

Architecture as well!

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In the early 2000s, a certain Wang Shu began teaching architecture at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. "At the time, I was the only lecturer for 20 students." In 2018, the architecture department of the Chinese university counts 40 lecturers and 700 students. It strives to "rebuild vernacular architecture within an international context". In 1973, Libano-Iraqi architect Salma Samar Damluji discovered the writings of Hassan Fathy, to this day the uncontested master of adobe building. Forty-five years later and undoubtedly one of architects who have been most influenced by his legacy, Damluji is the co-author of *Hassan Fathy Earth & Utopia*, to be published in October by Laurence King Publishing. In 2011, Israeli architect and academic Eyal Weizman, who is based in London, created Forensic Architecture, a collective relying on the architect's knowledge in order to establish evidence that will be used by international tribunals, NGOs and human rights lawyers to help vulnerable populations. In 2012, Barcelona-based office Flores & Prats completed Edificio 111, a concrete fortress with 111 social housing units, which its architects have been visiting over and over again in order to fashion a "post-occupancy" process... These are only a few examples that show the different shapes the architects' role can take. Whichever the modus operandi, today this commitment is no longer optional. The recent exhibition held at the Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine in Paris, *May 68. Architecture too!*, reminded the public that the seeds of the 1977 French law regarding the quality of architecture were sown in the late sixties, when, ever since the war, reconstruction architecture had been dominated by quantity-related concerns. Yet, from the notion of quality to that of "more" again, and above all "cheaper", there is only one step – backwards – which was taken in no time with the Elan Act in France. Architects have risen up against it and AA is offering them a platform in the following pages. To commit to something is first to oppose something – as in May 68, with the debunking of Fine Arts, as in May 2018, by condemning the Elan Act – with a view to "do things differently", à la Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu, à la Hassan Fathy and, closer to us and with more or less modest means, à la Eyal Weizman, Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats.