

Harry and Penelope Seidler House, Killara
Sydney, NSW Australia

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International working party for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

New International Selection
Full Documentation Fiche 2003

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composed by national/regional working party of: Australia

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item:
Harry and Penelope Seidler House

source:
Harry Seidler & associates web site
<http://www.seidler.net.au>



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1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

1.1 Data for identification

current name: HARRY AND PENELOPE SEIDLER HOUSE

former/original/variant name: Harry and Penelope Seidler House
number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 13 Kalang Avenue
town: Killara, Sydney
province/state: NSW
post code: 2071

block: lot:
country: Australia

national topographical grid reference:

current typology: Residence

former/original/variant typology: Residence

comments on typology:

1.2 Status of protection

protected by: state/province/town/record only

Proposed for listing on the State Heritage Register by the RAIA
www.heritage.nsw.gov.au

Local Environmental Plan

grade: not applicable

date:

valid for: whole area/parts of area/building

whole of building

remarks:

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1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s):

visual relations:

functional relations:

other relations:

2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

Note if the dates are exactly known (e) or approximately estimated = circa (c) or (±)

commission or competition date: c. 1966

design period(s): c. 1966

start of site work: c. 1966

completion/inauguration: c. 1967

2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: Harry Seidler for himself & his wife Penelope

design brief: Harry Seidler for himself & his wife Penelope

building/construction:

completed situation:

original situation or character of site: in a valley surrounded by a bushland reserve.

2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s): Harry and Penelope Seidler

architect(s): Architects: Harry and Penelope Seidler, Harry Seidler & Associates

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landscape/garden designer(s):

Bruce Mackenzie

other designer(s):

Lighting: Edison Price (New York)

consulting engineer(s):

Structural Engineers:

Miller, Milston & Ferris

building contractor(s):

Peter Cussel

2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name(s):

association:

event(s):

period:

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: alteration/renovation/restoration/extension/other: other

date(s):

early 1970s

circumstances/ reasons for change

Swimming Pool added

effects of changes:

persons/organisations involved:

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3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 Site/building character

The following description is drawn from the RAI A nomination form for listing of the Harry and Penelope Seidler House on the State Heritage Register:

The building occupies a steep bushland site, sloping westwards to a creek. The building is approached from the road at the top and steps down from a cantilevered garage through four half levels which follow the slope of the land.

The structure consist of four suspended concrete trays supported by reinforced concrete block traverse blades which divide the building into north facing daytime/active spaces, a central circulation spine and night time/passive spaces.

The top level consists of kitchen, dining and study, the next living room and main bedroom, the third children's room and bathroom, with studio, laundry and guest bedroom at the bottom having access to the garden.

The house embodies both a vertical and horizontal extension of space. The level changes and central open well provide a visual link from top to bottom. Large areas of glass and projecting terraces draw the eye out from each level to the natural landscape setting.

Materials include board formed reinforced concrete, rubble stonework, white concrete block work and Tasmanian Oak boarded ceilings.

The integrated artworks include Albers tapestries 'Full', 'Homage to the Square', lithographs and paintings "Impartial ' and "Structural Constellation", several "Positive-Negative" sculptures by Norman Carlberg, two Calder stabiles, an Arp tapestry and paintings by Vasarely and Andy Wahol.

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3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: Seidler Residence

of principal components (*if applicable*):

comments:

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: The residence and grounds are in excellent condition.

of principal components (*if applicable*):

of other elements (*if applicable*):

of surrounding area (*if applicable*):

comments:

3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

4. Evaluation

Intrinsic value

4.1 technical evaluation:

The Seidler House has a moderate degree of technical significance through its ability to demonstrate the innovative use of commercial scale structural techniques on a residential design. This is a common feature of Seidler's residential work. In this instance, three concrete block piers support suspended and cantilevered concrete floors, stiffened by rail height parapets, which make possible the long projections. Similar elements acting as sun protection down turns, stiffen the roof slab.

The level and type of finishes are consistent with the desire for honest, and wherever possible, natural materials and the need for economic and low maintenance materials.

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4.2. social evaluation:

The Seidler House has significance as an on going venue for Seidler's contribution to Australia's cultural life including Australian Labor party fund raising, RAI A events. It is the principal residence of notable architects Penelope and Harry Seidler.

4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:

The Seidler House is of aesthetic significance as a finely designed and executed example of Modern residential architecture. It is significant aesthetically for the integration of artworks inside and out and as an accomplished concrete building that dramatises the rugged, sloping nature of its site and the skill with which it adapts the plan and form to the terrain, the projecting terraces and verandahs increasing the spatial depth of the rooms and extending the eye to the surrounds

The Seidler House is highly regarded as an outstanding work of architecture by the architectural profession. In 1967 it received the NSW Chapter RAI A Wilkinson Award.

The Seidler House has rare social significance a special association with the life and works of Harry and Penelope Seidler. It has rare aesthetic significance through its ability to demonstrate the innovative use of commercial scale structural techniques on a residential design.

Comparative significance

4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)

The Seidler House retains a high degree of associated historical significance as part of the body of built residential works of the prominent Sydney architect Harry Seidler and as continuing principal residence of Harry and Penelope Seidler. The house demonstrates his contribution to the culture of Australia. Its significance was acknowledged in 1967 by the receipt of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Wilkinson Award.

The Harry and Penelope Seidler House is representative of the body of residential work in the Modern tradition carried out by Harry Seidler during the late 1960s.

4.5 historic and reference values:

The building and associated art works have a high degree of integrity as a result of its having remained the Seidler's principal residence since its construction.

5. Documentation

5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

State Library of NSW

Title: Harry Seidler - records of Harry Seidler and Associates, 1954-1991, along with Seidler family papers, 1926-1949

Creator: Seidler, Harry, 1923-

Type of Material: Manuscripts

Ask for: Original : MLMSS 7078 (ie Mitchell Library)

Physical Description: Collection comprises - 34 boxes - 8.93 metres
Design drawings
Manuscript
Newscuttings
Photographs
Printed
Sound recordings
Typescript
Typescript - (carbon)
Typescript - (photocopy)
Video recordings

Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW SEIDLER, HARRY & ASSOCIATES - Sydney and NSW residences and offices including Australia Square and Seidler House at Killara. These drawings are of buildings awarded either the Sir John Sulman Medal, the Wilkinson Award, Civic Design Award or Merit Award, 1961-83. Photographs by Max Dupain of the buildings held in PXD 509, 1961-1983 / 6170 dwgs, 100 photographs; Manuscript specifications (Locn No.: PXD 509 ; PXD 613 ; PXB 237)

Note: Original drawings and specifications for the Harry Seidler House in Tube 233

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

Irving, Robert, Kinstler, John and Dupain, Max, *Fine Houses of Sydney*, Methuen Australia, Sydney, 1982.

Frampton, Kenneth & Drew, Philip *Harry Seidler. Four Decades of Architecture*

Thames & Hudson, London, New York 1992

Jahn, Graham, *Sydney Architecture*, 1997, Watermark Press, Sydney

Dobney, Ed. The Master Architecture Series III, Harry Seidler, Craftsman House, North Ryde, NSW 1997

Taylor, Jennifer, *Australian Architecture since 1960*, Law Book Co, Sydney, 1998

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Spigelman, Alice *Almost full circle : Harry Seidler : a biography*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Rose Bay, N.S.W., c.2001.

5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

Refer to the State Library of NSW (as above)

Harry Seidler & Associates

<http://www.seidler.net.au/office/contact.html>

recent photographs and survey drawings:

film/video/other sources:

- Title:** **Harry Seidler** - video recordings, 1979-1991
Date of Work: 1979-1991
Type of Material: Manuscripts
Ask for: Original : VT 1003 - VT 1019
Physical Description: Collection comprises - 17 video tapes
Video recordings
Contents: 1979; Four Corners, ABC-TV programme on **Harry Seidler** recorded at the University of Virginia, USA and at Sydney, broadcast 3 Mar. 1979 (Locn No.: VT 1003)
1980; **Harry Seidler** lectures in Architecture at the University of New South Wales, including: 'Interaction', 10 Apr. 1980; 'Form Relation in Baroque and Modern Architecture', 17 Apr. 1980; 'Consequence of Design and Detail', 24 Apr. 1980; 'Form Relations in Baroque and Modern Architecture 2', 1 May 1980; 'Habitat-It's Detail and Totality', 9 May 1980; 'Mainstream of Modern', 28 June 1980 (Locn No.: VT 1004 - VT 1009)
1980; 'Habitat **Seidler**', lecture recorded at the University of British Columbia, Canada, 27 June 1980 (Locn No.: VT 1010)

1991; '**Harry Seidler**', being VHS recording of SBS-TV programme 'Nostalgia', broadcast 11 Dec. 1991 (Locn No.: VT 1018)
1991; '1991 Sulman Award: Grosvenor Place, George Street, Sydney' (Locn No.: VT 1019)

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5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier

*** not completed yet ***

6. Fiche report

name of reporter: Noni Boyd / Anne Higham

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date of report: June 2003

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name):

sign and date:

examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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