Wolfgang Sievers was one of the finest architectural and industrial photographers working in Australia in the second half of the twentieth century. Born in Berlin in 1913, Sievers studied photography at the Contempora School for Applied Arts, which followed Bauhaus principles. At the Contempora School, he became highly skilled in all aspects of professional photography and was introduced to photographers of the 1920s–30s Neue Sachlichkeit or New Objectivity movement. The work of protagonists such as Albert Renger-Patzsch, August Sander and Werner Manz influenced Sievers as it did Bernd and Hilla Becher, the renowned post-war German photographers and teachers. New Objectivity photography is characterised by scientific precision. Its proponents used the camera as an indexical tool and sought to bridge the divide between art and commerce through mass distribution of images. The movement arose after the First World War, when many artists became disenchanted by expressions of exaggerated emotion or dynamism.

In 1938, twenty-five-year-old Sievers migrated to Australia. Shortly after arriving in Melbourne, he established a darkroom and quickly found work as a photographer for advertising, industry and agriculture. Sievers successfully practiced commercial photography for many decades, focussing on architecture and the machinery of modern industry.

In 1995, through the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne purchased from Wolfgang Sievers 141 photographs with accompanying negatives. The fifty-seven exterior and interior views of buildings in this exhibition were photographed between 1956 and 1976, a period of great development at the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus. Sievers did not photograph architecture he didn’t admire. Many of the images record buildings and interior spaces in isolation from their context, a quality shared with photography of the New Objectivity movement.

It is likely that Sievers was engaged by some of Melbourne’s leading architectural firms to document their new work. He visited the university campus a number of times over twenty years, photographing buildings by, among others, Bates Smart & McCutcheon (Russell Grimwade School of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 1956; Wilson Hall, 1956; and Eakins Hall, Queen’s College, 1964), JFD Scarborough (Baillieu Library, 1959), and Yuncken Freeman (Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology and Medicine, 1962).