

Zeitschrift: Das Werk : Architektur und Kunst = L'oeuvre : architecture et art
Band: 54 (1967)
Heft: 12: Einfamilienhäuser

Rubrik: Summaries in English

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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

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.

Villa in Rue Agasse, Geneva

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

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.

Detached house at Hombrechtikon-Lütelsee ZH

1966. Architect: Heinz Hess, Zürich

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.

Two combined single-family houses at Gockhausen ZH

1966. Architect: Hans Ulrich Scherer

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.

Snider house in Verscio TI

Architects: Luigi Snozzi SIA and Livio Vacchini SIA, Locarno

The construction problem was to build a private home for an attorney with six sons on a large site on the periphery of the village centre of Verscio. In addition, an old house with sheds, on the same property, was to be renovated. Thus the new house had to be architecturally integrated with the village and at the same time to stand out from it. This being the situation, the architect hit upon the idea of an enclosed courtyard, into which open all the rooms of the house.

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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.

Home at Kirchlindach BE

1964/65. Architect: Urs Graf, Berne

An attempt has been made to give this complex one definite alignment: a narrow elongated structure running parallel to the street contains the bedrooms, utility rooms and the dining-room. The living-room tract nestles on one side in the slope, with an open-air court being created in front and bounded by the shoulder-high garden wall. The interior is designed as a contrast to the broad open landscape, being articulated into a series of variously dimensioned and lighted rooms which are architecturally very expressive.

'La Maison d'Homme' - The Le Corbusier Centre in Zurich

by Lisbeth Sachs

1967. Architect: Le Corbusier

At the instigation of the Zurich art dealer Heidi Weber, Le Corbusier designed for Zurich 'La Maison d'Homme'. It is simply a house but also necessarily an exhibition building. A heavy concave-convex folded roof covers the entire complex, its parts bolted together constituting the actual house. Nearly all the rooms merge into one another, and they are connected on the inside by a two-flight staircase and on the outside by a projecting ramp sheathed in concrete. On the 'roof' of the inner construction, but still underneath the large folded roof, there is a terrace framed by curving lines of sheet-metal seats.

The ceramic artist Benno Geiger

by Martin Geiger

The Bernese ceramic artist Benno Geiger completed an apprenticeship as a potter and studied for two years at the Academy for Applied Art in Vienna. Since 1941 he is Superintendent of the Ceramic Training School in Berne. This can accommodate around 15 pupils; the course of instruction covers all stages from the raw material to the finished product. The instructors are bent on gradually eliciting the innate creative talents of the young ceramic artists. Benno Geiger's own works are created in his spare time. In a conversation with the author of the article, he regrets that in Switzerland, in contrast, let us say, to the Scandinavian countries or England, there hardly exists a real body of informed buyers capable of distinguishing between artistically wrought pieces and cheap utility articles and of evaluating them accordingly. While he assigns to mass production, and thus industrial design, the capacity to follow the stylish trends of the times, he demands from individual works of art that they win the lasting approval of their owners.

The portrait bust of Carl J. Burckhardt

by Hermann Hubacher

The author describes the creation of his portrait of Minister Carl J. Burckhardt, which he produced for the Senate of Lübeck, which wished to express its gratitude for Burckhardt's services on behalf of the city, which was declared a Red Cross Port in 1944. The work was commenced in plaster in April, 1966, and after several interruptions completed on November 10, 1966.

The goldsmith Othmar Zschaler

by André Kamber

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.

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