

Mr Kenneth Lowell Unsworth

The degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (honoris causa) was conferred upon Kenneth Lowell Unsworth at the Sydney College of the Arts graduation ceremony held at 2.00pm on 14 March 2008.



The Chancellor Her Excellency Marie Bashir and Kenneth Unsworth, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Kenneth Lowell Unsworth for admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (honoris causa).

Ken Unsworth is one of Australia's foremost contemporary artists; a pre-eminent figure who excels in a wide range of media and practices. His works, particularly his sculptures, installations and art environments are highly significant to Australian and European art. Many of his works, such as the suspended river stones, which are in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, have attained iconic status that has reached far beyond the confines of the art world.

For more than four decades, Ken Unsworth has made a distinguished contribution to the cultural life of Australia, enjoying exposure through one person shows and group exhibitions in important international centres, as well as at home. Examples are legion, but include: representation in no less than six Sydney Biennales since 1976; work included in three Australian Sculpture Triennials in Melbourne; and a major retrospective of his work at the Art Gallery of NSW in 1998. There have been shows in New York, Paris, Berlin, Istanbul, Tokyo and Seoul. He represented Australia at the Venice Biennale in 1978, and was part of the landmark exhibition of global art, *Magicians de la Terre* in Paris in 1989.

Mr Unsworth's academic eminence is no less than that of his practice. He studied at the University of Melbourne and Melbourne Teacher's College, and later at the National Art School in Sydney. He began teaching in 1966 at Bathurst Teachers College, which provided the occasion for him to start making sculpture. In 1969 he was appointed as lecturer and Head of Art Teacher Education at the Tasmanian School of Art (now part of the University of Tasmania), and in 1972 joined the Sydney College of Advanced Education (now part of the University of Sydney), where he was lecturer in sculpture.

He has had a profound influence on successive generations of emerging artists both as a teacher and as a powerful role model of the artist in Australian society; a creative and utterly committed figure who demonstrates compassion, a political conscience and a dark sense of humour about the state of our society.

His contribution to, and relationship with, this University has continued in various roles over the years,

perhaps most notably in his role of external examiner at times for Sydney College of the Arts and long service as a member of the Faculty Board.

Mr Unsworth has received numerous awards, including the Captain Cook Bicentenary Sculpture Competition Award in 1970, and a DAAD Scholarship to Berlin in 1987. In 1989 he was awarded an Australian Creative Fellowship from the Australian Government and in the same year was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to sculpture.

Tony Bond, Head Curator of International Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales has said of Ken Unsworth: 'He reworks the great sagas of life and death while shaking the staff of a jester... The popularity of the works with a wider audience may be attributed to the richness of aesthetic effects and to the experience of witnessing a psychodrama unfolding. Beauty and delirium fade into melancholia and back into laughter. He is able to make you cry and laugh at the same time. Unsworth has lived and suffered as much as most of us so his art is able to reflect our own deepest fears, joys and secrets.'

Chancellor, I present Kenneth Lowell Unsworth for admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts, honoris causa, and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.