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American Town-planning: the Example Set by Philadelphia 149

by Ueli Roth

From the time of the Greek cities life in Europe has remained concentrated within towns, whereas in America we find vast stretches of land on which it has been the ideal of the pioneers to lead a free life in the heart of nature. It is true that the industrial revolution, which established the pre-eminence of the North, added to the importance of the urban sector as did equally the wave of new ideas transmitted by immigrants in the eastern towns. Nevertheless the first steps towards urban development were fated to be hampered by the great number of cars. This led more and more town-workers to take up residence in the then rural environs and suburbs, the result being that the town centres swiftly degenerated into slums. Urban conditions have still to be established in the States, and it is this fact that has led to President Kennedy's projected ministry of town-planning. The example to be found in Philadelphia is one of the most instructive of lessons as to the real conditions of town life in America. Penn, who founded it in 1691, wished, in conformity with Quaker ideals, to leave behind him a work inspired by the ideas of equality and tolerance; that is in diametric opposition to the absolutist tendencies then current in Europe. He sent for the surveyor, Thomas Holme, from England, who drew up the plan of the town on the basis of a rigorously right-angled scheme. Apart from certain secondary modifications, this plan of 1692 remained almost entirely intact until 1940. However, in addition to the frequently alleged monotony of the plan, most of the central districts, thanks partly to the terrible depression, had become slums, and the countermeasures undertaken after 1940 did not prevent the same fate befalling a tremendous number of more recent buildings. Despite an extraordinarily detailed census of buildings and their condition, the many plans drawn up had failed owing to their lack of coherence. This continued until a rather larger project, the master plan, was adopted; this plan now appears to be under way satisfactorily, and it has the advantage of not being abstract and schematically rigid, for it possesses sufficient flexibility for it to be adapted to cope with various concrete data where necessary. There are two principal facets to it: on the one hand, the desire to maintain the town centre and, on the other, improvement of the town's environs. The plan as a whole is rounded off by a graded and rationalized system covering the means of communication: express highways, normal roads, pedestrian tracks and green lanes. —*Town-planning and town volume*: Probably the most significant advance in the handling of town-planning questions to be found in the work of renovation carried out in Philadelphia lies in the endeavour to banish those factors which normally set town-planning up in opposition to architecture. Intent right from the start to create a "beautiful town", i.e. one not essentially functional, the Philadelphia town-planners have decided upon the intermediate category of a "town that works well". This is to be seen in the layout of the business centre, in the handling of the shopping centres for the various districts as well as in that of traffic. Thus, in the centre, the separation of vehicular traffic from pedestrian flow is achieved vertically (subways, sunken plazas, parking garages), whereas in the residential areas the same separation is obtained horizontally. One can see the first sign of the favourable effect of good town-planning on architectural work in the very remarkable Municipal Building of Vincent Kling now being carried out.

Architect's House in Zurich 161

1960. Architect: Prof. Alfred Roth FAS/SIA, Zurich; engineer: Emil Schubiger SIA, Zurich

After having lived for sixteen years in the wooden house originally built for Madame de Mandrot (La Sarraz), Prof. A. Roth has, thanks to the acquisition of a 1100 m² plot of land, been able to build a house for himself and some of his students. He lives on the first floor, which consists of an open suite of rooms, and has access to the roof-terrace, whereas on the floor below there are four rooms for one person and one for two occupants, these being intended for students of the school of architecture. The accordion form of the west elevation allows for an unimpeded view from the students' rooms and mid-day sun. The 3-metre axis of these rooms has been taken as the module for the whole building and thus lends order and unity to the work.

House at Novaggio 166

Architects: A. Camenzind FAS/SIA, B. Brocchi SIA, Lausanne and Lugano; collaborator: R. Sennhauser

This is a complex of three elements used as a holiday house. It can, however, later become the fixed residence of the parents. The building as a whole has been carried out in such a way as to withdraw the house from the bend of the road nearby. In keeping with the "holiday" atmosphere and local tradition the eating-nook has been created by extending the kitchen.

House at Elgg 170

1959. Architects: Atelier 5, Berne (E. Fritz, S. Gerber, R. Hesterberg, H. Hostettler, N. Morgenthaler, A. Pini, F. Thormann); engineer: W. Brunner SIA, St. Gall

The plan of this 3-storey house is practically square. The building corresponds to what are generally very spacious architectural ideas.

The Drawings of Théodore Bally 173

Born in 1896 at Säkingen, Th. B., a citizen of Schönenwerd, began to paint in 1916. For some time he worked in Munich and in the region of the Chiemsee and then with Cuno Amiet. He has been living at Montreux since 1939. His travels have taken him to Holland, Tunisia, Spain and Sicily. His abstract drawings, in which B. has attained the limits of the sensuously apprehensible, class him among the most significant Swiss artists of today.

Fountains in the Gardens of Stuttgart Castle 177

The exhibition organized in the gardens of Stuttgart castle in 1961 resulted in two important works remaining there: a metal sculpture by Wander Bertoni and the "fountains" created by the young Stuttgart sculptor Hanspeter Fitz. The elements of these "fountains" are in themselves essentially architectural as they are made up of horizontal bronze plates and sheets of falling water in such a way that they become as many translucent prisms. Despite the fact that the setting finally adopted can be criticized (each "fountain" in a circular pool ringed with concrete), it is nevertheless true to say that Stuttgart now has a group of fountains in which nature and art are harmoniously combined.

The Painter Felice Filippini 179

by Piero Bianconi

An exhibition of works by Renato Guttuso and Felice Filippini has recently been held in Zurich under the name "Two Painters of Reality". This title is not entirely suitable for the work of Filippini, which, even if it does evoke the real presence of his Ticino countryside, always impregnates it with a visionary hallucinatory character similar to that found in his famous novel "Signore dei poveri morti". As Ungaretti has said, the vision is a magical one through and through, remote as it is from the things of this world; in it reality gradually merges into dream.