

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R109

Name of Place: House at 11 Bass Gardens Griffith

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: 11 Bass Gardens GRIFFITH 2603

Block 13 Section 6 of

Listing Status:

Date of Listing:

Citation Revision No:

Citation Revision Date:

Other Heritage Listings:

Level of Significance:

Category:

Style:

Date of Design:

Construction Period:

Date of Additions:

Designer:

Client/Owner/Lessee:

Builder:

Statement of Significance

The house at 11 Bass Gardens, Griffith, is a modest and intact example of the Inter-War Functionalist style (c1915-c1940). Key features of the style displayed by the building include its asymmetrical massing and simple geometric shapes. The other feature of the style displayed is the use of corner windows.

The house compares with a few other Canberra examples of the style. The Bass Gardens house is a simple and modest example of the style.

It is valued by the RAIAs as an intact example of the Inter-War Functionalist style.

Description

The house at 11 Bass Gardens, Griffith was designed by Malcolm Moir in 1939 and built by John Tobler.

The house is a relatively late example of the Inter-War Functionalist style (c1915-c1940). Key features of the style displayed by the building include its asymmetrically massing and simple geometric shapes. The other feature of the style displayed is the use of corner windows.

The house is located on a moderate slope and faces Bass Gardens. It is oriented towards the west. It is a double brick construction with Wilson 'Bell' Marseille tiled roof, in red and muntz, set behind a small, two course parapet with a concealed gutter behind. The exterior walls are Canberra cream face brickwork, the interior walls are generally cement rendered and the house has timber casement sash windows. Ceilings are wood fibreboard and fibro cement sheeting. Floors are cypress pine and tiled concrete.

The house is entered from the street through a porch with a high set flower box formed up in brickwork. The porch floor was originally rendered concrete. There is a doorway back into the attached garage. The entry hall features sidelights to the glazed front door and a cloak cupboard. This leads to the living room which has, what was originally, an open fireplace framed with thin (1.5 inch) Canberra wire cut cream face brickettes. The dining room is adjacent, and the kitchen is next to this. The kitchen has a corner window and retains its original cupboards and range.

At the front of the house are the two bedrooms, both with built in cupboards and corner windows. The bathroom with tiled dado and toilet are between the smaller bedroom and kitchen on the south side. The floors in both bathroom and toilet are buff and cream Moravian tiles.

The house retains a number of original light fittings and original door hardware.

The garage is attached to the north side and has timber doors. A small pergola is located in the corner between the garage and front porch. A lowset flower box is formed in brickwork along the front of the house outside the bedrooms. With the corner bedroom windows either side and centrally located downpipe, this is an elevation of moderate architectural interest.

The back door leads from the kitchen to a small flat iron roofed porch and a flight of steps down into the back yard. The steps feature a decorative wrought iron balustrade. A wood store and laundry are located under the east part of the living room above.

The wood store and garage are bagged and painted internally.

Either side of the house is a decorative brickwork and wrought iron fence. The front boundary of the property is marked by a low fence of similar construction. The patterning of the wrought ironwork, including that at the back steps, is quite distinctive and has a 'modern' architectural feel.

Changes made to the house are very minor and include: the enclosure of the front porch by the addition of a window and door, the covering of the flower box and covering of the floor with lino tiles; a new gas heater in the lounge; a new bench and modern stove in the kitchen; carpeting in most rooms; and an open carport beside the garage.

The house is highly intact and in fair condition.

Condition and Integrity

Background/History

The house was designed by Moir of the architectural firm Moir and Sutherland, for Fred Charlesworth. Building approval was granted in 1939 and the contract price for construction was £1,445 and 6 shillings.

Moir practised as an architect in Canberra from about 1933 until XXX. Over his long career he was responsible for many houses and commercial buildings. In the mid to late 1930s the Depression eased and the practice undertook many residential commissions, including 11 Bass Gardens. With the onset of the Second World War, residential work declined dramatically.

Moir's work until the 1950s was,

'overtly modernist and avant garde in style. During this period, when Canberra was but a young city, the general architectural styles were conservative in nature, and in the large part, derivative. Malcolm Moir eschewed the 'politeness' of the Mediterranean, neo-Georgian and Stripped Classical styles, and built houses which were radically different from any being built at the time [in Canberra].' (Peter Freeman 1997:1:17)

Moir's most radically modern house was the Tregear House of about 1939 (now much altered) and he undertook other houses in this period which were similarly styled though less radical in appearance. The Bass Gardens house falls into this latter group.

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

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The house compares with a few other Canberra examples of the style including 43 Melbourne Avenue (1936), 3 Wilmot Crescent (1936), Forrest Fire Station houses (1938), Evans Crescent housing (1938-40) and 3 Spencer Street (1947). All of these were designed by Moir and Sutherland except the Forest Fire Station housing which was designed by E.H. Henderson. The Bass Gardens house is a simpler and more modest example of the style.

It is valued by the RAIA as a modest and intact example of the Inter-War Functionalist style.

(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

(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

References

- 1 National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection MS 5789, Box 27.
- 2 Peter Freeman 1997, Malcolm Moir, His Life and Work, 3 volumes, unpublished report for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (ACT Chapter).

Other Information Sources