



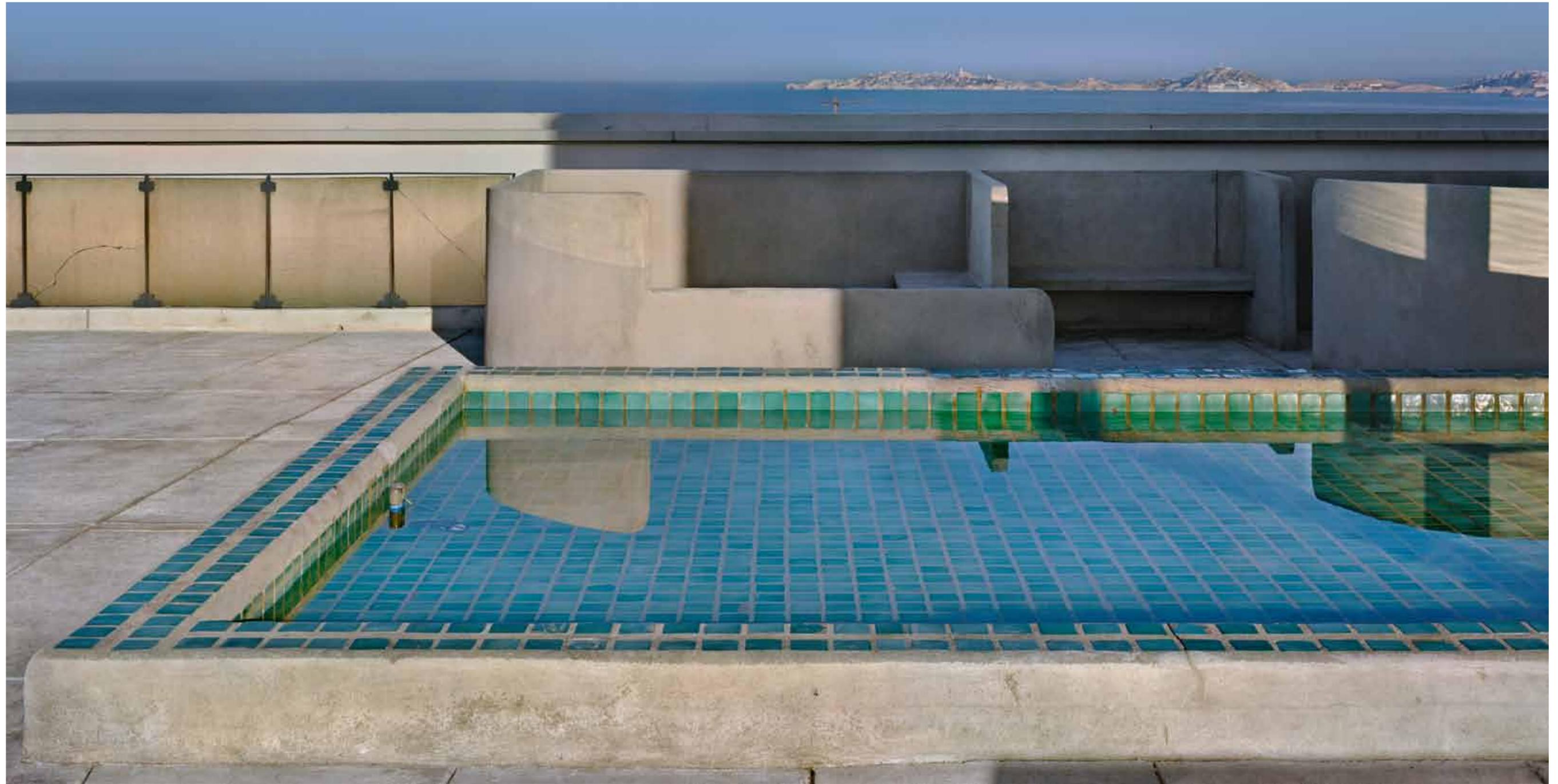
LE CORBUSIER

An Atlas of Modern Landscapes













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Jean-Louis Cohen

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Foreword



Hyundai Card is proud to sponsor The Museum of Modern Art's first major exhibition on the prodigious oeuvre of Le Corbusier, one of the most influential figures in the field of modern architecture.

Le Corbusier did not merely design masterpieces but also upended existing architectural notions and formulated principles still critical for today's practice. His progressive insight and groundbreaking approach to design were the hallmarks of his career, and these qualities are in line with the philosophy of Hyundai Card. As Korea's leading credit card issuer, Hyundai Card constantly challenges convention with innovative ideas. Hyundai Card is more than just a finance company, interested only in numbers; it is also an enthusiastic promoter of design and art, finding ways to embrace them in different areas of our business, from designing unique credit cards to building a design library for our members to enjoy.

As the sponsor of this landmark exhibition, we sincerely hope that *Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes* will promote innovation, allowing the legacy of Le Corbusier and his thought-provoking work to continue into the future.

The work of Le Corbusier features in the earliest installation shots of the young Museum of Modern Art. The inaugural architecture exhibition, in 1932, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, placed the model of the Villa Savoye front and center in the gallery, the keystone to an exhibition that launched the Department of Architecture and spurred a lively and ongoing discussion on how to bring architecture into the Museum. Le Corbusier, in both his person and his work, would reappear at the Museum on multiple occasions. Yet as Jean-Louis Cohen, guest curator of *Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes*, describes in this volume, this relationship has always been partial and incomplete.

It is only fitting, then, that Le Corbusier should return in an exhibition that not only embraces his astonishing range of creative practices—watercolors, films, sketchbooks, paintings, found objects, furniture, and models—but also highlights the geographic extension of his designs and built work across his six-decade career. An atlas both in the structure of its presentation and in its organization of a new interpretive territory, the range of material in the galleries is matched by the catalogue's equally impressive group of scholars, curators, and critics. For the generations of students and practitioners of architecture who have grown up on Le Corbusier's work, as well as for those who will first encounter him here, this is an invaluable opportunity to reassess the significance of this modern visionary to contemporary practice.

In its ambitious constellation of research, planning, and preparation, this project is indebted to the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris. We extend sincere thanks to its director, Michel Richard, and to Isabelle Godineau, Head of Archives and Collections. The Fondation has graciously opened its archive and made available the full breadth of its remarkable collection. The overwhelming majority of the works included here, as well as in the accompanying exhibition, are due to this generosity. The Fondation has also been a judicious collaborator and enthusiastic advocate during the long development of this project.

I commend Jean-Louis Cohen, Sheldon H. Solow Professor in the History of Architecture, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; and Barry Bergdoll, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at MoMA, for their curatorial vision and unflagging efforts in realizing this undertaking. I am grateful to them and to their many colleagues at the Museum and elsewhere for their contributions. On behalf of the Trustees and the staff of the Museum, I would especially like to thank Hyundai Card for its major support of this exhibition. Additional generous support is provided by Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III and by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

Le Corbusier was introduced to New York audiences in *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, the inaugural architecture exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, in 1932. In this exhibition he was identified as a leading proponent of the International Style; indeed, he would soon be one of the rare architects to have built on three continents before the advent of commercial intercontinental jet service. By 1932 he had already designed or built projects in France, Switzerland, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Tunisia, and his influence had been in the ascendant in South America since his 1929 trip to Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. This influence only deepened with his role in designing the Ministry of Education and Health in Rio de Janeiro (1936) and with the construction of the house for Dr. Curutchet in La Plata, Argentina (1949–54). The conquest of two more continents followed. In 1952, with the vast project at Chandigarh, he began a new and profound engagement with a landscape unlike any he had experienced to date, and he was subsequently able to draw on his decades-long studies of exhibition space in designs for the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo (1954–59). And in 1962, thirty years after Le Corbusier's introduction to American audiences at MoMA, he saw the opening of his first and only building in North America, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University. Only Australia and Antarctica were never on the itineraries of this globe-traversing architect, although the former has not been beyond the reach of his influence.¹

Yet already in 1932, in *The International Style*, the popular book published at the same time as MoMA's exhibition, there were unmistakable hints that his buildings did not always conform fully to Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's definition of the new style, nor to its suggestion of a universalist architectural aesthetic, unvaried by site or locale. If the Villas Stein–de Monzie (1926–28) and Savoye (1928–31) seemed near-perfect embodiments of Hitchcock and Johnson's three points of the International Style, as well as of Le Corbusier's Five Points, the load-bearing rough masonry walls of the Villa de Mandrot (1929–31) at Le Pradet were clearly earthbound, related to the Mediterranean vernacular of nearby farm buildings on the southern coast of France. And the roof terrace of the apartment for Charles de Beistegui (1929–31), off the Champs-Élysées, was a confirmation of Le Corbusier's claim that "the outside is always an inside," as well as an evocative composition of built and planted forms set in a very calculated and unexpected relationship with monuments on the horizon, including the Arc de Triomphe at the head of Paris's grandest axis. Neither at ground nor sky level did Le Corbusier create an architecture divorced from its

landscape, even if his practice and views had moved quite far from the mnemonic abstractions of nature and the integrated site plans of his early adherence to the *style sapin* (fir tree style) of his native La Chaux-de-Fonds.²

To organize a new generation of research, analysis, and interpretation of Le Corbusier's practice using the metaphor and, in part, the form of an atlas, as we have done here, is not, however, to return to the notion of an international practice, either in the sense of the International Style—pitted polemically as it was against the growing attractions of regionalism in the arts in Depression-era America—or in the sense of the last twenty years of globalizing practices, in particular of so-called starchitects, whose signature branded forms are intended to be recognized no matter where they are set down. Rather it is to acknowledge a profound relationship between practice and place in Le Corbusier's life and work, one that entails nothing less than his concept of vision, of the way he looked at the world on journeys first by traditional means, across the Balkans to Greece and Turkey, and then in the airplanes that for him were as much an extension of his retina as a means of conveyance. Airplanes were an integral part of the way he conceived of his buildings as instruments for crafting both optical and bodily relationships to landscapes; the notion of the landscape encompassed everything from the physical occupation of an interior to the projected occupation of an exterior framed by any number of devices, from the *fenêtre en longueur* (ribbon window) to cuts through walls or hedges that frame a larger exterior, a distant view, or distant horizon into something easily apprehended by the eye and the mind.

And while these techniques remain integral to a set of compositional strategies that Le Corbusier developed over decades, they were not invariable in his adaptation of them to specific places and specific cultures. What is revealed in this atlas—which is as much a survey of the last twenty years of revisionist thinking, by scholars who have devoted themselves to retracing the contours of Le Corbusier's practice in different venues—is the extent to which Le Corbusier's travels and artistic practice were not to be dissociated. From the time of his *voyage d'Orient* in 1911 to his discovery of the landscapes and cultures of Chandigarh and Ahmedabad, which are vastly different one from another and would be the venues for a substantial portion of his post–World War II built production, Le Corbusier was engaged not with the ways in which things are similar around the world but rather with the ways in which they are distinct, with layers of culture that resonate even in worlds in mutation from the forces of modernization. Having abandoned the "pack donkey's way," by rejecting the

¹ "Le Corbusier and Australia: Reaction and Reception in the Antipodes," a research project, is currently underway at the University of Queensland. See www.uq.edu.au/atch/le-corbusier-and-australia.

² See Helen Bieri Thomson, ed., *nouveau à La Chaux-de-Fonds* (Paris: Le Style sapin: Une Expérience Art Somogy, 2006).

nostalgia clinging to the city-design philosophy of Camillo Sitte that had so infatuated him as a young architect, Le Corbusier would find his greatest opportunity for building in the Punjab, where the donkey was one of the prime instruments of construction. His view of the landscape and of architecture's place in it could not but be affected.

This atlas confirms, then, a major realignment currently underway in the study of the masters of modern architecture, both in the interwar and postwar years, one in which place, cultural specificity, and attention to landscape have displaced the idea of modern universals. Already by 1952 Hitchcock felt some misgiving about the polemical oversimplification of the International Style, and he admitted that the concept could not accommodate the shifts in Le Corbusier's subsequent evolution; a few years after the Museum hosted a summit, in 1948, on the issue of what was happening to modern architecture, he wrote in a reflection on the twentieth anniversary of the 1932 show, "No one has done more than Le Corbusier ever since to extend and loosen the sanctions of the International Style."³ But even here Hitchcock remained within the logic of the taxonomic definition of style inherited from nineteenth-century architectural history, which would remain his intellectual frame for his entire career, and within the logic of the architectural object as a largely autonomous work of spatial art. Indeed, what is striking about the floor plans provided for every building reproduced in *The International Style*, which in countless editions has served several generations of twentieth-century readers and architecture students, is not only that all are redrawn and simplified for greater clarity but also that they are systematically isolated from their sites.

A decade ago, to explore a substantial revision of our understanding of the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, another of the great so-called form-givers of modern architecture, Terence Riley and I organized *Mies in Berlin*, an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, which contextualized the work of his Berlin years, from 1905 to 1933, in its German setting.⁴ This meant not simply considering the architect in the cultural milieu of the German capital at its great moment of intellectual and artistic experimentation. It also entailed situating his designs, both realized and proposed, in the specific urban and suburban landscapes for which they were created, beginning with the earliest neo-Biedermeier villas in Babelsberg, where both Mies and Le Corbusier worked in Peter Behrens's studio. Also in 2001 Sarah Williams Goldhagen published the first major monographic study of Louis I. Kahn to break with the formalist reading of his work and understand the stakes of place and culture in a practice that spanned from Philadelphia to Bangladesh. Goldhagen identified Kahn's "situated modernism," thereby making clear that to speak of even the most formally rigorous projects of twentieth-century modernist architecture in relationship to landscape was not simply to speak of the formal relationships between buildings and gardens, although these had often been overlooked in the consideration of modern architecture as paradigmatic and transportable rather than culturally contingent.⁵ Le Corbusier had passed through the very culture of the architectonic garden that was to have such a profound influence, in the same year, on the young Mies's early residential designs in Wilhelmine Berlin. And like Le Corbusier, Mies had a lifelong interest in cultivating a relationship between abstraction and place that could make buildings into frames for a different kind of modern awareness or even consciousness.⁶ Both house and garden in the remarkable Villa Favre-Jacot (1912–13) in Le Locle, Switzerland, are a direct working-out of this culture, absorbed in Behrens's office and in traveling through Germany and Austria. But he went beyond the tight interweaving of

³ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "The International Style Twenty Years After," *Architectural Record* 110, no. 2 (August 1951): 89–98. Reprinted in Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International*

Style, rev. ed. (1932; New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), p. 250.

⁴ Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll, eds., *Mies in Berlin* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2001).

⁵ Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁶ See also Christophe Girod, ed., *Mies als Gärtner* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2011).

interior and exterior rooms to an understanding of the building as a type of viewing device for the landscape beyond it, a means, therefore, of making the landscape into an object of contemplation in ways quite distinct from the picturesque tradition he had absorbed in his student days under Charles L'Eplattenier, in La Chaux-de-Fonds.

These techniques, echoed as well in Le Corbusier's use of photography and film, soon merged with those most modern forms of capturing the landscape, both static and moving, of recording the changing haptic and optic relationships between viewer and viewed.⁷ The experience and cultural meaning of landscape was in many ways as central to Le Corbusier's vision of design and his conception of architecture and cities as it was to architects more commonly associated with the organic, such as Alvar Aalto or Frank Lloyd Wright. As landscape historian Caroline Constant has noted, in a compendium of two decades of essays that attempt to reweave the historiographically frayed entwining of modern architecture and landscape, "Indeed, the notion of genius loci was crucial even to an iconoclast such as Le Corbusier. . . . Unlike his approach to architecture and urbanism, which evolved as his radical a priori theoretical assumptions were tested through his built work, Le Corbusier's approach to landscape evolved a posteriori from practice. Thus, despite the militant tone of his utopian urban pronouncements, Le Corbusier carefully calibrated his building designs to their specific locales."⁸

What this atlas contains, then, is both a tour of Le Corbusier's international activities and an accounting of the diverse and sometimes contradictory relationships he developed with places, from his native alpine birthplace to his refuge on the Mediterranean coast, a voyage that took him from mountains to sea, from a snowbound climate to one of year-round vegetation. But this was not solely a European journey, for it was in Chandigarh more than anywhere else (other than perhaps the pilgrimage church at Ronchamp) that Le Corbusier developed, in the final decade and a half of his practice, a more profound notion of the architect as one whose work encompasses the relationship of people to physical environment. The aim of this "atlas of modern landscapes" is to revisit some of the most influential works of twentieth-century architecture and expand our understanding of them, by both embedding them in specific geographies and relating them to the common horizons that were central to Le Corbusier's experience of the world and the frames of experience he sought to embody.

⁷ Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

⁸ Caroline Constant, *The Modern Architectural Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 20.



Opposite: Le Corbusier in an apartment of the Unité d'Habitation, Marseille (detail). c. 1952. Photograph by Sem Presser. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC L4-1-111

If there is a blind spot in the astonishingly vast literature dedicated to Le Corbusier, it is certainly his relationship to landscape, which provided him with scenes to observe, stimulation for invention, horizons against which to set his projects, and a fertile field for metaphors. Even though few architects have been as extensively studied—in all aspects of his production, from buildings and city plans to paintings, drawings, and publications—and his abundant correspondence has revealed the complexity of his thought and the contradictions between his public persona and inner reflections, stereotypes about him persist, often the result of his own rhetoric.

The implementation of his new urbanism, of which he styled himself the prophet, by lesser architects and anonymous institutions has made it synonymous with monotony and even state-sponsored oppression. Le Corbusier made clear that “city planning and architecture can bring sites and landscapes into the city or make them into a feature of the city itself, a decisive feature of plastic awareness and sensitivity,” yet certain critics refuse to see anything in his work other than an aggressive indifference toward landscape and gardens.¹ This attitude is but one expression of the totalitarian ambition still attributed to him, such as this near-caricature in Jan Woudstra’s dismissive analysis: “Le Corbusier’s ideas about landscape were simplistic and obsessively directed towards the control of the living environment irrespective of people’s needs, without sympathy and sensitivity towards people, places and nature.”² But such a statement is nothing new; the diatribes of Alexandre de Senger, as well as Swiss and German reactionaries who ranted against so-called nomadic architecture, without anchor in soil or region, demonstrate that this type of discourse goes as far back as the 1930s.³

None of the large exhibitions of Le Corbusier’s work over the last twenty-five years, from those organized at the Centre Georges Pompidou and Hayward Gallery for the centennial of his birth, in 1987, to *The Art of Architecture*, a traveling exhibition that began in 2007, have meaningfully addressed the issue of landscape.⁴ Certain isolated authors have analyzed its role, often in relation to specific projects, such as Caroline Constant on Chandigarh and Bruno Reichlin (the first scholar to consider specific buildings by Le Corbusier as machines

¹ Le Corbusier, *Looking at City Planning*, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), p. 67. Originally published as *Manière de penser l’urbanisme* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Éditions de l’Architecture d’aujourd’hui, 1946).

² Jan Woudstra, “The Corbusian Landscape: Arcadia or No Man’s Land?,” *Garden History* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 150.

³ See Alexandre de Senger, *Die Brandfackel Moskaus* (Zürzach, Switzerland: Verlag Kaufhaus, 1931).

⁴ In addition, no entries on landscape appear in the 1987 *Encyclopédie*, nor

was there a section on it in the exhibition it accompanied, an oversight for which I assume full responsibility, having acted as advisor for both, alongside Bruno Reichlin. Jacques Lucan, ed., *Le Corbusier, 1887–1965: Une Encyclopédie* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987).

for viewing the landscape) on the Villa Le Lac, in Corseaux, and sometimes in a broader context, such as Beatriz Colomina; there is also Dorothée Imbert, who has discussed the gardens of the houses of the 1920s and '30s.⁵ With the exception of these studies—along with an issue of *Casabella* on Le Corbusier's strategies of observation, a symposium on his relationship to nature, organized by the Fondation Le Corbusier in 1991, and a provocative issue of *Massilia*, the journal of Corbusian studies, devoted to landscape in 2004—this dimension of his work has remained largely unexamined.⁶ His preoccupation with landscape is nevertheless present, although so deeply intertwined with his architectural, urbanistic, pictorial, and literary work that it has become as invisible as Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter.

It is constructive at this point to specify how we will address the idea of landscape in this volume, both in its accepted sense as well as in terms of what it meant for Le Corbusier. The term "landscape," in use in the Anglophone world since the end of the sixteenth century, denotes both the physical and visible form of a specific outdoor space and its graphic, pictorial, or photographic representation; it was strictly rural in origin but today it is understood to be nonspecific. In his *Court traité du paysage* (Short treatise on landscape) (1997), the philosopher Alain Roger underlined the intimate connection between the two meanings, demonstrating that landscape resulted from the cultural construct of *artialisaton*.⁷ Using this word, borrowed from the philosopher of aesthetics Charles Lalo and, further upstream, from Michel de Montaigne, Roger argued that landscape was impossible without representation. The fertility of the term in Le Corbusier's work stems from this ambiguity, in which many semantic meanings overlap. The relationship of building to landscape is manifest in some of his work, but in a large portion of his production it is latent, not the central focus of the project. He did not theorize explicitly about its role, but he was aware of the writings of French geographers such

⁵ Caroline Constant, "From the Virgilian Dream to Chandigarh: Le Corbusier and the Modern Landscape," *Architectural Review* 181, no. 1 (January 1987): 66–72; Reichlin, "The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window: The Perret–Le Corbusier Controversy," *Daidalos*, no. 13 (1984): 64–78; Reichlin's essay on page 64 in this volume; Beatriz Colomina, "Vers une architecture médiatique," in Alexander von Vege sack, et al., eds., *Le Corbusier: The Art of Architecture* (Weil am Rhein, Germany: Vitra

Design Museum, 2007), pp. 247–73; and Dorothée Imbert, *The Modernist Garden in France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
⁶ See in particular Giuliano Gresleri, "Viaggio e scoperta, descrizione e trascrizione," Jean-Pierre Giordani, "Visioni geografiche," Pierre Saddy, "Le ricchezze della natura," and Bruno Pedretti, "Il vole dell'etica," *Casabella* 61, nos. 531–32 (1987): 8–33, 42–51, 74–85; Claude Prelorenzo, ed., *Le Corbusier et la nature: Actes des rencontres* (Paris: Éditions de La Villette

and Fondation Le Corbusier, 2004); and Xavier Monteys, ed., *Massilia 2004bis: Le Corbusier y el paisaje* (2004).
⁷ Alain Roger, *Court traité du paysage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 16. See also Roger, ed., *La Théorie du paysage en France (1974–1994)* (Seysssel, France: Champ Vallon, 1995).
⁸ Paul Vidal de la Blache, *Principes de géographie humaine* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1921); Jean Brunhes, *La Géographie humaine: Essai de classification positive, principes et exemples* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1912).



Fig. 1 Le Corbusier on the building site of the Secretariat, Chandigarh. c. 1955. Photograph by Lucien Hervé. From Willy Boesiger, *Le Corbusier et son atelier, rue de Sèvres 35: Œuvre complète, 1952–1957* (Zurich: Girsberger, 1957), p. 7

as Paul Vidal de la Blache and Jean Brunhes, and he maintained an intuitive and open relationship to its multiple significations (fig. 1).⁸

Le Corbusier approached the question of landscape from diverse angles. Observation always came first, as it was through vision that he usually encountered landscape; he would define himself in his last book, *Mise au point* (1966), as "an ass, but with a sharp eye."⁹ Next came notation, the capturing of landscape, most often in drawings but also in words, a skill developed in his correspondence with the Swiss writer and art historian William Ritter, and in photographs and, briefly, on film.¹⁰ Landscapes were recorded through changing artistic patterns, from the Ruskinian paintings of Charles L'Eplattenier, which shaped his views of mountains during excursions in the Jura, to the Post-Impressionist visions of Paul Signac, which guided him through Istanbul, and the works he saw during his tours of European museums, which inspired his perception of Paris as a fantastic setting, rendered almost hallucinatory in his drawings. As he continued to explore Europe and the world from Paris, the instrument of *artialisaton* drifted toward the photographic, although Le Corbusier ceased taking pictures around 1914, except for a brief episode in the mid-1930s.¹¹ Instead he amassed a considerable collection of postcards of landscapes, the effect of which on his reflections has incidentally never been fully accounted for. Finally, his lifelong observation of landscapes led to countless aphorisms and illuminating autobiographical accounts.

It was from these observations that he developed his building projects and city plans. The former took into account not only the siting of buildings and their immediate environments, most notably the gardens that surrounded them, but also the distant horizons onto which they opened, transforming territories into landscapes that responded to the machine age, of which Le Corbusier was determined to be the great interpreter. Thus Le Corbusier developed a notion of landscape that included both the microscopic scale of a building's immediate environment and the small landscapes that it created or sustained, such as terraces, and the macroscopic scale of urban ensembles and large terrains.

The principle of the atlas adopted here also deserves some clarification. The idea of a Corbusian atlas can be understood in its most literal sense, as a mapping of places lived, observed, drawn, designed, and built by Le Corbusier, to complement the thematic

⁹ Le Corbusier, *The Final Testament of Père Corbu: A Translation and Interpretation of "Mise au point,"* ed. and trans. Ivan Žaknić (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 88. Originally published as *Mise au point*

(Paris: Éditions Forces vives, 1966).
¹⁰ See *Le Corbusier, William Ritter: Correspondance croisée*, ed. Marie-Jeanne Dumont (Paris: Éditions du Linteau, 2013).

¹¹ See Tim Benton, "Le Corbusier's Secret Photographs," in Nathalie Herschdorfer and Lada Umstätter, eds., *Le Corbusier and the Power of Photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), pp. 30–35.



Fig. 2 Project for a Dom-ino housing scheme, Messina, Italy. 1916. Perspective of a street. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 20⁷/₁₆ x 40³/₁₆" (51.9 x 102 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 30288

and biographical survey carried out by the *Encyclopédie* of 1987.¹² His global practice of urbanism and architecture, along with his constant travels to places increasingly distant from Europe, resulted in a personal cartography assembled in the form of the thousands of postcards that both situated his projects and recorded his trips. D'Alembert's definition, in the "Atlas" entry of the *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751), two hundred years after the mathematician and geographer Mercator first used the word, in 1585, could also apply to Le Corbusier: "This term was given to the collection of geographic maps of all the known parts of the world either because we see on a map the parts of the world as if we were standing at the summit of Mount Atlas, described by the Ancients, and viewed as the highest point on the globe, or because maps, so to say, carry the world, as Atlas did in the myth."¹³ Le Corbusier flew higher than the mountains of North Africa but was invested in projects forming the bedrock of the modern world.

The atlas brings additional figures to mind, such as anatomical or surgical atlases. It is true that Le Corbusier often used metaphors grounded in medicine, likening cities to circulatory systems, recommending surgery to cure them of their ills, developing an anatomical, pathological, and clinical atlas through his analyses and proposals for urban areas. The atlas also evokes the images that Le Corbusier never ceased accumulating—photographs, images clipped from magazines and newspapers, alongside the production of his own drawings—and assembling into visual narratives, lectures, and book chapters, from *Vers une architecture (Toward an Architecture)* (1923) to *Aircraft* (1935) and *La Ville radieuse (The Radiant City)* (1935). The screens and pages on which Le Corbusier assembled and published his press clippings, cutout images, photographs, sketches, and geometric drawings echo another great enterprise undertaken at precisely the same time: the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, created between 1927 and 1929 by the Hamburg art historian Aby Warburg, in which Georges Didi-Huberman has perceived a project for "sampling the chaos," following Baudelaire's description of Francisco de Goya.¹⁴ Finally, it is hardly excessive to evoke the mythological figure of Atlas to describe the activities of a man who shouldered epic endeavors to transform the world. His work, as the texts of the present atlas propose, can therefore be read geographically, topographically, clinically, or simply in the realm of images. I aim here to address the types of landscape that extend across the various areas of Le Corbusier's production and to relate his projects to his writings, which, depending on the case, establish or retroactively validate them.

¹² Lucan, ed. *Le Corbusier, 1887–1965: Une Encyclopédie*. des sciences, des arts et des métiers, vol. 1 (Paris, 1751), p. 819. Translations, unless otherwise noted, by Genevieve Hendricks.

¹³ Jean le Rond d'Alembert, "Atlas," in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné*

¹⁴ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet: L'Œil de l'histoire 3* (Paris: Minuit, 2011).

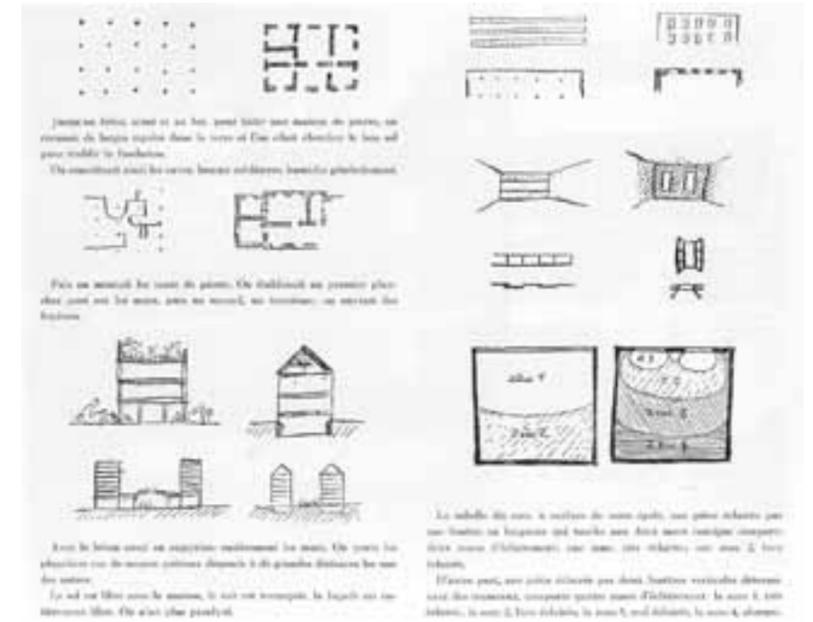


Fig. 3 "Five Points of a New Architecture." 1927. From Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret: Œuvre complète, 1910–1929* (Zurich: Girsberger, 1937), p. 127

Generic and Specific

André Malraux alluded to Le Corbusier's adversaries at his funeral, in 1965, when he said in his eulogy that no other architect had been "for so long, so continuously insulted."¹⁵ These adversaries continue to attack him for his indifference to the siting of his projects. It is true that he developed generic projects that could be inserted into nonspecific contexts, yet the buildings developed from 1914 onward, such as the Maisons Monol, Citrohan, and Loucheur; the Unité d'Habitation; the Musée à Croissance Illimitée (Museum of unlimited growth); and the Dom-ino housing scheme, almost always referred to a site, often idealized. In addition, his urban plans, such as the Ville Contemporaine de Trois Millions d'Habitants (Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants), the Ville Radieuse, and the Cité Linéaire Industrielle (Industrial linear city), although presented as having universal applications, actually had their origins in specific settings.

The division of Le Corbusier's work into the projects that are specific to their sites and those that are not, anticipating the dichotomy dear to Robert Smithson, is thereby largely artificial.¹⁶ The Dom-ino housing scheme, designed initially for sites in northern France devastated during the German offensive of 1914, was also proposed for the reconstruction of Messina, Italy, which had been leveled by an earthquake in 1908 (fig. 2).¹⁷ The geometry of the Ville Radieuse (1930) was the result of Le Corbusier's responses to a questionnaire sent by the Municipality of Moscow and was developed in precise relation to the territory; although the project was meant to destroy the essence of the city, it is nevertheless anchored in Moscow's material features. In proposing these designs Le Corbusier envisioned their application in a specific situation. As such, his entries for competitions in the 1930s, for the cities of Geneva, Antwerp, and Stockholm, are deconstructed versions of the Ville Radieuse's theoretical scheme, with the constituent elements mobilized specifically for those new terrains. In the interchange between theoretical and situated projects, the generic and the specific mutually support one another.

It is striking that out of his Five Points of a New Architecture (fig. 3)—formulated in 1927 on the occasion of the Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition organized by the Deutscher

¹⁵ André Malraux, funeral oration for Le Corbusier, Paris, September 1965. Published in *Le Miroir des limbes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 987.

¹⁶ Robert Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 364–65.

¹⁷ For a convincing interpretation of drawing FLC 30288, of the Dom-ino project for Messina, see Marida Talamona "Dom-ino Italia," in Talamona, ed., *L'Italia di Le Corbusier* (Milan: Electa, 2012), pp. 163–73.

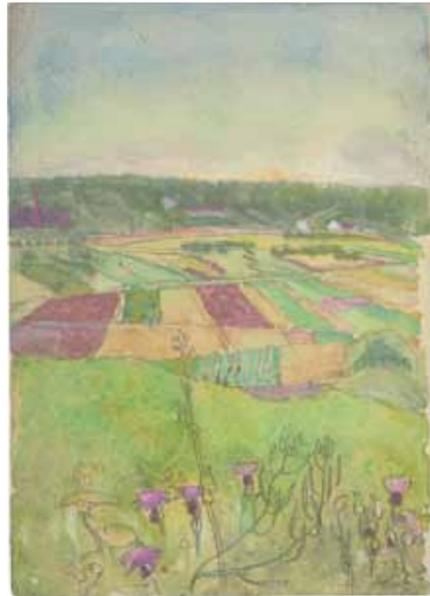


Fig. 4 Landscape with flowers and fields. 1908. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 8¹/₈ x 5¹³/₁₆" (20.7 x 14.8 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 1752

Werkbund in Stuttgart—which can be understood as a rhetorical strategy for pretending that architecture had become autonomous thanks to the development of reinforced concrete, three points bear directly on the question of landscape. In *L'Architecture vivante* in 1927, Le Corbusier related two of the three—the *pilotis* and the roof terrace—to the landscape: "The house is in the air, far from the ground; the garden passes under the house; the garden is also on top of the house, on the roof."¹⁸ As for the ribbon window, which pitted him against the Parisian architect Auguste Perret, who favored the vertical, its foremost characteristic is the panoramic view it offers. Two of the principal dimensions of Le Corbusier's relationship to landscape are thus accounted for in this theoretical formulation. Landscape is both the site where the building is placed and the site onto which it looks, and therefore it deals both with small- and large-scale considerations.

Itinerant Observations

Over the course of six decades, beginning with his early education at the École d'Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Le Corbusier pursued an intense interest in the world's landscapes. L'Eplattenier, his first mentor, did not limit his teachings to working in the industrial arts or reading John Ruskin; he instructed his students through the study of nature during excursions to the tops of mountains. In 1950 his former pupil would recall, "[I] studied nature under an excellent master; [I] observed natural phenomena in a place far from the city, in the mountains of the High Jura. . . . Nature is order and law, unity and diversity without end, subtlety, harmony and strength."¹⁹ He had been more cautious in *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (*The Decorative Art of Today*) (1925) when he noted the same master's advice: "Don't treat nature like the landscapists who show us only its appearance. Study its causes, forms and vital development, and synthesize them in the creation of *ornaments*."²⁰ The many drawings he realized in the Jura, followed by those from his travels in Italy and the Orient and eventually Paris and other French regions, clearly reveal, however, that he remained attached to the appearance of landscape (fig. 4).

Ritter, his second mentor, continued Jeanneret's education by guiding him toward Germany and Eastern Europe, requesting regular correspondence on his discoveries in the form of letters and sketches, and directing his attention to vernacular culture. The contribution

¹⁸ Le Corbusier, "Où en est l'architecture," *L'Architecture vivante* 5 (Autumn–Winter 1927): 19.

¹⁹ Le Corbusier, *The Modulor* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 25. Originally

published as *Le Modulor* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Éditions de l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1950).

²⁰ Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, trans. James Dunnett

(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 194. Originally published as *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1925).



Fig. 5 Map of Athens in the early twentieth-century from the Baedeker guide used by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret during his 1911 journey to the East. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC J144

of his third mentor, Perret, would not be limited to construction techniques in reinforced concrete or suggestions to read Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and Adolf Loos; the discovery of the sight of Paris from the heights of the terrace at 25bis rue Franklin, where Perret lived and worked, played a fundamental role in Le Corbusier's urban thinking, embedding in him the idea of high-rises that surveyed the ground. His fourth and final mentor, the painter Amédée Ozenfant, also shaped his way of looking at Paris and encouraged him to begin painting in oil; the landscape exerts a partial presence in some of these works. Moreover, Ozenfant introduced him to automobile travel, thus bringing about the rupture between the viewpoint of the pedestrian, witnessed in Jeanneret's earliest sketchbooks, and a new perception enabled by speed.

Attentive to both the grand landscapes of mountains and coastlines as well as to those of the city, Le Corbusier accrued his observations over the years, nourishing his written discourse with his impressions and employing multiple mediums. These included photography, a brief use of film, and, above all, drawing, filling the pages of the pocket sketchbooks that provide a true record of his travels around the world. With the same authority that he announced new ways of designing buildings and cities, he presented himself as a guide for his readers and listeners, as if the "eyes that do not see," evoked in *Vers une architecture*, must be opened to unknown or misunderstood places.²¹ This posture of unveiling took on an epic dimension in Le Corbusier's lectures and narratives that outlined in a few words or traits his interpretation of a landscape discovered through various modes of travel, as he would do on his return from South America, in *Précisions* (*Precisions*)

²¹ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007),

pp. 145–91. Originally published as *Vers une architecture* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1923).



Fig. 6 Acropolis, Athens (detail). 1923. Layout sketches for Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (1923). Ink on paper, sheet: 8¼ x 10⅝" (21 x 27 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC B2-15-88.

(1930): "Each city I visit appears to me under its own light. I feel certain needs, I set myself an appropriate line of conduct for my public."²² He developed an almost tour-guide style rhetoric, perhaps inspired by his familiarity with Baedeker and the Blue Guides, used religiously during his youthful travels (fig. 5), and presented himself as an authority on each city he visited, teaching a lesson to its inhabitants, as he did in the Latin American capitals, Moscow, and New York.

Landscape-Types and Memory

Distinct temporalities governed Le Corbusier's response to landscape. One is that of the site barely glimpsed, corresponding to a single moment, although the experience might subsequently be perpetuated or drawn out in writing. These snapshots constituted a background in montage, a set of reflections that fueled his early discoveries and accompanied him all his life. The architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri has correctly identified the contrast between "machine and memory" in Le Corbusier's work; I propose to identify the machine of memory that this work, in its deployment, constitutes.²³ By recording landscapes both visually and verbally, he could repeatedly reuse the places that moved him, transforming them into what could be called "landscape-types," after his "object-types." These landscape-types were often formed through memories that could be said to be Le Corbusier's primal scenes, after Sigmund Freud's term for the shock suffered by children witnessing or imagining the apparent violence of sexual relations between their parents.²⁴ An analogue of this violence can be found in the dominating relationship between built structure and natural site, something Jeanneret did not fail to observe nor, once he became Le Corbusier, to reproduce in his own projects. He did not shy away from erotic metaphors in his observations of the urban body, as when he noted, for example, in 1934 that Algiers, which he left by sea, professionally frustrated, was "a magnificent body, supple-hipped and full-breasted, but covered by the sickening scabs of a skin disease."²⁵

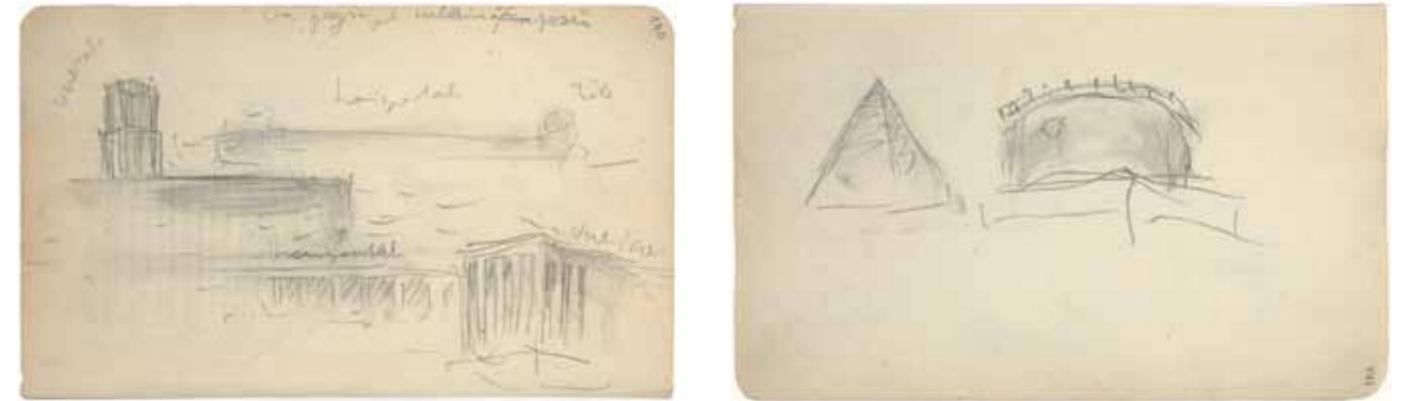
²² Le Corbusier, *Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning*, trans. Edith Schreiber Aujame (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 19. Originally published as *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1930). See also Benton, *The Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier as a Lecturer* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009).

²³ Manfredo Tafuri, "Machine et mémoire: The City in the Work of Le Corbusier," in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Le Corbusier: The Garland Essays* (New York: Garland, 1987), pp. 203–18.

²⁴ This theory first appeared in Sigmund Freud, *Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924); and was best stated in "The Dream and the Primal Scene," in

The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 17, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 29–47.

²⁵ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, and Derek Coltman (New York: Orion Press, 1967), p. 260. Translation amended by the author. Originally published as *La Ville radieuse* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Éditions de l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1935).



Figs. 7 and 8 "Un paysage urbain à composer" (An urban landscape to compose). 1911. Imaginary views of Rome featuring horizontal lines and elementary volumes. Pencil on paper, each: 3⅞ x 6⅞" (10 x 17 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. Sketchbook 4

During his travels in the Balkans and around the Mediterranean in 1911, Jeanneret made two particularly productive stops, first in Athens and then in Rome. He analyzed the composition and contour modulation of the Parthenon in its tiniest details, but he was also extremely interested in the Acropolis itself (fig. 6), perceiving that the site extended visually across Attica and the Saronic Gulf. In *Le Voyage d'Orient (Journey to the East)* (1911) he described a drama unfolding before his eyes, which left an indelible mark:

Many an evening from the side of Lycabettus that overlooks the Acropolis, I could see beyond the modern city lighting up, the disabled hull and its marble vigil—the Parthenon—dominating it, as if it were taking it toward Piraeus. . . . Like a rocky hull, a giant tragic carcass in the dying light above all this red earth. . . . Here is truly a most infernal sight: a faltering sky extinguishing itself in the sea. The Peloponnesian Mountains await the shadow to disappear, and as the night is clinging to all that is steadfast, the entire landscape suspends itself to the horizontal line of the sea. The dark knot that binds the sky to the darkened earth is that black pilot of marble. Its columns, springing out of the shadow, carry the obscure front, but flashes of light spurt out between them like flames that would leap out of the portholes of a blazing ship.²⁶

A few weeks later, his discovery of Rome inspired further comment on the relationship between buildings and topography, in which he analyzed two sets of opposing figures (figs. 7 and 8). The first contained the long neat horizontal set against the turbulent jumble of the existing city, linear elongation against apparent chaos, the archetype of which was Bramante's Vatican galleries. He would make explicit reference to this example in 1933, in his plan for the city of Stockholm.²⁷ The second figure was created by the free game of autonomous geometric forms detached on a plan, as found in other Roman monuments; his overquoted aphorism "Architecture is the masterful, correct, and magnificent play of volumes brought together in light" describes this figure.²⁸ Such a dynamic relationship between prisms would be the basis for several projects.

These landscape-types transcribed in his pocket sketchbooks would be developed in highly varied forms. The landscape-type arising from the experience of the Parthenon, a "block from another world" doubling as a "contemplator of the sea," was the model for his 1918 painting *La Cheminée (The Fireplace)* (page 226), in which an oblique white volume,

²⁶ Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, trans. Žaknić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 234. Originally

published as *Le Voyage d'Orient* (Paris: Éditions Forces vives, 1966).

²⁷ Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse*, p. 298.

²⁸ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, p. 102.



Fig. 9 Sketch made during a lecture in Chicago (detail). November 26, 1935. Pastel on paper, sheet: 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 9' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (101 x 278.1cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Robert A. Jacobs

slightly raised on the ledge of a fireplace, evokes a building on an esplanade.²⁹ The site of Athens figured in the first appearance of the Unité d'Habitation de Grandeur Conforme, ten years before Le Corbusier was commissioned to build one in Marseille: during his lecture "The Great Waste," at the Hotel Stevens in Chicago on November 26, 1935, he drew a section view of a *cité-jardin verticale* (vertical garden city) between a blue crayon line indicating the ocean and a silhouette of mountains (fig. 9), exactly as he had drawn the Acropolis from Mount Lycabettus in 1911. The presence of "the same phenomenon" at the Acropolis, in *La Cheminée*, and in the superstructure of the Unité of Marseille would be even more clearly enunciated in a sketch prepared for the publication *New World of Space*.³⁰

The two landscape-types that emerged from his Roman studies can be traced through several other projects. The dominant horizontal reappears at the Convent of Sainte-Marie de la Tourette (1953–60), where it is the fundamental element in a building designed from top to bottom. Le Corbusier followed a similar process in his conception of the Venice hospital (1964), designing it starting from the upper level, which was slated for patients' rooms and would act as a bridge above the building's lower components.³¹ The arrangement of autonomous volumes in dialogue with one another under the benevolent eye of hills or mountains emerges in several city plans, such as in his plan for Saint-Dié (1945), with housing units deployed in a vast valley in front of the summits of the Vosges, and even in the earliest sketches for Chandigarh (1951–65), with the Capitol buildings placed in precisely calibrated reciprocal relationships to the Siwalik Range. Between the sublime horizontal expanses of infinite planes and the picturesque effect of collected prisms is enacted a dialectic that is anything but indifferent to landscape.

Capturing the Landscape

An additional dialectic deals with the view of the landscape captured by the eye, whether placed in concert with it or in opposition. These voyeuristic sightseeing interiors can be autonomous, such as in the Villas Stein-de Monzie (1926–28) and Savoye (1928–31), in which Colomina has perceived "a machine to see, a cinematographic camera."³² Yet even the more generic projects, capable of being inserted into multiple locations, were nevertheless

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, p. 238.
³⁰ Le Corbusier, handwritten note, December 19, 1953, FLC B3-7-30. Lucan mentions this document in *Composition, non-composition: Architecture et théories, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Lausanne: Presses

polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2009), p. 407.
³¹ Hashim Sarkis, ed., *CASE: Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital and the Mat Building Revival* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Design School; Munich: Prestel, 2001).

³² Colomina, "Vers une architecture médiatique," pp. 259–60. See also Valerio Casali, "La Nature comme paysage," in Prelorenzo, ed., *Le Corbusier et la nature*, pp. 63–73.

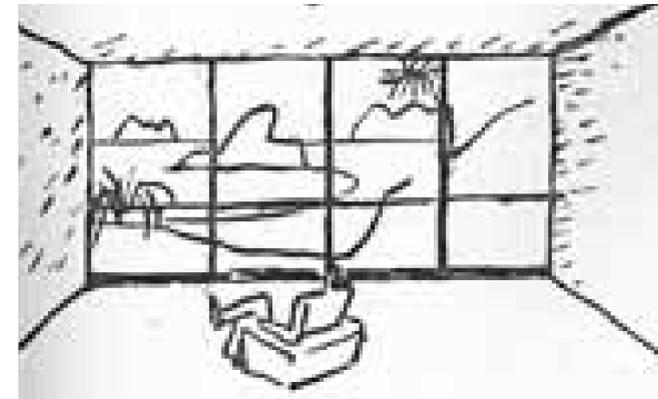


Fig. 10 Plan for Rio de Janeiro (detail). 1929. Views from the interior of an apartment. From Le Corbusier and François de Pierrefeu, *La Maison des hommes* (Paris: Plon, 1942), p. 69

designed as *camerae lucidae*, enabling distant observation. Many of his projects were just as mobile as the Kodak Box Jeanneret employed on his travels to the East, and some even appear to have taken on its form.³³ The large linear buildings designed from the 1920s onward could also perform this role, constituted as they were by a succession of cells, modular compositions from which the contemplation of landscape was possible.

This approach was formulated most clearly in his 1929 plan for Rio de Janeiro, in which the living rooms of the inhabited freeway enabled discovery of the city's beauty. Le Corbusier theatrically commented on this aspect in 1946: "This rock in Rio de Janeiro is famous. Untamed mountains surround it; the ocean bathes it. Palm trees, banana trees; tropical splendors animate the site. One stops, takes a seat—a frame all around. The four sides of a perspective! The room is arranged facing the site. The landscape completely enters the room" (fig. 10).³⁴ In an earlier version, first published in 1942 in *La Maison des hommes* (*The Home of Man*), he wrote, "The pact with nature has been sealed! By means available to town planning, it is possible to enter nature in the lease."³⁵ He generalized his system to make it adaptable both for places already analyzed and those where he longed to work, stating, "Rio de Janeiro is a celebrated site. But Algiers, Marseille, Oran, Nice and all the Côte d'Azur, Barcelona and many maritime and inland towns can boast of admirable landscapes."³⁶

The allusion to Marseille, which he had sketched several times en route to Algiers shortly before writing that text, is prescient. The Unité d'Habitation, designed four years later, captures the Provençal landscape in several registers akin to photographic framing, the most spectacular example being the roof terrace, the views from which could be likened to the panoramic views he had conceived since the 1920s, as in the presentations of the Ville Contemporaine (1922) and Plan Voisin (1925). A parapet obstructs the view of the building's immediate surroundings and directs the viewer's gaze toward the distant horizons of the bay and hills. Through this configuration the terrace doubles back to the young Jeanneret's impressions of Athens (page 109, plates 18 and 19). The mineral table of the roof evokes the Acropolis, as already seen. Yet Jeanneret had also noted in 1911 that "the steep slopes of the hill and the higher elevation of the temple above the stone slabs of the Propylaea conceal from view all traces of modern life," and, by reconstructing the perception of those who first inhabited the site, had evoked the view they would have had: "Priests came out of the cella,

³³ Benton, "Le Corbusier's Secret Photographs," pp. 30–35.

³⁴ Le Corbusier, in Willy Boesiger, *Le Corbusier: Œuvre complète*,

1938–1946 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1946), pp. 80–81. Translation by Hendricks.

³⁵ Le Corbusier and François de Pierrefeu, *The Home of Man*, trans. Clive Entwistle and Gordon Holt

(London: Architectural Press, 1948), p. 87. Originally published as *La Maison des hommes* (Paris: Plon, 1942).

³⁶ Le Corbusier and Pierrefeu, *The Home of Man*, p. 87.



Fig. 11 "Salut, Paris!" 1962. Panoramic view of Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower. Ink on paper, overall: 4 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (11 x 36.5 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. Sketchbook S67

sensing the bosom of the mountains behind them and sideways, and under the portico, they would cast a horizontal glance above the Propylaea at the sea and at the distant mountain it washes."³⁷ It is this horizontal glance, scorning the surrounding houses and small gardens, that he would construct in Marseille. In 1930 Le Corbusier would write of his visit to Rio, another situation that left a strong impression, that "the eye of the man who sees wide horizons is prouder, wide horizons confer dignity; that is the thought of a planner."³⁸ In addition, the Unité's second system consists of the loggias for each apartment, which provide protection from the intense, almost vertical sunlight in the summer and fully capture the low light of winter. They provide residents with a plunging view down onto the building's immediate surroundings and also act like theater boxes, framing the distant sight of hills and the still-rural suburbs of Marseille (page 22).

The only project that would give Le Corbusier the opportunity to orient the view toward the Parisian heights was a hotel designed in 1958 to replace Victor Laloux's Gare d'Orsay, of 1900. In a sort of inversion of the Plan Voisin the view extends from a high-rise building toward a horizon no longer intersected by office towers. He could, therefore, freed from his own project, boast of "this geographic locality, this extraordinary element of the Parisian countryside: the Seine, the Tuileries, the hill of Montmartre, the hill of l'Étoile, the hill of the Panthéon; Les Invalides, Notre-Dame, a feast for the mind and eyes" (fig. 11).³⁹ He reiterated this proposition for the hotel to Malraux in order to justify a design contested by local authorities, writing "I have Paris—Paris—France, Paris—Universe in me, through me. I shudder! This city is still beautiful!"⁴⁰ But his efforts to create a new observatory onto the city would be in vain.

Urban Landscape

By this time Le Corbusier had been reflecting on general aspects of urban landscapes and their transformations for nearly half a century, with his initial observations coming out of a project assigned by L'Eplattenier for a publication on urbanism. This term had first appeared in the French lexicon in 1910 and had developed out of the term *construction des villes* (construction of cities), a literal translation of the German *Städtebau*. Inspired by his readings in

³⁷ Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, pp. 220, 223.

³⁸ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 235.

³⁹ Le Corbusier, "Orsay-Paris: Project for a Cultural Center/Orsay-Paris,

1961: "Projet pour un centre de culture," in Boesiger, *Le Corbusier et son atelier*, rue de Sèvres 35: *Œuvre complète*,

1957–1965 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1965), p. 220.

⁴⁰ Le Corbusier, letter to Malraux, August 25, 1958, FLC E2-14-111.



Fig. 12 Plan Voisin for Paris. 1925. Axonometric view with the Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin gates. Ink on paper, 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 40 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (74 x 102 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 29721

Munich, which have been acutely analyzed by Christoph Schnoor, his curiosity led him from architectural objects toward urban ensembles, revealed in his watercolors of Istanbul and sketches of Athens and Rome in 1911.⁴¹

One of the favorite themes of his notations was the relation between buildings and vegetation. Jeanneret rejected the basic separation of Haussmann's Paris between building blocks and parks. In a 1911 notebook he jotted in the margins of his Roman sketches that "we must try to see if there is a way to plant the large pine trees of Naples or Berlin around our houses, instead of gardens."⁴² Returning to his notes for "La Construction des villes" while writing *Urbanisme (The City of To-morrow and Its Planning)* (1925), he would declare, "What could be more charming!" than churches set in greenery, a situation that a radical solution such as the Plan Voisin would have enabled (fig. 12).⁴³ In that plan the opposition between the city of stone and the city of vegetation would have been resolved in favor of the latter, and he envisioned that "the Tuileries might be continued over whole quarters of Paris in the form of parks, whether of the formal French kind or in the undulating English manner, and could be combined with purely geometrical architecture."⁴⁴

These echoes in *Urbanisme* add to those of *Vers une architecture*; both reflect on the composition of urban groupings shaped on the basis of a new type of vision. As he had similarly observed in Rome, he noted, "From the Eiffel Tower and its platforms at heights of 300, 600 and 900 feet, our horizontal vision is dealing with vast subjects which move and influence us deeply." Here he conjured the "purity of the city's silhouette . . . regained," which would enable the implementation of the Plan Voisin.

His reflections fall under the heading of "paysage urbain" (urban landscape). This syntagm, which would become very popular in architectural discourse, was, in the manner of many Corbusian phrasings such as *cité-jardin verticale*, a pure oxymoron, as "landscape" at this time exclusively denoted rural areas, either wild or cultivated. In the German version of *Urbanisme*, published by Hans Hildebrandt in 1929, "urban landscape" would be translated as *Stadtlandschaft*, a term widely used in Germany during the Nazi regime as well as

⁴¹ Le Corbusier, "La Construction des villes," 1910–15. Published in Christoph Schnoor, ed., *La Construction des villes: Le Corbusiers erstes Städtebauliches Traktat von 1910/11*

⁴² Le Corbusier, *Voyages d'Orient: Carnets*, ed. Gresleri (Milan: Electa; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1987), notebook 5, p. 8.

⁴³ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (1929; London:

Architectural Press, 1947), p. 297. Originally published as *Urbanisme* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1925).

⁴⁴ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*, pp. 248, 199, 248.



Fig. 13 Le Corbusier at the steering wheel of his Avions Voisin C12 automobile. c. 1930. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC L4-1-19

Fig. 14 "La loi du soleil." 1934. Pencil on paper, 8¹/₁₆ x 32¹/₁₆ x" (22 x 83 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC F3-5-9

the period of reconstruction after 1945, and would take on a second meaning of "city as landscape." Its origin was undoubtedly in Paul Schultze-Naumburg's *Kulturarbeiten* which Jeanneret read in 1910, taking notes that reveal an intense attentiveness to the discussion on urbanism and parks.⁴⁵

Vision in Motion

The idea of "vision in motion," made popular in 1947 through the posthumous publication of a vividly illustrated book by László Moholy-Nagy, transposes the dynamic character of the observational strategies deployed by Le Corbusier.⁴⁶ The major breaks that mark his thoughts on city and landscape can be traced back to his discovery of new modes of travel, each one radically altering his perception and method of notation. As such, technical objects were caught in a double game of gazes. The "eyes that do not see" ocean liners, automobiles, and airplanes are the same eyes that cannot see *from* these floating, rolling, or flying mechanisms.

His early adherence to the theories of the Viennese architect Camillo Sitte was linked to the pace and wandering shape of his youthful travels through cities on foot, with backpack strapped on. He rejected these theories in 1925, turning against the "most willful piece of work" by Sitte, which combined "a glorification of the curved line and a specious demonstration of its unrivalled beauties."⁴⁷ This rejection coincided with the automotive vision acquired on his trips with Ozenfant and eventually from behind the wheel of his own Ford and, later, his Avions Voisin C12 (fig. 13). Thereafter, Le Corbusier appeared to feel a certain joy in describing his discovery of twentieth-century means of transport, to the point of devoting his 1941 work *Sur les quatre routes* (*The Four Routes*) to them. In 1932 he had a vision of Algiers as seen by a driver on a highway set 100 meters above sea level, with one side of the road looking out toward the sea and the other onto the setbacks of the Fort l'Empereur, an experience he repeated in 1934 on the roof of the Fiat factory, where he became delirious doing laps on its racetrack.

His American experiences provided another perception of rapid routes. Although he had criticized suburban expansion in his "Great Waste" lecture, he was at the same time fascinated by the system of parkways, realized by Robert Moses, that crisscrossed the New York region. In his memoir of his 1935 trip to North America, he predicted that "parkways

⁴⁵ Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten* (Munich: Callwey, 1901–17). The volumes *Gärten* and *Städtebau* were published in 1902

and 1906, but *Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen* was published in 1916, thus too late for Jeanneret to have read it on that trip.

⁴⁶ László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947).

⁴⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*, p. 26.



Fig. 15 View of the site of the Ronchamp chapel from the railroad from Paris to Basel, May 20, 1950. Ink on paper, 3¹⁵/₁₆ x 5⁷/₈" (10 x 15 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. Sketchbook D17

will cover the whole extent of the USA with a sinuous, charming, picturesque—and slightly arranged—network of roads."⁴⁸ Returning to the issue ten years later, he modified his terms, noting that the parkway, in contrast with the highway, was commendable because "[it] is intended primarily as a channel for pleasure driving and incorporates a number of landscaping solutions; it has in fact been laid out in terms of plastic beauty. . . . The parkway technique in friendly contact with nature—with the ground and what covers it—becomes a landscaping science. Separating traffic into categories of circulation, making traffic orderly, it spares sites of rustic beauty."⁴⁹ This urban operator performed miracles: in Le Corbusier's eyes the Hudson River Parkway "wrapped a genuine belt of splendor around the flank of the city, expelling disorderly and still precarious harbor installations." He stated that "In this urban body, this organism which seemed hopelessly doomed to ossification, paralysis, lo and behold! a new biological element has appeared."

Although truly lyrical on the subject of the automobile, Le Corbusier remained relatively taciturn on the topic of the railway, inheritance of the previous century, except in a few cases, such as an account of his 1934 trip from Paris to Rome. The famous sketch of the Piazza dei Miracoli in Pisa, which he compared to the Palace of the Soviets (1931–32), was done on foot (the ensemble is roughly 1,300 feet [400 meters] from the tracks) and not from a train, as he would write. But it was as seen from the window of a railroad carriage that he drew the hills of the southern border of Tuscany and Lazio on June 4 (fig. 14). These landscapes inspired the *loi du soleil* (law of the sun), dealing with the full twenty-four-hour cycle of day and night, which he would discuss in one of the Roman lectures he delivered after he disembarked.⁵⁰ He first saw the site of Ronchamp on May 20, 1950, on a trip by train from Paris to Basel; he drew the church in ruins and the cemetery below (fig. 15), sensing the importance that the pathway would have for the project. In this seminal sketch he contrasted the larger hill and the smaller church, anticipating the relationship of subordination between site and building and exaggerating the profile of the hill of Bourlémont so that it resembles the Acropolis topped by the Parthenon.⁵¹

Jeanneret had experienced the view from a ship well before he crossed the Atlantic. In 1911 he had arrived in Athens by boat, and there he ruminated on his expectations for the

⁴⁸ Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White: A Journey to the Country of Timid People*, trans. Francis E. Hyslop (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), p. 136. Originally published as *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (Paris: Plon, 1937).

⁴⁹ Le Corbusier, *Looking at City Planning*, pp. 63–65, 73–74.

⁵⁰ Talamona has reconstructed this journey with precision in "Roma 1934," in Talamona, ed., *L'Italia di Le Corbusier* (Milan: Electa, 2012), pp. 241–61.

⁵¹ *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks*, vol. 2, 1950–1954, ed. Françoise de Francieux (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1981), sketchbook D17, 272.



Fig. 16 View of Algiers from the bay, with proposed skyscrapers. 1931. Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 7" (9.8 x 17.8 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. Sketchbook B7

city's monuments without sketching anything, although he did draw the deck of the ship he took from Patras to Brindis. It was unquestionably the perspective from a boat crossing the waters of Lake Geneva that led him to design the horizontal window along the length of the Villa Le Lac in Corseaux (1924–25), which frames both the surface of the water and the mountains.⁵² His subsequent discoveries of distant lands, sketchbook in hand, often took place from a ship's deck. This was the case in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in 1929, where all his projects began with observation of the sites' relationship to the water. This first impression remained powerful in the drawings he made for both projects: the business center for Buenos Aires is depicted from the Rio de la Plata, and the proposed inhabitable highway for Rio is shown from offshore, in play with the horizontal coastline, the rugged outline of the hills, and the peak of the Sugarloaf Mountain.

Algiers is a clear case of this perspective from the sea; it was in a sketch done while approaching the city by boat, in March 1931, that Le Corbusier formulated his reflections (fig. 16). After drawing a cluster of skyscrapers, similar to those proposed by the urban planner Maurice Rotival, he conceived the idea to "draw a large horizontal in the air," as he noted in his sketchbook from the voyage, declaring that he did not envision "excessive skyscrapers in Algiers, but very long buildings, all in one piece, perpendicular to the city's horizon, forming a sort of promontory."⁵³ It was also from a ship's deck that he first saw New York in 1935, rising above the harbor, and finally verified his analogy between ocean liners and buildings.

But it was above all the airplane, the emblematic machine of the twentieth century, that mobilized Le Corbusier's strongest emotions, and the poetic pages of his 1935 publication *Aircraft* were devoted to the "epic of the air" (fig. 17).⁵⁴ Le Corbusier was but a witness, one who did not venture in creating flying machines; whereas Raymond Loewy, the author of a book on locomotives in the same series, was a protagonist, since he designed them. He made the airplane both a pretext for reflection as well as a critical instrument, borrowing its mode of vision, for "[with] its eagle eye the airplane looks at the city. It looks at London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Barcelona, Algiers, Buenos Aires, São Paulo. Alas, what a sorry account! The airplane reveals this fact: that men have built cities for men, not in order to give them pleasure, to content them, to make them happy, *but to make money!*" He drew from this a lesson in mobility: "For one day soon the implication of the bird's eye view, that

⁵² See Reichlin, "The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window," pp. 64–78; and his essay in this volume.

⁵³ Le Corbusier, quoted in Paul Romain, "Le Corbusier à Alger: La Ville

radieuse," *Chantiers nord-africains*, May 1931, p. 482.

⁵⁴ Le Corbusier, "Frontispiece to Pictures of the Epic of the Air," in *Aircraft* (London: The Studio, 1935), pp. 11–13.

On the relationship between airplanes and airports and modern architecture, see Nathalie Roseau, *Aerocity: Quand l'avion fait la ville* (Marseille: Parenthèses, 2012).



Fig. 17 Left: village of La Garde-Guérin, France, with ruined fortification (top) and Douglas airliners over New York City (bottom); right: Jewish quarter of Tétouan, Morocco (top) and huts on the banks of the Shatt-el-Arab River (bottom). From Le Corbusier, *Aircraft* (London: The Studio, 1935), figs. 97–100.

nobility, grandeur and style should be brought into the plan of our cities, will be a fact. The airplane, flying over forests, rivers, mountains and seas and revealing the supremely powerful laws, the simple principles which regulate natural phenomena, will arrive at the cities of the new era of machine civilization. . . . The exact image of the town will be expressed in an entirely new sort of ground-plan."

He felt similar emotions during his trip to South America in 1929.⁵⁵ And twenty years later he looked back on his reflections and pursued them further in the commentary on a theoretical project for an airport: "In the wilderness: stratospheric sky, ocean, steppe, savanna, pampa, Labrador, Greenland, Sahara, virgin forest, the wanderings of deep rivers, estuaries, seas and oceans, sun, stars, storms, lightning and hurricanes. In order to fly man must banish all pride and place himself on the level of mechanical realities and their structure."⁵⁶ He thus never abandoned his curiosity for the airplane, its morphology, and its configuration as a flying camera lucida with portholes opened onto territories below. His frequent long-distance travels of the 1950s prompted reflections beyond issues of landscape; on a flight between Bombay and Delhi in November 1955 he was again carried away by "the airplane which looks, seeing all, minutely."⁵⁷ In his sketchbook he noted, "One could write a *Condition humaine* on the basis of discovering-revealing airplane flight = the stratospheric sky, the sea of clouds with all its biology; the islands the continents, the mountains the plains, the hydrography = brook stream river meanders and deltas. Erosion natural or induced deserts, agricultural cultures."⁵⁸

Each of the four routes he analyzed—highways, railroads, waterways, airways—thus engendered a specific vision. The focus varied, in the case of the airplane, from relatively close observation of Indian villages and human settlements to an enlarged field combining panoramic and tracking shots; as the observer moved he discovered vast territories.

⁵⁵ Le Corbusier, *Précisions*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ Le Corbusier, "Unité," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 19, special issue (April 1948): 25.

⁵⁷ *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks*, vol. 3, 1954–1957, ed. Franclieu (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1981), sketchbook J39, 439.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, sketchbook J37, 337. Le Corbusier was explicitly referring to Malraux's book, published in 1933.

His interest in panoramic vision, which he had deployed in the dioramas for the *Ville Contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin*, fed this new experience, which was both visual and kinetic.

Landscape Saved by Architecture

Le Corbusier's public image, shaped for the most part by his urban projects, is that of an iconoclast or, rather, an *urbiclast* who proposed to save only parcels of existing cities: Notre Dame in Paris, a fragment of the Casbah in Algiers, the Kremlin in Moscow. But several of his projects were deliberately marked by the most precise attention to landscape. While it was extremely rare for him to engage in preservation in its strictest sense, as in his discourse on Capri, he did not hesitate to rhetorically address the necessity to save landscapes threatened by urbanization.

Thus in 1934 he addressed himself to Jean-Pierre Faure and Théodore Lafon, his Algerian contacts, in an account of "a trip to the Italian lakes (at the foot of the Alps)" from which he "had confirmation of the absolute necessity from both the speculative and social perspectives of preserving the integrity of the splendid nature entrusted to the developers. It's one or the other: either we destroy the landscape pure and simple, a scandalous societal loss, or, through intelligent interventions, we save the surrounding nature, the landscape, and the natural beauties, creating at the same time a modern scheme."⁵⁹ Far from being a misplaced addition, the building plays a saving role. This attitude, which both describes and celebrates landscape while also taking account of built interventions, is not contradictory if we recall Le Corbusier's extensive knowledge of painting.

The "intelligent intervention" he suggested for Algiers would consist mainly of considering buildings as points of contrast, as foils that restructure the surrounding landscape, as if in echo of Diderot, who noted in his 1795 *Essai sur la peinture* that "in painting the essential objects must double as *repoussoirs* [foils]."⁶⁰ This configuration enables a centrifugal relationship, in which the building reshapes its environment by accentuating distances. In the case of the chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp (1950–55), Le Corbusier used an acoustic analogy to account for the relationship between the building and its distant surroundings, but this time according to a centripetal principle: he had designed, he wrote, "an acoustic landscape, taking account of the four horizons: the plain of the Saône across from it,

⁵⁹ Le Corbusier, letter to Jean-Pierre Faure and Théodore Lafon, February 21, 1934, FLC I1-20-161. I thank Guillemette Morel Journal for directing me to this letter.

⁶⁰ Diderot uses the term *repoussoir*, which translates literally as "foil." Denis Diderot, "The Lifetime Sum of My Knowledge of Chiaroscuro," in *Diderot on Art*, ed. and trans. John Goodman

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 206. Originally published as "Tout ce que j'ai compris de ma vie du clair obscur," in *Essai sur la peinture* (1795; Paris: Hermann, 1984).



Fig. 18 "Unités de paysage." 1945. From Le Corbusier, *Manière de penser l'urbanisme* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Éditions de l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1946), p. 85

the Ballon d'Alsace, and, on the sides, two valleys. We will create forms that will respond to the horizons and welcome them in."⁶¹ When dedicating the chapel to those "four horizons," Le Corbusier described the situation in a single sentence: "Ronchamp? Contact with a site, location in a place, eloquence of a place, word addressed to a place."⁶² Presenting the relation between the chapel and its landscape as a dialogue posits an equality between them, rather than a subordination of one to the other. The drawings for Ronchamp also reveal a feedback loop in which landscape shapes the curves of the building as well as finds itself revealed by the building on it.

In *Manière de penser l'urbanisme* (*Looking at City Planning*) of 1946, Le Corbusier constructed an argument almost symmetrical to the one above in which he confronted the concept of the *unité de paysage* (landscaping unit) with the actuality of the *unité de grandeur conforme* (unit of suitable size) (fig. 18); he had started designing a prototype with his *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille, where "natural conditions" provided "the counterpoint needed to offset the artificial factors born of machines."⁶³ At the same time, he specified, a balanced relationship between each of these two units must prevail:

A site or a landscape does not exist—except as our eyes see it. The idea therefore is to make it visibly present, choosing the best of the whole or parts of it. This source of inestimable benefit must be grasped. A site or a landscape is made of vegetation seen close up, of stretches of level or uneven terrain, or horizons seen at a distance or right in front of us. Climate places its stamp on the whole, dictating what is fit to survive and develop there. Its presence will always be felt both in what surrounds the constructed things as a volume and in the reasons which had so much to do with deciding on the very shape of the constructed thing.

At the inauguration of Ronchamp, in 1955, Le Corbusier declared, "There are places that are sacred, and we don't know why: because of the site, the landscape, the geographic situation, the political tensions which surround them, etc. There are designated places, high places in both senses of the term: altitude followed by elevation."⁶⁴ The dialectic of balance is particularly active at Ronchamp, a "high place" constituted by the double effect of topography and architecture, the first suggesting the second, the second

⁶¹ Le Corbusier, "La Chapelle de Ronchamp," memo, 1953, FLC Q1-1-118 and 119.

⁶² Le Corbusier, quoted in Jean Petit, *Le Livre de Ronchamp: Le Corbusier* (Paris: Éditions Forces vives, 1961), p. 18.

⁶³ Le Corbusier, *Looking at City Planning*, pp. 67–68.

⁶⁴ Le Corbusier, "À propos d'art sacré," in Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même* (Geneva: Éditions Rousseau, 1970), p. 183.

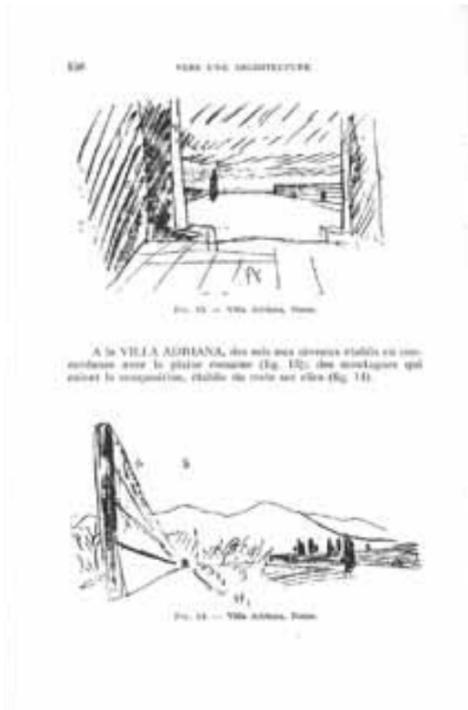


Fig. 19 Two perspectives of Villa Adriana, Tivoli. 1911. From Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1923), p. 109

complementing the first. Elsewhere he evoked “architectural feats” that were summoned by “predestined sites,” considering those feats as plants inserted in the landscapes of Le Havre, Lyon, Paris, and Marseille.⁶⁵ Ronchamp, far removed from the city, was incontestably one of the landscape-types on which Le Corbusier most directly focused his attention, following Mount Athos and the Athenian Acropolis: his building, just as religious, extending the hill or the mountain.

We can identify two other landscape-types. The first is the coastal city, first discovered by Le Corbusier in 1911, in Athens and Naples, followed by Rio de Janeiro, Algiers, and Marseille. The second is the city on a plain surrounded by mountains, also discovered in 1911, at Villa Adriana (fig. 19), and followed by Geneva, Saint-Dié, and Chandigarh. In both landscape-types, random order is combined with the persistence of visual and topographical patterns. The projects for Algiers and Chandigarh are also marked by a certain temporal duration, developing as they did through a patient survey of the sites, renewed on multiple trips, spanning a period of several years.

The Case of Algiers

The Plan Obus of 1932, while notable for its conceptual and graphic clarity, is an eminent manifestation of the complex relationship, maintained over thirteen years, between Le Corbusier and Algiers. Few places would capture his attention and emotions as intensely as this “city which looks at itself,” as he described it in *Poésie sur Alger* (*Poetry on Algiers*) of 1950, a small collection of his reminiscences of the city, including frustrations provoked by the failure of all of his undertakings there.⁶⁶ Two years earlier, in an issue of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* devoted to his work, he returned to the Plan Obus to clarify its relationship to the site, in a text that deals quite clearly with the symbiosis between building and landscape. Le Corbusier declared that he saw in the now-abandoned proposal the “first attempt at harmony, great harmony, between a geometric human project of steel, concrete and glass, and the surrounding nature: African earth, hills, plains and the great chain of the Atlas mountains, infinite sea.”⁶⁷

The Plan Obus’s relationship with landscape was crucial because of its “domination by a topographic situation that is hostile, adverse, to the point of paralysis. Curved and straight forms are deployed. An extraordinary model because it is precisely a direct function of the topography: it involves building housing, and for this, to create built volumes: but where? In the hollows of the valleys; there, where the land sinks, where the estuaries of the

⁶⁵ Le Corbusier, *Looking at City Planning*, pp. 110–11.

⁶⁶ Le Corbusier, *Poésie sur Alger*, (Paris: Falaize, 1951), p. 38.

⁶⁷ Le Corbusier, “Unité,” p. 13.

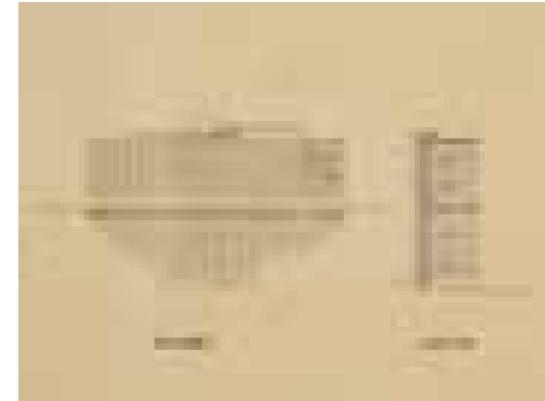


Fig. 20 Lafon apartment building, Algiers (detail). 1933. Elevation and cross section. Ink on tracing paper, sheet: 29 1/2 x 55 9/16" (74.9 x 141.2 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC13913

valleys open onto space. There the buildings will plunge down to find their home.” But the project also established new views, for “at the top, the edge against the sky will be the only crowning horizontal line. Here the reason of order, nobility, calm, the indisputable will reign; against the sky the line is no longer uneven, as is customary, but straight.” This analysis of a site conceived according to a vertical model, with its supports based on the slope of the crowning horizontal, also developed from his reading of the sixteenth-century Villa d’Este, which he had visited in 1911 and returned to in 1946, observing, “See here how architectural inventiveness makes use of the material conditions of the site: a site wild with incident. The slopes are exploited, and the broken contours bridged. Left, the profile; right, the face. The composition of the face is closed by the pure straight line of the roof.”⁶⁸

Fifteen years later Le Corbusier compared the project for Algiers with the Palace of the Soviets, likening the curving buildings and inhabitable highway to the conch shells in which he had heard the voices of Muscovite orators reverberate, declaring,

*‘Attention! We reveal the secret engines of harmony: we are at the heart of an acoustic event where everything accords, the acoustic of forms, extension from one science that must forgive us to another. This dominant horizontal is an echo of the plane of the sea; the curves of the building are like sonorous conch shells; they project sounds (or views) outwards; inwards, they receive all sounds (or views); they sweep across the horizon like the beams of a lighthouse. The horizontal roads are the terrestrial material; they are on the level of the African plain; the one which sinks down indicates the depth of the vast continent; the others intersecting at sinuous right angles like the meandering edge of the sea.’*⁶⁹

As he had done in Paris, where the unbuildable Plan Voisin led to several small projects inserted into the city’s fabric, Le Corbusier made studies for several buildings derived from his Algiers plan, parceled in 1933 into so many isolated pieces. Tafuri, probably thinking more about Le Corbusier’s sculptures, observed, “What in the Plan ‘Obus’ is designed to go into a machine insuring its significations is destined to reemerge, isolated, as an enigmatic fragment.”⁷⁰ Inscribed into the system of winding paths that had made a sharp impression, the buildings turned toward the bay they overlooked, as the Parthenon had done, that “contemplator of the sea.” But on the level of the immediate setting, they were inseparable from

⁶⁸ Le Corbusier, *Concerning Town Planning*, trans. Entwistle (London: Architectural Press, 1947), p. 20.

Originally published as *Propos d’urbanisme* (Paris: Bourrellet, 1946).
⁶⁹ Le Corbusier, “Unité,” p. 16.

⁷⁰ Tafuri, “Machine et mémoire,” p. 211.

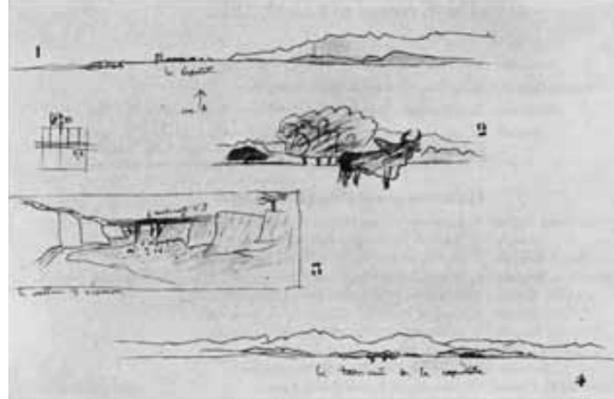


Fig. 21 Chandigarh site. c. 1951. 1: The Government Center flanked by the Himalaya; 2: The countryside; 3: The great gorge; 4: The site of the city. From Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, José Luis Sert, and Ernesto N. Rogers, *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life* (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952), p. 155

the surrounding topography. The Lafon building (fig. 20) was set in a ravine around which the chemin du Télémy wound its way and the habitable viaducts crossed, providing housing both under the roadway and above it. The principle was to “reconstitute the loggias of the arcades at the port” that had fascinated Le Corbusier since his first trip to Algiers and often again thereafter.⁷¹ A project for an apartment house was placed on a steep slope, in a manner similar to many such houses situated on the foothills of the city. It was divided into two blocks separated by an opening at street level, a principle he would favor for the entire city, to the point of developing a regulatory proposal for boulevards on which the cornice level of every building would have used his project’s cross section.⁷² And the buildings designed for Prosper Durand above the Oued Ouchaïa redeployed the hybrid of infrastructure and residence, but on a more even site between the hills. Their stacked levels also overlooked the sea, as if Le Corbusier had reproduced on flat ground the configuration of hills and ravines he found so inspiring.

Chandigarh

If landscape was the matrix for Le Corbusier’s projects in Algiers, it was the backdrop for his work in Chandigarh, as Montmartre had been for the Plan Voisin. Le Corbusier was finally given the chance, after twenty-five years of unrealized projects, to build a city from the ground up. He noted this when preparing for his first meeting with his Indian interlocutors, observing, “It is the hour that I have been waiting for,” the time “to construct a Capitol” for “India the humane and profound civilization.”⁷³ The site of the future capital could not have been more different from the one in Algiers, and his experience there would be completely distinct. He determined the outlines of the city plan fairly quickly—all the more so since it relied on a critique of the earlier work of the American planner Albert Mayer—although not without carefully studying the forms of existing houses and villages, as the plain in no way presented a clean slate. The inflections of the system first developed in 1945 and known as 7V, for 7 *voies* (seven ways), which would propose a differentiated network of urban traffic, derived from these notations, traces of which are in his pocket sketchbooks from 1951 onward.⁷⁴

The checkerboard of main roads across the city creates in his plan an orthogonal system deployed on the plains that the British architect Jane Drew felt had “a quality of

⁷¹ *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks*, vol. 1, 1914–1948, ed. Franclieu (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Paris:

Fondation Le Corbusier, 1981), sketchbook C12, 789.

⁷² Drawing, FLC 13916.

⁷³ Le Corbusier, quoted in Madhu Sarin, *Urban Planning in the Third*

World: The Chandigarh Experience (London: Mansell, 1982), p. 40.

⁷⁴ Le Corbusier, *Les Trois Établissements humains* (Paris: Denoël, 1945).

beauty hinted at in the paintings of Giotto.”⁷⁵ She described the setting in 1953, observing that “the slope of the site is toward the south and thus the eye is led up, and is always roving over the background of the endless ranges of the Himalayas” (fig. 21). The Siwalik Range performed the role of Le Grammont in Corseaux, while the Capitol buildings extending across the plain recalls Jeanneret’s 1915 sketches based on Pirro Ligorio’s view of Rome (page 112, fig. 5). Two orders adjoin within the monumental composition of the spaces of power, which reproduced the layout of the Ville Radieuse’s center in its separation from the rest of the city, and the living quarters, whose design Le Corbusier delegated to his cousin and former partner Pierre Jeanneret.⁷⁶ Far from considering the two visually compatible, Le Corbusier aimed to make the residential quarters invisible from the center, noting in his sketchbook, “Attention! [On the] city side the Capitol must be enclosed by a *continuous glacis* [consisting] of a horizontal embankment/(hide all construction of the city).”⁷⁷ He thus seems to have been wary of the city whose outlines he himself had traced and aimed to erase them, as the view from the Acropolis erased Athens.

While Pierre Jeanneret, Drew, and Maxwell Fry developed the city’s housing and public services, Mohinder Singh Randhawa, an agronomist specializing in rural environments and agriculture, designed the landscape scheme, relying on recommendations developed by A. L. Fletcher, the advisor to the Punjab government for the new capital.⁷⁸ With the model of the British garden city in mind, Randhawa formulated a program highly specific to modern India’s landscapes. He planned the principal green spaces and supervised, on the basis of drawings made in Paris, the alignment of plantings that gave character to the streets of Chandigarh’s different quarters.⁷⁹

Largely uninvolved with the development of the city’s landscape, Le Corbusier focused on the Capitol Complex, enriching his ideas with observations of Indian gardens. He was less concerned with revealing the “conditions of nature,” although he certainly kept them in mind, than with working out in his notes and sketches his impressions of various sites, proceeding in a near-mannerist way. He chose elements from a lexicon of Mughal compositions,

⁷⁵ Jane Drew, “Chandigarh Capital City Project,” *Architects’ Year Book 5* (London: Elek Books, 1953), p. 56.

⁷⁶ See Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* (1968; Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), p. 216.

⁷⁷ *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks*, vol. 2, sketchbook F26, 866.

⁷⁸ See “Notes Recorded by Mr. A. L. Fletcher, I.C.S., O.S.D. (Capital), in the Year 1948 on (1) Planning (2) Architecture (3) Construction of Government Buildings,” Archives, Chandigarh City Museum. Cited in Vikramaditya Prakash, *Chandigarh’s*

Le Corbusier: The Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 33–39.

⁷⁹ See Mohinder Singh Randhawa, *Beautiful Trees and Gardens* (Delhi: Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 1961).



Fig. 22 Governor's Palace, Chandigarh. 1951–65. Garden study. Pencil, colored pencil, and ink on paper, 10⁵/₈ x 8¹/₄" (27 x 21 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. Sketchbook Nivola

which he quickly sketched down and then modified and assembled according to a new syntax. On the garden of the Presidential Palace in Delhi, completed by Edwin Lutyens in 1929 for the viceroy, he wrote in 1951, "The sun sets on the axis over the canal//canal//everywhere the water, pools, and watercourses glimmer."⁸⁰ But it was in the Pinjore garden, an hour from Chandigarh by car, where he found a proportional sequence close to the units of the Modulor, which furnished him with the materials necessary for the task (page 376, fig. 9).⁸¹ For the Capitol he skewed the axes of the garden, in the same manner he would subvert the symmetries specific to the monumental forms of the buildings. Faced with the flatness of the plain, he denied it by implanting a network of humps and hollowed-out recessions similar to the flower beds planted at the bottom of the garden paths (fig. 22), explaining, "Artificial hills have been created with fill from the excavations made for streets and parking strips. These hills responding to the buildings of the Capitol will be covered with trees. . . . In certain parts of the Capitol the horizon will be enclosed by walls of green."⁸² This project, exceptional in all respects, thus inverts the relation between buildings and landscape, so that they play against one another to a certain degree.

Landscape as Metaphor

Landscape's most fertile role in Le Corbusier's thinking retained nothing of the literal; it involves neither geographic interpretation nor landscape's active or reactive presence in his projects. Landscape was edifying, if I may say so, because it generated analogies and metaphors, figures of speech that had immense importance in all of his work, as in his most provocative aphorisms such as "The house is a machine for living in." Along with the machine and mythology, images of landscape were summoned to support a project or biographic episode. He used the analogy of the steep mountain path to describe the elements of his project for the Centrosoyuz Headquarters (1928–36) in Moscow in a 1929 lecture in Buenos Aires.⁸³ Almost at the same time his formulation of the *loi du méandre* (law of the meander), during his observation of the plains of Uruguay in 1929, transformed the landscape into a sort of projective test, revealing his own thought processes to himself.

Toward the end of his life, far removed from the immense landscapes he had surveyed, he discovered one in his Parisian studio (fig. 23). He described it as though it had

⁸⁰ Le Corbusier *Sketchbooks*, vol. 2, sketchbook E19, 399.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, sketchbook E19, 392.

⁸² Le Corbusier, "The Landscaping of Chandigarh/L'Arborisation de Chandigarh," in Boesiger, *Le Corbusier et son atelier*, rue de Sèvres 35:

Œuvre complète, 1952–1957 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1967), pp. 108–09.

Translation amended by the author.

⁸³ Le Corbusier, *Précisions*, p. 47.



Fig. 23 Le Corbusier in his Paris painting studio. 1959. Photograph by Gisèle Freund. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC L4-9-49

been created by a process of sedimentation that had escaped his notice but which he nonetheless knew by heart:

I live in my archipelago, my sea, it's thirty years of accumulations diversely attached to intellectual and manual activities. Here and there, on the ground, groups of objects, devices, books, texts, drawings. These are my islands! . . . There are very clear islands of work: the island of the telephone, the workbooks, the intermittent and imperative daily work. . . . There are volcanic islands which emerge and disappear at the chosen hour; a sheet of plywood on the arms of two chairs. Here I edit a book, prepare an article, dictate something, etc. Lastly, there is the vertical island, the painting easel in front of the island of colors. . . . The archipelago is tight. The passes are narrow. But I navigate within them with the security and the precision of an old captain.⁸⁴

Thus he succeeded in making his most secret place a microcosm, there condensing six decades of observations.

⁸⁴ Le Corbusier, January 31, 1954, quoted in Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*, p. 114.

SWITZERLAND & GERMANY

SWITZERLAND

Projects

- Building, Les Eaux-Vives, Geneva, 1930
- Mundaneum, Geneva, 1928
- Palace of the League of Nations, Geneva, 1927
- Pont Butin, Geneva, 1915
- Urban plan, Geneva, 1933
- Rentenanstalt building, Zurich, 1933
- Sanatorium, Zurich, 1934

Built Works

- Villa Le Lac, Corseaux, 1924–25
- Clarté apartment building, Geneva, 1930–32
- Villa Favre-Jacot, Le Locle, 1912–13
- Exhibition pavilion for Heidi Weber, Zurich, 1962–67

La Chaux-de-Fonds

Birthplace

38 rue de la Serre

Workplaces

- École d'Art (currently Bibliothèque de la Ville), 33 rue du Progrès
- First office, 54 rue Numa Droz

Projects

- Paul Ditisheim department store, 120 boulevard Léopold-Robert, 1913
- Garden city, Les Crêtets, 1914

Built Works:

- Cinéma Scala, 52 rue de la Serre, 1916
- Villa Fallet, 1 chemin de Pouillerel, 1905–07
- Villa Jacquemet, 8 chemin de Pouillerel, 1907
- Villa Jeanneret-Perret, 12 chemin de Pouillerel, 1912
- Villa Schwob, 167 rue du Doubs, 1916–17
- Villa Stotzer, 6 chemin de Pouillerel, 1907–08

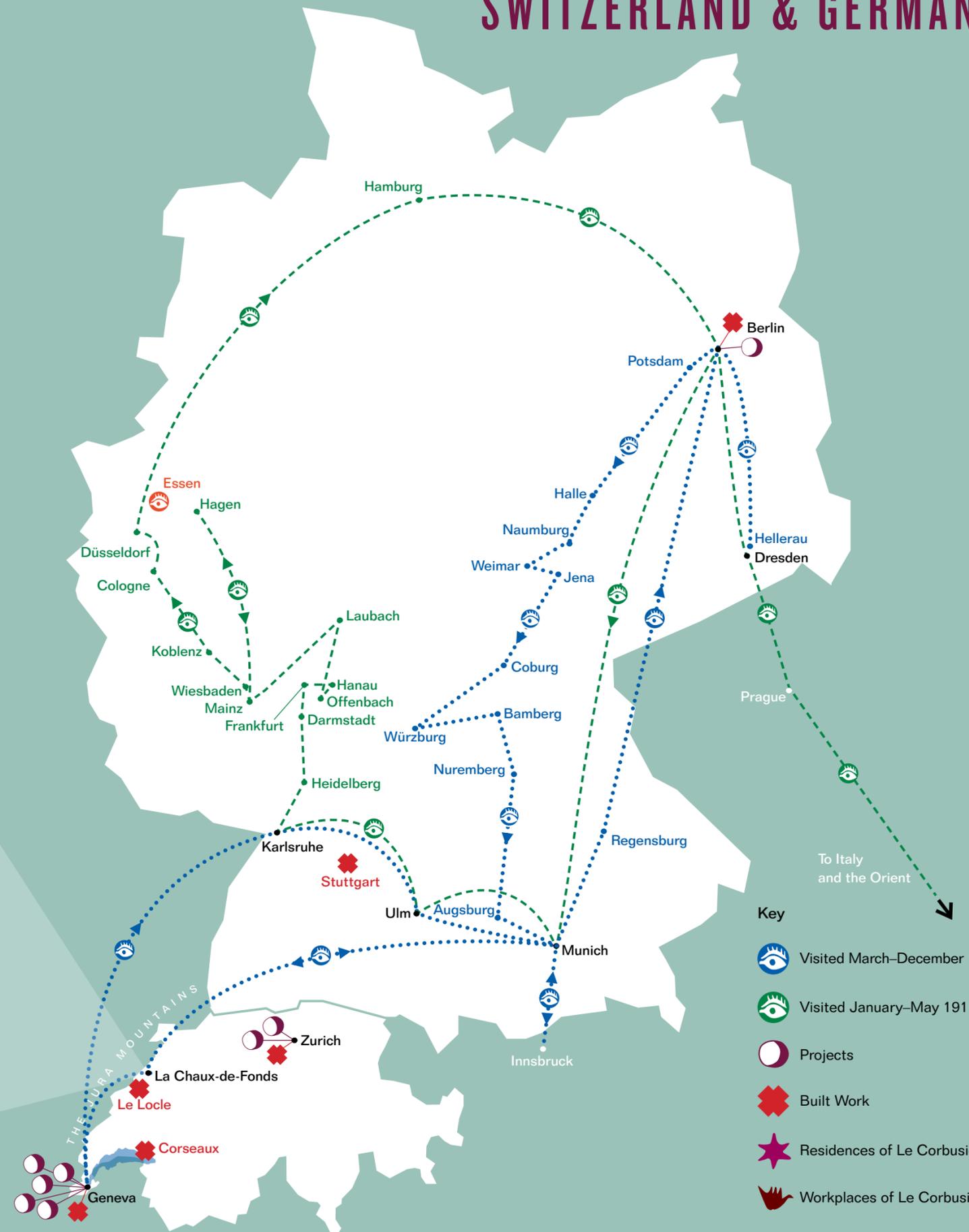
GERMANY

Project

Plan for the center of Berlin, 1958

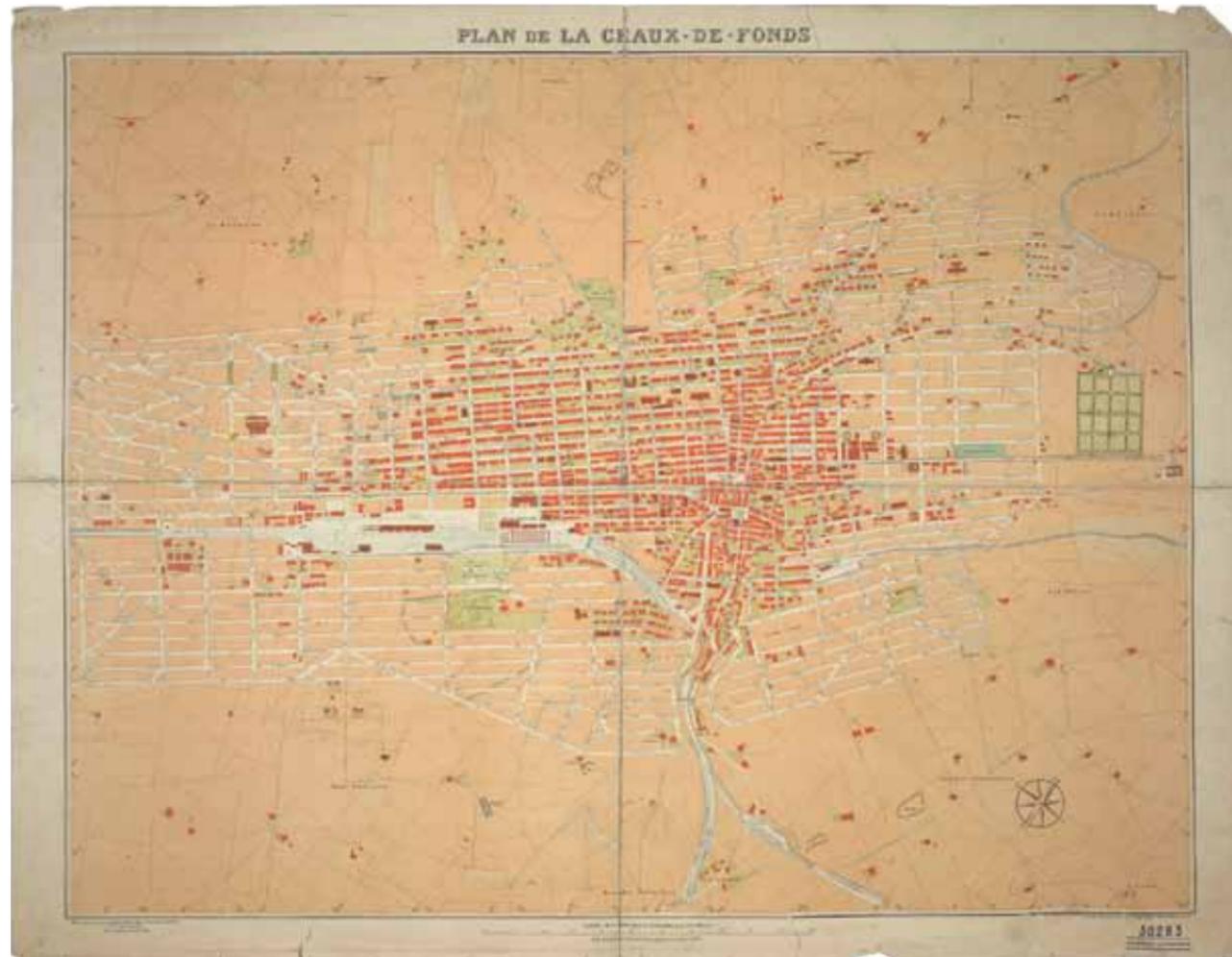
Built Works

- Unité d'Habitation, Berlin-Charlottenburg, 1956–58
- Two houses at the Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition, Stuttgart, 1927



Key

- Visited March–December 1910
- Visited January–May 1911
- Projects
- Built Work
- Residences of Le Corbusier
- Workplaces of Le Corbusier



Opposite: Map of La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1908. Typographic color print on paper, 31 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 40 $\frac{13}{16}$ " (80.9 x 103.6 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 30283

In 1925, in the chapter entitled "Confession" in *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (*The Decorative Art of Today*), Le Corbusier reminisced, evoking his place of birth, his discovery of nature, his first mentor, and his plan to develop a *style du pays* (regional style) and use it to transform the standards of home décor.¹

With this declaration of allegiance to the decorative arts and regionalism, and of participation in the "heroic conquering spirit" of Art Nouveau, he appears to be inscribing his personal history into the artistic and architectural culture of his time, counting himself among those who "[brought] forth the new machine spirit." It suggests a desire to secure the interpretation of this first biographical, intellectual, and affective sequence of his life—a period both determinative and unfortunate. "Here ends," he wrote, "my first chapter." But, as Marie-Jeanne Dumont has pointed out, in this account of origins, with its epic tone, nothing is given a geographical location, nothing is given a name: not the Swiss town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, nor the Jura, nor the mountain Pouillerel, nor the Vallée du Doubs, nor the fir tree that would become emblematic, not even the name of his mentor, Charles L'Eplattenier; everything is projected into a time of myth and a space of utopia, in the double sense of the term.²

The text is signed "Le Corbusier," who thus provides a cathartic and authorized version of his past. But since the death of Le Corbusier, it has been Charles-Édouard Jeanneret who in numerous critical studies has been situated in that contemporary natural and cultural environment, in the projects of those years, in the first essays, and in the abundant correspondence. These studies enable us to assess his formative years at home, revealing not only his complex, contradictory nature but also his vitality and rigor, and the determination and the doubts that contributed to his intellectual and artistic development during this period.³

From 1902 to 1914 his most significant influence was the École d'Art of La-Chaux-de-Fonds, but bit by bit other factors began to change Jeanneret's relationship to and perception of the local landscape: his travels, the books he was reading, and the new mentors who replaced L'Eplattenier. But a more philosophical rupture appears in a letter to his second mentor and friend, William Ritter, in which Jeanneret described the Villa Jeanneret-Perret,

¹ Le Corbusier, "Confession," in *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1925), pp. 197–218.

² Le Corbusier: *Lettres à ses maîtres*, ed. Marie-Jeanne Dumont (Paris: Éditions du Linteau, 2006), pp. 295–96.

³ See Geoffrey H. Baker, *Le Corbusier: The Creative Search; The Formative*

Years of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (London: E & FN Spon, 1996); H. Allen Brooks, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Édouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Luisa Martina Colli, *Arte, artigianato e tecnica nella poetica di Le Corbusier* (Rome: Laterza, 1982); Stanislaus

von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, eds., *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier: Applied Arts, Architecture, Painting and Photography, 1907–1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); and Patricia Sekler, *The Early Drawings of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), 1902–1908* (New York: Garland, 1977).

the villa he had built in 1912 for his parents, in terms that are rather audacious: "An anachronism of place, a *dépaysation* whose function is not to eliminate me but instead to suggest other lands, water, the sea especially calling forth views from a distance."⁴ His neologism, *dépaysation*, is most clearly understood as disorientation (*dépaysement*) but also introduces a conscious process of separation, anticipating the nonplace evoked in his "Confession"; this rupture with the Jurassic landscape was not only sentimental or imaginative but also called into question the very idea of regionalism in architecture.⁵ Jeanneret metaphorically suggested this shift on the lintel of the villa's living room fireplace, where he painted a dead bird reborn as a butterfly, gathering pollen from flowers borrowed from Ottoman ceramics rather than from local flora.⁶

In fact Jeanneret's hesitant but progressive *dépaysation* emerged in three movements: the first, rather brief, Jeanneret's submission to the local *style du pays* called for by L'Eplattenier; the second, the critical confrontation with this style that began in 1907, after his trip to Italy while still under the influence of John Ruskin; the third, starting in 1912, his deconstruction of the regionalism of his first completed projects, to be replaced in his teaching and his new architectural projects with a discreet and heterogeneous Neoclassicism.

The first movement began when Jeanneret enrolled at the École d'Art in 1902 to learn the craft of watchcase engraving. But he was more inclined toward art and toyed with the idea of becoming a painter. His first known landscape painting dates from that year: a watercolor, rather fresh in its awkwardness but still hewing to the iconography of the Jurassic landscape—pine trees, pastures, herds of cows—that at the end of the nineteenth century had become a distinct genre of alpine landscape and still remained the dominant paradigm in Switzerland. Jeanneret had seen the landscapes of such local painters as Albert de Meuron, Jules Jacot-Guillarmod, Édouard Jeanmaire, and L'Eplattenier (fig. 1) in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at the Collège Industriel, adjacent to his school. Two landscapes by L'Eplattenier seem to have lodged in his imagination: *Au sommet* (fig. 2) and *Temps de mars* (1907), both of which hang today at

⁴ Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, letter to William Ritter, May 1, 1913, box 359, Archives Littéraires Suisses, Bibliothèque Nationale de Berne. Fonds William Ritter. Translations, unless otherwise noted, by Christian Hubert.

⁵ The term Jurassic (*jurassique*) refers to a geologic period of the Mesozoic era, but Jeanneret often used it in place of *jurassien*, the more common way

of referring to the region, no doubt in order to evoke the mythic, ahistorical character of the place. The rupture with this landscape was partly achieved in the many allusions to the Orient in the Villa Jeanneret-Perret. Ritter gently mocked him for this, writing "Your Mediterranean white cubes, I can't imagine them in the Jura. . . . But if it makes you happy!" Ritter, letter to Jeanneret, November 3,

1911, FLC R1-18-128 to 141. He goes on in the same letter to call the house "Stamboulachauxdefonds" and "Acrop-ouillere."

⁶ This painted decoration, signed Jeanneret and dated 1913, has disappeared.



Fig. 1 Charles L'Eplattenier (Swiss, 1874–1946). *Coucher de soleil à Pouillere* (Sunset at Pouillere). 1900. Oil on canvas, 36 x 55½" (91.5 x 141 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds



Fig. 2 Charles L'Eplattenier (Swiss, 1874–1946). *Au sommet* (At the summit). 1904. Watercolor on paper, 29½ x 68 7/8" (74 x 175 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds

the Musée des Beaux-Arts of La Chaux-de-Fonds. But in 1905 L'Eplattenier, a young professor of drawing, urged Jeanneret to enroll in his Cours Supérieur d'Art et de Décoration, a new class on decorative arts, rather than in painting, pushing the student in a different direction. Thus Jeanneret would not be a landscape painter; he would not depict Jurassic nature. Instead he would "henceforth study its causes, forms and vital development, and synthesize them in the creation of *ornaments*."⁷

L'Eplattenier had studied at the Mintarajiskola (School of model drawing) in Budapest and at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He had kept abreast of the emergence of Art Nouveau in Europe and the subsequent revival of ornamentation and wanted to open the school to fields other than the decoration of watches; a devotee of Ruskinian ideals, he called for a return to nature and its direct observation through drawing, the probity of the artisan and his methods, and initiation into the grammar and history of styles of art through studying great works. His ideology contained an element of nationalism: a return to local tradition, to a rural and vernacular architecture, would counteract the internationalist eclecticism of architecture and the industrial disfigurement of cities.⁸ With his students he developed a regional style, the *style sapin* (fir tree style), using a formal vocabulary derived from the fauna and flora of the Jura.⁹ Jeanneret was an enthusiastic participant in this project and divided his time between drawing en plein air and consulting periodicals and reference works on design and ornamentation in the school's library.¹⁰ The few landscapes he sketched in pencil and watercolor during this time have a generalized quality: lack of detail, alternating masses of dark and light, linear compositional rhythms.¹¹ They are similar to studies in geometric stylization based on fir trees and rocks, most notably L'Eplattenier's own.¹²

The most striking works of the *style sapin* were created between 1905 and 1907, and the Villa Fallet, a collaborative work directed by Jeanneret, remains its definitive example and a manifesto for L'Eplattenier's students (fig. 3).¹³ It was the first example of the new

⁷ Le Corbusier, "Confession," in *The Decorative Art of Today*, trans. James Dunnett (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 194.

⁸ The Heimatschutz, the league for the conservation of picturesque Switzerland, was founded in 1905.

⁹ Helen Bieri Thomson, ed., *Une Expérience Art nouveau: Le Style sapin à La Chaux-de-Fonds* (Paris: Somogy, 2006).

¹⁰ Among the works that Le Corbusier refers to in *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* are John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849); Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856); Eugène Grasset, *La Plante et ses applications ornementales* (1896) and *Méthode de composition ornementale* (1907); and Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867) and *Grammaire des arts décoratifs* (1881). The French, English,

and German reviews available at the school included *Art et Décoration* and *L'Art décoratif; The Magazine of Art and The Studio; Die Kunst and Berliner Architekturwelt*.

¹¹ Drawings, FLC 1446, 1775, 2017, 2043, 2203, 2204, and 5817.

¹² Anouk Hellmann, *Charles L'Eplattenier* (Hauterive, Switzerland: Éditions Attinger, 2011), pp. 34–35.

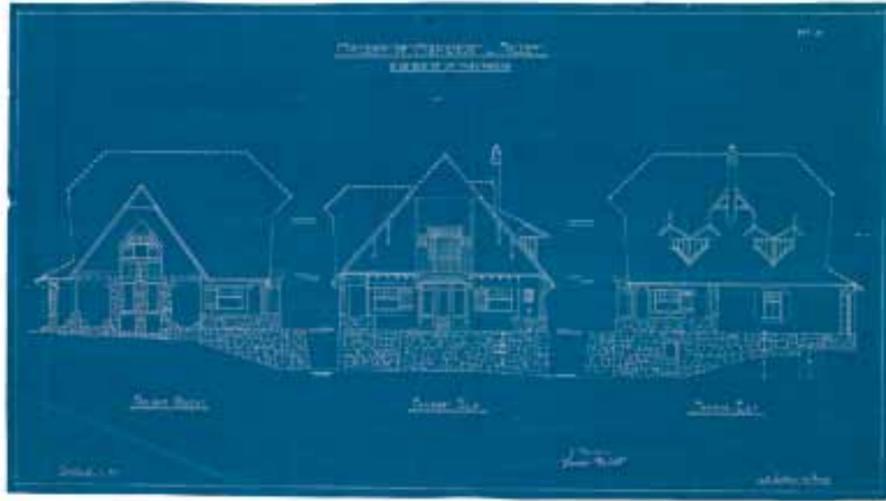


Fig. 3 Villa Fallet, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1905–07. Elevations of the west, south, and east facades. Blueprint, 23 ³/₈ x 41 ⁵/₁₆" (59.3 x 105 cm). Bibliothèque de la Ville, La Chaux-de-Fonds

ornamental language applied to domestic architecture, which had previously been used only on the watchcases sent by the school to the world's fair in Milan. The integration of architecture and landscape, showing an almost mimetic relation between the two, is vividly shown in an early sketch.¹⁴ The interior of the Chapelle Indépendante, in nearby Cernier-Fontainemelon, decorated in its entirety by Jeanneret and his fellow students, was described by the president of the commission of the École d'Art as akin to being "in the middle of a forest, everything is silent and calm; one sees the sky only if one looks up; all around the firs and their branches form a tapestry rich in lines and colors, linked to the earth by columns, the verticals of the tree trunks."¹⁵

The influence of the Germanic countries is evident in the Villa Fallet and the Chapelle Indépendante, but during Jeanneret's 1908 visit to Vienna, his firsthand experience of the Wiener Werkstätte and the architecture of Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann raised doubts in his mind: the work was forceful and original, but he found his admiration diminished because Viennese artists and architects did not use nature as the basis for their forms. He was thereafter conscious of an opposition in modern architectural culture between the German movement, whose coldness and classical leanings he deplored, and the Latin movement, based in a Mediterranean style, whose search for beauty based on the laws of nature appealed to him. He felt that L'Eplattenier's hope for a regionalism that would overcome this antagonism was nothing but a pious wish: "Where the Parisians place a leaf modeled after nature, and the Germans place a square polished like a mirror, well, we put a triangle with some fir cones and our taste remains unsullied."¹⁶ He had come to understand that the decorative arts would not be the solution to the problem of architecture. After Vienna, Jeanneret headed for Paris, instead of Dresden, as L'Eplattenier had planned for him, confirming his preference for the Latin style. This was further strengthened by a long stay in Germany in 1910, during which he made a study of the decorative art movement for the École d'Art and discovered German industrial architecture and, through the Werkbund, the effort to connect art and industrial production.¹⁷

In 1912, upon returning from his *voyage d'Orient*, Jeanneret built the Villa Jeanneret-Perret for his parents and accepted, reluctantly but out of loyalty to L'Eplattenier, a teaching position in the school's Nouvelle Section (New section), as the Cours Supérieur

¹³ The villa has been transformed into dwellings.

¹⁴ Sketch, FLC 2064 (verso).

¹⁵ École d'Art de La Chaux-de-Fonds, *Rapport de la Commission*, 1907–08, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶ Jeanneret, letter to L'Eplattenier, February 26, 1908. Published in *Le Corbusier: Lettres à ses maîtres*, vol. 2, p. 129.

¹⁷ Jeanneret, *Étude sur le mouvement d'art décoratif en Allemagne* (La Chaux-de-Fonds: Haefeli, 1912).

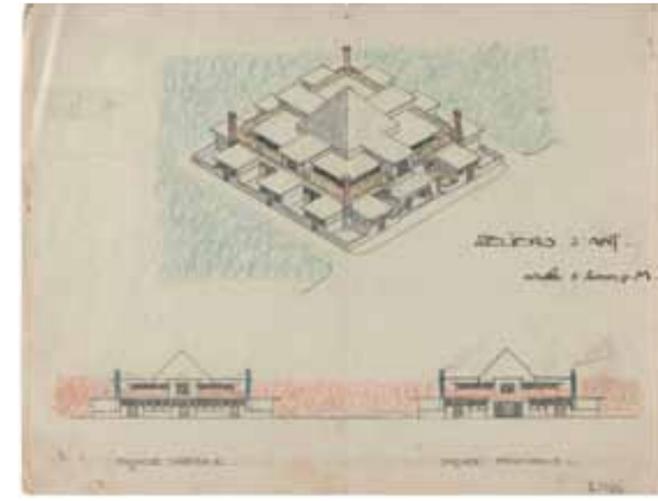


Fig. 4 Project for the Ateliers d'Art, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1910. Colored pencil and ink on paper, 12 ³/₁₆ x 15 ³/₄" (31 x 40 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

had been renamed in 1911. And until the section was closed in 1914, he did not practice as he preached.¹⁸ On the one hand, he continued to draw patterns based on fir trees in the manner of Eugène Grasset; with this work he expanded the commercial offerings of the Ateliers d'Art Réunis (fig. 4), an enterprise he had founded in 1910 with his colleagues Léon Perrin and Georges Aubert to sell decorative objects made by students. On the other hand, his architectural studies began to show the influence of the Neoclassicism of German architecture, combined with the idea developed by Alexandre Cingria-Vaneyre of an "other regionalism" specific not to the Jura but to the Suisse Romande.¹⁹ And despite his new interest in the picturesque urban landscape, of the sort advocated by Camillo Sitte and of which the pragmatic and rational industrial city-planning of La Chaux-de-Fonds was a counterexample, Jeanneret continued to paint a few mountain views, some rather melancholic in tone, others violently expressive and colored, like the images that would be included in *Le Voyage d'Orient* (*Journey to the East*) (1966).²⁰ From this point on, he preferred the lakeside landscape of Neuchâtel, with its likeness to the Mediterranean landscape, to the Jura.

Two texts from 1914 close this Jurassic chapter: "Le Renouveau dans l'architecture," in which he rejected both eclecticism and regionalism, and *Un Mouvement d'art à La Chaux-de-Fonds*, which traced the brief but exemplary history of the Nouvelle Section, which had been terminated that year, and L'Eplattenier dismissed, leaving Jeanneret with no future there.²¹ But this painful episode was liberating for him; he thus did not feel it necessary to eliminate from the latter text a remark made by the German architect Theodor Fischer that his master would surely have disapproved of: "I am surprised that abstract stylization of natural forms is still cultivated. In my opinion, only the concrete goal, concrete materials, and the concrete object can lead to a proper style."²²

¹⁸ Rüegg, "La Fin de l'Art nouveau: Perspectives nouvelles," in *Une Expérience Art nouveau*, p. 162.

¹⁹ Alexandre Cingria-Vaneyre, *Les Entretiens de la villa du Rouet: Essais dialogués sur les arts plastiques en Suisse romande* (Geneva: A. Jullien, 1908).

²⁰ Paintings, FLC 4076, 4079, 4085, and Brooks, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years*, plate 8.

²¹ Jeanneret, "Le Renouveau dans l'architecture," *L'Oeuvre* 1, no. 2 (1914): 33–37; Georges Aubert, Jeanneret, L'Eplattenier, and Léon Perrin, *Un Mouvement d'art à La Chaux-de-Fonds/À propos de la*

Nouvelle section de l'École d'art (La Chaux-de-Fonds: Georges Dubois, 1914). Although this brochure was credited to the Nouvelle Section's four faculty members, it was in fact written by Jeanneret.

²² Theodor Fischer, quoted by Jeanneret in *Un Mouvement d'art à La Chaux-de-Fonds*.



Plate 1 Jura landscape. 1902
Watercolor on paper, 4¹¹/₁₆ x 6¹/₄" (11.9 x 15.9 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2185



Plate 2 Landscape with lake. 1905
Pencil, watercolor, and ink on paper,
4¹³/₁₆ x 6¹³/₁₆" (12.2 x 17.3 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 1746



Plate 3 Forest. n.d.
Pencil, watercolor, gouache, and pastel on paper,
5⁵/₁₆ x 4¹³/₁₆" (13.5 x 12.3 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2100



Plate 4 Mountain landscape. 1904-05
Pencil and watercolor on paper, 2⁹/₁₆ x 6³/₄" (6.5 x 17.1 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2021



Plate 5 Mountain landscape. 1904-05
Pencil, watercolor, and gouache on paper,
6⁹/₁₆ x 8¹¹/₁₆" (16.7 x 22 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2210

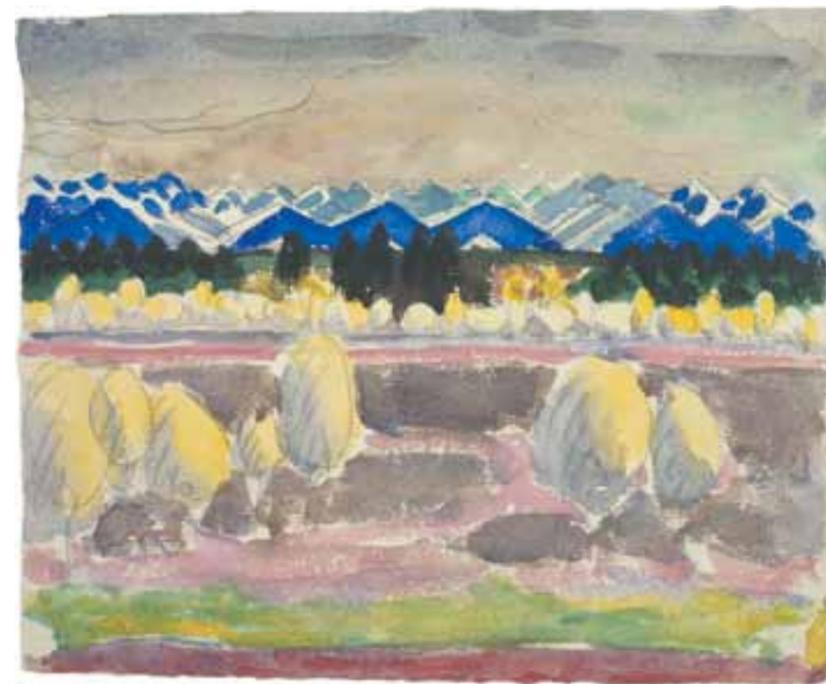


Plate 6 Blue mountains. 1910
Pencil, watercolor, ink on paper, 6³/₈ x 7¹¹/₁₆" (16.2 x 19.5 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2033



Plate 7 Forest in winter. 1910-11
Pencil and gouache on paper, 8¹¹/₁₆ x 11¹/₂" (22 x 29.2 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 5834

Following his discovery of Germany, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret returned to La Chaux-de-Fonds, where he divided his time between teaching in the new section of the town's art school and working as an architect and interior designer. He produced several designs for furniture for a group of progressive Jewish clients and worked on urban development projects, the most accomplished of which was the garden city of Les Crêtets (1914), a picturesque ensemble in which reminiscences abound of the work of Richard Riemerschmid and Heinrich Tessenow in Hellerau and of Georg Metzendorf in Essen.

In 1912, on a site near the houses that he had worked on with René Chapallaz from 1906 to 1907, he designed and built a large villa for his parents that overlooked the city. For the Maison Blanche, as it was quickly nicknamed, Jeanneret drew on many of the observations he had made during his travels. Unlike his chalet-style Villa Fallet of 1905–07, this house would not be defined by a stereo-typical form. It was set on terraced land rather than a promontory, on an embankment supported by a retaining wall.

Seen from the access path, the house recalls sketches Jeanneret had made of dwellings the previous year in Istanbul. From the road it can be reached by a meandering walkway that leads up to the corner of the garden. The path starts under a pergola similar to those Jeanneret had drawn in Pompeii, then it turns to the right, leading to a well-concealed front door. The dual entity formed by the house and its adjacent garden, which is set on a masonry base in the middle of the plot and hidden from the street, strongly recalls

Hermann Muthesius's house in Nikolassee (1906–07). Jeanneret knew this precedent from its publication in *Landhaus und Garten* (Country house and garden) as well as from firsthand experience; he attended a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Muthesius's home in its "forest of pines," as he reported to his parents in June 1910.¹ The white coating and asbestos-cement roof relate the house to contemporary German constructions. Also, from certain angles the house calls to mind photographs published by Paul Schultze-Naumburg in his *Kulturarbeiten* (Cultural works), while numerous details correspond to the simple, straightforward architectural forms of the early years of the previous century, such as those celebrated by Paul Mebes in *Um 1800* (Around 1800) (1908).²

The interior is striking in its luminosity, another echo of houses by Muthesius. The axis connecting the main living areas leads from the dining room, which opens on the garden through an apselike window, to the living room illuminated by a rectangular window surveying the slope—or, as Jeanneret described it, a "large window overlooking the horizon"—to the anteroom, which reveals a "large window with a forest view."³ On the second floor the bedrooms are lit by a band of windows facing the horizon. This strip recalls Frank Lloyd Wright's Winslow House in River Forest (1893–94), which Jeanneret knew through the Wasmuth publication of 1911.⁴ A very precise relation was thus established in which the open spaces of the interior relate to one another as well as to the panorama of the town and the surrounding hilltops. JLC

¹ Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, letter to his parents, June 13, 1910. Published in *Le Corbusier: Correspondance; Lettres à la famille*, vol. 1, 1900–1925, eds. Rémi Baudouin and Arnaud Dercelles (Gollion, Switzerland: Infolio, 2011), p. 310.

² Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten* (Munich: Callwey, 1901–17);

Paul Mebes, *Um 1800: Architektur und Handwerk im letzten Jahrhundert ihrer traditionellen Entwicklung* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1908).

³ Jeanneret, quoted in Arthur Rüegg, "Villa Jeanneret-Perret," in Stanislaus von Moos and Rüegg, eds., *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier: Applied Arts, Architecture, Painting and Photography,*

(1907–1922) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 210.

⁴ The library of the art school in La Chaux-de-Fonds contained the *Sonderhefte der Architektur des XX Jahrhunderts*, published by Wasmuth, a series in which a monograph on Frank Lloyd Wright was published in 1911.



Villa Jeanneret-Perret, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1912. View of the south facade. Photograph by Richard Pare



Villa Jeanneret-Perret, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1912. Exterior perspective. Pencil on paper, 23 1/16 x 32 5/8" (58.5 x 82.8 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 30266



Villa Jeanneret-Perret, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1912. Interior perspective. Pencil on tracing paper, 19 3/16 x 25 7/16" (48.7 x 64.6 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 30269

The house built by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret for the industrialist Anatole Schwob, the manufacturer of Cyma watches, was his last project in his hometown. It was also the only one of his early residences that he judged good enough to be included in the pages of *L'Esprit nouveau*, although he left the commentary to Amédée Ozenfant.¹ As opposed to his earlier houses, which were suburban, the villa was built on a city block that had been reconstructed in 1835 on Charles-Henri Junot's grid plan. Jeanneret had just completed his first building in the city center, the Cinéma Scala, whose vast roof evoked Heinrich Tessenow's Festival House (1910–12), which he had seen in Hellerau.

The comfortable Villa Schwob recapitulates the years of his formation, but above all it announces his turn toward abstraction in the 1920s. As he wrote to Auguste Perret in 1916, Jeanneret based the house on the principle of the concrete *maison bouteille* (bottle house), which he had designed while working for his mentor in 1909. He told Perret that it would have "facades with terraces 'à la française' . . . but made out of reinforced concrete."² However, the building was not cast all at once, and its framework was based on research Le Corbusier had undertaken in 1914 for the Dom-ino housing-scheme patent. He thus used "a skeleton of concrete built in a few weeks and filled in with pretty, bare bricks," achieving a result that recalls the side facade of Perret's Champs-Élysées Theater (1912). The theater's main, square facade reappears in Villa Schwob's large white surface facing the rue du Doubs. In *L'Esprit nouveau* Le Corbusier published the villa as a prime example of the systematic use of regulating lines.³

The clear-cut cubic volume with semi-cylindrical extensions marks the definitive departure from the vernacular and classical forms of his earlier houses. The exterior retains a certain flavor of Istanbul, with concrete elements replacing the wooden panels of Ottoman constructions. But the nickname "Turkish Villa," which it was rapidly given by neighbors, speaks as much to the eccentricity of its appearance as to an Orientalism that is difficult to identify. Indeed, the sources of the house are numerous. The sequence leading from the entrance to the double-height living room appears to reproduce the layout of the Villa Diomedes in Pompeii, organized around an atrium. This main area, truly the center of the house, recalls the large open spaces of Parisian artists' studios, invoked by the south-facing window, and also resembles the nave of the garage by Perret on rue de Ponthieu (1906–07).

In its overall organization the villa illustrates the new position Jeanneret took toward the urban landscape of his hometown. The picturesque illustrations found in the sketches he produced prior to 1914 are abandoned in favor of a more individual, almost nihilistic form that uses surrounding structures as foils. The building is presented as an autonomous object that connects to the continuity of the block only through the modeling of the service wings at the rear. While Jeanneret would harbor lasting resentment toward his client, who refused to pay the architect's fee because of substantial overruns in the villa's construction costs, he would also see in the house a true turning point. In June 1920 he wrote to William Ritter, saying, "I want to dedicate myself to serious, even learned works, that is to say paintings that are at least an extension of my Villa Schwob."⁴ JLC



Villa Schwob, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1916–17.
Photograph by Richard Pare



Villa Schwob, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1916–17.
Pencil, ink, and colored pencil on tracing paper.
17 3/8 x 34 3/4" (44.2 x 88.2 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

¹ Julien Caron [Amédée Ozenfant], "Une Villa de Le Corbusier 1916," *L'Esprit nouveau*, no. 6 (March 1921): 679–704.
² Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, letter to Auguste Perret, July 21, 1916. Published in *Le Corbusier: Lettres à ses maîtres*, vol. 1, *Lettres à Auguste*

Perret, ed. Marie-Jeanne Dumont (Paris: Éditions du Linteau, 2002), p. 180. Translations, unless otherwise noted, by Genevieve Hendricks.

³ Le Corbusier-Saugnier, "Les Tracés régulateurs," *L'Esprit nouveau*, no. 5 (February 1921): 572; and Le Corbusier,

Toward an Architecture, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), pp. 141, 143. Originally published as *Vers une architecture* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1923).
⁴ Jeanneret, letter to William Ritter, June 19, 1920, FLC R3-19-365.



Fig. 1. Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. 1924–25. Photograph by Richard Pare

A ribbon window 36 feet (11 meters) long, or almost that long, opens up the Villa Le Lac, also known as the Petite Maison, on the landscape of Lake Geneva (fig. 1). Le Corbusier would later suggest that he had conceived it with special regard for his father’s disposition. Among other evidence² there is an affectionate letter that Le Corbusier sent to his father, Georges-Édouard Jeanneret, on the occasion of his first birthday celebration in the new dwelling: “Here you are happily in your small house looking out on the landscape you love. It’s quite cold outside, I hope that your boiler is doing its job. In winter this site is extremely dignified, vast, vaster than in summer and it has an impressive polar softness. One no longer sees the mountains in the background, and the lake seems like a sea.”³ Le Corbusier employed various architectural devices for the house in Corseaux in order to adapt his design to a site he considered a veritable *salle de spectacle*, or theater; in this essay I will demonstrate how he inserted the Petite Maison into the site and opened the small dwelling to the surrounding landscape.⁴

By the time Charles-Édouard and Albert Jeanneret left for Paris in 1917, their father had withdrawn from active life, and the Villa Jeanneret-Perret (1912)—the construction of which had taken the entirety of the family’s savings—was too large for the parents alone, and, above all, its maintenance was onerous.⁵ Thus the elder Jeannerets decided to sell the house and to rent a small, suitable *châlet* in Les Châbles, in Blonay, above Vevey, to which they moved in October 1919.⁶

¹ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1954), p. 15. Translations, unless otherwise noted, by Marguerite Shore.

² Such as the dedication drafted for (but not included in) *Une Petite Maison*, draft at the Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris.

³ Le Corbusier, letter to Georges-Édouard Jeanneret, November 29, 1925, Bibliothèque de la Ville, La

Chaux-de-Fonds. Published in *Le Corbusier: Correspondance; Lettres à la famille*, vol. 1, 1900–1925, eds. Rémi Baudouin and Arnaud Dercelles (Gollion, Switzerland: Infolio, 2011), p. 726.

⁴ See Le Corbusier, lecture notes, Lausanne, February 18, 1924, FLC C3-6-25. Published in Tim Benton, *The Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier*

as a Lecturer (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009), p. 86.

⁵ See Klaus Spechtenhauser and Arthur Rüegg, eds., *Maison blanche: Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, Le Corbusier; Histoire et restauration de la villa Jeanneret-Perret, 1912–2005* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2007).

⁶ See *Le Corbusier: Correspondance*, vol. 1, pp. 553–69.

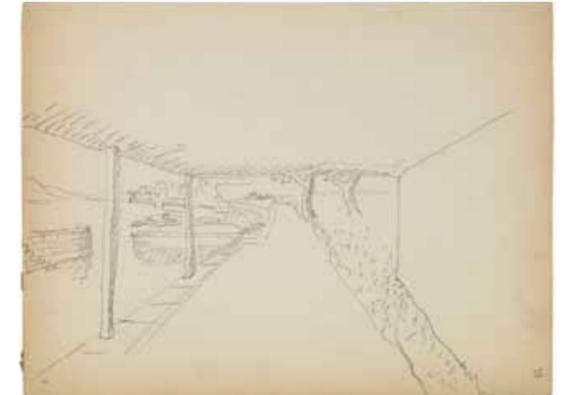


Fig. 2 Lakeshore seen through the *pilotis* of a house. 1920s. Pencil on paper, 9¹⁵/₁₆ x 13" (25.3 x 33 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 5065

The *châlet* was actually a summer residence, and living conditions there were a bit tight, but it opened up on a landscape that enchanted Georges-Édouard. After recovering from the move, he announced to his children, “At the moment, the window will lure us and will help the superb view that will be the remedy, for this view is wonderful, unique, indescribable.”⁷ In the same letter he was already proposing a visit to the region, to “the beautiful roads, the pleasant paths—later on the mountains.”

The correspondence between Le Corbusier and his father suggests that starting in the spring of 1923, they were looking for a piece of land on which to build a very small house.⁸ The die was cast in September 1923, when a site was found for what his mother described as a very small “purist” house.⁹ The hunt for the right land had proved exhausting: landowners suspicious, greedy, little inclined to sell; Le Corbusier impetuous, impatient, wanting to wind things up. But the greatest difficulties came from the requirements that Le Corbusier imposed.

His initial and fundamental demand was a piece of land that would offer a view of the landscape at Les Châbles that Georges-Édouard had extolled. This search is evidenced by, among other things, an album filled with sketches of sites and landscapes, on the hillside and at the lake, sometimes punctuated with the perimeter of the hypothetical project, other times in plan, elevation, and perspective views.¹⁰ The *châlet* at Les Châbles served as a model for the project, even for its furnishings. A corollary to his requirement for the site’s view was its specific placement in a relatively limited area, close to Les Châbles, ranging from the magnificent Côte de Lavau to Rivaz, Corseaux, Vevey, La Tour-de-Peil, and the heights of Clarens (in one drawing Le Corbusier shows the Castle du Châtelard).

His second requirement, that the design be a response to the landscape’s demands (fig. 2), was of a more intellectual order. It consisted of Le Corbusier’s ambition to confer a theoretical status on the innovations that his designs for the site would produce. One example was the “new [architectural] word” that arose out of the creation of the house’s ribbon window, and the exploration of the spatial and perceptual potential of this “new word,” which was derived, according to the Corbusian belief system, from new construction technologies.¹¹ Another was

⁷ Georges-Édouard Jeanneret, letter to Albert and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, November 10, 1919. Published in *Le Corbusier: Correspondance*, vol. 1, p. 566.

⁸ For an early mention of this idea, see Le Corbusier, letter to his parents, March 20, 1923. Published in *Le Corbusier: Correspondance*, vol. 1, p. 650.

⁹ Georges-Édouard Jeanneret, diary entry, September 5, 1923, Bibliothèque de la Ville, La Chaux-de-Fonds.

¹⁰ See FLC sketchbook 9, in particular the drawing FLC 5053.

¹¹ Le Corbusier frequently used the phrase *nouveaux mots* (new words) to refer to architectural devices he had invented, as when he wrote,

“The new techniques have brought us new words.” *Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning*, trans. Edith Schreiber Aujame (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 56. Originally published as *Précisions sur un état présent de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1930).



Fig. 3 "Les révolutions ne font pas que dans le sang et sur les barricades" (Revolutions are not fought only in blood and on the barricades) (detail). Notes for a lecture in Lausanne, with sketches of the Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. February 18, 1924. Ink on paper, sheet: 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (27.5 x 21.9 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC C3-6-30

the testing of new architectural figures that drew the user's attention to specific benefits and relationships—structural, spatial, perceptual, and symbolic—of the various architectural layouts employed. Indeed, the *Petite Maison*, created to satisfy his parents' urgent need for a minimal dwelling, gradually took on the character of an architectural manifesto.

The scaled-down requirements of an elderly couple, the need to reduce to a minimum the distribution of space, with an emphasis on the living room, and the importance of the view, combined with the fact that different terrains, from the lake to the highlands, suggested a long, narrow plan running parallel to the lakeside or to the contours of the ground, led Le Corbusier toward the idea of a "purist house in the shape of a sleeping-car," as Georges-Édouard noted in his diary.¹² "The plan in my pocket, I went off to look for a site," Le Corbusier later wrote, with the explanation that "the new elements of modern architecture made it possible to adapt to a site whatever the circumstances."¹³ These statements are supported by the various sketches of the *Petite Maison* (fig. 3)—on a hillside, set down amid vineyard terraces, always within that "Léman landscape, all *handcrafted*," as he explained in a lecture he gave on February 18, 1924, in Lausanne.¹⁴ The *Petite Maison*, still under construction, was already being used to illustrate the notion of a standard, a "machine for living," "a reappraisal of all the elements [that] proceed from inside to out," and the origin of feelings.

In the notes for that lecture Le Corbusier put forth, for the first time, his own history of architecture, tracing back a history of windows and of the material and technical assumptions that had led up to the present point, to the *fenêtre en longueur*, the ribbon window; it is illustrated with a series of diagrammatic sketches of historical and modern windows and a curious drawing of the *Petite Maison*, which appears in the foreground against the backdrop of the lake and the Savoy Alps, but with the ribbon window turned toward the viewer, that is, toward the mountains instead of the lake, giving the drawing a conceptual dimension in a paragraph of his lecture notes that approaches "the landscape architecture question."¹⁵

But the creation of the ribbon window—an innovative device that took advantage of a technical advance, improved the supply of natural light, and revolutionized the relationship between inside and outside—preceded the Lausanne lecture and owed something, although we do not know how much, to a provocation from Auguste Perret. Perret maintained

¹² Georges-Édouard Jeanneret, diary entry, December 17, 1923.

¹³ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, pp. 130, 127.

¹⁴ Le Corbusier, lecture notes (see note 4), FLC C3-6-30

¹⁵ *Ibid.*



Fig. 4 Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. 1924–25. Interior perspective with view of Lake Geneva. Ink and colored pencil on paper, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (21 x 27 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 32305

the window's anthropomorphic significance, as he wrote, "The vertical window frames man, it is in agreement with his silhouette . . . the vertical line is the line of the vertical stance, it is the life line."¹⁶ Rainer Maria Rilke, in his poem cycle *Die Fenster (The Windows)* (1927), would provide the best possible confirmation of this centuries-old cultural topos. In the ribbon window Perret quite rightly recognized a transgression, one that attacked values profoundly rooted in the culture and the experience of the *intérieur*, which is likely why he believed Le Corbusier to be "destroying the beautiful French tradition."¹⁷

Perret's aversion to the ribbon window—because unlike the vertical (French style) window, which "enlivens us, letting us see a complete space: street, garden, sky," it "sentences one to a perpetual panorama"¹⁸—was a corollary of Walter Benjamin's observation that the interior was "not just the universe but also the *étui* of the private individual."¹⁹ The ribbon window achieves the opposite effect, as Le Corbusier wrote, introducing "the immensity of the outdoors, the unfakable unity of a lakeside landscape with its storms or radiant calms."²⁰ Nature and the landscape, the feelings they convey and the values they embody, take place in the interior (fig. 4). It is impossible to keep the ribbon window at a distance, difficult to escape from the dominance of the landscape, of a "site [that] 'is there' as if one were in the garden."²¹ In the *Petite Maison*, the ribbon window subverts another symbol-element of refined bourgeois architecture: "the *enfilade* along the facade," originally meant to "establish a relationship among the noble spaces of the dwelling" and "to demonstrate to the visitor the wealth of the dwelling, in proportion to the length of this

¹⁶ Auguste Perret, quoted in Marcel Zahar, *Auguste Perret* (Paris: Vincent & Fréal, 1959), p. 15. See Bruno Reichlin, "Une Petite Maison sul lago Lemano: La controversia Perret-Le Corbusier," *Lotus international*, no. 60 (October–December 1988): 59–83.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier, undated memo, FLC F2-16. Le Corbusier noted that in February 1926 Perret had demanded

that Albert Morancé, the publisher of *L'Architecture vivante*, no longer publish Le Corbusier's works in the magazine.

¹⁸ Perret, quoted in Zahar, *Auguste Perret*, p. 15.
¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard

University Press, 1999), p. 9. Originally published as "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts," 1935, in *Schriften*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1955).

²⁰ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 130.
²¹ Le Corbusier, *Almanach d'architecture moderne* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1926), p. 94.



Fig. 5 Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. 1924–25. Interior perspective with view of Lake Geneva. From Le Corbusier, *Almanach d'architecture moderne* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1926), p. 94

perspective.”²² Instead of an enfilade of rooms, separated by doors and each with its own windows, the ribbon window unites living room, bedroom, and bathroom, introducing the architectural enjambment, a rhetorical figure that would become a principal characteristic of Corbusian spatiality.²³

As a result, with the ribbon window “making the majesty of the magnificent site enter into the house,” the inhabitant experiences a state of uncommon visual and psychological ambiguity.²⁴ Divided between two antithetical spaces, the place where he is and the place of his desire, confined to the role of spectator, he becomes aware of the dissolving of “the center, the warm core” of that microcosm, the private dwelling, and of interiority’s flight into the great outdoors (fig. 5).²⁵ For Georges-Édouard true nature was the place that redeemed and consoled, the goal of authentic experience—thus, his dwelling looking out over Lake Geneva would be a minuscule loge in true nature’s womb.²⁶

Only nature could offset the dismay with society and the future that was occasionally found in Georges-Édouard’s diary and letters (and in certain autobiographical pages written by his son); this emotional extreme recalls the hypochondriac states or the enchantments and euphoric images that fill so many of the pages of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (*Julie, or the New Heloise*) (1761) or his *Confessions* (1782) or *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (*Reveries of the Solitary Walker*) (1782). Georges-Édouard’s writings make no mention of Rousseau, who so thoroughly influenced both the way he listened to himself and the modern projection of the self in nature. But a subtle relationship triangulates among the feelings and the places for which Georges-Édouard, his architect son, and Rousseau felt affection.

²² For this type of enfilade, see Monique Eleb and Anne Debarre, *L'invention de l'habitation moderne: Paris, 1880–1914* (Paris: Hazan and Archives d'Architecture moderne, 1995); and *Architecture de la vie privée: Maisons et mentalités, XVII–XIX siècles* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture moderne, 1989), p. 50.
²³ Le Corbusier used the term *enjambement* to designate those effects of dual association or spatial ambiguity for which Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky have proposed the term

“phenomenological transparency.” Le Corbusier deserves credit for greater etymological relevance: *enjambement*, in rhetoric, designates the infraction of the correlation between syntax and meter. Le Corbusier, “Notes à la suite,” in *Cahiers d'Art* 1, no 3 (1926): 46–52; and Rowe and Slutzky, “Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal,” 1955–56, *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 45–54. See also Jacques Dubois et al., *Rhétorique générale* (Paris: Éditions Larousse, 1970), p. 71.

²⁴ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 130.

²⁵ See Georg Hirth, *Das deutsche Zimmer der Renaissance: Anregungen zu häuslicher Kunstpflege* (Munich: G. Hirth, 1880), p. 2.

²⁶ *Loge* is the term Le Corbusier used in his Lausanne lecture to designate the type of house to be inserted in “ce site [qui] est une salle de spectacle” (see notes 4 and 14). Le Corbusier’s emphasis.

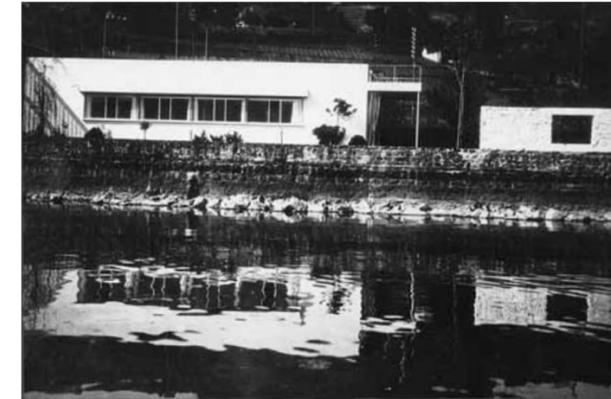


Fig. 6 Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. 1924–25. View of the house from the lake. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Department of Architecture and Design Study Center

Would it be rash to suggest that the ribbon window embodies an anthropocentric (a term flaunted by Le Corbusier in his Lausanne lecture, as when he called doors and windows *trous d'homme*, or manholes), modern, and secularized (and perhaps concrete, not to mention exceedingly prosaic) architectural device that, in the way it inhabits the world and the house, encourages reverie, solitude, and meditation in Rousseau’s idler-heirs? Taken together, these elements give the ribbon window, “the main feature, the chief attraction in the house,” such importance and theoretical and poetic urgency that when Colombo, the contractor, told Le Corbusier that he could not or would not cast a single beam in reinforced concrete, the architect, satisfied with the appearance of his “new word,” decided that the alternative—three small columns in metal crossbar, masked by the frame of the windows—did not invalidate it.²⁷

The *Petite Maison*’s garden is contained by a rectilinear lakefront wall that on the left side, looking toward the lake, is raised, forming a screen with an opening at the center. With the hedge on the street side and the enclosing wall on the short side facing east, which are about 6 feet (2 meters) high, the garden becomes much like a “summer living room.”²⁸ The enclosing wall, painted an almost Pompeian red, the white limewashed screen, and the opening at the center with the little built-in cement table complete this image of an interior open to the sky. It is no accident that in certain published photographs the cement table is set and household objects rest on the windowsill, creating a veritable “still life of the inhabited space.”²⁹

The screen, whose light stucco mitigates the natural, raw character of the exposed stone wall, is an unexpected artifice that helps to domesticate the summer room. Moreover, the whiteness challenges one’s automatic perception; the rustic material has disappeared, but its imprint remains, visual and tactile, so that the screen-wall becomes a sign of itself, of an article handmade in stone, of a traditional, immemorial artisanal technology, and the opening becomes the very type of opening for that traditional masonry.

²⁷ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923, p. 30. Le Corbusier’s personal library did not include *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, but *Les Confessions* was present there in two volumes, in a 1908–09 edition, with the inscription “Ch.-É.-Jeanneret, 1909” and underlined passages, including “Go to Vevey,

visit the region, seek out its loveliest spots, take a boat on the lake, and ask yourself whether nature did not make this beautiful place for a Julie, a Claire, and a Saint-Preux.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, trans. Angela Scholar (1782; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 149.

²⁸ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, pp. 129–30.
²⁹ See Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, *Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret: Ihr Gesamtes Werk von 1910–1929* (Zurich: Girsberger, 1930), p. 74.



Fig. 7 Villa Le Lac, Corseaux. 1924–25. Four perspective views of the exterior. Pencil and pastel on paper, 9¹⁵/₁₆ x 13" (25.3 x 33 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 5103

The messages articulated by the totality of these elements or devices are related but call for separate analysis. First: the screen, in exposed stone with the traditional "hole in the wall" type of opening, appears at one end of the history of architecture told through the history of windows, with the ribbon window, the "contemporary architectural revolution" Le Corbusier brought about by the use of new construction techniques, forming the other end.³⁰ Second: upon reading, in *Une Petite Maison*, that "the south wall . . . was nevertheless pierced with a square aperture in proportion (object at a human scale)," one might say that Le Corbusier, in this "room of greenery," had deliberately reinstated Perret's anthropomorphic concept.³¹ Finally: contrary to the ribbon window, the screen's opening selects and detaches a view from the continuum of the landscape. As Otto Friedrich Bollnow wrote of the "rapturous effect of the window," what one sees through "seems removed from chance: 'all chance is abolished.' It becomes painting."³² This is confirmed by how that opening has been photographed, framing a subject that is fixed (the lakeside of Vevey) or mobile (such as a sailboat, in which case the photographer necessarily must employ patience). Le Corbusier held on to this effect of the painting-view; in the third sketch of the *Petite Maison* he added a "nouveau cliché," sketched in pencil, depicting the view with a sailboat, as it would appear in the small publication sent to the press.³³

The two types of openings establish a comparison that for Le Corbusier demarcated the frontier between tradition and the new architecture, in which each is assigned a leading role in the characterization of its space and with its shape confers paradigmatic features (fig. 7). This is clearly manifested in the circumstances of the windows' existence: their technological systems, the spaces they frame, and the visual and mental relationship that they establish with a stupendous landscape. These spaces have a paradoxical relationship with each other: the ribbon window makes the interior space a thorough participant in the exterior

³⁰ The history of architecture told through the history of windows is a recurring theme in Le Corbusier's lectures and writings on purism. Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 51. Its first appearance, in a sequence of sketches that lays out the historical

development, was as the subject of the lecture in Lausanne, (see notes 4 and 14).

³¹ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923, p. 26.

³² Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer,

1963), pp. 162–63. Translation by the author and Shore. Bollnow brought to my attention Rilke's ten poems on the theme of the window.

³³ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923, p. 50.

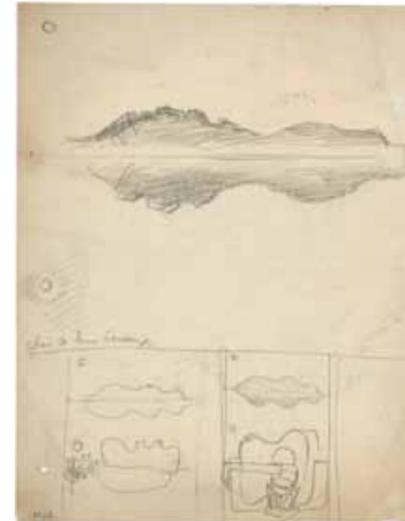


Fig. 8 "Clair de lune Corseaux." n.d. Pencil on tracing paper, 10⁵/₈ x 8¹/₄" (27 x 21 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2451

space, whereas the view that opens up in the rustic wall of the screen gives the enclosed space of the garden the features of an interior. The opposition is perfectly orchestrated by a series of correlations that were gradually established on the construction site. The ribbon window and hole in the wall are at the same height, and the width of the latter corresponds to the sum of the two basic modules—one wide and the other narrow—that make up by their juxtaposition the ribbon window. Thus, seen from the lake, the screen and the visible portion of the facade are two low, long rectangles with the same proportions, with the opening in an axial position and of almost the same color (white for the screen, probably pale green for the plaster of the facade, although in some sketches it is still "pale pink"). At an earlier stage Le Corbusier envisioned the screen in reinforced concrete, with the opening sloping down to the right, and, in one sketch painted "dark pink."³⁴

The Villa Le Lac's simple, symmetrical figures of facade and screen, its elementary composition and paratactic juxtapositions, the protected space of its garden that seems like an unfinished room, the archaic connotations of the wall facing the lake and the screen—all these things together must have suggested to Le Corbusier, in a letter sent from the construction site to his fiancée, Yvonne Gallis, "an ancient temple at the water's edge (fig. 8)."³⁵

³⁴ See the drawing of the plan and lake elevation of the house and garden, FLC 9419.

³⁵ Le Corbusier, letter to Yvonne Gallis, September 11, 1924, FLC R1-12-13.



Fig. 1 View of Lake Geneva toward the east from Blonay, Switzerland. 1922. Colored pencil and pastel on paper, 9 7/16 x 12 3/8" (24 x 31.5 cm). Album La Roche, folio 18r. Private collection

The Bassin Lémanique and its hillsides and mountains were omnipresent in guidebooks and on train-station billboards after World War I, thanks to the area's thorough transformation into western Switzerland's foremost tourist resort during the preceding decades.¹ Le Corbusier's parents were thus naturally drawn to that region when they decided to leave La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1919 for a more benign climate. Their son may well have played a role in selecting the spectacularly sited chalet Les Châbles, near Blonay, a village above Vevey.² In September 1922, on one of his visits to his parents, his painterly instincts were triggered by the wide basin of Lake Geneva and the panorama of the Alps that was the *raison d'être* of their new home. Within days he had produced an impressive series of landscape studies from Blonay and its environs (fig. 1).³

Decades later, in *Une Petite Maison* (1954), Le Corbusier described those early visits and studies as part of his search for a site for the Villa Le Lac, the little house that he subsequently built for his parents in nearby Corseaux: "1922, 1923, I repeatedly take the rapid Paris–Milan or the Orient Express (Paris–Ankara). I carry in my pocket a plan for a house. The plan before the site? The plan for a house in order to find it a site? Yes."⁴

A little sketch, also published in that book, identifies the location of the site that was finally chosen. It was close to international rail lines so that, as might be expected from the salesman-architect Le Corbusier, the great cities of Europe (Paris, London, Amsterdam,

¹ See the essays by Gilles Barbey and Jacques Gubler, in *Werk-Archithese*, no. 6 (June 1977). The present essay is partly based on Stanislaus von Moos, "Riviera lémanique," in von Moos, ed., *Le Corbusier: Album La Roche* (Milan: Electa; New York: Monacelli, 1996), pp. 63–78.

² Le Corbusier's enthusiasm about the landscape views is reported in his father's diary. See Arthur Rüegg, "Le Corbusiers Wohnungen und sein Zürcher Pied-à-terre," in Karin Gimmi et al., eds., *SvM: Die Festschrift für Stanislaus von Moos* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2005), pp. 210–33.

³ *Le Corbusier: Album La Roche*, folios 14, 17–24, and 27. See von Moos,

"Riviera lémanique," in *ibid.*, pp. 69–72, 103–05. The chronology of these studies is summarized on p. 76–77, n. 3. See also Nicholas Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), pp. 176, 196, and *passim*.

⁴ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1954), pp. 6–7.

Berlin, Munich, Zurich, Vienna, Milan, and Marseille) would be practically at the doorstep of the Villa Le Lac, also called the Petite Maison, thanks to the excellent connections between Lausanne and the rest of the world. Then the book presents the result of the undertaking: the house itself, shown in plan, as it was allegedly designed in advance, along with a panorama of the lake it faces. The transportation map and the Alpine panorama are featured on a double-page spread, as if in a travel brochure.

Could Le Corbusier have known the monumental views of Lake Geneva painted by Ferdinand Hodler a few years before? By most accounts, Hodler was the most important Swiss painter of the early twentieth century. He had turned Alpine vistas into emblematic works of art after the lakes, glaciers, and mountain peaks of the Swiss Alps, and especially the Bernese Oberland, were opened to tourism via steamboat, railway, and cog railway in the late nineteenth century.⁵ These works basically present two themes. The first is a dramatization of the Alps as the result of awe-inspiring geological catastrophes; this was a theme that, a few years earlier, had interested Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin, among others, though Hodler's main source of inspiration was doubtless the geologist Carl Vogt.⁶ The other theme demonstrates Hodler's conception of the landscape as the threshold to a transcendental understanding of the universe.⁷ The views of Lake Geneva that he painted in the last years of his life, from just a few miles west of Blonay, in Chexbres, represent both a synthesis of those themes and a climax in European landscape painting in its evolution from Symbolism to abstraction.⁸

⁵ Le Corbusier frequently referred to Ferdinand Hodler's monumental figurative work, especially in his early correspondence with Charles L'Eplattenier, William Ritter, and his parents, although I know of no comments on Hodler's landscapes. See *Le Corbusier: Lettres à ses maîtres*, vol. 2, *Lettres à Charles L'Eplattenier*, ed. Marie-Jeanne Dumont (Paris: Éditions du Linteau, 1911), p. 75; and *Le Corbusier: Correspondance: Lettres à la famille*, vol. 1, 1900–1925, eds. Rémi Baudouin and Arnaud Dercelles (Gollion, Switzerland: Infolio, 2011), pp. 117, 234–35, and *passim*.

⁶ Carl Christoph Vogt, *Lehrbuch der Geologie und Petrefactenkunde: Zum gebrauch bei Vorlesungen und zum selbstunterrichte* (Braunschweig, Germany: F. Vieweg & Sohn, 1854).

As an art student in Geneva in the 1870s, Hodler took classes with Vogt. See Oskar Bächtli, "Das Landschaftswerk von Ferdinand Hodler," in Bächtli, Stephen F. Eisenman, and Lukas Gloor, eds., *Ferdinand Hodler: Landschaften* (Zurich: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft/VerlagsHaus Zürich, 1987), pp. 24–48; and "Ferdinand Hodler: Geordnete Natur," in Tobia Bezzola, Paul Lang, and Paul Müller, eds., *Ferdinand Hodler: Landschaften der Geologie und Petrefactenkunde* (Zurich: Kunsthaus Zürich, 2004), pp. 51–61.

⁷ See in particular Dario Gamboni, "Hodler et les symbolismes," in Bächtli, Matthias Frehner, and Jans-Jörg Heusser, eds., *Ferdinand Hodler: Die Forschung—Die Anfänge—Die Arbeit—Der Erfolg—Der Kontext* (Zurich: SIK ISEA, 2009), pp. 249–62.

⁸ This process can be said to have found its completion in the work of the somewhat younger Piet Mondrian. See Beat Wismer, "Ferdinand Hodler, Piet Mondrian: Eine Begegnung," in Wismer, ed., *Ferdinand Hodler, Piet Mondrian: Eine Begegnung* (Aarau, Switzerland: Aargauer Kunsthaus; Baden, Switzerland: Verlag Lars Müller, 1998), pp. 13–39.



Fig. 2 Ferdinand Hodler (Swiss, 1853–1918). **Landscape Near Caux with Rising Clouds**. 1917. Oil on canvas, 25¹³/₁₆ x 31⁷/₈" (65.5 x 81 cm). Kunsthaus Zürich.

Le Corbusier's dialogue with Lake Geneva began just a few years after Hodler's ended. If not a direct influence, Hodler was certainly an eye-opening precedent for the intriguing catalogue of psychophysiological qualities in landscapes that Le Corbusier would develop as he studied the Riviera Lémanique and its topography. In 1922, however, Le Corbusier's interest was still primarily pictorial. Possibly encouraged by the painter Amédée Ozenfant, who had joined him for several of his trips to Blonay, Le Corbusier produced a series of color drawings in a plain Neoclassical style that owes more to Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot than to Hodler.⁹ A panoramic pencil drawing made from Les Châbles, looking south across the lake to the agitated profile of the mountain chain, is a particularly evocative attempt to assimilate the Alps to his Neoclassical taste.¹⁰ Springing out of nowhere, the Savoy Alps appear to turn their sharply outlined morphology, multifaceted yet resting, toward the sky, offering the viewer across the lake a panorama without even a trace of foreground. It is difficult, in this context, not to be reminded of some of Hodler's intriguing lake views (fig. 2).

In a lecture given first in Lausanne, in 1924, and subsequently in Paris, Basel, and Zurich, Le Corbusier, speaking at length of the views from the Côtes Vaudoises, couldn't resist offering a maverick theory of the sublime as opposed to the beautiful (or the merely picturesque) landscape, linking appreciation of landscape to the theories on the Platonic bodies he had put forward in *L'Esprit nouveau*.¹¹ His unequivocally Neoclassical prejudice left little space for the sublime as claimed by the eighteenth-century Swiss ideologues of the Alpine landscape, starting with Albrecht von Haller and Caspar Wolf; nor did he bother with Ruskin's explanation, in *Of Mountain Beauty* (1856), of the genesis of the Alpine chain through a gradual ruination of the earth's surface. In his psychophysiological perspective, it was enough to characterize a broken jigsaw line in a landscape as troubling, disturbing, thus unpleasant, as opposed to a wavy contour or straight horizontal line, which was calming and therefore pleasant (page 66, fig. 3). "This broken line is unpleasant," he wrote by the side of a sketch, "this continuous line is pleasing; this jumble of lines disturbs us; this rhythmic composition calms us."¹² Earlier in the lecture he had written, in a similar vein, "Confronted by these various lines, which I am drawing on the blackboard, different sensations are

⁹ These are folios 3 and 4, which I now think may be dated 1919, in *Le Corbusier: Album La Roche*.

¹⁰ Ibid., folio 14 and p. 103. This drawing is probably from 1921 (or perhaps 1922); a similar drawing was later

published in Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, p. 18.

¹¹ See Tim Benton, *The Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier as a Lecturer* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009), pp. 52–92. On Platonic bodies, see Le Corbusier-Saugnier, "Trois Rappels à MM.

les architectes: Premier Rappel; Le Volume," in *L'Esprit nouveau*, no. 1 (October 1920): 90–96.

¹² Le Corbusier, transcript of a lecture given at the Salle Rapp, Paris, 1924. Quoted in Benton, *The Rhetoric of Modernism*, p. 81.



Fig. 3 Palace of the League of Nations, Geneva (detail). 1927. Perspective sketch of the roof terrace. 1927. Pencil and ink on tracing paper, sheet: 26⁵/₈ x 24³/₈" (67.6 x 61.9 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 23384

generated. The difference between a broken or continuous line is enough to stimulate the heartbeat, in response to the shocking or soothing effect produced by the forms."¹³

What was at stake was clearly not, after all, a theory of landscape painting but a new aesthetic that would help architects to organize the world.¹⁴ In another sketch done for the same lecture, Le Corbusier explicitly linked the Alpine sublime of the Dents du Midi to the Germanic and ultimately Gothic architecture of the late nineteenth century, for him synonymous with the bad influence of the English and the Swiss-Germans on the colonization of the Suisse Romande. That influence, we understand, could only be overcome by reconfiguring architecture according to a new, purified kind of Classicism, in harmony with both the sober outline of Le Grammont and the remnants of the "useful past," embodied by the stone retaining walls of the Lavaux region, that "secular, perhaps millenary work."¹⁵

When a few years later, in 1926, Le Corbusier was working on the League of Nations proposal, it was the *petit lac*—the western tip of Lake Geneva and its panorama—that came into focus.¹⁶ It is interesting that most renderings of the proposed palace depict the complex as seen from the lake, so that the "calm" and "pleasing" contours of the Jura mountains in the background are the only natural context included. The more "disturbing" vista, on the south horizon, of Mont Blanc, Geneva's all-too-well-known postcard motif, is reserved for the select few who have access to the Assembly Hall's roof terrace.¹⁷ In the rendering of that point of view (fig. 3) the vanishing lines of the floor slabs point not toward Mont Blanc but toward Le Môle, a cone-shaped mountain located about halfway between Geneva and Mont Blanc, so that the latter appears like a ruined version of the former, its Platonic prototype, at its foot. If nature and history confront us with the results of millenary processes of decay, was the implied message,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ And—Le Corbusier claimed—this new aesthetic "needs some fundamental principles if it is to gain currency." To this end "a useful point of departure is the physiology of sensations. This physiology of sensations is our sensory reaction in response to a given optical phenomenon. My eyes transmit to my senses the spectacle before them." Ibid.

¹⁵ With these thoughts he came full circle with his earlier ideas about the culture of the Suisse Romande and its

debt to Mediterranean Classicism. See Alexandre Cingria-Vaneyre, *Les Entretiens de la Villa du Rouet: Essais dialogués sur les arts plastiques en Suisse romande* (Geneva: A. Jullien, 1908).

¹⁶ See Werner Oechslin, ed., *Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret: Das Wettbewerbsprojekt für den Völkerbundspalast in Genf 1927* (Zurich: gta-Institut and Ammann Verlag, 1988). See also Martin Merz, "Pushing Corb: Campaigning for Le Corbusier's Project for the Palace of Nations in Geneva

(1926–33)," in Shai-tsu Tzeng, ed., *Shida Studies in Art History: Agents of Modernity* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 2011), pp. 227–84.

¹⁷ This vista is found at the bottom left of the vignette of the axonometric view of the League of Nations Palace project, now at the gta-Institut at the ETH Zürich. See also FLC 23384. See Adolf Max Vogt, *Le Corbusier: The Noble Savage* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 160–82 and in particular p. 167.

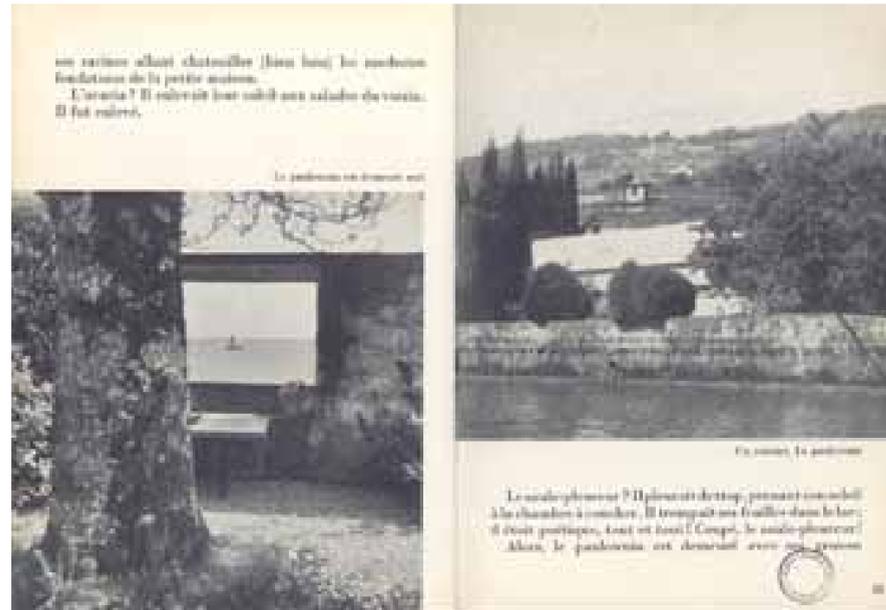


Fig. 4 Villa Le Lac, Corseaux, 1924–25. View of the picture window in the garden wall and the strip window of the house itself. From Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1954), pp. 54–55

then architecture must orient itself toward the purity of origins, and the same should go for the League of Nations. It may be useful to note that in terms of geology, at least according to Viollet-le-Duc, Mont Blanc's present physiognomy was itself the result of a millenary ruination process, which began with an almost cone-shaped massif.¹⁸

Given the unique magic of the *ingresque* panorama of the Savoy Alps in the drawing made from Les Châbles, it seems fitting that the architect, searching for a site for his parents' house, should end up choosing land immediately on the shore of the lake, so that the disquieting drama of the Alpine skyline would be mitigated by the mysterious silence of the sheet of water from which it rises as if from the sea. Although ruled by a rigorous discipline of domestic functions, the Petite Maison, barely larger than a trailer, is nothing so much as a tool for trimming views of the landscape. As if to illustrate an archetypal dichotomy, the views fit into two categories: the almost square (although actually horizontally rectangular) "hole" in the garden wall overlooking the lake, which corresponds to the classical proportions of a landscape painting, and the *fenêtre en longueur* (ribbon window) of the living room, which corresponds to the panorama (fig. 4). In fact the *fenêtre en longueur*, no less than 36 feet (about 11 meters) long, can be said to have been placed to frame the very view that is the subject of that drawing made from Les Châbles. By proposing such a frame for an Alpine view, Le Corbusier returned to one of the birthplaces of the panorama as an artistic form.¹⁹ Is it a coincidence that he did so at a time when he was also frequently planning fair installations or, more precisely, dioramas, a classic nineteenth-century device that he favored for promoting his ideas about urbanism?²⁰

¹⁸ Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Le Massif du Mont-Blanc: Étude sur sa construction géodésique, sur ses transformations et sur l'état ancien et moderne de ses glaciers* (Paris: J. Baudry, 1877), p. 77.

¹⁹ See Urs Kneubühl, ed., *Augenreisen: Das Panorama in der Schweiz* (Bern: Schweizerisches Alpines Museum and Schweizer Alpen-Club SAC, 2001).

²⁰ See *Le Corbusier: Album La Roche*, pp. 79–81.



Fig. 5 Forestay Waterfall, Bellevue-Chexbres, Switzerland. Photograph by Stefan Banz

Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*: 1. *La Chute d'eau*, 2. *Le Gaz d'éclairage* (Given: 1. *The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas*) (1946–66) offers what is arguably the most extreme alternative to Le Corbusier's technique of capturing a landscape by means of architecture. If the Petite Maison is an optical apparatus for capturing a panoramic lakeside view, *Étant donnés* is closer to the perceptual model of the camera obscura. Duchamp's work replaces Le Corbusier's strip window with two tiny peepholes; instead of a lakeside panorama, viewers discover a reclining female nude in close-up and, in the background, a quasi-Art Nouveau landscape consisting of a waterfall surrounded by a few weepy trees.²¹

Duchamp probably did not know about the house in Corseaux. Even if he had, given his "intrepid and unwavering despise" of the architect, he would have had no wish to visit it when he stayed at the Hôtel Bellevue, in nearby Chexbres, in 1946.²² Recent scholarship has revealed, however, that *Étant donnés* owes its key motif to that short stay on the Riviera Lémanique. While at the hotel, Duchamp had taken a few photographs of a nearby waterfall, which later served as the basis for the image of the *chute* in his installation, but he apparently had forgotten where he took the picture. Decades later, after painstaking detective work, a group of Swiss Duchamp acolytes was able to locate the site of the waterfall in the vicinity of Forestay, in the township of Chexbres, a few miles from Corseaux and near La Tour-de-Peilz, where Gustave Courbet spent the last years of his life (fig. 5).²³

Although at first sight Le Corbusier and Duchamp seem an impossible pairing, a case can be made for a considerable parallelism of interests between them, based on a number of shared themes that imply—yet go well beyond—the merely formal.²⁴ Both have made, in their own ways, an issue of the fabricated nature of the landscape, and of its character as a *paysage industriel* (industrial landscape). Both understood the landscape to be a site of production, of productive rationality, yet oddly enough both ended up framing it as a

²¹ See Beth A. Price et al., "Evolution of the Landscape: The Materials and Methods of the *Étant donnés* Backdrop," in Michael R. Taylor, ed., *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 262–81, as well as note 24 of this essay.

²² Robin Middleton, foreword to Philippe Duboy, Jean-Jacques Lequeu: *Une Énigme* (Paris: Hazan, 1987). See von Moos, "The Missed Encounter with Le Corbusier," in Stefan Banz, ed., *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2010), pp. 258–75.

²³ See Banz, introduction, *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*, pp. 9–13; and "Paysage fautif: Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall," in *ibid.*, pp. 26–57.



Fig. 6 André Raffray (French, 1925–2010). "Marcel Duchamp in his studio contemplating the secrecy of his last work, *Given*, which would only be revealed after his death, New York." 1966. Gouache and tempera on paper, 15 x 12" (38.1 x 30.5 cm). Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, New York

Fig. 7 Le Corbusier (right) and Anatole de Monzie, French Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts contemplating the diorama of the Ville Contemporaine shown at the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau. 1925. From Le Corbusier, *Almanach d'architecture moderne* (Paris: G. Crès & Cie, 1926), p. 136

romantic site, emptied of all traces of human hubbub—or almost (figs. 6 and 7). In his *vedute* Le Corbusier makes us forget that the Riviera Lémanique is anything but the bucolic paradise described in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (*Julie, or the new Heloise*) (1761), but is indeed a heavily urbanized stretch of land.²⁵ Duchamp, in turn, literally turns his back on everything that attracted him to the site in the first place. Rather than paying his tribute to the spectacular lakeside view, he proceeds to his somber meditation on the forgotten waterfall—not without, however, subjecting it (as Le Corbusier had done with the Riviera Lémanique) to a radical cleansing operation, eliminating its cultural and architectural *étants donnés* (the mill, the distillery, the shooting stand), so that we are left with a mere kitsch parody of a Courbet waterfall.

²⁴ See von Moos "The Missed Encounter with Le Corbusier"; and Duboy, *Jean-Jacques Lequeu*.

²⁵ See in particular Gubler, "Les Identités d'une région," *Werk-Archithese*; no. 6 (June 1977): 3–11.



Plate 8 Landscape of Lake Geneva. 1918–20
Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 10 x 13" (25.4 x 33 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 4791



Plate 9 Landscape of Lake Geneva with boat. n.d.
Pencil, watercolor, and gouache on paper,
9¹³/₁₆ x 12¹⁵/₁₆" (25 x 32.8 cm)
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 4910

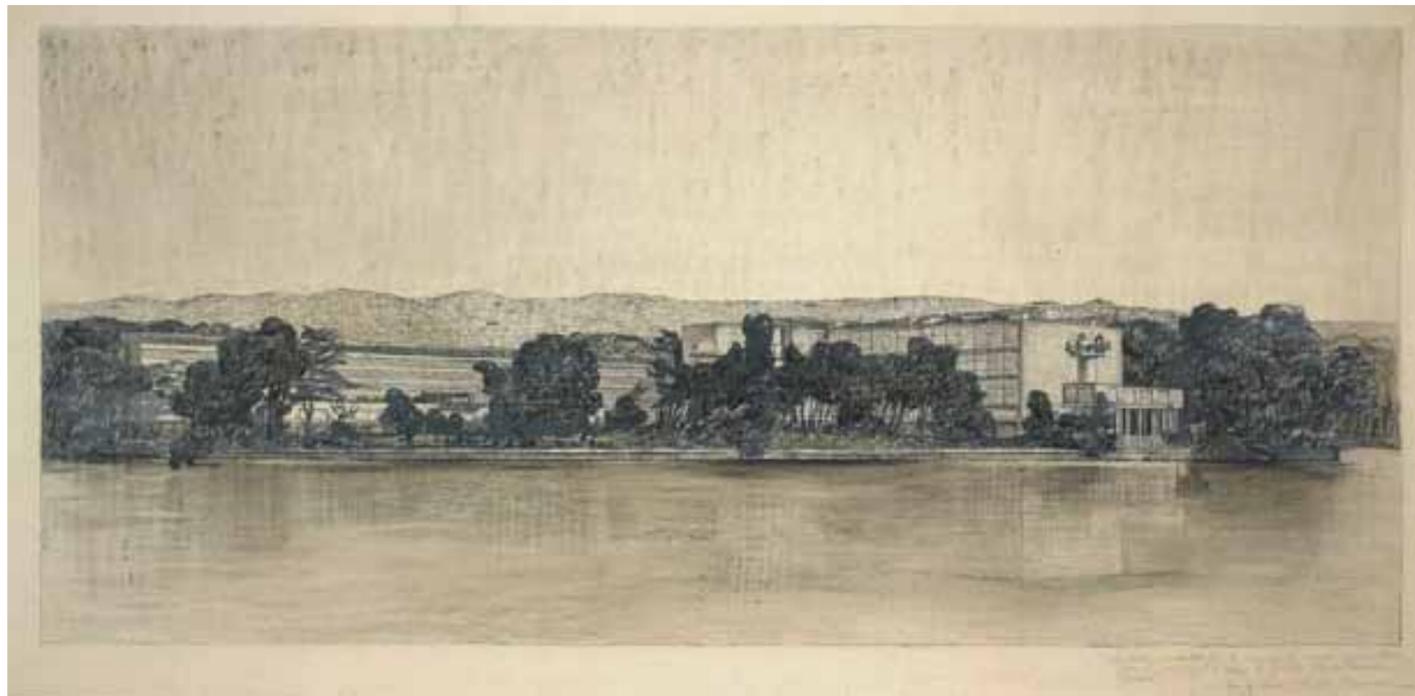


Plate 10 Palace of the League of Nations, Geneva. 1927
 Perspective in the landscape
 Charcoal and pencil on tracing paper,
 29¹³/₁₆" x 6' 1⁷/₁₆" (75.7 x 186.6 cm)
 Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 23169



Plate 11 Palace of the League of Nations, Geneva. 1927
 Axonometric view from the west
 Heliographic print on paper with ink and collage additions,
 53³/₈" x 57⁷/₈" (135.5 x 147 cm)
 Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (gta),
 ETH Zürich

In 1929 El Lissitzky, who was once Le Corbusier's greatest Russian ally, published a devastating article in the Moscow journal *Stroitel'naya Promyshlennost* (Building industry), criticizing his project for the Mundaneum, or Cité Mondiale (World city), located outside of Geneva, and the Czech critic Karel Teige would reiterate the language of the critique. The message was simple: by using regulating lines based on the golden section and taking recourse in forms reminiscent of ziggurats, Le Corbusier had turned the founding principles of modern architecture on their heads and revived the academic practices of composition and monumentality.¹

In 1928 Le Corbusier had accepted a commission from the Belgian philanthropist Paul Otlet, a man driven by the desire to advance goodwill among the citizens of the world through culture and education. Before 1914 Otlet had envisioned the creation of a Cité Mondiale and entrusted the design to the French architect Ernest Hébrard for a site located on the Dutch coast.² For Le Corbusier the project seemed to present an opportunity to avenge his defeat the previous year in the competition for the League of Nations, all the more so since the chosen site was on the shore of Lake Geneva, not far from the site of his lost battle.

His proposal for the Mundaneum was the more ambitious of the two projects. Its components—library, museum, scientific association, university, research institute—would have spread out to form a complex urban composition organized along two parallel axes, one leading to the lake and the other establishing the relationship between the most monumental element of the ensemble—the

museum—and the other institutions. Based on a spiral plan, Le Corbusier's design for the museum suggested the forms of Mesopotamian ziggurats and Egyptian mastabas. In his drawings Le Corbusier systematically compared the museum's silhouette to the Alpine peaks on the opposite side of the lake.

As he would explain in a pamphlet published with Otlet in 1928, elements of the landscape were the first consideration of the project: "The chosen site is situated between the Grand-Saconnex and Prégny, on an elevated plateau overlooking the Geneva region and providing from all four cardinal points the most majestic sights."³ He insisted that the Mundaneum "present itself to the view from all points: from the city, from its docks, from the large lake, from the small lake. It is like a gigantic landmark." More than a proportional grid, the regulating lines of the plan were conceived in their geographic dimension, so that the "diagonals of the World Museum on which the architectural composition is based rigorously indicate the four cardinal points."

This extremely ambitious project was also founded on the encounter between two orders: one external, of a landscape already reflected upon by Le Corbusier in his Villa Le Lac in Corseaux (1924–25) and his project for the League of Nations; the other internal, based on the geometry of the plan. But Otlet's ambitions by far surpassed his resources, and the enterprise was abandoned. Le Corbusier nonetheless subsequently recycled his concept for the museum, dropping the historicist features but insisting on the spiral plan; the best example is the Musée à Croissance Illimitée (Museum of unlimited growth) of 1931. JLC

¹ El Lissitzky, "Idoli i idolopoklonniki," *Stroitel'naya Promyshlennost* 9, nos. 11–12 (1929): 854–58; Karel Teige, "Mundaneum," *Stavba* 7 (April 1929): 145–55.

² Giuliano Gresleri and Dario Matteoni, *La città mondiale: Andersen, Hébrard, Otlet, Le Corbusier* (Venice: Marsilio, 1982); Gresleri, "The Mundaneum Plan," in Carlo Palazzolo and Riccardo Vio, eds., *In the Footsteps of Le Corbusier* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), pp. 92–113.

³ Le Corbusier, "Le Projet architectural," in *Mundaneum* (Brussels: Union des associations internationales, 1928), p. 30. Translation by Genevieve Hendricks.



Mundaneum, Geneva. 1928. Perspective views of the museum in situ. Ink, pencil, and colored pencil on paper, 9⁷/₁₆ x 13¹⁵/₁₆" (23.9 x 35.4 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 32114



Mundaneum, Geneva. 1928. Bird's eye view looking toward the lake. Ink on paper, 21¹/₈ x 44³/₁₆" (53.7 x 112.3 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 24520



Fig. 1 View from Theatinerstraße looking toward Odeonsplatz, Munich. 1910–11, Pencil on paper, 4¹⁵/₁₆ x 7⁷/₈" (12.6 x 20 cm), Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2030

The concept of *Städtebau* (urban planning) was new to Charles-Édouard Jeanneret when he arrived in Germany in 1910. He responded enthusiastically to the idea of urban space, and his subsequent thorough investigation led to a deep understanding of the field. His detailed studies during his travels in Germany, from April 1910 through May 1911, laid the foundation not only for his urban schemes but also for his architectural designs. He spent more than a year in Germany, traveling, researching, and working, and the four *carnets de voyage* he devoted to this period are bursting with evidence of how tirelessly he sought information and inspiration.¹ His manuscript "La Construction des villes" (The construction of cities), the result of his rather "impatient research," combines his detailed and thorough investigation of the visual and aesthetic aspects of *Städtebau* with arguments for functionality, although with a predominant focus on beauty.²

Jeanneret arrived in Munich on April 9, 1910, hoping to find work with Theodor Fischer, the planner of the city's urban extensions, whom he would come to greatly respect and praise. Although Fischer did not have a job for Jeanneret, in their conversations he must have given the aspiring architect valuable insights into town planning, perhaps suggesting literature for him to read. Jeanneret found a room in Lotzbeckstraße, thus situating himself in the heart of Classicist Munich, just behind the Odeonsplatz. His drawings of the Theatinerkirche and Theatinerstraße, which depict urban situations from unfamiliar perspectives, reveal his interest in the juxtapositions of spaces and buildings (fig. 1).³

Munich was his home base for the next two months, during which time he conducted a thorough search of the available literature on the field of *Städtebau*. He spent many hours at the Königliche Hof- und Staatsbibliothek (Royal court and state library), as well as in the small library of the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum. Since the library was situated in the Ludwigstraße, Jeanneret would have been constantly exposed to this serene, even barren Classicist street, which "does not have a single tree but is an impossible impressive wall of stone, powerful, not pierced by shops."⁴ Just to the north was the university building designed by Friedrich von Gärtner and erected in 1835–40; Jeanneret bought postcards of this building (fig. 2) and noted the dimensions of the impressive courtyardlike setback



Fig. 2 Friedrich von Gärtner (German, 1791–1847). University, Munich. 1835–40. Postcard, c. 1910, from Charles-Édouard Jeanneret's collection. Bibliothèque de la Ville, La Chaux-de-Fonds

that seems to anticipate the indented blocks of the *Ville Contemporaine de Trois Millions d'Habitants* (Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants) (1922). The late-Gothic Frauenkirche, comparable in monumentality, received attention in a series of atmospheric watercolors. To Jeanneret it stood for the magnificent unity of a single material—red brick—at a monumental height of 318 feet (97 meters) "that crushes the spectator with its vertiginous surface, forcing him to contort his body to grasp, with difficulties, the ensemble of its brutal lines."⁵ Jeanneret devoted several pages of "La Construction des villes" to a comparison of the Frauenkirche with San Marco, in Venice, the "fairy-tale spectacle of gold and marble" and "a fantastic oriental gem in a sober classical jewelry box."⁶

Städtebau was a field that was not only new to Jeanneret but had also only recently been established as a discipline separate from architecture.⁷ He dove deeply into his research and began writing a brochure, at the suggestion of his teacher, Charles L'Eplattenier, to be presented at the conference of the Schweizerische Städteverbund (Swiss confederation of municipalities) in September 1910 in La Chaux-de-Fonds. His assignment was to make a case for aesthetically based urban design as outlined by Camillo Sitte in *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (*City Planning According to Artistic Principles*) (1889).⁸ Thus in Munich and Berlin Jeanneret worked his way through the contemporary literature on town planning, mostly in German, digesting more than seventy titles, of which Sitte's *Städtebau* was his most fundamental point of reference. Similarly influential were works by contemporary architects and art historians Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Karl Henrici, Albert Erich Brinckmann, and Fischer.⁹ Jeanneret expanded the project far beyond the intended dimensions of a brochure, until in October of that year he had written more than six hundred pages for what would become "La Construction des villes." Not only did he go past the deadline for the conference, but in the end it was

1 Le Corbusier, *Les Voyages d'Allemagne: Carnets*, ed. Giuliano Gresleri (Milan: Electa; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1994).

2 Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," manuscript, private collection. Published as

Christoph Schnoor, ed., *La Construction des villes: Le Corbusiers erstes städtebauliches Traktat von 1910/11* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2008).

3 Klaus Spechtenhauser, "Munich," in Stanislaus von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, eds., *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier:*

Applied Arts, Architecture, Painting and Photography, 1907–1922 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 166–69.

4 Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv manuscript p. 126; *La Construction des villes*, p. 329.

5 Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv p. 151; *La Construction des villes*, pp. 349–50. Translations by Kim Sanderson.

6 Ibid.

7 *Construction des villes* is the literal French translation of *Städtebau*. Joseph Brix and Felix Genzmer held the first chairs for *Städtebau* at the Technische Hochschule Charlottenburg in 1903 and

1904, where they founded the Seminar für Städtebau in 1907.

8 Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (Vienna: Graeser, 1889).

9 For the complete reconstructed bibliography, see Schnoor, ed., *La Construction des villes*, pp. 615–17. See in particular Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten*, vol. 4, *Der Städtebau* (Munich: Callwey,

1906); Karl Henrici, *Beiträge zur praktischen Ästhetik im Städtebau* (Munich: Callwey, 1904); Albert Erich Brinckmann, *Platz und Monument: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Stadtbaukunst in neuerer Zeit* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1908); and Theodor Fischer, *Städterweiterungsfragen* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1903).

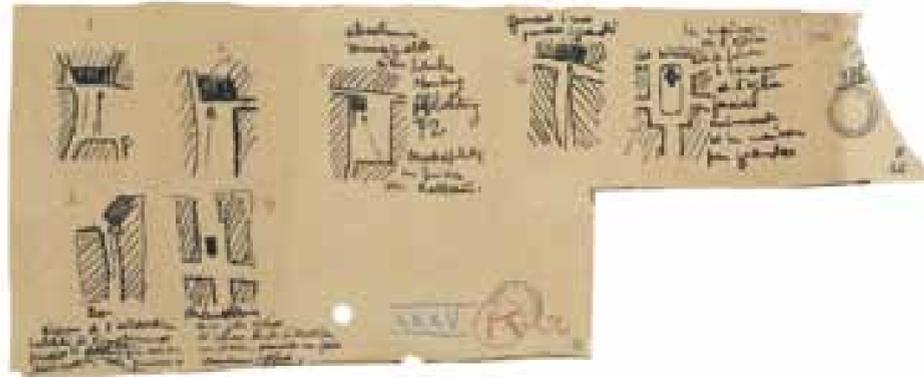


Fig. 3 Plans of urban squares. 1910. Sketches made after Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten*, vol. 4, *Der Städtebau* (Munich: Callwey, 1906). Ink on paper, 10½ x 4 5/16" (26.6 x 11 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC B2-20-330

L'Eplattenier who wrote the article for that event.¹⁰ In early November Jeanneret began a job in the office of Peter Behrens in Neubabelsberg, after which his research continued with diminished intensity and was finally abandoned in March 1911. He did not reengage with the topic again until 1915, in Paris, and the manuscript was never published in his lifetime.

By the end of 1910 Jeanneret had completed two chapters, "Des moyens possibles" (Possible strategies [for future urban design]) and "Application critique" (Critical application), along with various introductory sections, and had written the first five sections of the largest chapter, "Les Éléments constitutifs de la ville" (The constitutive elements of the city). He had also collected an abundance of material in the form of excerpts, his own translations of German urban-design literature, and fragments of the five remaining sections. Even in its incomplete state, "La Construction des villes" was an unusual treatise on urban design: instead of emulating Josef Stübben's near-contemporary *Der Städtebau* (1890), which was far more technical and regulatory in its orientation, it became instead a grammar of the aesthetically constituent elements of the city, in this way anticipating Cornelius Gurlitt's *Handbuch des Städtebaues* (1920).¹¹ Jeanneret defined the city as being formed of residential blocks, streets, squares, enclosing walls, bridges, trees, gardens and parks, cemeteries, and garden cities. The strength of this grammar of the city lies in Jeanneret's elaboration of the aesthetic and functional impact of various elements that make it up (fig. 3).

Such an approach goes beyond Sitte's, which investigated only urban squares and their visual-spatial impact while scarcely devoting a sentence to the form and layout of streets and streetscapes. Jeanneret, on the other hand, felt that his own chapter on streets was the most important in his manuscript.¹² In ascribing such importance to streets and their design, he limited Sitte's direct influence on his manuscript. Jeanneret worked with both Sitte's original German text and Camille Martin's French translation from 1902; he did not integrate Martin's gratuitously added chapter on streets into his own manuscript but instead took his views on good street design primarily from Henrici and Schultze-Naumburg, whose remarks on curved streets and skilful setbacks were of fundamental importance to him.¹³ These ideas are demonstrated in Jeanneret's precise little figure-ground drawing of the

¹⁰ Charles L'Eplattenier, "L'Esthétique des villes," in *Compte-rendu des délibérations de l'Assemblée générale des délégués de l'Union des villes suisses, réunis à La Chaux-de-Fonds, les 24 et 25 septembre 1910* (Zurich:

Art Institut Orell Füssli, 1910), pp. 24–31.

¹¹ Josef Stübben, *Der Städtebau* (Darmstadt, Germany: Bergstrasser, 1890); Cornelius Gurlitt, *Handbuch des*

Städtebaues (Berlin: Architekturverlag Der Zirkel, 1920).

¹² Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv p. 96; *La Construction des villes*, p. 290.

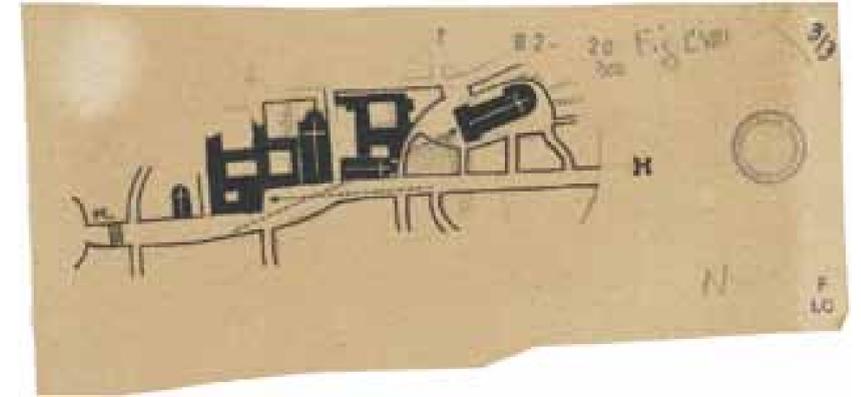


Fig. 4 Neuhauser Straße, Munich. 1910. Figure-ground sketch traced from a drawing published in the *Annuaire Suisse de la Construction*. Ink on paper, 3 15/16 x 9 5/8" (10 x 24.5 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC B2-20-300

Neuhauser Straße in Munich (fig. 4), which included the Frauenkirche. Following Schultze-Naumburg's model, Jeanneret explored a setback of several houses (fig. 3) that creates a little square to the side of the street and whose slight outer curve directs the gaze of the passerby toward the towers of the Frauenkirche.¹⁴ In his discussion of the spatial qualities of streets, Schultze-Naumburg introduced the notion of organic street systems; Jeanneret adopted the position that organic street layout was far more functional than a grid structure, such as the one in La Chaux-de-Fonds, and followed the German architect in arguing for a separation of different categories of traffic.¹⁵ Thus, his later *classement des rues* (classification of streets) finds its point of departure here. In this way Jeanneret understood medieval towns such as Ulm as organic entities, with streets and squares laid out in a manner that respected the visual perception of the passerby.

Around 1890, as Sitte was engaging in the first discussion of urban space in his *Städtebau*, a branch of architectural and aesthetic theory devoted to the phenomenon of space was emerging in Germany. August Schmarsow, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Adolf von Hildebrand were among the artists and art historians who were developing the idea of space as an abstract concept with a tangible impact. The influence of new disciplines such as physiology and psychology on art theory, another evolving field, became apparent.¹⁶ Sitte himself embodied this interplay of influences, with both medical and artistic training that lent him a particular awareness of the observer's perception of space and the built environment.¹⁷ However, it seems that Jeanneret was not familiar with the details of these theories; nowhere in the manuscript of "La Construction des villes" is there any mention of Schmarsow, Wölfflin, or others exploring theories of perception.¹⁸ Indeed, Jeanneret absorbed the principle of space and its impact on the observer purely via the applied practical aesthetics of Henrici, Sitte, Schultze-Naumburg, and Brinckmann, from whom he drew such ideas as the enclosure of public squares and the asymmetrical organization of monuments therein (Sitte); the impact of the street space on the flaneur (Henrici); the significance

¹³ Schnoor, ed., *La Construction des villes*, pp. 37–40.

¹⁴ Compare with Schultze-Naumburg's example from Prague, in *Kulturarbeiten*, vol. 4, ill. 30, as sketched by Jeanneret, FLC B2-20-319.

¹⁵ Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten*, vol. 4, p. 66; Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv p. 98; *La Construction des villes*, p. 293.

¹⁶ See Harry Francis Mallgrave, ed. and trans., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994).

¹⁷ See Gabriele Reiterer, *AugenSinn: Zu Raum und Wahrnehmung in Camillo Sittes Städtebau* (Salzburg: Pustet, 2003).

¹⁸ The only known exception is, in the *voyage d'Orient* notebooks, the explicit mention of Wilhelm Worringer, to whose work *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1907) Jeanneret was introduced by his traveling companion, August Klipstein. Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'Orient: Carnets*, ed. Gresleri (Milan: Electa; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1987), sketchbook 1, p. 43.

of the opening to the square (Schultze-Naumburg); the observation of human scale in the enclosure of squares (Brinckmann); and a significant interest in the uniform, symmetrical French royal square (Brinckmann again). Jeanneret followed these positions closely, noting, "Let's conclude in the way that Mr. Brinckmann perfectly sums up his book" and then translating Brinckmann's "Städte bauen heißt: mit dem Hausmaterial Raum gestalten!" into French: "Construire des villes veut dire: av. du matériel de maison dresser des volumes!" (To construct cities is to shape spaces using buildings!).¹⁹ Jeanneret treated architectural space as a malleable, abstract element, often using the term *corporalité* to express the tangible quality of the intangible.²⁰

"Berlin extended a horrid welcome to me this morning," Jeanneret wrote to his parents on October 18, 1910, having just arrived from Munich.²¹ And, three days later, "Berlin does not win me over, and once you leave the vast avenues, it is just revulsion, pure horror."²² Jeanneret called Berlin "hell" with persistent regularity, and anyone familiar with the gloomy aspects of Berlin tenement blocks will understand this dismissal. He nonetheless approved of the grandiosity of the city's straight lines, praising the effect in the evening "of the Siegesallee, at the end of which rises the Siegessäule, literally drowned in the purple of the sunset and glittering in its reflection almost in the macadam, polished by the automobiles."²³

Berlin might not have felt welcoming to Jeanneret, but it provided the single largest contribution to his education in urban design, possibly for decades. In June 1910 he had traveled there to see exhibitions including the Ton-Kalk-Cement Ausstellung (Clay-limestone-cement exhibition) and the Städtebau-Ausstellung, with the latter showcasing the newest developments in urban design. From June 8 to June 20 he attended sessions of the Werkbund congress and saw the winning entries of the competition to design a master plan for Gross-Berlin (greater Berlin); he decided that he would have liked to work for the architect Hermann Jansen, whose approach he appreciated as "essentially practical."²⁴ Jansen's design for the competition interpreted Sitte's theories in the form of large-perimeter blocks with generous gardens inside, a landscape of parks weaving through the city and vistas in

¹⁹ Brinckmann, *Platz und Monument*, p. 170. Quoted by Jeanneret in "La Construction des villes," LCdv 448; *La Construction des villes*, p. 558.

²⁰ Compare Francesco Passanti's discussion of the term *corporalité* in "Architecture: Proportion, Classicism, and Other Issues," in *Le Corbusier*

before *Le Corbusier*, pp. 68–97, with my own discussion of the term in Schnoor, ed., *La Construction des villes*, pp. 218–19.

²¹ Jeanneret, letter to his parents, October 18, 1910, FLC R1-5-67.

²² Jeanneret, letter to his parents, October 21, 1910, FLC R1-5-68.

²³ Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv pp. 123–124; *La Construction des villes*, p. 327.

²⁴ Jeanneret, letter to L'Eplattenier, June 27, 1910, FLC E2-12-68; and Jeanneret, letter to William Ritter, June 21, 1910, FLC R3-18-4.

the city, an idea that combined picturesque town planning with the monumental unity Walter Curt Behrendt advocated at the time.²⁵

As soon as the refreshing calm of public gardens is introduced into the argument, Jeanneret's tone relaxes. "In the Tiergarten," he noted, "one enjoys anew the impression of great peace in this great forest in immediate proximity to the noisy roads."²⁶ His near-Romantic portrait of the new garden suburbs such as Nikolassee, just thirty minutes by train from the city center, as peaceful, almost paradisiacal, completed his vivid image of Berlin: "So that, when on a spring or summer evening, one takes a walk in any of these suburbs, the visitor arriving from the great furnace of Berlin will be deeply surprised; he will indeed feel himself living in a reviving peace."²⁷ This was in fact his own experience of exploring Nikolassee, where he had seen, among other buildings, Hermann Muthesius's large villas inspired by English Arts and Crafts houses.

On his way back to Munich from Berlin, Jeanneret visited eleven cities in just five days, among them Halle, Naumburg, Würzburg, and Augsburg. This journey was a little masterpiece of meticulous planning, using the train schedule, with Jeanneret often spending just a few hours in a town. One focus of this tour, in fact its central aim, was on taking photographs from the same points as Schultze-Naumburg had done for the *Städtebau* volume of his *Kulturarbeiten*, capturing images of urban spaces in which spatial architectural qualities were clearly visible. Jeanneret used these views as design inspirations for his chapter "Application critique": his photo of St. Ulrich in Augsburg, for example, suggests that the church, in closing the vista of a long, stretched urban square, may have informed his sketches for La Chaux-de-Fonds, such as one in which he proposes a similar closing-off of the avenue Léopold-Robert with a building placed perpendicular to the street.

The Städtebau-Ausstellung showed examples of recent German garden suburbs. Here Jeanneret became aware of the new development in Hellerau, near Dresden, by Richard Riemerschmid. Despite its later fame for Heinrich Tessenow's Festspielhaus (Festival theatre) (1911), Hellerau is only mentioned in passing in "La Construction des villes."²⁸ In October 1910, while visiting his brother, Albert, who was studying eurythmics in Hellerau under Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, Jeanneret paid the suburb a visit and declared,

²⁵ Walter Curt Behrendt, *Die einheitliche Blockfront als Raumelement im Stadtbau: Ein Beitrag zur Stadtbaukunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1911).

²⁶ Le Corbusier, *Les Voyages d'Allemagne*, sketchbook 2, p. 122.

²⁷ Jeanneret, *Étude sur le mouvement d'art décoratif en Allemagne* (La Chaux-de-Fonds: Haefeli, 1912), p. 48.

²⁸ Jeanneret, "La Construction des villes," LCdv p. 74; *La Construction des villes*, p. 279.

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Les Voyages d'Allemagne*, sketchbook 3, p. 53.



Fig. 5 Georg Metzendorf (German, 1874–1934). Margarethenhöhe housing estate, Essen. 1909–12. Entrance building. From Metzendorf, *Kleinwohnungs-Bauten und Siedlungen* (Darmstadt, Germany: A. Koch, 1920)

Fig. 6 Plan for the creation of a garden city at Les Crêtets, La Chaux-de-Fonds. 1914. Heliographic print on paper, 22 x 42 7/16" (55.9 x 107.8 cm). Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 30268

"In general, Riemerschmid does not enthuse me."²⁹ Jeanneret showed more interest in the Margarethenhöhe, Georg Metzendorf's workers' settlement, designed for the Margarethe-Krupp-Stiftung in Essen, which he had also seen exhibited in the Städtebau-Ausstellung. Jeanneret carefully read Metzendorf's brochure on the settlement's design and translated the core of it for his chapter on garden cities. Realizing that the Margarethenhöhe incorporated many of the features he had discussed in chapters on the correct layout of streets and squares, Jeanneret went so far as to use some of the settlement's prominent features, above all Metzendorf's highly Romantic bridge building that served as entry into the colony (fig. 5), as a model for his 1914 design for the garden suburb Les Crêtets in La Chaux-de-Fonds (fig. 6).

During his year in Germany, Jeanneret had absorbed knowledge about urban design like a sponge, gaining a deep understanding of the perception and modulation of urban space. Although, as Le Corbusier, he would later almost completely renounce his 1910 crash course in *Städtebau*, it laid the foundations for his urban designs and, more than that, helped him to develop and articulate architectural space.

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Les Voyages d'Allemagne*, sketchbook 3, p. 53.

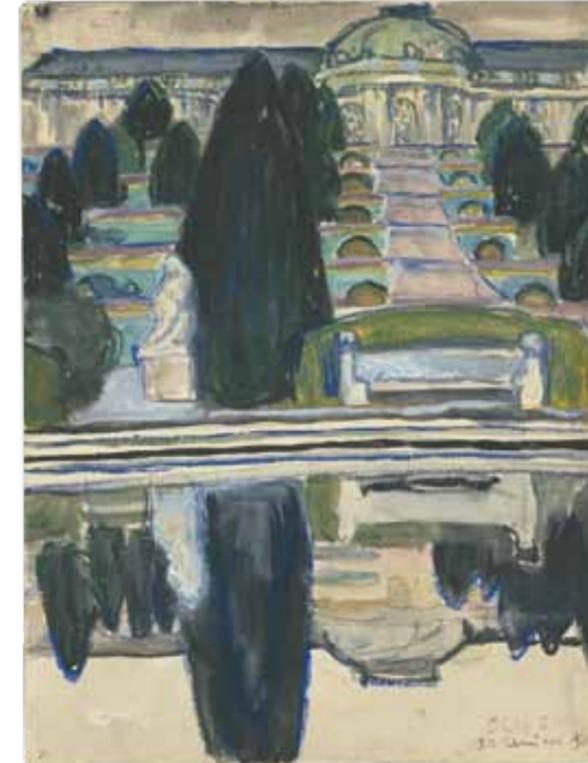


Plate 12 View of the Orangerie at Schloss Sanssouci, Potsdam. 1910 Pencil and watercolor on paper, pasted on cardboard, 11 7/16 x 8 11/16" (29 x 22 cm) Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. FLC 2857

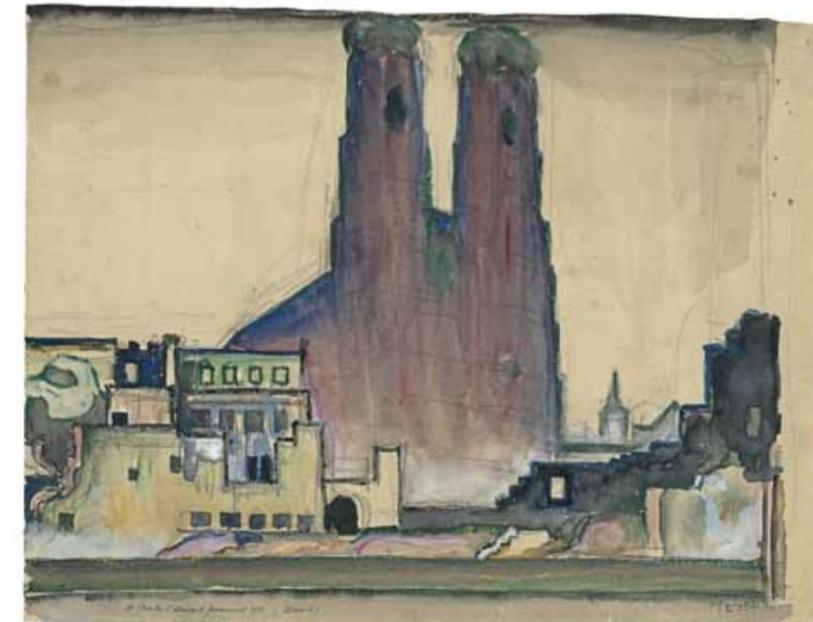


Plate 13 View of the Frauenkirche, Munich. 1911 Watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper, 14 x 17 5/16" (35.5 x 44 cm) Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (gta), ETH Zürich

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Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 15–September 23, 2013. Organized by Jean-Louis Cohen, Sheldon H. Solow Professor in the History of Architecture, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, with Barry Bergdoll, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.

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The exhibition is made possible by Hyundai Card.

Major support is provided by Cetine Nippert Ames and Anthony Ames.

Additional generous support is provided by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.; Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council; Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III; Phyllis Lambert; and an anonymous donor.

Funding for the accompanying publication is provided by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Produced by the Department of Publications
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Edited by Emily Hall and Libby Hruska with Sarah McFadden
Designed by Amanda Washburn
Maps drawn by Amanda Washburn
Production by Marc Sapir
Printed and bound by OGI/1010 Printing International, China

This book is typeset in Folio and Knockout.
The paper is 157 gsm Neo Matte Artpaper.

The essays by Jean-Louis Cohen were translated from the French by Genevieve Hendricks.

The essays by Edmond Charrière, Marie-Jeanne Dumont, Guillemette Morel Journel, Jacques Lucan, Danièle Pauly, Antoine Picon, Claude Prelorenzo, and Yannis Tsiomis were translated from the French by Christian Hubert.

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013935880
ISBN: 978-0-87070-851-0

Printed in China

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