DESIGN THEORIES
Columbia University GSAPP
Spring 2018 Thursdays 11:00–1:00 600 Avery Hall
Enrique Walker

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In his article "Architettura per i musei," which he had originally delivered as a lecture at IUAV in April 1966, Aldo Rossi examined the question of "design theory." The proposition he advanced, in retrospect particularly polemical, if not altogether questionable, reveals the aspiration, as well as the shortcoming, of his then imminent book, L'architettura della città. A theory of design, Rossi argued, is an integral part of a theory of architecture, and the first goal of an architecture school. Design theories, however, Rossi warned, are rare, and usually tackled, he added, by the most naive or the greatest of men.

Rossi's main reference was not an architect, but a writer, Raymond Roussel, in particular his posthumous publication, Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres, which explained, for other writers to exploit fruitfully, the method he had used to write some of his books. Rossi himself expected to eventually write a book that would explain the way in which he designed some of his buildings, but never actually did. In the preface to the second edition of L'architettura della città, he briefly mentioned a design procedure based, not unlike Roussel's method, on combining predetermined objects. His design theory, however, remained unformulated.

If design theories were rare then, as Rossi claimed, they have become rarer since. Design and theory have actually forked. This seminar will speculate on their intersection. Specifically, it will examine the ways in which architects have since the mid-sixties theorized their design practices. The seminar focuses on ten programmatic books by practitioners; each session will interrogate one book, and scrutinize the arguments it articulated, the objectives it pursued, the critiques it entailed, and, in turn, the design theories it implied. Ultimately, this seminar will trace the trajectories of architectural design as a theoretical question over the past five decades.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each student is expected to attend all seminar sessions, to complete the assigned readings, to participate in the seminar discussions, to deliver a presentation and a response on subjects agreed upon with the professor, and to complete one essay (3,000 words), also on a subject agreed upon with the professor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

01/18: Session 01: Introduction
02/01: Session 02: Robert Venturi, <u>Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture</u>
02/08: Session 03: Alison Smithson, <u>Team 10 Primer</u>
02/15: Session 04: Bernard Tschumi, <u>The Manhattan Transcripts</u>
02/22: Session 05: Aldo Rossi, <u>Scientific Autobiography</u>
03/01: Session 06: Cedric Price, <u>The Square Book</u>
03/22: Session 07: Iñaki Ábalos and Juan Herreros, <u>Tower and Office</u>
03/29: Session 08: Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, <u>S, M, L, XL</u>
04/05: Session 09: Willem Jan Neutelings and Michiel Riedijk, <u>At Work</u>
04/12: Session 10: Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, <u>Graphic Anatomy</u>
04/19: Session 11: Kersten Geers and David Van Severen, <u>Seven Rooms</u>