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# Orion, Geoffrey Bartlett



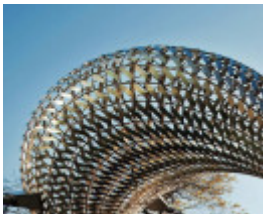
B7690 Orion - Night View, St Kilda Road. Courtesy of John Gollings.



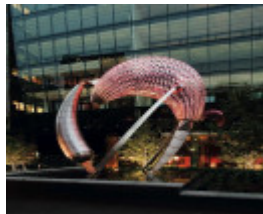
B7690 Orion - Courtesy of John Gollings



B7690 Orion - Day View, St Kilda Road. Courtesy of John Gollings.



B7690 Orion - Detail of Reflective Blades. Courtesy of John Gollings.



B7690 Orion - Illuminated After Dark. Courtesy of John Gollings.

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## Location

428-430 St Kilda Road MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

## What is significant?

The sculpture *Orion* by Geoffrey Bartlett was commissioned in 2008 by the property development group, Lustig and Moar, in response to an initiative of the Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Ministry of the Arts to improve public spaces in central Melbourne by the inclusion of "large scale sculptures and works of art". St. Kilda Road was already the site for major sculptural works by notable Australian sculptors including

Bartlett himself, whose sculpture, *The Messenger*, (1983) had been installed in the moat of the National Gallery. Max Moar, the CEO of Lustig and Moar, approached Geoffrey Bartlett to produce a design to enhance the streetscape of their new apartment block at 428-430 St. Kilda Road. Following the presentation of a maquette, Moar, approved the sum of \$120,000 dollars to cover the cost of the completion of the work, which was to be sited at the St. Kilda road entrance to the apartment block, now known as the 'Lucient' building.

Orion is seven metres high and five metres wide, and is positioned on a square slab of polished granite. It is constructed in 2B grade stainless steel, which has a high lustre, reflective surface. The rotation for the placement of the sculpture was carefully considered for viewing from all directions, including from the apartments above. The two interrelating, curving cylindrical forms with tapering ends arc towards and support each other. The larger, crescent-shaped form is held aloft by three flat, panelled, tapering blade-like supports. The smaller curving form is composed of solid steel panels with expressed construction details and joints. The two curved forms enclose and define the space and provide energetic momentum to the whole work. The larger form is constructed as an open steel cage with horizontal and circular steel bands drawn together at both ends, and enclosed by solid cylindrical steel "cans" which conceal the hidden lighting. A complex arrangement of individually cut and angled steel blades positioned within the cage enhance natural light by day, and maximise reflection from the lights at night. The resolution of the concealed, rotating lighting presented an enormous technical and design challenge. In darkness the supporting structure appears to disappear leaving the two forms hovering, like coloured projectiles in the night sky.

## How is it significant?

The sculpture *Orion* (2008) by Geoffrey Bartlett is significant for aesthetic and cultural reasons at State level (Criteria a, c, e, & h).

## Why is it significant?

The sculpture *Orion* is significant to Victoria for aesthetic reasons: criteria (c), (e) and (h). *Orion* refines and extends the aesthetic vocabulary and craftsmanship displayed by Bartlett in earlier sculptural works, and specifically in his most recent public work, *Aurora*, situated at the Melbourne docklands area. It exemplifies sculptural themes that have been refined during more than thirty years of establishing his position as a major artistic force within Victoria, Australia and internationally. His work is extensively represented in National and State public art galleries and many major private collections. Geoffrey Bartlett has completed significant public works of art within Australia. These include: *The Messenger* (1983) for the National Gallery of Victoria, *Beacon* (1998/99) for Newcastle City Council, *Fusion* (2000) for the Australian National University, Canberra and *Aurora* (2006) for Melbourne City Council. He has exhibited regularly with at least twenty major solo exhibitions including: Deakin University (2001), the National Gallery of Victoria (2007) and the McClelland Gallery (2015). Bartlett's sculptures embody a complex form of tension and visual balance and harmony. These sculpturally realized attributes are strikingly evident in *Orion*.

Geoffrey Bartlett's sculpture *Orion* is significant to Victoria at a cultural level: criteria (a), and (h). This sculpture, as with his former work, is influenced by, and reflects, his strong cultural background, particularly derived from his early experiences in rural Victoria. Born in Melbourne in 1952, he spent his early life in Warrnambool and Shepparton where family and friends and the acquisition of rural craft skills were important influences on the formative development of his subsequent three-dimensional artworks. Bartlett continued his education at RMIT University, Melbourne before being awarded a scholarship by the Ian Potter Sculpture Commission (1982), followed by the award of a Harkness Fellowship (1983) for further study at Columbia University, New York. Although responsive to the external influences of major international artists and sculptors including David Smith, Henry Moore and Isamu Noguchi, his work has continued to develop and demonstrate his cultural ties to his Australian heritage and the respect he acquired during his early rural background for craftsmanship, materials and technology. *Orion* imaginatively explores themes relevant to the Orion Constellation and its location in the Southern sky.

St. Kilda Road where the sculpture is situated is a major thoroughfare leading to the heart of the Melbourne CBD. It is a recognised cultural environment due to the siting of the Shrine of Remembrance, the National Gallery of Victoria, the State Theatre and Concert Hall and other sculptural works by many notable artists. *Orion* is a feat of aesthetic achievement, craftsmanship and technical innovation, which enhances this cultural environment. As such it is of significant importance to the State of Victoria and deserves protection.

Hermes Number 200964

Property Number

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*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/>*