

Annual Symposium 2021

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY + CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Call for Participation

The architectural world is urgently focused on fighting the Climate Emergency, but most architectural history remains uncomfortably detached from this central challenge of our age.

Architecture and the wider built environment intersect in many ways with the drivers of catastrophic climate change. One of these is large-scale energy consumption. Others include deforestation, eco-system destruction, and wide-spread pollution connected to primary material procurement, such as timber, sand, and mining for metallic components, leading to ever-greater embodied energy inputs. By investigating the relationship between buildings and energy, in conjunction with these other factors, architectural history can reclaim its long-standing place as a central contributor to architectural debate and practice. Much more importantly, considering the history of architecture in this context can make a significant contribution to understanding and addressing the fossil fuel dependency and biodiversity crisis that threatens the continuation of life on Earth. Recent energy history scholarship by Wrigley; Kander, Malanima and Warde; and Smil, among others, has produced a powerful new lens through which to understand the history of humanity, and of one of history's most energy-hungry and environmentally damaging activities: construction.

The SAHGB invites proposals for papers of 15 minutes for an online symposium on how architectural history can better engage the Climate Emergency. Proposals considering any place and time through human history and prehistory are welcomed, especially those addressing non-western and pre-modern case studies. Thoughts are also welcome on how architectural history in educational settings can better address these concerns, raising awareness and leading to systematic reform of curricula.

Our provocation is that energy inputs are the single most influential factor in shaping the physical realities of architecture, and that the art and theory of architecture through time have also transformed with the changing tides of energy shifts. We also contend that other environmentally degrading processes associated with building practices the world over have an historical trajectory that ought to figure in our

understanding of architecture not only as a material object but also in terms of its impact on the planet. Indeed, that architectural history must now lift its game in addressing these concerns, calibrating its historiography and reforming its educational agendas, would seem evident. We welcome papers that support, complicate, or challenge this position.

Papers are encouraged in, but by no means limited to, the following areas and on the following questions:

- Case studies: how do/have specific buildings or architectural projects from any time period and geographical zone been shaped directly or indirectly by energy inputs. How do we identify, measure, and historicise these inputs?
- How can ‘new’ histories of architecture and the wider built environment account for the fundamental but mostly invisible factor of embodied energy in the procurement, processing, transportation, and construction processes embedded in building industries? In what ways can such an approach help us better appreciate and thus raise awareness of the historic ‘carbon footprint’ of building traditions through time?
- How can a radical material understanding of buildings provide further insights on architecture as a thermodynamic process? Can science and technology studies and construction history offer ways of accessing the history of architecture in these terms, considering chains of assemblage, production methods, and the culturally contingent co-production of architectural technologies?
- What has architectural history to teach us about changing attitudes to and technologies of maintenance, upgrading, demolition, recycling and replacement?
- How might the agenda of writing and teaching global architectural histories be assisted or inflected by giving increased consideration to the histories of energy and the environment?
- How might architectural histories addressing climate change address intersectional issues of race, gender and class? What opportunities might there be for architectural histories that give greater prominence to historically marginalised voices and those of the Global South?
- How might conventional canons of architectural history be modified or re-read in the light of the Climate Emergency?
- How do we rethink architectural historiography in a way that systemically rather than merely superficially addresses architecture’s role in manmade climate change? Are we currently

witnessing a 'Climate Emergency turn' in architectural scholarship? If so, what are its key methodological, theoretical, and historiographic registers and ambitions? How might the climate emergency prompt epistemic reflections about the disciplines and practices of architecture and architectural history?

- Considering Jane Hutton's notion of 'reciprocal landscapes', is there a history of architecture and the built environment that can reconcile the object history of buildings or urban landscapes with their literal impact on the environment through the harvesting of raw materials and the destruction this causes? Is it possible, or even desirable, to imagine 'national' histories of architecture that inflect our understanding of the built environment as an index to the net exportation of carbon emissions and/or environmental degradation?

Practical information

We welcome submissions from academics, practitioners and professionals of all disciplines and backgrounds for participation:

- Papers for Presentation
15-minute papers, tackling substantial historical perspectives or theoretical themes
- Roundtable Sessions
Discussions involving a number of participants focusing on a particular question/problem relating to the symposium theme.
- Virtual tours which explore these themes for a specific building
- Short features/papers for circulation/poster presentations for a microsite accompanying the programme
- Other suggestions for ancillary programming around the Symposium (including CPD, A/V content, film etc) are welcome

Respondents should indicate what type of submission they are proposing. The deadline for submission of proposals is 12 March 2021. Submissions should take the form of an abstract of maximum 250 words in length, submitted as a MS Word document using the form on our website: sahgb.org.uk/symposium2021. Please use the following file-naming convention:

SURNAMESymposium2021.docx

Please use the following formatting conventions:

Arial, 12pt, 1.5 line spaced

Please include your name and institutional affiliation (if you have one) at the head of the document (with a link to a faculty or department page if appropriate). Independent scholars are warmly encouraged to participate.

Proposals will be selected by: Barnabas Calder (University of Liverpool), G. A. Bremner (University of Edinburgh), Neal Shasore (University of Oxford), and Savia Palate (University of Cambridge). Successful participants will be notified by 2 April 2021.