Architecture, Gender, Technology: Feminist Design Power-Tools
KTH Critical Studies in Architecture Elective Seminar

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This seminar and series of workshops delivered to Masters of Architecture and FEX (further education) students is dedicated to examining the relationship between architecture, gender, and technology, with an emphasis on exploring feminist design methodologies. Participants will be introduced to topical concepts and arguments drawn from architectural and feminist theories as well as from contemporary philosophies, in order to address the intersection between architecture, gender and technology. This seminar will examine how we can rethink technology beyond an emphasis on the high-tech or latest state of the art invention, and understand instead how technology contributes to the very definition of what it is to be ‘human’ and how we can think the ‘posthuman’ potentialities of the human. Our discussions will be set amidst contemporary research into the anthropocene (a new name given to the global environmental transformations of our current geological age, said to have been produced in the aftermath of the industrial revolution); the relation of the ‘posthuman’ to technology via the cyborg (cybernetic organism) and cross-species or ‘non-human’ encounters; the rise of the experience economy as part of our everyday hyper-consumerist condition; and the issue of ‘societies of control’ whereby our movements, habits and even our tastes come to be monitored and molded. As part of our methodology we will explore how to productively transfer concepts constructed in feminist theory and philosophy into both analytical and practical use in architectural design and thinking. We will ask, How, as feminist practitioners, might we reclaim an expanded sense of technology for our own design research? The organisational themes we will address will include: things and objects; containers and matter; networks and agents; machines and prostheses; noopolitics and information.

Through the use of text and instructional diagrams, inspired by precedent practices and concepts, participants will be asked to develop a a story-book of posthuman environment-worlds that explore alternative understandings of technology. This story-book approach is inspired by Jakob von Uexküll’s essay from the 1930s A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans, where the semiotic biologist constructs idiosyncratic scenes to show what different individuals perceive to be of importance and value in their local environment-worlds (umwelten). To undertake our work we will be using a seminar blog, where readings and participant responses will be disseminated: See http://archandphil.wordpress.com/

Masters elective seminar students (3 credits)

FEX students (7.5 credits)
Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Close reading of theoretical texts as they pertain to feminist theories in architecture and art
- Ability to identify key concepts, discuss and analyse key arguments pertaining to connections between feminist theories and practices in architecture and art
- Ability to verbally and graphically present research conducted in response to literature and class discussion
- Ability to enter into high level discussion with peers concerning course literature and practice examples from art and architecture
- Synthesise their own critical response to course literature and seminar discussion by creating image and text responses that will be presented in the format of a ‘fanzine’ or image and text ‘story-book’.

GENERIC course objectives for elective seminars:
(http://www.kth.se/student/kurser/kurs/A42SEH?l=en)

A student who has completed this course should be able to:

- Analyse concepts, artefacts or processes using some of the tools that characterise a research practice
- Present a critical analysis of a given text or design artefact or built environment
- Argue and present findings and results using texts, images, designs and/or prototypes

READINGS

01 Introduction: Posthuman Landscapes and the Anthropocene


J.K. Gibson-Graham, 'A Feminist Project of Belonging for the Anthropocene', in Gender, Place and Culture, 18.01, 2011, pp. 1-21.

FURTHER READING:


**REFERENCE TEXT for Posthuman Landscapes STORYBOOK EXERCISE:**


**02 Things and Objects**


**FURTHER READING:**


**03 Containers and Matter**

Katie Lloyd Thomas, 'Going into the Mould' in *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 144, July/August 2007, pp. 16-25.


**FURTHER READING:**


**Interior architectural example of the ‘Frankfurt Kitchen’:**


**04 Networks and Agents**


**FURTHER READING**


**05 Machines and Prostheses**


**FURTHER READING:**


**06 Noopolitics and Information**


**FURTHER READING:**


**07 Conclusion**

In the concluding seminar Posthuman Landscapes Storybooks will be presented.

**General Readers on Gender, Technology, 'New Materialism':**


INSTRUCTIONS

Meeting 01 Posthuman Landscapes and the Anthropocene
1. Based on the seminar readings and seminar discussions provisionally define what a ‘posthuman landscape’ might be. You may find that your definition needs to be revised as we proceed through the seminar meetings. Select a site that can be framed in terms of the concept of a ‘posthuman landscape’. Such a site should be situated in relation to our relatively new geologic age that has come to be called the ‘anthropocene’ (see J.K. Gibson-Graham). Furthermore, ‘site’ here should be conceived in an expanded sense; it is not necessarily a conventionally defined ‘architectural site’. While your site might be discovered in your local neighbourhood, you might also draw on a ‘scene’ from an influential movie; or a setting in a novel; you might respond to an artist’s body of work; or you might choose to focus on a site that directly relates to your current design research or interests. While a ‘posthuman landscape’ suggests a large-scale site, it may be a site of any scale from the macro to the microscopic.

Meeting 02 Things and Objects
2. Select a ‘technological’ thing or object that has some relation to your ‘site’. Assume an expanded sense of what a technological object or thing might be; a definition that goes beyond the idea of machines or engineering feats. Based on your readings, reflect upon whether a difference can be determined between objects and things? When you choose your object or thing imagine how it can be discussed or even retrofitted as a ‘feminist design power tool’.

Meeting 03 Containers and Matter
3. Select a container and/or discuss a material specification or a material relation as a means to further situate and discuss your selected ‘posthuman landscape’. Matter here turns out to be something that is quite lively, and may even exhibit an agency of its own. Containers such as bowls, plumbing, bottles, even houses, are the kinds of technologies that we take for granted when we place an emphasis instead on projectile technologies such as cars, planes, rockets and also various war machines (see Zoe Sofia).

Meeting 04 Networks and Agents
4. Diagram a network in which your technological thing or object operates. How is a network different from a ‘site’? What is the relation between network and site? Does your thing or object operate as an ‘agent’ in the network that makes your site operational? What relations and effects does your thing or object procure in its network in relation to its site?

Meeting 05 Machines and Prostheses
5. Now step back and reconsider how your ‘posthuman landscape’ and things (or objects) operate together like a machine and its parts: parts in relations to other parts in relation to the operation of the assemblage as a whole. This week we will discuss how quickly technology becomes integrated into the daily habits of the
human actor, becoming a ‘prosthesis’ that supports (and also inhibits) the functioning of a body. Is the (anthropocene) body more organism or more machine, or a hybrid of both? The term ‘cyborg’ as discussed by Donna Haraway will be a useful concept-tool here.

Meeting 06 Noopolitics and Information
6. Yet another aspect of the ‘posthuman landscape’ and the things (or objects) that populate it, also the networks formed across such milieus, and the role of machinic relations, is the way information is circulated. Noopolitics is a key term in relation to information. It is a concept that describes how minds (nous: noo) in the information age often enter into unwitting collaboration, which manifests, for instance, as local and global market trends, the predictability of consumer behavior, and even the increasingly predictable modes of inhabitation that are performed in urban contexts.

Meeting 07 Conclusion
7. This week is when your posthuman landscape comes together. All seminar participants will share their discoveries through the presentation of a draft of a posthuman landscapes and things storybook. Each presenter will be paired with a respondent who will have read the work before it is presented, and who will be prepared to offer critical and constructive feedback.

TASKS and ASSESSMENTS

01::PART ONE: 50% Discussion and BLOG activity (30% for FEX students)

A Every week in response to the given readings you will be requested to submit a diagram-image-drawing and text BLOG post (to be uploaded to the BLOG before class). The diagram-image-drawing should relate to a specific ‘posthuman landscape’ that you are interested in examining, and how it has been produced through diverse (human) technologies. Here ‘posthuman’ can be broadly understood to mean anything that follows in the aftermath of (wo)man’s impact on the environment in natural or cultural (constructed) settings. It will be helpful if you have a specific ‘landscape’ or context in mind that you can direct your readings towards, for instance, it might be a context that is relevant to your design research in your current design studio, and even though it is described here as a ‘landscape’, it can be large or small scale, interior or exterior. You will also be required to write a 300-500 word response to the weekly reading. You should offer a brief summary of the weekly reading as well as your critical and creative response in relation to the specific ‘posthuman landscape’ you have chosen to study. Be sure to upload your image and text before each seminar! We will use your BLOG posts during our seminars as an inspiration and prompt for group discussion. The set of diagrams-images-drawings and text responses will be developed toward an posthuman landscapes and things story-book, which can also have an instructional quality or be used as an activity book by others. A final draft of this story-book will be presented
at the final seminar. The key inspiration for our storybook will be drawn from Jakob von Uexküll’s *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* (available as a pdf in your seminar readings). **BLOG posts must be uploaded by 17.00 Tuesdays before seminar meetings.**

**B.** Every week you will post a comment on at least one other blog post that has been uploaded by one of your peers. Due **before** seminar commences on Wednesdays at 14.00. Please draft these in a separate file and collect your comments, as they will be submitted at the end of the term.

**To be uploaded on the discussion link of our**
**BLOG: [http://archandphil.wordpress.com/category/02_discussion/](http://archandphil.wordpress.com/category/02_discussion/)**

**AND presented each week in class.**

**02::PART TWO: 50% Posthuman Landscapes and Things Story-Book (for feminist practitioners)**

You will develop your responses to the weekly readings as an interactive storybook, to be uploaded as a pdf file to ISSUU: [www.issuu.com/ArchandPhil](http://www.issuu.com/ArchandPhil) (login will be supplied in class) and then embedded in the **Projects** category of the archandphil BLOG.

**Your Posthuman Story-Book must include:**

1. a title page, and don’t forget your name!

2. Contents page listing 6 chapters, one dedicated to each weekly reading, as well as introduction, conclusion and bibliography.

3. a brief introductory essay that explains how you have organised your booklet and which introduces your key discoveries

4. Revised responses to each of the weekly readings, as well as revised images (based on feedback)

5. A brief 300 word conclusion that reflects on what you have discovered in the course

6. A bibliography where you should include not only all the references you have made to the readings (and whatever other references you have found useful), but also references to any appropriated imagery or creative projects you might have used from architecture, art, film, literature, or other disciplines and sources. The booklet needs to use appropriate references, such as endnotes or footnotes or in text referencing throughout (the main thing is to choose a referencing style and be consistent).
7. Addendum: where you include comments you have made to your peers throughout the term.

To be compiled and completed in draft form as an A4 Instructional manual for presentation on Wednesday 03 December 2014. Final draft to be submitted to ISSUU and embedded in our seminar blog by Friday 12 December 2014).

03::PART THREE: additional exercise for FEX students (20%)

As a FEX student, you will be expected to attend three Architecture, Gender, Technology workshop events. Individually or in pairs you will be asked to interview a Swedish architect about their understanding of the relationship between architecture, gender and technology.
Architecture+Gender: Introduction SCHEDULE

A: Seminars - Wednesdays 14.00-16.00: September 24; October 1, 15; November 12, 19, 26; December 3 in Seminar Room: A3 KTH Architecture

B: Workshops - We also offer 3 workshops (mandatory for FEX students taking the course, optional for architecture elective students) See below

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<th>SCHEDULE</th>
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<td>Seminar Room A3 KTH School of Architecture Östermalmsgatan 26</td>
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<th>SEMINARS 14.00-16.00</th>
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<td>24 September (note FEX students will meet at earlier at 13.00)</td>
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<td>INTRODUCTION: Posthuman Landscapes and the Anthropocene</td>
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<td>1 October</td>
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<td>machines and prostheses</td>
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<td>26 November</td>
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<td>noopolitics and information</td>
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<td>03 December</td>
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<td>14.00-16.00 Final Presentation (elective students)</td>
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<td>16.30-18.30 Final Presentation (FEX students)</td>
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## WORKSHOPS

### WORKSHOP ONE

**Monday 13 October**

**13.00-16.00 (in Hjärne)**

**Architectural Fieldwork:** Talking to women in architecture about their understanding and use of technologies

**Lecture:** Jennifer Mack

**Location:** Seminar Room Hjärne in KTH Library, Main Campus KTH Osquars Backe 31

### WORKSHOP TWO

**Monday 10 November 10.00-12.00 and 13.00-15.00**

**Architectural Technologies:** Digital Practices

**Lecture:** Mette Ramsgard Thomsen, with Ulrika Karlsson, Oliver Tessman and Jonas Runeburger

**Location:** Red Tent (Tältet) KTH Architecture

### WORKSHOP THREE

**Thursday 27 November 13.00-17.30**

**Architectural Research:** The emergence of architectural research in the profession and the role that women play

**Lecture:** Malin Zimm, Katja Grillner, and members of Critical Studies in Architecture

**Location:** Sydvästra Galleriet KTH Library, Main Campus KTH Osquars Backe 31