Since the origins of the profession, architects have been trained to analyze location, climate, legal parameters, construction and technology, use patterns and lifespans, to understand history, budget, social context and markets before elaborating their proposal, ideally also making a contribution to a better world and formulating their thesis on beauty. But architects are not free: they always depend on a “client”, work within the framework of a contract and a fee, and are “service providers” for someone else who defines the goals and targets. This constellation limits the “idea of a better world” to what is possible within the wishes of the contracting party, be they private or public clients.

Architecture Activism proposes a different approach: Dream – Design – Deliver. It is a process of ten steps that starts with the identification of a problem, followed by the research of the context, meetings with stakeholders and the community, which results in the dreaming up of a utopian solution. This design is not the actual design of a physical
object, but rather the design of an infrastructure that will lead to the successful design. We build a team of experts and enthusiasts, then create an organizational, professional, and legal structure for it. Funds are raised from private or public organizations, finally resulting in the physical design. The last step is the delivery, which is the construction and implementation of the project. After an analysis of the success and challenges of the project, the concept will be expanded into other regions.

The presentation will use three projects by the design firm GRAFT, explaining this unconventional approach to design. Heimat 2 proposes a new approach to temporary housing for refugees in Europe, the Solarkiosk is bringing electricity to remote regions in Africa, and the Eckwerk Holzmarkt project in Berlin addresses the global issue of gentrification.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

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Christoph Korner received his degree in Architecture and Urban Design from the Technical University in Braunschweig, Germany, followed by a MArch from UCLA with an emphasis on History and Theory. Since then he has been a part of GRAFT, an award-winning design firm with offices in Los Angeles, Berlin and Beijing. Projects range from Master Planning, Urban Design, Architecture, Interior Design, Exhibition Design, to Product Design. In addition, his work has been exhibited and published on several occasions and he authored articles and books. In recent years, his dedication gravitated increasingly towards teaching and academia, culminating in his current position as Chair of Interior Architecture at Woodbury University in Los Angeles.