

ARCHITECTURE OF THE GAZE

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1. Introduction

This paper attempts to investigate how the “gaze” is conceptualized and understood by analyzing the tools that represent the gaze and the philosophical interpretation of the gaze, which helps to go into how the gaze contributes to the production of specific urban spaces, and the power relations and spatial relations embodied in the gaze. The interaction between contemporary social space and the human act of gaze produces both contradictions and alienations. Under the network of gaze, the interaction between space and gaze is accomplished through people’s behavior and use of space and the spatial interpretation it represents. The article first examines the tools of the gaze, then moves to discuss the complexities and interactions created by sight, elements, and space in urban space, and finally forms systematic connections to investigate the structure of the gaze. Focusing on the structure of the gaze, the article attempts to explain the role and influence of the gaze in the city by conceptualizing the spatial and philosophical aspects of the structure of the gaze and attempts to discuss theoretical background and case studies to provide spatial research and design solutions for the current structure of the urban gaze.

2. Conceptualization and interpretation of the gaze

i. Terminology of the gaze

In the fields of critical theory, sociology, and psychoanalysis, the gaze refers to an individual’s (or group’s) awareness and perception of other individuals, other groups, or themselves. The art historian Margaret Olin, in her entry on the terminology of the gaze, emphasizes that the gaze is a bilateral term, which emphasizes both the person gazing and the person being gazed at, thus linking visual form theory to social theory. ¹When the two sides of the gaze are analyzed together with the complex environment, the gaze forms a visual structure that temporarily connects the two sides, allowing them and the environment they are connected to be seen temporarily as a system.

ii. Position of the gaze

Explaining the position of the gaze, Jacques Lacan says: “In the field of vision, the gaze is external. The gaze I encounter is not the gaze of the beholder, but the gaze I imagine in the realm of the Other”. ²The location of the gaze determines that the gaze is a non-unidirectional system; the gaze of the self, the imagined gaze, and the mutual gaze constitute the system of the gaze. The logic of the gaze, therefore, lies in the dialectical relationship between seeing and

¹ Margaret Olin, “Critical Terms for Art History; Chicago; London; University of Chicago Press Gaze,” (1996).

² Andrei Gornyxh, “Trait, Identity, and the Gaze in Jacques Lacan,” in The Palgrave Handbook of Image Studies (Springer, 2021).

being seen, actual seeing and imagined seeing, the object of seeing and the subject of seeing. ³The eye of looking belongs to the subject, while the gaze is located on the side of the object, which is gazing at me, but I cannot see it; I know that the object is gazing at me, but I do not know where the object is gazing at me. That is, the object is always looking at me from a place I do not know.⁴

iii. The space of the gaze and power relations

In the horror stories of Medusa, the visual has been associated with power and taboos. The most famous contemporary analysis of vision and power comes from Michel Foucault, whose 'panopticon' uses vision as a form of social surveillance and self-regulation. In Foucault's understanding, the gaze is given space, which is seen as a means of enacting power. The power of the visual is exemplified in Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. In Foucault's words, the 'primary function of the panopticon' is to 'induce a state of conscious, permanent visibility among the prisoners to ensure the automatic operation of power'⁵. The eye under the gaze establishes a hierarchical relationship with the body, which implies a psychological difference in power relations. The gazer usually has a higher status than the gazed upon, in which case the relationship between the two as objects of study is a direct result of the gaze. As a form of power associated with the eye and vision, the gaze is a projection

3 ibid

4 ibid

5 Michel Foucault, *Panopticism* (Routledge, 2020).

of desire that implies a specific discourse of power which inevitably leads to 'control'.⁶

The gaze brings a sense of control and anxiety as a direct result of people seeing the gaze and feeling they are being gazed at; they lose their autonomy and become the object of the gaze of others. In this state of anxiety, people's behavior and perception of the self are affected. Urban elements, as the carriers of the gaze, are trained and reminded in repeated experiences, which makes these elements, originally without any tendency, stand-ins for the gaze. That is, when these elements are seen, people feel the pressure they are under from this aspect. Thus, they are controlled by this pressure of the gaze, subconsciously changing their behavior in different areas of their behavior.

3. Composition of the gaze

i. Eyes

The eye as the most direct representative of the gaze also becomes the basic structure of gaze - an examination of the environment without the aid of any instrument, using only the optical properties of the eye. The gaze that one anticipates from others is also based on the performance of the eye. Conversely, when faced with other techniques or means of viewing, one is unable to intuitively experience the perception of being gazed at due to unfamiliarity.

6 ibid

ii. Camera tools

Camera tools have become much more frequent in the world than they were a few decades ago and have made people aware that cameras are no less important for physical examination and surveillance than the eye. And the images captured by camera tools have become a rational testimony because they produce substance. But camera technology is not omnipotent, and performance limitations often prevent them from being as flexible as the human eye, so cameras are more likely to have obvious and well-defined blind spots in the field of vision.

The eye-like structure and form of the camera, and the direct response of form to function, highlight the duty that the camera represents - the gaze. A camera is a mysterious object: it does not have an eye, but it has a 'gaze'. While the person being watched is well aware that the camera itself cannot be seen, they are also aware that someone is watching it, or may be watching it. Nonetheless, the space being watched is considered to be only a passive container in which the object being observed exists, and because video surveillance usually reduces everything to a visual, it cannot recognise situations that require a more sensitive interpretation - the watched gaze is insensitive to who comes and goes, and to feelings or intentions, meaning that as long as the object is in range, the subject in it has no intention of committing a visually recognisable crime.⁷

7 Hille Koskela, "'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature

iii. Spatial elements and media of the gaze

The elements of space allow the gaze to change its mode of action and position. They block the line of sight, altering the direction of the gaze and affecting the visible field of vision, while also blocking the body and reducing the potential exposure of the gazer's body. In the case of the window, for example, the window as a medium of observation blocks the body's advance but also enhances the gaze - the width of the window reduces the range of vision, the height of the window obscures the lower part of the body, and the reflection of the glass blocks the view while allowing the person to partially see a mirror image of themselves while looking ahead at this angle. The gazer near the window can always maximize his or her obscuration thus creating an invisible area, while the gazed can almost always be fully observed at a certain angle. This disparate insight and visibility lead to a difference in visual power that exacerbates the effect of the gaze.

iv. Visibility

Visibility is so important in the gaze as an instrument of power control that the 'fear of dark space' represented by the unseen realm in the urban space filled with the gaze is the intolerable and threatening 'zone of disorder'. ⁸Opacity, on the other hand, is of *Urban Space*," 24, no. 2 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200668791096>.

8 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*

another important device. The opacity of the gaze is expressed in the isolation of visual as well as spatial relationships. Walking through the complex spatial environment of the gaze, one never has a holistic grasp of the space but is limited to the part of it that he/she is in at the time, and a sense of unease arises. While the former is a more immediate physical sensation, the latter has a more thoughtful involvement.⁹

4. The architecture of the gaze

"The ancients built Valdrada on the shores of a lake, with houses all verandas one above the other, (...) sees two cities: one erect above the lake, and the other reflected, upside down. Nothing exists or happens in the one Valdrada that the other Valdrada does not repeat, because The city was so constructed that its every point would be reflected in its mirror, (...), Valdrada's inhabitants know that each of their actions is, at once, that action and its mirror-image, which possesses the special dignity of images, and this awareness prevents them from succumbing for a single moment to chance and forgetfulness."

--Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*¹⁰

i. Vibrant structures - stages for gazing

People in the city are not isolated, quite the contrary: the city is a space of infinite encounters, where its inhabitants come and go, playing the role of censors in different

(Vintage, 1980).

9 He Weiling, "浅析约翰·海杜克的菱形系列与墙宅系列," (2018).

10 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1978).

positions. They view the city with as much scope as their eyes can encompass, and these gazes contain positive, unifying, negative, anxious, ambiguous implications, and the spatial quality of the city is subverted by these omnipresent gazes. This shifting tension leaves the city in a state of uncertainty - the uncertainty of its internal boundaries, the uncertainty of its territory - which means that almost everyone in the city within reach of the vision is under the gaze. By stepping into different spaces, the inhabitants of the city are confronted with different amounts of gaze from different angles and directions. In this ad hoc, improvised relationship, each person plays a role. The subject of the gaze presents different behaviors in a space with different degrees of gaze, just as the actor's behavior changes as the stage changes. The notion of space under the gaze becomes a complex collection of relations between the reciprocal subject and object being gazed upon, the taut and loose connections revealing the quality of space, the city thus being reorganized into a structure of stage-like dynamism by the multiple ambiguous relations of the gaze.

ii. Silent Structures - Cities under Surveillance

Developments in surveillance technology are influencing the nature of space, even if the space under surveillance is always limited. The space that is photographed is 'considered to be potential space'.¹¹ It is a

11 Steve %J Annals of the Association of American Geographers Herbert, "The Normative Ordering of Police Territoriality: Making and Mark-

stage-like space that can be entered and exited, and when one is in it, one is seen as an inactive object of surveillance. In 1929, Dziga Vertov made the film 'Man with a movie camera', which used a wide range of cinematic techniques to present life in Moscow and Ukrainian cities at the time. The film has been described as Vertov's practice of the term Kino-eye, as there are no actors in the film, and the film is made entirely through a montage of fragments of the photographed content, which is emphasized by the 'mechanical eye' containing multiple locations, to represent the city as seen only by the mechanical eye. Compared to the human eye, the 'mechanical eye' claims to be everywhere, not only in public spaces but also in intimate changing rooms and baby baths; not only at the height and perspective of the human eye but also accelerating, tilting, and approaching. "We can't improve the construction of the eye, but we can keep improving the camera."¹² The technology and means of Kino eyes swear by the way machines see, images that are confined in images like cities under surveillance technology, connecting cities with fragments. But the difference is that the inhabitants of the city are already aware of, and see, the surveillance gazing at each part of the frame. The space is relatively set aside in the dead space of the camera lens. Nor does the position of the camera indicate the position of the person behind it; there is no personal contact between the security personnel and the public. The photographed person does not know if someone is watching, how far ing Space with the Los Angeles Police Department," 86, no. 3 (1996).

12 Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Univ of California Press, 1984).

away the watcher is, or the spatial position of the watcher to him or her.¹³ The surveilling gaze thus makes "anonymity the norm"¹⁴. The person is reduced to an impersonal doll-like body, and surveillance is reduced to the observation of bodily movement. The technical device that separates the two sides of the gaze relationship makes it difficult to see the space of surveillance as a living, experiential space. The surveillance gaze is characterized by its paradox: forms are simultaneously presented as transparent and opaque. While everything (and everyone) being watched becomes increasingly visible, the forces (and potential helpers) behind this surveillance become less visible.¹⁵ But the city also thus becomes a living, but silent, collection of spaces within the boundaries of fixed-frame imagery.

iii. The structure of the counter gaze

"A house for the inhabitant who refuses to participate' is part of the 'Venice Project' conceived by John Hejduk in 1979. In addition to the architecture, the project illustrates three key components of the house through text: a stone tower, a house for the solitary inhabitant consisting of 12 individual units, and a 6 foot-deep hole in the ground. Each room has a specific function, subtly di-

13 David Lyon, *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life* (McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 2001).

14 Matthew G %J Geografiska Annaler: Series B Hannah, *Human Geography*, "Space and the Structuring of Disciplinary Power: An Interpretive Review," 79, no. 3 (1997).

15 Koskela.

viding coherent human life into individual compartments: a room with a bed, a room with a dining table and a chair, a room with a bath, etc. Most importantly, an empty room facing a mirror on the tower outside provides the occupant with a special moment to 'gaze back' at himself, both literally and metaphorically. Unlike the classical mirror object which returns the image of the subject to itself, in this building it is reiterated as a unit, and the mirror exchange does not equate re-images but rather activates a circuitous network of relations through the arrangement of objects, each of which returns the gaze of the other.¹⁶

The gaze and counter-gaze in this unfinished project constitute a structure of resistance to the gaze. And the undoubtedly complex structure of the gaze constitutes an interwoven and complex urban environment in which even the most ordinary residents become aware of and resist the omnipresent feeling of being the subject of the gaze. Surveillance cameras are vandalized with graffiti, high walls are erected around neighborhoods to prevent prying eyes, shades are closed daily; there is also the Chinese artist Yulu Ge who climbs in front of the surveillance cameras and watches the camera in turn until the person behind them appears. The structure of the gaze begins to show signs of resistance, the site of the gaze becomes the process of the gaze, the object of

¹⁶ Mitchell, E., 2022. THE NATURE THE-ATRE OF JOHN HEJDUK. [online] Boeldieu.com. Available at: <<https://www.boeldieu.com/leonard/Observation/Observation/PAROLE%20D'ARCHITECTES/F048707E-OCA4-41B8-8690-B87709C92F18.html>> [Accessed 10 January 2022].

the gaze becomes the subject of the gaze. The blind spot becomes a gathering place for those who resist, the space of the gaze becomes a testing ground for resistance to the gaze.

iv. The architecture of the gaze

The complexity of the gaze reconfigures the complexity of the city, as space makes the gaze the privilege of the gazer, and the gaze redefines the nature of space. Whether it is the space of the various technologies of gaze, the space of the most rudimentary human gaze, or the space and means of resistance to gaze, buildings and structures play a relatively stable role in this. While buildings and components tend not to move significantly, the act of gaze occurs and disappears randomly at various points, but architecture plays a role in guiding and generating the gaze. The network of the gaze is made up of the stability of the building and the instability of the gaze.

Alfred Hitchcock establishes a fixed-view panoramic scene in the film *Rear Window*: just as a panoramic prison combines spectacle with surveillance, the spatial scene in the film takes the form of a conical imaginary whose apex consists of the protagonist's living room (or his head) and then extends towards the bottom of the courtyard.¹⁷The

¹⁷ Jacobs, Steven. "Architecture of the gaze: Jeffries apartment & courtyard." In *Toward a New Interior: An anthology of interior design theory*, pp. 546-558. Princeton Architectural

protagonist has a set of specialist observation equipment (binoculars, telephoto lens) to keep an eye on his neighbors, and the introduction of these optical instruments adds more perspectives and ways of focusing on the single scene. In such a structure, architecture becomes an instrument of gaze, a kind of camera obscura within the city limits. The buildings and spaces in the film play a stable role, existing as spaces where the gaze takes place, while the protagonist is invisible but variable as a gazer. He can advance to expose himself to the light or retreat into the darkness where the light does not shine. It is possible to alter the way of seeing with optical instruments or to overview the events taking place in these windows with the eyes alone. Like the guard in the circular prison, whose absolute power is based on unidentifiable darkness, the voyeur in *Rear Window* hides in the darkness and retreats into the darkness that hides his entire body as soon as there is a possibility of discovery. The space in the film provides the solitary viewer with an overview of the many separated individuals.¹⁸The voyeurs see an anonymous collection of urban life, part of a society of autonomous individuals. Space in Film discusses the relationship between urban alienation and the power of the visual, especially in an era where cameras and other surveillance systems are ubiquitous in public and private spaces.¹⁹*Rear Window* announces a postmodern urban space whose boundaries are no longer defined by architectural structures, but by screens and lenses.

Press, 2011.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic urbanism: A history of the modern from reel to real*. London: Routledge, 2006.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the architecture of the gaze is seen as a structure of spatial power relations. At the same time, the relationship between the gaze and architecture expresses the complexity of the city. The architecture of the gaze moves from the human body to the extension and limitation of the human gaze by tools, creating a city today that is redefined by the boundaries formed by the camera and the screen, no longer a unified system, but a fragmented, discontinuous, multi-layered and multi-thick urban form. The article mentions the film sets in *Rear Window* and John Hejduk's paper architecture, which is more theoretical and idealized discussions, but the discussions they carry about the structure of the gaze ultimately form their unique understanding and philosophical reflections on the relationship between space and gaze, and these spatial concepts of the structure of the gaze shape our understanding of the role of the gaze.

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