Architecture is a spatial practice and architects are creators of space – this is still one of the most pervasive beliefs when defining the discipline. And yet, this has historically not always been the case; the discourse of space and spatiality as ‘natural’ properties of architecture only enters the field in the last decade of the 19th Century and it is with the rise of modernism that the two become inseparable. Even as the second half of 20th Century saw a succession of developments both in the critique of this notion and the creation of various ‘other’ understandings of space, it appears impossible to speak of architecture (as well as practice it, or visually represent it) without referring to its spatial aspects. Paradoxically, this is never more so than in the cases when architectural theory invites concepts like time and event into the equation – which come, more often than not, as conceptual tools for redefining space itself. This lecture series looks at some canonical texts concerning the various definitions of the term in order to show the variety and richness of potential interpretations, and their use outside the realm of philosophy proper and in the arena of architectural theory.

1 Adrian Forty
   ‘Space’ (1999)

   The first lecture looks at Forty’s text, which explains the origins of architectural interest in the concept of space. Forty discusses a number of key late 19th Century texts, and theorists who introduced the notion of architecture as a spatial practice. Forty’s text serves as a starting point from which to bring about a series of possible takes on space.

2 Henri Lefebvre
   From The Production of Space (1974)

   This session tackles one of the more influential figures in the study of space, Henri Lefebvre, and his seminal work The Production of Space, which would have influenced a number of later additions to the discourse. Lefebvre’s text discusses relevant examples from the history of architecture in order to clarify his proposition that space is the result of very specific production processes.

3 Michel Foucault
   ‘Panopticism’ (1975)

   Foucault’s text establishes an understanding of space that relates knowledge to power and locates the two in the architectural arena through the discussion of Jeremy Bentham’s ideal prison proposals. It shows how social paradigms of power relations find their spatial and architectural manifestations, and how particular spatial configurations and their architectural equivalents lead to the construction of specific conditions within the social field.

4 Robin Evans
   ‘Figures, Doors and Passages’ (1978)
Evans’ text shows another angle on the relationship between society and space by discussing the creation of corridors in English domestic architecture, proposing that they were the result of changing social conditions and new lifestyles. Evans’ discussion of the architectural plan illuminates the connection between space and the ‘invisible’ world of social forces, which result in formal and spatial solutions. This session also touched on the question of spatial representation.

5
Michel De Certeau
‘Spatial Stories’ (1984)

Moving away from the more static concepts of space, de Certeau introduces the notion of narrative space, space of storytelling, and the way it relates to lived spatial experiences. The examples de Certeau discusses also relate to the notion of spatial representation, showing a historical shift in the ways of constructing maps, as objectifying, scientific representations of knowledge of the world.

6
Beatriz Colomina
‘The Split Wall’ (1992)

Colomina’s text concerns itself with domestic space, the setting up of interpersonal exchanges through the design of modernist interiors (examples of Loos and Le Corbusier); it also deals with the gendering of space – the way it cannot be seen as neutral, independent of social categories. The concept of the gaze, commonly utilised through its psychoanalytic interpretation, is used here to illuminate spatial issues.

7
Anthony Vidler
‘Dark Space’ (1992)

Vidler’s text takes Freudian interpretations of the relationship between space and psyche, as developed through the concept of the uncanny. It relates space to perception through the notions of light and dark (in) architecture, charting out a history of the meaning of transparency and its ramifications on architecture, while offering a partial critique of approaches such as Foucault’s regarding the relationship between space and vision.

8
Doreen Massey
‘Space/Representation’ (2002)

The lecture series ends with Massey’s text, which brings back one of the recurring questions in the history of spatial theories: the relationship between space and time. By showing the progression of enquiry into time and duration throughout the 20th Century, Massey indicates potential problems with the construction of overly simplified concepts of space, championing the revival of its currency in the contemporary critical discourse.


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Filmography (recommended):

Blade Runner (The Director's Cut) (1982), dir. Ridley Scott
Blow Up (1966), dir. Michelangelo Antonioni,
Code Unknown (2000), dir. Michael Haneke
Dark City (1998), dir. Alex Proyas,
La Dolce Vita (1961), dir. Federico Fellini
Elephant (2003), dir. Gus Van Sant
Ghost in the Shell (1995), dir. Mamoru Oshii
La Haine (1995), dir. Mathieu Kassovitz
Last Year at Marienbad (1962), dir. Alain Resnais
London (1993), dir. Patrick Keiller
The Man with the Movie Camera (1929), dir. Dziga Vertov
Metropolis (1927), dir. Fritz Lang
Panic Room (2002), dir. David Fincher
The Passing (1981), dir. Bill Viola
Playtime (1967), dir. Jacques Tati
Rear Window (1954), dir. Alfred Hitchcock
Sans Soleil (Sunless), dir. Chris Marker (1982)

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