

Konrad Wachsmann

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Like the head of the team, the specialist experts may only pass their criticism at the end of the work. Their point of view is extremely important, as it may have considerable influence on certain work factors.

It is vital to stress that the results achieved by a team are often secondary. Success is not always apparent. The value of the work is often methodological in nature. Thus the result of a discussion group at the University of Yale was that certain methodological paths had to be followed to estimate certain secondary problems in a primary problem! It is interesting to note that repeated team study leads to astonishing results. Progress from the point of view of work and mastery of the subject is sure, the continuous exercise stimulates the imagination and spirit of scientific research. The work climate thus created is absolutely unique and fertile. The physical and psychological difficulties described at the beginning of our remarks may be reduced to a minimum.

It is the way of going about things that conditions the success of any enterprise. Industry and the new laws of energy condition the life and structure of our epoch. Thus, electricity, in so far as it produces light, influences, determines and alters the human conception of darkness. The same thing cannot be said for electric lights. The cause is electric energy and not the light itself. Similarly in the case of architecture, cause precedes effect.

Nevertheless, "causes" in the technical and scientific sense of the word are no longer comparable to "laws," evolution being far too rapid. Thus, a study book can only have very restricted range. It is necessary to use dynamic means of information, adapting oneself perpetually to scientific, technological and sociological evolution, taking into account all

objects, ideas, materials and uses. Quite obviously, any student, whether by himself or in a team, requires sources of information. But the knowledge of the past that is set in the present—for example, in the form of a book—is not sufficient, for the possession of the totality of information necessitates the ideas and knowledge of the present—and of the future, perhaps.

It is for this reason that about ten years ago Wachsmann formed a study group of several students with the intention of creating a tool for dynamic classification at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago with the help of the Federal Housing Agency in Washington. In this case the aim envisaged is to catalogue all information possible in any field that touches upon architecture and construction in general whether from near or afar, and to do this in such a way that the registration can always be kept up to date. An information machine of this nature seems to be the only really effective means for any form of scientific research. The use of microfilm and punched cards is indispensable in this field. It leads to the "system of modular coordination classification."

The principle of this system consists in registering no matter what datum—information, texts, designs, symbols and others on microfilm. The data from these films are then punched on appropriate cards. These cards allow for all the combinations of information desired. Moreover, it is possible to place the punched card in a projector—this being combined with microfilm—so as to study the figure shown on the film. It is possible, obviously, to photocopy this figure.

What is involved here is a microfilm library that can be enlarged to take in any amount of information and that can be adapted continually to the level of knowl-

edge. Since the range of this system is vast Wachsmann has suggested the following plan: Standardized sheets are distributed to students. Certain topics—according to a specific programme—are fixed upon. The results of study and analysis are registered and then become part of the programme of schools and universities. An international centre is to be charged with the organization of this vast form of teamwork. All the forms of administration, institutes, laboratories and other bodies having to do with building can collaborate. The centre will produce the punched cards already mentioned according to an international code and these originals can be copied at will throughout the entire world.

Teamwork demands faultless information: materials, methods, machines, systems of supervision, production processes, scientific analyses, static calculations, laboratory experiments, to put it in a few words, all the possibilities opened up by our age are indispensable. True, this system is not yet organized in this way. A lack of time, on one hand, and a lack of help, on the other, are slowing down the development of such a principle of information. The few examples of "teamwork" given in this issue will suffice, we hope as illustrations to the foregoing remarks.

Jacques Uffholz

Mobile Theatre (pages 385—390)

Project 1958

General Remarks

Who is there who does not like the circus making its way from town to town? Surely it is the romantic aspect of this particular type of spectacle that captivates us?

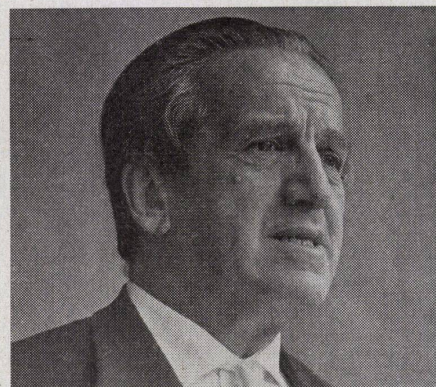
Equally well, isn't the entrancing element to be found in the enthralling sight of the organization deployed, which is capable of setting up a tent for 5,000 people and a ring, and all this while it moves about from place to place without ever interrupting its daily activities? Or what is involved perhaps is the fascination aroused in us at the idea of a home and place of work being moved about according to the whim of the owner and public demand. Is it the idea of vehicular and mobile housing?

If a mobile theatre is to be utilizable its dimensions must be approximately the same as those of a building with a fixed site. But if it is to be transportable its dimensions must be such that it can be folded or reduced to a size very different from that which it possesses in use. Moreover, the mobile theatre must not simply be a vehicle; the change from a vehicle to a theatre must be capable of being made rapidly and easily.

Is such a vehicle a work of architecture, or is it more a product of a mechanical engineer? The project in question is the work of an architect. To be more precise it is the work done for a diploma by an architectural student of the Polytechnic at the University of Lausanne. Furthermore, the professors in the department of architecture at the Polytechnic have accepted the work in question and the candidate has been raised to the status of architect! In this way the hybrid machine-house has become a work of architecture ex cathedra.

We are certain that to a large extent part of what is done in architecture will move along the lines followed by engineers and constructors where the idea of the profession of "architect" as we understand it today is no longer valid, where the architect of today has no part to play and where, nevertheless, the works that are done without him remain "architecture" all the same.

Konrad Wachsmann



Das Resultat der ersten welthistorischen Periode war die Ablösung des Menschen von der Natur. Der Begriff der klassischen Materie, auf den sich das Weltbild dieser Zeit aufbaute, ist heute vollständig aufgelöst. Unter dem experimentellen Zugriff des Physikers verschwindet die physische Realität dessen, was wir bisher Natur zu nennen pflegten, in einem unentwirrbaren Netz immaterieller Relationen, deren Sinn zu assimilieren gänzlich außerhalb der Kapazität unseres bisherigen Bewußtseins liegt.

Gotthard Günther, Schöpfung, Reflexion und Geschichte (Merkur Nr. 7, 1960).

Le résultat de la première période historique est un détachement de l'homme et de la nature. Le concept classique de la «matière», sur lequel était basée cette période, a disparu. Sous le scalpel du physicien la «réalité physique» de «notre» nature s'évanouit, faisant place à une multitude de réseaux de relations immatérielles que notre cerveau n'est plus à même d'enregistrer.

Gotthard Günther, Schöpfung, Reflexion und Geschichte (Merkur No. 7, 1960).

The result arising from the first world-historical period was the separation of man from nature. The classical concept of matter, which underpinned the general views held about the world at the time, has today been completely broken up. Beneath the probing fingers of the experimental physicist the physical reality of that which we once called nature is losing its solidity and merging into a forever tangled skein of immaterial relations, the significance of which is quite beyond the grasp of our former awareness.

Gotthard Günther, Schöpfung, Reflexion und Geschichte (Merkur No. 7, 1960).

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Konrad Wachsmann

Jacques Uffholz, Lausanne

Henry P. Glass, Chicago

John R. Lloyd

Studium im Team

351—362

Industrielles Bauen

Teamarbeiten in Lausanne, Salzburg, Chicago und Tokio

363—384

Vehikel als Architektur

Fahrbarer Theatersaal

385—390

Fahrbares Harmonikahaus

X 1

Vorfabriziertes Ferienhaus

X 2

Chronik