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Experimental Architecture

by Christian Hunziker

The architectural experiments of Christian Hunziker are sociological in nature. Their purpose is actively to engage all those involved in a given construction project: the owner, the building contractor, the workmen and the final residents. Up to now, creative capacity was credited only to the architect, but it can just as well be awakened in the owner and in the skilled artisan. In that case, the design of the given building would grow out of cooperation between all these participants and the architect. In our present situation, caught as we are between pre-fabrication and do-it-yourself, Christian Hunziker's experiments throw a great deal of light on the processes, so to speak, of building a house and living in one. The situations obtaining when decisions are taken are reflected in the given building, and the time factor becomes visible in the design of what is constructed. The architect keeps out of disputes among the others concerned; to his astonishment these disputes are settled by the artisans on the job, the resident or an artist brought in by the latter. Christian Hunziker, in the case of a private home, creates a model of process planning under democratic conditions.

Villa A Rajada in Gland VD

1959-1961. Architects: Frei, Hunziker and ass., Geneva

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Home in Biasca TI

1967. Franco S. Ponti, Lugano

This house was designed for a young family interested in new ideas, who were drawn to the architect's conceptions. The house is situated in a broad open valley surrounded by high mountains and steep cliffs. An attempt has been made to integrate the house in these surroundings by the application of a freely conceived plan and by the employment of natural stone and timber in the construction.

Villa in Rue Agasse, Geneva

1965/66. Architects: Frei, C. & J. Hunziker, Geneva

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This house was built on a basis of close cooperation among architects, sculptors, ceramic artists, weavers and the best craftsmen from the building trade, along with the active participation of the owner. It stands on the shore of Lake Geneva on a restricted site with an old stand of evergreens. The core of the plan is constituted by the living-centre: a round living-room measuring approximately 175 square metres. This is adjoined on the north side by the bedroom with dressing-room and bath; the connecting ramp serves as a library. On the southwest side of the living-room are the guest rooms, service rooms, service court, workshop and trailer shelter.

Detached house at Hombrechtikon-Lützelsee ZH

1966. Architect: Heinz Hess, Zürich

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In a centrally situated residential district in Geneva a small already existing villa was converted into a house serving for informal and official receptions and containing a collection of paintings and the studio of the lady of the house, along with the private living tract. The building program was an intricate one, growing in part out of the location of the site and other restrictions; the result was a rather complicated plan, on which the artisans elaborated freely during construction, the architect being called on, for the most part, only to give his approval to what was proposed.

Two combined single-family houses at Gockhausen ZH

1966. Architect: Hans Ulrich Scherer

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The building site as such is ample and beautifully situated, but it is inconveniently shaped and with a sharply restrictive building-line; the result has been a certain restriction on the design of this single-family house. The house is entered at grade level from the north, the first tracts to be entered being the living floor and the garages; a spiral staircase gives access to the bedroom floor below or to the partially covered roof terrace above. On the south and west the house rests on pillars, and on the north side the bedroom floor is embedded for its entire height in the slope, this side representing the rear of the house.

Snider house in Verscio TI

Architects: Luigi Snodari SIA and Livio Vacchini SIA, Locarno

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The portrait bust of Carl J. Burckhardt

by Hermann Hubacher

This house is situated on the north edge of the forested Zurichberg among detached houses. The building-line prescribed by the code could be respected only by the adoption of an open plan and relatively low eaves. The architect's intention, however, was to fuse the two single-family houses into one single formal unity.

The goldsmith Othmar Zschaler

by André Kamber

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Othmar Zschaler was born in 1930. Since 1960 he has had his own studio in Berne. The largely industrialized production of modern jewellery and its wide dissemination have reawakened the desire for the unique object which also takes into account the individuality of the future wearer. This kind of jewellery is not only an article of trade but also art. Othmar Zschaler stands in Switzerland for the cause of the independent goldsmith. He possesses a highly developed sense of form. His pieces are exquisitely fashioned and always capable of being really worn. In his early period severe geometric patterns prevailed. Later on, these were richly articulated and elaborated into movable rows of bars and chains. At the present time, Zschaler has reached the point of absolutely free formal creation, and his treatment of surface is richly varied.