

DULUX STUDY TOUR 2010

TOUR REPORT

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From left to right,
Michael McPherson
David Sutherland
Jo Hurley
Mark Berlangieri
Tom Ferguson

INTRODUCTION

I consider it an honour to have been chosen as one of the five recipients of the RAIA 2010 Dulux Study Tour. I believe the tour, still in the relative infancy of its third year, provides an enormous opportunity for young Australian architects.

In preparing the entry (Fig 1), it was an opportunity to reflect on my career to date, assembling and presenting projects from 4 years of private practice at TFAD Pty Ltd, 6 years of work at Cracknell Lonergan Architects and 15 years of student, unbuilt, experimental and competition design proposals.

In going on the tour it was a opportunity to meet renowned and inspirational architects, some of whom I had followed since university, and see buildings and places I may not have otherwise had the chance to see. It was also a chance to get to know the others on the tour, architects of my own age and experience, and plant the seeds of a new network of friends and colleagues that I feel will develop well over time.

In returning from the tour, it was an opportunity to look forward and contemplate the direction of my career using the tour as inspiration to aim for extension in skills, ability and quality of practice.

In preparing this report I have drawn out some of the more impressionable moments of the tour. I have attempted to make the report as interactive as possible, and you will find it incorporates hyperlinks to photos, videos, maps and routes followed during the 12 or so days from 29th May to 9th June 2010.

I will remember the Dulux Study Tour as a high point in the early stages of my career, and would highly encourage any eligible architect reading this to enter.

The links below are to customised Google Maps of London, Paris and Barcelona showing routes walked, photos and videos taken during the course of the tour. Some photos are further linked through to the TFAD flickr site with a selection of photos of the whole tour. Some of the photos are also hyperlinked throughout this report. Additional Links to Flickr can be found at the end of the report.

[DST London](#)

[DST Paris](#)

[DST Barcelona](#)

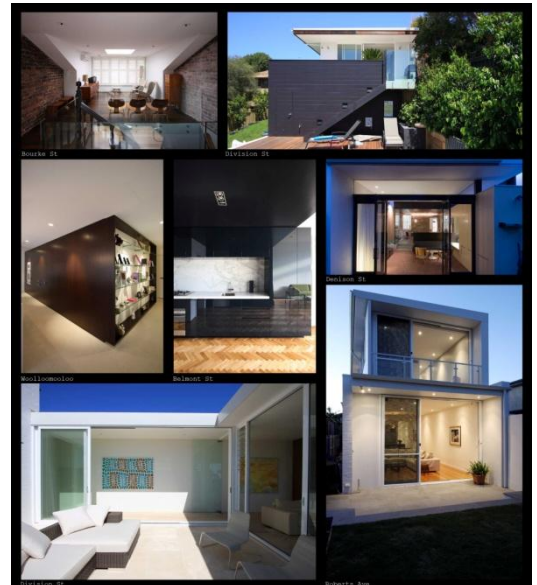


Figure 1

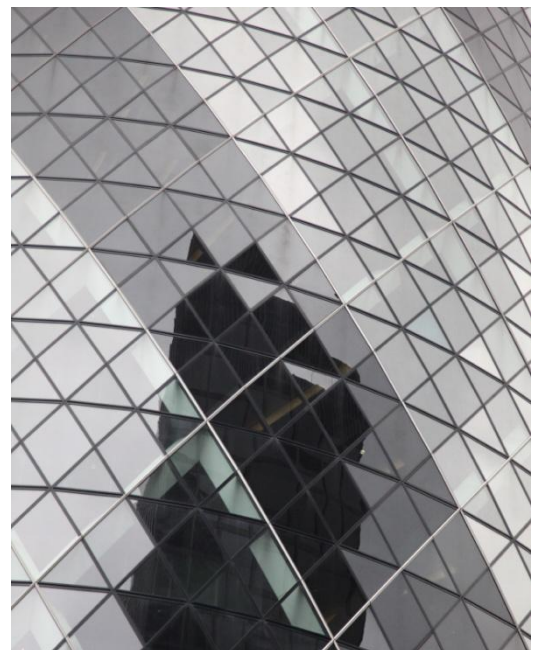


Figure 2

WALKING

A great part of the tour was the opportunity to walk parts of the city, experiencing it in both a planned and unplanned way. In day to day life we often focus on the destination, getting to places as quickly as possible in order to complete the tasks of day to day life. Walking creates more of a focus on the process of getting from A to B, allowing the city to unfold and stitch together.

The first official day of the tour saw us embark upon a 12km walking tour (Fig 4) of London led by Ken Allinson, ex Archigram member and author of *London's Contemporary Architecture + : a map-based guide*. The tour focussed on areas around Tottenham Court Road and the financial district and finished up at the London Eye for a bird's eye view of the streets we had just traversed.



Figure 3

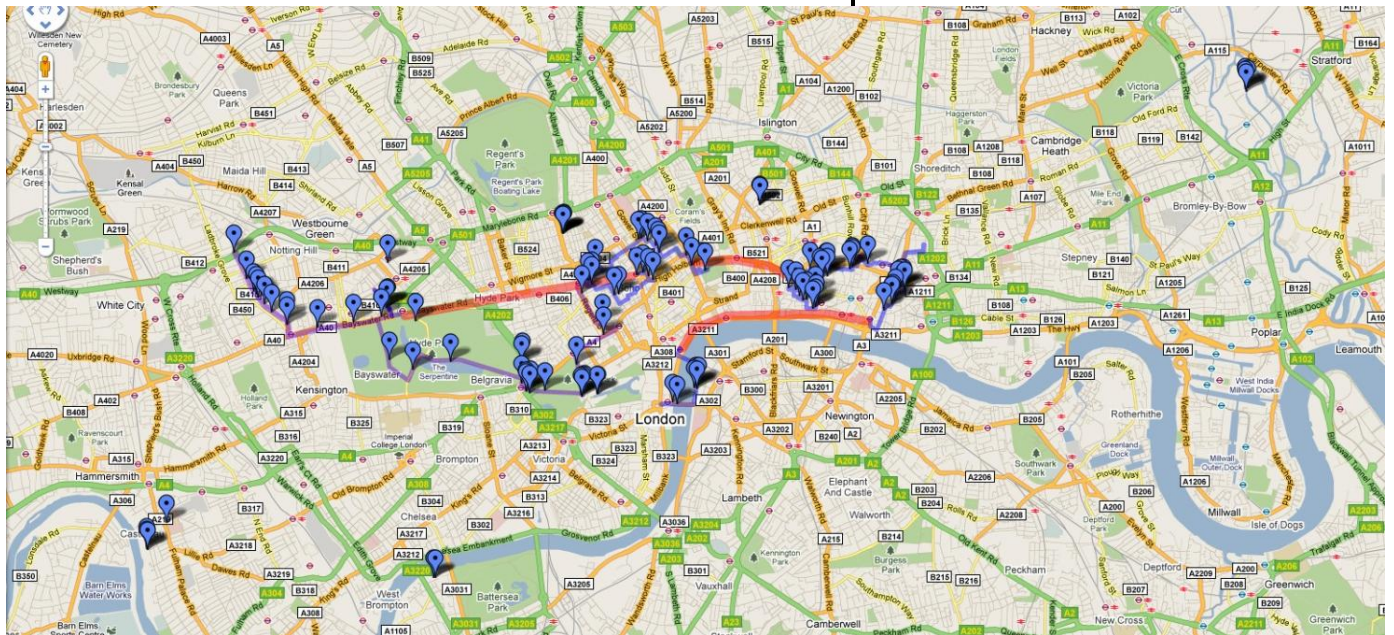


Figure 4

The tour was illuminating in more ways than one. Apart from providing valuable insight into the development and characteristics of specific buildings viewed on the tour, he also gave us a broader understanding of the historical development of the city itself, giving each building at once a social, historical and geographical place in the city. About half an hour into the tour, on the corner of Saint Giles High St and Tin Pan Alley, Ken stopped us and [crouched down on the pavement](#) with a piece of chalk to tell us the story of the city. In the space of 10 minutes and with only a dozen or so significant points, he described how the city had developed, influenced by politics, religion, industry and geography [i.e. the Thames]. For me the talk provided the ability to place myself within the city, something I had been unable to do in four previous visits to the city.

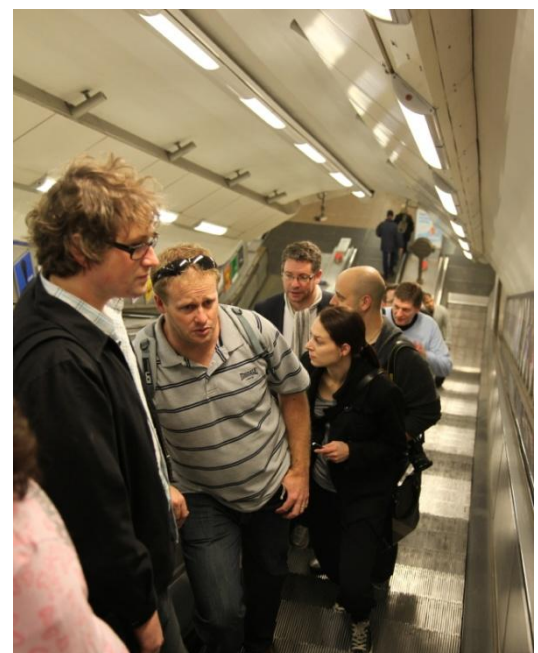


Figure 5

The remainder of the walk followed the same pattern; meandering through the streets of London, diving into the underground for a dash across town, and a pause every now and again so Ken could whip out the chalk and diagrammatically describe a building whether it be [Lloyds of London](#) by Richard Rogers or the development of the [British Museum](#) most recently renovated by Foster Partners (Fig 3).

The experience was repeated in Paris when Ivan del Ama [guided us on a tour of Paris Rive Gauche](#), the west bank of the city on the eastern side of the city centre. The Paris city centre is currently an area 9km x 10km populated by 2 million people, however it hasn't always been this size. The limits of the city centre have expanded in a series of steps over time as population grew, and this expansion is the core reason for the development of areas like Rive Gauche and the [Bibliothèque Nationale](#) (Fig 6). Each time the city expanded it would swallow large industrial sites which had formerly sat just outside the city limits. Once incorporated into the city, these sites became too valuable to remain industrial and as such were redeveloped.

In the case of Paris Rive Gauche, it was large expanses of railway tracks and post war warehousing east of Austerlitz Station that 10 years ago became the subject of a collaborative development proposal that is still being completed today. The site as a whole was been developed by a government owned company that has created a massive structural concrete deck over the site spanning the railway lines. Each individual site within the master plan has then been sold to private companies for development.

The area covered in the walking tour is significant in the development of Paris for a number of reasons. Firstly, the [structural concrete deck](#) (Fig 7) over the railway lines establishes a ground plane that is 7m above the surrounding city area, which establishes a heightened transition as you move from old city through to new. Secondly, the planning for each individual site has been determined only by floor space and height controls, with things like building setbacks, facade articulation, materials and bulk and scale entirely up to the architect. And finally, the large majority of buildings have been designed by young architectural firms, some with no previous experience designing that size or type of building. As a result the buildings are more adventurous than you might expect for a speculative development site, and their [distribution of bulk](#) creates a fascinating overlay on the more traditional street grid pattern by providing site lines across and above the rectilinear grid. On many sites it is almost as if the traditional 6 storey nil setback Parisian city block has been broken apart and reassembled as a twelve storey structure with no additional floor space (Fig 8).



Figure 6



Figure 7

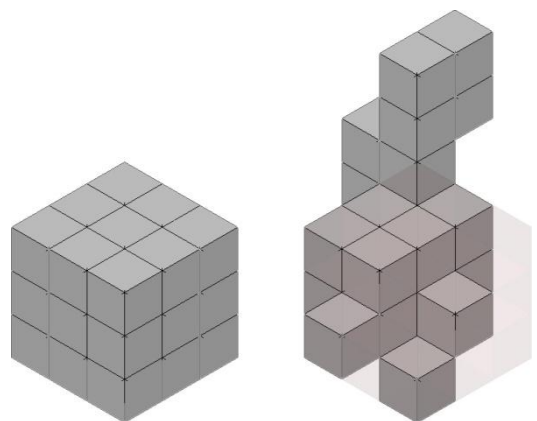


Figure 8

In an example of the chance and surprise possible when walking through a city, a short diversion on the Paris walking tour took us past [Le Corbusier's Arnee Du Salut building](#) – the first example of his work in Paris and a fine example of his 'all in one' building type including shops, apartments and a school.

In Barcelona, the walk was self guided as part of a free non-tour day, but it had a similar rigour and revealed some fascinating buildings, particularly Herzog and de Meuron's [Edifici Forum](#) (Fig 9) located on the coast 5km west of the city centre in an area that has been the subject of substantial urban regeneration in the last 10 years. The building itself is a giant blue triangular form hovering with massive cantilevers over an undulating ground plane.

The building has the remarkable ability to distort perception, particularly when view from beneath, as the combination of textures, shapes, solids and voids affect the eye's ability to distinguish between two and three dimensions. The experience was enhanced by the encounter taking place on a deserted rainy Sunday when the building was in an [obvious state of disrepair](#) and closed for renovations. In a way, the slightly post apocalyptic setting enhanced the experience of the building, which has quite an alien character.

The opportunity to have a couple of days free to explore the cities was a great compliment to the rest of the tour, enabling the kind of unplanned surprise that is a great part of travel.

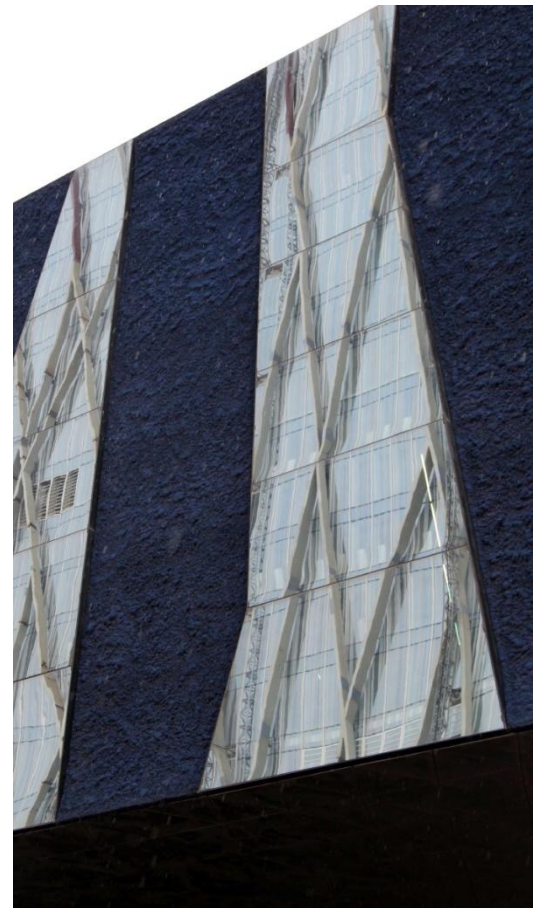


Figure 9

PRACTICE + PLACE

As part of the tour we visited 12 architectural practices over 10 days in 3 cities. The practices ranged from the very small such as Carmody Groarke with 3 staff, to very large such as Foster & Partners with over 1000 staff and offices all over the world (Fig. 10). There were many great aspects of the practice visits, including the chance to see their offices, the way they worked and current and recent projects, but perhaps the best part of the tour was the chance to visit buildings designed by the practice with a representative from the practice.

The first of the Practice + Place tours was through Carmody Groarke, a small practice with an office on Tin Pan Alley bordering Covent Garden and Soho. The office is probably most well renowned for winning the competition to design a [memorial](#) for the 2005 London bombings, something they won by proposing a solution that was undefined at the time of entry, and that would only be designed through a significant process of consultation and interaction with both the relatives of those killed in the bombings and the metal workers who would forge the high chromium stainless steel pillars. This collaborative approach was illustrated by the description of three projects, including the memorial, their installation for Brioni suits in Milan where they collaborated with the Brioni tailors and the [Bistrotheque pop-up restaurant](#) on the roof of the Stratford Westfield carpark, where they involved the scaffolders who would erect the giant temporary dining hall. In each instance, the design process was allowed to be moulded by the interaction of the interested and significant parties, and this is a process I found particular affinity with.

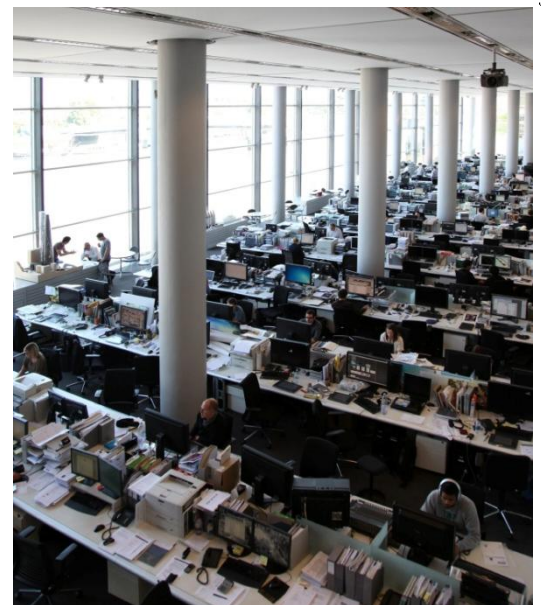


Figure 10

On the day following the practice visit we met [Lewis Kinnear](#) from Carmody Groarke at the site of the bombing [London bombing memorial](#) in Hyde Park (Fig 12). Lewis described how the site had been chosen to mark the end of one the desire line paths that crisscross the park (Fig 11), and we were able to see up close both the form of the monument as a whole and the individual character of each pillar. This combination of the whole and individual is something that characterises all of Carmody Groarke's work.



Figure 11

Another example of practice + place in London was the visit to the Rogers Stirk Harbour office along with a tour of their nearby [Stirling Prize winning Maggie's Centre](#). The latter is a beautiful pavilion like structure in the grounds of Charing Cross Hospital, where project Architect Will Wimshurst described the design as a series of rooms gathered around a central kitchen and covered by a floating roof plane. Like all Maggie's centres, the building is a caring centre for anyone affected by Cancer, and it was in full use when we made our visit. It was great to see how well the building performed to its intended function, with people gathered and talking around the kitchen bench, at the large central table or in the side rooms (Fig 13). From one quick visit it was clear that this building would be a prime candidate for the new award RIBA are planning for their national architecture awards, one that focuses on how well a building is loved and used at least five years after occupation.

Back at the offices of RSH, Denis Austin gave us a tour of the whole building; a [Roger's designed structure on the Thames in Hammersmith](#) (Fig 14). It was clear that the office was one of collaboration with a relaxed yet industrious vibe, and it was interesting to hear that Rogers himself did very little drawing, preferring to conduct his team the design using words and tools of instruction. A final surprise that accompanied the visit to RSH was a chance to meet [Kevin McCloud](#) of Grand Designs fame. We sat and chatted with Kevin for an hour or so over coffee at The River Cafe next to the RSH offices, covering topics as diverse as freedom of architectural expression in the context of local planning laws and Kevin's 'star in a reasonably priced car' lap on the TV show top gear.



Figure 12

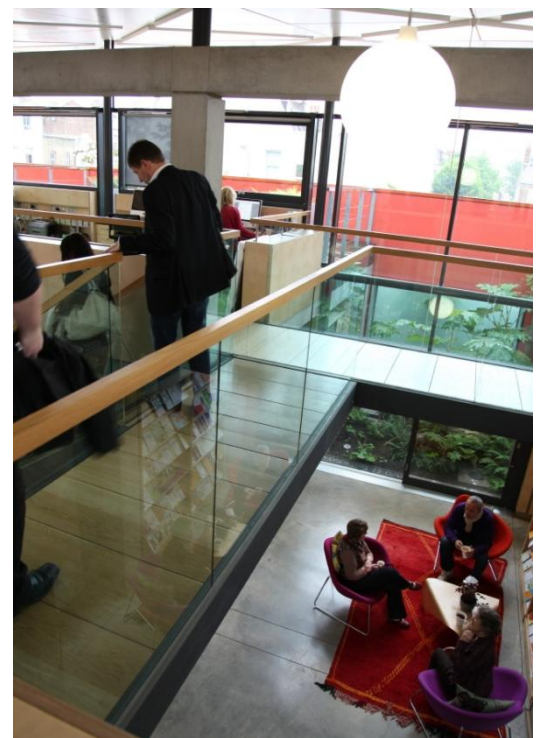


Figure 13



Figure 14

Barcelona was a wealth of practice + place experience, with visits to both offices and recent projects of Llongueras Clotet, Carlos Ferrater's Office of Architecture Barcelona, EMBT and Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura.

Carlos Ferrater's son Borja gave us an excellent presentation of the practices work, in an office space decorated with beautiful and intricate models of their work (Figs 15, 16), and the next morning, we received a guided tour of the [ROCA Barcelona showroom](#), a state of the art facility designed by Borja housing a examples of the ROCA brand of sanitary ware. The building is located in a very public place but has been made very private yet light by the use of a [facade](#) composed of 10cm wide pieces of glass laminated together and sitting perpendicular to the length of the building.



Figure 15

On the same day, we travelled out of the city to the [office of Ricardo Bofill](#) (Figs 17, 18), housed in a conglomerate of converted wheat silos. The offices were truly amazing; a labyrinthine series of grand and intimate spaces with a Piranesian sense to the whole structure. Following the visit to the office we were directed to the new [W Hotel](#) on the bay, a glass tower designed by Bofill with interiors by his wife, for a guided tour culminating in a tour completing glass of champagne at the [bar](#).

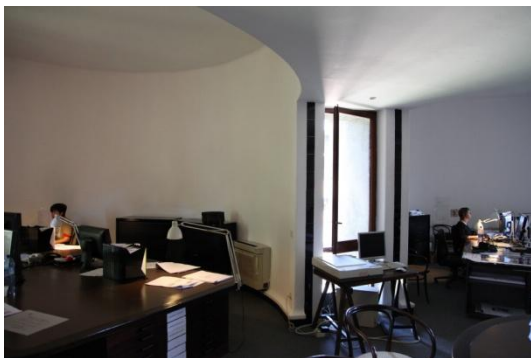


Figure 17



Figure 16

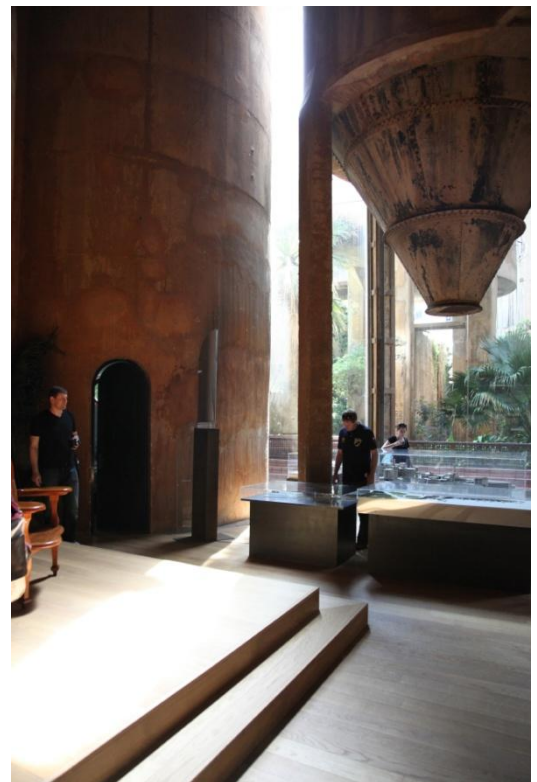


Figure 18

SOCIAL + PROFESSIONAL

Apart from the professional and social aspects of meeting all the foreign architects that we visited, one of the things I enjoyed most was the interaction with the other tour members, from the other architects to the representatives from Dulux and the Institute of Architects. We spent a considerable amount of time with each other, from the moment we met at Sydney Airport to the last breakfast in Barcelona, and it was a great opportunity to get to know each other. In day to day practice we probably all have the tendency to keep our heads down and work hard, and it was good to reflect upon that with others of the same age and level of experience.

While not being strictly architectural components of the tour, the meals we shared thanks to the generosity of Dulux were both a great chance to reflect on the day and to experience the social character of the cities we were in. Some memorable meals include dinners at [Atelier Maitre Albert](#) in Paris, [Princi](#) in Soho and [Ciudad Condal](#) in Barcelona.

We were also lucky enough to be received by the Royal Institute of British Architects in an experience that straddled social and professional spheres. A tour of their [amazing Art Deco headquarters](#) on Portland Place was followed the next day by a cocktail reception on their roof terrace. The interior of the building is covered with intricate carvings, etchings and friezes (Fig 21) and cocktail party was an elegant occasion (Fig 22) and a chance to meet our British compatriots and discuss common ground.

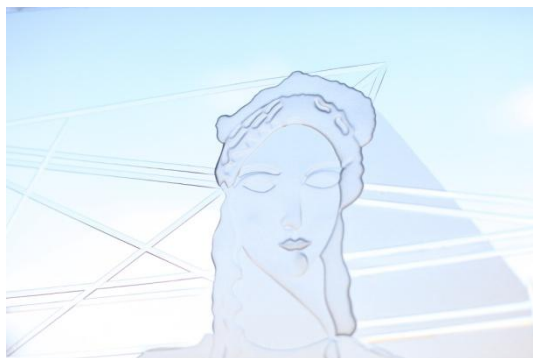


Figure 21



Figure 19



Figure 20

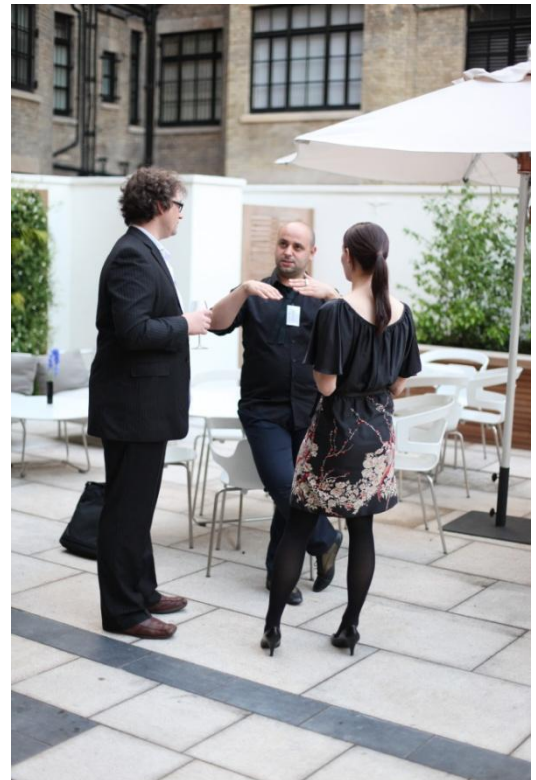


Figure 22

THE JAWDROPPER

Finally, every journey has a moment that you recount when asked on your return what the best part of the trip was. For me, that was walking into the main nave at the [Sagrada Familia](#) in Barcelona. It was an awe inspiring moment as my eye was drawn 45m up into the loftiest recesses of the church (Fig 22).



Figure 23

We were lucky enough through a connection with one of the last years study tour winners to have a tour guided by [Marta Miralpeix](#), an architect working in the onsite office. We were offered fairly unrestricted access, taking a route across the floor of the main nave, up via the builders lifts and scaffold to the very [roof](#) of the church. We got a close up view of the [precast mosaic tiled spires](#), the form work and workers, the [making of the 1:1 plaster models](#) and the model workshop, and all felt very privileged to be in such close proximity to such an icon of modern architecture.



Figure 25

Additional Links

[Tour Photos - Best Of](#)

[Tour Photos - London Walking Tour](#)

[Tour Photos - Paris Walking Tour](#)



Figure 24



Figure 26