

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R082

Name of Place: Dingle House

Other/Former Names: de Quetteville

Address/Location: 19 Downes Place HUGHES 2605
Block 29 Section 3 of Hughes

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	November 1991	Level of Significance:	Local
Citation Revision No:	3	Category:	Residential
Citation Revision Date:	November 2004	Style:	Organic

Date of Design:	1965	Designer:	Enrico Taglietti
Construction Period:		Client/Owner/Lessee:	Dingle
Date of Additions:	1981	Builder:	Juventus Contractors

Statement of Significance

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, 1966, is an example of significant architecture and an educational resource. The residence is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-) and is notable for displaying the design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti. The design incorporates the two features that are specific to the style; that being its free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained.

The following design features are of additional significance; the clearly expressed timber structure (the exposed roof beams), the horizontal roof planes, the horizontal boarded fascias, the highlight windows, the verandah with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench, garden walls, trapezium window to the garage front wall, large areas of glass, open planning, fireplace, and original finishes and details.

The house relates well to the site by stepping down the sloping block, while the sculptural effect is enhanced by the juxtaposition of roof levels with strong horizontal emphasis created by the deep fascias. The residence is greatly valued by the RAIA.

The house is important for its association with the talented architect Enrico Taglietti who is considered a key practitioner of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. Enrico Taglietti played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. He is one of the most important local architects to practise in Canberra and this is an important early house in his career. Enrico Taglietti was made a Life Fellow of the RAIA in 2001.

The architecture of this house may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of Late Twentieth-Century Architectural styles by locating the building in its historical and environmental contexts and placing it within the knowledge domain of architectural, urban and environmental histories.

Description

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, 1966, by Enrico Taglietti, is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) with its free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained.

Hughes was designed in part using the contemporary Radburn planning principles where the nature reserve connects into a small network of landscaped pedestrian passages through the suburb. The house is located to the rear western half, the highest part, of the sloping block with views to the east across the neighbouring site to the Federal Golf Course and the nature reserve to the north. The split tri-level residence is distinctive in a street of standard brick and tile roof 1960s houses with its stepped profile and horizontal roof planes. The entry is approached from the high side of the site along a paved path past a stepped masonry wall that encloses an entry court in front of the dining room. The courtyard walls also screen the entry from the lower level courtyard and garage. The driveway is on the lower side of the site. The garage faces side on to the street and has a trapezium window to the front masonry wall set under the roofline

The plan of the residence is formed by two connected rectangles, the single-storey longer western rectangle extends further to the front. The single storey rectangle originally extended further to the rear, of the two-storey eastern rectangle. The entry is placed on the right of the front elevation of the western single-storey volume. The solid timber and glazed front door opens into a small lobby separated from the dining room by a nib wall. The lobby is centred on an axis that extends the full length of the residence along the line of connection with the two-storey volume. The dining room opens off the lobby, the first room at the front of the house. The dining room has a large southern window facing out onto the walled entry court.

To the right of the lobby is a half-flight stair that leads up to the living room. This is one of two stairs to this level.

Beyond the dining room, and along the axis, the passage leads to the rear rooms of the middle level, each room placed to the left of the passage. The kitchen has a skylight, western window, a servery that opens to the dining room and a northern external glazed door that opens onto a small recessed western service court.

The bathroom is between the kitchen and the main bedroom and works as a two-way bathroom, with private access from the main bedroom as well as access from the passage via a small lobby.

The main bedroom is located at the end of the passage. The north wall is fully glazed allowing a view of and access to the landscaped garden and beyond to the reserve.

At the centre of the passage is a split stair with a half flight up to the east living room and a half flight down to the east lower bathroom and bedroom.

The upper living room extends the full length of the level with extensive glazing to the north that opens out onto the timber verandah and a large glazed wall at the southern end facing out to the east. A central narrow window slit extends the full height of both levels, centred on the fireplace. The square masonry fireplace is next to the stair leading up from the middle level and is placed directly over the lower stair. A glazed highlight extends along the western wall from the southern end to above the central stair. The living room has a view down over the dining room and passage off the kitchen. The design provides for an interrelationship between some spaces and private areas for rest and contemplation.

The living room is surrounded on three sides by a continuous verandah, which has been extended towards the rear of the block over a bedroom addition. The balustrade is detailed in steel with thin horizontal rails and a timber lined cantilevered top shelf/bench. The continuous shelf/bench creates a strong horizontal band around the building and provides privacy from the neighbour and reserve. The original drawings show a different balustrade detailed with three horizontal timber planks.

The original lower level consisted of a northern bedroom and a combined laundry/bathroom that opened out onto an external covered area to the south under the living room, possibly a temporary carport. It has been altered now to provide three bedrooms, laundry, music room/playroom and bathroom. The garage would appear to have been constructed at the same time as the residence. It is not shown on the original plans but its roof is shown on an approved plan dated one year later, and it was also designed by Taglietti. The lower level extension was designed by Trevor Gibson Architects in 1981.

The house is cavity brick construction, rendered and painted. It was originally painted white. The metal deck roofs on three levels, including the garage, have wide overhanging eaves, with deep sloping redwood horizontal paneled fascias. The roof and ceilings are constructed from the "Stramit" system. A large redwood beam projecting from the house extends past the garage. Exposed beams support the wide fibre sheet lined eaves.

The other architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-) displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- clearly expressed timber structure, the exposed roof beams;
- horizontal roof planes;
- horizontal boarded fascia, and
- highlight windows.

The additional significant design features are; the verandah with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench; garden walls; trapezium window to the garage front wall; large areas of glass; open planning; fireplace, and original finishes and details.

The roof form of this house can be contrasted with the significant Late Twentieth-Century International style (1960-) houses in Canberra by Dirk Bolt: two in Deakin including the Butler residence at 44 Beauchamp Street, Deakin, 1965; two in Fisher and 1 Astley Place, Garran, 1967. These houses are cubiform in their overall shape with minimal roof overhang.

The house can be compared with other significant houses in Canberra in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, in general most of which are designed by Taglietti including: the McKeown House, Downer; 1964; the Tange House, Griffith, 1965; the Paterson House, Aranda, 1969; Green House, Garran, 1976, and the Mijuscovic House Wanniasa, 1979. It can also be compared with his important public and commercial works including the `ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered); the Dickson Library, 1969; the Giralang Primary School, 1976, and the Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977. These have similar dominant horizontal roof forms that create deep shadowing under their eaves.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. This is one of his earliest residences and exhibits his philosophical and spatial principles in a relatively compact, economical design.

The residence is well maintained and in good condition. There are minor internal alterations to some areas while the lower extension has altered the rear form to a small degree.

Condition and Integrity

Good. Extended in 1981 to a design by Trevor Gibson.

Background/History

Organic architecture is imbued with the principles and teachings of F L Wright. Wright was one of the most important figures in modern architecture and influenced architects throughout the world during the 20th Century. His "Prairie" style of the first 20 years of the 20th Century emphasized the horizontal, using cantilevering forms, extensive roof overhangs and open free planning with extensive areas of glazing, often crafted with leadlight designs.

Predominantly a domestic style where buildings blend in with the site and take advantage of the topography, the earliest example of the Organic style in Australia is probably the Audette house, Castlecrag, begun in 1955, Peter Muller..

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, is one of a number of residences Taglietti designed in Canberra, and is one of six he considers to be of great importance in his Canberra work. The other five are the McKeown House, Downer; 1964; the Tange House, Griffith, 1965; the Paterson House, Aranda, 1969; Green House, Garran, 1976, and the Mijuscovic House Wanniasa, 1979.

Taglietti believes the Osborne House (Currandooley), in NSW to the east of Canberra, is also of significance and was one of his earliest house designs in Australia. He considers that the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, the Paterson House, Aranda and the Mijuscovic House, Wanniasa are his most important residential designs. Of these three residences in Canberra, the Hughes house was the earliest, the most economical in construction and displays most of the features of the Organic style.

Enrico Taglietti

"Enrico Taglietti came to Australia from Italy to design the Italian promotional display for a department store in Sydney. While in Australia he was invited to design the Italian Embassy."
JT89

"The exuberance and formal play of Taglietti's architecture has no parallel in the country. It strangely combines the gaiety of much Italian, free form construction with the sobriety of the heavy forms of Japan's post-war architects. It is an architecture fashioned for mood and visual delight."
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He established his own architecture practice in Canberra in 1955 and is responsible for the design of some of Canberra's most dynamic buildings. "The freedom of his work contrasts with the functional rigidity of much of Canberra's architecture." "Baffle walls and mouldings, stepped and curved forms, come not from the rational dictates of structural determinism, but from his abstract patterning of the shapes of the building to create interest through striking visual spatial effects."

"The use of hovering cantilevered planes of roof and deck, have given his work a distinct character and individuality." HT p43

Taglietti has written of his architecture: "Architecture is the Art of making spaces work for people, is human made environment on which the lives of our children will unfold, is the Matrix that transforms static places into a dynamic assembly of voids that excites emotions alive with users. Is 'Piazza del Palio', 'Central Park', 'Chartre', the Opera House... is the 'Invisible Canberra' of my dreams."

Taglietti studied architecture at the Milan Polytechnic after the WWII, having spent much of his youth in Eritrea. Gio Ponti was a Professor at the Polytechnic, a Bauhaus modernist and one of Italy's most important architects and founder, in 1928, of the journal *Domus*. Taglietti believes Ponti was an excellent teacher and influenced him in these early years, however, it was the ideas of Bruno Zevi at the School of Rome that had the greatest influence on Taglietti. Zevi had recently returned from the USA and brought with him the knowledge of F L Wright and his 'natural' or organic architecture as opposed to 'rational' architecture. Zevi headed the *Istituto Nazionale di Architettura* in Rome and also edited the journal *L'Architettura Cronache E Storia*. Taglietti found himself being educated in Milan but his preferred philosophy of architecture was being taught in Rome. Another early influence on him was the poetic style by reference to tradition and local environment of the work of BBPR.

The use of geometric forms and extensive cantilevers, while partly based on F L Wright's early work, is also a theme in modern Italian architecture and can be seen in the work of Valle, Sartago and Moretti. At the base of Moretti's apartment and office building in Via Rugabella, Milan, the tower sits into the lower level with the lower level wall cut at an angle, similar to Taglietti's angled cuts into perimeter walls to some of his buildings.

Enrico Taglietti was made a Life Fellow of the RIAA in 2001. He is a Knight of St Gregory and Knight Officer of the Italian Republic.

Other examples of his work include the Town House Motel, 1961, (demolished), Cinema Centre, Civic, 1966 (now extensively altered internally), ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered), Embassy Complex for the Republic of Italy, Deakin, 1967, the Giralang Primary School, 1976, Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977, Australian War Memorial Repository, Mitchell, 1979, the schools previously mentioned, Forrest Child Care Centre, Forrest and Woden Youth Centre, Philip.

There are important works in Sydney including the Smith House, Pennant Hills, 1965 and St

Anthony's Church, Marsfield, 1968. He also produced work in Hobart and Melbourne.

Taglietti's buildings have received many awards including; the RAIA ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion in 1977 and the RAIA ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award in 2001 for the Giralang Primary School; nine Architecture Merit awards from the RAIA ACT Chapter and a 25 year Award for the Dickson Library. The RAIA ACT Chapter considers that he is one of the two most eminent members still practising in Canberra, the other being Romaldo Giurgola who is semi-retired.

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

The creativity of the architect Enrico Taglietti is apparent in the design of the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, 1966, which was innovative when compared with other houses built in Canberra at the time. The house is one of the two more important residences in Canberra by the leading local and nationally significant architect Enrico Taglietti. The other is the Paterson House, Juad Place, Aranda, 1969.

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, 1966, by Enrico Taglietti, is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) and is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti. The two main characteristics of the style are exhibited here; its free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained.

The following design features are of additional significance; the clearly expressed timber structure (the exposed roof beams), the horizontal roof planes, the horizontal boarded fascias, the highlight windows, the verandah with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench, garden walls, trapezium window to the garage front wall, large areas of glass, open planning, fireplace, and original finishes and details.

The house relates well to the site by stepping down the sloping block, while the sculptural effect is enhanced by the juxtaposition of roof levels with strong horizontal emphasis created by the deep fascias. The house is greatly valued by the RAIAs as a very good example of this style of architecture by a leading local and nationally significant architect.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia.

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

The design of the house demonstrates an important development in architectural style that has extended through the 20th Century, by contrast with traditional architectural styles. Relatively few houses were built in this style in Canberra. Modern architecture, including Organic architecture, was the most important architecture of the 20th Century. Organic architecture had as its origins the work of F L Wright in USA. Walter Burley Griffin worked for Wright and brought the ideas of organic modern architecture to Australia when he was awarded the design of Canberra. While there are no buildings designed by Griffin in Canberra there are a small number in State Capital Cities. Canberra is one of the few 20th Century designed cities in the world. The combination of modern architecture and urban design is of exceptional interest.

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

The residence is a notable design of a house in the Organic style. It contains the key elements of the style in an economic form. The design solution gives definition to differing functions, particularly the living area including the verandah and takes advantage of the sloping site.

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

The residence is important for its association with Enrico Taglietti, who played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. He is one of the most important architects to practise in Canberra and this is an important early work in his career.

Enrico Taglietti was awarded a Life Fellow of the RAI in 2001.

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

Through its architectural style, planning and setting this building is a valuable educational resource for designers and planners. Its architecture is characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style.

The architecture of this residence may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of Late Twentieth-Century Architectural Styles by locating the building in its historical and environmental contexts and placing it within the knowledge domain of architectural, urban and environmental histories. This building is a very good example of the style. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

The residence can be compared with other significant houses in Canberra in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, in general most of which are designed by Taglietti including: the McKeown House, Downer; 1964; the Tange House, Griffith, 1965; the Paterson House, Aranda, 1969; Gibson House, Red Hill; Green House, Garran, 1976, and the Mijuscovic House Wanniasa, 1979. It can also be compared with his important public and commercial works including the ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered); the Dickson Library, 1969; the Giralang Primary School, 1976, and the Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977. These have similar dominant horizontal roof forms that create deep shadowing under their eaves.

References

Other Information Sources