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Figure 1: Summerhayes House, c. 1962

Source: David Moore, *Cross Section*, June 1963

1 Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden

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1.1	current name of building	Summerhayes House
1.2	variant or former name	
1.3	number & name of street	3 The Coombe
1.4	town	Mosman Park
1.5	province	Western Australia
1.6	zip code	6012
1.7	country	Australia

1.8	national grid reference:	n/a
1.9	classification/typology:	RES Residential
1.10	protection status & date:	Demolished 2005

2 History of building

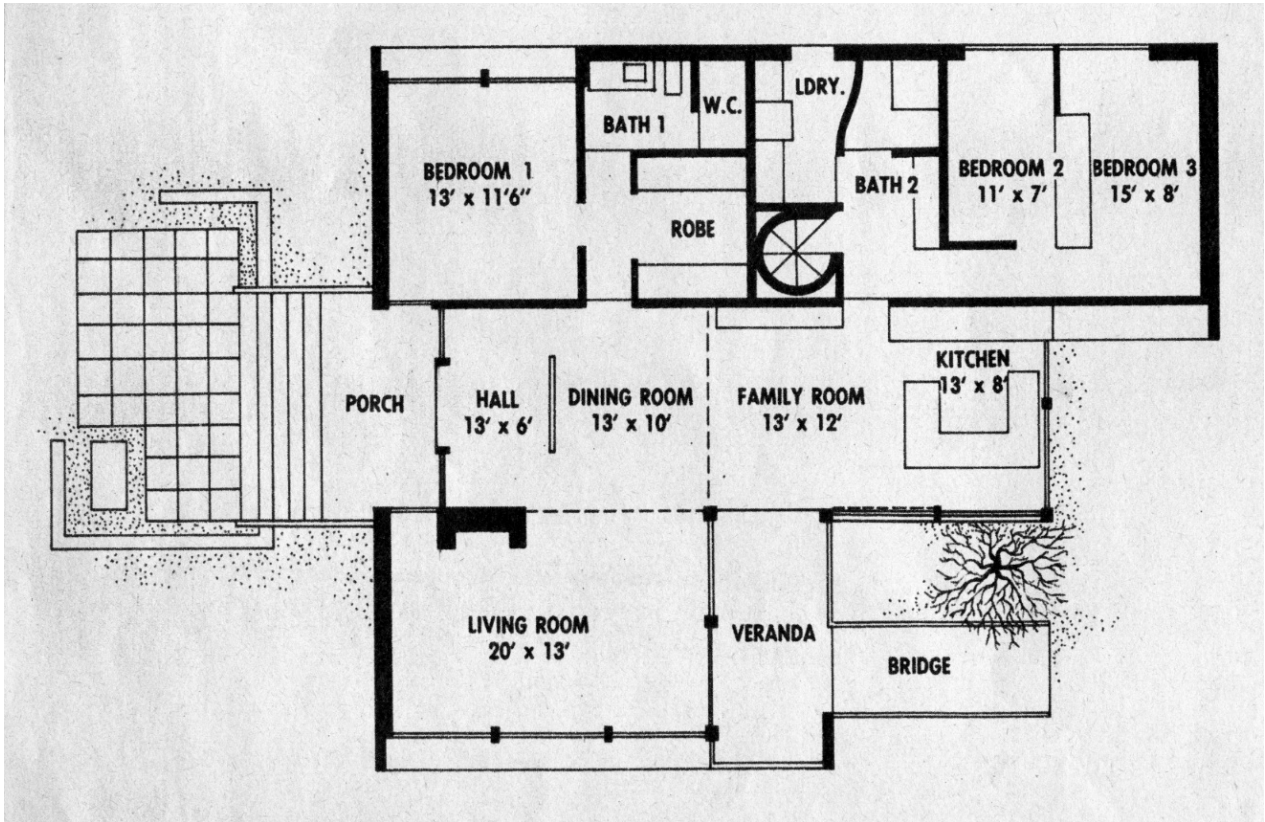
2.1 original brief/purpose:

Designed by architect Geoffrey E. Summerhayes as his family home, the house was constructed in 1961 with two distinct zones: a formal section for adults and entertaining and a family area for two children. Allowance was made for future extensions and additional accommodation was constructed at undercroft level in 1966, with a later upper mezzanine gallery in the early 1970s.

Flexibility in configuration of living spaces was a key concept in the planning along with considerations for privacy and maximising views within the natural setting.

The house remained in use under successive owners until early in the 21st century. Afforded little maintenance in its final years and facing demands for more opulent accommodation, the place was demolished in 2005 and the site redeveloped with a new residence.

Fig. 2 Plan of Summerhayes House, main floor level



Source: *Australian Home Beautiful*, June 1966

2.2 dates: commission/completion: 1961

2.3 architectural designers: Geoffrey E. Summerhayes (1928-2010) was a third generation architect. Born in Perth he was one of the first students to graduate from the first formal school of architecture in Western Australia that had been established at the Perth Technical School in 1946. Graduating in 1951, Summerhayes immediately left for a study tour of Europe and the United States where he undertook a Masters degree on scholarship at Princeton University. After working in the office of Kump & Associates in San Francisco he returned to Western Australia and in 1953 was made a partner at Summerhayes & Associates, alongside his father, Reginald.

Initially Summerhayes' best known works were his 'white box' houses which reflect influences of his US experience, in particular an admiration for the work of Marcel Breuer whom he met at Princeton, and the Case Study houses of the west coast. He retained an interest in residential architecture and interior design throughout his career although larger commercial projects also featured prominently in the office portfolio as the practice evolved through the 1960s and 1970s, receiving local and national recognition for highly accomplished modern architecture.

Summerhayes was a key figure in the development of Western Australian architecture in the second half of the twentieth century. He served as president of the WA chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1967-68; received the Architects Board of WA award in 1983 and numerous local design awards. In 1998 he was honoured with an Order of Australia.

2.4 others associated with building: Graham L. Glick, engineer

2.5 significant alterations with dates: 1966 - Partial enclosure of the undercroft with creation of a guest wing and study

1972/73 - Family room extension to main level and addition of an upper level mezzanine gallery with outdoor terrace

2.6 current use: N/A

2.7 current condition: Demolished 2005

3 Description

3.1 general description: The symmetrical entry façade of the Summerhayes House is an elegantly simple composition with a recessed central entrance bay flanked by blank white brick walls and articulated downpipes. The roof and floor planes sandwiching the brickwork walls are of identical

proportions - impossibly thin and accentuated horizontally by negative detailing. In contrast to the solid privacy of the street facade, the return elevation appears as an open box with full height window walls taking advantage of river views to the north-east. The projecting box is supported on slender columns and tied back to solid ground by the open riser, white terrazzo steps ascending to the entrance platform.

Internally the house is divided into two zones – a formal zone for adults and entertaining, and a family area for two children with a U-shaped kitchen, family room, bathroom and laundry and bedrooms divided by a timber wardrobe wall. Flexibility in the open planning of the living areas was achieved through sliding and fixed screens dividing the lounge, dining and family areas. Further flexibility in the accommodation configuration was realised through the full height, sliding glazed doors allowing outdoor patios to become additional rooms of the house in the moderate Mediterranean climate. Window units to the bedrooms incorporate louvred panels with internal sliding timber panels to control ventilation.

Throughout the house an emphasis was placed on natural materials with the white sand-lime bricks contrasting with jarrah timber. A spiral staircase in the centre of the house provided access to the undercroft which was partially enclosed with additional guest accommodation and a study a few years after initial completion. A further spiral stair to a mezzanine gallery and upper level patio on the cliff face, was constructed in a later stage of additions, fulfilling evolving family requirements.

3.2 construction:

The Summerhayes House was constructed with a reinforced concrete flat slab on R.S.J. beams and columns with white Calsil (sand-lime) cavity brick walls to upper floors. The horizontal roof structure comprised timber joists spanning between steel beams with a malthoid cover to the timber deck and a white pebble finish. Full height window glazing was beaded directly to structural elements reducing framing components and emphasising an overall thinness.

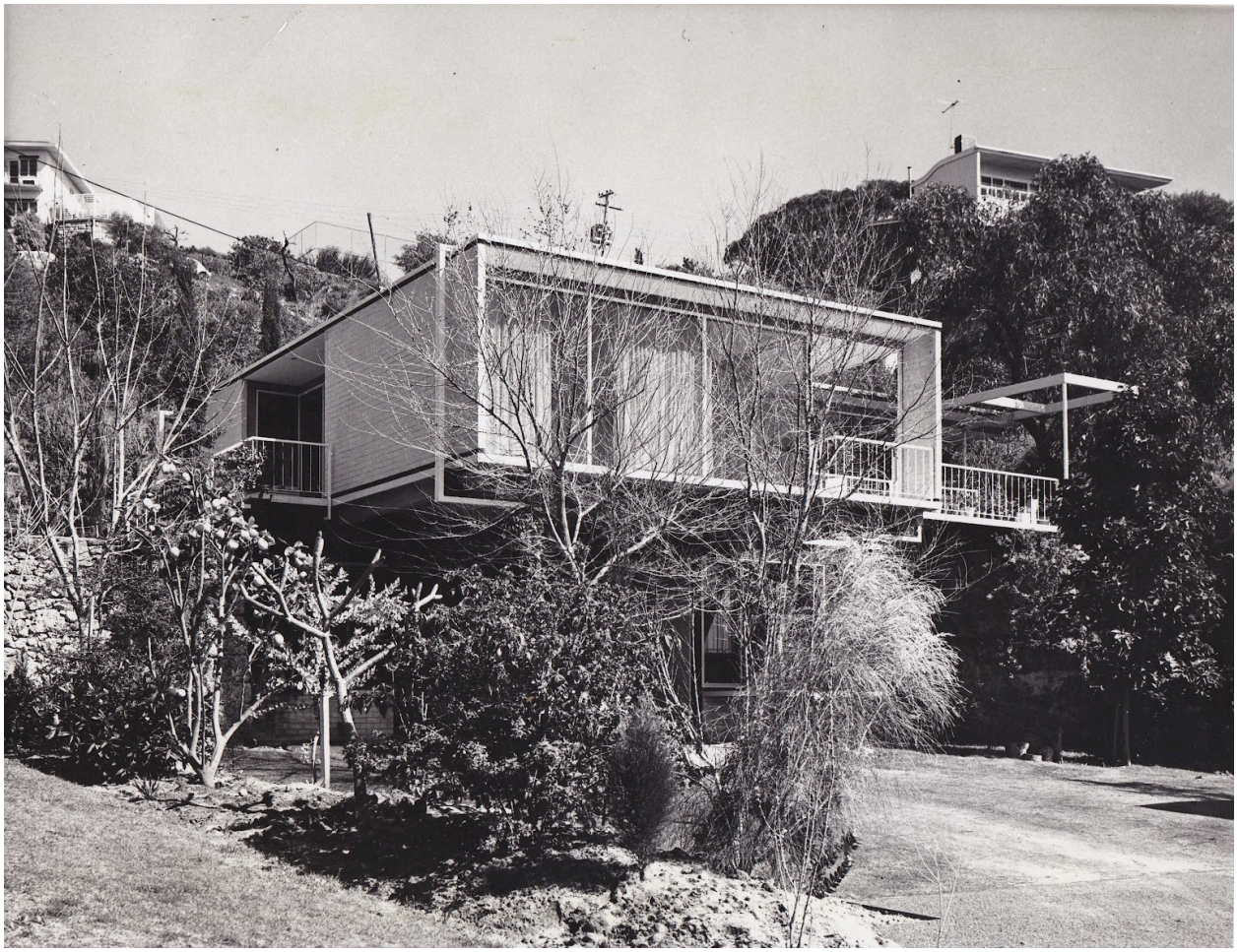
3.3 context:

Nestled into the natural amphitheatre of The Coombe which descends steeply to the Swan River below, the Summerhayes House has a backdrop of sloping limestone cliffs and brush vegetation. The simple white box form of the house projects forward, raised on slender columns and appears to float over the landscape, but is anchored back to the limestone cliff face with bridges and outdoor terraces.

Opening up of the difficult hillside terrain of The Coombe and nearby streets for residential development in the late 1950s coincided with the emergence of the first formally trained group of architects in WA who were returning from post-graduate experiences in the UK, Europe and the USA. Bringing with them an acceptance of International Style modernism and a willingness to test new ideas in residential architecture, particularly in their own houses, the results were refined boxes responsive to climate, technically innovative and had a strong rational basis to their construction and economy.

The high concentration of architect-designed houses in The Coombe and adjacent streets has contributed to its renown as an architectural pilgrimage for design professionals and students. Summerhayes was relatively prolific in the area designing a number of other residences expressing similar qualities to his own family house, albeit on a more modest scale.

Fig. 3 North-east elevation Summerhayes House, c. 1966



Source: Summerhayes Family Archives

4 Evaluation

4.1 technical:

The Summerhayes House is significant for the well resolved reduction in structural expression resulting in a finely wrought, light white box that hovers in the landscape.

4.2 social:

The delineation of public and private zones and creation of open and flexible living spaces at Summerhayes House demonstrates the new social freedom and approaches to planning evident in residential design in Australia in the mid twentieth century.

While influences for the Summerhayes House may have been derived from International precedents they were modified for local conditions and show a responsiveness to place, orientation and climate.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic:

The Summerhayes House is a fine example of a local adaption of International Style modernism with the refined white box showing influences of Summerhayes post-graduate experience in the USA. The house displays a high standard of resolution in design and detail with recognition extending beyond a Merit Award in the WA Home of the Year competition in 1963.

4.4 historical:

The Summerhayes House is cited locally and nationally as a significant example of residential architecture and is a key work of a prominent and influential West Australian architect in the twentieth century. The house was a centrepiece within a well recognised precinct of modern housing.

4.5 general assessment:

Through both the fineness of detailing and thinness of the wall, roof and suspended floor planes, the Summerhayes House creates an asymmetrical floating box which embodies the lightness of Western Australian modernism in the early 1960s.

5 Documentation

5.1 principal references:

London, G. & Richards, D. (eds) *Modern Houses. Architect Designed Houses in Western Australia from 1950 to 1965*, exhibition catalogue, UWA, 1997.

London, G. *A Short History of Perth Architecture*, Pesaro Publishing, NSW, 2002.

Markham, M. & Nordheck, M. (eds) *Geoffrey Summerhayes: Architectural Projects,* exhibition catalogue, UWA, 1993.

Pitt Morison & White, *Western Towns & Buildings*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979.

5.2 visual material attached

Figure 1. Summerhayes House, c. 1962 (Source: David Moore, *Cross Section*, June 1963)

Figure 2. Plan of Summerhayes House, main floor level (*Australian Home Beautiful*, June 1966)

Figure 3. North-east elevation Summerhayes House, c. 1966 (Source: Summerhayes Family Archives, photographer unknown)

5.3 rapporteur/date Katrina Chisholm, Hannah Lewi, June 2014