

# Course Syllabus

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GSAPP, Architecture

Columbia University

A4648

Spring 2018

Mary McLeod

Beyond Beauty: The Sublime and the Picturesque

In the first chapter of *Architecture and Utopia* Manfredo Tafuri delineates what he calls the “inherent opposition” of practitioners in modern art and architecture: “those who search into the very bowels of reality in order to know and assimilate its values and wretchedness; and those who desire to go beyond reality, who want to construct *ex novo* new realities, new values, and public symbols.” For Tafuri, this division does not reflect separate origins or causes, but rather stems from a specific historical situation: the emergence of the eighteenth-century capitalist city and a new view of nature as both reason and sensation. On the one hand, the “reason” underlying nature serves as a model for notions such as structural articulation, type, and functionalism; on the other, nature’s emotional effects become the basis of a “science of sensations.” Reason and “unreason” are thus not distinct entities but two integrally related responses to the same conditions: the collapse of earlier aesthetic models in the face of new contradictions and tensions arising from changing conditions--economic, political, scientific, and cultural--that emerge full-force in the eighteenth century.

Although there is (as with all theoretical constructs) a certain artificiality and arbitrariness to this binary division, it is a useful means to organize various tendencies in architectural theory that have persisted or resurfaced in different guises from the late seventeenth century to the present. This seminar will focus on one half of this division: namely, architectural theories and philosophical positions that might be seen as indebted to sensationalism, empiricism that sees sensation or the sense sensation arising from experience as the initial source of knowledge.

As an introduction to the issue of sensationalism, students will read excerpts from John Locke’s fundamental work *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1671), which can be seen as initiating this theoretical trajectory. The seminar will then focus on two aesthetic ideas that can be seen as emerging out of this philosophical position: the sublime (Burke, Kant, Boullée, Ruskin, Lyotard, and Libeskind) and the picturesque (Price, Knight, Kames, Soane, Sitte, Pevsner, Rowe, Gehry, and Tschumi). These ideas, and sensationalist doctrine more generally, challenged traditional architectural canons and conventions, most notably the classical conception of beauty as an *a priori* ideal, embodying unity and wholeness. The topic of sensationalist doctrine will be approached chronologically, with the first part focusing on the evolution of theories of the sublime and the picturesque from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century

and with the second part examining twentieth-century reinterpretations of these aesthetic ideas. The course will conclude with a critical examination of sensationalism and its theoretical heritage today, discussing themes such as gender, politics, and the body--and more generally, the relationship between aesthetic theory and poststructuralist critiques of reason and truth. It is hoped that in the course of the semester that the overlaps, inconsistencies, and complexities of the initial division between "sensation" and "reason"--as well as the contradictory legacy and transformations of this division--will begin to be apparent and understood. The goal is neither to celebrate sensuous empiricism nor to denounce it, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of its complex history and its possibilities as both a liberatory and oppressive concept--and practice.

Class meeting: Thursday 11-1, Room Buell 300S

Class format: The class will function like a reading group. Seminar participants will analyze closely the assigned readings, taking turns leading the discussion. All readings are to be completed before the class meeting. In the course of the semester there will be several guest participants, who will be specialists on individual topics such as Kant or Richard Payne Knight.

Requirements: Students will be asked to write three short essays (approximately 750-1150 words), focusing on one or two of the readings. Each student will also be asked to make several brief presentations to introduce the discussion of the readings.

Class enrollment: Limited to 15 students.

Office hours: Tuesday: 1:30-3:00 PM

Readings:

Almost all the assigned readings will be primary texts. A bibliography of secondary literature will be provided for students who wish to supplement these readings. Doctoral students are expected to complete the additional readings listed for each section meeting. Assigned books and essays as well as a reader will be on reserve in Avery Library. Books will also be available for purchase at Book Culture on 112th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam.

Note: all students should read the first chapter of Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* before the first class meeting.

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Continuities and Transformations in Theories of Architecture, 1670-Present

Note: All students should read the first chapter of Manfredo Tafuri's Architecture and Utopia (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977) before the beginning of class, if they have not recently. It will be a reference point throughout the class for the dialogue in architectural theory between sensation and reason that might be seen as beginning in the eighteenth century. Students may also want to begin reading Burke's Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime . . . and Kant's part I of the Critique of Judgment before the assigned weeks. In general, students may find the relevant entries in the Encyclopedia of Aesthetics useful as background reading. This four-volume work is in the reference area along the north wall on Avery's 200 level.

Part I: Sensationalism: From Locke to Ruskin

Week 1

Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), chap. 1.

Week 2

\*John Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, orig. 1671 (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), pp. 33-46, 69-78, 85-104. If you have another edition, please read the equivalent sections in Book II, chaps. 1, 13, 17, 19-21.

Joseph Addison, "Pleasures of the Imagination," The Spectator, nos. 411-21 (June 21, 1712-July 3, 1712), in Critical Essays from the Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 178-81, 185-86.

Additional Readings:

\*Terry Eagleton, "The Law of the Heart," in The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), chap. 2.

Thomas Furniss, "Addison, Joseph," in Michael Kelly, ed., Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, vol. 1 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 12-16.

Ernest Teveson, "Space, Deity and the Natural Sublime," MLQ, 12 (March 1951), pp. 20-38.

### Week 3

\*Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), parts I- IV, esp. part II.

The original edition was published in 1757.

\*Immanuel Kant, Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

Frances Ferguson, "The Sublime from Burke to the Present," in Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, vol.4, pp. 326-331.

### Additional Readings:

David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in Hume, Essays, Moral, Political and Literary (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985, pp, 226-49); also available on line.

Karsten Harries, "The Beautiful and the Sublime," in The Meaning of Modern Art: A Philosophical Interpretation (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 36-45.

Samuel Monk, The Sublime (1935; Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1962).

Walter Hippel, The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Press, 1957).

Peter De Bollo, The Discourse of the Sublime (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bollo, eds., The Sublime: A Reader in British Aesthetic Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Tom Furniss, Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender, Political Economy in Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Barbara Claire Freeman, The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Woman's Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

#### Week 4

Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," Part I of Critique of Judgement, orig. 1790, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Part I up to Second Section of Second Book (in other words everything in Part I except the Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgment).

Eagleton, "The Kantian Imaginary," The Ideology of the Aesthetic, chap. 3.

#### Additional Readings:

Gilles Deleuze, Kant's Critical Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 50-52.

#### Week 5

94. L. Boullée, Architecture: Essay on Art, ed. Helen Rosenau (London: Tiranti, 1953), pp. 81-94.

John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Power" and "The Lamp of Memory" (excerpt), in The Seven Lamps of Architecture (New York: Dover, 1989), pp. 70-102, 189-90.

Anthony Vidler, "Notes on the Sublime: From Neoclassicism to Postmodernism," in Canon-the Princeton Journal (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), pp. 165-91.

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## Week 6

Richard Payne Knight, The Landscape, A Didactic Poem in Three Books, Addressed to Uvedale Price (London, 1794), reprint edition (Farnborough, Eng.: Gregg, 1972); or if this is too much (and it may be) read the excerpts by Knight in Charles Harrison et al., eds., Art in Theory 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas (London: Blackwell, 2000).

Uvedale Price, An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful, and on the Use of Studying Pictures for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape, preface and chapter 1 (pp. 1-24) and 4 (pp. 82-122).

Extracts from Uvedale Price, "A Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful," 1801, in Harrison., Art in Theory 1648-1815, pp. 877-80.

Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View (London: F. Cass, 1927), pp. 1-17.

Film: Peter Greenaway, The Draughtsman's Contract, 1982.

### Additional Readings:

Stephanie Ross, "Picturesque", in Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, pp. 511-15.

William Gilpin, excerpts from "On Picturesque Beauty" and "Of Picturesque Travel," in Harrison, Art in Theory, pp. 857-62.

Marc-Antoine Laugier, An Essay on Architecture, trans. W. and A. Herrmann (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977), pp. 130-45.

Richard Payne Knight, An Analytical Inquiry into the Principal of Taste, 4th ed. (London: T. Payne, 1808); rpt. (Westmead: Gregg International, 1972).

Sidney K. Robinson, Inquiry into the Picturesque (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1991). This short book is an excellent general introduction to the picturesque and worth reading.

Humphrey Repton, A Letter to Uvedale Price, Esq., London, 1794.

Ann Bermingham, Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

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### Week 7

Henry Home (Lord Kames), Elements of Criticism (New York: A.S. Barnes & Burr, 1855), chap. 25 (on architecture and gardening).

Robin Middleton, "Soane's Spaces and the Matter of Fragmentation", in Margaret Richardson and Mary Anne Stevens, eds. John Soane, Architect: Master of Light and Space (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1999), pp. 26-37.

### Week 8

John Ruskin, "Of the True Ideal: Thirdly, Grotesque" and "On the Turnerian Picturesque" in Modern Painters.

John Ruskin, "Grotesque," from Stones of Venice, in The Lamp of Beauty, ed. Joan Evans (Ithaca, New York: Phaidon/ Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 251-53.

\*John Summerson, "William Butterfield, or the Glory of Ugliness," in Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays (W.W. Norton, 1963; rpt. 1998), pp. 159-176.

Joris Karl Huysmans. "Le Monstre," Certains (Paris: Tresse and Stock, 1889).

Victor Hugo, Preface to Cromwell, 1827.

Additional Readings:

John Macarthur, "The Heartless and the Picturesque: Sympathy and Disgust in Ruskin's Aesthetics," Assemblage, special issue devoted to Ruskin, ed. Jennifer Bloomer, no. 32 (April 1997), pp. 126-41.

Elizabeth Helsinger, Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

John Dixon Hunt, "John Ruskin and the Picturesque" and "Ruskin, 'Turnerian Topography,' and *Genius Loci*," Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 193-239.

Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Ugliness," in ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Critical Terms For Art History, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 281-95.

## Week 9

Camillo Sitte, City Planning According to Artistic Principles, trans. George R. and Christiane Collins (New York and London: Random House and Phaidon, 19 ), pp. 3-12, 60-67.

Auguste Choisy, "Le Pittoresque dans l'art grec: Partis dissymétriques, pondératopm des masses," Histoire de l'architecture, vol. 1 (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1899; reprinted Geneva and Paris: Slatkine Reprints, 1987), pp. 409-422. (You should read this excerpt if you read French. However, the most important passage is translated in the Eisenstein excerpt listed below.)

Sergei M. Eisenstein, "Montage and Architecture," Assemblage, no. 10 (December 1989), pp. 116-31; also Eisenstein, "El Greco y el cine" (ca. 1937-1942), as quoted by Yve-Alain Bois, "Sergei M. Eisenstein: Montage and Architecture", Assemblage, no 10 (December 1989), p. 111. You may find Yve Alain Bois's essay interesting.

Le Corbusier, "The Illusion of Plans," in Towards a New Architecture, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1981).



Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, "Les 4 Compositions," Oeuvre complète 1910-1929, ed. W[illy] Boesinger and O[scar] Stonorov (Zurich: Editions d'Architecture/Artemis, 1964), p. 189.

Le Corbusier, "The Pack-Donkey's Way and Man's Way," in The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), chap. 1, pp. 11-18.

Le Corbusier, Precisions, trans. Edith Schreiber Aujame (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 133-39.

#### Additional Readings:

Robin Middleton, "Auguste Choisy, Historian: 1841-1909," International Architect 1, no. 5 (1981), pp. 36-41.

Mary McLeod, "'Order in the details', 'Tumult in the whole'? Composition and Fragmentation in Le Corbusier's Architecture," in Barry Bergdoll and Werner Oechslin, eds., Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), pp. 291-322.

#### Week10

19. de Wolfe [H. de Cronin Hastings], "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price." Architectural Review 106 (December 1949), pp. 359-79; reprinted with an introduction in Joan Ockman with Edward Eigen, eds., Architecture Culture (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 114-19.

Reyner Banham, "Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965," in Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner, ed. John Summerson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 265-73.

Nikolaus Pevsner, "C-20 Picturesque," Architectural Review 115 (April 1954), pp. 227-29.

Alison and Peter Smithson, "Cluster City," Architectural Review (November 1958).

#### Additional Readings:

"The English Planning Tradition in the City," Architectural Review (June 1945).

Gordon Cullen, Townscape (New York: Reinhold, 1961), esp. pp. 9-15; passim esp. 17-96.

Nikolaus Pevsner, Visual Planning and the Picturesque, ed. Mathew Aitchison (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010). The introduction by John Macarthur and Mathew Aitchison is useful in giving background information about *Architectural Review's* advocacy of "townscape."

### Week 11

\*Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodern?" trans. Régis Durand, in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), pp. 71-82.

\*Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," in The Lyotard Reader, ed. A. Benjamin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). See also the essay on Barnett Newman.

\*Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 1-18.

Georges Bataille, "Formless," in Visions of Excess: Selected Writings (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 31

### Additional Readings:

Elizabeth Grosz, "Abjection," Sexual Subversions (London: Allen & Unwin, 1989), pp. 70-78.

Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind L. Krauss, Formless: A User's Guide (New York: Zone Books, 1997), esp. the opening and closing essays.

Barbara Claire Freeman, "Feminine Sublime," entry on Sublime, Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, vol. 4, pp. 331-35.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Woman's Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Jean-François Lyotard, Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, trans. George Van Den Abeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

## Week 12

Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, ed. J. Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1972).

Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara," trans. John Shepley, in October: The First Decade 1976-86 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press and October, 1987), pp. 343-72; the original French text appeared in Richard Serra, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1983).

Kim Ian Michasiw, "Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque," Representations 38 (1992): 76-100.

\*Arthur C. Danto, The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art, The Paul Carus Lectures, no. 21 (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 2003), pp. 39-60, 143-60.

Student presentations on some contemporary buildings or sculptures in terms of a rethinking of the sublime and the picturesque.

Additional Readings:

Peter Eisenman, "En Terror Firma: In Trails of the Grottextes," Pratt Journal of Architecture, no. 2 (Spring 1988), pp. 111-26; reprinted in Deconstruction: Omnibus Volume (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), pp. 152-53.

Richard Serra, "Notes from Sight Point Road," Perspecta, no. 19 (1982), pp. 172-81.

Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman, "Interview," Skyline (April 1983), pp. 14-16.

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Dave Hickey, The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty (Los Angeles: Art issues Press/ Foundation for Advanced Critical Studies, 1993).

Rosanna Warren, "Earthworks," in *Ghost in a Red Hat* (New York: Norton, 2011). This is a poem on Frederick Law Olmstead that deals with the picturesque, notions of democracy, personal loss, among other themes). Might be interesting to analyze in terms of other themes and readings examined in the class.

Reading period

Eagleton, "The Marxist Sublime," "From the Polis to Post-modernism," The Ideology of the Aesthetic, chaps. 8 and 14.

\*Hal Foster, "The Return of the Real," in The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century, An October Book (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 127-68.

## Course Summary:

**Date**

**Details**

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