

Statement of Significance: 386 Alma Road, Caulfield North

Date of Statement: August 2020

Address: 386 Alma Road, Caulfield North	Name: -
Place Type: Residential building (private)	Grading: Significant
PS ref no: HO217	Constructed: 1961-62



Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

What is significant?

The house at 386 Alma Road, Caulfield North, is a two-storey flat-roofed orange brick house in the modernist style, expressed as a box-like upper level (containing three large window bays with terrazzo spandrels) elevated above a recessed undercroft that encloses a double carport. Erected in 1961-62 for a clothing manufacturer and his wife, the house was designed by noted Austrian-trained architect Dr Ernest Fooks.

The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of the house, the matching brick walls to the front garden, and the pebbled paving to the driveway and the front paths.

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.

Why is it significant?

The house is aesthetically significant as a particularly distinctive example of modernist residential architecture of the early 1960s. Commissioned at a time when architect Fooks was moving beyond his usual hard-edged modernism towards a more inclusive and eclectic approach, the house deftly combines the tenets of Fook's more academic style (ie the stark expression of a two-storey house as an elongated glass-fronted box, hovering above an undercroft) with a playfully decorative style fashionable at the time, conveyed by small rows of openings to the carport walls, spandrels with eye-catching rubble terrazzo finish, and a two-toned pebbled driveway. As one of the first Fooks houses to depart from his mainstream modernist style (perhaps influenced by younger employee Michael Feldhagen, whose initials appear on the drawings), the house ushered in a more eclectic approach that would characterise Fooks' work thereafter. (*Criterion E*)

The house is historically significant for associations with Austrian-trained architect Dr Ernest Fooks, who started private practice in Melbourne in 1948 and soon became sought-after as a designer of residential projects for fellow European émigré clients. Notably prolific in the former City of Caulfield (where he himself resided, in Howitt Street, from 1966 until his death), Fooks maintained a long personal and professional association with what is now the City of Glen Eira, including several art exhibitions held at the Caulfield Town Hall. Dating from 1961, the Alma Road house is one of the most striking and intact examples of Fooks' residential work from that period, marking an auspicious start to what would become the peak decade of his professional practice in Melbourne. (*Criterion H*)

Primary sources

Heritage Citation PW02, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.