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Terraced Constructions

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Terraced constructions appeared at first only sporadically in Switzerland, but now there are a growing number of building applications and plans. On the one hand, the attraction may lie in the use of steep slopes, previously regarded as hardly amenable to building, such sites calling for high concentration, and, on the other hand, there is evident a joy in the new kind of design and the tendency to break up the elevation into a three-dimensional entity.

As Hans Ulrich Scherer shows in his editorial, the new type of architecture is no longer restricted to homes or to buildings on steep slopes. In addition to hotels, office buildings, government buildings, institutions, the terraced house is especially suitable for schools. Presumably, however, the staggering of levels is a general and highly promising architectural principle which will be used above all for polyvalent building projects in future metropolitan centres: a cityscape of creative diagonals.

Looking toward the City of the Future

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Plans by André M. Studer, Architect SIA, Zurich

André M. Studer is the architect who departed earliest and most consistently from the conventional vertical elevation; here he shows six designs which the public has become aware of in the last six years. They are for three schoolhouses, a teachers' training institute, an apartment house and a home for the aged.

Examples from England

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In order to demonstrate that it is not merely the narrow valleys of Switzerland that mainly call for this terraced design, reference is made here to four examples in England, of which at least three have little to do with the angle of the given slope.

School in Riva San Vitale

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Architects: Aurelio Gaffetti SIA, Flora Ruchat, Ivo Trümpy, Bedano-Lugano

This is the first stage of a school complex and it abuts on the north side of the village centre. It was sought to integrate the school in colour scheme and design with the village. The standard classrooms are disposed in such a way that the roofs of some of them serve as terraces for the immediately higher ones.

Santa Teresa Academy in Málaga

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Architects: Manuel Barbero Rebolledo and Rafael de la Joya Castro

This private elementary and secondary school for girls is situated on a very steep mountainside overlooking the sea. The seemingly scattered arrangement of the classrooms is based on a rigid module with the rooms being balanced one against the other; the system, however, remains adaptable to the site.

Mont-Goulin Primary School in Prilly

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Architect: Pierre Quillet SIA, Lausanne

The school had to be erected on a small building-site with a 30° slope, and there was a height restriction so as not to block the neighbour's view. Every classroom has its own cloakroom, its own covered recess court and its own terrace, and so constitutes an independent little unit. Between the school and the gymnasium there is situated a public stairway which passes over a connecting tunnel.

Mühlehalde Terrace Colony at Umiken AG

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Architects: Team 2000 (Scherer, Strickler & Weber), Zurich

This colony constitutes a part of a town-planning scheme for the town of Brugg (Cf. WERK 6/1958 and 10/1964). The colony is conceived as an endless carpet, in principle, whose development requires the installation of a unifying diagonal lift. The basically uniform plan could be executed in a number of variants, depending on the type of dwelling wished by the purchaser. Between the basement bulkheads there have been installed a number of imaginatively equipped studios and studio-apartments. Every owner of an apartment is a co-owner of the public services: lift, stairways, roof garden, playgrounds, heating.

EI Lissitzky

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by Lucia Moholy

The essential features of the Twenties: open-mindedness towards anything new, readiness to experiment, recognition of different points of view, were clearly apparent in a loose group of artists, who met one another in various places: Hans Arp, Theo van Doesbrug, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, J. P. Oud, Hans Richter, Mies van der Rohe, Kurt Schwitters, among others. This group also includes the Russian EI Lissitzky, born in 1890, who, although mainly active in Russia, had a great influence in the West as a painter, typographer, art theorist and organizer of exhibitions. His activity as a teacher at the Academy of Vitebsk got him into touch with Casimir Malevitch and led him to the formulation of an art which he called Proun (from Pro und Un, the abbreviation of 'Unovis', the name of an earlier academy). 'Proun leads us to the construction of a new body ... A Proun begins in two dimensions, proceeds to three-dimensional modelling and on to the construction of all the objects of general life.' Lissitzky's work comprises, in addition to painting, lithographic series, typographical compositions, posters, architectural plans.

The problem of space in the work of Alberto Giacometti

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by Jean-Christophe Ammann

In the work of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti the spatial dimension oriented toward one specific object constitutes an essential component. The artist himself says: 'Sculpture is based on the void. The space is hollowed out in order to construct the object, and in its turn the object creates a space.' Giacometti, starting in 1953, returned to the model; he succeeded, however, only in working from familiar models. In the process of creation, with Giacometti, the model loses its physiognomic presence. In this process of alienation the spatial problem plays a significant role: 'When you make an object, it is always deformed by the distance existing between you and it.' The figure and the spatial dimension involved with it grow simultaneously as the work takes shape. The figure is a spatial summation and a focus of energies.

Urban Renewal – Also possible without Land Reallotment

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by Walter Förderer

In this study Walter Förderer investigates the possibility of the self-regeneration of an ordinary urban district dating from the end of the last century; he also explores the chances of giving such a quarter enhanced development possibilities and a chance to function as a modern city centre. The private owner could be allowed to build over the unutilized air space above street level, and he could undertake to create a pedestrian way at first floor level of his front. The renovation of a quarter can proceed in stages, can be based entirely on private initiative and excludes losses from house-wrecking.