



24 November 2005

His Worship the Mayor
Auckland City Council
Private Bag 92516
Wellesley Street
AUCKLAND

Dear Dick

re: 5A Castle Drive Epsom, Auckland (1964) and 385 Riddell Rd, Glendowie, Auckland (1961-62)

I am writing on behalf of the Wellington Architectural Centre to express our concern about the lack of protection of two significant houses in Auckland. The Architectural Centre is an organisation dating from 1946 which advocates for good design. In the early years of the Centre we ran an architectural school, built a demonstration house, ran the Centre Gallery and published a journal about architecture and design: *Design Review*. Our current activities include providing forums for discussion about architecture, participating in local body decision-making about architecture, organising architectural competitions and exhibitions, and collaborating with other organisations such as the New Zealand Institute of Architects and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust in ventures such as Wellington Architecture Week. Our main focus is Wellington architecture and design, and it is only in exceptional circumstances that we become involved in issues beyond the Wellington region.

It has recently come to our notice that two modernist houses, of national significance, are under threat of demolition in Auckland. The current housing situation, and the trend for infill housing means that the sale of these two unprotected houses make them vulnerable to demolition, and this is cause for great concern. The two houses (5A Castle Drive Epsom, and 385 Riddell Rd, Glendowie) were designed in the 1960s by two members of The Architectural Group. This avant-garde architectural collective, which was founded in 1946, was critical in the development of modernist architecture in New Zealand, and many New Zealand architects have been influenced by their work. They are credited with the development of a distinctive New Zealand modernist architecture. The Group existed in various forms until 1958.

Several characteristics of our current housing were innovatively explored in houses built by The Group. Such characteristics included: low-pitched roofs, open-planning, plywood walls, and exposed structure (e.g. roof rafters). Architectural historian Peter Shaw has described their work as being a "radical departure from the ubiquitous state house." The Architectural Group has been the subject of at least one building report held at Auckland University, several magazine articles, and, because of their significance, they are automatically included in books on New Zealand architecture covering this time period. Their magazine *Planning* has been discussed in a 2001 article by Dr Noel Waite. There is no credible architectural historian in New Zealand who would not recognise the significance of The Group's contribution to New Zealand architecture.

The two houses of immediate concern were designed by William D. (Bill) Wilson, the founder of The Group, (5A Castle Drive) and Ivan Juriss (385 Riddell Rd), a founding member who was a part of The Group with Wilson until its end in 1958. Both architects

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are significant in the canon of New Zealand architectural history and their work is included in the main texts about New Zealand architectural history including: David Mitchell and Gillian Chaplin's *The Elegant Shed* (1984), Peter Shaw's *New Zealand Architecture* (1991), and most recently Douglas Lloyd Jenkin's *At Home: A century of New Zealand Design* (2004). Wilson's work also includes First House, Belmont, North Shore (1949-1950), and Malitte House, Milford (1954). Juriss' work includes his Stanley Point House (1954), and the acclaimed Mann House, Violet St, Mt Albert (1960).

We urge you to list these two buildings on the council's District Plan to recognise their national significance and to ensure their survival. These buildings have high architectural, historic and heritage values. We also urge you to list other houses by the Group to prevent a similar situation occurring to them. Auckland needs to acknowledge the strength of such contributions to its architectural environment, especially within the current context of rapid development which can lead to the destruction of irreplaceable buildings and to ill-considered design outcomes unless protection measures are in place. We look to your leadership as a mayor of Auckland who advocates for good design to take the necessary steps for appropriate acknowledgement and protection of such significant architectural heritage to ensure a rich architectural environment thrives in Auckland.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
Wellington Architectural Centre

cc. George Farrant, Sarah Pocklington, Ian Grant, Bruce Hucker, Neil Abel, Douglas Armstrong, Leila Boyle, Cathy Casey, Christine Caughey, Bill Christian, Glenda Fryer, John Hinchcliff, Linda Leighton, Toni Millar, Scott Milne, Graeme Mulholland, Richard Northey, Noelene Raffills, Penny Sefuiva, Richard Simpson, Feye Storer, Vern Walsh.