WHAT IS DESIGN

This is Design Review, so we may well ask the question: "What is design?" Like everything that has to do with the arts, design cannot be tested for its quality in a laboratory. You cannot work out an equation and find the unknown value of X which shall prove that a design is good or bad. It remains a matter of personal opinion, period and the object.

The elusive quality that a consensus of opinion agrees to call good design is not to be defined in terms like an axiom in geometry. This has not prevented men from attempting to lay down the rules of good design. The learned may quote Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Herbert Spencer and more, who have been vocal and dogmatic.

There are those who, perhaps after a modicum of instruction, can and do discern good design when they see it, and value it. There are others who fail to recognize good design but value their judgments. It is these latter who imagine they can discover sets of rules, rigid and frigid, that attempt to embrace the principles of all design and bring creativeness within their framework.

Those with a natural gift and a trained eye to discern good design refrain from attempting to shackle it with rules and definitions. They need none. They know it when they see it and what is there more? It is those who do not know good design, or who do not trust their own judgment, who need to form rules to support their wavering confidence.

Wherever there is design there is also the man who created it. So design always carries something of the temperament of its maker. This allows a wide margin of difference between similar objects made by different men. All may be of good design, but some we shall prefer to others for purely personal reasons that do not affect the quality of design.

So we will leave the making of formulas and rules to those who like that sort of thing. They do not get us anywhere. In fact there is no such thing as good design or bad design. These are only handy words of non-existent things. Granted there are well designed objects and badly designed objects, design does not exist apart from the object. What matters is how a particular object is made.

Let us leave the rules and formulas to the pedant and the philistine. Instead we shall publish in each number a discussion on some particular object; a house, a chair, a teapot or what have you. The contributor will tell you his or her opinion about the merits or demerits of the way that thing is designed, omitting any waving of the big stick to lay down laws of design. It is for you to decide if you think they are right.

Hoffman House, Remuera, Auckland

This house was designed for a very difficult site, but the very difficulties seem to have begotten the excellent solution. The site falls away steeply to the East. But the plan without any waste space manages to get the sun into all rooms as well as the view. It seems simple to the last degree, but it is of the simplicity that only long experience and great skill can produce. The same attitude prevails in the internal and external treatment. Good proportions and the warmth of good materials are the only ingredients of a truly vernacular solution.

No question of style or modernity arises. This is a truly New Zealand home in which everyone would wish to be guest, if he cannot be the owner. It is hospitable and therefore attractive.

New Zealand climatic conditions require special solutions. Large glass panels fixed directly into thin wooden frames admit ample light without the draughts that usually go with sashes and casements. Solid flaps in protected positions open to provide cross-ventilation.

Architect : VERNON A. BROWN
Much ingenuity has been employed to produce this charmingly simple exterior. Double folding-swinging doors link the indoors with the outdoor sitting terrace. The precarious slope of the site has been skilfully used to provide this extra living space.

Photo: Frank Hoffman

The proof, if any was required, that modern furniture and interiors need not look harsh, forbidding, or machine-like.

The two illustrations above by courtesy of H. H. Tombs, Ltd.

Compact yet spacious arrangement of rooms.
No waste circulation space.
The first of a series of articles on design is by Stewart MacIennan, Director of the National Art Gallery. He is a skilled binder, learning his craft under Douglas Cockerell, who continued Colin Sanders's work. He is a member of the Architectural Centre.

by STEWART MACLENNAN

Bookbinding may be defined as the process of binding books. Like most definitions which seem obvious, it is inadequate as we shall see.

It is in keeping with modern production methods that the bindery should be a separate and efficient department where the paper sections of the book are sewn together and receive a protective outer covering before passing along the chain to the distributors. Most of the books that we handle are made in editions running into thousands and machine technique is necessary to supply the demand at reasonable cost. There is very little craftsmanship apparent in the book apart from the craftsmanship of the author, yet craftsmanship is there.

Mechanical Binding in Mass

Craftsmen designed the type and format, a tradition of craftsmanship lies behind the recipe and the process of making the paper and the binding, or rather casing, is a mechanical reproduction of the bookbinder's craft. Like all reproductions it is inferior to the original, but these machine casings answer present day's needs and must not be ignored. They must be accepted and made as efficient and as sightly as possible without increasing the cost of production. It seems to me that the person most competent to design casings for mass-produced books would be either a practising craftsman with a thorough knowledge of machine methods, or a designer trained in machine methods but possessing a background of sound craftsmanship.

Room for the Handcraftsmen

Let us consider for a while the attitude of a craftsman to his work. There are still bookbinders who practise the craft. Not many books are bound by hand but special books still require special treatment and single volumes or very small editions are more economically bound by hand. Our bookbinder will revel in such jobs as rolls of honour written out on vellum, or illuminated addresses—strange as it seems they can be very beautiful. Valuable early printed or written books need rebinding and repair. Fine books, treasured by their owners, may be worthy of rebindings that will give full scope to the binder. No craftsman would waste his time on a book printed on shoddy paper and he would shun so-called 'art' papers, expensive but glossy, unpleasant to touch and lacking in substance.

The Craftsman's Aim

Let us give him a good book printed on hand-made or even high-grade machine paper, well printed in good type, with generous and nicely proportioned margins and with illustrations, if any, that are part of the book and not reproduced as separate plates to be "tipped" into the book. Give him such a book and he will, if he is a good craftsman, produce a binding that will be worthy. He will visualize just the sort of binding that will be in character; he will select his materials with care and his workmanship will ensure that the book may continue in use for many years. We hope that the book will even improve with age and use. The pages will be firmly secured in such a manner that the book will open easily, the joints where straining occurs will be cunningly strengthened, the book will be pleasant to handle and when closed it will assume its original shape. The title will be clearly shown and decoration, if necessary, will be appropriate. Accepting the natural limitations of his craft and showing due respect to the matter, the printing and illustration of the book, he will find that he can enrich the volume by unobtrusively adding something of his own personality to it, and so will he create a minor work of art. He will have the right to expect in return that the book, after it leaves his hands, will receive the treatment that it deserves. It will be handled frequently, but with due care the handling will "feed" the leather and keep it supple. It will be protected against damage by dust and damp and strong sunlight. He hopes that when repair becomes necessary the book will be handled by a craftsman who will appreciate and, as far as possible, preserve his original work. A binding well done will give him great satisfaction. His tools will be the best procur-
able and will be kept in perfect condition. Some he will make himself, but the great majority will be from the hands of craftsmen who understand and take pride in the making of tools. He will be a happy man, for good craftsmen are never miserable since they have learned the real joy that comes from work well done.

The Craftsman's Brain Controls the Machine

The worthwhile crafts have long and honourable traditions and it was natural that craftsmen should, at first, detest the machine which flooded the market with cheap imitations of their wares. Realization is just dawning that the machine takes over the hack work and leaves the craftsman free to do the work that is worthy of his special ability and training. From the ranks of craftsmen come the industrial designers—men who learn to understand the limitations and possibilities of the machine, as craftsmen do the tools, materials and methods of their craft.

Modern Trends

So far, in spite of some interesting experiments such as spirex bindings, machine-made books generally are simply inferior imitations of the original hand-bound volumes. No doubt the vogue for book packets, which obscure the cloth casings, has directed attention away from book construction. At least, the jacket carries the publicity and the cloth casing underneath is simple and inoffensive. We no longer see imitation cords, pseudo leather and half leather or fake headbands. Some day a craftsman designer will combine tradition with new processes and new materials and produce books from the line that will compare with a well designed machine-made saucepan.

An Exhibition was organized in the Wellington Public Library in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. The Exhibition was designed by a committee of the Architectural Centre. Miss Barbara Parker was chairman of the committee, and explains here the lines on which the exhibition was put together.

New Zealand Housing

by BARBARA PARKER

The Purpose is Historical

The large photographs which form the main part of this Exhibition (there are about eighty) have been chosen with the idea of giving a clear picture of what has happened in N.Z. housing over the years. Our aim has been purely objective. We had no intention of attempting to decide if a certain type of house was good or bad, but only to state that this or that happened for better or for worse.

The Early Settlers' Houses

We make a start in 1839 when the settlers first left England to sail for New Zealand. They also had a housing problem. The Maori already had his own dwelling of which plan, construction details, elevation and decorative features are illustrated. But where must the white men live? In many cases they brought prefabricated houses, of which we show plans and elevations. But these were insufficient to accommodate them all, and some built raupo huts. If timber was in short supply the settlers built huts in the crutch style, like a capital V but upside down. Some took over Maori dwellings till something better turned up. Some of them, as with the New Plymouth settlers, came out to barracks constructed for them by those who had landed before.

From this early start we trace the changes that took place: changes in methods of construction, changes in artistic view points. These changes are related to the standard of convenience, the standard of environment, and the standard of construction.

Typical Examples

You will readily understand that it would have been impossible to put everything into this exhibition; so as to make it give a clear picture we have picked out typical examples of housing from every ten-year period. It is noticeable how the plan forms remain the same over a period of years and so become traditional. They show too how, as the years pass, the standard of convenience gets better. We found it necessary, to make these changes clear, to devote one section entirely to technical matters in which constructional details are shown. These comprise the new methods of convenience planning in bathrooms, laundries, kitchens, etc.

Influence from Abroad

One object we kept very strongly in view; to show the powerful influences that have come from outside the country. These influences have changed at least the face, if nothing else, of the New Zealand house.

Just to mention a few of these outside influences, we have the obvious one resulting from Frank Lloyd Wright about the beginning of the century. Again these was a more or less self-conscious tendency to follow the Voysey, Morris, Ruskin influence from the latter half of the nineteenth century in England.

After the 1920's and into the 1930's there is decided influence from Le Corbusier in France, Ludwig Mies in Germany and Maxwell Fry in England.

Changes in Environment

Although mainly concerned with the houses themselves, the exhibition must show, we felt, the changes in environment. We have included therefore a special section to show the changes, or shall we say, deterioration in environment up to the present day. It is plainly a decline from the large section with native bush and perhaps specially planted exotics, down to the section with a frontage
of fifty to thirty feet in a crowded urban setting. This regressive setting, in a sense so sterile and ugly, has been accompanied by an obvious deterioration in plan-size. Increasingly difficult economies have compelled the house to shrink. We are not attempting to pass judgment on whether this is a good or a bad thing. We merely draw attention to the fact that it is so. It is matter for argument whether the small plan can ever fulfill the function for living that the large plan does, but we show different types of plans, especially contemporary ones, in which this problem is being handled with skill and ingenuity.

The Difference between Then and Now

The examples show a marked contrast between modern housing with its lack of unifying influence, and the early houses. There was something about the old houses which you might term their vernacular. It is hard to nail it down. There was a something in the proportion of the doors and windows, something in the detailing of verandah posts, architraves, the roofs with their wood shingles, and the shape of gables. They have a distinct Georgian flavour. We have tried to show that there was a unifying influence, something like the style of the English village unity. It was not only brought about by the similar colour and the fact of houses being built of timber, but also by the similarity of proportion in windows, in the form of gables, and in their shingle roofs.

Material and Construction

It was important that construction detail and materials should be shown, so a special section has been allocated for this purpose. It deals not only with the old houses but the latter part shows the new synthetic materials and their manner of use.

What of the Economic Aspect?

What, indeed, of the economic factors that have determined these changes? To have included these would have meant almost reconstructing the history of the last hundred years. Need I add that we felt that would be tackling too big a job. We have at least hinted at the social factors without describing them in detail.
The obvious reason why this is the frequent command of those possessing or responsible for sculpture and pottery is that the urge to touch, feel and handle is almost irresistible. The artist meant it to be so, and where "Don't drop" would be right, "Don't touch" is absurd. Too much stress is laid on the visual arts being visual. Every work of art reaches us through the sense of touch as well as of sight. I recently saw a child work the entire length of the Melbourne gallery trailing her fingers across every canvas. Though not good for the paintings, it was excellent for the child, whose sense of touch was not sufficiently trained to perceive texture through "imagined" touch. As "seeing" a picture requires training so "feeling" a texture in imagination needs education till it can be felt as the trained musician "hears" the music from reading the score alone.

The Bauhaus, training ground of artists from rudiments up, began by letting the student put together a series of materials of different texture which could be "read" by running the fingers from end to end, providing, incidentally, a new and thrilling aesthetic experience for the blind.

Texture is an integral part of the artist's means of communication. When Michelangelo or Epstein left their tool marks we feel the taut muscle and sweating strain that coupled the sculptor to his unyielding material. It was not the pleasure of being extravagant that impelled Van Gogh to smear the paint on thickly with a knife. If texture of this kind offends us it is because our palate has become debauched by the slimy machine finish of plastics and chromium. Only our insensitiveness to touch prevents us reacting against putting milk into a plastic jug of greasy texture, and some of our modern buildings have the pleasant texture of a well filled pincushion. Better far are popular sculptor's smooth nudes which tempt our wayward fingers to traverse their silken skin.

No self respecting potter ever made his wares to rest on the mantelpiece untouched. Pottery is made to be taken in both hands and felt, with enjoyment of its wavelike ripples. The sculpture of Henry Moore is "finger sculpture" not only to gaze at but to grasp by its inviting pistol grip, sliding the palms of the hands around its alluring swellings and exploring the opening with thumb and finger ends. Try it, at least in imagination, and its meaning as sculpture will be made plain.

FIGURE, 1933—Lignum vitae wood by HENRY MOORE
The poster was designed by the \textbf{NATIONAL PUBLICITY STUDIOS} and reproduced by the \textit{silk-screen process}. Size, 39 in. x 24 in.

\section*{Poster Design
by G. F. BRIDGEMAN}

G. F. Bridgeman is Art Director to the National Publicity Studios. He is responsible for industrial and agricultural exhibitions, not only in New Zealand, but in Canada, U.S.A., Great Britain, Paris, and Moscow. He is in charge of the designing and production of posters by which this country introduces herself overseas.

A design does not necessarily make a poster because it has been put on to a sheet of poster paper conforming to the standard size. There have been many fine illustrations which would make excellent pictures for wall decoration or picture books—but as posters I think they have missed the mark.

\section*{The Keynote is Simplicity}

I think simplicity is the keynote to poster design. Simplicity in conception, construction and ingenuity of arrangement. For instance, if you take a clean sheet of white paper and pin it up on the wall and leave it there and then watch the results you will find that it will create mild attention—but then again if you were to take a picture and hang it up it will probably go unnoticed. Now if you take a nice generous sized brush and a pot of red poster paint and then in the middle of your clean sheet of white paper, put a lovely big blot of red, it will attract attention more quickly, creating a lot of curiosity. You now have the first and most important thing in poster design—it has done its first job—drawn your eye towards it.

\section*{First Arrest}

That is the idea of the poster—to attract in a few seconds as one passes. Now what is it for? If we write in bold black letters across the blot of red the word 'Bovril,' we have now drawn attention and expressed something. What is Bovril? Well now at the top we write in a more sombre colour—say grey—the words 'Try' and below, three more words also in grey—'In hot milk' you now have a simple poster 'Try Bovril in Hot Milk.' The time estimated for a person to see and digest a poster is approximately three seconds, at least one must cater for the very minimum of time. Of course there are places like railway stations where people do have more time to view posters; that is the place for travel posters. Even then the artist, when planning such a poster, must still keep in mind some strong points to attract attention. If he is fortunate enough to visit the place the poster has to feature, he will study the surroundings looking for that particular spot which will give him a chance to get an eye-catcher such as a red sail, white cliffs, bright flowers, etc.

\section*{Avoid Useless Detail}

It is a waste of time to clutter up a poster with detail, and anything in a poster that cannot be sorted out from a distance of ten feet need not be there, which means that you must treat the subject broadly, avoiding too much detail. A poster is not a pamphlet, it is merely a quick means of attracting attention to something that somebody wants you to know about, whether it is soup or castles. There are some clever layouts which unconsciously direct the eye to a message that is important—like the Japanese flag; you must arrive at the sun whichever way you look at it. This can be done in a much more subtle way and such things as clouds, roads, trees, shapes, limbs, can all be placed in such a manner to direct your eye to a special point, usually to a name or illustration.
Colour

Colour is important, and balancing areas of colour in the right way to get the best results calls for experience—some colours dazzle, such as red on blue, unless they are separated by black, red on green, unless it is dark green. Tests have proved these are bad—they confuse. Black on yellow is the most striking colour combination and can be read over long distances.

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether advertising pays. As far as the poster is concerned I think that it is a good medium to use to keep a name before the public. Coming back to ‘Bovril,’ if you see this on the boardings every day as you pass to work it becomes absorbed in your subconscious mind and later if you are wanting something of that sort you will recognize it in a shop. It will sort itself out from other brands. Then again if the shop has another brand displayed in the window and it is an attractive show you may change your mind and forget Bovril.

Summing up I should say that a poster should be bright, simple in design but suggest a lot. Good draughtsmanship and well balanced colour scheme; above all, it must attract attention. It is not always so easy to design a winner and most of the best ideas are inspired or come to the artists in a flash—labouring over a design to my mind doesn’t always give the best results. Some subjects are very difficult while others are easy, but remember simplicity of design can be quickly absorbed by the passerby.

Try it Yourself

Readers interested in this subject could try a few simple designs using three or four colours only and the name of some commodity with a slogan to go with it—remembering first to attract, then the name, then the suggestions for its use as mentioned above. Try different colours to prove which ones catch the eye more readily. There should be plenty of freedom in the layout. Don’t crowd things up together; this only confuses the eye, and remember there isn’t time usually to puzzle a poster out. It must be quick to convey its message.

NOTES

Houses in Happy Valley:

The illustration will call to our readers’ minds the article in our last issue. Our criticism gains in interest by the following excerpt from the Evening Post:

"... The houses are almost identical in design, and it has been reported that the City Council will grant no more loans for dwellings of the type, and that a mistake had been made in permitting them to be built ..."

Acknowledgment:

The photographs of the housing scheme at Ohiro Bay, appearing in the last issue of Design Review under the title “Houses for the Homeless,” were by Bond Morris.

New President and Council

The third Annual General Meeting of the Architectural Centre was held on March 29th. The retiring President, Mr. John Cox, after two years of untiring service has handed over to Mr. Graham Dawson. Mr. Dawson has been one of the most active members of the Centre since its inception and has been in the forefront of educational progress in the architectural profession.

Under the new constitution a Council becomes the main policy-making body, and the Executive Committee will attend to the general administration. The Council consists of the following:

President: Graham Dawson.
Honorary Secretary: D. G. Porter.
Honorary Treasurer: M. B. Patience.
Editor: E. C. Simpson.
Director of the School: A. G. Kofoed.

Elected Members: John Cox, Gordon Wilson, V. Doreen Blumhardt, S. W. Toomath.

Chairman Student Committee: A. J. McDonald.

Government Grant

A grant of £1000 has been made by the Government to the Architectural Centre for the current year. Advice to this effect has been received from the Minister of Education in response to a deputation earlier in the year. The grant will be used exclusively in connection with the School of Architecture to allow the payment of the staff who have till now given their services without remuneration.
Prefabricated Houses in Aluminium

An exhibition of factory-built aluminium alloy bungalows was staged recently on a site near the Wellington Railway Station by A. W. Hawksley Limited, of Hucclecote, Gloucester. These houses attracted considerable public attention and the desirability of their use in New Zealand to speed up housing construction was widely discussed by laymen and architects.

The question of prefabrication is still a very controversial issue in most countries. The main questions raised usually are:

(1) Cost in comparison to tradition-built houses of same floor area.
(2) Weathertight construction and insulation from cold and sound.
(3) Flexibility in the arrangement of the prefabricated units of which the building is composed, so as to permit variety in size, plan and appearance.

How do the Hawksley factory-built homes meet these requirements? It is necessary to face up to these questions seriously in the interest not only of the general public but also of the producer. Any serious shortcomings would very soon wreck the market for that product and moreover, might introduce a long-lasting bias against any factory made houses. In the opinion of the reviewer, this would be a very regrettable reaction.

There is a field for factory made houses, especially where use is made of materials such as aluminium relieving the shortage of timber and cement which are bulk items in N.Z. tradition-built houses.

Structure

(a) The External Walls consist of aluminium framed and braced panels faced externally with formed aluminium sheets and lined with hardboard. Insulation is provided by a panel inter-fill of fibre-glass blankets.
(b) The Internal Walls consist of aluminium framed and braced panels faced on both sides with hardboard.
(c) Doors and Windows: Timber doors and fully glazed aluminium framed sash windows are supplied integral with the wall panels.
(d) Roof: Aluminium roof trusses and purlins are supplied in sub-assembly form together with roof sheathing panels of formed aluminium sheet lines on the underside with insulation board. Ceilings consist of hardboard panels.

All aluminium structure and sheeting (except roof sheeting) is degreased dip-painted and stove prior to fabrication. Roof sheeting is not painted so that the full reflective properties of bright aluminium are used for heat insulation.

The insulation value of the walls is stated to be equal to that of an 1 1/2 in. cavity brick wall. Sound-transmission figures are not available but are considered normal.

The houses may be erected (as in England) on to a concrete slab foundation which is subsequently floored with bitumastic coloured tiles or on to traditional types of foundation such as brick, concrete or timber piles with timber flooring.

Poor architectural design detracts from a good system of construction.

Below: This English model shows how good design can be used in the same system of construction.
The structure is borer and termite-proof and has a very low fire and earthquake hazard.

Cost
The cost of the completed unit ready for occupation and including the necessary sanitary and kitchen equipment (a refrigerator figures prominently in the women-folk's attention) is given as below £2,000 for the 920 sq. ft. house, at destinations within 10 miles of the major ports. This would amount to approx. £2 a sq. foot. The stoved and All-clad aluminium components ensure almost complete protection from corrosion and maintenance costs should be lower than for a timber house.

Equipment
The quality of the equipment provided is of well-known high English standard. Particularly interesting features are the provision of a refrigerator, an electric wash-boiler and a water-heating unit incorporated in a fireplace which may relieve the electric element in winter time.

Unfortunately, however, it seems that the English manufacturer has not been advised of the very high and now almost universally accepted requirements and standards in New Zealand. In consequence there is a lack of bench length and storage space in the kitchen. Almost all laundering is done at home in New Zealand, so that a laundry or utility room is essential unless a washing machine can be supplied. Such utility room could, of course, be added by the manufacturer but must increase the price. Wardrobe and general cupboard space is also small.

Flexibility of Design
The wall panels are interchangeable so that the position of windows and doors may be varied to suit individual requirements. However the very large size of the panels will have the tendency of rendering the planning of different types of houses more difficult than with the usual panel of a width of 3-4 ft. For instance, the panels cannot be so grouped that a continuous row of window units or French doors could be arranged. However, the Hawksley company overseas has turned out smaller panel sizes and many other types of houses.

General Planning and Design
In the sphere of design these particular bungalows do not do full justice to a generally sound and promising method of prefabrication. The plan which was presumably designed for different conditions of living would not orientate well to the sun and the garden.

The windows are badly proportioned and factory-like in appearance with unnecessary bars dissecting the view. Large side-hung casement windows are, however, available as alternatives. In general, plan and elevations of the exhibited bungalow are unimaginative, and whilst it is obvious that the design aims to meet the taste of the off-quoted man in the street, certain changes would have to be made before it suited the average New Zealand housewife.

However, the firm has produced incomparably better designs as instanced by the two-storied house with good ample windows shown below. Nevertheless, the only really satisfactory solution would emerge from employment of a modern New Zealand architect versed in our conditions, standards and requirements.
H. J. B. Coe's Talk on Design

A REPORT

It was satisfactory and exciting. He spoke on design from his point of view as an art teacher and painter, and it was a real thrill to some of us to hear how his views, particularly on the essentially architectural question of space, were similar to the ideas we, over a period of years over T-squares and coffee-cups, had been wrangling and twisting and battering into shape. Because his approach to design was unfamiliar to most of us, his talk can be summarized in a few Coe-logicisms:—

There is a clear distinction between structural design (design of structures) and aesthetic design.

Aesthetic design cannot be taught but must be experienced.

Culture acquired through experience has very deep roots.

In the degenerate period of any culture or civilization the designer is the victim of fashion and tradition. (In the last phase tradition becomes mere sterile imitation.)

Since the Renaissance, education has become primarily imitative, e.g.

This is how you write a poem
This is how you paint a picture
This is how you build a house.

The Result:

A poem is written
A picture is painted
A house is built.

The Analysis:

We have technical perfection—but
We have just another poem
just another picture
just another house.

Creatively speaking a student of design is not encouraged to stand on his own feet. He is perambulated so that he does not need to walk and by being conscientious, he graduates to a bath chair which is conscientiously pushed around by the public.

What is aesthetic design? It is the name we give to an inherent sense of rightness. Function, when it is the result of economy and perfect mechanics, can be visually pleasing; thus aesthetic functionalism is achieved.

Two-Dimensional Design—the importance of the "shape of the shape" and the shape of the spaces left over, e.g.,

The Map—a nautical map puts emphasis on the shape of the sea, as distinct from the shape of the land. Thus when certain shapes are important the function of their background is to repel visually. Mr. Coe suggested that this is also the function of wallpaper and stage sets, and the intention of much modern painting.

Space

Space cannot be adequately symbolized in a plan, elevation or even a perspective. (In perspective important shapes are likely to become background.)

Space is not completely visual.

Space has to be experienced.

Space can be articulated.

Without articulation a building becomes the piecing together of hollow bodies or cells.

Articulated space can be an exhilarating experience.

Mr. Coe outlined a programme he arranged with sixth form boys. The method was to consider the complete design of a house in relation to its site in purely abstract terms—all questions of structure, function or technique being entirely avoided. To make it easier to do this, the "house" was understood as a "shape"; a room as a "zone" within the shape; a wall became a "plane"; a window a "transparent plane." For this purpose a 4 in. to a foot scale model of his steeply sloping ½ acre section was made, including accurate models to scale of all trees, etc. On this model an abstract "shape" was designed and placed in relation to the site and its surroundings. Suitable textures were then chosen as being appropriate to the shape and to the nature of the environment. Then the shape was divided internally into zones—articulated space, without functional considerations, and each zone designed in detail.

The boys kept up their interest right through, and made all decisions throughout after careful thought. Mr. Coe's contention was that "unless they decide for themselves they aren't being taught." His aim in his training is to "develop an aesthetic background" and to assist each child to find for itself aesthetic standards. He concluded with a long overdue resubmission of the idea of "I know what I like" (for long enough a butt for intellectual snobs) provided that there is at least some aesthetic experience at back of the remark.

A.A.W.
Linoleum
Rubber Tile
Cork Tile
Asphalt Tile
Feltext and
Carpeting

Christie's
Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch
Hastings, Wairoa, Gisborne

Dominion Sales Corporation Limited
Private Bag, Auckland
Box 1168, Christchurch
Box 943, Wellington
Box 915, Dunedin

Representing
N.Z. Plywoods Ltd., Auckland

Duroid Products (N.Z.) Ltd., Auckland
(Bituminous Roofing and Paints)

W. H. Enstone Ltd.
(Building and Plumbing Hardware)

N.Z. Marble Co., Auckland

Unique Sash Balance (Pty.) Ltd., Melbourne

Plycor Division
Residential Construction Co., Wellington
(Flush Doors)

Dominion Industries Ltd., Christchurch
(Durock Asbestos Cement Roofing, Sidings, etc.)

Dominion Industries Ltd., Dunedin
(Linseed and Asbestos Cement Division)

Insulwool Products (Pty.) Ltd., Melbourne
(Insulation and Portable Acoustic Treatment)

Aluminium Window Co., Birmingham

Link Belt Co., U.S.A.
A. & T. BURT LTD.

MERCHANTS

GENERAL and ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

Specialists in

AIR CONDITIONING

HEATING

VENTILATING

PLUMBING

Distributors of:

Bastian & Allen Electric Boilers
Beeston ... Steam and Water Boilers
Benjamin ... Lighting Fittings and Reflectors
Crompton ... C.M.A. Cables and Wires
Crompton ... Lamps, Motors, and Switchgear
Sternes ... Refrigerators
Teddington ... Thermostats and Controls
Worthington-Simpson Pumps
Cowan Sheldon Electric Cranes

Offices at

AUCKLAND WELLINGTON CHRISTCHURCH
DUNEDIN WANGANUI TIMARU INVERCARGILL
Thoughts on Swinging Cats in Recent Houses—
On Pigs in the Parlour—
On Outdoor Living Areas—

and particularly on the Demonstration House

by A. L. GABITIES

Let us strike a serious note at the outset. It seems that over recent years the high cost of building and shortage of materials have imposed a drastic limitation on the floor area of our contemporary New Zealand house. The process of reduction in over-all size has been a gradual one, but with family accommodation requirements remaining fairly constant the result has been smaller and meaner rooms, until today the proverbial cat can rarely be swung with impunity.

The problem then for the designer is clearly one of making the best use of the area available, and of exercising all his skill in trying to avoid the feeling of being "cooped-up," and to obtain a sense of spaciousness. For this reason the architect of today endeavours to reduce areas of passage, to build in furniture, and to keep the plan "open." He contrives to arrange as many family activities as possible to take place in one large area, and throws together small special-purpose cells such as parlour, dining room, study, nursery, living room, kitchen, and even bedrooms into one space loosely divided by furniture, low fixtures and curtains. The special effects obtained by this "open" internal planning are generous, but unfortunately there appear to be limits to which it can be carried. These limits may be fairly flexible depending on the varying inclinations and habits of the occupants, but taken to an extreme it is a sad but obvious fact that "open" planning must react on the privacy of the individual. In practice it is this real or imagined threat to privacy which will allow it to be taken only as far as the occupants feel that necessity compels them to accept it.

As an illustration let us take an extreme case from the past. The Irish peasant was obliged to arrange the limited floor area of his cottage so that all the family activity took place in the one room. The best use was made of the space available, and it was even shared by the fowls and the pig at certain times of the year. No doubt the sociological effect on the pig was tremendous, but it is questionable whether the peasant and his family really enjoyed this invasion of their privacy on the long winter evenings. He was invited to share the cottage because no alternative shelter from the severe weather was available, and without protection he would surely have perished.

Does this give us a clue to our present problem? It seems essential that we open our internal planning to the fullest degree, and exercise all our ingenuity in making it acceptable and liveable, but it is clear that the limit is now set some fair distance short of the pig. In this country our climate is not so severe that we have to bring the wretched animal indoors, and indeed it is so mild.
GIBRALTAR WALLBOARD

* Gives perfect paint and paper surface
* Fire-safe
* Sound-stop
* Vermin-proof
* Borer-proof
* Free from buckle, twist, or warp

distributors...

Winstone Ltd.
AGENTS THROUGHOUT NEW ZEALAND

★ Consult them
However, the winds in Wellington are gusty and seem to blow from all directions at once. Where there is no natural wind break, strong measures must be taken to provide shelter in the form of walls (as in a monastery garden), or where there is a view to be preserved, glazed screens. But to be really liveable the area must be sealed off from practically all directions.

The designers of the Demonstration House at Karori were keen to exploit the possibilities of using an outdoor living area, to compensate for limitations on floor space. The site was one of peculiar difficulty. On this piece of steeply-sloping land in the windiest suburb of our windiest city, there was one small flat area. The ground sloped away from the sun, but the views of three sides from the flat portion were excellent. All in all the requirements for the design were formidable:

A maximum amount of the precious flat area must be preserved for living space;

The wind must be excluded from this area, and the arrangement of rooms such that the full benefit of solar heating obtained;

The views on three sides should be preserved;

The floor area should not exceed 1150 sq. ft.

"Open" internal planning should be carried as far as possible, but could only be taken to a degree which would be generally acceptable.

Obviously to be usable, the flat area available had to be sealed off from the wind. To seal the flat ground off from the wind effectively a wall at least eight feet in height was called for, and this would require glaring of some sort to allow for the view. If such an expensive wall had to be provided to create comfortable living conditions on the site in any case, the logical step seemed to lie in using it as one wall of the dwelling. This led to a U-shaped plan, the fourth side being formed by the natural rock wall of the hill. With the arms of the "U"

only one room in depth a considerable portion of the flat area was preserved as a sheltered internal court facing into the sun. Advantage was taken of the view outwards from the rooms, and on the court side large uninterrupted windows and French doors were provided. In this way the court on all but the stormiest days will act, not only as additional living space, but also will provide direct and easy access between the various parts of the house. Thereby the advantages of "open" planning should be obtained without sacrifice of privacy.

The house is nearing completion. The real test will obviously come with its occupation, but already by observation on the site it is possible to estimate the chances of success. The prospects seem promising in the extreme, and those persons interested, and in the position to do so, may take a 5d. tram ride to the Karori Terminus to see something of this experiment at first hand.

What is "the Architectural Centre"?

The Architectural Centre consists of people who share the belief that the purpose of things made and planned presupposes good design as necessary for fulfilment of living.

The aim of the Centre, therefore, is to maintain the value of design as a factor in complete living. The objects as laid down in the Constitution, are as follows:

(a) To work for the general improvement of town and countryside.

(b) To promote the association of persons engaged or interested in the arts and sciences concerned with planning and design.

(c) To carry out an educational programme for the advancement of the knowledge of planning and design principles in general, as well as for the assistance of students actively engaged in architecture and town planning study.

(d) To promote a true understanding of the arts and sciences among the community.

(e) To collaborate with similar organizations in this and other countries.

(f) To issue or promote or assist in the issue of books, pamphlets, periodicals and other documents relating to the above activities.

The activities of the Centre include:

(a) Part-time School of Architecture in Wellington for architectural, town planning and other students.

(b) Publication of Design Review.

(c) Annual Summer School of Design.

(d) Public exhibitions.

(e) Meetings, talks and discussions.

Membership

There are three classes of membership: Corporate, Student and Honorary.

The entrance fee for corporate members is £1 1s., and the annual subscription £2 2s. Annual subscription for students is £1 1s.

Procedure for election of corporate membership involves nomination by a corporate member and seconding by two other corporate members. Application shall be made in writing and handed to the Secretary, from whom forms
may be obtained. Applications are notified to all corporate members who have the right to lodge objections. Finally, the applicant must receive a four-fifths majority vote of the Council. The proposers of new members are responsible for introducing them to the activities of the Centre.

Membership is open to any person who has marked sympathies for the objects of the Centre. Corporate members are expected to participate actively. They should be prepared at all times to share the responsibilities and duties required in carrying out the objects of the Centre.

**Organization**

The policy of the Centre is determined by a Council (elected annually) consisting of a President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, and four elected members.

In addition the following persons are ex-officio members of the Council:

- The Editor of the Centre’s publications, the Director of the Centre’s School and the Chairman of the Student Committee.
- An Executive Committee attends to day to day administration and detail. This Executive is appointed by and subject to the direction of the Council. A Student Committee which is elected annually, is responsible for the conduct of student affairs and has representation on both the Council and the Executive.
- It is a recognized principle that no member shall seek personal recognition for work carried out on behalf of the Centre.
- The Club Room and Library of the Centre are at 39 Johnston Street, Wellington.

---

**Frances Hodgkins**

*Becomes Accessible to All*

The Penguin Modern Painters series has already made accessible to the least purist excellent reproductions of adequate size of a number of the best contemporary artists. Beyond being confined, except with Ben Shahn, to English painters, no academic restriction or pandering to the grocer’s calendar type of picture has depreciated the value of the books for those interested in genuine modern art.

*A Great Painter*

The modest sum of four and sixpence now brings us the latest volume on Frances Hodgkins. Can she be claimed as a New Zealand painter? All her efforts were directed to leaving this country and, had her destination been the U.S.A., she would long ago have been claimed as one of America’s greatest painters. She was certainly the greatest painter this country has produced, though she did not owe it much more than her birth and the earning capacity to quit.

*An Aristocrat of Paint*

Dying at almost eighty years of age her art described an upward value curve right to her last picture. Only strength of character saved her from joining the ranks of the leisurely talented whose art, like their meals, is delicious and at intervals. Her singleness of purpose and refusal to digress or worship the god of guineas allowed her to realize her gifts to the full and produce a succession, each new and different, of designs of flower-like vision in which colour and drawing combine in imaginative ferment.

The choice of pictures in the Penguin is excellent. The quality of colour reproduction permits an enjoyment of her work only inferior to seeing the originals.

---

**Contributions and Letters**

THE EDITOR is always glad to consider any contributions. Where possible, they should be accompanied by photographs of the illustrations suggested. Original works of art should not be sent unless requested.

For the purposes of reproduction, glossy photographs are preferable, and contributors are reminded that the appearance of good objects can be easily ruined by bad photography.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR and contributions should be addressed to The Editor, *Design Review*, P.O. Box 1628, Wellington, C.I., accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. If written under a pen-name, the writer must enclose his name and address.

**Advertising Rates**

Advertisers are reminded that the readers of *Design Review* are people interested in well made and well-designed products of all kinds. Rates for display advertising may be obtained on application to the Advertising Manager, *Design Review*, P.O. Box 1628, Wellington, C.I.