Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Residence **Address:** 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak	**HO Reference:** New HO731 **Citation status:** Final **Date Updated:** 31 March 2022
Designer: Holgar and Holgar **Builder:** Goldstein Engineering Pty Ltd	**Year of Construction:** 1970



Photograph of 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings **Heritage Type:** House	**Key Theme:** Building suburbs **Key Sub-theme:** Functional, eccentric and theatrical – experimentation and innovation in architecture
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Recommended for the Heritage Overlay as an individual place.	

Controls:	☐	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	☐ Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak, is significant. The built form, scale, fenestration and materiality of the Post-war Modernist house is of local significance. The landscaping, front fence and later alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington. It also has associative significance as a structure designed by the significant Modernist architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar.

Why is it significant*?*

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is historically significant as a house designed by European émigré architects for European émigré clients in the post-war period. In this way, it is historically significant in demonstrating the significant design contributions that émigré architects such as Holgar and Holgar and their progressively-minded clients made to residential development within the municipality. It not only exemplifies the innovative design trends taking place in Toorak by the post-war period, but also provides insight into the way these trends were shaped by both architects and clients of the European diaspora. (Criterion A)

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is aesthetically significant as a highly intact Post-war Modernist design with a striking character. Illustrative 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 proportion, the large concrete arched buttresses, the recessed entrance treatment and undercroft with circular glass glazing, and the overhanging upper-storey form with floor-to-ceiling glazing. The buttresses in particular express the structure of the residence while creating a sense of movement with its arched form. (Criterion E)

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar. (Criterion G)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is historically significant as a house designed by European émigré architects for European émigré clients in the post-war period. In this way,also it is historically significant in demonstrating the significant design contributions that émigré architects such as Holgar and Holgar and their progressively-minded clients made to residential development within the municipality. It not only exemplifies the innovative design trends taking place in Toorak by the post-war period, but also provides insight into the way these trends

		were shaped by both architects and clients of the European diaspora.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is aesthetically significant as a highly intact Post-war Modernist design with a striking character. Illustrative 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 proportion, the large concrete arched buttresses, the recessed entrance treatment and undercroft with circular glass glazing, and the overhanging upper-storey form with floor-to-ceiling glazing. The buttresses in particular express the structure of the residence while creating a sense of movement with its arched form.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*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*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the architectural partnership Holgar and Holgar.

Description

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak is a double storey residence designed by Holgar and Holgar in the Post-war Modern style. The structure is finished with a smooth white render and has a flat roof clad with a low clerestory window and Trimdek profiled sheet metal cladding. The residence reflects a strong rectilinear horizontal form with a top-heavy design. The structure appears to be detached from the ground, with a recessed ground level glass vestibule. The form is similar to the designs of other famous Modernist residences including the Villa Savoye in France and Rose Seidler House in Wahroonga. Adhering the design concept of 'pilotis', this structure adapts the otherwise recessive thin columnar forms with the usage of twin concrete buttresses. The buttresses have a distinct form, arched at the base and extending up the front façade face. The buttresses express the structure of the residence while creating a sense of movement with their arched form.

The front façade addresses Linlithgow Road and presents symmetrically. The ground level is framed by the two arched buttresses set between a pebbled screed ramp and steps leading to the entrance vestibule. The vestibule is recessed behind the buttresses and has a rounded form. The glass walls of the vestibule consist of vertical glazing set between closely spaced white aluminium full length frames. The main entrance door is located centrally on the front face of the vestibule. It consists of a wide double door with arched detailing on the front face mirroring the buttresses. An undercroft carpark with a stone clad wall is located behind the entry vestibule.

The upper level of the front face consists of a full-length floor to ceiling glazing. The triple pane fenestration includes awning windows on the top pane. The exposed floor slab on the upper level is detailed with expressed but subtle cross forms. The façade reflects a slight inward curve between the buttresses. The west (rear) elevation includes a covered patio leading to the backyard space.

The street front boundary is demarcated by a tall black steel gate and fence. A sheltered recessed rendered brick wall is located at the centre of the boundary. The gates accommodate the return driveway that curves around an arched in stone edged garden bed. The front garden beds around the brick wall are planted with young Magnolia (*Magnolia sp.*) trees.

23 Linlithgow Road presents a design that is closely reflected in the canon of Post-war Modernist style residences. 23 Linlithgow Road is currently used as a private residence. It is considered in good condition overall. The structure has been altered at its rear elevation, however the front façade remains highly intact. The most most visible alterations are the introduction of a contemporary colour scheme to the structure and a new boundary wall. The site has moderate integrity overall.

- ## Alterations and Additions

- Eight skylights added to the main roof.
- Section of the roof reclad with Colorbond.
- Backyard relandscaped (2020).
- Swimming pool removed (2018).
- Rear covered patio altered with roof extension (after 2018).
- Front façade buttresses repainted from light green to dark grey (originally likely a natural concrete finish) (after 2019).
- Front rendered wall, entry vestibule window frames and door repainted (after 2019).

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 antisemitism 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 craftmanship 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 23 Linlithgow Road is located once formed a portion of the substantial grounds of the Victorian era Hillside Estate which included Hillside Cottage (The Herald 1914, 5). The estate was subdivided in 1914, subsequently forming Linlithgow Road and nineteen generously sized allotments. This process reflected the wider pattern of subdivision and development that was taking place across Toorak during the early twentieth 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.

23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak, is first recorded in archival records as being occupied by a structure when the property was put to auction in December 1950. The building was described as an attractive double storey brick residence which is not in alignment with the type of residence on the site today (The Argus1950, 31). Following the sale of the property in 1950, the site was owned by multiple households before its eventual redevelopment.

The present-day dwelling was subsequently erected in 1970 to 1969 designs prepared by the noted architectural firm Holgar and Holgar (Sands & McDougall 1970; Holgar and Holgar 1969). According to rate books and original architectural plans, the dwelling was designed for Krysia and Mietek Lasker, a couple who was very active in the local Jewish community.

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 anglicise their names to Helen and John Holgar. The pair trained in Italy and were 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 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).

Original architectural plans depict a striking rectilinear residence set on arched concrete buttresses (Holgar and Holgar 1969). According to the floor plan, the substantial residence comprised a central ground floor entrance hall with staircase leading to the upper floor, three bedrooms, a guest room, sunroom, dining room and outdoor terrace. Notably, the ground floor also comprised a carport, maids room with bathroom, as well as a plant room and store (Holgar and Holgar 1969).

The property was advertised for sale in 1994, and was described as:

> Something from another planet – Number 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak, looks as if it was designed on another planet. Designed by Holgar and Holgar, this home is truly unique and offers and abundance of light. It is a single level home, although from street level it looks like two levels. It is a home that offers four bedrooms with grand living room areas and at the rear a totally secluded rear garden, which agent Talbot Birner Morley (525 9222) as a 'paradise'… (The Australian Jewish News1994, 20).

The sale of 23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak in 1994 was of great public interest, with the same newspaper reporting 'a second before auction… for a price rumoured to be in excess of $1.35 million' (The Australian Jewish News1994, 4).

The property was last sold in 1997, and continues to remain in use as a private residence.

Comparative Analysis

The house at 23 Linlithgow Road exhibits all the architectural features that have come to be recognised as being quintessentially associated with the notable firm of Holgar and Holgar, specifically comprising concrete arches and buttresses, a flat roof, a recessed entrance treatment and undercroft, 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:

- Naliandrah, 3 Glendye Court, Toorak (currently being reviewed by this study, and externally for inclusion on the VHR);
- 5 Heyington Place, Toorak (under review by this study), and;
- 4 Nola Court, Toorak (under review by this study).

In addition, there is a Holgar & Holgar located at 344 Beach Road, Black Rock. This building shares some clear similarities with the property at 23 Linlithgow Road, including the floor to ceiling glazing, concrete buttresses and recessed entrance.

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.

Elements represented onsite at 23 Linlithgow Road can be recognised academically as paying homage to international touchstones of Modernist design. In France, completed between 1928 and 1931 to designs by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, the Villa Savoye is designed with a circular glazed undercroft and foyer shaded by a projecting upper storey in a form very similar to that shown at 23 Linlithgow Road. On a more localised level, the Rose Seidler House in Wahroonga which was designed by Harry Seidler and constructed from 1948 to 1950 exhibits a similar emphasis on glazing and proportions with an upper storey projecting over a bunkered undercroft. These works reflect the sophistication of Holgar and Holgar's designs and the application of the International Modernism school of design in their body of work.

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 the 23 Linlithgow Road as an example of a high-quality Post-war Modernist house constructed in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Both houses share similar characteristics, including the rectilinear built form and top-heavy design, with a projecting second storey. The Lind House however is more utilitarian than the 23 Linlithgow Road, which exhibits a greater sense of 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 to the house at 23 Linlithgow Road, abiding by similar design principles, most specifically that of form. Both Modernist buildings are low, bunkered structures with long horizontal form. Both buildings share similar entrance treatments with recessed, sheltered, and centralised entrance treatments. The front door is recessed in an undercroft at Linlithgow Road. Clear differences however include the lack of ornament at Fenner House, which is evident at the Linlithgow Road House.

As demonstrated by the above comparative analysis, the residence at 23 Linlithgow Road is a highly intact and bespoke Post-war Modernist residence designed by notable European émigré architects Holgar and Holgar. The residence is a good representative example of their work and draws direct similarities with the qualities found in other important Post-war Modernist residences such as Lind House and Fenner House. The residence exhibits a level of architectural opulence and luxury equal to both of these properties, while also reflecting Holgar and Holgar's Hollywood-inspired aesthetic which was bold and flamboyant at times. Given there are no examples of Holgar and Holgar's work currently protected by a municipal Heritage Overlay, the residence would make a fine and justified inclusion on the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay.

References

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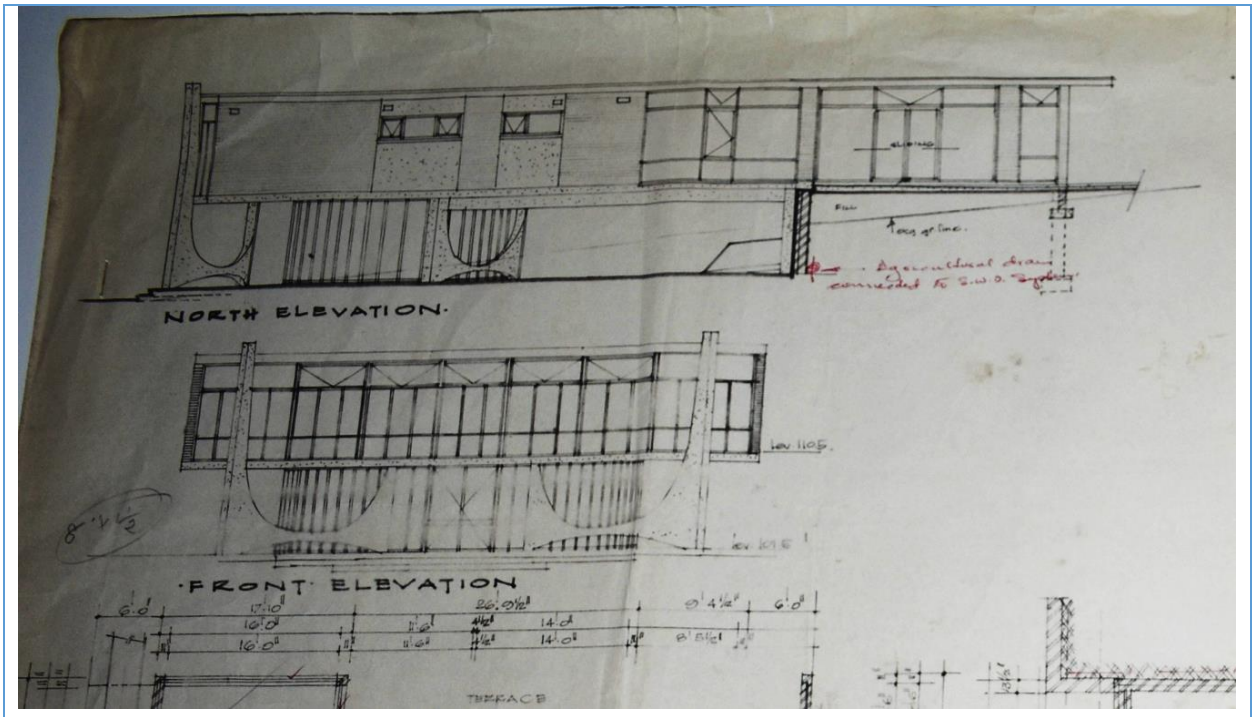
Advertising (1950, December 2). *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, p. 31.

Something from another planet (1994, November 4). *The Australian Jewish News (Melbourne, Vic. : 1935 - 1999)*, p. 20.

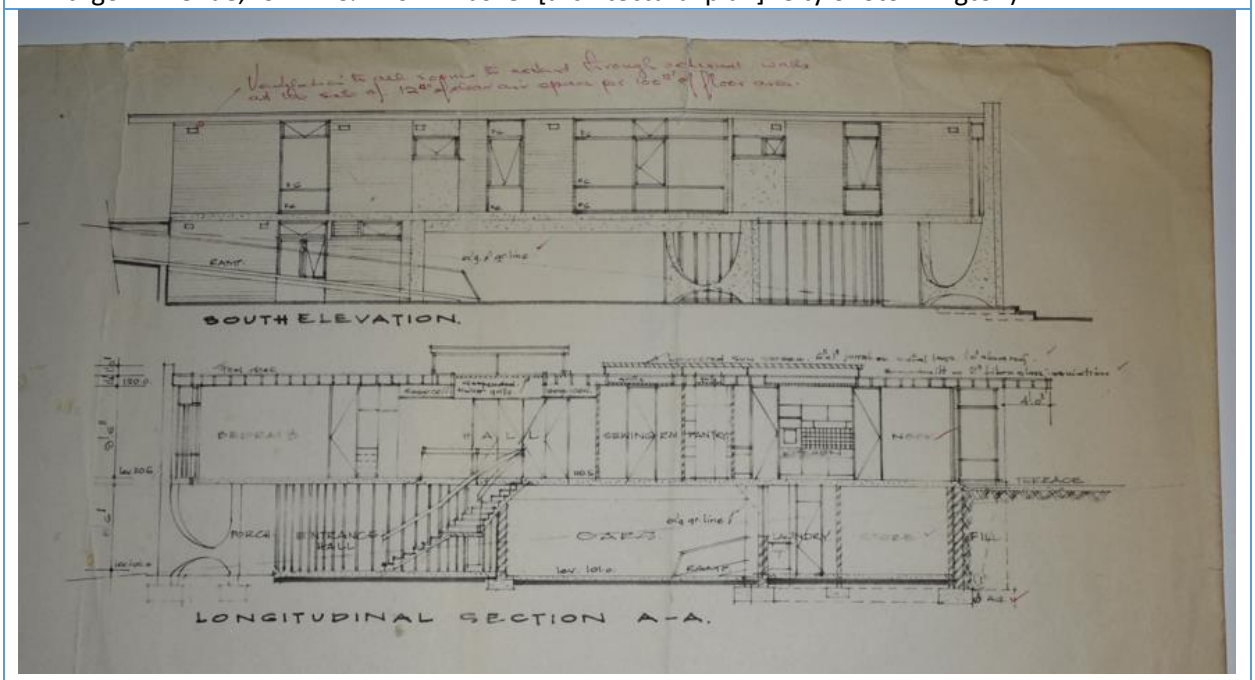
Limitations

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.

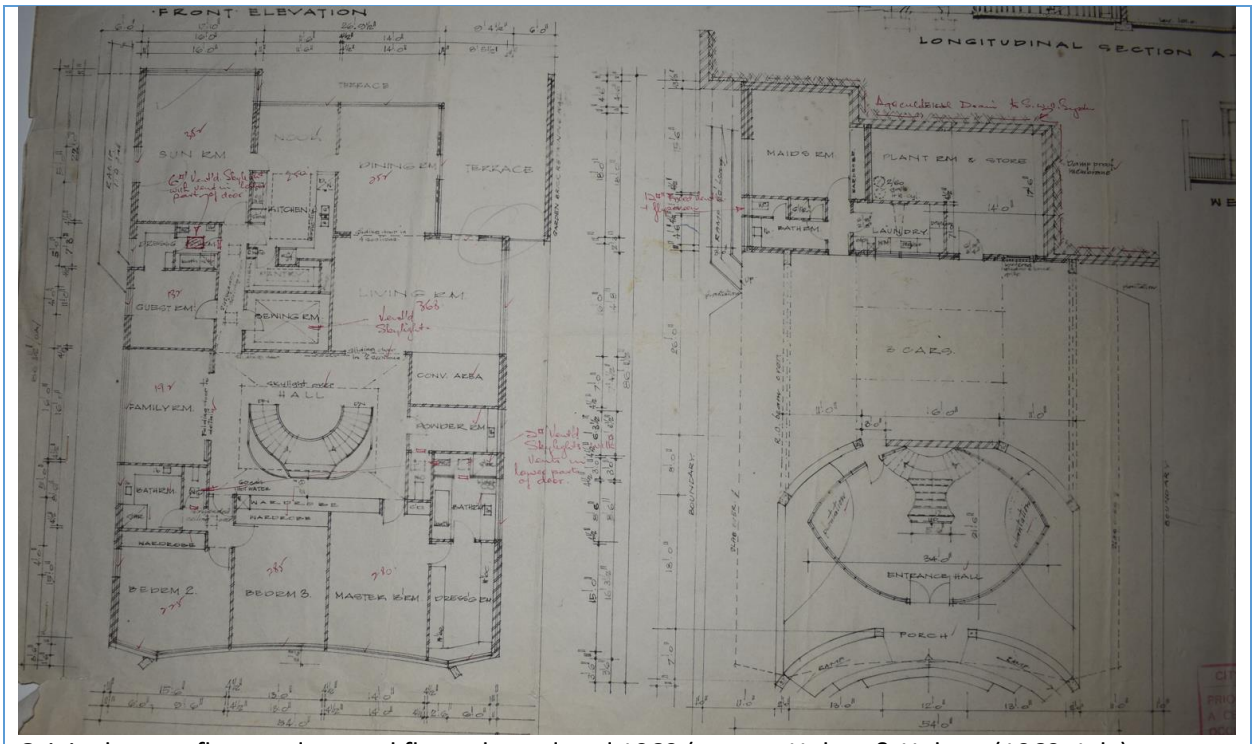
Further Images



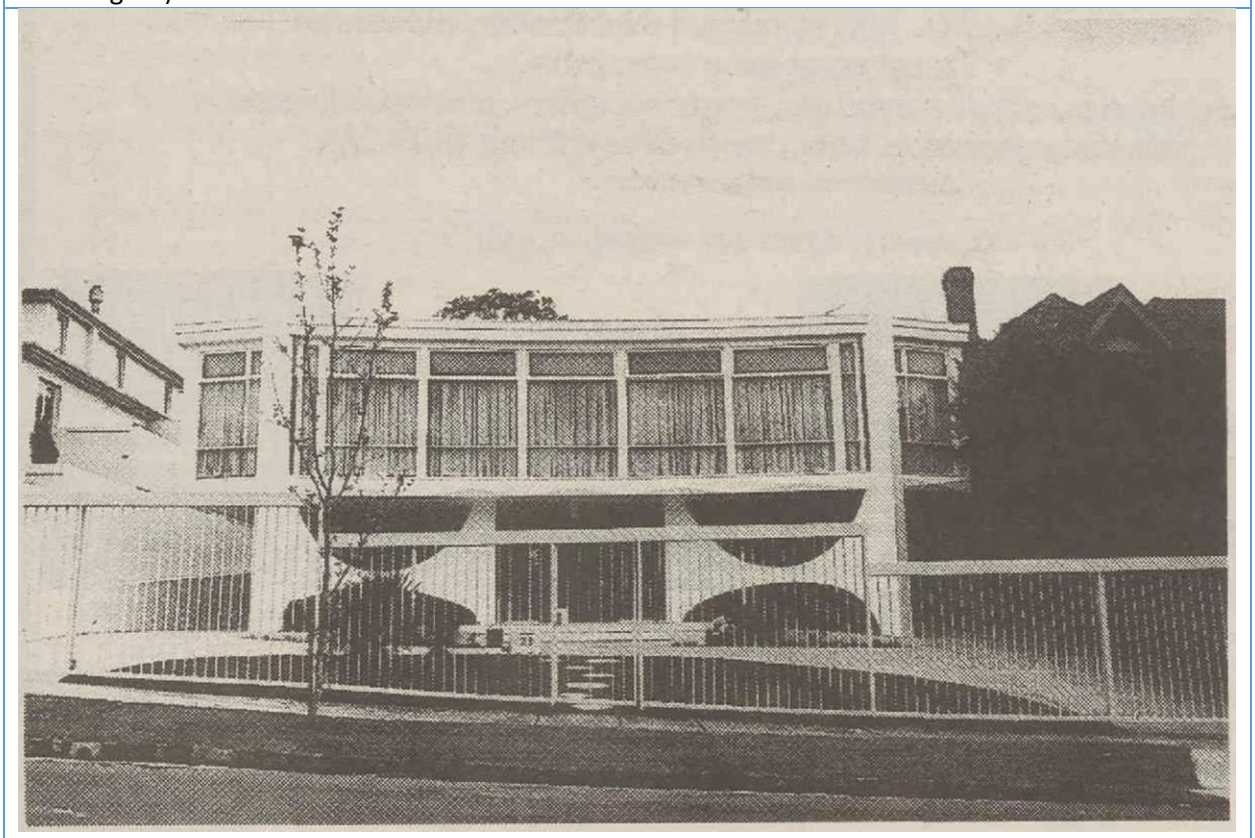
Original elevation plans, dated 1969 (source: Holgar & Holgar. (1969, July). Proposed Residence at 23 Linlithgow Avenue, for Mr & Mrs M. Lasker [architectural plan]. City of Stonnington).



Original elevation and section plans, dated 1969 (source: Holgar & Holgar. (1969, July). *Proposed Residence at 23 Linlithgow Avenue, for Mr & Mrs M. Lasker* [architectural plan]. City of Stonnington).



Original upper floor and ground floor plans, dated 1969 (source: Holgar & Holgar. (1969, July). Proposed Residence at 23 Linlithgow Avenue, for Mr & Mrs M. Lasker [architectural plan]. City of Stonnington).


23 Linlithgow Road, Toorak, in 1994 (source: The Australian Jewish News 1994, 20).



Front facade, looking southwest (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of façade, looking southwest (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of the entrance undercroft and buttresses (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Oblique view of the façade and buttresses (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Oblique overview of façade looking northwest (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Altered boundary gates, looking west (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

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