

2.3.2 Powerhouse Museum Design Principles Summary

This section is informed by research conducted by Design 5.

The following section has been drawn from "Powerhouse Museum Design Principles: Lionel Glendenning & Richard Johnson," prepared by Design 5, and has been summarised and interpreted by Curio Projects. The complete "Powerhouse Museum Design Principles: Lionel Glendenning & Richard Johnson" document had been included as Appendix E.

Key Design Priorities

~~As per the interview with Curio Projects, Lionel Glendenning summarised the following influences and design intentions for the design of the Powerhouse Museum Stage II Ultimo:~~

- "The great exhibition and railway buildings of the 19th Century including Garden Palaces, Sydney, Melbourne Exhibition Building, Central Railway Station, Sydney.
- A contextual awareness and historic reference.
- Creating old and new linkages with the architecture of Ultimo and the Powerhouse.
- Architecture within Architecture. House within a house.
- Adaptation and reuse of existing fragments of the city.
- Separation, layering, transparency, screen, density, diversity, intervention."¹⁰³

The mid-twentieth Century marked a major design revolution in museum architecture following the construction of landmark buildings such as the ~~Centre Pompidou (1971-1977)~~ and Musée d'Orsay (adapted in 1986) in Paris and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (1956-59). The Powerhouse Museum, and particularly the ~~Wran Building, acted as a direct, yet innovative,~~ response to these cultural centres and was heavily intertwined with emerging attitudes towards restoration and reuse of the local industrial buildings.

Development of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo was first considered in 1978 following a visit to the newly completed Centre Pompidou by NSW's then Premier Neville Wran.¹⁰⁴ In the same year, the NSW Government commissioned a Feasibility Study which was prepared by ~~Lack Ferguson Lindsay, Sharp and~~ Lionel Glendenning, ~~architects employed in the NSW Government Architects Office.~~¹⁰⁵ Glendenning was subsequently ~~appointed~~ the project's lead architect and went on to design the Claymore Primary School and now demolished IMAX Theatre in Darling Harbour.

In his 1978 report, Glendenning made particular mention of the Tramway Depot and Ultimo Power Station site in Ultimo, which offered a historically appropriate, economically effective and scale specific opportunity for the proposed museum.¹⁰⁶

An architectural brief for the museum was developed in 1978 by ~~Powerhouse~~ Curator Norman Harwood and ~~Director~~ Lindsay Sharp, along with ~~Lack Ferguson~~ Deputy Director and ~~Neville Wran~~ Premier. The team's primary design objectives focused on the creation of a centre that would 'embrace the challenges of the new age',¹⁰⁷ rather than adopt traditional museum and exhibition design philosophies. They envisioned a building that 'bridged' the gap between the traditional style and the more radical, experimental, hands on experience, interactive type, of museum of today and the future.¹⁰⁸ Glendenning responded by incorporating key elements of the site's history, primarily its connections to the Industrial Revolution, rail technology and electricity generation, with influences from Baroque architecture and landmark nineteenth Century Australian exhibition spaces such as Sydney's Garden Palace and Melbourne Exhibition Building, into his design.¹⁰⁹

Retention and adaptive re-use of the site's original buildings, primarily the Ultimo Power House and Tram Sheds, was also a key component of the museum's design development. Glendenning later described his overall intention as one that involved sustainability, resource management and the environment, where existing resources were retained and buildings re-used.¹¹⁰ To house the museum's collection, and address the Government's vision for the museum, he incorporated the Wran Building into the design. The building, a two vaulted post-modernist structure as Glendenning recalled, he intended to complement and contradict the site's existing character, history and objects. Glendenning also recalled he intended to accentuate the old and new, ensuring each was separated from the other, with no new elements touching old elements and vice versa.¹¹¹ The grand and imposing vaults of the building took their cues from Sydney's Garden Palace with its ghost-like transparency,¹¹² and the Normanton Railway Station's archway.

A key to the architecture was the sense of 'beginning a journey', hence the railway station metaphor, the space-capturing arch of Normanton railway station, Queensland.¹¹³

The overall size and form of the Wran Building was also designed to create an ongoing connection between Sydney's past and future through 'cultural memory'.¹¹⁴ Glendenning saw it as a structure that would act as a landmark that would be replicated across the cityscape and eventually form part of the city's psyche.

Together with exhibition designer Richard Johnson, primary intentions for the internal museum spaces themselves were to create diverse galleries that were flexible, surprising and adaptable to the desires and tastes of exhibition goers. According to Glendenning, each room was designed to respect the original function of retained buildings, including their fabric and form.¹¹⁵ Both designers wanted to create a strong contrast within the museum's internal spaces by incorporating large and small rooms into the buildings that could create a sense of purpose and focus.¹¹⁶ These influences can be seen in the Turbine and Boiler Halls which were used to house the museum's larger collections such as aircrafts, steam engines and locomotives, while also housing small, self-contained exhibition spaces and even structures.

The Museum was designed to be embedded in its location, the way Jern Utzon's Sydney Opera House, which had been completed a decade earlier, embodied its surrounding environment by mimicking elements synonymous with Sydney Harbour like boats, birds, clouds and shells. The Wran Building was similarly developed to respond to its immediate and broader environment by incorporating industrial forms and materials into its design and scale. He was ~~extremely inspired~~ by Utzon's distinct interior design which while minimal was characterised by decorative ceilings and coloured draped curtains.¹¹⁷ This is evident in Glendenning's use of contrasting colours throughout the museum, for example, black handrails, green columns, red steam vents, Italian nougat tiles and a painted sky mural.

George Freedman

"needles had any sense of retention of historic industrial bldgs."

Shed previously designed (1986)

dates ~~very~~ ~~many~~ ~~generations~~ * Oh my crap!

W the original house of the MAA's

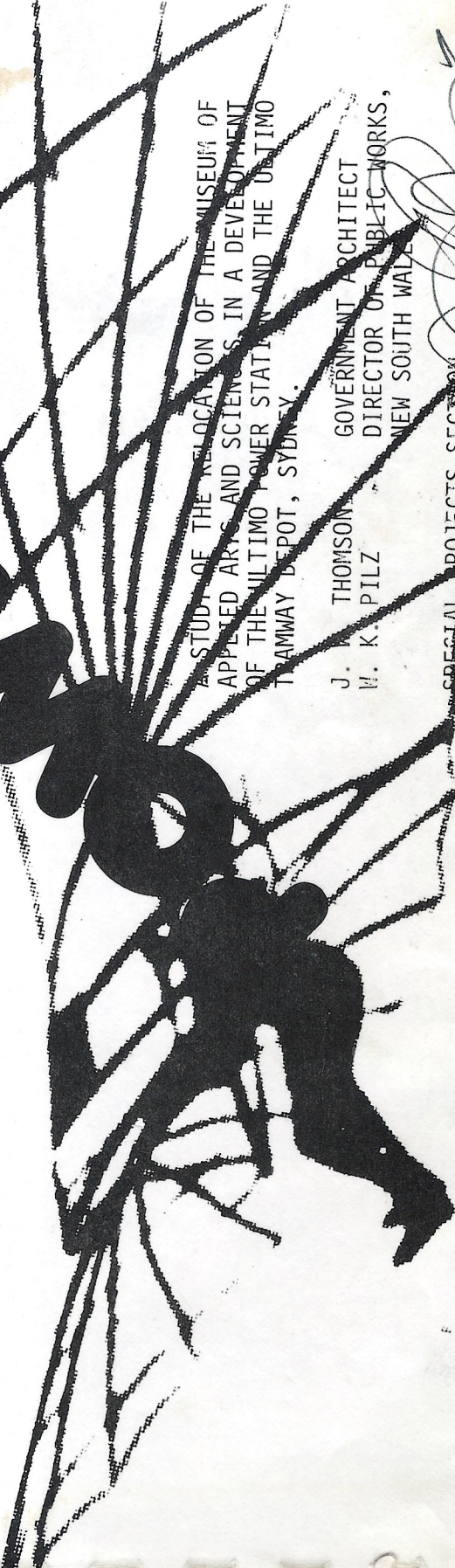
for the reuse of bldgs and contextual references in context to 'era' down clean space ships' landing in Sydney

Trouble finding

Norm He used centers Deputy Director

LIONEL
GENDENNING

HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT



A STUDY OF THE RELOCATION OF THE MUSEUM OF
APPLIED ARTS AND SCIENCES IN A DEVELOPMENT
OF THE ULTIMO POWER STATION AND THE ULTIMO
TRAMWAY DEPOT, SYDNEY.

J. M. THOMSON GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT
W. K. PILZ DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS,
NEW SOUTH WALES

SPECIAL PROJECTS SECTION
GOVERNMENT ARCHITECTS' OFFICE
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