

Batrouney House (former)

Prepared by: GML Heritage

Address: 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North

Name: Batrouney House (former)	Survey Date: 1 October 2021
Place Type: Residential building	Architect: Morris & Pirrotta [Edgard Pirrotta]
Grading: Individually significant	Builder: Barry Davidson Constructions
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1975



Figure 1 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 2 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)

Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme taken from the *City of Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (2012):

9.3.2 Designing fine buildings

Balwyn North is a residential suburb situated 10 kilometres east of central Melbourne. To its south is Balwyn, which is separated from Balwyn North by Belmore Road. It is bounded on the north by the Eastern Freeway.

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century there was rapid suburban growth around the fringes of metropolitan Melbourne. Increased access to the motor car, growing prosperity in the postwar period, and the desire for the suburban lifestyle resulted in the push for new housing and services in the suburbs of Melbourne.

Despite various subdivisions in the late 1800s and in the early twentieth century, the vast majority of the housing stock in Balwyn North was not built until the postwar period.

1940s and postwar development

There had been a scattering of new housing development in the area north of Belmore Road from the late 1930s, but this area was developed significantly from the early 1940s as the new suburb of Balwyn North. Occupied with orchards and small farms, this was the one of the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land relatively close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples building new homes in the 1940s and 1950s (some of which included returned servicemen and women). The suburb developed as quintessentially middle-class, with a high proportion of brick homes and a notable absence of industrial activity. The ridge that ran along Doncaster Road benefited house blocks in the adjoining streets by providing sought-after views to the distant ranges and encouraging the building of often grandiose double-storey homes. Public transport was provided with the extension from the electric tram from East Kew to Balwyn North in 1938, along High Street and Doncaster Road. A large shopping centre, known as 'North Balwyn Village', developed along Doncaster Road.

In the 1950s, the potential for large-scale residential development in Balwyn North was recognised by a private company, A.V. Jennings Pty Ltd, which proposed the Trentwood Estate on a large tract of land off Doncaster Road (Built Heritage 2015:12). From 1947, Balwyn and Balwyn North were acknowledged not only as epicentres for the Small Homes Service but also for modern architect-designed homes in general. Several notable architects, including Robin Boyd, designed Modernist homes in Balwyn in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the streets east of Balwyn Road, including the elevated area around Beckett Park.

This new residential expansion in Balwyn North, which included the Greythorn area in the 1950s, in turn brought commercial development. Several local retail strips appeared in the north of the study area, including on Bulleen Road at Dorado Avenue, on Balwyn Road between Lucifer and Echo streets, and, most notably, the prominent strip on Doncaster Road, near the Trentwood Estate. In 1960, G.J. Coles opened a large store on the corner of Doncaster Road and Burke Road, which was Melbourne's first American-style self-service drive-in supermarket complex. New schools and churches also appeared during this period of development. Balwyn High School, located in Balwyn North, opened in 1954, followed by Greythorn High School in 1959. Several new churches were



constructed, extended or rebuilt to provide for burgeoning congregations (Built Heritage 2015:12). This included new Catholic churches at Deepdene, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

Since the 1990s, a significant influx of new immigrants into the area has seen the extensive replacement of interwar and 1940s homes with new residential development. The suburb of Balwyn North is today favoured by many new home-owners, for access to Balwyn High School – a co-educational government secondary school with nearly 2000 students.

History

The land at 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, originally formed part of Elgar's Crown Special Survey purchased and surveyed by Henry Elgar in 1841. Elgar's survey was subdivided into small farms and grazing runs and leased out for several years. When financial difficulties forced Elgar to sell his land, the majority was purchased by a shipowner named Brooks, while one-third of the survey remained in the possession of Mrs Dyce, the widow of one of Elgar's business partners.

George Frankhauser purchased 69 acres of Elgar's Special Survey in 1879. George died in 1897, leaving the land to his son George Frederick Frankhauser (known as Frederick).

Frederick Frankhauser died in 1918, leaving the property to his wife, Elizabeth, with the direction that on her death it be divided equally among their children.

In 1923, prior to Elizabeth's death, it was decided to subdivide the land upon certain reserve prices. The set prices proved to be too high and land sales were slow. Elise Stone, a married woman, purchased Lot 125 of the subdivision (the subject site) in December 1926. Mrs Stone owned the land for 30 years, selling it in 1957.

The property changed hands a further four times before it was purchased in 1973 by Trevor Batrouney, lecturer, and his wife Shamla.

The Batrouneys commissioned the architectural practice of Morris & Pirrotta to design their new home and a building permit was issued in February 1974 for the construction of a brick veneer house.

At the time of its construction Batrouney House attracted much attention. Designated as the Age-RAIA House of the Week in September 1975, the article drew attention to such unusual elements as the 'transparent roof of curved perspex', the 'sculptural relationship of floor levels and rooflines', the 'unusual grouping of rooms' and the 'frankly expressed downpipes and vents'. The article also drew attention to the houses striking colour scheme of red and white noting that 'Externally the house appears as a crisp red-and white form standing in dramatic contrast to the Balwyn streetscape.' (Age, 15 September 1975:15). Although soften over the years by the Batrouney's, this colour scheme remains intact. Batrouney House was also included in Norman Day's 1976 publication on modern residential architecture, titled *Modern Houses: Melbourne*. In the publication, Day admired:

the heavy, confident translation of a confirmed conceptualist. There are no beg-pardons, with the detailing strong and impressive. Virgin white walls scream as they are broken by twisting red glazing mullions, glossy red doors and the exposed galvanised downpipes and heating flues of the brutalist. The building talks a lot to any viewer. It is probably liked or disliked, but it will demand respect for its confidence. (Day 1976)



The Batrouneys lived in the house for almost 25 years. They sold it in 2000 to downsize to a smaller townhouse, again commissioning Edgard Pirrotta. Apart from a softening in the original crisp red and white colour scheme and the addition of a door to the garage, the house appears to be highly intact

Edgard Pirrotta, architect

Egyptian-born Italian architect Edgard Pirrotta (b.1944) commenced his architectural career in Australia in the office of G. Stuart Warmington (1922–2022), who was the leading Modernist architect in Melbourne's western suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s (Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'G Stuart Warmington', *Dictionary of Unsung Architects*, www.builtheritage.com.au). At that time, Pirrotta was equally interested in architecture, art and sculpture, and, while in Warmington's employ, he designed notable pieces of artwork for two large projects: a dalle de verre window for the new Sunshine Municipal Offices and a glass mural for the nearby Nelson Brothers funeral parlour (both 1966-67). Pirrotta went on to complete his architectural studies at the University of Melbourne and, while in his final year in 1971, was commissioned to design a house in Brighton for the Fletcher family. Realised in raw concrete block, this was one of the first houses in Australia in the Brutalist style; it attracted considerable attention in the architectural and mainstream press, and won the RIAA Bronze Medal for 1972. Establishing a partnership with fellow graduate Michael Morris, the young Pirrotta was subsequently in great demand as an architect, and designed a number of houses around Melbourne in a similar vein.

By the late 1970s, Pirrotta had largely abandoned the pure Brutalist aesthetic. More recent examples of his work, including the townhouse development that he designed for Trevor Batrouney in Rogerson Court, Balwyn (2000), tend to be in a softer contemporary mode.

Edgard Pirrotta was one of a group of architects to introduce the Brutalist style into residential architecture in Melbourne, and Batrouney House in Balwyn North is one of several similar houses that he designed in this idiom in the early and mid-1970s. Pirrotta's high regard in architectural circles in Victoria is demonstrated by the accolades his work received and by his roles as an assessor for the RIAA (Victorian Chapter) Awards, in 1973 and 1974, and other architecture-related judging panels (*Age*, 4 April 1977:20).

Description

The house at 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is a concrete block house that shows influences of the postwar Brutalist style. Set back from the street on a sloping site, the house has a J-shaped split-level plan that comprises a single-storey front wing (containing a living room, dining room and carport) and a double-storey rear wing (containing bedrooms, a family room, and service areas). The house has a stark external form with walls of bagged concrete blocks and an irregular roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked, all clad with metal tray deck roofing. The street façade is asymmetrical, with the flat-roofed double carport to the south side and the living room wing to the north. The latter has a steeply raked parapet wall to the outer edge and a curved corner at the other side, leading in to the centrally placed front door. The entrance is surmounted by a large fanlight, which also marks the termination of one of the most distinctive features of the house: a long glazed vault, made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing. Chimney flues, rainwater

heads and downpipes are all exposed. The colour scheme has been softened, from its original white walls with bright red trim to grey walls with burgundy trim.

A wide concrete driveway leads down from the carport to the street. There is an adjoining flight of shallow concrete-paved steps from the front door. On the street, the property line is marked by a tall concrete-block retaining wall with curved corner walls at the driveway entry which match the curved corner wall of the house. The wall has a matching bagged and painted finish. The front garden is simply planted with evergreen trees and low shrubs. The specimen trees in the front garden conceal some of the street frontage of the house from view (namely the north end of the west façade, which has, or had, bays of north-facing full-height windows).

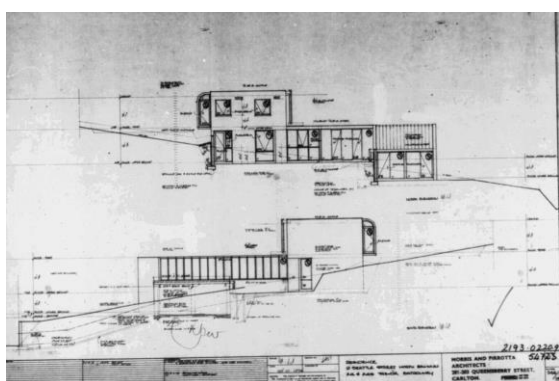


Figure 3 Original working drawing sheet. (Source: City of Boroondara)

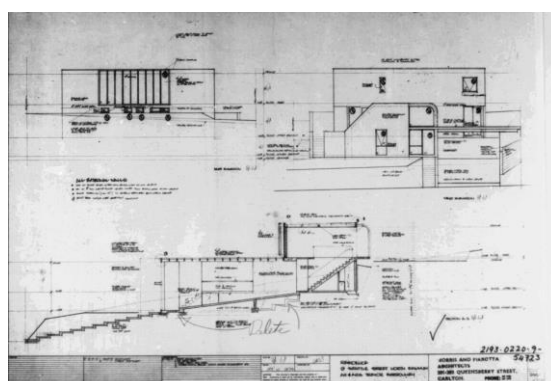


Figure 4 Original working drawing sheet. (Source: City of Boroondara)

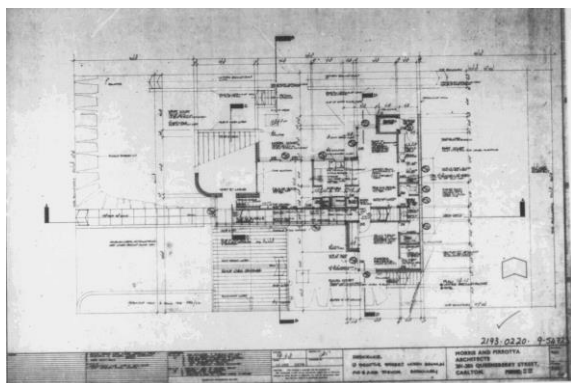


Figure 5 Original working drawing sheet. (Source: City of Boroondara)

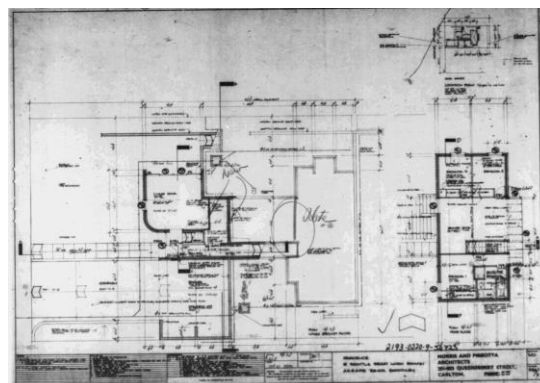


Figure 6 Original working drawing sheet. (Source: City of Boroondara)

Integrity

9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is highly intact: very few changes to the original or early fabric are visible. The building retains its original built form, roof form, bagged concrete blocks and window and door openings and joinery. Original details include its irregular roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked, all clad with metal tray deck roofing, a long glazed vault made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing, flat-roofed double carport and chimney flues, rainwater heads and downpipes which are left exposed.



The integrity of the place is enhanced by the retention of the original external colour scheme of the house (albeit subtly softened by the original owners), the flight of shallow concrete-paved steps that lead from the street to the front door, and the bagged and painted concrete block retaining wall with curved corner walls at the driveway entry. The addition of a garage door to the open carport has minimal impact on the integrity of the place and could be easily removed. Overall the place is of very high integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Commissioned in 1975, 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is somewhat atypical in the historical development of Balwyn North. The area's development is largely characterised by a significant boom of postwar residential settlement that began modestly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, then burgeoned at a phenomenal rate in the later 1950s and 1960s, but had abated considerably by the early 1970s. Although houses still continued to be erected in the area after that time, these tended not to follow any particular pattern beyond the fact that they were built wherever remaining vacant allotments were available. Although atypical, it is comparable to other postwar Modernist, architect-designed houses in Boroondara.

Modernist, architect-designed houses in Boroondara

Boroondara is identified as being a notable epicentre of fine architect-designed buildings, and eminent architects are well represented across all decades since the 1850s (Built Heritage 2015). In the postwar period, prominent Melbourne architects were commissioned in Boroondara and produced award-winning work for residential houses and public buildings. The mid-1970s saw a string of modern houses in Boroondara being awarded successive citations for the Age/RAIA House of the Week and Age/RAIA House of the Year. These include:

- Norman Day's own house in Hawthorn (1973)
- Batrouney House (subject place) in Balwyn by Edgard Pirrotta (1975)
- Trachsel House in Hawthorn by Max May (1976)
- Lagner House in Canterbury by Williams & Boag (1978)
- Kevin Makin's own house in Kew (1979).

9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is also included on this list and as such is recognised as contributing to this theme within the TEH (Built Heritage 2012: 228–233).

Other modernist houses were built in Balwyn North, Balwyn and elsewhere in Boroondara in the postwar period. Modernist postwar houses currently in the Heritage Overlay in Boroondara include:



Figure 7 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North (HO616), built in 1949. Robyn Boyd architect. (Source: Context 2014)

The Bunbury house represents a significantly early and intact example of Modernist architecture by prominent Australian architect, theorist, author and critic Robin Boyd. The Bunbury house displays clear associations in its design and detailing with the designs of Robin Boyd that were developed as part of the Small Homes Service, an initiative that sought to provide cost-effective, architecturally designed homes to a wider audience. The Bunbury House incorporates design elements that are recognisable and important in Boyd's design work, including the design of efficient floor plans, floor-to-ceiling glazing, projecting eaves, and suspended sun shading devices constructed from timber slats.



Figure 8 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn (HO177), built in 1952. Robin Boyd architect. (Source: *Docomomo Journal* 65, 2019)

Architecturally the design epitomises the approach to design held by Boyd and other Melbourne Modernists, through a minimalist external cuboid expression adorned only by 'structural decoration' as implied by the triangular bracing to windows. Like the nearby Stargazer house, it also took the form-follows-function dictum to a visual extreme, as seen in the design of the writer's study.



Figure 9 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North (HO928), built in 1948-49, alts 1959 and 1971. Robin Boyd architect. (Source: Built Heritage 2020)

Architecturally, the house at 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North, is significant as an early and notably intact example of the work of the eminent designer and writer Robin Boyd. It remains as one of relatively few surviving examples from this seminal phase of Boyd's career, prior to his celebrated partnership with Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg. Along with the Gillison House in Kireep Road, Balwyn (1951), and the Dunstan House in Yandilla Road, Balwyn (1950), it is one of three outstanding early and substantially intact houses by Robin Boyd in the area. Considered collectively, these houses provide rare and valuable evidence of the innovation, boldness and fresh design approaches of a young architect on the cusp of an illustrious career.



Figure 10 'Robin Boyd House I', 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell (VHR HO879, HO116), built in 1947. Robyn Boyd architect. (Source: National Trust of Australia (Victoria))

This house was considered by Boyd's contemporaries as the prototype Post-War Modern house. It took up new ideas about spatial flow, both inside and outside the building, revelling in the minimalism required by the war's materials conservation program and the challenges posed by the near-impossible site. It extended the leading architecture of its time and strongly influenced an emerging group of architects. The house is of architectural significance in that it demonstrates innovative design with regard to response to site, informality in planning, flowing spatial arrangements, use of materials and incorporation of built-in features. These are all aspects of domestic design which have now become common.

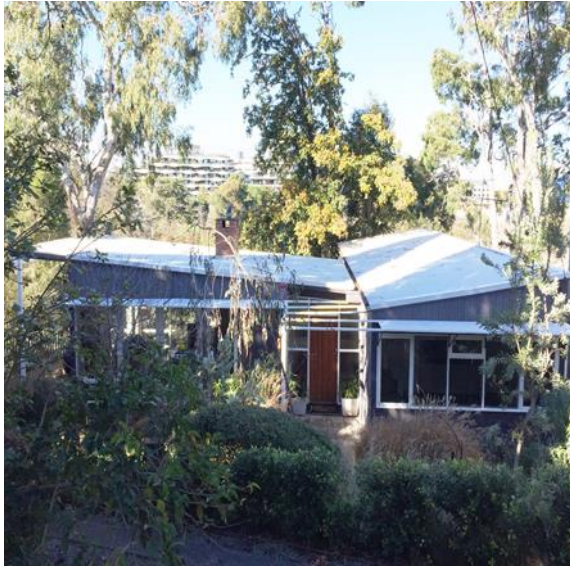


Figure 11 6 Reeves Court, Kew (HO822), built in 1955. Ernest Milston architect. (Source: Trethowan 2017)

6 Reeves Court is a lightweight, timber-framed house designed by architect Ernest Milston. The plan is formed of two rectangles reflective of the zones; the kitchen and living area are aligned with the street and run across the slope, while the bedrooms, bathroom and laundry are at right angles. Each wing has a separate skillion roof sloping to the other wing, creating an asymmetrical butterfly roof. A concrete driveway leads up from street level to a garage and studio, connected with the house by a pergola-covered path. A separate open pergola covers the entry. The building features extensive modular timber-framed glazing. Horizontal awnings provide shade to the north, echoed in the open timber framing over the windows to the south that allow light penetration.



Figure 12 18 Yarra Street, Kew (Significant within HO530), built in 1961. McGlashan & Everist architects. (Source: VHD)

The Guss residence at 18 Yarra Street, Kew, is a good example of the inventive, spare, and environment-responsive designs of McGlashan & Everist. Built in 1961, the Guss residence consists of three pavilion forms around a central courtyard staggered up the sloping site. Thin steel framing and light materials are used to reduce the bulk of the pavilions. Glazed walls float above the driveway and provide views down the site.



Figure 13 Dickie House, 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn (HO784), built in c1961-64. (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2017)

6 Fairview Street is representative of the postwar design ethos, sense of optimism and architectural modernisation pioneered by Robin Boyd and others. The high-quality design features honesty of structure and material, clean lines, deep eaves and an overall sense of innovation in design. The integration of the house with the landscape, seen in its 'floating' appearance over the banks of the Yarra, is characteristic of Modernist integration of architecture with natural context.



Figure 14 Cukierman residence, 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East (HO857), built in 1966. Hayden & Associates (attributed to Anthony Hayden). (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2018)

The Cukierman residence is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic, technical and associative significance to the City of Boroondara. The residence derives its aesthetic appeal from its unusual and striking architectural composition with references to the International Style. Interest is created through the floating curved, massed form fronting the street and subtle but evocative detailing of materials. The horizontal articulation of the window sets with their green mosaic tiled spandrel panels is applied with effect. Slender circular columns support the raised form, creating an open undercroft. The use of textured cream brick is continued in the landscaping elements such as the low walls and planters.

Like 9 Seattle Street, the above examples are all representative of the concentration of fine, leading architect-designed houses in Boroondara. However, 9 Seattle Street differs for its later build date (1975). Most of the postwar Modernist houses that are currently in the Heritage Overlay in Boroondara are representative of the early Modernism that was seen in Melbourne during the 1950s. They generally exhibit starkly expressed rectilinear floor plans with flat- or low-pitched skillion roofs and large walls of uninterrupted glazing. After 1960, residential architecture in Melbourne became more inclusive as local architects departed from the pure Modernism that had defined the so-called Melbourne Regional School and began to embrace more diverse influences from Europe, the USA and Asia.



It also differs in terms of its architectural expression, which is in the Brutalist style.

Brutalism in Australia

From the mid-1950s, Australian architects would have been aware of the burgeoning Brutalist movement in Europe, North America and Japan via reports in overseas journals, and from their own travels. One of the first local acknowledgements of the movement dates from July 1961, when Neil Clerehan wrote about it in his weekly Small Homes Service column in the *Age* newspaper (*Age*, 10 July 1961:10). Robin Boyd subsequently referenced the trend in his 1963 booklet, *The New Architecture*, describing New Brutalism (as it was then known) as 'an open revolt against facile prettiness and all forms of decorative sham' (quoted in Heritage Council of Victoria 2016).

By the mid-1960s a more robust architecture became widely accepted around the world, inspired originally by Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles (1952) and Jaoul House at Neuilly (1954), which displayed a new attitude to materials and construction, being composed of sculptural off-form reinforced concrete. The term Brutalism is closely associated with Le Corbusier's *béton brut* ('concrete in the raw', that is in its natural state when the formwork is removed, often to show the timber graining) (Goad & Willis 2012: p110).

Although the Brutalism movement was originally European, the influence in Australia came more from built works in North America and Japan. Although Brutalism in architecture is most commonly associated with the use of off-form concrete and raw concrete block, the British architects who pioneered the aesthetic in the 1950s adopted a palette of materials that more typically comprised face brickwork (at that time, more readily available than concrete block), rough timber and slate (Heritage Council of Victoria 2016).

The Brutalist movement emerged in Victoria in the late 1960s, slightly later than in other states. By the 1970s, Brutalist influenced houses in Melbourne shared many features in common. Circulation elements became overtly expressed and functional systems articulated with structure and service elements such as stairs, ramps and even ducting left exposed. Materials included rough, board-marked concrete, concrete block and face bricks, often manipulated to create complex sculptural forms, 45 degree chamfered corner elements and bold cantilevers.

In Australia, the Brutalist tendency in residential architecture initially followed the British lead of using face bricks, although local architects often used concrete block (sometimes in combination with face brick) as well as timber, slate and, occasionally, raw concrete (Heritage Council of Victoria 2016).

The Brutalist style is not well represented in Balwyn North or the broader municipality. Apart from the house at 9 Seattle Street, only two other houses built in the Brutalist style have been identified in the immediate locality: one at 12 Lloyd Street, Balwyn (date and architect unknown), and another at 13 Hardwicke Street, Balwyn (built in 1986 to a design by architect Charles Duncan). The latter, built a decade later than Batrouney House in Balwyn North, only partially shows the influence of Brutalism, combining the leitmotif of raw concrete blockwork with other stylistic influences such as Post-Modernism and the Prairie School.

Houses in Boroondara showing Brutalist influence include:



Figure 15 Townhouses, 76 Molesworth Street, Kew (HO325), built in 1969. Graeme Gunn architect. (Source: VHD 2005)

The townhouses at 76 Molesworth Street, Kew, are of an accomplished and distinctive residential design in a broadly Brutalist manner, which is characterised by a boldness in materials and skilful modulation of light and shade. 76 Molesworth Street, Kew, is a relatively early and successful example of the use of concrete-block and heavy un-planned timber, a combination that would characterise many architect-designed homes in Melbourne over the next decade.



Figure 16 Lewis House 8 Glen Street, Hawthorn (not in the Heritage Overlay), built in 1968. Nigel Lewis architect. (Source: realestate.com.au)

8 Glen Street is a single-storey house constructed of concrete blocks with a flat steel deck roof. Designed by Nigel Lewis while he was still an undergraduate student, Lewis (by his own admission) was interested in the developing Brutalist aesthetic although he deliberately eschewed the fashionable angular geometry in favour of a more conventionally planar approach, inspired by pre-war Bauhaus modernism.

The Lewis House is not included in the Heritage Overlay.

9 Seattle Street is comparable to the Molesworth Street townhouses at 76 Molesworth Street, Kew, and the Lewis House at 8 Glen Street, Hawthorn. These houses all show the emerging influence of a Brutalist aesthetic during the 1960s and 1970s. This is evident in the use of exposed concrete blockwork, although its expression at Lewis House is tempered with other influences such as the planar simplicity of the Bauhaus movement (Heritage Victoria 2016). The townhouses at 76 Molesworth Street are not directly comparable for their multi-dwelling form, whereas 9 Seattle Street is a freestanding house.

Houses in Melbourne showing Brutalist influence

Because of the limited number of comparable Brutalist examples in Balwyn North, Balwyn and Boroondara, the scope of the comparative analysis is necessarily broader.



Figure 17 Fletcher House, 3 Roslyn Street, Brighton (recommended for Heritage Overlay), built in 1971. Edgard Pirrotta architect. (Source: VHD 2010)

The house at 3 Roslyn Street, Brighton, is a double-storey Brutalist concrete-block house, of jagged form with steep skillion roofs clad in metal tray deck. It was built in 1971 to the design of architect Edgard Pirrotta. The house is architecturally significant as an early example of a dwelling in the Brutalist style; Fletcher House represents perhaps its first local application to residential design. The house won the Bronze Medal in the Age/RAIA House of Year competition for 1972. The resulting flurry of publicity made Brutalism more palatable in residential design, prompting the erection of countless similar houses over the ensuing years. Fletcher House is considered as a prototypal and highly influential example of this style in residential design.



Figure 18 35 Kinane Street, Brighton, built in 1975. Edgard Pirrotta architect. Recommended for further assessment in City of Bayside Post-War Modern Residential Heritage Study 2022. (Source: Google Street View)

35 Kinane Street, Brighton, is a single-storey linear house constructed of unpainted concrete blocks with a steeply pitched skillion roof clad in timber shingles. Built in 1975 to a design by Edgard Pirrotta, the house displays characteristics of the Brutalist style with its bold use of concrete blocks and internal spaces formed by raked ceilings with exposed timber beams.



Figure 19 Molnar House, 6 Flavia Court, Mount Waverley, built in 1976 to a design by Edgard Pirrotta

6 Flavia Court, Mount Waverley, is a substantial three-level house constructed of concrete blocks (overpainted) and steel with a flat roof, 45 degree angle glass and walls, circular stairs and a complex floor plan that reduces the bulk of the building towards the boundaries so as to not overwhelm neighbours. Built in 1976 to a design by Edgard Pirrotta, the house displays characteristics of the Brutalist style with its bold use of concrete and steel. The house was

of Morris & Pirrotta. (Source: Google Street View, January 2019)

winner of the Age-RAIA House of the Week in November 1976 (*Age*, 1 November 1976:21).



Figure 20 Leonard French House, 22 Alfred Street, Beaumaris (HO405), built in 1973. (Source: VHD 2010)

The French House, at 22 Alfred Street, Beaumaris, is of outstanding aesthetic and historic significance. It was designed as a house and studio for the important twentieth-century artist Leonard French, best known for his stained glass ceiling in the Great Hall at the National Gallery of Victoria. The house, one of many postwar architect-designed buildings constructed in Beaumaris, is substantially intact and is a good example of contemporary residential design of the 1970s. The house is important as the winner of the RAIA Bronze Medal for 1973 House of the Year. (Source: VHD)



Figure 21 Smith House, 16 Surf Avenue, Beaumaris, built in 1976. John Baird architect. Recommended for further assessment City of Bayside Post-War Modern Residential Heritage Study 2022. (Source: Google Streetview)

16 Surf Avenue, Beaumaris, is a two-storey house constructed of concrete blocks on a concrete slab and a flat and pitched roof of steel deck supported by exposed timber beams. The roof shape developed from the plan, which combines both double- and single-storey construction to achieve a separation of sleeping areas on the upper level. The sloping roof also provides privacy to the living areas, which are overlooked by neighbouring second-floor windows. The house was winner of the Age-RAIA House of the Week in September 1976. (Source: VHD)



Figure 22 Mason House, 1 Chavasse Street, Brighton, built in 1971. Bernard Joyce architect. (Source: realestate.com.au)

1 Chavasse Street, Brighton, is a two-storey house on an H-shaped courtyard plan, with a jagged skillion roofline. Built of concrete blockwork (exposed inside and out), it was one of the first houses in Melbourne to confidently express the mature Brutalist idiom, and received an RAIA/Age citation for House of the Week. (Source: VHD) In more recent times, the house has been rendered externally, which has severely compromised its interpretation as an early Brutalist house.



Of the above examples, Fletcher House (1971), French House (1973) and Smith House (1976) are most comparable to Batrouney House (1975). Like Batrouney House, all three houses are award-winning local examples of the application of the Brutalist aesthetic to residential architecture in the 1970s. At this time, residential architecture in Melbourne began to confidently express the Brutalist aesthetic, beginning with Bernard Joyce's Mason House (1971) in Brighton (much altered), followed by Edgard Pirrotta's influential Fletcher House. The success of Fletcher House resulted in a number of other Pirrotta houses being commissioned including Molnar House, Mount Waverley (now rendered), and 35 Kinane Street, Brighton.

Batrouney House compares well to these houses as a fine, award-winning and notably intact example of the Brutalist aesthetic as applied to residential design. With its irregular plan, jagged roofline and use of glazed vaulting, the house has a stark external form featuring walls of bagged concrete blocks and a roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked. One of the most distinctive features of the house is its long glazed vault, made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing. As is typical of other examples of the style, the house's chimney flues, rainwater heads and downpipes are all exposed.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Built in 1975 to a design by prominent Melbourne-based Italian architect Edgard Pirrotta of Morris & Pirrotta, 9 Seattle Street featured in architecture critic Norman Day's 1976 publication *Modern Houses: Melbourne*, among profiles of some 50 modern houses by a then-emerging generation of younger architects. As recipient of the September 1976 Age-RAIA House of the Week award, Batrouney House exemplifies the high concentration of modern houses of the mid-1970s in Boroondara that received architectural accolades or were awarded RAIA citations.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

N/A

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

N/A

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

N/A

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).



9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is of local aesthetic significance as a fine and notably intact example of the Brutalist aesthetic as applied to residential architecture during the 1970s. With its irregular plan, jagged roofline and use of glazed vaulting, the house has a stark external form featuring walls of bagged concrete blocks and a roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked. The house retains many distinctive features including its long glazed vault, made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing. As is typical of other examples of the style, the house's chimney flues, rainwater heads and downpipes are all exposed. Being highly intact, and retaining its original front and side fences and entry steps, the house is a bold and eye-catching element in the streetscape.

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

N/A

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 their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

N/A

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

N/A

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Batrouney House at 9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, designed by architect Edgard Pirrotta in 1975, is significant.

Significant fabric includes:

- asymmetrical built form with a steeply raked parapet wall and curved corner to the principal façade
- walls of bagged concrete blocks
- original external colour scheme (albeit subtly softened by the original owners)
- irregular roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked, all clad with metal tray deck roofing
- a long glazed vault, made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing
- flat-roofed double carport
- exposed chimney flues, rainwater heads and downpipes
- flight of shallow concrete-paved steps that lead from the street to the front door
- bagged and painted concrete-block retaining wall with curved corner walls at the driveway entry.

The garage door is a later addition and is not significant.

How is it significant?

The house is of historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Built in 1975 to a design by prominent Melbourne-based Italian architect Edgard Pirrotta of Morris & Pirrotta, 9 Seattle Street featured in architecture critic Norman Day's 1976 publication *Modern Houses: Melbourne*, among profiles of some 50 modern houses by a then-emerging generation of younger architects. As a recipient of the September 1976 Age-RAIA House of the Week award, Batrouney House exemplifies the high concentration of modern mid-1970s houses in Boroondara that received architectural accolades or were awarded RAIA citations. (Criterion A)

9 Seattle Street, Balwyn North, is of local aesthetic significance as a fine and notably intact example of the Brutalist aesthetic as applied to residential architecture during the 1970s. With its irregular plan, jagged roofline and use of glazed vaulting, the house has a stark external form featuring walls of bagged concrete blocks and a roofline that incorporates sections that are variously flat, low-pitched or more steeply raked. The house retains many distinctive features including its long glazed vault, made of curved timber beams with perspex infill, which extends all the way from the front door to the staircase in the rear wing. As is typical of other examples of the style, the house's chimney flues, rainwater heads and downpipes are all exposed. Being highly intact, and retaining its original front



and side fences and entry steps, the house is a bold and eye-catching element in the streetscape.
(Criterion E)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External paint controls	
<i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	Yes
Internal alteration controls	
<i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree controls	
<i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	
<i>Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	Yes (front retaining walls and steps)
Victorian Heritage Register	
<i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	
<i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal heritage place	
<i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No
Incorporated plan	
<i>Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?</i>	No

Identified by:

Built Heritage Pty Ltd, Balwyn and Balwyn North Heritage Study, 2013



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