

The Museum of Modern Art

1 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

WALL LABEL

TWENTIETH CENTURY ENGINEERING

June 30 - September 13, 1964

Engineers have usually been regarded as artists in the craft sense only. Their work has been admired for the excitement of its often monumental scale, and for its boldness and simplicity of design. Architects have sought to emulate these qualities and, more important, have tried to make the art of architecture as rational and functionally objective as the art of engineering.

Engineering at architectural scale includes bridges, dams, and stadia, and enclosures for storage, work, and public assembly. It also ranges from such quasi-mechanical objects as radar and telescope installations, to highways, earth terraces, and artificial islands.

Because engineers must solve many different kinds of complicated technical problems, their decisions must be rationally determined. But it is not true that technical problems admit one kind of solution only. No matter how rigorously objective an engineer may be, he must still make some decisions independently of objective, demonstrable fact. It is in these subjective decisions that he will reveal his personal preferences, his sense of form, and those individual responses that make up taste.

Some engineers are clumsy; others have very good "taste" indeed. Engineering as an art affords us such individual characteristics as the aristocratic elegance and restraint of Robert Maillart; the extravagant playfulness of Felix Candela; the expressive rhetoric of Pier Luigi Nervi; and the ethereal pragmatism of Buckminster Fuller. Sometimes these characteristics are national as well as individual; there are typically Italian and French and American ways of solving problems, let alone of defining them.

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The problems engineers solve cut across economics, politics, art, and science, affecting the lives of all men - on this planet now and eventually somewhere else as well. Engineering is among the most rewarding of the arts not only because it produces individual masterpieces, as beautiful, for example, as the Santa Luzia Dam in Portugal or the Theodor Heuss Bridge in Dusseldorf, but also because it is an art grounded in social responsibility.

This exhibition includes 195 projects. Fifty-four of them are shown at large scale in the center alcoves; all 195 are shown with explanatory texts in study alcoves along the perimeter of the gallery.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y.
CI 5-8900.