

Honorary Doctorate □ Sir TO Conran

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Sir TO Conran receiving his doctorate

The Programme for Interior Architecture, Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria conferred the degree, Doctor of Architecture (*honoris causa*), on Sir Terence Orby Conran FCSD, for his influence on the discipline of Interior Design. Sir Terence was meant to receive his honorary doctorate at the April 2012 graduation ceremony, but due to ill health could not travel to accept his degree. He received his degree at an alumni function in Oxford that took place on 21 August.

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The University of Pretoria is the only traditional university in South Africa offering degrees in Interior Design. The Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the disciplines of Architecture, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture.

The degree, *Doctor of Architecture (honoris causa)* will be the first doctorate conferred by the Programme for Interior Architecture and will be considered as a major milestone in the development of Interior Design as an academic discipline in Africa.

Sir Terence Conran made major contributions to the discipline (Interior Design):

- By introducing the concept that design can improve the general quality of life (specifically in the realm of the home interior).
- By bringing intelligent, contemporary design within the reach of the general population (as retailer).
- By impinging on the sub-field of restaurant design through the conception and design of his own restaurants.
- Similarly he had a principal impact on the sub-field of retail design. The integrated retail environment created to sell a 'lifestyle' is an original concept introduced by the Habitat stores.
- In his role in the sub-field of installation design (Festival of Britain; Smith-Kline; etc.).

- In his role in the sub-field of intervention design through adaptive re-use (Michelin Building; Shad Thames; Bluebird; Butlers Wharf; 59th Street Bridge; etc.).
- By writing a large number of books on Interior Design and subsequently expanding both the literature and knowledge base of a young discipline.
- As publisher of literature in the discipline (Conran Octopus).
- Through his design activism (through the Conran Foundation and Design Museum).
- His differentiation between the value of design and branding (marketing).
- He is a significant example of the interior designer acting as cultural producer through the use of taste-goods.
- Through praxis Conran is an early advocate of the positive aspects of globalisation as a force to spread cultural memes: e.g. in the 1970's in the UK Habitat was largely associated with French kitchenware and Scandinavian furniture, while in France it was seen as essentially English. This illustrates the Conran ethos that, "people do not always know what they want until you offer it to them."
- Conran exemplifies the idea that design is a progressive force which can contribute to economic development through 'the momentum of confidence' primarily by bolstering the image of the self.
- Conran is an early advocate (with Raymond Loewy amongst others) of a multi-disciplinary approach in design (a model followed by the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria).
- The holistic design approach which is evident in his practice (Conran and Partners) where location, environment, architecture, materials, interior design, light, space, product and graphics connect as if chosen by 'one pair of eyes'. This is a major and original contribution to Interior Design where the concept of design distribution plays such an important part in the design process.

It is the opinion of the Programme in Interior Architecture that Sir Terence Conran distinguished himself on an academic level comparable to the doctorate and has made a real and substantial contribution to the knowledge and practice of the discipline (Interior Design). His achievements are unequivocally recognised by experts in Interior Design and the informed public.

We are honoured that Sir Terence accepted the degree and believe that when the degree was conferred it brought prestige to the University and will promote the objectives of the Programme, while bearing direct benefit to our staff and students.

For more information on Sir Terence Conran,

<http://designmuseum.org/design/terence-conran/>