

la, Glasgow ha producido bellos ejemplos de arquitectura urbana. Pero allí donde se encuentra una iglesia o un importante edificio de la ciudad, estos se ven realizados por el propio emplazamiento: se trata, a menudo, de un espacio público dentro de la cuadrícula. Los nuevos Halls de Glasgow tienen la misma intención: los edificios están dispuestos alrededor del cruce de dos calles importantes, a lo largo de las cuales pueden verse, y se ha creado un nuevo espacio público para actos cívicos y uso peatonal.

■ *Estos ejemplos constituyen claramente "símbolos" de la máxima importancia en una ciudad. Pero, ¿qué puede decirnos acerca de edificios de menor escala dentro de un contexto existente, como son los casos de Kettle's Yard o del edificio para Balliol College, en Oxford?. Los ha descrito a veces como edificación "anónima"...*

Creo que eso significa sencillamente que hay muchas zonas en una ciudad donde puede mejorarse el entorno a través de simples añadidos a los edificios ya existentes. En Kettle's Yard se llevó a cabo la extensión de una casa a través de una serie de añadidos para formas galerías de exposición donde el propietario pudiera mostrar su colección de obras de arquitectura y compartirlas con otros. En Pembroke College, la edificación dentro del propio College de un espacio donde estaban emplazados unos garajes ofrece ahora una nueva biblioteca.

Lo cierto es que la ciudad cambia constantemente. Tenemos la oportunidad de discernir qué es lo apropiado para cada situación particular, y muchas zonas en ciudades inglesas han sido mejoradas de modo consistente en los últimos años a través de un simple proceso de renovación y relleno.

■ *Pero en los últimos treinta años, más o menos, la construcción en las ciudades de Inglaterra no ha sido siempre realizada de este modo. En muchas ocasiones, los nuevos sistemas viarios han destruido zonas urbanas: la edificación de viviendas y de centros comerciales ha creado en muchos casos la ciudad de las torres, que en la mente de la gente se asocia al Movimiento Moderno. ¿Cómo relaciona esto con las primeras ideas y ambiciones del CIAM?*

La contribución más importante del CIAM en sus inicios fué que llamó la atención sobre los problemas de la ciudad. También mostró claramente que existían nuevas técnicas que podían utilizarse para resolver estos problemas. Reunió a jóvenes arquitectos de muchos países del

para muchos de ellos, constituyó el punto de arranque de su trabajo posterior.

Tal vez pueda reescribirse algún día la historia del Movimiento Moderno. Es posible que pueda entonces trazarse el itinerario de los arquitectos de muchos países que, trabajando a partir de esas primeras ideas, marcaron sus propias líneas de pensamiento creativas y sobre la edificación, elaboradas en el contexto de los problemas y de las posibilidades técnicas de sus propios países. Tal vez veamos entonces, en todas sus variedades y con toda su riqueza, la contribución total proveniente de Finlandia, Italia, Dinamarca, Alemania y Francia. Esta contribución se extenderá a la renovación y reestructuración de ciudades más antiguas pasando por toda la gama de edificios públicos, desde los museos, en Italia, hasta los auditorios, en Finlandia. Incluirá a la vez la alta tecnología y la artesanía y una impresionante gama de diseño de mobiliario e industrial.

Y cuando se analice de este modo la historia del trabajo creativo, el Movimiento Moderno será algo muy distinto de los edificios de pisos en altura y de las obras viarias que han tenido un efecto tan triste en el entorno de nuestras ciudades y con los que tan a menudo se ha asociado la palabra "moderno"

*In England, ideas about the modern city which developed during the '20s and '30s and later after the war do not seem to follow the plans worked out in other countries in Europe: for instance the grand plans for Amsterdam or Berlin. Can you explain this?*

Yes, I think that the starting point for any ideas about urban planning in Great Britain is not the '20s and '30s. It must begin earlier with the conditions within so many of the industrial towns developed in the 19th century. Even at the beginning of the 20th century the legacy of that vast industrial development was still there. In many cities in the north of England the extensive areas of sub-standard housing, the factories and the pollution were very much in evidence.

These were the conditions of the 19th century industrial town that stimulated ideas about the new forms of town and environment that people might have and enjoy. Ebenezer Howard's proposals were published in 1898 in his book *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*. It is

distributed and linked by transport to form new groupings. Everything is measured: we know the type of house, the size of plot, the schools and places of work that are necessary, and the desirable size of the town itself.

At the beginning of the 20th century some enlightened industrialists had given a lead: the Garden City idea had been established at Port Sunlight and Bournville. A few years later Parker and Unwin demonstrated the new pattern of living at Letchworth and by the '20s Welwyn Garden City achieved only the national grid of electricity to establish the idea of new towns complete with their balanced industrial developments.

British ideas of urban planning after the war still have their roots in these earlier movements.

■ *Could you say something more about this? Unwin's towns or suburbs were all garden cities. Was there any lasting influence from this idea after the war?*

Unwin's housing certainly consisted of houses with gardens. This in turn controlled densities and set limits on the number of houses to the acre. That set the standard for an environment that he considered desirable and that was followed extensively in suburban developments. But Unwin left a lasting contribution to theory by his study of densities and by his use of simple methods of measurement and comparison. In his essay *Nothing gained by overcrowding* he compares the parallel rows of housing of the 19th century town with houses placed around the perimeter of a site with open space in the middle. He relates these to areas of road necessary and to cost. In his studies of perimeter development around existing towns he uses an important geometrical principle which relates expansion to travel time. Studies of this kind have had a considerable influence on our own work on land use and built form at Cambridge. That is to say that Unwin left behind a method of study: not just 'images' of what a town might be.

His associate, Parker, made an architectural contribution in his designs for individual houses: one or two ideas illustrate his approach. For instance the living room is the most important room in the house: this could have double height with a staircase leading to a gallery serving the bedrooms. Within this space are special areas around the fire, or for dining or writing, and with windows facing the view. Here

Leslie Martin, arqto.

## Una nota sobre los primeros edificios

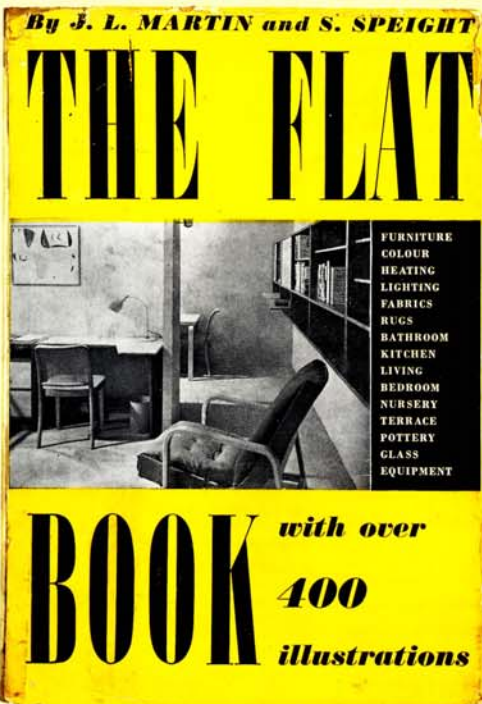
## « C I R C L E »

Leslie Martin empezó a ejercer de arquitecto en 1933 y, durante los años treinta, compaginó la práctica con la enseñanza.

Las obras de su primera época incluyen varias casas unifamiliares. Todas ellas seguían un diseño libre sujeto a las distintas necesidades y a la variación de los lugares en que se encuentran emplazadas. Están construidas con materiales locales. En 1937 se levantó un parvulario pionero. En este edificio, cuatro aulas podían convertirse en zonas más amplias, y esta primera etapa de la edificación, con sus guardarropias y zona de servicios, podía extenderse a través de una serie de reflejos de la forma planimétrica inicial.

Durante esta época, Martin también estaba involucrado en la edición de dos importantes publicaciones. La primera, *Circle*, se publicó en 1937. Los editores eran Leslie Martin (arquitecto), Ben Nicholson (pintor) y Naum Gabo (escultor). Esta publicación tenía un aire internacional, al ilustrar la obra de 22 pintores, 10 escultores y 27 arquitectos. El libro contenía por añadidura ensayos de Mondrian, Gabo, Noholy Nagy y del científico Bernal, sumados a otras colaboraciones de Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer y Richard Neutra. También incluía un artículo sobre el trabajo pionero en hormigón armado de los puentes y estructuras diseñados por el ingeniero suizo Maillart, una nota del arquitecto Honzig sobre Biotécnica y un ensayo del escritor norteamericano Lewis Mumford.

Los artistas y escritores cuya obra se reunió en este tomo trabajaban en distintos medios y provenían de formaciones considerablemente diferentes. Los editores no intentaron ligarlos a todos bajo ningún tipo de manifiesto. Creían sencillamente que, al presentar estas colaboraciones conjuntamente, podría tal vez demostrarse una actitud determinada de mente y pensamiento. Sentían que, dentro de la confusión generalizada de formas y teorías artísticas que imperaban en la época,



existían ciertas obras, ciertos enfoques que parecían compartir una idea y un espíritu comunes: la tendencia constructiva en el arte de nuestros días, y que, al agrupar estas colaboraciones, tal vez podría demostrarse un enfoque positivo.

La circulación de este libro a finales de los años treinta era limitada pero, en 1971, 34 años después de su publicación, el libro fue reimpresso en su formato original. En los últimos meses se han montado importantes exposiciones sobre la obra de Naum Gabo en la Tate Gallery de Londres, y sobre Ben Nicholson en la Fundación Juan March de Madrid.

Una segunda publicación apareció en 1939 cuando Martin y su esposa, Sadie Speight, editaron en colaboración *The Flat Book*. Fue un intento de que el público tuviese acceso a las ilustraciones de productos bien diseñados que podían servir para amueblar y equipar el hogar. La gama de muebles incluía sillas de Thanet, Aalto y Breuer. Mesas, escritorios, sofás, etc., aparecían ilustrados junto a tejidos y alfombras, cerámica y vidrio, alumbrado y equipos de calefacción

Leslie Martin began to practice as an architect in 1933 and during the 'thirties combined his practice with teaching.

His early work included a number of individual houses. They all involved free planning in relation to different needs and the varying sites on which they are placed. They are built in local materials. A pioneering nursery school was built in 1937. In this building four classrooms could be converted into larger areas and this first stage of building with its cloakrooms and service area could be extended by a series of reflections of the plan form.

During this period Martin was also involved in producing two important publications. The first was 'Circle': its was published in 1937. The editors were Leslie Martin (architect),

are all the elements of Le Corbusier's studio house and of a new and informal space for living.

■ *What do you consider the most significant developments in town planning at the end of the war period?*

I think without question it is the continuation of the belief that the problem of urban development could be analysed and studied and that from this base systematic proposals could be developed. Towards the end of the war for instance Abercrombie and Forshaw had produced their 'London Plan'. This established limits on growth and a relationship between population and places of work. The plan described the balance that would be required between housing densities and the schools, social services and the open spaces that might produce a better environment within the local communities from which London has grown and which constitute London as a whole.

The limit to the growth of London itself which the plan proposed, was counterbalanced by Abercrombie's plan for 'Greater London' which in turn led to a series of new towns following very clearly the precedent proposed by Howard.

By 1951 every county in England was expected to produce its own survey of existing conditions and its clear assessment of future needs.

■ *Abercrombie's work consists of plans. What has been the lasting influence of those plans on the development of building which has since taken place. What happened for example in the area of London where higher densities of housing were essential?*

Well, first of all I think that the plans reinforced the idea of London as a grouping of communities: the London Boroughs. One of these, Stepney, was in fact used for a demonstration area of housing, schools, etc. during the National Exhibition of 1951 and it followed very closely the Abercrombie patterns.

But the Abercrombie conception of density was limited. It was clear that for Abercrombie housing at low density was desirable where it could be achieved, that is at the perimeter. But in the inner areas the density would have to be high. For Abercrombie there was only one answer, the block of flats. This was certainly limited in height and was related to a reasonable provision of surrounding space.

Several housing developments built in London after the war followed

this pattern. In the case of the design of housing taken over by the LCC Architects Office in the late '40s the development of a parkland site at Roehampton was one of the first projects. What was proposed there was something different: it was the simple idea of mixed development. There were slab blocks but also point blocks again of limited height. But in addition the scheme included four storey maisonettes and two storey dwellings. The density remained high, the open space was still very apparent but the choice of type of dwelling had been widened.

■ *What was the motivation behind your own studies of density and housing types?*

The studies arose from an obvious question. If housing slabs and the kind of housing in mixed development can produce the same high densities what is the range of possible forms that might be developed? We began to study this question by placing different types of housing on an identical site area. We found that a high density of 136 people to the acre could be provided on many ways. Indeed the identical density could be accommodated in 3½ storey housing in which many types dwelling were combined when this was arranged around courtyards which contained the open space. That is to say that tall buildings were not essential to produce high density dwellings.

The theoretical aspect of this was not studied until later when the mathematical principles of placing floor space on a given site area were taken further as a direct outcome of work on the Whitehall plan.

I am stressing again the difference between the systematic study of a problem and the 'images' that we are so ready to adopt. One of these 'images' was contained in the idea that high density housing must be associated with tall building and as the point blocks in London became successively higher (16 storeys, 21 storeys, 24 storeys) the housing choice diminished.

I think it fair to Le Corbusier to add that although these tall developments have been associated with his City of Towers, his towers were offices, not housing. The nearest approach to high rise and high density housing is found in his 10 storey maisonettes (which have double height living rooms with open courts). These are built around public open spaces and accommodate 20% to 30% of the population. The remaining 70% to 80% of the inhabitants are to live in garden cities probably on the lines of Pessac.

It is clear that we are building false impressions.

■ *There were of course many types of building in addition to housing which were built in England as a direct result of the plans produced after the war. There was for instance a national programme of building the new schools that were required and later of course the new universities. What is your own conclusion about the success of these programmes and how did they affect your own works?*

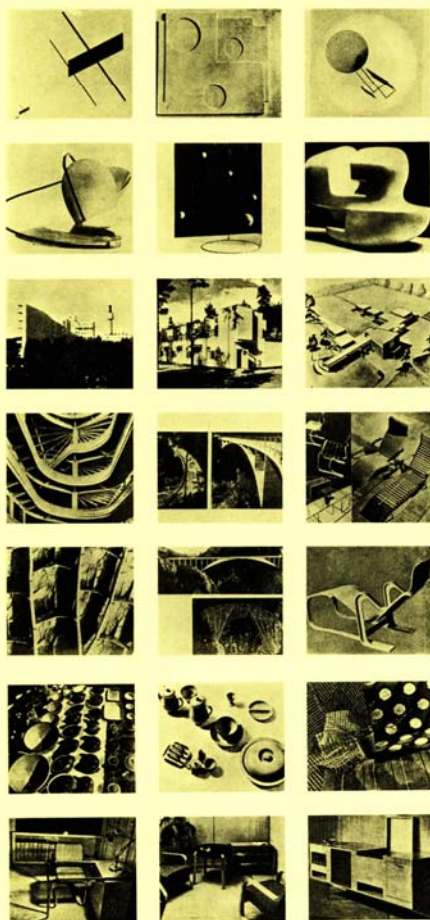
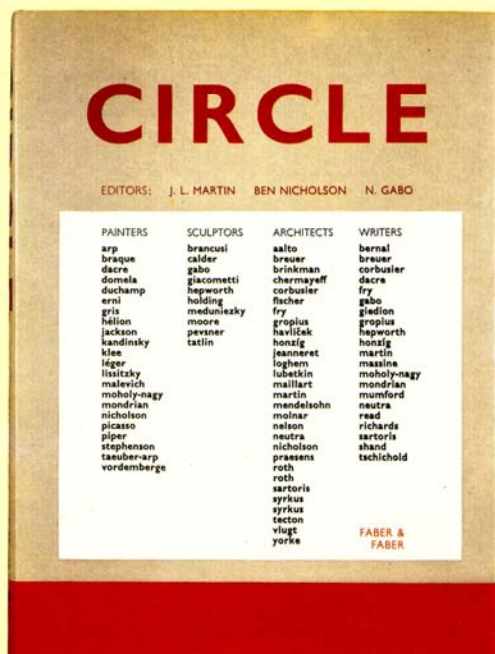
I would like to say first of all that I consider it to be quite remarkable that these programmes of building were carried out so completely over a period of years and on the whole successfully. I designed a small school before the war (in 1937) in which I tried to include some new principles; for example that classrooms needed good daylighting, that they could be flexible in size and use and that there could be provision for expansion and growth. The post war school building programmes developed all these principles together with new constructional systems to produce a remarkable number of new buildings in the time available. And that applies equally at a later date to the planning and building of the new universities.

My studio was involved in ideas for the layout of three of these university developments in which growth over a period of time had to be taken into account. This led in turn to the study of many of the component buildings of a university, including residential buildings, libraries and auditoria of various kinds. In each category we tried to discover the characteristic form. My experience over a period of many years has proved for me the validity of this approach. It has shown the way in which these basic ideas can provide a continuity of thought which can be elaborated and developed by each new requirement and situation.

■ *Apart from these individual building types you have also worked on major urban problems such as the Whitehall project and a major new development for Concert Hall and associated developments in Glasgow. At the other end of the scale you have developed small scale infilling. What aspects of urban development have these studies suggested?*

Let me start with Whitehall. The first point that I want to make is that the plan was not just a proposal for some new Government buildings. The plan was a framework which relates a set of ideas within the most significant area of London: the Centre of Government including the

# » Y E L « F L A T B O O K » Sigue en la página 20.



Ben Nicholson (painter) and Naum Gabo (sculptor). This publication had an international range. It illustrated the work of 22 painters, 10 sculptors and 27 architects. In addition the book contained essays by Mondrian, Gabo, Moholy Nagy and the scientist Bernal: other contributions came from le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and Richard Neutra. There was an article on the pioneering re-inforced concrete bridges and structures designed by the Swiss engineer Maillart: a note on Bio-technics by the architect Honzig and as essay by the American writer Lewis Mumford.

The artists and writers whose work was brought together in this volume worked in different media and there were considerable differences of background. The editors did not attempt to link all this together with any kind of manifesto. They believed quite simply that by placing these contributions side by side a particular attitude of mind and thought might be demonstrated. They felt that, within all the confusion of art forms and theory at that time, there were certain works, certain approaches that appeared to have a common idea and a common spirit: the constructive trend in the art of our day, and that by placing these contribution side by side a positive approach could perhaps be demonstrated.

The circulation of this book in the late 'thirties was limited but by 1971, 34 years after its publication, the book was reprinted in its original format. In recent months there have been major exhibitions of the work of Naum Gabo at the Tate Gallery in London and Ben Nicholson at the Juan March Foundation in Madrid.

A second publication appeared in 1939 when Martin and his wife Sadie Speight collaborated to produce the Flat Book. It was an attempt to make available to the public illustrations of the well designed products that could be used for the furnishing and equipment of a home. The range of furniture included chairs by Thanet, Aalto and Breuer. Tables, desks, settees, etc. were illustrated together with fabrics and rugs, pottery and glass, lighting and equipment for heating.

Ideas y edificios