



2014 Dulux Study Tour Report

ben milbourne

Firstly I would like to sincerely thank both Dulux and the Australian Institute of Architects for this wonderful and transformative experience. The 2014 Dulux Study Tour has already started to positively influence both my creative practice and business strategies. The experience provided invaluable insight into how some of the best architectural practitioners in the world approach issues that are highly relevant to the issues that I face in Melbourne and within my own practice. I am sure that the lessons learned and key observations made during the tour and in reflection on it, will continue to benefit both myself, and I hope through my interaction with students and other architects the broader community at large.

I have structured this report into three sections, the first 'Reflections' describes a series of more general reflections on the 2014 Dulux Study Tour given the benefit of several weeks to process the information and experiences of the tour. The second section 'Publications' comprises two articles that I have recently written for the ArchitectureAU website elaborating on a couple of key issues observed during the tour. The third section 'Impressions' is a brief photo essay documenting key moments of the tour from my perspective.

I have and will continue to unconditionally recommend the Dulux Study Tour to other young architects. The tour was enlightening, eye-opening and inspirational - I hope that others continue to have the opportunity to experience it for many years to come.

With thanks,

Ben Milbourne

Reflections

With the necessarily condensed program, the 2014 Dulux Study Tour was an extremely intense experience, one that left little time for reflection while experiencing it. However now that I have had several weeks to de-compress and to process the experiences and information gathered during the tour I have prepared the following reflections on the experience.

The highlight of the tour for me was a combination of seeing in person some of the most influential buildings of the twentieth century that I had studied during my architectural education, along with the opportunity to meet with some of the practitioners who are producing what are bound to be the most influential buildings of the twenty-first century, that will be studied by future architecture students.

While we did have the opportunity to visit a wide range of inspirational projects, the most informative and educational aspect of the Dulux Study Tour was the opportunity to meet with some of the most innovative architects in the world and to speak to them honestly and frankly about their practices; how they got to where they are, where they see themselves going and how they structure and manage their business. The generosity and openness of the architects that we had the opportunity to meet was marvelous and provided us all with invaluable insight into both the business and art of architecture. While there were a very broad range of practices types at very different stages in their creative and business development, without exception all provided an insight or range of insights into how I can grow my professional and creative practice.

I greatly enjoyed visiting all three cities, however found the depth and breadth of public engagement with architecture in Chicago particularly impressive. Chicago is an amazing architectural town, with an astonishing depth and breadth of world class buildings and is host to some of the most influential buildings and practitioners of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; from Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe to Jeanne Gang.

I greatly enjoyed visiting some of the iconic buildings that I had studied during my architectural education; such as the Farnsworth House, Crowne Hall at IIT, the Marina City Towers and a range of Frank Lloyd Wright houses and Unity Temple in Oak Park. It was also enlightening to learn of the revitalization program implemented within the central city over the last 20 years, including development of Millennium Park over a disused rail interchange, and the effect that this has had in the reactivation of the central 'loop' district.

Perhaps the most impressive quality of Chicago, is the place that architecture and urban design has the within the conciseness of the city – the famous buildings that the city hosts and the architects that designed them are known and celebrated by Chicagoans. Like many cities Chicago has a robust architectural discourse within the profession, however the city also hosts the Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) whose mission is to engage the public, not just architects in a discussion on the future of the city and to communicate the value of design. Established in 1966 the CAF operates a broad range of programs and in 2013 hosted a total audience in excess of half a million people with an operating budget of US\$17million, generated through donations and ticket sales. Promoted as the 'No. 1 thing to do in Chicago' (US News & World Report), the CAF runs daily tours throughout the city, by rail, foot and boat along the city's river system. The tours cover the early development of the city, through the gilded age to the most recent additions to the urban fabric, offering the general public insight into not only how the city arrived at its current form, but also the role of architects in shaping it.

At a time when business is increasingly interested in design thinking, designers and architects need to demonstrate the value of design not only as a methodology for decision making but also in delivering value to end products and environments. In order to do so we need to engage the broader public in a discussion of the value of what we do. Australia has some excellent programs for engaging the public with Architecture, in particular, the annual Open House program demonstrates that the public does have an interest in the built environment. However we as a profession need to pursue far greater & deeper engagement with the public to demonstrate the value of good design, on a more than annual basis. Chicago's multi-faceted approach, and rich history of public engagement demonstrates the way forward.

In terms of the practices that we had the opportunity to meet the highlights for me were Diller Scofidio + Renfro, SHoP and Family NY. Meeting with the lead architect for the High Line project at DS+R and then having the guided tour with Dustin Tobias was excellent given

the insight into the development of the project that someone with an intimate knowledge of its development was able to provide. I had the opportunity to hear one of SHoP's directors speak in Melbourne last year so was somewhat familiar with SHoP's work and approach and I had been particularly looking forward to this practice visit and was not disappointed. The breadth and quality of the work that they have under development was extremely impressive, however the real value of the practice visit was the discussion around their innovative approach to the practice and business of architecture, specifically how they evolved from a small practice to an increasingly large one and how they are expanding beyond conventional architectural services to undertake an expanded role in the delivery of projects. Again, meeting with one of the projects architects, Cathy Jones, afterwards in an informal setting to discuss the development and delivery of one of their projects was also a highlight. Family NY were an unexpected surprise for me, a practice that I was not familiar with yet are producing great work with extremely innovative procurement methods. Again it was the discussions around the business and practice of architecture that was most enlightening, rather than discussions about the work itself.

Reflecting of the key professional observations made during the tour, a common thread among the many inspirational practitioners that we had the opportunity to meet was their clear articulation of what they offered as a business and the value of this to their clients and the broader community. While the different practices that we meet with defined their offer in very different ways; from focusing on particular building types, through to a defined market section or innovation in their role in the process of building construction, they all were very clearly able to articulate what they offer that is unique and its value. Now that I have returned to Australia, I am critically examining our business in response to this insight and looking to refocus our practice to clearly articulate the value of what we do for our clients and the community.

One of the key differences I observed between Australian and American architectural cultures is in the procurement of buildings within the public domain. In Australia almost all public buildings (with the notable exception of MONA and a few others) are funded by the different levels of government. While US still has publically funded and procured buildings, many buildings in the public domain are privately funded, via philanthropic donors, or in some cases via crowd-funding, as is the case with Family NY's Plus Pool project for the Hudson River. This difference in the mode of procurement has dramatic impacts in-terms of design of these buildings. The client in these scenarios is often an individual, leading to clear decision making processes, as opposed to 'design by committee' that can plague publically funded projects. Also, and perhaps more importantly, as public funding bodies become increasingly risk adverse, arguably stifling design innovation, private funded projects, at least in the US, are delivering the most innovative and transformative outcomes, such as the Diller Scofidio + Renfro/Field Operations' Highline project that has transformed the SOHO district in New York City.

I would unconditionally recommend the Dulux Study Tour Experience to any young architect, the tour was enlightening, eye-opening and inspirational. The experience provided invaluable insight into how some of the best architectural practitioners in the world approach issues that are highly relevant to the issues that I face in Melbourne and within my own practice. I anticipate that these experiences will continue to inform and positively influence my practice form many years to come.



Chicago Architecture Foundation boat cruise on the Chicago River



Chicago Architecture foundation store front on Michigan Ave.



Bertrand Goldberg's River Apartments from the CAF boat cruise



Looking back to Chicago from the mouth of the Chicago River.



Some results of the CAF Lego Architecture Workshop

Publications

Tourism by Design

Chicago is a great architectural town, birthplace of the American Skyscraper and home to some of the most influential architects and architecture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. On the first leg of the 2014 *Dulux* Study Tour it is perhaps not surprising to learn that architecture has a central place in the psyche of this most American of cities. Daniel Burnham, Luis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright and more recently Jeanie Gang are public figures, whose influence in shaping the city is broadly known and recognised. It is true that Chicago has a very rich architectural heritage, but so do many other cities, how is it that this city has engaged the public in an active discussion about the importance of architecture and the urban realm?

Julienne Wolf, design principal with Studio Gang, argues that the importance of architecture to Chicagoan identity is a function of geography: "The flatness of the prairie defines Chicago, with very few geographic features the city itself takes the on the role of landscape, its buildings are its landmarks – urban mountains, that you use to orient yourself within the city."

Like many cities Chicago has a robust architectural discourse within the profession, via the Chicago chapter of the AIA and other institutions. However the city also hosts the Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) whose mission is to engage the public, not just architects in a discussion on the future of the city and to communicate the value of design. According to the CAF website:

The Chicago Architecture Foundation is the leading organization devoted to celebrating and promoting Chicago as a centre of architectural innovation. As Chicago's forum for the exchange of ideas on urban design, CAF inspires people to participate in the building of vibrant communities and to demand the highest standard in urban design. CAF awakens young people to achieve their potential through the discovery of architecture, engineering, and design.

Established in 1966 the CAF operates a broad range of programs and in 2013 hosted a total audience in excess of half a million people with an operating budget of US\$17million, generated through donations and ticket sales. Promoted as the 'No. 1 thing to do in Chicago' (US News & World Report), the CAF runs daily tours throughout the city, by rail, foot and boat along the city's river system. The most popular tours, the river cruise run every 30mins, consistently selling out with patronage in the hundreds. Staffed by docents (volunteers) who conduct tours and interpret the buildings in Chicago's downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods. The volunteers come from all walks of life, many with little or no previous formal education on the subject of architecture. The tours cover the early development of the city, through the gilded age to the most recent additions to the urban fabric, offering the general public insight into not only how the city arrived at its current form, but also the role of architects in shaping it. Other initiatives include free weekly lectures, exhibitions and a youth education platform, with participation approaching 50 000 students and teachers in programs such as Lego architecture workshops, engaging kids in design culture and thinking.

Other American cities are actively looking to Chicago and the CAF as a model for public outreach. The New York chapter of the AIA has established a program where entries in their annual awards program are exhibited via advertising boards throughout the subway system – getting architecture into the public domain and providing exposure for some of the projects that may not have gained an award in a given year.

At a time when business is increasingly interested in design thinking, designers and architects need to demonstrate the value of design not only as a methodology for decision making but also in delivering value to end products and environments. In order to do so we need to engage the broader public in a discussion of the value of what we do. Australia has some excellent programs for engaging the public with Architecture, in particular, the annual Open House program demonstrates that the public does have an interest in the built environment. However we as a profession need to pursue far greater & deeper engagement with the public to demonstrate the value of good design, on a more than annual basis. Chicago's multi-faceted approach, and rich history of public engagement demonstrates the way forward.

Published 23 Jun 2014, *ArchitectureAU*

<http://architectureau.com/articles/chicago-tourism-by-design/>



The Statue of Liberty, New York City.
photo: Michael Zanadro



View from Diller Scofidio + Renfro's office,
photo: Cherry Williamson



High Line seating detail, as demonstrated by
Ms Jenna Rowe. photo Cherry Williamson



Seating detail of the High Line project.
photo: Cherry Williamson



End of the Line, DS+R's High Line project.
photo Cherry Williamson

Publications

private funds/public projects

The United States has a rich history of philanthropy in relation to civic projects, delivering a broad range of innovative and iconic buildings, such as Carnegie Hall (Andrew Carnegie), New York Public Library (Samuel Tilden) and the United Nations Headquarters (John D. Rockefeller). This tradition is evolving in new and exciting ways with the advent of digital crowd funding, delivering even more direct connections between the public and the initiation, development and delivery of civic projects, opening up new pathways for communities to participate in shaping their environment. However eliminating the link between funding and the public purse, limits some aspects of accountability and does not address other issues manifest in public projects especially those prominently in the public domain concerning access, equity and how to obtain the most benefit for the greatest many.

One of the highlights of the 2014 Dulux Study Tour was an opportunity to visit Diller Scofidio and Renfro's offices in New York, to discuss and visit their High Line project. The High Line project is a 1.6 km linear park built on a section of the previously disused elevated West Side Line, running along the lower west side of Manhattan. Originally built in the 1930's, by the turn of the century the West Side Line had been abandoned for nearly 30 years and was under threat of demolition. In 1999, Friends of the High Line was founded by Joshua David and Robert Hammond, to advocate for the High Line's preservation and reuse as public open space.

In 2003 an open ideas competition received 720 proposals from 36 countries, with the commission eventually being awarded to DS+R in collaboration with James Corner's Field Operations. In November 2005 CSX Transportation donated the structure to the City of New York to be administered by Friends of the High Line as a non-profit conservancy overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park. Friends of the High Line work to raise the essential private funds to support practically all of the park's annual operating budget, and to advocate for the preservation and extension of the High Line at the Hudson Rail Yards, the third and final section of the historic structure. The first section of the High Line opened on June 9, 2009, running from Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street. The second section, which runs between West 20th and West 30th Streets, opened June 8, 2011. The third and final phase will open in the fall of 2014.

According to Mathew Johnston, DS+R's High Line project leader, who has been involved from the competition stage, the project was estimated to generate a net economic benefit to the Chelsea district of US\$200million, with an anticipated construction cost of \$100million. While the final construction cost to date is closer to US\$150million, with Friends of the Highline raising close to US\$40million for construction and ongoing maintenance; the current estimated benefit is US\$900million with a significant legacy and continuing long term economic and social benefits anticipated for the local community and beyond. The High Line has become emblematic of and a key reference project for urban landscapes and catalytic urban renewal internationally.

The High Line project can be seen as the latest iteration of the United States and New York City's rich heritage of philanthropy for civic projects. Perhaps of more interest is the emergence of new project funding approaches catalyzed by the advent of the sharing economy, in particular the use of Crowdfunding for civic projects. Crowdfunding is the collection of finance from backers—the "crowd"—to fund an initiative and usually occurs on Internet platforms and typically involves supporters offered tangible rewards and special experiences in exchange for their pledges. Arguably the most iconic example of this new approach is Family and PlayLab's '+ Pool' proposal for the Hudson River on upper west side of Manhattan, which we were shown during a visit to Family's office in the West Village. The +Pool is a cross shaped floating pool, that can be divided into four parts, with a lane swimming pool, kids area, sports pool and lounge. The most innovative and technically complex aspect of +Pool's design is that it filters river water through the pool's walls. The concentric layers of filtration materials that make up the sides of the pool are designed to remove bacteria, contaminants and odors, delivering safe swimmable water.

The project was launched on Kickstarter in 2011 with an initial funding round delivering US\$41 000 financing the initial design development and testing of the proposed filtration system with water drawn from the Hudson River. The second funding round enabling contributors to purchase a pool tile with their name or personalized message printed on it, raised \$275 000 and is being used to finance construction of a full sized prototype to be floated this year. Dong Ping Wong of Family argues that while the digital platforms may be new, Crowdfunding



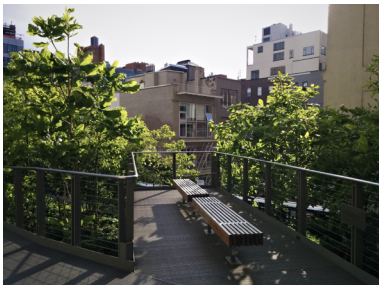
*The Standard Hotel straddling the High Line.
photo Ben Milbourne*



*The Standard Hotel straddling the High Line.
photo Cherry Williamson*



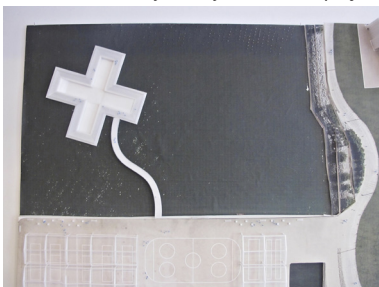
*DST group at DS+R's High Line project.
photo Cherry Williamson*



*Seating Detail of DS+R's High Line project.
photo Ben Milbourne*



*Sample tiles available for Kickstarter patrons
of Family & PlayLab's +Pool project*



*Model of Family & Play Lab's +Pool project.
photo: Bernadette Wilson*

as an approach for funding public projects is not new, simply evolving in response to the new tools available and contemporary interest in the sharing economy. Dong notes that the podium of the Statue of Liberty (itself donated by the people of France to the United States) was funded by a public subscription campaign lead by Joseph Pulitzer's News of the World to the tune of US\$100 000 (\$2.3million in today's money). The paper ran daily updates mentioning donors by name, administered a reward system and emphasized that no donation was too small; all seemingly drawn from the crowd funder's playbook, successfully financing a base for Lady Liberty in 1885. However Dong also notes that while Kickstarter has been enormously successful in delivering public buy-in and getting a highly innovative and technically complex project off the ground, it is unlikely to supply the full level of funding required to deliver it. He mentioned that the project team have had interest from some of the High Line project backers in joining the +Pool board to provide invaluable experience in large scale fund raising and in navigating complex privately funded civic projects through the public approvals process.

However not everyone sees crowdfunding as the cure-all solution for delivering civic projects, Alexandra Lange argues in her essay 'Again Kickstarter Urbanism', that the short attention spans and limited capital raising capacity of crowdfunding models limits its effectiveness for delivering large scale and long term projects without institutional backing. For crowd funding of civic projects to be successful it needs to engage, robustly and transparently, with questions of governance, equity and feasibility. While Crowdfunding is good at surfacing new ideas, those ideas must be tested within the context of strategic planning at the urban scale, and although crowdfunding is often successful in generating initial public interest it should not act as a substitute for broad based participation.

Private funds for public projects, in the US at least, appears to be delivering highly innovative solutions for complex urban problems. While Australia does not have a significant history of philanthropy for civic projects (with some notable exceptions, including David Walsh's exceptional MONA), crowdfunding appears to offer potential for initiating innovative public projects, particularly in Australia's current political environment favoring 'un-solicited proposals' as the preferred means of instigation for projects in the public realm. Leveraging the particular skills of architects: urban speculation, spatial intelligence and experience in navigating the approvals process, crowdfunding offers a means of incubating new ideas in the civic realm - rather than a full funding model. According to Lang 'Social media provides the drum-beat, traditional media the reach' for crowd-funded projects, and it seems that crowd-funding could increasingly be used to provide seed-funds, community buy-in and momentum for innovative civic projects, with large investors and/or the public purse the follow through to deliver them.

*Upcoming publication via ArchitectureAU
<http://architectureau.com/postcards/>*

Impressions

