

The Rotunda

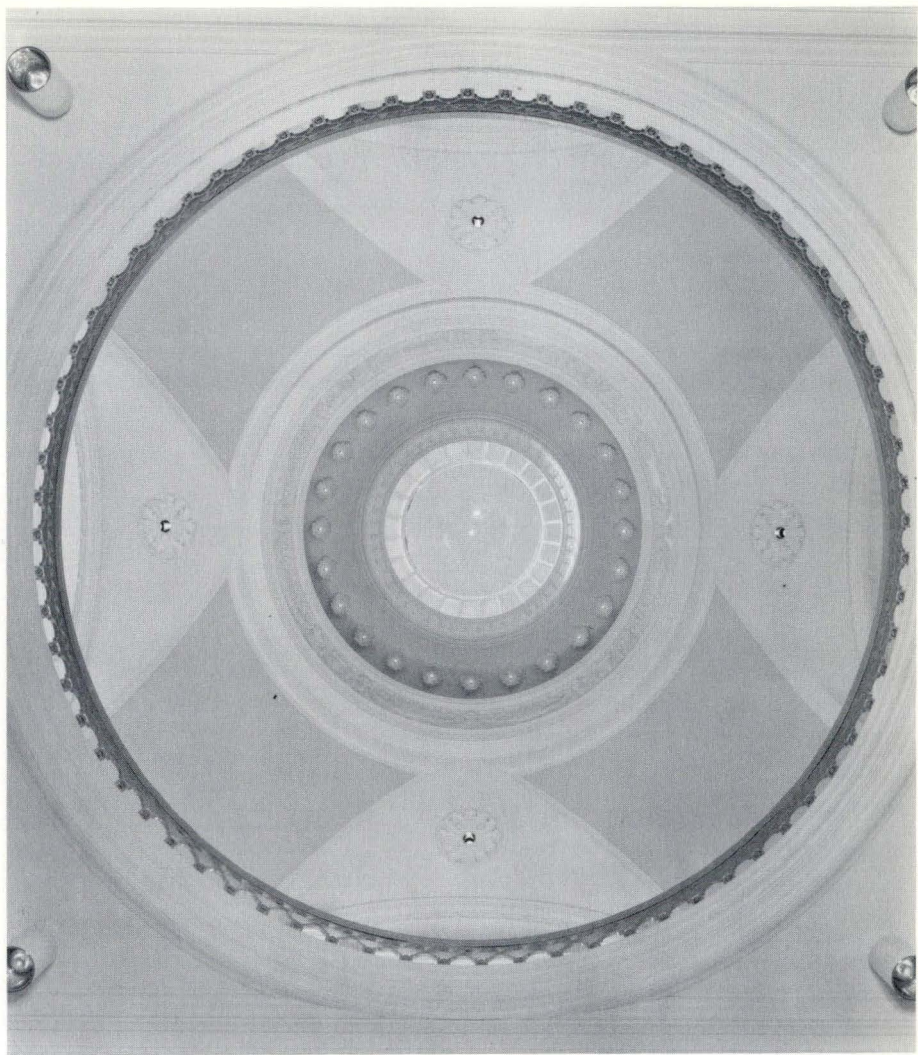
Although the new lobby of the Vancouver Art Gallery is a striking example of contemporary design, it is the delicately renovated Rotunda that is the masterpiece space of the entry. On entering the Rotunda, one has the sense of stepping back into the early decades of the century, for the area appears redecorated rather than reconstructed. This illusion attests to the architects' extreme care in preserving, restoring, and amending what was there originally.

In this new Rotunda, a grand staircase was created in what had formerly been a storage room. The half arches it contained have been painstakingly recreated as whole ones. Worn marble stair treads, taken from another part of the building, are set in the concrete structure of the contemporary steps that lead to the upper levels. This staircase is fitted with balustrades modelled on those which decorate the balconies of the upper levels.

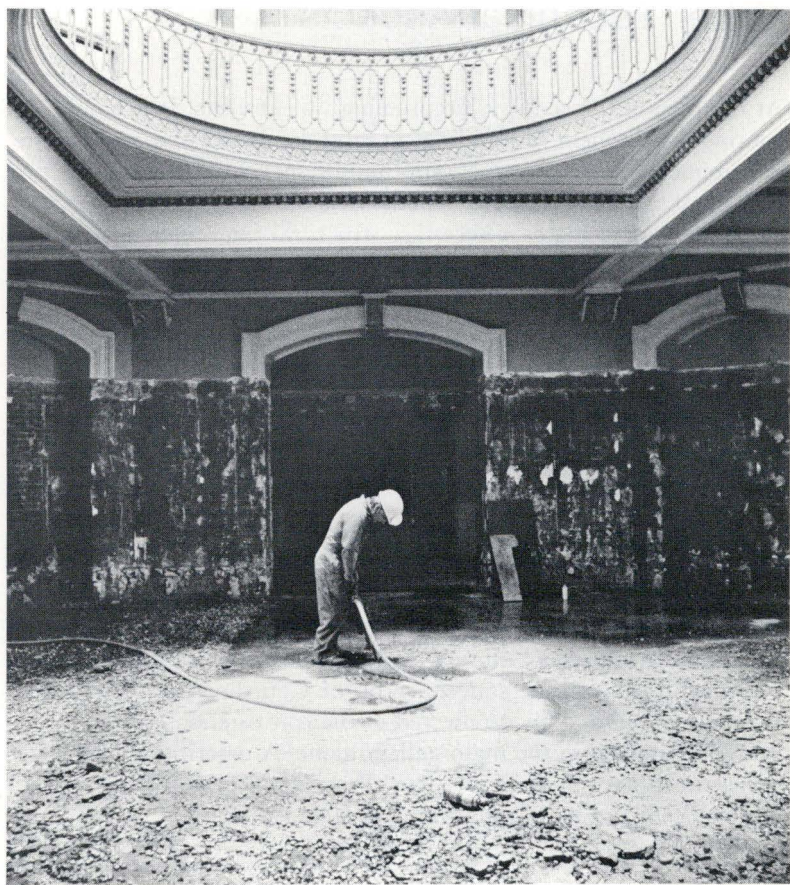
The three highest levels of the Rotunda have been changed very little, but most of the classical ornaments have been resurfaced. The subtle colours used in these areas have been chosen to fit in well with the neutral tones (greys and whites) that are employed in the galleries which flank the Rotunda on four sides. Plexiglass has replaced the glass of Rattenbury's dome. Concealed and revealed fixtures bathe this four-storey well with a magical light.

In the Old Courthouse, visitors gained access to the upper storeys via stairs set in one of the corridors near the central well. Now one ascends on elegant escalators on either side of the Rotunda. Several photographs document the difficult processes involved in the Rotunda's reconstruction.









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