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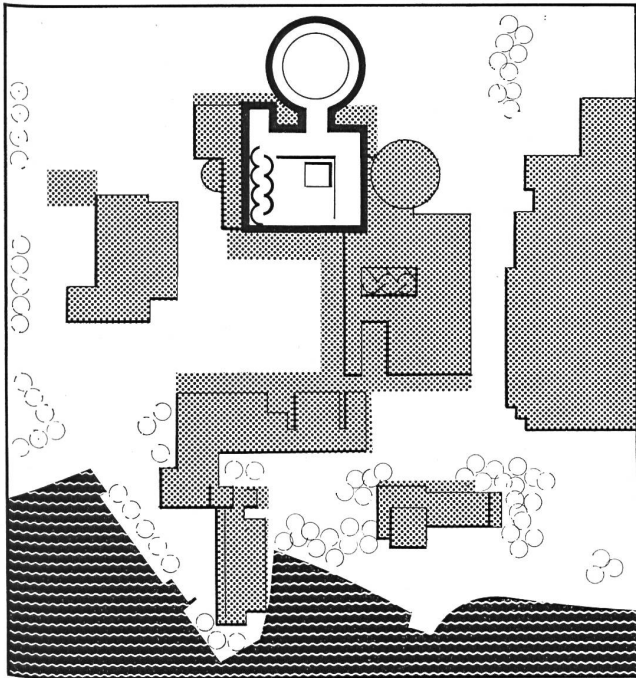
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SWISS NATIONAL EXHIBITION LAUSANNE 1964

Fashion embellishes Life Clothing and Fashion - a Foretaste of the Future

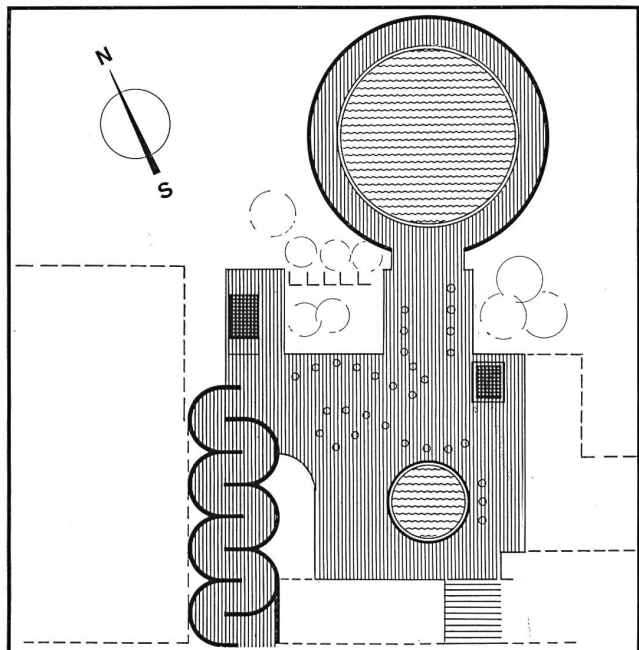


The last of the five sectors in the « special part » and the highlight of the whole National Exhibition, the « Art of Living » sector is magnificently situated on the shores of the lake in the eastern part of the plain of Vidy. In this sector, the « Clothing and fashion » section (Top centre) occupies a prominent position, even in the architectural plan.

From Darkness into Light

On first entering the « Clothing and Fashion » section of the National Exhibition, the visitor is momentarily plunged into darkness. Dark grey is the prevailing, all-pervading shade in the first part of a closed circuit, a sort of long corridor leading the visitor inexorably into the heart of the kingdom of fashion, dress, finery and beauty. Under a low ceiling, he sees first of all, standing out against a hazy background, a grey form surrounded by black glass, veils and a tangle of grey filaments. Moving beams of iridescent light and a bluish aura illuminate the scene, while the atmosphere of mystery is heightened by chords in a minor key, the whining of the wind and hollow echos. But nothing more, no exhibit, no accessory marks the entrance into the realm of fashion. In the beginning, everything is chaos, darkness and void. Everything is still to come.

After the first turn in the gangway leading through this corridor, the shadows gradually disperse. The dominant note here is dark violet. A violet figure, surrounded by cubist forms, holds a rose and a jewel, symbols of feminine adornment. Spotlights rhythmically project their narrow pencils of light onto these symbols. Less sombre chords, the clear peals of electronic bells, synchronized with the effects of the projectors, complete the message: « How life can be enriched by a jewel, a



The plan of the « Clothing and fashion » section shows very clearly the 3 parts into which this section is divided. Bottom left, one can see the 7 semi-circular niches, above right the big circle of the dome, between the two the lounge with the embroidery workshop and the watchmaking workshop as well as the circular pool.

little beauty ». Fashion and beauty... a few jewels and fashion accessories enrich the scene.

Round another bend in the corridor: a blaze of pure white! Shells surround a white figure, placed in the centre of a sort of coral-like excrescence of filaments. Detachment and purity. Periodically, the shells open, revealing a succession of very beautifully matched colours. The strains of a slow waltz are heard. « Colour is life, above all in fashion », is what this tableau seems to signify; skeins of synthetic yarns, bobbins, bottles filled with coloured liquids repeat this statement visually. Meanwhile the space has widened; while the gangway gradually slopes down, in each niche the ceiling is higher.

The next niche in the path is bathed in an aura of ethereal pink. An ivory figure is veiled in pink embroidered organza, its head decorated with flowers and butterflies. In a graceful pose, the figure turns as if she were dancing a lilting waltz, completely oblivious to the world in a moment of utter happiness. The strains of the waltz are accompanied by echo effects. One divines the meaning of this tableau to be « Movement, a significant element in the creation of fashion ». The accessories, a dress, a hat, a dainty piece of lingerie and shoes, are all made of the same pink embroidered organza. Starting from nothing, we have already seen beauty, colour and movement, three essential elements of fashion, clothing and finery, crystallized.

Green, bluish and yellow tones are the colours of the following niche. An acid-green figure is surrounded by two spirals; these spirals have hands manipulating brushes, scissors and needles. The figure is draped in a green print; towards the back, one of the leaves of the print has become a shrub. The mysterious sounds of a vibraphone are heard accompanying a muffled drum. Clothing, footwear, a hat, an umbrella, a handbag, emphasize the meaning of the whole: « Creative work in the service of fashion ». The fourth element of clothing and fashion now becomes apparent: the creative activity of forms.

Yet another turning, and we enter a niche in which the ceiling is at its maximum height. Here everything glitters like gold: the background, the mannequin (gold, silver and copper) and an ethereal filigree of columns and arches. The figure who queens it here wears a sumptuous gown of brocade, silk and lace. She appears to be both a bride and a queen. The light of the projectors enfolds this form, emphasizing each detail. A joyful, noble air is heard, the theme being: « Clothing enhances and asserts the personality ». Contrasting with the clothing of the mannequin — a cocktail or evening dress, a fur stole, a dinner jacket.

We now arrive at the *raison d'être* of this walk that has led us from darkness into light; it is designed to make the visitor adopt a personal attitude towards fashion. This is the task of the last, the seventh, niche in the path we have followed: in an orange

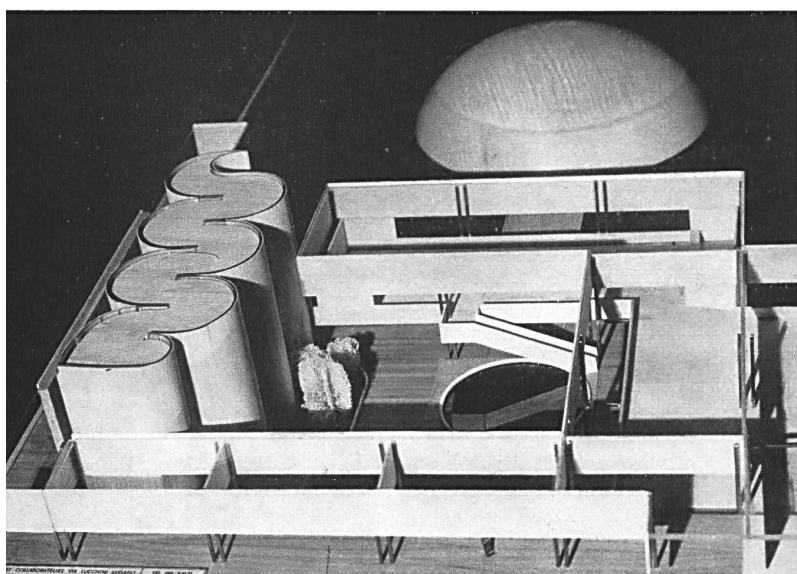
light stands a figure also in orange, symbolizing the presence of the mirror, reflecting oneself. To one side, a woollen coat and a knitted suit invite a spontaneous comparison. Here the spirit of spontaneity is to encourage the visitor to show a critical but positive attitude, and to reflect on his personal view of fashion. At the end of this walk, he is alone again, as at the start, but this time looking at himself with new eyes.

The three Elements

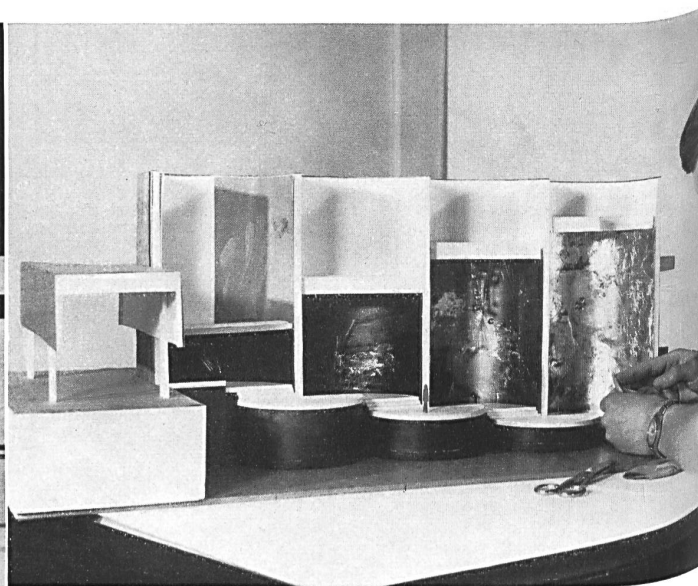
The architectural conception of the « Clothing and Fashion » section has been placed in the able hands of the Lugano architect Tita Carloni. Originally he had conceived the path we have just followed as a series of open half-cubes placed opposite each other but staggered, under the general title « Synthesis ». In the meantime, while the basic idea has remained the same, the cubes have become niches in the form of half-cylinders. The walk, in its new form, is also a synthesis of the phenomenon of « fashion » — jewels and clothing — placed in a very personal relationship with the visitor. The plan now consists of seven semi-circles, arranged opposite each other and staggered by a radius width each time. These seven niches gradually become higher and lighter the more the visitor penetrates into the section. The path leading him through this walk is a single-span concrete gangway leading him along the itinerary planned by the architect.

The decoration of this part has been entrusted to the Zurich graphic artist, Hans Looser. We have already tried, at the beginning of this article, to describe some of the ideas he has used to achieve his aim. The opposite end is the big hemispherical dome, originally planned for the « Fashionrama » and now housing another display under its lofty vault, after the first plan involving an Eidophore projection was abandoned. The rounded forms of the two elements set each other off; the « lounge » situated between the two, with its straight-line architecture, will therefore all the more easily be felt as a place for relaxation. While the walk along the corridor and under the dome invite concentration and focus the visitor's ideas on well defined points, the « lounge » is, so to speak, the place for an interlude on the theme of fashion.

On leaving the walk past the seven niches, the visitor enters this lounge and finds himself in a covered hall, opening on



A glance at the model of the « Clothing and fashion » section makes it possible to see the main parts, i.e. the seven niches (left) and the dome (in the background), and at the same time to look into the lounge with its circular pool, overlooked by the « fashion tea-room », which is reached by a single-span stairway.



In his Zurich workshop, Hans Looser studies the decorative scheme for the seven niches. A sectional view of the model shows clearly the path followed by the visitor, from the darkness into the light, and the narrowness of the entrance to the spaciousness of the hall near the final niche. To the four semi-circular niches visible in our photograph correspond three similar niches facing them and staggered by a radius width.

various sides onto gardens. The hall is decorated by columns formed of superimposed glass balls; these forms rise from the ground or come down from the ceiling, like stalactites and stalagmites in a fairy-tale grotto. The balls are made of coloured glass except for those forming the free end of each column, at eye level; 2 ½ ft. in diameter and made of white glass, they form miniature window-displays in which are shown all kinds of attractive fashion accessories, jewellery and little trinkets related to a woman's toilette; these miniature show-windows are arranged by the decorators in charge of each of the branches they represent.

They thus offer discrete displays, designed to delight the eyes of passers-by, of watches and jewellery, shoes, leather goods, vaporous lingerie, beauty products, articles of the synthetic textiles industry and certain carefully selected garments, representing the art of tailoring for men. These columns of balls are arranged in such a way that while strolling through, the visitor is obliged to follow a certain path leading him either to the entrance to the dome or to the foot of a single-span flight of stairs near the circular pool which leads to the « fashion tea-room » situated on the first floor. But, before passing on to another subject, let us stay a little longer in the lounge to consider certain details.

In the north-west corner intense activity prevails: here, a big hand-embroidery machine is at work; the Embroidery Vocational Training Schools of Eastern Switzerland in St. Gall are showing visitors how the filmy little Swiss handkerchiefs are made. In the north-east corner of the lounge, the visitor is given a glimpse into the wonderful world of watchmaking, represented by a watchmaker's workshop.

pool there is a gigantic wheel bearing projectors which one after the other cast splashes of light onto the grey walls of the dome — yellow, orange, red, violet, blue, green in the order of the spectrum of the rainbow.

The footpath is bordered by a balustrade on which are placed 16 switchboards. By pressing on a button, the visitor switches on the magic operation of the floating islands of fashion. Each of the 16 switchboards controls one of the 16 saucers floating on the pool, round the giant wheel. Summoned by remote control from one of the switchboards on the balustrade, one of the saucers approaches and, as it reaches the edge of the pool, becomes bathed in white light from a projector which illuminates the fashion objects and articles so artistically arranged on it. When he has finished looking at the objects thus brought into the limelight, the visitor presses on another button, sending the saucer back to its place in the centre of the pool. In this way the sixteen saucers come and go on the surface of the water from the centre to the edge and vice-versa, like the leaves of giant water-lilies.

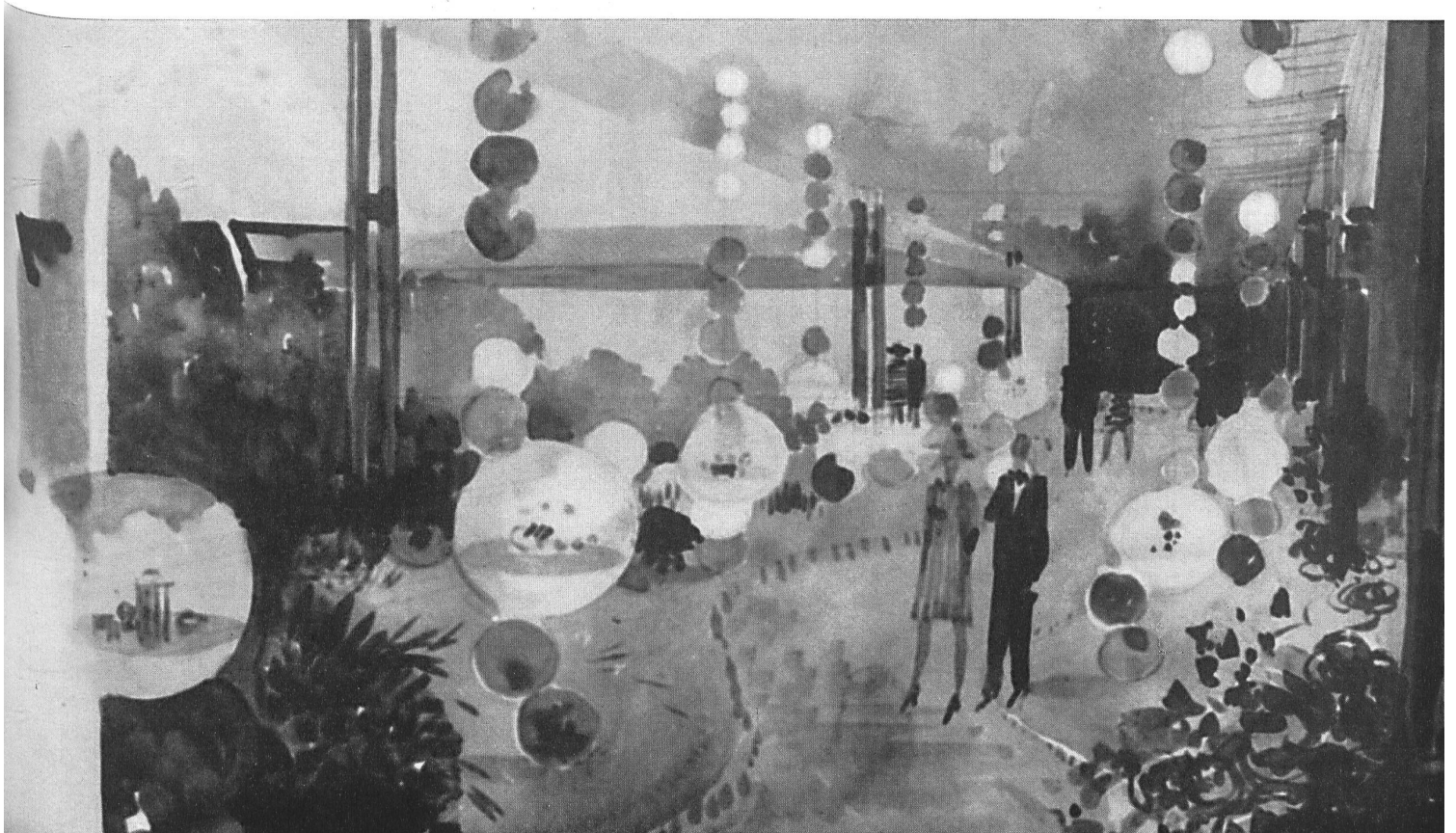
Donald Brun really had a brainwave here, when he designed these floating islands to replace the « Fashionrama ». In this way too, the products of Swiss ready-to-wear firms and fashion houses, ready-to-wear garments, hosiery and knitted articles, the products of the silk, wool, cotton and embroidery industries, leather goods and footwear, umbrellas, hats and furs, are shown to full advantage and achieve undoubted but discrete publicity for the high quality and good taste of the various Swiss clothing branches, from the production stage to the final making up. And the really fairy-tale manner in which the articles are presented contributes to impressing on the minds of spectators the main idea of this sector, that « Fashion embellishes life ».

After walking round the pool under the dome, with its ingenious floating display, the visitor is back again in the lounge, where

The " Floating Islands "

Finally we enter the dome whose hemisphere dominates the whole « Art of Living » sector of the Exhibition. The amphitheatre intended for the « Fashionrama » has been replaced by quite a different but no less captivating display. There is a 10 ft. wide footpath round the circumference of the pavilion, in the centre of which is a 70 ft. wide circular pool. In the middle of the

Having passed through the seven niches, the visitor enters the lounge, through which, guided by columns made of glass balls, he is led towards the dome. A water-colour impression of what the visitor will see as he strolls through the lounge. One could almost imagine a giant Christmas decoration.



he admires once more the attractive little objects displayed in the glass balls; under the light of the projectors, he stops a moment for a brief rest... he goes over in his mind all he has seen, goes up perhaps to the « fashion tea-room » and finally leaves the « Clothing and fashion » section by the wide stairs leading, in the south of the lounge, to the « piazza ». After this excursion into the enchanted realm of fashion and adornment, the visitor's state of mind can best be summed up in the very short phrase: « A life of happiness, a life with meaning to it ! » — this is the motto of the whole sector, of which the « Clothing and fashion » section is but a part although an essential one.

All for One

The danger that a « Clothing and fashion » section at a national exhibition might remain on the level of an ordinary industries fair has very fortunately been avoided thanks to the conception of the three elements (an element of synthesis represented by the walk through the seven niches, the lounge, and the dome) and thanks to the way in which the exhibits are presented. The whole section will cost in the neighbourhood of 1 ½ million Swiss francs; there was a danger therefore that the various branches of production, the associations, industries and institutions taking part might want to take advantage of the opportunity to do some smart advertising of their own products. But such a proceeding is not in the spirit of a national exhibition. The task of a national exhibition of this kind and — within it — of a presentation of the activity of Switzerland in the « Clothing and fashion » section is in the first place to present the results achieved and to project new ideas, aims and means. In the second place, the task of such an exhibition is to create a spirit of good-will in favour of Switzerland and the individual com-

ponents that go to make up this country. In this way, it helps further public relations.

This fact was realized by those taking part in the « Clothing and fashion » section and that is why they have given up the idea of any individual publicity for particular firms or makes in favour of a joint display. Those taking part represent all the various branches of the textile industry: cotton, wool, silk, synthetics, linen, embroideries; the clothing industry: ready-to-wear, made-to-measure, couture, hosiery and knitwear, footwear, tanning, jewellery and watchmaking; accessory branches: umbrellas, hats, leather goods as well as cosmetics and dyestuffs. They are grouped in an association of exhibitors of the « Clothing and fashion » section presided over by Mr. Bruno Meyer, Head of the Office for the Promotion of the Swiss Cotton and Embroidery Industries, who was recently appointed Manager of OLMA, the Swiss Agricultural Fair in St. Gall. In the particular case of the « Clothing and fashion » section, this association of exhibitors bears eloquent witness to the validity of the old Swiss motto « All for one ». They have joined forces in order to promote a common aim: a presentation of Swiss creative activity in the field of clothing and fashion, so as to give visitors to the Exhibition the lasting impression that to dress and to adorn really help to embellish life. It is but one step from this impression to the firm resolution on the part of each visitor, both male and female, to dress better in the future and to think more of his or her appearance, in order to enjoy to the full the riches of life.

A hemispherical concrete dome — transparent on the model only ! — shows the space intended originally for the « Fashionrama ». One can see the circular footpath surrounding the pool, on which float the saucers displaying articles of clothing and fashion and which visitors can summon to the edge and send back by operating the buttons on a switchboard.

