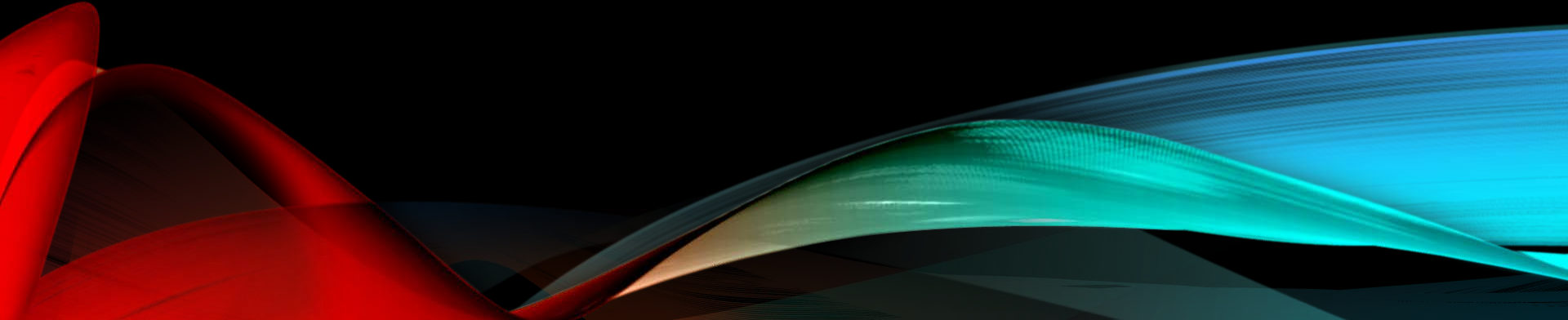


Postmodern City Films & Global Flows

FLÂNEUR & WAYS OF SEEING IN A CITY



OUTLINE

Ways of Seeing in a City

- for Visual Pleasure
- for Visual Control
- Walking, **Flâneurism**, Sleep Walking
 - As a Historical Phenomenon, A Reflection of Modernity, A Method of Observation/Representation
- Multiple Perspectives
- Discussion Questions

1. VISUAL PLEASURE

The background features several flowing, translucent ribbons of color. At the top, a ribbon transitions from yellow to orange to red. At the bottom, a ribbon transitions from red to orange to yellow to cyan. The ribbons have a slight 3D effect and are set against a solid black background.

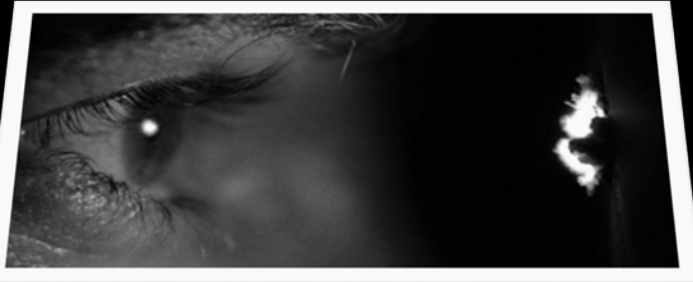
Fast-Forwarding and Re-Winding

(TraTAIPEIverse & *The Cabbie*)

- Are we watching a movie, or being part of a movie? Can our life be FFWD-ed?
- What does re-winding do? To remember or obsess over a scene (screen memory)?

WAYS OF SEEING & VISUAL PLEASURE : MALE GAZE

"Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."



- **John Berger *Ways of Seeing***

Nudity in classic paintings is a sign, different from nakedness

- **Laura Mulvey *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema***

Male viewing position

-- voyeurism (to possess) --not Francis in *Exotica*

-- self-projection (to adore and identify with)

Image source [1. Psycho](#) 2. [Greta Garbo](#)



Urban Spaces for Male Spectators

Striptease club, Commercials and ads –esp. for cars, cigarette and real estate on the one hand, perfume, cosmetics, body-sculpture on the other.

To evoke consumers' consuming desire as well as their possessiveness

Shanghai
hai
(image
source)

NYC



On the buses, Sec 4, Nanking E Rd, Taipei



FEMALE SPECTATORSHIP?

--an object of gaze, identifying with male gaze?

a desiring subject?

-- to watch, observe, appreciate and understand the city?

2. VISUAL CONTROL

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Surveillance System & One-Way Mirror

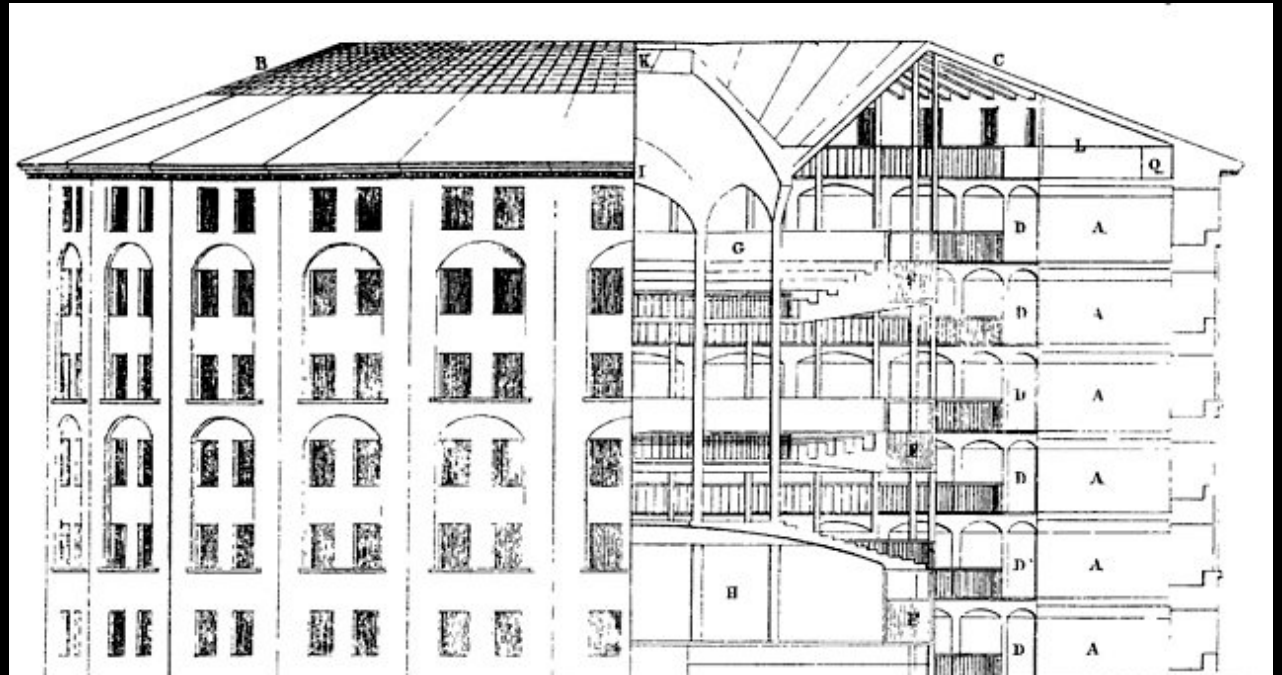
(阿霞的掛鐘The Clock , TraTAIPEIverse, *Exotica*)

Are we watching TV, a movie,
browsing on Internet?
Or being watched?

SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

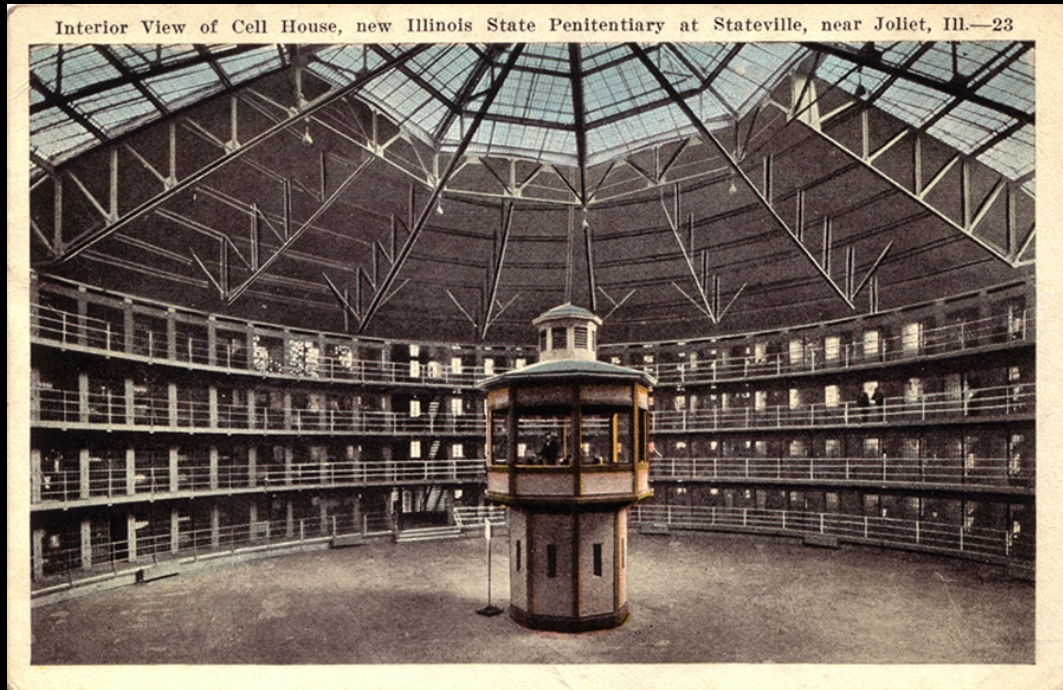
panopticon (敞視監獄) as a metaphor

“axial visibility
and lateral invisibility.”



敞視監獄 (PANOPTICON)

Constant surveillance → disciplinary society (where discipline is internalized)



[Image source](#)

EXAMPLES OF SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (CCTV)

closed-circuit television

In Taipei: more than 1.5 cameras, 55 per square mile in average (source)

Others: event data recorder, (EDR行車紀錄器), pinhole camera, bulletin board and TV walls

→ Census, any form of poll & registration systems, Google & FB, our cell phones!



3. Walking, Strolling and Sleepwalking in a City?

WALKING VS. FLÂNEUR

Walking

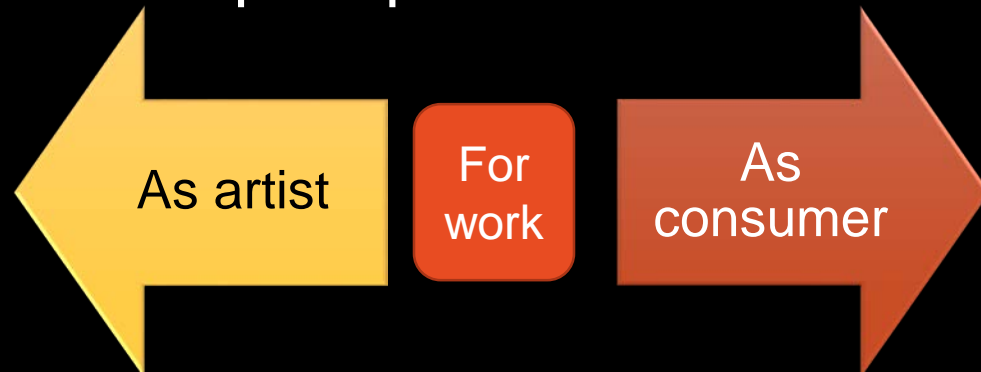
- Daily life
- Self-designed routes (w/ short cuts & multiple choices)
- Walking = writing one's own urban stories w/ footsteps

Flâneurism

- Apparently aimless & irregular
- Walking and seeing (being seen) at the same time

FLÂNEUR

- 1) A historic phenomenon in early modernism (19th -century Paris)
- 2) A representative of modernity, he "enjoys" strolling in a city (instead of being blasé).
- 3) Flâneurism: a perspective, a method.



CITY AS A SPECTACLE

-- THE ARCADE (長廊商場) IN PARIS



Arcade as a
temple

[image source](#)

1. AS A HISTORIC PHENOMENON



◆ "There was the pedestrian who **wedged** himself into the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who **demande elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of the gentleman of leisure**. His leisurely appearance as a personality is his protest against the division of labour which makes people into specialists. it was also **his protest against their industriousness**. Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable **to take turtles for a walk** in the arcades. the *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them." (W. Benjamin)

FLÂNEUR: RESULTS OF AND RESPONSES

TO MODERNITY –AND POSTMODERNITY?

- Fast development in industrialization, capitalism and modernization of city spaces. → increasing spectacles and human mobility.
 - **Spectacles**: Arcades → Exhibition such as Crystal Palaces → fairs, gardens, statues, etc
 - **Turning indoor**: in department stores, shopping malls, Cinema city and internet.
 - **Virtualized**: ‘phantasmagoria’ – 浮光幻影, or kaleidoscope 萬花筒
 - **Intoxicated, or blasé? Is flâneur an artist or a shopper?** (One Way Street Fragments for Walter Benjamin by John Hughes 43:00)

2. RESPONSES TO MODERNITY: BAUDELAIRE AND BENJAMIN

Baudelaire: the street becomes the dwelling for them...

Flaneur as the modern heroes:

e.g. the poet, the flâneur, the dandy, the collector, the gambler, the worker, the dandy, the collector, the rag-picker and the prostitute.

They give voice to the paradoxes and illusions of modernity.

2. RESPONSES TO MODERNITY: BAUDELAIRE AND BENJAMIN

Benjamin:

as a walking commodity;

is no hero; he acts heroes → empty commodity forms

Extension:

Virtual traveler, visiting different places online or via films?

Coach potato w/ a remote control to switch channels?

The concept is “meaningful only within a social discourse” (textbook)

Cellphone users as the center of spectacles?

SLEEP WALKING VS. FLANEURISM

Sleep Walking	Flaneurism
Intoxicated by urban spectacles	Collecting fragments or re-organizing them
--Urban landscape (of commodities) as a dream hard to wake up from --Virtual landscape?	--Understanding power relations in a city --Understanding one's positions in the world?

3. AS A PERSPECTIVE AND A METHOD

- ◆ Flâneur in a text can be a character (salesman in *Love Go Go*, the cabbie & *Amelie*) or narrative device (*Taipei Four Way*). One which is apparently unorganized and thus de-centering (non-traditional).
- ◆ E.g. Walter Benjamin himself.
- ◆ In life, can we be flâneurs nowadays? And what kinds of flâneurs are we?

SUMMARY: FLÂNEUR & FLÂNEUSE

1. **Person --Flâneur**: strolling, anonymously, on the street, in the crowd and observing fast-changing scene around **him**. → intoxicated, re-organizing
2. **Response**--Visual organization and/or physical embodiment of urban modernism: **from artistic observation to commodified existence** (e.g. window-shopper).
3. **Method--Artist-Flâneuse**: "the very boundarylessness of the metropolis gives her. . . an impulse to see beyond the limits of the self, **to occupy imaginative positions other than her own.**" "

4. Multiple Perspectives

The background features several flowing, translucent ribbons of color. At the top, a ribbon transitions from yellow to orange to red. At the bottom, a ribbon transitions from red to orange to yellow to cyan. The ribbons have a wavy, fluid appearance, suggesting movement and interconnectedness. The overall aesthetic is modern and abstract.

Multiple Perspectives

- Viewing Position = Power Position = Desire?

- Methods =

Archiving/Palimpsestic

Decentering

Critical/Participatory

Super Citizen
Ko

Taipei Four
Ways

CITY VISION: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

- Different Ways →
 - **ways of seeing:** gaze, glance, look, etc.
 - **angles and scope:** bottom up or top down
 - **devices:** camera, peep hole, surveillance camera
 - **perspectives:** detached, critical, participatory
abstraction, aestheticizing, historicizing, Subliminal
imprint, etc.
 - **social positions:** **city planners (filing clerks included),
mappers, artists, workers, etc. – Artists as a Painter
of Modern City**

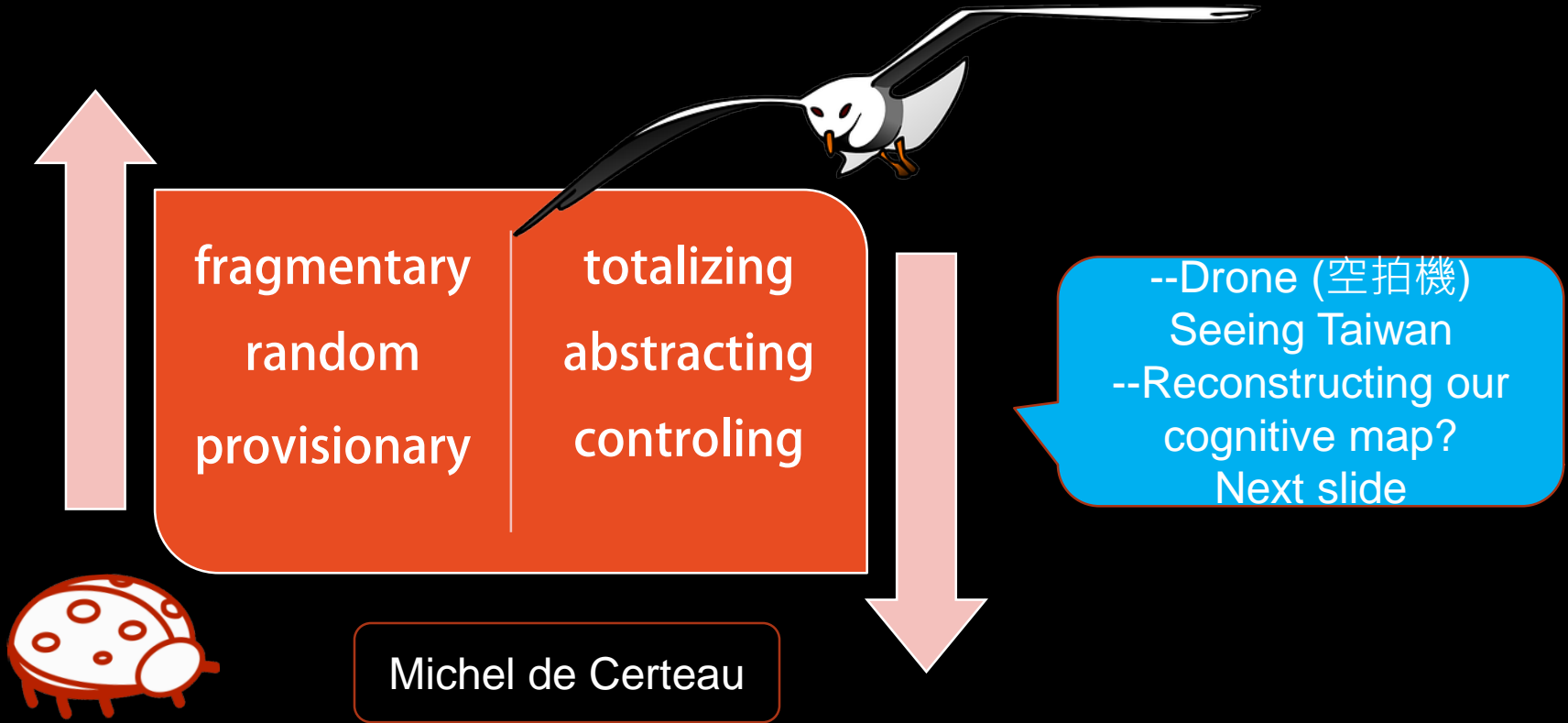
VISUAL PLEASURES

- Multiple Sites with multiple Sights, Power Positions and Desires
 - **Desires and Sights (gaze included): Who is seeing and who being seen?**
 - male sexual gaze: Porn house, Strip bar → women internalize the gaze;
 - **Consumer desire, Personal projections**
 - **Distracting, perspective-taking & mind-opening**
 - **critical view, historical perspective**

VISUAL CONTROL

- (Height = Control) Power Positions: **What** is seen? **Where?** on the street or on top of a tower or skyscraper, at people or the buildings
- (Large **Size** and Space= Control) City of Spectacle
 - filled with images; **can be artistic;**
 - implosion of images → nothing but images;
 - Does the city watch over us? Traffic control, census, TV wall, surveillance camera, etc.

BUG VS. BIRD



E.G. VISUAL ORGANIZATION/MESSAGE: ARTIST-FLÂNEUSE

1) Institutions vs. Artists on the margins (their multiple spaces)

- Institutions – church, school, customs office, etc. -- and their dogmas.

Visual representation – architecture and constructions

- Artists – marginalized but also secluded
- Multiple space in their “places” and multiple perspectives on art.

2) Flâneurial observation of the city – *The Cabbie*

PERSPECTIVE : TOP-DOWN

position	ways	device/ venue	object	angle
government academics Information elites Artist	regulate surveil observe analyze	Computer monitor, Statistical devices Internet	Concept city Map “society”	Aerial view detached

PERSPECTIVE : HORIZONTAL OR BOTTOM UP

position	ways	device/ venue	object	angle
Artist Flaneur	interpret aestheticize Symbolize	Driving, walking, photographin g,	Historical spectacle history	Observe, understand, Participate, appreciate
City worker Tourist Passenger consumer	Narrate Consume, glance, absorb unconsciously	Camera Workplace Car, cinema	Landmark/ icon Urban lives Commodity/co mmercial, daily trivials	gaze, investigate, self-project, fantasize, ignore (not see)

THE CABBIE: QUESTIONS

1. Do you find the taxi drivers in *The Cabbie* professional? Would you dare to become their passengers? In what ways is Da-chuan a flaneur?
2. -What other professions could be considered *flâneur*. Why and how do they respond to the flows in the urban city?
- 3.-5. Among all occupations, why does the film match **the father taxi driver with a coroner first, and then the son with a traffic police officer?** What roles do the sister and brother-in-law play?
6. Do you think A-Quan is dead or not in the end of the movie? Explain in detail.
7. What's the significance of the **accidents & the gangster-like passengers** in this film?
8. Do you think that the film is a black comedy?

A stylized city skyline at sunset. The buildings are dark grey silhouettes with white rectangular windows. A large, bright orange sun is partially obscured by a building in the center. The sky is a gradient of purple and orange. A large orange speech bubble is positioned in the upper left, containing the text 'How do we watch a city?'.

How do we watch a city ?

WORKS CITED

- Pile, Steve. "Sleepwalking in the Modern City: Walter Benjamin and Sigmund Freud in the World of Dreams." *A Companion to the City*. Eds. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson. NY: Blackwell, 2000: 75-86.
- de Certeau, Michel. "Walking in the City." *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

MADONNA

Vogue (voguing and gender performance/cross-dressing, fetishistic female image)

- 1990 MTV awards
- Super Bowl Medley 2012 (HD)
- Open your Heart (voyeurism)