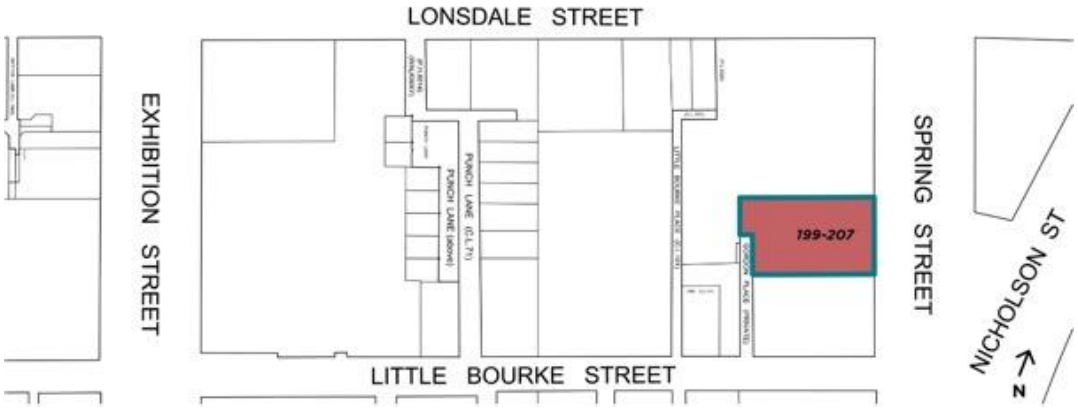
SITE NAME	Park Tower
STREET ADDRESS	199-207 Spring Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	108989



SURVEY DATE: November 2017		**SURVEY BY**: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	N/A	**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	**PROPOSED CATEGORY**	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Kurt Popper	**BUILDER:**	Notkin Constructions Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**	1969

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	**DOMINANT SUB-THEMES**
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
	1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
	1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Not able to be determined
1920s	Factories and workshops
1960s	Residential, car parks

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

Designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper in 1969, this modern residential apartment building is an early example of this building type that emerged in Melbourne in the late 1960s/early 1970s. It is distinctly modernist in form and aesthetic, with a curtain walled façade that features an abstract arrangement of brick spandrels and masonry balconies.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Overseas influences

America was the strongest overseas influence on the post-World War II architecture of Australian capitals. Australian architects often studied in American universities or visited the USA on study tours. American advances in the manufacturing of steel and concrete were also adopted in Australia. While

steel was the main material in North American skyscrapers, concrete was used more often in Australia, and often combined with high-strength steel (Marsden 2000:70-72).

Another influence on architectural design was émigré architects who arrived in Melbourne before and after World War II. The impact of postwar immigration on Australian cities can be described in three ways: the enlivening of city centres by the arrival of European and Asian immigrants into mainly Australian-born communities; the rapid increase in the size of capital cities; and the roles played by particular immigrant groups, especially in the fields of architecture, economies, politics and cultural activities (Marsden 2000:95-99). Architect Kurt Popper, who arrived in Melbourne from Vienna in 1940, developers Bruno and Rino Grollo (sons of an Italian immigrant), and Viennese immigrant Ted Lustig and his Israeli son-in-law Max Moar, have had a significant impact on Melbourne's city landscape through architecture and property development.

Émigré architects were often educated in progressive institutions where modernism was more advanced than in Australia. Their expertise and modernist designs gained recognition and were translated into the local context. Many were also involved with teaching at architectural schools and influenced the next generation of architects (Lozanovska & McKnight 2015:352-353). Examples in the city centre include the apartment buildings, Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970), both designed by Kurt Popper.

Housing and lodging

The provision of accommodation has always been a major function of Australian city centres, and has included the establishment of hotels, hostels, boarding houses and serviced apartments, as well as terraces, flats and medium-density housing. Since the 1950s, the market sought by inner-city developers has moved to an almost exclusively middle- to higher-income group. New forms of accommodation from the 1950s replaced older buildings with high-cost, high-rise buildings for a restricted range of users (Marsden 2000:53).

The postwar era saw the introduction of apartments and flats in the well-established inner suburbs of South Yarra and St Kilda, spreading to Caulfield, Malvern, Camberwell, Hawthorn and Prahran. Victoria's first block of 'own-your-own' or 'OYO' flats were built in Hawthorn in 1949 and the subsequent introduction of strata title legislation by architect and Lord Mayor Bernard Evans led to the proliferation of this housing type from the early 1950s (Heritage Alliance 2008:23).

The apartment boom reached the inner city in the late 1960s, facilitated by the *Conveyancing (Strata Titles) Act* of 1961. An Australian innovation, the legislation allowed each lot or apartment to have its own title deed (Stent 2018). Many émigré architects, who were experienced in higher density living in Europe, specialised in apartment design. Viennese-born architect Kurt Popper, for example, built two blocks of residential flats in central Melbourne – Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) (Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

Although marketed as a glamorous and convenient lifestyle, high-rise city apartment living was not popularly embraced. Exhibition Towers, an 11-storey residential building located at the north-west corner of Exhibition Street and Little Lonsdale Street, was designed and built as a residential and commercial building. Constructed in 1968-69 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the building was an endeavour to provide 'OYO' flats in the city centre. 'High prices, high bills and Melbourne's conservative living style' contributed to difficulties in finding buyers for the units and the building was converted to the Courtesy Inn Motel in 1971 (*Age* 17 February 1971:3). It was also reported in 1971 that Park Tower was using its tenants' car spaces as a public car park and the flats

were being let on short-term leases. Similarly, the two-month-old 13-15 Collins Street apartments contemplated filling its lower four floors with shops, offices and medical practices (*Age* 17 February 1971:3, Figure 8).

In 1974, the MCC introduced a policy to encourage residents back to the city through the construction of a variety of residential typologies. However, because development was market driven, it was predominantly offices and retail spaces that were constructed in the city centre (Marsden 2000:54, 112).

SITE HISTORY

The site at 199-207 Spring Street was part of the Crown Allotment 10, Section 24, purchased by D Dunbar. In 1895, four shops were present on the site, numbered 199 to 207, and in 1942, the shops housed R B Hallett, builder (no. 199), E S Wilson, sign writer (no. 201), a Chinese laundry (no. 203) and G W Rowley Pty Ltd, wire workers (no. 205-207) (MMBW Detailed Plan no 1014; S&Mc 1942). Businesses were still trading in the above premises in early 1968 (*Age* 16 February 1968:20; 17 April 1967:19).

In January 1969, a plan for a new residential tower in Spring Street was publicised. With an estimated building cost of $2.5 million, the project group Two-O-One Pty Ltd appointed European émigré architect Kurt Popper, who specialised in apartment designs, and Notkin Constructions Pty Ltd, builders, for the construction of a 20-storey apartment block named ‘Park Tower’.

While Popper had designed the six-storey ‘Crossley House’ (1967), which is known as the first modern residential block in Melbourne, Park Tower, as Melbourne’s first high-rise strata title property, was a pioneering work (*Age* 29 January 1969:24).

The building's central heating and cooling system was ground breaking. The Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria designed an experimental gas system for Park Tower, which was widely applied to commercial and industrial buildings (*Age* 29 January 1969:24). The new system involved the Corporation in installing a 6500 feet network of insulated pipes and ducts that were used for continuous water circulation controlled by roof units. Each apartment was individually billed according to the usage recorded on a linked meter, a common feature of ‘own-your-own’ flats already established in the inner suburbs (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

The original building design of 199-207 Spring Street incorporated 76 strata title properties including six luxury penthouses, two- to three- bedroom units, and some one-bedroom suites. Two levels of car parking for more than 60 cars were provided in the basement, with access from Little Bourke Street. Popper, included communal features such as a garden plaza with a fountain and a guest lounge that could be booked for parties on the ground floor, a spiral staircase, and a laundry room. The residents were serviced by live-in caretakers and protected by an electronic security system (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; 25 March 1983:27).

Park Tower was set back 24 feet from the road, with the two lowest levels projecting in line with neighbouring buildings (Figure 1, Figure 2) (*Age* 29 January 1969:34). A restaurant, ‘Nellies’, was opened on the ground floor by February 1971 (*Age* 13 February 1971:10).

Figure 1. Architect's drawing published in the *Age* in 1969 (Source: *Age* 29 January 1969:24).

Figure 2. Park Tower soon after completion (Source: Edquist 2002: 19)

Completed in 1969, Park Tower was promoted as an inner city 'town house', an idea imported from overseas countries such as the United Kingdom, with the building described as an 'ideal central dwelling for people with homes in remote areas' (*Age* 19 June 1970:22). At the time of the property release, the selling agents, Jones, Lang, Wootton & Baillieu Allard Real Estate Pty Ltd, were highly optimistic about property sales. The Park Tower apartments, however, were slow to sell in the early years, with only 25 per cent of 76 units sold within the first 13 months of opening (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; 17 February 1971:12).

By the 1980s, however Park Tower's accommodation was considered fashionable. A typical apartment unit with views overlooking Treasury Gardens to the east and Gordon House to the west was priced at $85,000 in 1983, and was selling for $127,500 in 1991 (*Age* 25 March 1983:27; 6 July 1991:31).

Today, Park Tower continues to accommodate residents in 77 units. It also contains one business, one shop and two food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

SITE DESCRIPTION

This 20-storey residential building has a two-storey base/podium built to the property boundary with a 16-storey tower set back from the street and two levels of basement carparking. The building is distinctively modernist in its form and aesthetic and is a representative example of a new building type - the modern residential tower building - that occurred in Melbourne in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

At ground level, the podium has glazed shop fronts and an (altered) cantilevered flat canopy that extends over the footpath. On the first floor, an outdoor terrace sits below a curved roofline with circular skylights, and was designed as a communal entertaining space for residents. Residential apartments are located in the tower section of the building.

The building is constructed with a concrete structural frame with curtain walls to the long edges. The front façade is divided into a grid pattern determined by the intersection of vertical and horizontal bays. Seven equal vertical bays are separated by structural elements clad in brown brick. Horizontal bays respond directly to the arrangement of floor plates. Regular panels of aluminium framed

windows, and masonry spandrels and balconies sit within the vertical bands. Open balconies are integrated into the façade and arranged in an abstract pattern for visual interest. This sophisticated composition is characteristic of the work of Kurt Popper.

The arrangement differs at the top three levels (which likely correspond with the penthouse apartments). Masonry spandrels run the full width of the building, with some sections glazed and others left open to form balconies. Alterations have occurred at this part of the building with some open balconies retrofitted with glazing.

The side walls of the building are clad in brown brick. The solid monumental appearance of the tall brick face is punctuated by a rendered panel down the centre of the wall. Small side windows for the building are incorporated into the rendered panel.

At the southern end of the podium, the brick edge wall extends vertically for one level and displays a metal art object.

INTEGRITY

The building retains a high level of integrity. The cantilevered flat canopy at ground level has been altered. At the top three levels, open balconies have now been enclosed with glazing.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are no residential towers from the post war period on the Heritage Overlay for the City of Melbourne. A group of four residential towers is included in this study. All are relatively intact examples of a new building type that emerged in the late post war period (late 1960s – early 1970s).

Other Post-War Modernist residential buildings in the Hoddle Grid

There are a small number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Park Tower. These are detailed below.

Apartment Building, 13-15 Collins Street (Kurt Popper, 1970) (Interim HO1265, & currently included as a Significant place in Collins East Precinct HO504)

Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (Kenneth McDonald & Associates, 1969-71)

- Treasury Gate, 93-101 Spring Street (Moore & Hammond, 1971) (Interim HO1262)

Analysis

Both 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) were designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper who was known for his apartment building designs.

Like Park Tower, all three buildings were designed as modernist buildings, with structural concrete frames supporting curtain walls of repetitive glazed elements and masonry spandrels. In each case, primary aesthetic interest is derived from the expression of structure and materials (brick, concrete, glass) and the arrangement of structural elements (windows, balconies). There is a consistency to the arrangement of levels between all four buildings with retail/commercial spaces provided at podium level and multiple floors of apartments in a tower arrangement. Both 93-101 Spring Street and 199-207 Spring Street have a common space for apartment residents located at a mid-level.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	**CRITERION A** Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	**CRITERION D** Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	**CRITERION E** Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
✓	**CRITERION F** Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
✓	**CRITERION H** Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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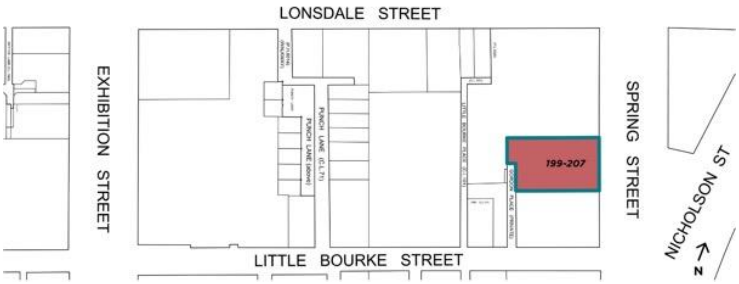
PREVIOUS STUDIES

Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985	Ungraded
Central City Heritage Study Review 1993	Ungraded
Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002	Ungraded
Central City Heritage Review 2011	Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Park Tower

PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street, Melbourne, built in 1969 to a design by émigré architect Kurt Popper.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations are not significant.

How it is significant?

Park Tower at 199-207 Spring Street is of local historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Park Tower is historically significant as one of the first wave of high-rise residential apartments constructed in the Melbourne CBD from the late 1960s, and before the introduction of a Victorian government policy in 1971 that directed where growth in Melbourne's housing supply could take place. (Criterion A)

Park Tower is a notable and early example of a new building typology that emerged in the CBD in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the modern high-rise residential apartment building. The building demonstrates key characters of the type. It was constructed as a modern curtain walled building, with a podium at the lower level accommodating communal, retail and commercial spaces, and luxury

residential apartments located in a recessed tower section. The distinctive modern character of the building and the deliberate promotion of it as a base for a glamorous modern lifestyle are characteristics of the type, which contributes to the understanding of Melbourne as a modern city in the postwar period. (Criterion D)

Park Tower is aesthetically significant for its demonstration of modernism in apartment design. Attributes of the apartment block include a generous distribution of space for ground floor retail and a first-floor communal terrace with a sweeping curved roofline, above which is the 16-storey apartment tower. Aesthetic value is demonstrated by the combination of concrete structural frame combined with curtain walling to the long facades, forming a grid pattern. Within this regular grid, an abstract composition is achieved by the positioning of the open balconies that are integrated into the façade and visually contrasting with the sheer vertical side walls of brick. (Criterion E)

Park Tower is significant for the innovative central gas heating and cooling system that was installed in the building. Designed by the Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria, Park Towers was the first application of the system which was expected to have widespread usage in commercial and industrial buildings. The centrally installed system featured a high air-volume, low noise level fan and heat exchanger, as well as thermostat controls for personal comfort and billing metres to allow for recording of energy usage in each apartment. (Criterion F)

Park Tower is significant for its association with émigré architect Kurt Popper who brought European ideas about living in the city to the Melbourne CBD. Popper designed a number of residential apartment buildings in Melbourne including the six-storey ‘Crossley House’ (1967), which is known as the first modern residential block in Melbourne. (Criterion H)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)