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Reflections

by W. Sandberg, Director of the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam

The whole of these reflections stem from a faith in the capacity of modern art to express and orientate our way of life and the need for such works to have a real "home", which can only gain by being clearly and dynamically planned in direct contact with the everyday world.

Enlargement of Zurich "Kunsthauus"

37

Arch.: Pfister Bros., Zurich

Put up for public competition in 1943-44, the new exhibition wing of the Zurich Museum of Fine Arts was opened in June, 1958. The cost came to 7,5 million francs, which were donated by E. Bührle and his family.

Commentary of a museum's director on the new wing of the Zurich "Kunsthauus"

37

by Max Huggler

In the eyes of the writer, the new section of the museum is unique in the concept that it embodies. For a long time the design of museums was inflexible and based on their contents (Basle, Amsterdam, Munich); then, when it became obvious that a freer arrangement was needed, movable partitions began to be employed, but usually in the form of panels which offered none of the architectural support which the paintings manifestly required. The originality of the Zurich museum lies in the effort that has been made to combine possibilities of alteration with the stability given by mural support. Moreover, the writer is unable to praise too highly the lighting quality of the new section which is equal throughout, thanks to the glass ceiling; whilst at the same time, the natural light entering through the lateral windows ensures a non-diffused illumination for the sculptural work.

Comments of an architect on the new wing of the Zurich "Kunsthauus"

40

by Benedikt Huber

According to B.H., the purely technical concern of making the new section of the museum available to the successive exhibitions held there has led to the ignoring of the inconvenient fact that, despite practical advantages, a museum should accord a well-defined architectural framework as well to its visitors and to the works displayed within its walls. Among other criticisms which could be made, it should be noted that the movable partitions which rise nearly to the ceiling do not make it clear whether a series of enclosed spaces is intended or whether they should be thought of as simply dividing up a large hall. This deliberately ambiguous characteristic of the interior is equally reflected in the neutral and weak elevations.

The Reply of the Director of the "Kunsthauus"

43

by René Wehrli

In disagreement with the optimistic view of Benedikt Huber that modern architecture is capable of integrating the functional needs inherent in the concept of a modern museum within a truly architectural scheme, R.W. has declared that the new Zurich "Kunsthauus" must at least be credited with having met the requirements of a "minimum program", which is both honest and in conformity with the current situation in art, this program consisting in the endeavour to give works on exhibition as neutral a setting as possible.

The Louisiana Museum at Humlebaek, near Copenhagen

45

1958, Arch.: Jørgen Bo and Vilhelm Wohlert, M.A.A., Copenhagen

In order to create a home for his collection and to set up a cultural centre, Knud W. Jensen, the great patron of modern Danish literature and art, not only bought the Villa Louisiana, but also commissioned the construction of an adjoining building—the whole to be closely related to the park and coastal landscape. The extremely happy originality of this work lies essentially in the fact that the main preoccupation has been with creating an atmosphere which would enable the works and visitors to come into close contact, and not with exhibition techniques. Works of art, architecture, furniture, and the countryside, all blend perfectly.

The Museum of Applied Arts of Zurich and its Collections

52

by Willy Rotzler

This Museum was founded in 1875 under the name Museum of Arts and Crafts and, in 1878, there was established the School of Applied Arts, under the same direction as that of the Museum. At first this Institute was devoted to be presentation and copying of traditional historical styles, but from about 1900 it took part in the "art nouveau" movement stemming from the ideas originating with Ruskin and William Morris and began, under the influence of its Director J. de Praetere, to take an increasing interest in modern work. A. Altherr, who has been the Director since 1912, followed up this tendency, which was greatly furthered by the foundation in 1913 of the Swiss Werkbund. In spite of the construction in 1933 of the present buildings, the Institute, which has continually organized notable temporary exhibitions, suffers from a serious shortage of space for its four collections: arts and crafts, graphic arts, posters, theatre collection. An extension plan is at present under consideration. In the meantime, only collections are shown which are related to the subject of each temporary exhibition. As for the spirit controlling the building up of the collections themselves, it is characterized above all by the desire to assemble a collection of significant designs rather than mere examples of historical styles.

Exhibition Wing of the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam

60

1954, Arch.: J. Sargentini, Amsterdam

This wing is intended for temporary exhibitions and is designed to resolve a three-fold problem: to create well-balanced halls suitable for flexible presentation, to assure the same light conditions as those obtaining in the studio and to avoid any exaggerated style which would detract from the works on exhibition.

New Exhibition Gallery of the Association of Artists of Hameln

62

1957, Arch.: Prof. Dieter Osterlen, Hanover

In spite of its modest dimensions, this building, situated in the midst of tall structures, is notable for its unity, which furnishes a particularly suitable setting for peaceful, undisturbed contemplation.

The Darmstadt "Kunsthalle"

64

Arch.: Prof. Th. Pabst, Darmstadt, in collaboration with Werner Nägele, Eng.

This building of modern materials is situated on the site of the Exhibition Gallery which was destroyed during the war. Moller's Rhine Gate, all that survives of the old structure, serves as a portico.

The Work of the St. Gall Museum of Fine Arts from 1953 to 1958

66

by Rudolf Hanhart

Renovating the old museum would destroy its charm; a study of the construction of a new building is being considered. In the meantime, over the past few years there has been a new surge of life in the St. Gall Museum taking the shape of a series of exhibitions of contemporary art. Following the Hodler Exhibition (winter 1953-54), in the spring of 1959 the work of Sophie Taeuber-Arp was shown, and in the autumn of the same year, the retrospective exhibition of Hans Brühlmann, followed by a Klee Exhibition in 1955, which can safely be said to have been an outstanding success. On a more local basis, 1956 saw an exhibition of country painters from Appenzell (this was shown afterwards with the work of the French "naïf" painters in Basle). At the same time, the Museum has been able to acquire a modest number of valuable new works.

World House Galleries, New York

70

Arch.: F. J. Kiesler and Bartos

Applying his "continuous architecture" principles here, the very antithesis of the traditional division into fixed rooms and corridors, Kiesler has transformed the two available floors into a series of exhibition areas. The slightly concave-convex walls meet a ceiling which is not plane throughout, as parts of its area are based on organic forms. The continuity of the total layout furnishes constantly changing angles of vision from which to study the works on exhibition; at the same time the visitor has the impression of moving within a large work of modern sculpture.