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Summary

Speaking of individual house planning Homage to Adolf Loos (pages 1—3)

About 1895, in Vienna, Adolf Loos began his struggle against contemporary architecture. The main object of his considerations was the individual home, as the centre of all cultural trends. One of his collections of essays he called: „Spoken in vain“; another: „Nevertheless“.

Leading traditions

Every epoch has its specific building problems, determining the development of a style which is so universally adopted that it becomes social property. These buildings are crystallizations of prevalent cultural energies. The Egyptians found eternal expression in burial monuments and temples. The Greeks continued with complicated systems of columns, with agora and stadii. The Romans created public squares, roads, aqueducts, technical works, traffic, the city.

In the middle ages, religious buildings were the decisive elements for the creation of a style, in the renaissance the palace buildings as political symbols, in the baroque age the representative absolutist buildings, in the 19th century, after the French Revolution, the villas of the Nucingen and Birotteau; today, it is the home of Babbitt. Of course, there are younger building problems than the individual home: cinemas, factory buildings, gasometers. But these express mankind as an inert mass, capable at the utmost of devastating roman pasture grounds and not as a constructive, conscient power.

The great mistake

The individual home is an excellent representative of culture. Here, everything is present: the spoon, the chair, the lamp, the work of art, music, nature, and the patron. But while in older times the building patron and the architect agreed within the same historically determined principles — which were those of the elite class — today, patron and architect usurp wilfully not only every possible historical manner, but also the capacity of esthetic judgment.

Ancestry

Another error is that of wanting to raise the individual home to a „work of art“, enforced by a false parallelism to other artistic forms in architecture. But the religious forms which determined the character of the much — admired churches, was a spiritual factor. And the political forms which manifested themselves in the buildings of the Renaissance, was also a spiritual factor. Our modern forms of residence are conditioned by practical, materialist reasoning.

And they have always had that character. In older times — as today in the farmhouse — working space and home were united. In our industrial epoch, the working area became a separate unit, and the remaining functions were turned to profit by speculators and „architects“. The result: tenement houses and individual homes filled with „art“ products. Of course, man tried to transplant some of the glamour of bygone patriarchal magnificence into the new world. That is why the imitation of past monumental styles was attempted against which Loos directed his attacks. This not proving efficient, the rural residence, the english country house, was discovered. These same reminiscings of our rural great-grandfathers still are the most hindering elements today in the creation of a new 20th century home culture, hindering the most decisive step to be taken in our time, whose specific style should be found through such contradictory conceptions as those of Loos and Wright, of Mies and Corbusier.

First attempts

About 1900, Adolf Loos began his struggle for european culture. He screwed down the ambitious pretext of making the house a work of art onto a human level, and began to build with reason, instead of with style. He fought his battle on all the fields of everyday life, he stood up for porridge, overalls and flat roofs. He strictly condemned the pretension of architects not only to build bad houses, but to fill them with especially designed furniture as well. He constructed. He constructed little and well and lived the life of a perfect gentleman. In addition, he said nearly everything that is to be said, even today, about the esthetic and

spiritual value of a house. After the first world war, Mies van der Rohe developed houses out of the classical tradition, whose spiritual portent — that of clearly defined rooms mingling in a free continuity of space — would have been the expression of a new cultural elite, if that basis had existed. His teachings endeavor to form such an elite today: „all education must begin with the practical side of life. Real education, however, must transcend this to mould the personality. The first aim should be to equip the student with the knowledge on skill for practical life. The second aim should be to develop his personality and to enable him to make the right use of this knowledge and skill.“ After the second world war, E. N. Rogers largely contributed to the building of a competent elite. His cultural criticism of the problems of our time aims to bring human relationships nearer to a „giusta misura“. This „giusta misura“ — the harmony of human feeling and human abilities — will determine the style of future homes. The architect will never be able to realize this aim out of his own stock of formal requisites. He needs a close relation to society and it is in his own interest if he tries to develop a social basis susceptible of a new culture.

Basic facts

“A house is no house if it is not warm in winter and cool during the summer, fit at all seasons to offer an adequate interior to a family. A house is no house if it possesses no corner for reading poetry, no bath or no kitchen.

No problem is solved if the solution does not satisfy from a functional, a moral and an aesthetic viewpoint. And man is not really man if he does not possess a house fulfilling these demands.”

E. N. Rogers.

The importance of practical views

A house must be more practical than a factory, it must work like an telephone automat. It must prove satisfactory even in 50 years. This is why it cannot be made fit to measure, like an italian dress, but rather resembles a kimono or a loose american suit. Statistics show us how much energy is wasted by unnecessary ways in the household; they determine the minimum living space and the most rational working order etc. They proceed from the point of view that a house is a working utensil, to be treated much as a machine. But a modern house, more than anything else, is an object of pleasure, and the most useful plan is that which gives the greatest possibilities for social life.

Social life is a changeable factor and we cannot decisively influence it by architecture. This is why architecture must beware from too great adaptation to individual desires. It cannot be allowed to grow wild, adopting in uncontrolled permutation every existing formal possibility. Otherwise, it might have the fate of the horses, and the fever of the last hundred years might destroy it. The demand for simplicity apparently contradicts the ceaseless perfecting of mechanical installations. But in a practical house, these are arranged in a way which permits their renewal and their adaptation to the growing demand for comfort. A house should be as man himself, who changes his philosophy with time, who increases his knowledge, develops his working instruments, and throughout all this, or because of it, maintains his original mould. A house, as man, must be independent from progress and change to be able to survive it. One of Loos' houses will still be adequate today or tomorrow, for it is the conscious expression of a gentlemanly mind — that is, of simplicity, usefulness and reserve. A house by Behrens will be impossible tomorrow — even if it is fitted with a television apparatus — because it has surrendered to a false ideology, to the power of money, to the idea of possession and power.

An assembly of rooms is still on house

Here a short description of the constituent rooms and their changed significance from their origin.

The entry is simple and leads directly into the centre of the house. It has lost its several labyrinth stages, as lobby, wardrobe, and anteroom, which manifestly had the function of a stiff collar. The living-room is the centre of the house. It must be sparsely furnished with light furniture allowing the formation of free groups for social entertainment. It must permit several arrangements of the furniture, and not „functionally“ demand one specific solution. The room is only a shell, coming to life through the people who live in it. It must adapt itself to different personalities.

The dining-room can be included in the living-room. Meals are a social event, gatheringpoint of all the inhabitants of a house. The usual type of house cannot afford a dining-room providing the necessary space and furniture for a medium-sized family. Meals must be served either in the kitchen or in one part of the dining-room.

The old kitchen has disappeared, instead, we have the „work-space“, as Wright calls it. Here and in the bathroom, the technical comfort of our time is to be applied, in construction and organization. The management of the household in the old style demanded servants. This let the situation of dependence which one wanted to escape by a private house, in through a back door of the new paradise. A modern household is without servants. To enable the housewife to exert her social functions pleasantly, the kitchen has to be mechanized. The „work-space“ also provides the former laundry, in the shape of a washing-machine, a drier and an ironing-machine. Kitchen vapours and odours should no longer exist. A breakfast bar helps to simplify the household. There, the single members of the house can prepare lunch or breakfast for themselves. The work-space overlooks the entry, the dining-space, the living-room and playroom. The playroom belongs to a modern house, even without children. A ping-pong table must find its place. The playroom can serve as a passage, but it must be developed according to its use, and placed at a sufficient distance from the living-room.

Bedrooms. These serve much too often for unsuited purposes. They are used for practising music, for working and other activities. The parents' room has only beds in it, with no unnecessary furniture. The closets and dressing-tables are in a separate dressing-room. The children's rooms have a bed and a table for school work. Frogs are kept in the playroom.

The bathroom has a growing importance and must not be restricted to a minimum.

An essential addition to the living-room is the studio, which ought not to be missing, although a minimum space is sufficient.

Cupboards are supplanted by wall closets.

New tendencies

The principal tendencies are towards simplicity of all living-rooms and bedrooms, towards liberty of ground plan interiors and towards creation on a three-dimensional scale, not only in the plane, as today. In spite of the closer interrelation of rooms, their functions remain separate. Single-room apartment will always be impractical. Americans tend to combine working area and dining-space. A possibility which is as old as the kitchen, but has a new significance since first-class hotels show their grill-rooms to the guest. Washing-machines may even be set up in the playroom, America shows a row of good solutions.

A current architectonic problem is the relation of building and nature. Not only „Bay Region“ architects, but from another aspect even the regional mannerism are expressions of a romantic reaction to the mechanization of town life, seeking to mingle building and nature. The house loses its clear cubic form and becomes an ornament to nature. Local materials and building idioms are adopted to blend the two elements organically. A more or less extensive use of glass surfaces is no decisive factor. Schmitthenner is nearer to Wright than Mies or Loos.

But a house is not a product of nature, not a result of organic growth, but of culture, of man. It is nature's antipode. In this sense, the classic conception which has been developed by Mies van der Rohe will see a renaissance. The objections raised against a compact building developed on a crystallisation system, accusing it of conservatism, are not justified. The possibilities of classical expression are not yet exhausted.

Form

“A house has to please everybody, contrary to the work of art which has to please nobody... A house fulfils a practical need... A house is conservative, art is revolutionary. A house, then, has nothing to do with art? It is so.“ (Cited from Loos). But this fact does not dispense the architect from the obligation of complete formal development. Today more than ever, this is essential to adequate architectonic expressiveness. The revolution which is transforming science to-day has evoked a wave of romantic formlessness in architecture. Function-

alism led to a hopeless flood of insignificance which can not be stemmed by an apparently severe screen. The screen is at the utmost a technical help, and not a spiritual base permitting the development of a new style; what is more, a system based on the principle of addition, and helpful only towards the solution of minor problems.

An antithesis to the screen method is the artistic treatment of architectural problems, which claims to be free from arithmetical and organisatory methods and prones itself to a pseudocreative dilettantism.

The very essence of architecture forbids the identification of house building with modernism, or with tradition, or with the force of the people, or with nature or dynamics. Meaning, technical construction and formal development of the house must be evolved independently from the views of the architect or the patron, as a sole consequence of prevalent conditions. A house is not built to express ideas, but to fulfil needs.

The clearest tendency against this „ideological“ architecture is displayed by the new houses and projects of Mies van der Rohe. In every single case, the number of constituent elements (beds, seats etc.) are coordinated to a system by organisatory and formal laws. The basic trend of these systems — comparable to crystallization systems — is the following (false interpretations not excluded): The constituent elements of the house are treated as the elements of a group, and coordinated according to appropriate laws. (I do not know whether these laws have any relation to the mathematical group theory. But it would not be without value to introduce mathematical laws into architecture and to apply them to colours, light, planes and volumes.) The elements are coordinated in a compact system whose extension is defined by practical needs. I.e., the planning does not consist in the best possible division and organization of a previously designed space, but inversely — similar to the structural methods of modern painting — in the fulfilling of the necessary functions, thus determining the spacial extension. This method — it is only a method — doubtlessly has many parallels to Schönberg's music. Arnold Schönberg's harmonical system, although conceived for sound, offers a very good pattern for the development of a theory of architecture. A good theory — with all its logical severity — leaves enough freedom for creative energy to assert itself. This energy is not used romantically, but rationally. Reduction to the essential is its characteristic feature, distinctness its main law.

Schönberg was afraid that his harmonical system would be of difficult understanding for the normal musician (who notably does not like to apply his reason), just because it is based on facts. This will also be the fate of a future theory of architecture. Only if modern architecture is freed from dilettantism can it do justice to the realities of our time.

House in Binningen by Bâle (pages 4—5)

This house was to be built in a quarter of single two-storied houses on the town border. Its position on a sloping ground facing northward permitted a splendid view over the town and the open valley of the Rhine onto the Schwarzwald and Vogese hills. The general disposition of the rooms had to follow these outer conditions; the view to the north was to be brought to full value, and at the same time a certain sun exposure to be conserved for the living-room; the interior demanded shelter against onlookers from the street and the neighbouring houses on the hill side; lastly, the building was to be brought into harmony with the steep sloping garden.

A very comprehensive building programme was realized with comparatively small means by compact disposition on a simple cube element, set transversely onto the sloping ground. A certain relaxation and flexibility of plan was achieved through the steel frame construction.

“Red House“ near Barrington, Illinois (pages 6—7)

General features: The position of the house and general orientation of the rooms were determined by the beautiful view, and the adaptation to a sloping site; the prevalent south-western winds were also drawn into account. All this led to a solution presenting living- and sleeping tracts respectively at a right angle, thus providing a sheltered garden area for outdoor life.

Ground plan:

The separate functions of living and sleeping are sufficiently expressed in the rectangular disposition of the two building tracts. The bedroom wing is two-storied, each storey presenting an unity of two bedrooms, bath and WC. The living-room wing is two-storied to the north, with its basement storey for laundry and storage largely retreating into the hillside. To the south, the upper floor level provides the large living- and dining-room, sheltering a covered entrance and car park beneath it.

With the exception of the window frames and a few other details painted white, all outer surfaces were treated in red-brown paint, which proved to be a good colour contrast throughout the year.

Constructed 1941; building expenses (excluding land and furniture) 12 000 dollars.

A house in Northfield near Chicago built of wood (pages 8—9)

This house was projected for a family of two adults and two children living without a maid, and had to be adapted to the climatic conditions of continental middle-west America. The southern front consists of a large glass wall, so that the strong exposure to the rays of the winter sun in daytime considerably contributes to the heating of the rooms. The inclination of the roof is at a parallel angle to the entering rays of the winter sun at its lowest point at noon, so that the rooms are flooded with sunshine in winter; during the summer, when the sun is high, the windows are shaded by the overhanging roof.

The house includes a large livingroom, separated from the kitchen by a low-level partition, a large bedroom for the children, subdivided by closet walls set freely into the room, the parents' bedroom with wall closets, a bathroom with separate compartments for shower and WC, and a storage room where heating and boiler centres are installed and which can be used at the same time as a working room. The large livingroom includes a bar, an open fireplace, a corner for meals with a table that can be wheeled to and from the kitchen fully laid.

Along the south side of the house, under the projecting roof, runs the covered terrace with the corner for outdoor meals which is often used in fine weather, and can be served directly from the kitchen by a pass.

A house in two segments (pages 10—12)

This house is situated on a steeply sloping plot in a forest region of Oakland, California. Living- and sleeping units are provided separately in two independent tracts, the living tract being for climatic reasons constructed on a considerably lower level to protect the living- and dining-rooms with their large glass surfaces from the glaring sun.

A covered staircase connects the two tracts, leading up over several grades of the slope.

The principal problem for the architects was to build a house for three generations, allowing a largely independent functioning of their parallel needs. As both segments are relatively small, both living and sleeping had to be concentrated on the smallest possible space, and at the same time an organization of these functions to be found which would still permit the feeling of ease and natural liberty of movement to the inhabitants.

The technical installation was separately planned for each building, giving for example independent heating plants to both living and sleeping tracts, so that we have two completely separate units.

A house in seven zones near Los Angeles (pages 13—17)

This site on a southwestern mountain slope near Los Angeles was chosen largely because of its unrivalled view over the town and the sea. The house is surrounded by a rich tropical vegetation. The building plot was picked out between two natural elevations of the ground forming a protective wall to both sides of the building.

The most conspicuous factor in the ground plan, dominating the structure of the whole house, is the uninterrupted suite of livingroom and loggia which occupies the whole length of the building from north to south, along which the other rooms form a secondary group. This axial body opens into the surrounding landscape to the north and to the south, thus forming the passage for a constant interrelation of the interior with

the intensely tropical outer surroundings in a free continuity of space. The study and diningroom are dependant from the central living-room and can be closed off by folding walls and sliding doors if separate rooms are needed.

This additional continuity of the rooms to the right and left of the central living-room forms a secondary transversal axis, leading over the inner dining-room to an outdoor porch reserved for meals in the open, thus permitting a double relation with nature. Both the rooms reserved for meals are directly accessible from the kitchen.

The wall closets in the dining-room can be opened from the kitchen as well as from the room side. The kitchen, which is placed behind the two dining-rooms, has an automatic washing machine besides the regular kitchen installation, so that no additional laundry is needed. The study, completely furnished as an atelier, can be turned into a guest room because of its large sofa. The bedrooms of the parents and children are isolated from the other rooms on the west of the house, with a view onto the hill and surrounding eucalyptus grove.

An additional bedroom is accessible from the entry hall, providing a guest — or maid's room.

From the entry hall, a staircase leads to the large roof terrace over the bedrooms of parents and children, offering on its partly covered area outdoor sleeping commodities for hot weather. A sideboard and corner for meals beside the chimney complete the necessary furnishings for out-of-doors life.

Bellah house (pages 18—19)

General features: This house constitutes an example for carefully planned room disposition on relatively small building area. The mutual positions of house and garage tracts create an outdoor living space completely sheltered against intrusion from without; the living-rooms: dining-room, salon and study, centre around this secluded court, their windows viewing the swimming-pool and greenery.

Ground plan:

The house is one-storied, all the rooms being on ground level. The kitchen is situated behind the living- and dining-rooms, both looking onto the terrace. The two bedrooms and bathroom with douche are situated along a separate corridor, accessible from the entrance. A separate smaller building contains the study and the adjoining garage, with an additional shelter for a second car.

Wood frame construction with outside woodwork of natural red California wood. Sliding-doors and -windows give more flexibility to the ground plan and allow a close interrelation between interior and garden spheres.

A house on the coast of Oregon (pages 20—21)

This house stands among the high grass on a beach of the western coast of Oregon. Its isolated position in the wild natural surroundings largely determined the constructive and formal quality of the house. To the west, a large row of windows gives a full view of the ocean, while the north and eastern walls are solid for greater shelter.

The front elevation to the west is in rough stone masonry, while the back walls to the east are covered with compact woodwork. The interior plan of the house is mainly determined by the large covered hall and veranda jutting out towards the ocean, whose spaciousness takes up half of the ground floor, thus making the hall the main feature of the house. This central room comprises the living-room and dining-room, adjoining the bedroom wing and bathroom on the north of the house, and the kitchen and storage rooms to the south. Two maid's rooms, a guestroom, bath and storage are situated above the garage and dining-room.

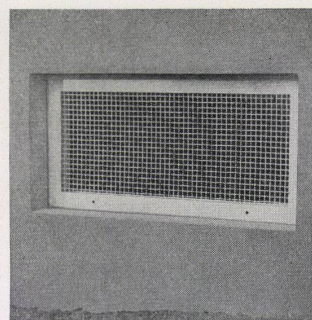
House of an italian vine-grower in Castana (page 22)

This house was built for three persons — the parents and a daughter — on a hillside among the vines. Its situation on the slope occasioned a full-sized basement storey with entrance and staircase on the south side, which recedes into the hillside with cellar, storage and garage to the north.

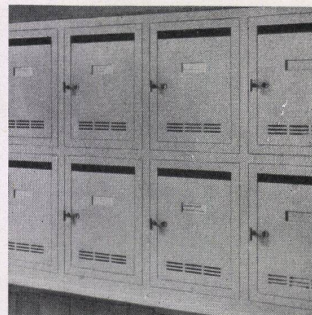
In the upper storey, kitchen and bath, as well as the two bedrooms on the south-east, centre around a spacious living-room, whose glass partition towards the staircase permits an additional view to the north-west.

Bauteile

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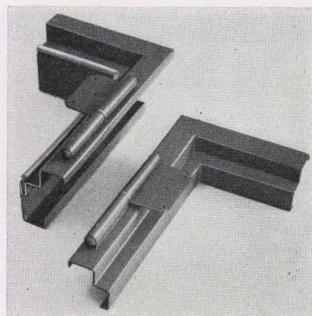
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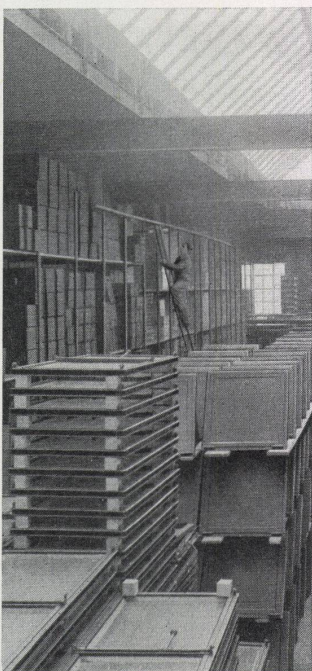
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Ab Lager lieferbar

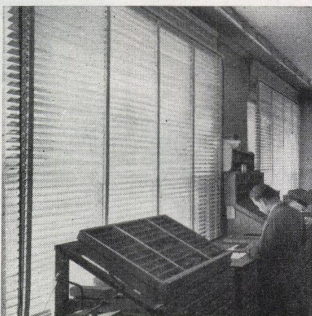
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Emil Maurer

House in Beaconsfield (page 23)

This house was constructed as a gate-keeper's lodge on a green slope near a small river. To the south-east, the house faces the main building across the large garden. A staircase leads from the entrance on the north to the apartments, which are on a higher level. Besides a kitchen with a corner for meals, a separate living-room and double bedroom are provided. A second bedroom is reserved for the master's family or guests. Kitchen and living-room are heated by a stove accessible from both sides.

A medical dispensary in a garden pavilion (pages 24—25)

An already existing house in Ennenda was to be extended to provide for the needs of a medical dispensary. Formal and practical reasoning led to a complete separation of the medical rooms by construction of an independent pavilion in the garden of the house. In this garden space, bordered by two rows of houses, by the doctor's house and its extension and by the high trees of an old park, a free position was chosen and the pavilion erected independently from the style of the surrounding buildings, determined only by functional and constructive reasons. The patients' entrance, leading through the doctor's flower-garden, adds to the general atmosphere of ease and relaxation. Architecturally, this new and different little building fits in well with the old houses around it.

The disposition of the rooms allowed a considerable rationalization of the doctor's work.

Constructed 1948, building cost about 55 000 Swiss francs.

Temporary shelter and future holiday home (page 26)

Decisive for the elaboration of this project was the idea of creating new housing possibilities for the destroyed towns of Holland, capable of being fitted organically into later coordinative reconstruction plans. The solution as proposed by the architect is to be found in a scheme for single houses, to be built in the surroundings of the larger towns in the function of temporary shelters, which may be converted into simple holiday or country homes as soon as housing conditions are normalized.

Ground plan: Living and sleeping sections are separated from each other by the entrance and lobby. Both have transversal airing. The bedroom section can be enlarged if necessary. A garage is provided in a separate building beside the road.

Construction: As long as the number of projected buildings does not justify prefabricated construction, the houses are to be built normally, id est with concrete foundations and brick walling.

Project for a boathouse (page 27)

A medium-sized, elder country house on the lake of Lucerne, is inhabited during the summer by a family of seven. The house is at some distance from the lake, screened by the old trees of a park; the architect's aim was to create a more direct relation to the lake.

The project combines new outdoor living space, consisting of a sheltered sitting corner, with a boathouse on the lake. A roof, porch, chimney-piece and a low wall provide enough shelter and warmth for the beautiful view and close neighbourhood to the lake which make the charm of this corner to be enjoyable in all weather. A floating mobile platform on the water increases the freedom of movement.

"Solar House" in Massachusetts (pages 28—29)

The main characteristic of this project is that it was neither designed for a definite site, nor for a definite client. This fact compelled the architect to direct his projecting work towards the greatest possible flexibility of plan, so that the house could be adapted to any building-site and the rooms disposed to suit any client. This was one of the reasons which led to a clear separation of the living-, dining- and play-rooms from those destined for sleeping and hygiene. The separation was realised through two completely independent buildings set parallel behind each other and connected only by the covered entrance tract.

A small intimate inner courtyard is closed off from all exterior disturbance by the two buildings and their connection. This patio leads directly onto a covered terrace which can be shut off by glass partitions during the winter to serve as a living-room and play-room.

A house with an inner courtyard (pages 30—31)

The main characteristic of this project is the disposition of the living-rooms around a central inner courtyard. This patio gives access to the actual living-room on the north, and leads directly onto the veranda. A small plantation in the open court gives the necessary relation to nature. The bedrooms projected to the south are separated from the central court by a passage, while an additional bedroom on the east has access to the open living-room and the veranda before it. To the west of the house are the kitchen, a breakfast bar and the adjoining dining-room, separated by a partition wall, and leading onto a terrace reserved for outdoor meals. An open service court joins the kitchen on the west, separating it from the large garden behind. To the left of the main entrance, a covered shelter for cars is projected.

Project for a town house (pages 32—33)

This project was conceived for one of the typical plots in the centre of towns, id est surrounded by private commercial buildings. The primary request for the general plan and disposition of the building was therefore the greatest possible shelter from disturbing outside influence, a comparative isolation giving ease and tranquillity to the life of the inhabitants. To solve this problem, the daylight was given through skylights, in a large row of oblique windows on the ceiling, thus assuring a very good climatic circulation.

The large living-room forms the centre of the building, divided by a chimney-piece and movable screens of corrugated eternite into dining corner and playroom. A further comparatively isolated room, reserved as a study, has been separated from the whole complex by a row of closets, accessible from both sides. The bedrooms and bath are arranged along this large central room.

A small house for a doctor (pages 34—35)

The modest building site lies on a small hill near Lugano, with a view onto the landscape towards the south-east; to the north-west, it is protected by trees.

The project is destined for a doctor, who wants to retire here with his wife once he has given up consultations. In the meantime, it is to be used as a holiday home.

Technical indications: Concrete wallings, consisting of cement, sand and natural stone grindings. Windows and outer doors in serial frames of 1,10×2,40 m. The sills are mounted onto the frames with the isolation and inner coverings. These prepared elements are inserted on the building spot; an inverted covering on the outside is applied afterwards.

Floor and roof in wooden carpentry, the flooring in the rooms of Douglas strips, while entry and living-room have tiled floors. The roof is covered with copper plating. The walls in the bedroom and study have a wainscoting of prefabricated fibre plates, in the halls of sponge concrete.

Country house in Salsomaggiore (pages 36—37)

The characteristic trait of this house which is being constructed in Salsomaggiore is the fact that in spite of its relatively small volume of only 500 m³, it has been provided with all the advantages of a large country residence thanks to a very careful disposition of the available space, and to an extensive system of technical and household requirements. The ground floor is slightly elevated, containing the large living- and music-room, which takes up two storeys and constitutes the dominant vertical room element of the house. Beside it are the dining-room, service-room and kitchen, and the entrance with a small lobby and WC.

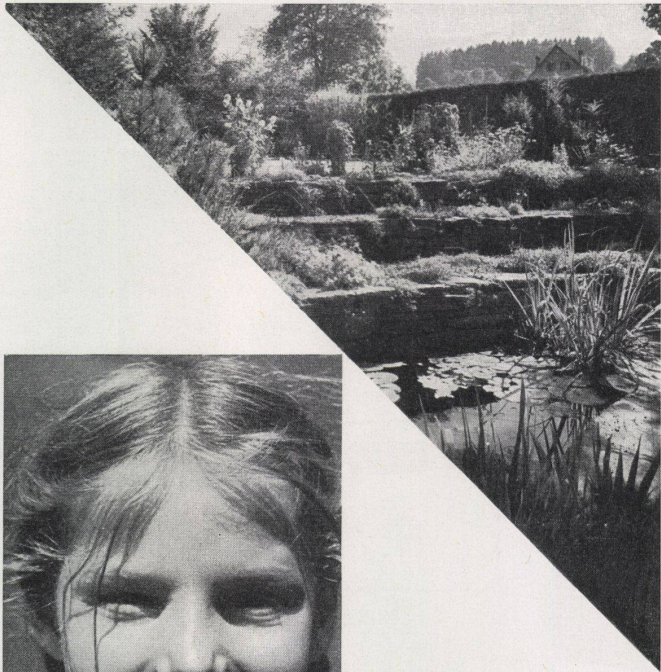
A staircase leads from the ground floor living-room over the gallery to the three bedrooms and the bath in the upper storey. The roof terrace is attainable from the upper floor by an outer staircase on the south of the house. All the storeys, including the top floor, have an additional connection through a small intern winding staircase.

The terrace with its swimmingpool and greenery has been developed into a roof garden which provides an ideal frame for outdoor life.

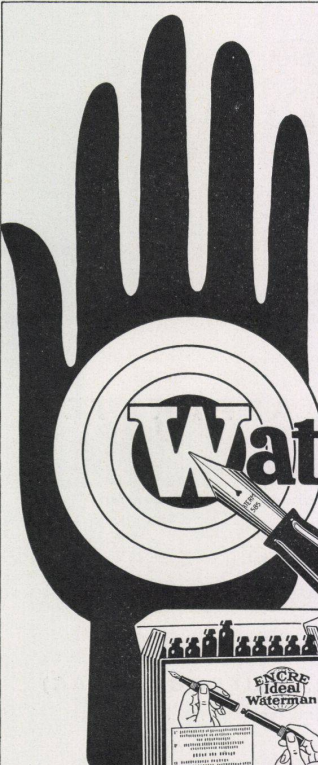
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IN GUTEN PAPETERIEN

Project for a house near Kusnacht (pages 38—39)

This building site was chosen on the edge of a natural terrace, with a view to the south, north and west.

The object demanded was a house for a doctor and his family of four. The esthetic motive for its general plan was an attempt to combine a functional disposition of the rooms, corresponding to practical needs, with fundamental laws of mathematics and harmony.

The ground plan correspond to the needs of a family with very varied interests. The front elevation is the immediate result of the inner disposition. The glass surfaces are arranged in rhythmic order to show clearly their function as confining planes; the glass is here conceived not as an unobtrusive separation between inner space and nature, but as a tangible slab comparable to a wall, with other qualities.

The formal coordination results from a synthesis of the cartesian axial system and of Kayser's Index and Generator theorems.

Holiday-house in the Val Malenco (page 40)

The architect Gandolfi was charged with a project for a holiday-house for about 7—8 persons, to be built on a 45° slope in the Val Malenco. He proposed a steel frame, with wallings of wooden outer scaling on asphalted card-board, with an air chamber and inner wainscoting of heraclite plates, the roof in aluminium sheeting with an isolating air chamber. A comparison between this prefabricated solution and the ordinary massive construction showed the first to be less expensive. Besides the pecuniary profit, the prefabricated house has the advantage of being set up in the small span of 20 days, and of being immediately ready for habitation because of its dry construction.

The whole house consists of a single large living-room two storeys high, with a gallery partly dividing it in mid-height and sliding doors with movable partitions and couches enabling a further division into single sleeping berths.

Resumés

Remarques sur la construction de maisons individuelles Hommage à Adolf Loos (pages 1—3)

Environ 1895, à Vienne, Adolf Loos commença sa lutte contre l'architecture de son temps. L'objet de ses raisonnements était avant tout la maison particulière, en sa fonction de centre des intérêts culturels. Une des collections d'essais de Loos s'appelle: „Parlé dans le vide“; une autre: „Malgré tout.“

Points d'appui historiques

Chaque époque a ses problèmes architecturaux spécifiques, à la solution desquelles se développe un style, si clairement vainqueur qu'il devient propriété commune. Ces monuments deviennent les points de cristallisation des énergies culturelles. Les Egyptiens s'assuraient de l'éternité par leurs tombeaux et par leurs temples. Les Grecs ajoutèrent leurs colonnades compliquées, leurs agores et leurs stades. Les Romains créèrent des places publiques, des rues, des aqueducs, des œuvres techniques, la cité, la circulation.

Au Moyen Age, c'était autour des monuments religieux que se concentraient les efforts de style, pendant la Renaissance, c'étaient les palais en leur fonction de symboles politiques, à l'époque baroque, les œuvres de représentation, au 19^e siècle, après la révolution française, ce furent les hôtels des Nucingen et des Birotteau; aujourd'hui, c'est la maison de Babbitt. Il y a certainement des problèmes plus modernes que la maison particulière: le cinéma, l'usine, le gasomètre. Mais ces édifices reflètent l'humanité comme masse sans volonté commune, capable tout au plus de dévaster les plaines romaines, et non comme force consciente et constructrice.

La grande erreur

La maison particulière est un représentant excellent d'une culture. Ici, tout se trouve: la cuiller, le siège, la lampe, l'œuvre d'art, la musique, la nature et le patron. Mais pendant que jadis le patron et l'architecte se rencontraient dans le même esprit général — esprit qui était celui de l'élite d'une époque — l'architecte et le patron d'aujourd'hui usurpent non seulement tous les styles

historiques, mais aussi la fonction de juges esthétiques.

Descendance

Une autre erreur consiste à vouloir élever la maison au rang d'une „œuvre d'art“, en parallèle directe avec d'autres manifestations d'un art architectural. Mais les formes religieuses qui déterminaient la structure des admirables églises, étaient d'un ordre spirituel; pareillement, les formes politiques qui se manifestent dans les monuments de la Renaissance, étaient d'un ordre spirituel. Les formes de l'habitation moderne sont déterminées par des raisonnements pratiques, matériels.

Elles l'étaient toujours. Jadis, la maison réunissait — comme aujourd'hui encore l'habitation paysanne — l'atelier et l'appartement. Par l'industrialisation, le travail a été concentré ailleurs, tandis que les spéculateurs et les „architectes“ s'occupèrent de ce qui restait. Le résultat: l'immeuble de rendement et la maison pleine d'objets „artistiques“. Naturellement, on voulait conserver au monde nouveau un peu de la gloire des splendeurs patriarcales passées. D'où d'abord les imitations du style monumental ancien combattues par Loos. Ce moyen ayant failli, on s'avisait de l'habitation rurale, de la maison de campagne anglaise. C'est cette même dépendance formelle de l'aïeul campagnard qui empêche aujourd'hui la formation d'une culture nouvelle de l'habitation. Elle empêche ainsi l'action décisive de notre temps, dont le style devrait se former des conceptions si opposées de Loos et de Wright, de Mies et de Corbusier.

Principes nouveaux

Vers la fin du siècle dernier, Adolf Loos commença à s'occuper de la culture occidentale. Il essaya de reporter la prétention de la maison particulière au rôle d'œuvre d'art sur un niveau possible, et commença à bâtir raisonnablement, au lieu d'aspirer au style. Il mena sa bataille sur tous les domaines de la vie quotidienne, il propagea le porridge, la blouse et le toit plat. Il se défendit strictement contre la vanité des architectes non seulement de bâtir de mauvaises maisons, mais de les remplir de meubles assortis, spécialement dessinés. Il ne faisait que construire; il construisait peu et bien, et vivait la vie d'un honnête homme. En plus, il a dit presque tout ce qui doit se dire encore aujourd'hui sur la forme et la signification d'une maison.

Après la première guerre mondiale, Mies van der Rohe développa des maisons sortant de la tradition classique, et dont la portée esthétique — distinction nette des pièces, continuité et équilibre des volumes — aurait été l'expression d'une nouvelle élite, si ce levain avait existé. Son enseignement essaye aujourd'hui de former cette élite: „toute éducation doit commencer par le côté pratique de la vie. Cependant, une vraie éducation doit aller plus loin, doit former la personnalité. Le premier but devrait être de fournir à l'étudiant la connaissance et l'habileté nécessaires à la vie pratique. Le second but, de développer sa personnalité et de le rendre capable de bien employer ces connaissances et cette habileté acquises.“ Après la seconde guerre mondiale, E. N. Rogers fit une contribution essentielle à la formation d'une élite créatrice. Ses méditations critiques sur les problèmes culturels de notre temps ont pour but de rapprocher les relations humaines à la „giusta misura“. C'est cette „juste mesure“ — l'harmonie de la manière de sentir de l'homme avec ses connaissances pratiques — qui déterminera le style de la maison future. L'architecte ne saura jamais atteindre à ce but par ses propres moyens formels. Il a besoin du contact avec la société et c'est en son propre intérêt s'il essaye de développer une société capable de porter une culture nouvelle.

Faits fondamentaux

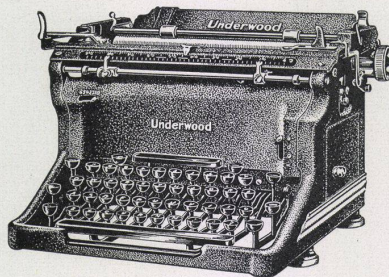
„Une maison n'est pas une maison si elle n'est pas chaude en hiver et fraîche en été, faite pour offrir en toute saison un séjour agréable à une famille. Une maison n'est pas complète s'il n'y a pas un coin à lire des poèmes, pas de baignoire ou pas de cuisine. Aucun problème n'est résolu si la solution ne satisfait pas en même temps la nécessité pratique, la morale et l'esthétique. Et l'homme n'est pas vraiment homme s'il ne possède pas une maison conforme à ces nécessités.“

E. N. Rogers

L'importance du point de vue pratique

Une maison doit être mieux organisée qu'une usine, elle doit fonctionner comme un téléphone automatique. Elle devra suffire à toutes les exigences même en 50 ans. Elle ne peut donc pas être faite sur mesure,

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