

Thresholds 55: Property

Thresholds

Deadline: May 1, 2026

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Thresholds, the annual peer-reviewed journal produced by the MIT Department of Architecture and published by the MIT Press, is now accepting submissions for Thresholds 55: Property, to be published in Spring 2027.

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Thresholds 55: Property.

Edited by Maia Adele Simon and Hana Nikčević.

Property: a thing, often material, that is possessed. Property: an aspect or attribute of that thing.

While seemingly concrete, the concept of property is frequently fragmentary, contingent, and ephemeral, premised in an array of theoretical descriptions. It is constructed through social relationships and defined through reciprocal accord. These social dynamics highlight the proximity of property to power through its delimitation of rights to access, possession, and exclusion. Ideas of property have been foundational in both western and non-western frameworks of culture and law, implicated in understandings of individual autonomy, rights, and the economy. From the enclosure of land to its representation in painting, from waqf funds to development mechanisms to environmental protection, to labor, protest, and repatriation, imaginaries of property have shaped art and architecture through history and across geographies. Thresholds 55 invites scholarly writing, criticism, and artistic interventions that interrogate these interactions.

Property both subtends our most pressing contemporary issues and is problematized, variably, throughout history and across cultures. Hippodamus's proposal for a system of urban planning tied land allocation to political, economic, and social factors; ideas of public goods have shaped the development of coastlines from the Gulf of Mannar to North Carolina. The Louvre stewarded cultural property in the service of both royal and republican interests; Tlingit clans inaugurate and maintain collective property, atóow, through ceremonies that Canadian colonial authorities sought to suppress and ethnographers attempted to theorize. Property destruction—the action and its mediation—is politically catalyzing, from environmental activists throwing soup at Van Gogh's Sunflowers to rioters burning buildings to the recent demolition of the East Wing of the White House. Such images raise issues of commensurability and the symbolic power of cultural, national, or religious patrimony. Property as an asset, a means of storing and producing value, is associated with particular timescales and types of risk. Collectors seek sound investments in an art market whose vagaries reflect the contributions of museums and galleries, historians and critics, artists and estates. Developers trade air rights and community groups use their land owner-

ship to resist gentrification. Metaphysical as well as material property inspires concern over its longevity as a source of value, if racial identity is constructed as property. Might property's dual senses—object and aspect—converge most saliently when value thus intersects with attribute?

Thresholds 55 seeks submissions that ask how art and architecture have historically informed and been formed by the definitions and structures of property. How do ideas of property inspire and emerge through particular social and economic relations, institutions and technologies, aesthetics and environments, ideas of the body and gender? How is the meaning of property negotiated not only through human relationships, but also between humans and non-human actors, objects, environments, and ideas of the spiritual? To what ends are objects claimed and by what means is ownership asserted? How do assumptions about property inflect our canons and criteria of value? What incentives for and strictures on creative production, on scholarship and criticism, are furnished by systems of authorship, ownership, and value? What disjunctures emerge in the conflicts between abstract ideas of property and its spatial and material manifestations?

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Submission deadline: May 1, 2026.

Please send your submission to thresh [at] mit.edu. Written submissions should be in English, approximately 3000 words in length, and formatted in accordance with the current Chicago Manual of Style. All submissions should include a cover letter (max. 200 words) as well as a biography (max. 50 words) and contact information for each author. Text submissions should be sent as .doc files. Where applicable, images should be submitted at 72 dpi as uncompressed .tif files. All scholarly submissions are subject to a double-blind peer review. Other creative proposals are not limited in size, medium or format.

Reference:

CFP: Thresholds 55: Property. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 29, 2026 (accessed Apr 29, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52097>>.