

EVERYDAY CINEMATIC SITUATIONS FOR
ARCHITECTURAL FILMS

A collection of viewpoints, urban micro-
stories, reveals and simple visual
devices to make architectural films feel
less like animated renders — and more
like real places.

Stop film the building Vol. 01

by OTERO VISUAL 2026

THIS IS VOLUME 01

This is not a complete catalogue.

It is not a list of rules.

And it is definitely not the only way to film architecture.

This is a collection of examples.

Simple situations, viewpoints, actions and visual devices that can be used, combined, adapted or completely reinterpreted.

Think of it as a starting point.

A library of ideas for those moments when you already have the architecture, already have the image, already have the tools...

...but you still need to decide what actually happens in the shot.

More situations will come.

More cities.

More people.

More viewpoints.

More volumes.

THE MAIN IDEA

The building does not need to be the hero of every shot.

Sometimes architecture works better when it simply exists in the world.

- *Behind someone.*
- *Across the street.*
- *Partially hidden by a bus.*
- *Seen through the rain.*
- *Reflected in a shop window.*
- *Discovered after turning a corner.*
- *Visible for only two seconds from a moving taxi.*

Architecture becomes more believable when life happens around it.

STOP THINKING

- CAMERA > BUILDING

START THINKING

- CAMERA > FOREGROUND > ACTION > SPACE > BUILDING

A film does not need twenty hero shots.

It needs hierarchy.

It needs rhythm.

It needs life.

BEFORE WE START

WHAT ROLE DOES THE BUILDING PLAY?

HERO

The architecture is clearly the main subject.
The composition, movement and action direct attention towards it.

GLIMPSE

The architecture appears briefly. Through traffic. Between trees. Through glass. At the end of a movement.

SECONDARY

Something else leads the shot, but the architecture remains visually important.

REFLECTION

We see the architecture indirectly.
Glass. Water. Mirror. Car body. Phone screen.

BACKGROUND

The building establishes the place.
It does not need to demand attention.

REVEAL

The importance of the architecture changes during the shot.
It starts hidden, secondary or absent...

...and gradually becomes the subject.

ONE FILM CAN USE ALL SIX.

01

FOREGROUND IS YOUR FRIEND

WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN CAMERA AND BUILDING MATTERS.

One of the easiest ways to make an architectural video feel like an animated render is to keep everything between the camera and the building perfectly clean.

No people cross close to the lens.

No cars block the façade.

No branches enter the frame.

Nothing goes out of focus.

Nothing interrupts the view.

The architecture is permanently visible.
That may be useful for documentation.
But cities do not work like that.
And cinema rarely works like that.

REAL PLACES HAVE LAYERS.

People walk in front of you.

Traffic interrupts your view.

Trees move.

Reflections overlap.

Objects enter and leave the frame.

Someone suddenly passes extremely close to camera.

A bus blocks the building completely.

Rain sits on the glass between you and the city.

THIS IS NOT VISUAL NOISE.

IT IS DEPTH.

THE THREE-LAYER SHOT

FORE

Something close to camera.

MID

Something happening.

BACK

Architecture.

FOREGROUND	ACTION	BUILDING
Coffee cup	Person reading	Across street
Rain on glass	Taxi moving	Outside
Leaves	Couple walking	Behind
Bus shelter	Person waiting	Opposite pavement
Cyclist	Crossing frame	Background
Flowers	Someone shopping	Across plaza

OCCLUSION IS NOT A PROBLEM

RENDER MINDSET

Don't block the building.

FILM MINDSET

Let the world pass in front of it.

THE BUS INTERRUPTION

CAMERA

Static. Opposite pavement.

FOREGROUND

City bus.

ACTION

Bus crosses the entire frame.

BUILDING ROLE

Background > hidden > revealed.

WHY IT WORKS

The architecture temporarily disappears.
When it returns, we look at it again.

AI COMPLEXITY

LOW

PEDESTRIAN WIPE

CAMERA
Static.

FOREGROUND
Person extremely close to camera.

ACTION
The person crosses the lens and covers most of the image.

BUILDING ROLE
Background.

WHY IT WORKS
Creates depth and can also become a natural transition between clips.

AI COMPLEXITY
LOW

THROUGH THE LEAVES

CAMERA
Static or extremely slow lateral movement.

FOREGROUND
Out-of-focus vegetation.

ACTION
Leaves move slightly in the wind.

BUILDING ROLE
Secondary.

WHY IT WORKS
Creates natural framing without demanding complex character animation.

AI COMPLEXITY
LOW

RAIN ON GLASS

CAMERA

Inside café, taxi, apartment or bus.

FOREGROUND

Water droplets.

ACTION

Subtle movement outside.

BUILDING ROLE

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

Separates camera and architecture through a physical layer and immediately adds atmosphere.

OPTION

Rack focus from droplets to architecture.

AI COMPLEXITY

LOW / MEDIUM

THE STREET SIGN

CAMERA

Close to a sign, traffic light or lamp post.

FOREGROUND

Urban object.

ACTION

Pedestrians or traffic behind.

BUILDING ROLE

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

The camera suddenly feels physically located on a real pavement.

AI COMPLEXITY

LOW

*FILM REFERENCE

PLAYTIME

Jacques Tati, 1967

Look at how Tati fills the frame with simultaneous actions at different depths.

People, furniture, glass, traffic, doors, reflections and architecture all compete gently for attention.

The city is not a background image.

It is choreography.

The viewer is allowed to discover things instead of being constantly told where to look.

TAKEAWAY

**YOU DO NOT
ALWAYS
NEED TO
CLEAR THE
VIEW.**

**SOMETIMES
YOU NEED
TO MAKE
THE VIEW
HARDER TO
SEE.**

02

URBAN MICRO-STORIES

YOU DON'T NEED A STORY.

YOU NEED AN ACTION.

Architectural films often try too hard to invent a narrative. Most shots do not need one. A three-second action can already suggest a world.

Someone waiting.

Someone arriving.

Someone leaving.

Someone buying something.

Someone looking for directions.

Someone taking a picture.

Someone returning home.

PERSON + SIMPLE ACTION + PLACE

That is enough.

ARRIVING

01 — LEAVING A TAXI

PERSON
Passenger.

ACTION
Opens door, steps out, closes door.

CAMERA
Behind or slightly beside taxi.

BUILDING
Secondary > Hero.

WHY IT WORKS
Creates immediate arrival and purpose.

02 — GETTING OFF THE BUS

PERSON
Passenger.

ACTION
Steps down onto pavement.

CAMERA
Across street or slightly behind.

BUILDING
Background.

WHY IT WORKS
The architecture feels connected to public life rather than presented as an isolated object.

03 — EXITING THE METRO

PERSON
Commuter.

ACTION
Walks up stairs towards daylight.

CAMERA
Follow.

BUILDING
Absent > Reveal.

WHY IT WORKS
The building can be discovered naturally rather than shown immediately.

04 — ARRIVING BY BICYCLE

PERSON
Cyclist.

ACTION
Stops and locks bicycle.

CAMERA
Low, close to bicycle.

BUILDING
Background.

WHY IT WORKS
Strong foreground geometry plus an everyday action.

05 — WALKING WITH A SUITCASE

PERSON
Traveller.

ACTION
Approaches entrance.

CAMERA
Rear three-quarter follow.

BUILDING
Destination.

WHY IT WORKS
Without explaining anything, the shot tells us where the person is going.

WAITING

06 — BUS STOP

PERSON
Commuter.

ACTION
Waits. Checks the street occasionally.

CAMERA
Through or behind bus shelter.

BUILDING
Background.

WHY IT WORKS
Glass, reflections, waiting and traffic create several independent layers.

07 — CHECKING THE PHONE

PERSON
One pedestrian.

ACTION
Standing still, looking at phone.

CAMERA
Medium shot.

BUILDING
Background.

WHY IT WORKS
Almost nothing happens.

That is exactly why it feels believable.

08 — WAITING FOR A TAXI

PERSON
Traveller.

ACTION
Looks down the street.

CAMERA
Slightly behind.

BUILDING
Secondary.

WHY IT WORKS
Introduces anticipation.

09 — BENCH

PERSON
One person.

ACTION
Reading, resting or simply watching the street.

CAMERA
Side angle.

BUILDING
Environmental background.

WHY IT WORKS
Gives the shot time to breathe.

10 — TRAFFIC LIGHT

PERSON
Pedestrian.

ACTION
Waiting to cross.

CAMERA
Behind person.

BUILDING
Across street.

WHY IT WORKS
The action provides a natural reason for both person and camera to remain static.

PASSING THROUGH

11 — CROSSING THE STREET

PERSON

Elderly woman, commuter, couple or child.

ACTION

Crosses pedestrian crossing.

CAMERA

Opposite pavement.

BUILDING

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

Familiar movement immediately establishes scale.

12 — CYCLIST

PERSON

Cyclist.

ACTION

Crosses frame.

CAMERA

Low and static.

BUILDING

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

Fast foreground movement against static architecture produces strong parallax.

13 — DOG WALK

PERSON

Local resident.

ACTION

Normal walk.

CAMERA

Pavement level.

BUILDING

Secondary.

WHY IT WORKS

Particularly effective for residential architecture.

14 — RUNNER

PERSON

Jogger.

ACTION

Passes through frame.

CAMERA

Static.

BUILDING

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

One fast moving element is enough to activate a completely static image.

15 — PUSHING A STROLLER

PERSON

Parent.

ACTION

Crosses square or pavement.

CAMERA

Medium-long.

BUILDING

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

A tiny domestic action makes residential or mixed-use projects feel occupied.

SMALL URBAN RITUALS

16 — ICE CREAM

ACTION

Walking while eating an ice cream.

CAMERA

Medium close-up.

BUILDING

Soft background.

RESULT

Casual, warm, everyday life.

17 — FEEDING PIGEONS

ACTION

Throws food.

CAMERA

Low.

BUILDING

Behind.

SECONDARY MOTION

Birds.

RESULT

Human action plus unpredictable movement.

18 — BUYING FLOWERS

ACTION

Selecting flowers from a street stand.

CAMERA

Through flowers.

BUILDING

Across street or square.

RESULT

Foreground colour + depth + urban activity.

19 — TAKEAWAY COFFEE

ACTION

Person exits café carrying coffee.

CAMERA

Opposite pavement.

BUILDING

Background or reflection.

RESULT

Simple and highly believable.

20 — METRO TICKET

ACTION

Using ticket machine.

CAMERA

Over shoulder.

BUILDING

Absent.

RESULT

Ideal first shot for a longer arrival sequence.

21 — OPENING AN UMBRELLA

ACTION

Person stops and opens umbrella.

CAMERA

Street level.

BUILDING

Background.

RESULT

A tiny action that can also hide a cut.

22 — LOOKING AT A MAP

ACTION

Checking phone or physical map.

CAMERA

Behind shoulder.

BUILDING

Further down street.

RESULT

Creates discovery and orientation.

SOCIAL ACTIONS

23 — NEWSPAPER

ACTION

Reader lowers newspaper slightly.

CAMERA

Across table or bench.

BUILDING

Background.

RESULT

Easy foreground reveal.

24 — SELFIE

ACTION

Person raises phone.

CAMERA

Behind or beside person.

BUILDING

Hero background.

WHY IT WORKS

The character gives the architecture a natural reason to be framed.

25 — TAKING A PHOTOGRAPH

ACTION

Raises camera.

CAMERA

Over shoulder.

BUILDING

Hero.

WHY IT WORKS

The architecture becomes the subject without needing a traditional architectural shot.

26 — ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS

ACTION

One person points.

CAMERA

Medium-long.

BUILDING

Background.

WHY IT WORKS

Natural gestures and small human interaction.

THE WORKING CITY

27 — STREET-CORNER CONVERSATION

ACTION

Two people talk.

CAMERA

Slightly distant.

BUILDING

Environmental background.

WHY IT WORKS

Life happens without competing with the architecture.

Do not populate every project with attractive people slowly walking around.

Real cities also contain work.

Logistics.

Cleaning.

Delivery.

Maintenance.

Routine.

These things are visually useful because they make the environment feel functional rather than staged.

28 — DELIVERY VAN

Worker unloading a box.

Architecture partially obscured by vehicle.

29 — WAITER SETTING TABLES

Chairs moving in foreground.

Architecture across street.

30 — BIKE COURIER

Locking bicycle or checking phone.

Architecture behind.

31 — STREET CLEANER

Slow movement across pavement.

Good early-morning shot.

32 — SHOP OPENING

Shutter or door opening.

Useful as both micro-story and reveal.

33 — TAXI DRIVER WAITING

Static vehicle.

Driver visible through windscreen.

Building behind.

FILM REFERENCE

PLAYTIME

Jacques Tati, 1967

One of the strongest lessons from *PlayTime* is that ordinary behaviour can be visually fascinating when it is carefully staged inside architecture.

The humour often lives in small gestures, distant actions and fleeting encounters.

For architectural filmmaking, the lesson is simple:

You do not need spectacular action.

You need believable activity.

FILM REFERENCE

HER

Spike Jonze, 2013

Production design: K.K. Barrett

Her uses Los Angeles and Shanghai to construct a city that feels simultaneously familiar and slightly different.

The architecture supports the emotional state of the character rather than constantly asking to be admired.

TAKEAWAY

**THE CITY
CAN HAVE
A MOOD
WITHOUT
BECOMING
THE
SUBJECT.**

03

THE REVEAL

DON'T SHOW EVERYTHING IMMEDIATELY.

A reveal gives architecture something valuable:

Expectation.

Instead of opening every shot with the building perfectly visible, allow the viewer to discover it.

Architecture can move from:

ABSENT > GLIMPSE > PARTIAL > DISCOVERY > HERO

LEVEL 01

ABSENT

We are already in the world of the project.

But we do not see it yet.

EXAMPLES

Inside taxi.

Inside bus.

Metro ticket machine.

Café interior.

Escalator.

Neighbouring building.

Person walking down side street.

LEVEL 02

GLIMPSE

We see architecture briefly.

EXAMPLES

Between people.

Between trees.

Through passing traffic.

In reflection.

Through bus window.

At the edge of frame.

LEVEL 03

PARTIAL

Architecture becomes identifiable but remains obstructed.

EXAMPLES

Behind taxi.

Behind bus shelter.

Behind tree.

Behind column.

Behind curtain.

Behind pedestrian.

LEVEL 04

DISCOVERY

The scene itself reveals the project.

Bus leaves.

Person moves.

Door opens.

Camera turns corner.

Curtain moves.

Focus changes.

Vehicle accelerates away.

LEVEL 05

HERO

Now show it.

Cleanly.

Clearly.

Give the architecture space.

REVEAL RECIPES

START	ACTION	END	CAMERA	ARCHITECTURE PRESENCE	AI COMPLEXITY
Bus → Building	Bus occupies most of frame	Bus leaves	Building fully visible. Locked	0% → 100%	●○○
Taxi → Entrance	Taxi dominates foreground	Taxi drives away	Entrance revealed. Locked / tiny pan	30% → 100%	●○○
The Corner	Following pedestrian	Pedestrian turns corner	Project appears down street. Tracking	0% → 80%	●●○-●●●
Metro → Street	Interior stairs	Camera follows upwards	Street and architecture appear. Follow	0% → Hero	●●●
Opening the Door	Interior	Door opens	Exterior architecture appears. Static / slow push	0% → 100%	●○○-●●○
Window Reveal	Interior activity	Pan toward window	Project visible outside. Pan	0% → Secondary	●○○
Pedestrian Reveal	Person fills foreground	Person leaves frame	Building appears. Locked	20% → 100%	○○○
Vegetation Reveal	Leaves dominate frame	Camera moves sideways	Architecture emerges. Slow track	30% → 80%	●○○
Rain Focus	Droplets in focus	Rack focus	Architecture sharp. Static	Present → Hero	●●○
Mirror Reveal	Building only reflected	Camera changes position	Real building appears. Tracking	Reflection → Hero	●●○-●●●

A HERO SHOT FEELS MORE
IMPORTANT WHEN
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN GIVING
HERO SHOTS AWAY FOR
FREE.

FILM REFERENCE

COLUMBUS

Kogonada, 2017

Columbus is useful because architecture is important without needing to behave like an architectural commercial.

Characters occupy carefully composed spaces and the buildings become part of their relationships, conversations and emotional experience.

TAKEAWAY

**THE BUILDING CAN MATTER
ENORMOUSLY WITHOUT
DOMINATING EVERY
SECOND OF THE IMAGE.**

04

ADD ONE THING

SIMPLE VISUAL DEVICES

Sometimes you do not need another shot.

You need one additional layer.

Take an architectural image.

Add one device.

Animate it.

Done.

ADD GLASS

01 — SHOP WINDOW

Building outside.

Subtle reflections of pedestrians and traffic.

RESULT
Depth + city life.

02 — TAXI WINDOW

Architecture through glass.

Add slight vibration.

Reflection.

Passing light.

RESULT
Travel.

03 — BUS WINDOW

More reflections.

More vibration.

People occasionally crossing the exterior.

RESULT
Movement + urban density.

04 — RAINY WINDOW

Drops sharp.

Architecture soft.

Optional focus transition.

RESULT
Atmosphere.

05 — CONDENSATION

Partial fogging around glass edges.

Architecture visible through clearer centre.

RESULT
Intimacy.

ADD A REFLECTION

06 — PUDDLE

Camera near ground.

Building reflected.

Small ripple.

Optional pedestrian crossing reflection.

RESULT

Strong image from simple motion.

07 — REAR-VIEW MIRROR

Architecture inside mirror.

Vehicle interior fills the rest of frame.

RESULT

Unexpected architectural framing.

08 — CAR BODY

Building distorted slightly across polished bodywork.

RESULT

Abstract glimpse.

09 — SHOPFRONT

Architecture overlaps products, people and internal lighting.

RESULT

Complex urban layering.

10 — GLASS FAÇADE

Architecture reflected in another building.

RESULT

City becomes part of its own composition.

FILM REFERENCE

PLAYTIME

Jacques Tati, 1967

Glass is almost a character in PlayTime.

Doors, windows and reflective surfaces repeatedly confuse what is inside, outside, real or reflected.

For us, the lesson is not to imitate Tati literally.

It is to remember that glass is not invisible.

GLASS CAN BECOME A LAYER.

ADD A PHONE

11 — SELFIE

Person in foreground.

Phone raised.

Architecture behind.

RESULT

Instant scale + tourism + social behaviour.

12 — PHONE PHOTO

Over-the-shoulder.

Phone foreground.

Building beyond.

RESULT

Natural frame within the frame.

13 — MAPS

Phone showing directions.

Architecture further down street.

RESULT

Arrival / orientation.

14 — VIDEO CALL

Person holds phone while architecture occupies background.

RESULT

Contemporary everyday behaviour.

SHOOT THROUGH SOMETHING

15 — CURTAIN

Soft moving curtain close to lens.

Architecture outside.

RESULT

Interior / exterior relationship.

16 — BLINDS

Partial horizontal obstruction.

Strong shadow pattern.

RESULT

Graphic framing.

17 — VEGETATION

Leaves close to lens.

Slightly out of focus.

RESULT

Natural depth.

18 — STREET FURNITURE

Traffic light.

Bench.

Bus shelter.

Lamp post.

Sign.

RESULT

Immediate urban context.

19 — PEOPLE

Shoulders or heads partially enter frame.

RESULT

Observer perspective.

ADD MOVEMENT

20 — CAR

Crosses frame.

RESULT
Scale + motion.

21 — BUS

Blocks building.

RESULT
Occlusion + reveal.

22 — CYCLIST

Fast foreground crossing.

RESULT
Parallax.

23 — BIRDS

Small group flying.

RESULT
Secondary motion.

WARNING
Use sparingly.

24 — UMBRELLA

Opens or passes close to camera.

RESULT
Human action + possible transition.

25 — CURTAIN

Small repeated movement.

RESULT
The image stops feeling frozen.

ADD WEATHER

26 — RAIN

Wet road.

Reflections.

Umbrellas.

Soft haze.

RESULT
Completely different atmosphere without altering architecture.

27 — WIND

Hair.

Clothes.

Leaves.

Curtains.

RESULT
Subtle environmental motion.

28 — FOG

Architecture partially lost in distance.

RESULT
Depth and scale.

29 — SNOW

Small accumulation plus falling particles.

RESULT
Seasonal transformation.

30 — HEAT

Subtle heat shimmer over distant urban surface.

RESULT
Climate without spectacle.

05

GIVE THE CAMERA A REASON TO MOVE

**MOVEMENT IS NOT
AUTOMATICALLY
CINEMATIC.**

AI video tools love movement.

*Orbit.
Dolly.
Push.
Crane.
Drone.
Another orbit.
Another push.
Another slow motion camera floating
through space.*

Movement is easy to generate.

Motivation is harder.

**DON'T MOVE THE CAMERA
BECAUSE YOU CAN.**

**MOVE IT BECAUSE
SOMETHING HAPPENS.**

ACTION	CAMERA RESPONSE
Person starts walking	Track
Taxi leaves	Small pan
Person turns corner	Follow
Door opens	Push forward
Person looks upward	Tilt
Bus exits	Hold — don't move
Cyclist crosses	Pan or stay static
Character approaches building	Dolly/follow
Person sits	Camera settles

IMPORTANT

SOMETIMES THE BEST CAMERA MOVE IS NO CAMERA MOVE.

Traffic moves.

People move.

Trees move.

Shadows move.

Reflections move.

Curtains move.

Birds move.

The camera can stay still.

This immediately reduces the generic AI-demo feeling.

STATIC CAMERA RECIPES

CROSSWALK

Locked camera.

People cross.

Traffic passes.

Architecture remains static.

CAFÉ WINDOW

Locked camera.

Rain.

People outside.

Occasional reflection.

Building behind.

BUS REVEAL

Locked camera.

Bus provides all movement.

TERRACE

Locked camera.

Waiter arranges chairs.

Leaves move.

People pass.

PUDDLE

Locked low camera.

Reflection.

Footsteps cross water.

A LOCKED CAMERA DOES NOT MEAN A DEAD SHOT.

06

THINK IN SEQUENCES, NOT CLIPS

ONE COOL AI CLIP IS NOT A FILM.

Film happens when one shot changes the meaning of the next.

Instead of asking:

WHAT VIDEO SHOULD I GENERATE?

Ask:

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THIS?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

SEQUENCE 01

ARRIVAL

SHOT 01
Metro ticket.

BUILDING
Absent.

SHOT 02
Escalator.

BUILDING
Absent.

SHOT 03
Exit to street.

BUILDING
Glimpse.

SHOT 04
Crosswalk.

BUILDING
Background.

SHOT 05
Bus passes.

BUILDING
Hidden.

SHOT 06
Bus leaves.

BUILDING
Hero.

SHOT 07
Person enters.

BUILDING
Architecture becomes experience.

SEQUENCE 02

RAINY MORNING

SHOT 01
Rain on café window.

SHOT 02
Coffee on table.

SHOT 03
Architecture blurred outside.

SHOT 04
Rack focus.

SHOT 05
Person outside opens umbrella.

SHOT 06
Taxi crosses frame.

SHOT 07
Building remains after taxi leaves.

SEQUENCE 03

LEAVING

SHOT 01
Person exits building.

SHOT 02
Taxi waiting.

SHOT 03
Person enters taxi.

SHOT 04
Taxi leaves.

SHOT 05
Interior taxi.

SHOT 06
Architecture reflected in glass.

SHOT 07
Building slowly disappears.

**A VERY
SIMPLE
ACTION
HAS BECOME
A SMALL
STORY.**

SEQUENCE 04

SATURDAY MORNING

SHOT 01
Cyclist arrives.

SHOT 02
Bike locked.

SHOT 03
Coffee bought.

SHOT 04
People crossing plaza.

SHOT 05
Child feeding pigeons.

SHOT 06
Wide architectural shot.

SHOT 07
Close detail of façade.

THE PROJECT IS NOT EMPTY.

IT HAS A TIME OF DAY.

A RHYTHM.

A LIFE.

FILM REFERENCE

*FROM INSIDE OUT — THE ARCHITECTURE
OF PETER ZUMTHOR*
Wim Wenders, 2026

A useful contemporary reference because the buildings are approached through the people who visit, inhabit, use and make them.

For architectural visualization, that suggests an important shift:

Do not only ask what the building looks like.

**ASK WHAT
IT FEELS LIKE
TO MOVE
THROUGH IT.**

07

USE THE WORLD AS YOUR EDIT

THE CITY CAN HIDE YOUR CUTS.

AI generations do not always match perfectly.

People change.

Cars mutate.

Lighting varies.

Geometry can drift.

Do not always fight these limitations.

Sometimes you can hide them.

PERSON WIPE

Person passes very close to camera.

Frame becomes covered.

CUT.

New generation begins.

BUS WIPE

Bus fills frame.

CUT.

Bus exits into another shot.

TREE WIPE

Camera passes behind tree trunk.

CUT while image is obscured.

COLUMN WIPE

Architecture itself hides transition.

DOOR TRANSITION

Door fills image while opening or closing.

CUT.

DARKNESS

Enter shadow.

CUT.

Exit into new location.

UMBRELLA

Umbrella opens towards camera.

CUT.

TAXI

Vehicle crosses very close.

CUT behind vehicle.

FILM REFERENCE

1917

Sam Mendes, 2019

Cinematography: Roger Deakins

1917 is an extreme example, but the principle is useful.

Characters and foreground objects repeatedly cross the lens, while darkness, trees, walls and other elements help hide transitions between shots.

You do not need to imitate the one-shot illusion.

Steal the principle:

LET OBJECTS HIDE THE EDIT.

08

SOUND IS ARCHITECTURE TOO

**ARCHITECTS THINK
VISUALLY.**

FILMS DO NOT.

A believable sound layer can make a simple AI clip feel dramatically more convincing.

You do not need epic music in every shot.

Listen to the place.

IMAGE	SOUND
Bus	Engine. Air brakes. Doors. Street ambience.
Crosswalk	Traffic. Footsteps. Pedestrian signal.
Rainy glass	Rain close to microphone. Muffled traffic beyond glass.
Café	Cups. Voices. Chair movement. Street outside.
Metro	Brakes. Low-frequency rumble. Announcement. Footsteps.
Bicycle	Freewheel. Tyres. Bell.
Pigeons	Wings. Footsteps. Distant city.
Taxi	Door. Engine. Indicator. Traffic.
Entrance	Door mechanism. Footsteps. Interior reverberation.
Trees	Wind. Leaves. Distant traffic.

USE SOUND BEFORE THE IMAGE

Hear the bus before seeing it.

Hear footsteps before the person enters frame.

Hear the metro before cutting underground.

Hear rain before seeing the window.

USE SOUND AFTER THE IMAGE

The taxi leaves the image.

Its engine remains audible.

CUT.

New shot.

Same sound.

The sequence feels connected.

FILM REFERENCE

PLAYTIME

Tati treats sound as part of spatial composition.

Footsteps, doors, furniture, machines and city noises frequently receive as much attention as dialogue.

The lesson:

DO NOT USE SOUND ONLY TO SUPPORT THE IMAGE.

SOUND CAN DESCRIBE SPACE.

09

KEEP THE ARCHITECTURE TRUE

THIS IS WHERE ARCHVIZ IS DIFFERENT.

AI can change the world around the project.

It should not casually redesign the project itself.

AI MAY CHANGE

People.

Cars.

Weather.

Foreground.

Street activity.

Movement.

Atmosphere.

Time of day when appropriate.

Reflections.

Secondary objects.

AI SHOULD NOT CHANGE

Façade geometry.

Number of floors.

Window dimensions.

Window rhythm.

Entrance position.

Structural logic.

Balcony geometry.

Approved materials.

Roof profile.

Landscape design when it is part of the project.

Signage when project-specific.

Proportions.

ADD LIFE AROUND THE ARCHITECTURE.

DON'T REDESIGN THE ARCHITECTURE TO
CREATE LIFE.

ARCHITECT'S CHECK

Before approving an AI shot, look past the atmosphere.

Forget the rain.

Forget the beautiful person.

Forget the cinematic colour grade.

Check the project.

WINDOWS

Correct?

FLOORS

Correct?

ENTRANCE

Correct?

COLUMNS

Correct?

MATERIALS

Correct?

LANDSCAPE

Correct?

NEIGHBOURING CONTEXT

Acceptable?

SCALE

Believable?

**A CINEMATIC
ERROR IS
STILL AN
ERROR.**

10

THE SHOT BUILDER

**WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO GENERATE, BUILD
THE SHOT.**

Choose one element from each category.

CAMERA	FOREGROUND	ACTION	BUILDING	DEVICE
Static	Glass	Waiting	Background	Rain
Follow	Person	Walking	Reveal	Reflection
Inside car	Window	Travelling	Glimpse	Motion blur
Low angle	Bicycle	Crossing	Secondary	Occlusion
Across street	Café	Talking	Background	Shallow focus
Over shoulder	Phone	Photographing	Hero	Screen
Interior	Curtain	Opening	Reveal	Backlight
Elevated	Rooftop	City activity	Context	Haze
Locked-off	Bus	Leaving	Hero	Foreground wipe
Slow push	Doorway	Entering	Reveal	Frame within frame
Side tracking	Vegetation	Cycling	Secondary	Parallax
Handheld	Table / cups	Sitting	Background	Shallow focus
Through window	Raindrops	Looking outside	Glimpse	Rack focus
Ground level	Feet	Walking	Fragment	Low perspective
From taxi	Car interior	Stopping	Reveal	Reflection
Long lens	Pedestrians	Crossing	Background	Compression
Behind subject	Shoulder	Approaching	Hero	Occlusion
Slow pan	Street furniture	Waiting	Context	Layering
Static telephoto	Traffic	Passing	Secondary	Motion blur
Upward tilt	Tree canopy	Looking upward	Hero	Reveal
Tracking backwards	Person	Approaching entrance	Hero	Leading movement
From doorway	Door frame	Exiting	Reveal	Silhouette
Across plaza	People	Talking	Context	Deep layering
Slow orbit	Column	Walking around building	Hero	Parallax
Inside café	Glass / cup	Drinking	Background	Reflection

SHOT BUILDER EXAMPLE 01

CAMERA
Inside taxi.

FOREGROUND
Rainy glass.

ACTION
Passenger travelling.

BUILDING
Glimpse.

DEVICE
Reflection.

RESULT

Passenger sits inside a moving taxi.

Rain covers the side window.

Reflections from the interior overlap the city.

The building appears briefly between traffic as the vehicle moves away.

SHOT BUILDER EXAMPLE 02

CAMERA
Across street.

FOREGROUND
Bus.

ACTION
Pedestrian waiting.

BUILDING
Reveal.

DEVICE
Occlusion.

RESULT

A person waits at the pedestrian crossing.

A bus passes between camera and architecture.

For a moment, the building disappears completely.

The bus exits frame.

The architecture is revealed.

SHOT BUILDER EXAMPLE 03

CAMERA
Inside café.

FOREGROUND
Coffee + rain.

ACTION
Person reading.

BUILDING
Background > Secondary.

DEVICE
Rack focus.

RESULT

Coffee and newspaper occupy foreground.

Rain droplets are visible on the window.

Across the street, the architecture sits softly out of focus.

Focus slowly changes from the interior to the building.

SHOT BUILDER EXAMPLE 04

CAMERA
Behind tourist.

FOREGROUND
Phone.

ACTION
Taking photograph.

BUILDING
Hero.

DEVICE
Frame within frame.

RESULT

A visitor raises a phone.

Architecture appears beyond it.

The person makes a tiny adjustment to the composition.

No camera move needed.

11

A FEW FILMS TO STEAL FROM

NOT THEIR IMAGES.

THEIR IDEAS.

PLAYTIME
Jacques Tati
1967

LOOK AT

Deep staging.

Everyday urban behaviour.

Multiple simultaneous actions.

Glass.

Reflections.

People interacting with architecture.

Sound as spatial information.

Foreground, middle ground and
background working at the same time.

STEAL THIS

Let the viewer choose where to look.

MON ONCLE
Jacques Tati
1958

LOOK AT

How architecture changes behaviour.

Doors.

Gardens.

Paths.

Furniture.

Domestic rituals.

Machines.

STEAL THIS

A building becomes interesting when
people have to use it.

HER
Spike Jonze
2013

Production design by K.K. Barrett.

LOOK AT

Urban atmosphere.

Windows.

Views.

Public transport.

Walking.

Intimate characters inside a large city.

Architecture supporting emotion without
needing to become the subject.

STEAL THIS

Use architecture to create a feeling.

COLUMBUS
Kogonada
2017

LOOK AT

Static compositions.

Human scale.

Symmetry.

Distance.

People talking within architectural space.

Architecture as part of character
development.

STEAL THIS

Sometimes the camera can simply
observe.

1917
Sam Mendes
2019

Cinematography by Roger Deakins.

LOOK AT

Foreground occlusions.

Transitions behind objects.

Movement motivated by characters.

Spatial continuity.

STEAL THIS

Use the environment to hide the edit.

FROM INSIDE OUT
THE ARCHITECTURE OF PETER ZUMTHOR

Wim Wenders
2026

LOOK AT

Buildings experienced through visitors,
inhabitants, users and craftspeople.

Materiality.

Movement through space.

Human perception.

STEAL THIS

Film the experience of architecture, not
only the object.

12

BEFORE YOU GENERATE

ASK YOURSELF TEN QUESTIONS.

01

WHAT ROLE DOES THE BUILDING HAVE?

Hero?

Background?

Reveal?

Reflection?

02

WHERE IS THE CAMERA PHYSICALLY
LOCATED?

Not just focal length.

Where is the camera?

Inside a car?

On a pavement?

Behind glass?

Sitting at a café?

03

WHAT IS BETWEEN CAMERA AND
BUILDING?

Nothing?

Person?

Traffic?

Rain?

Vegetation?

04

WHAT SIMPLE ACTION IS HAPPENING?

Do not write a screenplay.

One action.

05

WHY DOES THE CAMERA MOVE?

If there is no answer, consider keeping it
static.

06

HOW DOES THE ARCHITECTURE ENTER THE SHOT?

Already visible?

Glimpse?

Reveal?

Reflection?

07

WHAT IS MOVING BESIDES THE CAMERA?

People?

Traffic?

Wind?

Water?

Shadows?

08

WHAT DOES THE SCENE SOUND LIKE?

Not what music.

What place?

09

IS THE ARCHITECTURE STILL ACCURATE?

Look carefully.

10

WHAT COMES BEFORE AND AFTER?

A clip can be beautiful.

A sequence needs continuity.

THE SIMPLE FORMULA

CAMERA

*

FOREGROUND

*

ONE ACTION

*

BUILDING ROLE

*

ONE VISUAL DEVICE

=

A SHOT

DO NOT ADD EVERYTHING.

**ONE OR TWO GOOD IDEAS
ARE USUALLY ENOUGH.**

FINAL THOUGHT

Architectural visualization traditionally tries to show the project as clearly as possible.

That still matters. But film gives us something else. We can show how it feels to arrive. How it feels to leave. How it feels to pass by. How it feels to look through a window. How the building belongs to a street. How weather changes it. How people use it. How ordinary life happens around it.

AI makes many of these shots easier to create.

But the tool is not the idea.

THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ARE STILL:

Where is the camera?

What is happening?

What is between us and the architecture?

And how much attention should the building receive?

Sometimes the architecture should dominate the frame.

Sometimes it should barely be there.

**STOP
FILMING THE
BUILDING.
START
FILMING
THE WORLD
AROUND IT.**

by OTERO VISUAL 2026.