

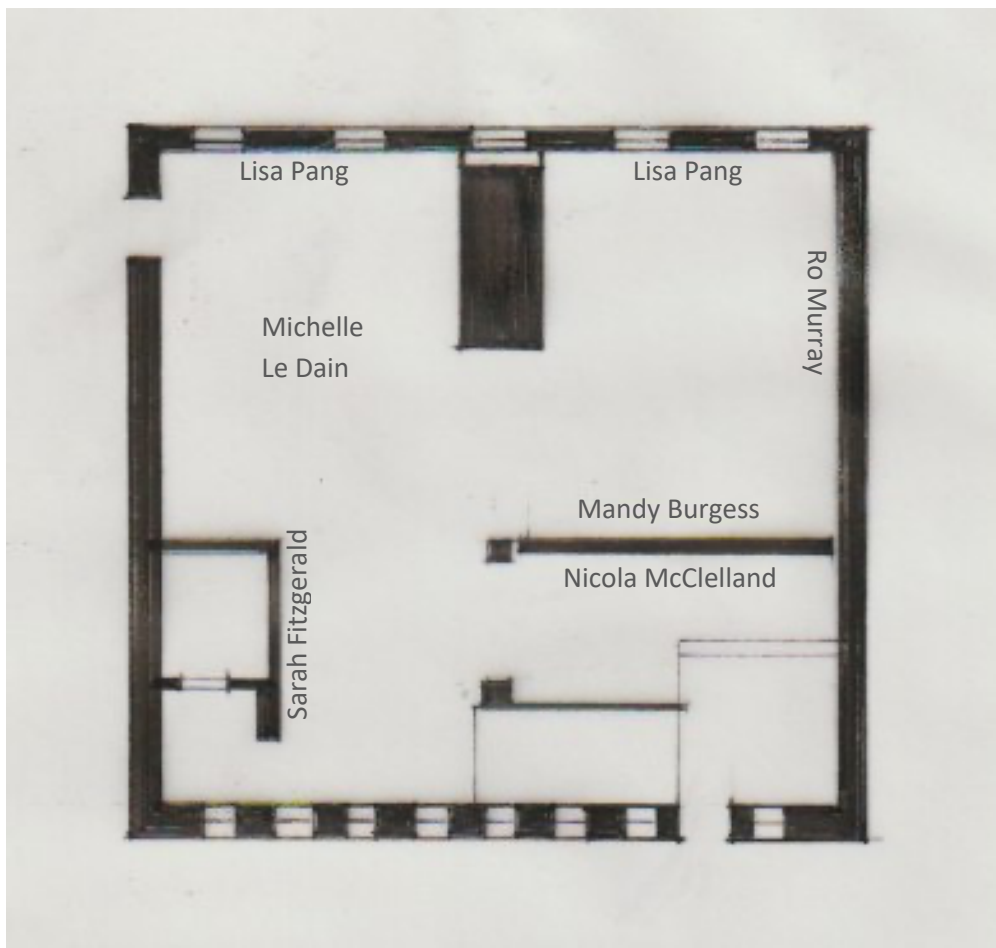
Architecture *and Beyond*

25 May – 12 June 2022

Incinerator Art Space

Lisa Pang, Mandy Burgess, Michelle Le Dain, Nicola McClelland, Ro Murray, Sarah Fitzgerald

The artists acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which they work



INCINERATOR
ART SPACE

2 Small Street Willoughby NSW 2068
Wednesday to Sunday 10am-4pm
www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/arts
Incinerator Art Space is a Willoughby City Council facility

Nicola McClelland

Arboretum Arboreta

1.

Turquoise Blue Gum 2022

Acrylic paint and mixed media on
watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

2.

Arboretum Arboreta 2021

Gouache and watercolour
on watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

3.

From Every Angle 2022

Acrylic paint
on watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

4.

Shaping Their Landscape 2021

Gouache, watercolour and water
from Lake Burley Griffin
on watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

5.

The Edge of a Dream 2021

Mixed media on watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

6.

Beyond the Lake We Love 2022

Mixed media and water
from Lake Burley Griffin
on watercolour paper

37 x 37 cm

\$600

Sarah Fitzgerald

Home

1.

Big Plans 2022

Acrylic paint on timber, plywood, mdf,
& cardboard

112cm x 1220m

\$1200

2.

Doors and Windows, (diptych) 2022

Acrylic paint on timber

29 x 51 cm

\$800

3.

Room to Move 2022

Acrylic paint and pencil on timber

30.5 x 30.5 cm

\$450

4.

Inside Out 2022

Acrylic paint and pencil on timber

30.5 x 30.5 cm

\$450

Michelle Le Dain

Lot 99

1.

LOT 99, 2022

Installation of printed perspex, fishing line,
acrylic, and tape

100 x 10cm each, Dimensions vary

NFS

Lisa Pang

Incineratorscapes

1.

Hāfu (Half), 2021

Cotton thread, gesso and pigment
on linen with bamboo pole

90 x 84.5 cm

\$600

2.,

Incineratorscape (circle), 2021-2

Watercolour, graphite ink & glue
on various papers

43 x 31 cm

\$350

3.,

Coppinscape ,2021-2

Watercolour, graphite ink & glue
on various papers

43 x 31 cm

\$350

4.

Incineratorscape (triangle), 2021-2

Watercolour, graphite ink & glue
on various papers

43 x 31 cm

\$350

5.

Incineratorscape (square), 2021-2

Watercolour, graphite ink & glue
on various papers

43 x 31 cm

\$350

Ro Murray

Reflected in the Glass

1.

Reflected in the Glass, 2021s

U.P. lino print 300gsm Somerset

76 x 56cm

\$450

2.

Chevron Doors, 2021

U.P. lino print 300gsm Somerset

228 x 56 cm

\$1000

3.

Forest I,II,III,IV , V,VI,VII 2021

U.P. lino print 300gsm Somerset

each 152 x 56

each \$800

Mandy Burgess

From the Earth Into the Fire

1.

From the Earth, 2021-2

Plywood

Dimensions vary

\$150 each

2.

Into the Fire, 2022

Found steel, wire, hessian, bituminous paint
on plywood and wood

90 x 305 x 15 cm

\$1000

Willoughby City Council is gratefully acknowledged for the provision of Incinerator Art Space.

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The View from In Here

Incinerator Art Spaceⁱ is located in the refurbished shell of an obsolete municipal incinerator. Nearby is Castlecrag, the suburb designed, and a community lived in by Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin. '*Architecture and beyond*' inverts the title of an earlier Powerhouse Museum exhibitionⁱⁱ, signalling an opportunity to look beyond the built environment. This exhibition playfully explores the enduring impact of the Griffins and more broadly, of Modernist architecture through the discourse of contemporary visual arts. The artworks traverse perceptions of interior and exterior spaces within the Incinerator building and other Griffin-designed sites.

This exhibition, *Architecture and beyond* has 6 artists looking at a view – and it is of aspects *beyond* architecture, meaning, variously, they are looking *far from, behind, past, after* architecture. In a tribute to the resilience of architecture, the view from in here is that of the American architect-couple Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin. If their shared architectural vision is the edifice, these artworks trace its effects beyond; in shadows cast, through lingering influence and the poignant stillness of remaining fragments, existing in a space that is *far from, behind, past, after* the main event. The Griffins have an enduring presence in the art and architecture of Australia, given their role as winners of the 1911 bid to design Canberra, our urban capital of a newly federated nation. More recently, and deservedly, the significance of Marion Mahony Griffin's achievements and contribution has come to be reprised and revalued. While disillusioned with the outcome of their Canberra plan, the Griffins continued to live, design and make Australia their home for the next 20 years, completing some 270 projects: residential as well as several cleansing incinerators, and including establishing and living in nearby Castlecrag for a decade. They too were conscious of what was *beyond architecture*, of its ability to articulate social ideals, stimulate social change, and engender an ethical enterprise capable of unifying the built with the natural environment. In this context architecture functions as a sort of filter, or a way of looking - through built form - at other aspects of the way we can function as a civil society.

"On some days the environment feels filled purely with colour and light."

It is fitting, given the Griffins' ideas about architecture's subservience to natural landscape, Marion's careful documentation and knowledge of native plant life, and the concept of revival, that the exhibition opens into a forest, the dreamed of *Arboretum Arboreta*. This series including gouache and watercolour on paper works by Nicola McClelland is inspired by the National Arboretum and is a familiar site for her having spent her foundational years in Canberra. An arboretum, a botanic garden of trees situated on the lake edge was originally a part of the capitol plan however remained an unrealised concept until the aftermath of the 2003 bushfires finally presented an opportunity. Another competition saw another architectural plan for 100 monoculture forests of rare, threatened and symbolic trees, planted almost a century after Griffin first envisioned it. Nicola's paintings are a riotous celebration of plant forms as they fuse with, overgrow or are contained by a scaffold of geometric forms (drawn from elements of the Griffins' Canberra and Lucknow plans) in a

composition of balance. The water-based materials are activated by water from Lake Burley-Griffin and together with the muted and specific colour palette utilised by Marion, work to provide tangible and visual links to site, people, place and time.

*“This home, like any home, was the site of successes and struggles,
both professionally and personally for the Griffins.”*

Sarah Fitzgerald’s *Home* starts with that simplest of shelter stories, a home built for two. Taking the plans, sections and elevations for the *Grant House* (1922), the home of the Griffins in Castlecrag, she has translated its proportions derived from schematic and diagrammatic plans into a suite of paintings that portray these spatial configurations not just as a building but as a particular lived-in home. Far from flatly brushed, these paintings are built. Lines become little walls as they project up, outwards and sideways, pushing out of pictorial space and into the real space of the gallery. Like pages in a pop-up book or scale models they draw a viewer in to look close and speculate on ways of living. Homes are safe and intimate spaces but the home of architects can also demonstrate a lived commitment to ideals, something the Griffins seemed to embrace in the building of their own homes, time and again. Referencing their personal relationship as well as their delight in nature, Sarah deploys interior house paint as a linguistic medium, playfully selecting a colour palette derived from the romance suggested by commercial paint names, so that *Love Note*, *Tender Kiss*, *Sweet Caress*, *Love Affair*, *Gentle Kiss*, *Alliance*, all take place within the surrounds of *Paradise Cove*, *Winter Gray*, *Outside*, *Pale Sage*.

*“Fragments and shapes of these architectural elements
have been distilled to a blurred moment”*

Moving from the architecture of one home to recurring design features, Michelle Le Dain has taken as her point of reference the window and door treatments of a house at Lot 99 (*Felstead House*, 1924), Castlecrag. Uniquely designed as a pavilion, the house also featured a pitched roof around a central square atrium (then a Japanese garden) more in keeping with the Griffins’ earlier Prairie-school buildings from the USA. Michelle’s works imagine the subsequent spilling of colour, light and treetop vistas within. Constructed as an installation of printed photographs on vertically suspended slats of Perspex, *Lot 99* introduces fragmented and intentionally blurred imagery taken of the house and from nature, lit by sunrises and sunsets. Installed in the Incinerator Art Space, the work draws out shared design characteristics from across the Griffins’ residential and industrial architecture – highlighting the site’s barred and narrow windows, the downward fall of light, even the sections of preserved graffiti as a colourful backdrop indicative of the building’s evolution.

“a textile marker or threshold between different spaces,
playing upon the geometric curiosity of a remnant structure.”

In my own works, to go *beyond architecture*, was to visually suggest the Griffins' architecture as fragmented remnants of a socially ambitious vision. The titling of a series as *Incineratorscapes* reflected my consciousness while making the works, of the space in which they would eventually be seen, as well as the siting of architecture within a shifting landscape of memory and social history. The *_scape* becomes not something to look at, but something to look with. These watercolour and ink drawings are loosely based on historical photographs taken after the Willoughby Incinerator was completed (1934), which then evolved into collages of various aged and textured papers. Another homage to the endearing obsolescence of a municipal incinerator functioning as an art space is the partly stitched, partly painted Japanese textile *noren* (curtain) traditionally placed as a marker or threshold between different spaces, playing upon the geometric curiosity of a remnant structure, a square grate placed over a circular chimney vent in today's Incinerator. Curtains were also used to divide functional spaces, as alcoves in the open cruciform plan of the Griffins' Melbourne home, *Pholiota* (1922). These works were made in and from materials intrinsic to Japan, a place of significant influence in many aspects of the Griffins' practices and Modernism.

*“I remember as a young child my parents pointing out a Griffin designed house
on the North shore with chevron patterned steel windows.”*

Reflected in the Glass, the linoleum print series by Ro Murray emerged out of a *beyond architecture* glance back into her own personal history; a childhood memory of a house in the suburbs, and later, of being impressed by the detail and format of a Marion Mahony Griffin rendering of a house in the landscape. This combination, of a strong and graphic linearity subdued and subservient to the natural landscape of its setting is played out in the varied compositions of her works. Taking part in the Griffin Open Houses Tour and also walking The Great North Walk put Ro on a linear course within the landscape. As a result, she was able to bodily experience the Griffins' plan for Castlecrag, encountering architecture enacting that idea once articulated by Paul Klee as a drawing simply being a line going for a walk. Similarly, the Griffins' architecture of built forms walks the landform, with roads tracing contours. A sense of unique community is encouraged by the irregularly shaped blocks, walkways between properties and shared access to pockets of bushland reserve. This harmony human and nature is depicted in her series of prints, which focusses on a composed view of a single tree, a eucalypt beside the *Cheong House* 1922. Vertically oriented, the works repeat the scroll-like format favoured by Marion.

*“I was fascinated by the stone embellishments of these unusual houses
which celebrated both the site and the life of the residents.”*

Observing the Griffins’ preference for utilising roughcut local sandstone in the architecture of Castlecrag and impressed by the overall development of the suburb to express a way of living within a shared human and natural landscape of freedom and community, Mandy Burgess has responded with *From the Earth*. In these works, Mandy hand-formed intimated versions of the octahedral mineral structures that lie within the stone and earth, and which also resemble the stone decoration. Interpreted in plywood and presented as abstracted formal objects in the gallery, almost ritualised, they can also be seen to allude to the Griffins’ spiritual beliefs and interest in theosophy and anthroposophy. Another work, *Into The Fire* completes the phrase, *Out of The Earth and Into The Fire* is a nostalgic and cyclical tribute, both to the demolished Incinerators of Sydney and to their function as cavernous furnaces capable of transforming matter. Using found steel salvaged from construction sites, the piece reworks discarded construction steel as a wall relief, revisiting the decorative motifs of the now demolished Pymont Incinerator. *“Heroic even in ruin, the building cantilevered over another of Sydney’s escarpments, and seemed like a monument from an ancient civilisation.”*

Architecture and beyond traces through the vocabulary of the visual arts, remaining influences of an idiosyncratic architecture that is the unique legacy of the Griffins’ partnership. In these works that legacy has been interpreted widely and variously. Once we look *beyond architecture* we see, as if magnified, the trees around us, the home of a couple, the light playing, behind a curtain, and the harmony and sensibility of monumental built geometry caught in a vividly observed moment.

Lisa Pang

May 2022

All quotations are the words of the artists.

ⁱ Architects Walter Burley Griffin and Eric Nicholls, 1933-4

ⁱⁱ *Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin* (1998) Exhibition, Powerhouse Museum curated by Anne Watson

Phillip Goad “*Pholiota Unlocked: A Pedagogical Case Study*” in University of Melbourne Collections, Issue 20, June 2017

Glenda Korporaal, *Making Magic: The Marion Mahony Griffin Story*, 2015: Bookpod USA

Visionaries in Suburbia, Griffin Houses in the Landscape, Ed. Anne Watson, 2015

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in Australia, Jonathan Mills & Phillip Goad in conversation, M Pavilion Podcast, 2016