

Animal Mineral Vegetable (Architectural Theory Review 21.1)

Sydney, Australia

Deadline: Dec 31, 2015

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Animal, mineral, vegetable?

Architectural Theory Review 21.1

For Plato, the answer to such a question lay in the relative beauty of organisms that were divided by their chemical constitution and their notable lack of a spiritual soul. In classic philosophy, definitions across these three kingdoms were often vigorously contested: Aquinas classified plants as being created solely for the consumption of animals while in the Great Chain of Being (*scala naturae*), Aristotle defined human beings as rational animals who existed in a different moral realm than their lower counterparts. Even in the contemporary sphere, the underground notion of theorizing the animal extends from Stanley Cavell, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Slavoj Žižek to current scholars like Brian Massumi and Cary Wolfe.

The animal condition in its disciplinary iterations returns to the question of life, whether an object should be considered inanimate or animate. Even the muteness of substances such as stone possesses its own internal dynamism, unknown to the human eye. Beyond metaphysics, animality provokes issues of identity and difference linked to discourses surrounding colonialism, race, and sexuality. Across empires controlled by Western nations, the subjugation of slaves and women has long been coupled with the “animalization” of human beings and points to the animal condition as one of hierarchical economy and coercive power.

Alongside the animal condition, biological models of architecture have drawn upon the mineral and vegetable worlds to provide inspiration for industrial design and architectural buildings – to name a few, Owen Jones’s botanical prints, Victor-Ruprich Robert’s *Flore ornamentale* (1866-76) on the decorative arts, Claude Bragdon’s projective arabesques, and Karl Blossfeldt’s *Urformen der Kunst*. Organic architecture, despite its sometimes eccentric origins, has been radically reinvented since the days of modernists Hans Scharoun and Eero Saarinen. Design computation and digital fabrication have pushed these metaphors to new heights, creating sinuous forms through material properties.

As artist Jim Dine states, “I trust objects so much. I trust disparate elements going together.” For this thematic issue, we invite contributions that examine new definitions of the animal, mineral, or vegetable in light of architectural history/theory, art history, literature, history, and philosophy, including but not limited to the following topics: animal studies, animality and race/sexuality, anthropomorphism, artistic collections that deal with animals/minerals/plants, biological models

and architecture, contemporary art and the bestiary, discourse of species, labor and slavery, natural history and museum design, historical models of organicism, and posthumanism.

Architectural Theory Review, founded at the University of Sydney in 1996 and now in its twentieth year, is the pre-eminent journal of architectural theory in the Australasian region. Published by Routledge in print and online, the journal is an international forum for generating, exchanging, and reflecting on theory in and of architecture. All texts are subject to a rigorous process of blind peer review.

Submission Instructions

Enquiries about this special issue theme, and possible papers, are welcome, please email the editor, Jennifer Ferng: jennifer.ferng@sydney.edu.au.

The deadline for the submission of completed manuscripts is Wednesday, 31 December 2015. Please submit manuscripts via the journal's online submission system. When uploading your manuscript please indicate that you are applying for this special issue, for example: vol. 21.1 – Animal, Mineral, Vegetable.

Manuscript submission guidelines can be found on the Architectural Theory Review website.

Reference:

CFP: Animal Mineral Vegetable (Architectural Theory Review 21.1). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 22, 2015 (accessed Jul 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/11330>>.