
Name	<i>Xanadu</i>	Reference No	
Address	119 Doncaster Road, North Balwyn	Survey Date	24, 25 November 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1948	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness Good Fair Poor

Heritage Status HV AHC NT Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

In 1941 R. Lockwood commissioned Arthur E. Pretty to design a residence.¹ Pretty designed a seven roomed, timber dwelling that was estimated to cost £1,950.² However the building application was cancelled in the same year, 1941, possibly because of the war.³

By 1948 the allotment had been acquired by Dr Alexander F. Roche who resided at the time at Yaneacoona, Healesville.⁴ Prentice Builders built a two storey brick house of seven rooms that was estimated to cost £5,400 to a design by architect Vincent Ward.⁵

Dr Alexander Roche was a medical practitioner who lectured at the Melbourne University Medical School. In 1962 he was appointed reader of anatomy in the school.⁶

(G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

Description & Integrity

Xanadu, at 119 Doncaster Road, was the second of two designs intended for this site, the first being an Arthur Pretty design of 1941. The present building was designed as a residence and consulting rooms by Vincent T Ward and dates from 1948.⁷ Ward's design was a mixture of Georgian, Jacobean and Italianate, in a two storey cream-brick block of two juxtaposed masses, divided by a long rectangular entry hall, stair and powder room. Ward unified the design with a simple double-fronted hipped roof in terracotta shingles, with boxed eaves. Below it he brought in a range of complex variations, expressing different functions. Ward divided the house into four differing modules- 10', 13', 6'6" and 15', that ran cleanly from one side of the house to the other, so that the transverse walls in the house work rather as wing walls in more modern-looking contemporary designs. The client had his doctor's waiting room and surgery on the north side, linked to the house section of the plan by a

large double door (perhaps suggesting that the houses and surgery combination may have been seen as temporary or at least convertible later). Originally the family lived in the south side and over the medical rooms on the first floor. The medical rooms opened onto a terrace which formed a potential entrance, and are expressed from the front with a deep frieze over the waiting room west window, which incorporates a gesture at sun protection in the form of a stubby sunblind canopy. The family entrance and living room pairing forms a single-storey projecting block on the west side. Externally this pairing is expressed as an ornamented door aedicule with scroll pediment and a blind parapet above it, plus an octagonal light in the wall directly behind it. This is linked directly to an Italianate balustrade with waisted balusters. On the east side, the stair hall is expressed in a tall window with a flattened arch at its top. Fenestration varies on both ground floor sides according to the internal spaces, and is at the same time traditionalised by elaborate aedicules and moldings. Most windows are small-paned and, on the western side, support small balconettes in wrought iron and have little voussoirs rising from each.

The house is generally externally intact. A cream brick garage was added (generally in the location anticipated in the original 1948 drawings) in 1953.⁸ Additions were made in 1962 (also to the design of the original architect, Vincent T Ward) however these appear to have been located to the rear of the house.

The garden, heavily grown, has most of the larger trees and shrubs still in place. The drive was a concrete slab with crazy paving over it, and is still in use.

Historical Context

This area of North Balwyn developed slowly from the late interwar period, with most development occurring in the early post-WWII years (pre-1960).

Comparative Analysis

In this area *Xanadu* compares with 91 Maud Street, Balwyn North, by G Burridge Leith, of 1941 (q.v., B-graded), and with earlier Neo-Georgian and Mediterranean mixtures such as *Ingoda*, 10 Fitzgerald Street Balwyn, of 1924 (q.v., B-graded). The tall proportions, solid compositional values and rich surface texture are common to each, and this solidity converts the otherwise quite inventive external expression of *Xanadu* into a model of cream-brick propriety. It reads as a quite inventive Colonial Revival, Neo-Georgian type, faithfully expressing a plan shifted to complete asymmetry within an ostensibly symmetrical shell and using the details normally associated with symmetrical buildings. Though a somewhat scaled down version, in its form, stylistic qualities, choice of wall detail and its shingle-tiled terracotta roof, the house is broadly comparable to many interwar residences in socially desirable suburbs such as Toorak.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION D: The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as a part of a class or type of places or objects.

Xanadu is a representative and externally intact example of the two-storey neo-Georgian brick residence with prominent hipped roof and chimneys, in this case executed in cream brick and distinguished by the asymmetrical treatment of its principal elevation. The house shows a characteristic palette of materials and forms for the interwar and early postwar period: cream brick, minimal aedicules and ornamentation; the octagonal 'keynote' window; and massing by simple overlay under a sheltering, flared roof.

CRITERION E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Xanadu reflects a mixture of both progressive architectural thinking (expression of function through fenestration), and studied traditionalism. Its detail is conscientiously applied and connected to the compositional whole, the two combining powerfully in a still quite contained building mass.

Statement of Significance

Xanadu, at 119 Doncaster Road, Balwyn, is of local historical and architectural significance. Constructed in 1948, it is a representative and externally intact example of a two-storey neo-Georgian brick residence with prominent hipped roof and chimneys, in this case executed in cream brick and distinguished by the asymmetrical treatment of its principal elevation. The house shows a characteristic palette of materials and forms for the interwar and early postwar period: cream brick, minimal aedicules and ornamentation; the octagonal 'keynote' window; and massing by simple overlay under a sheltering, flared roof. *Xanadu* reflects a mixture of both progressive architectural thinking (expression of function through fenestration), and studied traditionalism. Its detail is conscientiously applied and connected to the compositional whole, the two combining powerfully in a still quite contained building mass.

Grading Review

Unchanged.

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

Identified By

G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

References

General: G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

Specific:

¹ Drawing dated 19 January 1948 sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index # 1173, dated 9 February 1948.

² Drawing dated 19 January 1948 sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index # 1173, dated 9 February 1948.

³ Drawing dated 19 January 1948 sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index # 1173, dated 9 February 1948.

⁴ Drawing dated 19 January 1948 sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index # 1173, dated 9 February 1948, MMBW Drainage Plan Application 241493.

⁵ Drawing dated 19 January 1948 sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index # 1173, dated 9 February 1948.

⁶ Russell, K.F. *The Melbourne Medical School 1862-1962*, p.187

⁷ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, #1173, dated 9 February 1948 (house generally); #12360, 10 July 1953 (garage); #30617, dated 14 March 1962, 28 February 1962 (conversion of basement into rumpus room, underneath the north deck). Pretty's earlier design is lodged as #14608, dated 4 June 1941.

⁸ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index, # 12360, dated 10 July 1953.