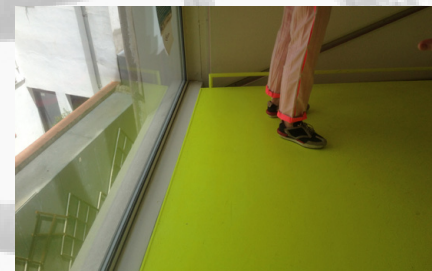
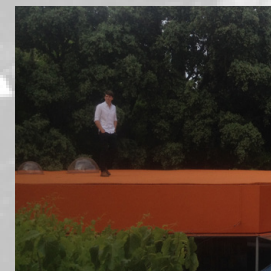
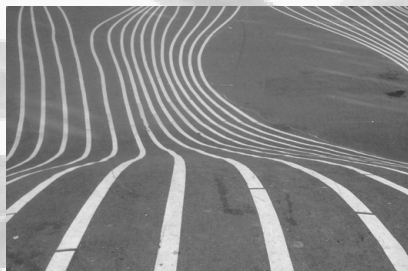


# KATY MOIR



dulux post study  
tour report



# DULUX STUDY TOUR

It is said that a human being doesn't actually feel temperature, just the change. I wonder if the same can be said of a city. It is sometimes all too easy to take for granted where we are and what that place has to offer. Australian architects are often looking outwards for inspiration and innovation never stopping to think that such stimulation could be found on our own back door....albeit sometimes 4000km away. It takes very little effort to discover the romance and ease of a European city, but it is important, as people who have been taught to be critically analytical to see past the romance.

If Australian architects were asked 'Where would be the best place in the world to be an Architect?' I'm sure many would answer:

**Copenhagen** for the feeling of value. For not needing to continually justify the need for their profession's existence, to get 80% of your work from paid competitions and to continually be contributing to the fabric of the city.

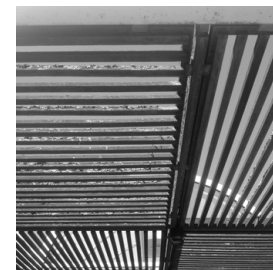
**London** for the progress. For the opportunity to work on projects that are leading the way in technology and innovation, for the wonderful melting pot of cultures and fashion.

**Madrid** for the street culture. For the opportunity to be immersed in another language, a culture that refuses to pander to my English speaking needs. For the joviality and eclectic architecture that weaves its way throughout the city on a human scale.

But who would answer Darwin? Me. And although it will be surprising to many, the Dulux Study Tour has only helped to affirm this.

As T.S. Eliot said *"We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."*

# 2016





# COPENHAGEN

## a tapestry of balconies

A tapestry of balconies is what I will remember Copenhagen for. Although the buildings that spread across the city from new to old, Norrebro to Orestad, differ greatly, the balcony was a strong repeating element. Unlike Australia where our verandahs and balconies are a part of the façade of a building because we are living outside for a large portion of the year in many parts of the country, in Copenhagen the need to pop outside to steal some sun is a rare and important opportunity to take advantage of. The balconies are small so as not to create too many openings for hot air to escape or cold air to creep in – they create a wonderful tapestry of materials, a changing pattern of shadows and the opportunity to see the personalities of the people who live behind them – an opportunity to connect with the outside world in a safe and undemanding way.

Meeting Jan Gehl was definitely a highlight of the trip for me. His book 'Life between buildings' was the first piece of architectural literature that really resonated with me and that I, amazingly enough, understood. He spoke of his lack of built influence on the one hand, but on the other his influence in shaping people's ideas and perspective of what they have come to expect of their city. And as someone who has always been (in the extreme sense) a people person it was incredibly relieving when he passed on the advice from his mentor, Ralph Irskine, that all one needed to be a good architect was to love people.

The ideas and influence of Gehl Architects ran strong through the CBD of Copenhagen and that language continued out into the suburbs. The increased activity that comes from people moving on the street outside of their bubble (car) is obvious in Copenhagen. Although the population may not be as large as that of many other cities, the cycling culture means that more people are out on the street, engaging, interacting and adding life to an otherwise potentially intense thoroughfare of traffic.

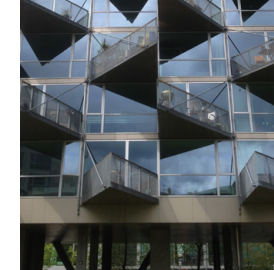
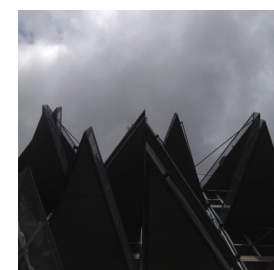
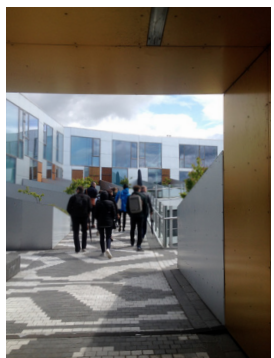
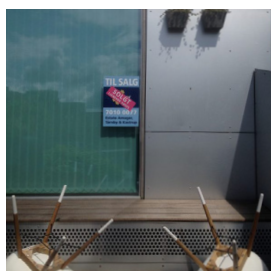
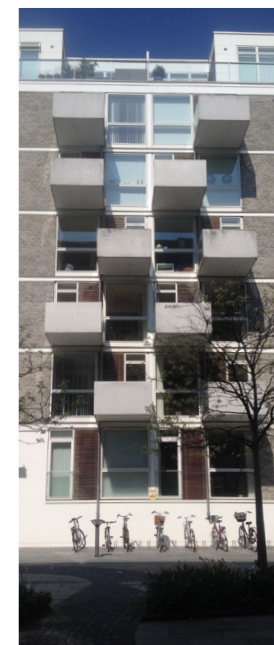
But we learnt that even Copenhagen, with this intelligent urban framework behind it, can make mistakes...

There are ongoing concerns with the affordability of housing and the huge disparities that exist between the culture and fine-grain activity that occurs in existing suburbs and the creation of culture and community that is being attempted in relatively new developments. Many of us have seen successful examples of the former, but are still struggling to experience and achieve successes in the latter. When we began to explore the new suburbia of Orestad this struggle became particularly obvious.

Our Spanish tour guide (and architect), Vicente was able to present us with very honest opinions about the development of Copenhagen, not impaired by the Danish responsibility and pride. He explained that the nature reserve on which Orestad stands was unpopularity sold by the government to help pay for the metro. The soil from the metro excavation was then being used to build up Nordhavnen, Sydhavn – affectionately known by locals as the 'white ghetto' – and other pockets of land in the water. Dubai in Copenhagen?

We continued through the desolate wind tunnel of Orestad to 8-House, VM Housing and VM Mountain Housing. The one thing that struck us all was the great sparseness and lack of activity that exists in between and around these buildings. For a city that was used to create a book about life between buildings, these lessons seem to have been forgotten in Orestad.

When studying these buildings from afar, they are presented to us as beautiful diagrams and selling ideas about housing that challenge the norm and the clients that are funding them. But are they just selling an idea? This certainly would explain the huge struggle that these developments are having in attracting





and retaining people. No one wants to set up business there because no one lives there, and no one lives there because there aren't enough facilities to support a population. As Jan Gehl wrote when people are stimulated by people, a self-reinforcing process can begin.

And while the success of these buildings individually may be strong, the place in which they are positioned and how they relate to one another completely distracts one's attention from the innovative ideas of the architecture. Does the development merely need time to gain momentum and life? The ideas suggest yes, the tapestry of "SOLD" signs suggest otherwise. As Cat Stevens said "where do the children play?" Apparently they play in the also new and innovative school that was built in this area. It is completely unrecognisable as this from the street...or in Orestad's case, the metro line.

One never feels particularly comfortable on streets that are wide and long and dormant; streets that are devoid of human activity; streets that have surpassed a reasonable human scale, making them overwhelming spaces to begin to inhabit. And a large piece of infrastructure like a metro line is no exception to this rule.

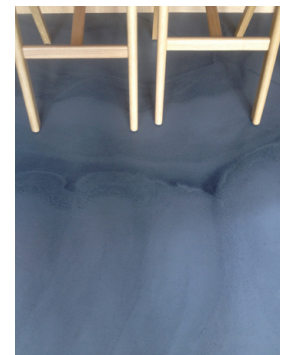
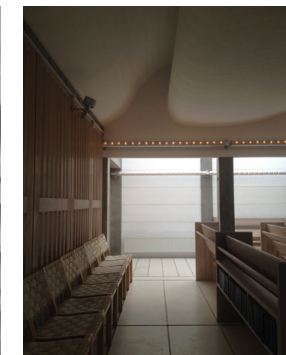
In Malmo the following day, we were lucky to be shown through a very opposite approach to developing new housing. A masterplan by Gehl architects, split up into large areas of small parcels of land – that is a developer could buy a large portion of the site but only spread out over numerous smaller lots so as not to create too many large iconic developments. Hopefully encouraging buildings of a human scale....the exact opposite to Orestad.

It was definitely eclectic – angled brick walls, glass cubes, there was even a bit of Troppo in there - but no matter your taste you

would inevitably find something to suit and if you didn't it was only metres before that would change. But the language of the street is what rang true throughout this development. There was a clear connection to the street from every home and a series of publicly accessible, but privately used courtyards were strewn throughout. This layering of public and private spaces allowed for a community based interface from the private residence, children were able to play on the streets in a safe and easily monitored environment.

In the privacy of their own home, people could enjoy some connection with the outside world, yet when in the public realm they have the opportunity to find a moment of privacy. It is somewhere between these two worlds that people find the most comfort. The space "in between" offers a moment where people can be involved in the private and public realm at the same time. It is here that people find the opportunity to be with others in a relaxed and undemanding way. The influence of this thinking from Gehl Architects was strong – again seeing the influence on thinking as opposed to a direct input to the final built product.

So Copenhagen encouraged us to continue questioning, how does one begin to create an active and social community from nothing? Is starting from nothing, like we so often do in Australia, always going to end with a place that no-one wants to inhabit? We can't expect to breathe the life and activity of a city into a nothing overnight, but there are obviously frameworks for development that are more successful than others.





# LONDON

Some would be surprised to know the excitement with which a Troppo Architect from Darwin approached the London brutalism scene. I think the clean lines yet slightly offset geometries have always appealed to me and the fact that most of them are social housing projects makes it hard for me to turn away. As for the heavy concrete...maybe we want what we can't have. But it wasn't just the architecture that was brutal. From the first trip through the Underground, weaving our way through throngs of workers hitting the daily churn and climbing up or down what seemed like never ending sets of stairs I was beat! The frustrating feeling of layering up for the cold only to be moments later sweating it all off with thousands of Londoners in a confined tube space. The city is intense and unforgiving, to be honest, I'm not sure if I'd be cut out for it.

I think what became obvious through the architecture firms we met in London is the many ways different individuals have decided to be an "architect." The continual change that the building industry is going through that we have to attempt to keep up with and adapt our skill set to accommodate seems to be happening at a greater speed in London and somehow, architects are keeping up! I mean, would Norman Foster have ever thought when he was studying architecture that he might one day hire a composer? I can just imagine him approving a list of pay slips one day and saying "Composer? When did we hire a composer?!"

Although some would question whether it was architecture at all, what became obvious was the flexibility of architects and architecture in London. Many of the projects and firms we saw were helping develop whole brands, typologies and communities, and sometimes the architecture was...hard to find. So, can they still be called architects some asked? Or is it that they, more than anywhere else, have found a way to make sure

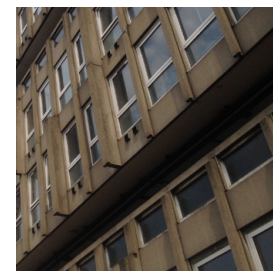
## brutally flexible

architecture stays relevant by adapting what it is to the changing nature of a very fast paced city? If culture has changed what the architecture of that place is, then will the architects still have a role in shaping the culture of that place?

We saw AHMM leading the way in new office typologies – creating more flexible rented spaces. Stepping back from designing every element of a building, down to the door handle and instead finding a way to create a building which leaves room for the creativity of the tenant – almost like the character a person would bring to their home through the balconies of Copenhagen – here they are encouraging people to do the same to their office space. So again, is it the ever changing fast paced commercial culture of London forcing architecture to strip back or is the architecture creating a platform that allows the melting pot of cultures and industries permeate through to the wider community?

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners becoming so involved in the structure of their buildings that it becomes the architecture – although I would argue that should not be unique to one firm. Not hiding and plastering what it is that brings a building together. Investing time and knowledge to make sure that what is seen as the bare essentials of a building is a part of the architecture or vice versa.

And then we have Foster + Partners, still creating some of the most innovative and iconic buildings in the world, but also spending time and money into researching new materials and winning science-based competitions about how one might build on Mars! Another thing Norman Foster may not have envisaged studying architecture at Yale in the 1960s.



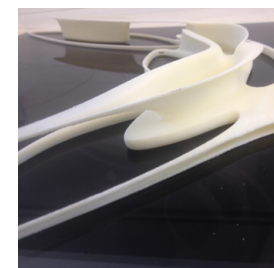


We met Assemble – a collective creating places with existing spaces, events, art, experiences that encourage discussion and ideas around architecture. Again, the architecture wasn't obvious to all, but I recognised the importance that architects like this play in the role of promoting architecture as a valuable part of our society. If someone isn't doing this then there won't be much for the rest of us to do soon.

Meeting Victoria Thornton was an absolute pleasure and highlight of the tour for me. To be honest, as I'm writing this I am struggling to remember the specific things that Victoria said (how disappointing) but I remember being overwhelmed by the excitement and relief to meet someone who thought of architecture as I did. While the motivation was slightly different there were many parallels to be found in why Victoria Thornton started Open House and why I started 'Talking Through Walls.' That need to make architecture more accessible, to bring people into the conversation about how we are building our cities. The intention to encourage a discussion about the development of a place through its architecture. Drawing attention to the spaces we create and how we continue to grow in a more meaningful and efficient way. It was incredibly refreshing to meet someone who recognised the shortcomings of architect's ability to connect with the wider community. The insular world that we have created and the language that we seem to fall into when in each other's company, excluding the world that we are supposedly designing for. Someone who believes in bringing people back into the conversation, encouraging everyone to be more aware of their built environment and the value of it. I have learnt through these events that interest in our built environment is strong and people are eager to contribute to the discussion if given the opportunity.

Another brief highlight was hearing about the efforts Studio Octopi are putting into public baths. Some of my favourite architectural projects have been sea baths and I have recently discovered the ruins of the Laramoo baths in Darwin...maybe it's time to bring them back.

I think the strong lesson that I took away from London was that yes architecture is based on a fundamental set of ideas and principles, but if we can't take those ideas and adapt them to the world and culture around us then we will become obsolete. I think we have already begun to see the beginnings of that in Australia and we can't sit around hoping that people will come back to what we see as an important part of a developing society. We need to bring it to the people and make architecture relevant to the society that we are in.





# MADRID

Madrid was a city I could have explored for weeks! The slightly off beat planning, or lack thereof, and façade driven architecture spoke of a city that didn't take itself too seriously. After Copenhagen and London it was a welcome relief! I joked that Madrid was a city I would definitely like to live in...if there was any work. The realities of this situation were unclear from the architects we met. All relatively positive and upbeat and proud to show their ideas and work, but very few were able to show us work currently being completed, at least not in Spain.

Madrid would not have been the same without the wonderful introduction by Werner. The architectural and urban story telling that Werner wooed us with – and not just the females – was the perfect way to start our time in Madrid. Through his mapping and inside knowledge Werner painted (drew) a picture of Madrid that we could not have found otherwise. His diagrammatic sketching of the urban sprawl like nature of Madrid over the last 900 years was captivating and not at all obvious to the untrained eye. He pointed out the numerous facades pretending to be buildings and the eclectic roof line made from buildings over a 100 year period.

Rio Madrid by Burgos & Garrido Arquitectos Asociados was a project of a scale that was hard for me to even fathom. Other local architects I met didn't question its success as a design project but did question whether it was the most appropriate expenditure of public money in a time of crisis. I think that question is compounded by the fact that Spain still hasn't really recovered from that crisis so looking back on this expenditure of (I think) \$4.4 billion euro is still hard for many to swallow.

Estudio Entresitio was introduced to us by models, models and more models. In fact, models were an overwhelming common thread through almost every architecture firm we visited on the

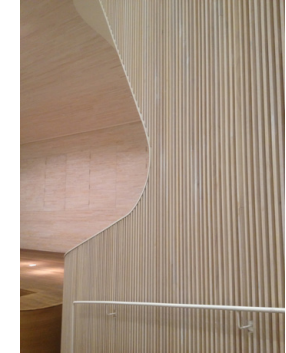
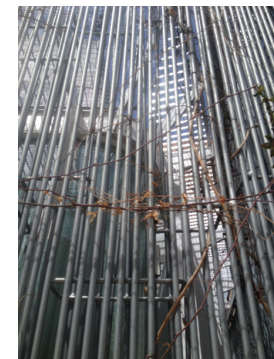
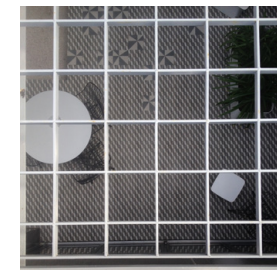
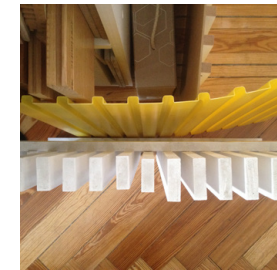
## live to work - work to live

tour. However, Estudio Entresitio were the only ones that really used them to communicate their ideas and projects to us. And ideas they certainly had! The director won us – well, most of us – over with her fashion and passion! The way she proceeded to enthusiastically tell us about each of the models we could see was captivating. Whether these ideas were being built was another story. The few finished projects the director did show us I felt lacked the enthusiasm of the ideas in the finished product. It was hard to distinguish whether it was the architecture or photography that resulted in a lack of human activity, but either way, I wasn't so convinced.

Foster + Partners yet again opened our eyes to another place architecture can take you. Exhibitions, curating and archiving! Another intelligent business move to promote and sustain the brand of Norman Foster.

AGI Arquitectos was an architectural firm that existed as the result of a collaboration between a Spanish architect and a Kuwaiti architect. The office was in Madrid, with the work being completed in Kuwait. Unlike London, where architects are looking for different types of work, here a firm is going to a different location to perform the same work. However, this presents an opportunity of flexibility in a different sense, designing for a culture very different to that of your own. The architects balance the struggle of appropriately addressing the culture of a place while still trying to influence what has become the assumed. Culture influencing architecture, or architecture influencing culture?

The architect spoke of the need to understand and be sympathetic to the Kuwaiti culture but also trying to encourage a more sustainable way of living. They are finding ways to encourage connections to the outside world while still maintaining the strong sense of privacy that exists. Again,





architects are having to learn to be flexible, to negotiate their ideas in a different context to stay afloat.

The visit to Langarita-Navarro Arquitectos was short and sweet but their graphical representation pulled at my architectural heart strings so I had to mention them. Was definitely taking some of those ideas home with me!

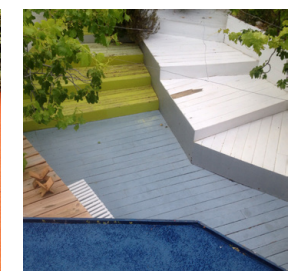
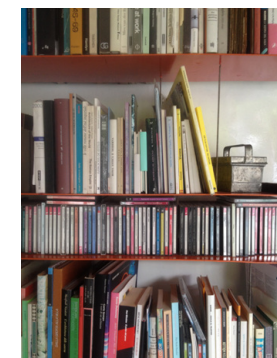
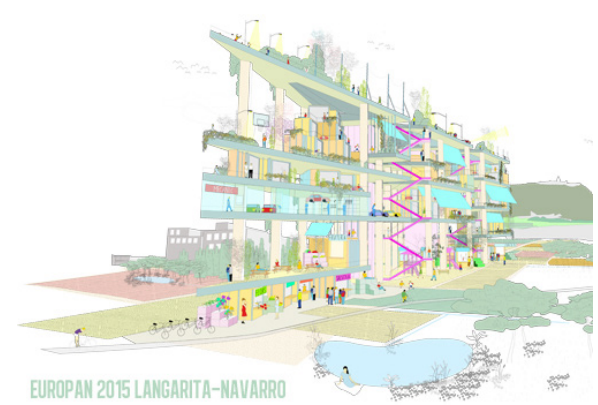
Selgas Cano's house definitely divided the group. Some overwhelmed by the playful romance of it, others frustrated by the lack of detailing and maintenance. I think it was clear that we were at the end of an intensive trip and had maybe forgotten how to enjoy architecture without analysing, assessing and critiquing what were seeing.

Post tour, I was able to explore Madrid on a slightly more relaxed timeframe, Spanish time, and I tried to decipher what it was that made Madrid instantly more comfortable to us all. Was it the wonderful hotel (minus the ghost), the Clara's or Werner? As I sat in a courtyard eating tapas I was reminded of the courtyards in Malmo, the fine grain that had been created there and that had obviously existed in Madrid for a long time before. The human scaled streets that felt comfortable and protected but in moments released you into courtyards of public activity. The human activity and culture of Madrid was hard to beat. However, it is never this simple.

As I sat on the train to Barcelona I was surprised to pass huge developments of 'IKEA', 'CHEMIST WAREHOUSE', 'ZARA' etc. While the CBD definitely has advantage in working within an existing scale that was made for the human, they, like everyone else are not seeing these aspects applied to their new tabular rasa style suburbs. And then the question must be asked, who lives in the city? Had Madrid, like many capitals become too

expensive for the locals to live in? With such a high amount of Spanish tourists it was hard to know.

Despite the erratic development and 'the crisis' that everyone refers to in Madrid, our guide Werner put the success of the city down to the fact that this is not just a city that people come to work or play, this is a city that people come to live! While London is having a continuous flow of money pushed into the development of high rises shaped by the contentious view corridors, people seem in too much of hurry to get to work to really experience what a city of 12million has to offer. Madrid on the other hand has a long history of working within their means, building facades physically and metaphorically. But people continue to flood the streets and public spaces with activity – a Jan Gehl wet dream as Chris would say. Madrid is definitely a city I would want to live in, but unfortunately it is not yet the city I want to work in.





# DARWIN

It seemed every city we visited while unique in style, materiality, language and culture, the challenges that our peers face remain the same. Affordability of housing, availability of office space, procuring and maintain work, developing and changing how they interpret architecture and where they look to create it.

I know some people on the trip found this slightly depressing, that these places and people that we have put on a pedestal haven't worked out the answers to so many questions we continue to ask, but I found this very comforting. Comforting to know that the challenges we face are not unique and that we surely have a responsibility to help address these common issues. We have to act local before we can think global. I think there is a valuable lesson to be learnt in that while we can look outside Australia for guidance of successful architecture we can also learn from others' mistakes. We are reminded to always question what is put in front of us because even an architect can be a successful salesman.

Mathew Van Koy would regular talk about the socialist gabble our universities taught us 'you can change the world' without actually setting us up to manage that world and while I haven't quite resorted to the cynicism that has swallowed Mathew I did take from him a lesson in assigning value. While I may want to change the world that doesn't mean I'm not allowed to make money – helping and success do not have to be separate ideas. In fact if they weren't separate maybe we could get a whole lot more people interested in the former. We do have to strike a balance between making what we do more accessible and available to the masses while still retaining the value our profession.

It is important to acknowledge at this time, the personal reflections that have come about because of this trip. Even though supporting our regional and remote communities is

## watch this space

something I have long been an advocate for I myself had not realised how much it had been affecting me. I think we need to remember as an architecture community, and a country in general, to look outside our urban centres. If new art, architecture, music is on your doorstep you don't have to go looking for it, but does that mean you shouldn't? And I need to remember to ask for support – to seek architectural conversation and reflection from my peers wherever they may be, because fighting the good fight can get lonesome and exhausting.

It's not just about the opportunities presented to you in the timeframe of the tour but the opportunities outside of the tour that being in these places has to offer...the opportunity to be released from the day to day drum and explore! Actually look at and experience architecture.

I would be lying if I said I wasn't tempted to stay in a courtyard of Madrid and never return to the challenges of being an architect in Darwin, but I know that would get boring quickly. Of course it would be a welcome relief to be working in any of the places we visited whose culture give a lot more time and respect to architecture. But maybe these places don't need yet another architect. Surely we are better contributing to a place that needs architecture as opposed to wanting it. Sure, it's hard, but it is where I believe our industry should be focusing our attention. It's opportunities like these that can revitalise us and return us to these places of need in a better place to effect change. Well... here's hoping. Thanks Dulux.

