

# Dulux Study Tour 2015

» *post tour report by casey bryant*

The 2015 Dulux Study Tour **DST** is an immense experience. On our first day in London we saw 27 buildings in one day. We went from practice to practice, hungry for insights into international architecture. Amazingly, we maintained intelligent conversations along the way, and made some great friends. We all continued to think about our own work back home. Our minds were full.

When you are experiencing so much, you need structure to absorb the information. Categorizing things into ideas helps me to remember not just what I saw, but what I learnt. These discussions presentend in this report follow three broad ideas that have stayed with me since the DST. Through these ideas, I now look back and remember some of my favorite buildings and practices from the tour. They are three ideas that I keep returning to now.

So many thank yous go out to Dulux and The Australian Institute of Architects for this amazing experience. I will specify Dulux forever. Especially thank you to the amazing people who made it possible: Daniela Crawley, Phil White, Sarah Nadenbousch, and Katelin Butler, and to my fellow Dulux Study Tourists who made everything fun: Bonnie Herring **BH**, John Ellway **JE**, Monique Woodward **MW**, and Nic Brunsden **NB**.





^ yokohama ferry terminal - foreign office architects, yokohama 2002  
 < the barbican estate - chamberlin, powell and bon, london 1976

## Scale

» *the relative size or extent of something*

One of the unexpected delights of the DST was being exposed to the thinking of 4 of my peers. Often conversations about projects or practices we visited would lead to discussing our own work and the implications upon it. We discovered that all five recipients operate within the smaller scales of architecture. Our knowledge of the small scale defined a point from which we observed the Tour.

The interesting thing about the definition of the word scale is the word relative. When you think of scale, you are always comparing one thing to another, and to a baseline scale within your own experience. My knowledge of buildings is in houses mostly, and while I work at larger scales, I feel most comfortable thinking about living arrangements and door details. So you can understand how visits to buildings such as **Yokohama Ferry Terminal**, **La Defence** in Paris, and the ongoing London **Kings Cross Redevelopment** (one of the largest building sites in Europe), took me away from my comfort zone. Subsequently, I was alert and interested in the unknown during visits to larger practices.

The scale of projects in London is immense. The **Barbican Estate**, built between 1965 and 1976, designed by **Chamberlin, Powell and Bon**, occupies a site area of 35 acres, and includes 2104 apartments, public promenades, cafes, restaurants, and an Arts Center. The estate stretches on forever as you walk around the oversized courtyard gardens, and between the tower blocks. However, upon entering the apartments, the scale shifts to that of the intimate living quarters. The apartments are all in original condition, and are heritage listed. Long sliding panels, original joinery, and bespoke door hardware all give a quality of sophisticated designer home. It is an amazing contrast to the scale externally. The rooms feel cozy, and afford good natural light and views. Walking around the Arts Centre is the same experience of quality finishes and care for tactile details. It is an amazing feat of the Barbican to be so large and accommodate so many people, but to accommodate them so nicely. Perhaps the act of mass construct has allowed the architects time to focus on the details. They are repeated thousands of times - you would want to get them right.

The new UBS headquarters building, **5 Broadgate**, by **Make Architects**, and due for completion in 2016, measures 120m long x 60m wide x 60m high. The DST was treated to a tour of the building site.



^ tate 2 - herzog and de meuron, london, 2016

The façade is clad in the largest stainless steel panels ever fabricated for a building, and there are four separate triple height atria imbedded in the building for natural daylight penetration. The building signals a new form of typology – the ground-scraper.

The scales of London's architecture offices seem relative. The offices of **Zaha Hadid** are 450 strong, and are scattered throughout a disused school. They are utterly dwarfed, however, by the **Fosters** office 'campus', currently 1400 in number worldwide. It was interesting to talk to these offices from the perspective of 5 small-scale Australian practices. We found ourselves asking about management systems, and techniques for client interaction. Building site administration and quality control were also common topics, and there was a range of different approaches. **David Chipperfield Architects** insist on total control during construction. On the other hand, local architects often control the international Foster projects while on-site.

The extension to the Tate Modern; **Tate 2**, by **Herzog and DeMeuron**, currently under construction, plays a very interesting game of scale. Interacting with the geometry and proportion of the original building, the extension is a twisting box, 50% taller

than the original turbine hall of the Tate Modern. It is a controversially large building, but seems an appropriate gesture in the context of 10 – 15 storey buildings. The brickwork façade, which incorporates on-off brick screens and an overlay of coloured brick pattern, is a bold and appropriate descendant of the original masonry form. The standardized brick module creates a relative measure between the old and new. Clever scaling of both the gesture, and its parts, is used to create a historic-contemporary dialogue.

The **Tama Art University Library**, by **Toyo Ito**, completed in 2007, is located in a campus on the outskirts of Greater Tokyo. Approaching the building takes you up hill through a grove of tall trees, spread thinly across a banking lawn. The facades of the building are flush concrete and glass compositions of arches, the scale of which resemble the trees. The building presents a billboard of organic shapes behind similar sized trees. Inside, the ground floor follows the incline of the natural ground, and compresses from a 5-meter high space at the entry to a very small, almost cave like space, at the rear. The sloping concrete floor is surreal, as you lose your sense of depth perception. The smaller space feels far away, until you get there and turn around to find the larger end of the room still feeling very close. The entirety of the interior



^ one pancras square - david chipperfield architects, london, 2014  
 < tama art university library - toyo ito, tokyo, 2007

on both floors is occupied by fine concrete arches. They soar above your head in sweeping parabolas, and land together in little clusters. The thinness in contrast to their height evokes the presence of trees. Indeed, this was the intention of the architect – to create a room below a forest canopy. This building uses scale to suggest a feeling of being somewhere else.

The practice of **David Chipperfield** uses shifting scales throughout their design process. The office exists over two levels of a small office tower. The 2nd floor is the “engine room”, where work happens at conventional desks. The 12th floor houses meeting spaces, a café, a workshop, and group model making and display areas. These areas form the backbone of the design studio’s workflow; with each project area occupying a table and surrounding walls with models of various scales. A stack of 1:1 scale window detail prototypes indicates the office aim to make buildings that work at both a city scale, and at a human scale. The DST saw this at the **One Pancras Square** building, completed last year, where a mass of stacked slabs contrasts against fine ornamental cast iron columns. Interestingly, the office deliberately takes on a range of project scales; their smallest being a bathroom renovation in Milan. This is also a way of ensuring the design thinking remains agile and relevant to all scales.

London and Tokyo are both cities with scattered centers. There is no obvious gesture to define the scale and distribution of the built form. As such, each intervention requires a study of what is appropriate to that place. It is often not enough to simply follow the surrounding height limits and setbacks. Some projects need to push forward as exemplars or icons, and others need to control the scale of their human interface.





^ fuji kinderarten - tezuka architects, tokyo, 2007  
 < tours aillaud - emille aillaud, paris, 1977

## Agenda

» *the things that must be done*

It was not long into visiting several well-known architectural practices that we began to notice each of their blatant attempts to define themselves. The DST began to question each of practice about their "house style". As an architect, your agenda is not only an important part of your identity, but also becomes your starting point when undertaking most tasks. Some practices labored the point of their agenda. **Make Architects** in London repeated the joys of their flat hierarchy and ambition to find new ideas in any project. The smaller practice **dRMM** often found their agenda to describe the buildings use so obvious that it became directly manifest as the façade of their building.

The design approach and day to day practices of **Toyo Ito's** office were given the highest praise by Associate **Kenta Fukunishi**. **MW's** article for **ArchitectureAU** describes the collaborative practices of Ito, who will never interject or overtly instruct his staff. His agenda is one of collaboration.

**Ateliers Jean Nouvel** presented the DST with a tour of their office and a refreshingly candid description of the workflow of the projects - from Nouvel, down to the model makers. After raising the question of succession planning with the offices of Foster, Chipperfield and Hadid, and not getting any good gossip, we thought it worth a shot across the Chanel. Whilst secretive on the detail, we learnt there is a lot of trust placed in a selection of partner-level architects within the office, grown from a shared agenda to achieve excellence. The buildings of AJN are often controversial additions of form to a city, but it seems every member of the design team strives for a high quality outcome. As a result there is a trust that permeates down the ranks of the studio, and helps to alleviate the bottleneck of decision-making. AJN are an example of an office-wide agenda streamlining process.

Agenda can manifest itself in a variety of ways. It can be formal, social, functional, or aesthetic. It can be many at the same time. Where the agenda of the offices we visited may have been scattered, and still in refinement, the agenda of each building on the DST was always prominent. None more so, than **Fuji Kindergarten** by **Tezuka Architects**. This building also inspired an article for **AAU**, this time written by myself. The building is thoroughly conceived out of social agendas, and the design



^ pathe foundation - renzo piano building workshop, paris, 2013

is brimming with ideas about how the young occupants interact with each other, learn about the world, and develop habits for their lives. Being privy to the development of the design, the DST concluded that the agenda for this building was to listen to, and manifest, the ideas and knowledge of the client.

The **Tours Aillaud** Housing development of 1977, in the outskirts of Paris by architect **Emile Aillaud**, could not be any more opposite in its agenda and manifestation. It was developed with no specific client group in mind, and was aiming to house as many as possible. Tours Aillaud however has a spirit of joy about it. The frescoes and bubble shaped windows speak of positivity and ambition, over the austerity of mass housing and efficiency. The agenda of the project seemed to be one of positivity at all costs, if in only applied to the façade.

An agenda can often lead to unexpected results. The **Pathe Foundation** in Paris by **Renzo Piano Building Workshop**, completed in 2013, is an example of a highly functional agenda, leading to a seemingly loose aesthetic result. The narrow courtyard site required a building that could allow light to existing inward-facing windows, whilst still accommodating the large volume of a

cinema, exhibition gallery and offices. Often seen as opposing forces, function and form have both prevailed here. The rational blob (as coined by **JE** in his **AAU** article on the building) curves and soars to permit light to existing windows. The resulting building volume is accepted as façade form, and wrapped in a skin of high tech louvers; themselves a direct functional response.

One of the most humbling aspects of the DST was hearing Japanese architects speaking about the **Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami** of 2011. There was a great sense of change about them. There was a desire to take all the knowledge and talent accumulated through the delivery of complex, fanciful, design driven building projects, and put that to a humanitarian use.

When speaking to us on this very topic, Astrid Klein of **Klein Dytham** was interrupted by a magnitude 5.4 earthquake. As we sat in her own building, **T-Site Daikanyama**, completed in 2011, the DST experienced (for most of us) our first major earthquake. It was debilitating. We had no idea what to do, and had absolutely no control over our own physicality. We followed her in total panic to the nearest column – apparently this is what is safest. The building shook, glasses fell, and then it was over and we got back to talking.

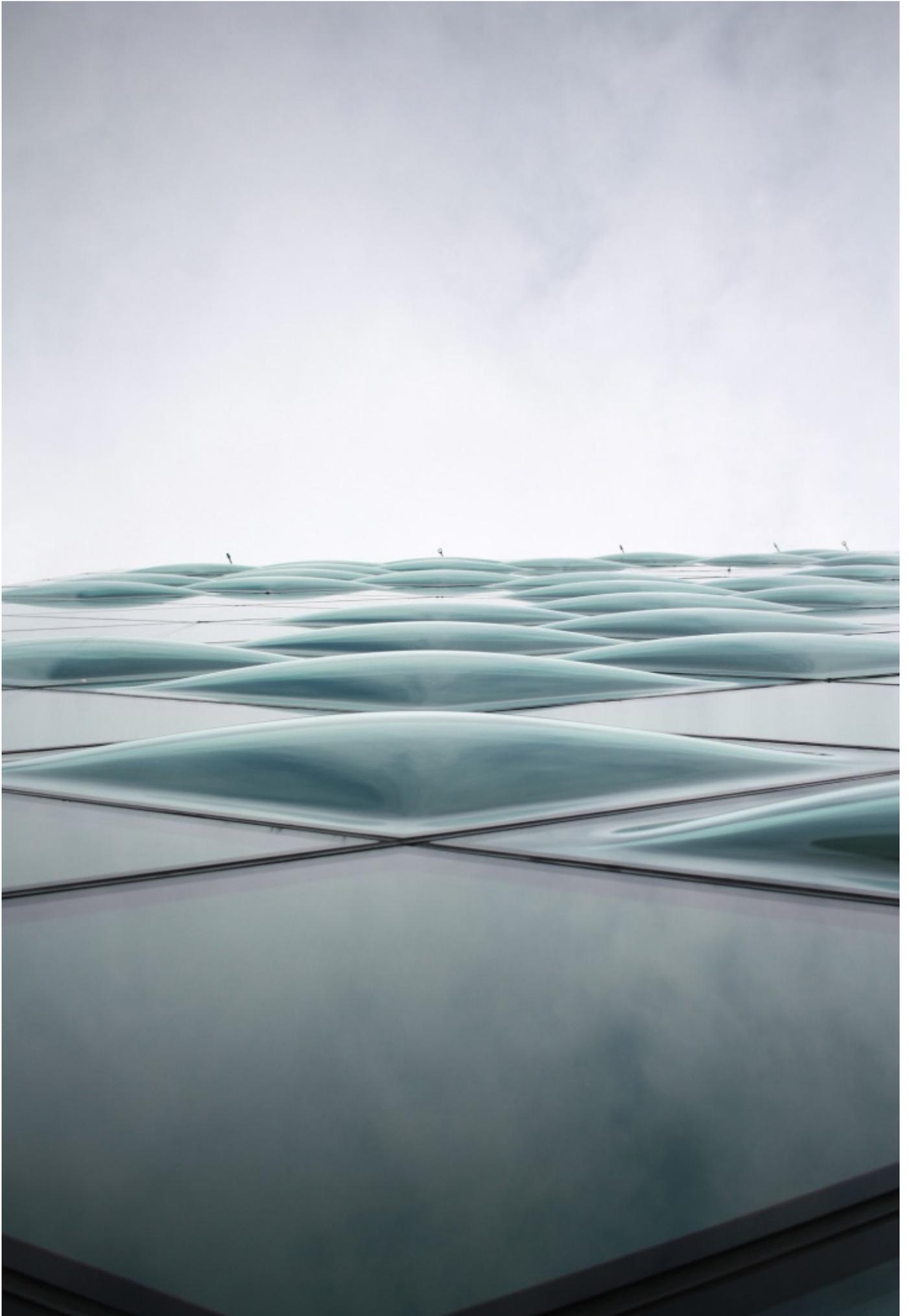


^ offices of tezuka architects, tokyo

It was immediately apparent how often this happens, just by observing Astrid's reaction. "Once every 8 months," she said, "for one that big." The rest of the room went about their business like usual. When asked by a curious **MW**, how the building would fail, Astrid appeared slightly dumbstruck, simply replying with "it won't". This is an unusual concept for Australians, as our codes design for failure; creating time for people to escape in the case of fire for example. However, it is the opposite in Japan – you simply cannot escape from an earthquake, so the buildings become bunkers or refuges, designed to withstand anything. Later speaking to **Takaharu Tezuka** about a new skyscraper building they are working on, the DST inquired after the cost implications for upgrading a building to withstand earthquakes. Immediately recognized as a slightly naive question, although I am sure we were all thinking to ask the same, the answer came back: "I don't know, I have never had to think about what it would be like without Earthquakes."

So here we have a situation where a primary agenda, that which must be done, is suddenly, in 2011, brought into question by one of the most powerful earthquakes to hit contemporary Japan. The agenda of confident design and city expansion has been brought into question. "Now we must think

about the future for that area," says Kenta Fukunishi of Toyo Ito's office, speaking about the earthquake-affected areas. Several other Japanese architects who we encountered along our journey repeated this sentiment. The new agenda for these architects is one of social resilience and collaboration in times of strife. Surprising to an outsider, they seemed keen to ignore the untapped potential for amazing formal architecture in Japan. Perhaps once you find yourself in a position where anything can be built, you start to wonder what needs to be built.





^ maison la roche - le corbusier and pierre jeanneret, paris, 1925  
 < prada omote sando - herzog and de meuron, tokyo, 2003

## Contemporary

» occurring in the present

Architects we no longer define themselves with stylistic labels. Art Deco, Nouveau, International Style, Modernism are just some of the immediately recognizable styles of the past few centuries. It is often said that Modernism killed the styles, with its functional approach and kit of industrial parts. But even Post Modernism and all the Neo-s had a go after Corb was done defining the city. The real killer has been **contemporary**. Most Australian architects use this word to define themselves, as if anything else would risk looking out of date. Contemporary is a word that can pertain to absolutely everything that is produced now, so by definition overrules other styles that may apply. Is it important to mark our work, and share our intentions?

The Paris leg of the DST gave insight into what is arguably the birth and death place of International Style. At the **Centre De George Pompidou**, built in 1977 by **Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano**, we visited an exhibition entitled **Le Corbusier - Mesures de l'homme**. The show studied Corb's explorations of living, and the resulting concept

of the modular man. Perhaps the underpinning of international style, the humble modular man, with his giant hand, became a measure for many housing projects. Corb also developed some of his best public buildings around the modular man.

Later in Paris, the DST detoured to visit **Maison La Roche**. Built in 1925 by **Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret**, the house is a gallery to celebrate the owner's life and art. **BH's** article for **AAU** describes the grand entry and circulation spaces, which are outlandishly large in comparison to the humble rooms. This house joined the charge for International Style Modernism in Europe. White rendered externally, with little to no decorative trimmings and mass-produced aluminium windows, the house presents a stark contrast to the surrounding neighborhood. In Paris and other major European cities, the 1920's where a departure from historic, and historically appropriate design.

Fast track thirty years, and Parisian architecture was the slab and tower housing block developments, built en-mass following the Second World War. The ultimate conclusion of International style; the rendered, undecorated, repetitive apartment blocks were fast erected around the periphery of the old city. I say conclusion, as the vast developments where hated by Parisians. They are still hated,



^ July 7 memorial in Hyde Park - Carmody Groarke, London, 2009

and form the basis of a countrywide hatred of all forms of contemporary architecture. In a second **AAU** article, I wrote about the difficulty in finding harmony between contemporary and historic built form, focused on **Manuelle Gautrande Architecture**. I am interested in strategies for harmonising with historic form. The Haussmann redevelopment of Paris was well received, and even now, the six storey Haussmannian style looks at ease beside a medieval mansion.

Paris is home to a well-known example of post-modernism - **Parc de la Villette**. Designed by **Bernard Tschumi**, the DST visited the third largest park in Paris, to consider its place in the Modernist / Post-Modernist handover. It doesn't take long to realize the popularity of this place, and the effectiveness of the large red follies. The vigor with which the city has embraced these useless buildings signals an opposition to the sheer functionality of Modernism. Along side the Pompidou, finished in 1977, these two postmodern icons signal, to me, the death of International Style. An ironic place to display a show about its birth then.

Time spent in London does not aid the defining of some, if any, principles of contemporary. The city is alive with development. Buildings are conceived and delivered with such speed. It isn't hard to

understand why this town is the second home for the world's non-American hyper-wealthy. Many critics are up in arms about the allegedly reckless pace and verticality of London development. It is interesting to compare such pace to the form-mentioned Paris slab and tower block housing boom. Most of the developments seem to lack any particular motivation other than volume.

However, several architects are starting define themselves through a dedication to craft, and in London; to English building traditions. **Kevin Carmody of Carmody Groarke** articulated this while showing the DST their design for a **plywood chair**. "It has to be a manifesto for what you think a chair should be," he told us. Later when talking about a new house design, where a Georgian mansion profile is simplified and built in brick, again the focus is not on complexity of design, but "on how you make a brick." The following morning the DST visited their **July 7 Memorial in Hyde Park**. The cast stainless steel totums have an amazing texture that invites exploration. Kevin tells us that the design is a manifestation of Antony Gormley's sentiment: "the only responsibility of a memorial is to resist amnesia." Visitors are inspired to touch and understand them. In doing so they understand their purpose as memorial.



^ nagakin capsule tower - kisho kurokawa, tokyo, 1972  
 < parc de la villette - bernard tschumi, paris, 1982

In Japan, **Kengo Kuma** is drawing upon local craft traditions to develop new building ideas. The **Sunny Hills Store** in Aoyama, built in 2013, uses a construction technique that has been developed from ancient Japanese carpentry. The timber facade is structural, and is assembled using a jointing method, which roughly translates to the "hell tenon". The form of this building is seemingly loose and unstructured, but upon close inspection there is a diligent assembly method. This building refreshes of a historic built form to give it a place within the contemporary city.

At the beginning of the last century, architects developed manifestos that unified them into stylistic groups, and guided all their work. The shift now is instead to manifesto each instance of design. Projects or crafts lead the manifesto, instead of visa versa, and the accumulation of each leads to an office without a single stylistic identifier.

The Tokyo **Metabolists** of the 60's presented one of Japan's most famous stylistic manifestos. They proposed city-wide megastructures, that would evolve in organic ways, responding to the city's inhabitants. The **Nagakin Capsule Tower**, by **Kisho Kurokawa**, completed in 1972, is one of the rare examples of built Metabolism principles. The building is designed with two central cores that

distributes people and services to the attached capsules, which themselves are demountable. Originally designed with permanent cranes atop the cores, capsule owners where intended to take their home with them, to another identical capsule tower in another city, should they need to relocate for their career. The DST was afforded a unique visit into one of the tiny apartments. They are a single room and efficiently accommodate a built in bed, desk, storage, kitchen and a small pre-fab wet room. The capsules both functionally and aesthetically represent the style. The building looks like an organic growth of prefabricated living.

The state of contemporary in Japanese architecture is split between more readily identifiable styles. For example, **Tezuka Architects** and **Kengo Kuma** focus on the craft and construction of a building, while **Sou Fujimoto** makes experiential spaces. It is perhaps the freedom of creativity afforded to Japanese architects that prompts them to define themselves a style and band together in shared interest.





^ dulux study tour 2015  
< sunny hills store - kengo kuma, tokyo, 2013

The first night of the DST, a humble **NB** came to us with an idea. Gingerly he suggested that Australian architects could be defined amongst one of three styles, each occupying one point of an equilateral triangle. Practices can place themselves within the triangle at any point, and their proximity relative to each of the corners defines their proximity to that way of thinking. The three corners are the **Romantics**, the **Scientists**, and the **Storytellers**. They represent those attracted to experiential, functional, and referential design respectively.

Whilst not totally resolved and refined to manifesto standard, the discussions aroused by this 'tri-force' compelled use all to think about our architectural practice, and our values. We spent several hours sharing our opinions of our own methods, and of those belonging to the other corners. Architects often don't like to be labeled, but our system of labeling proved its validity just in the thought and dialogue it inspired.