

ENGLISH SUMMARY

This month, Arquitectura presents a third issue dedicated to U.S. architecture. The panorama of Californian architecture is shown through the work of some 20 architectural studios from San Francisco and Los Angeles. Mark Mack's selection of architects from San Francisco with Phoebe Wall's introduction form an interesting contrast to the L.A. architects and Joseph Giovannini's article on the Environment of Movement.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION ARCHITECTURE: A CONTEXTUAL DIALECT Phoebe Wall

Phoebe Wall's article gives insight into the roots of Bay Area architecture and traces this path to the present. She states:

«What is known as the *Bay Region Style* embraces and expanse of work ranging from that of Bernard Maybeck to William W. Wurster to Richard Peters. It applies to a variety of small scaled buildings and houses, woodsy in character and often exhibiting the peculiar dichotomy of appearing at once simple yet spatially complex and contradictory in scale. Sheathed in redwood shingles or board-and-batten, the early examples were often paneled inside with redwood and finished with surprisingly scaled detailing. Later examples might be sheathed in plywood and finished in a stripped-down carpenter-like manner.

The Bay Region Style has traditionally borrowed modestly from a wide variety of historical images but quite freely from the vernacular and indigenous architecture of California, that is, the adobe Monterey Style building, the gold miner's shack and the unpainted wooden barn.

Though urban examples exist, the style or tradition is essentially a suburban one with the relationship of house to landscape of prime importance. These houses have a comfortable sprawl, not a rambling grandioseness but a relaxed spread often extending visually and spatially into the out of doors.

The major influence in Bay Area architecture has never been a single personality or figurehead nor any particular intellectual theory or movement, but rather an idealistic, romantic and at the same time relaxed and diversified cultural climate coupled with a gentle and benign physical climate and landscape. Its is an area infused not with rigor or dogma but with relaxation.»

She states that the intellectual and cultural climate failed to import or support the Modern Movement. And in addressing the present situation she says,

«The Bay Area of the late seventies is rapidly becoming a radically different place from the homey woodsy Berkeley of the 1910's or even the lusciously landscaped Marin and Peninsula of the late 50's and early 60's.

The disoriented and confused state of architecture has been cause for much talk and rumination in the Bay Area as elsewhere. The plethora of lecture series in the past several years, bringing theorists and practitioners from Japan, the East Coast and Europe, has had seemingly small effect on the work of midsized and long-established Bay Area firms. Unbuffeted by what may be more hot air than winds of change, these firms continue to produce a well-mannered and still recognizable form of Bay Area Regionalism.

No one direction, not even Post Modernism, has emerged from these forums and lectures as an orientation for the younger firms and individuals. Their work now shows the widest possible diffusion of approaches and escapes any form of stylistic cohesiveness.

As a result, the work presented in this issued defies categorization and analysis by familiar terms. To do so would be to force into artificially narrow focus an architectural tradition which, by its very regionalism, allows each individual the freedom and privilege of the broadest possible approach.»

FRONTIER OR PROVIDENCE Mark Mack

«Bay Area architecture manifests an architectural and cultural dualism rarely found elsewhere in the United States. The urge to preserve wild and unsettled land(s) is challenged by commercial aggressiveness; eclectic conservatism clashes with the constant search for alternative lifestyles.»

Mark Mack goes on to explain in more depth some of the many facets of the architectural profession in the Bay Area which include the roles played by Berkeley, Western Addition, the A.I.A., etc. Referring to the selection of 12 architects whose work is presented in this issue, he says,

«The following selection of architects and practitioners is a cross-section of an area divided by the difficulty to communicate and the reluctance to be classified. Neglected are the midsize to large firms practicing corporate International style and the craft-oriented populism of energy conserving apertures applied to single residential homes. The selection focuses on those who offer an architecture surviving populist contextuality and technological adequacy and which enters the realm of architectural proliferation. Either young and innocent climbing the first stairs of architectural recognition or veterans of architectural innovation like *Turnbull, Clay and Solomon* who cling to the hopes of Modernism, the selected span a continuum from pure regional eclecticism to sophisticated genius. This arrangement attempts to delineate the architectural consciousness, either formalized or theorized, rather than actual building activity. Some of these architects more than others address metaphorically or practically the issues of depleting natural resources and the exploration of new forms of energy. The work of *Wall/Levy, Fernau, Swatt and Stein* reveals their elevated awareness of these world-wide problems without being soiled in the technological seduction of high-tech hardware.

The originality of *Stanley Saitowitz*'s work, either drawn or built, and the narrations of an architecture built to perceive by *Lars Lerup*, make these two the theorists of a new local search for the articulation of unbuilt and metaphoric architecture. Defying the stale remnants of prechewed theories, *Gillam and Fernau* arrive at an architecture which proliferates a political as well as cultural awareness so much needed in this self-oriented, socio-economic frontier. The new found primitivism of *Batey/Mack* and the expanded modern vocabulary of *Mittelstadt, Stout, Solomon* and *Turnbull* give promise to a healthy and diverse beginning.»

L.A.'S ENVIRONMENT OF MOVEMENT Joseph Giovannini

Joseph Giovannini's article gives a description of the unique environment of Los Angeles created its urban structure and extensive use of the car. He states,

«There are many cities in the U.S. connected by freeways, but few in which the freeways are vital in connecting parts of the same city — as in Los Angeles.

As a matter of planning policy, Los Angeles embraced the car, constantly offering up better, more flowing roads. But the faster a road, the less it expresses its immediate neighborhood and the less the road contributes to a sense of place in that neighborhood.

While Los Angeles' dependence on the car affects the built environment, the car itself generate another type of environment. Perhaps one should not look to L.A. for *place*, but simply alter one's expectations and conceptions about the city.»

Juan Antonio Cortés, María Teresa Muñoz

In this issue's section devoted to *competitions*, architects Juan Antonio Cortés and María Teresa Muñoz analyze the 1958 competition for the capital of Berlin. They briefly discuss the relation between German and English pre-Modern Movement architecture. The changes in this relation are further analyzed through the competition proposals of Hans Sharoun and the Smithsons.

Both projects are strongly marked by their use of isolated buildings and their rejection of Cartesian geometry as an organizing element. In Sharoun's proposal, the circulation pattern assumes great organizational importance. Streets penetrate buildings and form elevated platforms. Also employed is the concept of one large building which dominates the plan and creates a symbol of Berlin.

The Smithson's proposal is contrasted to Sharoun's by the lack of importance given to buildings. The strongest part of the plan is seen in the circulation scheme, both vehicular and pedestrian. The Smithson's plan, unable to be fragmented forms an integrated whole.