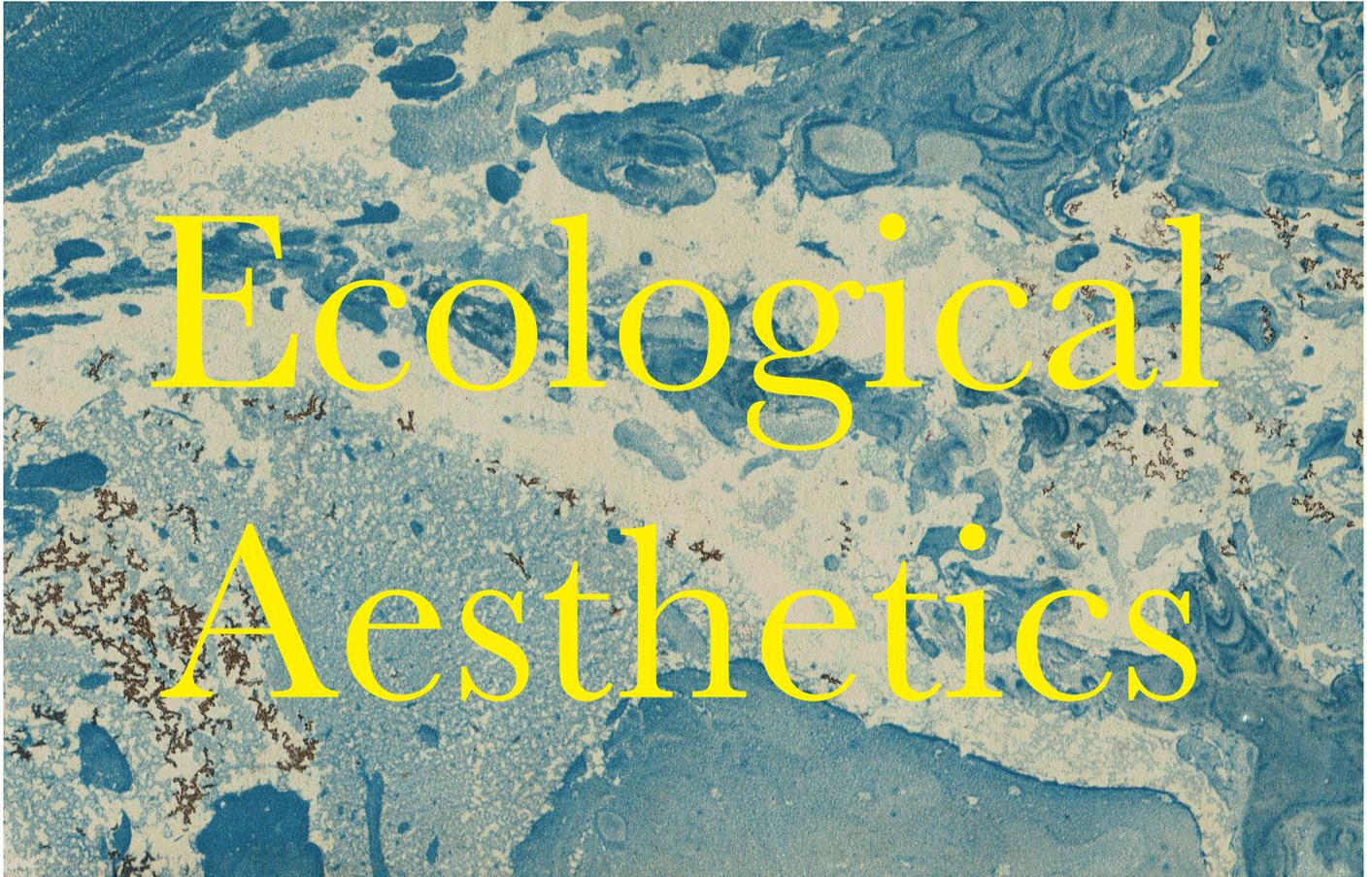


Design
is
Research
Studio



Studio Position / Ecological Aesthetics

This year the Design is Research studio will focus on the development of architectural responses to our growing ecological crisis. We will pose a number of questions regarding the role of architects and architecture in relation to the unignorable challenges of climate change. These questions will be based on a belief that architects can best respond through the act of design and that the development of meaningful built form is an important element within a wider system of ethical priorities.

Do aesthetics matter in the face of global climate change? Is architecture, in the traditional sense of the discipline, a decadent irrelevance in relation to our current ecological challenges? Or can it help to shape and define a meaningful response? What is an architecture that is not reliant on concrete, cement and brick? Is there an aesthetics of the circular economy and the fundamental rejection of cycles of waste? How do improvements to our built fabric impact on the composition and tectonic expression of buildings? Is beauty important in formulating a sustainable architecture?

Beyond the need to re-think materials and processes, the studio will link these concerns to a deeper relationship between ethics and aesthetics. It will speculate on a wider ecological framing and the development of architectural space and language that reflects and gives expression to a need to re-think our relationship to use, lifespan, consumption, energy and growth. The studio will start from the position that a cultural response to sustainability is vital and that an aesthetics of care extends beyond material choices, supply chain reforms or reductions in waste to encompass an ethics of architecture. Architecture – as a system of meaningful built form – needs to develop a response that is not simply about avoiding harm but about shaping a world that we want to live in. Our speculations may encompass policy, politics and wider cultural framing but they will focus on buildings, space and architecture.



Studio Programme / Retro Fit

An emphasis on the relationship between architecture and ecology must recognise the need to conserve and adapt existing buildings rather than construct new ones. This reflects the need to both improve the environmental performance of our existing stock and avoid the damage caused by materials used in the construction of new buildings. It would be easy to see this as a limitation on what architects do and the possibilities for new design. We however see it as a profound opportunity for invention and for new forms of creative thinking.

The studio will focus this year on the idea of creative re-use. We will not rule out new buildings but we will encourage and promote the validity of re-inventing existing ones. We see this in terms of use as well as material and expressive qualities. This will offer the possibility to re-define ideas of new and old, blurring boundaries between previously clearly defined categories. The clichéd separation of traditional and modern approaches will be jettisoned in favour of richer, more varied and fluid approaches.

We will study architects who have invented new forms of architecture through the redeployment of old buildings. These will range from the Victorian architect George Devey whose buildings mixed styles and materials in a deliberate attempt to create an ambiguous provenance, Frank Gehry, whose early buildings capture the exciting indeterminacy of construction process, and contemporary Belgian practice dVVT whose buildings occupy an intriguing state of transition between ruin and refurbishment.

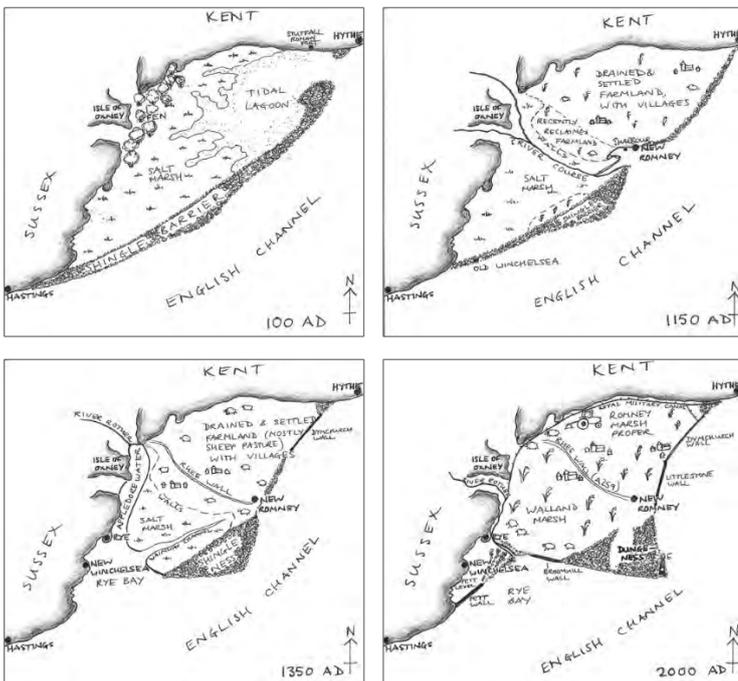
We will look at the way that different architects, artists and designers have developed aesthetic responses to adaptation and re-invention. We will explore the complexities and contradictions of things that are both new and old and we will celebrate the aesthetic possibilities of working with existing things.



Paul Nash: Rye Marshes, East Sussex (1932)

Studio Site / Romney Marsh

The geographical context for our investigations will be Romney Marsh, an area of flat marsh land on the borders of Kent and East Sussex. Romney Marsh is the largest coastal wetland on the south coast of England. It is a place shaped by large-scale geographic changes and a shifting relationship to the sea. Towns that were once ports - such as Hythe and Winchelsea - now lie inland as a result of retreating sea levels. This process can be seen as a mirror image to the likely effects of climate change facing us now. They thus offer important lessons in adapting and responding to large-scale geographic change. Projects will be based in this landscape but will focus specifically on two settlements within it: New Romney And Rye.



Images:

Left: Maps showing changes to the coast of Romney Marsh over time.

Above: Map of potential flooding of Romney Marsh and Dungeness, produced by the Environment Agency, 2019.



Lutjens Padmanabhan, Waldmeisterweg Housing, Zurich



Nick Gant/Community 21: Brick made from waste from the Preston Barracks site

Studio Projects

Project 1 / Ecological Aesthetics

Your initial project will focus on the relationship between materials, ethics and aesthetics. It will introduce and develop key considerations for the year to do with the aesthetic consideration of material choices and the language of sustainability. We want you to think hard about these things, avoid easy answers or clichéd stand-bys. We want you to think about how materials go together and how they relate to wider aesthetic questions and architectural traditions as well as their provenance and performance.

We would like you to choose an object that embodies an attitude or important aspect of sustainability. We want you to analyse and question this objects make up, its material properties and its symbolic qualities. We would you like you to consider the following questions and present the object back to us explaining why you have chosen it and why you think it is important.

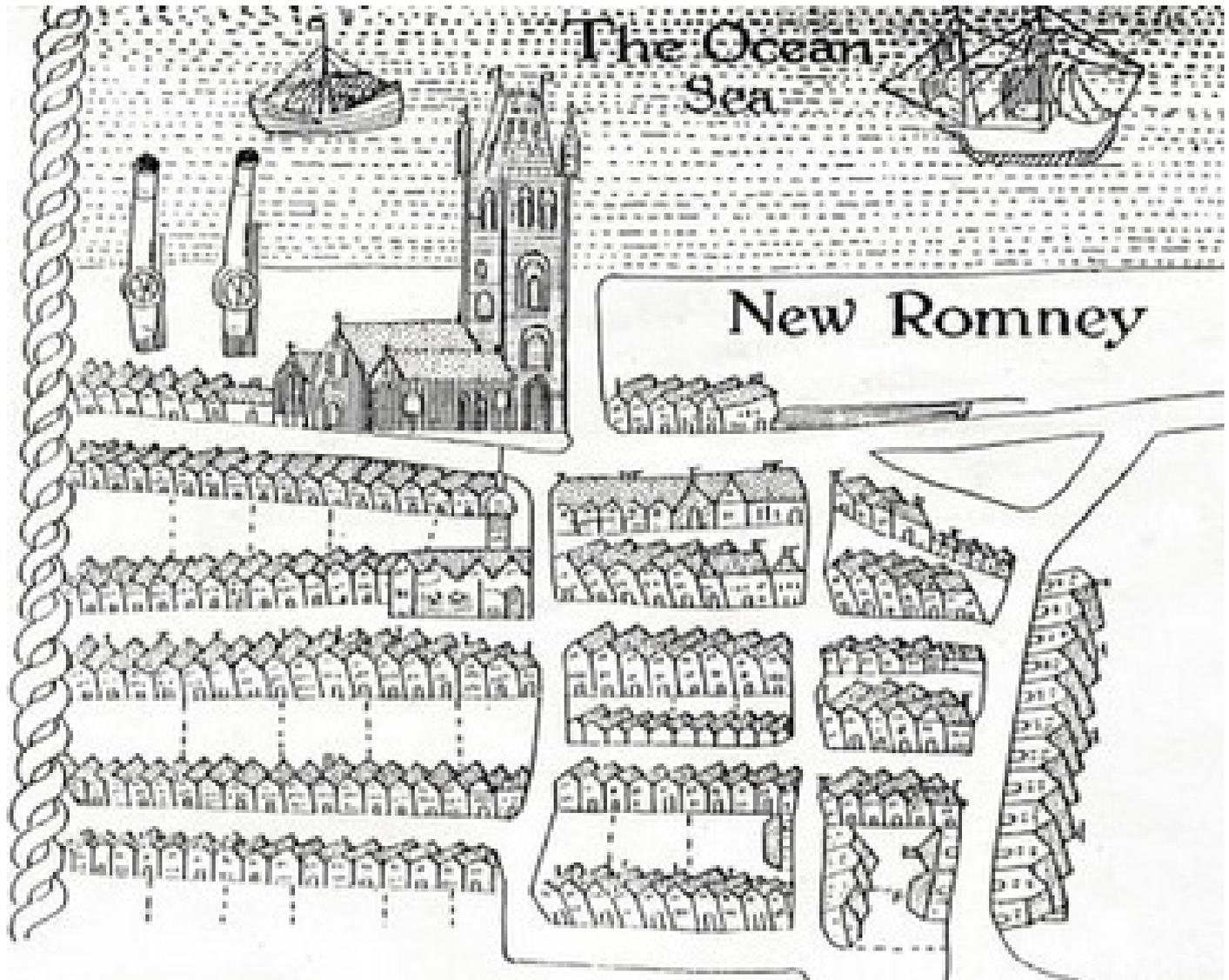
- **Is beauty important in relation to material choices?**
- **How do we develop an aesthetic language of sustainable architecture?**
- **Does this look different to previous architectures?**
- **How will a concern for energy reduction and the avoidance of cycles of waste affect the compositional and tectonic considerations we make when designing architecture?**

Programme:

Week 1: 01.10.19 / Introduction

Week 2: 08.10.19 / Presentation and Workshop

This is a one week introductory project. Alongside this we would like you to read a text from the reading list. We will discuss both when we meet in week 2.



Medieval map of New Romney showing its historic relationship to the sea

Project 2 / Future Proof

Following a site visit to Romney Marsh, the second project will be based in New Romney. New Romney is a former port that now lies inland. It is highly exposed to the effects of changing sea levels and bears the traces of these changes in its historic fabric. One of the most obvious of these is the door to St. Nicholas' Church. In the 12th century, this door faced New Romney's quayside. Now it is stranded several feet below the level of the road as a consequence of the silting up of the harbour. The doorway has adapted to its changed circumstances and reflects, in miniature, the profound shift that has occurred in the town's relationship to the sea.

For this project, we would like you to identify a building, object or place within the town and design future adaptations for it in relation to climate change. These might involve adaptations for rising sea levels, higher average temperatures, increased rain fall or the depletion of biodiversity and changes to the local ecosystem.

Programme

Week 3: 15.10.19 / Site Visit and Project Introduction

Week 5: 22.10.19 / Project Review



Rye looking along the River Rother estuary towards the sea

Project 3 / Retrofitting Rye

Rye is a hill town set on a promontory overlooking Romney Marsh. It has a harbour and is connected to the sea via the River Rother. It is bordered by marshes on one side and by the Royal Military Canal on the other. Rye has a highly preserved historic core containing notable buildings from the 13th to the 20th centuries. Its position, fabric and character will offer a year-long site for investigating the need to improve our built fabric to consume less energy and adapt to future needs and uses. We will look at retro-fitting Rye in the widest sense, adapting existing sites and buildings as well as the town itself. We will question classifications of new and old, suggesting more fluid and flexible categories and exploiting the ambiguities of buildings that evolve over time. Retro-fitting Rye will reconsider how the town works, how it can be extended, in-filled and densified and how it relates to the landscape and ecosystem around it.

You will be asked to develop building propositions through a series of compositional, material and tectonic investigations. These buildings will be in some way public or civic, giving expression to the values underpinning our research. The product of our efforts will be buildings: old, new and all points in between.

Studio Tutors

Charles Holland and Holly Lang

The studio will be supported by a number of workshop leaders and visiting critics throughout the year.



John Piper: Lydd, Across The Marsh (1950)

Studio Reading List

Books

- Gregory Bateson, 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind', University of Chicago Press (2000)
 Colin Ward, 'Talking Green, Five Leaves (2012)
 Fred Scott, 'On Altering Architecture', Routledge (2007)
 Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, Modern Art Papers on Architecture
 Philippe Boudon, 'Lived-In Architecture', MIT Press (1972)
 Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, 'Ad Hocism: The Case for Improvisation', MIT Press
 Irene Scalbert, Tom Emerson and Stephanie Macdonald, 'Never Modern', Park Books
 Patrick Lynch, 'Mimesis', Artifice Books (2015)
 Jill Allibone, 'George Devey, Architect 1820-1886', James Clark and Co. Ltd.
 Jan de Vylder, 'Architecten De Vylder Vinck Taillieu', MER (2012)
 Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, 'Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects 1954-84', Rizzoli Monographs
 Nicolas Antram and Nickolaus Pevsner, 'The Buildings of England: Sussex, East', Yale University Press
 W.S. Mitchell, 'East Sussex: A Shell Guide', Faber & Faber
 John Piper, 'Romney Marsh', Penguin (1950)

Articles

- Rosa Urbano Gutierrez, The Naturalisation of Architecture, 2016
 Jon Goodbun, Steps to an Ecological Aesthetic in the Atacama, 2018.
 Jon Goodbun, 'On the Possibility of an Ecological Dialogue, 2018