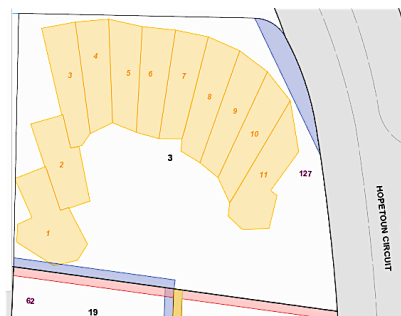


Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter Register of Significant Architecture

RSA No: R 153

Name of Place: **Lakeview Townhouses**

Address/Location 1/127 to 11/127 Hopetoun Circuit,
on Block 3 Section 23 Yarralumla ACT.



Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	None
Date of Listing:	28/4/2025	Level of Significance:	Territory
		Category:	Residential
		Style:	Late 20thC International
Date of Design:	1981	Architects:	Harry Seidler & Associates
Construction Period:	1982-4	Client:	Contec Properties
		Builder:	Dimitri Pedashenko

Citation prepared by Ken Charlton, who took the unacknowledged photographs

Statement of Significance

Lakeview, completed in 1984, is a complex of 11 medium density townhouses, which demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement by its designer, the renowned architect Harry Seidler in the period late in his career when he was preoccupied with non-orthogonal planning. This is present in the fan-shaped plan layout, the interiors of the townhouses and openings to the garages for daylight. All are due to Seidler working for Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil in 1948 and seeing buildings with Late-Baroque sculptural forms.

Lakeview has special associations with Harry Seidler, as he conceived the idea of erecting this row of townhouses, bought a suitable site, formed a company to develop it and retained one of the townhouses to stay in when visiting Canberra.

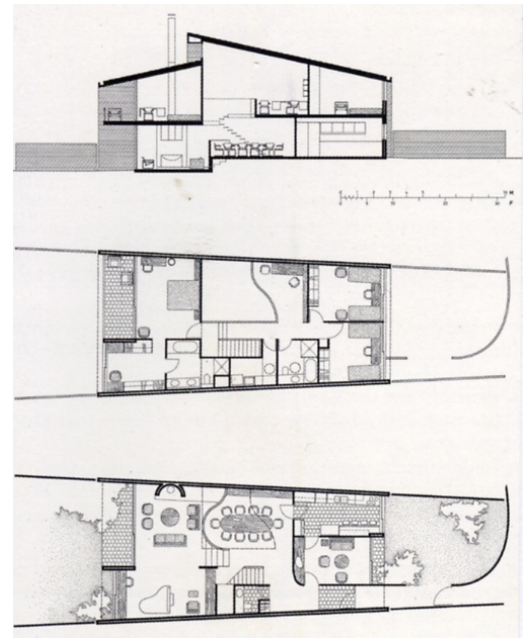
Seidler was a key practitioner of both the Post-War and Late 20th-Century International styles of architecture. The principle characteristics of the latter are demonstrated at Lakeview. When it received the AIA ACT 2017 Award for Enduring Architecture, the jury commended the strong design skills of Harry Seidler, “exemplified in this confident, well-integrated and mature work of architecture.”



Townhouses 4,5,6, & 7 (right to left) facing Stirling Park to the north in 2025.



Lakeview, Block 3 Section 23 Yarralumla, ACTPLA Aerial Photo, 2022 showing the fan-shaped plan and sculptural openings to the garages.



Drawings of a typical apartment.
Source: Harry Seidler and Associates
and 100 Canberra Houses¹

Description and Condition

Lakeview comprises eleven, near-identical, but with some being mirror-reversed in plan, two-storey, three-bedroom townhouses. The communal space has gardens, underground garages and a swimming pool. Lakeview demonstrates the principle characteristics of the Late 20th-Century International style of architecture in a residential complex: a cubiform overall shape; large sheets of glass; plain smooth wall surfaces; greater sculptural quality than buildings from the Post-War International style.² The townhouses have north-facing glazing between expressed party walls, carefully modulated wall surfaces, inset balconies, grey face brickwork, render, concrete floors, painted fibre-cement panels and timber doors and stair treads. The fan-shaped plan allows each house to step down the hillside and open out towards the north for admission of sun and lake views and the Late-Baroque-influenced interplay of straight and curved surfaces. This interplay is apparent upon arrival to the underground garages, which are naturally lit by large, curved openings. These emerge as sculptural elements within the shared, landscaped garden that leads to individual, private courtyards. The shared gardens allow residents to have easy access to Stirling Park. Open-plan living spaces are dramatised by a skilful composition of curved balustrades and a masterful articulation of light and space.³ There have been some minor internal changes, and almost all terracotta roof tiles have been replaced by ribbed steel, without loss of significance, so Lakeview has high integrity.



Townhouses 1 & 2 from the north in 2025



A typical dining room. Photo: Max Dupain

Background/History

Lakeview was designed in 1981 by the renowned architect Harry Seidler (1923- 2006) and built by 1984. He was born to Jewish parents and educated in Vienna. In 1938 he escaped to England and attended Cambridge Polytechnic. He was then interned in 1940 and deported to Canada. There he gained an architecture degree from the University of Manitoba (1944), won a scholarship to Harvard Graduate School (1945-6) and studied the principles of the Bauhaus under Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, for whom he worked in New York (1946-8). He then gained experience in Brazil, in the office of Oscar Niemeyer, when he saw buildings with Late-Baroque sculptural forms. In late 1948 he arrived in Sydney, where his family had settled. He was a leading figure throughout his career in Australia, where he was the first architect to fully comprehend the lessons handed down from the Bauhaus, of which he remained a steadfast exponent.

His practice, Harry Seidler and Associates, which commenced in Sydney in 1960, was responsible for several Canberra residences, medium density housing projects, bowling clubs in Braddon and Griffith and office buildings. The Edmund Barton Offices (1978) in Kings Avenue was his most outstanding. He was recognised by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1976 with its Gold Medal, the greatest honour the Institute can bestow, and awarded Australia's highest honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia, in 1987. He has been described as "one of the major talents of Australian architectural history".⁴

In 1981, Harry Seidler and an investor, Edward Meller, formed Contec Properties and bought a five acre site in Yarralumla. Seidler designed eleven townhouses facing north with views over Lake Burley Griffin. Dimitri Pedashenko was engaged to build them. This is one of Seidler's three medium density housing projects in Canberra, the others, both from 1968, being the Heritage-registered Campbell Housing Apartments and the now-demolished Garran Housing.⁵ Sculptural forms in concrete like those he saw in Niemeyer's buildings in Brazil are evident in the interiors of Lakeview townhouses and the design of the curved openings to the garages. These give Lakeview greater sculptural quality than buildings in the earlier Post-War International style, such as Seidler's Campbell Housing Apartments designed in 1964. The townhouses were slow to sell at first and most were rented. Townhouse Three was retained by Harry and his architect wife Penelope as a place to stay when in Canberra.

In 2017 the AIA ACT Chapter Award for Enduring Architecture, for sustained architectural excellence for more than 25 years, was won by Lakeview. The jury commended the strong design skills of Harry Seidler, "exemplified in this confident, well-integrated and mature work of architecture".⁶

Assessment Against Criteria in the Heritage ACT 2004

d. Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects.

Lakeview is important for demonstrating the principle characteristics of the Late 20th-Century International style of architecture, of which Seidler was a key practitioner, in a residential complex. The characteristics of the style evident are a cubiform overall shape; large sheets of glass; plain smooth wall surfaces, and greater sculptural quality than buildings from the earlier Post-War International style. Lakeview meets this criterion.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period.

Lakeview is important for demonstrating a high degree of creative architecture by Harry Seidler, in the period late in his career, when he was preoccupied with non-orthogonal planning. This is seen in the fan-shaped plan layout, the interiors of the townhouses and openings to the garages for daylight. All are due to the influence on Seidler of seeing Niemeyer's Late-Baroque sculptural forms in Brazil. These give Lakeview greater sculptural quality than Seidler's buildings in the earlier Post-War International style, such as the Campbell Housing Apartments designed in 1964. In 2017 the AIA ACT Chapter Award for Enduring Architecture, for sustained architectural excellence for more than 25 years, was won by Lakeview. The jury commended the strong design skills of Harry Seidler, "exemplified in this confident, well-integrated and mature work of architecture". Lakeview meets this criterion.

h. Has a special association with the life and work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.

Lakeview has special associations with the architect Harry Seidler, who has been described as “One of the major talents of Australian architectural history.” He conceived the idea of erecting the row of townhouses, bought a suitable site and chose an investor with whom he formed a company to develop it. Seidler retained Townhouse Three to have a place to stay when in Canberra. He was also important to the architectural history of the ACT, where his practice was responsible for several houses, notable office buildings and bowling clubs. This is one of three medium density housing projects in Canberra by Seidler, the others, both from 1968, being the heritage-registered Campbell Housing Apartments and the now-demolished Garran Housing. He was recognised by the RAlA in 1976 with its Gold Medal, and awarded Australia’s highest honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia, in 1987. Lakeview meets this criterion.

END NOTES

¹ Reeves and Roberts, 100 Canberra Houses, Halstead Press, 2013. p 190.

² Richard Apperly Robert Irving Peter Reynolds. Identifying Australian Architectural Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present. A & R 1989, p235

³ ACT Chapter, AIA ACT Architecture Awards 2017 Booklet, p 56.

⁴ Jennifer Taylor ‘Seidler, Harry’ in The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture, CUP, 2012, p 622.

⁵ GML Heritage, ‘Lakeview’ Case Study p145 in Modernist Houses in the Australian Capital Territory, Thematic Heritage Study for the National Trust of Australia (ACT) 2024.

⁶ ACT Chapter, AIA ACT Architecture Awards 2017 Booklet, p 56.