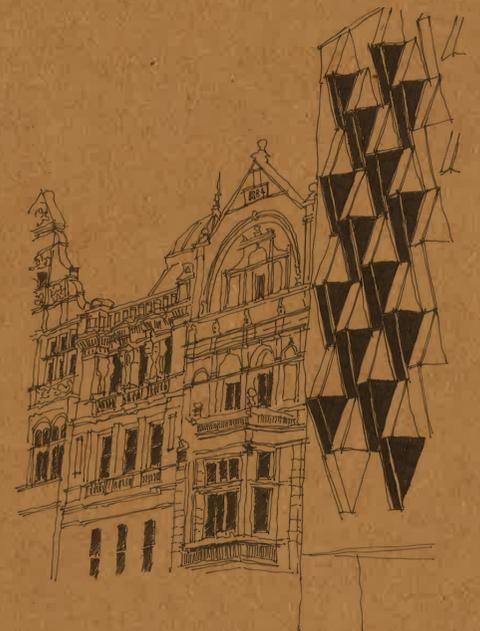


London ; Barcelona ; Copenhagen
Adventures of The Dulux Study Tour 2011



Christina Na-Heon Cho

Memo

The Bauhaus Manifesto claimed "the ultimate aim of all creative activity is the building." To be a good Architect, one must practice with a balanced knowledge of artistry, craftsmanship, sociology, history, engineering, construction, anthropology, and the environment.

When you travel you not only see Architecture, you are exposed to all that it takes to make Architecture. One can see beyond the pragmatics of the building, see it in its context, and experience how a physical intervention can have the ability to change and interconnect the city, its people and culture. The Dulux Study Tour through London, Barcelona and Copenhagen, provided the opportunity to contrast three cities and cultures, architectural practices and projects, that stimulated new perceptions and challenged ingrained ideas.

The following pages are a collection of random thoughts and reflections, correlated from mostly illegible scribbles and my blog posts. I have written daily accounts rather than composed them into themes, so that you the reader may have a sense of what we experienced and how vastly this differed throughout each day of the tour.

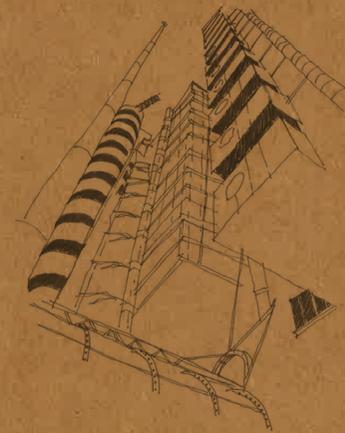
We will be forever grateful to our Mother Hen Bernadette from the Australian Institute of Architects and Uncle Phil and Jason from Dulux for your wisdom, friendship, and karaoke tips.



Thank you, Gracias, Tak

Dulux, Australian Institute of Architects,
Davis Langdon, EmAGN

Teresa Cho, Aaron Hwang, Timothy Hill, Brian Donovan, Michael Rayner, Casey Vallance, Richard Coulson, Arlyn Mangabat, Kim Richards, Michael Hogg, James Davidson, Kae Martin, Peter Skinner, Jason Anderson, Phil White, Bernadette Wilson, and my fellow adventurers: Jefa Greenaway, Yuri Dillon, Carly Barrett, and Brendan Murray.

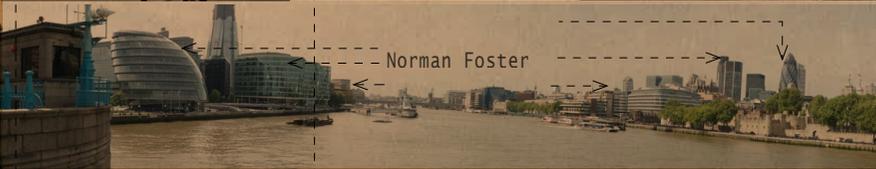


London 16TH May, 2011

---Viewing back out onto the city



Future Systems



Zaha Hadid

Ken Allison Architectural Walking Tour: [Amanda Leveté]- 10 Hills Place. [Future Systems]- 367 Oxford Street. [Denys Ladun]-Institute of Education. [Theis & Kahn]-Lumen UC Church conversion. [James Stirling]- British Library. [Foster + Partners]- British Museum, 30 St Mary's Axe "Gherkin", City Hall "Beehive", St. Pancras International, Canary Wharf JLE Station. [Richard Rogers]- Lloyds, Lloyds Register of Shipping, Leadenhall Market, [Renzo Piano]- Saint Giles, The Shard. [Thomas Heatherwick]-Guys Hospital.

Olympic Site Tour- [Zaha Hadid]- Aquatic Centre. [Populous]-Main Stadium. [Wilkinson Eyre]- Basketball Stadium. [Make]-Handball Arena. [Hopkins Architects]-Velodrome. [Anish Kapoor]-Arcelor Mitall Orbit.

Today we were led on an expedition by Architect Ken Allison through the urban playground for the prolific and adventurous Architect; London. The city is a built form of complexity, of Contextualism, futurism, pre-classicism, modernism, brutalism, and deconstructivism. Ken talks about the city as if it was his best friend, and explains its history and development through chalk diagrams on the sidewalk. Whilst landmark buildings hold their ground in the city, Ken mentioned most seem to be built on the premise of a limited life expectancy, constantly being demolished and rebuilt; reinventing itself- his own buildings not withstanding this trend. The tour gave us an insight into the formation of today's London, our next visit would show us the future direction of London...

The site of the 2012 Olympics is surreal. Enormous man-made super structures surrounded by piles of decontaminated soil. Olympic Form vs. Legacy Form: The Olympic form is massive and awkward. Zaha Hadid's legacy form of a fluid and curvaceous sea creaturesque aquatic centre is unrecognizable in between the additional 25,000 box seats plugged onto its ends. The main stadium by Populous, designed to legacy mode by having detachable top tier seating has now been bought by a football team and these seats will remain, changing the whole intent of the design and undoubtedly, wasted costs and visionary ideas. The importance of integrated design and consideration for the life cycle of buildings becomes evident. With all eyes set to be on London next year, each venue designed by a London based Starchitect stands independently as a contemporary symbol of a modern metropolis. How will the world view London? What legacy will these Olympic Games leave?

Thomas Heatherwick

Ken Allison (Archigram visionary)



London 17TH May, 2011

View from Rothchild's Bank Roof Garden



Rothchild's Bank Foyer



The DST Crew in uniform



RIBA Facade

RIBA Library



Rogers, Stirk + Harbour

[Davis Langdon]- Open Discussion + Breakfast, [OMA]- Site Visit NM Rothchild's Bank, [Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners]- Practice Visit, [ARUP Associates]- Practice Visit, [RIBA]- Site Visit + Cocktail Function

Sitting down for breakfast at Davis Langdon, the conversation turned to the challenges involved in the procurement of buildings. In the midst of the economic boom, Architects were beset by frustrations of design and construct contracts, but one good thing that has come out of the GFC, is the trend to return to traditional lump sum contracts where the Architect regains control of the design and quality. Davis Langdon also commented that there had also been a re-emergence of construction management, favored by clients for its acceleration of project programme. We were able to learn more about the workings of this process on our site visit to OMA's NM Rothchild's Bank, where the Managing Contractor and Architects shared a site office. We were all pleasantly surprised and impressed to see OMA's project Architect was a woman. I was immediately taken by the fact that she was an experienced and established woman Architect in her forties working internationally. I felt liberated, having only recently read a research study into reasons why woman were leaving the Architectural profession. That same night, we visited the RIBA building. The minimalist Art Deco façade features three large sculptures forming a hierarchical triangle. The two base statues represent the spirits of man and woman as creative forces under the statue of Architecture, they look blindly up towards the apex; 'Architecture' is a naked man surrounded by buildings...

The office of Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners is infamous amongst young Architects globally, as having the best office culture. What is the key to running a successful office with a happy and productive workforce? Perhaps it's the fact the company is owned by a charity and no one has direct equity in the practice? Maybe the Bicycle Scheme, where the company pays upfront for a bicycle of choice, which is then salary sacrificed for a few dollars a week? The in-house chef cooking up gourmet meals in the lunch room? Riverfront views? Or the fact that the office is housed in an archi-chic converted warehouse? All of the above.

The Lunchroom acts as a hub for communication and accommodates the basic human behaviour of sharing stories over food. Directors and Employees sit side by side, away from their desks, eliminating office hierarchy and catalysing social conversation.

London 18TH May, 2011

[WilkinsonEyre]- Practice Visit + Site Visit: Queen Mary University of London Humanitarian Building and Mathematics + Science, [David Chipperfield]-Practice Visit, [Foster + Partners]- Practice Visit, [Carmody Groarke]- Practice Visit.

Race around London. Four high profile Architecture firms in one day. Each reputable for their distinct design philosophies, and company brand, varying in size from 10 to 1000 employees.

WilkinsonEyre currently operated as one London office of 100 employees with a business plan that capped their employee quota, opting to stay at a manageable scale to remain in control of quality and brand. In contrast, Foster + Partners with over 1000 employees, concentrated on increasing their global presence by diversifying its services beyond Architecture to include engineering, project management, sustainable technologies, workplace consultancy, and product design. This allowed them to maintain a strong market share, which proved to be beneficial during the recession. 90% of all projects were international, locking the office into production mode 24 hours a day. Whilst we sat in the meeting room overlooking the production line of hundreds of Architects below, the Director admitted that Architecture was not a 9-5 job and required strict operations to meet increasingly short project programmes and limited budgets. In order to operate at such a scale, the firm had developed structured processes, protocols, and a clear hierarchy of management who remained responsible for quality, communicating and growing the brand. On the otherhand, David Chipperfield Architects maintained an exclusive quality and brand, with Sir David overseeing all projects. The media department with four full time employees, were allocated the task of cataloguing of all David's sketches, media, publications, models, and photos, constantly planning for succession and building on their resources.

Competitions remained a major source of work for all three firms. The established brands meant they could be selective about their projects, opting only to enter short listed/closed/paid competitions. Emerging practice Carmody Groarke established their firm by winning open competitions for high profile projects such as the London Terrorist Bombing Memorial and following, were commissioned for the Indian Ocean Tsunami memorial.

Physical models lined the walls of all offices, like a retrospective on the design evolution of the practice- which had clearly advanced through developments in computer aided parametric design. The increased reliance on designing in digital space, meant that these offices produced up to a hundred physical models and marquettes for one project. Laser cutters and rapid prototyping machines used to accurately re-create physical representations, in order to explore scale and form. It brings into question whether the dependence on digital modelling for complex parametric designs are actually divorcing Architects from the art of Architecture; and the creative outlet of using pencil on paper.



WilkinsonEyre

David Chipperfield

Foster + Partners

Carmody Groarke

Barcelona 19TH May, 2011

Parc Central Dou Ne Barris



Santa Caterina Markets



Casa Mila



Carme's foyer



Arriola + Fiol



Santa Caterina Markets: Dinner, drinks + magic tricks



London -> Barcelona. [Arriola & Fiol]- Practice Visit and Parc Central de Nou Barris Site Visit, [EMBT]- Santa Caterina Markets

Hola Barcelona! The city is enchanting, weather perfect, and people beautiful. Barcelona has a rich history and eclectic mix of architectural styles, that over centuries has transformed the city into a vibrant urban sculpture.

A sense of place is ingrained into their tradition and is a fundamental design philosophy of Architectural practice Arriola + Fiol. We met Carme Fiol at Parc Central Dou Ne Barris, a large public space intervention and regeneration project amongst a district of affordable housing estates. She strides elegantly through the park looking like the character Carmen San Diego with her fedora hat and tailored jacket, pointing out key features of the project. A prominent Academic and Architectural theorist she is generous with her knowledge, hosting another group of 30 American Architectural students in the same afternoon.

The practice won the competition to design Parc Central with the idea of sinking the carpark underground, and creating a vast public space above. The new intervention both urbanises and pedestrianises the district, breaking down walls into slopes creating a continuity of space between street, park and water.

We catch the subway back to the office of Arriola + Fiol, but not before a quick detour past Gaudi's Casa Mila, Toyo Ito's Porta Fira, and the foyer of her own apartment, a beautiful example of the organic Catalan modernista movement.



Barcelona 20TH May, 2011

[Antoni Gaudi]- Sagrada Família. [EMBT] Practice Visit.
[Ricardo Bofill] Taller de Arquitectura]- W Hotel Site Visit + Practice Visit.

As we approach Sagrada Família, I am at a loss for words...The volumes, organic contours, grandeur and sheer scale of the cathedral are overwhelmingly magnificent. The exterior of the building expresses a complex fluidity- but as we discovered during the site visit- was very pragmatic in its construction. The cathedral was shaped from a seismic structure of reinforced concrete with ornaments clad onto its surface. Traditional and computer aided techniques in Parametric design were utilised to interpret Gaudi's generative systems. A small team of Architects and Engineers working out of the Cathedral's basement, used Rhino to create an accuracy of modelling that would otherwise be impossible if one were not Antoni Gaudi. Sagrada Família is a powerful symbol of an experiential Architecture that evokes every human emotion.

The day continued to excite, with visits to the offices of EMBT, Ricardo Bofill and a site visit to the W Hotel. The offices and its people were relaxed and charismatic as the city itself, with flexible working hours and siestas contributing to an content and balanced lifestyle. With classical music playing softly in the background, a work day at EMBT began at 10am till 2pm, breaking for a two hour siesta, resuming at 4pm and concluding at 8pm; although working under the pressure and expectations of the Chinese market had hindered their relaxed routine.

We were once again blown away as we entered Ricardo Bofill's office. A minimalist intervention to an abandoned cement factory- silos were turned into his workplace and home, with some remaining as Architectural follies. The building was intentionally left as a ruin surrounded by overgrown lush landscapes and a labyrinth of evocative spaces that aroused curiosity. The sensory experience of each office translated into their work ethic and design processes, preference given to traditional techniques such as timber models, delicate hand drawings, and collages using scissors and glue- vastly different from their London counterparts.

Ricardo Bofill

Barcelona 21ST May, 2011

Day off to explore Barcelona. Oliver the Dulux dog tags along for the adventure...



Copenhagen 23RD May, 2011



[Terrior + Jeppe Utzon]- Practice Visit, [Jan Gehl]- Practice Visit, [3XN]- Practice Visit + Orestad College, Bella Hotel Site Visit

Terrior + Jeppe Utzon



Stroget

Stroget



Dog Leash holder!

Jan Gehl



3XN

3XN



Orestad

Orestad College



Bella Hotel

Shared zones

Cycling around Copenhagen: First stop, the office of Terrior, and Jeppe Utzon (nephew of Jorn Utzon). Gerard from Terrior- an Aussie living in Copenhagen- gave us an interesting perspective on the difference between Australian and Danish business etiquette. Gerard remarked that there was a consensual belief in the ability of the Architect, rather than the aggressive and complex contractual agreements he had experienced in Sydney. This gave Danish Architects more freedom to experiment in form making and new technologies, as projects were awarded based not on merit and experience on a specific building typology, but on the Architects's ability to design and provide intellectual and creative problem solving to complicated briefs.

Competitions were well paid, and wages controlled by unions making Danish Architects the highest earners in this profession around the world. Education is free, superannuation at 6%, accrued study leave at 3%, and paid maternity and paternity leave of up to 52 weeks between the parents. As we cycle to the office of Jan Gehl we are passed by a critical mass of mums and dads with baby trailers fixed to the back of their bicycles, going out for lunch. Copenhagen seems to have all the elements that goes into making a healthy, happy and liveable city.

Jan Gehl is my Architectural superhero. A Theorist, Architect, Designer, and Urban Planner. Graduating from Architecture School and married to a Psychologist, Jan asked the question "Why are Architects not interested in people and only form?". He emphasised that the form of a building needs to come from interconnections and create conditions of life for people. He does not call his services design, but a reprogramming of cities. He has championed the changes in the urban design of Copenhagen, creating shared spaces, where streets have become pedestrian plazas, and bicyclists make up 37% of peak hour traffic. Our next destination Orestad, a new development on the outskirts of Copenhagen is architectural sculpting and form making on a monumental scale, so vastly different from the vernacular seen in the city centre.

3XN's Orestad College and Bella Hotel are impressive and visionary, setting new precedents for education and hotel typology. Kim Nielson remarked that Architectural Education was not included in the Ministry of Education, but rather the Ministry of Culture; with form making, experimental technologies, and visionary ideas nurtured and developed from acceptance into Architectural education...

Copenhagen 24TH May, 2011

[BIG]- Practice Visit. Little Mermaid Statue. [Frederiksberg Radhus Council]- Municipality cycling tour, [Jan Utzon]- Bagsvaerd Church. [Danish Architecture Centre] - Cocktail function



BIG



Frederiksberg



Bagsvaerd Church



Jan Utzon

Australian Ambassador + Danish friends

YesIsMore: BIG's minimalist office is overtaken with physical models. Their designs are extraordinary, visionary, some realised, some conceptual. Daring forms and spatial concepts have won them numerous International competitions, each win bringing with it an invaluable amount of free publicity. They have built upon this media coverage to spread the brand globally, recently opening an office in New York. They are currently working on their first North American Project- a reinvention of the Manhattan skyscraper. BIG's shanghai expo pavilion created a public uproar in Copenhagen,when they dared to propose moving their treasured Little Mermaid statue to the pavilion for the duration of the expo. Now safely back home, we made a little detour to visit Copenhagen's second most visited tourist attraction before our next stop.

The Municipality of Fredriksberg: We were briefed by a Social/human geographer/ Branding Consultant, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects and Architects on the visions for the municipality. They had a sincere interest in the development of their city referring to "Place" as a complex product that required constant improvements in identity branding and profile. Identification of Urban development areas were considered not only on Physical development, but more importantly on social redevelopment. They took us for a bicycle ride through the municipality to a re-development zoned area for a first hand look at their visions. Their involvement went beyond council obligations, maintaining open dialogue with stakeholders, testing ideas and strategising on feedback from public workshops.

Our last site visit was to Jorn Utzon's Bagsvaerd community church with his son Jan Utzon. Having met both Jan and Jeppe, we now have a slight understanding of what kind of character Jorn Utzon may have been. We all gasp as we enter what looks like an industrial shed on the outside, to an elegant, calm and softly day lit interior- time seems to stand still. The heavy concrete roof structure seems to float above us; delicately detailed, rolling through the space allowing an aura of light to penetrate through its hidden crevasses. From the juxtaposed and dynamic forms of BIG and 3XN, to the simple and timeless elegance of Jorn Utzon, it only further commends the vast styles and talents of Danish design.

As the night falls in Copenhagen, we relax with drinks at the Danish Architecture Centre (DAC) with the Australian Ambassador and new Danish friends. We finished off the last night of our tour like every other night, sharing our thoughts and reflections over food and wine.

MOLSKINED

"Delight the future; Create happy Outcomes"

To conclude a fitting quote I saw written on the wall of London City Hall on the first day of the Dulux Study Tour...

Conclusion

The Dulux Study tour acts as a platform to learn and in return, inspire...

The exploration through three cities of vastly different urban environments, has further increased my aspiration to become more of a socially engaged Architect, within the practice and as a designer of physical interventions that accommodate the conditions of life. The Dulux Study tour is not intended for the benefit of one individual, the journey becomes a back drop to effectively communicate the fundamental knowledge gained to our Architectural peers and also the wider community, on the role architecture performs in shaping our cities.

My fellow adventurers were a genuine and impressionable bunch of characters; like old friends that I had never met. We left Australia as five strangers, but returned as each others groupies for life. I look forward to our future collaborations and adventures.

The DST is a visionary idea that aims to reinforce the passion for Architecture at a critical point in an Emerging Architect's career, and I urge everyone to enter. This was an incredible experience that has left me enlightened, inspired, and in true awe of the art of Architecture.

The adventures continue...

