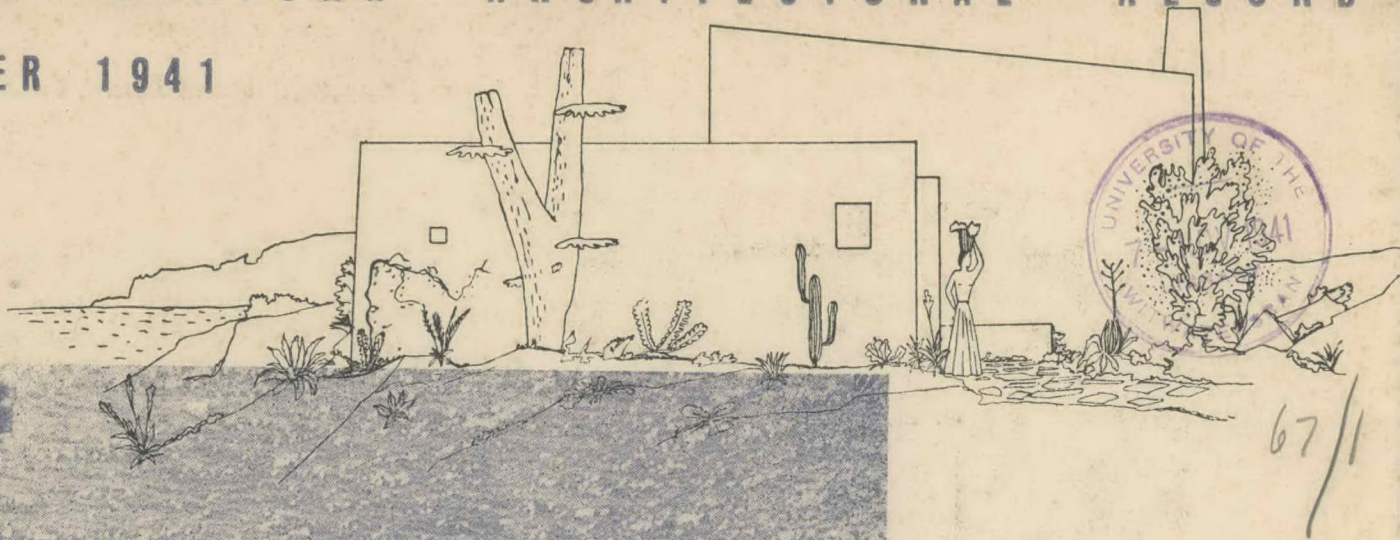


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I would tell my pupils how moving are the things on the Acropolis at Athens, whose pre-eminent greatness they would understand later.

Le Corbusier

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SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

The Journal of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal Provincial Institutes of South African Architects and the Chapter of South African Quantity Surveyors

611, Kelvin House, 75, Marshall Street, Johannesburg.
Phone 34-2921. Volume Twenty Six, Number Ten, Oct., 1941

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Honorary Editors: G. E. Pearse, Rex Martienssen

IF I HAD TO TEACH YOU ARCHITECTURE

Le Corbusier

The architecture of the new age has triumphed the world over. But it is still subject to violent and insidious opposition. It upsets too many prejudices, too many vested interests. The whole country is controlled by commercial obstructiveness, and by architects who employ old-fashioned technique, and so find it impossible to meet the demands of a new clientele. They invoke sacred traditions, good taste, beauty—Pericles or Louis XIV, whichever you like.

The teachers in the schools are extremely worried by the curiosity of their pupils, by their indiscreet questions, and their almost irrepressible enthusiasm. Life is no longer a joke for the majority of the teaching staff in most schools.

The immense future of modern architecture, which is, after all, the equipment of a new civilisation, should not have to be mixed up with vested interests. Life is just beginning for a new architecture, and it has a long life ahead of it. Why deny it the possibility of achieving beauty and greatness? That sort of objection is futile and groundless.

All the same, it is important to recognise that a great many mistakes have been made in the field of modern architecture, especially by young people who imagine that the modern man's house is like a soap box. But the greatest harm of all has been done by plagiarists, who take the superficialities of modern architecture and merely apply them to the same old carcasses. If the task is not yet finished (and it most certainly isn't), it is the duty of authorities to realise that the world is continually evolving and that consequently architecture as the expression of an age must go ahead. Architecture must be afforded the necessary opportunity for practical experiment.

One of the crucial aspects of the whole question lies in the teaching of architecture in schools. In this respect, certain countries are asleep and cling to tradition: the students are all right, but the instructors . . . They still don't hesitate, two thousand years afterwards, to become more Roman than the Romans, more German than the Germans, etc. Nationalism only serves to encumber architecture with all sorts of trappings which have nothing to do with the actual problem. All over the world I have noticed that

the teaching of architecture, however envisaged, is always scrappy and superficial—sometimes apparently on the old Beaux-Arts model, sometimes lacking in any aesthetic significance (as in some Oriental countries), sometimes gently ticking over (as in the most technically progressive countries, like America).

What is even more ludicrous to see is the fierce opposition of our fathers and grandfathers (magistrates, town councillors, etc.) to any manifestation of the modern spirit. Who are the towns of the future designed for? For those who will soon be dead, with their habits anchored to the pit of their stomach, or for those who are yet unborn? Their defensive attitude is comic.

Architecture provides the framework for a civilisation (housing, work, leisure, circulation); so architecture is also town planning. It is no longer possible to separate architecture and town planning—they are one and the same thing.

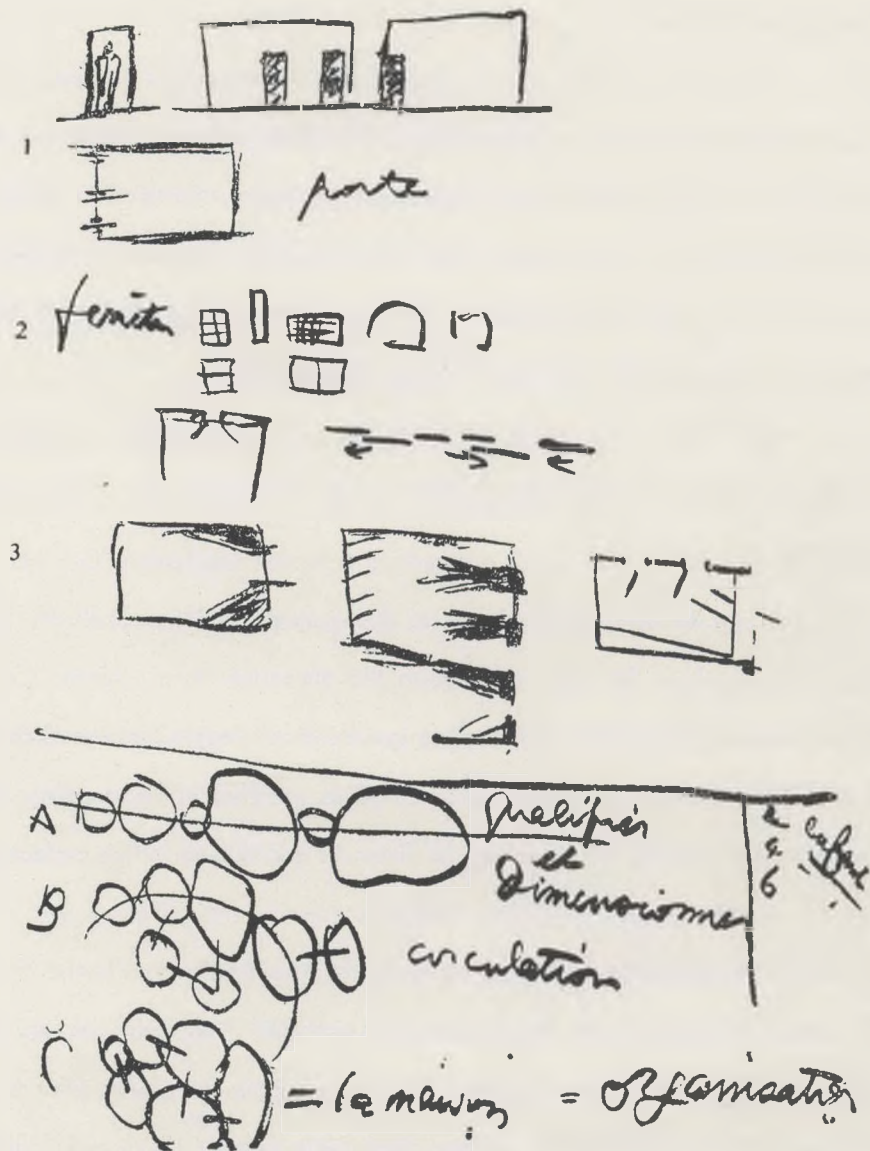
But what signs are there of modern town planning? It has only just been born—it's a new science with few professors. And they're all young. Surely they deserve universal recognition.

If I had to teach you architecture? Rather an awkward question . . .

I would begin by forbidding the "orders," by putting a stop to this dry rot of the orders, this incredible defiance of the intelligence. I would insist on a real respect for architecture.

On the other hand, I would tell my pupils how moving are the things on the Acropolis at Athens, whose pre-eminent greatness they would understand later. I would promise an explanation of the magnificence of the Farnese Palace and of the wide spiritual gulf between the apses of St. Peter's and its facade, both constructed rigorously in the same "order," but one by Michael Angelo and the other by Alberti. And many others of the simplest and truest facts about architecture, whose comprehension demands a certain mastery. I would emphasise the fact that nobility, purity, intellectual perception, plastic beauty, and the eternal quality of proportion are the fundamental joys of architecture, which can be understood by everyone.

I would strive to inculcate in my pupils a keen sense of control, of unbiased judgement, and of the "how" and "why." . . . I would encourage them to cultivate this sense till their dying day. But I would want them to base it on an objective series of facts. Facts are fluid and changeable, especially nowadays, so I would teach them to distrust formulae and would impress on them that everything is relative.



DIAGRAMS 1, 2,
3, 4, REFERRED
TO IN TEXT

I ask a young student : How do you make a door ? How big ? Where do you put it (1) ? How do you make a window ? But, incidentally, what is a window for ? Do you really know why they make windows ? If so, you will be able to explain to me why a window is arched, square or rectangular (2). I want reasons for that, and would add : Think hard : do we need any windows at all to-day ?

In what part of a room do you make a door ? . . . Perhaps you have several solutions. You are right, there are several solutions, and each one gives a separate architectural sensation. You see—these

differences of solution are the very basis of architecture. According to the way you enter a room and according to the position of the door in the wall, you get a particular impression, and the wall which you pierce takes on particular characteristics. You feel you have discovered architecture. By the way, I forbid you to draw an axis on your plans—axes are merely formulae to dazzle the unwary.

Another point, just as important: Where do you make the window-openings? You realise that according to where the light comes from you get a particular feeling, so draw all the possible ways of arranging window-openings and then tell me which are the best (3).

As a matter of fact, why have you made your room that shape? Think out other workable shapes, and put in openings for doors and windows. You had better buy a big notebook for this job—you'll need pages and pages (5).

Now draw out all the possible shapes of dining rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, each with its special requirements. Having done this, try to cut down the dimensions to a minimum. A kitchen. This is a question of town planning—circulation and working space. Don't forget that the kitchen is a holy of holies.

The next thing is to draw a business man's office and that of his secretary, his typists, and his workmen. Remember that a house is a machine for living in and that an office or factory is a machine for working in.

You don't know anything about "orders," nor the "1925 style"; and if I catch you designing in the 1925 style, I'll box your ears. You must not be a stylist. You articulate, you plan—nothing more.

Now try solving one of the most intricate of all contemporary problems: the minimum house.

First of all for a single man or woman, then for a married couple—don't bother about children. Next you move house—two children have arrived.

Then you have to accommodate four children.

As all this is very difficult, you will begin by drawing a straight line, round which you will build up the necessary units in their proper order, each with the minimum area (4).

Then on a sort of genealogical tree you work out their circulation, putting the appropriate units next to each other.

To finish up, you will try to assemble the component units to make a house—don't worry about the

construction : that is another matter. If by any chance you like playing chess, it'll come in useful here, and you won't have to go to a cafe to find an opponent !

You will go on to buildings in course of construction and see how they make reinforced concrete, flat roofs, or floors, and how windows are put in. Make sketches, and if you see anything idiotic, make a note of it, and when you get back ask questions. Don't imagine that you learn construction by doing mathematics. That's a deceit practised by the Academies to get the better of you.

Nevertheless, you will have to study a certain amount of statics. This is easy. Don't think you need to know exactly how the formulae of resistance are arrived at by mathematicians. With a little practice, you will understand the mechanics of calculation, but above all remember how the various parts of a building work. Make sure that you understand moments of inertia. Once you understand them, you will be free to do anything. All this is quite straightforward : leave higher mathematics to the mathematicians.

Your studies are not yet finished. You will have to research into questions of sound, temperature, and expansion. Of heating and refrigeration. The more direct experience you can pick up at this stage, the more thankful you will be later on.

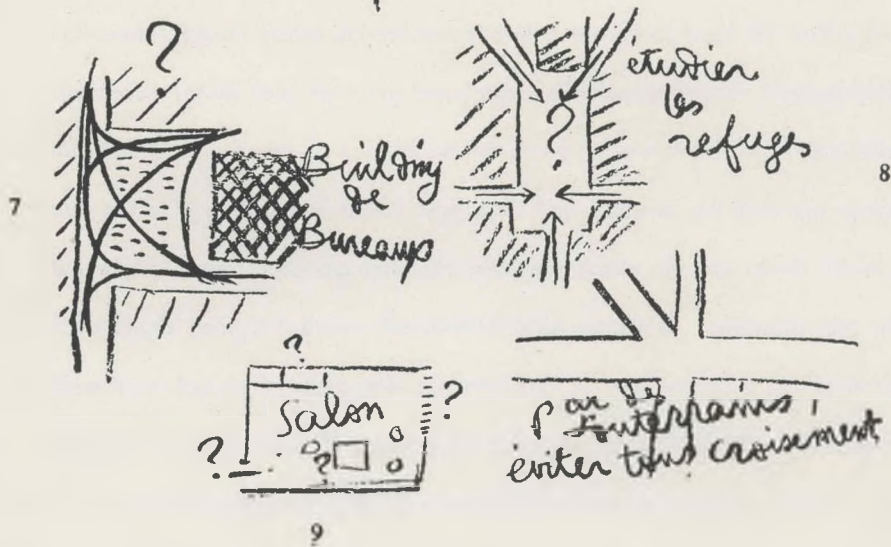
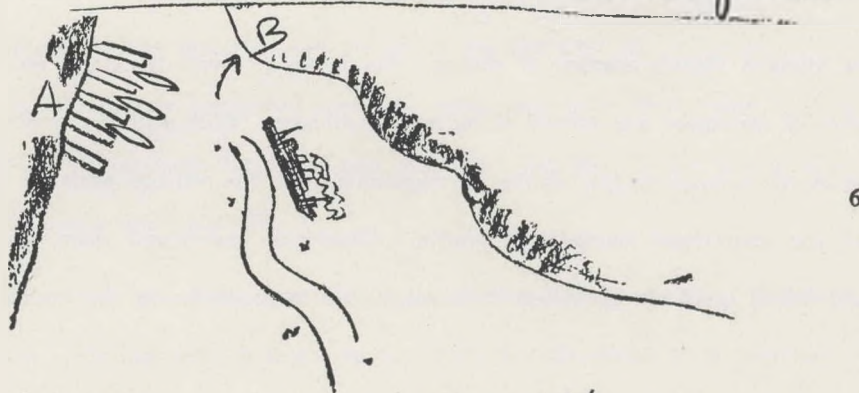
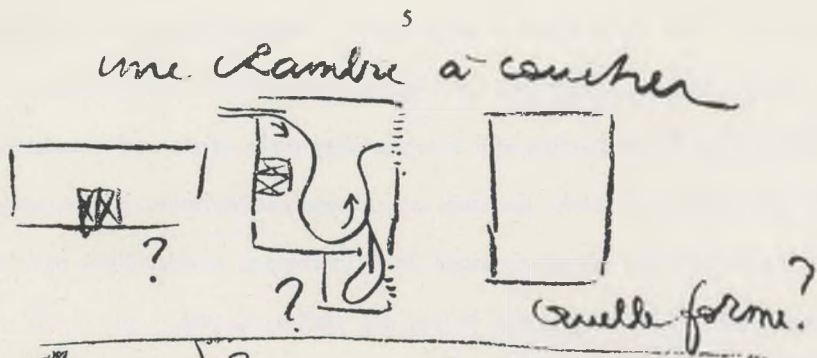
Try drawing a harbour with buoys marking the channel, and show how a liner comes alongside the dock and gets under way again (6). It will do to cut the rough shape of the ship out of coloured paper and show its successive positions on the drawing. This may give some ideas about designing docks.

Now draw a block of two hundred offices with a square in front for parking cars : find out how many cars to allow for, and, as with the steamer, show clearly all their manoeuvres (7). Perhaps you will get some idea of what size and shape to make islands and parking spaces, and of their relation to the street.

Here is a golden rule : use coloured pencils. With colour, you accentuate, you classify, you clarify, you disentangle. With black pencil you get stuck in the mud and you're lost. Always say to yourself : Drawings must be easy to read. Colour will come to the rescue.

Here is a square in a town, where several roads meet (8). Work out how traffic crosses it. Try to think of every kind of square, and figure out which are the best for circulation.

Set yourself the problem of a drawing room with its doors and windows. Arrange the necessary



DIAGRAMS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, REFERRED TO IN TEXT

furniture conveniently. This is another problem of circulation, and is common sense and lots of other things as well ! Ask yourself if your room serves any particular purpose like that (9).

Now I set a written problem : Get out a comparative and analytical report on the reasons for the existence of towns like London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Hull, Glasgow. Rather a hard task for a student, but you will realise that before putting anything down, you must always know exactly what you are considering and why it exists. Splendid exercise for developing your power of discrimination.

One day, go to the station, ruler in hand, and make an exact measured drawing of a restaurant car with its kitchen and service. Do the same for a sleeping car. Then go down to the docks and go over a liner. Draw coloured plans and sections, showing how it works. As a matter of fact, have you any clear idea of what does go on inside a liner ? Are you aware that it is a palace accommodating 2,000 people, of whom a third live in luxury ? Do you realise that here is an hotel system with three separate and entirely independent classes, a gigantic system of mechanical propulsion, with its staff of engineers and mechanics, and besides this a system of officers and sailors to operate the ship ? When you can express clearly by means of coloured sections and plans the organisation of a liner, you will be able to go in for the next competition for a League of Nations Palace.

And now, my friend, I beg you to keep your eyes open.

Do you keep your eyes open ? Have you been trained to keep your eyes open ? Do you know how to keep your eyes open ? Do you keep them open continually and usefully ? What do you look at when you go out for a walk ?

Look at the backs of buildings if you want to learn anything. Shut your eyes to the street front. Then go and measure some of those buildings which are decent behind their facades. Study this vernacular with a view to later execution on a larger scale, perhaps in steel (a prefabricated house), or in reinforced concrete (assembled from standard units).

Now that I have appealed to your sense of honesty, I should like to inculcate in you, and in all students of architecture, a hatred of "drawing-board stylism," which is merely covering a sheet of paper with alluring pictures, "styles," or "orders"—these are fashions. But architecture is space, breadth, depth, and height, volume and circulation. Architecture is a conception of the mind. It must be conceived in your head, with your eyes shut. Only in this way can you really visualise your design. Paper is only the means

for setting down the idea, and transmitting it to the client or contractor. Everything is in the plan and section. When you have achieved through plans and sections a working entity, the elevations will follow, and if you have any power of design, your elevations will be beautiful. Say, by all means, that houses are for living in, but you will be a good architect only when your elevations succeed. Proportion is enough, but you need plenty of imagination as well, and the more modest the problem, the more imagination you need.

Architecture is organisation. YOU ARE AN ORGANISER, NOT A DRAWING-BOARD STYLIST.

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THE PROPYLAEA, ATHENS

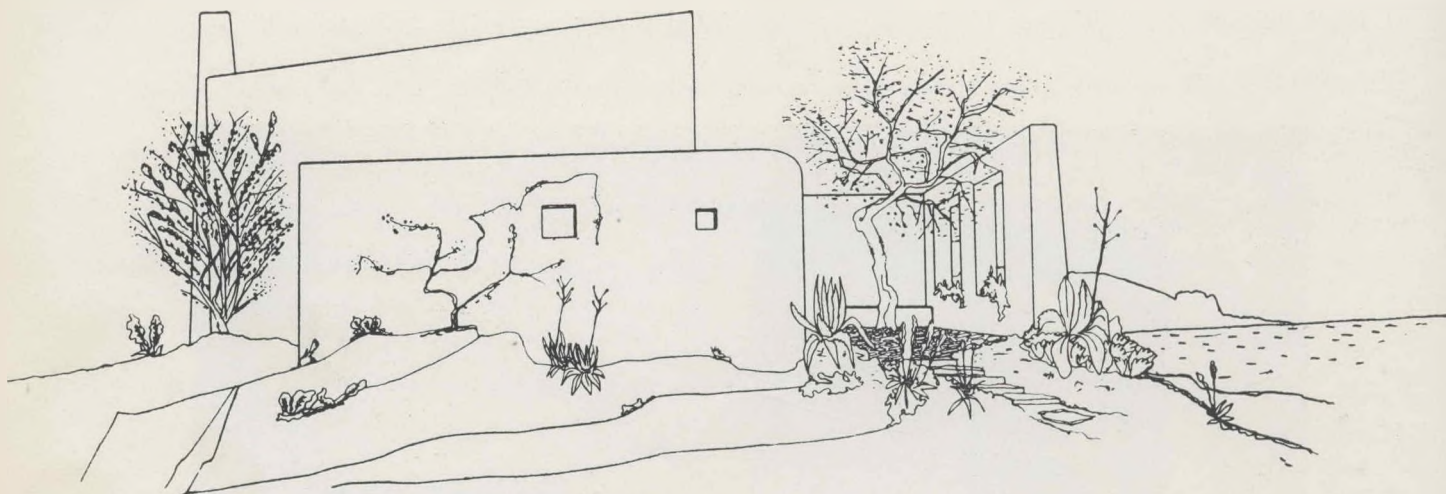
The Greeks on the Acropolis set up temples which are animated by a single thought, drawing around them the desolate landscape and gathering it into the composition. Thus, on every point of the horizon, the thought is single. It is on this account that there are no other architectural works on this scale of grandeur. We shall be able to talk "Doric" when man, in nobility of aim and complete sacrifice of all that is accidental in art, has reached the higher levels of the mind : austerity.

Certain writers have declared that the Doric column was inspired by a tree springing from the earth, without base, etc., a proof that every noble form of art derives from nature. It is most false, since the tree with straight trunk is unknown in Greece, where only stunted pines and twisted olives grow. The Greeks created a plastic system directly and forcibly affecting our senses : columns and their flutings, a complex entablature rich in meaning ; steps which set off and link on to the horizon. They employed the most delicate distortions, applying to their contours an impeccable adjustment to the laws of optics.

We must realise clearly that Doric architecture did not grow in the fields with the asphodels, and that it is a pure creation of the mind. The plastic system of Doric work is so pure that it gives almost the feeling of a natural growth. But, none the less, it is entirely man's creation, and affords us the complete sensation of a profound harmony. The forms used are so separate from natural aspects (and how superior they are to those of Egyptian or Gothic architecture), they are so deeply thought out in regard to light and materials, that they seem, as it were, linked to earth and sky, as if by nature. This creates a fact as reasonable to our understanding as the fact "sea" or the fact "mountain." How many works of man have attained this height ?

From le Corbusier : Towards a New Architecture.





Project for a seaside house by Gio Ponti

M E D I T E R R A N E A N H O U S E S

Notes on recent solutions to the problem of seaside building

By Rex Martienssen, M.Arch., D.Litt.

A year or two ago, in the course of a paper on "Architecture in Modern Painting" I referred to the vernacular building of France, Spain and Sicily in an attempt to establish the part played in the researches of Cézanne by the characteristic arrangement of forms in this work. In all the examples illustrated the maintenance of common characteristics over an extremely wide geographical area was noticeable, particularly the intrinsic harmony of wall and roof, and the unaffected expression of the volume of the dwelling. That the lesson implicit in these simple dwellings was appreciated by painters and not by architects was commented upon, as well as the important aspect of patterning which resulted in the repetition of building units such as that shown in the village south of Palermo. A series of photographs by Bernard Rudofsky in the *Architectural Review* of March, 1941, shows the essential repetition of standard units in the vaulted dwellings of the Greek island of Santorin. These, it is suggested, employ the earliest type of permanent house construction known, and it is interesting to note the close similarity to the local types of other Mediterranean countries, for example, those of Tunisia. Excellent photographs of Santorin by Ralph Brewster have appeared in the *Geographical Magazine* of March, 1937, and the *National Geo-*

graphic Magazine of March, 1940, has a series of natural colour photographs of Mykonos and Santorin which convey a vivid impression of the white buildings in their setting. One or two photographs in "En Grèce" and "Retour en Grèce" by Bon and Chapoutier [Paris, 1937 (new edition), and 1934] are worthy of note, and the general view of Santorin provided by plate 76 in the former volume is a valuable one.

Of corresponding Italian types those of the Province of Apulia are well illustrated in Marian Hooker's "Farmhouses and Small Provincial Buildings in Southern Italy" (New York, 1925) and these can also be seen in "Architettura Rurale Italiana" by Pagano and Daniel (Milan, 1936). Bernard Rudofsky in a set of brilliant photographs has recorded the dwellings of the fishermen of the island of Procida in *Domus* of March, 1938.

Charles Parain, "La Méditerranée : Les Hommes et leurs travaux" (Paris, 1936) in his chapter on architecture discusses "les villages perchés" and illustrates Santorin, comparing the use of terraces and barrel vaulted roofs with a similar application at Zarzis in Tunisia. His discussion on materials, influences, and types of dwelling in the Mediterranean is worthy of more detailed consideration than we can undertake in the present paper.

If we turn to the south of France, a sympathetic record of the characteristic houses of Saint-Tropez, Bormes, Canadel, Hyères, the Ile de Port-Cros, etc., is given by Chagny and Arlaud in "La Côte des Maures" (Lyon, 1930). Mention may also be made of Camille Mauclair's "La Provence" (Grenoble, 1935) which includes some fine photographs of Provencal towns and villages.

The architect who wishes to impose a new house on to the established pattern of Mediterranean coast architecture has a difficult task; for not only must he satisfy the living standards of a client who is bound to demand equipment and comfort of an order far beyond that afforded by a simple cell (which may well charm him as an integral part of the setting, but which would lack the raffiné interior atmosphere required by current taste), but he must also make his building sympathetic to its surroundings. When these surroundings include the age-old incrustation of a standard and repeated type of dwelling, the process of adjustment is a delicate one.

Let us review some recent examples, and see what has been attempted in this field. In *Domus* of June and August, 1939, Gio Ponti published four projects for seaside houses of a type that one can well imagine situated at Capri, Procida, Ischia or Positano. The "piccola casa ideale" illustrated here may



Project for a seaside house by Gio Ponti

(the arrangement of the plan is described below)

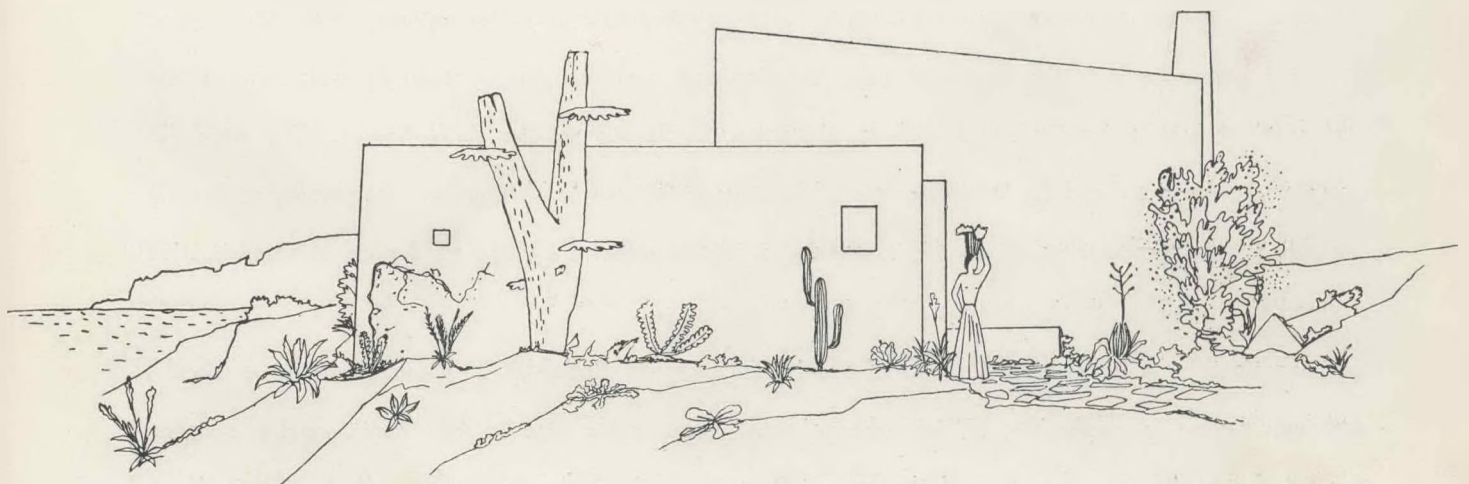
be taken as typical of these little schemes—though each has nuances and variations that give an individual charm. The plan "libero da rigori geometrici" but retaining the flavour of a "composizione astratta" is dominated by the living room which provides fascinating and languid access to the lesser elements. To one side of this nucleus is a small entrance hall which also links kitchen to living room and provides an immediate vista to the sea through an opening in the walled forecourt. A recess off the living room gives space for a divan and leads to the bath space. The latter has a startling intimacy with the living space which may not accord with average ideas of modesty. Extension is given to the house itself by

the forecourt whose wall provides at the same time enclosure and definition, and frames the view through two generous openings. A charming and sophisticated idea carried out with direct simplicity. The effect of the scheme as a whole, with its sharp white cuboid forms, is not alien to the traditional types of the Italian and Greek islands, and the adjustment of an essentially recreational mode of life to such a framework is an imaginative achievement of the first order.

The detailed treatment, disposition of openings and constant emphasis of view and vista all proclaim the spirit in which the scheme is conceived and stress its special marine setting. The architect's proposals for colour are no less stimulating. Suggestions for overall patterns for the floor in majolica or mosaic are illustrated in *Domus*, and although the gay voluptuous spread of Ponti's designs takes on a new significance as floor treatment, the mind goes back to the sunny courtyards of the ancient Greek houses of Delos with their bright mosaic floors. The easy transition of life inside the house to the sheltered forecourt which this design offers is something which recalls the oecus and peristyle treatment so characteristic of the classical and Hellenistic houses of Greece. The unselfconscious movement from shade to sunshine, the "half-way" zones of protection which allow a house to give itself generously to the sun and air—these things were subtly done by the Greeks, and the columned portico which was so vital an element in affect-

SEASIDE HOUSE BY GIO PONTI

Side elevation showing entrance court



ing this liaison of spaces gave a certain geometric precision, a formality, to the whole which is not echoed in the compact and cell-like dwellings of the Mediterranean fishermen. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Gio Ponti attains something of the Greek gradation of space without a column system, but with the simplest elements and surfaces. For the small patio or forecourt which is included in four different designs (though bearing a different relationship to the living room in each case) provides a space which, though intimately associated with the main structure, already suggests the unrestricted zone of sun, air and sea beyond. What is equally interesting is that the scheme as a whole has not lost the primitive compactness of the traditional cell type.

The architect's presentation of these little schemes is worthy of mention. In every drawing the full implication of the design is brought out. The plans are presented to indicate a mode of life, and the possibilities of visual experience, the immediate sense of created surroundings are suggested in a manner which is as refreshing as it is unusual. Owing their inspiration to the vernacular rather than to a formal precedent these "casette al mare" offer to the student something more important than an exemplar. They provide a demonstration of the impact of a creative attitude to a particular problem. Perhaps the effect of the house illustrated is, for some, too much of "an abstract composition" worked out in a restricted frame of phantasy which has little bearing on the wider problems of architecture to-day. But the freedom from clichés, and the brilliant economy of means to satisfy a fundamental mode of living do much to offset such a criticism.

The larger house by Gio Ponti (drawings of which I illustrated in the "Record" in October, 1938) has since been built at Bordighera, and is illustrated by photographs in *Domus* of June, 1939. This scheme is on a much larger scale than those we have just discussed, and the plan accordingly loses some of the nuclear directness which imparted such a characteristic flavour to the small houses. The need for secondary circulations and an inevitable loss of identity of the individual rooms are the penalty of directly expanding the vernacular type. In this example one may say that the imposed degree of sophistication strained the fabric of the house beyond its feasible capacity.

The project for a house on the island of Procida by Bernard Rudofsky is planned around a cortile. Although extremely simple in plan, this scheme, unlike the *piccola casa* of Gio Ponti, carries a strong flavour of formality—a suggestion of the ancient Roman or Etruscan atrium type which lent itself so



CORRIDOR TO SHOWER
Seaside house by Gio Ponti

In the original drawing the ceiling is plum-coloured; the floor blue-grey; walls beige, and shower wall green.

O V E R L E A F

Project for a house at Bordighera

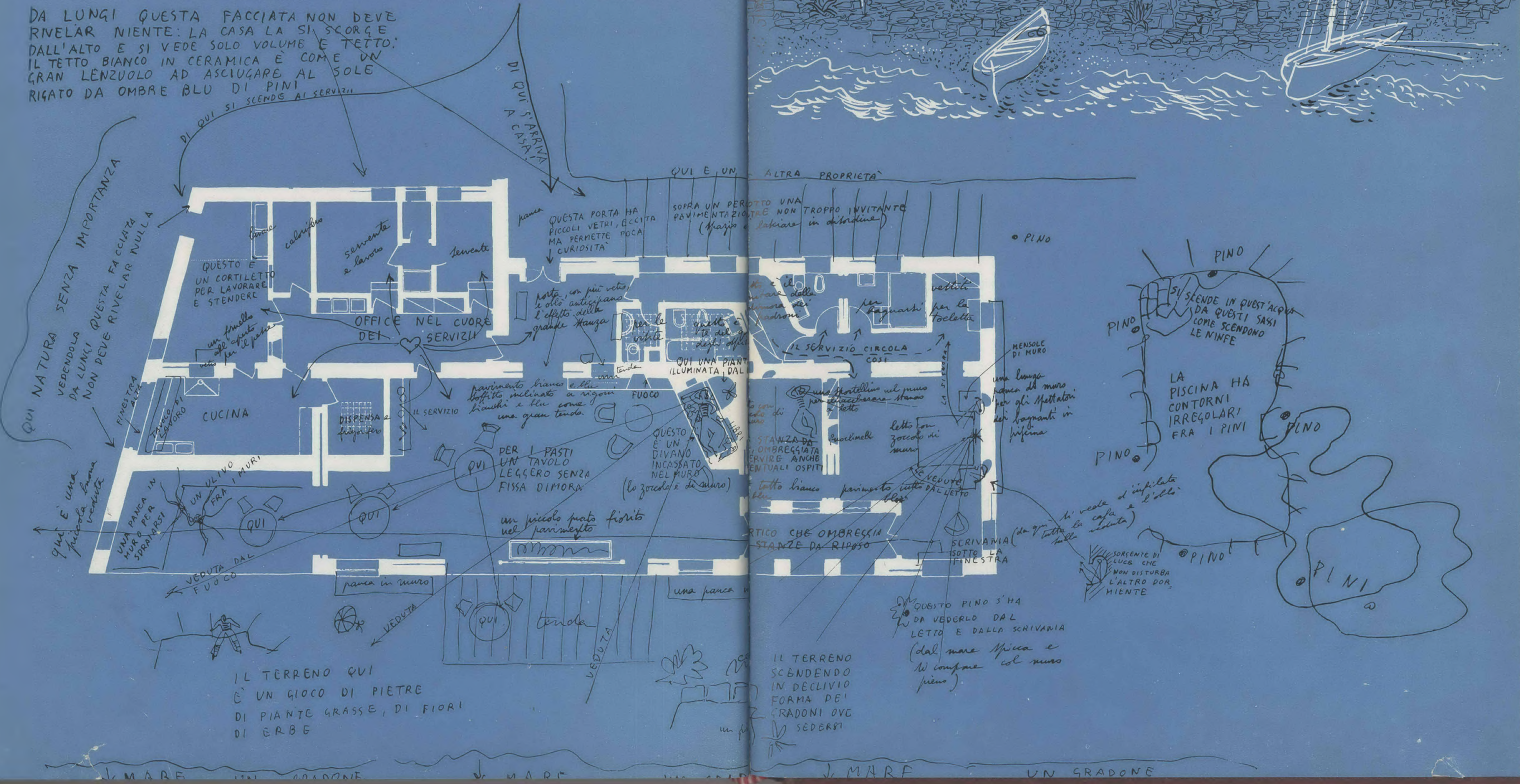
Architect: Gio Ponti



ANOTHER EXAMPLE BY GIO
PONTI

The architect Gio Ponti has designed for the family M, a house at the sea. Here is the plan of this little edifice as it vests itself in the imagination of the architect. Here you can see how he interests himself in lighting, colours, and materials, and above all in the life of the occupants.

DA LUNGI QUESTA FACCIATA NON DEVE RIVELAR NIENTE: LA CASA LA SI SCORGE DALL'ALTO E SI VEDE SOLO VOLUME E TETTO. IL TETTO BIANCO IN CERAMICA È COME UN GRAN LENZUOLO AD ASCIUGARE AL SOLE RIGATO DA OMBRE BLU DI PINI



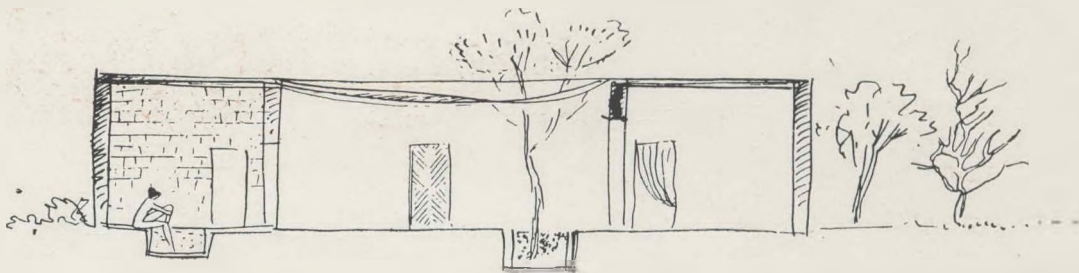
admirably to the Mediterranean climate. The present example shows a charming disposition of rooms which suggests a pavilion, a vantage point from which the surroundings can be experienced. It provides at once an intimacy with its setting and a withdrawing with extreme aesthetic economy.

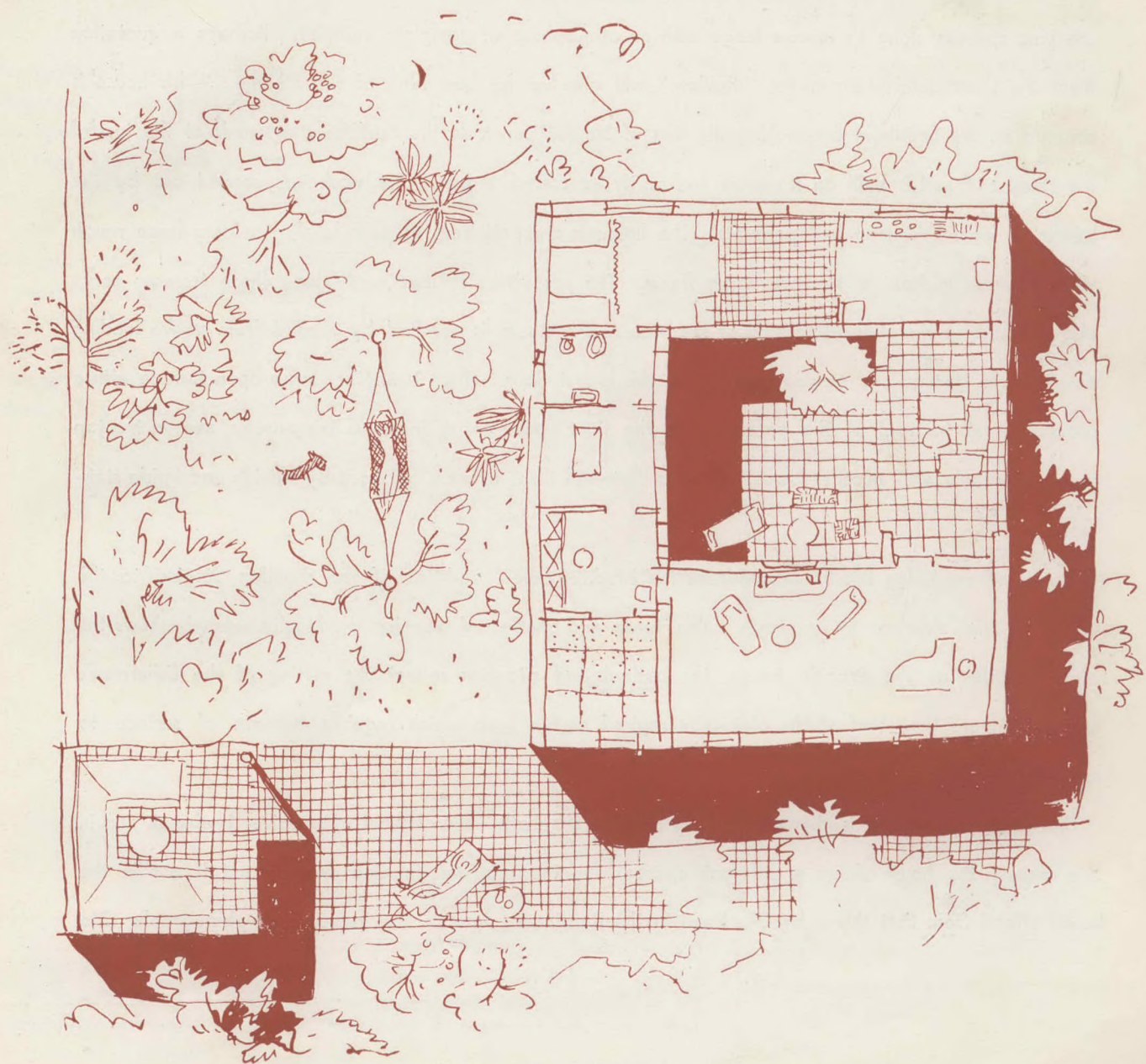
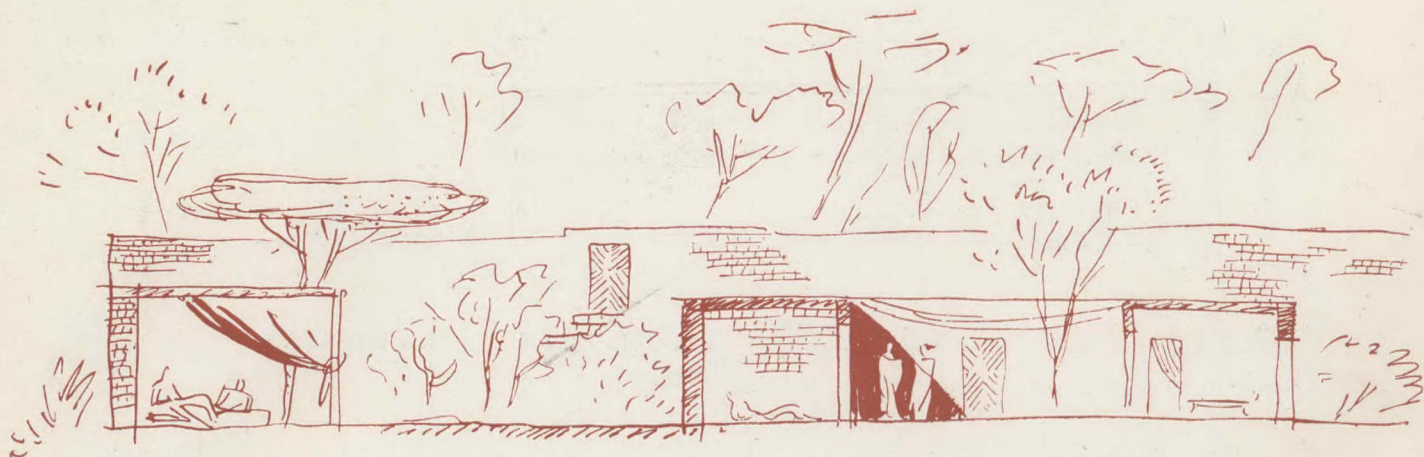
One recalls Pliny's letter describing his seaside house to his friend Gallus. ". . . Central with this is a delightful inner court, then a pleasant enough dining-room, jutting on to the shore—yes, and washed by the spray of the highest waves when there's an African blowing. On every side are doors, or windows as big, so that in front and sides it has a view of three seas, you may say; and at the back—inner court, colonnade, garden-court, colonnade again, atrium, the woods and the far hills. Set back a little on the left is a roomy bedroom, then a smaller one with one window to let in the dawn, another to hold the sunset; with a view, too, of the sea below . . ." And again "The seaside is bright with a pleasing variety of villas—now a terrace, now single houses—which have the appearance of a multitude of towns, whether from the sea or the shore."

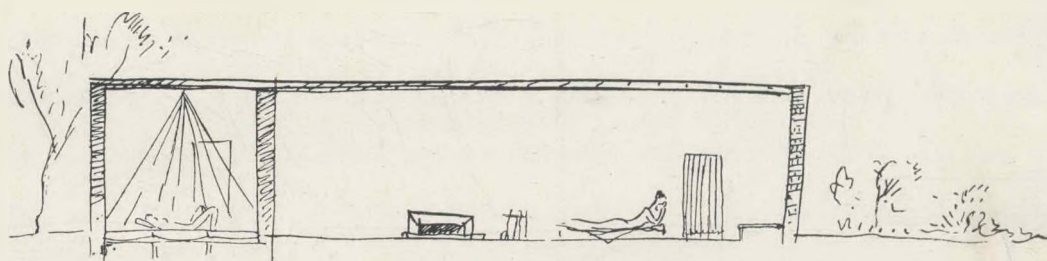
Rudofsky has indeed designed such a house, even though its size does not permit the splendid range of rooms that Pliny describes to his city-dwelling friend. It remains only to mention the photographs with which the architect illustrates his setting. They show white cube houses ranging steeply down to the water's edge; fishing boats in the harbour; flowers, vines, workmen quarrying stone; the microcosmic life of an isolated community.

It is just three years since the accompanying drawings first appeared in the "Record" (I include them in the present paper to complete the survey under one cover) and it is interesting to see that the Architectural Review (June, 1940) has now published a completed scheme of Rudofsky's, built at Naples. Seen

PROJECT FOR A HOUSE AT PROCIDA (SECTION) BY RUDOFSKY







HOUSE AT PROCIDA: ARCHITECT RUDOLFSKY

from above, the house has a gleaming crispness—the fine breadth of wall and roof is uninterrupted, and the plan spreads along its narrow ledge with an atmosphere of complete stability. Perhaps a quotation from the short description in the "Review" will give us the best idea of the scheme: "This house is situated on the headland overlooking the Bay of Naples known as the Posillipo. It stands at the top of the steep cliff and is built on a narrow and partly excavated ledge. The work was carried out by the labour of local fishermen and peasants. The house is stepped back at each level, providing large rough stone terraces in front of the two upper floors. The protective railings used along these terraces serve also to break up the plain white walls of the house. The house is reached by a road from above leading down to the garage and service quarters on the lowest floor. There is another large open terrace with a protective rail in front of the garage. On the floor above are dining- and living-rooms, and on the top floors children's and guest's rooms. Access between these floors is obtained by outside and inside staircases."

On its narrow ledge this house continues the Mediterranean tradition of the dwelling clinging to the cliff-edge, and although in its simple cubic forms and unaffected planning the Naples example shows the same qualities as the Procida house, the outlook and situation reflect the setting of the fishermen's vernacular more than that of the classically-inspired cortile type which requires breadth of surface to complete it.

The general treatment is characterised by extreme simplicity—the element of phantasy is absent, and in this respect the house shows a different approach to the problem (in plan arrangement if not in the broad effect) from that shown by Gio Ponti in the Bordighera house. To judge from photographs Gio

PLAN OF HOUSE AT PROCIDA

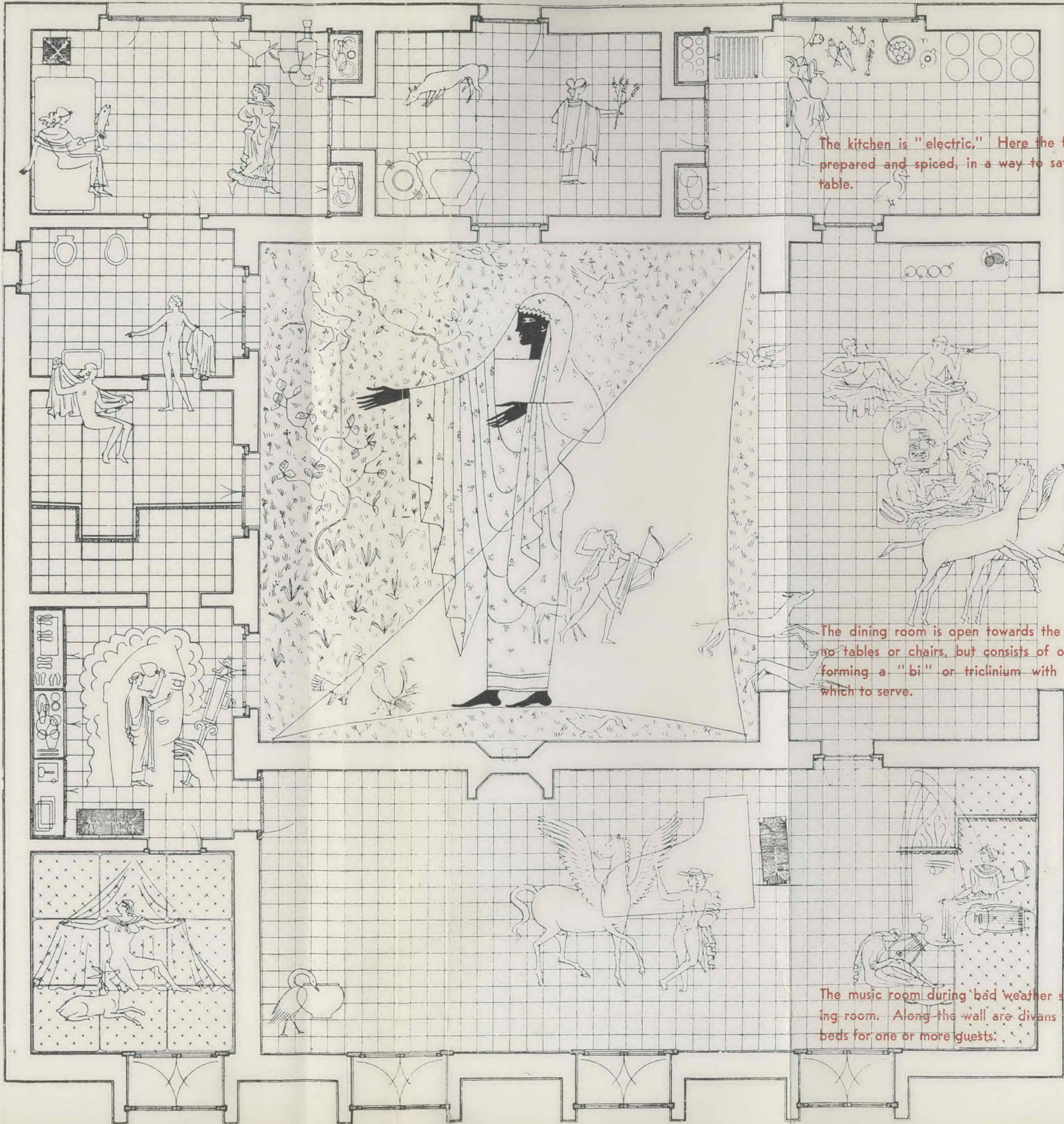
BERNARD RUDOFSKY

Entrance hall approached from the path.

The bathroom has no furnishing. In the floor there is a depression which holds water for the bath. Through the open door the morning sun shines. The necessities are kept in the adjoining room.

The courtyard is the real living room. Its pavement is formed of mown grass with marguerites and veronica ; in spring there will be violets and orchids. The sky with its million aspects serves for ceiling. Against the summer sun one can protect oneself with a rust-coloured blind. Dogs, cats, and doves find a refuge here.

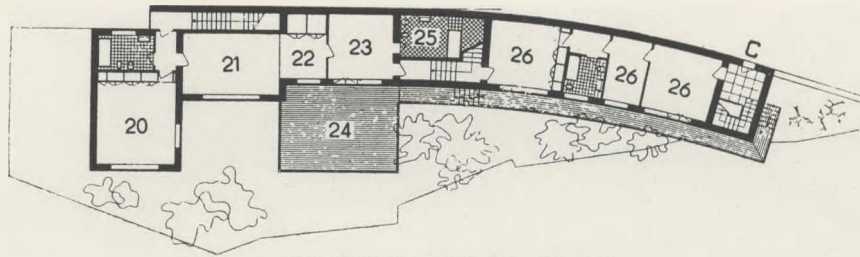
Before entering the bedroom one undresses in the adjoining room because the floor of the former is made entirely of mattresses. Against insects and flies there is a mosquito netting which hangs from the ceiling.



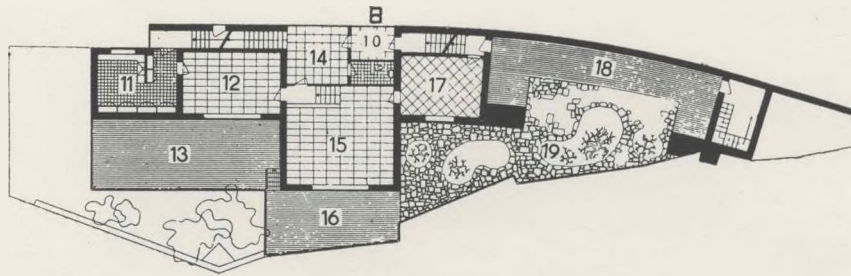
The kitchen is "electric," Here the food is completely prepared and spiced, in a way to save all work at the table.

The dining room is open towards the courtyard and has no tables or chairs, but consists of one or more divans forming a "bi" or triclinium with a little table off which to serve.

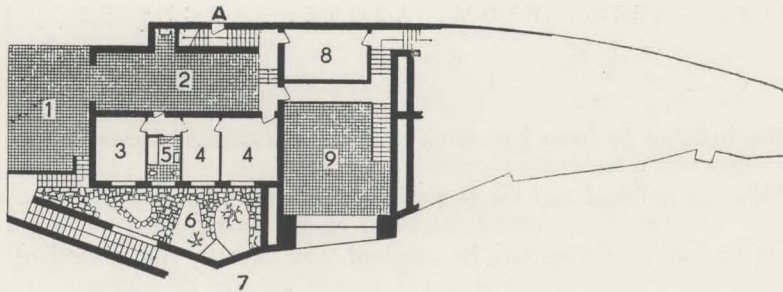
The music room during bad weather serves as a sojourn-ing room. Along the wall are divans which can serve as beds for one or more guests.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



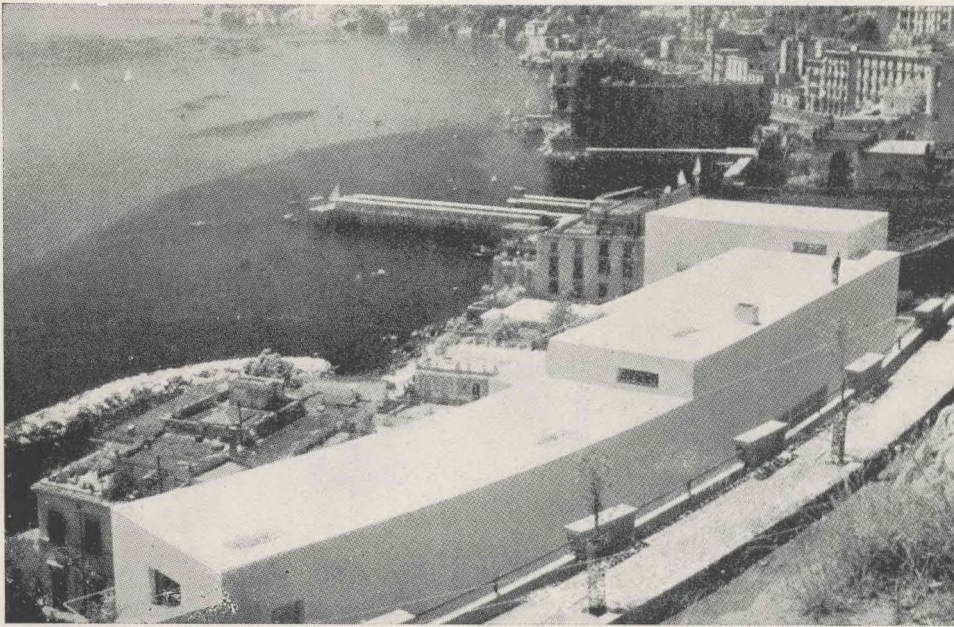
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

HOUSE AT NAPLES: ARCHITECT BERNARD RUDOLFSKY

(From the Architectural Review)

KEY TO PLANS

A Servant's Entrance: 1 Courtyard: 2 Garage: 3 Chauffeur: 4 Servant's Bed Room: 5 Servant's Bath Room: 6 Servant's garden: 7 Old stairway to the beach: 8 Bomb-proof cellar: 9 Lounge: B Main Entrance: 10 Entrance Lobby: 11 Kitchen: 12 Dining Room: 13 Dining Terrace: 14 Entrance Hall: 15 Living Room: 16 Living Terrace: 17 Library: 18 Loggia: 19 Garden Terrace: C Guest's Entrance: 20 Master's Bed Room: 21 Mistress's Bed Room: 22 Dressing Room: 23 Child's Room: 24 Child's Terrace: 25 Child's Bath Room: 26 Guest's Room.



HOUSE AT NAPLES, SEEN FROM ABOVE: ARCHITECT RUDOLFSKY

Ponti's design seems in the building to have lost some of the insouciance conveyed by the sketches. Perhaps the finish was a little too polished and the furnishing rather more urbane than the scheme called for. In illustration, at least Rudofsky's design with its constant rectilinearity (in elevation) and minimum "detail" allied to fundamentally satisfying proportion (as in the window treatment) is more successful. What Gio Ponti found difficult to achieve on one floor has necessitated no spatial distortion in the three floors of the Naples house—with its release from congestion. The varying levels and the handling of the stairs can be seen on the plans reproduced on the previous page.

For our last example let us consider a solution which employs a technique that is a product of the general movement fostered by le Corbusier. The house at Cap Martin Roquebrune, designed by Eileen Grey and Jean Badovici (portfolio of photographs and drawings with text in French ; Morancé, Paris, 1929) presents a stimulating solution to the problem of the medium-size seaside house. Unlike the examples



TERRACE SIDE HOUSE AT NAPLES BY RUDOLFSKY
 Photographs from the Architectural Review

we have discussed above, the present scheme displays a conceptual origin and a high degree of "abstract" arrangement which are the antithesis of an approach through vernacular.

In an interesting preface to the illustrations the architects define their attitude in dialectic form, and in a full description of the house show how this attitude has been given expression in a specific problem. We may note briefly one or two points arising from the general argument, and follow this by discussing the aspects of the design which are of outstanding interest.

The influence of "machinisme" normalisation and rationalisation on contemporary architecture are discussed, together with the role of the architect in reconciling the apparent frigidity of a purely intellectual solution to housing needs with the instinctively emotional demand which the individual "avec ses désirs, ses passions, et ses goûts" expects to see fulfilled in his surroundings. That a rational and scientific approach does not imply a refusal to recognise this demand is argued by Badovici, who points out that a full use of technical resources and material means must result in a richer and fuller satisfaction of the "emotional" needs. Technique is the means to an end.

To the proposition that decoration must strongly reinforce the attainment of this state, the architects reply: "C'est l'architecture qui doit être à elle-même sa propre décoration. Le jeu des lignes et des couleurs doit être tel, répondre si exactement à l'exigence de l'atmosphère intérieure, que toute peinture détachée, tout tableau, apparaisse non seulement inutile, mais nuisible à l'harmonie du tout."

This statement opens up the whole question of the nature of architecture, and its relationship to sculpture and painting. A few general observations, therefore, may not be out of place at this stage. Badovici's design offers an arresting demonstration of architecture which is complete in itself, and in which the traditional separation and co-existence of the three plastic arts within a single system is replaced by a single entity having the functions and attributes of all three. Thus the primary space requirements are stated and satisfied in the forms of the building, while the rôle commonly ascribed to sculpture is sublimated in that of the architecture which approaches a condition common to both arts. Similarly the idea of painting as an addition to architecture is expressed through colour as an extension to the forms of the building. That is, not through the medium of independent pictures, but as an integral component of the surfaces of space definition. The colour illustrations in Badovici's portfolio (reproduced by the pochoir process) give one an excellent idea of the vitality imparted to the interior by the use of broad planes of colour in strategic positions. Briefly one may say that any given interior treated in the architecture-sculpture-painting medium of total co-ordination involves a change in scale (in fact a revaluation is required to assimilate this change) which may be crudely expressed according to existing definitions of the three arts:—

Thus the fabric may be considered as :—

(1) Architecture with a sculptural flavour (where the definition of sculpture allows of an abstract, non-representational significance) ;

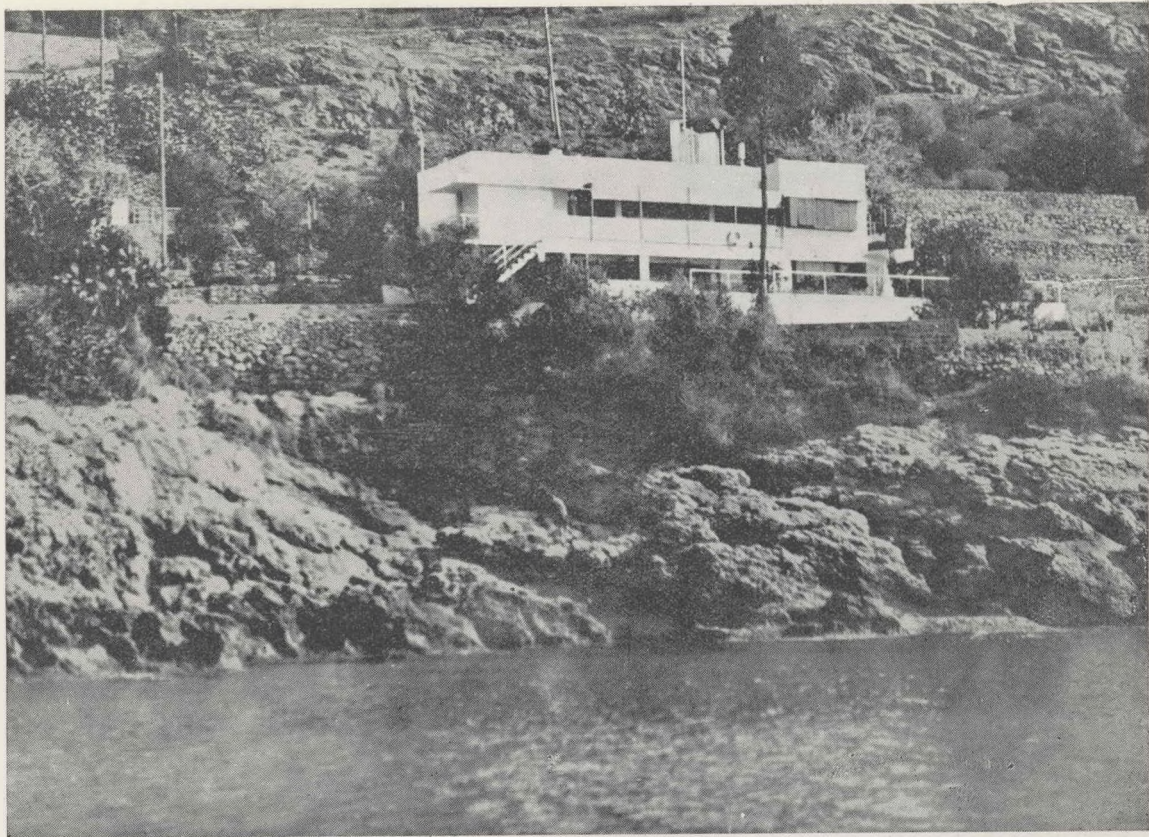
or, it may be:

(2) Sculpture given a hollow or practical and utilitarian form;

or, it may be:

(3) Painting on a large scale and unrestricted to one plane of painted surface. Again the practical attribute is a conditioning factor.

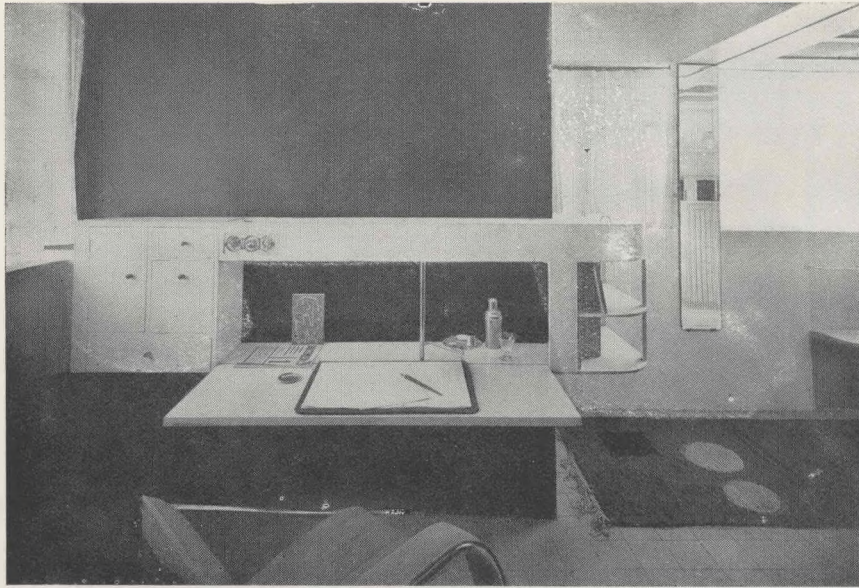
It is, of course, apparent that the major rôle played is an architectural one, and to define a medium of



HOUSE AT CAP MARTIN ROQUEBRUNE: ARCHITECTS EILEEN GREY
AND JEAN BADOVICI

plastic expression which is so indissolubly bound up with practical function as being primarily sculpture or painting is to deny the limiting factor of that medium. The common link is the space medium in which architecture, sculpture and painting are conceived, and when Badovici states that separate sculpture and painting have no useful purpose, and are, in fact, detrimental to the harmony of the whole, we may take it that he postulates a controlled architecture incorporating two secondary forms of spatial expression which through common medium are essentially commensurate with the major space technique that embraces them.

It is not only from the direction of architecture that there are indications of the gradual breaking down of the barriers between the three arts. The constructivist stage sets of the Meyerhold Theatre in the early nineteen-twenties, the "space-constructions" of Gabo and Moholy-Nagy (nominally falling under the



FITTING IN GUEST ROOM: GREY AND BADOVICI

heading of sculpture) and the paintings of Fernand Léger and Jean Hélion all imply an underlying architectural theme. The constructivist stage set is architectural in scale and in its relation to human activity but it is sculptural in the pattern of its structure and form. The space construction is architectural in its geometrical implications but must be classed as sculpture because of its independence of human scale and practical function.

Although Léger's paintings are, strictly speaking, detached and complete in themselves, it is through no wish of the painter that they remain so. This enforced isolation merely marks a stage towards the time when such architectonic (and therefore spatially significant) creations as his and Hélion's will be embodied in the surfaces of architecture. In content they have broken away from the age-old conception of what a picture must be—it is only in setting that the complete fulfilment of their purpose is still to be attained.

Thus the final synthesis in which architecture is complete in itself (having absorbed the attributes of painting and sculpture) represents a stage towards which all three expressions have been tending. Further discussion on this topic must be postponed to another occasion for we must return to the house at Cap Martin Roquebrune.

"L'homme vraiment civilisé a besoin d'une certaine élégance de formes . . ." and the architects of the present example have attempted to satisfy the needs of a free informal mode of life proper to the

seaside, while at the same time providing that degree of isolation and repose which are usually lacking in such a scheme of existence. It is significant that the architects stress the fact that the house represents a point in a more general research—they do not claim that all the problems have been resolved in a definitive expression. This attitude implies a spirit of scientific experimentation—a salutary reminder of the futility of relying on formulae and habit.

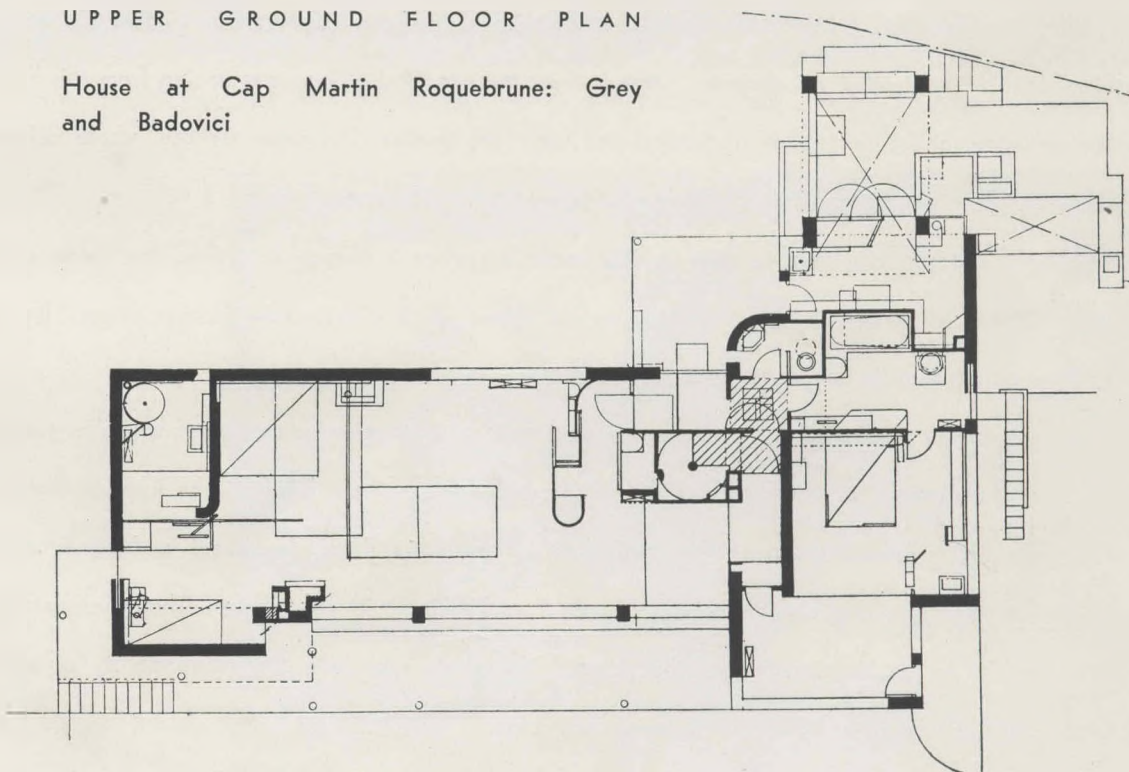
Briefly, the aims of the scheme are as follows:—To provide a general living space, planned in such a way that the occupants can on occasion have complete independence, and an atmosphere of solitude. The relationship of interior to exterior to have the freedom appropriate to a setting where doors and windows are rarely closed, yet to provide sufficient seclusion to prevent the unexpected entry of a visitor to any room. Four main problems are stated by the architects as having occupied their close attention.

1. The problem of windows (for which three types were designed).
2. The problem of shutters, the normal type of which allows insufficient circulation of air when closed.

A solution was arrived at which permitted ample ventilation while controlling the light.

UPPER GROUND FLOOR PLAN

House at Cap Martin Roquebrune: Grey
and Badovici



3. The problem of independence of the rooms in a house of small dimensions. This has largely been effected by offsetting (*désaxer*) the walls so as to obscure the actual door openings.

4. The problem of situating the kitchen for easy service, while at the same time obviating the possibility of odours reaching the rooms of the house. In this example the kitchen has been entirely separated—an arrangement which, the architects note, is only feasible in an exceptionally mild climate.

The general character of the house has been conditioned by the atmosphere of its surroundings, by the "materials" of the setting and by the proximity of the sea.

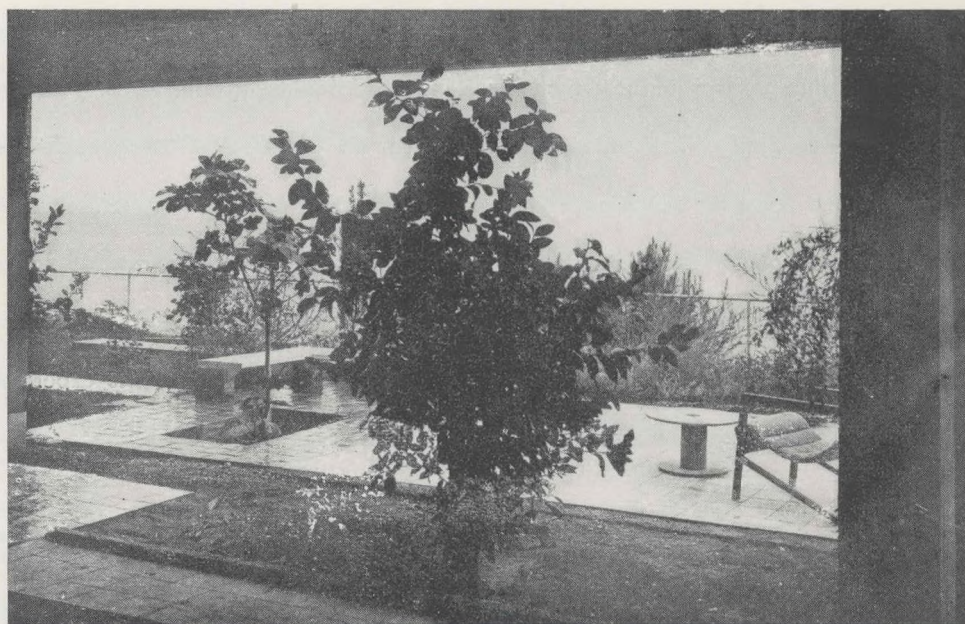
The architects have provided for general living requirements "une salle transformable" capable of giving ample space for entertainment, yet being arranged to allow of a more intimate disposition of the occupants when only one or two are in the room. This living room with its generous dimensions (about 46 ft. 0 in. x 20 ft. 0 in.) affords a fine centre from which the secondary elements are reached. The terrace which runs the full length of the room forms an excellent extension to the living space, and is brilliantly treated to make use of varying climatic conditions. The "balustrade" is of removable canvas sections which permit the sun to pour on to the terrace when desired, as well as making possible an uninterrupted view over the sea. Similarly the marquee above is in four sections so that the degree of sunshine can be controlled as desired. Apart from the practical advantages arising from this light and flexible arrangement for protection from wind and sun, the seaside character of the whole scheme is enhanced by these means, and the aesthetic gain is a considerable one.

Not only is the sea available to view in this house but when a change is desired the owner can look on to a "jardin de citronniers" and towards an old village which offers a new horizon, where "les masses de verdure remplacent les étendues bleues et grises."

The accompanying plan and photographs (selected from a very wide range of views) give some idea of the final appearance of the scheme. We cannot reproduce the colours of the interior, nor can an adequate suggestion be conveyed of the meticulous attention to detail treatment and equipment that has been expended in providing comfort and a true "workability" in the whole. The photographs will assist the reader to an appreciation of the scheme, though I must take the responsibility of any misinterpretation of intention or of actual error in description.



DETAIL OF HOUSE AT CAP MARTIN ROQUEBRUNE: GREY AND BADOVICI



TERRACE ON SEA
FRONT, LOWER
GROUND FLOOR

the vernacular idiom of the Greek and Italian fishermen with its high index of plastic effect and its externally significant pattern in multiplicity—through the lively essays of Gio Ponti and the more sober schemes of Rudofsky to the concluding expression of a rationalised solution to the problem.

Broadly speaking we find the common ingredients absorbed and expressed in the whole range. The variation takes place in the degree of control of natural conditions attempted, and in the degree of emphasis on physical comfort and visual amenity. The cottages that are the pure product of an ever-evolving local tradition do not bear the weight of an imposed and shaping hand. The amenities they offer show no fundamental advance over a span of centuries. But in the instinctive geometrising process that makes us cognisant of our surroundings they have a value similar to that of large-scale sculpture. The semi-circle of the barrel vault and the quadratic solidity of the wall system satisfy an inner compulsion to order and shape, and on abstract grounds the white dwellings of the Mediterranean enlist our admiration.

The rational example at the other end of the scale inevitably embraces a more complex postulate. For where the accent on the significance of architecture as "sculpture" may overshadow the complications of continued existence in a seaside dwelling (as it must if the shape is defined from outside) the rational dwelling aims primarily at satisfying practical and architectural desiderata. The components of the equation are largely governed by the predominance of one or other attitude—either an adherence to the literal forms of a traditional aesthetic, or the acceptance and development of a new aesthetic which is the product of new technique and re-stated living standards. The irrational factor in human make-up—coupled with a widespread distrust of an "intellectual" approach—has up to now, militated against the universal acceptance of the rationalisation of domestic architecture as a working hypothesis.

The architects of the house at Cap Martin Roquebrune have provided us not only with a cogent argument for a conceptual approach to the general problems of architecture, but in their brilliant demonstration in a specific solution have shown the plenitude of plastic experience the intellectual exhilaration and the sense of well-being made feasible by such an approach.

Acknowledgment is made to the periodicals "Architectural Review" and "Domus," and to the portfolio on the House at Cap Martin Roquebrune, published by Morancé, Paris, for illustrations used in this paper. Architects who have built seaside houses in South Africa or elsewhere are invited to send photographs, plans and descriptions for publication in the Record, and to comment upon problems they have encountered in carrying out such work.

R.M.



C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

To the Hon. Editors

Dear Sirs,

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ARCHITECTURE

As a humble but enthusiastic student of the Mistress Art for nearly half a century, I was profoundly moved by the revelations and hypotheses contained in the epitomisation of "a thesis approved for the degree of Master of Architecture in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1939" which appeared in your July issue.

For years I have been wondering what "Constructivism" was but I know it to be "an advance manifestation of spatial possibilities to meet a forthcoming necessity for environmental adjustment in an appropriate medium."

The delightful obscurantism of this phraseology reminds one of the schoolboy's definition of tapioca pudding as "milky kind of stuff with blobs in it" which so powerfully appealed to Mr. Punch's earnest enquirer into the real nature of Socialism.

This was the first reaction to the definition of "Constructivism" a second was attendant upon the reflection that since this was part of an adaptation of the thesis for a master's degree the well known criticism of Browning might be more to the point. A critic said that Browning was the most over-educated of living men and to prove it mentioned that the poet had written a long poem—"Sordello"—whereof the first and last lines alone were understandable ("Who would shall hear Sordello's story told"—"Who would has heard Sordello's story told") and they were both terminological inexactitudes.

But speaking of constructivism our author leads us to believe that it is not understood of the vulgar, is esoteric rather than exoteric, exotic, futuristic, super-surrealistic and so on until one comes to Part 9 of the synopsis which deals with "Le Corbusier and constructivism." Here we learn that "Le Corbusier's equipment for reconstitution and re-integration has its roots in a range of abilities that is unique in the history of Architecture."

I thank God for that, if that horror that affronts the Parisian sky the Salvation Army Headquarters known as the Cite de Refuge or the Salamander—cum-centipede model of the Soviet Palace at Moscow

are as our Author states, examples of the genius which has become florescent since "In 1918 Ozenfant and Jeanneret (le Corbusier) held the first exhibition of the 'Purism' movement in painting in Paris."

The house at Utrecht by G. Rietveld which is illustrated and commended looks very much like a parrot cage but is probably quite a good example of the machines to live in which le Corbusier says houses ought to be.

It is strange that the talented author of Constructivism and Architecture should have fallen into the error common to certain young philosophers of the class mislabelled Modernist in supposing that le Corbusier is serious.

He is anything but that. With his riotous gift of paradox, his amusing analysis and indication of "Satisfaction de L'Esprit," his sardonic grouping of humans like bees in the towering hives of his supreme jest the ideal modern city; for he follows closely the pessimistic Hedonism of the Chinese philosopher who tells us that the universe is a nest of boxes with nothing in the last box.

This Merry- Andrew spirit is clearly indicated in his sketches and comments by way of analysis of Domestic Building types which you show on page 268 of your July issue. His humour is irresistible because it is probably unconscious.

Like Wayne the hero of G. K. Chesterton's Extravaganza, "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," who led a revolution as a protest against lack of colour in the worlds Metropolis and the greed and graft that lay behind it, le Corbusier will pass into the unseen with a chuckle and the confession that it was all a joke but nevertheless well worth while.

Heath Robinson would heartily approve of le Corbusier's model for the Soviet Palace as also of the constructivism stage set for the Meyerhold Theatre, Moscow, in 1922, and would be ecstatic over the monument to the third International by Vladimir Tatlin, in 1919.

To summarise let us say that Constructivism alias Modernism is both a label and a libel for if it stands for fitness for function, designing in beauty and building in truth, then it is not modern alone but is of the ancients of the Potala at Lhasa, also of the newness and freshness of Frank Lloyd Wright and if it be anything else then it is not Architecture for what is true about it is not new to that Architecture of Adventure which Lethaby taught and epitomised and which has dominated the ideals of all true creators in the building art since the battle of the styles ceased ever so many years ago.

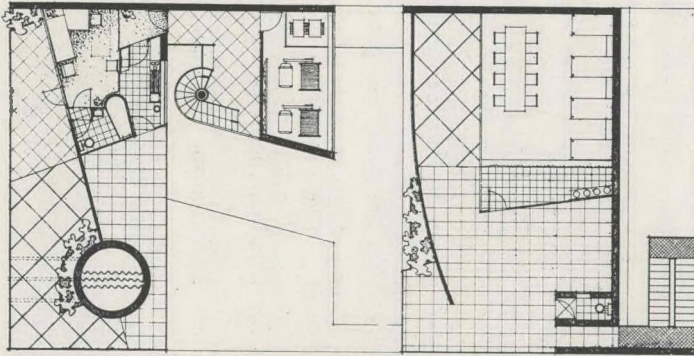
Good luck to the author of Constructivism and Architecture in that he manifests a youthful enthusiasm such as is needed in our academic groves. Some day I should like to meet him and break a friendly lance. Meanwhile I should like to tell him what happened at my first attempt to read his paper.

I fell asleep—My subconscious mind functioned around the idea that I had spent a long night beneath the stars in contemplation of the infinite but now had fallen asleep by the roadside near a barbed wire fence which obtruded on my field of vision as dawn's left hand appeared. In the dimness the fence became a field of tense action. A spider appeared, brushed his antennae free from dew and set to work linking barb to barb by an elastic filament spun out of interior integument. His given environment permitted such volume construction as his pantry storage was able to contain and he manifested space action with an agility and courage such as had once inspired Robert Bruce. Relationship of mass to void did not trouble him at all for his space organisation was of set purpose attenuated at the edges of the web he wove and close knit as he approached the nucleus. The elements of exhibitionism were not lacking for the dew was induced to hang diamonds at the junctions of web and woof. He was a fine craftsman exhibiting profound knowledge of the mechanics of space continuity and of volume, measure and scale knowing as he did how far apart the strands were, how much his vitals held, how far he could swing and the size he needed for his set end. His constructivism was profoundly crafty for no electrically welded fabric could rival the joint strength of his crossings—which made the plumbers wipe look like an also ran. The labour yielded him a satisfaction of the spirit too, for he chuckled as he wrought and I was so spell-bound that it was not until he had finished that I realised the full intent of his project and the danger of his directions for he had mistaken me for a fly and as he finished his web he said "Won't you walk into my Parlour?" I was fly enough not to do that for I realised that I should be decapitated and my carcase added to his winter store. While the going was good I faced the now rising sun and walked blithely along the broad highway. But as I walked I mused that the creature I had seen at work was a miraculous manifestation of fitness for function, the web he wove had inspired the constructivism of a Cottancin and the fan vaulting of the Gothic men. The spider takes hold in the Palaces of Kings, flourishes in the external offices of my dwelling and is the best kind of fly swatter, but somehow I believe that acting in the true spirit of modernism a vacuum cleaner is better than a holder of spider guests, and I believe I shall die in that faith.

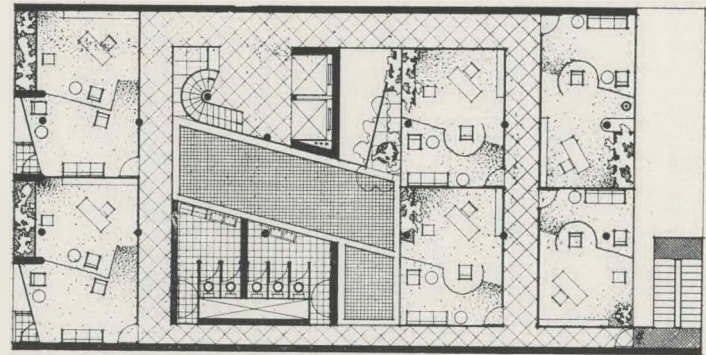
W. J. DELBRIDGE

office block

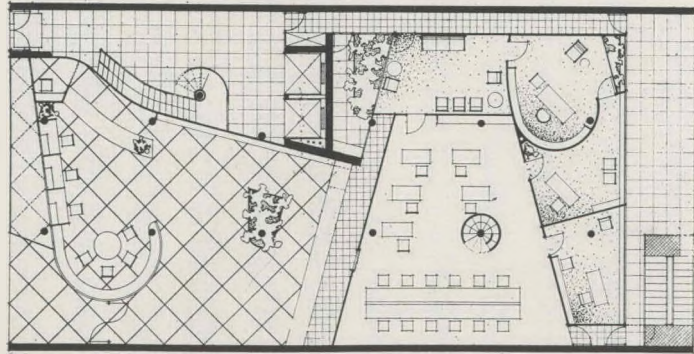
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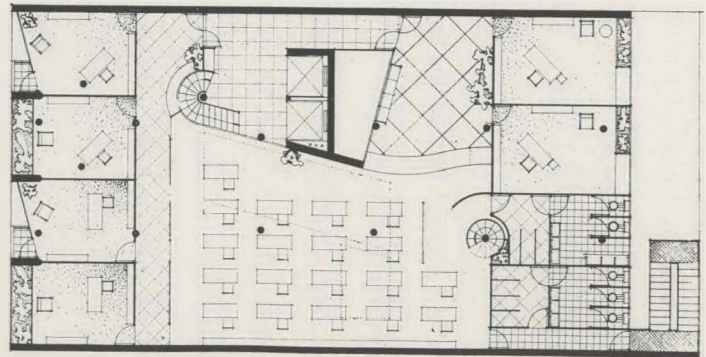
VIII • roof



III-VII • rent



I • travel



II • travel

GEORGE ERIC ABBOTT

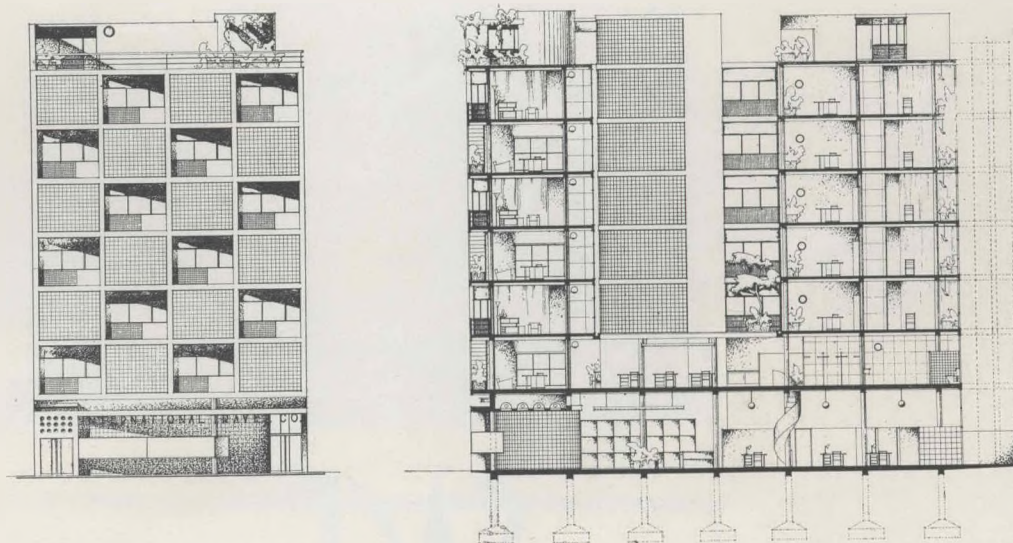
It is with regret that we have to announce the death of Lieutenant George Abbott, of the S.A.A.F., who was killed in action at Debra Tabor on September 23rd. Abbott was 26 years of age and had trained as a pupil pilot while still at the University of the Witwatersrand. He received the degree of Bachelor of Architecture with distinction in 1937 after five years of brilliant work as an architectural student. His enthusiasm for architecture extended beyond the studies required, and in one allied branch at least—photography—he achieved outstanding success. His thesis was a photographic survey of contemporary domestic architecture in Johannesburg which ran to several volumes and displayed the degree of his artistic judgment and skill in this medium.

In 1934 Abbott visited Europe on a N.U.S.A.S. study-tour and returned full of enthusiasm for the work he saw there. His own imagination and creative zest in architectural design were always well supported by his tireless energy and ability to give practical expression to his ideas. It was soon apparent that he had an instinctive inventiveness in design, and indeed before starting his studies, Abbott had already produced sketches for houses that gave promise of a brilliant career. He was a regular prize-winner on all round results, and although the war prevented him from carrying his studies into the field of practical experience there was every indication that his work would have been a substantial contribution to South African architecture. For some time he was in the office of Messrs. Cowin and Ellis where he worked chiefly on domestic schemes.

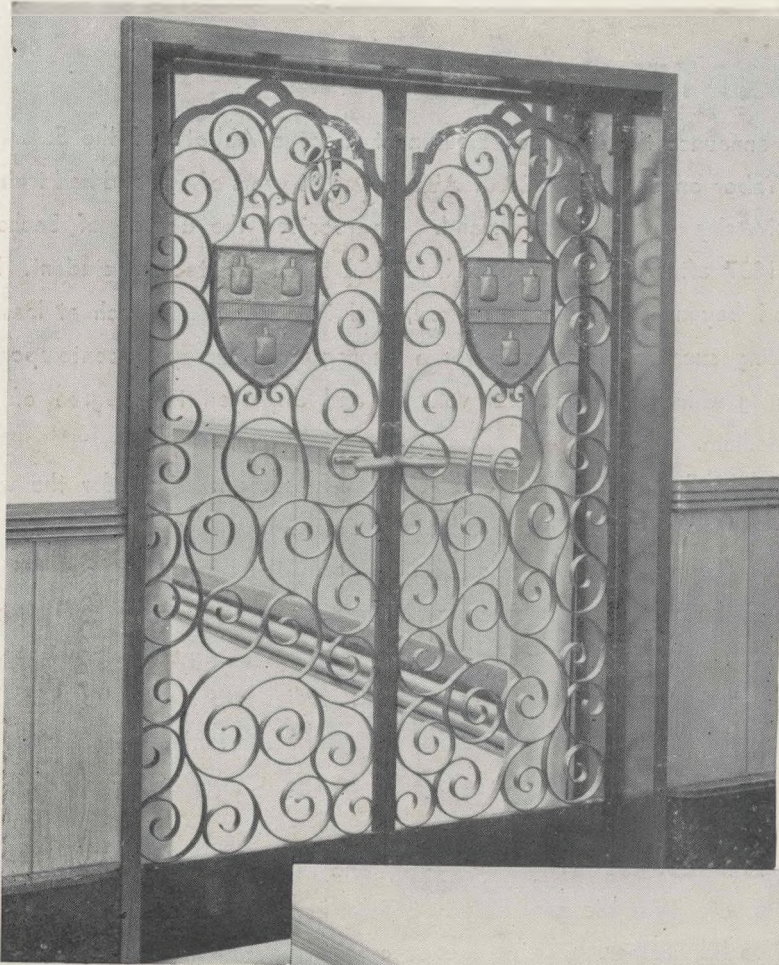
In the field of sport he was a keen motorist and played ice hockey and rugby during his student days.

We extend sincere sympathy to his wife (Miss Margery Leitch before her marriage last year) who is also an architect, to his father and to his brother. We reproduce one of his student designs—an office building which was drawn during his third year of study.

R. M.

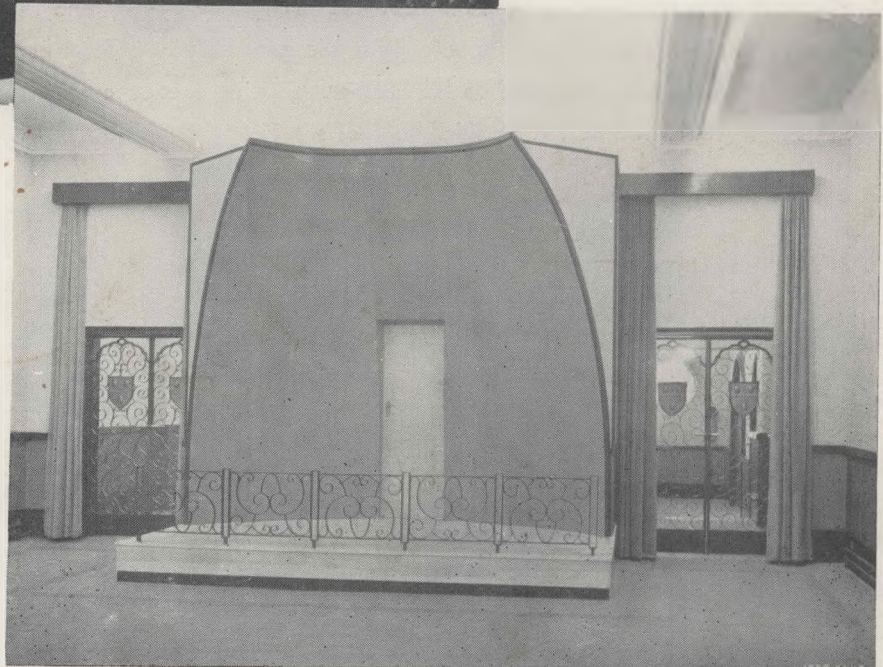


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Journal of the SA Architectural Institute

PUBLISHER:

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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