OSAKA COUNTERTACTICS
DECENTRALIZED HYBRID NODES FOR THE WORLD EXPO 2025

ATELIER HUANG SPRING 2023
The planned World Expo 2025 in Osaka faces a series of controversial challenges. On one hand, it is haunted by its own history: it must overcome the monumental shadow cast by its predecessor, the enormously influential World Expo 1970 designed by the heroes of Japanese modernism Kenzo Tange and Uzo Nishiyama. Also held in Osaka, it was heralded as a seminal moment in the renewal of Japan after the devastation of World War II. On the other hand, and more importantly, while the topic of this new Osaka World Expo 2025 edition, “Designing a Future Society for our Lives” is timely and relevant, the architecture of the exhibition itself raises many critical questions regarding sustainability, the very topic the world expo espouses to address: featuring a gigantic ring-shaped wooden roof of 2 kilometre circumference, the architects of the World Expo 2025, Sou Foujimoto Architects, situated the event on Yumeshima, an artificial island far away from the mainland and only reachable by long drives. Does a centralized world expo still make sense in a time when the planet is facing an ecological emergency? In light of the climate crisis, how can a world expo justify the massive embodied and operational carbon footprint produced by the millions of visitors and exhibitors traveling from around the globe?

In this studio, conceived as an independent sequel to the “Circular Kyoto” studio offered in the fall semester, we embrace these questions and develop counter proposals for Osaka 2050. We imagine our alt-expo as a global, trans-scalar architecture, intertwining a planetary network of circular, physical/virtual hybrid nodes, distributed in tactical locations in participating cities around the world. We will develop utopian and visionary projects at multiple scales: from the planetary to the urban, to the architectural, to the furniture, to the detail. Projects will graft onto existing social infrastructures, giving new life to obsolete typologies, urban parks, and abandoned buildings.

Additionally, each proposal will actively “design a future society” by critically examining the role of the digital in design. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitalization of our society, offering the opportunity to access services from home and participate in classes, meetings and political debates virtually. Governments, businesses and institutes, are now leveraging this confinement-induced trend, and rethinking their real estate strategies. Some organizations are reducing their physical workspaces to 80% by giving their employees flexibility to work remotely. Other companies, including creative firms, are completely moving online. In this studio, we see virtualization as an opportunity and danger for architecture. We will actively question the role of the virtual and the changing need for physicality in the proposed counter proposals for the world expo: How can we leverage digital spaces, including augmented, virtual, extended realities (AR/VR/XR) to minimize extractive practices and CO2 emission while providing meaningful experiences?
The studio will use advanced digital tools, such as software, scripts and plug-ins for flow analysis (Grasshopper), generative AI engines (ChatGPT, Midjourney, Dall-E, Stable Diffusion) 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.
Sou Fujimoto
World Expo, Osaka, Japan, 2025.
John Hejduk
Victims and Monsters, 1984.
Common Forms: Making room for the collective, Copenhagen, 2019.
Toshiko Mori
Toshiko Mori
Thread Artists’ Residences & Cultural Center, Sinthian, Senegal, 2015.
Sarah Kenderdine
Look Up Mumbai, Bombay, India, 2015.
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Look Up Mumbai, Bombay, India, 2015.
Space Popular
Gate of Bright Lights, Deoksugung Palace Seoul, South Korea
Space Popular
The Virtual Textiles of Civic Teleportation, 2021
Yuichi Kodai + SANDWICH Inc.
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Manuel Herz Architects
Manuel Herz Architects
François Bergeron
Instagram Space, 2020.
Sou Fujimoto
Sheila O’Donnell
Gregor Sailor
Gregor Sailor
Joanne Pouzenc
Datatopia Workshop, Day 3 within Projekt Bauhaus program at the Floating University, stands, Berlin, 2018
Joanne Pouzenc
Constructlab’s annual gathering in Cantercel, final round, La Vacquerie St Martin, 2020
raumlabor
Dialogue as Form, Tel-Aviv, 2019
raumlabor
Popup Monument, Frankfurt am Main, 2017
Assemble Studio
Assemble Studio
Charlotte Malterre-Barthes
*Scales of Extraction, after Morphosis, 2020.*
Thomas Hirschhorn
Robert Walser-Sculpture, Biel, 2019
Thomas Hirschhorn
Robert Walser-Sculpture, Biel, 2019
Kyra Michel + Micky Gerardi
Permanent discussion hubs located in main public spaces of the city. These bigger capacity spaces allow more variations in the size of the discussion groups. Moderators will be answering questions and guiding group discussions.

The voting positions will serve as the main gathering place. A multi-functional space hosting the different actors of the initiative, but also work as the archive of the Swiss voting process, where the voices of the citizens are kept and heard.

Anne Steullet + Alessandro Tiezzi
Media and Design Laboratory

Circular Kyoto, EPFL, Switzerland, 2022.
Media and Design Laboratory

*Circular Kyoto*, EPFL, Switzerland, 2022.
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. Prior programming experience is not required. Dates are subject to change.

Team

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