

K

irkbride

Past & Present



Sydney College Of The Arts



The University of Sydney

SCA
SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

K *irkbride* *Past & Present*



Home to Sydney College of the Arts,
a faculty of the University of Sydney,
Kirkbride was originally designed in the 1880's
as a state-of-the-art psychiatric institution.



A Brief History of Kirkbride

Callan Park Hospital

The Kirkbride complex is a series of individual single, two and three storey sandstone buildings in the Victorian free classical style set in parkland on the shores of Iron Cove at Rozelle. The complex was originally designed and constructed for use as a state-of-the-art psychiatric hospital. In 1873 the State Government purchased the site, then known as Callan Estates, for £12,500 to build a new psychiatric hospital. In 1876, Garry Owen House, the original homestead on the site, now the NSW Writer's Centre, was used to accommodate the first patients at the new hospital.

The Scottish born colonial architect James Johnstone Barnet (1827-1904) designed Kirkbride in 1877, in consultation with the then Director of Mental Health Dr. Frederick Norton Manning (1839-1903). Manning based his designs on a study of overseas methods of asylum administration and patient care, and was inspired by plans for an institution designed by architects Giles and Gough, built in Chartham Downs in Kent in 1875. The complex was named after Dr. William Kirkbride, an American who preached the curative powers of pleasant surroundings. Scottish born Charles Moore (1820-1905), curator of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, designed the gardens between the campus and Balmain Road.

The largest Australian public works project of the nineteenth century, the first stone was laid in April 1880 and continued until January 1885. On April 23, 1883 the laying of a memorial stone took place. The whole neo-classic complex is built of sandstone, four-fifths of which was obtained on site with the excavation providing an underground reservoir for water. The rest of the sandstone was quarried from Pymont. Buildings were fitted with slate roofs, timber floors, copper down pipes and high arched ceilings. Hundreds of mini-Doric cast iron columns support the verandah roofs while acting as down pipes for the collection of water. Keeping watch over the site is a Venetian clock tower with a tidal ball-spire that rises and falls according to the water level of the underground reservoir.

Kirkbride features a pavilion-type plan, arranged around interlinked courtyards. Sunlight and air were seen to bring general moral benefits to asylum patients, and the buildings are well-lit and airy and open onto verandahs that link the various courtyards. A high sandstone wall encircles the complex, coupled with a ha-ha device (steep trench) designed to render the necessary security while retaining the open outlook and views. The site was divided according to gender and status, with male patients at one end and females at the other. In between, within the central courtyard and organised east-west along what was called the “axis of authority”, were the medical officers’ residences, hospital administration and dining rooms. The hospital chapel separated the male and female dining rooms.

Kirkbride was well received in a report appearing in an 1885 edition of the Illustrated Sydney News: “It consisted of a magnificent pile of buildings, forming a conspicuous object of the locality and visible for many miles around. ... The Calan Park Asylum is at once a monument to the liberality of a country willing to contribute so large a cost for such a purpose, to the skilful brain that designed it, and to the contractors that built it. The arrangement of the buildings, from every point of view, exceeds any other of a similar kind in these colonies, and almost in the old country.”

The buildings were originally designed to accommodate 666 patients. During its history, the complex has suffered periods of overcrowding, necessitating the building of new buildings. By the time of the Royal Commission into Callan Park in 1961, there were some 1,750 patients in residence. In 1976 Callan Park Hospital and the Broughton Hall Psychiatric Clinic were amalgamated to become Rozelle Hospital. The buildings of Kirkbride was used for patient care until 1994, when the last remaining patients were transferred to more appropriate accommodation on the Rozelle Hospital Campus.

Sydney College of the Arts

Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) was the first tertiary art school established in New South Wales when in 1970 a government report, the Gleeson Report, recommended the establishment in Sydney of ‘... a corporate college of advanced education ... for the purpose of providing tertiary education for persons preparing for professional careers in art and design’. In 1976 Sydney College of the Arts was established as a College of Advanced Education and enrolled its first students when it took over responsibility for design diploma courses previously conducted by the Department of Technical and Further Education. A visual arts program was offered by SCA the following year. In 1988, the Design School and the Visual Arts School separated with the design courses moving to the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology, Sydney. SCA became solely dedicated to the research and practice of contemporary visual arts. On 1 January 1990, SCA became an academic college of the University of Sydney with status equivalent to a faculty. In April 1996, after twenty years located in ‘temporary’ premises in Balmain, SCA relocated to the refurbished historic sandstone buildings of Kirkbride. Nineteen million dollars were spent renovating, adapting and rehabilitating more than twenty under-maintained century-old buildings. The Government Architect’s approach to the refurbishment has been one of minimum intervention, and included restoring the stormwater system, healing salt-corroded stonework and resurfacing three courtyards. The approach was cost effective while maintaining the standards required of working on a heritage site. This sensitive attitude to conservation was rewarded with a Merit Award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1997 and builds upon the work of James Barnet, colonial architect.

The Honourable Peter Collins MP, Minister for the Arts on 2 November 1989, dedicated Kirkbride to SCA. *These fine buildings, the work of the Colonial Architect James Barnet and Dr F Norton Manning, completed in 1885, are dedicated to the Sydney College of the Arts to form a centre of learning in the visual and performing arts within the University of Sydney. “ The Sydney College of the Arts - the point where many artistic streams converge to form an irresistible torrent”.*

Historical Tour of Kirkbride

Welcome to Sydney College of the Arts. We hope you enjoy your walk around these magnificent buildings. We will commence our tour of Kirkbride at the Main entrance to the complex in Building 13.

Building 13: Main Entrance

The main entrance has a detailed façade with a sandstone pediment over the entry and two bay windows on either side of the main entry. On April 23, 1883 the laying of a memorial stone was performed. In the cavity beneath the stone was placed a ‘time capsule’ containing daily newspapers, coins, and a scroll documenting the history of the site relevant to the ceremony. 1883 is carved in Roman numerals above the entry. The pediment carries a beautifully carved Arms of New South Wales. The beautiful sandstone “poodle leg” columns of the main entrance are miniaturized copies of columns from the Royal Saltworks of Arc-et-Senans, located near Besançon in the Franche-Comté region of France, and built by the renowned French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736 - 1806), in the 1770’s, under orders from Louis XV. Building 13 is located on the eastern side of the east-west axis of the whole Kirkbride block. Building 13 was the hospital Administration Block and included the admissions office, x-ray facility, dental surgery and medical officer’s quarters (c 1883). The foyer of Building 13 is now the EXIT gallery. Building 13 currently houses the Theories of Art Practice offices and seminar rooms. Theories of art practice focus on the historical and theoretical concepts relating to contemporary art and design practice. Galleries One and Two are located on the right and left as you walk out of building 13 into the central courtyard.

We continue our tour in the central courtyard of the complex, with Building 21 consisting of the SCA Lecture Theatre located to the right, the Auditorium in the middle and SCA Gallery on the left.

Building 21: Lecture Theatre

During the 1960s, this room was used as the chapel. Sandstone crosses are still evident on either side of the main doorway. Originally it was the female dining room, and prior to that, the

sewing room. The windows are the same as those in the gallery but have black out curtains for lecturing purposes. The current lecture hall seats approximately 160 students.

Building 21: Auditorium

The Auditorium was originally the Recreation Hall and has a semi-circular apsidal dome with Victorian stain glass windows possibly made by Lyon, Cottier & Co. and probably imported. These windows incorporate the Royal Arms and allegorical figures representing the Arts and the Four Seasons in their design. The original 1880s timber beamed and paneled ceiling with stenciling on the underside of the beams and original colour scheme on the ceiling and the walls, is still intact above the 1960 false ceiling. If you step onto the stage and look up to the ceiling in the area where the film screen is located. There you will catch a glimpse of the original paintwork. The Auditorium is now mainly used as a foundation studio space for first year Bachelor of Visual Arts students.

Building 21: SCA Gallery

The SCA Gallery was also built around 1882 as the Gymnasium Hall. Please note the basketball court markings still evident on the floor. It was used originally as the male dining hall and then the mattress room. The original queen post roof trusses are still intact. The kitchen and bathrooms were later additions. The space is now used to host major national and international contemporary art exhibitions.

Exiting from SCA Gallery, if you turn right and continue through the break in wall enclosing the central courtyard you will come to the Glass studio.

Building 19: Glass Studio

This building was originally the Artisans Building or Engine Boiler House with coal store and Blacksmiths shop. It is constructed of sandstone with a high-trussed roof and was built c1883. Features of interest include the upper story monitor roof, circular vents in the east and west gable walls, fancy corbelled sandstone gabled eaves, the bell and its associated iron structure and sandstone arches which remain on the west gable façade. The building now houses the Glass studio, which focuses on contemporary object and design concepts in

glass, developing skills including glass blowing, casting, slumping, fusing and cold working. The Glass studio has played a major role in the development of contemporary glass in Australia, particularly in extending the medium beyond the object based work into installation. Next to building 19 is building 31, the 'hot-shop' housing the kilns and furnaces where glass blowing and casting takes place.

Directly opposite is Building 14.

Building 14: Jewellery & Object Studio

This building was first the Dispenser's and Chief Attendant's Residences, then the Cerebral Surgery Research Unit and in 1961 the Nurses Training School. On the ground floor and in the centre of the building is a paved enclosed courtyard complete with tiled wall plaques. The only access is via the surrounding windows. The building now houses jewellery and object workshops for processes including enameling, casting, polishing anodizing. The Jewellery and Object studio concentrates on concepts and techniques associated with the making of human-scale works within the disciplines of contemporary jewellery and object design.

Continue along the drive to the terracotta painted Building 17.

Building 17: SCA Workshop (c1950)

This was the Main Kitchen Block and is built on the site of the original Kirkbride stables. A single storey, brick building with a concealed ventilating saw-tooth trussed roof. Note the bagged and painted terracotta exterior that is an element that has been used throughout the site to highlight buildings which are not part of the original complex, but which existed before SCA came to Kirkbride. The current SCA Workshop houses facilities for woodwork, metal work and welding.

Proceeding along the driveway, you will notice the large iron gates to your left.

South Gates

During the recent refurbishment, the large metal gates with a clearance of 3.2m were repaired and restored. They were then

included in the security system of the site and were fitted with automatic opening devices.

To the right of gates, outside the campus, you will see Building 15, originally the male morgue. To the right on the inside of the campus is Building 1.

Building One: SCA Library

Building 1 was previously Male Ward Number 1. The Building features a barrel-vaulted ceiling. Originally there were a set of external set of stairs that hugged the side of the building, but these were demolished in 1983. Building 1 now houses the SCA Library and its specialist collection on contemporary visual art, part of the vast University of Sydney network of libraries.

Enter the courtyard between Buildings 1 and 2 and please note the formal layout of this and other courtyards. Exit this courtyard and continue walking towards Building 2. On your right is Building 16.

Building 2: Ceramics Studio

Male Ward Number 2, previously a Forensic Ward for the criminally insane. Building 2 now houses the Ceramics studio, exploring clay techniques, production design and emerging ceramic concepts and technologies.

Building 16: The Foundation (or Drawing) Room

Building 16 was originally the male bathhouse. In 1974 it accommodated the Industrial Therapy Unit. Building 16 is now known as the Foundation Room, mainly used as a foundation studio space for the first year Bachelor of Visual Arts students.

Continue along verandah past Building 16. To the left is Building 3 and on the right is Building 4/5.

Building 3: Film and Digital Art Studio

This building housed patients in the alcohol-related psychiatric unit. The building now the Film and Digital Art studio focused on concepts and technologies of digital film, video, digital sound and new media art forms.

Building 4/5: Photomedia Studio

Originally Male Wards Number 4 and Number 5. Features semi-detached wards of identical proportions both having characteristic Barnet half octagonal bay projecting from the centre of the west façade and clasped by a verandah. Now housing the Photomedia studio that focuses on photo-installation, documentary photography, experimental, and contemporary photographic practice utilizing analogue and digital technologies.

Retrace your steps and turn left to walk along outside Building 4/5. Head towards the gap between Building 4/5 and Building 17 (terracotta Workshop) on your right and enter a small courtyard behind Building 19.

Furnace

Adjacent to Buildings 31 and 19 you will find the remaining stack of the original furnace that was used to generate steam for the washing machines in the laundry area located at the opposite end of the complex. Please note the Glass furnace building that was purpose built for Sydney College of the Arts and is colour coded blue to differentiate between this and other buildings in the complex.

Re-enter the central courtyard through the door between Building 19 and Building 4/5 and you will now be to the left rear of the Auditorium. Turn left and follow the verandah to the Western Exit next to Building 24. Proceed around the back of the building while you take note of the ornate verandahs and the curved three-storey Administration building. You may want to walk down the sweeping staircase to the lawn and look back on the building.

Building 24: Administration

Originally the Medical Officer's wing and formerly known as the Matron's House it later became the Library Block. This building lies on the west perimeter of the east-west axis of the Kirk bride block. The west elevation incorporates a semi circular central wing flanked by sweeping staircases with timber pediments. The pediments have the cipher VR1. A sunken walkway encircles the basement level. This lower level contains a number of rooms with windows and some rooms have fireplaces. Built c.1880.

Return to the central courtyard through the Western Exit next to Building 24. Continue left under the verandah to Building 6/7, now the Painting Studio.

Buildings 6 and 7: Painting Studio

These buildings feature slate roofs and steps, timber floors and copper downpipes. Retains original chimneys. Please note the Doric cast iron columns that support the verandah roofs, providing a covered walkway throughout the site. Some of these columns also act as downpipes to collect the rainwater from roofs and transfer it to the underground water tanks for storage. Building 6 was originally known as Female Ward Number 1, then in 1961 as Female Ward Number 6. Building 7 was originally known as Female Ward Number 2, then in 1961 as Female Ward Number 7. Now housing the Painting studio that focuses on historical and contemporary concepts and techniques relating to painting practice.

Retrace your steps. Continue under the verandah to the doorway between Building 6/7 and Building 25 and enter the Painting/ Sculpture courtyard. Please note Building 20 on your right, the Tower.

Building 20: The Tower

Stone quarried from Pymont was used to build The Tower. Please note the variation in colour to other areas of the site. The Victorian Italianate tower is one of the few forms of decoration in the Kirkbride complex as Barnet sought to minimize ornament and carving seen to be inappropriate in a hospital. The external facade features Lombard arches and stone brackets. The circular hole on either side still awaits its clock proposed and actually drawn on the original plans. The Tower was the site's water reticulation system and is topped by Tidal-ball copper spire that indicated the rising and falling water levels of the storage tanks beneath the site. Water entered the two underground tanks collected from the surrounding roofs, via downpipes concealed as Doric columns supporting the verandahs, and was pumped into two large cast iron water in the tower. The water was then gravity fed to the wards, with the upper tank reserved for any fire emergency.

Walk towards the corridor between Building 27 and Building 6/7 and turn left.

Buildings 8 and 27: Printmedia Studio

Building 8 was originally known as Female Ward Number 3, then in 1961 as Female Ward Number 8. Building 27 was originally the female bathhouse. Please note the blue colour scheme signifying the additions to the building for Sydney College of the Arts purposes. The Printmedia studio focuses on digital and traditional print processes within a contemporary visual art context.

On your right will be Building 8, continue to walk out into one of the courtyards and to the lawn edge to see the 'Ha-Ha' wall.

Ha-Ha Walls

The high sandstone wall encircling the complex utilizes the 'ha-ha' device, pioneered in the UK by the 18th century landscape architect Capability Brown, and originally developed in France. The Ha-ha wall is designed to provide seamless change of the lawn by the house and the landscape behind, so it looks like the whole surrounding belongs to the garden allowing patients to be secure without feeling enclosed. The position of the complex provided patients with views of Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Retrace your steps back to the courtyard and proceed towards the second set of large steel gates, the North Gate. Note Buildings 10, & 12 on your left. These are not occupied and remain in their un-restored condition.

Buildings 9 and 12: Not part of SCA

Building 9 was previously known as Female Ward Number 4 and 5, then in 1961, Female Ward Number 9 and 10. Building 12 is a small, single storey building, formerly the Female Morgue.

To the right of the North Gate is Building 11.

Building 11: Currently being restored for SCA use

Building 11a was the original Medical Superintendent's Residence. Building 11b was the Visitor's Room, Library and Dispensary.

Remain on the gravel drive and walk between Building 29 and Building 11. Turning right in the central courtyard through the break in the sandstone wall can provide entry to Building 29.

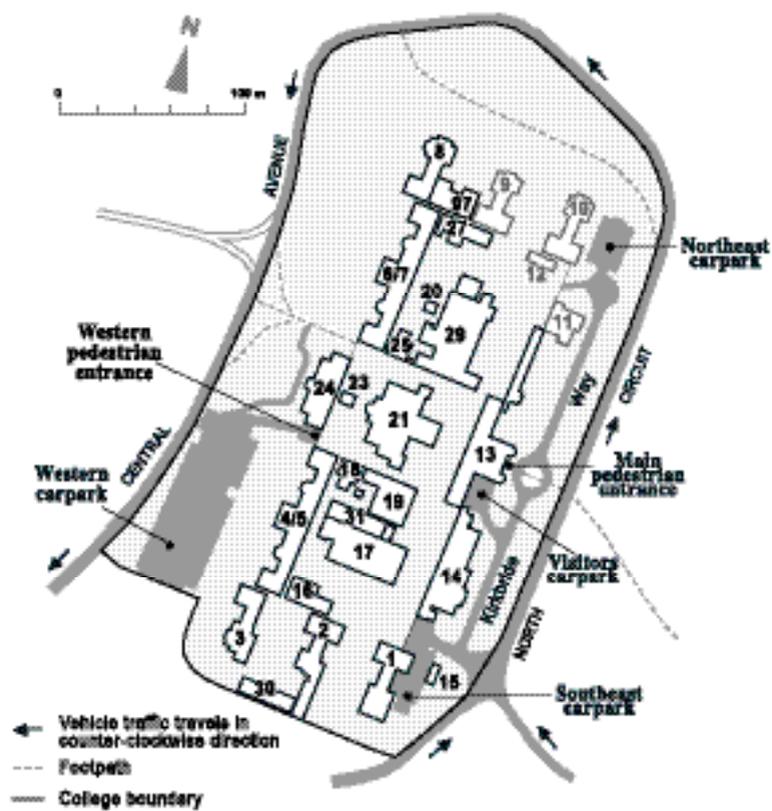
Building 29: Sculpture Studio

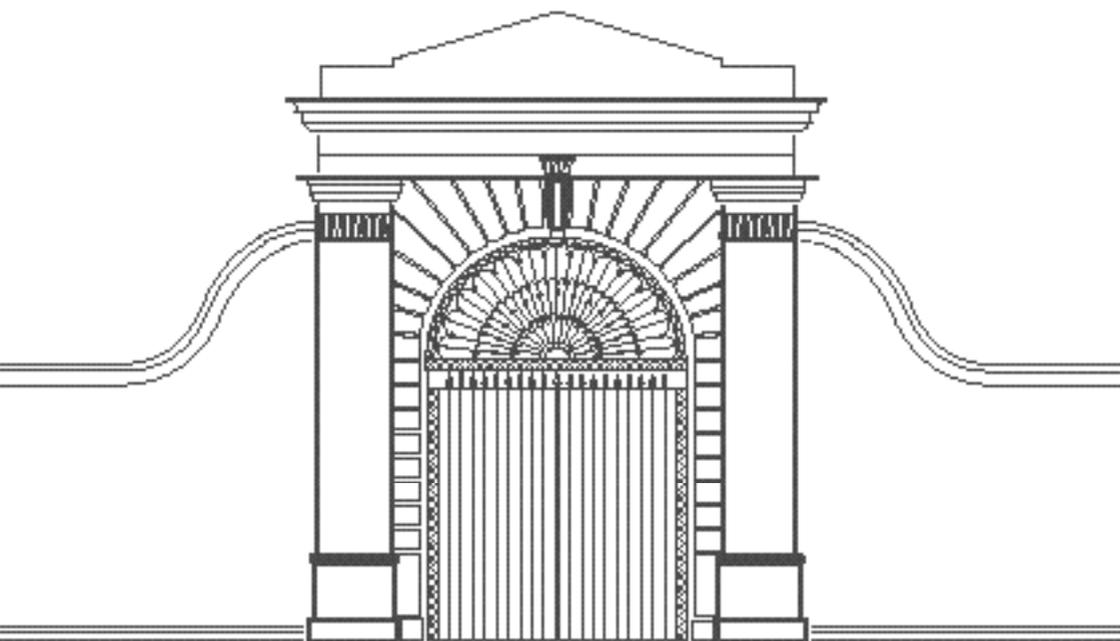
Building 29 once housed the hospital Laundry. The building has six-metre high ceilings supported by tall Roman arches. The original paintwork is still in evidence. Underground pipes from the furnace near Buildings 18 and 31 carried the steam to generate the belt driven washing machines. Evidence of the laundry machinery still exists today. A new building was added in 1996 as a sculpture work shed. Please note the blue/green colour scheme used to distinguish these new buildings from the original stone and other added buildings. The Sculpture studio focuses on performance, installation and the assembling of objects and structures that articulate space and a relationship to the body.

Enter the central courtyard again through the large opening in the sandstone wall and continue to the Auditorium, close to the starting point of this tour. Turn left to exit the campus through Building 13. Thank you for taking the time to enjoy the historic sandstone buildings of Kirkbride. We hope you enjoyed your visit to Sydney College of the Arts.

References

www.cs.nsw.gov.au/MHealth/rozelle/rozhistory
www.cs.nsw.gov.au/rozdev/history





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