

Statement of Significance

Cianci House

2607 Nelson Avenue

West Vancouver, BC

Draft, April 2008

Historic Place

The Cianci House is a 1½-storey (plus basement) house, originally sited on a double lot in the Upper Dunderave area of West Vancouver. This unusual house is a local landmark, perched high on the crest of a hill overlooking English Bay. The building includes the original 1933 residence, additions and alterations from 1954, and a recent 'in-law suite' addition on the upper level.

Heritage Value

The historic place is significant for having been the residence of artists Vito and Sybil Cianci, both graduates of the Vancouver School of Art, who used it as a home and a studio, as well as a place for creative play for their children. It was designed for them in 1933 by architect Hanns Carl Berchtenbreiter, who had recently abandoned an established practice in Germany to come to Canada.

The Cianci Residence has architectural value for its lodge-like rustic design, which was popular as an architectural expression of rural Canada in the 1930s and which is associated regionally with buildings such as lodges built by in national parks and with Minnekhada Lodge in Coquitlam. The house embodies a 'design with nature' philosophy, which is embodied in the original vision for Lower Caulfeild and later with the West Coast Modern architectural movement. Rocks for the building foundation were gathered on the site, and natural materials are used throughout.

Much of the early building fabric remains after additions and alterations made in the 1950s for the second owners, the Taylor family. The high quality craftsmanship and rustic detailing are evident in the interior and exterior wood finishes, hand-forged hardware, stone fireplace, and original light fixtures.

The house is also significant in that it won a District of West Vancouver Heritage Achievement Award in 2006, which recognizes the conservation process begun by the current owners.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Cianci House include:

- The original exterior siding of fir shiplap
- The rustic character of the exterior and interior design
- The extensive use of timber and granite throughout, reflecting the use of local materials
- The vaulted living room with a mezzanine sitting area
- The high quality craftsmanship and rustic detailing, evident in the interior and exterior wood finishes such as the hand-forged hardware, stone fireplace, and original light fixtures.
- Random-coursed rubble stone walls, of varying thickness, to the height of the ground floor joists
- Random-course stone inglenook fireplace with monolithic (12-foot long) fir mantelpiece
- Built-in bookshelves above mantle, and on east, west and south walls of living room
- Mezzanine “Minstrel’s Gallery” suspended at the south end of the living room, connected by a dog-leg stairway
- Unusual tile mosaic floor in main floor bathroom in a ‘rug’ pattern with stylized animals and borders
- Elements of mature landscaping, some of which date from the time of construction