



Australian Government

AUSTRALIA'S

World Heritage



THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Sydney Opera House was a daring and visionary experiment that has had an enduring influence on late 20th century architecture and beyond. This masterpiece of late modern architecture by Jørn Utzon is a story of vision, courage, belief, dedication, challenge, controversy and triumph.

In 1957, 38-year old Jørn Utzon was announced the competition winner for the design of what was called at the time the “National Opera House”. The competition jury was convinced that Utzon’s design was “...capable of being one of the great buildings of the world”. Five decades later, the judges were given the greatest affirmation they could have wished for when the Sydney Opera House was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Utzon’s vision was untried, but he was committed to using innovative methods of construction on a grand scale, stretching the boundaries of what was possible in terms of engineering and technology, and creating an exhilarating sensory experience.

His distinctive approach resulted in a vibrant and creative collaboration between architects, industrial designers, engineers, manufacturers and the construction industry – all striving to meet the challenges of the unprecedented design concept. British engineers Ove Arup & Partners and Australian architects Peter Hall, Lionel Todd and David Littlemore were pivotal in transforming Utzon’s vision into reality. The Sydney Opera House took 16 years to build, cost \$102,000,000, and in the process, pushed architecture and engineering to its limits. Ove Arup & Partners described the project as “an adventure into the unknown”.

The venture experienced substantial cost and time blow-outs, and in 1966 Utzon resigned. The building was eventually completed by Hall, Todd and Littlemore in 1973. Utzon was re-engaged in 1999 as the building’s architect to design projects for the interior, and he is still actively involved today. These projects have included the renovation of the (former) Reception Hall which was renamed the Utzon Room when it reopened in 2004; the Colonnade which opened in 2006; the Accessibility and Western Foyers which are still under construction; and the design for the renewal of the Opera Theatre.

This monumental urban sculpture inhabits Bennelong Point and Sydney Harbour with such grace it appears to belong there naturally. Its soaring white shells – which house over one million tiles – are set upon a massive podium encircled by harbour waters. With city skyscrapers and the Sydney Harbour Bridge as its backdrop, the Sydney Opera House is a dramatic site by day or night.

Today, the Sydney Opera House is one of the busiest performing arts centres in the world, each year staging up to 2500 performances and events, drawing around 1.5 million patrons, and attracting an estimated four million visitors. It is instantly recognisable, and fascinates, excites and attracts people from around the globe.

“The sun did not know how beautiful its light was, until it was reflected off this building”
- Louis Kahn