



Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 42 Queen Street

1918

Themes in development: cultural and social, civic.

Cultural heritage values: historical, architectural, technical, rarity, townscape and group values.

Not registered.

Owner

New Plymouth District Council
Private Bag 2025
New Plymouth

Title

All DP 3465 and Pt Sec 640
Town of New Plymouth
ID: 014957

Use

Art gallery and
restaurant

Description

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is adapted from a picture theatre of 1918. Its main elevation to Queen Street is dominated by a large wall with a single small door and no windows; instead there is a geometric design of pilasters and circles in plain plaster contrasted with a stucco finish on the main wall surfaces. A cornice and parapet finish the building at roof level. Work to adapt the building for a gallery included new structural elements in concrete and new floors in concrete, steel and timber, the floors floating within the volume of the old theatre.

History

The first Primitive Methodist Church in New Plymouth was built on this site in 1862; it was replaced with a larger building designed by Frank Messenger in 1904. Following the unification of Methodist groups in 1913 the church was purchased by Peoples Pictures Ltd and in February 1916 the first movie was screened in it.

The present building was originally the Peoples Picture Theatre and was built, in 1918, around the old church which was then demolished from within. Its name was changed to the Regent Theatre in 1930 and it finally closed in 1964. The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery was established by a bequest in 1962 from Mrs R Brewster. The gallery opened in the adapted and renovated building in February 1970, and has continued in this role since. The entrance was originally through the front doors and is now via the structure added on the north side that also contains a restaurant.

Architect

Architects for the adaptation of the building were Bowering, Thomson, Boon and Associates, and the contractors Bowers and Scweiteurs; the cost was \$130,000.

Statement of Significance

This building is a brilliant adaptive re-use of a heritage building, the work of changing it to suit the new purpose itself something of cultural heritage value. Its historic value is high for the religious, entertainment and artistic activities pursued there; there is architectural value in the facade and interior spatial qualities, and it has important townscape qualities and group value in association with the clock tower, White Hart Hotel and Public Trust building.

Sources

New Plymouth District Council building file 460/34.

Taranaki Museum, heritage trail file C7020048.

New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal, 20 March 1971, pp. 75-77.