

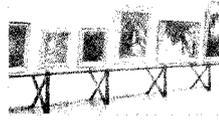
What is important about the Old Museum

This chapter deals with the cultural significance of the Old Museum. Cultural significance embraces a range of qualities – historic, social, aesthetic, scientific – that make this place especially important to the community. We must know about these qualities if we are to protect the Old Museum.

Briefly, these attributes make the place significant:

- Its evocation of the international exhibitions of the Victorian period – it is one of only two buildings still standing in Australia that demonstrate this important social and commercial innovation of the last century.
- The evidence it preserves of the development of public museums in Australia – in its fabric the building records the typical form of the nineteenth century museum, and shows much of the development of the Queensland Museum.
- Its demonstration of the development of choral and orchestral music performance in Brisbane from the 1890s to the 1930s – the building contains the most important surviving civic auditorium of the period.
- Its association with the development of the Queensland Art Gallery.
- Its outstanding quality as a piece of architecture – it is among the most important works of the architect G H M Addison, and among the most substantial works of the building boom of the late nineteenth century in Brisbane.
- The rarity of the gardens as a fine example of a late nineteenth century garden design – no other comparable public or institutional garden survives in Brisbane.
- The central place the building and its grounds have had in the consciousness of generations of Queenslanders as a place of resort throughout almost a hundred years of use for a variety of cultural and educational functions.

It is because of these attributes that the building and its grounds are entered in the Queensland Heritage Register. The reasons are set out (in



slightly different terms, but without any essential inconsistency with this study) in the *Entry in the Heritage Register* – the relevant part is reproduced in the appendix, on page 76.

The rest of this chapter discusses each of these aspects of cultural significance in turn.

The building as a type

The nineteenth century was an era of great scientific, industrial and agricultural developments in Britain and the British colonies. These achievements were celebrated by a proud and enthusiastic public – with special expositions, museums, public lectures, agricultural and machinery shows. Britain was the driving force of the industrial revolution and also the instigator of the exhibition movement. New activities demanded new types of building – thus the railway station, the exhibition building and the great museum were inventions of the nineteenth century.

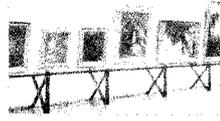
Designed as an exhibition hall and then converted to a museum, the Old Museum Building is a symbol of the Victorian spirit of inquiry and innovation.

Great Exhibitions and agricultural shows

An “Age of Exhibitions” began in London in 1851, when the Great Exhibition opened in Hyde Park. Held under the patronage of the Prince Consort the exhibition was a showcase for the products of industrial England. While the French were the first to realise the commercial advantage of industrial exhibitions, it was the huge success and popularity of the London Great Exhibition that captured the public imagination.⁹² It became the benchmark for all the international expositions that followed it – in London (1862), Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), and Philadelphia (1876). The Australian colonies sent exhibits to all these international expositions – generally samples of natural products such as timber and minerals, although manufactured goods and fine art objects were also displayed.⁹³

The fervour for large and frequent exhibitions also infected Australia, and the first exhibition was held in Sydney in the same year as the Great Exhibition. Major exhibitions were staged in all the Australian capitals – in Sydney in 1851, 1870 and 1879; Melbourne in 1866, 1880 and 1888; Brisbane in 1876 and 1897; Adelaide in 1881 and 1887; Perth in 1881; Launceston in 1891 and Hobart in 1894.⁹⁴

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was a vast display of the products of the industrial revolution, and the building itself was a conspicuous product of the new technology. The iron and glass Crystal Palace was built of prefabricated parts that were quickly erected to provide large unrestricted spaces. Features of the Crystal Palace were widely copied at the expositions that followed. In 1888 the National Association



considered buying an English exhibition building that had been erected in Antwerp and Liverpool – this was probably a prefabricated structure.⁹⁵

The major exhibition buildings constructed in Australia took their inspiration from the success of the Crystal Palace, although they tended to be conventional structures in classical costume. In Sydney a fancifully domed *Garden Palace* of brick and glass was built for the 1879 exhibition held in a couple of acres of parkland.⁹⁶ The exhibition was a huge success and more than a million people attended. The Sydney Exhibition building burnt to the ground in 1882.

The Sydney success was eclipsed in 1880 by the Melbourne International Exhibition.⁹⁷ The purpose built building still stands and, with its large dome and arched entrance, is probably one of the finest large classical structures in Australia.⁹⁸ The 1888 Centennial Exhibition held to celebrate 100 years of white settlement was also staged in Melbourne in the same building.

In Adelaide, a similarly domed and classically detailed building was erected for the 1887 exhibition there. This building was demolished in 1962.⁹⁹

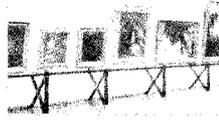
The grand exhibitions were very important in the development of Australian nationhood according to Michael Cannon, an historian of the Victorian era in Australia:

*...huge and frequent public exhibitions acted as remarkable unifying forces, showing each part of Australia the progress and development of other areas, and stimulating all to greater efforts. Since rural production was the major interest for most of the century, the engineering emphasis was usually on mechanical aids to the farmer.*¹⁰⁰

The relationship between expositions and agricultural shows was very close – indeed Cannon points out the great emphasis on farm machinery at the Australian exhibitions. In Brisbane this relationship was particularly close – the National Agricultural and Industrial Association built the Exhibition Building, conducted the annual exhibition and sponsored the Intercolonial Exhibitions. Brisbane differs from the other capitals in that the 1891 building was not built for any specific “Great Exhibition”, but for the annual exhibition, or *ekka* – an institution that still thrives in Brisbane.

At the first Brisbane Intercolonial Exhibition in 1876 the Queen Street ironmongers, Alfred Shaw and Company, had a large open air machinery display. The main attraction was a self regulating windmill imported from the United States.¹⁰¹ The plan of the Queensland International Exhibition 1897 (illustration 15) shows a large grassed area beside the railway line set aside for windmills and other farm machinery.

The mining industry, with its production and machinery, had a central place in the Australian exhibitions. At the 1897 Queensland Exhibition



fine arts displays took up half the exhibition hall, while the other half was devoted to mining exhibits (illustration 16). The northern verandah displayed specimens of Queensland coke and coal, while in the hall were obelisks representing gold production of various mines – a recurrent motif of the period.¹⁰²

The Old Museum Building was, in its time, a good specimen of the large Australian exhibition building. True to the type, it had a large exhibition hall covered by a wide span trussed roof. The internal spaces were unadorned, but the whole was enclosed in elaborate architecture which was intended to impress. The building was set in pleasure gardens and also boasted a concert hall and a dining room.

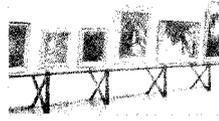
30
G H M Addison's 1891 drawing of the Exhibition Building. This image must have been well known, since it often appeared in newspapers and other publications. [The Queenslander 4 April 1891].



Although later adaptation has altered the exhibition hall, dining room and concert hall, the essential form of the building as an exhibition hall is clear to see. Of the original collection of exhibition buildings in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, only those of Brisbane and Melbourne have survived. The Old Museum Building symbolises the gusto and celebration of the Victorian exhibitions, and evokes Queensland's circumstances at the end of the 1880s development boom.

The Victorian museum

One of the great preoccupations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the study of natural history, which was thought a respectable pastime for gentlemen and amateurs. In Europe this interest had fostered the building of museums to display collections of specimens to a public eager for knowledge. The British Museum in London, probably the most famous museum in the English speaking world, was built over the years 1821-1847.¹⁰³ Australia with its exotic flora and fauna was a natural laboratory for collecting and classification. The first museum in the country, the Australian Museum in Sydney, was founded in 1827.¹⁰⁴ By the later nineteenth century, museums had broadened their collections to include a wide range of cultural material, including the arts, physical sciences and industrial technology.



The Queensland Museum was begun soon after separation from New South Wales, and its early establishment indicates the importance of natural history in the newly independent colony. The group of educated men who formed the Queensland Philosophical Society were excited by what they saw around them. At the beginning of January 1862 it was reported in the press that:

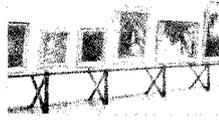
*A large room has been set aside in the Windmill to receive contributions of specimens of natural history for classification and arrangement. It is hoped this will provide the nucleus of a Queensland Museum. This followed action by the Philosophical Society.*¹⁰⁵

Although the Exhibition Building was the fourth home for the museum, and not built for the purpose, it was converted in a thorough and thoughtful way. The move to the Gregory Terrace building gave the museum a useful increase in space, as the basement was to be used for offices and preparation areas. The conversion followed the practice of the time of designing museums as a series of galleries or halls, with large internal spaces for hanging exhibits.¹⁰⁶ The collection was exhibited in glass and timber display cases arranged in orderly rows. A photograph of the interior taken in the 1930s (illustration 31) shows glass topped display cases, with some of the larger objects such as canoes and models of fish hanging in the mezzanine voids. This photograph conveys the style of displays used by the Queensland Museum through most of the time it occupied the building.

31
The interior of the Queensland Museum at some time before 1940. The clutter and rich variety of the collection is characteristic of Victorian museums. [Queensland Museum photo].



The conversion can be counted a success, and the result was a creditable museum building by the standards of its time – a good example of a Victorian museum. Although the museum function was not expressed in the external form or the architectural style, the building became the symbol of the museum. A drawing of the building was part of the letterhead used by the museum and it was often used in other graphics.



Consequently for the people of Brisbane – for 86 years – the building was the museum and the museum was the building.

32

The foyer of the exhibition hall in 1999 still shows signs of the long occupation by the Queensland Museum. In the right of the picture a tall cupboard, formerly used for storing Aboriginal spears; on the left, a chest of drawers still labelled with the scientific names of fish. This furniture contributes to the significance of the building.



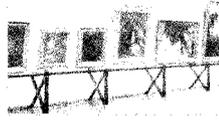
An artistic institution

The building was used as a concert hall and then an art gallery for 84 years and is now used for musical rehearsal and performance. As a specially built venue for concerts, later converted to an Art Gallery, the Old Museum Building has played an important part in the artistic life of Queensland. The building is significant because it has been in constant use for cultural purposes.

Music, concerts and civic functions

When the National Association resolved to build the Exhibition Building, it decided to include a concert hall as a means of earning a steady revenue. It is interesting to note that the Exhibition Building in Melbourne was fitted with a large pipe organ and concerts were held twice daily during the two great Melbourne exhibitions of 1880 and 1888.¹⁰⁷

With its fine pipe organ and large seating capacity the Exhibition Concert Hall became the musical centre of Brisbane. Artists of international acclaim such as Paderewski¹⁰⁸ and Dame Nellie Melba gave recitals at the concert hall.¹⁰⁹ It held this position for 40 years until the organ was transferred to the newly built City Hall. When the organ was first installed a program of *Opening Ceremonies of The Grand Organ*,¹¹⁰ which included a performance of the Messiah, was held to celebrate the *...splendid instrument*.¹¹¹ The Exhibition Concert Hall became the focus for musical activity in the city, although after the initial *novelty of the instrument* had passed attendances for recitals by local artists were often poor.¹¹² The concert hall's inconvenient location was usually blamed for



small audiences, but did not seem to stop visiting artists from getting good houses.¹¹³

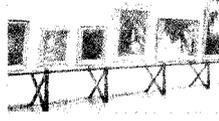
The concert hall was probably at its best for public celebrations such as the Civic Concert for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in May 1901. On that occasion the hall was festively decorated, extra seating was provided and a mixed program of choral singing, orchestral numbers and organ solos was presented. The concert was judged a success and a good indication of ...*the artistic resources of Brisbane*.¹¹⁴

33
The concert hall used for a civic reception for Anglican Archbishop Donaldson in 1921. [The Queenslander 5 March 1921].



The concert hall was also used for a wide range of other functions, including dinners, balls and university graduation ceremonies.¹¹⁵ The reasons for its popularity for these purposes becomes clear when it is compared with the other venues that were available. There were theatres of course, such as Her Majesty's Opera House in Queen Street built in 1888, and the Princess Theatre at Woolloongabba, but neither was as large as the Exhibition Concert Hall. There were also various flat floored halls attached to council chambers, including those at South Brisbane (1892), Coorparoo (1890-95), Toombul (1890), Sandgate (1911) and Hamilton (1919), all of which survive, and none of which is on the same scale as the concert hall. Brisbane had Schools of Arts halls also, notably the one at South Brisbane, and church halls. Some of these venues were more elaborately decorated than the concert hall, but none suited large functions and large concert audiences as well.

Because it was leased by the City Council and it was then the largest auditorium in Brisbane, the concert hall took the place of a city hall. The original scale of the hall is not visible today. The changes made during the 1930 art gallery conversion, and compounded during the recent adaptation, have reduced the capacity of the hall from the 2,800 claimed (perhaps optimistically) in 1891 to the present comfortable accommodation for 400. The visible volume of the hall has also been substantially reduced by the loss of gallery space and the intrusion of acoustic baffles, lighting bars and sound shell.



Art gallery

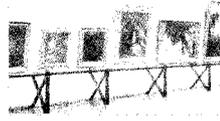
Brisbane lagged behind the other Australian capitals in founding an art gallery. “National” Art Galleries were established in Melbourne in 1861 and Sydney in 1874; even provincial centres like Ballarat (founded 1884: building 1887) and Bendigo (founded 1887: building 1900) had picture collections and substantial premises before Brisbane. Brisbane lacked the substantial wealth and private benefactors that had enriched the collections in the other states. That a gallery was eventually founded in 1895 was due to the energy of a group of individuals, such as Godfrey Rivers and members of the Art Society, who lobbied the government. Successive governments may have been sluggish in the matter of an art gallery, but the public showed its approval when 24,000 people visited it in 1896.¹¹⁶

The 1931 Works Department annual report recorded that *...on the completion of the City Hall, the Brisbane City Council vacated the Exhibition Concert Hall, the latter hall would be remodelled internally to enable the National Art Gallery to be housed there for the present.*¹¹⁷ From the beginning, the Art Gallery’s occupation of the building has been regarded as temporary – even though it lasted over 40 years – and part of the gallery’s odyssey towards purpose built premises. But it was while the Art Gallery was in the concert hall that the significant developments and expansion in the Gallery’s collection occurred. Many of the works that are the jewels of the collection – such as William Dobell’s *The Cypriot* and Picasso’s *La Belle Hollandaise* – were acquired during this period.¹¹⁸ It was also a time when a strong and cooperative relationship between the Art Gallery and Museum was fostered.¹¹⁹ This relationship between the sister institutions has continued at the new cultural complex on the South Bank of the river. The Art Gallery finally vacated the concert hall because the building was inadequate for its needs.

The Queensland Art Gallery’s 40 years at the Old Museum Building have left few marks still visible in the fabric. This very lack of physical evidence speaks of the difficult progress of the institution towards a more suitable home.

An architectural specimen

The Old Museum Building is unlike any other building in Brisbane. It marks the end of an era as it was the last big public building erected before the depression of the 1890s. It is a good example of the architecture of the time and an important piece of work of the architect G H M Addison.



34
G H M Addison. [The
Queenslander 16 July 1898].

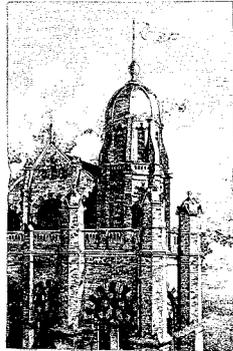
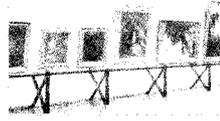
G H M Addison and his work

George Henry Male Addison is the epitome of the Victorian architect. He was an accomplished draftsman who publicised himself and promoted his ideas about architecture and interior decoration.¹²⁰ He arrived in Brisbane in 1886 and within just a few years had made a significant architectural and artistic impact.

Addison was born in Wales in 1857 or 1858. He got his architectural training as an articled pupil and also studied drawing at the South Kensington School of Art and the Royal Academy School. He exhibited architectural drawings at the Royal Academy in 1883. He came to Australia to work on the details of the South Australian Parliament House, but after three months that project was deferred. He then moved to Melbourne and in 1884 became head draftsman for the architectural firm Terry and Oakden. In 1885 he became a partner and the firm changed its name to Terry, Oakden and Addison.¹²¹ It was as a partner of this firm that Addison arrived in Brisbane to supervise the building of the London Chartered Bank. Addison found there was an abundance of work in Brisbane and soon had the commission for the Albert Street Wesleyan Church. He decided to stay in Brisbane and established a branch of the firm that subsequently changed its name to Oakden, Addison and Kemp.¹²² This partnership was dissolved in 1897 and Addison was later in practice with Leslie Corrie and then Robert Hassall. In 1919 his son George Frederick became his partner and the firm changed its name to G H M Addison and Son. G H M Addison died in Brisbane in 1922.¹²³

Addison was very interested in the arts and was a skilled and prolific draftsman. As chief draftsman at Terry and Oakden he had drawn most of the illustrations for the book *What to build and how to build it*.¹²⁴ This book promoted the work of the firm, pushed new ideas for interior decoration and showed what could be achieved. Addison involved himself in the architectural life of Brisbane as a teacher at classes held by the School of Art and then as an examiner and councillor of the Brisbane Central Technical College. He was also a member and office bearer of the Queensland Art Society which was instrumental in establishing the Queensland Art Gallery. He exhibited paintings and architectural drawings at various exhibitions.¹²⁵ He also designed, with Godfrey Rivers and others, the royal box at the Civic Concert for the Duke and Duchess of York and Cornwall.¹²⁶

With his overseas education and artistic interests Addison constructed in Brisbane *...stylistically eclectic buildings - more ornate and highly finished than any previously seen in the city*.¹²⁷ Besides the London Chartered Bank (now demolished) Addison's other major work in the period before he designed the Exhibition Building include the Albert Street Wesleyan Church and *The Mansions* in George Street (1888). He also designed houses of varying sizes including *Stanley Hall* (1886) at Clayfield, *Kirkston* (1888) at Wilston, *Ralahyne* (1888) at Clayfield, *The Priory* (1888) at Indooroopilly, his own house at Indooroopilly and *Cumbooquepa* (1890) at South Brisbane.¹²⁸



35
Addison's perspective sketch of one of the towers of the Exhibition Building. [Building and Engineering Journal 13 June 1891].

In its use of polychrome brickwork the Exhibition Building is to be compared with Addison's other buildings, such as *Kirkston* and *Cumbooquepa*. Addison was an accomplished brickwork designer and he was able to achieve maximum effect with the material. The Exhibition Building was designed on a small budget - it has little of the decorative stonework, carving or moulded plasterwork of *Cumbooquepa* and *The Mansions*. Addison decorated the exterior of the building using bands of contrasting brickwork and emphasising the arched window openings.

The Exhibition Building differs from most of his other work in that the interior was very unadorned. The plain finishes of the exhibition hall and concert hall are evidence of the tight budget. The exhibition hall, with its unplastered walls and unlined ceiling, is a far cry from the fine joinery, heavily coffered ceilings and decorative plasterwork of Addison's highly finished interiors at the Albert Street Wesleyan Church, *Cumbooquepa* and *Kirkston*.

Among Addison's work as a whole, and among other buildings of its time in Brisbane, the Old Museum Building is an architectural work of real quality - a building that displays skill in design and adaptation to the circumstances of its brief and its time.

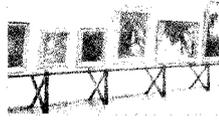
A place of resort

Generations of Queenslanders have regarded the Old Museum Building with special affection. Perhaps this universal esteem has been a factor in the strong public support for the conservation of the building. The Old Museum has been regularly visited by the public over a long period. Many people have fond childhood memories of family outings to this place.

The site around the building was a place of resort from 1863, when the Acclimatisation Society established its gardens. With the formation of the National Agricultural and Industrial Association and their leasing of part of the site there were dual reasons for visiting Bowen Park. As the *Brisbane Courier* commented:

*The site is in every respect suitable, being well supplied with water, convenient to the city, and as was pointed out at the meeting, highly attractive in itself, independently of the interest attaching to the Society's exhibition. Many ladies and townspeople who might hesitate to visit a purely utilitarian exhibition of produce and animals, will let the additional attraction of the Acclimatisation Society's gardens bring them to a favourable decision.*¹²⁹

Once the Exhibition Building was completed the concert hall provided another reason for visiting the site. However it was the museum that really established the site as a place of resort. Generations of Brisbane people have visited the museum, strolled through the bush houses and picnicked in the gardens.



The society's gardens were said to eclipse the Botanic Gardens.¹³⁰ It was claimed in 1880 by James Veitch, a nurseryman, that it contained the best collection of tropical trees outside the tropics,¹³¹ and an early catalog indicates an equal diversity of plants in the two gardens.¹³² While the character of the society's gardens was that of a picturesque and exuberant tropical foliage garden, very different to the gardenesque style adopted in the museum garden plantings, there is a continuity or transition of styles between the two gardens. The palms, *Brachybiton*, *Ficus*, *Kigelia* and Ginkgo (the last two now lost) in the museum garden are evidence of the continued Victorian interest in the exotic. Some of these trees may indeed have remained from the society's plantings, although there is no firm evidence of this.

36

A view of the garden in front of the museum entrance. Notice the well kept garden beds and gravel paths, always popular with the strolling public. [JOL 48210].

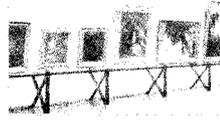


The museum gardens have always been popular in their own right as a place for pleasurable strolling. A visit to the gardens was generally made with every museum visit but the gardens, in particular the rose garden, were known and visited on their own for both the seasonal flower display and for enjoyment of a secluded and quiet urban garden.

School groups included the gardens in educational excursions to the Queensland Museum, and museum staff conducted botany classes around the grounds.

Because of the association of the grounds first with the Acclimatisation Society, more firmly with the Exhibition Building and then in their entirety with the museum, the grounds have to be considered an integral part of the whole place in assessing its significance.

Some of the attributes that made the site so attractive - its location, the gardens, the building and the activities housed there - have survived, and some can be recovered. The long continuity of this pattern of use is remarkable, and adds to the significance of the place.



The building in its setting

The Exhibition Building was the last Victorian public building constructed in Brisbane. The Depression of the 1890s almost stopped all building and it was not until the beginning of the new century that the construction industry recovered. The design, construction and history of ownership of the Exhibition Building mirrors the economic conditions of the 1880s and 1890s.

The economic setting

The Exhibition Building illustrates the boom and bust pattern of the Australian economy. The building's decorative exterior displays the confidence of the economic boom of the 1880s. But by the time the building was built the economy was on a downturn. *When confidence waned the building industry foundered, heralding the spread of the depression to other sectors during the years 1890-92.*¹³³ Ironically, the depression was an advantage to the Exhibition Building. It helped to achieve the high quality workmanship and the remarkably fast construction. *While the brickwork was in progress about 300 men of all trades and four steam engines were constantly at work.*¹³⁴ The standard of the brick workmanship achieved on the Exhibition Building is consistently high. By 1891 work was scarce and several hundred tradesmen and labourers queued outside the site gates every morning in the hope of getting work. J B Chapel has recalled how every day his father, a bricklayer, left home with his tool bag over his shoulder at 4 am. He walked from Greenslopes to the site, hoping to be near the front of the queue.¹³⁵

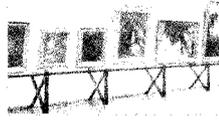
Once the Exhibition Building was opened its fate continued to be determined by the depression of the 1890s. The National Association had borrowed money from the state government to erect the building. The association got into *...severe financial difficulties during the depression and found itself unable to meet its payments on the new building, which was consequently taken over by the government.*¹³⁶

The building expresses in its form and detail, and in its very existence, something of the times in which it was conceived and built.

The physical setting

In 1863 when the Acclimatisation Society was granted 32 acres the site was well out of town, on the edge of development. A couple of years later, in 1865, the Brisbane General Hospital was established opposite Bowen Park. The hospital site was chosen because the locality was thought healthy and salubrious.

During the 1860s Spring Hill was subdivided and villas began to be built along Gregory Terrace. When the National Association leased the land for the Exhibition grounds the site was on the outskirts of the town amongst comfortable suburban houses.



Again, these facts of history are demonstrated by the existence of the building in this part of the city, and by the character of the development surrounding it.

37
The concert hall entrance photographed in 1905. Although it was on a tram route, the hall was considered remote from the centre of town. [JOL 137350].



Since the time it was built, the building has contributed to the visual character and quality of the part of the town in which it sits - this contribution arises from the scale and quality of the architecture, and the topography and pattern of the surrounding development.

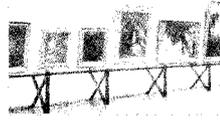
The landmark qualities of the Old Museum Building have not been lost in recent history. The building and its associated garden elements of fence and plantings make a significant contribution to the memorable streetscape of the area. There is a striking visual dynamism along Bowen Bridge Road. At the Gregory Terrace intersection are seen the two landmark buildings - the Museum and the Hospital - with the green open space of Victoria Park and the museum grounds between the buildings and crossing the road, providing an uncluttered setting and accentuating this streetscape landmark.

Significance of the parts

So far in this chapter the building has been considered as the expression of certain historical and social ideas. It is time now to get down to detail, and to say how the different parts of the building embody or express these ideas.

The concert hall

The prime importance of the concert hall wing arises from its use as Brisbane's chief concert venue between 1891 and 1930. It was used for musical recitals, as well as important civic receptions and dinners. In its original form the hall had, by Brisbane standards, a grand scale and testified to the development of the city's population in the nineteenth century, and to the popularity of organ recitals and choral music. The



plain finish and lack of elaboration of the interior indicate the tight budget and straitened times of the early 1890s. The concert hall was the defacto town hall until the City Hall was completed and took over its role.

With the conversion to an art gallery alterations were made that have since obscured the significance of the space as a concert hall - the main damaging changes are:

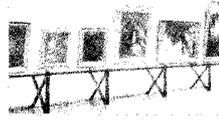
- Partial removal and alteration of the galleries.
- Introduction of the dormer windows.
- Removal of the organ.
- Replacement of the raked auditorium floor and raised stage with a level floor throughout.

The recent adaptation of the hall has masked the dormer windows, introduced another organ in a different location, and introduced a new stage while retaining the level auditorium floor. It has also introduced a new layer of highly visible changes - the *box within a box* walls, and the lighting, acoustic and air-conditioning services. The combined effect of the changes made in the period from 1930 to 1999 has been to hide the original scale and volume of the hall, and to mask the character of the original space.

The dormer windows introduced for the 1930 art gallery conversion remain visible outside the building. They are the most substantial visible evidence of the Queensland Art Gallery's occupation of the building. While the Gallery was housed there, the interior perhaps expressed the poor architectural endowment of the plastic arts before the new Queensland Art Gallery was built - but even the record of this aspect of the building's history is no longer intact. The use of the concert hall by museum preparators and curators is not regarded as a significant episode in the life of the building.

On balance, although use by the Art Gallery has added to the importance of the building as an artistic institution and a place of resort, the physical evidence of this phase is incomplete. In fact the main remaining physical evidence of the art gallery - the dormer windows - obscures the primary significance of the concert hall.

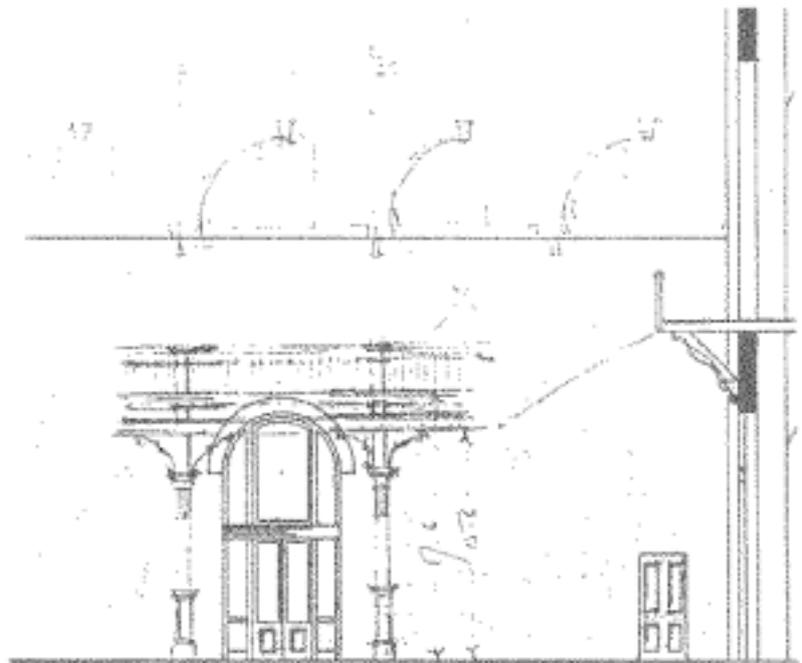
The recent adaptation works, although they do not reveal the original scale and character of the hall, have opened a new phase in the use of the building for cultural activity and public resort. The adaptation, therefore, has contributed to the continuity of appropriate use of the building.



The exhibition hall

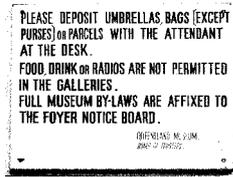
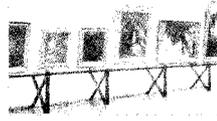
When it was built, the exhibition hall was an ambitious undertaking for the National Agricultural and Industrial Association. The large scale and substantial construction of the hall evoke the optimism of the late nineteenth century in Queensland before the depression. Building the exhibition hall was also an attempt to keep up with the other colonies, which all had substantial exhibition buildings. These attributes survive today, and are the basis of the significance of this part of the building.

38
 Design sketch for the gallery floor, drawn over an original contract drawing. In the 1890s, when drawings were copied by laboriously tracing them, it was common for architects to draw in pencil over an older ink drawing when designing alterations. This drawing from the Colonial Architect's Office shows how the new windows and mezzanine were designed to complement Addison's design. [Works Department Drawing 30A-10-6].



The Queensland Museum occupied the exhibition hall for 86 years and the hall was specifically remodelled for this purpose. It is the museum that is most strongly identified in the public mind with the building. The museum has had the longest occupation of any activity in the building and its presence can clearly be seen in the fabric of the exhibition hall.

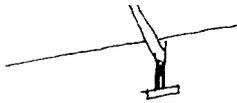
The early conversion of the exhibition hall for the Queensland Museum was carried out in a more comprehensive way than the Art Gallery conversion thirty years later, and must be counted a greater success as a piece of architectural work. The care taken in the design of the conversion is apparent in the building itself, in which the new work is nicely married with the original. One sheet of the original G H M Addison contract drawings in the Works Department collection - a section through the exhibition hall - has design sketches for the gallery floor drawn over it (illustration 38). These sketches give us a glimpse into the way the new work was integrated with the old. The main elements of the conversion - the gallery floor, the dormer windows and the ceiling lining - were carried out with skill and a sympathetic regard for the existing building.



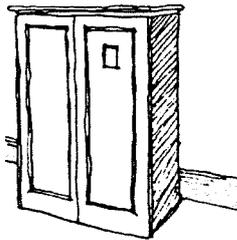
39
This sign is still visible in what was the entrance lobby to the Queensland Museum.

These major elements remain substantially intact and are highly significant. Although most of the fittings and fixtures of the museum displays have been removed, the exhibition hall still bears many marks of the museum. The *conservation study* noted in 1989 that *Elements such as signs, shackles for suspending exhibits from the roof trusses, remnants of dioramas and illustrations painted on the walls have significance and are subtle evidence of the museum.*¹³⁷ Since then, a small part of this evidence has been removed, painted over or lost.¹³⁸

The basement



The original form of the basement, and its use as a public dining room, have been somewhat obscured by changes during and since the initial museum conversion. Only the general disposition of the space, and the kitchen hearth and chimney remain as evidence of this use.

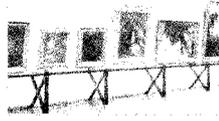


40
This fire hose reel box, illustrated in the 1989 conservation study, has since been removed.

Through the museum conversion, the area was changed from a large open space to a series of offices, preparation and storage areas. The timber partition walls, with glass in the upper section, were constructed using material from partition walls that were previously part of the exhibition hall – they divided the Fine Art court into four – but we do not know exactly where this material was reused. Much of the initial museum office layout remains intact, and the present significance of the basement derives from its relationship to its museum function. The significant elements are:

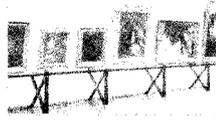
- The glass topped timber partition walls
- the trolley line and hatch which, it is assumed, facilitated the movement of large items into the exhibition hall
- the glazed lights in the floor above, designed to pass daylight from the exhibition hall to the basement
- the shelving for books and specimens.

The layout and fabric of the basement in its various overlays is evidence of the museum's use of the building. As the museum expanded, the need for storage space and preparation areas was catered for by extending the basement area further under the exhibition hall. Also some of the original spaces were subdivided and shelving built across doorways. These later changes are less significant, but are indications of how the museum had to adapt the building to suit its changing needs.



41
The museum library full of books. Even without the books, the room is richly evocative of its use for 86 years. [Queensland Museum photo].





42

The exhibition hall mezzanine in 1999. The structure with hipped roof in the centre of the picture is the top of the enclosure around the music studio (whose interior is shown in illustration 29). On the mezzanine level, holes have been cut in the floor to install wiring, and these holes have been fitted with temporary plywood covers – this level is closed to the public.



The exterior of the building

The building was designed on a tight budget with maximum architectural effect being achieved through the exterior form of the building. The exterior is highly significant and remains substantially intact. Exterior alterations that detract from the overall significance of the building include:

- The colour, profile and material of the roof sheeting.
- The inclusion of dormer windows to the concert hall.
- The removal of the terracotta openwork parapets.

As the use of the building has evolved a number of openings have been changed, such as windows bricked up or doorways changed to form window openings. These alterations have significance as external marks of internal changes. Other changes to the exterior include the addition of attached toilets and the enclosure of the exhibition hall porte-cochère to form a vestibule.

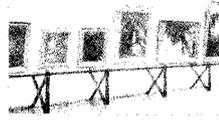
The building has had minimal maintenance over many years, and this long neglect is visible in deteriorated finishes and joinery and many small instances of damage. Its shabbiness hides the underlying quality of the architecture and the building.

The grounds and outbuildings

Catherine Brouwer and others have investigated the history and significance of the grounds, and prepared the *Old Museum Gardens conservation study*. In brief, they concluded that different zones (shown on illustration 43) were significant in different ways:

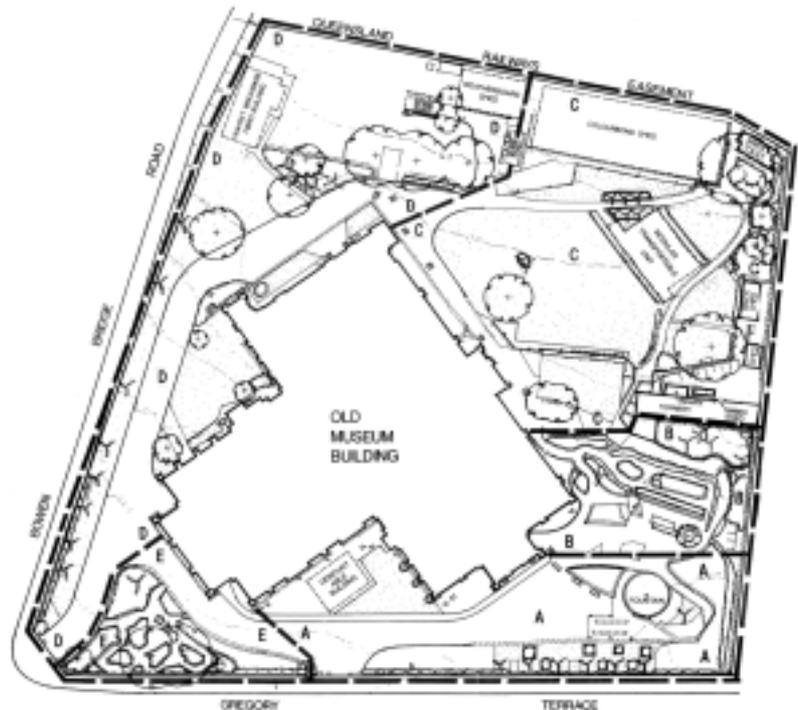
Zone A

This area contains the most substantial remnants of the ornamental



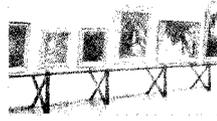
gardens and paths laid out in the late 1890s. Its cultural heritage significance is considerable, because it is the best example of this historic garden style surviving in Brisbane. For this reason it is the most rare and remarkable part of the old museum grounds. The layout and fabric of the driveway, paths, beds, drains and fences and gates, and the gardening methods and plant materials, are elements essential to the significance of this zone. The early garden form has been overlaid by other structures (such as the footings of the *Mephisto* shelter) associated with the museum. These structures have some value for their evidence of history, but they intrude on the garden's structure, formality and aesthetics and on people's understanding of the original garden design. The demountable building linked to the concert hall intrudes very much on the view of the old museum and gardens from Gregory Terrace.

43
Heritage significance zones, from
a plan in the *Old Museum
Gardens conservation study*.



Zone B

The upper part of this zone formerly contained garden beds that were part of the design mentioned in Zone A - the beds were removed to accommodate museum displays of a steam engine and two replica dinosaurs. The rest of the zone consists of an arbour, paths, rock walled garden beds, and a concealed gardeners' work area with soil and compost bins. Its cultural heritage significance is considerable, because it was laid out in the late 1890s with the establishment of the museum and exemplifies a typical garden design which has had a long currency though is uncommon in Brisbane now. The gardeners' work area contributes to the significance of the grounds. The remains of the steam engine and dinosaur displays, while they help interpret the history of the site, intrude on the garden's structure and aesthetics, and on people's understanding of the original garden design.



44
A view of the museum garden taken in the 1970s. Since then the beam engine and the replica dinosaurs have moved on, but the old garden layout and gardening practices have remained [Queensland Museum photo].



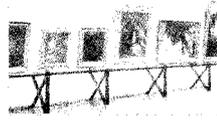
Zone C

This area contains the remains of the enclosed strolling garden of lawns, curving paths, feature beds and ferneries, and gardeners' propagating and work area laid out in the late nineteenth century. A modern retaining wall supporting a flat patch of lawn, and a number of buildings, have altered the structure and character. The area has significance because of the historic, social and aesthetic value of the garden with its horticultural support area that remains. There are several outbuildings of varying significance:

| | |
|--|--|
| Fernery, propagating shed, and gardener's bush house | Considerable historic significance |
| Air raid shelter | Considerable historic significance |
| Brick toilet | Considerable historic significance |
| Shed | Some historic significance |
| Modular unit | Not significant, intrusive |
| Colorbond shed | Not significant, but forms a visual screen of the railway beyond |

Zone D

The area between the building and Bowen Bridge Road generally retains the form established in the late nineteenth century, and has considerable historic and aesthetic significance. The fence, gates, driveway, paths, lawns, hedges, shrubs and trees are essential elements of its character. The corner next to the railway line, formerly the location of the caretaker's cottage, has been more extensively altered, and has less



significance. None of the outbuildings here is significant, although the weatherboard shed and the recent cooling tower enclosure form a visual barrier to the railway lines. The separation of the cottage yard from the rest of the grounds is still visible in the plantings – a valuable piece of historical evidence.

Zone E

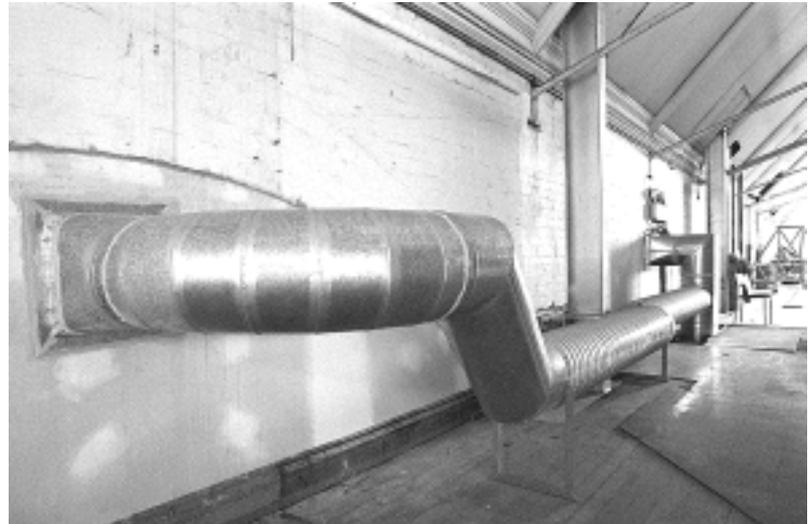
This area of dense shrubbery in front of the concert hall entrance has considerable aesthetic and historic significance. The street fence, driveway, plantings, rock garden edges, and paths are essential elements.

The name of the place

Although the building was originally built as an exhibition building and concert hall, for the past hundred years it has been known as *the museum* or *the old museum*. Now, more than ten years after the Queensland Museum staff, collection and displays moved out, the *museum* name reminds people of the major episode in the history of the site.

45

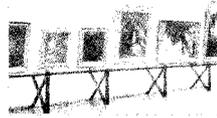
This duct work, part of the air conditioning system for the concert hall, intrudes into the exhibition hall at mezzanine level. This arrangement keeps the ducts out of sight in the concert hall, but diminishes the quality of the other space. The two steel columns, to the right of the picture, support the sound shell over the concert hall stage.



Significance of the elements of the Old Museum

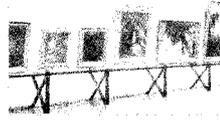
This table summarises the level of cultural heritage significance of the different parts of the Old Museum. *Aspect* refers to the various aspects of significance discussed in this chapter. *Level* refers to the levels of significance, using these terms:

- elements with *considerable* significance for a particular aspect are very important to the significance of the Old Museum Building as a whole – they ought to be protected



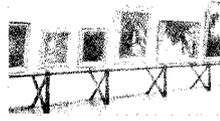
- elements with *some* significance for a particular aspect contribute to the significance of the whole – they might be altered in the pursuit of other conservation objectives
- elements with *no* significance do not contribute to the significance of the whole – they might be altered or removed

| Element | Aspect | Level |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| The grounds | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | Considerable |
| | An architectural specimen | Considerable |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | Considerable |
| The exterior of the building | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | Some |
| | An architectural specimen | Considerable |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | Considerable |
| The concert hall | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | Considerable |
| | An architectural specimen | Considerable |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | Considerable |
| Concert hall foyers and circulation spaces | The building as a type | Some |
| | An artistic institution | Some |
| | An architectural specimen | Considerable |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | Some |
| The exhibition hall | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | Some |
| | An architectural specimen | Considerable |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | Considerable |
| Exhibition hall basement | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | None |
| | An architectural specimen | Some |
| | A place of resort | Some |
| | The building in its setting | None |
| Contents (related to past uses) | The building as a type | Considerable |
| | An artistic institution | None |
| | An architectural specimen | None |
| | A place of resort | Considerable |
| | The building in its setting | None |



Notes

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- 93 Judith McKay, 'A good show: colonial Queensland at international exhibitions', *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, cultural heritage series, Volume 1, Part 2, 20 April 1998.; Dianne Byrne, 'Decorative arts in early Brisbane,' *Brisbane History Group Papers*, No. 3, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1985) p. 119.
- 94 Michael Cannon, *Life in the cities* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1975) p. 97.
- 95 *The Queenslander* (3 November 1888) p. 791.
- 96 Geoffrey Dutton, *City life in old Australia* (South Yarra: Currey O'Neil Ross Pty Ltd, 1984) pp. 104-105.
- 97 Cannon, *Life in the cities*, pp. 97-98.
- 98 Building Citation, Melbourne Exhibition Buildings, National Trust of Australia (Victoria).
- 99 Information provided by Dr Peter Bell.
- 100 Cannon, *Life in the cities*, p. 97.
- 101 *Brisbane Courier* (5 August 1876) p. 5.
- 102 Lynne Strahan, 'Exhibition Buildings' in *Historic public buildings of Australia* (Australian Council of National Trusts) p. 259.
- 103 J M Richards, *The National Trust book of English architecture* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) p. 185.
- 104 Helen Proudfoot and Robert Moore, *The Australian Museum: a conservation analysis* (Sydney: Otto Cserhalmi & Associates) p. 5.
- 105 *Moreton Bay Courier* (21 January 1862).
- 106 Proudfoot and Moore, *The Australian Museum*, pp.1-36
- 107 Granville Wilson and Peter Sands, *Building a city* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981) pp. 63-04.
- 108 Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941), Polish pianist, composer, and statesman, who made Australian concert tours in 1926-27.
- 109 Mather, *A time for a museum*, p. 25.
- 110 *The Brisbane Courier* (16 December 1892) p. 2.
- 111 *The Brisbane Courier* (23 December 1892) p. 5.
- 112 Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 223.
- 113 Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 223.
- 114 *The Brisbane Courier* (24 May 1901) p. 5.
- 115 Mather, *A time for a museum*, p. 25.
- 116 Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 227.
- 117 Department of Works Annual Report (1931) p. 7.
- 118 Janet Hogan, 'Queensland Art Gallery in historical perspective,' *Brisbane History Group papers*, No 3, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1985) pp. 108-109.
- 119 Mather, *A time for a museum*, p. 227.



- 120 Fiona Gardiner, 'Building a house in 1888,' *Brisbane History Group papers*, No 8, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1988) pp. 123-126.
- 121 Watson and McKay, *Directory of Queensland architects*, p. 19.
- 122 W F Morrison, *The Aldine history of Queensland* (Sydney: Aldine Publishing Company, 1888) Vol. 2, pp. 427-428.
- 123 Watson and McKay, *Directory of Queensland architects*, p. 19.
- 124 Terry and Oakden, *What to build and how to build it: a few hints on domestic, ecclesiastical and general architecture* (Melbourne: George Robinson & Co, 1885). Addison may perhaps have done more than draw the illustrations, although his contribution to the text is not acknowledged on the title page. The copy of the book once owned by the Brisbane architect James Cowlshaw has the title *Colonial architecture* blocked on the spine of the binding, along with the names of Percy Oakden and G H M Addison as the authors.
- 125 Watson and McKay, *Directory of Queensland architects*.
- 126 *The Brisbane Courier* (24 May 1901) p. 5.
- 127 Donald Watson, 'Foundations: The Queensland Institute of Architects,' *Brisbane history group papers* No. 8, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1988) p. 114.
- 128 Gardiner, 'Building a house in 1888,' pp. 123-126.
- 129 *The Brisbane Courier* (23 October 1875).
- 130 Conversation with Ross McKinnon, the present Curator of the Mount Coot-Tha Botanic Gardens.
- 131 Harold Caulfield, former Brisbane City Council Director of Parks, writing in the *Courier-Mail* (undated clipping).
- 132 Frederick Manson Bailey (Colonial Botanist), *Catalogue of plants in the two metropolitan gardens, the Brisbane Botanic Garden and Bowen Park (the garden of the Queensland Acclimatisation Society) arranged...* (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1885).
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- 134 *The Brisbane Courier* (15 August 1891) p. 7.
- 135 Personal reminiscence of J B Chapel, former Graded Foreman, State Works Department, referred to in notes prepared by Mr Peter Heyworth, Architect, State Works Department, 16 September 1985.
- 136 Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 223.
- 137 Peter Marquis-Kyle & Fiona Gardiner, *Old Museum Building conservation study* (Brisbane: Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle, 1989) p. 57.
- 138 Two examples of evidence of the Museum that have disappeared since 1989: a mural on the north mezzanine wall, near the eastern end, showing a Durham Downs dinosaur *Rhoetosaurus brownei*; the Bat Cave display on the southern side of the mezzanine, built into the roof space.