NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND FILM –

AN ANALYSIS OF THIS ANALOGY IN THE WORK OF JEAN NOUVEL

BY

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Introduction

> It is architecture that has the most privileged and difficult
> relationship to film
>
> (Vidler in Neumann, 96:13)

From the beginning of filmmaking there has been a link to architecture. This ranges from mere background against which the action takes place, with no particular emphasis on the architectural features and qualities, to where it is the most potent force behind the film, as in METROPOLIS (Lang, 1926,Germany).

From the alternative angle, that of film's influences on architecture, the connections are not so clear since the much discussed association of the 1920s and 30s, when film decor was central to architectural discourse. There have been various references of film to architecture through techniques such as montage, framing and the narrative, but up until now these seem to have always taken a subordinate role to the theory of the city and architecture. The vast variety of architectural theories presented to us in the twentieth century may have caused this complex issue to remain the opinion of the few architects committed to it.

Architects became deeply involved in the set designs of films particularly during the 1920s and 30s, when some architects used the film set to promote the aesthetic and philosophy of the modern movement. (Penz, 1994:38) This practice, of using film as a form of publicity for architecture and as a testing ground for architectural ideas has continued. In the National Film and Television School (NFTS) there are a significant proportion of production design students who are trained as architects. This is due to the fact that the skills required for both professions are very similar. (Penz, 1994:38) These include the ability to draw, to represent creatively a space in three-dimensions and to build models. A

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good knowledge of materials and a sensitivity to texture is also required. Qualities desirable to both professions, such as ingenious lighting arrangements, are as crucial to the aesthetics of film as to architecture. (Penz, 1994:38).

Film maker/scriptwriter Rem Koolhaas has become an architect, inverting the usual progression of the architect to film designer. For him the move is unremarkable because he considers there to be,

> 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).

Chapter one will discuss these various background links between the two spatial arts and give a brief history of when and how architects and their practice became involved in the film industry. These films have been well documented and serve only as a brief background to the film and architectural analogy to this thesis.

Such examples of where the two professions overlap serve to illustrate the connection between film and architecture, which has become one of the highest critical praises of the architectural world. Editors of architectural journals have stated that if they hear another reference to BLADE RUNNER(Scott, 1982, USA) that "they are going to scream". (Toy ,1994:35) However, the question still remains as to whether or not the film / architecture analogy is a deserving one? It is clear that they use similar techniques, but do their theoretical backgrounds derive from similar philosophical domains? Is this analogy based on the ideas of ambitious architects, emerging at a time when architectural practices are searching for new theoretical frameworks?

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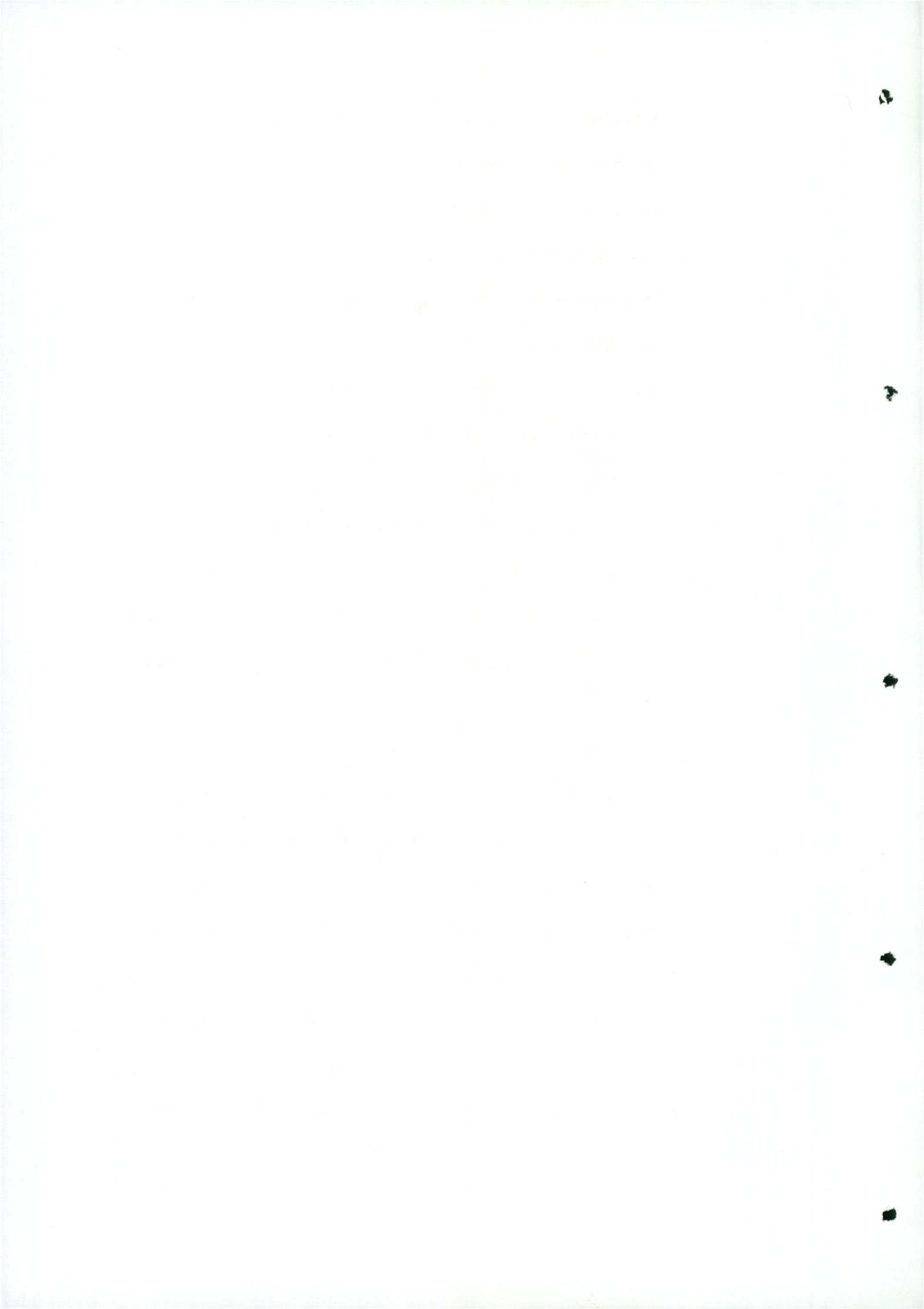
These are reasonable and debatable questions, but Anthony Vidler highlights in the opening statement, the difficulty in assessing this relationship. With all the different theoretical movements within film and within architecture, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific correspondence between them in simple terms. While it may be true that the German Expressionist film genre has a particular association with the architectural world, the same comparison might not apply with another specific genre category.

In this discourse, I wish to assess the interconnection of architecture and film within the work of one specific architect. There have been few architects who have boldly and continually expressed this relationship than the highly acclaimed French architect, Jean Nouvel. Nouvel is a contemporary and modern architect, who has rejected the "hi-tech" label sometimes assigned to him, and refuses to be called postmodern rejecting what he sees as its "historicism connections". (Nouvel in Bosini, 1997:13)

There are mixed feelings towards Nouvel's approach to design. Some criticise his inconsistent approach, to what they believe as the fundamental principles of design. Others reject him as a theorist even though they may recognise his talent. But then there are a few who envy Nouvel for his success and experience, like many other successful international architects, and subject him to continuous criticism and debate of his authenticity as an architect. (Bosini, 1996:7). Whether they are right or wrong barely matters, he has contributed ideas to a previous stagnant and dull debate, and even more importantly experiments with them, (Bosini, 1997:9).

Although Nouvel assigns himself the modern label, it is not the same modernism which architects, such as Mies Van der Rhoe or Walter Gropius, hoped to achieve. He believes in many of their fundamental theories but also feels that some of these methods are no longer justifiable to our era. This is evident in his rejection of urban planning or of standardisation, highlighted by his critics description of him being "consistently inconsistent"(Powell, 1995:18). He takes a different approach by letting the city create his architecture, instead of the modern idea of architecture creating the city.

In Chapter two, I will discuss his controversial classification and talk of Nouvel's theory of the modern city. In doing so, I will be referring considerably to a lecture he gave at the Centre Georges Pompidou in January 1992. In this talk he reveals his belief in the architect's responsibility to continue to construct the city with respect to its historical and cultural specificity. "We cannot economise with the culture of an era". (Nouvel in Bosini, 1997:13)
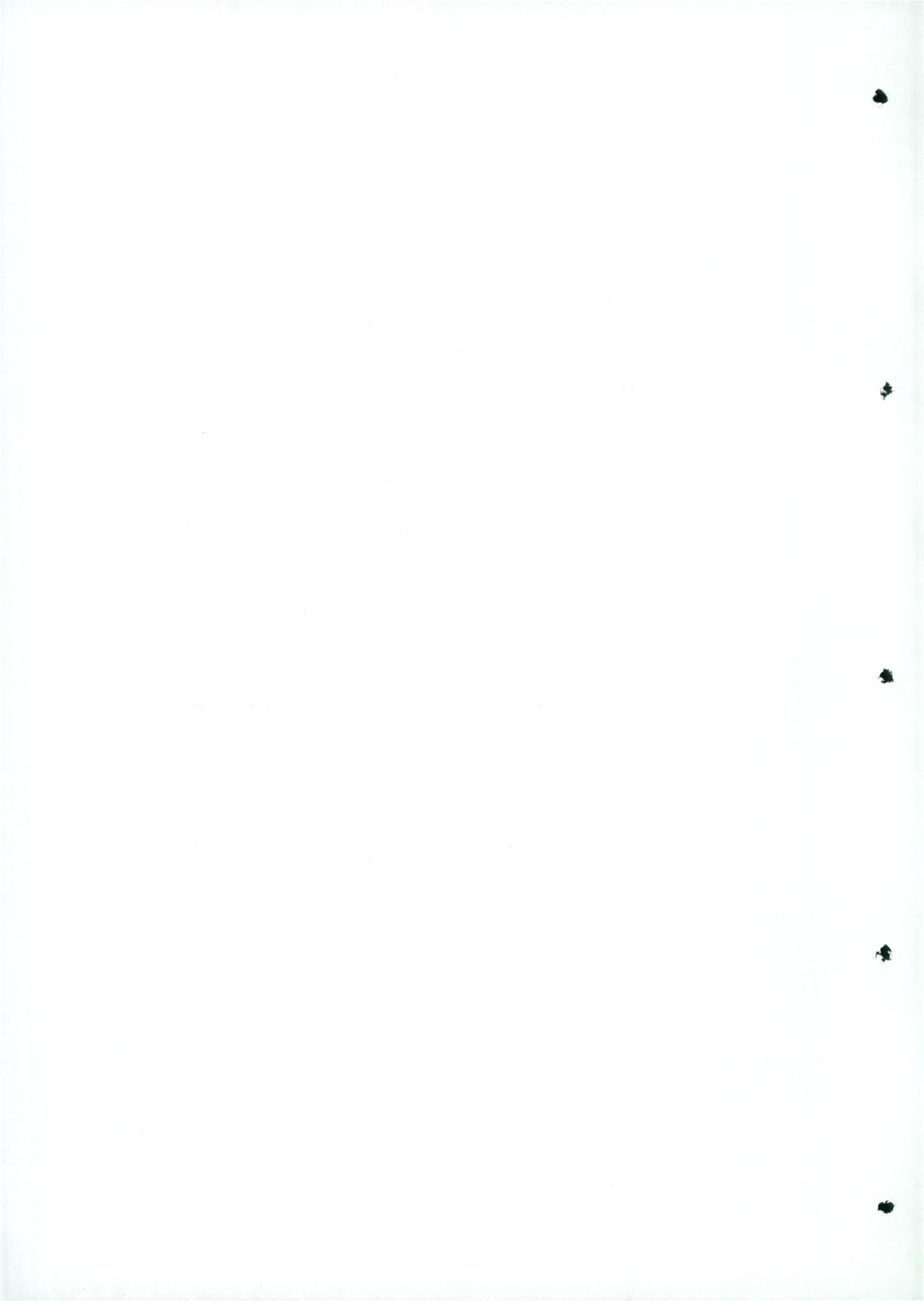
His theories have inspired him to produce daring technical and architectural solutions, such as, his most famous building, the Institute Du Monde Arabe in Paris, or the Tour Sans Fin, an ingenious yet unrealised proposal for a site at La Defense. (Muret, 1994:708) These projects among many others, have different links to the film industry. Firstly, he believes his profession and that of a filmmaker hold many similarities. (Bosini, 1997:14) In his statement, "the future of architecture is not architectural", (Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:14) Nouvel reveals his faith in this affiliation. He feels that architecture must always be compared with other disciplines for fear of it slipping into a world of ignorance towards the problems in our society. (Lucan in
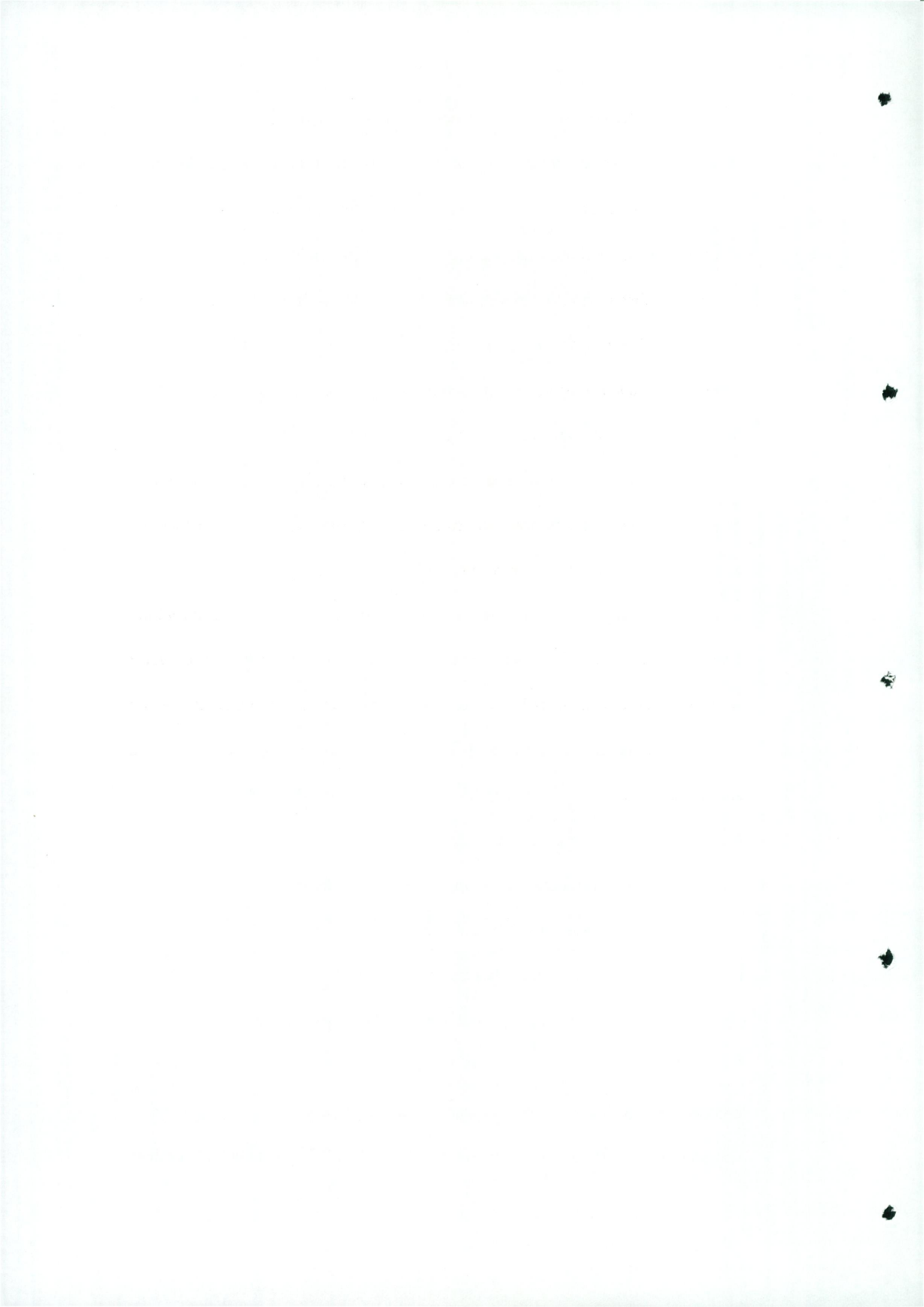
Blazwick, 1992:18) As he realises his limits as a human, he forms a team for every specific project and regularly calls people such as graphic artists, technical consultants, and synthesis imagery specialists. (Fromonot, 1994:56) He has also many faithful friends who interact with an external regard, providing release, and stimulating discussion. His relations form a cultural galaxy of people such as artist Yann Kersalé , theatre set designer Jacques Le Marquet, and film director Wim Wenders. (Fromonot, 1994:56)

Secondly, the various techniques, which he uses in his designs, can be found and are used in the film industry to create different effects. Nouvel puts his theoretical framework to practice using such techniques and these will be discussed using examples from his projects in chapter 3.

German film director Wim Wenders is one of the vast sources which influences Nouvels' creations and to whom surprising similarities of style emerge. In the final chapter I will briefly discuss the various correspondences he forms with other cultural frameworks and analyse in particular his correspondence with Wenders.

Chapter 1 The Correspondence Between Architecture And Film

The life-span of film is comparatively shorter than that of architecture, making a relationship between them a relatively new concept. Traditionally architecture has been related to sculpture and painting, as these are "permanent visual testimonies of culture".(Agrest, 91:129) This has been the case since the Renaissance, and continued to be so in the first few decades of this century. During this time, when architecture and urban planning, and their corresponding images were being developed (Agrest, 91:129), film was also being developed at an incredible speed. Some architects, such as Robert Mallet-Stevens, considered themselves to be the best persons for the job of stage designers. On the other hand most architects refused to look at film as a potential influence and continued to relate their work to the two-dimensional reality of painting.

In film there have been various productions, across different genres, which have been used as a sort of testing ground for the exploration of the built environment. DAS CABINET DES DR CALIGARI (Weine, 1920), features an anticipated version of the city, a version which is distorted so as to reflect and support the actor. It is the set design, created by Walter Reimann, Walter Röhrig and Hermann Warm, which produces the uniqueness that is *Caligari*. At that time, the major creative role was that of the actor, however *Caligari* reversed that, for example, in its use of expressionist lighting, which pointed over the backdrop and stage, suggesting danger and paranoia. (Rowe in Nelmes, 1996:145) As Warm stated "In this single case I will concede that the sets

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became the major means of expression". (Neumann, 1996:52) However Reimann

has denied the term "film architecture" in favour of "film painting",

> in no way are film sets architecture!…The film, the art of
> "optical" illusion, needs utopia. It needs a set that is
> utopian space, simulating the atmosphere of a space for
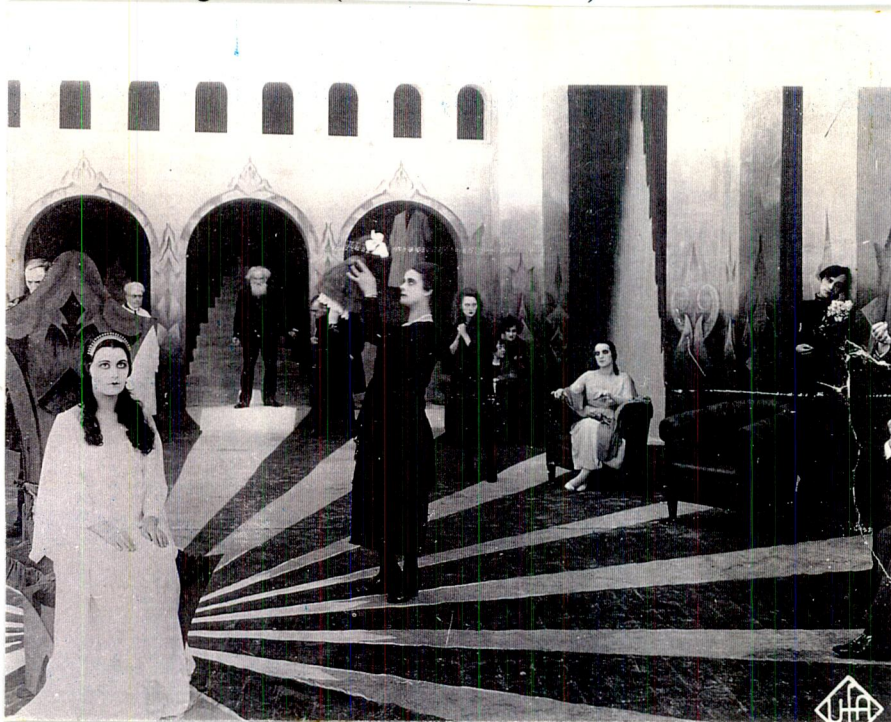> the imagination." (Neumann, 1996:52).

Fig 1: Das Cabinet Des Dr Caligari-
Courtyard of the insane asylum

However, the "utopian space" that Reimann refers to was one of the fundamental

discussions in modern philosophy, (Jencks,1992:34) suggesting the emergence

of the film as an advertising mode for the modern aesthetic.

Marcel L'Herbier's production of L'INHUMAINE (L'Herbier, 1924,

France), featured different styles of architecture, from Alberto Calalcantis'

extravagant Deco interiors to Robert Mallet-Stevens' geometric exteriors. Adolf

Loos, a pioneer of modern architecture, best known as the leading figure in the

reaction against ornament, described Mallet-Stevens as "France's most modern

master" (Neumann,1996:82) Mallet-Stevens was troubled by the invasion of

decor into filmic architecture, (Vidler in Neumann, 1996:23) and the film itself was described by Loos as "a stunning poem to modern technique." (Neumann,1996:80) Some critics objected to the disparity created by the six different set designers of the film, but L' Herbier's emphasis was not on the plot but the "resumé" of forms in France during that time. (Neumann, 1996:80) This brings to light an interesting theory of the city which Jean Nouvel believes in- the city as an amalgamation of forms from various different eras including the present.

Caligari and *L'Inhumaine* are examples of a chain of architectural films produced in the 1920s and 1930s including ALGOL (Werckmeister, 1920, Germany), METROPOLIS (Lang, 1927, Germany) and ASPHALT (May, 1929, Germany). It seems unlikely that this particular use of architecture, and the anticipated city, in the films of Germany was concurrent in coinciding with the emergence of the Bauhaus as a strong modern architectural body. Mallet-Stevens summed up this alliance in 1925,

> It is undeniable that cinema has a marked influence on modern architecture; on the other hand, modern architecture contributes its artistic share to the cinema. Modern architecture does not just offer cinematographic decor, but leaves its imprint on the mise-en-scene, it overflows its frame; architecture plays...

There are three fundamental roles architecture plays in film. They act as a reflection and commentary on contemporary development, as a testing ground for the developing of innovative visions and as a domain where different approaches to the arts and practice of architecture can be realised.(Neumann, 1996:7) *Metropolis* is one of the most expressive films of the pre-war period in

film, in its display of political conflicts and its hopes, fears and enthusiasm for technology. *Metropolis*'s creator, Fritz Lang, a trained architect, expresses these thoughts through powerful visual imagery and architectural metaphors. (Neumann, 1996:95)
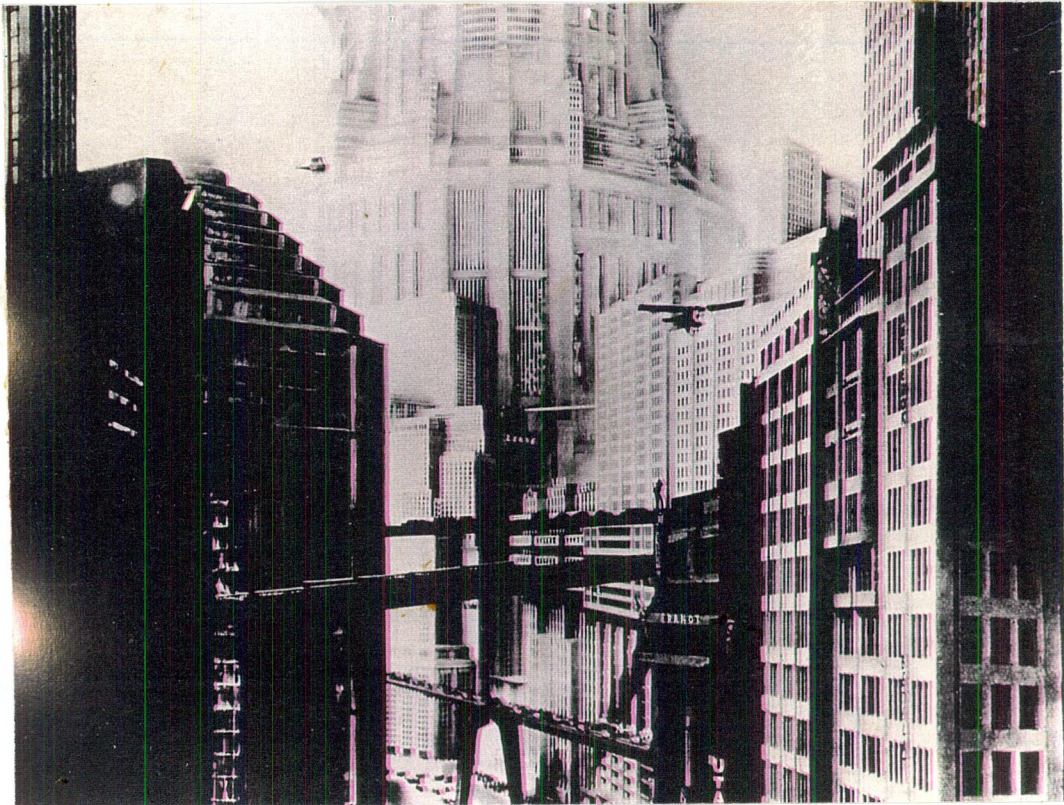
Fig 2: Metropolis - View of the City

In this film, Lang worked with three set designers Erich Kettlehut, Otto Hunte and Karl Vollbrecht. In the first version of downtown Metropolis, Kettlehut drew a Gothic cathedral in the background as the focal point for the city. This was probably how everyone in 1925 imagined the city would be in the not too distant future. For the skyscrapers in the foreground, Kettlehut relied on the predictions of various architects who had produced numerous modern buildings. The most impressive is the curved glass building, which could easily be mistaken for the much published glass skyscraper by Mies Van der Rohe. The

central role of the cathedral is presented as a resistant against the assault of modernism.

Fig 3 Mies Van der Rohe skyscraper, 1922

Lang clearly rejected this concept and wrote on the drawing, "Away with the church; Tower of Babel instead." This clearly demonstrates his new priorities for the appearance of the set, making it refer to the contemporary discussion regarding urban planning. Many architects argued that the silhouettes of future cities should be dominated not by church towers, but by modern skyscrapers. Kettlehut devoted much attention to the tower in the background, finally giving it an overwhelming, threatening form. (Neumann, 1996:97)

Kettlehut's preparatory work demonstrates that the set design had to create more than just a background to the film, it had to accompany the plot, underlining and commenting on it, while referring to contemporary architectural debate. (Neumann, 1996:98)

However critics, such as the architect Siegfriend Kracauer, were already denouncing the style of these films as purely decorative and staged, in favour of real approaches to the city. He stated that it was the stylised and imaginary architectural settings of *Metropolis*, that gave a staged quality to the film. Only
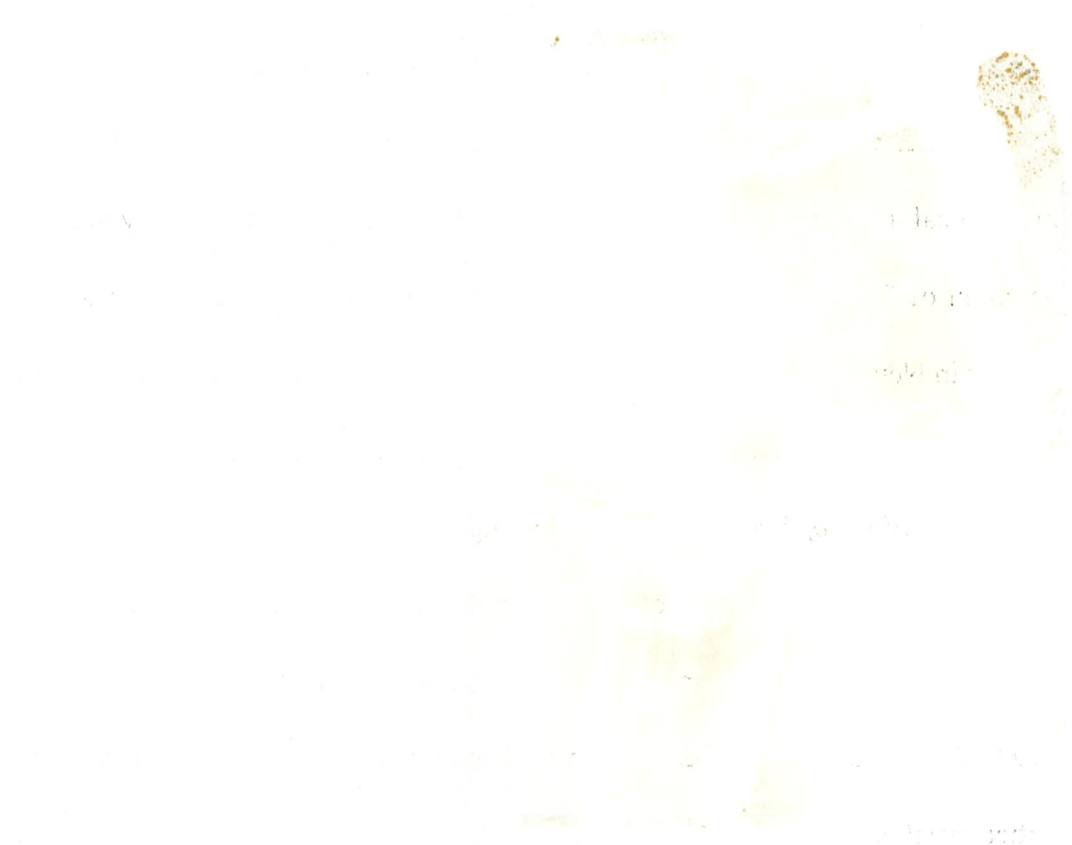
in the treatment and usage of various different shots did the film "provide exactly the kind of random impressions we would receive were we to witness this spectacle in reality." (Kracauer cited in Neumann, 1996:19)

Walter Benjamin in his acclaimed essay, "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction", (1935) reflected a more optimistic theory on the potential of filmic techniques to portray a more realistic approach to the world, (Vidler in Neumann, 1996:20) For Benjamin the film was a means by which man can represent his surroundings. This related to Freud theory found in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which highlighted the value of analysing the unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. In enriching our field of perception, "film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception."(Benjamin, 1992:677). This was the first step in the formation of the film to the modern critical aesthetic:

> By close ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera… With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended… The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.
> (Benjamin,1992:677)

This refers to the defamilarisation of "in between" spaces found in Brecht's theory of the epic theatre.

In the essay, Benjamin goes on to say that, in contrast to a man who concentrates before a work of art and is absorbed by it, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art, most obvious with regard to buildings. "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by the collectively in a state of distraction." (Benjamin, 1992:679)
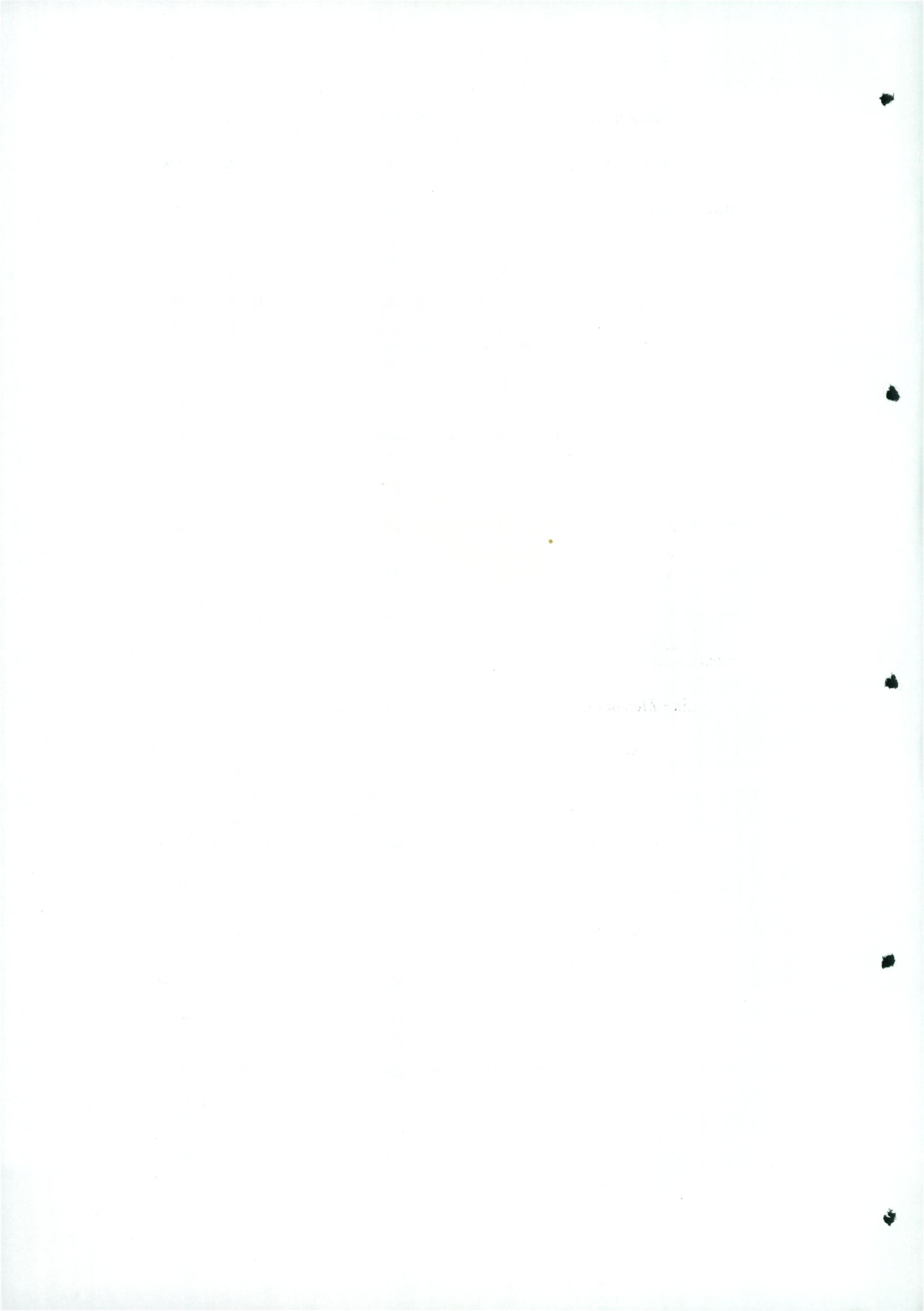
It is the "shock effect" of the film that allows the public to be put in the position of a critic. In its distracted state, film is the only way to view architecture critically. To make a film of a building (or the city), is to position the viewer as
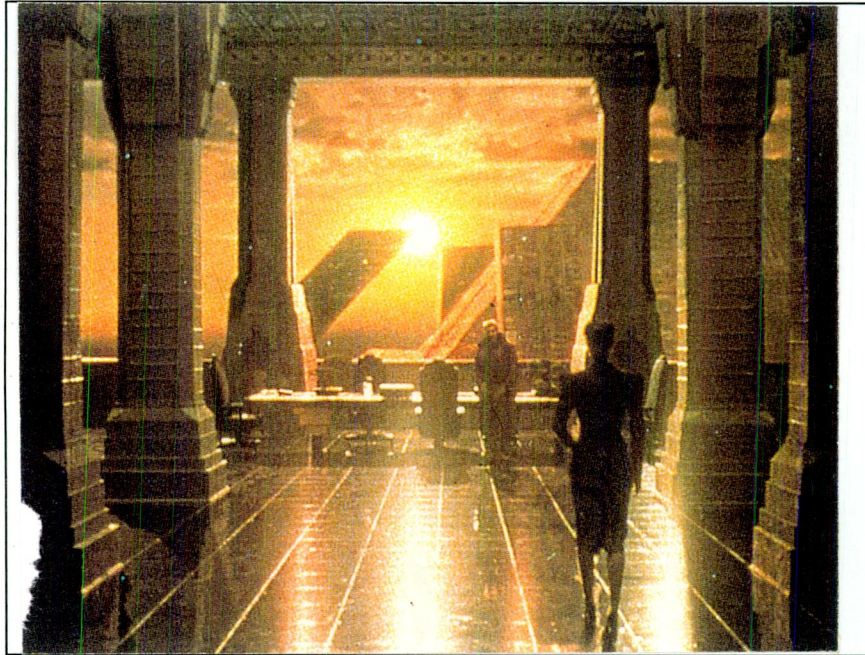
an examiner of that building.

Like *Metropolis, Blade Runner* typifies the emerging style of its era and corresponds with the architectural style of its decade, Postmodernism. Postmodernism rejected modernists refusal to learn from the experiences of their ancestors, following the lead of Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus, most schools or architecture removed historical studies from their curriculum (Ghirado, 1996:13). Robert Venturi saw this as a severe loss to the architect and believed it was due to this that modernist continued to churn out the same mundane glass boxes and tedious constructions. (Ghirado, 1996:13). Although many different

Fig 4 Blade Runner - The Tyrell Corporation

theories of Postmodernism exist, a common trend occurs throughout their assessment- the rejection of a single world view and, by extension, "a war on

totality". (Lyotard cited in Jencks, 1992:11) Venturi insisted that the complexities of modern day life did not permit such simplified architectural programs. (Ghirado, 1996:13)

Blade Runner is inundated with references to the historic architectural styles which Venturi hoped the city would achieve. Pastiche is the term used in reference to this type of city that has been adopted and borrowed from Frederick Jameson, *Post-modernism and Consumer Society and Postmodernism, or Cultural Logic to Late Capitalism*

Fig 5 Blade Runner - Deckard outrunning punks and priests
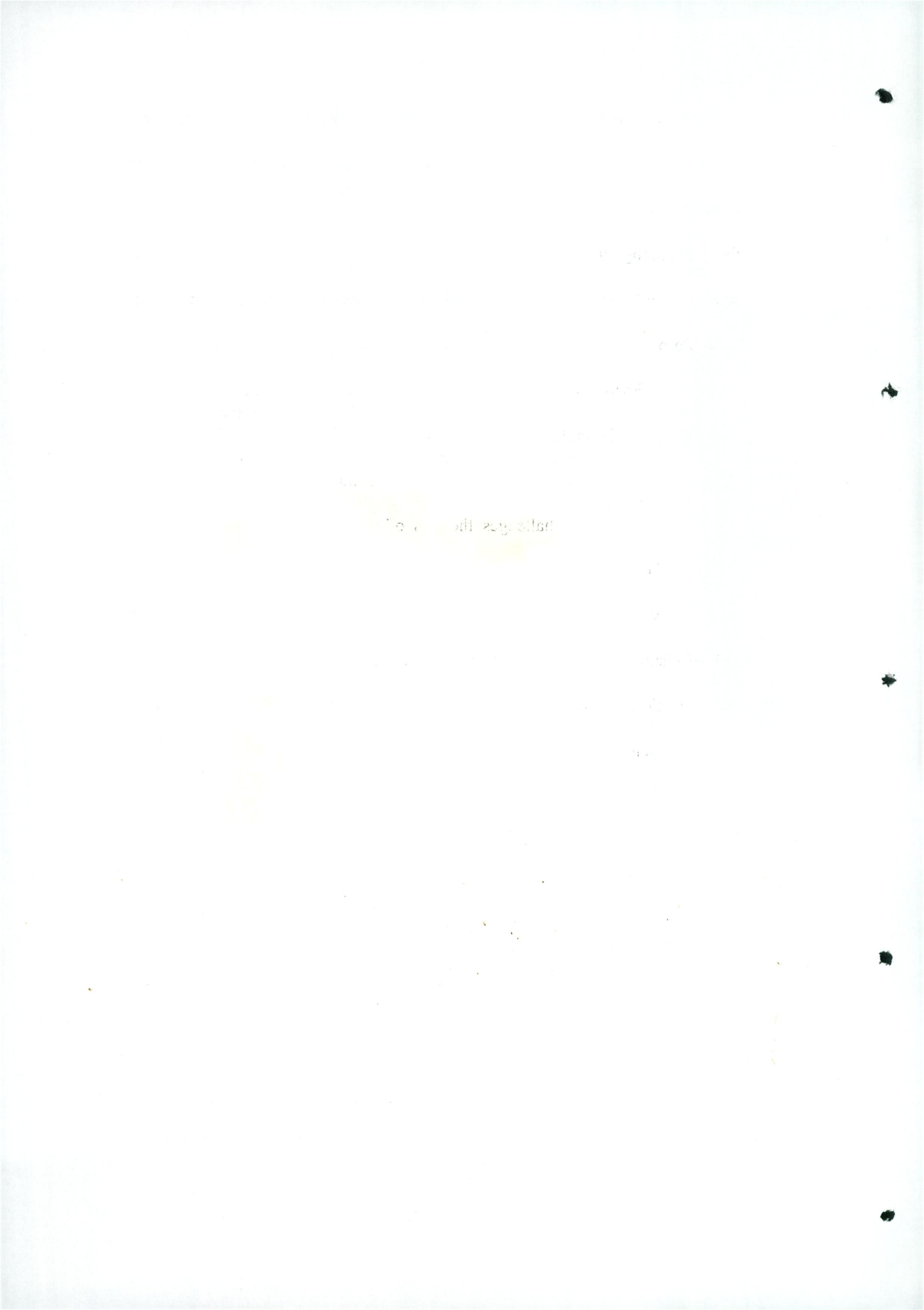
Set in 2019, Blade Runner is Los Angeles' "own dystopic alter ego". (Davis, 1992:1) Roman and Greek columns, classical oriental mythology, Chinese dragons, Egyptian pyramids, references to Mayan palaces are all featured among others in this movie. This results in an excess of scenography. It has been said that the scenography is the domain of post-modern architecture. Paolo Poroghesi claims that

> Post-modernism in architecture can be generally read as the re-emerging of the archetypes and the reintegration's of the architectural conventions and thus as the premise for the creation of an architecture of communication, an architecture of the visual, for a culture of the visual. (Bruno, 1987:67).

Director Ridley Scott challenges theories of architecture, of the city, of the cinema and of the vision of the early eighties.

The very basis of the replicants distinction from that of humans was its lack of history. This was very important to the replicants who clung onto any photographic evidence of their past, such as Rachel or Leon, who returned to his hotel in search of his photographs. This immediately indicates a reference to the post-modern aesthetic.
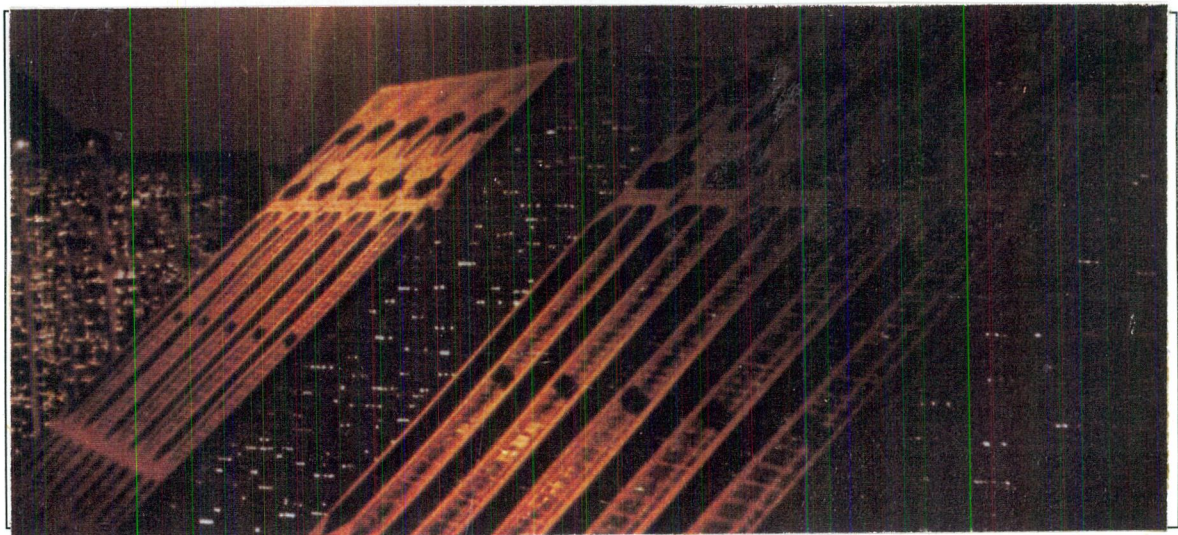
Fig. 6: Blade Runner-The Headquarters of the Tyrell Corporation

Replicants in *Blade Runner* were given only a four year life-span by their creators, the Tyrell Corporation. This temporality of the replicants combined with the pastiche city are the effects of the post-modern condition. (Bruno, 1987:65) According to Jameson, pastiche is intended as an "aesthetic of quotations pushed to the limit; an incorporation of forms, an imitation of any dead styles deprived of any satirical impulse." (Bruno, 1987:62) It is in the architectural layout of *Blade Runner* that the pastiche of the film is most dramatically visible.

If as Stephen Heath notes that film is often a drama of vision, *Blade Runner* is definitely a "drama about vision". (Bukatman, 1992:6) It is science fiction which is more centred on vision than any other filmic genre (Bukatman, 1992:6). The constant references to the eye in the film, also suggests a hegemony of vision. The film yields a host of visual details of a world fully mediated by the spectacle. *Blade Runner* both over and under values the eye as a realistic means of knowledge, "seeing guarantees nothing." (Bukatman, 1992:7)

Norman Denzin in "Images of Post-modern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema sage (1991), criticises the cinematic representations of Postmodernism, as they fail to offer anything more than superficial solutions to the problems of the present. (Toy, 1994:11) This is evident in the ending of the original version of *Blade Runner*, where the "happy ending" of American cinema once again comes into play. Here Deckard and Rachel flee the city into an undisturbed landscape. The directors cut of *Blade Runner*, released ten years after the original, alters the narrative of the film by eliminating the voice-over and cuts the "happy ending" of the original version.

In movie making there are two distinct poles of architectural significance, studio-set and location. Neither presume specifically reality nor dreams. "The rail/road movie has been film's route from reality to elsewhere." (Hatton in Blazwick, 1992:10) Along this route , the poles of studio and location, dreams and reality merge, each assuming a reciprocal phenomena. (Hatton in Blazwick, 1992:10)

This reciprocity is a theme in Wim Wenders' film UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD (Wenders, 1991, Germany, France, Australia), where an imagined device is developed for the direct transfer of images between the mind and world. (Hatton in Blatzwick, 1992:10) Searching the world for images that will give his blind mother sight, Sam, accompanied by Claire, is pursued by detectives, gangsters and even Claire's husband. Eventually the group arrive to Sam's family in the Australian aboriginal outback, where they wait to see if their world will end due to a nuclear explosion in space. The end doesn't arrive but the wanderers become trapped in addiction to their childhood dreams, manufactured for them by a dream realiser. The comic melodrama of the *Heimat* (a German play depicting a country spirit invented to show urbanism as evil and manufacture mass-mediated images of rural stability) at the end of the world seems to confuse "happiness and escape, old and new, dream and technology." (Kolker,1993:164) Even its allusions to other films no longer provide the security of communal images and stories.

Until the End of the World is a film of uncertainty in which redemption is reaction. The figure who survives most intact is the writer, Claire's husband, who takes to the typewriter and recreates his novel in the Australian Outback.

The typewriter, distances him from the chaos which unfolds before him. At the end, Claire orbits the earth searching for ecological disasters. Modernity has been reduced, awkwardly, to the romantic, the adorable and the politically banal, while visions of technology are condemned and the old ways of storytelling are celebrated. The imagination seeks *Heimat* in a heap of images, old and new, masquerading as postmodernism. (Kolker, 1993:164)

Until the End of the World is Wenders' personal revisitation of completely different genres - the spy story, sci-fi, gangster, and melodrama (Pellizzari, 1992:183) - all rolled together into a road movie, where characters from one genre chases another, who in turn chases another. It is a frenzied, spinning plot, swamped with metaphors, messages and meanings, but one of the more obvious is the fact that mans world has become so chockfull of associations that it has lost trace of its original nature. (Pellizzari, 1992:183)

The production design includes real settings and artificial sets from all over the world. This includes sets from locations planned but not yet built. Among these projections of projects lies Jean Nouvel's Tour Sans Fin, proposed to rise in Paris at La Defense. (Blatzwick, 1992:10) Wenders argues that in the future, so near it could almost be present day, the world will appear to have shrunk, as the characters hop from one side of the world to the other, using regular or improvised means of transport, every place is in our grasp. (Pellizzari, 1992:183)

The Analogy as it Stands Today

The worlds of architecture and cinema deal continuously with representation and illusion. Architects can learn from the ability of filmmakers to represent and move through space. (Penz, 1994:41) Film can act as a mirror for architects, who can then see cities and buildings reinvented in film (Penz, 1994:39) Both professions deal with illusion, a building is an illusion until it is constructed, and for architectural students remains so. Here the narrative comes into play for the representation and design process of the building. It requires a mise-en-scene of the architectural space, where human scale is required. (Penz, 1994:39)

One definite correspondence, Between the creation of film and the development of our built environment, is the exploration of volumetric space in time. (Toy, 1994:7) This is a fundamental to both professions. Like all forms of art, architecture is "confronted with questions of human existence in space and time, expressing and relating man's being in the world,". (Juhan, 1996:8)

It will take thousands of years for man to master the dynamic principles of space in time. However, it has progressed steadily since primitive man who was afraid of space. (Zevi, 1978:49-50) One only has to look at the closed spaces of the Egyptian Pyramids, and the Greek Temples to see that the history of space in architecture, indicates that it was repressed. It was not until buildings such as the catacombs in Rome, when man was introduced to the interplay of interior and exterior places, that the element of time was introduced. This architecture was designed to be moved through but did not led anywhere. The classical style of the Christian Church in the Renaissance, encountered the element of time in the

movement along the length of the Basilica, with a single axial motion line. Only the gothic achieved something a little more complex by introducing a second line of motion, in the contrast between the two lines of motion: the length of the church and the vertical course. (Zevi, 1978:49-50)

The modern movement began to appreciate the value of space in time as an important invariable to the principles of architecture, "space in time is that space which is truly lived in, ready to act and be acted upon." (Zevi, 1978:50) The introduction of space in time reassesses other invariables of architecture. Functionalism is the basis of this argument. Asymmetry and dissonance are indispensable features, because a symmetrical building suggests movement to be disfunctional. The constant changing of the viewing point means antiperspective is another consequence of space in time. (Zevi, 1978:50)

In "Architecture and Film", Lorcan O'Herlihy explores the idea of a body in a constructed space, participating in the narrative of that space. The architecture of the frame acknowledges blind space as well as celebrating specular space.(Toy, 1994:91) It is important to consider the limitations that are imposed by the frame, the composition of the image within that frame and the relationship between the movement of the camera and the movement within the frame. (O'Herlihy, 1994:91)

When considering these aspects, O'Herlihy suggests parallels which emerge between filmic and architectural techniques. "The filmmaker composes in three-dimensions and three sets of compositional codes: the geography of the space to be photographed; the plane of depth perception; and the plane of the image." (O'Herlihy, 1994:91) Let's look at these three compositional techniques

and draw comparisons with those of architecture. The architect is concerned with the body in three-dimensional space, the filmmaker with the plane of the image. The architect works with a shape, form, light, movement, expression, colour, balance, within the geography of space and depth. This is what architecture is composed of, the geography of the space as with film. (Toy, 1994:91).

Sergei Eisenstein compared architectural composition to cinematic montage, an editing technique of cutting and pasting used to aid the plot. Four different types of montage in film may be identified; intellectual, linkage and Hollywood. (Joyce in Nelmes, 1996:336).

Intellectual montage involves shots placed together to emphasis their difference. They are in collision with each other. For example, in OCTOBER (Eisenstein, 1927, Russia) a shot of a mechanical golden peacock is placed next to a shot of a man. This serves to draw the conclusion that the man is vain. In this type of film the viewer plays an active part in producing meaning from the film.

Linkage montage uses individual shots to build up scenes. Although these shots are not in collision with each other they are linked as fragments of a whole scene. Hollywood montage shows quick succession of events over a period of time For example in RAGING BULL (Scorsese, 1980, USA) Jack La Motta's successful boxing career is shown by combining various different shots taken from a number of different fights interspersed with home movie footage. The shots are clearly intended to flow into each other. This is usually edited with music to reinforce the sense of continuity.

Being an architect and filmmaker, Eisenstein used his experience to build a comprehensive theory of "space constructs". For Eisenstein, architecture itself embodied the principles of montage. (Neumann, 1994:22)

Eisenstein argues in "Architecture and Montage," that architecture is films predecessor in the transition from real to imaginary. He sets out this position contrasting two "paths" of the spatial eye: the cinematic, in which the spectator follows, through sight and through mind, an imaginary line, and the architectural, in which the spectator moves through a line of carefully placed artefacts and observes these in visual order (Neumann, 1996:22).

Despite Eisenstein's early conflation of architecture with film, critics place doubt on whether or not there is a true exchange between two. (Toy, 1994:11) A controversial argument lies in the assessment of the viewer's perception of a sequence in film and the observers architectural experience of a space. Kester Rattenbury argues that film is linear, that the director replicates or subverts the actual viewer's existence. With the aid of devices, such as music, object, story, focus, and extreme control the film director offers them an alternative way of seeing. He states that in film, unlike architecture, the creator invisibly provides and dominates the experience of the viewer, offering them an alternative way of seeing for a limited time. He believes architecture to be the total opposite, a leaky, alterable, subject to shifts of context, form, meaning, understanding as it is experienced, (Rattenbury, 94:35) This refers in particular to the linearity of Hollywood film and makes no reference to the counter-cinemas such as Avant-Garde or German Expressionist film.

Rattenbury argues that the director has ultimate control in knowing the film will never change. (Rattenbury, 94:35). However, changing technology has altered the viewers' control over the film, and video gives the viewer the ability to adjust the film as he sees fit. Also, over time, the viewer's perception may change due to changing attitudes in the world. Architects have to realise that the surroundings of the building are constantly changing. Due to his understanding of control, Rattenbury states that; "A lot of architects obsession with film is director-envy." (Rattenbury, 94:35).

According to Rattenbury, this envy stems from that fact that often "architectural film can portray an architects building to the viewer in a way architects wished they would experience it." He also suggests that "film observes architecture's existence", but that it is precisely the difference between architecture and film "that makes film treat architecture so well". The two spatial arts are in fact complementary.(Rattenbury,94:35)

French film critic, André Bazin, aspired film to be a window to the world. He does not refer to walls but to the architectural element which brings about a connection between the inner and outer worlds, by means of the eye.(Toy, 1994:49). Coop Himmelb(l)au regards the architect as medium, in the sense of ways of functioning that are similar to all modern media, including film. The practice attempts to make something visible, to let the outer world communicate with the inner, to intensify movement and to shape the "in-between" area, from where "medium" originally refers to.

Coop Himmelb(l)au's concept for the construction of the UFA Cinema Centre in Dresden offers an alternative and interesting bridge between
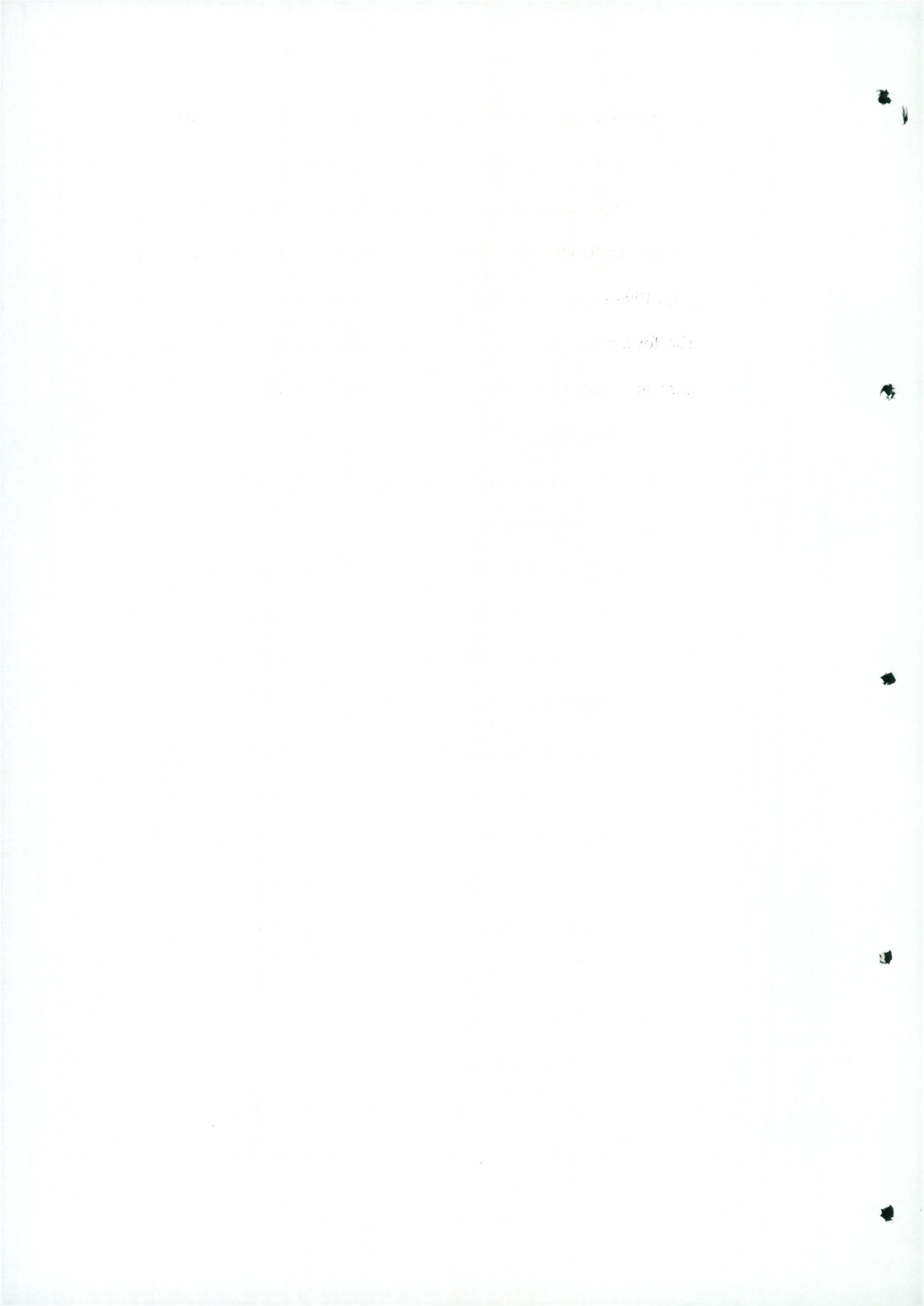
architecture and cinema. The buildings exterior material is glass. It is not simply a constructed space containing the cinema but a mediating "in-between" zone, where the entities of the cinema and the city form an exchange and communicate with one another It achieves this with the help of urban and cinematographic traits (Toy, 1994:49).

The foyer is an open space with ramps, platforms, and stairs as well as bars, cafes and activity areas. The generous, branched series of ramps and stair system
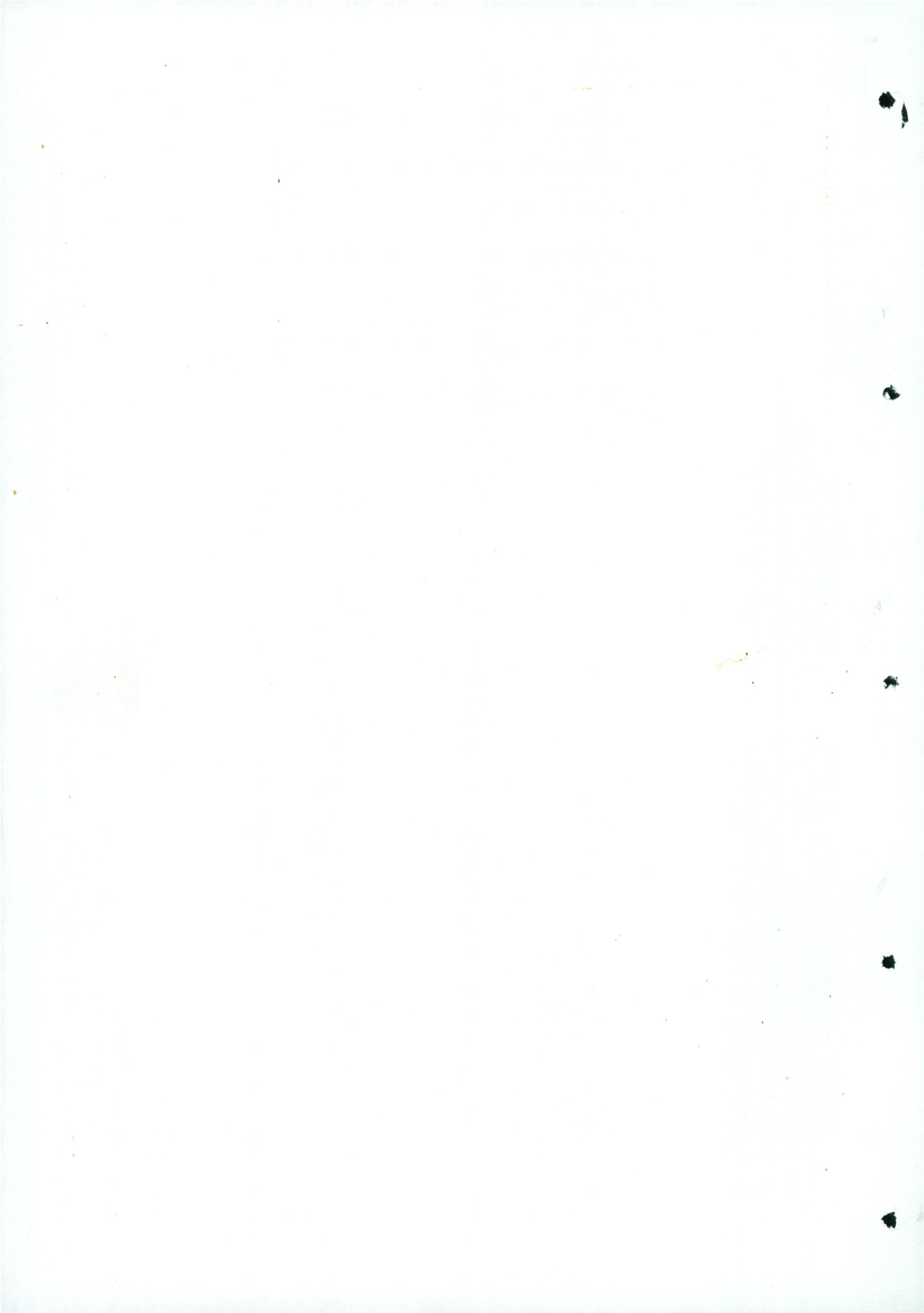
attempts to elongate the way towards the auditorium. They function purely for walking or as viewing platforms, which offer possible perspectives towards inner and outer space as well as multiple possibilities of viewing.

The flat cinematographic image depends on depth of the space in the construction of cinematographic space. This is achieved specifically by montage; by cutting and camera movements, as well as shifting viewing points. The architects demand that the visitor should feel as if they were in a film is mirrored by this construction of space. (Toy, 1994:51)

By transferring cinematographic ways of seeing into architecture, a shift in art takes place which has references to Walter Benjamin theories of perceived art of the twentieth century. Benjamin used the tactile perception of architecture to film; " Buildings are doubly noticed: by using them and by perceiving them… in a tactile and an optical manner". The principle behind the UFA cinematic centre's foyer is the connection between the perception of feeling and seeing.

A second characteristic of cinematographic perception is found in this building. Benjamin compares film with psychoanalysis, as both processes attempt to broaden our perceptions. He calls for the "optical subconscious". The architecture of the UFA Cinema Centre had similar aims- to make visible what was formally invisible.

Here architecture and film encounter one another in an overlapping process, while images are projected right across the architecture. The result is a shining cinema palace of glass and light. It does not have a clear boundary like traditional cinemas have.

Chapter 2 - Nouvel's theory of the Modern City

The success of Jean Nouvel emerged during the eighties parallel to a revitalising period in French architecture. When François Mitterrand took up the presidency in May 1981, he was determined to change the face of the country. (Jones, 1991:12) Since then, France has been making serious attempts to counteract antiquated historical supremacies. (Casiani, 1992:153) The sheer scale of projects undertaken by the state is impressive in itself. Within a decade forty "grands projects", including sixteen in Paris, were initiated by Jack Lang's Ministry of Culture. (Casiani, 1992:153) Whether are not the subordinate agenda behind these adventures was cultural idealism or political gain, they have given many architects a chance to build rather than theorise. (Blazwick, 1992:8).

Among Mitterrand's projects is Jean Nouvel's Instituit du Monde Arabe (IMA) which has been described as the "finest construction to be built in Paris in the 1980s" (Muret, 1994:708), although some critics have their doubts. Other projects include: La Grand Arche at La Defense by Johan Otto von Spreckelsen and Paul Andreu, (Ghirado, 1996:204) a 110 metre tribute to the French revolution; La Villette by Bernard Tschumi and Portzamparc which contains museums and cultural edifices, converted from an abattoir and cattle mart; and I. M. Pei's pyramid and the subterranean architecture it crowns at La Louvre. (Jones, 1991:13) These buildings not only enrich the cultural mix living in Paris but also stimulate it's regeneration and growth. They have also profoundly changed the geography of the city, providing it with a new series of landmarks. (Lotus, 1995:52)

Much of these achievements are the result of France's enlightened policy of paid international competitions. (Jones, 1991:13) Nouvel and his team have entered many of these competitions as well as others, including Tete at La Defense. Modestly Nouvel publicly announced his ability to lose such competitions at London's Institut Francais, "I have now lost 150 competitions". (Powell, 1995:18) However, his success rate is just as staggering and his own claim to be among the most acute architectural intelligence of the twentieth century lies in his incredible chain of completed buildings. (Powell, 1995:18) When the occasion arises he has no qualms in publicly announcing the projects he should have won. Indeed Nouvel felt he should have won the competition for the Grand Stadium which will host the 1998 World Cup, and admitted his disappointment towards the Prime Minister for deciding otherwise. (Bosoni, 1997:80)

Emerging with his success, Nouvel has gained general acceptance by the French public. The British, however, find him a "puzzling, even disturbing, figure". (Powell, 1995:18) This is not surprising when one compares the cultural differences between the two nations. One can generalise France as a nation with a preference for quality at any price. Frances Trollope wrote, in *Paris and the Parisians (1835)*, of the French love of doing things correctly. This quality and unity make French things special, and helped Mitterrand accomplish his projects. (Bayley, 1991:58) During the twentieth century the financial consideration of the British government created adequate but uninspired public buildings, such as the East London River Crossing for the Department of Transport. Richard MacCormac of the RIBA has expressed his concern for this but also added that

Mitterrand's policy would not work in Britain where the public are more sceptical. "The British don't like monuments". (Jones, 1991:14)

Although he doesn't attempt to be consistent nor has he any desire for standardisation, Nouvel is a self-proclaimed modernist,- thus deepening the confusion which the British express towards him, (Powell, 1995:18) So what justification does he have to give him this classification? The perplexity lies in the definition, or the public perception, on what modernism is all about. Marshall Berman describes the tendency of architecture of twentieth century modernism to

> lurch wildly back and forth between unplatable poles, from pseudo-Olympian contempt for modern society and the people in it, to pseudo-Dionysian embraces of everybody and everything, from thesis to antithesis, unable to advance towards... or even imagine what a synthesis might be.
> (Blazwick, 1992:8)

Nouvel's belief in modern architecture rises to meet Berman's challenge to create "an alternative programme for... design, recalling for us what was popular, hopeful, communal and egalitarian about the early period of modernism." The fundamental principles which Berman refers to are laid out in "The Theory and Organisation of the Bauhaus" written by Walter Gropius in 1923. The guiding principle of the Bauhaus, the most famous school of early modernists thinking, was "the idea of creating a new unity through the welding together of many "arts" and movements: a unity having its basis in Man himself and significant only as a living organism." (Gropius, 1923:120) Pre-Bauhaus architecture had become sentimental and decorative. Its chief concerns lay in the ornamentation of the exterior of a building:
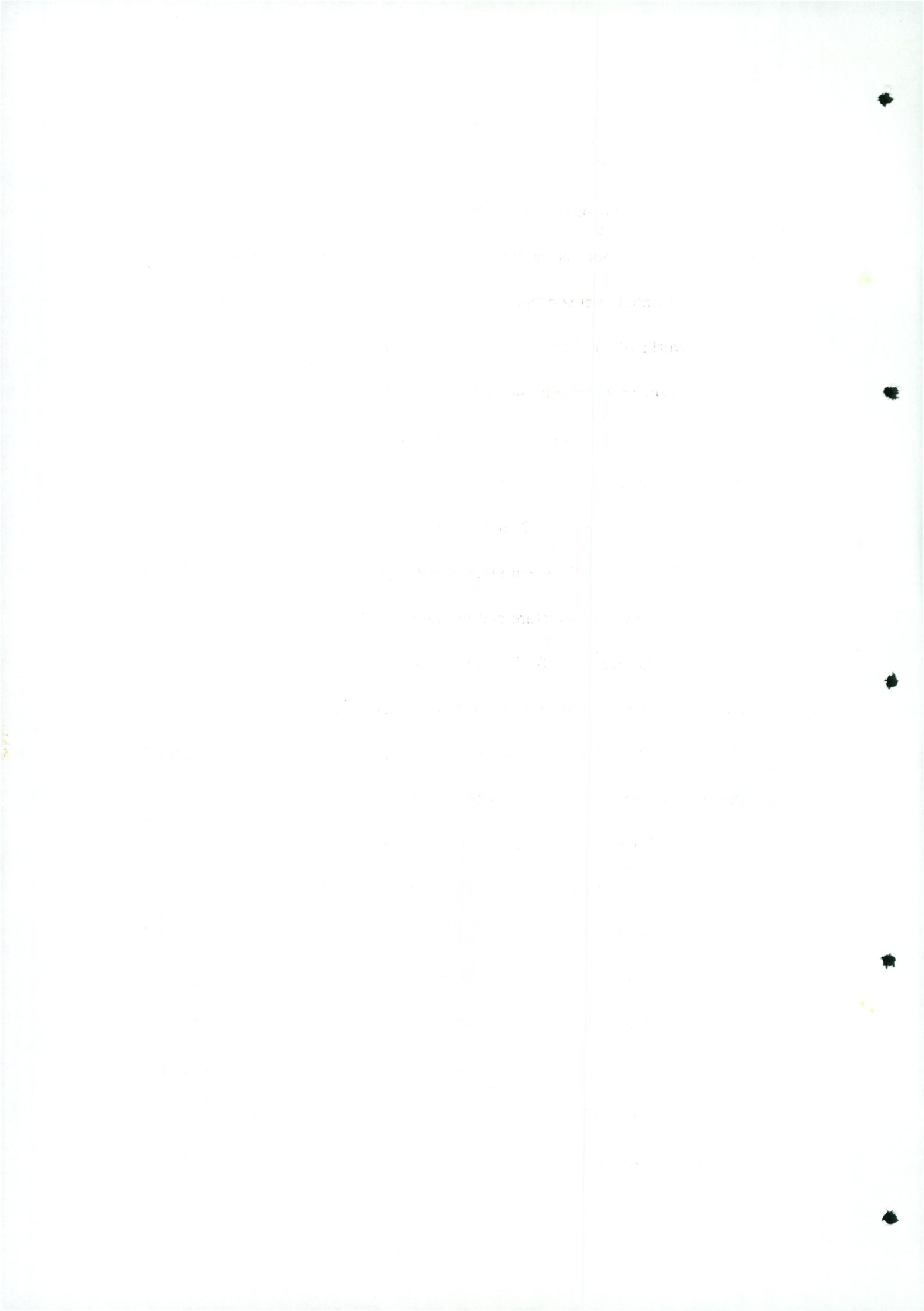
as if on a dead and superficial mass- not on a living organism. In this decadence architecture had lost touch with new materials; the architect was engulfed in academic aestheticism, a slave to narrow conventions, and planning of cities was no longer his job." (Gropius, 1923:124)

This was not the architecture the Bauhaus wished to continue. The Bauhaus wanted to create "a clear organic architecture… an architecture adapted to our world of machines, radios and fast motor cars, an architecture whose function is clearly recognisable in relation to it's forms." (Gropius, 1923:124)

Nouvel's understanding of modernism holds many similarities to that which Gropius hoped the Bauhaus would achieve. However there are aspects of modernism with which he is not in full agreement. In January 1992, Nouvel delivered a lecture at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in which he summed up his theory on modern architecture and the future of the city. Before he defined this theory of the city, he talked briefly on the history of the profession, giving reasons for why urban development is in such a chaotic state today.

For those not familiar with his style, they might have been taken aback by the unconventional yet realistic opening statement.

Since the invention of the city as an architectural concept in the 15th century, history has constantly shown that the city owes less and less to design; but rather that it evolves as the result of the economic forces on certain areas,

However, Nouvel doesn't say this in a state of disillusion, he continues by outlining the evolution of the discipline. "It is no longer a matter… of inventing the town of tomorrow according to the aesthetic, cultural or ethical criteria of a generation which saw progress as the driving force behind infinite possibilities". (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:120) This was the theory of the early modernists which Nouvel abandons. The opening statement finishes with a hasty remark:

"modern cities have invented themselves without us - and sometimes even despite us." (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:120)

This remark almost accuses politicians and architects of being irresponsible, however Nouvel acknowledges his hindsight vision and accepts the outcome was uncontrollable. If architects had been more culturally aware, a better level of understanding may have helped society to prepare for it and cope with it better. Cities through the generations have retained one common bond- they all sprang from decisions concerning territory, reflecting a classical architectural strategy for land and space. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:122)

Searching for meaning in an architecture disorientated from its source, has caused many architects to adapt to a model architects. First on a technical basis and eventually under pressure from the politicians and users, they take on a cultural dimension of copying. Nouvel feels that the postmodern aesthetic has brought this type of "copying" back into fashion. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:122) With the evolution of the city these models are incompatible to the programme a client demands. Technical and financial demands contradict them, so the architect now searches for a model which seems more convincing in economical, cultural and structural terms. Nouvel is firmly opposed to such reproductions. "This is the ridicule and disgrace of a profession which seems to have stopped thinking." (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:124)

Nouvel uses a metaphor to describe the life of architecture. Before the city architecture enjoyed a long childhood, integrated with nature and on the small scale of towns. In the industrial era a city in adolescence developed with the will to replan cities. Now, in adulthood, architecture "is faced with chaos and having

to conquer chaos itself." (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:124) Nouvel finds sources to tackle such a problem in philosophy, the sciences and art, the highest forms of human knowledge. This is reflected in his ideas for architectural education.

Nouvel begins defining architecture today by outlining what it doesn't do:

> In modern times, architecture wanted to create the world. It failed through over-ambition, without properly understanding that the world does not belong to the architect, but the architect to the world; without understanding that architecture modifies and extends the world through the defeat of chaos, an adventure into the involuntary   (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:126)

He believes that in each era the architect must reinvent the tools of its evolution. In doing so, he must consider the evolution of other disciplines which share the same characteristics.

Nouvel discusses this concept by referring to Michel Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. Here he discovers a link between the world of philosophy and the world of architecture. In Foucault, he appreciates the value of discourse exteriority, specificity and inversion as effective methods of investigation. He also appreciates the idea of developing rules which lead to a concept. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:126) He takes this theory further in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. According to them, a concept "has a past and a future and may be considered as the point at which the composing elements coincide and are condensed." However whether it is architectural or philosophical, the aim of the concept is to attain reality. This brings us back to the exploration of the physical world. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:128)

When working with reality it is the everyday applications of science that are relevant to the architect. This includes technological advances, the evolution of technical procedures and the contribution and properties of new materials.

Architecture aims for a "synergy of performance" in the relationship between science and its applications. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:128)

At this point, a critical difference between modernist thinking and Nouvel emerges. If architecture integrates the synergy of performance then technical prowess, a feature of modern architecture, has lost its value as a symbol. In Nouvel's opinion, "We no longer want to see the workings. Architecture has to be a force of it's own... guided by something other than contingencies and the harsh realities of construction." (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:130)

The evolution of the city has revealed that future planning does not work. According to Nouvel, the city can only evolve "by iteration, by alteration and by revelation." (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:132) By "iteration", Nouvel means a methodology which accepts a starting point and specific conditions, the site and modifies them. By "alteration" he means taking an existing structure and substituting it or discarding it. Revelation means that we designate and conserve according to different interpretations of the city. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:132)

Nouvel feels it's time to put an end to the widespread perception of modernity as an enemy of history and the belief that being modern now is admitting all the mistakes made throughout the century while continuing to make them. By it's definition modernity can not be anything but evolutionary. Therefore it needs redefining in that it requires memory, the exploitation of memory, as we cannot ignore experiences. Nouvel also redefines modernity as "a dynamic and evolving knowledge which progresses through diagnosis and analysis". (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:134)

So modernity is undergoing an evolution of thought. One of the paradigms of this evolution is that space and form are losing momentum, while light and matter are becoming increasingly important. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:136) Another paradigm is that of simplicity and complexity - what seems simple is in fact more complex. Yet another paradigm is that of lightness and compactness. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:136) In our world, things are becoming increasingly small and compact, which leads us to the paradigm of miniaturisation and improved performance. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:136) The most obvious example of this is the computer. A paradigm which architecture has always ignored is mechanisation and passive systems. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:138) Nouvel believes that these should be integrated into architecture as these are the clearest solutions to an architectural problem. Which brings us to the paradigm of support and contribution. Architects must determine what is fixed and what is mobile. It is necessary to consider elements which undergo rapid evolution, and those which can be changed or renewed. (Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:138)

This evolution brings us to the "glass syndrome, to an architectural ideology based on transparency". This could be the link in the evolution of modernity, because, in effect, modern building methods are those which work and are effective in the face of our historical and global problems. "These are the various things we see as the mists start to clear"(Nouvel in Blazwick, 1992:138)

Chapter 3 Nouvel in Practice

Nouvel is a "self-styled agitator of the French scene". (Fremy, 1994:54) Indeed a sense of quality and an inclination towards style and elegance affects all French life. (Bayley, 1991:58) But how does his style differ from that of "French scene"? In describing himself as a "contextual architect" he touches on this subject of diversity. It is the specific meaning of the building which interests him. The French are famous for evolving theories in advance, (Bayley, 1991:58) however French critic Alain de Gourcuff describes Nouvel as an architect who "does not make choices or impose ahead of time on any project. On the contrary, it is the site, its circumstances, and other givens that will determine the organisation of space, the style and the mode of expression". (Lacy, 1991:170) Inconsistency is a characteristic of Nouvel's style which still worries architectural critics today. In fact he despises consistency, believing it to have no place in an unpredictable world. Instead he is adamant that architecture should be a reflection of the world (Powell, 1995:18).

Certainly Nouvel's concepts are famous for adapting to there surroundings. One only has to look at the Hotel St.-James, in Bouliac(1989). This hotel is his idea of "four-star luxury"(Nouvel in Bosini, 1996:60). Located in a rural village, overlooking the Garonne river and Bordeaux in the distance, Nouvel wanted to intrude as little as possible with its surroundings. Thus he created the hotel in the form and colour of the local tabacco hangers. The use of orange rusty metal shutters resemble the sun, with a kind of grainy effect achieved by its

cryptograms and fungus. From the beds one can see the vast and beautiful landscape. Everything is kept extremely simple.

The CLMBBDO Publicity Agency (1994), situated on Ile Saint Germaine is another example of a building merging with its surroundings. It is built near a branch of the Seine where Nouvel has anchored what looks like an ageless boat on firm ground. It looks as if it has rusted in the watery setting with aquatic plants surrounding it. It is also plays on the metaphor of an oyster, with its rough unfinished exterior and smooth interior, with a pearly shine, created from the panels covered in holographic paper. (Nouvel, 1997:36)

This play with metaphors, show a skill which Benjamin, with specific reference to Charles Baudelaire , called the "putsch technique" when like a flash of lightening an "allegory for which nothing prepares one". (Benjamin cited in Blazwick, 1992:20) Thus, the architecture becomes part of the specular dimension - it will address other people. (Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:20)

Nouvel has often referred to the similarities between architecture and film. Some critics feel that when architects concentrate on theory of such an affiliation that they ignore or neglect other important responsibilities of the architect. These responsibilities include social, cultural and political debate Nouvel draws the analogy but is determined not to lose his firm grasp on all three of the afore mentioned architectural concerns. In fact for Nouvel, in acting as a director in the film he creates room in his agency to grasp all of these concerns very firmly,

There are certain devices which evidently reoccur in his work, such as the interplay of transparency, shadow, and light. (Lacy, 1991:170) Many of these devices are familiar to the film industry, in techniques such as montage and

superimposition. Nouvel began to consider the question of light in the Instituit du Monde Arabe (1987). The southern facade is a wall of camera shutters which displays functional and cultural characteristics. The screens are characteristic of the *moucharabieh* or Arab screen in the theme of perforation of the wall by light. (Nouvel in Bosini, 1997:82) In Arab culture this acts as a defence against the climate but also prevents women from been seen. Although Arab conditions are different in Paris, the Instituit wanted to distance itself from the close proximity of the Jussieu University.(ibid.) The camera shutters (all 25,000 of them) regulate the light entering the building, and their ultimate aim is to obtain a specific quality and quantity of light. (ibid.)

However the shutters are presently in a bad condition, due to a lack of funding and professional maintenance. (Vonier, 1995:62-66) The theme of light is also reflected in the stacking of the stairs, the reflections and shadows, and the superimpositions . There is also effects achieved through framing, such as the white marble walls which frame the patio. (Nouvel, 1997:83)
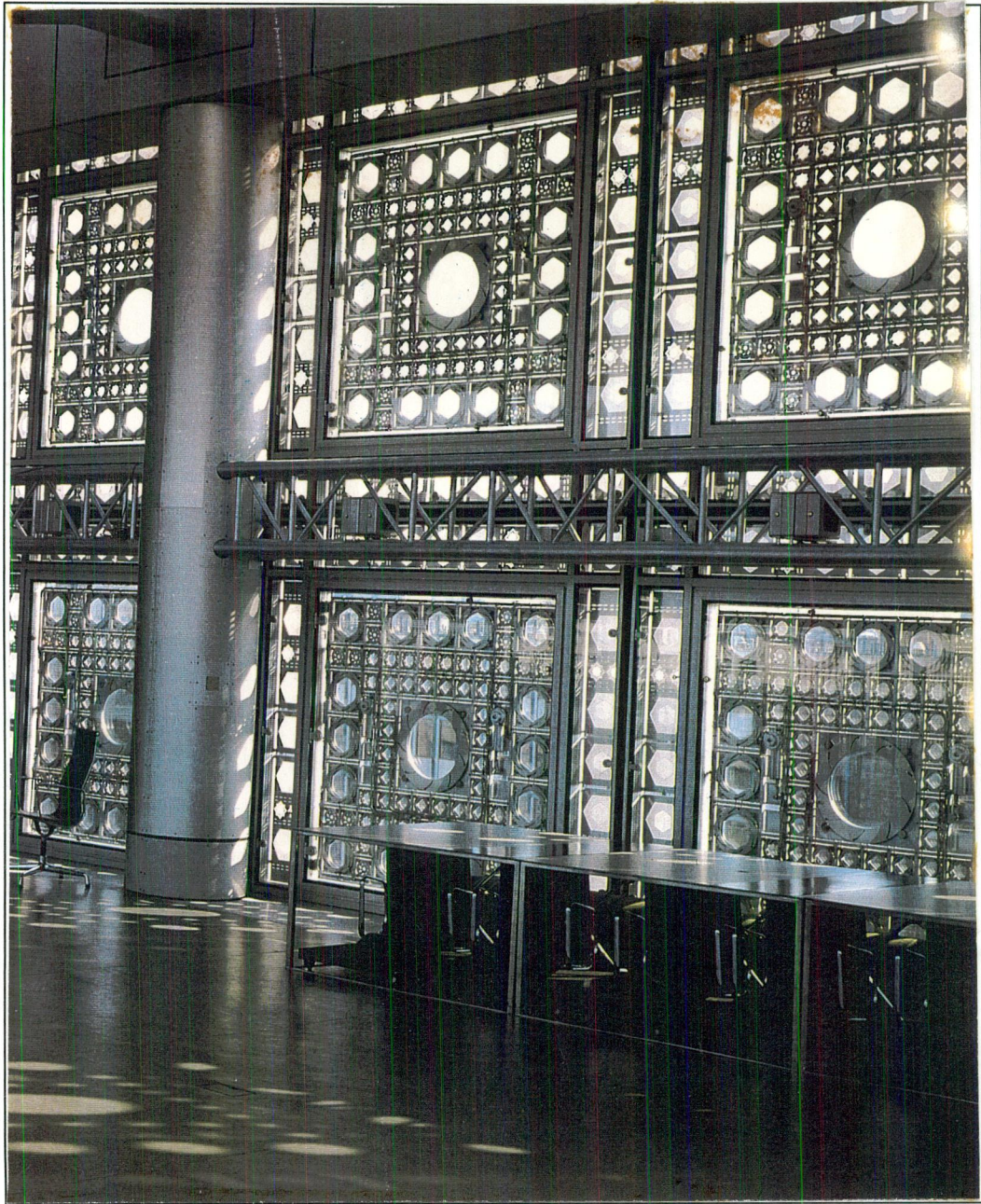
Fig 8 - Institute du Monde Arabe- *moucharabieh* screens

Many other projects reflect Nouvel's interest in light such as the Euralille (1994), in Lille which was commissioned by Rem Koolhaas. Nouvel describes this building as "rhythmic", characterised by large, gleaming surfaces, holographic materials lights and luminous coloured shop signs. (Bosini, 1997:70) This could be a tribute to Le Corbusier, with its multi-coloured windows so that the glass diffusing coloured light into the apartments. This is also found in the council housing block in the Paris suburbs of Bezons.

The Galeries Lafayette project in Berlin (1995) also features the concepts of light and depth which stresses the commercial aspect by means of signs. The block is pierced by cones, with a large cone descending to the ground floor in traditional domed department store fashion. This is contrasted by another large cone piercing the Carpark. This cone is made of glass with a plate glass mirror effect to it, onto which signs, images and projections are reflected. (Bosini, 1997, p.74) On a street level the ground floor is like a plaza of open space that runs directly onto the street. This offers a view of the heart of the department store for the passer-by, where luminous colours can be seen reflecting from the cones.(Blazwick, 1992:109)

The Mediapark, Cologne (1991), not yet realised, is based on the principle of signs and lights, where the facade acts as a screen, displaying the identity of the occupied offices. This principle he uses doesn't reflect the neon found in Las Vegas. An interesting underlying feature of the design lies in the fact that the image of the architecture also changes as life changes, because the imprint of the screen by its occupier is removed. (Bosini, 1997:78)

The concept for the Grand Stadium (1994) of the 1998 World Cup in France, also has a changing life. The project was based on the realisation of the on the variability of the geometry of stands. The configuration of the building depended on what sport the stadium hosted and brought the spectator closer to the ground, which was achieved by a sliding a whole stand.

Nouvel's continual use of grids is evident. At the Theatre in Belfort, (1980) a grid is placed on the buildings exterior, as well as creating a sort of vertical section framing the activities in the building. For the Tête Defense competition, Nouvel's proposal was titled "Squaring the Horizon". He wanted "to frame the perpetually changing sky like a work of art", inspired by the use of grid within classical art,. Furthermore he wanted to create the opposite to perspective: as it inscribes itself on paper in the same sense of the sunset. (Bosini, 1997:46) This was Nouvel's first concept to display a sense of dematerialisation. As the spectator approached this building, the lines of the grid would blur "like bad print." (Bosini, 1997:46) "This effect of ascent and the gradual dissipation of matter is a process I have used several times,", (Bosini, 1997:46) is especially evident for the Tour Sans Fin which could have been situated on a neighbouring site. The aesthetic of the grid, of impregnation and dematerialisation through light, is central to Nouvel theory of the modern city.

The sense of the immaterial caught within the grid provides the theme for the Cartier Foundation Building (1993) situated on the very prestigious Boulevard Raspail The site also has a rich history. In the 19th century, it was the home the French Poet Chateaubriand and more recently it housed the American centre. (Bosini, 1997:50) Chateaubriand planted a cedar tree there and this has

become a historical French monument. Nouvel's building frames it by using the two large screens which also create a gateway. (Blazwick, 1992:114) The project was initially refused on the grounds that it was a very daring and delicate project in which all surrounding trees had to be preserved, and that contemporary architecture was not deemed appropriate to the historically rich site. However several meetings, in which Nouvel managed to carry through his ideas about transparency and the effects of matter and dissolution, saved the project. (Bosini, 1997:50)

The building literally dissolves into its surrounding environment and becomes part of nature. (lotus, 1995:52) The interior and the exterior have a special relationship, as glass screens reflect and refract the surrounding trees, creating a confusion between real and virtual. (lotus, 1995:54) One "never knows whether a tree is outside or inside or just a reflection." (Bosini, 1997:50) Illusion is familiar to both the film and architectural professions for the presentation of their work. However, this building shows that architecture can use illusion in other applications especially for Nouvel's theories of dissolution and dislocation.

Inside the building everything has a soft focus or evanescent feel to it. This is achieved by the treatment of the partitions. They consist of three layers of glass, the outer two clear and the middle one is sand-blasted. Depending on the time of day, the people look like moving shadows.

Nouvel creates a kind of lightness in weight by hiding all technical equipment in the flooring. Everything about the foundation is smooth. This is an architecture based on the blurring of boundaries. All the major Postmodernist theorists, from Jameson to Lyotard - agree that there has been a challenge to the

metanarratives

presiding metanatraties - religion, science - which seek to define truth and a more generalised problematisation of the notion of fixed categories.

However, critics such as Stefano Casiani believe Nouvel has failed in the delivery of a building to represents the Cartier Foundation. Here he outlines what he calls Nouvel's "Scandalous" rejections of the historic Rue de la Paix showroom that personifies the House of Cartier and its jewellery the world over. He denounces Nouvel's decision "to superimpose his concept of architectural form on that of a client with such a resonant historical and cultural identity". (Casiani, 1994:170)

The narrative of diffused light celebrated his winning but unrealised Spa at Vichy (1988). The design of the building framed the landscape of the two parks it linked by a large glass and gold vault. The shifting light was to pass through walls of glass slabs in a symbolic reference of the pools within it. (Bosini, 1997:86)

There are similar characteristics between Nouvel's Palace of the cinema in Venice (1990) and the UFA cinema in Dresden where there is an overlap between the building and the cinema, creating a spectacle even in between the entrance and the auditorium. As with the UFA, the Palace has not yet been realised but if a wonderful example of making the "spectator" more aware of the city. The front auditorium frames San Marco in the distance, a window which is covered by the screen before a film begins.

The reconstruction of the Opera House at Lyons (1993) caused some controversy, however Nouvel managed to triple the original volume of the building. This is achieved by a huge vault implanted within the axes of the
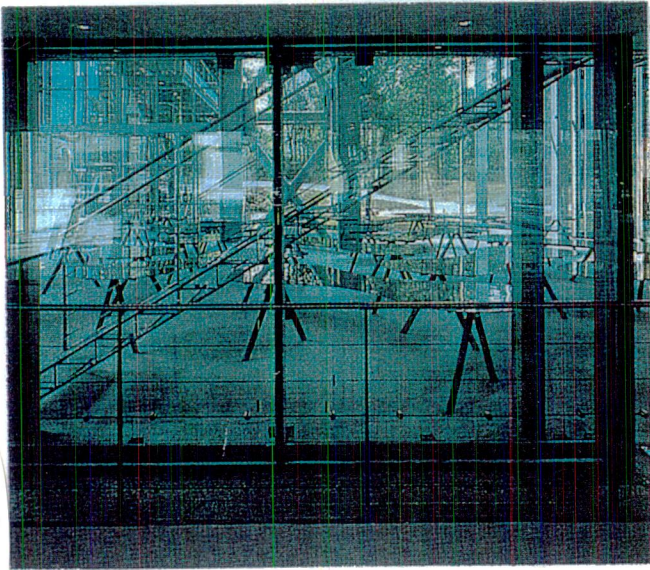
Fig. 10 The Cartier Foundation
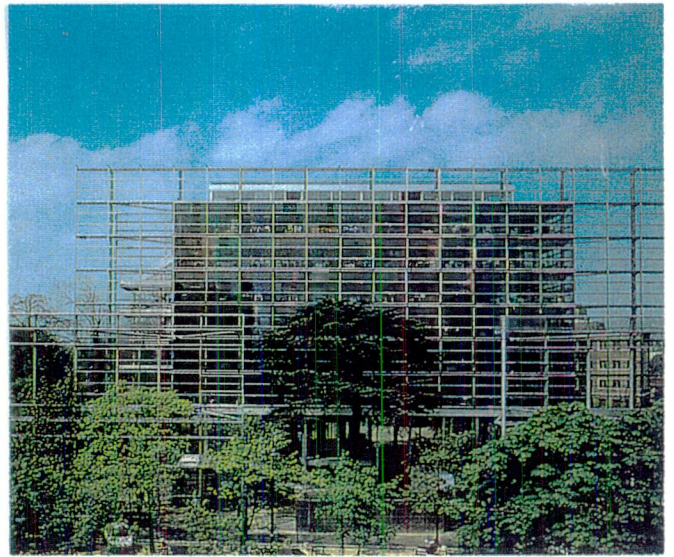
Fig. 11 The Palace in Venice
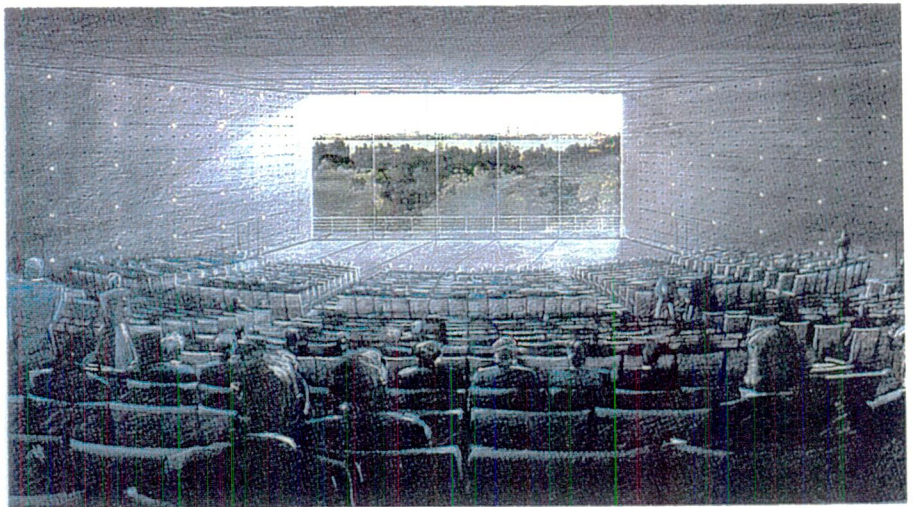
Fig 12. Tours Sans Fin
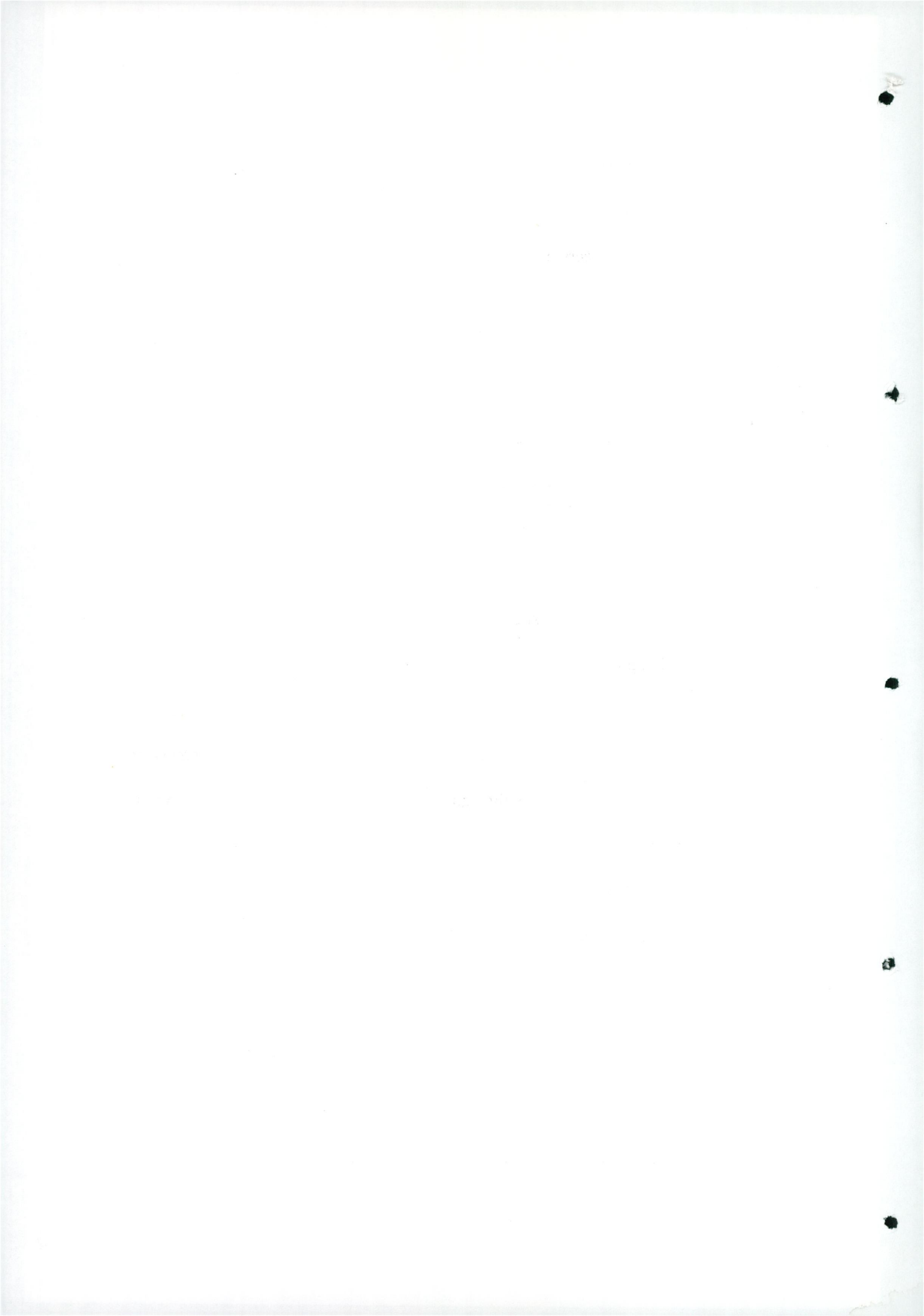
existing facade. Floating in front of the facade are two "skins"; the first made of arched glass and the second made of silk-screen glass, acting as a sunscreen.. The sunlight plays on this surface creating a scene of dematerialisation. Under the vault is the dancers practice room, which looks out over the city. At night, the city can look upon the dancers as they warm up. There are numerous plays of involving the city with this building. Nouvel wanted the building to seem like a beating heart. He employed the artist Yann Kersalé to programme a pulsating lightening system with reference to the building within. The lights pulsate and become brighter as the audience size increases. The light is like embers of a fire, guarded by the nine muses on top of the old facade, which are also backlit with red light.

The proposal for the site at La Défense (1989), Tour Sans Fin also plays on matter and light and is the building Wenders used in *Until The End Of The World*. A sense of dissolution is achieved by the choice of materials. (Bosini, 1997:92) This 420 metre tower (Blazwick, 1992:90) has black granite emerging from the ground. This gradually lightens with a silk-screened glass becoming increasingly dense and reflective towards the top until finally the last two stories become a simple glass structure without even a steel structure. (Bosini, 1997:92) At the top it is invisible and the effect achieves an illusion of the tower disappearing into the clouds. On a metaphorical level, Nouvel says the tower forms a link between earth and cosmos. Here too, he employed Kersalé to programme constantly changing night lights. (Bosini, 1997:92)

Also characteristic of Nouvel is his use of 'common' materials, evident in the functional council housing Nemausus in Nîmes (1985) (Lacy, 1991:170) His
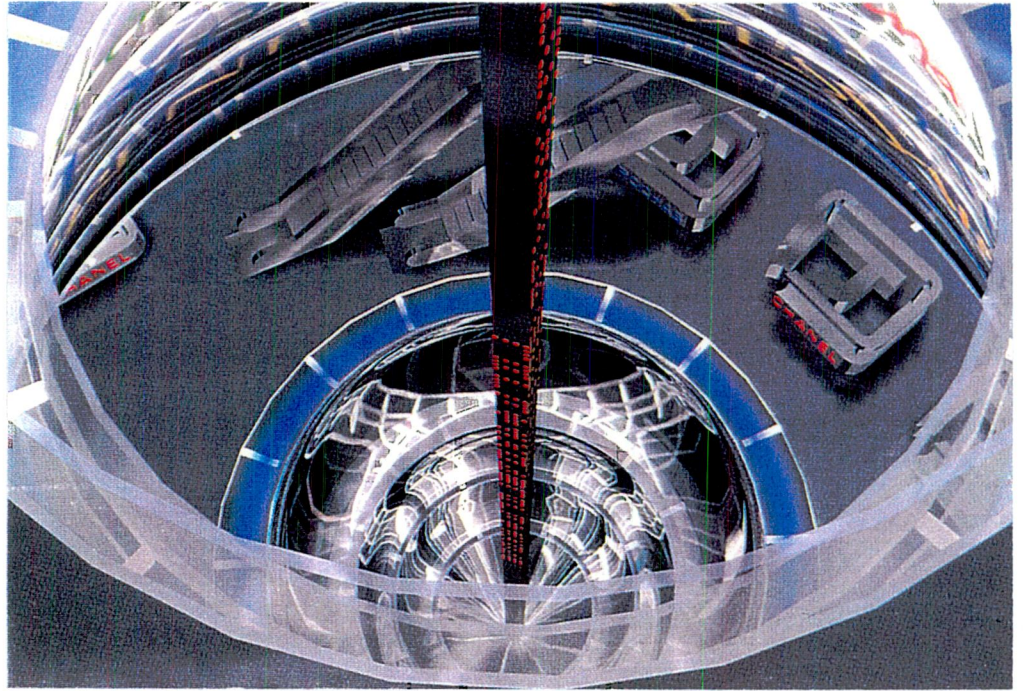
Fig. 9, The Galeries Lafayette
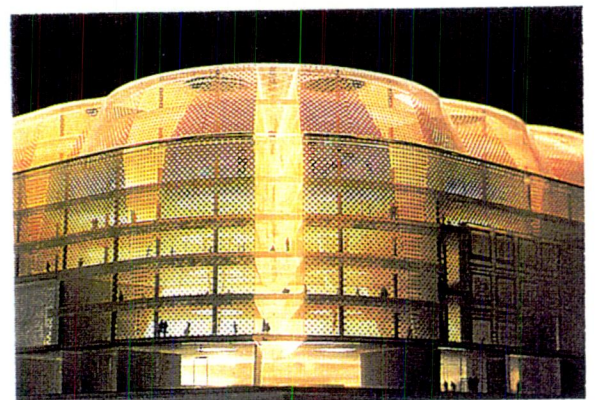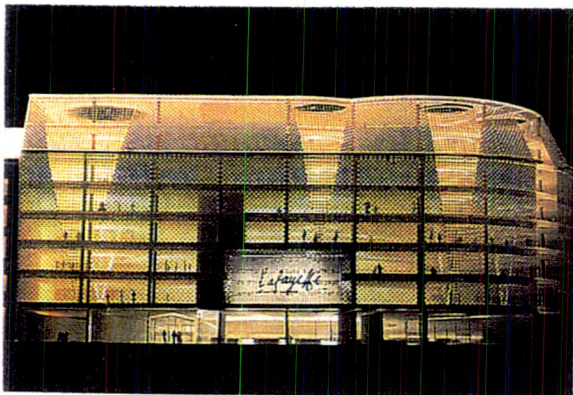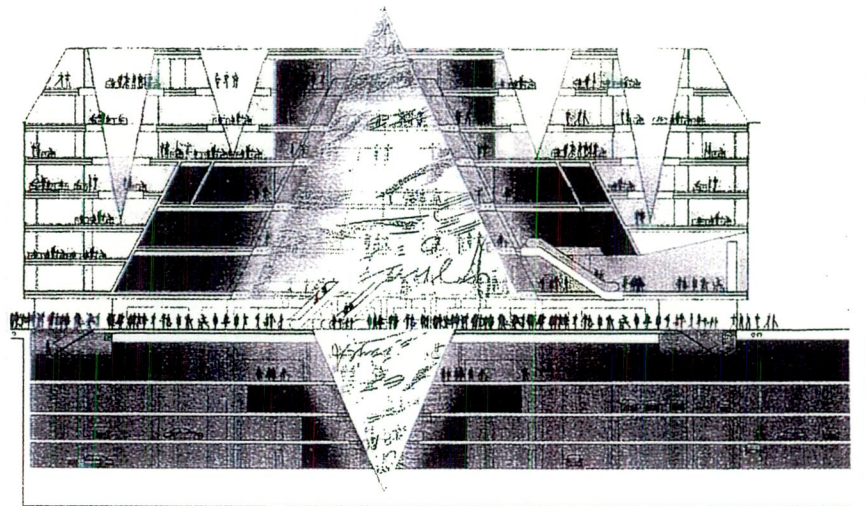
aim here was to produce flats with space, "a beautiful room is a large room. A beautiful flat is a large flat." With the same budget, there is forty percent more surface area which was achieved by upgrading poor materials like galvanised sheet metal, raw concrete. (Bosini, 1997:28) This democratisation of space is one of his debts to student radicalism.(Blazwick, 1992:8) Attaining maximum surface area is also Nouvel's major concern for the housing at Bezons (1994) As in Euralille, there is reference to "that great architect" Le Corbusier in the application of colour to the windows, using a film of colour. (Bosini, 1997:68)

Chapter 4 Nouvel and Wenders

In his search for knowledge Nouvel pays particular attention to the things that people tend to ignore, either because they're rejected or because they're forgotten. This eye for detail refers to Benjamin's assessment of the 'in between' spaces previously discussed and used in the UFA, Dresden. Thus when urban architecture chooses to forget the suburbs, Nouvel explores it in order to experience sensations. Paraphrasing Charles Baudelaire, Nouvel chooses fragments of reality where qualities of an aesthetic kind are found, putting them into a situation that gives it poetic dimensions (Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:18)

Here he is renewing attitudes of many of the great architects, such as Le Corbusier, wanting to open the eyes of his contemporaries towards the 'machine age'. It is also an attitude which Rem Koolhaas shares , setting out to discover the 'contemporary city' (ibid).

This desire to investigate contemporary urban realities which are, according to Baudelaire, ' a store of images and signs to which the imagination will assign a place and a relative value', (Baudelaire, cited in Blazwick, 1992:18) is linked to a critical process: as a project calls for a specific response in relation to a geographical, economic and social context, one has to abandon the conventional idea of a programme and consider the place that it occupies. This desire is interdependent on the 'innocence' of the eye. This 'innocence' must be capable of penetrating ' the poetry of the immediate , the nearby, of what you forgot to look at because you see it too much' (Nouvel cited in Blazwick, 1992:18).
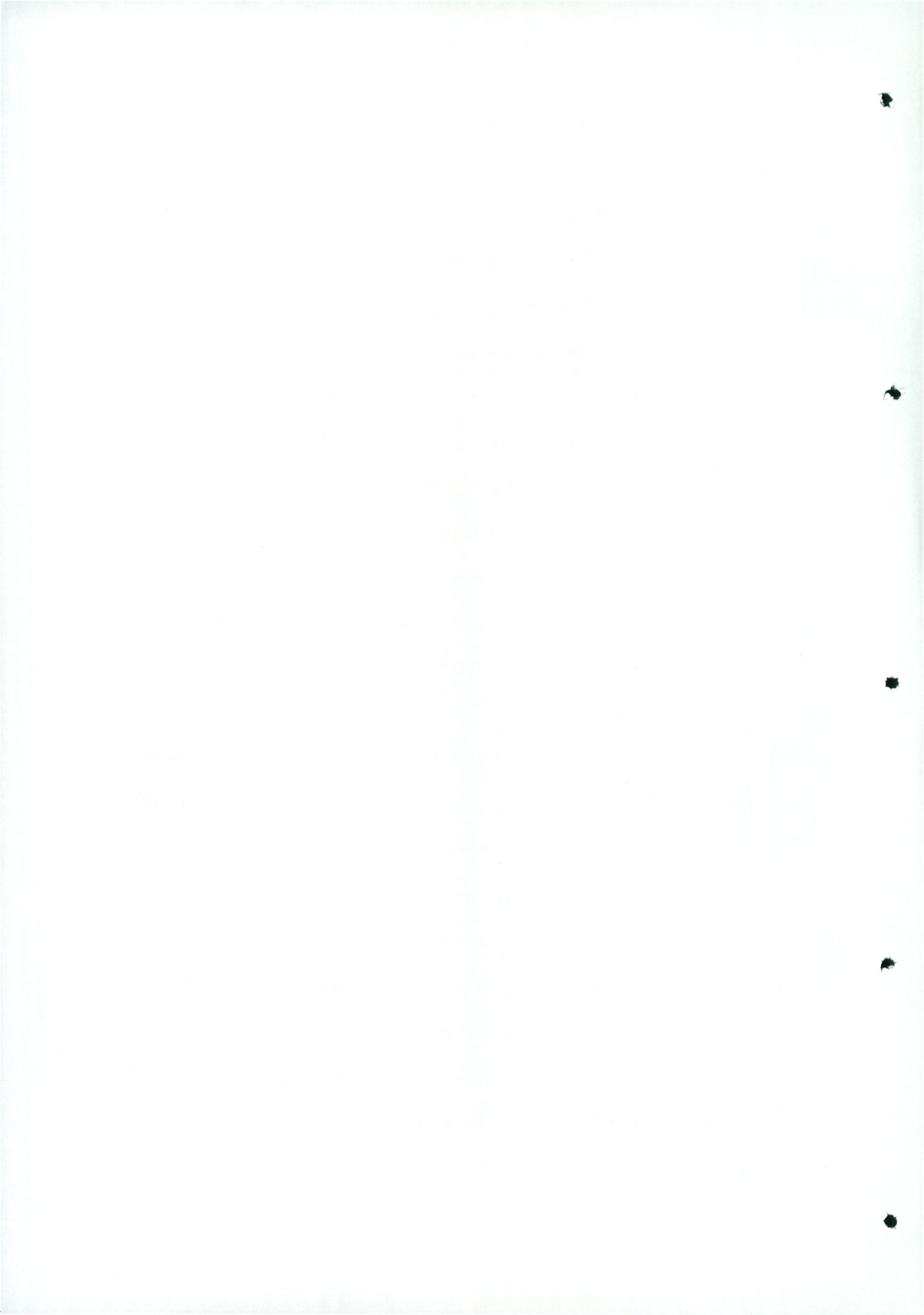
Here Nouvel's interest in the methods of Wim Wenders becomes immediately comprehensible.(Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:18).

Wenders is one of the well known directors of the 'New German Cinema', a term loosely applied to a group of films made in the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1960s, 1970s, and the early 1980s. The group is not a film movement and has evaded any clear generic description but is marked by its stylistic and thematic diversity,(Knight in Nelmes, 1996:394) However, New German Cinema has firmly established itself on the international film scene, and besides Wenders, has many well established directors - Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog- well known. (Knight in Nelmes, 1996:394)

Throughout his work, Wenders connects history and personality, Hollywood storytelling and the practices of modernism, post-war Europe and the desire to be saved by the cinema. His films constitute an ongoing narrative in which self and style, hope and despair, the highway and the road to heaven find a common intersection. Being part of large cultural and aesthetic forces, complex and contradictory, Wenders' films - themselves deeply emotional and visually eloquent - are rich stories. (Kolker, 1993:viii)

Nouvel often uses images from Wenders' films as inspiration. In L'etat des Choses- a factory converted into a night-club - he pays the ultimate tribute to Wenders and names the building after one of his films- THE STATE OF THINGS(Wenders, 1982,). "He's become a friend of mine. Wenders teaches you to look at things differently, in a human way but also with detachment, from an extraordinary distance." (Stocchi, 1995:149)

Comparisons between Nouvel and Wenders are frequent and unsurprising in that they engage in similar strategies. For example, both share the characteristic of repetition. Wenders' never ending journeys and sequence chases found in films such as *Until the End of the World* and *Kings of the Road* can be a dizzy experience. As previously discussed the repeated sequences of chasing in *Until the End of the World*, along with the cascade of images presented to the viewer, create a whirlpool of confusion. (Stocchi, 1995:148) Nouvel's repetition of the camera lens seen on the southern facade of the Institute du Monde Arabe, also creates bewilderment, and dizziness. The 25,000 shutters, which took two years to perfect, automatically adjust to the light, and creating a technological extravagance, (Bosini, 1997:82), that boosts the visual dazzle. (Stocchi, 1995:148)

Both Nouvel and Wenders see "architecture and film as graphic transcriptions of ideas or written texts." (Stocchi, 1995:148) Wenders introduces his screenplay into the film itself. This can be seen in his use of dialogue which affects the structure of his films. However, sometimes the search for suitable images to relate words does not produce a balanced effect. Nouvel prefers to narrate his ideas rather then sketch them as most architects do. He believes that a "simple sentence can often say more than a lot of plans." (Stocchi, 1995:148)

The result of this work is a powerful, almost pictorial, architectural or cinematic image. Every Wenders frame is a picture, though he questions the truthfulness of images, because now the electronic and digital images are copies and no original exists. "Identity is a thing of the past, it's gone out of fashion".
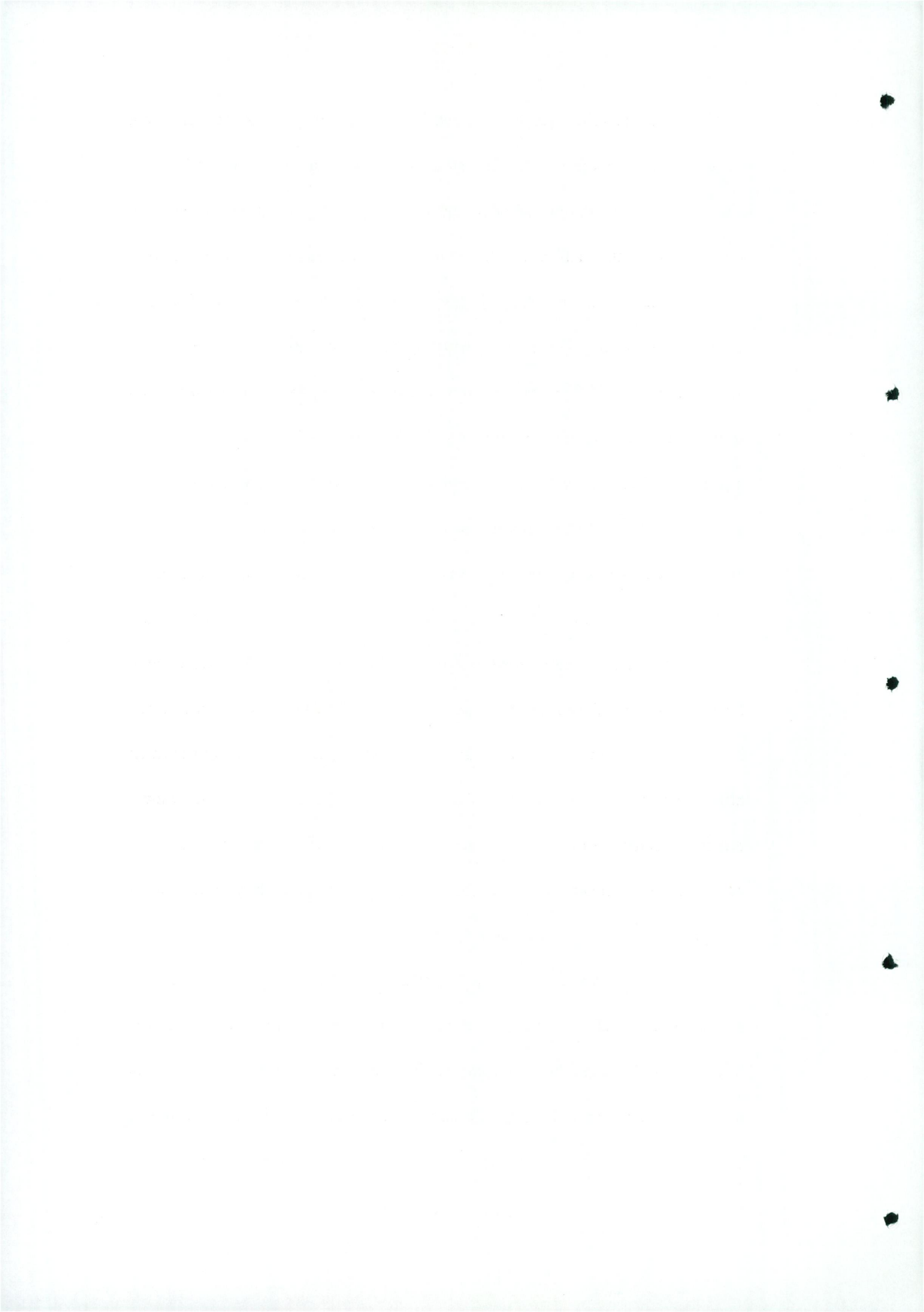
For Nouvel, images are the raw material of architecture, not metaphorically but physically, as ingredients. "Design is a factual image." (Stocchi, 1995, p.149)

The removal of substance is typical of Nouvel's technique in making his architecture lighter. His use of various tools of disembodiment is not only a game of transparency but also a portrayal of his theory on modernism. (Stocchi, 1995:149) This can be seen in his use of disappearance for the Tour Sans Fin. The gradual disappearance of the building into the sky is linked here to Paul Virilio's aesthetic of disappearance. As Nouvel puts it, "I love making things disappear, revealing and concealing is highly relevant today." (Stocchi, 1995:149)

The characters in Wenders' films can also be disembodied, such as in the film WINGS OF DESIRE (Wenders 1987, Germany). Wenders' angels are perfect humanists. In the film their centre of operations is the Berlin public library. Their chief function is to calm savaged emotions and despairing lives. They have perceptual access to every ones subconscious, and the film is at its best when the camera and microphone, simulate the angelic point of view - moving through the air, recording thoughts of the city's inhabitants. The angels can intervene to clear a troubled consciousness and give structure to disordered perception.

Ultimately what Nouvel and Wenders are looking for is space. Wenders lives within modernity and is fully equipped to pass through it to its sequel, the postmodern. Like Benjamin, Brecht, Nouvel and other modernists, Wenders looks to the city and takes to the road. (Kolker, 1993:161) The city, a place of fascination for Wenders, has also been a place of discomfort. He seems nostalgic
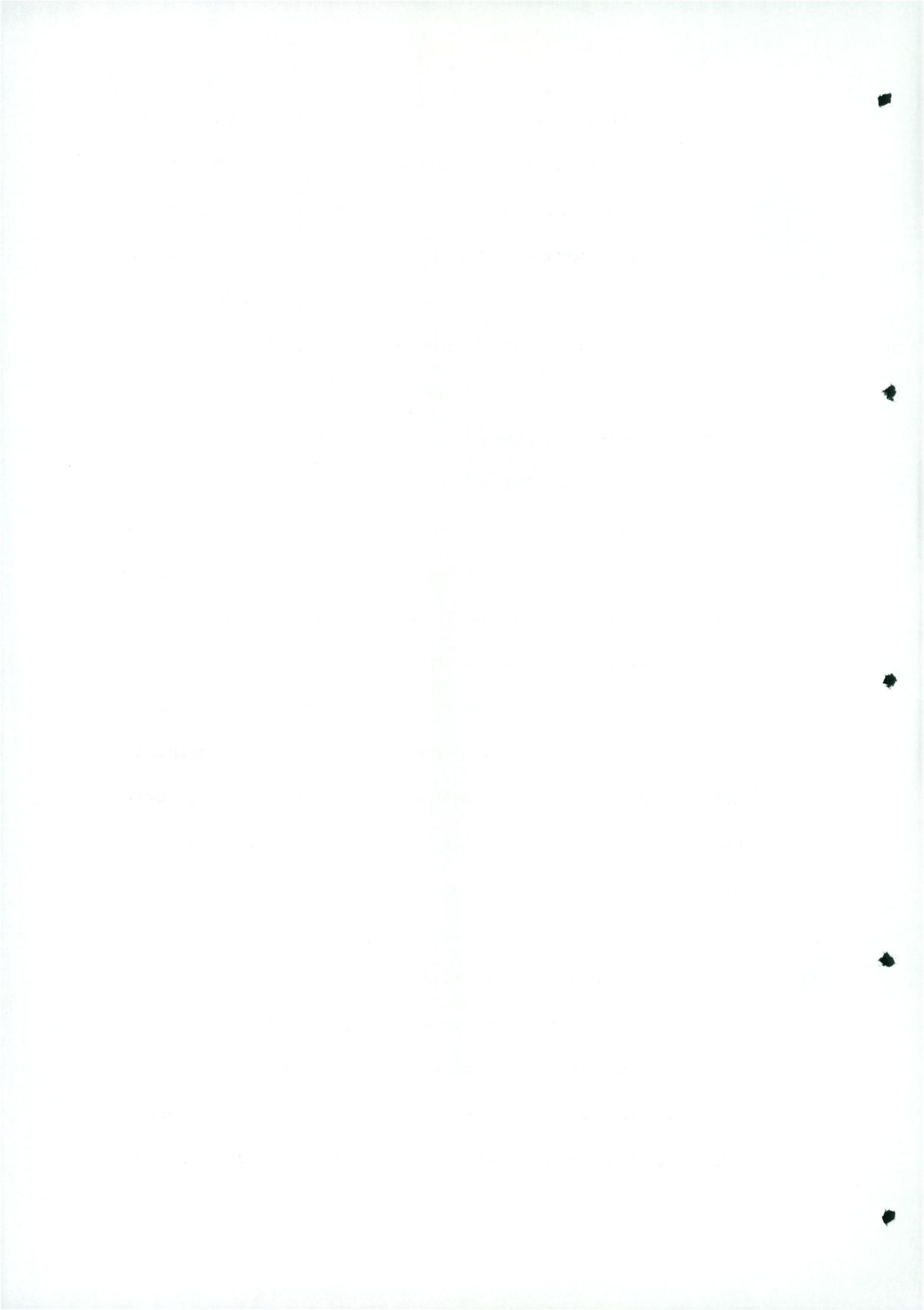
not for the green world, but for the road outside the city. In *Until the end of the world* the cities fall into the backdrops, decayed, corrupt and existing as a place only to leave. (Kolker, 1993:165) Both feel smothered, but attracted by large numbers. They love cityscapes but experience suffocation in a state of suspended animation.

Brian Hatton raises a question as to whether or not this affiliation with Wenders is just in the aforementioned techniques. He also ponders over the difference between their fundamental theories - Nouvel's theory of the city and Wenders representation of it- differ.

Nouvel frequently refers to his co-operation with the scenographer Jacques Le marquet. His work is mobile, montaged and translucent. It dispenses the spaces in between the *coulisse* by filters, grids and veils - all qualities found in Nouvel's work. Concentration and continuity are alike dissolved.

In relation to Le Marquet, two of Nouvels other references are at variance - Paul Virilio and Win Wenders. Virilio, for whom cinema initiated a regime of 'general arrival' 'a city without gates'… 'where all paradoxes of relativity become possible' (Virilio cited in Blazwick, 1992:10), considers that the kind of narrative that structured the old walked city is banished in the age of transit:

> The art of theatre is the transformation of a tale into acts; these acts are transformed according to models of liturgy, here standing for the actions and deeds of the people. With modern transport there are no longer any actions of the people… With this loss of narrative a whole dimension of the city is lost… The image takes precedence over the object and over man (Virilio cited in Blazwick, 1992:14).

In contrast, Wenders motive of his films is the story as "mankind has needed stories to learn that coherence is possible" (Virilio cited in Blazwick, 1992:14).
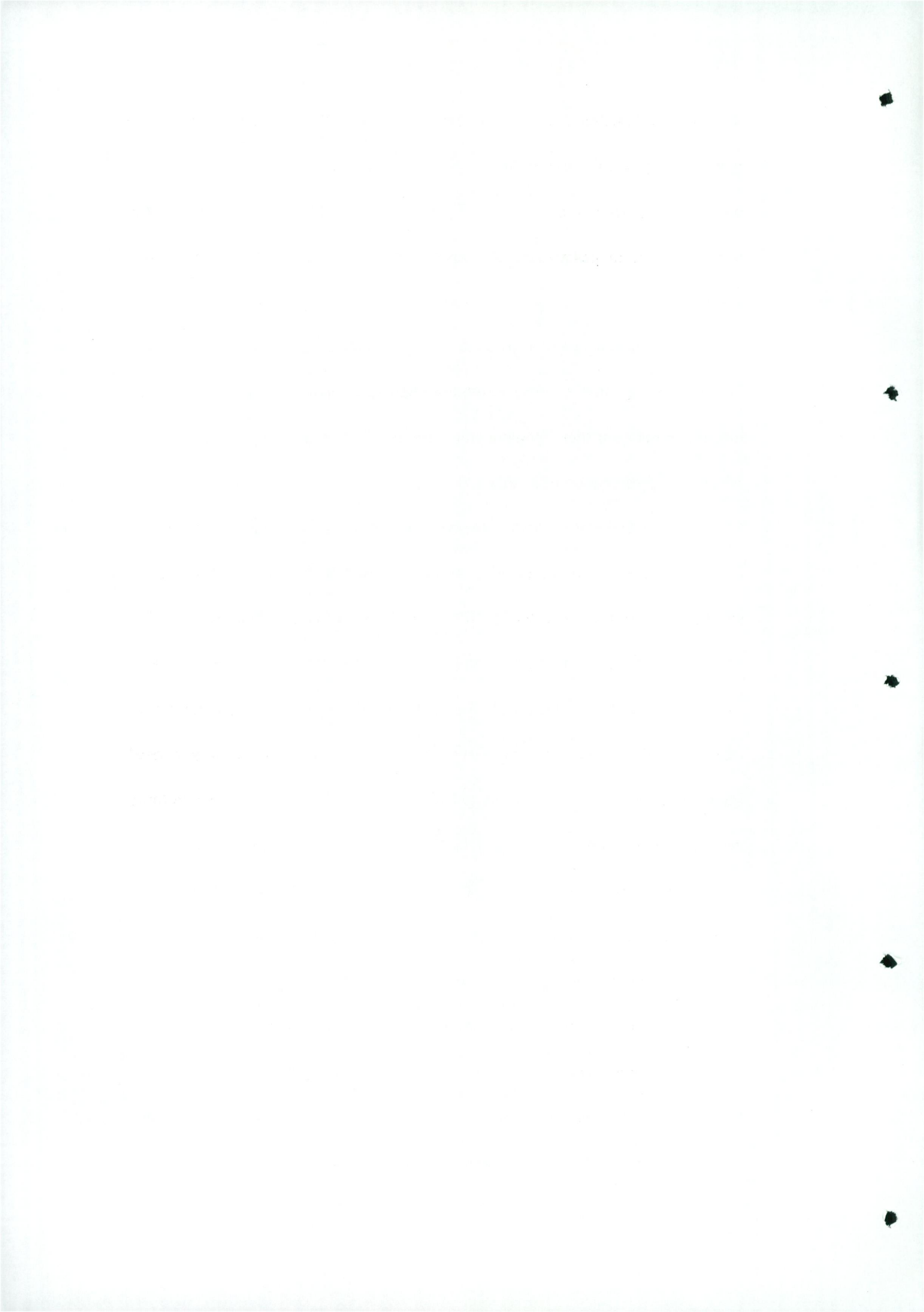
Nouvel's negotiation of Wenders and Virilio may lie in what he calls "the image as the matter of architecture...the future of architecture is not architectural"(Nouvel cited in Blazwick,1992:14). Stories, for Wenders are routes through images and sensations, and Nouvel has expressed his affinity with Wenders in terms of his feelings for overlooked 'in-between' places where "time drops away under a slow lasting gaze" (Nouvel cited in Blazwick 1990:14).

He also finds formal associations from film to architecture, such as dimensions of time and movement. These are general devices from which the film architecture analogy emerged from and are discussed in detail in Chapter 1. However for Nouvel, "it only makes sense as one moves". There is a difference between this way of working and the film-makers, because the architect can't rely on editing techniques, "as though filming a kind of continuous shot."

Nouvel's buildings are thought of in terms of their surroundings, a cut to what he chooses to show in the landscape. With the use of screens and textures Nouvel enables the viewer to reread the image with another image superimposed on it. "One thinks of the city in terms of a scanning process...One tries to build up a landscape using this dynamic." (Nouvel cited in Blazwick, 1992:14)

Here, a troubling reflection arises. For Wenders, the idea of story is a "version of the labyrinth", whereas Nouvel's "architecture - as - concept - as - image" is a version of a pyramid. (Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:14)

> Utopia is a place where architecture puts an end to 'stories' of Wenders' kind, and even an architecture of incidence and episode cannot evade some closure towards which its 'logic of images' will tend." (Lucan in Blazwick, 1992:14)

In this strange association between Nouvel and Wenders, there is an echo of the angelic man and the human woman in *Wings of Desire*. Each has

something that the other lacks and either want to become the other. (Hatton in Blazwick, 1992:16) The filmmaker films a city whose truth consists in unifying the action, characters and 'in-between' in the story. However, it is only fiction, whereas the architects builds for real. Alternatively Nouvel constructs building on which he has no control over the narratives of its occupiers and surroundings. Nouvel and the Wenders look in on one another. The filmmaker is looking for space, while the architect reaches for time. (Hatton in Blazwick, 1992:16)
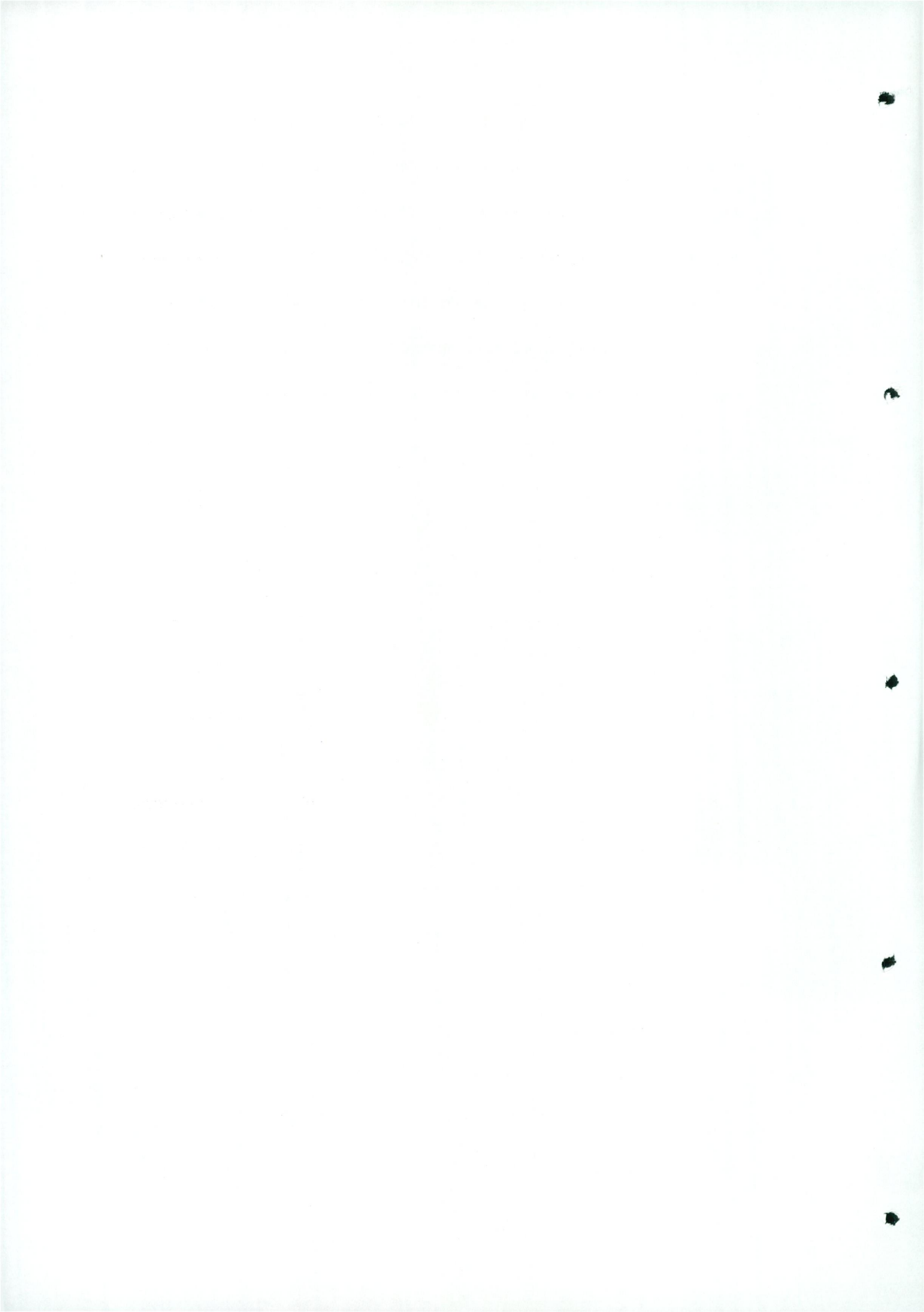
Conclusion

The shift of architects like Mallet-Stevens to the profession of set design during the 1920s and 1930s, marked the interest architects began to express towards the film industry. These moves coincided with the growth of interest in Modern architecture and the birth of the Bauhaus. Clearly, architects were interested in the possibilities of representing the modern aesthetic that cinema presented to them. Caligari, L'Inhumaine and Metropolis portray the city in very different aesthetics. The sets didn't just serve as a background setting. In Metropolis, Lang's attempts to refer to contemporary issues such as urban planning are obvious.

Kracauer expressed his dismay in the inability of these films to document a real version of the city. In 1923 Benjamin recognised the potential of film to seek out the milieu normally taken for granted. He believes in film's ability to place the viewer as an examiner of architectural space.

Blade Runner's prediction of the city is also reflective of architectural debate of its time - the Postmodern aesthetic. However, if one was to strip away the collectivity of various cultural influences from the buildings, the same visions of urban gigantism found in Lang's Metropolis would dominate.

Although film has used architecture to express the ideas of Modernism and Postmodernism of the twentieth century, architecture's reliance on film as a medium of expression is not as evident. There are various techniques which both professions use. François Penz finds similarities in techniques used in representation and illusion. Lorcan O'Herlihy believes framing, montage and the
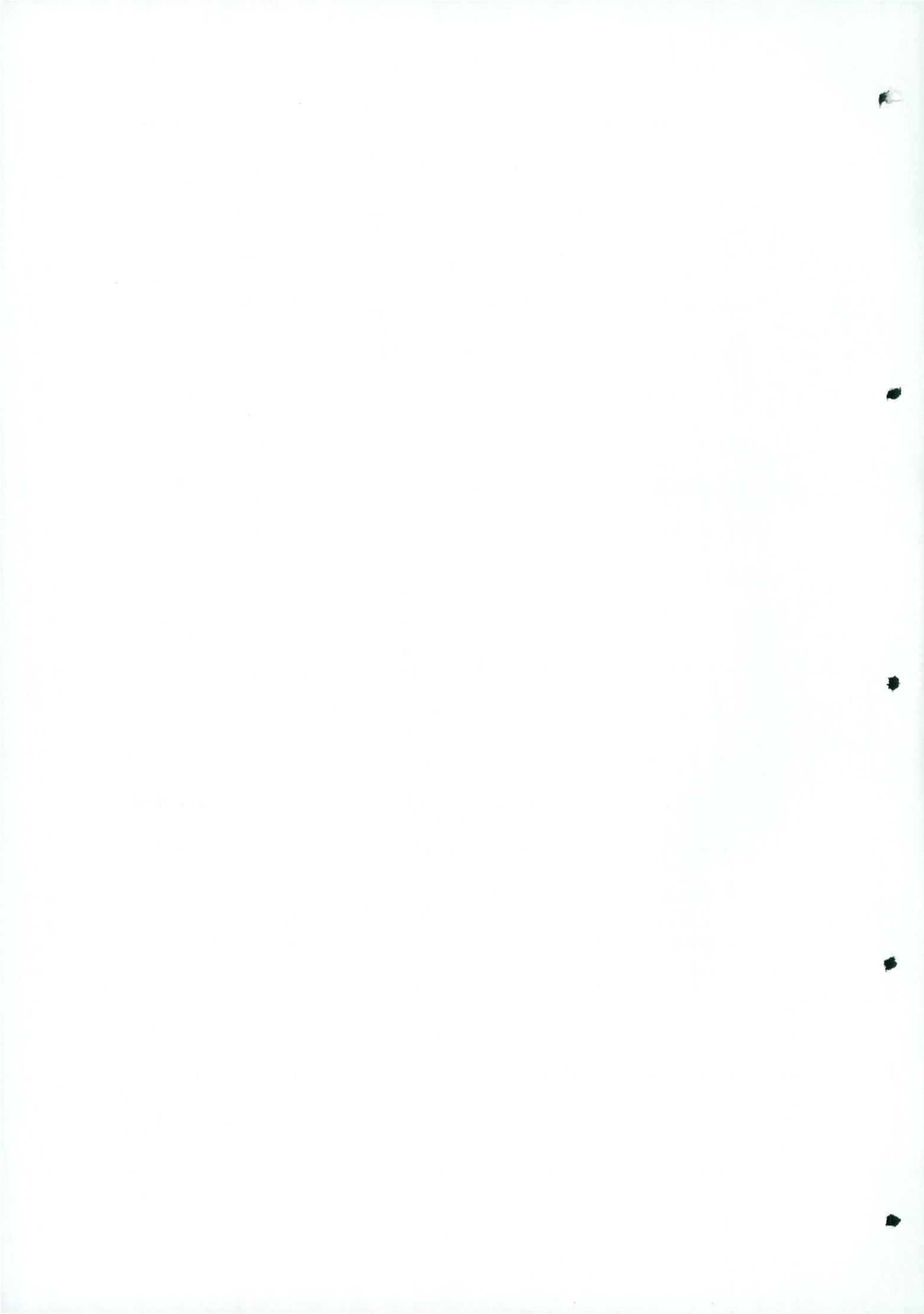
narrative of space contribute to the relationship, while earlier assessments by Sergei Eisenstein reveal his belief in architecture as film's predecessor in the transition from real to imaginary.

Nouvel has created his own theory of modern architecture, drawing from the works of various contemporaries such as Charles Bauldelaire, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. He believes the evolution of the city has revealed that future planning can only evolve "by iteration, by alternation and by revelation." This evolution gives Nouvel a type of "glass syndrome".

Nouvel takes a new approach to every building. He considers its surroundings and puts the project into context. Although critics have called him inconsistent, Nouvel is fairly consistent in the devices he manipulates in his architecture. These include framing, superimposition, and lighting techniques which form an affiliation between architecture and film

Wenders decided to become a film director because he believed that only cinema allows you to do work simultaneously with architects, musicians, poets, and with people from all forms of art. Nouvel challenges this, declaring that - "I work a bit like a film director." This stems from his theory of modern architecture. "An architect isn't equipped to handle the really specific problems he is faced with." (Stocchi, 1995, p.149)

As demonstrated by *Metropolis,* films reflect the theory of architecture of their era. It could be said that Wenders' films reflect Nouvel's theory of architecture using the techniques Nouvel considers the modern aesthetic to be,

such as superimposition, montage, disembodiment. Other techniques like repetition and their use of images appear in their work

Although Nouvel refers to many of his associates, he exposed a special kinship with Wenders. On reflection, their affiliation is in doubt. For Wenders the story is a version of labyrinth while Nouvel's concept is a version of pyramid.

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