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Although at first sight perhaps it might appear utopian or in the science fiction manner, Yona Friedman's "Mobile Architecture", presented in this Issue, strikes us as being a happy complement to three other studies that have previously appeared in this review: the "Bergstedt" survey (3/1962), the report on Philadelphia (5/1962) and finally "The Environment" by Chenut (11/1962). In respect of this type of study of the city of tomorrow, we can but regret that we have been unable to report in full on the remarkable work of Eckhard Schulze-Fieltz, Essen, and of Constant, Amsterdam.—Moreover, if in this Issue we cover the Halen colony, this is by no means because it can be said to represent the city of the future, but at least it constitutes, on its scale, a small fragment of utopia actualized here in our country to the satisfaction—and that is already evident—of 80 families.

Mobile Architecture

by Yona Friedman

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Social institutions and organizations are at the present time based on "eternal" norms, which amount to so many obstacles to the constant transformation of reality that is required, the greatest of these obstacles being cities in the traditional sense. Now, there is a need, on the contrary, to plan a "mobile architecture", i.e., one whose structures lend themselves to ready functional convertibility. This presupposes above all the adoption of new construction methods. The amazing increase in the world's population invests this technical revolution with a signal urgency. If there is any real desire to cope with this problem, what must definitely be understood is that the problem cannot be tackled from the standpoint of town-planning. The town-planner, at the present time, exaggerates his importance, whereas his true role ought to be to assimilate technological progress in such a way that urban dwellers are in a position to have it serve effectively and continuously the adaptation of the city to the no less continuous emergence of new requirements. To put it in so many words, what is needed is to discover procedures allowing for easy shifts from one solution to another, with a view to adapting the city to the behavioural patterns of its residents, and what's more, the latter to the proposals of the town-planners. All the other experiments (carried out or in the planning stage), even the boldest of them, from the "Cité radieuse" of Le Corbusier to Chandigarh, from the reconstructed cities that had been bombed in the war, to the brilliant study of F. L. Wright for Broadacre City, taking them as a whole, remain detached from the imperatives of concrete living in the modern age. Now then, modern life is being ever increasingly determined by a growing concentration of populations in cities, where the urban dwellers of tomorrow, increasingly relieved of long hours of work by automation, will have to work out a way of life that permits them to develop constructively and joyfully; otherwise they will run the risk of foundering in such a nihilism as is nowadays already being indulged in by the "beatniks". Here again, it is up to technology to step in and make possible a new kind of dwelling capable of being adapted to new needs, all of whose elements ought to be available in department stores (example: mobile shower stall, to replace the bathroom). To be sure, the dwelling is only the primary cell of larger complexes to be planned in accordance with a flexible type of town-planning (providing for units that can be dismantled at any time). Thanks to the erection of buildings on stilts, leaving the ground free for traffic, and above all, for agriculture, the problem then would be to put up, in a kind of artificial landscape, "span blocks" (replacing the present building blocks), then, "open neighbourhoods" (around 10 ha for 10,000 residents) and finally "open agglomerations"—all of these rendering possible the air-conditioning of these complexes and even of the entire city. To illustrate the proposal put forward, we can point out that the present area of Paris (exclusive of suburbs) could accommodate 7 million inhabitants.

The Halen Housing Colony, near Berne

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1959/61. Architects: Atelier 5, Berne; interior decorator for the shop and the restaurant: H. Eichenberger SWB, Halen; engineer: E. Pfister SIA, Berne and Olten

It can be said of this colony that its completion reveals that it is possible to make real progress even within the scope of the present building code. It is, in fact, a novelty in that each of the houses, along with its garden, is the property of its occupant, whereas the joint installations (swimming-pool, roadways, paths and woods, laundry, playground, garage, service station, porter's house) are the joint property of all the householders. The houses number 80 in all, of different types. Their high number has made possible a unit purchase price running from 130,000 to 165,000 francs, and this includes a site with an admirable view only 4.5 km from the centre of Berne, with residence areas measuring from 120 to 170 sq.m. At the same time, it has also been possible to maintain the private character of each of these flats. No one disturbs the privacy of anyone else and there is visiting back and forth only when people feel like it.

In two short testimonial letters the writer Claus Bremer and prof. Paul Hofer pay high tribute to the colony expressing their joy at being among its residents.

Karl Hugin

by Paul Weder

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Born in 1887 at Trimbach (Sojothurn), Karl Hugin, after passing through the schools of Basle, served a designer's apprenticeship in the field of reinforced concrete. He attended courses in design at the School of Arts and Crafts, then worked from 1904 to 1906 in Stuttgart, later in Zurich. After the First War he devoted himself to painting and graphic arts. Travels in Germany, Italy, Dalmatia and North Africa. He has taught at the School of Decorative Arts in Zurich. From 1923 on, many mosaics and frescoes. Frequent exhibitions in Switzerland. He wrote "The Formation of a Painter" (in German) for the collection "Als das Jahrhundert jung war", put out by J. Halperin. Two relatively recent exhibitions, in Aarau and in Winterthur (1960 and 1962), have revealed very clearly that this mosaic and fresco artist is also the creator of a pictorial and graphic world of high quality.

Alberto Giacometti

by René Wehrli

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If the family of painters of the Bregaglia Valley bearing the name of Giacometti suggests the dynasties of Swiss artists that from the medieval period to the Baroque emigrated and achieved fame far from home, it is no less true that the first two—Giovanni and Augusto—always remained in touch with their province and that even their present scion, though decidedly conditioned by life in Paris as shown by his art, likes to come back on occasion to the country of his forebears. Who knows whether, after all, certain "mountaineer" affinities crop out secretly in the structure—and the feeling of solitude—of these works that are so revealing, moreover, of the forlornness besetting the fate of modern man?

Michel Seuphor, Designer

by Hansjörg Gisiger

82

Our age of specialists gives short shrift to all-round talents, and this is no doubt what explains how Michel Seuphor (this name being an anagram of "Orpheus"), internationally known as a modern art critic—he is the author of a monumental work on Mondrian—has not yet achieved the same renown for his drawings, fascinating though they are. He himself has defined them as "drawings by gaps". By this is meant a system of strokes that are severely horizontal defining, in white, a shape. It has been said of this way of proceeding that it is both "allusive and abstract, often with components that are either surrealist or expressive". Certain drawings by Seuphor are known for having been torn up and then remounted by Arp. Finally, thanks to the collaboration of Elisabeth de Saadler, the eminent Belgian tapestry artist, his drawings have been admirably transposed on a grand scale.