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**instructor:** Micheline Nilsen  
**course title:** Issues in Art History: The Townhouse of the Atlantic Rim  
**institution:** Pratt Institute  
**date offered:** Summer, 2004

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## **HA551- Issues in Art History: The Townhouse of the Atlantic Rim**

Pratt Institute: Summer Session II, 2004

Section 1/2: June 28 - August 9

Tu, Th 6-8:50pm

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Office Hours: Tu & Th 4-6pm by appointment

From Georgian England to Art Nouveau Brussels (1730-1900), this course examines the development of the town house as an architectural form as well as the material culture of its decorative elements, its furniture, and furnishings. From the increasing practice of speculation for building row houses in London, or the American cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston and Second Empire Paris to the custom designs of Victor Horta for wealthy Brussels patrons, the emphasis is on the type of living environments created to meet specific and varying social needs in changing political, economic and cultural contexts. From the Adam Brothers to Horta, the work of designers who integrated interiors which defined stylistic movements into the structures they constructed encompasses both design and architecture. The examination of features such as the hierarchy of finishes between the private and public spaces of townhouses encourages questions not only on how the townhouse spaces were designed but also on how they were used. The course also considers how the original use of spaces evolved with social fluctuations in housing conditions such as ethnic migrations or gentrification.

**Grade breakdown** ( all assignments will be graded in the same manner for undergraduate and graduate students, a different curve will be applied to each group to bring both sets of grades to comparable levels):

-5%-glossary (illustrated) / journal of observations, see below

-15%-leading reading discussion

-30%-paper/ research project

-20%-presentation

-15%-exam

-10%-attendance & class participation

-5%-field trip attendance

= 100%

### **Format of Assignments**

All written assignments (except journal / glossary) are to be typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. They need to include a cover sheet. All sources, including web sites are to be cited and included in the bibliography.

## Schedule of Classes

- Tu 6/29 [1] -Define Townhouse  
-Vernacular origins, early construction techniques  
Readings: Stillman, Damie. "City Living, Federal Style." In *Everyday Life in the Early Republic*, edited by Catherine E. Hutchins, pp. 137-174. Winterthur, DE: Winterthur Museum, 1994. (begin glossary)  
**Assignment:** Describe your own archetypal house, i.e. what comes to mind when you hear "house." Make drawing. [One-two page(s), not graded, no credit if now handed in.] Due next class.  
Schedule field trips: (see below)
- Th 7/1 [2] -English precedents:  
-speculation and terrace housing, building techniques (low end)  
-Adams Brothers (high end)  
-later developments  
Readings: Cruickshank. *Guide to Georgian Buildings*, pp. 20-50.  
Kelsall "The London House Plan in the Later Seventeenth Century."  
**Assignment:** term project handed out
- Tu 7/6 [3] -Local variations  
-Continental variations:  
-low countries  
-French  
-18thc hotels  
-pre- and post Haussmann  
Discussion: Stillman, Cruickshank & Kelsall
- Th 7/8 [4] Connections Old and New World (mostly Britain -US)  
Crossing the Atlantic  
Readings:  
John Michael Vlach, *The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy*  
Henry Glassie, *Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building*  
**Assignment:** term project selected and research plan handed in  
Neighborhood walk (rain date 7/13)
- Sun 7/11 10:15 am. Field Trip to the Metropolitan Museum. Meet in the Met lobby on the left side ( of the central desk as you come in).
- Tu 7/13 [5] New York Public Library  
Meet promptly at 6:00 PM in the Library lobby at 5th Ave and 42nd St.  
Introduction in South Court and tour of library (including General Reading Room, Local History, Maps, Art and Architecture.)

- Th 7/15 [6] Philadelphia & Baltimore  
 Discussion: Vlach and Glassie  
 Readings:  
 Murtagh, The Philadelphia Row House, *JSAH* XVI, 4 (8-13)  
 Hayward, "Urban Vernacular Architecture in Nineteenth-Century  
 Baltimore," Winterthur Portfolio, 16:1 (Spring 1981)
- Tu 7/20 [7] Boston and New York  
 Discussion: Murtagh and Hayward  
 Readings:  
 Blackmar, Manhattan for Rent. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988)  
 pp. 109-148, 183-212.  
 Stansell, Christine. *City of Women. Sex and Class in New York, 1789-  
 1860*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982. pp. 3-62.  
**Assignment:** Draft due
- Th 7/22 [8] Continue New York  
 Chicago  
 Furnishings, Colonial to elite status goods  
 Readings: Wayne Craven, Craven, Wayne. "Peale's Portrait of Benjamin  
 Franklin." Epilogue of Colonial American Portraiture.  
 Kenneth L Ames. Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian  
 America.
- Fri 7/23 3 PM. Brooklyn Museum. Meet in the Lobby of the Brooklyn Museum.
- Tu 7/27 [9] Arts and Crafts (mostly furnishings)  
 Art Nouveau - Victor Horta (total vision)  
 Discussion: Stansel, Blackmar
- Th 7/29 [10] Adjustments (additions, subdivision, decay, gentrification, etc)  
 New Horizons (townhouses replacing projects)  
 Readings:  
 Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Modernizing: Or, 'You Never See a Screen  
 Door on Affluent Homes.'"  
 Gorlin, Alexander. The New American Town House. New York: Rizzoli,  
 1999. pp. 8-31  
**Assignment:** Paper due  
 Exam essay question handed out
- Sat 7/31 Field trip to Philadelphia. (See separate handout)
- Tu 8/3 [11] Summary lecture  
 Discussion Cromley, Gorlin (if needed)  
**Presentations:** 15 minutes each (8)  
**Assignment:** hand in glossary notebook

Th 8/5 [12] **Exam** - essay to be written in class in blue book from question handed out on 7/29. No notes, outlines or open book.

**Presentations:** 15 minutes each (8)

### **Glossary/Journal**

-Compile a glossary of the architectural terminology you come across in your readings, research and class lecture, make sketches to jog your visual memory. This glossary can then be used in your class project and presentation.

-Keep a journal of your personal observations, reflections, sketches related to the class topic which you encounter during the duration of the class. This may include your research notes but **NOT** your class notes, nor your reading notes (although personal reflections on readings are OK).

This may be hand-written and handed in as a notebook or as sheets of paper gathered in a folder or binder. Can reveal the messiness of work-in-progress but should be legible.

### **Field Trips:**

#### *Compulsory*

-Neighborhood walk (7/8- rain date 7/13) - during class time (Pratt President's House)

-Brooklyn Museum- period rooms - Friday 7/23 3 PM. Meet at Brooklyn Museum

-Met Museum -period room - Sunday 7/11 10:15 am. Meet at Met.

To obtain credit for a missed compulsory field trip, a written report of your own visit to the designated period rooms will be accepted as a substitute for attendance. An itinerary will be provided for self-guided visits.

-Introduction to NYPL - Tuesday 7/13 6-7:15 PM. Meet at NYPL, 5th Ave at 42nd St.

#### *Optional*

-Visit to Philadelphia ( July 31 - two drivers needed)