

Yule House

Address 309-311 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000

Practice Oakley & Parkes

Designed 1931

Completed 1932

History & Description The site had been owned since the early 1900s by William Yule, a wealthy Melbourne businessman, and later by his estate until 1985. Percy Oakley had been known to William Yule and his firm was commissioned to design a modern and fireproof replacement. The building was constructed during the Depression and economy was a major influence on the design. The building was intended to house retail shops on the ground floor and workrooms above, with long windows across the front to let in maximum daylight. The single span across each of the floors meant that no columns interrupted the interior spaces, each of which accommodated a single tenant. Yule house is a small five storey reinforced concrete Streamlined Moderne style office building. Its principal facade is clad in light-coloured terracotta faience tiles made by Wunderlich Ltd. On the front facade the floors are divided by protruding horizontal banded spandrels between horizontal strips of multi-paned steel-framed windows. An important feature of the main elevation is the elegant flat plate-metal lettering, highly evocative of the Moderne period. The name YULE HOUSE appears above the entrance and is also attached to the first floor spandrel, the street number is incised into the second spandrel, and the date 1932 is inscribed into the top spandrel. The parapet is crowned by an off-centre castellated coping. At the ground floor level are two shops, one on each side of the central entrance. These have large metal-framed display windows, originally with curved glass, one of which has been altered. The entrance hall and lobby have beige-coloured terrazzo flooring with a contrasting pink edging.



Perspective view 1931

Statement of Significance Yule House is of architectural significance as the first commercial building in Australia to demonstrate the principles of the emerging Moderne style, which in the late 1930s was to become the most fashionable style for buildings such as office blocks, department stores, car show-rooms and cinemas. It is an important example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architectural firm of Oakley & Parkes. During the twenties, the firm had designed mostly in the Mediterranean bungalow style. Examples include the Lodge (1926) and a large area of low density housing at Forest, Canberra. Yule House was a radically new design direction for them. Later they were to go on to design ANZAC House (1937-8), winner of the 1943 RVIA Street Medal.

References: Citation for VHR #H0703, Donald Leslie Johnson, *Australian Architecture 1901-51*, pp 98, 144.

Criteria Applicable N1 - Significant Heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.

N5 - Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



Street elevation 2007, image by David Thompson



Shows fine detailing at entrance, image from VHR



Shows detailing of spandrel panels & parapet 2007, by David Thompson