

Session at SAH (Mexico City, 15–19 April 26)

Mexico City, Apr 15–19, 2026

Deadline: Jun 5, 2025

Tairan An

Meteoric Artifacts: Architecture and the Atmospheric Sciences.

Session at the Society of Architectural Historians Conference 2026.

From the late eighteenth century onward, pursuits to rationalize celestial phenomena have redefined architecture's engagement with the vertical dimension, turning built structures once dedicated to religious practice into sites of scientific inquiry. This process was coeval with the global expansion of colonial powers, materializing in practices of agricultural management and environmental governance under the guise of scientific objectivity. While numerous studies have examined the reciprocal influences between architecture and the atmospheric sciences, scholarship often overlooks this perpendicular relationship between the vertical and horizontal axes that underpin these interactions.

Moving beyond the notion of observation as a neutral act, this session probes how meteorological knowledge-making, particularly within colonial empires, is channeled into mechanisms of governance through the study of what we term "meteoric artifacts"—the architectures and infrastructures that navigate the nexus between vertical and horizontal axes. While the vertical aspect reflects the technoscientific efforts to capture atmospheric phenomena and render them measurable, the horizontal plane reveals how these efforts expand into imperialist eco-territorial control. By redirecting focus to this perpendicular relationship, the session reconceptualizes the meteoric as a domain encompassing more than its common association with shooting stars to include a range of aeroterrestrial occurrences, from lightning and cloud formations to earthquakes and volcanic activities—all rooted in the Greek *meteōra*, meaning "raised above the ground."

The session invites investigations into the architectural and infrastructural artifacts that facilitate the scientific observation of meteoric matter, including the mediating structures such as observatories, weather stations, field accommodations; survey activities from ballooning and mountaineering to maritime navigations and astronomical expeditions; as well as their technological and representational media byproducts. We welcome proposals that engage with marginalized geographies and perspectives from any period, encouraging interdisciplinary and collaborative contributions.

Session Chairs: Tairan An and Zaid Kashef Alghata.

Submissions and further info: <https://www.sah.org/2026/call-for-papers-mexico-city>

ArtHist.net

Reference:

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