



2022 Dulux Study Tour Report

Sam McQueeney
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A Taste of Australia

This Prize would typically take participants overseas to cities unfamiliar, with big name practices and places, buildings we may have studied 10 years prior and dreamed of making a pilgrimage to. In 2022, forced partially by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, we were treating to somewhat of a home-coming, exploring three distinctly different destinations in our own backyard.

A celebration of Australian Architecture was long overdue. Seeing places once viewed with a casual eye, under more intense and studious circumstances has opened a door. Where I once cited international precedent and celebrated international practice, I hope to look a little closer to home to find inspiration moving forward. If not from the places we visited, then from the practice of the immeasurably talented peers on the Tour with me. Here is a taste of the Australia we experienced.

2022 Dulux Study Tour Participants

Liz Walsh
Bek Verrier
Simon Rochowski
Nick Roberts
Madeline Sewell
Carly Martin
Tahnee Sullivan
Keith Westbrook
Sam McQueeney

Thanks

Dulux
Australian Institute of Architects
Mai Huynh
Abbey Czudek
Alison Mahoney
Pete Wood
Cameron O'Brian
Gemma Savio



Tasmania

Growing up in Tasmania, attending the University of Tasmania and subsequently working in practice in Tasmania, I was sceptical that there was any stone that I had left unturned. Coming back after three years away practicing in Brisbane, distance and time afforded surprising new facets and faces to experience, further galvanising the view that Tasmania has clearly come into its own in the last decade, architecturally.

The projects and practices visited (whether old or new) displayed care and understanding for the land that they are sited on, working with occupants hand-in-hand to create something unique to this island. Highlights included Krakani Lumi, by Taylor and Hinds Architects with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, where we were lucky enough to engage with some of the traditions, language and cultural sites of the lands adjacent. This visit fell on the first full day of the Tour, facilitating a wonderful reset from the responsibilities of everyday life.

People and Places

People

Taylor and Hinds Architects with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania
John Wardle Architects
Tanner Architects / Lara Maesele
Esmond Dorney

Places

Krakani Lumi
Shearers Quarters + Captain Kelly's Cottage
Killora Bay
House at Fort Nelson



Tasmania

This relaxed atmosphere set early on in the Tour created the perfect backdrop for fruitful conversation and appreciation for the places visited. An example of this was the day spent touring a number of significant residential projects from Middleton to Bruny Island and back.

At Sunnybanks House by Core Collective Architects, Ryan Strating carefully talked through the plethora of sustainability strategies present, with the Client proudly producing their utilities bill from the prior quarter in order to further demonstrate the worth of these measures.

Following a short ferry ride to Bruny Island, the group stopped at the top of the driveway at the Shearers Quarters / Captain Kelly's Cottage by John Wardle Architects. John talked through each project with passion, demonstrating a clear appreciation of the site and subsequent design exploration in each and every detail on both projects.

Observations

The result is a breathtaking collection of moments, both built and collected, each project carefully housing a plethora of objects that John has picked up over the years.

The final visit of the day belonged to Killora Bay by Tanner Architects / Lara Maesele. Built largely by the owners, Lara and Tim, the project demonstrated a deft handling of the restraints imposed on the site by physical context and planning provision.

Starting with Sunnybanks House, and finishing with Killora Bay, the generosity shown by the Clients and Designers of each project left a lasting impression.

The more domestic location of this year's Dulux Study Tour has afforded us the chance to embrace and celebrate the work of more familiar practitioners, allowing a collegiality between practices and participants that may not have surfaced in an international setting.



New South Wales

Sydney is held up frequently as the most international city in Australia. I'd like to think this is largely in part due to the commission and subsequent construction of the Sydney Opera House, a seminal public project designed by Jorn Utzon, completed by Peter Hall. The Tour visited this project, alongside a selection of other excellent public and private works in Sydney and the Blue Mountains. This international city hosts two of the three most densely populated postcodes in the country, and it felt that way when visiting both the tightly held and wide open projects on our itinerary.

Space is of concern, and no project worked harder to preserve space for public amenity than the Green Square Library by Studio Hollenstein / Stewart Architecture. Pitched as an urban living-room in the centre of dense new subdivision, the project places the program largely underground, maximising open space at ground level. With the area becoming home to 60,000 people across the next 15 years, this open area will become a welcome reprieve from the dense surrounding area.

In The Thick Of It

People

Jorn Utzon
Durbach Block Jagers with John Wardle Architects
Welsh and Major
Studio Hollenstein

Places

Sydney Opera House
Phoenix Gallery
Office of Welsh and Major
Green Square Library



New South Wales

Having reached the halfway point of the Tour by this point, a coincidental focus on project visits shifted to a full dance-card of architectural practice visits, including Durbach Block Jaggars, Renato D'Ettorre Architects, and Welsh and Major Architects.

The three practices, located within a reasonably small radius of one another in Sydney, demonstrate three distinct ways of approaching the practice of architecture. Our first visit is to Durbach Block Jaggars, who occupy one level of a 4 storey commercial building that they designed on Roslyn Street, Kings Cross.

On arrival, we're greeted warmly by studio Director Camilla to enjoy a frank and open discussion about the challenges the practice has faced and the dynamic behind the inter-personal relationships that continue to sustain the practice. Camilla notes that there is an incredible stability in the relationship between the three Directors, which she describes as "a tripod" where each element is equally important.

Generosity

After a quick coffee stop, we visit the office of Renato D'Ettorre, located in a beautiful heritage listed sandstone cottage in Darlinghurst. The contrast between this space and the last is stark but it is no less beautiful. Renato talks about life in a previous studio space and the contrast of this new location, where he says he is enjoying the opportunity to "be on solid ground, surrounded by textures and materials to inspire you."

Nearby in Surry Hills, Welsh and Major host the final practice visit for the day. The whimsy and delight in their built projects is reflected in our initial conversation with practice Directors Chris and David, who suggest with tongue firmly in cheek that they may be considered a 'sub-merging' practice in response to the concept of an emerging practitioner.

The differences and similarities between the three offices raised a number of questions. What is the ideal way to approach architectural practice? Is there an ideal base from which to build? Each practice spoke generously of serendipity in the way that they evolved to reach where they are now.



Northern Territory

Seemingly the opposite climactic condition to Tasmania (a challenging trip to pack for), Darwin and Kakadu presented a similarly relaxed atmosphere. This was made no clearer than by our generous hosts Karen and Raquel, NT Chapter Staff of the AIA, who picked us up at the airport, participated in our building tour of the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre (by Hully Liveris Design Company) on the first afternoon and ensured we made it to the Darwin Ski Club by happy hour to meet Jo Best, practice director at Troppo Architects.

This condition, riffing on the name of the well-known architecture practice “going Troppo” has given rise to some excellent examples of climatically responsive architecture, both historically and in modern times. Our visit to Darwin centred around a selection of buildings that respond to this extreme condition, often bristling against modern planning guidelines and restrictions that ask for something more akin to a refrigerated box.

The Top End

People

Tropo Architects
Bininj/Munggyu

Places

Office of Troppo Architects
Troppoville
Nawurlandja Lookout



Northern Territory

The architecture practices that we visited in Darwin, Ajar Architects, Rossi Architects, Troppo and David Bridgman Architects demonstrated a deep concern and commitment to learning from and working with the Larrakia people to produce places that respect the land on which they're sited.

Once acclimatised in Darwin (if one can ever be), we were whisked away to Kakadu to experience the more natural amenity of the NT. A greener, more lush journey than expected (perhaps due to my lack of knowledge on rural NT), the country changed drastically on the journey out from Darwin, through Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve and the Adelaide River on our way to Bowali Visitor Centre by Troppo Architects with Glenn Murcutt. Seeing this collaboration, where climactic sensibility meets typical Murcutt-esque detailing, was made special by the occupation on that day by a small market to align with the Taste of Kakadu.

Natural landforms marked the major highlights in this section of the trip for me. Nawurlandja Lookout at sunset, distant monoliths of stone peppering

Last Impressions

the horizon through a sea of vegetation and red earth. Ubirr Art Site, where for the last 40,000 years, the rock faces have been continuously painted. Tales passed from generation-to-generation, demonstrated through intricate ochre brush strokes, some of which remain after 2000 years.

We were joined on the Tour by our Dulux Hosts, Alison Mahoney, Peter Wood and Cameron O'Brien, who generously supported us throughout the trip and demonstrated a real passion for encouraging emerging architects. The Dulux Study Tour couldn't have happened without the generous support of our Australian Institute of Architects representatives, Mai Huynh and Abbey Czudek.

After a long, COVID-extended wait, the Australian Dulux Study Tour concluded, having made a significant impression on us all, we hope the connection created between us all will continue as we return to the milieu of everyday practice.