

Lindsay Edward House Statement of Significance

Heritage Place: 149 Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty | **PS ref no:** HO216



(Source: Street-facing elevation, March 2016, realestate.com.au)

What is Significant?

Lindsay Edward House at 149 Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty is significant. It was constructed between 1950 and 1952 as a family home and studio for the artist and educator Lindsay Maurice Edward. Alistair Knox was the designer and builder. During the long occupation by the Edward family (until 2016), the house was enlarged on multiple occasions and a series of external and internal modifications were undertaken. The property was also subdivided. Knox may have been involved in implementing some of the early changes that his original plan had envisioned. Lindsay Edward is understood to have been responsible for most of the sympathetic modifications undertaken over the late 20th century.

The significant element is the original U-shaped/'butterfly' and split-level plan of *Lindsay Edward House*, including the cuboid form of the three connecting sections, flat and skillion roofs, moderate eaves overhang, exposed rafter to timber soffits, chimney or flue (south wing), walls of mud brick, vertical timber cladding, timber-framed window walls, casement windows, fixed glazing, timber-framed/glazed entrance door, and rear patio of multicoloured cement blocks (random pattern).

The natural slope of the property and its general 'natural' landscaping enhances the setting of *Lindsay Edward House*.

Internally, the 'hanging' timber stair in the entrance hall and ground-floor ceilings of exposed timber beams are significant.

The late 20th-century additions and alterations are broadly sympathetic with the original plan and design philosophy of *Lindsay Edward House*. Their complementary elements are flat roofs, walls of mud brick and window walls, and timber pergolas.

How is it Significant?

Lindsay Edward House is local of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Banyule.

Why is it Significant?

Lindsay Edward House is of historical significance as an early and commodious example of a postwar mud-brick residence in the municipality. It has an association with Lindsay Edward – a well-regarded art teacher at Melbourne RMIT, whose

output of semi-abstract paintings and murals achieved national attention over the second half of the 20th century – as his long-standing family home and, for a while, studio. The original house was designed and constructed, with Edward's assistance, by Alistair Knox, then in the formative stage of his career as an acclaimed practitioner of 'environmental building' and Victoria's foremost proponent of adobe. The design's employment of a vernacular earth construction technique, while likely a conscious aesthetic decision on the part of the client, is illustrative of the postwar scarcity of conventional materials that persisted into the early 1950s and the instinct to innovate brought about by the contemporary housing 'crisis'. More broadly, *Lindsay Edward House* is illustrative of the emergence of a postwar community in the Lower Plenty area, associated with Eltham at the time, distinguished by its creativity and embrace of 'alternative' environmental living. (Criterion A)

Lindsay Edward House is of aesthetic significance as the most substantial and architecturally ambitious mud-brick design completed by Alistair Knox in the municipality. It conveys his organic/Wrightian-influenced interest in the vernacular, although at a scale and level of architectural refinement that was then only beginning to define Knox's practice. The solar responsive split-level 'butterfly' plan – spreading naturally across the property's slope – combined with its volumetric expression encapsulates a distinctive local interpretation of postwar Melbourne regionalism. The evolving form of residence under the hands of the Edward family is also reflective of a common circumstance for postwar houses, which were often limited in their original manifestation by various factors (especially materials and size constraints). In this case, however, additions to the design undertaken by its long-term occupants have occurred in broad harmony with the original design and aesthetic. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Banyule Heritage Study 2020 (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants)