

## Simpson-Lee House II

Address 11 Wynnes Lookout Road, Mount Wilson,  
NSW, 2786

Practice Glenn Murcutt  
Glenn Murcutt & Associates

Designed Completed 1994

### History & Description

The clients Geelum and Sheila Simpson-Lee lived in a house designed for them by Arthur Baldwinson at Roland Avenue, Wahroonga, and commissioned Murcutt to design their rural retreat. The house faces views to the east and north-east (at the client's request, instead of Murcutt's habitual due north), its back to the west and south west winds. The house is sited on a natural ledge below a massive rock outcrop, the residence's two pavilions are placed on either side of a pond in a linear sequence along the access path to the house. The path skirts the smaller studio pavilion (containing the garage, laundry and pottery studio), forms a footbridge along the length of the pool, crosses the residential pavilion, finally emerging as steps from the eastern facade. The pool holds part of the water necessary for the built-in sprinkler system in case of fire. (It also provides a reflective medium for the sunlight that bounces onto the ceiling of the interior of the house.)

In the residential pavilion, the living room is symmetrically flanked by two vestibules and two bedroom suites on either side of the kitchen, which is reduced to a long strip of appliances. The north-east façade is a glazed window wall (of aluminium sliding doors, flyscreens and retractable electronically controlled slatted blinds) with a handrail, the circulation path has been incorporated into the living space – the living space becoming the 'verandah' – with the blinds, windows and screens retracted only the handrail breaks the continuity between landscape and building. This sophisticated layered window wall echoes the rhythm of the large trees filtering sunlight and views.

Apart from the timber stairs and footbridge, the house is wholly metal: the structure is an aluminium painted steel structure, exposed aluminium door and window frames, corrugated iron roof coverings and, throughout the interior, light grey polished concrete floors and white painted rendered brickwork and plasterboard.

The house is currently undergoing modifications, designed by Murcutt.

### Statement of Significance

The Simpson-Lee House II is highly regarded as an outstanding work of architecture by the architectural profession; recognised in 1995 by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects through the award of the Wilkinson Award. The house gains its quality as much as from its subtle placement in the landscape as from its masterly and harmonious control of space, structure and form.

The building has technical/research significance for its potential to yield technical information about late 20<sup>th</sup>-century construction techniques. The place has educational value to students and the architectural community for its design and innovative use of materials.

### 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  
**N6.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



View looking towards the entrance of the house, fire retention pool in foreground (Photo: Anthony Browell)



View looking back towards the garage (Photo: Anthony Browell)



View towards dining room (Photo: Anne Higham)