

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Residence
Address: 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak

HO Reference: HO739
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 28 March 2022
Year of Construction: 1954-55

Designer: Yuncken Freeman Bros. Griffiths and Simpson
Builder: Mr. Pascoe



Photograph of 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings (private)
Heritage Type: House

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

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Recommended as a new individually significant place on the HO.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input 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 residence at 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak is significant. The built form, scale, fenestration and materiality of the Post-war Modernist house is of local significance. The landscaping and later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak is of representative significance to the City of Stonnington. The site also has associative significance as a notable residence designed by the prominent Modernist architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Architects.

Why is it significant?

7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak is of representative significance as an intact example of the innovative experimentation in geometric form and materials in residential design that typified the peak of the Post-war Modernist movement in Australia. This is most evident in its built form, particularly its flat roof with exposed overhanging eaves paired with a double-storey construction, stepped roof form and glazing to the upper storey, which achieves visual boldness while simultaneously remaining lightweight in massing and scale. The sheer unornamented façade provides a sense of restraint contrasted with the luxury of the covered walkway and gold leaf gilding on the front door. (Criterion D)

7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak has associative significance as an intact notable residential design by the highly distinguished architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Bros. Griffiths and Simpson (later Yuncken Freeman Architects), which became one of Melbourne's most important architectural firms of the 20th century for its significant role in re-shaping the city from the 1960s and 1970s. They were responsible for important Modernist designs such as the Former BHP House (1972), Estates House (1976), Sidney Myer Music Bowl (1959) and La Trobe University. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
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>	7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak is of representative significance as an intact example of the innovative experimentation in geometric form and materials in residential design that typified the peak of the Post-war Modernist movement in Australia. This is most evident in its built form, particularly its flat roof with exposed overhanging eaves

		paired with a double-storey construction, stepped roof form and glazing to the upper storey, which achieves visual boldness while simultaneously remaining lightweight in massing and scale. The sheer unornamented façade provides a sense of restraint contrasted with the luxury of the covered walkway and gold leaf gilding on the front door.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<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.
<i>H</i>	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak has associative significance as a notable residential design by the highly distinguished architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Bros. Griffiths and Simpson (later Yuncken Freeman Architects), which became one of Melbourne's most important architectural firms of the 20th century for its significant role in re-shaping the city in the 1960s and 1970s. They were responsible for important Modernist designs such as the Former BHP House (1972), Estates House (1976), Sidney Myer Music Bowl (1959) and La Trobe University.

Description

• Physical Analysis

7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak is a double storey residence built in the Post-war Modernist style. The brick structure employs a flat roof clad with corrugated sheet metal with a Trimdek profile and an unembellished façade. The roof is stepped on the west side over the front garage and overhangs the structure with timber boxed eaves. The residence consists of a rectilinear plan, which is emphasised by its stepped massing, and a square internal open courtyard.

The ground level of the front façade is free of fenestration but includes a single main entrance door located under an original projecting curved steel and timber awning walkway supported by two round columns. The upper level of the front façade consists of a bank of tall white aluminium louvered windows that extend to the eaves.

There is a double garage accessible down a ramped driveway from the street. The ramp is flanked by bluestone retaining walls supporting the street level front yard. The undercroft garage includes two roller doors. A wrought iron lamp and three narrow rectangular windows are located above the garage doors. The front yard is heavily underplanted and includes several trees which obscure some views of the residence. The front yard includes a pebble screed laid patio and rectangular stone pavers leading to the front entrance, as well as an area of lawn and shrub plantings. The structure is set back from the street and does not include a front boundary wall, as was intended in the original design.

The interior of the residence opens onto a square internal courtyard and a yard at the rear that contains a swimming pool and an outbuilding with a flat roof. The internal courtyard includes banks of windows and covered bridge that encloses the internal courtyard. The rear yard is heavily planted with mature trees.

7 Trawalla Avenue is located at the junction with Lascelles Avenue. It is currently used as a private residence and appears to be intact with high integrity. However, the external paint finish, roof plumbing, boxed eaves and roof cladding are in a poor condition. Overall, 7 Trawalla Avenue is in fair condition.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

- Sections of the roof reclad with sheet metal.
- Residence repainted from an earlier terracotta colour (after 2009). The original colour scheme is unclear from archival research.
- Original internal courtyard pool removed.
- Original panelled garage door replaced with metal roller doors.

[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).

- **Modernism in Toorak**

Toorak’s wealthy clientele and strong culture of patronage has long provided architects with the space to explore ideas and innovation in design and construction (Context 2009, 138). While this was taking place from as early as the interwar period, this phenomenon soon paved way for Modernist expression in residential design by the 1940s.

Initially explored in Europe between 1905 and 1917, and subsequently disseminated, translated and transformed worldwide over the next fifty years, the Modernist idiom was primarily defined by abstraction in built form, restraint in ornamentation, clean architectural lines, open plans, a connection between indoor spaces and outdoor spaces, and the incorporation of new materials like concrete, steel and glass (Goad and Willis 2012, 464). In Toorak, a combination of patronage, post-war boom time economy and suburban growth enabled leading Australian Modernist architects to adapt this style to the country’s specific climate. What emerged was a Modernist aesthetic rooted in experimentation with geometric forms, raised structures and indoor-outdoor spaces. Architects like Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds were creating innovative and experimental Modernist designs to fit with the difficult topography or otherwise constrained nature of sites. For instance, Boyd’s Richardson’s House at 10 Blackfriars Close (1953) comprises a bridge-like structure suspended above a creek bed, while Grounds’ own house at 24 Hill Street (1950s), celebrated as an architectural experimentation in pure geometry, has been noted for its defining circular glass walled courtyard set within a square of solid brick walls.

Bold, innovative and above all experimental, architects practicing within the Modernist idiom established new forms of creative and technical expression, ultimately challenging the formal and decorative assumptions that dominated the architecture of the 19th and early 20th century.

- **Place History**

The land on which the residence at 7 Trawalla Avenue is presently situated formerly comprised the substantial grounds of the Victorian era Trawalla Estate (MMBW 1905). The Trawalla Estate was erected in 1864 and sold in 1930 for subdivision. This process reflected the wider pattern of subdivision and development that was taking place across Toorak during the 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, precipitating a pattern of subdivision and residential development in Toorak from the 1920s that lasted well into the post-war years. (Context Pty Ltd 2006).

In 1954, one Mr. Pascoe put a tender out in The Argus:

Builders Laborers wanted for concrete job, 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak. Apply Foreman on job, Mr. Pascoe. Overseas Constructions. (The Argus 1954, 35)

In 1955, the Sands and McDougall Street Directories for Melbourne record the site as being occupied by a structure still under construction (Sands and McDougall Street Directories, 1955). It was subsequently completed that year to designs by architect Roy Simpson of the architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Bros. Griffiths and Simpson. Initially established in 1933 by Otto ‘Rob’ Yuncken, John and Tom Freeman and William Balcombe Griffiths as Yuncken, Freeman Brothers and Griffiths, and later joined by Roy Simpson in 1938, the firm primarily focused on Modernist hospital design and practiced in the refined modern Georgian idiom during the initial years (Goad 2012, 781). By the post-war period, the firm’s work expanded to include houses, apartments, and urban office buildings. Following Yuncken’s death in 1951, Barry Patten and John Gates joined the partnership and oversaw the expansion of the commercial side of the practice. Celebrated for their high quality designs, innovative use of materials and ongoing commitment to Modernism as expressed through high-rise office buildings, the firm became one of the largest in Australia by the late 1960s (Goad 2012, 781). The best known works by the firm that were led by Roy Simpson include large scale projects such as the ACT Law Courts (1963), LaTrobe University Masterplan (1964) and the Cardinal Knox Centre (1971).

Originally occupied by Mrs. M. Pierce for over two decades, the property was ultimately put on sale in 1986. An auction advertisement in The Australian Jewish News describes the property as follows:

Toorak – 7 Trawalla Avenue, Auction: Wednesday, 22nd May at 3 PM. Sophisticated and elegant home of most Imagine design overlooking a superb paved courtyard and terraced northern garden with heated pool and a large and beautifully equipped cabana. Designed by eminent architect Mr. Roy Simpson, the house features a perfect balance of formal entertainment, living and excellent family accommodation and is convenient to the Toorak village. Large Entrance Lobby and glass enclosed Lanai opening to garden Terrace and Pool. Drawingroom and Study, superb Diningroom, Guests Cloakroom and W.C. Well fitted Kitchen and W.I. Cellar/Pantry. Guests or Staff accommodation of Sittingroom, Bedroom and Bathroom, Laundry. Upstairs: Main Bedroom with Sittingroom, Dressingroom and Bathroom, 2nd Bedroom with Dressingroom and Bathroom, 2 further Bedrooms and 3 unit Bathroom. Box Room. Cabana with Entertaining room, Bar, Changing room with Shower and W.C. (The Australian Jewish News, 10th Oct. 1986, pg. 47).

According to property records, ownership of the residence has not changed since this 1986 sale. It thus continues to be used as a private residential building.

Comparative Analysis

Distinguished by its bold rectilinear form, flat roof with exposed overhanging eaves, double storey construction, stepped roof form, glazing to the upper storey, ornamental restraint and tall aluminum framed windows, 7 Trawalla Avenue clearly articulates the key design features that typified the Post-war Modern style. While there is currently a dearth of Post-war Modernist style residences on the municipal Heritage Overlay, those that are listed are compare well to 7 Trawalla Avenue in terms of design quality and intactness. These include:

- **Richardson House, 10 Blackfriars Close, Toorak (HO360).** Designed by Robin Boyd, the Richardson House was constructed in 1954-55 and comprises a rhombus-shaped pavilion suspended over a creek bed. Described as a ‘fine example of Boyd’s domestic work and is of enhanced significance by virtue of its unusual and elegant structural system’, this residence is a more innovative and more

structurally expressive example the Post-war Modern Style. Although emblematic of radical experimentations with geometric form as opposed to the tempered Modernism displayed at 7 Trawalla Avenue, the house nevertheless observes several analogous design features. These include a preoccupation with strong geometric lines, open floor plans, an absence of ornamentation, and restrained materiality. Unlike 7 Trawalla Avenue, Richardson House has since undergone several substantial alterations and additions to the exterior and interior, including a large three-storey addition on the west side of the original building. It is thus considered less a less intact example of the Post-war Modern style.

- **35 Larnook Street, Prahran (HO645, currently under review as part of Stonnington Amendment C304).** Recommended by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd as an individually significant place on the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay, 35 Larnook Street is comparable to 7 Trawalla Avenue as a striking Post-war Modernist design that observes a distinct rectilinear form, brick materiality, clean lines, restraint in ornamentation, an integrated carport and street facing windows. Constructed in 1959 by noted European émigré architect Bernard Slawik, this property is more reminiscent of the European Modernist design tradition, particularly with respect to its raised sitting on pilasters and first floor window wall with repetitive modules and opaque blue glass spandrels.

Yuncken Freeman Architects' residential work in the Post-war Modernist style was very limited. Other than Kilpara Flats at 703 Orrong Road, Toorak, the only other known examples are the Smith House on Hopetoun Road, Toorak (which is now demolished), and Roy Simpson's own house at 60 Washington Street, Toorak (Recommended for inclusion in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay as part of this study). In establishing the significance threshold for Yuncken Freeman Architects' designs, the following comparative analysis thus includes one of their residential works outside of the style, as well as the aforementioned 60 Washington Street, Toorak that is being recommended as part of this study:

- **4 Grant Avenue, Toorak (HO491).** Designed by Yuncken Freeman & Griffiths in c.1936, this interwar Georgian Revival style residence is noticeably different from the firm's noted Modernist designs in the post-war period. It is an elegant example of the Regency idiom, owing to its symmetrical massing, fenestration, landscape and use of classical ornament. While it is of a different design style than 7 Trawalla Avenue, proto-modernist hints are visible in its use of sash windows without shutters and flat roof form. In addition, both buildings are comparable as the only two identified small scale private residential designs still extant that are associated with the firm Yuncken Freeman Architects.
- **Simpson House, 60 Washington Street, Toorak (Recommended for inclusion in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay).** Designed by Roy Simpson of Yuncken Freeman Bros, Griffiths and Simpsons as his own residence in 1952, the Simpson House is an intact and well-resolved example of the firm's Post-war Modern residential work. It is directly comparable to 7 Trawalla Avenue as a pavilion style Modernist residence oriented around an internal courtyard. Other key analogous features include its distinct rectilinear form, exposed overhanging eaves paired with a double storey construction, aluminum framed street facing windows, ornamental restraint, open floor plan and the incorporation of a buried, sunken garage.

The above comparative analysis illustrates the low representation of small-scale residential designs associated with Yuncken Freeman Architects on municipal Heritage Overlays. However, it also illustrates that the comparative value of the building extends beyond the associative architect and to the qualities

associated with other Post-war Modernist designs currently included on the Stonnington Heritage Overlay. With this, 7 Trawalla Avenue is considered a strong example of the style at a local level.

References

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Advertising (1954, May 8). *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, p. 35.

Advertising (1986, October 10). *The Australian Jewish News (Melbourne, Vic. : 1935 - 1999)*, p. 47.

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 7 Trawalla Avenue, date unknown (source: Yuncken Freeman Architects. [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: PIERCE]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00765, University of Melbourne)



Photograph shortly after construction showing the rear elevation of the residence (source: State Library of Victoria, Sievers, W., & Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson architects. (1955). [Residence at 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak, designed by Yuncken Freeman, Griffiths and Simpson] [picture]. SLV)



Photograph of the loungeroom shortly after construction (source: Sievers, W., & Yuncken Freeman Architects. (1953) [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: Pierce. House for Mrs. A.S. Pierce. Trawalla Ave., Toorak. 1953G]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00764, University of Melbourne)



Photograph of the sitting room shortly after construction (source: Sievers, W., & Yuncken Freeman Architects. (1953) [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: A.S. PIERCE 1953B]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00759, University of Melbourne)



Photograph of the sitting room shortly after construction (source: Sievers, W., & Yuncken Freeman Architects. (1953) [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: Pierce. House for Mrs. A.S. Pierce. Trawalla Ave., Toorak. 1953D Sitting room]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00761, University of Melbourne)



Photograph of the powder room and walk in robe shortly after construction (source: Sievers, W., & Yuncken Freeman Architects. (1953) [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: A.S. PIERCE 1953C]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00760, University of Melbourne)



Photograph of the internal stairwell shortly after construction (source: Yuncken Freeman Architects. (1953). [Residence for Lady Howse, Inscription: PIERCE 1953R]. Reference code: 2018.0115.00766, University of Melbourne)



Photograph showing the front door shortly after construction (source: State Library of Victoria Sievers, W., & Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson architects. (1955). [Residence at 7 Trawalla Avenue, Toorak, designed by Yuncken Freeman, Griffiths and Simpson] [picture].)



Overview of the building (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



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



Entrance treatment and portico (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



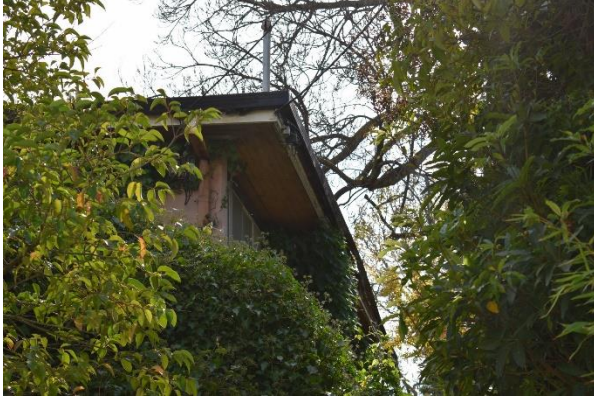
Entrance treatment and portico (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Underground garage (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Garage, upper storey and roof eaves (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Roof eaves on the eastern elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Oblique overview of the overgrown garden and façade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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Quality assurance review conducted by: Dr Luke James.