

MEDIA AND ARCHITECTURE

Media and Spatial Theory and Practice
SPRING 2012

Wednesdays 4:00-5:50pm

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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

All readings will be posted as pdfs, or as links to web resources, on our course website. You'll be prompted to enter a user name and password (which I'll share with you in our first class meeting) to access copyrighted material.

Although you are not *required* to buy any books, I encourage you to consider purchasing the following:

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

You'll find additional relevant resources on my [Pinboard](#) and on [Zotero](#) (I'm still migrating thousands of references over to Zotero from ten years' worth of hodge-podge bibliographies, so if you don't see anything on Zotero that pertains to your particular interests, I'll gladly share stuff from my ur-bibliography).

I also highly recommend *a456*; *Architect*; *BLDGBLOG*; *City of Sound*; *loud paper*; *m.ammoth*; *sit down man, you're a bloody tragedy*; *Strange Harvest*; *things magazine*; and *Varnelis.net* online. Relevant print periodicals include *Assemblage*, *Grey Room*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, *Metropolis*, *Log*, *Perspecta*, *Praxis*, and *VOLUME*.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. 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. A pattern of late arrivals is likewise detrimental. More than three excused absences, or more than two unexcused absences, will prevent you from passing the course.

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. Attendance and participation are worth **10%** of your final grade.

READING RESPONSES. You're expected to **post to our class website at least six ca. 300-word reading responses** throughout the semester. 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? Although your focus should be on the assigned texts, you're welcome to draw connections to external ideas and sources, and to incorporate images, audio, video, etc.

These responses also help **me** organize the discussion. Therefore, responses must be posted by **6pm on Tuesday** to give **me** time to review all posts before our class meeting. Late responses will not be accepted. Your writing should be relatively clean and coherent and should indicate that you've given some serious thought to what you've read, but given the tight timeframe for these assignments, nobody expects perfection. Your responses are worth **25%** of your final grade.

EXHIBITION/SITE REVIEW. Throughout the semester New York will host several architecture-and-media-themed exhibits and events in its museums, galleries, and other cultural and educational institutions. We'll keep a running list of relevant exhibits, events, and "sites to see" on our course website (please post any relevant event listings *you* find), and I encourage you to visit as many as you can. **By April 18***, I'd like for you to **post to our course website a 1200- to 1800-word review** of one of those exhibits or sites. Please describe the exhibit/site and post images/video/audio 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. This review is worth **15%** of your final grade.

*You have a chance here to get feedback on your writing and gauge your performance in the class at mid-semester. The earlier you seek this feedback, the more useful it'll be. I *strongly* encourage **early submissions**.

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 in conversation with me and your classmates. **By April 4**, I'd like for you to **submit via Google Docs a formal 600- to 900-word project proposal**. This proposal must include (1) a problem statement or research question; (2) a discussion of your proposed research methodology and an outline of your research/production plan*; 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. I certainly don't expect your proposals to be perfect (the primary reason I ask you to submit these is *so* you can receive constructive feedback before delving too deeply into your projects), but I do expect your proposals to evidence some serious contemplation, good planning, and an awareness of relevant resources in the field; the proposal is worth **10%** of your final grade. You'll have an opportunity to revise and resubmit the proposal if necessary.

*If you're considering a research-based creative project or media production, your "research methodology" section should explain how your chosen format – video, artist's book, interactive map, audio documentary, etc. – serves as an appropriate "method" for your project, how the *form* suits the *content*.

FINAL PROJECT. Throughout the semester you should be working toward the completion of either a **4,000- to 6,000-word paper** (word count includes foot/end notes and citations), or a **creative/production project with a 900-word accompanying text**, in which you address the critical issues you aimed to explore through your work and explain how your chosen format aided in that exploration. This research project is worth **40%** of your final grade, and is due before class **on May 6**. Papers *and* support papers for creative projects should be submitted **via Google Docs**.

SUBMITTING WORK VIA GOOGLE DOCS. Please give all your assignments a **filename** that helps me identify *you* and *the assignment* (e.g., **Mattern_ProjectProposal.doc**).

I'll email you with summary comments, and when necessary, I'll provide editorial and margin comments on the document itself. Depending upon your level of comfort with Google Docs, you could either (1) create your work *as* a Google Doc, in which case I'll simply use GD's own commenting features; or (2) upload your work as a Word doc and *not* convert it to a Google Doc, in which case I'll add comments via Word's "track changes" and email your edited work to you.

To share your work with me, simply click the **"share" button** in the top-right corner of Google Docs. Make sure the "sharing settings" are set to "Private," so "only people explicitly granted permission can access," and under "Add People," type my email address. That's it.

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 evening 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. Sorry – I know some other faculty are a bit more lenient with deadlines, but I tend to set aside big blocks of time for assignment review, and I provide substantial feedback – so missing deadlines means you miss your "window of opportunity" for feedback, which is an essential part of your learning in this course (and any course, for that matter).

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. 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 25

Introductions, Preview, Gauging Your Experience & Interests

Discuss:

- We'll review how various figures central to communication and media studies – James Carey, 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 1

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 is ubiquitous in media-architecture research. We'll think about why – and consider alternatives.
- Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, [1936]1968): 217-51 – also available [online](#) [You've probably already read this essay. Please quickly review it, looking this time for references to *architecture*.]
- Stan Allen, "Dazed and Confused" *Assemblage* 27 Tulane Papers: The Politics of Contemporary Architectural Discourse (August 1995): 47-54.
- 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, [1977]1998): 1-83. [*lots of images!*]

WEEK 3: February 8

Interface Space

What has happened to our conceptions of space in an era of dematerialization and decentralization? How have networked 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:

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.

- 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.
- Aaron Betsky, "A Virtual Reality" *Artforum* 46:1 (September 2007): 440+.
The following two cover similar conceptual and theoretical territory, but they provide different, and complementary, examples: Manovich references media art and branded spaces, while Shepard focuses on technologies used in architecture and urban planning.
- Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of Augmented Space" *Visual Communication* 5:2 (2006): 219-40.
- Mark Shepard, "Toward the Sentient City" In Shepard, Ed., *Sentient City: Ubiquitous Computing, Architecture, and the Future of Urban Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011): 16-37.
- The Living, [Living City](#) [follow the "next" links at the top-right; there are 25 pages in total]

WEEK 4: February 15

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: Google, 111 8th Ave

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 (skim 105-120; read final three paragraphs on 120-1), 156-181.
- Andrew Ross, “Jobs in Candyland: An Introduction,” “The Golden Children of Razorfish,” & “Steel Tables” In *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Basic Books, 2003): 1-20, 55-9, 109-22.
 - Check out MoMA’s “[Workspheres](#)” online exhibition to see many of the design innovations that would’ve graced the late-90s “no collar” workplace.
- Shannon Mattern, “Edge Blending: Light, Crystalline Fluidity, and the Materiality of New Media at Gehry’s IAC Headquarters” in Staffan Ericson & Kristina Riegert, Eds., *Media Houses: Architecture, Media and the Production of Centrality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010): 137-61. – or something about our field trip site?
- Sam Jacob, “[Revolving Doors: The Architecture of Corporate Media](#)” *Domus* (November 2011).
- James Bridle, “[Secret Servers](#)” *ICON 99* (September 2011), Reprinted on BookTwo.org.

WEEK 5: February 22

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?

Readings:

- Lynn Spigel, Intro through Chapter 4 In *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 1-135.
- **Recommended:** Shannon Mattern, “[Broadcasting Space: China Central Television’s New Headquarters](#),” *International Journal of Communication 2* (2008).
- **Recommended:** Beatriz Colomina, “Enclosed by Images: The Eameses’ Multimedia Architecture” *Grey Room 2* (Winter 2001): 5-29.

WEEK 6: February 29

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?

Readings:

- Sergei M. Eisenstein, “Montage and Architecture,” reprinted, w/ Introduction by Yve-Alain Bois, in *Assemblage* 10 (1989): 110-31.
- 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 Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction: On Berlin’s Picture Palaces” In *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 323-8.
- 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): 170-95. [The first section, “Toward a Theory of Distraction,” should present ideas familiar to you; feel free to skim.]

WEEK 7: March 7

Radio City: Sonic Spaces

How did new audio technologies of the 19th and early 20th centuries change the way people conceived of space? 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, “Protecting the Domestic Hearth” In *When Old Technologies Were New* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 76-81.
- 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, 208-19.
- 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): 229-48, 295-315.
- Sam Jacob, “Dot Dot Dot.” *Perspecta* 44 (September 2011): 136-44.
- Geoff Manaugh, “[Audio Architecture](#)” *BLDGBLOG* (August 10, 2007).
- *Skim the syllabi for my undergraduate “City & Sound” and graduate “Sound & Space” courses to get a sense of the breadth of this area of study.*

Listenings:

- Roman Mars, *99% Invisible* podcast: listen to the following podcasts, which you can find on iTunes:
 - Episode 1: “Noise” [4:21]
 - Episode 10: “Sound and Feel” [4:52]
 - Episode 21: “BLDGBLOG: On Sound” [5:22]
 - Episode 43: “Accidental Music of Imperfect Escalators” [7:21]

SPRING BREAK: March 14

WEEK 8: **No Class March 21** – Shannon @ SCMS Conference; **Make-Up Class** March 24 or 25
Flex Week: Digital, Televisual, Cinematic Spaces

Readings:

- We'll choose topics, readings, screenings, outings, etc., for this week based on student interest.

Optional Weekend Field Trip: Eugène Atget Exhibition @ MoMA – Time TBD

WEEK 9: March 28

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?

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.
- Maria Antonella Pelizzari, “From Stone to Paper: Photographs of Architecture and the Traces of History” In Pelizzari, Ed., *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900* (Montreal/New Haven: Canadian Centre for Architecture / Yale Center for British Art / Yale University Press, 2003): 22-57.
- 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.
- Fred A. Bernstein, “[Structural Integrity and People, Too](#)” *New York Times* (January 22, 2010).
- Rob Walker, “[Go Figure](#)” *New York Times* (February 4, 2011).
 - Browse through [Esto](#)’s photographs, and contrast with [Iwan Baan](#)’s work. Then check out [Unhappy Hipsters](#) and [People for the Architecture](#).
- **Todd Reisz, “As a Matter of Fact, The Legend of Dubai” *Log 13/14* (Fall 2008): 127-37.**
Some of our readings for next week will address architectural photography, too.

WEEK 10: April 4

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 an 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 11: April 11

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.
- Nancy Levinson, “[Critical Beats](#)” *Places* (March 6, 2010).
- Shannon Mattern, “Click/Scan/Bold: The New Materiality of Architectural Discourse and Its Counter-Publics” *Design and Culture* 3:3 (November 2011): 329-53.
- Browse through the website for the [Clip/Stamp/Fold](#) exhibition

WEEK 12: April 18

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 material texts even in our contemporary, mediated physical landscape?

Readings:

- 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* (1831) – or download as an [audio book](#).
- 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.
- Hal Foster, “Bigness,” *London Review of Books* (November 29, 2001).
- Skim through Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), *Yes is More!: An Archibcomic on Architectural Education* (Taschen 2009): If you have an iPad and \$10 to spare, check out [the digital version](#). You could also buy the printed book for \$20, or you could simply leaf through [here](#) and watch the first 5 minutes or so of [this video](#). [We’ll talk more about comics and illustration next week.]
- Rob Walker, “[Implausible Futures for Unpopular Places](#)” *Places* (July 25, 2011).

WEEK 13: April 25

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?

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](#) and its “[The Changing of the Avant-garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection](#)” online exhibition.
- 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.
- Dan Hill, “[Teaching and Drawing Urban Sensing](#)” *City of Sound* (September 2, 2009).

WEEK 14: May 2

Student Presentations.

WEEK 15: May 9

Student Presentations