

## Outdoor Education

The informal collaboration of Studio in the Woods pointed Piers Taylor towards a new form of practice

Like many architects I've had plenty of inspiring 'teachers' who've provided guidance, and many texts have also been formative. But it was the summer workshop Studio in the Woods that provided the most for me in terms of establishing a vision for a method of practice. Participation helped to clarify three key things: (lack of) structure, an attitude to making, and an approach to timber.

No-one started Studio in the Woods and in many ways it doesn't exist. It evolved from a few friends getting together in the summertime to test ideas at 1:1 while working alongside architecture students. The vision for an Invisible Studio – the name I chose for my own practice – came from this. We are a loose, unstructured collection of people that work together when conditions are right, and not when they aren't.

With Studio in the Woods there was never any commitment to work together again. There was no hierarchy, no presumptions and certainly no succession planning. It isn't a charity, a company or a co-op. Likewise, Invisible Studio isn't a practice – it's a kind of anti-practice. It is just people who work together with no labels or titles, with no commitment or expectation.

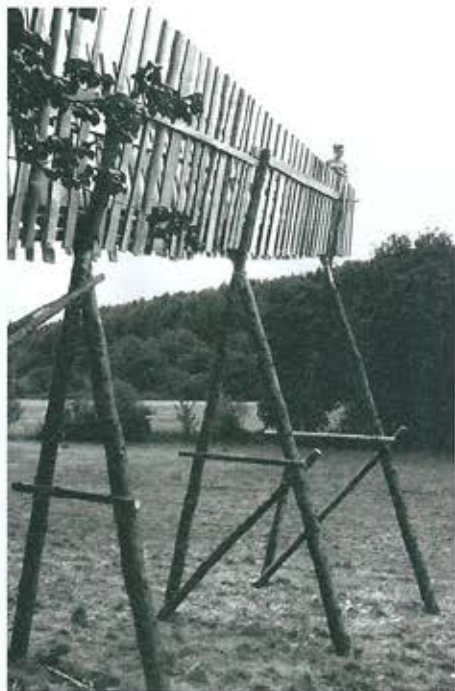
Studio in the Woods helped me understand that there could be a vehicle for practice outside the super-conventional model adopted by almost every architect. Like Studio in the Woods, Invisible Studio makes no commitment to anyone's future or ongoing livelihood. It exists merely to carry out interesting work. If the work is good enough, we find a way to make money and thrive creatively. Nothing else matters.

Before Studio in the Woods, I was suspicious of the moralising around 'making' which came with all the truth-to-materials baggage inherited from the Arts & Crafts movement. Studio in the Woods showed me how making could be used as a design tool to underpin practice, and in an exploratory way as a mechanism for discovery, rather than the pious making where something is made well for its own sake. I came to enjoy the 'bodged joint' – knowing that making wasn't an end, but instead the beginning of a process of design. At Studio in the Woods, we made quickly and greedily, with improvised structures built in an ad hoc way.

Through Studio in the Woods I discovered a world that conventional modernism had banished, where judgment and material sensibility were more important than design rhetoric. Over the years timber has become more and more fascinating to me, and I recently bought a woodland with my partner, which we manage alongside practice and family life.

We've built our studio in it, using a design method that has evolved through using full-scale making as an essential component. This, and the way of life that is Invisible Studio, would have been impossible without the lessons from Studio in the Woods, which will be back next year, 10 years after we ran the first one. **A**

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### Right

Experimental projects built during Studio in the Woods workshops.  
Details: [studiointhewoods.org.uk](http://studiointhewoods.org.uk)