

## THE NEW REVOLUTION IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE.

All through the ages architecture has been transformed at irregular intervals by fundamental changes of style. Then about fifty or sixty years ago, as everyone knows, the greatest revolution in all building history rocked architecture to its foundations. That was the start of what we still call, for want of a better name, the Modern Movement. All the suffocating antimacassical clutter of the Victorian era's monumentality and ornamentation was attacked by a swiftly evolving, bitterly fought series of new theories, culminating in Walter Gropius's famous Bauhaus school of design. The new image was cubic, plain, functional. The foundation rock on which all theory relied was that a building must be shaped to suit the needs of its occupants. If it does that, the axiom stated, it will be good to look at without need of any historical allusions or other ornamentation. Indeed, to add such allusions and ornaments is to insult and destroy the genuine solid materials, the integrity, of the buildings.

So far so good, But things did not remain as simple as that for very long. Within the general terms of that axiom the Modern Movement over half a century has developed enormous diversity. There have been many other sub-revolutions which have had great repercussions in our streets. The three main ones to date are shown on this chart.

The original plain informal Functionalist boxy style (No. 1) was no sooner firmly established than the first sub-revolution developed. It set out to restore formality and monumentality to building. It did

not want to overthrow all the principles won by the Functionalists - but it wanted to put them into more monolithic, expressive, sculptural, visually striking forms. This resulted in the late 1950s in the second phase of the modern movement (No. 2 on this chart). The representative of that phase sketched here is the outlandish, stunning, climactic, crazy TWA terminal building at Kennedy Airport, New York, by a brilliant architect, the late Eero Saarinen. He made the building express the idea of flight with birdlike wings (examples closer to home are the flying-saucer-like Academy of Science in Canberra and that sail-like ornament beside the harbour in Sydney).

Then, about a decade later, another sub-revolution struck. The illogical nature of these perhaps beautiful, certainly exciting, geometrical or sculptural forms - these closed, complete forms that cannot bend to changing conditions, that cannot grow to meet new functions - was attacked, and a third phase of fractured, but usually formally related, shapes became the common language of the avant-garde. Fragmented, though systematic, deliberately malleable and open-ended, easily expandable shapes (No. 3 on this chart) have now been familiar overseas for a decade or so and are not even very unexpected now in Australia.

So three phases have passed by, and it is clearly time for another new revolution. Sure enough this is happening.

I called it, in the title to this talk, the New Revolution in Modern Architecture. It would be more accurate to call it the New Revolution Against Architecture. It is directed against nearly everything that the art of architecture once stood for - including, dignity, unity, permanence - and it is an internal revolt coming from inside architec-

ture, and from more than one source. The ancient art is being attacked by both its wild young theoreticians and its square old practitioners. That makes the new revolution more serious than any before.

Let me take first the revolt of theory.

We all know that in this world of increasing technological complexity and specialisation there is more than just the one cultural split which C.P. Snow described in his famous essay on 'the two cultures' - the split between science and art. As complexity multiplies, all the separate branches of the sciences and all the branches of the arts tend to create their own private languages and to draw further apart from each other - and apart from the non-scientific and non-artistic (if not in-artistic) public.

One odd attempt to break down one of the barriers between art and the people was made by the Pop Art movement in painting which began a few years ago (and which is not dead yet). For instance, Andy Warhol and his giant Campbell Soup cans. The Pop artists had a tongue-in-cheek policy of ostentatious descent from the ivory tower. They presented an art which the public could understand - paintings and sculpture of food, Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, comic strip characters - an art which the critics also could applaud, in a slightly bewildered way at first. The main things wrong with Pop Art were that it wasn't very pop and it was pretty thin art. The uninformed public certainly doesn't want to see soup cans when it braves an art gallery. Pop Art was in fact as esoteric as any art in history. To paint popular objects at heroic scale, without distortion, without parody or satire, was inten-

sely focused, microscopically concentrated camp, an in-joke, accessible only to those who had travelled the art field full circle, and had arrived back at base. Not really Pop, nor really art, it was an intellectually snobbish joke, almost like one of those Mistress-Maid dialogues of a London Punch cartoon before World War I.

The Pop Art movement has not brought art closer to the populace nor stopped civilization's tendency to grow more rather than fewer cultures. There are already many more than two, and there is no sign at all of the main two becoming reconciled, let alone remarried.

But architecture is traditionally, and by dictionary definition, a combination of art and science, and many architects in the last decade have become enthused with the proposition, stated in various ways, that architecture can be a bridge, or a sort of marriage guidance counsellor: a third culture, combining elements of scientific logic and artistic creativity in an impeccable technological amalgam.

I have always been suspicious of the definition, of the idea of a mixture of the chalk of art and the cheese of science. Art and science can't mix, won't mix; and yet they are both essential to architectural conceptions. That really is the basis of the interminable internal conflicts of architecture. It doesn't know what it wants to be. It did once, before the industrial revolution, but that first set it off-balance and it has been teetering about like a tumble toy ever since,

about as long as the 20th. century.

When I speak of architecture in this context I must emphasise that I am not speaking of architectural economics or functions or techniques. I am speaking of the artistic and intellectual motivations behind building. We all know that the shape of every building is determined by numerous factors, including costs, regulations, planning codes, social and individual needs, and so forth. But the way these physical factors operate is controlled by the artistic and intellectual motivation of the designer, whether he be an architect, an amateur, a team of different experts, or a computer. This motivation is paramount in determining the external image, the impact of the building on the total environment in which everyone of us lives. Consider the off-beat motivation behind these house by Harold Desbrowe-Annear when everyone else was building Queen Anne villas in the Melbourne of the First World War.. The physical factors are of the utmost importance to the owners and occupiers of buildings, but the artistic and intellectual motivations are more important to everyone else.

Here are four buildings, all new,,all built in Australia, representing between them the full range of building styles at this time. Now, all buildings are not architecture - in any meaningful sense of that word - so two of the examples I am going to show you are not architecture and two are.

First, the Anonymous Technology style, produced by modern technology and mortgage rates interacting upon each other. This is an office building, in Melbourne as it happens, but it could be almost anywhere in the modern world, Western or Asian, Capitalist or Communist. It is

architecture, because it has been done with great care and skill. If it displays absolutely no imagination. that is because mass-production techniques, economics, and building regulations have together wrung all the heart out of this sort of building. It represents a great proportion of the dollars spent on building and it is likely to continue for many years, getting more anonymous all the time as it relies more and more on mass-production technology.

Second, the Nostalgic. This takes many forms, but usually in English speaking countries it is of Georgian persuasion: that is, it is a rough caricature of the style which prevailed when England was most English, and therefore it suggests elegance and aristocracy and monied ease. These qualities are sought by many people who want, when they build, to prove something more than that they need to keep out of the rain. This illustration is from Canberra. It could have been the Liberal Party headquarters, which is an excellent example of the same style, but this is a more recent one: the South African chancellery, a building evidently representing the progressive and enlightened spirit of its sponsors. This type of building cannot be taken seriously as architecture, and is not so taken by any serious architects. Which is the last thing that would worry the people who build it. It is stage-setting, usually suitable for a musical comedy of the 1930s.

The third kind of building is the kind I spoke of earlier when describing the three phases through which the modern movement has passed. It is certainly architecture, and is most simply differentiated from the Anonymous Technology kind of architecture by its individuality and originality. It is best described as Inventive. This is an ex-

treme example, a highly individual creation, a mixture of the 2nd. and 3rd. phases of modern architecture: a sculptural, closed, complete statement; yet fragmented and systematic and capable of expansion. In the same category although less extreme and spectacular are all the attempts which one can think of which use building materials as an expressive art form. Most of them are content to rely on right-angles and few of them are as expensive or as expressive as this; but this tremendous, tortured building represents a whole world of architectural endeavour, thousands of new buildings throughout the world, dozens in Australia. They may be civic centres or houses, rich or poor. They may be technologically advanced or done in bush carpentry. They have in common only the attempt to keep alive the ancient art of inventive, creative architecture.

The fourth kind of building today is the Exploitative. This is a rather extreme example. The Exploitation Style does not pretend for a minute to be architecture, but it exploits frankly and freely some well-known architectural symbol, usually for simple commercial purposes. It is best differentiated from the other form of non-architecture, the Nostalgic, by the fact that it clearly does not take itself seriously - as shown by the huge lettering and undisguised phoneyess of all its effects. It is likely to be with us for a long time: for about as long as commercial enterprise. Exploitation of architecture is used a great deal to serve commercial ends but often it is subtle enough to escape notice. However this one is about as subtle as sticky fingers. The style of the architecture which is being parodied is

directed leisure. The commercial Exploitation style is liked, obviously, by those who build it - that is, when it is successful in attracting attention and custom to itself, which is all it sets out to do. But its promoters, the spiders, are by no means the only ones who like it. Many of the flies which it wants to attract get genuine visual pleasure from its gaudy colours, flashing lights and giant letters. It spells 'Now' to the Monaro set. A strip of competing commercial Exploitation style structures is where the action is. However, it is important to note that although it is popular it is not Pop, in the sense of Pop Art, because there is no sense of parody or humour in its grim determination to attract the maximum possible number of customers to its doors.

Finally: the inventive, expressive category, the ancient art of architecture. This takes so many forms that one cannot define its supporters as a single group. A purist architect, for instance, will applaud it if he thinks it is well done, and will condemn it if he thinks it is badly done. Most people nowadays are prepared to like it, and want to like it, after a surfeit of the anonymous technological boxes. The only people who invariably dislike an expressive building, no matter what expression it wears, are the promoters and architects and technologists whose living depends on building in the Anonymous Technology Style. They are probably right in disliking it, because it is the only one of the other three types which offers any threat to their activities.

As I've said, I think that virtually every building being erected in the world at this time can be spotted on to the chart somewhere. But where do we go from here? Which pole will grow in attraction and which will decline in the near future? Architecture surely cannot maintain this state of uncertainty and unbalance for much longer.