

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R005

Name of Place: Canberra School of Art

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: Baldesin Crescent ACTON 2601

Block Section 28 of Canberra City

Listing Status: Date of Listing:	1984	Other Heritage Listings: Level of Significance:	Regional (original High School) National (School of Art additions) Educational Art Deco
Citation Revision No: Citation Revision Date:	2 November 1986	Category: Style:	
Date of Design:		Designer:	Cuthbert Whitley, Architect, Dept of Interior, Works & Railways Branch
Construction Period: Date of Additions:	1939 1980	Client/Owner/Lessee: Builder:	additions: Project Co-ordination Pty Ltd

Statement of Significance

The original school building was designed by prominent government architect Cuthbert Whitley, under Chief Architect E.H. Henderson and is a significant regional example of Art Deco style. The school was well sited and contributes to the townscape with the extension of the building's central axis into the landscape. Additional buildings now combine to form the Canberra School of Art complex, juxtaposing the original 1930's high school with its sympathetic additions of the 1950's and 1960's, and the most recent additions in 1980 by the architects Daryl Jackson Pty Ltd. The simplicity of the design of the recent additions provides an innovative solution relating the older and the new buildings, and contributing significantly to the school's "urban/garden" character. In 1981 the Canberra School of Art received the Canberra Medallion and the first national award for architectural excellence - the Sir Zelman Cowan Award.

Description

The original high school is a two-storey rendered brick symmetrical Art Deco style building with a central clock tower terminating the vista along Childers Street. The front wing, opened in 1939, has a fine entry foyer with parquet floor, original ironmongery, walls and sand-etched glazing all in near original condition. The long facade of the building is articulated by well proportioned windows and decorative elements characteristic of its style. The facade is terminated by semi-circular ends projecting beyond the side wings (completed in the 1950's), which return on each side of the former playground. A simpler Assembly Hall behind the south-east wing, was built in 1961. This and alterations and additions in 1980 to house the Canberra School of Art juxtapose to form a complementary and sympathetic design with the original buildings and a significant part of the precinct. The additions create a north-south pedestrian spine along the axis of the old U-shaped building, providing a link to the new infill buildings for students and various departments of the Art School, and turn "... the backyard into the heart of the precinct". The original buildings and the new buildings attached are of smoothed rendered and painted brickwork, while the new craft

building which is physically separated has bagged and painted walls. A continuous red brick plinth provides a visual link.

Condition and Integrity

The complex of buildings is in good condition.

Background/History

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

Other Information Sources