Architecture of the Gaze:
Jeffries Apartment and Courtyard

Steven Jacobs

INTRODUCTION

In the set design for the 1954 film Rear Window, *Alfred Hitchcock used neighboring interiors to fabricate a voyeuristic ambiance. In the following essay, Steven Jacobs analyzes the film's spatial relationships and famous visual tension while reporting on the extensive set design work he uncovered in his search to understand Hitchcock's construction of a fictitious Greenwich Village block in New York City. Using it as the site for his film, Hitchcock sought to intensify the close proximity of interior spaces in city life. The film's action is symbolic, showing and referencing its themes through window frames and camera lenses. Hitchcock bridges interior and exterior through framed views where the characters, the dynamics of urban dwelling, and the social rules of conduct guiding the characters are witnessed through a camera's eye. Jacobs guides us into the details of Hitchcock's interior space and highlights moments in the film that help establish the identity and symbolism of characters. This is accomplished primarily by isolating the main character, L. B. Jeffries, a photographer whose apartment is replete with visually oriented objects such as cameras and binoculars.*

Jacobs's analysis of the set design includes not only the details of Jeffries's apartment but also Hitchcock's strategy of emphasizing color in each apartment that Jeffries (and the camera) will see, as a way to associate occupant with interior. This color code even extends to clothing as a link to individual apartment interiors. This strategy, coupled with the camera's introductory pan across apartments at the start of the film, helps establish an important elevational map of the characters' apartments. Hitchcock pans the camera across the courtyard facades to help familiarize the audience with the location of apartments and their occupants. Both Jeffries and the audience are transformed from innocent bystanders to peeping toms.

A level of intimacy with the film viewer is established from the window-picture plane of Jeffries's centrally located apartment. Hitchcock

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subtly reinforces the relationship between film and window by assigning the same proportional dimensions of a film screen to the windows in the film set. Doing so draws the audience further into the film and setting.

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Rear Window
West 10th Street
Greenwich Village, New York
Color
Paramount, 1954

Art Direction:
Hal Pereira
Joseph MacMillan Johnson

Set Decoration:
Sam Comer
Ray Moyer

This apartment is a smallish studio with the kitchen hidden from view by a bookshelf. The only interior door, apart from the entrance, is the one of the bathroom, of which the inside is never seen in detail. It is not clear whether there is a separate bedroom. The big window looks out unto a courtyard, enclosed by the rear walls of a three-story apartment building in a vernacular 'Federal Brick' style. Only one narrow alleyway leads to a parallel street. The apartment itself is situated on 10th Street, just east of Hudson Street, Manhattan. As Donald Spoto and Juhani Pallasmaa among other commentators have argued, its location can be deduced from the address mentioned of the apartment on the other side of the courtyard: 125 West 9th Street.[1] Because American law required that a film crime was not situated at an existing place, the address is fictitious: in reality, 9th Street changes into Christopher Street west from 6th Avenue. However, at 125 Christopher Street, the building was situated that inspired Hitchcock, who, according to a Paramount Advance Campaign document, "dispatched four photographers to that colorful section of New York with instructions to shoot the Village from all angles, in all weather and under all lighting conditions, from dawn to midnight."[2]

The 10th Street apartment is the residence of L.B. Jeffries (James Stewart), who is confined to his wheelchair due to a leg fracture. Killing time by watching his neighbors through a rear window, his attention is drawn in particular by Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr), who murdered his wife—at

least, this is Jeffries' interpretation of a series of incidents he witnessed: the disappearance of Thorwald's bedridden and nagging wife; Thorwald inspecting her personal belongings such as a purse and wedding ring that are still in the apartment; Thorwald cleaning a butcher knife and bathroom tiles; Thorwald leaving the apartment with a big suitcase in the middle of the night; et cetera.

The protagonist of *Rear Window*, a film dealing with voyeurism, is even a professional voyeur: a photojournalist accustomed to nosing into other people's affairs and owning an arsenal of professional viewing devices (binoculars, telephoto lens), he eagerly deploys to spy on his neighbors. Precisely because of its voyeuristic theme, its tension between watching and being watched, and its outspoken attention to optic instruments, *Rear Window* has been repeatedly seen as an allegory of the gaze and the cinematic apparatus.[3] Hitchcock himself described the film's plot as "the purest expression of a cinematic idea" and as a meditation on the famous Kuleshov effect.[4] The film's protagonist is almost a hybrid creature: half man half camera, he even comes with his own tracking apparatus[5]—a few years later, cameraman Raoul Coutard would famously use a wheelchair for the tracking shots in Jean-Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle* (1959).

Revealing himself in earlier films as a master of point-of-view editing, Hitchcock presented *Rear Window* as a film in which the subjective point of view dominates (though not to an absolute degree). This resulted in a very specific topography. Since distance is important to the plot, we seldom get close to the characters on the other side of the courtyard. Furthermore, the predominantly fixed viewpoint implies an important spatial restriction: the film takes place in a single, but gigantic and diversified set that represents a Greenwich Village block comprising 31 apartments. [Figs. 7.17 + 7.18] Based on the hundreds of photographs and sound recordings obtained by the party exploring the neighborhood, the $100,000 set was designed by Paramount unit art director Joseph MacMillan Johnson under the supervision of Hal Pereira, head of Paramount's art department. For months, Hitchcock, Pereira, and MacMillan Johnson did nothing but plan the design of what was to become the largest indoor set ever built at Paramount. Hitchcock himself superintended the huge and complex construction that took six weeks to set up. [Fig. 7.19] The entire set was fit with a sophisticated drainage system for the rain scene and with an ingenious wiring mechanism for the highly complex lighting of day and night scenes in both the exterior of the courtyard and the interiors of the apartments. The earlier mentioned Paramount Advance Campaign document proudly displayed an impressive collection of statistical data: The set "consumed 25,000 man-hours. It used 175,000 board-feet of lumber, 200 sacks of plaster, 750 gallons of paint, and 12 tons of structural steel for flooring and for eye-beams from which to hang balconies.
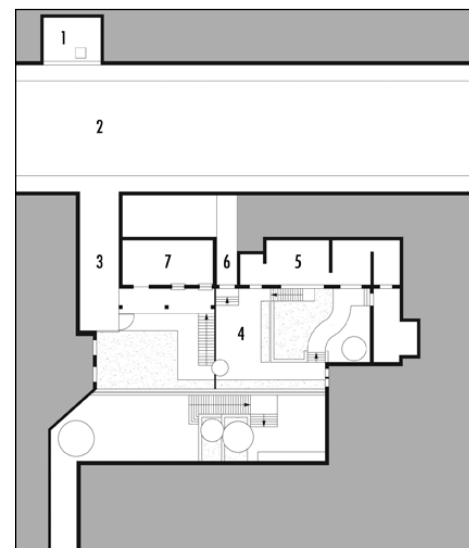

Fig. 7.17: Ground Floor. Drawing by David Claus

1. Restaurant
2. Street
3. Alley
4. Courtyard
5. Apartment Miss Lonelyheart
6. Corridor
7. Apartment Sculptress
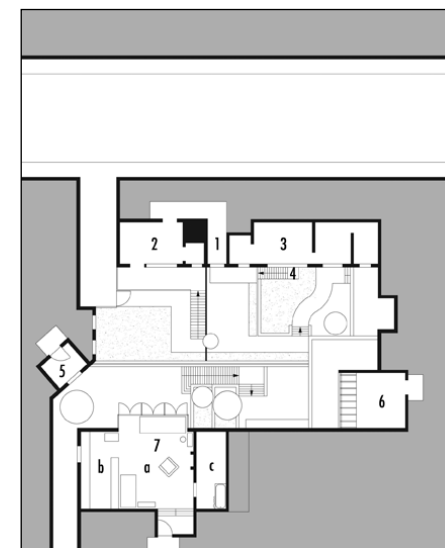
Fig. 7.18: Second Floor. Drawing by David Claus

1. Corridor
2. Apartment Miss Torso
3. Thorwald Apartment
4. Balcony with Fire Escape
5. Apartment Newlyweds
6. Apartment Composer
7. Jeffries' Apartment
a. Living Room
b. Kitchen
c. Bathroom

Fig. 7.19: Courtyard. Set Photograph, Royal Film Archive, Brussels

Steel was also used for roof vents, down-spouts, chimneys and fire-escapes, all of which were 'practical,' which is the film term for usable, as opposed to plainly ornamental. More than 20,000 square feet of imitation brick was cast-staff, in a new method introduced solely for this film."

However, the set was not only a huge piece of machinery, it also contained numerous well-considered details. Since about a dozen of the apartments play a role in the story line and because the camera peeked into the interiors by means of giant booms, they were upholstered or furnished extensively by Sam Comer and Ray Moyer to match the character of their occupants. A publicity handout announced that New York designer Grace Sprague (uncredited) had been hired to work out "visualizations" of the apartments as well as sketching "the kind of costumes needed for the actors working in them."[6] An unsigned Paramount memo further states that "Hitchcock feels due to the fact that he will be jumping around in the various apartments so much that the color of the background walls within the apartments, as well as color of wardrobe, will help orient the audience quicker than anything."[7] Such a meticulous attention to details gave the set its realist but also its uncanny look: a feeling of threat and danger gradually penetrates into an everyday and familiar environment. "This movie could never have been accomplished on location with the same dramatic impact," Pereira assured.

The careful attention to details already characterizes the impressive camera movement that opens the film and immediately evokes the claustrophobic atmosphere of the courtyard. In the first place, this crane shot serves as a classical establishing shot that gives the spectator an understanding of the architectural organization of the situation and of the spatial relations between the different places important to the narrative. [Fig. 7.20] During the long take, the camera rises and descends, slows down and accelerates slightly: from the very beginning, specific areas of the set are emphasized. However, after plunging through the window into the courtyard, the camera returns to the interior of Jeffries' apartment and explores his belongings. It is a perfect illustration of Hitchcock's visual way of storytelling: gliding past a broken camera, a snapshot of a racecar accident, war pictures, all kinds of photographic equipment, and stacks of illustrated journals successively, the shot gives us a lot of information on the inhabitant without any dialogue or voice-over. In a general study on art direction, the opening scene of *Rear Window* is described as "a good example of production design which, with the help of art works and props, presents a story (narration)—not only supporting it, furthering and interpreting it but actually telling it."[8]

The theme of voyeurism combined with the spatial confinements of a single set turns the architectural construction of *Rear Window* into a magisterial

Fig. 7.20: Hitchcock and cameraman Robert Burks in Jeffries' apartment.
Set Photograph, Royal Film Archive, Brussels

viewing device. The architecture becomes an instrument of the gaze, a kind of *camera obscura* on an urban scale. First and foremost, Hitchcock presents the architecture as a tool of the scopic drive by emphasizing the window, which, as the film's title suggests, is also the veritable subject of the film. Unmistakably, he presents the window as a metaphor for the film screen. In *Rear Window*, the window has become a cinematic equivalent of the old pictorial metaphor that dates back to the Renaissance, when the Italian architect and art theoretician Leone Battista Alberti defined painting, in his *De Pictura* (1435), as a window onto the world. Instead of a flat surface that is being looked *at*, the painting is a frame that is looked *through*. This concept, which is often visualized in the countless illustrations of so-called perspective machines of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, demonstrates that the visual understanding and the optical domination of the world is dependent on the construction of a frame situated between the world and its beholder.

Not coincidentally, the image of the window, which serves as the opening credits of *Rear Window,* is an important architectural motif in Hitchcock's entire œuvre. *The Lady Vanishes, Shadow of a Doubt, Rope, I Confess,* and *Psycho*, as well, start with the image of a window that marks the transition from an urban exterior to the seclusion of an interior. In contrast with these films, the trajectory in *Rear Window* is made from inside to outside: by means of an impressive dolly shot, we plunge through the window, then slide, from right to left, along the facades of the courtyard and, eventually, end up inside Jeffries' apartment back again.

Fig. 7.21: Miss Torso's apartment (Digital Frame). Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLLP

Fig. 7.22: Composer's apartment (Digital Frame). Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLLP

Not only the window of Jeffries' flat functions as a film screen, each window on the other side of the courtyard does as well—the proportions of these windows even match perfectly the aspect ratio (1.66:1) of the film. Viewed across the courtyard, the characters seem just real enough, something half-remembered, like the images on a cinema screen.[9] The facade on the other side is like a movie library. Each window, each film, answers to specific generic conventions: a comedy of newly-weds during their turbulent honeymoon, a musical comedy with the eligible dancer Miss Torso, a melodrama of a woman nicknamed Miss Lonelyhearts, a biopic of a young composer of popular songs, and, of course, the Hitchcockian murder mystery in Thorwald's flat. [Figs. 7.21 + 7.22] In addition, the film offers a view of some other residents of the building, such as the couple with the little dog that sleeps on the escape ladder and the woman who makes abstract sculptures. This last character alludes, together with the composer, dancer, and photographer, to the different senses but also to the fact that the story is situated in a neighborhood that is a perfect biotope for the fine arts.

Given this perspective, *Rear Window* contains a series of films into one single film. Each window offers a view to a singular picture and the entire courtyard is a kind of urban equivalent of a cable television mosaic with Jeffries (as well as the spectator) zapping between channels. Strikingly, each film deals with love or marriage: the lonely woman waiting for prince to come, the newly-weds making love all the time, the dancer desired by many men, the childless couple that adore their little dog, the couple that quarrels until the wife gets murdered, and, last but not least, Jeffries, who is unwilling

to marry his ravishing fiancée Lisa Freemont (Grace Kelly). As critics such as Robin Wood have noted, all windows, in short, represent alternative scenarios for Jeffries' own life.[10] The windows on the other side of the courtyard are also cinematic screens of desire and the events become the gratification of the voyeuristic longings of both Jeffries and the spectator.

Since the windows on the other side of the courtyard function primarily as screens, the rooms behind them are squashed. The reconstruction drawing of the floor plan indicates that the flats across the courtyard are narrower than Jeffries' apartment. Thorwald's apartment and the one underneath (occupied by 'Miss Lonelyhearts') and above (by the couple with the dog) only connect to the hallway. They seem to be so-called 'railroad apartments' which are quite common in New York brownstone apartment buildings. Similar in design to a railway car, such an apartments comprise a series of rooms, connecting to each other in a line. Often, there is no adjacent hallway, such that in order to move from the first to the third room, one must cross the second. Of course, such one-sided apartments with flattened spaces posited linearly next to one another are perfectly suited to the plot. In so doing, the rooms are arranged parallel to the range of vision of both Jeffries and the spectator.

Because the architecture is subjected to the gaze, the entire building shows several similarities with building types that serve as perspectival machines such as the theater and the panopticon. The space of *Rear Window* can be considered a theatrical or scenographic device because the story depends on

the repression of the fourth side of the city block. Although, as Michel Chion has noted, this fourth side is briefly exposed, the dominant point of view makes us forget that there may be on Jeffries' side of the block other apartments from which one can see just as well and perhaps even better what goes on in Thorwald's place.[11] Furthermore, the image Jeffries is watching from his theater seat resembles the archetypical stage set: Jeffries' rear window offers a view of the city, which was also the stage image of the earliest examples of modern theater architecture in the sixteenth century. The modern Renaissance theater building does not only incorporate all kinds of urban architectural fragments (windows, balconies, balustrades, stairs, et cetera) in its decorative scheme, the stage itself represented invariably an urban street in shortened perspective. With their perspectival vistas of the city, both Vincenzo Scamozzi's design for the permanent stage of Andrea Palladio's *Teatro Olympico* in Vicenza (1584) and Sebastiano Serlio's famous drawings of a tragic and comic scene illustrate that the origins of the modern theater coincides with those of modern urban planning—both are disciplines subjecting space to the gaze and to the new logic of geometric perspective.

Since Hitchcock, as opposed to most other Hollywood directors, had a sound grasp of the optical aspects of filmmaking, he undoubtedly exploited skillfully the perspectival distortions of the camera. Already at the start of his career, Hitchcock knew perfectly how a set would look like in the film. It was a lesson that he learned in the early 1920s from German masters such as Murnau: "What you see on the set does not matter. All that matters is what you see on the screen."[12] In *Rear Window*, the viewpoint determines the space even more than usual since Jeffries watches the spectacle from a distance and from a fixed position. As a result, his apartment serves as a box in the theater. This tallies with Hitchcock's frequent use of the theatrical metaphor. Crucial scenes in several films (*The Pleasure Garden, Downhill, Murder, The 39 Steps, Stage Fright, I Confess, The Man Who Knew Too Much, Torn Curtain*) occur in theater and concert halls. In addition, Hitchcock frequently employs architectural or decorative elements referring to the theater. *Rear Window*, as *Stage Fright*, opens with the rise of a curtain. At the end of the film, the curtains in Jeffries' box are lowered. Midway through the story, Lisa endorses the theatrical metaphor by literally closing the curtains while stating that "the show's over for tonight." Several authors have interpreted the presence of theatrical places and conventions in Hitchcock's *œuvre* as a Brechtian estrangement effect—a striking feature in the work of a director who presents cinema as almost the opposite of theater by means of fluent camera movements, dynamic editing, and the extensive use of point-of-view shots.[13] According to John Belton, *Rear Window* plays self-consciously "with the differences between theatrical and cinematic film space, relying on set design and certain kinds of camera movements to establish a concrete, unified theatrical space and on editing, framing, and camera movement to construct a more abstract, psychological, cinematic film space."[14] In the Paramount Advance Campaign document, production designer Pereira pointed out that the impressive single set reversed the usual rules. "It's ambition of every New York producer to acquire a property using a single set. The great properties of motion pictures have often resulted from the purchase of stage plays and then the movies have amplified these to create added scope and interest." Yet, the same document emphasizes, *"Rear Window uses only a single set which never could have been duplicated on the stage. Hitchcock has reversed the time-worn rules by creating a one set movie which could only be done as a movie."*

The subjection of the environment to the logic of the look gives the space of *Rear Window* not only qualities of the theater but also of the panopticon.[15] In the late eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham presented this circular building with central surveillance unit as a building type perfectly fit for all institutions dealing with control. Whereas the theater directs the gaze of many onlookers to the single focal point of the stage, the panopticon inverts this logic by subjecting the space to a single point of view. The space of *Rear Window* adopts the imaginary form of a cone, whose apex is constituted by Jeffries' living room (or his head) and then extends out toward its base in the courtyard. Just as the panopticon combines spectacle with surveillance, Hitchcock subjects the space to an all-encompassing gaze that transforms the environment into spectacle. The spectator/voyeur himself is invisible. As Bentham's guard, who bases his absolute and demonic power on his own invisibility in the dark core of the building, *Rear Window's* voyeurs hide themselves in the dark: Jeffries pulls back in the shade or extinguishes the light when Thorwald can notice him. Thorwald himself hides in the only non-lighted flat when the little dog of one of the neighbors has been found dead.

Nonetheless, the panoptic power is limited. As in every classical Hollywood film, *Rear Window* comprises many spatial ellipses and there are doors of which it is unclear where they are leading to. In *Rear Window*, however, these features have an added value because of the unusual cinematic space of the single set. In addition, not everything is exposed to the gaze of the protagonist. On the one hand, he is not able to perceive everything (because he sleeps, for instance). On the other, some areas, which can only be imagined by the viewer, are invisible because of the fixed viewpoint. Still other spaces are rendered invisible by characters such as the newlyweds closing the curtains. Moreover, Hitchcock rewardingly uses the border between visible and invisible spaces. The bare walls between the windows, for instance, play an important part in the scene of the quarrel between

Thorwald and his wife or in the one in which Lisa intrudes the Thorwald apartment. Hitchcock, as it were, introduces, on screen, an off-screen space. Because of this, he rouses the spectator's curiosity and imagination and he maximizes suspense. Furthermore, in contrast with the logic of the panopticon, the gaze is mirrored at a climactic moment in the film: Thorwald looks back at Jeffries and, through him, at the camera, the director, and the spectator.

Michel Foucault, who presented Bentham's panopticon as an allegory of the processes of normalization and discipline of modernity, noted that in Bentham's building, "every cage is a small theater in which the actor is alone, perfectly individualized and permanently visible."[16] As in Bentham's panopticon, there seems to be no communication among the individual residential units. Foucault noted that, consequently, the visual logic of the spectacle is turned upside down. Instead of exposing some individual bodies to a community (as the architecture of the temple, theater, and circus in antiquity did), the panoptic courtyard of *Rear Window* provides the lonely surveyor with an overview of many separated individuals. As the panopticon, the urban courtyard belongs to a modern society without a ritual mediation between particular individuals and the abstract concepts of the state or the law. The voyeur sees a collection of anonymous metropolitans that are part of a *Gesellschaft* of autonomous individuals. The inhabitants rather live isolated from than *with* each other. Even the courtyard is not that of a single apartment block but consists of a number of individual back yards attached to distinct, architecturally different buildings on a single city block.

Given this perspective, *Rear Window* is an interesting meditation on modern urban society. The film, as it were, offers a cross-section of an urban segment in a manner that resembles the popular nineteenth-century prints showing Paris apartment buildings. These prints, which show an unseen density and social diversity within a single architectural construction, illustrate the development of a new, modern, and urban way of life in a metropolis radically transformed by Baron Haussmann. Hitchcock's evocation of Greenwich Village shows a colorful urban universe in which inhabitants live as strangers next to each other. Nonetheless, *Rear Window*'s characters are no monads existing only on themselves. Their dwellings have windows and they open up to the world. The characters exist as representations and as images. The dialectic between seeing and being seen touches not only on the essence of Hitchcock's œuvre but also, as authors such as Erving Goffman and Lyn Lofland have demonstrated, on that of the urban way of life. In light of this, *Rear Window* is a wonderful evocation of the way in which the spatial organization of the city determines the lives of its residents.[17] The behavior of some inhabitants is unmistakably connected to the fact that the story takes place in this kind of semi-public courtyard in the midst of a metropolis.

Hitchcock, whose films comprise many hidden or impenetrable spaces, maximizes the voyeuristic pleasure by showing a space, which is usually invisible for most of us. The story develops not before a window but, tellingly, in front of a rear window. The set consists of an informal backside containing a capricious combination of terraces and little gardens and which undoubtedly sharply contrasts with the invisible front side. *Rear Window* clearly deals with the contrast between formal and representative facade and informal backside, which is one of the essential characteristics of urban architecture since early modernity—the set, moreover, contains little pieces of such representative front sides in the form of a protruding brownstone facade with a cornice and window mouldings on the other side of the street. Hitchcock realizes that some inhabitants would hesitate to perform the same acts behind a window on the front side or street side of the building. On the informal backside facing the courtyard, by contrast, nobody takes pain to hide or to close the windows with curtains or shutters. The urbanites perform their daily rituals without screening off their rooms. Jeffries too sits in front of the window in his pajamas and shaves. Instead of an absolute privacy behind doors and walls, the courtyard is characterized by a conditional or mediated form of privacy, which is based on the knowledge that others can watch but usually do not. It is a delicate social balance based on the collective use of spaces and on implicit rules of conduct between neighbors. Precisely the relative isolation and the lack of interference in the everyday life of others are the attractive elements of big city life. The story of *Rear Window* is unthinkable in a small town or in suburbia since the balance between individualism and collectivity is completely different in such places.

Dealing with social representation and its dialectic between coded forms of voyeurism and exhibitionism, the film is much more than simply "a commentary on the alienation of urban life."[18] The film discusses the relation between urban alienation and visual power—something that has become much more important in an era when cameras and other systems of surveillance are ubiquitous in both public and private spaces.[19] *Rear Window* announces a postmodern urban space, the boundaries of which are no longer defined by architectural structures but by the screen and the lens.

Notes

1 Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock,* 217; Pallasmaa, *The Architecture of the Image,* 145.

2 "Rear Window: Paramount Advance Campaign," document in the Royal Film Archive Brussels. See also the correspondence and documents in the Paramount Files 14 and 17 on *Rear Window,* Margeret Merrick Library, Los Angeles. See also Curtis, "The Making of *Rear Window,*" 29.

3 Douchet, "Hitch et son public"; Starn & Pearson, "Hitchcock's *Rear Window"*; Harris, *"Rear Window* and *Blow-Up"*; and Shariff, *The Art of Looking in Hitchcock's Rear Window*.

4 François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 214–16.

5 David Kehr, "Hitch's Riddle," *Film Comment* (May–June 1984), 12.

6 Bill Krohn, *Hitchcock at Work* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 141.

7 Ibid. See also Gavin, "Rear Window"; and Atkinson, "Hitchcock's Techniques Tell *Rear Window* Story."

8 Heidi Lüdi & Toni Lüdi, *Movie Worlds: Production Design in Film* (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2000), 20.

9 Brougher, "Hitch-Hiking in Dreamscapes," 8.

10 Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited,* 100–107.

11 Chion, "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window,"* 110–17.

12 McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 63. See also Leff, *Hitchcock and Selznick*, 30–31.

13 The tension between cinema and theater and references to theater as an estrangement effect are recurrent themes in Hitchcock criticism. Authors such as William Rothman, Donald Spoto, Tania Modleski, Raymond Bellour, Jean Douchet, Alenka Zupancic, and many others have focused on this topic.

14 Belton, "The Space of *Rear Window,"* 80.

15 The similarities between *Rear Window*'s spatial setup and the panopticon have been noted before by commentators such as Robert Stam and Juhani Pallasmaa. See Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, 212–13; and Pallasmaa, *The Architecture of Image*, 164.

16 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

17 James Sanders, *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 228–41.

18 John Fawell, *Hitchcock's Rear Window* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 112.

19 See AlSayyad, *Cinematic Urbanism,* 147.

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Display Engineers

Aaron Betsky

INTRODUCTION

In "Display Engineers," Aaron Betsky highlights the role of ritual and familiar spaces in the work of Diller + Scofidio (now Diller Scofidio + Renfro). Betsky reveals how these themes reveal and augment narrative structures that are often invisible. Diller + Scofidio's practice uses familiar objects from the domestic sphere, such as furniture and clothing, to build structures that reveal the temporary nature of rituals.

Betsky provides examples from works by Diller + Scofidio where their early work sets a foundation for their later. Both stages are performative, including exhibitions and installations. Their early performances mimics or fits the body, while the later work materializes structures at a larger scale, where interiors and architecture take on performance while referring back to the body. Diller + Scofidio attain dual capacities for performance applied to the body and building. Through familiar conventions of architectural language, such as orthographic projection and model-making techniques, the conventions embedded within architectural language are translated into clothing, by using ironing to develop new lines in a shirt for Bad Press, for example, or in Slow House, transposing the drawing section onto a model that influences a house design.

Aligned with the performative aspect of Diller + Scofidio's oeuvre are themes of fetish and display. These themes originate within the interior, and are projected outward to expose the undisclosed matters of the private realm. Their theoretical projects recall the visibility found in retail display windows. Together, fetish and display imply a private interior to which we are privy but not allowed to enter. The nature of interiors and their ability to retain privacy is the site for their performative assemblages. By revealing the conceptual constructs through custom-machined details and graphics, Diller + Scofidio reveal invisible structures such as social constructs and the temporary nature of how we occupy rooms. The emphasis on custom-machined details especially shows