



Heritage Citation



24 Macgregor Terrace, Bardon

Key details

Also known as

Fairy House

Addresses	At 24 Macgregor Terrace, Bardon, Queensland 4065
Type of place	Flat building, House
Period	Postwar 1945-1960
Style	Immigrants' Nostalgic
Lot plan	L2_RP65060; L1_RP65060
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — June 2001
Construction	Roof: Terracotta tile
People/associations	Grigoriy Mekhonoshin (Architect); Grigoriy Mekhonoshin (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

This circa 1951 house is significant for its uncommon architectural attributes, which include a three storey 'A' frame configuration, and a series of sculptures that adorn its front and fence. It is also significant for its connection with Russian artist, draftsman, and architect Grigoriy Mekhonoshin who lived in Brisbane with his family from the mid 1920s to the mid 1950s. Mekhonoshin worked on some significant projects in Brisbane including the Cloudland complex constructed in the mid 1930s. The house is a well-known component of the MacGregor Terrace streetscape.

History

This house, sometimes called the "Fairy House", at Bardon, was designed and constructed by a Russian migrant artist and architect circa 1950. It is distinctive for its unconventional architectural form, and the concrete statues that adorn both the house and its front fence.

The house was built approximately five years after World War II by Grigoriy Mehonoshin, an architectural draughtsman who arrived in Brisbane from Russia in late 1926. Mehonoshin purchased the land in 1948 and was granted Council permission to construct the house and garage in September that year. Mehonoshin had been an officer in the White Russian Army, and brought his family to Australia to escape the communist regime that he had fought against.

As a youth Mehonoshin studied art at high school and at Moscow University in Russia. When he came to Brisbane he started to train as an architect, considering that to be an occupation that would ensure a comfortable living for his family. He first completed secondary school studies at night and then enrolled in the Architecture School at the Central Technical College in Brisbane. He continued to study at night while working as a house

painter by day. His daughter states in her reminscences that Mehonoshin finally became a registered architect in 1950, and the Queensland Board of Architects confirm his registration in January 1951, under the surname of Meek, by which he became known. Mehonoshin appears to have maintained his registration until 1978.

Prior to this, Mehonoshin was able to establish his own drawing office in Albert House, Ann Street where he seemed to have designed mainly residences and commercial buildings. Among these was the Comino building at Redcliffe. According to his daughter, he also drew plans for the Cloudland fun park at Bowen Hills, designing a complex but efficient cable car system, or funicular railway, to transport patrons to and from the ballroom. The family still have in their possession photographs of the Cloudland site during construction.

Mehonoshin also did drawing and design work for the Russian Orthodox Church that was built in Vulture Street in the mid 1930s. Mehonoshin was very involved with the Russian community in Brisbane, regularly providing assistance to new Russian migrants. He was also heavily involved with the Russian Orthodox Church. His participation in the design of the church was no doubt undertaken as a form of service to his own ethnic community.

The house at MacGregor Terrace was constructed as a family home for himself and his wife and daughter in the years immediately after the Second World War. It seems that the house was constructed over an extended period of time and that work was slowed by the post war shortages in building materials, especially the cement used to make concrete. Mehonoshin designed the building and carried out much of the construction work himself. The conspicuous sculptures that adorn the front of the house and the fence are the product of Mehonoshin's considerable artistic talents. They include relief sculptures of classical composers Beethoven and Wagner, and statues with the appearance of fairy tale characters. These were designed and fabricated by Mehonoshin himself and created with the aid of the staff at his Ann Street drawing office.

The house is somewhat unconventional, being a three storey "A" frame dwelling constructed at the bottom of a gully that drops away from the street. The roof of the house rises up to street level and architectural convention has been ignored in that the front door was placed at the top of the house instead of at the bottom so that those entering the house descend into it. This was necessitated by the very steep nature of the block.

In general the house demonstrates some aspects of what has been termed the "Twentieth Century Immigrant Nostalgic" architectural form. It was not unusual for migrants arriving in Australia to construct buildings that were reminiscent of the cultural surroundings of their country of origin. Here architectural styles familiar to the builders were given particular expression, both as a demonstration of pride in coming from a certain cultural origin, and in having built successful lives in a new country.

The house's sculptures, adornments and unusual layout make it one that is well known in the local community and it was the subject of a newspaper article in the 1970s. It has been dubbed "the Fairy House" by local residents and has been the source of considerable public speculation as to its origins and history.

The Mehonoshins left Australia for the United States in the late 1950s where he worked for the prominent New York architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The MacGregor Terrace property was sold in 1957. It has had two owners since the Mehonoshins, and was been converted into flats in 1957. Nevertheless, the statuary and general decorative details on the house have been retained, no doubt being considered a significant part of the building's charm and identity.

Description

Sited below street level, the steeply pointed gable of this “folly” house emerges like a fairy tale within the streetscape of MacGregor Terrace in Bardon.

The style of this house could be described as the Late Twentieth-Century Immigrants’ Nostalgic type of construction - mostly domestic architecture built by immigrants in the form of free references to the culture (mainly non English) they had come from. This “style” resulted in a re-interpretation of diverse architectural elements and reflected the success of migrant groups in the “new country”.

The house has a front elevation to the street organised with two levels within the space of the steep gable of its terracotta roof. Entry from the street through a narrow bridge leads to the highest level of the house. The entrance feature consists of a moulded arched doorway to the right, and a pair of double hung windows, protected with a decorative cast iron security bars, to the left.

The building is raised above ground level. At the lower level the house consists of exposed brickwork. Above this, the street-facing gable front is rendered with decorative plaster mouldings. Two terracotta awnings shade each of the two levels within the gable end. Below the apex of the gable and contained within a timber boards section, a sculpture of a lady extrudes from an oval-shaped plaster medallion.

Sculptures representing young ladies in old style fashionable clothing (some say his wife), decorate the low masonry fence along the property boundary, at street level. The house frontage is further enhanced by large overgrown trees, which also add to the streetscape of McGregor Terrace.

The site includes a small garage located on the street boundary.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city’s or local area’s cultural heritage as an example of an architectural form that is distinctive and unique through its uncommon multi-storeyed A-frame configuration embellished with a variety of ornamental statues and castings.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for the attractiveness of its unusual design which includes a steeply pitched roof and decorative features, and for its leafy setting, which together make a fine contribution to the local streetscape.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as the building, with its distinctive appearance, has steadily attracted the attention of the community and is regarded with considerable affection by those that know it.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a house designed and built by Grigoriy Mekhonoshin, a Brisbane draughtsman and architect who worked on some significant buildings in the Brisbane region, and who was a noteworthy person within the local Russian community until the late 1950s.

References

1. Apperly, Richard et al. A pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
2. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
3. Immigrants to Australia. Catherine and Gregory Mekhonoshin and daughter Nina: Our Story. (Reminiscences of Nina Wemyss (nee. Mehonoshina).
4. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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