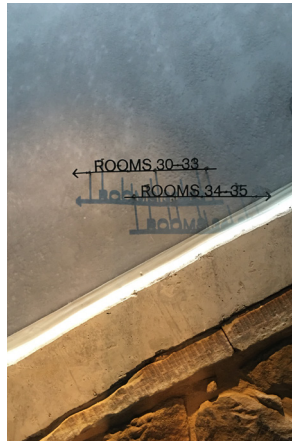
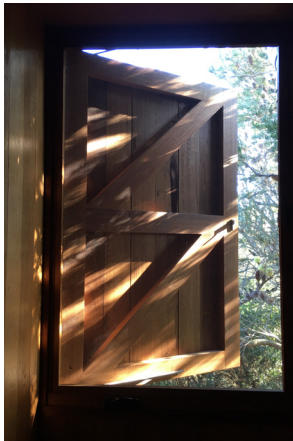


## **2022 Dulux Study Tour Report**

Simon Rochowski - studioplusthree

Tasmania / Sydney / Northern Territory 12th - 24th May 2022

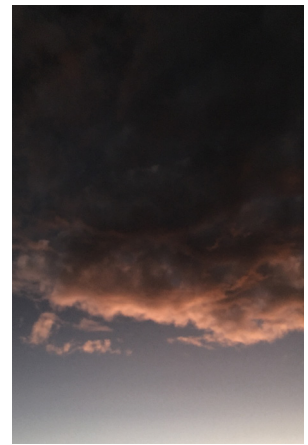
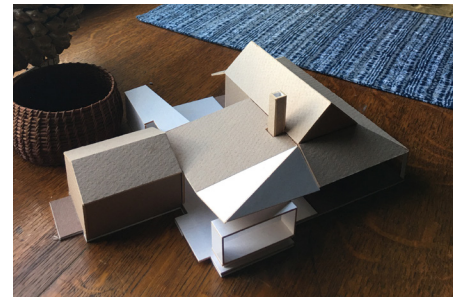


## Tasmania

Even before it's first official day, the Tour demonstrated one of the benefits of staying within Australia, with Tour participants having close personal and professional connections to the buildings, people and practices that we were to see. This started with a tour of the Moss Hotel by Alex Nielsen of Circa Morris Nunn Chua, a practice that some within the group had worked for previously, specifically on the project itself, and indeed Alex was the partner of one of the Tour participants. This very close connection to projects was to continue, with a visit to Liz Walsh's and Alex's home, a winner of the Small Project Prize at the National Architecture Awards. Listening to the personal motives, decisions and approach for the project gave it a very special quality, enhanced by the richness of this small but highly inventive project. The bar was certainly set high for the first day of the Tour itself, with a journey by light aircraft, helicopter and bus to Krakani Lumi by Taylor + Hinds. The intensity of this transportation was counterpoised by a gentle walk through country with guides Cody and

Jake, who explained the significance and stories of the landscape that we walked through. A smoking ceremony formed a personal highlight of the trip for myself, providing a palpable feeling of calm and unified our newly-formed group. The pace of the Tour was felt soon again though, as we headed back to Hobart for a practice visit to Partners Hill, located in a central but highly idiosyncratic building, revealed by its eccentric assemblage of fixtures, bedrooms, floor levels and objects. A welcome feature of each location was the chance to connect with the local EmAGN group, of which the Tasmanian contingent was out in numbers at The Lark Distillery. It was highly encouraging to see the depth of architectural practice in Tasmania represented through its members as well as Tour alumni, many of whom had keen insights and advice from their years since the Tour. Our second day provided a suitably atmospheric backdrop as we ascended the hills surrounding Hobart, to see Sunnyside House by Core Collective. Architects Ryan Strating and Emily Ouston gave a

thorough insight into this remarkably sustainable, comfortable and beautiful home, achieved through simple but innovative use of expanded clay aggregate insulation for walls, floors and green roof substrate. This relationship to the landscape was to continue as a primary theme in the next project visit, La Billardieri House by Megan Baynes. This striking project seemed to sit halfway between encampment and lookout - and indeed this is just what the client wanted, as a place to enjoy the rustic and wild sense of the Tasmanian landscape. Our next project visit was one highly anticipated by many in the group - Captain Kelly's Cottage and the Shearer's Quarters on Bruny Island, by John Wardle. The depth of thought, attention and almost recursive level of detail could only be conveyed by John himself, and the group was immensely fortunate to be given this opportunity to experience the projects in this way. This felt like an architecture that was a dense expression and vessel for many layers of history, craft and materials, thoroughly borne of its local context.



## Tasmania

Our second day in Tasmania finished with a visit to Killara Bay House, by Lara Maesele of Tanner Architects, and husband and engineer Tim. Working within a tight circular envelope, the house presented a simple and clear separation of spaces, a robust and responsive architecture, but more than that - a comfortable family home, designed and built by the family themselves, that gave it a very special and welcoming feeling.

An energetic steep uphill hike opened day three of the Tour, walking up to Dorney House. Again reinforcing the personal connection, fellow Tour participant Keith used to live in the house, now administered by the local Council but closed to the public, provoking the question of responsibilities of heritage buildings, and the strategies for conservation and (re-)use.

Our afternoon brought us, via a stormy ferry ride and inaugural session of Keith's Corner, to MONA. After the recent examples of residential projects so carefully responding to context, MONA is a deliberate provocation in almost every sense - from the level

of personal taste and morality to political and fiscal conventions, the museum can almost be understood as an artwork itself. Working to the themes of sex and death, this desire for provocation is evident in the defecating machines, plaster-cast vaginas and edible tables that sit incongruously side-by-side throughout the museum. This sense of deliberate imbalance was attested to by our attache Led, who explained (much to our horror) the antagonistic relationship between owner David Walsh and architect Nonda Katsalidis.

As James Turrell is a favourite artist of mine (and one I had the pleasure of meeting at MONA previously), I was especially keen to see the new extension, which features several of his works. One of these, Seen Unseen, is only viewable as part of a dinner-performance art menu item at the Faro Restaurant, in which dance, music, art, performance and dinner are all intermixed, each one an experiment, with questionable if not entertaining results. The experience of this artwork was mind-melting, disembodying, and utterly fantastic.

The projects seen in Tasmania could be characterised as having a deeply rooted sense of place. MONA notwithstanding, all displayed a sensitive and respectful approach to their relationship with this sometimes inhospitable environment. A very deliberate sense of materiality, construction and craft was evident, an approach that, from an external perspective, could almost be said to typify the architecture of this island. Far from concerns about parochialism, the range of projects and practices that we visited felt like they constituted an authentic and appropriate path by which to approach architecture, displaying sensitivity and innovation in response to the rugged landscape it is situated within. This was my impression of the Tasmanian architectural scene before the Tour, admittedly through the often superficial imagery that approximates the architectural experience, but it was gratifying to see this was a genuine reflection of the built reality and architectural culture within Tassie.



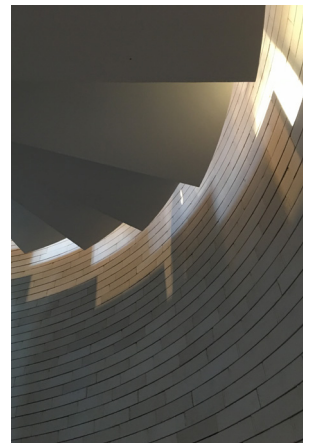
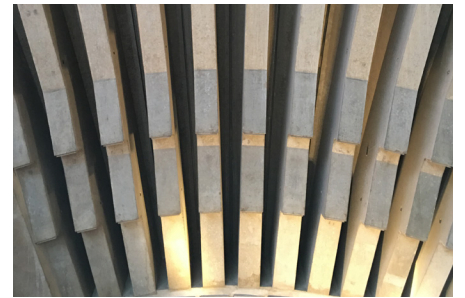
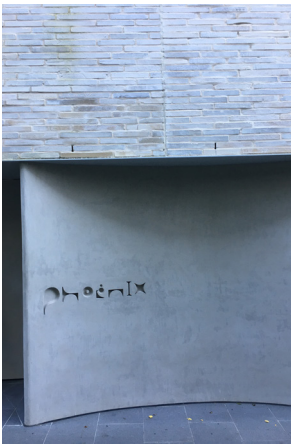


## Sydney

With Sydney being my now-home city, and where our studio is based, I was fortunate to know and have good connections with many of the people, practices and projects that we were to visit in the city. Although many were not new to me, it was a lovely opportunity to re-connect with these practitioners, especially after the relative isolation of the last two years had prevented us from the usual practice of meeting at talks, events and socially. The first of our visits in Sydney was to an architect that needed little introduction, but a project that I didn't know the full story of; the Simpson Lee House by Glenn Murcutt. After an early start from Hobart that morning, and subsequent winding journey up to the Blue Mountains, Glenn kindly gave us an in-depth and at times moving account of his close relationship with the clients of the house, how the project came to be, and how he came into ownership of the house he had designed. The idea of custodianship emerged as a key theme within this talk, especially given the challenges of geographical distance, physical age

and environmental change. Glenn's time with the group felt like a very intimate and personal encounter that provoked reflections about how we as emerging architects practice in a contemporary setting. Our second day brought us to a project that has been celebrated on many fronts; not just through awards, but also as a model of procurement of design from emerging architects (indeed, one of the architects Matthias Hollenstein would receive this NSW prize in 2020). As much urban intervention as singular building, this project - realised by Stewart Architecture and Studio Hollenstein - was the central 'living room' of the soon-to-come community, the housing for which was slowly emerging around it. A small break in the planned schedule allowed for another opportunity to realise the benefit of an Australian-based Tour to see projects we had personally worked on, as we walked from Alexandria to our next destination, via notable projects (whose authors we had met previously or were to meet subsequently) such as Phoenix Gallery by John

Wardle and Durbach Bloch Jagers, as well as Indigo Slam and Railway Operations Centre by Smart Design Studio. Our destination was the University of Sydney, to visit the new Chau Chak Wing Museum's Nicholson Galleries, designed by studioplusthree. It was a great pleasure to give a tour of our work to my fellow participants, if slightly apprehensive knowing eight keen pairs of eyes would be closely studying every detail. Our afternoon took us to another personal connection of our studio, William Smart of Smart Design Studio. Given privileged access to William's private apartment, which forms the penthouse to the studio below, was a wonderful chance to see the rigorous depth of the studio's commitment to innovation, sustainability, materials and craft. The meticulous consideration and resolution of every detail is an approach we aspire to in our work, so to see it realised so beautifully and convincingly was inspiring. Our third day in Sydney brought a steady beat of practice visits, some of whom I knew more closely



## Sydney

than others. The first was Camilla Durbach of DBJ, who provided a candid insight into the way their studio was founded and continued to operate, in a state of creative tension, with each of the directors 'taking turns to be reasonable'. The balance of family life and work was a consistent question during the Tour, especially as several participants had recently become parents, so Camilla's frank assessment and experience of this side of practice management was especially relevant.

Next was Renato D'Ettore, who is known well to our studio, and whose elegantly executed work had been admired by many in the group. To see the contrast of a sole practitioner, working in a slow, careful and very personal way, was a wholly different experience to some of the larger practices we had previously visited, though linked by the common goal of beautiful spaces and buildings. Renato's honest and idiosyncratic appraisal of his experience as an architect, the struggle to get the type of work and clients that allows one to do the work we would

desire, felt especially poignant to many of us who had started our own practices and were trying to navigate this similar terrain.

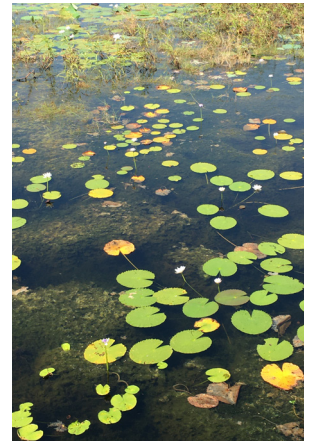
Chis Major and David Welsh were the next to kindly show us their studio, and explain their personal journey through practice, which felt highly relevant to our own practice in which we have both a personal and professional relationship of directors. Chris and David explained the long-term strategies adopted by their practice that were eventually bearing fruit, and the search for a language and identity that now sees them on the trajectory of an established and widely celebrated practice.

Our last day in Sydney took us to the much-publicised Punchbowl Mosque by Candelapas Associates. Having seen Angelo give a talk inside in this project previously, I was familiar with the layering of design dialogue behind the project, however the central space carries its own power in lieu of this. Glebe House by Chenchow Little provided one of the big surprises of the Sydney leg. Having seen the photographs, the

now lived-in project provided a wholly different and heartening perspective on its life as a family home, adorned by kid's artwork sitting side-by-side with that of famous artists. SRG House by Studio Johnston, and an insightful tour of the Opera House formed our last project visits, with a highly enjoyable evening at Aria and Shell House capping the day.

After the modesty of most of the projects seen in Tasmania, the contrast to Sydney was stark. Not only in density and scale, but in the considerations addressed within the design. A distinctly greater sense of formalism, and volumetric experimentation was apparent, though the high quality resolution of detail and construction was never absent, which can sometimes be the case in projects with strong formal ambitions. Especially appreciated were the personal insights into running a practice from the directors themselves - the navigation of financial, professional, personal obligations being markedly different between practices, but this diversity itself providing some reassurance of our own direction.



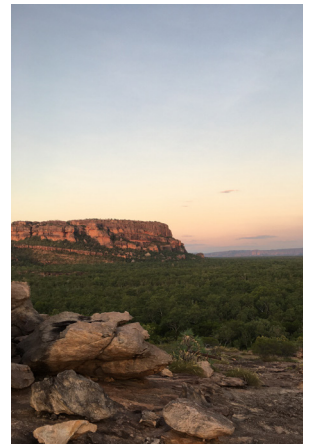


## Northern Territory

Early in our deliberations of an Australian Dulux Study Tour, we had discussed the importance and uniqueness of the Australian landscape. Our vast country, which few of us had seen the extent of, was something that provided a special opportunity. When the chance came to journey into the vast Northern Territory, the group was understandably keen. We knew this would be very different to our two other legs; a wintery Tasmania and dense urban Sydney. For myself, like many in the group, the NT existed in the imagination, glimpsed at through photos and tv shows, but without the real experience that is crucial to any legitimate understanding of place. It was therefore with a great deal of excitement that we took our seats on the morning flight to Darwin. Like any good experience, it immediately required a change of clothes. We were greeted both by the tropical heat and by representatives from the institute and local architects, kind enough to ferry us to the George Brown Botanic Gardens. Receiving a welcome to country from Larrakia man James was a

moving experience that set the tone for our stay in the NT, and we were especially conscious that we were entering territory unfamiliar to us in many respects. Architect Hully Liveris gave us a tour of the Visitor and Events Centre, and right from the outset, differences of architectural approach, culture and environment were apparent. Hully's description of the building as a "broad hat" seemed to neatly encapsulate many of these, as did the fake snake in a nearby tree used to fool newcomers like ourselves. Stressing the importance of shade, water and breezes in the architecture of the region, Hully touched on many of the fundamentals that can more easily be glossed over in a more mechanically serviced approach, albeit one that is unsustainable and inappropriate for this context, as became strikingly apparent throughout our days here. A cool drink by the setting sun, keeping one eye out for crocodiles on the beach, further seemed to set the tone for our stay. Our second day brought us to the studio of Troppo Architects, undoubtedly one of the best-known NT

practices. Their studio displayed many of the qualities with which the practice is most associated - an approach that works with, rather than against, the environment, embracing a low-energy design that utilises breezes, shading and water to maximum effect. As Jo Best explained, this traditional approach is now facing challenges due to misguided building control legislation predicated on the assumption of air conditioning. The friction between these two stances comes to a head in the Northern Territory, commented on by many as being at the coal face of climate change, the issue of which our generation of architects is starkly engaged with. This was followed by a visit to Troppoville, a series of houses designed by Troppo in the early eighties. Whilst some of these houses displayed many of the qualities I had hoped to see in an authentic tropical architecture, it was clear that subsequent alterations or developments had revealed their shortcomings, such as a roof of a new study building being so reflective it made a portion of the original house uninhabitable. The mixed approach



## Northern Territory

to architecture was continued with a visit to Rossi Architects, whose studio seemed to buck the trend of sustainable, contextual architecture.

Our next days took us into what was a personal highlight of the trip - Kakadu National Park. As we slowly travelled through the landscape, noting the changing scenery and flora, our journey was comprehensively narrated by the extremely knowledgeable Neville. This explanation into the wider issues, practices, culture and geography was invaluable to gain insight into the land through which we travelled.

The first unexpected feature of this landscape came in the form of the Mamukala Wetlands. Again expertly described by Neville, the six seasons of the year, birdlife and stories behind these wetlands displayed an intimate and long-standing association with landscape, something we as architects aspire to understand. The Bowali Visitor Centre, by Glenn Murcutt and Troppo Architects, was the next project on our trip, and whilst good to experience we missed

the architectural narration of the project that had proved so insightful during the rest of the Tour. As we progressed through the landscape, there was a sense of conversations taking a slower pace, but more in-depth, as we had come to know each other more closely, and with our number becoming seven by this leg of the trip, and all travelling together, a closer sense of unity for the group seemed to form. This sense of shared experience was tangibly felt at the Nawurlandja Lookout, as we slowly ascended the still-warm rock to see the sunset over the magnificent rock formations of the surrounding landscape.

The following day brought a deeper understanding of country and culture courtesy of Guluyambi Cultural River Cruise and visit to Ulbirr Rock Art Site. This depiction of 60,000 years of lived history and association with the site though the imagery drawn and re-drawn onto the rock itself was a truly special experience, and one far removed from the easy dispersal of images that can too easily come to constitute the experience of places.

Our final project visits took us to Larrakeyah House by Benny Burnett, now occupied by heritage architect David Bridgman and his wife, herself an archivist. This was an unexpected gem at the end of a long Tour - a peaceful, comfortable and responsive house that gave insight to the origins of the regional style that Troppo sought to revive and emulate.

The Tour had reached its end. Any reservations about not travelling internationally had long been dismissed by the breadth and quality of work we had witnessed across the three legs of the Tour; the opportunity to speak with our admired colleagues and visit projects we had long seen in media but would never otherwise have the chance to visit. The conversations between the larger group of participants ourselves formed an added benefit to the Tour; the shared experiences, challenges and solutions being an invaluable aspect of our time together, and I'm sure we all take these with us as we go our separate ways, hopefully to meet again soon.



2022 Australian Institute of Architects Dulux Study Tour  
12th - 24th May 2022

My sincere thanks to all the hard work and generosity of those at Dulux and the Australian Institute of Architects that made this incredible strip possible, in particular Mai, Abbey, Peter and Alison for being so organised and making everything so seamless! Thank you to my fellow Tour participants, for their insight, perspective, and friendship that made the Tour so enjoyable and meaningful. Thanks also to the practice and people that were so generous with their time in showing our group around - it was a great pleasure and privilege to have this experience.

#### Participants

Sam McQueeney  
Tahnee Sullivan  
Bek Verrier  
Keith Westbrook  
Ksenia Totoeva (apologies)  
Elizabeth Walsh  
Madeline Sewall  
Carly Martin  
Simon Rochowski  
Nick Roberts

#### Australian Institute of Architects

Mai Huynh  
Abbey Czudek  
Anurita Kapur  
Shell Brennan  
Jenna Greig  
Tamara Smith  
Mike Adlam

#### Dulux

Peter Wood  
Alison Mahoney  
Cameron O'Brien  
#paintsandcoatings

#### Photographers

Remi Chauvin  
Alexander Mayes  
Alex Politis

#### 2022 Dulux Study Tour - Projects and Practices

##### Tasmania

Moss Hotel / Circa Morris Nunn Chua  
The Barn Tas - workbylizandalex  
Krakani Lumi - Taylor & Hinds  
Partners Hill  
Sunnybanks House - Core Collective  
La Billardierei House - Megan Baynes  
Shearer's Quarters - John Wardle  
Captain Kelly's Cottage - John Wardle  
Killora Bay - Lara Maeselee  
Dorney House - Esmond Dorney  
MONA - Fender Katsalidis

##### Sydney

Simpson Lee House - Glenn Murcutt  
Green Square Library - Stewart Architecture  
Smart Design Studio  
Durbach Block Jaggers  
Renato D'Ettore  
Welsh + Major  
Barangaroo House - Collins + Turner  
The Nicholson Galleries CCWM - studioplusthree  
Punchbowl Mosque - Candelapas Associates  
Glebe House - Chenchow Little  
SRG House - Studio Johnston  
Sydney Opera House - Jorn Utzon

##### Northern Territory

Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre - Hully Liveris  
Toppo Architects  
Troppoville - Troppo Architects  
Sidney Williams Hut - Ajar Architects  
Troppo House, Parap - Troppo Architects  
Rossi Architects  
Kakadu National Park  
Ubirr Rock Art Site  
David Bridgman Architects  
Myilly Point Burnett Houses - Benny Burnett