

# DS18

## 2017 MONSOON ASSEMBLAGES CHENNAI

### First Year

Constantina Avraamides  
Sarah Bass  
Charlotte Birch  
Rob Fernandes-Dwyer  
Rosanna Rolfe  
Ben Street  
Georgia Trower

### Second Year

Tom Benson  
Monica Cristu  
Jeronimo Garcia  
Seetul Ghataora  
Emma Hilton-Grange  
Sebastien Monceaux  
Laura Nica  
Connor Page  
Cid Schuler  
Calvin Sin  
Charles Weston Smith

### Studio Tutors

Lindsay Bremner  
Roberto Bottazzi

### Thanks to

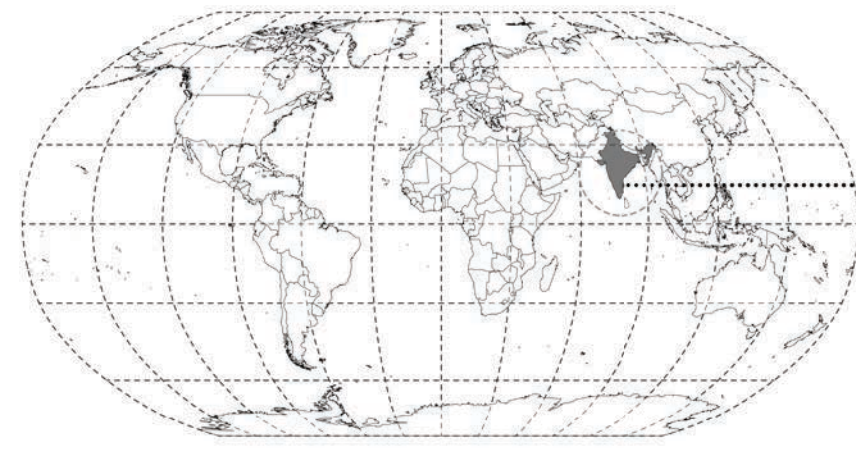
Pushpa Arabindoo, Beth Cullen, Cath Hassell, Priti Narayan, Sekar Raghavan, Rajeswari Ravi  
Ranee Vadamuthu, Jayshree Venkatesan and Michele Vianello for studio inputs in London and Chennai.  
Quintin Hogg Trust.

### Guest Critics

Laura Allen (Smout Allen Architects, The Bartlett UCL)  
Karl Beelen (University of Karlsruhe)  
Harshvardhan Bhat (University of Westminster)  
Nerea Calvillo (University of Warwick, AA)  
Beth Cullen (University of Westminster)  
Zac Fluker (The Bartlett UCL)  
Richard Difford (University of Westminster)  
Francois Girardin (University of Westminster)  
Susannah Hagan (University of Westminster)  
Jane MacAllister (London Metropolitan University)  
Oscar McDonald (Wilkinson Eyre Architects)  
Michael O'Hanlon (DSDHA Architects)  
Sowmya Parthasarathy (ARUP)  
Lorenzo Pezzani (Goldsmiths College)  
Ben Pollock (Fletcher Priest Architects)  
Anthony Powis (University of Westminster)  
Alfredo Ramirez (AA, Groundlab)  
Alice Thompson (Dan Marks Studio)  
Alex Watts (Eric Perry Architects)

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<http://www.monass.org>  
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### Introduction to the Studio:

Concluding the first year of the Five year Monsoon Assemblages research project, DS18 are proud to present their final year show. Based in Chennai, their research covers a wide range of issues encountered in the city all revolving around the monsoon, and their projects have addressed them in unique and innovative ways. All projects have been carefully overseen by Lindsay Bremner, architect and director of architectural research, and Roberto Bottazzi, architect and senior lecturer, both based at the University of Westminster.

The projects are just the first year of fascinating research embarked on by DS18, and over the following five years the European Research Council funded project will be based in three South Asian Cities: Chennai, Dhaka and Delhi. The projects this year in Chennai take a radically different approach to the monsoon. The studio views the monsoon not as a thing, but a vast meteorological system which drives the climate system across half of our planet, and students have explored the multiple ways in which it is woven into the fabric of urban life and the infrastructures that have been built up around it. The agenda which DS18 has this year endeavoured to advanced is summed up in the following quote from Lindsay, the principal investigator of the project:

"In the context of urban and architectural processes driven almost exclusively by economic and political interests and concerns, what might it mean to develop urban and architectural strategies for and with the monsoon, a global system massively dispersed in space and time, yet with profoundly local consequences and cultures?"  
Lindsay Bremner

DS18 this year has produced thesis' which discuss issues from the relationship between the sacred Indian Cow and the Monsoon (Georgia Trower, Year 1), to the bio remediation of marshland crucial to the cities ability to cope with the rains (Tom Benson, Year 2). These fascinating investigations have allowed for a different insight into both human and animal interaction with the seasonal monsoon rains in Chennai, using data to simulate, understand and map the interactions.

### The Site:

Chennai is located on a flat coastal plain. It depends for its water on annual monsoon rainfall feeding its surface water bodies (lakes, tanks, reservoirs and ponds) and replenishing its aquifer. What is evident from maps over its 350-year history is that, as the city has developed, its seasonal water bodies have been soft targets and been filled in or encroached upon to make way for construction or infrastructure. The IT Corridor development, a six-lane 18-kilometer tolled expressway, was no exception. Running parallel to the coastline and the Buckingham Canal (a colonial infrastructural project), the corridor has been built on coastal sand dunes and backwaters, including the Pallikaranai Marsh, a vital conduit for rainwater into the city's groundwater reserves and part of an excess water discharge system to the Bay of Bengal. The corridor was constructed after the introduction of a national neoliberal agenda in the 1990s, and world city imaginaries were adopted to attract foreign investment, particularly in the IT industry. Speculative building practices transformed peripheral urban landscapes and impacted monsoonal ecologies. When Chennai suffered devastating flooding in 2015, the cumulative effect of these policies and practices were blamed.

### Structure of the Year:

With this background in mind, the year began with the studio simulating the behaviours of monsoon rain as a way to develop a program and aesthetic. Investigations were carried out using both the software Realflo and physical experiments, and produced exciting results, with studies focusing on absorption, flow and splash among other behaviours.

Following this initial exercise, DS18 began to collate information on the site chosen in Chennai. A 9km transect through the Pallikaranai Marsh, was the basis of investigations, and each student identified a 'zone' on this transect to engage with the studio's research questions and methods. The transect used, passes through the Pallikaranai Marsh which has been encroached on by an IT corridor, in the center of zone four. Research was undertaken in groups per zone and each team produced an archive of information to aid them as the year progressed. These archives included base maps used on site during the visit in early December.

Hosted by The School of Architecture and Planning at Anna University, DS18 undertook a week of field work and design workshops. The trip was intended to coincide with the onset of the north-east monsoon, or the retreating monsoon, which Chennai relies on for the majority of its rainfall. In contrast with the devastating floods of 2015 the monsoon was delayed this year, with some anticipating its complete failure. Residents of the city were anxiously awaiting the advent of the rains, many in a state of "mortal fear" due to their experiences the previous year. Although the rains arrived they did not fall with intensity so the transect walk, and subsequent fieldwork, was much drier than expected. In the days following the walk the students focused on identifying monsoonal matters of concern in specific sections of the transect as well as their causes and effects and opportunities for design interventions. Presentations by Sekhar Raghavan, Director of the Rain Centre, Priti Narayan from Transparent Chennai/Urban Inform and Jayshree from Care Earth provided rich information. A number of unforeseen events affected plans. Midway through the trip Jayalalitha, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, passed away. As a powerful and controversial politician, referred to as the "goddess" of Tamil Nadu politics, her death was a major event. An official period of state mourning was declared and the group were restricted to the hotel for a day or so due to fears of public unrest. Despite the disruption the trip, it provided a fantastic opportunity to interact with local people and gather a huge amount of useful insights into the site and monsoon.

Following the trip students continued to research the issues they encountered on site and projects began to emerge. Each student declared their intentions for the second semester by way of a declaratory drawing. From these drawings detailed briefs emerged, each project interacting with an element of the monsoon and a monsoon related challenge revolving around a prototypical public forum. Projects decided on an urban strategy, deciding where their interventions would occur and how they would interact with the site conditions and context. Based on this urban strategy students then designed an architectural prototype, which could be repeated and deployed. Each project was heavily influenced by research and data, informing the design process and spaces created.

As the year draws to a close, this exhibition show cases DS18's final work, a culmination of a years research and design, each student forming a relationship with a specific issue encountered in Chennai.

