Before History
Assistant Professor Andrew Holder

“Before History” is a summer studio that will examine various Neolithic dry stone structures in Scotland, Ireland, and Southern France. Dry stone stacking is a construction method that relies solely on gravity and the friction-fit between stones to create habitable volumes without grout or mortar. To study this technique, we will take up residence in Edinburgh, Scotland to apprentice with a master dry stone mason. Work on a communal project with the master mason will be interspersed with frequent visits to prehistoric dry stone constructions in Scotland, England, Ireland, and France. Upon our return to Michigan, we will design our own dry-stacked fabrications.

Why would we do this? These objects are so old that they have become completely alien to the scope of our contemporary knowledge. We cannot understand them through the application of a typological category, or by attributing their form to the machinations of a political institution. We can only confront these objects as new things altogether - new in the sense that they are without names, having an origin and a cause that exceeds our capacity to understand. Objects from space are no more alien than these prehistoric constructions. We should make more prehistory.

Travel will include trips to Neolithic sites and important cities in Scotland, Ireland, and France, including: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Isle of Skye, Glencoe, Inverness and the Highlands, Orkney, Dublin, Cork, Carnac, Nantes and the Emerald Coast, and Aix-en-Provence and the Vaucluse.

Budget: Estimated $3,800 travel budget. (Pending revision. May be supplemented by ELF grant award which was allocated to a previous iteration of the studio.)

Schedule:
May 6th – 8th Travel Prep
May 9th – 29th Travel Abroad