



FREDERIC LASSERRE BUILDING STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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AND ASSOCIATES INC 

INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA CONTEXT

The first proposal for a publicly-funded university in British Columbia was made in 1887. By 1891, the economy was prospering and the idea of establishing an institution of higher education took hold among provincial officials. A disastrous downturn in the economy, and jealousy between Vancouver Island and the Mainland over its location scuttled these plans, and an alternative plan was devised whereby university education could be provided through affiliation with an established Canadian university. McGill University in Montreal agreed, and in 1906, a bill was passed by the provincial legislature to establish the McGill University College of British Columbia. The first classes in 1906-07 were held at the Vancouver High School, and in the spring of 1908 the *University Act* was passed, designating McGill as a caretaker until a successor institution could be formed. In January 1911, classes had to be relocated to temporary facilities constructed adjacent to the Vancouver General Hospital in Fairview, although the move to the proposed Point Grey campus was considered imminent. Due to a downturn in the economy in 1913 and the outbreak of World War One, it became obvious that the move to the proposed Point Grey campus would not occur as quickly as anticipated.

In the early 1920s, the successful ‘Build the University Campaign’ generated a petition calling for the completion of the Point Grey campus and culminated in a student protest march now known as the ‘Great Trek’ of 1922. The temporary buildings at VGH served the university until 1925, when the move to the Point Grey campus finally occurred. The Great Depression forced the province to drastically reduce funding to UBC, and the university came perilously close to shutting, with another student-led campaign ultimately saving it. With a growing economy and stable government funding, UBC grew steadily after the end of the Second World War.

In 1945, the Vancouver Board of Trade passed a resolution urging UBC to establish an architecture department. Concurrently, students in second and third year Applied Science formed a Pre-Architecture Club to lobby for the implementation of an architectural program. UBC president Norman MacKenzie strove for the creation of professional degree programs, including architecture, and personally sought out ‘radical’ practitioners like Frederic Lasserre, who led the Department of Architecture when it was established in 1946. In 1950, the department was reorganized as the School of Architecture. Lasserre, who became director of the School, continued in this capacity until his tragic death in 1961.

As part of MacKenzie’s vision, an arts complex (The Fine Arts Centre) was established, which included Architecture, Music, and Theatre; it was meant to function as a university within a university – a place for the arts to flourish. Originally housed in several old army huts, in 1962 the School of Architecture moved, together with the Department of Fine Arts, into the Frederic Lasserre Building for Architecture, Fine Arts, and Planning. The School’s philosophical position became established in the 1960s through the 1980s, at a time of shifting social circumstances. During this era, faculty and students played pivotal roles in civic protests, including rejecting the construction of freeways through the historic Chinatown and Gastown neighbourhoods, the preservation of the Yaletown Roundhouse, and the revitalization of Granville Island.

The Lasserre Building remains a part of the Norman MacKenzie Fine Arts Centre, along with the Music Building, the Frederic Wood Theatre, and, across NW Marine Drive, the Museum of Anthropology. The Lasserre Building continues to house the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA).

REDEFINING MODERNISM: THE EMERGENCE OF FORMALISM

Within the realm of architectural 'Modernism' there were varying influences of building design, ranging from Brutalism, International Style, Structuralism, and Neo Expressionism to Formalism. The latter began to emerge in the mid-1950s as a rejection of the strict rigidity and confines of Modernism. Although initially shunned by the architectural mainstream for what was perceived as fussy historicism, American architects Edward Durrell Stone and Minoru Yamasaki (architect of the World Trade Centre Twin Towers in New York City) became widely popular for their development of a "romanticized modernism" that sought inspiration in a variety of classical and historical precedents. This fusion of a modernist aesthetic and materials with historical, traditional styles ultimately paved the way for the widespread acceptance of Postmodernism in the late 1970s, as well as a renewed appreciation of historic architecture and the development of the heritage conservation movement.

The Formalist style, most common between 1955 and 1975, was representative of a connection between traditional and contemporary building forms, which were supported and exhibited by advances in building technology. This inspiration of traditional architecture, however, was exhibited through a Modern lens as innovations in the use of concrete and manufactured materials allowed designers to explore new forms. The design of Formalist buildings often focused on a careful organization of space and an emphasis on the exterior structural grid of the building. Often designed as single volume structures, Formalist buildings were typically separated by nature and/or the street level by a designed raised podium or structural base. The design concepts of Formalism were also applied to urban planning in the use of grand axes and symmetry to achieve monumentality.



New Delhi Embassy, Edward Durrell Stone, Architect, 1956-59



United States Science Pavilion, Seattle World's Fair [now Pacific Science Center], Minoru Yamasaki, Architect, completed 1962

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: FREDERIC LASSERRE BUILDING



Name of the Historic Place: Frederic Lasserre Building/School of Architecture

Other Historic Name: The Frederic Lasserre Building for Architecture, the Fine Arts, and Planning

Address: 6333 Memorial Road, University of British Columbia

Date of Construction: 1962

Architect: Thompson Berwick & Pratt, with Frederic Lasserre

Description of the Historic Place

The Frederic Lasserre Building is a large, concrete-frame, four-storey building located along Memorial Road in the Norman MacKenzie Fine Arts Centre complex on the University of British Columbia's Point Grey campus. Completed in 1962, the Frederic Lasserre Building is characterized by its ground floor projecting podium and encircling colonnade, its ground floor cladding of grey brick and concrete, and upper two storeys of patterned panel cladding with regularly-spaced banks of tripartite vertical window assemblies. The building features a setback top storey with extended eaves, surrounded by a rooftop terrace.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Frederic Lasserre 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 the School of Architecture, first established in 1946, and more generally, the Norman MacKenzie Fine Arts Centre, as well as for its Formalist architecture, as designed by prolific local architects Thompson Berwick & Pratt within the overall context of their long-term design of the UBC campus.

The Frederic Lasserre Building, opened in 1962, is an important part of the postwar 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 Frederic Lasserre Building. Among the policies guiding the expansion was the goal of creating a student-oriented 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 establishment of a Department of Architecture in 1946 marked a progressive shift at the University of British Columbia. President Norman MacKenzie strove for the creation of professional degree programs and promoted a vision for an arts complex which included Architecture, Music, and Theatre; the complex was meant to function as a university within a university – a place for the arts to flourish. The Frederic Lasserre Building for Architecture, Fine Arts, and Planning was opened in 1962, and remains a part of the Norman MacKenzie Fine Arts Centre along with the Music Building, the Frederic Wood Theatre, and, across NW Marine Drive, the Museum of Anthropology.

The Frederic Lasserre Building is additionally valued for its Modernist, and specifically Formalist, architecture, as designed by the pre-eminent architectural firm of Thompson Berwick & Pratt (TB&P), pioneers in the introduction of modernism to Vancouver and in the development of the West Coast style of architecture. The design of the building was undertaken in collaboration with Frederic Lasserre, first director of UBC's Department of Architecture. In 1912, Sharp & Thompson won the competition to design the Point Grey UBC campus and guided the architectural growth of the campus until the 1960s. Bob Berwick and Ned Pratt became partners in the firm in 1945 and led the development of a regional architectural language inspired by the principles of European modernism. Through the 1950s and 1960s, TB&P received international attention for their work, including the 1957 B.C. Electric Building. On the UBC campus, structures such as the Frederic Lasserre Building, the Hebb Building (1963), the Frederic Wood Theatre (1963), 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, and ribbon or curtain windows. Input into the design was provided by Lasserre, an accomplished architect in his own right and responsible for the design of the War Memorial Gym and the Faculty Club. The Frederic Lasserre Building, notable for its clean, spare design, which directly expresses the classroom and circulation functions within, remains one of the superior local examples of Formalist architecture.

Character-Defining Elements

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

Site

- location along Memorial Road in the Norman MacKenzie Fine Arts Centre complex of the University of British Columbia's Point Grey campus;
- setting among adjacent UBC cultural buildings;

Exterior

- institutional form, scale and massing as expressed by its rectangular, symmetrical, four-storey, expressed cubic form and full basement;
- concrete construction;
- Formalist modern design features including its: clearly articulated symmetrical floor plans, with substantially glazed northern facade; rigidly symmetrical facade expression; recessed base and roof forms; flat roof with a setback top storey with extended eaves, surrounded by a rooftop terrace; colonnaded ground floor set on projecting concrete podium, with

glazed stairwell corners and glazed grey Roman brick infill walls; concrete columns extending from the ground to the roofline of the third storey, with expressed intermediate pilasters on the second and third floors; and second and third floor cladding with rectangular patterned fiberglass panels;

- vertical aluminum sconce lighting on the ground floor
- original aluminum-profile fenestration including ground floor curtain walls; second and third floor tripartite assemblies with fixed panels of patterned glass flanking central jalousie panels; and mixed aluminum frame glazing and jalousies at the basement and fourth floor levels;
- full-height teak glazed entry doors with original hardware;

Interior

- floating concrete and terrazzo corner staircases with curved teak wood balustrades;
- glazed grey Roman brick walls, matching the exterior;
- terrazzo flooring throughout; and
- teak interior doors.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Address: 6333 Memorial Road, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Construction Date: 1962

Architect: Thompson Berwick & Pratt with Frederic Lasserre

Historic Building Users: Architecture, Fine Arts, Planning

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



1962. Invitation to Opening of the Frederic Lasserre Building for Architecture, the Fine Arts, and Planning
[CVA PAM 1962-7]

22*** The VANCOUVER SUN, Mon., Mar. 26, 1962



UBC's FREDERIC LASSERE BUILDING... named for man who helped design it

START OF \$2 MILLION CENTRE

UBC's Fine Arts Building To Commemorate Professor

By JOHN ARNETT

University of B.C.'s new \$1 million fine arts building will be named after a professor killed in a climbing accident. It will be called the Frederic Lassere building as a tribute to the late head of UBC's school of architecture.

Lassere, 50, died last April when he slipped and fell 200 feet while climbing a precipice in England's Lake District. He was studying in Britain on a year's leave of absence from UBC.

Lassere designed UBC's International House and was co-designer, with a city firm, of the ultra-modern faculty club. He also helped design the building that will be named for him.

The new building, first stage of a fine arts centre, will house the schools of architecture and fine arts. It will be opened officially May 25.

The building stands on UBC's Main Mall, between the faculty club and the administration building.

Second stage in the centre, a \$500,000 theatre, school of music, and classroom block, will get started this summer.

The third and final stage, an anthropology museum, is still in the planning stage.

Cost of the entire centre will be about \$2 million, with the Canada Council footing half the bill.

Prof. B. C. Bendig, head of the department of fine arts, says UBC will have one of the finest cultural centres of any Canadian university when the project is completed.

He said it will be the focal point for culture on the campus. "It will give this university a whole cultural focus which it otherwise would not have had," he said.

The theatre, especially designed for teaching, will have a revolving stage and practice rooms. UBC's summer and winter festival events will be staged there.

The centre will tie in with the Vancouver International Festival and will complement the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and playhouse.

By attracting the public it will bring the university closer to the community.

UBC's bold approach to foster the fine arts in being made at a time when demands from scientific forces to build up research facilities are much greater.

But UBC's retiring president, Dr. Norman MacKenzie,

doesn't believe that the fine arts should be overshadowed by the sciences.

"The fine arts are just as basic as your bread and butter and perhaps have never been as important as in this complicated world being created by science and industry," he has said.

"One of the things wrong with our society is that there is too great an emphasis on the practical, in the almost complete exclusion of human needs."

B.C. Population Growing All Over

The population increased in all 10 British Columbia census divisions in the last nose count.

The figures were released in Ottawa by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

An earlier release from the bureau showed that B.C.'s total population had increased 25.8 per cent, to 1,629,982 people from 1,183,210 in the last census in 1956.

The largest population growth in B.C. was in division No. 4, which includes Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, all the Fraser Valley, up the Fraser Canyon to south of Siska Lodge and up Howe Sound to Alta Lake.

The census last year showed the population stood at 907,231, up 129,610 from 767,321 in 1956.

The smallest gain in the province was in division No. 7, the Powell River area, which gained only 303 people, to 21,225 from 21,922.

Figures for other divisions, with the largest towns or districts and the 1956 count in brackets, are:

- No. 1, Cranbrook-Kimberley, 24,254 (19,584).
- No. 2, Nelson-Trail, 70,707 (63,615).
- No. 3, Okanagan Valley, 94,646 (84,821).

Nazi Jackboots Stomp in London

LONDON (Reuters) — Travellers at London Bridge railroad station Sunday found themselves elbowing past Nazi soldiers in uniform complete with swastika insignia.

They were told it was all just part of the making of a movie about a British soldier trying to escape from wartime Germany.

DELUGE BEATS RAIN GAUGE

DARWIN (AP) — Bill Wausby's rain gauge became famous during the year-long drought in Central Australia.

Twice he advertised it for sale — first as never used, later as a dust gauge. Then the rains came, deluging his Central Mount Wedge cattle ranch.

Northern Territory administrator Roger Nott wired Wausby, congratulating him on the 10-inch fall of rain, and saying there was no need now for him to sell the gauge.

Wausby replied: "The gauge gave one last despairing gurgle and disappeared into the flood."

Woman Killed Walking on Road

SALMON ARM (Staff)—A 20-year-old woman was killed when hit by a truck as she walked on the Trans-Canada Highway.

RCMP said Bertha Caroline Allan, of Salmon Indian Reserve, died almost instantly when hit by a pickup truck driven by Norman Morris, 30, on the outskirts of this city.

Equal Pay for Crews Urged

Seamen on the Canadian National Steamships West Coast summer excursion service should get the same wages as seamen on the Canadian Pacific boats, a federal conciliation board recommended.

But the board was unable to solve a number of major issues in dispute, and a Seafarers' International Union spokesman said members are being urged to reject the report.

The board said the positions of the two sides were "quite irreconcilable" on a number of main issues.

These include a welfare plan, overtime, statutory holidays and duration of contract. Present salaries: CN sailors—\$285; CP sailors—\$309.

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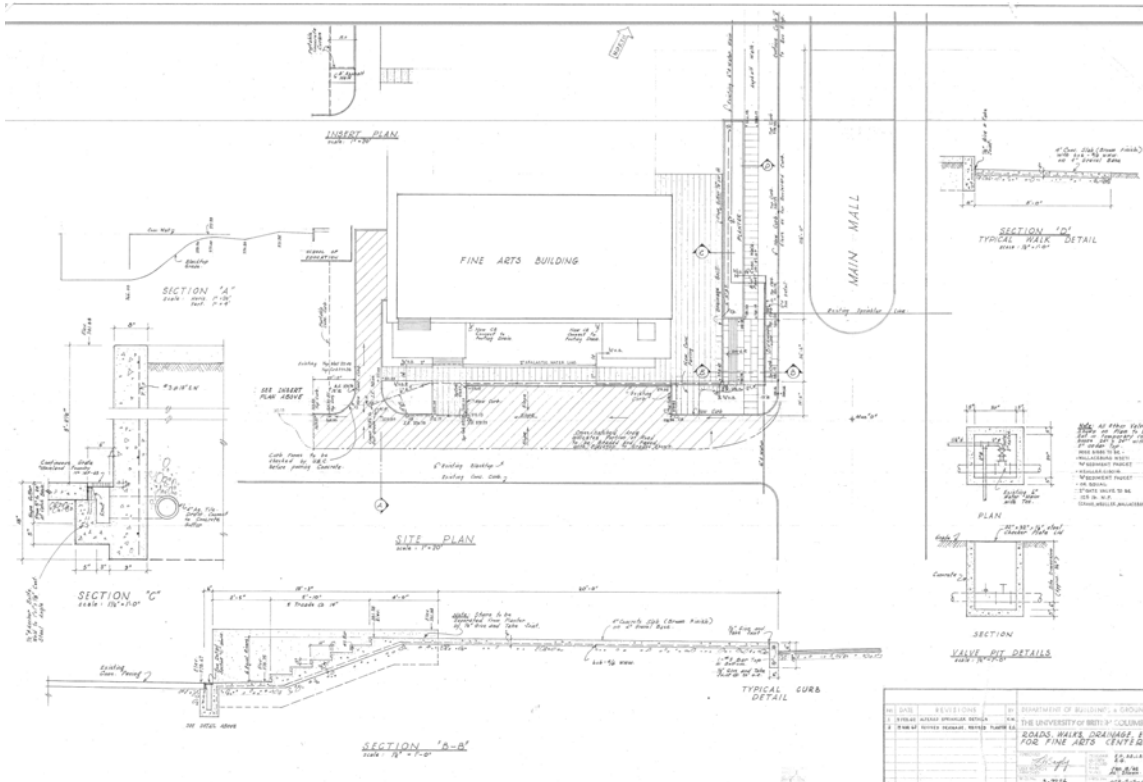
Watchdogs

The Vancouver Sun, March 26, 1962, page 22

ORIGINAL PLANS

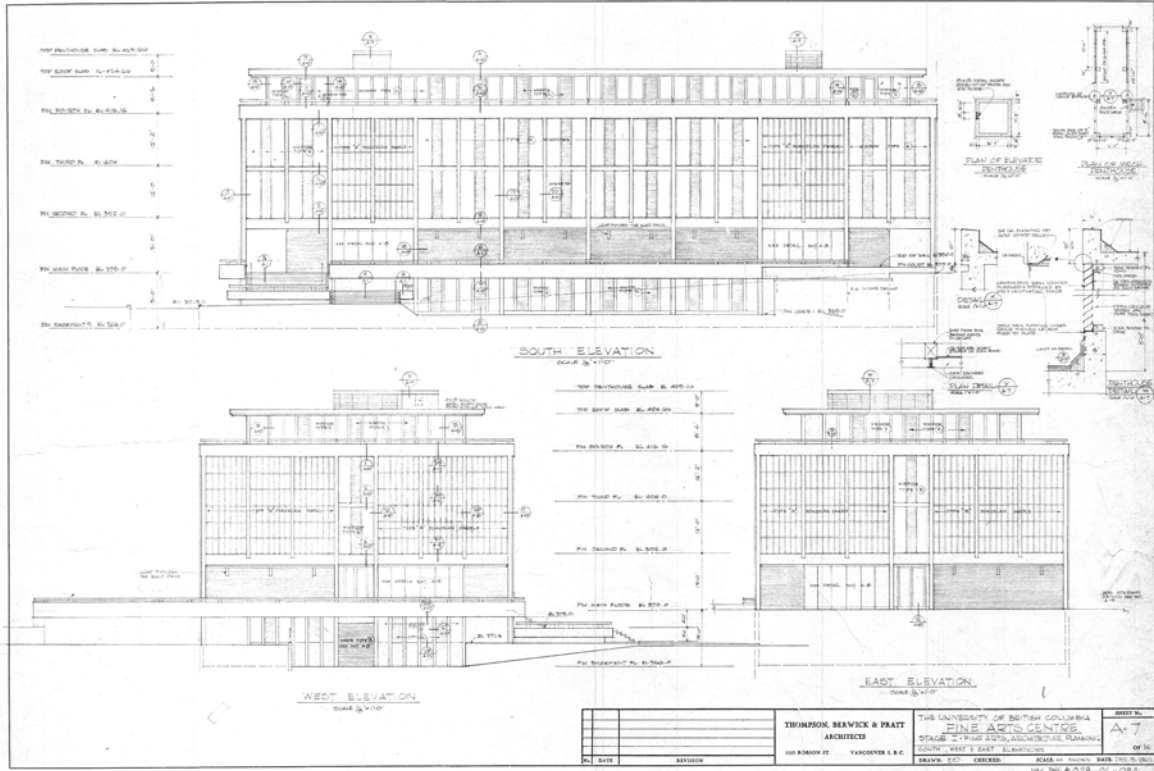


Frederic Lasserre Building, 1960, UBC Infrastructure Development Building Records, 028-06-027

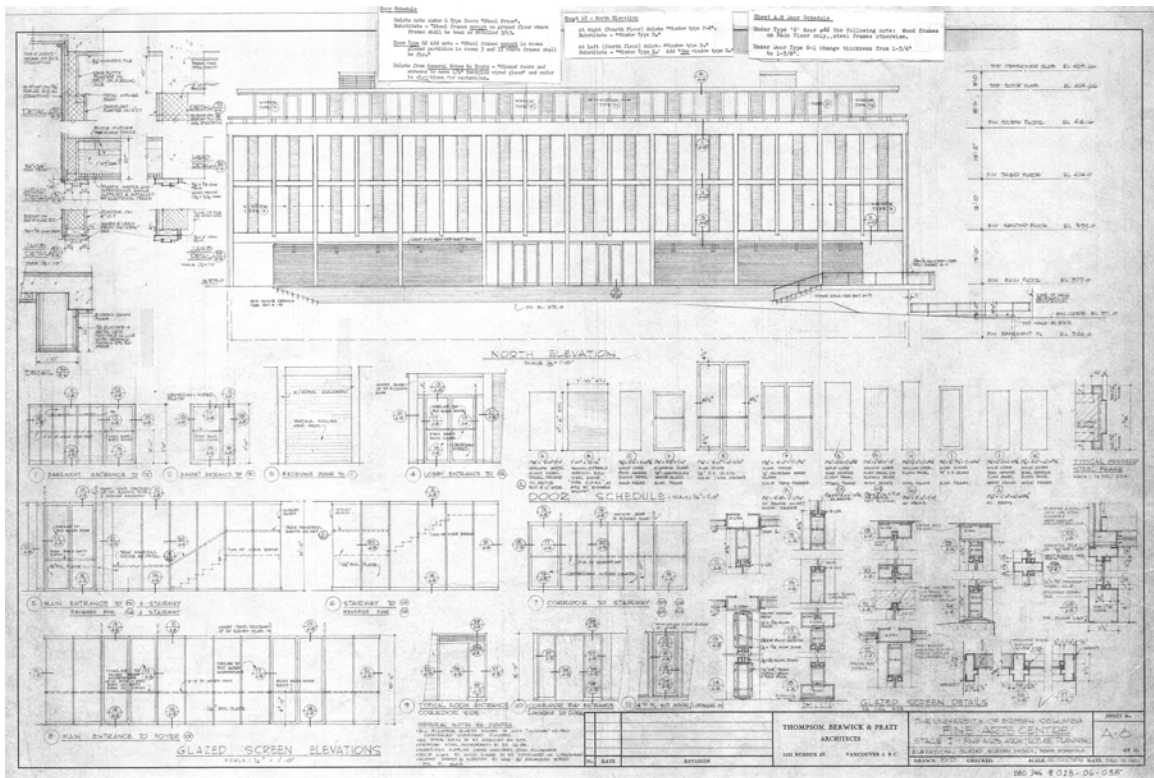


Frederic Lasserre Building, 1960, site plan, UBC Infrastructure Development Building Records, 028-03-001

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: FREDERIC LASSERRE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

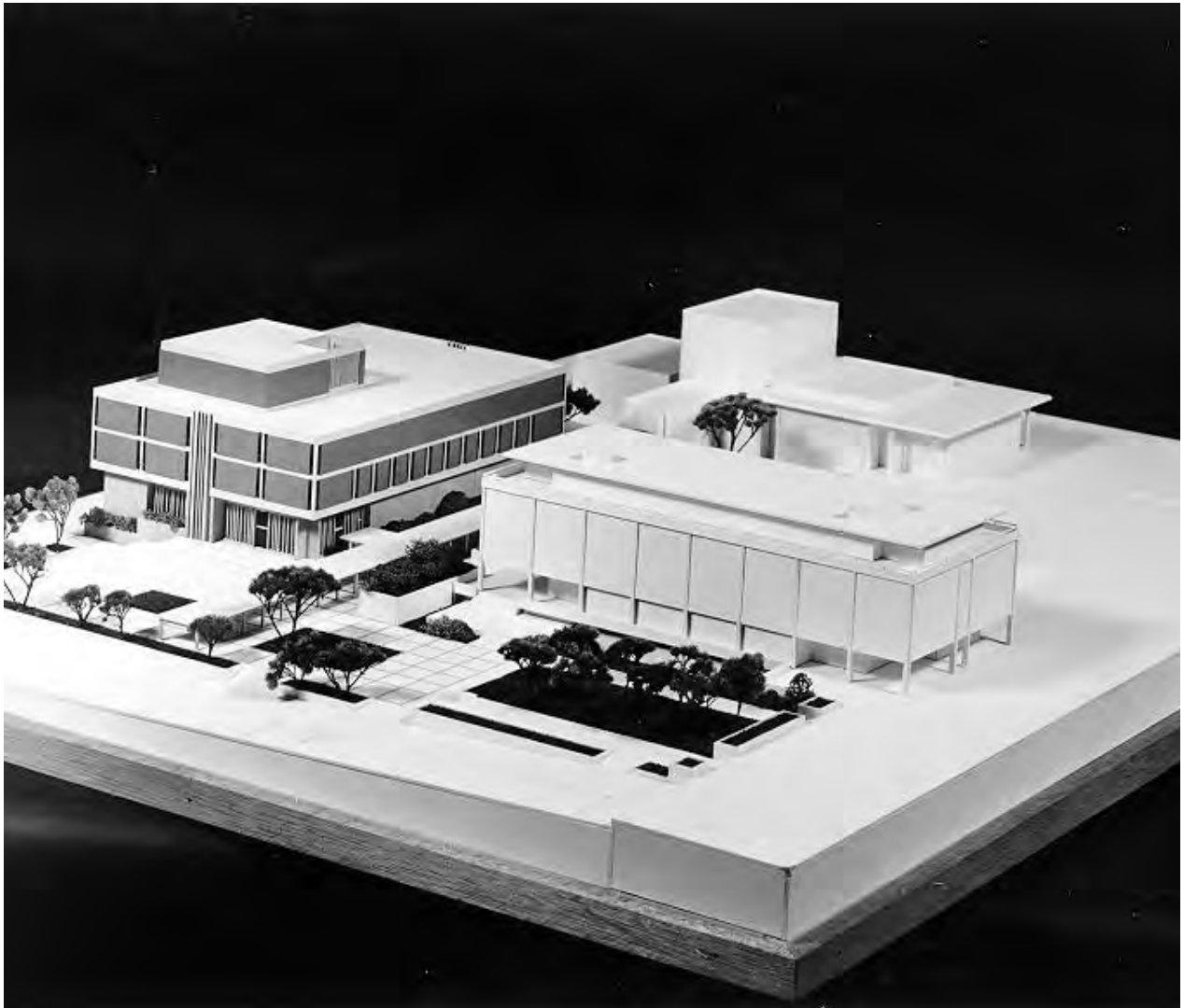


Frederic Lasserre Building, 1960, south elevation, UBC Infrastructure Development Building Records, 028-06-034



Frederic Lasserre Building, 1960, north elevation, UBC Infrastructure Development Building Records, 028-06-035

ARCHIVAL IMAGES



1960s. Model of the Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/1583]



1960s. Artist sketch of Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/2483]



1960s. Artist sketch of the Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/1585]



1960s. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/5680]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 3.1/730-3]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/39]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/40]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/41]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/42]



1961. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/44]



1962. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/736]



1962. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 104.1/45]



1962. Holborne, P. Aerial view of Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/3258]



1962. Holborne, P. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/3257]



1961. Cunningham, B. Opening ceremony of Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC 41.1/2615-1]



1968. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/1454]



1969. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 93.1/217]



1970s. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 41.1/1584-1]



1970s. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 41.1/1584-2]



1970s. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 41.1/1584-4]



1971. Holborne, P. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 1.1/12601]



1974. Frederic Lasserre Building [UBC Archives 41.1/84-3]



1979. Frederic Lasserre Building interior [UBC Archives 41.1/569-1]

CONTEMPORARY MAPS AND IMAGES



Google Maps looking north



Google Maps looking east

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: FREDERIC LASSERRE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Google Maps looking south



Google Maps looking west



South and west elevations



South elevation



Entrance on south elevation



West elevation



North and east elevations



North elevation



East elevation



Entrance on east elevation



Columns and cladding

Windows and brick



Pilasters and brick



Sunken level along south elevation