Shapes of Clay

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SHAPES OF CLAY

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WHEN General Allenby, "the last of the Crusaders," visited San Francisco recently, he was deeply impressed by his first sight of the skyscrapers silhouetted against the clouds. "They remind me of 'the topless towers of Ilium'," he said. "I find them beautiful, these modern towers of Ilium." San Francisco's building code does not limit the height of structures; hence the owner and the architect are free to rear these "topless towers" of beauty on San Francisco's seven times seven hills to the enrichment of the skyline. The fact that most of these noble monuments of business are clothed in terra-cotta has evoked many references to San Francisco as "the terra-cotta city," a phrase anciently applied to Bologna.

The ever-increasing use of terra-cotta throughout the Pacific Coast is a major factor in the beautifying of Western cities and towns. Terra-cotta is a "biddable" medium, yielding exact obedience to the architect's wishes. Its range is illustrated in the following pages. The plasticity of terra-cotta is illustrated too, also its readiness to enter into harmonious relations with other building materials, notably roof tile, face brick, and decorative tile.

The rise of terra-cotta on the Pacific Coast is not a new story, but it is one that is closely related to the growth of Gladding, McBean & Co. What actually constitutes a new story is the amazing progress of decorative tile, and here again Gladding, McBean & Co. is the principal teller of the tale.

With admirable conservatism, many architects were slow at first to apply
decorative tile. They wanted to study its possibilities and its effects before committing themselves to its use. The ceramic studios of Gladding, McBean & Co. have been the study-halls, and our artists supplied the demonstrations. Moving forward with thought and great care, the art of decorative tile has now attained a position on the Pacific Coast that seems to be unshakeable. Beauty always enforces itself in this way.

Just as one terra-cotta skyscraper leads to another and another, so one installation of decorative tile has inspired many more. The great panels in the dining-room of Hotel Del Monte told their lesson of pure art in terms that could not be mistaken. The rotunda of the Los Angeles City Hall won the admiration of the most discriminating critics.

With the presentation here of a decorative-tile installation for the Albert Isham swimming-pool at Sandyland Beach, seven miles south of Santa Barbara, it will readily occur to the reader that decorative tile is making remarkable strides. Here decorative tile actually dominates a beautiful structure. It is the triumph of sheer color, and this is very important for the development of our architecture. Nature painted the Pacific Coast from the mountains to the sea with her most vivid and most glowing tints, but the Pacific Coast man, hitherto, has been unaccountably shy about applying living color in his structures. With the rise of a distinctive Western architecture this is changing, and the latest phenomenon of all is this use of decorative tile. We are showing the courage of our convictions of beauty. We have adapted to our environment the art of Ispahan and Cairo, of Tunis and the Alhambra. The drab and dreary is departing from our vision. This is the outward sign of an inner grace. Homes and other buildings are arising that are worthy of the glorious sky above them, of the purple and golden splendor of the mountains, of the gorgeous variety of our flowers, and of the ocean that bathes our coast. In the judgment of Gladding, McBean & Co., decorative tile crowns our renaissance.
I. ALBERT ISHAM SWIMMING-POOL, SANDYLAND BEACH, CALIFORNIA: George Washington Smith, Architect; Snook & Kenyon, General Contractors. Here decorative tile from the ceramic studios of Gladding, McBean & Co. definitely controls the beauty of a unique structure. In general character the tile derives from Cairo, with strong Persian influences. This is the entrance to the pool.
II. ALBERT ISHAM SWIMMING-POOL, SANDYLAND BEACH, CALIFORNIA: George Washington Smith, Architect; Snook & Kenyon, General Contractors. Here is the pool itself. Side walls and floor are in green tile. The floors and the edge of the pool are of a specially modeled tile of non-slip quality. The wainscot, about seven feet high, is predominantly blue and gold.
III. ALBERT ISHAM SWIMMING-POOL, SANDYLAND BEACH, CALIFORNIA: George Washington Smith, Architect; Snook & Kenyon, General Contractors. Note how richly the decorative tile of the fireplace sets off the tapestry and the lamps of antique design. The decorative motive of this fireplace is Sixteenth-Century Persian, and the inspiration came from the artists of Isfahan.
IV. ALBERT ISHAM SWIMMING-POOL, SANDYLAND BEACH, CALIFORNIA: George Washington Smith, Architect; Snook & Kenyon, General Contractors. This fish panel at the end of the pool is mirrored in the water. The design is modernistic, but the tile technique is Persian. The whole lovely pool, with its appurtenances, is a significant tile achievement of Giadding, McBean & Co.'s ceramic artists.
V. CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, MESA, ARIZONA: Young & Hansen, Architects.

Mormonism attains its highest architectural ascent in this magnificently simple temple that crowns the tableland of Arizona. Here Gladding, McBean & Co. provided a complete investiture of Pulsichrome terra-cotta which has yielded the emotion of classic dignity that the architects sought to convey.
VI. CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, MESA, ARIZONA: Young & Hansen, Architects. The Pulsichrome terra-cotta manufactured by Gladding, McBean & Co. is a warm buff pulsing with pink, a peculiarly lovely color in the hot Arizona sunshine. The pool in the foreground was a happy architectural thought, setting the great structure on an axis of refreshing coolness.
VII. BANK OF ITALY, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA: H. A. Minton, Architect; McDonald & Kahn, General Contractors.
The seven intermediate stories are of buff face brick. All the rest of the building is of warm buff Granitex terra-cotta, completely harmonizing with the brick. The Granitex, of course, is from the kilns of Gladding, McBean & Co. Note the delicate terra-cotta loveliness of the cupola.
VIII. BANK OF ITALY, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA: H. A. Minton, Architect; McDonald & Kahn, General Contractors. Note how the Corinthian columns and the entablature with its rich frieze stand out against the background of the ashlar, casting pleasant shadows. Ashlar and ornament both are of Granitex terra-cotta from the kilns of Gladwing, McBean & Co., Granitex admirably expressing the ideals of a great bank.
IX. DIOCESAN JUNIOR SEMINARY, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA: Albert C. Martin, Architect; Sumner-Sollett Company, General Contractor. This detail picture shows the ornamental treatment of entrances and some window openings. The treatment is in warm Pulichrome terra-cotta, with the ornament in Polychrome. The effect is of Old-World cheerfulness, an architectural tradition for seminaries. Terra-cotta by Gladding, McBean & Co.
X. ALTA PLAZA APARTMENTS, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA: C. A. MEUSSDORFFER, Architect; Clinton Construction Company, General Contractor. Architectural ornament is used here with a bold but disciplined hand, and the result is most alluring. This terra-cotta entrance is of Granitex, of buff color, with a smooth finish. In coöperating to produce an effect like this, Gladding, McBean & Co. finds a special pleasure.
XI. MERCHANTS NATIONAL TRUST AND SAVINGS BANK, Los Angeles, California: Weston & Weston, Architects; W. V. Eaves, General Contractor. A successful combination of tile and brick. The body color of the tile is Venetian red, with cream-white, Persian turquoise blue and Persian cerulean blue. The cornice of brick, tile, and colored tile is beautifully studied for composition and color. A Gladding, McBean & Co. installation.
XII. PACIFIC TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH BUILDING, PIEDMONT, CALIFORNIA: E. V. Cobby, Architect; McDonald & Kahn, General Contractors. The trim is of terra-cotta produced by Gladding, McBean & Co. The body is Granite of buff color, with Polychrome of buff, brown, and blue enamel, with a smooth finish. This is another happy marriage of vivacious terra-cotta with staid and steady brick.
XIII. WILLIAM CAVALIER & CO. BUILDING, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Hugh C. White, Architect; F. A. Muller, General Contractor. This is a sound illustration of terra-cotta applied to the front of a small business structure. There is a note of strength clearly sounded in the two Ionic columns. The terra-cotta is enamel Pulsi-chrome, with a smooth finish, a product of the Gladding, McBean & Co. kilns.
XIV. CALIFORNIA BANK, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA: Walker & Eisen, Architects; Paul E. Wylie, General Contractor. Two Gladding, McBean & Co. products are combined in this branch-bank building. The terra-cotta entrance is of warm Pulsichrome enamel, while the brick is Old Gold Roman, laid with a wide cream joint. Combinations like these are winning more and more favor with owners and architects.
XV. SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA: Albert C. Martin, Architect; Pozzo Construction Company, General Contractor. The polychrome enameled terra-cotta shown in detail here is supplemented and accentuated by face brick of Medium Tan Ruffle. Both materials were produced by Gladding, McBean & Co., and the architectural result of their alliance is a distinctive structure.
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