

Studio Juggernaut

Jane Tankard, Farid Abdalla, Ben Brakspear, Safia Cragg, Sarah Daoudi, Nouha Hansen, Rim Kalsoum, Ali Montero, Hafsa Syed.



Please scan or click the code to access the film.

To testify is to articulate the hegemonic silences that we experience but do not speak. To listen is to bear witness to these political narratives, a necessary ethical responsibility that enables us to create a space of agency and transformation. The modernist construct of educational space and the architecture profession's embedded corporeal sense of the student as *tabula rasa* obfuscates and denies not only identity, cultural values and meaning, but also the realities of daily life for students when outside of the university studio space.

The film we present is a response to 'Anti-Racism at SSoA: A Call to Action'. It represents a fragment in a collaborative journey which has manifested in a series of online discussions, creative thinking workshops and film making focused on architectural study, collective practice and the relationship between active listening, reciprocity and commonality. Central to the work is the notion of architectural education as being more than transactional, and instead a narrative of personal and social transformation supported by safe, supportive and enabling spaces. We acknowledge that the condition of being "the other" manifests in marginalisation and silencing and that through listening, we may be able to construct spaces of equity and agency.

Our methodology evolved through a collaborative process that began with conversations about the nature of the institution and issues of colonialism, race, gender and class in architectural education and the profession. We recorded every meeting, which due to Covid -19 restrictions, were all on Zoom. We began with conversations around the issues faced, in a search for non-hierarchical structures in teaching and the potential

of understanding the studio space as a construct similar to the notion of “home”. We defined a group of questions from these discussions that helped voice individual experience; each member of the group wrote responses to these prompts, which they read as testimonies. The work has become a catalyst in wider contexts, opening conversations on how we in education can enable cultural inclusivity and learn the value and potential of individual experience.

The texts exposed some unexpected overlaps in our experience and cultural connections and the making of this document has now generated ideas of how we might collaborate across disciplines and educational structures.

Those taking part have studied architecture or architectural humanities and represent experiences at a number of institutions. They are at different stages of training or practising and not all have chosen familiar career routes. The opinions, individual and not necessarily shared, represent a cross section of experience of architectural education in the UK. But the value of listening is a value common to all.

Biographies

Studio Juggernaut is an open research group, based at the University of Westminster School of Architecture and Cities exploring mechanisms for reciprocity in architectural education and practice.

Jane Tankard is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Westminster and ARB/RIBA registered Architect. Her third year Undergraduate BA Architecture design studio, which she teaches with tutor Thomas Grove, explores the relationship between identity, politics and architectural practice. Issues of gender, race and colonialism are central to their work.

Working in roles aimed at positively impacting local communities, Farid Abdalla is an advocate for marginalised people and a community development practitioner, prioritising quality architecture for all. Working in the UK and internationally, he believes in the power of lived experience and his own experiences of social housing has informed his intersectional approach to environmental transformational design.

Ben Brakspear is a 29-year-old from Manchester working as a freelance Art Director and Set Designer in London. His background in architecture (RIBA parts 1 and 2) and construction (self-build) has a large part to play in informing the design process and aesthetic of his current work in production design.

Safia Cragg, an English and History graduate, is Head of Networks and Operations at a national charity. With over 15 years' experience working in the voluntary sector, Safia supports partnerships of cross-sector senior leaders to think differently about complex problems, applying a systems-thinking lens to bring about societal and cultural shifts needed to create inclusive and equitable places.

Sarah Daoudi is a Part 2 architecture student studying at the University of Westminster. She has experience in designing religious architecture at MakeSpace, as well as in community-led design at MUF architecture/art. Recently, she has been working on creating a short documentary about the Truman Brewery development at Brick Lane with Nabiha Qadir.

Rim Kalsoum is a RIBA Part 3 student who teaches first year Architecture at the University of Westminster. Currently working for the practice Architecture Doing Place, she is a founder member of Muslim Women in Architecture, and is active in promoting inclusivity in the profession.

Having worked at Part 1 for Amos Goldreich Architecture, Ali Montero is currently a freelance designer, set-design assistant in London and student external advisor to the University of Westminster. Interested in inclusive, intersectional and artistically-minded approaches to design, her hands-on attitude has manifested in recently learning carpentry and timber frame construction methods.

Currently working in the US as an architectural assistant, Hafsa Syed spent her first Part 1 year out working in Pakistan, archiving the histories and technologies of local vernacular architecture. She will begin her studies for her Part 2 at the AA in the autumn.

