60th Anniversary Federation of Swiss Architects : 60 Years of Swiss Architecture

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60th Anniversary Federation of Swiss Architects

WERK, itself an offspring of the Federation of Swiss Architects, is dedicating a special issue to the 60th anniversary of the Federation and is presenting a survey of architectural developments in Switzerland during this period of 60 years. In the year just past there died the last of the group which, on June 27, 1908, in Olten joined together in a spirit of forward-looking idealism in order to unite 'those architects practising their profession as artists' and 'to promote artistic and socially useful building'. The first phase of the history of the Federation, now ended, will surely be decisive for the next phase. However, it is absolutely necessary to examine which of its principles still possess validity today and to find out how they can be extended or altered, and steps in this direction have already been taken.

This Issue takes us back to the overcoming of the historicist approach effected by the Modern Style and then on to the still more revolutionary Modern Architecture, to the Romantic Traditionalist reaction, to the assimilation of tendencies in Functionalism down to the recent polarization between systematic severity and emotionally conditioned creative freedom. The survey reflects the transformation both in the available means and in their application. It is less capable of revealing the change in constructional procedures that has been confronting the architect over the last 60 years – unless he has kept his eyes closed ... or fascinating him with new constructive and formal design principles. The industrialization of building, the mounting burden of problems of orientation, research, programming and organization, the development of the large-scale 'pool' for dealing with the multifarious questions that arise – all these things are compelling us to tackle the question to what extent and under what conditions the architect can maintain his role of leadership in the building sector.

The Federation of Swiss Architects itself has retained its structure during this period, its organization being that of a restricted membership club. I, however, believe – and the experience of the Federation bears me out – that it is precisely this structure that permits an intensive dialogue among the members and that is in the highest degree suited to stimulate fresh approaches to all the outstanding problems. Wat is necessary, to be sure, is a most candid exchange of experiences and insights among all those concerned in the building trades.

I should hope that the interesting range of examples selected by the editors of WERK will be viewed against the background of the abovementioned confrontation with the structural development in the building trades. If we are fully aware that viable results are attainable only on the basis of a systematic analysis with all concerned working together, the examples given here can perhaps show that, in the last analysis, good results always stem from that creative synthesis of which we believe architects to be, in the main, capable.

Zurich, October 23, 1967 H. v. Meyenburg, Chairman

60 Years of Swiss Architecture

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Federation of Swiss Architects, we are publishing examples of constructions by Swiss architects ranging over this 60-year period. The buildings on which we are reporting in this Issue are all still extant; that means that this Issue can be used as a travel guide. For this reason we have arranged the material according to regions and not by types; within the given regional classifications the material is arranged chronologically.

Numerous persons have come forward with advice on the selection of the material and have aided us in assembling it. In French-speaking Switzerland we have been especially assisted by André Corboz, Geneva and Montreal, and by Roland Willomet, Lausanne. The final selection had to be made by one single person applying uniform criteria: Diego Peverelli, Zurich and Chiasso, assumed this responsibility. We express our thanks to all who have helped us.

The editorial board of WERK is not a historical institute and is not a documentation centre. The job of putting together this Issue was an unusual one for us. It is quite possible that errors have crept in, that important things have been left out. We should be grateful for all corrections; all suggestions would be carefully registered.

We herewith congratulate the Federation of Swiss Architects on the 60th year of its existence and wish it all success in the future as it continues with its pioneering activities.

The Editors of WERK