

# Between Media and Architecture

Media & Spatial Theory and Practice

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Mondays 3-4:50pm

The digital vanguard's much touted campaign to "dematerialize" our physical bodies and environments wasn't nearly as extensive as many early cyberculture theorists had predicted. We have not traded in our corporeality for virtuality—nor have we exchanged all of our brick-and-mortar schools, churches, and communities for virtual versions. In fact, many architectural theorists, sociologists, psychologists, geographers, and scholars 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 parallel evolutionary patterns, what is the relationship between these two human productions? 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 environments. In laying the groundwork for the course, we will first address theories of architecture as text, as language or semiotic system, and architecture as mass media. We will then turn our attention to models of production and consumption that apply to both architecture and media. After equipping ourselves with a vocabulary and a theoretical framework, 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. In the process, we will find that underlying and inspiring these two systems of cultural production throughout history are certain foundational elements—particular value systems and stages of consciousness, epistemologies and ontologies, cultural perspectives and worldviews. Throughout the course of the semester, you will be asked to attend class regularly and contribute meaningfully to class discussions; complete challenging weekly reading assignments composed of several short texts, which you will be expected to synthesize; compose two short papers; write a review of an art or architectural exhibit addressing issues relevant to the class; and develop and complete a rigorous final research paper or creative project.

## OUR TOOLS

A course reader is available at East Side Copy. You will also need to purchase the following books:

- Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy, eds., MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Kester Rattenbury, ed., This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Mitchell Schwarzer, Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Attendance.** You will be permitted two excused absences during the semester. Subsequent absences will impact your grade, and more than four absences may prevent you from passing the course. Attendance is worth 10% of your final grade.

**Participation.** Because this class is a seminar, your thoughtful participation is essential to its success. You are encouraged to contribute—courteously and meaningfully—to class discussions. Participation is worth **10%** of your final grade.

**Reading Responses.** You have two options: you can either submit a total of **ten 500-word (maximum!)** reading responses throughout the semester, or you can submit **seven written reading responses and one creative project**, which is described below. The reading responses are intended both to help you to think *collectively* about each week's readings – that is, to help you reflect on the selections you've read, to identify their similarities and differences and to appreciate their various ways of approaching the week's "theme," and to use the individual texts' arguments to piece together a larger understanding of the relationships between media and space – and to help me guide each week's class discussion. Please **email** me your responses in two formats: (1) as a Word/Word Perfect attachment to the email message, and (2) cut-and-pasted into the body of the message by **10pm** on the **Sunday** before each Monday class; late responses will not be accepted. The creative project is an opportunity for you to address the readings in any medium – on paper or canvas, in film, on video, in audio, etc. – and to explain, in a three- or four-page accompanying text, what ideas you've grappled with in your work. The form and content of this creative production are entirely up to you, but I ask that you please submit an informal proposal to me, and obtain my approval, before you begin work on your project. The creative project can be turned in at any time, but must be submitted by the last day of class. These reading responses – either in written or "project" form – are worth **35%** of your final grade.

**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 and "sites to see" at [www.wordsinspace.net/board](http://www.wordsinspace.net/board), and I encourage you to visit as many as you can. **By the end of the semester**, I'd like for you to submit a **five- to six-page** critique of one of those sites or exhibits. Please describe the site/exhibit, address the key theoretical issues the artist(s)/architect(s) is/are addressing, and assess his/her/their success in grappling with those issues. This review is worth **15%** of your final grade.

**Final Project.** Throughout the semester, you will most likely 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 area of personal interest. You should begin thinking about potential topics immediately—but you must make sure to email me a one-paragraph proposal *before Monday, April 18*. This research project, which should be presented in a **twelve- to fifteen-page paper**, or a **creative project with a five- to six-page accompanying text**, is worth **30%** of your final grade.

## OUR SCHEDULE

### WEEK 2

Monday, Jan. 31 So...What Do Architecture and Media Have to Do with One Another?

*What do various media and architectural historians and theorists have to say about the relationships between media and architecture?*

#### Readings:

- Harold Innis, "The Problem of Space" In The Bias of Communication, pp. 124-131 (I've included the entire chapter in the reader, and you may want to read it to provide context for the assigned excerpt).
- James Carey, Section V of "Space, Time, and Communication" In Communication as Culture, pp. 169-172.
- Adrian Forty, "Language Metaphors" In Words and Buildings, pp. 62-85.
- Jonathan Hale, "Systems of Communication" In Building Ideas, pp. 131-170.
- Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture" In Neil Leach, Ed., Rethinking Architecture, pp. 181-201.
- Marshall McLuhan, "Housing" In Understanding Media, pp. 123-130.
- Steven Heller, "Making Buildings Talk." Metropolis (July 2002): 104-7, 165.
- Karrie Jacobs, "How Coney Island Is It?" Metropolis (October 2004): 74+.
- Philip Nobel, "The Futures of Architecture" Metropolis (January 2005): 58+.

### WEEK 3

Monday, Feb. 7 Inscribing Space: Architecture in the Scribal Era, Architecture as Inscription

*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?*

#### Readings:

- James Burke, "Communication in the Middle Ages" In Crowley & Heyer, Eds., Communication in History, pp. 80-89.
- Umberto Eco, excerpts from The Name of the Rose, pp. 34-39, 71-78.
- Steen Eiler Rasmussen, "Hearing Architecture" In Experiencing Architecture, pp. 224-237.
- Robin Evans, "Translations from Drawing to Building" In Translations from Drawing to Building, pp. 152-193.
- Adrian Forty, "Language and Drawing" In Words and Buildings, pp. 28-41.

Film: excerpts from The Name of the Rose

### WEEK 4

Monday, Feb. 14 Talking Points: The Stage and The Public Sphere

*What role does built space play in the construction of a public sphere, and how can space be designed to function most effectively as a performative space where people enact their roles – as actors on the stage, as urban dwellers, and as democratic citizens?*

#### Readings:

- Sir Peter Hall, "The World as Stage" In Cities in Civilization, pp. 114-158.
- Jurgen Habermas, "Institutions of the Public Sphere" and "The Bourgeois Family and the Institutionalization of a Privatness Oriented to an Audience" In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, pp. 30-51.

Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks: Contact" In The Death and Life of Great American Cities, pp. 55-73.  
Clive Barnett, "Neither Poison Nor Cure: Space, Scale and Public Life in Media Theory" In MediaSpace, pp. 58-74.

Films: excerpts from Ridicule, Barbershop, and The Social Life of Urban Spaces

## WEEK 5

Monday, Feb. 21 No Class: Presidents' Day

## WEEK 6

Monday, Feb. 28 "This Will Kill That": Print and Place

*How might we characterize the "architecture" of text, and how might print's "spatiality" affect the way we conceive of and design our built spaces?*

### Readings:

Walter Ong, "Print, Space, and Closure" In Crowley & Heyer, Eds., Communication in History, pp. 114-124.

Mario Carpo, excerpts from Architecture in the Age of Printing, pp. 1-56.

Alan Powers, "The Architectural Book: Image and Accident" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 157-173.

Paul Finch, "Architectural Publishing: An Alphabetical Guide" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 198-203.

Films: excerpts from The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Ric Burns' New York: A Documentary Film (Disc 2: "Order and Disorder")

## WEEK 7

Monday, March 7 Manufacturing Desires: Plan Books, Packaged Design

*How did new commercial printing forms and formats influence the design of public and private spaces?*

### Readings:

Gwendolyn Wright, "Populist Visions" In Moralism and the Model Home, pp. 9-45.

Beatriz Colomina, "Architectureproduction" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 207-221.

Beatriz Colomina, "The Media House" In Assemblage 27 (August 1995), pp. 55-66.

Neil Leach, "Wallpaper Person: Notes on the Behaviour of New Species" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 231-243.

## WEEK 8

Monday, Mar. 14 Radio City: Wireless Technologies, Untethered Spaces

*How did the divorce of communication from transportation (Carey) change the way people conceived of space?*

### Readings:

James W. Carey, "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph" In Communication as Culture, pp. 201-227.

Stephen Kern, "Wireless World" In Crowley & Heyer, Eds., Communication in History, pp. 228-231.

Susan Douglas, "Broadcasting Begins" In Crowley & Heyer, Eds., Communication in History, pp. 232-240.

Jukka-Pekka Puro, "Finland: A Mobile Culture" In James E. Katz and Moark Aakhus, Eds., Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance, pp. 19-29.  
Leopoldina Fortunati, "Italy: Stereotypes, True and False" In James E. Katz and Moark Aakhus, Eds., Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance, pp. 42-62.  
Chantal de Gournay, "Pretense of Intimacy in France" In James E. Katz and Moark Aakhus, Eds., Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance, pp. 193-205.  
Andrew Blum, "Cell Theory." Metropolis (October 2001): 52.

Film: excerpts from New York: A Documentary Film (Disc 4: "Cosmopolis")

## WEEK 9

Monday, Mar. 21 No Class: Spring Break

## WEEK 11

Monday, Mar. 28 Collapsing Dimensions: Photography and Space

*How does photography render space, and what is photographic space?*

### Readings:

James S. Ackerman, "On the Origins of Architectural Photography" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 26-35.  
Shelley Rice, "Introduction: Times Zones" and "Parisian Views" In Parisian Views, pp. 3-28.  
Mitchell Schwarzer, "Photography" In ZoomScape, pp. 165-205.  
Pierluigi Serraino, "Framing Icons: Two Girls, Two Audiences / The Photographing of Case Study House #22" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 127-135.  
Kester Rattenbury, "Iconic Pictures" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 57-90 (mostly pictures).  
David Greene, "Foto-graph, Foto-shop" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 121-124.

## WEEK 12

Monday, Apr. 4 Mise-en-Scene: Cinematic Spaces

*How did particular places become centers of film production? How do movies construct filmic space, and how do we construct real spaces' identities through their representation in film? How do we design spaces for the exhibition of film?*

### Readings:

Sir Peter Hall, "The Dream Factory: Los Angeles, 1910-1945" In Cities in Civilization, pp. 520-552.  
Douglas Gomery, "Nickelodeons to Movie Palaces" In Communication In History, pp. 201-206.  
Siegfried Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces" In The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays, pp. 323-328.  
Patrick Keiller, "Architectural Cinematography" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 37-44.  
Anthony Vidler, "The Explosion of Space: Architecture and the Filmic Imaginary" In Dietrich Neumann, Ed., Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner, pp. 13-25.  
Dietrich Neumann, "Before and After Metropolis: Film and Architecture in Search of the Modern City" In Dietrich Neumann, Ed., Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner, pp. 33-38.  
Donald Albrecht, "New York, Olde York: The Rise and Fall of a Celluloid City" In Dietrich Neumann, Ed., Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner, pp. 39-43.  
Michael Webb, "'Like Today, Only More So': The Credible Dystopia of Blade Runner" In Dietrich Neumann, Ed., Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner, pp. 44-47.

Films: excerpts from Playtime, Metropolis, and Blade Runner

## WEEK 13

### Monday, April 11 Boxed In: Televisual Spaces

*How has television altered our perception of global space and domestic space, and how has it influenced the way we design our private and public spaces?*

#### Readings:

**SKIM** Joshua Meyrowitz, "The Merging of Public Spheres" and "The Separation of Social Place from Physical Place" In No Sense of Place, pp. 73-125.

Lynn Spigel, "The Home Theater" In Make Room for TV, pp. 99-135.

Anna McCarthy, "Television at the Point of Purchase" In Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space, pp. 155-93.

Terence Riley, "The Un-Private House" In The Un-Private House, pp. 9-17, 22-25.

Sanford Kwinter & Daniela Fabricus, "Television: The Infrastructural Revolution" In Mutations, pp. 508-523.

Films: excerpts from Brazil and The Truman Show

## WEEK 14

### Monday, April 18 Public and Private Exhibition Spaces: Cinematic and Televisual Spaces, Continued

#### Readings:

Mitchell Schwartz, "Film" In ZoomScape, pp. 206-253.

Mitchell Schwartz, "Television" In ZoomScape, pp. 254-305.

## WEEK 15

### Monday, April 25 Interfaces, Digital Places, and Other Networked Spaces

*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?*

#### Readings:

Lisa Parks, "Kinetic Screens: Epistemologies of Movement at the Interface" In MediaSpace, pp. 37-57.

Mark Andrejevic, "The Webcam Culture and the Digital Enclosure" In MediaSpace, pp. 193-208.

James Hay and Jeremy Packer, "Crossing the Media(-n): Auto-mobility, the Transported Self and Technologies of Freedom" In MediaSpace, pp. 209-232.

Nitin Govil, "Something Spatial in the Air: In-flight Entertainment and the Topographies of Modern Air Travel" In MediaSpace, pp. 233-252.

Fiona Allon, "An Ontology of Everyday Control: Space, Media Flows and 'Smart' Living in the Absolute Present" In MediaSpace, pp. 253-274.

## WEEK 16

### Monday, May 2 Interfaces, Digital Places, and Other Networked Spaces, Continued

Michael Bull, "'To Each Their Own Bubble': Mobile Spaces of Sound in the City" In MediaSpace, pp. 275-293.

Mitchell L. Moss and Anthony M. Townsend, "How Telecommunications Systems are Transforming Urban Spaces" In Cities in the Telecommunications Age, pp. 31-41.

Andrew Ross, "Dot.com Urbanism" In MediaSpace, pp. 145-162.

Constantin Petcon, "Media-polis / Media-city" In Neil Leach, Ed., The Hieroglyphics of Space, p. 281-288.

William J. Mitchell, "The Revenge of Place" In This Is Not Architecture, pp. 45-53

**\*\*STRONGLY Recommended:** Read William J. Mitchell, e-topia: "Urban Life, Jim—But Not as We Know It" Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999; Visit and skim William Mitchell's City of Bits: [http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-books/City\\_of\\_Bits](http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-books/City_of_Bits)

Films: excerpts from The Matrix, Minority Report

## WEEK 17

### FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE

Monday, May 9