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Sessions at SAH Conference (St. Paul, 18–22 Apr 18)

St. Paul, Minnesota, Apr 18–22, 2018
Deadline: Jun 15, 2017

H-ArtHist Redaktion

Panels at Society of Architectural Historians 2018 Annual International Conference

[1] Designing Homo Sapiens: Architecture, Environment, and the Human Sciences
[2] The Stagecraft of Architecture

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[1] Designing Homo Sapiens: Architecture, Environment, and the Human Sciences

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Concomitant with the rise of Darwinism during the second part of the nineteenth century, humanity was reconceptualized as a species within the animal kingdom, subject to physiological laws and unconscious drives. It appeared only logical then to determine what sort of spatial configurations and sensory conditions would bolster humans' economic productivity, mental health, security, morality, and physical well-being. In conjunction with the human sciences, architects sought to improve the functionality of the human organism through spatial-aesthetic organization. This endeavor, which has persisted into the twenty-first century, took place in Western, colonial and post-colonial contexts, drawing from fledgling disciplines in the human sciences: psycho-physics, ethnology, eugenics, psychiatry, cybernetics, anthropology, environmental psychology, and neuroscience.

While today the notion of environmental architecture is typically associated with ecological sustainability, its origins are also linked to conceptions of a human's optimal climatic, biological, and perceptory milieus, which could range in scale from vast natural ecosystems to small designed spaces, laboratories, or even the virtual spaces of projective media. We ask panelists to consider how the human sciences were intimately bound up with constructions of a universal human species which had its counterpart in notions of racial, social and sexual abnormality. We encourage proposals that examine how architects and planners instrumentalized the methods and assumptions of the human sciences and welcome a wide range of subjects, including (but not limited to) architecture's relations to anthropological and biological metaphors, perceptual psychology, social engineering, environmental psychology, racial discourses, the application of social sciences and data-mining to processes of urban development, as well as the recent turn to neuroscience.

Session Chairs: Ginger Nolan, University of Basel; Alla Vronskaya, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH)

Please submit an abstract through the SAH website

Deadline: 15 June 2017, at 5pm CDT.

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[2] The Stagecraft of Architecture

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Borrowing from a theatrical metaphor: what unseen forces worked "backstage," in the production of modern architecture? The means for execution of design and planning projects are often less acknowledged than the ends. Certain institutional structures, for example, privilege the intel-
lectual or creative work of design, relegating the scaffolding provided by editing, organizing, or documenting to a subordinate position. The former attests authorship or genius, the latter is named as project management or labor for hire. To interrogate such hierarchies, we seek geographically diffuse work that posits a history of architectural "stagecraft" to generate new models immanent to the history of colonial and post-colonial modern architecture and planning. The end form—whether a modern arts complex in Asia or the Americas, a European or African border camp, an imperial or
national headquarters, or a city plan—is less vital here than our efforts to limn obscured apparatuses that have receded into the background. We seek to invert conventions as well as categories. A border between the formal and the informal may appear in a shadow history of the "off-stage," thought through figures, institutions, media, communications, or curation. How do disparate practices articulated through invisibility, absence, or obscurity cohere as a new subject? Following Rancière, that "there is history because there is an absence," how does this conceptual figure-ground relationship relate to architectural historical method? Thinking with Carolyn Steedman, how do we write "history less as stuff . . . and more as process," in a historical tradition that pivots off built or visual-material referents? How often were the invisible practices upon which we seek to shed light "manned" by those other than white men, and precisely how were they gendered and racialized? By naming and inscribing them in the history, what purchase may be gained on theory?

Session Chairs: Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, New York University, and Claire ZImmerman, University of Michigan

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