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issue 19

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Clyfford Still Museum
Museum of Contemporary Art

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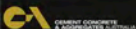
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MOCA



Museum of
Contemporary Art
Sydney

Architect Marshall

Born out confusion and controversy, the new Mordant Wing of the Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay in Sydney stands as a stark counterpoint to the billowing white sails of the Sydney Opera House on Bennelong Point, just across the water.

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It is here, at the landing of the First Fleet on the western shore of Sydney Cove, amidst the bustle of boats, taxi cabs and souvenir shops, harbour ferries and cruise ships, with the night of the Harbour Bridge at its shoulder, that you'll find Sydney's newest landmark, attached to one end of the unloved sandstone pile that houses the MCA, inside what used to be the Maritime Services Board building.

But first, some background to the saga of what started as a promising, well-intentioned competition, turned into farce and nearly ended in tragedy. In 1987, an international competition to add to the MCA was won by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, the team that is SANAA, with a radical vision for a cinematheque, comprising a glowing white box complete with two cinemas, a film library, additional exhibition space, new cafe, restaurant and performance space. Soon after the announcement, however, the plan and the architects were inexplicably dropped.

A new invited competition in 2000 saw Matthias Sauerbruch and Luisa Hutton – they'd participated in the original competition – and local architect Richard Francis-Jones with MOJ, lead the pack with impressive proposals but, again, neither scheme was deemed appropriate. The competition was then extended to an unplanned second stage, with architects given the option to demolish the old MSB building and to propose an entirely new structure on the site. Again, no decision.

In 2002 Sydney architect Sam Marshall, of Architect Marshall, got the job, in association with the NSW Government Architect's Office, to help transform the galleries within the old MSB building into workable exhibition spaces and to create the addition to the northern end of the building.

And though Sydney passed-up on an opportunity to have an important building from the sublime hands of Sejima and Nishizawa, Marshall's addition nevertheless provides yet one more reason to wander down to Circular Quay on a visit to Sydney. His response was to place a modernist block of irregularly stacked boxes of glass reinforced concrete, in shades of black and white and grey, pushed and pulled, rising from a base of poured in-situ concrete, set against the strong, symmetrical sandstone boxes of the old MSB.

Marshall chose glass reinforced concrete because, as he puts it, "large-scale, cast three-dimensional panels can be fabricated out of a single material just 12mm thick. GRC has the unique quality that allows it to be folded over from the vertical to form roofs and ceilings. Thus, one cladding material could be used for most of the building, striking walls, ceilings and roof as one." Folded panels as large as 9 metres by 3 metres with 1.5 metre returns were achieved in the making of the GRC boxes. The colours of the panels, derived from the predominant colours of the Rocks and Circular Quay, add to the three dimensional quality of the new wing.

The result is a crisply detailed facade, of light and shadow, which makes no attempt to joust with the Opera House – what building could? – but stamps its own mark on Circular Quay as a significant piece of new architecture in its own right.

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next elevation





For the first time, too, the MCA has a proper main entrance. A generous concrete stair up from Circular Quay, across a broad plaza, now takes visitors directly into the new building and to the main foyer from where visitors can access the various parts of the refurbished old building, via stairs or glass-enclosed lifts. From here a "street" cuts through the building to George Street, and it is from here that visitors begin to savour the many glimpses and views out to the harbour and beyond, created by Marshall's careful articulation of the boxes. It is here, too, that much of the building's concrete structure is revealed, with floors, lift cores, stairs, ceilings and soffits left exposed where possible.

Three new gallery spaces, including two double-height rooms – 18 metres square by 5.6 metres tall – have been included in the new wing. Look carefully and you'll see how the folded GRC panels act as an external "swapper" for these new galleries. In total, the new building has added an extra 4,500 square metres of new space, increasing the MCA's total size by almost 50 percent. Gallery space has been increased by 28 percent. The National Centre for Creative Learning, a centre for innovation and contemporary art education is also housed in the new building. Occupying 40 percent of the new wing, NCCCL features a dedicated multimedia studio and digital studio, two creative studios, a 117-seat theatre and room for children with specific needs. A cafe and sculpture terrace on level four, dominated by more of Marshall's GRC boxes, provides spectacular views across the harbour, the Opera House, Harbour Bridge and beyond. It will, surely, become one of the best vantage points from which to enjoy the city. **Joe Rollo**

- 01 plan
- 02 site
- 03 foyer
- 04 meeting
- 05 office
- 06 staff
- 07 desk
- 08 digital classroom
- 09 multimedia classroom
- 10 air-conditioned room
- 11 lecture theatre
- 12 entrance
- 13 hall
- 14 reception
- 15 store
- 16 reception
- 17 entry
- 18 desk
- 19 retail store
- 20 service corridor
- 21 shower



section



north elevation



west elevation



south elevation



Project Statement

Any extension to the Museum of Contemporary Art would have to be an innovative solution – simple yet complex because of the existing building, the early colonial remains under the site, and the museum's location within a heritage-protected precinct. As well as establishing coherent circulation, dedicated education space and flexible gallery spaces, the new building had to be a contemporary signifier, readily identified. All of this had to serve the art and its display.

Analysis of the solids and voids in the built form of Circular Quay, particularly The Rocks, shows roads running along the contours of the peninsula with narrow passages threading down between these roads, providing pedestrian shortcuts as well as vistas to the harbour. It is surprising how many passages there are. This device has been employed in the new building to reconcile the schism of entry levels from Circular Quay and George Street, which are at different levels because of the slope of the land. An internal 'street' has thus been created to allow easy access into the building and to get visitors to a point from which the gallery experience can begin. The key form generator was the ubiquitous 'white box'. The aim was to create spaces to accommodate all forms of art work: simple cube-like spaces that could be reconfigured to suit artists, curators and the requirements of display. The double height gallery on the prominent north-east corner is the clearest expression of this idea. The white walls of the interior and use of white glass reinforced concrete (GRC) on the exterior, separate the extension from the rest of the building.

Scale was a crucial consideration in the design. The western side of George Street is a coherent wall of Georgian and Victorian buildings. The eastern side, on the other hand, is a mix of later period architecture, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, and open space. I like contrast, especially when it comes to heritage. And a highly contemporary building up against a historic building highlights heritage aspects and there is no confusion about what is historically significant. Considering that the new building would be seen from all angles, including from above, an architectural expression that had no front, back or top became paramount.

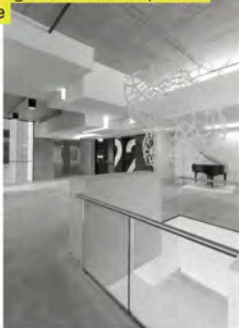
GRC cladding was used because large scale cast three-dimensional panels can be fabricated out of a material just 12mm thick. GRC had the unique quality that allows it to be folded from the vertical to form roofs and ceilings. This one cladding material could be used for most of the building, striking walls, ceilings and roof as one.

While wanting to have its own language commensurate with the large scale of architectural gestures around Circular Quay, the earth colours of the GRC cladding connect with and work in contrast to the site, so that the building does not get lost in its surrounds. Uninterrupted expanses of contrasting colour emphasise this: brown, white and black exterior panels act as bookends to the range of greys between. Interiors are predominantly white, as a neutral background for the art.

Sam Marshall



A modernist block of irregularly stacked boxes of glass reinforced concrete, in shades of black and white and grey, pushed and pulled, rising from a base of poured insitu concrete

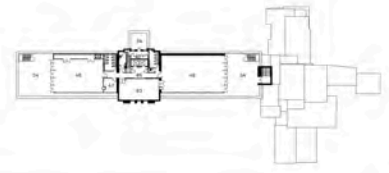


Large scale, three-dimensional panels fabricated from a single material just 12mm thick, with a unique quality that allows it to be folded over from the vertical to form roofs and ceiling



- 40 book store
- 41 foundation hall
- 42 kitchen
- 43 terrace
- 44 foyer
- 45 lobby
- 46 cinema
- 47 reception
- 48 computer lab
- 49 label making
- 50 foundation hall corridor
- 51 back of house
- 52 workshop
- 53 art
- 54 meeting
- 55 boardroom
- 56 office
- 57 security
- 58 security desk
- 59 gallery
- 60 gallery desk
- 61 staff
- 62 retail
- 63 lift lobby
- 64 gallery
- 65 MCA shop
- 66 meeting
- 67 reception
- 28 lobby
- 29 reception
- 30 lecture theatre
- 31 library
- 32 auditor
- 33 office
- 34 multimedia classroom
- 35 digital classroom
- 36 practical workshop
- 37 program
- 38 storage
- 39 office
- 40 MCA office
- 41 staff room
- 42 cafe
- 43 cafe terrace
- 44 computer server
- 45 storage function room
- 46 office
- 47 horticultural function room

level 10 Museum of Contemporary Art



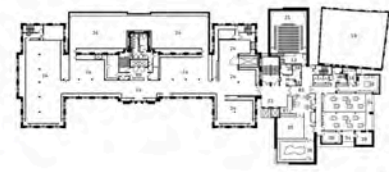
level 10



level 9



level 8



level 7



level 6

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level 5



level 4

A crisply detailed facade of light and shadow that makes no attempt to joust with the Opera House but stamps its own mark on Circular Quay



Freeman 2012 - Harry Amanteo

Issue 19 Museum of Contemporary Art
Project: Museum of Contemporary Art
Location: Sydney
Architect: Architect Marshall in association with
NSW Government Architect's Office
Structural, Civic & Facade Engineer: Simpson Design Associates
Acoustic: Acoustic Studio
Archaeology: Casey & Lowe
Heritage: Tanner Architects
Landscape Architects: NSW Government Architect's Office
Project Manager: Root Projects Australia
Mechanical & ESD Engineer: Steensen Varming
Hydraulic & Fire Engineer: Warren Smith & Partners
Photography: Brett Boardman / Museum of Contemporary Art

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

IN THE LOCK
BLOOD STICKEN
TIME HIDDEN IN LOST
UNDER THIS PLACE OF BIRTH
UNDER YOUR HAND LIES A TUNNEL
UNDER THIS STONE SALTY DARKNESS
FORGOTTEN PLACE OF DOCKS AND SHIPS