

Lecture series: Organizing Architectures (Frankfurt a.M., 26 Nov 25–11 Feb 26)

Frankfurt am Main, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Nov 26, 2025–Feb 11, 2026

Friederike Weidner, Frankfurt am Main

"Organizing Architectures: Coloniality".

Lecture Series of the DFG Research Training Group "Organizing Architectures" in Winter Semester 2025/26:

"Tracing Political Violence in Postcolonial Architecture: The Body Keeps the Score"

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Anoma Pieris [Melbourne School of Design]

#1 of the Lecture Series "Organizing Architectures: Coloniality"

26.11.2025, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Auditorium, Deutsches Architekturmuseum Frankfurt

In 2022, the citizens of Colombo (Sri Lanka) took to the streets in a peoples' sovereignty movement that challenged the government's vision of neo-liberal progress. The materiality and messaging of their protracted urban occupation read the multilayered accretion of political violence as characterizing the postcolonial city. This lecture discusses how these layers accumulate, and how we might recognise them and parse them apart.

"The Favela as Figure: Colonialist Afterlives and Urbanism's Technocratic Aesthetics in 1920s Rio de Janeiro"

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Adrian Anagnost [Tulane University School of Liberal Arts New Orleans]

#2 of the Lecture Series "Organizing Architectures: Coloniality"

10.12.2025, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Auditorium, Deutsches Architekturmuseum Frankfurt

How did the visual and spatial logics of colonial Brazil persist within modern technocratic urbanism? Focusing on Rio de Janeiro's early-20th-century urban reforms and architectural debates, I argue that the favela emerged as a figure through which elites translated colonial hierarchies of order and disorder into modernist form. From the demolition of Morro do Castelo for the 1922 World's Fair to the experimental architectural proposals of Flávio de Carvalho and the critical writings of Mário de Andrade circa 1930, the city became a laboratory for reconciling industrial moder-

nity with nostalgic visions of colonial stability. Rather than a break with colonialism, Brazil's technocratic urbanism recoded the spatial logics of the casa-grande and plantation – hierarchical, paternalist, and racialized – into the visual grammar of modernization. The favela thus became both the symptom and the aesthetic kernel of modern Brazilian urbanism: a site where social inequality was reimagined as a design problem.

“(Zionist) Coloniality under (British) Colonialism: The Architectural and Warfare Modernism of Yohanan (Eugene) Ratner in Mandatory Palestine”

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Alona Nitzan-Shifan [Technion – Israel Institute of Technology Haifa]

#3 of the Lecture Series “Organizing Architectures: Coloniality”

04.02.2026, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Auditorium, Deutsches Architekturmuseum Frankfurt

The proposition to study coloniality as a modernist mode of organizing the ties between the terrain and its inhabitants allows us to set apart the act of settlement from the power of colonial rule. It thus provides a powerful theoretical tool to question the knowledge and expertise Zionists drew on to disperse civic and military settlement as a means of resisting and often undermining the colonial authority of the British Mandate (1922-1948). I address this tension by probing the architectural agency of Yohanan (Eugene) Ratner—an immensely influential and largely forgotten figure, whose expertise and teaching simultaneously modernized the architecture and warfare of the Jewish population in Mandate Palestine. Trained as an architect in Germany and as a soldier in the Imperial Russian Army during W.W.I., in Palestine Ratner accepted a paid job as a formative Dean of the Technion's architectural school, while volunteering to organize and spatialize the military resistance of the Jewish population.

I will argue that Ratner's capacity to reciprocate between architecture and warfare is indebted to the foundation of both in the epistemology of German and Russian modernities. In architecture Ratner is credited with the transition from historicism to modernism in institutional building of “capital A” Architecture. But perhaps his greater influence is in the utilitarian architecture, territorial strategies, and organizational infrastructure that he devised through his non-paid job and have turned into a Zionist modus operandi. This rather invisible architectural-military oeuvre demonstrates how the nascent “forms of dominance” that Ratner envisioned nurtured a coloniality of power that predated rather than (or prior to) outlasting the formal end of European colonialism.

“Architectures of the Archive: Reorganizing Memory and Heritage”

With Contributions by Setareh Noorani [Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam] and Prof. Dr. Sung Hong Kim [University of Seoul] and a Guided Tour through the Exhibition “Out of Storage” with Evelyn Steiner [Curator]

#4 of the Lecture Series “Organizing Architectures: Coloniality”

11.02.2026, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Auditorium, Deutsches Architekturmuseum Frankfurt

This event brings together Sung Hong Kim, Setareh Noorani, and Evelyn Steiner to discuss the politics and poetics of archives, including their exclusions, futures and gaps. Together, they explore how archives can become spaces for negotiation between memory and material, visibility and omission, and the local and the global.

All lectures are held in English.

Reference:

ANN: Lecture series: Organizing Architectures (Frankfurt a.M., 26 Nov 25-11 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 22, 2025 (accessed Apr 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51204>>.