

In this reading group, we will explore the intersection of race, space, and aesthetics in the city. Specifically, we will think about how race is produced discursively through spatial imaginaries and design. We will tease out and analyse the submerged racial scripts in architecture, design, aesthetics, and the culture of taste. We will closely read a variety of texts in order to trace a genealogy of how genres of the Human, ideas about taste, manners, and the senses, as well as European cosmologies, have shaped spatial imaginaries and concepts of order. Many of the texts take as their point of departure the various ways in which the entanglement of race, taste, and capital has played out in art, and the built environment. Quite often conversations on design, whether architecture or urban planning, and aesthetics are depoliticized; however, we will interrogate the supposed pre-political ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’ of design and aesthetics.

Together, we will think about the role that sexism, heteronormativity, classism, racism, ableism, fatphobia, and capitalism play in shaping ideas on the built environment, and determining ‘the place’ of people in society. Some of the questions we will explore are: how do the presence of certain bodies structure spaces? How have certain bodies become associated with certain geographical and/or built spaces and vice versa. How is space culturally constructed? How does oppression affect how bodies ‘take up’ space, and what they ‘can do’? How does the racialization of space affect policy-making?

The set-up of the reading group follows three lines of critical inquiry:

1. Theorizations of the entanglement of anti-blackness, coloniality, and taste
2. Investigations of the imbrication of race, class, and aesthetics
3. Theorizations of gender, race, disability and the built environment

The reading load is between 40 and 70 pages per session. This is an introductory reading group. We hope to keep this conversation ongoing!

We will be reading the texts on the following page. It is expected that participants read the texts marked as “required readings” closely prior to each session. We will refer our discussion to the “required readings” as well as the “recommended readings”.

Reading group #1

The Culture of Taste and the Senses

16 October, 2–4pm

Butcher's Tears, Karperweg 45,
Amsterdam (NL)

Required reading:

– *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (49pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Learning to Make Sense* (18pp)

Reading group #2

The Racial and the Aesthetic

3 November, 7–9pm

Butcher's Tears, Karperweg 45,
Amsterdam (NL)

Required reading:

– *Racialization as an Aesthetic Production: What Does the Aesthetic Do for Whiteness and Blackness and Vice Versa?* (42pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Racial Images in Dutch Art* (18pp)

Reading group #3

The Aesthetic and the Spatial

25 November, 7–9pm

Helicopter,
The Hague (NL)

Required reading:

– *Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics* (20pp)

– *Demonic Grounds: Sylvia Wynter* (21pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Geographical Imagination in Dutch Historical Self-Representation—The Case of the Cultural Canon of the Netherlands* (10pp)

Reading group #4

Gender, Race, and Space

19 December, 7–9pm

Helicopter,
The Hague (NL)

Required reading:

– *Men in Space* (6pp)

– *Race, Space, and Place* (24pp)

– *The Social Becomes the Spatial, the Spatial Becomes the Social* (5pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Circumventing Openness Creating New Senses of Dutchness* (10pp)

Reading group #5

Bodies-Surfaces-Architecture

11 January, 7–9pm

Peach, Grondherendijk 9B,
Rotterdam (NL)

Required reading:

– *Enriching our Understanding of Architecture through Disability Experience* (13pp)

– *“The White Man's Burden” Female Sexuality, Tourist Postcards, and the Place of the Fat Woman in Early 20th-Century U.S. Culture* (7pp)

– *Bodies-Cities* (13pp)

– *Skins, Tattoos, and the Lure of the Surface* (11pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Viollet-Le-Duc and the Body: The Metaphorical Integrations of Race and Style in Structural Rationalism* (9pp)

Reading group #6

Art and Gentrification

11 February, 7–9pm

Peach, Grondherendijk 9B,
Rotterdam (NL)

Required reading:

– *Still Submerged; The Uninhabitability of Urban Redevelopment* (18pp)

– *The Occupation of Art and Gentrification* (16pp)

Recommended reading:

– *Appropriate Habits of White Privilege* (22pp)

– *Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice* (22pp)

The reading group is organised and led by cultural critic and writer Egbert Martina. The group is open to all but has a limited capacity of 15 participants, so please RSVP to us via rsvp@SSS-NWW.org.

Our belief is that learning experiences should be as accessible as possible. If you experience, or anticipate, physical or other barriers based on disability, please let us know immediately so that we can discuss options.

The reading group is part of the Northern Winter Workshops, more details on the program can be found on: www.SSS-NWW.org.