

# HISTORIA DEL ARTE Y LA ARQUITECTURA

## ORNAMENT AS A BATTLEFIELD

### ORNAMENT, CRIME AND ARCHITECTURE / DRAWING, PHOTOGRAPHY, POPULAR MEDIA, AND ARCHITECTURE: GAUDÍ, LOOS, LE CORBUSIER, MIES

#### Introduction

The course will try to link together some of the fundamental topics of modern architecture, which have to do with its expressive capacities and its possibilities of representation.

It will be based on the study of a series of oppositions that have been essential in the history of modern architecture from the times of its foundation and realization --between the last years of the 19th Century and the first ones of the 20th.

The famous article --interpreted by the contemporaries as a manifesto- written by Adolf Loos circa 1908, "Ornament and Crime", will constitute the key around which the lessons will be developed.

The title of this article has been much quoted --as much as it has been misunderstood, or simply not read. We can say actually that this fundamental and foundational text is --more than 100 years after its publication- still largely unknown but, paradoxically, very influent, even today. We are interested in this paradox.

From our point of view the "merit" of this article is that it was able to link architecture with its great enemy: a modernity that no longer needs the traditional eloquence of architecture, precisely --that is to say that doesn't need ornament in the broad sense that Alberti and other classic authors gave it, but only self publicity --the modern succedaneum or alibi of eloquence-, mainly based in photography --and more particularly published and manipulated photography.

We will study some of the most notable and contradictory cases of interpretation of the binomial "ornamentation-desornamentation" through the work of Gaudí, Loos, Le Corbusier and Mies, and under the light --black light, of course- of "Ornament and Crime".

#### Structure

The lessons will be "master's lessons" divided in two parts. In the first one the professor will present a topic --as indicated in the schedule below. In the second one a debate between the professor and students will be open, starting on the base of the topic of the day and of the readings proposed for the occasion --see also the schedule. The involvement of students in this dialogue will be valued as part of the course qualification.

**Absolute punctuality, assistance, and participation are required for ALL lessons.**

**Failure to attend lessons will subtract points from the final qualification.**

#### Requirements

Read all assigned texts (you will find them in **Atenea**).

Prepare summaries, questions for all texts in view of debates in class.

The bibliography on Gaudi, Loos, Mies and Le Corbusier is more than huge, and very known.

Research buildings and authors, and their architectural-artistic-literary context, by **reading**

**background texts** --you are not limited to the basic texts proposed in the program and should feel free to share additional comments, bibliography, etc., with the class.

BE CURIOUS, look around, find a building, author, books, magazines you want to study and research it thoroughly.

You should present your topic in class and lead class discussion.

## **Class schedule**

01. Presentation

02/04. Gaudí and ornament / Gaudí and matter / Gaudí, caricature, and revolution

05/07. Loos, ornament, and crime / Loos, modern architecture, and classic models

08/10. Le Corbusier and monumental city / Le Corbusier, architecture, prehistory, and primitivism / Le Corbusier and colonialist ideology

11/13. Mies and photography / Mies and advertisement / Mies and popular media

14. Conclusions

\* Depending on the number of participants, changes in the schedule could be considered.

\* Some lessons could be developed as visits to archives, exhibitions, and museums, related to the topics of the course.

## **Basic bibliography [see Atenea]**

Gaudí Readings:

- Jules Godefroy, "An intransigent press on the occasion of the 1910 Salon", 1910 (fragments)
- Guillaume Apollinaire, "Gaudí", 1914 (fragments)
- Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Introduction to *Gaudí*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1957.
- Bennett Schiff, "In the Art Galleries", *New York Post*, January 5, 1958.

Loos Readings:

- Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime", c.1908
- Adolf Loos, "Architecture", 1910

Le Corbusier Readings:

- Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*, 1922
- Ozenfant, "Introduction" to *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1931.

Mies Readings:

- Mies van der Rohe, "Manifestos, Texts and Lectures", in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word. Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, 1991.