

Architecture, A8905  
Phd Colloquium  
Columbia University  
Spring 2019  
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### Historiography of Modern Architecture: Giedion, Banham, Tafuri

This course is an introduction to the historiography of modern architecture, focusing on the work of three prominent architecture historians who have helped shape our knowledge of twentieth-century architecture: Sigfried Giedion, Reyner Banham, and Manfredo Tafuri. It is hoped that through a study of the work of these three very different historians, students will gain not only a fuller understanding of modern architecture and its historical formation but also a greater understanding the capacities and limits of architecture history as a discipline.

Sigfried Giedion is probably the most renowned of first-generation historians of the modern movement in architecture. A founder and the general secretary of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), he helped create as well as define modern architecture from the late 1920s until his death in 1968. He proclaimed its goals, chronicled its progress, and campaigned for its acceptance, believing that the historian as much as the designer must be actively engaged in creating a new architectural practice. As Tafuri later critically described him, Giedion was an “operative” historian, attempting to contribute to what he perceived as the progressive trajectory of modern architecture; in the history of the past, Giedion believed, the historian must determine a starting point for the future. Trained in the analytic tradition of Germanic art history (Heinrich Wölfflin was his doctoral adviser and Jacob Burckhardt and Alois Riegl were more distant influences), he was steeped in theories of style, psychological notions of empathy and expression, and sweeping historical concepts such as collective will or zeitgeist. While absorbing these tendencies, he departed from them in conceiving of history as having a constituent role in the formation of modernism itself. In his canonical and highly influential text of 1941, Space, Time, and Architecture (which was read by nearly every American architecture student during the three decades following World War II), he interpreted modern architecture as both a product and an embodiment of two major forces: engineering and modern art. Giedion believed that the task of the historian was not only to find the hidden unity in such disparate forces but also—and this became especially urgent to him in his post World War II writings—to overcome the profound splits in modern life and to reconcile spirit and intellect. He sought to create a “new tradition,” which would lead to “a new and balanced life for enormous numbers of men.”

Reyner Banham, whose book Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960) marked a second generation of modern architecture history, might also be called an “operative” historian—one who sought to shape the direction of current practice. And like Giedion (who had initially received a degree in mechanical engineering), he was deeply enamored with engineering and technological change. But unlike Giedion, Banham was skeptical of any sweeping theories of the zeitgeist that might encompass art and technology, and saw modern architecture of the 1920s as more formal, academic, and symbolic than technologically innovative. In this assessment he agreed with his British peers Colin Rowe and Alan Colquhoun, but whereas they embraced this formal and symbolic vision of modernism, seeking to emulate or extend Le Corbusier’s compositional invention, Banham rejected this objective as a direction for modern architecture. Trained in a more empirical British tradition of art history (though a student of the émigré Nikolaus Pevsner) after a stint as an apprentice aeronautical engineer, Banham depended not on the sweeping generalizations of Giedion’s stylistic categories or zeitgeist pronouncements but rather, at least in Theory and Design, on close textual readings, often revealing the gaps between intentions and results in modern architecture that Giedion ignored. As someone writing in post-World War II Britain,

Banham was also deeply interested in mass culture; his populism, in contrast to that of Giedion's more production-oriented vision of modernity, directly confronted (with humor and wit) issues of consumption, advertising, and new forms of entertainment.

Tafuri, whose first version of Architecture and Utopia came out only nine years after Banham's ground-breaking study, might be seen to represent another direction in architecture history, one committed to ideological critique. Deeply influenced by Marxist thought and the intense political climate of the 1960s and early 1970s, Tafuri sought to understand architecture in terms of broader social and economic forces. In contrast to Giedion and Banham, he saw architecture as relatively powerless to shape the future or to change social conditions. Indeed, to the extent that architecture harbored such aspirations it was regressive in its obfuscation of actual political and economic realities. His goal was not a class architecture, but, as he succinctly put it, a "class critique" of architecture. Fredric Jameson compared Tafuri's Architecture and Utopia, in its intensity and intellectual energy, to two other dialectical histories: Theodor Adorno's Philosophy of Modern Music and Roland Barthes's Writing Degree Zero. Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, Tafuri's penetrating analysis of the contradictions and tensions within modern architecture have indelibly marked our understanding of the period and enriched our vision of architectural history. Although he, like many of his generation, largely ignored issues of identity politics and postcolonialism, the very range and depth of his critical inquiry and vigilant self-consciousness about the limits and possibilities of history can be seen as fostering yet another generation of historians, subjecting ever new arenas to ideological scrutiny.

Although it may seem, from the way this course is set up, that there is a natural progression from Giedion to Tafuri, it should be emphasized that the intention is not to view architecture history itself as teleological or always progressive—however much historians should and do build on their predecessors' foundations. For example, Giedion's Mechanization Takes Command, in its attention to material history, everyday life, and the domestic environment, seems more in tune with certain contemporary feminist preoccupations than either Banham's or Tafuri's work. However, Banham's willingness to confront, and even to celebrate commodity culture, allowed him to see its potential in ways that Giedion's humanist idealism or Tafuri's at times censorial Marxism would not permit. Banham's ironic skepticism also seems closer to some contemporary currents than either Giedion's and Tafuri's sweeping convictions. In retrospect, these two historians, despite their extreme differences, appear to share an almost mystical embrace of totality—even if for the former it was founded on an optimistic belief in modern architecture's destiny and for the latter an acutely critical, self-conscious revisionist Marxism premised on ideological demystification.

All three historians have been sharply criticized by succeeding generations. In the 1970s and '80s, Giedion's Space, Time, and Architecture was rejected as simplistic and reductive for ignoring the complexity and diversity of modernism and for being ideologically naïve. The Right attacked its utopian faith in modern architecture; the Left, its failure to elucidate modern architecture's own complicity in the political and social events of the preceding years. Banham's Theory and Design, which did so much to redress Giedion's reductive assumptions about modernism—for example, that functionalism resulted in functional architecture—was also condemned by postmodern theorists for its uncritical embrace of technology as a panacea. Tafuri's work, which from its inception was controversial (and berated by architects and theorists alike for its pessimism and "closure"), has in the past twenty years been challenged by a new generation of leftist historians for its failure to confront issues of oppression beyond economics and class. Yet to focus only on the shortcomings of these historical approaches would be a mistake. At this point, such judgments are probably less interesting than analyzing the social and cultural parameters that each historian brought to bare on his work. In examining the historiography of modern architecture, we move closer to understanding the history of architectural modernism itself. This more contextual—and more constructive—reading of their work also provides us deeper insight into our own

discipline. Whatever their limits, both intellectual and historical, each of these figures in his own way opened up new avenues of research and intellectual pursuit. At the risk of being “operative,” we might say (paraphrasing Giedion’s project) that in the history of the past, new directions for future historical work can be found.

#### Requirements:

Students have the choice of writing either three essays (approximately 5-6 pages), one on each section, or one longer paper (approximately 18-20 pages), on a topic directly related to the assigned readings. The longer paper is to be presented in class. A draft of this paper should be given to the instructor for comments at least a week before the presentation in class. The final written version of this paper is due during exam week. Students are encouraged to exchange their papers with fellow classmates for critical commentary. All papers are to be double-spaced and follow the guidelines in the Chicago Manual of Style (Columbia’s doctoral dissertation style). In addition, each student will be responsible for leading the discussion of an assigned reading approximately every other week.

#### Class Structure:

The class will be divided into three sections, devoted to Giedion, Banham, and Tafuri. The emphasis will be on close textual readings of primary texts, which will be discussed in seminar. Specialists on individual topics have been invited to come to make informal presentations on topics related to the seminar.

#### Readings:

Most readings will be available at the reserve desk or a designated seminar shelf (t.b.a.). Books marked with an \* in the reading list below are available for purchase at Book Culture. Many out-of-print books can also be purchased on line, and some students may wish to purchase earlier editions of Giedion’s books for purposes of comparison. All readings indicated for a particular class should be done in advance of that class.

#### Part I: Sigfried Giedion

##### Week 1 Introduction

Detlef Mertins, “Siegfried Giedion,” Encyclopedia of Aesthetics (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 301-304.

\*Panayotis Tournikiotis, The Historiography of Modern Architecture (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 1-49. Note: I am assigning this text, despite my own criticisms of its structuralist methodology, because, it provides a useful overview.

##### Week 2

\*Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art, trans. M.D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950), pp. 1-32, 62-72, 115-23, 221-37.

Heinrich Wölfflin, “On Right and Left in Images,” trans. Marlo Alexandra Burks, Grey Room, no. 73 (Fall 2018): 88–95.

Sokratis Georgiadis, Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography, trans. Colin Hall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 1-33.

Joan Hart, “Heinrich Wölfflin,” Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, ed. Michael Kelly (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 4, pp. 472-76.

Zeynep Çelik, “Looking: Wölfflin’s Comparative Vision,” in Kinaesthetic Knowing: Aesthetics, Epistemology, Modern Design (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 63–96.

For those students who read German:

Sigfried Giedion, Spätbarocker und romantischer (Munich: Bruckman, 1922), passim.

Recommended:

\*Michael Podro, The Critical Historians of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 98-151. The chapter of Alois Riegl (pp. 71-97) is also informative.

### Week 3

Sigfried Giedion, Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferro-Concrete, intro. Sokratis Georgiadis, trans. J. Duncan Barry (Santa Monica, Ca.: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1995). (Unfortunately, this book is out-of-print but used copies can be found online.) Georgiadis, Sigfried Giedion, pp. 35-70.

\*Reto Geiser, Giedion and America: Repositioning the History of Modern Architecture (Zurich: gta Verlag, ETH, 2018), pp. 73-135.

\* Sigfried Giedion, Befreites Wohnen (Zürich and Leipzig: Orell Füssli, 1929), trans. as Liberated Dwelling, ed. Reto Geiser (Lars Müller, 2019).

### Week 4

\*Sigfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of A New Tradition, 5th ed. (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. v-x, pp. 1-41, 107-21, 155-71, 211-28 (recommended 229-90), 292-316, 430-98, 518-44, 585-600, 816-23, 845-56, 872-81. Note: Students should also compare the fifth and last edition to earlier editions, especially the first one of 1940.

Detlef Mertins, "Anything but Literal: Sigfried Giedion and the Reception of Cubism in Germany," in Modernity Unbound: Other Histories of Architectural Modernity, Architecture Words 7 (London: AA Publications, 2011), pp. 24-61. (This book is not available at Book Culture, but can be ordered online either from Amazon or the Architectural Association.)

Recommended:

Sigfried Giedion, "History and the Architect," Zodiac 1 (1957): 53-61.

Georgiadis, pp. 97-150.

\*Geiser, Giedion and America, pp.139-70.

Detlef Mertins, "System and Freedom: Sigfried Giedion, Emil Kaufmann and the Constitution of Architectural Modernity," in Autonomy and Ideology: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in America, 1923-1949, ed. Robert Somol (New York: Monacelli, 1997), pp. 212-31.

### Week 5

Sigfried Giedion, "The Need for a New Monumentality," 1943, in Paul Zucker, ed., New Architecture and City Planning (1944).

Sigfried Giedion, Fernand Léger, J.L. Sert, "Nine Points on Monumentality," 1943, in Architecture, You and Me (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 48-52; rpt. in Joan Ockman with Edward Eigen, eds., Architecture Culture (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 27-30.

\*Sigfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 2-50, 77-79, 96-127, 209-13, 240-46, 258-66, 309-28, 347-85, 482-527, 612-27, 628, 706-12, 714-23, and all illustrations.

Georgiadis, pp. 153-93.

Other Readings: Sigfried Giedion

Juan Pablo Bonta, Architecture and Its Interpretation: A Study of Expressive Systems in Architecture (London: Lund Humphries, 1979), p. 238.

Kenneth Frampton, "Sigfried Giedion" in On the Methodology of Architectural History, ed. Demetri Porphyrios, Special Issue, Architectural Design 51, nos. 6-7 (London, 1981), pp. 45-52..

Sigfried Giedion, Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of a Development (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958).

Sigfried Giedion, "Les CIAM-L'histoire de 25 ans d'activité des CIAM c'est l'histoire même de l'architecture moderne des 25 dernières années" in L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, no. 113/114; Eng. trans. in Ekistics, vol. 19 (1964).

Paul Hofer and Ulrich Stucky, eds., Hommage à Giedion--Profile seiner Persönlichkeit (Basel/Stuttgart: Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur and Birkhäuser, 1971).

Spiro Kostof, "Architecture, You and Him--The Mark of Sigfried Giedion" in Daedalus, no. 105, no. 1 (1976), pp. 189-204.

Detlef Mertins, "Anything but Literal: Sigfried Giedion and the Reception of Cubism in Germany," in Nancy Troy and Eve Blau, ed., Architecture and Cubism (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1997).

Detlef Mertins, Transparencies Yet to Come: Sigfried Giedion and the Prehistory of Architectural Modernity (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996). Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, "The Canon of Architectural History," in The History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture, Papers from the 1964 AIA-ACSA Teacher Seminar, Cranbrook, ed. Marcus Whiffen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965).

Nikolaus Pevsner, "Judges VI, 34: But the Spirit of the Lord Came upon Gideon and He Blew a Trumpet," Architectural Review 106 (August 1949), pp. 77-79.

Sigfried Giedion: A History Project. Special Issue of Rassegna 25 (March 1986), esp. article by Stanislaus von Moos, pp. 6-17.

David Watkin, Morality and Architecture: The Development of a Theme in Architectural History and Theory from the Gothic Revival to the Modern Movement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

David Watkin, The Rise of Architectural History (London: Architectural Press; Westfield, N.J.: Eastview Editions, 1980).

Paul Zucker, "The Paradox of Architectural Theories at the Beginning of the Modern Movement," Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians 10, no. 3 (September 1951), pp. 8-14.

## Part II: Reyner Banham

### Week 1

Tournikiotis, The Historiography of Modern Architecture, pp. 145-66.

\*Nigel Whiteley, Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 4-76.

\*Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), pp. 9-138.

\*Anthony Vidler, "Futurist Modernism: Reyner Banham," in Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 107-25.

Recommended:

Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius (London: Pelican, 1974). Note: Pevsner was Banham's dissertation adviser, and it is interesting to compare their two approaches. Even a quick glance at the images and chapter titles is informative.

### Week 2

Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, pp. 139-330.

Recommended:

Alan Colquhoun, "The Modern Movement in Architecture," British Journal of Aesthetics (January 1962), pp. 59-62; rpt. in Alan Colquhoun, Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 21-25.

### Week 3

Whiteley, Reyner Banham, pp. 80-185.

Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," Architectural Review 118 (December 1955), pp. 354-61; rpt. in \*Mary Banham et al, eds. A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 7-15.

Reyner Banham, "A Home is Not a House," Art in America (April 1965), pp. 109-18; rpt. in Ockman with Eigen, Architecture Culture, pp. 370-78. Please read the original version as original includes illustrations by François Dallegret.

Reyner Banham, "The Great Gizmo," Industrial Design (September 1965).

Vidler, "Futurist Modernism: Reyner Banham," pp. 125-40.

#### Week 4

Whiteley, Reyner Banham, pp. 186-410.

\*Reyner Banham, The Architecture of the Well Tempered Environment (1969; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 11-44, 93-170, 265-90.

\*Reyner Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies (1971; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Introduction by Anthony Vidler, excerpts, or Vidler, "Futurist Modernism: Reyner Banham," pp. 140-55.

#### Other Readings: Reyner Banham and his circle

Reyner Banham, The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic? (London: Architectural Press, 1966).

Reyner Banham, Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

Alison and Peter Smithson, Without Rhetoric: An Architectural Aesthetic 1955-1972 (London: Latimer New Dimensions, 1973).

Reyner Banham, A Concrete Atlantis: U. S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture, 1900-1925 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

Jonathan E. Farnham, "Pure Pop for New People: Reyner Banham, Science Fiction, and History," Lotus 104 (2000), 112-31.

Robert Maxwell, "Reyner Banham: The Plenitude of Presence," Architectural Design 51, nos. 6/7 (1981), pp. 52-57.

Robert Maxwell, "Banham—Historian," "Banham—Man," in Sweet Disorder and the Carefully Careless: Theory and Criticism in Architecture (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Papers on Architecture; New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), pp. 163-89.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, "An Overestimation of Theory," review of Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, by Reyner Banham, Progressive Architecture (April 1961): 200, 204.

Alison and Peter Smithson, "The New Brutalism," in Ockman, Architecture Culture 1943-1968, pp. 240-41,

#### Part III: Manfredo Tafuri

##### Week 1

\*Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 220-38.

\*Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 217-64.

Giulio Carlo Argan, "Architecture and Ideology," 1957 in Architecture Culture 1943-1968 (New York: Rizzoli/Columbia Books on Architecture, 1993), pp. 253-59.

##### Week 2

\*Manfredo Tafuri, Theories and Histories of Architecture (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), Introduction, chaps. 1-3; opt. chaps. 4-6.

Giorgio Ciucci, "The Formative Years"; Alberto Asor Rosa, "Critique of Ideology and Historical Practice"; Françoise Very interviews Manfredo Tafuri, "The Culture Markets," orig. 1976; Yve-Alain Bois, "Tafuri in the Labyrinth," orig. 1977; Casabella, year 59, nos. 619-62 (January/February 1995), pp. 12-25, 37-45. 155-59.

Recommended:

Luisa Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri, Any, no. 25/26, pp. 10–70. Jean-Louis Cohen, "La Coupure entre architectes et intellectuels, ou les enseignements de l'italophilie," In Extenso (Paris: Direction de l'Architecture et le Ministre de l'Industrie et de la Recherche depuis 1972, 1977).

Titia Rxt Hoekstra, Building versus Bildung: Manfredo Tafuri and the Construction of a Historical Discipline, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Groningen, 2005. Available on line <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/ppn/283596589> . This is useful for general background

\*Marco Biraghi, Progetto di crisi: Manfredo Tafuri e l'architettura contemporanea (Milan: Marinotti, 2005), trans. by Alta Price as Project as Crisis: Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013).

### Week 3

\*Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Mass. 1990), chaps. 1-4.

Recommended:

Tomas Llorens, "Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History," in On the Methodology of Architectural History, ed. Demetri Porphyrios, Special Issue, Architectural Design 51, nos. 6-7 (London, 1981), pp. 83-95.

### Week 4

Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia, chaps. 5-8.

Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in Architecture Criticism Ideology, eds. Joan Ockman et al, Revisions (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), pp. 51-87; rpt. in The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, vol. 2: Syntax of History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 35-60.

### Week 5

Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), pp. 3-17, 199-211. (While these short excerpts hardly do the book justice, they should introduce the reader to the issue of "discourse" as understood by Foucault.)

Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

\*Manfredo Tafuri, Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), intro., chaps. 1, 3, 8.

Recommended:

Pietro Corsi interviews Manfredo Tafuri, "For a Historical History," Casabella, pp. 145-51.

\*Carlo Ginzburg, Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), introduction.

Manfredo Tafuri, "Architettura e storiografia: Una proposta di metodo," Arte Veneta 29 (1975), pp. 276-81. This essay lays out some of the ideas that Tafuri would later develop in the "The Historical 'Project'" and a comparison of these two texts might be an interesting subject for a short essay. Another possibility would be to translate this essay.

Other Readings: Manfredo Tafuri

“Being Manfredo Tafuri,” Any, no. 25/26 (2000).

Joan Ockman, “Venezia e New York/Venice and New York,” Casabella, pp. 56-71.

Andrew Leach, Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing History (Ghent: A&S/books, 2007).

Helène Lipstadt and Harvey Mendelsohn, “Philosophy, History, and Autobiography: Manfredo Tafuri and the ‘Unsurpassed Lesson’ of Le Corbusier,” Assemblage, no. 22 (December 1993), pp. 58-103.

\*Anthony Vidler, “Renaissance Modernism: Manfredo Tafuri,” in Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 157–87.