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**New International Selection
Full Documentation Fiche 2003**

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composed by national/regional working party of:

International working party for
documentation and conservation

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

Australia

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



Sydney Technical College - Hoskins Block 1938 Wattle Street Facade

depicted item: School of Mechanical and Automotive Trades (Building P),
Sydney Institute of Technology

source: Harry Rembert Monograph

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1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

(a) Data for identification

current name:	Mechanical & Automotive Engineering Trades Building(Building P)
former/original/variant name:	School of Mechanical & Automotive Engineering Trades Hoskins Block
number(s) and name(s) of street(s):	Wattle and Thomas Street,
Town/ suburb	Ultimo
province/state:	NSW
post code:	2007
block or lot (if known)	
country	Australia
national topographical grid reference:	
current typology:	Educational Building /Technical College
former/original/variant typology:	Educational Building /Technical College
comments on typology:	Technical colleges are a building type that emerged in the late nineteenth-century in NSW. This is the primary example.

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1.2 Status of protection

protected by: state/province/town/record only

Register of the National Estate	Maybe Check
RAIA National Register	No Check
RAIA Register of Twentieth Century Buildings of Significance	Yes
National Trust Register	School of Automotive Engineering Which is within the Pymont Ultimo Conservation Area
State Heritage Register/Inventory	SHI
LEP	Sydney LEP 2005 Schedule 9
Grade (ie level of protection)	Local
Archival Recording exists?	No
Date:	n/a
valid for: whole area/parts of area/building	Listing covers whole building

1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s):	Sydney Institute of Technology
visual relations	The School of Automotive Engineering forms the western boundary of the campus (to Wattle Street)
functional relations	Technical college campus
other relations:	

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2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

Note if the dates are exactly known (e) or approximately estimated = circa (c) or (±)

commission or competition date:	
design period(s):	1937-1938 Drawings signed October 1938
start of site work:	1940
completion/inauguration:	1940

2.2 Summary of development

commission brief:	
design brief:	Probably 1937
building/construction:	1940
completed situation:	1940
original situation or character of site:	SIT was built in the grounds Ultimo House. The house itself was demolished in the 1930s

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2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s):	SIT (Sydney Institute of Technology) / Department of Education
architect(s):	NSW Government Architect's Branch. Cobden Parkes Government Architect
design architect:	Harry Rembert
landscape/garden designer(s):	
other designer(s):	
consulting engineer(s):	
building contractor(s):	H. G Wittle

2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name(s):	
association:	
event(s):	
period:	

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: alteration/renovation/restoration/extension/other:	The building has been assessed as being substantially intact
date(s):	
circumstances/ reasons for change	
effects of changes:	
persons/organisations involved:	

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3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 Site/building character

Peter Weber, in his monograph on Harry Rembert notes that

The second half of the thirties must have been an extraordinarily busy period for Rembert. During 1938 and presumably much of 1937 he was working on his largest Sydney project, the Hoskins Block at Sydney Technical College [SIT]. [Cobden] Parkes signed the working drawings in October 1938 and Rembert's initials indicate his responsibility for the designs. This was the first example of his mature 'Dudok' style. He prepared a waterplant for the development which was one of majestic simplicity, - a broad straight interior 'street' giving access to classrooms and laboratoria on both sides; the plan showed five staircase towers fronting Wattle Street with a clock tower marking the main entrance to Thomas Street. Only three-fifths of the scheme was constructed, but this nevertheless remains a most impressive work.

The building is planned and conceived with the utmost directness and simplicity. With the exception of the clock tower, every element in the building is straightforward and functional in its design and expression. This building houses extensive heavy machinery and equipment in a large number of workshops and is essentially industrial in character, yet it retains a human scale.

All the materials and finishes are chosen with the need in mind for economy, long life and minimal maintenance. The interior spaces again are spartan in character but nevertheless impressive in their simplicity. The main interior staircase with its bold white-painted forms is an uncompromising and impressive statement... A standard pattern of awning-type metal window sashes is repeated throughout the entire building.

Extensions to the building on the Wattle and Jones Street facades were fortunately carried out completely in sympathy with the original concept, so that the entire complex remains one of the most forceful and one of the most successful works of the period in Australia.

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The Sydney City Inventory described the building as:

A two and three storey concrete framed, face brick building, with a central entry on Thomas Street marked with a largely windowless four storey square tower. The flanking rectangular wings have steel framed windows set in continuous strips along the facade and returning around the corners. The entrance features chrome columns and marble wall linings and is noted for its simplicity. The building consists of a series of classrooms and training workshops, with lightwells between blocks. Interior materials and finishes are of high quality. The building's emphasis is on simplicity, austerity and functionalism and is an excellent example of Interwar Functionalist style architecture, as seen by the asymmetry, the simple geometric shapes, the long horizontal windows and spandrels and the steel framed windows. (SHI listing)

3.2 Current use

of whole building/site:	Technical College
of principal components <i>(if applicable)</i> :	Automotive trades [check]
comments:	The building is still in use for its original purpose

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site:	[check]
of principal components <i>(if applicable)</i> :	[check]
of other elements <i>(if applicable)</i> :	
of surrounding area <i>(if applicable)</i> :	
comments:	

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3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

The site is still in use as the Sydney Institute of Technology

4. Evaluation

<i>Intrinsic value</i>	
4.1 technical evaluation:	
	The building was constructed using modern construction techniques including a concrete frame, face brick facades, steel framed windows
4.2 social evaluation:	
	The building continues to be used as an educational facility, the purpose for which it was originally designed. It reflects the considerable expansion of the Sydney Institute of Technology during the 1930s, when the campus was extended to the west towards Harris Street.
4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation	
	The building is a significant example of the work of the NSW Government Architect's branch under the Government Architect Cobden Parkes and the design architect Harry Rembert. The building is significant aesthetically as a modern building constructed within an inner Sydney suburb that largely dates from the nineteenth-century. The School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering retains many of its original details, including the black marble and chrome to the entry. The materials used and the character of the interior spaces clearly shows the influence of European modernism, particularly the work of Wilhelm Dudok in the Netherlands.
<i>Comparative significance</i>	
4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)	
	The Hoskins Building is one of the series of public buildings designed during the 1930s under Cobden Parkes in which the transition to modern architecture can clearly be seen and is one of the high points in the output of the Government Architects Branch (NSW GAB) in the 1930s.
4.5 historic and reference values:	
	An important example of the work of the NSW Government Architects branch in the 1930s, and an

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important example that shows the influence of Dutch modernism which was much admired, and visited, by Australian architects during the 1930s.

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5. Documentation

5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

Conservation Plan prepared?	No
Listing & files	National Trust SCC Inventory
	NT listing

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

Weber, G. Peter, E. H. Rembert, The Life and Work of a Sydney Architect, 1902-1966

University of Sydney/Department of Public Works

5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/photographs/others:	Photographs included in Weber study
Original drawings	Former PWD Plan Room Some reproduced in Weber monograph
recent photographs and survey drawings:	
film/video/other sources:	
website	

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5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier

Images included in Weber study

Text from ADB Entry

Current photographs

6. Fiche report

name of reporter:	Noni Boyd
Information provided by	
address	GPO Box 1334, Sydney, NSW 2001 Australia
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e-mail:	noni_jd@hotmail.com
date of report	April 2008

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name):

sign and date:

examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

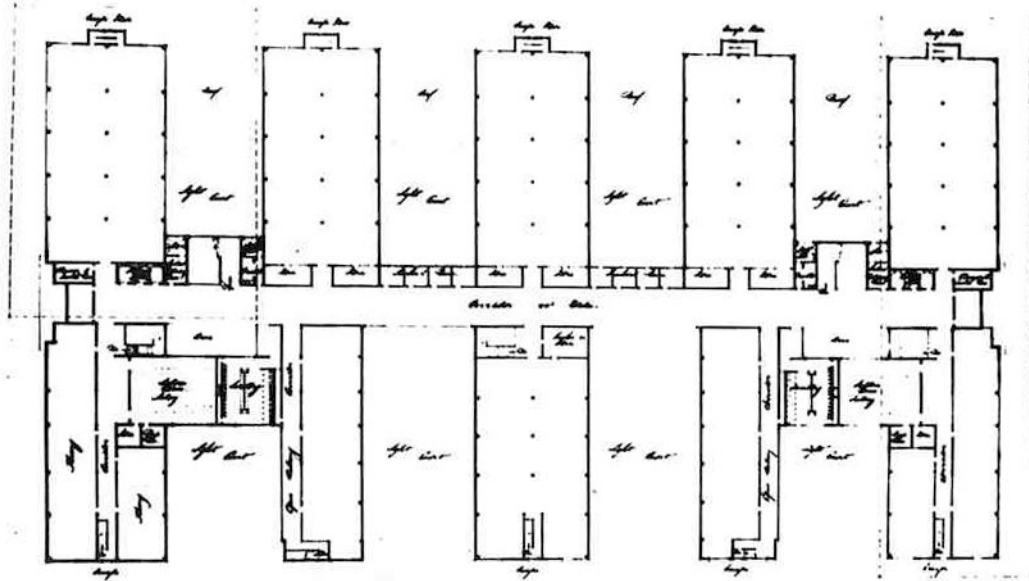
NAI ref. no.:

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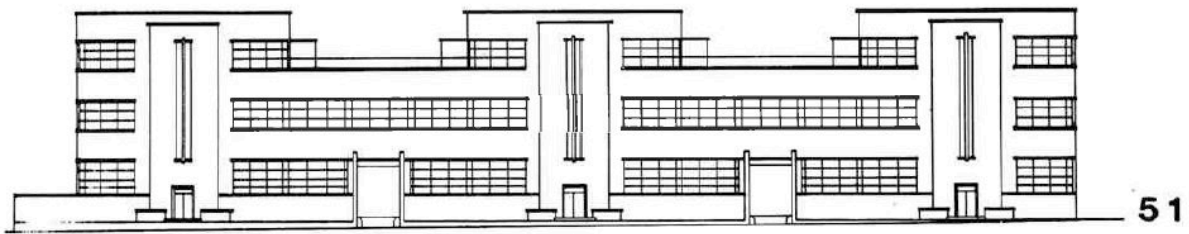
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Plan of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering (designed by the NSW GAB – Cobden Parkes Government Architect, Harry Rembert design architect)



SYDNEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE HOSKINS BLOCK

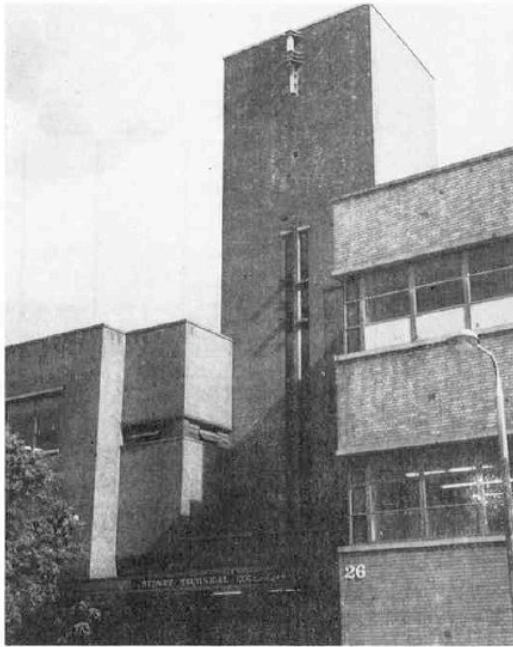
Main elevation (Wattle Street) of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering

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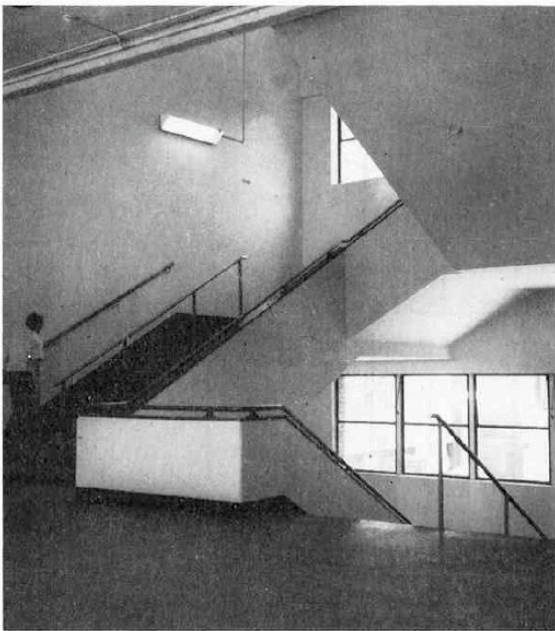
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Main entrance

Main entrance (Wattle Street) of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering



Hoskins Block - Main staircase **52**

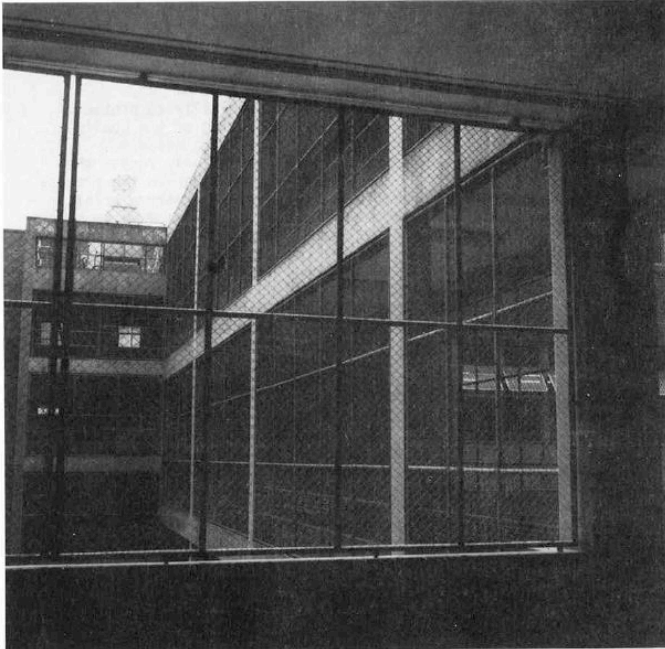
Main Staircase of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering

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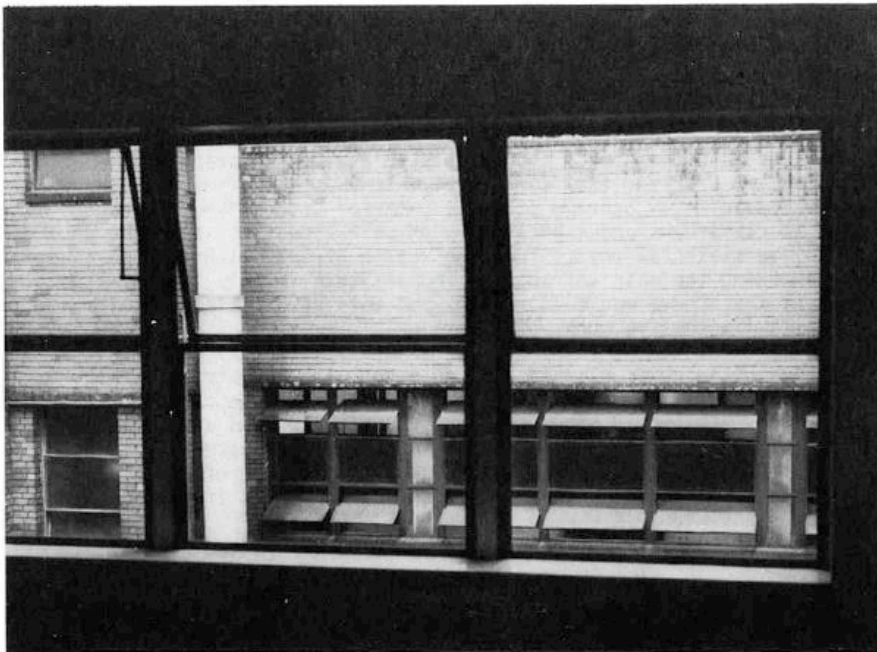
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55 Hoskins Block - internal courtyard

Internal Courtyard of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering



56 Stairan Glazing pattern

Glazing pattern of the School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering

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REMBERT, EDWARD HENRY (1902-1966), architect, was born on 12 April 1902 at Hurstville, Sydney, youngest of thirteen children of native-born parents Charles Rembert (d.1902), blacksmith, and his wife Susannah Jane, née Burrell. Harry was raised by his mother and elder sisters, and sent to the local public school. While apprenticed to the architect Thomas J. Darling, he attended Sydney Technical College. On 30 December 1924 he was registered as an architect. After he gained experience working for Henry White, the flamboyant designer of theatres, he joined the Department of Public Works on 3 August 1926. He was finally confirmed in the post of architect in 1942. Encouraged by Cobden Parkes, the government architect, Rembert designed numerous public buildings—schools, hospitals, court-houses, police stations and technical colleges, mostly during the 1930s and 1940s. In style, his designs of this period were influenced by the Dutch architect Willem Dudok. Of these works, perhaps the most outstanding were the Hoskins block (1937-38) at Sydney Technical College, and major buildings (1934-38) at Newcastle Technical College, including his masterpiece, the H. G. Darling Engineering Building, in which Dudokian forms were suffused by Rembert's own idiosyncratic spirit.

Rembert designed several private houses for family and friends, but none of them approached the quality of his own remarkable mountain home at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains, where he lived as a bachelor with his elder brother Oscar from 1935. In this most modest dwelling he devised an inventive plan and used the simplest of materials—brick and rough timber-boarded walls—which fitted quietly into a bushland setting. Several decades later the house was seen as inspiring some of the leading practitioners of the 'Sydney School' style of architecture.

On 20 July 1947 Rembert was appointed senior designing architect. Promoted assistant government architect in March 1960, he had responsibility for the entire architectural design output of a very large office. He no longer had the time to design buildings himself, but he played an important role (1957-64) on the Height of Buildings Advisory Committee. More importantly, he acted as guide and mentor to a new generation of young architects, who had joined the government architect's office at a time when it faced the exciting task of designing the universities, schools, colleges and numerous public buildings needed to serve the needs of an increasing population. The quality of architecture emanating from the office gained it an enviable reputation. Rembert's influence, like his personality, was gentle and discreet, yet pervasive and persuasive.

In his younger days Harry Rembert had been a talented cricketer, playing first grade for St George, (Sir) Donald Bradman's club, and later becoming a champion club golfer. Having suffered from tuberculosis in his twenties, he was never robust in health, and was forced to retire due to bronchial and heart problems in 1965. He died of coronary thrombosis on 12 September 1966 at Katoomba and was cremated with Anglican rites.

Select Bibliography

G. P. Webber, *E. H. Rembert* (Syd, 1982), and for bibliography.

More on the resources

Author: Peter Webber

Print Publication Details: Peter Webber, 'Rembert, Edward Henry (1902 - 1966)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 16, Melbourne University Press, 2002, p. 76.

Peter Webber, 'Rembert, Edward Henry (1902 - 1966)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition,

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