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The Editors would welcome contributions or comment on Architectural matters suitable for publication.

Enquiries related to advertising in this journal should be directed to the Secretary of the Chapter.

Talk is of town-planning once more; warnings have been issued again about the problems we shall have to face if nothing is done to implement the plan for Perth and the Metropolitan Area. Many more words have been spoken and the theory has become even clearer to those who are not adepts. Action, long delayed is still awaited and in the meantime big building is progressing uncontrolled.

Whatever the implications of an overall town plan for Perth, limited as it now is to the future development of the city, the fact remains that whether we have a town plan or not the planning of individual buildings is in the hands of architects and builders. The responsibility for a building's adequacy and its fitness and function therefore rests with those individuals requiring it to be built and those who plan it. Generally such factors are bound by commonsense considerations and the result offends no-one, but too often buildings are being built which have an adverse effect on the efficient functioning of the city and the convenience and safety of the public. Such buildings as city office blocks adding to the already serious parking and traffic problem, shops on major roads in the suburbs with no parking facilities and no protection for the pedestrian, garages erected haphazardly according to the whim of oil companies, factories and warehouses along highways are ineradicable once built, and are in defiance of the most commonsense dictates of town-planning. The situation will undoubtedly continue until it is impossible for it to get any worse, unless some remedy is found. If the remedy lies in strict control, then that remedy is not available now; but it is debatable whether such control is desirable at any time. Rather the remedy must be found by each individual according to his ability to choose between right and wrong.

Mural Painting And The Artist :

by Howard Taylor

In this short survey of mural painting, the aim is to examine the subject in a general way, hoping that it will not only be instructive, but also suggestive. It is a review of the problems and possibilities and we believe that the possibilities are so interesting and of value so greatly outweighing any difficulties, that we submit this article as a reminder to the Architect that this is so.

PAINTING AND ARCHITECTURE:

I would further like to make some points concerning the artist and his relation to the Architect. This is more than an incidental interest, but one that is relevant to the subject and I introduce it here in explanation of the Title.

Historic Relation:

The early relation of artist, architect, craftsman will be familiar enough to most readers—they were actively involved as a group or unit in a social activity and it is here that we have painting and architecture working at its best. With the renaissance, the individual, in assuming importance, sees the development of the specialist—the artist and architect become two distinct professions. The artist is still a man of training and the church and patron might still think of painting as carried out on a wall or ceiling, but the artist is becoming more of a Special Sort of man, more concerned with his "High Art" and his easel painting in his studio. With time the apprentice system disappears, craft guilds lose authority, painters increase in number, the bohemian and amateur blossom. The great painters are masters, but painting is a luxury generally clouded with muddle headedness and incompetence.

It is with the impressionist movement and its later developments that I see painting once more take on meaning and become actively engaged with social life. These painters are expressive of the change of values at this period, and in actually coming together with equally progressive architects at the Bauhaus participate in developments that have shaped and influenced vision in all the visual arts.

Relation To-day:

The commercial artist and industrial designer (artists of special training) have become an absolute necessity. One might say the activity of the artist painter is a necessary part of social life, but as yet he is not as necessary to the architect as is the industrial designer. He may never be as essential, but painting is now of more interest to a wider range and a higher proportion of population than for a long time past. This is so because society demands it, and needs it to balance the urban life of to-day, of mass produced products, functional machinery, factories and buildings. The more life becomes urban, streamlined and efficiently organised, as it must, so there will be more need for a replacement of something lost.

As buildings, public and private, become more functional and efficient, this environment of man will require some concession to be made to his visual en-

joyment. The architect can compensate for this and does, so can the designer, interior decorator, etc. The occupier may or may not do the rest. The mural painting is being used to-day by the architect as a further means whereby he can create a building that has this completeness. It is part of the building, designed into it and is a natural and time-proven way of achieving wholeness.

MURAL PAINTING:

Requirements:

The requirements of a mural and that which should be kept in mind in discussing later considerations are:

1. It should contribute to the function of a building seen as the environment of man. This is the point brought out in the previous paragraph.
2. It should contribute to the aesthetic value of a building.

In both cases, I think it can be readily seen that a mural must be conceived as part of a building at its planning. Ideally, it is not something added, but belonging to it. This was the case when the "unit" of craftsmen worked and before painting was isolated and became easel painting—before the specialist, when the artist was not a special kind of man, but every man was a special kind of artist. This was the condition that gave rise to the tag "architecture is the mother of all arts!"

Is that belief completely shattered and no longer profitable? I believe not, I believe that architects, artists and sculptors can still work together and in doing so can avoid soulless buildings, precious paintings and useless sculpture.

Painting:

The field of the painter is two dimensional and his expression is made through design. I use design in the full and proper sense of directing an intention within certain restrictions. Pictorially, there are the two extreme points of interest:

1. Design—the structure, formal content and organisation of the painting. By itself it can give intellectual satisfaction, but if it is to be meaningful, it will express something of the artist's emotion.
2. Expression—that which is concerned with the emotional senses. This can be powerful but without a formal structure to contain it, it will be chaotic. It must satisfy the demands of the two dimensional surface.

Painting ranges between these two extremes and in either case can be figurative or abstract.

This division of painting is made for the purpose of examining the application of mural painting with

architecture and to point out that the natural field of the painter is his two dimensional surface. His Mass and Depth are simulated—his Surface is actual. The architect works with the three actualities—Mass, Space and Surface—but the surface is the special consideration of the artist. In mural painting particularly, this surface must be stressed—the wall must not be broken and lost, but it need not mean that play in depth and mass is discounted. This play is highly interesting. It is merely subordinated to the surface or wall.

PROBLEM:

Analysis:

The actual problem of the mural rests finally with the artist and he must be capable of analysing the problem to find his solution. This puts a value on training, study, discipline and experience. His restrictions may be complex, but if he has been working with the architect an intelligent solution will be logical. The success of the mural rests on this co-operation and understanding and on the ability of the artist to execute it with a personal expression within the agreed plan.

Function:

The mural can function in various ways and basically could be:

1. Formal—the degree of formal interest can be extreme in either figurative or abstract work, but will naturally depend on the requirements of its surroundings. The design elements of pictorial work are of sufficient number and flexibility to obtain formal severity without boredom. This accent can give excellent opportunities for integrating mural with building so that appreciation goes beyond the painting itself and its subject.
2. Expressive—the emotional content can be developed powerfully, providing it conforms to the restrictions of the surface and is calculated in relation to its surroundings. Integration with building will in this case take place largely through its expression having agreement with that of the building.
3. Decorative—the above two types of painting will have a decorative value, but go further in expressing the artist's conception of form. The term decorative painting is meant to explain that which relies mainly on its surface treatment for its enjoyment. It is a simple solution to preserving continuity and flatness of wall yet providing textural quality and colour and is particularly so when surface is a close knit pattern. It is the easiest to control and be given function by the architect.

Technique:

The technique employed can be specifically line, colour or value, or it can combine all three. These elements taken as the primary form-finding elements need not be thought of only in terms of paint. For instance, line can be incised, or raised constructively and use of materials can give all three. Pictorial technique is of great variety and scope. Form can be realised in the round and modelled, or it can be treated quite flatly, but the two dimensional charac-



The central hall of a large Swedish school showing the use of fresco on a large scale. The painted wall is the entrance wall of the auditorium, which is at First Floor level.

ter of the surface is always the governing factor.

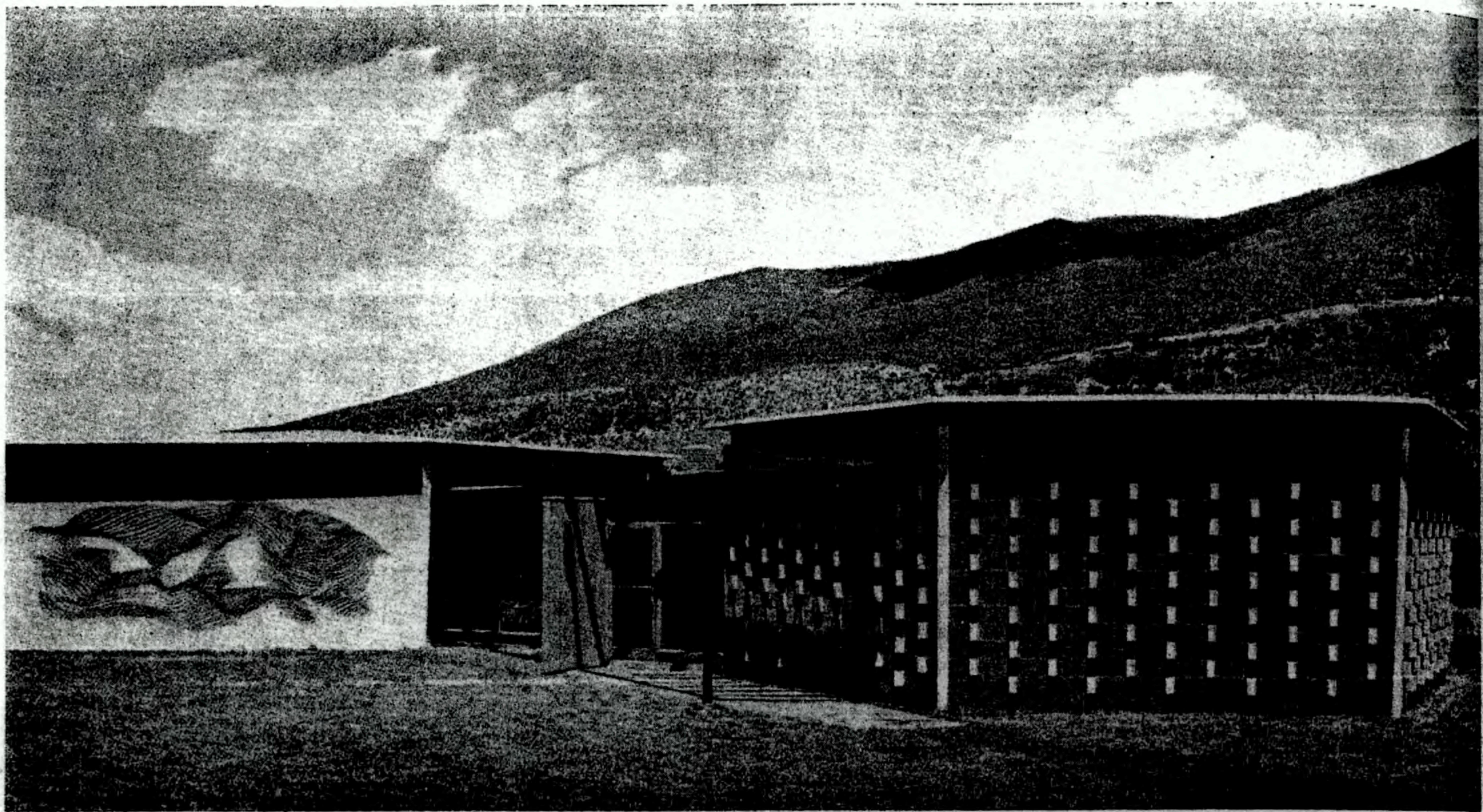
Co-operation:

The architect must have knowledge and understanding of painting if he is to employ mural work creatively. It will then become a further means of expressing himself. It will be apparent that co-operation is essential—of artist—of architect and of the third member—the client. The client may well be regarded as the critical member, but I am here assuming that he wants mural painting and has confidence in the other two. He will be consulted particularly in the early stages of planning, but if he is at all understanding, he will co-operate by not interfering in the later stages.

TECHNICAL:

Planning:

Planning for the mural with the building is not only the ideal way, but is also the most efficient. With a clear idea of the intention, walls can be prepared as building progresses and when this is nearing completion and assuming a final character, the artist will be ready to go ahead. It is important to the artist that he be able to paint in surroundings that are those in which the mural will be seen. This will mean that the planning of fittings, furnishings and



A meeting pavilion in California, one external wall of which has a sgraffito panel by Herbert Bayer echoing the feeling of the hills in the background. Projecting bricks on the other walls enliven the building and provide contrast with the landscape.

interior decoration must be carefully considered in the early stages with relation to the mural. Such planning will simplify the artist's problem considerably.

Mediums:

The possible means of carrying out the mural are:

1. Fresco—the traditional manner of painting on freshly-laid lime plaster which supplies the binding medium for the pigment. The clear de-saturated quality of colour and the perfection in matting pigment and wall is its characteristic. Its use demands considerable preparation and planning, but it is fast in execution and is still used to-day.
2. Oil Paint—providing the surface does not acquire too much shine or gloss disagreeable to viewing this is a sound method. The wall can be prepared to take the paint direct or canvas can be attached to it.
3. Synthetic Wall Paints—this is the modern replacement for fresco, egg tempera and distemper. The best quality paints are very durable and as permanent as necessary. The matt quality and clarity of colour is good.
4. Mosaic and Tiles—both of these have a traditional use and are popular to-day, being made in Europe, for the purpose of such work and could possibly be obtained in Australia or at least improvised.
5. Materials — any material is potential design material, and should be considered as possible means in carrying out or being incorporated in

mural work—glass, metals, composition board, mesh, enamel, wood, etc.

6. Other Work—such as tapestry, and stained glass could well be considered, but they are perhaps outside the scope of the artist painter I have in mind in this article.

Initiative:

The initiative of the artist is essential if full possibilities are to be obtained. Although he may usually express himself in paint, the last three mediums are provocative and are producing most interesting results in conjunction with modern building techniques. The artist will in some cases only, prepare drawings and designs for work that will be carried out by craftsmen.

Expression:

With the conception of mural painting by the architect he will have to decide on the artist best equipped to carry out his idea and this is most important. An artist cannot be expected to work in a manner foreign to his experience and thought. The artist has spent his life shaping his means of expression and he must be allowed to do that which he is best able to do well.

Selection:

If the architect is thinking in the manner outlined in this article he will not consider asking for competitive sketches. He will know what he wants and select his man to work with him. Public competition is I feel a poor way of tackling the problem and admits that the architect has not grasped the full

value of mural painting and is wanting to adorn his building with a bit of decoration. In a building already erected it is perhaps excusable but it is taking a risk.

Commission:

The question of sketches, commission and fee will vary with the work, but it must be recognised that the artist will be giving the problem long thought before he submits a sketch, and although it may be brief it will be the product of time and experience. This will be readily appreciated by an architect and if the project goes no further he should be granted payment for his services. The commission for the mural and the agreed fee must take the form of a Contract.

THE ARTIST:

Identity:

I would like to quote again: "the artist is not a special sort of man, but a man who is a special sort of artist". He is not a temperamental bohemian as once believed. He is a man with special knowledge with training, experience and integrity. The architect being also a special sort of artist will be able to recognise the right man when he wants him. The artist, needless to say, must be alive to his responsibility.

Contribution:

The field of expression of the artist is the two dimensional surface and his means of expression is a visual one, of line, colour, value, texture, shape, area, etc. His use of these elements in surface organisation can be original and a source of development in design. Painting has proved this to-day and I feel it will continue to be of service to the architect if it is brought into closer contact with architecture. Mural painting seems a very practical way of achieving this.

FUTURE OF MURAL PAINTING IN PERTH:

Standard:

In Perth I feel the conditions are inductive to mural painting. It is a community becoming more and more urban and ordered but it is still small enough to appreciate activity of this kind in its public buildings and "home-conscious" enough to appreciate its

value in private dwellings. It is essential however, that a standard be established now—there is good and bad mural painting, good and bad planning. Murals do not necessarily require a large scale, but would be equally effective in a small example of architecture and painting working harmoniously together. But I would like to repeat here that the mural and building acquire value from each other, integration is vital and primarily dependent on the vision and conception of the architect. The detachable easel painting is the alternative and that is another problem completely.

Client:

Is the client really such an impossible figure that he refuses to see the value of such work? Have the possibilities been brought to his notice? The public may be slow to appreciate the aesthetic achievement, but I can't help but believe that if a good original and provocative example appeared, it would be applauded by them and in turn give pride to the client.

Painters:

I feel that the young architect is anxious to develop the idea and I know that the young painter is waiting for the opportunity. The art student devotes part of his study to mural painting, and although some of these students are absorbed in the activity of the commercial world, in advertising, display and design, others want to express themselves more personally. Some can satisfactorily achieve this in easel painting, but there are still those who need to be intimately involved in a project before contributing their best work. The scale of mural painting, its permanence and usefulness has always been a tremendous incentive to painters. With the great masters the possible scale may have been that which was important, but even here I feel that the heart of the matter is that wish to participate in constructive work. This brings me back to the theme that painting has origins deep-rooted in architecture and that the association is still valuable. In Perth there are painters of training, experience and ability to work on a large scale and of sufficient variety of expression to meet any demands that architecture may make.