

Icon



Making Room for Downtime

Have Sketchbook,

Studying abroad opens up new worlds for interior designers—whether they're students or industry veterans.

BY MICHELLE TAUTE

ADRIANNE DALE, FASID, HAS A DOZEN STUDY ABROAD TRIPS UNDER HER BELT, BUT WHEN ASKED TO RECALL HER MOST STRIKING MEMORIES, SHE RECOUNTS AN EXPERIENCE YEARS AGO IN PARIS. SHE WAS STANDING IN THE LOUVRE WITH A GROUP OF STUDENTS WHEN ONE OF THEM TURNED TO HER AND SAID, "I NEVER UNDERSTOOD THERE WAS SO MUCH TO SEE IN THE WORLD." IT'S THE KIND OF EPIPHANY ONLY MADE POSSIBLE BY TRAVEL, AND PERHAPS, IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS THAT DALE TAKES THE TIME TO ORGANIZE DESIGN-RELATED TOURS EVERY COUPLE YEARS.

In fact, Dale was interviewed for *ASID ICON* two days before she was set to embark on a 10-day tour of Italy. Like many of the trips she arranges through an educational tour company, this one included students, practicing professionals and a few miscellaneous guests. She squeezes these excursions around her full-time residential design practice—as principal at Whardale International in Sumner, Wash.—and a part-time teaching commitment at the International Academy of Design and Technology in Seattle. But her tour planning motives aren't purely altruistic. Studying abroad offers just as many benefits for professional designers as it does for students, whether it's inspiration, knowledge or something purely practical. Dale, for instance, once spotted drawer pulls at a shop in Paris that she later put in one of her client's beach houses.

In large part, the kind of experience you have depends on the trip you choose. There are highly structured learning programs for students, vacations with an emphasis on art or architecture, and lecture-based tours created for design professionals.

Danielle Galland chose the latter

in 2004, when she signed up for an architectural drawing tour of Rome. "My visual analysis of these places is so much sharper now," says the principal of Danielle Galland Interior Design in New York City. "Standing in a ruin doesn't make a lot of sense unless there's someone there to explain it." In addition to learning from lectures, she gained a deeper understanding of many sites by sketching them—a luxury she doesn't normally indulge during self-directed travel.

There's another key advantage to organized trips: access. Like backstage passes to a concert, tours often provide participants with the chance to visit places they probably couldn't on their own. Galland's group, for example, took in private villas, as well as the Raphael Loggia at the Vatican. Marsha Lewis, ASID, and Jamie Berdon, ASID, both interior designers at Interior Concepts in Baton Rouge, La., found themselves at a private cocktail party in Venice with a duke. "We got to tour the home and see their antiques," Lewis says. "They keep things for centuries."

In all, the pair has taken five design tours together, and they're al-



JAMIE HUFFCUT, STUDENT MEMBER ASID

▲ **Travel study programs can provide time for luxuries, like sketching, that designers may not normally fit into their busy work schedules.**

ready planning a sixth trip, to Spain. "There's no comparison to having that hands-on experience of being in a city," Lewis says. She and Berdon have visited a silk factory in Venice and admired marble floors in Tuscany, keeping in touch with other design professionals they met on these and other trips. Many of these experiences relate directly back to their practice. Since colors from Italy are so popular in Baton Rouge, for instance, it was invaluable to gain first-hand knowledge of the country's palette. As Berdon says, "It's just a good life experience."

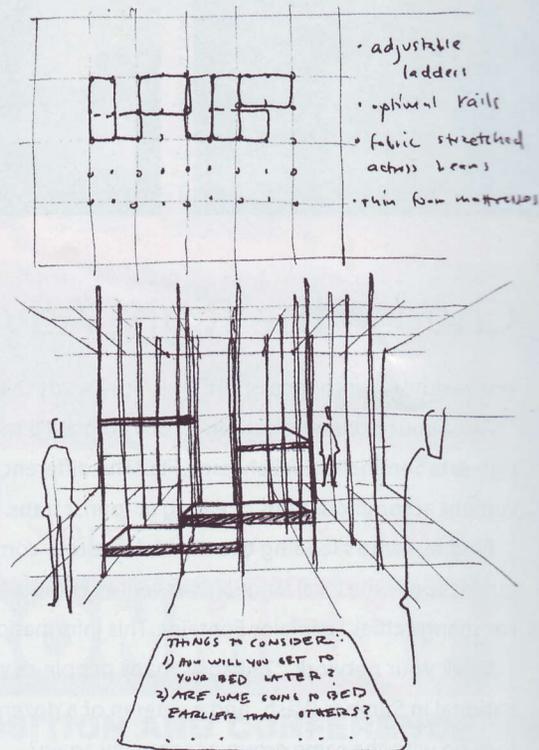
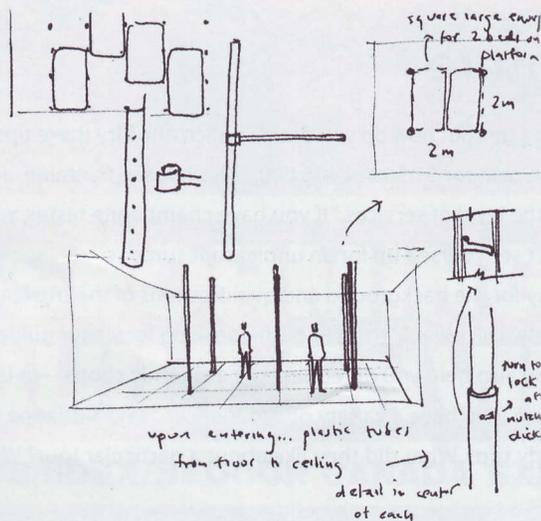
Will Travel

That's just the kind of experience that Kyle Barker, a fourth year interior design student at the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning enjoyed last summer. He spent six weeks studying in Copenhagen, living with a local couple and two other American roommates. Amid classes and study tours, Barker came away with a greater appreciation for sketching and 3-D model making. The latter he now views as a tool to help him solve a design problem rather than simply a presentation method. Barker also learned to admire things about Danish design that at first struck him as awkward, such as bathrooms with showerheads coming out of the wall over the toilet—a product of retrofitting. "I feel like in Denmark there's a huge emphasis on preserving history," he says. "For us, if a building doesn't meet our needs specifically, we tear it down and build fresh."

If you're thinking of booking a trip, it's also important to consider

These sketches and models illustrate a student project to design a youth hostel in Copenhagen. The assignment's goal—using the space to encourage conversation between people of different backgrounds—was a response to the social turmoil in Denmark surrounding publication of religiously-offensive cartoons.

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Studying abroad with interior designers—where

Seeing traditional art and architecture, up close and in person, can be an incomparable inspiration for designers.



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the pace of your travels. Thea Scott-Fundling, AIA, IDEC, an associate professor in the interior design department at Marymount University in Arlington, Va., has arranged several student trips to Italy. On the first two—about 14 days each—the group changed cities every three or four days, but last year, she took a different approach. Her group spent 22 days studying in residence in Tuscany with field studies to other locales. “The students need time to digest everything they’re seeing,” she says. “To really experience a place, you have to slow down a bit.”]

Cincinnati-based writer and editor Michelle Taute’s work has appeared in USA Weekend, I.D., HOW, STEP and other periodicals. Her most recent articles can be found at www.michelletaute.com.

See the Resource Guide on page 78 for additional resources and information about “Have Sketchbook, Will Travel.”

Choose the Right Adventure

You’ve dusted off your passport, and you’re ready to book a trip. But how do you decide which one? Try these tips for finding a tour that won’t disappoint.

Ask about accommodations. “You can book a trip to Spain for \$1,500 or \$15,000,” says Micene Fontaine, director of educational programs for Design Arts Seminars in Tallahassee, Fla. “The difference is the level of services.” If you have champagne tastes, you probably won’t be happy sleeping in student accommodations or eating at tourist traps. Don’t set yourself up for an unpleasant surprise.

Find out who’s leading the trip. Ask the tour company for the background and qualifications of the trip leader and any instructors. Be sure to ask if guides speak the local language, as well as English. “We always travel with an English-speaking local tour guide, and we change tour guides every time we change cities,” explains Fontaine. This information can also help you determine the academic chops—or lack thereof—for leaders of a given trip.

Work your network. “Talk to as many people as you can who have a variety of experiences,” says Adrienne Dale, FASID, principal of Whardale International in Sumner, Wash., and a veteran of a dozen study trips. What did they like about a particular tour? Were there things they didn’t like? Would they go with the same group or company again?

Inquire about credits. Ask whether you’ll be awarded credits—and what kind—after participating in a trip. Marsha Lewis, ASID, and Jamie Berdon, ASID, both interior designers at Interior Concepts in Baton Rouge, La., earn CEUs through study abroad trips that help them keep up their state licenses.

— Michelle Taute