

Preshil, Margaret Lyttle Junior School

Address 395 Barkers Road, Kew

Practice Borland, Kevin & Assoc.

Designed 1962

Completed 1972

History &
Description

Kevin Borland and his office designed a series of additions for the experimental school Preshill from 1962 and 1972 that were experimental in design, having irregular forms and angles created with complex, precise joinery that gives a variety of internal and external spaces. The precise form of each building is counteracted by the use of raw timber posts and beams. The rooms are lit via clerestory windows and walls of sliding glass doors and the internal spaces can be divided by folding doors to allow for different uses. There are many small spaces attached to the main spaces, and elevated platforms which the children can reach by ladders. The earliest of the buildings is the school hall constructed in 1962, known as Kevin Borland Hall. It has an innovative octagonal plan with a roof offset against the alignment of the walls with stage along one side and an intricate timber ceiling with skylights. It was designed for multi-purpose use. In 1964 Borland designed a classroom for pre-school children, added to the east end of the original house and incorporating a bedroom and sitting room of the house. The 'tree house' constructed in 1965 consists of two elevated classrooms separated by a timber deck through which an Italian Cyprus grows. In 1969 the original 1939 rectangular classroom was modified to create multi-purpose 'tutorial' classrooms that contain a variety of spaces and provide private and community areas with a verandah along the north side. The 'home rooms' were constructed in 1972 with John Kenny as assistant architect, an irregularly planned timber building with a variety of spaces on different levels and a mezzanine retreat for the children.

Statement of
Significance

Preshil is arguably the most significant example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architect Kevin Borland. In the 1960s Borland had emerged as a major design force in Melbourne with architecture imbued with a strong social agenda and an informal domestic architectural vocabulary. The buildings at Preshil are experimental in design and materials and reflect the participatory design methods becoming fashionable in architecture in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1972 Borland was awarded an RAI Victoria Chapter Bronze medal for this work. In 2003 the school was included as one of the thirty-seven best projects in Victoria to have been awarded RAI medals. Preshil is an early and outstanding example of the interest of architects, led by Borland, in inventive timber architecture, in structural techniques and expressive form, reflecting the exploratory lifestyles of the 1960s and 1970s.

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.
References: Citation for VHR# H0072



Home Rooms (1972), photo by Peter Johnson 2010



Rear Classrooms (1969), photo by Peter Johnson 2010



Kevin Borlan Hall (1962), photo by Peter Johnson 2010



Rear Classrooms (1969), photo by Peter Johnson 2010