



DULUX STUDY TOUR LONDON REPORT JULY 2008

Marissa Lindquist

Bosanquet Foley Architects

Firstly I feel very privileged to have partaken in this fantastic tour. It is with great thanks that I extend to the Australian Institute of Architecture, Dulux and Virgin Atlantic. Our tour organisers Dominic Pelle and Carmen Wragg (EmAGN + AIA) were outstanding in programming the tour and guiding us through London, as were Phil White and Ken Virtue (Dulux) our travelling companions who shared great enthusiasm and clever humour along the road.

Journeys, as with our London experience are marked by the impromptu and unexpected. These 'happenings' enrich the reading of the city, its people and architecture. They offer intrigue, delight and mental pause. What sustains these experiences are the conversations shared with others along the journey. It is what I believe makes place memorable. It is what to me made the London study tour memorable.

The impromptu emerged as we first greeted both London and Manchester. Hyde Park – silent picturesque garden at day break transformed into sunbaking makeshift beach by lunch. Manchester's historical city centre quickly flooded with blue by afternoon as fans of the UeFA cup took to the streets – putting an interesting and humanising twist on our 'architectural tour'.

London revealed the unexpected through artistic installations which drew attention to the space, texture and architecture of the city. Anthony Gormley's Quantum Cloud Sculpture delicately hovered over the Thames adjacent the blank white mass of the Millenium Dome. Installations throughout South bank's market lanes set off the overhead brick vaulted bridges reasserting layers of history, and Tate modern's industrial skin was tagged by giant sized art murals hinting possibly to graffiti's place within art. These small gestures made one reassess ones surroundings, dwell for longer on the quality of space and the uniqueness of the setting.

From an architectural perspective we discovered a broad range from the historical to the contemporary chic, from the quietly inspirational to the oddly overdone (read London's preoccupation with the 'glazed façade'). But it was the shared dialogue and unexpected happenings which occurred along two excellent architectural tours by local architects – Ken Allinson and Phil Griffin that provided greater depth and understanding. Both tour guides had an incredible knowledge of history and politics, which brought awareness to the machinations behind the new and at times questionable developments within the city centre. Kens charming street side chalk drawings on the history of the city, I am sure are still dotted throughout London



We tracked the pause and thrust of Rogers and Fosters buildings as they architecturally waltzed across the city. A revelatory 'a-ha' was drawn when we stumbled across the Lloyds building with its C20th architecture set directly against the C19th Leadenhall Markets glazed arcade. And I believe all were quite impressed by the temporary architectural pod found at the forecourt of the Architectural Association – built by students as a code for a new direction in construction and form.

These talks revealed the old, the new and the remarkable in between, such as Foster's subtly delicate glazed roof to the British Museum sewing together historical and contemporary edifice. They raised metaphysical questions such as '...how does it feel to be in this space?'- particularly the contrast between the recently completed DCM law courts and the nearby John Ryland's University of Manchester library. The law courts was undisputedly highly refined architecture yet its atmosphere for the general populace was trumped by the spatial sequencing found in the old, new and in-between of the library – imbuing a sense of awe, delight and personal intimacy.

Finally, it was the visit to the architectural offices that promoted great discussion amongst our group. Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid offices pulled many designers – students and architects alike. But it was the smaller offices – Chipperfield or Carmody Groarke whose concern for each and every project as an evolution in process which drew great esteem. For young architects it was encouraging to see a small office such as Carmody Groarke find high acclaim through projects mainly attributed to architectural competitions of an international kind. These offices were not slick or expensive – they were makeshift, intimate and unique – spaces which provided the right kind of inspiration for formidable design.

For me, the tour was a great opportunity to discover, listen and contribute in the discussion of architecture – be it from a historical, political, social or ideological departure. It underlined the great importance of the unexpected and the impromptu, within an urban and architectural context and it reaffirmed that fine architecture isn't just the domain of the well established or the iconic firms. I have always believed that the best creative work is borne out of struggle, whether ideological, emotional or financial, and the younger architectural firms we visited proved just that.

We are very fortunate to have associations such as AIA, Dulux and Virgin Atlantic who foster this level of exploration and learning. I truly believe this tour to be an incredible opportunity for future young architects wherever it may lead them. And I thank our small team for such an enjoyable experience in London.

