

Mark Rakatansky

*Recombinant Renaissance: Transformative Modes of Authorship*

ARCH6451

Fall 2018



Exploring the work of some of the most noted figures in Italian architecture in the 16th century, this course will investigate the multiple combinative authorships — the various authors and authorities — at play in any given architectural figure and any of their works. While there are some nameable architects and master masons in the Middle Ages, the most noted names in architecture begin to appear in the early Renaissance and emerge in force in the sixteenth century. And yet, already in that time, the singularity of authorship for these architects remains complex. It is not merely that many of these figures — Raphael, Giulio, Michelangelo, Palladio, and later Bernini, Borromini, da Cortana — worked across diverse media (architecture, painting, sculpture, engraving, tapestry, decorative arts) that makes their authorship multiple. In the intensive levels of self-consciousness that develops in (what is called for that reason) the Early Modern period — with its new forms of political, religious, and social forms of identity — the invention of new material and new forms of media (through which authorship is channeled) combined with the reinvention of past materials and media to radically transformed modes of design.

There are, in other words, many signatures at work in these figures. Add to which all the many commentators — the historians, critics, and architects — on these figures and their works, short excerpts of texts from which we will read each week to situate a given figure within a greater context and to review different forms of historical analysis, to which now you can add your own analysis. Each of these architects in this period may thus be more productively understood as a nexus in which and through which social forms develop through mediated cultural techniques as designed formations, to be subsequently recombined and reformed yet again.

Engaging the media of our own time, in this seminar we will explore new forms of investigation in the digital humanities, to which the digital visualization techniques of architecture can make a fundamental contribution by evolving beyond merely documenting a building to provide innovative modes of critical and historical analysis. The course will investigate the diverse ways digital visualization can be a crucial new lens of perception and communication. Students who are versed in these 2-D and 3-D techniques may elect, as an alternative to a substantially written analysis of the case-study they will select, to produce either a written paper augmented with their graphic analysis or to develop a substantially graphic form of analysis augmented with their narrative text.

***Course requirements:***

Your research through the semester can investigate your chosen subject in a variety of ways, exploring the complexity of authorship in a given work or between diverse works of a particular figure, relating formal modes to cultural, material, media, political, or social modes of the time. Or you can compare a chosen work to other global works in the same period (an Italian palace to a palace in China, England, Germany, India, Spain, or elsewhere). Or similar comparisons of modes between time periods, including our own contemporary time. Short presentations at midterm and final will be developed into a final project.

***Course schedule:***

*September 5:*

**Matter and Manner in the “High Renaissance:” Donato Bramante**

*September 12:*

**From Figures to (Re-figured) Fields: Raphael’s Alternative Antiquity**

*September 19:*

**The Transformations of Giulio Romano**

*September 26:*

**From Comfort to Commodity: Sebastiano Serlio (visit to the Avery Library Collection)**

*October 3:*

**No class.**

*October 10:*

**Signifying Media: The Imprinting of Palladio**

*October 17:*

**Architects Reading Historians Reading Architects: Palladio re-imagined through Rudolf Wittkower, Colin Rowe, Peter Eisenman, and Greg Lynn**

*October 24:*

**Midterm Presentations**

*October 31:*

**From Fields to (Superimposed) Figures: Michelangelo**

*November 7:*

**Future Recombinants (17th Century): The Performative Modes of Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini and the later New Composites (Pietro da Cortana, Carlo Rainaldi, Martino Longhi the Younger)**

*November 14:*

**Future Recombinants (18th-21st Century): Double Agency and the Politics of Metamorphosis (Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Luigi Moretti, and Rem Koolhaas)**

*November 21:*

**Final Presentations**

*November 28:*

**Final Presentations**

*December 5:*

**No class: Final studio reviews**

*December 12:*

**No class: Final studio reviews**

*December 17:*

**Final projects due**