

Lecture Series: Architecture as Living Matter (online, 24 May–5 Jul 22)

online / Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, May 24–Jul 6,
2022

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Organized by Albert Kirchengast and Giovanna Targia with Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino, Hana Gründler, and Alessandro Nova

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Our contemporary experience of the dematerialisation and virtualisation of everyday life and social interactions infuses the question about the status of materials as actual ‘living things’ in architecture and architectural theory with new urgency. In an age of rapid climate change, the controversies this question raises are further ignited by the multiplying threats to the natural environment. It is therefore no surprise that ‘living’ (bio-)materials play a central role in contemporary architecture, either in their organic and artistic metamorphoses or through transformation processes in their repurposing and recycling. In the wake of a well-established material turn in cultural studies, a revised view of the dynamic, and even metamorphic aspects of materials and their impact on the observer has emerged. In architectural theory and practice, by contrast, though specific historical approaches have sparked renewed critical interest, this change of perspective has yet to be fully explored.

Within the framework of the Ethics and Architecture research programme developed at the KHI, this lecture series aims to address critical questions about the relationship between architecture, material culture, and the temporality of nature. The ‘living’ in architectural theories has routinely been described and conceptualised with recourse to organic analogies or by borrowing concepts from biology and geology: from Gottfried Semper’s theory of metabolism to historically oriented studies on concepts such as ‘organicism’ or ‘morphology’. To what extent can one speak of a bodily connection of the material dimension of a work with the human being? Can architecture be described as ‘living matter’? How do current ontologies, such as new materialism, position themselves with respect to the *longue durée* of these theoretical models?

Program

24 May 2022, 18:00

Heather Viles (School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford)

Linking Life and Buildings: A Biogeomorphological Perspective

8 June 2022, 18:00

Jonathan Hill (Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL)

Architecture as a Time Machine

22 June 2022, 18:00

Elena Chestnova (Institute for History and Theory of Art and Architecture, Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio – Università della Svizzera italiana)

Bodies, Interiors and Origins of Art: National Artefacts in the Theory of Gottfried Semper

6 July 2022, 18:00

Daniel Talesnik (Technische Universität München)

Hannes Meyer's Materials Matter

Info & Registration

<https://www.khi.fi.it/en/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/2022/05/architecture-as-living-matter.php>

Reference:

ANN: Lecture Series: Architecture as Living Matter (online, 24 May-5 Jul 22). In: Arthist.net, May 7, 2022 (accessed Sep 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36632>>.