

New underground gallery & auditorium to open beneath historic Mitchell Library building

27/10/2023

Sydneysiders and visitors will soon experience the State Library on a whole new level with the opening of a new underground photography gallery and state-of-the-art auditorium, from Sunday 29 October 2023.

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “With funding support from the NSW Government and private benefactions the State Library has dedicated the last six years to transforming the much-loved Mitchell Building – from the rooftop to the very bowels of the library – into a truly accessible public space for everyone to use and enjoy.”

"The build has been incredibly challenging, and I can't thank our readers, visitors and staff enough for their patience over this time. I am both pleased and proud to see the Library's major transformational project complete," says Dr Vallance.

The new gallery will be the largest permanent space in Sydney dedicated to photography – the opening exhibition *Shot* delves into the Library's extraordinary collection of two million images and delivers a visual feast of 400 captivating moments – many displayed for the first time – by 200 photographers across three centuries.

Entry to the gallery is through a beautifully crafted glass 'link bridge' that uses the last known Wombeyan marble flooring (held in storage for over 20 years) to connect the Library's Macquarie and Mitchell buildings.

An Open Day planned for Sunday 29 October will give visitors the first look at the new spaces, including the 350-seat auditorium located directly beneath the Mitchell Library Reading Room and accessible via a large glass-ceiling atrium.

“Over 90 tonnes of steel have gone into creating this incredible venue, doubling the Library's capacity to host large public events, conferences and high-end productions and performances,” says Dr Vallance.

“With night-time access from the Mitchell Building, we know the auditorium is going to be incredibly popular and make a significant contribution to the cultural life of Sydney,” he says.

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Three special events in the auditorium are planned for Open Day with free performances by the Real Pigeons and the Bankstown Poetry Slam, and a screening of *Blaze* with award-winning scriptwriters Del Kathryn Barton and Huna Amweero.

The Photography Gallery and auditorium follow the opening of the Library Bar on the Mitchell Building rooftop 18 months ago. The Library's major transformational project has also included the refurbishment of the Mitchell Library Reading Room, the opening of The Children's Library in 2019, and the Michael Crouch Family Galleries, the refurbished Dixon Galleries and purpose-built John B Fairfax Learning Centre in 2018.

The Photography Gallery has been made possible by private benefactors with over \$350,000 raised through the State Library Foundation.

The State Library will publicly launch the new Photography Gallery and auditorium on Sunday 29 October, as part of a free Open Day. Everyone is welcome.

For more information: sl.nsw.gov.au/openday

For more information, interviews and publicity images, please contact:

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