

MELBOURNE ARCHITECTURE

Much of Melbourne's excellent architecture is focussed in the city centre, and mostly either along the Swanston St/St Kilda Road spine, or in a loop around the edge of the city grid that was laid down by Robert Hoddle in 1837. Swanston Street runs straight down the middle of the even grid, and along it are some of the best architectural works, both new and old. Visible down this axis along St Kilda Road is the iconic Shrine of Remembrance, built to commemorate the First World War and recently subject to an excellent contemporary renovation by cutting edge local architects Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM), whose other projects include RMIT Storey Hall (on Swanston above Latrobe), and the redevelopment Melbourne Central Shopping Centre (just south of Storey Hall and opposite the State Library). The QV redevelopment, on Swanston north of Lonsdale Street, rebuilds almost a whole city block but has used new laneways, emulating the successful shopping lanes that date back to late 19th Century Melbourne (such as Degraives Street and Block Place). QV was also designed by several of Melbourne's best architects to ensure pluralism into the single development. The black QV2 residential 'slug', by McBride Charles Ryan, is perched on the edge of the State Library forecourt – on one of Melbourne's best public spaces, a sort of grass beach. The Library itself is a fine classical building, launching the career of Architect Joseph Reed in 1856 – the highlight is the domed reading room (1913).

The Melbourne Town Hall is another classical institution by Joseph Reed, in a French Renaissance mode, and featuring a temple like portico that enters into the spine. The section of Swanston Street opposite the Town Hall is a dense urban block, built up to the old 40m high limit. The Capitol Theatre (1924), is the work of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, two Chicago architects who had moved to Australia after winning the competition to design the new capital of Canberra. Capital Theatre's crystalline ceiling is perhaps the most amazing of its type in the world, and a must see. Featuring a coloured light show, the space is now owned by RMIT University and used for lectures and part of the film festival. The two corner buildings of this block are by Marcus Barlow, Manchester Unity (1932) and the Century Building (1938) show the influence of Chicago and New York with their commercial modern take on the Gothic style. The latter is less decorative, inline with modern principles of abandoning decoration, coming into affect and large scale after the Second World War. Former ICI (now Orica) House, on the eastern edge of the city's grid was the city's first purely modern, abstract, glass curtain wall skyscraper. Finished in 1958 it broke the height limit by moving just outside the grid. Bates Smart and McCutcheon designed the well persevered glass slab, which still has the original tropical feeling garden at ground floor.

The Nicholas Building, on the corner of Swanston and Flinders Lane, designed by Harry Norris in 1926 is a classical *palazzo* in terracotta tile. Built as a demonstration of the wealth of the Nicholas family, the building today is a full for artists, makers and designers and one of few unrenovated buildings of its type left in the city – rather than being turned into apartments. Southward over the Yarra on Princes Bridge and onto St Kilda Road is the Arts Centre, a suite of cultural buildings from the 60s and 70s designed by legendary local architect Sir Roy Grounds. The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) is his masterpiece and one Melbourne's best loved places. Recently renovated to become NGV International by Italian Mario Bellini, key features such as the famous water-wall entry have survived along with the amazing stained glass ceiling by Leonard French in the Great Hall. Local tradition is to lie down on the carpet in hall and stare up in this almost medieval modernist public room. Also around the Shrine are some of the best recent institutional buildings - ACCA (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art) by Wood Marsh Architects, the exceptional VCA Centre for Ideas by Minifie Nixon and the Drama School also at the VCA by Edmond & Corrigan. A trip into the botanical gardens will reveal the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, a brave work of 50's engineering and host to some of the city's best music and dance events.

Buildings on the loop around the edge of the city can be seen from free city circle tram. Federation Square is both part of this circuit and a key point along the spine. It has been the main architectural talking point for visitors and locals alike since opening in 2002. Opposite the fine baroque Flinders Street Station (1911), Melbourne's principal suburban train station, 'Fed' Square was designed by LAB Architecture Studio and uses allusions to complex geometry and desert-like material palette, using West Australian sandstone in conjunction with zinc, glass and steel. The square itself works incredibly well, this piazza becoming like the city's lounge room at large events, cramped with people sitting around and watch the giant video screen, attached to the back of one of zinc 'shards' that orders the complex. Also at the key intersection of Flinders and Swanston is the St Paul's, the Anglican Cathedral designed by William Butterfield in London in the 1880s. A visit inside will reveal the Italian influence in the polychromic stonework.

To the east of Flinders Street Station and across the river is Southbank, an 1980's development, the promenade of which extends past the new Freshwater Place complex and then along the lavish Crown Casino to the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, or locally as *Jeff's Shed* after former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett. Finished in 1996 and designed by Denton Corker Marshall (DCM), the enormous building has super-verandah along the river servicing

flexible exhibition space. The work of DCM is associated with the 1990s 'Kennett' era and the city's architectural and economic recovery.

Further around is Spencer Street Station, the terminus for interstate trains, recently having a major upgrade by English Architect Nicholas Grimshaw and a name change to Southern Cross Station. A waving complex surface roof covers new facilities and platforms, making a link to the great English railways halls of the 19th Century but demonstrating the latest in computer assisted design and fabrication, and ultimately becoming an contemporary icon for the new Melbourne. The Melbourne Docklands development, a huge conversion of former docks into mixed use (but mainly residential) development is separated from the city grid by the Spencer street railyards. In the last ten years many people have moved into the City of Melbourne to live, many into the new residential towers of Docklands. Telstra Dome has become the heart of docklands, not a architectural masterpiece but featuring a closable roof for both cricket and AFL. The architectural quality is varied at Docklands – highlights include the Webb Dock Bridge by artist Robert Owen in conjunction with DCM the nearby Yarra Edge Tower 5, a bronzed monolith apartment tower by Wood Marsh.

Along the northern edge of the grid is are the fine Carlton Gardens, and within is DCM's Melbourne Museum (2000), alongside the historic Royal Exhibition Building (another by Joseph Reed) - a large classical show hall built for the International Exhibition of 1880 and used for such events since until the Exhibition Centre took over. Now restored, it is the largest exhibit in the Museum's collection and features a dome inspired by Borromini's Florentine Dome. The building was used for Australia's first federal parliament in 1901 and the whole park site is now subject to world heritage listing. The eastern edge of the grid is formed by Spring Street, home to the State Government and two fine classical institutions. Parliament House dates back to 1856 and has never been fully finished; and is a robust classical statement of order at the termination of Bourke Street. Further down is the finer Renaissance sensibility of the old Treasury, designed by the 19 year-old J.J. Clark in 1857 - the building is now a Gold Museum. Behind these two and further east along Macarthur Street is the imposing Gothic Revival St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral, a blending of French and English gothic tastes by William Wardell, and consecrated in 1897.

South-east of the city grid is the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG or just the 'G') which has been entirely rebuilt in last 15 years, principally by Architect Daryl Jackson. The most recent northern stands redevelopment, completed in time for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, has increased in capacity of the ground to just under 100,000 and is the venue for key sporting events such as the AFL Grand Final and Boxing Day Cricket Test. The G is the city's arena, and although lacking some of the character of the old ground, the Great Southern Stand is the highlight now - finished in 1991 is a tough and skilful exercise in concrete, featuring a great system of ramps for moving large crowds coming in and out. Other great sporting architecture can be seen in the nearby former Olympic Pool, finished for the 1956 Games – expressing its structural dynamic brilliantly. A proud architectural statement of a city trying to escape its 19th century heritage, the pool was designed by young Architects Kevin Borland and Peter Macintyre, the latter overseeing the buildings recent restoration and conversation into the Lexus Centre, training facility for the hugely popular Collingwood Football Club. This and other buildings around here, such as Rod Laver Arena (1988) form 'Melbourne Park'.

Not all of Melbourne's architectural quality is in the city, further afield in the suburban sprawl there are a variety of highly patterned TAFE colleges and hospitals by Lyons Architects. Visible to most visitors is the Melbourne City Gateway by which announces your arrival in the 'inner city' after coming in along the Tullamarine Freeway from the Airport. Colourful and abstracted, the iconic yellow beam cantilevering across the lanes is a contemporary reworking of the idea of the gateway, and is a signature of the DCM. Some of the old suburbs of Melbourne have fine examples of the Federation Style (1890-1914) and can be seen most seen in the houses of Middle Park, Albert Park, Canterbury, Camberwell, Ivanhoe and Eaglemont. The development of Federation Style followed the economic crash of 1891 and was in the context of the nation preparing for federal union in 1901. Australia flora in decoration, extensive use of screen and verandahs is typical. After the First World War however, the importation of the Californian Bungalow type became dominant in the expanding city. Following the Second World War, an Australian suburban house type developed, with similarities also to American models, as was promoted by developers such as AV. Jennings. This gave inspiration to local architect Peter Corrigan in the 1970s, who worked for many years on small suburban intuitions, such as Resurrection Church in outer suburban Keysborough. The practice of Edmond & Corrigan brought architectural post-modernism to Melbourne, and a strong tradition of the colourful, expressive and informed architecture remains in the strong and diverse architectural scene.

More information can be found in the excellent *Melbourne Architecture* guide, by Philip Goad, in the National Trust's compact *Walking Melbourne* guide, or on the unrelated website walkingmelbourne.com.