

Mother of God Catholic Church Statement of Significance

Heritage Place: 56 Wilfred Road, Ivanhoe East

PS ref no: HO199



What is Significant?

Mother of God at 56 Wilfred Road, Ivanhoe East – a Roman Catholic Church – is significant. It was designed in 1956 by Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell for an eponymously named new parish that covered Ivanhoe East and constructed the following year. John Mockridge was likely the primary designer, as was the usual practice in the firm.

The significant sections of *Mother of God* are its lozenge-shaped plan/form, narthex and original flat-roofed ancillary wing (west and part south elevation). Significant elements are the gable roof, slate cladding, ridge vent, concrete frame, copper crosses, flat roof (concrete slab), the cantilevered section of the porch roof, pair of tapered porch columns, remnant (or covered) tiling to the porch floor, barrel vaulting (west elevation), concrete-framed window walls (including mullions and muntins), all stained glass, exposed concrete-cased steel framing, wall panels of silica bricks, and all original openings (rectangular slots and cruciform windows).

Internally, the exposed black-matt painted steel beams and timber-lined ceiling are significant.

The arrangement of the front garden – driveway, triangular lawn and placement of a central tree (not the planting itself, which is a replacement) – as well as the nearby Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') and sunken rear courtyard (southwest), are original landscape elements that contribute to the setting of *Mother of God*.

Later additions are not significant.

How is it Significant?

Mother of God is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Banyule.

Why is it Significant?

Mother of God is of historical significance as the earliest modernist church constructed in the municipality and the first religious commission by the then young postwar architectural practice of Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell. It represents a noteworthy juncture in the design oeuvre of this well-regarded architectural firm, which went on to be responsible for a

number of other notable 'modern' churches in Victoria and an important event for the local Roman Catholic community. The construction of *Mother of God* is illustrative of Ivanhoe East's suburban energetic consolidation in the postwar period as well as the pronounced modernist undercurrents latent in this development. Its nonconventional character is highly evocative of the necessity felt by the church and congregation to respond to the rapidly shifting and different socio-cultural landscape of the mid-1950s with a new built image of their faith. Father Bernard Joseph Geoghegan, who was appointed the first parish priest, was instrumental in its development. (Criterion A)

Mother of God is of aesthetic significance as a generally intact, distinctive instance of 'modern' church design. Its progressive architects, Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell, took bold advantage of novel postwar construction techniques (steel framing) and materials (precast concrete, silica bricks) to convey a modernist expression, chiefly through its lozenge-shaped form, exaggerated gable and dramatic but welcoming cantilevered porch, then elements all unfamiliar for places of worship in Victoria. Christian architectural traditions were not completely eschewed, with the utilisation of slate cladding, highlighting of mullions and muntins, colourful stained glass, and employment of cruciform openings in the design of the church demonstrating contemporary interests in integrating simplified, abstracted ecclesiastical elements and symbols; resulting in a balance between stability and provocation. The interplay of expressive modernity and traditional continuity is indicative of the first phase of 'modern' postwar suburban church design in Victoria. (Criteria E)

Primary source

Banyule Heritage Study 2020 (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants)