

## **J. Stuart Renton RSA**

### ***RSA Obituary by Ian Arnott RSA. Transcribed from the 2006 RSA Annual Exhibition Catalogue***

Stuart Renton was a talented architect who designed a number of significant buildings which earned him a cluster of awards.

These facts are but a title page to a very full life. He had a glittering student career. From being Dux in Art at the Royal High School of Edinburgh, he was accepted into the School of Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art. There were few school-leavers in those post-war student years but the young Renton was so unfazed by the competition that, by his third year, he had won the Civic Medal, and, in the following years, several Andrew Grant Scholarships.

His professional career took off in 1955, with Alan Reiach: four years later he became a founding partner in the combined practise of Reiach and Hall, retiring as a senior partner in 1991. He was responsible, with Alan Reiach, for the New Club in Princes Street, and, in succeeding years, for many other significant projects, including his award winning work for British Steel at Airdrie, where he explored the integration of structures, services and the building process in a holistic design approach.

To all these major commissions he brought the intellectual rigour and the obsession with quality first evident in the schoolboy modelmaker. But, arguably, his design philosophy found its most complete expression in the two houses he designed and lived in. Clapperfield, in Edinburgh, was completed in 1960. Grianan, on the shores of Loch Rannoch, the Renton home since 1995, was originally designed for Danish clients who became firm friends.

Both of these delightful houses reflected Stuart's understanding of materials and craftsmanship, but, added to that was his imaginative manipulation of space, form and light and the interaction between them. At Clapperfield and Grianan, in the subtleties and balance of these relationships, Stuart Renton set out his stall as an architect.

Stuart's achievements were honoured by the award of MBE in 1972 and election to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1983 and in 1993 was given an award from the Gillies Bequest for the study of the evolution of Italian hill villages.

He took a great interest in the RSA and following his election to Academician in 1997 he served on Council and contributed fully to the continuing debate about the future of the Academy.

He was an External Examiner, a member of the RIBA's visiting boards, and finally, a Visiting Professor at the University of Strathclyde. For 13 years he was a member, then Chairman, of the Board of Governors of Edinburgh College of Art.

For Stuart, and nothing was too small for his attention, nothing too big for his imagination. It was a privilege to be his friend.