

Fellows



Thomas Elsaesser
IFK_Urban Fellow

Duration of fellowship
01. October 2003 bis 31. January 2004

Thomas Elsaesser

PROJECT TITLE

Promoting Planned Living: The "New Architecture" of the 1920s as Urbanist Media Space

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is part of a larger research initiative "Cinema Europe-Media Europe", tracking transformations of public space in Europe in the last century, especially those where the screen media may be said to have acted as a conceptual metaphor, helping to establish typically cinematic ways of inhabiting space and modulating time. Rather than concentrating on "cinematic cities" and their fictional or discursive representations, the focus is on the genealogies of different cinematic imaginaries and their dispositifs (visual, aural, graphic, architectural), as they were mobilised in urbanist discourses from the 1920s onwards. Behind the bold attempts made in the mid-1920s to reform domestic life, change affective relations between the sexes and revolutionize urban living by means of planned initiatives in housing, transport, furniture and design, one can detect new interfaces – as well as zones of friction – between the public and private that only came to dominate the debates in the latter half of the century. Many of the initiatives (*Neues Bauen*, *Rotes Wien*, *International Style*) not only utilised the modern media for their promotion and implementation in startlingly innovative ways; their functionalist ethic, political radicalism and modular logic, now often seen as misguided from an urbanist perspective, survive as templates for the creation of a contemporary media space, at least when considered as an alliance of avant-garde representational techniques and high-tech industrial production in the service of a new politics of "experience" (mediated immediacy). The research to be undertaken is thus historical as well as conceptual: to begin establish a corpus of visual material and moving images produced in different European cities to promote planned environments of living and leisure; and to probe the purchase of architectural concepts such as "the cinematic apparatus" and "narrative space" on what are finally ways of organizing time, the body and motion. What the new urbanism owed to the cinema was that the planned city was always already the programmable city.

CV

Professor of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam and Chair of Research in Film and Television Studies

Publications

New German Cinema: A History (New Brunswick 1989); Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative (London 1990); Writing for the Medium: Television in Transition (Amsterdam 1994); Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject (Amsterdam 1996); Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable (Amsterdam 1998); with Michael Wedel: The BFI Companion to German Cinema (London 1999); Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary (London 2000); Metropolis. Der Filmklassiker von Fritz Lang (Hamburg 2001); with Warren Buckland: Studying Contemporary American Film (London 2002); Filmgeschichte und frühes Kino. Archäologie eines Medienwandels (München 2002)

