

# 2023 Dulux Study Tour

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POST-TOUR REPORT

Helsinki  
Lisbon  
Zurich Vals  
Venice

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ARCHITECTS

Edwina Brisbane, VIC  
Ellen Buttrose, QLD  
Bradley Kerr, VIC  
Sarah Lebner, NSW  
Tiffany Liew, NSW

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Abbey Czudek, Australian Institute of Architects  
Jennifer Nichols, Australian Institute of Architects  
Linda Cheng, Architecture Media  
Cherie Micallef, Dulux  
Peter Wood, Dulux

TRAVEL DATES

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# Introduction

The Dulux Study Tour, organised in partnership with the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), is an annually awarded national prize that offers five emerging architects a remarkable opportunity to explore architecture on an expenses-paid tour. This year marked the tour's return overseas since the pandemic. Architects are selected based on their contributions to architectural practice, education, design excellence, and community involvement.

When I saw the Stage 1 shortlist I felt lucky to be among such promising emerging architects and esteemed peers. However, I was extremely fortunate to be part of the few chosen for this extraordinary opportunity, which was simply unbelievable.

The purpose of this report is to share highlights and insights from the 2023 Dulux Study Tour. Personally, the most significant highlight was the chance to travel alongside a group of exceptionally inspiring individuals, fostering deep discussions and forming lasting friendships. The tour left me creatively invigorated, with a renewed determination to shape architecture that is both humane and sensitive.

The photo below captures the first day we met in-person for the prize announcement, a reminder of how much we have grown together since. From left to right in the back row: Linda Cheng (Architecture AU), Sarah Lebner (Cooee), Abbey Czudek (AIA), Bradley Kerr (Winsor Kerr), Pete Wood (Dulux), Cherie Micallef (Dulux), and Jennifer Nichols (AIA). In the front row: I am on the left, Ellen Buttrose (POD) is in the middle, and Edwina Brisbane (Cumulus) on the right.

During the tour, we explored Helsinki, Lisbon, Zurich, Vals, and Venice over the course of ten days. We visited over fifty incredible buildings and discussed with more than twenty architects to learn about their practices and approaches to architecture. Considering the vast ground we covered, I would like to share a few insights of selected memorable moments, instead of an in-depth account. All sketches and photographs are my own, except for the group photo of us below.

Thank you for taking the time to read, and I hope you enjoy these glimpses into our journey.

- TIFFANY LIEW



Photographer: Casey Horsfield

# Helsinki

## MANY WAYS OF “DOING” ARCHITECTURE

Our walking tour with Marianna Heikinheimo and several practice visits revealed different approaches to practicing architecture. This revealed to me that we can advocate for better design of the built environment in many ways.

1 Otaniemi Library by Alvar Aalto, 1969.  
Architects can contribute to design at different scales. Aalto’s library showcases a comprehensive approach to the university project, from urban planning to intricate details. The library was completed after the Otaniemi Campus Masterplan in the 1940’s. To have a client for decades, and to skilfully resolve projects at different scales is impressive.

2 Collaboratorio Practice Visit  
Led by Kristiina Kuusiluoma and Martino De Rossi, this practice innovates with sustainable materials, including development of a cement-free concrete mix. Architects can develop materials to advocate for lower-impact construction.

3 Playa Practice Visit  
Based on the premise of “play”, Playa explained their work precisely and coherently, whilst demonstrating that it was possible to produce playful architecture without loud colours, materials or gestures. Architecture can be more fun; it does not have to be sombre, uptight nor serious.

4 Portania University Building by Aarne Ervi, 1957.  
Serving as a beautiful link to newer campus structures, this building demonstrates innovative 1950’s construction practices. Cherished and carefully maintained buildings can stand as a testament to good design, over time.

5 Juhani Pallasmaa Visit  
Pallasmaa invited us into his studio, sharing his practice of writing, advocating for and thinking about architecture.



# Helsinki

## MATERIALLY-RICH, YET CALM SPACES

In a fast-paced world with shifting digital landscapes, architecture has the power to soothe and ground people in the present moment. These buildings served a reminder of how textured natural materials, illuminated by natural light, can help draw our focus to the present and help to instill a sense of tranquility.



1 Aalto House, 1936. Landscape and a cosy scale are used as tools for calming. After visiting Aalto's university buildings, it was good to see his ideas about establishing a sense of place and connection with nature at a domestic scale.

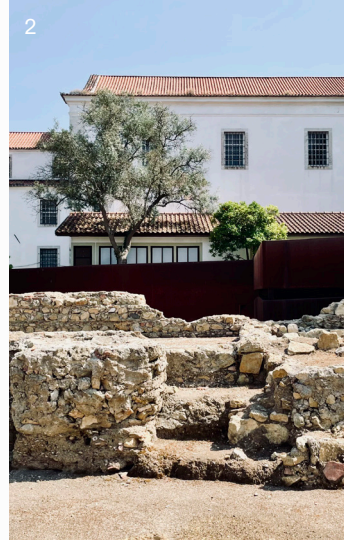
2 TempPELLIAUKIO Church by Suomalainen brothers, 1969. This magnificent church features a copper ceiling soaring above a solid rock base. Despite its grandeur, it emanates serenity and warmth through texture, colour, and a ring of natural light. The sloping rock wall edge helps visitors to understand the levels of the landscape beyond the building.

3 Tikkurila Church and Housing by OOPÉAA, 2021. At the rear of the building, a protected courtyard provides a peaceful landscaped sanctuary for residents and visitors, offering respite from the street.



# Lisbon

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## MATERIAL HOMAGES TO OTHER TIMES

Rodrigo Lima, a local architect, showed us over twenty buildings on warm day in Lisbon. At the castle ruins, he explained that the site could be read as a “palimpsest” of history and also as a “palindrome”, read from front-to-back and back-to-front. Materials are not only useful for a specific use in time, but are rearranged to suit other uses, as desired. Some material fragments we saw dated back to the Iron Age, which made me question the material assumptions upon which we calculate building impact. I think that the notion of a building life span needs to be seriously reconsidered, as all materials that we produce have the capacity to become useful building elements for many centuries to come.

- 1, 2 Archaeological Area of São Jorge Castle by Carrilho de Graça, 2010. Floating walls help define the ruins.
- 3 Thalia Theatre encapsulation of 1840’s ruins, by Gonçalo Byrne and Barbas Lopes Architects, 2008.
- 4 Passing through the Alfama neighbourhood, various shades of terracotta colour the rooftops.
- 5 Campo das Cebolas public space, with cross-sections of excavated material, by Carrilho da Graça, 2018.

# Lisbon

## DIFFERENT MODES OF ADAPTIVE RE-USE



As buildings age, we renew these assemblages with material repairs where desired. Sometimes structures are imbued with new, unintended uses. These buildings affirmed to me that changes in the patterns of use and spatial allocations can be powerful tools for transforming the character of a space.

1 Dodged house by L. Banchini and BUREAU, 2019. A new house behind a retained, closed facade to the street opens up a new way of living that addresses the rear planted courtyard, complete with kangaroo paws.

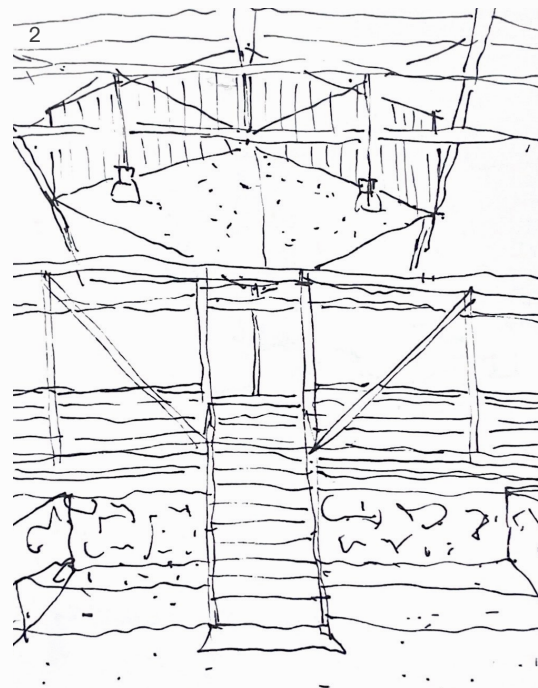


2 Carpintaria de São Lázaro, Cultural Center, 2019. A light-touch adaptive reuse project by Borges de Macedo relies on curtains and flexible walls to enable different cultural programmes.



3 BUREAU office space. Temporary elements from previous exhibitions and furniture installations are used to furnish their space.

4 Atelier Cecílio de Sousa, Aires Mateus Lisbon office. Originally built as a two-storey residential building in 1779, it was extended to be four-storeys, and is now reoccupied as a commercial premises.



## REGIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

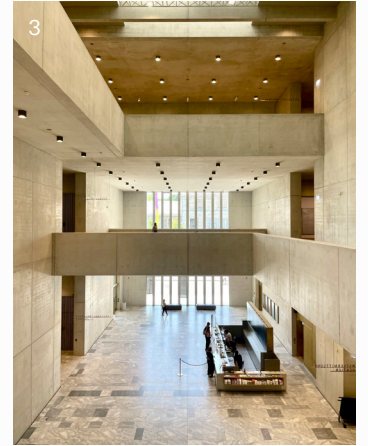
On our journey to Vals, the transformed rural vernacular helped us to understand local building traditions and materials. These regional motifs helped to make these contemporary projects sit more comfortably in their contexts, reflecting traditions whilst offering a renewed expression of place.

1 Atelier Bardill by Olgiati, 2009. The hexafoil motif, barn-like form, and local terracotta colour is referenced.



2, 3 Shelter for Roman Ruins by Zumthor, 1986. Timber construction and an open timber screen resonate with the barn-like structures that dot the landscape.

4 Saint Benedict Chapel by Zumthor, 1988. Wooden shingles, a roof like the hull of a boat, and its elegant timber structure reference local methods of building.



- 1 Kunstmuseum designed by Barozzi Veiga, 2016.
- 2 Therme Vals by Zumthor, 1996.
- 3, 4, 5 Kunsthhaus Museum Extension by Chipperfield, 2020.

## GRIDS, SEQUENCING, ORDER

At architectural school, we are often encouraged to consider how to make the organisation of a building more legible, user-friendly and approachable, to enable clearer navigation and to better interpret the functions of each space. Each of these projects demonstrated a meticulous level of control, guiding visitors through a procession of spaces organised within a carefully ordered grid.

The Veiga project shown above referenced the plan of the existing structure shown in the foreground, with a direct underground passage between the two structures. Similarly the Kunsthhaus Museum Extension by Chipperfield utilised similar principles, with an underground connection to ensure the safe passage of artworks, whilst presenting a highly structured facade to the street that defined edges of adjacent public squares.

Of these projects, visiting the Therme Vals by Zumthor was the most memorable, sensory experience. An escape from the city itself, the journey to the baths was filled with anticipation, winding through mountains adorned with waterfalls and eagles soaring in the distance. Before entering the baths, there is a ritual of changing and cleansing. We bathed in the evening daylight, at night under the stars and in the morning before breakfast. The interplay between light and darkness, cold and warmth, wetness and dryness (sauna), indoor and outdoor spaces was extraordinary. I enjoyed floating in the corners where the spaces echoed between the walls. Different depths of underwater ledges allowed for different postures to recline against the walls. Each combination of spaces offered a unique ambience as daylight or moonlight filtered in, framing views of the surrounding landscape.



# Venice

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN 'AGENT OF CHANGE'?

Lesley Lokko, curator of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition, set the theme 'The Laboratory of the Future', posing the question above.

Earlier in the trip, I recalled conversations with the architects on tour that it seemed more important to older generations of architects to describe what their architecture "says", where as emerging generations of architects are more interested in what architecture "does".

A similar tension emerged at the more temporal and intimate scale of the exhibition at the Venice Biennale, with what some exhibitions were trying to "say", versus what they were trying to "do".

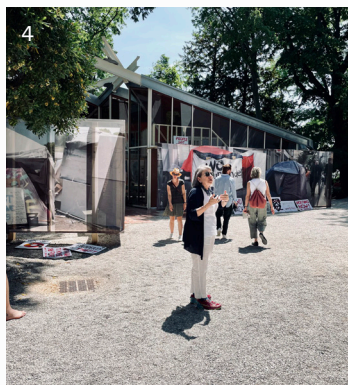
These exhibitions challenged me to consider how architectural practices and exhibitions can more directly address complex conditions and issues, such as climate change, access to housing, and social justice.



1 The Australian Pavilion, "Unsettling Queenstown" shared a lot of information, asking the audience to draw together disparate threads to reconsider the lands upon which we live and practice. The invitation was more passive and contemplative, asking the audience interpret what the exhibition was trying to "say".



2 The "Sámi Pavilion", set in a beautiful 1962 Sverre Fehn building, invited visitors to occupy nooks and crannies in the space to explore a library of ideas. To me the exhibition invited conversations to occur through a series of internal enclosures and exhibits that provided stimulus for discussion.



3, 4 The "Not for Sale!" exhibit at the Canadian Pavilion, organised by Architects Against Housing Alienation (AAHA), was much more action-oriented, rallying the architecture community to consider their role in addressing housing issues. A group of university students researched community-derived housing "demands" on the mezzanine, to further these actions. How can architects be agents of change?

# Thanks

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## ARCHITECTS

Edwina Brisbane, VIC  
Ellen Buttrose, QLD  
Bradley Kerr, VIC  
Sarah Lebner, NSW

To my fellow architects, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for your friendship and generosity. Thank you for sharing so many insights and your experiences so openly. You are each an inspiration to me, and I look forward to hearing all about your future endeavours.

## THE INSTITUTE

Abbey Czudek  
Jennifer Nichols

Thank you to the Australian Institute of Architects for this fantastic opportunity and for your continued support of the Dulux Study Tour. A huge thanks to Abbey for her exceptional organisation of the tour, and to Jennifer for your support.

## DULUX

Peter Wood  
Cherie Micallef

I am grateful to Dulux for supporting emerging architects and for providing us with the opportunity to meet like-minded peers. The legacy of the Dulux Study Tour is impressive, with many alumni continuing to excel with leadership of the architectural profession.

## ARCHITECTURE AU

Linda Cheng

A huge thanks to Linda for patiently working with us to refine our blog posts and write up articles on the go. Her patience to listen and ability to draw ideas into a cohesive narrative is impressive.

## PRIZE JURY

Shannon Battisson  
Barry Whitmore  
Jevan Dickinson  
Pete Wood  
Qianyi Lim  
Erin Crowden

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the prize jury for contributing to this endeavour in support of emerging architects, and for selecting such an amazing group of architects to travel with.

## PRACTICE

Andrew Burns

A huge thanks to Andrew Burns, my employer at Architecture AND, for your mentorship and encouragement. Without your support, my extra-curricular professional contributions would not be possible.

## LOVED ONES

Last but not least, thanks to my husband, family and friends for your immense support, which has allowed me to contribute so much to the architecture profession.

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## FURTHER READING

I encourage you to explore other documents produced by other tour members on the 2023 Dulux Study Tour:

- ArchitectureAU Articles by Linda Cheng.
- Dulux Study Tour blog posts on [Architecture.com.au](https://www.architecture.com.au)
- Other Post-Tour Reports prepared by Edwina, Ellen, Bradley and Sarah.

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