

As we are becoming ever more interconnected through our digital world, there is a growing realization of how disconnected we have become from our physical world. Our digital world has connected our minds, and in the process revealed the interconnectedness and consequences of our actions in the physical world.

Like Adam and Eve, our eyes have been opened, we have consumed the forbidden fruit, have lost our innocence, and become strangers in our own world. We now find ourselves in a place that is somehow familiar, but also different, one without reference, as our values have become questionable.

In this kind of world, when Filarete's Adam is confronted with hostile weather for the first time, he throws up his arms to cover his head (fig. 1.). In realising the need for more permanent protection, he recalls the action and shape of his arms, which fortuitously creates a stable form when constructed with branches. This becomes the first reference, and architecture (fig. 2.).

We find ourselves in a world with many things left behind from our past. Our situation is comparable to the analogy in the 1977 book, *Roadside Picnic* by the Strugatsky brothers, where the character Dr Valentine Pilman, compares a visitation from extra-terrestrials to a picnic. He compares the anomalies and objects left behind by extra-terrestrials visiting earth, to that of humans left behind in nature after a picnic. Just like the animals, we humans might find these objects and anomalies meaningful beyond what it really is, trash left behind.

There lies greater opportunity in looking at the potential of these things, than projecting meaning onto them. This approach is well illustrated in the experiment by the French artist Hubert Duprat. When Duprat substitutes the caddisfly larvae's environment with precious stones, pearls and gold, the larvae, without hesitation or considering the meaning of the new materials, spin them into cocoons (fig. 3.).

In this changing environment, we should deal with uncertainty not with ideas or dreams of how we want things to be, but rather, in trying to connect with this new world, try to find potential in what things can become. In this way, it makes sense to limit ourselves to the potential of what is available rather than the dream of what we want. A good example illustrating this approach is the mammoth bone shelters our ancestors built after the peak of the last ice age. As the climate became very unpredictable and hostile, our ancestors had to make do with



fig. 1. Trattato di architettura, Filarete, 15th c.
Vitruvius Adam reacting to the weather.



fig. 2. Trattato di architettura, Filarete, 15th c.
Vitruvius Adam's shelter inspired by the shape of his reaction to the weather.

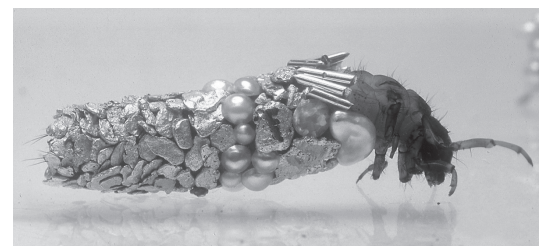


fig. 3. Trichoptera, Hubert Duprat, 1980 -
Caddis Larvae's Cocoon spun from precious stones,
pearls and gold.

what they could get (fig.4.).

We are at the beginning, like Filarete's Adam, and the act of creating is a way for our minds to find new relationships with the physical world. Like Francis Alys's shelter, (made of election posters tied to a ventilation grill and held up by the rising air) (fig.5.) rather than trying to solve the issues of the world, there is enough potential in materials, construction, and the environment to find connection again with the physical world and inspire new forms of architecture.



fig. 4. Author Unknown
Mammoth Bone Shelter, from after the peak of the last ice age.



fig. 5. Vivienda para todos, Francis Alys, 1994
A shelter made of election posters tied to a ventilation grill and held up by the rising air.

The perspective of the stranger provides us with a way of looking at things we know, in new ways. The students will be put in the condition of being a stranger in their own place. This territory will define the context of their approach.

This way of looking, will give insights into how to deal with limited availability of materials and construction techniques, in novel ways. Not with the ambition to find new technologies, but rather new forms of architecture.

The studio is both practice-based and research-based. The dynamic of the studio is a dialectic between these two standpoints: a pragmatic standpoint and a conceptual standpoint. First, the pragmatic standpoint will be underpinned by the choice of a place of intervention. With an important degree of latitude, the students will be invited to select a site inspired by his/her wanderings and to detect related communities, potentials, and challenges at stake. Besides, the students will explore local resources to identify available construction materials and constructive know-hows in the area. Second, the conceptual standpoint. The studio is a collective and prospective journey, exploring the potentialities of the design process itself. The student will examine how the appearance of a stranger can have an influence on local communities, how it can reveal potentials and how the tensions at play in architectural processes can be turned positively. This journey is research based, in the broadest sense. This research can be theoretical, but it can also take other forms: drawings, modelling, or crafting. The student will be invited to build and explain his/her own methodology, engaging with other through the meticulous production of well-crafted and beloved documents. This way of looking will give insights into how to deal with limited availability of materials and construction techniques, in novel ways. Not with the ambition to find new technologies, but rather new forms of architecture.

To synthesize the methodology of the studio, four rules are laid down:

N°1: The project is a building for the neighbourhood, defined by the students' research. A master thesis, as an engagement, and gift to the community, in the form of a proposal or even a realization.

N°2: The project must be situated in a radius of 2km around the student's home.

N°3: The materials used to build the project must be found in a radius of 2km around the student's home.

N°4: The know-how to construct the project must be found in a radius of 2km around the student's home. Either through personal conversation with locals, or through construction manuals.

The expected outcome will be a gift to the community, in the form of a proposal or even a realization.

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The studio is held in the framework of the research group architecture In practice (<https://architectureinpractice.eu>) and the research group Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities (<http://www.collectivespaces-kuleuven.be>).

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