

# Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

**RSTCA No:** R105

**Name of Place:** House at 12 Marawa Place Aranda

**Other/Former Names:**

**Address/Location:** 12 Marawa Place ARANDA 2614

Block 6 Section 31 of

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Listing Status:

Date of Listing:

Citation Revision No:

Citation Revision Date:

Other Heritage Listings:

Level of Significance:

Category:

Style:

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Date of Design:

Construction Period:

Date of Additions:

Designer:

Client/Owner/Lessee:

Builder:

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## Statement of Significance

The residence at 12 Marawa Place, Aranda, is an example of significant architecture and an educational resource. The house is a good example of a Late Twentieth-Century Regional Style (1960-). The design incorporates some of the principal design features which are peculiar to the style including simple shapes freely formed, concrete roof tiles and stained or oiled timber.

The following design features are of additional significance:

Externally; the low-pitch gable roof, clerestory windows, exposed rafters, exposed roof beams, timber deck, timber awning sash, face brickwork, large expanses of timber framed glazing, the off form concrete over the entry and large roof overhang.

Internally; the open planning with the main bedroom overlooking the living area below and the interiors opening out into the landscape; the exposed brickwork, timber panelling, detailing and type of finishes.

The residence can be compared with the Cater House (1965), Red Hill, by Allen, Jack and Cottier, the Headquarters of the RAI (1967), Red Hill, by Ancher, Mortlock, Murray and Woolley, and contrasted with Boyd's earlier Professor Manning Clark's House, (1952), 51 Tasmania Circle and Professor Fenner's House (1953), 8 Monaro Crescent, Red Hill.

The architecture of this residence may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of late twentieth-century architectural styles.

Robin Boyd is recognised as one of Australia's leading architects of the modern movement.

Boyd's recognition of this residence as an example of his work, in his book "Living in Australia", highlights the significance of this project for its special association with him.

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## Description

The three bedroom residence was designed by Robin Boyd C.B.E. (1919-1971) in 1968-69 for Mr & Mrs D H Eltringham and construction was completed in 1970-71 1. The building is an example of a Late Twentieth-Century Regional Style (1960-) with its simple shapes, freely composed; concrete roof tiles and stained or oiled timber 2.

There are examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960-) in Canberra including the Cater House (1965), Red Hill, by Allen, Jack and Cottier and the Headquarters of the

RAIA (1967), Red Hill, by Ancher, Mortlock, Murray and Woolley.

The elevated residence is located at the end of a cul-de-sac backing onto a reserve and has views to the north and west. It is set back at an angle from the street to face north with the entry path and drive angled across the front, perpendicular to the street. The drive descends to the double garage at the lowest level and is separated from the raised entry path by a 230mm thick wall, which forms the entry path balustrade. Where this wall meets the residence, the garage steel lintel beam extends slightly past it. An off form concrete section of wall extends from the entry door head and side light glazing up to above the internal concrete stair landing emphasising and giving prominence to the entry. The north elevation is a studied composition of large areas of glazing extending up to the under side of the tiled gabled roof, horizontal panels of brickwork below the glazing and a vertical central brick panel above the off form concrete wall section.

The planning is set about a central stair which links three levels and separates the children's 'wing' from the parent's and living 'wing'. Each wing is an approximate square and is slightly staggered with the children's wing set slightly to the north. From the half level entry the stair descends to the cellar and double garage and ascends to a narrow passage between the living areas to the west and the children's area to the east. The living wing has a dining room to the south and the kitchen to the north. The living room occupies the western half of the square with extensive glazing to the north. The living room is overlooked from the main bedroom above, and both share a vertical panel of west facing 1.8m wide double height glazing.

The two children's bedrooms face north with a full width playroom to the south. The ceilings to these spaces follow the pitch of the roof. The playroom opens through glazed doors to a raised southern terrace. The combined bathroom/laundry, which is located to the south of the passage and stairs, projects out to the south and is accessed from the playroom.

The combination of the slightly staggered two wings and the projected bathroom/laundry, and the large roof overhangs, provides protection from the weather to the outdoor spaces.

The upper main bedroom level is one storey above the dining area and kitchen. A full-length timber paneled low level balustrade wall extends along the west side allowing this room to overlook the living room below. The raked ceiling of the bedroom extends down over the lower living area. The large full height west window extends from the living room up past the double height ceiling. This extended window is accommodated in a raised low-pitched 'dormer' style roof form for the width of the glazing. To the north the bedroom opens out through full height glazing onto a narrow cantilevered balcony which projects out from the glazing above and below. The balcony also provides sun shading to the kitchen. A wardrobe providing a separate space to the south divides the bedroom.

The upper level bathroom is located over the lower bathroom/laundry and opens off the top stair passage.

The residence is constructed in cavity face brickwork with timber floors. The stair landings are reinforced concrete. The glazing is timber framed. The roof is tiled and framed with exposed timber beams and rafters externally and beams internally. The upper level ceilings follow the slope of the roof.

The major architectural elements that are characteristic of a Late Twentieth-Century Regional Style (1960-) and that are displayed by this building relate to the external forms. They are:

- simple shapes freely formed,
- concrete roof tiles.
- stained or oiled timber.

Other architectural elements of this style displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- low-pitch gable roof,
- clerestory windows,
- exposed rafters and roof beams,
- timber deck,
- timber awning sash.

The major architectural elements listed above place this building in the Late Twentieth Century Regional Style (1960-) 3.

The face brickwork, large expanses of timber framed glazing, off form concrete beam to the entry and large roof overhang are important to the building as a whole.

There are internal elements that are important: the open planning with the main bedroom overlooking the living area below and the interiors opening out into the landscape; the exposed brickwork, the timber panelling, the detailing and type of finishes.

The building is well maintained, in good condition and intact.

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## **Condition and Integrity**

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## **Background/History**

As a reaction to the architecture of the international style with its flat roofed, plain smooth wall surfaces and cubiform overall shape, some architects from the 1950s to the 1970s produced work which is now referred to as regional architecture. Melbourne and Brisbane regional styles were the first to take form with the other major cities in Australia taking on their regional styles in the 1960s. The styles reflected the lifestyles and climate of the various regions but had some similar influences.

The residence at Marawa Place, Aranda, has similarities to the Late Twentieth Century Sydney Regional Style (1960-) and the Late Twentieth Century Adelaide Regional Style (1960-) 4 which were influenced by the modern architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, especially the Saynatsalo Town Hall, 1950-52, Finland, and the post war architecture of Le Corbusier, notably the Jaoul Houses, 1954-56, Paris.

These new regional styles incorporated natural materials; dark rough (clinker) or face brickwork, exposed dark stained sawn timber and large areas of timber framed glazing. Often their planning was split-level which followed the site topography and their interiors, often open planned, were carefully contrived and were rich with the use of natural materials with tactile qualities. The Australian bush or a constructed native landscaping was their prime setting.

The residence at Marawa Place, Aranda, is one of a few residences, and is the last residence Boyd designed in Canberra. It exhibits Boyd's life long interest for modern architecture tempered by regional concerns, however, it has few of the elements his earlier work showed where he would "experiment with ways to overcome the deficiencies of the typical dwelling" including structuralist solutions. The residence shows elements of the regional styles of architecture that were prominent at the time. Although Boyd was a key practitioner of the earlier Post-War Melbourne Regional Style (1940-60) 5 the incorporation in this residence of face brickwork and tiled roofing are elements which exclude it from this style.

Boyd features this residence in his book "Living in Australia" where he states that his intention was to "adopt the materials of its suburb - brick and tiles - to be neighbourly". 6

Robin Boyd (1919-71) was an architect who practised from Melbourne and came from a family of noted artists and writers. In 1945 he formed a partnership with Kevin Pethebridge and within a short time Frank Bell joined them. In 1947 he published "Victorian Modern", the first history of the beginning of modern architecture in his home state of Victoria. Between 1947-53 Boyd was the first director of the "RVIA Small Homes Service" and from 1948 was the editor of this service for the 'Age' newspaper and wrote weekly articles for the same newspaper. The service provided designs of inexpensive houses, which attempted to incorporate modern architectural aesthetics and functional planning. The designs were sold to the public at a very small fee. Through this exposure he became a well-known identity. In 1952 Boyd published "Australia's Homes", an important study of modern architecture in Australia at that time. In 1953 he designed 'The Peninsula', possibly Australia's first project house.

In 1954 Roy Grounds, Frederick Romberg and Robin Boyd formed the practice of Grounds Romberg and Boyd. This was a leading firm in Melbourne architecture where the three partners produced their own designs and sometimes shared their supervision work when one of them was travelling abroad. Although initially they intended to work together on commissions, they generally worked on their own designs within the partnership.

While still a partner in the firm, Boyd had continued his friendship and correspondence with Walter Gropius (1883-1969), one of the most important architects of this century and director of the Bauhaus school of art in Germany before World War II. Gropius, at the time, was a director at MIT, Boston, and in 1956 offered Boyd a teaching position.

In 1960 Boyd published "The Australian Ugliness", a book on the built environment and Australian suburbs.

In 1962, a few years after Grounds won the competition for the National Gallery of Victoria, Grounds left the practice. Romberg and Boyd continued their own partnership. In 1967 Boyd presented the ABC Radio's Boyer Lectures. He is recognised as one of Melbourne's and Australia's leading architects of the modern movement and was made a Life Fellow of the RAI and an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. In 1969 he was awarded the RAI Gold Medal.

Robin Boyd was one of Australia's leading architects, architectural critics and writers. He was recognised as important for his buildings and for his contributions as an architectural historian. In 1970 he published "Living in Australia", a book of his more recent work. The RAI named its annual national domestic architecture award after him, the Robin Boyd Award. Roy Simpson, RAI 1997 Gold Medallist, believed that "no other architect has ever approached his level of distinction as a writer" (Robin Boyd: a life). Boyd was listed as one of 200 in "The people Who Made Australia Great", a Bicentennial publication 7.

Boyd designed many residences and a few public buildings in Melbourne and some in Canberra. The buildings in Canberra with which he or his partners were associated are: Professor Manning Clark's House, 1952, 51 Tasmania Circle (Boyd); Professor Fenner's House, 1953, 8 Monaro Crescent, Red Hill (Boyd); Dr Hilary Roche House, 1954, Bedford Street, Deakin (Boyd); Australian Academy of Science, 1958 (Grounds); Town Houses in Forrest, 1960 (Grounds); Holy Trinity Lutheran National Memorial Church, 1961, Turner (Romberg); three houses in Vasey Crescent, Campbell, 1961 (Grounds & Boyd); 24 Cobby Street, Campbell, 1963-64 (Grounds), W G Verge House, 1963, 204 Monaro Crescent, Red Hill (Boyd); Zoology Building ANU, 1963-8, (Boyd) and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Headquarters, 1968-72, Dickson (Boyd, completed after his death) 8.

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### **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 some of the particular architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Regional Style (1960-) including stained or oiled timber, simple shapes freely formed and concrete roof tiles.

The following design features are of additional significance:

Externally; the low-pitch gable roof, clerestory windows, exposed rafters, exposed roof beams, timber deck, timber awning sash, face brickwork, large expanses of timber framed glazing, the off form concrete beam to the entry and large roof over hang.

Internally; the open planning with the main bedroom over looking the living area below and the interiors opening out into the landscape; the raked ceilings, the exposed brickwork, timber panelling, detailing and type of finishes.

The house is unaltered and is a good example of how Boyd considered the site context in his work and successfully combined regional content with the international style.

The residence is valued by the RAI A as a good example of Boyd's 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*

Robin Boyd played a significant role in Australia's cultural history. Boyd features this residence in his book "Living in Australia" where he states that his intention was to "adopt the materials of its suburb - brick and tiles - to be neighbourly".

Robin Boyd was one of Australia's leading architects, architectural critics and writers. He is recognised as an important architect for his buildings and an important architectural historian. The RAI A named its annual national domestic architecture award after him, the Robin Boyd Award. Roy Simpson, RAI A 1997 Gold Medallist, believed that "no other architect has ever approached his level of distinction as a writer" (Robin Boyd: a life). Boyd was awarded the Commander of the British Empire and was more recently listed as one of 200 "The people Who Made Australia Great", a Bicentennial publication.

Robin Boyd was awarded the RAI A Gold Medal in 1970.

The residence is also significant as being the last residence designed by him in Canberra prior to his untimely death at age 52.

*(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*

Through its architectural style this building is a valuable educational resource for designers. Its external architecture is characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Regional Style (1960-)

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## References

- 1 Copy of the original working drawings & discussion with architect Bill Williams who worked for Boyd and documented the residence.
- 2 Richard Apperly Robert Irving Peter Reynolds. Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present. Angus & Robertson 1989.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Robin Boyd. Living in Australia, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1970.

7 Compiled from:

- a. Trevor Howells, Robin Boyd. The Walls Around Us, Angus & Robertson, 1982.
- b. Geoffrey Serle. Robin Boyd: a life, South Carlton, 1996.
- c. Howard Tanner (ed). Architects of Australia, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1981.
- d. Conversations with Bill Williams, who worked with Boyd, & Fritz Suenderman who worked with Grounds.

- 8 RAIA ACT Chapter RSTCA records & Transition No 38, Melbourne, 1992.  
Discussion with Bill Williams who helped administer the work after Boyd's death. Others record that Neil Clerehan completed the building, however, Bill Williams states that this is incorrect. The trustees required Boyd to undertake this project as an individual and not as part of Romberg & Boyd.)
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**Other Information Sources**