
Le Louvre



B4254 Le Louvre

Location

72 - 74 Collins Street,, MELBOURNE VIC 3000 - Property No B4254

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 16, 2007

What is Significant ? The Le Louvre shop occupies the last remaining townhouse of a terrace row of four similar three storey houses built in 1855. The ground level facade was altered from rustication, windows and a porticoed entry to comprise essentially a copper framed shopfront in 1927, leaving possibly small remnants of rustication on either side. The upper facades were modified and the interiors re-arranged some time soon after 1954. The shop was occupied by the exclusive boutique Le Louvre from 1934 to 2009. It was established by Lillian Wightman, who was a notable identity if not a leader in the field of introducing exclusive 'couture' and up to date Paris fashions from at least the 1940s. She was also famous for not selling the shop to the developers of Nauru House in the 1970s, making an important stand for heritage conservation in what she had termed 'the Paris End'. After her death in 1992 her daughter Georgina Wier carried on the tradition.

The building arrangement appears to be largely original to its 1855 form; there is a three storey front section with a hipped roof, joined to a two level rear section by a ground level corridor, open to a lightwell.

How is it significant ? The building known as Le Louvre is of historical, architectural and social importance at the State level.

Why is it significant ? Socially, Le Louvre is well known as the last exclusive couture establishment in Collins Street and as one of the institutions that helps to define Melbourne's distinctive character as a place of elegance and refinement with an appreciation of history and tradition.

Historically and socially, Le Louvre was *the* shop for Melbourne's elite from the 1950s to the 1970s, and its equally famous proprietor Lillian Wightman helped to introduce high fashion European designers to an increasingly cosmopolitan and discerning clientele.

Le Louvre was also well known as one of the places that was saved from demolition in the 1970s and represents the turning point in the acceptance of the importance of heritage conservation in Melbourne. Architecturally, the upper facade is significant as an example of 1950s taste for the Georgian style as the most refined 'historic' period, with a nod to the lure of the style of historic Paris. The 1927 copper shopfront is also one of the most intact, attractive and notable from the interwar period remaining in the CBD.

The arrangement of the building as a whole also has some significance as the earliest townhouse in Collins Street (on the exterior only the facade has been altered) and is relatively rare as a residential building in the city dating from the mid 1850s.

Classified: 09/02/1978

Revised: 27/04/2010

Hermes Number 64690

Property Number

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>