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Summaries in English

The Good-Taste Consultant

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Conscious of the depersonalization brought about by the increasing complexity of technical work, Semper criticized the intervention of the above, or what we would nowadays call "the designer".

Official Architecture as Found in Zurich

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by Benedikt Huber

The fact that "democratic architecture" is a thorny problem is shown clearly enough by our Swiss Federal Palace. The example furnished by Zurich is instructive on a cantonal and local level. Whereas the "Rathaus" (1694-1698) retains some of the reserve of a burgher house and the Town Hall by Gull (1900) is endowed with some restraint, the latter's County Hall (1917-1919), fortunately unfinished, is nothing but grandiloquence. Nowadays the civil servant is happy to find himself in some architectural anonymity.

The U.S. Embassy in London

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1959. Architect: Eero Saarinen

It was wished to create a building that would fit into its surroundings, stressing the importance of both countries, and that would at the same time act as a symbol. The end product shows what happens when architectural and functional considerations take second place. The whole building is a lame compromise in every respect, especially between diplomatic tact and the display of power. Looking at it, it is difficult to avoid thinking of the pompous constructions of the Third Reich.

The Danish Embassy in Washington

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1960. Architect: V. Lauritzen, Copenhagen; interior decorator: Finn Juhl, Copenhagen

The first example of an embassy designed throughout for the car age, the building opens out everywhere on to the surrounding country and lays pleasing stress on Danish internal decoration.

The Swiss Embassy in Bangkok

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Architect: Prof. Hans Hofmann FAS/SIA

Opened in April 1962, this embassy is one of the last works of the late Professor Hofmann: it is an excellent example of a modern design which is not out of keeping in the Far East.

The Architecture of Embassies, Legations and Consulates

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by Alfred Roth

The increasing number of countries attaining their independence and new capitals being set up make the architecture under discussion here a highly topical concern, even if only from the point of view of cultural propaganda. Generally speaking, however, our work abroad is still subject to the French monarchic styles. Very fortunately indeed, in three recent cases—Washington (architect: W. Lescaze), Bangkok and New Delhi (architect: H. Hofmann)—the Swiss Federal Council has followed the American example by making the buildings manifestations of living national art. In New Delhi the interior decoration is being carried out under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Commission for Applied Art.

New Roman Branch of the "Rinascente" Department Stores

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1958-61. Architect: Franco Albini, Milan

Made up of two wings, the building has three subterranean stories and six above ground. The first underground floor and five of the floors above ground are given to sales areas.

The GAK Building in Amsterdam

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1962. Architects: B. Merkelsbach and P. Elling

This building, which is intended to house the central administration and several social insurance schemes, is the last work by the late Merkelsbach, municipal architect of Amsterdam and one of the best representatives of the functional school. His main concern was to humanize as far as possible this colossal bee-hive of the administration: reduced groups (called "villages") in the large rooms, central location of the canteens, etc. The gardens are open to the public. In the entrance there is a sculpture hall as a bait for a future collection.

The "Modern" Department Store at Heerbrugg

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1960. Architect: Hanspeter Nüesch FAS/SIA, St Gall; engineer: A. Zähner, St Gall

The building has six floors, two of which are set below the ground. A rigorous system of proportions is maintained throughout. The essential materials used from a formal point of view: concrete, asbestos cement and glass.

Noirettes Workshop Centre in Geneva

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Architects: Bros. Honegger, Geneva

Thanks to the "70-million law" which enables mortgages to be taken out on the Canton of Geneva, it was possible to construct this building, which holds 161 workshops or offices at moderate rentals, plus another 36 below ground.

"Grand Quai", Geneva

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Architects: Bros. Honegger, Geneva

This is a building for commercial purposes which can be divided up inside as required on a modular basis of 0.60 cm.

Bosshard Building, Zurich

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Architects: Max Ziegler FAS/SIA and Ralph Peters SIA, Zurich

Seven floors, two of which are below ground and in reinforced concrete and five above in the form of a steel skeleton. The subterranean stories and the first and ground floor belong to Messrs. H. U. Bosshard (sanitary apparatus); the other floors have been rented out. Among other advantages, the metal construction allows for more space and renders an extension upwards in the future easier.

"Zur Schanze" Office Building, Zurich

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Architects: René Herter SIA and Werner Stücheli FAS/SIA, Zurich, and collaborators

As the public authorities insist on the maintenance, among other things, of the neighbourhood of the botanical gardens and the Schanzengraben canal, preference is given in this district to high-rise buildings. These premises, which have two underground stories, are of mixed construction: reinforced concrete and steel. The central section houses the lifts, stacks (heating and ventilation) and sanitary installations.

The New Realists and Their Predecessors

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by Herta Wescher

The trend which today bears the name "new realism" can be regarded as a reaction away from the dogma, which is today almost a cliché, that the only true form of salvation is to be found in abstract art. In an attempt to overcome this new type of conformism a few young artists have started to introduce real objects into their work, thus rediscovering the attempts made by the cubists, futurists and, above all, the dadaists. The movement, which first appeared in America but without the name put forward, was at its height at the time of the exhibition "The Art of Assemblage" (Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 1961), after which it is not unwarranted to think that this movement will undoubtedly ebb if new ideas do not come to enrich its content. And then, the author of this article thinks, it will be possible to assess the work of the Parisian "new realists", who formed a group in October 1960. Whether we consider the "anonymous pictures" of Yves Klein, the "multilocomotives" of Tinguely, the "sculptures" obtained by compressing, among other things, old cars (César), the contents of dustbins and waste-paper baskets (Arman), Raysse's "objects", Spörri's "tran pictures", the "torn posters" and the "backs of posters" of Dufrêne, it is true to say, generally speaking, that the difference between the "new realism" and their precursors, the dadaists, lies in the fact that the latter were primarily dominated by their feelings of hostility to the established order, whereas the group remains neutral towards it, avoiding not only all lyricism but also any polemics, with the sole aim of being, in their own eyes, informative, which, in the last analysis, is of no more than sociological interest. In the same way that it is possible to claim that the only works by dadaists that remain to us are those which—at least for those who can recognize it—possess artistic value (Arp, Schwitter, Max Ernst), Mrs. Herta Wescher says for her part of the "new realists", whom she attempts to define here: "... their desire to adhere to objective registration cannot hope to awake an echo in us except to the extent to which artistic intuition comes to the assistance of the aim which they claim to have in mind."