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Calendar of Events January 1940

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COMMUNITY ART PROJECT



CALENDAR
of
ART EVENTS

JANUARY
1940

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Modern Architecture

If we wish to evaluate the architecture of today, to make a distinction between enduring trends and temporary caprices, we may use the same rules of thought that we would apply to any other new and somewhat bewildering problem. We may choose a verdict from the past which appears to have been just and apply the principles on which it was based to the problem at hand.

Let us assume the first class Greek temple, Roman bath, Gothic cathedral and Italian palace to be of a standard of excellence which we would be proud to achieve ourselves. What common denominator have these widely differing buildings which can be carried over as a measure of quality into our own civilization?

No rule of proportion, massing or profile, of relation between solids and voids, of texture handling or detail arrangement can be drawn to cover more than a few of the architectural styles which we admire in retrospect. The most inspired and imaginative architects of each period did, to be sure, gradually evolve aesthetic ideals toward which they progressed. In some cases they were codified into a set of rules. But these rules will not serve as a universal criterion, since they are the very ones we use to differentiate between the historical styles, and between the periods within the styles. Thanks to the rules, or more properly to the application of the rules, we are able to date and place quite accurately a building we have never seen before.

We must not be confused by the fact that the rules of one architecture were sometimes copied by another, particularly in the Mediterranean tradition. What we admire in one architecture is not its adherence to the rules of another architecture, but its insistence upon the domination of its own aesthetic ideal. In Rome, for example, we admire the bold massing of a concrete vault more than the remnants of an intellectual Greek tradition. In the best periods of architectural piracy, when not only decorative fragments but substantial portions of previous structures were incorporated in new buildings, there was never an authentic restoration; the old building was always made to conform to the new. Vitality is therefore probably one of the standards by which we should measure a modern building—the ability to dominate a heritage rather than be dominated by it.

Each of the buildings is an excellent expression of the civilization and climate that produced it. The quality of the building appears to depend quite markedly on the degree to which it expresses the character of its civilization. The more spiritual a Gothic cathedral is, the more imperial a Roman government building, the more we admire each. It is fair to say then, that a first rate modern building will show a frank acceptance

of the twentieth century, and the more twentieth century it is in character, the better.

The design in each case is expressed in terms of the best available building materials. There is no uniformity of material or method of handling. Where building materials had unusual characteristics these characteristics dominated the design. They served as a constant source of inspiration to the architects who developed their ultimate decorative or structural possibilities. The assimilation of these materials and the development of an artistic expression for them, in terms of the physical needs and aesthetic spirit of the times, has been a measure of quality and standard of endurance for architectural design in the past and it remains so today.

It is well to note that the architectural style represented by each of these buildings was progressively modified with the development of aesthetic ideals in the civilization which produced it, and each lasted about the length of that civilization.

Let us therefore examine our own civilization for the factors that may be expected to exert a predominating influence on our own architecture.

The industrial revolution, which ushered in the present era, so profoundly changed man's relation to nature that our civilization does not yet appear to have found its balance. All we can say definitely is that we belong to a scientific and industrial age. Whether we like it or not, that is the pigeon-hole to which history will consign us.

New materials, new machines, new techniques of production appear daily. Each discovery tantalizes designers for an appropriate interpretation and offers new opportunities for expression. If a modern building is to measure up to the standard we have set, new materials must be used with the same fidelity to their intrinsic character that the old ones were. This calls for the same kind of artistic experimentation to which all time honored building materials were subjected. We must not expect perfection in the first essay. If any kind of perfection is the ideal, we must go through a period of constructive development. (Recall what is said to be the first appearance of a Corinthian capital. Without going into a question of archeology, I cannot think of another instance where it was ever again used in such a way—as a solitary feature on the axis of an Ionic temple.)

The variety of artistic possibilities offered by new materials has already shown unmistakable signs of the stimulating effect on design that older materials had when they were first introduced. This is a sign to be welcomed as evidence of a healthy architecture.

Everyone who reads this article will have had a vision of his surroundings while moving at a speed of fifty miles an hour, shot up in a hollow tube hundreds of feet in a few seconds, heard voices from the other side of the world, perhaps flown through the air at two



JOHN NICHOLAS BROWN HOUSE — Richard J. Neutra, Architect
(Legere)

hundred miles an hour and will soon see what is happening on the other side of the world at the moment it occurs. These experiences are such an integral part of our daily life that we seldom stop to realize we are the first people in the world to have them. They are probably the most important influences in our surroundings. They give us an entirely new concept of the world we live in—of our relationship to time, light, space and force. The architect who makes a conscious effort to analyze the effect of this new relationship on our aesthetic concept, and is successful in interpreting it, is the one by whom posterity will judge us.

Perhaps one reason we take this new relationship more or less for granted is because the outstanding contemporary medium for artistic expression—the movie—has frequently declined to accept the artistic challenge inherent in its technique. It has the greatest opportunity to synthesize the aesthetic development we are experiencing, yet it is often content with purely objective representation. This has had a tendency to dull our senses to the unusual position we now occupy in relation to our surroundings. And so it has contributed to our acceptance of banalities in the other arts which will probably make us a laughing stock in time to come.

Our new experience in space demands an architectural expression in **spacial relationships** that cannot be limited to any conception of form which was developed by the artists of an age that did not have this experience.

We are now concerned with a pattern in **space** that is a greater departure from the most elaborate Baroque pattern in **volume** than the Baroque was from the unicellular Greek temple. That does not mean that it will necessarily be elaborate or complex in appearance. On the contrary it tends more and more toward simplicity as the architects who are influential in this development impose increasing discipline upon themselves.

The spacial pattern achieves aesthetic equilibrium through tension and transparency and not solely through balanced weight. In an age when weight and mass were the only protection from the elements and the only sign of permanence they came to be regarded as highly desirable qualities. But with modern materials and mechanical equipment at our disposal this reason for their desirability has disappeared. The dependence of architectural character on climatic conditions has, in the same way, been greatly modified.

We are no longer confined to a rigidly circumscribed volume, or series of volumes, defined by solid masses. We are free to seek an architectural expression of our scientific and industrial civilization, and the new relationship with time and space that it has brought to us, in a pattern of interrelated planes and surfaces which vary in structure, texture, form, extent and arrangement to suit their functional or artistic purpose.

Considering the fate of the numerous "revival styles" that have appeared in the last hundred and fifty years, we may safely say that the architecture which is sincerely contributing to the formulation of a new aesthetic concept expressive of our new vision and environment is the architecture by which we will be known and judged in the future. It is the architecture which, being a product of our civilization and a reflection of it, will continue to develop with it, till forests grow in our airports.

Rockwell King DuMoulin



NARRAGANSETT PARK GRANDSTANDS — Mark Linenthal, Engineer
(McCarthy)

EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF RHODE ISLAND

Andover, Mass., Addison Gallery, Phillips Academy

- Jan. 6-Feb. 4—Photographs and Sculpture by Esther Jackson.
Jan. 6-Jan. 29—Indian Paintings.
Jan. 13-Mar. 17—The Architecture of a Painting: An interpretative Study of "Manhattan Bridge Loop" by Edward Hopper.

Boston, Mass., Museum of Fine Arts

- Jan. 1-Jan. 15—The Juliana Cheney Edwards collection of Paintings and Decorative Arts.
Jan. 1-Jan. 15—Prints by Sharaku.

Boston, Mass., Guild of Boston Artists.

- Jan. 12-Jan. 13—Paintings by Henry H. Brooks.
Jan. 15-Jan. 27—Paintings by R. H. Ives Gammell.
Jan. 29-Feb. 10—Water Colors by Nelly Littlehale Murphy.

Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum

- Jan. 15-Feb. 10—Pre-Columbian Art.

Pittsfield, Mass., The Berkshire Museum

- Jan. 1-Jan. 30—Old Master Drawings, lent by Durlacher Bros. of New York City.

Northampton, Mass., Smith College Museum of Art

- Jan. 1-Jan. 31—Polish Art Work, lent by the International Art Exhibits.

Springfield, Mass., Springfield Museum of Fine Arts

- Jan. 9-Feb. 5—Sculpture by Archipenko.

Wellesley, Mass., Farnsworth Museum, Wellesley College

- Jan. 13-Feb. 3—The Work of Lyonel Feininger.

Worcester, Mass., Worcester Art Museum

- Dec. 17-Jan. 14—Houses and Housing, an exhibition arranged by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in collaboration with the United States Housing Authority. During the exhibition the documentary film *The City* will be shown, free, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 p. m., Saturdays and Sundays at 3 p. m. The Museum will remain open until 10 p. m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

CALENDAR OF ART EVENTS

Wednesday, January 3

- *"What a Life" starring Jackie Coogan, under the auspices of the Junior League of Providence, Inc., Albee Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 7

- Gallery talk by A. Sydney Rollings and Edward Grescher. "Demonstration of Silversmithing." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Monday, January 8

- Basement Studio Group: Dramatic reading of "The Winter's Tale" by Shakespeare. Tea. 80 Benefit Street, 8:10 P. M.

Thursday, January 11

- *The Providence Community Concert Association presents the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 14

- Gallery talk by Dorothy N. Casey. "Early Providence Craftsmen." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Monday, January 15

- Basement Studio Group: Dramatic reading of "The Winter's Tale" by Shakespeare. Tea. 80 Benefit Street, 8:10 P. M.

Friday, January 19

- *Concert by Alec Templeton, piano virtuoso. Sponsored by the Parent's Club of S. Dunstan School. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 21

- Lecture by Mr. John B. Archer on the Boston Symphony Orchestra program. Providence Art Club, 4:00 P. M. Auspices of the Monday Morning Musical Club.
Gallery talk by Professor C. A. Robinson. "Olympia and Early Greek Sculpture." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Monday, January 22

- *The Players present "Spring Meeting" by M. J. Farrell and John Perry. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.
*Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Tuesday, January 23

- *The Players present "Spring Meeting" by M. J. Farrell and John Perry. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.
*Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.
*Concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Koussevitsky, Conductor. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:15 P. M.

EXHIBITIONS IN RHODE ISLAND

Faunce House Gallery, Brown University

- Jan. 8-Jan. 24—Watercolors by Millard Sheets.

Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design

- Jan. 5-Feb. 14—Rowlandson Watercolors.

School Gallery, Rhode Island School of Design, 14 College St.

- Jan. 3-Jan. 30—Exhibition of Student's Work.

Research Laboratory Gallery, Rhode Island School of Design

- Jan. 2-Jan. 16—Posters of varied subjects and techniques.
Jan. 17-Jan. 30—Textiles for mass production.

Providence Art Club

- Jan. 2-Jan. 14—Oil paintings by John R. Frazier and Mary Stafford Frazier.
Jan. 16-Jan. 28—Watercolors by Herbert R. Cross.

Armour Gallery

- Jan. 3-Jan. 31—Dry Points and Etchings.

Wednesday, January 24

- *The Players present "Spring Meeting" by M. J. Farrell and John Perry. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.
*Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Thursday, January 25

- *The Players present "Spring Meeting" by M. J. Farrell and John Perry. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.
*Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Friday, January 26

- *The Players present "Spring Meeting" by M. J. Farrell and John Perry. Barker Playhouse, 8:30 P. M.
*Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 27

- *Sock and Buskin presents "The Critic" by Sheridan. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 28

- Providence Y Oratorio Society presents "Creations by Haydn." Round Top Church, 5:00 P. M.
Gallery talk by Barbara Wriston. "Early Rhode Island Architects." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

- * Admission charged.