

## ACTOR'S STUDIO HOUSE



AS May 2022



AS Front Door 2022



AS 2022 Back Door



AS Aerial Photo of Extent  
2022

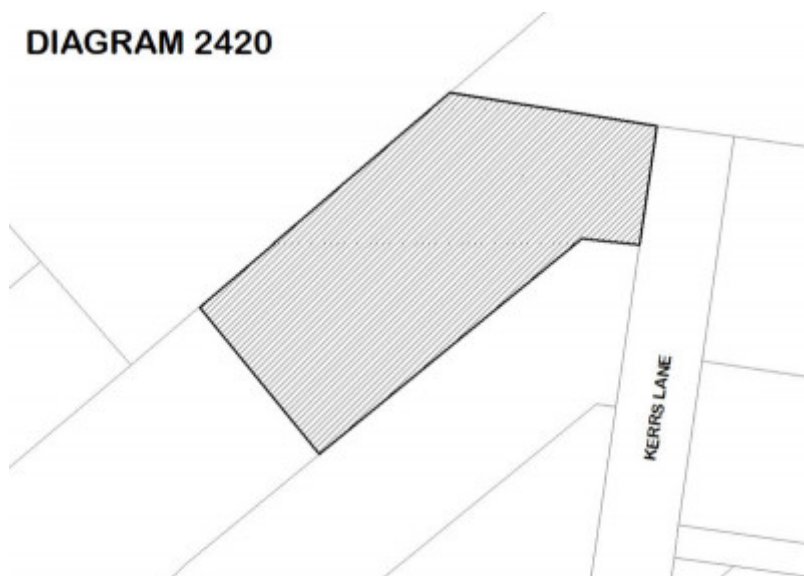


AS c 1980s



Actor's Studio House - Living  
Room and Kitchen 1980s

DIAGRAM 2420



AS Extent Diagram 2420

### Location

REAR 22 SHIEL STREET NORTH MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

### Municipality

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2420

## VHR Registration

August 18, 2022

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 9, 2022

### What is significant?

The Actor's Studio House is a two-storey corrugated iron building designed by architect Suzanne Dance in 1975 for actor Max Gillies as its first resident, located in the rear garden of an inner-city terrace house.

### How is it significant?

The Actor's Studio House is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places/objects.

### Why is it significant?

The Actor's Studio House is historically significant because it was the first building solely designed by a woman architect to be awarded a Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victorian Chapter) medal. Although buildings designed by teams including women architects had been awarded medals and commendations from the 1950s, it was not until Suzanne Dance received the New Housing medal for the Actor's Studio House in 1980 that a woman architect was awarded a medal for a design in her own right. [Criterion A]

The Actor's Studio House is architecturally significant as a notable example of a fine and early exploration of the corrugated iron revival movement in Victoria. Appearing as a tightly positioned collection of corrugated iron forms hidden in the garden, it is an exceptional example of small-scale design, responding sensitively to an irregularly shaped inner-city backyard. The interior is both spacious and intimate, with each space given its own differentiated shape, volume and detailing. The considered and resolved design conveys a sense of resourcefulness, and the building functions well as a creative studio and residence. This building was acknowledged as outstanding for its architectural design by the RAlA (Victorian Chapter) in 1980. [Criterion D]

## Permit Exemptions

## General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

## Specific Exemptions:

### Introduction

The purpose of this information is to assist owners and other interested parties when considering or making decisions regarding works to a registered place. It is recommended that any proposed works be discussed with an officer of Heritage Victoria prior to making a permit application. Discussing proposed works will assist in answering questions the owner may have and aid any decisions regarding works to the place.

It is acknowledged that alterations and other works may be required to keep places and objects in good repair and adapt them for use into the future. However, under the Act a person must not knowingly, recklessly or negligently remove, relocate or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate all or any part of any part of a registered place without approval. It should be noted that the definition of 'develop' in the Act includes any works on, over or under the place.

If a person wishes to undertake works or activities in relation to a registered place or registered object, they must apply to the Executive Director for a permit. The purpose of a permit is to enable appropriate change to a place and to effectively manage adverse impacts on the cultural heritage significance of a place as a consequence of change. If an owner is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that Heritage Victoria be contacted.

Permits are required for anything which alters the place or object, unless a permit exemption is granted. Permit exemptions usually cover routine maintenance and upkeep issues faced by owners as well as minor works or works to the elements of the place or object that are not significant. They may include appropriate works that are specified in a conservation management plan. Permit exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under section 38 of the Act) or after registration (under section 92 of the Act). It should be noted that the addition of new buildings to the registered place, as well as alterations to the interior and exterior of existing buildings requires a permit, unless a specific permit exemption is granted.

### Disrepair of registered place or registered object

Under section 152 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not allow that place or object to fall into disrepair.

## Failure to maintain registered place or registered object

Under section 153 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not fail to maintain that place or object to the extent that its conservation is threatened.

## Conservation management plans

It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan is developed to manage the place in a manner which respects its cultural heritage significance.

## Archaeology

There is no identified archaeology of State-level significance at the place. However, any works that may affect historical archaeological features, deposits or artefacts at the place is likely to require a permit, permit exemption or consent. Advice should be sought from the Archaeology Team at Heritage Victoria.

## Aboriginal cultural heritage

To establish whether this place is registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* please contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The *Heritage Act 2017* and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* are separate pieces of legislation. Please be aware that both Acts are required to be satisfied and satisfying the requirements of one Act may not satisfy the requirements of the other.

If any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time it is necessary to immediately contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ascertain requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. If works are proposed which have the potential to disturb or have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage it is necessary to contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ascertain any requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

## Other approvals

Please be aware that approval from other authorities (such as local government) may be required to undertake works.

## Notes

- All works should ideally be informed by a Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.
- Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
- Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits where applicable.

## General Conditions

- All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place.
- Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place are revealed which relate to the significance of the place, then the exemption covering such works must cease and Heritage Victoria must be notified as soon as possible.

## Permit Exemptions

The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Actor's Studio House.

## General

- Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of existing fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
- Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing external services such as plumbing, electrical cabling, surveillance systems, pipes or fire services which does not involve changes in location or scale, or additional trenching.
- Repair to, or removal of items such as antennae; aerials; and air conditioners and associated pipe work, ducting and wiring.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.
- Painting of previously painted external and internal surfaces in the same colour, finish and product type provided that preparation or painting does not remove all evidence of earlier paint finishes or schemes.
- Application of timber oil and varnish to currently oiled or varnished timber surfaces.
- Cleaning including the removal of surface deposits by the use of low-pressure water (to maximum of 300 psi at the surface being cleaned) and neutral detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing with plastic (not wire) brushes.

## Interiors

- Removal or replacement of existing hooks, brackets and the like for hanging wall mounted artworks.
- Installation, removal or replacement of existing electrical wiring. If wiring is currently exposed, it should remain exposed. If it is fully concealed it should remain fully concealed.
- Removal or replacement of smoke and fire detectors, alarms and the like, of the same size and in existing locations.
- Repair, removal or replacement of existing air-conditioning units provided that the central exterior unit is concealed, and that the work is done in a manner which does not alter building fabric.

## Garden

- The processes of gardening including mowing, pruning, mulching, fertilising, planting and the removal of plants, trees and weeds.

# Landscape and outdoor areas

- Removal, replacement or installation of subsurface watering and drainage systems. Existing lawns, gardens and hard landscaping, including paving, paths and roadways are to be returned to the original configuration and appearance on completion of works.
- Like for like repair and maintenance of existing hard landscaping including paving and footpaths where the materials, scale, form and design is unchanged.
- Installation of physical barriers or traps to enable vegetation protection and management of vermin such as rats, mice and possums.

## Freestanding garden shed to the southwest of the Actor's Studio (c.2000)

- All works within the footprint of the shed which do not change the size or exterior colour pallet of the shed.
- Removal of the shed.

## Title boundary fences

- Removal and replacement of title boundary fences to the same scale with like for like materials.

### Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates 1975,

Architect/Designer Suzanne Dance,

Heritage Act  
Categories Registered place,

Other Names ACTOR'S HOUSE, ACTORS STUDIO HOUSE, ARTISTS STUDIO, ARTIST'S STUDIO (REAR 22 SHIEL STREET), ARTIST'S STUDIO (REAR 22 SHIEL STREET), 22 SHIEL STREET, NORTH MELBOURNE STUDIO, MAX GILLIES STUDIO, FORMER GILLIES HOUSE, FORMER GILLIES STUDIO, GILLIES HOUSE, REAR 22 SHIEL STREET, SUZANNE DANCE STUDIO, STUDIO,

Hermes Number 208838

Property Number

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### History

### Suzanne Dance

Judith Suzanne (Su) Dance was born in Melbourne in 1942 and studied at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1965. In that year, 5% of registered architects in Victoria were women (55 out of 1,171). After

working for a number of local firms (including Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell) and the NSW Government Architect's Office, she began her own practice in 1971. Her early work and concerns ran in parallel to the issues that would increasingly come to command the attention of the architectural community. These included challenging government policies of slum clearance, particularly in Fitzroy, pursuing protection of heritage places through the new *Historic Buildings Act 1974* and fostering interests in history, conservation, and the value of neighbourhood communities, which are reflected in her design approaches. In the early 1980s, Dance was a member of the Historic Buildings Council of Victoria.

Dance was a foundation member of the Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service (FHRAS) which was established in 1975 by Dance, Peter Lovell and Peter Elliott. FHRAS was a community service providing free information, advice and referral on housing repair and building issues for those who could otherwise not afford it, while conserving at-risk housing stock in the ageing fabric of Fitzroy. At a time of significant social optimism and political participation, the FHRAS was a local response to a global movement of architectural activism and community empowerment. Dance was also Secretary of the Urban Conservation Advisory Committee of the Fitzroy Council (1977-83) and a member of the Fitzroy History Society. Her skills were acknowledged in 1981 when she was awarded a scholarship to attend the ICCROM Architectural Conservation Course in Rome. After her return to Melbourne a year later, she became a consultant in architectural history and conservation, and taught at RMIT University during the 1980s.

## Australian Architecture in the 1970s

Between the 1950s and 1970s multiple architectural streams emerged which reflected the diversity and innovation of design philosophies, aesthetics and approaches to building materials. The leading figures in 1950s architecture in Victoria continued their impact through the 1960s and 1970s and were joined by the next generation of architecture graduates, such as Daryl Jackson and Maggie Edmond. Influences on domestic architecture diversified. Organic architecture, New Brutalism, as well as movements in design from Japan, Scandinavia and the West Coast of the United States, all increasingly found expression in the architect designed residences and holiday homes of metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

In the 1970s a number of architects working in Australia were inspired by the landscape and their designs reflected environmental concerns. Ideas around sustainability prompted the use of low-cost, rustic and recycled materials and natural colours and textures which created a feeling of familiarity and closeness. In this school, buildings were reconceptualised as psychologically nurturing spaces for human activity, and designers experimented with smaller scale homes, and vernacular materials such as corrugated iron. During this era, the fusion of indoors and outdoors and distinctive spatial composition became accepted as a primary mode of architectural expression. These principles were also seen in larger scale commissions by Neil Clerehan, Guilford Bell, McGlashan & Everist and Kevin Borland.

## Actor's Studio House 1975

The Actor's Studio House was designed by Suzanne Dance for actor Max Gillies to be the first resident. It was built on land owned by Bill and Lorna Hannan. All four moved in socially progressive creative circles in inner Melbourne during the 1970s. Dance and Gillies worked together to ensure that the space suited Gillies' creative and residential needs. Dance's inspiration for corrugated iron forms came from the higgledy-piggledy corridor of sheds, lean-tos, and fences of this material encountered along the walk from Dryburgh Street to the end of Kerrs Lane (where the original separate entrance at the rear of 22 Shiel Street was located). The Studio was constructed by Dirk van Meurs, a skilled Melbourne builder Dance closely worked with to create specific forms, details and finishes.

The Actor's Studio House is typical of Dance's work. It reflects her interests in the inner city, a restrained and resourceful approach to design, and commitment to working closely with clients to produce finely crafted results on a budget. The Studio borrows the lush, treed backyard of 22 Shiel Street and has the feeling of an intimate creative sanctuary. The positioning of a new building in relationship to a Victorian terrace speaks to Dance's interest in additions and alterations to heritage buildings, for which she is renowned. The 1970s saw the beginnings of urban renewal, a trend towards conversions of disused industrial and commercial buildings to residential spaces, and sensitive additions to historic residences. From the 1970s onwards, Dance was a key and

sought-after exponent of this approach in Melbourne.

## 1970s corrugated iron revival

Composed of corrugated iron forms, the Actor's Studio House is part of a discernible 'corrugated iron revival' or 'corrugated iron aesthetic' that emerged in Australia during the 1970s. Corrugated iron is a lightweight, strong and durable material invented in Britain in 1829. It weathers relatively well and has been a recognisable element in Australian architecture since the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the first corrugated iron structures in Australia were portable prefabricated buildings shipped to Australia from Britain in the 1850s. Since then, corrugated iron sheeting has been commonly used in farming and industrial buildings, most commonly on roofs.

In the early 1900s, steel began to replace iron in the manufacturing process, but the terms 'corrugated iron' and 'galvanised iron' have persisted to this day. During the 1970s, corrugated iron underwent a revival and became part of designs reminiscent of early Australian bush homes and rural shearing sheds. Glenn Murcutt was one of the chief exponents of the corrugated iron aesthetic first demonstrated at his large Marie Short House at Kempsey, NSW (1975). Murcutt's innovative residential use of corrugated iron at Kempsey was acclaimed and he continued to explore the material throughout his distinguished career. Suzanne Dance's Actor's Studio House is a similarly early example of this aesthetic (1975) although more modest in scale. Dance used new corrugated iron, rather than recycled, because it was more easily bent into arched shapes.

## Australian Institute of Architects Award 1980

The professional body that has become known as the Australian Institute of Architects (Victorian Chapter) awarded its first medal for architectural excellence in 1929. From that time, women undoubtedly played a role in the creation of critically recognised and awarded buildings in the state. The first woman named in an RAIA (Victoria) award was Renate Block who was commended along with Gerd Block for the Siemens Australasia Headquarters in Richmond in 1964. But it was not until the Actor's Studio House was awarded the Medal for New Housing in 1980 that an award was given by the RAIA (Vic) to a work designed by a woman architect in her own right. That year, the number of registered woman architects in Victoria was 5% (166 out of 2,348).

The Actor's Studio House was critically acclaimed and widely published in Australia and internationally. Critic Peter Davey wrote in the UK *Architectural Review* in December 1985: '... Dance has used the material [corrugated iron] in whatever mode (upwards, downwards or sideways) that seemed appropriate for that moment. The result is a remarkably changeable building. It hangs together with a cheerful insouciance, totally different from Glenn Murcutt's perfectionist exercises... It is a new house yet has the feeling of an old one which has been repaired and added to over a long period of time... it reflects and celebrates the muddledness and variety of ordinary life.' [Davey, Peter 'Suzanne Dance: House, Melbourne', *Architectural Review* (UK), 1 December 1985].

## Selected bibliography

- Burns, Karen 'Su Dance' in Goad, Philip & Willis, Julie (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2012.
- Dance, Suzanne, Interview 29 March 2022.
- Davey, Peter 'Suzanne Dance: House, Melbourne', *Architectural Review*, 1 December 1985.
- Goad, Philip 'Former Gillies House/Studio', *Melbourne Architecture*, Watermark Press, Boorowa, 2009, p. 206.
- Van Schaik, Leon, 'Suzanne Dance', *Transition: Discourse on Architecture*, no.31, 1990, p.38-47.
- Willis, Julie *A Statistical Survey of Registered Women Architects in Australia*, Faculty of Art, Architecture & Design, University of South Australia, 1997.
- Wixted, D, S. Zahra and S. Reeves 'Studio (flat)', *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria*, Oct 2008, p. 209.

## Assessment Against Criteria



#### Criterion

The Actor's Studio House is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places/objects.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2420

Category: Registered Place

Place: Actor's Studio House

Location: Rear, 22 Shiel Street, North Melbourne

Municipality: Melbourne City

All of the place shown outlined on

Diagram 2420 encompassing part of Plan of Consolidation 366711 to the northern, southern and eastern lot boundaries, and extending six metres from the south western eaves of the building.

Dated 18 August 2022

STEVEN AVERY

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*