

Heritage inventory sheet

Based on the NSW Heritage Office State Heritage Inventory sheet

ITEM DETAILS			
Name of Item	Still House, including interiors		
Former name			
Item type	Built		
Address	Number 8	Street Victoria Street	Suburb Watsons Bay
Property description	Lot Lot 11		DP DP 1004606
Use	Current Residence		Former Residence
Statement of significance	<p>The Still House is of historical significance as an award-winning house demonstrating that the insertion of modern architecture into an historic streetscape could retain the significance of that streetscape without compromising the Modernist architecture of the urban infill project. It also demonstrates the early development of an architectural aesthetic of the highly-regarded architectural partnership of Colin (1943-2017) and Irene Still (b. 1953) who designed the house as their family home. It is an excellent expression of one of their early houses.</p> <p>The Still House is of aesthetic significance as a well-designed and well-executed example the domestic use of the Modernist influences from the USA and Europe combined with a re-interpretation of Sydney urban nineteenth century housing. It is also a seminal work by Colin and Irene Still that influenced their later work and holds an important place in their oeuvre.</p> <p>The RAIAs recognition of the significance of the Still House through the architecture awards program indicates it is held in high regard by an identifiable contemporary group (the architectural profession) for cultural reasons.</p> <p>It is capable of demonstrating the NSW historic themes of 'accommodation' and 'towns suburbs and villages.' The national themes of 'building settlements, towns and cities' and 'creative endeavour are also illuminated by the place.</p>		
Level of significance	State: No	Local: Yes	
Heritage listings	Located within the Watsons Bay Heritage Conservation Area as gazetted in the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014.		
DESCRIPTION			
Designer	Colin & Irene Still		
Builder	Not known		
Construction years	Design: 1972-1973 Construction: c.1973-1974		

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<p>Physical Description</p>	<p>General: The house is a three-level house orientated on the site so that the side walls are parallel with the side boundaries. The angle of Victoria Street meant the front, north-facing courtyard is trapezoidal in shape and the front wall of the house faces north-west. The family and living areas front onto the courtyard, facing north-west. The rear of the house faces south-east and backs onto Camp Cove Reserve. The lowest (basement) level was originally depicted as containing three bedrooms, a WC, laundry and a basement room, however, it appears that the planning was changed during construction so that the basement level contains two bedrooms and a laundry/bathroom. The ground level (at the Victoria Street level) contains a courtyard (for car parking), family room, kitchen, living, dining areas and a deck facing north-east and south-east. The upper level (first floor) contains bedroom 1, dressing area, ensuite, balcony overlooking the front courtyard and, up 6 steps, an attic. From the attic access was originally gained to a roof terrace running along the west side of the house but this terrace was deleted in alterations undertaken in 1997.</p> <p>The roof sheeting of the house is pale-coloured steel Trim Deck (replacing the original metal roof sheeting in 1997). The roofs are mono-pitched skillion roofs facing north and south with clerestory windows facing south. The walls are painted brick. The windows and exterior doors are painted timber. While the woodwork has remained almost the same (bright blue and a pale tangerine orange) the brickwork has now been painted a much paler (pale pink?) colour instead of the previous pale mustard colour and the front fence brick has been altered to a pale green instead of the previous grey. The steel gate retains a darker version of its tangerine orange and the steel track above has also been painted that colour instead of the previous deep red in 2004.</p> <p>By 2010 windows on the rear basement wall had been replaced in with bi-fold doors.</p>
<p>Physical condition</p>	<p>Good.</p>
<p>Modification and Dates</p>	<p>1997: Re-roofing and alteration to position of kitchen window to permit deeper kitchen benches. 2010: Bi-fold doors to rear wall of basement level.</p>
<p>Archaeological potential</p>	<p>Due to the long period of European occupation of this site the archaeological potential for Aboriginal cultural material is low.</p> <p>Due to substantial disturbance during construction, the potential for archaeological remains is low however, the rear garden is adjacent to a lagoon/water reserve, which may contain cultural remains, dating from pre-1973.</p>
<p>HISTORY</p>	
<p>The Still House is situated in the 1855 subdivision of Laing's 1793 grant of 20 acres, Roddam Farm at Camp Cove which was established in the traditional country of the Cadigal and Birrabirragal peoples. In laying out the subdivision, a swampy lagoon area was reserved for the purposes of a water reservoir, which was known as the Wild Duck Pool. Although the pond is now filled in, the area is still a reserve. Lots in the 1855 subdivision appear not to have sold rapidly, and George Wigram Allen, prominent Sydney solicitor and member of the Legislative Assembly, acquired the balance of the remaining town allotments, including that of the subject house, in October 1859. Allen sold a number of lots, including Lot 11 of Section 2, to Jeremiah J Moore, bookseller, in 1878. In 1897, the land was sold to Thomas Scott, a police constable. In 1902, Scott sold the property to AJ Newton, a seaman. Newton is the first occupant of the property that is identifiable in the Sands Directories, appearing for the first time in 1902. For a time, at least, the house was known as Stirling Cottage.</p>	

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After a number of subsequent changes of ownership, in 1971, Colin Still (1943-2017) and Irene Still (b.1953) purchased the property, having lived in the house as tenants for a time. In 1973, the Stills constructed a new house, designed for themselves, on the site.

Colin Still had entered a traineeship with the Department of Public Works after completing school, and received a degree in architecture from the University of Sydney, winning the University Medal and being awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to undertake postgraduate study at Harvard University (USA). Irene Still was a contemporary of Colin's in the architecture course. They cited their key influences to include Lloyd Rees, George Molnar, Roland Wakeland, Arthur Baldwinson, Bob Woodward, and Douglas Gordon, and had an interest in the work of Aalto. While in America, Colin studied with Jose Luis Sert, Fumiko Maki, Paul Rudolph and Louis Kahn. Charles Moore was another considerable influence. Upon returning to Australia, Colin and Irene Still initially designed a number of residential and commercial projects together; but this collaboration declined except to design a second house for themselves in the Central Coast which was completed in 2004. (Interview with Colin & Irene Still, 27th October 2004, Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners.)

The Stills described the ground floor as an exercise in controlled perspective and reflected light. Colin Still referred to "the quality of light coming through [the house] ... working with the spatial arrangement of the various forms to capture and reflect that light... This place is three rigid bays, but there's a lot of variety within that, and that probably is common in our projects."

Large glazed sliding Oregon timber doors and windows and freestanding fireplace, laundry chute shaft, formed a screen at entry. In 2004 the arrangement and finishes of the wet areas was largely original and employed brightly coloured plastic veneer finishes. The colour palette included bright green in the laundry and bright orange in the en-suite. Originally red and blue were used in the kitchen, all contrasting with white painted walls and ceilings. It was modest in size and scale, presenting as a resolved and complete work of architecture. The Still's placement of the central stair at an angle to the external walls was a clever use of space, while creating interesting spaces and filtered vistas through the ground floor level. The Still's deployed the Sydney School style split pitched roof and elements that have been characterized as 'slightly Brutalist' in the south east elevation, the projecting sky lit bay on the north side of the living room and the angled storage cupboard on the west side of the family room and present study. The use of deep off form concrete beams running east to west through the spaces gave them a sturdy character. The use of solid floors throughout gives a hint of the architects' travels in Mexico prior to the design. The freestanding fireplace/chimney shaft and the angled clear finished Maranti [sic] stair are essential elements to the significance of the place.

When asked in 2004 if they felt the house was a good example of their work, Irene Still responded, "You don't see it as an example, it's just an expression of where you are and in that regard its been very expressive...[Designing and building the house] is an exceptional opportunity that has worked really well...It's a personal expression and I think from that point of view we'd be very pleased with it...The people who we worked with on our next project [after the Still House] had seen this house and they really wanted that again. It's an expression but then again they were really happy with the language of the house. They really wanted us keep it. And I suppose if we would have kept rolling along on a practice we would have evolved from that." (CLSP 2005 Report for Woollahra Council)

Colin Still's work as Assistant Government Architect with the Department of Public Works and Services produced one Sulman Award winner (Orange Regional Library and Art Gallery, 1986) and 5 RIAA Merit Awards. (Docomomo Australia biographical notes on speakers 2004.) In addition to the Still House, Colin Still designed a house in Queen Street, Woollahra, which won the RIAA Merit Award. Colin Still is an early, skilled proponent of American Functionalism, influenced by such architects as Charles Moore and Louis Kahn. Over a long career which included mostly public buildings for the NSW Government Architect's Branch, he produced a variety of mid-20th century modernist buildings with a high degree of intellectual rigour which exhibit few easily recognisable stylistic influences.

In awarding the house a Merit Award in 1976, the jury stated:

"Built on a 10m x 30m site, this house demonstrates that a lot of joy can be achieved on a fairly standard inner suburban block of land and that it can be done without spending a lot of money. In an unselfconscious manner it evokes the character of the old harbourside suburb of Watsons

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Bay. Its slightly Mediterranean character is one of pleasant and colourful chaos – plenty of light and views of what you want to see. This total and very happy effect combines:

- Interesting spaces created around the ingenious central stairwell and a small area of double height
- An arrangement of rooms which admits of both privacy and a family life
- The use of very simple finishes and details
- The bold use of cheerful, but subtle colours which are a refreshing departure from the natural finishes or white and primary colours currently in fashion.

There has been obvious concern that the house should fit into its neighbourhood and Watsons Bay is richer for it.” (Architecture Australia, October-November 1976)

The house’s inclusion in Howard Tanner’s *Australian Housing in the Seventies* is testament to the high valuation placed on the achievement by the architectural community.

The design of the Still House demonstrates a sophisticated combination of Modernist influences from the USA, Europe as well as elements of the Sydney strand of Australian Modernism. The use of angled elements to create angled paths through each storey, the interpenetration of space, the use of open tread staircases (similar to those by Harry Seidler) indicates US influences and the use of the range of colours on building elements such as cupboards and windows recalls the colour palette of Le Corbusier as well as the nascent Post-Modernist colours then emanating from the USA. The split pitched shed roofs and mostly solid side walls is a twentieth century interpretation of the terrace house that was being explored by other Sydney architects in the 1960s and 1970s. In our opinion the Still House is not an exploration of Brutalism in that a more intimate, sophisticated combination of “softer” styles of architecture is employed by the Stills in their own residence, in contrast to Colin Still’s equally sophisticated but more extrovert exploration of Brutalism in his designs for the NSW Government Architects Office.

HISTORICAL THEMES

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	How the historical theme is demonstrated in the local area
4. Building settlements, towns and cities	Accommodation	The provision of accommodation to suit a particular site and lifestyle.
8. Developing Australia’s cultural life	Creative endeavour	Work of creative and well-known architects.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

Historic significance SHR criterion (a)	The Still House is of historical significance as an award-winning house demonstrating that the insertion of modern architecture into an historic streetscape could retain the significance of that streetscape without compromising the Modernist architecture of the urban infill project. It also demonstrates the early development of an architectural aesthetic of the highly-regarded architectural partnership of Colin and Irene Still. It is associated with the NSW historic themes of ‘Accommodation’ and ‘Creative Endeavour’ and the National themes of ‘Building settlements, towns and cities’ and ‘Developing Australia’s cultural life’.
Historical association SHR criterion (b)	The Still House is associated with its architects, Colin Still (1943-2017) and Irene Still (b. 1953), and is an excellent expression of one of their early houses. Colin Still, especially, is highly regarded by the architectural profession having won numerous awards for his architecture in both government and private practice.

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<p>Aesthetic/ creative/ technical achievement SHR criterion (c)</p>	<p>The Still House is of aesthetic significance as a well-designed and well-executed example the domestic use of the Modernist influences from the USA and Europe combined with a re-interpretation of Sydney urban nineteenth century housing. It is also a seminal work by Colin and Irene Still that influenced their later work and holds an important place in their oeuvre.</p>			
<p>Social/cultural/ spiritual significance SHR criterion (d)</p>	<p>The RAIAs recognition of the significance of the Still House through the architecture awards program indicates it is held in high regard by an identifiable contemporary group (the architectural profession) for cultural reasons. The house's inclusion in Howard Tanner's <i>Australian Housing in the Seventies</i> is further testament to the high valuation placed on the achievement by the Australian architectural community.</p>			
<p>Research potential SHR criterion (e)</p>	<p>The archaeological potential of the building is low due to the construction of the building.</p> <p>The Still House has research potential as a work of architecture. Its continued physical existence allows an appreciation of the design as a three-dimensional work of art. The presence of the original working drawings permits research to be undertaken as an historical item and as part of the development of the practice of a notable architectural partnership. The physical presence of the building allows a physical exploration of the spaces around and within the building.</p> <p>The building and the surviving archival record are a resource for understanding the constructional and architectural detailing of the architects, Colin & Irene Still, and the overall design and planning of the building on the site.</p>			
<p>Rare SHR criterion (f)</p>	<p>The Still House is a rare and seminal work by the husband & wife team of Colin and Irene Still.</p>			
<p>Representative SHR criterion (g)</p>	<p>The building is a very good example of Late Twentieth Century Modern style architecture.</p> <p>The Still House is a representative example of Colin and Irene Still's design and construction skills. Colin was later employed on other award-winning works of architecture for the NSW Government Architects Office.</p>			
<p>Integrity</p>	<p>The CLSP photographs of 2004 indicate that the house was intact at that time, with only minor alterations having been made by the Stills who were resident in the house.</p>			
RECOMMENDATIONS				
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>List as heritage item on Woollahra LEP. The boundary of the listing should be Lot 11 DP 1004606.</p>			
INFORMATION SOURCES				
<p>Type</p>	<p>Author/Client</p>	<p>Title</p>	<p>Year</p>	<p>Repository</p>
<p>Study</p>	<p>Robertson & Hindmarsh Pty Ltd / Woollahra Municipal Council</p>	<p>Woollahra Contemporary Buildings Study: Heritage Peer Review and Update</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>Woollahra Council records</p>

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Study	Clive Lucas, Stapleton & Partners Pty Ltd (CLSP) / Woollahra Municipal Council	Woollahra Contemporary Buildings Heritage Study	2005	Woollahra Council records
Archival records	Woollahra Municipal Council	Building Application Records	Various	Woollahra Council records
Study	Clive Lucas, Stapleton & Partners Pty Ltd (CLSP) / Woollahra Municipal Council	Woollahra Contemporary Buildings Heritage Study	2005	Woollahra Council records
Book	Howard Tanner	Australian Housing in the Seventies. Sydney: Ure Smith	1976	Various

AUTHOR OF THIS REPORT

Name	
Robertson & Hindmarsh Pty Ltd (Dr Scott Robertson) & Sue Rosen Associates (Dr Sue Rosen)	7/6/2024

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IMAGES			
Image Caption	8 Victoria Street, Watsons Bay, 2004.		
			
Image Year	2004	Image author and Copyright Holder	Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners Pty Ltd (WMC)

IMAGES			
Image Caption	8 Victoria Street, Watsons Bay, 2024.		
			
Image Year	2024	Image author and Copyright Holder	Robertson & Hindmarsh Pty Ltd

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IMAGES

Image Caption

Floor plans as-built, 1976. (Howard Tanner, *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1976, p.55.)

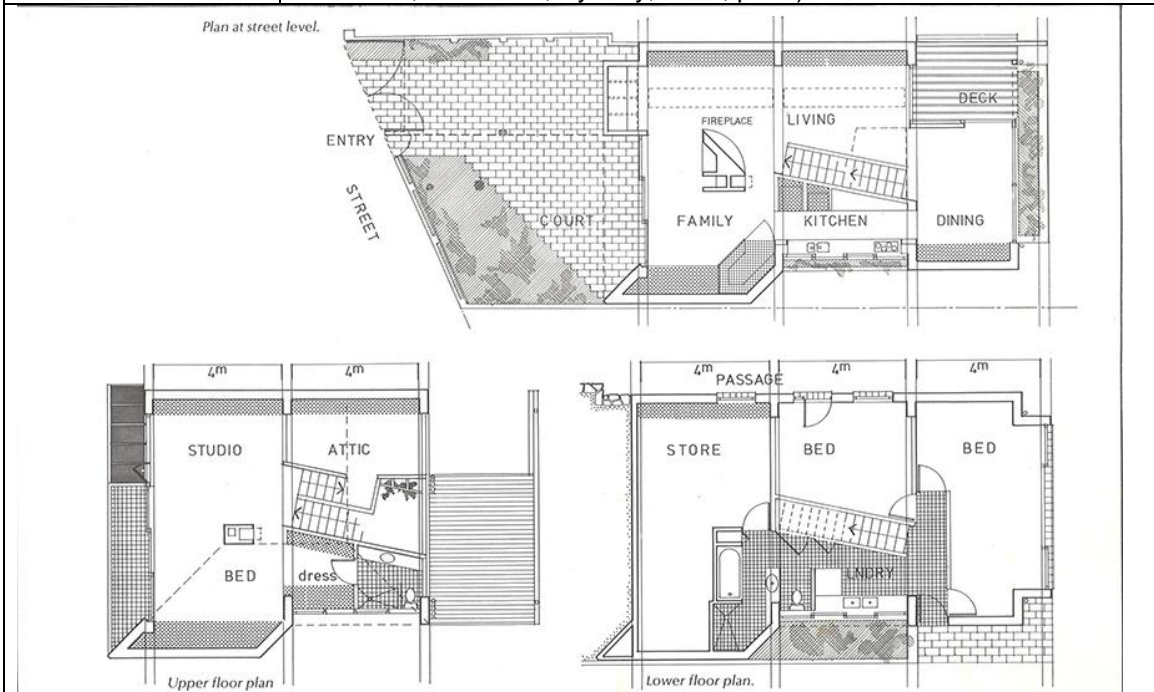


Image Year

1976

Image author and Copyright Holder

Colin & Irene Still

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IMAGES

Image Caption

View from Victoria Street showing the original gates, super-sized street number, the dark-coloured gates, lighter wall and the white supporting structure of the carport, etc, 1976. (Howard Tanner, *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1976, p.52.)



Image Year

1976

Image author and Copyright Holder

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IMAGES

Image Caption

View from the Living area looking through the Family area to the courtyard, 1976. (Howard Tanner, *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1976, p.53.)

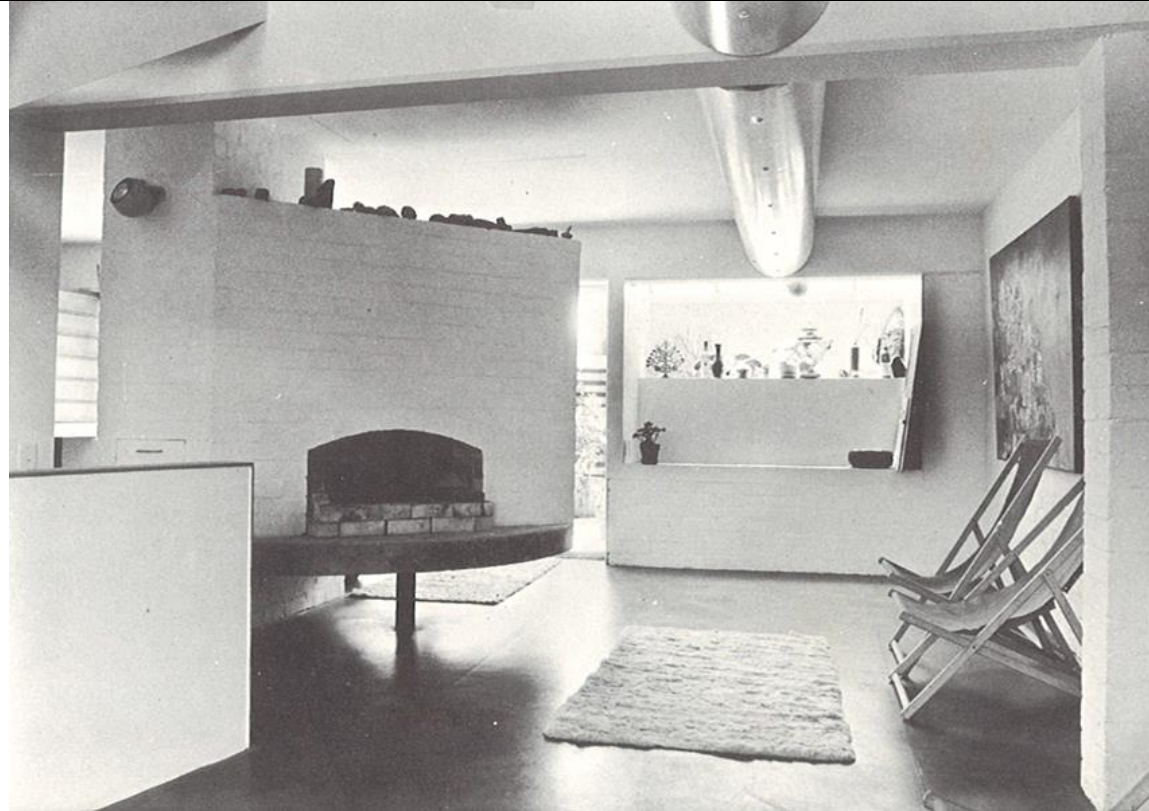


Image Year

1976

Image author and Copyright Holder

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IMAGES

Image Caption

View from the Dining area looking through the Living area and the open tread stairs, 1976. (Howard Tanner, *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1976, p.53.)



Image Year

1976

Image author and Copyright Holder

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IMAGES

Image Caption

8 Victoria Street, Watsons Bay, 2004; Looking south through Kitchen and Living area.



Image Year

2004

Image author and Copyright Holder

Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners Pty Ltd (WMC)

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IMAGES

Image Caption

8 Victoria Street, Watsons Bay, 2004; Looking north through Living area (Colin Still in blue on the right)



Image Year

2004

Image author and Copyright Holder

Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners Pty Ltd (WMC)