

Heritage Citation



The Banker sculpture

Key details

Addresses

At 260 Queen Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

Type of place	Art work
Period	Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Lot plan	L1_RP119919
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Sculpture: Aluminium
People/associations	Leonard Shillam (Sculptor)
Criterion for listing	(E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

‘The Banker’, located on the Westpac Bank building at 260 Queen Street, was installed in 1970 and is intended to represent bankers and the industries they assist. The sculptor, Leonard Shillam, is a significant Brisbane artist credited with introducing modern sculpture to Brisbane in the late 1940s.

History

The Banker was created by the renowned Brisbane sculptor Leonard Shillam in 1970. The sculpture was commissioned by the Westpac Banking Corporation following a competition and when completed was installed on the façade of the Westpac Bank building that faces Post Office Square.

Leonard Shillam studied drawing at the Brisbane Technical College in 1931-34 and then, with the aid of a Carnegie Corporation travelling scholarship, studied art in London in 1938-39. Shillam is credited with introducing modern sculpture to Brisbane on his return from London and from 1950 onward he worked as a full-time sculptor. Shillam is responsible for a number of significant public sculptures in Brisbane, including Enlightenment (1959), located on the river façade of the former Queensland State Library, Northbank, and Proclamation Figure (1959), located outside the Deanery in the Cathedral Precinct off Ann Street in the Central Business District. Leonard Shillam and his wife Kathleen are considered “among Queensland’s most significant public artists”.¹

According to the plaque attached to the sculpture, The Banker is intended to represent ‘Bankers and the industries they assist’. Judith McKay, in Brisbane sculpture guide: a walk around public sculpture in the city (1988) elaborates:

The Doric columns and entablature over the money-changer refer to the stability and antiquity of banking. The upper cast panels and openwork structure show the progress and development made possible through the banking system in rural, industrial, scientific and constructional spheres.²

Lisanne Gibson and Joanna Besley claim The Banker is one of Shillam's "most significant pieces of work".⁴

Leonard Shillam remains a significant figure in Brisbane and Australian sculpture. In 1968 Leonard and his wife, Kathleen, became foundation members of the Society of Sculptors Queensland; Leonard was the first instructor in sculpture at the Queensland College of Art in 1975 and both he and Kathleen received the Order of Australia in 1986 for services to sculpture and education. Since the 1950s, Shillam's work has been represented in galleries throughout Australia.

Description

The Banker is located on the façade of the Westpac Bank building facing Post Office Square. It comprises an aluminium sculpture, which is intended to represent bankers and the industries they assist. The sculpture is attached to a vertical concrete panel, which contrasts with the horizontal fenestration of the building on either side, emphasising the visual impact of the artwork.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a significant piece of artwork located prominently on the side of the Westpac building.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as artwork designed by significant Brisbane sculptor Leonard Shillam.

References

1. L. Gibson & J. Besley, *Monumental Queensland: signposts on a cultural landscape*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2004, p. 159
 2. J. McKay, *Brisbane sculpture guide: a walk around public sculpture in the city*, Brisbane, Society of Sculptors, 1988, p. 26
 3. Gibson & Besley, *Monumental Queensland*, p. 160
 4. Gibson, L. & Besley, J., *Monumental Queensland: signposts on a cultural landscape*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2004
 5. Kerr, J 1988, *Brunswick Street, Bowen Hills and Beyond: the Railways of the Northern suburbs of Brisbane*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Brisbane
 6. Shillam, L., *Shillam sculpture*, Brisbane, CopyRight Publishing, 2000
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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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