
Former Kodak (Australasia) Pty Ltd Factory Complex

Location

173-199 Elizabeth Street,, COBURG VIC 3058 - Property No B7337

Municipality

MERRI-BEK CITY

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 5, 2005

What is significant? The Kodak Factory complex was begun in 1957 on 23 hectares of vacant land at Coburg. It replaced an earlier factory at Abbotsford, initially constructed in 1886 by Thomas Baker who, in partnership with John Rouse, became Kodak's exclusive Australian agents in 1905, and whose company merged with Kodak to form Australian Kodak Limited in 1908 and eventually became Kodak (Australasia) Pty Ltd in 1920. In 1957 the noted commercial architect Harry Norris (whose firm was renamed H A & F L Norris & Associates in 1957) completed a masterplan for the new factory and designs for the individual buildings. The basic design was provided by Eastman Kodak in the United States, adapted to suit local conditions. The contract was awarded to Lewis Constructions Pty Ltd, and the still uncompleted complex was officially opened by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 14 April 1961. The Abbotsford factory continued operating until 1967, when all operations were able to be accommodated at Coburg. Further expansion on the site occurred until the 1990s, but with the decline in demand for traditional photographic products after that time the Coburg complex was closed in 2004. The factory complex consists of a number of buildings on a landscaped site. Along Elizabeth Street is a precinct of stylish non-production buildings which were the public face of the factory: the Film Testing Building (No. 7, 1957-8); the Head Office /Administration Building (No. 8, 1962-3); the Amenities Building/canteen (No. 9, 1959-61); and the Personnel and medical centre (No. 10, 1960-1); as well as the gatehouse (No. 1, 1957) which marks the entrance to the site. All of these are in the International Modernist idiom, but show the influence of changing tastes during their period 1957-63. Stylistic unity is achieved through the use of the high quality finishes and elegant detailing that characterise Harry Norris's best work: bold volumetric compositions enlivened with brickwork screens, glazed concrete block screens, brick walls with projecting and receding stretchers, diamond-pointed metal panels and decorative mosaic tiling. Other significant buildings on the site are: the Services Building (power house) (No. 11, 1957-9) with a tall brick chimney on an octagonal base; the Research laboratories (No. 17, 1962-3); the Film Coating Building

(No. 3, 1957-60); and the Film Testing Backdrop (south of No. 7, c1968). The Bluestone retaining wall (near building No. 20) is constructed of stone from the former home of Thomas Baker at Abbotsford. The landscaping, which includes lawns with specimen trees, planted beds and formal pathways forms an integrated context for the buildings. The oak tree to the north of the amenities building was planted in 1961 and was grown from an acorn taken from the original Abbotsford site.

How is it significant? The Kodak factory complex site is significant for historical reasons and the individual buildings listed below are significant for aesthetic/architectural, and technological reasons, at a State level.

Why is it significant? The Kodak Factory complex is historically significant as the national headquarters of Kodak (Australasia) Pty Ltd, an important company that has operated in Australia for more than a century and for a long time was the only local manufacturer of photographic films, papers and chemicals. The Kodak name has been synonymous with popular photography throughout the post war period in Australia. The complex is historically significant as the largest and most prominent factory complex in the City of Moreland, which has been a significant metropolitan centre for industrial development since the mid-nineteenth century.

The Kodak factory complex is architecturally significant as probably the most intact example in Victoria of a large post-war industrial complex. It is a fine and particularly intact example of an architect-designed mid twentieth century factory complex in a landscaped setting, a type that proliferated in Melbourne's outer suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s but has since become increasingly rare. It is architecturally significant as a fine, intact and varied example of the work of Harry A and Frank L Norris & Associates, a noted and prolific Melbourne firm of commercial architects, whose post-war work demonstrates a highly personal strain of International Modernism, distinguished by elegant detailing, ornamentation and the use of high quality materials and finishes.

Classified: 28/11/2005

Hermes Number 71669

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/>