

# Building and Design

... by Robin Boyd

## LONDON TO SEE OUR BUILDINGS



In the big exhibition hall of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, Australia will be on show next month—and this is one of the exhibits.

It is a photograph of the Orient Line offices in Sydney, and will be in the "historical" section of the show.

**D**ESIGNED in 1938 by New Zealand-born architect Brian O'Rourke, the building won the British Institute of Architects' bronze medal.

In recent years the RIBA has invited several countries in turn to send exhibitions of their architecture. London has thus been introduced to most of the more important current developments in world building.

The restless experimentation of modern Italy, the conservative rationalism of the Scandinavian countries, and the broken story of Western German modernism (a hiatus between 1933 and 1950) have all been conveyed lately in brilliant displays.

Last year the RIBA asked the Australian Institute of Architects to send a similar exhibition, and this week, after months of preparation, the last of the material for our show is leaving by air.

The bulk of the exhibition was shipped a month ago. It undoubtedly will be the most elaborate and expensively-mounted picture of this country ever presented to England.



**M**AINLY in photographs and diagrams, it attempts to cover the whole broad field of Australian building since the first colonial barracks, from overgrown arched ruins on Norfolk Island to a miners' monument in Kalgoorlie, from long-legged tropical houses to the thick-set stones of Tasmania.

And it sets out to give some account in graphic form of the political, social, geographic and other influences which have produced the background for our modern buildings.

Finally, it will show a wide selection of post-war architecture, leaving the Londoner to decide what we have made of it all.

More than 200 big photographs are being used, about a third of them of current work. The Department of News and Information took many of the pictures and technically directed the show.

Among the non-photographic exhibits are some all-Australian furnishing materials—wool and linen fabrics designed by Eclarte.

The show will conclude with an invitation to English architects to enter the current international competition for the design of Sydney's new Opera House.

Young Australian architects now in London (of

whom there are always many) will make the final adjustments before the show opens on February 28.



**W**ALTER Gropius, the famous German-born architect now living in the USA, will go to London in April to receive from the Queen the Royal Gold Medal for architecture.

This high distinction, annually recommended by the Royal Institute of British Architects, will thus come at last to one of the great constructive rebels of the 20th century.

Gropius visited Australia 18 months ago at the invitation of Sydney's Institute of Architects. He spent some time in Melbourne admiring our 19th century buildings.

Since then his biography by Sigfried Gideon, a distinguished art historian, has been published.

It is available here, but unfortunately will not make much impact. Published in Stuttgart, its text is in German.

In many magnificent illustrations this book shows the extraordinarily consistent development of Gropius, from a rebellious youth in pre-Hitler Germany to the elder statesman of modern architecture which he is today.

In his glass-walled Fagus factory of 1911, his circular theatre of 1931, his slab-skyscrapers of 1939, and many other works, he anticipated by about one generation most of the things by which modern buildings are now popularly known.

After London, Gropius will go on to Germany, for today some of his biggest projects are in the country which, under Nazism, destroyed his early masterpieces.