

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

1449-51
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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HOUSE DESIGNED BY MARCEL BREUER BEING BUILT IN MUSEUM GARDEN

Ground has been broken in the sculpture garden behind the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, for an expandable house to cost in its full size about \$25,000, designed by the well-known American architect Marcel Breuer. To be completed in April, it will remain on view for 6 months. Intended to be built by any local contractor, the house is an up-to-date economical solution for an individually built, architect-designed country home, but will not compete with prefabricated or mass-produced structures. Mr. Breuer describes it as "the house for the commuter who has personal views in selecting his land, probably at least an acre. The construction chosen and the materials selected enable any local builder to do the job without unusual technical problems."

Recognizing as today's primary architectural problem the need for adequate housing, quantitatively, structurally and esthetically, the Museum will present this house as good and practical design in the best of materials, equipment and craftsmanship. Because of the public's lack of understanding of inflationary building costs, the Museum will demonstrate how much living can be purchased for how many dollars, by means of an exact analysis of building costs to be made available in an illustrated catalog. This catalog will also include estimates of construction costs for the same house in other localities and alternate costs of substitute materials specified by the architect. Sources of labor, materials and equipment used in construction will be listed.

Marcel Breuer, although only 46 years old, ranks as one of the formulators of modern architecture along with Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. Born in Hungary and trained in Germany where he studied and taught at the Bauhaus, he came to this country in 1937 to teach at Harvard University where for several years he was Professor of Architectural Design and worked in partnership with Walter Gropius. Now practicing in New York, he is particularly interested in the adaptation of modern architecture to American needs and technical possibilities. He has had wide experience in building moderate and low cost houses as well as numerous elaborately equipped private residences.

Details of the house in the garden are described by Mr. Breuer as follows:

"It is an expandable house. The first phase, which can be built for about \$18,000, includes a living-dining room, two bedrooms, children's playroom, bath, kitchen and utility room. Later, when the children are older and additional funds are more likely to be available, one may add on a garage-storage section and above it an additional bedroom with private bathroom and sun terrace. This would then be the new master bedroom, not adjacent to the children's areas but in relative privacy from them, at the other end of the house.

"The kitchen is central, controlling all activities. There is an observation glass panel towards the playroom. Kitchen shelving and cabinet work is simple, partly open (since there is usually no dust in the country) with sliding doors of the simplest construction instead of swinging doors. Counters are of hardwood. Kitchen and utility room and service yard are adjacent and equipped so that housework is reduced to a minimum. This was a very definite principle in planning the whole house and in selecting the materials and finishes, especially for the floors, walls and for all the furnishings. The utility room can serve also as an emergency bedroom for night sitters, for occasional help, etc. A radiant heating system in the floor slab is planned to make the summer-cool stone floor warm in the winter. The extensively used bluestone flagging is a very practical floor to maintain, especially in rooms on the garden level.

"Special consideration is given to the children. In the first phase of the house, stairs are completely eliminated. The children's playroom has a separate entrance. In the second phase, if there are more than two children, they can take over the master bedroom of the first phase and use the children's playroom as their own living room or study. They are near the living room and kitchen, easily supervised, and yet they are separated.

"The outdoor areas are subdivided by means of free-standing louver partitions or bench-like stone walls into the following distinct areas:

- the parking area in front of the garage
- the patio-like entrance terrace
- the service yard
- the flower garden areas off the bedrooms
- the children's play yard
- the partly covered main terrace with an outdoor grille, adjacent to living-dining room."