

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R097

Name of Place: House at 24 Cobby Street Campbell

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: 24 Cobby Street CAMPBELL 2612

Block 1 Section 45 of Campbell

Listing Status:		Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:		Level of Significance:	
Citation Revision No:		Category:	Residential
Citation Revision Date:	1995	Style:	

Date of Design:	1963-64	Designer:	Roy Grounds
Construction Period:	1965	Client/Owner/Lessee:	
Date of Additions:		Builder:	

Statement of Significance

The residence at 24 Cobby Street Campbell is an example of significant architecture and an educational resource. The house was built at the end of the Post-War Period (1940-1960) and is a good example of the Post-War International Style. The design incorporates features which are peculiar to the style including cubiform overall shape and large sheets of glass. The residence also displays elements of the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style including widely projecting eaves and long unbroken roof line.

The play of the contrasting non-rectangular shape of the curved courtyard wall against the cubiform overall shape of the residence is a very good example of a major theme throughout the Post-War International Style and the work of Grounds. This residence is a sculpturally vital building and can be contrasted with the residences in Vasey Crescent Campbell.

The architecture of this building may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of these two architectural styles.

Description

The two bedroom house was designed by Roy Grounds for Dr and Mrs A J Nicholson from 1963 to 64 and construction was completed in 1965¹. The building is a late example of the combination of two styles:
the Post-War International Style (1940-1960) with its cubiform overall shape and large sheets of glass and;
the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style (1940-1960) with its widely projecting eaves and long unbroken roof line².

The house is an 'L' shaped single level residence with garage and workroom located under the living areas, taking advantage of the sloping site. Viewed from the street it has a terse functional appearance, however when approached it has at its centre a raised courtyard enclosed by a prominent 450mm thick curved brick wall. From the driveway the convex curved wall directs the visitor to a small entry stair that extends under the roof line up between the courtyard wall and the house and beneath an upper level 'bridge' which provides access to the courtyard from the study.

The approach to the entry culminates at a rectangular pool which extends to the right of the entry parallel with the gallery, which is a glazed wide hall between the living and bedroom areas.

The living, dining and study are left of the entry to the south. They are located on the south side to take advantage of the views of central Canberra. The glazing to these rooms is aluminium framed, including sliding doors onto a small cantilevered concrete living room balcony. These rooms have hardwood panelling to walls and ceilings with the perimeter cavity concrete brick walls fair faced internally. The study is separated from the living room by a full height cavity sliding door that is half the width of the room.

The two bedrooms are located at the north end of the house and are approached along the gallery that has hardwood panelling to the inner wall and full height glazing to the south east wall which overlooks the decorative pool and courtyard. The location of the guest bedroom window on axis allows the continuation of the view from the gallery into the landscape. The main bedroom is separated from the guest bedroom with a specially detailed acoustic wall.

The utility areas are located along the west side of the gallery with the bathroom facilities neatly separated from the gallery by a passage with wardrobes that allows for private access from the main bedroom.

The flat metal deck roof has a 450mm high metal fascia that extends out past the wall only where required for protection of the west wall, south balcony and entry stairs.

The house is set to the rear on a medium size block which backs onto the Mount Ainslie Nature Park. It is constructed of cavity concrete bricks, suspended concrete slab, steel and timber roof framing and 'stramit' roofing.

The major architectural elements that are peculiar to the Post War International Style and that are displayed by this building relate to the external forms³. They are:

- cubiform overall shape,
- large sheets of glass.

Other architectural elements of this style displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- overhanging for shade
- plain smooth wall surfaces,
- cantilever,
- contrasting non-rectangular shape.

The major architectural elements that are peculiar to the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style and that are displayed by this building relate to the external forms⁴. They are:

- widely projecting eaves
- long unbroken roof line.

Other architectural elements of this style displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- steel roofing,
- simple attenuated balustrade.

The major architectural elements listed above place this building primarily in the Post-War International Style (1940-1960) and secondarily in the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style (1940-1960).

Condition and Integrity

There are internal elements that are important to the integrity of the building: the open planning with the interiors spreading out into the landscape, the detailing and type of finishes.

The building is unaltered including the original raised curved courtyard and elongated entry pool.

Background/History

The residence is one of a few detached private residences Grounds designed in Canberra. It exhibits elements of his work that combine rational and economic planning with the use of natural materials and is an example of his interest in geometric forms. 'Grounds combined the circle and square in some of his 1950's work'⁵. During this period he was at the forefront of Melbourne modern architecture where 'Functionalism combined with structural and geometric determinism fashioned the architecture of the decade'⁶.

Sir Roy Grounds (1905-81) established his practice in Melbourne in 1932 after travelling in Europe and America. He stopped practising in 1937 but later worked on defence buildings during World War II and in 1954 formed the practice of Grounds, Romberg and Boyd Architects⁷. He was recognised as one of Melbourne's and Australia's leading architects of the modern movement and awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1968 and knighted in the same year.

Grounds designed many residential and public buildings in Melbourne and some in Canberra. The buildings in Canberra with which he was associated are the Australian Academy of Science 1958, ANU Botany Building 1968, Holy Trinity Lutheran National Memorial Church in Turner 1961, Town Houses in Forrest 1960 (in the design of Le Corbusier's Maison Citrohan) and the three houses in Vasey Crescent Campbell, 1961.

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

The house exhibits the particular architectural elements peculiar to the Post-War International Style including cubiform overall shape and large sheets of glass.

It also displays elements peculiar to the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style including widely projecting eaves and long unbroken roof line.

The dramatic play of contrasting non-rectangular shapes against cubiform overall shapes is a major theme throughout the Post-War International Style.

The rational open planning, detail and finishes, and the cantilevered balcony with its simple attenuated balustrade are design features that are of additional interest.

The house is unaltered and is a good example of Grounds' work where he was successful in combining the regional content of Melbourne architecture with the international style.

The residence is well detailed and well built and is valued by the RAIA as a good example of this style of architecture by a prominent Australian architect.

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

Roy Grounds played a significant role in Australia's cultural history. In 1968 he was awarded the RAI A Gold Medal and was knighted for services to architecture. There was insufficient information to ascertain whether this residence had a major association with Grounds' life other than as a normal architectural commission.

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

Through its architectural style this building is a valuable educational resource for designers. Its external architecture is characteristic of the Post-War International Style and the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style. The dramatic play of the contrasting non-rectangular shape of the curved courtyard wall against the cubiform overall shape is a major theme throughout the work of Grounds and the Post-War International Style. This residence is a sculpturally vital building which contrasts with the residences in Vasey Crescent Campbell, by Grounds, but in the Post-War Melbourne Regional Style.

References

- 1 Department of the Environment, Land and Planning (DEL P). Building File for Block 1 Section 45 Campbell.
- 2 Richard Apperly Robert Irving Peter Reynolds. Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present. Angus and Robertson 1989.
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Jennifer Taylor. Australian Architecture Since 1960. RAI A 1990.
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 Peter Cuffley. Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties. The Five Mile Press Pty Ltd 1993.

Other Information Sources