

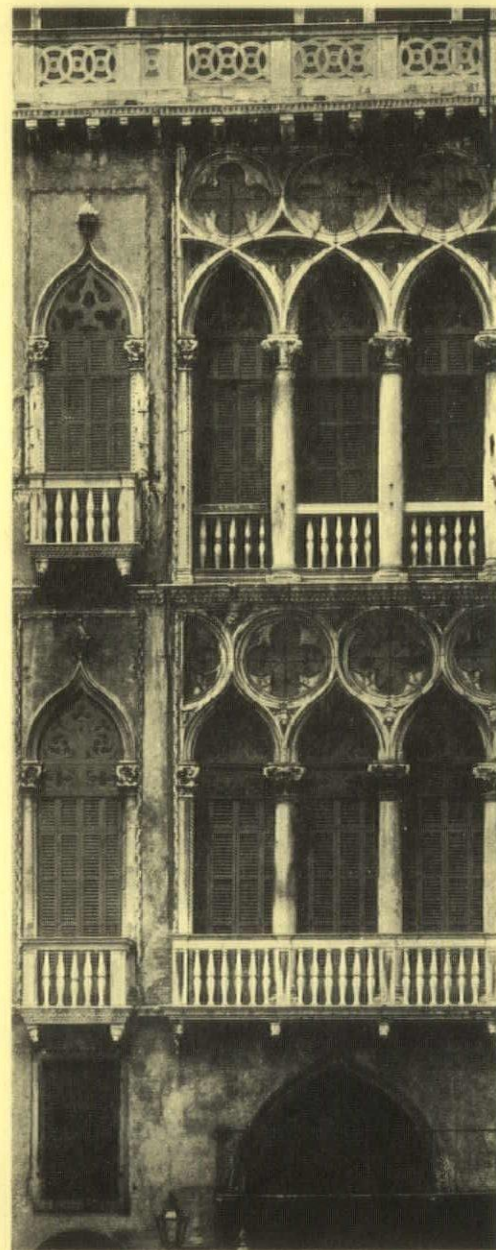
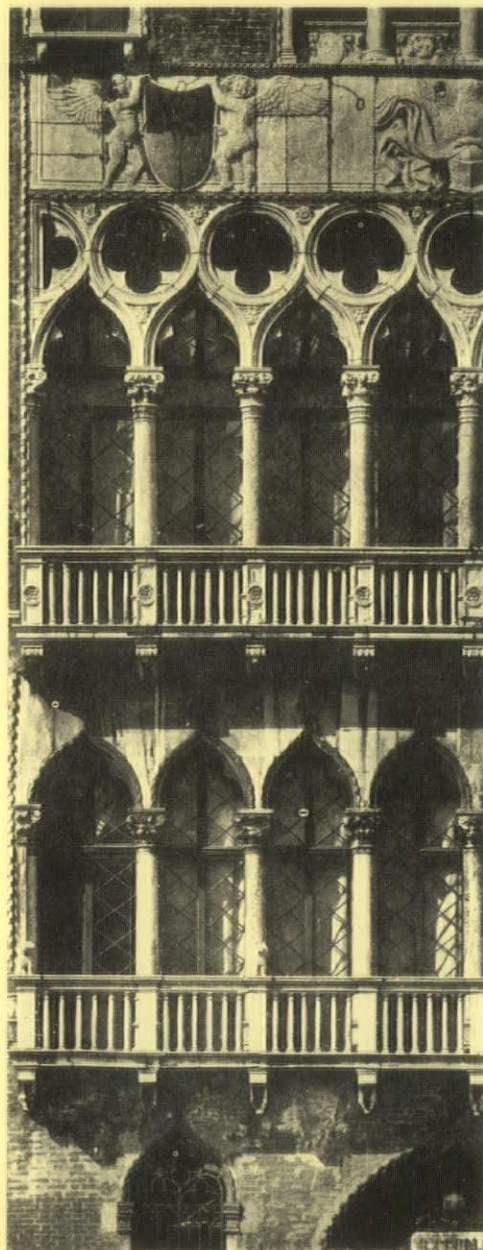
# POTOMAC VALLEY ARCHITECT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER OF MARYLAND

AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF  
ARCHITECTS  
Vol. 7 No. 3  
NOVEMBER, 1962  
NOV 8 1962  
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A · I · A



- *Steen Eiler Rasmussen on Venetian Architecture*
- *S. M. Sherman • Travel Notes*
- *Contemporary Canadian Architecture — The 1961 Massey Medals*



## POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER OF MARYLAND

American Institute of Architects

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## AIA FORMS

AIA forms are no longer available at the chapter office but must be purchased directly from the Institute. We have learned that sales of the forms are subject to Maryland Sales Tax, and we have therefore discontinued this service.

Forms may also be purchased by our chapter members from Miss Woodworth, Executive Secretary of the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter, ST 3-2322.

### NOVEMBER MEETING

12 Noon November 7

### DECEMBER MEETING

12 Noon December 5

*featured will be a color sound film  
"EERO SAARINEN — AN APPRECIATION"*

*both meetings will be held at*

Sirloin Inn  
Wheaton Plaza Shopping Center

## EVENTS and EXHIBITIONS

### AIA OCTAGON

*October 23 - November 11*  
The Massey Medals. Contemporary Canadian Architecture

### NATIONAL HOUSING CENTER

*Opening November 27*  
Young Americans — 1962 Crafts Exhibit

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

*Through November 25*  
Old Master Drawings from Chatsworth

### CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

*Through November 11*  
Retrospective Exhibition of William Ranney

*Through November 11*  
Edith Gregor Halpert Collection  
*Opening November 14*

Washington Artists Series — Robert Gates

*Opening November 28*

16 Artists from Germany

Contemporary Paintings

### PHILLIPS COLLECTION

*Through November 4*  
Kurt Schwitters

### SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

*November 1 - December 17*

Photographs by Richard Avedon

*Opening November 1*

Etchings and Drypoints by George O'Connell

*Opening November 15*

Permanent Exhibition Gallery on North American Archeology

*Opening November 17*

The Daniells in India

18th Century Watercolors, mostly architectural

*Opening November 17*

Contemporary Japanese Sumi-E Painting

*Opening Late November*

The Art of Thailand

### CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS INSTITUTE

*November 20, 8:00 p.m., National*

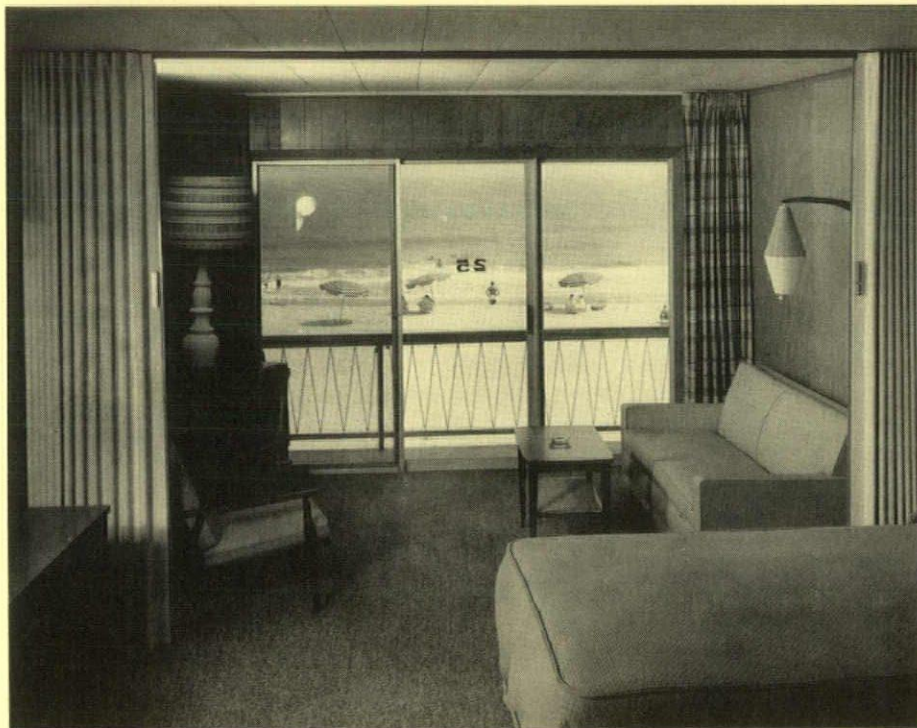
*Housing Center*

Built-up Roofing Characteristics

### TEXTILE MUSEUM

*Through January*

Indonesian Art Exhibit



STARDUST MOTEL

RONALD S. SENSEMAN, ARCHITECT

LOCATION: OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

OWNER BUILDER: IRVIN BAINUM

## NEW ADDRESSES

WALTER E. BUCHER, JR.

7676 Woodbury Drive

Silver Spring, Maryland

JOHN A. d'EPAGNIER

Second Floor, Conley Building

9525 Georgia Avenue

Silver Spring, Maryland



# c o m m e n t

*The happy excitement of living in a time of such rapid change is tempered by the sadness of seeing solid satisfying achievements abandoned for no reason other than fashion.*

Architecture has changed a good deal in the last five years. The reaction against the facile slickness of the curtain wall has produced from some a profusion of ornament, and from others — more serious — a turn to bolder gutsy forms. Now the magazines follow. If the cliché of acceptable avant-garde architecture is a crudely-textured concrete surface, in magazines it is a semi-abstract cover on uncoated, dull-colored paper, with fat face pseudo-Victorian lettering.

PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE was the first to change. In keeping with its name, P/A has been the most progressive of the larger magazines. The visual design, though, was not up to the editorial content. Now the thoughtful writing, such as the award seminars and the P. S. column, has been matched by careful experimentation in layout. At first it followed ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW too slavishly, I thought. While the REVIEW maintains a level of criticism and scholarship, and a breadth of coverage unknown in this country, I have never joined in the blind adulation of its visual aspect, which sometimes borders on the chaotic. P/A has slowly developed a handsome style of its own, however, up-to-date but not stereotyped.

ARCHITECTURAL FORUM was not so fortunate. FORUM occasionally lapsed into the habits of the Luce publications: presenting the significant and the trivial with equal solemnity, overly cute captioning, and emphasizing cleverness and entertainment above information. But however uneven the editorial matter, the format was consistently fine. Like its cousin LIFE — which set the standards for a generation of photo journalism — FORUM produced a uniformly slick, clean glossy layout enhanced by some of the world's finest photography. All this is past. The writing is better, with less emphasis on clever catch phrases and biographies of big real estate operators, and a fine page by Haskell. But the format has changed — junked, I presume, for the sake of the current fashions: muddy-looking covers with patterns vaguely reminiscent of textile designs, fat black letters and labels, and a typography on the binding looking almost like a photograph of the ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW. I yearn for the old type cover — a full color Stoller documentary photo on shiny white stock. The old FORUM was slick, but it was the slickness of a Lever House or Inland Steel, and too worthwhile to dump for what Mumford called "a new taste sensation."

In contrast ARCHITECTURAL RECORD reminds me of an old line architectural firm moving slowly and carefully through changes in style; sometimes a bit stodgy and behind the times, but always sensible and in good taste. Today it represents the best of what I would describe as the American commercial magazine tradition — not as brilliant as some, but not erratic either. It has the glossy cover with consistent identifying symbols and layout, large sharp photographs, simple conservative typography, and quiet well-balanced page design with ample margins.

What I have said about RECORD applies equally well to the A.I.A. JOURNAL. I hope neither one changes. We are richer for having both Seagram House and Ronchamp, and richer, too, for having comparably different styles in magazines.

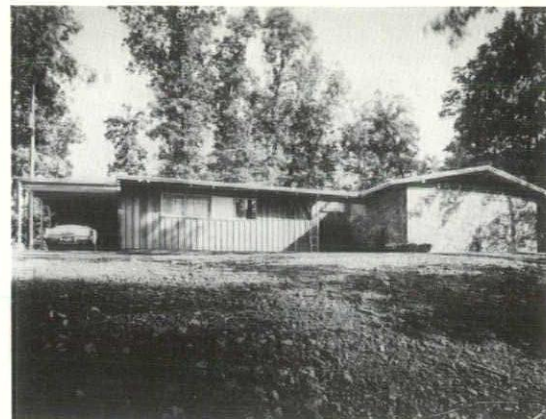
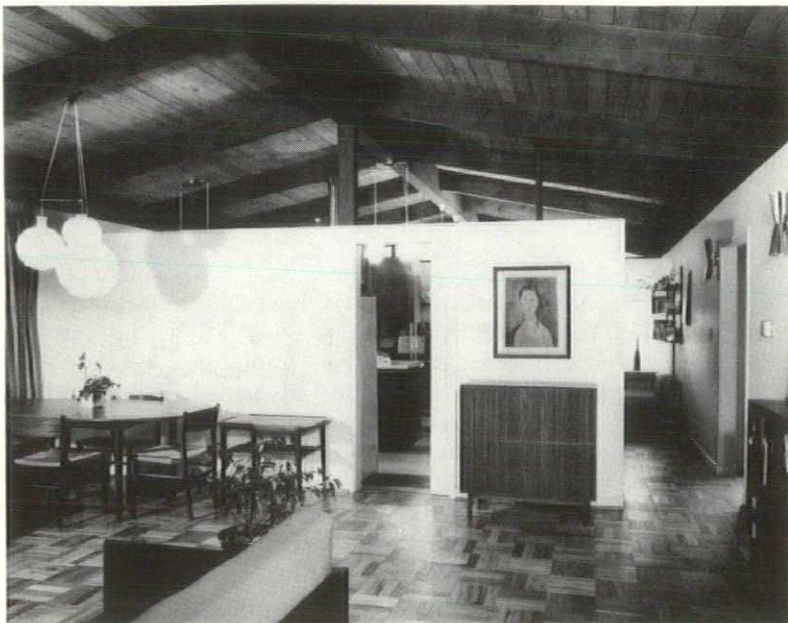
The fine architectural writers of our time are mostly propagandists and theorists. They shape and select architecture to fit their personal beliefs, and often exert a great influence on the design and planning of their contemporaries. They are moralists, and their books essentially attempt to distinguish the significant architecture from the insignificant. To them architecture is a deadly serious business, a tangled web of cultural, esthetic and historical forces, whose influences they proceed to sort out and classify. The author is always present, to criticize, correct, and lecture. Giedion and Zevi fit this category, as do Mumford, Scully, Pevsner and others.

A second rarer type of writing turns to architecture not as raw material for philosophy and morals, but as a source of wonder and delight. Unlike the first kind of writing, which narrows and intensifies the readers' perceptions, this style at its best opens our minds and eyes to new sensations and insights. The author, though his analysis may be as deep as that of any writer, underplays his presence and appears as a friendly, relaxed guide rather than a stern and earnest lecturer. Steen Eiler Rasmussen is such a man. Those who have not read his TOWNS and BUILDINGS have missed the most charming architectural book of our generation. A second edition of his latest book EXPERIENCING ARCHITECTURE\* has just been published, and we are happy to present a brief excerpt from it in this issue.

Robert B. Riley, AIA

\*Published by the M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass.





## FISHER RESIDENCE

ALEXANDER RICHTER, ARCHITECT

LOCATION: Potomac, Maryland

OWNER: Dr. & Mrs. Seymour Fisher

CONTRACTOR: George Parken

Photographs by Ann Evry

## PLANNING GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

Plans are advancing rapidly in the Planning Group. An overall plan for Silver Spring has been developed and at present, is being refined for presentation to the Silver Spring Progress Committee. At this meeting, we will present sketches of possible areas for rehabilitation.

We will also discuss the need for professional surveys to augment and verify our findings.

Within the next few weeks the plan is to be presented to the County Council for their reaction. At this point, we will know whether we will receive the basic political support so necessary for continuation of our work. We are investigating setting up an exhibit for publicity to be presented in the libraries of the county. Detailed studies by professionally trained personnel (i.e., traffic, tax base, land use) are about to be undertaken. The findings of these experts will strengthen and justify our proposed plan.

After the meetings with the Silver Spring Progress Committee and County Council, we will begin work on final presentation, to include a publication for dissemination to the public.

## CSI NEWS

Lack of knowledge about construction materials limits design possibilities and occasionally causes expensive failures. This is the problem under attack by the Construction Specifications Institute through the means of materials seminars.

Specialists have been carefully chosen to integrate discussion about material characteristics with the solution of specific problems. At the first seminar of this undertaking, on October 16th, Henry E. Robinson, Chief of Heat Transfer Section of the National Bureau of Standards; and Francis A. Govan, Assistant for Technical Operations of Building Research Advisory Board led the discussion of Thermal Space Insulation in Normal Temperature Applications.

This was not a program devoted to speeches or to the presentation of technical papers, but an examination of practical problems by the entire membership under the leadership of two qualified scientists. Approximately half of the two hour session was spent in questions and comments from the floor.

No final answers were developed — this would be too much to expect from one evening — but new understandings were initiated and future work for the Insulation Committee

was clearly defined. Field inspections, examination of many insulation materials, and further discussions with Mr. Robinson and Mr. Govan may be a part of this work.

On November 20th the Roofing and Flashing Committee, under the chairmanship of Roy Magee of Ronald Senseman & Associates, will sponsor a seminar relating to The Characteristics and Limitations of Built Up Roofing, at the National Housing Center at 8 p.m. William C. Cullen, Assistant Chief, Organic National Bureau of Standards, will explain the engineering concepts of built up roofing, followed by Max Greenwald, president of Max Greenwald & Sons, with comments about application problems and apparent causes for roof failures.

Here again we will have a direct attack on the nature and limitations of materials and systems.

All members of the architectural and engineering professions are cordially invited to take part in these programs, whether or not they are members of C. S. I. All contractors and materials specialists will be equally welcome. The 8 p.m. meeting will be preceded by cocktails at 5:30 and dinner at 6:30 at the National Housing Center. Dinner reservations must be arranged in advance with Mr. H. Steward White of Johnson & Boutin by telephoning AD 4-1184.



*The following article forms part of a chapter titled "Architecture Experienced as Color Planes" in the book EXPERIENCING ARCHITECTURE. Details appear in COMMENT in this issue.*

# LOOKING AT VENICE

STEEN EILER RASMUSSEN

We do not perceive everything as either mass or void. Very distant objects often seem completely flat. Many cloud formations are seen only as two-dimensional figures against the background of the sky. A distant stretch of coast coming into view across water appears merely as a silhouette. You see the outlines but have no impression of depth. Even Manhattan, with its depth of thirteen miles, looks like the painted back-drop of a theater when seen across the water from the deck of an in-going ship.

There is one place in the world where such phenomena—so often observed near the water—are very striking, and that is Venice.

Coming from the Adriatic, which forms a dramatic seascape of wave crests with shadows of an amazingly intense ultra-marine, to the flat waters of the lagoons behind the string of islands, you feel that you have been transported to an unreal world where the usual concepts of shape and form have lost their meaning. Sky and water merge into a brilliant blue sphere in the middle of which dark fishing boats glide and the low islands appear simply as floating horizontal stripes.

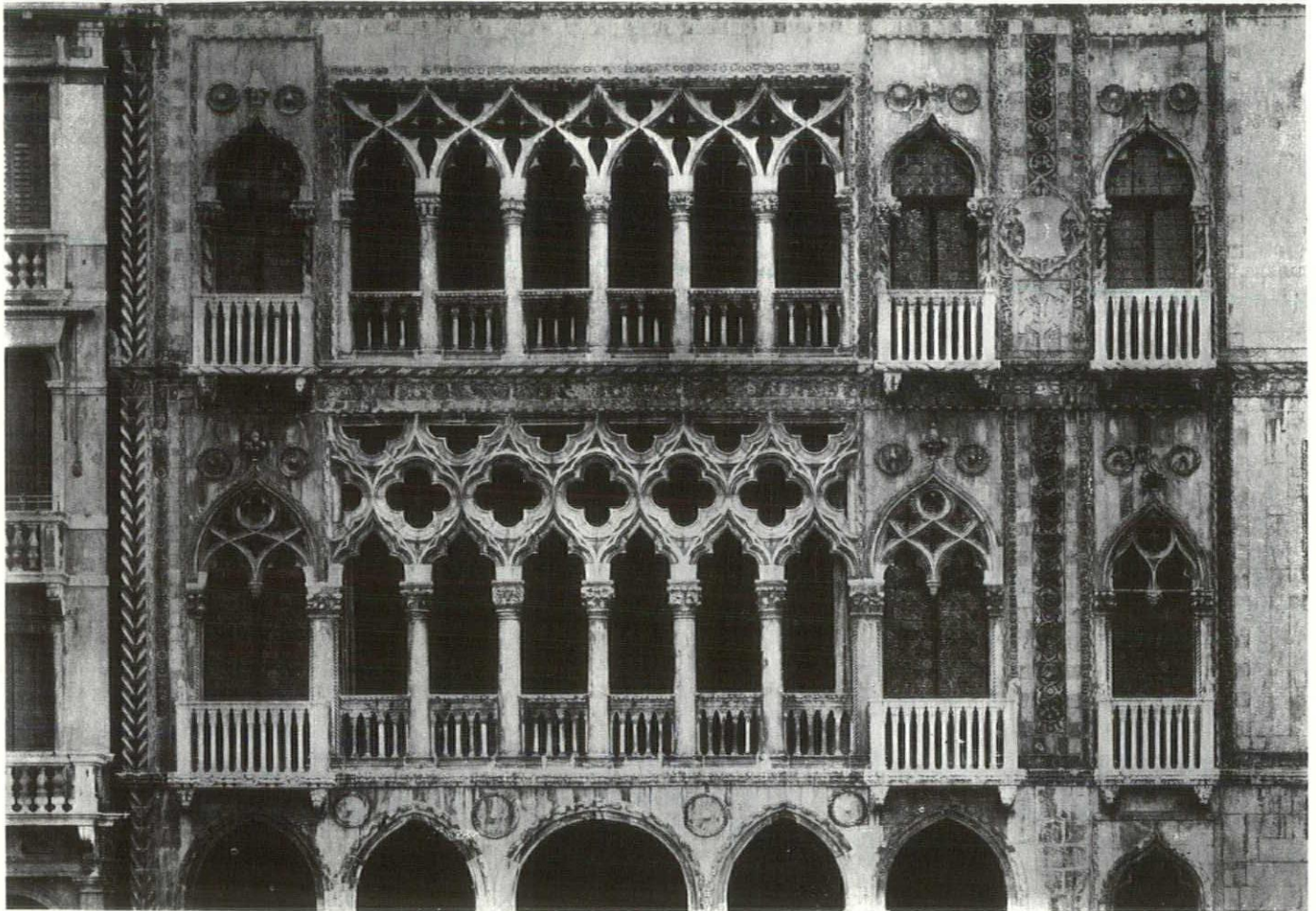
Venice itself looms like a mirage, a dream city in the ether. And this impression of unreality persists even to the very threshold. The colored phantoms of the buildings, floating on a watery surface, seem to be lighter than all other houses one has ever seen. In by-gone days Venice must have looked even more exotic. At that time, when every self-respecting town was surrounded by the most menacing and impenetrable fortifications, the first impression of this metropolis must have been a sort of earthly paradise where fear was unknown, with houses with delicate and graceful arcades swarming with carefree people. Large, lively market places opened out towards the sea. Where other cities fortified a mountain top with

thick walls without a single opening, Venice was built right out into the shallow waters with brightly painted palaces completely pierced by windows and columned loggias. Instead of emphasizing weight and solidity, Venice allured with gaiety and movement.

Here the Orient began, but a transfigured, an idealized Orient. The city was a veritable treasure house with its wealth of colorful merchandise from three continents. And when it decked itself in festive array no other European city could rival its magnificence. From the Orient Venice had learned how to transform her houses and create an atmosphere of splendor by hanging costly rugs from her windows. Still today during the great festivals you can see the buildings surrounding S. Mark's Square adorned in this fashion. Even without such ornament the buildings are extraordinary monuments of a unique city culture. The entire north side, the Procuratie Vecchie, is a gallery-like building five hundred feet long, from about the year 1500. On the street level is an arcade with shops and above are two stories with windows between columns, like boxes in a theater. When rugs are hung from the closely spaced windows they completely cover the many carved details of the facade. Instead of a richly sculptured block the building is transformed into a collection of figured color planes. After having seen this decoration you feel that you understand many of the other buildings better. They are attempts to make this festive array permanent. The mosaic floors in S. Mark's, you discover, are really costly carpets fashioned in colored stones, and the patterns of the marble facing the ancient brick walls of the church resembles fine rugs with broad colored borders.

But most remarkable is the Doges' Palace. Contrary to all architectural rules its walls are massive above and completely pierced below. But this is not at all disturbing; there is no feeling of top-heaviness. The





upper part, though actually solid and heavy, seems light, more buoyant than inert. This effect was achieved by facing the walls with white and red marble in a large checkered pattern. The design is cut off arbitrarily at the edges as if the whole thing were a huge piece of material that had been cut to fit. In artificial light the facade, standing luminous against the dark sky, becomes completely unearthly; but even in glaring sunlight it is no stone Colossus on feet of clay but a gay, tent-like surface. At the corners are twisted columns and they too are different from other columns. They are so thin that they no longer are supporting elements but simply edgings, like the cord upholsterers use to hide seams.

Potemkin is said to have erected scenery which conjured up flourishing towns along the route of a journey made by Catherine the Great. One imagines that he got flimsy frames covered with painted canvas to give the effect of solid buildings. In Venice the very opposite was done. Along the Canal Grande one great palazzo lies beside the other. They are deeper than they are wide, built entirely of stone and brick faced with marble or stucco in shades of venetian red or burnt sienna. And the architects have

succeeded in making them look like colorful *fiesta* decorations of unsubstantial materials.

The Canale Grande is above all a place of festivity, the scene of magnificent regattas. For centuries the canal dwellers have taken pleasure in decorating their houses with flowers, banners, and costly rugs, as they do on S. Mark's Square — and here too attempts have been made to make the decoration permanent. These light palaces are not, like the other buildings, characterized by certain architectural elements that are supporting and others that are supported. They are simply divided by narrow mouldings, twisted like cords or decorated like borders, and between the mouldings are stretched the color planes of the facades. Even the windows seem to be surface ornaments rather than openings in walls. Pointed arch openings are inscribed in a rectangular field so that they look like Islamic prayer rugs hung on the facade, those rugs which themselves are flat representations of a niche in a wall. There are also real Gothic buildings in Venice, churches of daring construction. But the Gothic of the palaces is merely ornamental. The pointed arch embellished with Islamic tracery is simply a decoration on the surface of the



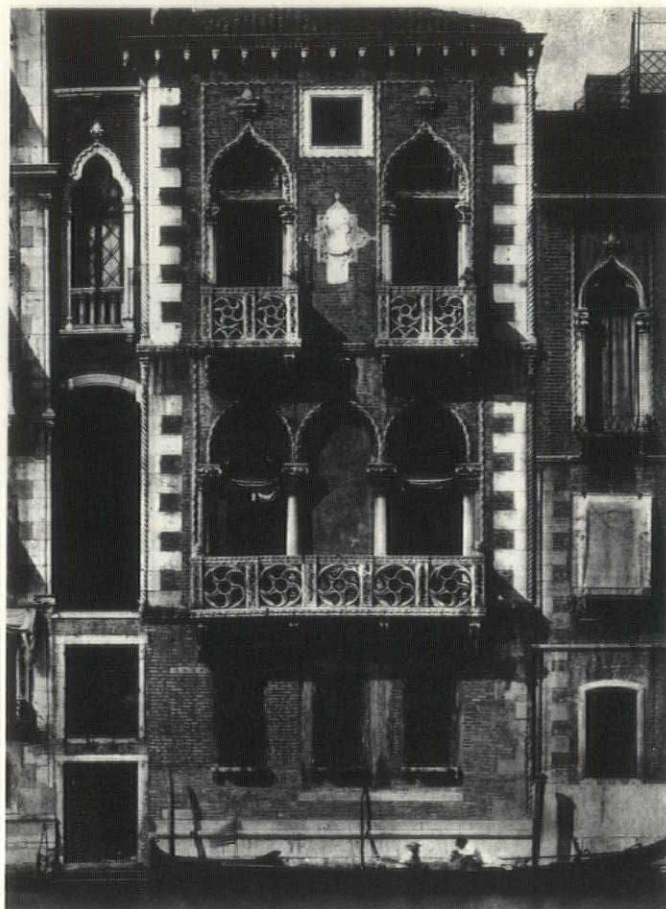
facade. In Gentile Bellini's painting one of the buildings (still to be seen in Venice) seems to be entirely hung with rugs. The wall surface has a textile pattern, the windows resemble prayer rugs. The wall surface has a textile pattern, the windows resemble prayer rugs and between two of them still another rug seems to be hung, while the whole is edged with cords and borders. Also the Venetian buildings of the early Renaissance, with their flat facings of many-colored marble, often give the impression of light structures in festive array. The buildings of the two periods are the same, it is only the exterior pattern that has changed: the pointed arch has been replaced by the round one.

There seems to be a connection between the colorfulness of Venetian architecture and the special light that prevails in Venice where there are so many reflections from the southern sky and the water. Shadows never become black and meaningless; they are lighted up by shimmering, glittering reflections which give the colors a special richness. During the period when architecture was light and colorful, Venetian art too glowed with intense color, as still can be seen in S. Mark's. We can only faintly imagine how well it suited the Doges' Palace when its interior was decorated with the pure color tones of medieval flat painting.

But the late Renaissance brought new architectural ideals to the airy city. Buildings were no longer to depend on color planes for effects but on relief, on massiveness and dramatic shadows. In our time a Venetian facade commission prevented the erection of a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright on the ground that it did not harmonize with the general character of the city. In reality Wright's mannerism is no more alien to the old Venetian architecture than the late Renaissance was. It was when those great, massive buildings with heavy rusticated masonry and boldly projecting orders were introduced among the lighter structures with their colorful walls that the decisive break in the orderly evolution of Venetian architecture occurred.

The interior of the Doges' Palace was gutted by fire in 1483 and later the enormous rooms were decorated according to the taste of a new era. The building, outwardly so light in color and material, was now given the heaviest of interiors. The walls were covered with grandiose paintings which, with their perspectives and violent shadow effects, disrupt all planes. The ceilings were stuccoed in high relief and given so much ornament, so much color and gilt, so many paintings creating the illusion of great depth, that you actually feel crushed under the weight of it all.

The Venetian buildings teach us something of how an appearance of either weight or lightness can be created in architecture. We have already seen that markedly convex forms give an impression of mass



while conclave ones lead to an impression of space. In Venice we learn that buildings can be formed so that the only impression they give is of planes.

If you make a box of some heavy material, such as thick, coarse-grained planks dovetailed together so that the thickness of the wood is obvious at every corner, the weight and solidity of the box will be immediately apparent. The buildings of the late Renaissance were like such boxes. The heavy quoins gave the illusion of exaggeratedly thick walls. By employing such devices Palladio designed buildings with brick walls that looked as though they were made of the heaviest ashlar.

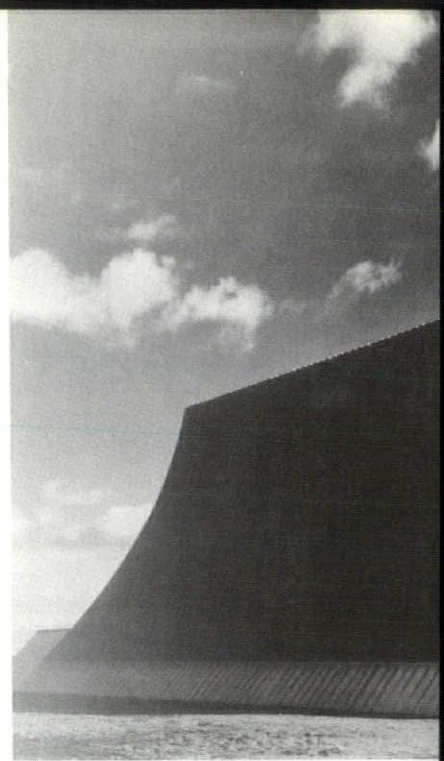
But just as a building can be made to appear heavier than it actually is, it can also be made to appear lighter than it is. If all irregularities on the wooden box were planed away and all crevices filled out so that the sides were absolutely flat and smooth, and it was painted a light color, it would be impossible to tell what material it was made of. Or if, instead of paint, it were covered with a figured paper or textile it would seem to be very light, as light as the material covering it. This is what was done with the Doges' Palace and with many other buildings in Venice.





PARKWOOD TERRACE,  
South Burnaby, B. C.

HALE, HARRISON, BUZZELLE,  
Architects



EGLISE ST. RAPHAEL,  
Jonquiere, Quebec

# CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN A

## The Massey Medals 1961

*A gallery of representative winners in the fifth annual Massey Medals for Architecture Competition, held in 1961. Over 300 buildings were entered and 19 Silver Medals and one Gold Medal awarded. A selection of 100 of the entries, now on view at the Octagon, is being circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.*

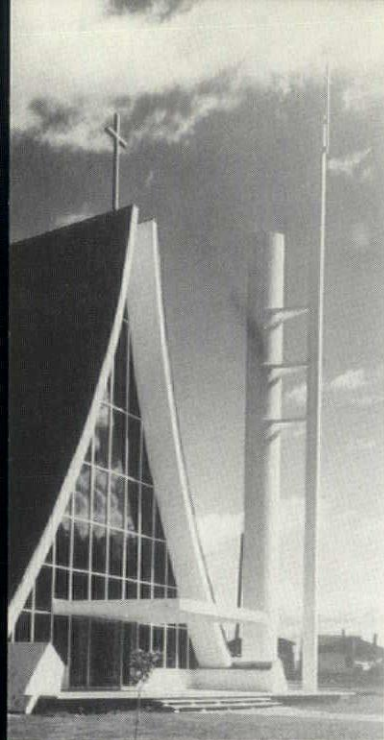


KIPLING COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE,  
Etobicoke, Ontario GORDON ADAMS and ASSOCIATES  
Architects



COMMONS BLOCK THOMPSON, BERWICK and PRATT  
University of British Columbia Architects





ST. GELAIS and TREMBLAY,  
Architects



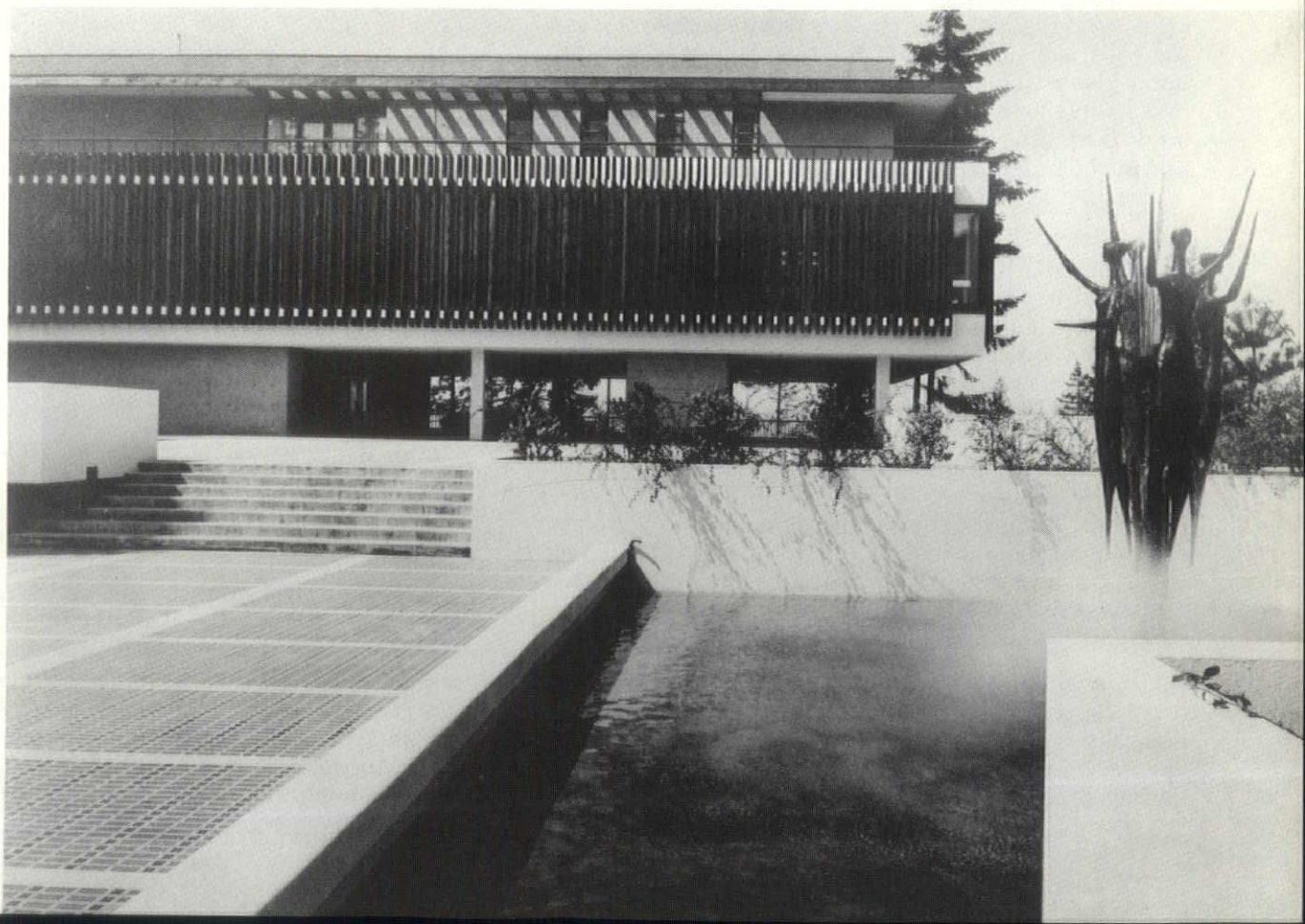
ROCKLAND SHOPPING CENTRE,  
Town of Mount-Royal, Quebec

IAN MARTIN and VICTOR PRUS,  
Architects

# ITECTURE

THEA KOERNER HOUSE  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B. C.

THOMPSON, BERWICK and PRATT: and PETER KAFKA  
Architects





*A highly personal collection of views on tourism, photography, architecture, and gastronomy. Mr. Sherman is chief architect for the Redevelopment Land Agency.*

# TRAVEL VIEWS

S. M. SHERMAN

Travel, for anyone concerned with the visual environment, is exciting, exhilarating, educational, expensive, exhausting and essential. Exciting, for the anticipatory sense of exposure to new and quite possibly beautiful scenes. Exhilarating, when the inherent promise of such exposure is fulfilled. Educational, for effort is involved for anyone to properly absorb such experiences. Expensive, of course; exhausting, beyond words; but withal essential for nothing substitutes for the experience of seeing in the "round".

Like many other things travel is often more exciting in anticipation than in the actuality. The mundane tasks of finding accommodations, getting laundry done, or even finding a letter-box in a strange city are never considered beforehand. We envision coming on a setting fresh, in perfect weather, free of extraneous elements like traffic and thus in a state of mind like a worshiper at a shrine. It just isn't so. But that's not a source of disappointment; once the voyaging is begun these practical problems are accepted and put in their right perspective.

Nonetheless, disappointments do occur, and if I list mine now it is to have them out of the way quickly. I suppose the best way to indicate this reaction is to say that I never found Europe to be the "Townscape Notebook" that a faithful reading of the ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW led me to expect. It's easy to be beguiled and to close one's eyes to a lesson still apparent from our own architectural periodicals, that is that the new good buildings are still scattered islands in a sea of mediocrity. We would rather think that Europe, with its longer and greater building heritage, had no such problems. But no, again this isn't wholly true, for even the isolated monuments, frozen in the mold of "tourist attraction" are not always sufficient to overcome the drabness of an environment that is touched and modified by contemporary activity.

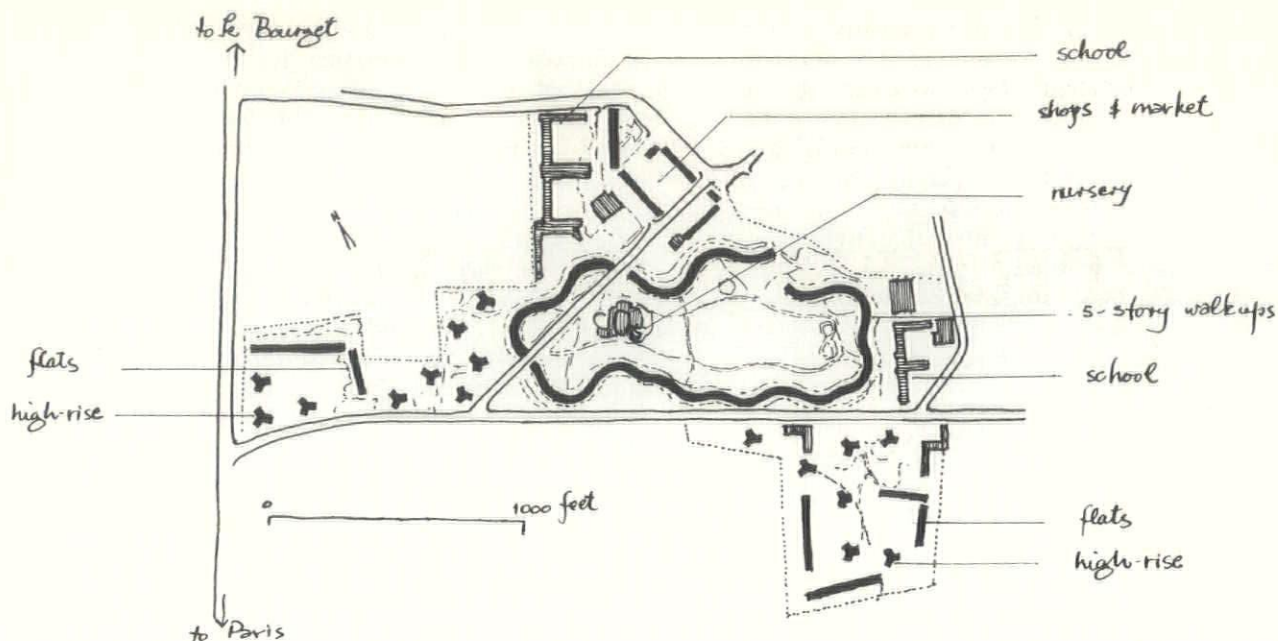
I've wondered about this fact, as well as its subsidiary facet that, with some exceptions such as Southampton and Rotterdam, individual buildings turned out to be more striking than groups of buildings. Perhaps one reason is the factor I touched on earlier,

that for anyone whose eyes are open to learn no element in an urban scene can be ignored. In fact there is a constant impingement on all the senses. Only rarely could I isolate myself from a setting and concentrate on the kind of detail that the REVIEW so compellingly and eloquently describes under "Townscape". And, of course, with open eyes, you see a great deal that often is swept under a figurative rug in recapturing an image of a favorite place. The road into the city from London Airport or Paris' Le Bourget are different from each other, but they are no less drab for that. And finding worthwhile development in either city often involves going through large districts that are eyesores by any standards. Speaking of "finding" reminds me: I constantly wondered, while traveling, why some foundation didn't give some worthwhile applicant a grant to compile a uniform series of city maps to a common code of symbols and reasonable scale. The red Michelin Guide comes closest and could serve as an admirable starting point.

I don't mean to belittle London or Paris, both of which have the important ingredient of recognizable character that makes them appealing for haphazard wandering. But they are also places with enormous traffic problems, rising standards of living, exploding populations and a great deal of execrable nineteenth century building. All are elements that effect one's reaction before finding any particular building or place. Hidden factors also influence one's reactions. But I shall speak of that after mentioning one other possible reason to explain the occasional disappointments.

For all the good that I recognize photography has done to the cause of good architecture, I feel, nevertheless, that I must record a dissenting voice as to its effects. The photograph is too frequently deceptive. Either it is used as a reporting device, or as a beautiful object in itself. In the case of the former, selection is still essential, for in the translation of a three dimensional scene into a two dimensional framework the loss of space must be counteracted by some device to restore clarity. And in the latter case, where a good photographer tries to create some corresponding "equivalent" to the actual building, he necessarily adds a personal interpretation. I don't begrudge either ap-





Cité des Courtilières  
E. Aillaud Arch.

proach, but I am convinced that the architectural photograph is most useful as a reminder to those who have seen the actuality. To believe one knows anything about a building from pictures alone is a fatal mistake.

In any case, within this framework, I have to sympathize with E. Aillaud, the architect of Cité des Courtilières in his attempts to offset some of the ill effects of the policy and rigidity I described above. The photographs of this development, north of Paris, show a 5-story building curving sinuously around a vast open space, roughly 800 by 2200 feet, and hardly gave a favorable impression. Judging only from these and without the awareness of other French developments laboring under similar restrictions, one could easily be deceived as to the project's worth.

All of which is by way of reinforcing my argument that travel is essential. Ideally it should be done at a slow and reflective pace. That didn't happen in our case, and as a result some of my reactions to buildings and places might be different with fuller knowledge. This is what I meant by "hidden factors". For example, I don't know if the Ministry of Construction in France has some policy which effectively limits all new residential building to 5-story or 10-story structures, the former usually without elevators and in unbelievably long rows. It may not be a policy, but I would have to assume so on the basis of what I saw. Added to this, whether by policy or design, is an inordinate tendency toward rigid planning in huge, not to say outlandish, superblocks. Sarcelles, outside Paris, is the prime example.

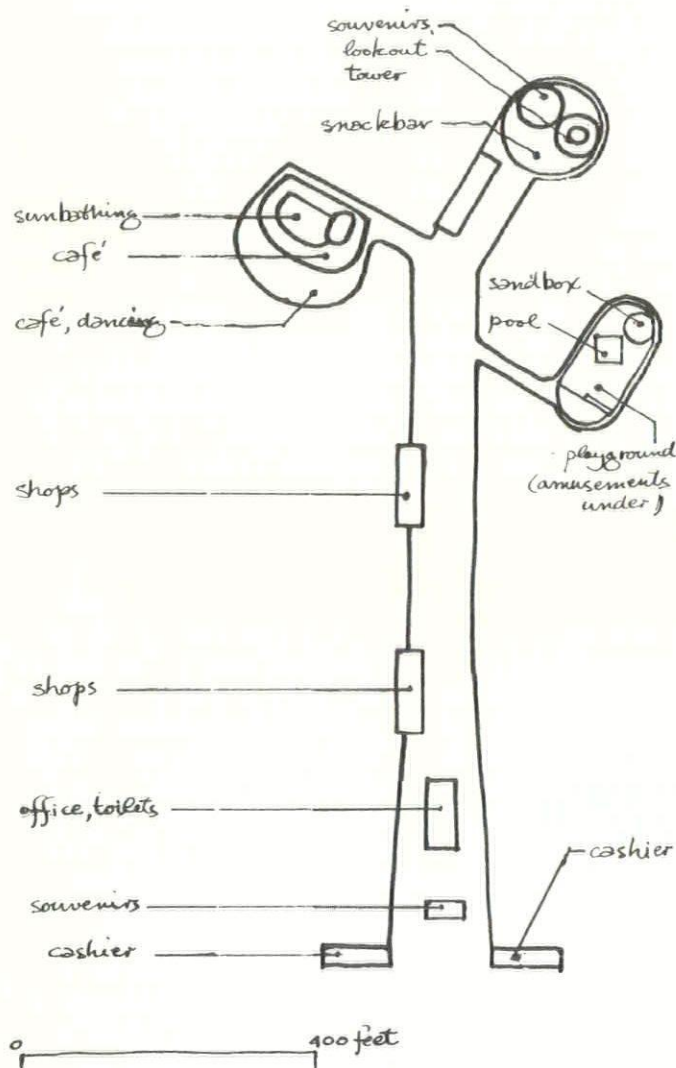
The final summation turns out otherwise. The serpentine building is surprisingly "tranquil", and na-

tural, once past the initial shock. Part of this is due to the repetition of the curvilinear motif in various ways; a vaulted nursery school with a twisted chimney and snaking walls is near one end of the open space; the entries to units are vaulted; all the paths curve. Most convincing, however, is the landscaping, designed with rounded hills, play and sitting areas. I can't condone the necessity of walking five full flights; I deplore, as I do in the States, that government mentality that limits housing budgets so as to straightjacket the architect; I wonder at the French approach that leads them to such vastness; but I must still admit that Aillaud has succeeded in creating a place of considerable interest, done with a degree of taste that is worth seeing.

The preconceptions I brought to Cité des Courtilières turned out to be wrong; it is hardly surprising that the many anticipations I also had turned out to be equally wrong. These don't balance out, but for the sake of exposition I can set up a contrast. My first viewing of Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, for example, set me wondering what all the fuss was about; an amusement park only a little different from others, traffic someone else's problem, and with a dash of whimsy you can take or leave alone. I modified this harsh judgment after other visits, particularly with my four year old son, but by contrast I was immediately entranced by the new Amusement Pier at Scheveningen outside The Hague. Of that I knew little except for a very brief notice in the ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW. I might say, as an aside, that I had my strongest reactions to buildings and places that had not been diluted by constant exposure in various periodicals; the thrill of personal discovery is irreplaceable.



The Dutch pier, designed by Hugh Maaskant, is 1220 feet long, for pedestrians only as it extends directly into the North Sea, has various offshoots and levels and a special outlook tower as a terminus. The suggestion of adventure from the rough cold waves immediately below one and the changing sources of amusement and pleasure on the pier add up to a unique combination of excitement and delight. Thus one amusement park worked for me, and another didn't. Could it have been predicted? I doubt it.



Amusement Pier. Scheveningen  
 Hugh Maaskant Arch.

Clearly, therefore, travel has many unexpected rewards. Reevaluation is always likely, and I would include my own estimates on the work of Le Corbusier as one indication of that. His *Maison Jaoul* in the Neuilly section of Paris turned out to be as high a point in our Paris stay as getting into the

house proved unexpected. The latter was sheer chance, the former was a revelation for it showed Corbu's mastery of a small space and flawless taste in color and furnishings. (I assume he had that degree of control.) I would like to try to describe the whole, but to do it justice would take far more space than I feel I have. Besides, my point is that seeing the *Maison* made me reconsider what had hitherto been a somewhat carping opinion of Le Corbusier. As a result, I travelled to the Chapel at Ronchamp much more favorably inclined to his sculptural approach. There the setting and the exterior of the building are magnificent. But the Chapel's interior was a disappointment, lacking focus and direction, the space belying the strong tower emphases of the exterior. The towers are minor chapels and all attention is turned on the windows which to me were both idiosyncratic and vacuous. Despite this, I have some sympathy for the sculptural approach as an antidote to the bland curtain wall aesthetic we have had for many years past. The new Harvard Health Center by Sert, Jackson and Gourley, for example, clearly influenced by Le Corbusier, has much to be said in its favor. Its many variations, possible under a sculptural approach, are usually all appropriate to the various conditions under which one sees the building. The new Visual Arts Center by Corbu, also at Cambridge, so awkward looking in plan, didn't strike me as outlandish now that it has reached its full height among the copious trees of its setting.

The turn-about and constant re-examination reinforce my feeling that alertness is always necessary in viewing. The unexpected, even the unknown building, is often the most rewarding. A case in point is the Children's Home in Amsterdam, designed by Aldo van Eyck. The combination of a special structural module, refined details in various materials, spatial flow within and between elements, and unique social grouping among the children and staff, all of the highest order and almost indistinguishable separately, made viewing this building one of the high points of the trip. But even a detail on a city street, such as the retention of the old and ornate railings at the new Chelsea Barracks in London, is often eye-catching.

The old as well as the new are of interest. This is only natural in the cities of Europe, now that change is constant everywhere. A common, as well as difficult, problem is adding an unabashedly modern structure to a pre-20th century urban scene. London abounds in examples, from shops in an otherwise unchanged street facade, through new buildings in a special setting, such as Denys Lasdun's flats at Green Park and Sir Hugh Casson's Royal College of Art near the Albert Hall, to the still controversial change in the new skyline of towers. Of course, the developments of Roehampton and the New Towns are a form of total change. With all these I am con-



vinced that change is inevitable in cities; the only question is the matter of degree. This is not determined by an architect or planner but by the great group of inarticulate thinking people, and there's the rub. Only through some intermediary method such as government controls under urban renewal can these inchoate mutterings find form.

With all the guide book material worth seeing it is easy to forget that Europe is more than just a setting for great works of art. This is another of those common mistakes; make it and you come away knowing more and less of what was seen. More of the detail, less of the mores and habits of the inhabitants. I don't pretend to know much of the latter but I can't forbear to comment on one trait that has its visible physical effects. I refer to the art that the French make of cooking.

The street market is one manifestation of the French interest in food. As a social phenomenon I thought the street market had all but disappeared. In all the brouhaha about shopping centers for the motor age, new methods of merchandising, economic return on investment, etc., the street market and the small merchant are obviously anomalies. But despite this they not only exist but seemingly flourish in France. I put it down to the care with which the French prepare their meals. No effort is too great to make their food more than just a means of absorbing energy and meal-times a great event in the day. French bread, for example, is delicious; once tasted, never forgotten. The characteristic long loaves are *not* made in the States for they are not made to stay fresh more than a few hours. Of course, a preservative could be added, as is done here, "saving" it. To do so, however, would mean a change in the taste and probably for the worst. The French prefer the taste as it is—and more power to them!—even if it means a trip to the Boulangerie two or three times a day. Which is what it most assuredly *does* mean, as the cook at our pension is my witness.

The phenomenon of the street market is, to my mind, a reflection of the French attitude to shopping and eating different from ours. Just look at the window of a charcuterie for another example of the time, effort, and delight they have in food. Such markets and shops are common throughout Europe. In fact, I suspect someone could write a sociological treatise

showing how markets exhibit different national characteristics. Some of the Parisian markets are quite primitive, dirty, probably insanitary and inefficient, but they are all so full of life that viewing them almost hurts. To call them "picturesque" gives a false impression; the word gives them a surface gloss they don't possess. No matter where located the markets have a special character and the buildings around them fade into the background of one's mind. Good, bad, or indifferent they are part of a city scene and tell us something of the people.

I have spent time describing markets not only because they affected me and made me reconsider certain ideas, but also because I feel their continued existence points up some useful reminders. The differing customs we encounter are expressed in physical settings. To us, as visitors, both custom and setting are alien. Obviously we need fuller understanding of the customs to understand their outer manifestation, old and new. More important, however, is that the existence of strange customs should make us re-examine our own traits and buildings both to see whether the latter are a true expression of the former and whether one or the other are adequate for our goals. If we are dissatisfied with contemporary building in any of its aspects, either social custom or building is at fault, and it is worth making sure which needs the more immediate reform.

Time is distorted while travelling, and space contracts. In any given place only the sense of immediacy remains. What happened in the morning, we would reflect over our evening wine, happened eons ago. But even so, our thoughts were modified, and modified in ways still unclear. For there is no real conclusion to a trip with variegated stimuli. Just as the beginning of a voyage originates in a remote past long before one sets foot on a plane, so the ending winds out in the ceaseless questioning and questing. And since there is no real ending to my trip, so there can be no conclusion to these notes. I could write of more impressions and more things seen, but I prefer stopping after the discussion of some special customs. I should like to leave with the emphasis on what I believe is a primary fact: that as buildings and cities have life then, in the words of Thoreau, "... it is the life of the inhabitants whose shells they are."



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