

MEDIA AND ARCHITECTURE

Media and Spatial Theory and Practice

Spring 2009

Wednesdays 4:00-5:50pm

Shannon Mattern, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Department of Media Studies and Film

Office: 2 West 13th Street, Room 1211

Office Hours: by appointment

MatternS@newschool.edu

212.229.8903

It wasn't long ago that the digital vanguard was prophesying the arrival of the "paperless office," the death of the book, and the "dematerialization" of our physical bodies and environments. Despite those proclamations, we have not traded in our corporeality for virtuality—nor have we exchanged all of our brick-and-mortar edifices and cities for virtual versions. In fact, many architects, urban planners, sociologists, psychologists, geographers, and scholars and practitioners in related disciplines argue that as our media have become ever more virtual, the design and development of our physical spaces—through architecture, landscape design, and urban and regional planning—have become even more important. If our media and our built spaces do not follow the same evolutionary paths, what *is* the relationship between these two fields of production and experience?

This course examines the dynamic and complex relationship between media and architecture. We will look at architecture as media, symbols and embodiments of particular ideas and values—and at the impact that communication media have had on the practice of architecture and the way we experience our built environments. After equipping ourselves with a basic design vocabulary and a selection of relevant theoretical frameworks, we will trace the contemporaneous development of media and architecture from the scribal era in the Middle Ages to the digital era of today and tomorrow. Along the way, we'll explore design, history, criticism, and theory from media and design historians and theorists, media makers, and designers. In the process, we will find that underlying and inspiring these various systems of cultural production throughout history are certain foundational elements—particular value systems and kinds of experience, cultural perspectives and worldviews.

OUR TOOLS

Please purchase the following books at **Barnes & Noble**, 5th Ave @ 18th Street:

- Robert Elwall, *Building With Light: The International History of Architectural Photography* (New York: Merrell, 2004). ~\$45
- Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). ~\$19
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown & Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977/1998). ~\$16

Additional readings will be available on **Blackboard**, in the "Course Readings" section, and relevant websites are tagged on **del.icio.us**: http://del.icio.us/Shannon_Mattern (choose the "media_architecture" tag). I highly recommend the *City of Sound*, and *BLDGBLOG* blogs and *Loud Paper* magazine online. Relevant print periodicals include *Metropolis*, *Grey Room*, *Log*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, *VOLUME*, others. Our events list is located at <http://2media&architecture.wordpress.com/>

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Attendance. In a seminar course each participant's contribution is valued, and absences affect the entire group. You will be permitted two excused absences ("excused" means that you must have contacted me *prior* to class to inform me of your absence) throughout the semester. Any excused absences in excess of two and any unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. More than four excused absences, or more than three unexcused absences, may prevent you from passing the course. A pattern of late arrivals is likewise detrimental.

Participation. You're expected to come to class prepared, remain engaged, and participate thoughtfully in class discussions, presentations, group exercises, etc. Be conscious of your "power of presence," and make room for others to contribute. Participation is worth **20%** of your final grade.

Reading Responses. You're expected to submit at least **six 300-word (minimum!) to 500-word (maximum!) reading responses** throughout the semester. Up to two can be creative responses—*original* drawings, photo essays, audio recordings or compositions, short videos, etc.—with a 150-word explanatory text. The reading responses are intended to help you to think critically and, when we're reading a selection of texts for the week, *collectively* about each week's readings. You might start off by very briefly summarizing the arguments of each text, then critically examining main ideas *across* the texts – and the development of those ideas from one week's readings to the next's. Think about how the texts have contributed to your understanding of the relationships between media and architecture. What issues raised in the texts are of particular interest to you, and how would you like for us to address these issues in our class discussion?

These responses also help me organize the discussion. Therefore, responses must be posted by **midnight on Tuesday** to give me time to review all posts before our class meeting. Late responses will not be accepted. The reading responses are worth **25%** of your final grade.

I encourage you to post these responses to a blog or website. Many of you, I'm sure, already have your own blogs and websites; you could simply fold these responses into your regular blog postings (please add a "media and architecture" tag and a descriptive label for each assignment so I can easily find the relevant material amidst your other postings), or create a new page for your Media & Architecture assignments. Please share with me your site's URL before the first assignment is due.

If you do not wish to or do not know how to post your assignments online, you can submit your responses to me via email by midnight on Tuesday. Please post the text into the body of your email, and attach it as a .doc or .rtf.

Gallery/Event/Site Review. Throughout the semester New York will host several architecture-and-media-themed exhibits in its museums and galleries. We'll keep a running list of relevant exhibits, events, and "sites to see" at <http://2media8architecture.wordpress.com/> (please email me any relevant event listings *you* find), and I encourage you to visit as many as you can. **By 5pm on April 22**, I'd like for you to post a 1200- to 1800-word review of one of those sites or exhibits. Please describe the site/exhibit and post images if possible, address the key concepts or theoretical issues the artist(s)/architect(s) is/are addressing, and assess his/her/their success in grappling with those issues. You're encouraged to post the review to your blog, but you're also welcome to email it to me. This review is worth **15%** of your final grade.

Project Proposal. Throughout the semester I hope you'll come across several ideas, arenas, individuals, etc., about which or whom you would like to know more. This final project will give you the opportunity to delve deeply into a research and/or creative area of personal interest. You should begin thinking about potential topics immediately, and you're welcome to explore project ideas on your website or in conversation w/ me and your classmates. Before our class on **April 8**, though, I'd like for you to submit a **formal 600- to 900-word project proposal**. This proposal must include (1) a problem statement or research question, including a discussion of the project's relevance; (2) a discussion of your proposed production plan or research methodology; and (3) a tentative bibliography containing at least ten sources, half of which must be scholarly sources. You'll be expected to deliver a **two-minute presentation** in class on the day your proposal is

due. You'll have an opportunity to revise and resubmit the proposal if necessary. Failure to submit a proposal by the deadline will negatively impact your grade.

Final Project. This research project, which should be presented in a **6,000- to 8,000-word paper**, or a **creative project with a 500-word accompanying text**, is worth **40%** of your final grade. Final projects are due at the beginning of class on **May 6**.

DEADLINES. Deadlines for each assignment are provided above. Because reading responses are used to help me plan for each week's discussion, late posts will not be accepted. So, if one week you're unable to make the Tuesday midnight deadline, you should count this week as one of your "free weeks." You're still welcome to post your response, if you like, but you won't receive credit for it.

Other assignment deadlines are fixed. Late work will be penalized, and extensions will be granted only rarely, and only after consulting with me well in advance of the assignment deadline.

A student who has not submitted all assigned work by the end of the semester does not receive an "Incomplete" by default. "Incompletes" are assigned only in extreme circumstances, and require that the student consult with me before the end of the semester and sign a contract obligating him or her to complete all outstanding work by a date that we agree upon.

ACADEMIC HONESTY. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University's academic honesty policy; see "Academic Standards" on Student Services' website: <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/rights/conduct-supplement.aspx?s=1:1> Plagiarism or cheating of any form will result in immediate failure of the course. If you have any questions regarding proper citation of sources or other academic integrity matters, consult the Writing Center.

OUR SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: January 28

Introductions, Expectations, Preview, Gauging Your Experience & Interests

Discuss:

- We'll review how various figures central to communication and media studies – James Carey, Sigfried Giedion, Edward T. Hall, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Joshua Meyrowitz, etc. – have addressed architecture.
- Beatriz Colomina, "The Media House" *Assemblage* 27 (August 1995): 55-66.

WEEK 2: February 4

Stones, Speak: Architecture as Medium

What do various media and architectural historians and theorists have to say about the relationships between media and architecture? Does architecture have a language? Can it be regarded as a mass medium? If so, what methods of analysis—e.g., formal analysis, reception studies, semiotic or rhetorical analysis, etc—might we employ in examining architecture?

Readings:

- Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture" Reprinted in Neil Leach, Ed., *Rethinking Architecture: Reader in Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 181-201.
- Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (*Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): 217-51 [orig. published 1936]) – also available online: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm> [You've undoubtedly already read this essay. Please quickly review it, looking this time for references to *architecture*.]
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown & Steven Izenour, "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning From Las Vegas" In *Learning from Las Vegas*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998): 1-83 [orig. published 1977].
- Stan Allen, "Dazed and Confused" *Assemblage* 27 Tulane Papers: The Politics of Contemporary Architectural Discourse (August 1995): 47-54.

WEEK 3: February 11

Interface Space

What has happened to our conceptions of space in an era of dematerialization and decentralization? How have digital technologies changed the way we design our buildings and cities, and altered our experiences of those built spaces? How new are these ideas of networked and immaterial architectures?

Readings:

- Paul Virilio, "Improbable Architecture" In *Lost Dimension* (Semiotexte, 1991): 69-100 [orig. published 1984].
- Marcos Novak, "Transmitting Architecture: The Transphysical City" *CTheory.net* (November 1996): <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=76> (skip "One: transTerraFirma: Tidsvag Noll v2.0")
- Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of Augmented Space" *Visual Communication* 5:2 (2006): 219-40.

In the following two texts, and in many others you'll read in the upcoming weeks, you'll probably encounter names with which you're not familiar. You're welcome to look up unfamiliar references on your own – but we'll also likely read and talk more about these people and projects as the semester unfolds.

- Aaron Betsky, "A Virtual Reality" *Artforum* 46:1 (September 2007): 440+.
- Mark Wigley, "The Architectural Brain" In Anthony Burke & Therese Tierney, Eds., *Network Practices: New Strategies in Architecture and Design* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007): 30-53.

WEEK 4: February 18

Open Office: The Digital Workspace

How do media workspaces embody the forms of media production that take place inside? How might the physical space help or hinder that work? How do they reflect the values, or ideologies, of the corporations they house? How have these buildings evolved as the media landscape has evolved, as the cityscape has evolved? How do these buildings themselves function as media?

Field Trip: Bloomberg Headquarters, 3rd Ave & East 58th Street, 4:15

Meet in Lobby; bring photo ID (Reg #G32619452)

Readings:

- Reinhold Martin, “The Physiognomy of the Office” and “Computer Architectures” In *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003): 80-121, 156-181.
- Andrew Ross, “Jobs in Candyland: An Introduction,” “The Golden Children of Razorfish,” “Steel Tables” & “The Value of Street Life” In *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Basic Books, 2003): 1-20, 55-9, 109-22, 135-8.
 - Check out MoMA’s “Workspheres” online exhibition to see many of the design innovations that would’ve graced the late-90s “no collar” workplace:
<http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/workspheres/index.html>
- Shannon Mattern, “Edge Blending: Light, Crystalline Fluidity, and the Materiality of New Media at Gehry’s IAC Headquarters” in Kristina Riegert, et. al., Eds., *Media Houses: Architecture, Media and the Production of Centrality* (New York: Peter Lang, forthcoming).
- Various articles on the Bloomberg building

WEEK 5: February 25

Boxed In: Televisual Space

How has television altered our perception of global space and domestic space, and how has it influenced the way we design and experience our private and public spaces? What is the architecture of the screen itself?

Possible Screenings: Brazil (Terry Gilliam, 1985); The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998); Philip Johnson on TV (Paley Center collection)

Readings:

- Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

WEEK 6: March 4

Mise-en-Scène: Cinematic Spaces

Why do so many historians and theorists regard the material city as inherently cinematic, and how do particular spaces lend themselves to representation in film? How do filmmakers construct and capture filmic space? How might various architectural elements – promenades, circulation patterns, windows, etc. – promote cinematic ways of looking within and without architecture? How do we design spaces for the exhibition of film?

Screening Options: The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1921); Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1931); La Notte (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1961); Playtime (Jacques Tati, 1967); 12 Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995); Federal (Mary Ellen Carroll, 2003); Private Fears in Public Places (Alain Resnais, 2006)

Readings:

- Sergei M. Eisenstein, “Montage and Architecture,” reprinted, w/ Introduction by Yve-Alain Bois, in *Assemblage* 10 (1989): 110-131.
- Giuliana Bruno, “Site-seeing: Architecture and the Moving Image” *Wide Angle* 19:4 (1997): 8-24. [For larger images, access the essay via Project Muse. In this essay Bruno lays out a map for her *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002).]
- Siegfried Kraacauer, “Cult of Distraction: On Berlin’s Picture Palaces” In *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 323-328.
- Joan Ockman, “Architecture in a Mode of Distraction: Eight Takes on Jacques Tati’s *Playtime*” In Mark Lamster, Ed., *Architecture and Film* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000): 170-195. [The first section, “Toward a Theory of Distraction,” should present ideas familiar to you; feel free to skim]

WEEK 7: March 11

Flex Week: Digital, Televisual, Cinematic Spaces

(Ideally, we’d include photographic spaces, too, to encompass all mechanically or digitally reproduced visual media – but because our guest speaker on architectural photography isn’t able to join us until April 8, we’ll have to postpone our discussion on photography.)

Readings:

- We’ll choose topics, readings, and screenings for this week based on student interest. So, if we read, discuss, watch, hear, allude to, etc., anything in the previous weeks that piques your interest – and about which you’d like to know more – make note of it, and suggest that we revisit the topic during this Flex Week. Refer to my Media Architecture Bibliography for additional sources.

WEEK 8: March 25

Radio City: Sonic Spaces

How did new audio technologies of the 19th and 20th centuries change the way people conceived of space? Even if architecture is not mentioned explicitly in these texts, how might we infer that these new spatial conceptions and relationships might have informed the design of concrete spaces? How could the building itself be thought of as a resonating or aural medium? What was the architecture of the “radio age”? How can architects design in response to the sounds that people and media make?

Readings:

- Carolyn Marvin, “Community and Class Order” and excerpt from “Annihilating Space, Time, and Difference” In *When Old Technologies Were New* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 63-108, 191-205.
- Rem Koolhaas, “All the Rockefeller Centers” and “Radio City Music Hall: The Fun Never Sets” In *Delirious New York* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994): 199-200, 208-219.
- Emily Thompson, “Electroacoustics and Modern Sound” & “Conclusion: Rockefeller Center and the End of an Era” In *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002): 229-248, 295-315.

WEEK 9: April 1

Le Corbusier: Designer as Media Maven

Beatriz Colomina argues that “modern architecture only becomes modern with its engagement with the media”— and that Le Corbusier was perhaps the first architect to recognize that media was a “new context of [architectural] production, existing in parallel with the construction site.” How did Le Corbusier choose to mediate himself and his work— and how did his media and architectural production practices inform one another? How do contemporary architects make use of new forms of media production to inform their design practice and construct their “brand”?

Readings:

- Jean-Louis Cohen, Introduction to *Toward a New Architecture* Trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007): 1-78 [feel free to skim over much of “The Break with Ozenfant” through “An Eye Opener for the Young,” pp. 43-57].
- Beatriz Colomina, “Le Corbusier and Photography” *Assemblage* 4 (October 1987): 6-23. [This essay contains many seeds that later bloomed in Colomina’s excellent *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).]
- Beatriz Colomina, “Architectureproduction” In Kester Rattenbury, Ed., *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (New York: Routledge, 2002): 207-221.

WEEK 10: April 8

Iconic Images: Photography & Architecture

What different functions has architectural photography served, what audiences does it appeal to? How does photography render space, and what is photographic space? What is the relationship between the photographed and the “real” building?

Guest Speaker: Pierluigi Serraino, Architect, author of *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism* and, with Julius Shulman, *Modernism Rediscovered*

Readings:

- James Ackerman, “On the Origins of Architectural Photography” In Kester Rattenbury, Ed., *This is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (New York: Routledge, 2002): 26-35.
- Robert Elwall, *Building With Light: The International History of Architectural Photography* (New York: Merrell, 2004).
- Pierluigi Serraino, “Framing Icons: Two Girls, Two Audiences / The Photographing of Case Study House #22” In Kester Rattenbury, Ed., *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (New York: Routledge, 2002): 127-135.
- Pierluigi Serraino, “Fables of Visibility” In Julia Chance & Torsten Schmiedenknecht, Eds., *Fame + Architecture, Architectural Design* 71: 6 (November 2001): 85-9.
- Browse through <http://www.guerrero-photo.com/> and <http://www.esto.com/>

WEEK 11: April 15

Circulation: Newspapers, Plans Books, Critical Journals, Design Magazines

What is the relationship between the pattern book, the theoretical journal, the design magazine, and the practice, reception, and experience of architecture? How did new commercial printing forms and formats influence the design of public and private spaces? And how has architecture informed the form and content of design publications?

Readings:

- Lewis Mumford, “The Paper Dream City” in *The Culture of Cities* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966): 255-8 [Recall the discussion of newspaper headquarters in my “Edge Blending,” which we read for Week 4.]
- Gwendolyn Wright, “Populist Visions” In *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1973-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 9-45.
- Brian McLaren, “Under the Sign of Reproduction” *Journal of Architectural Education* 45:2 (February 1992): 98-106.
- Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X-197X” [exhibition]: <http://www.clipstampfold.com/>

WEEK 12: April 22

Books & Buildings: Print & Architecture

What parallels exist between the architectures of the page and codex and the architecture of physical space? Was Hugo right: Does the rise of the print medium necessarily spell the demise of earlier forms of communication and embodiments of cultural values, including architecture? How did the rise of print influence architectural education and practice? Where do we find materials texts even in our contemporary, mediatized physical landscape?

Readings:

- Umberto Eco, excerpts from *The Name of the Rose*, Trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980): 34-9, 71-8.
- Lewis Mumford, “Architectural Forms” in *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966): 128-135.
- Victor Hugo, “This Will Kill That” in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. <http://tinyurl.com/2xx9cn> -- or download as an audio book: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/6539>
- Neil Levine, “The Book and the Building: Hugo’s Theory of Architecture and Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève” In Robin Middleton, Ed., *The Beaux Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982): 138-173. [This the most traditional “architecture history” text we’ll read this semester; have patience!]
- Logocities: <http://www.logocities.org/>

WEEK 13: April 29

Inscribed Space: Drawing & Architecture

How was space designed and experienced in an oral, or aural, age and in a writing culture – in a time before the printing press, as many have argued, brought fixity and linearity to the word and the world? What happens when a design is translated from word to image? How is the character of the “drawing” instrument – the pencil, paintbrush, or mouse – reflected in the buildings drawn and developed? What unique qualities of architecture can contemporary drawings practices—comics, cartoons, graphic novels, etc.—capture?

Field Trip: Museum of Modern Art: meet at Information Desk at 4:20pm (please arrive early!)

Readings:

- James Ackerman, “The Conventions and Rhetoric of Architectural Drawing” In *Origins, Imitations, Conventions: Representation in the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002): 293-317.
- Mark Hewitt, “Representational Forms and Modes of Conception: An Approach to the History of Architectural Drawing” *Journal of Architectural Education* 39:2 (Winter 1985): 2-9.
- Look through MoMA’s architectural drawings collection: <http://tinyurl.com/3pmv8w>
 - See “The Changing of the Avant-garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection” online exhibition: <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2002/gilman/index.html>
- **TBD:** Nathalie op de Beeck, “Found Objects (Jem Cohen, Ben Katchor, Walter Benjamin)” *Modern Fiction Studies* 52:4 (Winter 2006): 807-31 -- or -- Thomas A. Bredehoft, “Comics Architecture, Multidimensionality, Time; Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*” *Modern Fiction Studies* 52:4 (Winter 2006): 869-90.

WEEK 14: May 6

Flex Week: Sonic, Textual, Inscribed Spaces + Start of Student Presentations

Readings:

- We’ll choose topics and readings for this week based on student interest. So, if we read, discuss, watch, hear, allude to, etc., anything in the previous five weeks that piques your interest – and about which you’d like to know more – make note of it, and suggest that we revisit the topic during this Flex Week. Refer to my Media Architecture Bibliography for additional sources.

WEEK 15: May 13

Student Presentations