

THE THREAT TO THE NEXT

By Elizabeth Gordon, *Editor*

I have decided to speak up.

In this issue, devoted to the wonderful possibilities for the better life in the Next America, I must also point out to you what I consider to be the threat to our achieving the *greater good* which is clearly possible for us, if we do not lose our sense of direction and independence.

What I want to tell you about has never been put into print by us or any other publication, to my knowledge. Your first reactions will be amazement, disbelief, and shock. You will say "It can't happen here!"

But hear me out. You may discover why you strongly dislike some of the so-called modern things you see. You may suddenly understand why you instinctively reject designs that are called "modernistic." For you are right. It's your common sense speaking. For these things are bad—bad in more ways than in their lack of beauty alone.

Here is the story, in its bluntest terms.

There is a well-established movement, in modern architecture, decorating, and furnishings, which is promoting the mystical idea that "less is more." Year after year, this idea has been hammered home by *some* museums, *some* professional magazines for architects and decorators, *some* architectural schools, and *some* designers.

They are all trying to sell the idea that "less is more," both as a criterion for design, and as a basis for judgment of the good life. **They are promoting unlivability, stripped-down emptiness, lack of storage space and therefore lack of possessions.**

They are praising designs that are unscientific, irrational and uneconomical—illogical things like whole walls of unshaded glass on the west, which cause you to fry in the summer, thus misusing one of our finest new materials. Or tricks like putting heavy buildings up on thin, delicate stilts—even though they cost more and instinctively worry the eye. Or cantilevering things that don't need to be cantilevered, making them cost more, too. A strong taint of anti-reason runs through all of their houses and furnishings.

No wonder you feel uneasy and repelled!

They are trying to convince you that you can appreciate beauty only if you suffer—because they say beauty and comfort are incompatible.

They are trying to get you to accept their idea of beauty and form as the measure of all things, *regardless* of whether they work, what they do to you, or what they cost.

They are a self-chosen elite who are trying to tell us what we should like and how we should live. And these arbiters have such a narrow, often ignorant, con-

Something is rotten in the state of design—and it is spoiling some of our best efforts in modern living. After watching it for several years, after meeting it with silence, House Beautiful has decided to speak out and appeal to your common sense, because it is common sense that is mostly under attack. Two ways of life stretch before us. One leads to the richness of variety, to comfort and beauty. The other, the one we want fully to expose to you, retreats to poverty and unlivability. Worst of all, it contains a threat of cultural dictatorship

AMERICA

ception of the good life that only non-human, low-performance things get their stamp of approval. **These arbiters make such a consistent attack on comfort, convenience, and functional values that it becomes, in reality, an attack on reason itself.**

"Incredible!" you say. "Nobody could seriously sell such nonsense."

My considered answer is this. Though it is incredible, some people *are* taking such nonsense seriously. They take it seriously because this propaganda comes from highly placed individuals and highly respected institutions. Therein lies the danger.

For if we can be sold on accepting dictators in matters of taste and how our homes are to be ordered, our minds are certainly well prepared to accept dictators in other departments of life. The undermining of people's confidence is the beginning of the end.

Break people's confidence in reason and their own common sense and they are on the way to attaching themselves to a leader, a mass movement, or any sort of authority beyond themselves. Nothing better explains periods of mass hysteria or various forms of social idiocy than the collapse of reason, the often deliberate result of an attack on people's self-confidence.

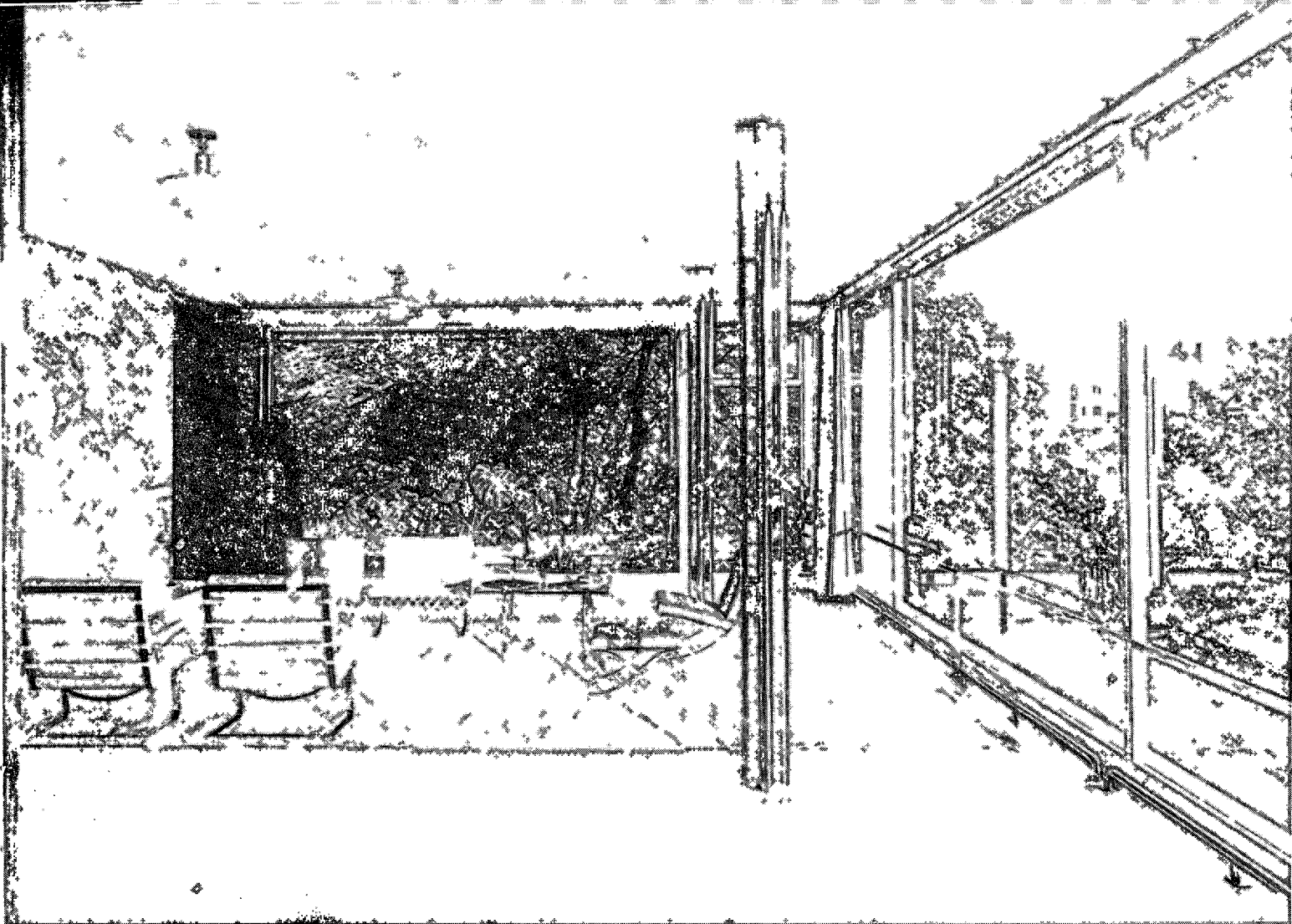
If people don't trust themselves and their own judg-

ment, then they turn helplessly to leaders, good or bad. And they can only recover the good, sensible life when they recover their senses and discover again that, by and large, the ultimate hope for mankind is the application of reason to the world around us. This rediscovery leads individuals to their own declaration of independence against the frauds, the over-publicized phonies, the bullying tactics of the self-chosen elite who would dictate not only taste but a whole way of life.

So, you see, this well-developed movement has social implications, because it affects the heart of our society—the home. Beyond the nonsense of trying to make us want to give up our technical aids and conveniences for what is *supposed* to be a better and more serene life, there is a social threat of regimentation and total control. **For if the mind of man can be manipulated in one great phase of life to be made willing to accept less, it would be possible to go on and get him to accept less in all phases of life.**

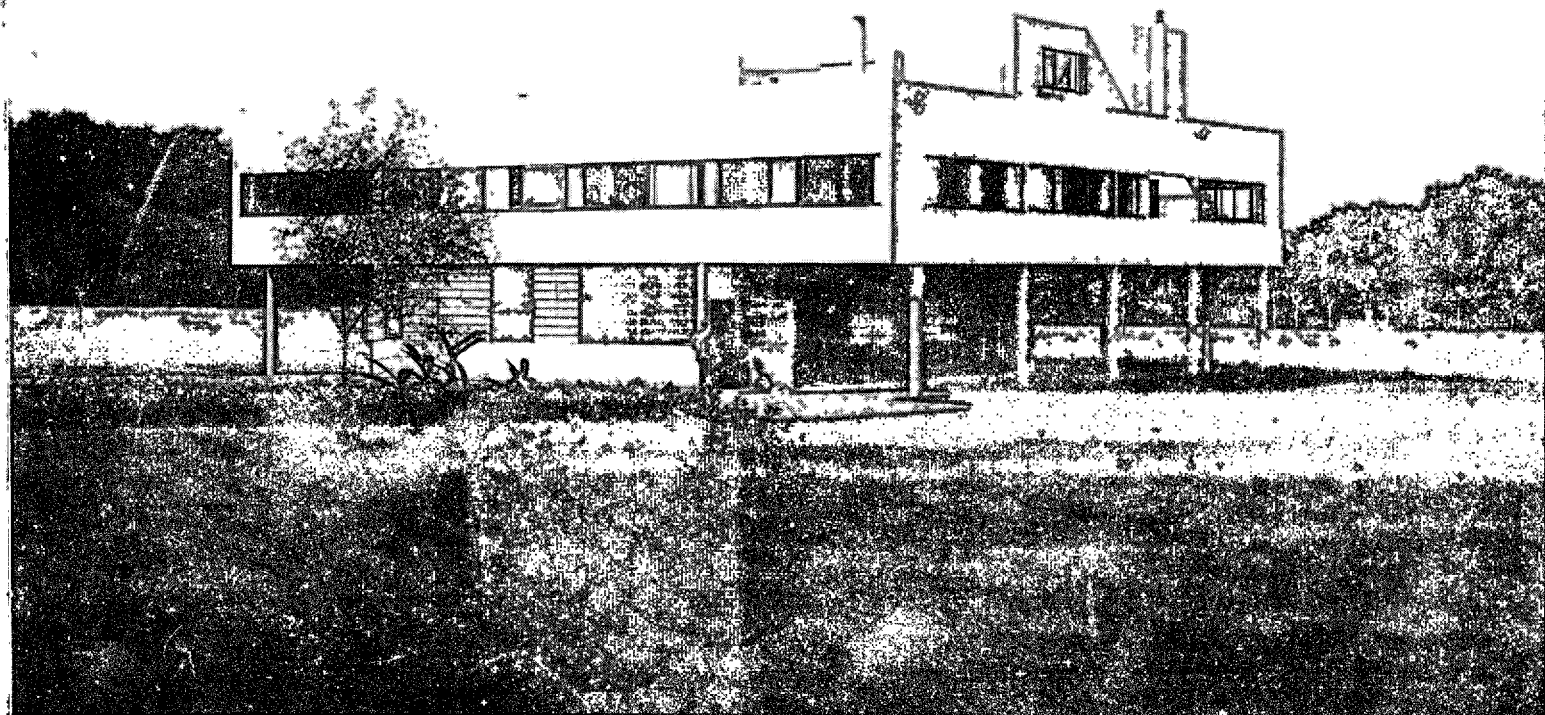
I can hear you say: "How can people collaborate for their own discomfort and frustration?"

Believe it or not, some people do, because their own self-confidence has been shaken. Not very many, fortunately, but enough so that I can clearly see the aberration growing. (Please turn the page)



*The Cult of Austerity is the product of Mies van der Rohe's cold,
barren design (above) and Le Corbusier's International Style (below)*

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK CITY



THE THREAT TO THE NEXT AMERICA *continued*

I can see people, puzzled by the glowing language applied to things they don't really like, becoming less confident in their rejections of these things.

I know that architects who abhor the bad houses that are "glorified" in some of the trade journals are unwilling to complain to the editors and publishers for fear their own work would be boycotted as a result.

I hear designers talk extremely critically of many of the non-rational objects that are chosen for glorification by *avant-garde* museums, but who are unwilling to say the same thing in print, because they are afraid to start a public fight with cultists who do the selecting.

I have talked to a highly intelligent, now disillusioned, woman who spent more than \$70,000 building a 1-room house that is nothing but a glass cage on stilts.

I hear people complaining about the much-publicized chairs which are uncomfortable after the first 20 minutes.

Everywhere I go I find a ferment of uneasiness among the best-informed people in the design world about the irrationality of much of the architecture and design that is being praised to the skies. Even some of our most penetrating and highly responsible critics say what they mean *only* through innuendo and double talk—rather than openly and clearly—fearful that their own books will be reviewed unfavorably in the journals of this school of design.

I have examined personally many of the bad modern houses which have been lyrically praised by the prophets of the "cult of austerity," and have heard their owners describe their shortcomings and dissatisfactions. (Owners are reluctant to "talk for publication" until they can sell their houses to someone else.)

House Beautiful finally speaks up to point plainly to the nonsense that goes on in the name of "good design." For, if you are aware of what is happening, we believe you will be quite competent to handle the matter for yourself. We still operate on common sense and reason. We know that less is *not* more. It is simply less!

We are sure, beyond any shadow of doubt, that if you apply your own common sense to modern houses and their contents, you can tell the good from the bad. Reason is your best safeguard from following blindly the would-be "artistic dictators." For good modern design is reasonable and functional—as well as beautiful.

House Beautiful believes that the modern design movement, on the whole, has been good and is still good. It had to go through, in its early phases, a sim-

plifying, cleaning-up period in order to clear the air, and begin afresh. Simplification was a legitimate goal. But if carried too far it can send us into a poverty-stricken way of life with only the bare bones of possessions.

Today good modern design offers comfort *and* performance *and* beauty. Too often people think of modern furniture and modern architecture as bleak, box-like and mechanistic. Nothing is further from the truth in good modern design, as you (*Please turn the page.*)

THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

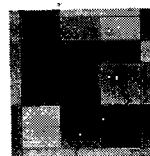
You can recognize the International Style by a combination of these characteristics (remember *some* of the first 7 may occur in good modern architecture):

- Flat roofs.
- Smooth surfaces.
- Walls that look like Mondrian compositions (rectangles within rectangles, see below).
- Cubist structures on stilts (steel or concrete).
- Favoring of stark black and white although occasional use of 2 or 3 primary colors.
- Abhorrence of ornamentation and decoration.
- Elimination of partition walls so that a house tends to be one public room with open areas for sleeping, eating, playing, etc.
- Maximum use of glass without any corrective devices for shade or privacy.
- Disregard for site and climate, whether on desert or in city with few or no protective measures against sun, heat, cold, rain.
- Emphasis on collective, block-house apartments, built according to above characteristics.

THE BAUHAUS

A school of design for poster art, architecture, furniture and the like, started in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 by Walter Gropius (now a practicing architect in the U.S.). He was replaced as director by Communist architect Hannes Meyer, who gave way in 1930 to Mies van der Rohe (also practicing architecture here). Bauhaus style is part of "International Style" (above). Bauhaus furniture design has a "clinical look": sterile, cold, thin, uncomfortable.

MONDRIAN



Bauhaus and International Stylists design houses, furniture to look like typical Mondrian compositions (left): flat, banded, carefully asymmetrical rectangles of very few colors. Painter Mondrian was key figure in Dutch school of Cubism called *de Stijl*.

THE THREAT TO THE NEXT AMERICA *continued*

see in the work of Edward Wormley shown on the opposite page. **Good modern combines the best technological knowledge with sensitive understanding of people's requirements. It creates houses that are beautiful to look at and wonderful to live in.** It is not to be confused with "clinical look" modern, which is only a part, *a bad part*, of the modern movement.

How have so many people been caught by the mysticism of this small but influential clique of modernists? Let's take a quick backward look at the history of modern design.

The modern movement started, in all innocence, with the forms developed by 19th-century America. It produced factories, grain elevators and silos—structures admirably designed for their purposes, practical solutions for their particular, usually industrial, problems. (The same period also produced the roots of our *good* modern residential architecture in the work of Wright, Maybeck, Greene and Greene, and others.)

Closely but not directly behind came the art movement of Cubism, which was born in Paris in the 1900's. In Europe, intellectual designers were simultaneously hit by the industrial forms of America—the box-like appearance of the factory, the tall cylinder of the silo, the match-box shape of the grain elevator and office building—and the similar forms of Cubist painting. They used these industrial forms as ends in themselves, as art motifs for their own designs, not noticing—probably not understanding—how they arose as practical forms solving practical problems.

Nowhere was this more evident than in a German school of design called the Bauhaus, 1919-1933, which applied Cubist principles to furniture, buildings, advertising layout, typography, etc. It is important in our

story for two reasons: Its influence has been widespread and two of its former directors now practice in the U.S. Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe came to the U.S. in the late 30's. Gropius, until recently, was head of the Harvard School of Architecture. Mies, as he is known, is still director of architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Thus the rational and functional forms of American industrial architecture took a trip to Europe where they became an intellectualized philosophy of design for furniture, buildings, and much else. And they returned to America, divorced entirely from their functional roots and rationality. This branch of modern is called the "International Style."

Thus, **form became separated from function and purpose, and became an end in itself.** And the forms this stylistic school admires so much are nothing but Cubism misapplied—misapplied because a three-dimensional thing can't be created by the same standards as a two-dimensional thing.

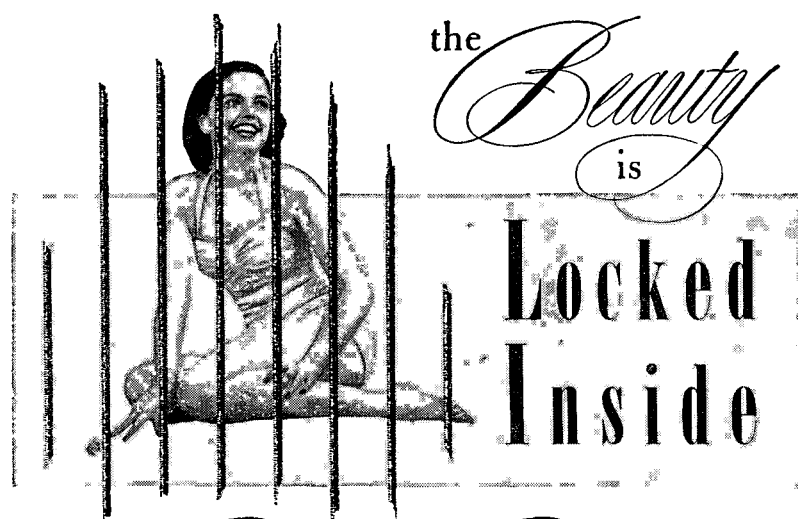
(For more detailed explanation of how Cubist art affected architecture and furnishings, turn to page 240).

In other words, **these International Style designers are much more concerned about appearance than they are about performance. They are more interested in the façade of a house than they are in how well it functions for its owners.** They apply the canons of Cubist painting to everything they handle: chairs, desks, chests, gardens, or houses. The highest praise they give an object is that it is like a Mondrian painting. Their work is a school boy's exercise in cubes and rectangles. Their chairs are meant more to be looked at than sat in. And when they get "practical," they design a molded chair (*Please turn to page 250*)

The beautiful and the practical are available today.

The answer to bad modern design can be only good modern design, as shown on the page opposite in the work of Edward Wormley for the Dunbar Furniture Co. The design of Mr. Wormley clearly flows from his understanding of the past and his feeling for the present. He is not trying to shock with novelty or impose arbitrary forms regardless of comfort or performance. He combines a real functionalism with a sensitivity for materials and human requirements. He relates his furniture to the best modern architecture: light-weight, look-through pieces to stand against glass walls; designs that complement built-in storage. He uses materials soundly and elegantly. In good modern design, such as this, there is livability, beauty, and individuality, the richness of variety and real human warmth.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPH BY EZRA STOLLER



Breathtaking Beauty

is held fast... within the very structure of Organdy by Defiance. The sheer... parchment-like crispness... fine hand and rich glow... are sealed inside Organdy by Defiance. The chemical magic of the Defiance "Heberlein" technique actually changes the original form of the cotton fibres, endowing them with new silkiness and crispness. This Organdy finish will last, because the "Finish is made of the Fabric Itself."



Organdy by **DEFIANCE** "HEBERLEIN PROCESS"
THE *truly permanent* ORGANDY FINISH

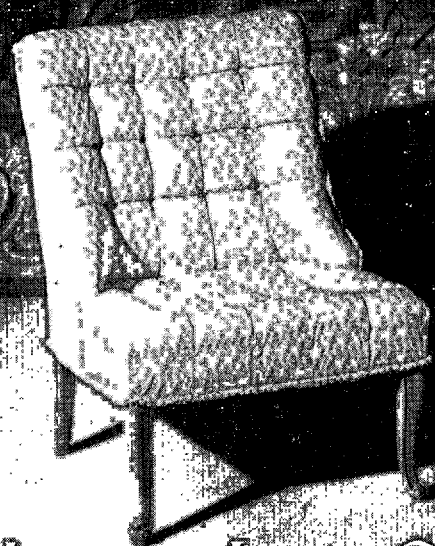
DEFIANCE BLEACHERY • BARROWSVILLE 12 • MASSACHUSETTS
Craftsmen of the "Heberlein Process"

JOSEPH B. WARNE, INC. • SOLICITING SALES REPRESENTATIVES • 40 WORTH ST. • NEW YORK 13 • N. Y.

The "Diamond Jubilee" Chair

A decorator chair

ask your dealer



Jamestown Lounge Co., Jamestown, N. Y.

Cubism and the

See "The Threat to the Next America," page 126-30

Combining the direct Cubism of Le Corbusier and the Cubist derivative of Mondrian. International Stylists are still playing with blocks 30-odd years after Picasso went on to something else. Posing as the *avant-garde*, they are in reality the Beaux Arts of the Twentieth Century, the new academicians of an old-fashioned esthetics.

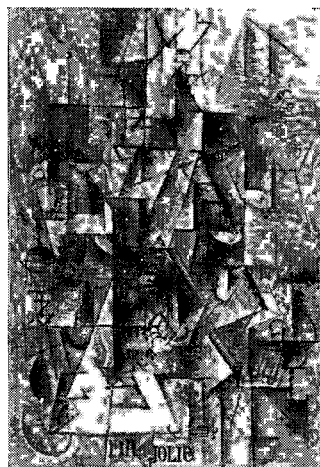
The so-called International Style is a term applied to buildings that show the influence of primarily four architects: Oud, a member of *de Stijl*; Gropius, a former director of the German school of design, Bauhaus, and now an architect in the U.S.; Mies van der Rohe, another former director and also in the U.S.; and Le Corbusier.

Le Corbusier, in addition to being an architectural theorist, was also a Cubist painter named Charles Jeanneret. He was early

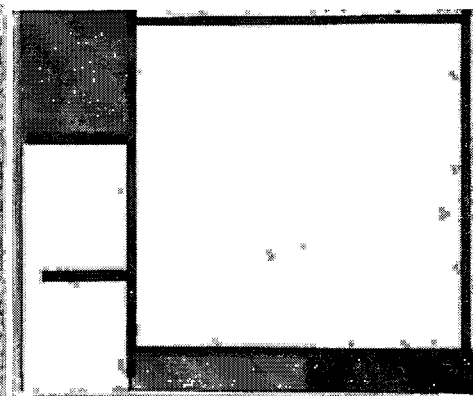
taken by the functional, box-like form of the American factory and from it developed much of his architectural point of view. Since the factory is a "machine for working," he reasoned, why not make a house that is a "machine for living?" So he took the form of the factory, played with it in oil painting after oil painting along Cubist lines, and came up (together with Oud, Gropius, and Mies) with the International Style.

A slightly modified example of this style may be seen in the concrete and glass slab of the United Nations building. It is nothing but an over-simplified American grain elevator. Slice the old-fashioned American factory and stretch it skyward and you also have it. You can do the same thing by simply standing a match box on one end.

In addition to American indus-



1



2

1. Late in the 1900's Picasso, along with Braque, began painting Cubist canvases. 2. Piet Mondrian, a Dutch artist, carried Cubism one step further toward pure abstraction and painted flat rectangles of a few primary colors. 3. Under the influence of Mondrian, the Dutch branch of Cubism, called *de Stijl*, extended his principles of composition to the design of furniture and even architecture. 4. Note the fascination with Mondrian forms. 5. This same fascination with form regardless of function continues today in the work of International Style architects, such as Mies van der Rohe.

Tommy was cute

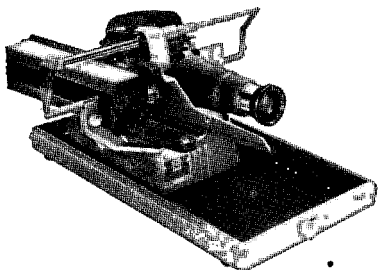
or was he?



will
you
remember

ten years from now?

Your priceless memories of life's great moments sparkle forever in glorious color—life has no richer reward!



A great projection team!

Show candid color slides the easy way with the GoldE Manumatic 2x2 Slide Projector—Compact . . . Lightweight . . . 300 Watts of Blower Cooled brilliance . . . and with the Index Changer—Fingers never touch the slides. Get this quality team today!

Combination value \$68.50, complete Tweed Carrying Case \$12.00
At Better Camera Dealers—Everywhere!



COLOR BALANCED • SLIDE PROJECTION

Write for free booklet!

GOLDE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
4888 N. Clark St., Chicago 40, Illinois

THE THREAT TO THE NEXT AMERICA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 130

that freezes you in one fixed "comfortable" position just long enough for you to buy it.

In the meantime, the home-grown variety of modern design has developed slowly and steadily along sound functional lines for well over 60 years and is in a remarkably healthy and progressive state. This healthy, rational branch of modern is skillful enough to produce buildings that have both beauty and performance, without sacrificing either—as can be seen in the work of Architect John Yeon, beginning on page 116.

Let's apply our own canons of common sense to all this bad modern design.—Does it work, will it hold up, and does it look good?

Does it work?

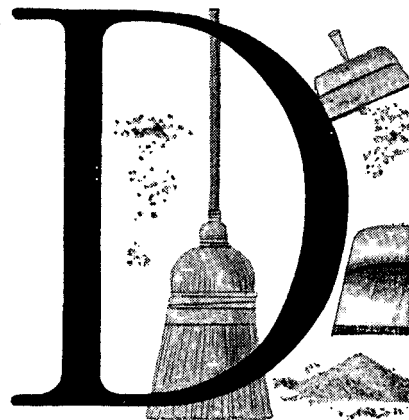
The much touted all-glass cube of International Style architecture is perhaps the most unlivable type of home for man since he descended from the tree and entered a cave. You burn up in the summer and freeze in the winter, because nothing must interfere with the "pure" form of their rectangles—no overhanging roofs to shade you from the sun; the bare minimum of gadgets and possessions so as not to spoil the "clean" look; three or four pieces of furniture placed along arbitrary pre-ordained lines; room for only a few books and one painting at precise and permanent points; no children, no dogs, extremely meager kitchen facilities—nothing human that might disturb the architect's composition.

Do such buildings hold up, age gracefully, and last reasonably long?

When told that a building of his would last no more than ten years because of the materials he planned to use, Le Corbusier said, "Good! Then we'll build another one!"

In California an architect of this school of design would not put a gutter on the roof of a client's house because, he said, "It would spoil the Mondrian scheme of the composition." When the roof leaked, he advised his client to move his bed out of the way of the dripping water.

In Chicago the all-glass apartment houses designed by Mies van der Rohe are uncomfortable because no arrangements exist to shade the glass, summer or winter, and they require a number of expensive aids and adjustments to



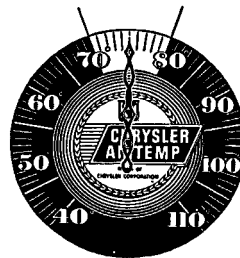
is for Dirt

that's what housework's about,
buy Chrysler Airtemp...
it filters dirt out!

Homes stay cleaner . . . need less housework . . . with Chrysler Airtemp Year 'Round Air Conditioning. Drapes and furniture stay new looking. Your family is healthier, more comfortable, too. In summer heat or winter cold, you live in a Springtime climate tailored to YOUR wishes.

Get a free copy of the delightful Alphabet Book for children. It shows many benefits of Chrysler Airtemp Air Conditioning for you and every member of your family.

Comfort Zone



Chrysler Airtemp

HEATING • AIR CONDITIONING
for HOMES, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY

Airtemp Division, Chrysler Corporation,
Dayton 1, Ohio

Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping
NOT AN ADVERTISED TRADING

Airtemp Division, Chrysler Corporation
P.O. Box 1037, Dayton 1, Ohio

☐ I want to know more about the Chrysler Airtemp Comfort Zone.

☐ Send me my free copy of the Chrysler Airtemp Alphabet Book. HB-4-53

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zone _____ State _____

City _____

make up for the deficiencies caused by the design.

In Paris the glass apartment house designed by Le Corbusier has been made inhabitable only by the very expensive investments of the tenants. The once clean look of metal and glass is now rusty and shabby; and where metal meets glass there are jagged cracks. In a Le Corbusier dormitory for students the occupants have to take a shower every few hours in the summer because of the direct sun streaming through the unshaded glass walls. (Actually glass, properly used, adds a new dimension to modern living.)

Do such designs look good?

Only if you think that Mondrian is not only the greatest artist that ever lived but also a painter who has obliterated the art of the Renaissance, the Byzantine, the past and the future. Only if you think that he has fixed, once and for all, the proportions of beauty and the use of color. Only if, in the last analysis, you can live with an illusion through all the discomfort and frustration and barrenness of such austere design.

A house or a piece of furniture cannot be judged by the same standards as a two-dimensional painting. Herein lies the fallacy which has trapped this school.

Life has depth and width and length; it moves in time and memory; it feels heat and cold, anger and fear, love and indifference; it seeks light and darkness, space and shelter, beauty and repose. Life is all this and much more.

You can hang a painting on a wall and look at it. Or you can turn it to the wall when you are bored with it. But you can't live in a painting day and night, physically, emotionally and esthetically. A three-dimensional object (like a house) cannot be evaluated by the two-dimensional standards of Cubist painting, nor by the standards of sculpture or music.

The good modern designer (and we have a great many fine ones) starts from a sense of the extraordinary variety of life, its passions, hungers and ordinary needs. Certainly in architecture he goes way beyond the smaller world of painting. Life and its requirements are his point of departure. He too is deeply interested in beautiful form, but he judges his forms in the same terms of common sense that we say should be applied to all design: function, structure and then beauty—usefulness, strength and esthetic appeal.

The first standard of good mod-

ern design is still function—despite the dictates of the hair-shirt school. In this sense it is *organic* design, or what is involved in the statement “form follows function.” This principle, first expressed clearly by Horatio Greenough in the 1880’s and developed by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, is the key-stone of American architecture and design. According to this principle, the form of a chair, for instance, is judged in these terms: How does it carry your weight and at what points; how do the arms feel under your arms, its back against your back, and so on?

The second standard of good modern design involves structure: strength and nature of materials used, economy and honesty of construction, durability and ease of maintenance, and similar concerns.

Finally, the third standard: *beauty*. Actually, if we accept the principle of “form follows function,” we are a long way toward agreement on what constitutes beauty. For example, the points judged *beautiful* in a race horse are also those that make it a *fast* race horse. Thus, a house that performs well and is well built may indeed be beautiful (as well as functional), because originality emerges in the happy solution of all problems.

In nature, the question of what is beautiful is fairly quickly resolved. A beautiful plant is always a healthy, structurally sound plant. Similarly with birds or animals. Natural forms are always evaluated in terms of their function or purpose. It is unlikely that there are bad forms in nature, for they suffer the most effective of criticisms: They don’t survive.

But somehow bad design survives in the market place, even if it doesn’t in the jungle. Somehow man can be carried away by the emptiest and most fraudulent of things, if three things happen: if he no longer trusts his own judgment,

if he depends on the wrong people for advice, and if irresponsible editors and publicists lose their own sense of responsibility and promote bad design.

International Stylists and Bauhaus designers have had beyond a doubt the best publicists in the market place. They promise more and perform less than any school of design in history. They say, “You must sacrifice comfort in order to achieve serenity.” And what is their serenity? Sitting in the middle of an empty room surrounded by glass walls.

Once people close their ears to the ecstatic gibberish they now hear in favor of the bad modern furniture and worse modern architecture, and open their eyes to the truth, then the reign of error will be over. Let people but judge this type of design in these terms (and ignore the lyrical language of their sponsors). (1) Does it perform the way I want it to? (2) Will it hold up under normal usage? (3) Do I really think it is beautiful?

Once furniture and architecture are so judged, the age of reason, beauty, and comfort i.e., the Next America, will be with us.

You can have *comfort and performance and beauty*, if you trust your own common sense and apply free and independent taste. After all, what is the alternative to trusting yourself? Trusting someone else. And if he perversely suggests something you would normally reject: an unsittable chair, an unlivable house, an inhuman philosophy, where are you then? If you don’t take his advice, you are back on your own. If you take his advice, you suffer the consequences of *his* choice and not your own. Freedom, your own freedom of choice—and its consequences—is the only road to personal growth. Your reason, your common sense, is the finest instrument you possess for living.

Don’t let them take it away.

Put NEW Hollywood Glamour in Your Bedroom!

Don't wait any longer for that Hollywood glamour. It can be yours in any size bedroom, in any style furnishings. It's easy when you . . .

Use the Genuine HARVARD BED FRAME

The complete foundation for Hollywood beds. Sturdy all metal construction—fully adjustable to hold any size coil or box spring—supports headboard—moves easily on quality casters. Many styles to choose from—at your furniture or department store. Look for the Seal on every Harvard Frame—look for the Registered Warranty Card in every carton. It's your assurance of guaranteed quality.

Use "NEW Decorating Magic"

24 pages of ideas on "how to plan your bedroom", fully illustrated. SEND 10¢ IN COIN FOR YOUR COPY.

HARVARD of Cleveland
6201 Woodland Avenue • Dept. .6 • Cleveland 4, Ohio



Bookcase Headboard by Huntington House





French Provincial Bombe Dresser

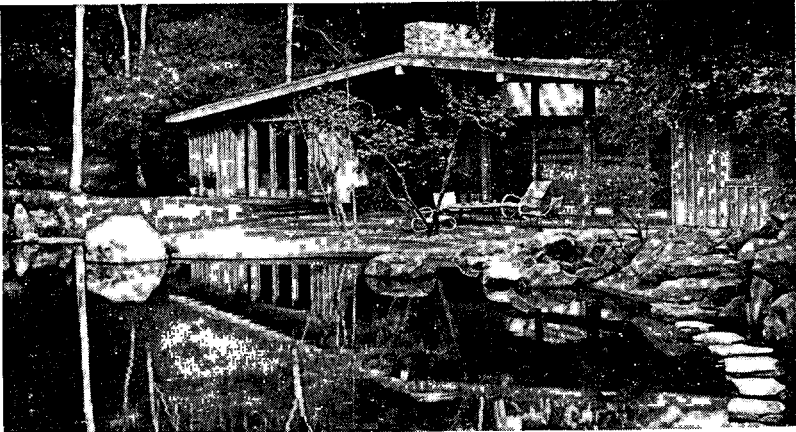
Craftsmanship
IN THE GRAND MANNER

Style runs more than skin deep in Treasure House furniture. This magnificent bombe dresser is an example . . . fashioned and carved by master craftsmen in the best French tradition, which permits no compromise in materials or execution.

New FURNITURE BOOKS
Send 25c for "The Story of French Provincial", handsomely illustrated. Also 25c, "The Colonial Treasure Book"—88 pages of furniture fact and picture.



COLONIAL MANUFACTURING Company
870 COLONIAL AVENUE • ZEELAND, MICHIGAN



Architect: Edla Muir, Los Angeles, California

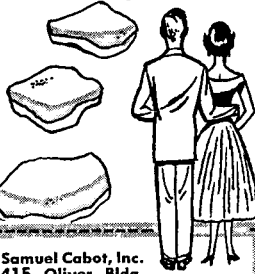
More beauty with Cabot's Stains

The charm of a beautiful home is its naturalness. This effect is often the result of Cabot's Creosote Shingle Stains, the finish that accents the true beauty of shingles, siding and clapboards and blends into the landscape.

Cabot's Stains are 60-90% creosote oil — best wood preservative known . . . yet they cost only 1/3 as much as good paint. Cabot's Creosote Shingle Stains come in a wide range of colors — from clear brilliant hues to soft weathering grays and browns — many available from no other source.

Write today for free booklet!

Cabot's Stains →



Samuel Cabot, Inc.
415 Oliver Bldg.
Boston 9, Mass.

Please send me a free copy of "Stained Houses" and Cabot's Creosote Shingle Stains color card showing 18 different shades.

NAME

STREET

CITY..... ZONE.....

STATE