

Ms Gillian Armstrong AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Gillian Armstrong by the Chancellor, Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM, at a special honorary award ceremony in celebration of women's leadership at 5.00pm on 1 November 2014.

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Gillian May Armstrong AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

Gillian Armstrong is an award-winning Australian director and filmmaker who has made an outstanding contribution to the Australian film industry. She studied at Swinburne College in Melbourne where she was initially interested in becoming a set and costume designer but became interested in film making in which she majored during her studies. Having won a scholarship to study at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) she joined the first 12 students at Australia's first and only film school. By the age of 27 she became one of Australia's first female film director.

Gillian Armstrong is the recent recipient of the Women in Hollywood Icon Award, a distinguished member of the Order of Australia for services to the Australian film industry. A woman whose brilliant career has spanned three continents, nearly four decades, 10 films, including *My Brilliant Career*, *Oscar* and *Lucinda*, *Little Women*, *High Tide* and *Charlotte Gray*. Seven documentaries, soon to be eight, including the longitudinal series following the lives of three girls from 14 in *Smokes and Lollies* through to their 50s in the latest instalment, *Love, Lust & Lies*, and *Unfolding Florence: The Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst* – the recently finished film about Orry-Kelly, the Australian costume designer, who won three Academy Awards for *Some Like it Hot*, *An American in Paris* and *Les Girls*. And importantly seven short films.

Gillian Armstrong's major feature films, produced in Australia and the United States, present complex studies of the role of women in a male dominated society. This thematic trajectory is impressive for shifting across genres and time periods. She was an important early female voice in an emergent national cinema, and was one of the first Australian directors to then move into Hollywood, therefore establishing connections for other Australian directors and actors in Hollywood—connections that have since developed very considerably. However, her commitment to advancing the role of women is not limited to the screen. Gillian Armstrong is a leading advocate for increased opportunities for women filmmakers in Australia and internationally. She currently actively involved with the organization, 'Women in Film and Television' (WFT).

Throughout her career, Gillian Armstrong has been a mentor for young film makers including indigenous film makers. She has been an active member of the Australian Directors' Guild lobbying various governments, for thirty years, about the importance of Australian screen culture, for our unique Australian stories and voices to be on screens, large and small.

Gillian Armstrong's distinguished achievements have made an outstanding contribution to the Australian film industry and she has been a leading advocate for increased opportunities for women filmmakers in Australia and internationally, in a very male dominated industry. She is an Academy Awards and Golden Globe nominee, AFI award-winning, one of the first graduates of Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), a strong and vocal advocate for the screen arts in this country and one of our enduring national treasures.

Chancellor, I present Gillian Armstrong for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*), and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.