

Attachment H

**Draft Inventory Sheet – 13-17 Riley Street,
Woolloomooloo**

Heritage inventory sheet

Based on the NSW Heritage Office State Heritage Inventory sheet

ITEM DETAILS			
Name of Item	Former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot		
Former name	Phillip Park Cleansing Depot		
Item type	Built		
Address	Number 13-17	Street Riley Street	Suburb Woolloomooloo
Property description	Lot 1		DP 83649
Use	Current Art gallery		Former Council cleansing depot
Statement of significance	The former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot at 13-17 Riley Street, Woolloomooloo is one of several such depots constructed by the City of Sydney from the 1930s through to the end of the 1950s. The resumption of the land on which it was constructed is one amongst many resumptions that were carried out during the first half of the twentieth century by the City of Sydney. The building is associated with Albert Alexander Smillie, who was promoted to the position of architectural assistant to the City Building Surveyor from 1936 and appointed the City of Sydney's Chief Architect from November 1949. He was involved with numerous Council projects, which included 13-17 Riley Street and several other cleansing depots. 13-17 Riley Street is a restrained and assured example of the Inter-War Functionalist style that contributes significantly to the locality. The building appears to have retained a high level of external and internal integrity and demonstrates a high quality of architectural resolution when compared to other cleansing depots designed by Council between the late 1930s and late 1950s. It has historical significance because of its early use as an air raid shelter, evidence of which is provided by its physical fabric. Because of its integrity, 13-17 Riley Street has the potential to demonstrate the functions and operations of the City of Sydney's cleansing depots. While the building may be considered representative of the cleansing depots designed by the City of Sydney in the years before and after World War II, it is a rare surviving example of a purpose designed cleansing depot in the City of Sydney. As the Firstdraft Gallery, 13-17 Riley Street may have significance to Sydney's artistic community through its endeavours to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice.		
Level of significance	State:		Local:
Heritage listings			
DESCRIPTION			
Designer	City Building Surveyor's Department, Chief Architect Albert Smillie		
Builder			
Construction years	1942 – c.1948		

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Physical description	13-17 Riley Street is a two-storey building with a distinctive plan footprint that partially reflects its unusual triangular site. The northern section of the building tapers, ending with a tightly curved corner, while the southern section is L-shaped in plan. This is reflected in the configuration of the building's roof, which is flat on the northern section and hipped and gabled over the southern part. The roof is covered by profiled metal sheeting. The exterior of the building is constructed of textured brick with horizontal rendered coursing at the window head and sill levels extending across the facades. Brickwork above and below windows is darker in hue than brickwork at the level of the windows. Windows consist of pairs of double-hung timber framed sashes. The building is a representative example of the Inter-War Functionalist style which was utilised by architects from the mid-1930s through to the early 1950s. Characteristics of the style that the building demonstrates include the plain brick surfaces, a rounded corner, parapet concealing the roof and horizontal banding (in this case the rendered courses). The use of textured bricks was prevalent at the time the building was designed and constructed. Windows are protected on the ground floor by mesh and on the first floor by grilles. The roof over the southern part of the building has projecting eaves just above the rendered course over first floor windows on those elevations facing Haig Lane and the open area at the end of the lane. The eaves are lined with spaced timber battens. A portion of the ground floor in the projecting southern wing has been lined with cement render, which according to the 1947 drawings is original; the wide opening that served what was originally a garage now contains a metal framed sliding door set.
Physical condition	The building is in good condition.
Modification and Dates	2010 – change of use (Firstdraft Gallery) 2014 – internal modifications for gallery use.
Archaeological potential	The site is considered to have limited archaeological potential.

HISTORY

The coastal regions of Sydney between Port Jackson and Botany Bay are the ancestral territories of the Eora people. The traditional owners of the land now within the City of Sydney local government area were the Cadigal (Gadigal) people. In common with other tribes living by Sydney Harbour, the Cadigal lived in harmony with the natural resources within their country, fishing from canoes or hunting the animals that lived in their surroundings. The tribe appears to have moved within its territory in response to the seasons and family connections. Shell middens and other archaeological remains in the area provide material evidence of many centuries of sustained connection to the land that also sustained them. The arrival of white settlers caused the wholesale disruption of traditional life and the cultural practices of the Eora people generally. Despite enormous challenges, today many Indigenous people identify as Eora and maintain cultural practices and a connection to Country.

13-17 Riley Street is located on a part of 100 acres granted to commissary John Palmer in February 1793. Here Palmer built Woolloomooloo Farm, one of the colony's first permanent residences. In 1810 Palmer travelled to England with colonial administrator William Bligh as a witness against Major George Johnston, a leader of the Rum Rebellion. During 1812 he gave valuable evidence to the select committee on transportation. In June 1813 he was re-employed in the commissariat and returned to New South Wales in May 1814 but on his return found his private affairs extremely straitened. The estate at Woolloomooloo was sold to merchant and pastoralist Edward Riley in May 1822.

Riley bought up lots of small land grants in the area between Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills during the 1820s. His land, called the Riley Estate, quickly grew, becoming not just a series of

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small land grants, but a vast estate. In 1825 Riley committed suicide, leaving behind two conflicting wills, which led to years of legal battle between his seven heirs. The site of 13-17 Riley Street subsequently became part of Block F23 of the partitioning of the Riley Estate in the 1840s.

Historically the site consists of two separate titles that were amalgamated after resumption by the City Council. Following subdivision of Block F23 the title to the allotment(s) comprising what was to become 13-15 Riley Street were conveyed on 4 February 1853 to labourer Joseph Kena (or Kenna). He evidently built a house (or houses) and was living there by the end of the 1850s. Kenna died in November 1878. Probate was granted to his widow Ruth, but she died intestate in April 1879. The following August the Curator of Intestate Estates conveyed the title of 13-15 Riley Street to shoemaker David Denley. He and his family occupied 15 Riley Street. Denley died at the end of October 1901, his will providing for his widow Mary to occupy one of the houses. She apparently resided at 13 Riley Street until her death in July 1914, after which the house was occupied by family members until it was resumed by the Municipal Council of Sydney.

Following subdivision of Block F23 the site of 17 Riley Street was sold to brass founder James Turner. The conveyance is dated 7 June 1851. Turner appears to have built a house on the property where he and his family lived for a short time. He conveyed the property title to butcher Thomas Higgins on 15 August 1864. Higgins subsequently conveyed it to tanner (later builder of wagons) William Sherlock on 9 October 1872. Sherlock also acquired the adjacent allotments at 19 and 21 Riley Street. He died in December 1894 and his wife died in September 1899. The trustees of his estate sold 17 Riley Street to Joseph Lynch in August 1901. Lynch is described as a tailor in Sands directory.

Towards the end of the 1930s the Municipal Council of Sydney resumed 13-17 Riley Street. 13-15 Riley Street was part of the estate of William Denley and 13 Riley Street was still occupied by members of the Denley family. 17 Riley Street was still the property of Joseph Lynch, although it is understood to have been tenanted. The Lieutenant-Governor of NSW approved the resumption "for the purpose of establishing thereon a Depot for use in connection with the sweeping and cleansing of public ways in the city" on 3 November 1937. The Council resolved to resume the properties on 14 February 1938. The resumption of 13-17 Riley Street was gazetted on 11 March 1938.

Documentation describing the proposed single storey depot were prepared by the City of Sydney during 1938. The building is thought to have been designed by Albert Smillie, whose signature appears on the architectural drawing. However, construction did not commence for some time and was apparently postponed because of the outbreak of World War II. In 1942 the design was revised so that it accommodated an air raid shelter, which was constructed as the initial phase of development. In November 1947 a two-storey building was approved that incorporated the air raid shelter while retaining the footprint of the 1938 scheme.

Until the early 1990s, 13-17 Riley Street was a working base for street sweepers that looked after the locality. It then became a workshop for the City's parking meter mechanics, who serviced, built and repaired equipment in the building until early 2002. The building remained vacant for several years, although used sporadically for storage and short-term City accommodation.

In November 2009 Firstdraft lodged a development application with the City of Sydney for a change of use of the building to artist studios, art gallery spaces and artist workshops for local artist residents and emerging artists. Firstdraft was established in 1986 as an artist-run initiative supporting emerging and early-career artists and bringing experimental practices to audiences, and is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOA), a national network of fifteen public, independent, non-collecting contemporary art organisations from all Australian states and territories that advocates for the small-to-medium contemporary visual arts sector in Australia. The application was approved at the beginning of 2010.

In 2014, the organisation's studio complex, which was known as the Depot, was converted into an all-encompassing facility to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice. Firstdraft's adaptive use of the building included new exhibition spaces, two studios, collaborative workspaces, and a large, private outdoor courtyard. The

Heritage inventory sheet

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gallery spaces opened in March 2014.		
HISTORICAL THEMES		
Australian Theme	State theme	Local theme
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Towns, suburbs and villages	Growth and development of Woolloomooloo
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Utilities	Provision of municipal cleaning services
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Creative endeavour	Exemplar of Inter-War Functionalist style architecture
9 Marking the phases of life	Persons	Associations with City Architect Albert Smillie

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT	
Historic significance SHR criteria (a)	There is no evidence to suggest that the site of 13-17 Riley Street prior to its resumption by the City of Sydney is important in the course or pattern of the City of Sydney's cultural or natural history. The former Phillip Park Cleansing Depot at 13-17 Riley Street is one of several such depots constructed by the City of Sydney from the 1930s through to the end of the 1950s. The resumption of the land on which it was constructed is one amongst many resumptions that were carried out during the first half of the twentieth century by the City of Sydney The building has significance because it served as an air raid shelter during World War II, evidence of which remains in its building fabric.. 13-17 Riley Street fulfils this criterion at a Local or State level.
Historical association SHR criteria (b)	13-17 Riley Street is associated with Albert Alexander Smillie, who joined the Sydney Municipal Council's Architectural Branch as an architectural draftsman around 1924, registered as an architect in April 1926 and in September 1936 was promoted to the position of architectural assistant to the City Building Surveyor. In November 1949 Smillie was appointed the City of Sydney's Chief Architect and was responsible for the City's architectural branch. Smillie was involved with numerous Council projects, which included a number of cleansing depots. His signature appears on several architectural drawings related to the site, indicating his involvement in the building's design. 13-17 Riley Street meets the threshold for listing at a Local level.
Aesthetic significance SHR criteria (c)	13-17 Riley Street is a restrained and assured example of the Inter-War Functionalist style. Its architectural form and use of dichromatic brickwork relieved by expressed horizontal coursing are significant aesthetic contributors to the locality. The building appears to have retained a high level of external and internal integrity. The building demonstrates a high quality of architectural resolution and form when compared to other cleansing depots designed by Council between the late 1930s and late 1950s. 13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.

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Social significance SHR criteria (d)	As the Firstdraft Gallery, 13-17 Riley Street may have significance to Sydney's artistic community. Firstdraft, initially established as an artist-run-initiative, has been supporting emerging and early-career artists and bringing experimental practices to audiences since 1986. It converted 13-17 Riley Street to a complex of exhibition and studio spaces and collaborative workspaces to accommodate the development and presentation of contemporary arts practice. 13-17 Riley Street may meet this criterion at a State or Local level, although more research may be needed to firmly establish this.
Technical/Research significance SHR criteria (e)	Because of its integrity, 13-17 Riley Street has the potential to demonstrate the functions and operations of the City of Sydney's cleansing depots, which performed an important role in the management of the sanitation and hygiene of city and suburban streets. 13-17 Riley Street has the potential to meet this criterion at a Local level.
Rarity SHR criteria (f)	13-17 Riley Street may be considered rare, as a surviving example of a purpose designed cleansing depot in the City of Sydney that demonstrates a high level of aesthetic significance. Although its use has changed, its high level of integrity allows early functions to be interpreted. Many other cleaning depots have been demolished and their sites redeveloped or turned over to other uses. The building is likely to have rarity value because its early use as an air raid shelter, evidence of which still remains in place. 13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.
Representativeness SHR criteria (g)	13-17 Riley Street may be considered representative of the cleansing depots designed by the City of Sydney in the years before and after World War II, although its architectural quality was much higher than others that were designed and constructed. 13-17 Riley Street meets this criterion at a Local level.
Integrity	13-17 Riley Street has retained a relatively high level of integrity.
RECOMMENDATIONS	
Recommendations	• Manage 13-17 Riley Street in accordance with Sydney LEP 2012 and Sydney DCP 2012. • 13-17 Riley Street should be retained and conserved. • The external form of 13-17 Riley Street, any original spaces, fabric and finishes should be retained and conserved in any future development. • Any proposed additions above roof level should not obscure the architecture of the building, retain the legibility of its original form and be subservient in terms of materials and detailing. • All conservation and new works should be undertaken in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter). • It is recommended that a Conservation Management Strategy be prepared to guide future works and conservation at the place. A heritage impact statement should be prepared prior to any major works being undertaken. • The exterior brickwork of the building should not be covered by paint or by cement render. • Consider undertaking further research on air raid shelters constructed in the City of Sydney and the extent to which they survive, to better understand the context and historical value of 13-17 Riley Street.

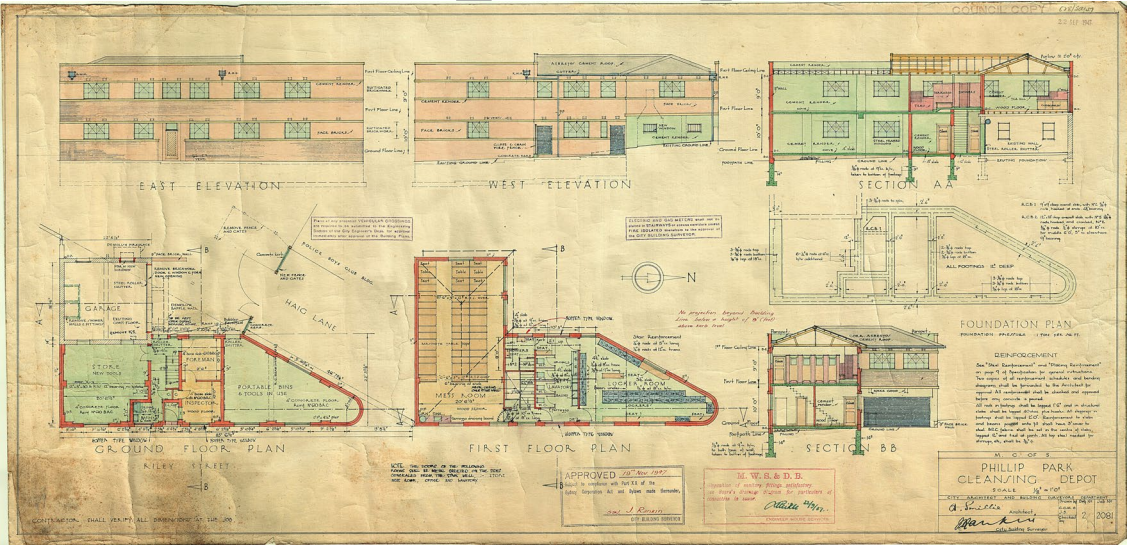
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INFORMATION SOURCES				
Type	Author/Client	Title	Year	Repository
Written	TKD Architects	Phillip Park Cleansing Depot, 13-17 Riley Street, Surry Hills Heritage Assessment	2025	City of Sydney

AUTHOR OF THIS REPORT	
Name	Date
TKD Architects	November 2025

IMAGES	
Image Caption	undated drawing describing the Phillip Park Cleaning Depot, which shows its existing two-storey form. The drawing includes Albert Smillie's signature.

			
Image Year	C. 1947	Image author and Copyright Holder	City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A- A-00555866

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IMAGES

Image Caption

13-17 Riley Street viewed from the north-east.



**Image
Year**

2025

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Heritage inventory sheet

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IMAGES

Image Caption

13-17 Riley Street viewed from the south along Riley Street.



**Image
Year**

2025

**Image author
and Copyright
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TKD Architects

IMAGES			
Image Caption	Looking south along the western side of 13-17 Riley Street fronting Haig Lane.		
			
Image Year	2025	Image author and Copyright Holder	TKD Architects

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IMAGES

Image Caption

The southern section of the building viewed from Haig Lane. The open space in front of this part of the building is used by Firstdraft as a courtyard.



Image Year

2023

Image author and Copyright Holder

TKD Architects

Heritage inventory sheet

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IMAGES			
Image Caption		The southern section of 13-17 Riley Street viewed from Yurong Parkway across the Phillip Park Basketball Court.	
			
Image Year	2025	Image author and Copyright Holder	TKD Architects