
Former Armadale Cinema



B7352 Fmr Armadale Cinema

Location

926 High Street,, ARMADALE VIC 3143 - Property No B7352

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Regional

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 9, 2007

What is significant? The Armadale cinema designed by the well known architects Klingender and Alsop and opened in September 1912, is one of the earliest surviving examples of a purpose built theatre for the showing of cinematograph films in Melbourne and Victoria and is relatively intact.

The rectangular, two story building is of red brick with a gabled corrugated iron roof and cement rendered facade, originally white but now pale grey. The roof is supported on steel stanchions set into the ground on concrete blocks so that it is independent of the walls; a feature of the construction seen as unusual at the time. A cantilevered verandah extends across the full length of the facade and shades the central entrance and that of the two adjoining shops. The upper facade is divided into three sections, the central being the widest and tallest with a curved pediment and bordered by two flat vertical pilasters. The facade is not symmetrical, the section on the left being narrower than that on the right. A large central window, curved at the top and with rectangular panes, spans the central section and two smaller similar windows are on either side section. The windows and doorways of the cinema and shops at ground level are surrounded by glazed ceramic tiles of dark green with a

linear banding of dark red. Window and door surrounds are copper clad, the doors have panels of bevelled glass and there are decorative star shaped marble inlays in all three doorways. Leadlight panels above the doors and windows are pale green textured glass with simplified floral motifs in red and green. The design is restrained and elegant.

Internally the original auditorium walls, barrelled ceiling and proscenium arch remain intact together with their original decorative plaster detailing. The balcony and all technical features have been removed due to the change of use.

How is it significant? The Armadale cinema, completed in 1912, is significant for historical, architectural, and social reasons at a Regional level.

Why is it significant? Historically the building is important as a surviving, relatively intact, example of one of the earliest purpose built cinemas in Melbourne and Victoria. Prominently positioned on a busy thoroughfare with excellent access to public transport, it demonstrates the popularity of the newly emerging entertainment phenomenon, the cinematograph and the growing importance of the Australian film industry. The Armadale has links with early pioneers of the cinema movement such as Mendel Snider who later opened cinemas in Bourke Street, Melbourne and New South Wales, and also the Associated Pictures Pty. Ltd., later Hoyt's cinemas. The architects, in particular Rodney Alsop, had considerable reputations for the design of significant buildings in Melbourne. In 1923 Alsop became the first director of the University of Melbourne's Architectural Atelier and in 1932 he was the first Australian recipient of a medal from the RIBA for his design for Winthrop Hall at the University of Western Australia.

Architecturally the building is an excellent example of the work of Klingender and Alsop (1906 -1921) and makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of Armadale High Street. It is unusual in being designed in the Art Nouveau style emanating from Europe, rather than the more customary classical or 'large arch' style employed for other early cinemas such as the Northcote, which also opened in 1912. The facade shows the influence of English architects such as Voysey and Lutyens on Rodney Alsop at the time. This influence was exemplified in his earlier design for the heritage listed house 'Glyn', Toorak, (1908).

Socially the Armadale cinema provided a focus for the community and remained a very successful and popular entertainment venue throughout the early twentieth century until the late 1930s. As well as its role as an early 'picture palace', the Armadale was designed to fulfill other functions within the community and hosted orchestral and theatrical performances and was also equipped with a dance floor for special gala occasions.

Classified: 25/06/1907

Other Names Sotheby's,

Hermes Number 71741

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/>