



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

2025 DULUX STUDY TOUR

Post Tour Report

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Post-Tour Report

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As always, away from my Country and whenua, I honour and pay tribute to our Elders, lands, skies, waterways and cultural practices that have made me who I am, that I am always trying to honour, that have given me this profound opportunity.

To the First Nations peoples of the various places I was fortunate to travel to, I show gratitude and respect.

INTRODUCTION

Exposure to diverse architectural styles, practices, ethos, communities and people can only make us better practitioners.

ANTICIPATION

10 near strangers, 9 days, 3 cities and countless moments of opportunity, exposure and excitement.

Being well aware of the honour that this tour holds, the fortune to be apart of it and the responsibility that comes with accepting it, does little to ease the anxiety.

How do I ensure to learn and absorb as much information as possible? To use this experience to develop better skills? Go home a better practitioner for the communities I work with.

Acutely aware of what the practice I have had the fortune to grow and learn within, has given me - Kaunitz Yeung Architecture. Our work is unique in program, clientele and location. It is difficult to draw direct parallels to any other places outside of those Countries. Regardless, honeing my skills as an architect - practicing and in critical thinking - is a life long endevaour that I'm committed to for the betterment of our work and what it means to Communities and Country.

Our communities, every time I speak at events, present to clients and have the privilege of working in this space I do so for mob. I have always felt the weight of that responsibility. While oceans away from my Country - my whenua - I'll remember why.



COPENHAGEN

"The poetry of pragmatism"¹

REPUTATION

Logic leads design in CPH, from form and materiality through to the approach to sustainability. Where sustainability has become a buzz-word, easily green-washed, the Danish architects and local government take a simple, effective approach - where possible, reuse. Minimal new construction.

CPH was structured, pragmatic and honest. Our cycling tour guide, Alice, was clear about the intention in approach to reusing buildings as opposed to building new - and even more so on the actuality and success. Where we often praise cities like CPH for their success in environmental and social sustainability it was important to hear first-hand how the architects here were continuing to push innovation and did not accept that what many other places, Australian included, consider the best in the world was still not good enough in the current state of extreme climate risks.

WHO DO WE LOOK TO?

We, Australian Architects, look to CPH for answers because we regard their practices as some of the best in the world. It is easy to fall into the trap of presuming they've achieved the ideal, it's more inspiring that they continue to say, this standard isn't enough. While the city reads as controlled and organised, practices here are not concerned with the perfect construction join, or considering themselves the peak of sustainability. They continue to strive for better and do not see an imperfect connection a sacrifice to achieve this.

There are design strategies prevalent amongst Danish architects and practices that we can absolutely learn from, simplicity in approaches, the grass-root obvious solutions and an ongoing commitment to bettering practices. It has never felt entirely right to put CPH - or any city - on a pedestal, particularly when considering the complex issues we face in practice at home. The very specific challenges of respectfully over-or-under-laying notions of Countr(ies), there are contextual challenges unique to both AUS and CPH which can't be ignored.

Justine Bell, Djernes & Bell's Director and South African architect, noted that both AUS and SA often look to EUR for answers when in fact, the more relevant ideas are coming from home.⁵

A reminder to share knowledge and learn, not to idolise or become complacent in developing best practice.

¹Geraird Reimuth, Director at Terroir

²Alice Lempel Sondergaard climbing Copenhill / BIG

³Thoravej 29 / Pilhmann Architects,

⁴Justine Bell discussing climactice materiality

⁵DST 2025 Blog Post Day 2, by Marni Reti

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AMSTERDAM & ROTTERDAM

Evolution without expansion

SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

AMS' attitudes towards social housing and the - often times opposing - issue of urban density is a fascinating realised case study. A demonstration of what happens when a city pushes against what many other Western countries have accepted as the unchangeable norm. From their extreme shift in the city's identity in the 1970s, when limiting car access for the environmentally and physically healthier alternative of cycling... and then when the pendulum swings too far to find one of the primary problems to solve through design now is too many bicycles in the town centre. A town that provides an immense amount of social housing.

The primary housing development scheme in AMS targets 35% social Housing in the Netherlands. Less than 4% of all households in AUS are social housing¹ according to the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. When social housing makes up such a large portion of work for architects, designers and urban planners the quality of social housing is inspired and reflective of AMS's commitment. With every solution, brings another problem, and another solution.

In AUS urban sprawl is seen as inevitable, density is often viewed as a compromise, Borneo-Sporenburg by West 8 offers a compelling alternative—showing that density, liveability, and generosity can coexist. Developed in the 1990s as a socialist response to suburban flight, it aimed to retain city residents through appealing, high-density housing, avoiding expansion into the Dutch countryside and prioritizing public over market-driven planning. Understandably, 20 or so years on from it's inception the demographic isn't what it was - the young professionals have grown up. Creative director Daniel Vasini reminds us urban design isn't about over-control - it's about inspiration, leaving space in the plan to spark the imagination.

DO WE NEED TO "LIKE" THE BUILDINGS?

RTD's architecture is eccentric and bold. The city did not fall into the trap of nostalgia when reinventing itself from the 1940 World War I fire tragedy that leveled the city centre. The questions RTD answers, from my perspective, seems to be what could a city be when it can look like anything in the world? When designers aren't afraid of controversial buildings that push the boundaries of what the vast majority consider appealing? Is that antagonism what appeals?

The infamous MVRDV RTD architecture is not for everyone, I don't believe they are trying to be. Yet, we still travelled more than halfway across the world to experience them. So, does it matter if we "like" the buildings? Also agreed, we are better practitioners for having experienced them in person.

¹Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), 2023. What is the difference between social housing and affordable housing - and why do they matter? [online]

²Kunsthal, galleries and exhibition space / OMA in Rotterdam

³Borneo-Sporenburg / West 8 in Amsterdam

⁴Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen / MVRDV in Rotterdam

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BARCELONA

"Complexity adds value"¹

IMPRESSIONS

Where Copenhagen thrived in order and structure that did not fixate on perfection, Barcelona leans into complexity for the sake of intrigue. The density of BCN is both a challenge and an invitation to designers to look for solutions outside of governance and prove where the loopholes become the answers. Where the chaos is celebrated, not resisted. When we lean into this ethos we begin to see the patterns emerge in the cityscape and how people move through it.

Architecture in this bustling city is experimental, bright and unapologetic. Distinctly, Barcelona - and yet, nothing really looks the same. From material's textures and colours, to the roof forms and each building's response to its context. I'm not sure I could define contemporary Barcelonian architectural vernacular, I don't think it wants to be defined.

As the group marveled at the construction detailing exposed at the rear of the Mercat de Santa Caterina, our cycling guide, Lorenzo, noted that "complexity adds value", a common Barcelonian approach to architecture. Admittedly, it was somewhat messy, blatant and a beautiful example. So much of the work at home relies on hiding construction and the perfect image of the architecture. Much work in remote and regional communities rely on simple construction, maintenance and delivery - but this idea begs the question: are there opportunities, in these contexts, to add value through complexity outside of what we know must remain simple? This requires architects to define 'value' per project.

LOOKING UP

The complexity and unique nature of Barcelonian architecture is never more apparent then when I focus on how the buildings interact with the sky. Reflecting the ground overhead², shading in unique forms³ or framing access to the sky visually, with light and shadow⁴. Each method is intentional and intriguing. I'm fascinated by the materiality - none obviously favoured - but a propensity for bold colours, textures and strong geometries. There is an excitement in how the forms respond to the sky as much as the ground plane.

At home, we're often in conversations about how our buildings can retain connections to various physical facets of Country: Sky, Land, Waterways. This has been an exciting case study of diverse methods to connect to the sky through a lens so far removed from the concepts that we grapple with at home. Simplifying strategies to the fundamentals of design to layer atop the tangible and intangible notions of Country.

¹Lorenzo Kárász, Guiding Architects Barcelona

²Nou Mercat dels Encants Flea Market / b720 Fermín Vázquez Arquitectos

³Mercat de Santa Caterina Market Hall / EMBT Enric Miralles + Benedetta Taglibue

⁴Walden 7 / Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura

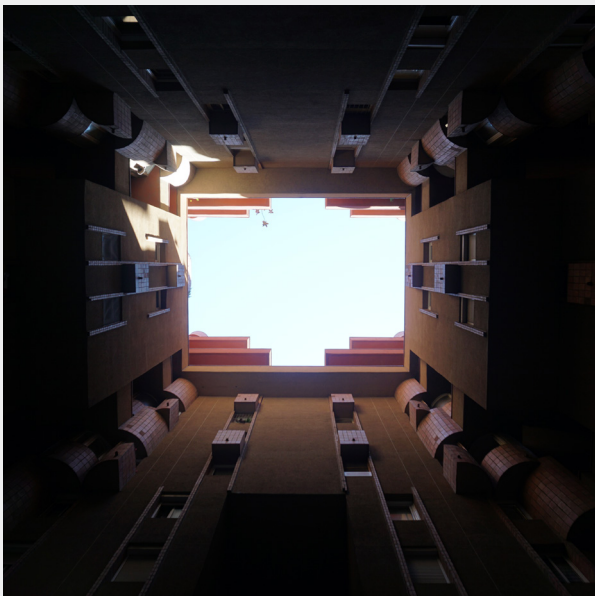
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CONCLUSION

Complicated Gratitude

OPPORTUNITY

No amount of desktop research, articles - academic or otherwise - theoretical analysis or replication of drawings can substitute seeing buildings in person, standing within their structures and feeling their spaces intuitively. We know this, we accept this as fact. We also must accept that the opportunities for this kind of critical exposure is complex.

While profoundly grateful, I also feel a call to ensure our young people - and more of our Indigenous cohort - are afforded this opportunity and the ones leading up to it in practice.

THE PEOPLE

To the DST2025 crew, I am so thankful for each of you. Much like architecture, it was the people that made the experience.

Each of my fellow recipients, Gumji, Kate, Jimmy and Nick, are talented architects who inspired me with every conversation.

The AIA reps, Abbey and James, are thorough and professional organisers who were so good at their ongoing jobs while on tour. Even more impressive, how patient and kind they were throughout - which isn't always easy with 5 architects.

Dulux reps, Pete and Maridza, both kind and so much fun. More than just partner representatives, really the life force of our tour keeping energies high.

Architecture Media rep, Adair, is a talented writer and editor. Thrown into this experience, she met each challenge head on and with success.

I'm truly thankful for what each of you contributed, you were all incredible during this time and I am so glad I had this experience with you.

Photographs in this report were taken during the Australian of Institute Architects Dulux Study Tour 2025 by the author unless noted otherwise

*Photograph by Nicholas Souksamrane



Gumji Kang



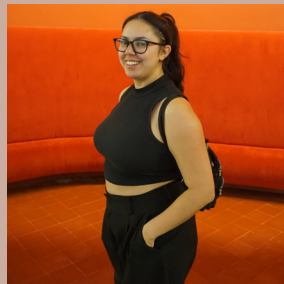
Kate Shepherd



Jimmy Carter



Nicholas Souksamrane



Me!



Adair Winder



Abbey Czudek



James Kennedy



*Maridza Riccioni**



Peter Wood

