

London

One of the strongest lessons that the Dulux Study Tour offers is the insight, if only briefly, into the character and personality of a place. And with that insight, the understanding that architecture is so heavily informed by or exists in relationship to that place; and to its community, its history and its environment.

We began our tour in London, the common link to all the previous tours that have gone before us, and we established the rhythm of the tour that was about to unfold ahead of us. Our days were scheduled into practice visit days or project visit days, with the addition in every city of a guided tour which offered a far greater understanding of how everything we were seeing and experiencing fit into the greater puzzle of that particular place and its evolving sense of itself.

After each visit to another practice who had generously opened their doors to us, or to another project that we could touch and examine, we all bundled into any one of at least three Ubers which ferried us off to the next destination. It was in these short drives, from practice to practice, or project to project, where each of us who were on the tour together would in addition to getting a sense of the places we were in, also began to get a sense of each other. The conversations and rigorous debates of these many short drives will be a lasting memory of mine of our time on tour.

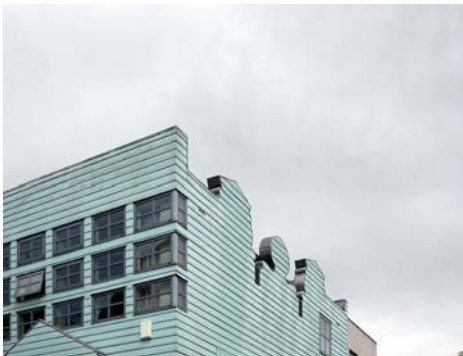


Kind homes

Kindness. Generosity. A loving and curious human condition. There were so many exceptional moments that we all experienced throughout this journey, however the some of the most meaningful encounters for me were of being welcomed into homes that were being lived in by curious, questioning, thoughtful and utterly wonderful people. It was the life of these people that washed over me, as the architecture fell away as an armature and an enabler for good lives being lived so well.

The first of these projects was the woodblock house designed by dRMM Architects. Designed for artist Richard Woods, children's book illustrator Jess Spanyol and their two children, the house is a vertical wooden nest composed entirely out of raw 100mm CLT panels fitted together with incredibly simple and unfussy lapped joints. The result is a rugged and resilient home that so perfectly reflected the character, worldview and the philosophy of its owners, a worldview that I obviously admired, that I desperately hoped to find a way to stay that little bit longer, for us to get invited to join them for a meal around the dining table, and to never leave.

The second of these moments was the infectiously delightful home of Cany Ash and Robert Sakula, which winds up and over their studio of Ash Sakula Architects. Every pore of this home so wholly reflected the kindness, and the loving curiosity of the people who lived within it that I left with broad smile, from ear to ear that I couldn't shake for days. As this is what we hope to achieve when we design, a framework for the living of utterly good lives.



Berlin

In Berlin we encountered a city seemingly full of people fiercely advocating for their own personal, cultural and communal agency. It's no surprise then that this city is home to the Baugruppe collective housing model that has been such a guiding force for the efforts to disrupt the typical developer driven housing model within my home city of Melbourne.

We were given a guided tour of one such project ze05 by Christian Roth, co-director of Zanderroth Architekten who were the designers of the project, but also resident along with his family in the community it houses. The project and the many others like it throughout Germany speaks of the collective will of people working together to create a city that works for them.

Another such collective ambition is Flussbad, which has been a 20 year campaign lead by design agency Realities:United to clean and to retain a section of the cities industrially operated Spree River for swimming.

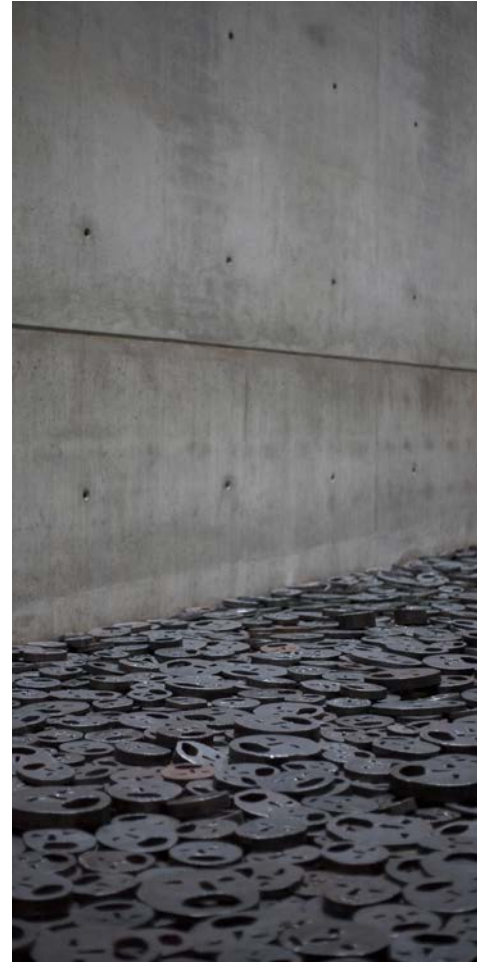
A cultural pilgrimage for us was to visit König Galerie, a monumental contemporary gallery housed within the 1960's brutalist St Agnes church originally designed by Werner Düttmann. The renovations and conversion to exhibitionary space was designed by the Berlin architect Arno Brandhuber, well known for his own gritty 'Antivilla' home outside of the city.



Memory and trauma

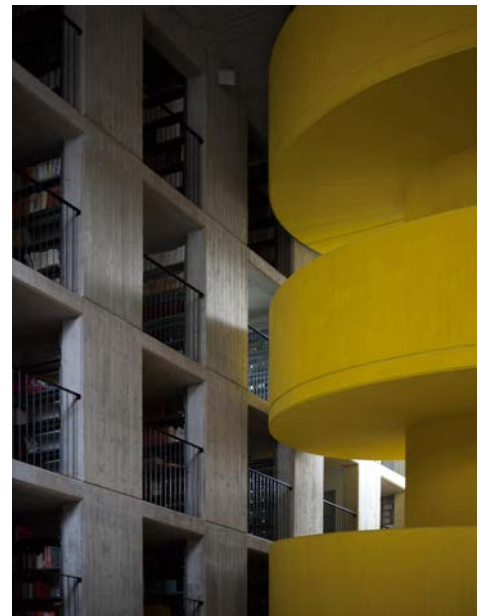
Trauma, and the memory and the lingering presence of it, casts a long and complicated shadow outward from the events that form it. We as people, and collectively as communities, cities, nations, are typically afforded the luxury of growing up and adapting in gradual intervals. Making many mistakes and learning enough from these to move on and to find delight and solace in living together, to continue making families, making culture. There are mistakes we make though, that are so great that they tear apart the fabric of who we think we are and how we come together as a society. The scars of these mistakes, of these traumas, reside deep in the memories and the minds of those exposed to its long shadow. These scars of the past are a graphic and persistent feature of the Berlin built environment. A constant reminder of the deep wrongs that were perpetrated by an unjust state. Architecture's capacity to bear those scars, to act as witness and bearer of that history is immense, but so is its capacity to hold that shared memory and to act as a healing force in coming terms with a troubled past.

Experiencing projects that performed this role was deeply moving and enlightening. They show how important truth telling can be in coming to terms with a traumatic past, which is a lesson that we need to learn from in addressing the troubled birth of our own nation.



Milan

In Milan we experienced yet another city living comfortably within its long and proud history. However, this old city, like so many others like it, appeared to be attempting to come to terms with a rapidly changing climate that it had never before experienced or had to respond to. The heat island effect of the dense urban center is having a significant impact upon the health and livability of the city. We encountered early examples of how to address this issue and to more readily incorporate a living ecology within the built environment in the many green roof proposals of Piurach or in the tree covered tower Bosco Verticale by Boeri Studio. Conversely though It also seemed fitting that our last stop in this city and of the whole tour was a visit to the OMA designed Fondazione Prada. Since 1995 this institution has been curating exhibitions and talks across the city and in 2015 they established a new permanent home within a vast old industrial estate. The entire complex of this facility, as a unified front of the titans of fashion (Prada) and architecture (OMA), is so intensely self-aware of its role as cultural change agent that it appears to constantly laugh at itself as it both delighted and intrigued us within its multiple pavilions and exhibition spaces.



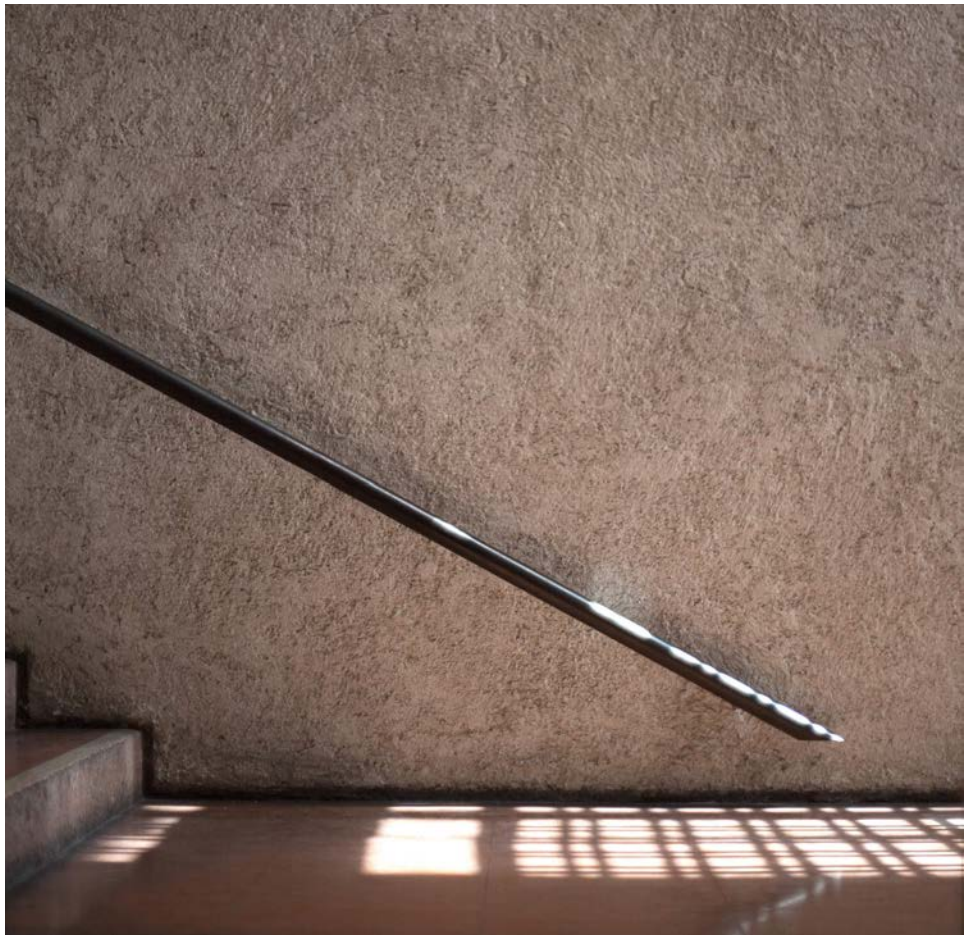
Carlo Scarpa

We stepped briefly outside of Milan and ventured out to the neighbouring city of Verona for a pilgrimage of sorts to experience two extraordinary and intriguing works designed by Carlo Scarpa.

These two buildings, the museum and restoration of Castelveccchio and the nearby Banca Popolare, contained within them an entire universe of care and obsession centred around the rigorous questioning of how a building is assembled together.

Wondering through the labyrinthine halls and passageways of Castelveccchio was to be swept up in a deep love for the stuff of architecture, the materials that it is made from. These raw materials were then crafted together into a vast language of unique architectural details that were distributed across the site like mushrooms erupting out of a forest floor.

Like Alvar Aalto's experimental house in Muuratsalo, these projects act as a shrine of sorts for the craft of architecture, offering to each of us willing or able to venture out to encounter them a powerful reminder of the elemental nature of buildings and of the immense delight in making.



2018 Dulux Study Tour Recipients

Leah Gallagher
Joseph O'Meara
Dirk Yates
Jason Licht
Kim Bridgland

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