

ETA Factory

Address Ballarat Road, Braybrook 3019

Practice Grounds Romberg & Boyd (Romberg)

Designed 1957

Completed 1961

History &
Description

The ETA Factory was designed in 1957, and constructed in two stages as the new manufacturing plant for ETA Foods. It was located on a greenfields site on a major arterial road. A basically rectangular form was chosen to serve the close knit functional requirements. It presents to Ballarat Road a long two-storey aluminium curtain wall with horizontal strips of clear glazing and black glass spandrels. There is a regular vertical subdivision of this wall formed by expressed steel columns. The curtain wall is given added dynamism by the diagonal K bracing in every fifth bay, originally highlighted in gold. The bracing works as arrow-like graphic elements leading the eye to the supergraphic ETA sign (no longer extant) at the eastern end of the facade. The curtain wall wraps around one end, and into a courtyard cut into the building, with the clear glazed end of the administration forming the entry. A wide projecting canopy, supported by a steel suspension cables from columns which are an extension of the main building structure, covers the administration wing entrance and the visitor parking area off Lacy Street.

The two largest factory floors are covered by saw-tooth roofs supported by innovative tubular steel trusses. Other spaces include large open span cool stores, smaller specialist manufacturing spaces and a despatch area to the rear. The Ballarat Road garden and the courtyard were landscaped to a design by John Stevens, with only some elements, particularly the sculpture / fountain in the courtyard, remaining.

- extracts from citation for VHR #1916



Main entrance & stair in 1960, Wolfgang Sievers [SLV]

Statement of
Significance

The ETA Factory is important example of modernist architectural design applied to a large industrial facility in the 1950s. It demonstrates the practice of applying a stylish curtain wall, more usually encountered on inner city buildings, to an office and factory complex located on the city outskirts. The design also expresses the structural rationalism prevalent in Melbourne in the period. The curtain wall facade of the ETA Factory is also architecturally significant for its futurist conception of the facade as billboard. The ETA factory is a significant example of the industrial work of the architectural firm of Grounds, Romberg Boyd, and in particular of Frederick Romberg. The structural expression in the design of ETA factory achieved some international architectural prominence. It was the only Australian design included in the 1962 publication *Industriebau*, an influential international text on industrial design, published by the German Institute for Industry.

Criteria
Applicable

- N1 - Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
- N2 - Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
- N5 - Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



Courtyard view ca 1962, photo by Kenneth Ross



Ballarat Road elevation in 1960, Wolfgang Sievers [SLV]