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Viewpoint, A New School Idea, Being Tried in Canada This Year

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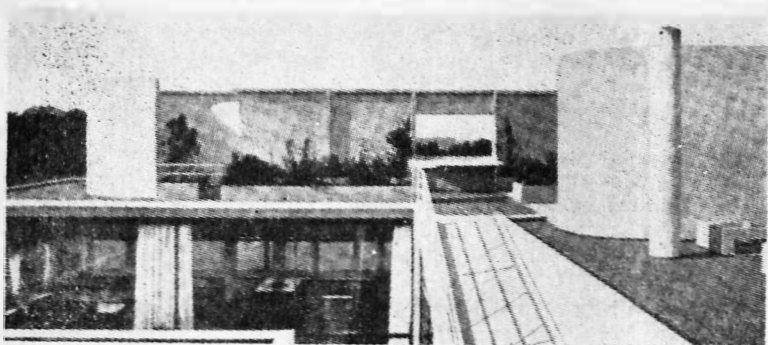
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The Owner-Built Home — Chapter 2
Volume IV — Design and Structure
**Planning Systems:
The Court-Garden House**

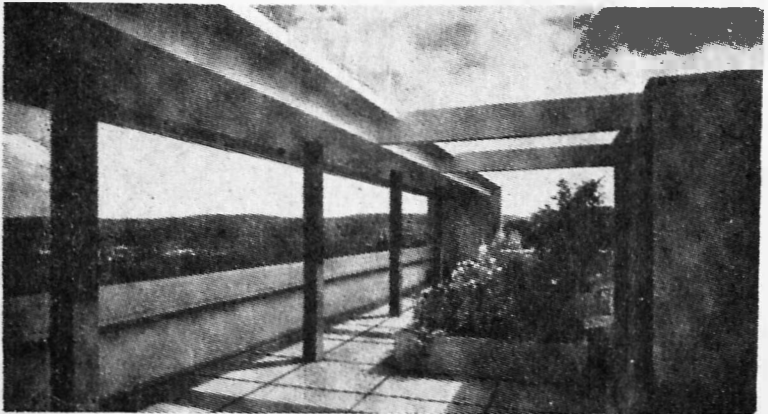
By Ken Kern

(continued from last month)



ROOF-GARDEN

Le Corbusier 1930



So much for the analysis of space; the average owner-builder is no doubt more concerned with the tools and methods for evoking these expansive emotions of discovery in his design and structure. It is important to know how to design so as to lead the observer through a sequence of experiences revealing the dwelling as an organic entity: a pattern of rhythms, effects, and ordinal sequences, leading finally to climactic repose.

The creative problem essentially resolves itself into the development of (1) *scale* and (2) *rhythm* in building.

Scale is dimension relative to man's visual apprehension, or to his physical size. When we perceive our environment we naturally use the human body-size as a yardstick. The scale of the median human figure-height has been conveniently expressed in the 3-foot module. A module is a "little measure," a division-unit. Perhaps the one most important tool of design and structure economy is modular coordination. Modular layout refers to the sizing of a building in relation to a basic division-unit. The 4-inch module is most commonly used; 16-inch, 24-inch, and 4-foot modules are also used as gridwork design guides. All outside-wall lines and interior partitions are designed to fall on the grid-module.

The correct ordering and proportioning of modules is essential to good design. For the creation of an intimate environment, for instance, one would employ a smaller module than in the rest of the house (reduced sizes give an impression of coziness and a general sense of ease. Each part must be somehow related to each other and at the same time to the total composition. Proportion is a composite of function and materials, scale and composition. Scale in design is achieved through focus and contrast as well. Color can be used effectively for focus; contrasts of light and shadow and spatial sequences can also give desired results. In contemporary design we use texture as an equivalent to ornamental detailing.

Design for rhythm in building is practically an unknown concept, even though the capacity to respond to rhythm is innate and basic to normal life. We can create rhythm in our designs through the juxtaposition of colors and of textures, through the patterning of volume, through the succession of areas of varying light levels, through the spacing of free-standing columns. With these design-aids we can create a slow and even rhythm (beat) to suggest dignity and poised assurance in our composition. Or we can introduce off-beats of such secondary elements as openings and textured panels to create a gayer quality in our design.

Good architecture has been likened to "frozen music," and Geoffrey Scott calls space "liberty of movement." In our dwelling design we seek order, relationship and integral structure. Order in musical notes creates melody; the relationship of notes played produces harmony; the structure of musical elements played in a planned sequence produces a symphony.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VIEWPOINT, A New School Idea, Being Tried In Canada This Year

VIEWPOINT is a place where children may broaden their interests and try their capacities in relative freedom from the restricted thinking of our culture. Chuck and Helen Valentine feel that our present school system puts too much emphasis on the learning of present facts and techniques, and not enough on

the acceptance and development of the individual and his own interests and excellencies. It does not provide broad enough experience on which to base a life, nor sufficient understanding of other people. They say:

"We would like to operate a school which would work toward the development of cre-

ative and self-reliant individuals who would have the built-in flexibility needed for life in tomorrow's everchanging world. This is beyond our present capacities, but we do feel able to offer a summer experience for children as an aid to this development.

"We have been accepting a few children of elementary school age to live with our family and take full part in the life of our rural homestead, including plenty of time for self-directed play and projects, art, crafts, construction, music, swimming, hiking, riding, mountain climbing. In 1966, if we can find personnel ready to work with us, we will welcome several more children to this type of experience.

"Our location—Argenta, in the mountains of southeastern British Columbia—is a small, unique community with numerous human and physical resources, in a setting of great natural beauty. "Send for our brochure, visit us if you have time, write us if you don't. If you like what you see and hear, then send your children and tell your friends. Or if you happen to be educators who are frustrated with the present directions of education, join us in our experiment with life."

The address is C. & H. Valentine, Argenta, B. C. Canada. The phone is Duncan Lake 651.

Light In the Midst of Darkness

My stop in New York City, returning from the New England festival, missed by less than a week the Black Night of Nov. 9 when the massive centralized power system broke down and plunged everything into darkness. That would seem a major horror, but to the credit of the Urbanites, there was little or no panic.

What does seem strange is that decentralization of power has occurred to a few as a way out. Rochdale Village, in Jackson Heights, was shining like a silver lake in a black desert. This is a 2-year-old cooperative apartment project on the site of the old Jamaica racetrack, and it has its own generators fired by natural gas and fuel oil. It buys nothing from Consolidated Edison. If its own \$10,500,000 power plant breaks down, there are two diesel engines that can take over in 60 seconds.

Their power system is known as a total-energy plant, because the heat recovered from the generator engines provides heat, hot water and air-conditioning for the 21,000 persons in their 20 buildings (13 stories each). Rochdale Village is a project of the United Housing Foundation, a non-profit organization for middle-income, cooperative housing. Their Warbasse project in Coney Island, consisting of five 24-story buildings and housing 9,000, also has its own power plant. It was dissatisfaction with Con Ed rates that led UHF to build its own power plants, and they save more than half a million dollars a year.—MJL

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