

Sails, Octopuses, and Telescopic Cranes: Building the Sydney Opera House

(「シドニーオペラハウス: よみがえる施工図面」)

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岩波書店一ツ橋ビル地下会議室
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For the past 50 years, the Sydney Opera House has been the subject of a prodigious hagiography of the personalities involved in its realization and their legendary quarrels. Yet it remains paradoxically unexplored when it comes to its operative construction decisions, particularly those that relate to the erection of its renowned superstructure in the course of Stage II, between 1963 and 1967. A multi-year research project, which delves into original site minutes, reports, and a newly discovered set of 5000 shop drawings created during and specifically for the construction of the iconic roof sails, has been led by Paolo Stracchi at the University of Sydney, Luciano Cardellicchio at the University of New South Wales, and Paolo Tombesi at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne. This comprehensive study finally allows for a scrutiny of the hitherto unacknowledged design role of the general contractor and clarifies the precise procedures and remarkable means employed at one of the most intricate construction sites of the 20th century. While addressing a distinct historical void about the Sydney Opera House, the study accentuates the paramount importance of incorporating construction-centric historiographies within contemporary architectural narratives.

Along with the talk, Paolo will introduce the “Digital Heritage Construction” project, a research initiative that showcases immersive VR experiences that recreate the construction site of the Sydney Opera House, offering a vivid representation of the building process as it originally occurred. These experiences aim to bring to life the documents, moments, and stories associated with the construction of this iconic architectural landmark.

Research and other materials on the project are available here:

<https://linktr.ee/beyondthesphericalsolution>



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Dr Paolo Stracchi

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Paolo is an Architectural Engineer who holds a PhD in Architecture and Construction. His research agenda builds upon construction history in architecture and building engineering, particularly from the late modern to contemporary eras. His research has brought attention to the Australian work of Italian master and engineer Pier Luigi Nervi in collaboration with Harry Seidler, and the construction history of the Sydney Opera House. He also received the prestigious Dr AM Hertzberg AO Fellowship in 2022 from the NSW State Library for his research on the role of modern architecture in the development of the construction industry in New South Wales (1950–1980). Beyond historical analysis, Paolo's research interests span the exploration of the capabilities of cutting-edge technologies in enhancing heritage conservation, particularly in relation to construction documentation and practices, and the development of advanced construction training practices. Since 2020, Paolo has been serving as the Program Director for the Master of Architecture program at the University of Sydney.