

DOCOMOMO AUSTRALIA/ICOMOS – SYDNEY TALK SERIES 2014 - NO. 2
THURSDAY 27TH MARCH 2014



DOUGLAS SNELLING: AUSTRALASIA'S MISSING LINK TO CALIFORNIA MODERNISM

Douglas Burrage Snelling (1916-1985) was one of Asia-Pacific's most significant interpreters of California modern design and architecture innovations from the 1930s to the 1970s -- particularly luxury lifestyle themes popular in Beverley Hills and Palm Springs and 'Polynesian pop' aspects of the tiki style. Inspired by a stream of apprentices from Frank Lloyd Wright – notably Richard Neutra, Harwell Hamilton Harris and Gordon Drake – he was briefly employed by Beverley Hills architect Douglas Honnold and received technical instructions from John Lautner on how to build the southern hemisphere's first 'infinity' (spill-edge) swimming pool. Snelling was a fore-runner (from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s) of the 'indigenous modern' (pseudo thatched roofs) thrust in luxury Asia-Pacific resorts and residences. This movement peaked with Peter Muller and Kerry Hill's hotels in Bali and Amanresorts from the 1970s to the 1990s and included Sydney residences with tribal-style roofs in corrugated steel by Richard Leplastrier and Peter Stutchbury during the 1980s and 1990s. Snelling can be regarded as 'the missing link' practising architecture and multi-disciplinary design in Sydney between the departure of Wright's former students Walter and Marion Griffin in 1935 and the 1950s career beginnings of a new generation of organic modernist architects and designers who later became known as 'The Sydney School'.

This talk will cover Douglas Snelling's pan-Pacific career from birth in England to adulthood in NZ, his two working stints in Hollywood, his successful professional life in design and architecture in Sydney, schemes for resorts and houses across the South Pacific, retirement to Hawaii and role as a diplomat for the King of Cambodia. Snelling's eldest son Christopher will show and explain key family memories from the late 1960s to Douglas' death in 1985.

SPEAKERS

Davina Jackson M.Arch (history and theory) is a visiting research fellow with Goldsmiths College of Art at the University of London and an associate editor Arts Music Architecture with Berlin science publishers De Gruyter Open. She is the Sydney author of an RMIT PhD thesis on Douglas Snelling and author of the Australia-Pacific architecture summary in the forthcoming Routledge World of Modernism anthology.

Christopher Snelling is the eldest of Douglas Snelling's three sons and Manager of the Powerhouse Discovery Centre at Casula. He is a former marketing director for the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Members of the public are welcome!

Time & Date: Thursday 27th March 2014, 5.30pm for 6.00pm start.

Cost: Members \$7, non-members \$12 payable at the door. Wine and nibbles will be provided.

Venue: Godden Mackay Logan, 78 George Street, Redfern, NSW, 2016.

RSVP: Miss Jane Vernon janev@gml.com.au or 02 9319 4811. RSVP is essential as places are limited.