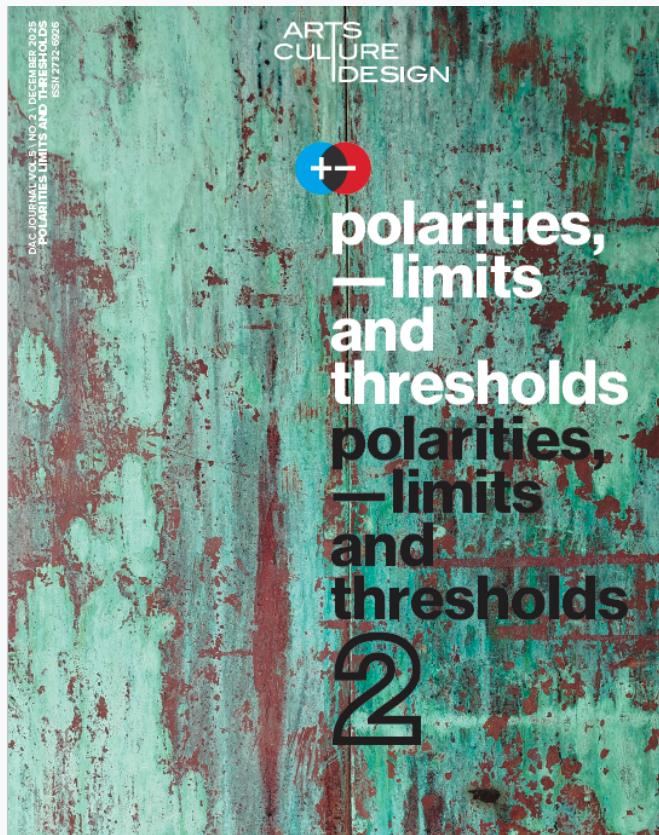


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POLARITIES, LIMITS AND THRESHOLDS



DWELLING IN-BETWEEN US AND ALTERED REALITIES: TIME STANDS STILL

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DWELLING IN-BETWEEN US AND ALTERED REALITIES: TIME STANDS STILL

ABSTRACT

From Aristotle to Bazin, the concept of art as mirror to reflect reality and the ontological level that establishes an existential relationship between image and reality respectively, depicting space, time and causality, is still today subject of constantly evolving. At the turn of the twenty-first century, understood as pictorial turn or Age of simulation (W. J. T. Mitchell, 1992), or even Age of disposable people (Rey Chow, 2010), the contribution of moving images to collective and individual memory relies, precisely, on questioning its boundaries when relating to visual literacy (James Elkins, 2008). The landscape of memory coming to fruition, dwelling in-between staged and altered realities, creates, then, the illusion of transparency as a catalyst to provoke re-actions.

INTRODUCTION

By evoking and questioning mediation as “creator’s essence” alongside with the vision of the “world as a picture”, this visual essay and research is structured in two parts. Firstly, looking at family polarities and childhood house emotional territories, places as the main goal the need to emphasize the relevance of observational cinema’s narrative work methodology towards the depicted surrounded realities: the self and the other. Secondly, and consequently, memory’s territory and polarities encompass cinema as a place to be or have been towards a projection in the future: the relevance of ways of seeing towards cinema as memory’s visual representation layers.

The continuous process of looking forward, emerging from artistic disquiet, and as part to discover an idea to build narrative, merged down with the need to seek challenges, as were tried to meet the expectations of everyone involved in the project. The urgency to materialize it, in a moment of closure and within a limited time-frame, met the opportunity of developing this project, which is itself an expected outcome placed previously. Above all, it came about the eagerness to start building a meaningful path for us as artists, when seizing every opportunity became essential.

In brief, this visual essay intends to contribute to foster critical thinking related

to cinema’s social value regarding the realm of literacy of memory, and its impact on viewer’s attention. Then, in the eyes of “Entre Nós” (Between Us, 2025) - directed by Joana Pinto, Hien Anh Tran, and Maria Miguel Silva - is raised the following issue: to what extend does space play “life time” and “life experiences”?

THE SELF, THE FAMILY, AND THE HOUSE: DWELLING BETWEEN STAGED AND ALTERED IMAGES

As the writing process began, were quickly realized that the frustration of not being able to convey a story that wasn’t ‘ours’ only disappeared when the role of an actress was played a little. It was then found the connection between the self and premise that the pen allowed itself to depict the right words on paper. It came to understanding what it means for a house to become a source of belonging, besides to be apart. In other words, to what extent the past and memory interfere with someone’s comfort zone towards a space that supposedly belongs to them.

The narrative is structured according to staged atmospheres that emphasize the ambiguity made of uncertainties and anxieties, at same time that characters ‘past events are in the present told. In this regard, time along narrative might be understood as place of waiting, and a place where characters look themselves into the mirror or an introspective manner. Thus, it’s not about self-portray, but instead self-expression, addressing how people are able to deal with their own pasts and overcome ordeals. In this case, the storyline approach is deeply related with the image and narrative making, namely its creative process. It began, precisely, with the simple image of a bird captured by a surveillance camera, which led us to realize that the storyline could be told by someone who observes without intervening. This way of looking at memory is mirrored in the two characters’ profile outline, as follows: one somewhat freer, and one whose vision is confined to a space. So, we also confined ourselves to a space to create and build our storyline, and from there, everything became then clear: two people experiencing the same house and never meeting each other. In this regard, memory plays an important role in the act of spectating or the act of watching a film, since it comprehends the narrative construction form and characters’ actions, recalling events of a certain segment film to another. This process enables to produce a memoria, when overlapping symbolic and imaginary, which comprehends amplification, enrichment, complexification.

In sum, the house plays, then, a major role in “Entre Nós” (Between Us, 2025): not only represents the characters’ childhood, in particular a family relationship and experience that no longer exists, but also the emotional distance between the two siblings. It is the authenticity and simplicity of childhood that makes protagonists to realize the urgency of not letting their relationship become part of the past that torments them. The narrative centers its plot on the self, the family and the house, and the storyline dwells between staged and altered images.

CHARACTERS PERFORMING MEMORY’S TERRITORY AND POLARITIES

As mentioned before, the storyline depicted in “Entre Nós” (Between Us, 2025) revolves



around two protagonists returning to their childhood home after a long time. The protagonists are in fact sister and brother, Lu and Vítor, dealing in silence for the very first time with their own grief and lost self-experiences. Even when growing up in the same environment, it's common for each to have a different relationship with family life.

In this case, Vítor, the elder brother, developed a more distant relationship with his parents. Since he always felt worth the expectations due to his own personal journey, Vítor pursued the need to prove himself facing a more independent way of living apart from his family. Now, as an adult, and at an age closer to that of his parents when he was a child, he feels the weight of regret. That house represents everything he chose not to experience. For him, it is a constant reminder of that pain and a symbol of how heavily the past still rests on his life. Lu, on the other hand, has always maintained a close relationship with her family. She finds it easier to take joy in the small things of everyday life and to live in the present without being consumed by anyone's expectations. Perhaps her brother's absence contributed to a deeper bond with their parents, as she felt a sense of duty, to make up for the time he wasn't there. Unlike Vítor, she feels no regret about the past. Her memories are both a source of comfort in grief, as well as a distraction that keeps her from moving forward and investing in her own life. These contrasting relationships with memory and the past have set them apart since the moment they found themselves alone, trying to navigate the house they grew up in, now without their parents, who had always been their foundation and the bond that united them despite their differences. Over time, this emotional distance became familiar. Yet, this very distance becomes more than just an emotional state — it shifts into a narrative device, shaping how each character exists within the shared space. A distance that, while justified, ultimately remains a choice, enhancing the subject's relationship within time and space, through mise-en-scène and frame. It means, the place and time, where personal sentimental fabulations attachment stage essentially a script or roadmap made of ambiguity and uncertainty towards future, portraying the tension between two perspectives. As follows: the space encapsulating so much that, because it is distant, we do not want to let it escape; and also, precisely because of everything it represents from the past, we no longer feel it is ours. Thus, it was never sought to frame this as a question of right or wrong. Rather, it is the story of two people whose survival depends on radically different relationships with memory and the space they once shared: "The house shelters day dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace." (Bachelard, 1994: 6)

In brief, and in this regard, the film's final moment reveals the first sign of possible reconciliation. Throughout the story, as both characters inhabit the same house, they explore different rooms and deliberately avoid each other. The corridors act as barriers, splitting both the physical and emotional space. Lu retreats to rooms and familiar comfort objects, while Vítor examines the house with the intention of closing it down. No matter experiencing real space revolving around the protagonist's childhood, evoking house past memories, viewing video tapes, tends to manage to break down obstacles imposed by time. They are the real proof of the truth, leaving no room for memory to corrupt it.

CONCLUSIONS

This short-fiction encompasses cinema as a self-expression form, unveiling diegetic and

non-diegetic realities, and naming the subject for observational narratives. The gaze seems to be, then, no longer innocently looking at reality. In this regard, Stanley Cavell contends, "(..) film is a moving image of skepticism" (1979: 188). The narrative territory outline and its polarities in this short-fiction, anchors its memory's performativity on the fictional atmospheres built.

Like Ken Loach's "Kes" (1969) and Wong Kar-Wai's "In the Mood for Love" (2001), "Entre Nós" (Between Us, 2025) pursues, in somehow, the documentary method of re-searching and re-framing for reality, being the self, family, and community, key narrative elements, dwelling between self-conscious and society's morality. Peter Brook contend- ed that any empty space could become a stage for a performative act towards memory's territory, as it happens when unfolding a filmic narrative and its polarities. In fact, Brook's concept evokes voided-time concerning a physical space, in this case the house, leading protagonists, Lu and Vítor, to a sense of emptiness state of mind, thus the possibility of knowing each other better taking "(...) any empty space and call it a bare stage." (Brook, 1996: 9) Thus, it is crucial to emphasize the need to debate visual representation. In particu- lar, the real and altered realities engagement, placing them into perspective a trajectory of different possible paths of memory's territory and polarities: the image as awareness of the self and the other. At first, turning visible the unseen stresses the latencies that concern belief and disbelief, overlapping realities with altered worlds, and coming to fruition when engaging "reading", "viewing", and "interpreting" processes.

To conclude, the imagery sensory experience becomes, then, personal, addressing raw human emotions when depicting true stories dealing with feelings from experiences that most people can relate to. As visual representation is a certain version of the real, both "socially and culturally constructed", "Entre Nós" (Between Us, 2025) recalls the metaphor of the invisible world or faded memories, figuring the possibility to experience new narrative fluxes: what does the image mean? And what paradoxes and what tensions does it raise?

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