Since its glory days as the capital of Japan (794 AD), Kyoto has managed to cultivate a flourishing tradition of artisanship (shokunin) for over 1200 years. Yet with the recent economic downturn and changing habits of a new generation, artisanship in Kyoto is facing a noticeable decline.

In this experimental studio, we consider Kyoto as our living laboratory for exploring the following questions. What can we learn from the shokunin’s precise and selfless way of making? How can we map the distributed processes at the urban scale that sustain such artisan traditions? Can revitalizing the architectures of the shokunin catalyze the transformation of a historical city into a circular city?

Circular cities promise to change the way society produces goods, how they are procured and delivered, how waste is collected and re-entered into the value chain. The transition from a linear city to a circular city, however, requires a new conception of urbanism, a shift from urbanism as a collection of forms and spaces (typologies) to urbanism as a network of matter and flows (processes).

Accordingly, the work of the studio will be situated between a larger scale, systems view of the flows of material and goods in the neighborhood (from linear to circular flows), and a precise acupunctural architectural intervention into an existing artisan building and invention of a circular prototypology.

Each member of the studio, individually or in groups of two, will focus on a particular Kyoto craft or artisanship and map the material flow of their choice, e.g. from sushi (Kikunoi), sweets shops (Toraya), bakeries (Yoshida), kaisekis (Muromachi), to umbrellas (Nishibori), paper products (Karakami), bamboo furniture (Naito), tatami and architectural parts (Misuiro Yokoyama). The analysis of the different flows that bookend the making of the product, from the material sourcing to waste disposal, will critically inform the studio’s architectural interventions and socio-ecological transformation of Kyoto.

There will be two critical drawings in the studio that will form the culmination of studio deliverables: (1) an axonometry showing the flows and circular relationship within the urban tissue, and (2) a 3D cross-section showing the transformation of the existing artisan building into an imagined “circular twin” prototypology.
We plan to exhibit the results from this studio at Sou Fujimoto’s Osaka World Expo 2025 pavilion (in collaboration with the Kyoto Design Lab).

The studio will use advanced digital tools, such as software, scripts and plug-ins for flow analysis (Grasshopper), AI and Machine Learning (Mid-journey, Dall-E) and digital representation (V-Ray, Blender, Unity or equivalent). No prior programming or software knowledge is required, however, there should be curiosity and desire to learn.

Cover image. Street Coffee Barista, Kyoto, 2021. Photo: Masaharu Okuda
Musubi Kiln
Jeffrey Friedlsz
*Komo Daru*, Sake Barrels, Matsuo Shrine, Nishikyo, Kyoto, 2011.
Kosuke Okahara
Chiso Kimono
Sayumi Tadokoro
Kenzo Tange
Kyoto City Axis Planning Research Report, Tange Laboratory, Tokyo, 1967.
koo architects
Kosuke Okahara
Masaharu Okuda
Umekoji Town, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Masaharu Okuda
Umekoji Town, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Masaharu Okuda
Kyoto City Central Wholesale Market, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Masaharu Okuda
Umekoji Town, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Masaharu Okuda
Umekoji Town, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Masaharu Okuda
Umekoji Town, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2021.
Ayumi Kobo
Hanayacho, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, 2022.
Kai Fusayoshi

Visit from the Chindon’ya marching band, Kyoto, 1976.
Kai Fusayoshi

*Spring’s come and the napping population grows,* Kyoto, 1996.
Kai Fusayoshi

Tamotsu Ito
Umekoji Creative Town Future Map, Kyoto, 2022.
16
car tower

function: car showroom + office + repair shop + parking garage
site: Higashi-oi, Shinagawa-ku
- along Wangan street and near the Samezu car licencing board
- single package-building for all aspects of car service
- an external car access road spirals around
- the tower made up of showroom, offices and carpark
- a proportional flip between a building’s usual numbers
of people compared to numbers of cars
- suddenly, a road flies through the middle of the city’s air space

Momoyo Kaijima, Junzo Kuroda, Yoshiaru Tsukamoto
Atelier Bow-Wow
Nora House, Sendai, 2008.
Beth George
Sayan Skandarajah
Curating an egalitarian territory, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014.
Sayan Skandarajah
Curating an egalitarian territory, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014.
Sérgio Besserman, Philip Yang, Marcela Ferreira
Map of Material Flows: physical imprint of commodities exchange, the Brazilian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2018.
Sérgio Besserman, Philip Yang, Marcela Ferreira
Map of Material Flows: physical imprint of commodities exchange, the Brazilian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2018.
Lys Villalba Rubio
Architectural tools to re-activate decaying places, Vigo, Spain, 2008.
Lys Villalba Rubio
Architectural tools to re-activate decaying places, Vigo, Spain, 2008.
MxD Lab
Site flow diagram, Atelier Huang, EPFL, 2022.
MxD Lab
2D-3D flow diagram, Atelier Huang, EPFL, 2022.
MxD Lab
Project Index, Atelier Huang, EPFL, 2022.
Sou Fujimoto
Osaka World Expo, 2025.
**Important Dates** - Fall, 2022

*Studio Introduction*
Sep 20

*Phase I: Shokunin and Material Flows (2 weeks)*
Sep 21-Oct 3

*Phase II: Circular Map and Section (5 weeks)*
Oct 4-Nov 6

*Studio Trip*
Oct 17-18

*Midterm Review*
Nov 7

*Phase III: Design Simulation (3 weeks)*
Nov 8-Nov 28

*Phase IV: Representation (3 weeks)*
Nov 29-Dec 18

*Final Review*
Dec 19

Dates are subject to change. An optional studio trip to Kyoto is planned for February or April 2023 (during the break, to be confirmed).

The Studio theme spans the entire academic year of 2022/23. Accordingly, there will be continuity between the fall and spring semester, but each semester can be followed independently.

**Team**

Media x Design Laboratory
Prof. Jeffrey Huang
Marcela Delgado, Christoph Holz,
Frederick Kim, Alexandre Sadeghi,
Mathias Bernhard, Christina Doumpioti,
Mikhael Johanes, Gianna Ledermann

**Partners**

Kyoto Design Lab
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Prof. Tamotsu Ito
Umekoji Town Development Lab Co.