

Studio in the Woods  
13/07/10



Structure designed by Studio Weave

**Piers Taylor, founder of Studio in the Woods, explains the thinking behind the outdoor architecture school as the 2010 course comes to an end**

Studio in the Woods doesn't really exist – it's an invisible studio. There's no institution, no one owns it, no organisation funds it, no one audits it, and it is beholden to no one. It's a group of people that have come together each year for the last five years, and each time there's never any sense that it will necessarily happen again. Peter Clegg of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios suggests that it is me that has brought them together, but I'd hate to think that my role is in any way different from any of the other people that take part and those who teach, visit, talk or show up, each of whom is unique and has something incredibly special to give.



Solar Mirror designed by Kate Darby and Gianni Botsford



Platform designed by Toby Lewis

Like my practice, I like to think Studio in the Woods happens despite me, not because of me. It grew out of a frustration of having taught in institutions that I felt out of synch with, places where people talked about learning outcomes above all else, and out of a joy I felt in the chaos and surprise of making quickly at 1:1. It was also, selfishly, a way of getting together many of the people I had respect for, hanging out with them for a few days and watching them do their stuff. These people were Meredith Bowles, Kate Darby, Gianni Botsford, Toby Lewis, Peter Clegg, Charley Brentnall, Ted Cullinan, and in recent years Susanne Tutsch and Barbara Kaucky or Erect Architecture, and Je Ahn and Maria Smith of Studio Weave. We've also been joined by Toby Maclean, Lena Ghotmeh and Shin Egashira, to name a few.



There's been a desire for those on the outside to try and pigeonhole what we do – as if being interested in wood and place means we're only interested in wood and place and as if mainly operating with low-tech equipment during the workshop means we're somehow anti-technology and anti-modernity... Quite the reverse is true. In many ways Studio in the Woods is a celebration of our diversity (as individuals, as a group) as much as our similarities and I'd hate it to be limited to a predefined ethos. Much of it in any case depends on the extraordinary energy and ideas of the participants.



Treehouse designed by Piers Taylor and Meredith Bowles

This year, we were in the Isle of Wight at the invitation of Joseph Kohlmeier, who recently founded the Isle of Wight Architecture Centre. I don't know what we'll do next year, or where we'll do it, but what I do know about Studio in the Woods is this: the power of working in a group; the fascination of seeing the diverse approaches of these different groups and tutors; the joy of the happy accident; the intensity of bringing something to a conclusion in a short space of time; the visceral thrill of materials, and of timber; the heady pleasure of working outside in summertime; watching people at the top of their game; seeing the intelligence of the students; the pleasure of being surrounded by good friends.



Rolling ribbon designed by Barbara Kaucky

*Piers Taylor is a partner in Mitchell Taylor Workshop and teaches at the University of Cambridge. Studio in the Woods is a four day outdoor summer workshop aimed at architectural students and practicing architects with an interest in place, landscape and the direct experience of making and working with materials to hand. Studio in the Woods 2010 took place from 8-11 July at New Barn Farm on the the Isle of Wight.*

