

OLD QUAD



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CHANCELLOR'S FOREWORD

For those of us fortunate enough to have enjoyed a University of Melbourne education, the Old Quadrangle is synonymous with much of what we love about this place. The University's oldest building has been a home for students and staff alike, a hive of academic activity and the ceremonial heart of the institution for many years.

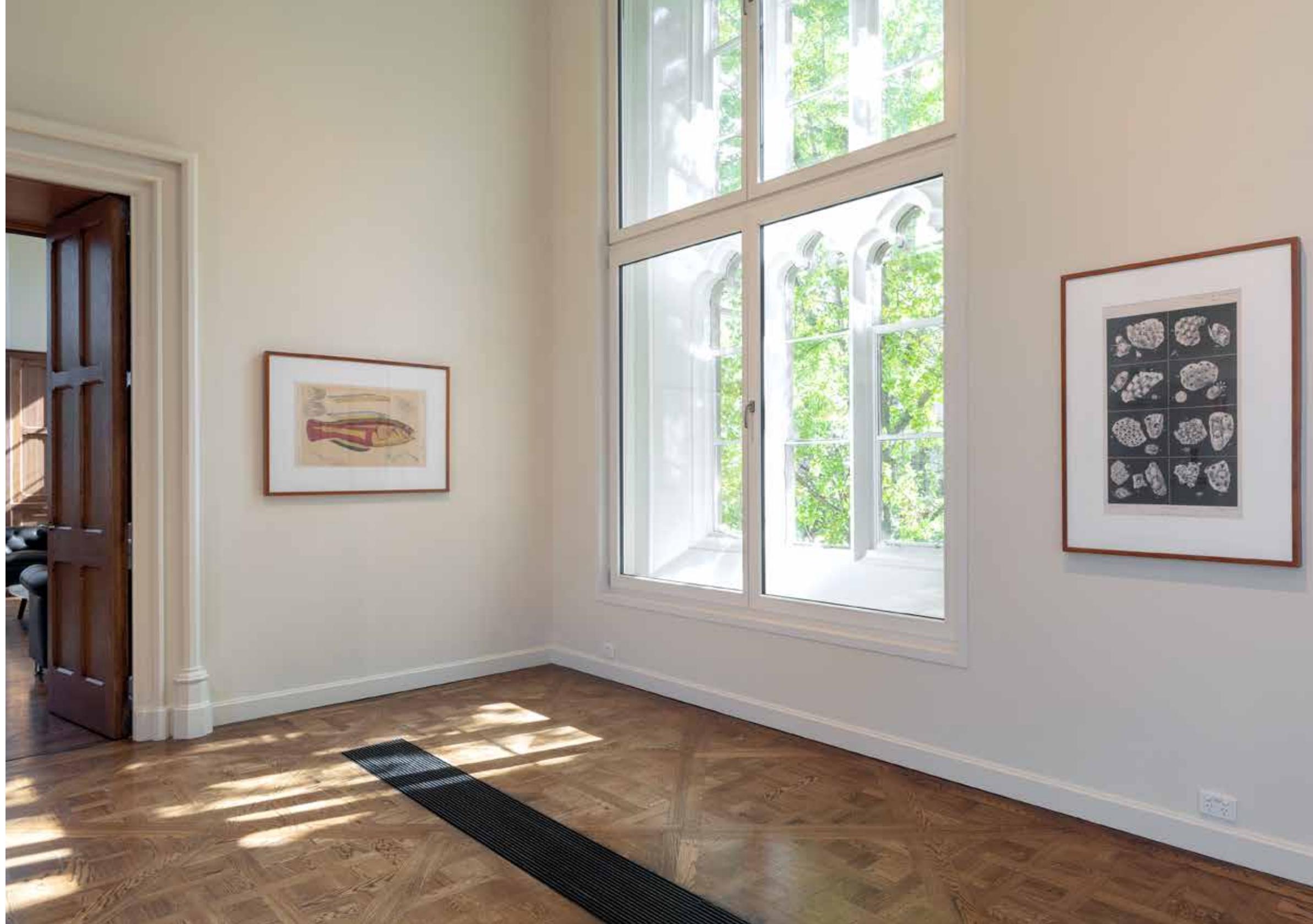
While old buildings have the appearance of permanence, James Waghorne's excellent essay reminds us that the Old Quad has in fact had many lives. It is a building that has changed as much as the University over the last 165 years. This latest renewal of the Old Quad stands within a long tradition, in which stewards of the University have regularly reconceived the purpose and function of this space in the face of new demands and changing requirements.

In the 1960s, when I was a law student, the North Wing of the Old Quad housed the Law Library, which functioned as the centre of social life for a generation or two of law students, rather than a place of study. The librarian, Miss Peggy Macmillan, strove without effect to impose silence upon the students gathered within, all seated at their accustomed desks with their usual companions and engaged in animated conversation.

I am delighted to see University of Melbourne alumnus Tom Nicholson's installation *Towards a glass monument* as the latest addition to this space. This great artefact symbolises the new life of the Old Quad as the ceremonial heart of our great University.

Allan Myers
Chancellor





TOWARDS A GLASS MONUMENT

Tom Nicholson



Towards a glass monument is a large-scale stained glass work by artist Tom Nicholson, working with stained glass artisan Geoffrey Wallace.

The work originated in two remarkable (lost) drawings from the early history of the North Wing of the Old Quad, by the artists Arthur Bartholomew (1833–1909) and Ludwig Becker (1808–1861). These drawings both describe two Mesozoic ferns fossilised in sandstone (*Gangamopteris angustifolia* and *Gangamopteris spatulata*). They survive only as lithographs, as two consecutive pages in a publication amongst the most extraordinary to have been produced at this site: *Prodromus to the Palaeontology of Victoria: or, Figures and Descriptions of Victorian Organic Remains*, 1874, written by Frederick McCoy, one of the University of Melbourne's first four professors. McCoy's *Prodromus* (along with his *Prodromus of the Zoology of Victoria*) was lavishly illustrated with lithographic drawings by a small group of artists, including Becker, but principally by Bartholomew, who was McCoy's attendant at the University from 1859. Bartholomew worked for many years under the windows at the eastern end of the North Wing, creating drawings of natural forms that are amongst the most intricately beautiful drawings of nineteenth-century natural history. The designs for *Towards a glass monument* are 'after' these drawings, and are a homage to these two artists, to the *Prodromus* and to this extraordinary early moment in the history of the University.

Towards a glass monument comprises two stained glass screens at the northern entrance to the Old Quad. Each screen, housed within a metal frame, presents twenty lancets that would fill the windows of the East Bay and West Bay of the Old Quad. The work is accompanied by six plaques with texts that contextualise the work's imagery through six narratives, imagining its possible placement into the historical lancets of the Old Quad but, above all, meditating on the act of imagining itself. The work is created with the hand-blown 'antique' glass of Glashütte Lamberts Waldsassen in Germany.

Perhaps unique to this project is the interaction between the two screens, which are located 126 cm apart. As the glass is animated by the changing light that passes through the north-facing windows and doors, a series of refractions, colourations and patterning between the two screens creates an unfolding experience of extraordinary intricacy, perceptual instability and elusive richness. The space between the two screens is also a space that viewers can enter, to be enfolded within the extraordinary properties of hand-blown glass, which can be enjoyed with an intimacy unusual for stained glass.

Tom Nicholson
born 1973
Towards a glass monument
2017–19

Stained glass: Geoffrey Wallace
Artist's assistant: Jamie O'Connell
Design of plaques: Ziga Testen

stained glass, lead and steel frame
in 2 screens, each containing
20 lancets; each screen 495 x 559 cm
6 cast bronze plaques;
each 60 x 90 cm

Realised through Monash Art Projects,
Melbourne; Geoffrey Wallace Stained
Glass, Melbourne; and courtesy of
Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Towards a glass monument also responds to the presence of Napier Waller's *Leckie Window* at the University of Melbourne, a complex work dedicated to allegorising creation itself. The university context of the Leckie Window closely links a problem in art to a problem in learning: How do things become? How do we become? How does one process of becoming precipitate another, and in doing so make us belong to one another, and to the world around us? *Towards a glass monument* attempts to respond to the legacy of the *Leckie Window* as well as to these abiding questions about what comes into being at a university. On the one hand, the work is archaeological, both in alluding to the early history of the university but also, in a much deeper sense, in imaging a form from a radically earlier moment in the history of life on this planet. On the other hand, *Towards a glass monument* images the intricacy and beauty of becoming—in a botanical and an artistic sense. It attempts to make a form of and for the process of becoming, one that also implies what unfolds within each student, within each teacher, and in the futures that a university contains.

Tom Nicholson is an artist who lives in Melbourne. He is a Senior Lecturer at Monash Art Design & Architecture (MADA), Monash University, and is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

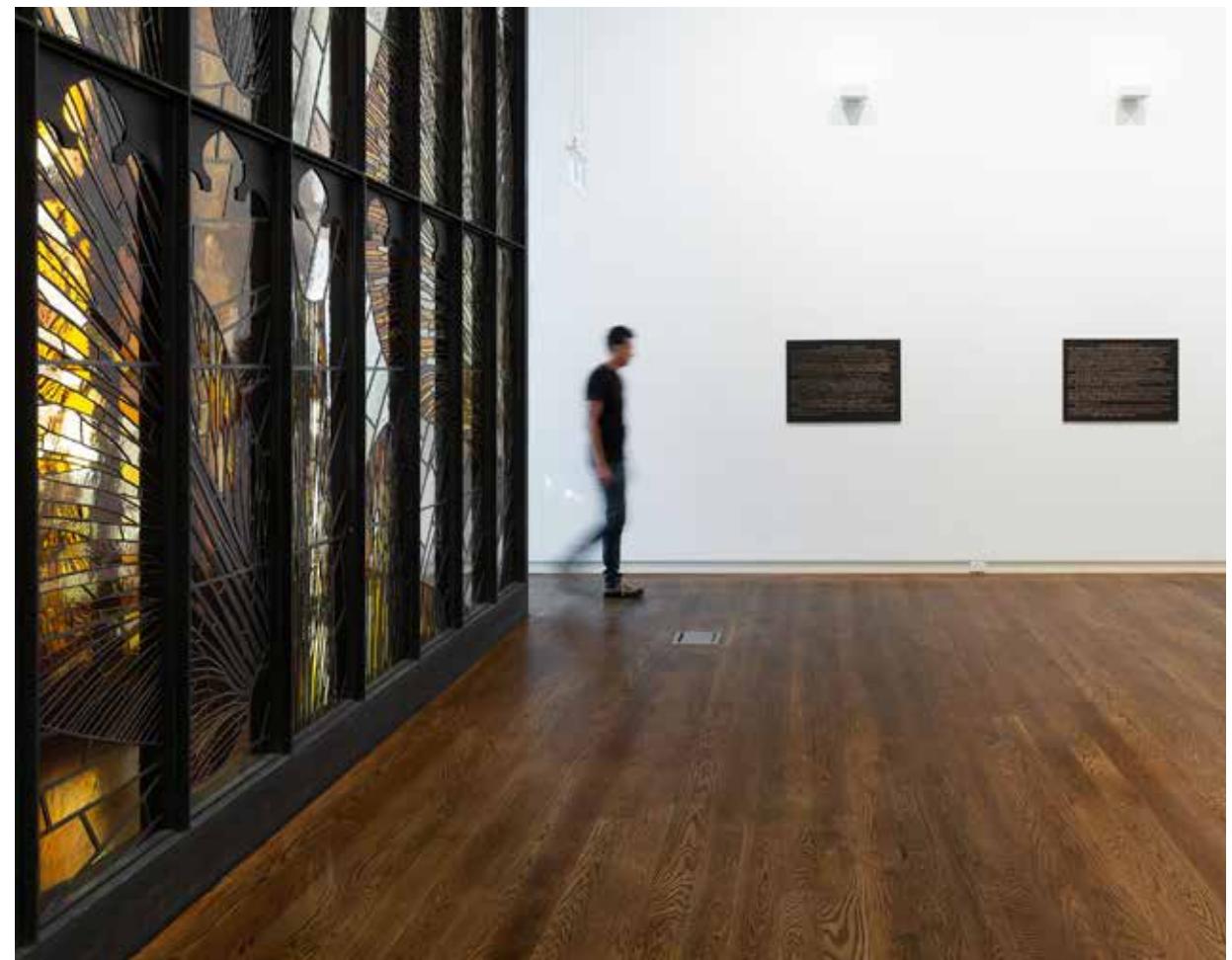
BIOGRAPHY Tom Nicholson

Tom Nicholson (born 1973) is an artist who lives in Melbourne. Recent large-scale projects include *Tom Nicholson: Public Meeting*, a survey exhibition of his work at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2019; *Tom Nicholson: Drawings and Correspondence*, a survey of his drawing-based work at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2018; a large-scale wall drawing for the 21st Biennale of Sydney, 2018; participation in *Trade Markings*, at the Van Abbemuseum, the Netherlands, 2018; and a new work co-commissioned by contemporary arts organisation Kadist and the Gwangju Biennale, 2018.

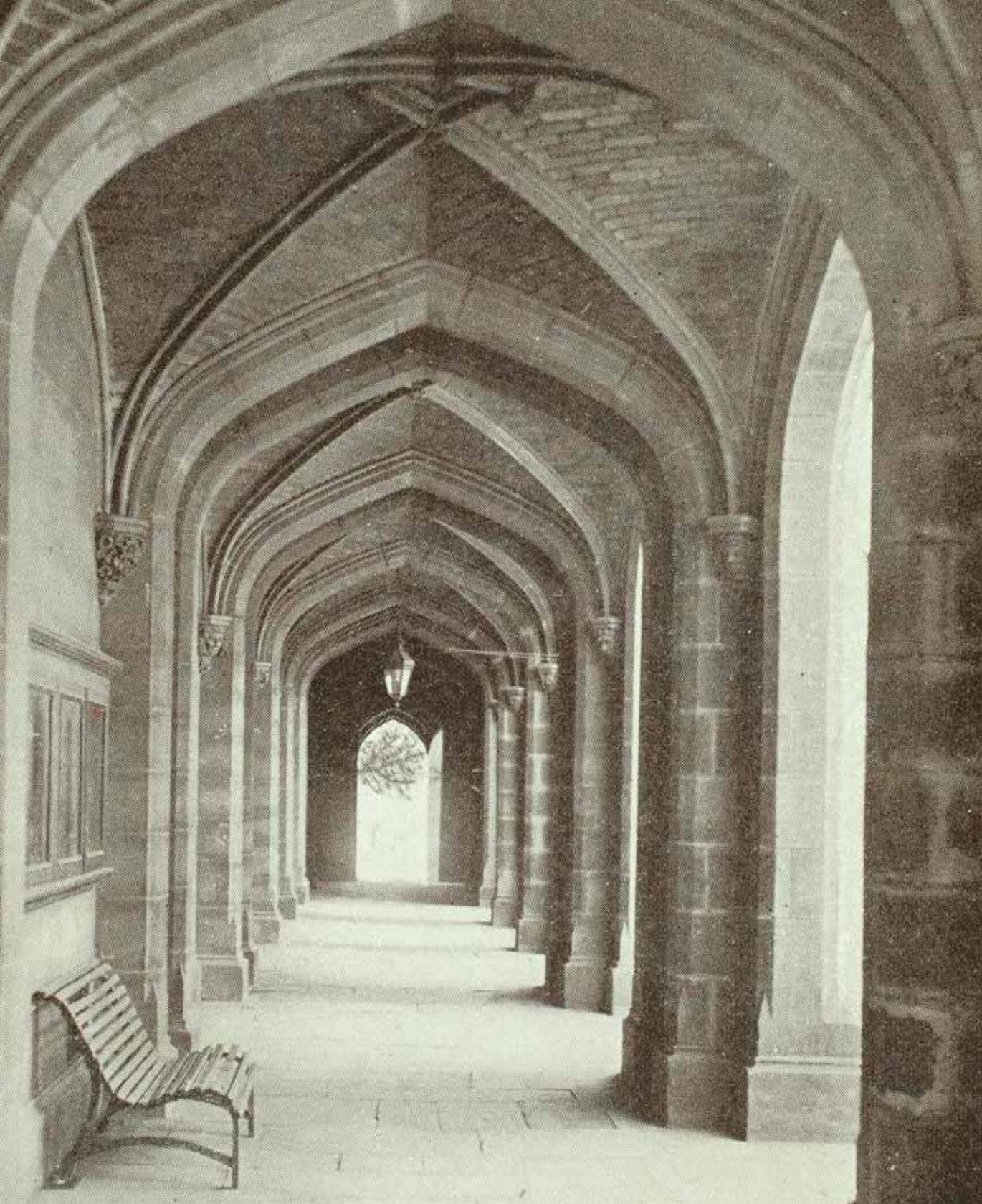
Other recent works include *Comparative monument (Shellal)*, which was recently shown in *The National*, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2017, and previously in the *Jerusalem Show VIII*, as part of the 2016 Qalandiya International, Palestine; his solo exhibition "I was born in Indonesia", at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2017, a provisional presentation of an ongoing project engaging with both the history of diorama-making in Indonesia and the realities of refugees and asylum seekers marooned in Indonesia; and *Cartoons for*

Joseph Selleny, first shown as a solo work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2014 and then at Kunsthall Extra City in Antwerp, and more recently articulated with a vast wall drawing for the TarraWarra International: *All that is solid ...*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2017. *untitled (seven monuments)*, a collaborative public art work with Kamilaroi/Wiradjuri artist Jonathan Jones and senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin, is a dispersed public monument marking the historical boundaries of Coranderrk, created over five years of working in and around Healesville.

Nicholson is an alumnus of the University of Melbourne. He undertook his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts, majoring in Drawing, 1996–98. Before that, he completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the University of Melbourne, majoring in Fine Arts and Italian, 1992–95. He completed a PhD at the University of Melbourne, 2003–07. Nicholson is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane, and is a Senior Lecturer in Drawing at Monash Art Design & Architecture (MADA), Monash University.







THE QUADRANGLE

James Waghorne, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education

In 1844, nine years before the University of Melbourne was established, the merchant and politician William Westgarth found himself lost in the scrub north of Melbourne while riding home late one night. Drawn to the light of campfires that were burning along a creek, he encountered a group of Wurundjeri people, one of whom was clearly sick from the diseases brought by the colonisers.

For Westgarth it was a memorable, if ‘comfortless’, scene, but one with a greater meaning. He located the camp at the heart of what would later become the University of Melbourne, close to where its first major building, the Quadrangle, would be built. He claimed that this showed the dramatic change brought about by the University, the height of ‘civilisation’, as it brought ‘enlightenment’ to the ‘primitive colony’. He missed the irony that on this occasion it was the Wurundjeri people who provided the light and who obligingly pointed the hapless Westgarth down the hill towards his home.¹

Westgarth’s story reveals some of the dichotomies of the University and its purpose. On the one hand, the University was an undeniable agent of colonisation and dispossession, and of the imposition of European ideals onto an Australian setting. On the other, it was a local institution, with practical requirements in a developing colony. These ambiguities were reflected in the architectural fabric of the Quadrangle and in the long process by which it developed and changed over 165 years.

The Quadrangle is a building that has been constantly reimagined, renovated and extended to follow the changing nature of the University. Far from its presentation as an unchanging stone edifice, harking back to the earliest British universities, it is a symbol of renewal within an evolving institution.

The original plans for the Quadrangle are now lost, and the designs were amended several times during construction. From indicative etchings commissioned by the architect, Francis Maloney White, the intention was to erect a stone building around a central courtyard, with a short tower in the southern wing. It was modelled after recently constructed buildings, including St David’s College in Lampeter, Wales, and the Belfast and Cork campuses of Queen’s College, Ireland.²

The building was situated on the east–west ridgeline of the campus, amid surrounding terraces in the middle of an open park, which was created by workers who dammed the creek to create an ornamental lake and dug meandering pathways through both native and exotic plantings.³

The building was designed in Tudor Gothic style, which simultaneously denoted tradition and a connection with the historic seats of learning from which the University recruited its professors, and signalled its secular modernity, particularly in its avoidance of ecclesiastical features.⁴

At the ceremony to lay the foundation stone, on 3 July 1854, the first Chancellor, Redmond Barry, and the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, stressed the same theme: the University’s importance in providing a public good and helping to civilise the colony, while also responding to the colony’s immediate needs.⁵

The East and West Wings were the first to be built, and these provided apartments for the four original professors and their families, teaching rooms on the ground floor of the East Wing and an office and boardroom for the registrar in the south-west corner.

The apartments were designed according to the particular needs of the professors, which varied considerably. William Edward Hearn, Professor of History and Political Economy, was married with six children, while William Parkinson Wilson, Professor of Mathematics, pure and mixed, was a bachelor. This bespoke plan created problems for Martin Howy Irving, appointed to replace the first Professor of Classics, Henry Rowe, who died shortly after arriving in Melbourne. Irving found his lodgings, sized for Rowe, impossibly cramped, with only two bedrooms for his nine children.⁶

The imposing North Wing was the next to be constructed. It provided two raking theatres for the sciences, in which the professors gave lectures and scientific demonstrations. A museum was installed on the first floor, and an 1875 extension to the building provided additional floor space for a library.

It was during the construction of the North Wing that the University became an assembly point for stonemasons from this site and others to march to Parliament House in Spring Street in 1856. The march heralded a famous victory for the eight-hour-day movement, the stonemasons winning concessions and helping to spur the development of the labour movement.⁷

By the time the North Wing was constructed, the University had already determined that it could not proceed with the South Wing or its tower, owing to funding shortfalls. The South Wing would remain unfinished, with only its foundations visible above ground level, hinting at what might yet be built above.⁸

The building came to be known, in the self-deprecating Melbourne style, as the three-sided quadrangle. Photographs of the building were invariably taken from the back, making use of the light that reflected off the lake and obscuring the unfinished sections. The open courtyard was planted with a central lawn pathway, which was bounded by gardens of flowers and shrubs on either side. Creepers were trained to grow over the walls of the southern face, giving the sandstone walls the appearance of being weathered and aged rather than unfinished.

The Quadrangle was often referred to by shorthand as the ‘University’. It was the hub of teaching, the venue for major ceremonial events, such as the annual Commencement, and the forum where students met to discuss their work and the issues of the wider world.

The collegial atmosphere it fostered was enhanced by the decision to grant the new Melbourne University Union, established in 1884, the use of Wilson’s old apartment—which had more recently been inhabited by his successor, Edward Nanson. The Union brought together male staff, students and graduates, and its rooms offered respite from the chill southerly winds that blew into the open quadrangle. In 1886, the Princess Ida Club, for female staff, students and graduates, moved into Hearn’s former apartment, and the two societies, divided on gender lines, faced one another across the courtyard. By 1907, the Quadrangle held more than 500 student lockers, enough for most of the University’s students.⁹



Victor E. Cobb, ‘The Registrar’s Office Melb. University’, 1921, H41872, State Library of Victoria.

View of the Quadrangle from the north-east, across the ornamental lake, before 1875, UMA/I/1316, University of Melbourne Archives.



This was the stomping ground of generations of students. The fondness for the Quadrangle was reflected in poems such as ‘Leaving the Shop’, published in 1899 in the University magazine Alma Mater:

Tread with me the old quadrangle
Where our course was set.
All was once a seeming tangle,
Is it tangled yet?¹⁰

The Quadrangle was, in its pomp, a lively scene, the building’s gnarled corners embodying the formative processes of a university education.

Yet the Quadrangle’s place in the wider University was already changing. As the University expanded in both its size and its range of activities, it built new buildings separate from the still unfinished Quadrangle.

Some of these new buildings, such as those for medicine in the north-east corner of the campus and the engineering building on the southern boundary, were deliberately separated in order to ensure adequate distance from the noises and smells they contained. Others, including a natural history museum and a biology building, were built around the lake. The Union and Princess Ida Club outgrew their Quadrangle lodgings and moved into the natural history museum in 1911.

All the while, the University declined opportunities to enclose the fourth side of the Quadrangle. The gift of the pastoralist Samuel Wilson for a ceremonial hall presented such a chance, but instead of Wilson Hall forming the southern wing, it was constructed separately, in 1882, to the south-east of the Quadrangle’s jagged southern walls. A second hall to house a library, envisaged to be built on the opposite corner to restore the symmetry of the southern aspect, never eventuated.¹¹

The prospect of completing the Quadrangle was again raised in the planning for the Old Arts building, which opened in 1924. However, the University again favoured a separate construction, even though its clock-tower was inspired by the original plans for the Quadrangle.¹²

The construction of the Old Arts building did, however, prompt the redevelopment of the Quadrangle. Its large lecture theatres relieved the Quadrangle's old raking theatres in the North Wing of their teaching burden. By this point, these had become hopelessly dilapidated—in the opinion of one professor, even endangering the health of those attending lectures there—and they were demolished in 1925.¹³ The North Wing subsequently housed the University library.

The unfinished East and West Wings were also capped by southern extensions that provided a more polished southern aspect, and the vaulted arcade erected along the North Wing was extended down the east and west flanks. Meanwhile, the former apartments, which had since been vacated, were renovated. Redundant staircases were removed, halls opened and domestic rooms converted into offices.

The Quadrangle continued to provide teaching facilities for several faculties, including Arts, Commerce and Law, but, gradually, the Law Faculty grew to assume ownership of the building. The transfer of the general library collection to the new Baillieu Library building in 1959 allowed the North Wing to become a specialist law library, and the old library space was extended to accommodate a bookroom and a bank.

Although administrators and staff from the Law Faculty made repeated calls to be moved into a new larger building after the Second World War, the building itself was held in fond regard by many as a fitting complement to the study of law, echoing the majesty of the law courts and some of the old law chambers.¹⁴ More space was made in 1969 through the erection of new lecture rooms between the Quadrangle and Old Arts and the opening of the Raymond Priestley Building in 1970, which relieved the Quadrangle of administrative staff.

It was also in 1969 that the Quadrangle was finally enclosed, 115 years after building commenced. The new wing, designed by Rae Featherstone in sympathetic style and retaining all of the existing building, but also encroaching into the courtyard, contained a new council chamber. With the construction of the South Lawn and Underground Car Park in 1972, the southern vista was again redefined.

The undercroft beneath the South Wing was only completed in 1981, creating a whole new space on the campus. Often mistaken for one of the oldest parts of the University, this new space, with its extensive vaulted arcade, has since become a favourite location for wedding and graduation photographers.

After the Law Faculty vacated what to many had become the 'Law Quadrangle' in 2002, the building housed various parts of the University, including Classics and Archaeology. As had occurred a century earlier, its interiors degraded while different proposals for its redevelopment were discussed. It is fitting, then, today, that a new purpose for the building has been found as part of the project to restore the University's centre, to revive the old Commencement and to gather staff, students, graduates and the public once more at the heart of the University campus.



'Melbourne University Commencement: Students Forming into Procession', *Australasian*, 13 April 1907.

NOTES

1. William Westgarth, *Colony of Victoria: Its History, Commerce, and Gold Mining; Its Social and Political Institutions; Down to the End of 1863. With Remarks, Incidental and Comparative, Upon the Other Australian Colonies* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Martson, 1964), 445–6.
2. George Tibbits, *The Quadrangle: The First Building at the University of Melbourne* (The University of Melbourne: The History of the University Unit, 2005), 15–16.
3. Geoffrey Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1957), 16.
4. R.J.W. Selleck, *The Shop: The University of Melbourne, 1850–1939* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 7.
5. 'The University and the Public Library', *The Argus*, 4 July 1854, 4–5.
6. Tibbits, *The Quadrangle*, 44–56.
7. Julie Kimber and Peter Love, 'The Time of Their Lives', in *The Time of Their Lives: The Eight Hour Day and Working Life*, ed. Julie Kimber and Peter Love (Melbourne: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2007), 1–14.
8. Ernest Scott, *A History of the University of Melbourne* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1936), 18–19.
9. Tibbits, *The Quadrangle*, 115.
10. 'Leaving the Shop (to H.S.L.)', *Alma Mater* 4, no. 2 (1899).
11. Tibbits, *The Quadrangle*, 106.
12. George Tibbits, *The Old Arts Building, University of Melbourne: History and Conservation Guidelines* (Parkville, Vic.: The University of Melbourne, 1995).
13. T.G. Tucker to Chancellor, 28 January 1919, 1919/350a, 1999.0014, University of Melbourne Archives.
14. John Waugh, *First Principles: The Melbourne Law School, 1857–2007* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, 2007), 271–2.



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Inside front cover: Tom Nicholson,
Towards a glass monument 2017–19 (detail)

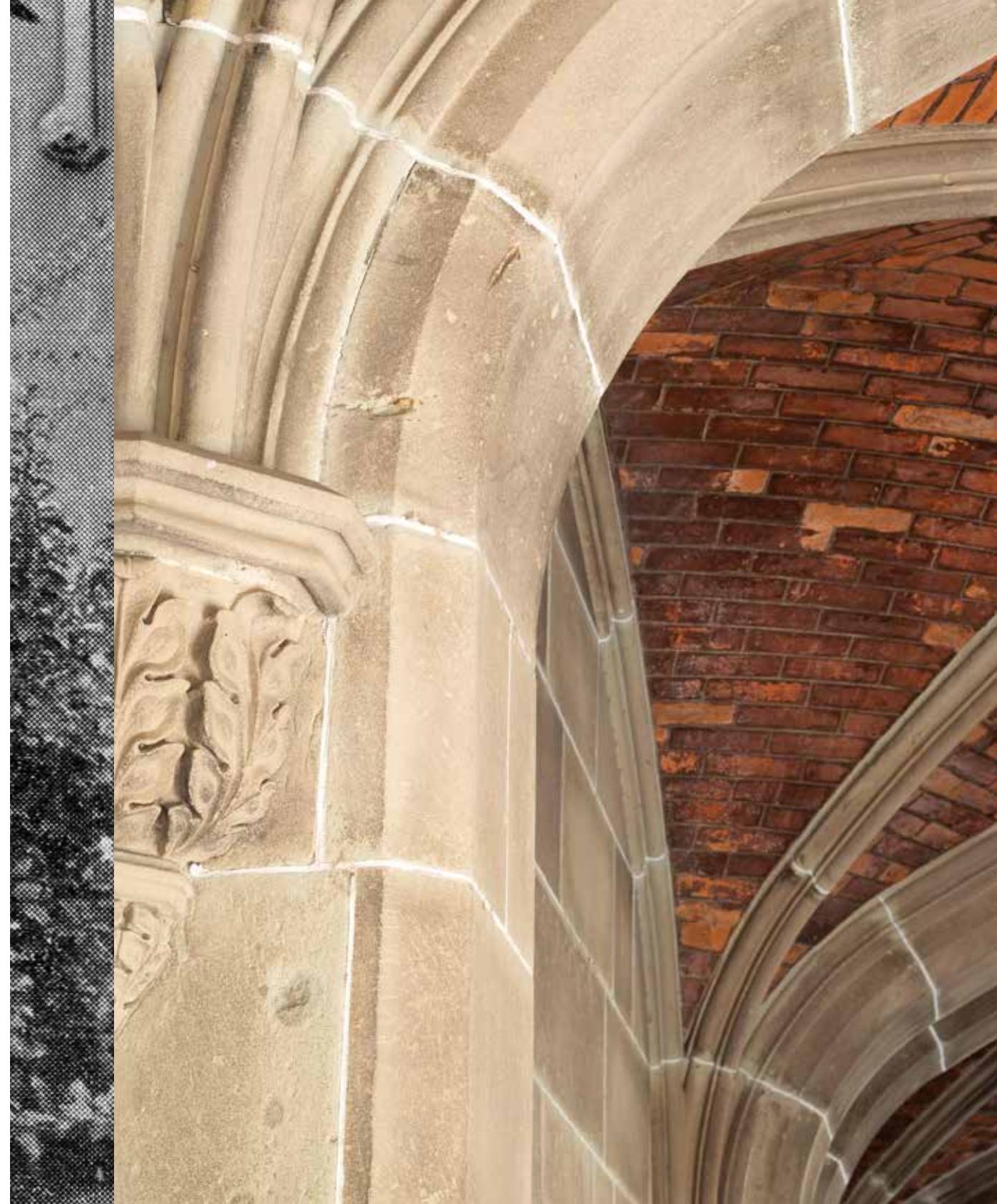
Inside back cover: 'Entrance to Quadrangle,
University of Melbourne', c. 1910 (detail)

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the Old Quad is situated, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Elders and collaborators, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who visit the Old Quad from across Australia.

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