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DESIGN REVIEW

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Progress and Finance

no organisation could do more to encourage good house design in New Zealand than the State Advances Corporation. Yet it is the biggest bar to progress. It is by far the largest lending agency and so has the final word as to what will and what will not do in the design of a large proportion of our houses. What young architect, keen with exciting designs and ideas for saving costs, has not been knocked back by the State Advances when applying for a loan? In many districts flat roofs and concrete slab floors are not accepted, sloping ceilings, any form of free planning, direct entry to the living room, vertical boarding and many other ideas do not meet the Corporation's requirements. There must be a great deal weight somewhere that needs lifting. And I don't think that dead weight is necessarily the Government; for there are instances when some of our most advanced institutions are State run. It must be a matter of either individuals, or policy. Architects and builders and those house owners who have experienced frustration, should start a move to liberalise this body. To start with, I suggest that someone collect documented cases in which good designs and ideas have been killed and replaced by dull, conventional bungalows.

Thirty Years On

It is not often now that one of the old guard of architecture is so bold as to have a crack at contemporary design. At the laying of the foundation stone of the Wellington City Council administration block, the architect said the building would not have large areas of glass as if it did, the rooms would be cold in winter and hot in summer. Well, that's a hard statement to swallow, when in fact the reverse would be nearer the mark. But you will see what it all means when the scaffolding is removed in a few years' time. In the second half of the twentieth century, we are to see in a young country divorced from tradition and with a strong emergent culture, a reinforced concrete office building with rustication on the ground floor, applied classical pediments over the entrances, narrow vertical windows in deep reveals in formal groupings without relation to the rooms they are to light, and with archaic light wells, looking in all like a stone building of the late 19th century with half its ornament removed. Can one really be oblivious to what has been happening in the rest of the world during the last thirty years?

Outdoor Living

New Zealanders are known to be outdoor people. But do we still spend too much time behind blind-pulled windows, in stuffy restaurants, dingy hotel lounges and shabby congested bars? Why don't we spend more time sitting out of doors, as well as digging, lawn-cutting and playing games? Why don't we drink our afternoon tea on Sunday on the lawn or terrace, or read in a deck chair in the seclusion of a sheltered patio? Why don't we have cafés and restaurants out of doors as in Europe? Whatever the reasons may be—climate, social habit, dull minds or lack of space—I am sure we miss many of the pleasant experiences that life has to offer. Our climate is certainly variable and windy, but we could build sheltered areas—a screen is a simple thing—which would not only keep out the wind, but provide privacy which we so fondly cherish.

I imagine most of us don't have our tea on the lawn because we wouldn't be comfortable there—it is probably cluttered up with beds of annuals, faces on to the street, or overshadowed by the neighbours. And our backyards are either untidy or full of clothes lines and cabbages. These and other matters concerning the way we live, or rather could live if we bothered to think about it for ourselves, are to be subjects of illustrations in this magazine—so the editors tell me. And I hope they will help to wake us all up a little.

Architecture for Students

The 1953 Prospectus of the Auckland School of Architecture is little different from previous years, apart from poor layout. It is always difficult to judge architectural drawings when they have been reduced to such a scale that the lettering cannot be read. But this year's selection of work in the Prospectus shows a maintained standard, which I consider compares favourably with many leading overseas schools. But student work always looks more exciting than any work we see built. Does this mean that once the student becomes a practising architect he loses his design ability, or does it mean his studio work cannot be translated into actual buildings? Or does it mean that the bright boys don't get much of a chance when they leave school?

Auckland Still Out of Hand

A correspondent has written from Auckland disagreeing with my views on the necessity for building more and taller flats in that city. He corrects me on one point, the actual numbers to be rehoused in the Freeman's Bay Redevelopment Scheme and puts forward some commercial thoughts about flat living and flat building which are worth discussion. I have no room in this issue, but the editors are giving me an extra page next time to print the letter and a full reply.

The Three-piece Again

Some months ago I wrote of the disappearance of the massive three-piece Chesterfield suite and its replacement by the fireside chair with wooden arms. One reader has questioned this view, so I must explain further. The reason for the decline of the padded suite was its excessive bulk and weight, together with the diminishing size of modern living-rooms. But it has advantages. We have a truly elephantine suite, and it has stood the ravages of human decline for nearly 20 years with little more ill effect than dropping of the arms. Sitting in it is really a relaxation—one sinks back and is absorbed, two can sit on the sides of each chair, and, though the suite is virtually irremovable, it is also virtually indestructible. Children, parties, sun and cats have failed to send it to the assault rooms. It may not be your answer to comfortable sitting, but is the Maple fireside chair the answer either?
THEATRE AND STAGE DESIGN

Russell Reid

(Russell Reid has been connected with the theatre in New Zealand for twenty years, both as an amateur and professional actor and producer. He has also been a London stage director and studied production in England and France. When cornered he will admit to being an ardent propagandist for the theatre in New Zealand.)

hall with a platform on which to we hear much these days about the theatre in New Zealand and about a 'national' theatre, whatever that may be. There have been various attempts to establish New Zealand theatre companies, professional and commercial organisations as distinct from amateur societies. No doubt there will be many more such attempts, for the theatre has become, despite the absence of such companies, one of the largest, if not the largest, creative community interest in the Dominion. But have we yet, leaving aside such important aspects as artistic ability, knowledge of management and sufficient population—have we yet even theatres in which such companies might play? We have not, and until we have, the day of our own theatre companies taking a full and valuable part in the life of our communities seems to me as far distant as ever. What we need are theatres to suit our peculiar requirements and capacities. What we have, except in rare instances, are buildings of a sort—unsuitable buildings, the blame for which lies with our architects and engineers who designed and built them. These men should have known better.

Having decided who we are throwing bricks at, let us consider why.

The need of such theatres is obvious. Almost everyone agrees with much wise head-nodding whenever the subject arises. Even the daily press has been known to point up the need, provided the information comes from somewhere outside New Zealand. Just recently most of our leading papers carried a five-hundred-word cable message which began, 'The theatre-going public in New Zealand is increasing, but progress is hampered by the entire lack of suitable buildings.' This was part of a review of the situation published in a paper under the auspices of UNESCO. The fact that it had been written in Wellington, published in Paris and cabled back from London does not lessen the fact that the need is urgent. There is a hunger for 'live' theatre. How great it is, few realise. No one knows for instance, just how many amateur theatre groups there are in New Zealand. There are two national organisations—the N.Z. Drama Council and the older, and larger British Drama League. However, they do not contain all the groups. It may startle you to learn that I can vouch for the existence of at least five to seven hundred such groups, I will also vouch for something else. Ask any of them what is their biggest handicap in the presentation of their plays and nearly every single one of them will answer, 'Give us a suitable theatre in which to play.' They are not asking for the moon, either. And whose fault is it that they have not, or at best (unless they are the envy of every other group), have only a perform? In most cases, it is the fault of those who designed or engineered those buildings.

Just what they do have in the way of theatres is to me almost unbelievable in a country that prides itself on its progress. At best, there is a small chain of privately-owned theatres in the main centres which are available at restricted times and usually at very high rentals. Here and there are also municipally owned theatres which, unfortunately, in most cases, have been leased to other interests in such a way as to deny the very word 'municipal' which usually occurs in their title. These are theatres. At least, they were designed as such. They have a stage, an auditorium and sometimes some other parts. But there, any similarity between them and a true, workable theatre of reasonable standard is often very difficult to find. (I emphasize, I am not asking for a stage director's or theatre manager's dream palace.) Elsewhere we have only halls that have platforms—sometimes. Sometimes too, as a result of community effort, some of these halls have been transformed into something that is just recognisable as something similar to a theatre. It is remarkable just how much time, energy, money, paper, and debating has gone into arguments drama groups have had.

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with local bodies up and down New Zealand to get something done about the local hall. Little has been achieved.

The reason lies in the inability of most of our architects and designers (certainly those I have met in this connection) to grasp and understand the merest essentials of what is required. True, they have sometimes been misled by local amateurs asking for something they have only read about. By chance, here and there, some architects have been found already interested in the theatre. But more often than not, they rarely realise that whether they are designing a theatre to replace Drury Lane, London, or designing just a stage in the local hall to be used by the local drama group some nights, the choral society other nights and sometimes the local politician, there are fundamental principles involved which go back hundreds of years.

Just recently one such architect engaged in such a task as altering a hall into a small theatre told me he had decided to install a counterweighted system for hauling scenery up and down, as he put it. “Make it really up-to-date,” he said. Refraining from telling him that such a system was called “flying” scenery, I did manage to break it to him gently that such a system had been designed and used more effectively than in any theatre to-day just about two hundred years ago. He could read about it quite easily and save himself making a couple of errors I could see already in his plan. I mention this to emphasise that there is a whole history of development in the principles and ideas of stage and theatre design, a history that goes back hundreds of years and about which plenty of good books have been written. The language of the theatre, the technical terms used by theatre workers, records much of that history.

In the matter of designing a stage in particular, it seems to me, most of our designers do know the word “proscenium”. But that is about as far as they have reached, for the very good reason that it is about as far as their view of the stage has reached. They have too often only seen a stage from a seat in the stalls. They know nothing of borders and skycloths, cycloramas and battens, dips and flats, the grid and the deck. In short, they know nothing of just how scenery is handled, what is required for its handling and why. Yet they calmly design what they are pleased to call a stage. What other people call it is something quite different. When it comes to the auditorium they are sometimes even more at sea than ever. The principles of what is rapidly becoming the science of sight-lines seem to exist in their minds solely as a theory that ‘everyone must have a good view of the stage’. If they have any knowledge at all of the various factors involved it is often based on an insufficient understanding of what the stage is like in some of the theatres that I have mentioned as actually existing in New Zealand. These proceed to copy with peculiar and often disastrous results, for even these theatres are in many cases badly designed and even for a totally different type of entertainment. I wonder sometimes if many architects involved in such tasks ever consider, for instance, that the six sides of a stage all of which are important, are used in various ways and about which are certain essential factors. A fair sized book could almost be written about the floor or ‘deck’ of the stage itself. Merely putting a platform in a hall does not make the building a theatre with a stage.

I am no expert in these matters; but look, there are grey hairs on my head from trying to handle scenery in some of the places termed ‘theatres’ in this country. I shake my head sadly too, whenever I watch some sincere, earnest drama group coping with the same problems. What some of the architects and engineers are responsible for in some of these buildings is unbelievable. One city engineer, with a memory perhaps of having seen a curtain on a stage in some old and beautiful, Continental Opera House, proceeded to install much the same thing in a city concert hall with a proscenium opening of about twenty-six feet by seventeen. The machinery for operating it ought to be one of the tourist attractions of that city. An architect of similar standing had pointed out to him that he had designed footlights so that they just shone across the deck and lit the performers’ feet. His reply was, “Of course they do, that’s why they are called footlights, isn’t it?” A third such professional man solved the problem of handling scenery on the local town hall stage easily. He designed and had built the stage in such a way that there were real doors and real windows set permanently in the walls so that there would be no need to have scenery for plays at all, seeing that all the plays he had ever witnessed took place in a room with doors and windows in it. These are facts available in concrete.

So pause, please, Mr. Architect and Mr. Engineer before you design the next stage or the next theatre. Do a little reading. Find out about theatre principles. Find out what happens backstage as well as consider the building from the audience’s point of view. And if you younger architects in particular want to plan something that will benefit our communities, add to their welfare and help fill their hearts as well, then do some research into the whole business of stage and theatre design. Theatres for our communities are just as important as swimming baths and hospitals. We need them just as much.

(Note: There are no illustrations to this article. I could have used photographs of theatres in Britain, America and on the Continent, but what I want to see are designs and photographs of theatres that belong to New Zealand.)
A HOUSE ON NAPIER HILL

Owner-Designer . . . . R. M. Yeoman
Architects . . . . Natusch & Sons
Napier

FLOOR PLAN

THE SITE: Falls away from the street with a 17 degree slope towards the N.W., commanding a broad view over trees of Westshore, the curve of the bay, and the distant Kaweka range.

THE PROBLEM: On limited funds, to provide accommodation for a young couple and one son, with possibility of extension; to provide maximum space for entertaining and children’s play; to avoid the cramped-up feeling of a small house, and to take full advantage of sun and the view.

CONSTRUCTION: Concrete slab floor, 4in. x 2in. studs at 36in. crs. with vertical heart matai t & g weatherboards, oiled and stained burnt sienna. R.P.M. one-pitch roof on 7in. x 2in. rafters. Ceiling fixed to underside of rafters.

RESULT: The open planning gives a feeling of spaciousness unusual for a house of 880 sq. ft. The sun-room, acting as children’s place space, circulation space leading to all rooms, etc., works well and avoids narrow wasted passages. The ceiling, sloping from 9ft. 6in. to 7ft. 6in. to give average of 8ft. 6in. and projecting on N.W. side to form 3ft. 9in. eaves overhang, gives perfect sun and glare-control. The large windows reaching to the floor allow the baby to play in the sun, and the big sliding sections make the terrace very much a part of the house. The concrete slab floor is beautifully warm, and very few fires have been necessary in winter.

FINANCE: The owner, a member of the staff of the Architects, on applying for a Rehabilitation load, was informed S.A.C. did not approve of: (1) style of planning, (2) materials, (3) construction, (4) site.

And as no amount of reasoning could change that attitude, finance was readily obtained from a private Insurance Company—the blinkers of unbending rules and regulations seem to have prevented New Zealand’s main lending institution from seeing any merit in a house that does not conform to the 1936 State house pattern. Our national coat-of-arms once bore the motto Onward. It seems to have become rather blurred.

COST: Contract price in December 1950 was £1950.


BUILDERS: R.G. and C. ALEXANDER.
FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE

Nancy Parker

Even the Honan ceramic figurines wanted to dance—though they were static enough where I found them, sedately grouped in a dusty case at the Fogg Museum at Harvard. My holiday mood was showing itself. A trip abroad had meant for me freedom from discipline, deadlines, and "musts". A period of impulsive compulsions if you like: when it was more important to spend an afternoon in the Tate Gallery or the Uffizi, than laboriously to record for oneself this or that historic spot. To draw only what I wanted to, mainly fragments, and always quickly: a black boy on a wharf, a glimpse from a London window, a group in a cafe. One general aim only—to loosen up, to work freely, to have fun.

Not that I don't have fun under normal circumstances. I have always had two kinds of interest as an artist and have found the practice of each equally rewarding. Having spent some eight years in a commercial studio, my interest in commissioned illustration has been as lively as in the free use of watercolour for landscape or decorative figure studies. Concentration on freedom during these few months abroad was merely intended to restore the necessary balance between the discipline of technique on the one hand, and freedom of expression on the other. The advice, "Work hard, and then say, nuts", appeals to me. Not because of the ease with which saying "nuts" would roll off the tongue, or be expected to drip off the end of the brush as a result of hard work. But the more vocabulary one has, or experience with a variety of techniques, the more effectively can one say it.

It was in New York that the search for new freedoms led me to the Art Students League. I think six weeks spent studying Lithography there was its culmination. Once long ago, I had been required to reproduce a seven colour poster (designed by somebody else, and a bad one at that) for the lithographic process, and it had kindled, not extinguished my interest in the possibilities of this medium. There is scope on a stone, to scratch, to scrape, to smear, to chalk, to make lines like the meanderings of cracks on ancient buildings, or textures like those of pitted wood. A thousand stored-up impressions of patterned landscape or strange skylines can find outlet here. The lively atmosphere of the Graphics Department at the League, where individual experiments with new materials, as well as group research, were being carried on in the seemingly severe disciplines of lithography and the kindred arts of etching, engraving and their variants, convinced me of their endless potentialities for artists seeking new freedom and variety in expression.

Working as a commercial artist channels a general desire to draw, into those methods of expression which are adapted to mass reproduction. However, the limitations of block printing by line or half tone, the reduction to a few colours, the requirements of a client, and economic considerations, can also be a challenge. There is a fascination in the never-ending search to
enlarge one's range of expression within these limits. And after all, one is free to choose between the media themselves.

'Small comfort!'—do I hear a hoot from the Art for Art's Sake's? Not at all. All lucid integrated works of art have their own discipline. So too, the discipline imposed from without can be fulfilling. It is true that too great a preoccupation with technique can tighten and inhibit creative thought. Yet lack of skill in saying what he wants to say can render an artist equally inarticulate. In the same way, a fixation on a formula has proved as fatal to the integrity of the artist painting only for himself as to the so-called hack working in a commercial studio.

There is a double interest in drawing for reproduction. First, the conception of an idea within the range of the chosen medium. Then the thrill of steering this child (which one always hopes will be a prodigy) through the intricate birth, the printing process. Each stage is a test. Perhaps a block has to be made, a colour chosen, a plate bitten, a stone inked. Even if one is only directing these operations and not actively participating, it doesn't alter one's vital interest in the result. Will it emerge as one intended it should? Will it, if it is an illustration for a book, really balance the type? Will it, if it is a poster, convey its message clear across the street?

There is a fascination in print-making which has nothing to do with economics or the need for multiplication. A veteran lithographer I met in New York summed it up when he said to me, while he 'mothered' a first run through the hand press: 'I would still make prints if only one print could be pulled from my stone'. He knew the discipline of the stone, the excitement of producing a clean print, and the possibilities of the medium.

There should be no barriers to artistic expression. No forbidden ground. No techniques too lowly to try out, no pigeon-holing of an artist's efforts into categories, 'commercial' 'industrial' or 'fine'. Each medium mastered can be a gateway leading to a clearer statement of the artist's outlook on life. In his ability to draw a precise or decorative line, his penchant for clear diagrammatic statement, his sensibility for colour, or his flair for innovation, his individual viewpoint will be apparent in whatever field he is working. It has been said of Paul Klee that his every mark upon paper was 'a positive controlled act of faith'.

In a recent appreciation in Image of the work of the young English artist Leonard Rosoman, Michael Middleton says, 'If the problem facing the artist in the second half of this century is seen as one of reintegrating values recently isolated and pushed to sterile extremes, Rosoman is a distinguished member of a generation that aims to bring the fine and applied arts together in harness again.' Rosoman himself, whose work enlivens pamphlets, magazines, the theatre, and book production, as well as painting, says: 'These are all aspects of the same problem.'
SCULPTURE EXHIBITION — BATTERSEA

Lithograph by Nancy Parker
A firm is often judged by its letterhead. Generally there is the usual motley collection of colours, typefaces, and devices as dished up by the average printer, expressing (that is, if it expresses anything beside typographical eclecticism) merely the fact that your printer has assumed complete and exuberant control of the whole situation. And this—in spite of the printer's glib line that 'Your best ambassador is your writing paper'.

This is a matter for dissatisfaction. 'Who is right,' you ask, 'the printer or the critic?' Where the printer happens to have been trained in layout the result may be perfectly satisfactory though perhaps rather tame. But when a man untrained in layout exercises control over a thing so personal as to convey the tone of a firm—that, one suggests, is a matter for censure. Just as a voice on the telephone conveys to the ear an impression of its own apart from the words used, so too, it is submitted, does the letterhead to the eye.

If we were to examine most of the letterheads printed in this country we would wonder what reason lay behind their arrangement at all. What, you may ask, do we expect a letterhead to do?

We want to know at a glance the name and address of the sender. If a reply is urgently required then we look for the telephone number.

As far as the design is concerned the first consideration must of course be legibility—the layout must be so arranged as to convey clearly the basic information at a glance—what the designer would call 'display'.

Character must be considered at the same time, for there is no doubt that a business firm may make very good use of its letterheads to establish goodwill. Many firms go to an extreme amount of trouble and expense to equip their businesses with up-to-the-minute methods. Yet they permit the contradiction of using letterheads that might have been designed in the doldrums of the eighteen-nineties.

One cannot offer a formula, for the requirements of every client must be considered on their own. However, some ideas can be stated. There is no need to place emphasis on size. The lettering need not be big. It is more important to relate correctly both the disposition of each element in relation to the others and to the white space available. Very often the symmetrical layout is used, but I find asymmetry gives more freedom. I also find two colours ample when designing and sometimes that it is better to keep the second colour for subsidiary details rather than have equal weight with the primary colour.

E.M.T.
THE CHOICE OF A LETTERHEAD SHOULD NOT BE MADE BEFORE A LETTER IS TYPED ON THE PAGE.
THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST — NAPIER

Architects: Natusch & Sons
Napier

SITE: A typical City Lot 30ft. wide, with a right of way on one side with street front facing North.

PROBLEM: To arrive at a solution which would cost under £5,000 (Building Control Maximum) and at the same time provide a permanent building which would satisfy the needs of the church.

CONSTRUCTION: Reinforced concrete pier and beam and panel construction with plaster finish on exterior and ½ in. pinex insulation board for interior wall and ceiling finishes, except to foyer and aisle wall which are lined with Heart Rimu plywood. The pinex sheathing is placed in the boxing with V-joints covered with paper tape on the inside to prevent seepage into the V's. When the boxing is stripped, all that is necessary to complete the wall finish is stopping up of tie wire holes and painting as required. It does require extra care on the part of the tradesman in placing the boxing and stripping, but considerable saving is made as no plastering is required. Parapets were reduced to a 6in. upturn so that the fabric roof is carried right over and finished with red tile cap.

COLOUR: Exterior snowcrete plaster finish with thin red line round top formed with tiles. Recess panel in street front is dove grey with deep green on panel under windows returning to entrance doors which are faced with birdseye maple. The interior is mainly grey walls with ivory ceilings, deep red floor, deep green columns, rich Rimu plywood clear finished with red lettering on the grey walls.

LETTERING: On the green panel in front is in white perspex set in almost flush with the green plaster wall and at night is lit from behind to form a quiet welcoming sign.

RESULT: A remarkably economical building which with its clerestorey windows gives perfect daylighting. Night lighting for the Hall is ideal with a combination of fluorescent strip on ceiling obscured from view with aluminium vanes, and incandescent bracket lights with green porcelain shades which add colour. The result is particularly restful with good light for reading. Acoustics are excellent, no doubt largely due to the walls and ceilings being sheathed in pinex soft board which also has materially added to the insulation against heat and cold.

CONTRACTOR: G. DIACK, NAPIER.
Top: EXTERIOR VIEW.

Middle: INTERIOR VIEW.

Bottom: INTERIOR VIEW.
THE NAENAE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Department of Housing Construction
Ministry of Works N.Z. Government

Above: KEY PLAN.
Left: TWO VIEWS OF MODEL.
See Front Cover for Further View.

One of the disadvantages about the act of town planning is the length of time which elapses between the formulation of a plan on paper and its realisation in terms of buildings completed. The town planner must indulge in polemics to a certain extent and inevitably with some people words and arguments fail to convince. He must somehow demonstrate his arguments in a form comprehensible to the layman.

Obviously then some sort of physical demonstration is needed to illustrate what is proposed in a planning scheme, either in whole or in part. To build the thing in bricks and mortar is of course out of the question. The next best thing is to build a scale model and this is what the Housing Department has done with their Nae Nae Community Centre proposals.

The beautifully-made model illustrated in the accompanying photograph shows what the Nae Nae residents may expect as a centre for their community activities. As an arrangement you will notice from the key plan the provision made for car parking.

There is, too, a properly arranged area for bus transport facilities. Traffic flows neatly around this “civic island” leaving the island itself to be explored on foot as is proper. The shops are served with goods through service lanes at the rear and so pavements are unencumbered. The Civic space at the core of the scheme is fronted by the local post office, two cinemas as well as the shops, and a hotel is included in the scheme.

As you will see from the photographs of the model, great care has been taken to exploit the visual effect of the arrangement, and the overall architectural result has been achieved only by the studied relationships of the parts to the whole enlivened by imagination and design.

When the scheme has become a full size working model and may be viewed in the flesh so to speak, the Hutt Valley Community will be the possessors of a centre of which they can be proud and town planners will surely have less need to convince by word of mouth.

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**Book Review**

**MYSTERY AND REALITIES OF THE SITE.**


This is a book of interest to Architect and Home Builder alike, for Neutra's understanding of the placing of architecture in the landscape is that of a great master.

His plea for the better understanding of nature and its relation to living should be particularly appreciated in this country, for we live in a land of fine scenery and every day we Neutra says, "Try to understand the characteristics and peculiarities of some fresh little thought about encroachment upon it. Does of your site, heighten and intensify what it may offer, never work against its inner grain and fibre. You will pay dearly for any such offense, though you may never clearly note what wasting leak your happiness has sprung."

These words taken from the end of the book sum up Mr. Neutra's aim. Realising the dismal failure of man to harmonize the advances of techniques, he wants a new approach to the land and nature when we build. Long ago man knew and respected the land, and he understood how to place the town to its best advantage. Nowadays we talk of a section having a view or being exposed etc., but really, we are not concerned enough with how we shall live and how we shall retain the character of the land.

Mr. Neutra shows most convincingly that though we may not consciously be aware of the effect our surroundings have on us, they do react on our life bringing with it either relaxation or irritation.

This is where the Architect comes in—he can assess the site not just in placing the house for the sun, wind, view, but for the subtle things that Mr. Neutra prefers to call the spirit of the section. As an example he shows us that it can be a case of knowing just where to cut the view so that the unsightly power line is not seen and instead, the eye is taken to some distant point on the horizon or to the judiciously placed vine outside for the mind and the body are relaxed when the eye finds rest in the ever-changing view or beauty of the enclosed garden.

There seems little doubt that we have let pass much of the joy of living in harmony with our surroundings in contemporary planning of homes, but perhaps this book will be an inspiration. Marred only by the captions it contains many excellent photographs of Richard Neutra's work, and they will have to serve as a substitute for those of us who cannot enter the buildings and experience them fully.

Perhaps the only thing most of us will query is the lack of small houses and the treatment of houses in relation to others. Many of the houses illustrated are larger than we can afford thought this in itself should not deter those with imagination for the same fundamentals apply whether the houses are large or small. However, on the question of houses in relation to each other Mr. Neutra contents himself with a brief mention of Channel Heights and we are left hoping that he will write another inspiring book on this important question.

MARTIN HILL
GRAMOPHONE NOTES

John Gray

The arrival of Nixa long playing records in saleable quantities has meant the advent of a quite bewildering diversity of music, some of which has long been a closed book to record collectors. How many of us had heard anything of “Orpheus in the Underworld” save the Overture? Of Haydn's masses, Mozart’s “La Clemenza di Tito,” or Bizet's “Pearl Fishers” apart from one or two favourite items? All these and many more now lie on shop counters to tempt us.

It might perhaps be pointed out that Nixa is a blanket name covering the English issue of records by anything up to half a dozen American recording companies, and embracing such important ones as Period, Concert Hall, Renaissance, Vanguard and Haydn Society. This explains the amazing variety of the Nixa catalogue, and also, of course, the disturbing inconsistency of the quality of the recordings—each concern obviously having its own recording characteristics. But it is only fair to affirm that the great majority of these Nixa discs reproduce well on most machines and have agreeably quiet surfaces. Some of them, notably the Bizet opera mentioned above, reach a level unsurpassed by other L.P.'s. Possibly the most important and interesting discs are those sponsored by the Haydn Society, an energetic body domiciled in Boston and not to be confused with the organisation which, under the guidance of H.M.V., recorded the string quartets in pre-war days. The new Society has also included the quartets in its curriculum (all 83 of these are being recorded by the Alexander Schneider Quartet), but it casts its net so wide as to include two or three dozen symphonies, a number of masses, concertos, divertimenti, and keyboard sonatas, even a full-scale opera, Orpheus and Eurydice, never given publicly since Haydn wrote it in 1791, until it was heard in 1951 at Salzburg.

From the Concert Hall Society's catalogue, Nixa have pressed such invaluable acquisitions as the complete string quartets of Beethoven, done in forthright, sober style by the French Pascal ensemble, and for those with less austere tastes there are some interesting and virtually unknown works by Tchaikovsky, such as his orchestral suites and his other piano concerto. And the Nixa catalogue has much to interest the collector of music stemming from the era before Bach and Handel.

Since early October the English scene has been enriched by the entry into the L.P. arena of H.M.V., Columbia, Parlophone and one or two of their subsidiaries. None of these discs has appeared here at the time of writing, but the English reviewers have been most impressed by an H.M.V. disc of the Monnowsky-Ravel Pictures at an Exhibition, played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Kubelik. One of the most interesting items in the first Columbia lists would appear to be the Berliner Harold in Italy, newly recorded by William Primrose with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Thomas Beecham.

Decca were our first friends in the L.P. world, and they have not been content to rest on their laurels. Simultaneously with the opening of the H.M.V.-Columbia offensive, Decca have come forth with such mouth-watering enterprises as the Beethoven Ninth Symphony, done in Vienna under the direction of Erich Kleiber, and a new Mahler song of the Earth with Kathleen Ferrier and Julius Patzak as the singers and the one and only Bruno Walter as conductor. Their latest operatic ventures range from a Pelléas et Mélisande under the experienced eye of Ernest Ansermet to new and highly successful versions of Tosca and Aida with all-star Italian casts.

A recent Decca arrival sure to be in great demand is their long awaited recording of Swan Lake on two discs (LXT 2681-2). This will give complete satisfaction to all but the most fastidious balletomanes, who may object to some of the omissions, the most serious of which are the brilliant variations and coda to the Act 3 pas de deux. There is evidence that the work has been huddled on to the four sides allotted, but that is really a small price to pay for such richness. The recording contains every piece of Swan Lake previously obtainable on the '78 records, and a great deal of exciting 'new' material from which one might single out the enchanting pas de trois with variations in Act 1, and the plaintive dances of the swans in Act 4 which, though not actually intended for this ballet in the first place (they come from some of the composer's late piano pieces) nonetheless fit the atmosphere perfectly. And all will rejoice to have the famous second act absolutely complete at last. Performance and recording, by the London Symphony Orchestra under Anatole Fistoulare, are alike first rate, and no less an artist than Campoli has been engaged to play the solo violin passages.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

I have just finished reading the October/November issue of your magazine. There are two points made in this issue which I strongly disagree with.

In the last sentence of your article on the Wellington Technical School of Architecture, you have stated that “inspiration is the result of hard and exacting labour and not something vaguely labelled 'intuition.'” I do not see that, just because there is an unfortunate lack of inspiration amongst the leaders in the arts community in N.Z., we should have to presume that inspiration does not exist in its own right. This quality is based on hard and exacting labour but is surely not just the product of it. Your attitude denies the whole meaning of the word. Intuition is perhaps a gift given to very few people, but it nevertheless does exist and there is no reason for pessimism. I dislike pessimism—there is far too much of it in New Zealand at the moment.

The other point I disagree with is Mr. Simpson's amazing assertion about the arrangement of pictures in a recent display in the D.L.C. In my opinion, the exhibition was an extremely pertinent example of "the bewildering spectacle of pictures crowded frame to frame on limited wall space". This overcrowding was very obvious and all the more obvious from the smallness of the room. The space available was suitable only for the exhibition of four large pictures or some eight small pictures.

To my disgust, the same thing happened at the recent exhibition of modern British lithographs from the Reiffen Gallery. With two walls in the main room of the Art Gallery to space these fine pictures on, they were crowded on to one wall with about 3 in. between each picture.

Now here's a bouquet. My congratulations must go to Mr. Patience for his excellent article. If this were to be expanded, and more details added, it would make an excellent booklet for sale to the general home-building public.

Yours sincerely,

ROGER HAY.

Edward. H. Earl

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Technical

The use of Resin Bonded Plywoods for outside sheathing of buildings is a new idea in New Zealand, but it is very well known in Canada and U.S.A., where such materials as Wildtex and Bondwood have been readily used for many years. It was largely this knowledge that led Mr. H. Einhorn to select Resin Bonded Wildtex Striated Plywood for the exterior covering of his house—reviewed in the August/September issue of 'Design Review' (Vol. 4, No. 4).

Being a pioneer in the use of Resin Bonded Wildtex in New Zealand it was necessary for Mr. Einhorn to convince certain authorities that it would be successful. To do this he arranged an 800-hour accelerated test by Dominion Laboratory, and their report was very satisfactory. It clearly pointed to the fact that so long as a satisfactory paint film was maintained no special deterioration was likely to result. The report particularly stresses, however, that the paint film must be even, otherwise the veneer will tend to check quite seriously, due to the effect of unevenly painted films and not to any failing of the ply. Particularly good results were obtained with the sample treated with 50/50 Linseed Oil and Pure Turpentine, where only mild checking resulted. In no instance did the samples show any separation of the plies. An earlier house upon which Resin Bonded Wildtex was used is a beach cottage at Waiheke, the property of Mr. V. Butland. This has now been standing nearly four years, and is giving excellent service. This job was painted.

Apart from the fact that it is always good to see new materials developed, there are some features of Resin Bonded Wildtex which must particularly attract.

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