

## Mr Martin Ritchie Sharp AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Visual Arts was conferred upon Martin Ritchie Sharp AM by the Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO at the Sydney College of the Arts graduation ceremony held in the Great Hall at 9.30am on 14 December 2012.



Mr Sharp with the Chancellor, *photo, copyright, Memento Photography.*

### Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to commend Martin Sharp to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (*honoris causa*). As an artist, cartoonist, songwriter and film-maker he has distinguished himself through his outstanding contribution to the visual arts and his creative achievement in Australian and international culture since the early 60s, and he is hailed as Australia's foremost Pop artist.

Martin was born in Sydney and educated at Cranbrook, where his teacher was the noted artist Justin O'Brien. In 1960 he enrolled at the National Art School at East Sydney and in 1961 studied Architecture for a short time at the University of Sydney before returning to the National Art School.

During the early 60s Martin published cartoons in *The Bulletin*, *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He co-created the magazine *The Arty Wild Oat* with Garry Shead and the satirical magazine, *Oz*, with Richard Neville and Richard Walsh. His work as the magazine's art director and major artist, first in Sydney and then in London, brought him international renown for his artwork.

In London, he lived and worked with some of the most revered and creative artists, writers and musicians during that heady period, and on his return to Sydney in 1970 Martin co-founded the Yellow House in Potts Point, where some of that sixties effervescence was transmuted into a Victorian Terrace. There, forty artists including Brett Whitely lived and worked in emulation of Van Gogh's concept of an artists' community at Arles. It became a unique multimedia space, an art environment in which each room was an entire art work. Open 24 hours a day, it had thousands of visitors between 1971 and 1973, encouraging many emerging artists and increasing the involvement of art and artists in the community.

During the mid-Seventies, Martin was probably best known for his work with the Nimrod Theatre (for whom he produced a famous series of posters, as well as designing numerous sets, costumes and scenery) and for his celebrated posters for the Festival of Sydney. He was also engaged as a designer and artist to oversee the restoration of Luna Park, including redesigning the enormous laughing face at the entrance. But this was to become a bittersweet experience as an arson attack in the park a year later claimed seven lives. Martin was instrumental in giving assistance and support by forming The Friends of Luna Park, and by continuing to fight for justice on behalf of the families that lost their loved ones.

Luna Park was a recurrent theme in Martin's work, as were Tiny Tim and Ginger Meggs and the word Eternity ...chalked on walls and paths by Sydney eccentric Arthur Stace. Martin's art celebrated and perpetuated Stace's work and his singular message ultimately materialised on the Sydney Harbour Bridge as the New Year's Eve motif for the new millennium.

Martin's work has been celebrated in many exhibitions, most recently a major retrospective at the Museum of Sydney, including paintings influenced by Matisse, De Chirico, Magritte, Hokusai and Van Gogh and artworks that comment on Indigenous issues and social justice.

His work is held in a large number of galleries in Australia and internationally and in 2005 Martin was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition for service to the arts as a painter and graphic designer, particularly contributing to the pop art movement in Australia and providing support for emerging young artists.

Chancellor, I present Martin Sharp for admission to the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.