

## Constructing History

Advanced Level Seminar, Oslo School of Architecture and Design, 25 October 2019

Organised by Institute of Form History and Theory/OCCAS

This seminar talks about historical method via work in progress. Historians Elizabeth Sears of the University of Michigan and Hilde Heynen from KU Leuven will present two twentieth century contexts where ideas about history and ideas about building met. Focussing on the relationships between the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes in London between 1934 and 1964, Sears' work confronts a project in architecture via the study of historical scholarship. Studying the activities of Sybil Moholy-Nagy across the US architectural scene during much the same period, Heynen investigates a career in historical scholarship predicated on a profound engagement with modern architecture. The day offers the chance both to discuss these fascinating histories and to reflect on the systems of construction that such history writing demands. In the afternoon session six PhD fellows in architectural history, from AHO and its international collaborators, present their work, with roundtable critique, reflection and discussion.

### Programme

09.00	<b>Constructing History – Welcome</b>
09.15	Elizabeth Sears
	<b>The Warburg and the Courtauld: Conjunctions and Complementarities</b>
10.00	Q&A
10.30	<i>Break</i>
10.45	Hilde Heynen
	<b>Writing an intellectual biography of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy: questions of historiography</b>
11.30	Q&A
12.00	<i>Lunch</i>
13.00	<b>Project presentations</b> Eirik Arff Gulseth Bøhn, Flavia Criscotti and Joe Crowdy
15.15	<i>Break</i>
15.30	<b>Project presentations</b> Beata Labuhn, Nikos Magouliotis and Maryia Rusak
17.45	Final comments
18.00	<i>Reception</i>

**Location** AHO Board Room, Open public event, requires registration  
To register contact [tim.ainsworth.anstey@aho.no](mailto:tim.ainsworth.anstey@aho.no)

### Contributors

**Elizabeth Sears** is George H. Forsyth Jr. Collegiate Professor of History of Art at the University of Michigan and currently Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers in the New York Public Library. Her areas of specialization lie in western medieval representational arts, especially manuscript illumination, and disciplinary historiography. She has investigated the life and work of figures including Aby Warburg, Adolph Goldschmidt, Edgar Wind, W. S. Heckscher, Jean Sez nec, and H. W. Janson, and she is now completing a book set in the years 1929–1964 treating the influential intellectual movement that traced its origins to the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg.

**Hilde Heynen** is professor of architectural theory at the University of Leuven, Belgium. Her research focuses on issues of modernity, modernism and gender in architecture. In *Architecture and Modernity. A Critique* (MIT Press, 1999) she investigated the relationship between architecture, modernity and dwelling. She has also engaged with the intersection between architecture and gender studies, resulting in the volume *Negotiating Domesticity* (co-edited with Gulsum Baydar, Routledge, 2005). She co-edited the 2012 *Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory* (with Greig Crysler and Stephen Cairns). More recently she published the intellectual biography *Sibyl Moholy-Nagy. Architecture, Modernism and its Discontents* (Bloomsbury, 2019; Sandstein, 2019).

*Keynote presentations:*

09.15-10.00 **The Warburg and the Courtauld: Conjunctions and Complementarities**  
Elizabeth Sears

The Courtauld Institute of Art opened in 1932. The Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg was enabled to escape Nazi Germany in 1933, and to reopen in London as the Warburg Institute in 1934, owing in good part to the efforts of the very men responsible for the creation of the Courtauld. In this lecture, drawing on extensive archival information, the deep connections and the profound differences between the two institutions – both of which would do much to shape the development of Art History in Britain – are brought to light. Emphasis is placed on articulated distinctions in the purposes, methods and pedagogical philosophies of each. The lecture starts and ends with consideration of the architectural vision of the 1950s, according to which the two institutes would inhabit a single building, with twin entrances, identical on the outside, differently configured within.



10.30-11.15 **Writing an intellectual biography of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy: questions of historiography**  
Hilde Heynen

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy was the second wife of Bauhaus-master Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. After his early death in 1946, she started a career as an architectural historian and critic, and thus made a name for herself. She was an exceptional and intriguing woman, who managed – without the benefit of an academic education - to carve out a place for herself in the male-dominated architectural scene in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s. She published several books and was a regular presence in the major architectural journals, including European ones. In both continents she repeatedly engaged in important and interesting controversies. The lecture will first provide an overview of the life and work of this remarkable woman. The second part will address the challenges of writing an intellectual biography from a feminist perspective.