

LOOKING AT THINGS AND THINKING ABOUT THEM



Parco Franco Verga, Milan

Turumeke Harrington

An explorative research trip through Switzerland and Italy supported by the
Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and the Hawke's Bay Design Trust, March and
April 2017

Submitted March, 2018

NGĀ MIHI

It is with huge aroha that I thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and the Hawke's Bay Design Trust for the incredible opportunity that was given to me.

It has given me new hope, inspiration and connection that there may be a future for us.

A huge thanks to my parents who supported myself and my young daughter as I was on my travels.

To Adrien Rovero and his kind studio mate, thank you for making time for me in your incredibly busy day. Being given a look into your studio and process was extraordinary, as was the impromptu unguided tour of the ECAL University campus you facilitated.

To my dear friend, Jack, who at the last minute came to join me in Milan. I was overwhelmed and having someone beside me to discuss and engage with the projects and exhibitions in the flesh was excellent!

To Andrew Colbert, Mahsa Razavi and the crew of Roman artists installing the Sol Lewitt at MAXXI, it was an absolute pleasure to meet you and your manaakitanga made me feel at home on the other side of the world. To everyone I met at the European Academy of Design 12 (EAD12) conference in Rome, the often intense discussion of design theory made for an unexpected and wholly incredible antidote to the overwhelming scale and luxe of Milan Design Week.

Nāku noa, nā

Turumeke Harrington

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I set out with aims to make new connections and leave my own 'bubble', with an open mind, ready to take in new sights and ask more questions of the world we make around us. I attended Salone del Mobile in Milan and the 12th European Academy of Design Conference, Design for Next, (EAD12) in Rome.

In between these major events I visited studios, local tertiary institutions, galleries and tried to take in as much as I could. Meeting the crew of artists, from across Europe, installing a Sol Lewitt at MAXXI, just one of the incredibly meaningful and unexpected interactions that comes from travelling with your eyes open.

Whilst away I was also in the development stages of a solo exhibition, supported by Creative New Zealand, and so was informed by what I saw around me. Taking notice of what it was in the designs I could see that I found successful, charming, failures. Having experienced first hand the breadth of products on offer, their materiality and approaches to process I returned to New Zealand with a renewed excitement to see what I could ask of manufacturers locally.

These two events, Salone and EAD12 lay in stark contrast to one another and have continued to provide moments of thought, reflection and comparison since returning home; how can I balance theory, discourse and ideologies with form, materiality and the 'user'.

PREFACE

Before embarking on my travels I was living in Lyttelton. Having returned home from Melbourne in 2014 ahead of the birth of my first child, Pia, I had been slowly 'working' my way back into design life. Progressing from a small label producing baby shoes, to practice in ceramics, jewellery, footwear and work as a freelance product designer & developer.

In late 2016 I applied for Creative New Zealand funding to mount my second solo exhibition. The first, 'Still Life' (October, 2016), was a collection of works produced since arriving back in NZ. The second exhibition was to have more purpose, a practical exploration of whakapapa - both genealogical and of craft tradition. Funding was granted and so the production of this show was at the front of my mind while travelling.

Around the same time, in late 2016, I applied for an all-inclusive scholarship to undertake a Masters of Design at Emily Carr University in Vancouver, CA.

Days before leaving for Europe I was offered (and accepted) the scholarship.

I left New Zealand for Canada on August 20th, started the course and unfortunately - due to life's wild ways - returned to New Zealand on September 26th.

On arriving in New Zealand I secured another full scholarship through the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre and will undertake a Master of Fine Arts at Canterbury University in 2018 exploring and seeking to better understand a contemporary Māori design identity and meaningful expressions of indigeneity.

My experience on the fellowship has been an invaluable asset in navigating these changes and a driving force in my pursuit of further research and education.



Glass shards atop wall, Rome



MAXXI Contemporary Art Gallery, Rome



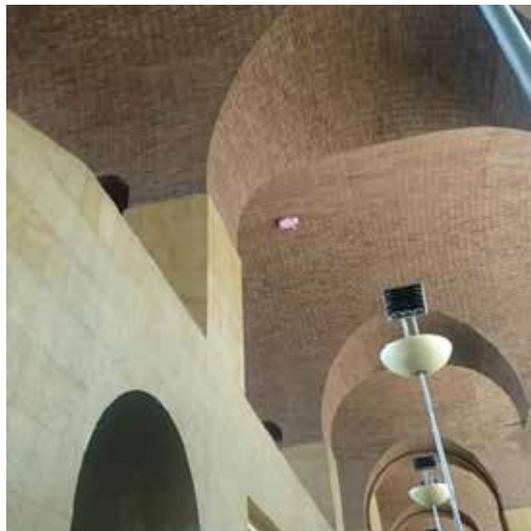
Midnight view, Rome



Heat warped asphalt, Milan



Makeshift shelving at architecture, Design for Next conference, Rome



Lost balloon, Centrale Station, Rome

INTRODUCTION

This is an anecdotal account of my time in Europe.

As I set out with the intention to connect with others and 'look at things' more so than to answer or seek new questions on a particular subject.

All the images used in this report were taken from my instagram feed.

Whilst there were about 1500 more images taken, I felt that this collection best captures what I experienced, having considered them at the time to be of importance.

What this fellowship gave me was a sense of direction, renewed passion to create work for people, for play and interaction. It provided valuable insight into professional practice - considering the exhibition halls of Milan - and academic life in the lecture theatres of EAD12.

These two events lay in stark contrast to one another and have continued to provide moments of thought, reflection and comparison since returning home; how can I balance theory, discourse and ideologies with form, materiality and the 'user'.

TRAVELLING WITH INTENT

The primary intention for this travel was to attend Salone del Mobile¹ and all the events around it in the city of Milan, “Seeking new insight and looking to understand design in a context and world outside of my own small bubble. New ideas, materials, networks and presentation platforms” and “...talking to people and engaging with different thoughts and world views can only be positive in growing my own design perspective. Design is for people.”²

In addition to this intent, and keen to make the most of the opportunity given to me, I also made arrangements to attend the European Academy of Design 12 (EAD12) ‘Design for Next’ conference, made appointments to visit local designers and to explore design museums and galleries wherever possible.

I was only able to meet with one designer, Adrien Rovero (Adrien Rovero Studio) in Lausanne, Switzerland but it was a fantastic afternoon. Busy with work when I arrived, I was offered a ‘tour’ of the ECAL³ campus down the road, a university I had read a lot about and seen work come out of for several years. When I returned to the studio I was shown work in progress, the prototyping workshop, previous works and catalogues, working areas and was generously given several publications by the studio. It may have been a short encounter but it is one I have thought about a lot - the generosity shown to a stranger and has informed how I would like to be with my practice, open and keen to help others wherever possible.

1 The Milan Furniture Fair (Italian: Salone Internazionale del Mobile di Milano) is a furniture fair held annually in Milan. It is the largest trade fair of its kind in the world. The exhibition showcases the latest in furniture and design from countries around the world. It is considered a leading venue for the display of new products by designers of furniture, lighting and other home furnishings. The show, also known as “Salone”, “Milano Salone” and “Milan Design Week,” is held every year, usually in April, in the FieraMilano complex in the Milan metropolitan area town of Rho.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_Furniture_Fair

2 Taken from my original fellowship application

3 The École cantonale d’art de Lausanne (ECAL) is a university of art and design based in Renens (in the urban area of Lausanne, Switzerland). It is affiliated to the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole_cantonale_d%27art_de_Lausanne

Despite my best preparations I had not quite grasped just how big the official fair in Milan was. Great halls of furniture, lighting, design. Opulence and luxury to a sickening extreme, new and innovative material and technological developments. A global student showcase was impressive, far beyond what I had produced while an undergrad!

Seeing all this work and being able to touch, where previously I had only magazines and endless websites to look through, was both inspiring and incredibly alarming.

The sheer volume left me thinking often, 'why make more'. It seems everything has been done and 100 times over at that. By the same token, that volume was exciting. The vast array of materials in different combinations had me continually asking 'what could this be next?' or how else processes may be applied.

I specifically recall one project, although the designers name has now been lost in the pages of scrawled notes, where a thin wooden veneer had been applied and formed over a dense foam with a lattice like embossing. A soft wooden bench!

Overwhelmed by the sheer volume of 'design', I took to looking in the in-betweens and mundane.

(Supermarkets)

Key observational points:

- Where's the fresh product located
- What's the dominant produce
- Who is shopping there
- What is the signage like
- How large/ small is it
- What are other people buying
- How are other people navigating around
- What kind of prices

United in our need for sustenance and with a fairly standard Western approach to function, I found going to supermarkets became a distinct and unusual pleasure. There was the highly organised Swiss (thing) where by you weigh your fruit and print the barcode yourself. There was a chaotic, small and roughly organised wee place in Rome; The huge Esselunga in Milan, Carrefour, Co-op, Denner's.

Looking to see differences in the familiar gave indication on how design was approached in everyday life.



Cheese, Switzerland



Gin, Switzerland



View from footpath, Zurich



Aldo Bakker, Mudac, Lausanne



Josefwiese Park, Zurich



ECALxPunkt, Milan Design Week

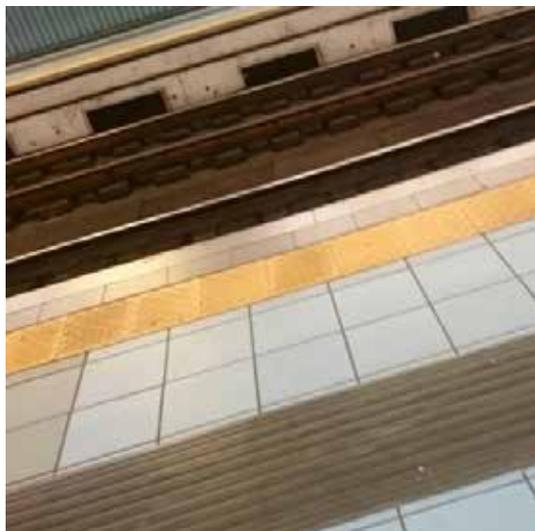


Ironic system design, Design for Next conference, Rome

A well discussed topic at the conference was the choice of location for the lunch service. 400 people, a 40sqm room with a single 2m wide doorway and two large entry points.



Bosco Verticale, Milan



Subway, Milan



GIRO, GIRO TONDO, La Triennale, Milan

This show was hugely inspiring.

Considering children's needs and the role these objects play in their development.

The show was made up of collections curated by prominent artists and designers featuring toys, furniture, games from around the world.



David Bielander, Carte blanche at Mudac, Lausanne

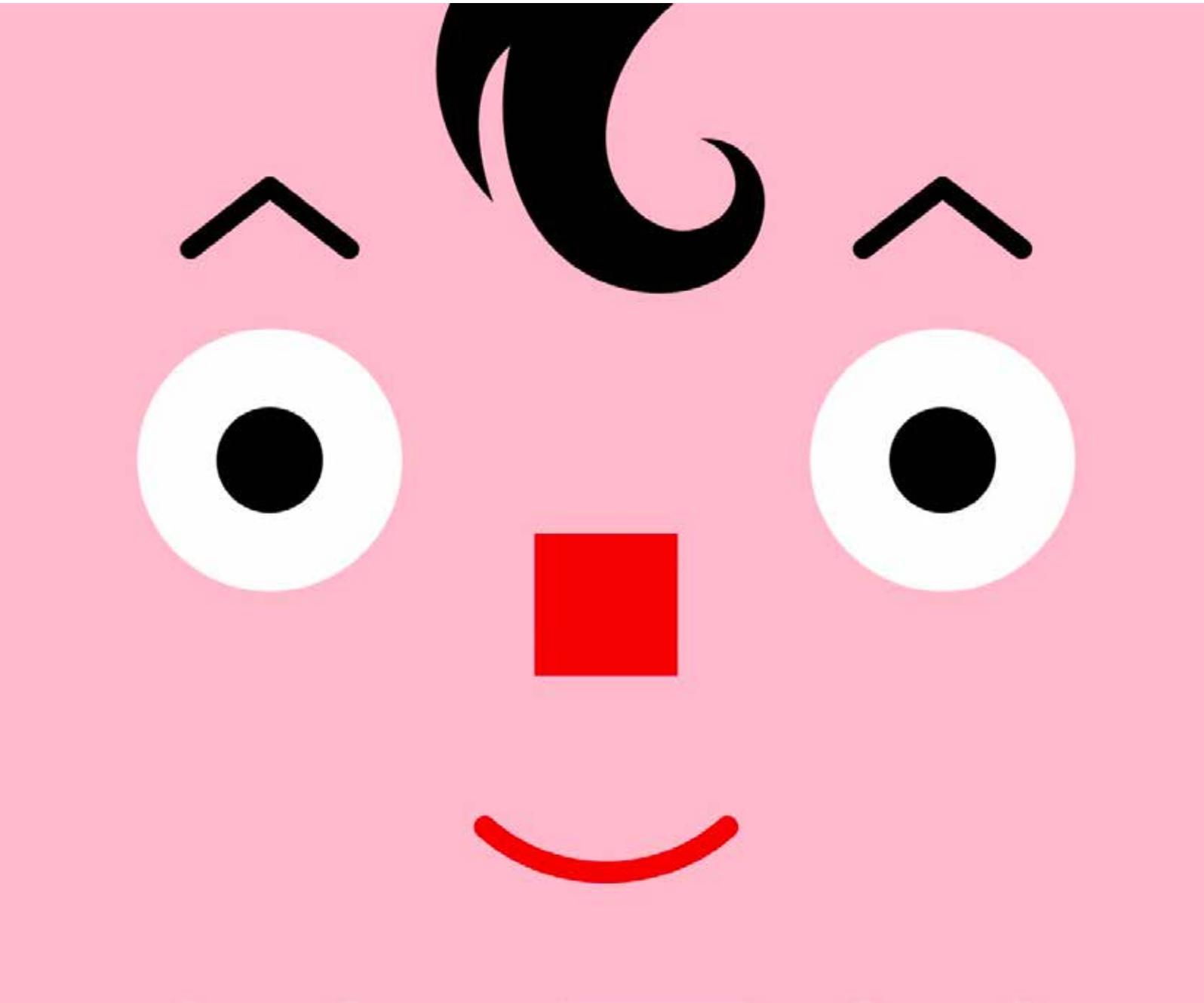


Bäckeranlage, Zurich



Duomo from afar, Milan

Artwork from Giro Giro Tondo, Muesum for Children
Triennale Design Museum, Milan



MAKING THINGS FROM

Before leaving for Europe I had secured funding from Creative New Zealand to produce new work for a show in Auckland. This show was called *Whai Whakapapa: Te Tuatahi*, the first in what I hope to be an ongoing series exploring the theme of identity, whakapapa and the intersections of art, craft and design.

Travelling provides many opportunities to sit and think without being able to do much else.

Pride of the Nation (pictured right) was conceived in the airport lounges, on public transport, sitting in parks and watching people move around.

I like very much the idea of producing work that people can engage with physically, climbing, wearing and in this case pushing and punching. Medium density foam upholstered in heavy duty outdoor grade PVC and weighted with a solid steel bar. Making reference to our nations great rugby tradition (tongue in cheek) and the carved pou of whareniui.



Gordon's Dog Walter is another work developed while away.

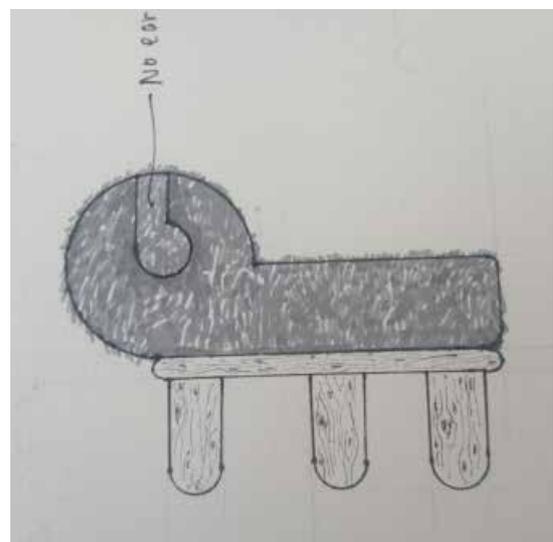
It became apparent while walking the halls of Salone del Mobile, that humour and play were elements of design I valued immensely.

Medium density foam, faux fur and solid turned ash. Seen here in an early sketch and presented as part of the show at Toi Tū (pictured top right)

These works were produced in collaboration with manufacturers here in Ōtautahi.

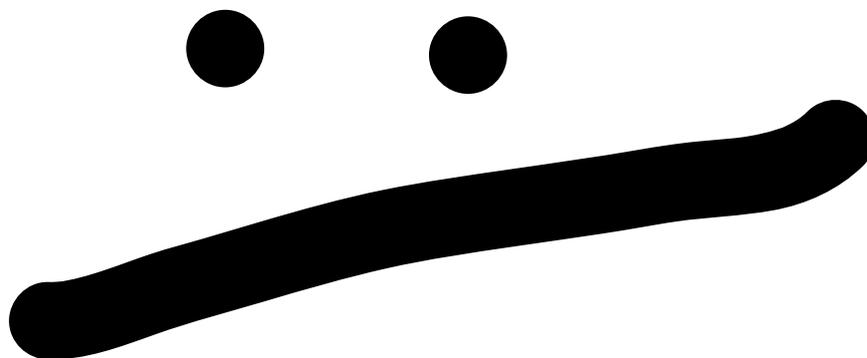
Having experienced first hand the breadth of products on offer, their materiality and approaches to process I returned to New Zealand with a renewed excitement to see what I could ask of manufacturers locally and continue to do so.

(pictured right, *Whai Whakapapa*, Tou Tū, 2017)



HOPEFULL

Hope for hopeless people - Vol.1



***DON'T WORRY,
WE'RE FUCKED**

Following discussions at EAD12, I wanted to start a new work looking at how other people felt about the uncertain times we face, what they did when they felt hopeless, how they saw a future for 'us'.

What came of this was HOPEFULL (Part One, Don't Worry We're Fucked). Produced as a simple black and white zine it had stories of mental health journeys, recipes, poetry. I asked a broad range of people to submit, beyond my usual net of designers and artists, in New Zealand and overseas.

As 2017 progressed I reflected a lot upon this work. In September, during my brief time at Emily Carr, I started to write the brief for Part Two, 'HOPE SPIRNGS'. There were some really charming moments in Part One, I appreciated the challenge of articulating what I wanted (somewhat unsuccessful) and people's responses were at times beautiful and kind and I think there is something to this idea - a journal full of Hope for the Hopeless.

I intend for the brief for Part Two to be released in 2018, and to expand this to a full colour, hard cover book.

HOPEFULL can be read in full online at wehopefull.tumblr.com

An additional pull out was also created, in antithesis, called SHIT. Featuring photos of dog shit and a poem about getting dog shit in my hair while in Milan.

Intro to HOPEFULL Part One

It's pretty easy to feel like we're at the end of the world, well at least I think it is.

*I just don't see how it can ever get better than now.
And, I can certainly see how it could get worse.*

*I met this Bulgarian architect while on research in Italy.
She thought we were fucked too. But, in a weird way she saw a future - it just involved countries like
New Zealand experiencing a, erm, Hitler-holocaust kind of tragedy. Like some solid suffering by all.*

I don't think that's quite the solution, but I think something has to give.

*And I think it'll be us in the middle, complaining about the price of cheese and our inability to get into
the property market sat in our fancy jeans on our comfortable couches, who will need to be that give.*

Viva la revolution! So long as I can still have my latte though aye?

*Selfishly I asked, and will continue to ask, and look for stories, images, activities that can give me
hope.*

If I'm feeling like this - I thought maybe you might be too...

Of all the stalls and exhibitons on display across Milan this was one of the most interesting materials. A solid board produced from end of life textiles.

Read more

<https://www.wallpaper.com/design/kvadrat-really-and-max-lamb-set-a-new-benchmark-in-sustainable-design>



*Bench seat by Max Lamb for REALLY (Kvadrat),
Milan Design Week*



(Unknown origin), Isola, Milan

When exploring the Isola Design District in Milan I came across a collection of Māori street art.

I can say nothing of their provenance, and all I could make out was a tiny “07” scrawled in the corner.

It was a surreal moment, and I’m sure I turned around a few too many times in disbelief. Can no one else see this!



Duomo from afar, Milan

*Every single day I
thought, shit, this
is a lush meadow*

*See the flowers? Nice
huh? Long grass
I thought, shit! This
is a lush meadow*

*Good day to try,
aye? Shit yeah,
have a go. He’d
say ‘just chuck it!’*

*And then I stood up
And my hair was full of
dog shit*

*And there was no one there
to laugh at me*

TRAVEL DIARY

25 March
(evening)
Flight out to Zurich

26 March
(transit)

27 March
Zurich- exploring local area

28 March
Museum fur Gestaltung
Lande Museum

29 March
(transit to Lausanne)

30 March
Visit to Adrien Rovero Studio and ECAL Campus
Walk along Lake Geneva

31 March
Mudac - Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts
David Brieland
Aldo Bakker
Musee de l'Elysee
Vertical No Limit - Mountain photography

01 April
Collection D'Art Brut, Lausanne - Outsider Art
(transit to Milan)

02 April
Exploring Milan downtown, Duomo

03 April
Castello Sforzesco
Bosco Verticale
10 Corso Como

04 April
Salone del Mobile 2017. Day one
Karakter
Zero
Petit Futures
Talked with Resident & David Trubridge
'Joy of Work' display
Ryota Yokozeki
Yen Hou Chu (?) 'Soft wood' veneer&foam
Luomo. Group female Finnish designers
Daisuke Kitagawa
Vos Ding
Ventura Lambrate
Studio Emma Fox
University Lund + many other displays

05 April
Tour of Milano design districts
Mattermade - American design studio
REALLY Kvadrat & Partners
Briera Design District
ECAL 'More Rules for Modern Life'
Palazzo Litta
5vie District
Punkt & Collaborations with universities

06 April	'Product meaning'
Day off. Hilarious/ gross anecdote about dog poo.	Fungal futures
Spent at local park and exploring local neighbourhood	Design for the worst
	Social design vs. design for social quality
07 April	Humble design
La Triennale di Milano Design Museum	Gala dinner
Giro Giro Tondo Design for Children	
Seletti	14 April
Dutch Invertuals Collected	Design for Next - European Academy of Design
Wallpaper* display	conference Day Three
	Open source design vision for circular economy. Terrible
08 April	talk.
Salone de Mobile	Explorative Vs. Focussed UX research
Halls 20, 16 (Vitra etc)	Open ended design
	A review of NYC Community gardens. Terrible talk
09 April	Realising the Theoretical. Forced practice by design
Exploring Milano design districts	academics?
SOS Achilles	
Palazzo Litta	15 April
Ventura Lambrate	(transit to NZ)
Studio Jim	
	16 April
10 April	(transit to NZ)
(transit to Rome)	
	17 April
11 April	(arrive back NZ)
Touring around Rome	
Colloseum	
Vatican City (or at least the walls of...)	
MAXXI Contemporary Art Gallery (met Andrew Colbert	
from the estate of Sol Lewitt here)	
12 April	
Design for Next - European Academy of Design	
conference Day One	
Material thinking	
Design fiction	
Future mundane	
How can an object function for a 'good' greater than	
utility?	
Abstract vs. Actual	
13 April	
Design for Next - European Academy of Design	
conference Day Two	
Design is 'creativity deployed to a specific end' Cox 2005	
Danish Design Centre	