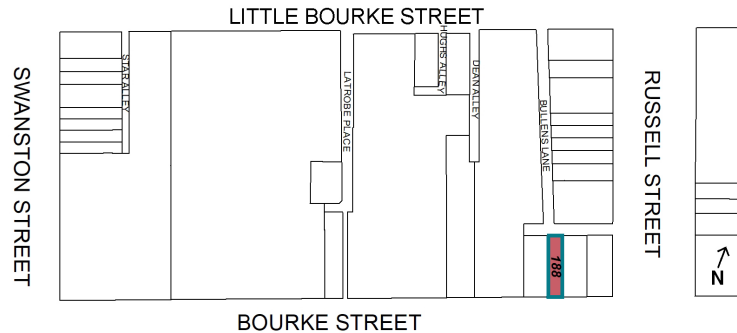


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Former Rockman's Showrooms (188 Bourke Street, Melbourne), April 2022

Heritage Place: Former Rockman's Showrooms Pty Ltd

PS ref no: HO1303



What is significant?

The former Rockman's Showroom at 188 Bourke Street, Melbourne, a three-storey retail building constructed in 1937.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Original building form and scale
- Original symmetrical façade geometry and fenestration, including vertical glazed panels, projecting mullions and rooftop fins and articulated parapet
- Original steel windows at the second-floor level.

The awning and alterations at the street-level shopfront and replacement aluminium frame windows at the first level are not significant.

How it is significant?

188 Bourke Street, Melbourne, is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Rockman's Showrooms Pty Ltd building at 188 Bourke Street is historically significant for the evidence it provides of an important phase in Melbourne's retail history; the rise in popularity of

the chain store retailers from the 1920s in the central city. To accommodate growing demand for retail stores in central Melbourne, by the 1930s, former businesses in the block east of Bourke Street mall were quickly replaced with clothing retailers and chain stores. Designed in 1937 by architects H W & F B Tompkins and occupied by frock sellers Rockman's Showrooms, who established a chain of fashion stores across regional Victoria and New South Wales, it is representative of the wave of smaller-scale commercial development in central Melbourne during the later interwar period that replaced the low scale masonry buildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th century. (Criteria A and D)

188 Bourke Street is architecturally significant as a finely detailed, modestly-scaled example of a Jazz Moderne commercial building in central Melbourne. Jazz Moderne was an extremely popular style in the later interwar period. Such buildings utilised the engineering benefits of steel and concrete frame structures to maximise window areas and to provide flexibility for external articulation and decoration, and the dynamic and streamlined aesthetic of Art Deco detailing. The building is also notable as a work of the eminent firm of Melbourne architects H W & F B Tompkins, who designed a number of other Melbourne buildings in the Jazz Moderne style during the same period. (Criterion D)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated April 2022)