

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about the Registration of 19 Downes Pl, Hughes) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 423

made under the

Heritage Act 2004 section 42 Notice of decision about registration

1. Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2008 – 101

2. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for 19 Downes Pl, Hughes) Notice 2008 (No 1).

3. Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for 19 Downes Pl, Hughes.

4. Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the 19 Downes Pl, Hughes meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

5. Date of Registration

11 September 2008.

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2602

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Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602

11 September 2008



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HERITAGE REGISTER

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **19 Downes Place**

Block 29, Section 3

HUGHES

DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 11 September 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI2008–423

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 132281 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- 19 Downes Place, Block 29, Section 3, Suburb of Hughes, ACT.
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HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes was designed by Enrico Taglietti in 1965 for Mr Dingle, construction being completed in 1966.¹

Residential settlements such as Hughes were an integral part of the creation and planning of Canberra. Peter Harrison AO as National Capital Development Commission Director and First Assistant Commissioner of Town Planning from 1959-67 coordinated the design of Canberra's new low-density neighbourhood suburbs in a series of new 'satellite' towns.²

Curtin, Lyons and Hughes were the first residential suburbs built in the new town of Woden. Hughes began development in the early 1960s and to this day is predominantly made up of individual houses.

The new suburbs designed by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) were generally based on 'Radburn' planning, with the segregation of traffic and pedestrians; their size determined by primary school catchments. The segregated pedestrian paths were often set in parkland or nature reserves linking the residential blocks with shops and schools, often passing under or bridging the roads. The pedestrian path in Hughes extends from the Federal Golf Course and Red Hill Nature Park to the west through the north of the suburb linking into the Hughes Primary School, shops and playing fields.

This planning was a departure from the earlier planning authorities' Garden City suburb planning of inner Canberra. Also, this house is one of only a few reflecting a shift at the time from mainly government designed and built housing to private development where the individual owner commissioned an architect. As such the building reflects not only the style of Taglietti, but the result of the interaction between the owner and architect: the conscious choice by the owner of Taglietti because of his style and the finished design demonstrating choices and wishes of the owner.

Juventus builders constructed the original house.³ In the early 1980s the house was extended to the rear with the addition of two bedrooms and the veranda was also extended above the new bedrooms. The extension was for the owners of the house at that time, Mr Geoff and Mrs Denise Robin, to a design by Queanbeyan architect Trevor Gibson.⁴

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 importance in his Canberra work. The other five are the McKeown House at 109 Irvine Street, Watson; built in 1965; the Tange House, Griffith, built in 1965; the Paterson House at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, built in 1969; Green House at 78 Couvreur Street, Garran, built in 1976, and the Mijuscovic House at 61 Sullivan Crescent Wanniassa, built in 1979.⁵

Howard Tanner states in *Australian Housing in the Seventies* "The use of hovering cantilevered planes of roof and deck, have given his work a distinct character and individuality".⁶

Taglietti believes the Osborne House (Currandooley), in NSW, built in 1962, east of Canberra, is also of significance and was one of his earliest house designs in Australia.

Twentieth-Century Organic Architecture and Architectural Influences on Taglietti's Architecture

Organic architecture is imbued with the principles and teachings of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright is 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, Sydney, designed by Peter Muller and designed in 1953, but not completed until the mid 1950s.⁷ The Downes Place house has many similarities with the Audette house; in its massing, horizontal boarded splayed fascias and roof planes, expressed timber structure, veranda and horizontal boarded balustrade.

The use of geometric forms and extensive cantilevers, while based on Wright's early work, is also a theme in modern Italian architecture and can be seen in the work of Valle, Sartago and Moretti.⁸ 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, such as the Dickson Library.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia.⁹

Enrico Taglietti

Taglietti studied architecture at the Milan Polytechnic, after the WWII, subsequent to spending much of his youth in Eritrea. Gio Ponti was a senior lecturer at the Polytechnic, a Bauhaus modernist and one of Italy's most important architects and founder, in 1928, of the journal *Domus*. Taglietti believes he was an excellent teacher who 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*. Taglietti found himself being educated in Milan but his preferred philosophy of architecture was being taught in Rome. The work of the BBPR was also an early influence on him with its style referencing to tradition and local environment.¹⁰

Enrico Taglietti came to Australia from Italy to design the Italian promotional display for a department store in Sydney. While in Australia he was appointed as project architect for the Italian Ambassador's residence, designing much of the interior.¹¹ He established his own architecture practice in Canberra in 1955 and has constructed some of Canberra's most dynamic buildings including; the Town House Motel, 1961, (demolished); Centre Cinema, Civic, 1966, (now largely demolished); ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered); Dickson Library, 1969; Italian Embassy Chancery Building, 1974; the Giralang Primary & Infants School, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School, 1976; Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977; Australian War Memorial Repository, Mitchell, 1979, and the houses previously mentioned.¹²

There are important works in Sydney including the Smith House, Pennant Hill, 1965 and the St Anthony's Church, Marsfield, 1968.¹³ He also produced work in Hobart and Melbourne.

Associate Professor Jennifer Taylor believes "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."¹⁴

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 in

to a dynamic assembly of voids that excites emotions alive with users. Is 'Piazza del Palio', 'Central Park', 'Chartres', the Opera House... is the 'Invisible Canberra' of my dreams".¹⁵

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

Taglietti's buildings have received many awards including the RAI A ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award for the Dickson Library; the RAI A ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion and Twenty Five Year Award for the Giralang School, and nine Architecture Merit awards from the RAI A ACT Chapter. The RAI A ACT Chapter considers him to be one of the two most eminent members still practising in Canberra, the other being Romaldo Giurgola who is semi-retired.¹⁶

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The construction of 19 Downes Place, Hughes, was completed for Mr Dingle in 1966. The house is an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) with its free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained.¹⁷

The Downes Place house is located near the end of the cul-du-sac abutting the Nature Park and Federal Golf Course, set in a mature garden of native plants providing a bush setting. It 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 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 is side on to the street and has a trapezium window to the front masonry wall set under the roofline. The angle of the window is repeated in the stepping of the entry courtyard wall.

The house is cavity brick construction, rendered and painted, and has plain anodised aluminium glazing. The render was originally painted white. The metal deck roofs on three levels, including the garage, have wide overhanging eaves, with deep splayed redwood horizontal panelled fascias. The roof and ceilings are constructed from the "Stramit" system. Redwood supporting beams project from the house, supporting the wide fibre sheet lined eaves.

Two connected rectangular prisms, single storey to the west and a two storey to the east, form the residence. The single-storey section extended further to the front and rear in the original plan, however, the rear extension to the two-storey section now extends beyond the single storey section. 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 is the first room at the front of the house, directly off the lobby, and open to the passage. The dining room has a large southern window facing out onto the walled entry court.

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 is organised 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.

There are two half-flight stairs that lead up to the living room; one to the right of the entry lobby and one at the centre of the passage. The central stair is a split stair with a half flight also down to the east lower level bathroom and bedrooms.

The upper living room extends the full length of the level with extensive glazing to the north that opens out onto the timber veranda, and a 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 central 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 a three-dimensional interrelationship between the formal spaces and compartmentalised private areas for rest and contemplation; all with views to the landscape.

The living room is surrounded on three sides by a continuous veranda, 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 some degree of 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. The eastern opening to this covered area mirrored the width of the glass wall to the living room above. The lower level has been altered to provide two bedrooms, playroom and combined bathroom/laundry.

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 of amendments, date stamped December 1966, designed by Taglietti (the garage is not one of the amendments but the addition of the fire place is). The garage front wall reads as a continuation of the front stepped courtyard wall, concealing its function. A horizontal boarded timber hood extends across the top of the trapezium garage window.

Condition

The house and garage are 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.

Design Comments

The original scale, form and fabric of the house, attached garage, natural and open landscape setting and courtyard walls are central architectural features of the property, contributing to the free asymmetrical massing. Additional architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-) exemplified by the building include:

- clearly expressed timber structure, the exposed timber roof beams;
- horizontal roof planes;
- splayed timber horizontal boarded fascia, and
- highlight windows.¹⁸

The following features are also integral to the building's design: the veranda with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench; courtyard walls; trapezium window to the garage front wall; large areas of glazing; open planning; fireplace, plain smooth wall surfaces and original finishes and details. Further, the planting and landscaping within the site enhances the scale and form of the building, including the open form of the street and view out to the reserve park and golf course.

The house can be compared with another significant house in Canberra in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, designed by Taglietti; the McKeown House at 109 Irvine Street, Watson; built in 1965.¹⁹ (The comparison and contrast with places of a similar type will provide the necessary context and depth to assist in analysing the significance of the house.)

The McKeown House has similar layered architectural composition with dominant horizontal roof forms that create deep shadowing under the eaves, supported by exposed timber beams.

This dominant roof form can be contrasted with the significant Late Twentieth-Century International style (1960-) houses in Canberra where the cubic massing of the spaces is similar to the Downes Place house but the roof form plays a minimal part in the arrangement of architectural forms. Examples include houses designed by Dirk Bolt in Deakin, the Butler residence at 44 Beauchamp Street and the house at 6 Fuller Street, both in 1965; and 1 Astley Place, Garran, 1967; and houses designed by Tony Pegrum, at 13 Furphy Place, Garran and 18 Godfrey Street, Campbell.²⁰ The only areas of roof overhang to these houses extends between masonry walls where sun protection is required, accentuating the cubic massing.

STATEMENT ABOUT THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, is illustrative of modern architecture and exhibits the principal characteristics of modern residential architecture in a planned neighbourhood suburb; appropriate human scale, functional domestic planning and well sited. As a design in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style of architecture it has special interest in being an early example in Canberra of this modern ideal by one of Canberra's notable architects.

The house is aesthetically significant for its free, asymmetrical massing and stepped planning juxtaposed with fine detailing, all expressed with a sensitive affinity to and close relationship with the site.

The place has been acknowledged as a distinctive example of architecture by professional bodies. It continues to fulfil its original purpose and its planning remains innovative and sound.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

The creativity of the architect Enrico Taglietti is apparent in the design of the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, constructed in 1966, which was innovative when compared with other houses built in Canberra.

The house is of considerable architectural merit; the solution, incorporating split-level planning designed to take advantage of the sloping site and views with an open plan interior, demonstrated an innovative architectural response to the needs of the 1960s family life style. The intricate sequence of spaces allows a play of three-dimensional space between the formal rooms while the bedrooms open out onto a private north-facing garden.

The house exhibits creative design and artistic excellence by virtue of its architectural theme of modern architecture in what is an interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Usonian' house principles.

It is one of the earlier houses Taglietti designed in Canberra, and is otherwise an accomplished example of a Late Twentieth-Century Organic style building in Canberra.

The design treatment of the early 1980s extension, designed by Trevor Gibson, was sympathetic in its affect on the original structure; it incorporated many materials similar to the original.

(b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;

The house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-). The building exhibits the two particular architectural elements specific to the style; free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained. It is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti.

The following design features are of additional significance; the light colour painted plain smooth wall surfaces; the horizontal roof planes and splayed timber horizontal boarded fascias; the integration of the garage with the house as a whole including the trapezium window to the front wall; the large areas of glazing and highlight windows; the veranda with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench open planning and relationship to the courtyards; the exposed timber beams and timber structure, fire place and original finishes and details..

The house was carefully planned to achieve a sensitive affinity to and close relationship with the site. The division of sleeping, living and eating areas has been achieved in a three-dimensional composition of asymmetrical massing.

The house is a very good example of the architecture of Enrico Taglietti, a renowned Canberra architect, and recognised for this by the RAI ACT Chapter in the Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture.

(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;

This place does not meet this criterion.

(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;

This place does not meet this criterion.

(e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition

This criterion is not applicable.

(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness

This place does not meet this criterion.

(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind

This place does not meet this criterion.

(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history

The Downes Place house 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 house design in his career.

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

The house has a special association with Taglietti being considered by him to be one of his more important works.

(i) it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes

This criterion is not applicable.

(j) it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site

The architecture of the house at 19 Downes Place, Hugh, is of high educational worth for students of architecture and may contribute to an understanding of twentieth-century modern architecture. Experiencing heritage buildings enables the visitor to locate the building in its historical and environmental contexts. These experiences readily enable the establishment, understanding and interpretation of the building's heritage value and significance. This house is a very good example of mid-twentieth-century modern architecture, in this case an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, based on free, asymmetrical massing incorporating roof planes with horizontal emphasis in a natural setting. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

Through its open planned class spaces, associated educational philosophy and educational function this house is a valuable educational resource for teacher education and research.

(k) for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements

This criterion is not applicable.

(l) for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:

- (i) the life cycle of native species;**
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;**
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species.**

This criterion is not applicable.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the Place and which require conservation comprise:

- Site Planning where the house steps down the site in an open landscape setting, incorporating courtyard walls, and including its original scale, form and fabric. The house and attached garage

specifically the free, asymmetrical massing; natural setting; the light colour painted plain smooth wall surfaces; the horizontal roof planes and splayed timber horizontal boarded fascias; the integration of the garage with the house as a whole including the trapezium window to the front wall; the large areas of glazing and highlight windows; the veranda with its steel and timber balustrade and shelf/bench open planning and relationship to the courtyards; the exposed timber beams and timber structure, fire place and original finishes and details. (refer Note 1.)

- Planting and landscaping within the site that enables its scale and form to be appreciated including the open form of the street and out to the reserve park and golf course.

Note 1:“Original scale, form and fabric” shall mean that which was designed and built and is shown on the working drawing titled “Dingle House Drawing 1 dated 16.6.65 (house plans and elevations) and Dingle House, no drawing number and no date, approval date stamped 12.12.66 (fireplace detail and roof plan showing garage) all by Enrico Taglietti Architect. Planning Authority of the time “Plan No. 10479”. Note also that these drawings do not show the original garden walls, veranda balustrade and garage as designed and built.

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

19 Downes Place, Campbell, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance against 4 criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.

APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of 19 Downes Place, Hughes.

The guiding conservation objective is that 19 Downes Place, Hughes, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 12 April 2008 and period for public comment closes on 8 May 2008.

2. REFERENCES

- 1 ACTPLA File. RSTCA and Conversation with Enrico Taglietti.
- 2 Reid, Paul 2002 *Canberra following Griffin: A Design History of Australia's National Capital* National Archives of Australia.
- 3 RSTCA.
- 4 ACTPLA File.
- 5 Conversation with Enrico Taglietti.
- 6 Tanner, Howard 1976 *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney.
- 7 Jahn, Graham 1997 *Sydney Architecture*, The Watermark Press, Sydney.
- 8 Hatje, Gerd (ed) 1965 *Encyclopaedia of modern architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London.
- 9 Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds 1989 *Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson.
- 10 Taglietti, op cit.
- 11 Taylor, Jennifer 1990 *Australian Architecture Since 1960*. RAI, & RSTCA.
- 12 RSTCA & RAI 1982 *Canberra An Architectural Guide To Australia's Capital*.
- 13 Taylor, op cit.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Enrico Taglietti's Curriculum Vitae.
- 16 RAI
- 17 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 RSTCA and Conversation with Enrico Taglietti.
- 20 RSTCA

Other Information Sources

RAIA ACT Chapter RSTCA Citation on 19 Downes Place, Hughes.

McCartney, Karen 2007 *50/60/70 Iconic Australian Houses: Three decades of domestic architecture*, Murdoch Books.

McCartney, Karen 2007 'Shaping Canberra', *Canberra Sunday Times*, November 11, 2007

3. PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS

Figure 1. Front view of 19 Downes Place, Hughes.



(www.canberrahouse.com/houses/1960s-house-profiles/19-downes-place-hughes-1965/)

Figure 2. Location of 19 Downes Place, Hughes.

