

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R104

Name of Place: Sri Lankan Embassy

Other/Former Names: Private Hospital

Address/Location: 35 Empire Circuit FORREST ACT 2603
Block 1 Section 11 of Forrest

Listing Status:
Date of Listing:
Citation Revision No:
Citation Revision Date:

Other Heritage Listings:
Level of Significance:
Category:
Style:

Date of Design:
Construction Period:
Date of Additions:

Designer:
Client/Owner/Lessee:
Builder:

Statement of Significance

Description

This building, which now serves as the Sri Lankan High Commission, was originally designed by Kenneth Oliphant for Sister Winifred Petrie in 1935 as a private hospital. It occupies an irregular corner site at the junction of Arthur Circle and Empire Circuit. The hospital was originally known as "Allawah". The building exhibits some of the characteristics of the Inter-War Mediterranean style [1915-1940] with its white-painted rendered walls, low pitch roof of Marseilles tiles, terrace, formal entrance treatment, two paned double hung windows and wrought iron detailing.

The building is single storey and, unlike other buildings of the Inter-War Mediterranean style, almost symmetrical. A formal entrance porch is located in the centre of the 'front' [ie. Empire Circuit] elevation, with wings projecting forward at an angle at each end around a curved entrance driveway. The dominant driveway configuration was an obvious design requirement of the original Hospital. The later use as a travel lodge would also have utilized the driveway / entrance configuration.

On completion in 1935, three sets of French doors to the entrance provided access to an Enquiries room, an Entrance Hall and an Observation Room. Accommodation for a Kitchen, Dining Room, Obstetrics Theatre, Sterilising Room and Operating Theatre was also provided to the front of the building. The rear section comprised four double wards and two single wards. The four double wards were arranged to present a zig-zag effect which accommodated three curved balconies. This configuration allowed for direct northern orientation for each of the double ward rooms. A Nursery, bathrooms, Laundry, Boiler Room and Scrub Room were also accommodated. Nurses Quarters were provided within a separate building comprising five bedrooms, lounge and bathroom.

The building appears to have had only two alterations since Sister Petrie, both of whom contracted Kenneth Oliphant to design alterations to the building in accordance with their needs. Despite this, the building retains its original exterior from with little alteration of addition.

The major results of the 1948 conversion of the Hospital to Travel Lodge use were internal changes to the portico / reception hall area, and modification to the three original 'double ward' rooms. Other changes were made to the central [former ward] area, with the result that two large office spaces were thus created.

The current conformation of the building and its grounds is much as it was following the 1952 alterations. The High Commission of Sri Lanka have now been occupants of the building group since 1952, ie. An occupancy of 44 years. In view of this longevity of occupation, no. 35 Empire Circuit is publicly perceived as the 'Sri Lankan Embassy Building'.

There has been little radical change to the exterior of the building. Internal inspection of the building has been limited because of the present use. Some large pine trees line the Arthur Circle frontage to the site, and two of these trees have been removed. Small miscellaneous and minor screen wall additions have also been erected to the Empire Circuit frontage of the building.

Condition and Integrity

Background/History

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

Other Information Sources