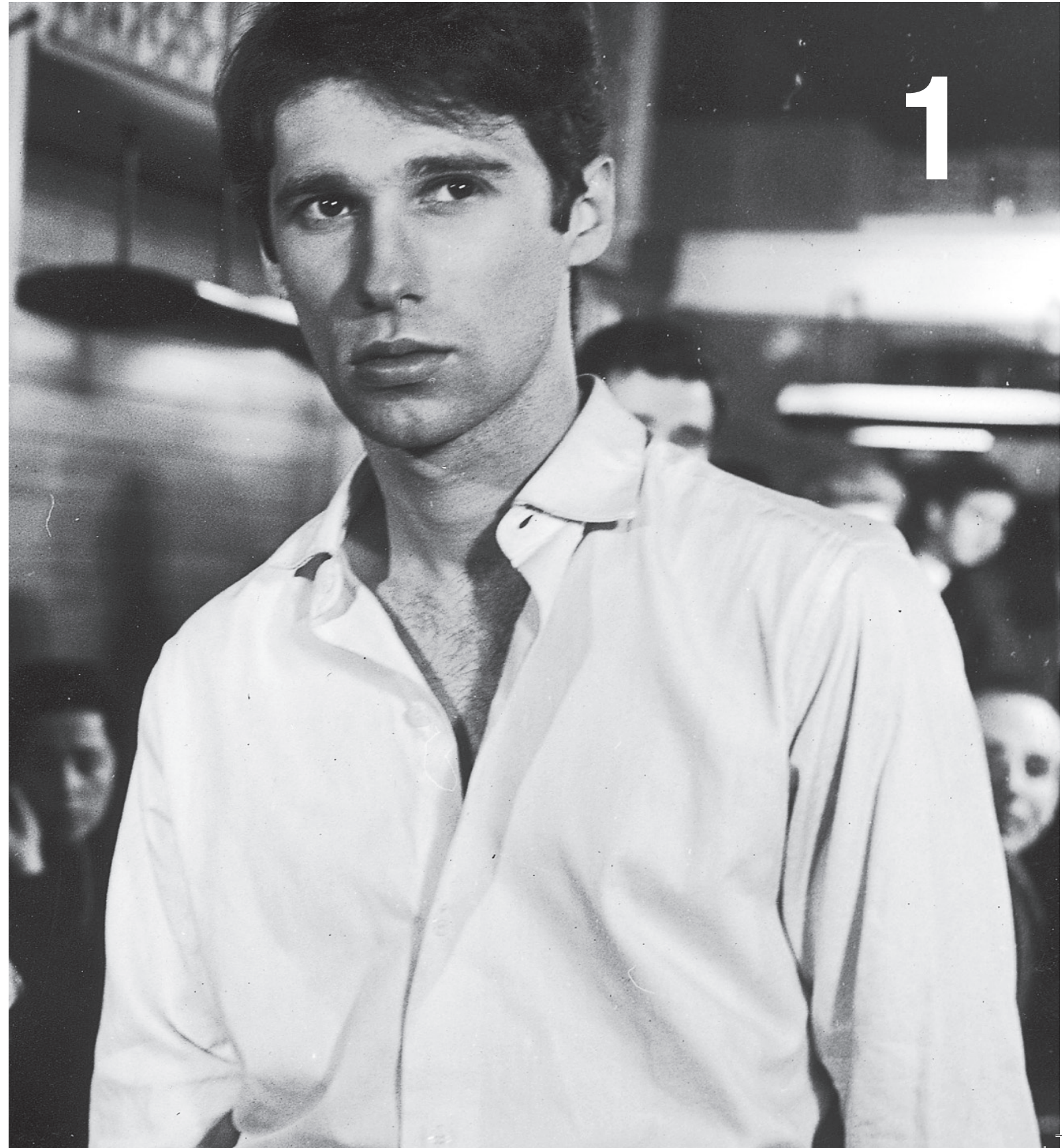


*I even imagined a delirious script, in which, by day, a naïve boy dated a modest girl who worked in an old ammunition factory, but by night everything changed. He was the factory's night watchman; she was a feline thief, dressed in black, gliding across the rooftops, disappearing into wells and caves. He lived in the dark, obsessively chasing her; she made fun of him with her mean laugh. He would never catch that wretched night temptress, who fled through his fingers like a Fantômas or a Batman in skirts.*



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# hi jack,

JACK was born from the academic research project *Silent Rupture, Intersections between Architecture and Cinema*, Portugal 1960-1974, that set out to explore the overlaps between the production and criticism on architecture and cinema in the Portuguese cultural and political context of those years. But JACK wants to broaden that experience, to go back and forth in time, far and close in place and beyond the academic sphere.

Drawing from a range of diverse disciplinary approaches, JACK will look at how architectural and urban space, real or staged, are fundamental to cinema and the way in which film, in its multiple dimensions, may become a key instrument within the creative process and the perception of architecture. JACK will explore this juxtaposition of filmic discourse and architectural design, to propose a spatial reading of film and a filmic take on architecture, crossing and diluting the boundaries between the two. This is, therefore, a journal in which architecture and cinema are never to be taken separately. In fact, as the aforementioned research project evolved, the belief emerged that a clear boundary between architecture and cinema may not even exist. There's no line, but a borderless yet identifiable territory instead.

Whatever is learned from that common ground where architecture and cinema meet will only potentiate them both in their mutual purpose of generating spaces and places.

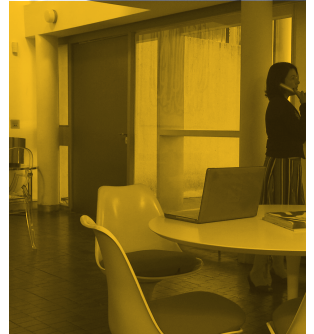
In delving into the vast and intriguing topography of such a symbiotic landscape, there will be, however, no attempt to define any limits, for that would create an imposed and artificial conscience of unnecessary outlines. In the end, JACK would like to have a part in the construction of that landscape.

*this is a journal  
in which architecture  
and cinema  
are never to be taken  
separately*

# the illegal window

*El hombre de al lado,*

Mariano Cohn, Gastón Duprat, 2009



by Luis Urbano

*El Hombre de al Lado* (2009), Argentinean film directed by Mariano Cohn and Gastón Duprat, was almost exclusively filmed in the *Curuchet House*, built in 1948 after Le Corbusier's design, in La Plata, Argentina. The house was built for a doctor and rumour has it Le Corbusier has never actually visited the site nor did he meet his client in person. Ironically, this building is often referred to as an example of integration into the existent surroundings, establishing connections with adjacent buildings and recreating the Argentinean patio house with a modern language. There are some other myths about this house. In one of them the house was Le Corbusier's way to thank the doctor for saving his life during a boat trip; another one claims that the house was received with such dislike in the city that the surgeon was ostracized, not only by his colleagues but also by his patients (for the building was also his practice), which ultimately led to his bankruptcy.

One of the film's most interesting features is that it does not display the house in an ostentatious way. The house is, indeed, one of the characters of the film but its presence and architecture are never forced on the viewer. Its spatial relation with the neighbouring building is not entirely clear, since, even though the two houses are adjoining, you have to go around the entire block to be able to go from one to the other. The connection between both is

most likely made in the posterior façade. Also unclear is the exact location of the illegal window that the flamboyant neighbour opens directly into the *Curuchet House*, in the attempt to collect some of the sunlight that his house lacks and that his neighbour's has in plenty. This spatial ambiguity is characteristic of the way architecture is often represented in cinema, where geography and spatial relations are almost always reassembled by the images, not just in the way they are organized in editing, but also in the way each viewer filters them through their own memories of that space or their experiences of other spaces. Therefore, spatial coherence in cinema does not necessarily go hand in hand with real architectural coherence.

The whole situation of the opening of this illegal window is also what triggers the questioning of the owner's life, his career, his marriage, his relationships with his students, his conceited ways, but also his weakness in dealing with the neighbour and with his own wife, that ends up making us sympathize more with the supposed villain rather than with the alleged victim. And those roles, the ones of villain and victim, are also not made clear, with the viewer having to wait until the end of the film to finally clarify them.

*El Hombre de al Lado* is also about trying to determine where the architect's intervention ends and the legitimate (or not so much) expectations of a building's users begin. The real issue is not only the physical boundaries



*El Hombre de al Lado*, Mariano Cohn and Gastón Duprat, 2009



*Curutchet House*, Le Corbusier, 1949-53



between two buildings and how to manage this border but also the architect's role in his work once it is concluded. When the proprietors consider installing an alarm system they discuss the location of the panic buttons. They cannot decide so someone suggests the better way to go about it is to ask Le Corbusier. Whoever lives or works in a building that is deemed a masterpiece of architecture will certainly relate to the film. Oddly, the most flexible and sensible attitude comes precisely from an architect, to whom the owner turns to for advice on how to solve the illegal opening, and who pragmatically suggests keeping the window, only at a higher level, and the use of frosted glass so the light still goes through but avoiding prying eyes.

Finally, the film questions the limits of privacy; how much of one's intimacy one is willing to share but also what one really wants to know of someone else's private life. There is an obvious affinity with Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, only here spatial proximity is more intense, almost shoulder to shoulder. The film inside the film – the small finger-animated theatre – refers, as does *Rear Window*, to privacy issues but also to the cinematographic device itself. The loss of privacy is almost inevitable when you live in a house that is an icon of modern architecture and you are forced to deal with the constant gaze of architectural tourists, crossing the limit between public and private.

*El Hombre de al Lado* is no masterpiece but it does show how cinema can be used to make an audience experience architecture: the narrative engages the viewer with the space, the camera movements highlight specific features of the building and the editing juxtaposes unrelated spaces as to create a cohesive and believable sense of place. The film also raises some interesting questions on the intersections between architecture and cinema, like the use of light in shaping places, the need of movement for a full spatial perception or the definition of interior/private and exterior/social limits.

*Spatial coherence in cinema  
does not necessarily  
go hand in hand with real  
architectural coherence.*

## JACK

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