

# MLC Centre Sydney

Address 19. 29 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW, 2000

Practice Harry Seidler & Associates

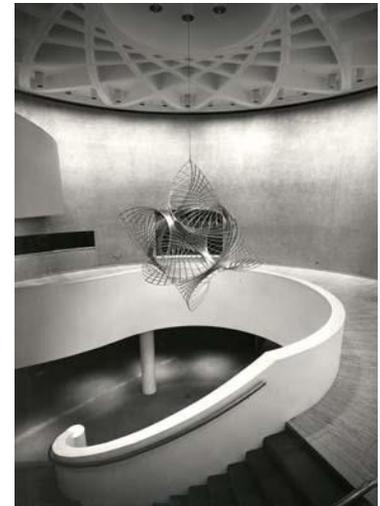
Designed 1972 Completed 1978

History & Description The MLC Centre is bounded by Martin Place, King & Castlereagh Streets, Lees Court & the remnants of Rowe Street; the consolidation of 23 properties. Seidler took advantage of bonus floor space of 4:1 awardable for the provision of public open space, placing the 65 storey office tower to the south of the site to avoid the underground railway line & to form a sun-filled stepped plaza to the north, opening onto Martin Place. Additional requirements included the provision of the Commercial Travellers Club, vehicular ramps parallel to the two street frontages, & above & below ground retail space. The 250m tall tower, then the tallest in Australia, was based on a square plan, placed diagonally on the site, with the corners chamfered resulting in an octagonal plan. This was seen as more efficient, spatially, environmentally & structurally creating a larger floor plate than a comparable rectangular plan with similar street setbacks. The tower footprint occupied only 20% of the total site & achieved a marginally higher level of view exposure & solar access to the interiors, & was a form which would better resist wind loads.



Tower from King Street

The design of the tower combined innovations used in the firm's design of Australia Square, 1967, & the contemporaneous Trade Group Offices (Edmund Barton Offices), Canberra, 1974, developed with the advice of Italian structural engineer Pier Luigi Nervi. The tower is supported by 8 massive, heavily loaded perimeter columns, each turned out at the base to spread & transfer the loads. The columns taper in section until they are flush with the façade at the top of the tower expressing the decreasing loading & creating an optical illusion of the tower's height. The white quartz finished columns & spandrels were constructed in precast forms as the finish with concrete poured into the assembled precast formwork units on site in a progressive sequence of columns, spandrels & ribbed floors, achieving a cycle of one floor every four days. The form of the slab spandrels expressed the structural change from the mid-span, with the greatest moment loading, to a full depth section at the column support with the greater shear loading. The glazing was set back from the spandrel face so that the depth of the slab form provided sun shading. The innovative progressive strength system of floor construction by the use of reinforcing welded to form self-supporting trusses required no conventional formwork or props. Plastic coffers were clipped onto the trusses which were progressively concreted to complete the primary beams & slab. The designs of the curved rib floor slab expressed as the entry lobby ceiling, the single-curved tapered mushroom-shaped column of the Commercial Travellers Club, the interlocking rib ceiling of the Theatre Royal entrance, & the restaurant ceiling were developed by Nervi. The public spaces feature artworks by Charles Perry, Alexander Calder and Josef Albers.

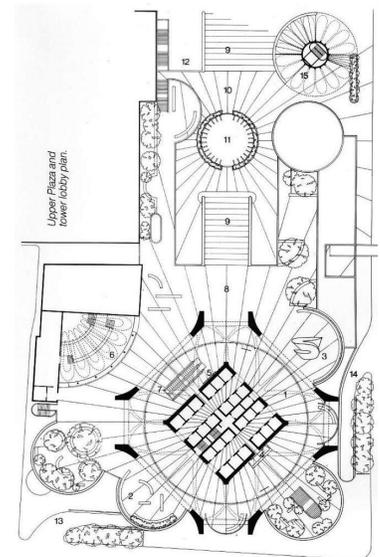


Interlocking rib ceiling to the Theatre Royal. Source: All photographs Max Dupain, copyright H Seidler.

This is an important building in the work of Seidler who was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal in 1996 & the RAIA Gold Medal in 1976. The building was awarded both the RAIA Civic Design Award in 1979 & The Sulman Award, jointly, in 1983.

Statement of Significance MLC Centre is an outstanding example of modern architecture combined with the innovative urban form of the plaza by one of Australia's notable architects. It has added significant for the collaboration of Seidler & notable Italian structural engineer Pier Luigi Nervi in the innovative structural design & technical solutions derived in order to construct what was the tallest building in Australia. Its approach to urban redevelopment in Sydney's CBD was innovative.

Criteria Applicable N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement N6. Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



Site Plan