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From October 25 to 27, 1963, the Swiss Werkbund organized a conference in Zurich in commemoration of its fiftieth year of existence. Werk is publishing in this Issue, as far as space permits, excerpts and abstracts of the discussions held and papers read at this conference.

During the first day the Berne Section of the Swiss Werkbund took up the subject of "Joint Ownership". The imminent introduction of so-called private flat ownership in Switzerland ought not to entail simply the sale of such flats by floors, in the way they have been let up to now. Rather, vertical joint ownership constitutes a new possibility of architectural and town-planning design.

The preservation and renovation of old town centres was the subject of the Zurich Section; out of the great abundance of material offered, we publish here the four first-prize plans appearing in the competition for a new building along the Limmat in Zurich, the "Samen-Mausier" building on Weinplatz. They show the range of possibilities available: "The New is Integrated in the Old", "Creative Restoration", "Modern Accent among Historic Monuments" and "Changing of Formal Idiom and Building Material".

The third day, set going by the Basel Section, saw a discussion of design problems.

Privately Owned Flats—A New Possibility

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Authors: Architects of Studio 5, Berne

The shortage of building sites and the steady rise in real estate prices are causing the chances of the average wage-earner of acquiring a house of his own to recede ever farther into the background. Also, building costs have gone up so high that, even with rising incomes, he can afford less and less building volume. Nevertheless, there is a latent need to acquire privately owned property, in order to feel secure from possible eviction notices and to have one's money at the same time tied up in a permanently valuable investment. For all these reasons Switzerland is about to reactivate via legislation the ancient device of privately owned flats.

The Werkbund is interested in design problems, and so privately owned flats present to it a new possibility of suitable design. It would like to draw the attention of architects from the very outset to the problems of privately owned flats, so that conventional apartments are not offered for sale like those up to now made available by speculators. The introduction of privately owned flats is intended to lead to a new way of living on the part of workers and employees in the tertiary sector of the economy. It gives the resident the chance to select a long-range habitat, and to this end it must within certain limits be flexible. However, at the same time it also gives the municipality an opportunity to draw population back out of the suburbs and to create a new urban concentration that does not lead to the formation of slums.

The long-range nature of the ownership also yields the possibility of higher investments than have been undertaken for apartment houses. This concerns not only the building material alone for the housing units, but also the "accessories", all the fixtures of the flat from the balcony to the terrace to the garden plus access to playgrounds, sports fields and public parks. The instrument of joint ownership, of share-wise acquisition of joint access to such facilities—e.g., swimming pools—is the logical continuation of the privately owned flats. The authors of the article see in all this a considerable impetus to social activity and the chance for increased interest on the part of the city-dweller in his neighbours and in his city.

Preserving and Designing

The following articles take up the problem of new buildings in the old town centre. Our Issue in this case does not follow the discussions of the Werkbund conference, but publishes the prize-winning plans of the competition, accompanied by general observations passed on to us by organizers of the conference.

Building in Old Town Centres—How to construct today?

86

by Manuel Pauli

How ought one to carry out in the densely articulated old towns the reorganization that has become necessary, and, if necessary, to renovate in entirety individual buildings? The author at the outset counters a number of slogans which have hitherto dominated this discussion. He demonstrates that the Old Town is a necessary and useful constituent of the living city, if only a correct land use policy is followed and the centre is not sacrificed to the interest of real estate speculators. Then he takes up the question of design, which up to this time has been disguised by the ready-made slogans of false realism. As his sketches show, he seeks to produce a careful translation of existing proportions and shapes into a contemporary architectural idiom, which is just as far removed from mere adaptation as it is from a schematic and abrupt shift in modes of design.

Samen-Mausier Building Competition, Zurich

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Realizing that new building in old towns can be learned only on the job and by practical experiment, the City of Zurich on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Werkbund organized an architectural competition devoted to the building of a new structure on an outstanding site in the Old Town of Zurich. We publish here the four first prize-winning plans: 1st Prize: Guhl + Lechner + Philipp, Zurich; 2nd Prize: Walter Moser & Rolf Keller, Zurich; 3rd Prize: Lorenz Moser, Jakob Schilling SIA, Zurich; 4th Prize: Ernst Kettiger, Zurich.

About the Samen-Mausier Building in Zurich

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by Stani von Moos

In this article the whole competition for the Samen-Mausier building is subjected to a general criticism, the argument being that the problem of preserving and renewing the old town is not an aesthetic but a town-planning problem. If there were a town-planning organization which took in hand a meticulous decentralization of all urban functions, then valuable old buildings like the Samen-Mausier building could be preserved.

The following summary articles are taken from the third day of the conference, under the title "Design Problems of the Present".

Designing and Preserving

97

by René Haubensak

Conjointly with his brother Hans Haubensak, the author made a film on the Old Town of Zurich for the Werkbund celebration. Three of the accompanying illustrations were taken from this film. In the film as in this article René Haubensak presents a picture of the town as of the site of densest settlement, most intensive activity and of meaningful juxtaposition of period styles, whose total architectural effect is precisely what constitutes the charm of an old town centre. He contrasts the harmonious variety of buildings, buildings from different periods or at least from different architects, with the false unity of a pseudo-city, which over and above its plan is built with uniformly monotonous unity.

Design Problems of the Present

102

by Gillo Dorfles

This article aimed mainly to clarify certain terms; it deals with the difference between Handicraft and Industrial Design, with the connection between Industrial Design and industrialized construction methods, with the reciprocal relations between Industrial Design and the fine arts, with information and business and with the relations between social order and styling. In his conclusions the author holds the view that even in the future, side by side with industrially produced and standardized products, there will be objects and buildings that are not mass-produced and that will display a high degree of individuality.

Architecture Today

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by Christian Norberg-Schulz

At the beginning of the Modern Movement was Corbusier's insistence on light, air and green grass. At the present time we are confronted by far more complex problems, and it is difficult to formulate just what our problem is. On the formal design level, what we are up against is no longer simple resolutions of clear problems, but rather demands for flexibility, individuality, many-sidedness in design and plans related to over-all urban concepts. On the side of human needs, in addition to light, air and greenness, there are also psychological factors, including the notion that architecture has to mean something, to create a specific environment and represent it. The author illustrates his paper by means of a number of examples, which can be mainly taken to elucidate the problem of grouping and linking and the integration of parts.

There appear as speakers:

Enrico Hartsuyker with the demand that the Werkbund, over and above the question of the formal design of individual objects of use, also concern itself with environmental planning, comprising everything from combinable installation groups to the whole inhabited landscape.

Daniel Chenut calls for the creation of social models, which, however, would have to be in keeping with the principle of free choice of mode of living on the basis of ready-made flexible housing units.

Yona Friedman axiomatically compares the present-day city with the layout of an ideally conceived city in space.

Aldo van Eyck puts in place of the formula of space and spaciousness the simple demand: "Provide that place!"