



HEAD GENEVA - INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

Natural History of Architecture

An ecological, objective, materialist, environmental, and realist approach to urban, architecture and interior design history

Master Class, Spring 2021

Instructor: **Philippe Rahm**

The History of Architecture written these last decades was strongly influenced by critical thinking and post-modern theories of the second half of the 20th century, when political, social, economic and cultural reasons dominated the system of explaining the causes and consequences of the emergence of a form, a style or a language. Induced by a context of massive and easy access to energy and by the progress of medicine, this History that precedes us, that can be described as cultural, has largely ignored the physical, geographical, climatic or bacteriological reasons that have, in reality, shaped, in a decisive way, over centuries, the architectural form, that of buildings, from cities to interior decoration. Our objective or realistic History of Architecture courses will highlight the natural, physical, biological and climatic causes that have influenced the development of architectural history and its figures, from prehistory until today, in order to understand how to face the major environmental challenges of our century and build in a better way in response to climate urgency.

- Lesson #0-How our homeothermic nature gave birth to architecture (Prehistory)
- Lesson #1-How Beer invented Cities (Neolithic)
- Lesson #2-How the invention of printing killed beauty (Antiquity)
- Lesson #3-How beans gave birth to Gothic architecture (Middle Ages)
- Lesson #4-How the tab of a drop-down menu of a computer software invented the architecture of the year 2000 (Renaissance)
- Lesson #5-How the eruption of a volcano invented the modern city (19th century I)
- Lesson #6- How a sprig of mint has invented nature in the city (19th century II)
- Lesson #7-How iodine caused the urbanization of all territories (19th century III)
- Lesson #8-How the dried meat of Graubünden gave birth to modern architecture (Modernity)
- Lesson #9-How antibiotics have initiated a return to the city (Post-Modernity)
- Lesson #10-How central heating killed decorative art (Post-industrial)
- Lesson #11-How global warming reinvents decorative art (Post-carbon)

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Course Schedule:

3 March 2021

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #0-How our homeothermic nature gave birth to architecture (Prehistory)

Lesson #1-How Beer invented Cities (Neolithic)

Lesson #13: Why the search for freshness led to the construction of so many churches in the 17th century (Baroque)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

24 March 2020

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #3-How beans gave birth to Gothic architecture (Middle Ages)

Lesson #10-How central heating killed decorative art (Post-industrial)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

21 April 2021

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #12: How air in motion initiated dome and cupola (Renaissance, 18th Century)

Lesson #7-How iodine caused the urbanization of all territories (19th century III)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

5 May 2021

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #6- How a sprig of mint has invented nature in the city (19th century II)

Lesson #5-How the eruption of a volcano invented the modern city (19th century I)

Lesson #8-How the dried meat of Graubünden gave birth to modern architecture (Modernity)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

19 May 2021

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #2-How the invention of printing killed beauty (Antiquity)

Lesson #4-How the tab of a drop-down menu of a computer software invented the architecture of the year 2000 (Renaissance)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

2 June 2021

Morning and first part of the afternoon: ex cathedra lecture

Lesson #9-How antibiotics have initiated a return to the city (Post-Modernity)

Lesson #14 How Oil Grew Cities in the Desert (20th Century, Part 2 / Glorious Thirty)

Lesson #11-How global warming reinvents decorative art (Post-carbon)

Late Afternoon: Conversation on contemporary issues and student project related

Dead line for sending your final work for grade: 14 of June 2021 23:00 PM CET by email: philippe.rahm@hesge.ch

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Structure of the course:

The course is an ex cathedra course presenting the history of architecture, interior decoration and urban planning followed in the afternoon by a conversation on the contemporary consequences of the topics covered in the morning, which will also be based on the design projects elaborated by the master students.

Assignment for grade:

Students will have to write a 5-page A4 essay (graded), of 4500 characters and illustrations, by June 14, 2021, freely choosing a historical subject (which can be borrowed from their cultural environment, a memory, or any experience) related to interior design and ecology, environment, energy or climate. The text has to analyze how a thermal context, a climatic issue, a material constraints, a physical fact, a pragmatic problem has generated a cultural respond, an aesthetic style in architecture and design. In one word, the students have to look to how a fact of Natural Science can create an artifact of Human Science, which natural reasons have been mostly forgot through the time, creating confusion in between cause and consequence. The text has to be in English.`

Dead line for sending your final work for grade: 14 of June 2021 23:00 PM CET by email: philippe.rahm@hesge.ch

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Book of the course (only in French)

Rahm Philippe, Histoire naturelle de l'architecture, Éditions du Pavillon de l'Arsenal, Paris, 2020

Bibliography :

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