

Topics

Monuments

The international competition to create a landmark that would henceforth symbolize Melbourne has ended without a winner. More than 2,000 proposals were submitted — futuristic monuments, casinos, sports complexes and science-fiction transit projects. There were architectural themes that would link the city with its river, and proposals for gardens full of Australian animals and birds. But that something special — the kind of symbol which inspires instant recognition and dime-store souvenirs — failed to show up: no Eiffel Tower, no Big Ben, no Empire State Building.

Forty-eight of the entries, including 13 from the United States, were considered good enough to merit a share of the \$100,000 prize money. Yet Melbourne will have to live with its iden-

Leaving Marks

tity crisis. It is hard to create a significant symbol on command.

Still, the fact that none of the entries swayed the judges speaks more plainly about the judges' sincerity than their original quest for status. Honesty is an image that fits the Australian reputation: a straightforward people impatient with sham. Melbourne may lack a monumental landmark, but its admission of that fact — in a world where supposedly meaningful and important symbols are produced on demand all the time — is not a bad monument in itself.

Car 8646

As the IRT train flashed into the station last Thursday, it was clear that something was different: it really flashed. The sides of the train were

smooth silver, punctuated by an attractive blue streak running along its length. From the outside, the inside seemed almost to shine. We entered Car 8646, which plainly had just been scrubbed. There were still soap marks on the seats but that hardly mattered: the car walls were fresh cream, the doors a shiny orange. The spirit lifted as the train took off. It seemed a real celebration of the subway's 75th anniversary.

Friday. Same station, same time. The silver streak flashed again and once more we entered Car 8646. The fresh cream had soured overnight: on the walls of the car in three places "Cane X" had left his mark, along with someone whose graffito looked like "Chwgggrck" and another that spelled "Coke." The spirit sank. The celebration was over. We wondered if Cane knew Latin. *Cave canem.*