

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ScholarWorks@UARK

Architecture Undergraduate Honors Theses

Architecture

5-2019

The Farnsworth House & 'The Grand Budapest Hotel': Cinematic Spaces

Rylie Davis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/archuht>



Part of the [Architectural History and Criticism Commons](#), [Other Architecture Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Visual Studies Commons](#)

Citation

Davis, R. (2019). The Farnsworth House & 'The Grand Budapest Hotel': Cinematic Spaces. *Architecture Undergraduate Honors Theses* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/archuht/34>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Architecture at ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Architecture Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu.

The Farnsworth House & *The Grand Budapest Hotel*:

Cinematic Spaces

May 2019

Rylie Davis

University of Arkansas

Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design:

Honors Architecture

Capstone Director Russell Rudzinski

Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design

Laura Terry

Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design

Michael Riha

Department of Theatre

3 Capstone Statement

3 Project Abstract

4 Introduction

7 The Farnsworth House cinematic analysis

7 One-point Perspective

12 Axially Dominant Spaces: Centrality, Symmetry, & Depth of Space

16 Methods & Process

21 Results & Value

23 Conclusion

24 Bibliography

27 Collage Catalog

Project Abstract:

Mies van der Rohe designed the Farnsworth House as a personification of his architectural vision, an architectural language void of the mistakes of the past that could be taught universally. Mies' illusory idea of free-flowing anti-space was ideologically unconnected to the cinematic arts, nevertheless the application of his design philosophy consequently resulted in spaces that were scenographic and cinematic. Just as a cinematographer establishes a relationship between the viewer and the scene, Mies van der Rohe used perspective to frame views transforming the Farnsworth House into an intermediary object establishing a relationship between nature and the viewer. **The Farnsworth House manifests cinematic space as a consequence of Mies van der Rohe's Universalist architecture.**

This capstone investigates the cinematic qualities of the Farnsworth House as a consequence of Mies' design ideologies, these cinematic characteristics are compared and contrasted with Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* to give a contextual understanding of Mies's cinematic architectural spaces. Where Mies van der Rohe exemplifies his design ideologies in the Farnsworth House, Wes Anderson has done so with *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. This capstone selected *The Grand Budapest Hotel* as the case study comparison because it is a compilation of Anderson's filmmaking ideologies and heavily relies in the cinematic spaces and qualities of architecture to develop the scenes. Wes Anderson's attention to detail is akin to Mies van der Rohe: each of his scenes are delicate and precise¹. Throughout his anthology, Anderson employs axially dominant one-point perspective exclusively as a device to enhance the delicacy and austerity of the scenography. This paper hypothesizes that Wes Anderson and Mies van der Rohe are comparable in their cinematic techniques, however with extensive research it has become evident that the two designers create cinematic spaces that yield far different results with the same underlying forces. By investigating the Farnsworth House through the analytical lens of a director, this project concludes the spaces in the Farnsworth house exhibit a distinctly cinematic character.

The capstone began with research into Mies van der Rohe, Wes Anderson, one-point perspective, and cinematography. This analysis led to a discovery of planimetric spatial order and symmetrically balanced compositional clarity in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and that discovery was established as the lens through which an analysis of the Farnsworth House was conducted. Through collages, this capstone analy-

¹ Timothy Corrigan, *A Short guide to Writing about Film. Third Edition.* (Longman, 1998), 171. Scene: a space within which narrative or action takes place; it is composed of one or more shots.

ses the cinematic characteristics of the Farnsworth House, using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* as a cinematic comparison. The qualities of cinematic spaces are dependent on one-point perspective, axially dominant spaces, centrality, symmetry or the denial of symmetry, and depth of space. By revisiting the architectural spaces in the Farnsworth House, the collages reveal the cinematic character of the Farnsworth House, offering a new perspective on understanding the scenographic quality of Mies van der Rohe's work.

Introduction:

Architecture and cinematic scenography share a historical lineage of compositional and atmospheric qualities that personify designer's personal theories and ideologies. In the Farnsworth house Mies van der Rohe's architectural theories of universal space consequently created cinematic, dynamic spaces - as a result of the combination of anti-space, compositions of floating planes in space, and the minute orthographic condition of the grid of the house. **The Farnsworth House consequently creates cinematic space as a result of Mies van der Rohe's universalist architecture.**

The Farnsworth House is a composition of an orthogonal grid between shifted planes. There visitors inhabit deep and shallow spaces as they move sequentially from one space to the next. The Farnsworth House frames perspectives regarding the foreground, middle ground and background like a scene in a movie – sometimes the roof cuts off the sky, sometimes the porch severs the trees into hovering masses that lay between viewer and river². Mies uses an orthogonal grid in the house, creating a free and open space³. Mies cared about the logic of structure, and how that structure was expressed rather than the technological language of the structure itself. Mies employs this logic by stitching together two slipping planes with floating columns. The house frames perspectives using the steel and glass as a datum.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, born Maria Ludwig Michael Mies in Germany in 1886, was an architect searching for a new, modern architecture. He developed a new “architectural language – as set of principles and methods [to be] passed on within the profession, reflecting the realities, values, and possibilities

² Michael Caldwell, *Flooded at the Farnsworth House, The Art of Architecture*, (Ohio: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2005) 395. “Above the deck and to the west, allegiances collapse with the thrust of perspective and the parry of landscape. The porch frames the riverside oaks and maples with converging lines of glass wall to the left, columns to the right, and roof plane above. The porch shears the trees of trunks and crowns, leaving them seem suspended in midair.”

³ Martiz Vandenberg, *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, (New York: Phaidon Press; First Edition, 2003) 14. “Where traditional houses had rooms, modern one must be open plan. Where traditional rooms were thickly carpeted and curtained, and densely filled with furniture and bric-a-brac, modern ones must have hard, lean surfaces and be virtually devoid of furniture and possessions.

of...‘the epoch’⁴. Mies’ two-part career, beginning in Germany and ending in the United States, was essential to the development of the International Style and its introduction into North America. Centuries distant from the Italian Renaissance, Mies van der Rohe designed with anti-space, questioning Renaissance spatial boundaries with “[an] abandonment of space⁵”. His intentional abandonment of spatial divides and enclosed rooms was the principal characteristic of modern space. Mies van der Rohe said of his 1924 Brick Country House: “The wall loses its enclosing character and serves only to articulate the house organism⁶”.

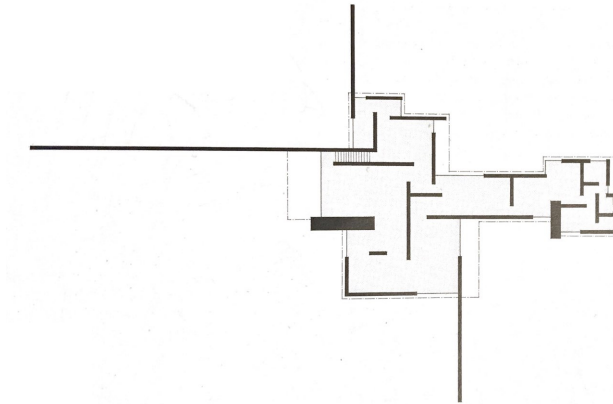


Figure 1. Brick Country House. Unbuilt. Mies van der Rohe. 1923

Wes Anderson (1969 – present), an American film director, screenwriter, actor, and producer known for his visual and narrative styles is a modern-day auteur, as is Mies van der Rohe. Wes Anderson is an artist who controls and oversees all aspects of a film; specifically he is concerned with the thematic style and narrative of each work⁷. Like Mies, Wes Anderson is a “stringent minimalist” with the language he cre-

⁴ Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1. During his second career, Mies believed that he had developed a new architectural *language* – a set of principles and methods that could be taught and passed on within the profession, reflecting the realities, values, and possibility of what he called “the epoch”. Using this language, during the 1950s and 1960s he produced a series of masterworks, beginning with the celebrated Lake Shore Drive Apartments and the Farnsworth House, continuing with S.R. Crown Hall, the Seagram Building, and Chicago’s Federal Center, and ending in a poignant personal circle, with the New National Gallery in Berlin.

⁵ Steven Kent Peterson, *Space and Anti Space*. (Boston: Harvard Architectural Review Publishing, 2018), 23. Mies’ goal was to “bring nature, houses, and people into a higher unity... in the ground plan of this house, I have abandoned the usual concept of enclosed rooms and striven for a series of spatial effects rather than a row of individual rooms.

⁶ Peterson, *Space and Anti Space*, 23.

⁷ Mark Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. (New York: Abrams Publishing, 2015) 238. George Lucas remarked: “You can spend your entire life perfecting a new world when you create its every piece.” Anderson does that in every film he makes. The Tenenbaums live in a parallel-world New York, Steve Zissou sails to phantom islands, and *Moonrise* lovebirds Sam and Suzy find each other on the vaguely New England-ish island of New Penzance. Instead of being sleek, perfectly finished worlds, these realms seem handmade, fragile, in the manner of outsider art... The architectural spaces have a squat solidity, and they’re stuffed with knickknacks, tchotchkes, and ephemera. The sense that each new release will transport us into a different topography is part of Anderson’s appeal.

ated for his works⁸. Anderson directs planimetrically a constraining style that relies on the qualities of one point perspective to create depth and dynamism in a scene, which makes the compositional qualities of his scenography very limited⁹. Despite this, he manages to create versatility and interest in hundreds of one-point perspective scenes¹⁰. With nine directorial credits dating to 1996, Anderson creates fast-paced comedies underscored by dark or grievous narratives. When setting one-point perspective scenes, Anderson uses the device of one-point perspective for a comedic or ironic effect. His framing ideologies rely heavily, almost exclusively, on the one point perspective because he has adopted a planimetric style of directing¹¹.

The Grand Budapest Hotel and the Farnsworth House compare in some arbitrary ways, like the striking similarities in narrative and context, and some compositional, like the composition of frames. “The Grand Budapest Hotel” is a humorously deadpan look at an Eastern-European-esque country ravaged by war, violence and communism centered on the rise and fall of the Grand Hotel. The story of Zero, the lobby boy, is told in three timelines, distancing the narrators from the tragedies of the narrative. The film plays out the life and death of the grandiose lifestyle of the 1930’s, and totalitarian regimes that spread intolerance¹². The Farnsworth House was designed and constructed from 1945 – 1951. What was a small weekend retreat for Dr. Edith Farnsworth became an architectural icon of the International Style in the United States¹³. A raised platform, with a low flat roof, pinning together horizontal panes of glass was not the typical American house in the 1940’s. Both *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and the Farnsworth house are, therefore, narratives of outliers, changing times, and breaking societal norms.

⁸ Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. 20

⁹ Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. 239. Planimetric staging frames people against a perpendicular background, as if they were taking part in a police line up. Planimetric staging assures that the characters in a scene are against a perpendicular background, usually facing the camera, but sometimes can be rotated at ninety degree intervals (front, back, left or right). When there is more than one character in a scene, the group will be “arranged... in some depth, [but] they are stacked in perpendicular fashion, making each plane more or less parallel.

¹⁰ Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short guide to Writing about Film*. 56. The perspective of an image refers to the spatial relationship an image established between the different objects and figures. Different relationships are the products of different lenses. Thus, one movie may present great depth, so that the audience can see the characters in the background as sharply in the foreground. Another movie may want to isolate or highlight one character or event, uses shallow focus.

¹¹ Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short guide to Writing about Film*. 171. Ideology: an analytical approach that attempts to unmask the stated or unstated social and personal values that inform a movie or group of movies.

¹² Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Abrams Publishing, 2015. 34

¹³ Vandenberg, Martiz. *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*. Phiadon Press; First Edition, 2003. 13

The Farnsworth house cinematic analysis: One-point perspective

The Farnsworth house frames perspectives to make a solid visual connection with the surrounding woods and river giving the illusion that one is in nature. The views created in one-point perspective give a feeling of permanence to the scene of river and woods, growing and moving around the house. Mies designed the house to compose a scene of nature all around. The interior and exterior “are designed to not enclose anything, to support the impression of a singular, continuous, universal, open-ended, unimpeded natural flow, an anti-space that passes around, through, and under the floating planes¹⁴”. The house is linguistically repetitious; however the house denies any centrality, from the entryway procession, to the alignment of the furniture inside. Mies created symmetrical central planes, which float and slip past each other, pinned carefully in tension, but not off balance.

The Farnsworth House frames and constructs views in one point perspective to put the viewer in nature, while still being held in controlled space. As explained by one visitor to the house:

“The sensation is indescribable— the act of waking and coming into consciousness as the light dawns and gradually grows. It illuminates the grass and trees and the river beyond; it takes over your whole vision. *You are in nature and not in it*, engulfed by it but separate from it. It is altogether unforgettable¹⁵”.



Figure 2. Farnsworth House. Mies van der Rohe. 1951. Porch framing views.

¹⁴ Peterson, Steven Kent. *Space and Anti Space*. 23

¹⁵ Saporito, Jeff. *What is One Point Perspective*. Filmmakers Handbook. 1

The characteristics of Mies van der Rohe's architectural theory were naturally conducive to using one-point perspective, because of the orthogonal nature of the work and the framing qualities of the steel, platform, roof, and panes of glass. This use of one-point perspective is comparable how a director might use one-point perspective in a cinematic scene. A director might shoot a scene in one point to elicit a psychological response or convey narrative, or to maintain focus on a character or action. In filmmaking, one point perspective means a scene is composed primarily of linear elements that all appear to converge on a single point, usually in the center. Stanley Kubrick is well known for his interest with one point perspective, Kubrick "use[s] one-point perspective as a means of directing the viewer as they watch, controlling their avenue into the scenes on-screen action and enveloping them in the three-dimensional nature of the work"¹⁵.

In architectural space, unlike film, the visitor occupies three dimensional spaces, unlike film, but designed spaces use one point perspective for similar ends. Wes Anderson uses axially dominant one point perspectival viewport as "the building blocks of whole films"¹⁶. Anderson's visual style, "in favor of one point perspective"¹⁷ sacrifices the deep shots achieved by other modern directors. This give the scenes a artificial quality, all of Anderson's films have a "toy-like", "innocent" framing technique for such grim and harsh realities exposed in the narratives. Films have overarching unity for the sake of the plot, what goes into the film, what objects, costumes, lighting, and any decisions impacting the screen would be considered cinematography¹⁸.

¹⁶ Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 239.

¹⁷ Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 239.

¹⁸ Corrigan, *A Short guide to Writing about Film*, 45.



Figure 3. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Wes Anderson. 2014. one-point perspective shot, with secondary lighting and architectural details emphasizing the framing technique

This capstone researched the history of one-point perspective in the Renaissance, using *The Origins of Perspective*, to make an argument for the connection between architectural spaces and cinematic space by comparing the Renaissance use of one-point perspective in architectural space to architectural perspective in theatre design. In the Italian Renaissance architectural space and theatre scene architecture were linguistically interchangeable in the architect's mind, Italian theatre scenes were "largely the province of architects".¹⁹ Serlio writes in *Architecture, Libro Perspectivo* of tragic scenes, and comic scenes, describing the text by Vitruvius and "maintaining the different kinds of scenery."²⁰ Tragic scenes had columns and ruins and the imperial ornament for a palace. Comedic scenes were residential spaces, ordinary buildings void of excess and ornament, with windows and doors for small scalar relationships. Architecture became the scenography for theatre; "nearly synonymous"²¹ with each other, architecture and set designs were communicating the same linguistic cues of the Renaissance - that of intellectual power and intentional control over positive and negative space.

¹⁹ Damisch, Hubert. *The Origins of Perspective*. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994. 210

²⁰ Damisch, *The Origins of Perspective*, 201.

²¹ Damisch, *The Origins of Perspective*, 203. You hold to this to be rather that in this context perspective appears to be no more than a simple means in the service of architecture and scenography. Of architecture *and* scenography, if that's true that these "became nearly synonymous," as in the drawing by Peruzzi preserved in the Uffizi and which, while it may represent a theatre set, nonetheless seems to belong to the genre of architectural *vedute*.

Filippo Brunelleschi, (1377-1446) discovered one point perspective construction and introduced it to Renaissance art.²² One point perspective describes parallel lines converging into a single point, or “center” as Vitruvius wrote. The farther the viewer is from an object, the closer the lines seem to appear in perspective. Brunelleschi regarded the “problem of architecture [as] inseparable from that of representation and the problem of the representation of architecture inseparable from that of the architecture of representation”, or construction.²³ This suggests that Brunelleschi was using perspective as a representational tool and as a design tool in his architecture in order to manipulate designed space. One point perspective in architecture was used as an idealization of a space, illustrated in Piero della Francesca’s *Flagellation* (1455), “One point perspective orders and defines layered space”. The linear perspective “[is] both a representational device and a method of craft. It incorporate[s] a unified concept of design, integrating painting, architecture, and the structure of society and religion to embrace the complete image of Renaissance man and Humanism. The station point, symbolized the individual and his virtuosity in an ideal preferred view and location”.²⁴ The one point perspective was considered divine and virtuous, therefore designed spaces became religiously centered and perspectival. Renaissance artists were looking for a vantage point that illustrated their intellectual search for divinity in the manmade world, and the centralized one point perspective fulfilled that search.

In contrast to architectural perspective, the cinematic one-point perspective was commonly used in early years of filmmaking as a rudimentary scene-setting device due to low budgets and poor set mechanics. One point perspective became a traditional form of directing “simply out of necessity,” but as technology and methods changed in cinematography, directors began revisiting this old tool in a new modern light.²⁵ Filmmaking takes inspiration from the historical use of one-point perspective, typically composed in conjunction with “near perfect symmetry” and centrality²⁶. This emphasizes focal points and elicits a degree of control over the viewer “absorbing them into the dimension of the shot,” similar to the effect of one-point perspective in architecture¹⁰. Film and Architecture each create framed perspectives in order to further develop important symbolic or ideological undertones in each respective work. “In the [cinematic] sense a

²² Damisch, *The Origins of Perspective*, 156.

²³ Damisch, *The Origins of Perspective*, 168.

²⁴ Peterson, *Space and Anti Space*, 21.

²⁵ Corrigan, *A Short guide to Writing about Film*.56

²⁶ Jeff Saporito. *What is One Point Perspective*. (Filmmakers Handbook. Screen Prism. 2016.) 1

scene takes place in a dramatic context, hence the expression setting the scene ... or in an architectural sense, setting a mood. As the story unfolds, so the look and feel and structure of the scenes within a [film] will change".²⁷ So too for architecture, as a visitor moves about space the compositional character of the perceived scenes constantly change. The program and function unfold with the circulation, changing in viewports out windows or niches of interior space.

This capstone argues that the most consistent characteristic between Mies van der Rohe's architectural language and consequential cinematic space is the effect of one-point perspective. Both Mies and Anderson utilize one-point perspective as a tool to enhance their respective design ideologies. Anderson shoots in the planimetric style, a constraining style that relies on the qualities of one point perspective to create depth and dynamism in a scene. Mies was a modernist, creating his own architectural language³¹. He needed to introduce modernist anti-space to American society, and the one point perspective created the dynamic tension between object of house and house within nature. The house in some instances is an austere object against the fields of grass, and at other times melts into the landscape, projecting itself far into the depth of the woods.

As seen in Figure 5, the perspectival views of the Farnsworth House are illustrated in collage form. The Farnsworth House frames differing views, with great attention to foreground, middle ground, and background. The intervention of architectural tectonics on the site amplifies the context, pushing the viewer into the trees, enveloping them in programmed space, or thrusting them out onto the grasses. In the collage, one-point perspectival views are hyperbolically contrasted in the Farnsworth House, highlighting the extreme juxtaposition of perspectival variance in the project. These cinematic qualities are diagrammed and shown developed in Figure 4, using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* for reference.



Figure 4. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* Diagram. This diagram takes apart the layers of one scene in *the Grand Budapest Hotel*, illustrating the symmetry and variance of one-point perspectival views in just one of Anderson's planimetric scenes.

²⁷ Herbert Zettl. *Sight Sound Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics Sixth Edition*. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2011). 15



Figure 5. Farnsworth House Collage.

The Farnsworth House cinematic analysis: Axially Dominant Spaces

The Farnsworth House shifts major axes off of the center relative to the grid of structure, making the orchestrating the informal entry sequence, and flowing like the nearby river. The Farnsworth House, takes the individual out of nature, and into the weekend retreat. The Farnsworth House is a highly controlled space, yet frees the visitor to enjoy the context in a relaxed and inviting way. Mies van der Rohe uses asymmetry and the aggressive denial of centrality to undermine the apparent rigidity of formal, axially dominant classical space. Mies choreographs circulation within the authoritarian grid, withholding the satisfaction of entering on center – so much so that the front door is one foot off center of the grid.

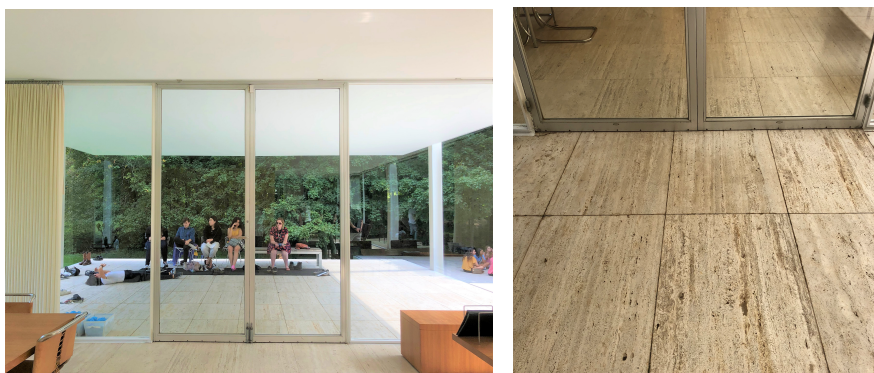


Figure 6&7. Farnsworth House. Mies van der Rohe. 1951. Front door positioned off grid.

Mies utilized the steel column in a transmuted austerity²⁸. He lifts the action in stages from ground, to porch, to entryway. By moving the visitor up 5 feet vertically, the house frames the site in strikingly different perspectives, because of the datum created by the floating planes of structure. Anderson composed scenes

²⁸ Vandenberg, Martiz. *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*. Phaidon Press; First Edition, 2003. 13

with the datum in mind as well, using characters, objects, existing architecture, and built sets to achieve linearity.

The Grand Budapest Hotel and The Farnsworth House differ in the location of their axes. In contrast to the Farnsworth House, the scenes in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* are minutely controlled on a similar perspectival grid, however the image is filled with much more objectivity than Mies' minimalistic design pallet. In a transformation of Mies' dictum: "less is more", Anderson wants to do "more with less."²⁹ *Grand Budapest Hotel* is rigidly centered, with delicate intrusions in the scene that erode the symmetry, thereby announcing or emphasizing a plot point.



Figure 8 (right) and Figure 9 (left) contrast the axiality and symmetry of the Farnsworth House to *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. In Figure 8, the axis of the column is shifted off the universal axis of the container of the house. In Figure 9, the central axis is rigidly on the main staircase, however the symmetry is eroded by the foreground character in front.

The center axis is always obvious in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, because Anderson also follows the "axis of the action" all the way from the composition of a scene, to the actual structure of a set. In other words, a scene filmed from the front, is then jump cut to in the next scene from a ninety degree turn, still following the line of action and continuing the axial centrality between each scene. This technique means we can see what the other characters are seeing from their vantage points, making each character a vanishing point and a vantage point. Depicted in figures 10,11, and 12, the axis of action is rotating around a conversation between two characters, the ninety degree turns allows the audience to see the characters reactions in real time.

²⁹ Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Abrams Publishing, 2015. 249



Figures 10, 11, & 12. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Wes Anderson. 2014. Planimetric scene sequences, following the axis of action. From dual dialogue, to $\frac{3}{4}$ character framing shots, the sequence follows the dialogue between two characters.

Anderson's scenes were storyboarded in advance, giving each scene a quality of symmetry and centrality, whether that symmetry is pure or eroded in the middle ground, foreground, or background is a consequence of the plot. The rigid centrality and balance of each scene is binding for Anderson; however his ability to micromanage the set design created dynamic and rich scenes that support the narratives. The *Grand Budapest Hotel* is a film set in three storylines, each set in their own times and aspect ratios. Anderson embraces centrality on static scenes, while choosing to break the center in action sequences. However, he never loses the balance and tension between objects in a scene whether he acknowledges the center or not³⁰. Anderson uses his characters as nodes of tension or balance in a scene, just as Mies uses circulation, program, and furniture as axis' in anti-space. Anderson creates symmetrical scenes in a multitude

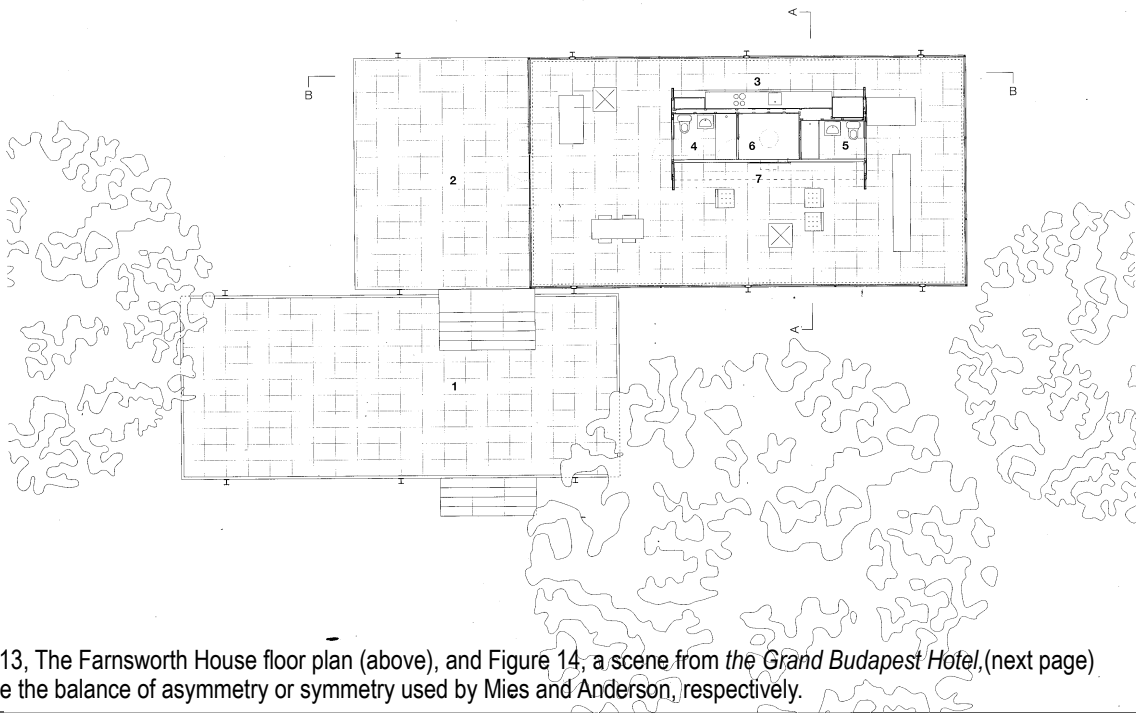


Figure 13, The Farnsworth House floor plan (above), and Figure 14, a scene from *the Grand Budapest Hotel*, (next page) illustrate the balance of asymmetry or symmetry used by Mies and Anderson, respectively.

³⁰ Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 306.

of ways; including creating tension either by a character off center in the foreground, or a series of object interventions in the background.



Figure 14, a scene from *the Grand Budapest Hotel*, (above) illustrates the balance of asymmetry or symmetry used by Anderson

The collages of this capstone make a comparison between Mies' design ideology and cinematic space by highlighting the cinematic spatial quality of axiality, symmetry, and centrality in the Farnsworth house. The composition of Figure 10 emphasizes Mies' denial of centrality, by regarding the anti-center as a focal point. The center creates tension by implementing void where the center horizontal and vertical axis would meet. This calls attention to Mies' intentional and active use of decentralized spaces within a centralized grid. In figure 11, the composition is a distorted view of Mies' entry sequence, highlighting the delicate asymmetry in the Farnsworth House, the collage mirrors the entry way and centers the door. These cinematic qualities: axiality, centrality, and symmetry, consequently enforced by Mies' architectural language, are distorted in collage to emphasize their role in creating cinematic architectural spaces.



Figures 15 & 16. Farnsworth House Collages, iterations showing the cinematic qualities of axiality, centrality, and symmetry.

These cinematic qualities are embedded in the Farnsworth House as a consequence of universal space. Mies was slipping the horizontal datum of the house and porch within a fixed grid of columns and thereby creating internal spaces that sectioned themselves off within the grid. This was architecturally done to created program and circulation, but unintentionally created cinematic scenes, each different from the other. Where Wes Anderson was using the scene to mediate between the character and the viewer, Mies is mediating between the viewer in and around the house in the context. The house creates cinematic spaces, illustrated below in Figure 17. The house is flat against the background, inhabiting the middle ground, whereas the porch and procession are pulled off the universal axis and occupy the foreground. The sharply defined shadows cut perpendicular to the house are a planimetric element that mirrors Wes Anderson's scenes.



Figure 17. Collage Image. The composition maintains each characteristic of cinematic space studies but this capstone. The central axis is hinged on the center column; the house is floating between foreground and background. The asymmetry of the background and foreground is balanced by the shifted symmetry of the house in the middle.

Methods & Process

The collages created from the capstone illustrate the powerful compositional qualities of one point perspective, centrality, symmetry, layering and depth of spaces in the Farnsworth House and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. I began with diagrams of the Grand Budapest Hotel, and analytical perspectives of the Farnsworth House generated from 3D modeling, to better understand the balance between perspective, centrality, and tension. Each week, a new series of collages demonstrated the scenographic effect of one point perspective on the Farnsworth house and the Grand Budapest Hotel. The collages are scenes set in

the Farnsworth house, informed by the cinematic effects of the Grand Budapest Hotel. The collaging techniques applied to the Farnsworth house were inspired by Mies' design style, clipping, shifting, and framing views.

The idea to create collage artifacts came as a blending of the mediums film and architecture. Film-makers storyboard their narratives to develop the scenography. Specifically, Wes Anderson uses a technique called "animatics"³¹ where he draws out each scene in one-point perspective and makes a short film of the sketches for reference for post-production and set design. Architecturally, designers have used painting and collaging techniques to illustrate one point perspectival space since the Renaissance, and Mies himself used collages as a means of designing space.

The capstone began immediately after the prospectus class. During Rome Study Abroad in the Spring of 2018, I photographed landscapes and architectural scenes in five different countries in axially dominant one point perspective to see the historical impact of the one point perspective on architectural scene setting. I also studied paintings in Italian museums to better understand the development of one point perspective in painting. I read *The Origins of Perspective* to familiarize myself with the history of perspective, beginning my research phase for the collages. The summer between the capstone and Rome, I read and acquired most of the reading materials needed to begin collaging in the fall. In the first few weeks of the fall semester, I analyzed and diagrammed scenes in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and created a rhino model of the Farnsworth House for perspective studies. Each subsequent week produced a new series of collages that built off the previous iterations. The collages were informed by the literature review as well.

The Farnsworth House employs deep dynamic space in the large gathering areas, and flattens the space for the more private program types. The compositional datum in the collages highlights the importance of datum in the Farnsworth House to frame space. This idea was mirrored in the diagrams of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, which illustrate Anderson's attention to balance of positive and negative space within a scene.

³¹ Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. 160. Animatics are storyboarding taken to the next level, where storyboards are actually cut together into animated sequences, the animatics become the road map.

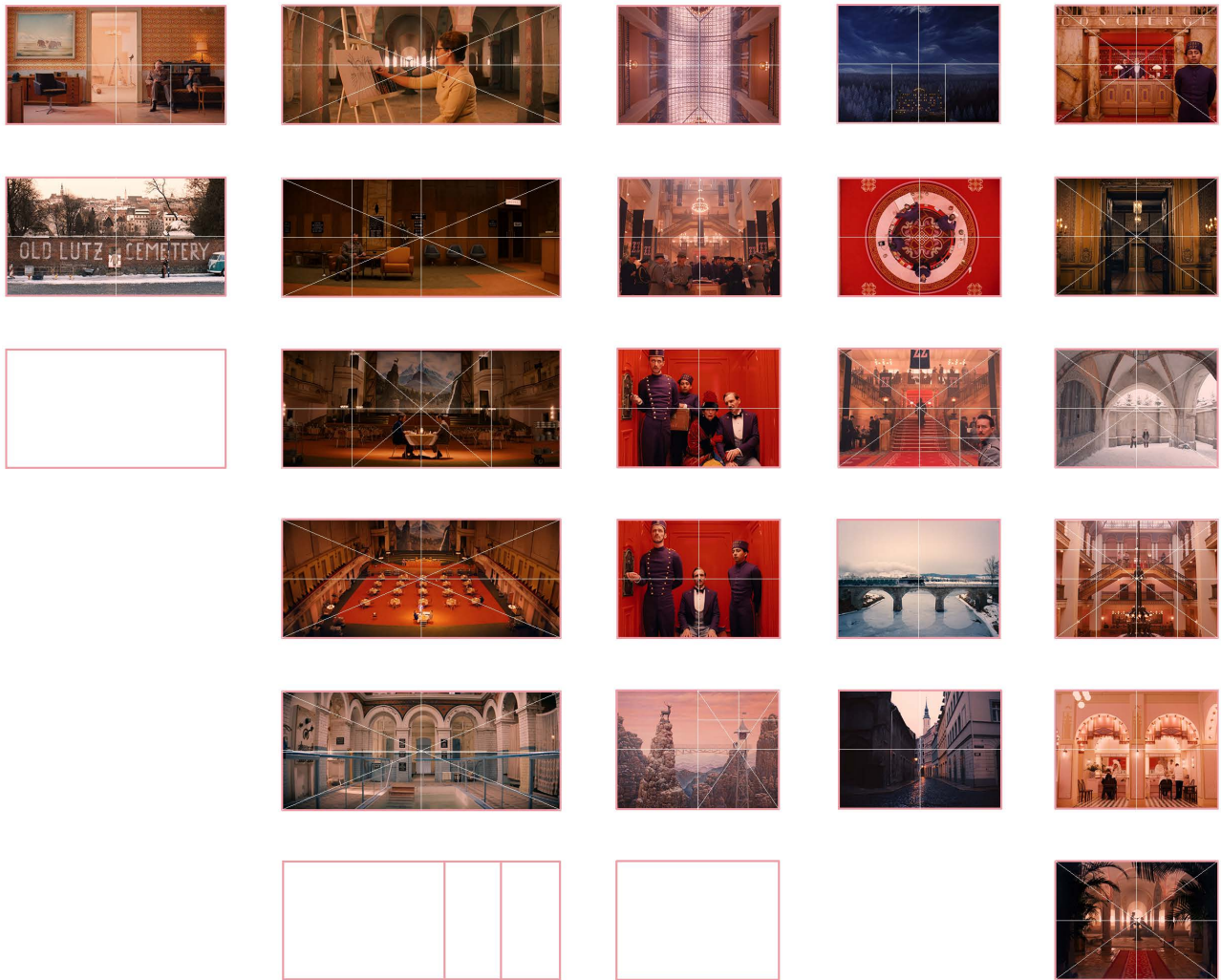


Figure 18. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* scene diagrams. Separated in to the three aspect ratios of the film, the diagrams illustrate the cinematic qualities of symmetry, centrality, depth of space, and linear datum's in the film.

The collages began to show the Farnsworth House as the protagonist of the scenes. The Farnsworth House is an object in space, however Mies' imagined universal space could freely inhabit any context. The house melts into the landscape between the vertical columns of steel, and floats above the ground giving the flat elevations a third dimension to interact with the ground. By studying the structure of a perspective in an architectural or cinematic scene one must look at the frame, the depth of space, the layering of foreground, middle ground and background, the major axes, the symmetry, and centrality. These factors are linked to the actual application and use of one-point perspective.

Because the Grand Budapest Hotel is shot in three timelines, Anderson switches between the aspect ratio that was typical of that time to signify a change in timeline during the film. Therefore, the collages adapt to the aspect ratios of the Grand Budapest Hotel: 1:1.35, 1:1.85, and 1:2.35. By comparing the types of scenes within the timelines, a consistent pattern emerged of the strict centrality Anderson is known for, and the “axis of action” mentioned above. The scene diagrams in figure 18 illustrate the proportional relationships Anderson was employing to emphasize a character or plot point. The aspect ratios give a new way to frame the Farnsworth House, having to re-proportion the house into collages with set frames led to an expository understanding of Mies’ framing techniques.



Figure 19, 20, & 21. Collage Images. The three images each represent one type of aspect ratio used in the collaging process.

The composition of the collages show the depth of space in relationship to the planes of space - for example, the plane of the glass is slid off axis from the structure on the following plane. Things appear flat in elevation or perspective but are very elegantly placed to float around each other in a much more dynamic way than it seems at the first glance. The collages are interior and exterior, to show the range of spaces in the small house.



Figure 22. Collage Image. This composition exaggerates the asymmetry of the house, and highlights the tectonic qualities of the kit of parts, by making the composition an analog of the physical elements of the house.



Figure 23. Collage Image, Northern Elevation, using the grid of the house as a field condition into the foreground, middle ground, and background. These interventions highlight the center of the house on a slim mullion, and reinforce the asymmetry of the house with abstract landscape images.

As the collages developed serially, I began layering the ground and sky in compositional strips determined on the order of the structure of the house. The house' underlying order was scored by field conditions of the context. Every space in the Farnsworth House has its own distinct characteristics. The deep space of the living room is framed by the roof overhang and balance by the negative space surrounding the porch; this is composed in figure 24. Here, the structure of the house has become a frame which bleeds out if the scene emphasizing the central datum. The house is both a protagonist and a medium through which

viewers relate space. There is an atmospheric connection between Mies' program layout and the narrative of a cinematic space. The harmony and balance in Mies' design is founded in the relativity of objects in space, the structure, the furniture, and the people inhabiting the space. Similar to the way Anderson balances his scenes.



Figure 24. Collage Image, emphasizing the balance between porch and living spaces, and the perspectival thrusts of each.



Figure 25. Collage Image. A playful account of the Farnsworth House narrative, blended with the narrative of The Grand Budapest Hotel. The composition shows the house in the middle ground, as an object floating on the landscape, pinned down only by slivers of shadow.

The collages in this capstone reacted to the narrative of the house, the Farnsworth House was designed to be a place to live freely in nature, integrating the tasks of living within the landscape. The house is unfolded, clipped, and shifted to directly compare the atmospheric qualities of one scene to the next. The house appears like a standing proscenium in the landscape, framing a perspective Mies found worthy of exposition.

Results and Value

The collages each yielded their own interesting results. As each series evolved it became clear the house was in fact creating cinematic space. Mies van der Rohe created cinematic space, and like a cinematographer he populated his scenes with furniture and function. Anderson does the same, making a statement of how scenes should be directed by stringently sticking to the planimetric style shot. Mies' collages were a source of inspiration for the prospectus direction, and the ephemeral quality of anti-space suggested in his compositions are realized in the Farnsworth house, and further highlighted within the capstone collages.

The collages also are an investigation into the datum of the house. The planes in space are based off of a rational geometric grid, but slip past the structure, creating a tense relationship within the pieces of the kit of parts. The house is sliding away from the porch, from the stairs, from the circulation and thereby slipping from the universal axis. The house is floating between ground and sky, only held down by columns which are slipping against horizontal planes. The directions of the collage pieces were composed to highlight datum lines of the house registering in foreground, middle ground, and background. The column is translated as the trunk of a tree, clamping the house program within the context.

The collages each regard cinematic space, informed by the framing and spatial qualities of the Farnsworth House and *The Grand Budapest Hotel's* planimetric, central scenes. In the Farnsworth House the denial of centrality appears in the collages to be an informal approach to living conditions within free space, by shifting the procession off center, Mies relaxes the visitor without relaxing the architecture. This subtle atmospheric effect is paralleled when Wes Anderson is following the "axis of the scene" in figures 10, 11, and 12. Anderson uses an overarching symmetry and erodes the structure with characters or objects in the scene. Mies does this in the Farnsworth house by pulling the horizontal datum of the house off of the column grid, and centering the entire length of the house on a mullion.

Figure 26. An example of collage pieces compositionally used to reinforce the datum of structure and its relationship to the foreground, middle ground, and background.



Figure 27 shows the northern elevation of the Farnsworth House, in which the upper level of the house is centered on a mullion. As seen in the background, the datum of the porch slips past the contained spaces, eroding the symmetrical structure of the house. However, this effect does not create a sense of imbalance, the asymmetry gives a balanced tension between the house and the porch.

Conclusion

The capstone gives an interesting perspective on the architecture of Mies van der Rohe, and reinterprets the association between architectural space and cinematic space. The two are not so different, and the atmospheric qualities achieved in each are profoundly influential to the way people inhabit and interact with space. The Farnsworth House fundamentally creates cinematic space as a consequence of Mies van der Rohe's universalist architecture. The collages created for this capstone illustrate the cinematic qualities of the Farnsworth house which create site specific atmospheric scenes throughout the spaces, based upon Mies' own beliefs in universal, free flowing space. The hypothesis that Mies created cinematic spaces is verified in the successful comparison between Mies' architectural ideology illustrated in the Farnsworth House and the cinematic qualities of planimetric scene setting as employed *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

Bibliography

Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel: The Illustrated Screenplay (Opus Screenplay)*. Opus Books, 2014

Bernard Tschumi Architects. *The Manhattan Transcripts*. 1976 – 1981

Caldwell, Michael. *Flooded at the Farnsworth House. The Art of Architecture*. Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. 2005

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short guide to Writing about Film. Third Edition*. Longman. 1998

Damisch, Hubert. *The Origins of Perspective*. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994

Shulze, Franz. *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*. University of Chicago Press, 2012

Lindenmayer, Mike. *The Cinematography of Architecture: a Narrative Perspective*. Post Magazine, 2015

Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Rakennustieto Publishing, 2008

Peterson, Steven Kent. *Space and Anti Space*. Harvard Architectural Review Publishing, 1980

Saporito, Jeff. *What is One Point Perspective*. Filmmakers Handbook. Screen Prism. 2016

Tafuir, Manfredo. *Modern Architecture*. New York : H. N. Abrams; First Edition, 1979

Vandenberg, Martiz. *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*. Phiadon Press; First Edition, 2003

Zettl, Herbert. *Sight Sound Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics Sixth Edition*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2011

Zoller Seitz, *The Wes Anderson Series: The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Abrams Publishing, 2015

Image Credits

Figure 1. Mies van der Rohe, *The Brick Country House*. 1923. *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*. Phiadon Press; First Edition, 2003

Figure 2. The Farnsworth House. Russel Rudzinski. 2018

Figure 3. Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 4. Davis, Rylie. Diagram using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* : Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 5. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 6. The Farnsworth House. Russel Rudzinski. 2018

Figure 7. The Farnsworth House. Russel Rudzinski. 2018

Figure 8. The Farnsworth House. Russel Rudzinski. 2018

Figure 9. Davis, Rylie. Diagram using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* : Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 10. Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 11. Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 12. Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 13. Mies van der Rohe, *The Farnsworth House*. 1951. *Farnsworth House Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*. Phiadon Press; First Edition, 2003

Figure 14. Davis, Rylie. Diagram using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* : Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 15. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 16. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 17. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 18 Davis, Rylie. Diagram using *The Grand Budapest Hotel* : Anderson, Wes. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Film. Directed by Wes Anderson. Los Angeles: American Empirical Pictures, 2014.

Figure 19. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 20. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 21. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 22. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 23. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 24. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 25. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 26. Davis, Rylie. *The Farnsworth House series*. Collage Artifact. 2018.

Figure 27. *The Farnsworth House*. Russel Rudzinski. 2018

Collage Catalog

These collages were produced during the capstone as representational artifacts illustrating the cinematic qualities of the Farnsworth House.

