Poem by Taglietti to accompany an article on the Gibson House in the Australian Journal of Architecture and Arts, November 1965

Dr. Enrico Taglietti
Background Material

Enrico Taglietti is recognised as an important architect and a leading practitioner of the late twentieth century organic style of architecture. His unique sculptural style draws upon Italian free form construction and post-war Japanese architecture. He has designed many houses, schools, churches and commercial buildings in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne and his projects have won numerous RAIA awards. In March 2007 Enrico was awarded Australia’s most prestigious architecture prize — the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Gold Medal for Architecture.
Enrico Taglietti was born in 1926 in Milan, Italy and educated at the Milan Polytechnic, earning his doctorate there in 1953. Enrico came to Australia from Italy in 1955 to design an Italian promotional display for a Sydney department store. He was then invited by the Italian Government to design their embassy in Canberra, which was to be the first of his major concrete buildings. Unfortunately that commission took nearly 20 years to materialise and in the early years complete building projects were relatively scarce. During this period interior work, commissions for motels and several houses sustained the practice — three early examples being the Gibson House at 12 Scarborough Street, Red Hill (1963), the McKeown House, 109 Irvine Street, Watson (1965) and 19 Downes Place, Hughes (1965).

Enrico’s early buildings used what he called a ‘calligraphy’ of elements, with long horizontal flat roofs and balconies that cast deep shadows, sloping, banded fascias and balustrades, battered walls and unpainted surfaces for texture and low maintenance. A notable example of this is the Dickson Library, his most important early building. Designed in 1964, the library is symmetrical, outlined by Enrico’s trademark deep, banded, upswept fascias. A central mezzanine and corner gardens add variation to the plan. Enrico designed a companion building for the library in 1981, the Dickson Health Centre.
Abstract and sculptural forms

Through the 1970s Enrico continued to use the creation of forms and spaces to add adventure and visual interest to structures. His school projects at Latham (1971), Flynn (1972) and Giralang (1975) demonstrate this, where his central concern for the inhabitants of his buildings produced complex yet fun and engaging environments for primary-aged children. His imaginative use of abstract forms and colour in some larger buildings allowed them to achieve a monumental scale, a good example being the Australian War Memorial Annex (1979) at Mitchell.

Evans House (1971) 62 Skinner Street, Cook

Photo: www.enricotaglietti.com
Central Themes

There are a number of important and recurring ideas present in Enrico’s architecture.

**Arrival.** His buildings, particularly the houses, place great importance on the arrival, but where the qualities of a building are revealed subtly after moving through a space or series of spaces, much like a Japanese house. The house at Aranda is a good example, with the approach and entry not obvious from the fortress-like appearance from the street.
Central Themes

The Central Space. Most of Enrico’s houses have a large central space that serves as a social hub for the inhabitants, containing the entrance, living and cooking areas. Enrico’s philosophy is that this is a place where the public and private needs of individuals can come together.

Green House (1975) 78 Couvreur Street, Carran

Photo: Max Dupain
Central Themes

Interlocking Volumes. The idea of interlocking internal volumes is central to many of Enrico’s houses. The inter-connected and overlapping internal volumes create interest and spatial drama; the idea also constitutes the rejection of a single level plan.

Smith House (1969) Glenhope Road, West Pennant Hills, Sydney
Pakistan High Commission (2013) 4 Perth Ave, Yarralumla
Central Themes

**Walls and Windows.** Enrico’s use of battered and stepped or curved walls and window reveals to achieve a balance between privacy and human interaction—as well as to create attractive sculptural forms—is a distinctive characteristic of his architecture.

Pakistan High Commission (2013) 4 Perth Ave, Yarralumla
Central Themes

**Deep Overhanging Eaves.** Enrico’s use of the deep, overhanging timber lined eaves with timber boarded fascias for shelter and protection from the harsh Australian light is one of his most recognisable elements.

McKeown House (1965) 109 Irvine Street, Watson
Central Themes

Walls and Courtyards. Finally, Enrico has made extensive use of walled gardens and courtyards in his work. They can project from the house (Paterson House, Juad Place, Aranda), form the entry to it (Mjuscovic House, Sullivan Crescent, Wanniassa) or be enclosed by it (Gibson House, Red Hill).

Smith House (1969) Glenhope Road, West Pennant Hills, Sydney
Works in Canberra

Town House Motel, 60 Marcus Clarke Street, Civic (1961; demolished)
Dickson Library, Antill Street, Dickson (1964)
19 Downes Place, Hughes (1965)
Dingle House, 12 Scarborough Street, Red Hill (1965)
McKeown Houses, 109 Irvine Street, Watson (1965 and 1994)
Center Cinema, Bunda Street, Civic (1966)
Italian Embassy, National Circuit, Deakin (1967)
ACMA Conference Centre, 26 Brisbane Avenue, Barton (1967)
Paterson House, 7 Juad Place, Aranda (1970)
Glenlyle Killen House, 311 Majura Road (1970)
Latham Primary School, O’Loghlin Street, Latham (1971)
Evans House, 62 Skinner Street, Cook (1971)
Flynn Primary School and Pre School, Bingle Street, Flynn (1972)
Medium Density Housing, Mockridge Crescent, Holt (1973)
Wood House, 43 Mayo Street, Weetangera (1973)
Green House, 78 Couvreur Street, Garran (1975)
Giralang Primary School, Canopus Crescent, Giralang (1975)
Gentle House, 7 Niblo Place, Chapman (1977)
Apostolic Nunciature, 2 Vancouver Street, Red Hill (1977)
Australian War Memorial Annex, 4 Callan Street, Mitchell (1978)
Nitrate Film Vaults, 16 Vickers Street, Mitchell (1978)
61 Sullivan Crescent, Wanniassa (1980)
Dickson Health Centre, Antill Street, Dickson (1981)
Gowrie Primary School, Jeffries Street, Gowrie (1983)
Pakistan High Commission, 4 Perth Ave, Yarralumla (2013)
Phillips Fox Building, 54 Marcus Clarke Street, Civic (1985)
White Eagle Club Turner, 38 David St, Turner (1973)
Woden Youth Centre, Calam Street, Phillip (1988)
Real Estate House, 16 Thesiger Court, Deakin (1989-93)
Saudi Arabian Ambassadors Residence, 88 Brereton St, Garran (1996)

Giralang Primary School, Canopus Crescent, Giralang (1975)
Other Works

Osborne House, Grantham Park, Currandooley, NSW, (1961 first house in Australia)

Church of St Anthony's, Marsfield, NSW (1968)

Smith House, 25-27 Glenhope Road, West Pennant Hills, Sydney (1968-70)

St Kilda Library, 150 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, VIC (1969) (pictured)

Dunmore Lang Apartments, 159 Herring Road, Marsfield, Sydney (1971)

Sea Residence, Lilli Pilli, NSW (1996)
Jury Citation - Gold Medal 2007 - Enrico Taglietti

The Gold Medal is the highest honour the RAIA can bestow, recognising architects who have produced buildings of high merit, who have produced work of great distinction resulting in the advancement of architecture, or who have endowed the profession of architecture in a distinguished manner.

Enrico Taglietti’s architecture is highly significant in Australian architecture, both for its individual character and for its regional base in Canberra – away from the large coastal cities of mainstream Australia.

Taglietti’s work over the second half of the 20th Century has consistently pursued an Australian architectural vision as seen through Italian eyes. Arriving in Australia, his first impression was of “the sort of emptiness which was very conducive to creation”.

His work demonstrates the architectural story of an immigrant – seeing a new country with clear vision – and he continues an important tradition of successful immigrant architects, including Harry Seidler, Frederick Romberg and, more recently, Romaldo Giurgola.

Having come to Australia as a young graduate in the late 1950s, Taglietti settled in Canberra, then an intimate city of 40,000 inhabitants. At the same time, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) emerged and engaged the country’s prominent architectural talent to undertake the major projects required to implement the capital’s growth.

In a period when Canberra practices were usually branch offices of Melbourne and Sydney, Taglietti’s succeeded as the first Canberra-based practice of note. Today he is regarded as one of the national capital’s active “elder statesmen” of architecture. His work has been critically acclaimed in Australia and internationally in numerous publications.

Taglietti’s influences come from the philosophies and work of Frank Lloyd Wright rather than the international modernity of the Bauhaus. The links and lineage between Wright, the Griffins and Canberra has been significant to Taglietti’s thinking and work, particularly the idea that meaning in architecture is developed from an organic relationship between architecture and landscape. This empathy with the landscape has made him a natural advocate for the Griffins’ vision for Canberra.
The design of his buildings is based on what he has describes as a “calligraphy” of elements – long, horizontal flat roofs and balconies, sloping fascias and balustrades, and battered walls – and often incorporates sloping window reveals and unpainted surfaces for texture and minimal maintenance.
Both his domestic work and large-scale public commissions gave him the opportunity to explore the free use of concrete. Concrete also enabled his houses to work into their bush settings. Prominent weathered timber fascias and boarding added to the fusion of his buildings with the landscape.

Enrico Taglietti was born in Milan in 1926 and completed his architectural studies at the Milan Polytechnic, studying under such luminaries as Gio Ponti, Franco Albini, Bruno Zevi and Pier Luigi Nervi. His work led him to Australia in 1955, and his practice has continued in Canberra through to the first decade of the 21st Century. His practice has had a long commitment to domestic architecture, but it has also built many public buildings including schools, churches and major commercial buildings.

Notable projects include the McKeown House (1965), the Church of St Anthony (1965) and the Embassy of Italy Chancellery (1974). Notable public buildings include the St Kilda Library in Melbourne (1972), Giralang Primary School and Preschool (1975) and the Australian War Memorial Annex (1979) in Canberra.

Working outside the architectural mainstream, Enrico Taglietti’s influence on Canberra architecture has been to stimulate the intellect and eyes of those who know and admire his work. The philosophic, aesthetic and formal qualities of his creations are remarkable. He is an outstanding architect of national significance, who has made a major contribution to the growth of the national capital."
SPACE, FREEDOM IN SIX-SIDED HOUSE

- This charming, six-sided house was designed by Dr. Enrico Taglietti, a clever young Italian-born architect now living in Australia. Dr. Taglietti, who belongs to the ultra-modern school of design, also created the three colorful interior settings below. This house is also our home plan for this week. See details overleaf.

THIRTY-TWO YEARS OLD

Enrico Taglietti

PHOTO: www.enricotaglietti.com

Home of Italian design in £4500 price range

- Our home plan this week is the beautiful and unusual six-sided design by Italian architect Enrico Taglietti that is featured in color on the two previous pages.

Where to buy this plan

With the permission of the Australian Woman's Weekly, we are pleased to announce that copies of the plan of this Italian design are available at selected stores throughout Australia.

The Australian Woman's Weekly April 9, 1958