

Improving Architectural Quality in Urban Public Space: Perfect Days Movie

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary structure that interacts with other branches of art such as cinema and literature. The relationship it establishes with cinema in particular allows architectural spaces to be used as an artistic narrative tool. Cinema uses scenario, editing, acting and spatial designs to convey emotions and thoughts. In this context, spaces in cinema are sometimes directly inspired by the discipline of architecture; sometimes architects freely and experimentally produce spaces for cinema. In addition to artificial spaces such as fictional planets in science fiction films, real spaces can also be a source of inspiration for cinema. The film Perfect Days can be given as an example of this situation. Wim Directed by Wenders, the film is about the daily life of a man who cleans public toilets in Japan, and the location was inspired by The Tokyo Toilet project. This study aims to examine these public toilet designs in the film Perfect Days within the framework of the aesthetic and philosophical principles of Japanese minimalism.

Keywords

Perfect Days, Wim Wenders, Japanese minimalism, the Tokyo toilet project, film-space relationship

1. Introduction

Architecture is one of the rare fields where technique and art come together. The relationship between architecture and art stems from its communication with different branches of art. Architecture feeds each other with branches of art such as cinema and literature [4]. This feeding appears as spatial designs in the architecture and cinema duo. Cinema uses scenario, fiction, actor performance and spaces to convey emotion and thought [2]. When spatial designs are made in films, inspiration is taken from the field of architecture or architects design film locations in a free environment. Sometimes, locations in films may be designed just for the film, such as planets in science fiction films [3]. Sometimes, existing locations inspire films and films are shot in those locations. An example of this is the film Perfect Days. Perfect Days tells the story of a man who cleans public toilets in Japan and was inspired by The Tokyo Toilet's project.

Perfect Days in detail, you must first look at its director. The director of the movie is Wim Wenders has worked in many different fields. His successful career progress has made him a playwright, producer, photographer and German film director today [19]. Wim Wenders's background in different branches of art is strongly reflected in his films.

Wim Wenders' Perfect Days takes us on a journey into the meaning of modern life through the daily routines of a man named Hirayama. Hirayama lives a simple life in the back streets of Tokyo, earning his living by cleaning public toilets. The story of the film is built on his personal world, full of meaningful and small details in his simple and repetitive daily life. These public toilets in Japan show that they are one of the cleanest countries in the world with the hygiene in their toilets, and this film aims to convey this message to the whole world. The "Tokyo Toilet" project takes this public quality even higher, and 17 public toilets in Shibuya have been renovated to support the Japanese culture of hospitality, increasing public quality regardless of gender, age or disability.

The Tokyo Project, also inspires architects. When architects examine this film, they will examine the smallest unit of public structure, toilets, both functionally and aesthetically. When they examine the

color, light, material, context, function or functions, and aesthetic perception of toilets, they will actually see a small urban transformation project. In this respect, the study will analyze how the increase in public quality is done according to the design principles of minimalism.

2. Analysis of Film Locations with Minimalist Principles

Perfect Days is a film that draws attention as a work of cinema that reveals the basic principles of Japanese minimalism through both its spatial designs and the lifestyles of the characters. Wim Wenders presents the audience with simplicity, plainness and order based on the principle of "less is more" of Japanese minimalism. The spaces in the film are arranged in accordance with the basic principles of Japanese minimalist design and aim to increase public quality. The principles to be taken as basis during the review: Simplicity Principle, Functionality Principle, Aesthetics and Order Principle, Use of Natural Materials, Use of Color Palette.

2.1. Public Toilets

Wim Wenders's Perfect Days film is particularly notable for its public toilet scenes. These spaces are designed in accordance with the essence of minimalism, such as simplicity, plainness, functionality and spatial calm, while also reflecting concepts such as wabi - sabi in the Japanese aesthetics [6]. In this section, 12 of the 17 toilets designed within the scope of 'The Tokyo Toilet Art Project', shown in the film, will be evaluated in terms of minimalist design principles.

2.1.1. Nanago Dori Park (Hi Toilet) – Kazoo Sato

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, 'Hi Toilet' is a design that combines functionality with innovative technologies with its simple form. Its oval white structure offers minimal aesthetics, while its voice-activated touchless functions increase hygiene and user experience. This is especially important in the post-COVID-19 era. Its seamless body with soft lines provides visual simplicity, while the space between the interior and the outer shell creates air circulation. The use of white color reflects the basic aesthetic understanding of minimalism. The design represents Tokyo's modern and clean city identity [7].



Fig. 1. Perfect Days Movie 00:31:40



Fig. 2. 'Modern Kawayu' toilets [7]

2.1.2. Nishihara Itchome Park (Andon Toilet) – Takenosuke Sakakura

Minimalism with its simple aesthetics that prioritize functionality. The balanced use of white and green colors provides harmony with the environment and visual spaciousness. The neat and simple geometric form provides an inviting atmosphere for users by offering a visual that is far from clutter, while the toilet's function as a "lantern" illuminating the park shows that the design also takes spatial experience into consideration, Figures 3 and 4. The open space layout and simple form support the efficient use of the area, while the aim of improving the image of the park is also consistent with the user-centered design approach [8].

2.1.3. Yoyogi-Hachiman (Three Mushrooms) – Toyo Ito

This design reflects the minimalism principle of connecting with nature with its aesthetics that are in harmony with the natural environment. Mushroom-like organic forms and open connection paths provide a space that is both functional and inviting, Figures 5 and 6. The absence of dead-end roads

supports safe circulation, while the importance given to accessibility and user comfort reveals a simple yet functional approach. Developed with inspiration from nature, this design is an exemplary application that integrates with the environment and provides a peaceful atmosphere [9].



Fig. 3. Perfect Days Movie 0:54:17



Fig. 4. 'Andon Toilet' [8]



Fig. 5. Perfect Days Movie 0:15:02



Fig. 6. Three Mushrooms [9]

2.1.4. Haru-no-Ogawa Community Park – Shigeru Ban

This design combines aesthetic simplicity with technological innovation, reflecting minimalism's approach focused on functionality and user experience. While transparent glass panels provide visual openness, their opacity when locked offers a balanced solution between privacy and transparency. At night, the park is integrated with its surroundings by lighting up the area and increases the sense of security. The user can observe cleanliness and occupancy from the outside, showing how functionality is integrated with simple design, Figures 7, 8 and 9. This structure stands out as an interpretation of contemporary minimalism that is both aesthetic and user-focused [10].



Fig. 7. Perfect Days Movie 0:33:02

2.1.5. Yoyogi Fukamachi Mini Park – Shigeru Ban

This design also exhibits similar features to the toilet in Haru-no-Ogawa Park, Figures 10 and 11. The point that distinguishes these two toilets, which belong to the same designer, is the color tone choices in the design. The different tones that the glass takes on together with the lighting visually enrich the design. This structure also offers an impressive example of a modern public space design by blending technology with aesthetics [11].



Fig. 8. Haru-no-Ogawa Park



Fig. 9. Ogawa Park at Night [10]



Fig. 10. Perfect Days Movie 0:17:30



Fig. 11. Yoyogi Fukamachi Mini Park Toilets [11]

2.1.6. Jingumae ('HOME') – NIGO®

This design creates an emotional bond with the user by combining nostalgic aesthetics with minimalist simplicity. It offers a peaceful atmosphere thanks to its traditional house form, simple façade layout and pastel tones, Figures 12 and 13. While creating a pause area against the city tempo with its small scale and simple details, accessibility and ease of use appeal to all age groups. This structure is an interpretation that combines both the emotional and functional aspects of minimalism, bringing the past and the present together [12].



Fig. 12. Perfect Days Movie 01:36:50



Fig. 13. 'HOME' Toilets [12]

2.1.7. Jingu-Dori Park (AMAYADORI) – Tadao Ando

This design aims to expand the boundaries of a public space with a simple architectural approach, Figures 14 and 15. The circular floor plan and wide roof design create a simple yet impressive form and establish a harmonious relationship with its surroundings. The use of vertical louvers both creates a sense of spaciousness by allowing light and air into the interior and increases the sense of security by establishing a visual connection from the outside to the interior. The free circulation layout allows users to move easily in the space, while at the same time making the space accessible and inviting. The integration of the structure into the natural greenery of Jingu-Dori Park reflects the minimalism principle of connecting with nature. Another striking point is the design made with a dark color palette, which is not generally preferred in minimalism [13].



Fig. 14. Perfect Days Movie 00:45: 43



Fig. 15. 'AMAYADORI' [13]

2.1.8. Nabeshima Shoto Park – Kengo Kuma

This design creates a strong bond by blending the aesthetics of nature with modern architecture. Organically arranged boards reflect the irregular harmony of nature, adding a natural originality to the design, Figures 16 and 17. The structure layout in the form of separate huts supports privacy and a spacious atmosphere, while offering an open and functional solution suitable for post- pandemic needs. This layout, which responds to different user needs, offers an experience integrated with nature by creating the feeling of a village lost in the forest [14].



Fig. 16. Perfect Days Movie 00:12:06



Fig. 17. Castle Park Toilets [14]

2.1.9. Higashi Sanchoime - Nao Tamura

This design combines bright red with simple geometric forms to create a striking and powerful appearance, Figures 18 and 19. Inspired by Origami, the structure expresses the elegance of Japanese culture in a modern language, reflecting the values of hospitality. Three separate areas create an environment where everyone can feel comfortable while taking into account privacy and security needs. While its simple and sharp lines maintain the minimalist line, the unusual color choice gives the design an original character [15].



Fig. 18. Perfect Days Movie 01:36: 33



Fig. 19. Higashi Sanchoime Toilets [15]

2.1.10. Ebisu Park – Masamichi Katayama / Wonderwall®

Offers an example that integrates aesthetics and functionality by bringing together historical and contemporary minimalism, Figures 20 and 21. Referring to primitive Japanese "kawayu" toilets, the 15

concrete walls reflect the material-focused approach of minimalism with their simple form and raw texture. Their seemingly random placement enriches the user experience by bringing together a sense of orientation and discovery. The natural integration of the toilet into the park setting creates a public space that is in harmony with its surroundings. The "Modern Kawaya " combines traditional elements with a modern interpretation, showing that minimalism can be both an aesthetic and cultural expression [16].



Fig. 20. Perfect Days Movie 00:31:40



Fig. 21. 'Modern Kawaya' Toilets [16]

2.1.11. Ebisu Station, West Exit – Kashiwa Sato

Of minimalism by focusing on simplicity and functionality. The pure white façade evokes a sense of cleanliness and spaciousness, while the parallel lines create a bright and peaceful atmosphere in the interior with their light permeability, Figures 22 and 23. The building's inviting appearance, which is in harmony with the environment, transforms it from an ordinary toilet into a symbol of the neighborhood. Thanks to the balanced combination of minimalist form and function, the building is an example of a contemporary public facility that offers aesthetics, accessibility and ease of use [17].



Fig. 22. Perfect Days Movie 01:37:42



Fig. 23. 'White' Toilets [17]

2.1.12. Ebisu Eastern Park – Fumihiko Maki

Minimalism's versatility and functionality by offering a multipurpose space that functions not only as a toilet but also as a rest and interaction area. Its decentralized plan and clear sightlines provide a safe and accessible experience. Its playful roof supports natural light and ventilation, while visually connecting with the park's "Octopus Park" identity, giving the structure a playful character, Figures 24 and 25. Appealing to different age groups, this structure offers an example of an effective, inviting public space in a social and environmental context [18].



Fig. 24. Perfect Days Movie 00:08: 16



Fig. 25. Ebisu East Park Toilets [18]

2.2. Hirayama's House

In the movie *Perfect Days*, Hirayama's house reflects a minimalist lifestyle with its simple and functional structure, Figures 26 and 27. Despite living in a small area within the dense urban fabric of Tokyo, he continues his daily routines efficiently thanks to his orderly and purposeful furniture placement. This area, free of unnecessary decorations, symbolizes both his disciplined life and his loneliness. Easy access to daily items, his habit of orderly storage, and plants in a corner of the house reveal both his practicality and his inner connection with nature. Thus, the house becomes a living space shaped by minimalist aesthetics, reflecting both the character's inner world and spatial limitations.



Fig. 26. *Perfect Days* Movie 00:20:18



Fig. 27. *Perfect Days* Movie 01:01:36

2.3. Tokyo Streets and Parks

Stand out as one of the places where Hirayama's daily life takes place in the movie "*Perfect Days*". These streets reflect the complex urban texture of Tokyo. In the movie, the streets and parks of Tokyo concretely reflect the relationship of the individual with the city in the movie "*Perfect Days*". While the streets offer chaos and activity, a little calmer begins in the side streets and as you move towards the parks, these become escape points that support individual peace. The movie realistically addresses Hirayama's role in his life.

2.4. Other Public Areas

Restaurants, warm tones of wooden materials and minimal decoration create a friendly atmosphere, but the narrow structure of the spaces and the feeling of crowding during rush hours reduce the quality of the public space. Although the bookstore contains minimalist elements in terms of order and functionality, it does not support the use of open space with its narrow and cramped areas. Although the orderliness of the books on the shelves creates a positive impression, the sense of chaos in the general space design exhibits a structure contrary to the principle of minimalism and reduces the quality. The bathhouse stands out as one of the spaces closest to minimalist elements. Its simple design, use of natural light and the orderly placement of the washing areas have also increased the quality in the public space. In general, natural light is not used much in the spaces. This weakens the feeling of spaciousness inside and increases the perception of congestion. The quality of the space in the public space is more positive in places where the principle of minimalism is used correctly.

3. Conclusion

It is a film where it is very clear that the fields of cinema and architecture feed each other. The film was inspired by public toilets in Tokyo. Public toilets are the leading role of the film. Public toilets were not considered only as toilets. Designing public toilets as the smallest structure of public space, sometimes as sitting areas and sometimes as play areas for children, showed how the quality of public spaces was increased. The awareness of increasing the quality of public spaces was ensured by transferring 17 toilet projects designed by famous designers within the scope of the Tokyo toilet project to the whole world with the film. Architects were informed about this project by watching the film and had the opportunity to do research and examine the design approach in Japan. When the toilets are analyzed in general, the bidet faucet in the interior draws attention. The bidet faucet is a faucet that is widely used in Anatolia but disappears as you go west. This faucet, which is used to ensure cleanliness, shows how much importance that culture attaches to cleanliness. We can understand how much

importance the Japanese attach to cleanliness from here. Different structures were chosen as structures. Even the shell design, which is generally applied in large public areas, has been made in these small public areas. Materials such as connection and harmony with nature have been emphasized. Materials such as wood, glass, and iron have been used. In terms of color and light, sometimes striking colors have been chosen to attract attention, while sometimes designs that integrate with the context have been made. More attention has been paid to lighting in locations where it is dark at night, and a safe environment has been targeted. All of these have been considered when determining the concepts, and designs have been made according to the principles of minimalism. Interaction with the society has sometimes been assigned different functions, and sometimes messages have been tried to be given as an aesthetic perception. Each region has been analyzed very well, and the necessary idea has been found with famous designers. Another perspective is that these designs are urban transformation projects. It is a project that shows how to take the city to completely different places with small touches and that the smallness of the project area or function should not affect the importance of the design. It has often been seen that architecture students or architects do not care much about the toilet and place it in the wrong places in the project, whereas an architect who examines this project will better understand the importance of the toilet and its effect on the design. It is also a project that shows how to design public spaces according to the context. It is as if the field of cinema inspired by the field of architecture and then the field of architecture inspired by the field of cinema have continuously fed each other in a loop and offered architects a different perspective.

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18. Perfect Days - 2023 movie

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