College of Architecture, Art & Planning
Department of Architecture
Arch 3308/6308/4408/6408 Special Topics in Theory of Architecture

Cornell University
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MELANCHOLY AND THE METROPOLIS

Modernity and its Aftermath

FRAME

The industrial revolution of the 19th unleashed a number of forces which disrupted and disaggregated the organic unity of the city. New technological, economic and social constructions threatened the traditional life world in the city. The many urban theories, projects and practices immediately following this period were preoccupied with covering up the loss, trying to restore the organic unity of the city. They, however, rarely dealt with how this traumatic transformation has been experienced by the man of/in the crowd, the flaneur, the ragpicker, the dandy, the beggar, the detective, who were critical of modernity and felt threatened by the accelerated urban development.

Melancholy, as Freud described it, is the inability to come to terms with loss. The goal here is to address the loss, which has been experienced during this traumatic period on the way to modernity and the transformation of the city into the metropolis. It is the intent of the seminar to investigate the effects of these transitions on the city's inhabitants, not as a pathological condition but use melancholy as a refined, reflective emotion with its own qualities. The seminar intents to look how melancholy with its reflective trait found its way into cultural representations in literature, social studies, art, film, urbanism, where melancholy emotions serve as an explanatory model providing additional insight.

Through the lens of the concept of melancholy as the inability to come to terms with loss, the seminar wants to engage the student in a critical assessment of the consequences of the birth of modernity and the metropolis. Key urban phenomena accompanying the birth of the metropolis and their impact on the city and their inhabitants will be investigated.

FORMAT

The seminar consists of eleven sessions. Each session has assigned as well as suggested
readings to be discussed during the session. The assigned readings will be available for the student to download.
Assigned films can be screened during the week before the session they will be discussed.

REQUIREMENTS

To ensure a lively and informed discussion each student is expected to have read the assigned material. Attendance and participation in discussion and debates is mandatory and will be considered in the final grading. In specific:

* For each session the student has to provide a one page synopses of the assigned readings.
* For one seminar session, prepare questions and direct the discussion.
* A final paper of min 2000 words about any topic of the student's choosing in consultation with the instructor or a 'project' using drawing, model, photography, video, film or any other media dealing with one of the seminar topics, to be possibly presented on the last seminar session or in a session after the course