

Victorian Heritage Database Report

## ETA Factory

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**Location:**

254 Ballarat Road BRAYBROOK, Maribyrnong City

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Included in Heritage Overlay

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1916**

**Listing Authority: VHR**

**Heritage Overlay Number: HO83**

**Statement of Significance:**

The ETA factory is of historical and architectural significance at the State level as an important translation of contemporary American factory design practice to an Australian building which demonstrates both the growth of awareness in overseas factory and architectural design. It is of Architectural significance for its association

with the important Australian practice of Frederick Romberg and the partnership of Grounds, Romberg and Boyd and for its place in the development of the glass curtain wall in an industrial context. (Criterion A3) As one of the earliest applications of the glass curtain wall in Victoria, and a rare application to industrial structures, the ETA factory contributes to our understanding of industrial development in the region, comparable locally with very few other examples, one being BP Lubricants in Spotswood. (Criterion C2) The Frederick Romberg design stands as a high point in the International Modern style, while the combination of building, landscaped garden and sculpture epitomises the integrated design philosophy of the Modernist movement. (Criterion E1)

The factory also reflects the 1950s growth of industry from its animal by-products beginnings in the Braybrook area and the confidence of industry in the period of post war revitalisation, while the significance of ETA as a major food producing company and household name of the post War period is demonstrated in the scale and form of the building. (Criterion A4) The landscaped courtyard, with surviving original plantings and the Zikaras sculpture contributes and is intrinsic to the overall design. Similarly, the cantilevered staircase and internal finishes of the entrance vestibule make an important contribution to the place.

### Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) criteria

The Australian Heritage Commission criteria consist of a set of eight criteria which cover social, aesthetic, scientific, and historic values. Each criterion has sub-criteria written specifically for cultural or natural values. The relevant criteria are:

A.3 richness and diversity of cultural features

C.2 research potential

E.1 aesthetic importance to the community or cultural group

A.4 demonstrates well the course and pattern of history, important historic events

### Description

Early example of "curtain wall" construction and application to industrial building. Coloured glass walls in aluminium frames with exposed diagonal trusses. The building forms a facade to the more utilitarian sawtooth roof factory behind but is detached from it, separated by a landscaped courtyard garden but linked by a continuous cantilevered loading bay canopy which forms the fourth side of the courtyard.

Within the courtyard is the sculpture and fountain by artist Teisutis (Joe) Zikaras featuring two cast concrete sections of curving forms in a delicate sense of balance, placed in a circular concrete basin filled with water and edged with basalt boulders. Four copper discs on opposite sides were meant to direct water onto the sculpture but have remained blocked. Remnants of the original integrated landscape design can be seen, including cactus and cordyline in the court yard. Angular and zig-zag paths and pebble borders are only evident in fragments.

The glass and aluminium construction continues around the sides and back giving the building a stand-alone integrity unusual for factory offices. A cantilevered, "floating" stair case enclosed by the glass wall forms the prominent entrance feature. A service tower stands above the roof line as a projecting geometric form originally carrying the ETA brand name.

In fair condition. Partitioning of the factory into smaller rental units and the consequent uncoordinated repainting and signage has diminished the uniform effect of the curtain wall facade. Lack of maintenance is also apparent.

Intact apart from replacement of some coloured panes of glass with unsympathetic clear or painted panels.

One of a number of large industrial sites along Ballarat Road in the Braybrook area, with Pilkington's contemporary factory nearby.

Thematic context  
Australian Principal Theme Manufacturing and Processing  
PAHT Subtheme: Manufacturing and Processing  
Local Theme Industry Pushing Outwards:

Creation date(s): 1956 -60

Map (Melway) 27 DII

Boundary description The extent of the current allotment

Heritage Study / Consultant	Maribyrnong - Maribyrnong Heritage Review, Jill Barnard, Graeme Butler, Francine Gilfedder & Gary Vines, 2000
Construction Date Range	1956 - 1960
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	MARIBYRNONG CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	28353
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*