

Heritage Citation

Mater Prize Home No.22

Key details

Addresses	At 345 Marshall Road, Tarragindi, Queensland 4121
Type of place	Residential
Period	Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	International
Lot plan	L1_RP102700
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 29 November 2019 Date of Citation — August 2018
People/associations	John Dawson (Architect); Lee Smith (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (F) Technical; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association

Mater Prize Home No.22 at Tarragindi was built in 1964 as part of the Mater Prize Home Art Union. The art union began in 1954 to raise funds for the Mater Misericordiae Hospital operated by the Sisters of Mercy Order which opened in 1960. Architect John Dawson and builder Les Smith designed and built 100 prize homes between 1960-1975. The homes became showcases for modern domestic design and facilities and shaped the aspirations of generations of Brisbane residents.

History

The Mater Prize Home Art Union was started in the 1950s with the first Mater Prize Home, a two-bedroom fibro house in Surfers Paradise, drawn in 1954. The Art Union was initially intended to raise funds for the Mater

Mothers, a maternity hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy, to care for expectant mothers and their babies.

The Sisters of Mercy Order of Catholic nuns, were brought to Brisbane by Bishop James Quinn in 1861 to instil faith and education in the nascent community. The Sisters established Brisbane's first Catholic school originally at St Stephen's before moving to what is now All Hallows in 1863.

The Sisters of Mercy Order later established the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in 1906 in 'Aubigny', a residence in North Quay. In 1910, they transferred to their new private hospital, designed by Robin Dods of Brisbane architectural firm, Hall and Dods, on the crest of ten acres at College Hill, South Brisbane. The following year, a public hospital building, also designed by Dods, opened on the site. During subsequent decades, the hospital expanded further with the addition of several extensions including a convent and chapel on the western side of the private hospital (1926) and new buildings such as a chaplain's residence (1924), and a children's hospital (1931).

While the extension of services slowed during the Great Depression and World War Two, the post war period and accompanying population growth, through immigration and the 'baby boom', saw an increased need for medical services. Perhaps drawing inspiration from the success of the government-run lottery, the Golden Casket, in funding Queensland's public hospitals, the Sisters established the Mater Prize Home Art Union, which proved popular. A medical school (1956) and Mater Mothers maternity hospital (1960) were opened with the proceeds of the Art Union which was drawn regularly from 1960.

The Mater Art Union contracted architect, John Dawson to design the homes and Les Smith to build them. John Dawson designed the first 100 Mater Prize Homes from 1960 until he passed away in 1975. According to builder Les Smith, the homes incorporated the latest in design, engineering and luxury. They became so popular that by 1967 there was a new one being raffled every 7 weeks. Builder Les Smith stated that he met all the short deadlines and built the homes 'at cost' so that all the profits would remain with the Mater. The homes were "built to a very high standard; fully furnished and equipped" and it was a matter of pride for Les Smith that he never had to go back to remedy faults or repair defects.¹ The homes came complete with furnishings and all appliances and often included a car as a book-buyers' prize.

Mater Prize Home Number 1 was erected in March 1960 and valued at, what was then the huge sum of, £8400. Tickets were 2 shillings each. By 1967 over \$1 million worth of Mater homes had been erected and inspected by over 2.5 million people. The homes were open for inspection from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. 7 days a week with each home attracting about 75,000 people. Highly skilled interior designers used modern household equipment and the latest design ideas² to create 'dream homes' which not only made the lottery highly successful, but had a lasting impact on people's aspirations for their own homes.

Mater Prize Home No.22 was built on 787 m² of land in Marshall Road Tarragindi which was purchased by the Corporation of the Trustees of the Order of the Sisters of Mercy in 1963. Tarragindi was first settled as a rural area with land being made available for soldier settlement after World War One. Urban development was slow until the extension of the trams along Ipswich Road to Salisbury in 1940. Urban development intensified following World War Two as War Service and Housing Commission estates were established. Between 1954 and 1966 the population almost doubled from 6,813 to 12,540.³ Like other suburbs chosen for Mater Prize Homes, Tarragindi was a rapidly developing "new" suburb.

The "delightfully different"⁴ "cool and gracious family home" of a "wide sweeping contemporary design" was approved for construction in May 1964 at an estimated cost of £12,000.⁵ The 3,000 square feet of floor space featured four large bedrooms, a dining room, ultra modern kitchen, bathroom" and an arresting hexagonal-

shaped lounge. The inverted “V” shaped design was created to take full advantage of the site’s wide frontage and featured large windows for cool comfort” and a “well-planned, completely private Barbecue area.”⁶

The home was won by Mario and Loris Balestrieri of Charlton Street Ascot, in January 1965. They sold the house a few months afterwards to Robert and Thelma Francey who lived in the house and raised a family there. The property was transferred to Graham and Robyn Francey in 1981. The current owner bought the house, which remains substantially original, in 1983.

Description

The subject house is a single-storey brick house built in the Post-war Modern style and located in Tarragindi. Distinctive features are the sweeping roofline, large windows and prominent garage door.

Tarragindi is a suburb located approximately nine kilometres from Brisbane city centre. The suburb has a primarily residential character. Marshall Road is a major road in Tarragindi with varied and inconsistent planting of street trees and concrete footpaths on both sides. Buildings in the subject area are mostly of a Post-war Austerity style. Most buildings on Marshall Road occupy medium sized rectangular lots with medium street frontages and setbacks from the street boundary. There are many irregular lots located at the corners of Marshall Road and the adjoining streets.

The subject property is located near the corner of Marshall Road and Chamberlain Street on an irregularly shaped site, approximately triangular in shape. The house has a medium set-back and is located at the northern corner of the site. The southern end of the street frontage is enclosed by a tall concrete masonry wall painted white and a breezeblock wall extending to the southern wall of the house. A wrought iron gate is located midway along this wall. The northern end of the street boundary is lined by a short face brick wall. The front yard has garden beds along the boundaries and at most exterior walls of the house.

The subject house is approximately V-shaped in layout with a skillion roof falling to the front and a gable at the middle. A vent is noted to the north of the central gable. The roof is tiled and features large exposed roof beams in the eaves with ends painted red to match the fascia boards.

All external walls are face brick. The principle elevation faces south east and features a prominent garage door at the southern end. The tilt-door is painted in quarter-triangles, alternating teal and white. Steel framed clerestory windows are noted between the top of the garage door and the ceiling. North of the garage is the timber panelled front door with clear sidelight and top-light. Under the centre gable end is a feature corner window with face brick sills and glazing up to the ceiling.

The northern side of the elevation has a row of hopper windows to the top of the wall and a second corner window. The northern end of the house features a small porch which is enclosed by steel bars and has a small set of stairs with steel railings leading to the front yard.

The interior has concrete floors throughout with a variety of finishes including carpet, vinyl and tiles. The entry is set lower than the floor level of the remainder of the house with a small flight of stairs leading to the living room past a timber screen wall with built in display shelves. Most walls are plain with simple architraves. Ceilings are generally plain with the additional detail of expressed beams in the living room and a faceted finish in the porch.

The subject house is in good condition and has undergone some alterations including changes to roof cladding from corrugated sheeting to tiles, addition of steel security screen to the porch and changes to the paint scheme particularly on the fascia boards and front door.

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:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a Mater prize home built in the 1960s for the Sisters of Mercy as part of the Mater Art Union fundraising initiative. The sale of tickets for Mater Prize Homes has underpinned the work of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital and the Mater Mothers Hospital from 1954 to the present. The homes attracted substantial crowds and influenced the domestic style and aspirations of generations of Brisbane residents.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a strikingly unusual house in a visually-prominent location, with a low butterfly roof and matching brick front fence, the building displays a high level of quality in its design in the triangulated lines and organization of spaces in a highly-intact modernist residence.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as an innovative, considered design displaying lightness and modest proportions despite its large footprint. The

house, constructed in 1964, is an early example of the free-form residential structures that became more common in the late twentieth century.

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 Mater Prize home designed by Brisbane architect John Dawson and built by Les Smith. Dawson was the sole architect of Mater Prize Homes from 1960 to 1975. Dawson and Smith designed and built numerous 'dream homes' for the lottery.

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 one of a series of Mater Prize homes which funded the health care systems provided to residents of Brisbane and surrounding areas by the Sisters of Mercy.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
2. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
3. Greenwood, J. "The man who made dreams come true: Les Smith Mater Homes builder". Interview transcript held by Mater Archives.
4. Mater Prize Hom: Your Souvenir of some of the best Mater Prize Homes, 1967 edition
5. Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
6. Queensland Post Office Directories

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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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