

2013 Sir James Irwin Presidents Medal

One of the most interesting and challenging tasks that I have to carry out is the award of the Sir James Irwin President's Medal. This award recognises excellence in the contribution made to Architecture. Over the years the medal has been awarded to individuals (mainly), partnerships and Government agencies.

This year I have chosen to award an individual who I believe has not only made outstanding contributions to Architecture in South Australia but also exemplifies many of the qualities that define an architect. A graduate of Adelaide University he was inspired at an early age by the works of the great Finnish Architect Alvar Aalto, the Italian Carlo Scarpa and England's James Stirling.

His first ten years of life as an architect saw him working for the SA Government where his designs included the Childrens Court, the Motor Registry Building in Wakefield Street and a major renovation of the Art Gallery of SA. He then worked as Principal Architect of the National Capital Development Commission in Canberra for two years.

Returning to Adelaide he soon became a principal and corporate head of Architecture at Hassell. In the ensuing seventeen years he was responsible for a range of well known buildings in Adelaide including the Santos Athletics Stadium, Mile End, the Holden Pavilion at the Birdwood National Motor Museum, Finlaysons Office Building in Flinders Street, Wyatt House in Grenfell Street, the Central Wing at St Andrews Hospital, the (recently removed) Sir Donald Bradman Grandstand at Adelaide Oval, Adelaide Entertainment Centre, the Adelaide College of the Arts on Light Square (I think his best).

He has continued to contribute to and support architectural education as a visiting lecturer and tutor at both Adelaide University and the University of South Australia as well as his Membership of the Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture & Design Advisory Committee from 2004 till 2012.

And since 2002 he has been leading his own practice JPE through thick and thin. It has not always been the easiest road – architecture is a tough profession – and throughout his career he has been true to his values and true to his unswerving passion for design and the pursuit of excellence. In the last decade his built legacy has continued to grow through projects such as the Margaret Tobin Mental Health Centre at Flinders University and the Wave and Edge Office and Apartments Development at the southern end of King William Street.

I congratulate him and it is indeed a pleasure to present Adrian Evans with the 2013 Sir James Irwin Presidents Medal.