or geographers from the perspective of objective outsideness, and also participate in its mass identity" (Relph 1976, 82). I believe that by looking at Toronto through its portrayal in film we are able to see it through the eyes of an outsider, allowing me to understand the city's identity a bit better. I recall watching the film *Buffaloed* (Wexler 2019), which was filmed in Toronto but took place in Buffalo, NY. I had not recognized it as Toronto for the majority of the film, until a scene that took place in an alleyway. It was not a particularly descript alleyway, but I recognized it immediately because it's the same one where a local brewery is located. In the film the alleyway was portrayed as being rather gritty and unsafe, whereas I knew it to be lively and surrounded by family homes. This usually unidentifiable space was recognizable to me as an insider, but its identity was transformed by the hand of an outsider.

Toronto has a deep connection with the film industry, with many major productions being shot in the city, and the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) taking place every September. Toronto also exemplifies placelessness, which,

as explored in the previous chapter, is an element that is portrayed through the films of Wes Anderson.

Toronto's Place in Film

Toronto's identity is strongly connected to the film industry. The city is often referred to as "Hollywood North" because of the sheer number of films that are shot there. There are lots of reasons why Toronto has been able to cement itself into the film industry, one of them simply being the tax credits that were created to incentivise filmmakers to shoot in Toronto. This includes both federal and provincial tax credits of up to 35% on Canadian productions, and up to 21.5% on foreign productions (City of Toronto n.d.). These types of incentives aid to bring a lot of large productions into the city.

Another reason why Toronto is so often seen in film is because of its relative anonymity. Toronto is a generic enough city that it can be easily transformed into any other metropolis (Ue et al. 2014). Sometimes this is done quite convincingly, other times the director may fail to mask out elements that clearly show a Canadian city. Toronto native, director David Cronenberg, is often criticized for creating films that are "cold or antiseptic", an image that is also placed on the city. "[H]e has taken full advantage of Toronto's blank slate, setting films in the city while simultaneously revelling in the anonymity that it provides" (Ue et al. 2014). Cronenberg shows the city as it is because it fits with the style of his work, but this also explains why it is easy to transform Toronto. This "blank slate" of a city can become whatever a director may choose.

Toronto has an incredible ability to transform itself into other cities. In the film *Good Will Hunting* (Sant 1997) a Toronto bar is transformed to a university bar in Cambridge,

Massachusetts by decorating it with American flags and posters for Boston sports teams (Ue et al. 2014). In *American Psycho* (Harron 2000), Toronto's own financial district is transformed into a 1980's version of New York. The Toronto-Dominion Tower becomes a stand in for the World Trade Centre with its similar architecture style, a tower including black steel and reflective windows (Ue et al. 2014). Finally, in the film *the Virgin Suicides* (Coppola 1999) a residential Toronto neighbourhood portrays a 1970's suburb of Detroit, Michigan, including tree lined streets and a typical public highschool. Toronto's anonymity allows it to transform itself into all of these different North American cities relatively seamlessly, especially to those who are not familiar with the actual locations.

The Distillery District in Toronto, which is actually quite distinct in appearance, has also played a huge role in the city's ability to portray other locations. Particularly, it has been used to show historical locations. The area is a well-preserved Victorian era distillery. It can be seen in the opening scene of *X-Men* (Singer 2000) portraying a Nazi concentration camp, as well as in *Chicago* (Marshall 2002) where it portrayed a penitentiary. This distinct location manages to transform quite well into spaces that you wouldn't expect to see in Toronto (Ue et al. 2014).

It is rarer that Toronto actually portrays itself in film, so often the neighbourhood aesthetics that are distinctly Torontonian would be hidden. This would include hiding the Victorian bay-and-gable homes, or "Cabbagetown cottage rows with mansard roofs" (Ue et al. 2014). But in films set in Toronto, these features are showcased. Such as in S*cott Pilgrim vs. the World* (Wright 2010) and *Take This Waltz* (Polley 2012), where the characters live in distinctly Toronto homes. Toronto

landmarks are also used to clearly identify the city. In the film *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (Wright 2010), the film opens and closes on the same street. In the opening the camera is facing east, showcasing no defining characteristics of Toronto, while in the closing scene the camera faces west and the CN Tower can be seen in the background, an iconic Toronto landmark (Ue et al. 2014).

Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)

Toronto's identity as a film city doesn't end with its portrayal in film, it is also the location of a world class film festival, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). TIFF is considered to be "one of the most influential and prestigious film events in the world" (Cervenan 2017, 15). The festival's first year was 1976, and their program was curated by choosing the best from film festivals all over the world, making it into the "Festival of Festivals". Over time, the festival's reputation was able to grow, becoming one of the most important film festivals in the world, and the programming has been able to grow significantly. TIFF's timing on the film festival calendar also positions it at the onset of award season, meaning that many of the films that are nominated for awards are showcased at the festival. TIFF is one of the few major film festivals that allows the public to see films as well as industry members, which means that it has become a great festival to test films in front of real audiences. This has allowed Torontonians to be the ones who get to interpret the value of a film (Cervenan 2017).

Placelessness

In order to choose a fitting site within the city of Toronto, I began an exploration of placelessness in Toronto. As was explored in the previous chapter, *placelessness* is a prevalent

aspect of Anderson's cinematic syntax, to translate this into architecture I wanted to select a site that was also placeless. Toronto's placelessness is shown through its ability to transform itself within film. Relph describes placelessness as both lacking significant place and as being kitsch or "mediocre, styleless, and sweetly sentimental" (Relph 1976, 82). He refers to it as being inauthentic and lacking a sense of place (Relph 1976). For this exploration, I separated placelessness in Toronto into two types. The first type of placelessness I explored are the spaces that transport you away from the city, the second type of placelessness is the spaces that could exist anywhere, they aren't distinct to Toronto. All types of placelessness have an inauthenticity to them because they have no sense of place (Relph 1976), which ties these places closer to films and their inauthentic (unreal and made up) narratives. I have mapped out both of these types of placelessness in Toronto, as an exploration of place.

Placelessness that transports you exists all over Toronto. It exists in the spaces that physically remove you from street level, the spaces that are odd or out of place (kitsch), and in spaces that remove you mentally from the world. Toronto has many spaces that are below street level, that are disorienting in the way that they remove your sense of direction. This includes the subway system, the PATH system (an underground walkway that spans a large portion of Toronto's downtown and links downtown skyscrapers to public transit), and the extensive ravine system. You are also removed from street level through the number of tall buildings, which allow you to look down at the city. The kitsch elements within the city are often those that are targeted towards tourists and outsiders. In Toronto this

Mapping placelessness in Toronto - this map locates areas that transport you from your current location as well as areas that are anonymous.

includes elements such as the CN tower, Ontario Place, and the Distillery District. They are identifiers of the city, but do not represent the overall identity of Toronto. Finally, the spaces that remove you mentally. This includes theatres, cinemas, and museums, of which there are a plethora in the city. Many of these types of places have a bit of a kitsch element to them, as they too are made to attract outsiders. This can be seen through the bold architecture of the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) by Frank Gehry and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) by Daniel Libeskind.

Placelessness that could exist anywhere is also very prevalent in the city of Toronto, though it is perhaps more difficult to spot because it is so mundane. These places are very generic and don't represent the identity of the city, instead they represent a sense of anonymity. It is the types of places that are created over and over in different cities, not speaking at all to their context. They create an inauthentic sense of place (Relph 1976). Glass condos and developer-built houses fall under this category and are becoming more and more prevalent in Toronto as the city continues to grow. Anderson's work has such a distinct identity, while these types of spaces seem to have no specific identity at all. For my project I have decided to look at one of these types of places: City Place development. This is a condo development on Toronto's waterfront, one of the largest developments in Toronto, developed by the Vancouver based Concord Adex (Rosen and Walks 2015). They took the same model that they had built in Vancouver and replicated in Toronto. The development does not respond to the identity of the city, but instead responds to a business model that had previously been successful, leading towards Toronto erasing its own sense of identity.

Mapping placelessness in Toronto - this map locates areas that are anonymous, or could exist anywhere.

Chapter 4: Design

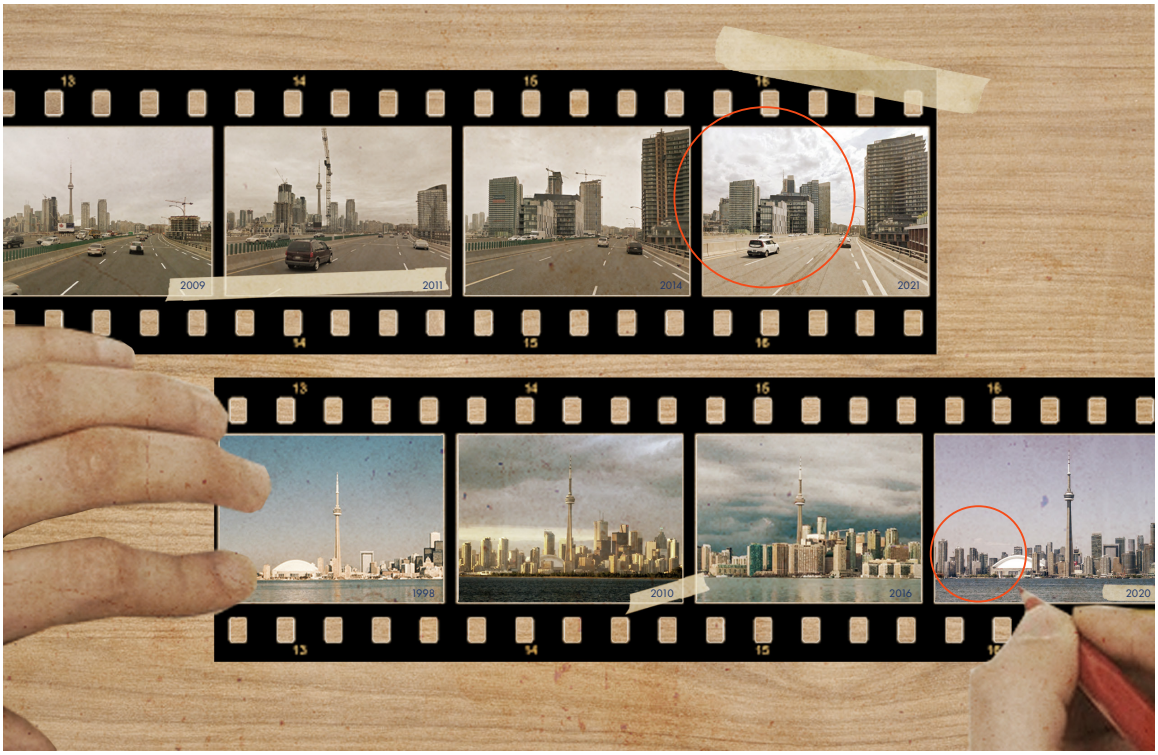
City Place Development

Construction of City Place development began in the early 2000s, by Vancouver based developer Concord Adex, who had created a similar condo development on the west coast of the country. This development arrived as the popularity of condos was growing in Canada, and Toronto's population was outgrowing the existing housing market. City Place is one of the largest condo developments in Toronto, built on top of what was once 64 acres of vacant railway lands belonging to CN, with the goal of building 20 towers with a total of 8,000 units (Rosen and Walks 2015).

Narrative

In the same way that films have a narrative, so do neighbourhoods and architecture. Because of its location, the narrative of City Place development is particularly important to the way that Toronto is experienced. It is located near the waterfront and is sandwiched between the Gardiner Expressway (a raised highway) to its south and the CN railway (a lowered train track) to its north. To the east of the site is a tourist district, including a lot of Toronto landmarks, such as the CN Tower, the Skydome Stadium, The Roundhouse, and Ripley's Aquarium. While on the west side of the site is the Historic Fort York. All of these elements play into the narrative of how we experience City Place development.

First, the proximity to the water means that City Place has become a major part of the Toronto skyline, a defining element of any city. The skyline from the water is also the first thing you see when landing at Billy Bishop airport, so



Visual representation of City Place's part in the narrative of Toronto. Because of its location, it is one of the first things you see when driving into the city. It becomes your introduction to Toronto. Its proximity to the water also means that it has become a major part of the Toronto skyline, leading to the city becoming less distinguishable from other

City Place plays a role in welcoming people to Toronto. It also does this because of its proximity to both the Gardiner Expressway and the CN Railway. Both of these are major arteries of transportation within the city and bring people into downtown, there is a clear view of City Place from both of them. The Gardiner Expressway is used to enter downtown when coming from Pearson Airport, while the railroad brings in any trains coming from the west of the city. So again, City Place plays a role in welcoming people into the city.

The elements to the east and west of the site help to isolate City Place from the rest of the city. They are both attractions that you would not go to unless you had a reason to be there. This separates the neighbourhood from other residential areas, commerce, and jobs. Meanwhile, the

Map of City Place development

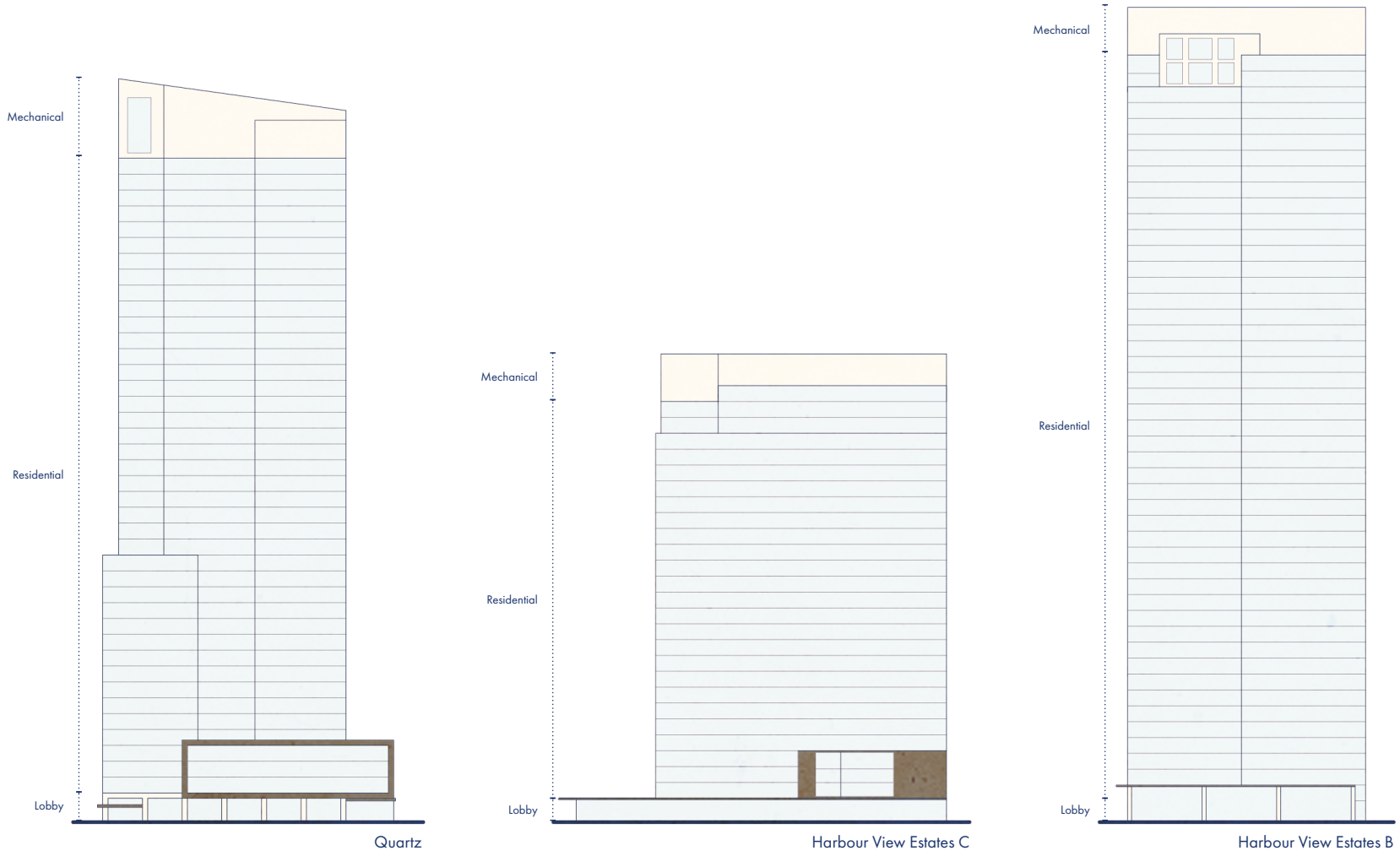
Gardiner Expressway and CN Railway create physical separation from the rest of the city. All of these elements work together to form an isolated neighbourhood, as well as a lack of diverse programming to bring people in.

At the centre of City Place is Canoe Landing Park. An eight acre, privately funded park, which features a sports field, dog parks, and public art by Canadian artist Douglas Coupland (Concord Adex Developments n.d.). One of the art pieces is a large red canoe, which sits at the top of a hill in the park, making it level with and visible from the Gardiner Expressway. When you stand within the canoe you are also able to see over the Gardiner Expressway, to Lake Ontario. This canoe marks what was historically Toronto's shoreline.

Syntax

Despite its important role in welcoming people to Toronto, the architectural syntax of City Place Development is rather expected and lacks any clear identity. When driving along the Gardiner Expressway to enter the city from the west, you used to be greeted by the CN Tower, a landmark signifying where you were. It was recognizable. But now, you are greeted by the mass of nearly identical condos.

The style of condos in City Place all match, point towers with window wall cladding. There is very little variety within the development. Some of the buildings have retail spaces on the ground floor, but even these lack identity. These storefronts all match each other and are barely distinguished by signage. Perhaps the only buildings that stand out in this development are the schools and library, which are only a few storeys tall.



Elevations of select buildings in City Place development. Shows an expected syntax that could exist in any city.

Since the 90s, urban trends in Toronto have increasingly moved towards condo-ism “and the cultural promotion of high-rise living as both sophisticated and environmentally friendly” (Rosen and Walks 2015). This trend pushes Toronto closer to what Rem Koolhaas refers to as the Generic City. He says that this type of living is the inevitable future “The Generic City is on its way from horizontality to verticality. The skyscraper looks as if it will be the final, definitive typology” (Koolhaas 1995). While Koolhaas embraces the Generic City, I believe that there still needs to be an identity that distinguishes cities from one another.

Design Method

Program

My proposal for this thesis is to translate Wes Anderson’s cinematic syntax into an architectural language, through programming and montage, in order to impose them onto City Place development as a way of creating identity in Toronto. This will be done by treating the neighbourhood like a movie set, creating cinematic montages that emphasise elements of the existing site and skewing the viewer’s perspective of them in a way that is uncanny in order to form a unique and memorable identity.

Looking at Toronto’s identity as a film city, there is an opportunity to create a space for a residency program for aspiring filmmakers. The facilities would include writing rooms, post-production and editing stations, sound booths, small studios, a screening room, a lounge, and a residence to host six filmmakers at a time. The residency will be housed within this series of cinematic montages, allowing them to create moments of inspiration and reflection for the participants. The cinematic montages become the front of

house elements of the building, or those that are “on screen”, while supplementary program elements become the back of house elements, or those that are “off screen”.

Diagram expressing “off screen” and “on screen” elements within the program

Narratives

By writing a series of narratives, based on characters from the films of Wes Anderson, I will develop a better understanding of the site through the mind of the director. This section will explore narratives based on Mr. Fox (*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*), Margot Tenenbaum (*The Royal Tenenbaums*), Zero (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*), and Steve Zissou (*The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*) as they, respectively, make their way through City Place development.

Fantastic Mr. Fox – Planning a Heist

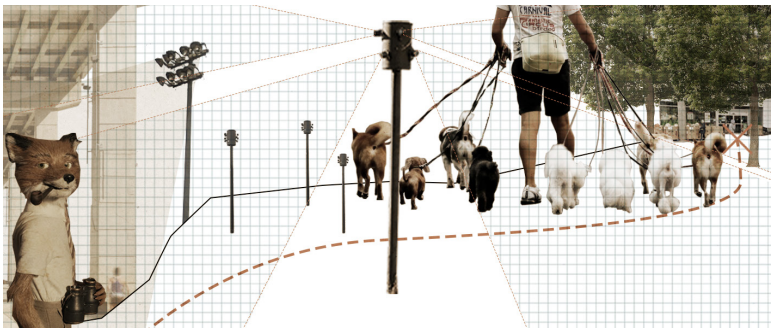
First step: stake out. He needed to know what kind of security and terrain he would be dealing with. The goal of this heist was to break into the local grocery store, make away with as much food as possible, and try not to get killed, his wife wouldn’t appreciate that.

It looks like the best bet is to approach from south, but there are going to be lots of obstacles to get past. Entering the neighbourhood should be easy, under the Gardiner he’ll go unnoticed, hidden behind the hill leading up to the park. The park itself is where trouble is going to arise. The first

thing he notices is a surveillance tower—cameras pointing at all angles, it is going to be nearly impossible to get past undetected. That, along with stadium lighting, even in the dead of night he will be visible. Daytime might be the best approach, blend in with the crowds walking their dogs and pray that none of the dogs catch his scent.

Once he gets through the park it's simple. Cross the first road, into the cover of trees, cross another road and he's there. There doesn't seem to be much car traffic, shouldn't be too difficult to get across. Then he just has to wait for someone to activate the sliding door and he's in.

He'll think about his escape plan when he gets there. How hard could it be?



Experiential pathway showing Fantastic Mr. Fox planning his heist.

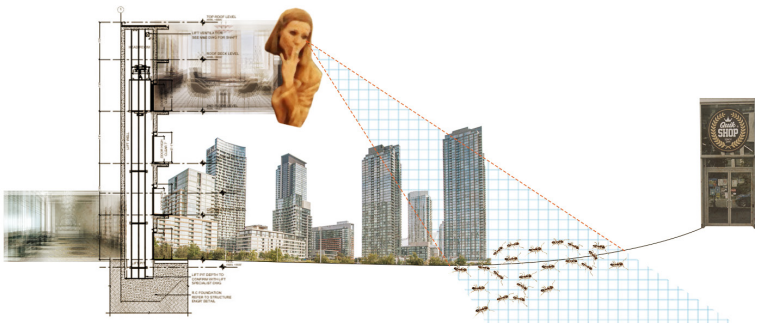
Margot Tenenbaum – Buying Cigarettes

She looks out her floor to ceiling windows, from a 46th floor condo that she's been living in since the move. People look like ants from this height, milling about in the winter sun, only leaving their own glass boxes when they need to run errands or walk their dogs. Margot, despite what she'll tell you, is no different from the rest of them, trapped and isolated in a box in the sky. Sure, Margot had her writing (she hadn't published anything in years), but every person that she was looking down on had their own lives as well and their own sets of hobbies.

This condo felt cold compared to her childhood home, it lacked all of the charms that she had become accustomed to. The thing she missed most about that home was the rooftop, her private outdoor escape. This place barely allowed her to open the windows, she had to go all the way downstairs if she wanted any outdoor air. Constantly travelling up and down in an elevator with her neighbours—whom she didn't particularly care for—simply so that she could enjoy a smoke. At least this time she had an extra reason to be leaving, she was out of cigarettes.

Margot goes to her closet to grab her coat, the same style of fur that she had been wearing since she was a child, and a small black purse. She heads to the elevator and makes her silent descent, shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers, a blank expression on her face. The walk through the lobby was uneventful, unlike some of her previous residences, the person working the front desk did not know who she was. There were simply too many people for them to keep track of–Margot was anonymous and there was a part of her that really appreciated this after her childhood in the spotlight.

She's hit with cold, dry air the moment she exits the building. Margot begins her dull and uneventful walk to the convenience store across the street.



Experiential pathway showing Margot Tenenbaum before her trip to buy cigarettes.

Zero – Running Errands for M. Gustave

Arriving underground at Union Station was always disorienting. Zero took his cues from the people surrounding him, following them out of the subway station, until he saw the sign he was looking for, The Skywalk, that would get him to his destination. He had been sent by M. Gustave to pick up a cake. Zero wasn't sure why it had to be from this specific bakery, but he understood why M. Gustave wouldn't have gone himself. It was in perhaps one of the least accessible neighbourhoods in the city.

Zero made his way to the Skywalk, a series of bridges that would get him most of the way to his destination without having to go outside. The walk was dull, and mostly empty at this time of day. The Skywalk spilled him out onto a large plaza, surrounded by tourist attractions. He continued his journey, up a large set of stairs and across a bridge that would finally bring him to the neighbourhood.

He walks by nearly identical condos, full of nearly identical storefronts, hoping that he'll find his destination soon.

Experiential pathway showing Zero's journey to City Place.

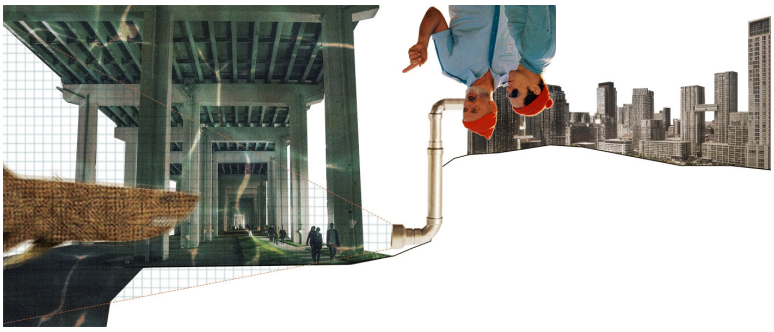
Steve Zissou - Observing

Standing on the edge of what was once the shoreline, Steve peers down. He senses that there is activity down there,

another world below the Gardiner, but he is unable to see it. He's fascinated at the idea of the unknown, the possibility of discovering something new, never seen before. He was constantly searching for the high that he associated with his adventure to kill the rare and dreaded jaguar shark that had eaten one of his crew members. Since then, he had barely had any expeditions worth documenting. Hopefully here he would find something, anything! Though, judging by the looks of his surrounding, he was not expecting much of interest.

Steve reaches into his bag to pull out a handheld periscope, he arranges it to look below the Gardiner. What he sees is, for the most part, expected. It's very different from the world above, its dark and grimy, a complete contrast to the perfectly manicured park he's standing in. It is a space that seems forgotten. Sure, there's a lot of movement, traffic steadily making its way through, but no one is actually paying attention to it. There is nothing there that demands attention, it is simply a means of transportation.

It's disappointing for Steve to see, but he's used to disappointment by now. He wonders about what used to be, before the infill, when this space used to belong to the lake. He wonders about what kinds of creatures he might have seen then. Maybe, if the lake still came up to this point, he would be staring into the eyes of his next great find.



Experiential pathway showing Steve Zissou's observations

Montage

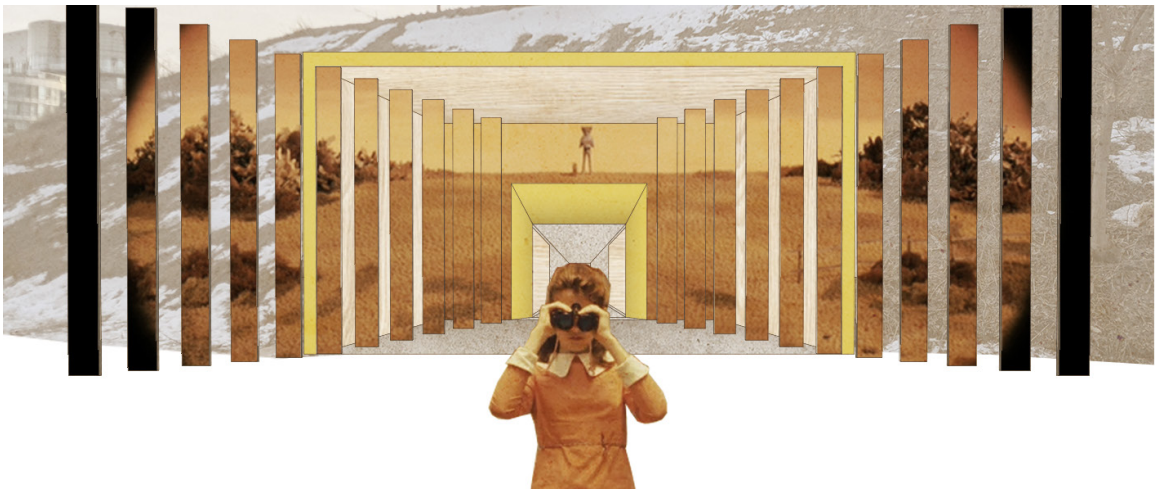
Drawing on the narratives in the previous section I have formed a series of three-dimensional cinematic montages used to bring attention to the experience of the site, using elements of Wes Anderson's cinematic syntax and character development. The montages are meant to be experienced from a specific point of view, the same way that filmmakers create specific points of view within their frames, to form an uncanny image. When they're experienced from any other point-of-view, the viewer's perception of reality will be shifted so that what they are looking at will seem unnatural, unsettling, or again, uncanny. The cinematic montages create architectural moments throughout the site that draw attention to the generic in a way that is uncanny.

Fantastic Mr. Fox

The first cinematic montage focuses on the experience of Fantastic Mr. Fox, planning his heist of the grocery store. The focus of this narrative was very much on the journey from point A to point B and the level of security and obstacles along the way. Because of this direct path of travel, the montage is set up with an exaggerated one-point perspective, to draw the viewer into the centre. All of the elements are lined up symmetrically to match Anderson's syntax, and his flat symmetrical frames. Because the fox is close to the ground, I shifted the scales of objects within the montage to make the viewer also feel as if they are closer to the ground than they are in reality. The geometries all angle towards the centre of the cinematic montage. This matches a typical Anderson shot, where the camera is set below eye level and the floor, ceiling, and walls are all visible. When this montage is looked at dead on it creates this image

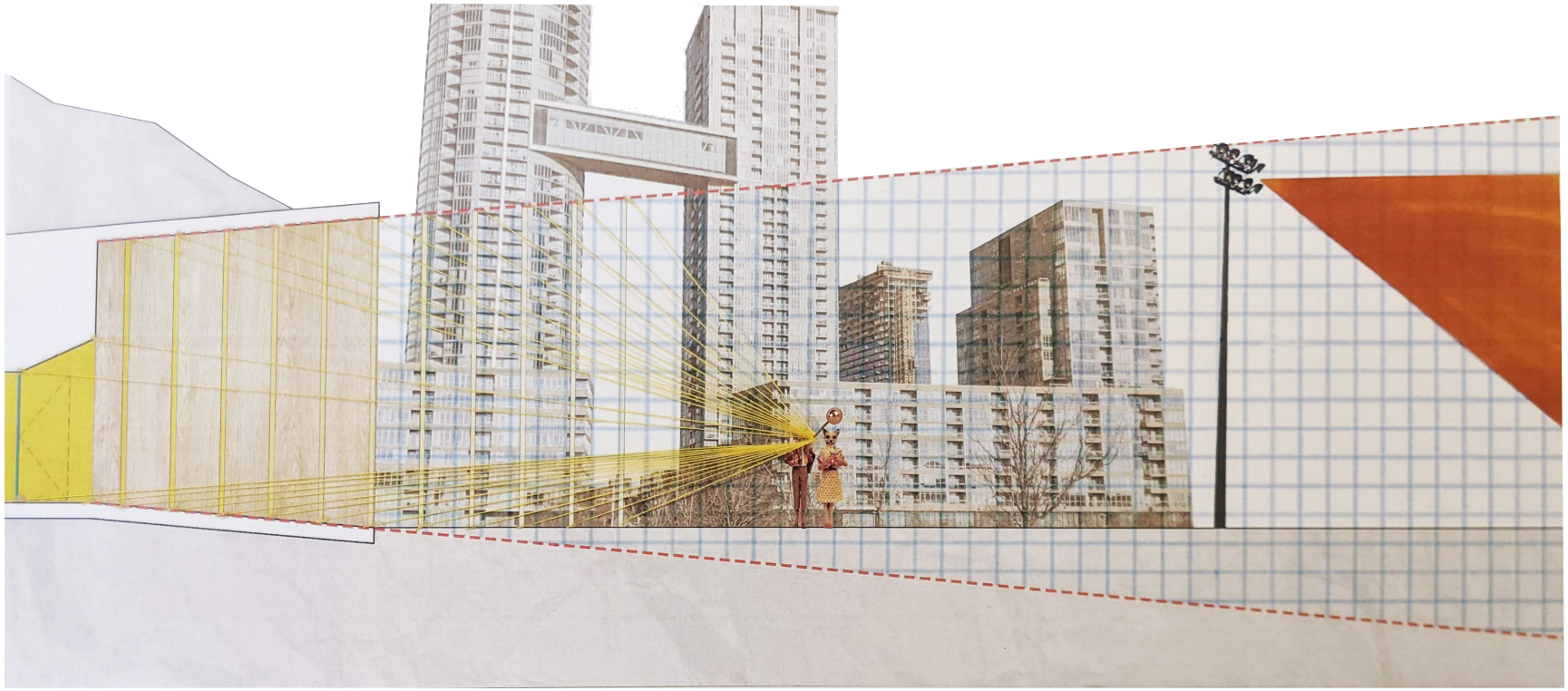
that draws you into the centre, but if it is looked at from any other perspective it looks instead like a series of planes layered together to set the scene. The use of perspective and scale work together to create an uncanny image within this cinematic montage.

This cinematic montage becomes the entrance to the building, with the exaggerated one-point perspective drawing the viewer into the building. The images that are placed on the fins can be changed out regularly to showcase stills from different films that the participants of the residency program are working on.



View of the cinematic montage from the front. The forced one-point perspective draws the viewer towards the centre.

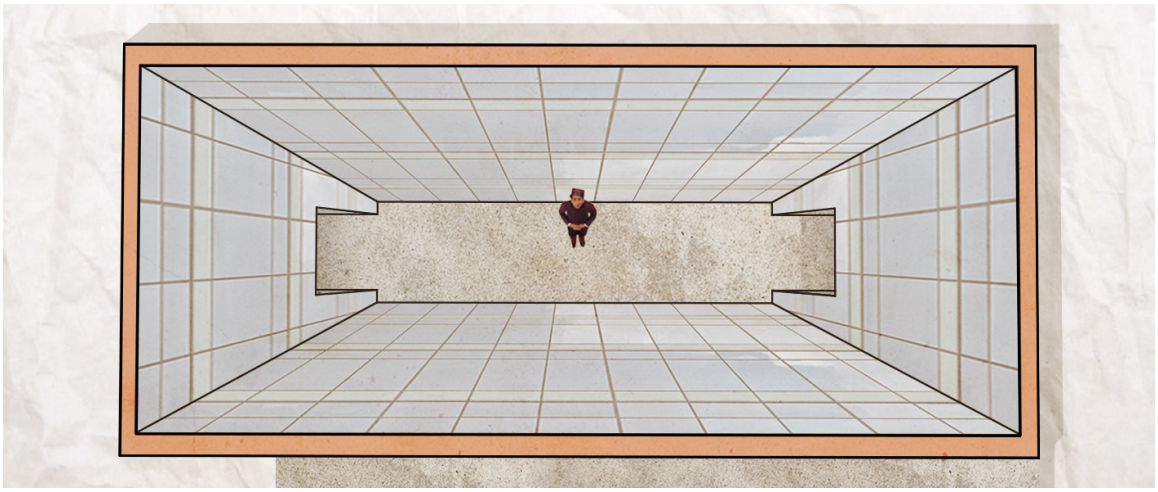
Skewed view of the cinematic montage.



Experiential section from the entrance of the building.

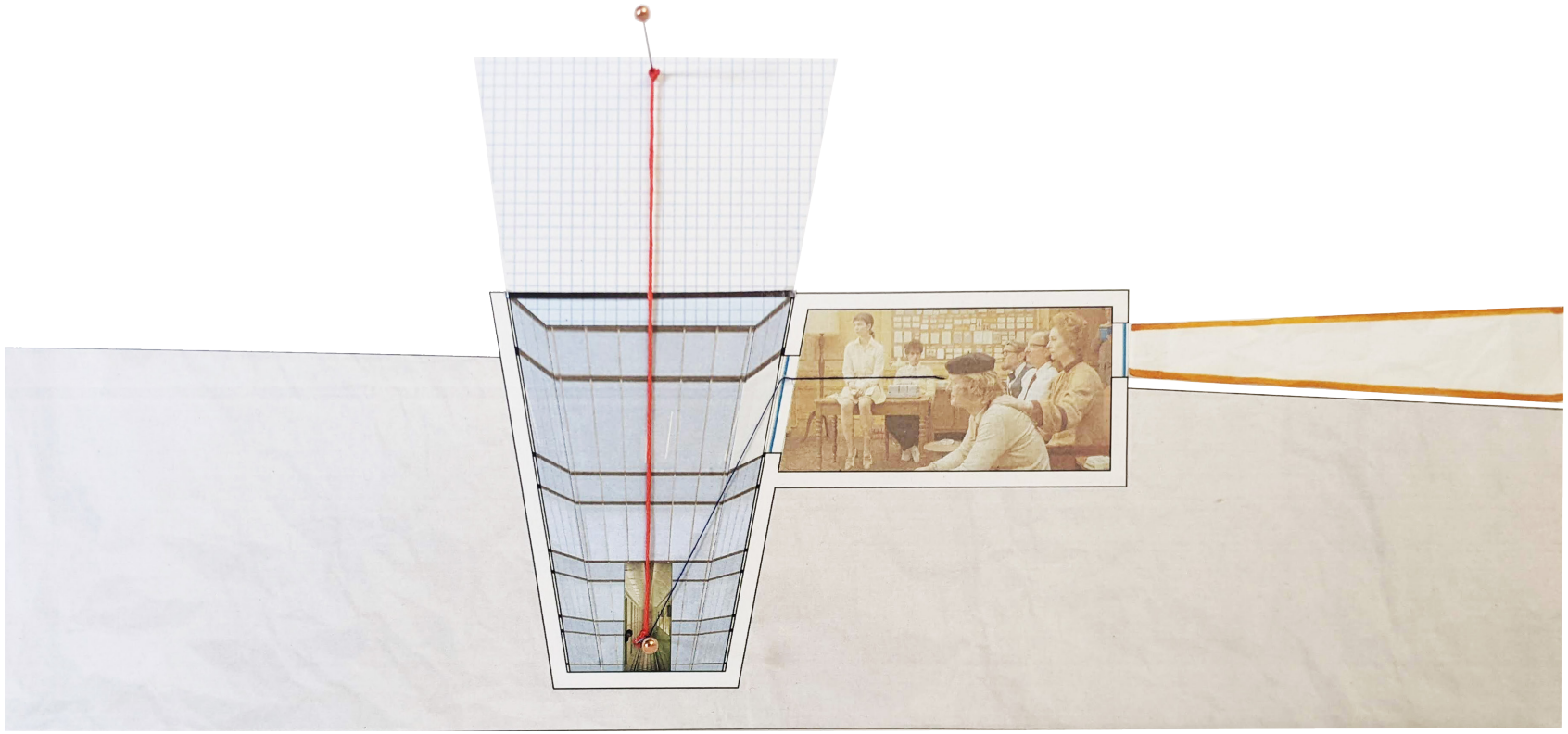
Margot Tenenbaum

The next cinematic montage is the experience of Margot Tenenbaum, looking down from her high-rise window. The narrative looked at builds on the idea of everyone living in these identical glass boxes, very high up in the sky, being disconnected from the world below. This montage is set up like one of Anderson's god's-eye-view shots, so it is meant to be seen directly from above, where again there will be an exaggerated perspective in order to demonstrate the incredible height that she lives at. The walls are made to look like the generic window wall cladding that everyone lives



View from the top of the cinematic montage.

View from the lower portion of the cinematic montage.



Experiential section through the corridor and workroom.

behind. This cladding is exaggerated within the small space, emphasizing the monotony of the surrounding architecture. When this montage is walked through and looked at from below instead of above, the perspective becomes skewed, and you are met with an oddly shaped room. From down here, the scale of the window wall cladding seems small, making the viewer feel much larger than they are. The use of scale, perspective, and exaggeration create an uncanny feeling within this montage.

This cinematic montage becomes an experiential corridor within the building. Unknown to those walking through the experiential corridor, behind the exaggerated window wall cladding, are actual windows. Workrooms, associated with the residency program, look down onto the space. They are hidden behind the scenes, off screen. This space allows for those working above to people watch without detection and gather inspiration from those below.

Zero

The third cinematic montage looks at Zero's experience of travelling to the site, and the monotony and repetitive nature of everything that he passes along the way, specifically the identical storefronts which lend no identity to the shops within. The cinematic montage with this narrative is like a billboard, that addresses the raised Gardiner Expressway and the moving cars. Using a large LED screen, a flat panning shot, similar to those showcased in Anderson's work, showing the repeating storefronts of City Place is played on a loop, moving along with the traffic of cars. This movement changes the perception of how fast the cars on the expressway are moving. Cars are often at a standstill at this location when traffic is bad due to congestion. This

montage becomes a backdrop for the cars, giving the impression that they are in fact moving. Exaggeration and movement help to create a feeling of uncanny for those driving past this montage.

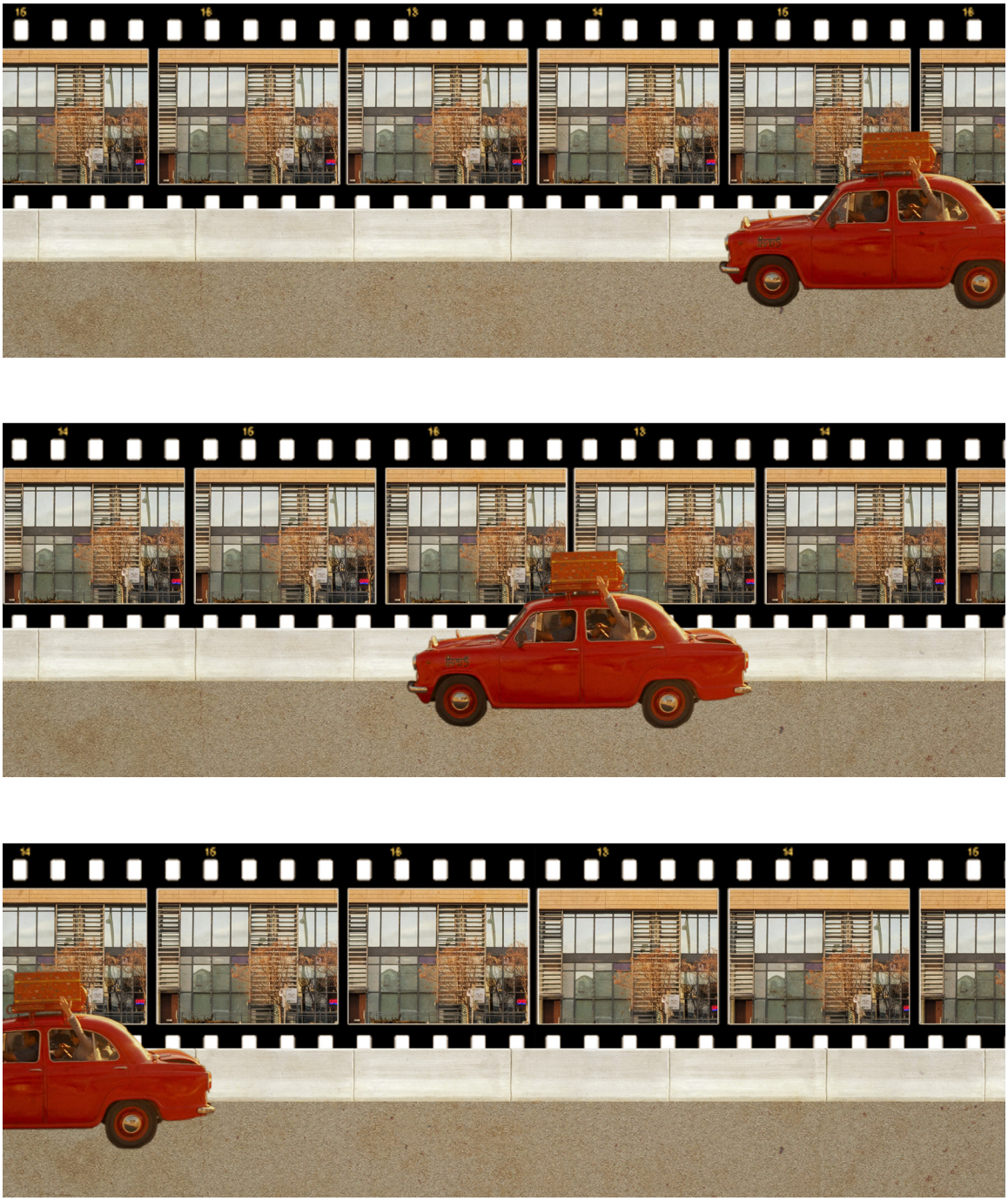
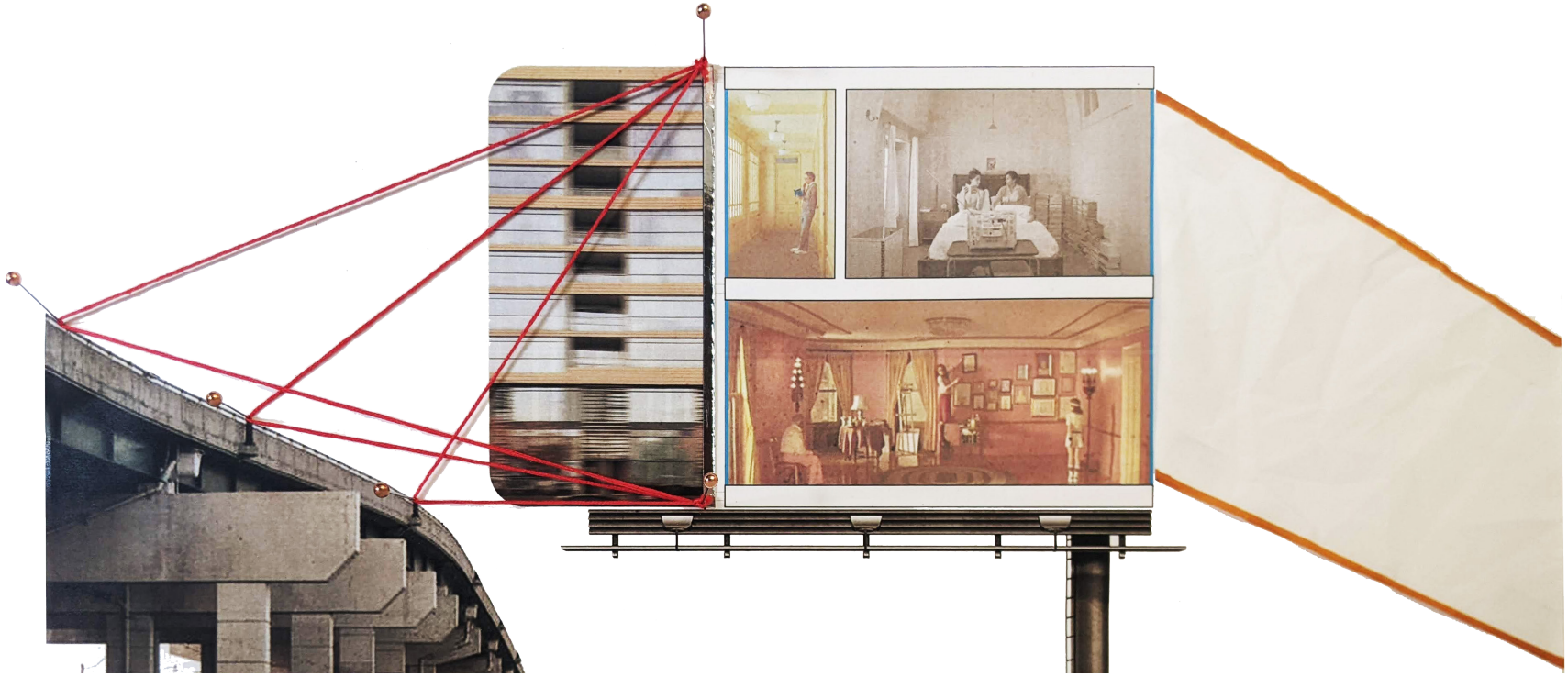


Diagram showing the movement of the paning shots next to the traffic on the Gardiner Expressway.



Experiential section of resident and lounge.

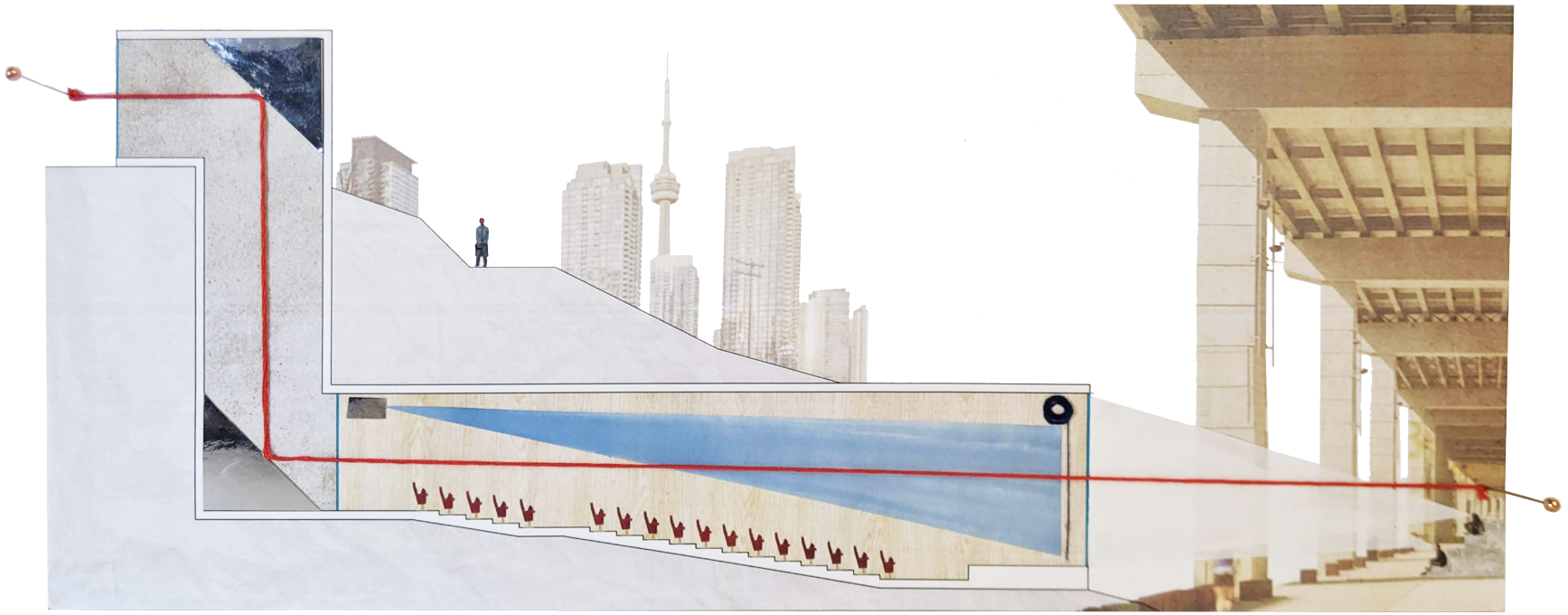
Within this cinematic montage is the residence and lounge for participants in the residency program. Its height separates it from the rest of the programming, forming an escape from their work, while still looking out onto the other cinematic montages. This space is hidden from the expressway, behind the LED Screen.

Steve Zissou

The final cinematic montage speaks to the ideas of imagining the fantastical, seeing what doesn't actually exist in the real world, things that can only be created in the cinematic world.

View from inside of the screening room and lecture hall, with the screen lifted.

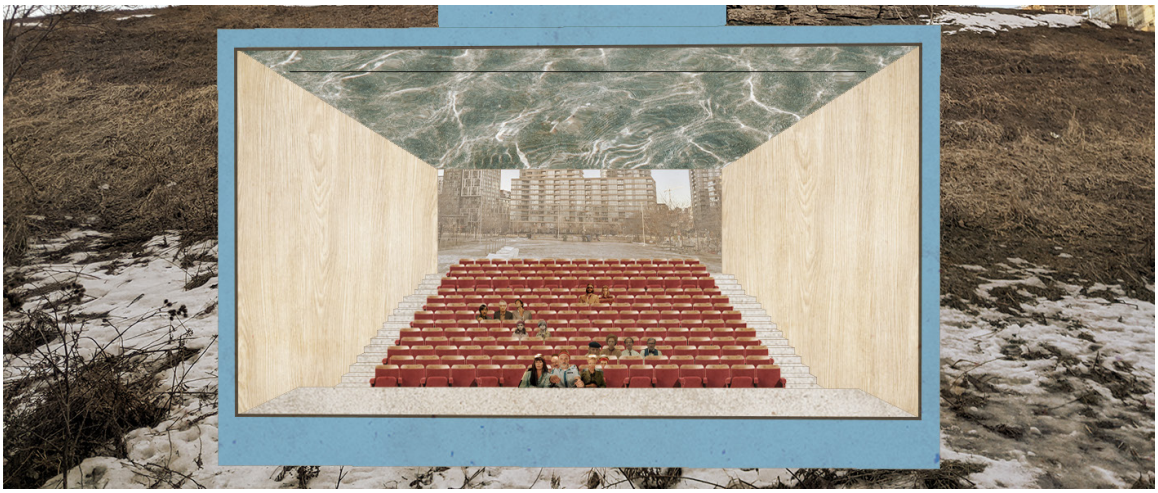
View from inside of the screening room and lecture hall, with the screen closed.



Experiential section through the lecture hall and screening room.

It is about seeing the unseen. It is a giant periscope, that allows the viewer to take a look underneath the Gardiner Expressway. When looking from the top of the periscope, a fantastical vision of the space below is created.

This montage becomes a screening room and lecture hall for the residency program. When a film is showing, a screen can be pulled down. This screen will be visible from the top of the periscope, emphasising that idea of looking into the fantastical and unreal that exists only in film. While looking in from the lower portion the periscope you are greeted with



View from outside of the screening room and lecture hall, with the screen lifted.

View from outside of the screening room and lecture hall, with the screen closed.

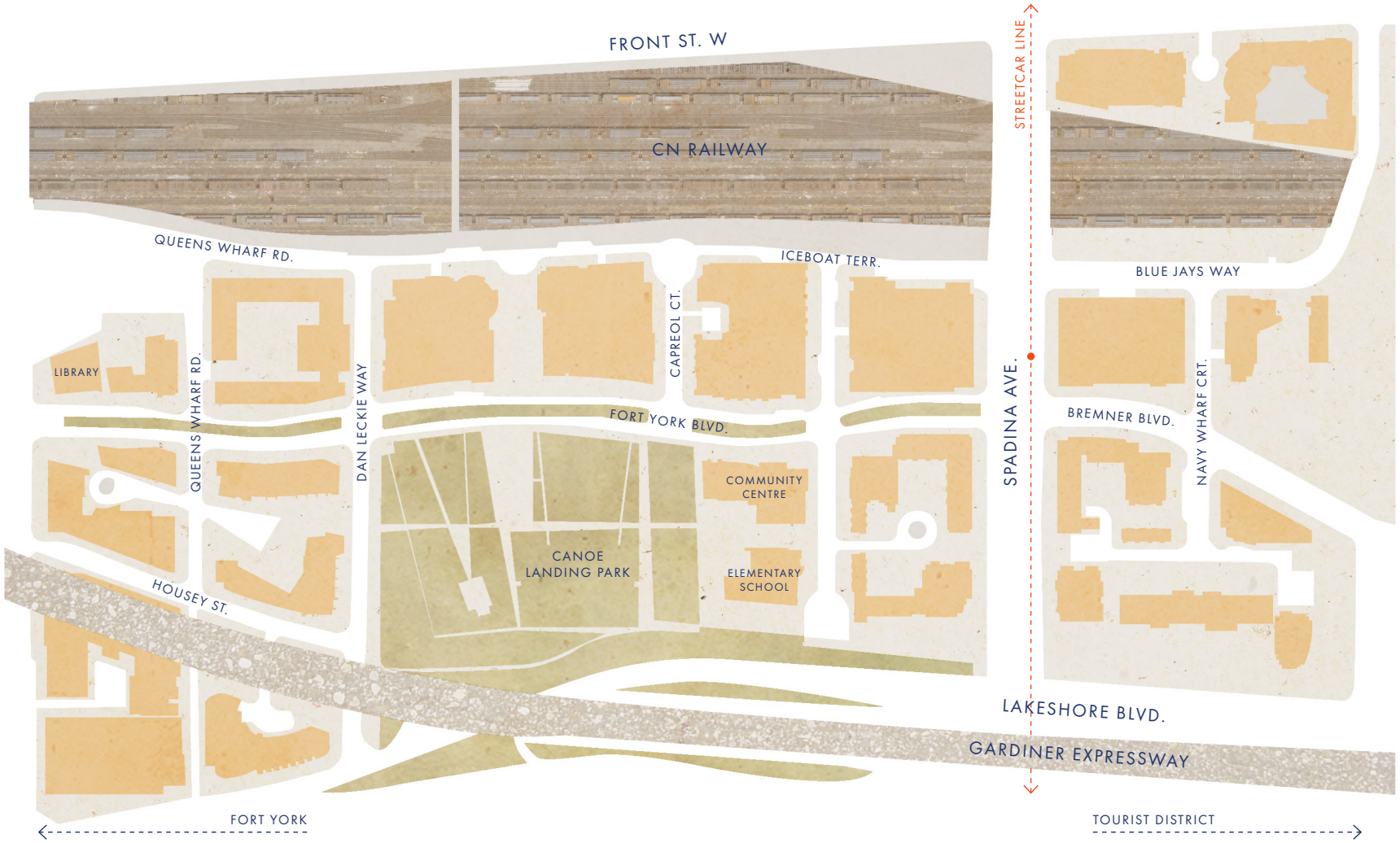
an auditorium staring back at you. It creates an unnerving feeling of being on display. When the screen is pulled down a reversed image of the film can also be seen from below the Gardiner.

Design Outcomes

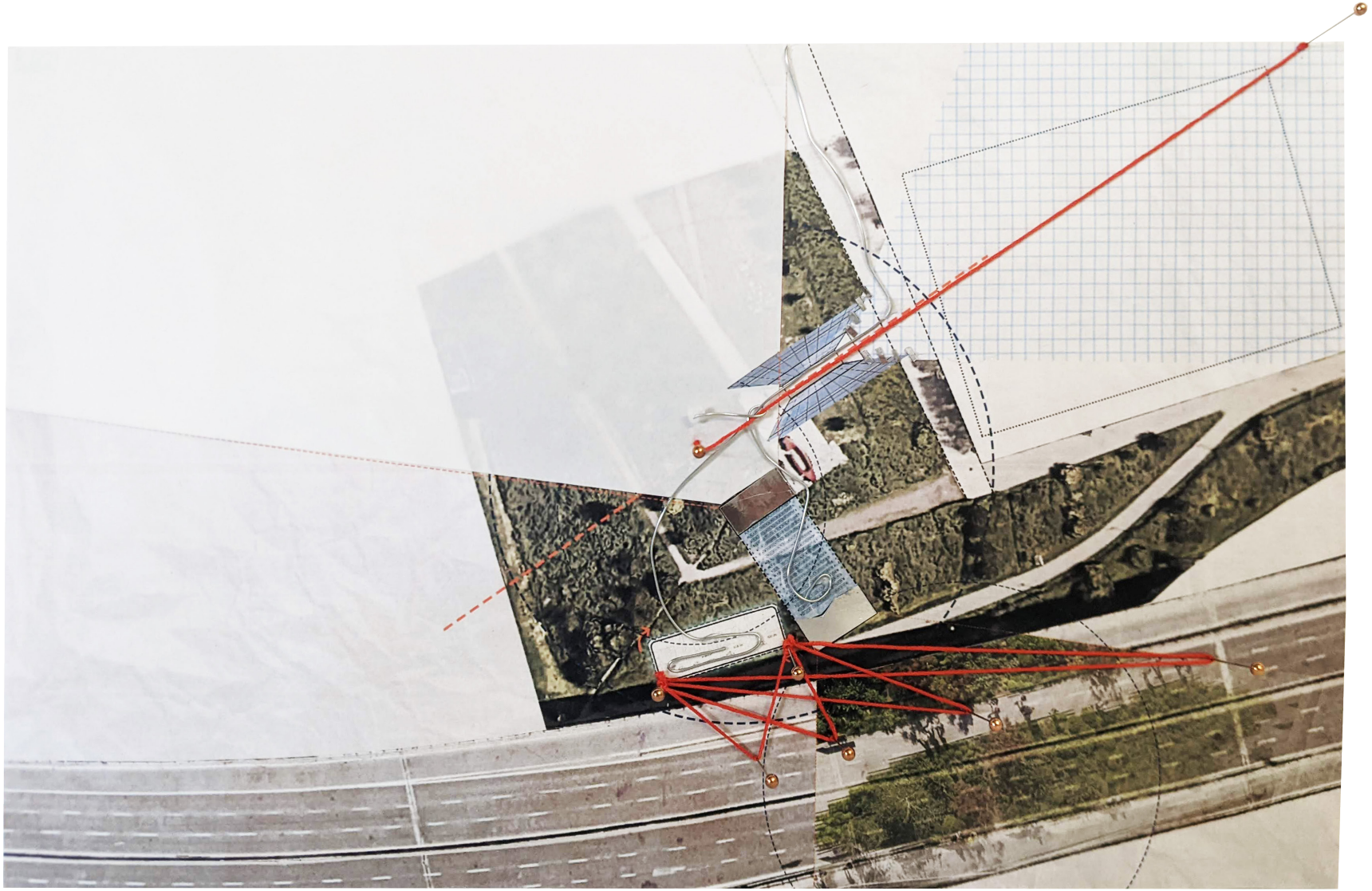
While writing the four narratives, I found that the four characters centred themselves around Canoe Landing Park, at the centre of City Place development. This park acts as a stage at the centre of the of neighbourhood, incredibly visible from multiple vantage points. It can be viewed from the surrounding condos, as well as from the Gardiner Expressway. With this in mind, the park a suitable site to text the project on. At the southern edge of the park is a hill. The top of the hill is at eye level with the top of the Gardiner Expressway, while the lower part of the hill reaches below the highway. This location allows for the cinematic montages to interact with both of those levels.

On the site, both Steve Zissou's and Zero's cinematic montages interact with the Gardiner Expressway, so they have been clustered together. The cinematic montages that belong to Fantastic Mr. Fox and Margot Tenenbaum both deal with movement, so they too are clustered together, to form one singular line of movement. The montages take advantage of the abrupt changes in topography and are carved into the hill, with the exception of Zero's billboard, which floats precariously above the park. The cinematic montages make connections with the existing pathways and viewpoints that exist on the site, forming specific points-of-view.

The cinematic montages form 4 colourful folies within the park, each of them matching the colour pallets from



Map of City Place development



Masking plan of Canoe Landing Park. Showing how the four cinematic montages sit on the site and how they interact with each other.

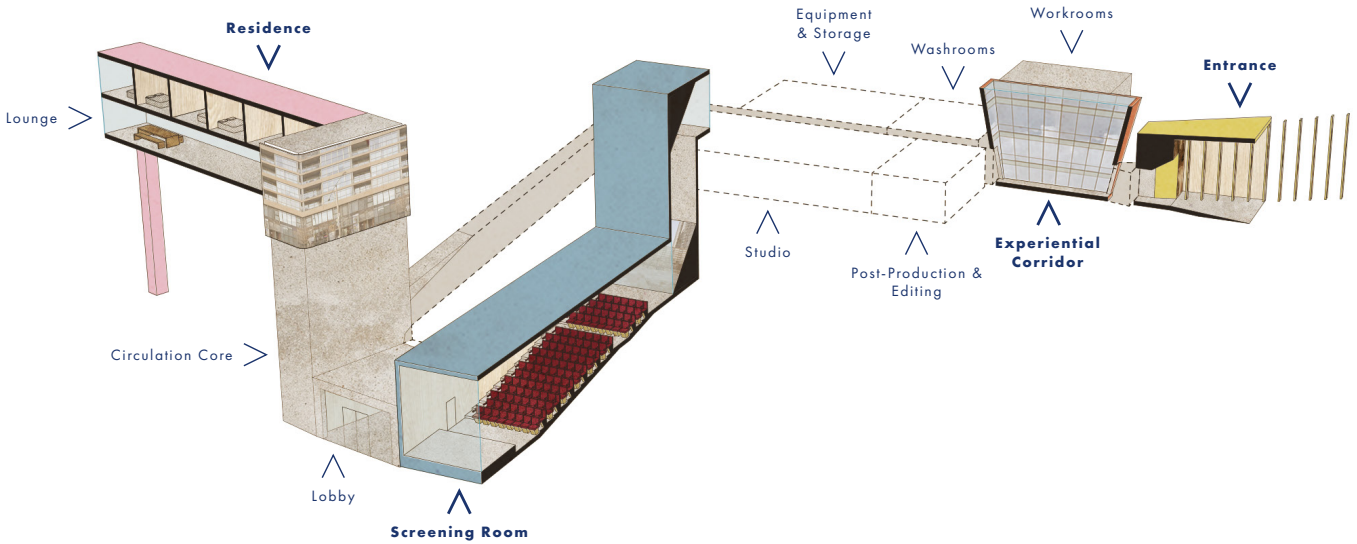
the films which inspired them. These colourful elements in the park stand out against the predictability of the rest of the neighbourhood. They are visible from the Gardiner Expressway and become a part of your new introduction when entering the city. They help to form a new cinematic identity for the city of Toronto.

In film, the perception of how spaces connect with each other is often skewed, and false. We often travel from room to room with little idea of how spaces actually relate to one another. To express this same experience within the building, areas that are not a part of the cinematic montages, those that are off camera, are sunken underground, not visible from the outside. They are placeless connectors between the areas of interest, those that are on camera.

This mode of procession can be seen similarly to Adolf Loos' raumplan, which acts as a translation of tracking shots within the films of Orson Welles, bringing the viewer between different points of interest. The added layer of these spaces being sunken underground ties into Anderson's long winded tracking shots, which become disorienting, leaving you with no idea of how spaces relate to each other. On the other hand, while looking at the building from the outside, you see framed views of these different point of interest. This can be seen as a translation of one of Anderson's dollhouse shots, where there is a clear visual representation of how the spaces relate to one another, even if the connectors themselves are not visible.

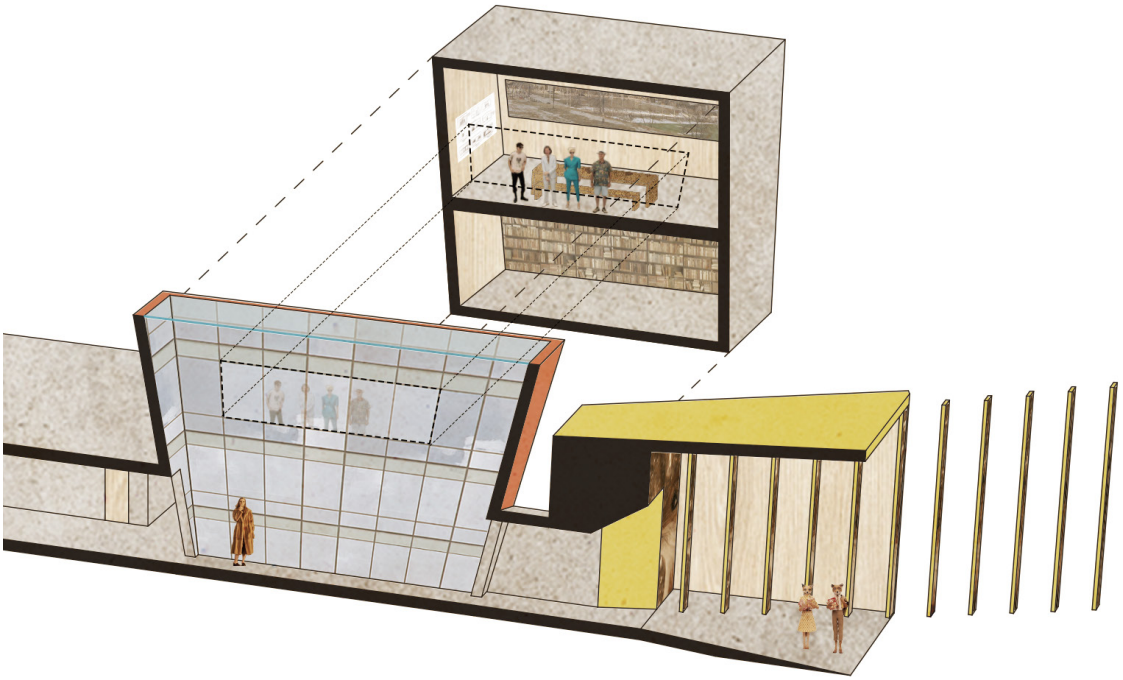
The first of these points of interest is the main entrance, Fantastic Mr. Fox's cinematic montage, where the exaggerated perspective draws you in to a single point. Upon entering this point, you are brought into a small corridor,

View of residency program.



Sectional view of residency program.

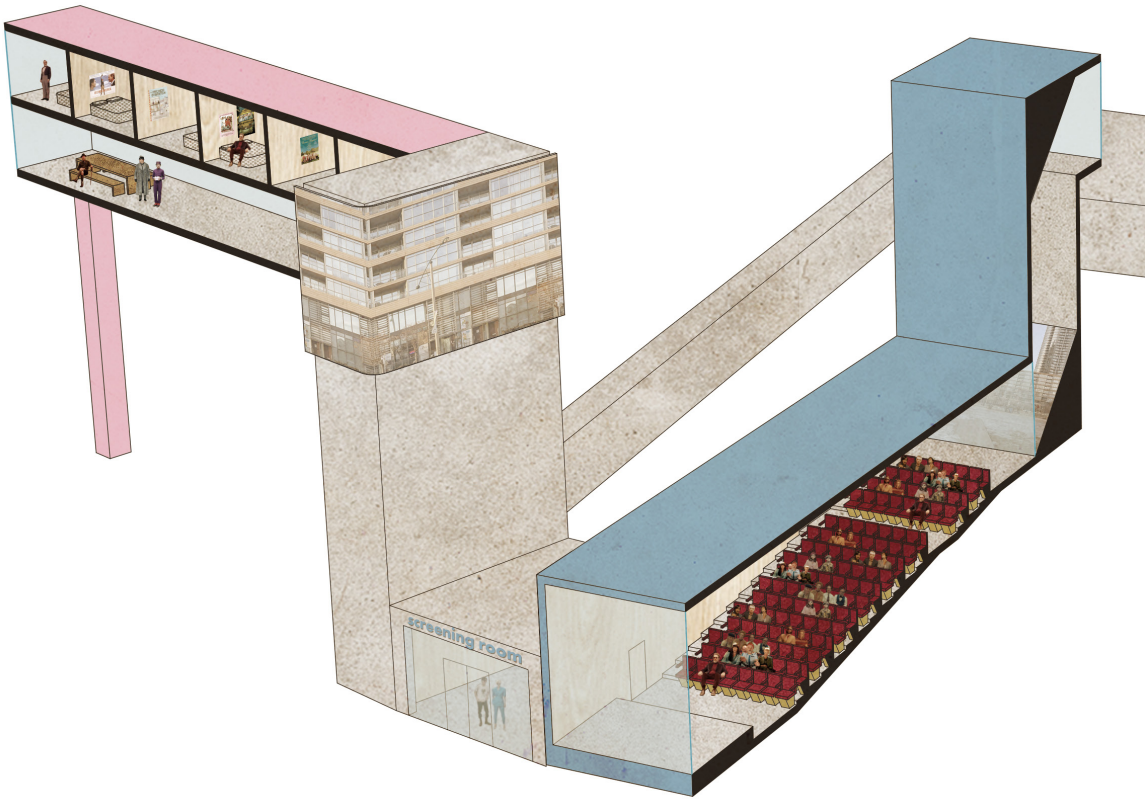
off camera, with low ceilings, contrasting the previous expansive space, on camera. From this corridor you are brought again into an expansive space. The experiential corridor, Margot Tenenbaum's cinematic montage, and the skewed perspective seen from inside the space. This on camera corridor is contrasting the off camera one which you just exited. You are unaware that within this space you are becoming inspiration for those watching you from the workroom above. The workroom is hidden off camera, with a view into the scene below. When exiting this cinematic montage, you are once again brought into a low-ceilinged space, connecting you to the off camera workspaces. The studio, post-production, and storage spaces. Integral to the function of the building, but not on camera.



Sectional view through the entrance and experiential corridor.

Further into the building you reach a circulation core, which connects the two remaining cinematic montages. By going up you find the residence and lounge, hidden from the Gardiner Expressway behind that large LED screen, Zero's cinematic montage. The screen itself becomes the element that is on camera, changing the perception of movement, while the residence and lounge are tucked away off camera. This space is split onto two levels, one for sleeping above and one for living below. The north side of this montage is open, looking over the park, and the spatial relationships of the other cinematic montages.

Going down from the circulation core you reach the screening room and lecture hall. This is Steve Zissou's cinematic montage, the periscope. From the lower portion



Sectional view through the residence and screening room.

of the periscope, looking into the screening room lecture hall from below the Gardiner, you are met with the uncanny image of all of the seats staring out at you. While at the top of the periscope you see into the unknown world below. When a film is playing, and the screen is pulled down, both of these views then allow for a look into the fantastical world that is only seen through cinema.

These cinematic montages work together to form a cinematic identity within City Place development. They emphasize the placelessness of the site in an uncanny way, drawing on elements from Wes Anderson’s cinematic syntax to do so.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This project comes together as a series of four cinematic montages that form colourful folies within Canoe Landing Park, in Toronto's City Place development. The design takes its inspiration from the cinematic syntax of director Wes Anderson, who uses elements of the uncanny as a way of forming a distinct identity for himself and for his work. By translating Anderson's cinematic syntax into architecture, a unique architectural identity is formed. This was done through studying not only how Anderson frames a shot, but also by studying the set design and narratives within his work. The cinematic montages are made to bring a cinematic identity to City Place, one that ties to Toronto's exiting cinematic identity, manifesting itself in a physical form.

By translating the cinematic syntax of auteur director Wes Anderson into architecture an identity was formed in the placeless neighbourhood of City Place. The cinematic montages become a part of the narrative of Toronto, giving it an identity beyond the glass condos that have become so prevalent.

To further the ideas explored in this thesis, this work could be extended beyond the scope of City Place. By looking at the other areas in Toronto that I identified as being placeless and lacking identity, this concept could be continued. Working in the same architectural language as in City Place, which was a translation of Anderson's cinematic syntax, more cinematic montages could be created throughout the city, creating a cohesive cinematic identity which would expand beyond the one neighbourhood. These same concepts could even potentially expand beyond the one city and beyond the one filmmaker. Forming cinematic montages based off of the

syntaxes and narrative expressions of different directors, bringing identity to cities across the globe.

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