

Sensing Architecture: When experience becomes form

This video presentation documents a series of experiential workshops to showcase how pedagogical innovation directly builds the essential skills required for the future. Through footage of hands-on projects in rural villages and urban art spaces, the film captures students translating theoretical knowledge into practical application, developing a robust portfolio of transferable competencies.

The narrative is anchored by two key films. The first, "Trilogy: Fields/Home/Childhood," documents the creation of site-specific sound instruments in Langtou Village. The process vividly demonstrates problem-solving and adaptability, as students learn to assemble and improvise with non-traditional materials like bricks, ceramics, and bamboo. The film shows how collaborative teamwork was essential to harmonize individual creations into a cohesive artistic installation, honing their ability to negotiate and integrate diverse ideas.

The second film, "Hunan Workshop Documentation," provides a compelling case study in project management and complex collaboration. The camera follows the full design-build cycle—from surveying and harvesting natural materials to the final assembly of a timber structure. This real-world project demanded critical decision-making, logistical planning, and resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges, moving from abstract design to tangible construction.

Both films powerfully illustrate the development of communication skills. Students are seen engaging not only with each other but also with local villagers, artisans, and the public. The culminating community banquet in Hunan, where 50 local villagers gathered around the student-built structure, highlights advanced interpersonal and cultural competencies, transforming an academic exercise into a meaningful social ritual.

ARCH 1079 Design 1 2024-25 | Sensing Architecture Teaching Team:
Thomas Tsang, Anneli Giencke, Jenny Hsiao, Tianying Li, You Wu, and Lily Zhang

3 Workshops:

Earthy Notes:
33 Attempts on Listening
Venue: Langtou Village, Huazhou District, Guangzhou, China
Collaborator: Chun Yang Tai Arts and Cultural Centre
Date: March 7 to March 10, 2025 (3-day workshop)
Curatorial Design: Thomas TSANG, Tianying LI, You WU
Student Participants: 16 students (BAAS Year 1)

A student film workshop, repairing and performing their instrument pieces in the farming fields/ruined courtyards of the ancient village (Langtou Village)/abandoned primary school. Understanding the assembly and improvisation using ready-made, including bricks, rocks, ceramic pieces, jars & glasses, fishing nets, bamboo, and fireworks.

Sensing Architecture:
33 Listening Pairs in the Field. Fei Arts
Venue: FEI Arts, Haizhu District, Guangzhou, China
Collaborator: FEI Arts
Date: March 12 to March 16, 2025 (5-day workshop)
Curatorial Design: Thomas TSANG, Tianying LI, You WU
Student Participants: 29 students (BAAS Year 1) + 2 students (GDUIT) + 2 students (GAFA) + 7 students (SCUT)

The workshop probed the animated history of isolated objects in and around the Zhongda Fabric District of Guangzhou. The eclectic collections go beyond their original intentions, showcasing lessons learned from performers, carpenters, designers, theorists, farmers, and audiences across various disciplines beyond just architecture.

Sensing Architecture:
Banquet in the Woods
Venue: Baishuidong Village (construction site) & Changsha (guided tours), Hunan, China
Collaborator: School of Architecture and Planning, Hunan University
Date: June 21 to July 2, 2025 (12-day workshop)
Workshop Leads:
HKU: Thomas TSANG, Tianying LI, You WU
HNU: Shen YAO, Jiansong LIU

Visiting Professor: Isami KINOSHITA
Special Thanks: YouTian Design, WCY
Guest Lecturer and Local Architectural Guide: Xueyang YUAN
Administrative Assistant: Yixin ZHANG
Student Participants: 15 HKU students + 5 HNU students

Film:

Trilogy 林間野餐

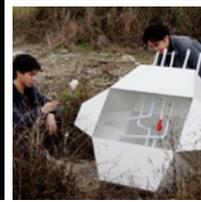
This trio of short films, as part of exhibition Earthly Notes: 33 Attempts on Listening (2025) by first-year architecture Sensing Architecture students at the University of Hong Kong's Department of Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture with support from the Chun Yang Tai Arts and Cultural Centre, reinvents spatial tales around the distinctive setting surrounding Guangzhou's Langtou, a 600-year-old known as "accomplished scholars village." Through the use of student-designed sound instruments, this trilogy celebrates a sense of place in the medium of sound.

This trilogy recuperates a long-lost slowness and attunement to our environment through sound. From crumbling courtyards to abandoned schools, the memory of these places is embodied in the instruments, telling their origin through vibrations to emit a palpable sense of place.

Executive Producer: University of Hong Kong Faculty of Architecture
Producer: Thomas TSANG
Co-producer: Tianying LI and You WU
Co-producer: Guangzhou Caixiong
Funding Body: Chun Yang Tai Arts and Cultural Centre
Director: Guoxin QIU
Art Directing: Mo CHEN
Scripting and Casting: Mo CHEN, Tianying LI, and You WU
Location: Tianying LI, You WU, and Chen MO
Photography: Chuande LI and Zijian YANG
Boom Operator: Zijian YANG
Film Editor: Guan YANG
Sensing Architecture Advisors: Thomas TSANG, Anneli GIENCKE, Tianying LI, You WU, Lily ZHANG, Jenny HSIAO

This film trilogy is part of the "Earthy Notes: 33 Attempts on Listening" exhibition in Chun Yang Tai Arts and Cultural Centre, Langtou, Guangzhou.

Field Duration: 5'17" Performers: CHOI Season Yong Xin KIN Wan Yan LI Chun Hai Angus PIAIE Phyo Maung Lian YAO YIM	Childhood Duration: 4'42" Performers: CHEN Mo CHOI Season Yong Xin KWOK Nga Ki Kellis KIN Wan Yan LI Chun Hai Angus LI Tianying LIUET Tsz Ki Kiki THWAY Thura Sit WONG Lok Chee WONG Ying Yan
Home Duration: 5'33" Performers: CHESING Marcus CHOI Season Yong Xin KIN Wan Yan KWOK Nga Ki Kellis LIUET Tsz Ki Kiki WONG Lok Chee WONG Ying Yan	Home Duration: 5'33" Performers: CHESING Marcus CHOI Season Yong Xin KIN Wan Yan KWOK Nga Ki Kellis LIUET Tsz Ki Kiki WONG Lok Chee WONG Ying Yan



Documentary: Banquet in the Woods 林間野餐 Hunan Workshop Documentation

The film shows the full process of our design-build workshop at Baishuidong Village, Longhui, Hunan. It covers everything from site surveying and designing to harvesting natural materials, building the timber structure, transporting the materials, and assembly on-site. The project aimed to create a space for place-making and community gathering, helping to strengthen social connections among the villagers. The film concludes with a banquet held in a traditional setting—on the big rocks of a mountain creek—an event that echoes their festival traditions and symbolizes community celebration and connection.

"Sensing Architecture: Banquet in the Woods" is an HKU x HNU joint workshop that aims to create an installation and performance through the ritual of dining. Learning from the natural environments and local craftsman, and inspired by the distinctive festival culture of the Yao people, participants create a piece of architecture that could be a bridge, a kitchen counter, a brief shelter, and sometimes an instrument.

This project is supported by CHINA VISION (China 10000 Exchange Programme 2024) and Global PE Experiential Learning Fund.

