



## Australian Institute of Architects – SA Chapter

### Sir James Irwin Presidents Medal 2008

#### Phil Harris

The achievements and contribution to architectural design and context of the 2008 President's Medalist are recognised well beyond South Australia.

From a typically modest and casual start in 1980, both architect and the practice he helped found have achieved a national presence, albeit in a very regional way.

In the ensuing almost 30 years they have accumulated 39 National, State and Territory Awards and Commendations.

In the process they have won the hearts of their clients and been acknowledged by peers and critics in places not normally noted for their warmth toward South Australian practitioners.

The 2008 President's Medalist has attracted collaborators of the ilk of Glenn Murcutt, and been the subject of profiles and examinations by judges of the repute of architecture historian Jennifer Taylor and academic and essayist Phillip Goad.

While a good support act, this recognition is not what makes the 2008 President's Medallist a significant player and a standard-bearer for the profession.

In a time when words like "sustainability", "sense of place" and "environmentally responsive" are bandied about glibly as if they had just been invented, our Medalist could quite rightly claim to having 'been there done that' – for the past 30 years.

His architecture has been typified by the:

- Promotion of cooling breezes
- Ventilation by convection
- Reducing radiation of heat
- Sheltering of walls and openings

Quite early on our Medalist and his practice articulated their work as the "production of buildings which respond to climate and the local setting and which are dynamic and adjustable in connecting indoors and out and responding to changes in time and weather".

I'll leave the final word to RAIA Life Fellow and commentator Judith Brine.

"Architectural histories charting the development of Australian architecture will recognise that the (Medalist's) buildings were based on designing for climate at a time when few other architects had the technical knowledge to build comfortable buildings which did not rely on energy to make them pleasant and responsive. The practice can be placed at the forefront of environmental design in Australia. The buildings not only demonstrate a technical mastery but also develop from it a clear and individual aesthetic."

The 2008 President's Medal goes most deservedly to Phil Harris of Troppo Architects.

*Andrew Vorrasi*