

HOME



Ray Edgar

RAY.EDGAR@BIGPOND.COM

Architecture sets the scene

Filmmakers have long known the power of domestic drama.

Home is the place where we feel most safe. Consequently it's an ideal setting for dramatic tension in films. After all, it's the place we can also be most vulnerable.

Kitchens make particularly sinister locations. Not only do they tend towards the cramped and claustrophobic, they also have knives and boiling water (think *Fatal Attraction*). The kitchen even has its own subgenre, the kitchen-sink drama.

But anxiety can be created in any room; and horror loves the home: bathrooms where you can drown (*Les Diaboliques*), the attic where you can go mad, the cellar where Norman Bates' mother rests in peace (*Psycho*). Some places even contain aptly named panic rooms.

While film and architecture have been mutually inspirational it has not always been complementary. Traditionally, filmmakers tend to depict modern architecture as sterile and hostile – perfect for hothousing cold villains and corporate drones.

Modernity has been mocked by Jacques Tati (*Mon Oncle*, *Playtime*) and Billy Wilder (*The Apartment*). Hitchcock heightened the unease in *Psycho* by juxtaposing the Bates motel's bland modernity against the Bates home's "Gothic gingerbread", as the director called it. Hitchcock also made modernity the villain's home in *North by Northwest*. The Bond films continue that tradition, featuring consummate bachelor pads such as John Lautner's Elrod house in *Diamonds Are Forever*.

Decades later, our appreciation for the bad guys' impeccable taste has shifted. In *Iron Man*, it's the superhero who lives in a Lautner-style house.

Architects often see buildings in cinematic terms. Among the more famous architects to declare their inspiration from cinema are Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas. "My reference point has always been filmmaking," Tschumi says. Both architects emphasise montage – the juxtaposition of different sequences – to create the "story". Tschumi believes "shock must be manufactured by the architect if architecture is to communicate".

The mystery and intrigue that montage creates in architecture seems evident in *Sound and Vision*, a short film by Francis Matthews, which won this year's Cinecity competition. In this "Tropfest for architects" the competition brief forbids editing within the one-minute films. Instead, Matthews uses the architecture to create tension. *Sound and Vision* focuses on the room of a modern, glass-boxed home with layers of materials that frame it – glass, walls,



“Anxiety can be created in any room; and horror loves the home.”



House frames: (Top) John Lautner's Elrod house in *Diamonds Are Forever*; (above) modernity is mocked by Jacques Tati in *Mon Oncle* (*Mon Oncle* and *Playtime* screen at the Astor, tonight at 7.30pm).

doors and windows – and the objects within. A person enters the frame and disappears, then re-enters through a door. We become disoriented, yet we can see that person almost every step of the way. As he opens the glass wall we've been looking through, we realise it's a reflection and he walks out. It's a lesson in how we orient ourselves in both built and cinematic interiors.

The film was selected from 70 international entries and judged by a prestigious panel including Zaha Hadid and Victorian government architect Geoffrey London. While the films don't offer conventional narratives, this year's entries took their cues from the National Architecture Conference's theme of "making". They explore architectural process in behind-the-scenes locations – studios, construction sites – that attempt to demystify design and building.

Cinecity co-curator Louise Mackenzie intends to open the next competition to the public, and explore the home in relation to Plan Melbourne and the city's population growth.

"We've heard from all the academics and planners; we'd like to see how the people respond," she says. "What does home mean to them? We may do it by housing typologies, such as terrace houses, living above shops or single dwellings. It would be fascinating to get kids' responses too."

Mackenzie runs a short architectural film program at MADA Gallery. Upcoming films explore the New Wave's take on Paris and the Melbourne equivalent, the "Carlton Ripple".

Next week two different takes on French cinema screen: Jean Rouch's *Gare du Nord*, which opens with a couple arguing over the construction going on outside their apartment; and Claude Lelouch's unnerving one-take, full-throttle trip through the streets of Paris with a camera strapped to the front of his Ferrari. Flaneurs beware.

thecinecityproject.com, artdes.monash.edu.au.

HANDSON



WOODWORK

Third-generation wood-worker Phoebe Everill offers weekly classes for beginners to intermediate that provide a grounding in fine woodworking. The first 10 classes involve set projects before students move onto their own designs. Maximum four students a class. **Furniture Making School, Drummond (between Daylesford and Kyneton); Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am-noon, 1pm-4pm and Sat 9am-noon; \$50 a three-hour session; phoebeeverill.com**

COLOUR

Fiona Parry-Jones from Von Haus Studio offers a three-hour basic skills training for applying colours using simple design techniques. Create a mood board of ideas to help you take the next step for any decorating project. **449 High Street, Prahran; June 28, 9.30am-12.30pm; \$150; von-haus.com.au**

EXPO

Alongside the latest products for sustainable living and smart technologies, this year's Build and Renovating Expo focuses on how to maximise outdoor spaces affordably and efficiently. It covers everything from planning and building to landscaping. The "Speed Date an Expert" area offers one-on-one discussion with industry experts about their project, vision or challenges. **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Wharf; July 4-6; \$20; buildexpo.com.au**

great dane sale

20% off

furniture and lighting sale extended until june 30

the very best in modern and classic scandinavian design

SYDNEY 613 ELIZABETH ST REDFERN 02 9699 7677 | MELBOURNE 175 JOHNSTON ST FITZROY 03 9417 5599
www.greatdanefurniture.com

TOMMY HILFIGER

BLAZER

MASSIVE WAREHOUSE

SALE

SATURDAY JUNE 21st

9-3pm

LAST DAY - ENDS TODAY!

53 Cremorne St, Richmond 3121 (03) 8416 8600