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VALLE DE CHICAMA

CLAY VESSEL

THE POTTERY OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

BY E. K. STRETTON

“Happily may I walk.
Happily with abundant showers may I walk.
Happily with abundant plants may I walk.
Happily on a trail of pollen may I walk.
Happily may I walk.
Being as it used to be long ago may I walk.
May it be beautiful before me.
May it be beautiful behind me.
May it be beautiful below me.
May it be beautiful above me.
May it be beautiful all around me.
In beauty it is finished.
In beauty it is finished.

It is difficult to reconcile this lovely fragment of a Navajo prayer-chant with the usual conception of a scalp-collecting American Indian warrior. Yet the one aspect is as typical as the other. The Indian was a gentle, beauty-loving agriculturist until the latent warrior was aroused by invading barbarians or encroaching neighbours. Then he became a ruthless fighter equipped with the most refined tortures. No mercy was ever shown to the captive, he must either become a slave or have his heart torn out and offered, steaming with life, as a propitiation to the God of Terror.

For the Indians, like all primitive people, worshipped a complicated system of gods who ordered their lives and watched over their welfare. They required such constant propitiation and figured so largely in the lives of the Indians that we find endless representations of them in the arts and crafts of primitive America. One, the plumed serpent, is found in the art of the natives in practically unbroken distribution from southern Canada to Panama and, in a modified form, in South America, as far south as Argentina.

This deity originated with the Mayas of Central America and consisted of an amazing conglomeration of features. He had the body of a serpent, plumes of a bird, teeth of a

jaguar, ornaments belonging to a man, such as ear plugs, nose plugs and a head dress, while in his distended jaws was placed a human head. As Paul Radin says “So curious a combination of features is not likely to arise more than once and we may, therefore, assume that wherever an animal of such a type is to be encountered either in the art of mythology of any American Indian tribe, it is to be explained as due to Maya influence.”

So before we begin to study American Indian pottery it is necessary to understand something of this influence that has been diffused by the glory that was Maya. For it was glorious, so glorious that it compares with the cultures of Greece and China. In political philosophy, in social organisation, in astronomy, the use of hieroglyphics and a perfected calendrical system, these people equalled any primitive nation of the world. Their mathematicians used the zero in their calculations possibly as much as eight hundred years before it was known anywhere in the Old World. Their architecture and bas-reliefs are comparable with those of Egypt and Assyria and though knowledge was as limited to the ruling classes as it was in Egypt, the fact remains that as a people, the Mayans were cultured and any tribe coming in contact with this culture must have been influenced and ennobled by it.



Valle de Chicama



Puma in clay

As many Indian tribes had a tendency to migrate and fuse with other tribes, either by overcoming them in warfare or by peacefully mingling with them, the leaven of Mayan culture was well distributed over North America, and in South America its presence is explained by the fact that the Inca culture of Peru, though distinct from that of Maya was yet similar to and contemporaneous with it. Both flourished until roughly the end of the seventh century A.D., so that from Panama to Peru the same high level of culture persisted. Consequently, however varied in shape and decoration the pottery of primitive America may be, it is all permeated with the same peculiar flavour and imbued with the same characteristic feeling.

Its flavour is one that must surely appeal to everyone. For it is so completely unlike anything that the Old World has ever produced that we are immediately attracted by the sense of freshness and novelty which emanates from it. Many people dislike modern art because it is like, and at the same time unlike, what they are used to, they cannot appreciate it because they do not understand why it is unlike their preconceived idea of how it should look. Indian pottery does not remind us of anything we have seen before so we do not have to understand it to be able to like it. Yet, the actual elements of the decoration are familiar to us because they are just simple geometrical forms such as triangles and circles, so it is as though a

foreigner is speaking to us in our own language and we hardly realise that we do not understand the topic of conversation because each individual word is intelligible. The order in which these words occur is also familiar to us and therefore aids the delusion. I mean that the decoration is symmetrical.

This is a characteristic of most primitive arts, possibly because they see so much symmetry in natural forms. The human body and those of animals, birds, insects, and fish are all symmetrical. This theory seems to be borne out by Boas, who states that in by far the greatest number of cases symmetrical arrangements are to the right and left of a vertical axis, much more rarely above and below a horizontal one.

Another fundamental element of Indian and other primitive decorative form is rhythmic repetition and this is also probably explained by nature. The rhythm of a line of distant hills, the movement of leaves on a windy day, the waving of a cornfield and the ripples on the surface of a pool would undoubtedly influence the imagination of a people living in close contact with nature.

If these theories are correct it is not surprising that we feel the appeal of American Indian pottery, for we are also sensible to symmetry and rhythm and it is therefore worth our while to examine the pottery still further so that we can obtain some idea of its meaning.

The decoration is of two kinds, modelled and painted and in both cases is applied after the actual pot has been made. The shapes of the vessels are too varied to be discussed here but they are excellent examples of pottery made by skilled craftsmen to whom the wheel was unknown, their well sprung curves reveal an aesthetic feeling for line and form.

The modelled decoration, unlike the painted, is usually wonderfully realistic and is in the form of animals and human beings. The Indians, steeped in religious mysticism, made effigy jars representing some bird or animal with which they associated various magic powers. Thus the turkey, for instance, was believed to be a rain inducing bird, so the turkey effigy jar was further embellished with a painted stepped design round the rim of the mouth, which was symbolical of the rain cloud.



Food Bowl

• Arizona



Food Platter

• Arizona



Food Bowl

• Cheylon



Bowl from Isla de Sacrificios. off Vera Cruz



Vase from Four Mile Ruin • Arizona



Peruvian Portrait Pottery

The rain cloud recurs with great frequency, its presence on the Zuni bowl has a symbolical interpretation which is explained by an Indian as follows:—"We call the whole design 'cloud all alone.' When a person does not go to the dances when they dance for rain, after her death she goes to the Sacred Lake and when all the spirits of the other dead people come back to Zuni to make rain, she cannot go, but must wait there all alone, like a single little cloud left in the sky after the storm clouds have blown away. She just sits and waits all alone, always looking and looking in all directions, waiting for somebody to come. That is why we put eyes looking out in all directions."

This interpretation gives us a very good idea of how replete with symbolism most of the decoration is. Motifs which originally

were entirely realistic (Mayan art was essentially realistic) have gradually become more and more conventionalised until what was once easily recognisable as a painting of a monkey has now become nothing more than a very geometrical design.

The explanation for this is quite simple. Pottery was never made for commercial purposes, consequently the craftsman making it for his own private domestic use did not feel any necessity to adhere to the naturalistic forms of the animals he was painting, but felt quite free to modify and conventionalise his motif as much as he liked, since no one but himself and his family need know what he was supposed to be drawing. On the other hand, if the pot was to form part of the sacred paraphernalia of religious rite there was equally small need for naturalism since every-

C l a y V e s s e l

N a z c a



one participating in the ceremony knew exactly what it was for and just what animals and objects were to be represented in connection with it.

So, far from indicating a degeneration in the art of the Indians, this extreme conventionalisation indicates the dynamic personality of the potters. Instead of slavishly imitating the realistic forms, they gave their sense of the decorative free rein. Where they eliminated unimportant detail they exaggerated characteristic features such as the head dress of a man. They did more, they altered the shape of such features and adapted them to their designs, thus is the curled-back snout of the alligator accounted for.

As a result we are presented with simple, vigorous decoration free from uninteresting

detail and able to convey to us a sense of pleasant spontaneity.

The effect is enhanced by the colouring. Though restricted in range on account of their ochreous nature, consisting chiefly of red, orange, brown and black, the proportion in which they are employed is always tastefully balanced. If two or more colours are used on the same vessel there is never any overinsistence of one of them, they are all of equal importance and the whole is bound together by a strong accenting outline of black which makes the design stand out from the creamy body of the ware in a most striking fashion.

Is it so difficult after all, in view of this direct yet rhythmic vigour to reconcile the poet and the warrior?



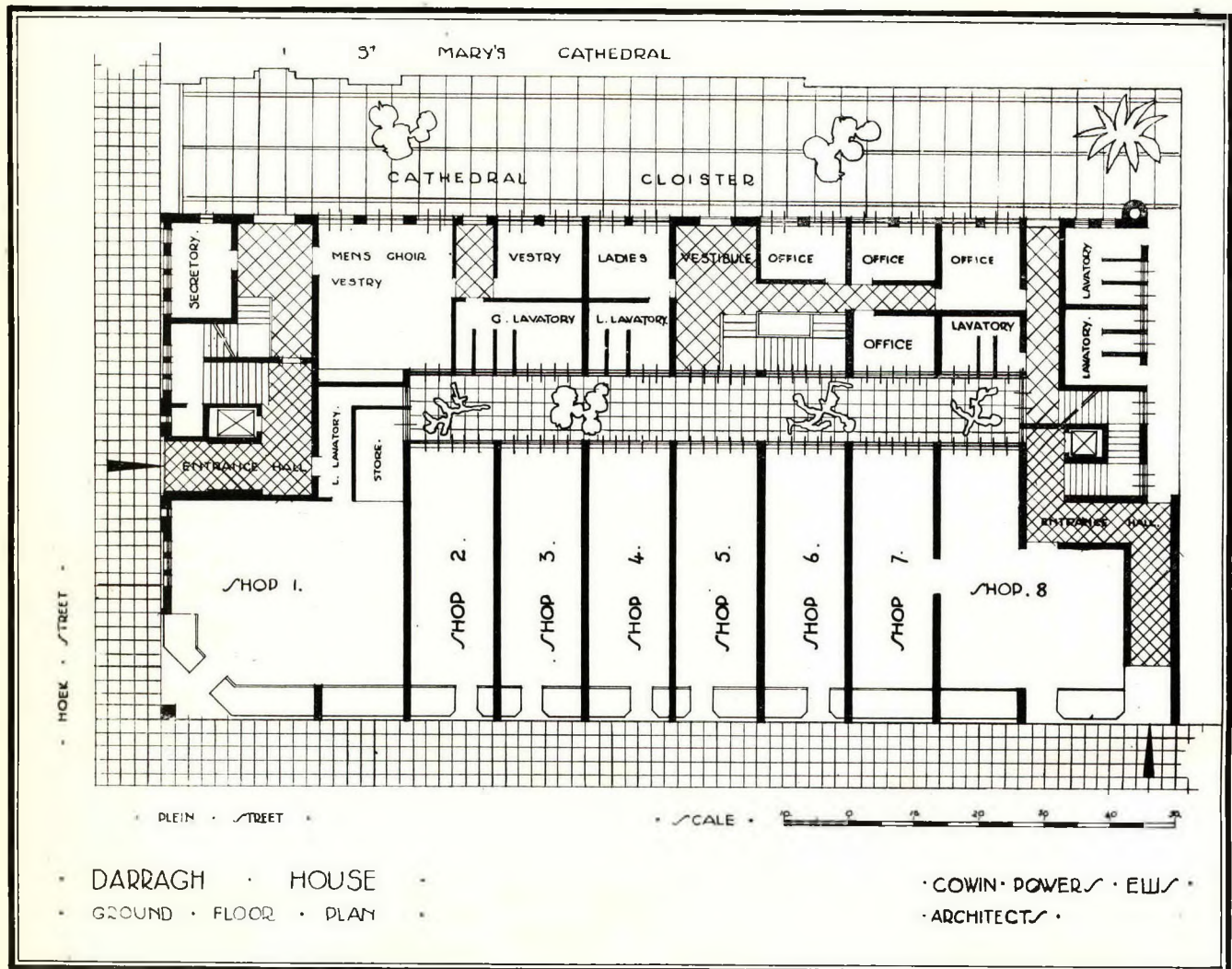
DARRAGH HOUSE.

JOHANNESBURG

This building takes the place of St. Mary's Hall, which was a landmark in Johannesburg, and well-known as the centre of the work of the Church of England in Johannesburg. A great deal of controversy arose when it was first mooted that the demolition of St. Mary's Hall was contemplated. Many thought that this would be sheer vandalism and that Johannesburg could ill spare the loss of a building of such great architectural merit. However, it was found that the building had lost its use after the new Cathedral adjoining had been built and had become a liability instead of an asset. It was ill adapted for social functions and, moreover, could not be altered to satisfy the needs of the Cathedral

congregation and the Diocese without great expense, and even then the result it was felt would be a make-shift. So after exploring every avenue for its useful purpose without success, with great reluctance the authorities decided on the removal of the Hall and the erection of the new building, which has been named Darragh House, in memory of the Rev. John Darragh, first Rector of St. Mary's.

Darragh House has to serve many functions. It provides for recreation facilities for the Cathedral congregation in two Halls in the Basement, one quite large and the other small, where lectures, concerts and dances can be held; and on the Ground Floor Vestries for the Clergy: offices and lavatories for the



The Plan

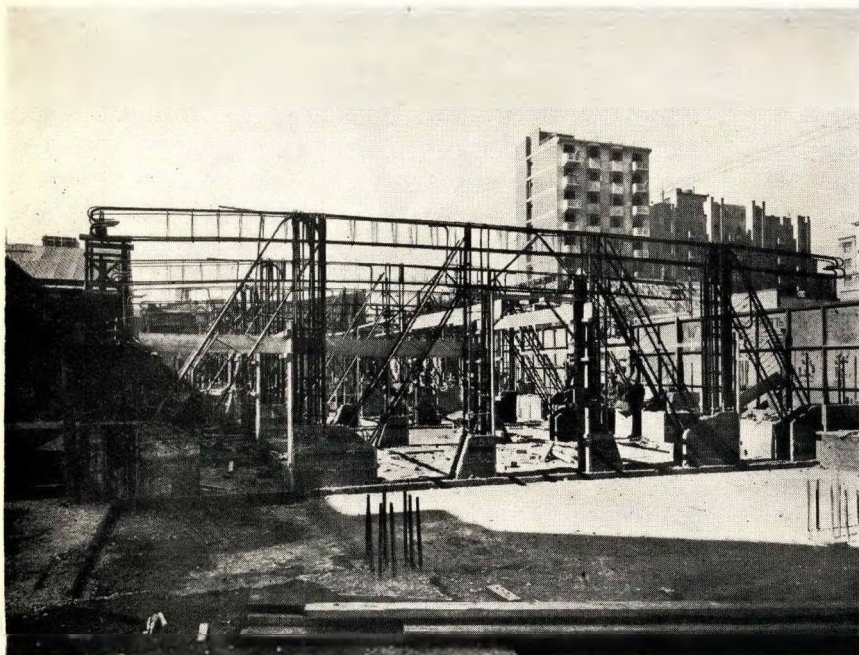


Fig. 1. The lattice girder



Darragh House



The Main Entrance

Church. More offices for the Diocese and a Board Room are provided on the First Floor. So much for the accommodation for the Church. Then the question of an adequate return on the capital outlay received consideration and shops are provided on the Plein Street frontage, and the upper floors are planned for letting as offices, single rooms and two-room and bachelor flats.

A feature of the construction which was new to Johannesburg was the reinforced concrete girders forming divisions between the shops and arranged to span over the large hall in the basement, thus avoiding the introduction of columns. These girders are forty-two feet long and twelve feet high and carry the whole weight of the building above the ground floor (see Fig. 1), and are of lattice construction in concrete which involved very careful setting out and arrangement during erection.

The facades are designed in harmony with the Cathedral adjoining, and are plastered with tinted cement of a buff colour.

Special consideration has been given to the heating, ventilation and acoustics of the halls in the basement; a system of pressure ventilation with provision for cooling and heating has been installed, and the ceilings of the halls are lined with feder board insulation.

A sheltered roof garden with a northern aspect occupies a great portion of the top floor.

By purchasing a small stand on the Wanderers Street frontage and demolishing the buildings thereon, a lane has been formed connecting Hoek Street and Wanderers Street and thus the Cathedral is entirely disconnected from the adjoining buildings, and this lane will be developed to form an attractive cloister to the Cathedral precincts.

The Architects were Messrs. Cowin, Powers and Ellis, and the Contractors Messrs. Clark and Sons. The sub-contractors were the Reinforcing Steel Co.; Waygood-Otis Co.; Magnusson & Gallie; Hunt, Leuchars and Hepburn; W. R. Boustred & Co.; Plastering Industries; A. E. Barker; Linoleum House; and United Oxy-Acetylene (S.A.), Ltd.



The original St. Mary's Hall

M I S E E N S C E N E

W I L L E M H E N D R I K Z

PART II

Technical Development.

The elaboration of scenery demanded machinery for efficient scene changing, and an amazing array of devices was evolved for this purpose.

The older stage was a fairly open box-like space ; with a floor sloping slightly towards the front, pierced with a proscenium opening less than half as high as the roof of the box and about half as wide as the stage width. The stage was flanked on either side by wings made to slide on or off the stage in grooves, and closed at the back by a painted drop—one of the many immense curtains hanging above and ready to be let down from the gridiron—and the top space was cut off from the audience by narrow strips called borders. An apron sometimes extended past the curtain line, and the stage was almost entirely lit by footlights, a few border-lights, and sometimes strips on the wings.

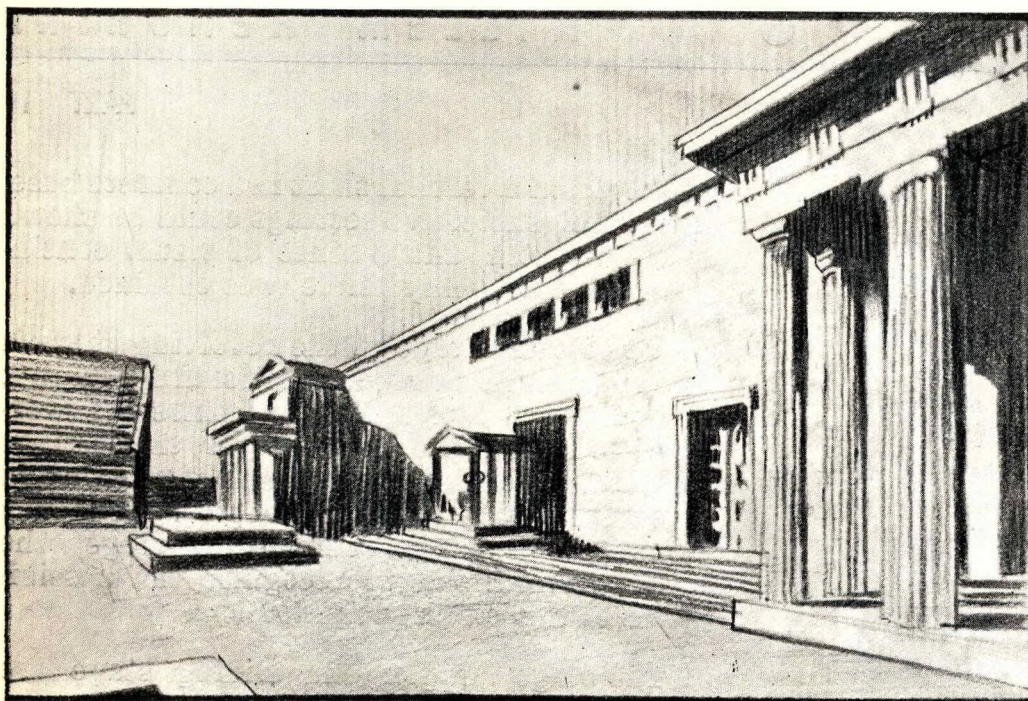
With the adoption of the box set, free moving flats, canvas stretched on wooden frames, were used and the wings and hangings disappeared and grooves were no longer used because the screens cut directly across them. The floor was no longer sloping and the proscenium opening was lessened to provide for better positions for border, spot and flood-lights. One of the earliest devices to hasten change of scenery was the revolving stage—it was used in Japan before Europe discovered its potentialities. The revolving turntable occupies only the centre portion of the stage space, being wider than the proscenium opening, almost touching the curtain line in front, and leaving at the back and sides ample working space. The four or five scenes were set up at the same time, with flats, cut-outs and properties complete : each set being either a small box set just high and wide enough to fill the stage opening, or partly open and devised to show whatever effect was required further back on the stage. The turntable

revolved on a vertical shaft in a concrete base, and many successive settings could be shown with despatch, and a sense of visual continuity, otherwise impossible, was obtained.

The disadvantage of the revolving stage is the demand for so much additional space, that it becomes too expensive, and since the average production has to go on tour, the settings have to serve theatres which may not contain a revolving stage. But although the tendency is toward a bare architectural stage, the realist cannot fail to recognise the possibilities of this efficient mechanism.

The stage wagon and sliding stage are recent developments of great value. The wagons are small wheeled vehicles on which the various sections of the scene can be fixed and rolled into place. From this a sliding stage as wide as the proscenium opening was developed. In this case a considerable portion of the old fixed stage floor disappears, and a moving platform carrying a setting slides along tracks parallel to the curtain line into a space before the curtain or back to its place at the side to allow another setting to be slid forward. The drawback of this is that the stage width must be at least three times the width of the opening to accommodate this sliding device. But this can be overcome where the settings can be lowered into a cellar, and then wheeled to either side, the settings being changed by the elevator system.

Another introduction of enormous importance is the cupola horizon or stage dome : a stage background in the shape of half a dome curving round the playing stage at the back and sides. Its surface is such that when properly lit, it resembles the sky and has the advantage of being perfectly natural and wholly unobtrusive. This cyclorama is described more fully under the chapter on Stage Lighting.



The fourth century theatre of Dionysius. A conjectural restoration.

The setting up to now seems to fit contentedly enough into the old proscenium opening, but when Craig and Appia gave expression to their ideas of simplification and conventionalisation, that is, to use materials essentially theatrical instead of borrowing from the other arts, the stage was simply crying out for reform.

Permanent Settings.

The stage in its entirety must not be a pictorial one, but a spacial one. Some reformers have secured this spacial quality by fixed and immovable architectural elements, and some of their settings are supple enough for variation by means of plastic units, curtains, and painted pieces.

One must distinguish the permanent setting from the architectural or constructional setting. The former is movable and has possibilities for considerable variation, whereas the latter restricts these possibilities because of its rigidity and constructional purpose.

This fixed architectural arrangement is to be found in the modern Shakespearean theatre. The tradition of this stage was interrupted by the perspective setting of the Italian stage,

and the Shakespearean enthusiasts believed that to free themselves from the stereoscopic scene with its wings and painted drops, they should go back to the point where their stage was interrupted—the theatre of Elizabethan London.

This theatre was a survival of the Middle Ages, handed down to Shakespeare and his contemporaries through the medium of improvised platforms of travelling companies, and it seems wrong to try to find a means of expression in this primitive stage.

There have been various attempts at an exact reconstruction of the Shakespearean stage. Killian and Klein, in the Hoftheatre in Munich compromised with a stage arrangement consisting of a deep inner proscenium pierced at either side by a portal behind which changes of scenes take place. This proscenium which occupies a depth of ten feet, is permanent, the space within it constituting an unlocalised area which is defined in the course of the play by the pictorial indications placed in the frame of the proscenium.

Kruger of Germany and Poel of England have attempted a more exact reconstruction of the Shakespearean stage.

In Kruger's project, the balcony, which cut off the actors to their waists by its balustrade and broke the movement with its two pilasters, was faithfully produced from the best documentation available. The stage was divided into two parts by a curtain, giving a fore and inner stage. The inner stage under the balcony was approached by a few steps and could be closed from sight by drawing the curtain. The general background always remained the same: a wall with a door right and left, a balcony and curtain masking the inner stage. The fore stage was an area which could be localised at will by some significant properties placed on the inner stage when it was exposed, and by the words of the play.

Poel, who created and carried on for years the Elizabethan Stage Society of London, has experimented on the same lines, often employing black velvet curtains as a background against which the figures appear in sharp silhouette.

In such a system practically everything which can interest the eye has evidently been abandoned. The imagination of the producer is exhausted to find different combinations of play on the forestage, inner stage and balcony, used singly or together. With these restricted means at his disposal, the result must be profoundly boring.

In creating a single locale for drama, conceived in architectural terms, we move inevitably to a stage without setting. An attempt is made to introduce realistic elements without sufficient means to harmonise them, and the environment of the action cannot be characterised and the psychological element disappears.

The advocates of this system believe that the bare stage gives the actor his full importance and that the imagination of the spectator will complete the stage impression.

In architectural settings there is a fairly tractable system known as the tripartite. It consists of two fixed pillars between the stage proper and the back stage, thus dividing it into three compartments each of which can be closed with curtains. The front stage can be used alone, or three different scenes may be shown simultaneously or in succession.

This tripartite stage is a transformation of the stage of Palladio, which was, in its turn, inspired by the classic stage. The modern application of this idea shows us the difference between the permanent setting, applicable to all exigencies of the *mise en scene*, and the immovable architectural stage.

A search has been made in the modern stage for variable combinations of architectural elements and various systems of permanent settings have been elaborated.

Alfred Roller of Vienna in 1905 introduced the well known movable towers or pylons in place of the wings, an innovation which spread rapidly and soon was seen in the form of mobile walls in the *Kunstler* theatre directed by Georg Fuchs.

To Fuchs rhythm is the very essence of the drama and the dance becomes the point of departure for the art of the theatre. The complete stage becomes a movement perceived in harmony, and the architecture of the theatre must be conceived to produce the closest possible union between the stage and the audience, and there must be perfect transmission of optical and acoustical impressions. His idea of obtaining this perfect transmission for both eye and ear is the "relief stage"—the actor standing out from the background as a figure in *bas-relief*. He found the transformation of impressions into dramatic action in the *proscenium*. Hitherto it had merely been the line of demarcation between stage and audience, now it becomes the spot where dramatic action was to be fulfilled.

Although there is a danger of isolating the actor, since he is detached from the background, one sees in the realisations of his theatre a remarkable element of simplification.

The very shallow stage of this theatre presented an architectural arrangement in three planes. The *proscenium* was sufficiently wide to permit an entrance on each lateral member and the middle scene consisted of two sections of wall joined by a bridge of the same thickness, placed a short way upstage. The bridge could be lifted and the walls moved off the stage at will, moving, of course, in the same plane. On bringing the walls together, a complete background could be

formed. These walls were, in fact, an inner and plastic proscenium. The back stage was closed with a backdrop entering directly into the scene dock, and the floor could be lowered in the backstage so that, in a landscape for example, the base line could be concealed. This was the third plane. The lighting system was studied with great care, the fore and middle stages being lighted from above, while the back stage was illuminated by special light units placed above and below those at the base concealed in a purpose made pit. Using green besides white, yellow, blue and red, greater richness and gradations were possible.

Since the backstage could be completely dematerialised by means of light, astonishing effects of atmospheric distance could be obtained. One notices that the relief stage cannot dispense with the illusion of depth. Unfortunately the relief stage uses a questionable means of effect, namely, painting. But as long as it is confined to planes without venturing into three dimensions or attempting perspective it is justifiable. The decorative treatment of the painted background framed by a plastic architectural arrangement produces a feeling of space, depth and distance. These two parts, the part which is plastic and architectural where the actor describes his movements, and the part which is painted before which the actor appears in living relief, are inclined to destroy the scenic unity, since it can be maintained only when the back drop depicts the open sky, or is a black background representing absolute depth, or lastly, a curtain.

These ideas brought about the use of walls returning in the form of mobile pylons forming the basic elements in other and different systems of permanent settings.

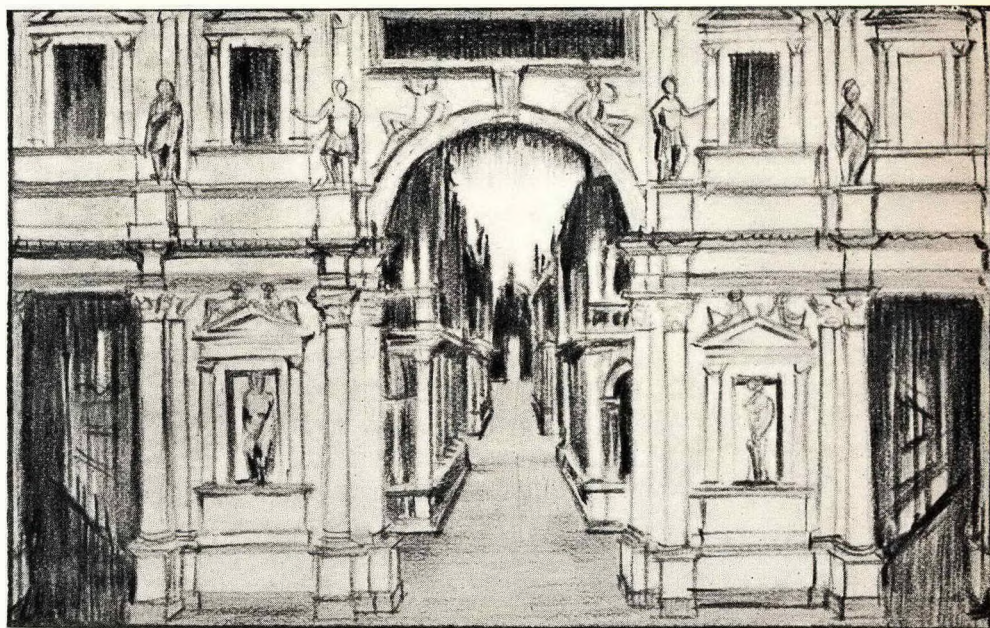
One of the most characteristic realisations of this idea was the first permanent setting in America—the Arts and Crafts, Detroit. A system was used which has been copied by many experimental theatres in America. It contained the following units: four pylons; two canvas flats; two sections of stairs three feet long, and a section eight feet long and eighteen inches high; three platforms of the same height, respectively six, eight and twelve feet long; dark green curtains slightly

longer than the pylons, divided into six sections; two folding screens for mashing, covered with the same material as the curtains and as high as the pylons; two irregular tree forms as set pieces. The pylons, flats and stairs were painted in a broken colour and the whole arrangement backed by a plastic sky dome and lighted with a special system.

Other artists have tried to find a setting capable of many variations through a combination and repetition of elementary forms such as cubes, blocks and cylinders. Finally, there are artists seeking an architectural construction which will be new for each play, but will remain more or less immutable for the duration of that piece. Norman bel Geddes has produced for Jeanne d'Arc a setting of which he says: "The setting represents not a scene, but a stage structure to play all the scenes upon. On this single setting ten scenes are played, each of a totally different nature—some interiors, some exteriors; and while the dialogue is being spoken the change of settings is made in full view of the audience. Never for an instant does one see the changes in the scenes being made from a street to a cell, from a cell to a palace, by the use of properties, banners and decorations carried by actors who are part of the scene they are making before you. The rear of this stage is filled with architectural embryos which are never more than dimly seen in the half light until they suddenly evolve in such significant forms as the Chateau of Chinon, the Altar of Rheims Cathedral, the ramparts of Compiègne, the streets of Rouen."

Appia and Craig.

Although these two men were not the first to protest against the mistakes in theatrical design, it was only through their writings and designs that the first constructive move was made. In tracing the evolution of modern stagecraft, the contribution of these great men is of immeasurable importance. They laid a sound foundation for a new stagecraft and their teachings have done more than anything else to change a vague and tedious development into something definite and daringly striking. They brought new life into a stagnating theatrical world.



The Palladian Theatre at Vicenza



A Naturalistic Setting for Ibsen's "Dolls House."

Adolphe Appia.

The name of Appia is synonymous with the "simplification and purification of scene design, the practicality of three dimensional scenery" in contrast to two dimensional painting, and the reinstatement of the actor as the primary and essential element of dramatic art: the whole subordinated to one directing force—music. He was first of all, a musician, and it is important to realise this priority. Music was his chosen art, his inspiration.

His reforms took place in first the technical processes of stagecraft: painting, lighting, scenery—practical details of all kinds; then the actor: his dramatic education and his costume. He established definitely and authoritatively, the duties of the director and stage manager. The central point from which his forms radiated was the actor, the living body, moving in space. The idea of time is supplied by the music, that of space by the body of the actor in the acting area. Appia found that in order to obtain the full strength and dramatic value of the human body, resistance is needed; such resistance is provided by the plastic scenic space, composed of planes and masses. Curves were avoided. The acting area was strengthened by the contrast between straight lines, vertical and horizontal, and the use of inclined planes, and the flexibility of the moving human body.

The necessity of evoking a precise locality, a room, a city, a forest, is only a secondary consideration in Appia's scenery. It is done by subtle suggestion only—demanding a spirit of sacrifice on the part of the designer and a need of long education. According to Appia the mounting of a play must follow the music. This duty is, in turn, a right to modify the proportions of space as music modifies those of time. It is therefore possible to take the same liberties, to introduce the same changes within that given space which is the stage of the theatre, as music does with the given duration of time represented by the score. As music modifies the relation of time to life, so scenery will modify the relation of life to space.

Appia's scenic space presupposes two methods of lighting. The first is devoted to

illuminating the entire space evenly, so as "to see clearly," as he said—a sort of diffused and special tone. The second is for the purpose of underlining the contrasts of scenic spaces, to create shadows and bring out the plastic value of the moving body of the actor. His settings are the result of a profound study of the score. He designed projects for the stage in which everything should be subordinated to the drama, the music and the action. A practiced eye and above all a keen musical sense are needed to comprehend the greatness which goes to the creation of such a style, simplified to the last degree.

Another thing which gives force to Appia's teachings is the importance he gave to technique. He was imbued with the conviction that all reforms must be founded on a solid technical basis and that without such a basis they will remain arbitrary, sterile and without future. Technique is the principle of order; we must submit to it because its origins are greater than our personal desires.

With amazing directness and clarity Appia dissected the plastic elements of the stage picture. In doing so he anticipated in detail the present technical basis of stage lighting and outlined precisely the way it has since been used, not only as an indispensable means of unifying stage settings, by suggesting mood and atmosphere, but also as a method of emphasising the dramatic values of a performance and heightening our emotional response to them. His supreme intuition was his recognition that light can play as directly upon our emotions as music does. We are more immediately affected by our sensitiveness to variations of light in the theatre than we are by our sensations of colour, shape or sound. Our emotional reaction to light is more rapid than any other theatrical medium of expression, possibly because no other sensory stimulus moves with the speed of light, possibly because our earliest inherited fear being fear of the dark we inherit with it also a primitive worship of the sun.

Appia's influence on the contemporary dramatic movement, direct and indirect, has been very great. Having gone back to the very sources of our aesthetic life, he has given



A design by Adolphe Appia for the rock in "Die Walkure" (Wagner).

us a doctrine which will not go out of fashion as happens so often in the theatrical world. The foundations of his work are too deep to be moved by superficial changes. All that has been accomplished since 1900 in the renovation of our dramatic art—from Rheinhardt stairways to Russian Constructivism—is almost entirely due to Appia.

Gordon Craig.

"It is impossible for a work of art ever to be reproduced where more than one brain is permitted to direct; and if works of art are not seen in the theatre this one reason is a sufficient one, though there are plenty more."

This idea of Craig's has worked out in such a manner that the theatre to-day, whatever its imperfections, is organised incomparably better than twenty years ago, for artistic control and for co-ordinate creation under a unified direction. "The art of the theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor drama, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words,

which are the body of the play; lines and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dancing. One is no more important than the other, no more than one colour is more important to a painter than another, or one note more important than another to a musician."

In opposition to the theory of realistic illusion he observed: "In what we call Decoration of our theatre . . . there should be no attempt to produce what we call 'Theatrical Illusion.'" For instance, we should not paint a tree, or put up an imitation tree so as but to copy in colour and texture a real tree. No more than in a Cathedral they put up a wooden copy of the original cross. Doubtless the cross on which the Saviour was crucified was a rough wooden structure, but when it reaches the cathedral it becomes a precious work of art, in no way realistic."

The idea at the heart of his writings is that the theatre beyond having unity which is an attribute of all art, and utilising to the full the values of that action which is its own essential feature, will abandon the ideal of an



A design by Walter Hampden for "Hamlet"
Movable units which can afford new forms



A setting for "Grotesques" (Head) by Raymond Jonson

illusion of reality—this ideal of faithful, if selective, representation of something happening naturally; will instead present a show that is typically and recognisably theatrical.

The spectator must be led to believe that he is not merely looking at clever or amusing actors affecting imitation of some real characters and real incidents, but is instead on a plane with the gods, where life is intensified, epitomised, classified—he is in a world of theatric imagination.

“I let my scenes grow out of not merely the play, but from broad sweeps of thought which the play has conjured up in me.”

Abstract means of Expression.

In the search for the new stage an effort has been made toward typically theatrical expressiveness and the beauties that lie close to abstraction and revealed form. Although Craig and Appia developed the theory of the abstract it had not yet become a creation of concrete means.

The values of curtains became to be fully appreciated when the realistic formula was abandoned, since they can be only as positive as the designer cares to make them; disappearing into a neutrality and colourless retirement; coming forward to serve decoratively with colour. The range of beauty and texture is almost unlimited and under colour lighting, and in folds and major masses, there is a great abstract value. They leave the imagination of the spectator free, they form an unobtrusive background that emphasises the action, they are plastic, they take light effectively and sensitively and contribute naturally to rhythmic value.

In short, they offer a simple harmonious means to abstract decorativeness.

Craig used curtains in his earlier work, but later abandoned them in favour of solid architectural masses—which seems to have become the tendency of modern producers. It was Appia who first evolved the theory that for contrast on the stage, the actor needs backgrounds in opposition to his roundness. Backgrounds which, like himself, are three-dimensional. Screens, too, have proved to be most adaptable and satisfactory in abandoning

realism without making the stage too formally architectural. They are usually painted in a flat tone or according to one of the broken colour formulas. Like the curtain they have the advantage of providing a simple background, emphasising the actor and offering abstract decorative qualities. But they are more adaptable and can be arranged in endless combinations to achieve various emotional suggestions.

The best known system was designed and developed by Craig and he described it thus: “These screens are self supporting and are made either of wooden frame covered with canvas or of solid wood. With screens of narrow dimensions curved forms are produced, and for large rectangular spaces broader leaves are used, and for varied and broken forms all sizes are employed. Sometimes certain additions may be made to this scene, such as a flight of steps, a window, a bridge, a balcony, and, of course, the necessary furniture, though great care and reserve must be exercised to avoid the ridiculous.

The scene is a living thing. In the hands of an artist it is capable of all varieties of expression, even as a living voice and a living face are capable of every expression.

The scene remains always the same, while incessantly changing.

The so-called “relief stage” was developed by George Fuchs; the basic theory being that if the actors appear to the audience on a shallow stage as if a flat scene and nothing more were behind them, a new decorative value could be given to their movements, and a new intimacy set up between players and audience. The background throws the actor into prominence and interest is concentrated where it indubitably belongs. Special attention was paid to the costuming—the movement of the actors being considered from the viewpoint of their individual places in a shifting pattern of colour.

The sharp silhouetting of the figures, the decorative parade of costumes, the closeness of the actor to the spectator appealed to directors as the accomplishment of what Craig and Appia had hinted at. It resulted in conventionalisation and a high degree of visual stylisation.

Expressionism, and the Plastic Setting.

When the stage designer broke the bonds of verisimilitude he was able to move toward the realisation of greater emotional expression. It was no longer necessary to suggest an exterior reality but rather to allow the scenic designer full play to transmit through the medium of his setting the emotions which the play evoke in him, and this new form of decoration becomes expressionistic in true form.

Actually, this synthetic stage decoration is an incomplete setting, consisting of isolated elements on an otherwise empty stage. Platforms and stairs make possible the arrangement of special movements and groupings. They facilitate and expand stage movement and strengthen the scenic expression. As Appia and Craig prophesied, it is the organisation of the stage in terms of levels, inclines and stairs which is most likely to survive in modern decoration.

Expressionism includes all those methods that look to greater intensification of dramatic emotion; to greater theatrical expressionism as opposed to those of imitating life or giving an interesting representation of reality. By aiding concentration in theatrical reality and the dramatic flow of the production, and by contributing to theatric form by every physical and visual element of the stage, one becomes expressionistic. The designer tries to foster an inner truth of quality or rhythm in the script by emotional rather than imitative means and by utilising the forces belonging to the stage.

Expressionism in a sense covers all that is being accomplished in the march toward abstraction in settings—toward formal stages and space stages—and detachment from realism is at the bottom of all these methods.

All modern stage decoration tends towards a more complete organisation; toward three-dimensional setting, which assumes plastic unity between actor and audience. In environment there is no longer a demand for accuracy of detail. Only certain elements are chosen for suggestion, and the visual concept is interpreted according to our sensitiveness.

Proportion, the organisation of the occupied and unoccupied, and colour are the means by which we present the characteristics of historic environment. For these elements to have expressive value, the setting must be plastic.

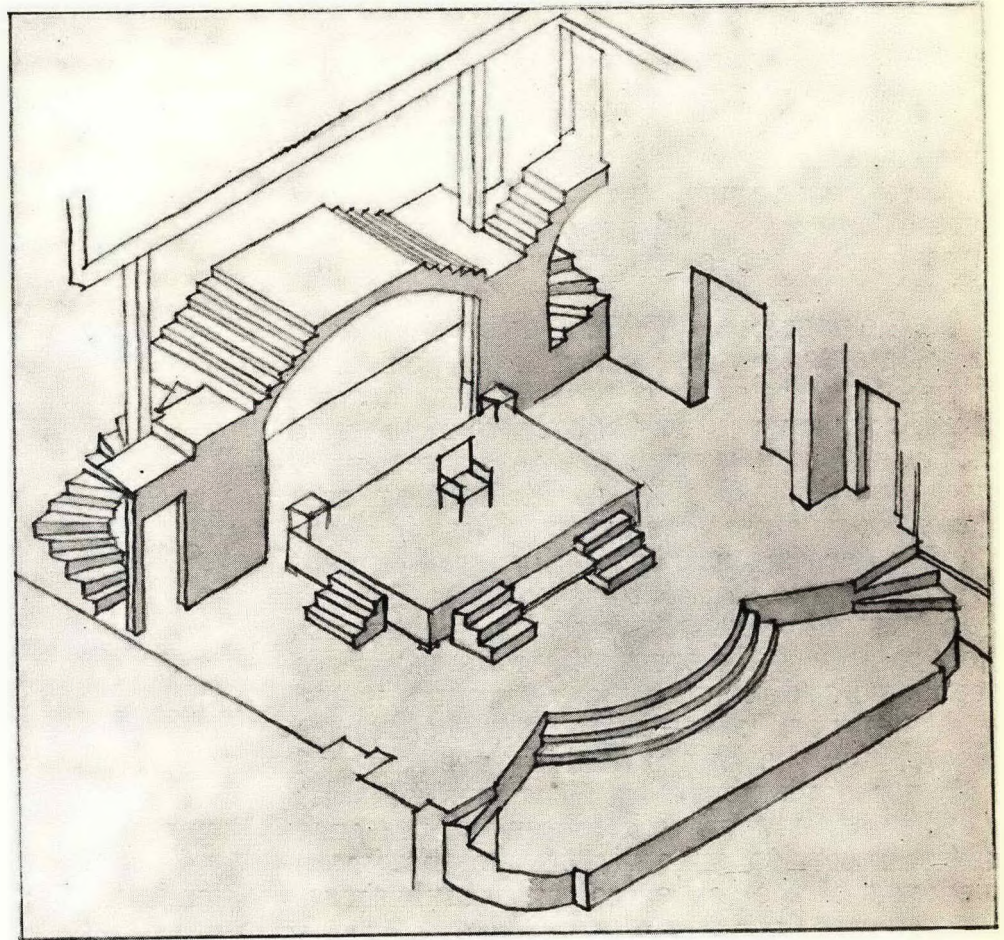
We have reached the truly and consistently plastic and tri-dimensional expressionistic stage with more than a vague search for fourth-dimensional qualities.

The New Stage.

The stage setting has developed with extraordinary speed during the last ten years, and the changes that have been accomplished may remain, or may in turn be revolutionised. But to-day we have achieved new forms which are undeniably—"of the theatre." Of these there are three which may each be considered on its merits.

(a) The formal or architectural stage, which is a playing space determined by a permanent architectural platform. The walls at the back and sides are fixed, and are not decorations. There is no proscenium arch and only a supplementary curtain halfway up the stage if any. This stage, always before the audience, and therefore a permanent reminder of the theatre, may have a noble decorative value in its physical form, like any other architectural composition, but its range of decorative variation is limited.

(b) The space stage, which, on the other hand, puts forward no declared platform. Its floor is usually the same stage floor that the older theatre has known, and the stage box the same barnlike place of old, with a proscenium arch as often as not still in place on the audience side. What links this physical stage with the modern type is its use; not as a shaped volume of space with surroundings suppressed as far as possible to afford the impression of a void into which the action is placed and picked out with light. Since background cannot always be pushed back into dead darkness, the space is ordinarily surrounded by the most retiring materials: black curtains, or a cyclorama or dome from which direct lighting is carefully excluded. In this box full of space a spot in the centre on a flat floor, or on successive platforms or



The architectural stage of the Theatre du Vieux Colombier Paris.
A permanent stage with movable units.

inclined planes, is lighted with perhaps an upright line or column showing as an anchor to reality. Living light and movement are the basic elements of this stage.

(c) The Constructivist stage is essentially a structure in space rather than an emphasised void. There is no formal platform for acting, but a fresh construction designed to meet the ends of each play. In effect, it is a skeleton erected in a stage space, an arranged patchwork of stripped stairs, arches, ramps, platforms and ladders, etc. Everything must be specifically called for by the action or it is not used. Every element must have a definite function. Constructivism is definitely anti-decorative, insisting that any shaping of the construction for aesthetic values is a betrayal of theatrical values.

The first of these three types—the architectural stage—seems the most logical and most direct answer to the cry for more intense capitalisation of the means that are essentially of the theatre as an art. It is the true answer to the call for a plastic stage in harmony with the plastic actor, for it is always in the round. There is an extraordinary freedom for movement, and the increased possibilities for group action on a stage disentangled from former picture accessories. The imagination of the spectator has to provide the background and there seems to be a concentration on the play, intensifying the inner core of the drama that addresses the soul. If the designer can preserve the abstract values of his formal stage and at the same time evoke vague suggestions and flavours by means of

light and colour, he will have kept just a balance of convention and imitated reality. There seems to be more value in structural form in the formal stage which is lacking in the space and constructivist stages. The permanent stage gives strength and continuity to theatrical values, and unless light projected into space can produce theatrical expressiveness we shall return to the formal stage.

In the vague feeling that in certain special adjustments there is a living beauty, a fourth-dimensional quality, a new form of decoration has sprung. The adherents of the void stage feel that they gain greater values out of unhampered manipulation of lighting as a dramatic medium than any they lose in abandoning decoration and solidity.

Appia wrote that all the theatre need be is : "an elementary structure designed simply to give shelter to the space where we work. No scene, no auditorium ; merely a room naked and empty and expectant ; everywhere space cleared for the things actually used ; a full lighting equipment." It seems the last word in an attempt to heighten the presence of the actor, to subordinate the inanimate elements of the scene, to put emphasis on

living action in living light. Although it does not utilise dynamically the physical form of an obvious stage, or the more melodramatic values of lighting, it is the most sensitively expressive stage yet devised since light was conquered and became a major theatric medium.

In denying the validity of any visual decorative values, in affirming that aesthetic intent in the arranging of the stage can only harm the action thereon, the Constructivists have uttered a revolutionary cry more radical and more far reaching in its consequences than any other form of stage decor.

Constructivism is an expression of the machine age, seeking perfect functioning and clean surfaces. Avowed anti-decorationists claim that it is necessary to strip the setting of every shred of decorative appeal and that the creation of art can only come by absolute design for use without the slightest admixture of so-called aesthetic intuition.

The constructivist setting affords freedom of action, its nudity is a virtue in the greater opportunity afforded for spacial composition, and much may be learned from its variety, flexibility and economy.

To be continued

TOWN PLANNING ASSOCIATION (TRANSVAAL)

COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR, 1934-1935.

Your Committee has pleasure in submitting this, the Sixteenth Annual Report covering the proceedings of the Association for the past year.

COUNCIL PERSONNEL.

At the Annual Meeting held on the 4th December, 1934, the following were elected as members of Council :—

Messrs. A. Allen, T. S. Fitzsimons, A. S. Furner, G. H. Halliday, A. Leitch, W. E. S. Lewis, Harold Porter, W. E. Russel, H. Sharp, C. P. Tompkins, E. H. Waugh and J. Wertheim, Dr. E. J. Hamlin and Professor W. G. Sutton, with Messrs. F. L. H. Fleming and G. M. J. Geers representing the Transvaal Institute of Architects ; Messrs. F. K. Webber and H. Neilsen representing the Surveyor's Institute, the Town Clerk of Pretoria and the Mayor of Vereeniging.

During the year Mr. C. P. Tompkins was appointed as representative of the Surveyors' Institute in place of Mr. H. Neilsen.

In March The Transvaal Land Owners Association was elected as an Institutional Member of your Association with Mr. A. P. Richter as its representative on your Council.

At the first meeting of the newly elected Council, Mr. Harold Porter was elected President and Mr. J. Wertheim Vice-President and these members have held office throughout the year.

MEETINGS.

Ordinary meetings of the Council have been held on the first Tuesday in each month throughout the year and special meetings and meetings of Sub-Committees have been held to deal with plans and new townships and any special matters.

PUBLIC BODIES.

The following members of your Council have served as members of other public bodies:—Messrs. A. S. Furner and Harold Porter on the Town Planning Committee of the City Council of Johannesburg ; Mr. Andrew Allen on the Johannesburg Traffic Advisory Committee ; Mr. J. Wertheim on the Johannesburg Publicity Association.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF COUNCIL.

In terms of the Constitution, nominations of members of Council for the ensuing year are invited.

PRETORIA, JOHANNESBURG AND REEF TOWNS.

Great advances have been made during the past year and the City and Town Engineers are to be congratulated on the excellent work accomplished.

Islands in main thoroughfares, circles at points of heavy traffic intersections, setting back kerbs and rounding off important street intersections have improved traffic regulation and control, besides adding to the improved appearance of the towns concerned.

The great increase in building activity has resulted in the removal of many old and unsightly buildings and this also has tremendously improved the appearance of Pretoria, Johannesburg and other towns in the Transvaal.

Paving of footpaths in Johannesburg has been extensively carried out and marks a noticeable improvement particularly in the suburbs.

WITWATERSRAND JOINT TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE.

The Civic Survey under the Witwatersrand Joint Town Planning Committee was completed during the year, also the aerial survey.

Your Council submitted suggestions for improvements and these with suggestions from other bodies have been passed on to the consultant regional planners for consideration when preparing the general town planning scheme.

TOWNSHIPS AND TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE AND REGULATIONS.

Steady progress is recorded under the provisions of this Ordinance.

SLUM CLEARANCE.

A Bill "to make better provision for the clearance of slums" has been passed by the Union Parliament. This Act is to apply to Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria.

Steady progress is being made in this connection, slum areas are being abolished, and model villages and white housing schemes are being embarked upon.

A utility housing Company was formed during the year on which three members of your Council are represented and arrangements have been made to erect two blocks of tenement flats in the early part of 1936.

PRETORIA MAIN ROADS TO JOHANNESBURG AND THE EAST AND WEST RAND.

The Provincial Administration has taken in hand the reconstruction of the roads from Pretoria to Benoni via Kempton Park and to Krugersdorp via Mulders Drift and when completed these main roads will greatly relieve the congestion of traffic on the present Pretoria-Johannesburg road.

PUBLICITY CONFERENCE.

Two members of your Council attended the Annual Conference held in Pietersburg in March, 1935, as the representatives of your Association.

EMPIRE EXHIBITION 1936.

Conference on Town Planning.

On the suggestion of Mr. Bellasis, General Manager of the Empire Exhibition, your Council considered the holding of an International Conference on Town and County

Planning during the period of the Exhibition in 1936.

The Town Planning Association of the Cape Province and the Greater Durban Town Planning Association have agreed to co-operate in this proposal and an invitation was cabled to the Congress in London in July inviting them to arrange an International Congress in Johannesburg next year. This proposed Conference, however, could not be arranged, but Dr. Pepler, of the Town Planning Institute, England, has suggested that a delegation of six or seven members who could address meetings, and a representative exhibition of town planning works could be arranged if desired. Dr. Hamlin, who is at present in England, has been asked to discuss this matter with Dr. Pepler and it is anticipated that such a delegation will be arranged to address meetings in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.

TOWN PLANNING ASSOCIATION.

Cape Town and Durban.

Minutes and Reports from these Associations have been received regularly throughout the year from these Associations and your Council records its appreciation and thanks therefor, and is pleased to note good progress in Town Planning matters are being made in these centres.

It is hoped that the suggestion made by Mr. A. Allen to form a South African Town Planning executive of town planning interests will eventuate in the coming year.

It is felt that such an executive would have more influence with Parliamentary, Provincial and Municipal Bodies.

NEW TOWNSHIPS.

Plans of the following proposed townships have been received from the Townships Board during the year and duly reported on by the Townships Sub-Committee, Messrs. A. Allen, A. S. Furner, G. M. J. Geers, H. Porter, C. P. Tompkins and F. K. Webber :—Monument, Stafford, Greenside Extension, Highlands North Extension, Nigel South, Olivanna, Brentwood Park, Anzac, Glenvarlock, Michaelstown, Proclamation Hill, Spaarwater, Western Extension, Willemsville, Houtport, City and Suburban Extension No. 1, Heidelberg Extension No. 1.

LOWERING OF THE RAILWAY LINE AT JEPPE, JOHANNESBURG.

It is gratifying to note that the City Council and the South African Railways have at last come to agreement to lower the railway line between George Goch and Doornfontein Stations. This is a project which has been consistently advocated by this Association for the past sixteen years and when completed will result in great and very necessary improvement and advantage to the City and Eastern Suburbs.

STANDARD BUILDINGS SITE.

Johannesburg.

It is regretted that negotiations did not result in the acquisition of this site by the City of Johannesburg as the consideration asked was considered too high.

In this connection your Council submitted to the City Council "that this Association in recording its profound disappointment at the failure of the negotiations for the acquisition of Standard Buildings desires to give expression to the view that, within reasonable limits the question of price should not be the determining factor where opportunities present themselves of acquiring open spaces which will tend to add to the beautification or the improvement of the City."

KAZERNE SCHEME.

Your Council is still of the opinion that steps should be taken to remove the large

goods distributing depot to another site, so as to avoid the cartage of enormous quantities of railway goods through the busiest streets of the city and to permit of the opening of more outlets to the north on the western side of the Railway Station. The latest suggestion of an overhead roadway should have very serious consideration from all points of view before being embarked upon. This overhead roadway was incorporated in a scheme for the reconstruction of the area put forward by one of your members and strongly supported by the members of Council and the Municipality.

FINANCE.

Your Council again records its appreciation of the Grant-in-Aid from the Transvaal Provincial Administration. This Grant with subscriptions received from members brought the total receipts for the year to £103 15s. 6d. Expenditure on Secretarial Administration, circulation of Minutes and Reports, Postages, etc., amounted to £97 18s. 9d., leaving a balance of £5 16s. 9d. carried forward. This position does not permit of your Association embarking on any publicity, propaganda or educative work or the promotion of lectures, etc.

SECRETARY.

Your Council desires to record its appreciation of the services rendered throughout the year by the Secretary, Mr. A. S. Pearse.

HAROLD PORTER President.

PROFESSIONAL NOTES AND NEWS

By mutual agreement the partnership of Messrs. Cowin, Powers and Ellis, practising in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban, has been dissolved.

Mr. E. M. Powers, who has for many years been resident in Durban where he has represented the late firm, from which he has now retired, will continue to practise there in partnership with his son, Mr. F. W. Powers, A.R.I.B.A., M.I.A., under the style of Powers and Powers, Chartered Architects, 6-10, Southern Life Building, Smith Street, Durban.

S. A. Academy.

The Seventeenth Annual Exhibition of pictures, etc., will be held in the Selborne Hall, Johannesburg, from Monday the 23rd March to Saturday the 4th April, 1936, both dates inclusive.

Johannesburg's Buildings.

Building plans passed in Johannesburg for the year 1935 amounted to £6,717,146. Following are the monthly figures:—January, £459,264; February, £479,206; March, £535,366; April, £297,538; May, £446,766; June, £444,240; July, £438,792; August, £563,460; September, £842,415; October, £659,757; November, £797,266; December, £753,076.

Professional Licences.

Practising Members are reminded that Professional Licences for the year 1936 should be renewed on or before the 31st January.

Clerk of Works.

A Clerk of Works recently arrived from Europe with American and Continental experience, seeks employment. Apply to The Secretary, Transvaal Provincial Institute.

R.I.B.A.

The following members of the Transvaal Provincial Institute have been elected Associates of the Royal Institute of British Architects:—N. I. Finkelstein, B.Arch. (Rand); N. L. Hanson, B.Arch. (Rand); J. S. McFadyen; C. J. Slade, Dip.Arch. (Rand); S. H. Todd, Dip.Arch. (Rand); S. N. Tomkin, B.Arch. (Rand); E. G. Tucker, B.Arch. (Rand).

Special Meeting. Transvaal Provincial Institute.

A Special General Meeting of Members of the Transvaal Provincial Institute will be held on the 18th February, 1936, at 4 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Kelvin House, to discuss "The Difficulties of the Junior Practitioner in regard to Professional Fees."

Subscriptions.

Members are reminded that subscriptions to the Institute for the year 1936 are now due.

British Architects' Conference, Southampton.

The following letter has been received from the Secretary, Royal Institute of British Architects:—

"Your members may be interested to know that our Annual Conference next year is to be held in Southampton, and a very interesting programme is being arranged. The date is from the 24th to the 27th June, 1936. We are always glad on these occasions to have the company of visitors from Overseas, and if any of your members are likely to be in England at that date I hope they will communicate with me and let me send them copies of the programme of the Conference."

A STANDARD OF VALUES FOR ARCHITECTURE TO-DAY

FRANCIS LORNE, F.R.I.B.A.

Paper read before the Northern Architectural Association
at Newcastle-on-Tyne on 13 February 1935
Reprinted from the R.I.B.A. Journal

Continued from November Issue

Let us consider also our furniture. We take a Queen Anne chair, an Adams table, a Chippendale desk, an Empire wardrobe, and apply modern ornament to them and call them designs in modern furniture. The applied ornament craze again. It hasn't occurred to the designers of buildings that for to-day, if we are to be true to ourselves, we must design for use in modern living. A Queen Anne chair was all right in Queen Anne's day, but our age is not one when people sit bolt upright in a chair. This is an age when one lounges in a chair. Try if you can to beat the modern motor-car seat for modern sitting. Watch the antics of the average person in a old straight chair. See how he twists and turns. Why? He is just trying to find a comfortable position in a chair which for to-day provides no comfortable position. Look at our so-called modern writing-desks—pigeon-holes, small doors, little compartments, flaps which fall down for writing and which overbalance the whole fitting when you lean on them, or wobble as badly as a train when you write on them; no space for card indexes or filing systems, not even enough space for one's knees and, worst of all, not enough space on which to write.

I don't know whether you suffer as much as I do when dining at friends' tables when I cannot cross my legs or when I get them jammed or drive a sharp corner of the under-carriage into my knee, or when I sit or lay my hands on some cold unsympathetic material that makes me gulp hot soup to keep from freezing. Yet all these are dressed up in modern ornament and called modern design. Observe the vast number of wardrobes one sees in walnut with vertical grain,

horizontal grain, or combinations of both, bands of stainless steel and triangulated ornament, everything, in fact, except sufficient and efficient space in which to put one's clothes. Art for art's sake, but certainly not art for storing clothes' sake. In any event anyone worthy of the name of a modern wouldn't use them; he would have wardrobes with a properly designed space for everything built into the walls of his house. If you want to see the most amazing collection of grandmotherly fittings parading around in modern garb, visit the Royal Academy Exhibition of British Art in Industry. You will see a lot of modern ornament plastered on industry, but the art and the industry have not fused in design any more than before, they are still separate, they are neither in tune with themselves nor with life. We have for too long been pseudo Greeks, Romans, Goths, Elizabethans, Jacobean, Tudors, Georgians, and more lately modern Dutch, Swedes and Germans. What a slough of snobbery and plagiarism we live in. You would not walk down the street except to a fancy-dress ball in an Elizabethan gown, and yet you will live in an adaptation of an Elizabethan house with reproductions of Queen Anne or Empire furniture. Why? Try and find a reason which you can really look at down a logical nose. You may say that the old stuff is good, as so many do, and that there is nothing new under the sun. I don't like to disappoint you. The Greeks did not run around in motor-cars; the Romans did not call their friends to cocktail parties over the telephone or the Elizabethans fly to Australia in a week-end, and you must be very out of touch with modern living if you do not realise that there are many ways in our modern life quite as original as these.

You may say also that I am indicating what is bad and indicating very little what to do to make it better. Perhaps, but only your thoughts and your ways finding expressions in things can be really you, and if I can change your thinking you will do the rest. You see what the motor-car manufacturer is doing with his cars in modern design. You see what the aeroplane designer is doing; you see what the streamline train designer is doing; what the Swedes are doing in glass, what the Paris coutouriers are doing for women and London tailors for men; what a few architects are doing to work out buildings for modern living as the others are doing for transportation and clothes. You see also that these men are building their furniture into the structure as an integral part of it, and not just buying it from an antique store. You see that they are solving the demands of a new generation entirely on its own merits, that they are making things over from their very foundations for a new way of living, not simply resurfacing the old; they are, in other words, being themselves, and therefore being original. They are being twentieth-century human beings wherever they are. They are trying to root plagiarism out of their lives so what I say is: go and do likewise—and don't forget in going that anybody can copy the other fellow, but it takes years to be yourself.

Let us consider now the second quality we want, that of being simple and therefore poised and quiet. I mean the simplicity which comes by directness in our ways and use of things, the having knowledge of an intimacy with essentials. We have lost much of our appreciation of essentials through so many years of not being ourselves. Nothing blunts the essentials like insincerity. Our life every once in a while through insincerity becomes too complicated, insincerity leads to inferiority, and the inferiority complex develops a million difficulties for us. We see it working in architecture and design in so many ways. There is far too great a tendency to complicate and disturb direct planning, to disturb simple planes by breaking them up unnecessarily, to complicate masses and groups to a point of absurdity, to complicate ornament until there is hardly a place on which to rest one's eyes, and particularly to

add features and notions for which there is no use at all, either aesthetically or functionally. Bell and clock towers—what a farce in days when everyone carries a watch. There is an insane desire in most designers to-day which can only arise from an intense feeling of inferiority to make themselves felt, to make a noise, to be obvious, to develop almost a yellow Press manner of exhibitionism and stunting; almost the attitude of "I'll tell the world," with the result that our buildings, our furniture, our exhibitions shout like loud speakers or startle like neon signs, everybody pitting on all he knows till one gets the quality of a Woolworth store window. Our furniture is the same—complicated draw-pulls that were designed as spots of ornament rather than to pull a draw, complicated door handles and hinges, complicated doors and drawers, complicated everything, so that we almost need a pamphlet of instructions on how to use them. Our many exhibitions suffer in the same way, too many exhibits, too much glass with too much cutting on it, too many fabrics with too much design on them, too much furniture with too much detail, too many small rooms with items enough to fill rooms four times their size. Everybody showing everything he has got and all he knows. A riot, in other words. It's like Stephen Leacock's hero who rushes out of the house and rides off madly in all directions. It's hard to get anywhere this way. Have we forgotten entirely that one of the fundamentals of good art is simplicity? Have we forgotten that to work out the bare essentials and then simplify even these we should have a greater art? Art consists more in what we can eliminate than in what we put on, and yet putting things on has grown to the proportions of a major disease in this country. Is it impossible for us to get any lightness and gaiety, restraint and poise into what we do? To have this in art, however, one must assume the person who has them in himself, the person who is sure of himself, the person who is really living in his own generation, the person who is himself. The "get rich quick Wallingford" instinct, the "be seen," "be heard," and "be talked about" instincts are ruining our art. Great art assumes great people; little noisy, fussy people cannot produce great art.

We used to have an idea in England that the really well-dressed man was not obvious, that to be obvious was rather bad form. One would hardly believe this from architectural and furniture design to-day. There is far too much exhibitionism and stunting. Don't let's mix this up with the real thing. There is the surprise that comes from an entirely new invention such as the gramophone, the radio or the aeroplane; also the surprise that comes through the development of the multiple building holding thousands of people in a manner and with conveniences undreamed of before, but this is not stunting, this is mental expansion, this is new life. These have something to say, they have something by which human beings grow into bigger human beings; what I refer to is the man with nothing to say saying it over again and louder than ever before. This can never be anything else than sand in the gears or water in the carburettor. I heard recently of a lady who took a modern centrally-heated flat and came to the conclusion that it was too simple and, as she said, not cosy enough. She had a painted wood imitation brick mantle made, she put inside it an electric imitation coal fire, she had a set of imitation brush, poker and tongs by the fireside, an imitation cat, and two large seats, one on each side of the fire with high backs and side cheeks made long ago to break draughts. She said she needed them to make the flat cosy. She did not realise that she just made it frowsy. She did not realise that it was not the modern flat that was wrong but her mental condition. She was unable to understand simple living. She had to be surrounded with Christmas tree effects. This is a good test; if you need these things you are fussily romantic, you are not able to stand on your own two feet, you have not been able to debunk your life. Being simple, restrained, poised, quiet and modern is not so much a way of doing things as it is a state of mind. It is perhaps hard to get this state of mind, but if we will turn our face instead of our back to our generation we will find in it a new freedom. Strangely enough it is not more standardised, nothing could be more standardised than the orders and Renaissance plans, but we were bound by them for so long we have become numb to their restraining influences, we fail to realise what

artificial, complicated human beings they made of us. We feel lost without them, we feel the same way as the romantic woman feels in the utterly simple flat. But if we will make architectural expression fit our lives instead of trying to fit our lives to it, in other words "Art for man" instead of "Art for Art's sake," we shall gain a greater freedom and have a chance to be simple, poised and quiet.

Let us now consider our third essential, that of being chic and therefore distinguished. Chic is easy, natural elegance, good style, the stamp of superiority and distinction. We all realise that in producing an architectural work of art it is not enough to satisfy the functions as it is not enough to produce a design with no regard to the functions. Let's look at it this way—we have suffered too long from the functional products of manufacturers which are unattractive, and too much from the unfunctional designs of artists; what we badly need is a fusion of the two. The science and the art must fuse before we can get anything worth while. We have suffered too much also from the sacred and profane attitude of artists that certain things in life are important and other things don't matter. All things in life are important, the only difference being that some things are more important than others. The unfunctional qualities of some of our products and the overdone artistic treatment of others separates them from chic and distinction as widely as races and creeds separate human beings. Chic is being oneself, being original, being simple, poised and quiet. It is the combination of the conscious and the subconscious in the artist. It is perhaps the only thing in life that can't be taught. It is a quality that comes with maturity, it scarcely ever exists in youth. Just as young women are practically never beautiful and chic, they are only pretty and vivacious, they have not had the time to develop the character which chic demands, so chic in design comes to the man after years, when he has passed the age of prettiness and vivaciously putting on all he knows, when he has become restrained and poised, in other words when he is mature. It is the ultimate of one's time. It is the quality so outstanding in Schiaparelli's modern dress. Paris touches it frequently in clothes for women, London in clothes for men, Berlin did

it for a few years in architecture, Sweden does it in glass and sculpture, and the Americans do it in advertising. It happens most frequently, strangely enough, when we come across the enigma of the artist who is also an executive, the one alone does not seem to be enough, perhaps because it demands a person of so many parts in one; conflict seems to be necessary, principally the conflict between function and art expression; all function is mostly dull and all art mostly silly. Art work in this country belongs to the latter of these and takes the form of not being able to keep hands off things; fingers literally itch to put things on, and this kills us. Look at the amazing effects obtained by the simplest of elements arranged in the simplest of terms in some of the foreign work. It could not possibly say more than it does, and yet it has arrived at that stage of completion when one could not take a line away or add one without spoiling it.

I remember once talking to a manager of a store in this country about the smartness of French dresses. I asked him why he did not show them in larger numbers. He said they would not sell except to a limited clientele, that they had to be made over to suit English taste, they were too simple. Women felt uncomfortable in them, things had to be put on,

they had to be fussed up. I have been told by an American that the same exists there. He showed me illustrations of the "made overs." I said that in the process they had lost all their chic and distinction, he said, "Precisely, but they sell, and we are in business to make sales." I wish this were confined to clothes for women, but it runs through architecture, our furniture, our twisting streets, our landscape gardening, and all our Art expression. We lack the grand manner to-day either because we have never had it or because we have, in our strange way, thought it pretentious, perhaps we are too self-conscious. We lack a civic sense because we have always treated a city as a place to make money in and then get out of it into the country as quickly as possible. Yet notwithstanding all this the London man is perhaps the smartest dressed man in the world. It is coming, however, in other ways. Some of our night-clubs are smarter than they have been, with more smartly-dressed men and women. We have got it in many of our modern shops, in rugs and fabrics, in some furniture and buildings, we have got it in some advertising too, it is by no means entirely lacking, and who knows but some day this smartness, chic and distinction will penetrate more of our streets, our architecture and the homes of the people.

To be continued

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