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The Art of Exhibition

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by Lucius Burckhardt

A national exhibition is a medium of mass communication and it seeks to inform and influence an entire nation—as, for example, the Swiss National Exhibition of 1939 mobilized national resistance against totalitarianism. WERK in its February Issue dealt with the architecture of the Expo 64, and in the present Issue would like to examine the art of exhibition as such, constantly bearing in mind the question: how is information conveyed, how does the exhibitor present the themes for the sake of which he has organized or participated in the exhibition?

The international and national exhibitions are the offspring of the 19th century, of the early phase of industrial capitalism and of colonial imperialism. They were infused with a forward-looking optimism, an optimism which we lack today. In the age of the early industrial inventions the article produced was itself an object of interest; the fact that it had been invented and could be manufactured excited admiration mingled with patriotic pride. Nowadays people are no longer so interested in the product itself as in the method of production, the costs, industrial organization, society in general and the whole country with the conditions it imposes, which fabricates and consumes products, in one word, what people are interested in is productivity. Thus the theme of an exhibition has become far more abstract.

The manner in which such abstract themes are presented is the subject of this article. Abstract, purely graphic methods of presentation exceed the receptive powers of the public. The abstract has to be represented by reality. This happens at the Expo in three sorts of ways: first, a given exhibition area is infused with an atmosphere, a spirit, by means of integrated aesthetic effects; second, informative media are used which, working with visual projection and sound, are able to reproduce a nearly total illusion; finally, there is employed a subtle kind of alienation which makes the banality of the product transparent, as it were, and interesting.

The Way of Switzerland

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by René Richterich

Architects: Architecture Office of the Exhibition

The history of Switzerland is not presented here as a straight chronological sequence, but is grouped about three themes, to each of which there is allotted a section of the complex of buildings. The first section shows the part played by man in a rugged mountainous environment; the second presents the growth of liberty and toleration in a nation divided up into separate religious and linguistic groups. The third part deals with the role of a small state in the heart of Europe. After a number of experiments carried out by the Architecture Office of the Exhibition, the tent-like, winding passageway structure was decided on. The interior was entrusted to three artists, Adrien Holy, Max von Mühlhelen and Hans Stocker, who worked out the three themes, and handed on parts of the project to other artists. Thus this section of the National Exhibition exemplifies the fact that a theme can be effectively presented only by artistic and architectural means.

Sector "Exchange" General Part

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Team of the Sector "Exchange": Florian Vischer, Martin H. Burckhardt, Rolf Gutmann, Georges Weber, Walter Wurster, Architects BSA/SIA, Basel; Heinz Hossdorf, Engineer; Numa Rick, Walter Ballmer, Gérard Ifert, Graphic Designers; Victor N. Cohen, Consultant
Realization of the Orchestra: Rolf Liebermann, Composition; Rolf Gutmann, responsible architect; Dr. Fritz von Ballmoos, Hansjörg Pauli, Electronics; Hans Harder, Acoustics

The symphony "Les échanges" by Rolf Liebermann is played by 16 typewriters, 18 calculating machines, 8 automatic accounting machines, 12 tape punchers, 10 cash registers and 92 additional devices, which are directed by an electronic driving mechanism.

**Sector: "Industry and Trade"
Division "Machinery, Metals"**

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Sector Architects: Frédéric Brugger BSA/SIA, Lausanne; Alin Décoppet BSA/SIA, Lausanne, Benedikt Huber BSA/SIA, Zurich; René Vittone BSA/SIA, Lausanne

Graphic Designer of the Sector: Mario Galloppini, Lausanne
Architect of Division "Machinery, Metals": Jean Kropf SIA, Lausanne
Division Graphic Designer: Galloppini, Tcherdyn & Zahnd, Lausanne

In an early stage of their work in the winter of 1961/62 the architects and graphic designers of the Sector "Industry and Trade" worked out a dialogue, which they presented on a "Salesmate" apparatus to their exhibition representatives. The dialogue was for the purpose of indicating to the exhibitors how they could present their products and plants within the scope of a thematic exhibition. The dialogue makes it clear that a thematic exhibition need not be more boring and didactic than a mere display of products. Rather, the exhibition should have an overall composition ensuring that the themes are presented to the visitor in a pleasant easy way in zones of concentrated display interrupted by zones of less intensive information.

The general theme of the Sector is Productivity: the divisions are articulated into the following areas: the place of work, the general cultural effects of the products on the consumer and the effects of mechanized production on the worker. Then there follow the problems of production on the regional and national levels, and, finally, an attempt is made to demonstrate the limits of production increases in Switzerland. In each division this general theme was adapted to the special wishes of the exhibitors.

Division "Increased Productivity" in the Sector "Field and Forest"

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Sector Architect: Jakob Zweifel BSA/SIA, Zurich and Glarus

Division Architects: Brosi & Flotron SIA, Zurich

Collaborator: Giuseppe Milani, Lugano

Division Graphic Designers: Kurt Büchel, Remi Nüesch, Teufen AR, in collaboration with Michel Rochaix, Jean Vallat, Paul Bourqui, Jean Rosselet

What is interesting about this section is how a purely abstract theme "Productivity", which is, moreover, the most vital problem of our industrial society, can be presented in concrete fashion and translated into terms that can be grasped by the ordinary visitor. It is intended to show how the farmer as farm manager can step up the productivity of his work, his soil, his plants and stock and so improve his standard of living, and that by way of considered, rational application of all the factors of production. The design of the division reflects rustic simplicity and is determined by the consistent application of wood, asbestos-cement and agricultural implements and products.

Interior Design of the Nestlé Children's Wonderland

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Architect: Michel Magnin, Lausanne

The plans and buildings can be seen in WERK 2/1964, page 68. The general idea behind the layout was the creation of a "Robinson" playground, that is, a lively but not entirely finished play site with some buildings where the children can find material and constructions for their games: pieces of wood, ropes, sand, etc. Also the children's mechanical bent must be catered to: small cars are available and even a flying saucer.

Masterpieces from Swiss Collections

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by Georges Pelllex

This exhibition in the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne is priceless for the high quality and the great number of works contained in it, all of outstanding value. They are all remarkable; some of them were acquired at first hand, and many had not up to now ever been exhibited before, such as: the three versions of the "Jew" of Chagall, here presented together, the two portraits of Javlensky, certain Pissaros, Renoirs, Cézannes and Vlamincks. Many visitors will make the discovery of the "pointillistes" Maximilien Luce and H. E. Cross. It is fitting to emphasize the special features of this exhibition, which are that all the pictures and sculptures come from private collections and that the number and variety of lenders are very great. Keen interest has been shown in the Degas sculptures from Zurich, Winterthur, Geneva and Lausanne. This show is a fascinating one replete with new discoveries and re-encounters with masterpieces, often barely accessible to the public.