

AHRA 2024: Body Matters (Norwich, 21–23 Nov 24)

University of the Arts, Norwich, United Kingdom, Nov 21–23, 2024

Deadline: Apr 7, 2024

Teresa Stoppani

!!NEW DEADLINE: 7 APRIL!!

BODY MATTERS, the AHRA 2024 International Conference.

BODY

Body Matters aims to investigate notions of Body in contemporary architectural discourses.

Always a fundamental in architecture, the body needs to be reconsidered on its own terms, as a creative, material and philosophical concern. Beyond historical materialism and phenomenological approaches in architecture, recent new materialism thought has proposed a cross-disciplinary endeavour to confront long-held assumptions about the relationship between humans, nonhumans and the world.

The material world is understood as a network of relational, non-fixed entities, always in flux and emerging in unexpected ways around actions and events. How then can Architecture position itself and its role in these shifting and pluralist perspectives? Body Matters aims to explore not only what the body looks like, how it works and performs and what it is made of, but also how it blurs its own boundaries as it resonates with the environment. Ultimately it will interrogate how bodies matter, in architecture and beyond.

The themes of this conference bring into sharp focus 'our forgotten relation to the encompassing earth' (Abram) to discuss a renewed environmental sensitivity that spans across science, politics, nature and culture.

MATTERS

WHICH BODY. Architecture has always been obsessed with bodies. Its own body first and foremost. What are the relations, the differences, the articulations of building and architecture? And between the body of the discipline and the constructed body of each of its instantiation – a building, a project, a drawing. What then is the body of architecture, in the exquisite and still troublesome relationship of arché and techton that sits at the origin of its western etymology (Vitruvius). Answers can be found perhaps by rearticulating the conversation in wider cultural and geographical, global contexts. Arché then becomes multiple, movable, and ultimately untraceable – it is exposed as a project of constant reinvention. Techton is pulverized in a myriad of techniques, technologies, makings and materializations, itself an ephemeral substantiation.

WHOSE BODY. Shelter, haven, container, envelope; home and sepulchre; social platform, hub of cultural and political exchanges, but also apparatus of control, exclusion and reclusion...

Architecture has an inevitable relation with bodies, human and non-human. It makes space, it constructs and constricts, it enables and accommodates life. Until a century ago architecture wanted to look like a human body and function as an organism, but then deconstruction exposed

the violence of its relationship with the body. The history of the body in the architectural humanities needs to be expanded to re-frame the emerging materiality/mattering of bodies.

WHAT BODIES. As bodies lose organisation from without, the shifting remaking of assemblages exposes their interconnectedness. Bodily intensities and affects need to be considered on their own terms leading to new relations. Architecture is also put into question: more than container, envelope, shelter, architecture can be understood as a vulnerable construction, a constellation of vibrating matter and resonating oscillations. Beyond the separations and distinctions of bodies and environment and bodies in environment, architecture needs to be considered as a manifold of mutual envelopments.

OTHER BODIES. From passive malleable material to acting matter; beyond distinctions and questions of natural and artificial, human and animal, organic and inorganic, virtual and actual: we have learned to co-exist, living multiple and intersecting lives – in our flesh, emotions, media, in uni- pluri- meta- verses. It seems we have dissolved, no longer made of cells, but of moving subatomic particles, bits of information and lies, and ultimately of energy. Then what does architecture become, do, make?

OVEREXPOSED AND FRAGILE. Extreme global events generated by anthropic activities of depredation are threatening or destroying lives and redesigning geopolitics and geologies alike. And while we live in hybrid or virtual realities, construct our digital alter egos, and reengineer our bodies, we are still called to face, feel, and sense our very material interconnectedness with the physical world. We need to redefine our bodies, invent new boundaries, design or improvise new forms of sociality and collectivity.

POLITICAL BODIES. New materialism has expanded how we see bodies, not simply as social constructs, but as multiple actants, quasi-subjects and quasi-objects that cut across social and natural divisions (Latour). The current geopolitical conditions call for such an emerging philosophy. But what about the social constructs inherent in historical materialism and poststructuralist thought? Does the human agency implicit in historical materialism necessarily counter a more multiple notion of agency? How can we question emerging relations between agents and actants, new and 'old' materialisms. How do these inform unexpected ways to think of political bodies?

BODY MATTERS

We invite individual and group proposals for 20-minute papers, as well as for themed sessions, debates and round tables. We welcome proposals of papers with the intention or possibility to be supported by or delivered through performance or film-based presentation. We welcome contributions that explore contemporary developments and project future trends, as well as those that offer retrospective theoretical and critical interrogations.

Please indicate clearly if submitting a full session panel proposal. For individual proposals please send a 400 word abstract with title, and a 50 word biographical note. For themed sessions please send the individual abstracts together with a session proposal, introduction and title.

Deadline for abstracts of papers and session proposals:

Friday 22 March 2024

Email to: bodymatters@norwichuni.ac.uk

Conference Website: ahra2024.org

AHRA website: ahra-architecture.org

The AHRA2024 BODY MATTERS convenors

Professor Teresa Stoppani, Director of Architecture and Interior Design

Dr George Themistokleous, Senior Lecturer in Architecture

Dr Ellie Nixon, Programme Director of Film and Performing Arts

Reference:

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