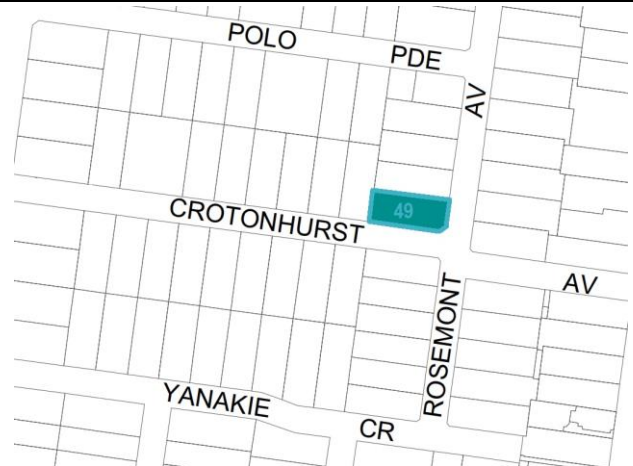


<b>IDENTIFIER</b>	HOUSE	<b>Citation No</b>	PW22
<b>Other name/s</b>		<b>Melway ref</b>	68 A1
<b>Address</b>	49 Rosemont Avenue CAULFIELD NORTH	<b>Date/s</b>	1972-73 1979, 1986 (minor additions)
<b>Designer/s</b>	Holgar & Holgar (original house and later works)	<b>Builder/s</b>	Unknown



Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019



Location map and extent of HO

<b>Heritage Group</b>	Residential building (private)	<b>Condition</b>	Excellent
<b>Heritage Category</b>	House	<b>Intactness</b>	Excellent
<b>Thematic context</b>	6.7 Making homes for Victorians		
<b>Recommendation</b>	Include on heritage overlay schedule as an individual heritage place		
<b>Controls</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

## Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

The house at 49 Rosemont Avenue, Caulfield North, is a two-storey flat-roofed house of a characteristic post WW2 modernist form, with the upper storey expressed as a rectilinear glass-fronted volume (in this case, atypically embellished by an ornate perforated grille screen) that projects over a recessed lower level, supported on curving piers. The house was erected in 1972-73 for a Cypriot-born cinema magnate and his wife, to a design by Polish-born husband-and-wife architects of Holgar & Holgar.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the house, including rear verandah and boundary wall. The detached garage, while also designed by Holgar & Holgar, is a utilitarian structure of limited interest, and is not considered to be significant.

### 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 H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in our history.

### *How is it significant?*

The house is aesthetically significant as a highly idiosyncratic example of post-WW2 modernist residential architecture. While it adopts the trademark European modernist expression, with a glass-walled upper storey projecting above a recessed lower level, it is overlaid with some unusual detailing that hints at overseas influences rarely seen in Melbourne, except in other houses by Holgar & Holgar. Rendered piers, curving to form a porch balustrade, recall the expressionistic work of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, while the full-width decorative screen at the upper façade evokes the glamorous 1960s residences of the Hollywood hills. An outstanding and remarkably unaltered example of this rare type of glamorous post-WW2 residence, so strongly associated with Holgar & Holgar, it remains a striking element in the streetscape (*Criteria E*).

The house is historically and architecturally significant for associations with the Polish-born husband-and-wife architectural partnership of Holgar & Holgar, which was notably active in Caulfield and environs in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Dating from 1972-73, this house is one of the finest and most intact local examples of the partnership's high-end residential work from the peak period of their career in the 1970s. Remarkably intact on account of still being occupied by the family that commissioned it, the house has undergone only minor changes. Some of these, namely the rear verandah (1979) and boundary wall (1986) were also designed by Holgar & Holgar, demonstrating a rare sense of continuity where, for over a decade after completion of the house, the architects maintained an ongoing association with it. (*Criterion H*)

### **History**

*Note: Identifying details of property owners and their families have been deleted as per Council direction*

The house at 49 Rosemont Avenue, Caulfield, was erected in 1972-73 for a Cypriot-born cinema magnate and his wife, to a design by the Polish-born husband-and-wife architectural partnership of Holgar & Holgar. Born in the mid-1930s in a village near Limassol, the future owner of the house became involved in the cinema business from the age of fourteen, working during his summer holidays as a ticket-seller at an open-air cinema in Limassol. He also assisted the projectionist and, after stepping in for an ailing subtitler during a screening of Charlie Chaplain's *Limelight* (1952), took on that role on a more regular basis. Gaining experience as a cashier, subtitler and projectionist, the young man was later poached by the owner of the more upmarket Rialto Cinema. Later still, he was offered the position as manager of the new Cine Volos, only to turn it down because he had already decided follow in the footsteps of his sister, who had already migrated to Australia.

Arriving in Melbourne in the mid-1950s, the future house owner worked in a clothing factory in Richmond before becoming an assistant projectionist at the Plaza Theatre in Collins Street, later transferring to the Brunswick Padua. In 1957, he formed his own film company and imported a popular Greek-language film, *Golfo*, which he screened at the Melbourne Town Hall to much acclaim (and indeed profit). The next year, he joined two Greek émigré colleagues, to establish a new film company. Over the next few years, the firm acquired eight cinemas in Melbourne (plus two in Adelaide and one in Perth) and leased several others in regional centres. Providing Australia's burgeoning post-WW2 Greek community with a unique opportunity to view films in their own language, the venture soon became a booming success.

After the future owner of the house married in the early 1960s, he and his wife settled in Bentleigh East (her parents having long resided in Caulfield South). The couple's growing family may have hastened plans to build a new residence. In June 1972, they acquired the title to a property at 49 Rosemont Street in Caulfield, which was then occupied by a triple-fronted brick villa. This was to be demolished for a new and grander residence, designed by architects Holgar & Holgar.

John Holgar (*ne* Władysław Aleksander Janusz Holgar-Ptaszyński) (1922-2006) and his wife Helen (*nee* Helena) (1923-2012) were both born in Poland, fleeing separately during WW2 and meeting for the first time while both were studying architecture in Rome. Moving to London in 1947, they married, completed further studies and gained professional experience before migrating to Australia in 1952, where they worked separately for various Melbourne practices including Godfrey Spowers, Arthur Purnell, Brian Lewis and D F Cowell Ham. In 1957, after the couple won first prize in a high-profile competition for an exhibition house, John began private practice under his own name, with an office in Swanston Street. Eighteen months later, he was joined by Helen, who was latterly employed by Grounds, Romberg & Boyd. Circa 1963, the practice was rebadged as Holgar & Holgar, relocating to Collins Street. It soon fostered a reputation as designers of large-scale houses for fellow European migrants, initially working in a strict modernist style before embracing a more eclectic and idiosyncratic approach characterised by unusual forms and luxurious materials and finishes. High-end residential projects of this nature would continue to sustain their practice well into the 1990s.

Holgar & Holgar's working drawing for the Rosemont Avenue house, dated September 1972, proposed a large two-storey dwelling dominated by a central circular lobby with a grand curving staircase incorporating a small garden and fountain at its base. The ground floor provided capacious living areas, with open planned living room, dining room and family room with built-in bar, while the upper level had four bedrooms and a vast playroom that extended the entire width of the building. Externally, the house was starkly articulated, with its principal frontage to Rosemont Avenue incorporating parabolic arches and, at the upper level, an element described on the plans as a "perforated feature grille". The drawings also indicate an attached carport to the south side, a detached flat-roofed garage to the rear (accessed from Crotonhurst Road) and "future swimming pool" of an unusual wedge-shaped design.

While construction was in progress, the family resided with the wife's parents in Caulfield South. Completed during 1973, the new house appears to have been built in accordance with what was indicated on the working drawings, including the attached carport and detached garage, although a handwritten amendment records that the swimming pool was to be omitted for the time being. It was eventually installed in the 1980s, in the intended position but to a different shape. When other changes were made to the property during this period, the owner entrusted the work to his original architects, Holgar & Holgar. In 1979, he commissioned them to enclose the rear terrace with a new skillion-roofed verandah of a simple but eye-catching arcaded form. In 1986, the architects were engaged again, this time to remodel the detached garage and provide a tall boundary wall along both street frontages.

## Description

The house at 49 Rosemont Avenue, Caulfield, is a two-storey flat-roofed rendered brick house in an idiosyncratic post-WW2 modernist style. It is expressed in a characteristic European Modernist manner, where the upper level is given emphasis by projecting outward over the recessed lower level. The façade is symmetrical, with a continuous window wall at the upper level screened by a full-width decorative grille in a pattern based on a repeating T-shaped motif. At ground level, the projecting upper storey is supported on a pair of rust-coloured circular columns and two large rendered piers that curve around at the lower end to merge with a low horizontal balustrade. Two large window bays open onto the front porch, which has a tiled floor. The front entrance, set into a recessed central bay between the two columns, comprises a pair of timber doors (inlaid with an inverted T-shaped motif in a contrasting darker tone) with two flanking sidelights.

The side elevation, to Crotonhurst Street, is much simpler in its expression, with plain rendered walls and a central double-height window bay in the centre, with multi-paned sashes separated by a small spandrel. The rear elevation, partially visible from the street, has a full-width screen of vertical louvres to the upper storey. At ground level, there is a large skillion-roofed verandah with timber-lined ceiling and a supporting structure of metal pipes that include round arches with leadlight infill to the spandrels. A tall brown brick wall, with regular narrow niches, extends along most of the Crotonhurst Road boundary, stepping down at the Rosemont Avenue end.

## Comparisons

Polish-born architects John and Helen Holgar were notably active in what is now the City of Glen Eira. Their first collaborative project in Melbourne, and the one that prompted them to open their own architectural office, was a prize-winning scheme for the Herald Ideal Home (1957) that was moved to Centre Road, Bentleigh East, after being displayed at the Ideal Home Show. From 1963, when the burgeoning practice was rebadged as Holgar & Holgar, they undertook a steady stream of residential work that included many houses and blocks of flats in the Caulfield area (and others in Elsternwick and McKinnon). Over the next quarter century, they are known to have completed at least twenty projects in what is now the City of Glen Eira. Their output encapsulates several discrete phases: the academic modernist style of their earliest work (c1958-63), which gave way to a more hybrid and inclusive approach (c1963-68), and then to their mature style, the individualistic and highly idiosyncratic approach for which they are best-known (c1968-79).

Dating from the Holgars' late period, the house in Rosemont Avenue (1972-73) is one of many grand and luxurious residences commissioned by clients who, almost without exception, were wealthy self-made European émigré families. While five other examples are recorded in the Caulfield area, few remain intact. A nearby house at 45 Rosemont Avenue (c1971), and another at 18 Howitt Road (1969), have both been remodelled beyond recognition. The latter originally had a decorative facade screen at its upper level, which would have made it the most pertinent local comparator to the subject building. Another example at 8 Hartley Avenue (1975) has also been altered, but remains recognizable. Considerably more intact are two outstanding and virtually unaltered examples at 49 Aroona Road (1970) and 82 Lumeah Road (1972). Like the subject building, both are two-storey flat-roofed houses with a glazed upper storey over a recessed lower level. However, instead of the façade screen, they are enlivened by equally quirky details: the Aroona Road house has a concrete feature resembling a huge faceted crystal, and the Lumeah Road house has a Moorish-style arcade with grand entry staircase. All three houses are exceptional examples of the Holgar's mature work.

## References

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Holgar & Holgar, "Proposed alterations to garage and new fence to residence at No 49 Rosemont Avenue, Caulfield, for [redacted]", working drawings, dated June 1986.

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