

Citation – Peter Roy Watts AM

Peter Watts graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1974, also completing studies in landscape architecture at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1975. His early years after graduation were spent in private practice before working for the Victorian branch of the National Trust of Australia (1976-81). At the same time, building upon research undertaken as a student, Watts published his widely celebrated book, *The Gardens of Edna Walling* (1981). Working for the National Trust, he was actively involved in landscape conservation issues and the Trust's properties. During 1978-9, he undertook a pioneering survey of Victoria's historic gardens, which was published as *Historic Gardens of Victoria: A Reconnaissance* (1983). This work led to his proposal to found the Australian Garden History Society. He was the Society's inaugural Secretary (1980-4), founding editor of its journal, *Australian Garden History* (1989-90), and later the society's Chair from 1998 to 2003. Each of these publishing ventures pioneered and promoted the public appreciation of designed landscapes.

Given these strong interests in architecture, history and gardens, combined with his passion for heritage, Watts was led to the Historic Houses Trust of NSW in Sydney. Founded in 1980, he became the Trust's inaugural Director in 1981. The Historic Houses Trust began as a small organisation responsible for just two properties, but under Watts's directorship from 1981 until his retirement in 2008 it grew to become a dynamic cultural and research institution of national significance, one of Australia's leading museum bodies. It was Watts's vision that enabled the Trust to successfully realise its aims of developing, maintaining and interpreting buildings and places of historic importance for the education and enjoyment of the public, and building broad-ranging community support for cultural heritage and the heritage of the built and landscape environment. Managing properties such as Elizabeth Farm, Government House (Sydney), the Museum of Sydney, Hyde Park Barracks, The Mint, Rouse Hill House and Farm, Vaucluse House and the Rose Seidler House, the trust, now renamed as Sydney Living Museums, received over 120 awards for architecture, conservation and design during Watts's tenure. Watts moulded the Trust into a new form of cultural institution that was firmly rooted by the historic buildings it cared for but was always outward looking and daring in their interpretation.

During his tenure at the Historic Houses Trust the Trust held hundreds of major exhibitions and published almost 100 books on NSW social and architectural history and actively fostered an interest in these areas with many public programs including the development of *Sydney Open* which has become a major annual celebration of historic and contemporary architecture in Sydney. It also built one of the finest libraries in the country devoted to Australian domestic architecture, gardens, interiors and furniture.

Peter Watts has been the Project Director for 14 projects that have received awards in the Institute of Architects annual awards including a Sulman Award for Public Architecture, three Greenway Awards for Conservation, three National Lachlan Macquarie Awards for Conservation, a Lloyd Rees Award for Urban Design, an Architecture and Media Prize and a Premier's Prize.

His last major development project at the Historic Houses Trust was the conservation and redevelopment of The Mint in Macquarie Street, Sydney – the oldest building in central Sydney - which received both the Institute of Architects Sulman Award for Public Architecture and also its Greenway Award for Conservation, the first time a single project had received this dual honour. This was an affirmation of his long held view that the best of conservation philosophy and practice could marry with the best of contemporary architecture.

In another long-standing appointment Peter contributed 26 years (from 1982 to 2008) as a member of the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD). An important task of the CAMD was to inform and shape museum and cultural policy agendas in Australia and New Zealand, and to represent the interests of members and their museums to Government and other stakeholders.

Throughout his career, Watts's expertise has been in demand on various boards, trusts and committees with interests in conservation, museums, architecture, design, the arts, and gardens, including the Official Establishments Trust (2002-14), the National Art School (2008-12), the Bundanon Trust (2009-15) and Company B Belvoir Street Theatre (2001-07). He has been Chairman of the Johnston Collection in Melbourne from 2008 to the present time. He currently sits on a number of advisory panels, including as a member of the Design and Development Advisory Panel for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, the Parliament House Expert Advisory Panel in Canberra and the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct Steering Committee, also in Sydney.

In 2003 Peter Watts was awarded the Baudin Medallion from the Republic of France, and in 2008 he was awarded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects President's Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Architecture for his role as a client and patron of architecture. His nationally significant contributions to the cultural heritage and architectural and historical landscapes of Australia were officially recognised in 2007 when he was made a Member of the Order of Australia.