EPFL

AR-450	**Montage and the metropolis**		
	Stierli Martino		

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA2, MA4	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	**2 weekly**
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

This course will introduce students to the concept of montage as a new paradigm for the perception, experience, and representation of urban and architectural space in modernity. Pursuing an interdisciplinary approach, the class will discuss major figures and episodes of 20th century architecture.

Content

Montage is omnipresent is modern culture and discourse. Rooted in industrial production and popular image practices in the late 19th century, it achieved its recognizable form in the avant-garde movements of the 1920s. The juxtaposition of photographic elements became, through adaptation and analogy, a primary compositional principle in all artistic media. Mainly related to fields of artistic production such as photography, film, the visual arts, and literature, montage has in fact deeply informed architectural thinking throughout the twentieth century. A direct consequence and function of what Walter Benjamin termed "the age of technological reproducibility," montage addresses the mode of perception specific to the mechanized metropolis and the architecture it is made of. Montage may therefore be considered a primary cultural technique of modernity, its "symbolic form," to invoke Erwin Panofky's famous characterization of perspective in the Renaissance. As much as perspective established a system of spatial representation for early modern Western art that encapsulated an entire worldview, montage became defining for Western visual culture in the 20th century. The Renaissance notion of a continuous and homogeneous space was replaced by the modern notion of a discontinuous, fractures, and heterogeneous one.

This lecture course will chart the history of (architectural) montage in late 19th-century urban and architectural contexts, its application by the early 20th-century avant-gardes, and its eventual appropriation in the postmodern period. More than just a chronological survey of 20th century architecture and its conception and representation based on montage thinking, the lecture course will identify a number of key episodes and protagonists that were particularly seminal in establishing this new visual and conceptual paradigm in architecture. With specific classes focusing on photomontage, the film theories of Sergei Eisenstein, Mies van der Rohe's spatial experiments, and Rem Koolhaas's use of literary montage in his seminal manifesto *Delirious New York* (1978), we will explore the centrality of montage in modern explorations of space as well as in conceiving and representing the contemporary city. The interdisciplinary nature of the course will consider architecture in dialogue with photography, film, literature, and visual culture, and will discuss the contributions of artists and architects such as Mies, Koolhaas, Hannah Höch, Marianne Brandt, Paul Citroen, George Grosz, El Lissitzky, and Le Corbusier.

These historical case studies will be grounded in a stringent theoretical framework that will introduce students to some key theoretical concepts regarding the conceptualization and representation of modern architecture in the 20th century. In addition, the class will discuss on a continuous base how modern montage thinking informs the conceptualization and representation of space in our own digital age. In this way, the class intends to provide students a useful discursive apparatus with which to intellectually frame their own design thinking.
COURSE SESSIONS
Session 1:
Friday, February 25

- Introduction to the class and semester overview

- Introduction: What is modernity? What is the metropolis?

Session 2:
Friday, February 25
  • Introduction: What is montage?

Session 3:
Friday, March 11 (online, pre-recorded)
  • Photomontage and the metropolis

Session 4:
Friday, March 18
  • Photomontage in architectural representation

Session 5:
Friday, March 18
  • Photomontage in architectural representation 2

Session 6:
Friday, April 1 (online, pre-recorded)
  • Mies van der Rohe and dadaism

Session 7:
Friday, April 8
  • Postwar Mies and the politics of photomontage

Session 8:
Friday, April 8
  • Sergei Eisenstein's theory of architectural montage

Session 9:
Friday, May 6
(online, pre-recorded)
  • Montage and Transparency

Session 10:
Friday, May 13
  • Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York* and the metropolitan unconscious

Session 11:
Friday, May 13
  • Architectural history and/as montage
  • Conclusion

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:
  • Apply in a critical and knowledgeable manner the key concepts developed during the course.
  • Understand modern architecture's interdisciplinary relationship to related fields such as visual art, photography, film, and literature.
  • Develop and understand the key tools of architectural representation in modernity and how they relate to the digital age.

Expected student activities

Personal work during the semester, reading of essential texts, personal study of specific themes of interest, and the writing of three short essays of one to two pages each that respond to specific issues or topics addressed in the class or in the recommended reading.

Assessment methods

The main objective of the course is to give students fluidity in key concepts of the conceptualization and representation of space in modernity. The class will also introduce students to an interdisciplinary understanding of modern architecture. Therefore, the evaluation will be based on the students' ability to relate to the themes and issues discussed in an independent, critical and engaging way.
80% Quality of the three short essays to be submitted in terms of relevance to subject matter and ability to articulate original and independent thoughts based on the historical case studies and/or theoretical concepts introduced
20 % Clear oral articulation during the semester.

Resources

Ressources en bibliothèque

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Références suggérées par la bibliothèque

- Montage and the metropolis / Stierli