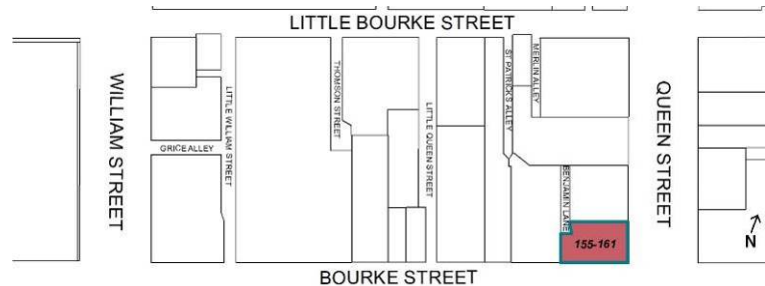


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building (155-161 Queen Street, Melbourne), April 2022

Heritage Place: Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building



PS ref no: HO1368



What is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street, Melbourne, completed in 1962 to a design by Bates Smart and McCutcheon.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form and scale
- Original non-loadbearing precast concrete curtain wall cladding including recessed window openings and transom panels set between concrete 'pilasters'.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, designed and engineered by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and constructed in 1961-62, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the rapid growth of corporate architecture in 1950s-60s' Melbourne that reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office

buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s, cementing Melbourne's pre-eminent role in the state for financial institutions. The South British Insurance Company owned and occupied the building from 1962 to 1977. (Criterion A)

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is significant as a largely intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne in the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic and incorporated features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The subject building exhibits the key characteristics of the style, including its non-loadbearing precast concrete curtain wall cladding, recessed window openings and transom panels set between concrete 'pilasters'. (Criterion D)

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is aesthetically significant as a refined and substantial example of the later development in curtain wall design constructed during the 1960s when a mix of materials was utilised to create a greater modularity and three-dimensional quality to the facades. Its aesthetic significance lies in the retention of the fine detailing of its facades to both Queen Street and Bourke Street, where vertical modules of recessed glazing and opaque transom panels set between concrete mullions or 'pilasters' that are disconnected at each floor level create a horizontal shadow line and give a refined modularity to the facade. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated March 2022)