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Architecture and Construction of Housing

by Jakob Maurer

Architects can be divided into two groups: those who are anxious to produce "good" architecture and work for the state and other institutions, and those, on the other hand, whose principal task when it comes to large-scale housing projects lies in the solution of technical and economic problems. Given the great complexity of the real estate market, the regulations which differ from community to community on building and the fiscal problems, the second class of architect is seen to be indispensable in its advisory capacity to private enterprise. Unfortunately, this economic and legal specialization makes itself felt only too often in the resulting architecture, and it is not impossible to imagine a time when the general contractor will be able to do without an architect, and therefore without even those considerations of architectural values which he does have now. Increased state intervention is the usual solution that is urged, not only for professional reasons, but also because there is a legitimate anxiety that people should have decent housing (architecturally and from the point of view of town planning). But, apart from imposing on the future the hypotheses of today, this would reduce creative freedom still more. The real solution would be to set up a service of information and research, whose studies and publications would allow architects to have more time to devote themselves to truly architectural problems.

"Cate" Flats at Massagno, Lugano

1958; arch. P. Brivio, Lugano

Following numerous discussions the plan, which was originally rectangular and then hexagonal, is a combination of the two.—Structural engineering: A. Rima, eng., Locarno.

"Albairone" Blocks of Flats at Massagno, Lugano

1956; arch. P. Brivio, Lugano

72 1 to 3 room flats in three eight-storey blocks. Cost: 102 fr. per m².

St. Gall City-Park

Arch. O. Glaus, FAS/SIA, Zurich; W. Schuchter, St. Gall; R. Kamber, Zurich; H. Stadlin, St. Gall; Engineers: G. Kruck, Zurich; J. Bruderer St. Gall

The name of City-Park is given to a new area restored in the old town, where 8½–9½ storey flats have been built. The group effect is very pleasant, but owing to the increase in costs inherent in any constructional work which only slightly exceeds the normal six storeys, the realization of the plans has proved rather costly for private enterprise.

Flats at Miremont-Le Crêt, Geneva

1957; arch. M. J. Saugey, FAS, Geneva

141 flats ranging from 1 to 8 rooms divided among 8 floors. The building is charmingly and elegantly harmonized with the garden.

Flats with cinema in Lugano

1957; arch. Prof. R. Tami, FAS/SIA, Zurich-Lugano

Although they stand on two different plots of ground, these flats, which were built to harmonize with the nearby house "La Piccionaia" (a historic building of the 15th century), are organic in construction. The triangular motif in black and white is of considerable decorative importance in the hall of the cinema and is repeated in the foyer.

Problems and Perspectives of Flat Ownership

by Beate Schnitter

Flat ownership or that of a floor of a house was abolished in Switzerland in 1912, when the Federal Civil Code was introduced, because of the complications and litigation (especially in cases of inheritance) it gave rise to. However, the general housing crisis and the facilities for payment, and therefore construction, that this form of ownership has allowed abroad (Germany, Austria, Italy, France) has led to a movement being founded in Switzerland which is trying to get it re-established, and soon Parliament will have to come to a decision. Important though they be, the economic arguments are not the only ones. The personal and civic questions deserve, perhaps, even more consideration. Not only will flat ownership correspond to the progressive equalization of wealth (economic reason), but it is well fitted to combat, given the in-

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creasing ratio of town to country in Switzerland, that "nomadic" life of the citizens, who are condemned to being uprooted by the changing from one anonymous flat to another, for it could help to develop that truly democratic and Swiss sense of belonging which could become a real "community spirit".

The Townplanning Pavilion at the National Horticultural Exhibition in Zurich

1959; Zurich Group for Townplanning Research

This is a pavilion with two sections: one is devoted to the idea of separating vehicles from pedestrians, whereas the other stresses the advantages of flat ownership and accentuates at the same time "the garden in the flat" and the intimacy of urban residential areas which are free from traffic.

Flats with Full Ownership in Lugano

1959; arch. A. Camenzind, FAS/SIA, Lugano; collab.: B. Brocchi, arch. SIA, Lugano

These are three "houses"—each for one family—built one on top of another. As a single storey cannot legally be regarded as property at the moment, the tenants are shareholders in the company in which the proprietorship is invested.

Speech on Hans Arp

by Georg Schmidt

In his address at the opening of the exhibition of graphic work by Hans Arp (April/May, 1959) Dr. Georg Schmidt, the director of the Basle Museum of Art, saluted the Alsatian painter and poet as an artist who had many friends in Basle. This town on the Upper Rhine has shown perhaps the greatest appreciation of the Alsatian spirit in general. Arp, who was born in Strasbourg in 1887, expresses in his work a deeply felt need for the harmonization of opposites. His work has been given a definite stamp by a country whose own way of life is characterized by forbearance, tolerance and a considerate lack of rigidity. After early contacts with German expressionism and French cubism, Arp's artistic powers matured quickly and by 1916 he had resolved his formal problems and chosen his themes. His contributions to Dadaism, Surrealism and concrete art stem, without undergoing any change from his own creative personality, from his feeling for nature and a genuine sense of humour. In his work he seizes on organic living things from the world of forms, such as leaves, plants, birds and fishes, and also inanimate objects like clouds, islands and stones. He has discovered the beauty of forms and groups of forms created "according to the laws of chance", which is for him not a random chaos, but one of the most powerful of the elements in life which make for pattern and order.

The Art of Ben Nicholson

by J. P. Hodin

Among the work done by modern English painters the art of Ben Nicholson represents the classical extreme; with its feeling for harmony and its efforts to capture essentials, it is a manifestation of an architectonic and aesthetic sense of order, such as we find in Pythagorean philosophy. From 1937 to 1939 his work displayed architectonic features similar to those in Mondrian, and geometrical shapes—the circle and rectangle—were employed. At the same time he was experimenting with several techniques and combined graphic and pictorial means of representation. Two themes have appeared in his work right from the beginning: landscape and still life; but he has not been very much preoccupied with the human form. Step by step Nicholson has developed a style from these elements which today, in spite of its apparent simplicity, is in reality complicated and extremely subtle. Design and colour are employed in counterpoint and unison to achieve masterly solutions.

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