

September 2017

CALL FOR PAPERS

Thermal Objects – Theorizing Temperatures and the Social

Special issue of *Culture Machine*, Vol.17 (2018)

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<http://www.culturemachine.net>

This special issue of *Culture Machine*, a peer reviewed and open access journal, will address thermal processes, bodies and media from interdisciplinary and international perspectives. When heat and cold appear in the humanities and social sciences, they are often treated exclusively as metaphors—think of Ferdinand Tönnies’s description of the modern, urbanized society as a cooling process that freezes the warm, authentic community; or Marshall McLuhan’s distinction between hot and cold media. While thermal metaphors turn out to be useful—perhaps even constitutive—tools that make abstract notions imaginable and tangible, recent discussions on the materiality of the social offer a productive background for new theorizations of temperatures that exceed their metaphorical valences.

This special issue aims to rethink the relation of metaphor and materiality: How can we theoretically account for thermal mechanisms as balance, transfer or collapse? What does it mean to perform hot or cool critical theoretical interventions? These and other questions will be investigated across three temperature-related dimensions: the senses, thermic media and thermopolitics.

Sensory studies has addressed experiences that are not explicitly listed in the classical five senses, such as the sense of motion and the sense of temperature. But is thermoception only an additional field for sensory studies, or does it also inflect our understanding of the social? In contrast to the sense of sight, which separates the seeing body from the object world, the thermal sense challenges the subject/object divide. When we move away from the human body, the question of thermoception gets even more complicated, since there is no subjective position from which temperature could be sensed. How can we theoretically think more-than-human thermal objects and elements? When we grasp thermal phenomena as media, their material characteristics and properties become visible; for instance, their rhythms and movements, and their capacity to store, transfer, and conduct, but also their relatively short half-life.

The biological notion of homeostasis, which is crucial to cybernetic thought, turns us towards important questions related to the measurement, control, and regulation of temperature, which not only takes place on the level of internal organization, but on a broader political scale (think

of new thermal technologies of sensory control, as well as thermally organized biopolitics). While the special issue aims to focus attention on the importance of temperature and thermal objects to questions of climatic change, it also seeks to foreground the intrinsic thermic qualities of the social that have led to global warming's proliferation.

Contributions are invited though not limited to the following topics:

Tempered senses

- Thermoception and the anthropology/sociology of the senses
- Skin-topologies and thermal bodies: the (dis)organization of vital energy
- Architectural thermic spaces and tempered atmospheres
- Thermal pleasure and delight

Thermic media

- Hot and Cool in media theory
- Temperature problems of media infrastructures (e.g. heat as computing-power and engineering problem)
- Data storage and freezing information

Thermopolitics

- Figures of thermal control in utopian and dystopian fiction
- History of the sciences: historical discourses of temperature, thermodynamics and cybernetics
- New thermal technologies: sensors, surveillance and control
- Thermal practices of resistance

Please submit your contributions to Elena Beregow

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The deadline for submission of articles of 4000-6000 words is 19th January 2018. If you wish to discuss potential contributions ahead of submitting completed articles, please feel free to contact the editor.

Please consult *Culture Machine's* Guidelines for Authors:

<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/about/submissions#authorGuideline>