Becoming.
Architectures for a planet in transition.

Proceedings of the UIA
World Congress of Architects
2026 Barcelona

Volume 1:
Call for Participants



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Editors
Pau Bajet, Mariona Benedito,
Maria Giramé, Tomeu Ramis,
Pau Sarquella and Carmen Torres

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Title

Reclaiming Urban Memory through Emotionalist, AI-Assisted Criticism

Author/s

Dinc Kalayci, Pinar
GAZI UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This essay examines how AI-assisted filmmaking can function as architectural criticism (AC) by reengaging a memory-laden place (Olgunlar Street) in Ankara (Turkey), through the newly emerged Emotionalist approach. Relationality and mediation together constitute the essay's analytical lens as the film Psyche(O)geography was used as the case. A research-creation approach was used as the methodology. Findings indicate: (i) Memory, walking, and storytelling articulate a coherent Emotionalist stance and (ii) AI tools, under human direction, reconfigure roles and media of the critique without displacing ethical judgment. The essay also outlines the pedagogical implications; the filmmaking process fostered critical reflection, digital fluency, and collaborative authorship among students and the tutor. Thus, the critical film emerges as a research, practice, and educational tool. The study contributes to Becoming Attuned by foregrounding walking, memory, and affect as necessary tools, demonstrating how emotionally grounded, site-specific storytelling can create more profound sensitivity to the everyday urban environment.

Keywords

Architectural criticism, the Emotionalists, AI-assisted filmmaking, psychegeography, urban memory, flaneurie, research-creation, design pedagogy

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1. Introduction

Architectural criticism (AC) stands at a junction: while it has long been limited to the textual discourse and single-person authority, the urgent transitions of the present time demand forms of critique that are embodied, affective, and technologically attuned. This paper argues that AI-assisted filmmaking can function as a representational experiment and a transformative methodology for reimaging AC. Through the making of Psyche(0)geography, a short film set on Ankara's Olgunlar Street and around the Miners' Statue, criticism was operated as a research-creation process where walking, memory, and affect intersected with scriptwriting, AI image generation, and cinematic montage. The project also expands the Emotionalist manifesto, positioning memory and emotion as critical tools, while redistributing authorship across graduate students, the tutor, and non-human agents, destabilizing the position of the single-authority critic. The experience demonstrates that.

Criticism can operate relationally, through the reassembling of human and non-human actors (Latour, 2005), and multimodally, through remediation across media layers (Bolter & Grusin, 1999), opening a new ecology of critical practice. The study claims that this methodology is transferable beyond the academy. It offers professional architects and researchers a sound means of re-engaging overlooked sites, communicating spatial narratives, and cultivating attunement to everyday environments. In line with the Becoming agenda of UIA 2026, the paper proposes that AC can move from being commentary to acting as a cultural agency, reframing practice as an act of presence, resonance, and transformation.

2. Literature (Briefly)

FROM ANALYTICAL TO EXPERIENTIAL CRITICISM

Historically, AC has been limited to textual and historical judgment (Raman & Coyne, 2000; Macarthur & Stead, 2006). On the other hand, new approaches consider AC as an experience of the body, emotions, and immersion in space. In this context, the Emotionalist approach (The Emotionalists, 2025) defends a poetic reengagement with the already forgotten or neglected spaces in daily life through memory and emotions.

PSYCHEOGEOGRAPHY AND SITUATED URBAN MEMORY

Psycheogeography, which is based on flânerie tradition, prioritizes the embodied acts of walking, remembering, and storytelling/storymaking as the tools of criticism. Vidler (1993) described cinema as an "explosion of space," while Keiller (2007) framed film as spatial critique. In such experiences and productions, urban figures that already stand there, the living archives, have been transformed into actors that activate individual and collective memory. That is how a poetic and multi-layered critique of the space becomes possible.

MEDIATION, AI, AND REMEDIATION

New media tools and AI transform how criticism is produced; a multimodal ecology emerges. AI tools, such as LLMs, text-to-image, and text-to-video interfaces, reinforce the emotional depth of the memory-laden symbols (the street, the statue, pavements, trees, figures, etc.) through the hybrid use of conventional footage, emotion maps, and AI-generated material, by making them more visible and meaningful by placing them in a story. This hybrid production recalls the remediation concept by Bolter & Grusin (1999), stating that the position of the old media is always being reframed by the new media, producing hybrid representations. This also resonates with concerns that algorithmic processes often flatten spatial experience (Park et al., 2024; Zhao, 2020) but demonstrates how deliberate (AI-human collaboration) remediation can instead reanimate memory-laden places.

RELATIONALITY AND THE DISTRIBUTED AUTHORSHIP

The AI-assisted filmmaking implies a process that ends the domination of a single author critic, which was also shaken by Foucault (1998, Langyan, 2021) and Barthes (1977). It replaces it with a dynamic relational network of diverse human actors, AI, and the elements/figures of the city. As Latour (2005) underlines, the social has always been constructed through new nets that constitute the basis of this relationality. Thus, AI-assisted criticism becomes a semi/fake/somehow social, collective practice. This also resonates with contemporary demands for more participatory and affective modes of criticism (Pousin, 2013; Heynen, 2024). This relational mode of criticism also echoes Bourriaud's (1998; 2002) relational aesthetics, emphasizing affective encounters and participatory critique, and extends Emotionalism (the critical stance that shaped the AI-assisted filmmaking, the theme addressed in this study) into a collective voice rather than a solitary act.

RESEARCH-CREATION AS CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) interpret the research-creation approach as the production process, which is the research and knowledge production itself, implying artistic production and academia integration. In this frame, making is simultaneously inquiry and output. In line with this approach, Rendell (2027; 2016, p.3) defines this as critical spatial practice, "a mode of working that is simultaneously critical and spatial, situated between art and architecture, theory and practice."

THE PLACE (OLGUNLAR STREET) AND THE FILM (PSYCHE(O) GEOGRAPHY)

Olgunlar Street in Ankara was chosen as the central setting of the *Psyche(0)geography* film precisely because of its layered history and symbolic resonance established in the 1970s and pedestrianized in the 1980s; the street evolved from a marginal, shadowed passage into a vibrant cultural corridor once booksellers settled there in the 1990s. Since then, it has served as a meeting ground for students, researchers, and booklovers, embodying a remarkable resilience within the rapidly transforming capital. The placement of Metin Yurdanur's Miners' Statue in 1992 added another dimension of collective memory, commemorating the 48,000 miners who marched to Ankara in 1991 in pursuit of the dignity of their labour (İlkay, 2024; Özcan, 2011; Özkan, 2010). As a symbolic anchor of collective struggle, the statue exemplifies how public art can generate shared meanings and act as a site of social criticism, resonating with Tempestini's (2025) argument that architectural criticism acquires strength when articulated through public and collective frameworks. In the film, these elements- the bookstores, the statue, and the everyday ambience- were not backdrops but active characters that interacted with the flânerie. Olgunlar Street thus became a living archive where memory and effect coalesced into a cinematic critique, turning a modest pedestrian street into a symbolic stage for exploring Emotionalist criticism and demonstrating how presence and resonance emerge from attunement to place (Figure 1).

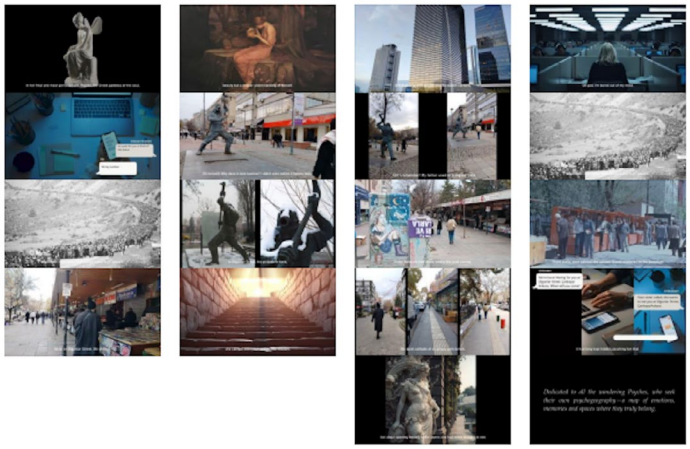


Figure 1. Screenshots from the short film Psyhe(0)geography (CritArch, 2025)

3. Methodology

RESEARCH-CREATION APPROACH

This study runs a research-creation approach, where the making of the *Psyche(0)geography* short film was used as a mode of inquiry and a site of knowledge production. As Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) emphasize, research-creation integrates artistic practice with scholarly investigation, allowing theoretical insight to emerge through making. As Rendell (2016) states, "*critical spatial practice is a mode of working that is simultaneously critical and spatial, situated between art and architecture, theory and practice*" (p. 3), and the film process embodied this principle by blurring conventional distinctions between analysis and design.

PROCESS

Creative practices like walking, scripting, and AI-assisted visualizations are integrated with critical reflection and textual analysis. In this hybridized process, the filmmaking process is an output and a central means of producing and communicating research.

DATA

The primary data was based on the collaboratively produced short film Psyche(0)geography, its 1745-word script, emotion maps, and AI-generated image/video materials. Tutor notes, student reports, and reflective analyses were the supplementary data, all examined through Voyant Tools (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016) and qualitative content analysis.

ANALYSIS

The analysis was carried out in two steps: first, the film script was examined with Voyant Tools to identify recurring spatial, emotional, and symbolic themes. Second, qualitative content analysis of production materials, student reports, and the final film allowed triangulation between the narrative and the cinematic execution. This hybrid approach provided critical distance and analytical depth in situating the film within the Emotionalist criticism and the Becoming framework.

RESEARCH CONCERNS

The present essay explores how AI-assisted filmmaking can operate as an approach of architectural criticism, which can be used in practice and education, by re-engaging urban memory through the Emotionalist principles. It examines how walking, memory, and digital remediation generate new critical insights within the Becoming Attuned framework.

4. Findings

THE EMOTIONALIST CRITICISM AS A NEW FORM

Poetic re-engagement with urban memory: The 1745-word script analysis through *Voyant Tools* highlighted *Psyche, Olgunlar Street, the miners' statue,* and the act of *walking* as the repeating elements that turned the street and the statue into active agents of memory, and the critique (Figure 2). The storyline that was produced through ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025)-human collaboration, centred on Psyche's urban wandering, illustrated how flânerie and revisiting familiar places activate collective and personal memory, producing a layered urban critique that is poetic yet grounded. Therefore, the analysis shows that Psyche(O)geography film and the AI-assisted filmmaking process effectively conveyed the Emotionalist critical stance by weaving memory, affect, and spatial-urban experience into its narrative.

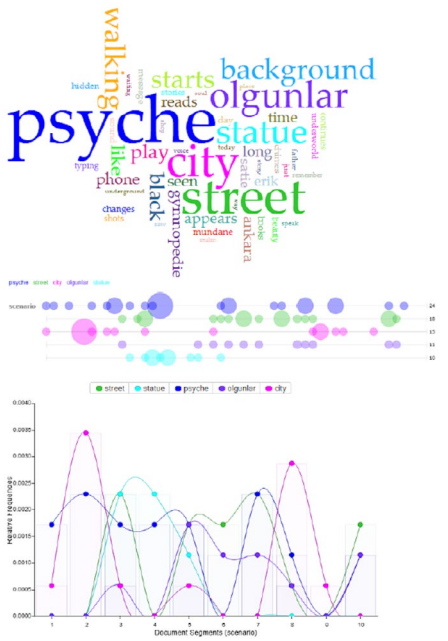


Figure 2. Voyant Tools analysis of the film Psyche(O)geography; the wordcloud, bubblelines indicating the main themes, and their occurrence (trend) throughout the film.

Amplification of the Emotional Resonance through AI: Content analysis of process notes and student reports revealed that the emotional map - Plutchik's Wheel- (Mondal & Gokhale, 2020; Whatley, 2025) provided the film with a shift in mood to resonate with the urban environment. ChatGPT-assisted scriptwriting and AI visualization tools -such as ChatGPT, Leonardo, and Ideogram- amplified the visibility of the memory-laden symbols (the street and the statue mainly) and reinforced the affective depth of the narrative (Figure 3). Thus, findings demonstrate that AI-assisted filmmaking can articulate Emotionalism and its critical stance by re-engaging the overlooked urban spaces and transforming them into living archives of resilience, identity, and emotional resonance.

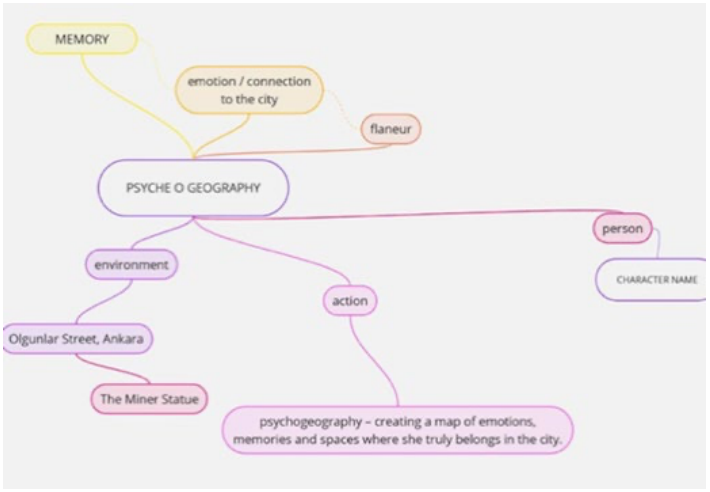


Image to Video Prompt (Imagine.Art)



The image depicts a statue of a woman, intricately designed and sculpted. The statue is predominantly white, with detailed textures that suggest a classical or neoclassical style. The woman's form is elongated and graceful, with a slender waist and a flowing dress that drapes elegantly around her. Her hair is styled in a curly, wavy manner, and she wears a headpiece that appears to be made of flowers or similar organic materials, adding to the overall aesthetic.

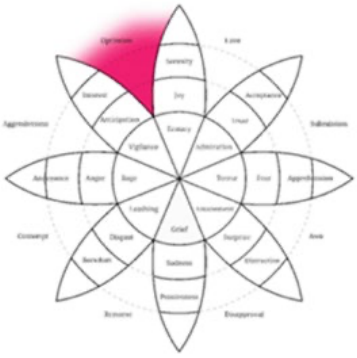


Figure 6: Emotion flow chart of Scene 4 minute 09.15. Psyche's new point of view and her self-discovery creates a resilience in her, the things that look ugly before are not as much anymore. This new light gives her hope for her life and sense of future.

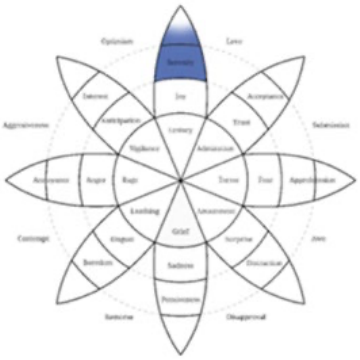


Figure 7: Emotion flow chart of Scene 4 minute 09.15. Psyche's journey through the city has changed her for the better, her reminiscence of her memories has re-awakened her sense of self and place in the city. She is no longer an alienated and detached individual but a conscious part of the city's collective memory.

Figure 3. The mind map indicates the general structure of the film, The Psyche character created through AI image generators, and Plutchik's emotion map, revisited.

Briefly, the collaborative and educational filmmaking experience and the creation-research of the Psyhe(O)geography film revealed that the Emotionalist movement can safely be the new form of AC; it revives the spatial memory through poetic narration and emotional mapping, as the cultural symbols in a memory-laden urban environment can be more visible and layered through mixed uses of real and the AI-assisted script writing and image/video production. Thus, the criticism and the critical stance, whether used in practice or education, display a transition, from merely analytical acts based on the real/analog data to being a reinforced act of emotional, memory-based, and experiential one by AI.

PRODUCTION, ROLES, AND MEDIA DIMENSIONS OF THE AI-ASSISTED FILMMAKING

Distributed authorship: Through the AI-assisted filmmaking, the conventional single-critic model was extended towards a collective deliberation between students, the tutor, and various AI tools that enabled text, image, and video production. ChatGPT was used not only for developing the script but also for the iteratively used prompts that enabled AI images. Script and its sections were studied through ChatGPT as a collaborative team of two students and one tutor checked each iteration regarding its suitability to the critical stance. The mind map by Canva (Canva, 2025) and the emotion map by Plutchik's Wheel were produced by a human team and were transferred to the script through ChatGPT and AI visuals. Therefore, humans acted as the editor, controller, and decision maker, as AI was the tool for realizing the imagined final product. This hybridity destabilized the notion of a singular authorial voice and -even the emotional tone- repositioned AI as a narrative agent -capable of co-constructing affective and symbolic content rather than merely assisting with technical production. Human mediation, ethical coherence, narrative clarity, and contextual fidelity were critical in the practice.

Relational and Multimodal Mediation: An affective and participatory critique was obtained through the tutor-student-AI collaboration, which constitutes a mode of relationality, as they produced a multi-voiced critique. Through the mixture of the real and synthetic layers- real street recordings of the walking and rediscovering Psyche, the memory-based mapping that directed her flaneurie, and the miners' statue as the cultural symbol were interwoven with AI-generated images, videos, and the mythological re-imaginings- a remediation was reached. As Voyant analysis indicates, the person-street relationship, the other mode of relationality, was critical; street -the real surrounding streets and the imaginary underground tunnel-, booksellers -with their past story-, and the statue -with its meaning/reason to be present/situated in the street- gained the value of being the other characters as Psyche, the real/imagined character, continued to her memory-based walk. In the film, Psyce receives an imaginary note from her dead father as she works in an imaginary shared office. These imaginary conditions -in line with the human in the age of AI- triggered her to go to the real place. Olgunlar Street also triggered childhood memories and invited the collective memory of the place on the stage. Subsequent uses of AI/real spaces gave birth to a new spatial-poetic dialectic through remediation. This remediation also transformed criticism into a multimodal experience -simultaneously textual, cinematic, and algorithmic. In doing so, Psche(Ogeography experience redefined AC as a hybrid cultural act where human presence, digital media, and urban memory converge to expand the critique's scope and medium.

The AI-assisted filmmaking experience revealed that AI image/video/text tools were the co-authors of the production process, as three collaborating humans acted as editors/directors who provided narrational unity and emotional correctness rather than leaving these two to AI hallucination. This hybrid process transformed criticism into a collective, multi-layered pedagogical experience in which students- also the tutor- gained fluidity and critical sensitivity for the digital.

5. Discussion (briefly)

The AI-assisted filmmaking practice represents the pedagogical and methodological transformation in the field of AC, thus reaching beyond a representational shift. The adopted research-creation inquiry reveals that the AI-assisted filmmaking process and product unveils an architectural critique that emerges through experimentation rather than detached judgment. As the critic(s) (AI-human) develop a story around experiencing/revisiting memory-laden places and creating characters and imaginary spaces, criticism starts to operate as a spatial practice -reinforced through AI- that echoes Rendell's early (2007; 2016) argument. Here, Emotionalism plays the critical role because of its stance, prioritizing memory and affect. Memory and affect equip young generations with the capacity to negotiate technological remediation responsibly through developing their digital fluency, reflective judgment, and emotional literacy. That is how the Emotionalist stance - a critique of the existing overdependence on algorithms- has been validated in a sense. Therefore, AC is redefined as an intellectual discourse and an educational practice of becoming where presence, resonance, and collective authorship are central. Considering that education is a lifelong issue, this kind of practice can also situate a sound base for the professional lives of designers; any design firm can start the design process by creating an AI-assisted critical film and use this material in negotiating the spatial quality with the shareholders. Here, the Emotionalist stance assures a professional approach dependent on the memory of places and their resonances in individuals, opening a safe track to reach a spatial quality that responds to human well-being.

Integration of real recordings of spaces and the images of imaginary spaces created through AI creates a challenge of remediation -echoing the actor-network theory of Latour (2005)-, as this sort of integration also transforms criticism from a single-channel mode to a multi-channel one that can include diverse individuals, societies, stakeholders, and even avatars representing real/imaginary intellectuals. This kind of remediation blurs the dominance of the conventional critic and the critical codes as it opens new dimensions for AC that still need human control and manage-

ment. Human becomes the nucleus of the new AI-assisted critical filmmaking approach. As Latour (2005) states, "*the social is not a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling"*, AI, students, tutors, the street, the statue, and even the ones that watch the film constitute a temporary relationality and peculiarity that is open to discussion and transformation. Memory, affect, and place are critical in reassembling and creating meaning. As re-assembly is a kind of attunement, humans are becoming more sensitive to places.

6. Conclusion

This work has demonstrated how AI-assisted filmmaking mediated by the Emotionalist approach could redesign architecture criticism as an embodied and relational exercise. Through its collaboration with Olgunlar Street and its multiplicity of memories, the work showed that attunement is an outcome of walking, sensing, and place's subtle resonances being narrated. While the focus here has been on individual memory and affect, the approach is not limited therewith. It may be extrapolated to address ecosystemic and communal dimensions by conceptualizing criticism in climate, biodiversity, and social change situations. In parallel, if Psyche(O) geography centers on one locale, the approach by its very nature is transportable and issues a model of comparative study across diverse urban and non-urban loci. The deployment of AI was not an unquestioning one: rather than providing a substitute for human agency, AI was a device of mediations of biases and limitations that demand reflexive sensibility. Future uses will need an additional explicit exploration of technological mediation itself as well as its cultural ramifications. Bridging artistic production, teaching, as well as professional designing situations itself, this protocol of research-creation yields a resilient, flexible model for the development of Becoming Attuned—a sensibility capable of hearing towards and acting out cultural, ecological, and technological movements transforming architecture today.

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