

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R108

Name of Place: House at 3 Spencer Street, Turner

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: 3 Spencer Street, TURNER 2612

Block 3 Section 31 of

Listing Status:

Date of Listing:

Citation Revision No:

Citation Revision Date:

Other Heritage Listings:

Level of Significance:

Category:

Style:

Date of Design:

Construction Period:

Date of Additions:

Designer:

Client/Owner/Lessee:

Builder:

Statement of Significance

The residence at 3 Spencer Street, Turner, is an example of significant architecture. The house was built in the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-1940). The design incorporates most of the principal design features which were peculiar to the style with its asymmetrical massing, simple geometric shape and roof concealed by parapet.

The residence is a rare surviving and good Canberra example of the Inter-War Functionalist Style.

Description

The two bedroom residence was designed by Moir and Sutherland for Mr Alan Ellis in 1946 and construction was completed in 1947 1. The building is a late example of the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-1940) with its asymmetrical massing, simple geometric shape and roof concealed by parapet 2.

There are other examples of the Inter-War Functionalist Style in Canberra including the Evans Crescent Precinct, Griffith, 1938-40, by Moir & Sutherland and former Forrest Fire Station Precinct, Forrest, 1938, by E H Henderson.

The residence is located centrally on the block, behind a large eucalyptus tree. The elongated plan extends along a north/south axis with a centrally located entry. A large front terrace extends across the two north east bedrooms. The terrace has a timber pergola supported by brick piers and brick corbels at the house. The lounge/dining room projects out to the front, at the southern end of the terrace, providing a protected approach to the front entry across the terrace. The entry opens into a small lobby with the lounge/dining room door to the south and a central hall perpendicular to the entry. The well proportioned lounge/dining room has a central fireplace in the south wall with joinery to the side. There is a large central window to the east wall and a window to the south wall, east of the fireplace. French doors open out to the north onto the terrace.

South of the lounge/dining room is a dinette, east of the kitchen. The kitchen faces west and has modern appliances installed within the original cupboards. To the north of the kitchen is the laundry. Beyond the dinette, to the south, is a play/family room. This was the original attached garage before being altered.

Central to the residence and beyond the entry lobby is the living room which extends out to the west with glazing to the north and west. This room is an extension with unsympathetic internal

finishes.

The northern half of the house accommodates the two bedrooms and the wet areas. The main bedroom extends across the north side with extensive glazing to the north and west, and a smaller window to the east. There are built-in wardrobes to the south and part west wall. The smaller bedroom, adjacent to the front entry, has a central window and a built-in cupboard to the south. The WC is separate from the bathroom and these rooms retain many of their original features.

The original internal elements including joinery, ceilings and some finishes are still present and in good repair. A feature is the Art Deco door handles and associated escutcheons.

The cavity brick house is constructed with a brown face brick with the perpends set flush and the bed joints raked, emphasising the horizontal. The roof is a minimal pitched metal roof hidden by a low brick parapet. The windows are mostly green painted timber double-hung with central transoms. Some windows are clear finish WRC and appear to be replacement windows in a similar style.

A timber post carport is located to the south/east of the site. This was built more recently. The garden is well maintained with some large trees and many large shrubs.

The major architectural elements that are specific to the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-1940) and that are displayed by this building relate to the external forms. They are:

- asymmetrical massing,
- simple geometric shape,
- roof concealed by parapet.

The major architectural elements listed above place this building in the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-1940).

The original house was built by 3.

The building is well maintained and is in good condition.

Condition and Integrity

Background/History

This 1946 modern brick architecture was a continuation of the architect's work from the mid to late 1930s, however, in some respects it demonstrates a more conservative approach than their earlier work. The windows are timber framed, not metal framed, and there are no corner windows, both of which appear in their earlier work and are features of the Inter-War Functionalist Style. The use of timber windows may have been due to the restrictions on the use of steel after World War II.

The original residence had a roofed court to the west of the entry which was a major central feature. Here the hall was fully glazed along the west elevation so that, on arrival, the visitor had a view through the house to the court and beyond to the rear garden. The glazing would have provided good natural light to the hall. The living room was placed into the court area and out into the rear garden. This extension is not sympathetic with the original house.

The main bedroom has been enlarged by glazing the original north west sleepout and removing the wall. The original glazing on the front eastern facade all had the same low level sills. Both the eastern bedroom's windows have had their sills raised. The front terrace was added later, however, the original plans show that the terrace was to be future work and was probably designed by the architects.

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

The house exhibits many of the particular architectural elements specific to the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-1940) with its asymmetrical massing, simple geometric shape and roof concealed by parapet.

The following design features are of additional significance: externally the entrance and terrace with its pergola, the face brickwork and its jointing and the large original window openings; internally the original joinery, bathroom finishes and fixtures, ceilings and door hardware.

With the passage of time many similarly styled buildings in Canberra have been lost or significantly and detrimentally altered. Significant buildings at 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, and Evans Crescent, Griffith, by K Oliphant are two such examples. The residence at 3 Spencer Street is therefore of greater significance.

The residence is valued by the RAIA as a late, but good example of this style of architecture.

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

- 1 Malcolm Moir: His Life and Work: RSTCA Consultancy 1998
- 2 Richard Apperly, Robert Irving Peter, Reynolds. Identifying Australian Architecture Styles & Terms from 1788 to the Present. Angus and Robertson 1989
- 3 Ibid

Other Information Sources