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Municipal Theatre of St. Gall

777

1964-1968. Architect: Claude Paillard BSA/SIA (Atelier CJP), Zurich and Winterthur

The new building of the Municipal Theatre of St. Gall is situated in the Municipal Park in a stand of fine old trees. With the neighbouring Concert Hall and the Art Museum it thus helps to create what actually amounts to a cultural centre. The dynamic treatment of the outside walls was to a great extent the outcome of consideration for the beautiful grounds.

The whole project is based on a hexagonal plan system stemming from the shape of the auditorium, which becomes broader towards the rear. This system, however, yielded, in all the tracts open to the public, fluid gradual transitions, which, more than any kind of decorative pomposity, contribute to the theatre atmosphere.

The auditorium and the stage were installed on the upper level, 5 metres above the entrance level. In this way, despite the relatively small parking area, there could be created a generously dimensioned ground floor with fine views out into the garden or, at night, into the foyers. The entire outside walls are, both on the exterior and the interior, of rough unpainted concrete.

The entrance is accessible via a wide canopy, with plants; from there the visitor passes the box office and cloakroom and goes on into the foyer containing the stairs leading to the auditorium. The stairway is broken by landings, and, like an open-air staircase, is intended as a lounging area. The rhythms of the steps are playfully taken up also by the ceiling under-faces.

The auditorium is asymmetrical, in that the orchestra seating area on one side merges, snail-fashion, with a circle that encloses the entire hall, the circle terminating on the opposite side in a proscenium box. This arrangement blurs the historic distinction between orchestra seats and circle. The ceiling, which again is staggered, is of redwood, the walls and parapets of untreated concrete, doors black, seat covers purple, curtain bottle-green, wall-to-wall carpeting neutral.

The stage aperture can be varied by means of movable portals and by depressing the bridge. The orchestra pit can, during performance, be raised to orchestra seating or to stage level.

The utility rooms are placed in two rear wings: the south tract is taken up by storerooms and workshops, the west tract by offices, performers' cloakrooms and rehearsal rooms. The big rehearsal room can on occasion also be made accessible to the public.

The House of Culture in Grenoble

789

1966-1968. Architect: André Wogensky, Paris

Associates: Jacques Lavot, Claude Bourgeois, Soizick Petard, André Bauwens

The building site is located outside the present built-up area of Grenoble, but it will soon be surrounded by the expected growth of the city. It contains considerable differences in height, for which reason entrances are sited at different levels. The building program comprises a multi-purpose theatre with a seating capacity of 1300, a multi-purpose theatre with a seating capacity of 600 and an auditorium with a capacity of 350. Besides, the cultural centre contains numerous rooms for entertainment and courses on a smaller scale, such as television rooms, discothèques, libraries, lecture halls, plus a lobby and a snack restaurant.

At the lower entrance level there is the auditorium (for demonstrations), a large exhibition hall and the television rooms. Moreover, this level is taken up by technical facilities, especially by the basement installations of the large theatre. The large theatre is situated at the upper entrance level and runs across the entire building, with the foyer and the snack bar on the same level. The large foyer also serves as an intermission area for the visitors of the smaller theatre located above; for checking purposes one space can be divided off. The third and topmost floor contains the theatre with 600 seats, which theatre represents the really experimental element of the building. The oval auditorium in the centre is surrounded by the 'stage'. The notion of putting the spectator in the midst of the dramatic action is here very consistently realized. Nevertheless, in order to have the attention of all the spectators simultaneously focused on the centre of the action, the 'auditorium' is set up on a rotating platform with a diameter of approximately 20 meters. This round platform in the middle of the oval hall permits a narrowing and deepening of the stage area depending on the angle from which it is viewed. This technical installation can be utilized by a director at will to instil more dynamic movement into his play.

Queen Elizabeth Hall. Purcell Room and Hayward Art Gallery in London

794

Architects of the Greater London Council under the direction of Hubert Bennett, London

This complex supplements the Royal Festival Hall, which was erected for the Festival of Britain, between 1948 and 1951. It grew out of the need

for a smaller concert hall as well as for an art gallery with closed in rooms and an open exhibition area for sculpture. The new complex was intended to form a unit with the existing Festival Hall and with a system of pathways and terraces to become the central attraction for strollers near Waterloo Bridge. The site-poured concrete construction method made it possible to give an appearance of unity to the two structures, which are otherwise so different; at the same time it provided sufficient acoustic insulation against the noise of traffic along the Thames.

The Queen Elizabeth Hall accommodates 1100 visitors on a staggered level. The stage consists of different platforms, which can be elevated mechanically. The Purcell Room contains 372 seats and is used for chamber music, small-scale performances and lectures. It has the same acoustic properties as the larger hall.

The Hayward Art Gallery is disposed on two levels so that two separate exhibitions can be arranged at any given time. The upper floor obtains its light via the glass pyramids on the roof, with light incidence being automatically controlled by selenium cells; additional neon light comes from the same direction. The upper level gives access to the open-air sculpture courts. On the lower floor there are artificially illuminated exhibition galleries of various ceiling heights. The foyer is connected by lift with the underground garage.

New acquisitions of the Zurich Kunsthau 1962-1968

805

by Felix Andreas Baumann

The article attempts to show how the Zurich Kunsthau has developed since 1962. The museum's success is owing not least to the happy circumstance that numerous patrons have, by means of very generous donations, made it possible for the Kunsthau to carry on its collecting activity meaningfully in the present difficult situation. A number of painful gaps could be filled solely owing to private initiative.

A collection always reflects the specific possibilities of a cultural community; nearly every city in our part of the world has developed a taste that is peculiar to it: which is the way it should be. Nothing would be duller than 'standardized' museums without any distinctive local atmosphere of their own. Thus the important job is to supplement the already existing groups of works and to emphasize them in new ways. Moreover, the great task confronting the museum is to make possible a general impression of artists' activity throughout the world, especially of contemporary art. A municipal collection best fulfils its function when locally determined work can be directly compared with the general artistic development.

New acquisitions of the Aargauer Kunsthau at Aarau

812

by Guido Fischer

The expansion of the permanent collection of the Aargauer Kunsthau is limited both by traditional considerations and by the modest means available for acquisitions. For some time now there has grown up a working procedure among the three institutions involved in the financing of acquisitions, the Canton of Aargau, the Aargau Art Association, and the Association of the Friends of the Aargau Art Collection, with the Canton collecting mainly works of Aargau artists, while the two private organizations direct their interest to Switzerland as a whole, including the work of foreign artists resident in the country.

The Aargauer Kunsthau is seeking to meet the varying needs of museum visitors with numerous changing exhibitions. Information on current trends can be conveyed more readily in exhibitions containing outside works of art than with the permanent collection. Even so, with the exception of Pop Art, the most important recent movements are represented in the museum's own material.

The Collection of the Gabriele Chiattoni family in the Lugano Art Museum

816

by Aldo Patocchi

In August of this year the Art Museum of Lugano showed the Chiattoni Collection, which was accepted by the Municipal Council of Lugano as early as March 1961, but owing to lack of space could not be offered to the public in the still incomplete Villa Ciani and continued to be held by the family. The works in question constitute the collection of the Gabriele Chiattoni family. Chiattoni was a resident of Bergamo at the end of the 19th century. He was an enterprising lithographer, and moved subsequently to Milan. Here he met numerous Lombard artists, especially the adherents of the 'Scapigliatura milanese'. Early works by Umberto Boccioni, who around 1910 along with Marinetti and his circle launched Futurism, constitute the core of the collection, in which, moreover, two dozen works by Tallone and Alciati represent the specific development of art in Milan at that time.