

### ***Fabricating Swissness Debuts at the 2021 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism***

**Seoul, Korea**—*Fabricating Swissness* is a multimedia installation designed by Swiss-American design firm Architecture Office, led by Nicole McIntosh and Jonathan Louie. It will be exhibited at the [2021 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism](#) from September 16 through October 31, 2021 at the Dongdaemun Plaza in Seoul, Korea, as part of the *Thematic Exhibition*, which explores the potential synergies between architecture and infrastructure. The project builds on the traveling exhibition [Swissness Applied](#), presented in 2019 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019 at Kunsthaus Glarus Güterschuppen, and 2020 at Yale Architecture Gallery; and on the forthcoming publication [“Swissness Applied: Learning from New Glarus”](#) (Park Books, Fall 2021).

*Fabricating Swissness* is a four-sided aluminium scaffold structure measuring 2m x 2m x 3.6m that illustrates the notion of “Swissness” and the Swiss chalet style in New Glarus, Wisconsin through vernacular imagery, audio, and memorabilia. In the early 1960s, New Glarus actively embraced the Swiss aesthetic as a way to enhance the social and economic base of its community. Today, New Glarus’ building code specifically contains Article II: Swiss Architectural Theme, which describes typical building elements that evoke certain associations with traditional Swiss architecture, such as the chalet.

*Fabricating Swissness* is a three-dimensional representation of the village’s efforts to appear Swiss. Painted coral, a contemporary interpretation of the iconic red color of the Swiss flag, the occupiable structure supports scaled-up model parts translated from Swiss-themed Gebr Faller Modellbau train kits. Surrounding these are six photographs of New Glarus by Brian Griffin and audio interviews exploring the aesthetics of Swissness with Benedikt Wechsler of the Consul General of Switzerland and architect Will Gallaher. The interviews are mixed with alpine sounds derived from traditional Swiss folk music and reconstructed through a variety of digital transformations by sound designer Paul Chavez of Arup. Together, the media, materials, and ephemera are semi-autonomous entities that together convey concepts commonly understood as *Swiss*.

Says McIntosh, “We are questioning if ‘Swiss’ architecture can be understood as just the formal character of specific alpine building elements as suggested in the design guidelines of New Glarus. Can material and size be disregarded? Can color be different? Seeing these ‘Swiss’ elements isolated from the actual architecture (i.e. shutters not on a facade) are they still understood as Swiss?”

The assembly of the installation draws inspiration from the overlapping and symmetrical joinery of Swiss Chalets. The structure is designed with a single joint that is made from screwing threaded barrels through two panels of 1/8” thick aluminum. Wiring paths are routed through two 1/8” thick panels that are sandwiched together and hide audio wires for speakers and mp3 players within the thin structure. Made of individual elements to minimize material waste, the

components of the structural assembly were cut from 5 sheets of 4'x8' aluminum. The installation is conscious of its travel footprint, and can fit flatpack into a 4'x8'x30" plywood crate. Upon arrival in Seoul, it will be assembled by a small team of 3-4 people using only flathead screwdrivers.

"While Americans have been trying to replicate alpine structures for a hundred years. Our interest was not to copy the chalet, but actualize its image through minimal means. The process of optimization undertaken with ARUP meant less labor and material waste in the build process," says Louie.

Architecture Office will give an online lecture on October 3, 2021, as part of the CrossxTalks series at the Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urban Design.

***Fabricating Swissness* is on view September 16, 2021 – October 31, 2021 at Dongdaemun Plaza in Seoul, Korea as part of the Thematic Exhibition at the 2021 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism.**

### **Project Details:**

*Fabricating Swissness, 2021*

Materials: Sherwin Williams 'Dishy Coral' Latex Paint, Waterjet Cut - 1/4" and 1/8 6061 Aluminum, CNC Milled - 8lb Renshape Foam, Harmon Kardon Esquire Mini 2 Ultra Slim and Portable Premium Bluetooth Speakers, and IPOD Mini MP3 Players.

### **Project Credits:**

Design: Nicole McIntosh and Jonathan Louie with Andrew G. Atwood, Julia Valisyev, Oscar Garza Reza, Ryan Garza, and Nari Kim.

Fabrication: Michael Gayk and David Goltz of the Automated Fabrication Lab at Texas A&M with Shane Bugni, William DiNisco, and Logan Froebel.

Structural Engineering: Roel van de Straat (ARUP)

Sound Design: Paul Chavez (ARUP)

Exhibition Photography: Selections from 'New Glarus' (2020), Brain Griffin

# ARCHITECTURE OFFICE

Audio Speakers: Wil Gallaher, architect ; Benedikt Wechsler, Consul General of Switzerland

Installation Photography: Brian Griffin and Hansol Bae

***This project was generously supported by Texas A&M University, ARUP, Seoul Metropolitan Government, and the Seoul Biennale for Architecture and Urbanism.***

## **About Architecture Office**

Architecture Office is a design practice. The practice applies the examination of images in consulting, design, and planning to build distinct identities and new environments. Architecture Lab is a research studio. It examines the implications of images and image circulation on the built environment.

Architecture Office is led by principals Jonathan Louie and Nicole McIntosh, and is located in Texas. The Office is influenced by imagery that creates new contexts for architecture. It works on a variety of scales and types, from restaurants and shared workspaces to exhibition design and single-family residences.

The work of the Office has been published both nationally and internationally, and Jonathan and Nicole regularly lecture about their work for both professional and academic audiences. The Office was the recipient of The Architectural League of New York 'Young Architect's Prize' (2017) and 'ACSA Faculty Design Award' (2020) for their contributions to design and research. Their restaurant design, All Square, was featured in the Time Magazine 'The World's 100 Greatest Places of 2019' publication. In addition, the Office was recipient of awards and recognition by Architects Newspaper 'Best of Design Awards' (2018, 2019), Interior Design 'Best of Year Awards' (2020), and the 'Frame Awards' (2018).

Architecture Lab often works in parallel with Architecture Office to enrich the practice with new ideas through transdisciplinary research. Current investigations include a traveling exhibition Swissness Applied and book Swissness Applied: Learning from New Glarus (Fall 2021, Park Books). It was exhibited at University Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Kunsthaus Glarus (2019), and Yale Architecture Gallery (2020). Other notable projects include Material.jpg an image fabrication process.

Nicole McIntosh (MSc. Arch ETH SIA) is a licensed Swiss Architect. She received an MSc in architecture from ETH Zürich. She was previously a Teaching Fellow at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture at Taliesin West.

## **ARCHITECTURE OFFICE**

Jonathan Louie holds an MArch from UCLA with Distinction. He previously spent time in Peterborough, New Hampshire as a MacDowell Colony Fellow. They are both faculty at Texas A&M Department of Architecture.

### **About ARUP**

Arup is an independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, architects, consultants and technical specialists, working across every aspect of today's built environment. Together we help our clients solve their most complex challenges – turning exciting ideas into tangible reality as we strive to find a better way and shape a better world.

### **About The Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism**

The Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism (SBAU) is a venue for harmony that interacts with cities around the world, about artists and their work, and about issues and suggestions that explore the future of the cities we live in. The Seoul Biennale will consist of a pilot year for international cooperation, research, and progress, and an event year to present the results in the form of exhibitions and participation programs every other year. The exhibitions include Thematic and Cities Exhibitions, which shows the most innovative initiatives occurring in cities around the world, as well as Global Studios, Live Projects, workshops and other programs that engage public participation.