

Topo-Graphia

The Cretan Studio

28 Aug – 7 Sep 2025

Crete, Greece





SYNOPSIS

Topo-Graphia is an Architectural Association **Visting School** that will take place from 28 August to 7 September 2025.

The Cretan Studio will be based on the wild and ancient island of **Crete**, a place overlaid with the traces of over 5,000 years of occupation and settlement. We will study the **contrasting landscapes** of Heraklion, a northern port city, and Koudouma, a remote monastery on the southern coast, exploring ways of looking at and **critically understanding a place** in order to develop precise design proposals.

The largest Renaissance and Venetian fortifications in the Mediterranean world define Heraklion's city centre. These extraordinary city walls took 125 years to construct and twenty-five years to conquer. This workshop will focus on these walls, which form a **landscape within the city**, connecting to the wider topography and acting as a backdrop to everyday life. Here, our designs will challenge the current approach to heritage and tourism.

In contrast, Koudouma – where the first **traces of monasticism** were introduced to Europe in the third century – is built around a walled courtyard within topographies of rocks, caves, eagles, wind and heat. We will explore this small and **isolated community** together, considering ways to improve life in such a challenging context. The semi-ruined and fragmented nature of these places, which seemingly exist **outside of reality**, leave space for the imagination and foster connections with the past.

Over ten days based both in a studio located in the historic centre of **Heraklion** and in **Koudouma** monastery, students will participate in drawing, casting and photography workshops. Short talks by local people – including a musician, filmmaker, historian, archaeologist and architect – will provide a rich background to our explorations, as will visits to the ruins of Knossos and the Labyrinth Musical Workshop .

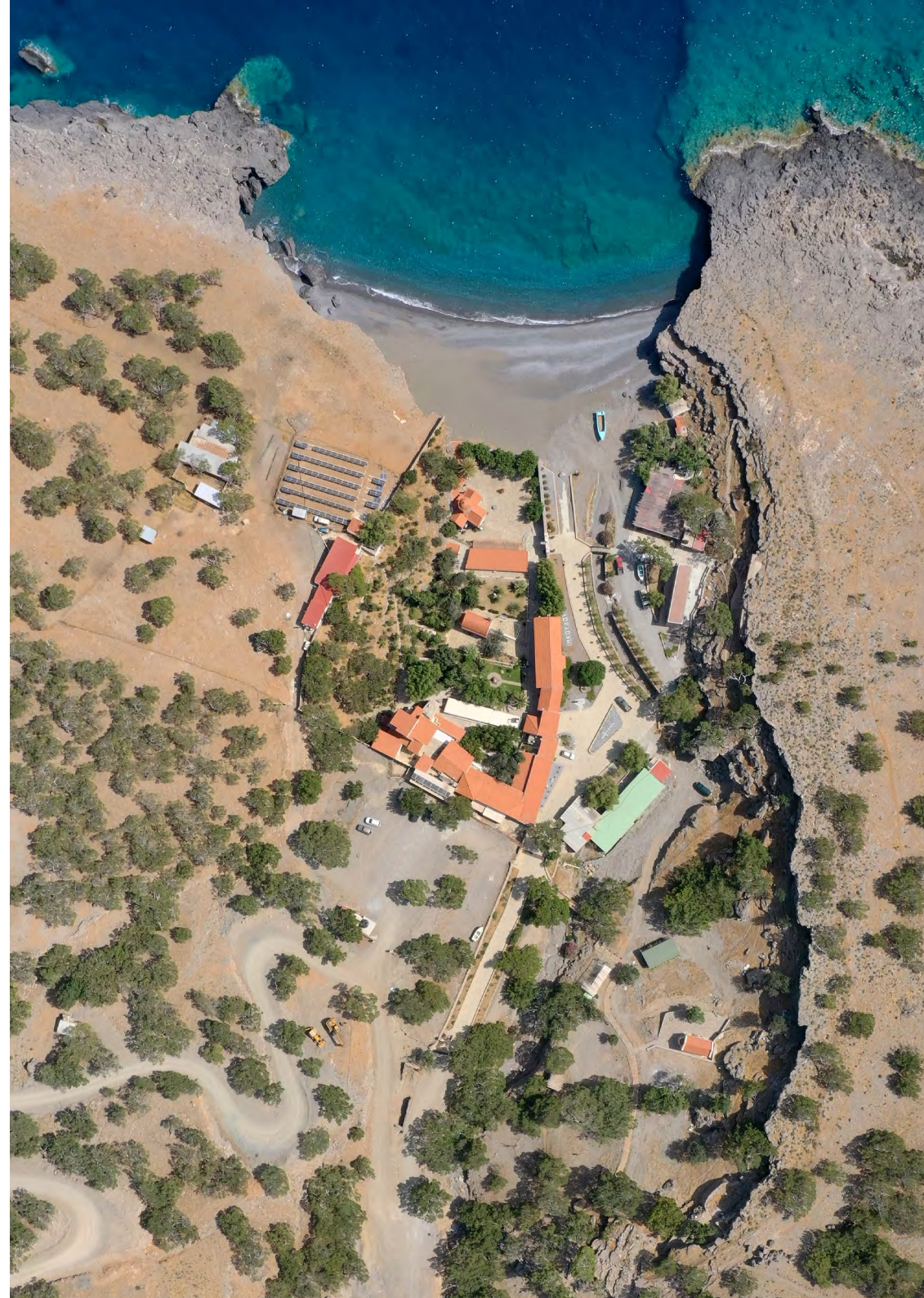
KEY SKILLS/FEATURES

- **Analysis:** An introduction to ways of looking at and understanding place.
- **Design Skills:** Gaining experience of designing in response to places, topographies and communities.
- **Communication:** Experimentation with the practice of hand drawing in its widest sense (including sketches, diagrams, sections, casts and photography) to express ideas
- **Confidence:** One-on-one tutorials will encourage the development of individual preoccupations and allow time to develop design proposals.
- **Personal Development:** An opportunity for participants to develop their own sensibilities and intuitions.

FEES

The AA Visiting School requires a fee of £695 per participant, which includes a £60 AA Membership fee, payable by all participants.

Fees do not include flights or accommodation (other than two nights at the monastery), but accommodation options in Heraklion can be advised on. Students will need their own drawing equipment, including paints/colours, and can bring laptops and digital equipment.







BIOGRAPHIES

Frosso Pimenides (Programme Head)

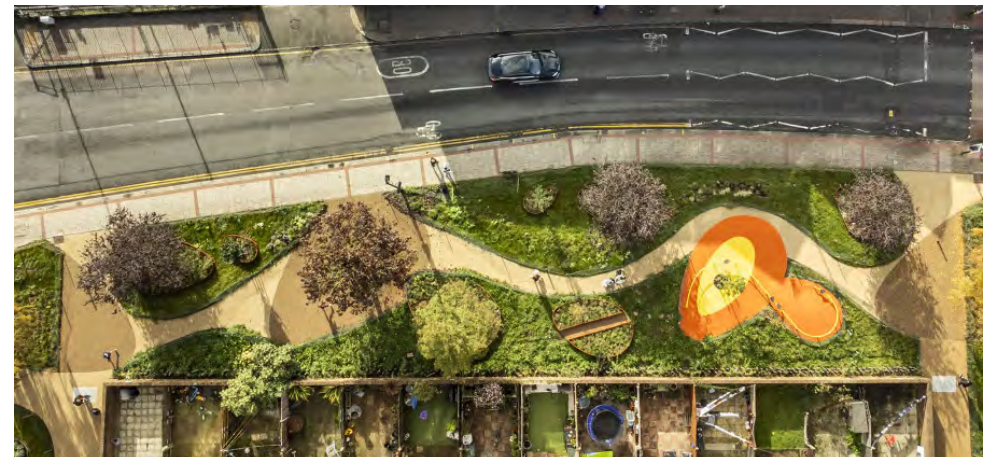
Frosso, Hon FRIBA, is an internationally registered architect, educator and Honorary Emeritus Professor of Architecture at UCL. She has built and worked in practice in Athens before teaching, firstly at the University of Cambridge (1984-88) and the AA (1988-90), then over 30 years at the Bartlett from which she has retired (1990-2023), where her honours included the Faculty Teaching Award (2004) and the prestigious Provost's Teaching Award (2012). She reflects on these experiences in her book on Architectural Education: "Dreaming the Impossible to Build the Extraordinary" (Bartlett, UCL, 2022). Frosso is also an experienced external examiner in schools of architecture across the UK and in Canada, and has been a member of RIBA Validating Boards both in the UK and internationally (2012-present). Since 2012 she has been involved with OPEN CITY, initially as cofounder of Accelerate, and later as an Advisory Member, and an advisor to Fondation Aldea in Chile, advocating for wider access to the profession, and the value of sharing practice with different disciplines and cultures. She is now based in Crete and London, working on research on topography, and a sustainable approach to heritage.

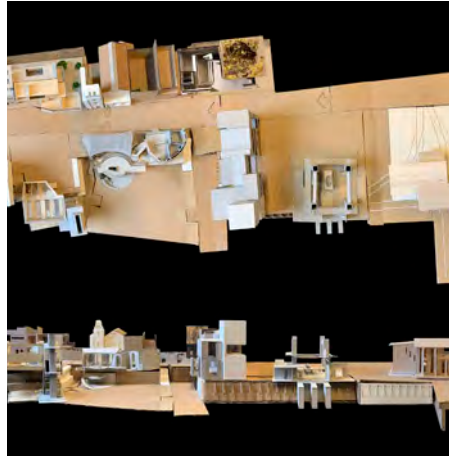
Graeme Sutherland (Programme Head)

Graeme is a co-founding director of Adams & Sutherland, a London based, award-winning architectural practice best known for its work in the public realm for both public authorities and communities. Over the past 25 years, the practice has won competitions, been widely published, and exhibited, including at the V&A and Design Museum, and gained plaudits, including RIBA Awards and BD Public Realm Architect of the Year.

Graeme is also an experienced teacher, having taught in many schools of architecture, including at the Bartlett, UCL for over a decade. He lectures regularly, has been an external examiner at the Universities of Cambridge and Glasgow and was a Glasshouse Community-Led Design Enabler. Formerly a design critic for the London Mayor, he is currently a design advisor for several London local authorities.

adams-sutherland.co.uk @adams_sutherland

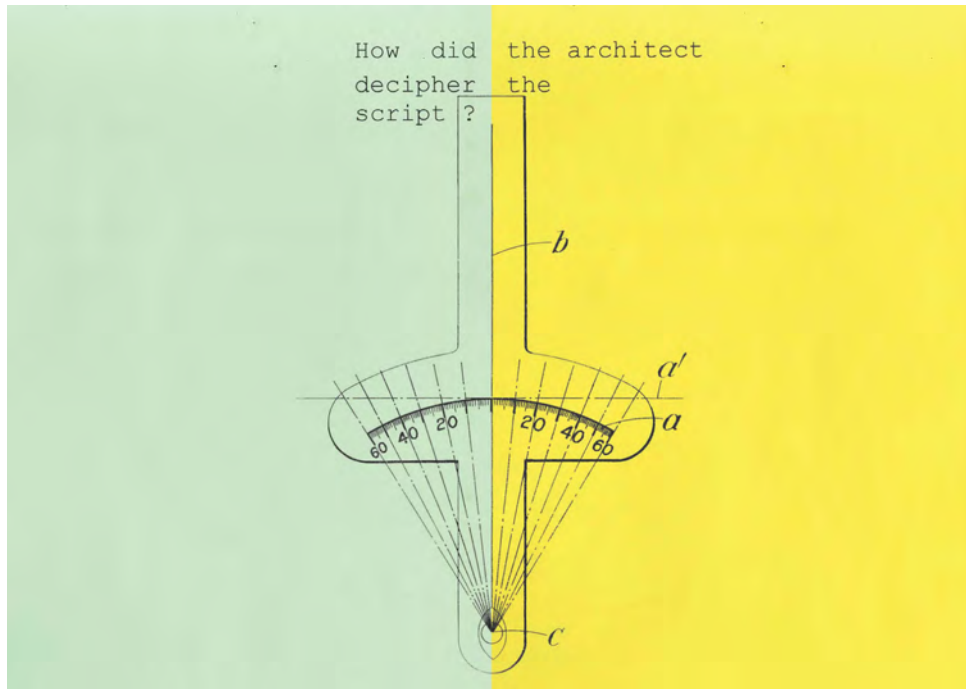




Elliot Nash (Tutor)

Elliot is an architect and teacher. He co-leads Accelerate, an education programme for young Londoners from underrepresented backgrounds, and teaches at the University of Greenwich. Elliot has worked with Wright and Wright Architects since 2017. Elliot graduated from The Bartlett UCL, where his projects explored the potential and poetics of construction through material casting and were awarded the Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners Bursary and the Architectural Review Future Projects Award. Elliot has exhibited at the Barbican, the Royal Academy and Drawing Matter.





Manolis Stavrakakis (Tutor)

Manolis is an Assistant Professor in Architecture at the National and Technical University of Athens. He was born in Heraklion Crete and studied architecture in Athens, in New York (AAD, Columbia University), and in London (PhD, Architectural Association). He taught design and theory of architecture at the Architectural Association and The Bartlett, UCL between 2011 and 2021. Manolis is currently practicing, teaching and researching as an architect in Athens and Heraklion.



About the Visiting School Programme

Encompassing myriad forms and agendas, AA Visiting School courses, competitions and workshops are built around agenda driven project briefs that are pursued and shaped by participants working intensively in small groups, and are led by AA tutors and other international experts. Central to each is the idea that experimental, new and provocative forms of architecture are best learned by doing. The school promotes, tests and challenges contemporary global interests and issues in architectural learning and exchange by embedding a diverse group of creative participants and tutors in an array of unique rural, urban, international and online contexts. Places on each course are limited, and anybody who would like to further their architectural knowledge and skills can apply.



PROGRAMME

	Thursday 28th August	HERAKLION/IRAKLIO
DAY	Arrivals	
EVE	introduction - Meet at Café Oasis by walls. Introduce each other – with brought object Frosso Pimenides /Graeme Sutherland: introduction project & programme Screening: 'The Gates of Darkness' (30-40")	
1	Friday 29th August	IRAKLIO
AM	Frosso Pimenides /Graeme Sutherland: 'How to look at a place' + 'Methods' Studio Base Working - Drawing Workshop	
PM	Manolis Stavrakakis: talk about Iraklion history (after lunch) Explore Iraklion (museums/port castle historic city) – wander within City	
2	Saturday 30th August	IRAKLIO
AM	Explore (early . . sunrise) walk the walls together History Museum: Stella Milliaraki (curator) on Venetian walls model Frosso Pimenides: talk on teaching approach/place (after lunch)	
PM	Studio Base Working - ideas/drawing/discussion/develop Walls explore (above/adjacent /below) Night walk on walls - events/music concerts	
3	Sunday 31st August	IRAKLIO
AM	Walls - drawing/looking/ tutorials Studio Base Working - Elliot Wood: Casting Workshop	
PM	Short talks: Mara Panayiotaki (archaeologist) + Manos Sfakianakis (film director) Studio Base Working - ideas/drawing/discussion/develop Knossos at sunset with Marinella Mamalaki (guide)	
4	Monday 1st September	KOUDOUMAS
AM	Breakfast together Bus to Epanosyfi Monastery (circa 2 hrs)	
PM	Bus to Koudoumas Monastery (arrive lunchtime). Explore place including walk to caves - swim / wander	
5	Tuesday 2nd September	KOUDOUMAS
DAY	Museum as study base All day tutorials on analysis and proposals	
EVE	Experimental Concert on beach	
6	Wednesday 3rd September	IRAKLIO
AM	Workshop tutorials at Museum	
PM	Presentation of Proposals after lunch Bus to Houdetsi (Labyrinth Music Centre) leave 5.30	
EVE	Ross Daly (musician): talk about music + culture (in musical instrument museum) Eat at Taverna Houdetsi - then return to Iraklio late evening	
7	Thursday 4th September	IRAKLIO
AM	Studio Base Working Review of all work to date at Studio Base (from Candia and/or Koudoumas)	
PM	FREE TIME - Visit Archaeological Museum and/or other musuems	
8	Friday 5th September	IRAKLIO
DAY	Studio Base Working - ideas/drawing/discussion/develop Tutorials on proposals (either Iraklio/Candia and/or Koudoumas)	
EVE	Graeme Sutherland – talk about Adams & Sutherland	
9	Saturday 6th September	IRAKLIO
AM	Studio Base Working - Pull together all work.	
PM	Pin Up/Review/Dialogue	
EVE	Celebration Meal with invited guests	
10	Sunday 7th September	IRAKLIO
DAY	Bus to Beaches in southern Crete. Reflections (OPTIONAL) or Departures	
	Monday 8th September	IRAKLIO
DAY	Departures	



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School of Architecture