

CITATION Peter Wilson

Peter Wilson is a distinguished and internationally recognised architect, educator and master of atmospheric architectural drawing. Throughout his career, he has been a significant influence on architectural design and education in Europe and the United Kingdom. Wilson, also, was and remains known for his extraordinary drawing and conceptual renderings of architecture. His drawings are in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, Drawing Matter, also in the UK, the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, the Tchoban Foundation in Berlin, and the Deutsches Architektur Museum in Frankfurt, among many others.

Wilson began studies in architecture at the University of Melbourne in 1968, completing three years and working briefly in the office of Romberg & Boyd. An exquisite talent with drawing led Wilson to leave Melbourne and join the Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture in London in 1972, where he graduated and attained the AA Diploma Prize in 1974. Published in numerous journals and professional magazines, and winner of several conceptual design competitions, Wilson started teaching and lecturing at the AA in 1974, first assisting celebrated architects Elia Zhengelis and Rem Koolhaas, then becoming a Unit Master from 1976 until 1988. During this period, he developed a distinctive style and a unique architectural language, leading to a series of small design commissions in the United Kingdom. His students were awarded many AA prizes over the years, and were published and exhibited in London and internationally. The design “Unit” of Peter Wilson became one of the signature teaching studios at the AA, and generated influence across schools of architecture in Europe, North America, and also back in Australia. Wilson’s early theoretical drawings in the mid-1970s and early 1980s gained international attention as part of a paradigm shift at the time away from functionalism towards a renewed interest in the poetics of architecture. His extensive portfolio of built works since continues those themes.

In 1980, while at the AA, Wilson established with his wife, German-born architect Julia Bolles, the practice that was to become BOLLES+WILSON. In 1987, they won the design competition for the new Münster City Library. Completed in 1993, the project was awarded multiple honours and prizes, and it remains one of Europe’s most visited and recognised civic projects of the late 20th century. The success and visibility of the Münster library propelled BOLLES+WILSON to more and more commissions, producing a body of work that is extensive and wide-ranging, including the Suzuki House, Tokyo (1993), the Luxor Theatre, Rotterdam (1996-2001), the Spuimarkt Block, The Hague (2009), the Korça City Master Plan in Albania (2009), the Cinnamon Tower, Hamburg (2015), and more recently, the Bibliothèque Nationale de Luxembourg (2019). In Australia, BOLLES+WILSON collaborated with local practices to produce the ‘Form’ apartments (2005), a 240-unit development at Zetland, NSW, a test-case for new medium and high-rise density apartment living in Sydney. The firm’s projects have received or been nominated for numerous international prizes and awards, and its professional work and design process are documented and disseminated through books, monographs and countless articles and features in all the world’s major architectural and design publications. Wilson’s drawings have since become the subject of academic research in studies of architectural theory and representation.

Wilson has remained committed to teaching and academic pursuits, running studios in Berlin, Barcelona, Tokyo and Venice, and with appointments as a visiting professor at the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the Accademia di Architettura Mendrisio, and at the Caribbean Winter School in Havana, Cuba. He has acted as an external examiner for architecture programs at the Architectural Association in London, the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London, the University of Cork, and at the University of Cambridge.

Though based in Europe for the last forty years, Peter Wilson continues to be recognised as an Australian architect and as a former student of the University of Melbourne. In recognition of his professional excellence and continuing influence, Wilson was awarded the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) President’s Prize in 2009. In 2013, he was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, the highest accolade of the Australian architecture profession. As recipient of that prestigious award, that same year Wilson delivered the 2013 AS Hook Address at the Melbourne School of Design at the University of Melbourne.