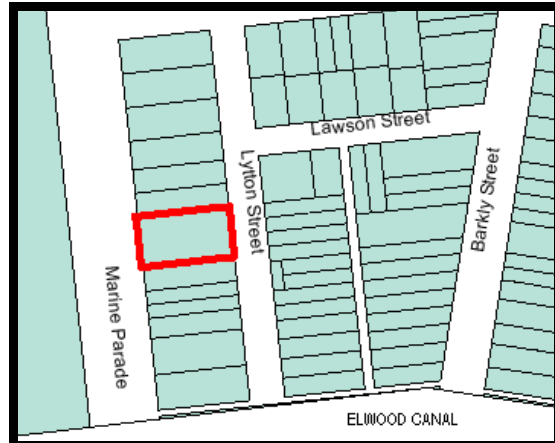


Identifier "Garden Court" Flats
Formerly unknown



Not within a HO area

Address 73 Marine Parade
 ELWOOD

Category Residential: apartment

Constructed c.1940

Designer J H Esmond Dorney

Significance

What is Significant?

Garden Court at 73 Marine Parade, Elwood, is a two-storeyed gable-roofed rendered brick apartment building in a simplified Functionalist style, with stark and volumetric form and ribbon windows, tempered by more conventional elements such as standard windows and a hipped roof. The flats were designed in 1940 by noted local architect J H Esmond Dorney as a speculative project for his father-in-law, estate agent John R Lambie.

How is it Significant?

The flats are of aesthetic and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip

Why is it Significant?

Aesthetically, the *Garden Court* is significant as an fine and intact example of a block of flats designed during the Second World War, a time when architects invariably reverted to a simpler interpretation of the Functionalist style that combining typical details (ribbon windows, stepped facades, etc) with more conventional elements (hipped tiled roofs, standard windows, etc).

Architecturally, *Garden Court* is significant for its association with J H Esmond Dorney, a prolific local architect and one-time employee of Walter Burley Griffin who became a leading exponent of the Functionalist style in Melbourne in the 1930s and, after the War, a highly regarded modern architect in Tasmania. Although less distinguished than some of Dorney's other known Elwood projects, it nevertheless stand out in his *oeuvre* for its interesting familial connection and as one of the last local projects undertaken by the architect before he enlisted in the RAAF.

Description

Garden Court at 73 Marine Parade is a double-storey rendered brick block of eight flats, with a gabled cement tile roof. Planned on an elongated L-shape, the flats have a double-fronted street frontage, each half, in turn, divided into three stepped bays. There are bays of rectangular windows with steel-framed casement sashes (some replaced by aluminium sliding sashes); along the inner elevation, the windows are set between orange brick spandrels. There is a matching orange brick chimney at the street end, and a planter box that runs along the ground floor. There are two entrances, each providing access to four flats: one doorway about half-way down the inner façade, and another in the corner, marked by a row of three ribbon windows with orange glass. Alongside, the words GARDEN COURT appear in mild steel lettering. The flats have a plain orange brick fence along the street boundary (which appears to be contemporary with the building) and a detached brick letterbox unit (which is apparently not).

History

These flats were evidently erected during 1940, as they appear for the first time in the 1941 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Directory*, listed simply as *Garden Court* flats, with a separate entry for one John R Lambie. John Robert Lambie (1884-1972) was a local estate agent whose daughter, Marie Clarke Lambie, had married local architect J H Esmond Dorney in 1931. Towards the end of that decade, Lambie commissioned his son-in-law to design this speculative block of flats on Marine Parade. Lambie and his wife, Margaret, who had previously lived in Glenhuntly Road for most of the 1930s, subsequently moved into Flat 5 at *Garden Court*, where they remaining living for almost two decades thence.

James Henry Esmond Dorney (1906-91) trained in the office of Walter Burley Griffin in the mid-1920s but, unlike Griffin's other employees, entirely rejected the Prairie School aesthetic and, on commencing his own practice in 1930, designed in conventional styles such as Tudor Revival before developing his own variation of the Functionalist style in the later 1930s. A resident of Elwood since a teenager, Dorney designed numerous buildings in the area, including several speculative apartment projects for his mother and his father-in-law. After the War, Dorney moved to Tasmania, where he became an innovative and highly-regarded modern architect.

Comparative Analysis

The *Garden Court* flats must be seen in the context of other blocks of flats that were erected during the Second World War. Although apartment development in Elwood and St Kilda still flourished during the early 1940s, design and detailing became simpler, no doubt a reflection of more careful spending and, later, limited availability of materials. Apartment blocks tended to be more conventional in form, with hipped roofs and standard windows in place of the bolder flat roofs and corner windows of the late 1930s. Some architects withdrew entirely from the Functionalist idiom, designing their flats with a tokenistic Tudor Revival influence (eg *Keith Court* at 27 Brighton Road, 1940-41) or even French chateau (eg flats at 39 Eildon Road, 1940-41). But even those designers who remained true to the Modernist canon opted for a simpler more watered-down style, in what has been described as Vernacular Functionalist. This is evident in a number of wartime apartments identified in previous heritage studies, including *Banff* at 145 Fitzroy Street (1940), *Lynbrae* at 193 Fitzroy Street (1940), *St Germain* at 68 Goldsmith Street, Elwood (1941) and the three adjacent blocks at 58-60 Queens Road, Melbourne (1940-42). An entire cluster of such flats also exists in Elwood at Southey Court (1943), one of the suburb's few wartime subdivisions.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

References

Sands & McDougall Directory, various.