

Dickie House Statement of Significance, August 2020

Heritage Place: 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn

PS ref no: HO784



What is significant?

The Dickie House and its grounds at 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn are significant. The house, built c. 1961-64, possesses highly articulated Japanese-inspired detailing; and landscaped garden designed and planted by acclaimed Australian landscape architect Mervyn Davis MBE with stone and rockwork by noted landscape designer Ellis Stones.

How is it significant?

The Dickie House is of local historical, architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The Dickie House (1961-63) is of historical significance as it is representative of an established pattern of architect designed houses that responded to difficult sites, establishing the City of Boroondara as one of the foremost testing grounds for experimental architecture in Australia. (Criterion A)

The garden is an uncommon example of a residential garden design by landscape architect Mervyn Davis with landscape designer Ellis Stones, both acclaimed Australian landscape designers who played prominent roles in establishing landscape architecture as a profession in Australia. The elaborate design was drawn by Mervyn Davis and features extensive areas of stonework and a stone feature in the lawn, presumably overseen by Ellis Stones. The planting

scheme is a rare example by Mervyn Davis undertaken during her limited period of private practice between 1961 and 1963. (Criterion A)

The Dickie House is representative of the post-war design ethos, optimism and architectural modernisation pioneered by Robin Boyd and others. The design features honesty of structure and material, clean lines, deep eaves and an overall sense of innovation in design characteristic of this period. The integration of the house with the landscape, with its 'floating' appearance over the banks of the Yarra is characteristic of Modernist design. (Criterion D)

6 Fairview Street is aesthetically significant for its accomplished modernist garden design by noted landscape architect Mervyn Davis with highly acclaimed landscape designer Ellis Stones. The plan was drawn by Mervyn Davis in 1961-62, and was designed in response to the modernist house and the surrounding landscape. The plan shows a design influenced by Japanese gardens, modernism, and Australian landscape themes. It was designed to step down the slope, allow views over the garden to the Yarra River, and included access in the north boundary to the adjacent Fairview Park. The original garden included a level area of lawn punctuated by a carefully grouped cluster of large stones (bluestone boulders) to form a sculptural feature, large areas of natural appearing stone laid on areas of sloped land, paths and garden beds defined by charcoal grey concrete paving creating both angular and biomorphic forms, areas of sandstone paving, a functional space along the south side of the garden. The original design also incorporated a Japanese stone lantern and rockery which are still extant. The more steeply contoured parts of the garden were landscaped with retaining walls and stepped pathways of bluestone pavers. Although some mature eucalypts were retained as part of the design, framing views to and from the house, the original planting scheme otherwise comprised predominantly non-Australian plants, including roses, rhododendron and azaleas, citrus trees, a ginkgo tree, and elm. (Criterion E)

Primary source

City of Boroondara Municipal-Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 3: Hawthorn (Context Pty Ltd, 20 July 2020)