

# ARCHITECTURE, AVANT-GARDE AND THE POLITICS OF MODERN PUBLIC SPACE



ARTH284M  
SPRING 2005

MWF 1:10 – 2:10 P.M.  
ROOM: FA 209

INSTRUCTOR:  
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Apartment buildings in Boston; "Proun" by El Lissitzky, 1923

Public spaces are the concrete architectural and urban settings in which the "dialectical motion of modernity" became visible (Marshall Berman). This course will examine the emergence, transformation, and diverse representations of modern public space in the European context. We will focus on the impact on the urban scene in the 1920s and 1930s of radically innovative movements in the arts, especially but not only in architecture, associated at the time and subsequently with the "avant-garde." Through the exploration of specific cases of architectural production and representation, the course will discuss the architectural avant-garde's re-appropriation of modern public space as a key site of political action and social advocacy. We will also expand the discussion from Europe to the rest of the world, in order to consider the influence of European avant-garde movements in a global context, i.e., as reflected in "other geographies," as well as conceptions of avant-garde design emerging from the meeting or even clash of "European" and "non-European" cultural values and forms.

Format and Requirements:

Attendance at all classes is necessary. There will be a take-home final exam in the form of a short paper and students will be asked to write short reading reports each week. Evaluation will be based on attendance, weekly reports, contribution to discussion, and the final exam.