

STONE, WOOD, SOIL - CENTER FOR CREATION

Japan Studio III + Seminar Week HS25



Post card of the old school building in Feldis-Veulden, 1935 (nossaistorgia.ch)

Building Common Ground through Material

In this studio, we will seek to reconstruct our values toward natural materials through the exploration of materials at various scales—including comparisons between modern and premodern materials such as concrete and stone, gypsum board and earth, industrial lumber and solid timber, as well as differences in their applications, consideration of the factors that drove material transitions, and the relationship between the site and sources of materials.



Japan Studio III HS25

Rather than treating tradition and technology as opposites, the studio explores materials as evolving knowledge—asking what should be preserved and what reimagined. Led by architects and researchers Junko Sawada (stone), Fumi Kashimura (wood), and Kazuya Morita (soil), students develop approaches to design and construction grounded in material awareness.

Stone, wood, and soil—once sourced directly from the land—are being revalued for their ecological benefits, such as reduced carbon in transport and construction, and for their cultural role in supporting local communities and local economies.

The design site is the former school grounds in Feldis, Graubünden. Students will propose a center that strengthens local industries, livelihoods, and creative practices. Linked to the village's resources, including food production, the center is envisioned as a hub for community life and a model for

resilience. The project asks how architecture can sustain cycles of use and renewal while imagining new societal futures. The semester unfolds in two phases:

Phase I: Research and Concept-Making

Following a workshop on material properties and a site visit, groups of three will document and analyze ways of living in Feldis—focusing on either pre-industrial (past) or industrial (present) practices. Findings, visualized in actor-network drawings, will inform individual conceptual proposals presented at the mid-review in week 8.

Phase II: Designing a Center for Creation

Phase II translates research into design. Each student develops a proposal for a Center of Creation, supported by mock-ups that express material approach and construction logic. The studio pin-up in week 11 provides a platform to demonstrate how tradition and innovation converge in sustainable architecture.

Organizer: Chair of Architectural Behaviorology, D-ARCH
Guest Lecturers: Fumi KASHIMURA, Kazuya MORITA, Junko SANADA
Assistants: Lowis GUJER, Erik FICHTER
Contact: fichter@arch.ethz.ch
Language: English

Location: Between ONA E25 and Feldis-Veulden (Graubünden)
Cost: Approx. 200 CHF
Key Dates: Tue, Sep. 16 (Introduction ONA Langhalle)
Tue, Sep. 23 - Wed, Sep. 24 (Study trip with stay-over)
Wed, Nov. 05 (Mid review)
Wed, Dec. 18 (Final review)

Seminar Week HS25

The seminar week is optional, but strongly recommended as an integral part of Japan Studio III.

During the seminar week, students will live and work in Feldis, staying in the former village school. The task is to design and build a bread oven as public infrastructure in the center of the village. Constructed with local resources—stone, soil bricks, and timber—the oven will be a durable, functional structure for collective use.

The seminar is guided by local craftsmen together with the studio's invited experts from Japan: Junko Sawada (masonry), Fumi Kashimura (timber), and Kazuya Morita (soil). Through direct engagement with materials and techniques, students will learn by making, testing how craft knowledge can inform design decisions. The process emphasizes practical collaboration: measuring, cutting, stacking, binding, and refining construction through hands-on experience.

This oven is not only a construction exercise but also a milestone within the semester. As a piece of shared infrastructure in the village center, it embodies the studio's broader aim: to explore how architecture can strengthen public life through modest, site-specific interventions. The work in Feldis offers a concrete test of these ideas at 1:1 scale, preparing the ground for the design projects that follow.

The seminar concludes with the opening of the oven. Local residents will be invited to bake bread and share a meal, turning the construction into an occasion for exchange. In this way, the project demonstrates how architecture, however small in scale, can support cycles of use, renewal, and community life.

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Location: Feldis-Veulden, Graubünden, CH
Number of Students: 18
Cost category: A
Credit points: 2
Key Date: Wed, Oct. 8 Afternoon (Preparation workshop)
Mon, Oct. 20 - Fri, Oct. 24 (Seminar week)