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SIGNS REVEAL SECRET HISTORY OF MELBOURNE

The recent installation of a large neon sign reading 'Signs of the Times' on the front of the Old Treasury building signalled the beginning of City Museum's latest exhibition. 'Signs of the Times' is a treat for the senses, and will appeal to visitors of all ages.

Over 150 years of Melbourne street signs, billboards, posters and typefaces form the basis for this revealing and colourful journey through the secret history of Melbourne's visual culture. The exhibition shows how signs tell the history of Melbourne, in a unique and very honest way.

'Signs of the Times' presents fragments and objects from Melbourne's past, once revered and considered integral to the spirit of the city, but now abandoned, lost, destroyed or simply forgotten. Their combined story describes the contribution made by immigrants to Melbourne, and how our cultural tastes have changed, from theatre, to cinema, to pin ball arcades.

The exhibition includes neon signs, historical signage, council signs, over 150 photographs, and various sign ephemera. The exhibition also explores the changing use of typeface, and documents the fight to save Melbourne's historical signage, such as the Nylex sign, Pelaco sign, Slade Knitwear sign, and 'Little Audrey', the iconic Skipping Girl sign.

Signs on display include the neon ‘Skating Girl’ which once adorned the now demolished St Moritz ice skating rink in St Kilda, an important collection of early 20th Century advertising signs, and the animated ‘Daily Planet’ sign. The Daily Planet brothel in Elsternwick commissioned the sign in 1985, and featured a 3-metre reclining female, who visitors will see wink, blow kisses, before seeing her dress disappear. The sign was installed for one night in 1985, before the barrage of complaints forced the brothel to remove it.

Also featured in the exhibition are a variety of works by six contemporary artists – each with a very different perspective on the function and value of signs: Geoff Hocking, Kiron Robinson, Steve Proposch, Patrick Jones, Bill Hay, and graffiti artist ‘Lkae’, whose 5-metre high site-specific work will challenge the expectations of all who enter the historic Old Treasury building.

Lenders and other participants in the exhibition include Stephen Banham from Letterbox Design Studio, Simon Reeves, City of Melbourne, City of Yarra, Ash Keating, David Wixted, Adam M. Dimech, Mimmo Cozzolino, Ben Spencer-White, Martin Zweep, Murray Walker and principal Exhibition Partner, Delta Neon.

For more information please contact City Museum at Old Treasury, Melbourne on 03 9651 2233.