

Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne

Address Wilson Avenue, University of Melbourne 3010

Practice Bates Smart & McCutcheon

Designed 1953 Completed 1956

History & Description Wilson Hall was constructed following a fire in 1952 that destroyed the Joseph Reed's original Gothic Revival Wilson Hall (1879). The new building, designed by architects Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, was officially opened on 22 March, 1956. It is the university's main gathering space and is used for orations, examinations, graduations and other ceremonial occasions.

The building's structure is a simple concrete encased steel framed rectangular box with brick in-fill and has an east wall almost entirely of heat absorbing glass. The building also incorporates stone rosettes from the old hall in the textured brickwork of the south wall.

Wilson Hall was indicative of the development of aesthetics and architectural design with its monumental proportions, simple cuboid form, use of curtain wall glazing, lavish materials including the Swedish birch paneling and the black Italian marble and the extensive artwork both inside and outside the building. In its design and detailing Wilson Hall clearly reflects the influence of the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen's university buildings which McCutcheon visited as part of his research.

Described by Robin Boyd as 'the crowning jewel of Australian Featurism', Wilson Hall is one of the most crafted and well decorated box-buildings of the 1950s.

(extracts from VHR# H1012 & Philip Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*)

Statement of Significance Wilson Hall is significant as an early and distinctive example of the post-war International Style. It was one of the first major public building to combine ornament, artwork and detail within the strict visual tenet of the monumental form of the International Style. Its monumental scale demonstrates the importance of a great hall in the ceremonial customs and ritual of a university.

Wilson hall is an important example of the work of distinguished architect Sir Walter Osborn McCutcheon (1899-1981) and the practice of Bates Smart and McCutcheon.

Criteria Applicable N1 - Significant Heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design

N5 – Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



Front Entrance [Wolfgang Sievers, SLV]



East Wall [VHR# H1012]



View from the South West [Wolfgang Sievers, SLV]



View to Stage 1956 [Peter Wille, SLV]