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The FAS and the Standardization of Construction in Switzerland 1

Topics discussed at Stansstad (October 2, 1959), prepared by J.-P. Vouga, H. Hubacher and W. Niehus

The high level of construction in Switzerland has not up to now been accompanied by an equivalent degree of rationalization or of standardization, which could, nevertheless, lead to most fruitful results if ever architects take a hand in it on the basis of studies embracing all phases of the project.

Architecture and Standardization

by Charles-Edouard Geisendorf

It took the First World War to force the development of standards determined solely by private enterprise into those that are truly collective. The latter are becoming more and more widespread, but they are still absent in Switzerland. Elsewhere they have been determined either by the State (France, Germany) or at the instigation of architects (Finland, besides other Scandinavian countries); the latter is apparently the preferable way of proceeding. Except as regards standardized norms raised to the status of binding prescriptions, well-conceived standards ought to be optional, but at the same time communal, effective, homogeneous and flexible.

The Unit of Measure in the Classical Japanese House 5

by Werner Blaser

The principle of proportion, or, if you will, the "modulated co-ordination" proper to the classical Japanese house resides in the dimensions of the mat (tatami), which determine those of the floors, the partitions and the sliding doors, and that without any kind of schematization.

Industrial Construction 7

by Franz Füg

In the course of his remarks at the meeting of the FAS, Franz Füg elucidated certain problematic aspects of standardization. Contrary to the generally accepted opinion, standardization and rationalization cannot bring about any reduction in the cost of construction, seeing that both ordinarily entail an increase in comfort. Moreover, at the present time the machinery that would make such standardization possible is still not available. If, however, the present-day building materials industry is intended to be transformed into a construction industry in the proper sense of the term, there should have to be available the construction engineers and planners capable of elaborating, in an architectural sense, the requisite construction elements, on the basis of the conditions created by machine production. In Füg's opinion, the task of the new-style architectural firm is to investigate economic conditions, as well as to co-ordinate machine production with the architects' ideas, and only in the final instance to create construction elements for housing.

Three Point-houses at Birsfelden near Basle 9

Architects: J. Gass & W. Boos FAS/SIA, W. Zimmer, SIA, Basle

These 17-storey buildings are constructed of untreated materials entailing minimum maintenance costs. 12 months to complete.

The Standardization Institute of the Finnish Architects' Association 11

by Egil Nicklin

This Institute was founded in 1941 after the "Winter War", with a view to the planning of the reconstruction of the devastated areas. From this organization, in which participated well-known architects like Alvar Aalto, Rewell, Ervi, etc., there eventually grew the Standardization Institute in its present form, with the purpose of standardizing construction materials, on the basis of thorough-going studies. At the present time, there is in existence a standards catalogue composed of 440 "RT" cards, which are supplemented each year. Moreover, various studies on housing and housing demand are being undertaken for the State and for private instances, and also standards of quality and execution for construction materials are being set up. The difficulties involved in these studies were greater than anticipated, construction projects covering as they do such a vast field and each building constituting in principle an individual case subject to special technical and climatic conditions. At the same time economic, social and technological circumstances are constantly altering. The Institute is from now on striving in particular to extend the possibilities of standardization by the creation of a module.

Housing Project in Bagarmossen, Stockholm. Experiment on the basis of partly prefabricated elements 14

1954/55, architects: Léonie and Ch.-E. Geisendorf, Stockholm and Zurich

This complex includes 114 houses, with 2 garages, each accommodating 50 cars, a food store and annexes, the whole employing some prefabricated elements, selected after lengthy studies with a view to creating, at minimum cost, comfortable living quarters. The houses comprise 5 or 6 rooms and kitchen.

2 Nurses' Skyscraper Residence at the Zurich Cantonal Hospital 19

1959, architect: J. Zweifel FAS/SIA, Zurich and Glarus

The lack of ground space called for a point-house, but it was sought to avoid any effect of barracks-like dreariness. Each floor comprises 2 groups of 7 rooms, with common rooms in the centre. The whole design is at once simple and impressive.

The Sculptor François Stahly 25

by Carola Giedion-Welcker

Born in 1911 of an Italian father and a German mother, F. S. grew up in Switzerland and has lived since 1931 in France. At the Ranson academy he was a pupil of Maillol and of Malfray. His first sculptural works were shown at the World Fair of 1937 in Paris. The author first discusses some small carvings in wood realized by Stahly during his wandering life in the Second World War; these are the fruit of a heightened awareness which took the artist, as it were, to the primordial roots of nature. There appear in the more recent sculptures organic and vegetable forms, but the informing and structural principle is for all that not excluded. These works suffuse a psychic radiance of an affective nature which may even go so far as to recapture mythical motifs ("Mères-montagne"). Side by side with these purely personal works, F. S. devotes himself, in collaboration with younger artists, to problems involved in the synthesis of sculpture and architecture. In line with these endeavours, he has created—along with Etienne-Martin, Antoine Poncet and J.-C. Dehalaye—the stained glass reliefs in the church of Baccarat, and, with Martin, the Vatican chapel at the Brussels World Fair.

The First Symposium of European Sculptors (1959) 31

by Peter R. Meister

In the ancient quarry of St. Margarethen, in the Austrian province of Burgenland, eleven artists from eight different countries, each working independently in the midst of a group, along non-representational lines, have sought to create new "signs". It is to be hoped that this venture, can be repeated annually, as it contributes abundantly to furthering the cause of art and mutual understanding among the divided peoples of the world.

The 5th Biennale of Sao Paulo 34

by Walter Kern

This Biennale was dominated by three tendencies, in painting as in sculpture: "tachisme" or abstract expressionism, represented in the main by the Americans but also active in Germany, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Argentina and Bolivia; second tendency, constructivism, the heritage of Mondrian, widely disseminated in Brazil, side by side with an art having its roots in folklore; finally, an important group of painters and sculptors, who, by way of abstract art, are returning to a sort of sublimated naturalism. Their subjects are not, moreover, landscape or the human body, but materials—stonework, sand, etc. — appealing to the sense of touch. Still another group, which is harder to define, practises a kind of graphic painting which might be called "scriptism". W. K. is of the opinion that this plethora of experiments will, in many cases, not lead to any lasting results, but feels that a number of works nonetheless contain the germs of future development.