

Richard Leplastrier

Richard Leplastrier's architecture reveals a profound understanding of sustainability in the deepest sense of the term. Through a philosophy that is best summarized in the statement, 'Let's cultivate less!', he has developed a truly original and personal approach to living and creating with dignity and respect. Inseparable from its site, his architecture takes form in response to the given conditions, revealing the inherent character of the landscape and sharpening our senses to the very nature of the place in which we find ourselves.

Richard Leplastrier possesses a special cultural sensibility, which comes to expression in language, drawing, and architecture. With handcraft as ballast, the sketch is thoughtfully transposed to poetic and refined spatial compositions - weaving in and underlining the presence of nature and setting the experiential and sensory in motion.

Richard Leplastrier dares to take the profane, the unassuming, the almost invisible and weave it into his projects - thereby creating an intensity that radiates an elevated serenity and dignity.

Spatial coherence is supported by the careful use and treatment of materials - everything is conceived within context, with nothing superfluous added. He believes in a creative simplicity that gives room for life and invites nature to be present.

Richard Leplastrier establishes a field studio for each of his projects, working on site to gain a thorough understanding of the place. Here he works closely with his craftsmen, developing the project as a team. Working primarily in wood, he shapes constructions and assemblies of second-hand timber and plywood that can, in principle, be dismantled and used again and again.

His architecture is an ode to nature. With roots in the ancient aboriginal culture of leaving no traces behind, Richard Leplastrier asks fundamental questions about our conception of 'existence.' His architecture interprets and explores the notion of the primal shed through simple, minimal constructions in which alcoves, sleeping niches, work desks, and dining spaces are worked and reworked, taking on the minimal, multi-functional character of a ship's interior. All his buildings offer intriguing and insightful interpretations of natural ventilation, solar shading, and the tectonic accommodation of the changing weather and seasons.

The Blue Mountains House is an interesting example of a renovation and addition to a traditional house on a unique site. With the addition of few simple elements, a series of alcoves and Japanese inspired shutters, the house is enhanced and transformed.

Upon closer inspection, the small new studio building screening the house from the drive reveals an inspired interior world of thoughtful detail. Here an articulated system of stretched parachute fabric panels are raised and lowered like the sails of a ship, facilitating the insulation and ventilation of the space.

Richard Leplastrier has led a life invariably connected to nature and especially to the sea. In addition to having sailed the Sydney Hobart Race, he has conceived and constructed three boats in the small shipyard below his home.

After working for Jørn Utzon and studying in Japan, Richard Leplastrier established his practice in 1970, focusing primarily on private houses. More recently, he has completed several cultural buildings as well as directed his energies towards urban issues, working to protect the natural and urban heritage of Sydney.

He has actively taught architecture for many years, most recently teaching master classes with Glenn Murcutt. He has

been awarded the highest architectural prizes in Australia, and has most recently received the respected Finish Wood Prize.

The legacies of Jørn Utzon, Kenzo Tange, and the classic Japanese building tradition are continued in the most beautiful way - creating human experiences of exceptional elegance and simplicity. Within the realm of architecture, he has imbued the term 'sustainability' with a deeper meaning through the ideas expressed in 'Let's cultivate less!'

It is therefore with great happiness that we award this year's Prize of Honour to Richard Leplastrier.