

15 July 2009

GREEN LIGHT FOR MCA REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

NEW BUILDING TO TRANSFORM MUSEUM INTO A MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ART AND EDUCATION HUB



Sydney, Australia: The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) has received planning approval for a \$50 million redevelopment set to transform the institution through the building of a new contemporary extension and the refurbishment of the Museum's existing building on Sydney Harbour.

The redevelopment plans, designed by Sydney architect Sam Marshall in close collaboration with the MCA and local stakeholders, include the creation of a National Centre for Creative Learning, along with revamped and extended gallery spaces and a new fully accessible entrance.

New South Wales Government Planning Minister, Ms Kristina Keneally, said the MCA redevelopment will breathe new life into Australia's leading contemporary art museum and rejuvenate a Sydney tourism drawcard.

"This redevelopment will enhance the MCA building and complement one of Australia's most important sites, Sydney Harbour," said Ms Keneally.

Director of the MCA, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, said the redevelopment is vital to consolidate the MCA's reputation as a major cultural destination.

"We are delighted that our plans for this important and complex site, which have come out of a long process of collaboration with Sydney architect Sam Marshall and consultation with interested stakeholders, have achieved this milestone," Ms Macgregor said.

Previous schemes to redevelop the MCA - including a proposed design concept by Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa in 1997 and a controversial design by Sauerbruch and Hutton in 2000 - have failed to progress to planning consent stage.

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The redevelopment plans respond to increasing demands placed on the MCA's existing building by strong growth in visitor attendances.

"This expansion is essential as the MCA continues to welcome visitors in record-breaking numbers. More than half a million people visit MCA exhibitions each year, representing an increase of more than four-fold over the past decade."

Education is a central focus of the redevelopment and the new building will house a National Centre for Creative Learning with workshop spaces for schools and after-school youth programs. There will be new facilities for the Museum's renowned Bella program for young people with special needs, a digital classroom, multi-media room, library and resource room and a lecture theatre/new media events space.

"The redevelopment is an investment in creative education and teacher training facilities which will put the MCA at the forefront of world class arts education delivery through leading edge technology," Ms Macgregor said.

New media, enhanced online capabilities and improved facilities will enable the MCA to deliver a greater range of educational programs to more Australians living in remote and regional areas.

"As the only institution in Australia dedicated to both collecting and exhibiting contemporary art, living artists are at the heart of all the MCA's activities. Using new technology, the new facilities will give young people across Australia the opportunity to engage with the artists of today," said Ms Macgregor.

New and improved gallery spaces in the new extension and the existing building will allow a greater presence for the MCA permanent collection. This includes important works by contemporary Australian and international artists and a significant collection of early Indigenous bark paintings.

The MCA has secured more than half of the \$50 million required for the redevelopment, with \$27 million already raised. Construction will commence once 90% of required funding is in place.

"Even in this difficult global financial climate, the MCA has already received pledges of over \$16 million towards the redevelopment. Together with the \$10 million from the State Government and another \$1 million pledged by the City of Sydney, we are already more than half way towards turning this plan into a reality."

MCA Foundation Chair Simon Mordant, who has personally pledged \$5 million to the project, said: "The receipt of the DA approval is the culmination of a huge amount of work by the MCA team and its consultants. We are well through our half way mark in the fundraising and I hope the DA approval will be a further catalyst to complete the Building Appeal".

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD) and the reduction of the MCA's carbon footprint are also key elements of the redevelopment. The plans incorporate a seawater heat exchange with a fully integrated air-conditioning system offering energy savings of up to 30%. Other initiatives include ESD compliant lighting, energy monitoring throughout the building, insulation of gallery spaces, as well as water and materials recycling.

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Notes to Editors:

For further information and to request interviews and high resolution imagery of building renderings and interiors please contact Kym Elphinstone, MCA PR & Communications Manager on +61 2 9245 2434 or +61 421 106 139 or email kym.elphinstone@mca.com.au.

Additional media backgrounders available on request:

MCA Redevelopment & Architecture and **History of MCA site & building.**

About the MCA Fundraising Campaign:

The MCA has raised \$27million of the \$50million expected total project cost. The fundraising campaign, launched in August 2007, has raised \$16million from the private sector and \$11million from government grants. In 2008, the MCA received a \$10million grant from the New South Wales Government and \$1 million from the City of Sydney.

About the MCA:

The MCA is the only institution in Australia dedicated to both collecting and exhibiting contemporary art, from this nation and around the world. The MCA makes art accessible and engaging for a broad spectrum of public audiences through stimulating exhibitions, educational programs and special events.

- The MCA is continually recognised for its excellence and was recently voted Sydney's favourite museum (Best of Sydney Awards, August 2008)
- The MCA attracts over 500,000 visitors per year, an increase of more than fourfold since 1999
- 65% of the MCA audience is under the age of 35
- Over 8,500 people participate in more than 70 MCA public programs each year
- Over 25,000 students participate in MCA programs each year
- MCA touring exhibitions are seen by over 100,000 people each year

About the Architect:

Sam Marshall is the principal of an award-winning private architectural practice Marshall Architect, headquartered in Sydney's Surry Hills. He commenced private practice in 1989, after graduating from UNSW with honours and working as an associate at Marsh Freedman Associates. Marshall was awarded the 2000 RAIWA Wilkinson Award, President's Award for Recycled Buildings and the Conservation Award for his design involving a warehouse conversion in Darlinghurst. He is a recipient of the Dulux Colour Award for Best Interior, the Marrickville Medal and the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, for which he mounted the exhibition "Supermodels". Marshall has been a member of the NSW Ministry for the Arts Capital Infrastructure Committee and is currently a Board Member of the Australian Centre for Photography.