The Space in Between

Reflections of Addition, Care and Civic Ambition

Singapore | Paris | Vienna

2026 Dulux Study Tour Report / Sharaan Muruvan

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What does Architecture give back?

Before the architecture came the journey: six architects travelling together.

For ten days, we moved through Singapore, Paris and Vienna by train, tram, bus, bicycle and foot. We shared airport lounges, practice visits, rushed connections and dinners that stretched late into the evening. The conversations began with architecture but rarely stayed there. We spoke about teaching, practice, leadership, family, burnout and the kind of architects we hoped to become.

Those moments between the official itinerary became some of the most valuable. Each of us noticed something different: landscape, housing, materiality, public life, procurement or practice culture. A project I initially understood one way became richer after hearing someone else's perspective. Travelling together reminded me that architecture is never created, understood or experienced alone.

The cities revealed themselves in much the same way.

Moving through them by public transport, on foot and by bicycle changed how I read them. Buildings were never isolated destinations. They belonged to streets, parks, transport networks, neighbourhoods and everyday routines. Waiting for a tram, cycling through the rain or simply walking between projects often revealed as much about civic life as the buildings themselves.

Across the tour, I kept returning to one question: What does architecture give back?

Before leaving Australia, I might have answered with words like innovation or design excellence. Those qualities still matter, but they no longer feel like the whole story.

The projects that stayed with me were those that gave something back to the people who used them every day. Sometimes that was shade. Sometimes housing. Sometimes dignity, access or simply a place to pause. Their value was found not only in how they looked, but in what they enabled.

Each city offered a different perspective. Singapore revealed landscape as civic infrastructure. Paris demonstrated the value of adding rather than replacing. Vienna showed how housing can become part of a broader civic project, supported by transport, public space and long-term investment.

This report is not a catalogue of projects or a chronological account of the tour. It is a reflection on the ideas that remained after the itinerary ended, and the conversations that gave those ideas meaning.

It is about the space in between: between buildings and streets, between architecture and landscape, between formal visits and informal conversations, and ultimately between architecture and the people it exists to serve.

Because perhaps that is where architecture gives the most back.

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01 — Cité de Refuge (Le Corbusier), Paris | Sharaan Muruvan, Ksenia Totoeva, Jack Gillmer, Jasmine Placentino, Rachel Licht, Callum Senjov. (Photograph: Bella Walker.)

I acknowledge the First Nations peoples of the lands on which I live, work and practise, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

As I travelled across Singapore, Paris and Vienna, I also acknowledge the cultures, communities, histories and places that shaped each city we were fortunate to learn from.

This tour was a privilege, and one I carry with gratitude and responsibility.

01

Landscape as Civic Care.

Singapore changed the way I understood landscape.

Before the tour, I often thought of planting as something that supported architecture. In Singapore, that relationship felt reversed. Landscape was not simply placed around buildings; buildings, movement and public life were organised around it.

Planting, shade, water, transport and density worked together. Landscape cooled the city, supported biodiversity, made walking more comfortable and helped dense environments feel generous. It was not only visual. It was climatic, social and infrastructural.

Our visit to WOHA gave this thinking greater depth. Hearing Richard Hassell and Adithya Rangharajan speak about the practice made it clear that the greenery associated with their work is not an applied image. It comes from a broader approach that connects climate, density, community and everyday life.

Across PARKROYAL on Pickering and Kampung Admiralty, landscape performed different but related civic roles. At PARKROYAL, planted terraces extended the ground plane upwards, creating shade, habitat and retreat within the city. At Kampung Admiralty, gardens became part of a more complex network of housing, healthcare, food, childcare and community facilities. Together, the projects showed that landscape can soften density while also supporting care, proximity and social life.

The Enabling Village expanded this understanding through accessibility. Inclusion was embedded into paths, thresholds and shared spaces rather than added as a final compliance layer. A clear route, a shaded place to pause or a gentle transition in level became part of a wider environment in which people could participate with dignity.

At the Punggol Digital District and the Singapore Institute of Technology, these ideas moved from the scale of the building to the scale of a precinct. Rather than clearing the existing secondary forest, the campus is organised around it. The landscape becomes the centre of learning and movement, creating a “Campus-in-a-Park” where ecology, education and public life are closely connected.

What might once have been seen as a constraint became the organising idea.

Singapore’s broader landscape infrastructure reinforced this approach. Gardens by the Bay, public parks, shaded routes and water systems all contributed to a city where environmental performance and civic experience were closely linked. Moving through Singapore by public transport made that coordination visible. The projects did not feel like isolated destinations, but parts of a larger urban framework.

By the end of our time there, I had stopped asking how planting could be added to a building.

I began asking how architecture could be organised around climate, ecology and care from the beginning.

Singapore showed that civic architecture is not always monumental. Sometimes it is a garden, a shaded path, an accessible threshold or the ability to move comfortably through the city.

Landscape was not the space left over. It was part of what architecture gave back.



02 Kampung Admiralty
WOHA

03 PARKROYAL COLLECTION Pickering
WOHA

04 Jewel Changi Airport
Safdie Architects

05 SIT Punggol Campus Heart, Plot 1
WOHA

06 Rifle Range Nature Park
Henning Larsen + Architects 61

07 Enabling Village
WOHA

Author’s own interpretive sketch collages.

02

Learning to Add.

We experienced the city on foot, by metro and, most memorably, by bike. Riding through Paris in the rain, weaving between boulevards and crossing the Seine made the city feel wonderfully ordinary. It wasn't the postcard version of Paris; it was commuters, cafés spilling onto footpaths, cyclists filling protected lanes and architecture quietly supporting everyday life.

One afternoon, we found ourselves racing across the city to return our bikes before hurrying to a practice visit. It was slightly chaotic, slightly stressful and unexpectedly memorable. Looking back, it summed up the city perfectly. Paris wasn't experienced as a sequence of architectural icons, but as a living city constantly in motion.

One of the most rewarding conversations of the tour took place at Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture, where Perth-born architect Rohan Golestani presented the practice's work. Speaking with someone who understood both Perth and Paris created an unexpected bridge between two very different cities. We spoke not only about projects, but about practice culture, procurement and the different opportunities and constraints of working in each city.

The practice reflected a quiet confidence. Rather than pursuing architecture through spectacle, the work was grounded in place, material, history and craft. That same sensibility continued through our visit to LAN and WOOD'UP, where discussions around housing, timber construction and density reinforced the value of precision over excess.

Across Paris, the projects each explored addition in their own way. Bourse de Commerce demonstrated how contemporary intervention can strengthen historic fabric through restraint. Fondation Cartier blurred the relationship between architecture, landscape and street, while Philharmonie de Paris showed how a major civic building can contribute generously to the public realm without relying on monumentality alone.

Perhaps the most personal moment came at Villa Savoye.

Like many architecture students, it was one of the first buildings I studied in first year. For years it existed as drawings, photographs and architectural principles. Standing inside it was entirely different. The spaces felt both familiar and unfamiliar, reminding me that architecture is ultimately understood through movement, light and experience rather than diagrams alone.

By the end of our time in Paris, I realised the city had quietly shifted my understanding of architectural ambition. The projects were rarely trying to reinvent the city. Instead, they worked carefully with what already existed, allowing history and contemporary architecture to strengthen one another.

That idea feels increasingly relevant in Australia, where our instinct is often to replace rather than adapt.

Paris reminded me that sometimes the most meaningful act of architecture is simply to add—with care.

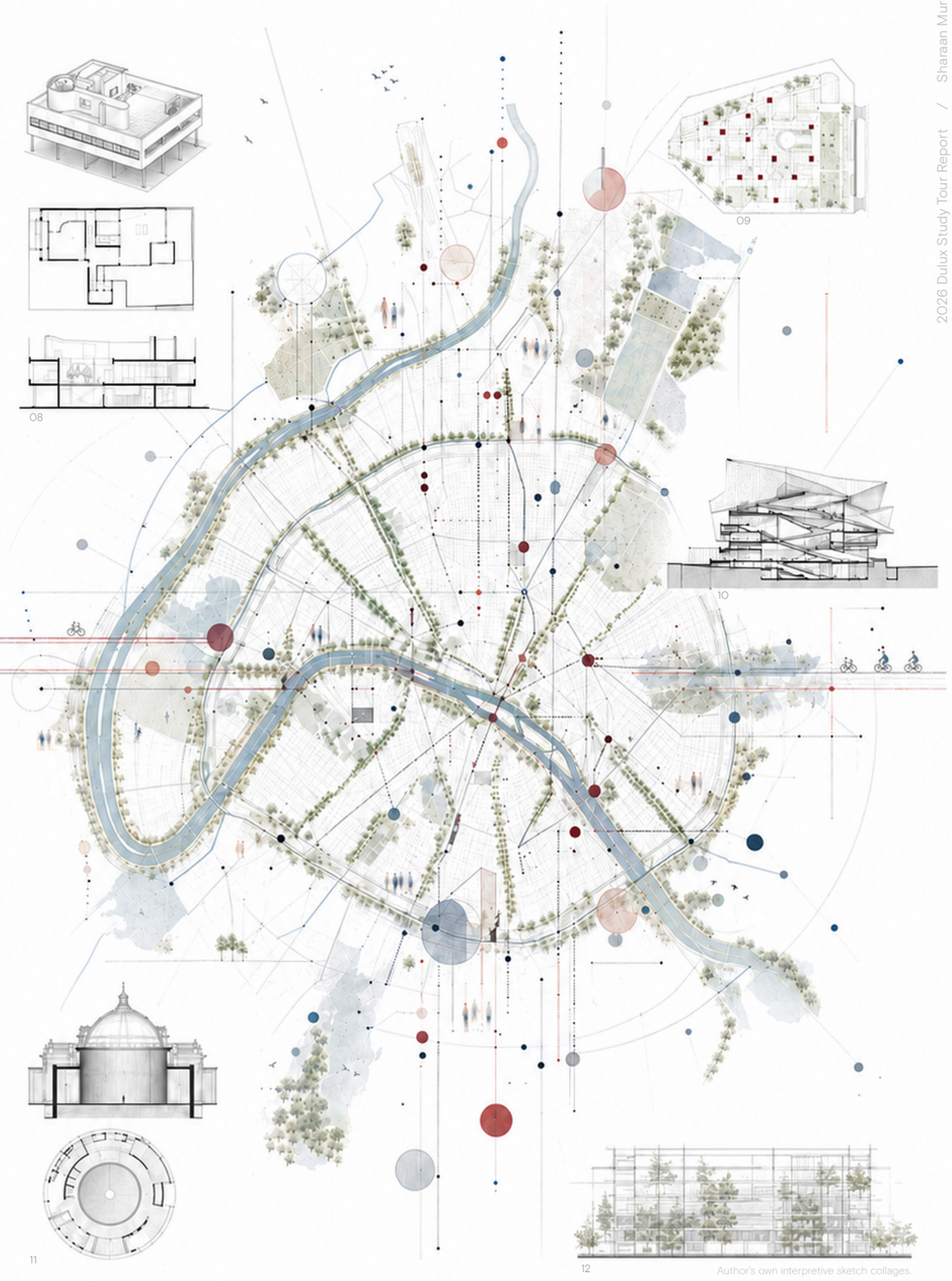
08 Villa Savoye
Le Corbusier + Pierre Jeanneret

09 Parc de la Villette
Bernard Tschumi Architects

10 Philharmonie de Paris
Ateliers Jean Nouvel

11 Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection Tadao Ando Architect & Associates

12 Fondation Cartier, Boulevard Raspail — Jean Nouvel



Author's own interpretive sketch collages.

P A R I S

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03

Housing is Civic Infrastructure

Vienna made housing feel like a public commitment rather than a private outcome.

After Singapore's planted density and Paris's careful negotiation with history, Vienna revealed a different kind of ambition. It was embedded in systems: trams, cycling routes, courtyards, shared facilities and housing supported by long-term policy. Architecture was inseparable from the structures that make everyday life possible.

Biotope City Wienerberg was the clearest contemporary expression of this thinking. Rather than treating landscape, density, affordability and climate adaptation as competing concerns, the precinct brings them together. Planting is integrated through courtyards, roofs, façades and streets, supporting biodiversity while creating comfortable places to live. The architecture is varied, but the broader idea is consistent: housing quality extends well beyond the apartment.

That thinking has deep roots in Vienna.

At Karl-Marx-Hof, housing is unmistakably civic. Its scale, communal facilities and relationship to the city reflect a belief that everyone deserves access to dignified homes, shared spaces and public infrastructure. Nearly a century later, that ambition continues through precincts such as Sonnwendviertel Ost and the legacy of Alt-Erlaa, where streets, courtyards, transport and open space are treated as essential parts of housing rather than leftover space around it.

Moving through the city by tram and bicycle reinforced this understanding. Housing was never experienced as isolated developments, but as part of a connected network of public transport, landscape and everyday life.

One of the most memorable journeys was the ride to Wotruba Church.

What began as a leisurely cycle quickly became an unofficial race up the hill, with everyone quietly trying not to be last. We arrived out of breath and laughing, making the stillness of the church feel even more profound.

Its heavy concrete forms are raw and sculptural, yet the interior is remarkably calm. Arriving through movement and exertion made that silence unforgettable. It reminded me that architecture is remembered not only for what it is, but for how we arrive there.

Elsewhere, IKEA Westbahnhof by querkraft demonstrated that even commercial buildings can contribute to civic life. Its open, planted structure and integration with public transport challenge the familiar model of a retail box surrounded by parking, giving something back to the city beyond its primary function.

What stayed with me most, however, was Vienna's broader attitude towards housing.

The city expects housing to contribute to public life. The apartment matters, but so do the courtyard, garden, footpath, tram stop and shared spaces that support everyday community.

Vienna left me with a question that feels increasingly relevant in Australia:

What would change if housing were understood not only as supply, but as long-term civic infrastructure?

Answering that requires more than good buildings. It requires policy, procurement, maintenance, public trust and design working together.

That may be Vienna's greatest lesson.

Housing becomes civic when responsibility extends beyond the dwelling to the life that surrounds it.

13 Karl-Marx-Hof
Karl Ehn

14 Wohnpark Alt-Erlaa
Harry Glück + Requat & Reinthaller + Kurt Hlaweniczka

15 Wotruba Church
Fritz Wotruba + Fritz G. Mayr

16 Biotope City Wienerberg
Urban design: Studio Vlay Streeruwitz



Author's own interpretive sketch collages.

V I E N N A

04

Learning in Motion

Some of the strongest learning happened between the formal visits.

It happened on trains, trams and buses; while walking between projects; waiting at stations; cycling through rain; and comparing notes over dinner after long days. These moments did not distract from the architecture. They helped us understand it more fully.

Travelling as a group meant that every place was seen from several perspectives at once. One person noticed the material logic, another the public realm, another the housing model or practice culture behind it. A question raised casually on a tram could shift how I understood a project we had seen hours earlier.

The conversations often moved beyond architecture. We spoke about teaching, leadership, career choices, family, burnout, ambition and the pressures of practice. We compared the kinds of offices we had worked in, the responsibilities we carried and the kind of architects we wanted to become.

Those discussions gave the tour a depth that no itinerary could have planned.

Movement also made the cities more legible. Experiencing Singapore, Paris and Vienna by public transport, bicycle and foot revealed the relationships between buildings and everyday life. A project was never only an object. It was part of a route, a neighbourhood, a climate, a transport network and a pattern of public use.

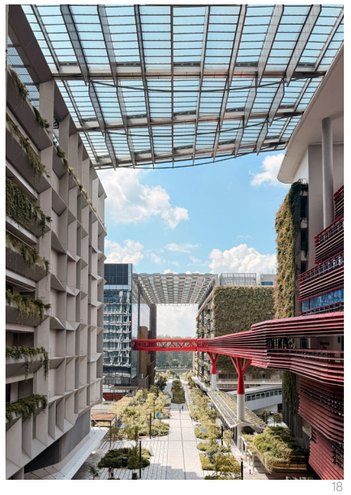
Cycling through Paris in the rain, rushing to return the bikes before a practice visit, or racing uphill towards Wotruba Church made the cities memorable in ways that photographs could not. The architecture became tied to effort, humour, weather and shared experience.

By the end of the tour, I understood that professional growth does not come only from seeing significant buildings. It also comes from being with people who challenge the way you think.

The cities gave us the material. The conversations helped us make sense of it.



17 — Biotope City Wienerberg (Masterplan: Rüdiger Lainer + Partner), Vienna. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)



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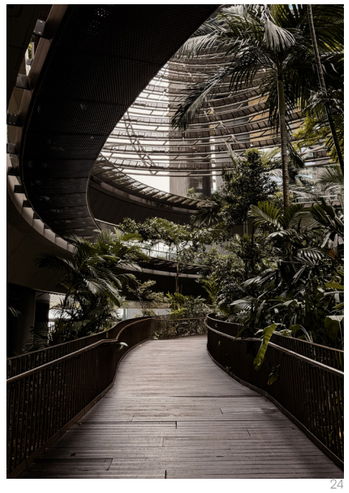
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18 Singapore Institute of Technology, Punggol Digital District (WOHA), Singapore. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

19 WOHA Studio, Singapore. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

20 Kampung Admiralty (WOHA), Singapore. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

21 Villa Savoye (Le Corbusier), Poissy. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

22 Lina Ghotmeh Architecture, Paris. (Photograph: Bella Walker.)

23 Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection (Tadao Ando, NeM Architectes & Pierre-Antoine Gatier), Paris. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

24 Marina One (ingenhoven associates), Singapore. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

25 Wohnpark Alt-Erlaa (Harry Glück, Kurt Hlaweniczka & Requat and Reinthaller), Vienna. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

05

What I Bring Home

The tour did not give me answers to import. It gave me better questions to ask.

Singapore, Paris and Vienna each operate within different political, cultural and economic conditions. Their architecture cannot simply be transferred to Perth. What can be carried home is the way each city frames responsibility.

Singapore asked how landscape can do more civic work.

Paris asked how architecture can add without erasing.

Vienna asked what becomes possible when housing is treated as long-term public infrastructure.

Together, they shifted my attention from individual buildings to the systems that support them. Better architecture depends on more than design intent. It is shaped by procurement, regulation, maintenance, public trust, political ambition, practice culture and community expectation.

That feels especially relevant in Perth.

How can landscape be treated as essential infrastructure rather than decoration?

How can housing contribute to streets, neighbourhoods and public life?

How can buildings respond more carefully to what already exists?

How can density become generous rather than merely efficient?

These questions are useful in practice, but also in teaching. I want students to see architecture not only as form-making, but as a way of shaping relationships: between people, climate, landscape, movement and shared space. The strongest projects are often those that understand what they are part of, not only what they are.



26 — Gleis 21 (einszueins architektur), Vienna. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

The tour also reinforced the value of looking beyond the site boundary. A building's civic contribution may be found in its shade, its edge, its ground floor, its connection to transport or the way it makes someone feel welcome. These decisions may appear modest, but together they shape whether a city feels generous or indifferent.

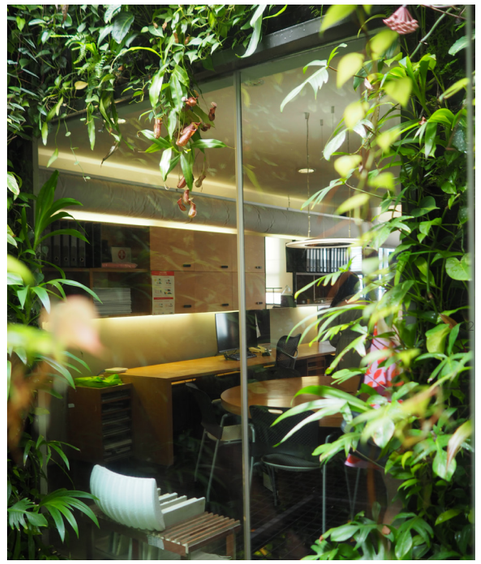
What I bring home is not a preference for one architectural language or one city model. It is a stronger sense of responsibility.

Architecture should do more than resolve a brief. It should contribute to the life around it.

At the end of the day, architecture is for the people, with the people and by the people.



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27 My Last Home (L Architects), Singapore. (Photograph: Lucia Amies.)

28 WOHA Practice Visit, Singapore. (Photograph: Lucia Amies.)

29 Biotope City Wienerberg (Masterplan: Rüdiger Lainer + Partner), Vienna. (Photograph: Sharaan Muruvan.)

30 Villa Savoye (Le Corbusier), Poissy. (Photograph: Bella Walker.)

06

A Shared Experience

The Dulux Study Tour was far more than an opportunity to visit remarkable buildings. It was a chance to learn alongside people who continually challenged, encouraged and expanded my thinking. While the projects will stay with me, it is equally the conversations, friendships and shared experiences that have shaped what I take home.

My sincere thanks to Dulux and the Australian Institute of Architects for continuing to invest in emerging architects through a programme that is both generous and transformative.

Peter Wood and **Christian Earls**, thank you for your generosity, enthusiasm and constant support throughout the tour. Your passion for the programme made every city, visit and conversation feel both purposeful and memorable.

Loren Bates, thank you for your exceptional organisation and care behind the scenes. Everything ran seamlessly because of your efforts, allowing us to focus entirely on learning and making the most of the experience.

Bella Walker, thank you for capturing the tour with such thoughtfulness and energy. Your photographs preserved not only the architecture we visited, but also the friendships and moments that defined the journey.

Lucia Amies, thank you for your curiosity, humour and generosity throughout the tour. Travelling with you was a pleasure, and your perspective encouraged us to reflect more deeply on what we were experiencing.

Rachel Licht, thank you for your warmth, generosity and genuine curiosity. Our conversations continually reminded me that architecture is ultimately about people and the communities we design for.

Callum Senjov, thank you for your humour, perspective and positive energy. You had a way of making every conversation richer and every day just that little bit more enjoyable.

Jack Gillmer, thank you for your thoughtful perspective and quiet curiosity. You consistently connected architecture back to culture, history and community, broadening the way I experienced each place.

Jasmine Placentino, thank you for your enthusiasm, optimism and infectious curiosity. Your excitement was contagious and encouraged all of us to approach every city with fresh eyes.

Ksenia Totoeva, thank you for your calm, insightful and considered perspective. You encouraged us to look beyond individual projects and think more deeply about the systems and values shaping our cities.

MJA Studio, thank you for supporting my participation in the Dulux Study Tour and recognising the value of bringing new ideas, perspectives and experiences back into practice.

Finally, thank you to my wife, Olivia. You encouraged me to take this opportunity from the very beginning. Sharing the final chapter of our travels through Europe with you was a fitting end to an unforgettable journey.

Although the tour lasted only ten days, its influence will extend far beyond them. The buildings will stay with me, but so too will the conversations, friendships and shared experiences that gave them meaning.

Looking back, I realise the most valuable lesson was never contained within a single project. It was found in the space between places, between people and between ideas.

That, perhaps, is what architecture gives back.

2026 Dulux Study Tour Report / Sharaan Muruvan



31 — House Freddie (Studio Bright), Melbourne | Callum Senjov, Christina Earls, Sharaan Muruvan, Jack Gillmer, Rachel Licht, Bella Walker, Ksenia Totoeva, Loren Bates, Lucia Amies, Peter Wood, Jasmine Placentino. (Photograph: Casey Horsfield.)

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