

News Update

July 2000

***City of Dreams* the Film Australia documentary on the Griffins to be launched at Melbourne Film Festival in late July 2000**

The hour long film will be launched on Sunday 23 July at 7:15pm at the Treasury Theatre, Collins St, Melbourne and screened at the same venue on Monday 31 July at 7pm. Contact tel 03 9662 3722 for tickets. Cost \$13 adults. It will also be screened on ABC television later in the year.

The documentary weaves together the couple's personal and professional lives to reveal one of the most intriguing artistic collaborations of the 20th century.

Drawing on archival and contemporary footage, an extensive collection of photographs and their own correspondence and writing, the film explores their commitment to architecture, the philosophies that underscored their life and work and their remarkable contribution to Australian culture and social history.

***Walter Burley Griffin in his own right.* US documentary film special viewing Sunday 6 August at University of NSW**

This award winning TV documentary is to have a special viewing organised by the Walter Burley Griffin Society at the University of New South Wales. It is a fascinating 50 minute program that reveals how many of the design innovations previously credited to Frank Lloyd Wright were first conceived by Walter Burley Griffin. Last October the film was given a prestigious Emmy award. It has also received a 1999 Telly Award and an honourable mention from the Central Education Network for the best cultural documentary. The film was produced by WILL-TV in the United States.

Also on display on the same day will be the theses on Griffin and Castlecrag by UNSW students over the past 40 years including ones by Peter Maxwell

Bryant, Janine Formica, Richard Meynert, Warwick Newall, Stephen Turner, Antony Harvey Peter Harrison and Bob Myer, a 1999 thesis on the Griffin reserves by James Smallhorn and one on Eric Nicholls by Joseph Lahoud.

The screening and theses will be on display at 3.00pm in the Red Centre (West Wing) Room M010, Mezzanine Level, Faculty of Built Environment, University of New South Wales. The Red Centre was designed by Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp, architects of New Parliament House in Canberra, and completed in 1998. Enter from Gate 14 Barker Street, Kensington, Sydney.

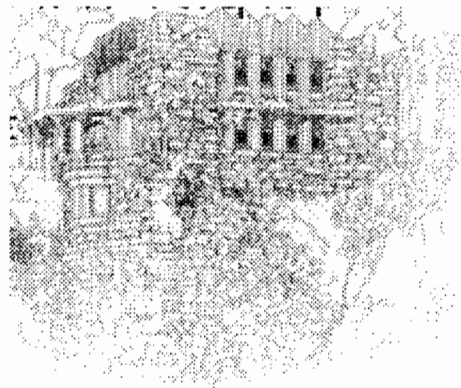


Illustration of the Melson House, Mason City, Iowa published on the website about the film: www.pbs.org/wbgriffin

New exhibition with Griffin objects at the Powerhouse Museum

The exhibition titled *Colonial to Contemporary: a decade of collecting Australian decorative arts and design* showcases beautiful Australian objects and the best of the museum's acquisitions and donations of the last ten years.

Amongst the items on display are many designed by the Griffins including a light and "boudoir" door from the Capitol Theatre, a Café Australia chair, a light from GSDA No.1 Dwelling, Castlecrag and the

coloured perspective on linen of the Cameron House, Killara.

It is an exhibition of fascinating variety that ranges from opulent silverware to a chair made of recycled wooden cotton reels. Curated by Anne Watson, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, the exhibition is on until mid 2001.

Sydney Suburb exhibition

This interesting exhibition of paintings, photographs and objects is on at the Museum of Sydney. It reveals the diversity of suburbia, its places and people, and includes the rendering on silk of the Griffin Castlecrag houses GSDA No.1 and No.2 Dwellings. The exhibition is on until 23 July.

Glebe incinerator threatened

A few years ago, Leichhardt Council commissioned a Conservation Study of Glebe Depot and the former incinerator to be prepared by Meredith Walker and Trevor Waters. It was completed in 1997 and clearly indicates the significance of the incinerator, its sheds, the original interior stipple paint finishes that have survived very well, and the Griffin designed landscaping.

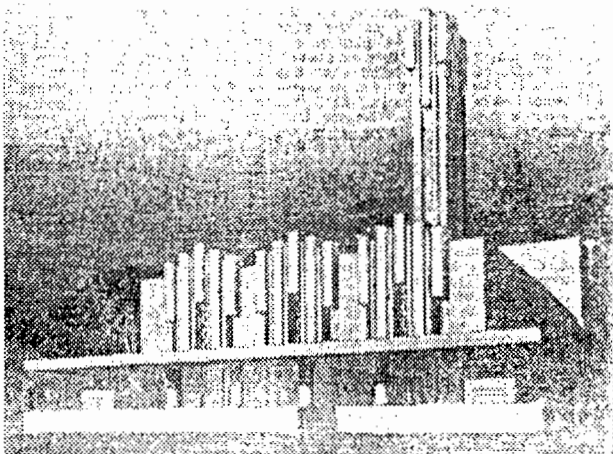


Illustration of Glebe Incinerator published in the Sydney Morning Herald 31 May 1932.

Most recently the site and a neighbouring site known as the John Fletcher Container Site have jointly had a Masterplan prepared and a re-zoning request made for a proposed residential development.

This Society was very pleased that the revised Draft Masterplan prepared by Devine Erby Mazlin adopted the recommendations made in the Conservation Study concerning the restoration of the 1933 incinerator, its sheds and landscaping.

However it was disappointing that at the Council meeting on 20 June the Councillors approved an amendment to locate the "vehicle entrances to the site directly opposite Taylor Street." This decision contradicts all the prior work. If implemented, it would mean that, at best, the road would carve up the precinct and separate the incinerator from its

sheds and prevent the implementation of Griffin's landscape plan.

Fishwick House restoration wins award

At its Heritage Week celebrations last April, Willoughby City Council presented the Willoughby City Heritage Awards. The winning property for the Restoration category was the Fishwick House, a Walter Burley Griffin house at Castlecrag. The Mayor Pat Reilly and the Chair of the Heritage Council of NSW, Mrs Hazel Hawke, presented the award to the owners Mr and Mrs Andrew Kirk.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society nominated the Fishwick House for the awards, and the Society congratulates Andrew and Sue Kirk on their very deserving win.

As was documented in the entry, major restoration was necessary in many areas of the house which was undertaken with minimum intervention wherever possible. The plumbing was repaired in the bathrooms which were then restored true to their original form and materials. Leaking stormwater pipes concealed in the massive sandstone fireplace were repaired using in-situ drain relining or resleeving. "There are almost no detailed records of the original decorative finishes but most were either discovered (e.g. in cupboards) or revealed through paint scrapings. A heritage architect supervised "

Paint finishes restored including the "exquisite original finishes of the eight massive concrete pillars in the entry hall[where] Griffin had used three translucent glaze layers (dark green, light green and brown) and then splattered on thick gold pigment. These had been painted over many times." The best two pillars were painstakingly scraped back with scalpels over hundreds of hours. Following Burra Charter best practice restoration principles, the other six pillars had their paint finishes duplicated but not exactly, so that the original finishes can always be identified from the replicated finishes.

Willoughby City Council Heritage Week 2000 - address by Mrs Hazel Hawke

To celebrate Heritage Week, Willoughby City Council in Sydney organises activities and awards on a biennial basis. In her address at the Awards Ceremony on 8 April, the Chair of the Heritage Council of NSW Mrs Hazel Hawke spoke about the interrelationship between Aboriginal heritage, natural heritage and cultural heritage with particular reference to Willoughby City. She noted that "Willoughby is a place where that interconnectedness is all around us." She went on to say: "You have only to take the foreshore walk around the Harold Reid Reserve to understand the relationship between them. We are fortunate that the combined forces of topography, Middle Harbour and resident action have left us this remnant of how

this place once was.

It's relatively easy to point out the particular qualities of each of these aspects of heritage. The challenge is how to see their connections, to view the environment around us in a holistic way as a canvas on which the various layers of history have made their mark. Heritage is about understanding the whole of the past, not the sanitised or politically correct past that can't upset anybody. It's vital that we think of the whole of the past, and not just the bits of it that we find it easiest to relate to because of our particular cultural or ethnic affiliation.

Heritage is, after all, the connection we as individuals and as a community have with the past and with the lives of the generations who came before us... I believe that to have a sense of continuity and identity, every community needs to retain the important places from the past, and these awards have proved that the people of Willoughby have a fine record in doing just that.

But it's equally true that communities need to grow and develop. Without development and change, communities are in danger of living in the past, just like individual people who have lost the sense of discovering the exciting new possibilities of the future.

The present is, after all, the sum of the past - the whole of the past. The Willoughby of today is the result of the efforts and activities of all who have lived in this place - from the many generations of Gamarai people to the recent immigrants from Asian countries.I say we should rejoice in the diversity of the population in this area and celebrate our differences, just as we are celebrating our common heritage today.

There is surely no greater cause for celebration than a community which has recognised its debt to the past and maintains its heritage for future generations to inherit and enjoy."

Joan Domicelj awarded the Marion Mahony Griffin Award

This annual award, that celebrates Marion's invaluable contribution to the architecture of Australia, was introduced in 1998 by the NSW Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) to acknowledge a woman architect for a distinctive body of architectural work rather than an individual project.

The award was won this year by Joan Domicelj for her "long commitment to the built environment as a democratic site of creativity and social responsibility, carried out in national and international arenas."

Joan is a Heritage Advisor and Cross Cultural Mediator. As stated in the RAIA's *Architecture Bulletin* "While a member of the State of the Environment Advisory Council of NSW and the

Heritage Council of NSW, she redefined the ways in which we think about evaluation, emphasising the links between the cultural, natural and socio-economic environments and change....

Joan has successfully argued for a major rethinking of the role of the built environment by developing new ways of understanding the past. She has been a member of the Australian Heritage Commission, Chair of ICOMOS Australia and Vice-President of ICOMOS Paris and is currently Australia's delegate to ICCROM.

As a teacher of architecture and planning in the 70s, she introduced the ideas of ecological thinking to these disciplines. Joan continues to lecture at universities and conferences world wide on heritage matters. She is appreciated for her intellectual generosity and her ability to help others realise their capacities."

Pratten House tour - very popular

The generosity of the owners of the Eric Pratten House and the owners of the David Pratten House in opening their homes to the coachload of 48 people in May was very much appreciated by this Society and all those who attended, including the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai and Councillor Ian de Vulder.

Thanks are also extended to Professor James Weirick for guiding the tour. As James pointed out the two houses "converse with the architecture of the American Prairie School but are much more monumental and earth pressing than Frank Lloyd Wright's work."



Eric Pratten House's garden was a joint project of Walter Burley Griffin and Eric Pratten. It includes a sweeping driveway, sunken garden with pond and tennis courts with large sandstone retaining walls. The garden also has many mature trees including a Redwood characteristic of many Griffin gardens.

News from America:

• Marion Mahony lights discovered

Two of the ceiling lights designed by Marion Mahony for the Unitarian Church of All Souls, Evanston, Illinois were recently discovered in the storage room of the Wolfsonian Museum, operated by the Florida International University, at Miami Beach.

As reported in the latest issue of *The Griffin Newsletter* published by the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America, the discovery was made by Ian

Lochhead, architectural historian from the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand and Emeritus Professor Paul Sprague from the University of Illinois.

The lights are an inverted pyramid design made of metal and green and amber glass. Twelve of them originally graced the All Saints Church which was designed by Marion Mahony and built in 1902 to 1904. A photograph of the church's interior was published in *The Western Architect*, vol XVII, no.9, September 1912 and is reproduced on page 60 in *Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin: America, Australia, India* published by Powerhouse Publishing.

The church, of which Marion was a member, was demolished in the 1960s and until now only one of the lights was thought to have survived. That light was exhibited in the *Beyond Architecture* exhibition on loan from a private United States collection and photographed on page 125 of the book.

• **Carter House, Evanston, Illinois for sale**

This house designed by Walter Burley Griffin and completed in 1910 is being offered for sale by its owners of the last 35 years Hans and Maxine Friedman who have made it clear that "we would only offer this house to someone who would treasure it as we have." The Friedmans can be reached by e-mail at: hans@mediaone.net

• **Restoration of Ralph Griffin House and Emery House**

The second and latest issue of the American newsletter contains a report on the restoration of the Emery House by its owners Dr and Mrs Tom Zusag who commissioned conservation architect John Eifler. The work is very extensive and is planned in three phases. At the completion of the first phase last month, the house built in 1903 in Elmhurst, Illinois was the venue for the American society's first Annual Meeting on 24 June.

The first issue of the American newsletter contained an article on the faithful restoration of the Ralph

Griffin House by its owners Richard and Mary Berry. The house in Edwardsville, Illinois was designed for Walter's brother and his family and completed in 1909. The Berrys are to be congratulated on their comprehensive and sympathetic restoration that has included structural repair, implementation of the original landscape plan, and over 1600 man-hours on the restoration of the exterior cypress trim, window frames and mullions. Mr Berry reported that one of the greatest challenges was to find materials that matched the originals but that "While the restoration has taken a long time, we are excited to be able to bring back a Prairie home to its original condition."

The Walter Burley Griffin Society of America can be contacted at 1152 Center Drive, St. Louis, MO 63117, USA or by e-mail to Peter Burley Griffin (the President) at: wbgociety@aol.com Membership costs US\$25 per annum.

Italian journal *Rassegna* features the Prairie School and a selection of Marion Mahony's presentation drawings

Rassegna No.74 (1998) contains six essays on the Prairie School with references to the Griffins, photographs and/or drawings of Griffin houses and most significantly 14 of Marion Mahony's coloured presentation drawings reproduced in full colour. The text accompanying the drawings states that they "illustrate not only the intensely creative period of Walter and Marion Griffin before their Australian adventure, but also the outstanding civil merit of the architecture of the Prairie School." The drawings are from the Avery Library of Columbia University, New York and many have never been published before.

Copies of the journal can be ordered from the Museum of Sydney bookshop in Bridge Street, Sydney, Telephone 02 9251 4678. It is a large and beautiful journal and costs \$70.40

News items and articles wanted

News items and articles are welcomed from readers. Please contact the editor on Fax 02 9958 2060 or e-mail: designcircle@dial1.net

MEMBERSHIP FORM



MEMBERSHIP

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: _____

Date: _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheque payable to
Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. and post it to
The Treasurer at 7 Mackenzie Street, Lindfield NSW 2070.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. was established in 1988 and aims to create a greater awareness and appreciation of the Griffins' town planning and architecture and thereby encourage the conservation of their internationally significant work. The Society produces a newsletter and regularly organises meetings with guest speakers. If you would like to join the Society in Australia fill out the form below.

Individual	\$ 15pa
Student	\$ 5pa
Individual overseas	\$ 25pa
Community organisations	\$ 25pa
Business organisations	\$ 50pa