

## **Citation - Hugh O'Neill**

Born in 1933 and educated in Melbourne, Hugh Andrew O'Neill earned a Bachelor of Architecture from The University of Melbourne in 1956. He has gone on to make an outstanding contribution at a national level to architectural education, and has been instrumental in fostering Indonesian-Australian cultural relations over a period of more than fifty years.

While studying at the University of Melbourne, O'Neill met a considerable number of Colombo Plan scholars who introduced him to the culture and arts of the Asian region. O'Neill joined the Australian Indonesian Association of Victoria in 1956 and through this started a life-long association with the country and the broader cultures of the region. Through these contacts, O'Neill undertook volunteer aid work from 1958-60, served on the Association's Committee (1962-75), was Chair of the Volunteer Graduate Scheme to Indonesia (1963-70), and President of the Australian-Indonesian Association (1969-72). This led to his membership (1972-99) and chairmanship (1983-9) of the National Committee of the Overseas Service Bureau, Australian Volunteers International.

His commitment to education has also been significant. Over a period of more than thirty years, O'Neill taught architectural design to successive generations of first year architecture students at the University of Melbourne, in effect providing the initial training of Victoria's top architects including eventual Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal winners such as Denton Corker Marshall and Gregory Burgess. However more significantly, O'Neill pioneered the teaching of Asian architecture at the University of Melbourne from 1962, which became and still remains a key teaching and research specialization and a distinguishing element in a Faculty that was one of the first in Australia to take a lead in the training of students from Southeast Asian and the Indian sub-continent through the Colombo Plan.

During his career and through his work in Indonesia, O'Neill has had a profound and extensive contribution to developing relations with the Asian region. Through actions such as participating in study tours, giving time and energy to committees, developing academic curricula, publishing writings and curating gallery exhibitions, he has actively developed an appreciation of the Indonesian cultures within Victoria and of Australia in Indonesia. His influence has profoundly affected the architectural practice of the region through the recognition and respect he has encouraged students to develop for their own cultures. More importantly, he has established deep and resilient friendships among his students that have persisted to this day; the wide fabric of personal trust that his students maintain has contributed greatly to enhancing the respect for Australia across the region. O'Neill's values of mutual respect and ethical behaviour are perpetuated by this group.

In 1974, with others, he co-founded the Indonesian Arts Society. He has published widely on Asian architecture and convened several exhibitions on historic and contemporary Indonesian art and culture. In 1988 and 1990, he was Visiting Fellow in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1992, he was appointed Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne and, in 2000, Adjunct Professor in the Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific at Deakin University.

One recollection reported by Goh Hock Guan, an architect and leading opposition politician in Malaysia who studied at Melbourne at the end of the 1950s, tells of O'Neill's encouragement that he pay attention to civic rights, engaging in debate on civic action and encouraging his participation in both student societies (including the

Architecture Revue) and civic rallies against discrimination; all these activities led Mr Goh to establish the opposition political party on his return to Kuala Lumpur and to develop both a professional practice in architecture and also a political career. This is evidence that O'Neill's influence was not only in culture and architecture but also broadly through society across the region.

For his quiet and consistent leadership, for all his many contributions to developing a culture of mutual respect in the region, and for his unique contributions to architecture and architectural education, Hugh O'Neill is a remarkable role model for the nation.