

Zeitschrift: Das Werk : Architektur und Kunst = L'oeuvre : architecture et art
Band: 54 (1967)
Heft: 4: Zwei Forschungslaboratorien : Geschichte der Moderne
Rubrik: Summaries in English

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Two Research Laboratories

by Ueli Roth

Salk Biological Research Institute, La Jolla near San Diego, California.
Architect: Louis Kahn, Philadelphia
Research Laboratory D (RLD) of the Chevron Research Company,
Richmond, California
Architect: Gerald McCue, Berkeley, California

Ueli Roth compares these two institutes, which are as different from each other as they could be and whose similarity consists in the fact that their architecture is to a great extent determined by the installations. Both contain laboratories, whose air is renewed at unusually brief intervals, which calls for a voluminous system of conduits and shafts running vertically and horizontally.

The most difficult problem involved in these buildings is the integration of the ventilation equipment and the supports and struts. The beauty of the combination of all mechanical and structural systems in integrated elements, which is aimed at by Kahn, entails the inherent difficulty that the construction elements are often perforated by ducts at the very points where loads are concentrated: at the junction points. The history of the plans of both McCue's and Kahn's buildings demonstrates a fundamental attempt to come to terms with this problem. In the case of the RLD building, the solution was found in a displacement of the mechanical and the structural grids by half a module. In this way the mechanical and the static systems are kept apart and yet constitute an integral unity. The ventilation system divides each laboratory building floor into twelve equal sectors, within which the air temperature and quantity can be varied. The gas and fluid supply to the lab tables, etc., also follows these divisions.

In the RLD building the air is distributed via external ducts running along the outside of the building and blown into the different tracts through short conduits and again sucked out in the same way; in the Salk Institute these ducts are incorporated in the floor decks of the building, where they can be easily modified, if the need arises. The difference in systems has the following consequences: the tracts in the Salk Institute are more generously dimensioned, permit a higher degree of flexibility, do not dominate the building architecturally, and are more costly. The lab floors can be detected on the long sides of the building only by the slitlike window openings in the massive concrete lateral walls.

The author goes on to describe the different relationships between the two research institutes and the urban environments in which they are located. In particular, the question is brought up as to whether the degree of seclusion shown by the Salk Institute is in the long run fitting for scientific work. The RLD Institute is located where it is for reasons important to the firm. Nevertheless, it would have been possible to utilize the Institute as a formal focus for its part of the city.

Steel and glass architecture and Early Modern Style in Paris

by Monica Hennig-Schefold

The author would like her photographs to be understood as a plea: a plea for 'good Liberty Style'. She locates this style in the tradition of the technical architecture of early industrialism, which was enriched by an element of formal elaboration. What formerly had been mere necessity has here become an elegant demonstration of the mastery of architecture by means of the new materials available, and this new development opens the door to a new era of rationalism in the field of architecture.

The Renewal

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La Città futurista – On the Architecture of Antonio Sant'Elia

by Jörn-Peter Schmidt-Thomsen

Out of the 326 sketches by Sant'Elia which are still extant, approximately 35 deal with the problem of the city. These studies were made in the first half of 1914 and were intended for two exhibitions in Milan. Jörn-Peter Schmidt-Thomsen maintains that Sant'Elia's designs of cities are interesting mainly from a formal point of view and less from the town-planning standpoint. It is shapes, forms, that fascinate Sant'Elia, and his designs can be traced from the Wagner school and the influence of Josef Hoffmann. Sant'Elia's achievement lies in architectural integration and not in the elaboration of traffic plans. What prompted the town-planning studies was obviously two publications of American plans seen by Sant'Elia in a Milan magazine in 1913. He took these multi-storey complexes as a point of departure for a visionary creation of an ordered agglomeration based on an additive system of interdependent units with axes, different levels and blocks.

Karl Gerstner

by Margit Staber

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The Basel painter and graphic artist Karl Gerstner, born in 1930, takes full advantage of the technical possibilities of reproducing works of art; however, he rejects the term 'reproduction' *per se*, preferring to employ the word 'multiplication'. His aim is the art product rooted in the consciousness of technology, the function of this product being a free play with technological methods of operation. His materials are: neutral fabrics, metal plates, sprayed and annealed colours, prisms, motors, electric light, polaroid filters; the resultant shapes: anonymous objects, assembled out of elements and based on the montage method; the communicative intention: to erect an objective construct which can be manipulated by the spectator.

Art in the Supermarket

by Karl Gerstner

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The article explains the exhibition of 50 serial reliefs (edition: 100 copies) by the artist, from the édition MAT, Collection 65. The exhibition showed 50 positions of the transformable relief. In support of the idea the artist cites the statement by Abraham A. Moles: 'We shall reach the age of permutational art.'

Piotr Kowalski, Technician or Artist?

by Harald Szeemann

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Piotr Kowalski was born in Warsaw in 1927. Between 1947 and 1952 he studied architecture in Cambridge, Mass. Since 1952 he has lived in Paris. Thus he is a member of the generation born around 1925 that includes the kinetic artists, who demonstrate the possibility of producing art by means of machinery. His aim is the 'creation of new shapes issuing directly from all the deformations to which an elastic surface can be subjected'. Thus he employs elastic membranes in order to get fixed shapes, to pour them and to interconnect them. He also employs pioneering techniques in the field of design and architecture. In 1962, in Viry-Châtillon, in record time he poured, in concrete, two mural reliefs measuring 4 x 42 m and 4 x 15 m, by means of a single rubber mould.

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Here parts of the paper 'Etude sur le mouvement d'art décoratif en Allemagne' by Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), dated 1912, are translated into German and furnished with a commentary by Stani von Moos.

The paper by the young Corbusier deals with those trends in the German-speaking countries which prepared the way for the transition from the Early Modern Style ('Jugendstil') to more functional designs, this movement taking place within the ranks of the young Werkbund. Characteristically this movement is bound up with a reform of architecture by figures who come from the world of art and are interested in handicrafts. Among them, one of the most important is Peter Behrens, who, moreover, had the good fortune to work for a leading employer: the General Electricity Co., an enterprise with 60,000 employees.

The paper by Le Corbusier grew out of an assignment from the Art School in La Chaux-de-Fonds, in which he was to study the methods of instruction, the design, fabrication and sale of art products in Germany. The conclusions he reached are programmatic in character. In the world of industrial production he sees the point of departure for a renewal of design, and he accounts for the superiority of Germany over France in the field of the applied arts by adducing the great expansion of industry in those years immediately before the outbreak of the First World War.