

## Walter Burley Griffin Housing Precinct

Address Castlecrag, NSW, 2068

Practice Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin

Designed 1921 Completed 1934

**History & Description**

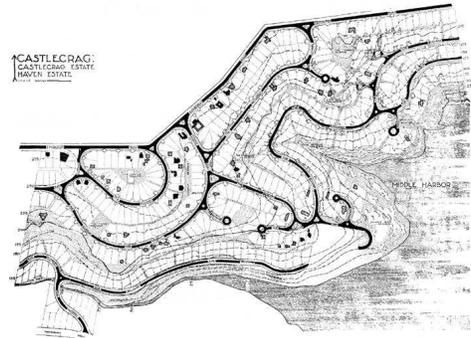
In 1920, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin founded the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) and in 1921 the Association purchased 650 acres of land at Middle Harbour, including the south-west part of Castlecrag for the sum of 25,000 pounds. The aim was to develop the site according to the Griffins' views on community planning and the integration of community, nature and the built environment. Roads were created that follow the contours of the land and a system of public pathways was established to connect roads with reserves, community areas and the waterfront. The GSDA placed a covenant on the sale of sites in Castlecrag estate to ensure a consistency of architecture. Houses could only be built of stone or concrete, in sympathy with natural topographical forms and Australian flora. Roofs were to be low and views of the harbour maximised from all areas. Walter Burley Griffin designed over 40 speculative houses for Castlecrag; 14 residences were completed, of which 13 remain. These are GSDA No 1 Dwelling (1921), GSDA No 2 Dwelling (1921), Johnson House (1922), Grant House (1922), Moon House (1922), Cheong House (1922), Felstead House (1924), Guy House (1925), Mower House (1926), Creswick House (1926), Wilson House (1929), Fishwick House (1929) and Duncan House (1934). The houses were designed with distinctive architectural features and expression, including stone and concrete voussoirs and prismatic frames around window openings. Some of the houses were constructed using Griffin's innovative 'knitlock' concrete block system. (Refer to NSW Heritage Branch Database and Australian Heritage Database).

**Statement of Significance**

The houses designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in the Castlecrag estate form a nationally significant precinct of outstanding inter-war domestic architecture that is nationally and internationally recognised. Through the Griffins' association with Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago, they introduced organic architecture to Australia, though its influence was not taken up until the 1950s. The houses were technically innovative and are of significant research value for understanding the progressive nature of inter-war domestic architecture in Australia. The Castlecrag estate is an outstanding early example of subdivision which respected the landscape character of an area, created community environments and provided shared views. This process was initiated by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin who were known for their appreciation of the opportunities provided by landscape which was embodied in their plan for Canberra. (Refer to Willoughby City Council, Development Control Plan Part H: Statement of Significance). The Castlecrag estate was classified as an Urban Conservation Area by the National Trust of Australia in 1981.

**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



Plan of Castlecrag and Haven Estates. (All rights reserved. Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated Collection, courtesy Deans and Batterham families)



GSDA No.1 Dwelling (©Max Dupain and Associates, 1965. Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated Collection)



Cheong House exterior and surrounding bush reserve, c1920s (All rights reserved Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. Collection, courtesy of Nancy Price (nee Lawrie))



Eastern side of Fishwick House (©Max Dupain and Associates, 1965. Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated Collection)