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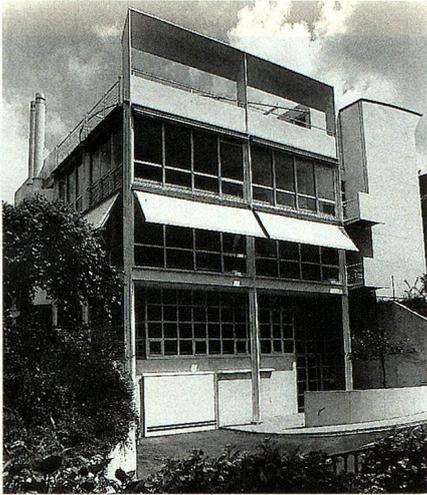
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Swiss architecture is achieving renown at the international level. Our cover picture shows the Vogelbach residential project in Riehen, designed by the Basle architectural firm, Michael Alder + Partner. (Photo: A. Helbling & T. Ineichen)

## I M P R E S S U M

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«» The importance of architecture is often underestimated. This is in spite of the fact that it can give pleasure to the senses and also provides an opportunity for reflection on the human dimension.

Anyone who has never experienced this should visit Orvieto in Umbria and admire its cathedral, a remarkable architectural achievement with a facade covered in magnificent ornament and coloured glory. Or go for a walk in the heart of Rome, between the Pantheon and the Piazza Navona, to discover the extraordinary domed tower of the Church of Sant'Ivo della Sapienza. When you consider these two edifices, one medieval and the other dating from the age of Baroque, you are bound to wonder how the builders of those days could have enabled such artists of genius to realise their dreams in the absence of modern technology. These were immense achievements for their age.

In our day too, cities possess new buildings which excite admiration. In the cultural metropolis of Paris, we may admire the Louvre pyramid or the new «Défense» architectural complex. It must be said, however, that controversy is bound to attend all architectural achievement. Feelings aroused by contemplation of art are a personal matter, and in any case a work of art emerges from the genius of an artist, or several artists, influenced to a greater or lesser extent by time and place.

In our age, dominated as it is by technology, no cathedral like that of Orvieto will be built, but instead there will be buildings like those in the «new» Paris or those of our contemporary Swiss architects, both men and women. We should consider for a moment how greatly our landscapes, and partic-

ularly our urban landscapes, have changed in the last few decades. This issue's Forum goes into the matter in more detail. I would just like to mention that in Switzerland's Ticino the modern pilgrim after art is confronted by a veritable guide to contemporary architecture.

Many Swiss architects of renown are known to history. Some of us first call to mind the names of the three great men who changed the face of Rome and who were all brought up on the shores of Lake Lugano: Domenico Fontana, Francesco Borromini, Carlo Maderno. Others will first conjure up Solari from Carona or Trezzini from Astano. Yet others will think first of Le Corbusier from Neuchâtel.

And it is good to know that the tradition of genius is still among us thanks to the followers of these famous builders: dreamers of new creative forms which fit into a tradition marked by a high degree of confidence in human capability and by patriotic sentiment. Indeed architecture means life, both during the period of creative design and during that of execution. It also embraces art, which stems from the close relationship between the architect, the surroundings in which he works and the materials he uses. A completed building – although transient, for everything falls victim to time in the end – is a living thing in so far as it arouses feelings and thoughts in the mind of the beholder, which are themselves creative. It is like a rock which speaks to us.



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