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Summaries in English

The Federation of Swiss Architects

by Hermann Baur

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In other countries it is customary for architects to unite in only one organisation; in Switzerland, however, we find the special circumstance that in addition to the general organisation (S.I.A.) which includes both engineers and architects, there exists, also – since 1908 – the Federation of Swiss Architects (F.S.A.). Such "double entry book-keeping" might seem to be needless waste, but in point of fact it has proved to be quite productive, especially in the light of the fact that the F.S.A. has come to fill the position of "aesthetic conscience" (Peter Meyer) for the country and for the profession. In addition, the F.S.A. has never ceased to serve a useful function in organising competitions, in arranging courses of study at the Federal Institute of Technology, and in many special projects: local planning, housing, etc. and numerous exhibitions: London, Basle, Zurich.

Housing construction from 1908 to 1930

by Paul Artaria

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The story of housing during these years can be summed up as the struggle to get away from the 19th century tenement type of building. Originating in England, Holland and Germany, this new movement flourished in Switzerland, from 1912 on, under the impetus given to it by Hans Bernoulli; this took place in spite of the resistance of authorities and of the general public, who had to be gradually won over to the idea of the small house and of the housing area. The F.S.A. and the Schweizerischer Werkbund contributed by means of exhibitions and model houses, and gradually there appeared the housing projects of Freidorf (Basle), Aire (Geneva), Hirzbrunnen (Basle), etc. and finally that of the S.W.B. at Neubühl (Zurich, 1930-2).

Housing projects from 1930 to 1958

by A.H. Steiner

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At the beginning of this period there was a slump, brought about by the economic crisis, and it was only in 1943 that, in spite of a shortage of materials, there was a resurgence of activity in this sector. Shortly afterwards there appeared the first experiments in urban legislation, and at the same time attempts towards building housing projects with business and civic centers. The first efforts in building point-houses were also made at this time.

25 years of national planning in Switzerland

by Armin Meili

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In point of fact, we do not yet have the overall plan which is regarded as necessary, but rather just a variety of preliminary studies and a few partial embodiments. In 1933, in the "Autobahn", the author raised for the first time the question of dividing the country into different zones. Both the press and public opinion reacted negatively. Paradoxically enough, it was the war which furthered these ideas, in the form of the fight against unemployment, entrusted in part to the Military Service, and of the hotel reorganisation plan undertaken by the P.T.T. 1943 saw the foundation of the "Swiss Association for National Planning" and its publication "Le Plan". The increase in population and the extensive highway projects made planning an absolute necessity – otherwise the ravages of slums and the spoiling of our landscape would go unchecked.

Brief historical review of school construction in Switzerland

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by A. Roth

Shortly before 1900, the standard school-building was developed consisting of a central stair-case with classrooms on either side; the buildings were mostly three-storied and the classrooms received light from three sides. From 1900 to 1930, the "dungeonlike" type of school-building grew to gigantic proportions. Then, in 1930-9, the revolution in architecture (stressing the predominance of the human element, of reason, nature and technology) and the movement for outdoor education promoted the pavilion type of structure. In 1932 there was held in Zurich the exhibition: "The Child and His School", organised by W. M. Moser in collaboration with W. Schöhaus and Prof. W. Gonzenbach. This was followed by some constructions of unconventional design (Lachen, Zollikon, Basle). 1939-50: construction was greatly retarded by the war and, consequently, more attention was paid to the study of planning. As for school planning, the city of Zurich (whose lead was followed by Berne) studied the problem of distributing schools according to districts, along with the idea of differentiating the size of schools (kindergartens, small schools, medium-sized schools, large schools). Accelerated construction of new schools began right after the war. 1950: A. Roth published his "The New School". 1953: second school exhibition in Zurich, organised by A. Roth in conjunction with an international conference. On this occasion a competition for new school designs was held, entries being required to provide a hobby area for each classroom. The winning project (Cramer, Jaray and Paillard) was constructed at the "Chriesiweg" school, the most beautiful pavilion school in Switzerland. Other notable constructions have become the pride of Zurich and many another Swiss town or community. – In the construction of schools, architectural form must adjust itself to the desired atmosphere and spatial considerations.

Swiss hospitals in the last half-century

by H. Fietz and R. Steiger

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Development in this sector began with a solid core of buildings left over from the 19th century, and has been marked, partly by renovation, but even more by the construction of new buildings. Notable is the increasing preference given to large centralised buildings, the integration of the different medical services and the increasing enlargement of operating rooms and clinics.

Industrial construction in the last half-century

by Roland Rohn

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The most remarkable architectural changes of the last fifty years have been made in industrial buildings. The rapid spread of industrialisation can in many cases not be handled by merely enlarging the already existing plants; it often demands the construction of new buildings, usually outside the cities; these, by the same token, will constitute the nuclei of future centers for which plans are now to be made.

Fifty years of Protestant church design

by Benedikt Huber

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After the neo-classicism of the first years of the century, a new concept appeared with the St. Paul's Church in Basle, where the pulpit takes the place of the choir. There are two opposing concepts in this sector: the traditional, longitudinal nave versus the church centered around the pulpit or altar (Otto H. Senn).

Fifty years of Catholic church design

by Hermann Baur

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Shortly after 1920, St. Anthony's Church (Moser) in Basel marked the first application of modern art to religious architecture. Since then, architects have tried, among other things, to express the eternal truths in modern forms either by the concentration of light on the choir, or, more recently, by the gradual raising of the whole nave from the entrance to the choir.

The F.S.A. and international relations

by J. P. Vouga

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It is obvious that in architecture, as in almost all other fields, foreign countries seek more inspiration from Switzerland, whose federal structure in fact forbids much action on the international scale, than Switzerland does abroad. But it was in Switzerland, at La Sarraz, that perhaps the most important event in contemporary architecture took place: the founding of the C.I.A.M. Moreover, until 1948 the C.P.I.A. was presided over by our colleague from Basel, P. Vischer, and it was at Lausanne, in 1948, that the International Union of Architects was founded. Nevertheless, there is one field in which Swiss efforts have met with notable success abroad: several travelling exhibitions of Swiss architecture in European and American towns.

Preparations for the National Exhibition in 1964

by Paul Waltenspuhl

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In a special meeting on the 11th of February, the F.S.A. was presented with the various proposals for the National Exhibition of 1964. That of the A.P.A.U.R.B.A.L. (Association for Urban and Rural Planning in the Lake Geneva Area) proposed as the theme of the Fair an important project for the region between Lausanne and Morges. On the 15th of March, the C.Euvre decided to call the Swiss cultural associations to a meeting at Lausanne in order to give them a chance to take a stand. Briefly, they wanted to know whether the consensus of opinion favoured a centralised fair of the traditional type, displaying the current state of Swiss undertakings, or, on the other hand, a decentralised fair comprising an experimental area and designed to offer a view into the future of mankind and of our national development, in pace with the great scientific discoveries and technological advancement of our age. As of the present moment, no definitive conclusion has been reached.

Painting and sculpture in architecture

by Heinz Keller

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In most of the Swiss cantons, 2 per cent of the building budget is set aside for "artistic ornamentation", a happy situation in itself, but one which unfortunately does not penetrate to the heart of the problem. To begin with, this concept of "decoration" is a heritage left over from the 19th century; in general, both authorities and public, even though they usually accept modern tendencies in architecture, are far from showing the same understanding towards the plastic arts. Nevertheless, one can see that sculpture aims at architecture (the object in space of Maillol, Burckhardt or Brancusi, or the integration of space to sculpture: Pevsner, Moore), and reciprocally, that architecture aims at sculpture (Ronchamp). Painting can also become an element of architecture, in both murals and stained glass art, especially since non-representative art has made it possible for painting to abandon the illusion of perspective.