DINING TABLE AND CHAIRS

The table is simply a flush door supported on bent steel legs. Chairs designed to fit comfortably the shape of the body. Designed by Vernon Brown, Auckland.

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THE FUTURE OF FURNITURE

Renaissance or Relapse?

That we have in New Zealand to-day a not very wide choice of atrocious furniture is only partly the fault of a somewhat slow-moving industry.

Our furniture makers say, with some show of justice, that they know what the public want and what they make is just that. Furniture is governed, like women's dress, not by function, good taste, or even common sense, but by fashion.

Recently it was the fashion to show antiques if you had them, or to buy imitations if, as was more likely, your family had left you no heirlooms to air. Now, while nearly all furniture that is over a century old has the beauty of honest materials handled with affection, the approximation to their appearance that can be obtained by modern machine production will deceive nobody.

But this phase is passing and there is a swing to the disastrous "moderne." Here snobbery raises its ugly head in a new form. Not antiquity but volume seems to be the measure of quality. The customer wants to show he can afford a "heavy" piece? Very well, he shall have one. He likes to be abreast of the times? Very well, he shall have strips of chromium and modernistic flashes all over the place.

The only way to return to health and sanity is through a renaissance. In this re-birth, the parents will be function and means (material plus method) but the child will grow in its own strength and will achieve its own grace.

Is it too optimistic to hope that two world wars and a depression have chastened our self-assertion and blown away some of our sentimentality? We feel that the younger people now making homes would, in fact, buy lighter, simpler, more honest furniture if it were to be had.

In New Zealand, furniture is a factory product and we need not hanker after a lost handicraft which is doomed even in the old countries. But there is no reason why our industrially made furniture should not have true New Zealand character. We have a great variety of timber with natural warmth and interesting grain, so long as this is not blotted out by dark stains and heavy lacquers. Eventually also, we shall wake up and use for upholstery the abundance of deer, cattle, and sheep skins that must otherwise go to waste.

One thing is quite certain: no matter how methods and materials may change, beauty can be achieved in anything made by man for a reasonable purpose. But the beauty of furniture made in our time will be relevant to machine production, and suitable for informal living, confined spaces, and busy lives.

All beauty is at first surprising, and it is at this element of surprise that the furniture salesman boggles. We must try and help our generation to overcome its reluctance to think clearly about design; so that at least the younger folk will accept good contemporary furniture, not because it is "the thing," but because it is good.

H. W.
Top Left: **COMBINATION FURNITURE**
Space-saving when shut. Additional shelving or cupboards of equal size can be added. Great flexibility for varying room sizes and shapes. Turned wooden knobs of inverted mushroom shape pleasant to touch, provide a genuine unobtrusive ornament. Mass-produced chair with foam rubber cushion fits in well with simplicity of design.

Top Right: **CHEST OF DRAWERS**
Simple, straightforward work, winning by good proportion and fine detail. Fingergrips gouged out of lower edge of drawer fronts are invisible but convenient.
Honey-colour finisher Southland Beech.
Designer: E. A. Plishke, for John Cox, Wellington.

Lower Left: **COUCH BED**
Gay Cottage weave cover. Commercial wire-mattress sunk into Rimu frame. Three upholstered top mattresses have coil springs built in. Designed and built by T. J. Haiselden.

Lower Right: **EASY CHAIR**
Ingenious frame from cut-out boards. Chair-back of webbing is elastic without being bulky. Leather cushion with coil-springs. Commercial product.

Right: **DINING CHAIR**
Cover material of hides and fur, plentiful in New Zealand, but awaiting greater exploitation for this purpose.
Designed and built by Bruce Rotherham, Auckland.
FIRST GLIMPSE OF A STIRRING PROJECT

Proposals for the Auckland Civic Centre and adjoining Development

City Engineer: A. J. Dickson.

This scheme has great merit if for no other reason than that it gives a first glimpse of a proposal for the actual rebuilding of an entire city quarter, using the principles of modern town planning and the opportunities of good architectural design.

Here are the Architect's comments:

The Problem

To provide in Auckland a combined Administrative Centre housing combined local and government authorities.
To provide a sheltered square for outdoor public meetings and for assembly halls.
To provide parking for the up-town area.
An east to west route across the City central to link with the proposed harbour bridge, and an alternative main outlet from the main business area is to be planned for.
In general the scheme must assist development of the business area towards Hobson Street and give it breadth by pulling the City out of the Queen Street gully.

The Need

The present accommodation of the City Council is grossly inadequate, and has no provisions for expansion. Government offices are scattered far and wide, a distressing state of affairs for those having to deal with the various departments.

(1) City Administration Building.
(2) Reception Hall, capacity 3000 seated or 1000 couples.
(3) City Hall—capacity 4000 on sloping floor and galleries—full stage accommodation and equipment.
(4) City Theatre—capacity 1500 and as (3).
(5), (6), (7) Government Offices.
(8) Future Public Library on Civic Theatre site.
(9) St. Matthew's Church.
(10) T. & G. Building.
(12) Open square, capacity 40,000, parking and servicing under for 600 cars.
(13) Existing State Flats.
(14) Queen Street.
(15) Wellesley Street.
(16) Greys Avenue.
(17) Vincent Street.
(18) Albert Street.
(19) Cook Street.
(20) Proposed Law Courts and Administration.
(21) Proposed Police Station and Flats.
(22) Proposed Ellen Melville and Pioneer Women's Hall.

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ment Buildings along Wellesley Street and the Albert-Vincent Street Division. The office buildings run approximately north and south to obtain maximum sunlight, and are designed as shells inside which partitions can be arranged as needed, giving great flexibility in office lay-out.

The Reception Hall has a flat floor for dancing, and will hold 1000 couples at a ball and 3000 seated at a reception. The City Hall has a complete stage, and will seat 4000 on sloping floors and galleries. There is also a City Theatre to seat 1500.

The Square is partly surrounded by buildings which protect it from street noises and wind. Forty thousand people can assemble here and disperse through the colonnades under the future library or down to the underground parking and through subways to the proposed underground railway.

The underground parking area for 500 vehicles has access from Queen Street and Wellesley Street and from the rear of the Reception Hall.

The future Library is lifted to first-floor level on columns to open up a view from Queen Street into the Square and to provide shelter for persons using the Square and buildings.

All buildings are designed in accordance with the latest research on design and structure. The asymmetrical lay-out has not been chosen arbitrarily, but is the logical outcome of complex internal planning problems and the street lay-out. The arrangement of the blocks of buildings is not forced into a preconceived pattern.

General traffic does not pass through the Square. The internal roads serve the Centre itself, and, while the approaches are broad, general traffic would gain nothing from entering the precinct.

The whole scheme should provide an efficient and dignified seat of Public Administration befitting a city of Auckland's importance.

The project is envisaged as forming an integral part of the future City plan, and takes into account future development. It is an overall plan to be built in stages, not involving extensive and immediate demolition.

The site lay-out will be discussed in the next issue.

EXTERNAL RENDERING OR PLASTERING

J. L. Mandeno

External cement-rendering of a masonry wall is commonly adopted for the exclusion of moisture from the building. It has developed from the old lime plaster which deteriorated rapidly when exposed to rain or frost. Lime plasters were therefore protected by a coat of paint or a simple wash such as lime-tawny. Much of this painted plasterwork remains in the work of Nash in London, but still requires regular painting for its maintenance.

A later development was the use of hydraulic limes, and during the latter part of the last century the use of Portland cement in renderings was introduced. This brought with it the cracking and crazing of rendering so well known today.

In New Zealand, we seem to have followed the English tradition of using a 1:3 cement:sand mix, to which about 15 per cent of lime is added to improve workability. Cracking and moisture penetration of these finishes either on solid masonry or "Wood-frame and Stucco" buildings is common and well known.

As a result of numerous inquiries about rendering failures, the Building Research Station in England carried out an extensive programme of work. Several Continental countries were visited to study their methods, as cracked and crazed renderings are uncommon there.

Though mixes vary widely on the Continent, cement is seldom used as the sole binding material. It is usual to include a high proportion of lime.

It was found at the Building Research Station near London that a 1:2:9 cement:lime:sand mix was very satisfactory, if it was properly applied. However, under the more severe conditions of Scotland, these weak absorbent renderings failed. It was found finally that a 1:1:6 mix was generally satisfactory, when a good quality fine lime was used. In all the mixes tried, the binder:sand ratio was about 1:3. It was the cement:lime ratio that was altered.

The general method of application of renderings involves "laying on" and then finishing with a wood float. On the Continent, the material is thrown on at a fairly wet consistency, and finished in a variety of ways, generally in the nature of a scraping technique, but never by trowelling. The cement is allowed to take its initial set generally after four to six hours, depending on the weather. It is then scraped with a steel straight-edge, hack-saw blade or other tool to give the required texture.

The reasons for the success of this technique will be discussed in the next issue.

DESIGN IN THE THEATRE

The next number of Design Review will feature design in the theatre and design of the theatre building. It will show original work being done in New Zealand today and how we are developing our own technique within our meagre resources. Do not miss Design Review. Order your subscription now.
ART and THE SCHOOL

Do you, as an adult, know how to appreciate children’s art?

Do you know why Bill loves to draw himself, his mother, or his sister, and why the people he draws are often mostly face? Why he draws himself far bigger than the door of the house? Have you ever seen a child draw his dog, then paint the kennel over the top and tell you that the dog is inside the kennel?

Children’s art work must be seen through their own eyes and respected. Bill draws a large face because to him the face is the most important thing about the person. He is bigger than the door because he is far more important than the door.

It is well known how much children of all ages love to draw and paint and the importance of this mode of expression can be fully realized only when we see children developing their individuality through expressing fearlessly their experiences in their own way. A child’s work is obviously not skillfully expressed. It is not desirable that it should be as the charm of the work is in its unsophisticated frankness. The purpose of this approach is to develop aesthetic sensitivity in all children and not to teach skills to the gifted few. The product does not matter, but what takes place in the mind of the child while producing is important.

Herbert Read has said—

“It is not in the nature of the child to be ‘original,’ but only to express directly its own individuality, the individuality of a seeing and feeling being, but not the originality of a thinking and inventing being. It is an important distinction, and we know now that the faults of the old methods of teaching art were due to this false bias. The child was called upon to use faculties of observation and analysis quite foreign to the pre-adolescent stage of mental development.”

In New Zealand schools we have begun comparatively late in giving art the important place it rightly holds in modern education, but children in the majority of primary schools are now given every opportunity to discover and develop their own potentialities.
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of the subjects are: "Me on a Horse," "Riding on a Lorry," "Helping Mother on Washing Day," "Friday Night Shopping," all of which show an individual expression of what the child knows and feels about his environment.

This is the first exhibition of its kind in New Zealand and in the future it will be most interesting to see an exhibition of work done by these same children when they have developed to the post-primary level.

V. D. B.

NOTES

Te Aro Exhibition

The Architectural Centre's exhibition "Te Aro Re-planned" completed its Auckland showing in the Art Gallery in mid-August. Attendance was below Wellington's total despite the fact that Auckland's redevelopment problem is just as serious as the Capital's. The dungeon-like character of the Gallery room was not a fitting setting for the bright drawings and models, even if it was for the paintings which it replaced.

More exhibitions are being planned for next year, but of a different kind.

Demonstration House

The next Summer School of the Architectural Centre, which now looks like becoming an annual affair, is to be the building by the students of a demonstration house. A site near the Karori tram terminus is already purchased. Details will follow in the next issue.

Students in Eruption

A general meeting of students of the School of Architecture in Auckland was held recently to discuss reasons for long-felt discontent. A vote of no-confidence in the teaching methods of the School and in its curriculum was passed unanimously. The reasons for student grievances have not been eradicated, but as a result of a combined staff-student meeting there is promise of reform. But it is doubtful whether much progress can be made even with a better curriculum without a reformed policy and the staff to carry it out.

Appointment

Mr. Gordon Wilson has been appointed Assistant Government Architect.

The Wakefield Collection

(Continued from page 11)

of the gems are only a matter of a few square inches in area.

I can honestly say that I have looked forward for months to seeing this exhibition and I have not been disappointed. I have been in turn excited, exhilarated, and satisfied. Yes, and surprised, too, for some of the actual prints are much better than I anticipated, having seen some of them reproduced in various books and magazines over a period of years.

Three cheers for Lord Wakefield and the British Council.

E. Mervyn Taylor.
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REPAIRS . . . . MAINTENANCE
Auckland Gains a Well-behaved Building

Architects: Vernon Brown and Simpson.
Builders: R. Savory Ltd.
Owners: The Auckland Glass Co., Hobson St.

In our cities, the street rather than the individual building is the architectural unit. With city buildings packed tightly against one another, each building becomes merely an incident in the street façade.

And so far as most buildings are concerned, they turn only one face to the outside world. To the man in the street, city architecture is two-dimensional.

In designing a city building on a section of limited frontage such as this, the architect is designing part of the street wall. It has been the architect’s lack of awareness of this context of their buildings that has been largely responsible for the medley of discordant styles that make up the city street. The other contributing factor is the unconscious striving for each building to dominate its neighbour, the result of our social attitude.

We welcome this building as the first piece of street architecture in New Zealand of which we know. Its quiet dignity offers opportunity for new buildings to live with it in harmony. It is the modern counterpart of the buildings making up the streets of Georgian London.

Of particular interest are the vertical wooden louvres, designed to break the glare from the setting sun, and the manner in which the front wall has been treated. The structural framework is clearly covered by a non-structural skin of glass and asbestos. Columns and beams are covered on the outside by plaster. Glass divisions are determined by needs of ventilation. Together, logical, decorative, and serviceable.

D.G.P.

THE WAKEFIELD COLLECTION

The Wakefield Collection is specially welcomed by many people, including myself, who have not had many opportunities to examine original prints, drawings, and watercolours by British artists. It is the most representative and one of the most important exhibitions of its kind to be shown in New Zealand.

There were two extremes represented on opening night in the D.I.C. Gallery. One lady was thoroughly enjoying herself, examining the prints through a magnifying glass—another was standing many feet away peering through a lorgnette. These two people more or less personify the reaction this exhibition will receive during its itinerary. The print lovers and those people interested in draughtsmanship will be very happy to look at the exhibits for hours and hours and I can only pity those people whose religion of art begins and ends with painting.

Throughout the exhibition there is a variety of technique and subject-matter to suit all tastes. The craftsmanship is outstandingly high and is based on sound draughtsmanship, a tradition long held in honour by British artists. It was interesting to me to note that where the work was inclined to be experimental the artist had mastered his craft beforehand. There was no fumbling or any attempt to take short-cuts.

It is hoped that many New Zealand artists will “learn” from this show that after all there is something in good, sound draughtsmanship. In comparing the standard of work being done here with that of the British artists on exhibition it is obvious that generally speaking we are lacking in craftsmanship and in imagination. In criticizing our own standards I am not overlooking that there are some dull spots in the Wakefield Collection, and in some cases the limitations of the various mediums have been stretched and trickery indulged in, particularly among the etchings.

Of course I have my own favourites among the exhibits but I would not attempt to foist my standards on other people, but there is one name that I must mention and that is Robert Austin, for to me in his small copper engravings is represented the highest skill to which a craftsman can aspire. Size does not count in this exhibition and some

(Continued on page 9)
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