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Design Review is published bi-monthly by the Architectural 
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Design Review is printed by Geo. Slade Ltd., Wellington. Blocks 
by Thompson Photo Engravers Ltd., Wellington.

A subscription is a good way of getting your copies of Design 
Review regularly on publication. The subscription is 10/- for 
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APOLOGY
The article on Japanese Houses, inadvertently stated 
to be written by O. N. Gillespie, was actually written by 
O. A. Gillespie. We very much regret this error.
THE EDITORS
BRIGHTER SHOPS

Within the past year an increasing number of sleek 'modern' shops have appeared in the larger towns, particularly Auckland. Retailers appear to be coming under the influence of new store design in the States, which has been so amply illustrated in American architectural magazines. There has been much good original design using colour, texture, materials and light in an effective way to attract people in from the street and provide a gay and pleasant atmosphere for selling. This is a welcome trend away from the conventional shop with deep showcases, narrow entrance and vitrolite front. The idea now is to open the shop up to the street and make the shop itself the display. But it is not enough to use this idea at random. If not applied with full knowledge and design skill, it can be disastrous for the shopkeeper. I am thinking of a remodelled shoe store in Wellington which, though attractive to look at, exposes the stockinged feet of customers to public view. There is another case of a women's frock shop opened right up to the footpath, and one looks into an expanse of carpet with the goods around the walls. A customer would have to be fairly sure of herself before stepping beyond the threshold. One is not cunningly lured in, or even encouraged. Though 'smart' to look at, this is a mis-application of an idea.

* * *

BEETTER FURNITURE

Though with advancing years, I seem to become more critical and less tolerant of poorly-designed objects, I am sure there has been an improvement lately in some of the furniture in the big stores, particularly easy chairs. The wooden-armed lounge chair is replacing the padded upholstered Leviathan with its massive arms, and the 'three-piece suite', the be-all and end-all of most suburban living-rooms, is losing favour. I should like to ascribe this to an improvement in people's design sense, but I am sure it is really because rising building costs mean smaller rooms; there just isn't any space in most houses now for the padded 'three-piece'. Of course, only a small proportion of these new chairs are handsome; the point is that one can now buy quite a good-looking and comfortable chair without having it specially designed or imported from overseas.

* * *

A LOSS TO DUNEDIN

I have heard so many stories about the Scotsman's over-cautionary attitude towards money that I had considered this trait was probably grossly overplayed. But I have been unable to find any other reason for the reported demolition by the Dunedin City Council of the old home of the late Sir John Robers. I hope to be corrected if I am wrong, but I understand that this house and garden were among the finest of their kind in the country. The house, a huge and solid structure in permanent materials, was bequeathed to the Council by Sir John—so conditions, no trustees—a direct gift. The house was subsequently converted into quarters for married university students, and, though very successful in this respect, failed to reap the required rate of interest. The house and gardens, including the magnificent trees, have been demolished and bulldozed. The land is to be used for playing fields, which, I suppose, will bring in some return from ground fees. Letters of protest to the Council and members of the family were unable to prevent this destruction. It is a serious loss—historically, socially and architecturally—to the country as a whole and to Dunedin in particular, which is now so much poorer and so much nearer to resembling any other New Zealand town.

* * *

WAR ARTISTS EXHIBITION

The exhibition in the National Gallery of the paintings of the war artists is the only opportunity we have had of seeing this work together. It enables us to evaluate the total work, both as painting and as historical record. I found the exhibition disappointing on both counts. As paintings they are competent—there are few more capable draughtsmen in New Zealand than Russell Clark. The other two official artists, Barnes-Graham and Peter McIntyre, are also good technicians. As historical records the paintings are of doubtful value. Peter McIntyre, who was our only official artist in the Middle East, has done little more than record incidents. One wonders whether photographs would not have served the purpose as well. In fact, I am suspicious that many of the paintings were in fact taken directly from snaps. I cannot imagine Winston Churchill posing in the desert in his hobnail suit for his side portrait.

The pictures have a sameness about them that becomes monotonous. The portraits are among the best, I thought. They are certainly the best of Barnes-Graham's work—strongly yet sensitively handled. What was most lacking was any suggestion of war on the lives of the soldiers or even civilians. No excitement, no fear, no horror, no courage nor weakness. The only exceptions were two large oil colours by J. B. Coe of war in the jungle. These were realistic—you felt that this was the reality of war. Unpleasant? Of course it was unpleasant.

* * *

SCHOOLS OF BRITAIN

An architectural exhibition from overseas is a rare event in New Zealand. So it was with feelings of expectation that I visited the opening of the exhibition of recent British schools prepared by the Royal Institute of British Architects. My expectation was heightened by illustrations of many fine school buildings I had seen in the Architectural Review and by a recent visit to the Old Country. What a disappointment to see only a selection of conventional buildings, most of which could just pass for mediocre design! Where were Aalin's brilliant prefabricated steel schools in Hertfordshire, of which fifty have now been completed since the war? Where were Yerke and Rosenberg's new schools in Stevenage and Poplar? If recent British school buildings have anything to teach us, these are the ones we should have been shown.

Mr. Richard Halliver, the new British Council representative in New Zealand, explained at the official opening that, due to mishaps, the exhibition was late in arriving in New Zealand. In fact, it was so badly damaged in Australia that it had to return to London to be re-prepared. But this hardly explains the poor selection of buildings. Though mounted on beautiful aluminium screens, the illustrations were not always clear. Many were so small that they were no use at all, and others so large that one had to stand further from them than there was space in the hall. An exhibition such as this does not help to boost our own low architectural standards. Could it be that the R.I.B.A. cannot recognise good buildings when it sees them?
THE JAPANESE HOUSE

O. N. Gillespie

Through the centuries the home of the Japanese peasant, farmer and artisan has remained the same—a simple, unpretentious residence and charming because of those very qualities. Fashionable design has not affected its construction. Changes have come very, very slowly, and principally since the introduction of Western ideas after the restoration of the Emperor Meiji in 1868—changes such as the use of glass for windows, electric power and iron for pipes instead of lengths of bamboo. Before the Meiji era even the nobles and aristocracy lived in houses similar to those seen everywhere in Japan to-day, except that they were much larger and their refinements of decoration more delicate and noticeable; but, once Japan accepted the ideas of the Western world, the wealthy and noble families vied with each other in building vast mansions, most of them modelled on Victorian lines (even to heavily-embossed wallpapers) or old English manor houses or French châteaux of the Renaissance period. But even these mansions always contained a wing built in Japanese style, as were—and are to-day—the quarters for the servants. These notes, however, are not concerned with this magnificence, for most of these large houses reflect this word, but only the simple traditional buildings the Japanese call home. In this respect they are, as a nation, curiously like the British peoples in their love of home and all that the word implies.

Rooms and furniture and interior decoration as we know them have little or no counterpart in the Japanese house, and, as land is so valuable,
not an inch of space is wasted. Consequently, even in distant farming communities, the houses are huddled together in little villages or hamlets, the owners going to and coming from their patches of farmland each day at dawn and dusk. Only the larger landowners — and they are comparatively few — built their homes on their farms. Wherever you go you come on these farming communities among the hills, a few houses among tiny gardens in the valleys, clinging for the most part to sloping ground, with only narrow paths and tracks dividing them, since streets would be a waste of space. In the larger towns and cities, of course, dwellings are packed one against the other along narrow streets, so closely that a Japanese remarked to me one evening when we stopped to listen to all the noises: ‘Now you know why we never have any family secrets in Japan.’

During my years in Japan I lived in three different houses, and visited many others ranging from those of simple farmers and fishermen to royal residences and the mansions of the aristocracy. Two of my houses were exactly as their owners left them at the end of the war; the third had been remodelled on European lines by the installation of modern plumbing, carpeted floors, an open fireplace and our own furniture, bath and shower, but it still retained its essential character, and I must admit that the welding of styles and ideas was most successful.

A Japanese house is always built sufficiently high off the ground to permit the free current of air underneath it. Blocks of granite or rock from the hillside, used as foundations in olden times, have now been replaced by concrete or wooden piles. The main supports for the roof are usually slim trunks of pine or cedar, stripped of their bark and polished. These are so fitted into the house that they frequently become part of the decoration of the interior. The outer walls are a simple plaster made of clay and finely chopped rice straw, shovelled to a proper degree of consistency by withered old crones who do most of the heavy work for the men. This plaster is laid thickly between and over lathes of bamboo, the outer and inner walls being smoothed and sometimes whitewashed, but more often retaining the ochre colour of the clay. A modern conceit is to allow a few boards to show on the outer walls, so that the larger houses take the appearance of English cottages of the Elizabethan period. There are few houses built entirely of wood — more since the end of the war. Creosote or a brown stain takes the place of paint, which is never used. There are few windows in the small Japanese house, since sliding glass and paper screens take their place.

The roof is of tiles, dull red or
blue-grey, according to the district, though one still sees numbers of thatched roofs in the country areas—reeds, rice straw or the bark of the cedar. Tiles and other rough pottery are made in almost every district, the kilns being built on hill slopes, one above the other, so that no heat escapes through chimneys. These tiled roofs make a quaint pattern of every hillside village. Little porches are deliberately placed to break the main lines, and tiny Shinto or Buddhist lions, so familiar outside every shrine or temple, usually surmount the highest point of the roof. Tile-ends at the eaves carry some modest design, the more wealthy using the family crest. In the era of the Tokugawas, the shoguns who isolated Japan from the rest of the world and raised the country’s standards of art almost to a religion, their family crest, three hollyhock leaves, was employed as a decorative feature on the roofs and pillars and gates of many shrines and temples.

The house itself is oblong in shape, sometimes modified in design so that one end extends to enclose one side of the garden. It therefore takes the form of the letter T with one shoulder removed. A narrow verandah occupies the length of the sunny side of the house and opens on to a garden. This verandah serves several purposes. Most of the compartments of the house open on to it; it enables the whole house to be lighted and aired without using windows; it becomes a corridor for general traffic from room to room, and a view of the garden is obtained from it. The outer screens of this verandah are now of glass and wood, with additional runners for storm shutters used during the rainy and hurricane seasons. Tiny screws fitted with butterfly nuts enable the owner to secure these screens if he wishes to lock the house.

The only parts of the house which are divided by what we would term walls, also of clay and straw plaster, are the kitchen and the bathroom. All the other space, except in houses occupied by the wealthier and officer classes, are divided by paper screens about five to five and a-half feet high. Above these screens there are permanent divisions to allow for the grooves in which the screens slide. These screens, which were evolved before the days of glass, serve a variety of purposes, and are in themselves quite beautiful. Those from temples are works of art and are much sought after should a temple be demolished. The inner screens are made of thick opaque paper surrounded by bands of lacquer or polished wood. They are beautifully painted in the Japanese manner with a few sprays of bamboo or blossom, a twisted tree, the shape of a mountain or birds in flight. This decoration is never heavy, and quite often consists only of a few strokes of gold or silver paint. Screens which open on to the verandah and the kitchen wall are made of fine layers of wood for the lower third, and a grey paper for the two upper thirds. This paper is divided into tiny panes with slivers of bamboo, and the light which filters through is most restful. By the use of these screens a Japanese house may be opened and closed as the seasons dictate; for instance, in the summer, which is oppressively hot, they are removed to allow a greater circulation of air; in winter the whole house may be closed into a series of small compartments, thus preserving all the available heat. There is no difference in the design of the Japanese inn, so that such a thing as complete privacy is unknown. Nor are there such things as fireplaces in the Japanese home. Fuel is as scarce as arable land in this country, where not a leaf or a twig is wasted when a tree is demolished. Charcoal is used for both heating and cooking. Large and beautifully decorated crocks of pottery known as hibachi are placed in the rooms. A few inches of sand in the bottom prevents them from burning the matting on the floor, and on this glows the charcoal fire. The family sits round the hibachi, usually with the hands draped over the rim. All cooking is done on small charcoal braziers, with a minimum of pots and pans, since all Japanese food is simple and usually boiled or fried. Its tastiness comes from the sauces used.

Thick mats of rice straw, encased in closely woven matting and known as tatami, cover the floors. These
are polished with wax, and exude a faint and not unpleasant musty smell. They are supported on rough boards and are taken up twice a year, in spring and autumn, and given a thorough dusting. The floor grooves for the sliding screens divide the house into compartments, and a compartment is never referred to by its size in feet and inches, but always by the number of mats it takes—three, five, seven or nine. The numbers are never even, and the mats are never laid evenly, but one sideways, one lengthways, so that the darker coloured edging of the mats gives a pattern to the floor. Footwear is never worn in a Japanese house, but is removed and left at the entrance porch, which is provided with cupboards and a selection of long-handled shoe horns. This entrance porch is paved at ground level, with a high step on which to sit, either to chat and bargain, as in the small shops, or to remove and put on footwear. Rows of shoes and wooden geta at the entrance to a Japanese inn reveal the number of guests staying there. When the Japanese wear European boots and shoes they never look tidy about the feet, because boots or shoes are always one or two sizes too big, so that they may be easily slipped on and off.

The interior of a Japanese house is an interesting study in simplicity. There is little or no furniture. One sits, eats and sleeps on the soft tatami matting. Japanese raise and lower themselves without using the hands as a lever, hence the excessive development of thigh and leg muscles. But they do it most gracefully, and sit for hours with their crossed legs tucked under them. Visitors are given silk cushions on which to sit round low lacquer tables at mealtimes. At night thick padded quilts known as futon are laid on the floor, and similar quilts used as covers. Pillows are tiny, filled with rice husks and tucked into the nap of the neck. Pyjamas are always provided for guests, though a loose-fitting cotton kimono is the more usual sleeping kit.

The interior of the house contains many cupboards, cunningly arranged so that their sliding screens resemble those forming the walls. Here everything is put out of sight—all the family possessions; all the clothing, which is always laid flat; all the bedding; even the tiny stand mirrors before which the women kneel to put on their make-up or arrange their hair and kimono. Kitchen and eating utensils are similarly kept out of sight and, as each member of the family has his own chopsticks, washing-up is simplified. The Japanese are fond of collecting pottery, but even the choicest collections are kept in cupboards, each piece wrapped in its own cloth and in its own box. These are brought out only if a visitor is really interested. But there is one place, and one place only, where some possessions are displayed—a raised alcove and the place of honour. In it hangs a kakimono (small wall picture), and on the floor below it is a flower arrangement, a piece of pottery, lacquer or bronze, the whole forming a most agreeable picture. Each is changed regularly and according to season, and the womenfolk spend hours exploiting their artistic ability, which is considerable, even among the peasants.

Every Japanese home has a bathroom, and everyone uses it. But there is no running hot and cold water or bath as we know it. The room is on ground level, paved with tiles or stone blocks or, in later years, concrete, and drains into a neighbouring gutter. The bath itself is usually a kind of copper with a false wooden bottom. It is heated from below, and the fire stoked.
through a hole in the outer wall. The whole family uses the same bath water, but only after cleansing themselves thoroughly before getting into the bath. Tiny pine-wood pails are provided for this purpose, since the Japanese believe that the bath water must be left as clean as when they entered it. In the thermal regions—and they are many and splendidly utilised in Japan—water is fed into beautiful tiled baths by bamboo pipes from the neighbouring springs.

There is always an ornamental garden to a Japanese house, however small it may be. It may consist only of a few small trees in pots and a few stones and patches of garden moss, but the wealthy classes excelled in creating gardens of amazing beauty. There are no formal flower beds, borders or shrubberies. Rocks and stones and gnarled trees, flowering shrubs, stone lanterns, pools and cascades are arranged so that a perfectly balanced picture greets the eye from every angle. Formality is abhorred. The garden is reached from the verandah, not by formal steps, but by blocks of stone or granite used as such. Holes are bored through flattish rocks, so that the water oozes up through them and drips over the edges to give the effect of natural fountains. In Kyoto, the old capital of Japan and its art centre to-day, streams run down from the pine-clad hills which surround the city, and here the wealthy residents have created gardens of incredible beauty. Only human patience and time itself could have shaped the trees as one sees them here, or designed pools and cascades among the groves of cherry and maple, pine and bamboo, with the houses themselves so much a part of these gardens that architect and gardener must have worked together.

The Japanese make great use of their woods. One of the more charming refinements is to cut sections from the trunks of ancient trees, parts of which have rotted with age, and use them as panels above the sliding screens. The decayed portions are removed, thus leaving an unusual pattern of the solid wood, sometimes almost as delicate as irregular lattice work. Sections of such wood are also used as a base on which to stand vases and flower containers, and very attractive they are in design.

Except in houses which have been Westernised, the lavatory of a Japanese house is primitive in our eyes. All human excreta is used as fertiliser; consequently a sewage system as we know it does not exist. A small pottery trough let into the paving of the floor with a rounded hood at one end suffices, and over this the user squats on his haunches. Each house or building has its own holding tank, which is emptied regularly and the contents taken out to the farmlands in small wooden tubs. One of the more familiar sights in Japan is the morning and evening procession of carts filled with these buckets leaving the cities. Necessity has driven the Japanese to the use of this fertiliser. Without it the country would become a waste land, since the importation of sufficient modern fertiliser is beyond the nation's economy.
A HOUSE AT YORK BAY

Architect: C. Fearnley

This is a low-cost house—at least as costs go to-day. It is for a young couple with a small son, and is built on the eastern hills overlooking Wellington Harbour at York Bay. This means glorious views, sun all day except early morning, and, of course, most of the wind that goes. As the southerly is the most objectionable, the south wall was sealed off, despite the view of the Heads.

The house is a simple rectangle in plan with one corner cut out. The central spine wall runs right up to the ridge and supports the rafters. This made it possible to eliminate
ceiling joists, and to have sloping ceilings which give a greater spaciousness.

The house is clearly divided at the front entry into two separate parts—living and sleeping, which should be a good working arrangement. The living-space on the north end is fairly open—there is no door between entry and living, and the dining space is in a recess. The study, though, is cut off as a separate room, which is a pity in some ways, because had it been integrated with the rest of the living-space, the house would have gained much in spaciousness and interest. Though a separate room was the owner's wish, a low screen wall or other partial division could have provided the visual barrier required. In a low-cost house such a room is rather a luxury. How would it be to have a study alcove off the parent's bedroom? This would have a lot of area and provide the quiet needed. After all, the bedroom is in use only eight or nine hours a day. Of course, the study would be useful for a guest bedroom, though one wonders again whether the occasional guest would not be just as pleased to use a divan in a corner or alcove of the living-space.

The relative openness of this part of the house creates a heating problem. Without a system of overall house-heating, all that can be done is to warm one room for sitting in and leave the rest. In this house, an open fire must heat hall, living and dining. A roaring fire could probably cope with this on a bitter wintry night, but it would be no problem to one of the improved form of space-heaters.

The most convenient place for eating is probably the kitchen rather than the designated dining recess. But what family does not want such a room when guests come, and for the Sunday roast? The kitchen table folds against the wall to provide space for the youngster to play when it is wet outside.

The bedrooms receive the afternoon sun and the harbour view. The main bedroom is above average size, with a bank of wardrobes and recess for a dressing-table. But its proportions prevent its full use. Where, for instance, would a chest or bank of drawers go? In a double bedroom it is usually more convenient if the greater dimension is to the side of the beds rather than at the end of them.

The furnishings shown in the illustrations are not the final articles. They were already in the possession of the owner, who intends to build new pieces to suit the house in his basement workshop.

The large sliding windows in the living-space may look costly, but are of simplified construction. The other windows are four feet by three feet. In each pair, one is top-hung and one pivoted to slide down and out. The extra wide sashes made joinery cheaper, as fewer were required.

Colour has been used well. In the living area the walls are light grey and the ceiling pink. In the dining area, the walls are pink and the ceiling grey. The wall in the hall facing the living is bright yellow. The curtains are lime green and the floor covering grey Bisonia rugs.

This is a house that should tend to raise our slowly improving standard of domestic design.
Everybody knows how difficult it is if you want to furnish your house or even your room—to find some decent modern furniture.

So we have decided that it may be of some help to our readers if we try in this column of our magazine to draw attention to various fittings, which are available in New Zealand. It is a widely held opinion that it is the lack of taste of importers, overseas buyers and New Zealand manufacturers that is solely responsible for the modest level in taste which we see in many objects, especially furniture and fittings in the shops. To us this point of view seems unfair to importers and manufacturers. It is rather the public which is to blame; and certainly it is only the public which can bring about a change. Individually designed and made chairs are a contradiction to modern methods of production. A certain minimum sale is required to make production of new models worth while. We are well aware that this fact is used as an excuse for the lack of enterprise of manufacturers. We know that most of the stock-in-trade ware is produced in relatively small lots and not industrially mass produced, as, for instance, a bent plywood chair. This point is essential, and offers the possibility of producing objects of better design under New Zealand conditions of production. That is to say if the public encourages the manufacturer by buying his better-designed models.

The objects we are showing this time are not specially designed and evolved; they are the product of current commercial trends overseas. But if the interest for modern furniture increases enough, there would be hope that objects designed and developed by New Zealand artists could be commercially produced. In the meantime we will look round and show what we can find and think worth buying.

The furniture shown on these pages is available at "Furniture Fashions", 40 Willis Street, Wellington. The photos are by John Ashton, 12 Cashmere Avenue, Wellington.

The little occasional table is made in oak.
Price £8/5/0

The easy chair is also in oak.
Price from £1/10/0, depending on the covering material.
This small table with drawer is made in oak.
Price £7/5/0

This upholstered chair is sprung in Dunlopillo, and is suitable for the housewife as a sewing chair.
Price £10/5/0

This is a comfortable wing chair, suitable for father.
Price £19/19/0
GRAMOPHONE NOTES:

John Gray

Our news this month is mainly of long-playing records, since, owing to one of the numerous industrial bottlenecks to which we have regrettably become accustomed, there has been scarcely an official release of standard discs here since before Christmas. The mighty E.M.I. organisation (H.M.V., Columbia and Parlophone) has awakened from its beauty sleep and announced the issue of its first L.P. records in October, but meanwhile the '78 disc is far from dead, and I might mention a few delectable items which must find their way here sooner or later. First, Madeleine Grey's records of Songs of Auvergne (Columbia LCX 151-3). The Auvergne is a remote district of France whose inhabitants have resisted the influence of surrounding peoples, and whose folk music has an earthy tang and an endless fascination. The tunes on these records were arranged by the composer Canteloube, and have been unforgettably sung by the great French artist Madeleine Grey (who was musically associated with both Debussy and Ravel), accompanied by an orchestra under Elie Cohen. These records are all twenty years old, but have long been prized as collectors' rarities—as one who has vainly tried to obtain them for years I must salute the consideration of Columbia in making them available at last.

Of the multifold recording activities of the last few years, none have been more productive or spectacular than the great revival of the music of Antonio Vivaldi. I recall being excited ten years or more ago, when Ezra Pound announced that no fewer than 300 Vivaldi concerti were known to be gathering dust in a library at Turin. After the war was over, the first signs of activity came from Venice, where the musicologist and conductor Angelo Ephiokian and the great composer Malipiero have been assiduously uncovering, editing and performing the music of this grand master. The task of identifying the Vivaldi concerti, which have appeared with a rush on records, must have been one of the most vexing to face the co-authors of the new World's Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music, due from Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson at any moment as I write this. My latest American L.P. catalogue lists 31 of them, plus an oratorio, a mass, and some odd sonatas.

No one is going to claim that everything Vivaldi wrote is of permanent value, but we have a fascinating sample of his work in a recently released Decca disc (LXT 2600) containing four violin concerti collectively labelled The Four Seasons to which disc I would earnestly commend the attention of all with interest in early 18th century music. The music abounds in naive descriptive effects that cannot fail to delight, and the performance and recording by the redoubtable Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, under Munchinger, are of uniform excellence. This music offers an imposing full-scale introduction to Vivaldi, and those whose appetites demand more will be well catered for when at last arrangements are made for the distribution here of the records put out by the Nixi company, which pays special attention to the work of the Venetian master, and which is responsible for the release, among other things, of his dramatic oratorio Judith Triumphans.

Massenet's opera Manon (Decca LXT 2618-20) is a less than completely satisfying issue which nevertheless cannot be entirely disregarded. Much has been made of the fact that the recording is disfigured by the presence of a narrator, who chips in at odd times to tell us (in French) what is happening on the stage. I know one or two people who have passed the set by just because of this, and yet the commentary is surely less offensive in French than in English (where after about the second playing it became quite unbearable to us). and, as it is sometimes delivered over the music, we can easily persuade ourselves that it is 'part of the show'. I must point out also that the aggregate amount of speaking is about 5 minutes in a performance lasting all of two hours. A more serious cause for complaint lies in the way the opera has been abridged for recording purposes—obviously each scene has been made to fit into its allotted space, and it seems that L.P., with its fixed 10-inch and 12-inch dimensions, and an understandable desire to avoid 'odd sides' in a long work, has been imposing its own set of time limits, as did the '78 system—in other words, the tyranny of the 4 minutes has become the tyranny of the 24 minutes. The cutting is quite ruthless in some places; for example, the important colloquy between the Conte des Grieux and his son in the church scene has been reduced to a flat statement on the part of the former. But those who had their first acquaintance with Manon as given by the visiting Italian opera company will find an entire scene (the open-air fête in Act 3) which is always omitted in Italian versions, and this contains some of the most sparkling music in the score. Despite the drawbacks mentioned above, the performance never errs on points of musical style; it is thoroughly and deliciously French, the Manon (Janine Micheau), Chevalier des Grieux (Libero de Luca) and Lescaut (Roger Bourdin) are right under the skin of their roles, and Albert Wolff, a veteran of opera house and recording studio, draws some ravishingly beautiful sounds from the Opera Comique orchestra and chorus. There is—or was—an older and more complete recording available on about 20 Columbia records, but the compactness and really excellent style of the new L.P. would seem to outweigh its minor disadvantages; and it can be warmly recommended to all but the fanatical Manon devotee, who may choose to await the issue of a more complete version, unaccompanied by the silly innovation of a spoken commentary.

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ALTERATIONS TO A LOWRY BAY COTTAGE

Architects: M. B. Patience and A. L. Gabites

A well-lit wall space was required for the display of paintings and prints, together with a fitting for boots and the display of pottery.

An existing bedroom was enlarged and storage space provided underneath by raising the floor 4 feet.

The existing kitchen facilities were found to be inadequate, so it was enlarged and a new dresser and laundry provided.

MATERIALS:

Exterior weatherboarding is New Zealand larch. The new timber floor in the living-room is polished tawa boarding. The interior walls and ceiling are finished with fibrous plaster.

The builder was Mr. L. Bird.
WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY MERVYN TAYLOR

MERVYN TAYLOR is well known to readers of Design Review, mainly because of his charming wood engravings that have from time to time appeared in its pages. Less is known perhaps of his rather thankless task of co-editing and publishing this journal in the face of the nightmarish cost problems of publishing to-day. Those of us who know Mervyn Taylor know, too, that he has attained the quality of Design Review often at considerable personal interest when we heard that he had been awarded the National Art Scholarship of a thousand pounds offered by the New Zealand Art Societies.

This year the conditions were changed to allow the entry of more mature artists. Too often in this country the artist of promise is so burdened with responsibility in middle life that he cannot bring his work to fulfilment of earlier promise. Mervyn Taylor is not a young man in years. His ability as a craftsman is already well known. All who know him personally cannot but be impressed by his sincere and humble manner, and by the integrity with which he seeks perfection in every aspect of his illustrations. Each biological and historical detail is accounted for, but never at the cost of aesthetic completeness.

His projected course for the next two years is what might be expected from this man. For some time he has been fascinated by Polynesian mythology. When we look at the plates of ‘Maui Taming the Sun’, and more especially ‘The Magical Wooden Head’, and hear him speak of his hopes, we glimpse what might be, and that, too, is fascinating. Apart from a work undertaken by a German artist, Dittmer, at the beginning of this century, a work now out of print, rare and expensive, there is no adequate visual record of the Maori legends. Mervyn Taylor intends to begin with Grey’s Polynesian Mythology as a basis for a series of wood engravings suitable for reproduction in book form. In order to do authentic work, he will live for periods in Maori communities to study and make drawings of the Maori people, and study their carving and artefacts in museums and other sites. In the present rapidly shifting state of Maori culture, valuable material in the nature of unwritten legends and the interpretation of ancient carving is fast being lost. The recording of this knowledge presents another problem in that the mysticism native to all mythology is so easily lost when transferred into the pictorial tradition of another culture. It is inevitable that the story told in Maori carving interpreted into traditional European art will be akin to the French song or Chinese poem turned into English. In Mervyn Taylor’s recent work, however, one realises his unique ability as an interpreter. We can look forward in the next two years, not only to some delightful translations, but also to some gems of the wood engraver’s art.
The Magical Wooden Head
THE FORDHAM HOUSE

Architects: Messrs Lightbody and Kofoed

The house which won its architects the New Zealand Institute of Architects Bronze Medal for 1952 was the subject of an interview recently. Design Review met the owner, Mr. N. W. Fordham, together with Mr. A. Graham Kofoed, of Messrs. Lightbody and Kofoed, registered architects and winners of the medal.

EDITORS: We understand that this house was designed for a family in no great way different from many others in this country. The owner is a business man with a wife, two teen-age daughters and a younger son.

OWNER: That is right. A typical New Zealand suburban family. We entertain a bit, and we like to be handy to town.

EDITORS: You used to live at the Hutt?

OWNER: We had a house of 2,900 square feet there, and coming in to town we felt the loss of area was to be the biggest sacrifice. However, with a properly planned house, 1,600 square feet, as we found out, went just as far. In fact, we now have more usable space and greater conveniences than we had before.

EDITORS: The site, we imagine, played a large part in the design.

ARCHITECT: Yes. Briefly, the ground, when we first saw it, fell mainly into three levels, none large enough to use by itself. The size of the proposed house made us use the greater part of the site to build on, so we used the levels with as little earth-moving as possible. The lowest level we used for a garage and basement play-room, and the next, which was also on street level (it is a steep street), we made the entrance hall, living-room and kitchen. Above, we placed the bedrooms about three feet higher than the main floor.

EDITORS: How is the rest of the site treated?

ARCHITECT: There is a paved terrace on the low level, where the car comes in, which is also the drying ground. The rise to the next level, a boulder bank, dissociates it from the entrance lawn and flower beds.

OWNER: At the back, where the retaining wall is close to the house above, we have a small rock garden.

EDITORS: How do the levels within the house suit the owner?

OWNER: We have found them very satisfactory, particularly for the view. We have a small glimpse of the harbour between the hills, and we can see this from all the rooms in the house.

EDITORS: This dividing by levels has had the effect of keeping the conveniences fairly remote from the rest of the house.

OWNER: Yes, we would have liked a toilet by the front door, but finances prevented this.

EDITORS: Looking at the plan, we notice you have two separate dining spaces side by side. Isn’t this a bit wasteful?

OWNERS: In reality we have most of our meals in the nook in the kitchen, which is well set up with plastic-covered upholstery, and is far handier for my wife. The dining table and chairs are kept for occasions, and when not in use still look a very pleasant part of the living-room.

EDITORS: How was the interior decoration arrived at?

OWNER: I left that to my wife, who acted in co-operation with the architects.

EDITORS: We wondered about the style of the furnishing. It does not fit in with the style of the general design of the house as well as we feel it should.

OWNER: That is partly because a lot of it was already there; we merely had it recovered. The rest we had made to go with it. We didn’t want to have the chairs and tables clashing with each other. Another reason was that we did not want to be too modern inside, so we chose things which suited us.

EDITORS: Another point that interests us is the placing of the fireplace. We think one should feel more enclosed sitting before a fire, and that it is best in a corner of its own.

ARCHITECT: In this case the fire is placed to heat the whole area of the room, since it is the sole means of heating, apart from the electric radiators.

EDITORS: Where do you keep the fuel—in the cupboard beside the fire?

ARCHITECT: That is actually where we originally intended it, but the owner finally decided that it was little enough effort to carry one night’s fuel in a scuttle and stand it beside the fire.

EDITORS: We like the windows in the living-room; the size is generous, but we feel sorry that they were not made to open on to the lawn.

ARCHITECT: We should have liked to have done that, but we were afraid of draughts in the position they are in.
EDITORS: And are the Venetian blinds the result of a desire for privacy?

OWNER: One reason is for the sake of privacy, although we intend to grow a hedge along the edge of the lawn for privacy. Apart from our own liking for Venetian blinds, another reason is to keep the sun off the furniture. The grand piano stands fairly close to those windows, and the blinds are easily adjusted when the sun comes round.

EDITORS: We like the placing of the kitchen in relation to the entrance and living-room.

ARCHITECT: The whole problem of kitchen here was a complex one. In one big space we have laundry, kitchen and meal space, and we tried to arrange entrance and exits (there are four necessary doors in this area) to form divisions in the use of the room. The back porch screens and divides off the clothes from the food, while the door to the hall is handy to both without giving any of those long-range views through the house.

EDITORS: We thoroughly approve of being able to come up from the garage without going outside again.

OWNER: Yes, we are very pleased with that. In fact, that is one of the points of the house that is thoroughly satisfactory to our way of living.

In New Zealand, timber has always been the most important building material. Even the dwindling supply of the better native species and the necessity to substitute for them exotics and natives which would previously have been thought unsuitable has not deflected the industry from its dependence on timber.

This may be partly because alternatives to timber have themselves been in short supply, and partly because our building industry is based on the trade of carpentry. Whatever the reason, we find to-day that we rely on timber for our buildings just as much as ever before, and that we are using species and grades that fifteen years ago would have shocked us. As is so often the case, what is unfamiliar is met with opposition, but as it becomes familiar it is accepted as a matter of course.

However, the result is that we are now using timbers about which many of us know very little. We have not the background of tradition, of successful use over long periods, to guide us in their application and treatment. In the absence of tradition to guide us, our use of any material, if it is to be successful, must be based on thorough knowledge of its nature and characteristics. It is only by knowing their characteristics that we can expect to use the 'non-traditional' timbers so as to exploit their good qualities and avoid their weaknesses.

This leads us to a scientific approach of analysing the properties of the many useful species; in particular, comparing, tabulating and discussing the results. Then, if the preferred or known kind is not to be used, another can be selected with some confidence in the performance that can be expected.

The book under review makes such a scientific approach and is authoritative in the best sense of the term. Its importance is suggested in the following quotation from the first page: 'The report [the book] presents for the first time in the country reliable and authoritative data—comparable with overseas data—upon the fundamental physical and mechanical properties of its woods.' In other words, we have never before had available fully reliable information on the properties of our timbers, and have never been able to fully compare them with the timbers of other countries.

In reading the book, your reviewer was first disappointed by the limited scope covered and the absence of definite recommendations on the use of particular timbers for specific purposes. Later he became more impressed with the thoroughness of the survey and the avoidance of generalisation. It is true that all the test figures are based on small clear
Insulation in the Home

K. E. F. Greene

In your last issue by limited correspondence I drew attention to the importance of insulation when considering the question of heating the home in winter. The use of insulating materials in original design is also necessary to ensure the maintenance of a cool summer atmosphere in temperate zones.

None the less, when considering the important and very much neglected question of equitable and pleasant temperature in the home in both summer and winter a number of other considerations must be borne in mind. These factors are connected with original design—i.e., the orientation of the dwelling, its roof structure, the size of windows and construction of floors. These factors were not investigated in this short note, as it is assumed that proper attention would be paid to these matters in construction. My object is to point the way to a summer-winter compromise within the home: to stabilise and so avoid extremes of both cold and heat; to conserve warmth produced during winter months, and to prevent its early escape and waste by lining ceilings and walls with, as it were, a skin of material designed to insulate. Basic to the crux of home insulation is to prevent the inner linings of walls and ceilings becoming cold and winter and hot in summer. Hence the necessity for insulation between outer higher walls. The effect is wall temperature versus air temperature in a room is amply demonstrated by reversing conditions thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wall Temp</th>
<th>Air Temp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70°</td>
<td>56°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56°</td>
<td>70°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is therefore as important to line heated rooms with lightweight sheaths (fibre board, plaster board, etc.) to facilitate "warming-up" as it is to provide rock wool or thermal insulation. Ceiling insulation is effective in heated rooms, and one or two inches of mineral wool laid on ceilings is adequate provision. The value of insulating walls varies with the conditions. If windows are relatively large the effect of insulating the remaining wall is likely to be small. Insulation of timber frame walls may be achieved by placing mineral wool in the cavity in the form of blanket bats or loose fill not less than 1 in. thick.

There is available in New Zealand to-day an insulating material which consists of glass-fibre elements blasted from molten rock by high-pressure steam jets. These particular fibres entrap millions of tiny air cells that form over 90 per cent. of the mass of the material. This insulation is available in the form of handy-sized batts which fit quite easily between ceiling joists, and also in the form of loose and granulated wools to fill between ceiling joists or wall studbs. The efficiency of this particular insulating material has been proved in use, and its thermal conductivity at a mean temperature of 100° F. is 3 B.Th.U. per hour per square foot per inch thickness per °F. In so far as costs of material are concerned, I understand that the price of the batt for ceiling work is in the region of 13. 0/4, per square foot, whilst the price of a bag of loose insulation material is 10s. (one bag will cover approximately 70 square feet, 1 in. thick) would be 46s. per bag. There is no doubt that the initial cost of insulation becomes an investment by ensuring an equitable temperature in the home and the saving of costly fuels. In these days of rationing, whether heating be with electric current or gas or coal, some provision for insulation should be made in the original design. The economy thus effected eventually proves of benefit not only to the individual but to the state.

Architect's Purchasing Column

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