

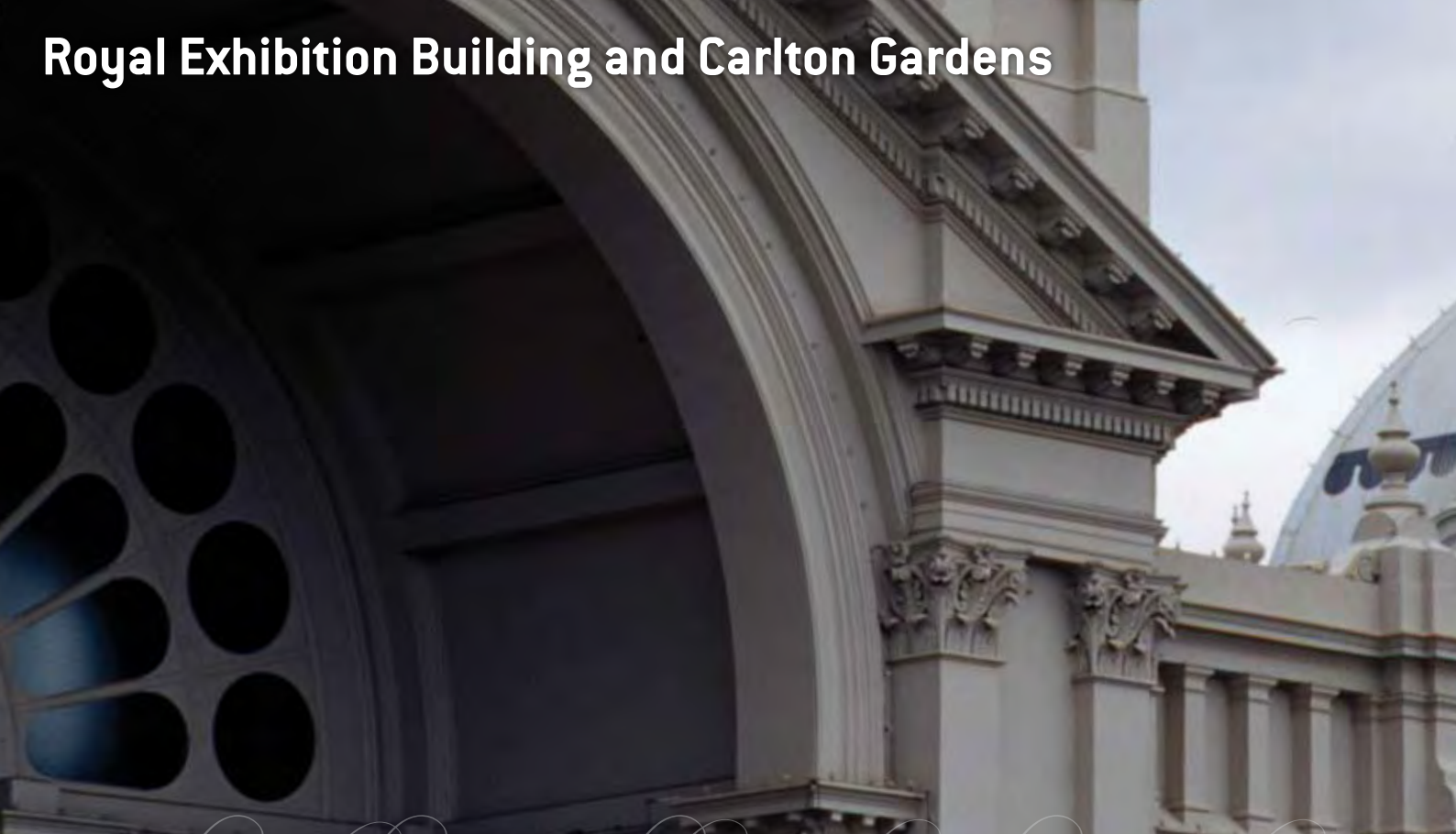


Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004

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# Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens



The Royal Exhibition Building was built for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition and hosted Melbourne's second international exhibition, the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition. It is one of the great enduring monuments to the International Exhibition movement, which began in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Royal Exhibition Building, in its original setting of the Carlton Gardens, was purpose-designed to be the Great Hall or "Palace of Industry", the focal point of international exhibitions. The scale and grandeur of the building reflects the values and aspirations attached to industrialisation and represents its international face.

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, Melbourne, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004 because of its outstanding universal cultural heritage values:

- exhibits an important interchange of human values over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design.

The Royal Exhibition Building was built in Melbourne's Carlton Gardens for the Melbourne International Exhibition. It subsequently hosted Melbourne's second international exhibition, the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition. It is one of the great enduring monuments to the International Exhibition movement, which began in the mid-19th century.

International exhibitions were staged around the world to demonstrate the confidence and achievements of the industrial age. They provided a mechanism for the worldwide exchange of goods, technology, ideas, culture and values, and heralded a new era of trading networks and the modern international economy. The exhibitions were a spectacular shop front for the industrial revolution, which shaped some of the greatest global social and economic transformations.

Around 1.5 million people visited the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition (including repeat visitors).

Around 2.2 million visited the 1888 Centennial Exhibition, amounting to about 69 per cent of the population of the Australian colonies.

The Royal Exhibition Building is representative of the international exhibition movement style, based on a Beaux-Arts axial scheme with the building as a palace, primarily in the German *Rundbogenstil* and Italian Renaissance style.

The soaring dome was influenced by the Florence cathedral dome designed by Brunelleschi. The building is cruciform in plan, comprising a pair of elongated rectangular wings, extending east and west, with a transept to the north and a truncated transept to the south.

During the 1880 and 1888 international exhibitions, the South Garden was the site for the "pleasure garden" that contained exhibits. The North Garden was used to house temporary exhibition pavilions during the two international exhibitions. It was re-landscaped as parkland and now also houses the Melbourne Museum.

The scale and grandeur of the building reflects the values and aspirations attached to industrialisation and its international face. The Building boasts many of the important features that made the exhibitions so dramatic and effective, including a dome, a great hall, giant entry portals, versatile display areas, axial planning and complementary gardens and viewing areas.

The Royal Exhibition Building was purpose-designed to be the Great Hall or "Palace of Industry", the focal point of international exhibitions. Unlike many international exhibitions, Melbourne's Exhibition Building was conceived as a permanent structure that would have a future role in the cultural activities of the growing city of Melbourne.

The Carlton Gardens were designed by the architect who designed the building and still retain the layout of the original Exhibition Gardens. The formal ornamental palace garden, as represented by Carlton Gardens, is substantially intact in form and in its treed avenues.

The South Garden, which is essentially in the Gardenesque style with classical elements, contains parterre garden



beds, significant avenues, including the “Grand Allee” and specimen and clusters of trees. The feature entrance fountain of 1880, the French fountain and a granite drinking fountain are surviving features. The South Garden continues to be used for parkland and exhibition purposes.

The North Garden was designed to be a complementary landscape that would be reinstated after the removal of the temporary exhibits in the northern portion of the site. It was restored after the 1880 exhibition with a main east-west path and treed avenues of oak and elm.

Despite the great impact of the international exhibition movement worldwide and the impressive nature of the many buildings designed and built to hold these exhibitions, few remain. Even fewer retain their authenticity in terms of original location and condition. The Royal Exhibition Building, in its original setting of the Carlton Gardens, is one of the rare survivors.

It continues to be used as a general exhibition hall, which is unusual for surviving international exhibition buildings in other parts of the world. The authenticity of the building and gardens has ensured its association with the exhibition movement remains substantial.

Museum Victoria is responsible for the day-to-day management of the property in conjunction with the City of Melbourne Council which manages the Carlton Gardens.



**title page:** The Royal Exhibition Building is one of the great enduring monuments to the International Exhibition Movement Mark Mohell & DEWHA

**top strip:** The scale and grandeur of the building reflects the values and aspirations attached to industrialisation Mark Mohell & DEWHA

**top:** The building continues to be used as a general exhibition hall Rodney Start, Melbourne Museum

**above:** The building boasts many of the important features that made the exhibitions so dramatic Mark Mohell & DEWHA