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Introduction

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Even if definite progress has been made during the last few years in the construction of schools in Switzerland, there still remains a great deal to be done, among other things, the awakening of greater interest on the part of headmasters and teachers in what the architect is trying to do. – The increased recognition of the advantages of the large classroom with bilateral lighting is a marked feature of the present situation. The idea of the spread-out school building is counterbalanced by the trend towards its opposite (with social and economic advantages). The problem of the school is not to be confined to that of the classroom unit, but is to be treated as a whole, account being taken of all the various questions which may arise. Architecturally, the problem is not formal, but consists in bringing forth the psychological conditions which render possible a free, active and stimulating school atmosphere. Finally, let us also be aware of certain dangers, such as the temptation to build for the sake of building (in view of economic prosperity) and to lapse into mere juggling with abstract concepts. School architecture calls for genuine artists who are at the same time experts of the matter involved.

"Untermos" Primary School, Zürich-Altstetten

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1954/55, architect E. Del Fabro, Zürich

This school, on account of the (square) shape of its classrooms and its overall plan, is an important event in school construction in Zürich. 2 buildings, one for the classrooms, the other for special purposes, border on an ideal recreation area, finished off by a covered playground. There are 12 classrooms, each group of four forming a unit with its separate entrance. The recreation area is also intended as a public park for the neighbourhood. – Cost: 3.10 fr. per cub.ft.

The "Wasgenring" School, Basle

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1953/55, architects: B. Haller SIA, F. Haller FAS/SIA, Solothurn-Basle

This large primary school with 28 standard classrooms realizes in a consistent manner the conception of the spatially decentralized school. Structural elements: the 2-storey pavilion for 4 classrooms, the various pavilions being joined by covered walks. The criticisms directed against the conception of dispersal embodied in the whole lay-out are grounded not so much on pedagogical considerations (although the area allotted to each pupil is less than that of the "Untermos" school in Zürich) as on town-planning notions of ground utilization. Each pavilion closely integrated with the garden; the nursery has a lawn of its own, with a small pool. – Cost: 2.90 fr. per cub.ft. (wages included).

Frescoes in the Playgrounds of the Wasgenring School (Basle)

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Seven artists from Basle, being allowed free choice of theme, were entrusted with this assignment. It would be desirable to gather accurate data on the reactions of the children to these works. – It should be noted that those artists who left unpainted a 30 to 50 cm. strip at the bottom were indeed inspired, their work in this way being spared varicoloured scuff marks from the shoes of the small pupils, who could hardly be forbidden to engage in rough-and-tumble.

Pavilion-School at Niederurnen

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1953/54, architects: H. Leuzinger FAS/SIA, Zürich, and J. Graf SIA, Niederurnen, A. Strickler, Zürich, collab.

Only one pavilion has up to the present time been erected (4 classrooms). This school is characterized by its atmosphere of intimacy.

Small School at Lostorf (Canton of Solothurn)

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1954/55, H. Frey, arch. FAS/SIA, Olten

The character of the site called for strong foundations. 2 square classrooms on the ground floor and, in the basement, 2 additional classrooms.

Small School at Gunzgen, near Olten

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1954/55, H. Frey, arch. FAS/SIA, Olten

Two particularly noteworthy features: 1. Typical example of bilateral arrangement of classrooms on both sides of a central

corridor; 2. The architect has achieved a remarkable feat of economy in keeping the cost down: 2.00 fr. per cub.ft. for the classroom wing and 1.00 fr. per cub.ft. for the gymnasium.

Two New Schools of Three and Four Storeys in Mannheim

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1953/55, R. Jörg, arch. BDA, Head of the Building Department of the City of Mannheim

We are publishing an article relating to these two schools because they form an interesting basis for discussing the problem of the school with several storeys the classrooms of which are provided with bilateral lighting. The one with 3 storeys seems to work out better than the one with 4 (especially from the point of view of inner circulation and relation to recreation area. – Special feature of both schools: the windows. They are horizontally sliding windows and (measuring 26 x 26 ft.) they face each other on 2 sides of each classroom. On the south side, a slab of reinforced concrete gives protection against the sun, provided, on top, with polished glass (which is rather blinding). – From the architectural point of view, these two schools introduce a conception that is refreshing.

Value of Drawing

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by Hans-Friedrich Geist

It seems that non-representational art has now reached the stage where it is no longer a target for prejudice as it was in its beginnings, and this would be cause for satisfaction if, among the general public, it did not go hand in hand with the contrary view that everything that is not abstract is outmoded. For styles oscillate between thesis and antithesis, disdaining the indispensable synthesis, without which we should suffer a permanent impoverishment of our faculty of seeing. As the author has already emphasized on several occasions in this publication, at about the age of 14 – at the very period when his inner life is becoming more imperious and is seeking to express itself – the child is impelled to take a more "objective" view of life, but this crisis in his development should certainly not cause the subjective to be sacrificed to the purely rational. It is precisely for this reason that H.-Fr. G. attaches so much importance to the study of formal elements, as he explained a short time ago in WERK. But it is all the more necessary for objective drawing and "pure" drawing to be carried on simultaneously as the former too is never mere imitation, but transposition and as, moreover, there is never an authentic vision of the real which is not also activity. (Not to mention the fact that so-called abstract art is not at all, as so many people imagine, contempt for reality, but insight into a *different* reality.) In this connection, careful thought should be given to the admirable passage by Paul Valéry in "Degas – Dance – Design", on the value of giving free rein to our faculties and of self-mastery which constitutes the act of drawing from nature. Neither the discoveries of non-representational art nor the services rendered by photography could replace that active contemplation which the act of drawing entails. It is said that every gain is paid for by a corresponding loss. Let us recognize this fact and have the courage to annul the effects of it by compelling ourselves to take up drawing.

The Study of Nature

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by Walter Binder

In a description of the tasks set his pupils in a preparatory class at the School of Applied Arts in Zürich, W.B. distinguishes three phases: 1. After the young people have gone out in a group to look in nature for pebbles that strike their fancy (found in the dried-up bed of some river), they make drawings of these stones trying to catch their colour, their material effect and their markings (those "chance contingencies", those "ciphers" to which Novalis was so attentive); 2. Taking up the same pebbles once more, the pupil first plunges himself into a rapt contemplation of them, then, from memory (interpretative memory), he makes use of their elements, not for the purpose of reproducing them, but as a first stage in composition; 3. Finally, after further contemplation of the object, the pebble, and a further transposition from memory, the problem is to make an abstraction from the material substratum (among other things colour) and to trace on a light or dark background only those arrangements of markings, of "ciphers", which henceforth have an independent aesthetic existence. – Not that these tracings are, properly speaking, the "works" of the pupil. They are simply the preliminary stage of later formal artistic activity to the extent that the latter tends, as Klee said, to "create forms (bilden) as nature does".