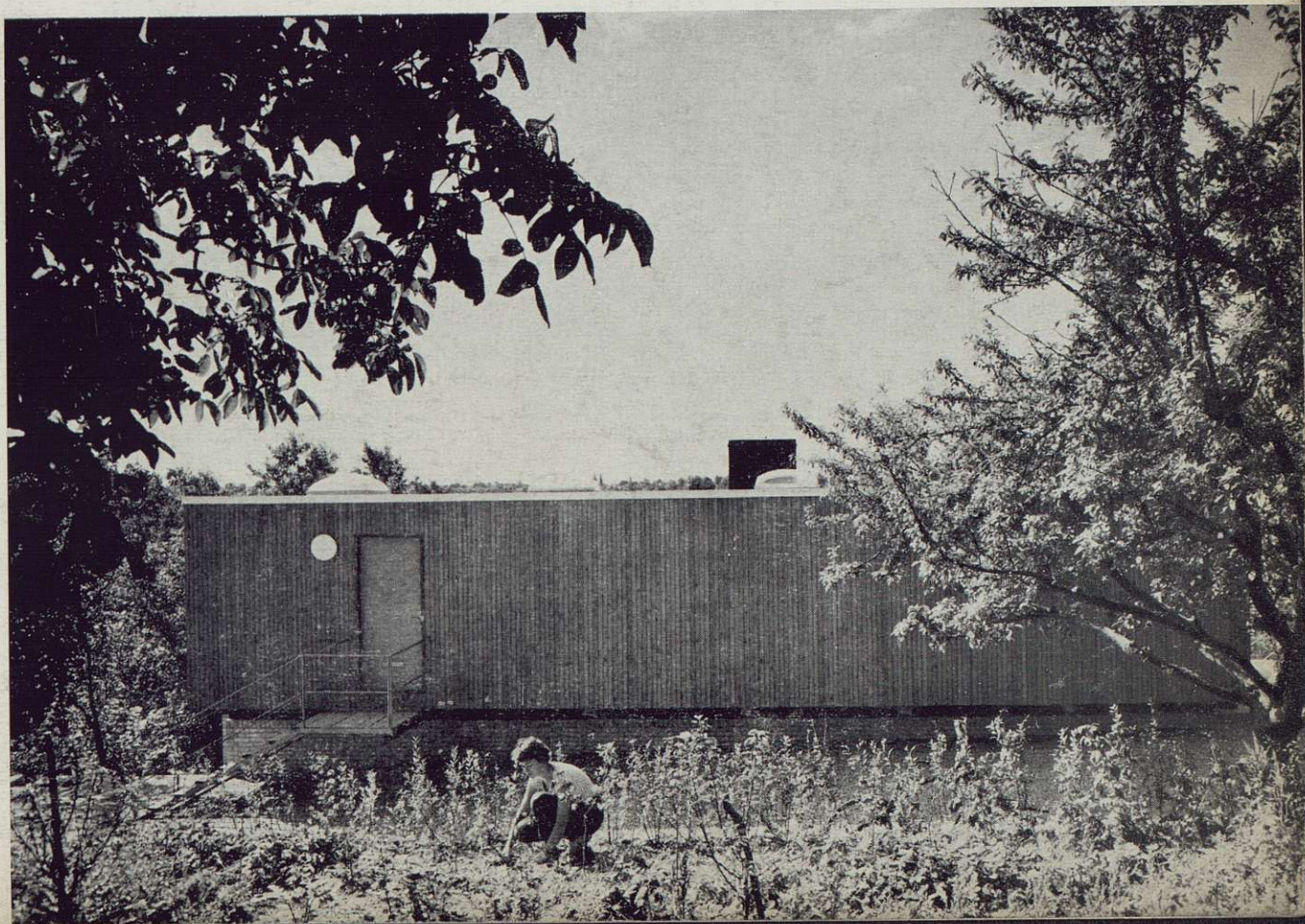
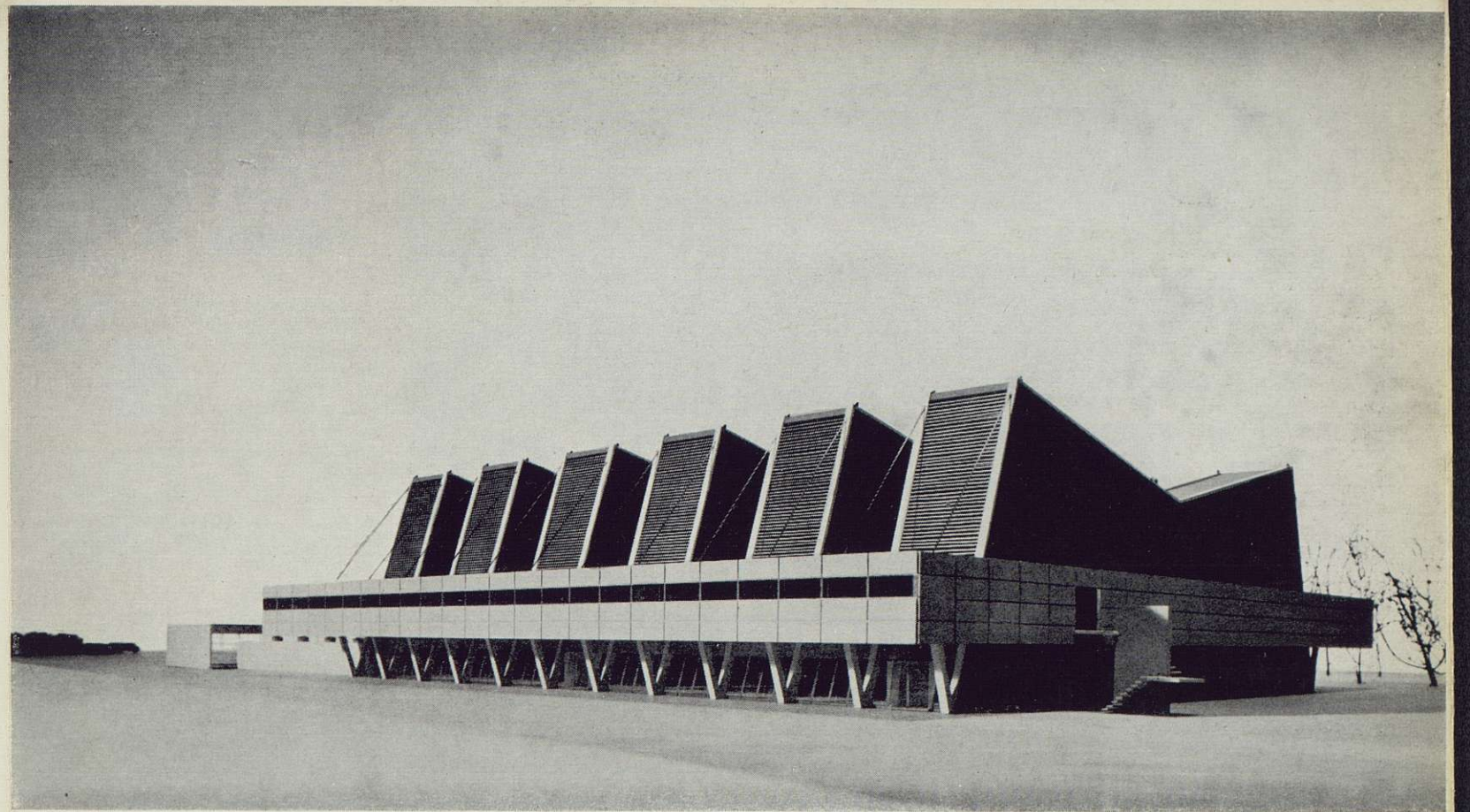


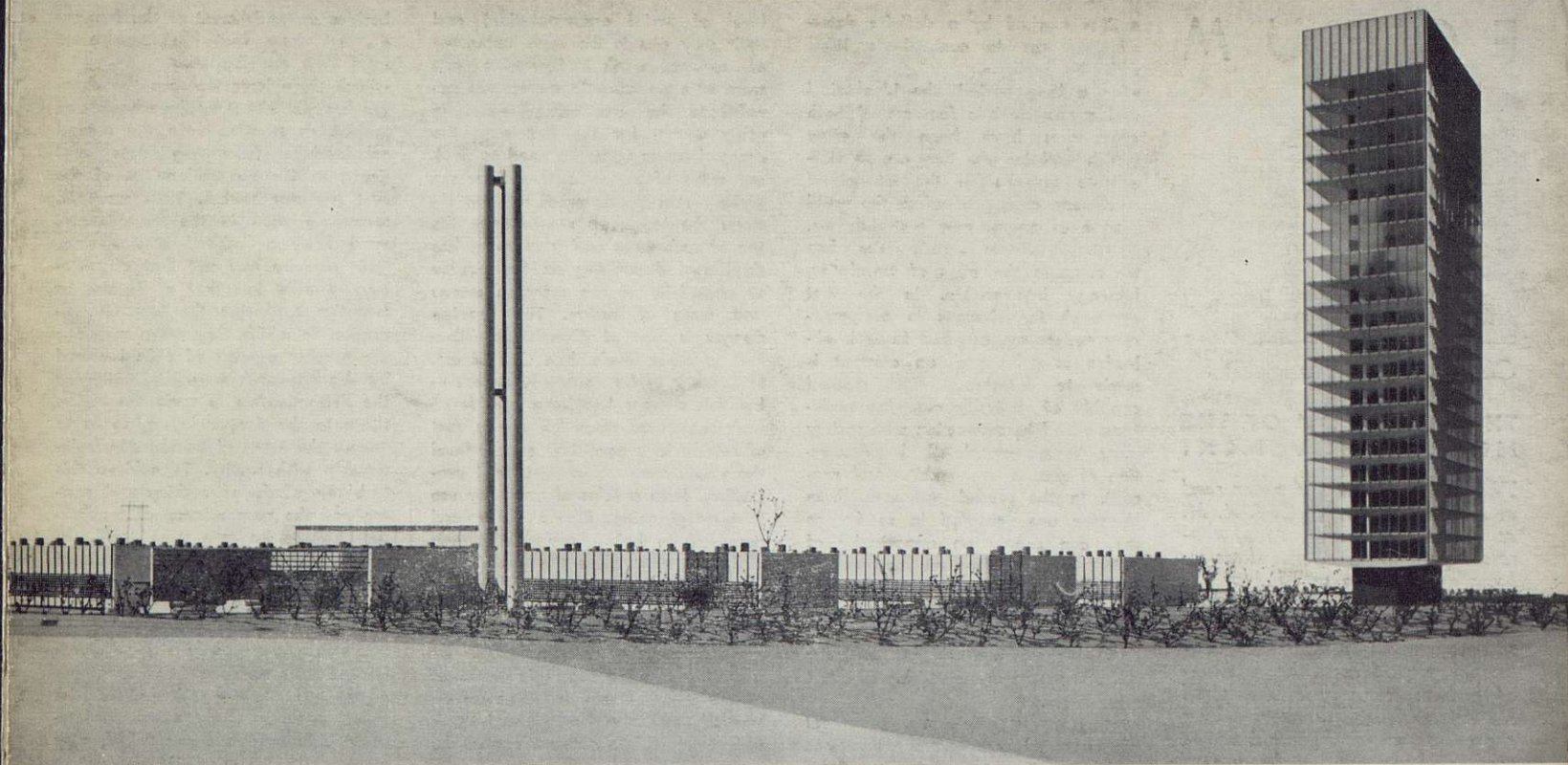
le carré bleu

NUMBER 2. 1960









Pages 2—6 inclusive show the work of Professor Arne Jacobsen, Architect (called A.J. below).

Certain famous architects pretend to draw with their hearts —; A.J. has no such pretensions.

In contrast to the former A. J. intends to be neither good nor bad. Rather: clear.

A.J. was once somewhat formbound (yes, formalistic: service station, Skovshoved Havn, 1936) A.J. is perfect now.

A.J. during his expatriation in Sweden was architect to a large cooperative housing concern. The head of the concern: »but it didn't work».

A.J. has recently refused a large commission It was to be a town centre for a former purveyor of poison gas to Auschwitz concentration camp

But it does seem as if he still draws with his heart . .

A.J. is perfect.

*George Varhelyi.
Stockholm, Mai, 1960.*

From left to right: S.A.S. building Copenhagen, Sports hall in Landskrona (Sweden). House in Sjaelland. The Novo factory, Copenhagen. On the cover: house in Sorgenfrij. Photo Struwing. Printed by Simelius Helsinki 1960.

FORUM



Giancarlo de Carlo

THE SITUATION OF THE MODERN MOVEMENT

These extracts from a paper read at the last meeting of C. I. A. M. at OTTERLO (Sept. 1959) represent an analysis of actual trends by a well known member of the younger generation of architects in Italy. The claim for a greater sincerity when faced with contemporary problems, the rejection of fashion (even if it is inspired by acknowledged authority) are the points, which in our opinion, give this contribution its proper place in the current debate.

»I believe that from the very start we can trace in the modern movement two main approaches that, though contradictory in content, are so closely coexistent that they may be found even within the various trends and even in the leaders of these trends. The first might be described as a radical historical objectivity approach, based on the acknowledgment of the new economic and social reality of today world and on the assumption that architecture must undergo a process of renewal — not only of matters but also of essence — so that it may participate »from within» and as a progressive force to the changes required by the new reality. The second approach, though proceeding from an equally radical urge, immediately assumes a subjective and unhistorical position by refusing to directly participate to reality and by proposing absolute alter-

»The same may be done for the opposite approach, where the relationship connects l'Art Nouveau, the Viennese Secession, all the European avant-garde trends of the twenties: futurism, expressionism, neo-plasticism etc. and the purism of Le Corbusier.»

»Such a classification is no doubt schematic and subject to rigorous criticism, but within its limits it may already help to clear up the question which concerns us. The main difference arising from this comparison is that while all the trends mentioned in the first relationship introduce into architecture the need for a structure renewal which basically differentiates it from pre modern architectural conceptions and from figurative arts, the movements belonging in the second relationship are mainly concerned in getting rid of the super-structures (symbolic attributes and style mixtures) which debased architecture to the

natives marked by a definite determination not to contaminate itself with this reality.»

»For a long period, the ideological and propagandistic features of both approaches have been the same (which explains why they are so difficult to distinguish): the advent of machinery, mass production, the rapid growth of towns, new materials etc. But the difference is quite clear when we compare the ways of translating ideology into action. In the first approach the changes in contemporary society are assumed in their objective integrity and an attempt is made to consciously find method capable of radically renewing architecture and its connection with society after having completed the destruction of pre-modern architectural concept. In the second approach these changes are accepted in so far as they can supply an opportunity of lyrical renewal to an architecture whose substance does not change at all: for the rest they are merely alienated, resorting to a position of autonomy which does not basically differ from the romantic idea of »l'art pour l'art».

»In order to outline a development course of the attempt to objectivate architecture we may set up a relationship connecting the Arts and Crafts, the Chicago School (F. L. Wright and Sullivan), the Middle-Europe proto-rationalism (Berlage, Behrens), Adolf Loos and German rationalism of the first post-war period.»

»The same may be done for the opposite approach, where the relationship connects l'Art Nouveau, the Viennese Secession, all the European avant-garde trends of the twenties: futurism, expressionism, neo-plasticism etc. and the purism of Le Corbusier.»

»Such a classification is no doubt schematic and subject to rigorous criticism, but within its limits it may already help to clear up the question which concerns us. The main difference arising from this comparison is that while all the trends mentioned in the first relationship introduce into architecture the need for a structure renewal which basically differentiates it from pre modern architectural conceptions and from figurative arts, the movements belonging in the second relationship are mainly concerned in getting rid of the super-structures (symbolic attributes and style mixtures) which debased architecture to the

level of social ornamentation) and their only aim is the same autonomy of expression that figurative arts were also pursuing in movements parallel to the architectural ones. In other words, for the first ones the renewal arises from the need to work out ways of action apt to face the entirely new problems of modern society: the language results from the use of such ways and is more or less significant depending on the degree of objectivity of the research means and ways of action. The ensuing danger is that of diverting architecture to other levels than that of art, to cause it to be no longer an art — but this danger has been considered from the outset since the aim is that of raising to a consistent quality level the whole range of architectural production, from articles of everyday use to town planning. Results are valued according to their power to fulfil their civil task; only when the intensity of the civil contribution reaches something more than objective accuracy and becomes a synthetic representation of an experience of reality, will it be possible to judge again in terms of artistic value, based however on an idea of architectural art which is quite different from the outworn one of the past.»

»For the second ones on the contrary, the expressive quality of the language proceeds purposely from an assumed subjective insight of each situation, and has already in itself all solving powers. Results are valued according to their expressive power, and since expression must refer to an aesthetic standard set in advance without any objective links with reality, the only touchstone is then »taste» with all its dangers and restriction. Taste, in fact, implies renouncing and cheking all impulses that do not agree with the stylization principle and therefore instead of promoting a deeper understanding of the matter to which it is applied, it prevents going beyond its more obvious appearances and very often its subordinate and outward components.»

»The prevailing of taste marks the schools and individuals mentioned in the second relationship (from l'Art Nouveau to Purism in architecture) and it was exactly this hindrance that prevented them from going beyond the limit of the highest formal subtlety. They did not examine in its dialectic reality the substance of the problems they had to face and so,

besides an enrichment of the language, no deep rooted change came from their contribution.»

»Much more important are the changes brought about by the schools and individuals mentioned in the second relationship: from the Arts and Crafts to German rationalism of the first post-war period. Their work is, sometimes even in the worst sense, marked by a lack of »taste» since their purpose was not that of restoring a style but that of finding a tentative truth for the historical situation in which they were working; the greater amount of risks involved by this approach were discounted by the determination to carry the action down to the deeper layers, so as to restore the terms of an objective relationship with reality. To achieve this task the whole of architectural matter and the very essence of architecture had to be reexamined and discussed, disengaged from the myths of an assumed aesthetic authenticity by verifying their social authenticity.»

»Town planning also takes its proper place in contemporary civilization. It is no longer an exceptional extension of an architectural episode, but the place in which all episodes are integrated. In today's towns, which may come into being overnight and out of nothing, which in any case grow at a dizzy speed, once more the problem is laid in terms of space organisation: the elements which determine it again proceed from the life which goes on within it, but in this case the life involved is that of a community and, beyond this, of the whole human society.»

»In this way, the conscious creation of an objective approach to a knowledge of reality finds its conclusion — when it comes to choosing — in the planning conception, where the whole range of architectural production, from the article of everyday use to town planning reaches its more appropriate and fruitful destination.»

about the Bauhaus

»I said before that the two approaches I tried to outline are so closely intertwined — in the modern architectural movement — that they may often be found side by side in the same trend or in a same individual, as for instance in the Bauhaus school or in Le Corbusier's manifold ideological and creative work. And I mention only two cases I think useful to discuss in this connection, but I could also

mention Van de Velde and even Morris — not Berlage nor Loos or Gropius and absolutely not F. L. Wright, since their position has always been consistent and unwavering.»

»The inconsistency we may find in the Bauhaus lies in the fact that at the start it believed in the need of an objective approach — and pursued it with a clearness and consistence till then unknown to German rationalism — and at a certain point of its development it receded to a position of style restoration.»

»Its original ideological line, as stated by Gropius and his first team, came directly from Sachlichkeit and indirectly from the fiery expressionist atmosphere of the German post-war period. From the latter it had acquired the power to look penetratingly and deeply into things and also the urge to get rid of all rhetorical stratifications accumulated by a bad use of art; from Sachlichkeit it had inherited a quality of objectivity and concreteness, the need for an accurate correspondence between things and their function, between use and form. But in addition to this, it possessed a new social consciousness and the determination to establish deep rooted relations with the cultural, social, economic and political environment. Its purpose was that of favouring — through direct action and through the indirect influence it would exert on the outside (and which it actually exerted since its most important supporters were the most enlightened men in Weimar Republic) the development of a democratic society. In fact, for a short time the Bauhaus was a democratic school and not so much because its organization allowed the establishment of relationships based on freedom and criticism, but rather because by working out a new conception of creative work released from naturalistic myths and stylistic bonds of aesthetic genuineness it accepted the bond of a social engagement.»

»Due to the regression of German society — of course — but also due to the intervention of De Stijl, the situation deeply changed and turned towards contradictory issues. In fact, the arrival of the De Stijl section in 1922 meant the coming in the Bauhaus of its utter opposite.»

»At that time, Neoplasticism represented the most advanced and unpromising point of a movement which

aimed at destroying the last remaining links between creative image and reality. By accepting its influence and cooperation, the Bauhaus introduced a disintegrating element into its realistic structure.»

about the work of Le Corbusier

»Le Corbusier's ideological and creative work represents, at the highest level yet reached, the ambiguity of reconciling the pursuit of an objective approach and the determination to restore the principle of style. His origins may be found everywhere: in Fourier and in Owen, in the architects of the French Revolution (Ledoux, Du Fourny) and in the engineers of the 19th century, in l'Art Nouveau and in the Werkbund, in Adolf Loos and in Baron Horta, in futurism and in the first German rationalism; but his most direct source are the movements which around the beginning of this century were working a radical change in figurative arts, reasserting their expressive autonomy.»

»Le Corbusier's main purpose has been from the outset that of bringing into architecture the same impulse that stirred those movements, translating into architectural terms the purifying and liberating processes which were going on in painting.»

»A sober and closer examination of these statements however already discloses something that is corroborated by his later theoretical statements and, still better, by his more mature works: namely that the objective principle, assumed as the ideological support of the action, is reduced to a mere emotional stimulus as soon as it has fulfilled the purpose to discern the typical contemporary features, in other words as soon as it has discovered the questions that must be considered in order to avoid deviating into academicism the pursuit of an aesthetic authenticity.»

»The whole problem of the renewal of architecture is reduced to a radical change of the language, which originates from the emotional urge of general observations (mechanization, mass production, the large city) but takes form in a pure state, shaking off even the original contaminations of purpose and use.»

»Once started on this track, Le Corbusier followed it right to its last issues with unwavering impetus and consistency. He patiently built his language — from its grammar elements to

its syntax rules — and with driving passion proposed its poetic constructions through a continuous output of plans and works which, involving every architectural subject, from the article of everyday use to the city, were to form the nodal points of a new universal style. But the language, manufactured in a deliberate and intellectual way and with a structure based on an authoritarian pretence purposely shunning the painful play of contradictions, turns into a stiff scheme rejecting any chance to deal with reality. It must inevitably be rooted in the most abstract reasons — geometry — and in order to acquire a semblance of life must feed on the most exciting estrangements — lyricism. For this reason Le Corbusier cannot understand a space which is neither metaphysical nor grandiose or phantascientific but is instead straightly related to the life that goes on within it, to the human scale.»

»Le Corbusier, endowed with a boundless formal shrewdness and with an unrelenting technical earnestness, always managed to avoid the bottomless pit of academicism which at each step threatened to reopen under the smooth surface of his conception. He was even able to resist the temptation to become a »classico» and to escape from the wear and tear of ideological controversy, basking in popular success and in the boundless admiration of his followers. In every risky situation a subtle humor enabled him to preserve his anticonformist strenght even at the cost of contradicting his own dogmatic statements. For this reason, in spite of everything, his contribution to the modern movement in architecture retains a positive meaning.»

»One cannot avoid however to hold him responsible for having offered an easy issue to the trend which through a long and modest work had tried to start the way towards a more radical change in architecture; for making this trend deviate towards a solution which does not really solve anything since it is bound to degenerate into a confusion of principles, ends and means. Replacing the pursuit of an objective method with a poetic scheme which was supposed to transcend — as if by magic — the subject of every possible kind of research, enervated the modern movement reducing it to adopt a language which, once estranged from the creative power of its beginner could not resist

the pressure of Power and of the market organisation and ended up by becoming the formalistic expression of contemporary conformism.»

conclusions

»I tried to show how within the architectural modern movement — as it happens in every movement undertaking a revolutionary task — two opposite trends have co-existed throughout its development: one pursuing a renewal of structures and prepared to upset its very basis of life in order to reach it; the other pursuing a renewal of the outward appearance, not going beyond the boundaries which may endanger the autonomy of its own position. Though both of them revolt against the naturalistic idiom and the mystifications it brings about and upon which it is based, they disagree as to the way to follow to destroy it. I also said that I believe that the more radical of these two trends, consciously trying to find an objective method, disengaged architecture from the need to follow aesthetic aims established beforehand, and entrusted it with the task of synthetically expressing the experience of reality thus turning it into an efficient mean of civil progress; while the other trend, disregarding the chance of an objective relationship with social life, maintained unaltered the substance of pre-modern architectural conceptions. Anxious to preserve to the language the prerogative of being by itself able to solve matters, it restored the standard value of »taste» accepting the limitations and renouncements it involves.»

»I admit that the modern architectural movement (I am here using a typical CIAM simile) is like a tree with a trunk, its branches, its leaves and its parasites. I also admit that — once the parasites removed — it is the tree that counts, in its harmonious whole. I certainly do not deny that Horta or Gaudi, Rietveld or Le Corbusier, brought through their work a basic contribution to modern architecture since — where principles are concerned — I believe in the formative value of contradictions and — where means are concerned — I believe in the ultimate significance of language. But I also believe that in the present situation, when formalism is entrenched even in the strongest fortresses, it is most important — and not only in this meeting — to discern

see p. 10

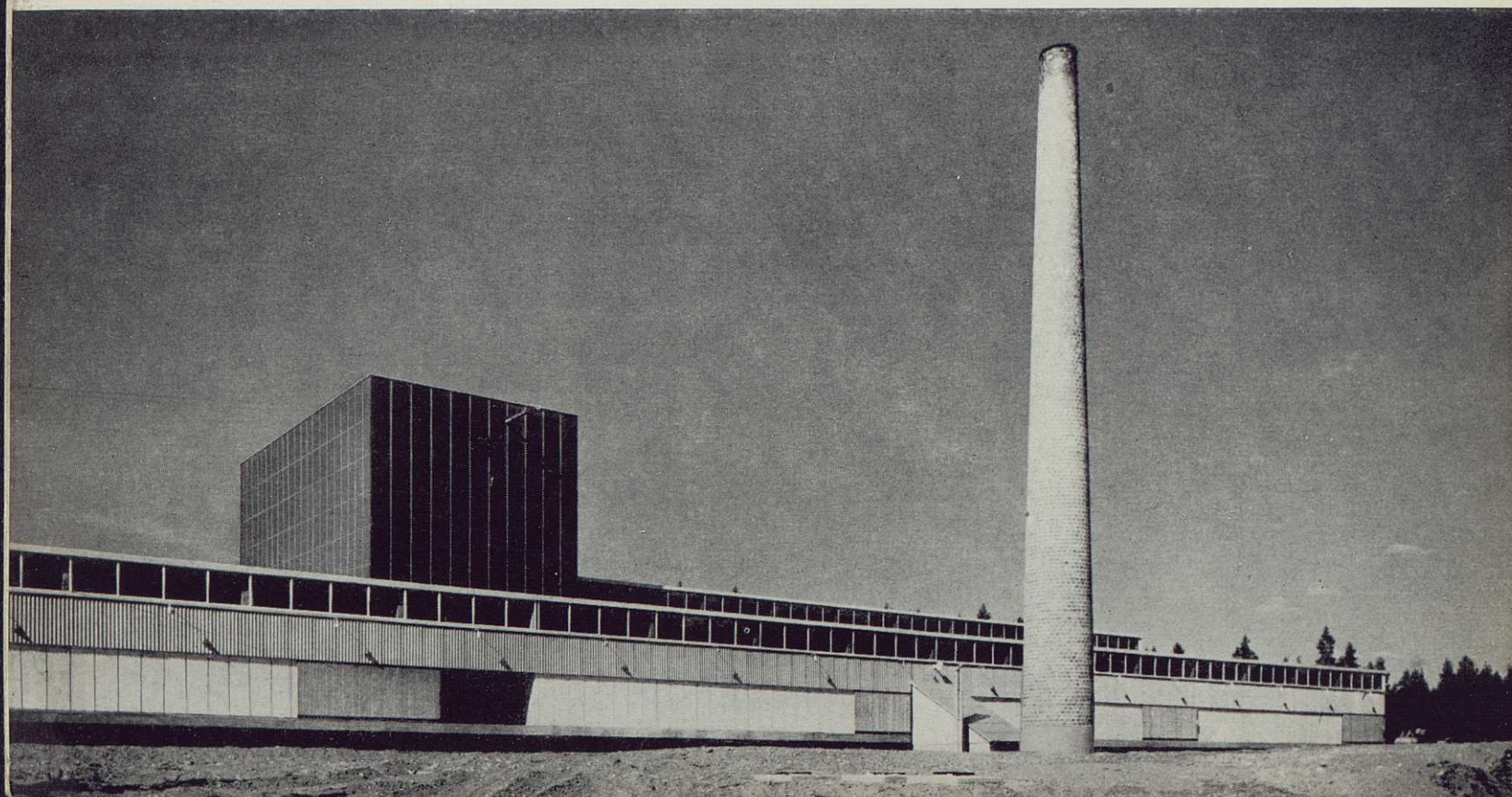
Les manuscrits en français, en anglais, ou en allemand, destinés à nos rubriques 'FORUM' ou 'LETTRES' sont publiés dans la langue originale.



Pargas Kalkbergs Aktiebolag

Minerit cladding made from Asbestos cement is becoming popular. The plates are easy to handle and can be rapidly assembled. Minerit plates resist all climatic conditions. Minerit plates are delivered in 28 different colour tones.

Detail of Suomen Minerali's new factory at Muijala. Architect Kurt Simberg



Newspaper-stand of The Finnish Railways Bookshops in Tapiola Garden-city, Helsinki. Architect Aarne Ervi.

Our guests from abroad may obtain, in place of greetings from home, all publications from their own countries at the different newspaper stands which the Finnish Railways Bookshops have established all over Finland. They may find there equally literary and artistic publications and souvenirs from the country.

THE FINNISH RAILWAYS BOOKSHOPS

R A U T A T I E K I R J A K A U P P A O Y

what hinders from what may help to solve the problems which architecture has to face today.

»To resume the tree simile, I am convinced that it is now necessary to ascertain the difference existing between leaves and branches and between branches and trunk, and to discover the abnormal branches which now pretend to be the trunk after having sucked the life out of it by their growth.»

The problems we have to cope with today range from the rebuilding of underdeveloped areas to industrial design; they are both huge and manifold and cannot therefore be met with flashes of subjective insight. Modern architecture cannot possibly face them unless it resolves to choose definitely between the clamor of an aimless avant-garde position and the self-effacement of a research carried out along clearly defined lines.

— Milano — September 1959

REACTIONS

A press comment

The editorialist of the ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW comments our number 4/1959 in following manner: »Future pursuers of the Twentieth Century Zeitgeist will have plenty of trouble with the word square. For reasons in which coincidence exceeds belief, the word now means unprogressive both in mental equipment and (quite independently) in the plastic arts as well. Thus the Finnish periodical Le Carré Bleu with its french

title and its devotion to a particular body of aesthetic doctrine (pure form, integration of the arts) is as square in every sense of the word as its name would suggest, except that the current issue (4,1959) carries a report by John Voelcker on the recent Congress at Otterlo at which the square and non square factions collided and shows other evidences of a more liberated attitude as befits a magazine that enjoys support (apparently out of loyalty to the 'cause') from men like Ralph Erskine.»

LE CARRE BLEU

International paper on architecture. Vyökatu 4 b 22 Helsinki Tel 14 395.

Quarterly. Appearing in french and english. Subscription rate for a year in finnish marks 800.— in US dollars: 2.60.—. £ 1.—

Editorial committee: Aulis Blomstedt, Eero Eerikäinen, Keijo Petäjä, Reimo

Pietilä, Simo Sivenius, André Schimmerling, Kyösti Älander. Directing (1959): Eero Eerikäinen. Editor: Tyne Schimmerling. Foreign members: Roger Aujame, Elie Azagury, Lennart Bergström, Giancarlo de Carlo, George Cluzellas, Ralph Erskine, Sverre Fehn, Arne Jacobsen, Sven Ivar Lind, Åke E. Lindquist, Sven Backström, Leif Reinius, Jörn Utzon, Georg Varhelyi. Number 1. 1960.

Letter to the editor

»Je tiens à vous dire combien vos feuilles sont intéressantes et passionnantes les pages d'Aulis Blomstedt qui rendent hommage à Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

»Son texte traitant des rapports de l'Architecture et de la nature est absolument remarquable et devrait servir d'introduction à toute étude d'architecture.»

Je souhaite bel avenir à votre »Carré Bleu» et vous prie de croire cher Confrère, à mes cordiaux sentiments» Paris, le 30 Mai 1960

Raymond Lopez
Architecte en Chef des Bâtiments Civils et Palais Nationaux.

General distributors

Allemagne: W. E. Saabach G.M.B.H. Koeln 1. Schliessfach 1519.

Angleterre: Alec Tiranti Ltd. 72 Charlotte Str. London W.1.

Danemark: Arnold Busck, Købmagergade 49 København.

Etats Unis: Wittenborn and Company, 1018 Madison Avenue, New-York 21 N.Y.

France: Vincent, Fréal et Cie, 4 Rue des Beaux-Arts Paris 6-ème.

Suède: Librairie Française, Box 5046 Stockholm. 5.