A Gleam on the Horizon

Those of us interested in good design tend to ignore the fact that the vast majority of design is bad. Truer words were never spoken than when Milner Gray said that this was not a period of the rebirth of good design, but that there was a faint gleam on the horizon. The opposition and obstruction to good design as a general and universal standard is mountainous, and there is no good fairy to remove the mountain overnight. Only recently Pevsner remarked that ninety per cent. of British industrial design was devoid of any aesthetic merit. Investigation would probably more than confirm this figure for New Zealand.

This is an age of steel, of speed, of work that does not allow much play or carefree enjoyment. It calls for the design of severe forms of simple and carefully considered proportion. To this fact the public has never become reconciled. They may choose a low-priced article for its utility, but the costly article becomes an inexhaustible source of sham splendour. A complete rejection of and a fleeing from this age of austerity is shown by the popularity of ye olde candlestick lamp fittings. This state of affairs will not be altered until the public selects a kettle or a clock as carefully as an evening dress.

Public bodies set no example. Even the British Government's encouragement of design institutions can only come from the mouth and not from the heart while they continue to furnish their overseas embassies in period styles. Civic bodies are too scared to enter into far-reaching schemes for new design even when means and money allow, for fear of losing votes; such might even savour of the Left.

The manufacturer hides behind the excuse of giving the public what it wants and disclaims the role of reformer. His standard of design is dictated not by the public but by travellers, salesmen, buyers, and shopkeepers. They consider a plate with cottage trees and cupids, or a perambulator with golden scrolls is a faster selling and therefore a more profitable article.

In the few years of the history of industrial design informed private opinion has made little difference. Britain paid no attention to it until 1930 when competition from foreign manufacturers drove its goods off the foreign market. Industrial design there has now awakened new interest on account of Britain's export drive. The New Zealand manufacturer, however, is not likely to re-design his wares while he cannot produce enough to satisfy the market and is short of staff. He is going to need much persuasion even then.

These few words are not written in a spirit of hopelessness or pessimism. Well designed objects, good architecture, sound town planning are worth fighting for. It is never good policy to underrated the enemy's strength.

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 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.

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Design of Radio Cabinets

The radio cabinets made by Phillips Electrical Industries, described in our last issue by Mr. Leighton Lord, are mostly models exclusive to New Zealand, and are designed here by a qualified architect.
A Matter for Agreement

In Design Review, April-May issue there is an editorial article under the caption, “What is Design.” In that article the writer declares that it is his intention in future issues to discuss particular objects of design. He makes quite explicit that he wishes to avoid the broader questions as to the nature of design, its established values, etc. In declaring such an intention the writer expresses a current of opinion which has been popular among certain modern philosophers and which has, apparently, some influence with “Design Reviewers.” This particular approach to design takes what has been termed a relativistic standpoint in the Philosophy of Values. The underlying assumption is that in the world of human values in the first place and for ever more, all things are matters for individual preference. Between individuals there is no meeting ground, except that of the quite accidental concurrence of otherwise divergent preferences. Because, therefore, everything is so much a matter of individual taste it is declared impossible to state any general truths about values. Unlike science, where the regularities of the subject matter allow laws of some definiteness to be formulated about them, the world of values has so few regularities, say between this preference and those tastes, that it is impossible to formulate such general truths or laws.

As a result from the relativistic viewpoint it is regarded as impossible to have “knowledge” about any laws of design. The author of the article “What is Design” has as a philosophic background just such a relativistic viewpoint, and consequently becomes entangled in all the difficulties which are involved in saying something about that, which by definition has nothing which can be said about it.

I will endeavour in the following paragraph to expose some of the ins and outs of this tangle of inconsistencies. Before doing so, however, I would like to make it quite clear that in thus protesting against such extreme relativism in the philosophy of values, I am not thereby advocating its opposite absolutism. Rather, I am advocating something in between these two. Because all knowledge depends as much upon the constancies of human attitudes as upon the constancies of non-human material, knowledge depends ultimately as much on human agreement as on objective facts. As modern anthropology clearly demonstrates citizens within one community are in many respects conditioned alike, and therefore viewpoints are never as purely relative as “Relativists” would have us imagine. The amount of overlapping in our common social nature is the basis for common attitudes in matters of taste, that is the basis for a formulation of rules of design. Such rules while they deliver us from the “negativism” of extreme relativism, at the same time, owing to the changing nature of their basis, are a long way from the “Eternal” laws of the absolutists. And now, with an apology for the oversimplification involved in the use of such blanket terms as “relativism” and “absolutism,” I will proceed with a point by point discussion of the statements in the article “What is Design.” (My proper subject matter.)

It is the declared intention in that article that in future issues there shall be a discussion of the nature of “particular” objects of design. Such an attitude involves the following points:

1. If the author is to make statements about the “merits or demerits” of a particular object of design his attitude to many objects of design will be involved. That means his philosophy of design will also be involved. To say that his philosophy of design is involved is another way of stating that all the rules and definitions that exist in his mind with reference to design are also involved. And, like it or not, to make any value judgments about design as he is doing when he discusses the merits and demerits of a particular object, is to involve himself in having such rules and definitions in his own mind whether consistent or inconsistent, conscious or semi-conscious.

2. If these rules and definitions of his on the values or merits of certain objects are to have any significance to the reader, then both the writer and the reader must have at least some common values with respect to design. If this is not so his statements would be merely the individual ejaculations of the “naturally-gifted” falling on stony ground. All profitable discussion of values requires some basis of agreement before that discussion can proceed. Again if this were not so then the statements, for example in the April-May issue, that the Hoffman House does not waste space, is virtue to the last degree, would be meaningless to us. We are expected to agree that these are values in design. It is because we do thus agree that the discussion can proceed.

3. Yet although we must thus agree on certain things about good design before we can profitably discuss examples of it, he nevertheless declares in his article that “in fact there is no such thing as good design or bad design. These are only handy words for non-existent things.” But if good design does not exist how can common views on this non-existent thing be a basis for discussion? How can there be any discussion? It would appear that there is some contradiction in his article.

4. I believe that it is possible to make rules and definitions about the nature of good design. Such rules are based on the constancies of human and material factors which are interdependent in the process of designing objects. At the same time because human and material factors are constantly changing, such rules and definitions must be tentative and kept in accord with these changing realities. It can be realized that it is not a matter of either making rules or not making rules. Man is a rule-making defining being, whether he likes it or not. The question is whether you choose to make these rules consciously and thus be aware of your assumptions or whether you choose to proceed making rules semi-consciously and thus end up with contradictions in your beliefs such as I have endeavoured to illustrate above. Perhaps in the long run, to use his psychology, it is just as neurotic to withdraw from the responsibility of making rules as it is to wave the “big stick” of rigid definitions. Perhaps in flying from rules and definitions he displays as wavering a confidence as do those who fly to rules and definitions. Why avoid the traditional philosophic extreme of value ruling fact and yet insist on the equally fallacious extreme of fact ruling value. This is the “fallacy
of misplaced concreteness.” Surely both fact and value are interdependent.

6. Finally, on the basis of what has been said above, I believe it is necessary for the author of that article to rethink his policy with respect to the question “What is Design?” I believe he may follow either of the alternatives which I set out below:

(i) If he continues to believe that discussion is possible, then he will proceed to tell us something about good design in the world today. It will not be left to the purely arbitrary and mystical insight of those with the “natural gift” to discern for themselves.

(ii) If he believes that “good design” does not exist and hence that discussion is impossible then he will cease discussing and begin ejaculating. My suggestion is that he should show us the picture of his completely anarchic idea of the non-existent good design with a tick or a cross beside it and nothing more. There is after all nothing more to be said. On further thought I believe he should use a red colour to denote a positive attitude to his representation and no colour for the negative. A recent investigation shows that red is the favourite colour chosen by children in their toy selections.

B. SUTTON-SMITH.

Our correspondent’s argument (the upshot of which is no doubt clear to him) leaves us coldly unconvinced. In fact, the entanglement of his dialectic only serves to convince us more firmly in our belief that words, words, and more words get us nowhere. What matters is things—not rules, arguments, and theories.—Editor.

About Nothing and Something

A characteristic of our present urban life is the variety and intensity of its noise. Noise is just a less genteel word than sound. Sound, after putting some order into it, is the main component of music. But the musician does not employ the squeal of brakes or the chugging of a motor; we do not expect him to incorporate, even in a pastoral, the grunting of pigs. He uses a kind of sound that we do not associate with nature.

The painter, the sculptor, and the architect have an equally intangible but powerful means of expression in space. The schoolboy described a hole as nothing with something round it, so we might describe space as nothing with something in it.

To convince us that space can be organized into something significant and can then be used as a personal means of expression we need only mention two examples. Almost all the major problems that have faced mankind have been centred round finding a workable solution to the organization of space; the vastness of Australia and her white-Australia policy;

Germany and Japan seeking for Lebensraum (room to live); slum-clearance; town-planning; immigration; ribbon development. Air travel, in reducing space, has intensified its problems.

The artist’s main purpose is to convey by means of his work, the slant of mind that possesses him at the time. For such an objective there is not a more effective means than the description of organized space. Space has a deep and radical effect on our state of mind. How much less self-confidence we have in a vast hall than in a small room? How much less self-importance on the top of a hill than in our office? If we doubt the ability of space to express a personal viewpoint we need only re-arrange the furniture in our house during our wife’s absence. On her return it will become clear that her organization of the space in the house is a personal expression of her particular mind. Who would deny that the organization of space in the average country town gives a complete picture of the minds of those responsible?

To give the impression of space the artist would need only to paint his canvas evenly all over in blue; to use space as a means of expression something must be placed in that space to delineate and organize it. As a single chair placed in an empty room defines and conditions its space, so a figure serves, as in the illustration, to define the space.

In painting the first artist to exploit the organization of three-dimensional space by disposing solid volumes into it was Giotto in the fourteenth century. Since his day it has remained not only a constant but the main feature of European painting. The white man as explorer, soldier and man of action has always been discontented with his own share of space. Feeling it was his antagonist he has battled against it. To depict solid volumes which defined a limited space provided the European artist with the most perfect means to express the drama, dynamic action and monumentality that were the predominant features of the white man’s way of living. Broadly speaking we may say that European painting since Giotto has been the expression of drama and action by means of a rhythmic organization of space by solid volumes.

The forms of art referred to above have dealt with the delineation of a defined extent of space. The Chinese landscape painter concerned himself with space for centuries, if not millennia, before the European artist. His aim has been to create not a defined extent of space but infinity. This marks the difference in outlook between East and West. The Chinese, whose ideal was meditation, have always had a profound contempt for Western man’s busy, quarrelling, fighting, shoving restlessness. The infinity that is characteristic of the Chinese painting is the symbol of his ideal of meditation, and occurs seldom in European art. Turner is the exception. To him infinite space was the perfect means of expression and his whole technique was directed to achieving it. In the picture of Schaffhausen every detail of the foreground is painted in what appears a haphazard position determined by chance. On the contrary the position of every detail is subtly organized and painted in a rhythmical plan. The distance from one object to another can be estimated in feet, with the ultimate purpose of creating space that lies beyond and reaches to infinity. No Turner landscape is a portrait of a locality, in spite of its title. All are essays in the delineation of infinite space.
Despite the multitude of attractive and well-designed packages that fill our stores, the layman is apt to think of packaging as a matter of packing and parcels, brown paper, boxes, string and perhaps sealing wax. This is as it should be, for when a thing is well designed it should not attract attention to the labour of its design; it should simply appear to be right; it is when something looks wrong that it calls attention to its faulty making.

The layman too is largely right in his view of packaging; he has at least seized upon a first essential of the good package; with few exceptions the first job of the package is to protect the article to be wrapped, and it is one of the tasks of the designer to see that this important requirement is met. A package is essentially a container, but it is more than this. A package has two purposes: to contain and to sell. But before I tell you more about the purposes of the package, I want to say something about its origins.

**Beginnings**

The history of packaging, using the word in the modern sense, is largely the story of branded goods and their containers; and its development covers a period of very little more than half a century. But its origins are rooted in the story of the container itself, which goes back to the dawn of civilization.

The branded product is at best a bare 160 years old, if we except such passing, but perhaps significant phenomena as the Roman ointment which bore the maker's name engraved on the lead cover which closed the pot. Certainly before the days of mass production and mass distribution, when every town and the agricultural district surrounding it formed a more or less isolated community—self contained and self supporting—there seemed more point in branding cattle than in branding goods.

The beginnings of modern packaging can be found in the eighteenth century; though glass bottles were replacing the old leather and earthenware bottle for wine as early as 1640. It was in the eighteen century that we see a few patent remedies being marketed packed in glass phials or paper envelopes such as those for Dr. John Harper's Female Pills, and Dr. James' Fever Powder. More important still was the introduction from Germany to England of the tinplate industry at Pontypool in 1730. In this century when Nicholas Appert was quietly working on the problems of canning, beer was sold in bottles and such famous firms as Crosse and Blackwell, Yardley's and A. & F. Pears were laying foundations of great businesses in which the package and container played a vital part.

The nineteenth century saw many important developments and technical improvements come thick and fast. In 1810 Auguste de Heine and Peter Durand had taken out British patents for the use of iron and tin containers for preserving foods, and in the following year a process based on that of the pioneer Appert was developed in England by John Hall, the founder of the famous Dartford iron works. There were many difficulties to overcome, many failures, but at last the firm was able to send tins of preserved foods to high authorities of the Navy and Army for trial.

The approval of the authorities was not long in coming, and within six years Donkin and Hall, and others were regularly supplying the Admiralty with canned foods.

Concurrently with the early development of canning came the beginning of the cardboard containers. Their first wide use was for pill boxes, and among the pioneers of this packaging development was a certain John Bradbury Robinson, a retail chemist who sold out his chemist's business in 1839, bought a pill box factory and founded the now flourishing box making and printing firm of Robinsons of Chesterfield, one of the largest box making concerns in Britain today. In 1846 the Robinsons opened a square box department, and the development of the rigid cardboard box went forward rapidly. Nevertheless these boxes remained almost exclusively confined to the chemist trade, and fancy and decorated boxes so widely used for chocolates and confectionery were not introduced until the latter part of the century. By the late 60s Cadbury's were marketing croquette chocolates in circular rigid boxes, and in square boxes bearing still life illustrations of fruit. The pictures, pasted on the lids, were purchased in sheets from continental printers, and the favourite subjects were children, landscapes, animals and reproductions of famous paintings. This period also saw the birth of the "chocolate box girl." Richard Cadbury made a notable contribution to package history when, in the late 60's he decided to use his own designs and thus distinguish his boxes from those of his competitors. He used his own children as models, and also made use of Swiss and English flowers, and of Swiss scenes painted during his holidays.

I will not weary you with a list of the many developments in packaging machinery which were introduced in the last century; it was a time of great technical advances in many fields—the first mechanical bottle making
machine, the first paper bag machine, the first carton and vacuum can. In merchandising, too, there were great developments; British industry had become conscious of the power of advertising, and by the end of the century the chain store, in the shape of Boots and Liptons, had entered the lists of retail trade. Yet a great many things and a great deal of food was still sold loose to the retailer, and all kinds of packaged products were by no means acceptable to British conservatism. Our forbears feared that ptomaine poisoning lurked in every tin. Food lay about in bulk at shop doors and on shop floors, and was visited by many who were not customers. The grocer displayed his wares on open shelves at the mercy of dust and flies, and gave them to the customer in bags which often had to be separated by the simple but unhygienic method of blowing into them.

**America Comes In**

A few progressive manufacturers put their new products in tins or cartons, advertised them by poster as "The Best," and made fortunes almost as a matter of course. It was largely the influence of America which changed all this, which speeded up the tempo, and which finally compelled our British manufacturers to take the subject of package design more seriously. It was America that sent over new cereals to compete with porridge oats, dental cream to oust our tooth-powders from our markets, sent us free samples to whet our appetites, sent chewing gum and razor blades, tinned soup, canned fruits and motor oil. Not that all these products were new to us; but the thoroughness with which they were sold brought the lesson home. Every quality and aspect of the product was shown to us to be better than those of its competitor. And even the bottle, tin or box, in which the product was packed was treated as a selling force. If the customer found your bottle, tin or box easier to open than that of your competitor, this in itself was a selling point, and selling points were by this time becoming important.

**Later Developments**

The story of the first half of our own century is again one of great technical development, speeded up by the special requirements of the Services of the two major wars, and the impact of the new techniques in store layout and merchandising. New materials have placed new weapons in the hands of the salesman and have posed fresh problems to the designer.

In Britain there has been a re-orientation of class distribution; upper and middle class families have become much smaller, while the purchasing power of the working class has increased. Contemporary life in urban communities does not include large larders as in Victorian times. Domestic help is at a premium, and the women of all classes, more often than not, are engaged all day in working for a living. With the growth of the big store the personal touch between shopkeeper and customer is vanishing. Packed goods are easy to buy, easy to handle, and easy to store.

**A Team Job**

An exhibition which I have recently been in part responsible for staging at the Royal Academy in London, under the title of "Design at Work" begins the story of the design process with this introduction: "Everything made by man is first designed; some things are well designed, some not. A thing that is well designed WORKS WELL, LOOKS WELL, LASTS WELL and from the manufacturer's point of view SELLS WELL." This exhibition explained that designing for all large-scale production is not a one man job; it is a team effort calling for collaboration between the manufacturer, the designer, research workers, production and sales managers, and finally an essential member of the team whose views are of paramount importance to successful and continuous manufacture—the consumer.

**Public Taste**

If one designs for the taste of the market, then there is surely a justification for bad design, for crude illustration to match crude taste. Sometimes one hears that public taste is always bad. Let me say at once that I do not believe it; nor has my experience lent colour to this view. In most cases where the public has been given the chance, it has voted in favour of better designed goods. It is possible to be both good and popular. But the designer must draw strength and inspiration from his own time, share its viewpoint, and like the same forms it likes. You cannot make a hundred thousand copies of a design no-one wants, no matter how much it may please you.

**The Purpose of Packaging**

I propose a division of the aim of packaging into three prime functions: to protect, to identify, and to advertise its contents. To protect the contents the package must be made of the right sort of materials, made in the right sort of way, and of course, made as economically as possible. It must be easy to handle in the manufacturer's warehouse, in transit, on the dealer's shelves, and in the hands of the consumer; it must be simple to open and easy, if need be, to re-seal.
Protection

Great strides have been made in the last few years in the scientific protection and preservation of goods by packaging them. The war taught us many lessons in technical packaging, the result of scientific research into the proofing against rust, mould, mildew, vermin, weevils and termites. Techniques have been developed for testing containers to ensure that they will stand up to the physical conditions they will encounter in transit from the factory to the consumer. A new science of technical packaging which is solely concerned with the protection and preservation of packaged goods has grown up over the last few years.

An example of this is the cocoon process by which a synthetic film is sprayed over aeroplane engines and so on, thus preserving them indefinitely against the deterioration consequent upon storage over long periods of time, or in exposed conditions. For metal parts we now have what is called the strip-coat, again a synthetic covering which seals the article against air, yet which can be peeled off by slitting up with a pen-knife.

Many such processes, or derivatives, of such processes are finding commercial application in Britain today.

New Materials

Linked with protection is the subject of right materials. I cannot attempt to list here the vast range of materials available in the service of packaging, but some of the more recent developments are worth a mention. In the field of plastics, especially in the thermo-plastic group, many new packaging materials are now becoming available—for example, the introduction of polystyrene, polythene, polyvinyl, and polyvinylidene-chloride. Some of these plastics will find their applications in the packaging of foodstuffs, and will prove powerful rivals to the transparent cellulose films which we have known for so long. Polystyrene, at present scarce and expensive, will undoubtedly come into the packaging picture as an attractive transparent container in the luxury cosmetic field; somewhat similar effects can be obtained at a cheaper cost with cellulose acetate, of which considerable quantities are being used for the manufacture of cylindrical, spiral-wound and rect-
more easily in the mind’s eye than others. It is easier for instance to visualize and recall, as well as to pronounce the word VIM, than for instance a word like polyvinylidenechloride.

Advertisement
The function of your package is to advertise the contents. As an advertising medium it ranks high, for its appeal is made at the point of sale, when with purse in hand your potential customer hovers between the purchase of your product, or that of your hated rival. Nor does it cease to serve you after purchase, for it is carried through the street, in tram or train or bus boldly advertising to all and sundry that someone has had the temerity to try the stuff; and this is not all; it becomes perhaps a familiar adjunct to the breakfast table, until at long last the dustman carries it away to whatever limbo is reserved for packages which have successfully served their makers. Some may even attain a near eternal life, as what we call re-use containers, on the housewife’s shelves.

The Role of the Designer
In this vast field of operations covering materials, function, and propaganda, what then is the role of the package designer? In these days of specialization it is more evident that he cannot be an expert in all these functions, but he holds a key position in this scheme. His position, and what he has to do in relation to packaging is very much the same as the position of the designer in another sphere, that of the architect in relation to building. The designer of buildings will know a lot about social conditions, as well as about bricks and mortar, steel and concrete. The more he knows of these things, and of the whole business of building, the better equipped he is for his job, but he is not expected to know as much of social conditions as the socialist, nor as much about concrete as the Research Department of the Cement and Concrete Association. Like the architect the industrial designer will visualize his client’s problems as a whole, and prepare his plans for a solution in the light of all the evidence available, co-ordinating the work of the experts, and assessing the value of rival materials and methods. He must be able to advise his clients on the relative merits of glass, or metal, or pulp, or earthenware containers for their products, and how these in turn shall be decorated, printed, or labelled, and finally packed and identified for transport and economic stowing on lorry, train, or ship. Like the architect who turns to the structural or sanitary engineer for his specialized knowledge he will be in touch with specialism for advice on the most recent advances in such fields as plastics, paper, and boards, coatings for metal cans, new synthetic films and so on. The designer’s function is to interpret the manufacturer’s brief in terms of materials, form, colour, lettering, and typography, and he can only give effective service if he is adequately briefed. The general approach to the design problem remains the same whether one is designing a carton, a bottle, an electric fire or a washing machine. First a full discussion with the manufacturer so as to collect a statement of the problem. At this stage the designer is hardly interested in what the object will look like when finished; he wants to know the answers to a number of questions. What sort of market the product aims at? What sort of shop will sell it? Is it a high or low priced luxury article, or a utility article for mass consumption? How does it compare in price and appearance with competitive makes? Will it be sold with other ranges, or complementary articles? What processes and mate-
tials seem to the manufacturer to fit in best with his schedule? Are there any particular colours, letter-forms or other design elements associated with his present products? How far should the new pack relate to these? What is the character of the business and its marketing policy? The character of a design may grow out of the fact that the business is old established, or set in a particular locality, or associated with some historic landmark.

All this is pure fact finding; but it will be on the basis of these facts that the design will evolve in an orderly way; and if the facts are accurate, and the designer interprets them correctly, and if he possesses that virtue of invention which enables him to see old things in a new way, a successful design will result.

To manufacturers I would say give the designer every facility you can. He may want to visit your factory, talk to your sales or production people; he will want to see the shops in which your goods are sold; he will want to know all he can learn about you and your problem. Tell him everything you can with all your cards on the table; it will help him and it will pay you.

Summary

Finally, to sum up, I would repeat that design is not something which can be added when the job is practically done. The character of the package must grow from the product which it contains, the distinctive background of the maker and the requirements of the market at which it is aimed. But all these factors will in turn be governed by the individual outlook of the particular designer engaged on its design. The presentation of any manufacturer's products to the public must depend upon the most precise terms of reference which market research can supply, upon an accurate assessment of the competition to be faced, and of the dressing of competitive lines. There must also be complete confidence, and the closest collaboration between the designer, the manufacturer, and his sales and packing staffs, and the various package suppliers concerned. Like all industrial design, packaging is a team job, and cannot progress divorced from the techniques of research, production, and distribution. But in the end it is the character which the designer imparts to the package which will be the deciding factor in its failure or success as a good sales agent. If he is worth his fee the designer is first and foremost an artist, one who is sensitive to the atmosphere of the product, and to the mood of the consumer buying the product; and his vital contribution is, of course, the aesthetic character which he brings to his work, whether he is designing a pavilion or a package.

The Design of Churches

by REV. D. M. HERCUS

A building is the embodiment of a purpose. It is built for use. There is no hope of good design in any sphere of building unless the prospective user of a building has a fairly clear cut idea of the uses for which it is intended, and unless the architect has both grasped his client's idea and met its practical demands in a workmanlike way. We have had relatively little really good Church building in this country so far, and probably the blame must be shared about equally between Church authorities and architects. In some Churches there are the vestigial remnants of a puritanism which suspects many of the arts at any rate so far as they may be applied to religious expression. This results from thinking that art, applied, say to Church architecture, consists in an expensive prettifying up of the building in a style considered to be de rigeur if it is to "look like a Church." Architects must bear some blame for having pandered to this sort of nonsense in the past. Actually, it is a pity the puritans did not stick more intelligently to their principles, instead of misunderstanding them. The partial definition of good design which stands at the head of this paragraph is one which would follow on very naturally from the tenets of a puritanism which was based on living conviction instead of on pig-headed habit.

Churches less affected by the puritan tradition have done somewhat better. Anglicans especially have some good buildings to their credit, though the tradition depends heavily on the England of last century. Probably their greatest success has been with timber Churches. Much of their merit is owing to the genius of Selwyn, the first Bishop of New Zealand. Here a style of genuine beauty, dignity, and simplicity was evolved, in which the material used was honestly applied. One main point in which this style may be criticized is that the pointed window is not well suited to wood, though this convention was perhaps an understandable concession to the desire to retain associations with the Gothic tradition of a mother country only recently left behind. The use of pointed windows, frequently of bad proportions, and of unsond structure, was to become the one essential which would enable any church built barn to masquerade on the New Zealand landscape as a Church.

However, this is not primarily a historical article. Sufficient to say, that the conventions as to what ought to be provided in a Church for the uses of worship continued for a long time in each of the Communions which established themselves in this country to be pretty much those which had prevailed in the early Victorian period.

The proper design of churches must begin from analysis of the normal activities of Christian worship. These are principally, prayer, praise,
the reading of Holy Scripture, the preaching of the Gospel, and the observance of the Sacraments, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. To these may be added Marriage, Confirmation, Funerals, and Ordination, which require a certain planning of space, but little special provision of furniture. The building which does not make due provision for these activities is inadequate as a Church. Corresponding to these uses there are such furnishings as prayer desks, choir stalls, and organs, lecterns, pulpits, fonts, and Holy Tables, which need to be arranged in some coherent pattern.

It is when we come to decide what this coherent pattern should be that we begin to get to grips with Church design. It is not a purely architectural issue, indeed it is not primarily architectural, it is theological. That is, the main principles of good Church arrangement will spring from and express sound and clearly comprehended ideas of Christian truth. Many bad arrangements are the architectural expression of heresy. At the same time, the architect, who has to build all these bits into a coherent whole which shall itself express and evoke the spirit of worship, has to be heeded. The general principles he will respect are those of good design in any building, and he may be expected to display a certain majesty in their application. Whatever the aesthetic treatment, it should be basic and beyond question that the actual techniques of construction should be the best. No less should be the aim for any building.

Frankly confessing myself an amateur, I intend to lay down now what I understand to be the essentials of good design which the architect must meet, before returning to territory in which I have more right to feel at home. The basic excellence must surely be good proportion. This must extend to the lines of the building itself, both inside and out, the individual pieces of furniture, and their arrangement into a whole pat-
tern. Various factors contribute to the effect of good proportion. A building gains unity from its focal centre, in relation to which other objects need to be arranged. The focal effect may be enhanced by observance of the principle of balance, which is not necessarily obtainable only by means of complete symmetry, though both longitudinal and crossways symmetry have been used effectively. There must be harmony between the different parts, both in style and in scale. Generally the best results are obtained when there is but one mind at work. Many Churches have been spoilt because of unwillingness to "look a gift horse in the mouth." The use of contrast, whether in surface textures or in colour, also contributes to good composition.

All these things the architect should aim at, and that by an honest use of his materials. Sham effects are neither good architecture, nor good morals. I have never felt the same about so supreme an architect as Sir Christopher Wren since I learnt of the falsified exterior height in the side walls of St. Paul's. But I feel a much deeper revulsion against concrete parodies of Gothic tracery. New materials do not entirely dictate new styles, but new styles must be evolved in expression of the nature of new materials. If that is functionalism in architecture, it seems to me the only defensible doctrine aesthetically, though the designs of some of the more self-conscious functionalists (what a word!) seem at times to lack grace. Whether this is because they are not very good functionalists, or because functionalism is not all, I leave to others to decide. Certainly the beauty of anything which is to be used, whether it be a seythe handle or a chalice must come mainly from the way in which it has been fitly formed for that use.

Finally, the architect of a Church should usually aim at permanence and stability, both in fact and in appearance, because the building is intended to witness to enduring realities. It should never be necessary to shift any of the furnishings provided for the main functions enumerated above which fall into the normal pattern of use in worship. To be put to the necessity at any time of moving things in order to use them shows inadequate planning.

The direction the architect wants from his employers, who are to use the Church for their worship, will include: the proper object to use as a focal point, the sizes of the different furnishings which will be necessary to their use, and notes as to the disposition of the remainder. For the rest he ought to have a fairly free hand.

What shall be the focal object in a Christian Church? The main tradition of Christendom is plain—it should be the Lord's Table. There is a secondary tradition of no great antiquity, it comes from the eighteenth century, which places the pulpit in the dominant position. It is a point on which opinions differ among Churchmen, but the trend towards the older tradition has set in strongly, and that not solely among those of a "Catholic" emphasis. I must cast my vote for the main tradition. Here are reasons: The service of Holy Communion, whether frequent or infrequent, is the central act of Christian worship in all the variations of tradition. The Holy Table, used for this service, is a symbol of the Church's Lord and of fellowship in Him. A table is the natural centre for the meetings of God's Family. The pulpit is used for the proclamation of the Christian faith, it symbolizes the face that there is a message from God for the world. But preaching is not the whole, nor the centre, of Christian worship. Further, the pulpit is designed to make the preacher prominent. The symbolism becomes confused. Again, for intimate, effective preaching, the preacher should be brought physically as close to his hearers as possible, and this does not always accord with having the pulpit in the focal point. Finally, from the aesthetic point of view, the Table, with its long horizontal lines, is a more restful focal object than is a pulpit with its predominantly vertical lines.

One of the striking new emphases which is springing up in every Communion in Christendom by way of spontaneous response to the pressures
of our age is a rediscovered emphasis on the corporate fellowship of the Church. The Church is God's Family, and all are members. This is securing architectural expression in a strong trend towards arranging Churches so that the Family is close to the Table, and may even surround it. This calls for broad shallow sanctuaries, and broad naves, often almost square in plan. The plan of the John Keble Church, Mill Hill, is highly suggestive here. Pulpit and lectern are prominently placed so as to balance on either side of the shallow sanctuary. The latest thing in Roman Catholic liturgical practice, and in a few Anglican Churches, has been to build churches of this type so that the celebrant at the altar faces the people. The reason is to emphasize this note of fellowship. Most of the Reformed Churches have always followed this arrangement, and for the same reason. It was also the arrangement in the Primitive Church, with which in some ways wide-awake Christians feel a closer kinship every day.

The disposition of the organ and the choir can be a difficult problem. There is a strong trend towards placing them at the back of the Church, often in a gallery over the entrance. This is economical and acoustically good. For the position dominating everything and sounding forth in the teeth of the people there is no possible defence except that of bad custom. A choir in such a position makes all hope of symbolism in the focal centre quite vain, unless one tries the desperate expedient of hiding it behind a screen, which muffles the sound. But the vulgarity of these central choirs is slowly being recognized.

The Anglican solution of a robed choir in the chancel is, except in cathedrals, an unfortunate innovation of last century—one of the less inspired by-products of the Oxford Movement. It separates the People of God from the Holy Table. Where the position at the back is not adopted, another very good solution will be found at Mill Hill. The choir is placed in the midst of the congregation in the centre of the nave. There is excellent Anglican precedent for both these alternatives to the chancel arrangement.

If we cared to build in this country in a modern style with such materials as God has given us (chiefly brick, concrete, and timber) and in line with the new trends in Christian thought, we could be in for some really good Church building in the next hundred years. It is clearly high time that the Gothic tradition was abandoned. It suits neither our climate, our earthquakes, nor our purse. As used in this country so far it has been an imitative and artificial style, not native to us, and doomed to decay into insincere irrelevance. It is still a "live" style in England, though there have been many very notable buildings in much more modern idioms. Let us create our own traditions. If, in many places, we have not scope for more than all purpose parish halls, with small chancels which can be screened or curtained off, even these can be built in a simple, clean-cut manner, as the excellent Union Church at Taits shows. The glory of the invisible God is not proclaimed only in great cathedrals. It is able to inform very humble buildings where there is real craftsmanship and the honest embodiment of a purpose.
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A New Zealand Manufacturer has sound progressive views

It is hard to express what a joyful kick we derived from an interview with Mr. R. H. Stewart, managing director of Plastic and Diecasting Ltd., Christchurch, who supplied us with his views on design for the manufacturer of goods in New Zealand, an account of his factory and most important, samples of his wares. This company deserves the attention of every architect and of all interested in sound well-designed goods. Mr. Stewart keeps in touch with modern developments. He is the only New Zealand member of the English Institute of Plastics whereby he is kept posted with the latest information. The company was founded recently and their staff has already grown from thirty to ninety-five. They produce plastic mouldings (compression mouldings of thermo-setting bakelite type), die-castings in brass, aluminium, and zinc. Their trade mark is PDL. Their articles are mostly electrical and builders' hardware.

Views on Manufacturing For New Zealand

They consider that architects must often find that there is not electrical apparatus, to take an example, conforming to their views of design. They are therefore forced to install goods which shock their sensibilities. Manufacturing here being in its infancy there do not appear to be first class industrial designers with adequate technical knowledge. The architects should themselves approach this problem for a solution, as it is in their sphere to demand and insist that what they install answers their conception of how a job should be done.

Moreover it is being realized that an article made outside New Zealand is not thereby better in design or more serviceable than local products. The best approach to the manufacturer of electrical wiring accessories is to create, as far as possible, an entirely new article suitable for local conditions. In this the New Zealand manufacturer, knowing the requirements of the trade, has an advantage compared with an overseas firm which generally considers the expense of developing a particular article for this market is not justified.

An Example

The switch illustrated is one of several examples of new design where this firm was not satisfied to start manufacturing on existing patterns which were not in every instance wholly satisfactory. The matter called for new designs based on fundamental function rather than on improving existing patterns. This is one of several types of switches for which they have designed new models embodying new principles, and which are more satisfactory than those generally in use.

Some Difficulties

In one instance the time from when the idea was conceived until the article was placed on the market was eleven months. It entailed considerable capital expenditure which is not recovered until a quarter million are sold. To keep the price competitive each switch recovers a small portion of the capital outlay.

New designs present the further problem of acceptance by the authorities responsible for approval. This approval must be given before the article is marketed. These are the penalties paid by men of initiative who wish to improve on current design.

They are designed

Design is in the hands of the managing director who considers that as the services of industrial designers are not available, those people responsible for quality of housing should be consulted. His practice is to make pencil designs and, after approval, wooden samples.
These designs he submits step by step to an architect conversant with modern design and with an active interest in the improvement of design in New Zealand manufactures.

Finish is a special concern. The dies of hard steel are polished by hand with emery and are chromium plated. The result is a plastic with a high quality finish.

From examples we inspected we are convinced that these new technical designs are of outstanding performance and efficiency, and therefore of particular interest to architects and the discriminating buyer.

**Good design in the factory**

The workshops where these articles are made are themselves the subject of care and planning. The machine shops are among the few, possibly the only one in New Zealand, painted to be bright and cheerful in accordance with the British Standards Institute recommendations for the use of colour in factories.

Benches, except the working area which is left plain wood, are in cream with green edging and feet chairs likewise. The workshops are not only made more pleasant by this, but also benefit by more light.

When machines are imported they are often painted grey which looks dirty and drab. So all machines are first rubbed down and then painted cream, with electrical apparatus in orange and danger points in red. Tools and equipment are kept on shadow boards.

All very expensive? Yes it costs hundreds of pounds. Does it pay? The answer is emphatically yes, for these reasons:

(a) It keeps the staff, who have pride in being associated with the place.
(b) It maintains a high standard of production.
(c) It encourages orderliness in the productive flow.
(d) It leads to better treatment of tools and machines with consequently lower maintenance costs.

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This photograph, taken at night, is of a prominent Government building.

"Mazda" Fluorescent Lighting has been installed on the middle floor, first step in the conversion from filament lighting of the whole building. When the photograph was taken the other floors were still lighted by filament lamps. For plans and specifications of fluorescent lighting, consult any branch of THE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL & ENGINEERING CO., LTD., Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Wanganui, Hastings.

NOTES

Shoddy Standards of Today:

"New Zealand today is full of shoddy goods, shoddy houses, shoddy cities—and the implements we use, the very tools of trade, are shoddy, too," said Professor C. R. Knight, senior professor at the Auckland University College School of Architecture, addressing the inaugural luncheon of the newly-formed Design Guild in Auckland recently. More than 200 people enrolled in the guild, which is intended to furnish a forum for the exchange of ideas of people wishing to improve the conditions of life in its visual requirements.

"Just here and there," Professor Knight continued, "we find something gracious—a Sehyn church, a modern home, a piece of silver, or even a garden spade—but they are hard to find, and I must be pardoned if I wish that we had not fallen into the evil of making anything do for the job of living.

"We have many things in New Zealand of which we are proud. The glorious countryside, the mountains, lakes and beaches, high wages, short working hours, universal education—all commonly called the high standard of living. But can it be a high standard of living when good design is rated so low?"

The excuse put forward for bad design and shoddy goods, said Professor Knight, was that they "would do the job," ignoring the neglect of inspiration given to man by doing that job perfectly and the enjoyment he received by doing it well.

"If we start to do a job in a slovenly manner," he said, "making do, the time comes when the whole fabric becomes repulsive. It has become a collection of ill-considered, unsatisfactory units, and working with it is ineffective."

One of the tragedies of urbanized living as created by the industrial revolution was the divorce of art from living—the worship of material functionalism at the expense of aesthetic emotionism. Generations had grown up educated to believe that art was something to enjoy with leisure, playing little part in the everyday life of the individual. The failure was in not realizing that true gracious living was a unification of the material and aesthetic.

Book Review

Replanning Our Towns and Countryside, by Andrew Benko, T. Rex, and V. Lloyd. Published by W.E.A., South Australia; price, 3s. 6d.

This booklet is produced from a series of twelve lectures delivered from April to October, 1948, at the University of Adelaide. It is a study of the efforts to change the purpose and scope of town and country planning. In 72 pages it tries to cover practically everything. After dealing with the history of planning, it attacks the problems in the town, developing from the neighbourhood unit to discussion of town problems such as parking, traffic, and their solutions. It then widens into regional planning—the relation of country to town; the final chapters deal with planning legislation and practical experience in other countries as well as in Australia. (In this last connection is mentioned the Te Aro Flat Exhibition of the Architectural Centre, Inc.) The booklet contains a good bibliography of books and periodicals and also a glossary of town-planning terms.

For the person who is already aware of the need for planning but who wants a concise explanation of terms and some idea of contemporary application and legislation, this book is highly useful; but for the complete layman who needs to be convinced before he will accept this "planning business," it would be insufficient. The style does not arouse interest. Subjects are covered with alarming rapidity and apparent lack of integration. The layman in Adelaide, who is probably as conservative as is his New Zealand counterpart, would no doubt find Corbusier's vertical garden city on skis startling, to say the least. In fact, the whole production appears rather too technical and impersonal. Since planning must be based on sociological consideration, one is left to wonder whether the authors did not start from this idea—find out what constitutes a good life for the people, integrating points such as parking and open spaces from this basis. This would have made the relation of planning to people far more apparent.

In spite of these shortcomings, which no doubt are due partly to translating lectures into print and mainly to the lack of space, this book is a worthwhile addition to literature on town planning for demonstrating that it is possible to bring planning to the people in concise, simple language.

-A.M.C.
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