

Dulux 2023

Helsinki, Lisbon, Zurich, Venice

21 May - 30 May 2023

Of landscape, material culture, light,
play + public, histories, in practice and
in conversation.

ellen buttrose



of landscape



Of all the buildings visited throughout the tour, there were those that were of the landscape and those that seemed to be on the landscape. Those that were objects placed in a context and those that seemed to emerge from their place. Those that grew richer with age, and those built to resist time. Those buildings of the landscape each carried several unifying characteristics. Each grew richer with age and encouraged patina. Each contained a formal

expression of its context and place, and responded seamlessly to the topography and existing landscape environment.

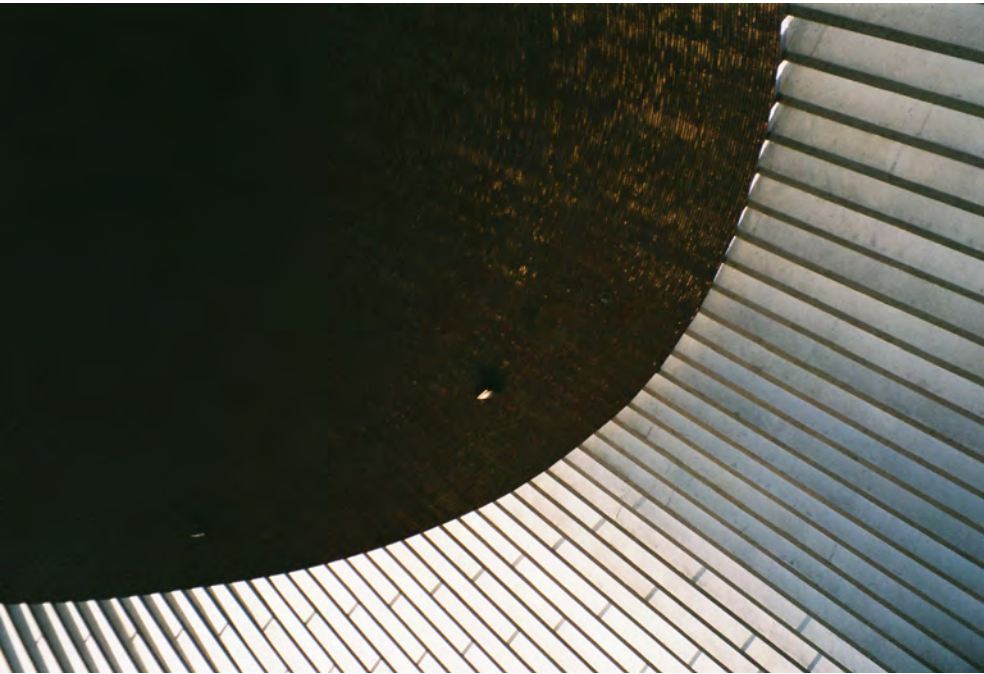
The lichen inching across the timbers of the Atelier Zumthor's Roman Ruins or the timber shingles of Atelier Zumthor's Saint Benedict's Chapel weathered to the east differently to those on the west. The Linoleum on Alvar Altos' floors, polished with socks and slippers over time. Collaboratorio's explanation of their



ambitious process of developing clay floors and rammed earth free from concrete proposed as an alternate to concrete, epitomised the idea of architecture of landscape. They were encouraging of materials that could breathe, absorb odour, and when demolished be returned to the place they came from. A holistic material life cycle entirely drawn from then returned to the landscape.

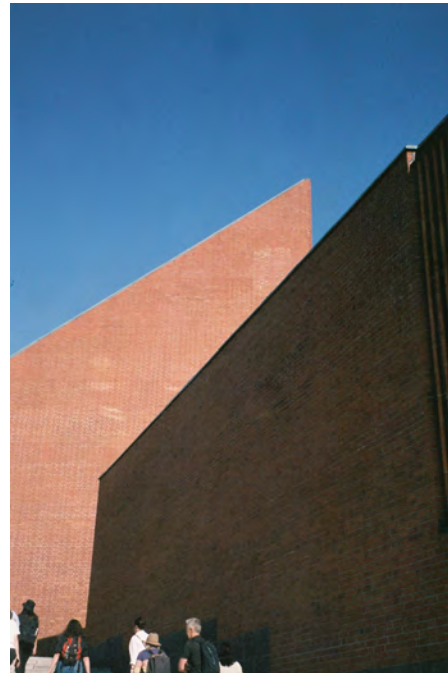


material culture



I was immediately struck by the consistency in material language across each city we visited. Each region had its own identity integral to place and the base materials it was surrounded by. Consistent material languages that had evolved over time appeared across the city and unifying various architectural movements and styles.

The architecture we visited had taken this material language and elevated it.



The Temppeliaukion Church, in Helsinki carved deep into the granite bedrock of the city had an incredible woven ceiling out of local copper. Atelier Zumthor's Saint Benedicts Chapel mastered contemporary form and detailing, drawing from traditional houses and farm structures dotted across the landscape of the region.

João Caldeira Ferrão of Extra Studio (Lisbon) spoke of using of locally available materials such as marble,

as a frugal method of construction, buying direct from the source to cut out supplier costs, an approach borne from tough economic climates.

With these experiences I reflect on building according to speed and economy as a priority, where specifying materials that can be poured, flat packed or stacked and shipped large distances is prioritised over material exploration, localised manufacture



and the use of natural over composite materials. Perhaps we can benefit from understanding and learning from traditions that have evolved over longer periods of time to learn how architecture uses material to connect to place.

light

The capturing, filtering and shaping of light was executed beautifully in so many projects, nowhere more so than in Helsinki. Every building had a distinct and clear relationship with both natural and artificial lighting. This expressed in fittings, skylights, and external apertures but also in how volumes and surfaces sculpted and reflected light. Glass, transparency, reflectivity, absorption, surface, texture, shadow, filters; all were considered and articulated with precision. Perhaps it has something to do with Helsinki's seasonal variance in sunlight, a precious resource to be curated and celebrated.

Aalto Studio and its buildings used every conceivable way to curate light. Within each project we visited it was evident that light was an integral material consideration where light and surface was

designed as one. In Lisbon we saw the Thalia Theatre where the bold textured external form contrasted the intricate classical marble façade. The glazing facing the street used glass and mirrored surfaces, alongside smooth and textured concrete, each throwing and absorbing light. Atelier Zumthor's Therme Vals, a sensorial masterpiece enhanced experience through the highly controlled and crafted light sources, from slotted directional skylights to petite copper fittings.

It was evident through many projects that light shapes how we view architecture, it the base building block for every other material or formal decision that follows. These projects reinforced architecture's ability to harness light and shape our sensorial experience.



play + public

Who is a building for? How is a public building occupied and by whom? Most architecture we encountered were places that encouraged public interaction and actively invited participation. It appeared the success of these projects all prioritised scale, play, ownership and transparency, human scaled viewing windows (Roman Ruins), interactive facades (Löyly), human scaled tactility (Aalto University), awe inspiring, yet human scaled volumes (Temppeliaukion Church). They each addressed the street (Thalia Theatre, Aalto University), encouraged play and interaction (Amos Rex & Oodi Central Library). Some acted

as a thoroughfare or community living room (Tikkurila Church), inhabited the landscape (MFO Park) or encouraged ownership (Hunziker Areal co-operative housing).

An example that highlights the importance of scale and public amenity is the typology of the European plaza. A place physically 'empty' yet active, its success defined by its ability to offer reprieve to its dense perimeter and surrounding context. One active plaza we visited was at Lisbon's Campo das Cebolas by Carilla de Graça where the only beautiful intervening gesture was to

lift a portion of the ground plane of the plaza just higher than the height of a car. The result softened the view toward the horizon and dampened the sound of the adjacent road.

In contrast Lisbon's MAAT Museum and the 1998 Expo Pavilions set out to create large scale spectacles and spaces designed to hold many people. The pavilions sat unoccupied, devoid of the people they were intended for and without the urban density surrounding them. They appeared as islands or destinations, disconnected from their contexts.



histories

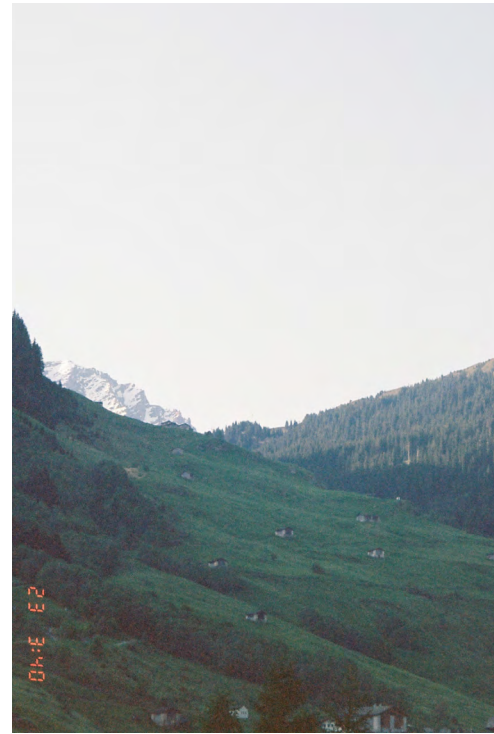


Historical context was raised again and again by Finnish and Portuguese architects, each talking through how the history of the city and country directly shaped the built politic, philosophy and fabric of the city.

The conversations between us morphed into the differences between a colonised and colonising country. Each architect we visited in Lisbon articulated the ways



their architecture sat within a historical context, an unbroken history dating back to the Iron Age. Luis from Carrilho de Graça Arquitectos spoke of how the ending of the Estado Novo's dictatorship in the 70's was integral in defining Portugal's interpretation of Modernism. He directly linked Novo's extensive nationalistic rebuilding of the cathedrals and historical buildings to Portugal's robust and severe interpretation



of modernism, which has shaped Portugal's buildings since.

In contrast, the architects we spoke to in Finland appeared to be striving to articulate a national identity separate to its historical colonisers, Sweden and Russia. There was an apparent self-consciousness in carving out what belonged to Finland and what the emergent identity of the country is moving



forward. Collaboratorio discussed the blasè attitude of preserving Finland's historical built fabric and the readiness to demolish and build again. They contrasted the freedom of expression in design unhindered by a historically defined tradition (such as in Italy) because Finland's own identity is more limber or unfixed.

in practice



The variety of studios we visited each occupied different scales of practice and stages of career. The consistent themes were; the value of dialogue, play, design competitions and the challenges architects face in needing to preserve and advocate for good design in contrast to the perils of business and economy.

Many practices reiterated the value of design competitions as an established tradition across Europe where

many practices are formed through entering and winning competitions. What was evident was the dialogue of ideas that design competitions generate within the industry. It was clear that competitions have a place in preserving design culture through promoting the commercial value of ideas. EMBAIXADA explained that design competitions play a role in removing the 'race to the bottom' seen in fee based procurement models.

Emerging and younger practices appeared to be opting for flatter structures, favouring collaboration, research, critique and dialogue to inform design rather than rely on traditional top down modes of practice. Playa, EMBAIXADA, and Collaboratorio displayed an agility in their research and approach to practice.

in conversation

It has been very evident at how architecture is always in conversation. Practices, buildings, time periods, socio-political and economic factors all influence architecture. Architecture will always sit within a context and dialogue.

This is the essence of the Venice Biennale, where dialogue between countries, about what architecture is and what is relevant and contextual to the country it represents is presented. The breadth of the Biennale included formal exhibitions to interactive places of play, enquiry and occupation. A perfect way to end the Dulux 2023 Tour.

The most important conversations I experienced on this trip were with my fellow Dulux Tourists, immersed outside the island of architecture thought and

dialogue. We covered topics that directly relate to the built environment, regions, projects, colonisation, detailing, climate, practice culture, landscape.

And things we juggle everyday alongside being an architect that are also integral to what we do, but seldomly spoken about, caring, time, insecurity, fertility, imposter syndrome, family, wages, culture, pets, identity.

This tour has given me above everything else, an invaluable opportunity to be in conversation.



thank you

Thank you to Dulux, for your invaluable and generous investment in an emerging architect from the Deep North. For the opportunity to stretch and step outside of the island of architecture, to be flawed and awed for 10 days straight. The learning's from this trip will be with me for my career to come.

Thankyou Pete and Cherie, Abbey and the Institute of Architects, and Linda and Architecture Media, It

Photographs in order from page 1-9, left to right. 1.1 Shelter for Roman Ruins by Atelier Zumthore, Chur, Switzerland . 2.1 Therme Vals by Atelier Zumthore, Vals, Switzerland 2.2 S. Jorge Castle Interpretation Centre by Charrilho de Graça, Lisbon 2.3 Shelter for Roman Ruins by Atelier Zumthore, Chur, Switzerland 3.1 TempPELLIAUKION (Rock) Church by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, Helsinki 3.2 Otaniemi Campus by Studio Alto, Helsinki 3.3 Shelter for Roman Ruins by Atelier Zumthore, Chur, Switzerland. 4.1 Therme Vals by Atelier Zumthore, Vals, Switzerland 4.2 Thalia Theatre by Goncalo Byrne and Barbas Lopes Architects, Lisbon 4.3 TempPELLIAUKION Church 5.1 Amos Rex≠ Art Museum by JKMM,

wouldn't have been possible without you all, thankyou for your openness, guidance and brilliant humour.

To Bradley, Edwina, Tiffany and Sarah thankyou for the conversation, generosity and hilarity. You are an incredible bunch of insightful and intelligent humans; it's been a dream to share this journey with you. Long may the conversations continue.

Helsinki 5.2 Portuguese Pavilion by Álvaro Siza, Lisbon 5.3 Knowledge of the Seas Pavillion by Charrilho de Graça, Lisbon 6.1 + 6.2 S. Jorge Castle Interpretation Centre by Charrilho de Graça, Lisbon, 6.3 Vals, Switzerland 6.4 Shelter for Roman Ruins by Atelier Zumthore, Chur, Switzerland 7.1 Saint Benedict's Chapel by Atelier Zumthore, Sumvitg, Switzerland 7.2 Atilier Bardill by Valerio Olgiati, Scharans, Switzerland 7.3 Thalia Theatre by Goncalo Byrne and Barbas Lopes Architects, Lisbon 8.1 Collaboratorio practice visit, Helsinki 8.2 Campo das Cebolas by Carilla de Graça, Lisbon. 9.1 S. Jorge Castle, Lisbon

