

9H?

The seemingly obscure title, *9H*, has no connection with the monthly magazine 'il0' published by J.J.P. Oud and Moholy-Nagy in the 30s – a fact that was brought to our attention very recently but expresses, perhaps distantly, the notion of 'pencil hardness' . . . hardness, terseness, critical . . . critical of present discourses in the sphere of history and architectural criticism, but also exploring and suggesting means and ways of moving forward, not by leaps and bounds, but with measured steps taken with a grasp of history, a knowledge of the present, and the aim of more than worshipping or peering at the future . . . But at the same time, encompassing the poetry of architecture, of light and walls . . . ambiguities and contradictions that we accept for they exist despite ourselves (and hardness never existed without the reassuring presence of softness) for this is the only way, with a free exchange and intercourse of different opinions, to step towards the future which has no chosen road, as is being increasingly realized . . . However this does not mean that we shall omit polemics for even rhetoric is a necessary part (and perhaps a consequence) of this search.

In keeping with these aims we have organized the magazine in the following manner:

1. the translations of important texts within current and historic architectural discourse
2. their analysis by specific critics
3. theoretical discussions
4. projects hitherto unpublished in England
5. readers' letters.

The articles in this issue explore the following areas:

1. factors which affect and often determine design and building
2. evaluation of the role of architects and planners in the past and the present
3. a questioning of the methodology of examining the nature of architecture

Architects and planners have often seen themselves as instigators of social change. The Italian articles challenge this assumption and point other powerful forces, which often determine the direction and the actions of the planners and architects. The article, *Form as a Mask*, by questioning some of the basic categories of architectural criticism, in turn also calls for a further examination of the other factors that determine architectural action.

However planners and architects have often been able to direct the lives of large communities – sometimes with due consideration, often rashly – without taking into account all the necessary factors. The critique of the planned Algerian village illustrates one particular way that change is being brought about in the rural areas of the underdeveloping countries where the majority of the world's population live. This disregard for concrete studies and ignorance of the consequences of certain actions is not only an effect of the architects' ideologies but is also a necessary component of the quest for profits. The document from China illustrates other aspects of the problems encountered by architects in these countries. Its interest also lies in the fact that little is known about this country in the west. We hope to extend this theme and examine the interventions of architects and planners in these countries.

Scharoun's speech, the first major text of this important figure in Germany's recent architectural history to be translated into English, enables us to advance our understanding of his approach to town planning with specific reference to Berlin.

Doug Clelland, by indicating the contradictions within Scharoun's speech (and perhaps being over-assertive in taking it to be a sign of "schizophrenia" – after all contradictions and conflicts always exist and what matters is what one does), asks for a re-appraisal of the Rational Man, a mythological figure that was used to justify many proposals and actions of architects in the past and is still often resurrected. To replace one myth by another serves no purpose except to those who need myths to perpetuate their dominance.

Groak's comments on *Form as a Mask* suggests that different areas of theory account for the varying meanings given to terms used in architectural discourse and goes on to tentatively explore these areas.

On the other hand, Olgiati's thoughts on some of the aspects of architecture can be said to be a part of one area of architecture – that which is intimately related to and uses the spoken/written word; yet at the same time, they provide clues for an understanding of his projects and buildings.

The articles in this issue are by no means a comprehensive representation of the areas that this magazine hopes to explore but are an indication of the direction it will take. Future issues will be under the direction of different members of the editorial board and this will inevitably reflect upon the contents.

Being a magazine run primarily by students, plus the fact that our material and financial resources are limited, has implications on the frequency of this publication, which for the time being, stands at two a year. We have tried to keep the cost of the magazine low in order to increase its accessibility; however, we would like to make a special plea for subscriptions, as this will enable us to reduce our costs. Unsolicited contributions – whether financial, drawn or written – are welcome.

Finally, we would like to thank the translators and various other people without whose help this magazine would not have been possible.