

Identification and location

Name of Place: **ETA Factory**

Other Name

Address 254 Ballarat Road

Braybrook

Place Identifier 20243

Heritage Significance state

Creation date(s): 1956 -60

Map (Melway) 27 D11

Boundary description The extent of the current allotment

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type Private

Description

Site Type: factory (food processing)

Physical Description

Early example of "curtain wall" construction and application to industrial building. Coloured glass walls in aluminium frames with exposed diagonal trusses. The building forms a facade to the more utilitarian sawtooth roof factory behind but is detached from it, separated by a landscaped courtyard garden but linked by a continuous cantilevered loading bay canopy which forms the fourth side of the courtyard.

Within the courtyard is the sculpture and fountain by artist Teisutis (Joe) Zikaras featuring two cast concrete sections of curving forms in a delicate sense of balance, placed in a circular concrete basin filled with water and edged with basalt boulders. Four copper discs on opposite sides were meant to direct water onto the sculpture but have remained blocked. Remnants of the original integrated landscape design can be seen, including cactus and cordyline in the courtyard. Angular and zig-zag paths and pebble borders are only evident in fragments.

The glass and aluminium construction continues around the sides and back giving the building a stand-alone integrity unusual for factory offices. A cantilevered, "floating" stair case enclosed by the glass wall forms the prominent entrance feature. A service tower stands above the roof line as a projecting geometric form originally carrying the ETA brand name.

Condition

In fair condition. Partitioning of the factory into smaller rental units and the consequent uncoordinated repainting and signage has diminished the uniform effect of the curtain wall facade. Lack of maintenance is also apparent.

Integrity

Intact apart from replacement of some coloured panes of glass with unsympathetic clear or painted panels.

Context

One of a number of large industrial sites along Ballarat Road in the Braybrook area, with Pilkington's contemporary factory nearby.

Threats

None apparent.

History

Designed by noted architect Frederick Romberg of Grounds Romberg and Boyd and constructed by ETA c.1957-60. The building reflects the translation of contemporary American factory design to Australia. A sculpture and fountain was commissioned for the landscaped courtyard and created by Teisutis Zikaras in 1962.

ETA Foods Pty Ltd. produced salted peanuts and cashews, peanut butter and margarine. Marrickville Margarine Pty Ltd, was a co-tenant and the largest margarine manufacturer in Australia in the 1960s also producing a range of edible and technical products. Both companies commenced in Victoria in 1921, expanding to Braybrook to meet increased demand.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

Cultural Significance

The ETA factory is of historical and architectural significance at the State level as an important translation of contemporary American factory design practice to an Australian building which demonstrates both the growth of awareness in overseas factory and architectural design. It is of Architectural significance for its association with the important Australian practice of Frederick Romberg and the partnership of Grounds, Romberg and Boyd and for its place in the development of the glass curtain wall in an industrial context. (Criterion A3) As one of the earliest applications of the glass curtain wall in Victoria, and a rare application to industrial structures, the ETA factory contributes to our understanding of industrial development in the region, comparable locally with very few other examples, one being BP Lubricants in Spotswood. (Criterion C2) The Frederick Romberg design stands as a high point in the International Modern style, while the combination of building, landscaped garden and sculpture epitomises the integrated design philosophy of the Modernist movement. (Criterion E1)

The factory also reflects the 1950s growth of industry from its animal by-products beginnings in the Braybrook area and the confidence of industry in the period of post war revitalisation, while the significance of ETA as a major food producing company and household name of the post War period is demonstrated in the scale and form of the building. (Criterion A4) The landscaped courtyard, with surviving original plantings and the Zikaras sculpture contributes and is intrinsic to the overall design. Similarly, the cantilevered staircase and internal finishes of the entrance vestibule make an important contribution to the place.

Comparative Examples

Compares with the BP blending building Spotswood in the early use of glass curtain wall as applied to an industrial building. Otherwise a style more usually notable in Central Business District head office buildings.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
Register of the National Estate	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
National Trust Register	<input type="text" value="Yes 5435, also sculpture"/>
Other Heritage Listings	<input type="text" value="WRIHS"/>
Planning Scheme Protection	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
External Paint Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="Yes"/>
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="Yes - esp. entry & stairs"/>
Tree Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="Yes - landscaped courtyard"/>
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	

Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements. To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place. To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements. To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements. To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements. To prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives and which addresses future adaptive reuse in the light of the changes and excess signage resulting from the current subdivision and sub leases.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

- A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.*
- A distinctive and rare example of industrial architecture adding a sense of class to a generally functional street scape.
- C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.*
- As one of the earliest applications of the glass curtain wall in Victoria, and a rare application to industrial structures, the ETA factory contributes to our understanding of industrial development in the region.
- E1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.*
- The Frederick Romberg design stands as a high point in the International Modern style, while the combination of building, landscaped garden and sculpture epitomises the design philosophy.
- The factory also reflects the 1950s growth of industry from its animal by-products beginnings in the Braybrook area and the confidence of industry in the period of post war revitalisation.

Documentation

References

Vines, G. *Western Region Industrial Heritage Study*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West. 1989.
Hamann 1981,
Sunshine Illustrated 1960.

Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: