

THE LAST OF ANIMAL BUILDERS

The Edith Farnsworth House
April 2, 2023 – November 26, 2023

FEATURING WORK BY

ASMA
Faysal Altunbozar
Selva Aparicio
Daniel Baird
Renée Green
Claudia Hart
Ragnar Kjartansson
Thiago Rocha Pitta
Joshi Radin
Michael Rakowitz

CURATED BY

Alberto Ortega Trejo

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

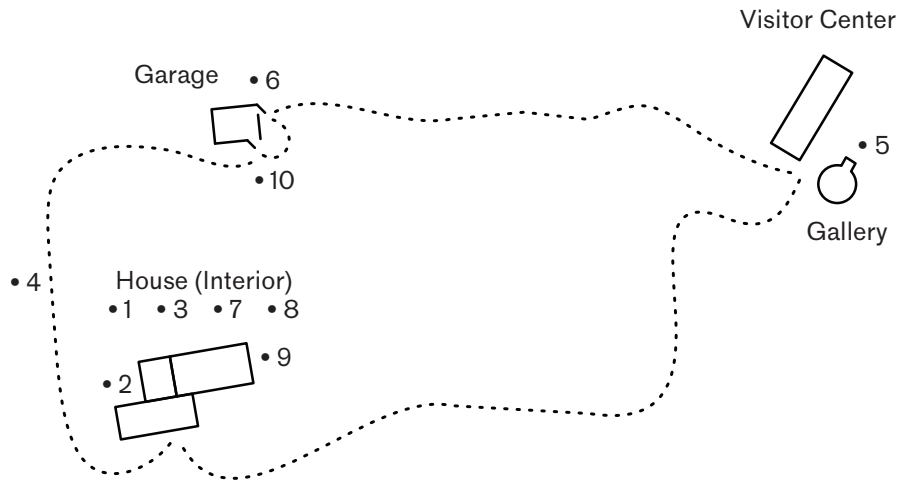
by Alberto Ortega Trejo

In 1970, one year before her death, the acclaimed architecture critic Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, in “Chapter Three: Defenseless Breeders,” of her unpublished manuscript titled *Pragma*, wrote:

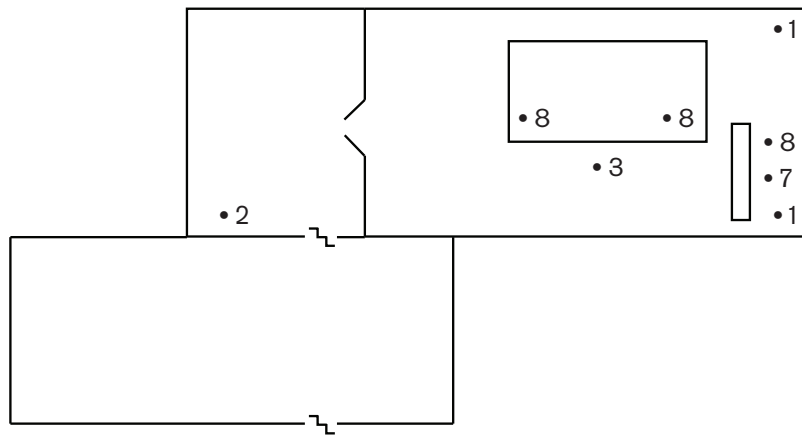
What distinguishes animal structure from human structure is this: in animal structure, structure and space are one. Structure is not means to span a functional void, but structure is the functional void: beehive, nest, spiderweb, etc. A secondary factor: there are no alternatives, which makes Mies (van der Rohe) and SOM, the last of animal builders.

With this declaration, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy allows us to think about the complex relations established between the human, the animal, nature, society and economy having architecture as its mediating and determining mechanism. By framing the work of Mies van der Rohe through the lens of animality, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy complicates classical understandings of the legacy of one of the most iconic architects of architectural modernity and forces us to engage with a multispecies ethics and politics as a fundamental aspect of the ways in which we produce our spaces and societies. By announcing the end of animal logic within architectural modernity and by declaring Mies van der Rohe as one of *The Last of Animal Builders*, Sibyl seems to expect the modern human to become something beyond its animal condition. Architecture, according to Sibyl’s writings, is the artificial matrix by which human societies refine their biological development. However, in such an argument she seems to unwillingly justify modernity as a logical stage in evolution, and in doing so, isolates it from its political condition. (cont.)

EXTERIOR



INTERIOR + PORCH



*From et aut es molessim dolorib
ustendant eum ex et quam lis ut alitas
ex et, www.example.com.

- ASMA
Habitational blouse
(composition I-IV), 2021
Hand printed and dyed organza,
metallic studs, metallic buttons.
120" x 120"
- Faysal Altunbozar
feeder no.7 (à rebours), 2023
Powder coated metal tubing,
leather, d-rings, zipper, sand,
ratchet straps, fruit, seeds, lard
73" x 72" x 36"
- Selva Aparicio
The Roots (Acto de Fe), 2023
Dandelion seeds, roots, and wood
from dead Farnsworth's Black
Sugar Maple Tree
29" x 19" x 4.5"
- Daniel Baird
Murmur, 2019-2023
10g welded steel basin, stand,
bronze, tubing, water, pump, flow
regulator
44" x 56" x 22"
- Renée Green
Begin Again, Begin Again, 2015
Single Channel SD Video
40 mins (Loop)
- Claudia Hart
The Ruins, 2020
Single-channel 4K video
10 mins (Loop)
- Ragnar Kjartansson
Burning House, 2015
Single channel digital video
1 hour, 23 mins (Loop)
- Joshi Radin
Tengger Desert
(From the Solarscapes series), 2022
Anthotype, 20" x 30"
- Michael Rakowitz
paraSITE, 1998 - ongoing
Plastic bags, polyethylene tubing,
hooks, tape
Variable Dimensions
- Thiago Rocha-Pitta
*Danaë nos jardins de górgona
ou nostalgia da pangeia*, 2011
Single-channel digital video
15 mins (Loop)

*From et aut es molessim dolorib
ustendant eum ex et quam lis ut alitas
ex et, www.example.com.

Ignam sunt et aut es molessim dolorib
ustendant eum ex et quam lis ut alitas
ex et, omni nvelenti commo quid
moluptate pratempes rerum sin
nobitae endipti:



farnsworthhouse.org

But the critical question emerging from such declarations resides in the possibility to think of the human as a chimeric being, an organism able to achieve all possible forms and formations by means of architecture, art and technology. We can say then, following this line of thinking, that we are human, only to the extent that we are able to create devices of chimerization, devices to allow our frail bodies not only to survive but to transform, to allow the possibilities of our thinking to expand, to create devices to endure hostile environments, to see and think through darkness, to attempt to think like other living organisms do, and to create a world where all potential intelligences are able to thrive.

Described by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy as *defenseless breeders*, humans connect with their fellow living organisms through mimicry and interdependence at best, or in exploitation and extraction at worst. By borrowing ideas and metaphors from the animal, vegetal, mineral and insect worlds, we have moulded our societies based on the kinds of interactions and behaviours we believe as efficient based on our perspective on the workings of non-human worlds. Throughout modernity and still determining our contemporary politics, the belief on the separation of the human and the “natural” has only worked to enhance relations of exploitation rather than of collaboration, co-existence and of mutual beneficial transformations. As a contemporary reinterpretation of the sculpture walk that occupied the property during Lord Peter Palumbo’s ownership of the house, this temporary exhibition brings artworks selected from Thoma Foundation’s Art Collection and works by contemporary artists to the Edith Farnsworth House and its landscape, but also spaces normally out of sight for visitors of this icon of architectural modernity.

The artworks selected from Thoma Foundation reflect on how architectural modernity, minimalism and capitalism have shaped our understandings of nature, the human, the non-human and economy. Bringing attention to the legacies of western modernity in architecture, and enabling a poetics of destruction and regeneration, these artworks engage with the existing architectures of the site through video installations. The artists selected to contribute with new and existing artworks, use plant, animal and mineral metaphors as a way to address social issues, questions of human desire and transformation, ways of engaging with the fragility of our bodies, and processes of thinking beyond and through anthropocentric power relations by means of sculpture and drawing.