

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Statue of Captain Cook in Hyde Park, Sydney

Date

c 1880

Primary Maker

Henry King

Medium

Silver gelatin print

Dimensions

Overall: 150 x 202 mm

Name

Photograph

History

The decision to erect a statue of Cook in Sydney had been decided by 1869 and the foundations were laid down. But the funding and commissioning process delayed the creation and unveiling by a decade. The artist, Thomas Woolner, was eventually decided upon and with direction by then Colonial Secretary, Sir Henry Parkes, the process moved forward. The statue itself was designed and made in England by Woolner, already a recognised sculptor. Prior to it being shipped to Sydney, the statue of Cook was displayed in London for a few months where it received much attention. According to 'Australian Town and Country Journal' on 14 September, 1878, the statue was hugely popular: "The attitude is easy, yet imposing. The great navigator has come on deck bareheaded, and has just made out the new continent showing dimly in the early morning sun. He is thus represented in the moment of a discovery which entitles Cook to rank immediately below Columbus in the list of discoverers. He holds a telescope in his left hand and points in triumph to the Great South Land with his right hand. As he is here represented, there is nothing theatrical or strained in the expression of his joy; what is revealed is rather a thoughtful, foreseeing happiness, softening the severity of features, which Mr. Woolner has, perhaps, made rather too severe... It is remarked by the Pall Mall Gazette that the colony of New South Wales will be much better off than the mother country, for it certainly has no such possession in sculpture to boast of." The unveiling day on 25th of February 1879, was proclaimed a public holiday in Sydney and attended by at least 30,000 people and as much pomp and ceremony as the town could manage.