

Attachment A4

**Draft Inventory Sheet – 5 Onslow Avenue,
Elizabeth Bay - St Ursula**

Name			
St Ursula			
Address	5 Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay	Lot number	Lot 9 Sec 0 DP 15713
Architect	Hugo Stossel	Construction date	1951–1953
Builder	RH Andrews and Co		
Listings	<p>Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012: located within the Elizabeth and Rushcutters Bays Heritage Conservation Area (C20). Noted as 'detracting' within the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 building contribution map.</p> <p>Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture.</p>		

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 featuring interesting plants, specimen trees, an orchard and an 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.

5 Onslow Avenue is located on Lot 9 of the Elizabeth Bay House Estate, which comprised 'the residence and 15 allotments of Sydney's greatest residential subdivision' as advertised for auction sale on 17 September 1927. Elizabeth Bay Estates Pty Ltd conveyed Lot 9 in December 1935 to George Ely and Maria Jane Ely (as tenants in common). The allotment eventually changed hands to Dr Suzanne (elsewhere spelt Susane) Sedgwick in December 1950.

Urban Multi Home Units lodged an interim development application in January 1950 for a residential building containing nine flats and garages on Lot 9, on the corner of Onslow Place and Onslow Avenue Elizabeth Bay, as the applicant intended to purchase the land from RCB Ely and Hazel Tait. The following month Council granted permission to use the land for the erection of a flat building.

In December the same year, Hugo Stossel lodged a new interim development application for a six-storey block of flats. In January 1951 Stossel submitted a building application for a six-storey block of 13 flats for Dr S Sedgwick estimated to cost £33,000. The application was promptly approved the following month. Amended plans submitted in March were approved in April and work had commenced on the site by June.

As early September 1951 LJ Hooker advertised home units in 5 Onslow Avenue 'for sale on individual ownership basis' in 'a modern block of twelve home units each commanding a magnificent Harbour view and having every modern convenience'. St Ursula was completed and signed off by Council in January 1953.

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

Historical overview

The property was conveyed to St Ursula Pty Ltd in mid-1957. An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted the flats were being built on a co-operative basis and would be sold individually once completed.²

St Ursula was one of the earliest postwar apartment projects completed at a time when restrictions on materials remained an issue for development. *Building and Engineering* magazine noted 'Between the difficulties of the site, and irksome building restrictions, the way of an architect in regard to construction projects of any kind is hard today, and this applies with greatest force to blocks of flats, of which there are many in the planning and design stages, waiting for the day when building difficulties will cease'.³

Hugo Stossel & Associates

Hugo Stossel (1905–2002) was born in Hungary, moving when young with his family to the Hungarian capital, Budapest. From 1928 to 1932 he studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, graduating with a diploma of Engineering in Architecture. From 1933 to 1938 Stossel worked as an architect in Bucharest, designing theatre interiors, apartment blocks and commercial buildings. Stossel left Europe on the eve of World War II, arriving in Sydney in 1939.

During the war Stossel continued to design, completing a number of buildings in Sydney during the 1940s. Once he was naturalised as an Australian citizen in 1948, he registered as an architect, aged 43.

His early projects included a house in Warrawee for Polish steel manufacturer and developer Moses Eisner (1947) and a house for renowned Viennese furniture-maker Paul Kafka in Lindfield (1948) both of which were published in *Australian House and Garden*. Stossel's focus later moved to apartment design, beginning with the innovative, steel-framed St Ursula building in Elizabeth Bay, an 'ultra-modern' home-unit block with a curved wall of floor to ceiling steel-framed windows.

He later undertook significant commissions for the new development company Civil & Civic, including Broadwaters (1958) in Darling Point. These were followed by numerous other apartment and commercial developments completed over the next decade, with seven in the Elizabeth Bay area alone. The 20-storey Eastbourne Tower (1968), Darling Point, cemented the position of his firm as one of the major contributors to Sydney's burgeoning apartment scene.

In 1953 Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, commissioned Stossel to design a speculative opera house on a site at Wynyard. The design was published on the front page of *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 31 March 1954. When the NSW Government endorsed a future opera house and designated Bennelong Point as its location, Stossel was one of many local and international architects to make a submission to the 1957 architectural competition.

Stossel formed Hugo Stossel & Associates and was joined by fellow Hungarian George Buda, who became a partner in 1960. The firm designed numerous high-rise buildings for the inner city of Sydney including the 22-storey Wynyard Travelodge (1969), the Sydney Police Headquarters, College Street and the BMA Tower in Chatswood (1970–1972), which featured an external lift shaft. By 1970 Stossel retained only a remote involvement in the firm, which continued under Buda's and the other partner's leadership. In his later years Stossel lived in Vienna, as well as Italy and England. He died at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, in February 2002, aged 96.

² 'Elizabeth Bay Block of Flats', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March 1954, p 11.

³ "'St Ursula", Elizabeth Bay, home unit project under way', *Building and Engineering*, May 24, 1951, p 91.

Description

An external-only inspection from the public domain was undertaken by GML in September 2024. This physical assessment is based on available documentation of the site.

Physical description

St Ursula is located on the corner of Onslow Avenue and Onslow Place, directly opposite the historic Elizabeth Bay House (to the south) on a triangular site with expansive harbour views to the southeast.

The seven/eight-storey building is located close to the street front with a curved front and circulation spaces and services located to the rear. Built on a sandstone foundation, the building is raised above street height with a flight of steps to the central entrance foyer.

The building consists of reinforced concrete on a steel-frame structure with curtain walls of cavity brickwork. Steel-frame windows are used throughout with the glazing to the full height on the southeast elevation. The main window panels have a distinctive arrangement of three fixed lights to the lower section and a main fixed panel with an operable casement window to the side.

The central portion of the building projects forward; it is finished with cement render and painted white. The side sections of the building and the basement level are face brick. The street-level retaining wall is finished in rusticated sandstone blocks. There are two garage doors to the western end of the street front elevation.

The entrance is reached via a set of stairs with a metal balustrade. This element and the flanking wall-mounted side lights appear from the plans to be original. The porch is angled in response to the building's narrowing plan and contains a pair of timber-frame glass doors with a fan light above. This recessed porch space is delineated by thin rectangular bricks laid horizontally in stack bond. Inside the doors is a small lobby before stairs that lead to the main lift and stair lobby. The original notice board remains in this small entry space.

Each floor was planned with two two-bedroom apartments off a central stair and lift core, resulting in 13 two-bedroom units and one penthouse. Garages, laundry and storage rooms are provided at ground and basement levels. The flat concrete roof has no parapet and is cantilevered over the penthouse, forming a projecting cornice.

Within each apartment, the living rooms and main bedrooms are located on the main elevation with full-height glazing. Bathrooms, with a separate toilet, are located on the side elevations. A second bedroom and kitchen are to the side and rear. The plans provide a high level of amenity to each apartment on the compact site. The penthouse is also two bedrooms but occupies the front section of the building with a terrace to the northeast. The lift motor room projects above the penthouse.

Modifications/integrity

Previous applications show works to garages and other repairs.

A 2023 application was submitted for comprehensive works described as 'Repair, replace or reinstate original windows, doors or security screens including retrofitting of existing windows'.

Condition

The building appears largely intact. An internal inspection has not been undertaken as part of this assessment.

Comparative analysis

This section compares the subject building with other works designed by Hugo Stossel, and apartment buildings in the Elizabeth Bay area of the same period, in order to determine whether the subject site has rarity and/or representative value.

Although having designed a number of apartments in Europe before World War II, the first apartment building Stossel designed in Sydney was the 1951-1953 St Ursula in Elizabeth Bay. Utilising a reinforced concrete and steel frame, the curved building is thoughtfully planned in response to its corner site and northeastern aspect. It can be seen as an early and innovative

Comparative analysis

postwar apartment design and is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture.⁴

Stossel's other most distinctive apartment projects came some years later in Darling Point, specifically Yarranabbe Gardens (1958) and Broadwaters (1958–1959). These projects demonstrate Stossel's continued engagement with building technologies to enable increased height and innovative approaches to difficult sites. They also utilise steel structures with reinforced concrete floor slabs and curtain walling, but at a larger scale and with more sophistication as was typical of the late period.

Completed in 1953, St Ursula is an early example of a post-World War II apartment block in the Elizabeth Bay area. Its design and detailing show some elements of interwar style (its face brick finish and steel-framed windows) combined with Stossel's European influenced architecture (rendered cement with painted white finish and the novel arrangement of large, glazed façade elements). As an early and well-planned and detailed postwar apartment building, St Ursula is rare.

St Ursula can also be compared with the LEP-listed Wylde Street Apartments in Potts Point, by architect Aaron Bolot (completed 1951). Highly regarded as one of Sydney's exemplary postwar architectural designs, it has a similar curved plan to maximise access to views from its triangular lot. Its façade is characterised by steel-frame ribbon windows and strong horizontal bands of spandrels punctuated by regular vertical projections and recessed balconies. Although at a larger scale and a more complete and refined design than St Ursula, the buildings together demonstrate a wider application of modernism in apartment design that was to be further developed in the postwar years.

St Ursula is rare as a low-scale curved apartment complex using large areas of façade glazing, and is representative of the wider application of modernist design in Sydney's inner city apartments after World War II.

Assessment of significance

Criterion A (Historic significance)

St Ursula has historic significance as a building designed by a Europe-trained architect in the years immediately following World War II, a time when a significant group of émigré architects were applying their European modernist training to Sydney conditions. This group made a significant contribution to the built environment. As one of the first apartment buildings designed by an architect trained in Europe, St Ursula is considered to be historically important.

It is also has historical significance as one of the earliest examples of a modern residential flat building to be built in the area after World War II, a time when building materials were scarce.

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

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

Criterion B (Historical association)

St Ursula has historical association with architect Hugo Stossel.

It is a good and representative example of the work of Hugo Stossel, a significant modernist architect active in Sydney in the years following World War II who made a notable contribution to the development of Sydney's cultural environment, in particular residential flat buildings in the eastern suburbs. It is particularly

⁴ *Building and Engineering*, 24 May 1951 p 91.

Assessment of significance

notable as his first apartment building completed in Sydney following World War II and his emigration from Europe.

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

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

Criterion C (Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement)

St Ursula is a well-designed and considered modernist residential apartment building demonstrating a high degree of creative and technical achievement.

Its form and composition demonstrate technical achievement and distinctive aesthetic attributes through its curved plan, which is oriented to views to the harbour and maximises light and ventilation to each unit. It demonstrates the evolution of apartment design in the years following World War II and the use of new construction methodologies and materials such as curtain walling.

The building is substantially intact with its original modernist design qualities able to be appreciated.

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

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

Criterion D (Social, cultural and spiritual significance)

St Ursula is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture, indicating that it has importance to architects and the design community more generally.

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

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

Criterion E (Research potential)

Hugo Stossel is one of a group of architects who, having trained and worked in Europe, emigrated to Australia in the 1930s. The early work of this group is considered significant for its ability to demonstrate the application of European modernist architectural training in the context of Australia. As one of Hugo Stossel's first projects completed following World War II and his first apartment design, St Ursula is considered to be significant for its ability to contribute to an understanding of the development of postwar modernism and, in particular, its application by architects trained in Europe.

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

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

Criterion F (Rare)

Hugo Stossel (later as Hugo Stossel & Associates) was a prolific apartment designer in the postwar period, particularly in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area, and St Ursula dating from 1953 is considered an early and rare example of his work. It demonstrates unusual characteristics of interwar architectural styles and Stossel's European architectural training and experience. It is considered a highly resolved example of his work that contributes to an understanding of the development of postwar architecture.

Assessment of significance

St Ursula's form and detailing are considered rare in the context of postwar apartments in the Elizabeth Bay area as few curved-plan residential flat buildings were constructed in this period.

St Ursula **has** cultural significance at a local or state level under this criterion.

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

Criterion G (Representative)

St Ursula is a good intact and representative example of the work of Hugo Stossel, a significant architect of this period.

St Ursula can be seen as a significant representative example of Hugo Stossel's architectural practice and is particularly significant as work completed early in his career in Australia.

St Ursula **has** cultural significance at a local or state level under this criterion.

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

Statement of significance

St Ursula has historic significance as a building designed by a Europe-trained architect in the years immediately following World War II, a time when a significant group of émigré architects were applying their European modernist training to Sydney conditions. This group has made a significant contribution to the built environment and, as one of the first apartment buildings designed by a Europe-trained architect, St Ursula is considered to be historically important.

St Ursula also has significance for its associations with its architect Hugo Stossel, a Vienna-trained modernist architect active in Sydney in the years following World War II who has made a notable contribution to the development of Sydney's cultural environment, in particular residential flat buildings in the eastern suburbs.

St Ursula has aesthetic significance as a well-designed and considered modernist residential apartment building demonstrating a high degree of creative and technical achievement. It has distinctive aesthetic attributes in its form and composition. It demonstrates the evolution of apartment design in the years following World War II and the use of new construction methodologies and materials such as curtain walling. Listed on the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture, St Ursula is likely to have social significance to architects the design community more generally.

As an early work of an émigré Europe-trained architect, St Ursula has research potential for its ability to contribute to an understanding of the development of postwar modernism and, in particular, its application by Europe-trained architects and their influence.

St Ursula is rare as an early example of the work of Hugo Stossel and as a curved-plan form residential apartment building in 1950s Elizabeth Bay, when few curved-plan residential flat buildings were constructed. St Ursula also has significance as a good, intact and representative example of the work of the architect Hugo Stossel.

Recommendations

St Ursula meets the threshold for local listing for its historic, historical association, aesthetic, social, research potential, 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 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.

Information sources

Type	Author	Title	Year	Repository
Site inspection (external)	GML		2024	GML
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Year 1950 No 80 Lot 9, cnr Onslow Place & Onslow Ave, Elizabeth Bay, Sydney	1950-1953	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Year 1950 No 1078 Lot 9 Onslow Ave, Elizabeth Bay, Sydney	1950-1953	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	No 66 Year 1951	1951-1952	City of Sydney Archives
Publication	<i>Building and Engineering</i>		24 May 1951, p 91	Trove, National Library of Australia
Publication	<i>Construction</i>		23 May 1951, p 3	Trove, National Library of Australia
Publication	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>		21 Sept 1951, p 14	Trove, National Library of Australia
Publication	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>		23 March 1954, p11	Trove, National Library of Australia

Image caption	Plan of Elizabeth Bay House Estate City of Sydney, the subject site is Lot 9.				
Image year	1927	Image by	Cowdery & Cowdery	Image copyright holder	No copyright

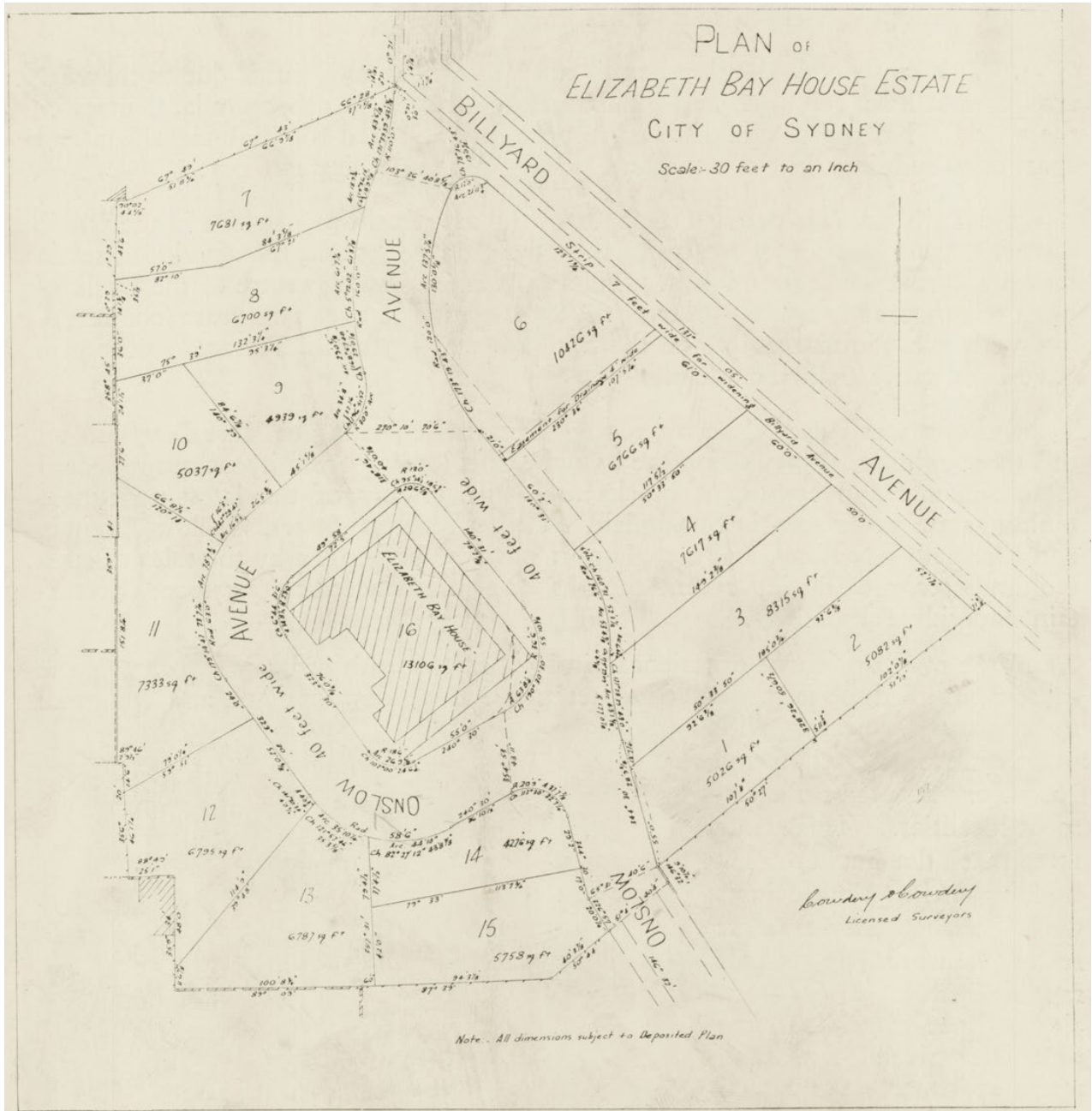


Image caption	'St Ursula' Elizabeth Bay, Building and Engineering, 24 May 1951, p 91.				
Image year	1951	Image by	NLA	Image copyright holder	No copyright

"St. Ursula" Elizabeth Bay

HOME UNIT PROJECT UNDER WAY.

Work has started on a large block of home units in Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, and these flats will represent the latest practice both in planning and construction.

The building will be of reinforced concrete on a steel-framed structure, with curtain walls of 1½ in. cavity brickwork.

All-steel window frames will be used throughout, and the windows in the living-rooms on the east-north aspect will be all glass from ceiling to floor.

The building will stand on a solid rock foundation, and will be elevated above Onslow Avenue, which in turn commands a splendid vista of harbor and the north shore. It will join

company with a number of other fine blocks in the neighbourhood.

The owners are to be congratulated upon their choice of location and design, and the architect, Mr. H. Stossel, A.R.A.I.A., has shown great appreciation of the opportunities offering in planning these home units.

The flats have been skilfully fitted into place. Each room has a good shape and there is a commendable absence of awkward corners and unusable spaces.

Between the difficulties of site, and irksome building restrictions, the way of an architect in regard to construction projects of any kind is hard today, and this applies with greatest force to blocks of flats, of which there are many in the planning and designing stages, waiting for the day when building difficulties will cease.

The construction work on these home units is being carried out by the North Sydney building firm of R. H. Andrews and Co.




"ST. URSULA" HOME UNIT PROJECT.

Showing how skilfully the flats have been fitted into place. All rooms are outside rooms with ample light and air from either of two street frontages. Left: Floors one to six. Right: Ground Floor.

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"ST. URSULA," ELIZABETH BAY.

This ultra-modern home-unit block was designed by Mr. H. Stossel, A.R.A.I.A., and is now in the course of erection in Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay.

Its architecture is graceful and its appearance pleasing, both inside and out.

Image caption	St Ursula flats in Onslow Ave, Elizabeth Bay, in <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 23 March 1954, p11.				
Image year	1954	Image by	NLA	Image copyright holder	No copyright

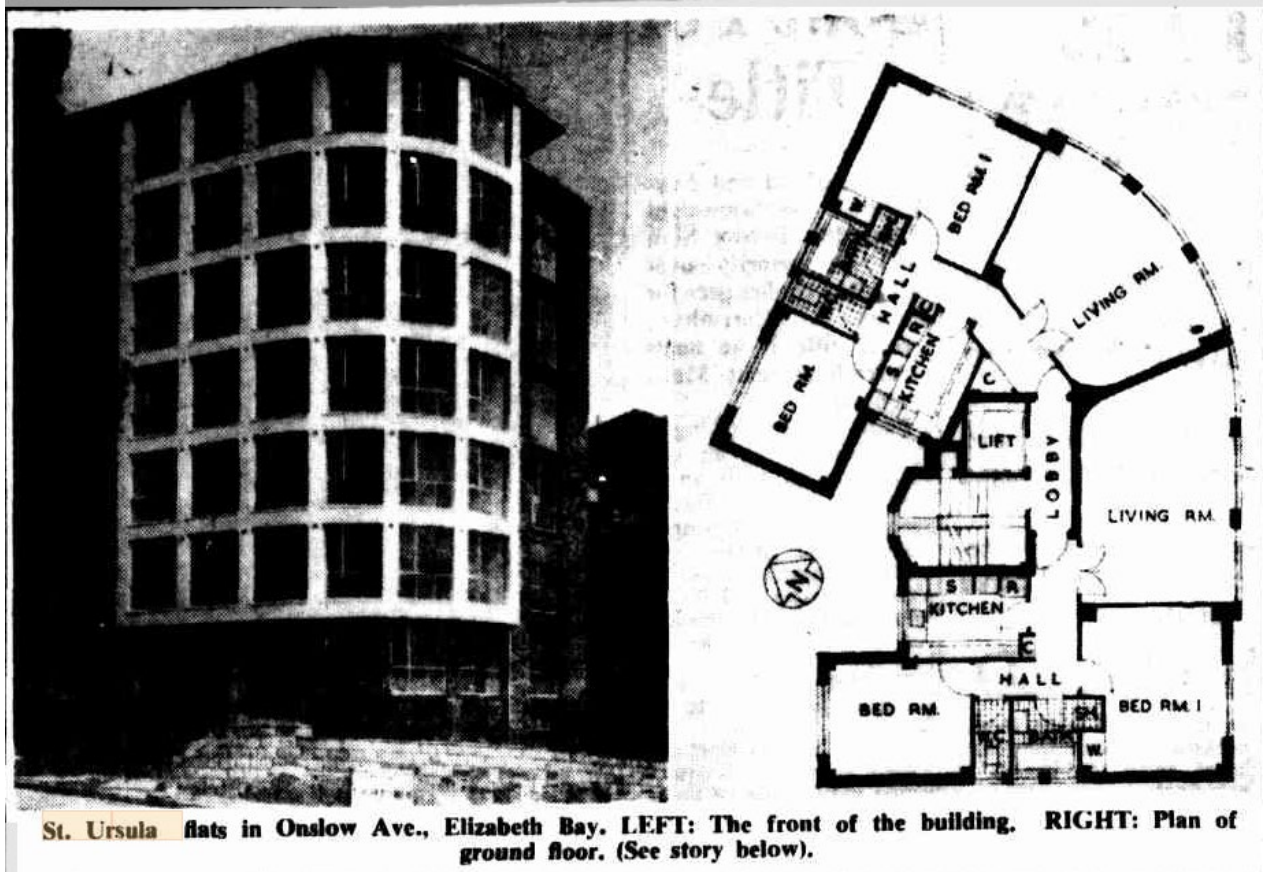


Image caption	Proposed block of six-storey flats at Lot 9 Onslow Ave Elizabeth Bay for Dr Susane Sedgwick.				
Image year	1951	Image by	H Stossel	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney Archives

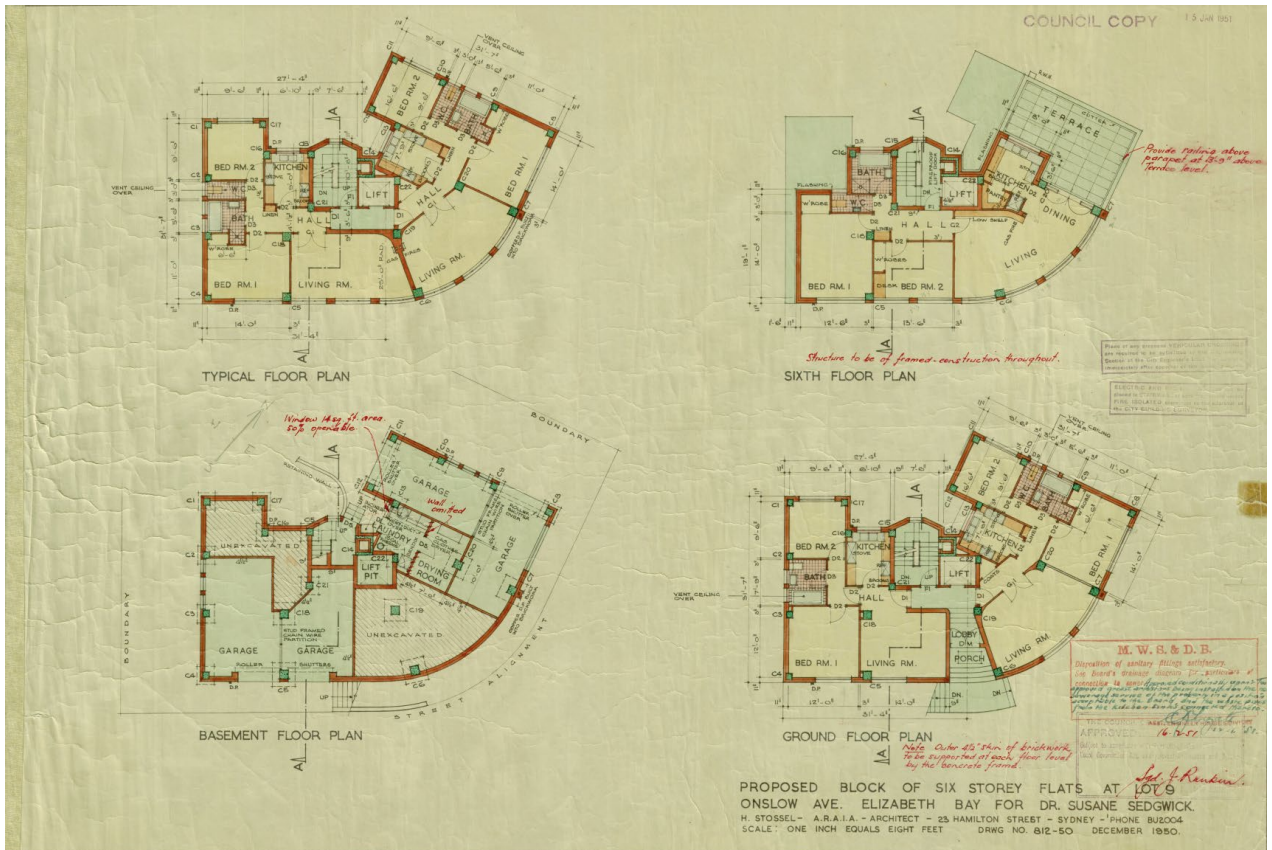


Image caption	Proposed block of six-storey flats at Lot 9 Onslow Ave Elizabeth Bay for Dr Susane Sedgwick.				
Image year	1951	Image by	H Stossel	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney Archives

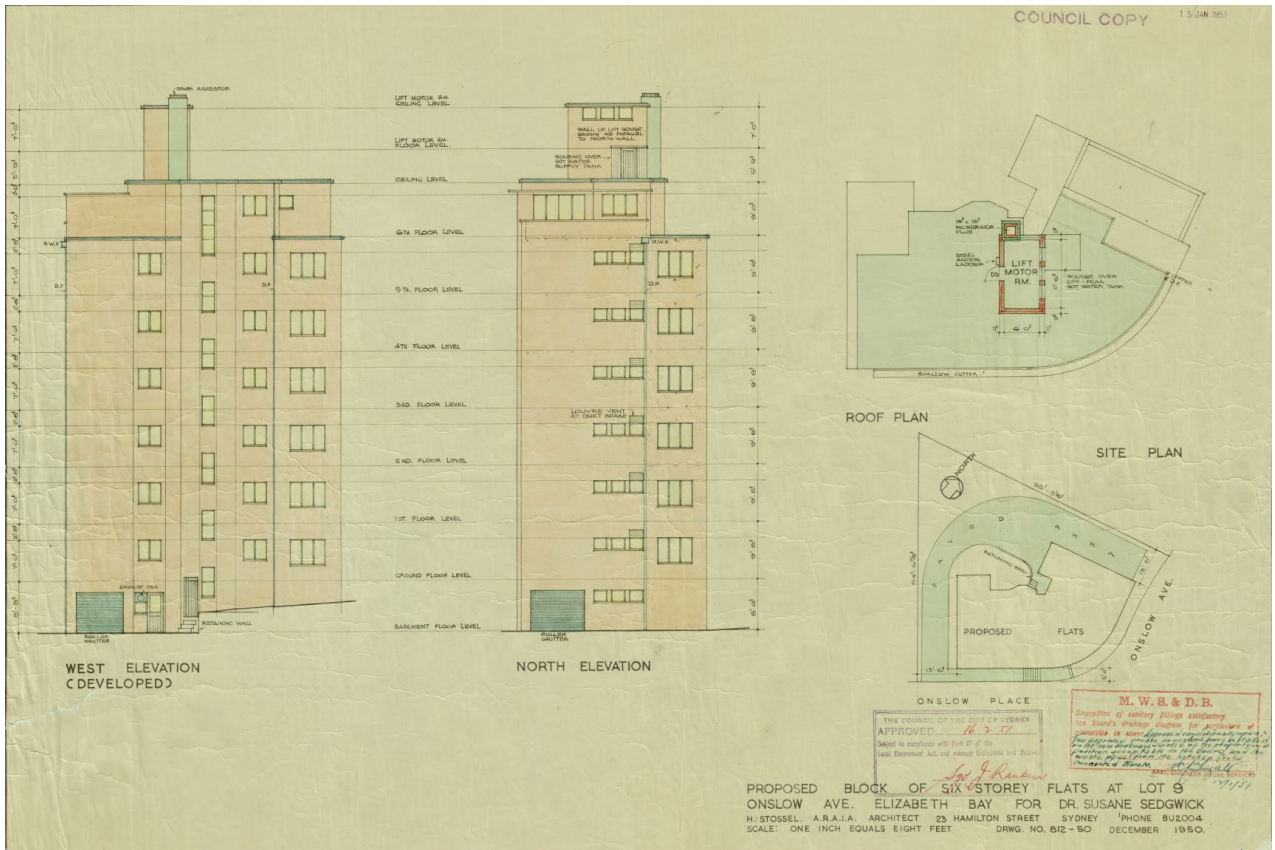


Image caption	St Ursula from Onslow Place.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	City of Sydney



Image caption	St Ursula showing narrow bricks to entrance way and original external wall lights.				
Image year	2018	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	St Ursula showing curved entrance and timber-framed double glazed entry doors to foyer.				
Image year	2018	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Internal view showing floor to ceiling steel-frame window units.				
Image year	2018	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Detail of early elements remaining in an apartment bathroom.				
Image year	2018	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML

