Günther Feuerstein

Biomorphic Architecture
Menschen- und Tiergestalten in der Architektur
Human and Animal Forms in Architecture

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Mankind needs to relate to inanimate matter as well. Mankind «ani-
mates» stones, mountains, rivers, yes even the world and the cos-
mos so that it can communicate with them.

There is quite clearly a need to initiate individual contact also
with architecture, with our surroundings. This is easier if we can
also recognize certain characteristics of our own bodies in the
constructed bodies of the built environment. We can go well be-
yond the common phenomenon of corporeality to find countless
analogies between buildings and human beings, thus demonstrat-
ing a first step towards an anthropomorphy of architecture. These
statements become clearer if a column is interpreted as an anthro-
omorphic element. If certain features in façades are reminiscent
of a pair of eyes, then architectural physiognomy helps us to a dia-
logue: the building is looking at us, in the direct sense of the word.

In the world of Christian symbolism the church – spatially and
theologically – is constantly compared with the body of Christ, and
thus becomes an image of a man-god. The church is the »mysteri-
ous body of Christ«, and all parts of the building become meta-
phors of Christ and his congregation.

The «organic» architecture of the 20th century in its three-dimen-
sional and sculptural manifestations constantly addresses the cor-
poreality of biological creatures. In very recent times we are sur-
prised how often the metaphor of man and architecture occurs: in
the work of Ricardo Porro, Imre Makovecz, Santiago Calatrava,
Reima Pietilä and others.

Zoomorphic architecture is a variant of anthropomorphic archi-
tecture. Elephants, birds, fishes, insects do not just appear in
many current works of modern architecture like those of Frank O.
Gehry and Coop Himmelblau, they are also absurd manifestations
of trivial architecture that has also to be considered in its everyday
quality.

If we are talking about «expanded» architecture, then cities, the
world and even the cosmos have to be included. Mankind is still
moved by the transfer from man as microcosm to the universe as
macrocosm.

Günther Feuerstein, who was a professor at the Hochschule für Ge-
staltung in Linz and also a lecturer at the Akademie der bildenden Künn-
ste and at the Technische Universität in Vienna until his retirement, must
be considered the catalyst in the Viennese post-war architectural
scene, as almost all architectural avant-garde groups of the town have
come from his circle.