
241-245 COLLINS STREET

Location

241-245 COLLINS ST MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-1801

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO502

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 2, 2005

This place is included on the Victorian Heritage Inventory, for its potential to contain historical archaeological remains associated with the settlement and growth of early Melbourne. Under the terms of the Victorian Heritage Act there is protection for all historical archaeology sites and objects in the state.

Please visit the Heritage Victoria website to find out more about the Victorian Heritage Inventory.

What is significant?

The Fourth Victoria Building was originally a four storey brick warehouse and office building, built in 1884 and remodelled in 1912 by architect Robert Haddon for the Fourth Victoria Permanent Property Building and Investment Society who owned the building from 1886 to 1971. Two more storeys were added to the building and the Collins Street facade was rendered with white cement and a series of whimsical decorative elements added. Haddon's treatment of this facade reflected his interest in the Arts and Crafts and movement, in nature, and in the latest architectural movements in Europe, and it is an early landmark of the modern movement in Victoria.

The six storey facade of the Fourth Victoria Building differed significantly from other contemporary commercial facades in its austerity and originality. Above the ground floor shop front and awning the first floor facade is covered with a panel of green glazed tiles, originally with the name of the building in large letters above arched windows, surmounted by a stylised wrought iron balcony. The facade above this was of plain white render pierced by windows without architraves. Haddon considered that developing uniquely Australian forms and motifs was important, but in the design of this facade he used decorative elements such as the lion motif and Art Nouveau curvilinear forms. Above the fifth level were two large majolica medallions, originally containing green lions' heads, with trunk-like majolica stems running down the facade. Beneath a simple parapet a row of cement projections casts an indented shadow along the plain wall face, an effect Haddon described as aesthetically necessary to the form of the building.

The interior was also remodelled in 1912, and the lift cage from this period still exists. The remodelling at this time in the stairwell, lift core and the installation of the large windows brought light and space into the centre of the building. All these internal changes were part of the building's modernisation. The firm of Wunderlich Ltd, Victoria's major supplier of architectural terracotta and pressed metal architectural features, particularly ceilings, which were so characteristic of the Edwardian period, was a supplier to the construction, and the first major tenant. Interior features from this period survive, including the architect's green and white colour scheme, the white marble treads on the stairs, extensive use of green glazed tiles, pressed metal ceilings and the Wunderlich showroom with samples of Wunderlich pressed metal designs.

Tenants in the building before and after the 1912 remodelling included the Melbourne Bicycle Club, architects GW Vanheems and Isidor Beaver, Wunderlich Pty Ltd (on the third floor), and architect Leslie M Perrott in the 1920s.

The facade has been painted pink and the lions' heads, which gave meaning to the form of the decoration and also proclaimed the purpose of the building, have been removed as has the wrought iron balcony.

How is it significant?

The former Fourth Victoria Building is of aesthetic, architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Fourth Victoria Building has architectural significance as a stylistically unique commercial facade, characteristic of its renowned architect and his idiosyncratic design technique, and his influence in turn from British Free Style architecture and the Viennese Secession. In the opinion of Robin Boyd, the building is a landmark of the modern movement in architecture in Victoria. It was a very early, perhaps the only, commercial facade in Victoria to incorporate the simple white surface which was important in early twentieth century European modernism. Although the facade now lacks the two famous lions' heads of green glazed terracotta, its Art Nouveau elements, plain parapet and lushly tiled first floor level is remarkable for its contrast with contemporary commercial facades. The dripping majolica stems, stylised wrought iron balustrading and projections at the cornice line provide a Secessionist character to the building.

The building has aesthetic significance for its interior features which includes extensive use of green glazed tiles and pressed metal ceilings. The former Wunderlich showroom features a unique showcase of Wunderlich pressed metal ceilings in Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles ranging from simple to opulent designs. The original tiled signs on the landing are also noteworthy.

The former Fourth Victoria Building is of historical significance for its associations with the architect Robert Haddon. Robert Haddon was a highly influential architect, teacher and writer. He was a consulting architect from his office known as the Central Drawing Office and was associated with the work of a number of architects and firms such as G B Leith and Sydney Smith and Ogg of Melbourne and Laird and Barlow of Geelong, and Michael McCabe of Camperdown. He was head of the department of architecture at the Working Men's College (now RMIT) from 1902 and a founding Vice President of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

Other Names FORMER FOURTH VICTORIA BUILDING,

Hermes Number 9715

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/>