100 Years of Cubism

It is now a century since Picasso and Braque began the astonishing seven years of exploration that created cubism. ‘Roped together like mountaineers’, they led each other on further into a radical decomposition of pictorial form that revolutionised not only painting, but the paradigm of space as the symbolising faculty at the essence of architecture. Already emergent in theories of psychology and perception, this new paradigm was crystallized by Cubism, and catalysed in turn a series of translations - summarised by El Lissitzky in his 1922 book “The Isms of Art” - into a new architectural language.

This course follows the evolution of that language through theories and practices of space and form, from the appearance of the open plan in the 1920s, the influence of Gestalt psychology on critical design in Colin Rowe and Robert Venturi, the acute dissection of ‘deconstruction’ by Robin Evans in his chapter ‘Persistent Breakage’ in his book “The Projective Cast”, to the recent emergence of folded topologies in architectural form which, while seeming new, in fact revisit, through the virtuosity of digital media, paradoxes of spatial continuity that, hinted in Piranesi, were first given theoremic exposition in cubism.

Lectures

1. The Moment of Cubism
2. Space and Relief
3. The Isms of Translation
4. Space, Time, & ‘4D’
5. Figure, Ground, & Gestalt
6. Rowe: Mannerism, Transparency & Collage
7. Persistent Breakage
8. Topology, or Curviplanar Cubism

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