
Former Foy & Gibson Complex - Group Class

Location

68-172 Oxford Street, 103-115 Oxford Street, 107-131 Cambridge Street and 145-63 Smith Street, COLLINGWOOD VIC 3066 - Property No B2668

Municipality

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0755

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 31, 2006

The former Foy & Gibson complex of warehouses, factories and showrooms was designed by William Pitt (1855-1918) over a long period beginning circa 1887. The extant buildings date from 1895 until the second decade of the twentieth century and cover almost the whole block bounded by Cambridge, Oxford, Stanley and Peel Streets, Collingwood, together with the former Foy & Gibson retail store in Smith Street, Fitzroy.

Foy & Gibson's played a major role in the history of manufacturing and retailing in Australia. The firm produced and sold goods through what is believed to be Melbourne's earliest department store chain to have adopted the trading principles of the Bon Marche of Paris and was remarkable for the magnitude of its operations. It was described in the early 1900s as "undoubtedly the largest (factory) in the Southern Hemisphere", employing 2,000 people and manufacturing a large range of items including soft furnishings, manchester goods, clothing, leather goods, furniture and foods.

The complex was technologically advanced in its day, employing steam and electric power from an early date. Today, however, the equipment and shafting have been removed, the boiler house stacks forming the only extant references to Foy & Gibson's technological achievement.

The architecture of the complex is closely associated with the eminent Melbourne architect William Pitt, who retained Foy & Gibson as a client for most of his professional life. As well as the vast Collingwood complex, he was responsible for the 1911 Smith Street Diamond Cut Lingerie retail store in Fitzroy. The factory complex can be compared with other important Pitt commercial complexes such as the early sections of the Victoria Brewery and the Bryant & May complex in Church Street, Richmond.

Visually, the former Foy & Gibson complex is remarkably cohesive, the formula for the design, once established, being repeated with little change in the selection of materials and decorative motifs. Although a few of the buildings have been gutted the exterior fabric remains substantially intact. The principle facade elements consist of rusticated pilasters between windows above a lower cornice line and capped by a similar cornice and parapet. The street level and first floor facades have chamfered pilasters, whilst the cornices and lintels (in later work) are stuccoed. The streets environments are unique in Melbourne for their uniformity and complemented by the bluestone pitched drains, crossings and the remarkable weighbridge in Oxford Street. Of the remaining interior spaces, a number survive intact while others have been sympathetically refurbished as offices and apartments within the existing building structure.

Numbers 79-93 are the oldest remaining Foy and Gibson buildings in Collingwood.

Numbers 95-101 were the power house and motor garage. The weighbridge is located there.

The former Boiler House is at 150 Oxford Street (corner Oxford and Stanley Streets).

Classified: 21/09/1989

Hermes Number 67107

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/>