



14/12/2021 (2021-12-14T01:54:31Z) 0

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[/ Largest Sydney CBD artwork by an Australian coming in 2022](#)

[Back to Top](#)

Largest Sydney CBD artwork by an Australian coming in 2022

Architecture news & editorial desk

An artwork by Maria Fernanda Cardoso has been integrated onto the new mixed development at 116 Bathurst Street in the Sydney CBD, which was designed by Candalepas Associates (<https://www.architectureanddesign.com.au/suppliers/candalepas-associates>) for Castle Residences.

The artwork, titled Ripples and Droplets, will be the largest public artwork by an Australian artist in the Sydney CBD and spans 11 storeys. It is inspired by the natural movement of water and is located on one wall of the 36-storey tower.

Commissioned by United Development Sydney as part of the Castle Residences mixed development, Cardoso worked closely with Architect Angelo Candalepas since the beginning of the design process in 2014, as well as with Curator Amanda Sharrad.

The artist's design—concentric circles and spirals like ripples on a pond, also the silky thread of a spider web—reflects the broad direction of her creative career. Cardoso says she is fascinated by the natural geometry of the world, which has led to her magnifying details typically concealed to the naked eye.

“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. The scale makes them visible,” she says.

“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.”

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

[Back to Top](#)

“There is a need for artworks on buildings to reflect the intentions of the architectural work, which is also art. We had wanted to add to the city something as strong as the Josef Albers sculpture in Martin Place or Alexander Calder’s in Australia Square—but with an Australian artist,” says Architect Angelo Candalepas.

“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. It has been completed through contemporary technology to appear both uncertain and permanent, at once of this time and absent of a time.

“It sits uneasily on microns off a concrete wall like the constellation of a thousand spiders. 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.”

Ripples and Droplets can be seen above and to the right of the Castlereagh Street facade of 116 Bathurst Street, above a laneway beside Porter House. The work is designed to be seen laterally, given most vantage points will be from across the street or from beneath. The building is due to reach completion in early 2022.

Image: Supplied

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