

HOUSE

Prepared by: GML Heritage

Address: 24 Orion Street BALWYN NORTH

Name: House	Survey Date: December 2022
Place Type: Residential Building	Architect: Davis Bité
Grading: Individually Significant	Builder: Samuel High McCorkell
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1958



Figure 1 Principal façade, facing Orion Street to the north. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 2 Presentation to Libra Street. (Source: GML 2021)

Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic themes taken from the *Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (2012):

6.3.4 Suburban infill after Second World War

9.3.2 Designing fine buildings

Balwyn North is a residential suburb situated 10 kilometres east of central Melbourne. To its south is Balwyn, which is separated from Balwyn North by Belmore Road. It is bounded on the north by Koonung Creek and the Eastern Freeway. The suburb was formerly part of the City of Camberwell and from 1994 has been part of the City of Boroondara.

1940s and postwar development

There had been a scattering of new housing development in the area north of Belmore Road from the late 1930s, but this area was developed significantly from the early 1940s as the new suburb of North Balwyn. Occupied with orchards and small farms, this was the one of the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land relatively close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples building new homes in the 1940s and 1950s (a proportion of which included returned servicemen). The suburb developed as quintessentially middle class, with a high proportion of brick homes and a notable absence of industrial activity. The ridge that ran along Doncaster Road was an advantage to house blocks in the adjoining streets, providing sought-after views to the distant ranges and encouraging the building of often grandiose double-storey homes. Public transport was provided with the extension from the electric tram from East Kew to North Balwyn in 1938, along High Street and Doncaster Road. A large shopping centre, known as North Balwyn Village, developed along Doncaster Road.

In the 1950s, the potential for large-scale residential development in North Balwyn was recognised by a private company, A.V. Jennings Pty Ltd, which proposed the Trentwood Estate on a large tract of land off Doncaster Road (Built Heritage 2015:12). From 1947, Balwyn and Balwyn North were acknowledged not only as epicentres for the Small Homes Service but also for Modernist architect-designed homes in general. A number of notable architects, including Robin Boyd, designed



Modernist homes in Balwyn in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the streets east of Balwyn Road, including the elevated area around Beckett Park.

This new residential expansion in Balwyn North, which included the Greythorn area in the 1950s, in turn brought commercial development. Several local retail strips appeared in the north of the study area, including in Bulleen Road at Dorado Avenue, in Balwyn Road between Lucifer and Echo streets, and, most notably, the prominent strip on Doncaster Road, just down from the Trentwood Estate. In 1960, G.J. Coles opened a large store on the corner of Doncaster Road and Burke Road, which was Melbourne's first American-style self-service drive-in supermarket complex. New schools and churches also appeared during this period of development. Balwyn High School, located in Balwyn North, opened in 1954, followed by Greythorn High School in 1959. Several new churches were constructed, extended or rebuilt to provide for burgeoning congregations (Built Heritage 2015:12). This included new Catholic churches at Deepdene, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

Since the 1990s, a significant influx of new immigrants into the area has seen the extensive replacement of interwar and 1940s homes with new residential development. The suburb of Balwyn North today is favoured by many new home-owners for access to Balwyn High School—a co-educational government secondary school with nearly 2000 students.

The period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, when 24 Orion Street was built, represented something of a heyday of post-war homebuilding in North Balwyn. This phase followed on from the more tentative settlement of the area in the late 1940s and early 1950s, subsequently burgeoning at such an intense rate that, by the mid-1960s, vacant allotments in Balwyn North were hard to come by.

History

The land at 24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, originally formed part of Elgar's Crown Special Survey purchased and surveyed by Henry Elgar in 1841.

Elgar did not reside on the land as he was based in the West Indies, employing an agent to manage his investments in Australia. The survey was subdivided into small farms and grazing runs and leased out for several years. After financial difficulties forced Elgar to sell his land, the majority was purchased by a shipowner named Brooks, while a third of the survey remained in the possession of Mrs Dyce, the widow of one of Elgar's business partners.

William James Woodmason, Dairyman purchased fifty-nine acres of Elgar's Special Survey in 1915. Woodmason's land was subdivided in 1925 with the subject site becoming lot 313 of the subdivision (CT V3948 F 486). It appears that the land was slow to sell and by 1942 the subdivision had been purchased by the Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of the City of Camberwell (CT V6561 F159). The subject site became part of a smaller subdivision becoming lot 5 of the Boulevard Estate which was subdivided into 13 residential allotments in 1954 (*Argus*, 14 July 1956:25). The City of Camberwell issued tenders for the construction of Orion, Aquila, Musca, Taurus and Libra streets the same year (*Argus*, 14 July 1954).

Orion Street was aligned at a slight angle parallel to Koonung Creek to the north. As a result many of the allotments on the street are irregularly shaped, including the subject site; located on the corner of Orion and Libra Streets, it has an asymmetrical kite-like shape (CT V8145 F617).

Graham Dunshea, accountant, purchased the land in 1956 (CT V8145 F617). In 1958, the City of Camberwell issued a permit for the construction of a six-roomed brick veneer house worth £7000

(BP). Wanting to build a modern house that took advantage of the elevated site and its views, Dunshea engaged Davis Bité, a young architectural student and personal acquaintance. The project became Bité's first commission (Dunshea, pers. comm., 2010). Construction of the house was completed in 1958 by builder Samuel Hugh McCorkell (BP 22785).

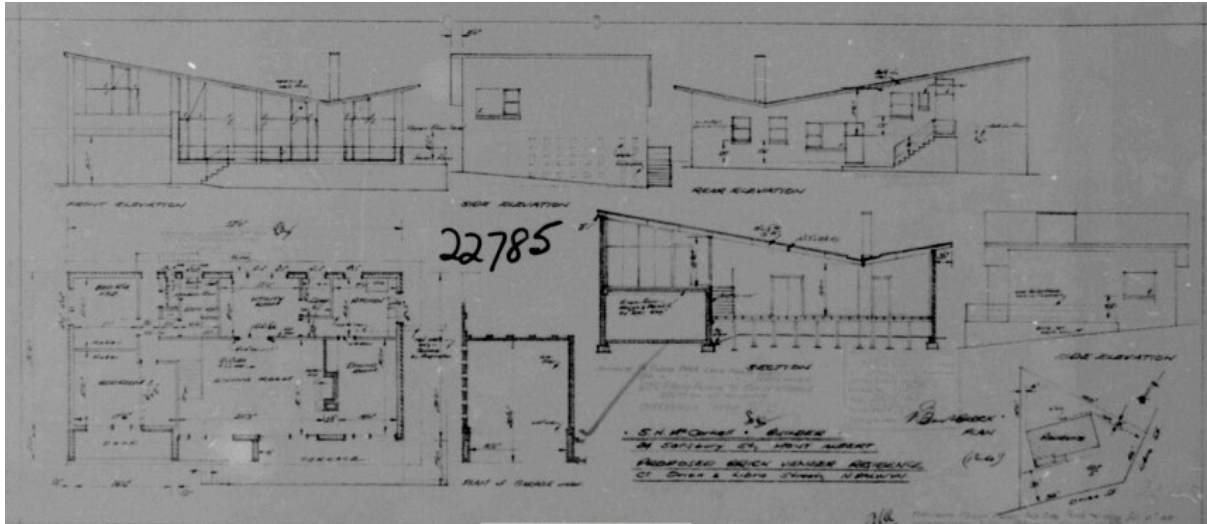


Figure 3 Working drawing sheet for 24 Orion Street, Balwyn North showing floor plan, elevations, section and site plan (Source: BP 22785)

The Dunsheas lived in the house for six years before moving to England, whereupon it was rented out until 1967, when it was sold to jewellery manufacturer Anthony Clancy and his wife, Ethel (CT V6561 F159). The same year the City of Camberwell issued a permit for the construction of a single storey brick room addition at the rear of the house, on the house's south-eastern corner (BP).

Since 1983 ownership of the property has changed hands three times (CT V6561 F159). Council building cards record no alterations or additions to the property since 1967.

Davis Vladas Bité 1936–1987, Architect

Born in Lithuania, Davis Vladas Bité (pronounced *Bee-tay*) migrated to Australia in 1948 with his father Vladas (who was also an architect), his mother and sister. He studied architecture at RMIT where, in the words of fellow student Daryl Jackson, “his skills as a designer and illustrator were well known amongst his peers” (Jackson 1987:33). Exploiting his talent for the latter, Bité went on to become an architectural renderer of considerable – even international – repute. By 1960, he was working in the USA, where he created presentation drawings for such eminent architects as Eero Saarinen (North Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio and the Dulles International Airport in Virginia), Paul Rudolph (Creative Arts Centre at Colgate University in New York), Walter Netsch (Cadet Chapel at US Air Force Academy in Colorado) and Philip Johnson, as well as others like William Morgan, Ulrich Franzen and Harrison & Abrahamovitz. Immediately recognisable for their dense line-work and almost obsessive attention to detail in evoking texture, Bité's renderings frequently appeared in leading American architectural journals such as *Architectural Record*. (Built Heritage 2015)

Returning to Australia in 1965, Bité worked as a design architect for various firms, including Eggleston & McDonald, before taking a position in the office of Peter McIntyre. Bité became a director of that firm in 1974 and was elevated to full partner in 1980. His eminent career was cut short when he died of a heart attack in New York City on 20 May 1987, at the age of only 50 years. He was posthumously



acknowledged in a textbook on architectural delineation, Robert W Gill's *Basic Rendering* (1991), which republished some of his classic drawings from the 1960s (Built Heritage 2015).

Description

Set back on a gently sloping corner site, the house at 24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, is a split-level Modernist dwelling of brick veneer construction. Its external form is dominated by a distinctive butterfly roof – that is, comprising two roof planes that slope inwards to a box gutter rather than outwards, as in the case of a traditional gabled roof. The butterfly roof is asymmetrical; although its two roof planes are of identical pitch, one is longer than the other so that they intersect at a point approximately two-thirds along the length of the house. This point is marked not only by the box gutter, but also by a wide slab-like chimney constructed of brick that extends up from the living area within.

The asymmetry of the roof form is echoed in the principal (Orion Street) elevation. Taking advantage of the sloping site, this elongated frontage incorporates a double garage at the left (east) end, underneath the raised bedroom wing. The front of the garage projects slightly forward to create a narrow balcony to the master bedroom above, enclosed by wing walls and a solid balustrade. A broad L-shaped terrace, with a random-coursed stone feature wall and steps, extends along the remainder of this frontage, and returns down the side (Libra Street) elevation.

The principal street frontage, which faces north, has four large full-height window bays with multi-paned timber-framed sashes, while the elevations to the side and rear have smaller and more conventional windows. The two street boundaries of the property are delineated by a volcanic stone retaining wall with deeply recessed mortar that curves around the corner and by other retaining walls that use pale modular bricks of varying sizes. Stone retaining walls were commonly seen in gardens of Modernist houses and are therefore thought to be part of the original or early landscaping on the site. The brick wall to the Libra Street side incorporates a planter box and a flight of steps with slate treads.

Integrity

24 Orion Street, Balwyn North is largely intact, with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. The house retains its original built form, distinctive butterfly roof, walls and central chimney of face brickwork, pattern of fenestration and door opening with original joinery, L shaped terrace with stone rubble wall base and steps, a balcony above the enclosed garage and a volcanic rock retaining walls. The third bedroom, added to the rear in 1967, is not visible from the street and does not impact on the integrity of the place.

Integrity is enhanced by the landscape setting with the house set at an angle to the corner, elevated above the street and discrete sections of the front retaining wall in pale modular bricks of varying sizes.

Overall, the place has high integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century there was rapid suburban growth around the fringes of metropolitan Melbourne. Increased access to the motor car, growing prosperity in the

postwar period, and the desire for the suburban lifestyle resulted in the push for new housing and services in the suburbs of Melbourne.

Despite various subdivisions in the late 1800s and in the early twentieth century, the vast majority of the housing stock in Balwyn North was not built until the postwar period. The area north of Belmore Road, where large tracts of land were taken up with orchards and small farms, was one of the last remaining areas of extensive undeveloped land close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples in the 1950s and 1960s with many using architects to design their homes. Many of these architects were influenced by the International style that had emerged in Europe between the wars. They approached house design with optimism and innovation, despite the material shortages and other restrictions that had been imposed during the war years.

Modernism offered an alternative to many of the postwar styles offered at the time, many of which were simply scaled-down versions of the 1940s prototypes. The informality of open floor plans, and the relationship between interior spaces and the landscape setting, fitted comfortably within the Australian context, and this, coupled with a simplicity of structure and minimisation of decoration, worked at a time when demand for housing was high, building materials were in short supply, and money short to spend on housing.

Landscaping adopted a distinct aesthetic relationship to architecture in this period with house designs increasingly being informed by the topographic setting. Many modern houses were designed as integral components of the landscape; for example, on platforms terraced in relationship to a sloping site. This created a sense of living within the landscape rather than being removed from it (Goad 2002:253).

Departing from the traditional concept of the house as an isolated object bound by a polished front garden and more utilitarian backyard, the postwar period started to see many suburban gardens take on a less cultivated appearance. Changes to established landscaping techniques included the loss of the boundary fencing and greater tendency to leave plantings in their natural shape. Yards became zoned for outdoor living, largely focusing on comfort and leisure (Goad 2002:253).

According to Graham Dunshea, the house at Balwyn North represented Davis Bité's first realised commission (Dunshea pers. comm., 2010). Research by Built Heritage Pty Ltd has not yet identified any other comparable projects that Bité undertook during the early phase of his career. That Bité subsequently worked extensively as a freelance perspective artist (based in the United States from c.1959 to 1965) and later as a design architect for larger firms, might suggest that he did not maintain a sole practice and thus probably carried out very few (if indeed any) private architectural commissions under his own name. This house at Balwyn North, therefore, should be considered as a rare example of Bité's output.

The butterfly roof was a fashionable motif in residential architecture of the 1950s, being introduced to Melbourne at the start of that decade. Writing in 1951, Robin Boyd observed that 'the newest thing on the suburban horizon is the "Butterfly" roof, the inside-out roof, the upside-down gable. There are not half a dozen around at present, but there will be more, for the idea is not altogether ridiculous' (Age 15 February 1971:3). One of the first examples to gain widespread attention was actually located in Balwyn North – the residence of architect Kenneth McDonald at 50 Tuxen Street (1952). Prominently sited in what was then largely undeveloped suburbia, the house was much published in the architectural and popular housing press. The house at 50 Tuxen Street has since been demolished. Another local example, also designed by an architect for himself, was the residence of Frank Dixon at

6 Carrigal Street, Balwyn (1953). Although it remains extant, it has been substantially altered. While a number of other butterfly-roofed houses survive, these tend to have much lower-pitched roofs that are not expressed quite so boldly, such as the former Kramer House at 7 Milfay Court, Balwyn North (1956), where the butterfly profile is not even evident from the street.

In spite of the dominance of houses built in the years following the Second World War, Heritage Overlay coverage of postwar houses in Balwyn and Balwyn North is limited. The house at 24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, can be compared broadly to a number of contemporaneous houses in the locality that exhibit a similar use of volumetric massing, flat or low-pitched roofs, and full-height glazing. These include:



Figure 4 'Bunbury house', 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North, designed by Robin Boyd in 1949 (HO616). (Source: GML 2022)

'Bunbury House', 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and social significance. It represents a significantly early and intact example of modernist architecture by prominent Australian architect, theorist, author and critic Robin Boyd. 'Bunbury house' displays clear associations in its design and detailing with the designs of Robin Boyd that were developed as part of the Small Homes Service, an initiative that sought to provide cost effective, architecturally designed homes to a wider audience. 'Bunbury house' incorporates design elements that are recognisable and important in Boyd's design work, including the design of efficient floor plans, floor to ceiling glazing, projecting eaves and suspended sun shading devices constructed from timber slats.



Figure 5 'Gillson House', 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn, designed by Robin Boyd in 1952 (HO177). (Source: VHD)

'Gillson House', 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn is of local historical and architectural significance. Architecturally its design epitomizes Boyd and other Melbourne Modernists' approach to design, with a minimalist external cuboid expression adorned only by 'structural decoration' as implied by the triangular bracing to windows. Like the nearby 'Stargazer house', (designed by Peter McIntyre architect in 1951-52) at 2 Taurus Street, Balwyn North, it also took the



Figure 6 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North, designed by Robin Boyd in 1948-49 with alterations by Boyd in 1959 and 1971 (HO928). (Source: Built Heritage 2020)

form-follows-function dictum to a visual extreme, in the design of the writer's study.

12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North is of local architectural and technical significance. Architecturally, the house is an early and notably intact example of the work of the eminent designer and writer Robin Boyd. It remains as one of relatively few surviving examples from this seminal phase of Boyd's career, prior to his celebrated partnership with Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg. Along with the Gillison House in Kireep Road, Balwyn (1951), and the Dunstan House in Yandilla Road (1950), it is one of three outstanding early and substantially intact houses by Robin Boyd in the area. Considered collectively, these provide rare and valuable evidence of the innovation, boldness and fresh design approaches of a young architect on the cusp of an illustrious career.

There are also several postwar houses on the Heritage Overlay in the broader Boroondara context that are comparable to 24 Orion Street Balwyn North. Examples include:



Figure 7 'Robin Boyd House I', 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell, designed by Robin Boyd in 1947 (VHR H0879; HO116). (Source: National Trust of Australia, Victoria))

'Robin Boyd House I', 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell is of local historical and architectural significance. The house is considered by Boyd's contemporaries as the prototype Post-War Modern house which took up new ideas about spatial flow, both inside and outside the building, revealing in the minimalism required by the war's materials conservation program and the challenges posed by the near impossible site. It extended the leading architecture of its time and strongly influenced an emerging group of architects. The house demonstrates innovative design with regard to response to site, informality in planning, flowing spatial arrangements, innovative use of materials and incorporation of built-in

features. These are all aspects of domestic design which have now become common.



Figure 8 'former Hirsch House and Office' at 118 Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris, designed by Grigore Hirsch (CONARG Architects) in 1954-55 (HO897) (Source: Trethowan Architecture 2018)

The former Hirsch House and Office is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and associative significance. The building and its response to the landscape and climate demonstrates the contemporary approach to local conditions favouring good orientation and functionalist planning. The residence is an intact example of a post-war Émigré architect's house and office and illustrates European Modernism as it was translated into a Melbourne context. The double-storey dwelling of the 1950s illustrates the Post-War Melbourne Regional style, demonstrating key characteristics of the style in the simplicity of the forms, low-pitch butterfly roof, textured clinker brick cladding and large areas of glass to the north. The bold forms are further expressed through the delineation of materials across the upper (clinker brick) and lower (concrete tile) levels and exposed steel structure. More broadly, the use of steel frame construction throughout, further allows the illusion of the upper level to dominate the architectural composition.



Figure 9 'Milston House', 6 Reeves Court, Kew, designed by Ernest Milston in 1955 (HO822). (Source: Trethowan 2017)

'Milston House', 6 Reeves Court, Kew is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and associative significance. The house is a lightweight, timber framed house designed by architect Ernest Milston. The plan is formed of two rectangles reflective of the zones; the kitchen and living area are aligned with the street and run across the slope, while the bedrooms, bathroom and laundry are at right angles. Each wing has a separate skillion roof sloping to the other wing, creating an asymmetrical butterfly roof. A concrete driveway leads up from street level to a garage and studio, connected with the house by a pergola-covered path. A separate open pergola covers the entry. The building features

extensive modular timber framed glazing. Horizontal awnings provide shade to the north, echoed in the open timber framing over the windows to the south that allow light penetration.



'Guss residence', 18 Yarra Street, Kew (Significant within HO530) is a good example of the inventive, spare, and environment-responsive designs of McGlashan & Everist. Built in 1961, the 'Guss residence' consists of three pavilion forms around a central courtyard staggered up the sloping site. Utilising thin steel framing and light materials to reduce the bulk of the pavilions, glazed walls float above the driveway and provide views down the site.

Figure 10 'Guss residence', 18 Yarra Street, Kew designed by McGlashan & Everist in 1961 (Significant within HO530). (Source: Hermes)



'Dickie House', 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn is of local historical, architectural and aesthetic significance. The house is representative of the post-war design ethos, sense of optimism and architectural modernisation pioneered by Robin Boyd and others. The high-quality house-design features honesty of structure and material, clean lines, deep eaves and an overall sense of innovation in design. The integration of the house with the landscape, with its 'floating' appearance over the banks of the Yarra is characteristic of Modernist integration of architecture with natural context.

Figure 11 'Dickie House', 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn, c.1961-64 (HO784). (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2017)



Figure 12 'Cukierman Residence', 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East, designed by Hayden & Associates (attributed to Anthony Hayden) in 1966 (HO857). (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2018)

'Cukierman Residence', 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Boroondara. The residence derives its aesthetic appeal from its unusual and striking architectural composition with references to the International Style. Interest is created through the floating curved massed form fronting the street and subtle but evocative detailing of materials. The horizontal articulation of the window sets with their green mosaic tiled spandrel panels is applied with effect. Slender circular columns support the raised form, creating an open undercroft, and the use of textured cream brick is continued in the landscaping elements such as the low walls and planters.

24 Orion Street, Balwyn North exhibits key elements of postwar Modernist houses; most notably in its response to its site, informality in planning, flowing spatial arrangements and innovative use of materials. It compares to the earlier (1947) 'Robin Boyd House I' (VHR H0879; HO116) which is widely recognised as the prototype for postwar modern homes, in its clever adaptation to the site, use of new ideas regarding the spatial flow between inside and out and the innovative use of materials in a time of postwar austerity.

Robin Boyd first introduced the concept of a regional Melbourne style in 1947 calling for an architecture that was simple, light and fresh with an unpretentious elegance. Apperly, Irving and Reynolds (1989) describe the typical characteristics of the style as a house with a flat or low-pitched roof with wide eaves, long unbroken roof lines with exposed rafters or joists, vertical or horizontal boarding and large areas of glass with regularly spaced timber mullions. Examples of Robin Boyd's work in Boroondara that demonstrate these qualities and are comparable to the subject place include: 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North 1949 (HO616), 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn, built in 1952 (HO177) and 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North, built in 1948-49, 1959, 1971 (HO928).

24 Orion Street, Balwyn North embraces these characteristics with a sophistication of design and planning that reflects the skill of its designer, Davis Bité, who was still an undergraduate at the time of commissioning. It is comparable to the works of other more recognised Modernist architects including Grigore Hirsch, CONARG Architects (118 Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris, 1954-55 HO897), Ernest Milston (6 Reeves Court, Kew, HO822), McGlashan & Everist (18 Yarra Street, Kew, 1961, Significant within HO530) and Hayden & Associates (Cukierman Residence, 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East, HO857). Similar characteristics across all these houses include the use of a bold roof plane that appears to hover above the building, an expressed structural modularity in their design with an integration of the house into their site-specific landscapes, large walls of glazing that connect the interior with the exterior, simple unadorned planar wall surfaces and a simple rectilinear planning.



The house is particularly comparable to 118 Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris, (HO897) designed by Grigore Hirsch in 1954-55 and 6 Reeves Court, Kew (HO822) designed by Ernst Milston in 1955. All of these houses use a butterfly roof form, although in the case of Hirsch's house it has a very shallow pitch and at Milston's house it is formed by two separate skillion roofs over separate wings of the house that intersect. Bite's use of the form is more dramatic with a stepper pitch emphasised by its asymmetry. This gives the house a sculptural presence that sits above the landscape. Coupled with its contrasting use of materials – stone rubble base and modular brick walls, and expression of Modernist detailing – rectilinear planning with bays of full height windows and planar wall surfaces, the house has a remarkable street presence making it a striking example of postwar residential architecture in the locality.

Overall, the subject site is an exceptionally fine and innovative example of an early mid-century Modernist house, which exhibits key characteristics of the style including attributes consistent with the regional expression of the style that developed in Melbourne.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Designed in 1958 by then undergraduate architect Davis Bité, this highly intact house is notable for its sophisticated and evocative manipulation of Modernist features which include its rectilinear planning with bays of full height windows and planar wall surfaces and a steeply pitched asymmetrical butterfly roof form. Elevated above the landscape on a base of rubble stonework the house has a remarkable street presence and exemplifies the high concentration of architect designed modernist houses built in Balwyn and North Balwyn during the 1950s and 1960s.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

N/A

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

N/A

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

N/A

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Aesthetically, 24 Orion Street is significant as a striking example of postwar Modernist residential architecture in the Balwyn/Balwyn North area. With its steeply pitch asymmetrical butterfly roof,



rectilinear and elevated massing, contrasting stone rubble walls, modular brick work and window walls, the house ably illustrates the basic tenets of postwar Modernism with attributes consistent with the regional expression of the style. Situated on a sloping block and designed to sit above the site on a stone base, the house has a sculptural presence that can be appreciated from various vantage points because of its corner site. Consequently, this highly intact house has a remarkable streetscape presence, enhanced by retention of early retaining walls delineating the front boundary, and remains as a notable and evocative example of post-war residential architecture.

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

N/A

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

N/A

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

N/A



Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Dunshea House at 24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, designed by architect Davis Bité while still a student in 1958, is significant.

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

- original built form
- distinctive butterfly roof
- walls of face brickwork
- pattern of fenestration and door opening and original joinery
- L shaped terrace with stone rubble wall base and steps
- front boundary retaining wall of volcanic rock.

The bedroom, added to the rear in 1967, is not significant.

How is it significant?

The house is of historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

24 Orion Street, Balwyn North, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Designed in 1958 by then undergraduate architect Davis Bité, this highly intact house is notable for its sophisticated and evocative manipulation of Modernist features which include its rectilinear planning with bays of full height windows and planar wall surfaces and a steeply pitched asymmetrical butterfly roof form. Elevated above the landscape on a base of rubble stonework the house has a remarkable street presence and exemplifies the high concentration of architect designed modernist houses built in Balwyn and North Balwyn during the 1950s and 1960s.

Aesthetically, 24 Orion Street is significant as a striking example of postwar Modernist residential architecture in the Balwyn/Balwyn North area. With its steeply pitch asymmetrical butterfly roof, rectilinear and elevated massing, contrasting stone rubble walls, modular brick work and window walls, the house ably illustrates the basic tenets of postwar Modernism with attributes consistent with the regional expression of the style. Situated on a sloping block, and being designed to sit above the site on a stone base, the house has a sculptural presence that can be appreciated from various vantage points because of its corner site. Consequently, this highly intact house has a remarkable streetscape presence, enhanced by retention of early retaining walls delineating the front boundary, and remains as a notable and evocative example of post-war residential architecture.

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an Individually Significant place.



Recommendations for the schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External paint controls	
<i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal alteration controls	
<i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree controls	
<i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	No
Solar energy system controls apply?	
<i>Is a permit required for Solar energy systems?</i>	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	
<i>Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	Yes Front boundary retaining walls
Victorian Heritage Register	
<i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	
<i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal heritage place	
<i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No
Incorporated plan	
<i>Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?</i>	No

Identified by:

Built Heritage Pty Ltd 2012



References

Age, as cited.

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