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Habilitation and Research Project
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**Montage in Architecture**

Studies on Spatial Conception and Architectural Representation in the Age of Technical Reproducibility

Montage and collage may be counted among the principal artistic strategies in modernity. Their impact has been discussed widely with regard to disciplines such as painting and sculpture, literature, music, and, most importantly, film. As far as architecture is concerned, montage and collage and the respective theoretical concepts have been referred to frequently in postmodern discourse, albeit—for the most part—on a purely metaphorical level. One major exception may be seen in Colin Rowe's and Fred Koetter's seminal Collage City (1978), a study that argued for a palimpsest-like reading of the contemporary metropolis that explicitly embraced the heterogeneous, fragmentary, and disrupted nature of the urban tissue. Such a reading was heavily indebted both to gestalt theory and a neo-historicist turn in architectural and urbanistic discourse around 1970.

The research project "Montage in Architecture" proposes a different approach. Focusing many on the historical avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, the project undertakes an inquiry in the meaning of montage for modern architectural thinking and the representation of space based on a number of case studies. It is guided by the notion that montage—the appropriation and assembly of individual elements or their fragments into a new constellation—has become the central operation for architectural production in modernity. In an architectural context, montage first referred to anonymous industrial production based on the assembly of pre-fabricated parts, and it is for this reason that it became a guiding principle for standardization, industrialization and mass-production in modern architecture. However, the principle of montage may not be reduced to such a technical procedure; rather, montage was soon exploited in the sense of an aesthetic category whose impact depends on dialectical juxtaposition and shock. The theoretical foundations for such an aesthetic understanding of montage were laid out mainly by film theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein (himself an architect by training) and Dziga Vertov, but also by Dadaist artist circles in Berlin around 1920. Later on, Walter Benjamin in his Arcades Project theorized montage as the structural principle for a materialist historiography.

This research project will investigate in how far avant-garde architecture played a significant role in the development of a modern theory of montage. The inquiry proposes a close reading of the relevant writings of Sergei Eisenstein and Walter Benjamin, and discusses architectural montage with regard to a cinematographic theory of architecture. A number of individual case studies will focus on specific instances of architctural montage throughut modernity. The investigation intends to show how architecture in the age of technical reproducibility increasingly gravitates towards montage, and proposes to critically discuss the sources—and the consequences—of this epistemological rift.