Architect Writers

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Description

Taking stock of the architecture profession today, this seminar brings together a select group of architects who have written about their design work as a means to better understand the built environment while reflecting on the discipline and field of architecture as a whole. For the purpose of this seminar, it has been conceived with an inclusive title but with varying content meant to change from year to year. This year’s focus will be on writings by women architects about their design work; their partnerships; and the making of buildings and books. While it is possible to argue over whether venues and platforms exclusively for women are needed, and how it is problematic to “insert the female figure into the male canon”, it is certain that women's participation in the field of architecture is crucial yet remains underrepresented. Specifically, when it comes to the representation of ideas through writing and production of texts, women's contributions about their own design work appearing on bibliographies is scant. And questions about what architects do, in relation to writing, continues to be the idea that architects are atypical writers and as writers, unusual architects.
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Advocating that written ideas last as long as drawn or built ones; writing about architecture remains critical to an architect’s education. So then how does an architect engage in multiple practices of architecture and writing? How do you as students work between writing and design?

The seminar invites students to intently focus on ten women architects from the twentieth and twenty-first century, from around the world, to examine their buildings, built work, proposal projects, installations, objects, design writings, lectures, as well as critical essays they wrote. This course draws upon the usual visual materials from architecture and art such as drawings and painting, to models and mock ups, but also includes other forms of representation through a variety of mediums -- videos, film, novels, interviews, conversations, short stories, to poetry, in addition to written primary materials and texts. How does history and theory intersect their work? Where does technology support their thinking? We will examine how they practice, with whom they work, and for whom they work. This seminar will engage in primary source materials about architecture and design work and writings, and focus secondarily on their biographies for the purpose of understanding their educational and career limitations.
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and accomplishments. Examining buildings and writings in parallel as a way to understand the field of architecture and its creative culture up close, as well as the forms of representation, and the reach into the world are the focus over gender distinctions.

The seminar will ask several questions surrounding the work of these architects. As architecture is a profession, formal education is necessary to achieve the status of being a professional; what educational limitations were presented; what opportunities arose? Examine the intersection between a lack of education and achieving a professional status. What sources of influences can be identified? Did role specific models or mentors contribute to a career path? And in turn is the role of a mentor or model important? Was gender a consideration in seeking out education or professional opportunities? When looking at the design work, examine how it is done, did individual styles of designing or doing architecture influence or shape the work? When looking at the writing, how is the writing completed? Is there a style to the writing? Some of the writers are as well known for their buildings as their texts, but how did different types of achievements affect their work? Is design enriched by writing? If so, how? How does
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the role of collaboration impact their creative work? What kinds of practices are novel and can be attributed to them individually or in a collaboration? What areas or subjects have they advanced in the field? For instance, almost no subject is off limits to architects, be it aesthetics, color theory, engineering from social to climate, environmental, materials, structural, to the digital and representational, or beyond to urban planning, design or historic preservation. Where are the written texts published? Similarly, are there other venues for exhibiting work that enabled the architect writer to establish an audience? When does architecture become part of broader cultural conversation or public awareness and what role did these architects play in that awareness? Or what role does experimental architecture play? What critical knowledge is established in the design work versus writing about design? How are these two forms different? How does writing infuse practice? And vice versa? . . . If writing about a previously built project what could be said? Through these trailblazers and pioneers, we can think through the established domains of architecture in order to reframe its future.
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Format

Each week, students will study select readings and sets of related buildings. Professor Hilary Sample will present six lectures about the built work, projects, and architectural ideas. Guests will join the seminar in a variety of formats. Each week, there will be a discussion about the architecture and readings from the syllabus.

Requirement

The seminar’s purpose is to create a more in-depth bibliography on architects’ writings, and the goal of the seminar will be to double the size of the syllabus bibliography and identify additional architects who are practicing around the world. Students will also develop a list of questions for a questionnaire, and a list of architects to distribute the questionnaire to. Students will write a 1,000 word essay with no less than five images and five citations. On the last day of class we will have an exhibition of the materials and invite guests to join in the discussion.
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Schedule

Week 1 January 23  Alison and Peter Smithson: Urban Structuring


Smithson, A. and P. Smithson, Thoughts in Progress: the New Brutalism, Architectural Design 1957, no. 4, April, 111-113


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**Additional Reading:**


**Week 2 January 30**  
Denise Scott Brown, *Having Words*


Week 3 February 6  Lina Bo Bardi, *Stones Against Diamonds*


Week 4 February 13  Diana Agrest


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Week 5 February 20 Toshiko Mori, Immaterial/ultramaterial


Mori, Toshiko. Materials, Fabrication + Performance, Buffalo: School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo, the State University of New York, 2003. (already scanned as a PDF)


Mori, Toshiko and Greg Lynn, Thom Mayne, Lorcan O’Herlihy, Frank Escher and Rvi
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Week 6 February 27 Madelon Vriesendorp, Delirious New York


Additional Reading:
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Week 7 March 5 (Kinne Week)

Week 8 March 12 (Spring Break)

Week 9 March 19 Eva Prats: Drawing without Erasing


Week 10 March 26 Momoyo Kaijima: Graphic Anatomy

Kaijima, Momoyo, Yoshi Tsukamoto, Atelier Bow-Wow - Graphic Anatomy 2, Tokyo, Toto, 2014.

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Week 11 April 2 Anne Lacaton: Tour Bois Le Prêtre

David Huber, Artforum International, "Beyond relief", USA, 2015, p. 344-347.

Speech : affordable housing, "Interview Anne Lacaton - More space, more light, more green : a new vision of social housing", Denis Bocquet, Russie / Russia, 2014, p. 238-252.

Reduce Reuse Recycle, Mathieu Wellner, Allemagne / Germany, 2012, Anglais / English, Muck Petzet - Florian Heilmeyer


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Week 12 April 9 Farshid Moussavi: Architecture and Micropolitics


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Week 13 April 16 Mariam Kamara: Construction Magic

Kamara, Mariam, "How we narrate our yesterday determines how we imagine the future of architecture" (lecture, MIT Architecture, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 8, 2021).


Kamara, Mariam, "Design can be a Powerful Tool for Good" (lecture, Design Indaba Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 2019).


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Kamara, Mariam, Construction Magic, August 2017, http://www.ateliermasomi.com/blog/xzerh4a3gx8nx28c2nw3kaat92c3mp

Kamara, Mariam, Mind shifts: Limited means can yield greater beauty, March 2015 http://www.ateliermasomi.com/blog/22

Week 14 April 23 Jeanne Gang:


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Week 15 April 30 Hilde de Haan: *What happened to my buildings…?*


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Assignment No. 1
Design a display for a text.

Assignment No. 2
Assemble texts by an architect. Scan book covers and drawings, as well as texts assembled as a PDF. Write a bibliography of ten primary and secondary sources.

Write a 1,000 word essay.
Due April 30, 2024.