

Statement of Significance: Aroona Road Modernist Precinct

Date of Statement: August 2020

Address:	Aroona Road: 43, 45, 47, 49	Name:	-
Place Type:	Residential building (private)	Grading:	Contributory
PS ref no:	HO238	Constructed:	1961-63, 1970-71



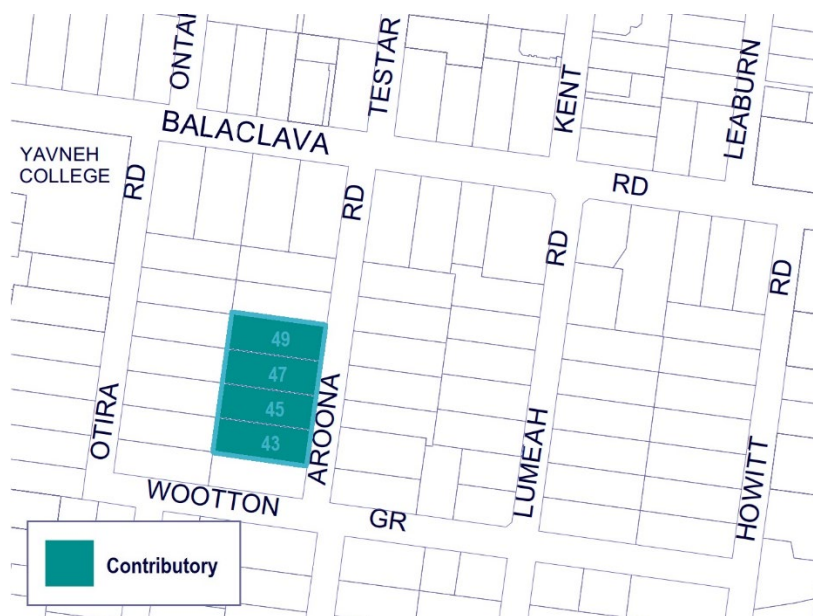
Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

What is significant?

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct comprises a cohesive row of four post-WW2 houses at the northern end of Aroona Road, Caulfield North, erected between 1961 and 1971. Although quite differently articulated, the four houses are all designed in a consistent European Modernist style characterised by bold rectilinear massing, flat roofs with broad eaves, and expansive windows. Commissioned by European émigré families who engaged architects of similar background (two houses designed by Austrian-trained Ernest Fooks and two by Polish-born Holgar & Holgar).

The following houses are deemed to be *contributory* elements in the precinct:

- Aroona Road: Nos 43, 45, 47, 49



How is it significant?

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of Glen Eira's cultural history.
- 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 Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant for associations with post-WW2 redevelopment of the former *Talbot Estate*, a prestigious inter-war subdivision that was transformed from the mid-1950s as original houses were replaced by grander modernist counterparts, mostly built by well-off European émigré families who commissioned architects of similar background. As these large and prepossessing modern houses proliferated in the 1960s, '70s and into the '80s and beyond, the area acquired an envied reputation as Caulfield's "Golden Mile". (*Criterion A*)

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant as small but excellent collection of post-WW2 modernist houses. Designed by architects who were born and trained in Continental Europe, the houses are unified by a consistent hard-edged modernist style associated with such designers, broadly characterised by bold rectilinear massing, flat roofs with broad eaves, and expansive windows. This is tempered by more unusual forms and detailing that reflect each architects' gradual departure from academic modernism towards a more idiosyncratic approach. The house that Fooks designed at No 43 (1963) shows the emerging influence of Japanese architecture that he saw during a recent trip overseas, while the canted façade of the early Holgar & Holgar house at No 45 (1963) hints at the unusual geometry that would so strongly define the firm's later work, typified by the house at No 49 (1970-71), with its eye-catching façade elements. (*Criterion E*)

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant for associations with two leading post-WW2 émigré architectural practices that each maintained an important and enduring connection with what is now the City of Glen Eira. Czechoslovakian-born and Austrian-trained Ernest Fooks began practice in Melbourne in 1948 and, after designing his first building in Caulfield in 1951, completed many more over the ensuing quarter-century, including his own celebrated residence in Howitt Road. Holgar & Holgar, comprising Polish couple John & Helen Holgar, launched their practice after winning a high-profile exhibition house competition in 1957 (the outcome of which was relocated to a site in Bentleigh East), and remained similarly active in the study area from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. While Fooks and the Holgars undertook much residential work in what is now the City of Glen Eira, some of their most outstanding houses were to be found in this prestigious enclave loosely defined as Caulfield's "Golden Mile". (*Criterion H*)

Primary sources

Heritage Citation P01, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.