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11-storey high mural by Australian artist unveiled on residential tower in Sydney CBD

Architecture news & editorial desk

A mural designed by one of Australia's most celebrated contemporary artists was recently unveiled on a new building in Sydney. Standing 11 storeys high and covering 335 square metres, the mural by Maria Fernanda Cardoso is integrated into the building and is believed to be the largest public artwork by an Australian artist in the Sydney CBD.

Cardoso was commissioned by United Development Sydney for the newly completed Castle Residences mixed development at 116 Bathurst Street. The project was designed by Candalepas Associates and realised by Hutchinson Builders. Working closely with the architect, Angelo Candalepas since the inception of the project in 2014, the artist developed the mural with public art curator Amanda Sharrad.



Titled Ripples and Droplets, the mural on a single wall of the residential tower takes inspiration from the natural movement of water. Consisting of concentric circles and spirals similar to ripples on a pond or the silky thread of a spider web, the design reflects Cardoso's fascination for the natural geometry of the world.

Visible on the north facing wall above the entrance lane that runs between the Castlereagh Street facade of 116 Bathurst Street and the Porter House hotel beside it, Ripples and Droplets is designed to be seen laterally.

The mural is part of a series called 'Drawing Paintings, Painting Drawings', referring to a technique invented by the artist that allows her to draw and paint simultaneously. Her tool is a container that dispenses paint through a small plastic tube and needle, which creates droplet effects as she draws lines across the surface.

The Castle Residences and hotel will open in late April. An exhibition by Cardoso, detailing the creative process behind *Ripples and Droplets*, will be available for viewing in the Porter House during this time.

“When I started to make public art, I just felt at such ease. I had prepared all my life for it. In a public space, scale is very important, because most things go unperceived,” Cardoso says.

“The scale makes them visible. The patterns are like ripples in water, and if you look closer, there are droplets. My concept from the beginning was about painting as a fluid. That is why it has ended up being ripples and droplets,” she explained.

Public art curator Amanda Sharrad said: “This artwork is a distinctive and exceptional landmark and Maria Fernanda Cardoso’s most ambitiously scaled work to date. Cardoso delights in finding, revealing and celebrating beauty and magnificence in small and seemingly insignificant forms and forces of nature.”

“There is a need for artworks on buildings to reflect the intentions of the architectural work, which is also art,” Angelo Candalepas said.

“Maria Fernanda Cardoso listened to the building’s needs and understood that the work deferred to the ancient idea of a circle in geometry, the sphere and the imperfection of pendulums in making these shapes. Her work reflects the tenuous nature of circles rather than their certainty, and in so doing it defers to nature,” he added.

“She leaves behind a great message about optimism in geometry, about the human ability to offer something joyous, with the arches of Castlereagh Street finding their source in this mirroring of nature.”

Images: Ripples and Droplets, by Maria Fernanda Cardoso, at Castlereagh Residencies, 116 Bathurst Street Sydney. Photo: Jillian Nalty