



RALPH JOHNS

Citation - Ralph's election as Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects

Ralph Johns has contributed significantly to landscape architecture in Aotearoa through teaching, design, publishing and leadership. The common theme through each of these pursuits is Ralph's vision of the influential and meaningful role landscape architecture has to play.

Ralph came to New Zealand in 2001 when he was appointed, with programme director Dr Catherine Alington, to establish the new landscape architecture course at Victoria University. Ralph helped design the programme, lead the studios, lecture, supervise research, and guide the course through academic committee approvals and accreditation with the NZILA. He had a fundamental influence on the course's urban and design-focussed character, thereby adding to the depth of landscape architecture education in this country.

Ralph joined the Isthmus Group in 2006 as leader of what was then a small Wellington studio. He grew the capability of the team and led a range of design projects. Several of these won NZILA awards including Government House, Ferndale, High Street Lower Hutt and Ngaio School. In particular he helped deliver Kumototo, a project he had earlier master-planned with Studio of Pacific Architecture, that went on to win the George Malcolm Award.

During this time Ralph served as chair of the NZILA Wellington branch, on the NZILA Registration Panel, and had earlier helped organise the 2002 NZILA Landscape Conference.

In 2013 Ralph was appointed Isthmus CEO – arguably the role in which he has exerted the most influence within the profession. His conviction is that a design practice is best led by designers. Importantly, one of his missions is growing staff capability and influence on projects. The practice has increasingly taken leadership roles in major housing, public place, transport, and infrastructure projects. In this way Ralph has helped change what people understand as possible within landscape architecture. He has had a significant influence on the careers of many people, and increased the standing of the profession.

Along the way Ralph promoted landscape architecture through publishing. He has a body of articles and conference papers to his name and has been instrumental in winning awards with other professional bodies. Notably, he also instigated and produced 'Coast. Country. Neighbourhood. City.' (CCNC) to mark Isthmus's 25 year anniversary. Rather than a 'glossy' book, Ralph chose a 'chunky' format to suit his purpose of recording the ideas and thinking behind the projects. CCNC won the Charlie Challenger Award in 2017. The citation reads: "Mighty in its ambition, its clarity in delivery, and its context in capturing not only influential projects, but also their essence that New Zealanders can all identify with..... 'Coast. Country. Neighbourhood. City.' stands tall, at the forefront showcasing a New Zealandness, on a local, national, and global stage."

Ralph is therefore one of a select group of landscape architects to have won both of the NZILA's George Malcolm and Charlie Challenger Awards.

In summary, Ralph is a leader, innovator, and ambassador. He adds mana to the ranks of the Fellows of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.