

## Material Histories

“Materials have histories, and these histories deeply affect the ways they have been used and the meanings they carry” Jessica Sewell and Andrew Scott Johnston recently wrote on *Platform*.

In this seminar we will look at the history of the architecture of the last two centuries by following the thread of the history of materials. Starting from case studies and critical readings, we will discuss the ways in which buildings of the past and the practice of architecture were affected by which materials were available, how they were produced, and the craft required to work them. Materials affect the way we engage with a building sensorially, and at key moments in the history of architecture there were many implications to the architects' material choices. Materials carry cultural meanings connected with complex histories. We will reflect on how architects have interpreted, manipulated, or added to those meanings through their own work. Materials' lifecycles and the networks of extraction, production, transportation, and reuse had an impact on the built environment in the past, just as they do today. We will learn from historical examples to critically assess the consequences of the choices we make as designers. We will highlight how the meanings attached to materials – such as timber, steel, brick, plaster and concrete – changed over time, as construction moved from craft-based to industrialized, and how these stories of change were deeply and at times messily connected with the social, political and ecological context. Finally, we will critically engage with the presence of history as a layer of complexity embedded in the material itself – an effect that is compounded in the practice of reuse of materials with patina, marked from their past use.

Image: Brett Weston – Wrecked Building 1976