

WALTER OSBORN McCUTCHEON

Gold-medallist 1965

Born 8th April 1899 at Melbourne, Osborn McCutcheon was educated at Wesley College before embarking upon a career in architecture. Becoming articled to a leading Melbourne firm of architects, Bates Peebles and Smart, he later went on to undertake formal study at the University of Melbourne, obtaining his Diploma of Architecture in 1927. The previous year he had already entered into partnership with his old masters, and the firm Bates Smart and McCutcheon, under the hand of Osborn McCutcheon, has grown to be one of the two largest architectural firms in Australia. It is also the oldest, having an unbroken lineage back to 1853 and a young gold-seeking architect Joseph Reed. The firm of Bates Smart

and McCutcheon has been responsible for some of Australia's most progressive buildings, particularly in the period following World War II, when it led the way in Australia towards integrating the skills, knowledge, and effects of industrialization and technology into architecture. Its buildings, noted for boldness of concept and refinement of detail, won several prizes and awards in Western Australia, Victoria and New Zealand.

McCutcheon became an Associate of the R.A.I.A. in 1930 and a Fellow in 1939. He was a member of the R.V.I.A. council from 1930-45, was honorary secretary in 1933-9 and president in 1941-2. In 1941-2 he also served on the R.A.I.A. council. While he has had interest in all aspects of architecture he has concentrated on two—education for the young and organization and administration for the practitioner. He was Director of the School of Architecture at the Melbourne Technical College in 1935-42 and headed a move to have courses “recognized” by the newly formed R.A.I.A. He was a member of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne and of the R.V.I.A. Board of Architectural Education in 1933-9, 1941-2 and 1953-7. He has given valuable service in many other fields and organizations related to architecture. From 1934-6 he was president of the Building Industries Congress of Victoria and an adviser to C.S.I.R.O. He is a member of the National Capital Planning Committee, the Aesthetics Committee of the Snowy Mountains Authority and the Founding Council of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies. Despite this outstanding record of service to architecture possibly his most valuable personal contribution has been in the areas of organization and management in architectural practice. It was McCutcheon's work in improving these aspects of his own office that sparked off the practice group movement, which was of such importance to architectural survival in the 1960s. The knowledge, techniques, and systems that evolved for his own use were readily made available to the profession at large, and both directly and indirectly the business and administrative standards of Australian architecture and building were lifted immeasurably.

For his valuable services to his profession and his community he was awarded the Gold Medal of the R.A.I.A. in 1965; he was honoured with knighthood (Knight Bachelor) by the Queen in 1966, and with an Honorary Doctorate of Laws by Monash University in 1968. In 1969 he was elevated to Life Fellowship of the R.A.I.A.