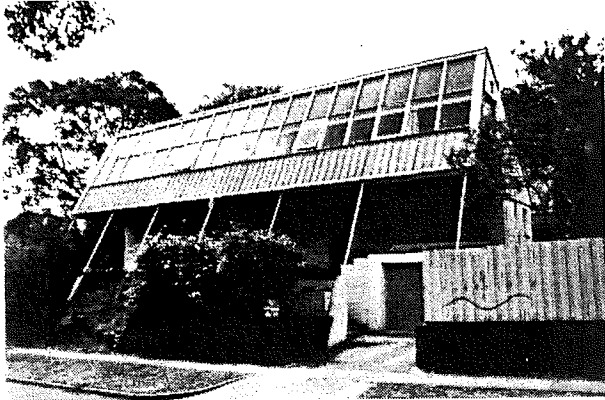


Camberwell Conservation Study 1991

BUILDING CITATION

Stargazer House, 2 Taurus Street, Balwyn



Study Grading: A
Construction Date: 1952
First Owner: Castle, M C
Architect: McIntyre, R P

History

Mervyn Charles Castle, an inspector, purchased Lot 291 from Walter I. Jackson of Malvern to build a residence on. In 1952 Jackson made a building application for a concrete block dwelling of six rooms with an attic that was estimated to cost £4,000¹. The residence was designed by architect R. Peter McIntyre of Carlton². Mervyn Castle built the house himself over many years and still occupies the property today³.

Robert Peter McIntyre, the architect, designed a number of experimental structures during the 1950s which included the co-design of the Olympic Pool and houses such as the nearby Stargazer House. His practice broadened into town planning, with the 1973 City of Melbourne Strategy Plan (with Planning Interface) and private developments such as Diner Plain. He received the Order of Australia in 1982, was Federal President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (1973-5), and won the 1974 James Barratt Memorial medal for his contribution to planning⁴. He has been appointed head of the Melbourne University Architecture faculty after being associated with the school since the 1960s.

Description

Another unusual McIntyre design, in this case wedge-shape, which evidently had some difficulties with building regulations. His other tension structures (Olympic Pool, McIntyre house and Buelah Hospital) post-dated this example which sat on a simple rectangular plan with upstairs rooms shifted 2700mm laterally and both floors pivoting about a central stair. Downstairs kitchen, bathroom, connecting laundry and dining room are typical enough but the large living room, facing north, extended up into the level above achieving a partly two-storey space. A workroom was at the east end⁵.

On the top level two bedrooms, gazing up into the southern sky, were on either side of a linking bathroom. One cross-section showed the master bedroom as an open mezzanine looking over the living area, also allowing a lounge at ground level to sit gazing at the starry sky. This sky view arose from the client's dislike of the red roofs which stretched away on either side, the sky was better. Facing south, the windows needed no sun control. The childrens' bedroom was divided by fittings which, as they grew older, would be reorganized for 'entertaining'⁶.

The floor was concrete (clad with asphalt tiles), the frame timber and the cladding, upper roof and wall, asbestos cement and lower wall concrete block, exposed as an inside wall surface. The cantilever was in part supported by cables running from the north roof frame which also served as a base for intended slatting.

Comparative Examples

The following Camberwell sites may be compared with this site.

- 106, WHITEHORSE ROAD, 1940-1
- 1, MONTANA STREET, 1940
- 1297, TOORAK ROAD, 1940
- 91, MAUD STREET, 1940c
- 133, MAUD STREET, 1940c
- 56, RIVERSIDE AVENUE, 1940c
- 15, WALBUNDY AVENUE, 1940c
- 417, WHITEHORSE ROAD, 1940c
- 113, YARRBAT AVENUE, 1940c
- 123, MONT ALBERT ROAD, 1941-2
- 2, BEATRICE STREET, 1941
- 6, BULLEEN ROAD, 1941
- 171, DONCASTER ROAD, 1941

1 BA 1952, 10535
2 ibid.
3 TD 1990
4 WWA 1983 p.561
5 BA drawings
6 *Australian Home Beautiful* 1.53 p.18f

**Camberwell Conservation Study 1991
BUILDING CITATION (Continued)**

4, MAYSIA STREET, 1941
46, THE BOULEVARD, 1941
1, KELBA STREET, 1941c
666, RIVERSDALE ROAD, 1946-7
119, DONCASTER ROAD, 1948
1, KALONGA ROAD, 1948c
166, WHITEHORSE ROAD, 1951-2
2, TAURUS STREET, 1951c
32, URSIA STREET, 1951c
6, CARRICAL STREET, 1952
43, KIREEP ROAD, 1952
1, MADDEN STREET, 1952
2, CARRICAL STREET, 1954
16, CARRICAL STREET, 1954
129, WINMALEE ROAD, 1954
14, ORION STREET, 1954c
32, BALWYN ROAD, 1955c
45A, NARRAK ROAD, 1955c

External Integrity

Generally original.

Streetscape Contribution

Unrelated to the surrounding housing except in age.

Significance

Architecturally, a unique house concept so typical of the experimentation with function and form, as guided by structure, which obsessed the young post-war architects, particularly Peter McIntyre also prominent in, if not supportive of, the streetscape: of State importance.

Historically, occupied since construction by one family and hence given its integrity to the construction date, a document of typical lifestyles emanating from the experiments with living undertaken by some after the war, particularly in this suburb: of local importance.
