

## ANU School of Art (Canberra High School)

Address Childers Street, Canberra City, ACT, 2601

Practices Department of the Interior Works & Services Branch, Canberra,  
C.C.M. Whitley, Senior Architect under  
E.H. Henderson, Chief Architect (Canberra High School).  
Daryl Jackson Evan Walker Architects Pty Ltd (Canberra School of Art).

Designed 1936 & 1978 Completed 1939 & 1981

History & Description

The ANU School of Art is sited at the end of a cul-de-sac adjacent to the ANU campus and Civic. Originally designed as the Canberra High School it has an imposing central clock tower that closes the vista & complements a long symmetrical façade terminated by semicircular ends projecting beyond the wings. Two side wings extend further to the rear. Designed in a combination of Inter-War Art Deco & Inter-war Stripped Classical styles the two-storey façade is divided into recessed & projecting vertical bays with parallel line motifs & stylised low-relief ornamentation below a minimal corniced parapet that conceals the roof. The school is the second & largest designed by Whitley, who was responsible for the design of most of Canberra's housing & public buildings in the 1930s, as well as other government buildings throughout Australia including banks. Sir Zelman Cowen described the school as "one of Canberra's strongest architectural statements".

Whitley, (1886-1942), qualified as an architect in Melbourne in 1920. He joined the Commonwealth Public Works Branch in 1912 & later assisted the Chief Architect John Smith Murdoch. He was transferred to Canberra in 1929 & at the time of his death he was Senior Architect in the Department.

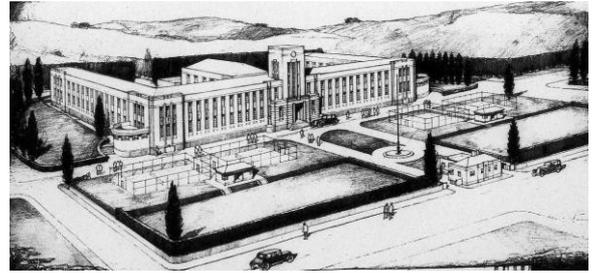
The school was converted into the Canberra School of Art in 1980-81 by Daryl Jackson Evan Walker Architects. The extensions to the south include double height galleries, workshops & a library, placed along the axis as interconnected pavilions, & constructed in bagged & painted masonry with fully glazed walls opening onto brick paved courtyards. The complex was awarded the inaugural National RAIA Sir Zelman Cowan Award in 1981.

Statement of Significance

The original Canberra High School is a significant example of civic architecture in the combined Inter-War Stripped Classical & Inter-War Art Deco styles in Canberra. The articulation of the façade & its geometric decorative elements are shown here to good effect. The considerable conversion of the school into the Canberra School of Art has been done in an exemplary way that was recognised at the time by the awarding of the National RAIA Sir Zelman Cowan Award.

Criteria Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.  
N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.



1936 Design. Note rear central wing not built. (Source: National Trust of Australia (ACT), Tutty Collection).



High School front façade. (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).



High School semicircular ends. (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).



Paved Courtyard, 1981 additions. (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).