

WORDS SARAH HENDER PHOTOGRAPHS PETER HOARE

# LIFE IN GLASS AND STONE

After a lifetime of creating some of South Australia's most recognisable homes, architect Pauline Hurren is passing on her gifts to her daughters.





**Above:** Pauline Hurren at her graduation ceremony, she was the only female architecture student in her class. **Above, right:** Pauline, pictured at her drawing board in the 1990s, had a fascination with architecture from a young age. **Opposite page:** The use of glass and natural stone are signatures in Pauline's work, such as this project in Waterfall Gully. **Previous pages:** Pauline (centre) still works with daughters Melissa and Rosanna.

**G**ROWING UP IN STRATHALBYN, PAULINE HURREN, ONE of South Australia's most treasured residential architects, was exposed to both the beauty of stone and the contrasting ugliness of some of the new housing developments in the area. She remembers thinking that she would like to do better than that.

She got her opportunity to practise when, at age seven, she fell out of a tree. The prescribed treatment was three years' bed rest, leaving her with a permanent limp, but giving her plenty of time to create the perfect imaginary houses for her dolls. Pauline's dream was that one day those dolls would be replaced with people.

However, her father had other plans. Pauline would either help him in his retail clothing store or marry a farmer, but, he told her, as he pounded the dining table, she would never be an architect.

Happily, Pauline has never done what she is "supposed" to do. She was the only female architecture student (at that time taught by the Engineering Faculty) at university. Upon graduation, the Institute of Engineers sent her a congratulatory note, while at the same time informing her that she shouldn't bother to join the institute as there were no female toilets available.

Unphased, her love of conserving the precious heritage of a residence and its relationship with its environment has always set her apart, and put her in demand. She would become Adelaide's first woman to have her own architectural practice.

In recognition of her achievements, in 2005, she was awarded the Sir James Irwin medal for Exemplary Services to Architecture. After 63 years in the profession, at age 85, she is still working, with no plans to retire. She can't think of a single thing she'd prefer to do than design houses.

"We all have this vision of finding her one day, lying sprawled across her drawing board," says Rosanna, Pauline's eldest daughter, also an architect.

Fortunately, Pauline appears in robust health. She is full of enthusiasm for her current projects and is working collaboratively with two of her four children, Rosanna and her younger sister, Melissa, an interior designer, under the newly-named Hurren Architects.

"I'm delighted to be able to work with my daughters. There is this frank discussion we can have, which is hard to do with anyone else but family," says Pauline.

Sharing their mother's intense passion for architecture, as well as her no-nonsense approach, Rosanna and Melissa don't hold back if they think their mother is wrong on an issue. Pauline doesn't take it personally, in fact, she seeks the input. She admits that she can sometimes get carried away with excitement about a project and her initial thoughts are not always practical.

"That's the benefit of having more than one pair of eyes; a design process should be a collaboration with someone else casting their eye over it and enhancing it," says Melissa.

Disagreements are usually resolved quickly but the sisters choose their issues wisely.

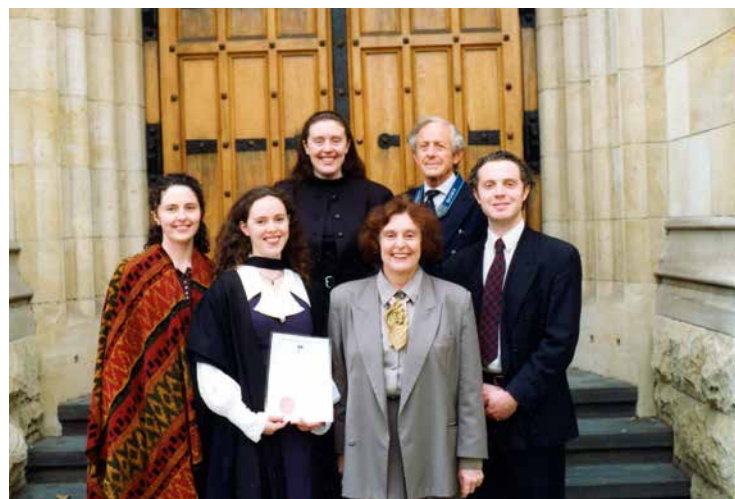
"I never start an argument I can't win," says Rosanna.

One of the challenges of working with your mother is knowing when the conversation you are having is with Pauline your boss, or Pauline your mother.

"You have to be mindful about what you're actually discussing. If I'm getting emotional about it, I step away and deal with it as a family discussion. I like to keep work logical," Melissa says.



**Below:** Pauline and Rosanna pictured with baby Melissa in 1968; The Hurren family at Amelia's graduation ceremony (L-R) Melissa, Amelia, Rosanna, Pauline, Frank and Tony; Pauline aged 10 in 1944 during her "bed rest" years, with her brother David; At her drawing board with Rosanna. **Bottom:** Employee Veena Hillier, Melissa and Pauline in the late 1980s. Veena was one of the many young graduates that Pauline mentored over the years.



WE ALL HAVE THIS VISION OF FINDING HER ONE DAY, LYING SPRAWLED ACROSS HER DRAWING BOARD.



Mostly, the three are on the same page. They have a similar sense of humour and it can be cathartic to debrief, enjoying a laugh together. The Hurren women not only work together, they also live in close proximity to each other, along with Rosanna and Melissa's siblings Tony and Amelia and their families, in the same tiny corner of leafy Crafers in which they were raised. Pauline and her late husband, Frank (who, helpfully, also had an architectural background) reared their family based on the concept that "it takes a village to raise a child".

It worked so well that the second generation has embraced it too. For Pauline, family support was essential. Working in her own business while raising her four children meant that she needed a solid support system around her. Two sets of grandparents and a supportive husband provided that.

At a time when most women were expected to stay at home with their children, Pauline worked. It meant she was extra busy but she didn't feel maternal guilt or wonder why she was doing so much juggling.

"I only ever thought, thank God I am!" she says.

Her drawing board was an escape from some of the monotony of child-rearing. When the children were young, Pauline liked to work until the early hours of the morning. Her children recall hearing the cake mixers going in the middle of the night while she worked. The next day it would be Frank who would step in and cook the children breakfast, getting them off to school.



[www.designfurniture.com.au](http://www.designfurniture.com.au)



**designfurniture** est. 1986

## PETER SYNDICAS

Sculptures inspired by a fascination with organic shapes in their simplest forms - fractals of nature. Twigs - fragile, precious, shaped by the elements. Delicately carved, the revealed forms are translated on a magnified scale and immortalised in bronze, steel or stone - a stark contrast to their fragile nature.

Peter searches specifically for twigs that portray a human figure as it gives each sculpture a unique duality. On the one hand they are magnified reproductions of fragile twigs, while at the same time they display these very expressive abstract human forms.

*"I love that my sculptures allow people to view fragments of nature, as works of art"*

For all sales and commission enquiries email [peter@petersyndicas.com](mailto:peter@petersyndicas.com) or call 0414 441 041.

[petersyndicas.com](http://petersyndicas.com)





ONE CLIENT PHONES  
PAULINE REGULARLY JUST TO  
LET HER KNOW HOW MUCH  
SHE LOVES HER HOUSE.



Melissa, Pauline and Rosanna say that working together brings them all tremendous joy, with the sisters vowing to uphold their mother's legacy. **Previous pages:** Pauline designed Rosanna's octagonal house, which was based on a French village.

"I have a memory of Frank standing at the stove cooking us poached eggs, holding up his pyjama pants with one hand because no-one had bothered to put in fresh elastic," Rosanna laughs.

As the children grew older, the business became a family affair, the children often accompanying their mother on site visits. Rosanna recalls, the night before leaving for a family trip, all the children, including the then five-year-old Amelia, working through the night with their parents copying and collating documents for a client delivery the next day.

Rosanna and Melissa have both worked for their mother over the years before Hurren Architects was established 18 months ago. Now Rosanna handles all the interior architecture and the bulk of the site overseeing, while Melissa holds an administrative and social media advisory role in the firm.

The sisters have always deeply admired their mother's work; Rosanna's own octagonal-shaped house based on a French village,

was designed by Pauline. They both hold the same view as their mother that a house should be respectful to its environment or, as in the case of a renovation, respectful to the residence, and that any extension should not be out of character with the original.

And of course, with a Hurren design, lots of stone and glass. For those who have been lucky enough to enjoy a Hurren-designed home, their appreciation is deep. One client phones Pauline regularly just to let her know how much she loves her house.

Although retirement is not an option for Pauline, she knows that, one day, that decision is likely to be forced on her.

"I love what I do. The only stress I get from work is..."

Melissa interrupts her mother:

"...that you want to keep doing it!" she laughs.

But Pauline feels a deep sense of comfort that her daughters will continue to produce beautiful work, holding fast to her philosophy of what makes good design long after she has gone. 🍷

## The Fine Art of Fine Living

**Wine, Furniture, Cars, Jewels, Artworks, & Decor**

Since 1966, du Plessis Auctions have been serving the people of SA selling their treasure through their uniquely designed auction complex. Whether it is a stunning piece of furniture made in Paris from the 18th Century or a still-life painting by Sir Hans Heysen in the 1940's, du Plessis Auctions has always been the destination where people would come to find the rare, decorative & desirable. Well now there is a new way to find these magnificent items without leaving the comfort & safety of your home...







### du Plessis

- The App designed for you.

Download on the App Store
ANDROID APP ON Google Play



1 London Road Mile End South Australia 5031  
08 8234 1804 info@duplessis.com.au  
[www.duplessis.com.au](http://www.duplessis.com.au)

## Resthaven. Everything aged care.

Home care & support 1300 13 66 33  
Community respite 8198 2060  
Retirement living 8370 3756  
Residential care & respite 8373 9113



**Trust. Dignity. Choice.**

[www.resthaven.asn.au](http://www.resthaven.asn.au)



*Celebrating 85 years in 2020*



**YOUR LIFE. YOUR LIFESTYLE. YOUR CHOICE.**