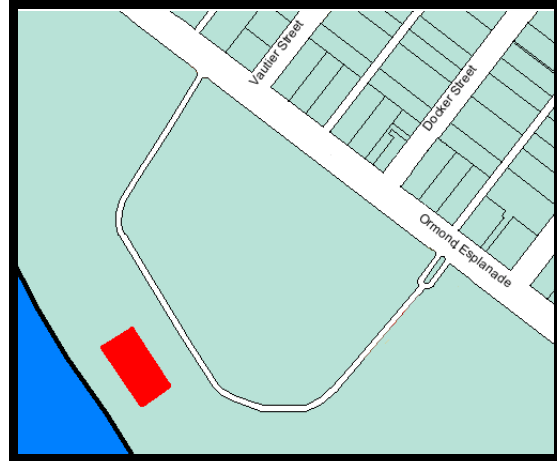


Identifier Elwood Surf Lifesaving Club
Formerly Elwood Beach Pavilion; Conabere Pavilion



Not within a HO area

Address Ormond Esplanade
ELWOOD

Category Public

Constructed 1971

Designer Don Hendry Fulton

Significance

What is Significant?

The Elwood Surf Lifesaving Club is a distinctive single-storeyed concrete block building designed in a stark and rugged Brutalist style by architect Don Hendry Fulton. Erected in 1971 on the site of a pre-war bathing pavilion, the building serves as a bathing pavilion, the premises of the local lifesaving club (established 1913) and, from 1976, the State Disaster Headquarters for all marine emergencies on Port Phillip Bay.

How is it Significant?

The Elwood Surf Lifesaving Club is of aesthetic and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Aesthetically, the Elwood Surf Lifesaving Club is a fine and intact example of the so-called Brutalist style of the early 1970s, characterised by rugged and angular form, stark concrete blockwork and battered mass walls. Its unusual form, surface treatment, detailing and starkness make it a particularly distinctive element along the water's edge. It is also the most aesthetically distinguished of the five post-war lifesaving clubs along the City of Port Phillip foreshore.

Architecturally, the building is a fine, intact and particularly accessible example of the work of Don Hendry Fulton, a notable architect of the 1950s and '60s whose expansive practice included Olympic games infrastructure in Melbourne, a number of award-winning houses and other buildings in the suburbs and regional Victoria, and town planning projects in outback Australia.

Description

The Elwood pavilion is a highly distinctive concrete block building in the stark Brutalist style. Occupying an elongated footprint along the foreshore, it comprises a row of three of gambrel-roofed volumes, linked by flat-roofed wings, with a battered base. The distinctive pavilion roofs comprise a central sawtooth element, clad in unpainted timber boards, which rises above a gently sloping hipped metal tray deck, with broad overhanging eaves. The roof of the north pavilion is raised up above the concrete block walls on a fully-glazed mezzanine level, which serves as the observation deck for the lifesaving club. This pavilion has roller shutters on the north side, but is otherwise windowless; the other two pavilions have vertical strip windows with metal-framed fixed sashes, and there are small square windows, similarly detailed, to the linking wings. Along the foreshore (west) side, the battered base incorporates several flights of steps. On the street (east) side, the main entrance is marked by a trabeated rendered portico.

History

Founded in 1913, the Elwood Lifesaving Club was originally based in Head Street, in a triple-fronted timber building with a central lounge flanked by dressing rooms. This was remodelled several times, including alterations in 1950 when the lounge roof was rebuilt and new toilets added. New premises were built in 1971 on the site of a sea bathing pavilion, one of three structures built by the City of St Kilda in 1928. The new Elwood Beach Pavilion, as it was known, was designed by Don Hendry Fulton. It became one of the best equipped surf lifesaving facilities in Australia; in 1976, it became the State Disaster Headquarters for all marine emergencies on Port Phillip Bay, obtaining its own water ambulance, and a control room equipped with radar and Telex facilities. More recently, the building was renamed in honour of Jack Conabere, who was a member of the lifesaving club from 1932, and its president from 1952 to 1982.

The architect, Don Hendry Fulton, completed his studies at Melbourne University in 1950 and later took a M Arch at the University of California at Berkeley. He became a highly-regarded residential architect in the 1950s, designing a house at Kew that was one of ten 'Houses of Outstanding Merit' selected by *Architecture & Arts* magazine in 1956. Fulton is best known, however, as the planner of outback mining towns such as Mary Kathleen and Weipa, also in the 1950s, and as the designer of the BP oil refinery administration building at Crib Point, which won an RIAA award in 1966. Within the City of Port Phillip, he was responsible for a distinctive cluster of mushroom-like concrete beach shelters on the Lower Esplanade at St Kilda (1967).

Comparative Analysis

Lifesaving clubs in what is now the City of Port Phillip were mostly formed in the 1910s, but none still occupy their original buildings. One, the Esplanade LSC, was demolished in the 1950s for the erection of the St Kilda Marina. Three others now occupy two-storey buildings of little architectural merit, dating from the 1950s and '60s: South Melbourne (red brick), Middle Park (bluestone and concrete brick) and St Kilda (brick and cement sheet). The Victorian headquarters of the Surf Lifesaving Association of Australia, also on the St Kilda foreshore, is more architecturally distinguished, but in a *retardataire* Moderne style that was out of fashion when it built. The Port Melbourne Life Saving Clubhouse is of even more recent origin.

Aesthetically, the Elwood Pavilion is comparable to a small number of Brutalist buildings in the former City of St Kilda. Some flats at 2 Crimea Street (c.1970) are different in form but similar in their stark, windowless concrete surfaces and battered walls. The St Kilda Library at 150 Carlisle Street (1969-73) is the municipality's finest example of the style, designed by leading practitioner Dr Enrico Taglietti. The Elwood Pavilion is also similar to the nearby soccer pavilion, off Head Street, designed by architects Young, Lehman & Co. Another stark, windowless concrete block building of rugged form (a truncated triangle with corner porches and steep roof), it is, however, much later in date (built 1980) and thus falls outside the heyday of Brutalism in the early 1970s.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

References

Anne Longmire. *St Kilda: The Show Goes On*, p 285

