

NOTES ON READING

John Dixon, *Architectural Design Preview U. S. A.* Reinhold Publishing Corp., New York, 1962. \$15.00.

"What are American architects designing in the 1960's? That is the question that is explored in this book through the analysis of 144 projects by 111 architects or firms. This examination of projects — work still in the design stage as distinguished from finished buildings — illustrate the way Americans are thinking today."

Among the welter of projects are such buildings as John Carl Warnecke's Hawaii State Capitol building, a mixed salad of ideas derived from Le Corbusier, Edward Stone, Yamasaki and Wright; Edward Stone's neo-classic pile for the North Carolina Legislative Building; a house at Palm Beach, Florida which is simmered down Yamasaki; and a work by Kump Associates which is a direct steal from Maybeck. As the author points out, American architecture (and for that matter world architecture) has taken a drastic turn in the past six or seven years, a turn it should be noted which has been and still is under severe attack, both here and abroad. Aspects of it have been labeled the new "Sensualism," "Chaoticism," the "Ballet School," and so forth. How valid are these criticisms, and what are the essential ingredients which are coming to constitute our present architectural scene? As this survey of projected buildings illustrate there seem to be two major trends developing. One of these could aptly be called Neo-classicism, the other a new episode of Expressionism. As a fundamental component of both, is a renewed rash of self-conscious eclecticism which ranges not only into the far distant past and to far distant lands, but feels no qualms about "borrowing" in a most blatant (and usually trite meaningless fashion) from our immediate 19th and early 20th century past. The Neo-classic phase is characterized by symmetrical plans and facades, arches and arcades, high porticos and/or completely peripteral buildings, while the Expressionists have returned to the concept of the "picturesque" silhouette — especially the roof forms — of the Queen Ann. The greatest rage among the Expressionists are high pitched hipped roofs, truncated roofs, often with central skylights, etc.

It is self evident that both of these phases — Neo Classicism and Expressionism — mark a decided departure from the canons of the International Style. The fact that they are a departure need not, of course, condemn them. For among these projects (for example, Edward L. Barnes' Haystack School of Arts and Crafts at Deer Island, Maine; Richard C. Peters and Charles W. Moore's Guest House at Sobre Vista, Calif.; or Marquis and Stoller's projected house, at Mill Valley, Calif.) are a number of buildings which undoubtedly are of real quality. The problem which the contemporary architectural scene faces (dramatically illustrated in this book) is to avoid the emptiness of the fashion of the moment, the new and different for different sake. How can even the most gifted designer produce a significant building when even a client for a new church (Church of the Good Shepherd, Bellevue, Wash., by Kirk, Wallace, McKinley and Associates) demands that "... will attract a maximum of attention and the largest possible number of visitors?"

—David Gebhard

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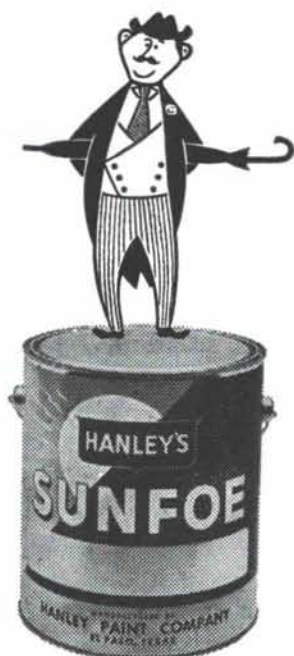
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NOTES ON READING

John D. Hoag *Western Islamic Architecture*; Nelson I. Wu, *Chinese and Indian Architecture*; Donald Robertson, *Pre-Columbian Architecture*; William Alex, *Japanese Architecture*. The Great Ages of World Architecture. George Braziller, New York, 1963. \$4.95 each.

The publisher has issued 12 volumes in this series to date. This present group of four volumes follows the earlier format: each contains a short introductory essay of around 25 to 40 pages accompanied by a few notes and a selected bibliography. The major portion of each book is devoted to half-tone and line cut illustrations. The earlier volumes in the series were devoted to the major historical phases of western European architecture (the Gothic, Renaissance, Greek, etc.), and as such they could assume a certain degree of passing acquaintanceship on the part of the reader. On the whole most of us approach these four non-European epics of architecture with little or no previous knowledge; not only are we usually ignorant of the architectural tradition, but we usually know little about the basic history of the non-European world. This, of course, poses a major difficulty for the writers of these volumes, for in essence they must assume that their readers are completely unaware of the subject (with perhaps the exception of the Japanese), and also that we tend to approach the non-European with many set, preconceived ideas.

With these difficulties in mind one must commend the four authors, for on the whole they have performed this task very well. Each of them has obviously sought to tread the precarious path between that of a cataloger of buildings, and that of a broad and often times abstruse philosophical approach. The only one who has a tendency to slip into the latter — the vague and indefinable — is Nelson I. Wu (*Chinese and Indian Architecture*), while Donald Robertson's text (*Pre-Columbian Architecture*) gravitates toward that of a catalog. For the American or European reader, John D. Hoag's *Western Islamic Architecture* and Nelson I. Wu's *Chinese and Indian Architecture* will unquestionably be the most interesting, since these are two areas of architecture with which most of us are unfamiliar. An acquaintanceship with these non-European traditions of architecture should provide the necessary background so that we may continually examine and reappraise our own contemporary world of design and that of our American and European heritage. —David Gebhard

A NEW MEXICO SKETCH—by John McHugh

