

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

Compiled by: Dr JJ Bruwer, 2002-07-29

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NAME OF PLACE: VANITES BUILDING



Previous/alternative name/s : originally *Vanite*; 1954 - *Vanites Building*;
: by 1974 - *Laddiere*; by 1992 - *Fine Art Building*

LOCATION: Street : Joubert
Street number : 44
Stand Number : 672RE
Previous Stand Number: originally 1670; by 1976 672F
Block number : AC
GIS reference :

ZONING: Current use/s :
Previous use/s : originally a warehouse, shops and showrooms;
: by 1976 shops and office

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : 50' 8.5"
Levels above street level : five
Levels below street level : one basement
On-site parking : none

The basement houses a high and low-tension chamber, service and main stair.

The ground, first and the double volume second floor of the building were originally designed as showrooms.

The third floor – the height of this floor is less than that of the other ordinary floors – is designated as a sick and change room, also as the alteration department (indicated on the plans as “Alteration hands”).

The fourth floor, or roof, comprised a roof garden; staff room; staff mess room and kitchen; lobby and window dressers store; lift motor room and stair lobby.

Urban Features: “Architectural Merit: The building has a very well resolved façade, with a build up of forms and articulation to a suspended rectangle reminiscent of much of the Martiensen dominated Johannesburg modernism.”

Of interest are the brackets on the upper portion of the cantilevered verandah. “While the commercial buildings” according to Van Der Waal, “were vertically orientated, especially in the upper portions of their facades, they did not entirely escape the force of the strong horizontal lines and planes of the display windows and pavement hoods. Verandahs with their pillars began to be replaced by cantilever pavement covers in the early 1930s, but such hoods were first used in the *Paramount Building* (see AE-1) as early as 1911. In Johannesburg this change-over was more gradual than in Sydney, Australia, where new building regulations introduced in 1912 banned verandahs altogether...Initially, Johannesburg’s hoods were fitted with bearer beams on the underside. Later however, beams were placed on the upper side of the hood to leave an uncluttered ceiling over the pavement. The effect of this practice was that the hoods, together with the long bands of display windows, reinforced the suggestion of horizontal movement in the smooth street and pavement surfaces.”

This is an out-of-the-ordinary designed building. A special effort should therefore be made to monitor any future alterations to the street façade of the building. It is also recommended that the building should receive protection status, as this building is 52 years old and is therefore not protected under the general protection provisions of the current heritage legislation.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: marble on ground floor; terrazzo slabs; plastered brick.

Roof: reinforced concrete slabs; waterproofed.

Windows: two large plate glass display windows on ground floor, and a single large plate glass display window, placed at an angle on the first floor; top-hung casements and ventilator windows.

The original name of the building *Vanite* originally appeared above the large plate glass display window on the first floor.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

Deviation: new four and a half inch brick wall in basement and new door in existing wall; name on building removed. Note on Application for Approval Form: “Subject to doors of lift being Fire doors in compliance with Bylaws.”

Architect : Kling & Trope
Plan date : 16 October 1951
Plans passed : 4 March 1953
Estimated cost : £300

Various minor internal alterations have also been carried out to the building.

INTEGRITY:

The City Engineering Department’s record for this building contains six approved alteration / deviation plans. The only external alterations were the installation of two new display windows and a passage for emergency exists to the ground floor. Except for the bricked-up windows, the façade of the building has essentially remained true to the original design. It is to be regretted, however, that the entire façade has been painted, considering that the original façade, comprised *inter alia*, of

interfacing face brick sections.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Kling & Trope. (Address 214, S.A. Mutual Buildings, Harrison Street, Johannesburg).

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans : September 1951
Approval of plans : 7 April 1952
Completion date : December 1952

A note written in red – on the Application for Approval Form of the City Engineering Department - clearly states “Approved subject to compliance with endorsement on plan that floors will at no time be converted to industrial or office use.”

BUILDING STYLE:

Late Modernist.

BUILDING TYPE:

Shop to street, warehouse and showroom building.

ENVIRONMENT:

The smooth lined *Vanites Building* holds its own against the elaborately gabled façade of the *Ranath House* and the impressive Art Deco features of the *Dunvegan Chambers*. The height of The *Vanites Building* is in sympathy with the much older *Ranath House*, its design responding well to the scale and form of the latter building. The ten-storey *Dunvegan Chamber’s* dominating height against its earth-bound neighbours, does not diminish the skyline but rather allows the above buildings each with an own ‘place in the sun’.

CONDITION:

In the RAU June 1976 Survey report, the condition of the buildings was described as bad, and it was recommended that the building should be demolished. It would have been a sad day had this recommendation been implemented, as such a recommendation should never have been made in the first place! This is evidence of the fact that the above Survey Report certainly had its shortcomings in terms of some of the recommendations put forward in this report. The building is currently in a fair condition.

URGENT ACTION:

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	provisional protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
	heritage area	<input type="checkbox"/>
	listed in provincial heritage resources register	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

FORMER PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)

NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: Fine Arts Buildings (Tvl.) Limited, 105 Pritchard Street, Johannesburg.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

PADDON & BROCK BUILDING:

G.-M. van der Waal describes the *Paddon & Brock Building*, previously located on the site of the current building, as follows: "There was also a marked difference between shops built before 1895 and those that came after. The first shops constructed after the economic depression of 1889-90 were of simple design and modest in scale and ornamentation. Examples were: *Juta Building* (1892), 43 Pritchard Street; *Kimberley House* (1892), 44 Pritchard Street [see R-1]; the first *Thorne & Stuttaford Building* (1893), 58, 60 Pritchard Street [see Pre-History: T-2]; *Duffus Bros Building* (1893), 70 Pritchard Street [see Pre-History: AC-6]; *Henwood Building* [see Pre-History: AE-1] and *Paddon & Brock Building* (1893) [see also Pre-History: AC-5], 56 [sic. this should be 44] Joubert Street and 68 Pritchard Street. The first four were built in the style of the period before 1890 – a free and folksy interpretation of classicist building forms. By contrast, *Duffus Bros* and *Paddon & Brock Buildings* in particular were cast in a new style, the picturesque Neo-Queen Anne, as revealed mainly by the prominent gables and colourful variations between red-brick wall surfaces and pale plaster accents. The interruption of the street wall's roof silhouette by gables gave the buildings an individual colour and aspect, so that these 'gable buildings broke away from the homogeneity which was such an important feature of building styles prior to 1890. The commercial buildings erected between 1894 and 1899 underscored this differentiation still further, thereby reinforcing the identity of the shopping district." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

HISTORY:

On a municipal submission drawing dated September 1951, the name *Vanite* appears on the façade of the building; the name, however, does not appear on a later plan, dated 16 October 1951. This is of interest, especially as subsequent alterations to the building till as late as 1966, were for 'Vanite Limited'.

GENERAL NOTES:

Estimated cost of building	: £60,000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £700
Accommodation approved	: 4 'Non-Europeans'
Valuation at completion	: £21,000 (Class 2)
Occupied	:

Below are extracts from minutes of meetings of the City Council's Non-European Affairs Committee, contained in the plans record of the *Vanites* Building:

Meeting on the 28 February 1952: "Resolved: That, when the building has been completed according to the approved plan, a licence be granted to Fine Arts Buildings (Tvl.) Ltd. to house four male 'natives' on Stand 1670 [now 672RE] Johannesburg."

"Location of Quarters: Two rooms for four males on roof of six storey commercial building. Necessary amenities will be provided. The site is zoned General Business. Under the Town Planning Scheme, 'Native' quarters may be erected only with the consent of the Council.

Licence Required for: Four males to be employed as cleaners.

I RECOMMEND: That, when the building has been completed according to the approved plan, a licence be granted to Fine Arts Building (Tvl.) Ltd. to house four male 'Natives' on Stand 1670 [now 672RE], Johannesburg."

Meeting on the 12 November 1952: Resolved: That, when the building has been completed according to the approved plan, a licence be granted to Fine Arts Building (Tvl.) Ltd. to house three male 'Natives' on Stand 1670 [now 672RE], Joubert Street, Johannesburg."

In a letter dated 25 May 1992 to J Hugo, Director: City Planning, City of Johannesburg, Flo Bird, then chairperson of the Transvaal Plans Committee of the former NMC, stated as follows: "...We have been asked to approve the demolition of yet another block of flats in the CDB. This is Mansfield House (101 President Street), on the north-east corner of President and Joubert Streets. The developer has purchased the entire block (the city block bounded by President, Eloff, Pritchard and Joubert Streets), having been warned in advance of the historical importance of a number of buildings on it. These include Cutherts (see AC-7), Penlan (see AC-2), Hilson (see AC-6), The Royalty (see AC-5), Dunvegan Chambers (see AC-4) and possibly Ranath House (see AC-8)...When that assessment was made some years ago, Mansfield was not considered of great significance. It is a good substantial building, with relatively modest Art Deco facades, designed by the same architects as Hilson, the (sic.) Royalty and Dunvegan ie (J.C.) Cook and Cowen, but less lavishly – presumably because it was done in the Depression (during the early 1930s). A case can be made to some extent for its conservation in terms of the National Monuments Act, but it is not of such outstanding significance as to be worth retaining if that is the only contribution it makes. The NMC has always tried to work with the City Council in terms of planning policies, because it is our belief that conservation is most successful where it is integrated into planning. According to numerous press statements the Council is deeply concerned with increasing the residential component of the CDB. We understand it is fundamental to all proposals for revitalising the City Centre. If this is the case, is the City Council opposed to the demolition of Mansfield House? Is there a plan which deals with maintaining or increasing the residential stock in this sector? And if there are plans for this what incentives are being offered to landlords and/or developers? The redevelopment of the block as outlined by the developers exclude any residential component. It is proposed to erect two stories of retail space, with a floor of offices above. They are prepared to retain the facades and a certain module of the original building behind (at least up to the pitch of the roof where applicable) in respect of Hilson, the (sic.) Royalty, Ranath and Penlan. Cuthberts will be retained intact since it is already a fully declared National Monument. But is it proposed to remove Dunvegan Chambers, as well as the two newer buildings, Fine Arts (see AC-3) and Franwell."

PREVIOUS TENANT:

By 1954: Vanites Ladies' Gowns.

CURRENT TENANT/S:

SOURCES:

For additional illustrative information, see relevant supplementary photo album in electronic format.

See SOURCES DOCUMENT for information on sources consulted with reference to this document.

City Engineering Department, Stand No. 672RE, Township Johannesburg (Planning Department), City of Johannesburg.

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic Value:

- Associated with historic person, group or organisation
- Associated with historic event or activity

Architectural/Aesthetic value:

- Important example of building type
- Important example of a style or period
- Fine details, workmanship or aesthetics
- Work of a major architect or builder

Social/Spiritual/Linguistic value:

- Associated with social, spiritual, linguistic, economic or political activity

Illustrates an historical period

Scientific/Technological value:

Example of industrial, technical or engineering development/achievement

New, rare or experimental building techniques

RECORDED BY:

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.

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