



# Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture

By Michael Tawa

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Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture aims to explore parallel approaches to the conceptualisation and composition of place, space, time, materiality and narrative in cinematographic and architectural practices. Beyond drawing useful implications for design, the book investigates a range of themes to mobilise a reconsideration of cinema and architecture as non-representational practices. It suggests that films and buildings can be read and designed as assemblages not directed to the formal expression of meaning, but to the framing of strategic and enabling conditions of emergent sense, realised within the tectonic and material conditions of the cinematic and the architectural as such. Succinct analyses of precedents in film, music, painting and architecture are used to foreground tectonic and compositional characteristics related to spatiality, temporality and narrative that are transferable across disciplines and practices. The thematic framework of the book engages theoretical material by Heidegger, Simondon, Deleuze, Nancy, Agamben and Stiegler. Classical modernist and postmodernist films by Dreyer, Antonioni, Hitchcock, Godard, Paradjanov, Tarkovski, Herzog, Lynch and Heneke are analysed side by side with important traditional, modernist and contemporary buildings, including works by Corbusier, Scarpa, Lewerentz, Zumthor and Markli. Illustrated with drawings and photographs by the author, this book should be of interest to practitioners and students of art, design, cinema and the built environment who wish to expand the creative scope and resonance of their work.

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*By Michael Tawa*

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## **Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture** By Michael Tawa **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Michael Tawa's writing moves between architecture and film, producing unexpected resonances in the reader. This is a book for creative designers, who will find themselves absorbed in arguments and informed by erudition, but the real point of the reading will be for the effect it will have on the reader's world. Things that passed unnoticed will come into focus. By dwelling on acutely observed moments in films and buildings, Tawa evokes the special qualities that make them memorable, and shows their rapports with one another. Buildings house everyday activities, and films often show us things that are not in themselves remarkable, but with careful juxtaposition, a memory or a shadow, dripping water or brute stone can evoke a sense of something much more deeply interfused. One comes away from the text wanting to act on intuitions that were previously dormant, but which have been gently roused and turn out to have a life of their own. -- Andrew Ballantyne, Professor of Architecture, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

In this elegant, erudite work, Michael Tawa traces the points of intersection and difference between architecture and cinema, touching on the materiality of space, time, light and sound - how they are experienced, held in our memories, and reactivated. With great sensitivity and originality Professor Tawa draws on a range of theoretical perspectives offered by Heidegger, Deleuze, Derrida and Nancy, amongst others, putting them to work in his analysis of the built environment and cinema. Arguing that it is often the more discordant elements between disciplines that produce the most productive resonances, the reader is invited to imagine possibilities for enacting new opportunities for thinking, experiencing and making. It is for this reason that *Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture*, provides such a valuable resource for emerging and established artists, architects and filmmakers, as well as a broader, critically engaged, reading audience --Dr. Elizabeth Presa, Head of The Centre for Ideas, Victoria College of Art, The University of Melbourne

From my own philosophical perspective, Michael Tawa's work presents a double interest which at the same time situates it at the heart of our fin de siècle contemporary theory: 1) on the one hand, an interest at the level of sense (sense and not meaning), which constitutes, as we know, an acute question for our late modernity threatened by nihilism (or the negation of sense): by proposing the project of a design lexicon which goes beyond all technical or thematic dictionaries, he aims to renew and displace the entire field of architectural reflection, firstly by the choice of terms, then by the treatment of their semantic, etymological, evocative or suggestive values. ... 2) On the other hand, an interest as the question of being-in-common, that is to say the question of pre-political, pre-social plurality (or else beyond the social and political maybe) that makes of us (human beings, but also all beings) beings-with as essentially as they are, each one and in groups, singular beings. ... Hence the double form of this research significance of design and design of place, questions of place for sense engages a resolutely active and practical thinking, a philosophy in action of design as that which traces sense or possibilities of sense. This thinking, which it seems to me takes up again the most fundamental vocation of architecture, appears perfectly adapted to the formation of architects, urbanists and landscape architects. ...Michael Tawa rests his work on very solid and broad knowledge of the great contemporary philosophical currents, as well as the artistic and ethical givens and sensibilities of a world in whose diversity he moves with great ease of discourse and design, engaging concepts, words, images or tonalities from all sorts of traditions and cultural settings. --Jean-Luc Nancy, Philosopher

About the Author

Michael Tawa is an architect and Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney, Australia. Between 2006 and 2009 he was Professor of Architectural Design at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. He has practiced and taught architecture in Alice Springs, Adelaide and Sydney. His current projects include a web-based Design Lexicon, a forthcoming monograph, *Theorising the Project: A Thematic Approach to Architectural Design*, and research on the concepts of emergence and translation in architectural design.

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