

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)
CLASSIFICATION REPORT - PUBLIC ART

1. NAME OF WORK OF ART

Mural on the Arts

1.1 Media

fresco on white cement

1.2 Dimensions

22 feet high X 18 feet wide

2. NAME OF ARTIST

Elaine Haxton

3. DATE

1956

4. LOCATION

St Catherine's Girls School Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142
External east wall of School Library

5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This mural was one of a number completed by the artist, one of which won her the Sulman Prize in 1943. The five figures in this work represent the Arts - Music, Song, Dance, Comedy and Tragedy. It is a charming and romantic work marked by an intense nervous liveliness. Both theme and imagery relate to the artist's involvement in theatre design in which she was principally engaged at the time of this commission.

Controversial when originally painted, the colours were modified by the artist. However with hindsight it can be viewed as a work which not only typifies the artist's style, but bears a marked resemblance to some of the work of the artists Dobel and Drysdale with whom she was in close contact. In general the work has withstood the test of time surprisingly well.

This mural was one of the first substantial external painted murals completed in Melbourne.

6. HISTORY OF THE WORK

This work was commissioned by the architects Mockridge Stahle and Mitchell for the new Assembly Hall built for St Catherine's in 1956. Originally painted in more brilliant hues characteristic of Haxton's other work, the artist was forced to modify the colouring to comply with the wishes of the school. The completed work incorporates the school colours of grey, light and dark blue and gold. The location of the work

required the artist to use two tiered scaffolding and working through mid winter in Melbourne required considerable determination and perseverance.

In the 1970's the original purpose of the building was changed. It is now used as the School Library, however this in no way interferes with the mural.

The condition of this work considering its long exposure to the elements is reasonable, and St Catherine's is currently investigating the conservation of this work.

7. HISTORY OF THE ARTIST

7.1 Name

Elaine Haxton (Mrs Richard Foot)

7.2 Dates

b Melbourne 1909, d Sydney c 1985 ?

7.3 Date of Arrival in Australia

NA

7.4 Training

1923 East Sydney Technical College, studied drawing and sculpture with Raynor Hoff. Continued classes part-time.

1932 Grosvenor School London under Iain McNab

1945 Studied theatre design in New York

1965 Studied printmaking at the Willoughby Art Centre Sydney

1969 Studied printmaking at Hayter's Atelier 17 in Paris

Studied the traditional Japanese woodcut in Kyoto.

7.5 Address and Telephone

7.6 Represented in Public Collections

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Hermitage, Leningrad; The Australian National Gallery; all State galleries and most regional galleries; innumerable collections in Australia and overseas.

7.7 Other Public Commissions

1940 Claremont Cafe, Sydney; 1941 Great Hall entrance - Royal Easter Showgrounds Sydney; 1943 Coq d'Or Restaurant, Sydney; 1945 Warship HMS Battler; 1948 Jacaranda Cottage Hospital NSW; Peninsula Restaurant, Newport NSW

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

9. APPENDICES

Letter and information from Marcia Del Thomas includes:

- photocopies of a number of Haxton's other works.
- list of murals by Elaine Haxton
- Elaine Haxton etchings, frontispiece and reproductions of publication by Beagle Press Sydney

- Appraisal by Russel Drysdale
- Elaine Haxton - a brief profile by Lou Klepac, includes biographical notes.
- Newspaper clipping: The Herald, July 9 1956
- Hobart Mercury "Weekend" The Arts, Review of Haxton exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Launceston by Joerg Andersch, April 1982

Copies from *St Catherine's A Centenary Celebration 1896 - 1996*
 Edited by DE & IV Hansen 1996 p 136, colour image p159

10. REFERENCES

Elaine Haxton etchings published by the Beagle Press, Sydney 1967
 Barbara Chapman: *Elaine Haxton Printmaker* Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston 1982
St Catherine's A Centenary Celebration 1896 - 1996
 Edited by DE & IV Hansen 1996 p 136, colour image p159

