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# Purcell House



B7351 Purcell House



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## Location

17 Hartlands Road,, IVANHOE EAST VIC 3079 - Property No B7351

## Municipality

BANYULE CITY

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 12, 2007

What is significant? The house at 17 Hartlands road, East Ivanhoe, was designed for the Purcell family by the eminent Australian architect, Guilford Bell. Designed in 1962, and situated centrally on a long rectangular suburban block, it was completed in November 1963. Bell was responsible for all aspects of the external and internal design as well as working with landscaper Gordon Ford on the layout and format of the garden. He was also involved in all modifications such as the inclusion of the pool and changing rooms in the early 1970s. Bell established an extremely good relationship with the clients which resulted in the total integrity of his design concept being maintained. The house remained in the possession of the original clients until October 2005. It is remarkably intact and in very good condition internally and externally, and the garden remains true to the original concept.

The house is single storey, built of Monier Besser concrete blocks in a pale sandstone colour and with a flat roof of galvanised steel pierced by six small sky-lights over internal service rooms. Two narrow wings of a formal living space and bedrooms and bathrooms are bridged by a kitchen/ family room to form an H-shaped plan. This

encloses a private courtyard to the west and forms a recessed porch area on the eastern elevation. All the windows are floor to ceiling, without glazing bars, and of a standard dimension to create the 'formal symmetry' of each elevation. All the service elements are hidden. The windows are aligned to allow views through the house; of the external landscape through the courtyard space, and from front to back.

As well as designing the house, Bell was responsible for all internal features incorporating both built in and free-standing furniture. These are still an integral part of the house and valued by the new owners. The use of the exposed concrete blocks for internal walls and mountain ash boarding for ceilings, joinery and floors all contributed to the modern 'minimalist' interior.

How is it significant? The Purcell house, 1962/3, designed by Guilford Bell, is significant for architectural and aesthetic reasons at a State level.

Why is it significant? Architecturally the Purcell House is significant as a seminal example of the work of Guilford Bell, one of Australia's most respected and influential architects. It is important for defining and developing Bell's distinctive signature of formal symmetry and order which became a recognised feature of his later work. Bell's experience of proportion and symmetry gained in the architectural practice of the classical architect, Professor Albert Richardson, is expressed in a totally modern way. The house demonstrates Bell's desire for perfection and total order whilst also retaining a strong personal character adapted to his clients' needs and lifestyle. The house is outstanding as an excellent example of early 1960s progressive domestic architecture, and also of Bell's practice of the 'Art of Architecture'. Scholarly critiques of Bell's life and work by Joseph Burke, Philip Goad and Leon Van Schaik describe the Purcell House as architecturally significant and Graham Fisher, his partner in later years, states that it was one of which Bell himself was particularly proud.

Aesthetically the Purcell House exemplifies Bell's mastery of the sculptural interplay of mass and void and of his pursuit of excellence in design and detailing. The meticulous selection of materials and finish, and the precision of detail have stood the test of time and remain as good today as when the house was built. The use of standard modular dimensions for all openings creates a harmonious symmetry of both external elevations and internal walls, whilst the careful alignment of the floor to ceiling windows, typical of Bell's later work, facilitates the interplay of internal and external space. The landscape elements and integral courts are also used to enhance and express this articulation of the house's spaces. The integrity of the design concept is preserved by the presence of the original furniture as designed or specified by Bell and also by the well conceived original services.

Classified: 26/06/2006

Hermes Number 71686

Property Number

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