

International architecture workshop  
for Bachelor and Master's students

# Close to Earth

## قريب من الأرض





# Close to Earth

## International Summer School 2025

### WHAT?

The Summer School provides practical knowledge on the use of earth as sustainable building material, bringing together tradition and innovation to build resilient places for the future. It will be led by a team of Polish and Egyptian tutors, each bringing unique and diverse expertise.

### WHEN?

#### 16–22 September 2025

A week-long workshop of immersive, hands-on learning and cross-cultural exchange.

### WHERE?

Nuweiba, South Sinai – Egypt  
Habiba Organic Farm – a place of regeneration, biodiversity and Bedouin heritage.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

Architecture, urban planning, design, and landscape architecture students at the Bachelor's & Master's level  
12 participants from Poland  
12 from international universities  
Join a diverse group of young designers eager to get Close to the Earth.

### HOW TO APPLY?

Fill in application form and submit your portfolio  
Use this [link](#)

**Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> of June**







# The idea

The "Close to Earth" workshops aim to initiate dialogue and promote sustainable design practices using natural materials (earth) while drawing inspiration from local traditions and stories gathered from the community. This project seeks to revive the process of creating contemporary spaces, objects, and places by employing practices centered on the oldest and most widely used building material—earth. The goal is to inspire modern architects, urban planners and designers to explore new applications for this material. Additionally, it supports local community initiatives that create climate-resilient spaces aligning with circular economy principles, minimising environmental impact, and continuing the local tradition of living and designing with earth.

## Why practices in/from Egypt?

Egypt is the cradle of earth-building traditions. Design practice in close collaboration with local craftsmen that take from local heritage is still very much alive among contemporary designers. Egyptian architects draw inspiration from Hassan Fathy known as ‘the architect of the poor’ who designed the New Gurna village. In his work he revitalised mudbrick construction, incorporating local traditions but also promoted the use of natural energy solutions. Egyptian architectural practices emphasise sustainable, community-oriented design, focusing on projects that integrate local culture, materials, and traditional building techniques while addressing modern challenges such as environmental sustainability and community development.

This project also seeks to recall the collaboration between Polish and Arab architects in the 1960s-1980s working together in the Middle East countries like Syria, Algeria, Lebanon, and Iraq. These professionals sought solutions that respected local cultural codes and building traditions.

Green farms and local community development: practices at Habiba Organic Farm (HOF) The Habiba Community is a grassroots local initiative located in Nuweiba, Sinai, on the shores of the Red Sea. It is focused on unique projects aimed at promoting environmental solutions for land regeneration, enhancing biodiversity, ensuring food and water security, improving the resilience of indigenous communities and ultimately re-greening the Sinai desert. The foundation cultivates date palms, protecting cultural and natural heritage while contributing to local sustainable development. HOF integrates local traditions by reviving craft practices involving Bedouin communities (Tarabin, Jabaleya, Muzeina).

The future plan is to expand the Educational Center at Habiba Organic Farm, with programs for children and local communities.

# Methodology and tools

## Interpretive Survey

Starting with the survey of the existing infrastructure with its context, a survey methodology will be developed that will go beyond the standard recording of the condition of buildings in the form of typical architectural drawings but also examine it’s relationship with the context. A drawing style will be tested and developed to examine and understand specific conditions and convey different points of view. Observing the materiality, scale of architecture, infrastructure, but also their relationship with the landscape are necessary to understand the matter and atmosphere of the place.

## Participatory Design

From the beginning the local community will be involved in the design process. Hands-on workshops and interviews with local residents will help us understand needs and aspirations of future users.

## Interviews and Sound recordings

Sound and visual recordings will be another element documenting the design process and existing condition of the place. Using insights from the survey and interviews with the local community, participants will develop initial concepts for the building and the surrounding landscape, creating a holistic strategy for the place.

## Working with earth materials

The project emphasises the use of local materials while respecting the site’s context and history. Practical workshops will focus on earth as a building material and the history of architecture and construction in Egypt, led by Ahmed Hossam Saafan coworking with Mud Studio architects, which specialises in earth architecture. Students will gain knowledge about material properties, mixture preparation, and construction techniques, enabling them to propose building designs and landscape elements for the Educational Centre at Habiba Organic Farm.

## Design concept

Students will work in small groups to develop initial concepts under guidance. Proposals will be democratically voted on, and the chosen concept will form the basis for a comprehensive strategy. The strategy will become a blueprint for what facilities should be secured and supported by landscape and land cultivation to create a rich and vibrant place. Building on experiences from survey and practical workshops, participants will use a range of architectural representation tools (drawings, models, mockups, animations, sound) to present a vision for the Educational Center at Habiba Organic Farm.

## Documentation

The entire process will be thoroughly documented. A publication featuring drawings, photographs, texts, and accompanying audio material will be prepared.







# Workshop program

During the workshop, we aim to develop a holistic vision of the site with students and researchers, combining architecture, landscape design, and sustainable development strategies. The program includes:

## **DAY 1**

**Interpretative Survey** - a diary of subjective drawings of existing landscape, architecture and infrastructure

## **DAY 2**

**Participatory design** - workshops with local residents and children conducted by students

**Audio interviews** - recording interviews and conversations with the local community

**Photographic documentation** - capturing the essence of the site

## **DAY 3 - 5**

**Earth architecture workshops** - practical workshops on traditional vernacular architecture and modern practice (MUD Studio/Cairo)

## **DAY 6**

**Exploring local traditions and heritage** - learning from the heritage of earth architecture - visit to the Bedouin farms in Saint Catherine

## **Day 7**

Design concept and presentation with local people

## **Following the workshop**

**Publication** - documenting the process and collecting student proposals for the space

# Cost

**Tuition fee:** € 600

**The fee includes:**

- accommodation with half-board (Habiba Organic Farm),
- participation in all activities, workshops and lectures,
- materials and tools,
- trip to St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

Flight and health insurance costs are not included and needs to be covered by participant.

A €200 deposit is required by 30th June to secure your place.

# Contact

close02earth@gmail.com

# Workshop tutors



## Kasia Domagalska/Poland

Architectural and art historian, and researcher. Her work focuses on cultural codes and the identity of space. She investigates the use of metaphor in architecture as a design method employed by Polish architects working on urban projects in the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon) and Algeria from the 1960s to the 1990s. Her research also includes the evaluation of these projects and implementations through psychological studies and analyses of human interaction with space, including the use of eye-tracking methods. She works at the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning (Poland).



## Malwina Gruszecka/Poland

Architect and educator with experience in both Poland and Great Britain. She has taught at the Birmingham School of Architecture in the United Kingdom, the Interior Architecture Department of the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw, and currently teaches at the Architecture Department of the University of Technology and Arts in Applied Sciences in Warsaw. She has collaborated with the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts and Contemporary Art in Vienna (MAK) on international curatorial and art projects. A recipient of grants from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Association of Authors ZAiKS. She is the owner of the design studio Salon. In her work, she is focused on creating well-crafted, sustainable, and socially conscious spaces.



## Marta Akincza /Poland

Landscape architect and educator. She works as an assistant professor at the University of Warmia and Mazury (Poland) in the Department of Landscape Architecture. Her research interests focus on cultural landscapes, their transformations, conservation, and planning. As part of her educational activities, she collaborates with the Technical University of Berlin, the Gerhard Hauptmann Haus Foundation, and Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. She promotes and expands knowledge about shaping cultural landscapes in migration areas with historically shifting borders.



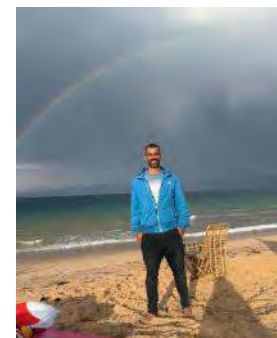
## Ahmed Hossam Saafan/Egypt

Ahmed is an internationally recognised architect and landscape designer dedicated to creating spaces that serve and empower communities. His work blends contemporary design with local materials and traditions, delivering projects that are both environmentally responsible and socially impactful. Spanning Europe, North Africa, and beyond, Ahmed's practice focuses on cultural, public, and civic spaces that foster connection, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. His design philosophy centres on collaboration and sustainability, ensuring each project responds meaningfully to its people and place.



## Mohamed Tantawy/Egypt

Mohamed Tantawy is an Egyptian architect focused on vernacular architecture, cultural heritage, and restoration. Through his work on the restoration of Hassan Fathy's New Qurna in Luxor, he gained insight into the evolving perceptions and misconceptions around traditional architecture. His research revisits Fathy's ideas through a contemporary lens, aiming to bridge the gap between heritage and modern application. Recently, he founded Mud Studio to put these principles into practice, promoting sustainable, context-driven design rooted in local materials and traditions.



## Karim Maged/ Egypt

Co-founder of the Habiba Community and Habiba Organic Farm in Nuweiba. A tourism and hospitality professional, strategic marketing specialist, and advocate for sustainability and organic farming. She is committed to driving community development and well-being in Nuweiba through innovative initiatives and collaborations with partner institutions.

### Partner institutions

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Adam Mickiewicz Institute  
Polish Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning  
Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Cairo  
Close to Earth  
MUD Studio  
Habiba Organic Farm





Ministry of Culture and National Heritage  
Republic of Poland



ADAM  
MICKIEWICZ  
INSTITUTE



Embassy  
of the Republic of Poland  
in Cairo



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ARCHITEKTURY  
I URBANISTYKI



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SNOB  
SNOB  
ARCHITECTURE

