

## **DARK SPACE: Architecture Representation Black Identity**

GSAPP Columbia University

SPRING 2019 SEMINAR

ARCH A4552 (Modern and American)

Instructor: Mario Gooden, Prof. of Practice

T: 11AM – 1PM

# **DARK SPACE**

A discourse on black subjectivity in contemporary architectural theory is virtually non-existent. Architecture historically privileges the construction of perspectival space through the gaze of the white male subject, from Pietro Perugino's *Christ Handing the Keys to St. Peter* (1481–83)—whose primary actors are represented as fair-skinned European men with Roman features (although Christ and the Apostles were from Palestine and likely of darker skin tones)—to Mies van der Rohe's perspective collages that unbind space in a manner that dislocates the stationary viewpoint and collapses it at the eye of the author. Within this spectrum, architectural space is conceptualized as a rational, linear system of spatial projection in which privileged and honorific bodies are captured within view and all other bodies and objects that lie beyond the cone of vision are excluded from the frame of the picture plane. In architectural representation, black bodies systematically fall beyond the frame of reference for spatial inclusion; likewise in architectural discourse, black bodies are either invisible, occupy unspoken spaces of colonial subjugation, or dismissed to locations of repressive difference where the black body is simultaneously an object of desire and derision, yet has no desires of its own.

The initial questions that come to mind ponder over the subjectivities that were relegated to the hidden kitchen entrances and rear doors of restaurants, hotels, and doctors' offices during the Jim Crow era; the subjectivities that occupy the servant positions within Modernism's hierarchal dyad of "served" and "servant" spaces; and the subjectivities of the curved, feminized, and "primitive" bodies to which Modernism refers as irrational, dangerous, and difficult, but which

nevertheless signify sensuousness in contrast to the straight-lined rationality of the modernist grid. However, such considerations rarely occupy a position in architectural theory. Hence, black subjectivity is not just an “other” in modern architectural discourse; architectural theory represents a space of exclusion of black subjectivity.

The basis for that exclusion can be traced to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, presented at the University of Berlin in 1822, 1828, and 1830. Hegel positions the “Negro” outside of analytical history through examples of intellectual, technological, and moral histories as well as cultural progress—all of which exclude the “Negro.” According to Hegel, “The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas—the category of Universality...The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state.”<sup>1</sup> In the text, Hegel constructs a dichotomy of the Negro in counter-distinction to the white European, who is motivated by rational thought processes evidenced by organized forms of political and social orders, scientific and technological achievements, and desire for progress, in order to establish the superior of the white (implicitly male) subject. Yet the paradox of this dialectic is the required exegetical presence of the Negro. Hence, race and blackness have been fundamental to the teleology of the history of modernity and humanist thought; and by extension architectural discourse, rooted in humanist notions, is complicit in the maintenance of this racial power structure.

## **PURPOSE**

The seminar will examine the spaces of exclusion of black and African American histories from architectural discourse and the ways in which modernist architecture participates in racial hierarchies in terms of representation. Furthermore, the seminar will recover the narratives of black subjectivity and African American architectural production with regards to architectural theory to reveal liberation is a spatial practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 111.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Satisfactory completion of the course requires that students actively engage the course content and meaningfully contribute to expand the boundaries of knowledge and spatialize cultural theory.

### **Course Design:**

The course will be divided into three sections:

The first section will present a critical overview of themes related to African American history and architectural production. The intention is to situate the general parameters of a critical discourse in architectural theory as it pertains to black identity and representation that will be discussed throughout the course.

The second section will entail weekly research seminar presentations by teams of students working in pairs. The presentations will be based upon a given theme or topic and the students will examine the work of specific architects (and artists) and their engagement with new spaces for cultural discourse within architectural history and theory.

In preparation for the research seminar presentation, the instructor will hold weekly individual tutorials.

The third section of the seminar will be a research paper or visual analysis (analytical drawing):

Students have the option to complete a fifteen-page research paper based upon the research seminar presentation topic or to construct an analytical drawing that spatializes the relationships and issues discussed in their seminar presentation.

### **Research Seminar Presentation:**

40% - Preparation and in-class Presentation

In addition to the in-class presentation, each student will submit a rough draft of his / her research paper (minimum 1000 words) no later than one week following the presentation.

### **Final Research Option/ Research Paper or Visual Analysis:**

45% - Fifteen (15) page (minimum) research paper or Visual Analysis / Analytical Drawing.

### **Participation, Progress, Effort:**

15%

## Seminar Topics

- The Function of Identity
- Architecture Liberation Theology
- Space as Praxis as Identity
- Modernism's Desires: Modernism's Ghosts
- Re-Mastery and Dreams of Architecture
- (Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze

## SCHEDULE

Discussion January 22, 2019: *Introduction:*  
*Who Is the Subject?*

W.E. B. Dubois, "The Souls of Black Folk – Of Our Spiritual Strivings," *Dubois Writings*, (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986).

*Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, editors, (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

Shane White and Graham White, *African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), alongside various pieces of commentary and reviews by *Publishers Weekly Review*, *Library Journal*, and *Kirkus Reviews*.

James Draper, "From Slave Cabins to "Shotguns": Perceptions on Africanisms in American Architecture", *Historia* Vol. 10 (Eastern Illinois University, 2001).

John Michael Vloch, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

Bell Hooks, "Architecture and Black Life: Talking Space with Laverne Wells-Bowie," *Art on My Mind: Spatial Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

Discussion January 29, 2019 – February 5, 2019:

*The Function of Identity / Architecture Liberation Theology*

Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," Interview with Paul Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

Carter G. Woodson, *A History of the African American Church* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1920; reprinted New York: Diasporic Africa Press, Inc.).

*Georgia Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* by Federal Writers Project (Native American Book Publishers, 1938).

James H. Cone, *A Theology of Black Liberation* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970; reprinted Maryknoll NY: Orbis Press, 1986).

Kenneth Frampton, "The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde," from "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for and Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New York: Bay Press, 1995).

Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957).

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1991 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600–1750* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986).

Anthony Blunt, *Borromini* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 24.

Joseph Connors, "S. Ivo Alla Sapienza: The First Three Minutes," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (1996).

John G. Hatch, "The Science Behind Francesco Borromini's Divine Geometry," *Visual Arts Publications*, Paper 4 (2002), 127.

Steve Wallet, "From South Los Angeles to West Hollywood: James Garrott, Rudolph Schindler and the Bethlehem Baptist Church" (June 17, 2014), [stevewallet.com](http://stevewallet.com).

Esther McCoy, "Bethlehem Baptist Church Story," (c.1939, undated and unpublished), Esther McCoy papers, 1876–1990, bulk, 1938–1989, Archives of American Art, Series 6: Architect Files, 1912–1990, box 24, folder 10, 1, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/-Bethlehem-Baptist-Church-Story--343462>.

Discussion February 12, 2019:

*Space as Praxis as Identity*

Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?" in "The Duchamp Effect," special issue, *October* 70 (Autumn 1994).

Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), 116. Originally published as *Hans Richter, Dada, Kunst und Antikunst*.

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum* 21, no. 1 (September 1982).

*Proposal for Artists Space*, "\_\_\_\_\_, Louise Lawler, Adrian Piper & Cindy Sherman Have Agreed to Participate in an Exhibition Organized by Janelle Reiring at Artists Space, September 23 through October 28, 1978, Artists Space, 1978."

Adrian Piper, *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma*, 1978, Audio Monologue, Adrian Piper Research Archive (ARPA), [www.adrianpiper.com](http://www.adrianpiper.com).

April Kingsley, "Art Goes Underground," *The Village Voice*, (October 16, 1978): 122.

Joan Ockman, "Talking with Bernard Tschumi," *Log z Journal*, no. 13/14 (2008).

Germano Celant, "Artspace," *Studio International Journal of Modern Art* 190, no. 977 (September/October 1975).

Roselee Goldberg, "Space as Praxis," *Studio International Journal of Modern Art* 190, no. 977 (September/October 1975).

Bernard Tschumi, "Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or the Architectural Paradox)" *Studio International Journal of Modern Art* 190, no. 977 (September/October 1975).

Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (Editors), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar With Michel Foucault* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

Discussion February 19, 2018

*Modernism's Desires: Modernism's Ghosts*

Phillip Johnson, "House at New Canaan Connecticut" *Architectural Review*, Vol. 108, No. 645 (September 1950), pp. 8 - 15.

Jimmy Robert, "Imitation of Lives" Interview with Mario Gooden *Performa 17 Magazine*, (November 2017).

Discussion February 26, 2019  
*Re-Mastery and Dreams of Architecture*

Wagner-Steagall Act, 1937. U.S. Statutes at Large (75th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 888-899)

Paul R. Williams, "I Am A Negro" originally published in *American Magazine*, July 1937 abridged version reprinted in "Blacks Who Overcame the Odds," *Ebony Magazine*, (November 1986).

J. Max Bond, "Still Here," *Harvard Design Magazine*, No. 2, Summer 1997. Accessed January 24, 2017. <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/2/still-here>

"Nickerson Gardens: Big Project Of Small Neighborhoods," *Journal of Housing*, Volume 11, December 1954, pp. 426-427.

Oral history interview with Kerry James Marshall, August 8, 2008, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-kerry-james-marshall-13706>. Accessed January 25, 2017.

Discussion March 5, 2019  
*(Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze*

Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001).

Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977).

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).

Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Anja Zimmermann, "'Sorry for Having to Make You Suffer': Body, Spectator, and the Gaze in the Performances of Yves Klein, Gina Pane, and Orlan," *Discourse*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Fall 2002).

Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity," *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Amelia Jones (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Farès el Dahdah, "The Josephine Baker House: For Loos's Pleasure," *Assemblage* 26 (April 1995): 75.

Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen," *Adolf Loos, Trotzdem 1900–1930* (Innsbruck: Brenner, 1931), 93.

Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

*Azurest South, Chesterfield County, Virginia*, National Register of Historic Places, Virginia Department of Historic Resources No. 020-5583, NRHP Registration (December 30, 1993), Section 7: 1.

Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg NY: Crossing Press, 1984).

### **March 11 - 22, 2019: Kinne Week / Spring Break**

- Seminar Presentation March 20, 2019: Architecture Liberation Theology
- Seminar Presentation March 27, 2019: Space as Praxis as Identity
- Seminar Presentation April 3, 2019: Modernism and its Ghosts
- Seminar Presentation April 10, 2019: The Problem with African American Museums
- Seminar Presentation April 17, 2019: Re-Mastry and Dreams of Architecture
- Seminar Presentation April 24, 2019: (Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze