

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)

CLASSIFICATION REPORT

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|---------|----------------------------------|--|---|---------|
| 1. | NAME OF PLACE | Fooks House | <table border="1"><tr><td>FN 7157</td></tr></table> | FN 7157 |
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| 2. | OTHER NAME | | | |
| 3. | LOCATION | 32 Howitt Road, Caulfield, City of Glen Eira | | |
| 4. | DATE | 1966 | | |
| 5. | TYPE OF PLACE | House | | |
| 6. | LEVEL | State | | |
| 7. | EXTENT OF DESIGNATION | Entire house and contents, and landscaping. Includes garden walls, sculpture walls, pergolas, remnant original landscaping, driveway and, interior purpose built furniture, fittings and fixtures. | | |
| 8. | STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE | | | |

What is significant ?

The residence at 32 Howitt Road, Caulfield was designed in 1964 (completed in 1966) by the Viennese architect and urban theorist, Dr Ernest Fooks, as his own house.

This house represents the most celebrated and architecturally resolved of Fooks' domestic designs, combining his analytical approach to planning with a stylistic interpretation of traditional Japanese architecture. Considered within the body of Fooks' 1960's house designs, Howitt Road epitomizes and best exemplifies premises central to Fooks' urban theory and methodology. Fooks controlled every design aspect of his residence, including custom-designed freestanding and built-in furniture, exterior sculpture walls, landscaping and plant selection, ensuring his theoretical concerns, especially those concerning integration, achieved expression in all aspects of the environment. The end product pays testimony to the design confidence and thoroughness of Dr Fooks: high quality of workmanship, uncompromising choices of materials, and cleverly resolved details are evident throughout. Howitt Road showcases the skills of the five cabinet-makers who crafted furniture and built-ins to Fooks' design requirements, including the respected furniture maker Shulim Krimper. All the specifically fabricated pieces remain as originally positioned in Fooks' layout.

The house gained broad appeal through frequent promotion in numerous 1960's and 1970's Australian home magazines. Fooks maintained his private practice until his death in 1985. Since then, the architect's house at 32 Howitt Road, and its contents have been kept intact and in excellent condition by his wife, Noemi.

How is it significant ?

The Fooks House is of architectural, aesthetic and historical significance at the State level.

Why is it significant ?

Architecturally and aesthetically, the Fooks house is a highly individual design, combining the architect's analytical approach to planning with an interpretation of many principles embedded in the vernacular of traditional Japanese architecture. The whole is an unusual and early example of interior and exterior spatial

integration encompassing all elements including exterior landscaping, which is itself, unusually sculptural. Howitt Road displays a rich array of innovative features fashioned in high quality, low maintenance finishes featuring custom designed furniture (often built-in), that create a sumptuous yet restrained effect. The house, landscaping and contents are also remarkable for their intactness, the whole remaining much as it was in 1966, with the addition of the Fooks' collection of decorative and ethnographic objects. It is a remarkable window into a very particular and fascinating time and place in Victoria's architectural and social history.

Historically, the Fooks house is important as perhaps the most celebrated, remarkably intact, and stylistically sophisticated example of an imported, innovative form of postwar domestic architecture, as practiced by a small group of émigré architects predominantly in the Caulfield precinct during the 1950's and 1960's. Fooks' local contemporaries from Central and Eastern Europe included Erwin Kaldor, Anatol Kagan, Robert Rosh, Michael.A.Feldhagen and John and Helena Holgar. These 'Caulfield modernists' produced a distinctive genre of domestic architecture grounded in the International style but delighting in rich textures and materials, such as exposed or textured brickwork, terrazzo, marble, patterned or ornamental surfaces, and custom-designed built-in timber joinery and furniture. This group of practitioners responded to emergent mid-century lifestyle considerations with entertaining areas, and patio terraces in designs often distinguished by bold street facades. Many design elements intrinsic to their domestic work were subsequently adopted by mainstream building practices in suburban Melbourne.

The very popularity of the Caulfield genre influenced its reception among contemporary critical commentators, in particular Robin Boyd, who categorized Melbourne's 1960's suburban architecture as unnecessarily futurist. Since then, orthodox local architectural histories have tended to overlook the post-war domestic work of the Caulfield émigré group. With the exception of Frederick Romberg, postwar European émigré designers have generally not been the subject of serious historical or curatorial study until very recently.

9. HISTORY

In 1965, Dr Ernest Fooks employed the firm of S&S Susskind Pty.Ltd to build the house he designed as his own residence at 32 Howitt Road, Caulfield.

Howitt Road displays many of Fooks' theoretical concerns, and incorporates a wide range of built in and specially designed furniture and fittings. Five skilled cabinet-makers crafted the furniture and built-ins to Fooks' design requirements, including the respected furniture maker Shulim Krimper¹

Since its completion in 1966, this Fooks house has enjoyed frequent appraisal and promotion, in particular, through numerous feature articles in local 1960's home magazines.

To their 1960's audiences, *Australian House & Garden*, and similar Australian publications, popularized 1960's design innovations through contemporary domestic homes that accommodated an enlarged amount of household gadgetry, included heating and cooling systems, provided parking space as an integral design component, and, incorporated flexible open plan designs with outdoor entertaining areas. Between 1967 and 1979, Howitt Road and certain of its design solutions featured in *Australian House & Garden* at least half a dozen times. These articles drew attention to Fooks' use of shoji screens as room dividers², his production of "a woman's dream kitchen" in which he 'scientifically organized every foot of space'³, his unprecedented use of a copper hanging strip in the exposed brick coursework, his purpose built wall-hung buffets⁴ and, his integration of internal space with external "living areas"⁵. Indeed, one 1960's *House &*

¹ See, Johnson, Ian. "Two Pioneers of Modern Furniture in Melbourne: Schulim Krimper and Fred Lowen". *Transition*. No.24, Autumn, 1988., pp.85 & 86. Other craftsmen engaged to fabricate furniture according to Fooks' designs included Harr and Lowenberg and Otto Hechenberger.

Crafti, Stephen. "A Life Less Ordinary". p.10. 'Domain' *The Age*. October 3,2001.

² "Don't Let Your Hall Be A Letdown" *Australian House & Garden* January 1968 p 26. pp.25-26 & 92.

³ "Aiming For the Ultimate" *Australian House & Garden* March 1968 p.27 pp.226-227 & 83-84

⁴ "Ideas With A Touch Of Ingenuity" *Australian House & Garden* May 1968 p.36. pp.36-37

⁵ "Make This Your Pool Year" *Australian House & Garden* September 1969 p.62 pp.62-63, 65, 67 & 129.

Garden issue described Howitt Road as having “one of the most brilliantly designed floor plans ever featured in Australia”⁶ and, in 1967, endowed Howitt Road with an *Australian House & Garden* award⁷.

In addition to its celebration in home magazines, Howitt Road attracted attention in certain local and international architectural journals. Again in 1967, Fooks’ house acquired critical validation with a review in *The Australian Journal of Architecture & Arts*, the same year this journal featured award winning domestic projects by Neil Clerehan, David Dalrymple and Ian.J.Smith.⁸ By 1971, Howitt Road had gained international recognition featuring in the Japanese publication, *Architecture & Urbanism*.⁹ Here, the Fooks residence was showcased alongside houses designed by overseas architects such as Paul Schweiker and, the British architects Peter Aldington and Stout and Litchfield. Grouped together as examples of “antiroutine” design systems, the journal promoted specific projects by these architects as responding to “routine domestic requirements” in “new and valuable terms”¹⁰. The houses were chosen for their blend of analytical planning and organic architectural concerns for building and site integration, high quality craftsmanship and attention to detail. Howitt Road acquired special distinction for its harmonious conceptualization of interior and exterior domestic space that experimented in “combining architecture and nature”.¹¹

In opposition to this popular appeal and praise, the very popularity of the Caulfield genre certainly influenced its reception among 1960’s critical architectural commentators, in particular Robin Boyd. He tended towards generalist and dismissive categorization of Melbourne’s 1960’s suburban architecture as overwrought and unnecessarily featurist¹². This perception of Boyd’s set the pattern for most subsequent historical examinations of postwar domestic architecture in Melbourne. Orthodox local architectural histories¹³ have tended to overlook the domestic work of the Caulfield émigré group, focusing instead upon broader mid-century responses with a regionalist thrust and experimental work by local architectural iconoclasts¹⁴. With the exception of Romberg, postwar European émigré designers have generally not enjoyed attention in the formulation of canonical architectural histories nor have they been the subject of serious historical or curatorial study until very recently.

In 1993, Howitt Road was used to represent Fooks’ domestic architecture in both the *45 Storeys. A Retrospective of Works by Melbourne Jewish Architects from 1945* and *Notable and Modern. Post War Domestic Architecture in the City of Glen Eira* exhibitions. Fooks’ house featured most prominently in the latter where it was the central exhibit and image used for associated promotional material¹⁵. Significantly, Howitt Road was the unique focus of the November 2001 exhibition, *Ernst Fooks: Architect. The Fooks House 1966*, at the Melbourne Jewish Museum.

The 1960’s and 1970’s reception and promotion of Howitt Road in certain national and international publications can be linked to the suitably modernist imaging of the house in a 1967 photographic series by Wolfgang Sievers¹⁶ (refer photographs). Sievers’ black and white images emphatically depicted mid-century architectural modernism in similar fashion to Max Dupain’s “photomodern” work of the 1950’s¹⁷.

⁶ Crafti, Stephen op.cit., p.10.

⁷ Goad, Philip. Notes from *N: Notable & Modern. Post War Domestic Architecture in the City of Glen Eira*. 2001

⁸ *Australian Journal of Architecture & Arts* January, 1967. In separate issues during 1967, this publication featured domestic designs by both these local architects that had been awarded a Gas Project Home Award.

⁹ The same issue also featured another mid-1960’s domestic design by Fooks, the Adams Residence at 20 Lansell Road, Toorak. Sadly, this design that was awarded the 1966 “Family Home Of the Year” by *Australian House & Garden* has been extended and completely corrupted by an entirely unsympathetic recladding of its exterior in a neo-tuscan style. Fooks’ original design has been altered beyond recognition. Refer photos.

¹⁰ Nakamura, Toshio. “Editorial Memorandum”. *Architecture & Urbanism*. Vol 7, July, 1970 p.2.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.32.

¹² See Boyd, Robin “The State of Australian Architecture” *Architecture Australia* vol.56, no.3, June 1967 p.454 – 465.

¹³ Including Max Freeland’s *Architecture in Australia: A History* (1968), Robert Irving’s *The History and Design of the Australian House*, (1985), the 1976 anthology entitled *Architects of Australia* edited by Howard Tanner and Jennifer Taylor’s *Australian Architecture Since 1960*, (1986).

¹⁴ An exception to this general exclusion is a reference to a domestic design by the Holgars in Philip Goad’s *Melbourne Architecture*. The Watermark Press, Sydney. 1999. p.184. For a detailed discussion of Historical constructions of postwar domestic architecture in Melbourne see: Callister, Winsome. “Dealing with the ‘Sydney School’: Perspectives on Australian Architecture in the 1950’s and 1960’s.” *Transition* no.21, September 1987. P.6-12.

¹⁵ See *Glen Eira News*. vol.53, July 2001 p.8. The same image also appeared on the exhibition opening invitation.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Sievers is himself an émigré from Germany where his photographic education was underpinned by the philosophies of the Bauhaus school. He arrived in Australia in 1938 and quickly established a reputation as one of the country’s leading architectural and industrial photographers. His vast body of work included photographic documentation for RMIT’s 1964 *Face to Face* exhibition at the NGV, *The Age* “Dream Homes” and Robin Boyd’s “Houses of Tomorrow” series. Sievers’ mid to late century photographs recently featured in the exhibition *Wolfgang Sievers: A Life*, RMIT Gallery, 2000. A collection of over 500 Sievers’ photographs, taken between 1949-1976, can be viewed on the *Picture Australia* website.

¹⁷ See Morrison, Guy. “An Image of Modernity: 17 Wylde Street and Early Sydney Modernism”. *Transition*. September, 1987.p.23-29.

Sievers' 1967 photographs of Howitt Road presented an image of modernity as a type of domestic utopia in which its inhabitants enjoyed both its luxuriousness and the benefits of scientific planning¹⁸. Howitt Road was largely introduced to its contemporary audiences through Sievers' series of images. His particular stylistic emphasis portrayed Fooks' design in a manner that perpetuated perceptions of modernism and its application to domestic design¹⁹. Curators and historians re-presenting Fooks' Howitt Road design to new audiences continue to privilege Sievers' particularly powerful 1967 series of photographs. Not surprisingly, one of Sievers' Howitt Road photographs was selected as the promotional image encapsulating the spirit of modernism for an entire municipality in the 2001 exhibition "Notable & Modern. Post War Architecture in the City of Glen Eira".

Dr Ernest Fooks (Ernest Fuchs) 1906-1985

Whilst the Viennese architect, Dr Ernest Fooks is readily acknowledged for his significant contributions to urban planning²⁰, he was also an accomplished artist, furniture designer, lecturer and author. Fooks was born in Czechoslovakia but undertook his tertiary education at the Technical University of Vienna where he graduated in 1932, with an architectural doctorate specializing in town planning. Fooks' town planning theories, expounded in his thesis entitled "Stadt en Streifen" – Lineal Cities, were "at the forefront of town planning theory of the time"²¹. Whilst in Vienna, Fooks established a successful design firm, Atelier 'Bau und Wohnung'. However, an increasingly difficult political climate in 1930's Austria convinced Fooks to abandon his practice and flee to Canada. In 1939, Fooks migrated to Melbourne. In so doing, Fooks joined the ranks of other émigré practitioners, including Walter Gropius, Frederick Romberg and Harry Seidler, who, in fleeing political upheavals in Europe and taking up private practice and instructive positions elsewhere, assisted the dissemination of early 20th century European Modernism.

Soon after his arrival, he gained the position of chief town planning assistant at the Victorian Housing Commission. In this role Fooks contributed sophisticated town-planning schemes for several regional cities in Victoria including Swan Hill, Wangaratta and Ballarat²². By 1944 Fooks had earned a place on the Architects Panel of the Victorian Housing Commission²³. In addition, he was also granted the first lecturing position in Town & Regional Planning at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology²⁴. During this period, Fooks elaborated his town planning concepts and methodology in articles for *Australian Quarterly* and the 1946 publication of his seminal text *X-Ray the City. The Density Diagram: Basis for Urban Planning*. He also staged "Cities of Yesterday", his first of four exhibitions of paintings and sketches produced during travels abroad in which he examined the built environment, modernity and the human condition.²⁵

By the 1950's, Fooks had resigned from the Victorian Housing Commission. He continued lecturing in the architecture faculty at the University of Melbourne whilst maintaining a thriving private practice busy with commissions for houses and flats. Later 1950's work included offices for his architectural firm and a collaborative project with Anatol Kagan for the War Memorial College at Mount Scopus. Fooks' projects during the 1960's included several award-winning domestic designs and numerous large commissions from the Jewish community for building designs that included the Addass Israel Synagogue, Elsternwick, B'riai B'rith Community Facility, East St. Kilda and the Jewish Memorial Centre in Canberra. Fooks maintained his private practice until his death in 1985.

10. DESCRIPTION

10.1 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.27

¹⁹ Photographs from this series were used by *Australian House & Garden*, *The Australian Journal of Architecture & Arts* and the *International Journal of Architecture & Urbanism*.

²⁰ See, Townsend, Catherine *X-Ray the City! Ernest Fooks, Modern Planner in the Modern World*. delivered at the 6th International DOCOMOMO Conference, Brasilia, Brazil. September, 19th-22nd, 2000. Also, Goad, Philip *Melbourne Architecture* The Watermark Press, Sydney. 1999. p.157.

²¹ Townsend, Catherine. Text for architect's biography *N: Notable & Modern. Post War Domestic Architecture in the City of Glen Eira*.

²² *ibid.*

²³ Edquist, Harriet. *op.cit*

²⁴ Ricketson, Merren. Introduction notes *In Quest & Praise of Indigenous Architecture and Folk Art. Dr Ernest Fooks. Retrospective Exhibition* Caulfield Arts Complex 12th-29th October, 1989.

²⁵ Fooks exhibited his artwork in three subsequent shows; *The Two-Faced Metropolis* in 1952, *Tribal Architecture. Tribal Village*, in 1980 and his final show in 1984 entitled *Travels throughout the World.*

The house is sited facing the East/West axis on a flat block of land. It is a single level dwelling constructed of a flat reinforced concrete slab and exposed brickwork with a long roof line of steeldeck sheeting broken by a raised section clad in slate. The house is a low, horizontal brick structure with a flat roof, nestled into the designed garden and courtyard areas. The planning is strongly influenced by traditional Japanese houses, with a flow from interior to exterior through courtyards, pergolas and decks, and within the house, through the use of sliding and folding timber screen walls. High quality low maintenance materials and finishes are used throughout. These include large area of full height timber-framed glazing, floor coverings of terrazzo tiles, vinyl tiles and hickory parquetry, wall faces of either exposed brickwork or Japanese vinyl wallpaper and ceilings of fibrous plaster sheeting or timber battens.

The street façade avoids symmetry and frontality. It is set back from the Western boundary and is partially screened by a heavily textured curved wall of extruded brick with split-face exposed. An entry corridor composed of charcoal-coloured slate inlaid with dark river pebbles quotes traditional Japanese processional paths in its winding anticipatory form. It leads to a semi-enclosed entry vestibule featuring a dropped timber-lined bulkhead. The orientation of this paneling directs visual flow down the path and through a wide internal space framing a vista of large gum trees and pergola at the far eastern end of the terraced rear garden. Built-in planter boxes on either side of the bulkhead demonstrate a Japanese approach to landscaping, combining architectural features with carefully placed natural features and specimens. This theme is extended in the rear garden with the inclusion of freestanding walls of textured brick that act as mountings for sculptures.

Landscaping in both front and rear gardens remains largely unaltered and demonstrates a boldly 1960's choice of plants including succulents, cacti, bamboo, silver birch and silver cypress chosen for their popularly perceived sculptural qualities and textural interest. A twin-post pergola defines the site's eastern boundary. Another pergola leads from the guest wing and alongside the pool to a partially enclosed windbreak of textured brickwork. The pergolas recall a specifically Japanese post and beam tradition.

The asymmetrical house comprises three wings of private spaces arranged along north and south boundaries extending either side of the full width public space that constitutes the living/dining/ study areas. The wings are linked by this open space that functions as the design's centre. Spatial function is mirrored in spatial scale. This shifts from intimate – the narrow entry court, master bedroom garden, breakfast space and small internal courtyard off the dining area – to an open informality for the central living/dining space and entertaining areas flowing through to the rear garden.

Internally, scale is visually manipulated and given continuity through features such as full height doors, shadow-line cornices and a copper picture rail inserted two brick courses below the ceiling line. Sliding grillage, suspended from a box beam adjacent to the entry/lounge/dining area also continues as a horizontal datum, picking up the ceiling height datum. Above the living/dining area, the ceiling rises in a substantial clerestory void, fashioned in a serpentine profile. The lower end of this serpentine curve stops short of the south wall, creating a reveal for concealed fluorescent lighting and, at the high end creates a space for glazing with mechanically operated drapery. This undulating ceiling of mountain ash grants importance to the lounge area by giving added height and allowing northern light entry. The ceiling is both functional and dramatic.

All internal spaces, irrespective of function, allow either sunlight penetration or embrace an exterior outlook. Much of the interior enjoys both. Enclosed external courtyards off the master bedroom and breakfast space, a 14-foot long skylight over the master washroom, north-facing clerestory windows and, floor-to-ceiling sized doors and windows throughout represent some of the features assisting dissolution of internal enclosure. This visual integration of indoor/ outdoor environments gains physical reinforcement and circulatory freedom that affords spatial unity.

In the open, 'public' spaces, fluidity of floor plan is achieved through timber concertina walls and cavity sliding screens enabling compartmentalization of space whilst not prescribing it. The study, for example, incorporates full height concertina doors into a wall of cabinetwork. Between entry and dining areas grillage cavity room dividers function to simultaneously enclose and include. Opening these screens delineating the living/dining/study areas along the north/south axis allows for a large circulation of people. In addition, full height sliding doors leading to the patio/ pool area allow this house to be opened entirely, from its western entry to the eastern end of the pool. Circulation requirements condition how flexible components are set up. In creating various zones of transition between nature outside and the volume of the

house the floor plan provides uninterrupted continuity between exterior and interior spaces. Significantly, traditional Japanese architecture demonstrates an overriding concern with these very principles of harmonious spatial integration and fluid floor plans that shift according to content or lifestyle occurring within.

Despite the fluidity of the floor plan order is made visible as clearly defined areas delineated by cabinet-work and furniture disposition. The cabinets have all kinds of functions, both real and imagined. They anticipate a cocktail party for 100 in the same way as they anticipate an intimate breakfast. Built-ins and grillage also function as visual components in a formal visual system integrating interior and exterior spaces. This is evident in their decorative treatment consisting of a minimal black horizontal band designed into interior and exterior components. Made variously of doe-skin, metal or stained timber and, defining a mid-point in scale, this band travels from the front gate and into the entry space and continues around the open central area embedded in the concertina doors, screens and cabinet work. It provides an emphatically horizontal visual continuum and decorative leit-motif between indoor and outdoor spaces.

The whole design exhibits a strict adherence to defined horizontal proportions. Externally, a mansard style slate-covered section of roof over the central area's serpentine ceiling represents the only break in the horizontal emphasis of this single level house. From the very horizontal textural treatment given to exposed brick work throughout – the courses are struck and perpenders are not - to the shadow-line cornices and minimal skirting used internally, the design continually focuses attention upon horizontal qualities linking various spaces whilst minimizing vertical disturbances to the visual field²⁶.

Whilst appearing modest enough, interior and exterior materials and finishes are statements of luxury. They essentially comprise exposed brickwork and oiled timber. However, internal timber finishes translate as entire concertina walls, built-in cabinetry and bedhead of oiled teak, a hickory parquetry floor and mountain ash ceiling fillets. Most of the architraves, skirtings, doors and trims are oiled teak. Similarly, oiled teak is used for movable furniture including the study desk built by Schulim Krimper and its chairs, designed by Hans Wegner²⁷ The honest expression and liberal usage of luxury materials throughout does not detract from their valued status. The interior is embellished with minimal yet luxurious details, such as the specially fabricated copper handles and inset panels of doeskin in much of the cabinetwork. The interior neutral colour scheme of sand, beechwood, tan, gold, brown and black is duplicated externally. All carpet and most drapery is still original and in excellent condition.

10.2 CONTEXT

The Fooks House is located in a coveted section of Caulfield prized for its generous sized allotments and proximity to local services and amenities. It is for these very reasons that the suburban streetscape surrounding the Fooks House has undergone enormous change with many homes radically altered or demolished. In its immediate context of large houses and multi-unit developments, none more than ten years old, the Fooks House bares testimony to a former period of rich and intensive residential development in Caulfield's post war suburban history.

10.3 PRESENT USE

House

10.4 PRESENT CONDITION

Minimal change to either exterior or interior has been made since the house was completed in 1966. Original interior furnishings, finishes and built-ins are intact and in excellent condition. External garden and feature walls remain unchanged however the north boundary pergola has been removed and remaining ones have recently been painted slate-grey. Much of the original landscaping exists with trees now mature and serving to further conceal the house from the street.

²⁶ This preference for horizontality suggests Wrightian organic notions linking horizontality of architectural form and natural materials to their indoor/outdoor environments.

²⁷ Significantly, these particular Wegner chairs are something of a design 'classic'. The same chairs were selected by Roy Grounds for use in the boardroom of his 1957 Academy of Science building in Canberra.

11. EVALUATION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

*“Integration...the term connotes not only a whole composed of an indefinite number of parts and functions, but also the close interdependence of these numerous parts and functions and their interpenetration. This process of integration is conditioned by the existence of a dominating element which absorbs the other factors and functions: it is called the nucleus of integration...the social needs of the human being form the nucleus of urban integration.”*²⁸

Fooks’ concept of integration was pivotal in his urban planning methodology and in guiding his architectural decisions. Fooks’ ideas for urban improvement were embedded in early 20th century idealistic social programs for urban renewal and reform. In his published texts, Fooks advocated a concept of ‘Housing’ as not only the provision of a home but also the establishment of living conditions that integrated the needs of its inhabitants and related these to their environment²⁹. Fooks’ notion of housing, in which integration was paramount, underpinned his design practices and translated as a responsive type of architecture enabling “Inside and outside space become integral parts of living space. Coordinated and balanced they can make possible the proper fulfillment of the physical functions of human life”³⁰. Fooks’ analytical approach to planning insisted upon close functional analysis in order to group and integrate subdivided parts into well-balanced units³¹. His application to these units of a proportional system grounded in classical architectural traditions endowed them with a humanistic sense of clarity, order and unity.³²

Howitt Road represents the most intact of Fooks’ 1960’s house designs exemplifying his notions of integration, his analytical approach and a particularly sophisticated stylistic alignment with Japanese architectural principles. With Howitt Road, Fooks was necessarily familiar with its inhabitants’ functional requirements and consequently applied his planning method “...to the nth degree”³³. That Howitt Road was designed as his own residence enabled Fooks to exercise complete design freedom without client restraint or imposition³⁴. In this design, Fooks’ landscaping decisions, his internal and external furniture designs, selected materials and finishes form part of a complex visual system emphasizing organic interrelationships between different constitutive elements. Its co-ordinated spatial arrangement sets out to integrate indoor and outdoor spaces, and to provide a physical environment that adjusts in response to different kinds of functional requirements within.

Fooks’ design creates oppositions in scale, structure, and materials, to group and integrate spaces. This strategy was derived from traditional Japanese architectural practices that sought balance and harmony through opposition. Shoji screens, a Tokonoma (display alcove), a Genkan (access corridor), pergolas, and a feature ceiling representing a rather Aalto-esque abstraction of a cloud-lift motif are just a sample of Japanese quotations employed as integral elements linking the whole living space at Howitt Road. Fooks’ ‘East Meets West’ treatment grants an enriched function and meaning for each component by incorporating them into a dialogue of implicit and explicit relationships operating throughout the whole design.

This thematic and spatial interpretation of harmonious opposition also distinguishes Howitt Road from other contemporaneous domestic projects in Caulfield designed by Fooks. Howitt Road’s closest comparison is at 47 Aroona Road, Caulfield³⁵. Fooks’ exploration of a specifically Japanese architectural vernacular resonates throughout both these house designs and both manifest similar materials, finishes and features - shoji screens, courtyards and a fluid floor plan. Yet comparison of the two points to Howitt Road as a more resolved and refined attempt by Fooks to synthesize certain traditional Japanese architectural principles with his theoretical concerns. This is exemplified in their contrasting façade treatments; Aroona Road announces its stylistic alignment and modernity to the street with painted joinery used to articulate the

²⁸ Fooks, Ernest *X-Ray The City: the Density Diagram: Basis for Urban Planning*. Ruskin Press, 1946 p.95.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp.95 & 96.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.57.

³¹ Fooks categorizes the different functions of human life as 1.Living 2.Working 3.Recreating and 4.Distributing. *ibid.*, p.27.

³² It was not uncommon for practitioners of early 20th century modernism to develop their own proportional systems; Le Corbusier’s dimensional module, ‘Le Modulor’, a case in point. Fooks, however, consistently applied the mathematically harmonious ‘Golden Section’ throughout his interior and exterior building designs.

³³ Noemi Fooks quoted in: Crafti, Stephen *op.cit.*, p.10. Mrs Fooks explains, “It was a matter of what needed to be stored...and having things designed to accommodate them”.

³⁴ The particular functional requirements of the Fooks house necessitated the design was “...intended to be a framework of relaxed living - a house in which it is possible to relax and where one can entertain and carry on one’s hobbies - sketching, filming and photographing, also display painting and the many relics collected on numerous overseas trips.” *Australian Journal of Architecture & Arts. op.cit.*, p.12.

³⁵ 47 Aroona Road, Caulfield featured on the front cover and was the central article of the January 1966 issue of *Australian House & Garden*.

structure and emphasize its horizontal forms. The street façade of Howitt Road is virtually non-existent. Its partially hidden, partially revealed components play upon tension generated through this opposition, building a sense of anticipation as the structure begins to reveal itself the further into the space one travels. Fooks' Howitt Road design represents a more thorough and successful attempt to fuse stylistic content and expression than was achieved in Aroona Road where Japanese references appear more as a stylistic gesture.

Fooks' exploration of a traditional Japanese architectural vernacular can be seen as part of a broader 1960's Australian interest in Japanese culture³⁶. During the 1960's various local architects experimented with concepts intrinsic to traditional Japanese architecture in their domestic designs, notably Graham Gunn, Neil Clerehan and Robin Boyd³⁷. Whilst the varied architectural responses of these local iconoclasts to this eastern influence have merited analysis within certain histories tracing the evolution of styles in Melbourne's postwar domestic architecture, Fooks' particular interpretations have, until recently, been overlooked. Howitt Road showcases Fooks' specific blend of Japanese principles and its components with his theoretical concerns using built-language forms prevalent among a genre of postwar modernism practiced in the Caulfield precinct. Howitt Road not only represents a significant example within the body of Fooks' 1960's domestic design. It also epitomizes a different expression in local postwar domestic architecture that reworked and recontextualized concepts rooted in European modernist practices and combined these with local concerns and technologies.

12. REFERENCES

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13. APPENDICES

1. Photocopies of Wolfgang Sievers' 1967 Howitt Road series of photographs as they appeared in *Australian House & Garden* articles, *Australian Journal of Architecture & Arts*, *Architecture & Urbanism*, promotional material for *N:Notable & Modern. Post War domestic Architecture in the City of GlenEira* exhibition and *Ernst Fooks:Architect. The Fooks House 1966*. exhibition.
2. Photocopies of plan as appeared in *Architecture & Urbanism* vol.7, July 1971
3. *Australian House & Garden*. April, 1966.p.19. Wolfgang Sievers' photos of the Adams residence, 20 Lansell Road, Toorak.
4. *Australian House & Garden*, January, 1966. pp.23-24. Wolfgang Sievers' photos of 47 Aroona Road, Caulfield and its floor plan.

³⁶ As early as 1961, Eric Wilson wrote for *Australian Home Beautiful*: "the first waves of a peaceful Japanese invasion are washing over our shores bringing forth fresh thoughts on new ways of life". Quoted in Callister, W. op.cit.(1989) p.47 By the late 1960's similar local magazines carried articles advising readers how to recreate Japanese style landscaping, Ikebana arrangements and room dividers based upon shoji screens.

³⁷ Clerehan's 1964 Fenner House explored privacy, Graham Gunn's 1963 Richardson House in Essendon emulated Japanese courtyard houses and, Robin Boyd experimented with Japanese notions of stacking space in many of his 1960's domestic designs. Other local architects, including John Rouse, Peter Staughton and Graham Whitford, designed houses that clearly referenced the Japanese pavilion form and post and beam tradition. See, Callister, W. op.cit. (1989) p.44-47.