

**Architectural Association
School of Architecture**

AA PROGRAMME GUIDE
VISITING SCHOOL AMAZON
2025/2026

AA VISITING SCHOOL AMAZON

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1. Introduction to the AA Visiting School Amazon

1.1 Overview

Since 2015, the AA Visiting School Amazon has brought together architects, designers and researchers to explore the confluence of biomimetics, digital design and local Amazonian knowledge in crafting sustainable, circular architecture. Each year, while the specific projects, sites and readings are updated to respond to emerging environmental and social challenges, the core research line—integrating natural systems thinking, parametric workflows and indigenous craft—remains unchanged. Over ten days in Alter do Chão and the Arapiuns community, participants will immerse themselves in fieldwork and workshops—ranging from fibre-dyeing, weaving and parametric scripting to full-scale prototyping—culminating in the co-creation of a community pavilion with Escola da Floresta and local artisans. Currently in its 8th edition, the VS Amazon has had more than 70 students from 20 different nationalities.

1.2 About the Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture

Founded in 1847, the Architectural Association is one of the world's leading institutions dedicated to architectural education. Located in London, the AA is known for its innovative and progressive approach to architecture and design education, with a global network of Visiting Schools that extend its influence and pedagogy beyond the UK. The AA Visiting School Amazon is part of this initiative, offering students a chance to experience the school's cutting-edge teaching methods in a unique and challenging environment.

1.3 Course Relevance

This course is particularly relevant for students and professionals interested in sustainable, circular and community-driven architecture. By engaging with local lifeways and the Amazon's ecological systems, participants will develop adaptive design strategies for climate-responsive architecture. Emphasizing innovation and circularity, the programme guides students to experiment with closed-loop material systems and regenerative design processes in real-world contexts. It also leverages advanced digital design technologies—such as parametric workflows,

and generative algorithms—to push the boundaries of circular architectural innovation. Through hands-on prototyping and critical reflection, participants will learn to devise inventive solutions that minimize waste, valorise local resources, and foster resilient, circular architectural intervention.

2. Programme Specification

COURSE TITLE	VISITING SCHOOL AMAZON Ecologies of Innovation: Circular Architecture in the Tropics		
Level	Fourth Year	Dates	4-13 Sept 25
Course Leaders	Ignacio Marti and Marko Brajovic	Term	First
Credits	10 (5 ECTS)		
Learning methods	Lectures/ site visits/ interviews/ Seminars/tutorials/juries Self-directed learning		

2.1 Course Title:

Ecologies of Innovation: Circular Architecture in the Tropics

2.2 Course Leaders:

Ignacio Martí: Nacho Marti graduated from Elisava School of Design and obtained a master's in science in Emergent Technologies and Design from the Architectural Association. He runs his design studio in London while teaching at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London as Co-Head of Environmental and Technical Studies and Programme Head of the Visiting School Amazon.

Marko Brajovic: graduated from Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia and obtained a Masters's in Digital Arts at Pompeu Fabra University and a Master's in Genetic Architecture at Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, both in Barcelona. Marko Brajovic is founder and Creative Director at Atelier Marko Brajovic based in São Paulo, Brazil.

2.3 Dates:

4-13 September 2025

2.4 Location:

Escola da Floresta, Alter do Chão, Pará, Brazil

2.5 Credits and Certification:

This course carries 10 credits. Participants will receive a certificate of completion from the Architectural Association upon successfully meeting the course requirements.

2.6 Target Audience:

- Architecture students (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- Professionals in architecture and related disciplines

- Individuals with a strong interest in sustainable design and environmental architecture

2.7 Aims & Learning Outcomes

- Aims:

- To immerse students in the unique ecological and cultural environment of the Amazon rainforest.
- To explore circular, biomimetic and community-led design approaches in the Amazon
- To develop parametric methods for sustainable pavilion design and explore innovative architectural responses.
- To engage respectfully with local knowledge, materials and craft practices

- Learning Outcomes:

- Develop a sound understanding of the Amazon's ecological systems and their relevance to architectural design.
- Acquire practical skills in digital design tools and biomimetic principles.
- Apply learned concepts in the creation of a circular architectural proposal for a local project.
- Prototype at multiple scales—digital, model and full-size.
- Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively in a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural context.

2.8 Entry Requirements:

Applicants are expected to have a background in architecture or a related discipline. Prior experience with digital design tools is advantageous but not mandatory. A portfolio showcasing relevant work is only required as part of the application process for scholarships.

3. Programme Structure:

ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION VISITING SCHOOL AMAZON											
4-13 September 2025. Alter do Chao, Brazil											
Ecologies of Innovation: Circular Architecture in the Tropics											
	THURSDAY 4 SEPT	FRIDAY 5 SEPT	SATURDAY 6 SEPT	SUNDAY 7 SEPT	MONDAY 8 SEPT	TUESDAY 9 SEPT	WEDNESDAY 10 SEPT	THURSDAY 11 SEPT	FRIDAY 12 SEPT	SATURDAY 13 SEPT	
09:00		Independent site exploration	Grasshopper training	9h Trip to Aratapi and night away. Departure at 9:00 from CAT Alter do Chao. Visiting Praia do Ponta Grande and comunidade da Coroca.	Breakfast in Coroca		9h Lecture by Marko Brajovic	9h Construction and documentation	9h Construction and documentation	9h Construction and documentation	
09:30											
10:00											
10:30											
11:00		11h Introductory lecture and course brief.			10h Fibre dyeing and weaving workshop. Model making		10h Project development and prototyping in teams				
11:30											
12:00											
12:30											
13:00						Independent site exploration. Tapajos National Forest/ Belterra/ Serra da Piroca.	Lunch and free time				
13:30	Welcome Lunch at Escola da Floresta	Lunch and free time	Lunch and free time	Lunch and dinner at Coroca.	Lunch and dinner at Coroca.						
14:00											
14:30	Course introduction	Grasshopper training	Concept development and first ideas	Bee hives, turtles, community houses. Dinner and accommodation in hammocks in Coroca in Bruno Hospedagem	Return to Alter do Chao			Project development and prototyping in teams	Construction and documentation	Construction and documentation	Final touches and photoshooting
15:00											
15:30											
16:00	Tour and introduction to Escola da Floresta (ecology, pedagogy and community)										
16:30										Final presentations and conclusion	
17:00											
17:30											
18:00	Self-directed work and free time			Self-directed work and free time							
18:30	Self-directed work and free time			Self-directed work and free time							
19:00	Self-directed work and free time			Self-directed work and free time							
	Carimbo	Chorinho						Carimbo	Chorinho	Procissao Saie	

Note: This schedule is indicative and may be subject to changes. The organization reserves the right to adjust, refine, or alter the schedule as needed to accommodate unforeseen circumstances or optimize the learning experience.

4. Teaching and Learning Strategies

4.1 Learning Approach

The course adopts a blended learning approach, combining theoretical lectures, practical workshops, self-directed study and experiential learning through site visits and fieldwork. The immersive nature of the programme allows students to engage directly with the local context, fostering a deep understanding of the environmental and cultural factors that influence architectural design.

4.2 Collaborative Learning

Students will work in small groups throughout the course, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of ideas. This collaborative approach is essential for tackling the complex challenges posed by designing within the Amazon and fosters the development of teamwork and communication skills.

4.3 Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is an integral part of the course, with daily reflection sessions where students can critically assess their learning and progress. These sessions help students to consolidate their understanding and apply insights to their design work.

4.4 Technology Integration

The course incorporates the use of advanced digital tools, such as Grasshopper software, to explore and develop biomimetic architectural designs. Technical tutorials will ensure that all participants are equipped with the necessary skills to utilize these tools effectively.

5. Learning Support

5.1 Academic Support

- Tutoring: Students will have access to one-on-one tutorials with course leaders and course tutors, providing personalized guidance and feedback on their design work.
- Workshops: A series of technical workshops will be held throughout the course, focusing on the use of digital design tools and the application of biomimetic principles.

5.2 Resources

- Digital Resources: Students will have access to the AA's extensive digital library, including journals, e-books, and architectural databases. Additional resources specific to the Amazonian context and biomimetic design will also be provided.
- On-Site Resources: A workspace equipped with desks, electricity and internet will be provided. Participants must bring their own tools and computers.

5.3 Pastoral Support

- Health and Wellbeing: The wellbeing of students is a priority, with pastoral support available throughout the course. Course leaders will be on-site to assist with any personal or health-related concerns.

6. Assessment Criteria

6.1 Assessment Methods

- Design Portfolio: Students will submit a portfolio of their design work, including sketches, models, digital renderings, and final proposals. The portfolio will be assessed based on creativity, originality, and relevance to the course themes.
- Final Presentation: The final presentation will be evaluated on the clarity and coherence of the design proposal, as well as the ability to articulate the conceptual and contextual aspects of the project.
- Participation: Active participation in workshops, discussions, and group activities is crucial. This will be assessed throughout the course.

6.2 Assessment Standards

Assessment will be based on the AA's rigorous academic standards, with a focus on the following criteria:

- Innovation: The originality and creativity of the design proposal.
- Technical Competency: Proficiency in using digital tools and applying biomimetic principles.
- Contextual Understanding: The ability to integrate ecological and cultural insights into the design process.
- Communication: Effectiveness in presenting and defending design ideas.

7. Grading Outcomes & Criteria

High Pass (80-100%):

- Outstanding work that exceeds all assessment criteria.
- Demonstrates exceptional creativity, technical skill, and contextual understanding.
- Effectively communicates complex ideas with clarity and insight.

Pass (40-79%):

- Satisfactory completion of all assessment criteria.
- Shows a solid understanding of course content and adequate technical competency.
- Presents ideas clearly and cohesively.

Fail (0-39%):

- Does not meet the minimum required criteria.
- Significant gaps in understanding and technical competency.
- Inadequate communication of ideas.

8. Transferable Skills

Participants will develop a range of transferable skills that are valuable both within and beyond the field of architecture:

- Analytical Skills: The ability to critically analyse ecological and cultural contexts and their implications for design.
- Technical Proficiency: Advanced skills in parametric design tools and biomimetic design principles.
- Communication Skills: Effective verbal, visual, and written communication, essential for presenting complex ideas.
- Teamwork: The ability to collaborate effectively in a diverse and multidisciplinary team.
- Problem-Solving: Innovative approaches to addressing design challenges in a complex environmental context.
- Time Management: The ability to manage time effectively in a demanding, immersive course environment.

9. Health and Safety Considerations

9.1 Health Precautions

Participants will be in a remote and ecologically sensitive environment, where health and safety are paramount. Prior to departure, students are required to:

- Obtain recommended vaccinations, including those for tropical diseases.
- Carry necessary medications, including malaria prophylaxis if advised.
- Be aware of the health risks associated with the local environment, including waterborne diseases and insect-borne illnesses.

9.2 Safety Protocols

On-site safety protocols will be strictly enforced, including:

- Site Safety: Adherence to guidelines during site visits and fieldwork to avoid accidents or injuries.
- Emergency Procedures: Familiarization with emergency procedures, including the location of medical facilities and contact information for emergency services.
- Environmental Awareness: Education on how to interact responsibly with the local environment, minimizing ecological impact and avoiding dangerous wildlife.

9.3 Insurance

Students must ensure they have comprehensive travel and health insurance that covers participation in fieldwork in remote locations.

10. Environmental and Ethical Considerations

10.1 Sustainable Practices

The course emphasizes sustainable practices in both the design process and the conduct of the course itself. This includes:

- Minimizing Waste: Reducing waste during workshops and using recycled or biodegradable materials where possible.
- Energy Efficiency: Awareness of energy use during the course and minimizing the carbon footprint of the event.
- Cultural Respect: Engaging with local communities in a respectful and mutually beneficial manner, recognizing and valuing traditional knowledge systems.

10.2 Ethical Engagement

Students will engage with local communities ethically and respectfully, ensuring that their presence and activities do not disrupt local life or the environment. This includes:

- Informed Consent: Ensuring that local communities are fully informed about the nature of the course and their involvement.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Respecting local customs, traditions, and practices.
- Fair Compensation: Ensuring that any local guides, experts, or workers involved in the course are fairly compensated.

11. Key Contacts

- Course Leaders:

- Ignacio (Nacho) Martí

Email: Ignacio.marti@aschool.ac.uk

-Marko Brajovic

Email: marko@markobrajovic.com

- Course Coordinator:

- Mariia Pastukh

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