

REVISITED

Cater HOUSE

by John Allen and Russell C. Jack Architects

• CANBERRA, ACT •

This much-loved home in suburban Canberra, completed in 1965, is a fine example of the late Sydney regional style.

Words by Eugenie Keefer Bell
Photography by Dianna Snape



01 The cosy, carpeted sitting room of the Cater house features three vertical slot windows that look back into the courtyard.

JOHN ALLEN AND RUSSELL JACK'S CATER HOUSE

Canberra 1965

The latest edition of HOUSES magazine (Issue 76) published by Architecture Media (www.architecturemedia.com) includes an article on the Cater House designed in 1965 by John Allen and Russell Jack in suburban Canberra.

Eugenie Keefer Bell's article describes the Cater House as "a fine example of late Sydney regional architecture."

The article draws attention to the house as encapsulating the seminal approaches to architecture of Allen and Jack that laid the foundations for the successful practice that followed for the next half century.

In Keefer Bell's words: *"From the late 1950s, Sydney architects such as Russell were drawn to the work of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and to the spatial organization and construction motifs of traditional Japanese architecture. There was a great interest in the natural environment, demonstrated by the design of climatic controls, the manipulation of natural light, the orchestration of views and a response to the forms of the landscape. Russell's houses of the 1950s and 1960s embody these references in gestures such as the clarity of natural materials and construction techniques, the juxtaposition of dark timber joinery and white walls, and the use of sliding doors and screens to manipulate internal spaces and diffuse the boundaries between inside and outside."*

The values of the house have been recognized by various awards; the 1965 Meritorious Architecture Award by the ACT Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Chapter's 25 year award in 2001. In 2008 the house was recognized as a heritage item under the ACT Heritage Act. But more importantly perhaps, the house was well loved and well used by the Cater family for 45 years. In the 1980s, Russell Jack designed additions to the kitchen, family room and external verandah, meeting the needs of the growing family. In 2010, with the children gone and the Caters moving into retirement accommodation, the house has been placed on the market.

The life of the Cater House, encapsulating enduring aspects of good design, reflects the life of the firm that Allen and Jack laid the foundations for. John Allen began the practice in 1952, formed the partnership with Russell Jack in 1956 and expanded to include Keith Cottier in 1964. Today, Allen Jack + Cottier, or AJ+C, has over 80 architects and offices in Sydney, Brisbane, Shanghai and Beijing. The main work of the office remains residential, in all its forms from single houses in rural Australia to the dense high rise of China.

Anne Warr

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