



Iwan Iwanoff (abc.net.au/news 17 Oct 2021 - Iwanoff family)

Iwan Iwanoff (1919-1986) was born 2 July 1919 at Kyustendil, Bulgaria, elder son of journalist-poet Nickolai Iwanow and Maria Iwanowa-Schopowa. Raised in an artistic family, Iwan began to study fine arts before undergoing military training. Despite the difficulties of the Second World War (1939-1945), in 1941 he left his home at Vratsa, Bulgaria and enrolled in architecture in Germany at the Technical University of Munich. He graduated in 1946 (Dip Eng and Arch) with high praise for an exceptional final project, a design for a chapel. Known as Iwan Nikolow Iwanow as a child, he changed his name to Iwan Nikoloff Iwanoff during his student years, and soon further simplified it to Iwan Iwanoff. In the difficult post-war years, he lived at Laufen, Bavaria, and supplemented his income by selling caricatures and watercolours. Iwan and Dietlinde (Linda) Hildegunde Zenns were married at Laufen in October of 1947. In 1948-1949 Iwan worked with the modernist architect Emil Freymuth at Munich. Together, they came second in a design competition for the rebuilding of central Munich.



Iwan and Linda Iwanoff in the 1950s (Reflections of Iwanoff video 2021 - Iwanoff family)

Migrating to Australia as part of the International Refugee Organization resettlement scheme, Iwan and Linda arrived on the *SS Fairsea* at the port of Fremantle, Western Australia, on 2 March 1950. On arrival in Western Australia, Iwanoff discovered that his architectural credentials were not immediately recognised. The Government Employment Office initially allocated him employment in the Humes concrete factory. However, before he commenced, Iwan was offered employment as a draughtsman with Krantz & Sheldon, a large architectural firm specialising in the design of flats, and in time became senior draughtsman in charge of staff. Leaders of the firm, Harold Krantz (1906-1999) and Robert Sheldon (1908-1968) had significant European family backgrounds. Almost all the staff were migrants, including Estonian Kalju Palmoja, German Hans Bollig, Englishman Colin Rule, Dutchmen Lou Westerveld and Sye De Jager, Lithuanian engineer Anatole (George) Kateiva, and South African supervisor Eric Yates. Iwan was soon in charge of design and supervision of the huge Wandana Flats in Subiaco, the second biggest housing project in Australia at the time. He also took on private architectural projects in his own time, designing his first residence for George Voudouris at Applecross in 1950.



Dodonia Gardens City Beach house for Jack Harrison (*The West Australian*, 24 July 1954, p.15)

In 1956 Iwanoff was naturalised. He worked with the Melbourne architectural firm of Yuncken, Freeman Bros, Griffiths & Simpson during 1960-1962. After a visit to West Germany, where he was accepted as a member of the Federation of German Architects, he returned to Perth and work with Krantz & Sheldon. With belated recognition of his previous German qualifications and subsequent Australian experience, in 1963 Iwanoff was registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (no 419) under section 14 (a) of the *Architects Act 1921*. In 1964 he was listed at Flat 18, 130 Terrace Drive (now Road) Perth.



1965 Paganin House 165 The Boulevard, Floreat (Jack Lovel)

In 1963 Iwan established the Studio of Iwanoff in Perth. He became an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1964 and a Fellow in 1972. Commissions continued to come through word of mouth and Iwanoff was often able to persuade his clients to allow him a fairly free hand in design. Between 1963 and 1986, his small office produced more than 70 works, including numerous residences, shops, interiors, and three blocks of flats. Many of the Iwanoff residences from the 1960s and 1970s were in the new northern suburbs of Perth, where there was often minimal surrounding development and clients willing to explore new styles and techniques.



1967 Iwanoff House 16 Lifford Road, Floreat (Jack Lovel)

A gifted architect, Iwanoff had exceptional drawing abilities, an innovative 'expressionistic' approach to design and detailing and, above all, a conviction that architecture was an art. His creative use of concrete blocks drew richness out of every aspect of the utilitarian. The Iwanoff house in Floreat, a combination of architectural office and living accommodation, is a fine example.



1969-74 Northam Shire Offices and Library - view from Fitzgerald & Beavis Streets (AIA – WA)

He also designed shop fronts and interiors in central Perth, and one larger project, the civic administration centre and public library at Northam (1969-74). Ivan's professional qualities were acknowledged by the conferring of the honorific titles Associate of the RAIA in 1964, and Fellow of the RAIA in 1972.



1976 Marsala House 38 Sycamore Rise, Dianella (Jack Lovel)

Although dapper and charming, Iwanoff displayed many contradictions. He could be cautious with strangers but was outgoing with friends and clients. Architectural students regarded him as a friend and mentor. Despite his commitment to Australia, Iwanoff remained a European in spirit, valuing the artistic traditions and standards of excellence that Europe represented and hopeful that Australians would aspire to these values. He was quoted as saying "Architecture without Art is like life without a pulse". Survived by Linda and their two sons Michael and Nicolai, he died of pneumonia on 7 October 1986 aged 67 years and was buried at Karrakatta. Linda passed away in 2009, aged 79 years.



1977-80 Tomich House 7 Dorking Road, City Beach (Jack Lovel)

In 1991 the Library and Information Service of Western Australia held an exhibition of his architectural drawings, most of which are held by the State Archives of Western Australia. Since then, with some peaks, there has been a fairly sustained interest in Iwanoff's architecture and marketing of his residences, when they come up for sale, invariably stress their architectural importance and rarity of opportunity to own one. There has been a steadily increasing recognition of the lasting impact Iwanoff's body of work has had on the built landscape in Western Australia, and an improved understanding of the myriad ways in which post-war migrants enriched the cultural life of Western Australia and contributed to a local sense of identity.

While some houses designed by Iwanoff have achieved cult-like status due to renewed interest in their groundbreaking design, wider appreciation of his full suite of design contributions is slowly growing. State government heritage agency research notes that since 2006, eleven examples of his work have been demolished, and some extant developments remain unrecognized. In 2010, the [Royal] Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) listed 'Studio Iwanoff' (the Iwanoff House at Floreat) as an example of Nationally Significant Twentieth Century Architecture; and in 2021 the AIA (WA) gave the Northam complex its Richard Roach Jewell Award for Enduring Architecture.

More recent printed publications on Iwanoff have provided a greater body of documentation to increase our understanding of the great value of Iwanoff's fabulous portfolio of work.

References:

- 'Nearly 2,000 Migrants in Fairsea for W.A.', *The West Australian*, 3 March 1950, p.3.
- 'Home Draws Attention', *The West Australian*, 24 July 1954, p.15 (Dodonia Gardens City Beach residence for musician Jack Harrison).
- 'It's Modern but has Peasant Look', *Sunday Times*, 27 February 1955, p.30 (by 'Jane Scott' – pen name of Ray Oldham, Lunghi house Victoria Parade Claremont).
- 'All Migrants on this Architectural Staff', *Good Neighbour*, 1 July 1955, p.2 (at Krantz & Sheldon).
- 'Building a Future', *Good Neighbour* (ACT), 1 December 1959, p.3 (Iwanoffs and two sons born in Perth live in a flat which Iwan designed and decorated himself).
- 'Other People's Houses 2', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* (Port Moresby), 6 October 1978, p.38 (Swiss award for Iwanoff House).
- 'Iwan Iwanoff', *Constructional Review*, November 1979, pp.40-43 (with photos by Fritz Kos).
- 'Architecture as Art or Craft', *The Architect*, 1985, No.4, pp.22-23 (the Studio of Iwanoff).
- Ian Rawlings, 'Tribute: Iwan Iwanoff BDA FRAIA', *The Architect*, Vol 26, No 4, 1986, pp.20-23.
- 'The art of architecture : the architectural drawings of Iwan Iwanoff (1919-1986)': exhibition of drawings by Iwan Iwanoff from the collection held by The State Archives of Western Australia, curated by John Nichols and Duncan Richards, 15 April – 13 May 1991, Alexander Library, Perth. Geoffrey London and Duncan Richards; 'Modern Houses: Architect-designed Houses in Western Australia from 1950 to 1965', School of Architecture, UWA, 1997, pp.43, 61, 81 (drawings of Harrison House City Beach, Golovin House Mount Lawley, Schenberg House Floreat Park).
- Duncan Richards, 'Iwanoff, Iwan (1919–1986)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, 2007.
- Kathryn Exell, 'Remembering Iwanoff', Master of Architecture Dissertation, Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts, UWA, 2010.
- Simon Anderson, 'Iwanoff, Iwan', *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, editors Philip Goad and Julie Willis, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2012, p.357.
- 'Iwanoff architectural plans and papers', SLWA MN1401 (collection of documents some digitised).
- Phil Griffiths, 'Iwanoff – A Unique Legacy', *The Architect*, May 2020, pp.102-105 (Lovel photos).
- 'Reflections of Iwanoff', Video Frame Virtual Reality, 2021; SLWA online slwa_b6591544_1.
- Jack Lovel, *Catching Light – The Architecture of Iwan Iwanoff through the lens of Jack Lovel*, Press Print 2022, <https://www.jacklovel.com/shop/catching-light>
- Warren Andersen, 'Modern Gothic - The Architecture of Iwan Iwanoff', *The Architect*, 2024 work rest play edition, pp.98-101.
- Warren Andersen, 'Architecture of Iwan Iwanoff', Bossanova Lounge, 2024.
- 'Iwanoff House, Floreat', HCWA draft Register of Heritage Places Assessment, July 2024.
- Pers. comms. Michael and Nicolai Iwanoff, December 2024- February 2025.
- Heritage Committee review: 20 February 2025 Last updated: 20 February 2025

Citation details:

Taylor, Dr John J., 'Iwan Iwanoff (1919-1986)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, <http://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html> accessed DATE.