Assemble Material

Masters Architecture
@ EPFL

Spring 2022
This studio is founded on the belief that an understanding of how things are made brings an intimate engagement with the problems and possibilities of the real world. We are interested in the material life of buildings, how we process the fabric of our environments to construct spaces.

From resources and technology to policy and trade, we will consciously appraise our material, cultural and economic context to produce projects capable of responding to issues that shape the contemporary environment.

The Studio: 2021-2022

Teachers:
Amy Perkins
James Binning
Maria Lisogorskaya

Teaching Assistant:
Camille Sineau
This Year: Timber

MMMAF, 2021, Le Forêt de la Traconne, Photograph: Timothée Gauvin
In our work this year, we will work with one of our most abundant and diverse natural resources - wood. Together we will build our understanding of its qualities as an environment, as a resource and as a material - working within places and with people whose relationships with the forest and its the cultural, economic and social life of the wider landscape of the Jura can deepen our understanding of how to act carefully, intelligently and resourcefully as architects working with timber construction today.
Burtigny, Vaud, Switzerland

During both semesters we will be based between Lausanne and Burtigny in the Jura Vaudois, analysing the construction make up of local timber exploitation, buildings, natural and industrial resources.
Approach / Methodology

We will combine rigorous research and design with hands-on 1:1 prototyping and material exploration. We will explore how existing materials, infrastructure and people could be mobilized to create exciting new materials and models of building.

We think that architectural practice should combine critical thinking and direct making. This approach underpins the work of our practice, Assemble, and will inform the tactics and teaching of this studio.
The teaching this year will emphasise the value of collaboration and co-production. We will actively encourage students to work in groups and develop the skill and confidence to work together effectively, believing that the complex challenges we face today require the profession to move beyond the narrow conception of the architect as an individual author.
Last Term

Sawmill Visit

Sawing the tree for the term with Roland, Mobile Sawmill 2 Rivière, Bortigny

Last Term

Felling the tree for the term with Jean-Pierre, Bortigny

Felling the tree for the term, Bortigny

Felling the tree for the term with Jean-Pierre, Bortigny
Last Term

Models and Model Photos
Projects by Chiara Kempter, Luana Ferrari, Hannah Kraus, Sonja Fritz
Winter Semester 2021

Models, Model Photos and Sketches
Projects by Hannah Kraus, Sonja Fritz, Santiago Mancera, Nanda Nugroho, Théo Gauger
Winter Semester 2021
This term - Building and Dwelling: Community Housing in the Jura Vaudois

This term, the studio will work closely with members of the local community in the commune of Burtigny in the Jura Vaudois to design co-operative housing projects. Last semester we designed projects that worked with the commune’s timber resources, thinking about how simple structures might be constructed within shortened supply chains.

But the commune have more ambitious plans - the Mayor has been working towards the construction of new co-operative housing using locally available sustainable materials within a community who face economic, demographic and cultural challenges that are common to many rural places.

Our work this term will develop as a dialogue with these ambitions, giving our collective work the potential to both enrich and embolden the conversation about how new housing in the commune could be built, and to demonstrate new prototype projects for rural situations more broadly.

We will begin with collective research into diverse examples of communal and co-operative housing alongside investigations into both the forest as an ecosystem and timber as a resource - working within places and with people local to the Jura to enhance our understanding of how to act carefully, intelligently and resourcefully as architects building in timber today. Working closely with a structural engineer and with figures within the commune, we will attempt to demonstrate how radical proposals can be realised.
The teaching this year will emphasise the value of collaboration and co-production. The semester’s programme of design research and analysis is structured by bi-weekly seminars and workshops and encourage the production of work across scales, including through large-scale models and 1:1 work with timber. We will actively encourage students to work in groups to develop the skill and confidence to work together effectively, believing that the complex challenges we face today require the profession to move beyond the narrow conception of the architect as an individual author.

The visiting professors will be in the studio in person each week throughout the term. We will begin with a studio walk in the Jura Vaudois, visiting local forests and staying overnight in Burtigny. At Easter, we will go on a short study visit to Turin and Milan will include visits to examples of a wide variety of excellent housing projects.

Spring Semester 2022

Term Outline:

#1 A walk in the woods

A hike in the Jura Vaudois to Burtigny, meeting key local people in the town and local forestry industry and building our understanding of the local context

#2 Collective examples

Research and investigations into different organisational, funding and architectural models of communal and collective housing and re-imagining these examples as contemporary constructions in timber

#3 Building and Dwelling

Design of a co-operative housing project in Burtigny, working in dialogue with the Mayor and other local figures to develop projects that can enrich and inform the local dialogue about new housing in the town and act as prototypes for what is possible in other rural situations