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French Architecture from 1945 to 1957

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by Claudius Petit

After the devastations of the war, the longing to restore what had vanished all too often caused reconstruction to be a mere reconstitution of the old. Of course, more modern ideas won out here and there (Marseille, Nantes, etc.), but in most cases they were applied to individual complexes and usually did not attain the proportions of an entire city. However, knowledge of new needs stemming from population changes and technological progress became necessary: notion of residential density and the principle of disposition of terrain, accompanied by the desire to profit at last by the work of the great pioneers (T. Garnier, F. L. Wright, Le Corbusier). Unfortunately, the influence of the greatest builders can be said to be reflected only indirectly in present-day life. Nevertheless, the reconstruction needs growing out of the war are so novel that we have to pin our hopes on a new association between builders and public, which will lead to a new Renaissance in architecture.

Aspects of City-planning in Algeria and Tunisia

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by F. A. Emery

From time immemorial, the Maghreb has been subject to two streams of influence, one from the East (Phoenicians, Byzantium, Arabs), the other from the North (Rome, the Barbarians, France), and the result is that this vast region has the greatest variety of types of city plan accumulated over the centuries: Roman cities, admirable Arab cities, e.g. Mzab, or again the Casbahs, — Turkish cities, Kabyle cities, finally, no longer merely Mediterranean in its conception, the modern (French) city. In Algeria, the immigrants from the North have established themselves in the very heart of the African cities, which might have led to a perhaps harmonious synthesis, if the unforeseen and tremendous increase in the Moslem population had not given rise to a chaotic development, which has meant that the most well-meant regulations have remained a dead letter: degradation of Turkish and Arab palaces into sordid makeshift apartment houses, division of parks into lots, and that scourge of North Africa: the shack towns. And yet, what the city-planners (Agache, Prost, Rotival, Le Corbusier, Dalloz, Zehrfuss, Bardet) have achieved, albeit fragmentary, is as important as what they have done in Europe. But the city plan for Algiers by Le Corbusier is almost unknown on the spot and the admirable Palace of the Government General, by A. and G. Perret, was conceived independently of the influence of Le Corbusier. The period of great enthusiasm due to the installation of the provisional government in Algiers in 1943 was followed by a time of chaotic building, with a proliferation of skyscrapers and a rather sensational attempt at striking effects (rather similar to Roman architecture of the Mussolini period). All of which did not prevent the creation of good plans (surpassing even the "dogmas" of Le Corbusier). At the present time, it is too early to forecast the future and to know whether North African cities will escape the two-pronged danger threatening them: senescence and, on the other hand, the excesses of boundlessness.

City-planning in Morocco

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by M. M. Ecochard

Thanks to the understanding of the Resident General E. Labonne, the author was enabled in Morocco, and this is unusual, to study city-planning on the State level, not by reason of mere administrative centralization, but for the creation of a team (law-makers, city-planners, architects and landscape architects) aiming at the economic development of the entire country and the laying out of cities, towns and even villages, along with highway construction and plantation facilities. As there are 6 times as many Moroccans as Europeans, 6 times as much attention was devoted to the needs of the former, the most urgent problem being housing for the masses, growing out of the abandonment of the countryside and the terrifying growth of the cities. On the general basis of the Athens Charter, it has been sought, on the urban level, to make an organic whole of European and Moslem quarters (no segregation), and, from the point of view of housing, to have a minimum housing space of 2 rooms on an open courtyard. The author believes that independent Morocco, despite all difficulties, will succeed in this endeavour.

House Furnishing in France

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by Charlotte Périand

The author calls for homes equally suitable for work and for relaxation. What is needed is a synthesis of the arts concerned, in the spirit of a functionalism that has ceased to be merely abstract.

Plastic Arts in Contemporary Life

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by Raymond Cogniat

The picture is assuming an ever more preponderant role in our age. Precisely how does fine art affect our daily life? There are two contradictory trends: a more and more intransigent cultivation of art for art's sake, and, by utter contrast, an endeavour to incorporate the discoveries made in the name of this pure art in everyday life. In France, the situation is particularly complicated in that this country has had the most revolutionary art movements, but has also known the most hidebound academicism (Institut, etc.), and if today the Government appears anxious to make up for lost time, we have the paradoxical spectacle of the conservatism of the public which often objects to daring creations. Happily, in addition to a certain number of large-scale architectural works which are now under way, many great artists are devoting themselves to the cause of creation outside the realm of pure art (ceramics of Picasso, tapestries by Lurçat, etc., — Salon de l'art mural inaugurated by Saint-Maur). New developments are afoot even if it has to be admitted that the results so far are rather inconclusive.

Books and Prints in France

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by Luce Hoclin

During the 19th century the art of the book declined to a very low level and it was toward 1900 with Ambroise Vollard that a revival became apparent, this renaissance being marked by the lithographic illustration confided to the most eminent artists. This movement continued up to the second war and pursued its course right up to 1946, young publishers even turning to young painters. There are even instances of a collaboration between writer and illustrator. In addition to these de luxe works, the book clubs have taken on a great importance for the revival of fine editions (demi- de luxe, e.g.); books of prints have also assumed great importance. Finally, the organization of the Triennial Exhibition of French Art at the Museum of Decorative Arts will not fail to have a stimulating effect on this general revival embracing typography, prints and binding.

Advertising Art in France

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by Denys Chevalier

For 12 years advertising art has been dominated by the problem of the colour photograph. The widespread fad of the „pin up“ seemed at first to signify the death of the traditional poster. But such was not the case, designers found other outlets (including the cinema poster) and, if private firms have turned away from catalogues, the State on the other hand is increasing its propaganda literature, at the same time as cardboard record covers have become numerous. But new fields call for new styles: just as P. Colin, Loupot, Cassandre and others had dethroned the style of Capiello, their juniors Villemot, Savignac, J. Colin, F. Bernard, A. François, etc. have created an advertising style which is more in touch with the latest technical research, more evocative than descriptive, attaching more emphasis to graphic elements than to pictorial elements, and in spirit it evokes a universe in ever more rapid motion.