

Ruins and new narrations. Design strategies for a cultural re-appropriation of spaces in ruin

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1. Introduction

Observing contemporary urban scenarios it is possible to see that the city is the space of fragmentation and conflict. On the one hand, there is the preservation of the ancient heritage, sometimes too strict, that, as Marc Augé said, «we preserve for the show»¹, on the other hand, there is often the “destruction” of the heritage of a more recent past, that it is not supposed to have a value. This state of a city between Preservation and Destruction has been described by Rem Koolhaas in an exhibition presented at the Venice Biennale in 2010 under the title *Cronocaos*. Koolhaas described a world divided «into areas of radical change and areas of radical immobility»². These two attitudes, although opposites, both can lead to the condition of abandonment in the city. In this situation the question how to “inherit” the ruined places acquires great importance. In fact, in contemporary cities we can often identify incompleting forms and unresolved narratives, we can find different ruins. They seem to constitute a problematic issue for the city. On the contrary, according to Anthony Vidler, the abandoned places, play a primary role in narrative landscapes: they show a break in the time of the narration and a range of different possibilities.

«What is a ruin, after all? It is a human construction that has been abandoned to nature and one of the features of ruins in the city is their wild appearance: they are places full of promises and unknowns»³.

For Walter Benjamin the past is made of «ruins upon ruins»⁴ and “ruin” is a perpetual and inevitable condition. Time, wars, natural disasters have produced and continue to produce ruins, in every era, motivating men to think about what to do with them.

The etymology of the word, from the latin *ruina*, from *ruĕre*, that means “to precipitate, to reverse”, reveals the changing essence of ruin, which is the never definitive result of a transformative dynamic triggered by different causes that produce a decay of the form and the role of architecture, but also the development of new balances which open to the design interpretative imagination. Ruin contains memory, metamorphosis and imaginative abilities, but also – as the etymology shows - the sense of the damage, the extermination, the fury and violence. It tells how the effects of time, abandonment or destruction lead to a «specular architecture reversal»⁵ which loses its structural logic, but also how the same disintegration can open a new set of rules organization, generating, as claimed by Georg Simmel: «a completely new formal unit, that is absurd, not designed, incoherent, whose nature is procedural»⁶.

In contemporary city we can find different declinations of ruin: as for example the relic; the stratified ruin; the city-ruin; the fragment; the unfinished or “ruin from the birth”; the inhabited ruin; till the paradox, that Marc Augé or Franco Purini show, of the construction site as ruin. This condition emphasizes that the ruins of an ancient past are uninterruptedly juxtaposed by ruins of an increasingly recent past: new ruins on ancient fragments. All are “ruins of the present”, because as Augé writes: «ruins exist through the look that is on them»⁷.

With this set of ruins the contemporary architectural project is called to face. As Alberto Ferlenga writes: «this huge amount of fragments and ruined objects represents today a great project opportunity that if it was related to the places in which it is inserted, it could constitute a big resource for the entire landscape»⁸.

¹ M. Augé, 2004. *Rovine e Macerie. Il senso del tempo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, p. 93.

² R. Koolhaas, 2012. *Cronocaos*, in Dromos. Libro periodico di architettura, Il Melagolo, Genova, p. 42.

³ R. Solnit, 2000. *Wasterlust, A history of Walking*, Viking, New York, 2000; trad. it., Storia del Camminare, Bruno Mondadori, Milan.

⁴ W. Benjamin, 1963. *Il dramma barocco tedesco*, traduzione Einaudi 1999, Torino.

⁵ G. Simmel, 1911. *La rovina* Titolo originale: *Die Ruine*, in *Philosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays*, Klinkhardt, Leipzig.

⁶ G. Simmel, 1911. *Op. cit.*

⁷ M. Augé, 2004. *Rovine e Macerie. Il senso del tempo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, p. 42.

⁸ A. Ferlenga, 2014. *Segni*, in A. Capuano (ed.), *Paesaggi di rovine. Paesaggi rovinati*, Quodlibet, Macerata, p. 300.



Figure 1. Different ruins in contemporary cities

2. Ruin as a narrative device

Starting from the objective of identifying possible approaches of the architectural project for ruins, the concept of “ruin”, taken into consideration in this study, doesn’t want to define a temporal delimitation of the ruin, intended as a still object belonging to a particular historical age; on the contrary, the ruin is intended as an element “in motion”, in continuous changing. In particular, some concepts are found that seem to distinguish it and that identify a way of interpreting the ruin as a “narrative device” for the architectural project. These concepts are: temporality, memory and imagery.

2.1 Ruin and temporality

Marc Augè contemplating the ruins of Tikal asks: «to what past did those ruins bring me back? [...] The site did not possess any historical existence, it did not return to any past»⁹.

Contemplating ruins is not the same thing as making a journey in history, but it means having time experience, of a “pure time”. The pure time described by Marc Augè is not datable because it does not belong to any precise temporal chronology. It is close to what Vittorio Ugo calls “temporality” as a qualitative characteristic of the architecture. Architecture is always something “temporal”. «Every work of architecture, as it represents the dialectic between nature and artifice: it potentially contains its own ruin»¹⁰. Ruin shows this condition: «it is both a process and the outcome of that process. A process of meaning that brings meanings to destruction»¹¹. Due to their temporal and spatial indeterminacy and their semantic instability, ruins become the privileged place to experience the suspension of historical linear time and to favor the rise of hidden meanings. As Simmel said «ruins are able to collapse temporality. They ask us to contemplate the past in the same way they have been present in the past»¹².

The temporality, on the one hand, reveals the overlap of different times that coexist into the ruin dragging it into contemporary temporal conditions, on the other, it highlights the condition of the ruin as a form in progress that is in continuous changing through an incessant metamorphic process. About this point, José Ignacio Linazasoro says that: «ruins incorporate the past into the present and introduce it as a positive action on reality. Concept that acquires meaning only when the intervention is done in the same way did the masters of the Middle Ages on the ruins of antiquity or Michelangelo in *Santa Maria degli Angeli*»¹³.

Ruins show the presence of different historical times in a material stratification: different elements dislocated in space that connect different temporal realms, creating a starting point for a narration.

2.2 Ruin and memory

Through narration ruins gain their *cronotopic* quality, they point out to the observer the inscription of the story in space. The *cronotopo*, which means “time-space”, is a term borrowed from physics and that can indicate the relationship between temporal and spatial coordinates that form a literature text.

⁹ M. Augé, 2004. *Rovine e Macerie*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁰ V. Ugo, 2007. *Architettura e temporalità*, Edizioni Unicopli, Milan, p. 53.

¹¹ V. Ugo, 2007. *Op. cit.*

¹² G. Simmel, *Gesammelte*, p. 135.

¹³ J.I. Linazasoro, 2010. *Rovine*, in *Ricomporre la rovina*, Ugolini A. (ed.), Alinea, Florence, p. 17.

One of Walter Benjamin's most famous observations on ruins is the ideal starting point for dealing with the theme of narrativity. According to Benjamin: «allegories are in the field of thought, what the ruins are in the field of things»¹⁴. So it is clear that it is possible to emphasize the stories told by ruins and the fact that they express a void, an absence that needs to be narrated: the ruin has “narrative skills”. They are not, however, like consequential and linear narratives, but they are hybrid and incoherent narratives, made up of breaks, of interruptions, of continuous returns, of splinters from the past that re-emerge as pieces of unconscious, exactly like memories come to mind.

The narrative skills of the ruins are highlighted by the analogy of the ruin with the memory. Lévi-Strauss was among the first ruin scholar to perceive an analogy between memory and ruin. He wrote: «dragging my memories into its flow, the time, rather than worn out and burying them, built with their fragments the solid foundations that provide to my walk a more stable balance»¹⁵. So ruin is a “memory object” full of meanings because it tells a story; or better it is a «store of memory»¹⁶, as Francesco Venezia said. About this, we can say that: «memory of what we were, ruins tell us not only what we are, but what we could be. They are for the community that for the individual the childhood memories are»¹⁷.

Franco Speroni, in *La rovina in scena*, highlights how the ruin is a “narrative form” which combines in itself the multiplicity of contrasts: between artifice and nature, construction and destruction, beauty and horror, sublime and uncanny, memory and metamorphosis: «the formal unity of the ruin is characterized by the continuous motion of the border, by the non-closure of the form, by the incessant presence of the conflict, due to the inexhaustibility of internal antagonistic forces»¹⁸.

The issues that ruin raises are often linked in some way to a tradition that demands that they can continue. That is why we need to rethink it because only the transformation can be able to deliver it to a longer duration. In this perspective, Francesco Venezia, talking about the history of the Augustus Mausoleum, underlines that «the ruin shows how a form can change destiny in time»¹⁹, since the building, once became ruin, is able to “speak” a universal language and it is able to embody other destinies and to create new architectures.

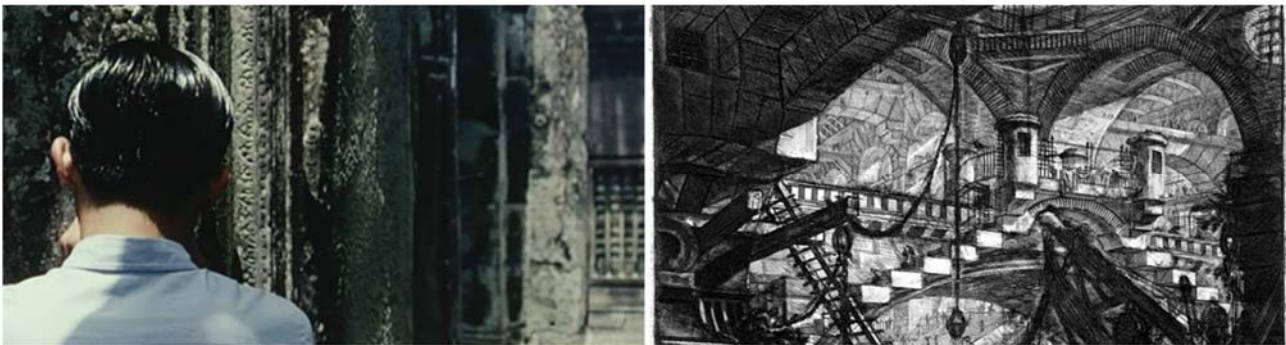


Figure 2. 1) Frame from the film W. Kar-wai, *In the mood for love*, 2000; 2) G. Piranesi, *Le Carceri d'invenzione*, 1745-50

2.3 Ruin and imagery

The ability of projection of the ruin was already clear to John Soane when, in 1830, he asked to the artist J.M. Gandy to represent the Bank of England «both in the aspect that it would have once failed the cohesion between its parts, both in the unfinished configuration»²⁰. Also the “future ruin” supposed, some years before, by Hubert Robert for the *Grande Galerie* of the Louvre tells a projection capability attributed to the ruins that will become a model for the concept of the “anticipated ruin”, whose semantic significance retains interest still in the XX century. But the most important figure in this direction is the visionary Giambattista

¹⁴ W. Benjamin, 1963. *Il dramma barocco tedesco*, traduzione Einaudi 1999, Turin.

¹⁵ M. Augé, 2004. *Rovine e Macerie*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ F. Venezia, 2011. *Rovine e non finito* in *Che cosa è l'architettura. Lezioni, conferenze, un intervento*, Electa, Milan, p. 92.

¹⁷ S. Settis, 2010. *Rovine. I simboli della nostra civiltà che rischiano di diventare macerie*, la Repubblica, 11 novembre 2010.

¹⁸ F. Speroni, 2002. *La rovina in scena, per un'estetica della comunicazione*, Maltemi editore, Rome, p. 12.

¹⁹ F. Venezia, 2011. *La separazione fatale*, in *Che cosa è l'architettura. Lezioni, conferenze, un intervento*, Electa, Milan, p. 16.

²⁰ F. Purini, 2000. *Comporre l'architettura*, Editori Laterza, Bari, p. 59.

Piranesi who, through the *Views of Prisons* and the *Reconstruction of the Campus Marte in Rome*, creates imaginary ruins.

If the painters of ruins of the XVI century imagined a bucolic past and the painters of the XVIII century imagined an unreal past, contemporary artists, in an age that appears in a condition of eternal present, imagine a past not yet happened. «All happens as if the future could only be imagined like the memory of a disaster of which we today could only have the foreboding, like a black utopia»²¹. An example is the paintings by Carel Willink, such as *The last visitors of Pompeii* (1930), in which it is represented the “specter of catastrophe”. Or it is possible to think to the works of Anne and Patrick Poirier, who, in more recent times, have given their ruins a sense of tragic loss: the imaginary future cities of *Mnemosyne* (1996), *Exotica* (2000) and *Amnesia* (2009) reflect a black utopia²². It is significant that to give back the “time” to the city, artists need of ruins, but it is also significant that, in order to imagine and describe ruins, artists need to apply to a tragic future or to a black utopia, to a disaster that has forced humanity to abandon places.

Near the artistic prefigurations, the photographic documentations of ruins in contemporary spaces, like those of Gabriele Basilico and Luigi Ghirri, affected more and more everyday collective imagery. Even the “absent ruins” of the New York World Trade Center, have been able to stimulate imagery and imagination of the artists, who have represented, for example, the moment immediately before the ruin, or have transposed the event in other places, in order to reflect on the identity into an everyday context. It is as if the ruin from something “special” and rare, it is increasingly becoming something “ordinary”. The “ordinariness” of the ruin’s condition is also represented by the imagery of film. The filmmakers, in fact, have often thought about the theme of ruin, interpreting and returning it in various ways: as a key figure of the existential and painful life in the city, like *Paisà* (1946) by Roberto Rossellini or *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987) by Wim Wenders; as a background of spiritual reflections on the city’s memory and the human soul, like *Nostalghia* (1983) by Andrei Tarkovskij; as a representation of (im)possible cities in ruin of the future, such as *Inception* (2010) by Christopher Nolan or *Dogville* (2003) by Lars von Trier.



Figure 3. Frame from films: R. Rossellini, *Paisà*, 1946; W. Wenders, *The state of things*, 1982; W. Wenders, *Il cielo sopra Berlino*, 1987; F. Fellini, *Satyricon*, 1969.

3. Ruin and montage

Since the ruin is a category of time-space, since its hybrid and non-consequential narrative skills and since its imaginative capacities for future transfiguration, it can be interpreted as a narrative device that, on the one hand, tells a story, although not linear and dense of contrasts; on the other hand, the creative creed that it expresses, entails the possibility of creating “new narratives” through architectural design. These new design narratives have the peculiarity of combining memory, temporality and imagination, and this point allows doing another observation regarding the relationship between the narrative device of the ruin and the narrative tool of the cinema.

3.1 Fragmentation and re-composition: cinema of ruins

As we have seen, «ruins are able to collapse temporality»²³. Through this ability they become the place of “temporal re-orientation”. This conception is a consequence of the new perspectives opened to the

²¹ M. Augé, 2004. *Rovine e Macerie*, p. 98.

²² Cfr. A. Norcia, 2015. *La rovina, nuovo paradigma del XX e del XXI secolo*, in M. Barbanera e A. Capodiferro (ed.), *La forza delle rovine*, Mondadori Electa, Milan.

²³ G. Simmel, *Gesammelte*, p. 135.

discoveries and inventions of the beginning of the century, first of all the birth of cinema, which has implemented the ability of man to visualize and play with temporality. Cinema is not just a tool capable of imagining and “staging” the ruin. It is a tool that, since its inception, has allowed remodeling temporality, as well as memory and imagery. Like ruin, it is also a place of temporal re-orientation. The place of the specific techniques that operate the fragmentation and re-composition of images in order to respond to a precise narrative will.

These findings highlight the relationship between the concept of ruin and the concept of *montage*, where the term “*montage*”, introduced by Sergej Michajlovič Ėjzenštejn, refers precisely to the theoretical meaning of cinema and its cinematographic techniques. Cinematographic *montage*, through the fragmentation and re-articulation of the reality it produces, is the most powerful narrative device that the twentieth century and the modernist impetus have produced. In fact, as Ėjzenštejn argued: «it is a way of linking in single point different elements - fragments - of a phenomenon in its different dimensions, from different points of view and from various sides»²⁴. It is also interesting to note that Le Corbusier, starting from the studies on the ruin par excellence – the Acropolis of Athens - begins to approach the cinema, bringing his interest in the visual dynamics of space and its composition, through the juxtaposition and the *assemblage* of separate bodies in time and space. Referring to his studies on cinematographic techniques, Le Corbusier said: «in my work I have the impression of thinking in the same way Ėjzenštejn does in his films»²⁵.

In this view, the cinematographic vision, for the expressive peculiarity of the medium itself, can be understood as a “set of ruin”, since visual fragments, film scans, as well as ruins, live a continuous process of decomposition and *montage*, imaginary and real. As Fabio Benincasa argued: «to the whole of being cinema replaces the continuous fragmentation of the world in the human eye, as noted in their writings scholars from Pasolini to Deleuze. The *montage* practice coincided with the discovery of an intrinsic plurality of the image and the real. [...] The visual fragments of cinema, like ruins, outside the brief experience of the cinema room don't live in a precise media reality, but in the recall of memory that inevitably tends to synthesize and recombine them. The film itself, in the practical experience of contemporary man, is never a whole, but it corresponds to the traumatic plurality of the imagery»²⁶. So it seems possible to identify some links between the practice of *montage*, or more generally, of cinematographic postproduction and the project for the ruins: both try to operate the fragmentation of the gaze and the re-composition of the pieces.

The cinematographic vision, understood as a “set of ruins”, which are constantly fragmented and recombined through techniques of film postproduction, becomes a “mental and technical” tool that can help to reflect on the narrative structures and compositional ways of the architectural design for ruins.

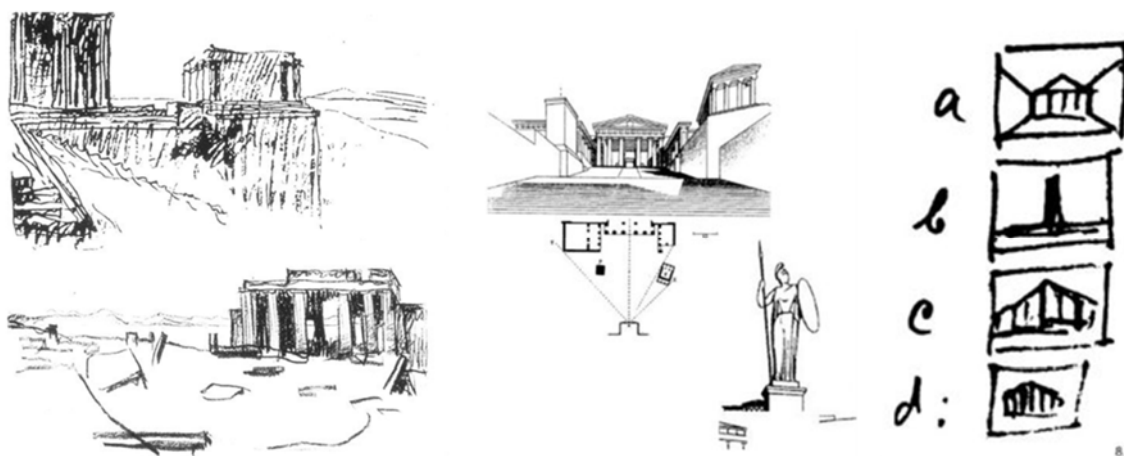


Figure 4. Le Corbusier-Eisenstein, Sketches of the Acropolis of Athens.

²⁴ V. Trione, 2014. *Effetto città. Arte, cinema, modernità*, RCS Libri S.p.A, Milano, p. 14.

²⁵ G. Bruno, 2006. *Atlante delle emozioni. In viaggio tra arte, architettura e cinema*, Mondadori, Milan.

²⁶ F. Benincasa, 2015. *Rovine e Cinema. Cinema di rovine*, p. 46.

3.2 Architectural project as new narration

In this framework, the architectural project becomes the interpretative tool capable of giving rise to new narratives for ruin in contemporary times. Ruins, identified as potential narrative devices for the architectural design, may become an occasion to graft new narratives and, from neglected and abandoned places, they can be transformed into places of contemporary urban and cultural re-appropriation. For Franco Purini: «to insert a new architectural sign in the stratification is an essential operation for architecture [...] A new sign added to others is an interpretation, but also it allows to give a new meaning to the text itself»²⁷. Ruin tells a story, the architectural project interprets and adds meanings.

In this direction, Paul Ricoeur identifies a «parallel between architecture and narrativity, in which architecture would be for the space what the story is for time, that is, a “configurative” operation; a parallel between building, that is realizing a form in space and telling that is intertwining in time»²⁸.

In the case of the ruin, seems very interesting a statement made by Renato Bocchi, when he said: «it is not about designing a physical, stable and finished condition, but rather to design a process in transformation and also a progressive perception process [...] the program of a project like this looks more like a storyboard or a theatrical or film screenplay than an architectural project. However it is certainly a project, since it wants to offer a key reading and targeted interpretation of the places to which it applies: for this reason this type of project can be conceived as a “description full of temporality” and ultimately as a narration»²⁹.

And then he adds, that: «is necessary to conceive the project to have in mind a plot, a story to tell, or a sequence of scenes to be staged, to define a system of significant correlations in space and time. The conceptual, narrative, and interpretative basis is fundamental to the inventive process»³⁰.

In this direction, the purpose of some design strategies and techniques is to rediscover and interpret spatiality, temporality, perceptions, imagery, lost relationships – among the site, the layers, the edges, the voids, the fragments – of the ruins, acting through a continuous process between memory and metamorphosis, between imagination and pragmatism, between identity and innovation.

In particular, it is possible to identify some compositional techniques that try to act on the *mixité* of time and space of the ruins, which can be continuously reinterpreted, fragmented, re-assembled, warped, re-composed, enlarged, and re-meanings. These modalities recall those in which the cinema, using some artifices or devices, such as: *found footage*, flash back, flash forward, slow motion, sky camera, zoom, etc., introduces the spectator to a nonlinear spatiality, temporality and narration. Renato Bocchi speaks of techniques such as hybridization, layering, rewriting, overlapping, *montage*, similar to the cinematographic technique of the post-productions: «as Eliot and Joyce worked with fragments, letters and no, to build their modern masterpieces; exactly as the *montage* of the so-called *found footage* works today in the cinema to build new narratives, according to new horizons of meanings»³¹.

At the same time, Juhani Pallasmaa underlines how *collage*, *assemblage* and *montage* are the most characteristic expressive forms of modernity: «the art of *assemblage* is one of the techniques that had as a result refined materiality, stratified time and narrative, suggested by poetic juxtaposed images. These techniques make possible an archaeological density of the imagery and a non-linear narrative through the juxtaposition of fragmented images which derived from irreconcilable sources»³². He emphasizes the way in which architectures as the Museum of Castelvecchio by Carlo Scarpa, the Hamar Museum by Sverre Fehn or

²⁷ F. Purini, 2015. *Il nuovo e tre forme dell'antico*, in Bigiotti S. e Corvino E. (a cura di), *La modernità delle rovine*, Prospettive, Roma, p. 78.

²⁸ Cfr. P. Ricoeur, 2008. *Leggere la città*, in F. Riva (ed.), *Città aperta*, Troina.

²⁹ R. Bocchi, 2011. *Le strutture narrative e il progetto di paesaggio*. In C. Olmi (ed.) *Il Parco dell'Ariosto e del Boiardo. Progetti di luoghi come esercizi di fantasia*, Quodlibet, Macerata.

³⁰ R. Bocchi, 2011. *Op. cit.*

³¹ R. Bocchi, 2015. *Il futuro delle città: fra rigenerazione, rammendo, innesto e riciclo*. In M. Carta e B. Lino (ed.), *Urban Hyper-metabolism*, Quaderno n.15 Recycle Italy, Aracne, Rome.

³² J. Pallasmaa, 2012. *Frammenti. Collage e discontinuità nell'immaginario architettonico*, Giavedoni, Zambelli M. (ed.), Pordenone, pp. 50-51.

the Neues Museum by David Chipperfield narrate «epic tales of time and life that contemporary architectures usually are not able to transfer»³³.

3.3 Narrative and postproduction techniques in film

Between the various forms of narration, the narrative form of the cinema with its techniques of “postproduction”, as we have seen on the basis of the relationship between ruin and *montage*, seem to be a useful tool to reason on the narrative strategies of the project for the ruin. Consequently, by studying exclusively from a technical and compositional point of view some films and by deepening some theoretical concepts at the basis of various cinematographic theories, such as those of Eisenstein, Deleuze, Godard, Tarkovskij, it seems possible to trace some design techniques for the ruin.

A first examined film is Spike Jonze’s *Adaptation* (2002) that generates a complex interweaving using the technique of the *mise en abyme*. The *mise en abyme*, a French term that indicates the “mise en abys”, is an expression initially used by André Gide to designate a narrative expedient that involves the reduplication of a sequence of events or the placement of an exemplary sequence which condenses in itself the last meaning of the story in which it is placed and to which it resembles. It is a sort of “a story in a story” that, from time to time, opens in further stories. It remembers and can be associated with the concept of “mental *decoupage*”³⁴, expressed by J. L. Godard, which indicates the permanence of images as traces and the ability to re-compose them in a new *montage*.

One of the most interesting film from the point of view of the narrative techniques is definitely Wong Kar-wai’s *In the mood for love* (2000): a film that works for a constant remodeling of time, through expansions or contractions of moments obtained from techniques such as time-lapse, rallenty, stop motion, jump cut, flashback, flash-forward. In fact, through these techniques, it is possible to narrate parallel or interlaced plot in time and space; to compare time stories; to provide different possibilities of action that travel parallel as in separate but intertwined dimensions. Another film useful to deduce possible design techniques is *Blade Runner* (1982) by Ridley Scott, a film that shows recycling practices related to some sequences and some shots from other films. In this case, the narration occurs through the technique of *found footage*, which consists of the creative reuse of repertoire footage³⁵; by operating an overwriting, which permeates the ancient images of a new meaning and enters them into a new circle.

A last film important for these reflections is Terrence Malick’s *The Tree of Life* (2011), a film in which the technique of the “narrative suspension” is used, a technique that Malick uses in most of his films and which could be called almost “anti- storytelling”. In this case the plot is just an excuse to describe the deep essence of things, often fragmented; to contemplate life in its overall essence, to remain suspended between the images and the signs that surround us.

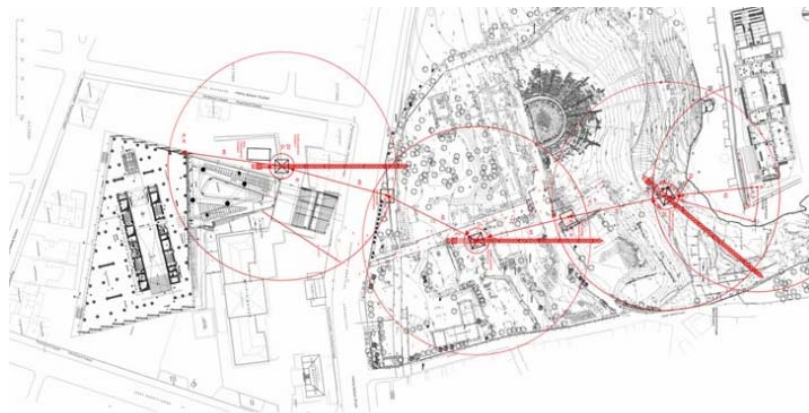


Figure 5. B. Tshumi, 2009. *New Acropolis museum*, Athens.

³³ J. Pallasmaa, 2012. *Op. cit.*

³⁴ Cfr. D. Dottorini, 2006. *Che cosa resta della storia (del cinema)*. In G. Tortora, (ed). *Semantica delle rovine*. Manifestolibri, Rome, pp. 233-241.

³⁵ S. Marini e F. De Matteis, *La città della post-produzione*, pp. 11-12.

4. Narrative strategies of the project for ruins

Starting from all these considerations, it is possible to identify some architectural projects for the ruins that seem to “stage” the ruin through narrative and cinematographic techniques. Through these projects we can try to define possible narrative strategies for ruins which can lead to a contemporary “re-appropriation”, both physical and cultural of ruins. All these projects are unified by the will to narrate and reinterpret stories that already lived many times, using some particular and specific compositional techniques, almost as if it was a film capable of holding together different moments and memories.

- *Narrative suspension: framing the ruin*

The first strategy is that of the narrative suspension of the ruin and it considers the ruin as a distant object and the project as a tool for the contemplation of ruin. Here the design technique is “framing the ruin”, creating particular relationships and perceptions that decisively can influence the interpretation that will be given to the object being framed. An example could be *The new Acropolis museum* (2009) by Bernard Tshumi is a true filmic architecture, which frames, watches, narrates from different points of view and from different sides the ruin par excellence: the Acropolis of Athens. It is an architecture totally conceived, both from a compositional-spatial and a structural point of view, as an element to visually, perceptively and materially narrate the Acropolis. The use of various types of window and various glasses has the aim of creating a constant relationship with the Parthenon, but always different. In this conception the tallest level is turned 23 degrees from the rest of the building so that it is perfectly oriented towards the Acropolis. For Thsumi, a great connoisseur of *montage* and cinematographic techniques, both the relationship with the ruins of the Acropolis and the ruins placed under the building is visual and contemplative, which generates a sort of narrative suspension, but which constantly, interacts with the ruin.

- *Mise en abyme: decoupage and re-composition of fragments*

The narrative strategy based on the *mise en abyme* is near to the concept of mental *decoupage*, expressed by Godard that indicates the permanence of images as mnemonic traces and the possibility of re-assembling them in a new *montage* that recalls them. This concept regards to reuse the same materials as elements of a story of multiple looks: each fragment is re-circled, remodeled, perceived now in its new relationship with the other elements. In this case, what counts is the way in which the “junction” is made, the “interstice” between the fragments. An example in this sense can be intended another project for the Acropolis, the so-called “Pikionis Trails” (1954-1957) by Dimitris Pikionis. Below the Acropolis, along a path that look like mosaics or engravings, dozens of traces evoke, recall, interpret, tell a complex past using fragments of the present time. The trajectories that traces signs on the ground lead to thoughts towards their ramified history. Archaeological fragments mix with pieces of rubble, marble slabs with concrete slab and rocks. The landscape finds its life into the micro-compositions scattered on the path, where the sense of places is renewed and the original meanings are confused with other newer.

- *Intertwined plots: combining spaces, signs and layers*

The strategy of intertwined plots involves an active concatenation and hybridization between new interventions and the ruin, which act among the layers, spaces, or signs of the past. The intent of these interventions is not to affirm their own supremacy over the past, but rather to narrate the continuous sequences of a possible uninterrupted tale; to remodel time through breaks or repetitions. Architectures such as the Sverre Fehn Hamar Museum help to understand this complex set of spatially remodeled temporal elements that indissolubly intertwined each other. *The project for the Hamar Museum* by Sverre Fehn (1988), quoted by J. Pallasmaa as “epic tale”, reinterprets the ruins of the palace and the Hedmark Cathedral and doing this it tells a story. The project operates a *montage* and *collage* of the different parts and signs, reinterpreting the different layers by the creation, of a path through time. There are four temporal layers in the Hamar Museum: the 13th Century Bishops’ fortress ruins that becomes the basis of the narration; the concrete ramp of the “present”, which creates a narrative-exhibition path, consisting of precise rhythms and

sequences, which crosses all the phases and the layers of the complex; the 18th century enclosure that marks the border and finally the layer of rural life. These layers weave and interact with each other, forming a real intertwined storyline and creating a dialogue between each epoch of time.

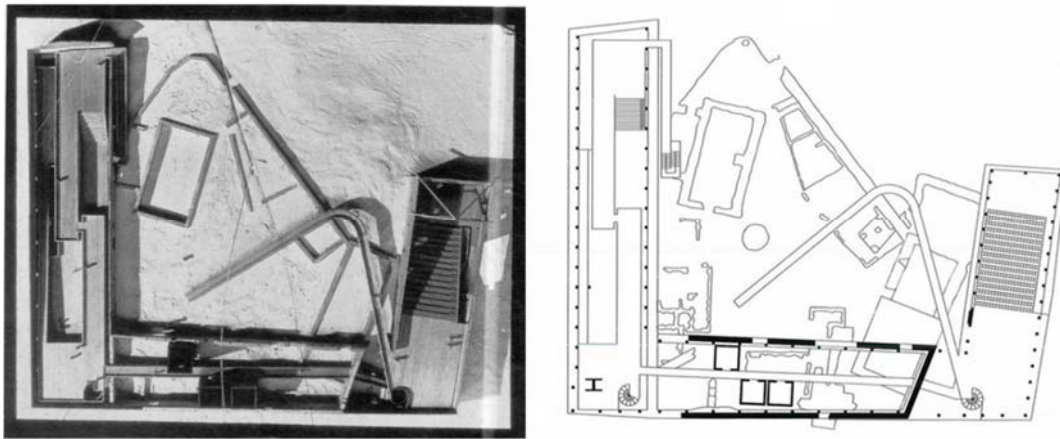


Figure 6. S. Fehn, 1988. *Hedmark Museum*, Norway.

- *Overwriting_Found footage*

The overwriting strategy operates a “creative” re-use of the elements in ruin, through the technique of the *found footage*, which consists of reassembling into a new context films that are partially or entirely made with a pre-existing footage. In this case, the project moves till the point of overwriting the existing or recomposing entire parts of the building. A new narration is created. In this case, however, the project is always in continuity with the past, there are no interruptions but only the natural fluidity of the temporal flow. An example is *The project of a library and some lecture halls for the church complex of Escuelas Pías de San Fernando* (2004) in Madrid by Josè Ignacio Linazasoro. Here an overwriting is made regarding the remains and the gap of the ruin. The new library reuses much of the space of the existing church in ruin, while the lecture halls are concentrated in a new building that is grafted to completion of the void that there is in the block and it is juxtaposed to the ancient building. Linazasoro writes: «the project creates a different space from the original, in which, in some parts, skinny walls of the ancient church are the background of added elements; in other parts of the building, the ruin is one that is implemented as a figure and the new as the background»³⁶.

- *Parallel texts_Alternate mounting*

The latest identified strategy sees the ancient and the new as two distinct and parallel texts that never meet each other, but they are complemented by contrast. In this case, the cinematographic technique is that of alternate mounting and it allows telling two parallel stories that are part of a single film: two separated narrations in the same building, in the same story. For this case we can think to the intervention on a former distillery, dating from the first decade of the twentieth century, by the study OMA, led by Rem Koolhaas, that has become the new seat of the Prada Fondazione (2015) in Milan. The project is characterized by an articulated architectural configuration that operates a precise montage between existing buildings and new construction. Rem Koolhaas argues: «the two dimensions –old and new- co-exist here, while remaining separated, and they confront each other in a continuous interaction process, as if they were fragments destined never to form a unique and defined image. Introducing a number of spatial variables, the complexity of the architectural project contributes to the development of an open and constantly evolving cultural process»³⁷.

³⁶ J.I. Linazasoro, 2010. *Rovine*, in *Ricomporre la rovina*, Ugolini A. (a cura di), Alinea, Firenze, p. 17.

³⁷ R. Koolhaas, *Fondazione Prada a Milano* in *Domus*, maggio 2015

https://www.domusweb.it/it/architettura/2015/05/11/fondazione_prada_a_milano.html

5. Conclusions

The narrative strategies and techniques described, through these examples, reveal the possibility of defining a sort of “postproduction” methodology for ruins; where the term “postproduction”, stripped of its purely technical meaning, is understood like Nicolas Bourriaud³⁸ as a contemporary cultural re-appropriation. Ruins, ancient and recent, are thus places of urban, physical and cultural re-appropriation.

«The thing that interests the postproduction is the fact that it can open architecture to an “essential action” perspective, at least as a creation from nothing. What do I destroy and what do I keep? Certainly I don’t “destroy everything” and don’t “conserve everything”. The ruin is made “adaptive” through the architectural project»³⁹. The re-appropriation-postproduction works on an editing of historical and ideological narratives, incorporating the elements that make them into alternative scenarios. New contemporary spaces are created where the ruin is the narrative device and the architectural project its postproduction.

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³⁸ Cfr. N. Bourriaud, 2005. *Post-production. Come l’arte riprogramma il mondo*, Postmedia Books, Milan.

³⁹ O. Carpenzano, 2013. *La post-produzione in architettura*. In S. Marini, V. Santangelo, *RECYCLAND*, Aracne, Rome, p. 36.