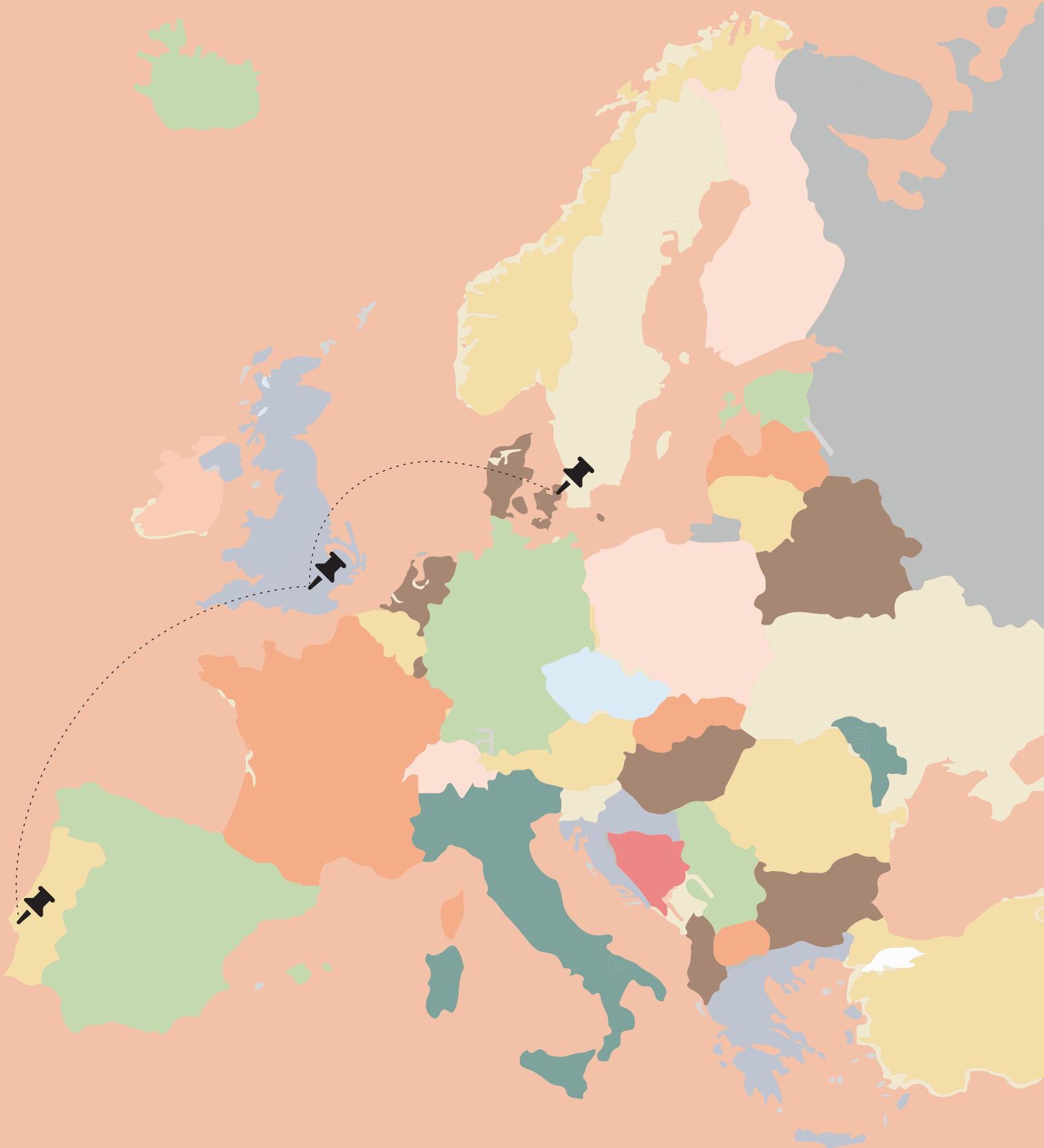


# Dulux Study Tour 2019

Alix Smith



# Copenhagen



## Copenhagen

### Impressions of the City

Copenhagen was remarkable first stop of the tour; a city with an understanding and appetite for design thinking and social generosity at its core.

Our whirlwind bicycle tour with Alice Sondergaard took us to over 30 buildings and urban spaces many of which, with the ambition of the designer, had gone beyond the brief to provide something for the people of the city; an opera house incorporates a public waterfront plaza, a powerplant with a ski slope on top, and a research facility is accessed by a winding bikepath that is provided for pure enjoyment.

Another recurring theme was an openness and honesty about the issues of the city that would manifest in some startling yet purposeful adjacencies of program. A school yard with no fences adjoins a busy road to teach students about the dangers of traffic. A drug consumption centre unapologetically faces an

alfresco dining area in the trendy meatpacking district.

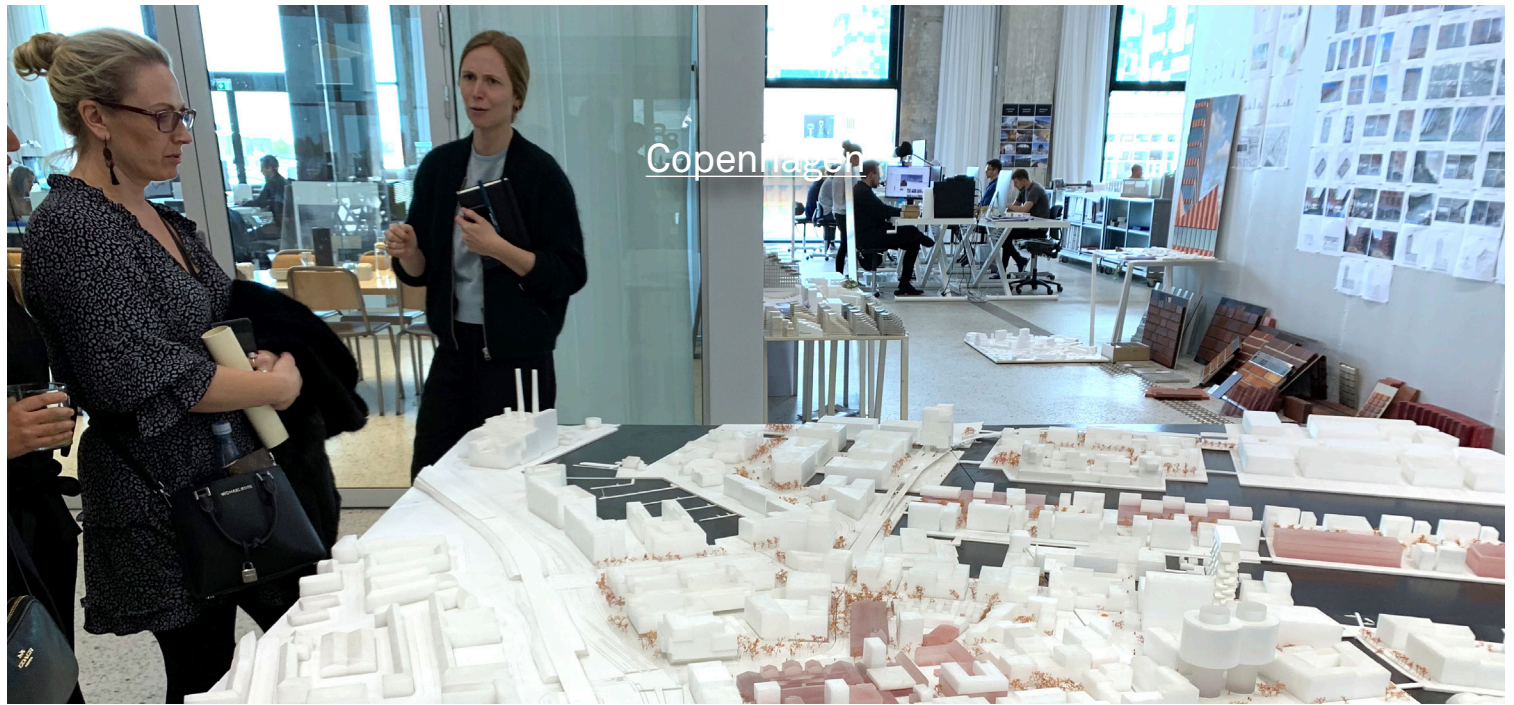
It was this hunger to enact change through design, and openness and honesty that define the character of Copenhagen.

#### Projects visited:

- \_ The Danish National Bank (Arne Jacobsen)
- \_ Royal Danish Theatre Playhouse (Lundgaard & Tranberg)
- \_ Sankt Annæ Plads (Scønherr) and Kvæsthusprojektet
- \_ The Royal Danish Opera (Henning Larsen)
- \_ Krøyers Plads (COBE)
- \_ Kids' City (COBE)
- \_ Hal C (Christensen & co)
- \_ Free Town Christiania
- \_ Copenhagen (BIG)
- \_ The Crystal / Prismen – Sport and Culture House (Dorte Mandrup)
- \_ School Amagerfælled, open school yard
- \_ Tietgen Kollegiet (Lundgaard & Tranberg)
- \_ Harbour Bath (PLOT / BIG + JDS)
- \_ Kalvebod Wawe (JDS)
- \_ The Bicycle Snake (DISSING+WEITLING)
- \_ Gemini Residence Frøsilo (MRDV)

- \_ Havneholmen (Lundgaard og Tranberg)
- \_ Meat Packing District (Copenhagen Municipality. Brown city built 1870's. White city built 1930's, Poul Holsøe et al.)
- \_ Drug Consumption Centre (PHL Architects)
- \_ Radisson Hotel (Arne Jacobsen)
- \_ The Green Path / Super Bike Lane
- \_ Sjakket (BIG + JDS)
- \_ The Library / Biblioteket Nordvest (COBE)
- \_ Dortheavej Residence, social housing (BIG)
- \_ Superkilen Park (BIG and Superflex et al.)
- \_ BaNanapark (Schønherr)
- \_ Forfatterhuset kindergarten (COBE)
- \_ Elephant House, Center for Cancer (Leth & Gori)
- \_ The Maersk Tower (CF MØLLER)
- \_ Israels Plads (COBE)
- \_ Nørreport Station (COBE)
- \_ Hausers Plads, playground with underground offices (WERK Arkitekter and Sangberg Architects with Karres en Brands Landschapsarchitecten)
- \_ Nordhavenen, COBE
- \_ Bagsvaerd Church, Jørn Utzon





## Copenhagen

### Meeting the Practices

Practices visited:

- \_ Lundgaard + Tranberg
- \_ Gehl
- \_ Leth + Gori
- \_ COBE
- \_ David Thulstrup
- \_ Jan Utzon

Each of the practices we visited were incredibly generous and open about their work, process and operations.

The scale of the practices varied from the tiny Leth and Gori to the powerhouse in Nordhavn at COBE, however, a common theme was a practical sense of really engaging with the city they work in; whether it be through a gallery in their shopfront (Leth + Gori), or the cafe in the lobby of COBE's office that sits within their own masterplan, an act of commitment to the success of the new neighbourhood.

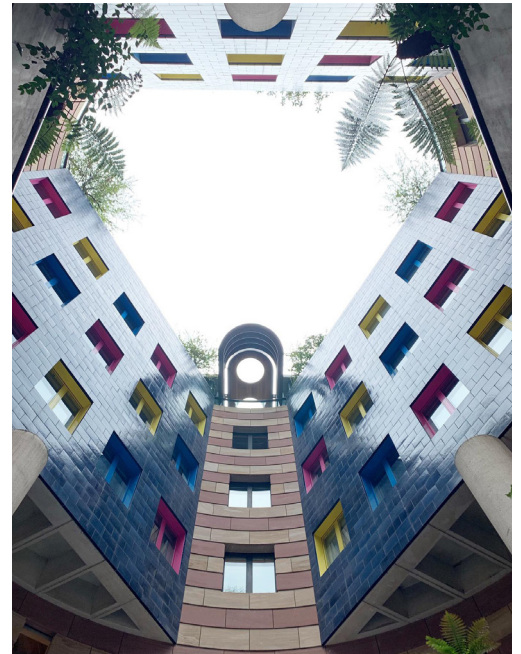
COBE and Lundgaard + Tranberg's working spaces clearly reflected their rigorous design process; model making, testing, pinning up the work, and openly discussing the project as a team.

David Thulstrup's studio also reflected the key ambitions of their work; a rigorous exploration of material, with the sample library of any architect's dreams, and a huge portion of the space dedicated to assembling ever changing sample and mood boards to find the best design solution, character and quality of space that would be bespoke for each client.

Both Thulstrup and COBE had grown exponentially in profile and size within the 10 years of their practice and it was fascinating to hear how each practice had dealt with such growth, relinquishing control and maintaining a consistency in the design quality of their work.

What came through from each practice visit in Copenhagen was a desire to build upon the character of each of the places in which their projects were located, whilst creating something that would make it a better, more human place.





## London

### Impressions of the City

London is a hard city to summarise. The sheer energy of the city hits you in the face the minute you step off the plane. My overall impression is that London is a city in tension and profoundly more chaotic than what I saw in Copenhagen. There's a palpable tension between economic growth and preservation, the working class and the bourgeois. It has a rebellious, punk attitude in contrast to deep rooted tradition that makes the city such a captivating place.

For me, the tour in London raised many questions about heritage and conservation. It's a city that seems to be constantly shifting the goalposts of what should be preserved. Amid rapid development you can see in the urban fabric make desperate grasps to protect the vestiges of their built history. "View cones" to St Paul's carve out dense pockets of high rise towers, even though the view of the cathedral's river facing façade has long been compromised

by new developments. Many of the contemporary buildings we saw only exist because heritage listed buildings were allowed to be cleared for "exemplary" architecture. Ordinarily, buildings less than 30 years old are not considered for heritage listing. However James Stirling's No 1 Poultry was granted listing status at barely 20 years old and uniquely evaded the fate of many other post-modernist buildings.

We encountered two impressive brutalist buildings, the Hayward Gallery and National Theatre that seem lucky to have survived an era of public distaste for the style, to live until a time when there is growing interest in the brutalism and its severe, raw structures. This newfound trend or fashion for brutalism is an example of how quickly the thresholds of taste can change.

Across the river we saw another brutal, yet not brutalist icon at the Tate Modern. Within Herzog and De Meuron's revitalisation of this industrial structure we can see changing approaches to preservation within one site, and even within the work of one architect in

two projects developed 10 years apart. The refurbishment of the spaces around the Cathedral-like Turbine hall exhibit one approach in which new interventions starkly contrast in material and form with the existing. In the Switch House, completed in 2017, Herzog and de Meuron's approach seems to have shifted from toward a more analogous use of material and structures.

What differentiates the brutality of the Tate from the National Theatre and Hayward Gallery building, however, is the generous and open spirit of the gallery that invites the public into their spaces. The Turbine Hall can be used in its most basic state as a thoroughfare, and the Switch House invites visitors up to its free viewing floor for a unique perspective of London.

While this city can seem anarchic and capitalist-driven in its development compared to more fiercely preserved European cities, it seems it is precisely this combination of tradition, establishment, enterprise and innovation that has allowed London to remain one of the true powerhouse cities of the world.





## London

### Meeting the Practices

Practices visited:

- \_ Peter Barber Architects
- \_ 6A Architects
- \_ Foster + Partners
- \_ AL\_A
- \_ RHSP
- \_ HASSELL

A consistent theme through the practices we met in London was the importance each practice placed on allowed time for research. In a city so vast, fast paced and international in reach, it appeared this dedication to research is what has allowed these practices to rise to the top of their field.

For Peter Barber it was a decades long research through design project, refining a medium density, social housing typology that gives it's inhabitants a sense of ownership and community, whilst offering an urban design

solution that fits in seamlessly with it's surrounds.

At 6A, research focused on the cultural and design context of their projects; with their joyful celebration and deep understanding of a utopian 1960's scheme for Milton Keynes in their Milton Keynes Gallery project as the key example of the design outcomes of such research.

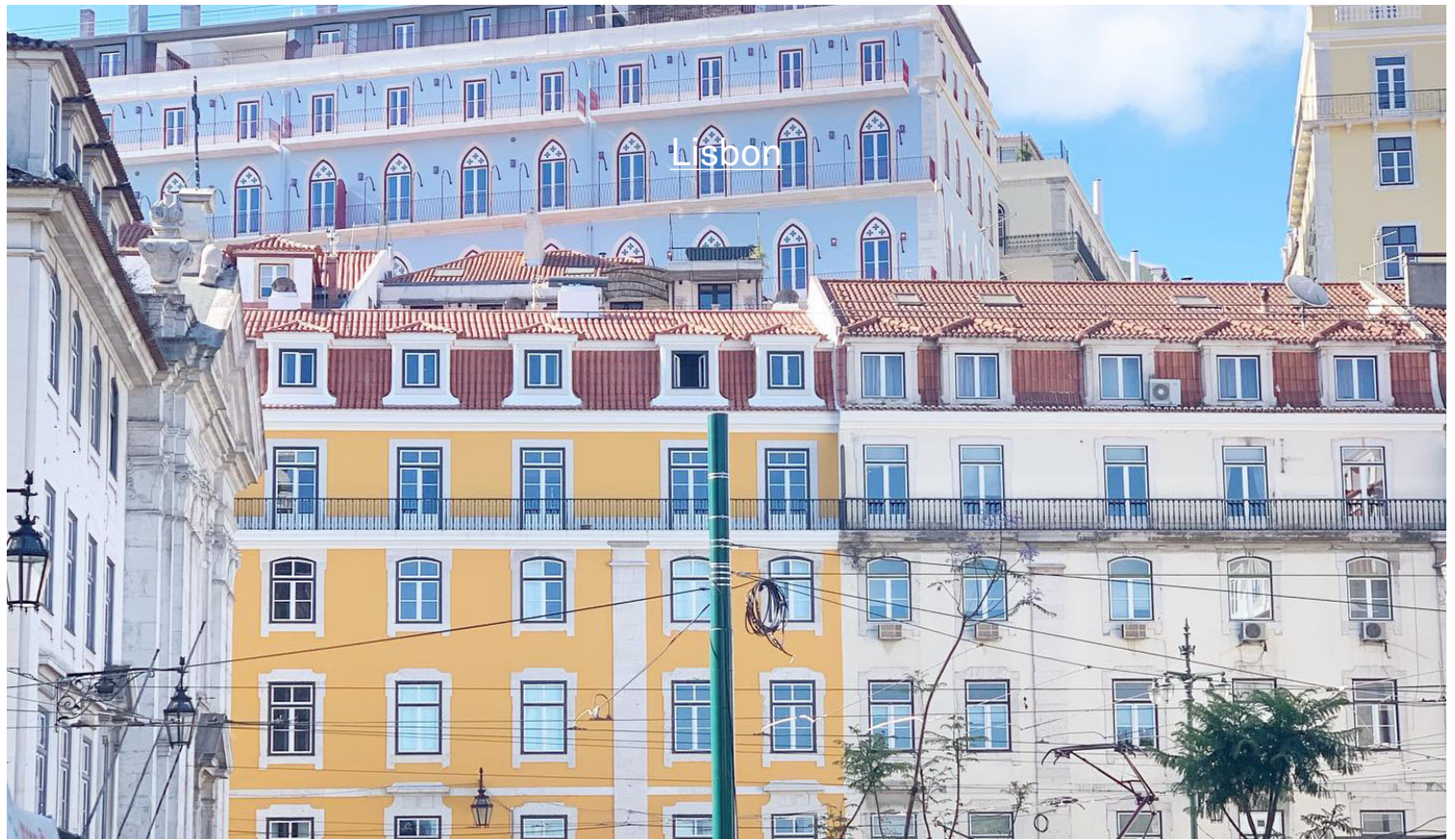
Our visits to AL\_A and RHSP both revealed an ambition of these practices to innovate around the things that buildings are made of: structure, construction materials and methods. Whether this means a beautiful bolt or exhaust, or pushing contemporary technology, 3d printing and digital fabrication to the limits.

The dedication of two of the disciplines at the Foster + Partners' Campus to research and innovation made it very clear how important research has, and continues to be to the success of this practice. The research we saw at Fosters ranged from innovating in the

creation of materials, to understanding how humans may inhabit Mars.

Alice Black at the Design Museum told us about an upcoming Mars exhibit that was planned, and HASSELL also presented a research project they completed for NASA for their Mars habitat. It seemed fitting for a city as international in it's mindset as London to be the epicentre of a kind of thinking that would allow designers here to imagine living on another planet.





# Lisbon

## Impressions of the City

There's a certain romance that is found in the southern cities of Europe that is helped by the warmer climate, outdoor living, eating and drinking, and what seems like a more contemplative pace. The historic parts of Lisbon took this romance to the next level, with a wild topography cascading down the water, the streets lined in glistening hand laid tiles, pastel buildings, jacarandas in bloom and the smell of freshly baked pasteis de nata from every corner.

While the streets were narrow, public space seemed generous and varied; from beautiful inner city squares, to wide waterfront boulevards, and many public balconies or lookouts due to the steepness of the seven hills of Lisbon. The variety of modes of public transport to serve the ever changing terrain of the city was fascinating; from cable cars to

trains (including one of the best train stations I've ever seen at Calatrava's Estação do Oriente), whole buildings dedicated to public elevators, and the recent introduction and what appeared like success of sharebikes, electric bikes, and electric scooters.

Our walking tour with the excellent Rodrigo Lima from Cultour took a much slower pace and more detailed look at key places in the city than our previous tours in London and Copenhagen.

The day was full of contrast and contradiction, from the subtle and nuanced heritage restoration projects of the Thala Theatre and the ruins at Castelo de São Jorge, to the exuberance and contemporary nature of the Portugal Pavilion by Alvaro Siza and other buildings at the expo site.

Lisbon is a beguiling city; at once confident and gentle, and also forward thinking whilst rooted in culture and history.





## Lisbon

### Meeting the Practices

Practices visited:

- \_ Embaixada
- \_ Bak Gordon
- \_ AR-X

We were blessed to be led to each practice visit by the wonderful Cristina Mendonca from Embaixada who set the tone for a day of calm contemplation, and a generosity in spirit and time.

Embaixada, a practice led by the “three headed beast” of three directors took us through their remarkable journey as a practice that has been able to work both locally within a range of typologies, whilst also completing work internationally in China and elsewhere.

We saw the theme of research evident in London picked up again at Embaixada, as we were all enthralled by a beautiful research

project in which the practice had mapped the history of Lisbon, the diversity of its spaces and buildings and current characteristics in a kind of atlas, which they used to explain the context of the city to their potential clients and international investment.

Embaixada's willingness to try new things, change when things didn't work, and allow time for research, whilst still retaining a sense of calm was a source of inspiration and hope for any hoping to begin their own practice.

This humility and openness about failures and setbacks also came through our discussion with Jose Mateus from AR-X. Their practice has seen great success, and hardship of it's 25 year life. Jose's sense of humour, resilience and passion for the practice of architecture shone through the discussion and are in no small part responsible for the enduring nature of their practice.

An understanding of the political nature of practicing architecture was clearly evident

through our experience in Lisbon. Everyone we encountered were very aware of the many forces acting upon the city; politics, economic forces, international investment, and the protection of cultural and historic values.



# Thank you

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## Tak! Thank you! Obrigada!

Words cannot express what an enjoyable, educational, inspiring and thought provoking experience the Dulux Study tour is, and I am so grateful to have been a recipient of what I think is one of the best prizes in Architecture.

Thank you to Dulux for making this all possible and investing in the next generation of designers in Australia. Special thanks to Anurita + Carrie who helped craft an incredible trip and bring lots of laughs along the way! Hope to have a soup in the Qantas lounge with you both and Simon Simonsen soon.

Thank you to the Australian Institute of Architects for supporting this award and facilitating the process. A big shout out needs to go to Mai Huynh who created and coordinated a watertight itinerary, balancing the requests of five very eager architects with incredible practices, food options, timing and transport. For a trip that covered so much ground in a short amount of time I've never felt more relaxed with you at the helm!

Thank you to Architecture Media and Linda for your assistance articulating and capturing the swirling thoughts and discussions throughout the tour. I'm still super impressed by your light packing Linda, and one day hope to travel as efficiently as you.

A final thank you to the other recipients, Ben Peake, Carly McMahon, Jennifer McMaster, Philip Nielsen. You are an incredible group of people; kind, funny, talented, and ambitious for a better world. You have all already achieved so much and I cannot wait to watch your futures unfold!

Here's to many more Portuguese tarts!