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The Fine Art of Being an Heir

by Lucius Burckhardt

The expressions "preservation of historical monuments" and especially "preservation of the local heritage" by their very nature betray their romantic origin and the "idealist" intention to make of every restoration, let us say, a reconstruction of the original state of the buildings, independently of the historical transformations they have undergone. This is currently the most widespread trend, giving many contemporary restorers the illusion that they are heeding strictly objective criteria, whereas, working in effect in accordance with stylistic categories, we tend to forget that the history of art also has its history and that consequently future generations run the great risk of having to call into question this objectivity on which we pride ourselves. Restoration need not necessarily signify the transformation of an object into a museum piece. As regards the old quarters of our cities in particular, their preservation, rightly taken in hand, requires that they not be insulated from the main streams of modern life. Thus, in our cities the "old town" must not be protected, as it were, against man, against life, but can even at the present day serve a purpose, that is to say: it can live. To place it in a kind of incubator and so to make a sort of museum of it amounts to condemning it.

The Small Town and its Planning Problems

by Hans Ulrich Scherer

As long as we remain obsessed by the nightmare of traffic and the madness of speculation, the problems of town-planning on a grand scale will be in a state of suspense, whereas it is already possible to attempt to resolve them within the scope of the small town. Aargau—a canton of eleven small towns—can serve in this respect as an excellent proving ground (e.g., Baden), if only we ever learn how to distinguish among the problems proper to the old town in the true sense of the word, to the medium-sized town (district around the station) and to new quarters, and try to realize a total complex as humanly balanced and vital as possible.

The Old Town and Town-planning Problem

by Klaus Christoffel

The problem, which is being so hotly discussed, of the modifications to be introduced into the old quarters of our cities can be happily elucidated by the extremely instructive example of Neunkirch-In-Klettgau (Canton of Schaffhausen). This very old town, in fact, has undergone a meticulous, methodical study through the good offices of the architecture class of the Institute of Technology of Winterthur, under the direction of Prof. U. J. Baumgartner. There has been no attempt to reconstruct the past, but rather, while taking into consideration the spirit embodied in the original plan, this group has sought to adapt the quarter to its new functions, which are no longer, as at one time, those of a country town but of a small-scale urban centre, housing moreover part of the growing population of the neighbouring city of Schaffhausen. Each house was carefully studied, and the proposals of renovation proceeded in line with this study. At the end of the project, an exhibition, organized at Neunkirch, in connection with a meeting of the local section of the Regional Planning Group, served as a illustration of the result of the studies, which have been followed with keen interest by the public.

Tradition

by Eduard Neuenschwander

The question of the maintenance of our old towns and of those country districts that are still unspoiled is an urgent one, not just in the sense of historical conservation but in the sense of a renovation and rejuvenation of whole living complexes (importance of "anonymous architecture" as defined by S. Giedion). We have every hope of being able to tackle these problems successfully thanks to the wealth of the architectural idioms at our disposal.

Reconstruction and Renovation of the Solothurn "Landhaus"

1957/58. Architect: H. Luder SIA, Chief Architect of the Municipality of Solothurn; Engineer: Emch & Berger SIA, Solothurn

All but the walls of this building (constructed in 1722) was destroyed in a fire. The exterior has been restored to its original state, but the interior has been adapted to the present-day needs of the community. A characteristic of the building is the open and deliberate mingling of ancient and modern elements.

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Renovation of a Farmhouse at Toggwil

1959/60. Architect: Eduard Neuenschwander SIA, Zürich

Making the very minimum of modifications, it was possible in this case to achieve a measure of creativity by using the timeless idiom of tradition.

Renovation of an old House at Agno (Ticino)

Architect: Dolf Schneebli SIA, Agno

This was formerly a priory; it then became a press-house and is today discreetly adapted to contemporary requirements: light colours, light, space.

Renovation of a Zurich Flat

1955. Architect: J. Messerli, Zürich

In an old house on Limmatquai it has been possible to restore an air of spaciousness to this fine flat and also to render it comfortable. This has been done by eliminating the non-supporting walls.

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Reorganization of the Centre of the Town of Burslem, England

by Prof. Misha Black, London

The municipal council of this city, from which originated Stoke-on-Trent, centre of the pottery industry, asked the town-planning organization of the Civic Trust to proceed to the reorganization of the centre of the town. As in the case of Norwich, Prof. Misha Black, London, was designated co-ordinating architect. The main objective was to restore to the town its clearly delimited and distinctive centre and in addition to undertake the organization of green belts while restoring the various structures in the vicinity. The various associates offered their services freely.

Restoration of All Saints' Cathedral in Schaffhausen

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Carried out between 1950 and 1958, this restoration of the Schaffhausen Cloister was intended to restore the building to its original state in the 12th century. This at first stemmed from the Cluniac reform but culminated in an ascetic form under the influence of the architectural school of Hirsau. Restored in the strict symmetry of its three naves with their non-vaulted ceilings, the building, where proportions and materials have regained their true character, will henceforth stand out in all its initial grandeur and simplicity. It would be all the more imposing if the new equipment of the interior—stained-glass windows, altar, pulpit, tapestry, the quality of which as regards workmanship is not in question—were better suited to the austerity of the building.

Notes on the Applied Arts in Switzerland

by Willy Rotzler

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Unlike watches, chocolate, cheese and precision machines, the products of the applied arts do not enjoy the same esteem as those coming from abroad—Scandinavia, Finland, Italy or Japan, for example. Several reasons could be given for this prejudice. In the first instance it would seem that, as we are not so far from the great centres of the fine arts, we rank "free" work more highly, whereas the case is reversed in Scandinavia and Finland, where there is, moreover, an "art industry" which also allows its practitioners to create works that are not mass-produced. Nevertheless, it is true that in our country there are a number of significant artists, whose comparative anonymity (working as they do for individual clients in the main, they are rarely brought to the fore by the press and publicity in general) is not such that they do not fail to produce first-class work in fields as various as furnishings, fabrics, ceramics, binding, glassware, tapestry, etc.