
Nolan Eureka Mural



B4071 Eureka Mural (Earth
Visual Communications)



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Location

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, CANBERRA - PROPERTY NUMBER B4071 AND FORMERLY
RESERVE BANK 56 - 64 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE - PROPERTY NUMBER B4071, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 25, 2023

What is significant?

The mural, which is located in the foyer of the Reserve Bank of Australia, is an extremely large work of art, measuring 20 metres long by 3.6 metres high. Entitled the *Eureka Stockade*, it was commissioned by Dr. H. C. Coombs, Governor of the bank, from the eminent Australian artist, Sir Sidney Nolan, and was completed by him and two technical collaborators, Robin Banks and Patrick Furse, in 1965 in London. It is comprised of 66 individual panels and was executed in jewellery enamel on heavy gauge copper.

The mural depicts the historic clash of arms in 1854 between the gold-diggers at Eureka, Ballarat, who were protesting about the unfair licensing system and police and militia sent by the government to enforce the existing laws. The figurative elements of the story are shown by a white line drawing in enamel applied by Nolan himself using an ancient technique employed in sand painting. The overall colour of the mural is in predominantly red and coppery tones with areas of pale blue, green and turquoise which combine to provide a rich and glowing textural

background to the drawing.

How is it significant?

The Eureka Stockade mural is significant for aesthetic, historic, social and technical reasons at the State level.

Why is it significant?

Aesthetically the mural is a very large scale, significant work of art designed for a public space by Sir Sidney Nolan, an artist of both Australian and international repute. It is unusual in the manner of its realisation and for the collaboration of Nolan with two creative technical artists, Patrick Furse and Robin Banks, in London. It reflects an important theme, that of the 'heroic' gesture which recurred often in Nolan's paintings.

The conflict at the Eureka gold-mine was a significant historical event in the development of a more democratic form of government. It resulted in a Victorian Act in July 1855 to establish a Constitution in Victoria which established a wholly elected Legislative Council and Assembly. The mural *Eureka Stockade* provides a strong visual record of the event which influenced this development in democratic government.

As a depiction of an event which shows the struggle between the workers, gold-miners, and the forces of the establishment, the mural illustrates and creates awareness of social issues which still have relevance. The rebellion was brutally crushed by the authorities and resulted in deaths on both sides of the conflict. As a result the miners have achieved the status of martyrs in the name of democratic government.

Technically the mural is an example of the development of new techniques and processes to solve artistic requirements. Although the technique was well known, producing and transporting such large panels in jewellery enamel on copper presented new challenges to the artist and his assistants and called for innovative solutions in enamelling and handling.

Classified: 24/09/2012

NOTE: Donated by Reserve Bank to ANU in 2019. NO LONGER IN VICTORIA

Hermes Number 183740

Property Number

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>