

**A House at Bristol. Marcel Breuer.
Design For Today, December, 1936. pp. 459-462**

This pdf is published by the Ken Stradling Collection,
48 Park Row, Bristol BS1 3LH. May 2020.
www.stradlingcollection.org

The Collection is grateful to Bristol Record Office for their
help in making this publication possible.

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A House at Bristol

By Marcel Breuer

The house of Mr. Crofton E. Gane in Bristol has three living and five bedrooms and was built about ten years ago in a style in keeping with contemporary and local fashion. It was decided to give this house a new appearance and new content and when this work was entrusted to me I had to be quite clear about its possibilities. It should be an effort to incorporate modern ideas and contemporary requirements without considerable structural changes. This meant mainly reconstruction inside with corresponding changes in the equipment.

Such a reconstruction of existing houses will, I believe, become in the near future just as important a question as the building of new houses. It offers an interesting personal task with especially new points of view. This was so particularly in my case since I had to adapt my Continental experience and teaching to modern English conditions. My work was supported by Mr. Gane himself with such understanding and decision that I could not wish for better.

The interior of this "modernised" house now offers a completely changed picture. First of all it was necessary to carry out one or two structural modifications. A new staircase, and with it a new landing, was erected, the sanitary and electrical installation was almost completely renewed; the unused chimneys were reconstructed or eliminated and electrical heating laid on; the romantic small panes of the windows were taken away and larger undivided panes put in their place; walls, ceilings and doors were cleared of dust-catching and ugly projections; the window of the dining room was converted into a glass French

door and so linked up directly with the garden; new floors were put down, etc., etc.

In furnishing, built-in or fixed parts had to be avoided as far as possible. Various pieces of furniture were, however, fixed actually on the walls; bookcases, porcelain cabinets, dressing tables, the writing table in the garden room. This wall furniture is fixed at a comfortable height; it has no feet and no supports which would only give it a complicated appearance and would be a nuisance when the furniture is being removed. In certain items of furniture a new type of wood construction has been demonstrated; smooth light cupboards have been made out of thin sheets with narrow metal edges. In other places wooden stays are used as connecting and stiffening material for thin wooden sections, the structural principle being here the same as that adopted for structures made out of steel.

With the exception of the large living room, all rooms are furnished with aluminium chairs and seats. Those seats are comfortably sprung according

to a new type of construction which allows elastic aluminium alloys (anti-corrodal) to be used. I believe that this furniture represents a new step in the development of metal furniture generally; reduction in weight, a more comfortable pliability in the springs and a sure avoidance of all corrosion, an important characteristic especially in the moist English climate. The silver gleam from the matt-finished aluminium gives a new and pleasant effect in conjunction with the wood and coloured textiles—a note in the music of the new architecture.

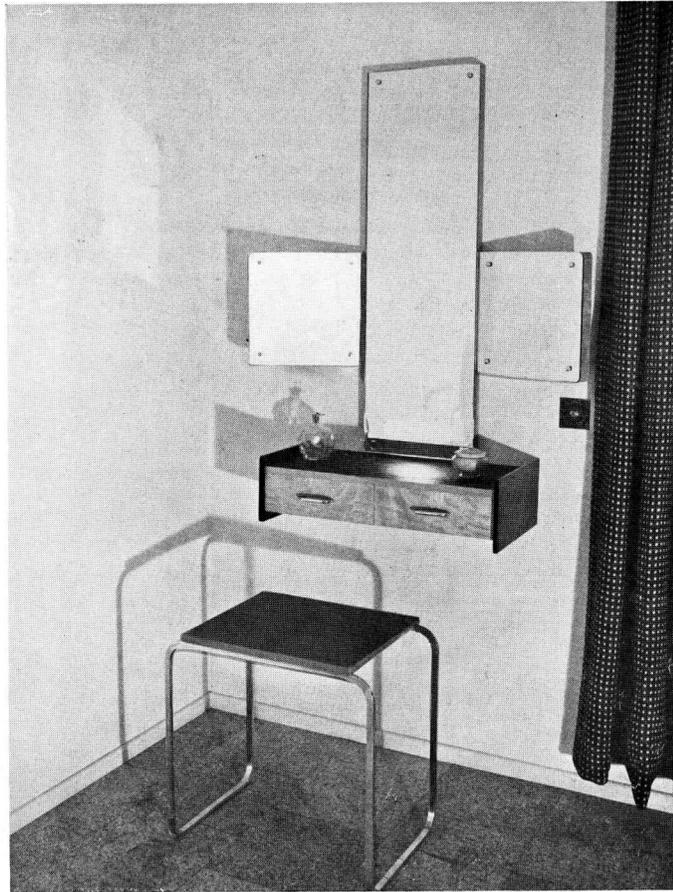
The following description of details may give some idea



A corner of the garden room in sycamore with aluminium chairs



A corner of the lounge. Note the very neat bookshelf, moveable cupboard at the side of the writing table and novel treatment of the fireplace



Two views of the principal bedroom. The furniture is in light brown grained maple and the floor is covered with light coloured cork sheets





A corner of the study-bedroom which has black polished furniture and light grey walls

of the interior. On entering the house, one finds oneself opposite the stair leading up to the landing. In order to avoid any impression of narrowness in the entrance hall, the staircase has been lightly built so that it offers the least obstruction to light and makes the hall larger and more open. The living room and a smaller garden room are laid with light grey carpet material as well as the hall. The walls and roof and ceiling are mainly white with a suggestion of light blue; the living room walls are faced with light maple. The furniture is made of light polished maple and the tops of the nests of tables as well as the tea-table are of light, grey opaque glass. Furnishing textiles in the living room are dark brown and those of the garden room blue.

The lighting installation of the whole house has been designed on the principle of indirect illumination. Reflectors cast their light on the ceilings and the light source itself is never directly visible. Where direct light is needed, for example on the writing table or beside the bed, movable lights are used.

The living rooms of the house are heated by the tubular system, the tubes being placed under the windows. The temperature is thermostatically

controlled. In the large living room there is in addition a fire place which is conceived more as an adjunct to a feeling of comfort in the room than as a source of heat.

The floor of the dining room is covered with Chinese red carpet, the furniture is polished black, the textiles are blue and the walls white.

In the entire upper floor light coloured cork sheets are used for the floorings; the walls are light blue-grey or green or white.

In the principal bedroom the furniture is of light brown grained maple, the textiles are dark brown, the bedspreads of camelhair.

In the daughter's room the furniture is light grey lacquered, the textiles are light red.

In the son's room the furniture is of light deal, textiles are light coloured. It is possible to split up this room by the use of curtains and a wooden partition half way up, so that one part is used for beds and the other as a living and work room.

The study: black polished furniture, grey-brown textiles, light grey walls.

All the work in connection with this scheme was carried out in Bristol mainly by Messrs. P. E. Gane. The aluminium furniture was imported from Switzerland.