

DARLING

FIND

YOUR



Find Your Darling!

Initiatives for Transformation

A

INTRODUCTION

This guest studio – Find Your Darling – is something special to me. I’m teaching it this semester at KIT together with Andjela Brašanac and a number of guests.

It’s the first and only semester at KIT, and that’s exactly why I want to do things a bit differently.

I was in your shoes, not too long ago – attending lectures, sketching until midnight, chasing ideas through models and texts. I loved it. But when I entered the profession, I was also hit by a reality check.

Global warming, biodiversity loss, social fragmentation, housing crises – we’re deep in a polycrisis. And architecture is right in the middle of it.

Did you know that over half of Germany’s total waste is produced by the construction industry? Or that 14,000 buildings are demolished every year?

As architects, we can’t look away from this.

That’s why I started initiating projects myself – together with Aimée Michelfelder – projects that try to engage with these urgencies in different ways. Some of them failed. Some are just beginning. But all of them have changed how I see architecture.

In this studio, I want to share that mindset with you. We’ll work on real, local initiatives in Karlsruhe and the surrounding region.

You’ll form small groups and find a “Darling” – a place, a question, a potential. You’ll analyze, propose, and design. You’ll build on what’s already there. You’ll test your ideas with reality, not only with drawings.

I won’t give you a task. You’ll define it.

We’ll support you with everything you need – inputs, tools, methods, and guidance. But the initiative will be yours.

Each week, we'll meet individually and as a full group. Our collective sessions are important: they're a space to learn from each other, to collaborate, and to create a shared energy.

You'll learn how to 3D-scan a site and translate that data into design. You'll get an introduction to video as a tool for architectural storytelling. We'll hear from inspiring other collectives.

We'll also go on an excursion to the rural town of Werben – for a few days of collective living and learning. There, we'll experiment with clay construction and build habitats not for humans, but for birds, plants, and other species.

I believe architects can and must become agents of transformation. Not someday. Now.

If you're looking for a semester to test what architecture could be – beyond form, beyond commission – then I think you'll enjoy this studio.

At the end of the semester, we'll share all your proposals with the public and with local municipalities. And if your initiative has potential, AFEA – our association for ecological architecture – can support you in taking it further.

This isn't just about a grade. It's about starting something real.



B

TIME TABLE

On the following page, you'll find the semester schedule. The reader is divided into several parts—this is Part 1 of 7. Throughout the semester, we will provide the remaining parts, each containing the current assignment and input on the respective topics.

The time table will be updated in each reader.

Time Table

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
W0 KW16 14.04 - 20.04	Studio presentation				Good Friday Introduction mail			W9 K25 16.06 - 22.06				Corpus Christi – Public Holiday			
W1 K17 21.04 - 27.04	Easter Monday			Studio intro, goals and initiative; Specialisation intro				W10 K26 23.06 - 29.06				Desk crits; Workshop filmmaking*4			
W2 K18 28.04 - 04.05				May 1st - Public Holiday	Optional: Online desk crits			W11 K27 30.06 - 06.07				Desk crits			
W3 K19 05.05 - 11.05				Desk crits; Intro lecture 3d scan*1 and historical analysis* 2	Excursion Arrival	Excursion Workshop	Excursion workshop; departure; Photos and documentation	W12 K28 07.07 - 13.07				2nd mid- presentation			
W4 K20 12.05 - 18.05				Desk crits Lecture Workshop photography *3	Optional: Online desk crits			W13 K29 14.07 - 20.07				Desk crits			
W5 K21 19.05 - 25.05				Desk crits	Optional: Online desk crits			W14 K30 21.07 - 27.07				Desk crits; Design Freeze			
W6 K22 26.05 - 01.06				Ascension Day - Public Holiday				W15 K31 28.07 - 03.08				Desk crits; Presentation; Narrative and layout discoussin			
W7 K23 02.06 - 08.06				1st interim presentation				W16 K32 04.08 - 11.08				Final presentation			
W8 K24 09.06 - 15.06	Pentecost Monday	Seminar Week	Seminar Week	Seminar Week	Seminar Week	Seminar Week									

*1: Kristof Schlüssler, jbks *2: Anette Buse, KIT *3: Alexander Paul Brandes *4 Stefan Braunshausen

Initiative (studio)

Your answers to the three questions in the introduction will serve as the foundation for identifying and starting a project and initiative.

Why is architecture particularly exciting for you / What is particularly exciting about architecture for you?

What would you like to change or improve if you could / What do you think should change in the way we build / live / work or influence the environment?

What is your relationship to Karlsruhe / which places or what do you particularly like or dislike and why?

In the next meeting, we will discuss your proposals. You are free to choose the type and scale of your project. However, the following requirements are important:

- Your proposal focuses on a specific, existing building or structure in Karlsruhe or the surrounding area.
- The goal of your proposal is to create both an ecological and social improvement.

Each group is asked to *research on both the political and social background of your chosen topic, as well as on the specific building or structure* you have selected. Present your results and insights in a **presentation**.

The existing building (Darling) should be documented through **photography**. Be mindful of *unique or subtle details*.

The *qualities of the Darling*—including its residents, uses, and specific features—should be identified and recorded in a experimental way using **video**.

The format of the presentation is open. It should be compelling, convey your passion for the Darling, and include your research, photography and video.

D

TASK 2

Vertiefung

For Vertiefung, each student will work individually to create an **section drawing** (A4 format) that shows an animal or plant species within a structure of their own design.

The structure should reflect and support the species' preferred living conditions as best as possible.

In addition, please write a short **text** (maximum half a page) from the perspective of your chosen species, describing what life is like within the structure you have designed (first-person narrative perspective).

EXCURSION

Although our initiatives are focused on Karlsruhe and the surrounding region, our Vertiefung and excursion will take us to a completely different setting. We will travel to the remote, rural town of Werben, where we will live and work together while participating in a hands-on workshop on clay construction.

For a short time, we will adopt strategies inspired by the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College—embracing collective living, collaborative working, and learning through making.

The structures we will build are designed to provide living spaces for non-human inhabitants—such as animals and plants. Under the guidance of experienced earth and clay builder Tobias Titz, we will explore mud construction techniques on site.

Our accommodation will be the nearly completed Verwalterinnenhaus—an initiative launched by our group—which already offers habitat for various bird species and includes a botanical balcony in construction.

Werben offers us a rural space for physical experimentation, ecological thinking, and creative exploration.



1/7

We want to take proactive steps toward climate regeneration and improving our built environment. Join us in developing a concrete project for an existing structure — turning it into a real-world initiative! Become an agent of change in architecture, society, and the built environment. Analyze existing buildings, their context (Karlsruhe and its surroundings), and uncover both challenges and potentials. Follow your intuition, your dreams and desires — and turn them into ecological design proposals for our shared future.

Find your Darling!

