

Rose Seidler, Rose and Marcus Seidler Houses

Address Clissold Road, Wahroonga, NSW, 2076

Practice Harry Seidler

Designed 1948 Completed 1951

History & Description

A cluster of modern two-storey houses designed by Harry Seidler after his arrival in Australia in 1948. Sited in suburban bushland, each utilises glass walls to open the interior to the surrounding landscape and views. The Rose Seidler House, design by Seidler for his parents, was the first of this group and is constructed of four basic materials: natural bush stone, reinforced concrete, timber and glass. The stone foundations provide three walls of the double garage. The bi-nuclear plan clearly separates living areas from sleeping and bathrooms. These are connected by the flexible transitional zones of the playroom and deck.

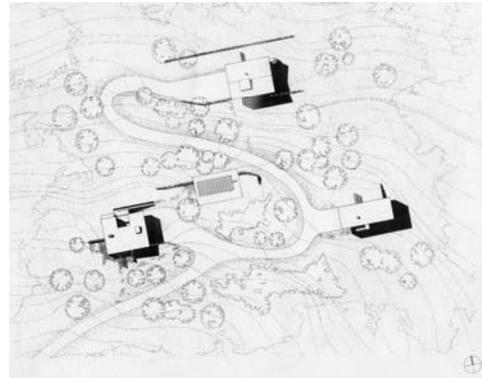
The Rose House was built for guests of the Seidler family. The plan is basic in-line arrangement with kitchen and bathroom back to back and separate living and sleeping quarters. The in-line arrangement faces all rooms to the northern view, with shade provided by a continuous terrace. The minimal structural steel frame stands on four columns and is exposed both inside and out. Contrasting with the rectilinear building form are the diagonal lines of the suspension members, which find their counterpoint in the expressed slope of both exterior stairs. The Marcus Seidler House was built for Seidler's uncle and was intended for a family. The original main floor space comprises an open free arrangement without any circulation space. The main living space is across the north side with steel sliding glass doors giving access to a continuous 2.4m wide terrace. The roof overhang provides cover to this terrace and acts as an automatic sun-protection shield for the glass in summer but allows winter sun to enter. The ground floor blade wall features the second (and last) mural to be painted by Seidler himself. It was directly influenced by forms and shapes of Brazilian architects Portinari and Burle Marx, whom he had met while working with Oscar Neimeyer in 1948.

Statement of Significance

All three houses form a nationally significant precinct of the finest and purest examples of mid-century modern domestic architecture in Australia. The houses are regarded as outstanding works of architecture by the architectural profession. The Rose Seidler House was awarded the Sulman Medal in 1951. All houses are technically significant for their design detailing and choice of construction methods and materials highlighting aspects of post-war housing construction in a period of conservative building regulations, scarcity of materials, skills and industrial processes. (Refer NSW Heritage Branch online database)

Criteria Applicable

- N1.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design
- N2.** Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
- N3.** Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement
- N4.** Having significant monumental and symbolic heritage value to the development of architecture and the history of architecture
- N5.** Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history
- N6.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



Site plan of the three houses (Source: *Harry Seidler: Houses and Interiors 1948-1970*, 2003)



Rose Seidler House, view from the northeast (Source: Historic Houses Trust)



Rose House, north side (Source: *Harry Seidler: Selected and Current Works*, 1997)



Marcus Seidler House, view from the west, with mural wall (Source: *Harry Seidler: Houses and Interiors 1948-1970*, 2003)