

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Naliandrah
Address: 3 Glendye Court, Toorak

HO Reference: HO732
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 24 October 2023
Year of Construction: 1967

Designer: Holgar and Holgar
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Naliandrah (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 3 Glendye Court, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Mansion

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Functional, eccentric and theatrical – experimentation and innovation in architecture

Significance Level: State

Recommendation: Recommended for the Heritage Overlay as an individual place; internal controls are recommended in relation to the original staircase, colonnaded dance floor with a plastic dome, ballroom, gold fittings in the bathroom and original bathroom tiling, bath and vanity; paint controls are recommended in relation to the use of white paint on the façade.

Controls:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 3 Glendye Court, Toorak, (otherwise known as Naliandrah), is significant. The built form, scale, fenestration, colour and materiality of the Post-war Modernist mansion is of state significance, along with the original carriageway drive and intact original features specifically relating to the original staircase, colonnaded dance floor with a clear-plastic dome, ballroom, gold fittings in the bathroom including a faucet in the shape of a dragon, and original bathroom tiling, bath and vanity. The landscaping and later alterations and addition are not significant.

How is it significant?

Naliandrah is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington, as well as being of associative significance as a structure designed by the significant Modernist architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar.

Why is it significant?

Naliandrah is historically significant as a Post-war Modern residence that was erected after the post-war development of residential enclaves in Toorak, seeing the creation of cul-de-sacs along generous residential roads, and thus forms a tangible link to this period of planning and development in Toorak. As a house designed by European émigré architects for European émigré clients in the post-war period, Gelbart House is historically significant in demonstrating the significant design contributions architects such as Holgar and Holgar and their progressively-minded clients made to residential development within the municipality. The exuberant and flamboyant style also captures a period of time when entertaining was undertaken at a grand scale. (Criterion A)

Naliandrah is aesthetically significant as a highly intact, bespoke, flamboyant and expressive Hollywood inspired Post-war Modernist design with a striking streetscape striking character and landmark qualities. The site is immediately representative of the unique style associated with the architectural firm of Holgar and Holgar. Physical elements contributing to the overall aesthetic significance of the house include the rectilinear form and proportions, the large concrete arches and pillars running the length of the façade, the recessed entrance treatment, original timber entry door, original colour scheme (white), circular carriageway drive, floor-to-ceiling glazing and the unhindered views to the building from the east owing to the lack of fencing. Of great aesthetic importance is the large overhead steel screen with curved 'S' motif, drawing a direct visual connection between the building and the Selwyn family who commissioned the house. Recent footage of the interior shows that the interior remains highly intact, with original fittings and fixtures as well as floor plan. There are no clear comparisons between the design of Niliandrah, other work of Holgar and Holgar's, nor in the broader Post-War Modern style, making this a unique design that is not emulated anywhere else. (Criterion E)

Naliandrah is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar. Holgar and Holgar was a noted husband-and-wife architectural partnership comprising Helen Ptaszynska-Holgar and Wladyslaw Aleksander Janusz Ptaszynski-Holgar. Well-regarded for their combination of luxurious high-end eclecticism with European Modernist design principles, the firm was responsible for designing a number of noted post-war Modernist residences in Stonnington. The property is considered to be the most impressive example of Holgar and Holgar's work. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Naliandrah is historically significant as a Post-war Modern residence that was erected after the post-war development of residential enclaves in Toorak, seeing the creation of cul-de-sacs along generous residential roads, and thus forms a tangible link to this period of planning and development in Toorak. As a house designed by European émigré architects for European émigré clients in the post-war period, Gelbart House is historically significant in demonstrating the significant design contributions architects such as Holgar and Holgar and their progressively-minded clients made to residential development within the municipality. The exuberant and flamboyant style also captures a period of time when entertaining was undertaken at a grand scale.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Naliandrah is aesthetically significant as a highly intact, bespoke, flamboyant and expressive Hollywood inspired Post-war Modernist design with a striking streetscape striking character and landmark qualities. The site is immediately representative of the unique style associated with the architectural firm of Holgar and Holgar. Physical elements contributing to the overall aesthetic significance of the house include the rectilinear form and proportions, the large concrete arches and pillars running the length of the façade, the recessed entrance treatment, original timber entry door, original colour scheme (white), circular carriageway drive, floor-to-ceiling glazing and the unhindered views to the building from the east owing to the lack of fencing. Of great aesthetic importance is the

		large overhead steel screen with curved 'S' motif, drawing a direct visual connection between the building and the Selwyn family who commissioned the house. Recent footage of the interior shows that the interior remains highly intact, with original fittings and fixtures as well as floor plan. There are no clear comparisons between the design of Niliandrah, other work of Holgar and Holgar's, nor in the broader Post-war Modern style, making this a unique design that is not emulated anywhere else.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	Naliandrah is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar. Holgar and Holgar was a noted husband-and-wife architectural partnership comprising Helen Ptaszynska-Holgar and Wladyslaw Aleksander Janusz Ptaszynski-Holgar. Well-regarded for their combination of luxurious high-end eclecticism with European Modernist design principles, the firm was responsible for designing a number of noted post-war Modernist residences in Stonnington. The property is considered to be the most impressive example of Holgar and Holgar's work.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Naliandrah is a stepped, double storey structure built in a Hollywood-inspired Post-war Modernist design by Holgar and Holgar. The concrete and steel structure is finished with a smooth white render and employs a flat roof with trim deck cladding. The main portion of the residence consists of a simple rectangular plan with a central square open courtyard. The residence extends south and terminates at a single storey ellipse shaped space. The structure has a strong horizontal form.

The façade is partially characterised by large concrete arches creating a repetitive form on the ground level, a calling-card of Holgar and Holgar's design aesthetic. Each arched bay houses full length steel framed windows with garden beds planted with hedges, bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea cv*) and palm trees (*Arecaceae sp*). The central bay includes the main four panel double timber door entrance. The entrance bay does not include garden beds and is raised up two steps with round steel balustrades. The upper level of the front façade houses the unique white steel façade screen. The screen depicts the letter 'S' in a stylised form, representing the Selwyn family who commissioned the house. The visually permeable steel façade screen provides privacy to the upper level while also exposing the stepped form of the main residence. The arched built form extends one bay north past the residence, forming an arched driveway entrance leading to an integrated carport and secondary entrance.

The upper level opens to a large open verandah around the square void overlooking the backyard. The other elevations of the residence have simplistic detailing with a white rendered finish. The fenestration includes grouped rectangular steel windows. Full length windows are sited on the elevation where there is a visual connection to the rear yard space. The windows on the ellipse shaped wing includes blue rounded canvas awnings.

The residence is set back from the street and has no front boundary wall. The front setback is mostly paved with red brick laid in a herringbone pattern that forms a return carriageway driveway extending to the parking area along the north boundary. Rounded garden beds flank the perimeter of the front area and forms sets the formality of the paved driveway. Low trimmed hedges form a visual boundary but does not impede the view of the structure from the street. The rear yard space is comparatively enclosed and private. It includes an organic shaped lawn area with flanking garden beds and a central round garden bed. The remainder of the rear yard area is laid with a lighter coloured brick. There is a swimming pool located at the southwest corner of the property.

As evidenced by a range of video footage taken in 2020 during an auction of house items, the interior of Naliandrah is shown to remain highly intact. It retains many of the features described in The Australian Women's Weekly magazine (refer to History below). Key aspects of the interior include the original staircase, colonnaded dance floor with a clear-plastic dome, ballroom, gold fittings in the bathroom including a faucet in the shape of a dragon, and original bathroom tiling, bath and vanity. On a broader scale, the layout appears to be relatively intact. A lift was added to the interior at a later point and the kitchen has been refurbished.

Naliandrah remains in use as a residential property. The property is considered to be in good condition and is of high integrity overall.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)
- Addition of an internal lift.
- Kitchen refurbished.
- Swimming pool added.

History

- [Historical Context](#)

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This

environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

- [European émigré architects and Modernism in Toorak](#)

Combining luxury in architecture with Modernist design, Post-war residential Modernism in Toorak existed at the nexus of local émigré consumption cultures and the emergent practices of European émigré architects. While Toorak's strong tradition of patronage by wealthy residents allowed for architectural experimentation in the Modernist idiom amongst prominent architects like Roy Grounds and Robin Boyd from the late 1930s (Context 2009, 138), the arrival of both émigré architects and clients following the rise of 1930s anti-Semitism and World War II created a distinct Modern design aesthetic that built upon and yet diversified existing trends.

In Toorak, this tended towards a combination of luxurious high-end eclecticism and European Modernist design principles by the 1960s (Reeves 2016, 571). This was most readily evident in the works of Polish-born duo Holgar and Holgar. Their Toorak-based Modernist designs were grand in scale and typified by palatial fittings and finishes. Designs like Naliandrah (1969) at 3 Glendye Court evoked an image of post-war opulence and grandeur in its luxuriant curves, terrazzo floors, and imported furnishing (Goad 1999, 14). Although arguably toned-down, this tendency towards luxury is also evident in local works by figures like Czech-born Ernest Fooks and Russian-born Anatol Kagan, who made use of lavish inbuilt European-influenced furnishings while extolling functionalism and minimalist forms, with Fooks arguing for variety, flexibility, and good craftsmanship in interiors as opposed to the uniformity and formality. While many of these elements were rooted in European approaches to Modernism, such high-end Modernist eclecticism was undoubtedly inflected by the post-war aspirations of wealthy, often Jewish, diasporic clients who had settled in the elite suburb of Toorak. Taken together, this wave of post-war émigré architects and clients alike pioneered new approaches to residential Modernism that

fundamentally enriched and transformed the Anglocentric Modernism that was being practiced within the municipality (Edquist 2019, 31).

- **Place History**

The land on which Naliandrah is presently situated formerly comprised the substantial grounds of the Victorian era Beaulieu Estate (now St. Catherine's) (MMBW 1905). The Beaulieu mansion (formerly Sherren House) was erected in the 1880s. The estate was gradually subdivided in the early 20th century, though still retaining a large parcel of land. This process reflected the wider pattern of subdivision and development that was taking place across Toorak during the early 20th century and interwar period. While the subdivision of large estates was taking place as well before this period, rising labour costs following World War I made the cost of servants and other works to maintain the estates prohibitive (Context Pty Ltd 2006). This resulted in intense urban character changes in the area, particularly in the form of grand architect designed homes situated on generous allotments.

Naliandrah was constructed in 1967 for prominent European émigré citizens Ada and Alan Selwyn, and designed by the pre-eminent architectural partnership of Holgar and Holgar. Alan Selwyn was a prominent figure of Australia's rag trade and also a founding member of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Governor of Tel Aviv University (The Australian Jewish News, 8th Aug. 2017). Ada was socially conscious, and was an active member of the Womens Division of the United Israel Appeal.

Holgar and Holgar was a husband-and-wife architectural partnership comprising the Polish born Helen Ptaszynska-Holgar and Wladyslaw Aleksander Janusz Ptaszynski-Holgar, who would later later anglicise their names to Helen and John Holgar. The pair trained in Italy and employed as architects in England, before migrating to Australia in 1952 and establishing their own practice in 1959 (Reeves 2016, 569). The quintessential Holgar and Holgar designed mansion was described by Simon Reeves as 'palatial in every sense: grand staircases, cabanas, conversation pits, sunken baths, gold-plated taps, travertine, chandeliers, imported/bespoke furnishing, carefully chosen by the much-travelled architects' and designed to cater to 'moneyed clients who craved opulence not seen since the 1930s' (Reeves, 2016). While their initial designs were more in line with conventional Modernism, their style eventually evolved to include a luxurious eclecticism defined by lavish fittings and finishes (Reeves 2016). As addressed by Grow, Nalandrah was one of Holgar and Holgar's best work, stating 'an outstanding example is Naliandrah... at Glendye Court, Toorak, 1967' (Grow, 2021).

The property was extensively photographed in 1969 after it was awarded 'House of the Week' by The Australian Women's Weekly (refer to Further Images below). It was described in the magazine as follows:

MR. and Mrs. Alan Selwyn worked closely with architect Helen Holgar in planning the design of their Mediterranean-style house at Toorak, Victoria. Mrs. Selwyn, in particular, prepared detailed lists of the features she wanted, and even sketched a rough plan of built-in cupboards with fittings sized specifically for their contents. Besides being designed so exactly to her requirements, the house is filled with beautiful and unusual furniture which Mrs. Selwyn chose during trips overseas. Much of the furniture was made to order in Italy. The prettily colonnaded dance floor, situated between the dining-room and the cabana and opening on to a terrace, is one of the most charming features in the house. Instead of a conventional ceiling it has a clear-plastic dome for dancing "under the stars." In summer a canvas canopy is drawn over the dome

to keep out the heat. Lighting on the dance floor is romantic - a soft glow from lamps within each column. Roman bath Mrs. Selwyn was delighted with the dance floor, but she calls her sunken Roman bath "my piece de resistance". Two steps descend into the bath, which has gold fittings (the faucet is in the shape of a dragon), and a white telephone is close at hand. It is large enough to be called a mini swimming pool. A Mediterranean-inspired mural covers the wall behind the bath. The 16ft. x 15ft. bathroom also has a massage table, and adjacent to it is a walled solarium... (The Australian Women's Weekly, 27th Aug. 1969, pg.74).

The descriptions of the interior of Naliandrah are extensive, detailing the rich furnishings and Holgar and Holgar's design at the time. In addition, it demonstrates that the façade screen was deliberately designed with the letter 'S' to pay homage to the Selwyn family name.

The Selwyn's were local philanthropists and this is partially reflected in the Emergency Department at Cabrini Malvern Hospital naming it the Alan, Ada and Eva Selwyn Emergency Department in 2017.

The property remained in Alan and Ada's ownership until Alan's passing in 2014 and Ada's passing in 2019.

Comparative Analysis

Naliandrah is possibly the best example of Holgar and Holgar's work, and exhibits all of the architectural features that have come to be recognised as being quintessentially associated with the notable firm of Holgar and Holgar, most notably comprising concrete arches, a geometric steel screen on the façade, and floor-to-ceiling glazing. To date, there are no Holgar and Holgar properties included on a Heritage Overlay in Victoria. However, there are a number of notable Holgar and Holgar designs within the municipality, including:

- Gelbart House, 5 Heyington Place, Toorak (under review by this study);
- 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak (under review by this study); and
- 4 Nola Court, Toorak (under review by this study).

In addition, there is a Holgar and Holgar located at 344 Beach Road, Black Rock. This building shares some clear similarities with Naliandrah including the floor to ceiling glazing, concrete buttresses, recessed entrance and elaborate interior fitout such as a blue tiled bathroom with gold fittings.

With this, though works associated with the firm have not historically been provided with heritage protections, Holgar and Holgar's body of work is now in a period of intense assessment for potential inclusion on statutory heritage registers.

Given that there are no comparable Holgar and Holgar designs on the Heritage Overlay, comparable examples executed by other architects include:

- **Lind House, 450 Dandenong Road, Caulfield North (VHR H2387, City of Glen Eira HO156).** Designed by Anatol Kagan in 1954–55, the Lind House is comparable to Naliandrah as an example of a high-quality Post-war Modernist house constructed in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Both houses share similar built characteristics, including the rectilinear form and top-heavy design with a projecting second storey. The Lind House however is more utilitarian in style than the Naliandrah, which exhibits a greater sense of aesthetic boldness, luxury and opulence. Both properties are also reflective of the post-war migration of European Modernist architects.

- **Fenner House, 228 Domain Road, South Yarra (HO6 and VHR No. H2350).** The Fenner House was constructed in 1964 to designs prepared by Neil Clerehan. Fenner House, though quite different in style to the Naliandrah, abides by similar design principles, most specifically that of form. Both Post-war Modernist buildings are low, bunkered structures with long horizontal form. Both buildings share similar entrance treatments with recessed, sheltered, and centralised designs. Clear differences however include the lack of ornamentation at Fenner House, which is clearly evident at Naliandrah through its unique, flamboyant detailing.

As demonstrated by the above comparative analysis, Naliandrah is a highly intact and bespoke Post-war Modernist residence designed by notable European émigré architects Holgar and Holgar. Naliandrah is considered to be the best identified example of their work. In addition to its similarities with the qualities found in other Victorian Heritage Register Post-war Modernist residences, such as Lind House and Fenner House, Naliandrah exhibits a level of architectural opulence, luxury and uniqueness in its Hollywood-inspired Post-war Modernism that is not emulated anywhere else in the state. Given there are no examples of Holgar and Holgar's work currently protected by a municipal Heritage Overlay, Naliandrah would make a fine and justified inclusion on the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay. Further, it has a strong potential to meet the threshold for the Victorian Heritage Register.

References

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



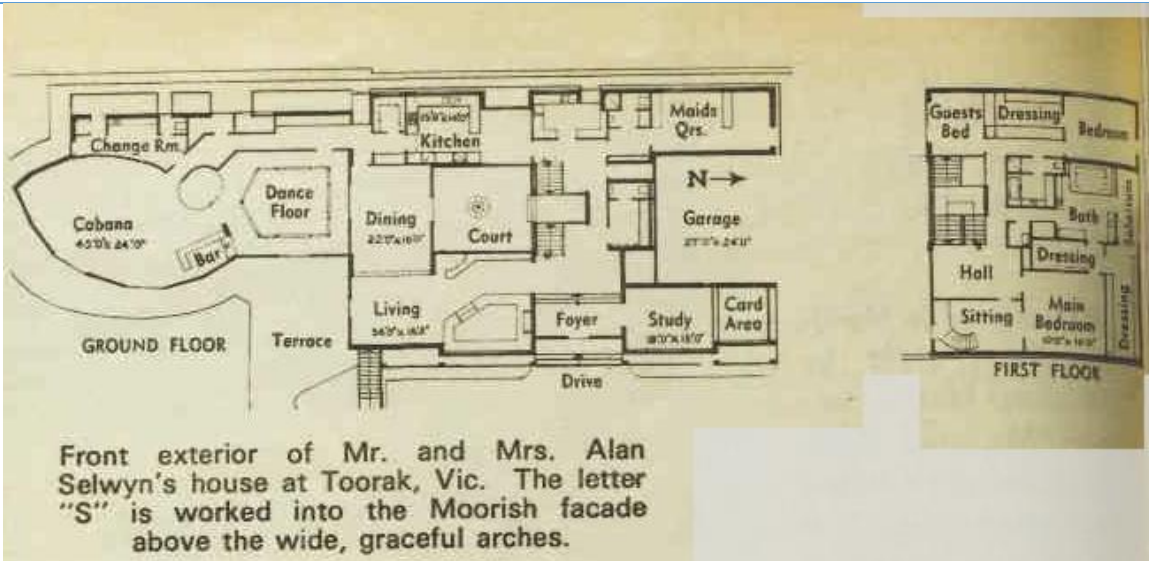
Photograph of Naliandrah shortly after construction in 1967 (source: Wille, P., 1967. House. 3 Glendye Court (off Heyington Place), Toorak. 1967-68).



Photograph of Naliandrah shortly after construction in 1967 (source: Wille, P., 1967. House. 3 Glendye Court (off Heyington Place), Toorak. 1967-68).



Photograph of Naliandrah in 1969 (source: "Modern mansion designed in Mediterranean style" The Australian Women's Weekly (1933 - 1982)).



Original floor plan (source: "Modern mansion designed in Mediterranean style" The Australian Women's Weekly (1933 - 1982)).



Model of Naliandrah (source: Museums Victoria Collections, Architectural Model - Naliandrah, Toorak, 1967, Model by Tom Malyra, 1989)



Overview of front façade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of steel screen (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of glazing to the ground floor facade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Main entrance (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Driveway arch (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Oblique aerial view showing the current arrangement of the property, including the ellipse shaped cabana (source: NearMap, taken October 2021).

Authors

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