

SARAH LEBNER - COOEE ARCHITECTURE



DULUX STUDY TOUR REPORT

2023: HELSINKI, LISBON, ZURICH, VENICE

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HELSINKI, FINLAND

Themes

The resounding themes from Helsinki for me are pattern, detail and light. A collection of Aalto buildings and other similar era projects paint a tapestry of evidence for how thinking about all the little things make the whole entirely delightful. In some areas, materials are very simple yet altering the brick bond or creating a rhythm for window vs wall creates spaces and forms that appeal to the mind's desire for order while offering textural richness. Door handles and handrails are prioritised as functional, robust and refined things to be interacted with. Light is clearly given project priority as the presence of skylights is constant. But in most projects there is no excess and gimmicks, and often a sense of frugality.

Lessons

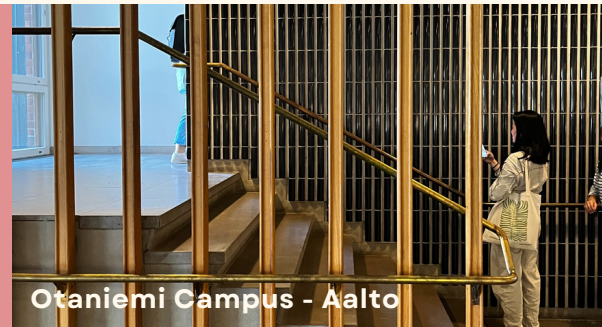
Simple materials used thoughtfully can create appealing spaces that have an enduring quality. Details don't need to be fancy but they do need to be considered. Texture and pattern create warm pleasing spaces.

The power and awe of nature (rocks and light) are clear at the Temppeliaukion Church, while the delight of the organic Amos Rex forms or upper 'landscaped level' of the OODI Library also emphasis human enjoyment of spaces that remind us of the natural world.

Materiality also seems to be very important to all of these projects. If materials aren't natural or 'raw' then they use patina, texture or pattern to remind us of things that are.

I appreciate the term 'humanist architecture' as design that places human welfare and experience as the driver behind the art and science of the building.

Alusta Pavillion offers a completely different lesson, reminding us to design for non-human species as well as humans.



Otaniemi Campus - Aalto



Otaniemi Library, 1969 - Aalto



Amos Rex, 2018 - JKMM



Temppeliaukion Church, 1968 - Timo + Tuomo Suomalainen



Porthania Building, 1957 - Aarne Ervi

HELSINKI, FINLAND

Juhani Pallasma

It feels like a rare treat to access the mind of such a prolific philosopher and writer. I scrawled endless notes as he shared thoughts on 'the human project' and human experience. He speaks about the inner experience of finding a sense of space and self in the world. He praises intense looking, listening, and always coming back to nature for inspiration. He emphasises that learning is not 'collecting things'. I'm extremely excited to read the paper he is working on called Rootedness - Lessons for Students. We were a little disappointed in his response to questions about Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, though this doesn't devalue the earlier wisdoms for me.



Juhani Pallasma Office



Collaboratorio Office

Collaboratorio

Collaboratorio are a breath of fresh air. Though a young firm, they are pioneering some impressive material innovations regarding rammed earth, using waste clay and zero cement content. They're also experimenting with waste aggregates such as salvaged marble from Finlandia Hall.

We discuss national design culture and realise how our national history influences our built fabric, such as Finland being a 'young' country searching for identity compared to Italy having a long-established way of 'who we are and how things are done'.

Others who welcomed us:

PLAYA ARCHITECTS: Office session

OOPEAA: Tour of Tikkurila Church and Housing

ALA Architects: Tour of Oodi Central Helsinki Library

AVANTO ARCHITECTS: Tour of Loyly Sauna



Oodi Central Helsinki Library - ALA



Alusta Pavilion, 2022 - Maiju Suomi + Elina Koivisto



Tikkurila Church, 2021 - OOPEA

Aalto Office, 1955, Aalto



Aalto House, 1936 - Aalto

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Themes

Lisbon is an incredibly old city, and the deep layers of history are rich and tangible. This setting seemed to foster brave adaptive reuse and bold interventions, sometimes to complement and enhance the surroundings and at other times to compete with them.

The scale of space seemed to be a constant tool, from the aspirational height of many of the projects pictured on the right to the horizontal urban gestures of the public space projects to the incredibly skilled use of space at Dodged House. Even at the S. Jorge Castle Interpretation Centre, the key idea in explaining the ruins is to demonstrate the scale of the spaces.

I got the sense that Lisboaers inherently believed in the power of architecture to tell their story or carve a new one.

Lessons

Lisbon offers an undeniable lesson in valuing what was there before, from Thalia Theatre to the S. Jorge Intervention, but also in the commentary we heard about the city's evolution over time.

Likewise, several projects offered the experience of a grand gesture. I had modelled Calatrava's train station at University but was completely unprepared for its size and presence. I've never experienced a building so light and so heavy at the same time.

I also had the chance to gain insight into what I DON'T like in Lisbon. The bold minimal forms of Siza and Carrilo da Graça Arquitectos don't appeal. While I appreciate their sculptural quality, I find them to have an opposing quality to the 'humanist' features of the projects I favoured in Helsinki.

This group's discussion and observation of local material influence also gains significance in Lisbon.



Church of the Heart of Jesus, 1967 - Portas + Pereira

Thalia Theatre, 2008 - Gonçalo Byrne Architects & Bárbara Lopes Architects



Portuguese National Pavilion, 1998 - Alvaro Siza



Lisbon Orient Train Station, 1998 - Santiago Calatrava



Oceanário de Lisboa, 2011 - Pedro Campos Costa

LISBON, PORTUGAL

EMBAIXADA ARQUITECTURA

Embaixada started as a group of 7 passionate graduates. Now run by three directors, they generously welcomed us to their practice and shared their Herdade da Cardeira Winery rural project with us and Lisbon mapping research they are undertaking.

ANTONIO COSTA LIMA

Antonia Costa Lima's office was full of elegant models. I particularly enjoyed his refined concept of a beautifully simple bamboo prayer space hovering over the water's edge.



Embaixada



Extra Studio



Costa Lima

EXTRA STUDIO

Joao and Joao offered us enthusiastic, entertaining and thoughtful conversation at the end of a long day. Their knowledge of Australian architects surprised us. Having previously worked at OMA, their perspective on practice and architectural movements was fascinating. "It's like you've learned to do high-cuisine, and then you go home and don't even have a kitchen." They also noted that "materials increase in price each time they pass hands."

Others who welcomed us:
 BUREAU: Dodged House Tour
 AIRES MATEUS: Office Tour
 CARILHO DA GRACA: Office Session

S. Jorge Castle Interpretation Centre, 2010 - Carrilho da Graca



Lisbon



São Lázaro Carpentry, 2019 - Filipe Borges de Macedo

Dodged House, 2019 - Bureau



MAAT, 2016 - AL_A

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

Themes

Exploring the regional areas surrounding Zurich was a feast for the senses and made my rural heart sing. Seeing Zumthor offices and significant projects in regional settings was incredibly inspiring and encouraging.

The Zumthor projects offered contemporary solutions that still sat appropriately and sympathetically in their place, while the two Olgiati projects were a little more challenging and I wished I could ask the locals what they thought of them.

There's a cultural social generosity that's evident from their successful housing co-op schemes, right down to individual homes that openly interact with their street - even offering moments of pause or a display for their neighbours.

Lessons

Zumthor achieves a beautiful tectonic (art of construction) in every approach by demonstrating and considering the quality of a material and how it goes together.

Generosity to street/public space is an important contribution to creating a welcoming, fascinating and friendly community.

Patina and ageing are fully embraced and evoke a sense of authenticity, character, and heritage.

Buildings don't need to be traditional to be sympathetic and appropriate.

Zumthor's consideration of all the human senses creates an engaging, fulfilling experience of a space.

Designing for convenience comes at a cost. Inconvenience is often where community, resilience and cross-generational-education and tolerance is formed. Inconvenient materials express time, place and culture.



Planta Hof Auditorium, 2011 - Valerio Olgiati



Saint Benedict Chapel, 1988 - Zumthor

Zumthor Studio, 2017 - Zumthor



Shelter for Roman Excavation, 1986 - Zumthor



Atelier Bardil, 2007 - Valerio Olgiati

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

THERME BATHS, VALS

Zumthor's thermal baths are a true bucket list experience. I think back to Pallasma speaking about designing for the human experience and I think this must be the epitome of such a project.

Sure, it's the height of luxury, and again I wonder what the locals think, but it transcends tacky extravagance and offers something deeply satisfying, contextual, and rejuvenating.



The Therme Vals, 1996 - Zumthor



Pool Architects



Generosity to street in Scharans



Kunsthaus Zurich - Chipperfield Building, 2020 - Chipperfield

ZURICH

The Chipperfield Building demonstrates high quality detailing, construction and environmental management and I can see it enduring for hundreds of years.

MFO park displays exciting adaptive reuse of an industrial building.

POOL ARCHITEKTEN

Martin and Thomas introduced us to Switzerland's Cooperative Housing model and explained some of the affordability tactics of Hunziker Areal, such as no carparks, shared outdoor space, and differentiated ground level.

One of their units cleverly stacks double height space to create space-efficient solar access into each apartment. They also 'leave space' for inhabitants to finish off or make their own.



Hunziker Areal

MFO Park



Pavillon Le Corbusier, 1967 - Corbusier

VENICE, ITALY

VENICE BIENNALE

The Australia Pavillion demonstrates the 'ghost' of a Queenstown building, detached from the ground, and offers great audio interviews from locals. The Canadian Pavillion offers incredibly hearty research and solutions on housing. In contrast, Australia's pavilion feels more like an artistic comment, sparking deeply productive discussion within the group.

I also enjoy the German Pavillion's focus on repair and recycling. Other Pavillions capture my attention on the topics of soil health, foodscapes, house sizes around the world, and even a composting toilet on display.

VENICE THE CITY

Venice is described to us as an open-air museum with only a few residents left. However, a chance encounter with a Venetian architect offers a contrasting perspective. The spatial restrictions and age of the place create an atmosphere that enchanted me far beyond what I expected.

After the tour concludes, I enjoy a day trip to the Dolomites and see the regional town of Cortina (which offers a useful contrast to regional Swiss towns) and also visit the colourful island of Burano.

SUMMARY

Seeing projects in real life offers a value that makes reading about them or looking at pictures seem almost pointless. The value of comparing a series of works by the same architect, era, or country, against that of others also offered pleasantly surprising insight. Discussions with fellow travellers enhanced my learning.

Is it a gift? Is it a thank you? Is it an investment in the industry? My fellow prize winners and I spent a lot of time reflecting on what an incredible opportunity this trip was and how we possibly all deserved it. This report highlights the key themes of my experience and what I will take forward from my time on tour. Heartfelt thanks to the AIA, Dulux and all involved for this lifechanging experience.



Australia Pavillion



Day trip to the Dolomites



Venice



Canadian Pavillion



Burano