

**Citation for Penelope Seidler AM**  
**Doctor of Architecture (*honoris causa*)**

Thursday, 22 April 2021 – 1.00pm

Vice-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Penelope Seidler AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Architecture (*honoris causa*) in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the field of architecture, the arts and the wider community.

Penelope grew up in Wahroonga, New South Wales and is the daughter of the Honourable Clive Evatt QC, a prominent barrister and politician. She completed a Bachelor of Architecture at the University of Sydney and was registered as an architect in 1964. That year, she joined one of Australia's most influential architecture practices, Harry Seidler and Associates. As wife and business partner to the late Harry Seidler, Penelope has played a significant role in the operation of the practice while also defining herself as a key figure in the cultural sector. As well as being an architect, Penelope is a qualified accountant in charge of the financial management of the practice. She has held the position of Director of Harry Seidler and Associates since 1966 and is directly responsible for commissioning artists for projects.

Since becoming an architect more than 50 years ago, Penelope's ambition and passion have defined her role within the field of architecture and cemented her as a leader of art and architecture in Sydney and internationally. Together with her late husband Harry, Penelope pioneered the integration of modernist art and architecture in Australia. The works of her architectural practice have demonstrated how the principles of modern architecture and urbanism and the values of rational design and innovative engineering can come together with an extraordinary business acumen to create some of the most internationally significant buildings in Australia, including Australia Square.

In addition to her own distinguished creative achievements, Penelope has demonstrated a lifelong dedication to the cultural sector as a patron. She has nurtured the emerging careers of numerous contemporary artists and has been the willing subject of many portraits, including the 2014 Archibald Prize-winning work by University of Sydney alumna, Fiona Lowry.

Penelope made a donation to the University of New South Wales in 2014 for the establishment of the Seidler Chair in the Practice of Architecture to allow students the opportunity to learn from a distinguished practicing architect in a design studio environment. She also funded a PhD scholarship and an international design studio for graduating students at the University of New South Wales. In 2015, Penelope made a pledge towards the establishment of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney. Two years later, she established the Penelope Visiting Professorship in Architectural History at the University of Sydney to highlight the importance of Australia in global discussions of architecture and architectural history. The donation funds the appointment of an international authority in architectural history to undertake work within the Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning. She regularly provides private access to buildings of Harry Seidler and Associates to assist cultural organisations with their fundraising projects.

Penelope was a Biennale of Sydney director since late 2010-20 and was deputy commissioner for the Australian Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale. She is a member of the NGA Foundation Board. Penelope has advocated for Australian artists within the international art sector through a variety of formal and informal roles. In 1971, she joined the council of the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales as one of the first volunteer guides. She has sat on the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York since 1973 and is a life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects. She is a former member of the International Advisory Board of Vienna's Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, the National Gallery of Australia Council and the Australiana Fund.

The iconic 'Harry & Penelope Seidler House' at Killara, which she designed with her husband, won the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Wilkinson Award in 1967 and is now listed on the New South Wales Heritage Register.

In 2001, Penelope was awarded a Centenary Medal for service to Australian society in business leadership. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2008 for service to the preservation of cultural heritage, to visual arts organisations and to architecture. In 2011, she was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur by the French government and received an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of New South Wales. She also received the University of Sydney Alumni Award for Cultural Contribution in 2017.

Penelope's contributions to architecture and the arts in Australia and internationally will be experienced for generations to come through her advocacy and philanthropy across contemporary art, architecture and education.

Vice-Chancellor, I present Penelope Seidler AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Architecture (*honoris causa*) and invite you to confer the degree upon her.