

Grosvenor Place
Address 205. 225 George Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000
Practice Harry Seidler & Associates
Designed 1982 Completed 1988

History &
Description

The site bounded by George, Grosvenor, Harrington & Essex Streets was released for redevelopment in 1983 by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority with a 99 year lease as part of a strategy to fund conservation works in the historic Rocks area to the north. In the design of Grosvenor tower, Seidler's interest in non-orthogonal geometry since the early 1960s came to fruition with a plan form of opposing arcs, slightly offset & placed diagonally on the site, exhibiting an influence of the City Hall, Toronto, Canada by Viljo Revell, 1958-1965.

The form was efficient in satisfying a number of site constraints: the need to conserve heritage listed buildings aligning Grosvenor Street to the south; to provide a diagonal pedestrian circulation through to The Rocks & to take advantage of views of Sydney Harbour in both directions. The curved plan allowed long column-free spans of 14.6m & provided a high level of view exposure & natural light to the interiors of the typical floor of 2,000m². The tower was constructed with a steel frame (as opposed to a concrete frame which was more usual for Seidler in Sydney) & a concrete core. The façade of 11 segmented bays to each curve was clad in prefabricated grey granite-faced reinforced-glass spandrel panels as permanent formwork & the 2.3 m high glazing is shielded by aluminium sunhoods.

The varying sunshade configurations to control solar heat gain set between flush columns & a small number of recessed balconies provided an interesting play of space & form to the tower's façade. The system of projecting sunshade units on a curving façade, the angle of the each changing in response to orientation, was initially conceived in conjunction with Marcel Breuer for the Australian Embassy in Paris. The columns of the tower are gathered in groups of three into piloti to form a grand colonnade giving a sense of scale & importance to the three storey, 10 m high, circular glazed lobby that is set well back from the colonnade.

The lobby spaces feature a ceiling of exposed radial concrete ribs, a fountain, & three curvilinear themed wall-relief paintings "Pillars and Cones" by the New York artist Frank Stella. The consolidation of the floor space into a 46 storey tower building occupying only 30 percent of the site allowed two spacious open plazas; one glass covered with a space frame structure, & one enclosed to the north west by a quadrant shaped pavilion, each surrounded with curved granite walls to the street frontages.

Energy efficiency is provided with shaded glazing, roof solar collectors & off-peak electric energy stored in a basement ice-bank for peak periods of air conditioning. Seidler was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1976 & the RIBA Gold Medal in 1996. The building was awarded both The Sulman Award in 1991 & the Lustig & Moar Prize in 1989.

Statement of
Significance

Grosvenor Place is an outstanding example of modern architecture combined with the innovative plaza levels, by one of Australia's notable architects. The tower embodies structural & energy conservation advances & demonstrates exemplary skill in the handling of form & materials. The impressive design of the ground level plazas resolved the varied planning constraints of a city block with varied street levels. Seidler pioneered modern architecture in Australia & this is an important work in his career.

Criteria
Applicable

N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history



Grosvenor Place under construction
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View from George Street:
Source: M. Desgrand 2011



View of the ground floor piloti & ribbed ceiling.
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