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into which light could penetrate at certain points, producing the image.

#### Film and Photogram

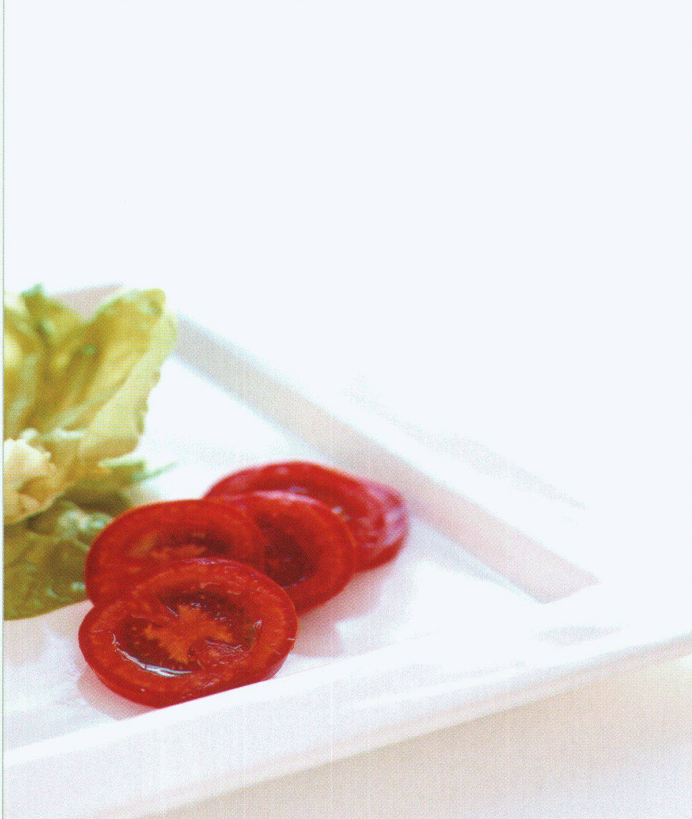
What is meant here by the word “image”? What does Smith actually perceive, given that his vision is necessarily reduced to a minimum on this night-time car ride? Does he really see only a post-industrial landscape with fragments of architecture scattered through it? How could this space be portrayed, and by what synthesis might it be captured? After all, Smith himself noted its resistance to representation (“there is no way you can frame it...”). With the wisdom of hindsight, the answer is clear: through the filmic paradigm. In the following, however, it is important to understand the concept of the “filmic” in the sense of Roland Barthes, who did not see it in a sequence of moving images, but in a montage of images, that is to say of individual images – or, as Barthes writes – of photograms: “If, however, the specific filmic (the filmic of the future) lies not in movement but in an inarticulable third meaning that neither the simple photograph nor figurative painting can assume since they lack the diegetic horizon, ... then the ‘movement’ regarded as the essence of film is not animation, flux, mobility, ‘life’, copy, but simply the framework of a permutational unfolding ...”.<sup>2</sup> With its concrete media, that is to say photography, video or film, this

paradigm provides the means of representing duration, process, narrative moments and drama, memories and associations as they are linked with the experience of architecture.

Another outstanding representative of a discourse addressing the relationship between architecture and art is Robert Smithson (1938 – 1973). Smithson was enormously influential (especially for a number of younger artists) and, like few other artists of his generation, considered the possible influence of cinema on the representation of architecture. His work is teeming with designs, drawings, photographs and texts that focus on the theme of “atemporal” architecture and “anti-monuments” situated not above the earth’s surface, but sunk deep into the geologically stratified (and even metaphorical) ground. It is no coincidence that his most famous work is a combination of anti-architecture and film: a filmic essay on the Spiral Jetty structure that he created in Salt Lake, Utah in 1972 (now submerged below the waterline). Like Tony Smith, Smithson was also interested in the dialectics of appearance and disappearance in the context of architecture, and the topos of the dark room also occurs in his work. His unrealized project “Towards the Development of a Cinema Cavern ‘The Moviegoer as Spelunker’” (1971) in which Smithson dreams of a cinema in a cave, is far more than a mere footnote to his oeuvre. The cave appears as a

kind of a natural camera obscura, the ideal trope linking both aspects of architecture and cinema within a programme critical of representation: “What I would like to do is build a cinema in a cave or in an abandoned mine, and film the process of its construction. That film would be the only film shown in the cave. The projection booth would be made out of crude timbers, the screen carved out of a rock wall and painted white, the seats could be boulders. It would be a truly ‘underground’ cinema.”<sup>3</sup> The reason for Smithson’s interest in the cinematic medium lay not only in the persuasive power of the cinematic experience and film’s capacity to transport the mind to another place: “One thing all films have in common is the power to take perception elsewhere”.<sup>4</sup> As “Towards the Development of a Cinema cavern ‘The Moviegoer as Spelunker’” shows, Smithson links the illusionism of the filmic experience with a problematization of the image. He suspends the illusion at the moment at which he introduces the reflection on the location of the image itself – and, with that, on the spectator’s own sense of location. Yet Smithson knows full well that illusionism is not merely a factor inherent within the image, but one that points towards a cultural given.

## SILVERSTAR W



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### Transformation of Architecture

In "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967) Smithson gives a parodistic report on bridges, pumps, sewage pipes and such like in terms of pre- or post-historic phenomena, and describes simulacrum-influenced reality: "Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an over-exposed picture. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph. The sun became a monstrous light bulb that projected a detached series of 'stills' through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank."<sup>5</sup>

In contemporary art, more traditional means of designing and shaping spatial reality have been assimilated by photography, video, and film. The term "assimilate" is an important one, since painting, sculpture, drawing, plan or model are not simply cancelled without substitute, but are transposed into a new medium and thus transformed. It remains possible for the various media of projection to exist independently alongside one another (as is indeed the case in most of the artistic positions presented here). Just how they are transformed is evident in the work of a remarkable number of contemporary artists

whose practice is permeated by the filmic condition.

### Julian Opie

British artist Julian Opie (1958) uses his installations featuring wall paintings and various objects to simulate an all-encompassing grammar of the natural world: architectural structures, urban scenes, landscapes with or without people and animals. He bases simulation on pictographic elements. Opie's works are, in principle, pictures even when they take the form of three-dimensional objects in space, since such objects are merely different sides of a picture presented together and juxtaposed with sharp angularity. The pictographic aspect makes it possible to identify individual elements within seconds, giving spectators the impression that they could actually project themselves into the scenes portrayed. However, the geometric "generalization" of forms precludes any real identification, let alone empathy, with what is there. Although Opie refers in all elements to the natural world and although he quotes various typologies (cars, architecture, landscapes, etc.), he suppresses any aspect – such as an insistence on detail – that might transfigure the generic character of the pictorial types. In spite of the immediacy of Opie's work, the metaphorical door leading "into" it remains closed. Opie's worlds consist of surfaces, passing by us

or passed by us. In his installations, space is primarily a question of planes set behind one another. "For the last few years I have been using the passenger's sideways view moving past things. As in Japanese prints, the landscape and objects within it are seen flat on. There is a gentle sliding of close objects over distant ones."<sup>6</sup> For Opie, images are not only placed one behind the other, but actually follow one another in a sequence of temporal continuum, as in forward movement – whether in a car or as a visitor strolling through an exhibition or merely casting a glance through it. This is a potentially cinematic experience: "One of the truly modern experiences is speed ... Driving fast is cinematic, vision becomes fluid."<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the architecture quoted in Opie's installations is an element in an essentially cinematic narrative, another projection screen. However, Opie clouds the illusory effect: he lends his installations a distinctly in situ character, by referring to real architecture in the immediate or wider vicinity of the exhibition venue.

### Rita McBride

American artist Rita McBride (1960) creates in situ works, objects, and photographs. In some of her works, she refers expressly to architecture and design.<sup>8</sup> In her "Parking Structures" or "Skylights", model-like bronze sculptures of the late 90s, and in her photographs, McBride addresses

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