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The Birsfelden Electric Power Station

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Machinery and electric installations: Centrale B.S.A., under the supervision of Fr. Aemmer; technical installations: Engineering Firm of A. Aegeter & O. Bosshard, Basle; architecture: Prof. H. Hofmann FAS, Zurich

Since 1942-47, Prof. H. Hofmann had been the specialist in charge of the problems of landscape preservation which were created by the building of the Birsfelden power plant; then in 1952, there was entrusted to him the architecture of the buildings comprised within the plant. The fundamental idea behind the enterprise was not to confine the planning to the station itself but to recreate, in place of the former natural landscape, a new landscape no less beautiful, not only owing to the green surroundings but also owing to the effortless authenticity of the architectural designs in keeping with functional necessities and at the same time in harmony with the given natural environment.

Pre-stressed Concrete Bridges and Landscape

49

by Emil Schubiger

The success scored by the traditionalists as regards the new Teufelsbrücke (Schöllenen) does not in any way prejudice the final solution which has to be found throughout the country for the problem of bridges in general, such as will be presented for instance by the creation of the planned express highway. A modern bridge has in the first instance to be adapted to the speed of modern traffic. Not an arch, to be sure, but a strictly horizontal roadway and, as far as possible, a bridge reduced to one roadway. Now, the use of pre-stressed concrete permits a reduction in the quantities of materials utilized; the resulting lower expense at the same time makes for gracefulness. The eye becomes accustomed to this linear severity, and a new aesthetic of bridges is born, based on economy of the means placed at our disposal by modern technology.

Landscape Architecture at the Rheinau Weir

54

Landscape architects: Walter and Klaus Leder, Zurich

It is possible to re-create, on a site formerly renowned for its scenic beauty, a harmonious landscape. The main thing is knowingly to replant woods and orchards, to get vines to grow over the retaining walls, etc. Moreover, the technical architecture of the weir itself likewise has to be integrated into the surrounding landscape, and it is to be hoped that the whole will be a happy synthesis of technology and nature.

Modern Lighting of Streets

56

by Alfred Farner

As in all modern technical problems, there must be sought here a synthesis of the useful and the beautiful. Functionally, the lighting of streets should: 1) allow pedestrians to walk in safety; 2) reveal to motorists at a sufficient distance the obstacles in their way, for their own safety and that of fellow motorists. If, more and more, the aesthetic mistakes of the past are avoided (a maze of wires, ugly lamp posts, etc.), the new kinds of illumination (fluorescent tubing, neon, etc.) also allow us to pay more heed to the principle that what is important is not so much the direct illumination as reflected light and its angle of perception. Also important – and still frequently overlooked – is the system of measuring light intensity, which alone makes possible an objective determination of the proper illumination. – On the whole, definite progress has already been made in this field.

The General Motors Technical Center near Detroit (USA)

58

1950-1956; arch.: Saarinen, Saarinen & Associates; Eng.: Smith, Hinchman & Grylls; landscape arch.: Th. D. Church

In this complex of 25 buildings, where 4,000 employees work, G. M. has created a center on the grand scale comprising 4 sections: 1) Research proper (chemistry, physics, metallurgy, etc.); 2) Automotive construction, with sub-division devoted to research on household appliances; 3) Rationalization (Process development); 4) Research on new car models (Styling department). The whole center, resembling a huge modern university, is completed by a one-mile test road.

Relief and fresco in the Customs House of Freiburgerstrasse, Basle

65

In the luggage examination hall, iron relief, conceived by Walter Bodmer, has been executed by the pupils of the ironwork class of the School of Arts and Crafts of Basle, while Karl Glatt has created an amusing fresco decorating the counter-room.

The Painter Otto Tschumi

66

by Hans Curjel

O.T. was born at Bittwil (Canton of Berne) in 1904 and no doubt owes to his rural origins his sense of "material" and formal clarity, his craftsman's taste for "making things". But of course without vain and picturesque imitation. He was a pupil of the "Gewerbeschule" of Berne, but nevertheless he early became aware of the signs of the times: expressionism, cubism, "Neue Sachlichkeit", futurism. In 1925 he was in Paris where, after periods in Berlin and London, he later spent 4 consecutive years, before returning finally to Berne in 1940. Paris at the end of the 20's, that was to have been the decisive period for his artistic development. For a time he was caught up in the magic purism of Ozenfant, but he finally threw in his lot with Surrealism, the Surrealism of the great period (which had none of the facile technique of post-Surrealism which has justly fallen into a sort of discredit); to this movement he was able to contribute his personal accent, in his abstract line as on the representational-associational level. T.'s art is essentially a transposition of the real into the unreal, a passage from the objective world to the dream world. Since his return to Berne (1940) he has created, all of them elegiac and ironic, the illustrations for Melville, Goethe, Kafka, Max Jacob, then an entire pictorial creation the concrete density of which is always seeking to be an interpretation of a realm lying behind the appearances of things. – Having chosen to settle in Berne, T., an artist who discovered himself in the turmoil of the great world cities, feels that he has contributed to a decentralization which can only aid in making art more human.

Saul Steinberg and Architecture

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by Heinz Keller

The delicious parody of architecture in the graffiti of Saul Steinberg in the "Labyrinth of Children" at the Triennale in Milan in 1954 recalled that this amazing artist, originally from Rumania, had in fact studied architecture right here in Italy before settling in America in 1941. In his three major works "All in Line" (1945), "The Art of Living" (1949), "The Passport" (1954), there is a clear evolution from an exquisite caricature to the art proper of an artist of genius. Beginning with the second of these books, things, especially monuments, start to live in their own right, not in the shape of spirited reproductions, but evocations as well of the inner life or rather non-life, especially in the Victorian period or in the "modern style", of which they are the expression, both hideous and fascinating. This trend becomes even more marked with "The Passport", reinforced moreover by a pluralism of styles (such as in Klee or Picasso), which makes his drawings so many caricatural syntheses at the same time as they are for the eye veritable poems in themselves, above and beyond their satiric import (see especially everything relating to the "accessories" of the American way of life); and they achieve an absolute beauty.