

National Film & Sound Archive (Australian Institute of Anatomy)

Address McCoy Circuit, Acton, ACT, 2601

Practice Federal Capital Commission; William
Hayward Morris & Robert Casboulte

Designed 1927 Completed 1929

History & Description

The National Film & Sound Archive is set in formal parkland next to the ANU. The FCC architects William Hayward Morris & Robert Casboulte designed the building by means of axial & symmetrical planning in the Inter-War Stripped Classical style. The influence of Palladio can be seen in the symmetrical façade of vertical bays & the simple portico with columns, & in the planning of the central entry with linked 'pavilions' each side. Each major space is double height with the library to the left & the theatre to the right. Directly beyond the foyer is a landscaped courtyard enclosed on two sides by display galleries completing the 'U' shaped plan. The exterior is clad in sandstone and ceramic decorative tiles with the court walls painted render. The interior Art Deco or Style Moderne detailing is of great significance with geometric & angular forms, & zigzag & chevron motifs in luxurious finishes of metal & polished stone. At the time of the design & given the intended original function of the building, the architects created an array of representations of native animals & plants including: goanna column capitals combined with waratahs & ferns, frill necked lizards & wombat head roundels, & the entry foyer platypus stained-glass skylight. The heart of the racing horse Phar Laps was housed in the Institute for many decades. The Australian Institute of Anatomy was refurbished as the National Film & Sound Archive in 1985.



National Film & Sound Archive (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2002)



Art Deco detailing; façade & entry lobby (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2002)

Statement of Significance

The National Film & Sound Archive is a significant example of civic architecture in the Inter-War Stripped Classical style of architecture in Canberra. The symmetrical plan & facades with simplified classical motifs combined with Art Deco decorative elements are expressed here in an exemplary way.

Criteria Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.



Library (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2002)