

## Statement of Significance: 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North

Date of Statement: August 2020

<b>Address:</b> 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North	<b>Name:</b> -
<b>Place Type:</b> Residential building (private)	<b>Grading:</b> Significant
<b>PS ref no:</b> HO233	<b>Constructed:</b> 1990-94



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

### What is significant?

The house at 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North, is a two-storey flat-roofed reinforced concrete house on an elongated and irregular plan. Its street frontage is dominated by a blank elliptical volume penetrated by a projecting rectilinear bay with fin-like mullions and mirrored glazing, with a steel front door and a simple trabeated concrete slab carport. Erected in 1990-94, the house was designed by architects Wood Marsh.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior and interior of the house, and other elements of its setting designed by Wood Marsh (including carport, front fence/gates and swimming pool). Controls over internal finishes (eg concrete walls, terrazzo floors, roughcast ceilings) and fittings (including formal staircase and original kitchen and bathroom fitouts) are deemed to be applicable because the architect has stated that the interior is inseparable from the totality of the design.

### How is it significant?

The house satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
- Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

## Why is it significant?

---

The house is aesthetically significant as an outstanding and idiosyncratic example of modernist residential architecture of the 1990s. Starkly expressed with bold sculptural forms, a curved street facade, a limited palette of materials and minimalist detailing, the house defies convenient stylistic labels. While its massive raw concrete forms evoke the ruggedness of the Brutalist idiom, the projecting mirrored curtain-wall bay recalls the slickness of the International Style. The interior has prompted observers to make comparisons with Egyptian architecture and the work of the Italian Rationalists. A house that literally stopped traffic at the time of its construction, it remains a striking and wholly unexpected element in this suburban residential streetscape. (*Criterion E*)

The house is architecturally significant as a ground-breaking re-invention of the modern house. With a basic brief that effectively gave the architects a wholly free hand, the project represented a noted departure from contemporary trends in planning, materials, forms and finishes. With a cave-like foyer incorporating a grand curving staircase, and a vast entertainment area (for 350 guests) that doubled as a corridor, the interior planning challenged conventional notions of domestic living. Its limited palette of low-maintenance materials, and use of industrial finishes such as brushed metal sheeting, was then uncommon (and has only been embraced more widely since). Also unusually for the time (and still today), the project was conceived as a true totality of design, with its interior inseparable from the exterior, and the architects engaged to design furniture, fences and swimming pool, and even select the artwork. (*Criterion F*)

The house is architecturally significant as an important and influential early undertaking by the internationally-recognised partnership of Wood Marsh. One of the fledgling firm's first major projects, this high-end commission provided a rare opportunity to fully develop and articulate their architectural standpoints. Generating a flood of attention and publicity, and winning two prizes at the 1994 RAIA Awards, it remains one of the firm's best-known and most celebrated projects. It has continued to provoke scholarly and popular attention into the twenty-first century, with a photograph even gracing the front cover of the firm's recent monograph. (*Criterion F*)

## Primary sources

---

Heritage Citation PW18, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.