

NEW YORK CHAPTER

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

# O C U L U S

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## NEW GALLERIES AT THE METROPOLITAN

On Friday evening, January 8th, the Metropolitan Museum of Art held an invitation showing of its new painting galleries which were opened to the public the following day.

Under the direction of our Honorary Member, Director Francis Henry Taylor, and Theodore Rousseau, Jr., Curator of Paintings, the entire collection of European painting from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries has been reassembled for the first time since the not so recent World War. With Robert B. O'Connor and Aymar Embury II serving as architects, the West Wing of the building which is the old museum dating from the late Seventies has been completely rebuilt. Old skylights have been removed and replaced with a new lighting system developed by Lawrence Harrison of the museum's staff. New galleries have been created, new parquet flooring laid, a new method of picture hanging worked out, and air conditioning installed.

The result is magnificent. The Metropolitan's galleries are extremely simple and flexible, almost the sole architectural detailing consisting of uniform travertine door casings and base. Due to the new lighting, the pictures are revealed as never before. Generally, the background color of the walls has been kept very light, in many rooms matching the travertine, in the Dutch gallery a light blue. Here several pieces of Delft porcelain have been placed on pedestals against the walls between the wonderful Vermeers in their ebony frames.

Accessories from the period also accent the Seventeenth Century French gallery where gleaming military equipment of the time of Louis XIV has been placed flanking a great Poussin and in the Eighteenth Century Venetian gallery where a huge gilded harpsichord with its attendant carved Tritons complement the Tiepolo ceiling panel which hangs above them.

Several of the galleries have been hung in figured damask, some in a wine red and some in a blue green. The setting of the Spanish pictures against a fabric of gold and white is spectacular. The governing idea has been to hang the paintings according to periods rather than schools or individual painters and with reference to contemporary works of other countries and to the decorative arts of the time. As far as possible, chronology has been observed in the succession of the galleries as the visitor moves from one to the next.

The remaining aspects of the Metropolitan's rejuvenation will be shown on Friday, February 19th, when the galleries of Medieval and Renaissance Art will be opened, and on Friday, May 7th, when the public will see the galleries of Post-Renaissance Art and Period Rooms.



## PACKAGED LIBRARIES

Ready access to technical information for the Architect has always been a problem. OCULUS is indebted to Howard T. Fisher of the Chicago Chapter for information bearing on a possible answer to this problem which is now in its early preliminary study phase. It is the "Packaged Library" planned by the National A.I.A. The first such library will cover the specialized field of Detention and Correction - a shippable library to contain books, articles, plans and details by the best current practitioners and theorists. In this way, in a short time, all the most valuable and recent information can be in hand.

If this first project is successful, others will follow. A preliminary meeting last month attended by Messrs. Harvey Wiley Corbett, Benjamin M. Gruzen, Charles B. Meyers and Clarence B. Litchfield, all of this Chapter, indicated that the idea is being met with much enthusiasm here and it is hoped that further work on the project will soon be under way.

## TELEVISION

Thomas Creighton's television series "LIVING BY DESIGN" made its debut on WOR-TV, Channel 9, January 12th at 10:00 p.m. Mr. Creighton acted as moderator, introducing the series and the client of the evening, Mrs. Bernard Thomsen, in search of a house. Guest architects Caleb Hornbostel, Edgar Tafel and Abel Sorensen each sketched a plan and perspective of the house whose requirements were developed in a discussion between client and moderator. Circulation, orientation and the possibilities of solar heating were among the basic points covered in the concluding Round Table. The series will continue with various other building types on Tuesday evenings at the same hour.

## HANDS ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

The very representative showing of Puerto Rican architecture which closed last month at the League will serve as a reminder that A.I.A. members in Puerto Rico belong to the New York Chapter. This is the more gratifying in that it was the wish of the Puerto Rican architects themselves that their membership be assigned to the New York Chapter.

The Chapter numbers six members now practicing in Puerto Rico and while only one of them was represented in the recent exhibition (Henry Klumb, with an extensive new building program for the University) we hope to learn more of their fine contemporary work and of themselves in the future. Isadore Rosenfield, a Chapter member resident in New York was handsomely represented by a large general hospital.

## FAME

Without question the most widely publicized name in American architecture is Frank Lloyd Wright. Yet such is public apathy and ignorance in regard to architecture that even this outstanding figure failed to be identified on two recent TV quiz programs. The panel of experts on "Twenty Questions" - who rarely miss - did not even succeed in narrowing the field to architecture. The finalists in one of Groucho Marx's "You Bet Your Life" program fared no better. Such is fame: at least, such is architectural fame.



MATTHEW W. DEL GAUDIO, RETIRING PRESIDENT,  
ARCHITECTS COUNCIL OF NEW YORK CITY

Having served for three years as President of the Architects Council, Matthew W. Del Gaudio has retired from the post as of January 1954. Mr. Del Gaudio has been a most energetic and forceful officer. He has been of especial service in making the members of the six smaller constituent Chapters feel that their case is being represented equally with that of the numerically more weighty New York Chapter.

Several years ago, Mr. Del Gaudio received an A.I.A. Fellowship in recognition of his efforts toward unification of the interests of the Chapters of the New York area. It is fortunate that Mr. Del Gaudio will remain on the Council as Delegate of the New York Chapter for the next term of one year. His Alternate will be William Potter.

### NEW BOOKS

Motels, Hotels, Restaurants and Bars, An Architectural Record Book, F. W. Dodge Corp., New York, 1953.

The editors of Architectural Record have recently brought together between the covers of a book a series of articles and illustrations on motels, hotels, restaurants and bars that was published in the magazine during the past eight years. They include some twenty-odd examples of motels and the technical analysis that Pawley prepared in 1950. Five hotels - large and small - are fully illustrated. About sixteen restaurants and bars are shown in the last section of the book, which also reprints articles by Siegel on restaurant planning, by Kelly on lighting, and by a panel of experts on kitchens. Other articles cover "drive-ins", restaurant management, and an analysis of restaurant space and layout by Spaulding.

While this volume cannot be considered a completely integrated or analytical treatment of the subject, it makes for convenient reference to have all the material available in one place and much of it is extremely interesting.

### CLASSROOM LIGHTING

A series of lectures on WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT CLASSROOM LIGHTING began on Wednesday, January 13th, sponsored by the Illumination Division, New York Section of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. All of the lectures will be held at the General Electric Auditorium Lexington Avenue and 51st Street at 7:00 P.M.

A group of diversified experts in various phases of classroom lighting are scheduled to present the lectures.

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| Wed., Jan. 27 | Carl Allen, School Lighting Specialist<br>General Electric Co.      |
| Tues., Feb. 9 | Willard Allphin, Illumination Research<br>Sylvania Electric         |
| Tues., Mar. 2 | Cash Crouch, Technical Director<br>Illuminating Engineering Society |



## SECOND LUNCHEON MEETING ON PRE-STRESSED CONCRETE

A fine color film with sound was the feature of the luncheon sponsored by the Technical Committee on Tuesday, December 15. The subject of the meeting was the second in a series of two meetings dealing with pre-stressed concrete. The speaker was Mr. J. J. Closner, Vice-President of the Pre-Load Construction Company who brought with him a color film dealing with the use of Pre-stressed Trestles in the new bridge over Tampa Bay, Florida. Scheduled to open in 1954, this will be a 15-mile toll bridge and will form an important link in the highway program of the Gulf Coast. Approximately three miles of the bridge are built of pre-stressed concrete sections forming trestles. The project is being built at a cost of approximately \$15,000,000 by the Florida State Road Department with Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Hall and MacDonald of New York City serving as engineers. Using a design based on pre-stressed concrete, the successful contractor submitted a bid for \$140,000 less than those using a conventional reinforced concrete design.

Mr. Closner pointed out that even though the example was a purely engineering work, a great deal of successful research is being conducted for the more extensive use of pre-stressed concrete, including industrial applications. One of the slides shown at the meeting was of a pre-stressed concrete dome with a diameter of over two hundred feet and a thickness of six inches. The Technical Committee is to be thanked for arranging these two excellent meetings.

### CANDIDATES

Information regarding the qualifications of the following candidates for membership will be considered confidential by the Admissions Committee:

#### Corporate Membership

Ernest A. Durhan

Frederick Charles Gans

Carl Eugene Pancaldo

William Daniel Wilson

Sponsors: Robert M. Wagner and John Severinghaus

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Sponsors: Eldredge Snyder and Harry Silverman

Sponsors: Arthur C. Holden and Walker O. Cain

#### Associate Membership

Alvaro Cardenas-Moreno

Leo Shang Wou

Sponsors: Harmon H. Goldstone

Sponsors: J. Roy Carroll, Jr., and Philip Mei Chu

