



CONTEMPORARY THEORY IN ARCHITECTURE



FALL
2009

ARC519

Thursdays 8:30 – 11:10 am

Hayes 132

Jean La Marche



In the late nineteenth century, as western cultures moved away from commitments to humanism and towards a faith in science, architecture was forced to re-define its status, value, and cultural significance. Various theories were advanced to explain and advocate certain ideas concerning the nature, experience, and production of architecture in order to respond to this challenge. A similar process is taking place in architecture and architectural theory today:

A survey of architectural theory from the last thirty years finds a multiplicity of issues vying for attention. The lack of dominance of a single issue or a single viewpoint is characteristic of the pluralist period . . . Since the mid 1960s, architectural theory has become truly interdisciplinary; it depends upon a vast array of critical paradigms. (Nesbitt, 16)

This course explores some of the most important and yet widely disparate recent theories in architecture through the examination of the theories, concepts and works of several major figures: Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi/Denise Scott Brown, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, Herzog/de Meuron, Zaha Hadid, and Gordon Matta-Clark. The course is designed to offer students the opportunity to discover material concepts and theoretical positions that they might find useful in their own work as well as the kinds of criticism that are currently developing around them. It also develops critical thinking, textual analysis, and criticism in the public discussion of the readings in the seminar and writing skills through a few writing assignments.