

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R016

Name of Place: Australian War Memorial

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: Area bounded by Limestone Avenue, Fairbairn Avenue and Trelear Crescent CAMPBELL 2612

Block Section 39 of Campbell

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	1984	Level of Significance:	National
Citation Revision No:	2	Category:	Educational
Citation Revision Date:	November 1986	Style:	Art Deco

Date of Design:	1928	Designer:	J Crust & EL Sodersten (formerly Sodersteen)
Construction Period:	1934-41	Client/Owner/Lessee:	
Date of Additions:	1971	Builder:	Simmie and Co

Statement of Significance

The building is seen as a fine and outstanding example of Australian Art Deco, and provided an exciting and ingenious solution for a national war memorial. The contribution of the building to the surrounding environment is significant. The site for the building selected by the Sulman Committee at the foot of Mount Ainslie, closes the vista from Parliament House along the axis of Griffin's Parliamentary Triangle, Anzac parade, and was originally Griffin's site for a Casino. The design was the result of an international competition held in 1926. The idea was conceived by Dr C.E.W. Bean, who as Australia's official war correspondent in 1915 at Gallipoli, observed soldiers collecting relics as souvenirs, and in 1917 suggested the establishment of a national war museum. The competition was jointly awarded in 1927 to prominent Australian architect Emil Sodersten (one of Australia's first architects of the Modern Movement) and John Crust, after all 69 entries in the competition were disqualified for exceeding the cost limit. The adjudication of the competition by the assessors, including J.S. Murdoch and Sir Leslie Wilkinson, caused an uproar amongst architects. John Crust's entry with a cloistered courtyard was seen to embody "Australian sentiment for gardens and sunlight". (1) Emil Sodersten's design stood out fresh and vigorous, drawing on Byzantine imagery, with its solid massing culminating in a domed shrine. The composite Sodersten Crust design was produced in 1928. Owing much in planning to both architects, but in style, the new design was that of Sodersten, and drew on American modernism.

Description

The original building, a two storey sandstone faced monumental Byzantine Revival style war museum, designed in 1928, and constructed from 1934-41 after delays due to the Depression. Work continued between 1947-50, the most significant being that of Napier Waller in the Hall of Memory - stained glass windows, and from 1955-58 - mosaics inside the cupolar and walls. From 1968-71 sympathetic wings were added to house the collection which includes all wars in which Australia has participated. In 1980 Robert Woodward's stepped granite cascade was installed in the courtyard. Constructed on a cruciform plan, a central memorial pool on axis is surrounded by arcades, and terminated by the copper-domed Hall of Memory creating a dramatic composition of "chunky interpenetrating masses." The building is approached by an impressive flight of stairs, two wings thrusting out before a massive elongated dome, mounted on a stepped base and denuded of traditional decorative details.

Condition and Integrity

Good.

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