

Attachment A5

**Draft Inventory Sheet – 108 Elizabeth Bay
Road, Elizabeth Bay - Oceana**

Name			
Oceana			
Address	108 Elizabeth Bay Road, Elizabeth Bay	Lot number	Lot 1 DP 80313, Lot D DP 412723, Lot A DP 412406, Lot 1 DP 1031461
Architect	Theodore Fry	Construction date	1961
Builder	Arcos Pty Ltd		
Listings	Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012: Within the Elizabeth and Rushcutters Bays Heritage Conservation Area (C20), identified as detracting on the Sydney Development Control Plan building contributions map.		

Historical overview

The Cadigal people of the Eora nation have lived in the Sydney area for thousands of years and have shaped its landscape and nurtured its plants and animals. Before the arrival of the European settlers the Potts Point area was known as Kurrajeen (or Curageen) and Yarrandabbi. Governor Lachlan Macquarie set aside land near Elizabeth Bay, Potts Point and Woolloomooloo as a 'model fishing village' for Aboriginal people in 1820. At this settlement, known as Elizabeth Town, several huts were built, a patch of land was cleared for a garden, and boats were provided for use by the Aboriginal people who lived there. John Palmer's estate at nearby Woolloomooloo Bay was also an important gathering place for local Aboriginal people, and was the location of a corroboree in 1831 attended by Bungaree's son, Young Bungaree.¹

The subject site formed part of the original 54-acre property granted to Alexander Macleay, Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, by Crown grant in 1831. In 1839 MacLeay constructed a stone mansion named Elizabeth Bay House on the property, as well as extensive stables, museums, and a large garden of interesting plants, specimen trees, an orchard and orangery. Financial trouble forced Alexander Macleay to submit to the foreclosure of his mortgage to his son William Sharp Macleay in 1845. When William died in 1865, the property passed to his brother George. George arranged for the subdivision of the property and sold leaseholds of portions of the estate between 1865 and 1882.

Lot 53 was conveyed to James Bartlett in 1866. By the late 1870s there were two residences on the allotment named Fairlight and Toftmonks, with a curved right of way shared by the two properties. The two houses changed owners a number of times until the 1950s.

Structural engineer and owner of steel manufacturing company Arcos Industries, Moses Eisner, acquired the title to Lot A (and H) of a subdivision of 108 Elizabeth Bay Road in 1959. In July 1958, prior to registration of the conveyance to Eisner, architect Theodore Fry lodged an application to erect a part 12-storey and part nine-storey building to contain 57 flats, to be built in steel, concrete and curtain walling (using 'Besser Vibrapac' concrete masonry blocks) with provision for off-street parking for 60–70 cars on Lot A. At this time the property consisted of a vacant lot (Lot A) and a two-storey brick residence on 108 Elizabeth Bay Road that was in the course of demolition. 108 Elizabeth Bay Road was owned by FD Hixson and Lot A by HI MacCarthy. The estimated cost was £90,000. Oceana Apartments Limited became the registered proprietor of Lots A and D in 1959.

One month later, Council granted development approval providing the total floor area did not exceed 54,000 square feet. The builder was Arcos Pty Ltd and the structural engineer was Docker and Smith. Construction commenced and additional structural plans were approved in 1959. Council also approved the addition of two penthouses on the roof of the building under construction in September of the same year. The Oceana Apartments were advertised for sale from the beginning of 1959 during the early construction stage.

¹ City of Sydney 2013, 'Aboriginal People and Place'.

Historical overview

Revised architectural plans and specifications for minor additions were approved in 1960. Oceana was completed in 1961.

In May 1960, *Cross-Section* noted that 'Oceana is the name of this 13 storey (59 H units) bldg. nearing completion at Elizabeth Bay Syd. Over 25% reduction in cost and time was achieved through such techniques as all-steel form work for column & beam casing, pre-cast pre-stressed conc floors, hollow beams with cinder concrete walls & all copper one-pipe drainage system.'

Theodore Fry

Theodore Fry (1908–1968), architect of Oceana, was born Teodor Freiwilg in Poland. Fry studied design at the Lvov Polytechnic, escaping Poland in 1939 and travelling through several countries before arriving in Australia in 1948. Registering as an architect in 1949, Fry's first project with Eisner was a block of 18 flats at 25 Wolseley Road Point Piper, designed in 1952. The project was published in *Cross-Section* in 1954 and was noted as one of the few apartment buildings to begin construction after World War II. Fry's other prominent apartment projects include Rushcutters Court (now Bayside), a 12 storey block at 85 New South Head Road, Edgecliff; and Orana, an eight storey block at Rose Bay completed in 1963, also owned and built by Arcos Industries.

Fry's own house in Castlecrag was published in *Australian House and Garden* in January 1961, noting his innovative use of sculptural concrete blockwork as a screen.

Fry employed Croatian architect Nino Sydney (Somogy) shortly after his arrival during the 1950s. Sydney worked with Fry on the Knoll Laboratories at Arncliffe, completed in 1968 shortly after Fry's death, when Sydney took over the practice.

Arcos Industries

Moses Eisner came to Australia from Poland in 1939; one of few members of his family to survive the Holocaust. By 1945, Eisner, an engineer, had founded a steel company in Sydney called Arcos. In 1946 Arcos constructed a series of prefabricated steel houses for the Housing Commission of NSW, designed by Hugo Stossel. During 1948 Stossel designed one of Australia's first European influenced modernist houses at Warrawee for Eisner and his wife Gisele. In 1955 Stossel and Eisner cooperated in the design and construction of a factory at Artarmon, the same year Eisner's company financed and constructed the block of 18 flats at 25 Wolseley Road, Point Piper, which were designed by Fry.

By this time Arcos had become a major construction company, gaining NSW Government contracts including the construction of the Vales Point power station. Eisner purchased the site of Oceana in 1959 in what appears to have been a speculative development, retitling the property as Oceana Apartments Limited and raising capital by selling shares in the building. Oceana was advertised as 'Home units... ARCHITECT DESIGNED, constructed by ARCOS INDUSTRIES. 208ft WATER FRONTAGE. SWIMMING POOL. All Units have NE aspects which cannot be built out'. Oceana Apartments Limited remains Oceana's owner'.

Arcos built more apartments during the 1960s; however, its focus had moved primarily to civil engineering.

Description

A site visit was undertaken by GML in October 2024. The physical assessment is based on this and available documentation of the site.

Setting and context

Oceana is located between the northern end of Elizabeth Bay Road and the harbour. It is one of several apartment buildings in a radial arrangement around the northern tip of the road loop. The topography of the area is undulating with the land sloping steeply down towards the water.

Oceana is located within the Elizabeth Bay and Rushcutters Bays Heritage Conservation Area (HCA). The HCA within the immediate vicinity of the site is characterised by large Victorian and Federation residences, and multi-storey postwar and contemporary apartments that are comparable in design to Oceana but generally smaller in scale.

Description

Oceana occupies four lots that together form an irregular 'battleaxe' shape. The frontage to Elizabeth Bay Road is approximately 8m; the western boundary is approximately 117m and northern harbourside boundary is approximately 65m.

Due to its setback and orientation, the view of Oceana from Elizabeth Bay Road is limited and partially obscured by the neighbouring apartment building. The scale and visual prominence of the building is clearer in views from the water, Beare Park and Elizabeth Bay Marina, where its full length and scale can be seen.

Physical description

Oceana is a 10 to 13-storey International style residential flat building with a long, thin plan originally containing 55 two and three-bedroom units that span the width of the building. The flat building is aligned with the west boundary and covered carparking spaces occupy the eastern half of the site. A pool is located along the northeastern edge towards the harbour. Oceana is accessed from Elizabeth Bay Road via a concrete driveway.

The building is of a simple, narrow rectangular form constructed of a reinforced concrete column-and-beam frame and floor slabs with textured concrete block infill walls and spandrels. The concrete slab and beams are exposed externally. External façades are defined by a consistent fenestration pattern that maximises the lighting and views inside the units and provides cross ventilation.

Following the topography of the site, the building is 10 storeys to the south, increasing to 13 storeys in the north section. Oceana is serviced by two elevator and fire stair cores placed at the rear and front quarters of the building and rising an additional two to three storeys above the flat roof.

The eastern elevation is almost entirely glazed with expansive windows and solid panel spandrels alternating with cantilevered projecting balconies of the same width, dividing the façade into a distinct grid. The narrow, northern elevation consists of full-width cantilevered balconies while the southern (street facing) elevation is face blockwork without fenestration. The western elevation comprises full-length cantilevered access galleries on each floor with metal rail balustrades. Aqua-coloured panels are fixed to the balustrades in an alternating pattern. At each level the lift lobby is set back and finished in orange glazed tiles. The lift lobby areas at each floor were originally screened with frosted glass panels providing shelter, since removed.

The plan as shown in 1960 includes three-bedroom apartments at the southern end, with four identical two-bedroom units in between. The northern unit is a larger two-bedroom configuration with a full-width living room, making six units per floor. It appears that apartment layouts have since been altered with some amalgamations. Each unit has a similar façade composed of face brickwork walls, timber-framed multi-pane windows and an entry door.

Internally, each unit has a simple quadrant plan with a living room and main bedroom facing east, and a kitchen, bathroom and secondary bedrooms on the western side with windows to the gallery. Two expansive penthouses are located on the top floor.

Common spaces on the site include a covered concrete parking area with distinctive zigzag sheet-metal roof, and a pool with change rooms and BBQ in the lower harbourside area.

Landscaping

The landscaping of the site includes mature plantings and a landscaped garden in the northern portion of the site surrounding the pool.

Modifications and integrity

Council records after 1995 indicate the following modifications.

Building related and development applications for various interior works, including the consolidation of units, internal reconfiguration, the demolition of walls and refurbishment, were approved between 1995 and 2011.

A development application submitted in 2007 (D/2007/1335) was approved for alterations and addition to an existing cabana, restoration of the roof, demolition of an amenities structure, changes to the existing south and west façades and balconies, and new frameless glazing has been fitted to all external balconies.

The twin entry lobbies at ground floor have been refurbished.

Description

Condition

A HIS prepared by Weir Philips in 2010 indicated Oceana is relatively intact and its integrity is relatively high. The current condition of the building has not been assessed.

Comparative analysis

Oceana can be compared with other major apartment designs of Theodore Fry, including the block of 18 flats at 25 Wolseley Road Point Piper (1952) and Rushcutters Court (now Bayside) at 85 New South Head Road, Edgecliff (date unknown), both of which remain but have been substantially altered.

The building at Wolseley Road is of significance as an early postwar apartment building designed with a strong modernist expression by an architect trained in Poland, and is rare. However, it appears that the building has been subject to a series of alterations and hence its original design is less able to be appreciated than Oceana's. Similarly, Bayside has been altered a number of times and is not considered to be able to represent Fry's original design. Oceana, completed in 1961 and intact, is able to demonstrate Fry's contribution as an architect. As the only intact example of Fry's work and as the work of a noteworthy émigré architect working in Sydney in the postwar years, Oceana is considered rare.

In its scale and prominence, Oceana is unique as a 1960s apartment building. It can be compared with other large apartment projects of the period such as Glenhurst Gardens, Darling Point (1959) or Blues Point Tower, McMahons Point (1962), but there are few examples of the same scale and prominence.

With around 60 apartments over 15 floors, at its time of construction Glenhurst Gardens was the largest apartment building in Sydney and represented a marked shift in the development of Darling Point. The building also included many firsts, from its construction technology to its high level of customisation. The design, planning and engineering of Glenhurst Gardens can be seen as a historical benchmark in the evolution of apartment design in NSW. Glenhurst Gardens is considered to be of historic, aesthetic and technical significance.

Similarly Blues Point Tower, at 24 levels with 144 apartments when completed in 1962 was one of the largest apartment buildings in Sydney. Its prominent harbourside site was also significant. Although part of architect Harry Seidler's wider concept of freeing up foreshore space through high rise development, the project was widely unpopular.

Oceana, designed and constructed in a similar period, shares many characteristics with Glenhurst Gardens and Blues Point Tower and is important for demonstrating this period of large-scale development on harbour sites. When completed, with originally 55 apartments over 10/13 floors, Oceana was the largest residential flat building to be completed in the Elizabeth Bay/Potts Point area and was at the time among the largest in Sydney.

As restrictions on the development of harbour sites came into force shortly after it was completed, the location and scale of Oceana is rare. Later projects were required to be set back from the foreshore and tended to be lower in scale, stepping down steep sites. Due to its location and the period of its design and construction, Oceana is seen as having historic significance for its ability to represent a particular period of Sydney's harbourside development. While Oceana's use of linear planning, with its apartments oriented to the light and views, and its rear circulation spine, can be seen as typical of many apartments of the period, the scale and execution of this design is noteworthy. When compared to Glenhurst Gardens and Blues Point Tower, Oceana is able to represent variations of a similar form and an individual expression in design. Oceana has aesthetic significance for its distinctive design which is still able to be appreciated.

Oceana is the most ambitious and intact project undertaken by Theodore Fry and Moses Eiser, two noteworthy figures in the postwar development of Sydney making it rare.

Comparative analysis



Figure 1 25 Wolseley Road, Point Piper, project undertaken by Theodore Fry and Moses Eiser and completed in 1952. The original form is visible but the building appears to have been modified.



Figure 2 Glenhurst Gardens, Darling Point, by Douglas Forsyth Evans. Completed in 1959, it is a notable early large-scale linear apartment building in Sydney. (Source: GML 2024)

Assessment of significance

Criterion A (Historic significance)

Oceana is a good example of a large scale post-World War II high-rise apartment building in the Elizabeth Bay Potts Point area. It is representative of the process of redevelopment and subdivision of the suburb, beginning in the interwar period, from grand, freestanding dwellings to apartment buildings. The site's redevelopment by Moses Eisner with architect Theodore Fry demonstrates the growing influence of European migrants on the built environment, an important historic phase in the development of the area. The building's location on the harbour foreshore is also able to demonstrate a period before restrictions on the development of foreshore land were implemented.

At its time of construction Oceana was one of the largest apartment buildings in Sydney and represented a marked shift in the development of Elizabeth Bay towards higher densities.

Oceana **has** cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.

Oceana does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.

Criterion B (Historical association)

Oceana has strong associations with Theodore Fry, a noteworthy architect of this period as his largest and most intact project. Oceana is a good example of Fry's work and provides evidence of his designs, including an application of modernist design principles.

Assessment of significance

	<p>Oceana also has some significance for its association with Moses Eisner, a noteworthy businessman, engineer and property developer of the period.</p> <p>Oceana has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Oceana does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion C (Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement)	<p>Oceana is considered to be aesthetically distinct and of high design quality. The design of the building—its siting on its harbour front site, the elongated form, the planning of the corridors and units, the configuration of the internal layouts and its fenestration pattern demonstrates Fry’s application of modernist architectural principles.</p> <p>The external elevations have a unique presentation with large areas of glazing, projecting balconies and external circulation galleries. The building contributes positively to the streetscapes/skyscapes of the Elizabeth Bay peninsula.</p> <p>The integrity of common areas remains to be confirmed.</p> <p>Oceana has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Oceana does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion D (Social, cultural and spiritual significance)	<p>Oceana is not known to have special associations with a particular group or to have contemporary esteem within the local community beyond housing amenity.</p> <p>Oceana does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion E (Research potential)	<p>Oceana is not considered to have the potential to yield significant further or new information not available elsewhere.</p> <p>Oceana does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion F (Rare)	<p>Oceana is considered rare as an example of the architectural work of Theodore Fry. Other examples of his design work have been substantially altered and are less able to be appreciated.</p> <p>Oceana is also rare for its scale and location, with later apartment buildings in this area lower in scale and set back from the harbour’s edge. Buildings of the late 1960s tended to use compact plans stepping down their sites in response to the topography. The uncompromising horizontal massing of Oceana is rare in the context of the Elizabeth Bay Potts Point area.</p> <p>Oceana has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Oceana does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion G (Representative)	<p>Oceana is representative of a wider post-World War II trend, seen in many areas of Sydney close to the city and the harbour, of large houses being replaced by Modernist residential flat buildings. As one of the largest apartment buildings in Sydney at the time of its construction, and one of the largest apartment buildings to be developed in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area, Oceana is significant for its ability to represent this trend.</p>

Assessment of significance

Oceana is also a good and intact representative example of the work of a European émigré architect and property developer. It is one of a group of significant apartments that European migrants completed during the 1950s and 1960s in the local area. It is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of these projects, which tended towards higher densities, displayed modernist design principles and promoted apartment living.

Oceana **has** cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.

Oceana does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.

Statement of significance

Oceana has historic significance for its ability to demonstrate the wider historical trend of the development of harbourside sites for apartment buildings. Its development by Polish émigré businessman and engineer Moses Eisner and Poland-trained architect Theodore Fry also demonstrates the growing influence of European migrants on the built environment, an important historical phase in the development of the area. Oceana also has historic significance for its association with Fry, a noteworthy architect working in Sydney in the post-World War II period, particularly as his most prominent and intact project.

Oceana has aesthetic significance for its design qualities, its elongated form, large areas of glazing and simplified forms repeated over large façades; it demonstrates Fry's application of modernist architectural principles. Highly intact externally, the building contributes positively to the streetscapes and views within the Elizabeth Bay peninsula.

The building has significant rarity values as an intact example of the architectural work of Theodore Fry and for its scale and location, as later apartment buildings in the area are lower in scale and set back from the harbour's edge.

Oceana is significant for its ability to represent wider trends of the development of harbourside sites as one of the largest apartment buildings to be developed in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area. Oceana is also significant as one of a group of significant apartment buildings that European migrants completed during the 1950s and 1960s in the local area. It is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of these projects, which tended towards higher densities, displayed modernist design principles and promoted apartment living.

Substantially intact, Oceana is able to demonstrate the principal characteristics of mid-twentieth century modernist apartment buildings in the City of Sydney local government area and Sydney more generally.

Recommendations

Oceana meets the threshold for local listing for its historical, associative, aesthetic, rarity and representative values.

It is recommended for heritage listing on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan. Individual apartment interiors should be excluded from the listing.

The building within its setting should be retained and conserved. A heritage impact statement should outline any original features and their proposed management prior to any major works being undertaken.

A comprehensive conservation management plan for the site could be prepared to guide future uses and development and ensure its heritage values are conserved.

Information sources				
Type	Author	Title	Year	Repository
Site inspection (external)	GML		2024	GML
Land titles	Land Titles Office	Vol 7891 Fol 113 Vol 7746 Fol137 Vol 4530 Fol 230		NSW Land Registry Services
Publication	<i>Building, Lighting and Engineering</i>		November 1958	National Library of Australia
Publication	<i>Building Ideas Guide to Sydney Architecture</i>		1962	National Library of Australia
Publication	<i>Cross-Section</i>		May 1960	University of Melbourne

Image caption	Oceana Apartments at Elizabeth Bay, NSW. Architect: T Fry; builder: Arcos Industries; and photographer: not known. The photograph was published in <i>Cross-Section</i> , No. 91, May 1960. (Source: Cross-Section archive)				
Image year	1960	Image by	Unknown	Image copyright holder	Unknown



Image caption	Working drawings of the Oceana Apartments—west elevation, May 1952.				
Image year	1952	Image by	Theodore Fry	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney

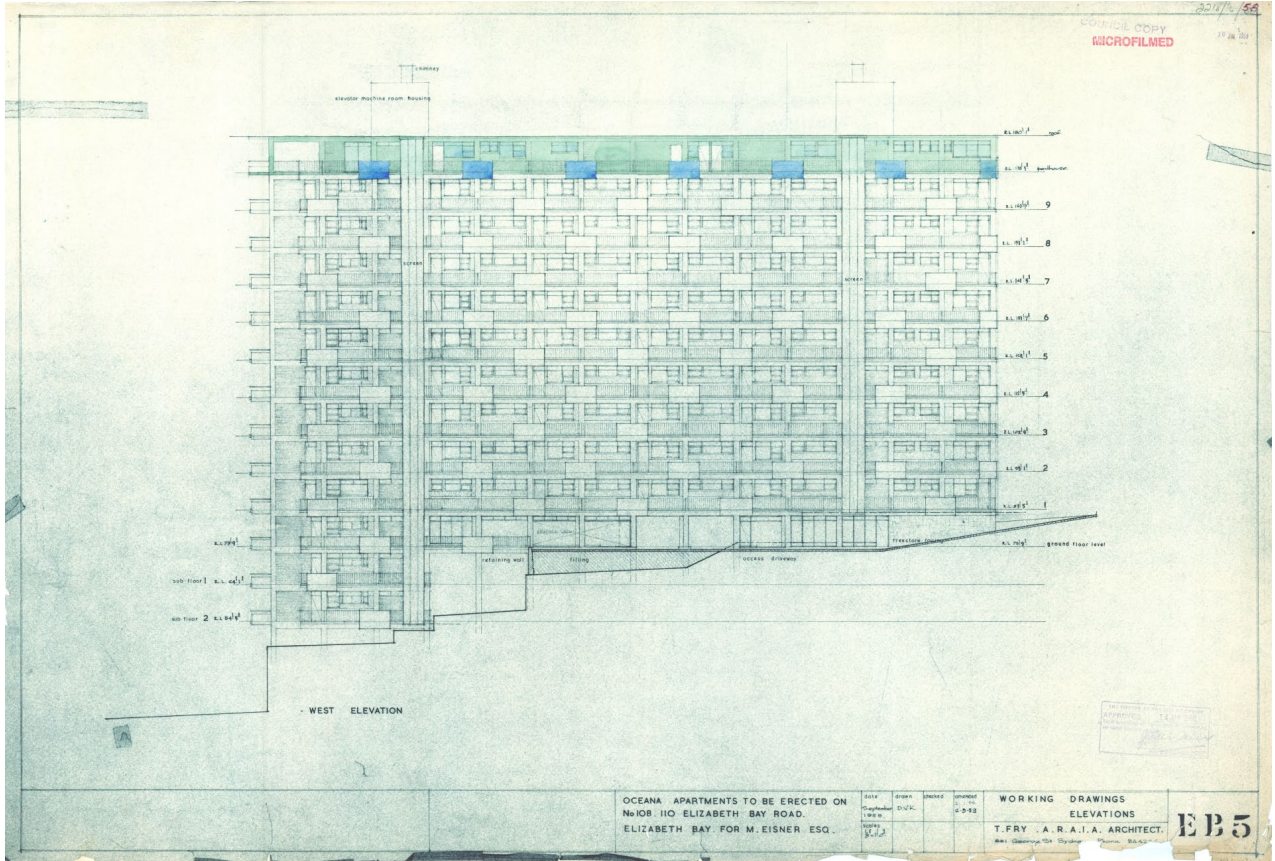


Image caption	Working drawings of the Oceana Apartments—east elevation, May 1952.				
Image year	1952	Image by	Theodore Fry	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney

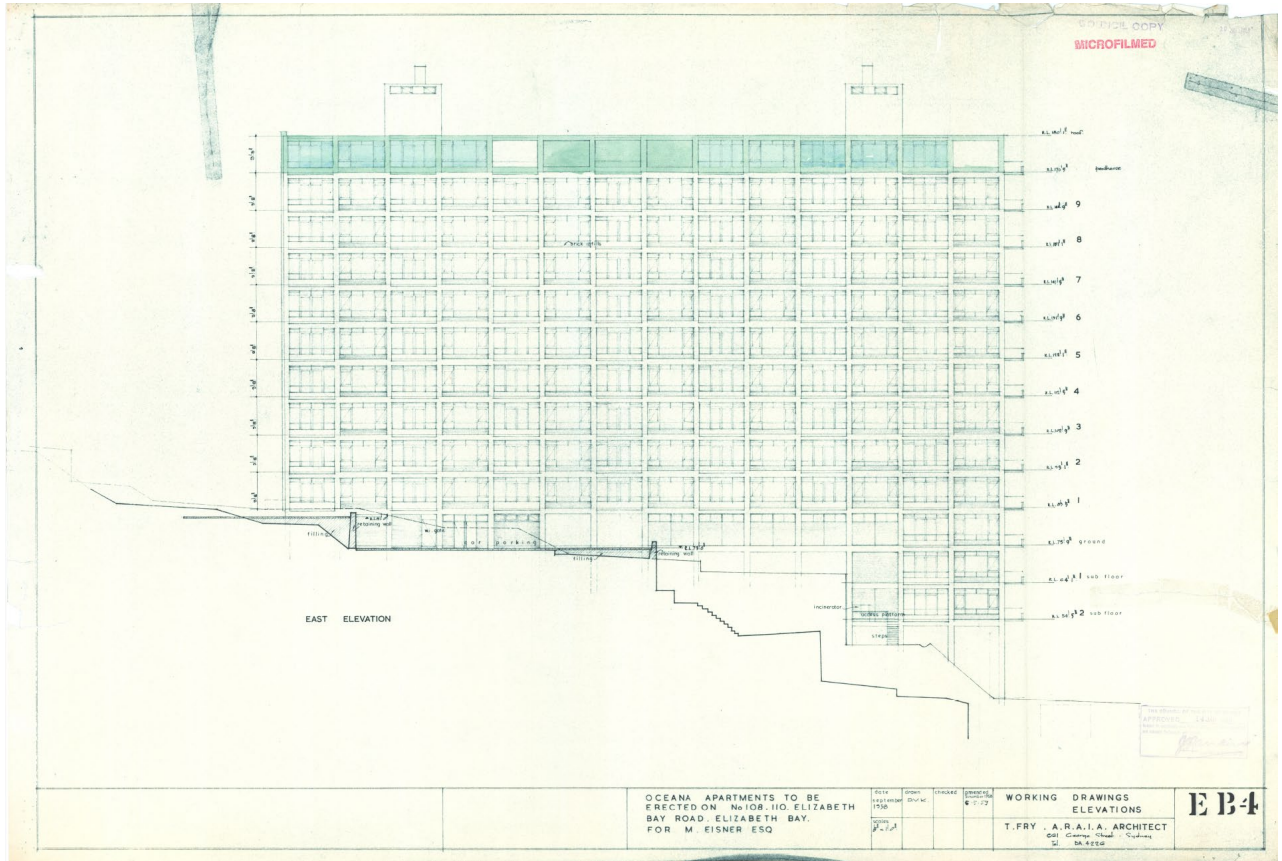


Image caption	Working drawings of the Oceana Apartments—amended plan of the first, second and third floors, May 1960.				
Image year	1960	Image by	Theodore Fry	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney

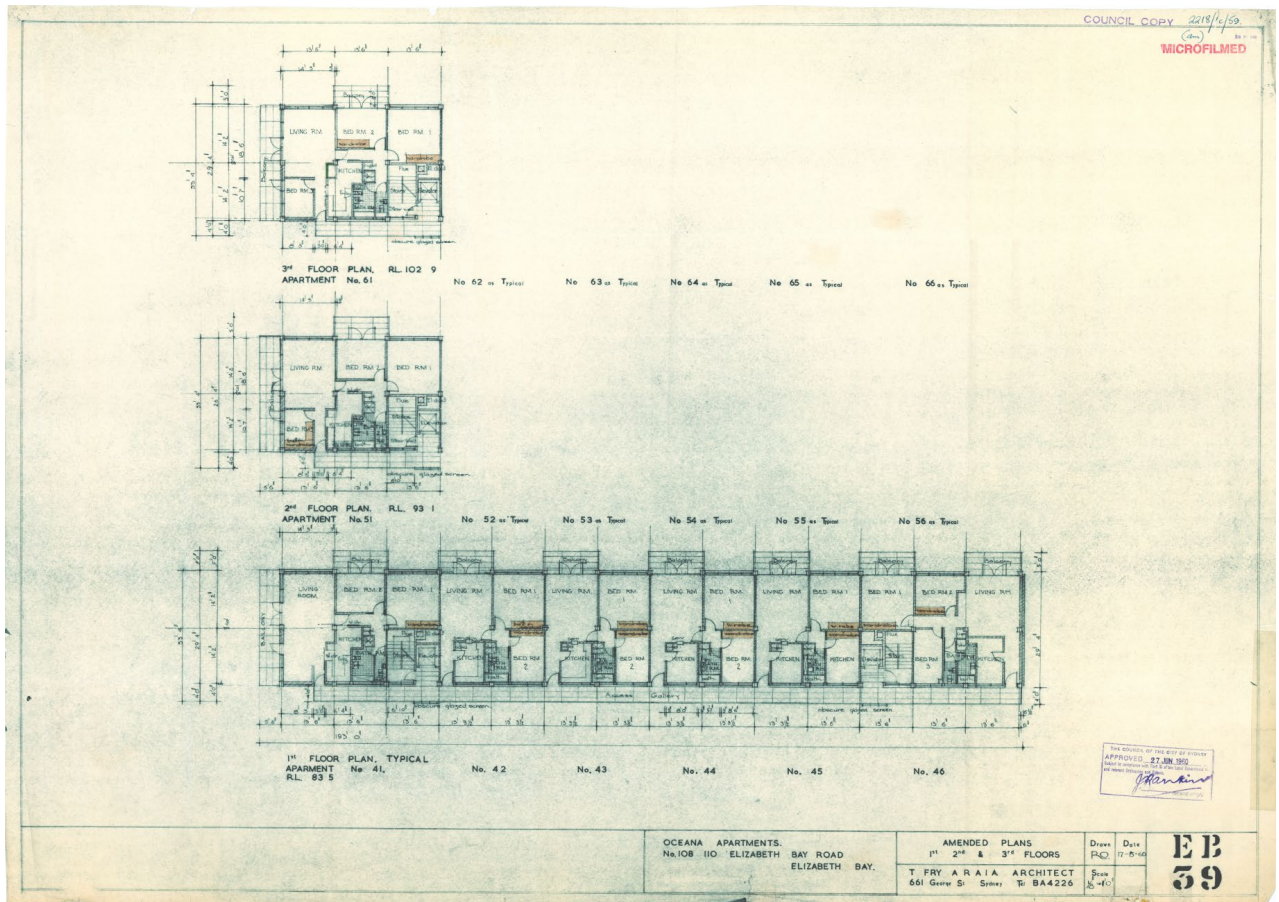


Image caption	Oceana from the east and Sydney Harbour.				
Image year	1972	Image by	Unknown	Image copyright holder	Museums of History NSW



Image caption	Oceana from Beare Park.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Oceana from Beare Park.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	View looking west from the carparking area. All balustrades have been replaced with glazing and stainless steel rails.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Typical balcony arrangements, with a variety of tile surfaces. Pool and garage spaces are visible at the ground level below.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	The building's distinctive concrete blockwork and timber-framed glazing on the gallery elevations.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Internal view of original timber-framed windows and doors to balcony.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Internal view of typical kitchen layout and windows to gallery.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML

