

# Spectacular Attractions: Museums, Audio-Visuals and the Ghosts of Memory

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**Abstract.** In the last decades, moving images have become a common feature not only in art museums, but also in a wide range of institutions devoted to the conservation and transmission of memory. This paper focuses on the role of audio-visuals in the exhibition design of history and memory museums, arguing that they are privileged means to achieve the spectacular effects and the visitors' emotional and "experiential" engagement that constitute the main objective of contemporary museums. I will discuss this topic through the concept of "cinematic attraction," claiming that, films and moving images often produce spectacular *mises en scène* with immersive effects, creating wonder and astonishment, and involving visitors on an emotional, visceral and physical level. Moreover, I will consider Phantasmagoria-like displays that simulate ghostly and uncanny apparitions, creating an ambiguous and often problematic coexistence of truth and illusion, subjectivity and objectivity, facts and imagination.

**Keywords:** exhibition, history museum, memory, audio-visual display, attraction/narration, Phantasmagoria.

## Museums, Audio-Visuals, and the *Experience* of Memory

In the last decades, moving images have become a common feature in exhibition spaces, and a wide variety of museums today are filled with projections, video loops and film installations. In cinema museums, enlarged frames, posters, costumes or film clips are displayed in exhibitions about the relations between art and cinema, or on the work of specific directors (see for instance Païni and Cogeval 2000). In art museums, contemporary art installations involve more and more frequently the use of films and moving images.<sup>1</sup> In science, natural

1 Consider for example the work of Chantal Akerman, Tacita Dean, Stan Douglas and Douglas Gordon, to mention only a few.

history or ethnographic museums, as well as in history museums, projections and screens are used as museological tools, and occupy the space traditionally inhabited by artifacts and artworks. Albeit an impressive amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the investigation of the penetration of cinema in museums, the role of moving images in museology and exhibition design still remains neglected in academic research. In the following paragraphs, we will focus on this last aspect of the dissemination of moving images in exhibitions, analysing museums in which films and audio-visuals are not exhibited as works of art, but rather function as means of contextualization, explanation or visitor engagement. In these contexts, however, the role of moving images is far from being merely instrumental, and they deeply affect the strategies of museum exhibitions and the meanings they convey.

In this paper, I will concentrate particularly on museums devoted to history and memory,<sup>2</sup> which have known, over the last thirty years, a considerable proliferation (see Williams 2007) in conjunction with the emergence of memory as a dominant issue in Western societies (see Huyssen 2003). Their concern in the conservation and transmission of memory establishes a link with the similar role played by films in the documentation of historical events, but also, on a deeper level, with cinema “as a powerful mnemonic machine, with its capacity to discipline, to enhance, to supplement, or to substitute for memory” (Demaria 2014, 109).

### The Museum as “Experience”

Before investigating the use of audio-visual media in museum exhibitions, we should briefly take into account some major trends in contemporary museology that deeply affect memory museums. As noted by many scholars, one of the main aims of contemporary museums is the “delivering of experiences” (Hein 2000; Landsberg 2004). As Patrizia Violi has stated, it is possible to identify “an action performed by the museum in order to affect visitors, evoking a strong emotional involvement on their part, by focusing on their *pathemic* experience. Memory museums thus appear to foresee and construct an *experientialist visitor*, i.e. a visitor that will, first and foremost, ‘have an experience’ during his visit, rather than being informed, by acquiring more knowledge of past events, which was the principal underlying idea behind traditional museums” (Violi 2014, 53).

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2 In the following paragraphs, I will use the term “memory museums” to refer to a wide range of history museums that present past events through the paradigm of memory (Arnold-de Simine 2012, 16).

Experience should be understood as a “strong embodied sensory pathemic involvement on the part of the visitor” (Violi 2014, 53; see also Williams 2011 and Arnold-de Simine 2013). As a consequence of this change of perspective, the very nature of museums is radically transformed, and they have become, instead of repositories of collections, “places of recollection, not so much driven by objects but by narratives and performances” (Arnold-de Simine 2013, 2). Museums could therefore be understood as *performative spaces*, where “the total physical environment becomes the attraction as the visitor is encouraged to re-enact the drama in a kind of empathetic walk-through” (Williams 2011, 223). According to Paul Williams, theatrical tropes in museums include stage-set-like reconstructions of historical scenes, as well as the dramatization of the act of testimony (2011, 223): in theatrical performances or video recordings, real or fictional people that were directly involved in significant events of the past tell their personal stories, accompanying and guiding visitors through the exhibition. Contemporary memory museums seem thus to favour what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has called “in situ displays” when writing about ethnographic museums (but we can extend the definition to history museums as well). As opposed to “in-context displays,” which are based on the “drama of the artifact,” such displays are immersive and environmental, privilege experience over demonstration and are based on mimesis and illusionism, through which they recreate virtual works that visitors can enter and explore (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 19–23).

Considering this scenario, I will focus specifically on the role of audio-visual media within the exhibition strategies of museums, arguing that contemporary memory museums extensively draw upon films and audio-visuals to fabricate such performative and “experientially oriented encounters” (Arnold-de Simine 2013, 1) with their visitors.

## Audio-Visuals in Museums

Since the very first debates about moving images in museums, curators have emphasized the capacity of cinema to bring motionless museums’ objects to life. In a 1930 article titled *Museums and Movies*, an anonymous editor of the *Museums Journal* wrote: “In a museum the objects are as a rule immovable. [...] A collection of stuffed animals, of dried plants: how lifeless! [...] But now the cinematograph has come to change all that and to give us real living pictures, to bring all the life and movement of the world on to a few square feet in one little room” (1930, 334; see also Griffiths 2008, 243–248). Not only moving images gave curators the

opportunity to “animate” exhibits, but at the same time films were considered to carry an extraordinary educative potential, being capable to communicate in a short time and in a synthetic way a large amount of information otherwise difficult to provide, such as details about the historical context of objects or artworks. Contemporary curatorial statements are in a way very similar: audio-visuals are understood as didactic means but also as instruments to create spectacular displays, hanging in the balance between education and entertainment. Although moving images challenge the traditional “primacy of the object” and pose a number of questions about authenticity, they are by now widely accepted as museographical tools, together with sounds, slide shows, interactive stations, augmented reality or virtual environments. Such devices are no longer an exception, and visitors almost expect the use of multimedia in exhibitions.

However, if today screens and projections are common in museums, designers often employ a series of display strategies that aim to restore what we might call the “attractional” component of audio-visual media. The well-known notion of attraction, firstly developed by film scholars Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault (Gunning 2006 [1986]; Gaudreault and Gunning [1986]), has been used not only to describe a specific kind of film practice and spectatorship, historically situated in the period of early cinema, but also as a trans-historical concept applicable to other moments in the history of the seventh art, as well as to other expressive forms (see Strauven 2006). I would argue that this concept could help us to describe and understand a series of practices related to the use of audio-visuals in contemporary museum exhibitions.<sup>3</sup> In fact, when embedded in displays, films and moving images often produce spectacular *mises en scène* with immersive effects, creating wonder and astonishment: by providing a pleasure based on shock and “strong sensations,” they engage visitors on an emotional, visceral and physical level. As it is well known in film studies, *attraction* is distinct from (if not opposed to) *narration*, but the two concepts are not mutually exclusive: attractions can be present when narrative is also involved (see Strauven 2006). Although exhibitions could be characterized by a strong narrative component, I would claim that they have an attractional dimension as well, which suspends for a while the development of the “story” to directly address spectators.

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3 In this essay, this claim is discussed in relation to history museums, but I would maintain that these arguments could be extended to a broader range of museums.

## **Between Narrative and Attraction: Studio Azzurro's *Ocean Liners* Exhibition**

I will discuss this topic through the analysis of an example of exhibition design by the Italian multi-disciplinary group Studio Azzurro. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Studio Azzurro has carried out various permanent or temporary installations devoted to local memory and identity. Through the use of multimedia and digital technologies, the group gathers audio-visuals, photographs and other documentary materials in immersive, multisensory and emotional displays, where visitors can interact with the environment in seemingly natural ways, without the interference of intrusive devices. The whole structure of the exhibitions is sustained by a strong narrative, which, for its complexity, could be compared to a film script. As stated by the group, “the narration which unfolds, filling the whole museum space, requires a dramatic approach in the management of the physical space, virtual components and narration, as it were a film script and not just an exhibition. The narration is therefore inextricably linked with that environment, with the stories it tells and the overall subject matter” (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 28). On the one hand, “attention is shifted away from the object itself to the story surrounding the object, reconstructing a setting which gives a context to the exhibit” (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 28); on the other hand, the visitors’ intervention completes the exhibition. As they move through the space and interact with the devices, they contribute to building up the story, which means that this is not inherent in the single objects, but is embedded in the whole installation: “visitors do not move just from room to room, but also within a ‘cinematographic’ sequence which develops as they proceed” (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 29).

The reference to cinema is not casual: cinema is not mentioned only because of the abundant use of moving images, but it has a deeper significance and it is used as a model for the very conception of the exhibition space. Drawing on the classification suggested by Irina O. Rajewsky, I propose to understand it as a systemic intermedial reference where “the media product uses its own media-specific means [...] to refer to [...] another medium qua system” (Rajewsky 2005, 53). In other words, in many works by Studio Azzurro, museum narrative could be compared to film narrative, not only because they both unfold in time and follow a script, but also because the first employs, through its own media-specific means, filmic techniques such as montage (not only in time, but also in space), zooms, close-ups, as well as a complex articulation of diegesis and characters.

The exhibition *Ocean Liners (Transatlantici)*, held in 2004 at the Museo del Mare in Galata (Liguria, Italy), is emblematic in this respect. The installation was explicitly conceived “as a film that takes place around the space” (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 65), a film split into fragments disposed throughout the museum. The narrative was articulated in sixteen rooms: eight narrative scenarios, and just as many rooms for in-depth investigation of the history of transatlantic shipping in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each multi-screen installation presented one of the ships’ spaces, and at the same time a different historical period, providing thus a travel in both space and time: the narrative followed the liners from the boarding to the dock, but also through their history in different decades. The exhibition could be described as cinematic not only because it was mostly composed of audio-visuals, but also because of the particular positioning of the exhibits: the screens were arranged across the museum space in order to create a spatial montage in a three-dimensional succession of details and overall views, which amplified the audio-visual montage of the images. For instance, in the first room, devoted to boarding, four screens presented different points of view of the scene, combining in space moving images of passengers from different social classes [Fig. 1]. The juxtaposition of images accentuated their heterogeneity: while a projection showed a close-up or a detail of a first-class passenger, the next one displayed a full-shot of a third-class traveller. This arrangement showed in a powerful and immediate way the multiplicity of people who crossed the Atlantic, while the fractures between the screens revealed the insurmountable gap between them. The multiplication of perspectives on the portrayed event brought to light the impossibility to gather the different stories in a unique narrative, and stimulated visitors to adopt their own individual point of view on the story that was just beginning: the narrative was thus open, discontinuous and multi-layered. And it is precisely into its interstices that, I would argue, the attraction insinuated itself.

Through the various rooms, different strategies aimed to directly involve visitors. The audio-visual narrative abounded with spectacles, which implied the presence of a diegetic observer who is shown from behind, in the foreground, in a *mise en abyme* of the spectator’s position. In the scenario titled *And the ship goes... the film of films*, settled in a space similar to a small cinema theater, visitors could sit and watch a montage of original film sequences dedicated to transatlantic ships. Here, the distinction between the space of reception and the diegetic space was ambiguous and uncertain. Moreover, in scenarios such as *The Ballroom*, devoted to parties on board, characters continuously entered

and left the frame moving to or from the fore of the shot, creating an imaginary continuity between diegetic space and viewers' space [Fig. 2]. Often, characters looked directly into the camera, explicitly demanding the spectators' attention, or even made invitation gestures, apparently asking visitors to follow them, to enter the fictional world: this created a momentary uncertainty between the real and the fictional, accentuated by the almost life-size dimension of the figures on the screen. A few seconds later the trick was unveiled as the diegetic character who was the effective receiver of the interpellation entered the frame.<sup>4</sup> However, this restoring of the distinction between fiction and reality did not attenuate the estrangement effect caused by the previous blurring of the boundaries. Addressing viewers directly and emphasizing their being an essential part of the show, these display solutions undermined with their attractional force the homogeneity of the narrative.

In the interactive area *The Routes Carpet*, a dark ambient with ceiling-to-floor projections, the movements of the visitors produced virtual maritime routes which appeared on the floor, superimposed on moving images of the sea. Occasionally, shipwrecked or imaginary beings such as sirens and sea monsters appeared on the surface. Further ahead, in the *Wreck* room, a video projection on the ceiling mirrored on the reflecting floor showed an overturned sea surface where different objects floated to the top. Noises and voices came from a boat, softened by the water that completely surrounded the spectators, who were thus immersed in a multisensory and emotionally charged environment. Their impossible point of view, from the depths of the sea, emphasized the act of viewing itself and the exceptional nature of this point of view. These moments were only marginally functional to the unfolding narrative; rather, they created a pause in the rhythm of the visit, generating wonder, and captivating spectators through spectacle and visual effects. Moreover, in *The Routes Carpet*, the interactive device itself, which responded to spectators' movements, produced an effect of astonishment on them.

Studio Azzurro's exhibitions are characterized by a strong narrative component: the group define its museums as "narration" or as "narrative habitats" (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011). Moreover, the group firmly tries to avoid using technology as a means in itself, merely aimed at creating spectacular moments. However, as I showed, their use of audio-visual and interactive technologies occasionally creates instants of suspension, which undermine the development

4 Francesco Casetti describes the interpellation as "the recognition by the film of someone outside the text to whom the film makes a direct appeal, 'hailing' this 'you' in the form of an aside; the enunciator, in the form of a narrator, a voice-over, titles, or the like, that directly addresses the spectator" (1998, 138).

of the narration and make spectators' position uncertain. These are not to be understood as parentheses of mere visual pleasure and physical involvement. Rather such moments of attraction underline the direct involvement of visitors, and require a deeper engagement with the issues brought forward in the exhibition.

Another feature makes the *Ocean Liners* installation particularly interesting. As mentioned above, eight rooms were devoted to deepen issues related to the history of liners, such as migration, architectonic styles, ship competitions, as well as war and propaganda. Here, some projections showed archival footage and interviews with witnesses, as well as actors in costume who interpreted key figures in the ships' history, such as captains or architects. The narrative was always in the first person: events were filtered through the experience of individuals, through their (real or imagined) personal accounts and memories. For Studio Azzurro, not only could peoples' stories enrich official history with new shades of meaning, but this "revival of the oral culture" also allowed to "reproduce the emotional impact of direct communication" (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 29), creating a deeper involvement: "the memory contained within the museum is seen as a mobile and fluid substance whose significance must be continually reassessed in the present context, in relation to the social system and the situation we now live" (Cirifino, Giardini Papa and Rosa 2011, 30). This choice is not isolated in contemporary curatorial practice, but responds to a broader trend, as I will show in the followings.

## **The Witness and the Ghost: Audio-Visual Testimonies in Exhibitions**

Witnesses represent key figures in museums devoted to history and memory, which nowadays tend to privilege the stories of common people over authoritative and (presumed) objective historical narratives (see Hooper-Greenhill 2000). This museological tendency is linked to the growing importance of the act of testimony in contemporary culture and media (see Bhaskar and Walker 2009); in fact, as Felman and Laub have argued, the figure of the witness has become crucial to our relation to events (1992, 5). Hence, video testimonies have become an almost ubiquitous presence not only in media such as cinema and television, but also in museum exhibitions, where video interviews regarding the memories of witnesses are projected on screens of all shapes and dimensions. In the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, for instance, the *Tree of Testimony* installation, a seventy-screens video sculpture inspired by video artist Nam June Paik's works, shows



hundreds of filmed testimonies by Holocaust survivors. Moreover, numerous museums such as Studio Azzurro's Museo Audiovisivo della Resistenza (Audio-visual Museum of Resistance) in Fosdinovo (Italy), or N03!'s Museo Diffuso della Resistenza (Diffused Museum of Resistance) in Turin are almost entirely based on audio-visual testimonies, which narrate the history of opposition to fascists during the Second World War, or, more precisely, the many individual stories connected to that period. The significance of video testimonies in the communicative strategies of museums is also proved by the fact that often, when filmed interviews with eyewitnesses do not exist, fictional witnesses interpreted by actors perform the narration of historical events, creating "a tension between the authenticity signaled by the 'genre' of the video testimony and the fact that these are only simulations of testimony" (Arnold-de Simine 2013, 101).

An extensive use of fictional testimonial videos is made at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres (Belgium), where actors play the role of people who actually lived during the First World War and were involved in the armed conflicts: soldiers of different armies, a priest, a doctor and a nurse. Their testimonies, although written by curators, are based on verified historical sources such as letters and written documents. The life-size images of characters are shown on glass display cabinets, one of the most classic means of museum exhibitions. Each video testimony is associated with some real objects, such as weapons or diaries that truly belonged to the historical figure. The colours of their clothes are desaturated, their faces are pale and their bodies seem to emerge from the shadows. Reflections of the Gothic windows of the building on the glass of the vitrines create a number of tricks of light, which emphasize the transparency and immateriality of the figures, and accentuate the ambiguity between the attraction of the visitors' eyes and their inability to touch the exhibits. Characters seem spectres caught between life and death, which speak as they look straight into the eyes of the spectators, asking for their empathy, seducing but at the same time frightening them (Arnold-de Simine 2013, 192–193).

As Silke Arnold-de Simine has stated, such exhibition strategies could be described as "nostalgic revivals of simulations of eighteenth and twentieth-century spectacles such as the magic lantern shows renowned as 'Phantasmagoria' or 'Pepper's Ghost'" (2013, 187–200). As it is well known, the Phantasmagoria was a nineteenth-century exhibition of optical illusions produced by means of a magic lantern. The show was held in the darkness, and the magic lantern, hidden from view, projected frightening images such as ghosts, skeletons and demons on a transparent screen. In this way, rather than appearing on a material surface,

images seemed to fluctuate in the air, and audiences were aware of neither the projection device nor the screen. Pepper's Ghost, which took its name from the lanternist who made it popular, was an improvement of the Phantasmagoria: it allowed, through a game of mirrors, to project on a transparent screen, positioned on the scene, the image of a real person placed in an adjacent room, out of sight of the public (see Mannoni 2000, see also Gunning 2004). Today, these strategies are very popular in museum exhibitions: already in a 2008 article of the professional journal museology *Museums Practice*, Scott Billing argued that museums were rediscovering the impact of displays with ghostly apparitions, obtained by projecting still or moving images (Billing 2008, 36). Effects similar to those of Phantasmagoria and Pepper's Ghost are thus recreated in museums with hi-tech means such as holographic projections, a mid-twentieth century invention whose potential has been fully exploited with the advent of digital technologies. [Fig. 3.]

In memory museums and historical sites, "spectres" seem to know an unprecedented diffusion. Not only testimonies, but also the very protagonists of historical events, or even fictional period characters, re-appear in museums' rooms. To mention only a few, at Palazzo Ducale in Gubbio (Italy) the three-dimensional moving image of an actor playing Duke Federico da Montefeltro appears in one of the rooms and seems to float in the air. Not casually, he converses with an angel, an unreal figure that accentuates the impression to be in presence of an uncanny vision. At the entrance of the Museo Martinitt e Stelline, created in Milan by the group Studio N03! and devoted to the stories of children in the two city orphanages during the nineteenth century, the shadows of the little orphans run on a staircase, accompanied by sounds of steps, whispers and laughs. The immateriality of their figures is accentuated by the fact that they overlap with the bodies of the visitors, just like eerie apparitions. The Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw proposes the reconstruction of a nineteenth-century Parisian living room, where spectral silhouettes of actors are projected behind a window, mimicking the life that took place there. At the Roman Baths in Bath, full-size wall video projections of historical characters re-populate the site. In Studio Azzurro's exhibition *Fare gli italiani* (The Making of Italians), held in 2011 in Turin, an impressive procession of ghostly figures marched along three large screens hung on the ceiling, which dominated the whole space, creating a sense of wonder in visitors but at the same time a sense of discomfort as well by the threatening figures incumbent upon their heads.

I should also mention Peter Greenaway's 2007 exhibition at Venaria Reale, an Italian Royal palace near Turin. As the title *Peopling the Palaces* indicates,

Greenaway's intervention was intended to bring life in a now deserted historical palace, presenting the daily life of the court during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through hundreds of archetypal figures. The installation, a film divided into fragments and disseminated in space (as in the case of Studio Azzurro's *Ocean Liners*), was situated in eleven rooms (today reduced to five), in which audio-visual projections showed images of people engaged in their daily activities: cooking, hunting, court dances and a procession (for a more detailed description, see Chittenden 2011). In *The Kitchens*, for instance, a large central screen is placed at the centre of the room, flanked by twenty smaller holographic screens placed symmetrically on either side. [Fig. 4.] During the unfolding of the audio-visual narrative, images of the chef and his under-cooks are refracted on the different screens, surrounding and immersing visitors. Again, the transparency of the images suggests the spectral nature of the characters who return to inhabit the palace and share its space with visitors, blurring the distinction between presence and absence, past and present. In other rooms, Greenaway uses the white walls as projection surfaces. On the one hand, filmic images blend with the architectural surface and with its materiality, but on the other, the very architecture seems to lose its consistence and to unfold into a new and evanescent space. Through the use of audio-visuals and digital technologies, *Peopling the Palace* recovers and renews traditional means of museum display such as illusionistic diorama or life groups, as well as historical drama reconstructions.

Finally, another Phantasmagoria-like display is the so-called *Secret Annex*, a part of the permanent *Anne Frank* installation at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. It is a small, circular room that recreates the shelter of Anne's family during the Nazi occupation. Here, the moving shadow of the young girl is projected onto a two-hundred-and-sixty degrees curved wall. An actress gives her a voice, and a number of visual and sound effects create an engaging narrative about Anne's life in the refuge. Space is similar to a little projection room: spectators are seated, they watch images on the screen, and they are immersed in dramatic sounds. Museum space mimics the classic conditions of film viewing, and visitors, accustomed to walk through the space, are almost forced to immobility: a constraint that strengthens the feeling of claustrophobia and aims to create a deeper empathy for the girl and her family.

Even if they are in many cases inscribed in the progressing of museum narrative, these strategies at first create attraction, in the sense that has already been explained above. They are thus very effective means for museums to create evocative and emotive experiences (Hein 2000). Audio-visual display

strategies, similar to those just mentioned, contribute to the intensification of the emotional impact of the exhibition, increasing the spectators' sense of empathy and attachment to historical or fictional characters. Projected moving images create a sense of presence and contact (albeit illusory and ambiguous) between reality and the represented world: visitors are aware that they are not actually seeing or hearing "real" historical individuals, but nonetheless they are deeply and emotionally touched by their stories. According to Silke Arnold-de Simine, accounts of personal memories, and in a broader sense the transmission of historical knowledge through the filter of individual narratives, "take centre stage, not only because they are seen to be more engaging but because they also seem to provide a democratic and ethically responsible way of approaching the past" (Arnold-de Simine 2012, 15). Moreover, she continues, the focus on emotions "is based on the assumption that knowledge about atrocities alone does not prevent violent histories from happening again, but that instead a degree of imaginative empathy is being called for in order to ensure moral responsibility" (Arnold-de Simine 2012, 15). However, we agree with Patrizia Violi when she argues that we should not underestimate the influence of the broader "spectatorship culture" in which museums are immersed, which renders them "spectacular media showplaces" (Violi 2014, 55). For this reason, "the main emotion they aim to provoke [...] is often one of *wonder*: visitors are to be surprised and captured by spectacular innovations and new presentation forms" (Violi 2014, 55).

For their spectacular potential, audio-visual technologies are privileged means to obtain such effects. In the installations described above, the uncanny appearance and disappearance of the shadows of historical characters, as well as the fact that they move as in real life, engender and modulate the spectators' involvement, inducing surprise and astonishment. The presentation of "real" objects, which is the traditional mission of the museum, leaves place to an ambiguous and often problematic coexistence of truth and illusion, subjectivity and objectivity, facts and imagination.

In this paper I have shown that audio-visual media are not merely accessory tools in museums. On the contrary, when film and moving images are incorporated in exhibitions, their arrangement affects the whole museum discourse, which in turn contributes to determine their significance. Moreover, on a deeper level, the components of the exhibition space (such as objects, architecture, lighting, sounds, and visitors' paths) can be shaped in a way that refers to filmic language. Following Rajewsky (2005, 53), I defined this relation as a systemic intermedial relation, arguing that the cinematic component should

be understood as a structural element of contemporary exhibitions. Therefore, the analysis of how audio-visuals are displayed in museums not only enriches our understanding of an underestimated arena of the circulation of films and moving images outside the movie theater, but also helps to better understand how museums transmit their contents and engage their public.

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## List of Figures

**Figure 1.** Studio Azzurro's *Ocean Liners* exhibition: *The boarding.*



**Figure 2.** Studio Azzurro's *Ocean Liners* exhibition: *The Ballroom.* **Figure 3.** In Flanders Fields Museum: the “ghost” of Willi Siebert.





**Figure 4.** Peter Greenaway's exhibition, *Peopling the Palace* (2007). *The Kitchens*.

