

Yann House Statement of Significance

Heritage Place: 21 Keam Street, Ivanhoe East

PS ref no: HO211



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 local 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 the ability of Woodfall to contain the organic excesses of the American master and explore regional sources in a 'modern' manner. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Banyule Heritage Study 2020 (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants)