

## YANN HOUSE

---

<b>Address</b>	21 Keam Street, Ivanhoe East
<b>Significance</b>	Local
<b>Construction Date</b>	1960-63
<b>Period</b>	Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Date Inspected</b>	January 2021



### Statement of Significance

#### What is Significant?

*Yann House* at 21 Keam Street, Ivanhoe East is significant. It was constructed between 1960 and 1963 for the Yann family. The design appears to have been a collaborative effort between Geoffrey Woodfall and Garside and Genser Architects.

The significant elements are its original gabled roofed form, chimney, tan/orange brickwork, dark-painted timber fascia and pergola, cantilevered balcony with weatherboard balustrade, screened entry stair, planter box walls, piers, undercroft (concrete floor and plaster ceiling), and timber-framed window banks. The driveway, 'volcanic rock' retaining walls, and terraced character of the front garden complements the overall aesthetic.

Later addition elements at the rear are not significant.

#### How is it Significant?

*Yann House* is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Banyule.

#### Why is it Significant?

*Yann House* is of historical significance as a compelling instance of neo-Wrightian organic regionalism in the early 1960s. This approach evolved as a striking variant of Melbourne's modern movement, reflecting the aspiration of a relatively small group of architects to develop a regionalised, more humanist version of modernism related closely to local landscapes. The design seems

to have been undertaken as a collaboration between Geoffrey Woodfall, a noted practitioner of the organic/regional mode, and the lesser-known practice of Garside and Genser. Viewed in the context of Woodfall's wider work, his influence (or responsibility) for the design of *Yann House* is clear. As an upmarket and sizable example of an architect-designed 'modern' house – one distinct from the mass of residences produced at the time – *Yann House* is important in illustrating the development of Ivanhoe East as an affluent suburban enclave and focal point for modernism in the municipality. It is the only known instance of Woodfall's work in the municipality. (Criterion A)

*Yann House* is of aesthetic significance as a generally intact and expressive example of the organic/regional approach adopted by Geoffrey Woodfall, especially his considered reformulation of Wright's Usonian projects in a local setting. The streetscape presence of the dwelling, raised-up and slung across the sloping site, and foregrounded by a generous garden, is prominent. Such an embrace of the street is less typical of the idiom, which often adopts more secluded public postures. The restraint of the design – a Woodfall hallmark – is relieved by introducing movement into the frontage through subtle planar shifts and projections, counterpoised by the robust brickwork. The interplay of the 'floating' cantilevered balcony with the yawning carport beneath, taken in after the eye sweeps up the tapered driveway, is conspicuous. A limited 'earthy' material palette ties *Yann House* to the site and underscores its cohesiveness. Alongside Wright's influence, conveyed by brick massing, the merger of site and dwelling, and sheltered entry sequence, are other design elements – the low gable roof and pared-down character of the design – that reflect Woodfall's ability to contain the organic excesses of the American master and explore regional sources in a 'modern' manner. (Criterion E)

## Description

*Yann House* is elevated above street level, parallel to the contour, at the centre of a large wedge-shaped allotment that steps gently down east to west. In siting the residence, its designers – Geoffrey Woodfall and Garside and Genser Architects – responded to the property's tapered shape as well as the availability of likely scenic views to the river and across.

The dwelling is well set back from Keam Street, providing space for an ample front garden, mainly composed of terraced lawn areas and planting beds. The vegetation is mature and obscures the lower half of *Yann House*. An oblique and inclined driveway with turning bay, surfaced in coarse aggregate and edged with smooth concrete divides the front garden. It is a conspicuous component, as are the flanking mid-height purplish/brown 'volcanic rock' retaining walls. These elements curve upon meeting the street, splitting into a pair of stepped retaining walls, which run the property boundary, similar to many properties in the area.



The 'Working Drawings' (reproduced in Site-Specific) record the natural fall of the land and directions for some excavation activity (possibly cut and fill) to enable a lower ground floor for the single-storey *Yann House*. This plan details the former as containing an undercroft 'car port' with a separated 'workshop' behind. In response to the change of landfall, the dwelling's ground floor has an internal split-level plan. Overall, the effect is a building set in the landscape, rather than above or apart.

The original footprint is square with a projecting wing (south-east) covered by a gabled roof of two different low pitches with sturdy timber fascia. It appears to be now clad in corrugated metal sheeting (initially 'Brownbuilt' metal tray roofing'). A squat and broad-brick chimney defines the apex of the primary roof. The eaves overhang is prominent to the façade, oversailing the front wall to align with either the intersecting, raised planter box walls or to cover the balcony. In the case of the latter (described in the Working Drawings as a 'terrace'), the dressed Oregon timber 'members' (rafters) were left exposed and open in the manner of a pergola. They are now covered with clear polycarbonate sheeting or the like. Soffits appear to be lined with timber boards or battens.



To the rear of *Yann House*, as depicted in the Working Drawings, the roof flies out to create a narrow verandah, supported at either end by a brick post (north) and projecting wall with casement window (south). The verandah deck incorporates in-ground stairs that provided access to the lower-ground floor. A moderately sized skillion-roofed addition has since been attached to part of this elevation (west). Its level of intactness is not known.

When built, the balcony featured a return along the north elevation of *Yann House*, the back part of which was partially enclosed with brick and weatherboard. Initially, the existing north-east pier marked a change in level, which signalled the start of the short-enclosed gallery. Above this return, the exposed timber rafters continued to the ridgeline, albeit perpendicular to the street. This aspect of the design has been lost by the enclosure of the return balcony with timber-framed glazed doors (set slightly back from the original 'window wall' to the terrace) and the moderate northern extension of the brick gallery wall. The primary front roof plane has also been lengthened accordingly to cover the new living space. The parallel pergola rafters were taken across the exposed northern end of the balcony. While altered, the balcony – with its original broad weatherboard balustrade – remains a demarcated and distinctive element/space in *Yann House's* design.

The house is constructed of lightly variegated tan/orange bricks in stretcher bond with struck pointing on a concrete slab. This brickwork underlies *Yann House's* robust massing and form, while its earthy-hued palette assists in tying it to the landscape. While characteristic of many neo-Wrightian designers in 1960s Melbourne, the expression of mass via brickwork, particularly piers and planter box walls (integrating nature into the design), was a recurrent theme for Woodfall. The contemporary Wille photographs (see Site-Specific) show that roof timber elements were painted the extant dark brown, while the balcony balustrade was lighter in colour (paint or stain). It has since been overpainted dark brown.

*Yann House's* frontage has a pronounced horizontal emphasis and is volumetrically well-resolved, composed of various interlocking and projecting planes – the undercroft, planter box walls, the balcony and window banks. This interplay confers a sense of movement into the façade, a counterpoint to the solidity of its brickwork. Further dynamism is fostered by the pronounced cantilever of the balcony above the undercroft, a divergence that endows an impression of floating/weightlessness

into the front. The contrast created between the deep, shadowed double undercroft carport with its fibrous plaster rectangular panelled ceiling is also purposeful. Such an unadorned planar emphasis, although articulated by shifts and voids, is indicative of the trend in architect-designed houses of the early 1960s towards increasingly 'blank' presentations within the streetscape. A short L-shaped stair leads from the driveway to the raised and recessed porch entrance, 'surrounded' by the thickset brick planter box walls. The steps appear to be clad in terrazzo or the like. The door is not visible from the public domain but was specified in the Working Drawings as a central 'Flush Panelled Door', bordered by fixed glazed panels. The designers' orchestration of a sense of enclosure and shelter/privacy within the arrival sequence at *Yann House*, juxtaposed by the relative openness of the internal space, recall a favoured Wrightian effect.

Two banks of timber-framed windows puncture the frontage. To the balcony, an alternating pattern of floor-to-ceiling fixed windows and glazed doors are evident. To the forward room, the windows have been formed into a square window bay, aligning the internal space with the porch's landing. It has side casement windows, with a pair of the latter to the front flanked by fixed glazing. Other original openings include casements to the south elevations and, in the back part of the lower ground floor, a long bank of fixed and awning sashes.<sup>1</sup>

Internally, the drawings illustrate an interest in spatial flow and zoned living spaces with daytime activities grouped to the north of the foyer and bedrooms to the south. Flat ceilings are specified in the Working Drawings; other internal finishes are not, other than a reference to 'selected stonework' to a feature wall and the hearth-style fireplace in the living room. The intactness of the interior is not known.

*Yann House* is classifiable as an example of what architectural historian Philip Goad describes as the 'Wrightian survival'.<sup>2</sup> A vein of postwar modernism that turned away from the perceived anonymity of the International Style to draw from the American master Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas of 'Organic Architecture'. These complex principles were typically translated as an intimate response to site, low-slung and vaguely biomorphic forms, humble materials, and an embrace of 'primitive' – albeit readily modern – notions of space and shelter (the cave). From the 1970s, many aspects of the neo-Wrightian approach pioneered by architects entered the vernacular of mainstream builders.<sup>3</sup>

Woodfall classed his practice as 'organic' rather than 'Wrightian', although the difference is far from precise, with both stressing the harmonious integration of site, occupant and structure.<sup>4</sup> In general, his reformulation of Wrightian principles eschewed its more decorative flourishes, arguably engaging more with the simplified 'Usonian Houses'. Examples of which sought to merge structure and land, incorporated car parking beneath the building and featured 'floating' weatherboard balconies and cantilevered pergola roofs (for instance, the *Lewis House* in Libertyville, Illinois, 1939).<sup>5</sup>

The diversity of source material should not be underestimated, however. Woodfall's attachment to spreading low gable roof forms and humble materials, while present in some of Wright's work, may stem as much from the Australian homestead form and is also present in some of the Griffins' houses.<sup>6</sup> At the time, Woodfall was one of a minority of Melbourne architects who were actively seeking to develop an authentic regionalised interpretation of the modern movement.<sup>7</sup> Collectively, this array of attributes – visible at *Yann House* – reinforces the likelihood that Woodfall was the dominant hand in its design.

The organic/regional design mode, alongside the other variants of the modern movement, should also be recognised as indicative of major shifts in daily life for the wider population, particularly from the mid-1950s, driven by rising prosperity, technological advances and changing societal attitudes. The enthralment of many avant-garde architects with domestic design both reflected and reinforced such transformations, encouraging lifestyles revolving around intensifying consumerism, increased car ownership and more relaxed outdoor-orientated mindsets. 'Good-life Modernism' for those who could attain it.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 'hit and miss' brickwork apparent in the south elevation of the Working Drawings appear to be a remnant of a former design phase as they are not detailed elsewhere in the known plans.

<sup>2</sup> Philip J Goad, *The modern house in Melbourne, 1945-1975*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Architecture Building & Planning, University of Melbourne, 1992, Chapter 6, pp31-32

<sup>3</sup> Philip Goad, 'The Australian House in the 1960s', in Paula Whitman, Tracey Avery and Peta Dennis, eds, *Cool: The 1960s Brisbane House*, School of Design and Built Environment, QUT, 2004, p8

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Geoffrey Woodfall, 21 August 2006, in Alex Haw Gie Njoo, *Organic Architecture: Its Origin, Development and Impact on Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Melbourne Architecture*, thesis, RMIT University, School of Architecture and Design, 2008, p112

<sup>5</sup> Stuart King, 'Intersecting identities in Geoffrey Woodfall's Woolnorth Homestead, 1969-70', *RMIT Design Archives Journal*, vol 10, no 1, 2020, p36

<sup>6</sup> At the end of the decade, Woodfall was responsible for two celebrated contemporary gabled homesteads – *Old Penola Estate Homestead*, South Australia (1968) and *Woolnorth Homestead*, Tasmanian (1969).

<sup>7</sup> Philip Goad, 'Regionalism', in Goad and Julie Willis, eds, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p589

<sup>8</sup> Mark Jarzombek, "'Good-Life Modernism' And Beyond: The American House in the 1950s and 1960s: A Commentary", *The Cornell Journal of Architecture*, vol 4, 1990, pp77-93

## History

### Context

The City of Banyule covers the unceded Country of the Wurundjeri-willam people, who have inhabited and managed its landscape for thousands of generations and maintain an ongoing cultural connection.<sup>9</sup> The lightly wooded grasslands of what became known as 'Ivanhoe' were quickly targeted for sheep runs and by timber-cutters from the 'illegal squatter camp (est. 1835) downstream of the *Birrarung/Yarra* at Melbourne.<sup>10</sup> However, as part of the 'Heidelberg' district in the Parish of Keelbundora, this area passed rapidly into private hands via an auction in Sydney Town in 1838.<sup>11</sup>

Over the following decade, a patchwork of 'prestige' estates emerged, along with a surveyed township – *Warringal* (possibly 'eagle's nest'), later 'Heidelberg' – on the river's west bank.<sup>12</sup> Productive river flats, and the demands of the gold diggings further afield, encouraged market gardening, orchards and (gradually, due to soil exhaustion and flooding) dairying; activities mostly undertaken by tenant farmers.<sup>13</sup> This perceived rural idyll enticed *plein air* artists to the district during the 1880s, fixing the 'Heidelberg School' within Australia's artistic consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

Ivanhoe – its name stemming from Archibald Thom's 'Ivanhoe Estate' – remained a sparsely populated agricultural area until Melbourne's 'Land Boom' in the late 1880s.<sup>15</sup> 'Picturesque' terrain, varied outlooks and the high repute of the broader district drew often well-off newcomers. By the turn of the century, 'Beautiful Ivanhoe' was routinely portrayed as a 'fashionable', 'exclusive locality' of 'model homes'.<sup>16</sup> An improved railway connection to Melbourne in 1901 supported further middle-class growth, instigating 'four decades of slow and relatively affluent suburban sprawl' in the vicinity of Ivanhoe, Eaglemont, and Heidelberg train stations.<sup>17</sup>

During the interwar years, suburban Ivanhoe solidified, although its southern and eastern reaches remained primarily locked up by the expansive 'Hartlands', 'Charterisville', and 'Chelsworth' estates.<sup>18</sup> To navigate the complexities that accompanied the subdivision of these areas (sloping land, curving streets, views) in the postwar period and galvanised by the swelling influence of modernism, many of the new and generally moneyed proprietors sought the services of an architect.<sup>19</sup> By the early 1960s, distinct enclaves of upmarket, modernist design culture were apparent in the southern reaches of Ivanhoe and Ivanhoe East, with the aesthetic and lifestyle reverberations of the modern movement also shaping infill development in the more established environs of the locale.



View near Heidelberg in Victoria, pen and ink drawing, circa 1858  
(Source: Eugene von Guérard, National Gallery of Victoria)

<sup>9</sup> Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018, pp15-20, available online

<sup>10</sup> James Boyce, 1835: *The Founding of Melbourne & The Conquest of Australia*, Black Inc., 2011, pxi

<sup>11</sup> Keelbundora stems from a European rendering of Kulbundora – the name of the eldest son of the important Wurundjeri *ngurungaeta* (essentially 'head man') Billibellary. ('Suburban Native Names', *Argus* 28 April 1906, p5). One of the earliest manifestations of local governance in the Port Phillip District (1840), the fluctuating borders of municipal Heidelberg mirrored its growth, as it was reformatted into a Road District (1860), Shire (1871) and then City (1934). It was amalgamated as the City of Banyule in 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Donald S Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People 1838-1900*, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p13

<sup>13</sup> Robert P Whitworth, *Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer*, F F Bailliere, 1879, pp237

<sup>14</sup> Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.5, and 2.3.10; and Janine Rizzetti, 'Heidelberg', in Richard Broome et al, eds., *Remembering Melbourne 1850-1960*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 2016, p282

<sup>15</sup> Thom's estate designation was inspired by a novel of the same name by Sir Walter Scott (1819).

<sup>16</sup> Ivanhoe & Alphington Progress Society, *Beautiful Ivanhoe: the suburb of model homes and scenic charm*, Model Studio, 1900, SLV

<sup>17</sup> Ivanhoe Station opened in 1888; however, inefficiencies in the Heidelberg-Melbourne railway line initially bedevilled growth.

<sup>18</sup> Ivanhoe grew from roughly 2,000 residents in 1913 to nearly 8,000 by 1933 (*Victorian Year Books*, Australian Bureau of Statistics).

<sup>19</sup> Don Garden, 'Ivanhoe', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, July 2008

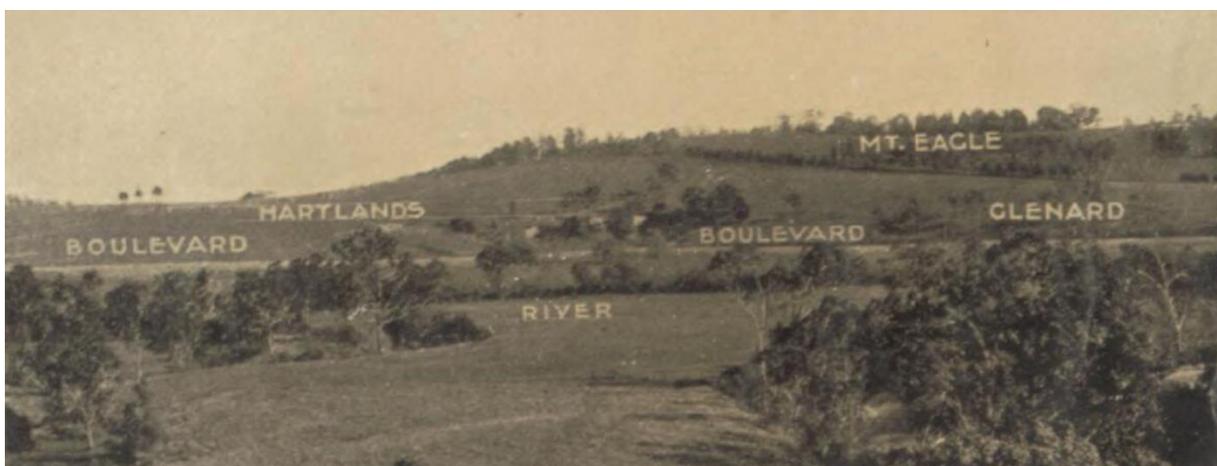
### Site-specific

The subject allotment derives from Portion 2 of the Parish of Keelbundora, a roughly 420-hectare holding purchased (along with portions 1 and 3) by Thomas Walker in 1838. A Sydney-based Scottish banker and philanthropist with an eye for marketable land across the colony, Walker's intention in the Port Philip District was speculative from the start. He commenced subdividing his acquisitions as early as mid-1839 to enormous profit.<sup>20</sup>

In the resulting sales, Portion 2 was carved up into multiple large estates. The subject land formed part of 'Hartlands', a 126-hectare property acquired by Captain Sylvester John Brown (circa 1790-1864 – the original spelling was 'Brown', the 'e' was added later by his son) a onetime shipmaster in the East India Company who had made a small fortune in Sydney through whaling and trade. (He was also the father of multifarious Thomas Alexander Browne, celebrated during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the novelist 'Rolfe Boldrewood'.) Motivated by the economic prospects of Port Philip, Brown Snr brought additional land within the Hoddle Grid and at Toorak and along Darebin Creek (near Northcote). Around 1840, he made Hartlands the familial seat. From a commodious weatherboard homestead complex overlooking the river, the Browns cultivated the flats and socialised with the area's gentry.<sup>21</sup>

However, within a few years, the colonial economy's worsening conditions forced the foreclosure of Hartlands – the stress of which shattered Brown Snr. A fortunate marriage between his daughter and a relative of Walker (the mortgage holder) enabled the debt to be cleared through the partial sale of Hartlands in 1853 (namely, the western portion, establishing Maltravers Road) and the 'Brownes of Hartlands' reoccupied the remainder of the traduced estate.<sup>22</sup> They remained there until the mid-1860s, departing in the wake of their residence's destruction by arson, after which the holding was leased agriculturally.<sup>23</sup>

From 1903, large parcels of Hartlands were excised for sale and subdivision.<sup>24</sup> The final transaction, in 1921, encompassed the core of the estate – approximately 30 hectares of sloping and cleared land between Lower Heidelberg Road and The Boulevard, including the subject property. This procurement was made by one of the nation's most recognised real estate agents and Catholic lay leaders, Thomas Michael Burke.<sup>25</sup> His 'Hartlands Estate' subdivision featured memorably named curvilinear roads,<sup>26</sup> presenting as a diluted version of the nearby Mount Eagle (1914) and Glenard estates (1916), both avant-garde Garden Suburb designs by Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin. The specific planner for the Hartlands Estate is unknown.<sup>27</sup> Initial sales of the offered lots continued into the mid-1930s and the building of residential homes was scant and sporadic until the postwar years.



Photograph extracted from a subdivision promotion for the Glenard Estate in 1916 with the Hartlands estate captured left of frame (Source: *Sale brochure for Glenard Estate, Mount Eagle, Victoria*, Eric Milton Nicholls collection, NLA, Bib ID 3701541)

<sup>20</sup> W Joy, 'Walker, Thomas (1804-1886)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1967, available online

<sup>21</sup> Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and its People*, pp31-2

<sup>22</sup> Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People*, pp41-2

<sup>23</sup> 'Incendiarism', *Australasian*, 15 April 1865, p6

<sup>24</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 1844, folio 676

<sup>25</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 4480, folio 831; and Tony Hannan, 'Burke, Thomas Mitchell (1870-1949)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1979, available online

<sup>26</sup> Streeton, McCubbin, Longstaff, and Mackennel were all Australian artists, while Kean Street was the namesake of a prominent local farmer and town planning advocate, Peter Kean, the developer behind the Mount Eagle and Glenard estates.

<sup>27</sup> In interwar Melbourne, beyond the Griffins, breaking with the typical gridiron subdivision was the calling card of the progressive surveyor, Saxil Tuxen (1855-1975).

The subject land comprised part of a three-lot purchase (161-63) on the north side of Keam Street by Lenore H Ryan in 1921.<sup>28</sup> A covenant was attached to the sale, stipulating residential use and the provision of one tiled or slate-roofed building per lot. It also forbade any 'paling or close iron fence ... [to] be erected or suffered upon the said land.'<sup>29</sup> This small holding passed through multiple hands over the ensuing decades without any construction activity, a development pattern reflected throughout the broader locale.<sup>30</sup>



1954 aerial photograph of the Hartlands Estate, still in the process of consolidating  
The vacant subject site is indicated by the red arrow  
(Source: Landata, Project no 174, Run 15, Frame 75)

In 1956, Victor Drolz Yann (1924-2009) and Ivy Elizabeth Yann (*née* Medlycott), both of Preston, acquired lot 162 and a thin slice of lot 163 – creating the existing subject property.<sup>31</sup> The purchase included access to a right of way at the rear of the site that linked to Lower Heidelberg Road. It appears to have since been incorporated into surrounding property. Victor was a professional engineer, establishing 'Yann Engineering' in 1960 (still family-owned and operational).<sup>32</sup>

Construction of *Yann House* occurred between 1960, the date of the first known set of plans, and 1963, when the Victorian electoral roll records Victor and Ivy in residence at '21 Keam St'.<sup>33</sup> They were still listed as the occupants into the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

To design the family residence, the Yanns engaged 'Garside & Genser Architects' as well as Geoffrey Woodfall. The nature of the relationship between these parties is undetermined. The drawings for *Yann House*, which are catalogued in the 'Geoffrey Woodfall Archive' (RMIT) and dated March and August 1960 (see below), identify Garside & Genser Architects in the 'header' of the title block, with Woodfall specified as the drawer.

At the time, Woodfall (still relatively early in his career) was in a loose partnership with fellow architect Linton Reynolds, although they worked chiefly independently of each other. The Woodfall Archive also holds a 1958 set of plans for a Garside & Genser hotel project in Tally Ho. Multiple scenarios are conceivable, including collaboration or some type of sub-consultant arrangement (perhaps with the imaginably larger Garside & Genser office overseeing the administration of the contract and construction). However, the broad similarities between *Yann House* and Woodfall's oeuvre – together with the presence of the plans in the archive of the latter – imply that he played a central design role.

<sup>28</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 4480, folio 010

<sup>29</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 4480, folio 010

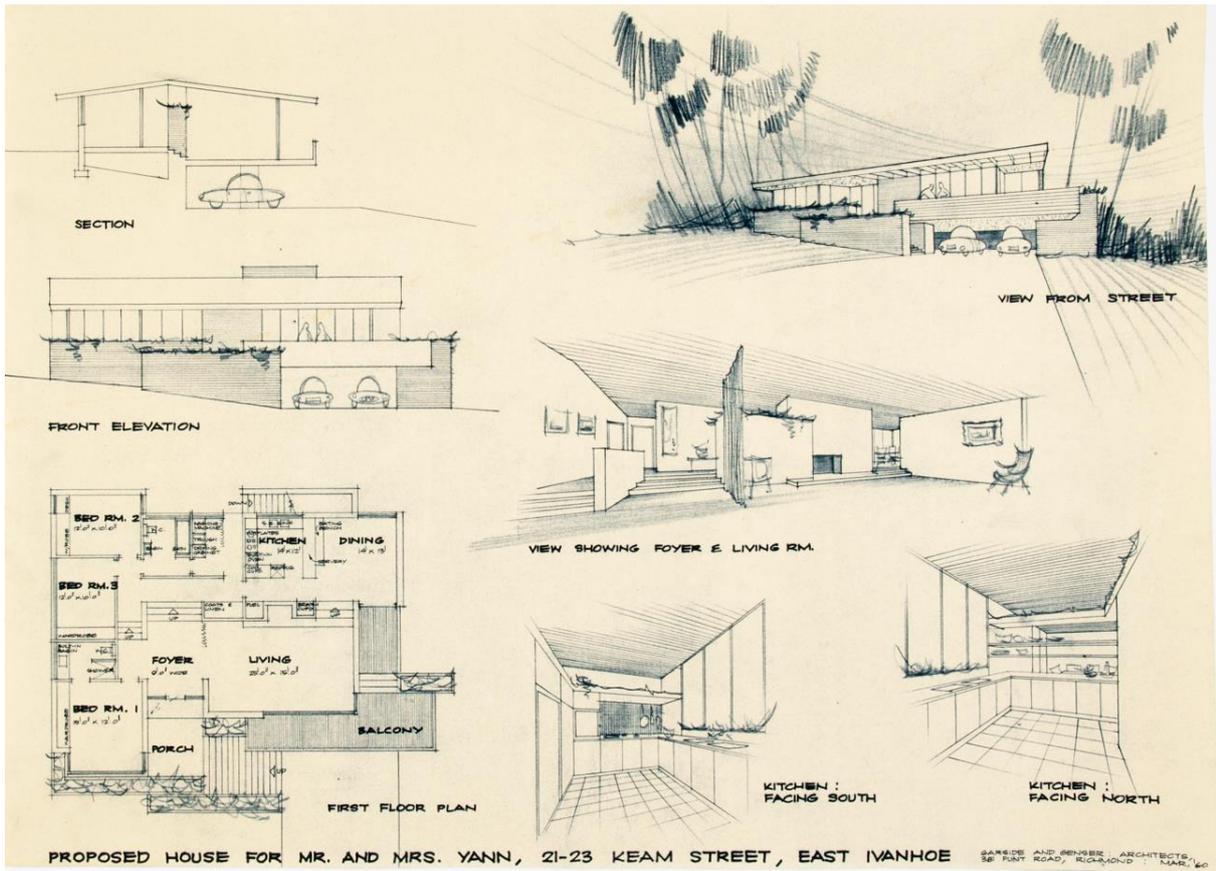
<sup>30</sup> Certificate of Title, vol6204, folio 682.

<sup>31</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 8123, folio 733

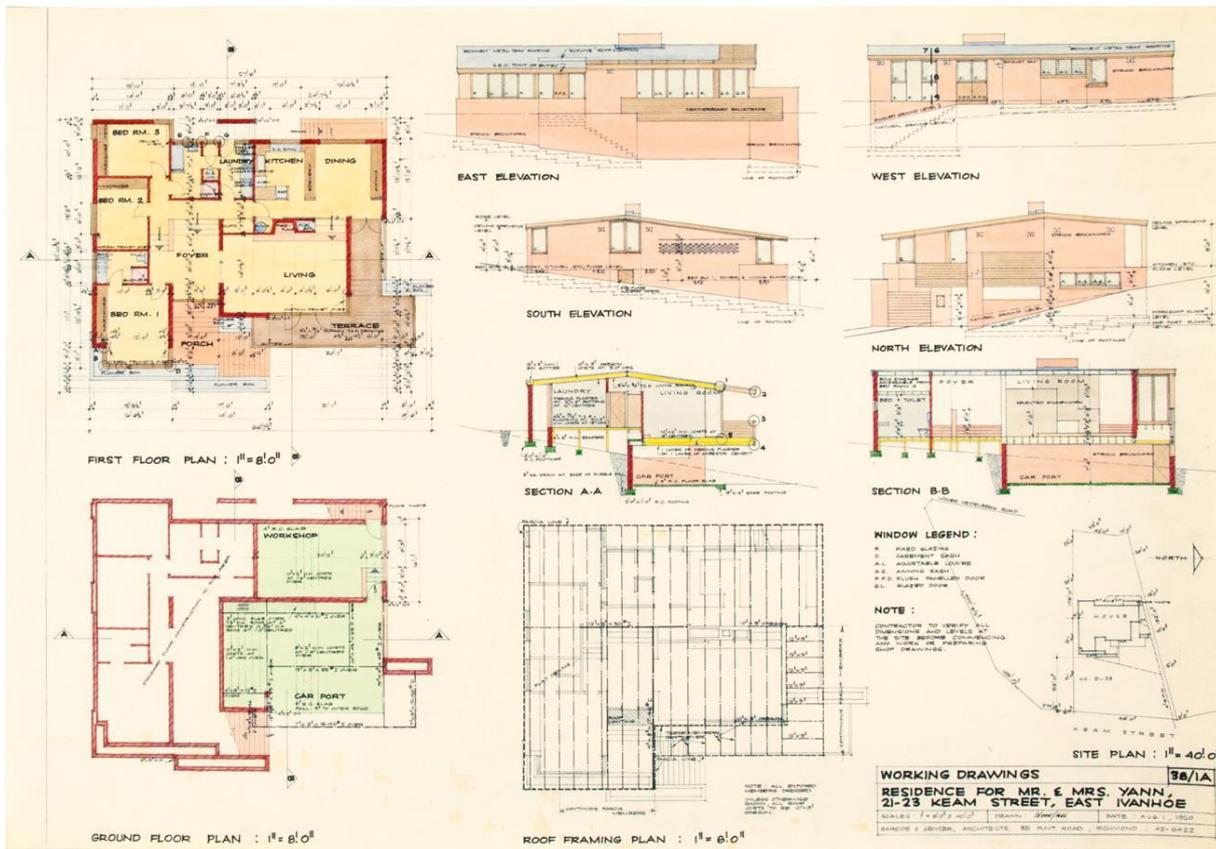
<sup>32</sup> *Yann Engineering Pty Ltd*, <https://www.yann.com.au/>, accessed 18 February 2021

<sup>33</sup> 1963 Victorian electoral roll, Division of Batman, Subdivision of Ivanhoe, p108 (via Ancestry.com). The address is not listed in *Sands & McDougall's Directory of Victoria* until the 1970 edition with 'Yann VD' record occupation (the *Directory* was not produced between 1966 and 1969).

<sup>34</sup> Victorian electoral toral Rolls, Batman Ward, Ivanhoe, 1980, p65



Presentation drawings for Yann House, dated March 1960 (Source: Geoffrey Woodfall Archive, RMIT, Box 83)



Working Drawings, dated August 1960 (Source: 'Geoffrey Woodfall Archive', RMIT, Box 83)

*Yann House* does not appear to have drawn any published architectural commentary in the 1960s. Yet, the residence was of enough note to draw the modernist enthusiast Peter Wille (1931-71).<sup>35</sup> He photographed the building on at least two occasions, before and after the retaining walls in the front garden had been laid.



*Yann House* during landscaping work, early 1960s  
(Source: Peter Wille, '21 Kearn St, E. Ivanhoe G. Woodfall, 1962', SLV, H91.244/5017)



*Yann House* post-landscaping works, early 1960s  
(Source: Peter Wille, '21 Kearn St, E. Ivanhoe G. Woodfall, 1962', SLV, H91.244/5017)

<sup>35</sup> Wille was employed as a draftsman by the firm Smith, Tracey, Lyon & Block. In his own time, he compiled an extensive record of modernist designs in Melbourne, predominantly in its southeast (he resided in Mount Waverly).



(Left) *Yann House*, note original balcony return

(Right) Detail of front entrance stair

(Source: left and right – Peter Wille, '21 Keam St, E. Ivanhoe G. Woodfall, 1962', courtesy of SLV, H91/244/5017)

A sewerage plan for the *Yann House* for the installation of the swimming pool, dated 1972-73, makes this element a relatively early addition to the site.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Geoffrey Rolfe Woodfall (1931-2016)**

From the late 1950s, Woodfall surfaced as a leading practitioner of an organic/Wrightian regionalist discourse in late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Victoria. His architectural work – with some distinguished exceptions, such as his vernacular homestead interpretations – was predominantly suburban. Over the 1960s and 1970s, his houses were frequently commented upon in the architectural and popular press and awarded. Woodfall's architectural work remains well-recognised with the contemporary design community and has been the subject of some academic study.<sup>37</sup>

Melbourne-born, Woodfall started work as a draftsman for N & N Shopfitters in 1947 at sixteen. The following year he commenced architectural studies at the Royal Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT University).<sup>38</sup> Over the 1950s, mostly while studying, Woodfall gained experience drafting for several well-known architects and firms, including A.S & R.A. Eggleston, Kevin Borland, Don Hendry Fulton, Peter Jorgensen, and Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell. He graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Melbourne in 1956, part of a postwar stream influenced by Professor Brian Lewis's remodelled curriculum, provocative tutors and the ideological fervour of a splintering modern movement.

Woodfall had entered into an informal partnership with Basil Walker (1954-56) while still at university, followed by a loose association with Linton Reynolds (1958-62), after which he embarked on his successful solo private practice that continued into the 2000s.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Garside and Genser Architects (late 20<sup>th</sup> century)**

Little has come to light about the office of Garside and Genser Architects; however, the architect and later well-known Melbourne property developer, Albert Genser, was evidently a key figure. In the late 1960s, the practice reformed as 'Genser, Shepherd and Associates'. Their most critically acclaimed work was *Hickey House* at 34 Warringah Crescent, Eltham – a dwelling with a distinctive 'cut out' form, constructed mainly of radiata pine boarding, for the artist Dale Hickey. It won *The Age*/RAIA 'House of

<sup>36</sup> Yarra Valley Water, *Sewerage Plan*, Lithographic no. 2601

<sup>37</sup> Goad, *The modern house in Melbourne, 1945-1975*, Chapter 6; Winsome Callister, 'Woodfall, Geoffrey' in Philip Goad and Julie Willis, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p773; and King, 'Intersecting identities in Geoffrey Woodfall's Woolnorth Homestead, 1969-70'

<sup>38</sup> Woodfall later designed a new factory for N & N Shopfitters at Notting Hill in 1963, after their first was 'burnt out'. (*Cross Section*, issue no 134, December 1963)

<sup>39</sup> Partnership dates derive from the *Geoffrey Woodfall Archive*, RMIT, inventory

the Year' in 1972.<sup>40</sup> Genser Shepherd and Associates was regularly associated in the press with large-scale residential and commercial developments and remained active into the 1990s.<sup>41</sup>

## Thematic Context

Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018:

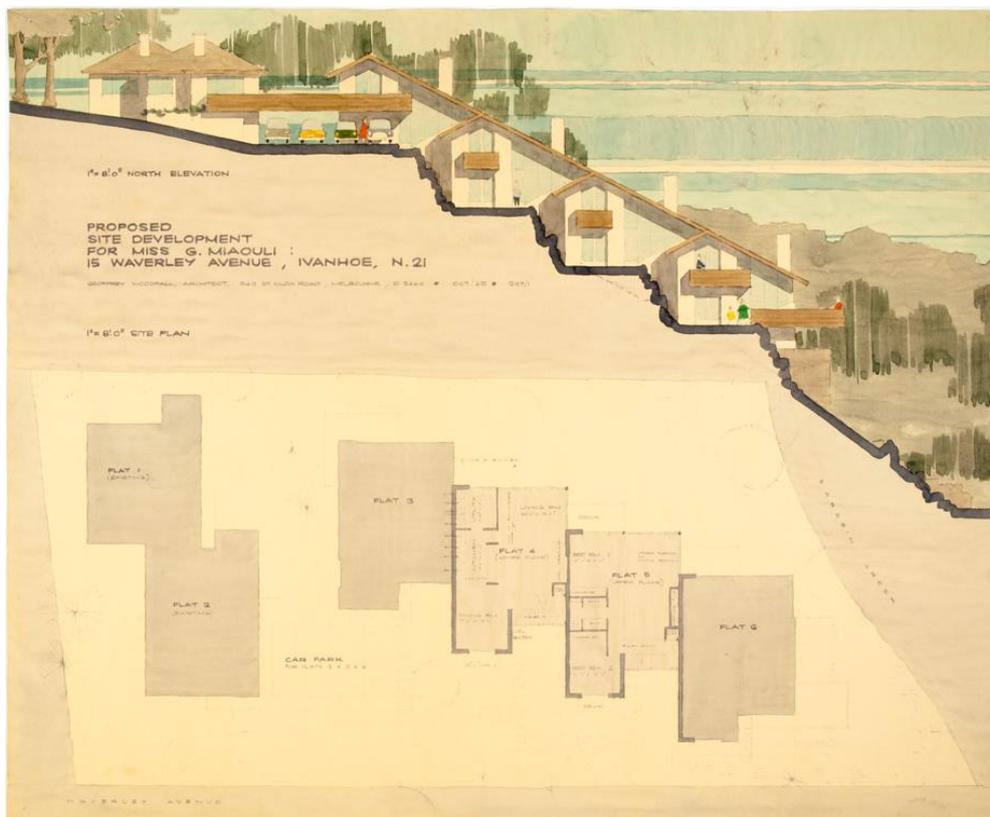
- Theme 5: Suburban development

See also Allom Lovell & Associates, *Banyule Heritage Place Study: An Urban History*, vol 1, July 1999:

- 6.4 Post-War Residential Development

## Comparative Analysis

The comprehensive Woodfall Archive details only a handful of residential and commercial projects undertaken in Banyule. Most of these appear to have been concept designs that were never realised or have since been replaced.<sup>42</sup> *Yann House* is the only known extant building in the municipality with which Woodfall has been involved.



Concept drawings for a townhouse development between Waverly Avenue and Darebin Creek (Ivanhoe), dated 1965 – seemingly never built (Source: Geoffrey Woodfall Archive, RMIT, Box 86)

An array of architect-designed modernist houses are included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay for Banyule. Most originate in the 1950s and reflect the multiplying version of mid-century modernism. The dominant influence of the International Style is prevalent, particularly its preference for rectangular footprints, cuboid forms and stripped-down aesthetic; for instance, 10 Alexandra Street, Greensborough (HO136) by Moore and Hammond, 1957. Others reveal the period's growing interest in the modular derivation of the plan, with steel or timber framing and lightweight panelling and bands of glazing. A key example of

<sup>40</sup> 'Hickey House', *Age*, 27 November 1972, p17. Vasilios Tsismelis is attributed as the designer of *Hickey House* (Doug Evans, Huan Chen Borland, Conrad Hamann, eds, *Kevin Borland: architecture from the heart*, RMIT Architecture, 2006, p74)

<sup>41</sup> Paul Robinson, 'Trust fights tower plan near church', *Age*, 20 August 1982, p5

<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey Woodfall Archive, RMIT, Box 84 (alterations for *Tayton house*, Heidelberg, 1957 + *Prudential Investments*, shop, Rosanna, 1960); Box 86 (*Miaouli house*, Ivanhoe, 1965); and Box 96 (*Collins Development*, Heidelberg, 1972)

specific geometry is the 1954 *Snelleman House* (HO36 + VHR H2282) in Ivanhoe East by architects Peter and Dione McIntyre, often referred to as the 'Coil House'. While the neo-Wrightian organic undertones of *Yann House* are faintly detectable in some of these designs, only three others are especially reflective:

- *V Walker House*, 209 Main Road, Lower Plenty (HO163) – a two-storey cream-brick residence with an unusual, some organic trapezoidal form created by slanted sidewalls and a 'folded' gabled roof, by Hipwell, Weight & Mason, 1958.
- *Williams House*, 4 Glenard Drive, Eaglemont (HO146) – an 'aggressive play of clinker brick walls and hefty roof planes edged by deep-facias of stained timber', built in 1963 to a design by noted organic architect, Charles Duncan.<sup>43</sup> It was later the recipient of the RIAA Victoria Architecture Medal (1965) and consists of a series of overlapping volumes with stepped flat roofs and extensive window walls.
- *Elliston Precinct* (HO92) in Rosanna – a residential development by the innovative company Merchant Builders, initiated in 1969. Four notable architectural architects/practices were engaged (Charles Duncan, Daryl Jackson and Evan Walker, David McGlashan and Neil Everist, and Graeme Gunn) to prepare multiple designs with Ellis Stone responsible for integrating the subdivision with a contrived bushland landscape. Several houses by these architects were constructed in the southern section of the estate (Bachli Court to Von Ninda Crescent). These houses are generally modestly scaled and nestled in Stone's landscaping with a palette of brown or tan brick, flat or skillion roofs, and stained finish to the timberwork (facias, windows, etc.). In 1971 Merchant Builders sold the remaining parts of the estate for speculative development.

While corresponding with the above, particularly regarding its material/colour palette, *Yann House* is distinguished by its extracting restraint and ability to represent the regional design interest of its noted designer, Woodfall.

### Intactness

Generally intact

### Previous Assessment

- RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants, *Banyule Heritage Study 2020: Stage 1 report*, Banyule City Council, August 2020 – High priority, recommended for Stage 2

### Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	Yes (walls of brick and timber elements)
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or fences	Yes ('volcanic rock' retaining walls)

<sup>43</sup> *Cross-Section*, The University of Melbourne Department of Architecture, issue no 142, 1 August 1964, np

## Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay is outlined approximately below.



Recommended extent of heritage overlay  
(Source: Nearmap, April 2020)