

**Item name:** Former Horwitz House including internal structure**Location:** 398-402 Sussex Street Haymarket 2000

Sydney

**Address:** 398-402 Sussex Street**Planning:** Sydney South**Suburb/nearest town:** Haymarket 2000**Local govt area:** Sydney**Parish:****State:** NSW**County:****Other/former names:****Area/group/complex:****Group ID:****Aboriginal area:****Curtilage/boundary:****Item type:** Built**Group:** Commercial**Category:** Commercial Office/Building**Owner:** Private - Corporate**Admin codes:****Code 2:****Code 3:****Current use:** Commercial**Former uses:** Commercial**Assessed significance:** State**Endorsed significance:** Local

**Statement of significance:** The former Horwitz House is associated with Horwitz Company, a well known and prominent publishing house that was particularly noted for its wide range of popular fiction during the second half of the 20th century. It is historically significant because of the innovative manner in which its design incorporated a direct and uncompromising response to controlling the impacts of the sun on building occupants.

Its aesthetic importance is derived from the integration of its structural system and sun control louvres. The building is the first example of an office building in Sydney that convincingly integrated passive sun control devices into its design. It is a significant early example of Modern Movement design in Central Sydney and as the first large project and office design of Harry Seidler, regarded as one of Australia's most outstanding exponents of the Modern Movement. It was the first of a series of significant commercial projects in Sydney designed in Seidler's office. The building is understood to be an early example of the work of prominent structural engineer Peter Owen Miller, AM, and may have technical significance because of its unusual structural design.

**Item name:** Former Horwitz House including internal structure

**Location:** 398-402 Sussex Street Haymarket 2000

Sydney

**Historical notes of provenance:** This site forms part of the land of the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of land within the City of Sydney council boundaries. For information about the Aboriginal history of the local area see the City's Barani website: <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/>

The building is situated on part of 6.07 hectares of land granted to John Dickson, historically significant miller and entrepreneur, on 8 March 1831.

The site of 398-402 Sussex Street was undeveloped during the mid 1840s. By the mid 1860s it was occupied by a pair of single-storey buildings. By 1882 the property was owned by wool broker John Hinchcliff. He sold it to the Commercial Building and Investment Company that year, which then sold it to Anthony and Samuel Hordern in the first half of 1883. Samuel and Anthony Hordern were members of the Anthony Hordern and Sons mercantile empire. It was one of Sydney's foremost retailing concerns, manufacturing many of the articles available for sale in its department store or by mail order. It had the largest number of factories of any of the great retailing establishments. The Horderns acquired several properties in Sussex Street between the 1860s and the 1900s. They are understood to have redeveloped 398-402 Sussex Street by the construction of a three-storey building with three separate tenancies. The date this took place has not been ascertained.

Samuel Hordern died on 13 August 1909 and his estate passed into the jurisdiction of trustees the following year. They progressively sold off his properties. 398-402 Sussex Street was purchased by tea merchant William John Stewart in May 1918. Stewart died about three years later and the property was inherited by his widow Lily. She eventually sold it to Goodman's Tents Pty Limited in July 1946, which in turn sold it to Israel and Stanley Horwitz in 1954. The transfer of title took place on 7 July 1954.

Israel Horwitz migrated from England to Australia during the second decade of the 20th century. He and his wife Ruth founded the Horwitz Company (Horwitz Publications) in 1921, which initially published trade journals. By the middle of the 1940s the Company began to develop an identity as a book publisher. It flourished during the 1950s and 1960s through the publication of cheap paperback novels, employing a stable of house writers, and comic books. When Israel Horwitz died in 1956, the company was run by his son Stanley. During the mid to late 1980s, Horwitz began to scale down its publication of books and by the early 2000s was primarily focussed on its magazines. By 2007 most of the company had left the Horwitz family's control.

Around the time that Horwitz Company purchased 398-402 Sussex Street, it engaged architect Harry Seidler to design a new building. A development application was lodged with Council on 28 April 1954, followed by a building application on 7 July 1954.

Harry Seidler (1923-2006) is one of the most important Australian architects to have practised during the second half of the 20th century and a leading proponent of modernist architecture. Born in Vienna, he escaped to England in 1938 but was interned and deported to Canada, where he studied architecture at the University of Manitoba, graduating in 1944. Seidler then studied at Harvard University under ex-Bauhaus architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, followed by further study under another ex-Bauhaus master, Josef Albers. Seidler's family settled in Sydney and he arrived here in 1948, having worked with Breuer in New York and Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil in the meantime. Seidler's first commission, a house for his parents, was also one of the most significant post war houses in NSW, led to a great deal of publicity, a Sulman medal and numerous residential commissions.

Horwitz House was Seidler's first large project and office design. Harry Seidler & Associates was founded in 1960. Buildings designed by Seidler and Harry Seidler & Associates in or near Central Sydney include:

- Printers' Union building, Regent Street (completed 1958; demolished)
- Howard Silvers Office Building, Ultimo (completed 1959; modified);
- Associated Press, Elizabeth, Park and Castlereagh Streets (completed 1961);
- Lend Lease House, Macquarie Street (completed 1961; demolished);
- Australia Square, (completed 1967);
- MLC Centre, King Street and Martin Place (completed 1975);
- Mid City Centre, George and Pitt Streets (198; demolished);

**Item name:** Former Horwitz House including internal structure

**Location:** 398-402 Sussex Street Haymarket 2000

Sydney

- Grosvenor Place, George Street (completed 1988);
- Capita Centre, Castlereagh Street (completed 1989);
- IBM Centre, Sussex Street (completed 1993);
- Elizabeth Street Offices, Surry Hills (completed 1998);
- Cove Apartments (completed 2004);
- North Apartments, Goulburn Street (completed 2004);
- Meriton Tower, George Street (completed 2006);
- Ian Thorp Aquatic Centre, Pyrmont (completed 2007);
- Alliance Française, Clarence Street (completed 2009).

Several of these works received awards and commendations for their outstanding architectural achievement.

In addition, the practice designed numerous apartment blocks located in suburbs close to Central Sydney and a Welfare Centre at Alexandria (1965) for the City of Sydney.

The Horwitz Company' published several books about Seidler's work: *Houses, Interiors, Projects*: Harry Seidler (1954), in which Stanley Horwitz wrote the foreword; *Harry Seidler 1955/63* (1963) and *Architecture for the New World: the work of Harry Seidler* (1973). Seidler also designed another building for the company at Pyrmont.

Prominent structural engineer Peter Miller (died 2013), who worked with Seidler on a number of significant projects, designed high-compression concrete floor slabs cantilevered off internal columns to create beam-free spaces. The floor slabs at the front of the building cantilevered from structural columns set back 2.9 metres from the front of the building. The high level of Miller's contribution to engineering is reflected by the award of the Order of Australia and an honorary Doctor of Engineering degree from the University of Sydney in 1983.

Horwitz House was considered quite unusual when constructed on account of its system of sun control and its structure. The building was designed at a time when aluminium and glass curtain wall systems were becoming popular and architects relied on double glazing, venetian blinds and air conditioning to make buildings comfortable. By contrast, Horowitz House used 3.6 metre high movable vertical aluminium louvres, which pivoted on ball bearings, to filter the strong westerly sun. In 2015, Harry Seidler and Associates commented that this design "created striking light effects with infinite control of sunlight and shade as shown in many Max Dupain photographs...(which) remains a legitimate architectural device and treatment for the facade."

The Sydney Morning Herald reported the building's noteworthy construction:

"The building, which faces west, will have a complete glass front protected from the sun's rays by adjustable vertical aluminium louvres...the use of vertical aluminium louvres placed outside the windows provided a real answer to the problem of sun protection...the vertical louvres also allowed ample diffuse sunlight to penetrate into the offices. The louvre blades are 12 inches wide and nine feet high and pivot on grease-packed ball bearings permanently sealed against weather. An operating bar will connect four groups of louvres across the building which can be operated through the standard aluminium windows.

The frame structure of the building, designed by consulting engineer P O Miller, is interesting...It is completely free of beams, the 7½ inch thick special high-compression concrete slab floors are cantilevered from six internal columns. The columns are in two banks of three, the first bank being 9ft 6in from the facade of the facade of the building. The internal columns will have bearing plates welded to them and the concrete floors will be pouted in situ." (Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July 1954)

In 2015, Harry Seidler and Associates commented that this design "created striking light effects with infinite control of sunlight and shade as shown in many Max Dupain photographs...(which) remains a legitimate architectural device and treatment for the facade...The original louvred facade form was expressed as a hovering block over a recessed street facade. Glass blocks enclosed the ground floor reception and office space and glass floor bricks illuminated the basement with daylight."

**Item name:** Former Horwitz House including internal structure

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Sydney

The building was a precursor to several of Seidler's Sydney buildings that were designed with direct and integral sun control devices such as Lend Lease House in Macquarie Street (1961; demolished) and the Plaza Building on the eastern side of Australia Square (1964). It was built by contractor Peter Cussel, who constructed a relatively large number of Seidler's buildings and also those of other prominent post war architects. Originally intended to rise to eight storeys, the completed structure was only six storeys high. Horwitz occupied several of them and leased the remainder.

The Horwitz Company owned the property for almost sixteen years, before selling it to Precision Plastics (Sales) Pty Limited. Not long after the new owner sold it to Rabin Investments Pty Limited. The building is understood to have been occupied by the Totalisator Agency Board during the mid 1970s.

The Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union purchased it from Rabin Investments in 1978, eventually selling it to Wilshe Pty Limited around 1990.

In 2018, the adaptive reuse of the building to hotel/serviced apartments was approved, together with a three-storey rooftop addition. The design maintained and restored significant design features, with the input and support of Harry Seidler and Associates. The deteriorated aluminium windows and like-for-like movable louvres were approved for reinstatement. The Harry Seidler and Associates architectural statement of 2015 noted the replacement louvres would "reinststate the lustre, sharpness and flexibility they originally exhibited". In terms of the proposed facade changes, Harry Seidler and Associates also noted that "With the original design expressing a connection with similar designs by early collaborator Oscar Niemeyer, a floor shifting pattern was considered, leaving an opening open at either end without louvres." For the street facade at the ground level, it was noted "Existing ground floor retail, which is currently flush to the street facade, is to be maintained in such a way to re-establish these original features by careful articulation of the shopfront...A delicate glass and steel awning is proposed to replace the clumsy solid awning that has been introduced to the building and detailed to support the recessive nature...The awning structure is proposed to float under the first floor slab to again emphasise the floating block." The statement concludes the proposed adaptive use will "respectfully express the original Seidler design without constraining the new development's distinctive character. The refurbishment of the aging building should be a positive outcome for significant Seidler building and the city precinct".

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>National theme</b>	<b>State theme</b>	<b>Local theme</b>
	3. Economy	Commerce	Publishing
	8. Culture	Creative endeavour	Modern architecture & art
	9. Phases of Life	Persons	Harry Seidler, architect
	9. Phases of Life	Persons	Peter Miller (P O Miller), engin

**Designer:** Harry Seidler, architect; Peter O Miller, structural engineer

**Builder:** Peter Cussel

**Year started:** 1954

**Year completed:** 1956

**Circa:** No

**Physical description:** Former Horwitz House is a six-storey building with a simple west-facing facade that is determined by the method used to control the ingress of sun into office levels. Aluminium windows are recessed behind the edges of floor slabs, which provide strongly defined horizontal elements that are balanced by the full-height aluminium louvres mounted between the slabs at each level. The louvres pivot to provide controlled solar access to the building's interior. The facade is "contained by thin vertical concrete walls at either end of the building".

A relatively recent roof addition is set back from the facade. It does not extend the full width of the building.

The ground floor section is separated from the upper levels by a cantilevered awning. It consists of a wide shopfront, with the main entrance to the building, reached by a flight of stairs, located at the southern end of the building.

**Physical condition level:** Fair

**Item name:** Former Horwitz House including internal structure

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Sydney

**Physical condition:** Fair condition overall. Deteriorated aluminium louvres and windows approved for like-for-like reinstatement in 2018.

**Archaeological potential level:**

**Archaeological potential Detail:** The site has been identified as an area of archaeological potential, for deeper sub-surface features only, in the Central Sydney Archaeological Zoning Plan.

**Modification dates:** The building has undergone internal modification to suit changing occupant needs. External changes include:

c.1972: Storeroom added to the roof.

c.1980: Street-level awning added circa 1990.

c.1991: Shopfront altered.

Date to be determined: Ancillary plant structures and telecommunications towers have installed at roof level.

2018: Adaptive reuse approved with setback rooftop addition of three storeys, conversion to hotel/serviced apartments with ground floor retail (D/2017/1137), and like-for-like reinstatement of facade windows and louvres, to a design supported by Harry Seidler and Associates.

**Recommended management:** The former Horwitz House should be retained and conserved. All original fabric on the building exterior should be retained. Surfaces never intended for painting, including the aluminium sun control louvres, should remain unpainted and be appropriately maintained. Where fabric is deteriorated beyond repair, like-for-like replacement that retains the original design integrity is recommended. Remaining intact original internal structure or other fabric should be retained and conserved.

Additions should be undertaken in a sympathetic manner that do not obscure the aesthetic significance of the building. The awning should either be removed or replaced with an awning that is sympathetic to the building. Future shopfront designs should be sympathetic to the building.

A conservation management plan should be prepared to guide future use and maintenance. Any application for future development should be accompanied by a heritage impact statement.

**Management:** **Management category**  
Statutory Instrument

**Management name**  
List on a Local Environmental Plan (LEP)

**Further comments:** Heritage inventory sheets are often not comprehensive, and should be regarded as a general guide only. Inventory sheets are based on information available, and often do not include the social history of sites and buildings. Inventory sheets are constantly updated by the City as further information becomes available. An inventory sheet with little information may simply indicate that there has been no building work done to the item recently: it does not mean that items are not significant. Further research is always recommended as part of preparation of development proposals for heritage items, and is necessary in preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Management Plans, so that the significance of heritage items can be fully assessed prior to submitting development applications.

**Criteria a):** The former Horwitz House is historically significant because of the manner in which its design incorporated a direct and uncompromising response to controlling the impacts of the sun on building occupants. It was an innovative response to architectural design at a time when many designers were relying on technological solutions to environmental control in commercial buildings.  
**[Historical significance]**

**Criteria b):** The former Horwitz House was designed by Harry Seidler, one of the most important architects to practice in Australia during the second half of the 20th century and one of the country's outstanding exponents of the Modern Movement. It was his first major commercial building in Sydney, and over the following four decades Seidler's office designed a large number of significant commercial Sydney projects.  
**[Historical association significance]**

The building is associated with Horwitz Company, a well known and prominent publishing house that was particularly noted for its wide range of popular fiction during the second half of the 20th century.

The building is understood to be an early example of the work of prominent structural engineer Peter Miller.

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Sydney

**Criteria c):** The former Horwitz House is a significant early example of Modern Movement design in central Sydney. Its aesthetic importance is derived from the combination of its structural system and an innovative method of sun control, which are fully integrated into the external design of the building.  
[Aesthetic/ Technical significance]

**Criteria d):** Further research is required to determine whether the building has social significance.  
[Social/Cultural significance]

**Criteria e):** The building may have technical significance because of its unusual structural design.  
[Research significance]

**Criteria f):** The building is rare because it is the first example of an office building in Sydney that convincingly integrated passive sun control devices into its design.  
[Rarity]

**Criteria g):** The former Horwitz House is representative of post war office buildings.  
[Representative]

**Intactness/Integrity:** The upper section of the building's exterior has retained a relatively large amount of original fabric. The ground floor exterior has been altered and an awning added. The design integrity is maintained and features restored in the adaptive reuse approved in 2018.

<b>References:</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>
	Harry Seidler and Associates	Architectural Statement, September 2015	2015
		Land titles	
	Jennifer Taylor	Australian Business Going Up: tall buildings 1945-1970	2001
		"Louvres to Guard Office Block Against Sun", 6 July 1954	1954
		Cross-section, Issue 40, February 1 1956	1956
	Helen O'Neill	A Singular Vision: Harry Seidler	2013
	Austlit	Overview, Horwitz Company	2014

<b>Studies:</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Year</b>
	Tanner Kibble Denton Architects	Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney - Heritage		2018

<b>Parcels:</b>	<b>Parcel code</b>	<b>Lot number</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Plan code</b>	<b>Plan number</b>
	LOT	1		DP	55229

**Latitude:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Longitude:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location validity:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Spatial accuracy:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Map name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Map scale:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AMG zone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Easting:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Northing:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Listing:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>ListingDate</b>
	Modern Movement Architecture in	Heritage study		01/01/2008

**Data entry:** Data first entered: 11/07/2018      Data updated: 04/10/2018      Status: Completed

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Sydney

**Image:**



**Caption:** The building shortly after construction, photographed by Max Dupain

**Copy right:** Penelope Seidler

**Image by:** Max Dupain (Dupain job 618 image 618-2)

**Image date:** 01/11/1955

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345c697ef6e8784462fadea02e434405e0d.jpg>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test345c697ef6e8784462fadea02e434405e0d.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test345c697ef6e8784462fadea02e434405e0d.jpg)

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Sydney

**Image:**



**Caption:** The building in 1976, viewed from the south-west, before awning and shopfront alterations

**Copy right:** State Library of NSW

**Image by:** Jack Hickson

**Image date:** 01/01/1976

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3455aa9f02427e74bd4b00dfff1e649113d.jpg>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test3455aa9f02427e74bd4b00dfff1e649113d.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test3455aa9f02427e74bd4b00dfff1e649113d.jpg)

**Image:**

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Sydney



**Caption:** Former Horwitz House in 2013, viewed from the south-west

**Copy right:** City of Sydney

**Image by:** Tanner Kibble Denton Architects

**Image date:** 01/01/2013

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3453a652aca8c0c47fa88b97b48fdd667df.jpg>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test3453a652aca8c0c47fa88b97b48fdd667df.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test3453a652aca8c0c47fa88b97b48fdd667df.jpg)

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Sydney



**Caption:** Former Horwitz House in 2013, viewed from the north-west

**Copy right:** City of Sydney

**Image by:** Tanner Kibble Denton Architects

**Image date:** 08/01/2013

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345ea0fcb9ebbea4f239971e8b7cc5544a4.jpg>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test345ea0fcb9ebbea4f239971e8b7cc5544a4.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test345ea0fcb9ebbea4f239971e8b7cc5544a4.jpg)

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Sydney



**Caption:** Shopfront and facade louvres in 2018

**Copy right:** City of Sydney

**Image by:** Claudine Loffi

**Image date:** 10/07/2018

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345da8acc203b494a36ad9c746024b2cea8.JPG>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test345da8acc203b494a36ad9c746024b2cea8.JPG](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test345da8acc203b494a36ad9c746024b2cea8.JPG)

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**Caption:** Original interiors as photographed by Max Dupain

**Copy right:** Penelope Seidler

**Image by:** Max Dupain (Dupain job 618 image 618-3)

**Image date:** 01/11/1955

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345472533f6be68454e98f5fb7cd47648e9.jpg>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test345472533f6be68454e98f5fb7cd47648e9.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test345472533f6be68454e98f5fb7cd47648e9.jpg)

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**Caption:** Internal detail of original aluminium louvres and fenestration

**Copy right:** City of Sydney

**Image by:** Hui Wang

**Image date:** 12/01/2016

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/345d10b1a74c38f4049b78ce5f0fb435272.jpg>

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**Caption:** Internal detail of original aluminium louvre mechanism

**Copy right:** City of Sydney

**Image by:** Hui Wang

**Image date:** 12/01/2016

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/34549f144027fb64915a09615772556dba9.jpg>

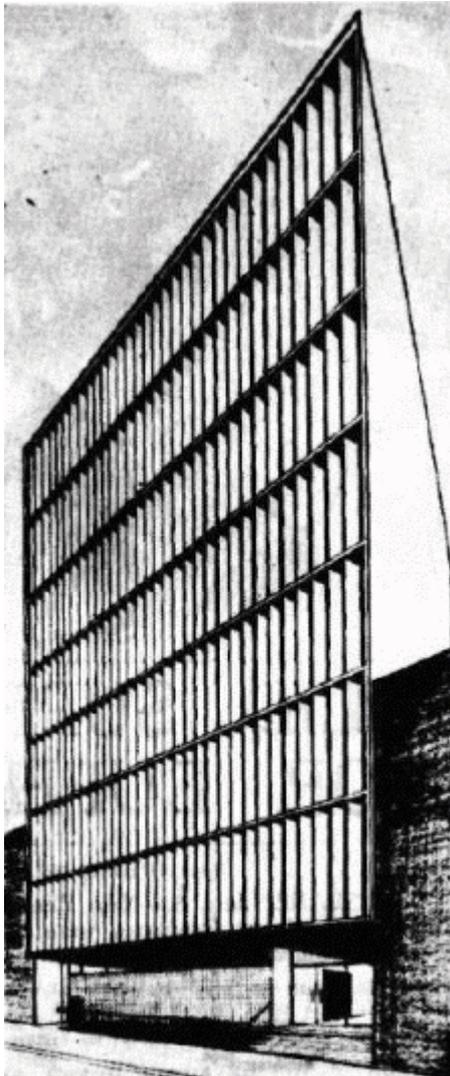
**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/P/Thumb\\_test34549f144027fb64915a09615772556dba9.jpg](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/P/Thumb_test34549f144027fb64915a09615772556dba9.jpg)

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**Caption:** Perspective study by Colin Griffiths, architect of Seidler's office, as published in SMH

**Copy right:** Penelope Seidler

**Image by:** Colin Griffiths

**Image date:** 06/07/1954

**Image number:**

**Image url:** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/34517064614c411492bb016bfb67fcf0edc.gif>

**Thumbnail url:** [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb\\_test34517064614c411492bb016bfb67fcf0edc.gif](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test34517064614c411492bb016bfb67fcf0edc.gif)