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Getting to know Sweden

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by Alfred Roth

The exhibition "Modern Sweden at Work" (Zürich, July 9th–August 21) gave us a very full picture of democratic Sweden's architecture. The first exhibition in Switzerland (1922) stressed the decorative aspect, but this one (in line with the unforgettable Stockholm exhibition of 1930) was concerned with the housing problem. The 1930 exhibition marked a general Swedish renaissance in that, under the leadership of Gregor Paulsson and Gunnar Asplund, it revealed a lively and modern search for good form. In this new exhibition the true spirit of progress was clearly to be seen.

Without, however, appearing unjustly critical, we should like to make the following two points where future exhibitions are concerned, aspects which this 1949 exhibition did much to clarify. Our idea would be to distinguish between average and outstanding achievements, to separate the chefs-d'œuvre from the general run by grouping them in one hall (Van de Velde would say "temple") and treating them as something other than the average. The other solution would be to reserve a special place for them in each section. This would have to be entrusted to a committee of experts carefully chosen and fully aware of the international import of the problems at stake. The value of such exhibitions would thus be increased.

As a whole the Swedish exhibition was a magnificent achievement. The most important lesson that Sweden has to teach us is the exceptionally close collaboration between the Swedish "Werkbund", the associations of architects, the authorities and semi-official organizations, and industrial leaders. Sweden's architectural situation is typical of that of the world, and is also exposed to the same dangers. The present return to a new romanticism could easily run the risk of compromising the conquests associated with the thirties of this century if we tended to forget that the beautiful can, from now on, only serve its legitimate function in harmony with the spirit of the times.

Phases of Town-Planning in Sweden

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by Charles-Edouard Geisendorf

Town-planning is a problem of first importance throughout the world, and Sweden provides us with an excellent example of how problems can be met as they present themselves. In the 19th century towns sprang up with the liberty of mushrooms. Planning's *first stage* – surface extension and schematic planning – came through technical and utilitarian needs, though not without serious drawbacks such as functional chaos, circulation blockages, new buildings in courtyards etc. Sweden's reaction to this was radical and interesting. The *second stage* concentrated on hygiene, the opening up of new dwelling areas on city fringes, houses varying between 3 and 10 stories. Result, districts that were city dormitories with no life of their own. The *third stage* – social planning – aimed to create community centres, to further communal institutions, to divert traffic and bring about a better equilibrium between town and country, industrial and housing zones. Today we enter on a *fourth stage*, the "aesthetic", which is concerned to remedy the formlessness of spacing, to avoid "diluted" green-belts. The attempt is to combine the architectural and the social,

where the beauty of the surroundings does not cease to be of human significance.

Some Tendencies in Modern Swedish Painting

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by Martin Strömberg

Swedish painting had for long turned its eyes to the Düsseldorf Academy until in 1909, the dawn of modernism, Paris became the focal centre, Matisse in particular. Moving with this tide of cosmopolitan inspiration were Einar Jolin and Isaac Grünewald, Sigrid Hjertén etc. Expressionism was more national: Karl Isakson and Carl Kyberg. They were the originators of "Göteborg colorism". The first World War brought a reaction against Parisian cosmopolitanism and the inflations of German theorists. Art becomes more Swedish. The "Form and Colour" group is important. Monumental painters: Hilding Linnqvist and Sven Erixson. Large Sweden has a northern and southern school; surrealism in Hamstad. Stockholm sports exhibition 1949 was monopolized by abstracts influenced by Picasso, Braque, Klee. Does this mean victory of abstract art in Sweden, as for functionalism in the 1930 exhibition?

Carl Fredrik Hill

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C. F. H. (1849–1911) lived in France 1874 to 1880 after Stockholm Academy. First in Paris, then Barbizon. Mental trouble put him under Dr. Blanche's care. His work before his illness was related to Barbizon, but later works, whose interest was not remarked before his death, anticipate Picasso's lineation (like those of Josephson born under similar conditions). If some evoke Munch, Bonnard, Chagall, Kokoschka, there are others that seem to herald in the "automatic drawing" of the surrealists. As a forerunner he is undoubtedly a genius.

Sven Erixson

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by J. P. Hodin

To understand and assess the significance of an artist like S. E. we must see him in relation to the evolution of modern Swedish painting. After Ernst Josephson and his contemporaries had revolted against academicism, resulting in paintings open-air triumph according to the formula of Barbizon's school, a second generation, likewise anti-academic, whose leaders are Isaac Grünewald (died in 1946) and his wife, Sigrid Hjertén, brought in the hegemony of "fauvisme", formed by Matisse. (Swedish art jumped the impressionistic phase by its own impetus.) A third generation is that of "naïvisme" or "neo-primitivisme", which rejecting the too subtle aestheticism of Paris attempted to carry its message to the more humble in harmony with the pacific social revolution of modern socialistic and democratic Sweden. Born in 1899, S. E. belongs to the second "naïviste" generation. Sensitive in particular to foreign primitives and to popular Swedish art, his admiration for Van Gogh and Kokoschka explains what might be called his "naïviste" impressionism. His latest period shows a stricter formal research, without excluding his constant liking for colour and the decorative. Apart from oils, glass windows, we owe to him some monumental creations such as the vast fresco for Asplund's Crematorium, and the largest modern Swedish tapestry, "Market Melodies", for the Göteborg concert hall. This latter is perhaps more in keeping with his genius.