

Somewhere at the bottom of my memory are the sunken remains of all the films I have ever seen

What the fuck are you looking at? Why are you staring at me?

He tells me, irritated, one of three guys sitting on the porch of a house on - I don't know what street. I wish I had replied *"Oh no, sorry, I wasn't looking at you, I was looking at some kind of ghost of you buried in a cinematic elsewhere. A very recent elsewhere, at that last night I watched a movie and a scene from it just came to my mind… I don't care what you're doing, I looked at you with the same stupefied face as when I looked at the kids playing baseball in the backyard of a house some blocks down. Me, I've only seen this thing in the movies. From my own personal archive, I'm doing drawings of frames or stills I have unconsciously saved, and just as unconsciously they pop out while I'm cycling or walking."*

Obviously I don't reply anything like that to the irritated guy. I just look down and quickly sneak off, like a rat startled by a sudden noise.

> One thing all films have in common is the power to take perception elsewhere. As I write this, I'm trying to remember a film I liked, or even one I didn't like. My memory becomes a wilderness of elsewheres. […] I will allow the elsewheres to reconstruct themselves as a tangled mass. Somewhere at the bottom of my memory are the sunken remains of all the films I have ever seen, good and bad they swarm together forming cinematic mirages, stagnant pools of images that cancel each other out.[1]

The thing is, my first week in the US, in New Orleans, is a trip down these personal elsewheres from cinema or national television. Someone asks me what has struck me the most in the first days I spent in New Orleans.
Someone: *Hey Gio, so what's the most beautiful thing you've seen till now? -*
Me: *I don't know… I like to wander around and look at the houses at different moments of the day. -*

Indeed, there is no shortage of architectural styles here. I carry in my pocket a little booklet by the Historic District Landmarks Commission of New Orleans where they've gathered all the different types of houses in the city: from the Shotgun to the Townhouse and Greek revival.
But, before I can put my new architectural knowledge to use, television images from my childhood pour into my mind. Images, floating in my cinematic subconscious. *"They float down here… they all float down here."* as Pennywise said to Georgie before killing him in the TV miniseries *IT* (1990).

My mental maps are a collage of overlapping and interchangeable visions, a film privately screened in the movie theatre behind my eyes. The fiction preceding my gaze, which has crept in as a filter between the landscape that surrounds me and the retina of my eyeballs. There are many who tell me that the first week is when the jet lag manifests itself most intensely; you find yourself intoxicated for free, in a constant wakefulness that slightly distorts the perception of things and of the flowing of time. You are, in other words, constantly "stoned".

1 Robert Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia", *in Artforum. Special Film Issue*, edited by Annette Michelson, September 1971.

Horror movies play with our strongest emotions, the fear and distress they evoke cause their images to remain in our visual memory the longest. They are glued, stuck there, like chewing gum under school desks, until you lay your hand on them.

During my gothic metal teens, I used to watch countless horror movies (to be honest I've always watched them, but in my teens it was my duty as a metalhead), and through these visual baggage, Louisiana — the Louisiana geographically situated in my imagination — has become a gothic land. We — me and the metalheads — often watched *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), and used to mix up the history of Louisiana with Ann Rice's vampire stories. Today, this ethically questionable cross-breeding of narratives is told directly by restless tourist guides in the French Quarter.

In my mind, even movies that weren't filmed in Louisiana were filmed here. These residential areas which I'm passing through, anonymous and new to me, are familiar not because of experience, but because they are mentally decoded by my perception as familiar sights. It is this feeling that I'm "reliving" things that amplifies the unsettling quality, they are echoes of a deep-seated image that haunts their physical appearance. As in *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, *"I couldn't deny the extent to which everything was known to me, and nonetheless I was surprised to perceive how strange the fantasies were that those ordinary images agitated in me."*

In 1980, Lucio Fulci came to New Orleans to shoot the movie *The Beyond* (1981), which I have always called by its Italian title *L'aldilà e tu vivrai nel terrore.* The dwelling featured in this movie is also seen, with slight adaptations, in *Zombie 5: Killing Birds* (1988) and in *Beyond Darkness* (1990). Needless to say, I visited this house during my first days in Louisiana. I needed to geographically pinpoint one of my cinematic elsewheres, to remove it from abstraction and experience it as a physical place, and then let it drift, as a mere image, in my memory. I also wanted to go to the house that was used for the movie *The Amityville Horror* (1979), but that is in Toms River in New Jersey. Strangely though, I could swear I had seen it on - I don't know what street, in New Orleans.

> […] sites in films are not to be located or trusted. All is out of proportion.
> Scale inflates or deflates into uneasy dimensions. We wander between the towering and the bottomless. We are lost between the abyss within us and the boundless horizons outside us. Any film wraps us in uncertainty.[2]

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Courtesy the artist and Galleria Tiziana Di Caro

2 Robert Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia", *in Artforum. Special Film Issue*, edited by Annette Michelson, September 1971.