Summaries in English

The Architect and Industry 305

by S. Giedion

W. Gropius recently entreated architects to abandon their indifference with regard to industry or run risk of being eliminated by the latter (80% of American building being done without architects). Now, the American influence is beginning to make itself felt in Europe, likewise in this field. Seeing that standardization and mass construction are inevitable developments, the sole means of preventing the awkward consequences of this trend is for architects and the building industry to get in touch with each other. The campaign for "good design" in the manufacture of objects of daily use has already yielded excellent results. Just as much has to be done now on the level of relationships between industry and architecture.

The Architect Pier Luigi Nervi 306

by Giuseppe Vindigni

Born at Sondrio (Veltlin) in 1891, N. studied at the engineering school in Bologna, where he took his degree in 1913, at a time, then, when contradictory trends within architecture were more than ever coming into conflict with one another. N. is one of those who have done most to integrate modern architecture in the economic and social system of our day, and he has done so as much in his capacity as professor of structural technology at the Architectural College in Rome as by his works proper. N. tackled the architectural problems of our age essentially by rejuvenating the technical methods of building. In particular, he was instrumental in having reinforced concrete – the finest of all the materials invented by man, he has written – utilized for the creation of new structures, seeking on the one hand to make its use more economical (economical in use slab forms) and on the other hand seeking an ever-living synthesis between structure and design. The most exciting thing about this second aim, according to N., is the fact that it is never theoretical, abstract. To be sure, mathematical calculations are necessary, but should only serve as frames of reference, to be corrected on the construction project, in the course of the practical experience, one might say, gained on the job. It was in this way that he went to work, among other things, on the Municipal Stadium of Florence (1932), as well as in his other projects (airplane hangars, large exhibition hall of the Turin Fair, etc., and – his most recent projects – the Pirelli skyscraper in Milan and the large conference hall of the UNESCO Building in Paris). We should also mention his very interesting concrete boats. – In the achievements of N. the strategy of the intellect and design form, one may say, one seamless whole.

The UNESCO Headquarters in Paris 314

The complex of UNESCO buildings rises near the Ecole Militaire, delimited by several spacious avenues of the Invalides district and by the Place de Fontenoy. It comprises: a) the building housing the secretariat, with Y ground plan permitting as many exposed elevations as possible; 8 storeys; b) the building uniting beneath one and the same roof the conference hall and other adjoining rooms; c) a low wing (delegates' foyer, etc.) – The structure of the conference hall is architecturally most striking. The whole (in which concrete plays an essential role) possesses an admirable monumentality which is suffused with a poetic quality.

Prefabrication in France: the Works of Jean Prouvé 317

In Europe, architects and owners are still very hostile to anything that smacks of prefabrication in building, in large measure no doubt owing to the deplorably schematic character of this kind of construction in America. Moreover, conditions in Switzerland, a small country, are ill suited to the mass construction called for by prefabrication. All the same, natural developments should induce architects to lend their support to a well conceived industrialization of building (excellent results using standard elements in Sweden and Finland). – Hence the interest, which is far more than merely local, of the remarkable projects carried out in France by Jean Prouvé. Pr. does not regard himself as an architect at all, but only as a "constructeur". Engineer by profession, he established his Metals Construction Shops in Nancy in 1925, and worked in close collaboration with Le Corbusier and all the French avant-garde. His establishment became a veritable metals construction laboratory. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Reconstruction did not evince much understanding, and Pr. had to give up his Nancy shops to come to work in Paris. Abbé Pierre, in contrast to the authorities, understood at once the significance of these experiments and hopes, for this winter, to erect hundreds of prefabricated houses of the type created by Pr.

Prefabricated car shelter 327

Good example of prefabricated construction. The firm of Wartmann (Brugg) has erected a sample structure at Zurich-Kloten airport. This garage for motor-cars is specially contrived to provide shelter from outside drafts; no pillars to obstruct the entrance and exit of cars; finally, beautiful design.

The Artist and the Problems of the Contemporary Age 328

by Willy Rotzler

People have often spoken of the "social vacuum" in which contemporary artists are living in which our society shows as little interest as they do in social problems. Why, for instance, it might be asked, does the artist take in general such little interest in industrial civilization? It is no doubt considerations of this nature which have induced the Shell Petroleum Company to invite artists to come and observe its diverse activities and interpret them in their works. This is not the first attempt on the part of the industrial Maecenas, but this recent move is distinguished by the fact that it is not a publicity venture, and also because the artists have been granted complete freedom in choice of subjects as much as in artistic treatment, ranging from pure realism to the abstract manner. Certain of them have even gone so far as to give expression to their terror in the inhuman of this industry which had extended its hospitality to them. Which is one the best proofs that an intelligent effort to integrate the arts in modern life need not necessarily result in a paltry and matter-of-fact social realism. It must only be hoped that other similar ventures will serve to arouse artists' interest in the forms assumed by human activity in modern times.

A Special Case: Marius Borgeaud 332

by G. Peillex

The art critic, confronted by Borgeaud, finds himself unable to classify him. Though a born painter, he did not in fact really begin to paint until he was well advanced in years. He was a friend of the impressionists, admitting readily enough their cult of light, but he drew utterly different conclusions from it. Partly by reason of the revelation of Spain experienced on his trip in the Iberian Peninsula. He built up his canvases from sharply delimited surfaces, with perspective in depth in the manner of Vermeer. And no doubt he also knew the «fauve» Jean Puy, but apparently he had already on his own been converted to pure colour. – This impossibility of classifying him only serves to stress the originality of his talent, a compound of knowledge, freshness and a certain naiveté.

The Life of Marius Borgeaud 334

by Maxime Valloton

Making use of evidence provided by the wife of the painter, the author gives a brief outline of the life of this unique artist, who was born at Pully in 1861 and died in Paris in 1924. B.'s parents intended him to become a banker, for which career he prepared in Marseille: first discovery of Mediterranean light. But B., who up to that time had painted only for pleasure as an amateur, received an inheritance from an uncle and went to live in Algiers, then in Paris. It was then, having this fortune, that he decided to earn his living by painting. He was therefore nearly 40 when he became one of the most eager pupils of the Cormont Academy and of the Grande Chaumière. Pissarro aided him in his experiments. But B., though he studied the impressionists, did not become one of them. A free lance par excellence, he lived in Poitiers, then in Brittany, travelled in Spain, leaving behind him great paintings, which fall short of world-wide fame only owing to the circumstance of his untimely death.