

Item name: Sydney Masonic Centre including significant interiors and Mona Hessing artwork**Location:** 279-283 Castlereagh Street Sydney

Sydney

Address: 279-283 Castlereagh Street**Planning:** Sydney South**Suburb/nearest town:** Sydney**Local govt area:** Sydney**State:** NSW**Parish:****County:****Other/former names:** Memorial Masonic Centre**Area/group/complex:****Group ID:****Aboriginal area:****Curtilage/boundary:****Item type:** Built**Group:** Recreation and Entertainment**Category:****Owner:****Admin codes:****Code 2:****Code 3:****Current use:** Conference and function centre, museum**Former uses:** Masonic centre**Assessed significance:** State**Endorsed significance:** Local

Statement of significance: The Sydney Masonic Centre has strong associations with the United Grand Lodge, which was formed in the 1870s. The northern section of its site has been associated with the United Grand Lodge since 1884, following the completion of the New Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street.

The Sydney Masonic Centre is an outstanding and powerful example of the Brutalist architectural style, with a monumental interior that ranks amongst the finest interiors in Sydney from the second half of the 20th century. It is associated with the prominent architectural firm of Joseland & Gilling and is one of several innovative buildings designed by the firm during the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. The Sydney Masonic Centre demonstrates a very high standard of off-form concrete construction. The building is an important landmark and streetscape element in this section of Sydney.

The Mona Hessing artwork, which was commissioned for the building and is located in the main foyer, is regarded as one her finest works.

The Civic Tower has aesthetic significance because it closely follows Joseland & Gilling's original intention for the development of the site in the 1970s and is notable for its unusual method of construction.

The Sydney Masonic Centre is at least of local heritage significance in terms of its historical, associations, aesthetic/technical, rarity and representative value. This satisfies five of the Heritage Council criteria of local heritage significance for local listing.

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Historical notes of provenance: This site forms part of the land of the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of land within the City of Sydney council boundaries. For information about the Aboriginal history of the local area see the City's Barani website: <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/>

Freemasonry was brought to the colony of New South Wales by soldiers in British Army regiments shortly after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. In September 1839, members of the various Masonic groups purchased the York Hotel in York Street to house their meetings. It became known as the Freemason's Hall. The first Grand Lodge opened in Sydney in 1845. The Grand Lodge of New South Wales was established by 13 Masonic lodges in December 1877.

In January 1884, a New Masonic Hall at 279-281 Castlereagh Street, designed by Backhouse & Lough, was consecrated. On 16 August 1888 the Masters and Wardens of 183 lodges assembled for the purpose of constituting and establishing the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. The first Grand Master was Lord Carrington, Governor of NSW. The New Masonic Hall served for many years. However, by 1935 it was perceived to have numerous inadequacies so during that year the United Grand Lodge passed a resolution to purchase property "suitable for the erection of a Temple worthy of this jurisdiction." (Cramp 1948, p.71)

The history of the land acquired for the future building has associations with the site of the New Masonic Hall. By 1876, properties extending north along Castlereagh Street from Goulburn Street were in the possession of Herbert Gibson. He sold them to accountant Thomas Hall in October 1876. During July and August 1881 the title of the southern section was transferred back to Herbert Gibson and that of the northern section to licensed victualler James Hunt, cordial manufacturer John Starkey, builder and contractor Unni William Carpenter, and druggist and future mayor of Manly, Nicholas Weekes. All four were associated with the Grand Lodge – Hunt was one of its officers, Starkey its Grand Treasurer, Carpenter a Grand Junior Warden and Weekes its Grand Secretary. The northern section became the site of the New Masonic Hall; its title was transferred to Starkey on 1 August 1882, who subsequently transferred it to the Grand Lodge of New South Wales Masonic Hall Company on 1 April 1886. The title was eventually transferred to trustees of the United Grand Lodge in October 1913.

The property "suitable for the erection of a Temple worthy of this jurisdiction" happened to be the southern section of land that Thomas Hall transferred back to Herbert Gibson in July 1881. At that time part of it was vacant. The Pompey's Pillar Hotel occupied the corner of Goulburn and Castlereagh Streets along with an adjoining pair of houses on Goulburn Street, all of which had been built by the second half of the 1860s. They were purchased by H Patrick in 1869 and then offered for sale in April 1873 before being acquired by Gibson a couple of years later. The buildings were sold to prominent retailer Samuel Hordern in July 1901. By 1903 he had acquired all of the properties along Goulburn Street and several along Pitt Street to the north. After Hordern's death his estate came under the control of trustees, who began to sell sections of it at the end of 1937. The United Grand Lodge purchased several of them.

The final purchase by the United Grand Lodge was the 1919 building, which occupied the site of Pompey's Pillar Hotel, and an adjoining building in Castlereagh Street known as the Bapaume Building. In the first half of 1918, Samuel Hordern's trustees sold the buildings to James Chester Foy, a director of the major retailing company Mark Foy's Ltd. Dorothy, Lurline and John Millar acquired both buildings, which they had tenanted since 1920, and the Bapaume Building, in May 1925. They had occupied the 1919 building, known as Millar House, since 1920, and mortgaged the entire property to the City Mutual Life Assurance Society in February 1930. For whatever reason the company exercising its power of sale sold it to the United Grand Lodge at the beginning of May 1945.

It took some time for the United Grand Lodge to rebuild. In September 1943 the Grand Master, Lord Gowrie, had revived a proposal for an ambitious scheme put forward in 1936 and suggested it might take the form of a Peace Memorial Temple to commemorate freemasons who had served and died in the two world wars. In December 1954 a motion to establish a building fund to finance construction of a Memorial Masonic Temple in honour of those who died in the two World Wars was carried. There was not unanimous support, however, and the initial fund, launched in 1957, foundered. It was relaunched in 1959.

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In June 1967, a building committee was finally set up and began gathering information locally and from overseas. It included the United Grand Lodge's Grand Architect, T W Hodgson, and architect Ronald Gilling, a partner in the respected firm of Joseland & Gilling. Although development consent was sought for new Lodge headquarters in 1970, in March 1972 a model and sketch drawings were exhibited to the client. The United Grand Lodge submitted a revised development application in 1973 for a lodge, shops and office block. Joseland & Gilling lodged the building application in July 1974.

The firm of Joseland & Gilling was formed in 1919 when Richard George Howard Joseland entered into partnership with Frederick Glynn Gilling (1877-1955). The practice designed a series of substantial and notable houses during the interwar period. Joseland retired in the late 1920s. Gilling's son, Ronald Andrew, became a partner in 1948 and continued the firm after his father retired. The firm's orientation became increasingly commercial, and designed several notable buildings in Central Sydney during the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from the Masonic Centre, these included the ANZ Bank Building in Hunter Street (designed circa 1960), the South British United Insurance Building in Hunter Street (designed circa 1969), the Qantas Centre near Lang Park (designed circa 1968), and the Colonial Mutual Building in Pitt Street near Martin Place (designed circa 1973). The use of reinforced concrete and advanced structural design played a key role in the South British United Building, the Qantas Centre and the Colonial Mutual development.

Tenders were called to construct the building on 14 April 1975. The building's foundation stone was laid on 15 May 1976. Occupancy commenced during December 1978 and the building was officially opened and dedicated on 10 March 1979. An International Masonic Festival was staged at this time to accompany the opening.

The entire project consisted of a podium to serve as the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales – "to the Grand Lodge of New South Wales as a cathedral is to the Church" (Constructional Review) – above which a 24-storey office tower was to rise. The office tower was not to eventuate for some 25 years. The forceful podium, an outstanding example of the Brutalist idiom that was popular with architects from the second half of the 1960s through the 1970s, contained parking and supper rooms at basement and street levels, and the Grand Temple, Banquet Hall, Lodge and committee rooms and office space on upper levels. It also contained some of Central Sydney's most dramatic interiors as the main foyer extended over three storeys, each level linked by a pair of centrally located free-standing circular lift shafts, surrounded by a winding stair. Acclaimed artist Mona Hessing was commissioned to undertake a woven sculpture for the building that was located within the main foyer. It is considered to be one of her major commissions.

In 1989, Apperly, Irving and Reynolds featured the Sydney Masonic Centre in their reference book "Identifying Australian Architecture" as one of the select illustrated examples of the brutalist style in Australia.

The office tower, an integral component of the original design, was finally completed in 2004 under the jurisdiction of the architectural firm PTW, closely following Joseland & Gilling's original concept. The building is unique in that it is supported off its central lift core.

According to architecture writer and critic Joe Rollo, "the Sydney Masonic Centre expresses all the plasticity and brute force of concrete as a material in architecture perhaps better than any other building in Australia. It is bare-boned, direct and strong. For fans of the art it is an architectural experience of great sophistication and delight, boldly conceived and carried through without compromise." (Concrete Poetry 2004, p.130)

Themes: National theme

8. Culture

4. Settlement

8. Culture

9. Phases of Life

State theme

Creative endeavour

Towns, suburbs and villages

Social institutions

Persons

Local theme

Modern architecture & art

Creating landmark structures ar

Masonic halls & freemasons

Joseland & Gilling, architects

Designer: Joseland & Gilling, T W Hodgson & Sons

Builder:

Year started: 1975

Year completed: 1978

Circa: No

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Physical description: The Sydney Masonic Centre is an outstanding example of the Brutalist architectural style and demonstrates many of its characteristics – strong and expressive shapes in reinforced concrete, bold curved elements, texture provided by building materials and large unbroken wall surfaces. The original program of spaces is expressed externally through the massing of different components and the dramatic upper level structure that is supported off large splayed bracing elements.

Its original character has been obscured to some extent by later modifications, including coatings applied to off-form concrete surfaces and the glazed enclosure of forecourts at street level.

The external form of the building was generated by internal spatial requirements. It originally contained parking and supper rooms in basement and street levels, and the Grand Temple, Banquet Hall, Lodge and committee rooms and office space on upper levels. These spaces were organised around one of Sydney's most dramatic interiors – the main foyer extended over three storeys, each level linked by a pair of centrally located free-standing circular lift shafts surrounded by a winding stair. A fabric artwork by Mona Hessing was hung above a reception desk near the stair. Although the building's interior has been refurbished and upgraded, it has retained a great deal of its original character and spatial quality.

The Sydney Masonic Centre forms the podium of the 24-storey office building known as Civic Tower, which closely follows Joseland & Gilling's 1970s concept for an office tower. It is linked to the Masonic Centre by a splayed base. The tower is constructed of concrete, with a strong vertical emphasis provided by narrow window bays separated by slender projecting mullions. The corners of the building are curved. While completing Joseland & Gilling's original scheme for the site, the tower was constructed approximately 25 years after the hall complex.

Physical condition level: Good

Physical condition: The building is in good condition and has been well maintained.

Archaeological potential level: Not assessed

Archaeological potential Detail:

Modification dates: The building was subjected to a program of refurbishment in the first half of the 2000's. The works included the glazed enclosure of undercroft spaces adjacent to Goulburn and Castlereagh Street and construction of the Civic Tower office building.

Recommended management:

Management: **Management category**
Statutory Instrument

Management name
List on a Local Environmental Plan (LEP)

Further comments: Heritage inventory sheets are often not comprehensive, and should be regarded as a general guide only. Inventory sheets are based on information available, and often do not include the social history of sites and buildings. Inventory sheets are constantly updated by the City as further information becomes available. An inventory sheet with little information may simply indicate that there has been no building work done to the item recently: it does not mean that items are not significant. Further research is always recommended as part of preparation of development proposals for heritage items, and is necessary in preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Management Plans, so that the significance of heritage items can be fully assessed prior to submitting development applications.

Significant interiors for modern office or community buildings generally include interiors with original design quality or fabric, such as entrance foyers, halls, lift lobbies, stairs, meeting or event rooms, and gathering spaces, including original art installations and exposed structural features. It excludes interiors with no significance, such as non-original office or service room fit-outs. Significant interiors can be identified in more detail for each item through preparation of a heritage assessment or conservation management plan.

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Criteria a): The site of the Sydney Masonic Centre has long associations with freemasonry in Sydney, in particular the United Grand Lodge, which has occupied its northern section after the completion of the so-called New Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street in January 1884.

[Historical significance]

Meets this criterion at a Local level.

Criteria b): The Sydney Masonic Centre has strong associations with the United Grand Lodge, which was formed in the 1870s.

[Historical association significance]

The building is associated with the prominent architectural firm of Joseland & Gilling. It is one of several innovative buildings designed by the firm during the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s.

Meets this criterion at a Local level.

Criteria c): The Sydney Masonic Centre is an outstanding and powerful example of the Brutalist style, with a monumental interior that ranks amongst the finest interiors in Sydney from the second half of the 20th century. It is an important landmark and streetscape element in this section of Sydney.

[Aesthetic/Technical significance]

The Civic Tower has aesthetic significance because it closely follows Joseland & Gilling's original intention for the development of the site in the 1970s.

The Sydney Masonic Centre demonstrates a very high standard of off-form concrete construction.

The Civic Tower is notable for its method of construction, being supported off its central lift core.

The Mona Hessing artwork, which was commissioned for the building, is regarded as one her finest works.

Meets this criterion at a Local and State level.

Criteria d): The building's social significance has not been ascertained. It has potential social significance for the mason community and architectural community.

[Social/Cultural significance]

May meet this criterion at a Local level.

Criteria e): The building's research potential has not been ascertained.

[Research significance]

May meet this criterion at a Local level.

Criteria f): The Sydney Masonic Centre is a rare example of a Masonic building from the second half of the 20th century in the City of Sydney.

[Rarity]

Meets the criterion at a Local level.

Criteria g): The design of the Sydney Masonic Centre is representative of the Brutalist style of architecture.

[Representative]

Meets the criterion at a Local level.

Intactness/Integrity: The Sydney Masonic Centre has retained a large amount of original building fabric. The Mona Hessing artwork remains in situ.

References:	Author	Title	Year
		"Masonic Centre", February 1980	1980
	K R Cramp	From Jubilee to Diamond Jubilee: history of ten years of the U	1948
	M H Kellerman	From Diamond Jubilee to Centenary: history of forty years of tl	1988
	Philip Goad and Julie Willis	Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture	2012
	Joe Rollo	Concrete Poetry: concrete architecture in Australia	2004
		Freemasonry: History	2014

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Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year
	Tanner Kibble Denton Architects	Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney - Heritage study		2018

Parcels:	Parcel code	Lot number	Section number	Plan code	Plan number
	LOT	1		DP	1067328

Latitude:**Longitude:****Location validity:****Spatial accuracy:****Map name:****Map scale:****AMG zone:****Easting:****Northing:**

Listing:	Name	Title	Number	ListingDate
	Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney	Heritage study		01/01/2018

Data entry: Data first entered: 10/04/2018

Data updated: 25/03/2019

Status:

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Image:



Caption: Sydney Masonic Centre in 2013 viewed from the south eastern corner of Castlereagh and Goulburn Street

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by: Claudine Loffi

Image date: 10/07/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345cb85326d52354234b722366994242e11.JPG>

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Caption: Sydney Masonic Centre viewed from the top level of the Goulburn Street Car Park

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by: Tanner Kibble Denton Architects

Image date: 01/01/2013

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345cfa70978a5ab4dd19946a96c2d2a76f2.jpg>

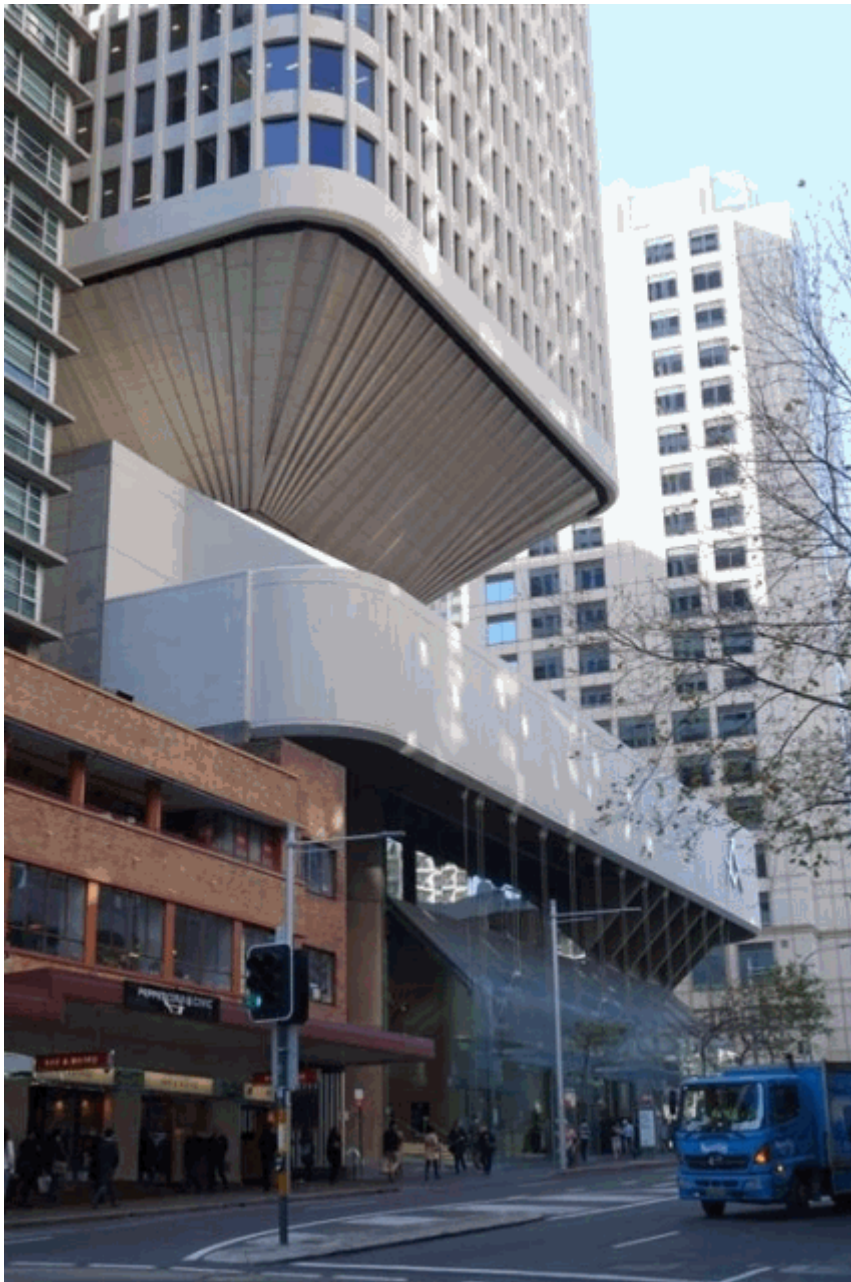
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Caption: Sydney Masonic Centre Goulburn Street elevation

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by: Claudine Loffi

Image date: 10/07/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3456dbdda3b7e3b4ced8521e2b025457854.JPG>

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Caption: Sydney Masonic Centre Castlereagh Street elevation

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by: Claudine Loffi

Image date: 10/07/2018

Image number:

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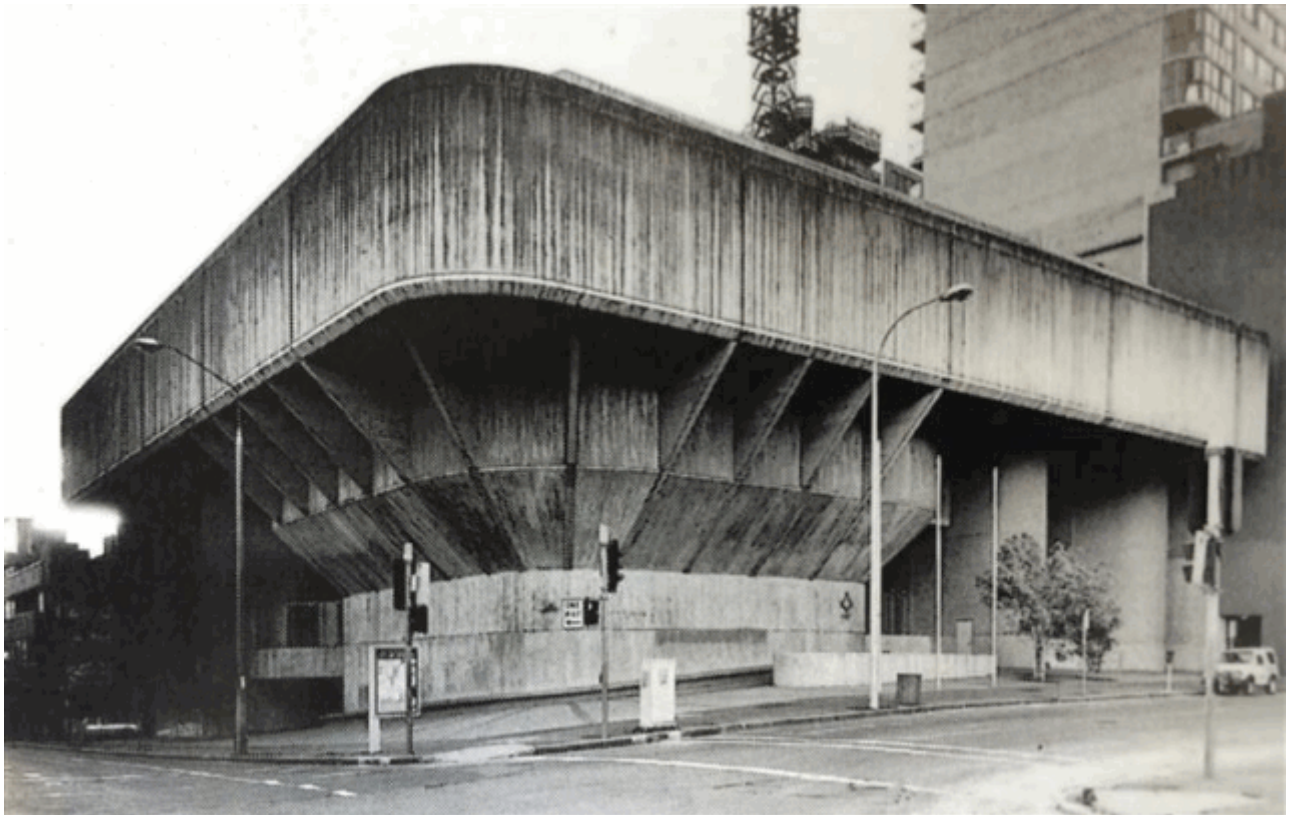
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Caption: The building in c.1989, before the tower, as published in "Identifying Australian Architecture"

Copy right: Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds

Image by: Apperly, Irving & Reynolds

Image date: 01/01/1989

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345cb76de33cda64ad1a69421aa3362759c.jpg>

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Caption: Civic Tower under construction in 2003

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by: John Prescott

Image date: 01/01/2003

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345d5f54eee9e524e41aaf446ed690d07ad.jpg>

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Caption: Building exteriors in 1997 before alterations, viewed at corner of Castlereagh and Goulburn Streets

Copy right: City of Sydney

Image by:

Image date: 15/01/1996

Image number:

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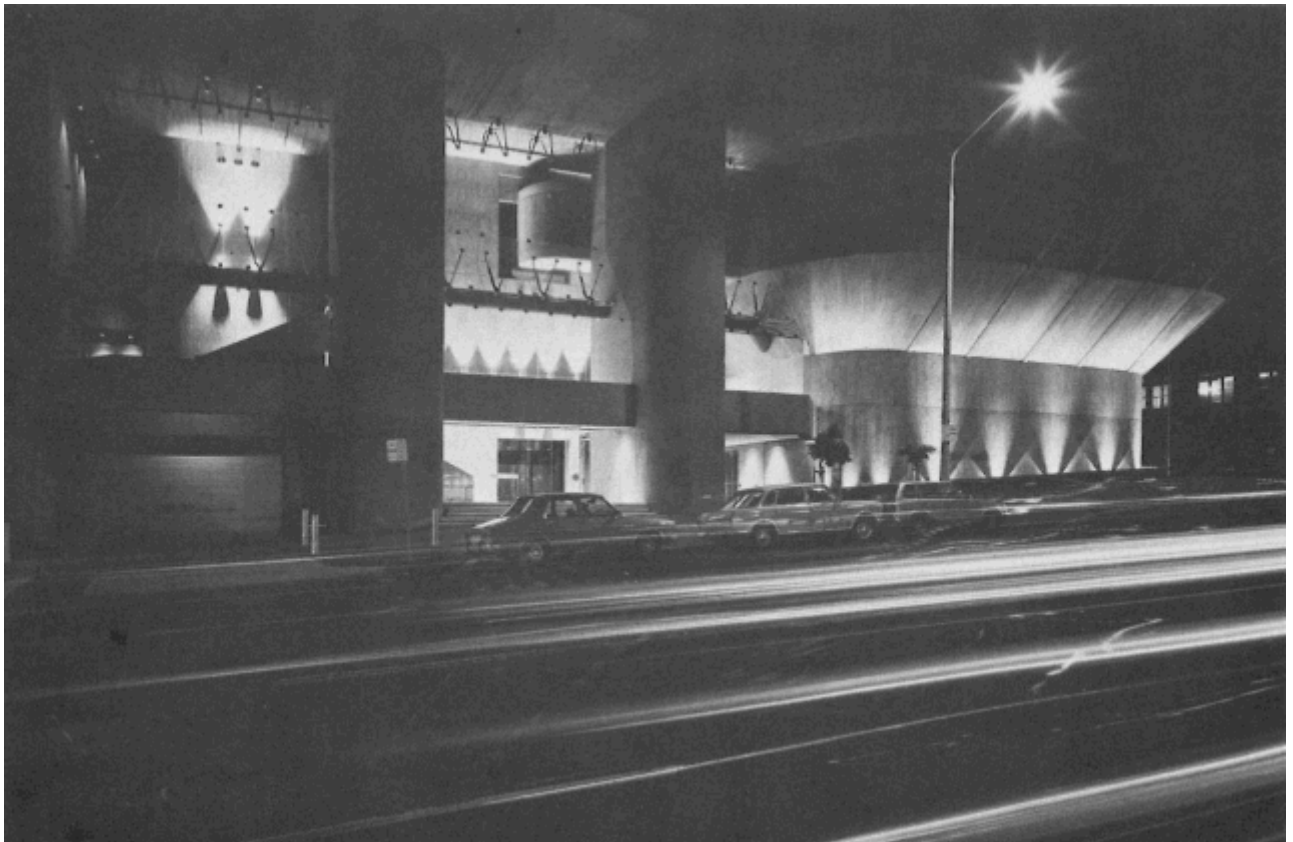
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Caption: The building shortly after completion, as published in Constructional Review, Feb 1980

Copy right: Constructional Review

Image by: Constructional Review

Image date: 01/02/1980

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/3459bb1f805302b413a96405762bdb54c1f.jpg>

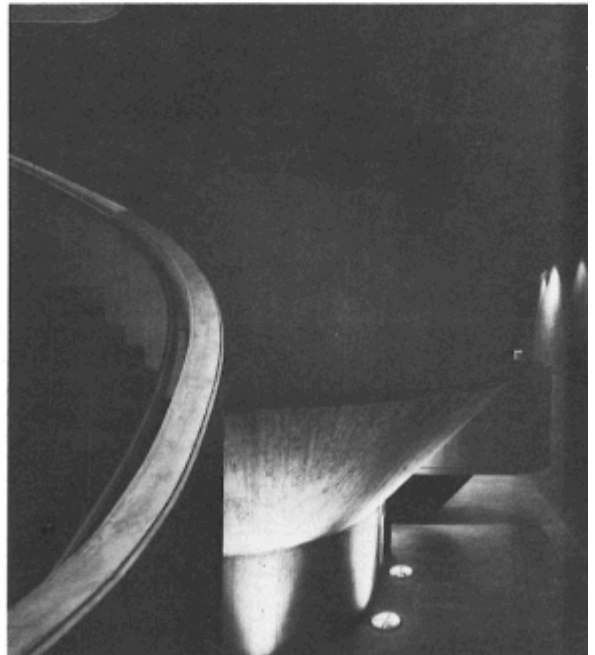
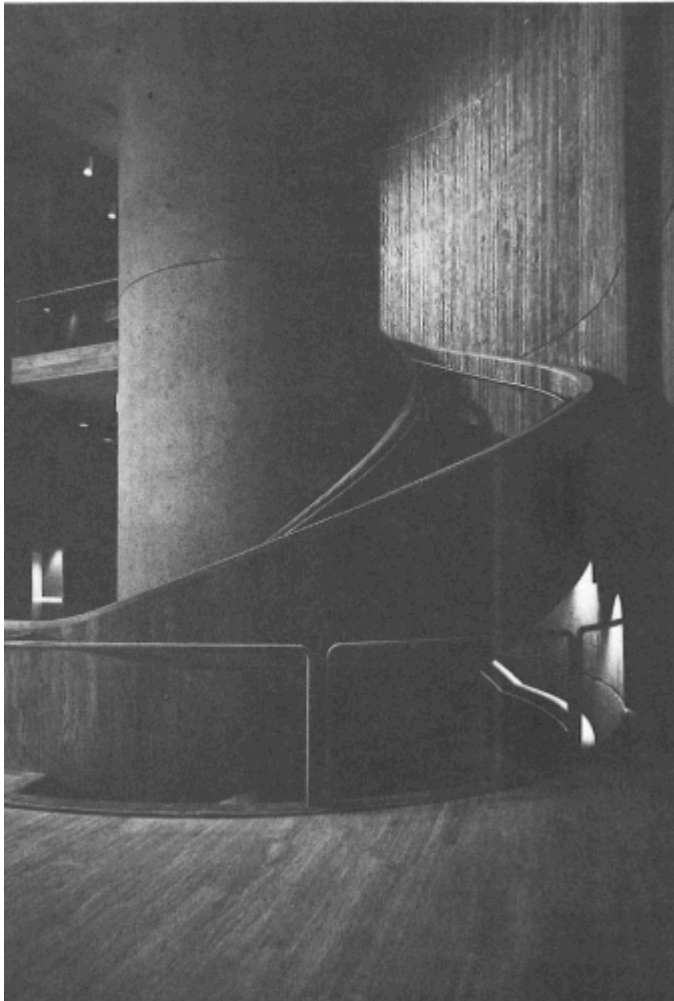
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Caption: The foyer shortly after completion, as published in Constructional Review, Feb 1980

Copy right: Constructional Review

Image by: Constructional Review

Image date: 01/02/1980

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3459bf69ca4ebc04f2193b941363fd04411.jpg>

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Caption: Mona Hessing's artwork in the main foyer, as published in "From Diamond Jubilee to Centenary..."

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Image by:

Image date: 01/01/1980

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3453a15011f03d54bad91f3befc453c6efd.jpg>

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