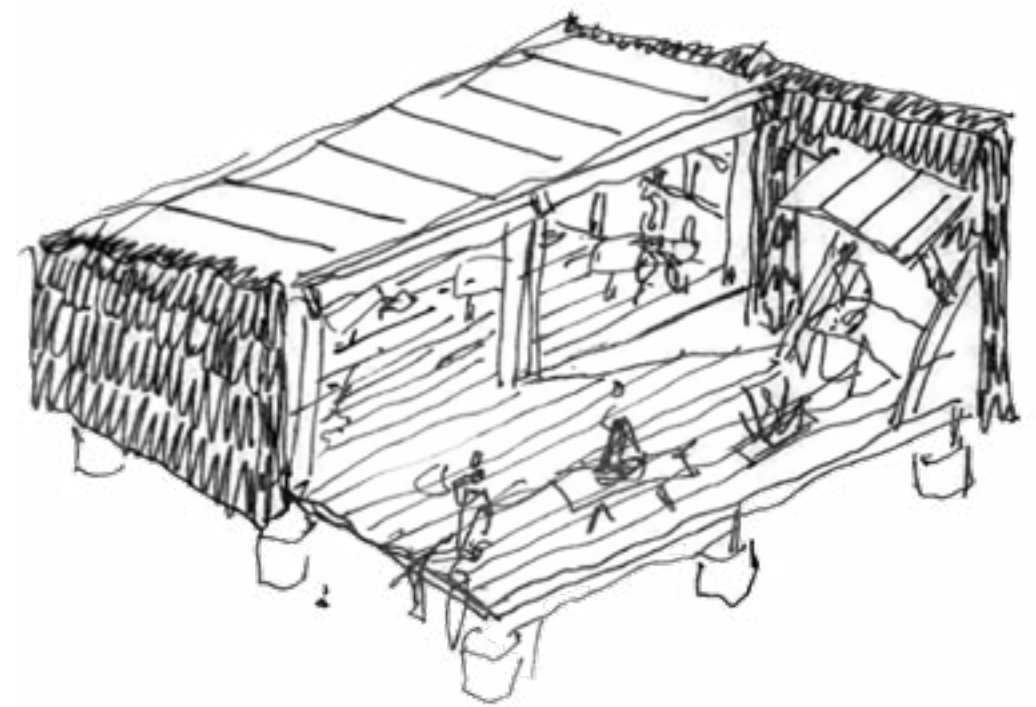


FieldSchool:

inside a gathering circle
that faces the forest



I love to dream, even when I know very well that my dream is impossible. Even so, I dream...The role of utopias is not to be reached: it is to stimulate us to try harder and go further. To be able to dream is already a dream come true!

Augusto Boal



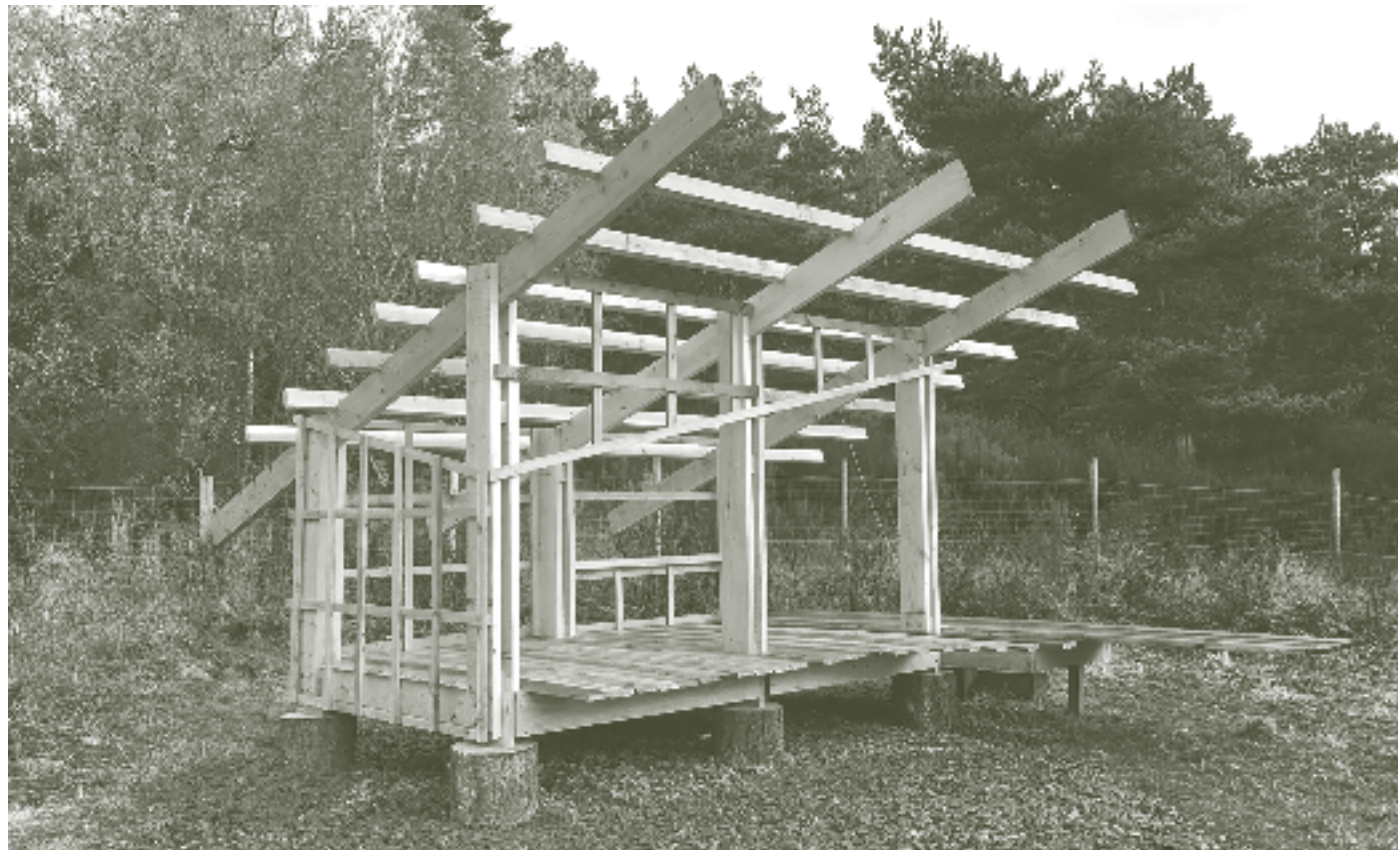
Welcome to FieldSchool: inside a gathering circle that faces the forest, a publication which showcases a live build at the GSA Highlands & Islands campus on the Altyre Estate in Moray. FieldSchool was part of a longer project called shielin-bough (www.shielinbough.co.uk) which explores cultures of shelter in Scotland and Finland. We could not have completed either part of the project were it not for the generous financial assistance from our funders the Scottish Government and the Finnish Institute UK + Ireland.

FieldSchool was directly supported by our business partner Logie Timber and we have worked in collaboration throughout with colleagues from the University of the Arctic. We are also grateful to the University of the Arctic for funding this publication under the auspices of Living in the Landscape (LiLa), an experimental, multi-disciplinary, hybrid approach to art and design education delivered in place and online through collaboration across the Thematic Network on Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design.

FieldSchool contributes to the goals of the University of the Arctic with respect to its focus on inter-cultural collaboration and the innovative mode of hybrid delivery which included virtually enabled co-design workshops and in person learning in the landscape. We gratefully acknowledge the use of the subtitle of this text which was co-created by the students at Mackintosh School of Architecture.

We thank all of the students for their creative insight and their poetic engagement with this process. This project was collaborative from its inception and we are most grateful to all of the participants who took hold of the kernel of an idea and nurtured it to succeed. You did this with patience, with humour, with professionalism and with care. Thank you.

Dr Gina Wall & Professor Timo Jokela
Project Leaders



In order for different people, who at times do not even know each other, to be able to work together, it is necessary that they play together and form the group. Nobody is obliged to do everything. Everyone must seek to be better than himself and not better than others. Without competition spirit. Without violence.

(Augusto Boal cited by Demay & Degay, 2018 p.197)

Shielin-bough is a longitudinal collaborative project which has brought participants from different places and cultural backgrounds to research, to converse, to design and to build together. The collaboration coalesced around the concepts of shelter, food and storytelling offering a variety of experimental modalities for learning and teaching.

The title of the project plays linguistically with the name of a Scottish vernacular building used for seasonal inhabitation, a shieling, and bough, or branch which denotes our interest in the cultures of wood and wooden shelters. In this publication we are focused on the FieldSchool element of the project, a week-long residential live build which took place on the Altyre Estate in Moray. Through FieldSchool, students from GSA Highlands & Islands, Mackintosh School of

Architecture and the University of Lapland worked together to lead on the building of a co-designed shelter on campus, inspired by a Finnish laavu.

The ambition for the construction to sit lightly on the land in dialogue with its surroundings resonates with the term ecoculture, which in its compound form, emphasises the inter-dependence and inter-connectedness of ecology and culture. As Mellissa M. Parks writes:

Ecoculture, as a focal term and conceptual framework, reminds us to decenter [sic] our own socially constructed anthropocentric perceptions and seek more place-based, ecologically centred perspectives that can reinstate value and agency to the more-than-human world. (2020, p.70)

The shielin-bough project values the wisdom of place as spoken through the histories of vernacular architecture which builds with and from the land. Thinking ecoculturally opens a way of learning from the unique affordances of place, its local materials and specific cultural resonances. Using sustainably sourced, locally grown materials with low environmental impact in construction means that a building such as this quite literally emerges from its place.

The relational specificity between site, context and embodied knowledge entails paying attention to, learning from and taking responsibility for the planet which we share with our more-than-human kin. The holistic value of learning from the ecologies, cultures and materials of place is known in indigenous thought and practice as indigenuity (Wildcat, 2023), and in the context of the multi-cultural Arctic, is expressed by Maria Huhmarniemi and Timo Jokela as the northern knowledge system:

The term 'northern knowledge system' is used ... to refer to interlinked ecological and cultural systems. It incorporates cultural heritage and the tacit knowledge of material culture in the making and wearing of arts and crafts as well as in visual symbols of arts and crafts as a language. (2020, p.3)

Key to the shielin-bough project was its emphasis on intercultural engagement, the transit of ideas and ways of doing across our respective cultures in all their intersectional granularity. Furthermore, FieldSchool provided an opportunity to bring a range of cultures into conversation around the inter-connectivity between ecology and cultural heritage in the many forms understood by the group. This transient learning community, comprising of students, technicians and academic staff, gave space to a contingent pedagogy which operated in a non-hierarchical way, during which all participants brought both individual expertise and the personal space to learn.

This way of learning together supported what María Puig de la Bellacasa calls 'thinking-with', a relational thinking that 'creates new patterns out of previous multiplicities' (2017

p.72). This relational modality of learning operated across generations, disciplines and cultures, encouraging playful learning and cross-disciplinary skill sharing.

FieldSchool and the wider shielin-bough project has demonstrated the potential of learning together across academic institutions and across cultures. The power of learning communities brought together in short-term durational configurations is generated in part from their fluid relationality.

The tropes of shelter, food and storytelling served as vital tethers to which we tied explorations of our commonalities and our differences. To return to the words of Augusto Boal, the group was able to live, play and work together to form a space in which a pedagogy of sociability and conviviality emerged. The dynamic was positive and energetic because the group cared for and respected each other. Although many hands supported and guided the project, ultimately the students were its custodians and it is from them that we learned the most.

Dr. Gina Wall, Programme Director GSA Highlands & Islands

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- Wildcat, D. (2023) On indigenuity: learning the lessons of Mother Earth. Speaker's Corner.



As an architectural educator, the chance to work with artists is always rewarding and brings new insights to our discipline. One of the great learning challenges for any young architect is to explore aspects of basic shelter and opportunities for this to happen at any meaningful depth are rare. The shielin-bough project was able to do this by binding together people of Finnish, Scottish and Chinese cultures over common ground where poetics and practicality were able flourish.

Early Zoom collaborations proved that design education can successfully work across distance, cultures and ages. Much can be gained from developing this technique further. The hands on learning gained by everyone during the build stage was unique, especially the focus on using locally sourced timber and experiments using heather as a contemporary material. For these reasons the project has been a privilege to work on. I would wish for the exploratory and experimental nature of this collaboration to continue so that we can build upon this new knowledge and the relationships that were formed.

Kathy Li, Stage 2 Leader Mackintosh School of Architecture

57° 34' 37" N
3° 37' 33" W

Neighbouring Cottage

5x5 m Shieling Site

Mown Paths

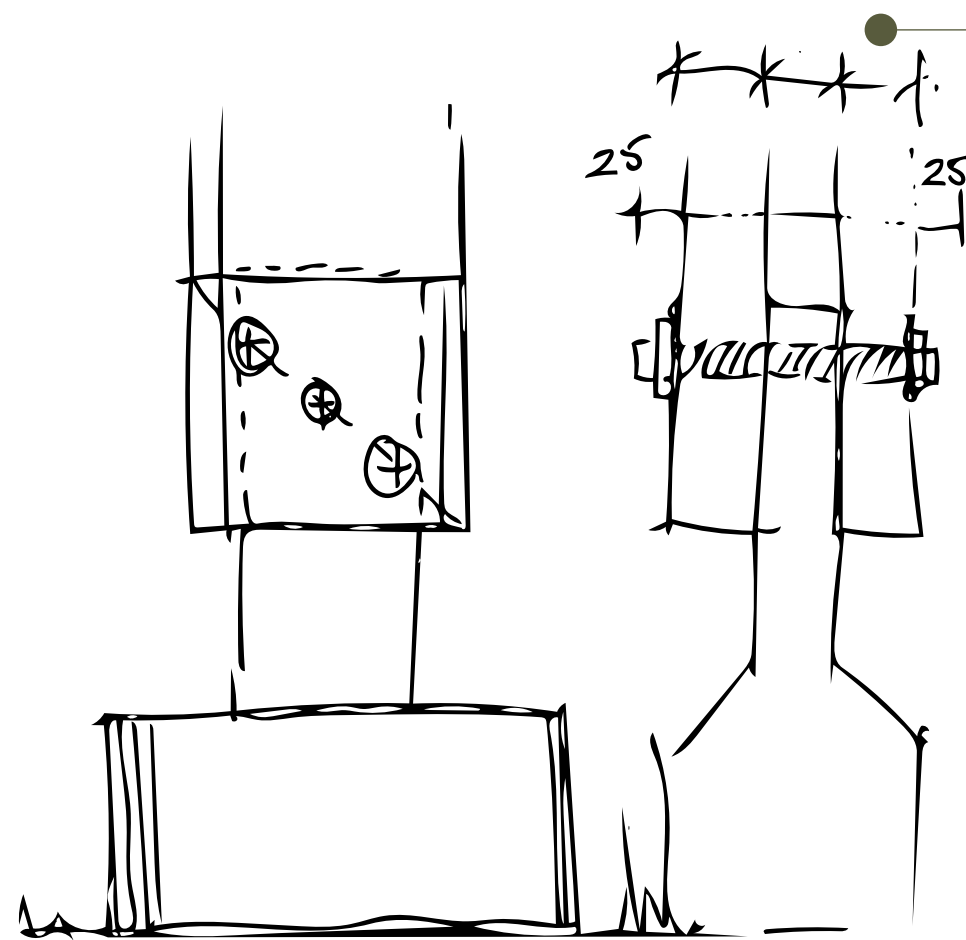
Pond

GSA Teaching Pods

GSA Polytunnel

GSA Campus Building

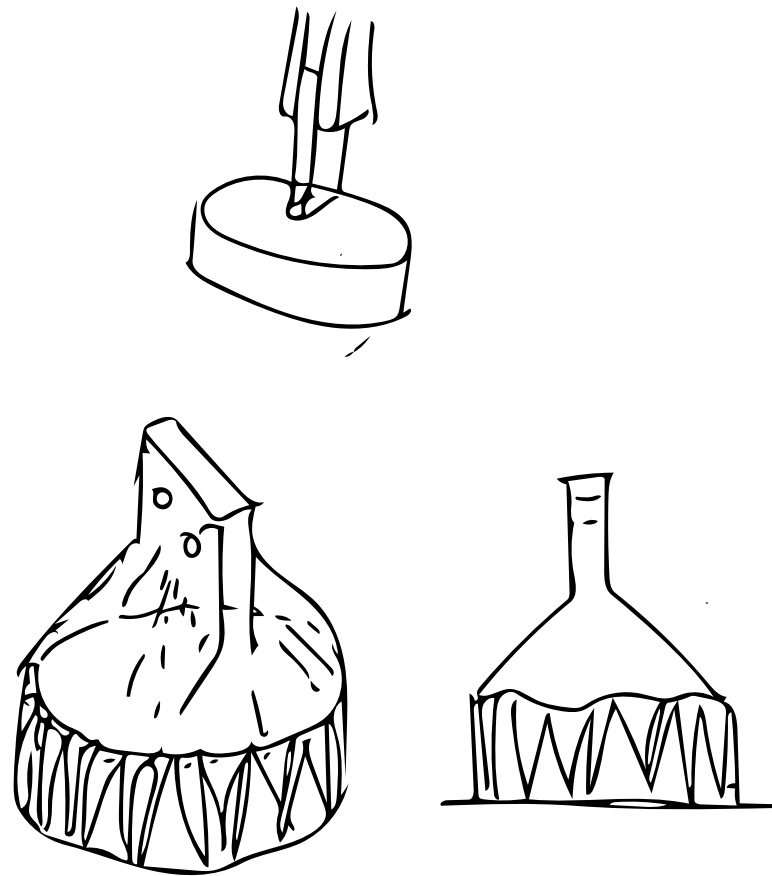
For me, shielin-bough has been a special and successful example of hands-on collaboration with the University of the Arctic, adding significant aspects to the effort to develop hybrid courses for art and design universities in the Arctic region under the theme 'Living in the Landscape'. Our field school, which included elements of art, architecture, and design along with aspects of natural & cultural heritage and anthropology, emphasises how we can learn from the ecocultures of northern regions. It involved knowing with materials and landscapes in line with philosophies of the more-than-human. The results demonstrated that traditional ecocultural knowledge can be revitalised and presented in new contexts and for new purposes.



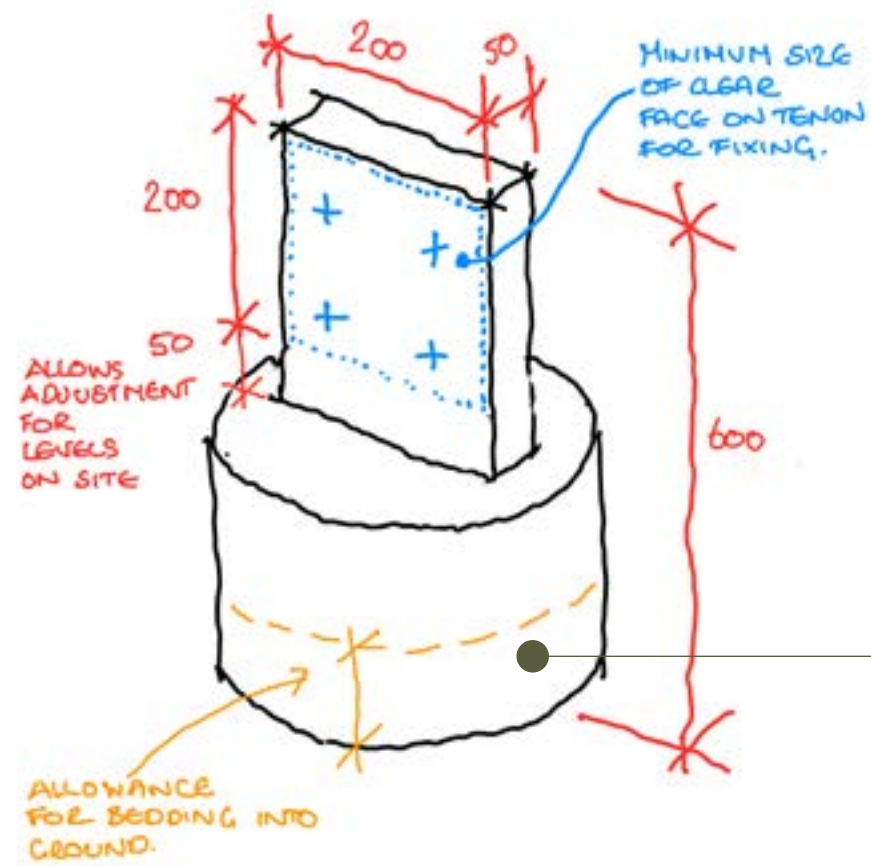
Tenonlog Sketch

As an installation and environmental artist, I find working and teaching with architects particularly rewarding. The result of the field school is a small-scale architectural building which can also be viewed as an artwork. For me, it is a particularly noteworthy example of a public artwork created by a temporarily gathered community of students and tutors. The piece served as a diverse dialogic space for communication and learning, where concrete bodily activities such as preparing materials, nailing, fixing and tying created multifaceted bonds between the participants and between the substantive and cultural components.

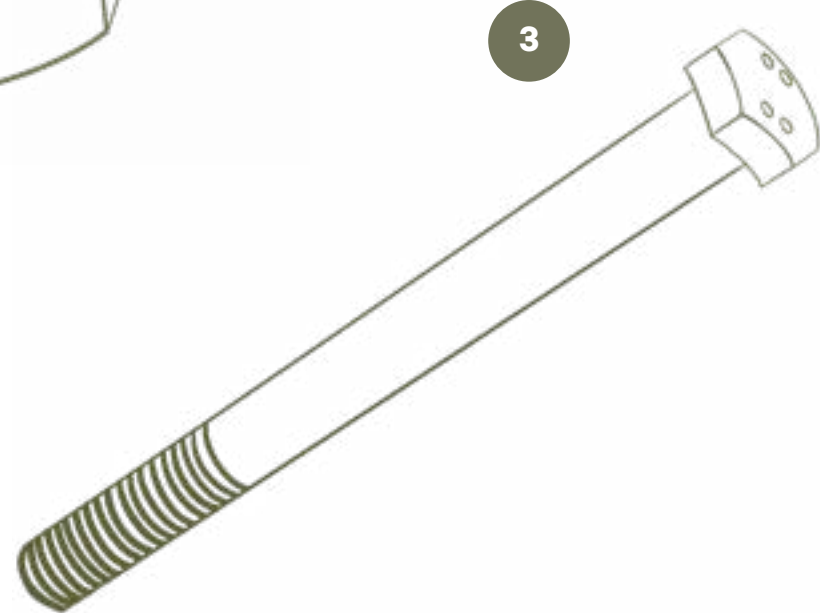
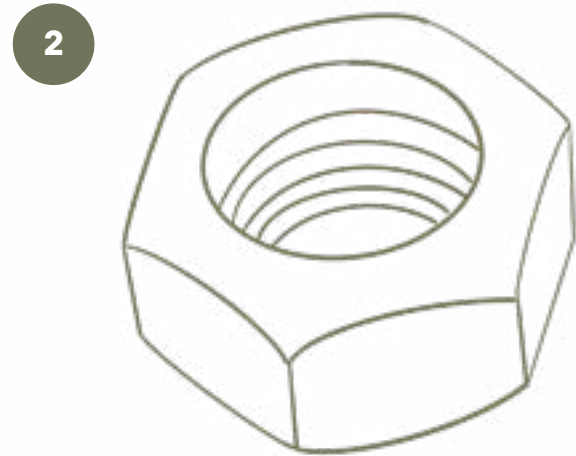
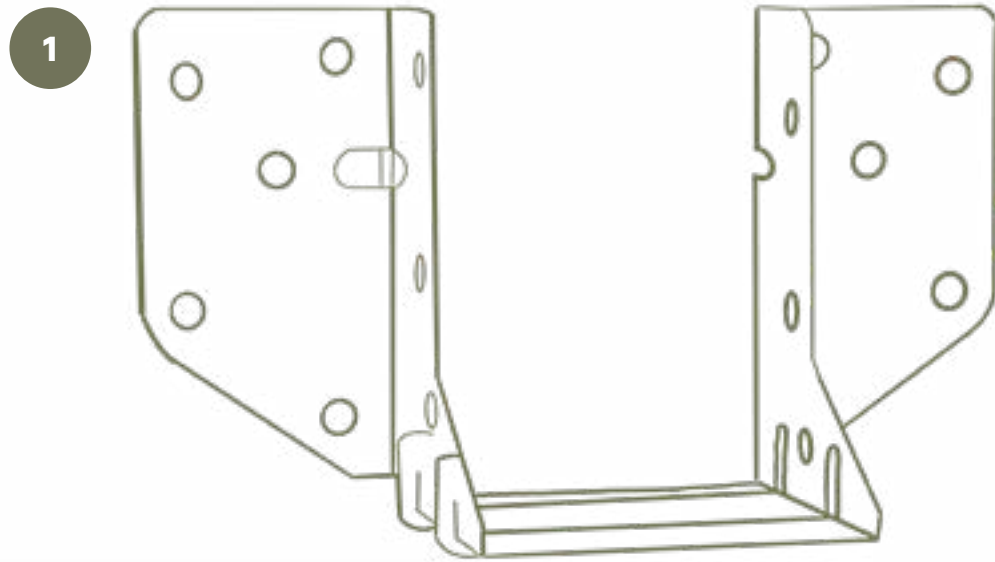
Professor Timo Jokela, UArctic Chair in Art, Design and Culture



Tenonlog Sketch



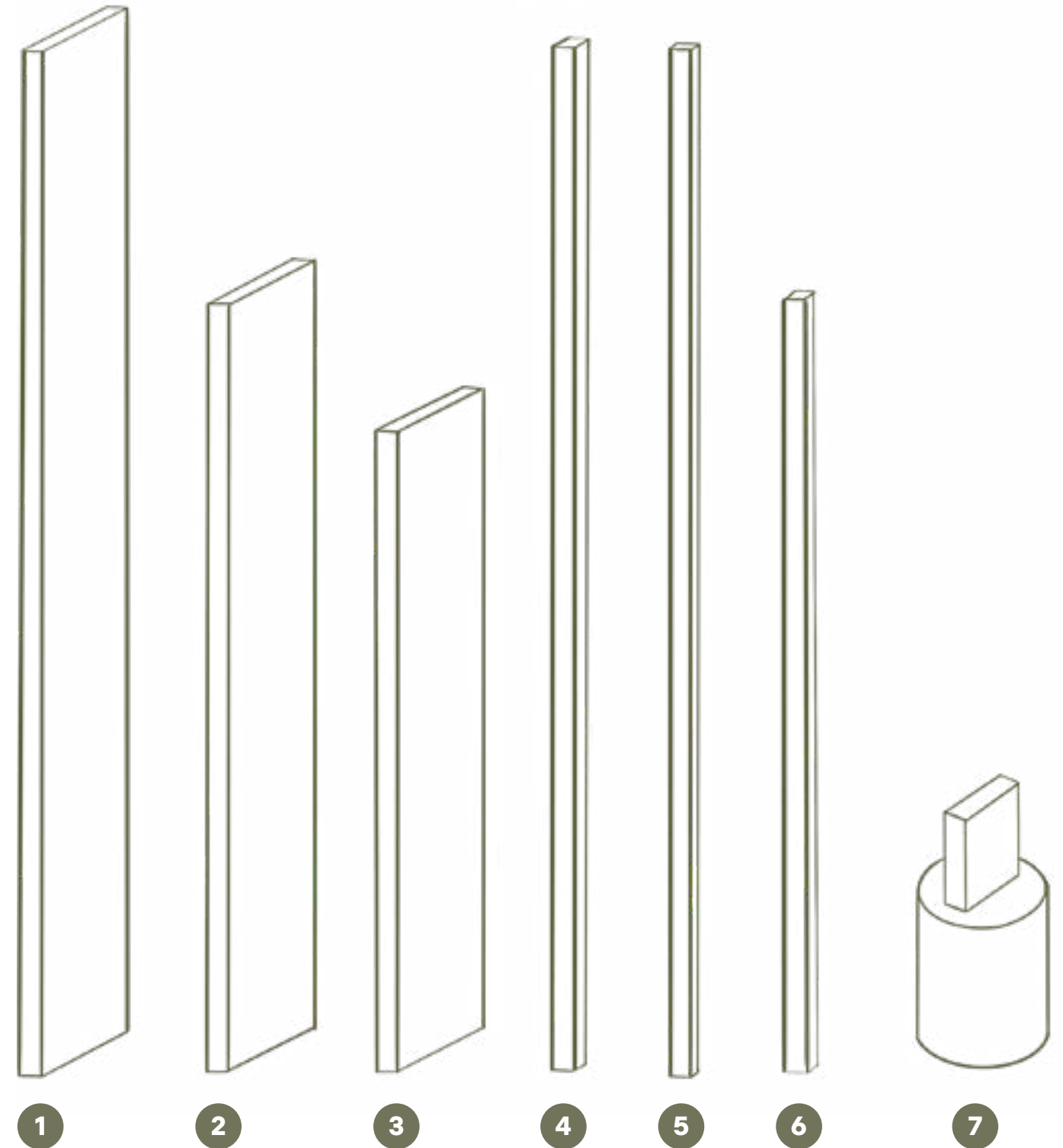
Tenonlog Design



1 Galvanised Steel Joist Hangers 40mm

2 Steel Hex Nuts M16

3 M16 x 130mm Carriage Bolts



1 9x 2400 X 50 X 200mm
DOUGLAS FIR PORTAL FRAME MEMBER

2 9x 1800 X 50 X 200mm
DOUGLAS FIR PORTAL FRAME MEMBER

3 23x 1500 X 50 X 200mm
DOUGLAS FIR PORTAL FRAME MEMBER

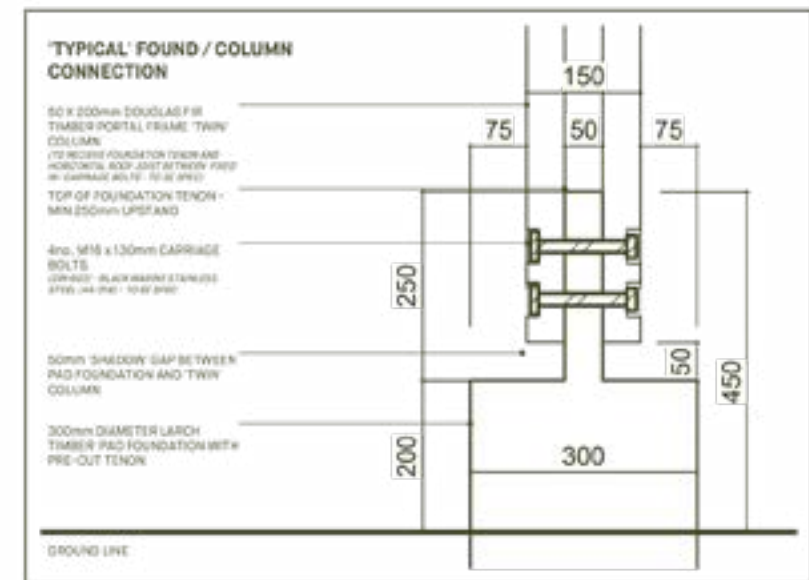
4 24x 2400 X 50 X 50mm
DOUGLAS FIR SECONDARY JOIST MEMBER

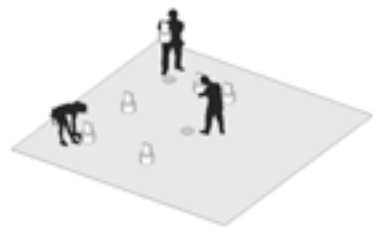
5 6x 2400 X 25 X 50mm
DOUGLAS FIR TERTIARY CLADDING MEMBER

6 22x 2400 X 25 X 50mm
DOUGLAS FIR TERTIARY CLADDING MEMBER

7 6x 600mm (H) X 300mm (D)
LARCH LOG PAD FOUNDATION

16





1



2



3



4



5



6



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8



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10



11



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14



15



16



17



18



19



20

- 1 Level ground & set out grid
- 2 Place, level + connect portal upright no. 1 with 4 bolts
- 3 Place, level + bolt portal upright no. 2
- 4 Lift portal cross member into place
- 5 Bolt together with 4 no bolts at each junction.
- 6 Fix joist hangers to main beams, insert decking joists into hangers, fix.
- 7 Temporarily prop portal 1. Screw perimeter beams for decking. Setup uprights for portal 2
- 8 Complete portal no 2. as per item 5.
- 9 Place, level + connect portal upright no. 1 with 4 bolts at each junction
- 10 Insert roof beams, fix to portals at each end. Note: Diagonal bracing required to internal face of rear wall
- 11 Complete insertion and fixing of roof joists
- 12 Begin screwing tertiary wall and roof cladding rails and battens to portals.
- 13 Complete tertiary joinery on first section.
- 14 Begin erecting vertical posts for portal no 3. Bolt to pads.

- 15 Lift portal cross member into place. Bolt together with 4 no bolts at each junction.
- 16 Complete insertion of roof and deck joist
- 17 Insert roof & deck joists, fix to portals at each end
- 18 Begin screwing tertiary wall and roof cladding rails and battens to portals.
- 19 Complete shell by screwing timber deck to joists.
- 20 Shieling frame ready for cladding prototype test panels.

The shielin-bough project stands as a testament to the power of cross-border, inter-disciplinary and co-designed education and practice. Devised as the experimental synthesis of traditional forms of Scottish and Finnish shelter, the shieling and laavu respectively, the students were empowered with the agency to develop a collective form of haptic learning and making.

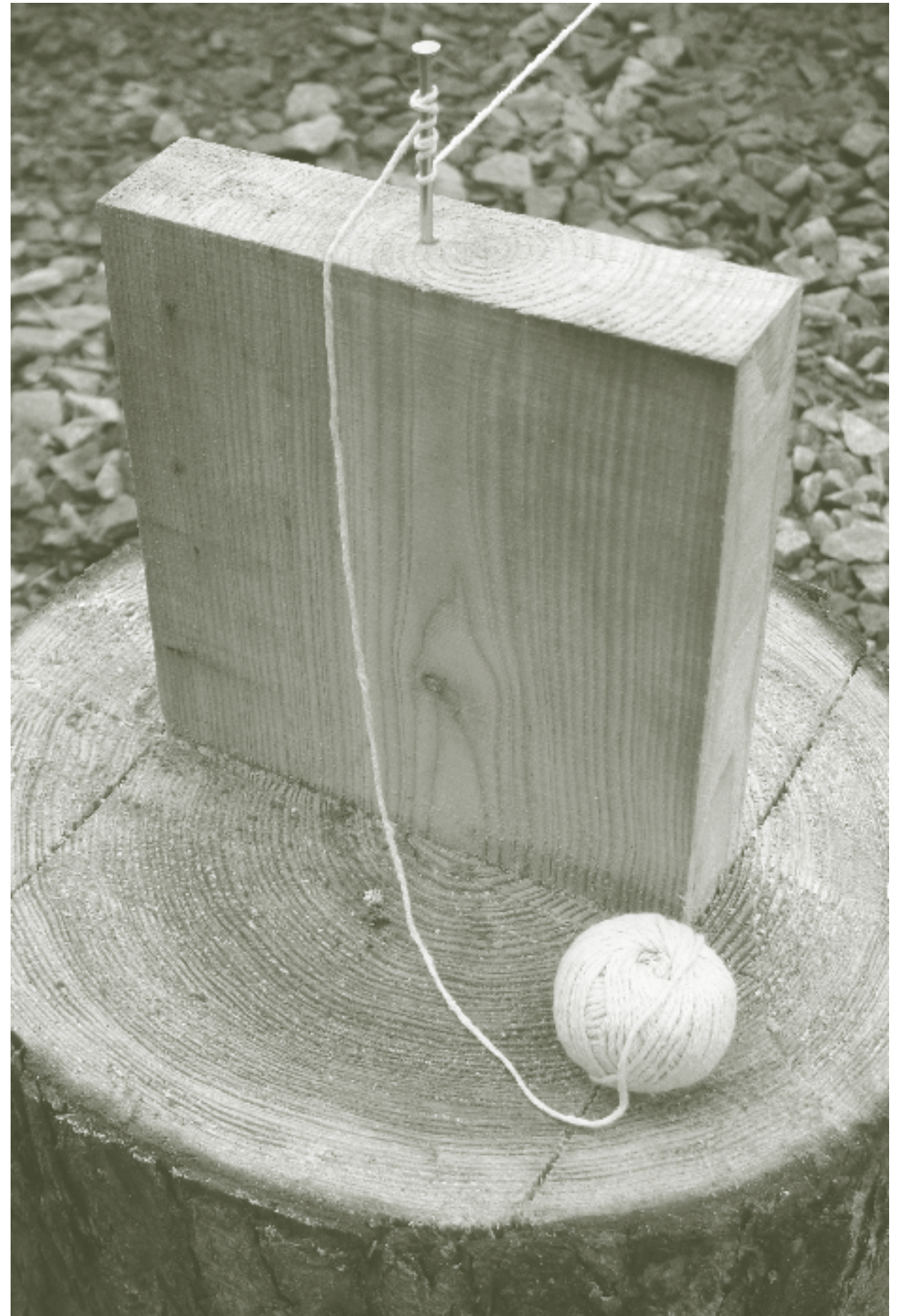
Through the lens of construction as a didactic, ethical imperative, the project sought to prototype an architecture which explores the desire to live lightly on the land and establish a better awareness of our surroundings. The final enclosure makes legible the tension between prospect and refuge within the choreography of our inhabitation of the environment.

Utilising local materials of timber and heather, participants facilitated tactile experimentation with traditional and innovative low-tech and low-impact construction techniques. Harnessing the unique environmental and material conditions of the chosen site, the constructed shelter not only sensitively draws upon the socio-cultural sense of shelter unique to each participant, but more fundamentally explores the nature of inhabiting natural landscapes across both time and space.

To some extent, I think that we make buildings as an attempt to figure out and reflect upon the human phenomenon of place. This act of building is a repeated attempt to redefine and re-scale the landscape, offering a platform for us to comprehend and communicate with our surroundings. The pragmatic and poetic approach developed by the students embodies this reflexive relationship between place, craft and community - a space designed for people to come together and share, built from the materials provided by its location and from techniques both old and new.

The significance of the intercultural collaborative and practical learning developed by the shielin-bough project should not be understated. Not only has it been an invaluable opportunity for students and tutors alike to engage in the profound pursuit of cultivation and contribution as opposed to consumption but offers something much greater than the design of architectural artefacts. It is a model of process-based practical learning that considers a far broader attitude towards our occupation of the landscape and modes of collaborative engagement.

Rob Colvin, Lecturer Mackintosh School of Architecture

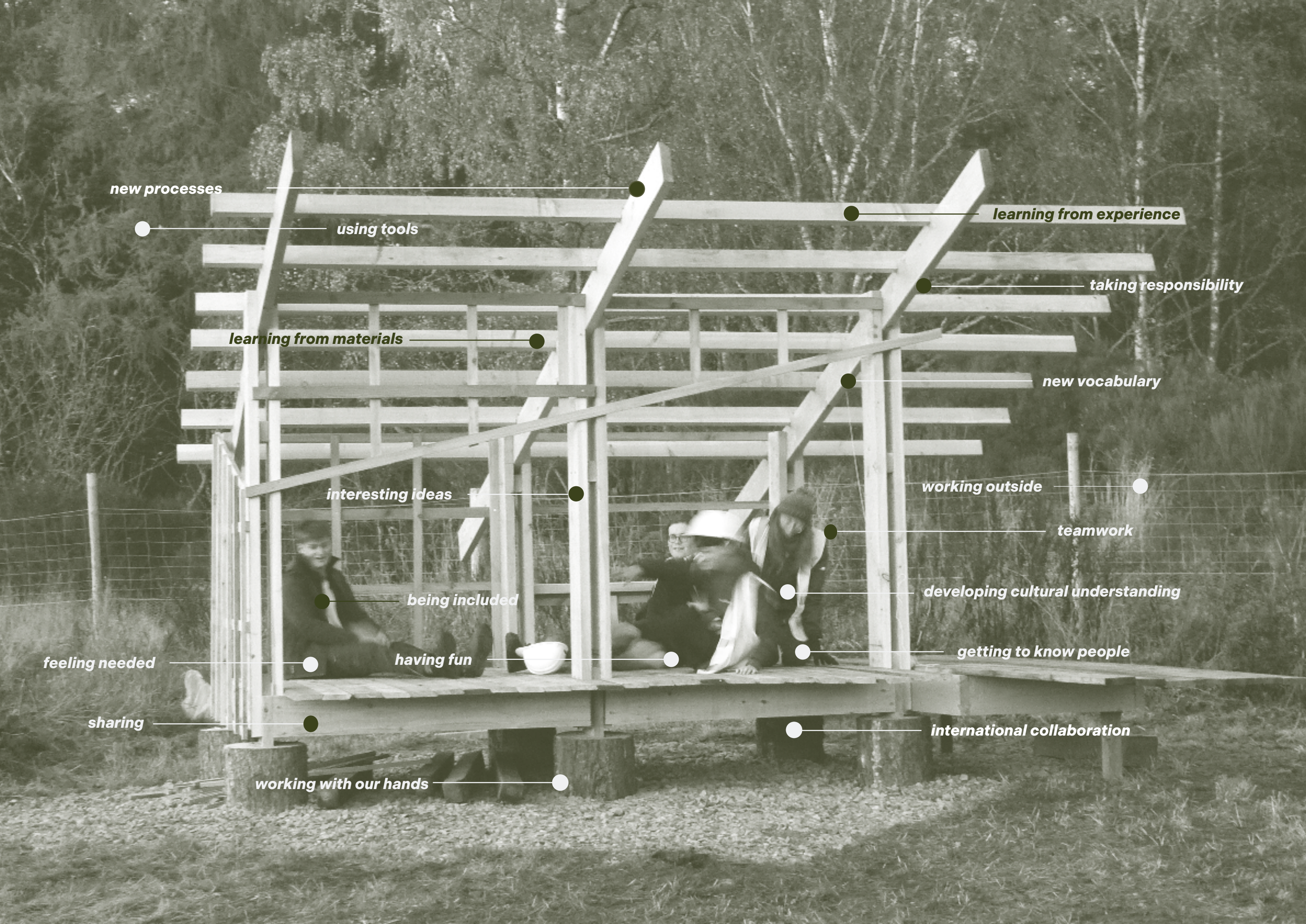




The part of the sheilin-bough that I was most heavily involved with as technical staff was the roof. It presented the most issues from a health and safety point and was also the last piece of the puzzle to be put together. One of the points that came up during the making was that the main roof beams needed further support. This was done by notching perpendicular struts that were spaced evenly along the beams. As a new member of staff, I hadn't had much time to get to know the students that were on campus. Notching these struts has stuck with me because I got to show some of the students a new skill and then watched as they took on the task of measuring and notching all the subsequent struts, gaining confidence with each one. These struts then helped align the beams, solidifying the structure further. It is something that I think those students will remember as they can see where they specifically helped with the integrity of the structure. The collaboration between the architecture students, the environmental design students and the art education students was fantastic. They worked together, communicating well to choose the best solutions and when it came to attaching the structures their teamwork was phenomenal.

**Brodie Birss, Workshop technician GSA
Highlands & Islands**





new processes

using tools

learning from experience

taking responsibility

learning from materials

new vocabulary

interesting ideas

working outside

teamwork

developing cultural understanding

feeling needed

being included

getting to know people

sharing

having fun

international collaboration

working with our hands





Acknowledgements

The shielin-bough Project Leaders Dr Gina Wall and Professor Timo Jokela would like express their sincere thanks to everyone who made FieldSchool such a success.

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