
Former Chapel Of St Joseph



B7153 Former Chapel Of St Joseph

Location

27 - 29 Strabane Avenue,, MONT ALBERT NORTH VIC 3129 - Property No B7153

Municipality

WHITEHORSE CITY

Level of significance

National

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 26, 2006

What is significant? The Chapel of St. Joseph was commissioned by Father Michael Burke, priest of the Holy Redeemer Parish in the suburb of Surrey Hills, who had heard about the Church of the Resurrection in Keysborough, completed by Edmond and Corrigan in 1976, and liked its sense of humanity and its lack of expense. His parish wanted to upgrade and replace their little wooden building in Strabane Avenue, in Box Hill North to serve the local population, particularly the inhabitants of a St Vincent de Paul home for the elderly then under construction on a site next door. Sketch designs were developed in 1976-77, and the Chapel was finally completed in 1978. In 1991 the Chapel and the adjoining land was bought by the City of Box Hill, and is now used as a teaching facility for the University of the Third Age.

The Chapel is a solid brick building, with a remarkably complex and three-dimensional design, given its modest scale. The plan is curved and inflected, with the curved wall of the lobby forming the street face, while the curved rear wall of the taller nave rises behind. The exterior is faced in cream brick, with a base in red brick, which is also used in strips and panels, providing highlights and subtle architectural effects. Simple off-the-shelf timber

framed windows and doors are used. The curved entry wall dominates the front, above an elevated patio, from which a long ramp snakes across the site, topped by a simple post supported flat-roofed canopy, painted a light blue. The same colour is used to pick out all fascias and down-pipes, and the post-supported steel frame that projects out from the main body of the building on both sides. There is a more complex steel frame internally, consisting of tubular posts marking each window bay in the main body of the church, connected to the two main beams by smaller angled tubular steel struts, suggesting vaulting. These are also painted light blue, and set against face brick interior walls, in similar colours and patterns as the external walls.

How is it significant? The Chapel of St Joseph, Box Hill, by the nationally renowned Melbourne architectural firm of Edmond and Corrigan is of architectural importance at the National level.

Why is it significant? Architecturally and aesthetically the Chapel of St. Joseph is an extraordinary work. It was one of the first projects to bring international architectural debates about the validity of Modernism and the International Style to Melbourne, ushering in a new polemic that was to dominate the 1980s - Post-modernism. The Chapel incorporates a series of evocative gestures that engage with the immediate context of suburban Melbourne in ways never seen before or, perhaps, since. For the first time architectural pieces were relating critically to their region and context. The Chapel quotes from a range of sources, but the use of elements typical of the vernacular post-war suburban house, turning them into a place for worship, made this a work of extraordinary creativity and radical significance to the architectural culture of Melbourne. The Chapel is the second in of a pair of projects commissioned to Edmond and Corrigan by the Catholic Church and represents the formation of original, expressionistic, solutions that were at the time revolutionary.

Edmond and Corrigan hold a unique position in Australia's architectural history - work done by this architectural firm at this time was at the centre of the architectural debate in Victoria and indeed nationally and had an impact on these debates for many years to come. This chapel is considered one of their most important works, representing that point in their oeuvre where a Post-modern critique of the suburb was first successfully completed. The closest comparison, a complex of Church, school, meeting room and retirement units for the Catholic Church in Keysborough also by Edmond and Corrigan, developed between 1975-79, also incorporates these concerns, but lacks the distillation of influences and aesthetic resolution evident at St Joseph's Chapel. The seminal position of the Chapel, and of the work of Peter Corrigan over a long career, has been recognised by numerous awards. In 1983, the Chapel won the Royal Australian Institute of Architecture (Victorian Chapter) award for Outstanding Architecture - New Buildings Category. In 2003, the Chapel won the RAI (Victorian Chapter) inaugural 25 Year Award, and Peter Corrigan himself won the RAI National Gold Medal.

Classified: 02/02/2004

Hermes Number 66714

Property Number

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