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Back to the Land

Abstract

This paper considers the methodological premises and implications of a history of architecture concerned with land and dispossession—a complete and complex historical system, with present-day effects. It distinguishes more recent work from older claims on geographical scale by locating architecture within the settler colonial systems that established the settings for large swathes of the history of architecture since the eighteenth century. The paper poses the confiscation of land as a kind of “original sin” for architecture in the modern age. Turning to a series of recent historical and curatorial projects, it suggests ways in which the history of architecture might draw from a decolonisation agenda to realise a fuller historical account of the recent past. This, it suggests, demands the exploration of an expanded definition of architecture within its own complex history, as a medium, index, and vehicle of dispossession.

Keywords

Land, Property, Settler Colonialism, Architectural History, Territory