

Living Architecture Systems Group Interviews

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During my sabbatical in 2016-17 I travelled to visit the studio and laboratories of core members of the LASG to learn about what they do and why they do it. I was not an interviewer looking in from the outside; I was an active participant with an agenda.

My agenda was to engage in conversations about living systems and how, as designers, we contribute to this endeavor. As I performed the interviews, I realized that sending ahead an essay about the theoretical issues I wanted to discuss, such as theories of the organic, enriched our conversations. I approached the interviews either from a scientific point of view or from a philosophical point of view. An essay on organicism in the sciences by Scott Gilbert and Sahotra Sarkar entitled "Embracing Complexity: Organicism for the 21st Century,"¹ informed interviews with Martyn Dade-Robinson, Rob Gorbet, Dana Kulić and Alan Macy. Mari Hvattum's essay,

1 Gilbert, Scott, and Sahotra Sarkar. "Embracing Complexity: Organicism for the 21st Century." *Developmental Dynamics* 219, no. 1 (2000): 1–9.

2 Hvattum, Mari. "Unfolding from Within": Modern Architecture and the Dream of Organic Totality." *The Journal of Architecture* 11, no. 4, (2006): 497-509.

- 3 van Eck, Caroline. "Organicism Revisited. The Desire for the Animation of the Inanimate Matter in the 19th Century." *Archithese* 43, no. 4 (2013): 52-58
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Additional Reference

van Eck, Caroline. *Organicism in Nineteenth Century Architecture, an Enquiry into Its Theoretical and Philosophical Background*. Amsterdam: Architectura et Natura Press, 1994.

“‘Unfolding from Within’: Modern Architecture and the Dream of Organic Totality,”² informed interviews with Philip Beesley, Colin Ellard, Carole Collet, Michael Stacey, Rachel Armstrong, Andreas Bueckle and myself (the latter conducted by Luke Kimmerer). Some of these essays appear in this edition of *White Papers*; the others will be published in a future volume.

Through these conversations I understood better the complexity of mimesis in bio-design and became even more convinced that the aesthetic philosophy of organicism that grew out of the Renaissance and flourished in the 19th century is even more relevant than ever.³ These interviews are a document of this search process that recalls a Socratic approach to learning and discovery.

Sarah Bonnemaison is a professor at Dalhousie University in the Faculty of Architecture and Planning. Her ongoing research interest is in architecture and its relation to nature, notably with the award-winning book, *Architecture and Nature, Creating the American Landscape*, (with Christine Macy). She is currently writing about the resurgence of organicism in architectural theory and practice. Her design practice in tensile structures has now evolved into creating exhibitions about topics such as the transformation of food in the modernist kitchen and the resurgence of organicism. The exhibition, along with the catalogue, are conceived as a research tool that grows in each place it lands.