

Summary

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éléments actifs sont représentés par la structure, les éléments passifs par les matériaux inertes qui se conditionnent réciproquement; ils restent en relation constante qui se manifeste de deux manières très différentes selon la volonté artistique de l'auteur d'un projet: Si l'on désire montrer l'équilibre statique, on souligne les éléments portés reposent sur les éléments porteurs. Les proportions indiquant l'équilibre entre les charges et les appuis dépendent de facteurs purement statiques: c'est une forme d'architecture primaire et originelle. Une conception architecturale opposée même à l'expression d'un équilibre dynamique qui recherche à augmenter les matières inertes visibles tout en escamotant les éléments porteurs: cette interprétation d'une structure constructive devient donc atonotique, parce qu'elle réduit au minimum l'expression d'éléments porteurs, ce qui donne l'illusion de légèreté et même d'une absence d'efforts physiques réels. Cette tendance vers une solution «détachée du sol» mène à une forme d'architecture «secondaire» qui veut arriver à un effet contraire à la pesanteur de la forme spontanée statique.

La nouvelle construction du bâtiment administratif de Ventilator AG à Stäfa offrait à l'architecte la possibilité de réaliser une vision architecturale cristalline qui obéit aux lois d'une architecture dynamique secondaire.

Le dynamisme s'exprime dans la négation de toute loi statique et dans l'immatérialisation des éléments de fermeture. Les éléments portés ne se distinguent plus des éléments porteurs. Le jeu de matières transparentes et translucides, escamotant les éléments structurels, évoque une certaine fragilité, où on n'a plus l'impression d'un soutien depuis le bas, mais d'un flux de matières intangibles coulant du haut vers en bas. Ces formes irréelles ne prétendent plus à l'architecture, mais plutôt à l'esprit d'une sculpture niant toute pesanteur. Selon les principes du baroque moderne, un tel bâtiment se détache du sol; il n'a plus de haut ni de bas, et fait simplement partie d'un organisme spatial sans début ni fin qui se répand partout. «Il semble que le concept d'architecture est devenu trop étroit» (S. Giandon).

La façade translucide et transparente de même couleur rougeâtre que la structure qui se trouve dans le même plan présente un contraste nouveau et puissant avec la nature environnante qui semble pénétrer le bâtiment sans heurt et dont les formes organiques s'opposent toutefois à ce cristal presque abstrait.

L'absence d'éléments indiquant une échelle de comparaison est essentielle pour cette forme d'architecture dynamique. Pour cette raison, les divisions intérieures d'un tel bâtiment ne doivent pas se marquer à l'extérieur qui reste une «grande forme unique». La subordination de tous les éléments et moyens architecturaux particuliers à la vision d'ensemble rappelle les principes de composition d'une symphonie. La volonté de nier la matière s'affirme conséquemment à l'intérieur du bâtiment comme à l'extérieur. Des vitrages hauts et des glaces s'entreposent entre les éléments portés et porteurs. L'effet de légèreté et de transparence dû à cette architecture influencent favorablement le psychisme des gens qui y travaillent, parce qu'ils éprouvent un sentiment de libération.

Le climat spacial:

Toute architecture obéissant à des principes conceptionnels arbitraires, doit toutefois satisfaire aux exigences fonctionnelles. Les espaces de travail, où les hommes passent une grande partie de leur vie doivent offrir les meilleures conditions concernant la lumière, l'acoustique et la température. L'ambiance d'un espace qui est la synthèse de ces trois facteurs ne doit cependant pas s'imposer agressivement.

Le climat lumineux:

La lumière changeante provenant d'un éclairage naturel direct est remplacée par des parois lumineuses translucides qui permettent une diffusion très régulière de la lumière. Des lamelles verticales, mobiles, réglables individuellement, assurent un éclairage constant sans effets de clair-obscur. Ainsi les yeux se fatiguent le moins possible. La lumière artificielle provient logiquement de la même direction que celle du jour: une bande lumineuse continue

extérieure donne en même temps un aspect quasi magique au bâtiment. Le climat optique est également déterminé par les matériaux employés pour les aménagements intérieurs: cloisons en matière synthétique blanche, planchers noirs, dans les bureaux; cloisons contreplaquées en palisandre et moquettes dans les bureaux de direction et dans les salles de séances. Le plafond suspendu en plaques métalliques perforées passe vraiment d'un espace à l'autre à cause des vitrages hauts: ainsi chaque niveau ne semble se heurter à aucune fermeture. La vue vers l'extérieur à travers les glaces légèrement teintées en rouge donne sur un entourage chaud.

Le climat acoustique:

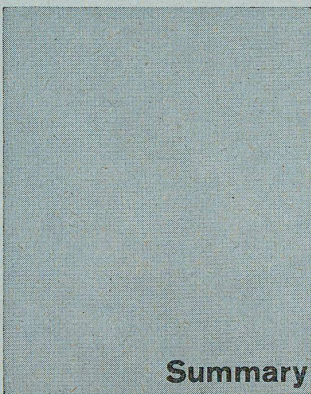
L'isolation entre les étages est assurée par des dalles épaisses, celle entre les locaux par les joints de bord soignés des panneaux amovibles. L'absorption directe se fait par le plafond.

Le climat physique:

Les vitrages entièrement fixes assurant une isolation phonique vers l'extérieur conditionnent une climatisation complète. Pour des raisons publicitaires, Ventilator AG a particulièrement soigné cette installation. L'air régénéré entre soit par les allèges, soit à partir d'une centrale par le plafond perforé. L'isolation contre le soleil est réalisée par les vitrages réfléchissants Stop-Ray.

La structure constructive:

Les deux volumes décalés d'un demi-niveau l'un par rapport à l'autre se composent de dalles massives coulées sur place, d'appuis en acier, d'éléments de façade et de séparation à base d'un module de 1,23 m qui correspond en même temps aux usages techniques et commerciaux des locaux. Les éléments préfabriqués en ateliers sont montés à sec sans échafaudage.



Supplementary Remarks

Jürgen Joedicke

Observations on Architectural Criticism (Page 1)

To write an article on architectural criticism means to write on a special field which practically does not exist at all; or only in a fragmentary way, which has no influence on the general situation. It is rather interesting to go into the reasons why there has not been up to now any such thing as architectural criticism.

One of the reasons is no doubt the lack of properly trained architectural critics. A critical appraisal of contemporary architecture presupposes a very exact knowledge of the manifold and complicated processes involved in present-day building. Empathy—no matter how valuable and indispensable it is—empathy alone no longer suffices. To give a very simple example: a critical analysis of the CNIT Exhibition Hall in Paris covered with a shell construction completely misses the mark if the critic does not possess an exact knowledge of the statics and the construction of a shell.

However, even in the case of a more ordinary building, the role of structural and technical factors is so great that criticism without any knowledge of these special fields does not seem possible;—we may refer in this connection to Adolf Loos, who as early as the turn of the century brilliantly pilloried the deficient technical knowledge of architectural critics in his essay "My Appearance with Melba". Criticism, however, not only presupposes knowledge of building prob-

lems, but—above all—knowledge of the theoretical and historical foundations of the modern style. And here we come to another reason for the lack of a solidly grounded architectural criticism: the want of binding criteria or—expressed in general terms—the state of uncertainty in the theoretical field. Even today the final wisdom is often enough only the formal criterion. Another weighty reason for this situation is the antipathy of many architects to public criticism. This hostility is in part occasioned by the professional status of the architect. The architect is a designer and a businessman—or he feels that he is one at any rate. For this reason architectural criticism is often equated with damage to his business by an architect who is excessively concerned with the business aspect of his job. This outlook has now induced many architectural journals to eschew all architectural criticism. Thus once good journals become degraded to mere trivial albums of views. If nowadays architects complain of the low intellectual calibre of certain journals, it can be countered that they are getting precisely the journals they deserve—a few good ones and many bad ones.

All the reasons for the want of architectural criticism are not given here; each of the reasons indicated, however, is so grave that it is readily understandable why public criticism of architecture is only tentative. However, the question can also be posed as to whether architectural criticism is at all necessary, whether at bottom the failure of so many attempts is not to be explained by the fact that architectural criticism is directed at the wrong object. But it need only be pointed out that every change in the cultural sphere is bound up with a critical dialogue between the old and the new. This basic fact of human behaviour is revealed in architecture in the very lively mutual criticism that goes on among architects; what is lacking, however, is a general, non-subjective architectural criticism that is at the same time based on specialized, objective knowledge.

Nevertheless, there is still another reason for the present situation, one that is not based on human behaviour. Architectural criticism, in that it interprets a building from another standpoint, can be a necessary and fruitful supplement to the creative work of the architect; the rightness of his work, to be sure, is a certainty for the architect himself; however, its emergence into general consciousness is dependent on the critic's interpretation borne by profound insight. Architectural criticism, looked at in this way, could become a creative discipline.

The uncertainty on the theoretical plane—and thus in architectural criticism—is the dilemma of an entire profession which has still not overcome the separation from artistic sensibility and inspired thinking which was visibly symbolized by the foundation around 1800 of the Ecole polytechnique in Paris side by side with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. This handicap is all the more serious as there have been developments, in the meantime, that can probably no longer be ignored by architects, developments in certain fields of knowledge such as the social sciences and in perception psychology. However, as long as every discussion in the field of architecture is grounded in emotions, the necessary dialogue between the spokesmen of various fields of knowledge and the architect is hampered—in fact, prevented.

J. M. Lamunière and Associates, Lausanne

Publishing and Printing Enterprise in Lausanne

(Pages 2-8)

A printing firm and two daily newspapers of Lausanne decided beginning in 1956 to organize an architectural competition to try to resolve the town-planning problems and construction problems proper posed by the reconstruction and expansion of their enterprises.

The plan selected envisaged an entire rebuilding, in stages, of the complex of office and industrial buildings situated between the four avenues. The drawing up of the district plans, elaborated along with the Municipality

and the owners involved, was a very long-term job. The production programmes of the newspapers and of the printing shops were bound to impose working conditions that were often very difficult.

This project could never have been carried out but for the perseverance of a contractor aware of the difficult and complicated problems posed by an attempt to disentangle a snarl in the centre of a city and confident as to the functional and structural possibilities of the plan selected.

Architectural and structural conception:

The materials utilized are light, except for the foundation of reinforced concrete, and they permit assembly without mortar (steel skeleton, sheet-metal planking on flooring of precast reinforced concrete, windows of aluminium and insulating glass, movable interior partitions). A module of 1.40 meters determines as far as possible the dimensions of the standardized elements.

The reinforcing of the high-rise building is ensured by the solid core with the lifts and stairways. The canopies on the narrow ends, composed of steel sections and of 9 cm. of concrete, rest on four faced steel pillars sited in each elevation, this to obtain an uncluttered surface on the inside, where the movable partitions can be shifted about in accordance with a module of 1.40 meters. The elevations reinforcements are made up of the union sections between the interior partitions and the absorbent glass elevation elements.

An elevation panel is composed of four panes and of the natural aluminium coping, eloxidized, appearing in front of the radiators. The insulating copings in front of the decks are of aluminium eloxidized black. Thus, the structure is clearly visible from the outside. As the axis of the last module is located flush with the interior face of the elevation panel, the corner reinforcements are shifted toward the centre of the elevation, 12 cm. off axis. In the resulting cavity there have been installed the power cables, which could also have been put behind the supports. This therefore is an exception to a rigorous system and one that is necessary for prefabricated construction. (Cf. Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, the Inland Steel Building in Chicago, B+W 1/63). These different proposals prove that there has not yet been found a uniform and perfect solution for the problem of construction with modern materials, such as steel, glass, aluminium, etc. The reasons for this diversity are not technological ones; they have to do with the human factor. Architecture is supposed to foster the free unfolding of man's nature. Architecture ought to avoid imposing a rigid environment on people who have to spend considerable lengths of time in buildings. The job of the architect is to limit himself to essentials, to select authentic materials, apply them logically, find a harmonious relationship in proportions and colour scheme: all these are elements that contribute to the physical and psychological well-being of man, at the same time leaving him as free as possible.

F. W. Kraemer, Brunswick, and Gerhard Donath, Dusseldorf

Central State Bank in Dusseldorf

(Pages 9-15)

Site:

The 7600 sq. meters belonging to the richest bank in Germany are located in the centre of the city, this being a crucial site defined by the vertical accent of the Phoenix Rheinrohr Building, at the head of the Berliner Allee. There are situated here several high-rise buildings, between two narrow streets, and opposite there is one of the rare churches spared the ravages of war.

Design:

A restricted competition among 6 architects resulted in a first prize for the plan of Kraemer, who, in contrast to the other participants, did not suggest a high-rise building, but a structure 90 meters long and 35 meters high. This modern example of a prestige building 9 floors high is slightly concave to form a square in front of the church at the head of the Allee. In the rear are the main public hall on two levels and a wing on 7 levels adjacent to an already existing gabled wall.

The idea behind the building:
How is an architect supposed to translate the role of such a building into architectural terms?

Less recent banks borrowed the neo-Renaissance style, which was supposed to stand for a certain dignity, or they borrowed the neo-Baroque style, like the Swiss Credit Bank in Zurich, which is not necessarily a disadvantage if we compare them to some examples of modern monumentality. The high-rise office building in the centre of a city symbolizes very well the big concern: it is the typical expression of the large organization. However, to represent the power of a bank, the low building of the Trust Company on 5th Avenue surpasses all the skyscrapers in the neighbourhood. Thus, the State Bank need not resort to sensationalism. To achieve the dignity of expression appropriate to such a business, whose respectable position represents the confidence placed in it, it was not necessary to make use of the means proper to most of the buildings of the business district. All that was needed was to select among the means available to our age those that give expression to the solidity and the sense of responsibility of the institution.

Materials and interior organization:
The essential materials are black Labrador granite, rubbed so that it reflects, and aluminium for the window frames and facings. The wide cornice houses the technical installations, the large apertures correspond to the conference room, and the office levels are defined by broad silvered bands. The recessed face on the second floor also animates the solid wall sections. In the annexes, faced with aluminium, a flight of marble stairs leads to the first level, from the entrance hall on two levels, with an interior face entirely glazed and opening on to the courtyard with pool. This very open hall has an advantage over the high-rise building of Phoenix-Rheinrohr, where the ground floor is cluttered with technical facilities instead of being free. Here, it communicates with the taller window hall the ceiling of which is composed of oblique zigzag panels and with glazed walls. On the ground floor there are also premises where money is handled, a shipping department with loading ramp, accessible from the courtyard, while on the first floor are the accounting department and the offices handling indirect payments. On the second floor are the restaurants and annexes of the central management, and from the third to the seventh floors the ordinary offices, in traditional lay-out, with a central corridor, partition-lockers which are prefabricated, with movable partitions on a module of 3.62 meters; the offices are not large.

From the seventh floor, reserved to the management, there is access via spiral stairs, to the conference room on the eighth floor, which also serves for other occasions for the staff. The roof accommodates a garden with pool. The technical installations are housed at the top of the building. Since the building is not air-conditioned, the windows are centre-fixed with movable casements above and below. The interior appointments are, like the faces, of natural materials: wood, stone, etc.

Eero Saarinen †

Office Building at the plant of Deere & Co., manufacturers of agricultural machinery and vehicles, in Moline, Illinois (USA)

(Pages 16-24)

This office building of one of the most important concerns of this type in the USA is situated 7 miles from the centre of Moline. It is one of the last projects of Saarinen, who suffered a premature death.

The special kind of steel employed in the construction was originally intended for use in railway rails. Not requiring a protective layer, this steel gradually becomes enclosed with a layer of rust which then shields it from the elements and which takes on the colour of tree bark.

The main building, 7 stories high, is surrounded by a fine forest of oaks and two lakes, which are used for the cooling of the building. A parking area for 720 cars is situated on the east side of the main building, the 4th floor of which with the reception hall

is connected via footbridges to the auditorium and the exhibition hall.

Organigramme:

26,700 sq. meters of office space on the upper floors, 2700 sq. meters of display area, 2000 sq. meters of auditorium space, facilities for clients and restaurant (800 servings per hour) beneath the entrance level, which comprises the management offices; the computers, the technical installations, the telephone central and the heating plant are on the basement levels; the dining-rooms for higher employees and clients (70 persons) and the conference room on the ground floor.

The auditorium is remarkable for the unusual arrangement of the rows of seats ascending toward the platform; the optical connection is effected therefore underneath the following rows, the nearest to the platform housing the lights. This section has acoustic advantages. The large turntable has a diameter of 10 meters. The auditorium is equipped with direct interpreters' installations. There is a display court outside the auditorium. An ordinary floor has large offices with natural illumination, a circulation and installations core as well as individual offices in the centre. The air-conditioning can be regulated independently in each office.

The module of the building is 90 cm./180 cm., which corresponds likewise to the division of the ceiling, where the partitions can be attached. The architectural effect is determined by a new system of brises-soleil and by the visible steel skeleton.

The I-section columns take I-beams which form an elevation canopy to support horizontal slats from which are suspended vertical brises-soleil in the upper part of the windows, which invests the faces with a very plastic effect. The double panes reflect much of the light without sacrificing any transparency, and this appreciably cuts down air-conditioning costs. The envisaged extensions comprise a second office building to the west, which will also be connected to the complex by a catwalk. The offices and research labs are planned to the south.

The plan dates from 1956. In 1961 at the start of work Saarinen died. The building was inaugurated in 1964.

Dr. M. Bacigalupo, Dr. U. Ratti, Rome

ENI Central Administration in Rome

(Pages 25-31)

Site:

On the grounds formerly reserved for the international exhibition in Rome which did not take place owing to the war, there are now situated several office buildings, including the ENI Building (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi).

The complex is made up of a restaurant on one level with seating capacity of 1000 and an office building of 20 floors reflected in an artificial lake, which lies in the axis of a large traffic artery, with access to 300 hectares of parking space. The pedestrian approaches are directly tied in with the subway stations on the line running from Rome to Ostia.

The design of the building is characterized by almost blind lateral faces between which are placed long curtain-walls to the east and west.

Organigramme:

The rectangular plan comprises 2 basement levels with technical installations, heliography, duplicating machines and records, the ground floor with a large conference hall, a branch bank, a travel agency and the staff entrance underneath a footbridge leading to the main entrance of the first floor, where there are located the main offices serving the public, the library, the public relations offices, the press office as well as the telephone central.

The standard floor is made up of two large offices tied in north and south with vertical circulation facilities (9 lifts, 3 of which only go to the last two floors, freight lifts and two emergency stairs situated on the north and south faces); they do not have intermediate supports, which permits a very flexible furnishing scheme (tables and filing cabinets 1.10 meters high). Only the managers' offices are separated by glass partitions.

Construction:

Structure of steel rendered and faced with travertine, decks of reinforced

concrete, curtain-wall of aluminium sections with parapets of dark crystalline glass. As the building is entirely air-conditioned, no window can be opened. The elevation was set up from the inside, without the use of any scaffolding. The acoustic insulation between the floors and between the various blocks is very well worked out (ceilings of perforated sheet metal with flexible suspension, flooring covered with square linoleum tiles, grey. All the intermediate partitions are movable and are of glass and aluminium or of wood covered with fabric.

Dr. Justus Dahinden, Zurich

Office Building of Ventilator AG at Stäfa on the Lake of Zurich

(Pages 32-36)

In connection with this building, the architect, Dahinden, is elaborating a theory of architecture that we are presenting here. Certain artistic, structural and technical solutions to problems are remarkable because of the advanced theoretical stage they have reached and the thoroughness of their application. The long period of study granted by the owner to the architect allowed him to take up the whole complex of prefabrication problems, in order to work out solutions that are more consistent than those often encountered in Germany, where the buildings, being the outcome of compromise, display bad detailing, a mixed structure and a depreciation of buildings owing to excessively accelerated ageing. (The Editors)

The architectural problem:

The basic criteria and the intellectual ground of a construction are the issue of an artistic will and a formal ideal proper to a given epoch: these are the real structural elements of a building which first have to be analyzed.

Any architecture exists in the first instance via its connection with the soil, the ground on which it stands. The essence of architecture, then, is to transmit stresses and forces via a system of supporting and supported elements to the ground. Architectural harmony is ensured by the relationship between the supporting and the supported elements; the interpretation of this relationship characterizes the design of a building.

"Style" is the resultant of the relationship between the two basic attitudes as opposed to an architectural and constructional conception. In construction, the active elements are represented by the structure itself, the passive elements by the inert materials which reciprocally condition one another; they remain in a constant relation which is manifested in widely varying manners depending on the artistic will of the author of the given plan: If we seek to show static equilibrium, we emphasize that the supported elements rest on the supporting elements. The proportions indicating the equilibrium between the loads and the supports depend on purely static factors: this is a form of elementary and primordial architecture. An architectural conception opposed even to the expression of a dynamic equilibrium which seeks to augment the visible inert materials, while conjuring away the supporting elements: this interpretation of a constructive structure thus becomes atectonic, because it reduces to a minimum the expression of the supporting elements, which creates the illusion of lightness and even of an absence of real physical effort. This tendency in the direction of a solution "detached from the soil" is leading to a form of architecture which can be called "secondary", one that seeks to score an effect contrary to the ponderousness of the spontaneous static shape.

The new office building of Ventilator AG at Stäfa gave the architect a chance to realize a crystalline architectural vision obeying the laws of a dynamic secondary architecture.

The dynamism is expressed in the negation of all static laws and in the immaterialization of the panel elements. The supported elements are no longer distinguishable from the supporting elements. The play of transparent and translucent materials, conjuring away the structural elements, evokes a certain fragility, in which one no longer has the impression that there is a supporting skeleton coming up from below, but rather an impression of a flux of intangible materials pouring down from above. These un-

real shapes claim no longer to be architecture, but rather a sculpture that has renounced all weight. According to the doctrines of modern baroque, such a building is detached from the ground; it no longer has a top and a bottom, and is merely a constituent of a spatial organism without beginning or end, which expands freely in all directions. "It appears that the concept of architecture has become too narrow" (S. Giedion).

The translucent and transparent elevation of the same reddish shade as the structure in the same plane presents a new and powerful contrast to the surrounding natural environment, which seems to penetrate the building smoothly and the objects of which, organic as they are, contrast even so with this almost abstract crystal.

The absence of elements indicating a scale of comparison is essential for this kind of dynamic architecture. For this reason the interior divisions of such a building ought not to be visible from the outside, the outside of the building remaining a "single great shape". The subordination of all the elements and special architectural devices to the over-all vision recalls the principles governing the composition of a symphony. The will to renounce matter is affirmed consequently on the inside as much as on the outside of the building. High windows and glassed areas are interposed among the supporting and supported elements.

The effect of lightness and transparency due to this architecture is having a favourable psychological influence on the people working there, because they are given a feeling of liberation.

The spatial climate:

Any architecture obeying arbitrary conceptual principles ought, however, to satisfy functional requirements. The working areas, where people spend a good deal of their lives, ought to offer optimum conditions as to light, acoustics and temperature. The atmosphere of a volume which is the synthesis of these three factors ought not, nevertheless, to intrude itself aggressively.

The luminous climate:

Changing light effects, the result of direct natural illumination, is replaced by translucent luminous partitions which allow for a highly regular diffusion of light. Vertical slats, mobile, individually adjustable, ensure constant illumination without disturbing chiaroscuro effects. Thus very little strain is put on the eyes. The artificial light proceeds logically from the same direction as the daylight: a luminous continuous strip on the outside at the same time invests the building almost with a certain magic. The optical climate is also determined by the materials employed for the interior appointments and fittings: partitions of white synthetic material, floors black, in the offices; partitions laminated of rosewood and wall-to-wall carpeting in the executive offices and conference rooms. The suspended ceiling of perforated sheet metal is a unifying element owing to the high windows and glazed surfaces: thus one space flows into the next.

The view toward the outside through the windows with their slight reddish tint is a warm one.

The acoustic climate:

The insulation between the floors is ensured by thick plates, that between the offices by movable panels. Direct absorption is effected by the ceiling.

The physical climate:

The entirely fixed panes guarantee complete acoustic insulation from the outside and call for complete air-conditioning. An identical year-round climate aims to equilibrate output through the seasons. For publicity reasons, Ventilator AG has devoted particular attention to this installation. The conditioned air enters either through the parapets or via a central plant through the ceiling perforations. Solar insulation is ensured by Stop-Ray reflecting panes.

The construction:

The two blocks staggered by half a level are made up of massive decks poured on the site, steel supports, elevation and separation elements on a module of 1.23 meters, which corresponds at the same time to the technical and commercial usages obtaining in offices. The elements prefabricated in the factory are assembled dry without scaffolding.