

# CAIRNS ART GALLERY

# AUDIO TOUR BUILDING HISTORY

## FOYER

Welcome to the Cairns Art Gallery. The Gallery is housed in one of the few remaining heritage buildings in Cairns.

Construction of the building began in 1934 and was completed in March 1936 at a cost of £34,173, equivalent to \$2 million Australian dollars today.

The building was designed as part of the Cairns Court House Complex by Government architect RC. Nowland. Many of Nowland's buildings are listed on the Queensland Heritage register. Nowland also designed the Cairns Post Office building and the former City Council building both nearby on Abbott Street. All three buildings were designed in the Georgian revival style and share design elements such as the classical columns.

The Court House Complex consists of the Court House building, the original Mulgrave Shire building as well as this, the Public Curator's Building. All buildings that form the complex have now been carefully restored to heritage values.

Upon completion the building was known as the Public Curator's Building which is still its official name in the Queensland Heritage Register. It was named this as it housed several government departments including the State Government Insurance Office, Tourist Bureau, Land Commission and Agricultural Bank. The building also housed the Forestry Department and this is reflected in the use of 16 different rainforest timbers throughout the building.

In this foyer area you will notice the decorative terrazzo floors which can be found throughout the building and wood panelling crafted from local timbers. The solid timber reception counter is an original feature.

The decorative lead lighting above the doorways are found throughout the building, these were produced in Brisbane.

# PUBLIC CURATORS GALLERY

The wide balconies, found on three sides of the building, were important in keeping the building cool before air conditioning. The French-doors and casement windows found throughout the building were open during the day to allow air flow to the internal offices.

During the 1984 refurbishment, the three balconies closest to Abbott St were enclosed with laminated glass windows to assist with climate control. By keeping the original ornate balustrades on the outside of the windows the balconies retain their original feel.

The flooring on the first floor is silver-beige Chillagoe marble and was added during refurbishment. Chillagoe marble is used in a number of prominent public buildings in Cairns and around Australia, including the School of the Arts building, Performing Arts Centre, the Pullman International hotel, Cairns Airport and Parliament House in Canberra. The pattern of the marble was designed to replicate the original terrazzo found throughout the building.

Again, the heritage walls have been clad with false walls, and the ornate ceiling remains on display.

# IRELAND FAMILY GALLERY

The Ireland family were strong supporters during the pre-opening, fund-raising campaign, with Ron Ireland appointed as Chairman of the campaign.

In this gallery space, you will notice a false ceiling has been added. This was to allow for the essential services such as electrical and data cabling to be available to the top floor of the gallery.

# LOFT GALLERY

The Loft Gallery is housed in the original empty roof space and was converted to a usable gallery in 1994 during the refurbishment.

The staircase and lift were added at this time, with the lift being connected to the Loft Gallery by a ramp as the roof pitch and spacing did not allow the lift to travel any higher.

The large timber beam in the loft is not original and was added to bring the structure up to contemporary building safety code.

The flooring, which was originally carpet was replaced with timber (Spotted Gum) in 2018, elevating the space to a more contemporary feel. At this time, the exposed beams were stripped back to reveal the timber, as they had been painted white.