

The current demands of architecture

his first commission as an architect. It consists of a steel skeleton with wood facing.

Another house by Erik Chr. Sørensen is one which he designed for himself, and which has recently been completed. It is likewise a skeleton building with glass and panels.

Knud Peter Harboe's one-family house is very closely related to Erik Chr. Sørensen's work. Harboe attracted attention by his work in an international competition for a house in Canada. Since then he has done much interesting work in Denmark.

Jørgen Bo has also built a house for himself. It has a large roof with a slope on one side only and the entire upper part is faced with wood. The house is built together with a carport and a system of walls which form an interesting composition.

Glahnand Helweg built a housing estate, the "Skoleparken", in Søllerød, in which the houses are grouped around a system of courtyards.

In the same neighbourhood Glahn and Helweg have built a house with a studio for a sculptor. It is a skeleton building with sun screens. There are board ceilings and one of the rooms is two storeys high.

Halldor Gunnlögsson and Jorgen Nielsen have built a house near Birkerød. It is characterized by the long screen walls which push out in front of the building and completely disintegrate the body of the house.

These walls emphasize a form principle which strongly influence modern architecture, and which is characterized by a screen effect in contrast to the spatial effect of earlier periods. It is this principle which we find particularly in the works of Neutra and Miës van der Rohe. Finn Monies and Gunnar Jensen have built a small hotel on the little island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. An extremely interesting project. The guest rooms are divided in two parts—a living room section and a bedroom section—separated by screens. It is a rather unusual plan which has great possibilities. The building is placed dramatically high upon a rock. Bornholm is Denmark's only rocky island.

In closing I would like to mention Jørn Utzon. He made a name for himself by winning the first prize in the large international competition for an opera house in Sydney, Australia, last year.

Together with Tobias Faber he was one of the winners in a competition for a town plan for Borås, Sweden. Their proposal has some very interesting details. To a certain degree the project was influenced by Aalto's row houses in Sunila.

The Sydney project shows great imagination. The design of the building is based on thin shell-vaulting, a system used in recent years especially in the United States by Novici, Hugh Stubbins, and Saarinen, and in Italy by Luigi Nervi. Utzon has formed these shell vaults in a very graceful fashion so that the building unfolds like a flower. The criticism might be made that the bowl-shaped form of the ceiling does not entirely harmonize with the form of the room itself. It also seems to me that the spatial effect is marred by the fact that the shell-vaulting itself is not seen but hidden by the acoustic slabs hung beneath it.

Despite these minor objections it is a masterly work which has justly aroused great interest in international architectural circles, and under all circumstances, it is to be hoped that it will be carried out.

With these words I have endeavoured to give an impression of modern Danish architecture, particularly of the young and experimental architecture, and of that which I find is particularly characteristic of the moment. I believe, I may say without exaggeration, that Danish architecture is advancing, and along a line which is not entirely independent of tradition, adapted to Danish environment and Danish character, quiet and modest in expression, influenced by currents from the outer world, but indebted first and foremost to its Danish inheritance.

The only thing I can do at this last moment is to outline in a few sentences the present situation of architecture and its current urgent demands.

Relation to Techniques: The situation is as follows: During the nineteenth century construction represented the subconscious of architecture. Architecture itself—under the spell of the ruling taste—portrayed the external attitudes of the period: construction its internal strivings which never came above the surface.

During the present century the situation has become changed as a result of the rise of such personalities as Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, who have been able to transform means of construction into artistic expression.

To-day matters are almost reversed. Architects are now demanding more from the engineers than their calculations permit. One of the reasons for this is that we are to-day on the way towards a new solution of the vaulting problem. This demanding of more than lies within the possibilities of present structural techniques is a hopeful sign. Periods imbued with an architectonic spirit have nearly always made such demands: it was so in the Gothic period; it was so in the late Baroque period.

Relation to Economics: Nobody will deny the connection between architecture and economics, but the matter is by no means so simple that it can be reduced to the level of cause and effect. The relation is obvious when only an individual or a private undertaking are concerned: "I have so much money, therefore I can afford this and I cannot afford that". But this no longer remains true when the community as a whole, or the state, comes into play. At this moment it is no longer the simple economics of the situation which is decisive, instead it is the public attitude which directs the spending of money. It depends what kind of institutions are regarded as necessary for civic standards of living, and therefore on what kinds of amenities money should be spent for the sake of the people. The Roman thermae were no more regarded as profit making undertakings than schools are today. The cathedral of Chartres was by no means proportioned to the size of the available funds. To-day economically poor states—such as India—embark upon the building of a new capital city, while the western nations on both sides of the Atlantic have—over the last century and more—been incapable of creating even a well-equilibrated city square.

In other words, the relation between available funds and economics is not that of cause and effect, but rather of the will to accomplish things left undone.

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Urgent Demands: To-day contemporary architecture urgently demands, for the solution of the problems which lie ahead, that relationships become established. There is no longer an architecture which is enclosed within itself. There is no longer the single family house, or the single skyscraper, no matter how artistically conceived it may be. There is no longer the individual building considered as an isolated structure. We are now in a time of the relationship between building and building.

Here we touch upon one of the most difficult problems of to-day: the relationship of volumes in space. Very few contemporary architects are able to realize Le Corbusier's definition of architecture as "le jeu savant, correct et magnifique des volumes sous la lumière". This involves two other conditions which have to be re-established.

1. Urban Design

There is no architecture when there is no relationship with urban design. This is neither easy nor self-evident at the moment. We are historically in a very curious situation. In former periods, such as the middle ages, the outburst of building new cities came only after centuries of architectural effort. It needed centuries from the early Renaissance to the Baroque period before really creative urbanism could come about.

To-day our situation is such that the reawakening of architecture lies only a generation back, and yet we are already in the midst of the adventures of urban renewal. Incalculably over the last few years this long neglected urbanistic approach has suddenly sprung up: things are impossible and even subversive.

Not only the building of completely new capital cities—such as Chandigarh and Brazilia—but enormous rebuilding projects, covering the entire central areas of existing large cities—such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh

and several other US cities, Baghdad (on which a galaxy of western architects is working) and the recent competition for the replanning of Berlin, both east and west. It is also significant that, for the first time, a large Canadian city—Toronto—has embarked upon an international competition, which has attracted extraordinary participation, to obtain a plan for the core of an otherwise chaotic human agglomeration.

This momentum is already reflected in modern architectural education. I will instance only the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University where, under the direction of Jose Luis Sert, collaborative projects are carried out between the young architects and city planners from their first year through to the Master Class. In these exercises, the architectural student is obliged to fulfil a double role: as member of a team to prepare the three-dimensional plan for an entire urban sector, then to become personally responsible for the development-down to the last detail—of a building within this complex. Here is reflected what should be typical of everything in our period: working simultaneously with the airview and with the microscope.

2. Trinity of architect, sculptor and painter

This trinity has still to be re-established, and yet it is the most urgent need of the present moment. The problem of the co-operation between artists and architects circles around one point which Hans Arp and I placed before the Sixth CIAM Congress at Bridgwater in 1947, in a questionnaire upon architectural expression: "Should the architect, painter and sculptor co-operate from the very beginning so as to strengthen the emotional and symbolic content of architecture?"

This formulation was very cautious, as architects at that time were convinced of their omnipotence. Some still are. These regard the artist in just the same way as the architect himself was formerly regarded by the business man: as a kind of decorator who should adorn the building after the engineer had completed the essential job.

May I just mention a wellknown example of good architecture—the new UNESCO building in Paris. After the architects had completed the essential job they called in the best artists they could get, and asked them to place their work upon places predestined by the architects.

To-day another attitude towards the role which the artist has to play is essential. Architects and artists must create together from the very beginning. The reason is that architectural expression is becoming increasingly more refined in all aspects of form. We are, without any doubt, moving towards a period of more sculptural development, both in the modelling of the interior and of the exterior of buildings.

We know that co-operation between architects and artists is by no means easy. Enormous organizational demands are placed upon the shoulders of the architect. But there is another reason which I regard as far more important: the habit of working together between artist and architect has now been lost to us for two centuries. In the questionnaire submitted to CIAM 6 in 1947 one final point, especially stressed by Hans Arp, had to be omitted: "The precondition for the working together of architects, painters and sculptors is a state of humility of all participants".

Here we enter the sphere of human aspirations—of human vanities—which are always the most difficult to combat.

Sigfried Giedion

L'architecture contemporaine danoise

Dans cette importante étude, Kay Fisker explique d'une façon détaillée tous les faits qui ont conduit à la formation de l'architecture contemporaine danoise, dont le représentant le plus éminent est bien le célèbre architecte Arne Jacobsen. Quoique le Danemark ne soit pas à la tête de l'architecture moderne, il est certain qu'il a fortement contribué à son développement.

Les exigences actuelles de l'architecture

Durant le XIX^e siècle la construction ne représentait que le subconscient de l'architecture, celle-ci ne faisant que porter les aspects extérieurs de l'époque. Actuellement, plus personne ne nie les liens existants entre l'architecture et l'économie, mais il faut bien dire que cette circonstance ne doit pas être réduite à une simple relation de cause à effet. D'autre part, la trinité entre les architectes, les sculpteurs et les peintres est à ce jour une des choses les plus urgentes à réaliser.