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Responsibilities and Opportunities of Architectural Criticism 37

by Benedikt Huber

Public opinion, after having for a long time rejected as a whole everything modern in architecture, is now on the way to approving, not the modern as such, but any kind of modernism. To meet this danger, it is necessary for a competent architectural criticism to emerge. There is a sad lack of such criticism in the press at the present time. There is also a need for ad hoc criticisms. We should point out that those journals in which this kind of criticism is already conducted can only gain by proceeding as little as possible from purely technical considerations and by envisaging in particular the individual and social needs which it is the function of architecture to satisfy and to try to be essentially what can be called "on-the-spot critics".

The New Landscape in Art and Science

40

by Gyorgy Kepes

G. K., Hungarian by birth, is at the present time a professor at the Institute of Technology in Chicago. He has engaged in a wide range of activities (painting, photography, motion pictures, stage designing, exhibition lay-out) and he is also the author of "Language of Vision" (1944). In 1956 he brought out "The New Landscape" (Paul Theobald & Co., Chicago), in which he continues his attempt to elaborate a new mode of seeing. In this work he has called on the assistance of modern scientists and artists, he himself writing merely the introduction and furnishing some of the illustrations. The underlying idea is that since the sciences have become freed from their sensory basis constituted by Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics, we have lost our "landscape", our image of the world we live in, and that the real task of modern artists is to provide us with a new vision of the world which makes visible and, as it were, sensualizes what is by definition beyond the reach of the senses.

Form and Content

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Remarks on the situation currently obtaining in architecture
by Alfred Roth

Any fruitful development in architecture in the future depends much more on a determination of its content than on any purely formal experiments, it being clearly understood that what is meant here by content is the functional and human essence of buildings. However, in architecture, in addition to the concepts of form and content there must also be taken into consideration the concept of space. In all the great periods of architecture the problem of spatial organization was of paramount importance (e.g.: the Gothic period). If now the question arises, Where, generally speaking, do we stand today in architecture?, it can be answered that we are still in an initial phase so that it would be premature at this juncture to attempt to define the style of our age. Nevertheless the principles proclaimed at the beginning of the century by the "New Architecture" (rationality, and refusal of formal "imitation") remain valid, and all the more so as the practical application of these general principles varies greatly depending on individual countries. To be sure, the present situation gives some cause for anxiety (too much technical specialization, confusion between the faddish and the authentically new, etc.), but the future of architecture is to a great extent in the hands of the architects themselves if they can make the public accept their legitimate authority in the name of reason, feeling and creative inspiration.

Shaping the Technical Power

50

by R. Steiger

To some extent in Europe, but above all in America, the architect has been reduced to the role of mere "stylist", architectural make-up man, whereas any authentic architecture ought to comprise in one unity all the structural aspects going to make it up, such a harmonious unity as the great builders of the Middle Ages worked within or Brunelleschi in Florence. – Now, R. S., basing himself on the example of the assignment given him in Geneva by the European Commission for Nuclear Research (CERN), shows that it is only by going deeply into the technical nature of the components to be built (protonsynchrotron and cyclotron) that the architect has been able to ward off the formally unsatisfactory consequences of the original conception of engineers and technicians, succeeding in this way in realizing more successfully (and more economically) the scientific goals to be achieved and, at the same time, achieving a no less successful architectural design. This is a result involving, it is clear, a great deal of hard thinking.

The New: Why always Something New?

55

by H. van de Velde

Selected extracts from a lecture given in 1929 and appearing in "Pages de doctrine". – Distinction made between "novelty" and the new, which for its part is eternal.

Jointing of pieces of wood

58

by Werner Blaser

Exercise given by the author to his students at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (Ulm).

Painting and Sculpture

60

by Werner Hofmann

It has been sought (by Sedlmayr) to define the tendency of modern art in terms of its search for purity in each of its branches, whereas this purism, which goes back to the distinction among the genres made at the time of the Renaissance, is plainly not in accord with the facts. The whole trend of all vital art is on the contrary to liberate the creative faculties with a view to a total expression. At the beginning of the century painting was ahead of the sculptors with respect to new experiments (cubism, futurism, dadaism), but sculpture soon caught up. If at first it was painting which aspired to spatialization, sculpture for its part set out on its own to discover the "new landscape" and again furnished "models" to the painter, who has ceased to be abstract and has now begun to evoke the "plastic reality" of the modern world.

Art since Mondrian

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by Karl Gerstner

K.G. in the light of several examples reproduced in this issue notes that the first phase of painting in this century (in a very eminent sense the Mondrian phase) is characterized by the discovery of the elements, and goes on to suggest that the second phase can be defined in terms of its search for their proper order (in accordance with their morphology, their syntax). – To call this art a "concrete" art is only a manner of speaking (what is not "concrete" nowadays?). In reality, there are no longer any "isms", – a sign that there is emerging an art which is on the same basis as all the other domains of thought and of life.

Value of Pure Colour

70

by Max von Mühlenen

Pure colour, a relatively recent discovery which has not yet been properly explored, was unknown to traditional painting devoted as it was to chiaroscuro. It is a fundamental element in art, and can perhaps really be understood only in terms of the plastic pictorial creative process. Contrary to what was believed at one time, a colour can exist by itself (that is its concrete character), – and a new colour demands a new form. Formerly, a picture was a sort of stage offering us a spectacle; henceforth, a picture has become a reality *sui generis* into which we can allow ourselves to be absorbed, and only this renunciation of the representational element has permitted us to discover and to experience directly pure forms and colours.

The Spatial Irradiation of Modern Sculpture

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by S. Giedion

The human figure has lost its central position: modern sculpture in its entirety represents an attempt to get back to the primeval origins of plastic art. These general views are illustrated by S.G. in the report of a discussion with Pevsner on the Swiss radio (October 25, 1949). In the same spirit as that of P.'s manifesto (worked out with his brother Naum Gabo), it is stated that the plastic works of art of this artist are no longer, as formerly, cut out of the solid mass of the material, but are surfaces capable of free development integrating space and time, with the aid of light and colours. – These sculptures are made for public exhibition (sculpture for Caracas) and for display in the open air (the "Developable Column of Victory" – stands today in front of the main General Motors building near Detroit).