



11/10/2016 4P 3201 HART HALL “BLACK AND BLIGHT”

A talk given by Andrew Herscher

“Black homes matter.” In the summer of 2015, this affirmation was painted on a fence erected by community members and volunteers from Detroit Eviction Defense next to a house whose owner was facing eviction. What can architectural history offer to a reading of this affirmation? This study explores the intersection of race, space, and housing in the American city by focusing on “blight”: a term that has been deployed to characterize urban difference from the early 20th century into the present. Posed as “blight,” the uneven urban development endemic to capitalist urbanism was often refracted through white supremacist politics and framed as a “problem” that could be “solved” by city planning, zoning, urban renewal, and other technical means. In so doing, studies of and actions against “blight” masked contradictions in capitalist urbanism and spatialized race in uneven urban development.

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Trained as an architect and historian of architecture, Andrew Herscher works on the spatial politics of violence, humanitarian and human rights issues, migration and asylum, and contemporary art and architecture. He works both as a scholar in the academy and in hybrid public collaborations that have included the Detroit Unreal Estate Agency, an open-access platform for the study of urban crisis; Detroit Resists, a coalition of activists, artists, architects, and community members working on behalf of an inclusive, equitable, and democratic city; and the We the People of Detroit Community Research Collective. Among his publications are *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict*, published by Stanford University Press in 2010; *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit*, published by the University of Michigan Press in 2012; and the forthcoming *Displacements: Architecture and Refugee*. At the University of Michigan he has appointments in the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and the Department of the History of Art and at Stanford University he is a Creative Cities Fellow at the Stanford Arts Institute.

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