

CITATION FOR HONORARY DOCTORATE OF ARCHITECTURE

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Neil Clerehan has been from the 1950s a national leader in modern house design, an influential architectural writer and promoter of the modern movement, a social commentator, and an active supporter of heritage conservation, research and architectural education.

His architectural education at RMIT and Melbourne Universities was interrupted by war service in the AIF in 1942-44, serving in Milne Bay and Goodenough Island, and he completed the BArch in 1950. He temporarily filled Robin Boyd's shoes at the pioneering RAIA Age Small Homes Service, travelled extensively, and succeeded Boyd as Director of the Small Homes Service in 1954. His early work was much influenced by Boyd and by [Sir] Roy Grounds, another personal friend. When he married Sonia Cole in 1955 Boyd was best, and the couple soon moved in to one of Grounds' Hill Street flats.

The private house, regarded by many architects as an unduly difficult and unprofitable building type, has been central to Clerehan's practice, and he has referred to it as being the 'design laboratory'. Over forty of the designs published by the Small Homes Service can be attributed to Clerehan, and these, with others unattributed, were a powerful force in bringing good design into the regular housing market. Other designs by Clerehan, which have been published and have won architectural awards, have influenced two or three generations of modernist architects. His designs are urbane and direct, and have remained remarkably consistent over half a century. He has never engaged in stylistic willfulness or in the structural flourishes which occupied his contemporaries in the 1950s and 1960s. His best-known non-domestic work is the legal offices built for the then firms of Corr & Corr in William Street, Melbourne, in 1981.

Clerehan entered practice in 1951, was a housing consultant to the United Nations Secretariat, New York, in 1952-54, was Director of the Small Homes Service from 1954 to 1960, and founded his independent practice in 1961. In 1962-04 he practised in partnership with another leading modernist, Guilford Bell. He won the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1964 and 1967. In 1967 he also won the RVIA Bronze medal for the Fenner house in South Yarra, and other awards followed in 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1964. He was a councillor of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter from 1953 to 1977 and President in 1974-6. In 2004 the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter awarded him the President's Prize for the Hall of Fame.

He was a member of the Board of Try Youth Clubs from 1965 to 1970, the Board of Odyssey House from 1981 to 1991, the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council in 1974-79, and the Children's Court in 1970 to 1975. He was President of the council for the Historic Environment in 1977-80, and from 1982 to 1999 was a member of the Historic Buildings Council (later Heritage Council). He has been instrumental in securing philanthropic funding for historical research projects at this university and elsewhere.

Clerehan's publications include the book *Best Australian Houses of 1961* and a substantial biography of Robin Boyd in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, weekly articles in *The Age* on architecture and design in 1964-61, book reviews in a variety of publications, obituaries of leading architects and others, and articles on individual buildings in local newspapers. He has an extensive knowledge of Melbourne personalities and their interconnections, and is fascinated by society in the broadest sense. This has been integral to his architectural work and to his other activities. His networking is reflected in holdings of his letters, such as those in the M L Peisch Collection at Columbia University. His work is the subject of a book by Harriet Edquist and Richard Black, *The Architecture of Neil Clerehan* (2005).

He and his wife Sonia still occupy the house which he designed in Walsh Street, South Yarra, in 1968. It is regarded as one of the classic expressions of local modernism, and has itself been widely influential. Clerehan practices from a converted plastic/ash-tray factory in Windsor and writes a weekly column for Melbourne Weekly Magazine/Fairfax.