



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 7, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-014

HEARING DATE: June 22, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #1 – Jerome and Joyce Shaw/Lloyd Ruocco House**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Amukelani Family Trust; represented by Landmark Historic Preservation

LOCATION: 7245 Rue de Roark, 92037, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN: 352-331-12-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Jerome and Joyce Shaw /Lloyd Ruocco House located at 7245 Rue de Roark as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Jerome and Joyce Shaw /Lloyd Ruocco House located at 7245 Rue de Roark as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1966 under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Organic Geometric Style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1966 period of significance. Specifically, the resource has a curved flat roof with cantilevered overhangs, asymmetrical façade, U-shaped form, interior courtyard with oculus, rough stucco cladding, fenestration consists of floor to ceiling glass, aluminum windows of various operation and a decorative round window.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect, Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a good example of Ruocco's work in the Organic Geometric architectural style. Additionally, the building also exemplifies Ruocco's typical design aesthetic through the lack of ornamentation, use of natural materials, indoor-outdoor living, unobstructed views, and siting adapted for the ocean views of San Diego.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The resource is a one-story, single-family residence located on the northeast corner of Rue De Roark and Rue Denise within the La Jolla Community.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Jerome and Joyce Shaw/Lloyd Ruocco House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Jerome and Joyce Shaw, who constructed the house as their personal residence, and the name of Lloyd Ruocco, Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by Landmark Preservation Planning, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D; and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.

The subject resource is a one-story, single-family residence constructed in 1966 in the Organic Geometric architectural style. The house features a curved flat roof with cantilevered overhangs, asymmetrical façade, and U-shaped form. The house is sited on a hill which provides both privacy and views of the ocean from the floor to ceiling windows on the North and West elevations. The materials of glass and rough stucco cladding blend with the site. A concrete path leads to the deeply covered entry which includes doors to both the house and courtyard. Fenestration consists of floor to ceiling fixed windows that wrap the curving north and west elevations, with large sliding glass doors to the courtyard creating a continuous view of the bay throughout. A circular stained-glass window on the west side matches the stained glass in the entry door and sidelight. There are aluminum windows of various sizes and operations throughout the house.

The courtyard is enclosed by full height walls and has an overhanging section of roof with a large oculus cutout, featuring a suspended globe light. There is a large Koelreuteria bipinnata, a.k.a. Chinese Flame tree, in the center of the courtyard. The olive trees lining the front path are still present but much of the ground cover and other plantings have been altered in the courtyard and surrounding hillside. The attached two-car garage is set at the street level on the east side, and accessible from Rue de Roark.

There have been minimal modifications to the structure since its 1966 date of construction. Permits were issued in 1970 for an 18'X45" rear sun deck; and in 2015 for a photovoltaic system on the roof. Sections of the courtyard landscape have been replanted over the years. These modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

The resource is a good example of the Organic Geometric architectural style and demonstrates two of the three primary features identified in the [San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement](#); *polygon* design motifs and the use of natural materials; and three of the four secondary features, including an asymmetrical facade, complex roof form, and site-specific design.

The HRRR identifies the resource as a good example of the Freeform Organic architectural style; however, staff disagrees. According to the San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement both the Organic Freeform and Organic Geometric styles exhibit natural materials, asymmetrical facades, and site-specific design, but Organic Freeform architecture is differentiated by the incorporation of nature within the design aesthetic. Organic Freeform architecture seeks to mimic nature with biomorphic (organic) shapes, curvilinear forms, and handmade elements. The subject resource does not have the character defining features of the Organic Freeform style architecture such as; organic shapes and handmade elements; therefore, staff is recommending designation as an example of the Organic Geometric architectural style.

Organic Geometric architecture is a philosophy of design which promotes a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. Organic Geometric designers used natural building materials such as wood and stone. Like their Post and Beam Modern contemporaries, Organic Geometric architects also used glass to minimize the separation between the interior and the exterior and encourage indoor/outdoor living. Buildings were carefully sited to take advantage of views and other site features. Designs emphasize rectilinear geometry, asymmetrical facades, unusual rooflines, and angular shapes. Primary character-defining features of the Organic Geometric style are: exposed structure and materials; polygon design motifs including squares and diamonds; and natural materials. Secondary features are: sharp angular massing, asymmetrical facades, complex roof forms, and site-specific design.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Organic Geometric style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a curved flat roof with cantilevered overhangs, asymmetrical façade, U-shaped form, interior courtyard with oculus, rough stucco cladding, fenestration consists of floor to ceiling glass, aluminum windows of various operation and a decorative round window. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Lloyd Pietrantonio Ruocco was born in Maine in 1907 and moved to Canada as a baby. In 1923, he and his family moved to Southern California, first to LA, then to Long Beach, and finally to San Diego. While attending San Diego High School, Ruocco took an architectural drawing class and entered a contest run by Richard Requa for an original home design. Ruocco's design was so unusual that he was awarded a special third prize and a chance to meet Requa. After attending San Diego State College for one term, Ruocco was hired by the office of Requa and Jackson. He then decided to study architecture at UC Berkeley. While at Berkeley, Ruocco was exposed to the Beaux Arts tradition but favored the designs of Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Wright.

After graduating from Berkeley in 1933, Ruocco returned to San Diego. He worked for Requa again on the County Administration Building, as well as a model town exhibit for the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition. During World War II, Ruocco worked as an architectural drafter for the US Public Works Office.

Ruocco built the Lloyd Ruocco Design Center (HRB #434) in 1950 to serve as the offices for his firm and his wife Ilsa's interior design firm and as a place to mentor young architects, including Homer Delawie. Ruocco and Delawie went on to form a partnership in 1958, which lasted until around 1961.

Ruocco has been called the second most significant Modernist architect in San Diego architectural history (after Irving Gill). Ruocco, along with several other San Diego Modernist architects, was instrumental in establishing the Post and Beam style. Characteristics of Ruocco's work include an economy of materials, extensive use of glass to create the visual effect of transparency; simple wood beams; the inclusion of small, private places with lighting, nooks, and window seats; floor-to-ceiling cabinetry of fine wood; walls and ceilings made from redwood; Masonite floors; intricate landscape relationships; sliding panels; and flat roofs with wide eave overhangs.

Ruocco was also an advocate for social change and sound city planning. In 1961, he founded Citizens Coordinate for Century Three (C-3), an organization that advocates for strong city planning. He was also a founding member of the San Diego County Creativity Research Committee and a member of the San Diego City Urban Renewal Commission. In 1974, he was elected to the AIA College of Fellows.

At least seven of Ruocco's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Lloyd Ruocco Design Center (HRB #434), which established him as a Master Architect in 2000, in addition:

- HRB #911– James Don & Rita H. Keller/Lloyd Ruocco House (1433 Puterbaugh Street), 1948
- HRB #1228– Jackson Johnson III/Lloyd Ruocco & Homer Delawie House (8272 El Paseo Grande), 1961
- HRB # 1271– Park Garden Apartments/Lloyd Ruocco and Homer Delawie Building (1740 Upas Street), 1960
- HRB #1297– Robert and Alma Lard/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco House (2218 Vallecitos), 1965
- HRB #1340– Ruth Smith and Louise Neece / Lloyd Ruocco and Homer Delawie Duplex (8015–8017 El Paseo Grande), 1960
- HRB #1340– the Donald and Gladys Clitsome/Lloyd Ruocco House (2228 33rd Street), 1938

The 7245 Rue De Roark property was designed and built for Jerome and Joyce Shaw in 1966, based on Joyce's interest in architecture and environmentalism. This demonstrates Ruocco's work in the Organic Geometric Style. The curving façade, large windows, focus on indoor-outdoor living, and use of natural materials are hallmarks of Ruocco's influential style.

The original landscape plans show that the courtyard and surrounding hillside was designed by Wimmer and Yamada; landscape designer Harriett Wimmer and established Master Landscape Architect Joseph Y. Yamada. While the mature trees on the site remain, much of the ground cover

and other plantings have been removed. Due to these modifications the landscape does not retain integrity. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for Master Landscape Architect Joseph Y. Yamada.

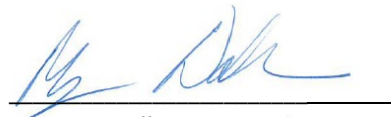
Significance Statement: The subject resource retains good integrity and continues to reflect Master Architect Lloyd Ruocco's original design, intent, and aesthetic. The house is significant as an example of Ruocco's work in the Organic Geometric Style. The building exemplifies Ruocco's design aesthetic through the lack of ornamentation, use of natural materials, indoor-outdoor living, unobstructed views, and siting adapted for the ocean views of San Diego. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

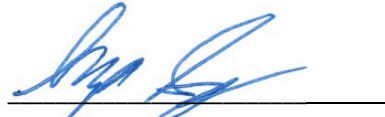
Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that Jerome and Joyce Shaw /Lloyd Ruocco House located at 7245 Rue de Roark be designated with a period of significance of 1966 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of Organic Geometric style of architecture and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Lloyd Ruocco.



Megan Walker
Associate Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

MW/sa/ss

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 6/22/2023

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/22/2023, to consider the historical designation of the **Jerome and Joyce Shaw /Lloyd Ruocco House** (owned by Amukele Family Trust 04-13-10, 7245 Rue de Roark, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **7245 Rue de Roark, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **352-331-12-00**, further described as LOT 75 in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the **Jerome and Joyce Shaw /Lloyd Ruocco House** on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics Organic Geometric Style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1966 period of significance. Specifically, the resource has a curved flat roof with cantilevered overhangs, asymmetrical façade, U-shaped form, interior courtyard with oculus, rough stucco cladding, fenestration consists of floor to ceiling glass, aluminum windows of various operation and a decorative round window. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect, Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a good example of Ruocco's work in the Organic Geometric architectural style. Additionally, the building also exemplifies Ruocco's typical design aesthetic through the lack of ornamentation, use of natural materials, indoor-outdoor living, unobstructed views, and siting adapted for the ocean views of San Diego. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote:

BY: _____
TIM HUTTER, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

RECORDING REQUESTED BY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

7245 Rue de Roark, San Diego, CA 92037

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **352-331-12-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**