Spatial Depiction vs. Spatial Simulation:
*An investigation into spatial animation in stop-motion and CGI based fictional feature-length films*

Our reception and experience of imagined interior space in animated films is defined by the type of spatial depiction or spatial simulation used. Depiction illustrates or portrays something imaginary through creative technique, whereas simulation tries to emulate qualities of what we recognise as real in an imaginary narrative. This body of research is concerned with which type of animated spatial construction is easier to understand. The enquiry contrasts *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009) (a stop-motion feature-length-film by Wes Anderson) with *The BFG* (2016) (Steven Spielberg's heavily CGI animated feature-length-film).

My concern throughout the thesis is that designers have a responsibility to provide authentic representations of space in order to prevent an excess of computer-generated content. Contemporary theatre and film industries are saturated with Hollywood blockbusters and CGI. Overuse of such techniques risks replacing and/or undermining the set-designer's role to invent, create, design and build in order to make the performing arts world more real.

The exploration of animated spatial construction methods and problems concerning the overuse of CGI is informed by Jean Baudrillard's theory of 'Simulacra and Simulation', which provides insight into why CGI is more difficult for audiences. Held alongside Marshall McLuhan's theories surrounding prior-media from his book *The Medium is the Message*, this shows how heavy use of CGI is challenging because it lacks the precursor plane of media for audiences to recognise. The favourable notion is that stop-motion is a more appropriate spatial depiction because audiences have a familiarity with it; this is supported by research into the argument of handmade vs. mass produced.

The thesis concludes by explaining architectonic elements of *Fantastic Mr Fox* and why the crossover between architecture and cinema provides for a truer cinematic depiction of spatial narrative. Combining the camera with the architectural section can create a hybrid of cinema and architecture, thus highlighting stop-motion as a more effective spatial depiction in fictional feature-length films. Understanding animated filmic space in this way will enrich the design of new scenarios of interior spaces.
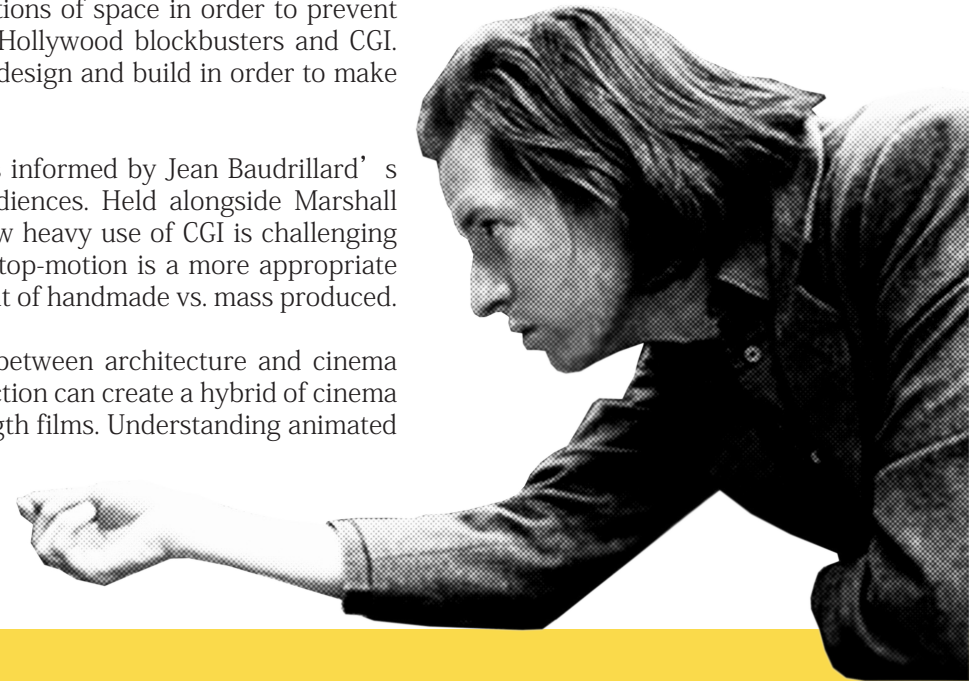
KEY WORDS

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