



Abu Dhabi

FOREWARD

After seventeen hours in transit, and a long day exploring Dubai and the heights of the Burj Khalifa, we found ourselves sitting cross-legged on cushions in the middle of the Arabian Desert, shisha pipes in hand and the starry night sky above. A group of wide-eyed and eager travel companions, excitedly discussing our shared passion and speculating on the adventure to come.

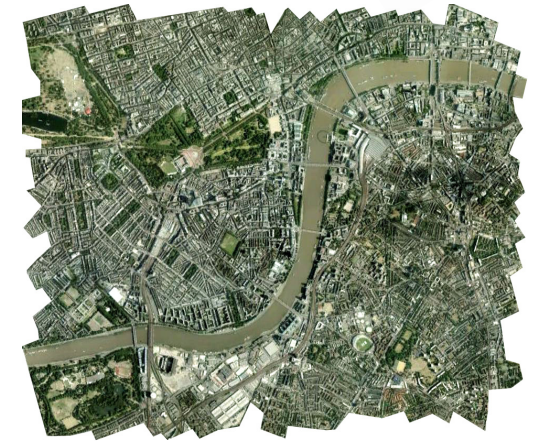
What followed was an ambitiously scheduled fortnight which saw our small group navigating the architectural realms of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Berlin and London. We used every means possible to learn and understand more: observation, discourse, photography, exploration, sketching, and when necessary cycling, running and climbing. The architects we met along the way were eager to discuss their projects with us and, in some cases, reflect on the broader cultural, urban and social environment to which their work contributes.

It is just one month since the conclusion of the tour and I am certain that the lessons learnt along the way will resonate throughout each of our architectural lives. Here follows my account of this incredible architecture-adventure, arranged chronologically yet focusing on what was, in my opinion, the key topics that arose particular to the places visited.



Dubai

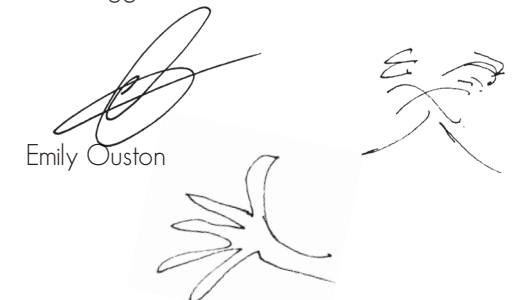
My sincerest gratitude goes out to the sponsors and organisers of the Dulux Study Tour: the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), Dulux and Davis Langdon (AECOM). The architectural profession owes much to your foresight and generosity. To Phil and Sarah from Dulux, it was a pleasure getting to know you both; your passion, high spirits and karaoke song suggestions were greatly appreciated. And Kahlea from the Institute of Architects - what a legend! Kahlea elegantly cracked the whip to ensure that we made it to our appointments on time ('you must never be late for the Germans!' ringing in our ears as we raced across Berlin).



London

And finally, to my four compadrés; Weian, Shaun, Anna and James. It was a real architect's dream come true to dive head-first into the tour with you. Your passion, insight, conversation and thoughtfulness was truly inspiring. I look forward to our future endeavours together.

The Dulux Study Tour serves as a reminder to the architectural profession: Always keep learning; Never take anything for granted; Question everything; And of course - Think Bigger.



Emily Ouston



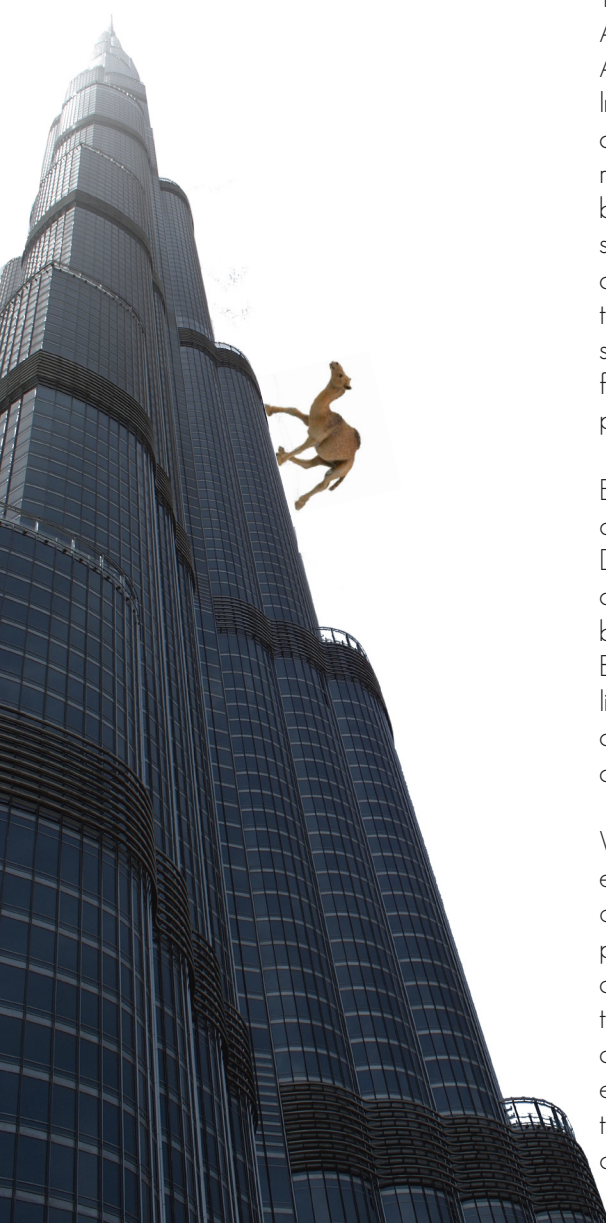
Berlin

ITINERARY

Desert safari tour: Camels, shisha, belly dancers, crazy sand dune driving...

Practice Visits: Woods Bagot; Atkins.

Site Visits: Burj Khalifa Observation Deck; Burj Al Arab (Atkins); Zayed Bridge (Zaha Hadid); Sheik Zayed Grand Mosque; ADIC Headquarters (Aedas); Central Markets (Foster + Partners); Capital Gate (RMJM); Masdar City (Foster + Partners); Ferrari World (Benoy UK); YAS Viceroy Hotel (Asymptote Architecture); Emirates Palace.



THE U.A.E. - DREAM VERSUS REALITY

As our Etihad flight dipped its nose towards Abu Dhabi, the in-flight entertainment (Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol) was abruptly cut off and replaced with a colourful U.A.E tourism montage: smiling people, shiny glass buildings, blue skies dotted with hot air balloons, the shiny red beacon of Ferrari world seen from above, glamorous shopping malls filled with all things bling, windmill farms, happy businessmen shaking hands, fireworks and sky-high fountains, all serenaded by energetic Arabic pop music.

By comparison the reality is, to say the least, disheartening. Driving into town from the Abu Dhabi airport, we passed skeletal high-rises abandoned during construction, 'big brother' billboards featuring the bearded faces of the Emirate leaders, endless empty highways and lifeless walls of glass all engulfed in a blanket of desert sand. The rare public space had not a soul in sight.

We learnt that the fragmented urban environment is due largely to the lack of a considered urban plan, and a neglect of the public space between buildings. The architects at Woods Bagot and Atkins are aware of these issues and are working on projects that address them. However, as the architects explained, it is difficult to convince their clients that it is worth investing in non-commercial design features such as public landscaping.



TEN TENDENCIES

Lawrence Nield spoke of the 'Ten Tendencies' of architecture during his 2012 Gold Medalist acceptance speech. The tendencies include what Lawrence calls Pattern, Zombie and Iconic One Liner. There was evidence of each of these tendencies throughout the U.A.E, in particular the Zombie - the reflective glass tower with no sense that 'someone is home'.

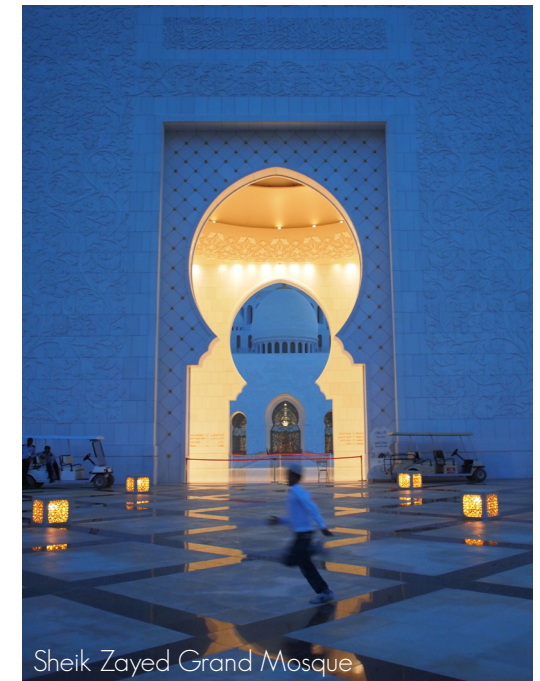
As Nield explained, 'Now an architect, not a society or the taste of the aristocracy, decides individually on a building's language [. . .] This has turned our city environments into an often-noisy collection of individually competing buildings that are expressions of architects' personality.' There have certainly been a lot of different personalities at play in Dubai, all competing for attention. It will take a well-considered rectification process in order to unify what is currently a sandy ocean of 'Zombie' islands.

Dubai &
Abu Dhabi
6-8 MAY

THE ARABIC CULTURE

Despite being a 'global city', there are some reminders of the history and culture throughout Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

A visit to the Grand Mosque at dusk unveiled the heart of the community; families gathered outside in the cooling air, some praying towards Mecca while others watched their children playing. The Call to Prayer echoing from the mosque and reverberating throughout the city. It was a beautiful moment, and a very special thing for us to witness.



'...which poses the question: Because you can should you? The answer one suspects is yet to be defined. It's an experiment that has a lot riding on it. If the oil runs out, Dubai and Abu Dhabi will rely on whatever they have built to survive.'

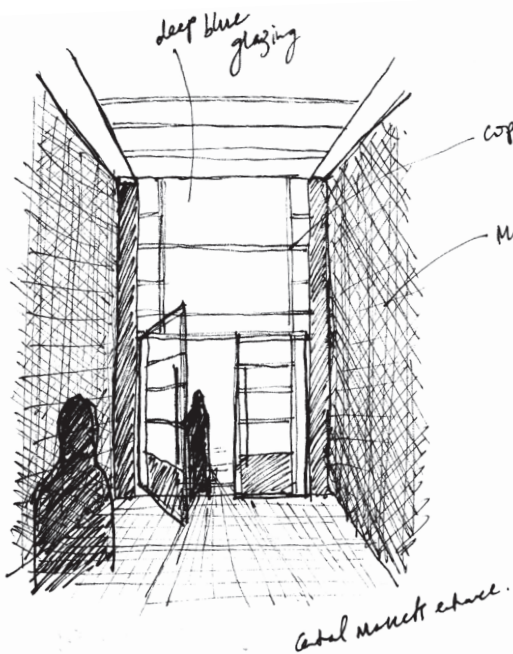
Excerpt from Shaun Carter's blog entry.

FOSTER-ING THE U.A.E.

We visited two projects by Foster + Partners in Abu Dhabi: the Central Markets and Masdar City. Both projects are designed specifically for the environment; they are culturally sensitive, often learning from the vernacular, a design strategy that has been overlooked by other developments.

The Central Markets is a contemporary version of the traditional Arabic souk (marketplace). Naturally lit by dappled sunlight and ventilated by automated apertures, it is a comfortable public space, intended as a hub for shopping and socialising.

The materiality enhances the human-scale that Foster + Partners intended; precast concrete



panels are decorated in traditional Arabic patterns while timber lattice screens line the internal walls and ceiling.

The Masdar Initiative is the world's first attempt to produce a zero-carbon, zero-waste community. It is a green energy utopia - part of which is already built and operational. Visiting Masdar City is like stepping into the future; you step into an automatic, driverless bubble-car that zips you to where you want to go (hopefully!) and you then ascend to the manufactured ground plane of the city. The area we visited features a university building, library and student accommodation.

Again, Foster + Partners have learnt from the vernacular; sun shading, natural ventilation and evaporative cooling are all adopted strategies. Cool, shady public spaces are provided (we noted the human scale of these spaces, as opposed to the abandoned public space at the base of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai).



Dubai &
Abu Dhabi
6-8 MAY

BUR'QAS AND BRIEFCASES

This being my first visit to an Arabic country, I expected to feel uncomfortable about the traditional gender roles, in particular the treatment of women, in the U.A.E. Social etiquette often requires that men and women are divided, with women generally hidden behind loose black cloaks, sometimes with faces also veiled. Some may perceive this as a form of misogyny, however, we came to understand these cultural traditions are largely due to the underlying belief that women are delicate creatures that must be protected: a strange concept for a westerner to be faced with.

This observation brought me to reflect on the attitude towards women in Australia, and in particular the architectural profession. As



a young female architect, my own attitude has always been that I need to 'be one of the boys' and prove that I am capable of performing in a 'male industry'. Of course, this is nonsensical; men and women are different and we should embrace this. In the architectural profession gender diversity seems even more relevant; it enables firms to respond to diverse clients and diverse design requirements.



ITINERARY

Architectural Bicycle Tour - Georg Dux: Hackesche Höfe, Sophie-Gips-Höfe, Auguststraße, Urbane Living (Abcarius Burns), Hamburger Höfe (nps- Tschoban), Apartment Houses (Grüntuch & Ernst), Museums Island, Gallery at Kupfergraben, Deutsches, Historisches Museum (I.M. Pei), Foreign Ministry (Müller Reimann), Town Houses Friedrichswerder, City Model, via Karl-Marx-Allee, Cafe Moskau, and Alexanderplatz.

Practice Visits: Realities United; Graft Lab; Deadline Architects; David Chipperfield.

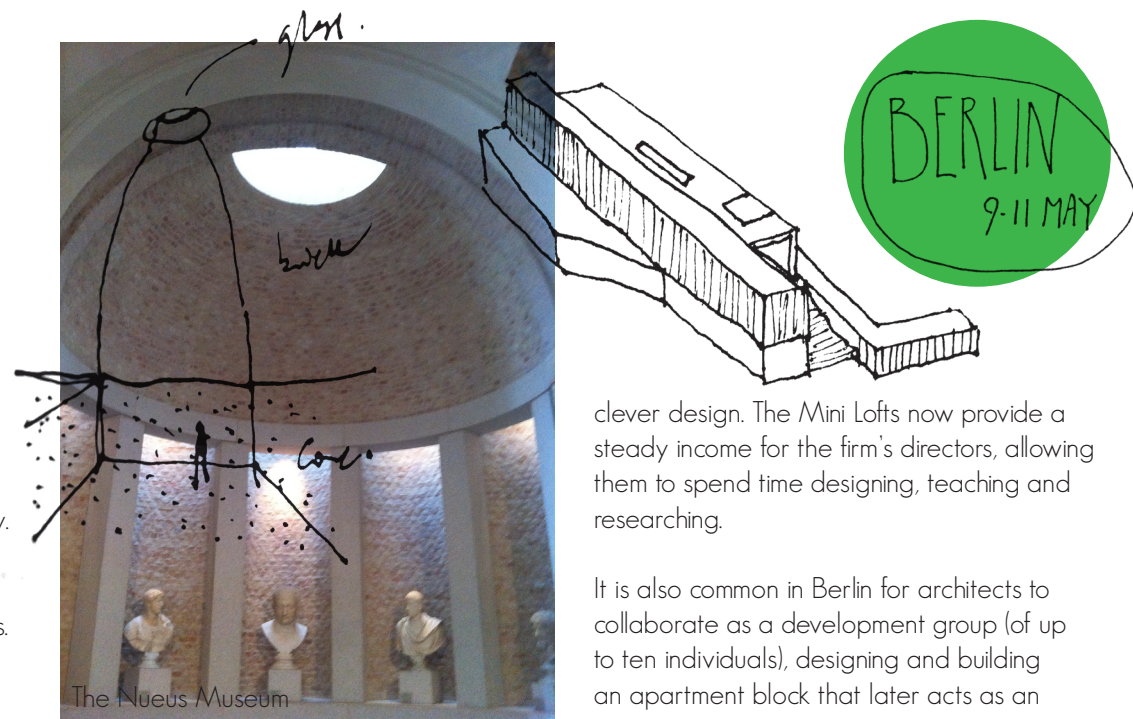
Site Visits: KU64 Dental Clinic (Graft Lab); Mini Lofts (Deadline Architects); Neues Museum (David Chipperfield); Jewish Museum (Daniel Libeskind); Berlinische Galerie; Apartment-Haus Johannisstraße (Jurgen Mayer H); Holocaust Memorial (Peter Eisenmann).

CITY OF LAYERS

We spent a morning cycling around Berlin with local architect Georg Dux, who explained the history of the city's built fabric as we manoeuvred our bicycles through courtyards, cobbled laneways and over bridges.

The courtyard residential planning strategy was adopted in the mid-19th century when a sudden increase in population demanded high density housing in the city. The courtyards remain successful today, allowing sunlight and air to flow between buildings whilst creating a social centre off the main streets. Cycling through Berlin, it was wonderful to catch a glimpse of a leafy courtyard through the layers of apertures along the street edge.

We gradually wound our way to Museum Island, a cultural hub at the centre of the city. This island is home to the Neues Museum which was largely destroyed during WWII and reconstructed by Chipperfield architects. The intervention artfully layers the old and new in a Scarpa-esque manner. Where it was necessary to reconstruct sections of the building, including the main stairway, Chipperfield maintained the original forms in a new material (often white concrete), creating a ghost of the original museum.



SMALL FIRMS, BIG IDEAS

The smaller practices visited in Berlin displayed a range of strategies for establishing their business as well as maintaining profits.

Deadline Architects kick-started their career by their own hand: a scheme to design a small boutique hotel, Mini Lofts, which also houses the firm's own studio. Through being their own client, the practice achieved an exciting,

clever design. The Mini Lofts now provide a steady income for the firm's directors, allowing them to spend time designing, teaching and researching.

It is also common in Berlin for architects to collaborate as a development group (of up to ten individuals), designing and building an apartment block that later acts as an investment.

We visited Realities:United, whose practice philosophy is to unite different realities in different industries and mediums. The firm often collaborates with larger practices, in a 'piggy backing' type of arrangement. They worked with BIG architects in Denmark, designing the 'smoke vortex' at the top of a waste-to-energy plant that doubles as a ski slope.



'Our experience seemed a perfect summation of the power of architecture to remember, provoke and inspire. It was also a great reminder that these spaces have lives - our cities are constantly recontextualised and made new through their inhabitation and use.'
Excerpt from Anna Maskiell's blog entry.

MATERIAL + FORM

I have always admired the distinct German way of maximising the potential of a single material in contemporary architecture. Berlin offered many examples of this: Deadline Architect's Mini Lofts were wrapped in a stainless steel armor; Chipperfield's use of lime-washed brick and white concrete at the Neues Museum; J Mayer H's futuristic apartment with a facade of aluminium extrusions; the quiet of the concrete pillars at Eisenmann's memorial. Granted, some of the architects listed are not German, however it still reflects on the German people as client and user.

Again, Lawrence Nield's Gold Medallist speech comes to mind; he reminded us that the architect must be aware of the ways of creating architecture: Modelling, Carving, Casting and Opening.



What if, for instance, an entire building could be carved out of one material?

The Berliners are well aware of the process by which architecture is made, and the potential inherent in all raw building materials.



The Holocaust Memorial

ARCHITECTURE AS MEMORIAL

While in Berlin we visited two of the iconic memorials to the Holocaust. Firstly, Libeskind's Jewish Museum which seems to have one intention only: to communicate the anxiety, fear and oppression of the Holocaust. The building's ominous voids, angular walls, unsteady ground planes and low dark ceilings all played their part in artfully achieving this. In particular, the 'Garden of Exile' - experienced through walking on unsteady cobblestones amongst huge concrete pillars that swayed at varying angles, destroying the visitor's perception to nauseating effect. There is no relief and certainly no sense of hope.

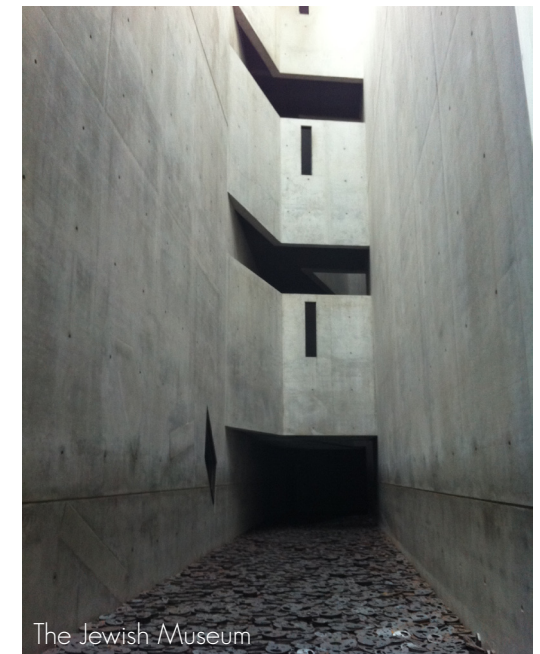
We visited Eisenmann's Holocaust Memorial around dusk when the skies rolled in and it started to rain. Quite fitting, given the circumstances.



The Neues Museum

The beauty of the memorial is that it fills the visitor with dread while in the depths of the concrete maze, however upon exiting, the concrete pillars lower into the ground yielding a sense of relief and hopefulness.

Eisenmann's genius is evident; the memorial is extremely simple yet strong gestures are made to ensure that the visitor's experience is moving and enriching. For me, this was a very special experience and an example of architecture at its best.



The Jewish Museum



ITINERARY

Architectural Walking Tour - Ken Allinson: Central St Giles (Renzo Piano); NLA London Model; Brunswick Centre/St Pancras Eurostar; Kings Cross; Lumen (Theis and Khan Architects); Central St Martins (Stanton Williams); Barbican; Gherkin (Foster + Partners); Lloyds (Richard Rogers); Rothschilds Bank (OMA); One New Change (Nouvel); Millennium Bridge (Arup + Foster); Tate Modern (Herzog + De Meuron); Great Court, British Museum (Foster + Partners).
Practice Visits: Davis Langdon, AECOM; FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste); Wilkinson Eyre; Carmody Groarke; Foster + Partners; Rogers Stirk Harbour; Arup Associates.
Site Visits: Grand Designs Live (Kevin McCloud + Peter Maddison); London University buildings (Wilkinson Eyre); 7 July Memorial, Hyde Park (Carmody Groarke); Maggie Centre (Rogers Stirk Harbour); Macquarie Bank (Arup Associates); RIBA.

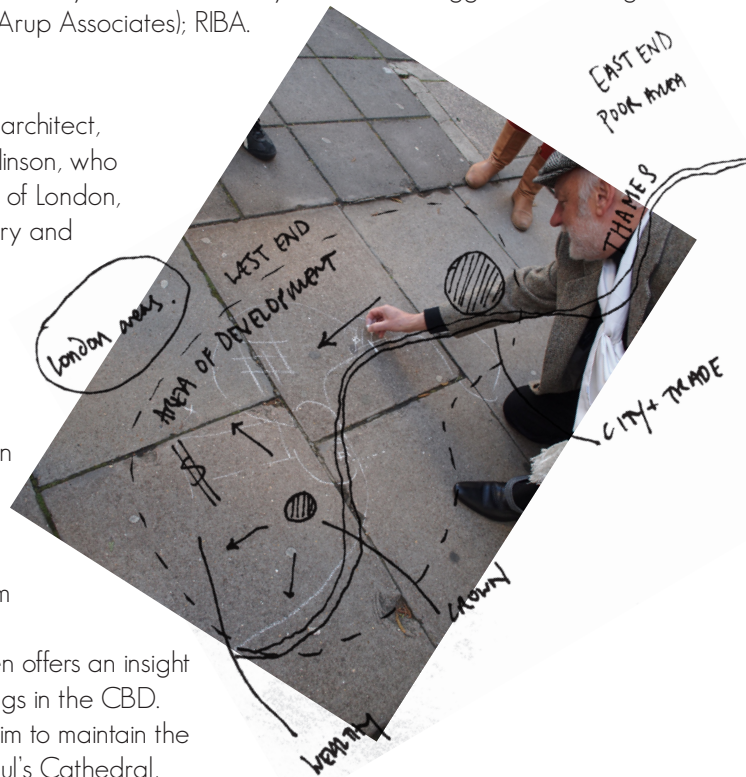
KEN'S TOUR OF LONDON

We were privileged to meet architect, academic and author Ken Allinson, who guided us through the streets of London, providing insight into the history and development of the city.

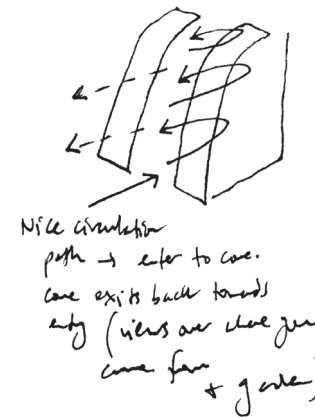
Ken's passion for the city of London was translated onto the footpaths as he drew diagrams in chalk, explaining the urban evolution of London and the strategies of the key buildings within it.

Having worked for Archigram Architects and Farrell

Grimshaw, among others, Ken offers an insight into the contemporary buildings in the CBD. London's planning schemes aim to maintain the visual corridors towards St Paul's Cathedral, with many new buildings having been bluntly sliced and angled in order to achieve this. Jean Nouvel's One New Change complex, located adjacent to St Paul's, employs two key strategies in order to respectfully sit alongside St Paul's; firstly, the large mass of the building is clad in glass which is sometimes mirrored and sometimes frosted, achieving a stealth, ghostly presence; the second strategy



is a large gash in the building - a yawning void that opens up, the glass walls acting as blinkers towards St. Paul's. Our tour ended with a glass lift ride to the top storey of One New Change, allowing an ascending view of St Paul's along the building's void, and despite all the 'view corridors' throughout London, this was the first time that we were offered a really exciting and engaging view of St Paul's.



Another highlight of the walking tour was the 1950's social development, the Barbican, which was a regeneration scheme on a site that was heavily bombed during WWII. The huge 'brutalist' complex houses an arts centre and schools, private apartments, church and landscaped public areas. To us archi-nerds, entering the Barbican was like entering a modernist wonderland; we were overjoyed at the monolithic concrete structures, sculptural forms and thoughtful copper and timber detailing. The Barbican has also proven successful with the people of London; its arts centre, residences, schools, museum, library

and pedestrian linkages make it a key social hub in the city centre.

AECOM's research into design and planning for the age of climate change discusses the importance of creating socially-conscious, healthier and attractive places for people to live and work. Perhaps the Barbican can serve as a precedent for future socially-conscious developments.



'We learn about the history of the city - its urban origins, growth, expansion, polarisation and present-day regeneration. We learn that different urban/financial/historic monarchical agendas and generators of the city centre, west end and east end, contributed in shaping the city we are familiar with today.'

Excerpt from Weian Lim's blog entry.

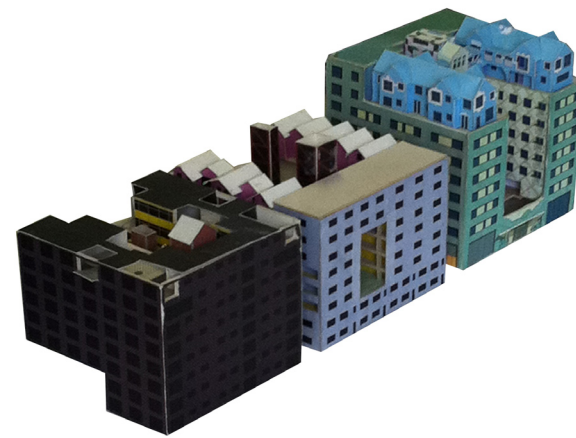
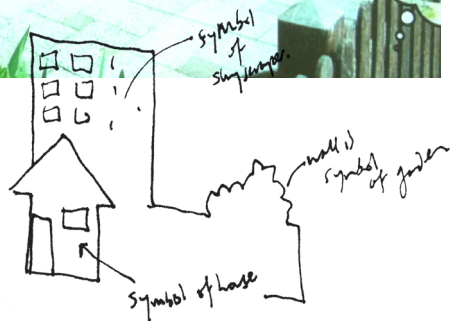
POP!

In his guide to London's contemporary architecture, Ken Allinson speaks highly of FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste): 'Anyone who thinks the work of Venturi is dead and no longer of significant influence should take note of FAT and AOC - two of London's more interesting practices [...] ' (Allinson, P. 136) Needless to say, we were very keen to visit FAT's office and gain an insight into their design philosophy.

Charles, co-director of FAT, reminded us of the meaning inherent in everyday objects, with an example of a person's backyard - the objects adorning it and the meaning they hold for the

owner. FAT believes that 'people should be encouraged to customise their homes', as they have in their office by hanging a large disco ball in the centre of the room.

I found the visit to FAT's office extremely refreshing and inspiring. Their embrace of popular culture, often seen by others as 'kitch', has led them to develop a meaningful architecture that has the complexity, contradiction and paradox that Venturi would be proud of.



SUPER MODELS

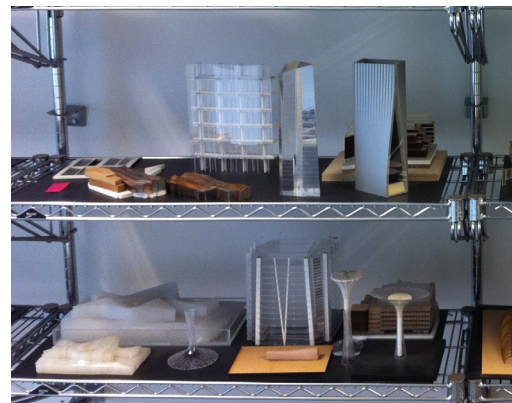
The practice visits revealed that the physical model remains the most useful tool employed by the profession, despite its growing reliance on computer-aided design.

Many of the practices visited had in-house model-making workshops; Fosters + Partners had the most impressive set-up - three model making workshops complete with band saws and CNC routers.

The architects commonly spoke of their preference for the physical model for testing spatial ideas, materiality, form, scale and light. Also, the physical model appeals because it doesn't tell lies (whilst a computer-rendered image can be distorted and manipulated).

The physical model is also used as a communicative tool to aid the client's understanding of the design process. Often 'sketchy' models are shown to the client to explain the development of the scheme.

It is also clear that the physical model is a cherished artifact, being displayed in the office as a beautiful object to inspire future projects.





(L-R) Back; Phil White (Dulux), Weian Lim, James Coombe, Emily Ouston, Kahlea McGeechan (AIA). Front; Tina White, Anna Maskiell, Shaun Carter, Sarah Nadenbousch (Dulux).

The 2012 Dulux study tour was an unforgettable experience; we met some inspirational architects, visited some incredible buildings and shared some very excited conversations.

For me personally, there are a number of lessons learnt along the way that I am certain will inform my own professional development.

In particular, the value of architecture is an issue that reverberates post-tour; Australians do not value architecture (and design, generally) in the way that European cultures do, for instance. Perhaps a solution to this is for architects to 'bridge the gap' by educating the public about the services that we provide and the value of design. This is an ambition that I wish to pursue in my own work. FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste) serve as a precedent for this by responding to popular culture in a way that many architects fail to do. Their celebration of the every day is truly inspirational.

As demonstrated by the architecture community in Berlin, it is clear that a supportive, collaborative architecture culture is necessary for the sustainability of the profession. The network of emerging architects in Australia is a strong bond that must be nourished, and it is opportunities like the Dulux study tour that support and encourage this. If my fellow architectural adventurers are anything to go by, the future looks bright.

REFERENCES *Generously donated by the Practices and Sponsors*

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