

Book making buildings

The London based Japanese-Malay studio, Toh-Shimazaki Architecture, run an architectural workshop every summer. Seven years old, t-sa forum is themed around *Context and Craft*. And each year, as founder **Takero Shimazaki** explains, part of the forum process is to make books.



Caption:

Yuli Toh and I have been running Toh Shimazaki Architecture (T-SA) for over a decade after working for other practices such as Richard Rogers Partnership (now Rogers Stirk Harbour), Itsuko Hasegawa Atelier, and Alison and Peter Smithson. During this time, we have been fortunate to work on a variety of projects of different briefs in interesting locations for different clients. In all of the projects we try to enrich the quality of the place through focusing on the contextual background and the material characteristics together with rigorous studies of each unique user brief and its arrangement. We apply this approach on all of our projects whether, residential, NHS hospitals, private health clinics, mass housing, cultural buildings or urban master planning.

OSh House in Surrey, and Centre For Sight in Sussex are the two most challenging and important projects in the practice's recent history. A lot of the ideas for these projects were very specific to each unique situation. However, there are influences across different projects, and in the case of these two projects, small residential projects in London's Calbourne Road and Wandle Road have inspired the design of OSh House, which was then an inspiration for Centre For Sight. In all of these cases, we used simple construction techniques with locally available craft methods, choosing each material very carefully to assemble the whole. Studies of local bricks and working with the constructor's joinery specialities were key to the success of these projects.

Designing buildings and delivering them is a challenge in itself. Sometimes, as an architect you become so overwhelmed by the process of orchestrating different disciplines and organisations involved in delivering those buildings that it is an enormous challenge every time to achieve the quality of space or place you want. Architects often turn to teaching or writing to investigate and test their ideas outside of the practice context in order to re-focus on their agendas.

Toh Shimazaki Architecture Forum Workshop

We started our own architectural school six years ago to share issues and research with outside participants and called it Toh Shimazaki Architecture Forum, (t-sa forum). The Forum is run in a workshop style. Student participants are mainly from Japan and the UK although more students are joining from other European schools. Forum is a workshop open not just to students but to architects and artists who are already working. The idea is to spend about 4-6 weeks together working on projects based on the sites that Toh Shimazaki Architecture is working on.

At t-sa forum, we investigate with the theme of *Context and Craft* every year. Within this overall theme we have focused on *Textured Surfaces and Tactile Details*, *Context Narratives and Boundaries* and