

# SIGFRIED GIEDION, HISTORIAN, 74, DIES

Architecture Theorist Was  
Professor at Harvard

Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, April 11—Dr. Sigfried Giedion, one of the world's leading architecture historians, died yesterday in Zurich. He would have been 75 years old on Sunday.

Dr. Giedion, who had taught at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was professor of art history at the Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich. He was perhaps best-known for his panoramic study "Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition."

## Student of Wolfflin

A short stocky man, with wavy white hair and eyes glinting behind thick glasses, Dr. Giedion lectured with an animation that often captivated his students.

He had been a student of Dr. Heinrich Wölfflin, the noted art historian, and an associate in Weimar of Dr. Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and later chairman of the department of architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

He was born in the northern Swiss Canton of Aargau on April 14, 1893, the son of John and Bertha Jacobs Giedion.

After receiving a doctorate from the University of Munich, Dr. Giedion became a professor at the University of Zurich. In 1938 he went to Harvard as Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry and spent the war years writing "Space, Time and Architecture," which was based on his lectures as Norton Professor. The first edition was published by Harvard in 1941.

In 1947 Dr. Giedion joined the faculty of the Federal Polytechnic in Zurich, and in the next year Oxford published his "Mechanization Takes Command," a study of mechanization as it influences our environment.

## Biographer of Gropius

In 1950-51 he taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was a visiting professor of architecture at Harvard from 1954 to 1956 and visiting lecturer there frequently until 1964.

His biography "Walter Gropius: Work and Teamwork" was published by Reinhold in 1954.

In 1962 and 1964 Pantheon published in its Bollingen Series Dr. Giedion's "The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art" and "The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Architecture." The second volume was based on his A. W. Mellon Lectures on the fine arts at the Washington National Gallery in 1957.

The work was concerned with the dual concepts of constancy and change in spheres ranging from the creative to the philosophical. The first volume, on paleolithic art, broke with the 19th-century materialistic approach and discussed the art in terms of abstraction, transparency and simultaneity as revealed anew in contemporary art.

In this volume he wrote: "The complete freedom and independence of vision of primeval art has never since been attained. It was its distinguishing characteristic. In our sense, there was no up and no down, no above and no below. Whether an animal appeared in a vertical position or in any other position was irrelevant to the eye of prehistoric man. Nor was there a clear distinction or separation of one object from another. . . . Violent juxtapositions in size as well as in time were accepted as a matter of course. All was displayed within an eternal present, the perpetual influx of today, yesterday and tomorrow."

The second volume dealt with Egyptian and Sumerian art and architecture. His thesis was that during these civilizations the problem of constancy and change flared up with an intensity unknown in any other period in history and resolved eventually into the first architectural space concept: the automatic psychic recording of visual environment.

Dr. Giedion had been general secretary of the International Congress of Modern Architecture since its founding in Switzerland in 1928.

In 1963 he attended a shipboard conference near Athens, after which 34 scientists and scholars called for the development of a synthetic science—ekistics, the study of human communities.

He was a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Survivors include his widow, Carola Giedion-Welcker, a writer on modern art and sculpture.