

AR-488

Familiar horror-critical history of domestic space

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA1, MA3	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	Oral
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	2 weekly
Lecture	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

Critical history of domestic architecture from its origins to the present.

Content

We tend to think of living in homes as a natural way of life. Yet, in the history of the human species – which is 3.000.000 years long – the house appeared at the very end. Around 10.000 years ago, in certain parts of the world, people chose to settle: to become sedentary and build homes. These initial attempts to sedentary life started a process of domestication of the human species that to this day is not yet complete. In many parts of the world many communities resist sedentism and all its social and cultural implications. It is precisely such resistance to the inevitability of sedentary life – and thus of the home as a way of life – that offers us a critical lens through which to revisit the history of domestic space.

The house as a specific mode of dwelling originates in part with a desire for stability. As many anthropologists have noted, if there is a fundamental character of the human being, it is their constant feeling of not being at home. For this reason, we can argue that the invention of the house as an architectural apparatus is motivated not only by the need for protection from a hostile territory, but also by a desire to settle and to give ritual form to life. With its architecture made of partitions and opening the house orients, enables, encloses, individualizes subjects. In many examples of domesticity, the subject of the house is the family, and this means that a history of the house is indistinguishable from the history of family relationships. Moreover, the rise of the home has given form to fundamental tropes of the human way of living such as notions of privacy and publicness, and land ownership. Through history, the house has been the nexus between the micro scale of the household and the large scale of institutions of power. While often represented as a pastoral idyll of intimacy, the house is the locus of asymmetrical relationships such as those between husband and wife, parents and children, landlord and tenants, and debtor and creditor.

The seminar will focus on a critical history of domestic architecture from its origins to the present by answering the following questions: Why we live in houses? Why has this become the predominant way of living? Why has the history of housing always been a history of crisis? Why has domestic space always been a tyrannical place? Why has domestic space always been violent? Why is the real 'state of exception' the one that takes place within domestic space? Why does barbarism begin at home? Why, within domestic space, are we always in debt with something or someone? Why have houses become a commodity? Why is housing scarce in the Neoliberal era? Why have we never been safe within our homes?

From Epipaleolithic settlements to the Greek-Roman idea of the house, from monastic traditions to the emergence of social housing, from ancient texts on domesticity to feminist critique of domestic labor, the seminar will trace a genealogy of domesticity through a multitude of concrete architectural case study.

Schedule

Session 1 (17.09.2020)

- From Hunter and Gatherers to early forms of domestication
- Villages, households, and the Neolithic Revolution

Session 2 (1.10.2020)

- Habitat in the Aboriginal culture of Australia
- The Greek *oikos*

Session 3 (15.10.2020)

- The *Domus* and the Villa
 - Ascetic Life and Western monasticism: from hermitage to coenobitism
- Session 4 (29.10.2020)
- From Renaissance palazzo to bourgeois townhouse
 - The Terraced House and the rise of speculative building
- Session 5 (12.11.2020)
- Dispossession and the origins of the Houses for the Laboring Classes
 - The Grand Domestic Revolution: the feminist critique of domesticity.
- Session 6 (26.11.2020)
- Against Domesticity: from the Residential Hotel to the Dom-Kommuna
 - The Political Economy of Housing from Welfare State to Neoliberalism

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Analyze , discuss, and write about specific architectural designs
- Recognize the social and power relations at work in domestic environments
- Distinguish the home's diverse forms and respective roles throughout history until today
- Define the origins and broad genealogy of domesticity

Teaching methods

Bi-weekly lectures

Assessment methods

- Short written assignment
- Oral exam