

Zeitschrift: Das Werk : Architektur und Kunst = L'oeuvre : architecture et art
Band: 45 (1958)
Heft: 5: Schulbauten - Altersheime

Rubrik: Summaries in English

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Remarks on two new school buildings in Zurich

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by Alfred Roth

Zurich can be justly proud of its recently built schools, especially of the 2 schools dealt with in the present issue. One of them, the Letzi Secondary School, with an admirably concentrated plan, reveals an outstanding feeling for straightforward architectural design without overlooking the need for pedagogical efficiency. This striving for personal design has perhaps had an adverse effect on the 2 kindergartens adjoining, just as it may be pointed out at this juncture that an undue concern for design as such or a preference for such and such a material ought never to obscure the need to keep the building "on the child's scale". The second example, the Chriesiweg Primary School, on the other hand, corresponds entirely to the pavilion school type. In the Letzi school, bilateral lighting (the floor in the classrooms is black, but, in view of the predominance of dark brick material, it "soaks up" in this case too much light) and cross ventilation; in the Chriesiweg school, same type of ventilation, while the lighting, which is excellent, has necessitated an adherence to the conventional south-east orientation. In both cases the music room seems perhaps to be rather too cut off and in particular not readily capable of extensions.—Fine murals by Hans Fischer and Max Truninger in the Secondary School, in which the architecture is neatly balanced by the stele created by S. Mattioli and by the prismatic sculptures of O. Müller, whereas in the Primary School, the whole question of the artistic ornamentation, as yet unresolved, is rendered especially ticklish from the presence on the site, felicitous though this is, of numerous erratic boulders.

The Letzi Secondary School in Zurich-Albisrieden

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1955/56; Ernst Gisel, arch. FAS/SIA, Zurich

This secondary (i.e. upper primary) school with 2 floors comprises 26 classrooms, 4 needlework rooms for girls, 2 physics and science classrooms, 1 study, 1 teachers' room, an office for the principal, 1 library, 1 music room (with stage), 1 art room, 2 manual training shops (wood- and metal-working) for boys, 1 caretaker's flat, 2 gymnasiums (1 for each sex), plus 2 kindergartens and playing fields, etc. The building encloses on three sides an interior courtyard, but all the classrooms look out on lawns. Principal construction materials: red brick left untreated, as well as concrete, asbestos-cement and copper. Cost per cubic metre: around 105 Fr.

"Chriesiweg" Primary School in Zurich-Altstetten

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1955/57; Cramer + Jaray + Paillard, arch. SIA, Zurich

This school is the result of a competition for which in 1953 the administration had requested the architects to present new and fresh ideas on school construction. The "Chriesiweg" school ("Chriesiweg" is the dialect form of "Kirschenweg"—"Cherry Lane") consists of 3 pavilions with 4 classrooms, each reached through arcades forming at the same time a recess yard. It has been sought to keep all dimensions on the child's scale. Every classroom has its special hobby corner. A carefully landscaped school area.—Cost of construction per cubic metre: 109.70 Fr.

The problem of the modern Classroom

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by Rolf Walss

R. W., a teacher at the school described above, explains that the solution adopted here represents a compromise between the conventional classroom and what would be an ideal classroom to be subdivided, permitting working in small groups, e.g., of 4 pupils. It is a compromise in the sense that the so-called projects corner at least already permits an extremely fruitful "division of labour" (preparation, revision, manual projects, etc.).

The "Chriesiweg" School in Pupils' Drawings

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by Rolf Walss

These drawings testify, as it were, to the mode in which the pupils "live in" and, it might be said, "accept" the new world of modern design represented for them by their school, which is in all respects so original.

Three schools at Nagele (North-East Polder, Holland)

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architect: Aldo van Eyck and H. P. D. van Ginkel, Amsterdam

Nagele is a new village built on a polder recently reclaimed from the sea. The landscape, utterly flat, is lacking in any kind of contrast, but the antithesis between the monotonous flat expanse and the "closed" structure of the settlement is thus all the more striking. The village was

planned for a population of approximately 2800 by the Dutch section of CIAM ("8 en opbouw"). The three schools, the Catholic, the Protestant and the non-sectarian, are all located on the same site, this arrangement being rather unusual for Holland if one considers the bitter controversy between the Churches and the State in the field of education. Radically simple disposition of different rooms. Between classrooms and entrances an area which serves really as a zone of transition from school to outside world.—As far as the design is concerned, the landscape is only a point of departure and must not be architecturally "aped", the latter procedure, according to the author, being the error perpetrated by Le Corbusier at Ronchamp.

Modern Art in old and new schools in Basle

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by Maria Netter

The schools of Basle, even the old ones, are brightened here and there by fine modern examples of stained glass (K. Flaig, J. Düblin, W. Barth), while, thanks to the generosity of the Electric Power Company, the Kohlenberg School has acquired an iron relief by W. Bodmer and two ceramic compositions by Marguerite Ammann.

The new Zurich readers for the 2nd and 3rd primary school grades

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by Hans-Friedrich Geist

The readers in question are 7 thin volumes, easy for a child to handle and carry, 3 for the 2nd and 4 for the 3rd grade. The least one can say of them is that they are a sheer enchantment. There will be unreserved praise for their typography, their page lay-out and especially the coloured pencil drawings by Hans Fischer and the water-colour illustrations by Alois Carigiet. These two artist-poets never fail to speak the language of children, who are eager to learn the new and to recognize the familiar. There is nothing pedantic or schoolmasterish in these books, which resemble so little the dreary primers of former times and are a heartening indication of the high level of teaching in Zurich.

"Am Bruderholz" Home for the Aged, Basle

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H. P. Baur, arch. FAS, Basle

Located on the outskirts of the city but only 1 km. from the centre, this home for the aged comprises a 3-storey building with 36 rooms and another 2-storey building with 24 rooms (12 of them doubles). In order to guarantee quiet, none of the rooms face the street, but they all face the open country to the south and south-east. Half of the rooms have been furnished by the firm of "Wohnbedarf" (good contemporary design) in Basle, the other half by the occupants themselves. Common room, smoking lounge and reading room can for special occasions be converted into one single room. One building, on the north, houses the kitchens, another, on the east, the personnel quarters with accommodation for 6, provided with separate entrance.—Cost per cubic metre: 128 Fr.

Resident Centre for the Aged, in Basle

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1955-57, arch.: F. Visch and G. Weber, FAS, Basle

The steady increase in human longevity, the break-up of the family unit owing to industrialization and finally the housing crisis have all contributed to making old age not so much an individual as a social problem. In Basle a welfare organization has been set up to establish a resident centre for aged persons. This centre is made up of pavilions constituting, as it were, houses with arcades, with strictly private apartments (to avoid any suggestion of the old-style home for the aged). There are 126 1- and 2-room apartments; average monthly rent: 67 Fr.—Prime cost of construction per cubic metre: 104 Fr.

