character five presents

Characters & Spaces.

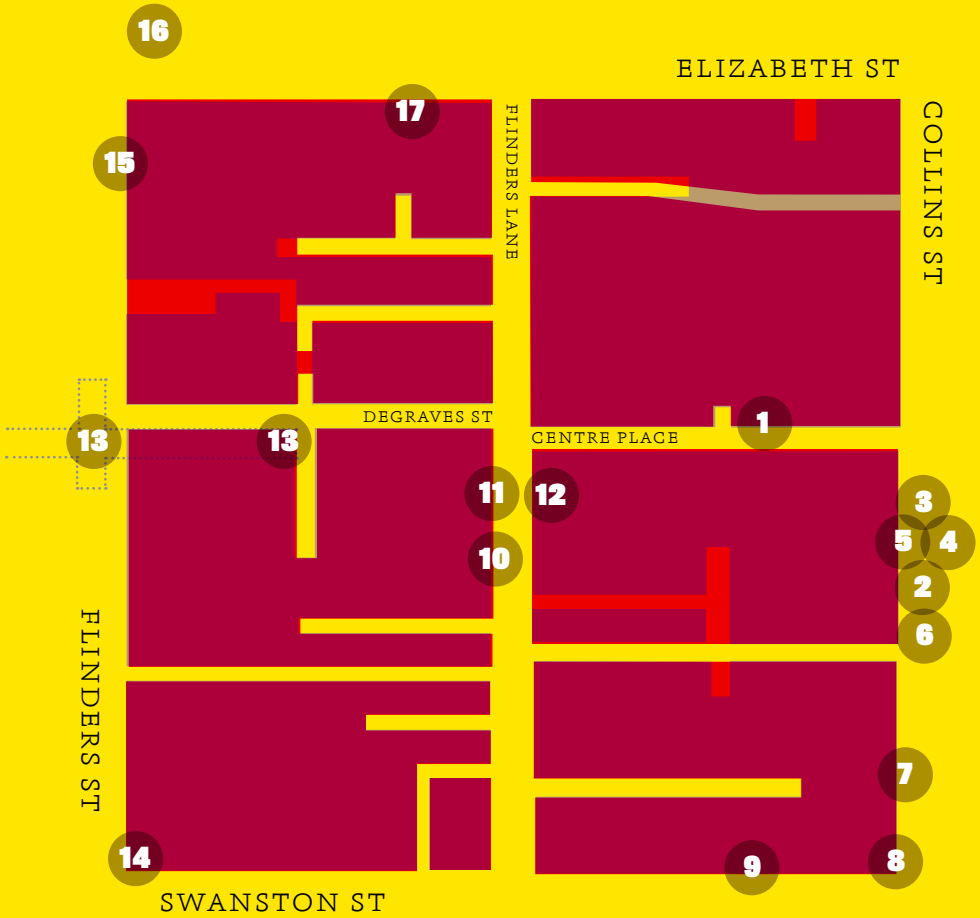
1 City Block.
17 Stories.

Design for Everyone

STATE of DESIGN

Victoria's Design Festival

A STATE OF DESIGN FESTIVAL PARTNERSHIP



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STATE of DESIGN A STATE OF DESIGN PARTNERSHIP

Characters & Spaces takes one city block of Melbourne and peels back its layers of graphic design. It tells the stories behind what we see in our visual environment, things we may pass every day and not think twice about. By bringing out their meaning, it highlights their significance.

There's plenty of beautiful type, art and design out there on the streets. The sites shown in *Characters & Spaces* offer us greater depth through the telling of their stories. Seemingly unrelated things are then connected – a style of lettering, a form of architecture, a time in social history, an art movement or even a long-gone Olympic Games.

The *Adventure* section seeks to involve children in the joy of design through questions and activities*.

We encourage you to walk the block, experience the stories of these sites first-hand and pose the question – if there is so much richness in just one city block, how many other stories are there to uncover in a whole city?

*The answers to the *Adventure* questions are located on the back page.

1 SUBVERSION IN THE ARCADE

The arcade that runs between Collins Street and Flinders Lane comprises two distinct halves. Centre Place, connecting to Flinders Lane, is a tourist mecca attracting bustling lunch-time crowds and regular film crews taking advantage of its assortment of graffiti. The other end, known as Centreway Arcade, is less celebrated. Extensive renovations in the 1980s may not have aged with grace but they do offer one of the most ironic typographic secrets in Melbourne.

The southern end of the arcade features a patterned wall of evenly-spaced brass uppercase letters set in Helvetica. They are often seen but seldom read. Have a read.

Adventure
Can you decode the message on the wall?

Best view
Walk up the stairway to the upper floor where the walk-over enables you to get closer. The wall then reveals its actual message *'We live in a society that sets an inordinate value on consumer goods and services'*. This is an ironic message to find within a shopping arcade.

On closer observation
The oddity of the Centreway renovation design is perhaps best seen in the lighting poles which are cast in the shape of Australia.

Architect
HW + FB Tompkins
1911–1912

Cocks, Carmichael & Whitford (refurbishment), 1984–1987

2 READING THE FINE PRINT

Built in an age when building titles were proudly etched into their façades, the purpose of *Newspaper House* is self-explanatory.

Aside from the neon titling at the very top of the building (you'll have to crank your head a bit), the most immediate feature of the building is the extraordinary mosaic that runs the entire width of the first floor façade. Created by leading neo-classical mural artist Napier Waller, *I'll put a girdle round about the earth* is a jubilant celebration of man's potential to use technology for both material and spiritual fulfilment. In order to overcome the challenge of two windows penetrating the façade, the mosaic wraps around sills and edges. Looking closely you can make out the almost cryptic lines of type, including the date of its installation, 1933.

Adventure
Can you find a telephone pole and a light globe in the mosaic?

Did you know?
The architects won the commission through a public competition run by the building's owner *The Herald and Weekly Times*.

Did you know?
The mosaic title, *I'll put a girdle round about the earth*, is taken from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Architect
Stephenson & Meldrum, (façade), 1933

Artist
Mervyn Napier Waller (1893-1972)

SMILE, YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY LOGOS

the story behind the
Melbourne City Council logo

Standing at the Collins Street postbox you may realise that you are surrounded by symbols. On the green powerbox is one of the earliest symbols of the Melbourne City Council (MCC) from 1843. Before the age of conceptual branding, logos tended to be more pictorial. Under a Skippy-esque kangaroo, you'll find illustrations of the four most important industries at the time – whaling, wool, cattle and the maritime industry. On the sides of the box there is a purely typographic version of the MCC logo presented as a monogram.

In front of you is the bright red of the Australia Post identity; at your feet etched into the maintenance hatch is the old Telecom logo. These logos are linked.

The Postmaster General's Department (PMG) was disbanded in 1975 and split into two entities, one governing postal services and the other telecommunications. The Australia Post and Telecom logos were created at the same time by the same graphic designer, Pieter Huveneers. Although these logos may appear as abstract marks they both tell a story.

the story behind the
Australia Post identity

A specialist in corporate identity systems, the Dutch-born Huveneers designed the Australia Post logo. It cleverly positions the internationally recognised post-horn device, a potent symbol of communication history, to form the letter P for Post. The circular element surrounding this represents movement, direction and global connection of people.

the story behind the
Telecom identity

Similarly, the Telecom corporate identity is primarily typographic, with the central letter T symbolising the semaphore system embracing the world. In 1993 Telecom began trading as Telstra and a new logo by Flett Henderson & Arnold (FHA) was launched. Part of the later Telstra branding and identity included commissioning a customised typeface called *Harmony* for its exclusive use (that's what Telstra phone bills are set in).

Above: Lucy Wilson in *underwhere* – a theatre performance staged from Telecom manhole pit in Hobart, Tasmania 2007. Photographer: Peter Mathew

Harmony for Telstra designed 1999

abcdefghijk,1234567890

Did you know?

Lucy Wilson, the step-daughter of identity designer Pieter Huveneers, was so intrigued by the Telecom logo on manhole lids in the footpath that she devised *underwhere*, a theatrical performance depicting the urban underground's network of pipes and tunnels.

Designers

MCC identity:
Thomas Ham
(1821–1870), 1843

Telecom identity &
Australia Post identity:
Pieter Huveneers
(c.1926-), 1975
Jeremy Tankard
(*Harmony* typeface), 1999

3

Adventure
Which animals do you see pictured on the green powerbox?

4

Adventure
Can you find the horn in the Australia Post logo?

5

Adventure
How many Telecom logos can you spot on the manholes between the postbox and the corner of Swanston Street?

6

SPEECH MARKS

The corporate identity for telecommunications company Vodafone is a wonderful example of graphic abbreviation – the spirit of conversation indicated by the clever use of opening and closing quotation marks in the 'o' letterforms.

This was revised in 2005 with a single opening quotation mark sitting above a line of customised type. The new Vodafone typeface was developed by UK type designers Dalton Maag and is based on their font family *InterFace*. Reflecting its global reach, the Vodafone font system is supported in over 50 languages, allowing the company to speak to around 2.5 billion people in their native tongues.

Did you know?
Google the Vodafone logo and you'll soon uncover a tenuous conspiracy theory.

Designers
Springpoint Ltd, 1997 (initial brand)
Unknown, 2005 (revised brand)
Dalton Maag, 2005 (customised typeface)

THE MANY HOPS OF EVOLUTION

7

Unknown
1944

Gert Sellheim
(1901–1970)
1947

Lunn Design
Group
1984

Hulsbosch
Communications
2007

the story behind the
Qantas identity

Adventure
What does the acronym 'Qantas' stand for?

The original Qantas symbol (1944) was based on a kangaroo that appeared on the Australian one penny coin. This iconic marsupial was then embellished with wings, and in a nod to international travel, carried a globe with its feet. It became the basis of subsequent Qantas logos.

Ideas and aspirations of freedom lie at the very heart of most airline advertising. In the case of Qantas this is ironic as the designer of its logo, the Estonian-born Gert Sellheim, was interned by the Australian Government for a period during the Second World War because of his German parentage.

After Sellheim's 1947 flying kangaroo design, the logo underwent several revisions. Most recently (and controversially) in 2007 the 'big foot' modifications to the animal's silhouette were described by some as being 'more pterodactyl than flying kangaroo'.

8

Adventure
Looking from Collins Street, how many MU's can you spot on the building ?

12TH FLOOR - MANCHESTER

In strong early morning sun, the beacon of the 12-floor Manchester Unity Building offers a view of the luminous initials MU on its top windows.

Built for the Friendly Society of the same name, the Manchester Unity Building is known for many important design features. It was the tallest building in Melbourne at the time; it was the first to have escalators and toilets for both sexes on every floor; automatic cooling as well as rubbish and postal chutes on every floor. It is also noted for the speed of its construction, the floors going up at the rate of one a week.

Did you know?
The Manchester Unity Building is built on what was once affectionately known as 'Puppy Dog Corner' – named after the number of besotted young couples who would use it as a meeting place.

Architect
Marcus R Barlow (1890–1955), 1932

9

LUXURY FINISH Melbourne prefers to cloak its beauty with a certain intrigue. One has to seek it out but the effort is always rewarded. The Graham Hotel is a great example of this. The unique steel tubing script sits quietly on the northern face of what was the Graham Hotel, built on the site of the old Town Hall Hotel.

Constructed for the accommodation needs of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, in its heyday the Carlton & United Breweries (CUB)-owned hotel proudly boasted air-conditioning and was described as having a 'luxury finish'.

There does not seem to have been any attempt to light the sign during a period when the use of neon was widespread. This fact also indicates the absence of any nearby tall buildings that may have obscured the view of the sign.

On closer observation
This sign is best viewed from across the road.

Architect
Archeson Best Overend (1909–1977), 1954–1955

Adventure
Green and gold are often used to symbolise Australia in sport. What green and gold signage is on this building?

ONLY THE LONELY

Stand on the top of the Ross House steps and look across the road and up. What you'll see is the old forgotten signage on the side of the Majorca Building.

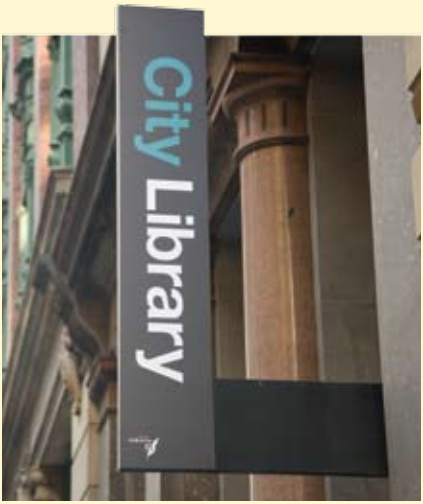
The beautifully detailed Majorca façade, photographed every day by tourists, is said to have been inspired by the Spanish Island of the same name.

Positioned above eye level and obscured by the larger buildings that have since sprung up, this titling has escaped such attention.

Architect
Harry Norris (1888–1966)
1928–1929

10

11



THE BIG L

Standing at the intersection of Flinders Lane and Degraves Street and looking towards Swanston Street, you may have a special Sesame Street moment. On the façade of the CAE building is a mighty big uppercase L. This lone capital stands for Library, specifically the City Library.

Designer
Cornwell Design
2007

Adventure
Can you spot any other big letters in the street?

12

THE SUM OF MANY PARTS

the story behind the
Emirates identity

The Emirates logo is one of very few identities in this city block that feature non-Latin type. Consistent with sacred Islamic art whereby forms are represented calligraphically rather than figuratively, the logo is composed of individual Arabic letterforms which are read from right to left.

Adventure
What artistic style of lettering is the Emirates logo made of?
C----------

Designers
Negus & Negus Associates, 1985
Emirates Corporate Communications, 1999

13

ARCADE OF DELIGHTS Built in 1955, the Campbell Arcade (also known as Degraves Street Subway) was built in anticipation of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games to enable city commuters to bypass crowds and readily access Flinders Street Station.

Once a bustling thoroughfare, the arcade suffered a dramatic drop in patronage after the opening of the city loop in the early 1980s. After decades of neglect, the arcade now offers a glimpse into what Melbourne would have looked like over 50 years ago.

On closer observation

The signage for the public telephones is particularly fetching as it wraps around the corners of the arcade.

One of the most resourceful uses of type can be found outside A Touch of Paris hairdressers where a price rise has been simply communicated by flipping the 2 in 12 to create a 15.

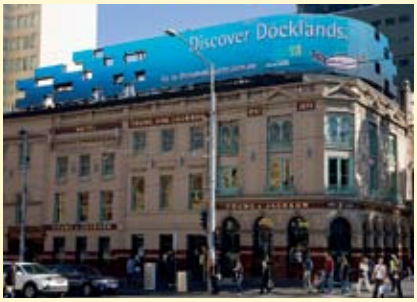
The inset boxes, now used for the artist-run initiative Platform, once displayed products for the Mutual Store, Melbourne's first department store, situated on the corner of Degraves and Flinders Street. At the dead-end of the arcade you can just make out the remnants of directional signage to the store which now points to a sealed-up exit.

Myth or truth?

For many years there has been talk of a disused subterranean bowling alley situated alongside Campbell Arcade. According to rumour, the entrance is through fire-doors near the western stairway.

Architect

Victorian Public Works Department, 1952–1955



14

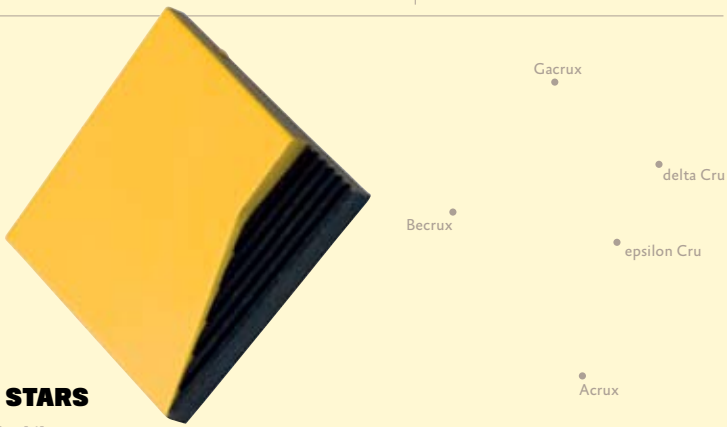
MIND THE GAPS

Given its prime position on the corner of Flinders and Swanston Street, the site of Young and Jackson Hotel has long been associated with electric sky signs above its façade. Although the hotel itself is on the Victorian Heritage Register, its landmark status as an advertising site has enabled the installation of the latest billboard incarnation, the roof-mounted major promotion *electronic message display* (EMD) which wraps around the corner.

Adventure
How many gaps appear on the billboard (excluding those on the edge)?

On closer observation
The electronic display features a curious set of gaps. Sit and watch the billboard for a while and see how the graphics produced for this screen are in fact customised for this unconventional format.

Creator
Cody Outdoor Advertising, 2008



15

SEEING STARS

the story behind the
Commonwealth Bank identity

So ubiquitous are logos in our urban streetscape that often we only notice them when we're actively seeking them out. Commonwealth Bank customers look out for that bright yellow diamond with the black edge. Designed by Cato Purnell Partners in 1989, the introduction of this identity was met with a mix of public intrigue and curiosity. Affectionately known as the 'toast dipped in Vegemite,' the logo shape is actually an abstract plotting of the points of the Southern Cross, the most recognisable star group in the Southern Hemisphere.

Adventure
Join the dots to make a Southern Cross constellation.

On closer observation
The real gem lies in the typographic element of the bank identity. At first glance it looks like a conventional sandwiching of heavy and light weights of the typeface Helvetica. A closer look at the number of m's in the word Commonwealth reveals a ligature (a linkage of two letters) cleverly used to consolidate the length of the name whilst creating the visual illusion of two m's.

Designers
Cato Purnell Partners
1989

CHEERS TO THE THREE GLASSES! With the hosting of the 1956 Olympic Games, Melbourne was keen to project the image of a modern and progressive-looking city to an international audience. This spurred the introduction of modernism across Melbourne, of which Hosie's Hotel mural is a fine example.

16

In 1953 Carlton & United Breweries (CUB) announced the building of a new thirteen-floor air-conditioned hotel, providing modern accommodation for visitors to the games.

The architects commissioned Richard Beck to design a mural facing Elizabeth Street. Beck was a leading modernist graphic designer trained in England and Germany. His design is an abstraction of three glasses (or pots) clinking together, four storeys high and made of ceramic tiles. Originally featuring bright, high-contrast colours, the mural has since faded significantly. Beck was extensively involved in the design work for the 1956 Olympic Games. He designed the only official poster, a commemorative stamp, and contributed to the street decorations of the Olympic Arts Festival.

On closer observation
In front of the Beck mural is a sign indicating the tram routes to the Royal Melbourne Show. This charming relic has miraculously escaped the revisions of streetscape signage – just don't rely on the timetable.

Architect
Mussen, McKay & Potter, 1953–1955
Designer
Richard Beck (1912–1985)

Adventure
Which colours can you see in the mural?

AN ARCHITECTURAL MENAGERIE The Australian Natives Association (ANA) was one of an assortment of Friendly Societies that existed prior to government welfare. The ANA was founded in 1871 with one specific difference – its membership was restricted to those born in Australia (there were however no Aboriginal Australians amongst them). The Association lobbied for Australian Federation, Australian-made goods, the establishment of Australia Day, the adoption of the wattle as the national floral emblem and was ahead of its time on environmental issues. The classically-influenced façade of their building features an assortment of native fauna (notice the kangaroo and emu flanking the Melbourne symbol from site 3).

17

Did you know?
ANA is an ambigram. This is a rare occurrence where a typographic title is completely symmetrical.

Architect
Marsh & Michaelson, 1939

Adventure
How many animals can you see on the front of the building?

Character is an initiative of the Communication Design Program at RMIT University. It seeks to explore and express the cultural and social significance of graphic design and typography to a broader community. The fifth in the *Character* series, *Characters & Spaces* is a partnership with the State of Design Festival 2009. character.rmit.edu.au | stateofdesign.com.au

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Design
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Photography & Image Manipulation
Gordon + Kriesler

Printer
Bambra Press

Acknowledgements
Amanda Bacon *Heritage Victoria*, **Csaba Banki** *Cato Purnell Partners*, **Paul Bebbington** *ABAF*, **Eddie Butler-Bowdon** *City of Melbourne*, **Bronwyn Clarke** & **Russell Bevers**, *RMIT Communication Design Program*, **Mimmo Cozzolino**, **Pieter Huveneers**, **Kirsty James**, *National Trust of Australia (VIC)*, **Ken Scarlett**, **Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFares** *Khatt Foundation*, **Martin Snelling** *Emirates Group*, **Jeremy Tankard**, **Lucy Wilson**.

NLA Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Author	Banham, Stephen.
Title	Characters and spaces : character 5 / Stephen Banham.
Edition	1st ed.
ISBN	9780959867848 (pbk.)
Subjects	Graphic design (Typography) Victoria–Melbourne Public art–Victoria–Melbourne Signs and signboards–Victoria–Melbourne Visual communication–Victoria–Melbourne
Dewey N°	741.609945

For the typophiles Text: *Absara serif & sans* (Fontshop), site headings: *Titling Gothic Black Condensed* (Font Bureau), cover titling: *League*, *Morice* and *Terital* (Letterbox).

Select Bibliography

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Adventure Answers **Site 1** We live in a society that sets an inordinate value on consumer goods and services / **2** Telephone pole (middle panel, right hand side), light globe (left window, bottom of left hand window sill) / **3** Sheep, cow, whale and kangaroo / **4** The horn is the white area on the right hand half of the logo / **5** Between the postbox and the corner of Collins and Swanston St there are ten Telecom logos in the pavement / **7** Viewed from Collins St, there are seven MU's on the façade / **8** Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services / **9** Melbourne Sports Depot / **12** Calligraphy / **14** There are nine shapes within the billboard (not counting the ones on the edge) / **16** Blue, yellow, rust, black and pale green / **17** There are 14 animals on the ANA Building façade – seven rams, four koalas, one emu, one kangaroo and one sheep (many are in the coat of arms).

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