



JOHN GOLLINGS

EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE

EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE journeys into the world of cutting-edge architecture in Australia and Asia through the lens of renowned architectural photographer John Gollings.

produced and directed by **Sally Ingleton**



360 Degree Films



EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE

PRESS KIT

One line Synopsis

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One Paragraph Synopsis

EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE journeys into the world of cutting-edge architecture in Australia and Asia through the lens of renowned architectural photographer **John Gollings**. A Gollings photograph can turn an ordinary building into art, helping it get published or win an award. Join Gollings on a journey from ancient cities in India and Cambodia to the modern face of China and Australia, seeing his influences and what it takes to create memorable images.



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Synopsis

EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE

journeys into the world of cutting-edge architecture in Australia and the Asian region through the lens of renowned architectural photographer **John Gollings**.

When it comes to winning awards or major contracts, a Gollings photograph can give an edge to an architect's design. It is an attention-grabbing, inventive, strong twilight shot: the hero shot with a slightly exaggerated wide angle. It can turn an ordinary building into art.

"The buildings tell me what to do," Gollings says. "I'm not the director of the shot. I can get in the helicopter, but then I have to fly around the sky until the building puts on its makeup and displays itself to me and then hopefully I can go snap."

At 65, the wiry, irreverent Gollings is known as the unofficial curator of Australian architecture, such is the power of his eye and ability to get a building published.

He lives in Melbourne, Australia, a city known for its innovative modern architecture. Top Australian architects, including Cassandra Fahey, Barrie Marshall (*Denton Corker Marshall*), Rob McBride and Deb Ryan (*McBride Charles Ryan*) and Ian McDougall (*Ashton Raggatt McDougall*), share their stories about the man.

But while his passion is documenting cities and reflecting urban space, his muse is not the modern world but the ancient cities of Asia.

"Most of my work as an architectural photographer has never been seen," he says. "It is of dead cities in deserts and jungles where I return year after year for an orgy of self-flagellation and recrimination over lost images and intransigent buildings."

EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE follows Gollings on a photographic journey through the rapidly changing cities of Australia and China. It travels with Gollings to ancient cities in India and Cambodia to show how these magnificent places have influenced his work. Here he reveals that he too has insecurities, despite being recognised as one of the world's top architectural photographers.



EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE is an entertaining and visually rich journey into the creative mind of one of the world's top architectural photographers.

About The Making Of The Film

For filmmaker Sally Ingleton, **EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE** has been a labour of love, a documentary filmed over many years about a subject who has been part of her world for decades.



Ingleton first crossed paths with renowned architectural photographer John Gollings in the 1970s when she met him socially through her sister.

Both had a strong interest in Asia and have spent time working and travelling in destinations such as India and Cambodia.

“I’ve had contact with him through family and professional connections for years and there was this weird synchronicity between us in what we loved and what we were doing with our work,” Ingleton says.

“I remember when he first started going to work in India; at the same time I’d been travelling in India and we had this love of India in common. Then in 1992 I was in Cambodia filming *The Tenth Dancer* and he was there photographing the temples and artefacts of Angkor with the National Museum of Cambodia for a major exhibition held by the National Gallery of Australia. There is something in what John sees in those countries that I also see.”

Part observational documentary, part formal interview, Ingleton made the film slowly over several years, starting work in 2005 when she accompanied Gollings on a working trip to China, then India in 2006 and Cambodia in 2007. Most of the interviews with his architectural clients were filmed in Melbourne in 2009.

“The film is not an intimate portrait of him as a man, it’s about his work. It’s about trying to give an audience an understanding of what it takes to be an architectural photographer and be able to capture a building in one shot.

“He’s someone who has been very influenced by the ancient cities of Asia, so it was important to go there with him and show what he

does on the road. I wanted to give a sense of his personality; how he interacts with local people and the struggle that he goes through in order to be able to get the right shots.”



Gollings says in the film that everything he has learned about architectural photography, he's learned in India by photographing the ancient cities.

Photographs taken on one such trip to India are on display at the Hampi-Place exhibit at the Melbourne Immigration Museum for most of 2009.

While the personal relationship perhaps allowed Ingleton more intimate access to her subject, she says it did not impact on the way she told his story.

“He's not a close personal friend, he's somebody who I've known through family connections so I've been able to keep it at arm's length,” she says.

“What it has enabled me to do is get his trust and as well as unique access to a side of his work. I've been able to travel with him, which may have been harder for someone else to do. Perhaps he's opened up to me a little a bit more.”

“He's a real character, he's got a great sense of humour he's a bit of a renegade, he's an absolute maverick in his field and he's been at the forefront of all the new waves in architectural photography.”

Working in Asia was not without challenges, though that adds drama to the story.

When Gollings arrived in China to take 12 “hero” shots of a stadium, he found it was still a construction site covered in scaffolding and crawling with labourers. Over three days he faced a real battle to get the shots he needed working frantically from dawn until dark.

“In the end he did it and managed to wrangle lights and cope with all sorts of dramas. It was a similar story when we went to India. He was working with the Melbourne Museum creating stereo panoramas for a virtual installation. The 3D camera played up and in the end both his camera and the museum's camera were in pieces. It made it more interesting for us even though it meant that he had to cut his trip short. When he couldn't take photographs then he basically just jumped on a plane and came home.”

Much of the film was shot in Melbourne, a city known for its innovative architecture.



“When I talked to architects about their work and John’s depiction of it, I got a real appreciation of how much effort goes into designing buildings, which might be loaded with symbolism that the average punter would never realise.”

All in all, Ingleton is satisfied to have made a humorous and entertaining film and hopes it also gives audiences an interest in architecture and an appreciation of architectural photography.

“Hopefully they will walk through the city and look at buildings in a different way,” she says. “That’s probably the thing that I’ve gotten most out of the film. What architects go through to actually design a building; it’s a bit of an unsung art form.”

About John Gollings

John Gollings fell in love with photography from an early age.



“I picked up the family folding Ensign camera and took a few photos of my sister jumping off my brother’s shoulders,” he says. “A friend had a darkroom and showed me how to process film. The whole nature of freezing a moment was magic. Choosing the moment when you press the button, that’s the core value of photography. It’s that subconscious Cartier-Bresson idea that a camera can do what a painter can’t.”

Gollings studied architecture in the 1960s and paid his way through university by taking photos of music bands and socialites. When everyone else was shooting formal with flash, Gollings was the first to shoot weddings and ads in 35mm verite – nitty gritty and real. He revolutionised ‘capturing the moment’ and did everything intuitively.

By the late 1960s-early 1970s, Gollings was making a name for himself in advertising photography. But he kept in touch with his former architecture classmates shooting their first designs. He adapted the techniques he picked up in the commercial world, such as the use of high-powered flash, to his architecture work.

Since then, Gollings has worked with the architects who have defined Melbourne, representing their work in his playful and exploratory style.

IAN MCDOUGALL, Architect, *Ashton Raggatt McDougall*: "As young graduates we were kind of in awe of his capacity to take photos. They had sort of symbolic parts to them; they were triple shots using flash and combined imagery, very dynamic multi-viewpoint type of shots, which were really striking."



Everything he did was ahead of its time. Photographs became theatrical or used superimposed images to create an other-worldliness to the buildings. He ventured into the suburbs and played with images of brick veneer and Hills Hoists.

Where other architectural photographers produced repetitive 'hero shots', Gollings was aggressive and controversial. He explored what a building meant rather than how it looked. He was one of the

first commercial photographers to embrace digital and Photoshop and suffered criticism for his innovation. Now it is the norm.

LEON VAN SCHAIK, *Professor of Architecture, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*: "The photographs he did of the Keysborough Church with Edmond and Corrigan was a major point in getting people to understand what this then new approach to architecture in Melbourne was all about. The priest standing in the foreground, the theatrical lighting, everything about that is revealing about the intentions of that architecture."

Gollings has always been an adventurer. In 1979, friend George Michell told him about a wonderful ancient city in India that desperately needed recognition as a World Monument Site. Gollings was intrigued and travelled to the 14 to 16th century city of Hampi in southern India, for the first of what would be many trips over 30

years. Shunning the normally dull model used by archaeological photographers, Gollings applied his commercial skills to give Michell photos that would put Hampi on the international map.



“I was very anxious to push archaeological photography,” Gollings recalls. “It had been pretty dry in the past...very banal midday photographs that the archaeologists would have taken. I was very conscious that I wanted to give George a set of pictures that would really put his project apart.”

But it wasn't easy. The city was a ruin and Gollings devised a way of photographing it at night to bring it to life. Using flash and long exposures, he honed his now famous night-photography skills.

He now returns to Hampi most years to take photographs and work on cultural projects, including a recreation of the famous Colonel Alexander Greenlaw images of 1856. The Gollings collection is held in both the Australian National Gallery and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Most of what he has learnt about architectural photography and applies to contemporary buildings, he has learnt in Hampi, he says.

“The core elements of architecture are here. Everything is stripped back to the basics ... the colour has gone, the furniture's gone, the people have gone and so you're left with an analysis of what really matters in architecture. I mentally undress every building I shoot back in the west now to work out whether it's a good building or not.”

Buildings such as the contemporary façade of the Melbourne Museum would never stand that test of time, Gollings says.

“It's a very good example of late 20th century modernism. I personally just worry about the maintenance; you know a building like the pyramids that has nothing to rot basically is still here after a few thousand years. There's not much to this building. You know the glass will break and the steel will rust and fall to pieces and that will be the end of it.”

BARRIE MARSHALL, Architect, *Denton Corker Marshall*: “John used to say that you know you can take a hundred photographs but at the end of the day you'll find that one of those photographs is the one that gets repeated over and over again when someone wants an image of that building.”



"I certainly help refine and develop the hero dusk shot," Gollings concedes. "I was being asked by magazines to produce one defining picture. And the quickest way to show both inside and outside the building is to get that perfect twilight moment when you still have colour in the sky you can see detail in the building, but you can also look into the rooms. It was technically tricky, but I was always up for the challenge."

DEB RYAN, *McBride Charles Ryan*: "He will do things that other photographers won't necessarily do. When we were doing the Klein Bottle House, we were pretty surprised to see John at the top of a ti tree, which is a pretty spindly sort of tree, just to get his photograph! He wanted that one so he was prepared to go out on a limb, literally."

John tells us the first photograph he ever saw as a child was of the South Gate of Angkor Wat. He first went there in 1991 when he had the whole place to himself.

This time he is working with Australian art historian Helen Jessup on a comprehensive book about the Angkor Temples. Now the site is crawling with tourists and he can't get a clear shot. In a magic moment his mood lightens as he realises he can turn a negative into a positive. He starts to shoot the tourists as though he is on a fashion shoot, laughing and amusing himself.

Far away from the tourist temples in a remote part of Northern Cambodia, John is revelling in the solitude.

The signs warning of landmines do not deter his spirit.

Perhaps Gollings' biggest problem is the tension between being a successful commercial photographer and a desire to explore his own creativity.

"I don't want to be known as an Australian artist, but I'd like to be known as a great photographer who made architecture more accessible and exciting to the viewer," he says. "The best vehicle for

my work is a big print hanging on the wall and there is very few of them to date. I just lack that confidence to say what I have done is worth showing people at the moment. Tragic.”

Biography of John Gollings

Born in 1944 in Melbourne, **John Gollings** is a photographer specialising in the built environment. Since taking his first photographs at age 11, Gollings has cemented his place among the top architectural photographers in the world, renowned for

documenting both ancient and modern cities. After studying arts and architecture, Gollings began to work as a freelance advertising photographer, specialising in fashion and travel. As his contemporaries in architecture developed their practices, so the amount of architectural photography increased. While still shooting for leading graphic designers and advertising agencies, he is considered one of the most interesting of Australia's architectural documenters.



Gollings work is characterised by strong formal composition but with a didactic, and wider, contextual viewpoint. He brings the technical skills and craft of an experienced photographer to a discipline that often lacks a point of view. In 1976 he received private tuition from Ansel Adams in his darkroom in California. He has taught the use of large format cameras, and lectured extensively on architecture and advertising photography. Recently he has devoted his time to projects with academic or cultural significance for books, exhibitions and fine prints. He has won numerous awards and his work is represented in dozens of books. It is held in collections in Australia and around the world.



Biography of Producer and Director Sally Ingleton

Sally is a partner in the Australian company 360 Degree Films. As well as doing stints as a film bureaucrat and teacher she has been producing and directing award-winning documentaries for the past 25 years. Specialising in science, arts, history and social issues Sally has made programs for BBC, Channel 4, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, ABCTV, SBSTV, and NHK.

Sally is currently producing *Penguin Island* – a 6 part series about life in the Little Penguin Colony on Phillip Island Australia for ABC/BBC/Arte France.

In 2008 she produced and directed the multi award winning *Seed Hunter* (ABC/Arte France/SVT/RTE/National Geographic Channels) Winner ATOM Award Best Science Environment and Technology; Excellence Prize Earth Vision Japan; Best Conservation Documentary Wild Talk Africa; Nominated Best Environment Documentary Banff TV Festival; Best Conservation Documentary VAASA Finland Festival and a Silver Dragon China Science Festival.

Other recent work includes *Tibet: Murder in the Snow* and *2 Mums and a Dad*, which won Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival Dendy Awards and Best Documentary at the Australian Teachers of Media Awards. In 2006, Sally produced *Welcome 2 My Deaf World*, which was nominated for Best Documentary at both the Australian Film Institute and Australian Teacher's of Media Awards. It won the most popular film at the Real Life on Film Documentary Film Festival Melbourne.

Other credits include *Muddy Waters: Life and Death on the Great Barrier Reef*, which won the Jury Prize at Japan's Earth Vision Festival and the Best Environment and Conservation Award at the Japanese Wildlife Film Festival; *Painting Country*, which won the Silver Chris Award at the Columbus Film festival; *Mao's New Suit*, which won Best Documentary at Chicago; and *The Tenth Dancer*, which screened at festivals around the world and won awards in Japan, Chicago and San Francisco. It also won Best Documentary 1994 Australian Teachers of Media Awards.

Biography of Editor: Tony Stevens

Tony is one of Australia's most respected and experienced drama and factual editors. His credits include the documentaries *Hunt Angels* (AFI Best Documentary) *Revealing Gallipoli*, *The Hit Game*,

Vietnam Nurses (AFI BEST EDITING Nominee), *Two Men and a Baby*, *Inheritance*, and Ingleton's *Seed Hunter*, *Murder in the Snow*, *Mao's New Suit* and *Muddy Waters*. TV Dramas include *My Worst Best Friends*, *L'il Horrors*, and the feature film *Road To Nhill*.

Key Production Credits

producer and director
SALLY INGLETON

camera
PETER ZAKHAROV

editor
TONY STEVENS ASE

original music
DALE CORNELIUS

sound recording
SALLY INGLETON
BEN TRAVERS

additional camera
PHILLIP BULL, MAX DAVIS

edit assistant
ANNA BROWNFIELD
BERGEN O'BRIEN

colourist DEE McCLELLAND
online CHRIS DEA

sound mixer
TRISTAN MEREDITH

in co production with the
AVRO
commissioning editor JESSICA RASPE

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