Revised date 18/11/2010

WAIT Architecture Building

Address: Kent Street, Bentley, Perth, Western Australia.

Practice: Public Works Department –Vin Davies

Designed: 1968-1969 Completed: 1971

History & Description

Built specifically for the Architecture Department of the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) in 1971 the building plan reflected the architectural teaching practices of the mid twentieth century. It was designed by Vin Davies of the Public Works Department who also designed other buildings on the WAIT campus including the Robertson Library. WAIT (now Curtin University) opened in 1965 as a new Western Australia technical institution.

The building is a seven storey essay in bold modernist brutalism exploiting the sculptural possibilities of off-form concrete and contrasting dark red brick. The aesthetics of off-form concrete using grained timber boards was rigorously controlled during construction by drawings showing the placement of individual boards.

To counter the harsh Western Australian sun Davies formed overhangs, deep-set windows and concrete louvres, which cast prominent shadows across the building in the height of summer.

Internally the building was conceived as a medieval street translated into a modern idiom. The massive central space that extends the length of the building is punctuated by stairs and bridges and was meant to demonstrate to students the basics of architecture though the play of structure, materials and changing light. *It's a real teaching machine that space. The building is provided with so many choreographed opportunities for "chance" encounters that by the end of the day one has had conversations with a hundred people or more (J. Buch, 1995)*.

The building still houses the architecture course although changing teaching patterns has altered the use of its spaces.

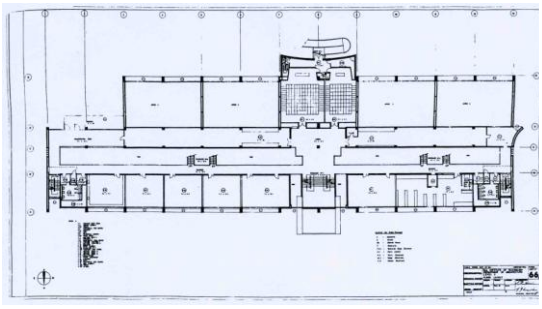
Statement of Significance

The architecture building has aesthetic value as a significant example of brutalist architecture and innovative interior spaces which were meant to stimulate the architectural student experience.

The building is highly valued by the thousands of architecture students who have experienced its spaces for nearly 50 years and is significant for demonstrating the development of architectural teaching practices over that time.

The premium finish off-form concrete, illustrates a high degree of technical achievement that was both creative and practical.

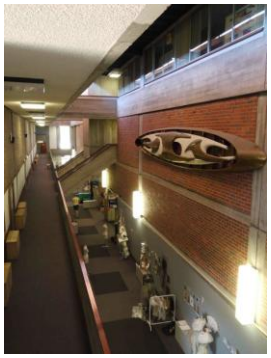
Criteria Applicable: N1, N2, N3, N4, N6.



PWD fourth level plan of the Building *The Architect*, 1995, Vol 35, No 1

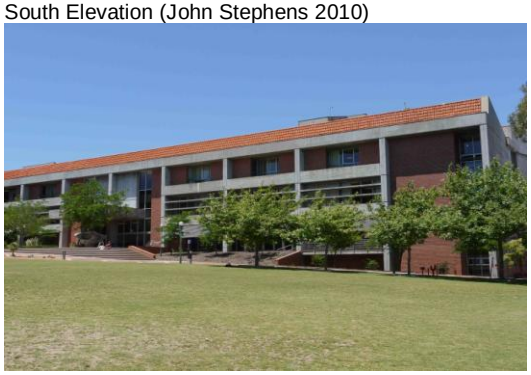
Interior of Building in 1971 *The Architect* 1995, Vol 35 No 1

South Elevation (John Stephens 2010)



Interior (John Stephens 2010)

East Elevation (John Stephens 2010)



North Elevation (John Stephens 2010)