



Melocco Room, Central Station

Client Sydney Trains

Services Outdoor Heritage, Built Heritage, Public Art

Overview

A fire at Central Station was the impetus for conservation restoration to this marvellous mid-century Melocco Brothers artwork. The impressive wrap-around wall relief depicts the history of transportation above travertine walling and a beautiful terrazzo floor map of Australia. The Melocco Room is now open to the public.

Condition

The former Interstate Booking Office at Central Station's main concourse was designed and opened in 1951 as part of 'modernising the railways' under Railway Commissioner Winsor. The modernist interiors were designed by the railways' principal architect, with space for specially commissioned artwork by the Melocco Brothers, renowned Italian artisans. Guido Zuliani and Peter Melocco designed, fabricated and installed a magnificent terrazzo mosaic and marble floor, travertine walling and a 'Keenes' cement incised wall mural. This wrap-around wall mural was conceived on a grand scale totalling 132 m² and was known as 'Transport Progress in Frieze'.

In recent years, the room had been adapted as a Hungry Jacks outlet obscuring the significance of the artwork by fast food paraphernalia, unsympathetic room subdivision and degradation from grease and dirt built up. In 2015 a fire broke out which destroyed large sections of 1906 plaster ceiling in the back-of-house kitchen area while smoke and water damaged the 1950s wall mural in the public area.

Given the significance of the Melocco Brothers artwork, the fire incident presented an opportunity to fully restore the mural and sympathetically integrate it into a new tenancy fit-out.

The conservation treatment was undertaken in 2018 and was remarkably successful in retaining the patina of the plaster work whilst allowing the full impact of the artwork to be appreciated anew.

The artwork conservation works were part of a wider rejuvenation of food and beverage offerings on the main concourse at Central Station. Delaware North, in collaboration with Sydney Trains, designed the new



During treatment



During treatment



During treatment



During treatment

space, now known as 2000 Acres. The design, minimalist and luxurious, blends well with the mid-century aesthetics and materiality to integrate and celebrate the railway artwork. Other aspects of the project include extensive plaster reconstruction of fire damaged 1906 decorative ceiling in back-of-house area, and sympathetic adaptive re-use of the former Booking Hall now known as Eternity. Both spaces are now open for public enjoyment.

This project demonstrates funding prioritisation of exceptionally significant features at Central Station. It also showcases best practice conservation and promotes public access to Melocco Brothers artwork. The intense conservation and the sympathetic fit-out design energised this space; its repair and conservation has fully restored, sharpened and brightened this imposing creation. The Melocco Room is truly a hidden gem of Central Station, and indeed Sydney.

Treatment

The project then embarked on extensive conservation work to carefully remove years of surface dirt and recent smoke and water damage. The conservation methodology required delicate and painstaking cleaning by specialists at ICS. This involved:

- Cleaning the surface with brush vacuum
- A deep clean with molecular trap sponges
- A wet clean using minimal water to limit damage to the porous surface using a Ph7 detergent
- A selective solvent clean to remove deep dirt ingress
- Poulticing of areas of staining
- Inpainting losses in the fine line work
- Application of a protective wax coating

More information

- 'Celebrated mural at Sydney's Central Station brought back to life' article in ABC News:
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-24/sydneys-central-station-peter-melocco-mural-restored/9181486>



Before treatment



After treatment



After treatment



After treatment