

Jack House

Address 62 Boundary Road, Wahroonga, NSW, 2076
Practice John Allen and Russell Jack
Designed 1956 Completed 1957

History & Description

The Jack House was designed for Russell Jack and his wife, Pamela, who had purchased a sloped and heavily wooded site in Wahroonga – the last to be developed in the street. Not bound as tightly by council restrictions as nearby areas, the Jacks originally envisaged a steel framed house that ran down the western boundary. Due to cost factors they abandoned this idea and opted for a brick and timber framed house that was designed to harmonise as much as possible with the existing site, even to the extent of accommodating a small creek. Perched on a ridge, the front side of the house consists of bagged-brick walls that screen the house from the street. Entry is through an arched opening and over a timber bridge that leads past a delightful water feature and into the entry space of the house which is a junction of two wings – one contains the living areas and the other the bedrooms. Unlike the front side, the northern side of the house is an essay in elevation, openness and transparency. Large planes of glass extend the interior spaces outward, a deck continuing the spatial flow. Post and beam construction is used with timber frames set according to a 10 foot module, an order that is reinforced in the partitioning of the rooms and through the juxtaposition of the dark stained timber frame against the white painted brick front walls. A restrained form of decoration is used in places, including a timber screen outside the main bedroom. Drawing inspiration from the organic theory of Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese design philosophy, the idea behind this house was to make it a comfortable and easy place to live and one that respected the natural landscape. The house showed that this was achievable within a modest budget and without making a significant impact on the site.

Statement of Significance

The Jack House is significant as an early project by Jack Allen and Russell Jack, who later formed the firm Jack, Allen & Cottier. The house is a fine example of architectural thinking and practice in Australia in the mid 1950s in which modern architecture was being conceived with a humanist sensibility and respect for the natural conditions of the site. It demonstrates the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and traditional Japanese architecture, sources that were being explored by architects in Australia at the time. The house is highly regarded as an outstanding work of architecture by the architectural profession, recognised in 1957 through the award of the Sulman Medal.

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
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



View from the south (Source: *Architecture in Australia* (July-September 1958))



View from the north (Source: *Architecture in Australia* (July-September 1958))



Plan, 1958. The northern bedrooms were realised, a deck added and the western verandah enclosed (Source: *Architecture in Australia* (July-September 1958))



Living area (Source: *Architecture in Australia* (July-September 1958))