

Professor William Robert (Jim) Allen



The honorary degree of Doctor of Visual Arts was conferred upon Professor William Robert (Jim) Allen by the Chancellor the Hon Justice Kim Santow at the Sydney College of the Arts graduation ceremony held at 9.30am on 13 April 2007.



Chancellor the Hon Justice Kim Santow and Professor Allen, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*



Professor Allen, Guy Warren, Associate Professor Helge Larsen and Darani Lewers, *photo, copyright Memento Photography*



With the Dean of Sydney College of the Arts, Professor Colin Rhodes (centre) are (from left) Guy Warren, Professor Allen, Darani Lewers and Associate Professor Helge Larsen, *photo, courtesy University of Sydney News.*

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting William Robert (known as Jim) Allen, Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for the admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (honoris causa) in recognition of his role as the founding Director of The Sydney College of the Arts and for his outstanding contribution to visual arts education, his creative achievement as an artist, and his eminence in his professional field.

Jim Allen was born in Wellington New Zealand in 1922, and saw extensive war service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force between 1940 and 1945.

He received his Diploma of Fine Arts from Canterbury College of Art, New Zealand followed by an ARCA from the Royal College of Art in London. Further studies were undertaken at Perugia University and the Istituto d'Arte in Florence, Italy.

From 1953 to 1959 he worked in the New Zealand Department of Education, initially as a field officer for the Northern Maori Experimental Art Project, followed by a posting as liaison organizer in the development of art and craft education between secondary schools, teachers' colleges and universities. From 1960 he lectured in sculpture in the School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1969. Jim Allen took up the position as the founding head of the Sydney College of the Arts from 1977 to 1987.

He was a pioneer of post object art in New Zealand in the 1970s and is widely regarded as the most influential art educator of his generation both in New Zealand and Australia. His transformation of the sculpture department at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Art into 'a hothouse for ambitious experimental art' occupies an almost 'legendary' place in the history of contemporary New Zealand art.

His early stewardship of the Sydney College of the Arts was equally significant and its innovations in visual art education were to establish a challenging pedagogical model that was soon to become a profound shaping influence on the curricula of many other Australian Schools of Art and Design. During the period of his Directorship, the school established its reputation as a leader in visual arts education, attracting some of the most ambitious and accomplished contemporary artists/teachers and students into its programs.

During the 1980s Jim Allen played a major role as an advisor to government, universities and the profession in the establishment of tertiary, contemporary visual arts and design courses. He served as a member of the interim advisory Committee to the Premier of New South Wales for Education and the Arts in 1983 and '84 and on the board of management of the Aboriginal and Islanders Skills Development Scheme from 1982 to 1987. He was instrumental in the founding of Art Space in Sydney and was the Chairman of the Committee of Enquiry for the establishment of artist managed art spaces for New South Wales. His most recent work has extended his commitment to the pedagogical development of contemporary visual arts practice through

his exploration of new media and the Internet.

His work as an artist and educator has received wide recognition both in New Zealand and Australia; in 2000 he was honored as the 5th Fellow of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools.

His work has been exhibited in numerous group and solo shows and in more recent years the significance of his work, especially that of his Elam years and his residency at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 1976, have been the subject of several publications and videos including a recording by the New Zealand Film Archive. In 2006, in recognition of the significance of his seminal performance works from the 1970s, the Auckland City Art Gallery presented an important exhibition of these works.

His work is represented in numerous public and private international collections and commissions including: The British Council and The Royal College of Art in London, The United Nations Building in New York, the Santa Barbara Art Gallery in California, the Osaka City Library in Japan and in museums and galleries in New Zealand and Australia.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (honoris causa), innovative educator and advocate for the visual arts, distinguished artist, William Robert (Jim) Allen, and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.