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108 East Duke
Weds. April 11
4:00 p.m.



ON EVOLUTION:

**WORLD ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AND
QUESTIONS OF EVOLUTIONARY MODELS
IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS**

Sponsored by the Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies,
the Department of Cultural Anthropology, and the
Asian Pacific Studies Institute, Duke University

ON EVOLUTION
World Architectural History
and
Questions of Evolutionary Models in Intercultural Contexts

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A deceptively simple term “evolution” has been fundamental to modern discussions of historical progress in the past two centuries. From *Australopithicus afarensis* to *Homo sapiens*, or from the pyramids of Giza to the Empire State Building in New York, laws of evolution allowed humans to connect a sense of universal time with patterns of changes of physical forms on a grand scale of world history. Yet this temporal-formal connection was founded upon stratified historical sequences, in which cultural diffusion, racial taxonomy, and biological differences determined hierarchy along the steps of the evolutionary ladder.

Not surprisingly, evolutionism was both embraced and concurrently resisted by many historians, particularly those who sought to map out changes in world history beyond the Eurocentric trajectories of most evolutionary models. This lecture explores the love-hate tension within evolutionism as manifested in the writings of world architectural history by European and Asian scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By examining their interpretations of the laws of evolution and subsequent differences in their application, the lecture presents an intercultural intellectual history of evolutionary models through the lens of critical architectural historiography and simultaneously calls into question these models’ function in the writing of architecture.

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