

Capitol House & Theatre

Address 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne 3000

Practice Griffin, Walter Burley and Peck & Kemter

Designed 1921 Completed 1924

History & Description Capitol House was erected between February 1923 and November 1924 for a business syndicate which included A J J Lucas of the Cafe Australia and the American born Phillips brothers, who also held the Palais at St Kilda. The architect was Walter Burley Griffin (probably with his wife Marion Mahony) in association with the architectural firm of Peck and Kemper. The principal builder was (Sir) John Monash and the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company.

The 10 storey steel and concrete building originally comprised offices, extensive lobbies, lounges and grand staircases and a huge cinema seating 2137 people. The auditorium with its modelled plasterwork concealing coloured lights which change systematically through many hues and brightnesses was unparalleled in Australia. The facade, with its 25 ton cantilevered concrete canopy, represented a revolution in office architecture in Australia during the 1920s.

The building, which was extensively renovated in 1965 losing many of its internal features including the ground level foyers and stalls, still displays a high level of integrity.
(extracts from AHD# 14691 and VHR# H0471)

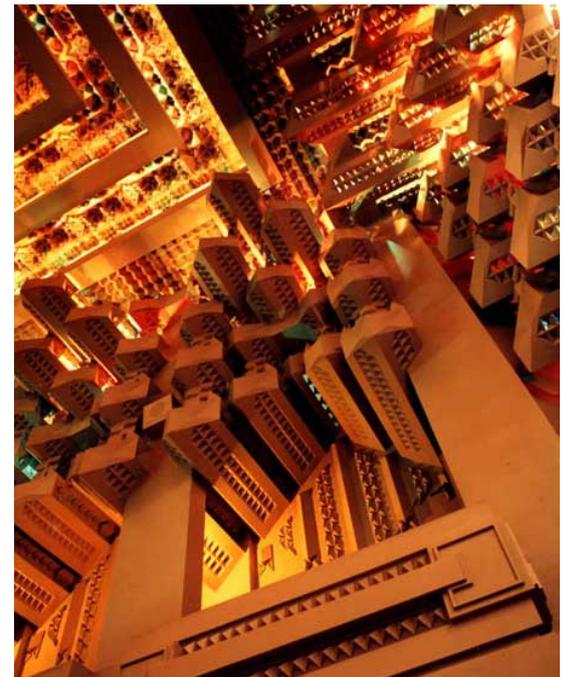


Exterior c1940 [SLV]

Statement of Significance Capitol House is of significance as the largest civic work executed by Walter Burley Griffin in association with his wife Marion Mahony.

Capitol House is of aesthetic significance for the innovative treatment of the interior, particularly of the auditorium. In the Australian context the ornament, applied to the interior and the fixtures and fittings, was in a style totally outside any previous or existing ornamental traditions and was extraordinary in concept and execution. The lighting design and technology used in the foyers and the auditorium was unique and highly advanced in concept and design.

Capitol House is of technological significance for its highly innovative structural design of steel and concrete which took the technology of the day to its limits.



Balcony Detail 1975 [Wolfgang Sievers, SLV]

Criteria Applicable N3 - Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement
N5 - Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.
N6 - Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



Circle Foyer 1924 [Lyle Fowler, SLV]



Theatre Ceiling 1975 [Wolfgang Sievers, SLV]