Cultural Landscapes Seminar: ARCH 541 (Selected Topics)
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School of Architecture
McGill University
Winter Term 2010
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Meets Tuesdays from 9:30-12:30 in room 206.
Office hours by appointment

from Maira Kalman: *The Principles of Uncertainty*

**Catalogue Description:**

An overview of cultural landscapes studies, methodologies, and resources. Comparative studies of the connection between people, particular places, and artifact systems are interpreted through architecture, critical regionalism, and material culture. Precedents for the interpretation of cultural landscapes by architects, ethnologists, anthropologists, folklorists, historians, writers, filmmakers, photographers, and artists are presented.
Course Rationale:

This seminar provides the opportunity for an elective for both Professional and Post-professional Masters degree students. Cultural Landscape studies provide helpful context for Professional program thesis projects, especially for the interpretation of project sites and situations. The study of cultural landscapes relates to the content and concerns of all School of Architecture Post-professional program options, again by providing context for the study of architecture in particular situations. Rather than focusing on the study of individual buildings, the focus is instead on understanding and interpreting the artifact system at all scales, reaching beyond the study of form to syndetically interpret meaning and address values.

Course webpage:


Please note that the course outline and schedule will be updated on the web page. Please remember to check this site weekly for clarifications, for schedule changes, readings (articles available online), and for supplementary references.

Pedagogical objectives:

This seminar provides an overview of cultural landscapes studies, methodologies, and resources, including analysis and discussion of the work of architects embracing critical regionalism in architecture. Comparative studies of the connection between people, particular places, and artifact systems are interpreted through architecture, critical regionalism, material culture, and intangible culture. Precedents for the interpretation of cultural landscapes by architects, ethnologists, anthropologists, folklorists, historians, writers, filmmakers, photographers, and artists are presented. Rather than focusing on the study of individual buildings, the focus of this course is on understanding and interpreting the artifact system at all scales, reaching beyond the study of form to syndetically interpret meaning and address values.

Assignments:

Mid-term paper on methodology or annotated bibliography, end-of-term paper interpreting a particular cultural landscape in Montreal or elsewhere. Students are encouraged to connect assignments in the Cultural Landscapes Seminar with their own particular research papers and graduate / post-graduate thesis topics.

There are two points of departure for independent study that will help you to prepare for your assignments for this course. The first is an article by Mitchell (2003) on “Medium Theory” (available on the web and as a pdf accessed from the seminar web page: this is a preface to the 2003 Critical Inquiry Symposium). The second involves the novels of Sebald (Austerlitz, or The Rings of Saturn, or The Emigrants) and a particular secondary source (Searching for Sebald: Photography after W. G. Sebald: The Institute for Cultural
Inquiry, Los Angeles, 2007). Sebald’s novels are readily available either from the library or bookstores. I requested *Searching for Sebald* for reserve books at the library.

*The mid-term assignment* is the preparation of a typed, concise (5-10 pages double-spaced) paper on interpretation / representation that informs the approach to your end-of-term assignment. This paper should provide some background on your readings and should explain any influence on your end-of-term assignment. You may decide to concentrate on Sebald, but if you are already familiar with Sebald, or if you prefer to supplement the readings on Sebald with other readings or other references please let me know. Alternatively, you may prepare an annotated bibliography of similar text length for your mid-term assignment, submitting a paragraph on each book or article you read. Your text should provide an indication of the relevance of the reading to your own research.

*The mid-term papers are due March 2, 2010.*

*The end-of-term assignment* is a paper or project in a format similar to Anne Meredith Berry’s *Gros Morne Time Lines* (see the pdf file linked to the web page). Hers is a fold out book, but you will produce a web version that requires scrolling to the right (continuous images) on a standard Dreamweaver web page template I will provide that uses a simple table for positioning images. This piece (text, photos, drawings) will feature your documentation and interpretation of a particular area, building, condition, way of living, or artifact in Montreal, with reference to time, place, space, and possibly with reference to other aspects like light, materials, and details. In other words, the assignment is fairly open-ended, informed by hermeneutics and ekphrasis (as will be discussed early in the course), and possibly somewhat risky (see Clare Melhuis, “Editorial: Why Anthropology?,” in *Architectural Design Profile: Architecture and Anthropology* [New York: VCH Publishers, 2000, folio NA2543 S6 A6 1996], 7.). The main references on the seminar bibliography may also be helpful in this regard. As you will find from your readings on Sebald (see *Searching for Sebald*), the visual character / layout of text and graphics is very important for this assignment. In consultation with the instructor for this course, the end-of-term assignment may be configured to assist with research for other courses in the School of Architecture (for example, thesis preparation for the M. Arch. Professional Program).

**End of term assignment format:**

Each “page” or image on the sample of the assignment format on the course web page is a jpg image 6” wide by 8” high at a resolution of 105dpi. Folded paper in a book was used for continuity in the original document. However, you can enhance the continuity by presenting a continuous image with graphics and text arranged accordingly. For example, if you decide to have 20 pages with the dimensions shown above, you can present one final image that is 120” wide by 8” high at 105dpi (you must use width multiples of 6”). The final image must be in jpg format (colour or grayscale) at 105dpi for the web page, and a second image at 300dpi (same dimension constraints) must be provided for printing purposes. Your name and your project title must be integrated in the graphic design of your images. The end-of-term assignment is due the day before the last class meeting date (jpg images to be placed in a folder with your name on the folder).
Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>End-of-term presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>End-of-term paper/project</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
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Lecture Schedule

(weekly readings shown in italics).

1) **January 5- Introduction to Cultural Landscapes (Part One)**

   Readings:

   *Searching for Sebald (overview)*
   *One of Sebald’s novels (your choice): Austerlitz and/or The Rings of Saturn and/or The Emigrants*

2) **January 12- Rural Cultural Landscape Case Study:**

   **Tilting Part One, and Introduction to Cultural Landscapes (Part Two)**

   Tilting film: D. Craig, K. Knight
   Oral History: The Currency Exchange

   Cultural Landscape Case Studies (overview: RM’s examples)
   Seminar schedule revisions

   Methodology:

   Hermeneutics
   Animation: Glassie (material culture studies), text, drawings, photos
   Methodology: Glassie, Gadamer, Sebald
   Treatises in architecture: text, drawings…
   Robert Plant Armstrong: Cultural Metaphoric Base
   Form, Meaning, Values
   Syntax, Semantics
   Technical studies, typologies, etc. vs. storytelling
   Maira Kalman: *The Principles of Uncertainty*
   Research papers: McGill
   Project examples: Brazil, Montreal, A. M. Barry

Books to read
Seminar papers / project description (for those not present last week)

Readings:

_Hanna’s Suitcase_ (Levine)
_Recovering Landscape_ (Corner)
_Tilting: House Launching..._ (Mellin)
_Searching for Sebald (overview)_
_A Place to Belong_ (Pocius)

3) **January 19- Rural Cultural Landscape Case Study:**
   **Tilting (Part Two)**
   **Subtheme: In Small Things Forgotten**

Tilting film: History Television (Post Office)

Readings:

_Tilting: House Launching..._ (Mellin)
_Places of Presence_ (Creates)
_In Small Things Forgotten_ (Deetz)

4) **January 26- Rural Cultural Landscape Case Studies:**
   **Joe Batt’s Arm (Ludlow Premises); Little Fogo Islands**
   **Subtheme: Fragile Architecture: Syntax, Semantics, and Values**
   **Context: Structuralism vs. Oral History**

NFB Fogo Island films: late 1960’s (DVD)

Readings:

_Vernacular Architecture_ (Glassie)
_Folk Housing in Middle Virginia_ (Glassie)
_Passing the Time in Ballymenone_ (Glassie)
_Glassie: values (summary)_

5) **February 2- Rural Cultural Landscape Case Study:**
   **Joe Batt’s Arm (Brett Premises)**
   **Subtheme: Memory and Material Culture**

Film: Homes by Design: Hood Residence

Readings:

_Despite This Loss_ (in press: may not be available)
_On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place_ (Lippard)
Living in a Material World (Pocius)
Scanning (Diller, Scofidio)

6) February 9- Urban Cultural Landscape Case Study:
Newfoundland Modern: Architecture in the Smallwood Years
Subtheme: From Place to Non-place; Identity, and Memory

Film: Rain, Drizzle, and Fog (DVD)

Readings:

The Architecture of the City (Rossi)
A City of Towns (Mellin: CMHC)
Jimmy Corrigan (Ware)

7) February 16- Suburban Cultural Landscape Case Study:
Pittsburgh, Kalamazoo, Leisureworld…
Subtheme: Place or Non-place?

Readings:

“The Housebreaker of Shady Hill” (Cheever)
Suburban Transformations (Lukez)
Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes (Archer, Brooks, et. al.)
A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time (Jackson)

8) March 2- Architectural Regionalism in North America:
Rudolf Schindler, Richard Neutra, Rick Joy,
Brian MacKay Lyons, Rural Studio
Subtheme: A Fine Balance: Working at the Margins

Readings:

Plain Modern (MacKay-Lyons)
Rick Joy: Desert Works (Joy)
Architectural Regionalism (V. Canizaro et al)
Rural Studio (Mockbee)
Rudolf Schindler (Sheine)

9) March 9- A Forgotten Cultural Landscape: Havana, Cuba
Subtheme: The Shape of Time; Architecture, History, and Politics

Film: Waiting for Fidel
Interview with Mario Coyula (DVD)
The Buena Vista Social Club (DVD)
Readings:

*The Shape of Time* (Kubler)
*Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Coyula)

10) **March 16- Crossing Cultural Landscape Boundaries: Ahmedabad, India**
*Subtheme: Realities of Life and Dwelling*

Film: *Born into Brothels*  
(view the special features after you watch the DVD).

Readings:

“*Site and Services Case Study, Ahmedabad, India*” (Mellin: M.Arch. Thesis)  
*A Fine Balance* (Mistry)  
*Turkish Traditional Art Today* (Glassie)  
*Art and Life in Bangladesh* (Glassie)  
*The Grace of Four Moons* (Shukla, Glassie)

11) **March 23- Montreal Cultural Landscape Case Studies: Griffintown, Berson Brothers…**
*Subtheme: Urban Anomalies and Traces of the Past*

Film: *Ghost of Griffintown* (Richard Berman)  
Field trip (depending on the weather)

Readings:

*A Scientific Autobiography* (Rossi)  
*The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau et. al.)  
*Signs of Our Time* (Creates)

12) **March 30- Super Scale: Beijing, China and Lagos, Nigeria**
*Subtheme: Modernity and Tradition, Organization and Chaos*

Presentation on Beijing: Joe Carter  
Film: *Lagos* (Koolhaas)

Readings:

*Burtynsky-China*

13) **April 6- Syndetic Historiography: the Architecture of Rogelio Salmona**
*Subtheme: The Marvelous Real*
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(lecture by Professor Ricardo Castro)

Readings:

*Rogelio Salmona* (two volumes) (Castro)
Reading: “Baroque and the Marvelous Real” (Carpentier)
*A Pattern Language* (Alexander)

14) **April 14- Student Presentations**
Cultural Landscapes Seminar Outline  

Bibliography

*Library books on reserve in blue:*

**Cultural Landscapes: General**


Alexander, Christopher et. al. *A Pattern Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) NA9050 A49x


Corner James, Editor; *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).


*Coyula Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Mario et. al.) HT384 C92 H387 2002


de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Michel, with Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol) HN8 C4313 1984 (try to find the U. of Minnesota 1998 edition if you decide to purchase this book)


Jackson, J. B. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994) F796 J27 1994


Kubler, George *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962) N66 K8


Lippard *The Lure of the Local* (Lucy) GF503 L56 1997

Lippard *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place* (Lucy) G155 A1 L57 1999


Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). G71.5 T8 1977


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Architecture


McCoy, Esther, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962* NA7235 C2 M2 1977

Mellin, Robert. “Site and Services Case Study,” M. Arch. Thesis (McGill, 1984) and *Open House International* article. AS42 M3 1984 M48

Polyzoides, Stefanos, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles* NA7238 L6 P6 1982


Artists, Photographers


Creates, Marlene. *Signs of Our Time* TR647 C733 2006

Creates, Marlene *Places of Presence* N6549 C74 A4 1993b

Creates, Marlene *Language and Land use* N6549 C74 A4 1998


Galassi, Peter. *Jeff Wall* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007). (there are many other books on Jeff Wall in the library).


Gursky, Andreas. *Andreas Gursky* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2007).

Gursky, Andreas. *Architecture* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008).


*Kauffman, Ross. Born into Brothels* (2004: view the special features after you watch the DVD). HQ792 I5 B67 DVD

Keller, Judith and Anne Lacoste *Where We Live: Photographs of America from the Berman Collection* (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006).


Suburbia


Material Culture


Literature


