



Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real

By Nezar Alsayyad

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The city and the cinema have become inextricably intertwined over the last century, with the identities of places becoming bound up in their cinematic portrayals. We have seen the landmarks of New York, London and Tokyo turn into iconic symbols of wealth, power, status, style and culture, and for the majority of people the images and sounds of movies form the only experience they will ever have of distant cities.

Cinematic Urbanism presents an urban history of modernity and postmodernity through the lens of cinema. AlSayyad traces the dissolution of the boundary between real and reel through time and space via a series of films that represent different modernities. They include:

- *Cinema Paradiso*
- *It's a Wonderful Life*
- *Metropolis*
- *Brazil*
- *Blade Runner*
- *Annie Hall*
- *Taxi Driver*
- *Do the Right Thing*
- *My Beautiful Laundrette*
- *The Truman Show*.

Alsayyad argues that our understanding of the city cannot be viewed independently of cinematic experience. Films do not only capture the depiction of a society; they influence the way we construct images of the world and, as a result, how we operate within it. We are beginning to blur the distinction between what is real in the everyday, and how we imagine the everyday. *Cinematic Urbanism* explores this dynamic, bringing together insights from urban and film studies to illuminate current architectural debate.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Nezar AlSayyad is Professor of Architecture, Planning and Urban History at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the Associate Dean for International Programs at the College of Environmental Design, and Chair of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Berkeley. Additionally, he is the Director of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments and principal editor of its journal, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*.

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