

## Architectural Studio

London Architectural Association School of Architecture

Shillim Institute



London Architectural Association School of Architecture joins the Shillim Institute and Foundation in a pioneering knowledge exchange and design studio, pursuing a unified mission to conserve, enhance and advance the land of Shillim. Shillim is a 2500-acre reserve in the Western Ghats between Mumbai and Pune; 250 acres at the heart of the valley contain a 100-room spa retreat operated by Hilton International, as well as the Shillim Institute, a facility that integrates ecology, the arts and wellness in programs that further new ideas about sustainable development. The studio aims to blur the boundary between the hospitality component – the commercial entity that has made preservation of the landscape possible and the larger landscape as well as the larger mission to connect with the site as an integral part of its natural systems.

Studio Diploma 18, led by Barcelona architect Enric Ruiz-Geli, focuses on sustainability, biodiversity, and global warming. Bringing together multi-cultural intelligences from Taiwan, Italy, Ecuador, Peru, Israel, China, United Kingdom, Iran, Ukraine and Montenegro, the studio sets out to understand the landscape of forest, savannah and farmland, documenting the ecosystem using multi-sensory technologies to observe, archive and analyze the land of Shillim. From the data collected, the studio will create prototypes of designs that will activate various segments of Shillim, to transform Shillim from a retreat to a spiritual home for all.

Healing is more than a program. It is an experience, a necessity and a responsibility, going from the individual, to the collective, to the planet.

Architectural Association and Shillim Institute embark on a pioneering collaboration, moving towards a vision for sustainable development that understands healing as an explicit agenda in sustainable development.

This constitutes a third phase of healing at Shillim. The first phase of work at Shillim begun 20 years ago involved remediating the deforestation and erosion that occurred over generations of slash-and-burn and overgrazing practices by both Adivasi and settled villagers. Hundreds of thousands of trees were planted in a large-scale reforestation program, enhancing the biodiversity and environmental performance of the landscape. The people who live in the valley have been involved in the operations of the retreat since its inception; the aim of the studio as subsequent workshops is to channel industries created by tourism into sustainable livelihoods for the people who live in and around Shillim.

The next phase of healing remediated the scars in the landscape left after the construction process. Now the charge is to heal the rift in the site made by cordoning off the retreat from the larger landscape of ridge and valley, as well as enhancing areas low in ecological value. A new regeneration of the site will bring the whole together as a healthy, cohesive, living landscape that connects the people who live and work there and visitors with the natural processes on the site and in the surrounding landscapes of the Sahyadri Range. The studio shifts the emphasis at Shillim in recent years on the commercial retreat, to embrace the entire site as a place of growth and transformation.