HEBB BUILDING
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MARCH 2017

DONALD LUXTON
AND ASSOCIATES INC

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: HEBB BUILDING

Name of the Historic Place: Hebb Theatre and Tower ('Hebb Building')
Address: 2045 East Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Date of Construction: 1963
Architect: Thompson Berwick & Pratt

Description of the Historic Place

The Hebb Theatre and Tower (known collectively as the 'Hebb Building') consists of a sunken, one-storey, windowless lecture theatre attached to a five-storey classroom tower. Completed in 1963, the Hebb Building is located at 2045 East Mall on the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus and is characterized by its Modernist architecture, expressed through: the theatre's articulated cubic volumes, cast-in-place concrete construction, blank vertical concrete panels, flat stepped roof forms with copper cladding and copper fascias, and the tower's exposed slab edges, glazed white brick panels, full-height glazed corner "experimental towers" with black steel window frames, and stepped skywalk to the Hennings Building. Designed by Thompson Berwick & Pratt, long-term architects for UBC, the Hebb Building sits within the northeast quadrant of the campus.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Hebb Building is valued for its association with the Modern-era development of the University of British Columbia (UBC), which completed a building expansion program during the 1960s. The building is additionally significant as a representation of the importance and growth of science and technology during the postwar era, as well as for its Modernist architecture, as designed by prolific local architects Thompson Berwick & Pratt, within the overall context of their long-term design of the UBC campus.

The Hebb Building, opened in 1963, is an important part of the post-World War Two expansion of the University of British Columbia, when tremendous growth was resulting in the demand for new facilities, infrastructure, and disciplines. In the early 1960s, UBC embarked upon an ambitious five-year, $30 million building program, which would see the construction of nine new campus buildings, including the Hebb Building. Among the policies guiding the expansion was the goal of creating a student centre of campus, located near the intersection of Main Mall and University Boulevard, which would see the convergence of four complexes – education, biological science, physics, and arts-commerce. This central hub was intended to reduce the sprawling nature of the campus, making it convenient for students to commute between classes and buildings. The expansion plan was also intended to accommodate a burgeoning campus population, which would not be alleviated until prospective students were provided with an alternative university choice, Simon Fraser University, beginning in 1965.

The Hebb Building is valued as a representation of the growing importance of science and technology following the Second World War. From the 1950s to the 1970s – the Atomic era and the height of the Space Race – scientific and technological research programs gained new prominence throughout North America. Global tensions, which arose during the war and continued during subsequent world conflicts, also raised awareness of the power of science and technology and promoted the establishment of sophisticated science programs on university campuses. The result at the University of British Columbia was investment in new buildings and substantial additions to existing infrastructure, as well as expanded science, technology and engineering programs. The building campaign of the 1960s included the construction of the Hebb physics complex (at a cost of $1.4 million), which was an addition to the original 1947 physics building, a new agriculture-forestry building, a dentistry building, a metallurgical section and civil and mechanical section of the significantly expanded engineering complex, and a substantial addition to the biological sciences building. The Hebb Building was named after Dr. Thomas Carlyle Hebb, first head of the physics department and a UBC faculty member from 1916 until his death in 1938.

The Hebb Building is additionally valued for its Modernist architecture, as designed by the pre-eminent architectural firm of Thompson Berwick & Pratt, pioneers in the introduction of modernism to Vancouver and in the development of the West Coast style of architecture. In 1912, Thompson Berwick & Pratt won the competition to design the Point Grey UBC campus and became the official architectural firm of the institution. Founded in 1908 as Sharp & Thompson, the firm played a major role in the architectural development of Vancouver through the 1900s. Sharp & Thompson first designed medieval and classically inspired commercial, institutional and residential buildings, most significantly on the UBC campus, until they were joined, in 1937, by Berwick and Pratt, young graduates committed to the development of a regional architectural language inspired by the principles of European modernism. Through the 1950s and 1960s, Thompson Berwick & Pratt received international attention for their work, including the 1957 B.C. Electric Building. The firm employed some of Canada's most significant architects, including Barry Downs, Arthur Erickson, and Ron Thom. On the UBC campus, structures such as the Hebb Building (1963), the Frederic Wood Theatre (1963), the Frederic Lasserre Building (1962), and the Buchanan Building (1956-58) illustrate the firm's Modern aesthetic, as expressed through cubic volumes, symmetrical forms, cast-in-place concrete construction, flat roofs, ribbon or curtain windows and a consistent use of white brick. The Hebb Building, notable for its clean, spare design, which directly expresses the classroom and circulation functions within, remains an excellent and refined example of a Modernist Thompson Berwick & Pratt contribution to UBC.

Character-Defining Elements

The elements that define the heritage character of the Hebb Building are its:

Site

- location along East Mall in the northeast quadrant of the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus;
- setting among adjacent academic, athletic, transportation and recreation facilities;

Theatre

Exterior

- institutional form, scale and massing as expressed by its below grade, symmetrical, one-storey, expressed, near windowless, cubic forms, accessed by a flight of steps;
- Modernist Style design features including its: expressed projecting cubic volumes with soffit lighting; stepped flat roof with copper cladding and copper fascia; expressed blank vertical concrete panel wall treatment; concrete slab-on-grade foundation; and central, tripartite entryway;
- cast-in-place concrete construction; and
- associated concrete planters and mature plantings.

Interior

- terrazzo flooring in the lobby;
- glazed white Norman brick walls, matching the exterior of the Tower;
- geometric wood banisters; and
- fan-shaped auditorium with sloped floor, auditorium seating, and suspended ceiling.

Tower

Exterior

- institutional form, scale and massing as expressed by its rectangular, symmetrical, five-storey, expressed cubic form;
- Modernist Style design features including its: flat roof; concrete cast-in-place exterior walls with white glazed Norman brick cladding; expressed cubic volumes, which project out to either side; reinforced concrete columns and beams supporting concrete suspended slabs offering entry to the building; exposed floor slab edges; concrete slab-on-grade foundation; and original skywalk, connecting the third floor of the tower with the original 1947 physics building (Henning Building). The skywalk features a stepped profile, exposed concrete structure, significant glazing on one side and solid concrete walls on the other;
- cast-in-place concrete construction; and
- original full-height glazed corner "experimental towers" with steel window frames, painted black; fixed corner windows at the rear of the building; stacked fixed vertical windows on the front elevation, and tripartite windows with awning openers on the rear elevation; and paired aluminum doors.

Interior

- terrazzo flooring in the halls;
- glazed white Norman brick walls, matching the exterior;
- wood banisters; and
- wood classroom doors.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

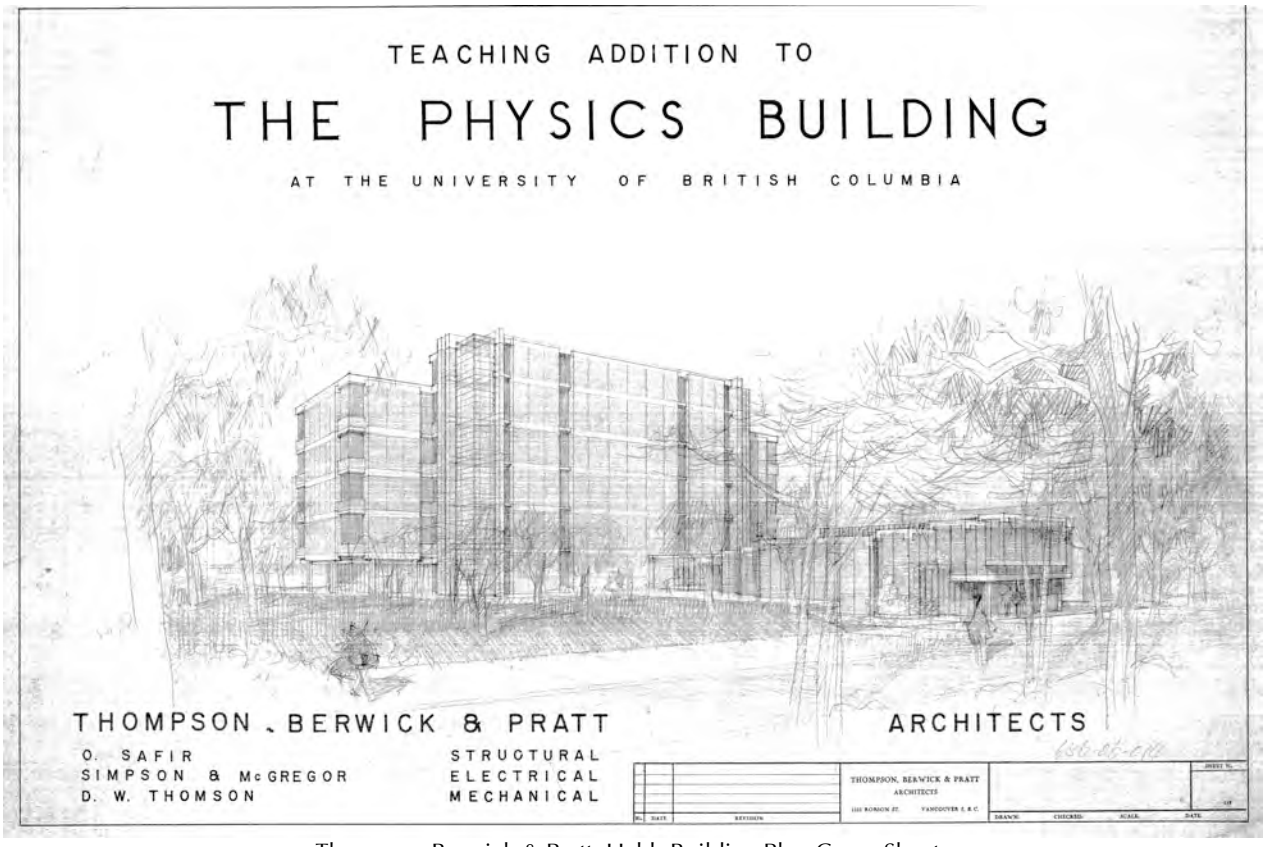
Address: 2045 East Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Construction Date: 1963
Architect: Thompson Berwick & Pratt
Cost: $1,398,503
Construction Type: Cast-in-place concrete
Historic Building Users: Physics

Sources: UBC Archives; *The Ubyssey;* UBC Buildings (Campus Planning)

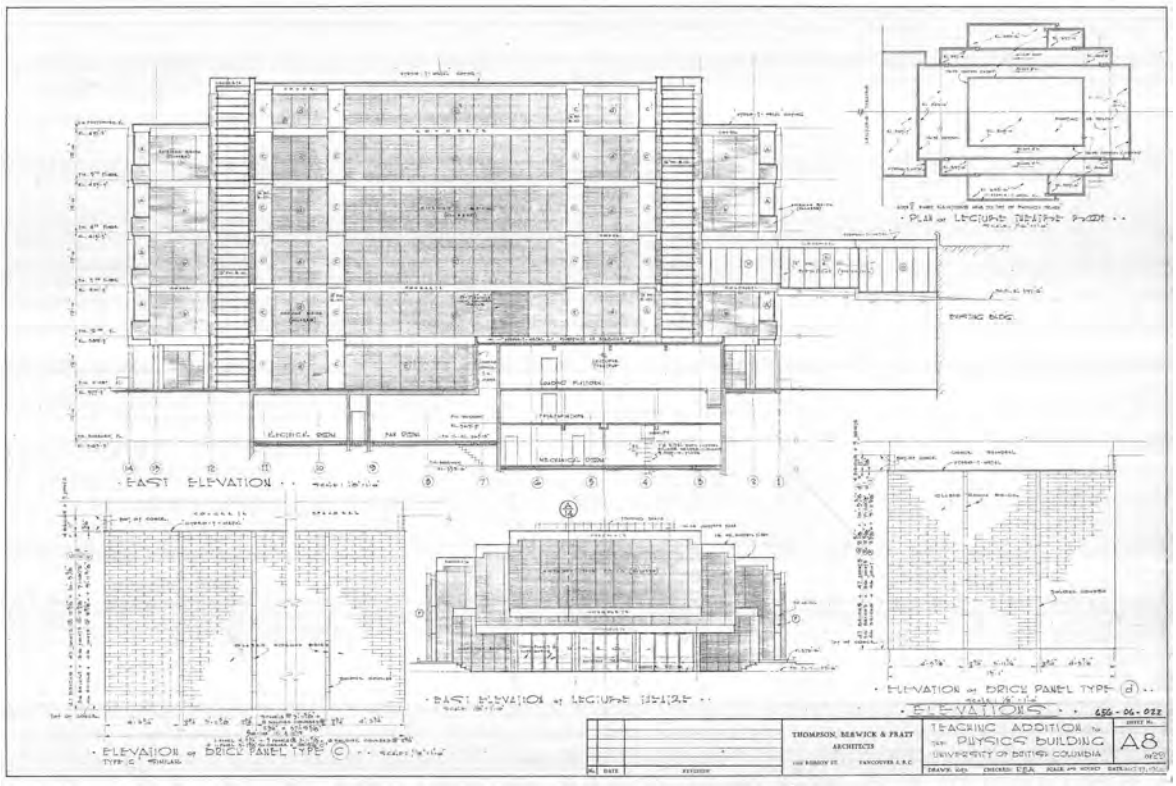
***THE UBYSSEY* ARTICLE REFERENCES**

- October 24, 1963
- November 30, 1963
- December 31, 1963

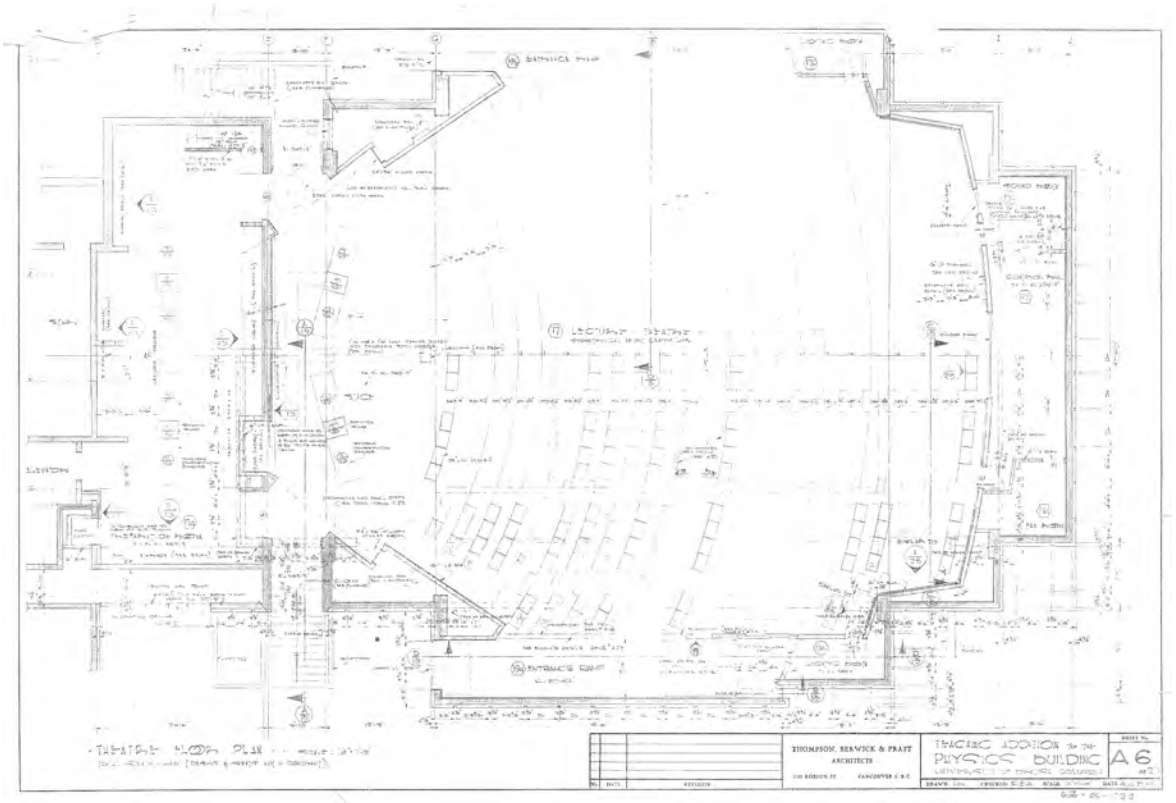
ORIGINAL PLANS



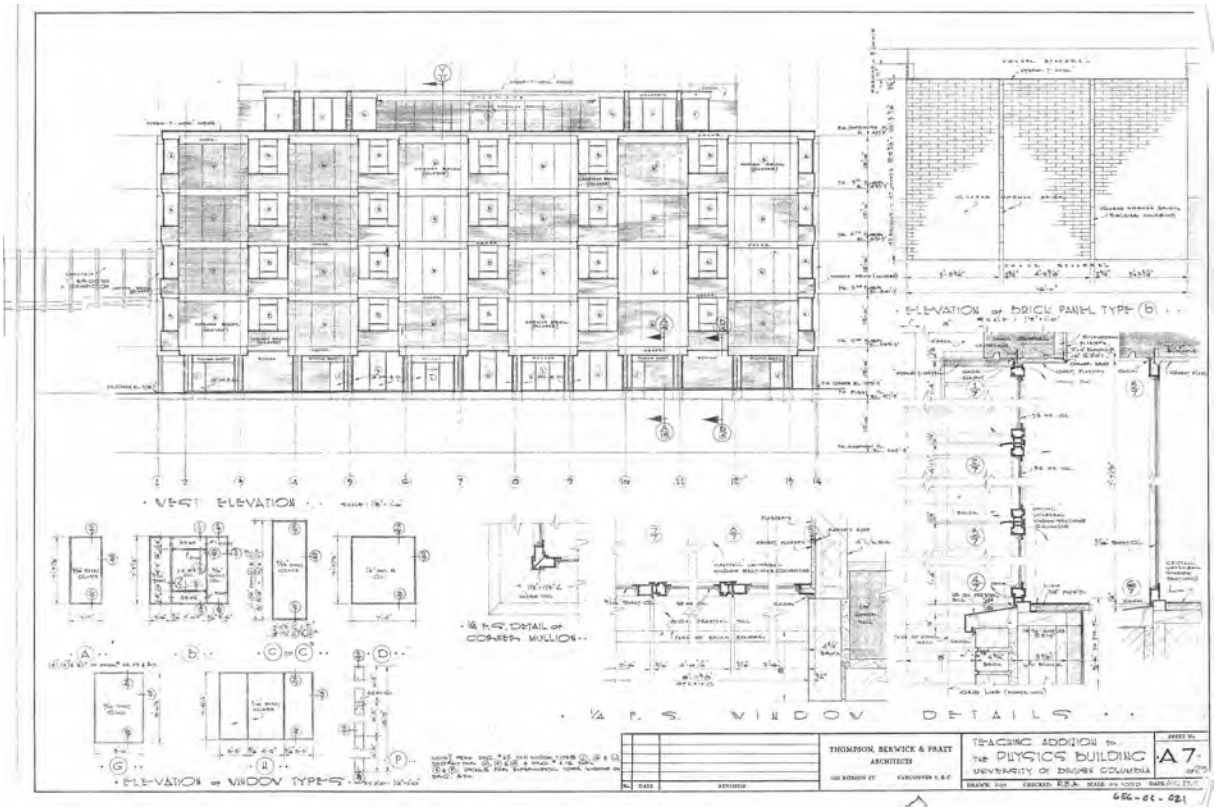
Thompson Berwick & Pratt, Hebb Building Plan Cover Sheet



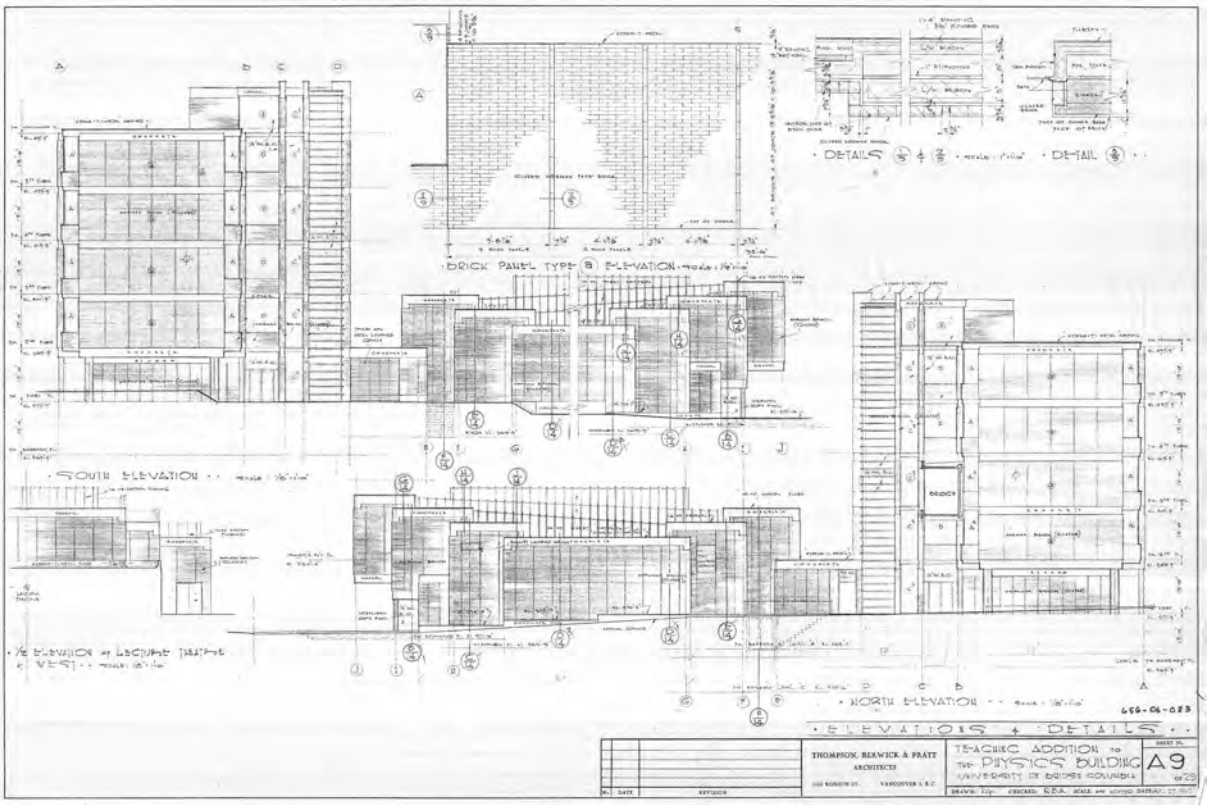
Thompson Berwick & Pratt, Hebb Building, East (Front) Elevation



Thompson Berwick & Pratt, Hebb Building, Lecture Theatre



Thompson Berwick & Pratt, Hebb Building, West (Rear) Elevation



Thompson Berwick & Pratt, Hebb Building, South Elevation

ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Thomas Carlyle Hebb, UBC Archives (UBCA) 1-0137161

First day of lectures in the Hebb Theatre, September 16, 1963, UBCA 1-0031143/1-0031143

First day of lectures in the Hebb Theatre, September 16, 1963, UBCA 1-0028900/1-0028905

Hebb Theatre, 1963, UBCA 1-0020136

Hebb Theatre, September 30, 1963, UBCA 1-0020137

Hebb Theatre, 1974, UBCA 1-0135923

Entrance to Hebb, 1995, UBCA 1-0161544

Hebb Building, UBCA 1-0151500

CONTEMPORARY MAPS AND IMAGES

Bing Maps looking east

Bing Maps looking north

Bing Maps looking west

Bing Maps looking south

SITE

THEATRE

North elevation showing copper roof panels

Concrete panels

Interior of Hebb Theatre Lecture Hall (Google Image)

Interior of Hebb Theatre Lobby

Hebb Theatre showing concrete planter and mature plantings

TOWER

Rear elevation

Skywalk from east

Skywalk from west

Experimental tower

Entryway (skywalk above)

Corner windows

Interior hallway