BIRDSEYEVIEW

FERAL
PARTNERSHIPS

San Mei Gallery

8 April – 21 May

Birds have taken to cities for as long as humans have been building them. From pigeon to swift to Peregrine falcon, a multitude of bird species have come to depend upon human-made structures and environments for shelter and sustenance. People throughout history have responded in kind, building elaborate birdhouses, dovecotes, and towers to celebrate birds and to shape their interspecies relationships to mutual advantage.

However the global expansion of urban environments also poses threats to avian species. Today, the risks to birds are heightened. Industrialisation has led to the abandonment of (agri)cultural practices which humans had developed in partnership with birds over centuries. Modern buildings and methods of construction are confusing to birds' senses and offer limited nesting opportunities, sealing off eaves and cavities that were important sites for inhabitation. And while many bird species are familiar with crossing vast distances, it seems now all birds are on the move, undertaking precarious new migrations prompted by climate breakdown and biodiversity loss.

Presenting the city from a bird's eye view, this exhibition speculates upon how creative practices of multispecies care might help to secure the shared futures of birds and people in an uncertain, volatile world.

Window

Billions of birds die each year due to flying into windows: the single largest human cause of bird mortality.[1] Glass has been made too large, and too transparent for the senses of avians to detect.

To memorialise this loss of life, and to raise awareness of how we might prevent further deaths, an artwork to the gallery window has been created using UV liquid paint, which is virtually transparent to human eyes but visible to most bird species.

A visit to the Gallery at night will see the artwork revealed to human eyes.

1—Klem Jr, Daniel. "Avian mortality at windows: the second largest human source of bird mortality on earth." In Proceedings of the Fourth International Partners in Flight Conference: Tundra to Tropics, vol. 244251. 2008.

Tower of Silence

We start inside the exhibition with the Tower of Silence, or Dakhma: a funerary structure designed to the vulture's eye view (Object A, Shelf 1–4).

Originating with the Zoroastrian communities of Persia three thousand years ago, the Tower of Silence is the product of an extraordinary relationship between humans and vultures, mediated by the funerary practice of *dokhmenashini*. Human dead are presented on high open platforms, at the tops of mountains and open to the sky, for their excarnation and consumption by avian scavengers.

Bodies are placed in depressions in concentric circles around the *dakhma*'s central pit. The carrion birds quickly reduce the bodies to the bone, which are then sprinkled and washed with nitric acid and slaked lime, catalysing their disintegration in the central pit.[2] The contamination of groundwater is avoided through filtration by layers of sandstone, sand and charcoal, contained in underground channels and pits. This process ensures that a corpse should not come into contact with the sacred elements of earth, fire, air and water, in accordance with Zoroastrian practices; and instead be consumed by sun, time and carrion birds.

The practice endured in Persia until the 1970s, when it was outlawed by Iranian authorities, but continues intermittently in India. In Mumbai, the Zoroastrian Parsi community maintains three dakhmas on Malabar hill in

2—Desai, Sapur Feradun (1977). History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, 1860-1960. Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties.

the heart of the city.[3] However, the viability of the practice is threatened by a collapse in vulture populations, in an example of how the diversity of human cultural practices is impoverished by species extinction.

A. Dakhma, clay model
by Feral Partnerships

1. Tower of Silence, Mumbai, India, 1890
Source: alamy.com https://www.alamy.com/tower-of-silence-bombay-mumbai-india-image66168300.html

2. Dakhma, plan drawing
by Francesca Rausa with Feral Partnerships

3. "The burial place of the Parsees in India"
Source: SHOKOOHY, MEHRDAD. "The Zoroastrian Towers of Silence in the Ex-Portuguese Colony of Diu." Bulletin of the Asia Institute 21 (2007): 61–78. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24049363.

4. Dakhma, section
by Francesca Rausa with Feral Partnerships

Houses for Pigeons

Houses for pigeons - known variably as dovecote, columbarium, colombier, culvery, doocot, pigeon cote or pigeon tower - are found in a diversity of cultural

3—Bachi Karkaria. "Death in the City: How a Lack of Vultures Threatens Mumbai's 'Towers of Silence'" The Guardian, Monday 26 January 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/26/death-city-lack-vultures-threatens-mumbai-towers-of-silence

and climatic contexts around the world, and in a range of architectural forms, materials and construction techniques.

Hundreds of dovecotes can be found in and around the city of Isfahan, dating largely from the 15th to 18th century Safavid era (B, 5). Each structure could accommodate thousands of Persian wild pigeons in specially-designed nooks (6). The birds' dung or guano was collected and used as a fertiliser to supplement nitrogen-poor soils and for softening leather in Isfahan's tanneries.[4]

Dovecotes served a similar purpose in Anatolia, Turkey, where they range from rectilinear constructions such as at Diyarbakir (7), to cave-like constructions that recall the pigeon's 'natural' homes in cliff faces (8). In Kayseri, in the Derevenk Valley, pigeon manure was harvested to fertilise grape vines for wine. Stone chimneys protrude from underground pigeon dwellings, excavated from the steep hillsides (9). The interior is kept warm for pigeons by orienting the openings to permit sunlight to enter while keeping out cold north winds.

The Greek island of Tinos contains over one thousand highly ornate homes for pigeons known as Peristeriones (10–12). In feudal times, Venetian traders domesticated the birds for their meat, lubricating fat, communication capabilities and nutrient rich manure, bringing them to

4—Aryan, Amirkhani & Parham, Baghaie & Taghvaee, Ali & Reza, Pourjafar & Ansari, Mojtaba. (2009). Isfahan's dovecotes: Remarkable edifices of Iranian vernacular architecture. Middle East Technical University Journal of the Faculty of Architecture. 26. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26638014_Isfahan's_dovecotes_Remarkable_edifices_of_Iranian_vernacular_architecture

landscapes around the Mediterranean.[5] Projecting walls shelter eclectic triangular and diagonal openings from strong island winds, and horizontal ledges protect the elevated openings from snakes and other predators, while allowing many surfaces for pigeons to nest, sit and rest between flights.

Situated amidst arable fields, cities and populations reliant on their precious holdings, these dovecotes were a significant source of local revenue, and their importance is reflected in the plethora of symbolic, religious, and social decorations (far exceeding that of human dwellings). Decoration was also intended to make them easily recognisable to pigeons. At Tinos geometry is thought to play this role, and distinctive red patterned bands were used at Isfahan, as the renowned Persian expertise in pattern and colour here became used as an inter-species semiotic device.

Dovecotes may also be found across the British Isles and Western Europe (13) where they became a common element of the great country houses. The dovecote was employed by Palladio, for example, to bookend the productive agricultural wings of villas in Veneto. Many of these original wings have been subsequently removed, associated with a shift away from productive agriculture; conversely at Villa Trissino only the dovecote and a portion of the wing remains (14).

5—R. Orazi, 'The dovecotes of Tinos', *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre*, 1 – 2 (1998), pp.52 – 63.

While pigeon rearing remains a popular practice around the world, the dovecote and the nutrient rich soils they facilitated have become redundant with the rise of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, leaving many of these buildings - and the ecologies they fostered - in ruins. Meanwhile, their synthetic replacements are heating the climate through fertiliser production, disrupting ecosystems in land and sea through nitrogen run-off, and unintentionally leading to infertility in creatures of all kinds.[6]

B. Dovecote of Isfahan
Model by Feral Partnerships with Polygenic Studio

5. Pigeon Tower with truncated pyramidal section. Isfahan, Iran.
Source: R. Orazi, 'The dovecotes of Tinos', Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre, 1 – 2 (1998), pp.52 – 63.

6. Interior of a Dovecote near Isfahan, Iran.
Source: ismeo.eu https://www.ismeo.eu/portfolio_page/borj-e-kabotar-architecture-and-anthropology-of-the-pigeon-towers-in-the-isfahan-province/

6—The Haber-Bosch Process for synthetic fertiliser contributes 1.44% of CO2 emissions, 1-2% of global energy production and 3-5% of natural gas. https://youmatter.world/en/definition/what-haber-bosch-process-ecological-impact/ Subsequent nitrogen run-off from fields is creating vast 'dead zones' in freshwater and marine ecosystems. https://e360.yale.edu/features/can-the-world-find-solutions-to-the-nitrogen-pollution-crisis. Impact on human fertility https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160302082257.htm

7. Dovecote near Diyarbakır, Turkey
Source: diyarbakirhafizasi.org
https://diyarbakirhafizasi.org/en/both-a-means-of-living-and-a-way-of-life-animal-husbandry/

8. Dovecote in Uzgenti Valley, Urgup, Turkey.
Source: Cappadociahistory.com https://www.cappadociahistory.com/post/agricultural-cave-spaces

9. Kayseri Dovecote,Turkey.
Source: cdn.goturkiye.com https://cdn.goturkiye.com/kayseri/gesi-vineyards-and-pigeon-houses-2.jpg

10. Elevation Studies of the Dovecotes of Tinos
by Justine Rudock (jrud7233@uni.sydney.edu.au) and Jade Grayson (jgra0933@uni.sydney.edu.au) in the University of Sydney's 'Architecture of Multispecies Cohabitation' Design Studio, 2022.

11. Dovecotes in Tinos, Greece.
R. Orazi, 'The dovecotes of Tinos', Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre, 1 – 2 (1998), pp.52 – 63.

12. Dovecotes in Tinos, Greece.
R. Orazi, 'The dovecotes of Tinos', Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre, 1 – 2 (1998), pp.52 – 63.

13. The interior of a colombier on the French island of Oleron.
source: pascal_nl/Creative Commons https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/09/the-history-of-the-dovecote-is-all-about-birds-and-status.html

14. Dovecote at Villa Trissino, Andrea Palladio.
source: wikipedia https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/19/ArcadeVillaTrissino

Theatres of Care

> *'The Turks… consider it a great sin to kill and destroy captured birds, and prefer to ransom them with money, and release them into their previous state of freedom, [so] that they may fly away… Pieces of raw meat are … carried about the city on spits, which the Turks buy and throw up to the kites, which fly about in crowds, and catch them in their claws ... A countless number of these kites fly over the city, and the Turks allow no one to shoot or injure them.'*
> — Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw, 1591[7]

> *Mosque and grove, ancient wall and garden, palace and courtyard, are full of song, of the cheerful sound of twittering and chirping; everywhere there is the rush of wings, everywhere the busy, active little lives go on.* [8]
> — Edmondo de Amicis, 1878

The Ottoman era (1299–1922) in Western Asia has been characterised by a very strong ethic of care towards street animals such as dogs, cats, and prominently, birds. Care for animals was considered an indicator of religious and social virtue, and central to a set of laws and rituals that anticipate (and exceed) contemporary performative practices of multispecies care in the built environment.[9]

7—Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw, 1591 in The Adventures of Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw. 2013. Cambridge University Press

8—Edouardo de Amicis, 1877. Constantinople. trans. Caroline Tilton. London: G.P. Putnam & Sons

9—Cihangir Gundogdu, "The animal rights movement in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic: The Society for the Protection of Animals (Istanbul, 1912)" In: Suraiya Faroqhi, ed. 2010. Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul: Muhittin Salih Eren.

The Ottoman regard for urban birds is perhaps epitomised by the elaborate, decorative bird palaces that were carved into the eaves of many buildings or placed on facades of mosques, which were centres of animal care (15–17).[10]

Sculpted paving stones are often found embedded in the street in front of houses, which were used as dishes to leave food scraps and water for urban birds, as well as stray dogs and cats (18).

Sculpted pavers inspired by this artefact of Ottoman multispecies care have been produced in collaboration with artists Studio Hot Mess (C).

15. Bird palace on the tomb of Sultan Mustafa III, Laleli, Istanbul, 1759-1763.
source: Christiane Gruber https://www.journal18.org/issue11/like-hearts-of-birds-ottoman-avian-microarchitecture-in-the-eighteenth-century/

16. Ottoman era Bird Palaces, drawing
by Feral Partnerships

17. Bird House on the Ayazma Mosque, Istanbul. Turkey.
source: flickr
https://weburbanist.com/2017/08/07/for-the-birds-ottoman-style-miniature-palaces-house-our-feathered-friends/

10—Zeynep Gül Söhmen Tunay, "The Function of the Ornament: Bird Palaces in Ottoman Architecture." In: Archi-Cultural Interactions through the Silk Road 4th International Conference, Nishinomiya, Japan, July 16-18, 2016

18. Ottoman Paver
Source: reddit
https://www.reddit.com/r/interestingasfuck/comments/ev6vih/the_ottomans_placed_carved_cobblestones_on/

C. Sculpted Paver
by Studio Hotmess (Charlotte Moore & Maria Saeki)

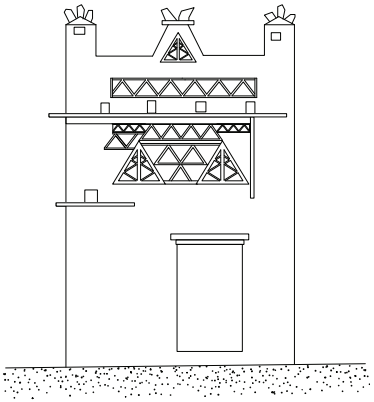
Migrations

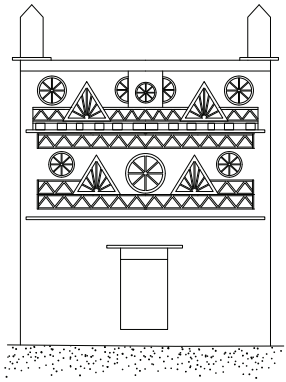
For migrating birds, architecture can play the role of a stop-over or secure breeding site in an otherwise nomadic existence on the wing.

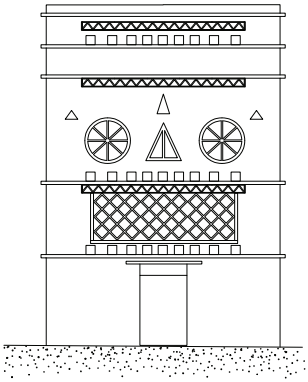
Ottoman benefactors set up stork hospitals along intercontinental migration routes to assist stricken birds on their long journey (19–20). An example is the Stork Hospital in the province of Bursa, known as the *Gurabahâne-i Laklakan* (House for Injured Storks).[11] Once the storks were cared for and recovered, they were then set free.

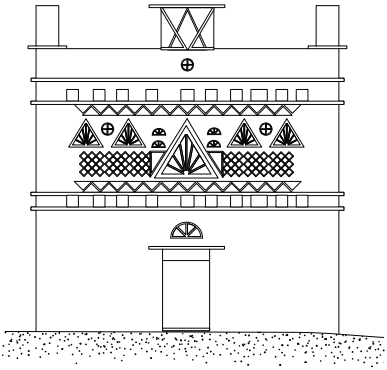
Storks are widely known across Europe for their charismatic nesting structures, built upon chimney stacks, church belfrys, and other tall man-made structures along their migration routes (21). A once familiar sight, ingrained in folklore, their range contracted greatly post the 18th century as changes in agricultural practice and industrialisation restricted their preferred habitat. In recent years they have been returning in response to

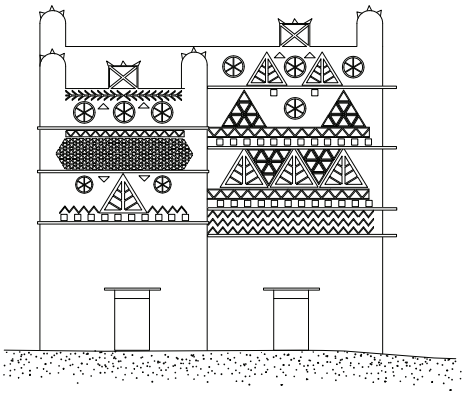
11—bursayitanitiyor.com. "Gurabahane-i Laklakan- First Animal Hospital", March 8, 2012.

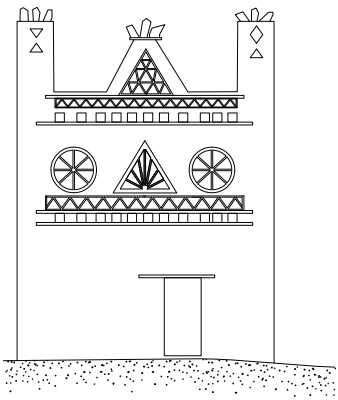


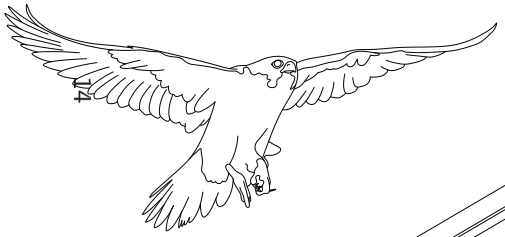


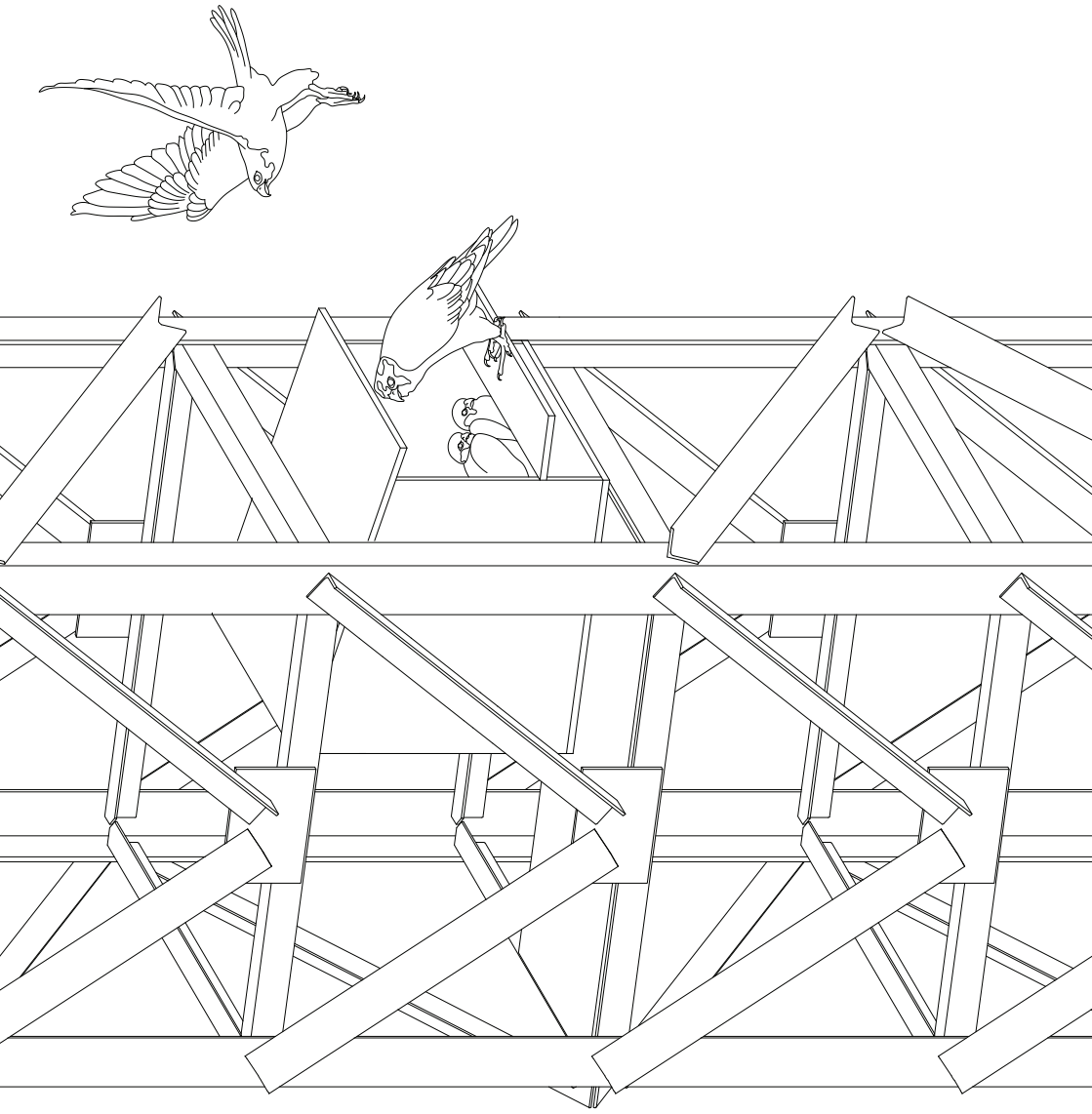


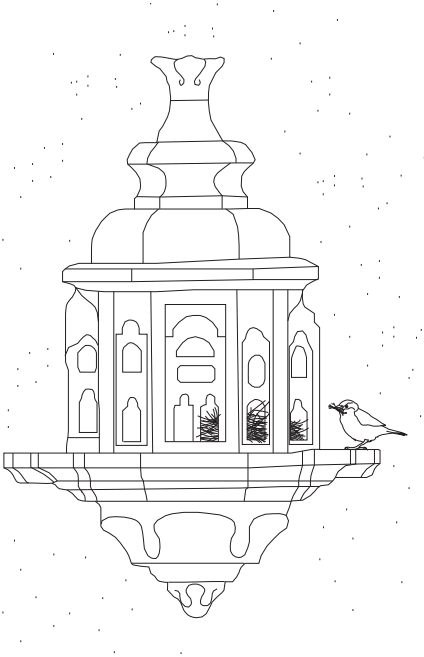


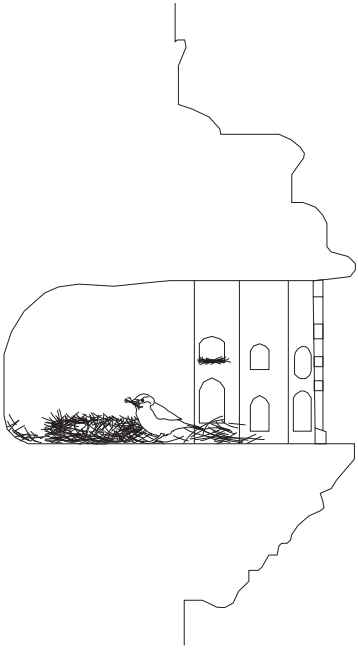


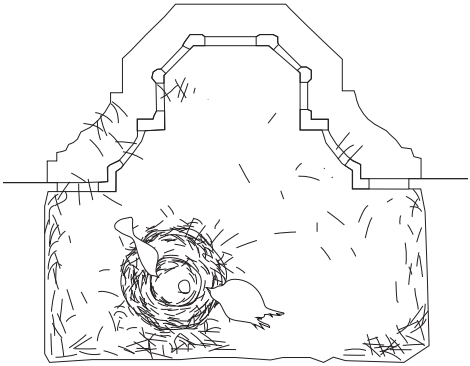












landscape regeneration efforts. At the Palazzo di Racconigi near Turin, Italy, storks were originally encouraged to make their nests on the ornamental vases crowning the wings of the palace; after disappearing in the 18th century, they have now returned after a 1989 reintroduction effort (22). In the UK, storks are now nesting in the turrets of Knepp castle in Sussex, which in 2020 hosted the first successful breeding pair in the UK since 1416.[12] While they have benefitted from suitable perches, key to these returns have been wider landscape transformations that create their preferred open, flooded pasture.

In the UK, one of the most well-known and important studies of migrating birds and architecture is of the swifts that inhabit the tower of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (23–24). They have been continuously studied since 1948, and made the subject of a classic 1956 book "Swifts in a Tower", which brought the often secret nesting behaviour of the birds into the public consciousness.[13] Much of British scientific knowledge about swift migration and behaviour has come from the swifts studied and tracked from their nesting sites in the museum (25). Their sojourn for breeding in the tower is the only grounded moment in a life otherwise spent on the wing, and swifts will often return to and hand down familiar nesting sites across generations.

12—Barkham, Patrick. "First wild stork chicks to hatch in UK in centuries poised to emerge" The Guardian. Sunday 26 April 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/26/uk-first-wild-stork-chicks-hatch-centuries. See also https://www.whitestorkproject.org/.

13—Lack, David. 1956. Swifts in a Tower. London: Chapman and Hall.

19. Three storks at the stork nursery, Bursa, circa 1900
Source: Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey / GRI Special Collections
https://www.trtworld.com/life/an-ottoman-era-hospital-for-storks-in-bursa-still-cares-for-animals-38466

20. Migration patterns of an individual satellite-tracked White Stork.
Source: Berthold et al. (2002) J. Ornithol. 143: 490, with permission of the German Ornithologists' Society.
https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Migration-patterns-of-an-individual

21. Storks Nesting on Chimney
Source: James the Sweep
https://jamesthesweep.co.uk/birds-nest-in-chimney-removal-prevention-and-advice/

22. Storks nesting at the Castello di Racconigi
source: Wikipedia https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a8/Castello_di_Racconigi.jpg

23. Swift Tower at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History
Source: Oxford University Museum of Natural History
https://oumnh.ox.ac.uk/learn-swifts-in-the-tower

24. Swift Tower at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History
by Feral Partnerships

25. Swift Migration Map
Source: Oxford University Museum of Natural History.
https://oumnh.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/oumnh/images/media/migration-swift_2.jpg

London's Natural History

R. S. R. FITTER's *London's Natural History*[14] portrays the ecological history of London through the lens of its human relationships (26-28). Fitter denounces London's progressive *sterilisation*; and describes a series of processes in which animals and plants have been "displaced, re-introduced, lost, and forgotten"[15] in order to shape the London we inhabit today. He also describes how species other-than-human have come to live in and adapt to urban spaces by human instigation or assistance. This wartime survey of London's ecological landscapes remains remarkably current. St James's Park, St Paul's Cathedral, Trafalgar Square still provide the very same avian scenes portrayed in 1945, together with a continuing urban role of birds as spectacle. Streets, squares and parks remain places where Londoners - both humans and non-human - come together.

At the same time, the ubiquity of bird spikes (29) that can be seen on favoured bird perches hints at the contradictory treatment of urban birds.

26. Pelicans in St James' Park
Source: Fitter R. London's Natural History p. 132

27. Waterfowl, South African grey-headed shellduck, mallards in St James' Park
source: Fitter R. London's Natural History. p. 121

14—Fitter, Richard. 1990. London's Natural History. Repr. of the ed. 1946 with a new forew. by the author. The New Naturalist. London: Bloomsbury.

15—Scalbert, Irénée. "London After the Green Belt." AA Files, no. 66 (2013): 3–16. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23595435.

28. Feeding pigeons in front of St Paul's Cathedral
Source: Fitter R. London's Natural History p. 33

29. Bird Deterrent Device
Cameron A. Riddell
Source: https://patents.google.com/patent/US6718701B2/en

Aviary

The Snowdon Aviary at London Zoo, designed by Cedric Price with Frank Newby and Lord Snowdon in 1962, was the first walk-through aviary in the UK (30–31).

In 1960, a memorandum dedicated to the 'Future Policy on Bird Collections' was published by the zoo's committee. This made recommendations for improvements to specimen visibility, and prompted proposals for a large outdoor bird cage, designed to minimise the appearance of captivity.[16] The aviary was formed from aluminium tubes fashioned into tetrahedrons, draped with aluminium netting, and was said to be inspired by the movement of birds in flight. Price claimed that captivity was not a permanent condition in the aviary, rather, "that once the community was established, it would be possible to remove the netting. The skin was a temporary feature: it only needed to be there long enough for the birds to feel at home."[17]

16—Bird Spot. 2020. Defying Gravity – The Snowdon Aviary. birdspot.co.uk/a-little-bird/history/defying-gravity-the-snowdon-aviary

17—Alsop, W. "Flight of Fancy," The Guardian, Saturday, 18 June 2005, www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2005/jun/18/architecture.

Price's vision of a grand un-netting was never realised, and the aviary's transparent "skin" proved to be more porous than originally anticipated. The gaps in the mesh were intended to be small enough to keep aggressive urban birds out, but large enough to resist icing. However, the smaller module was found to increase loading to an unacceptable level, and the resulting mesh size proved to admit foraging sparrows. To counter this, a group of hooded vultures was introduced to guard not who was getting out, but who was coming in.[18]

Over time, the aviary fell into disrepair, and proved to be no longer suitable for avian inhabitation. Price, an advocate for adaptable architecture, might be pleased to know that the aviary will soon have a new, rather different set of residents, following a complete overhaul by Foster + Partners: the zoo's troop of Colobus monkeys.

30. Aviary at London Zoo, drawings by Cedric Price
Source: Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)
https://www.cca.qc.ca/img-collection/8Jiu1psE3KatgHKMU2retzyOO24=/1400x2012/394961.jpg

31. Aviary at London Zoo
Source: Architectural Press Archive / RIBA Collections

18—Steiner, H. A. (2016). Birds of a feather: Habit, habituate, habitat, habitivity. In The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture (pp. 71-89). Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315687896

Policy Traps

Distributed throughout the exhibition are examples of contemporary design for birds (Objects D–J).

Many of these bird bricks have been designed to provide alternative nesting opportunities for birds who have evolved to inhabit the gaps, joints and cavities of pre-industrialised construction over thousands of years, and are made homeless by modern, sealed building envelopes. Their installation in buildings is intended as a vital mitigation for this loss, while the variety of bird brick products themselves is testament to the diversity of affected species, as well as the popular desire to aid charismatic, threatened birds.

Bird bricks are also commonly employed in new buildings to score more highly on sustainability metrics such as BREEAM, or to meet biodiversity 'net gain' targets set by a local planning authority. However, the relationship of the bird brick to new development is a problematic one.

At Kingsbrook, in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (32–34), the story of species such as the swift or house martin has been subversively used as part of a dubious claim that developing a greenfield site can provide 'net gains' in biodiversity.[19] In this context, the simplicity and appeal of the product and the charismatic bird species becomes open to manipulation by the greenwashing tendencies of

19—Nyul, Helen, "Barratt Developments' commitment to ensuring biodiversity net gain". Natural England. 22 January 2019. https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2019/01/22/barratt-developments-commitment-to-ensuring-biodiversity-net-gain/

neoliberal development. Here, bird brick becomes less an ecological contribution than a 'policy trap' for codifiable species.

Kingsbrook has been lauded at the highest levels of UK government policy, which looks to unite biodiversity pledges with the increased development of greenfield sites to meet housing targets.[20] It threatens to set a precedent for the one million new homes that are planned on the belt of greenfield land between Oxford and Cambridge nearby.[21] Yet to truly achieve a 'net gains' in biodiversity and halt further ecological loss, we will need much more holistic and integrated approaches to architecture, landscape and the cohabitation of human and non-human life.

D. Kingfisher Tunnel
by Vivara Pro

E. House Martin Nest
by Vivara Pro

F. Grey Wagtail Dipper Nest Box
by Vivara Pro

G. Barn Owl Nest Box for Buildings
by Barn Owl Trust

20—Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs White Paper, 11 January 2018: "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment". pp.147. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan

21—Monbiot, George. "How did wildlife groups start collaborating in the destruction of nature?" The Guardian. Wednesday 24 June 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/24/how-did-wildlife-groups-start-collaborating-in-the-destruction-of-nature-

H. Standard, Swift and Sparrow Terrace Houses
by Bird Brick Houses

J. S-Bricks
by Action for Swifts

K. Gutter Boxes
by Feral Partnerships

32. Kingsbrook Estate, Aylesbury
source: bucksfreepress.co.uk
https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/resources/images/13287857/

33. Great Tit entering a nesting box
source: birdbrickhouses.co.uk
https://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MarieStone-2936.jpg

34. The Kingsbrook Design Guide
by Feral Partnerships

Battersea Falcon Tower

"The peregrine falcon is the fastest animal on Earth" reads the first sentence on the Battersea Power Station development web page describing their obligations towards this species.[22] By the 1960s peregrine falcons were almost extinct in Britain. Pervasive use of DDT caused a steep decline in populations of predatory birds throughout our planet. However, some found refuge in cities, where their

22—Battersea Power Station. 2022. Battersea Power Station: The Best Peregrine Address. [online] Available at: https://batterseapowerstation.co.uk/news/article/peregrines-at-battersea-power-station>.

main food source - pigeons - was free of pesticides (if not a host of urban pollutants) and where tall buildings provided the perfect habitat for their hunting behaviour.

The first peregrines were spotted in London in the 1990s. A pair reportedly "moved in" at Battersea Power Station in the year 2000. Peregrines receive the strongest of legal protection under the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act, making them a rather impactful resident on one of the biggest redevelopments in London. It is illegal to disturb them, so the one small family of falcons could stall the entire construction process for months, at significant cost, so the development looked instead to intervene in their nesting habits by constructing an alternative nest site to tempt away the birds from the area of site works.

Costing more than £100,000, a 50m tall steel tower was erected (35–38). At its top, a wooden nesting box placed at exactly the same height as the original nest on the Power Station. When construction is complete in 2022, a more permanent nest will be installed in the Station's northeastern wash house.

Speciesism of this kind is enshrined in the planning system and illustrates the lengths we go to for more "charismatic" species. In contrast, the vast majority are given zero protection in development proceedings, simply because they fall outside of "protected" and "priority" classifications.

35. Battersea Power Station and Peregrine Falcon Tower, Drawing
by Feral Partnerships

36. Peregrine Falcon, Temporary Nesting Box
Source: dailymail.co.uk
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9282063/Owners-20mil-pent

37. Peregrine Falcon Chicks
Source: i.guim.co.uk
https://i.guim.co.uk/img/media/cf8ac479cb5af71bf0956cbf99de136a227df

38. Battersea Power Station, Peregrine Falcon Tower and Temporary Nesting Box Drawing
by Feral Partnerships

A House for Ornithologists

A House for Ornithologists (L) is a project first proposed by Feral Partnerships in 2019 as an alternative housing development model, set against contemporary paradigms based on the codified mitigation of human ecological damage.

Installed along field margins, embedded into a linear earth bank and ditch, the linear housing typology is designed to become enveloped in vegetation, and their proliferation restores lost hedgerows. This produces a patchwork urbanism of inhabited linear woods that still maintains productive land for sustainable food production, forestry, or wild 'corridors' (39–40).

In a wild landscape, the architectural enclosures provide refuges for youth of all species: the room for a human child, or the nest for the bird before its fledging. The architecture considers the growth of the human child, and is designed to choreograph ecological “epiphanies”: transformative encounters with wildness during childhood to which ecologists commonly attribute their lifelong dedication to wildlife. Multispecies cohabitation in this way becomes an empowering condition that brings our forgotten relationships with birds - and many other species - back into the human everyday.

L. A House for Ornithologists: 1:25 Model
by Feral Partnerships

39. A House for Ornithologists: Wilderness Section
by Feral Partnerships

40. A House for Ornithologists: Sectional drawing from a Bird’s Eye View
by Feral Partnerships

Feral Partnerships is a design collective founded by Matthew Darmour-Paul, James Powell, Enrico Brondelli di Brondello & Beth Fisher Levine, born out of frustration with professional and academic practice standards in architecture around ecological and biodiversity loss. Their work has been presented at the POLLEN Biennial Conference 2020 and the London Festival of Architecture 2021, and was the subject of a solo exhibition at the University of Sydney's Tin Sheds Gallery in 2021.

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