

Expo 1964

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EXPO 1964

Never since the Exhibition of paintings from the Prado has Switzerland housed an exhibition of the size and importance of the "Masterpieces from Swiss Collections" exhibition at present being held in Lausanne. It is interesting to note that this exhibition has already been visited by some of the greatest French, German, English, Belgian, Dutch and American art critics who have written glowing accounts of it for their readers. A number of big German newspapers have featured an enthusiastic report on it by the famous art critic Hermann Dannecker, who pointed out how rare it was for an exhibition to present at the same time masterpieces of French impressionism and German expressionism. The Swiss TV, the Flemish-speaking Belgian TV, as well as the Canadian TV have already made a number of interesting films there. The programme producers of the Community of French-Speaking Radio Programmes have decided to devote special features in their countries to this exciting and impressive exhibition.

That is why attention should once again be called to the extremely valuable achievement of the National Exhibition in organizing this magnificent exhibition of European painting and sculpture and its great merit in thus putting on display one of the most valuable artistic heritages in the world. [O.S.E.C.]

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An article by Michel Ragon recently appeared in the Paris magazine "Arts et Spectacles". Dealing with the EXPO, it presented quotes from other European magazine and newspaper articles on the same subject, including quite a few by the French industrial designer Georges Patrix. The first of these concerns that sector of the EXPO known as the Holiday Village (*Feriedorf*) located directly on the shore of Lake Geneva.

"I have never before seen a vacation village of such beauty, constructed exclusively of sail-like forms made of plasticized canvas of all colours. One encounters, seemingly as an integral element of the landscape, the aesthetic loveliness of the great Venetian sails of yore [and of the sails of the old Latin barques which used to ply the waters of Lake Geneva — Ed.]. It is not a question of decoration, but rather of the creation of architectural space".

"What I find so wonderful about the Exhibition in Lausanne", Patrix continues, "is the fact that one sees there no old architecture, no architecture inspired by what is past, but rather the expression of an architectural lan-

guage which makes use of both traditional and modern materials. Canvas, wood, concrete, plastics, metal — all of these employed in the service of a creation which is totally contemporary, both in technique and form. We all know of individual architectural successes, but their influence is limited, perhaps because we lack a total framework in which to judge them. The sight of such a totality in Lausanne makes it quite clear that most modern architects are not making appropriate use of the new techniques available to them. In Lausanne one does not meet with the spiritless monotony of much so-called modern architecture, which is nothing but an expression of boredom without creativity; one does not find such unoriginal forms as the "curtain-wall", for example. Rather, there are spheres, sail-forms, many tensile forms, umbrella-forms, splendid examples of prefabrication by local industry. If Switzerland has been capable of assembling so remarkable a display, it is because that the country's architecture is one of the best, if not the best, in Europe to-day. The most attractive industrial structure I know of is Tschumi's Nestlé Building in Vevey, not far from the small house which Le Corbusier erected for his mother. In most Swiss buildings, the arts are integrated. Even most small Swiss villages boast well-designed modern schoolbuildings. And so I feel that all creative people should have a look at Lausanne, where one can finally witness a completely contemporary architectural totality, instead of merely one or two isolated examples. There are many creative talents in Europe today which are lying fallow, unused; here is an opportunity to put them to work".

Michel Ragon then proceeds to denounce the provincialism of much modern architecture, ending his observations with the following passage: "Perhaps Switzerland has become so aware of the importance of contemporary methods of city planning and architecture because this already-small country is being squeezed together like a bellows. What I mean by that is, each year Swiss agriculture loses about 7,500 acres of land to the cities and the industry. It is clear that Switzerland must take the bold suggestions of contemporary architects and planners seriously, in the hopes of finding ways and means to slow down the decimation of its green areas through improved land distribution and city planning. That is why, at the Lausanne Exhibition, one of the most important themes of our time is given such a prominent place: 'The farmer in the midst of the technical revolution'. There, the public is offered a rational view of the position of agriculture in our society. Switzerland deserves both our gratitude and our recognition for having taken a stand on the problems of 'the man of tomorrow', his home and his community". [S.N.T.O.]

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