

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R077

Name of Place: Townhouse Motor Inn

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: 60 Marcus Clark Street CANBERRA CITY 2601

Block 13 Section 23 of City

Listing Status:		Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:		Level of Significance:	
Citation Revision No:	1	Category:	Residential
Citation Revision Date:	March 1987	Style:	Post War Organic

Date of Design:	1959	Designer:	Enrico Taglietti
Construction Period:	1960	Client/Owner/Lessee:	Motelliers Pty Ltd
Date of Additions:		Builder:	G Flamia Constructions Pty Ltd

Statement of Significance

At the time of the Town House Motel's opening on 4th May 1961, it was the largest motel in Canberra and an early example of a "down-town" motel. Its design was considered to be a breaking away from the conventional "motel square". The first building in Australia designed by internationally recognised Canberra architect, Enrico Taglietti the design exhibits characteristics of Taglietti's distinct style of architecture. As a response to the emptiness and horizontality of Canberra, and the quality of light, the building emphasises light and shadow, and horizontality, with its use of deep horizontal balconies. This emphasis has remained throughout the development of the architect's work and the Town House Motel provides an early example important in this development. The original development of the site included a restaurant called Noahs (now demolished) designed like an ark.

The motel was designed like a ship to float above the ground allowing more room for car parking (one of the major site requirements) and provided an innovative design solution. Both the motel and restaurant incorporated sculpture by Clem Meadmore, designed in consultation with the architect. The siting of the building is significant, angled across the site terminating the approach to the city from the north-west.

Description

A three storey building with 68 bedroom-bathroom units, office, manager's quarters, breakfast kitchen, reception and waiting areas. The configuration of the building was influenced by the restricted access on all sides except the narrow south side and the requirement of car parking spaces for each unit in addition to that for visitors, staff and restaurant patrons. Thus the ground floor had to be considerably smaller than the cantilevered upper floors, and added to the ship-like quality of the design. Access to the upper floors is gained from perimeter balconies which allow more space for circulation and parking. The structure is steel frame construction with vierendel trusses supporting the four, 40ft span, corners of the building, the floors and cantilevered decks are reinforced concrete slabs, the internal partition walls are sound proof high porosity concrete; and natural wood finished are extensively used. The upper two decks are enclosed by metal balustrades, which incorporate sculptures by Clem Meadmore.

The freedom of Taglietti's work contrasts with the functional rigidity of much of Canberra's architecture, and his exaggeration of horizontality and use of light and shade provide a sculptural effect.

Condition and Integrity

Demolished.

Background/History

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

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

(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

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(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

(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

(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

References

Other Information Sources