

Tokyo / Berlin / Madrid / Valladolid

# Dulux Study Tour

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This report is written nestled deep in Waring Season on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people.

I pay my respect to Elders past and present, and extend this respect to all First Nations Peoples.

I recognise the ongoing connection of First Nations Peoples to sky and spirit, land and water, culture and community.

With gratitude for what is shared I strive to enable authentic representation and care for Country in the built environment.



# Itinerary

## Tokyo

Part measure, part abundance - Tokyo is very different from Australia. During the Edo Period the city experienced fires so frequently that it was known as the 'City of Fires'. The Great Fire of Meireki 1657, destroyed over two thirds of the city this was just one of many.

Fire, earthquake, tsunami, and war have forged a city of intense cultural depth but with limited attachment to built structures. Buildings depreciate quickly, death taxes make it more affordable to demolish and subdivide than to retain old homes. Baked into the city's structure is cellular form, emerging from fire regulations.

Western building technologies and materials permeated during the Meiji period with opening of the ports in 1859. Following the Great Kantō Earthquake 1923, fires spread through the city centre raising a death toll over 100,000. The high survival rate of concrete buildings, spurred rapid uptake of modern construction.

Emergent accumulation of spontaneous patterns from the bottom up, as opposed to disorder or grand design characterise Tokyo. Abundant small businesses and flexible micro spaces persistently pepper the city - any two-story house in Japan can operate a bar, restaurant, boutique or workshop and it's cheap to get a liquor license, these regulatory choices inform the city.

Unsuitable for stone and masonry, the use of timber has been the most defining architectural characteristic for earthquake prone Japan. Modern Tokyo mixes traditional and contemporary materials with Japanese sensibilities offering tiled precast façades and delicately detailed thresholds.

Crafted elements are infused into the streetscape through human scale interventions. These curated moments exist alongside power lines and building services which appear to have landed without notice. Within the scale of such a big city is a smallness, defined by DNA so different to our local city expression.

## Berlin

My expectations of Germany circulated around order and structure, something direct and concise, pleasingly logical and rational was the tone. Berlin is ordered but it is also so much more varied and energetic than my cultural impressions.

Founded at the crossing point between trade routes two settlements Berlin and Cölln date back to the 13th Century. Joining across the River Spree Berlin became the capital of Margraviate of Brandenburg, 1417. As Germany's centre of trade and creative excellence in the 1920's Berlin grew to be the third-largest city in the world.

Immediately following WWII Berlin is divided by the Allied Powers, as political symbol and microcosm of the administration of East and West Germany. In the decade following 1949 there was relative ease of movement and exchange across the border, but as economic differences became more pronounced political tensions grew. Until the night of 13 August 1961, when the German Democratic Republic constructed the Berlin Wall severing movement and connections.

Since the boarder reopened in 1989, and the city was reunited in 1990, East and West Berlin have been growing back together. Physically the wall has been removed, economically and socially memories remain. Where the wall used to be a double cobblestone line beautifully traces it's path in the pavement.

What was restricted has become opportunity, creating an interesting dynamic of new development at the centre. The city is a startling transcript of this history underpinned by careful ordered planning with well defined blocks and open spaces. Neighbourhood squares provide orientation points, both structuring and inviting.

Bigger than just layers of old and new form, formal and dynamic. There is an almost legendary magnetism to Berlin, something uniquely gritty vibrating with creative energy. There is a looseness and space for breath which feels invitingly open-ended.



Prada Aoyama, Herzog & de Meuron



Ganpachi Nishi-Azabu, Tokyo



Omotesandō backstreet, Tokyo



International Building Exhibition IBA 1984-87



Choriner Straße, Berlin



Berlin Wall Memorial

# Itinerary

## Madrid

Spain conjures impressions of flare and exuberance, bright colours, openness, direct and embracing. With food and socialising as important cultural features, I imagine outgoing people and lively night-life. Suggesting a looser urban order embodying these cultural characteristics than perhaps Tokyo or Berlin.

Madrid is a young city with a long history, originally founded as a fortress called Mayrit from the Arabic Mayra meaning plenty of waterways. A city of prospect, as opposed to port or trade, Madrid became Spain's capital in 1561. Eighty percent of current population growth is post 1950, the city oozes youth and exuberance.

There is order in the city, with a clear axis and wide streets. Differing building ages are mixed, creating a collage with enticing variation. This combination of form and style is a record of growth radially from the fort, as a series of satellites beyond the city walls, infilling towards the centre, then expanding north and south.

Alongside extroversion is well protected domestic privacy, everything happens in the street all the meetings and meals and catchups, partly because home is so deeply intimate. This social nuance could be understood as a shadow of Franco's fascist regime - where political belief was policed and mistrusts multiplied.

Madrid is lively but not disordered, with older medieval fragments alongside proud boulevards and monumental architecture. Growth has at times outstripped planning, requiring for subtraction to carve out plazas and open spaces.

The recent City-Park Madrid Río redevelopment, delivered in an astounding eight years, assertively drops the motorway below ground. Enabling local parks, rewilded landscapes and bridge connections across the Manzanares River. This subtraction, full of children and birds, compliments Madrid's density and formality offering a view of what could emerge as the city evolves.

## Valladolid

A brief two-hour drive from Madrid, my expectations for Valladolid were largely unstructured. For starters you do not pronounce this name with any English phonetics, it is beautifully lyrical and soft.

Valladolid is part of Madrid's story. Seat of the Castilian crown in the 13th Century, location of Europe's first moral debate on the treatment of indigenous people and the birthplace of Felipe II and Felipe II who moved the Court to Madrid in the 17th Century. Following this move the city population waned, blossoming after the Spanish Civil War with industrialisation and the railway arrival.

The city is a strategic node, located between Galicia, The Basque Country and Madrid. It is the capital and primary seat of government of the autonomous community of Castile and Leon. Surrounded by rich wine-growing areas and as we saw en route infilling with wind turbines generating new local income.

The city is almost opulent in its deep history and ornate architecture, the surrounding country side and villages draped in glorious sandstone. Valladolid is a little jewel in dialogue with Madrid, offering glimpses into the past and adding cultural context.



Casa de las Flores, S. Sotelo



City view from Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid



Plaza España, Madrid



Hipodromo de la Zarzuela by E. Torroja, C. Arniches and M. Domingues



On the road to Valladolid



Cathedral of Valladolid

# Urban themes

## Density + energy

Urban sprawl is one of our biggest local hurdles, we need great dense living examples to redirect focus from free-standing houses. I consistently hear parents saying they want more space for their kids, our cities desperately need to welcome people of all ages.

High density cities build critical mass, supporting vibrant suburbs, reducing vehicle use and associated energy demands. Keeping our cities contained preserves productive agricultural areas and protects wildspaces supporting biodiversity.

Tokyo is very dense, but both Berlin and Madrid align relatively closely in density with Brunswick. Limiting single homes these cities weave together residential and commercial spaces while also offering generous parks and plazas, enabling greenery and relief.

If we could tip the balance away from the house and towards more medium density housing we could provide parks, community gardens and playspaces. With concentrated well connected cities we would gain back time in our days creating vibrant mixed neighbourhoods. With the right balance of density, comes vitality.

## Disruption + resilience

Tokyo's repeat experience of catastrophe infiltrates the cultural perspective of permanence. Similarly Berlin has been rebuilt four times in the last century and before that with the Thirty Year War.

Madrid has also experienced trauma and demonstrates a similar elements of central infill and mixed building ages, as affordable peripheral land was at times preferentially developed. Rapid development followed by demolition to create public open spaces, has created an architecture of subtraction.

There is deep memory in these cities, disruption does not equate with erasure. Thinking about the history of each place I wonder about creative impact of disruption and how it may have fostered resilience and diversity. Perhaps like our bushfire prone ecology these cities have evolved to embrace and depend on change.

Our cities will need resilience to enable evolution in the face of climate change. The places we visited offered an optimistic outlook for the potentially positive creative and cultural impact these challenges can offer for a city.

## Openness + order

'People care about what they care about' – was Mike's motto in response to my repeated 'why' queries. In Tokyo there is an openness, some things are very precisely managed while others are allowed to just be. This juxtaposition is quite foreign coming from an Australian perspective where we tend towards certainty and order.

Allowing a system to possess openness enables opportunity for variety and unexpected moments. Berlin and Madrid also possess similar characteristics of variety. In Berlin there is fairly consistent underlying order in form, providing a framework for life and vitality. In Madrid it reads more like exuberance which can't be fully contained.

Shared identity and agreement about what is most important enables confidence in more open frameworks and policy. We have such deep knowledge and unique perspective from our First People's, we have the opportunity to embracing existing ways of knowing to support stronger local perspective and urban identity. Clear priorities are the antidote for rigid systems of excess control, which we need to enable space for excellence and unexpected joy.



# Long lives



Barkow Leibinger Studio, Berlin



Wohnregal, with Marc Frohn, FAR frohn&rojas



Neue Nationalgalerie refurbishment David Chipperfield Architects



St Agnes, Brandluber + Emde, Burlon, Riegler Riewe Architekten



Campus Joachimstraße, David Chipperfield Architects



Rehabilitation of the Church of San Agustin in the Municipal Archive, Estudio Primitvo Gonzalez

Leaving some space open for interpretation and user input was a delightful common theme emerging between a number of the projects. This looseness of fit presents opportunity for adaptability, which was demonstrated joyfully in LOBE Block's open outlook towards future adaptation from commercial to residential.

Another example of this theme is presented by Wohnregal, employing industrial structural fabrication provides large open floors allowing for multiple unit configurations. Excitingly adaptability is extended here to consider end of life disassembly and re-purposing of parts into new building configurations.

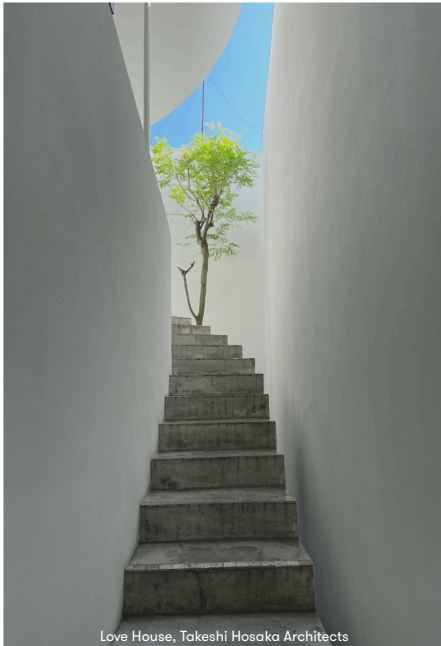
Studio TAB's ethos similarly draws on these themes providing a carefully crafted shell, embracing financial constraints, and aiming to provide the most possible value for least upfront cost. Offering opportunity for future adaptation and resident lead infill, without neglecting care of execution.

The value of good well lit and configured buildings was reiterated by Barkow Leibinger and J Mayer H und Partner's both with offices located in refurbished buildings. With ample daylight and great proportions these spaces could easily live another hundred years continuing to evolve while consistently providing all the essential nutrients for happy healthy occupants.

In Valladolid Estudio Primitivo Gonzalez offer a lovely lyrical narrative of old and new with their Rehabilitation of the Church of San Agustin. As does St Agnes, dropping a massive conceptually removable concrete floor into an existing chapel offering rebirth. Investing in good bones provides potential for buildings to be re-imagined to live many lives.

Our future holds growth but at a more modest rate than we have seen over the last decades, we need to shift to consider not just the upfront cost of construction but also the compounding interest of what we expend today. Our delicate ecosystem will thank us, and the outcomes have potential weave a rich evolving tapestry.

# Living models



Love House, Takeshi Hosaka Architects



Chestnut Tree Library, Atelier Bow Wow



IBeR, Ifrau + Heide & von Beckerath



Terrassenhaus / Lobe Block, Brandhuber+



Share Yaraicho, Spatial Design Studio and A Studio



Gazebo House, Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop

Creating spaces of delight for people is the heart of architecture, there will always be many elements demanding our attention but it is a mistake to forget to seek beauty in the everyday. We need to consider longevity to enable future lives for our buildings, but these spaces also need to invite engagement and occupation.

Love House is the most elegant example of how to live simply and beautifully, with a tiny 33 square meter footprint it holds the most expansive elements - the moon, the sun, the wind and the rain. "I will build you a house to hold all of these things and we will be happy", is the promise spoken so clearly. It is so full of delight that there is no need for more rooms for it to be complete.

With space for three generations Chestnut Tree Library follows with a compelling argument for connection. A lively jumble of toys and books, simple materials used well, with space for family and a future micro bookstore. What could our cities be filled with more homes like these - modest, joyful and connected.

Purposefully living in close proximity Share Yaraicho provides an alternative to individual apartments. Providing affordability and connection, carefully respecting user needs for balance between public and private spaces. There is looseness in each of these homes, redundancy without excess, with whimsy and open edges that would frighten our building codes.

Blending spaces for living and working in close proximity sets the foundation for well resourced communities fostering connection. We could have a future where very few people drive and where work is within walking distance - what would we do with the abundance of time and space this would offer back?

For Riken Yamamoto community is always a central consideration, if the focus shifts from individual built form and towards the ecosystem I think we would be delighted by the outcomes. Lobe Block burst with authentic community spirit, it is a lovely assembly of open and closed design elements. Community should be the defining feature!

# Materially crafted



Foster and Partners Studio, Madrid



Piscinas Municipales En Castromonté, Contextos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo



Ensamble Studio and Fabrica, Madrid



Sunny Hills Japan, Kengo Kuma



Wohnregal, FAR frohnrojas



Super Low-cost Big House 6, Studio TAB

Working with local and readily available materials is not only often the most affordable choice but it also connects and can resonate with place. Contextos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo demonstrates how to combine local masonry and contemporary construction harmoniously, breathing new life into traditional craftsmanship.

Pairing prefabricated culverts with concrete and local stone Ares Alvarez provides dramatic expression and promotes local manufacturing. Similarly using industrial precast fabrication Wohnregal presents unapologetic structural joints with surprising glimpses of light where compression is expected. When we use what is available, rather than following ego or trend, there is opportunity for alchemy.

Working with what is available imposes constraints which encourages innovation, Studio TAB spoke about embracing budget constraints to amplify value and crafted construction. Combining traditional “Jiigoku-Gumi” timber jointing with digital modelling and fabrication Sunny Hills creates a structural shell refreshingly modern, informed by a deep history of craft and culture.

Martina Bauer spoke about the importance of industrial production and material innovation in relation to her role at the Institute for Industrial Building and Design, IEK University of Stuttgart. There is space for innovation with novel materials, but just as excitingly there is potential to elevate materials which may previously have been overlooked by pairing them with modern technologies.

The work of Ensamble studio exists at this exciting experimental intersection between art and architecture. There is a real enthusiasm for and willingness to experiment with materials. Here we also saw physical experimentation in prototyping and fabrication of models, choosing materials to express intent over representation. The role of craft in innovation was one of the most compelling recurrent connecting themes between the practices and projects we visited.

# Connecting threads

## Interdisciplinary practice

The value of having a diverse interdisciplinary practice was a recurrent theme which stuck with me. Many of the most impressive projects and practices operate in more than one sphere. Creativity seems to be amplified when there is diversity of practice, whether that is engagement with academia or through personal interests driving connections beyond traditional project work.

Bauer spoke to the space that teaching provides personally for material exploration and research, and how these outward facing connections underpin the practice's ethos and willingness to innovate. Frohn spoke of his academic role as a more parallel activity to professional practice, yet there is a rigour and level of articulation which feels at least informed by these two professional spheres.

With hands on experience Studio TAB bring a knowledge of doing into documentation and design, without this first hand experience the work would not be as successful or compelling. Then there is Ensamble Studio's practice, both artistic and intellectually informed.

Its easy to see things which do not directly align with productivity output goals as a detraction, the architects we met spoke directly and indirectly to the benefits of external influence. These varied interests may support brain plasticity, I like to think they nourish the soul and that time out offers more back than a linear exchange.

## Creative partnerships

Architecture is never in isolation, it is always collaborative. Even when the roles are segregated it takes many hands and many minds. We spoke to firms where a central figure appears acts as the gravitational pull and others where creative partnership is at the heart of the firm's foundation and success.

Many of the firms we spoke to received a lot of their projects through competitions, while this could serve to divide practices into adversaries there were moments of mutual acknowledgement and respect expressed between firms pursuing the same projects. The international pool of firms participating in competitions also functions to link the community globally, creating unforeseen connections.

## Vibrancy

There was an infectious energy and vibrancy demonstrated by so many people we met. Each with their own tone or resonance. There are so many ways you can practice, the scope architecture offers as a profession is vast – you can't do everything, but you absolutely can carve out a niche which brings joy and aligns with your core values.

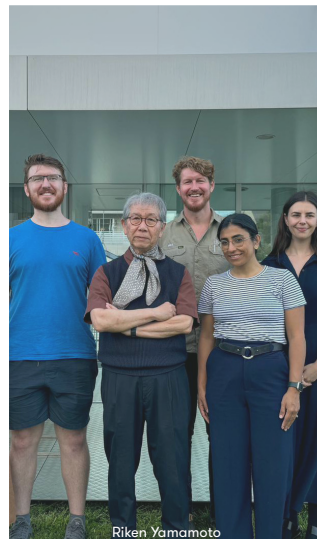
I came away less with a single scalar view of good to bad, or who I strongly liked or disliked, and more with an affirmation of the expansive impact and scope the profession holds. I am proud to be part of a profession which enables such diversity of practice and opportunity for presence of the whole person.

When you live in love with what you do everything comes more naturally. But beyond that I think architecture is intrinsically about the people. We are engaged with the production of things, but they are never made or experienced in isolation. Forgetting your intrinsic connection to and reliance upon others is risky business.

The most uplifting and inspiring projects for me were the ones where the voice of the occupants and community were amplified. Where the creative process enabled more than was envisioned before the project began and gave back more than the energy expended in its conception and construction.

This thread was present in so many of the projects and practices that we visited but especially strong in Riken Yamamoto's office where community connection is consistently forefront. To the extent that the office consistently take meals together, inviting more than just the professional face of staff into an inclusive workplace.

Architecture can have such a positive ripple impact on the community it serves, these themes were strong in Valladolid with the project of Contextos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo and Estudio Primitivo Gonzalez. Where a pool becomes a social hub and the community centre becomes a deep source of collective pride - lets make more places like these.



Riken Yamamoto



Pablo Urango Lillo



Hans Schneider



Meji Jingu Museum and Nezu Museum, Kengo Kuma



## Experience reflection

Receiving so much information and stimulation within such a compressed space of time, I think there is a immediacy to my current reflections which will take some time to settle and to see the impact both professionally and personally.

The Tour felt like bright collection of impressions compressed in time. I have found myself thinking of Cubism, about how the artists bring together glimpses of their subjects resulting in paintings which appear fragmented and abstracted. Rapidly touring these cities is a little like receiving slices or facets of something larger.

Inspired by Immanuel Kant, Cubists focus on thought as the highest reality and try to capture thought in image without processing, it is cerebral and stylistically dense. It prioritises conscious thinking over sensory stimulus and subconscious rumination.

Considering what to take from this Study Tour or how to process all the information, I am reminded that experiences are larger than our immediate thoughts. This trip was so rich, in connection, in intellectual exposure, but also in lived body and sensory stimulus.

Adding to the intensity is that this is shared rather than individual experience. There are opportunities for collective processing, with conversations challenging preconceived ideas and introducing other perspectives. Having the time from practice to share space and focus for appreciation of architecture was truly unique.

I have this image of ten vibrant perspectives of places and projects, linked through shared experience into something wholly unique and in its collected perspectives more stable and than any individual view. It has been valuable but tricky to succinctly capture something so such expansive. I'm looking forward to reading the other accounts and returning to my own after the thoughts have permeated more deeply into my practice and perspective.



# Thanks

## Practices

Atelier Bow Wow

SANAA

Kengo Kuma & Associates

Takeshi Hosaka Architects

Riken Yamamoto

Barkow Leibinger

J Mayer H und Partners

FAR frohn & Rojas

David Chipperfield

Lobe Block

Ensamble Studio

Temperaturas Extremas  
Arquitectos

Foster & Partners

Contextos de Arquitectura y  
Urbanismo

Estudio Primitivo Gonzalez

## Guides

Taka, Showcase Tokyo

Richard Ollig, Ticket B Tours

Werner Durrer, Madrides

## Winners

Flynn Carr

Jamileh Jahangiri

Simona Falvo

Mike Sneyd

## Dulux

Pete Wood

Christina Earls

## Institute

Abbey Czudek

Rob Henry

## Architecture Media

Linda Cheng

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To my peers, the experience would not have been the same without your candour, charisma and authenticity. I am so grateful for the new connections and hope the future holds many more disorientating time zones and long conversations.

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