
Former Australian Glass Manufacturing Office

Location

420 - 434 Spencer Street,, WEST MELBOURNE VIC 3003 - Property No B7197

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Local

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 15, 2005

What is significant? No. 420 Spencer St. is one of the few Streamline Moderne buildings in West Melbourne, and is an outstanding example of this style of building. It was constructed in 1930 and extended to its current form in 1937. The building was commissioned by Australian Glass Manufacturers Co. Ltd. and designed by HW and FB Tompkins. It utilizes both flat and curved surfaces, has little external ornamentation and features vertical fins and horizontal spandrels. The use of materials such as metal windows and door frames reflects an innovative approach to construction consistent with the style.

The building was constructed as a showroom, with large spaces. It reflects the desire for a building in 'the latest' style which was sure to attract attention and prominence for the manufacturers products.

How is it significant? The building is significant for aesthetic/architectural, historic, social, reasons at a local level.

Why is it significant? No. 420 is an excellent intact example of the Streamline Moderne style of architecture. The style was more typically used for commercial properties.

The building was designed by the firm of HW and FB Tompkins, who were responsible for a number of significant commercial buildings in the Melbourne business centre in the interwar period, notably Myers in Bourke Street.

Whilst this building differs in scale from their larger commissions in the centre of the city, it also represents their most innovative work in the use of the Streamline Moderne building style.

420 Spencer is a rare example of a Moderne building in the western end of the City of Melbourne, and is of a scale appropriate to the lower levels of activities in this area. Given its corner location, it is significant as a local landmark and should be preserved and re-developed to serve the needs of the local community.

The building is located in an area that does not include many other heritage buildings. Neighbouring buildings include a service station, double storey commercial building, Metropolitan Fire Station and a Motor Inn. Other neighbouring properties are generally of a commercial nature with some residential developments. The integrity of the building stands alone, regardless of its neighbours, and the lack of other heritage buildings is even more reason for preserving this example. There is a scarcity of buildings of this type and style in the City of Melbourne,

and the building's architectural style is rare in this area of Melbourne, thus adding to its physical character and visual quality.

Clearly the major architectural significance of the building is found largely in its exterior. The interest is aroused by its use of modernistic styling to create a striking appearance in a utilitarian building housing showrooms, and by the fact that the building is highly visible from Spencer Street and Dudley Street.

According to conservation architects Allom Lovell and Associates, the existing building is:

"of architectural, aesthetic and historic significance at the local level", and

"is significant at the local level within West Melbourne as a building with landmark qualities in a prominent corner location, and a typology which reflects the suburb's industrial character"

(420 Spencer Street, West Melbourne: Heritage Assessment; Allom Lovell & Associates, June 2002)

Historically, the building was the local headquarters and showroom of Australian Glass Manufacturers. The innovations in glass manufacture was an important factor in the development of Moderne buildings in the prewar period.

Classified: 07/04/2003

Hermes Number 65595

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/>