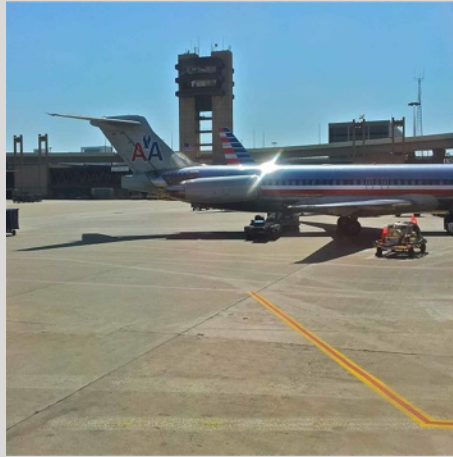


DULUX STUDY TOUR 2014 REPORT MICHAEL ZANARDO

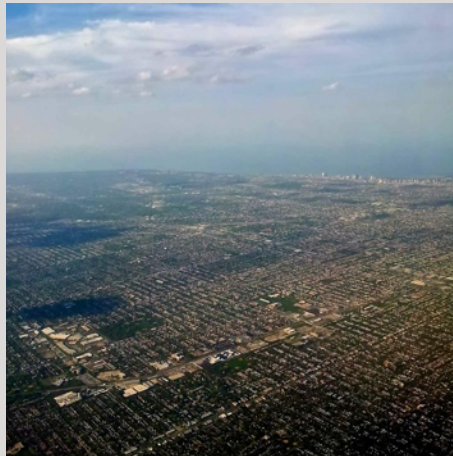
CHICAGO FALLINGWATER NEW YORK

DAY 1

Up early to finish packing. Both excited and anxious at the same time. Long hugs and kisses with family. Off to Sydney airport.



Twenty long solo hours of transit. Transfer in Dallas. Fingerprints and retina scans. Acres of concrete. Ten gallon hats.



Flying in over Chicago. An endless square grid densifying from farmland into metropolis. Taking measures across the American landscape.



Taxi from the airport. Chicago is big. Huge. Impressive buildings. Grand boulevards. Arrive at the Public Hotel. Meet up with the crew and settle in. An epic first day.

DAY 2



Coffee. Good strong coffee.



Morning rendezvous for exploratory walk along the lake edge and through the central business district.



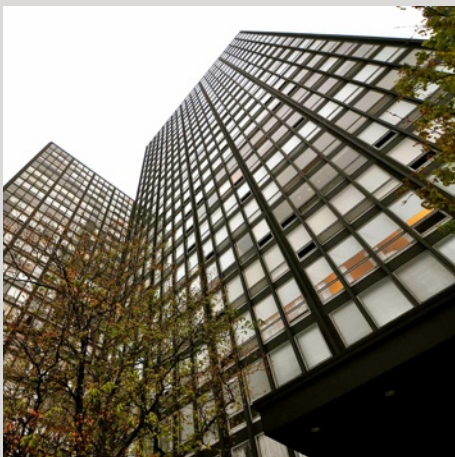
The Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise is a marvellous introduction to the city from the water. A history of place told through built form. Beginnings as a rural outpost on Lake Michigan. Railroads and commerce. Crossroads between East and West. The Great Fire. The birth of the skyscraper. Burnham and Sullivan. All the icons. Willis, Trump, Hancock. And all the rest. Housing is ever-present. The audacity of Lake Point Tower and Goldberg's vision for Marina City are the standouts for me.



A quick bite to eat and we are whisked away to the Farnsworth House. Our tour guide Larry is the man. By the time we reach Plano, Illinois we have the low down on Mies and his client.



The house is set away from the street but a motorway flies past. White floating planes set in a lush verdant clearing. It has been recently damaged by flood and the eastern end is under scaffold. The purity is destroyed but it is the masterpiece we know nonetheless. Larry lays down the backstory and describes every detail. I am not sure how to feel about it. The house is fascinating, but it is not an 'easy' place to be. Is less more? Our thoughts make for good conversation fuel on the return trip.



Larry swings us past 860-880 Lake Shore Drive. More Mies. Fraternal twin towers glistening in the afternoon rain. Buildings made of rigour and logic.



Night time trip to the John Hancock Centre. The sun sets quickly over the Windy City. Lines of streetlights merge to a single point on the horizon. The courageous 'Tilt' out over the edge and look down. Not me.

DAY 3

Six hours sleep and we are off again.



The Chicago Architecture Foundation is downstairs from our first practice visit. The foyer has a city model stretched over the floor. Coloured lights pick out buildings depicting the evolution of the city over time. We make out where we have been and where we might go next.

Upstairs we meet Doug, Paula and Jason of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. We are ushered into a boardroom and introduced to the SOM oeuvre. Multidisciplinary, international, corporate. Skyscrapers and urban planning. Barangaroo in Sydney. The World Trade Centre reconstruction in New York.



Discussion is less formal when we go for a walk. Across Michigan Avenue, Millenium Park is equivalent in size to about fifty city blocks. Careful landscape treatment of the public domain makes for very human spaces. The scale of Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate is compelling, but Jaume Plensa's Crown Fountain is a richer artefact for its textures and the sound of kids at play.



Our next stop is the Monadnock building. Love at first sight. Sixteen relentless storeys of brickwork detailed to appear supple and soft. Aluminium interiors. We later learn it is the tallest load-bearing masonry external wall ever constructed.





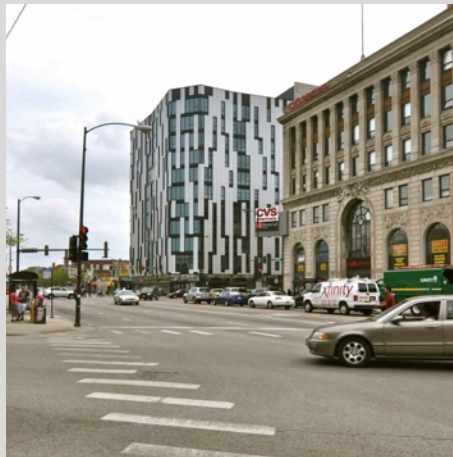
PORT Architecture + Urbanism is on the ninth floor. Andrew is a generous host and openly shares his professional experiences with us. Speculative proposals. Competition wins threatening to be realised. We could certainly relate to some of the challenges of small practice. Balancing work and teaching. Finding a niche. Getting the message out there loud and clear. You could see the sheer hard work. It was motivating to meet a talented young guy making it happen for himself.



Wheeler Kearns Architects are across the road in the Fisher Building. Dan gives us a warm welcome. His practice is medium size, well-established, and top heavy with experienced architects. I am impressed with the responsibility he feels towards his staff. Commissions are diverse in type and scale. High end jobs enable more interesting 'robin hood' projects for not-for-profits. The approach is clearly conscientious and considered. Maybe too conservative? 'Evolutionary rather than revolutionary' he says. Hand-drafted drawings and balsa models. He is Professor at UIC. 'Architects need to be educators.' We walk down Dearborn Street to Mies' Federal Centre. Dan regales us with architectural anecdotes and words of wisdom under the Calder sculpture.



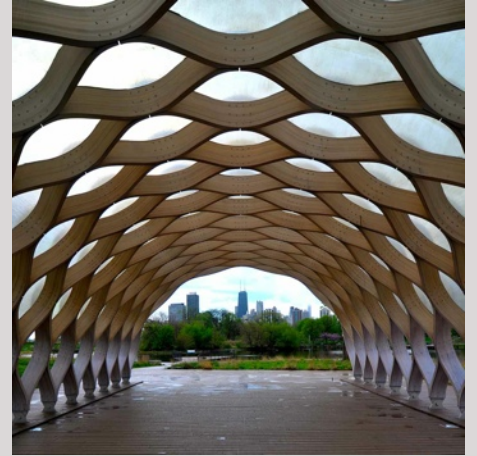
Beneath the 'L'. Trains in the sky encircle the Chicago downtown. Time to get into taxis. We head northwest out of The Loop to see our next office.



A Wheeler Kearns project greets us as we arrive. Studio Gang is in a concrete loft above a shoe shop. Jeanne is out. Juliane gives us the tour. The office is large with lots of people elbow to elbow at computers. The work is premised on lucid strategy, strong forms and material exploration. Sustainability is key. A lot of competitions. Many successful. OMA is an obvious influence. Sorry, no photos allowed.

DAY 4

Opinions over dinner last night were split. Was Studio Gang all that? I am keen to see their work up close and personal. A solitary early morning expedition across the baseball fields to see the Lincoln Park Zoo Pavilion. The project is more than the structure. A boardwalk circumnavigates the pond. Grey-green landscape reflects off the water. The shelter is made from complex plywood elements pinned simply together. Its siting in the landscape is awkward, but approaching from the rear, the arch frames the city.



Our first port of call today is John Ronan Architects. Every project the office has done is pinned on the wall. Models flood the desks. John gets stuck straight into it. The office has been going fifteen years. We talk procurement. We talk practice. We talk about making a name for yourself.

John's Poetry Foundation is five blocks away. We get a personal tour. A seductive screen to the street. A prolonged journey through the courtyard. Complex and beautifully proportioned volumes make modest spaces seem a lot larger. Humble materials are elevated. Attention to detail. We all think the building is superb.



John walks us across to Krueck + Sexton. Tom greets us in the meeting room. The firm has been going thirty years. It started out with houses. Now it delivers major government commissions. They never fell for post-modernism. It has always been about the modern project. 'Great buildings take the material of the time and push it as far as it can go' he says. Tom shares the story of renovating S.R. Crown Hall at IIT. A change in glazing thickness to meet current codes means nine months spent arguing a single mullion detail. The 'Mies Police' are finally satisfied. That's commitment.



We meet Eugene and Andreas at the Spertus Institute. The historic streetscape is broken by a unapologetically modern facade. An ingenious pivoting connection detail allows the glazing to fracture and lean out over Michigan Avenue.



After lunch, it is time to up the scale with a visit to Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill. We ascend to the twenty-third floor of the classic SOM building 111 West Monroe. John does towers. Big towers. 'Super-tall' towers. They designed the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. They are doing the kilometre tall Kingdom Tower in Jeddah. 'How much higher can you go?' we ask. 'The sky is the limit' John says. Technology, materials and some serious engineering.



Next is Strawn Sierralta. A partners-in-life-and-business duo. Karla teaches full time at IIT. Brian consults in design thinking and strategy. Together they maintain a small-scale architectural practice. Their home and office is seventy square metres in the Marina Towers. The unit renovation is Chicago chic. Our young group feels many parallels as we swap stories on the petal-shaped balconies.



We get to experience the building from bottom to top. Foyers, corridors, lifts. The penthouse laundromat leads out to the communal roof top. It's cold and it is starting to rain but it doesn't matter. Three hundred and sixty degree panoramic views allow us to soak in the city.



Brian and Karla are also co-presidents of the Chicago Architectural Club. They have organised for us to speak. It is the first time we have got to see each others work too. We gain some insight into what makes each other tick. Q&A then drinks and informal discussion. Affordable housing is seemingly big on Chicago's agenda.



Dinner is at the Little Goat Diner. Beers and burgers. We talk over our meals. Literally.



Phil takes us to Blue Chicago. The dulcet tones of Charlie Love and the Silky Smooth Band are accompanied by diva Shirley Johnson. There was singing. There was dancing. A memorable way to spend our last night in Chicago.

DAY 5

But still a lot to do before we go.

We are led on a guided tour of the Mies IIT campus. Our architecture student guide has a 'more or less' philosophy. Ben fills in the gaps.

The masterplan is structured by a twenty-four foot grid. Buildings occupy the squares. The space between the buildings is loose and undefined. We see the evolution of Mies. Negative corners. Floating stairs. Early work is tentative, perhaps utilitarian. The tour de force is the S.R. Crown Hall.



Enormous spans, refined detail, universal space. The hall is full of student work. Certain vantages still permit the intended effect. Column-less free-flowing light-filled space. Steel, glass and travertine. The lower level library anchors the building.



The locals seem friendly too.



We start and end at the McCormick Tribune Campus Center by OMA. It is squished beneath the train line. It crashes into Mies' Common Building. A project driven by concept, but is that enough? To my eye it is kitsch and gaudy. And orange.



Larry meets us back at the hotel. We load our luggage and head due west. It is time for our Frank Lloyd Wright intensive. We arrive in Oak Park at Unity Temple. A thoroughly public building. Almost secular. The lineage to Walter Burley Griffin is obvious. The interior is captivating with intertwining volumes and ever-changing perspectives. A building truly designed in section and plan. Timber lighting and furnishing embroider the volumes.



Next, we are delivered to Wright's home and studio. It is converted to a museum dedicated to his life and work. The house is a patchwork quilt of details, furniture and space. Each room used to investigate a thousand ideas.



We conclude with a paper-boy tour of the suburb. Larry describes the evolution of the Prairie style with his radio-voice and architect-hands.



Off to the airport. The plane is delayed. Long queues are conducive to discussion. Ludwig or Frank? There are two schools of thought. I had thought it would be Mies, but seeing the buildings first hand, it is Wright who has captured my heart. I suppose it is the difference between reading the recipe book and tasting the food.

DAY 6

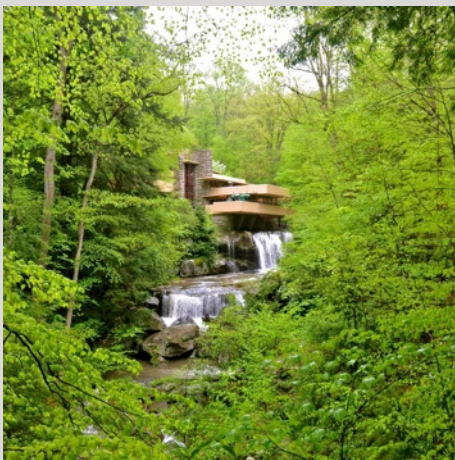
A night time flight brings us to Pittsburgh under the cover of darkness. In the morning we pack our bags and head straight out of town.



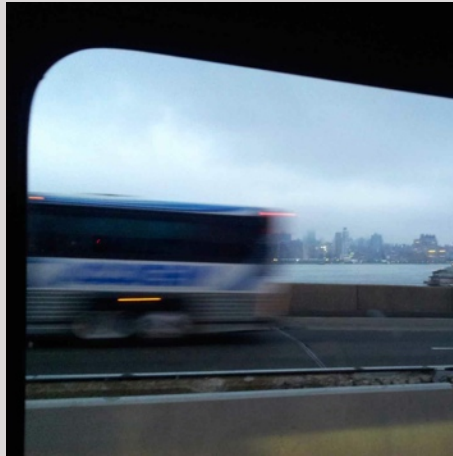
We are at Bear Run in three hours. School children swarm the visitors centre. Russell Crowe was here last week. The gift shop is busy. We wait for our tour to begin.



The cafe sells bottled water.



I had read about the house before, but it had never really grabbed me. Being here in person, I am in awe. The sound of the waterfall. The smell of the forest. The setting is spectacular in the true sense of the word. It begins to rain. Falling water at Fallingwater. The Kaufmann Residence is simultaneously opulent and domestic. The main living room cantilevers impossibly into the landscape. Tight stairs and doorways lead to intimate bedrooms. Every corner is designed. The walkway over the driveway to the guest house above is a special surprise.



It is 380 miles to New York. The coach trip is long but the excitement builds. No sleep till Brooklyn.

DAY 7



Accommodation is a four storey brownstone on East 27th. The green line is a block away. We head to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal to meet Bettina. The coffee is good at the New Amsterdam Pavilion by UN Studio.



Bettina knows New York. We have four hours to explore Lower Manhattan with her. She describes early settlement and the wall at Wall Street. We look across the Hudson to New Jersey and Brooklyn.



We visit the Elevated Acre. Privately owned public spaces (POPS) are open spaces built in return for additional development rights. This one is only open from 7am to 10pm. Hmm. It's a contradictory kind of concept.

East River Waterfront by SHoP. The New York Stock Exchange. George Washington and the Federal Hall National Memorial.



The Equitable Building was once the largest office building in the world. It is built thirty-eight storeys to the street on all four sides. Floor area ratio 30:1. A monolith which inspired the introduction of New York's modern tower controls.



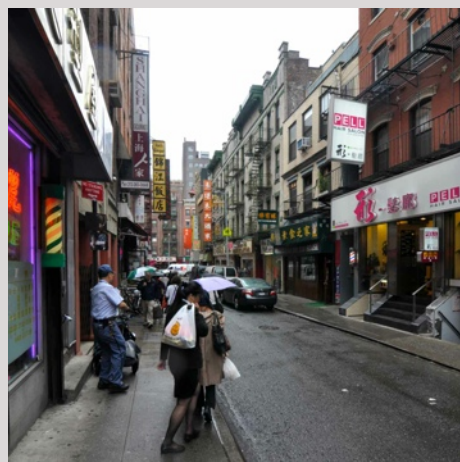
President Obama opened the National September 11 Memorial to the public the

day before we arrive. 'Reflecting Absence' by Michael Arad and Peter Walker is a powerful experience. A well for human emotion that can never be filled. Commercial edifices by SOM and Maki are underway. Calatrava's train station almost ready to take flight.

Irish Hunger Memorial by 1100 Architect. City Hall Park. The Woolworth Building.



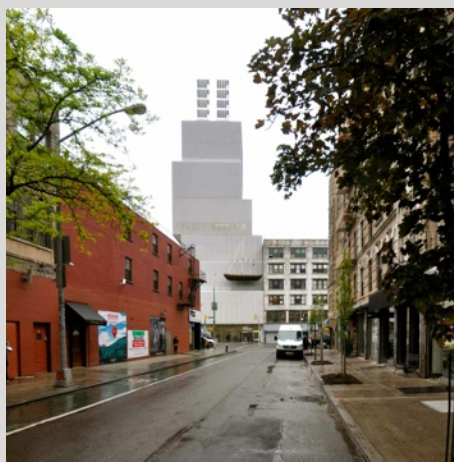
Beekman Tower by Frank Gehry is the tallest residential tower in the western hemisphere.



We farewell Bettina over dumplings in China Town. We have some free time before reconvening at the American Institute of Architects.



We lock on to the Storefront for Art and Architecture and venture forth into the grid. NoLIta and The Bowery are gritty in the best way. Suzannah, Ben and I find SANAA's New Museum.



Its stacked abstracted volumes are surprisingly at ease in the street. You start from the top and walk down. Each box is a gallery of different proportion. Ragnar Kjartansson and Sigur Rós is haunting. The spaces pinwheel around the lift core until we are back at the street.



At the Center for Architecture we meet AIA Chapter President Rick. We compare notes on strategies to reach out to the members and the public. The AIANY Design awards are in the foyer. The European Prize for Urban Space exhibition is in on the floor below.

We wander in search of dinner. We stumble on Herzog De Meuron in Bond Street. Morphosis' Cooper Union is nearby. Luzzo's pizzeria is on the way back.



I think Ben thought it was good.

DAY 8



We begin at TriBeCa Loft by Australian designers Nexus. Patrick and Conan are gracious hosts. They accompany us on the road trip to New Canaan. Phil braves the Henry Hudson Parkway in the minivan.

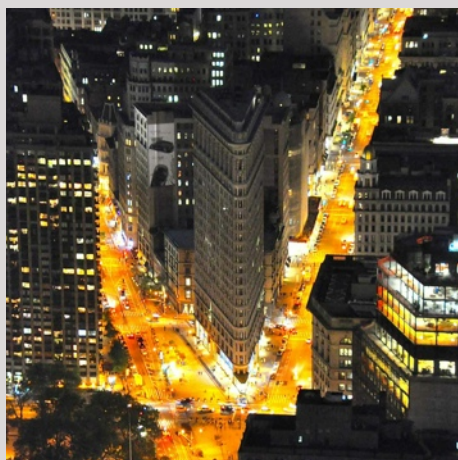


Philip Johnson's Glass House is engulfed by Fujiko Nakaya's fog installation. Legend has it that Johnson had seen a model of the Farnsworth House and built his own version before Mies finished his. The Glass House is grounded in comparison. Less refined details. More liveable spaces. Equally cold in winter.

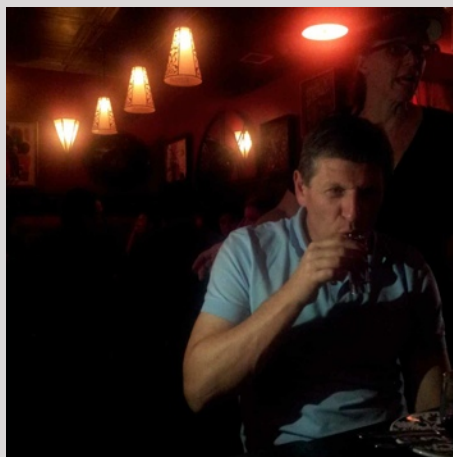
The forty-nine acre estate is Johnson's plaything. Architectural follies and structures dot the grounds. The Sculpture Gallery. The Library. Donald Judd's first concrete work. The Pond Pavilion and the Lincoln Kirsten Tower are in the distance.



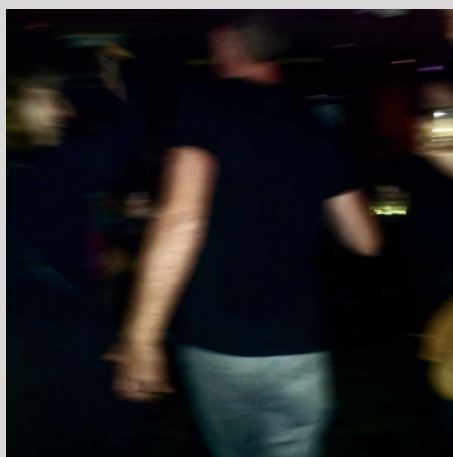
The painting gallery is built into the hill. A clover-leaf plan with a tunnel from outside to in. Rotating art walls are heavy with Frank Stella. An Andy Warhol of Johnson times nine. Wealth, connections, and influence. And, oh, the soirées!



By nightfall we are back in the Big Apple. We take the express lane to the top deck of the Empire State Building. One hundred and two storeys above the city. The outline of Manhattan is clear. The whole city opens up where Broadway and 5th Avenue meet.



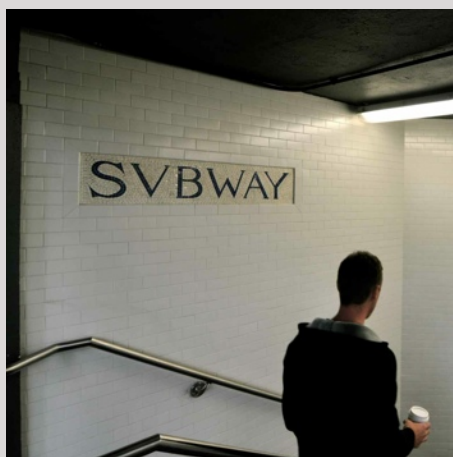
Not to be outdone by our night in Chicago, we set out to make the Lower East Side our own. Moscow57 is a Russian Tapas Cabaret Bar. Vodka shots and Sun Goddess cocktails. It kicks on to the Black Crescent Oyster Bar. Our personalised cocktail is called the 'Priscilla.'



I'm not quite sure where we went next. I know there was eighties tunes and dancing. But honestly, it's all a bit of a blur.

DAY 9

I think we got to bed before sunrise. Luckily, it is Sunday and that means a free day. Cherry was meeting a friend in Alphabet City. We all tag along.

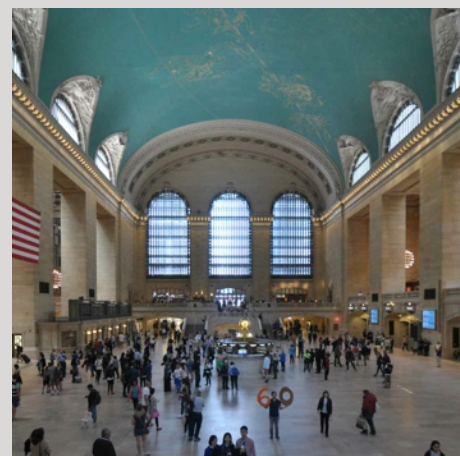


The green line takes us to St Marks Place. We get a strong coffee and stroll through Tompkins Square Park.



At my request, we head north to Stuyvesant Town. It is a huge housing estate built by insurance companies just before World War II. The brick mountains look forbidding. It is surprisingly civil and green. The private ownership ensures the place is looked after.

We peel off in different directions. Suzannah and I want to check out some New York City classics.



First stop is Grand Central Station with its magnificent astronomical ceiling. Gropius' hulking PanAm Building straddles above.



Heading north up Park Avenue takes us to the Seagram Building and Lever House. Plazas and podiums. They are the grandfathers of scores of corporate towers all around the globe.

Crosstown is MoMA followed by the Rockefeller Center.



We cut across the Central Park to the Lincoln Centre. A modernist set piece. A trilogy of ballet, theatre and opera. Johnson, Saarinen, Abramovitz. The guy I hadn't heard of before was my favourite.



But even with all of the special buildings, I am constantly aware most of the city is housing. It is the glue holding the city blocks together. Six storey tenements have twenty or so apartments. Each are just 7.62m wide in accordance with the Commissioner's Plan. Side by side. Block after block. Street upon street. The density is mind-blowing.

DAY 10

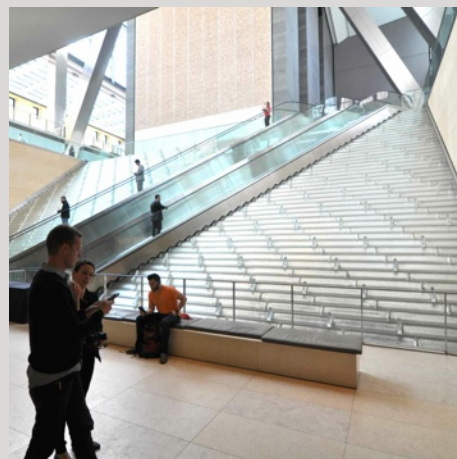
Today we meet our first New York practices. We cross Midtown to 10th Avenue and grab a cinnamon bagel with cream cheese. It's going to be a big day.



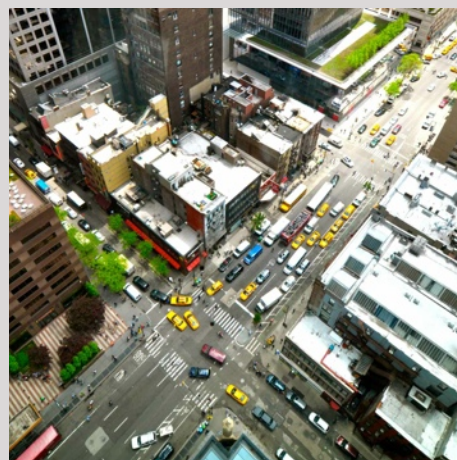
Suzanne and Ed introduce us to 1100 Architect. Eleven Hundred do a wide range of work. But the approach is consistent. Emphasis is on 'material quality' and response to place. Everything is thoroughly detailed. Precise. We talk product research and documentation. The materials library is encyclopaedic. We are lucky enough to meet directors David and Juergen. They round out our visit with some talk of current events.



Next up is LTL Architects. Paul is one of three partners. They built their practice on innovative restaurant projects. It has evolved to public and institutional buildings. He talks about the 'intensities' of his work. Intensity of resources, of sections, of surface, of material. He is Associate Professor at Princeton and vice-president of the New York Architectural League. Paul is pretty intense himself. He gives us pointers on the logistics of practice and teaching. He is passionate about publishing. Books are an opportunity to reflect on your work and develop your profile.



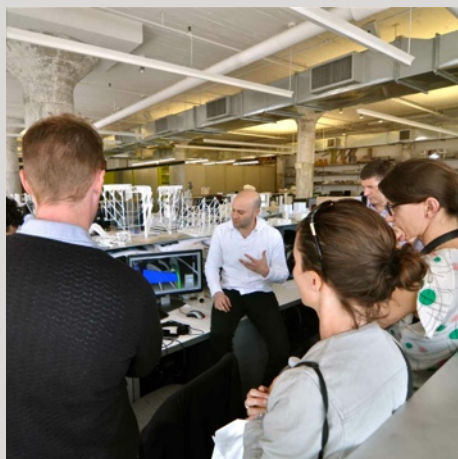
The third stop is the Hearst Tower. A crystalline form above an historic stone base. It is the national headquarters of the media giant. Magazines, newspapers, broadcasting. Foster + Partners have half a floor. They designed the building. Chris gives us the corporate overview of their international exploits. 1,100 staff in over twenty countries. Current local projects include the Yale School of Management in New Haven. The view from the faceted corner windows down to the street was pretty cool. New York has a lot of cabs.



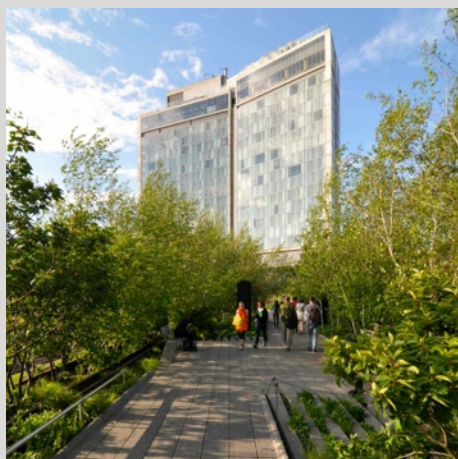
We took a tray in the corporate cafeteria on the podium level for lunch. Like being part of the firm already.



Reiser + Umemoto Architecture were back on the East side. Jesse and Nanako began practice thirty years ago. Paul is Professor at Princeton. Nanako is visiting professor at three other universities. They combine intensive teaching with speculative proposals. Recent competition wins in Taiwan have set them on a new trajectory. They are soon moving office. The models on the shelf talk of an explorative process. Scripting and digital documentation help them deliver it.



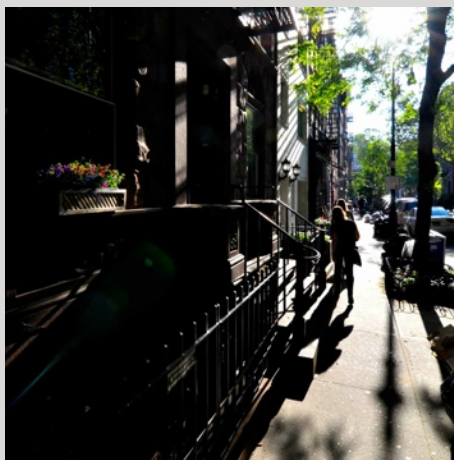
We wind up in Chelsea. Diller Scofidio + Renfro are in the mammoth Starrett-Lehigh Building. Occupying a whole block it was both a commercial warehouse and a freight terminal. Yep, the trains came right in. Luca walks us around the office. It looks like it is built of presentation panels and models. Matt talks us through the Broad Art Museum, Columbia University Medical Center and Hudson Yards Culture Shed. It's hard not to be impressed.



Our extended tour includes a visit to the High Line. The trusty Dustin provides an in depth explanation in both conception and realisation. We start at the north end and walk the whole length. It is sequential and controlled. A landscape procession. Simultaneously without use and highly used. A unanimous favourite. Truly elevated design. Anything but standard.

DAY 11

What a whirlwind. The last day.



An early rise and we are in Greenwich Village. Chiaroscuro of stoops and trees lined streets.



Practice number one is Family. Dong knows how to make a splash. He has the entrepreneurial instinct and talks about his Plus Pool with passion. A floating pool that cleans the river so New Yorkers can swim in it again. Buy a tile. Build the pool. Architecture made possible with crowd-funding. Stages one and two have already begun. It is just a matter of time.



Toshiko Mori Architects are in NoLLta. She is Professor at Harvard. Her practice is structured in four parts. Architecture, strategic, not-for-profit and teaching. Each part benefits from being separate, but also informs the others. She is interested in how the old meets the new. Sensitive renovation projects engage with historic masterpieces. New projects are strong, smart and refined.



We get the subway with Justin to Hudson Yards. Hard hats and hi vis vests. The canopy is for a new train station twelve storeys below the ground. We descend into the tunnel. Serious infrastructure to support serious development. The Sean Kelly Gallery is close by. The restrained palette and careful lighting make a robust canvas for artwork.



We leave the island and head for Queens. Leiser Architecture have recently renovated the Museum of the Moving Image. Thomas tells us his part in growing the commission from a foyer upgrade to a fully fledged expansion. The interiors are a white folding landscape of angles and planes. A striking Klein blue is used for the cinema. It is the venue Scorsese prefers. The museum is dedicated to art and technology. Plans and models of famous movie sets are a winner.



REX is next. They are in DUMBO. Down under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass is fast becoming a creative hub. The office is an American descendant of OMA, but appears to have a more commercial bent. Half the office is in Germany for the Mercedes-Benz Future Centre they have just won. It is ideas based architecture. Large format whiteboards make the walls a sketchpad. Watch out, don't knock the models!



Last but not least is SHoP Architects. They are on Level 11 of the Woolworth Building. Dubbed the 'Cathedral of Commerce,' it was once the tallest building in the world. This is entirely appropriate. Omar tells us how the firm engages with developers to turn their parameters into architecture. Density, yield, setbacks. They are not a consultant, they are part of the industry. SHoP also take risks and reap the rewards. Buildings cantilever neighbours when they exhaust the height limit. Super slender skyscrapers push the controls to the limits. We leave with Kathy and Jake to revisit Pier 15. They provide the inside knowledge of the project. We drink beers overlooking the Brooklyn Bridge.



Our final dinner is at the Mercer Kitchen. Subterranean fine dining.

Has it only been eleven days? What day did we do that? Do you remember when? We take turns to describe our highlights.

It has been a lifelong dream to visit Chicago and New York. We are fortunate to have been exposed to such a rich experience. Every size of practice interested in everything from the details to the big picture. Each has been generous in sharing insights and knowledge with us. The buildings and places we visited, both old and new, will provide ongoing inspiration for the years to come.

Although it has been short, we have come to know each other well. Of course we have talked about our lives and our practices, our challenges and our ambitions. It is actually quite rare to do this so openly, but the tour has encouraged discussion and debate. I have learnt a lot from my colleagues and enjoyed our time together immensely.

In the morning we say goodbye at the airport. Everybody is heading their separate ways. We are all due to meet later in the year. It will be great to relive it again. And to share it with others.

WITH THANKS TO _____

Dulux
Australian Institute of Architects
EmAGN
Exsulte

Phil White
Sarah Nadenbousch
Bernadette Wilson

Ben Milbourne
Jenna Rowe
Suzannah Waldron
Cherry Williamson

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
PORT Architecture + Urbanism
Wheeler Kearns Architects
Studio Gang
John Ronan Architects
Krueck + Sexton Architects
Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill
Strawn Sierralta
1100 Architect
LTL Architects
Foster + Partners
Reiser + Umemoto Architecture
Diller Scofidio + Renfro
Family New York
Toshiko Mori Architects
Leeser Architecture
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Off the Map tours
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Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe
Frank Lloyd Wright

Olivia Zanardo

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