

Grounds House and Flats

Address 24 Hill Street, Toorak 3142

Practice Roy Grounds

Designed 1953

Completed 1954

History & Description The Grounds house and flats consist of a residence with a string of four investment units behind. Noted architect Roy Grounds (later Sir Roy) designed the front house as a home for his family. The plan of the house, a perfect square with a circular courtyard at its centre, is a striking essay in pure geometry, a hallmark of Ground's work during the 1950s. With only highlight windows on the external walls, all of the rooms focus on the internal courtyard, creating an inward looking, almost eastern character. This oriental influence continues to the external design, with strong solid walls, topped by projecting eaves floating above the highlight windows, and a single central large door with oversized knocker. The original planting of the courtyard with persimmon and bamboo also displays an eastern influence.

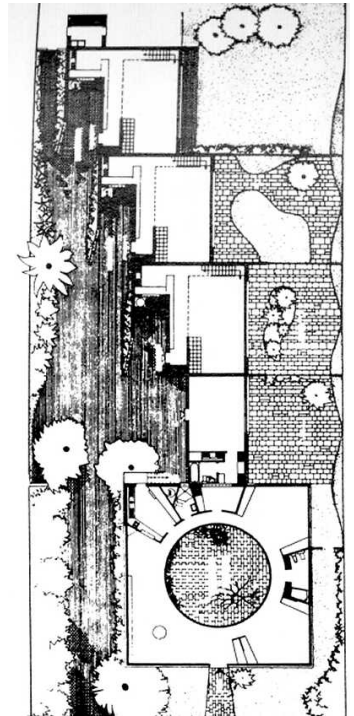
The four flats to the rear sequentially step back from the main house to allow undercover carparking. While they do not have the geometry or oriental repose of the main house, they include distinctive features such as the angled carpark walls, small slatted balconies, and a double height main space, with a tall window wall facing the side courtyard gardens.

The Grounds house was one of a number of experiments in developing architecture from pure geometry designed by Roy Grounds, an approach he began in the late 1930s. It was widely publicised and praised at the time, winning the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1954. (Extracts from VHR#1963)

Statement of Significance The Grounds house and flats are significant as an important and celebrated work of mid 20th century modernist domestic Australian architecture. The perfectly square plan, with a circular courtyard at its centre, is a striking essay in pure geometry, a hallmark of Ground's work, and one of the best examples of experimentation with geometry in the work of post war avant-garde architects.

The Grounds house and flats are one of the best domestic examples of the noted architect Roy Grounds and are typical of the restrained monumental formality that dominated his later work. The overall form of the National Gallery of Victoria owes much to the ideas expressed in this small project.

Criteria Applicable N1 - Significant Heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
N3 - Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement
N5 - Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



Plan [SLV Manuscripts]



Courtyard from living room 1953. [SLV Pictures]



Living room from entry area 1953. Photo by Leslie Runting, SLV



Street view. Photo by Peter Johnson