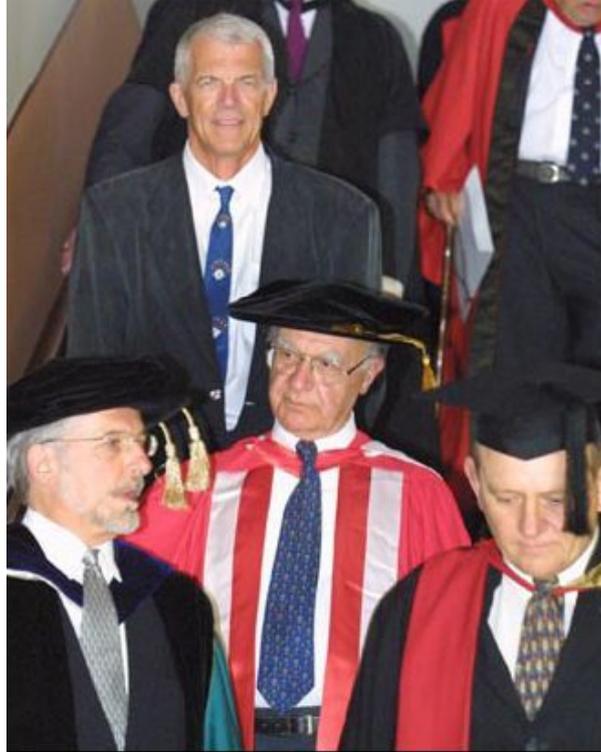


Mr Joern Utzon

The degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (honoris causa) was conferred in absentia upon Joern Utzon at the Architecture ceremony held at 2.00pm on 28 March 2003. The honorary degree was received on his behalf by his son, Jan Utzon.



Jan Utzon (back), who received the honorary degree on his father's behalf, behind Romaldo Giurgola (front, centre) making their way to the honorary degree ceremony in the Great Hall with the Dean of Architecture, Professor Gary Moore (front, left) and Professor John Carter (front, right), Civil Engineering Adjunct Professor and then Chair of the Academic Board, *photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 11 April 2003.*

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Mr Joern Utzon for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (honoris causa).

Today, it is our pleasure to celebrate a special symmetry.

In 1955, Professor Harry Ingham Ashworth, then Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, drew up the conditions of an International Architectural Competition for the design of a new National Opera House at Bennelong Point.

The competition was won by the then almost unknown Danish architect, Joern Utzon, with a beautifully resolved design. Today it is Australia's principal architectural monument in the most perfect locus of our wonderful harbour.

Born in Hellebaek, north of Copenhagen, in 1918 in what is one of the most beautiful regions of Denmark, Joern Utzon was influenced heavily by his father, Aage Utzon, a naval engineer who designed famous double-ended yachts and managed the Aalborg and later the Helsingor shipyards. He was raised in a proud and solidly middle-class design and engineering family. At an early age, Joern designed pendant lamps and designed and built polished half-scale models of yachts.



Joern Utzon is pictured here in his new Sydney University robes. He was unable to attend the ceremony, *photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 3 October 2003, University of Sydney Archives.*

It was Professor Ashworth's strategy to compose a brief for the competition such that only an architect of genius could win. By eliminating all but the most essential requirements, Ashworth ensured that this competition could only be won by the strength of the submitted architectural project.

Professor Ashworth was an utterly inscrutable Mancunian, who, behind a bluff exterior harboured a longing for a radical project that would overturn Sydney's tired architectural status quo. By inviting the Finnish-American, Eero Saarinen, and his Manchester contemporary, Sir Leslie Martin, to be his fellow competition jurors, Ashworth all but sealed off the local architectural network.

Utzon understood Ashworth; he revered him and, after winning the competition, he involved Ashworth in all of his design studio work, like a benevolent uncle taking a friendly interest in Utzon's visionary project, secure in the knowledge that it was his, Ashworth's strategic genius that enabled it all to happen.

Ashworth loved Utzon: I think that is the right word for his untrammelled belief in this irreverent young Dane. When Utzon wrote to Ashworth from China to tell him that he had, from his protracted study of a Sung Dynasty architectural treatise, found a way through some of the most difficult design issues of the Sydney Opera House, Ashworth immediately went – armed only with a cheap modern reprint that Utzon had sent him – and convinced his Technical Committee that Utzon had made a significant breakthrough. Ashworth trusted Utzon's interpretation of Chinese construction, enabling the second and third stages of the Opera House to be assembled from prefabricated elements produced onsite at Bennelong Point.

At the moment that the then NSW Minister for Public Works was removing Utzon as architect for the Sydney Opera House in early 1966, the German Architectural Association, in an unprecedented move, was awarding him its Honour Plaque. Joern Utzon was being recognised as one of the outstanding architects of our time, not so much for the quantity of his architectural works but for the unique quality of expression and

ability to define place. He has received many other major prizes, including the RIBA Gold Medal, the Alvar Aalto Medal, the Wolf Prize and the Sonning Prize in recognition of his contribution to the advancement of European civilisation.

Joern Utzon has never returned to Australia, yet he has never forsaken his affection for the place and the people he worked with all those years ago. Indeed, by placing his archive in the Mitchell Library and insisting that it remain unembargoed, Utzon has put himself forever in our care and trust. Utzon's faith in both human nature and the spirit of enquiry lets him give the people of Australia this unique and precious record of his most important work, the Sydney Opera House, knowing that disinterested study of his drawings and models of this now national treasure will, eventually, achieve his halls, glass walls and interiors.

Bennelong Point was always an important site. Utzon revealed that with his wonderful composition of the two performance halls placed side by side on a vast platform, so as to acknowledge both the city and the harbour. We can only guess at what rush of inspiration led him to this design. Like any great work of art, Joern Utzon's Sydney Opera House will always challenge our creative intelligence.

By giving us the Sydney Opera House, at tremendous cost to himself, Joern Utzon has made a place for himself in the culture of our country, such that we can now embrace him as a truly great Australian.

Chancellor, I invite you to confer the degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (*honoris causa*) on Joern Utzon.

As Mr Utzon is unable to be with us today, I present to you his son, Jan Utzon, to receive the award on his behalf.