DESIGN RESEARCH ESSAY

Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif: Interrogating the Ideological Effects of the Perspectival Image

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In the exhibition, ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’, held at the Tent Gallery at the Edinburgh College of Art in October 2018, images of the film House: After Five Years of Living – made by Charles and Ray Eames in 1955 – were extracted, dissected and spatialised. Using Jean Louis Baudry’s concept of the dispositif in film studies, and Jacques Lacan’s notion of the image/screen, this essay provides an analytical critique of the Eameses’ film and their representation of the domestic interior through the screen. The aim is to extrapolate and identify, through design-based research, some of the components in the configuration of Baudry’s dispositif.

Through drawings and the construction of a physical structure, the exhibition proposed an alternative architectonic assemblage of such components, suggesting new subjective and material consequences in the process. In this sense, in this essay, the use of drawings and models acts as an analytical instrument in which the specificity of the studied medium (in this case, film) is suspended, unpacked, and deconstructed to re-construct an apparatus that proposes an alternative ‘disposition’ of its images. As an extension, it also proposes the representation of a domestic interior that is not simply constrained to a visual experience, but which expands as a visual landscape and a spatial performance within the gallery space.

Keywords: Dispositif; Charles and Ray Eames; Jacques Lacan; Jean Louis Baudry; cinema; film; screen; perspective; gaze; exhibition; house; domesticity; gallery space; visual culture

On House: After Five Years of Living

The experimental film, House: After Five Years of Living (1955), was produced by Charles and Ray Eames to explore their Case Study House #8 in the Pacific Palisades, on the northwest fringe of Los Angeles, California. The film is an unusual composition of colour slides filmed with a motion picture camera. Accompanied by the music of Elmer Bernstein, the film comprises more than 300 photographs taken sporadically by the Eameses during the first five years in which they lived at their house following its completion in 1949. House: After Five Years of Living is a visual exploration of their domestic interior. In the film, we are witnesses of the house and the studio wherein elements of the landscape are juxtaposed with the Eameses’ personal objects, reflections, pieces of their work in progress, decorative objects, and pieces of pottery (Figure 1).

In the film, we see the outcome of a stitching of different temporalities, and the visual dissemination of a kind of photographic archive in which the Eameses could explore the representation of architecture through the film screen [1]. Intentionally underexposed, the images are characterised by their very intense colours and dense shadows, the peculiarities of their framing (which exaggerate the foreshortening effects), the structured absence of human figures, and by extreme close-ups. While these attributes reside in the colour slides (the photographs), the editing technique used in the production of the film translates these slides into an accelerated composition of image displacements. In the film, we continually ‘jump’ from one place to another through moments of frantic acceleration which are occasionally interrupted by moments of slow pace.
This effect is accomplished by two editing techniques: the ‘fast cutting’ (a rapid succession of still views) and the ‘dissolves’ (whereby the image on the screen fades into the presence of the next one). While the former produces a rhythmical acceleration of the sequence, the latter appears to resist its pace, partly slowing down the sequence. However, although these two modes of editing/display are distinguishable from one another – and, to some extent, can create certain tensions – a constant acceleration of the images seems to prevail throughout the film.

By transforming the modes through which we perceive, look at and experience the Eames House, the film also suggests a new architectural assemblage that operates as a visual performance. Other films such as Two Baroque Churches (1955), The Day of the Death (1957), Glimpses of the U.S.A (1959), and Think, made for the IBM Pavilion at the 1964–65 New York Fair, also employed similar techniques whereby the flow speed of images on the screen appears to take the viewer into a perceptive threshold. This form of addressing the viewer is referred to by the American film director Paul Schrader as ‘information-overload’ [2: p. 7], with the viewer being given more information than they can possibly process.

On a technical level, the approach executed by the Eameses in the production of House: After Five Years of Living relies on the alignment, through its confrontation, of different devices: camera/image/projector. In this process, the film camera, a Mitchell Standard 35mm, is placed over a rig facing the coloured, still slides of the Eameses’ objects [3]. Behind these images, a Kodak SlideMaster slide projector was placed as a source of light to backlight the slides being shot [3]. The colour slides operate as if there is a screen between the film camera and the projector. House: After Five Years of Living therefore performs as a media struggle between two systems of representation: film and photography.

**The Exhibition**

The exhibition, ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’, was the outcome of a process of spatialisation of the film image. Held at the Tent Gallery in the Edinburgh College of Art in October 2017, a total of 41 shots from House: After Five Years of Living were selected and printed onto transparent acetate and acrylic plates. These images corresponded to colour slides of the house’s interior, depicting the modes by which the Eameses represented their domestic space and their objects. Placed at eye-level over a steel structure, the exhibition reconstructed a section of the film sequence, re-enacting the transformations of the space produced by the lens of the Eameses’ camera (**Figure 2**).
Using Jean Louis Baudry’s concept of the dispositif in film studies and Jacques Lacan’s notion of the image/screen, this essay builds upon the Edinburgh exhibition to offer an analytical dissection of the Eameses’ film and their representation of the domestic interior via the screen. As such it aims to extrapolate and identify, through design-based research, some of the key components in the configuration of Baudry’s dispositif. Using drawings and the construction of a physical structure, the exhibition and now this essay proposes an alternative architectonic assemblage of such components — a new apparatus — while suggesting new subjective and material consequences in the process. Throughout this essay, the use of drawings and models acts as an analytical instrument in which the specificity of the studied medium (in this case, film) is suspended, unpacked, and deconstructed to reconstruct an apparatus that offers an alternative ‘disposition’ of it images. In this process, the work proposes the representation of a domestic interior that is not simply constrained to a visual experience, but which expands as a visual landscape and a spatial performance within the gallery space.

The exploration entails two different processes, one archaeological/forensic, and the other projective. The former relies upon drawings to ‘excavate’ and ‘dissect’ the film, isolating specific frames for perspectival analysis (identifying the vanishing points of the perspectival objects/spaces). The latter then reverses the process to construct specific material convergences towards vanishing points.

**Figure 2:** Elevation drawing of the steel structure to hold the new perspective models. The images extracted from the film were placed at an eye-level (1.7 metres above the ground). All the images used in this work belonged to the interior of the house, thus re-enacting the transformation of the space produced by the lens of the camera [Drawing produced by the author].

**The Perspective/Screen**

The concept of dispositif in media studies was first used by French philosopher Jean–Louis Baudry in two seminal essays: ‘Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus’ (1970) [4] and ‘The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema’ (1975) [5]. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory from Freud’s understanding of psychic functioning through to Lacan’s concept of misrecognition Baudry’s concept of dispositif refers to the ‘disposition’ of the viewer within the film theatre. This disposition suggests a viewing condition activated by the appareil de base (that is, the apparatus which comprises the mechanisms needed to project a film, such as filmstrip/projector/screen/dark hall).
For Baudry, the idea of cinema experience as a dispositif entails moments of subjectification. He argued that the experience of watching a film — the dark room, the immobile subject, the projection of images, the split between our optical field and our spatial position, and the concealment of the projective mechanism — recalls, or is anticipated by, Plato’s famous allegory of the cave. If, in Plato’s cave, the subject is haunted by the illusion — to the extreme of using violence to remain in that condition — then in cinema, the subject is deceived into a state of pure satisfaction [5]. Therefore, the cinema dispositif is considered by Baudry to be a transhistorical model that views cinema as the final accomplishment of an older subjective aspiration wherein desire was fulfilled by hallucination. It was a desire to recede into a state of pure satisfaction where representations are misled by perception.

Combining Althusserian Marxism and psychoanalytic theory, for Baudry, one of the main elements of the dispositif is the film screen itself — a kind of hybrid that pertains to the technological mechanism that makes the projected image possible, being the manifestation of a certain narrativity, and a viewing condition that is ideologically constructed. A central element of this ideological effect is the perspective representations that are constructed by the camera and their movement upon the screen, which together facilitate the concealment of the material presence that had been needed to produce the film. In this sense, it is possible to describe Baudry’s dispositif as a part of an apparatus that entails the ideological manifestation of perspective construction, its movement, and the subjectification of a viewer (the construction of an ideological subject).

Delving into its technical process, Baudry suggested that, in the construction of the final cinematic image, there is a series of phases, changes, manipulations and alterations. If these remain perceptible to the viewer, as they did in Dziga Vertov’s Man with a Movie Camera (1929), knowledge is produced ‘as actualisation of the work process, as denunciation of ideology, and as critique of idealism’ [4: p. 288]. If, on the other hand, these procedures remain imperceptible to the spectator, and thus the subject is deceived, Baudry argued that an inevitable ideological effect is produced.

Central to this idea is the identification created by the camera. The subject takes its place, embodies its monocular vision, and engages in a transcendental manifestation (by seeing everything in the film). As Baudry says, ‘Thus the spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself, than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him [sic] to see what it sees; this is exactly the function taken over by the camera as a sort of relay.’ [4] The camera becomes the fulcrum between the eye of the spectator and the world represented on the screen, acquiring a kind of phantasmatic presence that is impressed into the perspective construction of the image. Therefore, for Baudry, the vanishing point implied in the image on screen simultaneously signals the co-habitation of both the camera and the viewing subject.

Although it is possible to find in history different treatises on visual perspective (each one of them proposing its own representational techniques), the term ‘perspective’ can best be described as a monocular representation of vision: the construction of a single eye that controls and masters the visual representation it faces (such as the one produced by the photographic camera). In this mode of representing the world, perspective construction results from the encounter of two distinct, but related, optical fields. The first one recedes from the picture plane and joins all the straight lines that project from the things represented [6]. The other is the eye of the subject (that is, a monocular eye) whose field of view is projected as if a visual pyramid towards the surface of representation. Therefore, it is possible to discuss a certain homologation between the vanishing points of the representation and the viewing point that situates the subject. This relationship does not necessarily mean that both points coincide as one object on a target, but that both points enter a relationship that makes possible a veritable representation of the space for a viewer. Perspective is not a unique and universal system of representation, and indeed it has changed throughout history. Each historical moment produces and promotes not only its own mode of depiction, but also its own mode of perceiving the world. In other words, perspective, as a technology of representation is not simply a geometrisation of the world as viewed, but a system that intervenes in our access to knowledge — what Martin Jay calls ‘Cartesian perspectivalism’ [7].

In his book, Perspective as Symbolic Form (1991), the philosopher Erwin Panofsky — one of the most influential scholars in the study of perspective — relates past visual representations to the philosophical and metaphysical conceptions of the spaces which they resemble. Accomplished during the Renaissance, what can be called Perspectiva artificialis, according to Panofsky, stands as the final representation of a world in which objects and space are no longer disconnected unities, but a corresponding organisation of ‘homogenous’ elements. As he states, ‘Thus the great evolution from aggregate space to systematic space found its provisional conclusion. Once again this perspectival achievement is nothing other than a concrete expression of a contemporary advance in epistemology or natural philosophy.’ [8: p. 65] Previous forms of perspective (or past attempts to create a faithful two-dimensional representation of the space), were thus not incorrect or
inexact, but rather depicted a different mode of relationship between the subject and the world, a perception that favoured (and is rooted in all) the human senses, and which is not only constrained to the optical one [8]. For Panofsky, perspectival space transforms psychophysiological space into mathematical space. As he writes:

… [perspective] negates the differences between front and back, between right and left, between bodies and intervening space (empty' space), so that the sum of all the parts of space and all its contents are absorbed into a single ‘quantum continuum’. [8: p. 31]

Panofsky argues that perspectival construction entails an objectification of the subjective, and in this process, perspectival construction allows 'bodies to expand plastically and move gesturally' [8: p. 67]. However, the perspective construction theorised by Baudry entails the submission of perspective to movement. This new kind of perspective emerges as the tool by which the subject is simultaneously distanced and attached to the image — distanced because they are physically outside of that world, in front of it, protected by the frame that encloses the image, the screen. They become attached to the image because the perspective is being constructed for them and from them (since they now occupy the position of the camera) [4]. Given this ambiguity, the image produces a space for the subject who can simultaneously extend their domain over it, whereas perspective places the subject in an imagined position of mastery. Potential conflict arises because the different points of view, angles of representation, places and situations are negated by the camera's potentiality to move, and by the illusory identification of the subject in that process – the difference between perception and representation is cancelled out.

All of this means that, for Baudry, subject and object cannot be seen as different entities, but rather they are conflated in the simulation of movement, assisting the dis-incarnation of the subject’s eye [7].

Design Research Methodology

The first process of investigation in this essay uses drawing as a means of tracing over the Eameses' colour slides the vanishing points which organise each of the different images (Figure 3). In this series of drawings, perspective — as a kind of force-field, concealed but present — becomes materially manifested. To achieve a three-dimensional perspective, it is necessary to follow specific criteria that seek to rotate the vanishing point from the XZ-plane to the Y-plane. This procedure is accomplished by using the distance from the 'horizon' to the picture-plane's frame as the basis for this rotation; thus, the new vanishing point recedes behind or in front of the picture-plane (Figure 4). This procedure not only materialises the hitherto merely implicit presence of the camera, but also drags it outside the frame of the image. In other words, the whole process aims to 'excavate', and dissect, the phantasmatic presence of the vanishing points in the Eameses' images (Figure 5).

**Figure 3:** As the Eameses' film is composed of photographs, this makes it easier to analyse and identify the perspectival views constructed by the camera. The perspective construction identified on each slide was traced over. These new lines (representing the vanishing points of the images) overlap and intersect one another, somehow interrupting their structural composition [Drawing produced by the author].
Figure 4: In the exhibition, each image represented in the steel structure was manipulated and transformed. The photographs become not flat surfaces anymore but geometric reconstructions of the vanishing points — translucent cones protruding from their surface. This process translated the two-dimensional representation of the domestic space into a three-dimensional exhibition construction [Drawing produced by the author]. Materialisation process of perspective construction: a) Fragment of the house being framed by the camera. b) Slide from the film House: After Five Years of Living framing a fragment of the house with the vanishing lines of the glass panels. c) Process of rotation of the vanishing lines: The distance between the 'horizon' and the picture plane is rotated through the Y-axis. Thus, the new vanishing point recedes behind or in front of the picture plane. d) Materialisation of perspective protruding from the slide.

Figure 5: Axonometric view of the film's perspective spatialisation [Drawing produced by the author].
After having defined a new perspective for these images, a model based on a steel structure was designed to hold them. Being placed at eye level, the model organised, as a lineal sequence, the new interior images to display a series of translucent fields of view, the materialisation of perspective’s visual geometries. Here, the model in the Edinburgh exhibition materialised a conflicting situation. The inherent alignment of Beaudry’s apparat (appareil de base) between the spectator’s eye, film projector/camera and screen was dislocated by the simultaneous appearance of the images (one adjacent to the other instead of one following the other), and by the reversibility of the vanishing points. This meant that, at the level of its geometric construction, the homology between the vanishing point and the viewing point – as two visual geometries corresponding to one another (one belonging to the field of representation, the other to the field of perception) – became disrupted by the ‘assault’ of the vanishing point over the viewing point (Figure 6). In turn this disturbed the previous ‘disposition’ that had been structured by the Eameses’ 1955 film.

The Gaze/Screen
In the exhibition of ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’, this new interference was not only represented by the translucent visual geometries protruding from the photographs, but also by the piercing of the screen surface. In this sense, the images in the exhibition became the model of a paradoxical phenomenon. In the Eameses’ film, perspective works as an invisible force-field, a phantasmatic presence attracting each space towards its vanishing point. We could say that although present in their film, perspective remains concealed. In the exhibition model, when this presence was materialised, it disturbed the very image that it was meant to organise and display. The model transformed transparency into opacity and, consequently, the screen was pierced, and representations were distorted (Figure 7). In the gallery space, the eye of the visitor observed that which should have remained concealed, those forces structuring and organising the representation of the spaces.

This abrupt encounter between the eye of the subject (within the gallery space) and the field of vision protruding from the photographic surfaces also recalls Jacques Lacan’s idea of ‘montage’ between the eye and the gaze. As developed in the Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1977), his theory of the gaze became understood as the penetration of the unconscious into the field of vision. More precisely, the Lacanian gaze precedes the subject [9], and emerges as the outcome of a process of ‘alienation’ in the early stages of their childhood, generated when the subject abandons their pre-linguistic condition, thereby gaining access to symbolic order and social constitution. In this transfer something is missed, a lost object (objet petit a) that is removed from the subject through interdiction. The gaze for Lacan begins to represent a subject that is constituted through this extraction – a subject that is structured through an endless search for a missed object, a search that is oriented by a force of desire. Thus, the Lacanian subject is intrinsically split; they are both object and subject, challenging disembodied rationality in the sense of Cartesian perspectivalism.
Lacan’s theory of the gaze draws precisely into perspectival representation to explain its deceptive function and attack its philosophical and subjective consequences. Perspective, as we know it today, is not a faithful representation of a space, but rather a representation that faithfully resembles our present relationship with the world. This means that it is more a depiction of our relationship with things than it is an 'objective' way of showing them [8]. Hence, perspective is a bond characterised by the placement of the subject as a spectator and the world as spectacle [10], and as such, Lacan’s critique stems precisely from perspective’s deceitful artifice — one that presents the world as a spectacle, but above all, as a spectacle mastered by the subject’s field of vision. Lacan cancels this premise by the montage of two perspectival views, a chiasmus between seeing and being seen. One of these emerges from the subject, looking towards the object of perception; the other emanating from the gaze (the object) towards the viewer. Mediating these two is the image/screen, simultaneously a place of appearance and of masking (Figure 8).

![Figure 7: View of one of the colour slides as pierced by the perspectival representation of the space. The model rendered visible the manifestation of perspective and, consequently, the representations were distorted. The visitor’s eye observed that which should have remained concealed, those forces structuring and organising the representation of the space [Courtesy of the author].](image)

![Figure 8: Jacques Lacan’s famous diagram of the image/screen [Redrawn by the author].](image)
Thus, the function of the screen is the taming of the gaze, a protective surface that negotiates between the subject’s sight and the object’s gaze. For Lacan, this mediation follows a double function. On the one hand, it protects the subject from the gaze, since to see the gaze means an encounter with the ‘real’ — that which cannot be represented — which is beyond language and escapes from the symbolic order in which the subject *qua* subject is situated. And on the other hand, it allows the subject to see the object of perception, segregating and isolating the threat of the gaze. It is interesting to see how, for Lacan, the screen described operates in direct reference to the cinema screen, as if it were a media-like apparatus. The Lacanian screen conceals the ‘real’ in favour of a reality that is highly mediated. The function of the screen is to ‘ease’ the presence of the gaze, domesticate it and integrate it into the field of representation, and thus the gaze is never manifested as such, but always through its mediation. As he says:

If, by being isolated, an effect of lighting dominates us, if, for example, a beam of light directing our gaze so captivates us that it appears as a milky cone and prevents us from seeing what it illuminates, the mere fact of introducing into this field a small screen, which cuts into that which is illuminated without being seen, makes the milky light retreat, as it were, into the shadow and allows the object it conceals to emerge. At the perceptual level, this is the phenomenon of a relation that is to be taken in a more essential function, namely, that in its relation to desire, reality appears only as marginal. [9: p. 108]

While Lacan’s screen differs from that theorised by Baudry, it is still possible to construct a certain parallel between them, in which both perform as an ideological construct. Both screens are simultaneously a place of appearance and of masking. The screen intervenes between subject and object, making them visible, and hiding them from one another. The cinematic screen is made possible only through the concealment of all the different technological artefacts used in its construction; however, Lacan’s screen (the symbolic representation of the world) is only possible through the masking of the unconscious experience.

In ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’, both screens became one, and collapsed. The perspective created by the camera in Baudry’s screen was denounced by the artificial representation of the space and its objects which protruded from the photographic surface as translucent geometries (gazes) threatening the viewer’s eye. Thus, in the exhibition, the model displaces the alignment between the camera and viewer. This was perhaps more evident when the structure was observed from the side; all the vanishing points shuffle into a single volume, a visual discharge that expands from photographic slides (Figure 9).

![Figure 9](image_url)

*Figure 9:* The model looked at from one of its sides. All the vanishing points shuffle in a single volume; the materialisation of the gleam, which is refracted in multiple directions outside the photographic slides [Courtesy of the author].
The agency of the camera, which in the film experience fixes the viewer's eye and gives a singular place to it, was in the exhibition released by the model. However, in this release, the perspectival construction, originally built by the camera, emerged as a threat to the eye. As gazes, some of the vanishing points fold back towards the subject who now faces the tips of the geometric construction like spikes intimidating and arresting the eye, almost reproducing Durer's grid frame as represented in *The Painter's Manual* (1525, 1528). Durer's drawing showed the fixation of the man's eye to a mini-obelisk which was the superimposition between sight and the apex that allowed him to focus his view upon both the female figure and the gridded frame, constructing a veritable perspectival image. Thus, in the Edinburgh exhibition, the apex of the vanishing points that protrudes in and out of the picture appears to transform its perspectival arrangement into the measuring tools used for its own construction (Figure 10).

**Figure 10:** The translucent geometries protruding out of the photographic slides within the exhibition resembled Albrecht Durer's 'Draughtsman Drawing a Recumbent Woman' (1625), where the apex of a mini-obelisk is used as a measuring device for a veritable construction of perspective [Courtesy of the author].

### The Mirror/Screen

In the final part of his essay on 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', Baudry compares the Lacanian mirror-stage with the specularisation and the double identification of the subject with the screen-image inside a cinema theatre. For Lacan, a process of specular recognition is produced during the subject’s early stages of development. At between six and eighteen months, the child is for the first time able to recognise its own image in front of a mirror. The child, in seeing themselves next to their parent, and using this parent as a referential point and as prompt, identifies their own image in the mirror as a completed figure – in contrast to their hitherto experience as a fragmented body with motor incapacities and vulnerabilities [11]. This experience will split and mark the subject permanently, constructing an ideal *ego*, an exterior image with which the child identifies, but that fails to correspond with their disunified body. Lacan calls this *méconnaissance*, a false recognition that the subject initially finds in their specular reflection, and later in the social world. Throughout the mirror-stage, the subject enters an imaginary order, one of the three psychoanalytic structures defined by Lacan: that is, the real, the imaginary and the symbolic.

Although Baudry was aware that these levels of identification differ from the Lacanian mirror-stage [4], since what we see on the cinema screen is not the reflection of our own image, but rather something that
has already been given; nevertheless, for him, the optical operation behind the reconstitution of fragments (different images) into a whole (movement) function in the same way as the mirror assembles the fragmented body (corps morcelé). As Baudry states: ‘Just as the mirror assembles the fragmented body in a sort of imaginary integration of the self, the transcendental self unites the discontinuous fragments of phenomena, of lived experience, into unifying meaning’ [4: p. 295]

Baudry constructs a parallel in which the function of the film screen resembles the Lacanian mirror-stage as a surface of encounter where fragments are assembled in an imaginary integration. Furthermore, in this process both subjects are deceived; the Lacanian one with a false sense of mastery as Gestalt, and the cinematic viewer with the illusion of movement and unity. In cinema, the image projected in front of the viewer is possible only through the effacement of its technology and the labour that has produced it, namely through the concealment of its fragments and interruptions.

From this point of view, the exhibition of ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’ did not attempt to expose the technological machinery of the Eameses’ film, but rather the representation of its inherent fragmentation and discontinuity. This interruption can be seen in the separation between each photograph: its three layers of representation (the three acrylic sheets); the cut-out of the perspectival view within each photograph; the elements suspended and detached from the images; and the piercing of the frame by the elements within it.

In the exhibition, a section of the steel piece was divided by a glass panel, and part of the structure remained inside the gallery and part was outside its space (Figure 11). Both fragments were re-assembled by the reflections created on the glass surface, and with the precise lighting condition — a condition also needed for the projection of a film — it was difficult to recognise where the steel structure ends. The structure merged with its own reflection, and the eye was deceived (Figures 12 and 13 ). It became no longer easy to recognise if what one saw on the glass surface was a mirror image of the structure or the same structure that had penetrated to the other side of the glass panel. This uncertainty was increased by the fact that the same acrylic sheets passed through (and were structured by) other perpendicular acrylic sheets that multiplied its reflections. There was a persistent ambiguity between the fragmentation of the images and their representations as a single and continuous element.

Figure 11: Steel model as split by the glass wall of the gallery space. Part of the model remained inside the gallery and part of it remained outside; both fragments were then reassembled by the reflections created on the glass surface [Courtesy of the author].
Figure 12: The steel model also overlapped with its own reflection, and so the difference between what is material and what is virtual became ambiguous. This ambiguity was increased by the reflections of the same acrylic sheets structuring the colour slides [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 13: Another photograph of the overlapping reflections in the exhibition [Courtesy of the author].

Conclusion: An Alternative Viewing ‘Disposition’

The exhibition, ‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’, can be seen as an indexical-formal apparatus, wherein its three-dimensional composition challenged the legitimisation of visual perception in operation at the cinematic experience. Through the materialisation of its images and their subsequent spatial performance, this new apparatus produced its own images upon other surfaces. These images not only pertain to the
colour slides of the Eameses’ film, but also included those created by the same apparatus and the effects of natural and artificial light: its shadows and reflections. Hence, the puncturing of the photographic screen, produced other screens and images outside its frame. Therefore, in the exhibition, vision was not oriented towards a single surface, but diverged to others within the gallery space, such as floor, glass panels and ceiling (Figures 14 and 15). There was no single place from where to look at, but rather the viewer wandered around the images and the physicality of the structure.

**Figure 14:** The steel model cast further images onto the gallery ceiling, walls and glass panels, thereby creating new shadow projections up towards the ceiling [Courtesy of the author].

**Figure 15:** Another photograph of the shadow projections [Courtesy of the author].
The different surfaces in the gallery space became the new screens where the spatialisation of the film’s images were mapped and projected. This process folded the media representations back into the architectural space, thus constructing a certain architectonic alterity that had its origin in the Eameses’ film. Moreover, this new apparatus proposed an alternative mode of looking at the domestic interior of the Eames House, not only as it had been represented in the film — as a visual performance — but as a spatial performance within a new visual landscape (the gallery space).

In materialising the film in the exhibition — its images, the perspectival view created by the camera, and some objects (ladder and trusses) — the infinite and homogeneous space suggested by the camera was translated into a finite and fragmented space suggested by its spatialisation. At the exhibition, the screen was de-territorialised through its perspectival materialisation. The plethora of perspective geometries projected in and out of their frames was the place where the confrontation between the virtual world of the film and the material space of the gallery were negotiated — that is, the place of encounter between the cinematic viewing condition and the materialisation/projection upon the surfaces of the gallery space. On this encounter, the subject was no longer centred and fixed by the camera (as in the Eameses’ film) but was decentred by the very disruption of the screen, by the spatialisation of one’s own presence.

The setting-up between the film camera, still image and projector in *House: After Five Years of Living* appears to have been unconsciously enacting a quite literal transposition from the Lacanian diagram, in which it is the screen of representation (the still image) that is the (new) object that is filmed. While in the film, domesticity is represented through the Eameses’ objects and their careful location in space; in the Edinburgh exhibition, these objects materialised as gazes, looking back to the viewer. The objects became objects of desires, the signifiers that in the film looked back through the representational screen and, at the exhibition, were ‘released’ in the form of a disturbing presence by the piercing of its photographic slides (Figure 16).

*Figure 16*: Overall view of the steel structure holding the different photographic slides to create a disturbing presence of the Eameses’ objects as represented in *House: After Five Years of Living* [Courtesy of the author].
‘Piercing the Screen of the Dispositif’ can therefore be read as the outcome of the continual interactions between design and research. The exhibition approached the study of the screen not only as a material piece of technology, but also as an apparatus embedded in theoretical discourses. This meant conceiving the screen as an assemblage of varied phenomena, capable of being analysed, challenged, and reassembled to propose new material and visual configurations.

The word ‘screen’ hence becomes a permanent practice of making, revealing, exposing, and displaying the work produced. Hence, the topos of the screen meanders through multiple places and systems of representations. It can be recognised in the technological media apparatuses, as an architectural element, or as a mechanism of subjective formation that mediates our relationship with the outside world – thereby producing new objects with which we can perceive architecture and its various representations.

Competing Interests
The author has no competing interests to declare.

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