

An Icon that Almost Wasn't: The Design and Construction of the Sydney Opera House

Presented by Structural Engineers Association of New York
& AIA New York Chapter Cultural Facilities Committee

Cliff McMillan, a Principal in Arup's New York office, will give an illustrated presentation about the tumultuous design and construction process of one of the world's most acclaimed architectural icons—the Sydney Opera House.

The building is one of the most recognized buildings in history, and for many, has come to symbolize Australia, itself. At its inception, the design was already touted as a work of genius and garnered unforeseen support, namely from Australian Premier Joe Cahill, whose musical inclinations would not typically render him a patron of the arts. Cahill rose to be the project's biggest political champion, pushing the project through an unenthusiastic Cabinet by enormously underestimating the project's budget and insisting on beginning construction prematurely. Against advice from architect Jørn Utzon and engineer Ove Arup, who partnered in 1957, construction commenced in 1959, resulting in numerous design changes and cost overruns during construction.

That same year, Cahill abruptly passed away, leaving a disenchanted successor who was "unsympathetic" to the costly performing arts center. These debacles marked the first of many in a 20-year period of construction fraught with political and financial disputes. It was financial withholding that eventually drove Utzon to abandon his master work.

Cliff McMillan was a structural engineer in Arup's London office during the late sixties, at the time Utzon resigned from the project due to lack of funds. Although Cliff did not work on the Opera House, his knowledge of its story comes from his colleagues' first-hand accounts, and subsequent familiarity as a devotee of its performances.

His discussion will include planning and engineering aspects of the project, and reflections on the two decades of remarkable events leading to the eventual completion of the landmark project that the judges of the original design competition described as "capable of being one of the great buildings of the world."

January 17 6PM
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place

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ARUP

AIA & SEAoNY Members \$10, Non-Members \$15
1.0 AIA CES/ HSW (Equivalent to 1 PDH)
Food and Beverage Will Be Provided
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www.aiany.org/calendar