

House

Prepared by: GML Heritage

Address: 116 Bulleen Road BALWYN NORTH

Name: House

Survey Date: October 2021

Place Type: Residential

Architect: Sol Sapir

Grading: Individually Significant

Builder: Trainor Enterprises

Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries

Construction Date: 1963



Figure 1 116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 2 116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)

Historical Context

The area of Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, is on the traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung.

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.

History

The land at 116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, originally formed part of Elgar's Crown Special Survey purchased and surveyed by Henry Elgar in 1841 (CT V7528 F001). In 1845, the land was later subdivided into 27 allotments within the 'Boroondara Estate'. The site was Lot 651 of the 'Camberwell City Heights Estate', which comprised 677 allotments bound by Bulleen Road, Doncaster Road, Mountain View Road and Templestowe Road. The Camberwell City Heights Estate was subdivided and released in stages from 1923 (*Reporter* 24 August 1923:7). The subject site was part of the land north of Hillview Road that was subdivided in 1928 (CT V5438 F461).

The subject site changed hands a few times from 1947 to 1963, before it was purchased by Carl and Eve Trainor on 26 July 1963 (CT V8388 F065). Plans for the new residence had been prepared and a building permit lodged prior to the purchase on 3 July 1963 (BP). The two-storey residence was designed by St Kilda based architect Sol Sapir and built by the family building firm, Trainor Enterprises, for a cost of £10,000 (BP), and (Figure 3–Figure 5).

The property remained under the ownership of the Trainor's into the 2000s. Council building cards record no alterations or additions to the property since 1963.

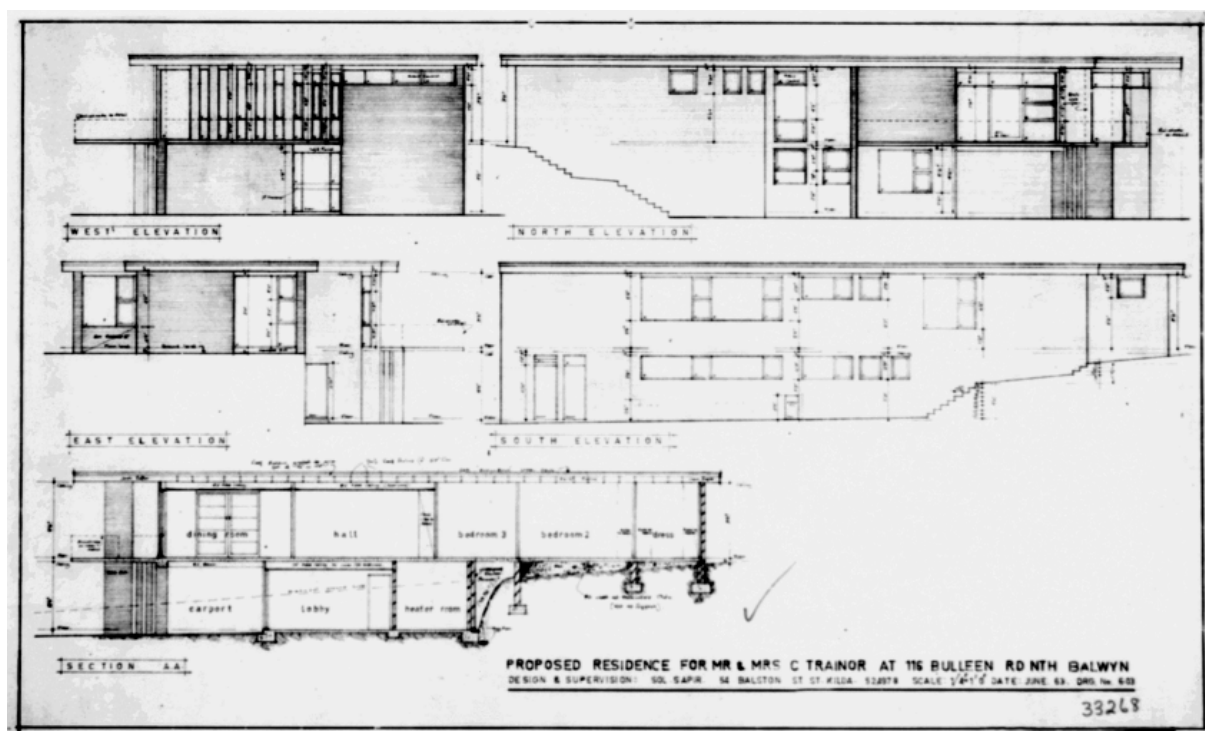


Figure 3 Architectural drawings by Sol Sapir for 116 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn showing elevations and section. (Source: BP 33268)

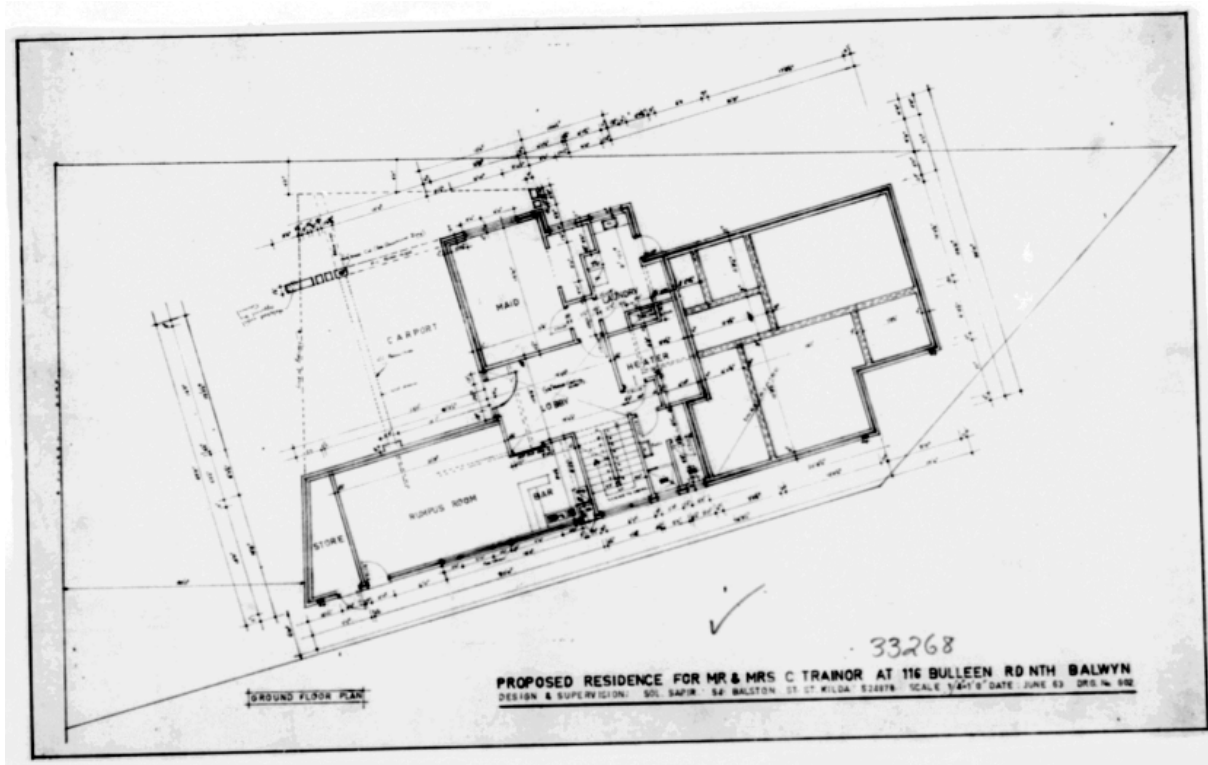


Figure 4 Ground floor plan for 116 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn. (Source: BP 33268)

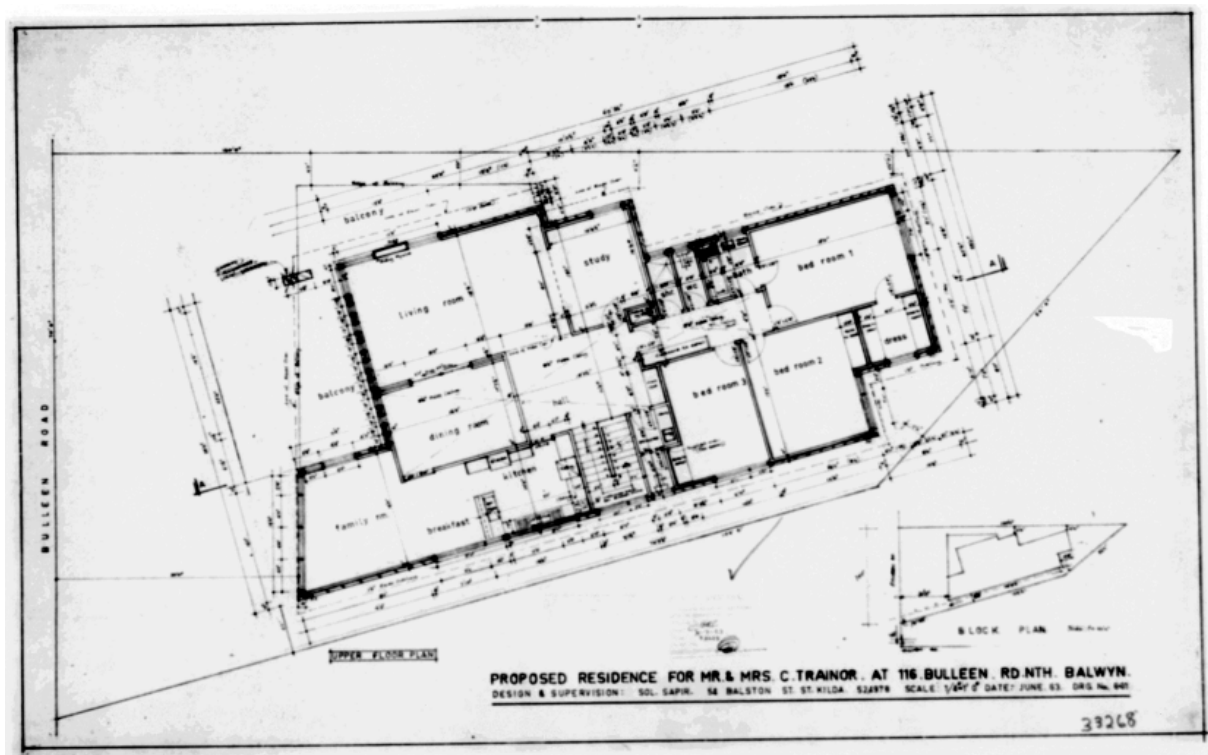


Figure 5 Upper floor plan for 116 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn. (Source: BP 33268)



Sol Sapir

Melbourne born architectural designer Sol Sapir (1940-2015) was the son of Polish Jewish emigres who had abbreviated their surname from 'Sapirshtein' after migrating to Australia in 1928. Sapir commenced studying architecture at RMIT in 1958, however he did not complete the requisite office experience and therefore could not become a registered architect. Instead, he styled himself as an 'architectural designer', establishing his practice in 1963 in East St Kilda and later relocating to East Melbourne and South Yarra (Built Heritage).

Having designed several flat-roofed houses, including a concrete-brick house in Glen Avon Road, Hawthorn for himself and his wife and the house at 116 Bulleen Road, Sapir formed a collaboration with property developer and real-estate agent Nathan Beller and commercial builder Martin Sachs. Their association resulted in about 30 residential towers across Melbourne's inner south-east, which incorporated innovative construction methods including the American life-slab principle and steel slip formwork, as well as new forms of architectural expression. Notable examples include towers at 189 Beaconsfield Parade in Middle Park and 333 Beaconsfield Parade in St Kilda West (Built Heritage).

During his career Sapir completed more than one hundred blocks of flats, and by the mid-1970s was referred to as 'Melbourne's best-known high-rise specialist'. He also continued to undertake commissions for residential designs, including a large house in Buckingham Street, Heidelberg, which was used as a film location in the Graham Kennedy biopic *The King* (2007) (Built Heritage). Sapir continued to practice until his death in 2015, aged 75 (Clerehan 2014:29).

Description

116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, is a two-storey brick-veneer dwelling constructed in 1963. Built on an elevated site on the east side of Bulleen Road just north of Hillview Road, the property is opposite a small commercial precinct on the Bulleen Service Road. Set back from the busy suburban street, the house is accessed by a gently sloping concrete driveway and sits in a recently cleared landscaped setting.

Constructed in orange brick with a flat roof, deep fascia boards conceal the house's gutters. The house is cut into the site so that its street facing elevation is two-storey while the rear of the house sits on a concrete slab-on-ground. The house is rectilinear in plan and follows the angle of the southern boundary of the site, while a projecting front roof and balcony aligns with Bulleen Road. This creates a distinctive angular, geometric form that is emphasised by the upper balcony cantilevering beyond the building line at its northern end.

The ground level functions primarily as a point of entry with open car accommodation underneath and a balcony above. Expressed concrete beams run the width of the carport and support the upper balcony. These beams taper at their northern ends as they extend beyond the building line creating a cantilevered side balcony. Under the carport the recessed timber entrance door sits within a frosted glass surround. The flat roof extends over the upper balcony and is supported by a brick column at its northern end. A lightweight metal balustrade runs across the front of the house.

At the upper level, under the covered balcony, a series of eight narrow floor-to-ceiling timber-framed windows punctuate the wall of the living/dining space behind. On the same level, a wide floor-to-ceiling timber-framed window is provided on the north-facing elevation. A subtle three-dimensional quality is given to the façade by the use of two-tone brickwork to the edges of these windows and the

balcony's support column that rises from the ground to the roof line. A sophisticated level of detailing is further evident in the 'toothed out' of the brickwork at the corners of the front projecting room.

The house is complemented by its original stacked stone front fence/retaining wall which returns along the driveway and incorporates planter boxes and an integrated letter box.



Figure 6 Vertical window bays on principal west elevation. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 7 Access to balcony via French doors. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 8 Section of fence/retaining wall with integrated planter on lower level. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 9 Stacked stone/retaining wall front fence, with integrated planter boxes and timber letterbox. (Source: GML 2021)

Integrity

116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, is highly intact to its original 1963 design. The building retains its original built form, roof form and fascia detail, orange brick walls and timber-framed window and door openings and joinery. The integrity of the place is enhanced by its landscape elements, including original or early stacked stone retaining wall front fence.

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 a 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 North Balwyn 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. North Balwyn became the suburb of choice for many young married couples in the 1950s and 1960s, and many used 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, which were often 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 to spend on housing was scarce.

The house at 116 Bulleen Rd, Balwyn North can be compared broadly to a number of contemporaneous houses in the area that exhibit a similar use of volumetric massing, flat or low-pitched roofs and asymmetric form.

Despite the dominance of houses built in the years following World War II, Heritage Overlay coverage of postwar houses in Balwyn and North Balwyn is limited. The following are comparable examples in North Balwyn and Balwyn.



Figure 10 'The 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 11 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn designed by Robin Boyd in 1952 (HO177). (Source: [GML 2022](#))

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



Figure 12 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)

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.



Figure 13 Former Plotkin House, 47 Mount View Road, Balwyn North, 1966 (assessed as Individually Significant in this study). (Source: GML 2021)

The former Plotkin House at 47 Mount View Road, Balwyn North is of local historical and aesthetic significance. It was specifically designed to address the rear of the property and capitalise on distant views east to the Dandenong Ranges. It is distinctive for its low roofline, its stark and apparently windowless facade and especially its modular concrete brickwork, which introduces almost sculptural effects through stepped planes, interlocking volumes, recessed headers and dwarf walls of contrasting narrow tile-like bricks. The massive slab-like letterbox which boldly intersects with two garden walls, is an especially prominent element on the street boundary.



Figure 14 Former McDowell Residence, 1 Caravan Street, Balwyn, 1956–58 (assessed as Individually Significant in this study). (Source: GML 2021)

The former McDowell residence at 1 Caravan Street, Balwyn is of local historical and aesthetic significance. It is one of the more striking examples of postwar residential architecture in the area. With its low-pitched skillion roof, rectilinear and partially elevated massing, window walls and clear articulation of new materials such as steel framework and concrete slab floors, the house ably illustrates the basic tenets of postwar Modernism. Moreover, being designed on a long and relatively narrow plan due to a difficult site, the house has an atypically elongated street frontage that allows for an unparalleled expression of its Modernist form and detailing. The house is elevated above street level. The front boundary is defined by volcanic rock retaining walls that return into the drive on both sides.

Postwar houses in the Heritage Overlay in the broader Boroondara context that are comparable to 116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, include:



Figure 15 '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 16 '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 17 'Cukierman Residence', 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East designed by Hayden & Associates (attributed to Anthony Hayden) in 1966 (HO857). (Source: Heritage Victoria)

'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.



Figure 18 'Dickie House', 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn c.1961–64 (HO784). (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2017)

'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.

116 Bulleen Road compares well to the above examples. The subject house exhibits key elements of postwar Modernist houses influenced by a number of earlier examples including the 'Robin Boyd House 1', built in 1947 (VHR HO879; HO116), which is widely recognised as the prototype for postwar modern homes. The key elements of the Modernist house include its site responsive design, use of new ideas regarding the spatial flow between inside and out and the innovative use of materials in a time of postwar austerity.

These qualities are demonstrated in the subject place and a number of earlier houses in the Balwyn/Balwyn North area: 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North (1949) (HO616), 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn (1952) (HO177) and 12–14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North (1948–49, 1959, 1971) (HO928).



The design of the house responds to the sloped site, with the garage integrated underneath and the main living space provided on the upper level. Positioned on an elevated site, the geometric form of the house is emphasised by the upper balcony cantilevering beyond the building line at its northern side. In this sense, the building is comparable to other local examples by notable Modernist architects who addressed respective topographical conditions, including the 'former Hirsch House and Office' (HO897), 'Cukierman Residence' (HO857), the 'Dickie House' (HO784), 43 Kireep Road (HO177), and 12–14 Tannock Street (HO928).

Similar characteristics across all the comparative examples include the use of a bold roof plane that appears to hover above the building, an expressed structural modularity in their design, simple unadorned planar wall surfaces and a simple rectilinear planning.

Overall, 116 Bulleen Road is a striking example of postwar residential architecture in the study area. With its flat roof, bold rectilinear and elevated massing and integrated garage underneath, it represents one of Sapir's earliest designs in a Modernist idiom, anticipating the architectural designer's later residential work.

It exhibits key characteristics of the style and is a fine example by respected architect Sol Sapir.

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).

116 Bulleen Road, 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 1963 by respected architectural designer Sol Sapir, this house exemplifies the high concentration of architect-designed Modernist houses built in Balwyn and North Balwyn during the 1950s and 60s.

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 understanding 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).

The house is aesthetically significant as a striking example of postwar residential architecture in the Balwyn and North Balwyn area. The design of the house responds to the gently sloping site,



integrating the garage underneath with the main living space provided on the upper level. Its bold geometric form is emphasised by the upper balcony cantilevering beyond the building line at its northern end. The house represents one of Sol Sapir's earliest designs in a Modernist idiom, anticipating his later residential designs. The house features refined detailing including a series of eight narrow floor-to-ceiling timber-framed windows punctuating the upper-level wall and a wider floor-to-ceiling window facing north. A sophisticated level of detailing is further evident in the use of two-tone brickwork to the edges of these windows and the balcony's support column, and 'toothed out' of the brickwork at the corners of the front projecting room. The house is complemented by its original stacked stone front fence/retaining wall which returns along the driveway and incorporates planter boxes and an integrated letter box.

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?

116 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, designed by architectural designer Sol Sapir in 1963, is significant.

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

- asymmetric built form with projecting front room and geometric massing
- flat roof with deep fascia and concealed gutters
- orange face brick walls with two tone detailing and 'toothed out' of the brickwork at the building's edges
- open carport beneath the upper floor
- upper balcony and metal balustrade
- original pattern of fenestrations and timber framed windows
- original or early stacked stone front fence/retaining wall with integrated planter boxes and timber letterbox.

How is it significant?

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

Why is it significant?

116 Bulleen Road, 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 1963 by respected architect Sol Sapir, this house exemplifies the high concentration of architect-designed Modernist houses built in Balwyn and Balwyn North during the 1950s and 60s. (Criterion A)

The house is aesthetically significant as a striking example of postwar residential architecture in the area. The design of the house responds to the difficult site, having integrated garage underneath with main living space provided on the upper level. Its geometric form is emphasised by the upper balcony cantilevering beyond the building line at its northern end. The house represents one of Sol Sapir's earliest designs in a Modernist idiom, anticipating his later residential designs. The house features refined detailing including a series of eight narrow floor-to-ceiling timber-framed windows punctuating the upper-level wall and a wider floor-to-ceiling window facing north. A sophisticated level of detailing is further evident in the use of two-tone brickwork to the edges of these windows and the balcony's support column, and 'toothed out' of the brickwork at the corners of the front projecting room. The house is complemented by its original stacked stone front fence/retaining wall which returns along the driveway and incorporates planter boxes and an integrated letter box. (Criterion E)

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 systems 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: stack stone fencing/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:

GML Heritage 2021



References

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