

ARCH 4204-5204: Learning from Los Angeles: The Architecture of Seven Ecologies (Part 2)



Learning from LA: *The Architecture of Seven Ecologies (part 2)*

Leclerc/Spring 2019

Since early XX century, Los Angeles has been a dynamic place for different kinds of cultural, artistic and architectural experimentation. From the early twentieth-century regional modernist architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, and Rudolf Schindler to the second generation of LA modernists that culminated with the Case Study Houses Program in the 1950s. This experimental tradition has continued and evolved over the last decades producing some of the most innovative forms of contemporary popular culture, visual arts and architecture. Interestingly, also Los Angeles has been the stage for some of the most devastating urban riots in recent US history, endemic gang violence, pervasive police brutality, and chronic homelessness, all these urban problems get exacerbated by the environmental fragility of the region, always vulnerable to unpredictable fires, earthquakes and tsunamis.

This research seminar will explore the different historical, cultural and physical forces that have made Los Angeles a paradigmatic place for social and cultural experimentation. This seminar will also further explore and analyze the permutations of artistic, architectural and popular culture in contemporary Los Angeles as influenced by three major cultural streams: historic progressive California ethos, Mexican and Chicano (Mexican American) Culture, and diverse Pacific Rim Immigrant cultures. We will focus our inquiries on cultural forms and practices that: *1) have predictive qualities of future creative expressions in Los Angeles as related to architecture; and 2) reflect the emergent hybrid condition of Los Angeles culture.*

Based on demographic information, we can discern that, the fact, L.A. is the most Latinized American metropolis in this country. This Latinization process is closely connected to the South, to Latin America, particularly to Mexico. From this perspective, we will look at the Los Angeles/Southern California region as a type of macro-frontier that extends beyond the US-Mexico borderline, this liminal space has created a dynamic *postborder* cultural corridor from Los Angeles to Tijuana with its own unique spatial, cultural and artistic permutations and forms.

Using Rayner Banham's seminal work *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* we will attempt to re-write, up-date and expand LA's contemporary ecologies. For our purposes, we will understand ecology as a dynamic hybrid field that comprises three juxtaposed conditions: 1) an environmental/geographic condition; 2) a cultural/social condition; and 3) an imaginary/representational condition.

LA's Contemporary Ecologies:

- I) The Beaches
- II) The Hills
- III) The Flatlands
- IV) Downtown(s)
- V) The Republics of East LA
- VI) The LA River
- VII) The *Macrofrontier* (The Border and The *Postborder*)

As key part of the research process we will conduct a field trip to Los Angeles during Spring break.