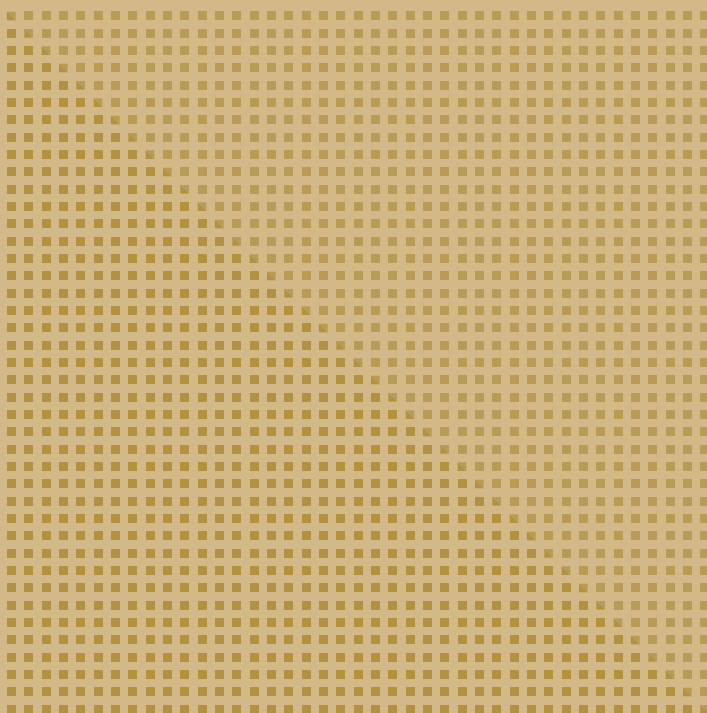


Daniel Naegele

ISSUE 4

Who shot Le Corbusier? The architect of the century and his photographers



Inaugural Speeches and Other Studies
in the Built Environment

Who shot Le Corbusier?

TU Delft Open 2020

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Inaugural Speeches and Other Studies
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With an introduction by
Herman van Bergeijk

Inaugural Speeches and Other Studies in the Built Environment

Series Editors: Herman van Bergeijk and Carola Hein
[Chair History of Architecture and Urban Planning, TU Delft]

ISSUE 4

Who shot Le Corbusier?

The architect of the century and his photographers

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Photography plays an important role in the dissemination of architectural ideas. This small booklet contains a study of the American scholar Daniel Naegele on Le Corbusier and his photographers. It provides a reflection on the importance that was given to photography by this famous architect during his lifetime and the way that he used and instructed professionals to illustrate his work and his ideas.

All translations from the French are by the author

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Dedicated to Mogens Krustrup

*Architecture is the skillful, accurate and magnificent play
of masses seen in light.*

-Le Corbusier

Photography is manipulation of light.

-Moholy-Nagy



Contents

Daniel Naegele

Acknowledgments 11

Herman van Bergeijk and Carola Hein

Preface to the series Inaugural Speeches and
Other Studies in the Built Environment 13

Herman van Bergeijk

Introduction 15

Daniel Naegele

Author's preface 21

Architectural Photography, 1924–1938 27

Albin Salaün and the *habileté de vieux praticien* 51

Serials 1920–1946 57

Architectural Photography after 1945 75

The Marseilles Unité & Le Corbusier's edicts
governing photography 79

Le Corbusier's 'House Photographer' 89

The "insufficient" images of Chandigarh 99

On display: Le Corbusier and his architecture 103

Les Carnets de la recherche patiente:
photo-essays on architecture 113

A Larger Picture 131

Illustration credits 143

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Preface to the series Inaugural Speeches and Other Studies in the Built Environment

Inaugural speeches have long been unique moments in the careers of academics in many countries: As an important moment in the career they offer a moment to pause, to reflect, and to envision new approaches. Planners and architects in particular have used such speeches to tie together insights into design work and education and to offer a programmatic view on their own operating within the academic community. Prepared with great care for a university and general audience, inaugural lectures also offer later researchers insight into the thoughts of these scholars at a specific moment in time. Material gathered for and notes written on the occasion of these lectures can help such researchers understand the work habits and thought processes of their authors, perhaps even their relationships with colleagues and students. This series has been expanded and now offers inaugural lectures – translated into English and contextualized with scholarly introductions – and other seminal studies to unlock information for comparative research and set the stage for new investigations. The expanded series continues with a research on Le Corbusier and his photographers done by Daniel Naegele.

Herman van Bergeijk and Carola Hein

Introduction

In January 1991 I was invited by Marco Frascari to give a seminar for Ph.D. students of the University in Pennsylvania. I addressed topics ranging from Viollet-le-Duc to Ruskin and also some more modern architects of the 20th century. Two lectures were dedicated to the voyeurism and activism of Le Corbusier. The gaze of the Swiss-French architect interested me particularly because it had to do with being close and creating distance simultaneously. The space between the object and the observer was something that this architect obsessed over.

One of the students who engaged in the lively discussions was Daniel Naegele. Our contact was not limited to the classroom. On weekends we would drive around with other students to look and investigate notable architecture in Pennsylvania. We went to see houses by Louis Kahn, works by Frank Lloyd Wright, and the remarkable, peculiar Albert Barnes collection in its Paul Cret gallery in Marion, Pennsylvania. These encounters with students and architecture flavoured my stay in the USA. Unfortunately, I lost contact with most of them when I returned to Europe. Later I heard that Daniel had written his Ph.D. on Le Corbusier and I noticed that he was publishing some of the results of his research in various places. Some years after that, when I was working at the TU Delft, we met again. Older and maybe also wiser, he was busy with his research on Colin Rowe, but had not forgotten that Le Corbusier had been on my mind. We talked again: about Rowe, about Dutch architecture, about Le Corbusier, and finally, about photography. I had published a small book on Herman Hertzberger who used to make many photos

during his many trips through the world. We discussed the importance of photography and the various ways that architects and photographers used the camera. My fascination with the work of the British photographer, Frank Yerbury, recently found its way into an article that I wrote.¹ We are living in times when the image is everything. Anyone can take as many photos as he wants with using only his mobile telephone, a device some see as a blessing, others as a curse. Daniel mentioned that he was working on Le Corbusier and his photographers. My curiosity was immediately drawn to the theme and I offered to help in finding a publisher. I also told him that I would gladly write a short introduction—an offer which Daniel accepted even if I was and am not one of the experts on Le Corbusier.

It was the architectural historian, Colin Rowe, who wittily wrote in a late-1980s letter to Lisa Germany, “What is a rare book? – a book for which Kenneth Frampton did not write the introduction”. Nowadays one could ask: “What is a rare book on *Le Corbusier*”? The answer would be “A book not written by Jean-Louis Cohen or one for which he did not write a foreword.” Cohen is the ultimate authority on the French-Swiss architect, an expert whose approval sanctifies the research of others. This study deals with the relationship between Le Corbusier and his photographers and thus takes a very different road of investigation than, for instance, that of Beatriz Colomina who is fascinated not with Le Corbusier’s photographs, but with the medium of photography, especially with the effect it has on gender perception. Factual information is more important than a theoretical interpretation for one’s own delight. But one could also think of Tim Benton. All these authors have dealt more or less extensively with the relationship

¹ H. van Bergeijk, ‘Een poging om Engeland op een modern spoor te zetten. F.R. Yerbury, H. Robertson en de Nederlandse architectuur’, *Rode Haring*, 2020, n. 1, 2-17.

of Le Corbusier to photography. Also, Naegele has made a name for himself as a scholar of Le Corbusier and the photographs in the archive of the Le Corbusier Foundation in Paris. In this book he explores the relationship between the world-famous architect and his photographers.

One doubts that the artist-architect and writer Le Corbusier really had a passion for photography. When he was young, he travelled the world with a heavy camera in order to make pictures of things and moments that he considered important. His vocation was not yet clear to him. Especially during his famous “Voyage d’Orient” he was not only making sketches but was also using the camera to capture realities. Many of these photos are well-known. If he didn’t take them himself, he dictated his position in them. There is, for instance, the famous photo probably taken by his friend August Klipstein of the young architect atop the Acropolis leaning against the remains of an enormous column and looking out: looking out across the remnants of great architecture to the open sky beyond. Wearing a hat, he has his back to us and thus implies that he is more interested in contemplating the rubble of the temple site than in documenting his presence. Yet his relationship with photography seems to have been problematic in the beginning. This is clear from his oft-quoted statement: ‘When one travels and works with visual things – architecture, painting or sculpture – one uses one’s eyes and draws, so as to fix deep down in one’s experience what is seen. Once the impression has been recorded by the pencil, it stays for good – entered, registered, inscribed. The camera is a tool for idlers, who use a machine to do their seeing for them.’² This opinion in which a direct relationship is suggested between the eye, the brain, and the hand has been devoured by architectural theorists. What is clear is that the young Jeanneret

² Le Corbusier, *Creation is a patient search*, New York/Washington 1960, 37.

was particularly interested in the recording of the impression. He was searching for effect, something that would touch the observer. What caused this profound aversion to the machine as a medium for capturing reality is unclear. Maybe the architect was weary of dragging along with him heavy equipment and was more at ease with the sketchbook and the pencil. Nevertheless, it remains a strange opinion for someone to assume who seeks to be in sympathy with his times. The camera was too fast of an instrument for him. Speed was the main enemy of memory. Today's 5G network would probably be something which he would have disliked immensely. It leaves no impression, it barely touches the skin, and the effect is not lasting. But the times have changed.

“A tool for idlers” – it sounds especially strange in a world now overwhelmed with so many cameras. Le Corbusier believed the camera had to be used by someone who knew well its working and its effects. The transition from the flaneur to the voyeur had cognitive consequences that had to be addressed. Both the ‘promenade architecturale’ and the distant view in their own manner had to investigate and illustrate particular spatial qualities. The first lay in the physical act of walking, the second in the penetration of the gaze. We are now looking superficially at the world through the camera in our cell phones. Security services relentlessly looking at us through surveillance cameras everywhere. We cannot escape the penetrating gaze of the camera, that yet has no intellectual value. For Le Corbusier the gap between the brain and the pencil could not be bridge by the camera. The mind had to inform the hand and the hand had to inform the brain. In the end his traveling was above all a mental thing. During his trips he encountered things of which he had already had a sensation but that he had not really yet witnessed in person. Maybe this is also the reason that he never wanted to see himself as a photographer. His early photographs made during his travels through the East with a heavy apparatus show that he

lacked the skills and technique of a good photographer, but that he was aware of the captivating possibilities of photographic illustrations.³ The working of the camera, like that of the car, escaped him. Both were just machines. But at least he had an interest for the design of the latter. He therefore preferred to use professionals to make the pictures even if he would breathe down their neck while they were taking the pictures, constantly issuing directions. The arrangement of the objects still had to be completely under his control. He staged much of the content and had a keen eye of how to place the figures, objects, and furniture in order to enhance the sense of depth. They functioned not only as *repoussoir* or ‘*objets trouvés*’, but contributed to the creation of his world. This is clear even in early photographs from the time before he left his small Swiss village for Paris to become a famous architect under the name “Le Corbusier”. He was the center of attention and often also the one who had the leading role in the pictures. He had the feeling that he needed to determine his world and his vision of the world to be. How many times do we find him standing with his back towards us, looking out into the distance? Even a dog assumed this ‘looking out’ posture in one of the photographs. Unequivocally Le Corbusier had an influence on the photographer Horst P. Horst who worked in his office in the late-1920s but who was disillusioned by Le Corbusier who, according to Horst, showed more interest in mass than in people. A celebrity, Le Corbusier’s portrait was made by several famous photographers including Yousuf Karsh, Irving Penn, Ralph Prins, and Man Ray.

The relationship between Le Corbusier and Lucien Hervé has been touched upon many times in the past. We get the impression that he was the only photographer that shot the architect. Not many

³ See the photographs in: G. Gresleri, *Le Corbusier: Viaggio in Oriente*, Venice 1984.

scholars, however, have reflected on the other photographers that Le Corbusier employed and it is a very fortunate that Daniel Naegele was willing to expand on a chapter of his dissertation and write this little book on a topic that is often overlooked.

Author's preface

Who were Le Corbusier's photographers? The question is germane to any study of Le Corbusier's use of photography yet it is a question frequently overlooked. Often it is assumed that Le Corbusier exercised total artistic control over the photographic presentation of his buildings and that photographers served only as technicians in this process and were therefore of little importance. He published over fifty books, most with many photographs. He, himself, did not take the photographs; he directed others to take them. He selected what he liked—and cropped them, abstracted them, and drew over them. He placed them on the pages of his books, catalyzing them with new proportions, coloring them with new associations. Unapologetically, he appropriated photographs that he liked from other publications and, unapologetically, he underscored this appropriation: double-framing the photographs, presenting pages of published books as illustrations for his present book, and elaborating in detail on his habit of subjecting pages and images to “*les tracés régulateurs*” that so intrigued him. He placed these photographs on the pages of his many books, mediating the medium of photography, making his manipulations obvious to his reader. Persistently he treated photographs as merely material for a larger medium: his book. These tactics encouraged a remarkably consistent ‘look’ to the photographs even though they had been made by many diverse photographers. The photographic text resisted assignment to specific photographers, schools, or styles. All that one sees on every page appears to be entirely Le Corbusier's doing. Le Corbusier never explicitly laid claim to this, not in published writings anyway. It was his habit to

present photographs without by-lines. And though—especially in the 1920s and 1930s—he seldom named his photographers, many were exceptional.

In assessing ‘Le Corbusier and photography’, undoubtedly primary consideration should be given to Le Corbusier’s presentations: to his composing of image, page, book; to the new contexts he created; to what he made of the image. Yet, “Who were Le Corbusier’s photographers?” would seem an essential inquiry in determining what the photographs do. Knowledge of both the producer and the conditions under which the image was produced seems essential to valid interpretation. Both photographers and photo-technology were essential, determining factors in the presentation of Le Corbusier’s architecture. When they changed, Le Corbusier’s imagery changed, and between 1922 and 1965 both changed often. New technology in the form of improved transportation, mass-production, miniaturization, and electric communications brought on new portability. Photo equipment became smaller, lighter, faster, less expensive, and more readily available to the amateur. Once a craft practiced by skilled technicians with large-format cameras and glass plate negatives requiring long exposure time, by the mid-1930s, architectural photography had become an art that could be executed by amateurs. Advanced technology democratized the medium. Less expensive, smaller, mobile cameras could be held to the eye. Better lenses and faster films enabled photographs that previously were not possible. Action could be stopped. Novelty, artistic intent, and personal expression could be pursued.

Le Corbusier ‘imaged’ himself as both a scientist and an artist. His book-writing was frequently photojournalistic reporting on contemporary architecture and on his own buildings, and on the current state of society as he understood it.⁴ Changes in photographic representations affected this reportage. The accelerated pace of postwar communications challenged the control he exercised over the publication of his architecture in the 1920s and 1930s. Changes in society affected changes in photography, and both affected his working relationship with photographers. Equally important, they affected his audience, now far broader and non-professional, an audience that sought immediate news and was attracted to the sensational. In many ways, this encouraged Le Corbusier’s foray with mediation. His photography never simply documented a completed building, it created a new one. Rather than merely coping with the many changes, Le Corbusier put them to use, creating narratives for his most important buildings, employing images of his art as visual metaphors for architecture, reveling in disclosing the construction of architecture, and protracting the story of a building for as long as it took to conceive, create, build, and occupy it.

1 This kind of commentary is most overt in the mid-1930s in Le Corbusier’s prescription for new cities, *La Ville radieuse* (1935) for instance, and in his recounting of his trip to the USA, *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (1937). Yet it persists in some form in nearly all his writings, beginning at a very early age with his travel diaries. Even writings intended to celebrate advanced technology turn into direct comments on the contemporary state of society. In *Aircraft* (1935), for instance, Le Corbusier understood the new vision made possible by the combination of an aerial perspective and the eye in motion as an indictment of the city. The visual documents he selected for this book substantiate this belief.

What did Le Corbusier want from the photograph—from a visual fact that always told the truth yet was so easily manipulated? How might he get what he wanted from the photographer? How did the ever-evolving technology support and challenge what was wanted? Who were Le Corbusier’s photographers—in the beginning, in the end? “Character is not predetermined,” he once wrote to a young student in India. “One shapes it over the course of a life; one forms it [...]”⁵ Undoubtedly, he was writing about human character, but his insight is applicable to photography as well.

⁵ FLC U3(8)234. Letter dated 13 January 1958 from Le Corbusier to Mr. Santosh Ghosh, Department of Architecture, B. E. College, Howrah, India.



FIG. 1

Architectural Photography, 1924–1938

In 1924, the year of the completion of Le Corbusier's first modern building,⁶ architectural photography was a well-established métier in Paris, architecture being a popular subject for photographers, second only to the human face. Paris produced and attracted some of the finest architectural photographers of the day, many of whom photographed the buildings of Le Corbusier.⁷ Le Corbusier's Paris photographers included both photographers working alone as well as large photographic houses. G. Thiriet, Marius Gravot, and Albin Salaün, for instance, photographed the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau, the Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier's own apartment, the Beistegui rooftop apartment, and many more of the early works. [1]

-
- 6 The Villa Besnus is assigned this distinction by many Le Corbusier scholars and is sometimes said to have been completed in 1923. Though Le Corbusier designed a studio for Amédée Ozenfant after he designed the Villa Besnus, in his *Foundations of Modern Art*, Ozenfant claimed his studio was completed before the "little villa at Vaucresson."
- 7 This is evident in publications such as *L'Architecte*, a yearly chronicle made up largely of finely reproduced photographs. The excellent architectural photography is mostly of Parisian buildings by Parisian photographers and is comparable to the best architectural photography done anywhere in the world at this time. The photographers are credited in this publication, with the exception of those clichés purchased by the journal (some the work of renowned English travel-photographer Frank Yerbury, for instance). These credits, together with the excellent reproductions—which in other professional journals are often muddled by halftone printing—make it an important source for the study of architectural photography at this time.



FIG. 2

The photographic house of Frères Chevojon photographed the Nestlé Pavilion and the Maison de Week-End, and Boissonnas, the renowned Geneva photographers who had opened a portrait studio in Paris, photographed the Villa La Roche-Jeanerret and later, in Geneva, the Immeuble Clarté. [2]

Photographs of *chantiers* remote from Paris were made by local, not Parisian, photographers. The Bordeaux firm Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest, for instance, photographed Le Corbusier's Cité Frugès in Pessac, documenting the housing complex not only in its finished state in 1928 [3], but also during construction [4].

Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest also photographed the remote Maison aux Mathes, and in the postwar years photographed the Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles.



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

In Paris, evidently it was Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier's cousin from Geneva and his partner in the architectural firm, who organized the photography of the atelier's work.⁸ Jeanneret conducted the business of photography, corresponding with photographers and printers, and was himself an avid and reputedly excellent architectural photographer.⁹ His skill as a photographer may account for his role as director of the photography of the firm's work; but even were he not so gifted, he might well have assumed this responsibility for, in general, it was he, not Le Corbusier, who

-
- ⁸ In the 1920s and 1930s, correspondence concerned with the photography of buildings, drawings, or models from the Atelier Le Corbusier-Pierre Jeanneret, was almost always addressed to, answered or initiated by Pierre Jeanneret. See, for example, Jeanneret's reply to photographers Bernès, Marouteau & Co, 36 avenue de Châtillon, in a letter dated 15 October 1936, FLC T1(1)731. However, Le Corbusier corresponded with the photographer if the photography was of his personal work—i.e., his painting—or if, for some unusual reason, it was he personally who had commissioned a photographer. See, for instance, FLC T1(1)731.
- ⁹ This reputation is based on the expressed opinions of Lucien Hervé and of Le Corbusier. For Hervé's opinions, see Daniel Naegele, "An Interview with Lucien Hervé," *Parametro* 206 (Feb. 1995), 70–83. Le Corbusier's assessment of Jeanneret as photographer is considered below. The exceptional quality of Pierre Jeanneret's photography is everywhere evident in the many photographic images made by him and presently archived in Montreal at The Canadian Centre for Architecture.



FIG. 5

managed the firm's business transactions. This does not preclude involvement on the part of Le Corbusier in selecting and directing photographers, yet, Pierre Jeanneret's role was clearly critical. With a hand-held camera, he made 'preview photographs' of buildings near Paris shortly before they were completed, presumably in an attempt to determine the most favorable views [5].¹⁰

¹⁰ See, for instance, FLC L2(17)135, 138, 139. Mostly small photographs, these prints measure 6 cm x 10.5 cm and seem to be full frame images of the Villa Savoye made shortly before its completion. They are mounted on heavy stock paper as if destined for an album. The photographs show mud tracks on the floor and mounds of earth just outside the entrance door. They demonstrate a propensity toward what Thomas Schumacher once termed a "deep space/shallow space" composition and toward what I have described elsewhere as the bifurcated photograph. This is especially so in L1(10)30 and #9 on L2(17)135, a photo identical in composition though different in details to that shown in the *Œuvre complète-2*, 27, top-left. #1 is a view of the Armée du Salut entry lobby in which all light seems to emanate from the door, clearly the focal point of a 'truncated pyramid composition'. Typical of many Le Corbusier photographs, in this image the foreground is defined by furnishings: a table, two magazines and three Thonet chairs. The FLC holds many more 'preview photographs' of other buildings. >>



FIG. 6

Often the buildings are presented without furnishings, yet occasionally portable pieces of furniture can be found in a ‘scene’—presumably added by the photographer—or select pieces of the owner’s furniture are judiciously displaced, enhancing composition while conveying a lifestyle compatible with the new architecture [6].¹¹

-
- >> For instance, L2(17)135 shows five photographs of the Villa Savoye under construction and shortly before it was completed. L1(10)30 is a photograph of the toit-jardin of the Villa Stein-de Monzie at Garches exhibiting Pierre Jeanneret’s propensity for bifurcated space and truncated pyramid composition. There is some indication that, on at least one occasion, Le Corbusier may have made his own photographs of his architecture. His name is inscribed on the back of two images of the Villa Stein rooftop—FLC LI(10)32 & LI(10)38. Both are square photographs, a format unique to these two images in this archive. Both exhibit a concern for centrality within a dynamic composition. The latter features a woman in silhouette, captured in motion and appearing so small as to make immense the architectural environment through which she moves.
- 11 Photographs of the interior of the Villa Church (*L’Architecture Vivante*, Spring 1929) and one of the interior of the gallery of the Villa La Roche (*L’Architecture Vivante*, Spring 1930, pl. 17) show chairs co-designed by Le Corbusier, Charlotte Perriand, and Pierre Jeanneret. >>



FIG. 7

These preview photographs show little concern for technical correctness (vertical lines would converge, for instance) and make no attempt to purge the picture of construction workers or of evidence of construction activity. In them we find glazier's marks on the windows, muddied floors, ladders, and exposed foundation walls. Immediately upon completion, but if possible prior to its occupation by the owner, the villa would be photographed by a professional architectural photographer following views established in Jeanneret's preview shots.

-
- >> In both interiors, the chairs—chaise-longue and dossier basculant—are of similar fabric and one is led to suspect that these furnishings did not belong to their respective houses, but were installed only for the photo session. In 1993, in response to my question regarding this, Charlotte Perriand said that the furniture was not installed as props for photographs, but that both clients had ordered the same furniture in the same finishes completely by coincidence.



FIG. 8

In prewar photographs, only occasionally do people appear in the photographs, almost always in either a seated, leaning, or bent over position. [7] These positions make it difficult to ascertain the person's height and therefore to visually determine the size of the buildings by scale relationships. Frequently, these figures have their backs toward the camera. This provides anonymity, of course, but also serves to experientially involve the viewer in the photograph. For the figures in the photograph look in the same direction as

the photograph itself looks, serving as the viewer's surrogate, suggesting how the novel space might be understood. [8]

Le Corbusier's involvement in directing the photography on site is known from testimonies of those who worked in his office at the time, from certain correspondence, but also because he himself occasionally appears in the photographs. One imagines it unlikely that he would have been present at these sessions without exercising control over their execution.¹² [9]

In these early years, Le Corbusier's involvement in the business of photography was often precipitated by problematic situations. In March 1925, for instance, "Monsieur Jeanneret, architecte" (Le Corbusier, not his cousin Pierre)¹³ received a bill from the Atelier Photographie Artistique Jacques Thalmann of Vevey, Switzerland who had photographed Le Corbusier's parents' house in that same town.¹⁴ Apparently Le Corbusier had hired the photographer based on his portfolio of outstanding portraits and with little concern for his fee. Nearly a year after receiving the bill, he wrote to Thalmann claiming that Thalmann's photographs were "of no use," that the lens he had

-
- ¹² Except in the image of Pessac, this final point is contestable. Figures in these photographs very seldom face the camera or are seen in profile. Figures which could be Le Corbusier are, however, evident in images of Pessac, Plainex, the Armée du Salut, Immeuble Clarté, and the Immeuble Porte-Molitor. See, for example, the *Œuvre complète-1*, 86 (bottom) and 159 (top-right), and the *Œuvre complète-2*, 68 (top), 69 (top-left), 104 (bottom-right), 105 (middle), 150 (top-right).
- ¹³ This is made clear in a letter dated 16 February 1926 from 'Jeanneret' to Monsieur J. Thalmann [FLC A1(10)304_001 & 002] in which Le Corbusier, whose given name was Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, mentioned the illness of his father as reason for his late reply to the photographer's request for payment. His father died 11 April 1926.
- ¹⁴ FLC A1(10)302. The address on the letterhead is "Vevey, sous l'hôtel des Trois Couronnes, Telephone 38" and the bill is for exactly 100 Francs suisses and reflects a twenty percent discount.

employed proved “insufficient,” and that his exposure time had been incorrect. He sent Thalmann a print by Monsieur Gérard,¹⁵



FIG. 9

“our French photographer,” as an example of the “use of a lens which permits one to really photograph architecture” and included Gérard’s invoice “for fifteen francs per negative (one-fifth of your price).” Le Corbusier then proposed to pay Thalmann “the price of the excellent French clichés, 15 French francs” for each of his eight negatives. In addition, he would pay one franc for every print. To this sum, a small fraction of Thalmann’s billed

¹⁵ Although no print is found with this letter, Gérard corresponded with Pierre Jeanneret as early as June 1924 and may therefore have been the photographer for the Villa Besnus or for the Ozenfant studio which was completed in that year.

price, he added an additional 33% for the “more expensive Swiss conditions” (one Swiss franc equaled five French francs at the time). Enclosed was a check for 180 French francs, one-third of the bill. “I know that you do marvelous portraits,” he wrote, “but I need something totally different for architecture.”¹⁶

Responding three days later, Thalmann demanded the balance of his fee noting that all prices had been agreed upon in Swiss currency, that he had acted on Le Corbusier’s request without delay, and that Le Corbusier had failed to express his dissatisfaction in a timely manner. “I will turn the matter over to my business agent in Paris,” Thalmann concluded, “as it is not my habit to discuss at length such matters with those who fail to pay their bills, though fortunately such people are rare among my clientele.”¹⁷

The Thalmann incident makes clear the criteria Le Corbusier would employ in assessing architectural photographers for the rest of his life. Photography was to be well-executed, technically appropriate, and relatively economical—at least when his atelier was obliged to pay for the services.¹⁸ The incident also suggests the difficulties

¹⁶ FLC A1(10)304_001 & _002. Handwritten letter dated 16 February 1926 from ‘Jeanneret’ to Monsieur J. Thalmann.

¹⁷ FLC A1(10)303. Letter from J. Thalmann dated 19 February 1926, includes the bill of Gérard. Thalmann’s letterhead: Photographie Artistique et Moderne / J. Thalmann / Vevey / Sous l’hôtel des 3 couronnes.

¹⁸ These criteria applied to the photography of flatwork as well. See, for example, FLC T1(1)737, Le Corbusier’s 15 October 1935 reply to Photographie Bernès, Marouteau & cie. (36, ave de châillon, Paris 14) regarding their 12 October 1935 bill to ‘Lee [sic] Corbusier, artiste Peintre’ for 525 francs [15, 18 x 24’s (‘cl. compris’) @ 35.00 francs ea.]. Le Corbusier paid the photographers in full for photographing flatwork—probably his paintings—but expressed his dissatisfaction with both their price and their work: “Je vous répète que je trouve ce prix cher, étant donné que nos photographes prennent 20 et 25 frs pour travaux d’architecture [...] Je n’ai pas le temps de vous prier de refaire quelques clichés dont le partage des couleurs n’avait pas réussi, mais je suis persuadé qu’à mon retour d’Amérique vous voudriez bien reprendre certains des clichés qui ne me donnent pas satisfaction [...]”.

incurred in controlling the photography of buildings remote from the Paris atelier. Such photography could not be supervised easily by Le Corbusier or Pierre Jeanneret and the expense of sending a Parisian photographer to shoot remote buildings was prohibitive. A local photographer was needed for these assignments, yet the work of photographers outside of Paris was seldom known and technical sophistication was unlikely to compare well with Parisian standards.



FIG. 10



FIG. 11

Regardless of its importance, a building was not given extensive coverage in publications controlled by Le Corbusier—including the *Œuvre complète*—if its photographic images were judged “insufficient.” The Villa de Mandrot, for instance, is presented in four well-executed but utterly banal views taken by the Toulon photographer Marius Bar and presumably commissioned by Madame de Mandrot.¹⁹ [10] One interior view shows two chairs and a coffee table by René Herbst, furnishings that at the time of the building’s completion in July 1931 could not have pleased Le Corbusier whose own modern furniture had gone into limited production with Thonet in 1930. [11] The villa is spacious, though not large, but Bar’s interior shots rendered it small and somewhat oppressive. Le Corbusier’s subsequent cropping attempted to remedy this impression. The house was a marked departure from Le Corbusier’s stucco Parisian villas in both its rustic stone construction and its failure to subscribe to any of the ‘five points’.²⁰ And though it appeared in the *Œuvre complète* and *L’Architecture Vivante*, since the negatives remained with the photographer, its images were not readily available at later dates to journals and publishers through Le Corbusier’s office.²¹

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- 19 FLC L2(19)15, 16, 21, 22. Prints of the four most prominent views of this house—two interior and two exterior—carry an embossed circular seal in the lower right corner which reads: “PHOTOGRAPHIE MARIUS BAR TOULON.” Reproductions of these images which most closely follow these full-frame views are found in *L’Architecture Vivante* 5, pl’s 22, 24, 25. In the *Œuvre complète*-2, 58 and 61, the photographs are further modified.
- 20 The initial design endorsed by Madame de Mandrot was based on the *Maison Loucheur* prototype, a pre-fabricated house of folded zinc sheets over ‘Solomite’ panels adhered to a steel frame. For a detailed history of the design development of the Villa de Mandrot, see Tim Benton, “The Villa de Mandrot and the Place of Imagination,” *Quaderns d’arquitectura i urbanisme* 163 (Oct.-Dec. 1984), 36–47, English supplement, 17–25.

A building's reputation and assumed importance often was established by the frequency with which its image was reproduced in key publications. This unavailability could only have discouraged frequent publication.

Another important building consigned to relative insignificance in part because of insufficient photographic documentation was the Centrosoyus building in Moscow. Given its status as Le Corbusier's largest built work prior to the Chandigarh complex and as a building type different from the residential and exhibition buildings that had sustained his practice since its inception, the Centrosoyus merited extensive publicity. Begun in 1928, the building was not finished until 1935.²² By that time the Depression had curtailed the firm's activity and their other large buildings—the Armée du Salut, Immeuble Clarté, Pavillon Suisse, and Immeuble Molitor—had been featured in the second volume of the *Œuvre complète*. As the third volume came to press in 1938, there was a need for new documentation of a completed building. Good photographs of the Centrosoyus building were not available, an issue Le Corbusier attempted to rectify as late as 1939. Presumably he had called on the French Ambassador to the Soviet Union in Moscow to have photographs made, but was sorely disappointed with the results. When in March 1939, he finally

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- 21 FLC T1(1)856, 857, 858. In response to a request from “M. le Directeur, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 5, rue Bartholdi,” for specific photos selected from his *Œuvre complète-2*, on 15 April 1939 Le Corbusier wrote, “Nous ne possédons aucun document sur la Villa de Mme de Mandrot [the requested photos were from the *Œuvre complète-2*, 58 (‘façade’), 61 (‘vue sur l’arrivé’), and 61 (‘intérieur’) (lower left)] ni sur la Maison aux Mathes [65 (‘galerie balcon’), 66 (‘façade and intérieur-pièce de séjour’)]. Le cliché représentant l’intérieur de l’appartement de M. de Beistegui [57, lower-left] n’existe malheureusement plus.” He then suggested that photographs of the Beistegui apartment be retrieved from earlier issues of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*.
- 22 See Jean-Louis Cohen, *Le Corbusier et la mystique de l'URSS* (Brussels: Pierre Mardaga éditeur, 1987).

received photographs from Moscow, he wrote the ambassador in exasperation: “For a people reputed to be cinematographers of the first order, how few of these photographs are well done and how terribly un-resourceful are the shots that have been taken!”

He went on to state that he would have thought the grand hall “une chose fort agréable à photographier” and therefore could not understand why the photographer was so obsessed by the “underside of the concrete ramp, which is of limited interest.”²³

The Immeuble Clarté in Geneva, a large apartment building completed in 1932 and one of Le Corbusier’s most significant works at the time, was probably photographed without the supervision of Le Corbusier himself, although Pierre Jeanneret was certainly present. Jeanneret was from Geneva and had an apartment in Clarté. In one of the frequently published images of the building, he is featured seated in a chair on the balcony. [12]

The renowned Geneva photographers Boissonnas photographed the building. Boissonnas’ photography differed from that typically done of Le Corbusier’s work in two respects: people—women, children, and men—appear in many of the interior pictures sometimes in profile or facing the camera;²⁴ and, each negative

²³ FLC H2(9)430. Dated 4 March 1939, this letter from Le Corbusier was addressed to the “Ambassadeur de France” from whom Le Corbusier had requested photographs on 13 July 1938 and who had sent photographs of the “Ministère de l’Industrie Légère à Moscou” to him on 24 February 1939.

²⁴ Occasionally people were shown in photographs of Le Corbusier’s work done by others prior to this. Sometimes these people—as at Pessac, the Maison Plainex, the Villa Church, the Armée du Salut or, I suspect, the Pavillon Suisse—are Le Corbusier himself. They are often but not always men, perhaps people on hand during the shoot. Pierre Jeanneret is featured seated on an outdoor balcony of the Immeuble Clarté where he owned an apartment. He’s at the focal point of the image, playing with a child, and to his right a woman inside the apartment is seen leaning out of a large window. >>



FIG. 12

carries the firm's signature in the lower left or lower right corner, a 'by-line' which appears in all prints unless a significant part of the picture is cropped. [12]

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- >> To her right—in the minimally cropped version of the same photograph featured in *L'Architecture Vivante* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (no. 10, 1933, 99)—a man frames the view with his silhouetted profile deformed by his proximity to the camera. Like the woman leaning out of the window, this man is 'looking on'—'looking on' being a typical Le Corbusier ploy. Jeanneret seated renders the 'space' larger than Jeanneret standing would have. It was very probably Jeanneret, and not Le Corbusier, who conducted this shoot and composed this image.

Le Corbusier's photojournalistic coverage of the Immeuble Clarté is typical of his coverage of many of his built works at this time. In the *Œuvre complète-2*, there are five photographs of Clarté with people in them (67–69) and only one, the one discussed above, shows a man (Jeanneret) facing the camera. One shows a child facing the camera (69), and another (67) shows two women outside in lounge chairs: one in profile—presumably "looking at the world"—and one facing the camera. On 153, two photographs of interiors of the Immeuble Porte-Molitor show a woman sitting, reading a newspaper, and in one of the photographs, smoking. In the same photographs, a man tends to the dog in one and presumably pays the bills in the other.



FIG. 13

Given the residential and communal nature of the apartment, signs of family life were desirable. The interior space is rather anonymous, and furnishings and human activity help to give it definition and inform the reader as to how to live in such a novel world. Spaciousness, luminosity, and interior-external continuity are the architecture's formal attributes. The people in these photographs elaborate on these themes, portraying a lifestyle of lounging and 'looking out'. Their diminutive size (children, small



FIG. 14

women, and seated men are featured) deceptively portrays the space larger than it actually is, a standard ploy in the presentation of Le Corbusier's architecture. Later, in the 1934 photographs of his own apartment at 24 rue Nungesser et Coli, people are again evident in the pictures, if only occasionally. [13] A photograph of Le Corbusier's wife Yvonne— attired in pants, no less— demonstrates how one was to use the modern, minimal kitchen;²⁵ while in the apartment below, the pipe-smoking occupant and his dog are shown in silhouette, the dog looking out the *pan de verre* onto the sports arena across the street. [14]

²⁵ Yvonne did not advocate living in such modernity. When faced with leaving the archaic apartment at 20 rue Jacob in the heart of Paris where she and Le Corbusier had lived for years, with tears in her eyes she told the photographer Brassai that she had been to see the new apartment. "You can't imagine what it's like!" she cried. "A hospital, a dissecting lab! I'll never get used to it [...] And way out in Auteuil, far from everything [...] far from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where we've been living for sixteen years." See Brassai, *The Artist in My Life* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 85.

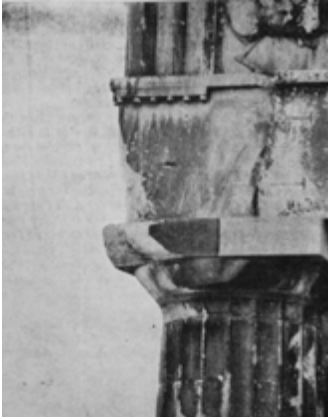


FIG. 15



FIG. 16

As for the integral by-line, in these early years, with publications which he himself authored, Le Corbusier would not credit the photographer unless obliged to do so. This was no doubt the case with Boissonnas, but the Boissonnas signature may also have been desirable bringing a certain distinction to the presentation, this despite the sometimes mediocre quality of the photographs.²⁶ In *Vers une architecture*, although most of the photographs are appropriated—many from catalogues, some

²⁶ The following note appeared as a postscript to Le Corbusier-Saugnier, “Architecture, Pure création de l’esprit,” *L’Esprit Nouveau* 16 (May 1922):
 Les clichés qui illustrent cet article proviennent de l’ouvrage “Le Parthénon” par Collignon, paru aux Editions Albert Morancé, 30 et 32, Rue de Fleurus, Paris, et de l’ouvrage “L’Acropole” paraissant actuellement aux mêmes Editions. Ces deux magnifiques ouvrages, qui donnent deux documents véritablement précis du Parthénon et de l’Acropole, ont pu être établis grâce au talent de M. Frédéric Boissonnas, photographe, dont la persévérance, les initiatives et les qualités de plasticien nous ont révélé le principal des œuvres grecques de haute époque.
 When this article was republished as a chapter in *Vers une architecture*, this note was left out.

from famous books and by renowned photographers including Boissonnas—only seven are credited.²⁷ Presumably in these seven instances the credit line was a condition imposed on Le Corbusier. This is the case, too, in other books by Le Corbusier. In *Almanach d'architecture moderne* only four photographs carry credits: a Greek vase by Giraudon [15], a detail of the Parthenon by Boissonnas [16], and two dark interior images of the Villa La Roche-Jeanneret by Calavas. In the 1933 special number of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* dedicated to the work of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier himself did the page layouts and graphic design. Of the over one hundred photographs of models and buildings, only one carried a credit: the Boissonnas signature inscribed on a photograph of the Immeuble Clarté (the signatures on other Boissonnas photographs in this issue were cropped). Yet it was typical for *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* to credit photographers, even when the building presented was by Le Corbusier, unless Le Corbusier himself wrote the article and therefore controlled the illustrative text.²⁸ On the last page of his 1933 book *Croisade ou le crépuscule des Académies*, Le Corbusier noted that many of its illustrations were provided by the weekly popular press magazines *VU* and *Voilà*. And on the closing page of his 1938 *Des Canons, des munitions? merci! des logis... SVP* he stated that the photographs are by “Salaün, Levy [sic] et divers amateurs” without specifying who did what. In the eight volumes of the *Œuvre complète*, photographers are only credited beginning with Volume Six in 1957.

²⁷ One is credited to Draeger, one to Branger, one to Hostache, and four (of the Parthenon) to the publishing house Morancé. Morancé played an important role in the publication of Le Corbusier's work.

²⁸ In a May 1992 interview with the author, Pierre Vago, *rédacteur en chef* of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* at the time of this special issue, recalled that Le Corbusier insisted on complete control of the *mise en page* and that it was Le Corbusier who wanted no photographer credited, contrary to the journal's standard practice.

Given both his preference for a certain kind of photographic image and the complications involved in coordinating the photographing of a building, why did Le Corbusier not simply choose one or two photographers to photograph all of his buildings? Photographs had to be made by local photographers within a very limited range of time: immediately after the building's completion but prior to its occupation. This time frame was fixed; the photographer was not. More importantly, Le Corbusier very seldom commissioned the photographs himself, rather the photographers were commissioned by publishers or they occasionally photographed the buildings without a client in the hope of marketing the images at a later date.²⁹

Yet, Le Corbusier controlled the artistic rights to his buildings. According to French law at the time, images of his buildings could not be published without his consent. His approval was necessary, and publishers and photographers alike understood this. Occasionally, Le Corbusier himself held the rights of reproduction for photographs which he then marketed for a small profit.³⁰

These factors are made evident in correspondence concerning the photographing of the Immeuble Porte-Molitor at 24 rue Nungesser et Coli, the Paris apartment building where Le Corbusier lived, occupying the top two floors. When the Zürich editor of the *Œuvre complète*, Willy Boesiger, did not receive photographs of this recently completed building before Volume Two was to go to

²⁹ For example, in *L'Architecte*, some of the photographs credited to *L'Architecte* can be recognized as the work of the English photographer Frank Yerbury. From this, I surmise that the journal must have purchased the cliché with full rights of reproduction from the photographer.

³⁰ For instance, on 23 February 1939, Le Corbusier sent a bill to 'McGrath and Shand' for 65 select photographs (proofs and rights of reproduction), for which he charged 9 francs each, 565 francs total. FLC U3(20)197. On 23 January 1936 he billed *Paris Soir* for "Droits de reproduction pour 6 photos / 6 x 6 = 36 francs" [FLC T1(1)747]. These photographs were perhaps of flatwork, not of architecture.

print, he instructed the photographer Heep to go to Boulogne just outside Paris to make “ein paar gute Nah- & Distanz-” photographs.³¹ Meanwhile, Pierre Jeanneret wrote to Boesiger on 10 September 1934. “With my equipment, it has been almost impossible to take the facade of Boulogne,” he said, referring to deformations due to the angles involved and enclosing “two small negatives” from which Boesiger was to make enlargements “following the format indicated on the little piece of paper enclosed.”³² In a postscript he noted that a Mr. Heep had arrived but that they did not know who sent him.³³ Three days later, Le Corbusier wrote to Boesiger that he had received a visit from Heep that morning, adding that Heep’s services were by then not necessary.³⁴ He explained that before he had left for the sea—sometime in August, probably six weeks prior to writing this letter—about twenty photographs of 24 rue Nungesser et Coli, interior and exterior, were made for the September issue of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* by the journal’s own photographer.

Le Corbusier then sent Boesiger “two photographs of the facade, two of a characteristic apartment on the sixth floor, and seven very beautiful photographs of my own apartment which should effectively complement those that you already have, those made with the Rolleyflex [sic].” The photographer was Albin Salaün.

³¹ FLC B1(5)151. Letter from W. Boesiger, Kirchgasse 3, Zürich to Heep.

³² See FLC B1(5)146, unsigned letter dated 10 September 1934 with the heading “LE CORBUSIER & P. J.” to Monsieur Boesiger, 17 Kirchgasse, Zürich. The preview photographs previously described employed small negatives, and Jeanneret’s reference here suggests again that it was he who took the preview pictures. His “little piece of paper” visually described the cropping of the image, a habit Le Corbusier, too, possessed and one that he retained until the end of his life. See my “Interview with Lucien Hervé,” *Parametro*, 206 (Feb. 1995), 70–83.

³³ FLC B1(5)146.

³⁴ FLC B1(5)152. Letter dated 13 September 1934 from Le Corbusier to Monsieur Boesiger, 3 Kirchgasse, Zürich.



FIG. 17



FIG. 18

In Paris, in the 1920s and early 1930s, Le Corbusier seemed to prefer two photographers: Marius Gravot and G. Thiriet. Gravot made many well-known photographs of the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau, the Villa Savoye, the Beistegui apartment, and the Pavillon Suisse—buildings which became some of Le Corbusier's best known works.³⁵ [17] Thiriet was another excellent Parisian photographer who worked with Le Corbusier, most notably on the Maison Plainex, the Armée du Salut and the Villa Church. [18]³⁵

35 It is sometimes difficult to ascertain authorship of the photographs of Le Corbusier's work from this period since as a rule he did not credit the photographer in either the articles or the books that he himself wrote. Other journals, *L'Architecte* for example, did carry by-lines, however, and it is from these as well as from archival search that I have determined who did what. Research at the FLC is not always fruitful in this area because very few of the prints in their collection carry the stamp of the photographer. Many are recent re-prints made from earlier prints. In the 1990s, I could not access, in either the FLC or the Lucien Hervé archives, the now frail glass plates from which the original prints were made. These plates would have enabled me to assign authorship with greater certainty. Confounding the search is the French law that assigns credit for the photograph to the owner of the rights of reproduction. The owner is not necessarily the author of the photograph but may well be a photographer who has purchased the work of another photographer. Often more than one photographer shot the same building. For example, Braun & Cie. of Paris, not Gravot, did the most widely publicized photograph of the exterior, front facade of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau while three other photographs—one of the Pavilion's interior, one of its terrasse-jardin and one of its exterior from the front—are credited to Thibaud in Michel Roux-Spitz's *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris, 1925, pl.'s 62–63. Both G. Thiriet and René Lévy photographed the Armée du Salut. Lévy's photographs of the completed building are those most often re-published. Gravot shot the building under construction and his photographs offer a revealing view of the building's structure, structure that was later concealed by curtain wall. Gravot photographed other buildings by Le Corbusier. He did a few photographs of the Immeuble Clarté though those most often published are by Boissonnas. He also photographed the Beistegui apartment. His image of the solarium with the Arc de Triomphe in the background (*Œuvre complète-2*, 54) is frequently reproduced, yet seldom attributed to him. However, *L'Architecte* (1932), 102, fig. 190, carries his 'by-line' for this photograph and nearly all of the old prints of the Beistegui apartment now held in the FLC are stamped: "M. Gravot & Co. / PHOTOGRAPHIE ARTISTIQUE & INDUSTRIELLE / 159, Boulevard St. Germain, PARIS (VI)." >>

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- >> Beistegui himself encouraged popular press photographers to photograph the apartment after he furnished it rather outrageously and in a manner that contrasted greatly with Le Corbusier's style. It was published in *Vogue* ["Sur les troits de Paris", *Vogue* (Nov. 1, 1932), 38–39, with five photographs carrying the credit 'Boffotot, Sèvres' on each page], and later in *Harper's Bazar*, and *Plaisir de France* accompanied by an article by Roger Baschet. These articles feature photographs of the gardens and solarium that both inform and contrast those by Le Corbusier. This is also the case with the most definitive photo exposé of the apartment, Alexander Watt's "Fantasy on the Roofs of Paris" in *The Architectural Review*, vol. 79, no. 473 (Apr. 1936), 155–159. Several of the nine photographs in this article focus specifically on furnishings not by Le Corbusier. It might be argued that it was Beistegui, a great admirer of surrealism and a friend of many of the movement's most important artists, who gave the apartment its surrealist overtones, and not Le Corbusier. It was Beistegui, and not Le Corbusier, who decided that while the apartment should have no electric lights, a mere push of a button would move an interior partition or a wall of shrubs [see Watt, above].
- Le Corbusier may have seen in Gravot's stunning image a kind of studied, cerebral, judiciously restrained provocation of a surreal spirit. Photography provided him an opportunity to reassert his control over the design, to suggest in a single image that, far from being a pawn in Beistegui's game, he himself had intentionally designed the solarium as a surreal landscape. It is doubtful though that this was his intention from the start. At any rate, it should be obvious that the "surrealist element" exists not in the architecture itself but rather in its image. That is to say, it is the peculiarities of the photographic composition—an unnaturally high station point, a receding wall that nevertheless manifests itself as a horizontal line parallel to the picture plane, a sky that is also an exact rectangle thereby insisting on its two-dimensionality, the discreet pairing of black and white "theme objects" (a white mantel with black opening vs. a black "Arc" with white opening, one white chair vs. one black chair, an open book echoed in a white pillow)—that provoke "surreal" sensations, not the architecture.
- For additional information on Beistegui, collector and eccentric, and on his villa at Groussay outside Paris, see Eveline Schlumberger, "Beistegui," *Connaissance des Arts*, 218 (April 1970), 89–97.

Albin Salaün and the *habileté de vieux praticien*

From the mid-1930s until 1950, Albin Salaün—and sometimes René Lévy—photographed Le Corbusier’s buildings, his models of architecture, and his art work.³⁶ Salaün typifies the architectural photographer of this era. Born in 1876 of a Bretonne family in Lannion on the Côtes-d’Armor, Salaün moved to Paris at the age of twelve. He did not choose photography as a profession but took it up by chance entering into apprenticeship with a photographer at an early age. He established his own business, maintaining a studio at 8 rue des Favorites in the 15th arrondissement, working alone his entire life with a clientele of mostly architects and interior decorators. He also did work for the Bibliothèque Nationale.³⁷ Not only did he photograph buildings and interiors for these clients, he did ‘flatwork’ as well, photographing paintings, models, and large drawings for Le Corbusier.

³⁶ Their photographs of Le Corbusier’s apartment were published with a by-line in *Le Décor d’Aujourd’hui*, no. 30 (1938), 21–22. The article features one photograph by René Lévy and two by Albin Salaün of Le Corbusier’s own apartment in the Immeuble Porte-Molitor. All three are shown without by-lines in the *Œuvre complète-2*. Salaün’s interior of the living room is the upper left image on 145 and his “L’escalier” is on 151. Lévy’s photograph of the bedroom with a Léger painting in the foreground is on the left side of 152. In this same issue of *Le Décor d’Aujourd’hui* there are other Salaün photographs not of Le Corbusier’s architecture. For additional Salaün photographs, see *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* no. 3 (Mar. 1937), 39, 44, 50, 51, 54, 66–69.

³⁷ This biographical sketch was provided by Mlle. Hélène Salaün, 8 rue des Favorites, 75015 Paris in her 22 May 1993 letter to me in reply to the my inquiry.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Salaün photographed for many of the most important Parisian architects. His photographs were frequently commissioned by and published in professional and popular journals including the illustrated serials, *L'Architecte* and *L'Encyclopédie*. As was typical for professional architectural photographers of the time, he employed a large format camera with glass plate negatives, the majority 18 x 24 cm (approximately 7 x 10 inches).³⁸ Some of his photographs of Le Corbusier's work apparently were directed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, although the remarkable eye and unquestionable artistic talent that distinguish his photography for Le Corbusier is evident as well in his photography of the works of other architects done prior to his meeting Le Corbusier.³⁹

Following common practice, Salaün was frequently commissioned directly by architectural journals to photograph Le Corbusier's buildings. He owned the negatives and the rights of reproduction, made prints on request and under the direction of Le Corbusier, and was paid by the publications who featured his photographs. Together with René Lévy, Salaün photographed the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux for publication in Le Corbusier's book, *Des Canons, des munitions? merci! des logis...SVP*, and in *L'Architecture Vivante's Le Corbusier; Œuvre plastique*. [19]

³⁸ In the letter cited above, Mlle. Salaün recalled that the equipment was "24 x 30 ou 30 x 40." However, FLC records indicate the Salaün glass plates of Le Corbusier's work were mostly 18 x 24.

³⁹ See, for example, Salaün's photographs of the work of André Lurçat in *L'Architecte* (1933) and Roux-Spitz in *L'Architecte* (1931).



FIG. 19

Le Corbusier occasionally commissioned Salaün directly as in 1945 when Salaün photographed a model of Algiers and made large prints for an exposition at St. Dié. [20] On more than one occasion he found Le Corbusier a reluctant client when it came to remuneration for his services.⁴⁰ In a rather desperate 1947 letter Salaün begged Le Corbusier to pay a year-old bill of 14,148 francs. “In dollars it is nothing,” he pleaded, but “I am far from being a millionaire and need to make good my obligations.”⁴¹

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- ⁴⁰ FLC T1(1)299. Handwritten letter dated 10 November 1945 from Salaün in Paris to Le Corbusier seeking payment for work billed to Le Corbusier four times previously. Apparently, Le Corbusier had refused responsibility for payment claiming that the photographs were for “Mme de Wogenski,” André Bloc, and “Mons. Lefebvre.”
- ⁴¹ FLC T1(1)300. Handwritten letter dated 18 May 1947 to Le Corbusier from Albin Salaün, Photographe à Paris, 8, rue des Favorites, XV, Téléphone: Vaugirard 59 97.



FIG. 20

Yet Le Corbusier obviously valued Salaün as a photographer and as a friend. When Salaün died in December 1951 at the age of 75,⁴² Le Corbusier wrote to the Salaün family offering his condolences. He described Salaün as “*un bon ami et un fidèle collaborateur*,” noting that with him he had always had “*les meilleurs rapports*” and that he very much appreciated Salaün’s “*habileté de vieux praticien*.” Loyalty and understanding were qualities Le Corbusier valued and sought in all his collaborators, but as for the “*habileté de vieux praticien*,”⁴³ in his photographers such skill ended with the death of Salaün. In February 1952, Salaün’s son began proceedings to sell his photographic negatives. Le Corbusier, together with Lucien Hervé, purchased the clichés of his work and began to build an archive of photographic images.

42 FLC R3(2)363. A death notice sent to Le Corbusier states that Albin Salaün, “*père, grand-père, frère, beau-frère, oncle et parent, décédé, muni des Sacrements de l’Eglise, le 21 Décembre 1951, à l’âge de 75 ans, à Paris*” and will be buried in the Bagneux-Parisian cemetery in the family *sépulture*.

43 Letter dated 10 January 1952 from Le Corbusier to the Salaün Family, 8, rue des Favorites, Paris (XV), a copy of which was given to the author by the photographer’s daughter, Mlle. Hélène Salaün.



FIG. 21

Serials 1920–1946

Serial publication was fundamental to Le Corbusier and differentiated his efforts from those of other architects. He entered modern architecture as an editor of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, and the articles that he wrote for this periodical he later compiled into several books. These books, the core of his theory of architecture and urbanism, were expanded and given the label, *Collection de "L'Esprit Nouveau."*⁴⁴ In the mid-1950s, Le Corbusier started another series, *Les Carnets de la recherche patiente*, comprised mostly of pictorial monographs on his completed buildings. [21] Where the first collection prescribes, the latter "reports on"; and though he wrote many other books, these two collections anchor his writings, distinguishing the early and the late, the white and the gray, Le Corbusier.⁴⁵ In addition to these two collections, Le Corbusier's work was disseminated in serial format in *L'Architecture Vivante* and in the *Œuvre complète*.

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- ⁴⁴ The *Collection de "L'Esprit Nouveau"* was comprised of the following eight books: *Vers une architecture* (1923), *La Peinture moderne* (1924), *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (1925), *Urbanisme* (1925), *Almanach de l'architecture moderne* (1925), *Une Maison – Un Palais* (1928), *Précisions* (1930), and *Croisade* (1933). The first five of these are largely compilations of articles (occasionally co-authored with Amédée Ozenfant) previously published in the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*.
- ⁴⁵ There were other, less prominent 'collections': *Collection the New Vision (Aircraft, 1935)*, *Collection de l'Équipement de la Civilisation machiniste (Des Canons, des munitions ? merci ! des logis...s.v.p., 1938)*, *Collection ASCORAL (Les Trois établissements humains, 1945, and Manière de penser l'urbanisme, 1946)*.

Exemplifying the French tendency for encyclopedic organization, serial publication had several advantages. It offered a guaranteed forum and definitive format for the presentation of Le Corbusier's buildings as they came available. In serials, buildings could be presented beginning, middle and end. Larger buildings required up to six years to construct, and in the case of the government complex at Chandigarh, ten years. Le Corbusier could hold the interest of his audience for these long period of times by showing the building in different phases of consideration. A new, not yet built, design could be announced. The building under construction could be documented. The completed building and the ceremonial inaugurations that go with opening a building could be featured. Also, the serial effectively isolated Le Corbusier's architecture from that of his contemporaries: segregation that worked to his advantage. By comparison with the buildings of the leading architects of the day, Le Corbusier's buildings—in the 1920s, mostly stucco houses for a bourgeois clientele—were small and delicate.⁴⁶ In a context that excluded contemporary buildings designed by other architects, these same buildings could be and were presented as radiant, substantial, certainly not stylized, sometimes “scientific,” and always of the utmost importance and urgency. The *Collection de “L'Esprit Nouveau”* offered itself as such a context, and in the mid-1920s, as his early villas were completed, their photographs began to appear in his books, first as end-of-chapter supplements in later editions of *Vers une architecture*, then as illustrations of theory in *Almanach d'architecture moderne*, and ultimately as integral illustrative text in *Une Maison - Un Palais*. But these early books were cheaply made and the photographs poorly reproduced. Other serials would do better.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, *L'Architecte or Encyclopédie de l'Architecture, Constructions Modernes* for such a comparison.

Éditions Albert Morancé published *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*; the stunning annual *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture, Constructions Modernes*; as well as *L'Architecture Vivante*, a bi-annual publication on contemporary architecture edited by Jean Badovici. A portfolio format of loose plates printed in a full range of grays on one side only of a fine matte finish paper, *L'Architecture Vivante* presented a limited number of very select, large format photographs unsurpassed in their excellence and often complemented by short introductory essays. Although artistically conceived, this format made little concession for page layout or sequence and photographs often 'fill-out' each page or plate, conforming to the book's dimensions rather than asserting their own.

Eight *séries* of *L'Architecture Vivante* were effectively monographs dedicated solely to the work of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret.

The first appeared in autumn 1927 and included photographs of Maison Cook [22], the Villa Albert Jeanneret (one in color), the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau, Pessac, and drawings of various other projects. A new *séries* on the firm's work appeared almost annually through the winter of 1933 when the sixth volume—featuring the Pavillon Suisse, the Beistegui interior, and the Immeuble Clarté—was issued. A seventh number came out three years later at a time when the Depression had severed all building and only eight photographic plates—five of 24 rue Nungesser et Coli, all credited to Albin Salaün, and three of the Maison de Weekend taken by Chevojon but without credits—were included. [23] An eighth volume titled *Le Corbusier, Œuvre plastique* was issued in 1938. Coinciding with a Zürich exhibition of Le Corbusier's art, it was dedicated to Le Corbusier as painter and as such marked an important transition in his career. In addition, it featured drawings and photographs (mostly by Salaün) of the ephemeral canvas tent, the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. [24]



FIG. 22

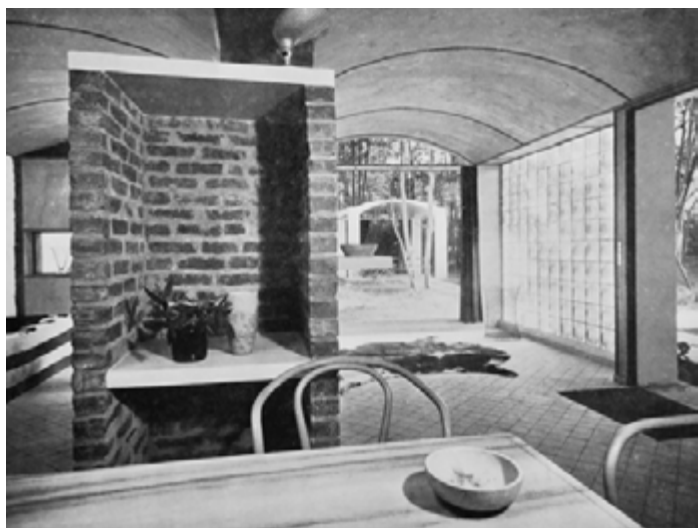


FIG. 23



FIG. 24

The *séries* was a forerunner of the atelier's own *Œuvre complète* initiated by Willy Boesiger, Oscar Stonorov, and Vedres perhaps at the instigation of Le Corbusier.⁴⁷ The *Œuvre complète* was published in Zürich by Girsberger and Co. The first volume, dedicated to work executed between 1910 and 1929, appeared in 1930. It was intended, in the words of Boesiger, as the “publication of the work of a master done by young architects who admire this work” and as such, he explained, would contain “no critique but instead a series of introductions explaining the work of the architects.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ In the first volume of the *Œuvre complète*, 11, Le Corbusier writes, “a publisher and two young architects [...] joined forces to make this book a sort of balance-sheet of my work.”

⁴⁸ FLC B1(5)27_001 & _002. This letter dated 24 April 1929 from Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, (Zeltweg 7, Zürich 7) to Le Corbusier, in the words of its authors, “serves to summarize our conversation in your atelier and to request your confirmation” regarding the publication of Le Corbusier’s complete works. >>

The written text would be in both German and French, with possibly English and Russian editions. As Le Corbusier was to provide the illustrative material, almost all the *L'Architecture Vivante* photographs re-appeared in the *Œuvre complète*, albeit in 'altered-by-Le Corbusier' form.

Comparing the two serials, there is a noticeable difference in the presentation of photographs. In contrast to the compilation of plates in *L'Architecture Vivante*, the photographic arrangement in the *Œuvre complète* is an artistic presentation, an almost filmic sequencing in which high contrast and careful composition conspire to abstract the photographs and unify the presentation. Half-tone printing produced high-contrast images in which the photographs lost their subtle shades of gray, one means of conveying depth. The dense blacks and bright whites rendered compositions graphic and abstract, formally allying verbal and visual text by underscoring the materiality of each as ink on paper. The inclusion of black and white architectural drawings and occasionally of collages which united drawings with photographs eased the transition, equating ink and photo image as markings on paper. [25]

High contrast sometimes obscured information carried by the photograph. For example, in an early authorized postcard of Le Corbusier's parents' house in Vevey, high contrast printing obliterated the laundry hanging in the neighbor's yard, a ladder, the surrounding shrubs and trees: all scale-indicating details. [26]

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- >> It informed Le Corbusier that the two of them had discussed with M. Girsberger Le Corbusier's point of view and that he was in agreement on the principal points regarding page composition, the choice of documents, and the publication of the *Œuvre complète* in several languages. It outlined the program to be followed and the organization of the publishers and editors. Le Corbusier was to supply plans and photos for the book which was to appear in September 1929.

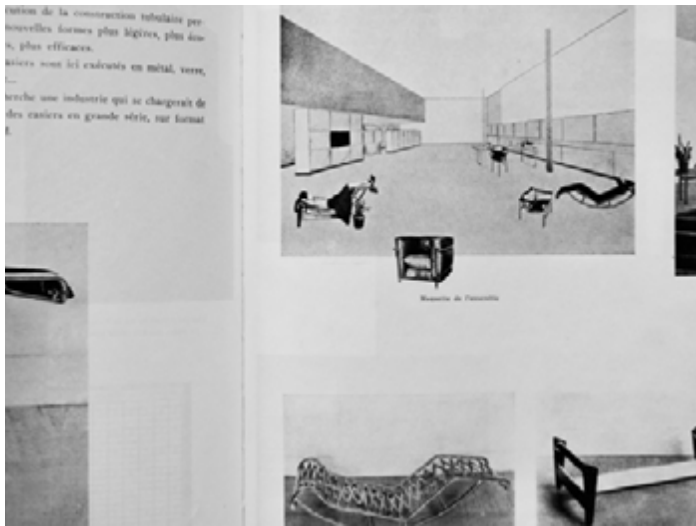


FIG. 25

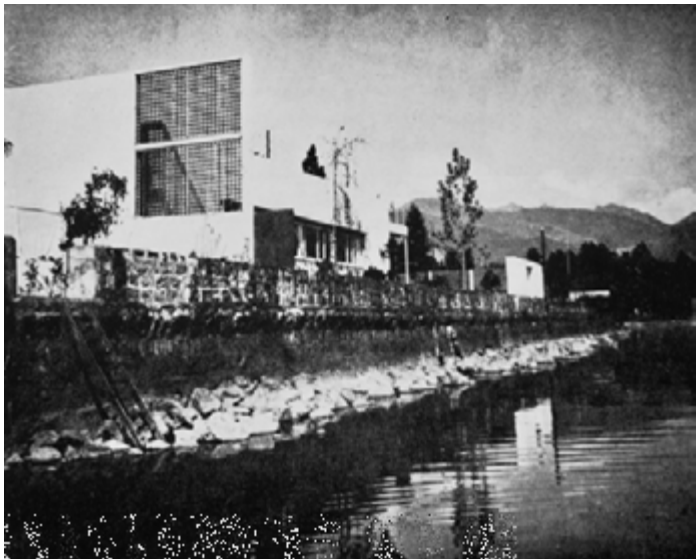


FIG. 26

This allowed the tiny house to appear much larger than it really is.⁴⁹ The obscuring of extraneous details thus eliminated one set of possible variations from image to image, and, by extension, from building to building.

In the *Œuvre complète*, page composition is of great importance and each photograph is part of a larger whole. As with Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*, page to page movement and opposite page adjacencies are carefully considered. By setting highly abstract images of his architecture side-by-side—as with the photographs of the Beistegui *toit-jardins*—Le Corbusier could suggest spatial innovations far more daring than the actual space of the apartment itself. [27] As correspondence with Girsberger makes evident, Le Corbusier was personally responsible for *la mise en pages du texte et des photos*⁵⁰ and if he was displeased with the available photographic documentation or even if he thought the illustrative text too overwhelmingly photographic, he was not adverse to making last minute changes, variations from the designated program that surprised the Swiss editors and brought vitality to the publication.⁵¹

49 This postcard image [FLC L3(17)31] is very similar to the photograph titled “... au bord du lac Léman” in the *Œuvre complète-1*, 75, top-right.

50 FLC B1(5)166_001 & _002. This letter dated 21 September 1934 from Le Corbusier to Girsberger, 17 Kirchgasse, Zürich, was his response to the proofs for the *Œuvre complète-2*. He wanted to update the photographic documentation of Immeuble Porte-Molitor to include additional photos of the bedroom and dining room. Also, he noted that because *la ferme* was “une étude importante qui méritait mieux que de tout petits clichés”, it deserved “un grand cliché”. He said that the photographs of Nemours had not turned out well and consequently the project was to be re-photographed after which he would send immediately the page layout of text and photos.

51 FLC B1(5)172. In a 27 September 1934 letter to Girsberger from Le Corbusier following the letter detailed above [FLC B1(5)166_001 & _002], Le Corbusier wrote that the Nemours project was not to be published in the *Œuvre complète-2* and noted that upon reflection he had found a solution “which is infinitely more interesting in the present circumstances.” >>



FIG. 27

The serial format held Le Corbusier accountable for developments in his work even during the Depression and the Second World War when almost no buildings were built.⁵² The third and fourth volumes of the *Œuvre complète* which cover the period 1934–1938 and 1938–1946 are as dense as those that document Le Corbusier’s most fruitful years. In these two volumes, Le Corbusier presented unrealized urban plans as well as prototype designs for the

>> He then proposed to send 36 sketches from journeys he had taken, sketches which would give the reader “une idée de certaines manières de voir et de se préoccuper de l’architecture des choses anciennes ou des objets environnants. J’ai des centaines de dessins comme ceux-là, mais ceux-ci constituent un petit groupement systématique.” He went on to say that “after the publication of 500 documents of modern architecture, it’s interesting to show that these creations are the consequence of a constant inquiry into things of the past [*une enquête permanente dans les choses du passé*].” And he noted a symmetry with Volume 1 which had begun by showing a series of sketches from the 1910 journey. “Here,” he said, “we end by an analogous but contemporary method and,” seeking Girsberger’s affirmation, he added, “I hope you will agree with me that this termination is not so bad. It could give cause for reflection to the reader who has traversed the rest of the volume.”

⁵² Several large commissions were completed in the 1930s: the Immeuble Clarté in 1932; the Armée du Salut and Pavillon Suisse in 1933; the Immeuble Porte-Molitor apartment building at 24 rue Nungesser et Coli in 1934; and the Centrosoyus in 1935. The Armée du Salut and Pavillon Suisse were documented in the *Œuvre complète-2* published in 1934.

Between 1932 and 1946, Le Corbusier realized only four new commissions: the Maison aux Mathes and the Maison de Week-End, both of 1935; the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux of 1937; and the France d’Outre-Mer Exhibition, an interior of 1940. The earlier two were very small vacation houses; the latter two were temporary works. In 1936, Le Corbusier was a consultant for the Ministry of Health and Education buildings in Rio.

various components of his urban vision, in particular multi-story residential and office structures.

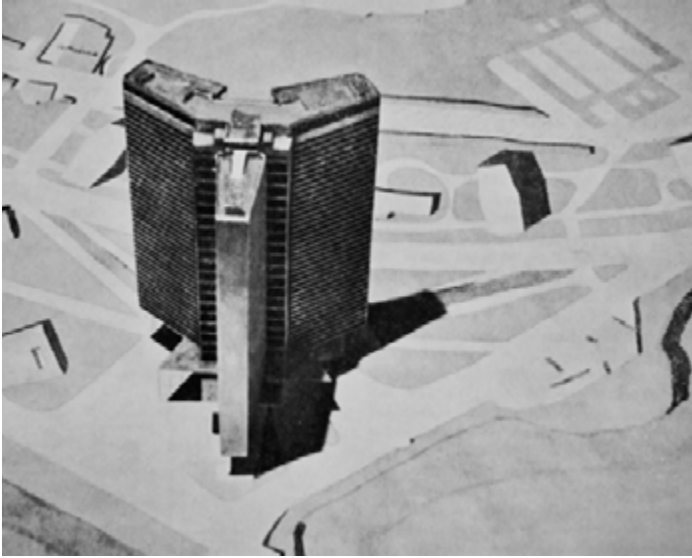


FIG. 28

These are presented in model form, carefully photographed. [28] Here, Le Corbusier develops not only standard types, but building motifs such as the *brise-soleil*. In the postwar years, the prototypes and the component parts which modify the prototypes—both built in concrete—would be offered as solution to numerous building problems throughout the world.

In addition, the *Œuvre complète* provoked and sustained interest in major works that took many years to complete: the *Unité d'Habitation*, Ronchamp, and the Chandigarh complex, for instance. With the sequential issues format, Le Corbusier could announce his intentions, demonstrate through plans and models his process of creation, and eventually report on the completed project in his own terms, massaging the new work into the narrative of his life's work. When projects were rejected, heavily

criticized, or cancelled—or even, as Le Corbusier claimed, ‘stolen’ by another architect⁵³—he used the publication to indict and try those he determined responsible for the injustices.

In addition to Corbusier-designed *reportage*, both *L’Architecture Vivante* and the *Œuvre complète* served as references for individuals and publishers who sought photographic documents for publication. If a request did not specify a photograph from one of these two publications, it was returned with instructions to do so.⁵⁴ This not only facilitated access, but guaranteed that only certain “impressions” of the buildings would be allowed into circulation despite the great number of available images, many of which remained unpublished until 1987. In the last years of Le Corbusier’s life, the recommended sources were no longer limited to these two publications, but were expanded to include all of his postwar books.⁵⁵

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- 50 See, for instance, in the *Œuvre complète-2*, 48–52, Le Corbusier’s exposé on his *Maison Errazuris* project and the house Antonin Raymond built in Japan based partially on this work. Also, Le Corbusier’s ‘last word’ on 76, *Œuvre complète-2*, to “Encore le Pavillon Suisse”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 28 Dec. 1933. See also in 1928, his *Une Maison – Un Palais*, and in 1947, his *United Nations Headquarters*.
- 54 A typical response of Le Corbusier to letters of request for photographs is found in this reply of 1 October 1936 [FLC T1(1)775] to Mr. Gutkind, 59, Belsize Park, London. Noting that Gutkind’s request was far too general, Le Corbusier wrote: “Vous savez où trouver des reproductions des constructions que nous avons faites, dans les diverses études qui ont été publiées soit chez GIRSBERGER à Zürich, soit chez MORANCE à Paris. Veuillez me fixer vos références d’après ces livres et je ferai alors le mieux possible pour vous être agréable.” To this he added, “Quant aux photographies d’autres confrères, il m’est tout à fait impossible de vous renseigner.” Gutkind’s request was probably with respect to his review of *Ville radieuse*.
- 55 FLC T1(5)234. This letter from Le Corbusier’s secretary to Mrs. Elizabeth M. Aslin of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London dated 11 October 1963 stated that documents requested should be chosen from the “books dedicated to the work of Le Corbusier by various publishers. The documents which you desire should be indicated by the book title, the page, and even a sketch of the image [...] this then will be transmitted by M. Le Corbusier to the photographer, author of the document.”

Within the atelier, the *Œuvre complète* served a similar purpose as source book. Le Corbusier referred his draftsmen and associates to various completed projects as they appeared in this inventory.⁵⁶ The *Œuvre complète* was always simultaneously in a state of being and becoming, it seems. As a source-book, in structuring new design endeavors, it facilitated the cumulative nature of LeCorbusier’s design.

The serial format shaped diverse creations into a unified body. It brought to Le Corbusier’s work a sense of importance, immediacy, and progression. It colored his practice as more than simply a business or aesthetic parlor game. It was, in Le Corbusier’s terms, a “patient search.” In the *Œuvre complète*, the lifework of this architect unfolds before the reader’s eyes. It appears dramatic, yet sequential and methodical, as scientific, edifying and entertaining as a medical operation performed in amphitheater before the watchful gaze of dedicated students and knowing colleagues. Its sequential structure imbues the work with plot, with a narrative quality not unlike novels published in installments in the popular press.⁵⁷ This narrative context provided a role for Le Corbusier, helping to establish his public persona. Again and again, he is pictured in the *Œuvre complète* drawing, directing construction, surveying the site, lecturing, and consulting with world leaders.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See Jerzy Sołtan, “Working with Le Corbusier,” in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Le Corbusier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 1–16, esp. 9.

⁵⁷ Rabelais, Cervantes, and Homer were three of his favorite authors. The serial format adopted “the continuing saga” nature of their work. With its tremendous potential to capture and hold the public’s interest, the serial was ideally suited for other media as well, notably, at the time, for radio, television, and film.



FIG. 29

Indeed, each of the eight volumes opens with a photograph of Le Corbusier. The first volumes picture him benignly, in profile, wearing his signature glasses. Volume 3 shows him drawing ardently for an audience. [29]

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- 58 Among this century's great architects, perhaps only Frank Lloyd Wright enjoyed a similar, self-authored, narrative structure to his life and work. This is evidenced in his inventive imaging of his early architecture in the *Wasmuth Portfolio*, his involvement in selecting works featured in *The Wendingen Edition* in 1925 and H.R. Hitchcock's *In the Nature of Materials* in 1942, his imaginative 1932 *An Autobiography*, and in the *Architectural Forum* issues and the large issue of *House Beautiful* dedicated solely to his work.



FIG. 30

Volume 4 shows him actively reading, and Volume 5, 1946–1952, shows him in big trousers and a white unbuttoned shirt ‘making a point’ as he talks to Picasso who is also in big trousers and a white unbuttoned shirt. [30] The two are in Marseilles, beneath the Unité d’Habitation housing block, and the photograph is unusually large and alone on the page.

Opposite it, on the adjacent page, is a full-page reproduction of “A Diploma for Le Corbusier” drawn by Saul Steinberg, a cartoonish spoof on the pretentiousness of the academy. The final three volumes open with big photos of the master drawing or about to draw. Always, but especially obvious in this serial, Le Corbusier reported not only on his buildings but on himself, carefully managing his image, revealing to his readers the architect he imagined himself to be, and involving them in his enterprise.⁵⁹

The serial thus embellished with narrative both his architecture and his life, weaving the two into one, coloring both with a persistent science-and-art-together paradigm. [31]

If in the interwar years the serial’s sequential nature epitomized Machine Age production and helped to render Le Corbusier a champion of that era, in the postwar years, sequence and mechanization gave way to the instantaneous, irrational, and invisible of an Electronic Era. After the Second World War, the artist was preferred to the scientist, and in *Les Carnets*, a new series of mostly monographs on recently completed buildings, Le Corbusier presents his work and himself accordingly. The *Œuvre complète* continued to record his achievements and to narrate his life, though more and more the life it portrayed was that of universal man, a world leader comparable in status to Einstein, Picasso, and Nehru—all of whom appeared pictured with Le Corbusier eventually. [32]

⁵⁹ To involve the public in dialogue, whether real or staged, was typical of Le Corbusier. Often one finds in his books ‘audience response’ letters. See, for example, “Les Maîtres de l’architecture manifestant,” the closing twelve pages of *Une Maison – Un Palais*, and *Modulor II*.



FIG. 31



FIG. 32

Architectural Photography after 1945

In the mid-1930s, a new portability, coupled with the popular appeal of documentary film, gave rise to the syndicated, globe-trotting photographer whose photo essays were enjoyed by millions. Photography became a visual form of journalism, and allying itself with journalism, documentary photography often sought more subjective expression. The photographer, once regarded as a technical craftsman, was now often appreciated as an artist. Both a new kind of photographer and new standards for photography came into being.

The 35mm camera revolutionized photojournalism and this revolution had profound effects on postwar architectural photography.⁶⁰ As smaller, portable cameras that could be held to the eye replaced large, inert instruments on tripods, standard static views expertly executed by local artisans gave way to numerous fragmentary images of a building, photographs often made by itinerate amateurs. Inexpensive film encouraged experimentation. Faster films stopped action, allowing for unposed figures and resulting in informality and spontaneity. A rational objectivity gave way to subjective expressionism.

⁶⁰ Invented in 1920, the 35-mm camera was established as the press format by the German News propaganda ministry in 1937. See Rolf Sachsse, "The Dysfunctional Leica," *History of Photography* (Autumn 1993), 301–304.

The new architectural photographer, often an amateur, willingly traveled long distances to shoot newsworthy buildings, often for free. Le Corbusier's architecture—always newsworthy—was far more than just building. It addressed worldwide problems brought on by the devastation of war: problems of housing, of urban planning, and of religious worship in an age of existential sectarianism. It revolutionized standard building types: the housing block, the factory, the single family dwelling, the office tower, the government palace. And always, it was a unique, artistically conceived creation.

After the war, modern architecture briefly changed its affection for high technology. During the interwar years, it had valued technology tremendously. Science and rationalism were viewed as means to social and material progress. When the devastations of war discredited science, technology and mechanization were rendered suspect. After the war, in the late 1940s, an electronic era began to build a new global society. A humane approach to the immense task of rebuilding houses and cities was called for. Architecture openly aligned itself more and more with modern art, and by the war's end the 'synthesis of the arts' that had been discussed in the mid-1930s achieved a manifesto-like tenor. This synthesis, which Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement had envisioned earlier and which 'total environment' artists had called for in the Teens and Twenties, was taken up in the 1930s by both bourgeois parlor artists and populist Depression Era muralists. In the postwar era, art was called upon to give a human touch to modern architecture—now larger, rawer, and often more brutal than ever before. Le Corbusier presented this raw concrete brutality as artistic manifestation in architecture. He epitomized the artist-architect, having promoted himself as both painter and architect since the late-1930s. In the postwar years, he challenged established vision once again.

All of this, coupled with changes in his atelier—including new associates and commissions for larger, institutional work in distant and exotic lands—directly affected Le Corbusier’s postwar publications and his relationship with those who photographed his architecture. Popular, heavily-illustrated weekly or monthly journals informed the public at large. Architecture was of interest. Le Corbusier’s presentation of both his architecture and himself in this new era was not unlike this mass media *reportage*. No longer did he rely on commissioned photographs of his buildings by professional architectural photographers, photographs often directed by him and made between the time of the building’s completion and its occupation. Pierre Jeanneret, who had organized and often supervised photographic activity, had left the firm in 1940. With new commissions for larger buildings in distant lands, by 1950 Le Corbusier had little time for such procedures. Larger buildings meant longer construction time—often many years; decades, in the case of Chandigarh. This, coupled with demands made by the press for news and his personal desire to keep his freshest architectural activities before the public necessitated that Le Corbusier release these works for public consumption well before they were finished. This accelerated circulation challenged his control.

Le Corbusier’s postwar publications reflected these changes. With rare exception, they were no longer theoretical but almost exclusively devoted to recording, re-viewing, and interpreting his artistic and architectural achievements. He reported on his own work and on himself in a manner unapologetically subjective.⁶¹

⁶¹ *Le Modulor* is the rare postwar theoretical work. *Modulor II. La parole est aux usagers*, published five years later, is, as its title suggests, an audience response to *Le Modulor*. This maneuver—fabricating a news-like and therefore objective recording of public reaction to a work, or to a supposed injustice—occurs time and again in Le Corbusier’s writings (*Une Maison - Un Palais*, for instance) and owes much to the investigative reporting genre of the day.

Immediacy and process took on new importance. His books became pictorial accounts: small, delightful photo essays on single buildings comparable to the monographs made at that time by photographers on a single theme. These publications coincided with Le Corbusier's new manner of securing photo documentation. He now accepted, even encouraged, the unsolicited work of young amateur photographers whom he had not commissioned. From hundreds of photographs submitted on contact sheets—photographs made inexpensively with 35mm film—Le Corbusier selected and cropped for publication images of buildings both during construction and after construction was completed.

These changes affected Le Corbusier's relationship with those who photographed his architecture. Some photographers now claimed artistic rights. Le Corbusier quickly dismissed these claims. He considered photographers technicians, not artists, and though they may exercise their craft to perfection, and thus artistically, the true artistic vision was his, not theirs. For Le Corbusier, the photographer was like a skilled craftsman who helps to construct a building he did not design. Interwar architectural photographers may have agreed with that description, postwar photographers did not. To Le Corbusier, awarding artistic rights to a photographer meant a loss of control. But to retain control it would be necessary for him to address the new conditions—a daunting task for a sole proprietor with large commissions in distant lands.

The Marseilles Unité & Le Corbusier's edicts governing photography

The photographic representation of the Marseilles apartment block is indicative of these postwar changes. A key component of the urban vision put forth in Le Corbusier's 1935 *La Ville radieuse*, the Unité d'Habitation, was the fruit of thirty years of speculation regarding collective living. It was offered as solution to the worldwide housing shortage that had been brought on by the destruction of the war and the postwar population boom. Like much of Le Corbusier's earlier work, it was proposed as a 'standard type' and was intended to be reproduced throughout the world. It would be one of Le Corbusier's most important and necessary buildings, and undoubtedly he understood it as such from its inception.

For these reasons, the *reportage* of the Marseilles Unité was critical and needed to be quite different from that of his earlier buildings. Housing was of interest to the general public, and Le Corbusier understood that public awareness of the project was vital to its success as a standard for mass housing. But provoking and sustaining interest while at the same time controlling the photographic representation of the building—managing the image of his architecture—was very challenging. He needed to keep the project before the public, to present it in his terms not theirs, and to present it as a viable vision, one that was currently materializing, a building that could and should be repeated. But construction would take six years. It was therefore necessary

for him to allow this work to be visually reported well before its completion, though to do so was in violation of mandates he had imposed for twenty-five years.

Le Corbusier approached this challenge enthusiastically. While exercising careful control of all images made of the *chantier*, he actively encouraged media coverage and attempted on several occasions to have films made of the *Unité*.⁶² These involved actors, a moderator (Albert Camus was contacted), large-scale models of the interiors, helicopter shots of the *chantier*, and often a good deal of rather preposterous, inflated dialogue.⁶³ The films were intended to be circulated worldwide as cinema newsreels and perhaps aired on television. In addition to these films, the building's

⁶² Scripts for the *Unité* were proposed and written throughout the 1950s, but many went unrealized. Two of the early films that were completed and are in the holdings of the FLC are the 8-minute long, 1951 "Le Corbusier Travaille," directed and produced by Gabriel Chereau, and the 12-minute long, 35mm, 1952 "La Cité Radieuse," with sound and color and directed and produced by Jean Sacha. The earlier film, shot in black and white, shows Le Corbusier at work at the *chantier* in Marseilles.

Much has been written on the early films of Le Corbusier's architecture of the 1920s, particularly on the film "L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui." See, for instance, Helmut Weihsmann, *Cinetecture: Film, Architektur, Moderne* (Vienna: PVS Verleger, 1995), a work that includes a complete listing of all films related to Le Corbusier. Regarding Le Corbusier's unique 8mm films as well as his own still photography, see Tim Benton, *LC PHOTO: Le Corbusier Secret Photographer* (Zürich: Lars Müller, 2013).

⁶³ In late 1951–early 1952 Le Corbusier organized a film on Marseilles to be directed and produced by M. Tenuzzi [sic "Tenoudji"], 7 rue de Presbourg, Paris XVI [FLC B3(10)215]. On 1 August 1952, he wrote Albert Camus at 29 rue Madame, Paris [FLC B3(10)220] saying that he had seen Tenudji [sic] that morning and that Tenudji [sic] was delighted that Camus would be participating in the film. He then went on to describe the film:

Il faut un drame du "Tonnerre de Dieu" qui soit l'armature totale de l'affaire. Il a demandé que vous et moi mettions sur pied ce drame en quelques pages. L'action se passe innocemment dans notre Bâtiment de Marseille, et autour, et en plus, Marseille, la Ville; Marseille, le port; Marseille, les cabanons, etc.... tout ce que l'on veut de pittoresque, de lamentable, de retardataire, souvent à l'abri de beaucoup de mousquetarisesades. >>

progress would be covered both by standard professional journals and by the popular press. No longer would the audience be limited to architects and students of architecture. And the circulated photographs of the building were not always made by architectural photographers. The building was a novelty in its size, its insistence on collective living, and its use of the rooftop for daycare, recreation, and entertainment. It would be built of raw concrete, its exterior concrete decorated in dabs of brilliant color. Presenting it to the public properly was essential to Le Corbusier and necessitated a change in approach to photographic representation.

Concerns established during the interwar years—for artistic control, technique, and the cost of photographic services—persisted after the war, but as Le Corbusier increasingly depended on the un-commissioned, unsupervised photography of amateurs inexperienced in architectural work, standards for control, technique, and remuneration necessarily were modified. The photographer Simone Herman’s relationship with the atelier underscores the predicament free-lance photographers posed for Le Corbusier. Herman had photographed the Unité d’Habitation at Marseilles and sent a bill to Le Corbusier’s office for her services. In March 1949 Le Corbusier’s associate, André Wogenscky, wrote to Herman in response to the bill. “It seems to me that it was made explicit that you could not charge the

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- >> Le Corbusier himself wrote a script abstract for the film and went so far as to price for Hervé the cost of a helicopter needed for shooting the aerial views (65,000 francs/hour and needed for two hours) [FLC B3(10)228]. Presumably the film was never made although in late 1953 José Luis Sert wrote to Le Corbusier from Harvard requesting the film. As late as 25 September 1957 it was still a possibility, albeit remote, when Le Corbusier wrote to Hervé [FLC B3(10)281] regarding an advertising/propaganda campaign that he wished to stage in the Berlin media for support of the ‘Unité de Dreieck’, noting: “Il faut proposer même des films. Celui de Tenudji (Films Marceau) est sans espoir, mais il y a celui de Pierre Kast (dont j’ai oublié de vous parler au téléphone) qui est un film extrêmement instructif.”

atelier for your photography,” he stated, adding, “[...] we agreed to reimburse you simply for the direct cost of the prints.”⁶⁴ In her scathing reply to Wogenscky three months later, Herman stated that the price she billed the atelier (500 and 600 francs) was half of what she usually charged and that his offer of 100 francs per print “is exactly as if you proposed to your employees to pay them the cost of their metro tickets to come to work.”⁶⁵ She continued on a personal note, “You whom I had imagined so humane, so understanding and so devoted, as soon as you become the boss, only the interest of the company counts.” To this she added, “I have not forgotten your kindness in allowing me to photograph the construction at Marseilles and I recognize that you and your office have sent me a certain number of journalists but I must maintain the price of my work,” and then closed by expressing her desire to continue coverage of Marseilles in mid-August. In his reply Wogenscky transcribed the notes Le Corbusier had written directly on her letter: “We are not the clients of Simone Herman, but the authorizers of photography. It seems to me that we authorize photography on the condition that we receive free of charge proofs in 5 copies for our archives and files. Failing this, we will not authorize photography.”⁶⁶

Yet Wogenscky was deeply disturbed by the misunderstanding and arranged for a payment of 5,000 francs to be sent to Herman. In the summer of 1950, with the *Unité* nearing completion, he encouraged Herman to come again to Marseilles, enticing her with the prospect of photographing an “entirely equipped

64 FLC T1(1)426_001 & _002. Two-page letter on a single sheet dated 23 March 1949 from André Wogenscky to Simone Herman, rue Vaneau, Paris VII.

65 FLC T1(1)437_001 & _002. Two-page letter on a single sheet dated 20 April 1949 from Simone Herman to André Wogenscky.

66 FLC T1(1)453 & 454. Two-page letter dated 7 July 1949 from André Wogenscky to Simone Herman.

apartment” interior and adding that for her, of course, Le Corbusier’s consent was always given.⁶⁷ In November of that year, Herman wrote directly to “*Mon cher Corbu*” sending him her latest photographs of Marseilles, photographs destined for the Ministry of Reconstruction. “In fact, everyone imagines that my reports on Marseilles are financed by your office,” she wrote. “This is false, as you know. It is therefore necessary to organize it in such a way that when the Ministry requests photographs from me, they pay me for my work [...] I’m certain that you understand this and that you will agree.”⁶⁸ Herman continued her work on the *Unité d’Habitation*, with Wogenscky prompting her to “make beautiful photographs of the building in color when it is completed.”⁶⁹

Perhaps because of the initial misunderstanding with Herman, and because dealings with her ultimately had resulted in a working relationship that was acceptable to both architect and photographer, Le Corbusier issued his “AVIS à l’USAGE de Messieurs les PHOTOGRAPHES”;⁷⁰ the first of two written notices which attempted to regulate the photographing of his architecture. To be given to each photographer who wished to enter the *chantier* at Marseilles, this

⁶⁷ FLC T1(1)571. Letter dated 10 July 1950 from André Wogenscky to Madame Simone Herman, 54 rue Vaneau, Paris.

⁶⁸ FLC T1(1)598_001 & _002. Two-page letter dated 17 November 1950 from Simone Herman, 54 rue Vaneau, to Le Corbusier. Other photographers had done work at Marseilles and were also asked to send prints to the Ministry. Marcel de Renzis, 4 Quai du Port, Marseilles, made photographs of the *Unité*. Le Corbusier was particularly interested in his shots of the interior of ‘notre appartement’. On 6 December 1949 [FLC T1(1)509] André Wogenscky requested Renzis to send five complete sets of all the photos of the *Unité* apartment to Marcel Roux, head of the Cabinet du Ministère de la Reconstruction. Later, in a letter dated 11 July 1950 [FLC T1(1)572], Wogenscky asked Renzis to send two images from 28 June 1949 to Charlotte Perriand and to send ‘la facture’ for these to *Technique et Architecture*.

⁶⁹ FLC T1(1)607. Letter dated 29 December 1950 from André Wogenscky to Simone Herman.

⁷⁰ FLC T1(1)484. “AVIS à l’USAGE de Messieurs les PHOTOGRAPHES.” Not dated.

edict required the photographer, at his own expense, to send to the Atelier Le Corbusier in Paris three copies of all photographs taken. Further, Le Corbusier explicitly stated that he reserved all rights “to employ these documents, or any fragment thereof, for my personal use such as exhibitions, books, etc.” This “Notice” went on to state that when a journalist requested photographic documents from Le Corbusier, Le Corbusier would select the appropriate image from his files and would then refer the journalist to the photographer responsible for that image. At this point the journalist would deal directly and only with the photographer who was free to set his or her own price for the photographs without, Le Corbusier stressed, “the need for me ever to intervene in this operation.” In this manner, Le Corbusier sought to obtain for free the services of many diverse photographers, to retain artistic rights to photographs made by others of buildings he designed, and to maintain substantial if not complete control of the photographic representation of his architecture as every publisher had first to obtain his approval to publish any photograph of his architecture.

The Unité d’Habitation at Marseilles opened in 1952. While it was being built, it was photographed extensively by the Bordeaux company, Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. [33] In early 1953, the company’s Monsieur C. Héreau wrote a proposal in reply to a request from Madame Strassova who wished to publish a book on the building and had contacted Héreau for photographs. Presumably, Héreau thought his firm entitled to “droits d’auteur.” Le Corbusier thought differently. “I was the one who indicated each photograph to take at Marseilles and it was I who put my head under the black cloth to frame them,” he wrote to Héreau. “It would therefore be reasonable that you be paid for your work as photographer [...] but that you renounce your claim to authorial rights.”⁷¹

⁷¹ FLC T1(2)183. Letter dated 10 April 1953 from Le Corbusier to C. Héreau of Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest/ 45, rue du Pas-Saint-Georges / Bordeaux.



FIG. 33

When Héreau persisted, Le Corbusier wrote him: “You are industrial photographers, you made photographs that I myself framed with your camera; you have no claim to the rights of authorship. This attitude of photographers today hinders simply everything in the making of illustrated books.” Le Corbusier then suggested Héreau be content with his usual 250 francs per photographic print and advised him to “Leave the rights of authorship to those who are the authors and leave the photographers to their laboratories and equipment.” In closing he made the consequence of Héreau’s infringement clear. “If these claims are repeated, I will be obliged never again to use your negatives and never again to cite your name in conjunction with my work.” To this warning he added what Héreau certainly already knew: “I hope by now it is well understood that the Atelier Le Corbusier, 35 rue de Sèvres, is not an *atelier d’affaires* and that it is not with us that you will grow rich.”⁷²

⁷² FLC T1(2)197. Letter dated 16 July 1953 from Le Corbusier to Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest / 45, rue du Pas-St-Georges / Bordeaux.

The following April, perhaps in response to the Héreau conflict, Le Corbusier issued a second notice regarding ‘relations d’affaires’ with the Atelier Le Corbusier.⁷³ This edict applied to no specific chantier but was addressed to ‘Messieurs les Photographes’ in general. In it, he attempted to make clear that, regarding the photography of his buildings, all “droits à la propriété artistique” rightfully belong not to the photographer but to Atelier Le Corbusier. The Atelier, Le Corbusier noted, “designed the buildings [...] built the buildings [...] and often wrote or provoked the news articles under consideration.” Artistic rights, the edict continued, applied only to photographic documents “of individual value,” the “pâture naturelle” of periodicals of immense circulation. The photographs in question, however, were destined, he wrote, for the somewhat less spectacular “ouvrages de science ou de vulgarisation scientifique”: journals or art books with small circulation and not one or two but “ten, twenty, or a hundred” illustrations. “You might well appreciate,” Le Corbusier wrote, “that such works cannot support tariffs applicable to magazines.” He continued, “When I ask you for 2, 4, 10, or 30 photographs of my work (not yours), I am requesting from you a service of a mechanical nature only.” He concluded by assuring these ‘technicians’ that their cooperation would result in a greater demand by the press for their photographs and that this, obviously, would be of benefit to them since, when dealing directly with the various journals, they legitimately could claim “une part raisonnable de droit.”

⁷³ FLC T1(2)179. “Note à l’adresse de Messieurs les Photographes en relations d’affaires avec l’Atelier Le Corbusier,” dated April, 1953 and signed, ‘Le Corbusier’.

This dispute over authorial rights and the resulting *avis* marked a turning point in Le Corbusier's relationship with photographers. He sought simpler, more accommodating relationships: the loyal collaboration of trusted and talented technicians. This became increasingly necessary as nearly all of his work after the war was remote from Paris and he could not directly oversee the photography of these buildings himself.



FIG. 34

Le Corbusier's 'House Photographer'

One of the photographers who came to Marseilles to photograph the Unité and whose work was thus governed by Le Corbusier's Avis was Lucien Hervé. [34] Hervé's involvement with photography and his initial contact with Le Corbusier were in many respects typical of the architect's postwar photographers. Trained in the arts, Hervé moved from Hungary to Paris during the Depression. In 1938, a Hungarian photographer, a friend of Hervé's cousin, asked Hervé to collaborate with him as a writer. The photographer had a contract with a popular magazine to do a certain number of photographically illustrated articles. Hervé began by writing the articles, but with the signing of the Munich Accord his photographer partner fled Paris and, in order to fulfill the contract, Hervé assumed responsibility for photography as well as writing. Although he was not trained in photography, he took photographs of sporting events and machines, and after the war he accepted a position as a photographer and journalist with *France Illustration*. He began to write on art and artists; and while doing a story on Matisse, he met Father Couturier, a great admirer of the architecture of Le Corbusier and the director *L'Art Sacré*. A small but impressive journal dedicated to religious art, *L'Art Sacré* was very influential in the promotion of modern ecclesiastical architecture and occasionally was illustrated by the work of renowned photographers such as Brassai. On Couturier's suggestion, in the autumn of 1948 Hervé went to Marseilles to photograph the Unité d'Habitation for *Plaisir de France*. Hervé recalled that, "In order to obtain authorization to enter the

construction site I went to the office of Le Corbusier in rue de Sèvres and there was a little note which read, ‘Photographers are requested to remit samples of their photographs.’” “I took that quite seriously,” he said, and in a single day he took 650 photographs of the Unité, all with a Rolleiflex, the only camera he had at the time. “When I returned I made two prints each, one for *Plaisir de France*, and one for Le Corbusier’s atelier. The editor in chief of *Plaisir de France* was completely baffled by my photographs and told me ‘There is not a single good one in them.’ By contrast, two days later I received a letter from Le Corbusier which began by saying, ‘Vous avez l’âme d’un architecte.’”⁷⁴

This was the beginning of Hervé’s relationship with Le Corbusier, a relationship that lasted until Le Corbusier’s death in 1965. Hervé always maintained his independence, accepted commissions from journals and from other architects, and continued to do portraits of artists. At the same time, for Atelier Le Corbusier, he served as ‘house photographer’.⁷⁵ When Le Corbusier needed photographs of certain exhibitions or interiors, Hervé got the assignment. He photographed Le Corbusier’s models, paintings, and drawings, as well as the exhibition installations of his work.⁷⁶ He did un-posed portraits of Le Corbusier painting or visiting the building site. [35]

⁷⁴ Daniel Naegele, “An Interview with Lucien Hervé,” *Parametro* 206 (Feb. 1995), 70–83.

⁷⁵ This responsibility was assumed over a period of time. In a 16 October 1950 letter to Philip Johnson at the Museum of Modern Art [FLC C2(7)13], Le Corbusier recommended Hervé as a “*photographe remarquable*” but also recommended an “*excellent photographe également*” M. Maywald of 10 rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris.

⁷⁶ FLC T1(1)540. This letter dated 1 March 1950 from Le Corbusier to Lucien Hervé, Photographies Industrielle de Renzis, requests that Hervé make available to Le Corbusier’s office copies of photographs taken of the Marseilles Unité *maquette*, the model apartment of children’s and parents’ bedrooms, common room, etc. These copies would facilitate the many requests for such images which could then be purchased ‘*sur place*’.



FIG. 35



FIG. 36

When Father Couturier, who wished to persuade Le Corbusier to accept the commission for a chapel at Ronchamp, lunched with Le Corbusier in his apartment, Hervé was there to record the meeting on film. He accompanied Le Corbusier on visits to Marseilles and Chandigarh. [36] As with other independent photographers of Le Corbusier's work, Hervé was paid for his prints by those who published or exhibited them, and occasionally this included Le Corbusier himself. But Hervé's fees—unlike those of most other photographers—met with the approval of Le Corbusier who might have considered Hervé's services a bargain.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ When in 1954 Le Corbusier declared the Vevey photographer Claudine Peter's price per photograph to be "extravagant!", it was Hervé's price that he used for comparison. See below.

As important as his services were to Le Corbusier in photographing both his architecture and his presence, Hervé served the equally important function of *managing* the photographic documentation of Le Corbusier's work. Le Corbusier wanted to build an archive of the photographs of his architecture. The archive would facilitate easy access, eliminate all questions of artistic rights and rights of reproduction, and allow for more control over costs. He initiated the idea in 1952 following the death of his long-time photographer, Albin Salaün. Albin's son, Marcel, offered to sell his father's clichés to the various architectural firms whose work his father had photographed. Initially, advertised prices were on a graduated scale beginning at 1,000 francs per negative for the first twenty-three selections.⁷⁸ Later, Le Corbusier was offered all photographs pertaining to his work—about 250 negatives, mostly 18 x 24 cm on glass plates—for 60,000 francs.⁷⁹ In March 1952, with Lucien Hervé acting on his behalf, he purchased these negatives for that price with full rights of reproduction.⁸⁰ Under French law,

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- 78 FLC T1(2)65. A mimeographed form letter dated 10 February 1952 from Marcel Salaün, the son of Albin Salaün, addressed to "Monsieur Le Corbusier, Architecte / 35 rue de Sèvres / Paris, 6ème." The letter offers for sale clichés made by the deceased Albin Salaün of Le Corbusier's art and architecture and establishes prices, for instance, 30 or more clichés for 600 francs each.
- 79 FLC T1(2)67_001 & _002. Letter dated 25 February 1952 to Le Corbusier from Marcel Salaün. The opening paragraph states, "We have seen Lucien Hervé, who has proposed to us to buy back your negatives and we would agree to give 50 percent of the rights of reproduction to him for all future publication of the photographs." It goes on to state that he, the seller, desires total liquidation since selling partial rights would be far too complicated. A special price of 60,000 francs is offered which includes full ownership of the rights of reproduction. An invoice for the sale of 270 negatives including all rights for 60,000 francs dated 13 March 1952 followed. T1(2)81.
- 80 FLC T1(2)80, 81. Letter on Albin Salaün's letterhead dated 22 March 1952 from Marcel Salaün to the Atelier Le Corbusier attention André Wogenscky stating in part: "Nous avons l'honneur de vous confirmer, pour la bonne bourse [?] réglée, que nous avons remis à Monsieur Lucien Hervé la totalité des clichés correspondant aux travaux que Monsieur A. Salaün a exécutés pour le compte de l'Atelier Le Corbusier. (Cet ensemble représente 270 clichés de formats différents, en majorité 18 x 24). Ceci suivant vos instructions." >>



FIG. 37

published photographs carry the name of the owner, not the photographer. In the case of the Salaün photographs, Lucien Hervé is the sole owner. As Hervé was himself a prominent architectural photographer, these ‘by lines’ became, and remain, the source of much confusion with many thinking Hervé, who was born in 1910, responsible for classic photographs of Le Corbusier’s architecture taken by Albin Salaün, Marius Gravot, and others in the 1920s and 1930s.⁸¹ [37]

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- >> The check for 60,000 francs was paid to Marcel Salaün. The transaction was confirmed by Lucien Hervé in a 29 April 1992 interview with the author. Referring to photographs taken by Salaün, Hervé stated: “I have them now because Le Corbusier had asked me to buy back the negatives when Salaün died and I purchased them with the rights of reproduction from his successors, from his son. Salaün made photographs which probably were soon destroyed, perhaps because all of the photographs from the Twenties were on glass plate negatives.”

To Le Corbusier, regulating and maintaining a photo archive was burdensome. He encouraged Hervé to assume this responsibility and to begin to collect photographs of the firm's early work. He did not, however, relinquish control over the photographing of his architecture. A new three-point 'notice concerning photographs' was issued in February 1956 and stated:

1. *In response to a client's letter, Hervé must submit a choice of photographs to L-C. Hervé must not submit this choice by letter with references to contact prints since L-C has no time for this. He should bring it in person to L-C, whether it be contacts or prints.*
2. *On the back of the photographic prints sold by Hervé to the clients, and beside his own photographer's stamp, must be applied the stamp of SPADEM [Société des auteurs des arts visuels], in conformance to article 3 of his contract with M. Le Corbusier:*

*"Photo Lucien HERVE, 11 rue Soyer
Neuilly s/S Maillot 64-66
Ses droits de reproduction réservés"*

*important!.... "Oeuvre de M. LE CORBUSIER
Ses droits réservés, SPADEM, Paris"*

3. *Concerning photographs not coming from Lucien Hervé, Le Corbusier will give his authorization only on submission of prints or the receipt of references of a useful sort.⁸²*

⁸¹ For instance, a note on p121 of Françoise Choay's *Le Corbusier* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1960) states, "All of the photographs in this book are by Lucien Hervé, Paris." However, the vintage photographs of the early work, figures 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13 of Villa Savoye, Pessac, and the Pavillon Suisse, for example, were certainly not taken by Hervé, though undoubtedly he owned the negatives in 1960.

⁸² FLC T1(3)12. Notice "dictée par L-C concernant les photographies," dated 21 February 1956.

As this notice made clear, Hervé was entitled only to the rights of reproduction. Since Le Corbusier was the artist responsible for the buildings represented in the photographs, he retained the artistic rights under the jurisdiction of SPADEM.

By 1960, the standard reply for requests for photographs made to 35 rue des Sèvres read, “M. Le Corbusier has made a point of keeping no photographs in his office but you can obtain them by writing to his photographer, M. Lucien HERVE (31, rue Vineuse, Paris, 16^e), who possesses all his records with their references; you can discuss with him the choice and expense.”⁸³

Hervé also sometimes served as a distributor of photographs of Le Corbusier’s works, photographs taken by his colleagues who were in no position to market their own work. For example, Jeet Malhotra, a Chandigarh architect who photographed Le Corbusier’s work at Chandigarh and the Bhakra Dam, gave enlargements and negatives of more than sixty black and white photographs and nine colored slides to Le Corbusier for use in his publications.⁸⁴ [38]

⁸³ FLC T1(3)354. Letter dated 25 May 1960 in English from Le Corbusier’s secretary to G. E. Kidder Smith, 163 East 81, NY 28, in response to Smith’s request [FLC T1(3)348, dated 26 April 1960] for photographic documentation of La Tourette and of Ronchamp under construction, two photographs intended for his book, *The Significant New Churches of Europe*. An addendum to the letter dated 1 June 1960 cites photographs of Ronchamp taken under construction by René Groebli, Morgentalstrasse 115, Zürich as shown in Le Corbusier’s *Œuvre complète-5*, 86–88. FLC T1(3)355.

⁸⁴ FLC T1(3)261, 262, 263. Three-page letter dated 24 April 1959 from Chandigarh architect Jeet Malhotra to: “Mme Jeanne Heilbuth, Secretary to Mons. Le Corbusier, 35 rue de Sevres, Paris-6e”.



FIG. 38

These went to Hervé to whom Malhotra agreed to pay a commission of 33% for all orders that Hervé procured for publication of these photographs.⁸⁵ When Le Corbusier turned Malhotra's photographs over to Hervé, he emphatically reminded him to share with Malhotra the photographer's rights and noted that he himself had agreed to pay Malhotra "a sum that we, too, must agree upon."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ FLC T1(3)268_001 & _002. Two-page letter dated 8 June 1959 from Jeet Malhotra to Lucien Hervé, c/o Le Corbusier's atelier, Paris.

⁸⁶ FLC T1(3)269. Letter dated 12 June 1959 from Le Corbusier to Lucien Hervé.

Although Hervé oversaw the photography archive, he seems almost always to have answered to Le Corbusier. If a publisher approached Hervé with a request for photographs, it was Le Corbusier who decided if the request was to be granted and who determined which photographs were to be printed and how they were to be framed. Occasionally, Le Corbusier's control was undermined and Hervé exercised his own artistic judgment, even when it ran counter to Le Corbusier's. One such incident involved photographs of Ronchamp for which Le Corbusier had made sketches on tracing paper over Hervé's contact sheets indicating how he wanted each photograph to be framed. He had instructed Hervé exactly as to which photographs to provide should a journal or newspaper request either a single view, or two views, or multiple views. Hervé later confessed, "I amused myself a bit by making choices counter to his indications. Not only did he not notice, but what's more he found my choices quite satisfactory. To put it another way, his selection and mine were not necessarily the same."⁸⁷

For his part, Le Corbusier thought Hervé a good photographer but was not always completely pleased with his work.⁸⁸ He regularly employed the photographs of others and frequently encouraged various photographers to photograph certain of his buildings that had not been documented to his satisfaction.

⁸⁷ Daniel Naegele, "An Interview with Lucien Hervé," *Parametro* 206 (Feb. 1995), 70–83.

⁸⁸ For example, in a two-page letter dated 2 August 1956 concerning the *Œuvre complète-6* [FLC B1(7)65_001], Boesiger complained to Le Corbusier that, regarding the *Maisons Jaoul*, "Les photos sont insuffisants (Hervé!)" and that they must be redone after the holidays. Le Corbusier wrote his agreement directly on the letter, in pencil, between paragraphs.

The “insufficient” images of Chandigarh

The limitations of a house photographer were made evident at Chandigarh, the Indian capital complex that Le Corbusier began to design in 1950. In September of 1962, Le Corbusier wrote Pierre Jeanneret who had established a private practice in Chandigarh and who, as an independent consultant, collaborated with Le Corbusier on the building of the new city there. He had refused to authorize the printing of Volume Seven of the *Œuvre complète*, he told Jeanneret, because the available photographs of the complex were outdated and miserable. Much had since been accomplished on the construction of the complex which he wished reflected in these photographs. More importantly, he wanted “correct photographs,” stating emphatically, “Those by Hervé are scandalous.” “You yourself have taken some with a certain talent (they carry no number, no date),” he wrote to Jeanneret, “but at that time the building was not finished [...]” He continued, “I don’t believe Malhotra talented as a photographer [but] I know that you have always taken very good photographs of architecture and that you know the ‘mettre au point’. But the photographs that you sent in May ’62 are not clear. Their printing is light.” Later in the letter, he noted, “I was visited by Correa [...] who has a mass of kodachromes, one worse than the other,”⁸⁹ but then stopped short of asking Jeanneret to photograph the complex again.

⁸⁹ FLC P1(6)330_001 & _002. Two-page letter dated 6 September 1962 from Le Corbusier to “Pierre Jeanneret, Chief Architect, Punjab, and Chief Town Planner, Capital Project.” I thank the late Mogens Krustup for bringing this letter to my attention.

A month later, in October 1962, Le Corbusier asked the New York architect-photographer G. E. Kidder Smith—whose work he lavishly praised and with whom he enjoyed an amicable relationship—if he had been to Chandigarh. If so, he told Smith, “I’d be very happy to have some of your photographs,” and then confided, “my information coming from Chandigarh is insufficient.”⁹⁰ Hervé—and Malhotra through Hervé—would have been the principal source of that information.

That same month Arthur Drexler, director of the Department of Architecture and Design at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, sent Le Corbusier a request to mount an exhibition of his postwar work to be comprised entirely of large color photographs. He mentioned that Hervé had written to him already “suggesting that we make up the entire exhibition from his own color photographs, assuming that this arrangement would be satisfactory to you.”⁹¹ Le Corbusier responded, “I must make one observation concerning the photographs of Lucien Hervé. Lucien Hervé is an excellent photographer who has done very beautiful things. But concerning the Assembly at Chandigarh, you should not take account of his images of the Palace of the Assembly which are those of a building under construction and far from being complete.

⁹⁰ FLC T1(5)112. Letter dated 1 October 1962 from Le Corbusier to G. E. Kidder Smith, FAIA, 163 East 81, New York 28, praising his “previous photos of the churches” and asking him to send any others he might have, specifying “quelques épreuves sur papier brillant (18 x 24 peuvent suffire ou bien 12 x 18). Si je les emploie, je citerai votre nom, bien entendu.” Smith replied on 8 October 1962 [FLC T1(5)118] by sending 28 photos of Ronchamp, La Tourette and ‘various Unités’, stating that unfortunately he had not yet been to Chandigarh.

⁹¹ FLC C2(7)221 & 222. The first two pages of a three-page letter dated 29 October 1962 from Arthur Drexler, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 19, Department of Architecture and Design, to Le Corbusier. The third page [FLC C2(7)223] features a list of “Fifteen Buildings for Proposed Le Corbusier Exhibition,” all postwar ‘Brutalist’ buildings, eight of them from India.

You should not display photos of an unfinished building.”⁹² He then instructed Drexler to contact directly his former partner, Pierre Jeanneret, at Chandigarh and to ask him to make a series of slides of the Assembly which would include the requisite interior views as well as “slides of the exterior with the basins full of water (it’s necessary to insist very definitely to Pierre Jeanneret, who is an excellent architectural photographer, that there be water in the pools; it’s indispensable).” A few weeks later Le Corbusier again wrote Drexler⁹³ saying that he had seen Hervé’s stock of color photographs and that he was not at all satisfied with them first, because a great number had been taken before the Parliament building was built, and second, because he found the colors very weak. He stressed that this was not a critique of Hervé, who hadn’t the proper photographic plates at his disposal in India at the time these slides were taken. He insisted that Drexler submit for his approval all photographs that he was considering for exhibition. “I am not able to authorize this exhibition without being reassured on this subject. Perhaps you could commission Hervé to go take photographs for you in India. My request is formal and I ask you to consider it immediately.”

⁹² FLC C2(7)224 & 225. Two-page letter from Le Corbusier to Arthur Drexler dated 5 November 1962, a reply to Drexler’s letter of 29 October 1962. Although Le Corbusier often published photographs of his work under construction in order to illustrate, for instance, structure or materials or acoustic isolation, he objected to photographs of a nearly complete building taken for expedience rather than to illustrate a principle, particularly if the photograph could be made easily after completion. In his 3 September 1959 reply [FLC T1(3)285] to a request from Vittorio Mazzucconi to publish photos of the Maison du Brésil in an article in *Architettura-Cantiere*, Le Corbusier wrote, “*Je vous fais compliment d’une partie de vos photographies qui montrent vous voyez bien les choses. Par contre, je n’accepte pas qu’on publie des photographies montrant un chantier inachevé au sol avec les fenêtres barbouillées de blanc, etc....*”

⁹³ FLC C2(7)228. Letter dated 30 November 1962 from Le Corbusier to Arthur Drexler.

He went on to express dismay at the color rendered in photographs recently sent to him by Pierre Jeanneret and closed by asking Drexler rhetorically, “Do you want to show the people of the USA that my buildings were done in horrible colors, or the opposite?”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Sometime later, in early 1960, Le Corbusier received photographs of Chandigarh from the Swedish photographer Lennart Olson, Drottninggatan 88C, Stockholm C [FLC T1(3)335]. In a letter dated 17 March 1960 thanking Olson for these and complimenting him on his beautiful work, Le Corbusier asked to see any other photographs of his buildings Olson might have had. Olson replied on 23 July 1960 that all of his material on Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Ronchamp, Marseilles, and Berlin was assembled in the archive of his Stockholm agency, TIO, and was at Le Corbusier’s disposal “sur les conditions normales de TIO.”

On display: Le Corbusier and his architecture

In the 1950s, as architecture became an art for exhibition, many museums wished to present the work of Le Corbusier and necessarily depended on photography to represent his architecture, painting, and sculpture. This demand for photographic documentation increased the monetary value of such documentation. As the ‘house photographer’, Hervé maintained a virtual monopoly over the photographic documents of Le Corbusier’s work, and although he asked but a minimal price per print from Le Corbusier,⁹⁵ others found his prices quite high, even extravagant.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Under the *Avis*, Hervé was entitled to remuneration for the rights of reproduction but not for artistic rights, which went to Le Corbusier.

⁹⁶ In a two-page letter to Philip Johnson of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, dated 6 December 1950 [FLC C2(7)21_001 & _002], in response to Johnson having returned the photographs that Le Corbusier had sent him, Le Corbusier wrote, “*Si vous avez refusé mes documents parce qu’ils sont trop chers leurs prix sont fixés par les photographes professionnels sur le tarif courant à l’UNESCO, je vous l’avais précisé.*” Though the reason for the MoMA’s rejection is not clear, Le Corbusier suspected that it was due to the price he had asked for these photographs. His letter goes on to recount how in 1947 in New York he had purchased a photograph of the Manhattan skyscrapers behind the UN Headquarters site for \$12—and had paid this out of his own pocket.

In October 1950, Le Corbusier sent to Philip Johnson, the director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art, photographs from his own and from Lucien Hervé's files, pricing each at 5,000 francs.⁹⁷ Johnson promptly returned the photographs, stating that many of them were already in the files of the MoMA and remarking that he found "the tariff that you have put on these pictures about three times the amount that we ever pay for publication rights. However," Johnson hastened to add in a slightly satirical tone, "because photographs of your work are of so much greater value than those of anyone else, the Museum will be glad to pay 5,000 francs each for photographs we can use."⁹⁸

In January 1955, Boesiger, on behalf of the Kunsthau Zürich, requested photographic documents from Hervé in preparation for a major exhibition of Le Corbusier's work. In his reply, Hervé stated that he had negatives of the old buildings and projects, and he specified eight conditions for the release of these documents. These included, among others, stipulations that: (1) any prints made from these negatives not be published without Hervé's prior agreement; (2) the museum pay Hervé 1,500 francs for each black and white photograph exhibited,⁹⁹ 3,000 francs for each color,

⁹⁷ FLC C2(7)14_001 & _002. A two-page letter dated 19 October 1950 from Le Corbusier to Philip Johnson. This letter was preceded by one from Le Corbusier to Johnson dated 16 October 1950 [FLC C2(7)13] in which Le Corbusier wrote that he had selected for Johnson 12 photographs of the Pavillon Suisse taken in 1931 and that, in addition, he had asked Hervé to send to Johnson contact sheets of recently-made photos of the building as well as photographs—made by "M. Maywald (*excellent photographe également, 10 rue de la Grande Chaumière à Paris*)—of the 50 sq. m. mural that he had painted in the library of the Pavillon in 1948.

⁹⁸ FLC C2(7)18. Letter dated 1 November 1950 from Philip Johnson, MoMA, to Le Corbusier.

⁹⁹ This is exactly the fee Le Corbusier found so extravagant for the specially commissioned photographs of Claudine Peter less than a year earlier (see below). Le Corbusier's handwritten comments on this invoice indicate that Hervé billed Le Corbusier 350 francs per photograph in 1954.

all to be paid in advance; (3) the name of the photographer be indicated in both the exhibit and the catalogue; (4) ‘rights of reproduction’ be paid for all photographs printed in the catalogue; and (5) in the event these enlargements are exhibited elsewhere all fees must be paid anew.¹⁰⁰

Boesiger’s response was to send Hervé’s letter directly to Le Corbusier with a point-by-point list of objections to the photographer’s demands.¹⁰¹ The exhibition must be strongly supported by the press, Boesiger explained to Le Corbusier, and this is not possible if newspapers that want to publish one or two photographs must pay for the right to do so. Further, he complained that Hervé’s fees were “clearly exaggerated”, that it was his intent to use 100 black and white photographs and ten color photographs and to stage the exhibition in ten cities,¹⁰² and that with Hervé’s rates this would cost 1,800,000 francs in photographer’s fees alone. In addition, he said, it was impossible to ask the Kunsthhaus to pay such a sum in advance. “If Hervé maintains these exorbitant conditions, I fear the entire exhibition will be put into question,” Boesiger declared and in closing noted, “Obviously the Kunsthhaus will compensate Hervé, but to a reasonable limit.”

It could be said that Hervé was merely following the example of Le Corbusier who had frequently demanded high prices from museums for photographs of his buildings and had always asked for payment in advance. Le Corbusier felt such institutions had wronged him greatly by ignoring his painting and sculpture while

¹⁰⁰ FLC C2(13)075. Letter from Lucien Hervé to Boesiger undated but written the first week of February 1955.

¹⁰¹ FLC C2(13)74. Letter dated 8 February 1955 from Boesiger in Zürich to Le Corbusier.

¹⁰² This exhibition was titled “Dix Capitales d’Europe et d’Amérique.”

seeking his assistance in exhibiting his architectural work. When asked for his cooperation, his demands approached extortion, yet the nature of these demands is such that one cannot help but speculate on a larger motive behind them. When the director of the Kunsthaus Zürich wrote Le Corbusier with the proposal for the exhibition of his work, Le Corbusier's reply¹⁰³ of 1 March 1955 specified that two conditions be met before he would agree to the exhibition and noted that these conditions had already been satisfied in regard to a scheduled exhibition in Tokyo¹⁰⁴:

1. The organizers of the exhibition must undertake to purchase at least one painting of format 100 on the basis of 20,000 francs per numéro, with a discount of 33% (since no merchant intervenes).

This would be a sum of 1,333,000 francs for a canvas of 100.

2. The organizers also undertake to buy two tapestries (one from Atelier Picaud and one from Atelier Tabard) at a price consented to in Tokyo and established on the basis of 100,000 francs per square meter.

To these stipulations Le Corbusier added that, "The sales must be confirmed before the exhibition is prepared, and the sums are to be deposited in my bank, payable to my account as soon as the works have arrived in Zürich (1 painting, 2 tapestries)."

¹⁰³ FLC C2(13)79_001 & _002. Letter from Le Corbusier to Dr. R. Wehrli, Directeur Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, Zürich. The bank to which Le Corbusier referred is Banque du Pasquier, Montmollin & Cie in Neuchâtel Switzerland. He concluded the letter by stating that "once these operations are accomplished, the Kunsthaus would have free reign to arrange the paintings, tapestries and photographic documentation as they see fit."

¹⁰⁴ Regarding stipulations for the Tokyo exhibition see Le Corbusier's 11 January 1954 letter to Charlotte Perriand in Tokyo [FLC C2(10)161] in which he outlined the required purchases and closed with "[...] pas un mot de plus, pas un espoir de plus. J'en ai assez d'être l'homme toujours exploité par les autres."

The Kunsthauus met these demands¹⁰⁵ and apparently eight of Le Corbusier's works were sold at the exhibition.¹⁰⁶

These demands seem to have affected more than exhibition rights. They carried over into photographers' access to Le Corbusier's architecture. For instance, when the Museum of Modern Art in New York commissioned Ezra Stoller to photograph Ronchamp in the summer of 1955, Stoller was informed by the Atelier that "M. Le Corbusier would cooperate with me only if the MoMA bought two of his paintings." Stoller found this situation "almost surreal." "Not only was I in no position to commit the museum," he later wrote, "but here was what many considered the world's greatest architect demanding attention as a painter. Every painter I ever knew would have loved to be recognized as an architect." Stoller sidestepped the Atelier. "I headed to Ronchamp on my own where I was greeted by a well-dressed gentleman who soon proved to be of great help to me," he recalled. "I am ashamed to admit that it was only much later that I realized that he'd been sent by Le Corbusier."¹⁰⁷ Obviously, Le Corbusier valued both Stoller's talents and the attention of this important museum, yet felt it necessary to use an international interest in his architecture to secure remuneration (priced by size) for his other creative endeavors and to bolster his reputation as an artist—the status of artist-architect being central to his postwar understanding of himself and of the profession.

¹⁰⁵ The city of Zürich purchased the tapestry *Le Taureau et l'Étrange Oiseau* to hang in the "grande salle de conférences" at the Museum of Decorative Arts as well as Le Corbusier's *Traces de Pas dans la nuit*.

¹⁰⁶ Apparently, Le Corbusier received two-thirds of the selling price and the Kunsthauus, one-third. See FLC C2(13)79_001 & _002.

¹⁰⁷ William S. Saunders, *Modern Architecture: Photographs by Ezra Stoller* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 205. See also Daniel Naegele, "An Interview with Ezra Stoller," *History of Photography*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 105–115.

In 1955, MoMA began planning a major retrospective of Le Corbusier's work which, had it been realized, would have been the largest and most comprehensive show in his lifetime. In addition to his paintings and sculpture, and to photographs and drawings of his architecture, it was to include specially commissioned scale models of his major works and a model of Chandigarh so large that it could only be viewed in its entirety from above. In the spring of 1955, Arthur Drexler, director of the museum's Department of Architecture and Design, proposed the exhibition to Le Corbusier with a tentative February 1957 opening. Drexler was no stranger to Le Corbusier, who had written him in June 1951 with a proposition that the MoMA purchase "drawings and other original documents of architecture" from him, specifically the manuscript of his book *Précisions* and the 71 colored drawings executed during the lecture series in South America which the book records. The price tag for this "*prédiction de l'architecture qui devait venir, celle des temps modernes [...] un document que j'estime sensationnel, historique [...] prétexte à une exposition permanente*" was \$8,000.¹⁰⁸

But in the mid-1950s, now in the last decade of his life and the object of worldwide attention, Le Corbusier was suspicious of the museum's motives. On his earlier trips to the USA, and particularly regarding his involvement with the United Nations building, the American press had not treated him kindly, the tabloids caricaturing him, finding his statements preposterous and his

¹⁰⁸ FLC C2(7)52 & 53. Letter dated 27 June 1951 from Le Corbusier to Arthur Drexler at the MoMA. Le Corbusier offered his ideas for displaying these drawings (drawings that ultimately the MoMA did not purchase), suggesting that "*Le manuscrit pourrait être dans une vitrine et le livre 'Entretiens' avec ses pages développées pourrait même servir de tapisserie.*" Though he did not go so far, had it been executed his suggestion for this display would have transformed both drawing and book into architecture, an idea he himself had exacted in 1937 at the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux.

personal appearance somewhat comical.¹⁰⁹ Always willing to play the martyr, Le Corbusier imagined a conspiracy of sorts against him in the USA and thought this the reason for his failure to secure commissions for two of the major international peace buildings of the twentieth century: the United Nations headquarters—whose basic parti he indeed had devised as part of a team effort in 1946—and the UNESCO building. Either commission would have brought him public recognition as the world’s foremost twentieth-century architect. Instead, the commissions went to New York-based architects, both one-time friends of Le Corbusier.

109

In addition, regarding his 1935 tour, there was a misunderstanding between Le Corbusier and the MoMA that could only have aggravated suspicion on both sides of the Atlantic. Philip Goodwin’s 9 March 1936 reply to Le Corbusier’s letter of 21 February 1936 made this clear [FLC E2(3)434 & 435]. “The real basic difference between [...] your point of view and the Museum’s with regard to the lecture tour, boils down to one of race,” Goodwin wrote. “Good common sense seems petty to you, and the reaching out for glory does not appeal to me. It is the difference between Latin and Anglo-Saxon, which I hardly believed in, but which seems to have existed strongly in this case.” Goodwin went on to tell Le Corbusier that he, Le Corbusier, “totally misunderstood what the Museum and I intended as a coöperative [sic] partnership lecture tour. In this case, we put in the hard work of arrangement [...] and you put in your services as a lecturer. You had the interesting experience of a trip to America,—and we had the privilege of having various American groups listen to your views personally and not in books. You were to put in the whole of the financial returns from the lectures, \$75.00 and \$100.00 each,—and we to put in all the additional money needed, which, in this case, consisted of about the same amount.”

In *When the Cathedrals Were White* (97), Le Corbusier quoted the above passage (altering it slightly) to open a discussion on ‘common sense’ in America. He prefaced the quote with:

... some people in the USA, with a pride that puts us in our place, conclude: ‘You are Latins, we are Anglo-Saxons.’ [...] The important man, a true transatlantic gentleman, with whom I was in constant contact during my American tour, still writes to me: ‘Our divergences are summed up in a difference of race. Good common sense is a negligible quantity for you and the call of glory leaves me cold. That is the difference between Latin and Anglo-Saxons...

Because of this suspicion, and because he clearly wished to establish his reputation as a serious contributor to modern painting, in May 1956 he authorized the MoMA exhibition only after imposing eight conditions, which included: (1) payment of \$2,000 to him personally, (2) the purchase for \$5,000 by MoMA of one of his paintings, (3) that the paintings to be displayed at the exhibition be chosen by himself and a MoMA representative, (4) that the exhibition include some of his drawings for the UN and UNESCO projects,¹¹⁰ and (5) that MoMA submit for his approval, “loyally and exactly,” all material for the catalogue. This final reservation was necessitated, Le Corbusier explained, by the earlier *mauvaises expériences* of the architect in the USA, where a certain important press had assumed a clearly hostile attitude “*en rédigeant des études pleines de perfidie destinées à priver L-C des fruits de son travail dans deux circonstances très particulières*.”¹¹¹

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- 110 Le Corbusier took the loss of major commissions as opportunities for self-promotion, even if it meant distorting the facts as evidenced in the *Une Maison – Un Palais* account of his loss of the League of Nations Competition to ‘École des Beaux-Arts’ competitors. In that instance he could claim the judges chose in favor of the antiquated over the modern and thus gain public sympathy. With the UN and UNESCO projects this was not the case and other reasons for these losses had to be found. Le Corbusier memorialized this injustice on numerous occasions including the tiles he made for furnishings as part of the renovation of the Pavillon Suisse after its interior was partially defaced during the war. His ploy of making a display of these injustices was one he engaged as early as 1925 when, in *The Decorative Art of Today* (108), he published a blank page with a notice reprimanding the Sauter-Harlé establishment for their failure to provide him with a photograph he had hoped to use in that spot. Later, in the late 1950s, he threatened something similar when the New York MoMA refused to lend out the model of the Palace of the Soviets that they had purchased from Le Corbusier in 1941 for \$750 and that he now claimed they had stolen from him.
- 111 FLC C2-7, 200 & 201 & 202. Three-page letter dated 9 May 1956 from Le Corbusier’s secretary Jeanne Heilbuth on his behalf (Le Corbusier was at Cap-Martin at the time) to René d’Harnoncourt, director of the MoMA. Two months earlier, in a letter dated 19 March 1956 to Arthur Drexler at MoMA [FLC C2(7)183_001 & _002], Le Corbusier announced that he had signed a contract for a book to be titled *Le Corbusier and his Times* and to be published in several languages. >>

And here he cited the UN and UNESCO projects, with the *New Yorker* (1946–47) and *Life* (1947) magazines as the culprits.

The MoMA's response to these stipulations was immediate and decisive. "After a careful reading of your letter," wrote the museum's director René d'Harnoncourt, "we had to decide, to our greatest regret, that your conditions enumerated therein are unacceptable to us, and that we had to cancel the exhibition of your work proposed for February 1957."¹¹² D'Harnoncourt went on to elaborate the museum's belief that close cooperation between museum and artist is a necessity in any such exhibition:

*Your statement that you are unwilling to sign a final agreement with the Museum before approving detailed plans of the exhibition and the accompanying book makes it not only impossible for us to schedule the exhibition but it also reveals a lack of confidence which we consider incompatible with true and fruitful cooperation. As to your reference to press criticisms as a basic consideration in the formation of an exhibition or the publishing of a text, we feel that the Museum as a responsible educational institution cannot compromise the expression of its own point of view because of anticipated press reaction.*¹¹³

>> "Ce livre sera donc précis et exact" he told Drexler and suggested that if there was to be an exhibition of his work, it was this book that should accompany it. He explained: "J'aime mieux que la cas de ma petite personne soit examinée du point de vue occidental plutôt que du point de vue américain, qui est très intéressant mais qui n'est pas basé des sources sûres."

¹¹² FLC C2(7)204. Letter dated 14 June 1956 from René d'Harnoncourt, director of the MoMA, to Le Corbusier.

¹¹³ FLC C2(7)204.

On the fifth of June of the following year the *Exposition des Dix Capitales* of Le Corbusier's work—an exhibition of neither the magnitude nor caliber of that planned by the MoMA—opened in Zürich, the Kunsthaus having complied in part with Le Corbusier's stringent demands. But despite his ardent self-promotion, major museums did not willingly purchase his paintings at this time.¹¹⁴

114 Le Corbusier's desperation is apparent and somewhat pitiful in a three-page letter dated 3 August 1957 to James Johnson Sweeney, director of the Guggenheim Museum [FLC C1(1)52 & 53 & 54]. Sweeney had failed to attend an exhibition of his paintings at Pierre Matisse's New York gallery, prompting an angry letter from Le Corbusier. "Je suis peintre, très sérieusement," he wrote, citing his many shows, his honors, his association with important artists and government officials, and his keen connoisseurship in amassing the La Roche collection. A year earlier Sweeney had visited Le Corbusier in his apartment, had offered him \$20,000 for his Braque, had attempted to buy his Lipchitz sculpture, but had overlooked completely Le Corbusier's own paintings. All of this insulted Le Corbusier, who—by noting that "le pétrolier grec" had recently paid "103 millions" for a Gauguin—showed his awareness of the astronomical sums being paid at the time for paintings while at the same time implicitly rendering Sweeney a bargain hunter, a dealer in, but certainly not a connoisseur of, fine art. He then subjected Sweeney to his well-established diatribe against the USA and the MoMA, which, he noted, had sold their 1920 Jeanneret painting to Zeckendorf.

Regarding the exhibition and sale of his paintings, Le Corbusier often assumed an aloof, disinterested public posture. Yet in private he was very concerned not only with establishing himself as an important painter, but with being properly remunerated for his creative efforts. He actively promoted and closely monitored the sale of his paintings in the USA, a market remote from the eyes of his European followers. If a painting or even a sketch sold for less than what he himself thought fitting, he wrote a satirical letter to his dealer there.

Les Carnets de la recherche patiente: photo-essays on architecture

In 1954 Le Corbusier began a series of monographs in which individual buildings are presented in a manner quite different from that of the *Œuvre complète*. In this new 'collection' the presentation has a distinct narrative structure. The making of a building is revealed as a process which continues after the building's completion, with Le Corbusier presenting recently finished works or re-viewing and re-presenting former works which had matured and to which he now gives new interpretation.

Une Petite maison,¹¹⁵ a small book of largely illustrative text, published in 1954, was the first of these 'storybook' monographs which included *Ronchamp* (1957), *Le Poème Électronique*, *Le Corbusier* (1958), *Le Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette* (1960), *Textes et dessins pour Ronchamp* (1965), and *Les Maternelles vous parlent* (1968).

Une Petite maison tells the story of the then little-known house that Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret designed for Le Corbusier's parents, a house conceived without a specific site but eventually built in 1924 in Vevey, Switzerland on the bank of *lac Léman*. [39]

¹¹⁵ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite maison* (Zürich: Éditions d'architecture, 1954).



FIG. 39

In this book, Le Corbusier viewed this economical house as a prototypical “*machine à habiter*”, a dwelling of minimal dimension which due to careful planning, sensitive siting, and correct orientation yielded all the benefits of a grander, more conventional, site-specific house. At this time, the *petite maison*—whether a twentieth-century hut in a natural setting or one of many ‘file-drawers’ in a communal *Unité*—became a viable solution to the postwar housing shortage. Equally important, in its minimal dimensions and with its assumptions about dwelling, the house could be understood as a fundamental component of Le Corbusier’s urban vision.

Published some thirty years after the house was built, presumably *Une Petite maison* was intended not only as a record of a completed work but as a proposal for a lifestyle that Le Corbusier strongly advocated and had assumed himself, if at first only occasionally while on holiday at Cap-Martin in his spartan, pre-manufactured, yet rustic *cabanon* assembled just two years earlier.

By 1954, the little house at Vevey—that upon its completion in 1924, Le Corbusier tells us, had so offended local residents that they deemed it a “crime against nature” and outlawed further construction of its sort—had become the paradigmatic ‘natural house.’ Like its architect it had undergone a transformation. Le Corbusier wished to document the metamorphosis, and his photo essay pictures a softened, weathered box, engulfed in foliage, its roof abloom with wild geraniums.¹¹⁶ [40]

On the recommendation of his brother Albert Jeanneret, who at the time lived with their mother in the house, Le Corbusier commissioned photographs from Claudine Peter, a photography teacher in Vevey. If Le Corbusier’s edicts were effective with photographers who had been assigned or who themselves had chosen to photograph his more newsworthy structures, they seemed not to apply in the case of Peter. Presumably her fee was not determined in advance and she billed Le Corbusier 80 Francs suisses for two exterior shots and two enlargements.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ In the same year that Le Corbusier published *Une Petite maison*, 1954, Frank Lloyd Wright published *The Natural House* (New York: Horizon Press, 1954) which documents his twenty-year preoccupation with developing a low-cost suburban dwelling, beginning with the 1934 Malcolm Willey house in Minneapolis. The Great Depression, the Second World War, and the return of the soldier to family life encouraged the affordable house in the USA.

¹¹⁷ FLC T1(2)247. Invoice dated 12 May 1954 from Mademoiselle C. Peter, Photographe Diplômée, 2, rue de l’Hôtel de Ville, Vevey to Le Corbusier. The bill was for 80 francs for 2 exterior shots and two 24/30 enlargements. A postscript noted that “I have enclosed two color photographs and two other photographs that your brother asked me to take.” There are some calculations scribbled on this invoice in Le Corbusier’s hand that seem to compare Peter’s price with that of Lucien Hervé. Roughly, they seem to read: “40 photos 1950-52 pour 250 Frs. = 6 F la photo / = 500 f la photo / Hervé me fait 350 f la épreuve.” According to Le Corbusier’s notations one Franc suisse=40 French francs at this time. It should also be noted that on the final page of *Une Petite maison* Le Corbusier credited the photography to a “Mlle. Péter” but that in all other correspondence ‘Peter’ is without the acute accent. >>



FIG. 40

When Le Corbusier received her first invoice in mid-May 1954, he wrote her that he found her price extravagant, reminding her that the selling price of such a small book must pay for materials, publisher,

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- >> The un-accented version is correct as confirmed in a letter from J.-C. Kirchhofer, le secrétaire municipal, Commune de Corseaux, dated 30 June 1993, who, in response to my attempt to locate Peter for comment, wrote “the photographer Claudine Peter-Comtesse is deceased.” Whether for convenience or convention, Le Corbusier often gallicized foreign names.

printer, author, and bookseller.¹¹⁸ He then turned the matter over to the book's publisher, Girsberger. Later, when the relentless Peter submitted a bill¹¹⁹ for 225 Francs suisses—175 of which were for rights of reproduction—Le Corbusier wrote her a less than delicate two-and-a-half page letter. In it he told her that he did not underestimate her talent as a photographer, but insisted that the photographs she had made for him were not so much a creative endeavor on her part as a recording of an architectural creation executed by himself over a thirty-year period. In addition, he reminded her, “I did 40 drawings which permitted you to precisely frame 40 shots on your own.” And he told her he understood well the commercial realities which plague the publisher, having “published more than 40 books myself, doing all the documentation, all the typography (page layout, cropping, paste-up, etc....)”. Again, he recounted the many costs involved in the publication of such a booklet and insisted that her price—“40 Frs. suisses” or “3.500 Frs./ la photographie”—was absurd when multiplied times fifty photographs, especially given the price of such a small book. “In the 40 books that I’ve done and which are filled with photographs,” he told her, “the photographers were paid for their (professional quality) prints and not for their artistic talent.” He closed by comparing her work with that of two other photographers, one whom he portrayed as a true artist, the other a photographer more or less comparable to herself. The true artist was the renowned Yousuf Karsh who had recently done Le Corbusier’s portrait and whom Le Corbusier described to Peter as “truly an extraordinary photographer.” “He spent four hours at my place photographing me (about fifty shots),” he recalled, “all with modesty and an energy for work which astonished me and an absolutely piercing nervous outlay which explains the authentic success of his portraits.” [41]

¹¹⁸ FLC T1(2)248. Letter dated 18 May 1954 from Le Corbusier to Péter [sic].

¹¹⁹ FLC T1(2)250. Letter and invoice from Peter to Le Corbusier, copy to Girsberger, dated 21 May 1954.

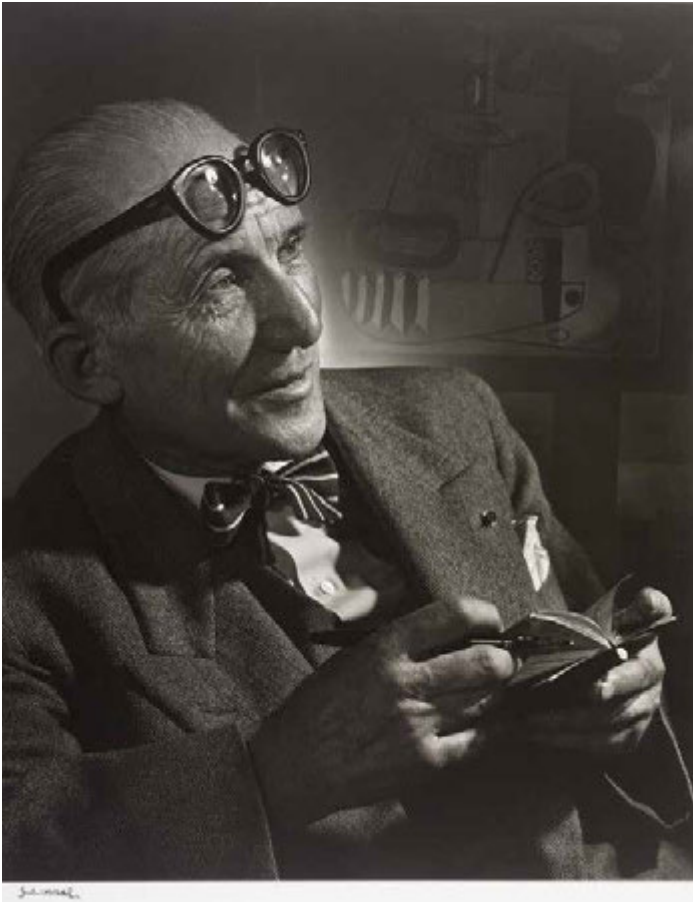


FIG. 41

The second photographer he did not name but described as “*un autre type of bien moins bonne qualité*,” a photographer “who has photographed me over the last five years in diverse places around Paris (a photographer from *Paris Match*). He’s probably charged *Paris Match* your photographers’ syndicate rates, but they’ve accepted only about twelve of his photographs and that’s all.”

He admonished Peter to “Réfléchissez, chère Mademoiselle, et ne vous croyez pas exploitée ni martyrisée”, and closed by telling her that she should feel fortunate to receive any pay at all, that it is enough that her work is being published and that she should be honored to have her photographs in an international publication which he, “qui a attrapé beaucoup de cheveux blancs pour acquérir un nom”, had authored.¹²⁰ The episode ended with Peter writing to Girsberger, accepting his payment of 200 Francs suisses (five francs per photograph as compared with her asking price of forty francs), and thanking him for his letter, “plus conciliante que celle que m’a écrite Le Corbusier dont les propos manquent totalement d’élégance.”¹²¹

In 1957 Le Corbusier published *Ronchamp*,¹²² a storybook quite similar in concept to *Une Petite maison*. There was no need to commission special photography. Because of its importance and immense popularity, the chapel attracted many amateur architectural photographers who sent Le Corbusier complimentary prints of their photographs and gratefully permitted him to publish their work in this book.¹²³ In addition, Lucien Hervé, who by that time served as Le Corbusier’s ‘house photographer’, photographed the chapel extensively. All photographers were credited on the last page of the book. Le Corbusier made special mention of some of the photographers in a section of the book titled “Des Hommes” dedicated to all those who contributed to the building of the chapel.

¹²⁰ FLC T1(2)260, 261, 262. Two and a half-page letter dated 23 June 1954 from Le Corbusier to Mademoiselle C. Peter, Vevey.

¹²¹ FLC T1(2)265. Letter dated 5 July 1954 from Peter to Girsberger.

¹²² Le Corbusier, *Ronchamp* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1957).

¹²³ Le Corbusier was well aware of *Ronchamp* as a tourist attraction. He described it as a “Lieu de pèlerinage à des dates exactes, mais aussi, lieu de pèlerinage pour isolés venus des quatre horizons, venus en voiture, en train, en avion. On va à Ronchamp.” As reprinted in Jean Petit (*Le Corbusier*), *Textes et dessins pour Ronchamp* (Geneva: 1965), unpagéd.



FIG. 42

“Later came the photographers, the good among the atrocious!” he wrote, and proceeded to list nine by name and location beginning with “Hervé de Paris”.¹²⁴ Beneath this passage is a portrait of the contractor Bona and his crew of seven men—tank-topped or bare chested, baggy pants, arms around each other, smiling to the camera in their camaraderie. [42] Thus this church building was presented as a cooperative effort, and with their contributions, the photographers, too, were included in this community.

Le Corbusier’s gesture stands in contrast to his prewar practice yet does not seem out of place here given the neo-Humanist tendencies of the day as well as the size and ecclesiastical nature of the building.

124 Le Corbusier, *Ronchamp*. The other photographers named in this passage are: “Iris Volkart and Walter Faigle of Stuttgart, Marcel Lombard of Lyon, the Magnum people, Hubmann of Vienna, Burri of Zürich, Perusset of Verdun, Moosbrugger of Zürich, etc....” Photographers not mentioned here but credited on the book’s last page are Charles Bueb of Pulversheim (Haut-Rhin), René Groebli of Zürich, and A. Maisonnier of Vitry sur Seine.

Les Maternelles vous parlent (*The Nursery Schools*¹²⁵), published posthumously, was conceived in response to a growing interest throughout France in daycare centers, an interest that coincided with Le Corbusier's socio-urbanistic visions. Located on the rooftop of the Unité d'Habitation, *les maternelles* promoted family living. As such they might justify the extremely expensive communal *toit-jardins* on top of the apartment blocks, thus preserving a component essential to Le Corbusier's formal vocabulary, a design element already being questioned (and discarded) by budget-conscious builders.¹²⁶ When in July 1960 the women's magazine *Elle* asked Le Corbusier for illustrations for an exposé on his work at Marseilles, he requested photographs from Louis Sciarli,¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Le Corbusier, *The Nursery Schools*, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Orion Press, 1968).

¹²⁶ The book offers insight into what had by then become a standard component in Le Corbusier's formal vocabulary as a response to a new demand in French society. The roof garden, an essential component to Le Corbusier's block buildings, broke the box and made his artistic, sculptural touch integral to building. As in *Une Petite maison*, the brutal materials and forms are relieved by *la vie*. But given his vision of a city of Unités on pilotis in a garden landscape, was this *toit-jardin* necessary? Le Corbusier argued that there could be no better location for *La maternelle*—daycares being in great demand by Marseilles society in the early postwar years. Here, children would be secure; contained but not confined. They would be free to play naturally under the open sky. The invigorating environment built by the genius architect would surely stimulate creativity and breed artistic sensibility, and this is precisely what Le Corbusier presents photographically in this book. *La maternelle* was only an elevator ride away. At the end of the day, children could be delivered directly to their doorstep with minimal effort. Classmates would all live in the same building and a community would develop naturally. At the same time, when school was not in session, these facilities—a large open space, bathrooms, a wading pool, etc.—could facilitate adult communal activities.

The *toit-jardin* allowed the block to be experienced 'in the round', an experience that alters one's understanding of this architecture and distinguishes it from that of other modern architects. That the building be climbed on and over—that it be understood as a construct—seems essential to Le Corbusier's formal vocabulary.

¹²⁷ FLC T1(3)367. Letter dated 12 July 1960 from Le Corbusier to Louis Sciarli, 112, Blvd. National, Marseilles, III.



FIG. 43

a Marseilles photographer whom he had known since 1953 when Sciarli requested his authorization to publish a packet of a dozen postcards of the Unité, especially *La maternelle*.¹²⁸ Le Corbusier felt Sciarli particularly adept at capturing children in their interaction with his so-called ‘brutalist’ architecture. Sciarli’s photographs of the Marseilles roof, together with photographs by Lucien Hervé, were later employed to illustrate *Les Maternelles vous parlent*. [43]

At the same time and for the same *Elle* article Le Corbusier also wrote to the young German photographer Hans Silvester requesting “très jolies photographies” of the roof of Marseilles “with or without children,” noting that he had in his possession an excellent photograph by Silvester of the *toit-jardin* but that there were “two visitors on the image and unfortunately no children.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ FLC T1(2)207. Memorandum dated 29 October 1953 regarding Sciarli’s request.

¹²⁹ FLC T1(3) 366. Letter dated 12 July 1960 from Le Corbusier to Hans W. Silvester, Lórrach Mozartstrasse 12, Lórrach/Baden, Germany.



FIG. 44



FIG. 45

Le Corbusier had first come in contact with Silvester some years earlier when the photographer sent him unsolicited photographs of Ronchamp. [44] At that time, Le Corbusier wrote Silvester, “I’ve looked closely at your photographs. They are very good and I congratulate you. You have immersed architecture in life and you are one of the rare few who have succeeded in doing this well.”¹³⁰ His reference is to Silvester’s inclusion of people in his images. When later Silvester requested permission to photograph the inauguration ceremonies at La Tourette,¹³¹ Le Corbusier encouraged him to do so, no doubt in appreciation of Silvester’s talent “*faire entrer l’architecture dans la vie.*” At the same time though, he also recommended to Père Lecapitaine at La Tourette that René Burri of Magnum—who “is serious and does things very well”—photograph the inauguration.¹³² [45]

The dedication of the chapel of Ronchamp in 1955 is essential to the story line of *Ronchamp*, and photographs of large crowds of un-posed people communicated the social nature of the building’s purpose and its inauguration. The photo essay, at the time a regular feature in the popular press, had helped to establish such one-time events as momentous and worthy of documentation.

Photo-technology, facilitated this. Unlike the pre-war professional photographer with his large format camera, tripod and glass negatives, the postwar amateur photographer was a visitor who did not interrupt the daily life of the building. New lightweight

¹³⁰ FLC T1(3)136. Letter dated 28 May 1957 from Le Corbusier to Hans W. Silvester, Lörrach Mozartstrasse 12, Lörrach/Baden, Germany.

¹³¹ FLC T1(3)143. Letter dated 13 July 1957 from Hans Silvester (Lörrach Mozartstrasse 12, Lörrach/Baden, Germany) to Le Corbusier (rue de Sèvres, Paris 6).

¹³² René Burri’s photographs of Le Corbusier and of Le Corbusier’s architecture are legendary. See Arthur Rüegg, ed., *Le Corbusier: Moments in the Life of a Great Architect: Photographs by René Burri* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1999), especially 100–120, “Notre-Dame-du-Haut Ronchamp, 1950–1955”.

cameras were less conspicuous, less of an intrusion, and with fast films could stop the action of the inhabitants where previously such people were excluded or else posed for long exposures.

While photographing Ronchamp, Ezra Stoller later recalled, “A group of priests happened by on the third or fourth day of my work. They were most friendly and accommodating and, in their clerical garb, couldn’t have made better models.”¹³³ Such ‘garb’ became an important element in architectural photography in the 1950s and early-1960s. Priests, nuns, children, robed monks, and Sikhs in turbans—all might enrich the image. They could bring to it a heightened sense of history, of mysticism, and of the universality of man. [46]



FIG. 46

133 Saunders, *Modern Architecture: Photographs by Ezra Stoller*, 205. Naegele, “An Interview with Ezra Stoller,” 112.



FIG. 47

They could render it exotic, international, and of a temporal dimension. Photographs of Le Corbusier's work in India featured in Volume Six of the *Œuvre complète* are crowded with such exotic figures. When occasionally modern furnishings or a contemporary automobile show up in these images creating conflicting cues, Le Corbusier's editorial comments indicate his adamant opposition to them.¹³⁴ [47 & 48]

¹³⁴ For example, on p74 of the *Œuvre complète*-6, Le Corbusier marks "X non!" on the two lower photographs [FLC B1(7)22 & 24]. Both show new cars parked in front of the Palace of Justice at Chandigarh together with a wooden pull cart and Indians with turbans. >>



FIG. 48

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- >> The Villa Sarabhai seemed particularly problematic. On one interior photo in which a Panama fan is clearly visible hanging from the vaulted ceiling, Le Corbusier wrote a disparaging comment in the margin of the first maquette [FLC B1(7)37]. (In the published version, the image was darkened, resulting in a more pronounced white fan, while the dark vault all but disappears.) In another instance [Œuvre complète-6, 124, bottom], Le Corbusier comments negatively on “la voiture” that appears in the lower right corner of a photo of the north facade [FLC B1(7)39]. And beside another interior photograph of the villa—which shows a robed boy reading and a wire Bertioia-like chair as well as various potted flowers (129)—Le Corbusier scribbled, “pas de meubles en France en 50 années depuis 1900!” [FLC B1(7)42]. Nevertheless, despite these concerns, and presumably because better “information” coming from India was unavailable, the photographs were used. See fig.’s 47 and 48.

Just as the *objets-types* had promoted Le Corbusier's prewar concerns, the human figure reinforced his postwar message. His buildings after the Second World War—often of exposed concrete and far larger in size than his earlier buildings—undoubtedly benefitted from the scale that the full-sized, erect human figure brought, but this 'presence of man' was not unique to his images alone. As interest in architecture expanded beyond technicians and professionals to a lay audience, architectural photography worldwide began to include people in its pictures. This trend peaked in the late 1950s and is epitomized in Julius Shulman's renowned images of Los Angeles case study houses, images intent on selling modern architecture as a lifestyle to the populace at large.¹³⁵ But beyond this, the 'universality of man' theme was itself one of the most popular in all of photojournalism at the time. MoMA's *Family of Man* exhibition which opened in New York in January 1955 testified to the immense international interest generated by 'humankind' as a topic. In the introduction to the catalogue of that exhibition, Edward Steichen explained that the

135 See Peter Gössel, ed., *Julius Shulman. Architecture and its Photography* (Köln: Taschen, 1998). See, also, Joseph Rosa, *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994). Lucien Hervé, in contrast to Shulman, "adopted a manner of photographing which excluded people most of the time, except when I needed to give scale to the image." (Naegele, "An Interview with Lucien Hervé," 81). When Le Corbusier wanted to include people in the images of his architecture, he often turned to other photographers. Ezra Stoller also questioned the need to have people in his photographs of architecture. "To use people or not to use people? My criterion is that when you have a scale so unfamiliar that you have no idea what it is, you've got to use a familiar object in it. But to say arbitrarily that you must always get people in pictures, that's ludicrous. For one thing, the picture that contains people is a picture of people. They are the first thing that you see in looking at a photograph. You always see the people first and not the architecture. Then, you relate it to the architecture. And if you know that there is, for instance, a window or steps or a chair or furniture, then you know the scale and you don't need a person for scale anymore." (Naegele, "An Interview with Ezra Stoller", 112).

show “was conceived as a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life—as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.”¹³⁶ The exhibition was immensely popular, drawing record crowds in New York. It traveled around the world and was shown in Moscow in 1959. But according to Steichen, nowhere was it so successful as in Paris. The exoticism of other lands, of costumed religious figures and simple universal truths were also themes often conveyed in the photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson.¹³⁷

The ‘universality of man’ theme, if it did not directly influence Le Corbusier, certainly benefitted his portrayal of himself as the universal man, the artist-architect whose creations were no longer to be confined to the aesthetic arena alone but were of technical, political, sociological and environmental significance. In the last decade of his life, it helped to give meaning to both his architecture and his lifelong ‘patient search’.

¹³⁶ *Family of Man* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955).

¹³⁷ In an 11 June 1992 letter to the author, Maurice Besset, Le Corbusier’s literary executor, wrote from Geneva that Le Corbusier “did not often speak about photographers except Cartier-Bresson, which he admired.” I have questioned numerous acquaintances of Le Corbusier, including several photographers, as to his attitude toward photography, always asking if he admired or spoke of any photographers in particular. All except Besset responded that he never mentioned any photographers.

In a letter dated 17 March 1992 to the author, Henri Cartier-Bresson noted that “I am very sorry but I must say that I never met [Le Corbusier], and I have never been to Ronchamp. I only know his building in Marseilles.”

A Larger Picture

Le Corbusier's attempt to control the representation of his buildings may have been well-founded. Certainly, his artistry had made the images as much as his artistry had made the building itself. Books mediated the medium. But towards the end of his life, complete control became less and less possible, with near disastrous results. One has only to look at the 'unauthorized' Le Corbusier monographs that began to appear in the 1960s for confirmation.¹³⁸

Regarding Le Corbusier's relationships with photographers, when compared with those between photographers and other renowned twentieth century architects, they were not all that unusual. Concerning authorial rights, for instance, Le Corbusier's stance differed little from that assumed by Frank Lloyd Wright in America. According to Ezra Stoller, Frank Lloyd Wright never commissioned photographers and Stoller "didn't expect payment from him." Nevertheless, Stoller built his reputation by photographing Wright's buildings and his images were in great demand. "But I did stick to my copyrights," Stoller related. "Wright, however, thought they were his pictures. Once, when it was pointed out to him that my pictures were copyrighted and he was not free to distribute them, he phoned in a fury. I didn't know the reason for the call, except

¹³⁸ See, for example, Françoise Choay's *Le Corbusier* published by Braziller in 1960 as part of the "Masters of World Architecture" series and featuring photographs selected by Lucien Hervé and presented, presumably, by the publisher's graphic designer. Le Corbusier rejected this book when Choay presented him with a *maquette*. Later, he blamed Hervé for engineering the book, and when he found it by accident in José Luis Sert's personal library, he wrote Choay denouncing it. See FLC T1(3)374, 389, 390, 284.

that his words were, ‘You’ve not done anything for us’ and ‘Sue me! I enjoy being sued.’” Stoller went on to confess, “deep down I was not secure in my opinion of ownership not only of these images but about ownership of the buildings themselves.”¹³⁹

And as for remuneration, Le Corbusier’s belief that photographers should photograph his buildings for little or no pay was common among celebrated architects. In fact, he was perhaps less successful in securing complimentary photographic services of high quality than others of his stature. Ezra Stoller has noted that, “Both Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer tried to convince me that I should be happy to photograph important works of architecture without charging. Somewhere in my disorderly files is a long letter from Gropius explaining in a most reasonable way that without the work of the architects to document, I’d really be nowhere. Hence, it was a privilege to do this work and I shouldn’t charge for it.” Stoller went on to explain, “It seems that the European tradition was for camera and materials manufacturers to keep the better-known photographers supplied for free. And it happened in other fields as well. So, Gropius and Breuer didn’t feel that they were asking anything unusual. Breuer proposed at one point that he would see to it that I photographed all of his buildings if I, in return, supplied him with pictures at no charge. ‘We will be partners,’ was how he put it. I knew how badly this sort of arrangement was working out for Le Corbusier, whose work was being done by one man, and I couldn’t see how Breuer could force

¹³⁹ Saunders, *Modern Architecture: Photographs by Ezra Stoller*, 73. Where relations with photographers were concerned, Wright outdid Le Corbusier in another respect when at one point he suggested that Stoller “[...] show his house photographer ‘some of my tricks.’” Presumably, Pedro E. Guerrero was the house photographer to whom Stoller refers. On working with Wright, see Guerrero’s *Picturing Wright* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994).

a magazine to use a photographer of his choice. And what would happen when some new star caught his eye?”¹⁴⁰

The ‘one man’ to whom Stoller referred was, of course, Lucien Hervé. And although Le Corbusier’s buildings were in fact photographed by many photographers, Stoller’s conviction that the Le Corbusier-Hervé arrangement worked out badly has some merit. Certainly, the arrangement did not result in the singularly stunning images that Stoller himself created. Yet excellence in photography was not really what Le Corbusier sought since excellence at that time—unlike in the 1920s and 1930s—frequently meant ‘signature’ photography. The architectural photographer was no longer a technician with a ‘good eye’, but an expressive artist with a palette of various cameras, filters, films, lenses and lighting devices.¹⁴¹ Signature photography might interfere with, rather than reinforce, Le Corbusier’s presentation. What was needed in a house photographer was infrastructure. Le Corbusier sought not an artist-photographer but a loyal collaborator, one who could be relied upon, was available when needed, and would not make excessive demands on Le Corbusier’s time. This he found in Lucien Hervé. This does not mean that Le Corbusier did not appreciate extraordinary photographs of his architecture.

¹⁴⁰ Saunders, *Modern Architecture: Photographs by Ezra Stoller*, 79. See also Naegele “Interview with Ezra Stoller,” *History of Photography*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 105–115.

¹⁴¹ So much is evident in Stoller’s assessment of the conditions under which he photographed the chapel at Ronchamp: “The extreme contrast between the colored glass windows and the otherwise un-illuminated interior presented a real problem. I had to choose to show one or the other. Any artificial light that might have been available would have distorted the quality of the space. (This was long before strobe lights were available and there was no electricity in the building.)” See Saunders, *Modern Architecture: Photographs by Ezra Stoller*, 205, and Naegele, “Interview with Ezra Stoller,” 113.

On the contrary, such images were often employed together with Hervé's photographs to enrich and complement Le Corbusier's illustrative text, or recommended for use in publications by others where only one or two images of a Le Corbusier building were to be presented next to signature images of the work of other architects.

Although always reluctant to pay for photographs of his buildings, Le Corbusier nevertheless supported his photographers, sometimes praising their work enthusiastically and often recommending their services to journals and publishers. When G. E. Kidder Smith requested photographs of Ronchamp and La Tourette for his book on modern churches, Le Corbusier did not hesitate to recommend the work of the Zürich photographer René Groebli. Later, in the early 1960s, when Smith presented Le Corbusier with his own photographs of these churches, Le Corbusier praised them as "magnificent" and showed his appreciation by giving the photographer his own "lithographie de Mourlot: 'Le Cheval de Fiacre'", taking it to his hotel in person¹⁴²—an exchange that suggests Le Corbusier may have understood Smith's photographs as an equivalent art. Upon receipt of Charles Bueb's photographs of the interior structure of the roof of Ronchamp—documents which he would use as evidence of the rationality of a structure attacked as 'whimsical' and 'Baroque'—Le Corbusier wrote to the photographer:

142 FLC T1(5)108, letter dated 30 June 1962 from G. E. Kidder Smith to Le Corbusier. In his 19 March 1996 letter to the author, Kidder Smith wrote that Le Corbusier gave him "the treasured lithograph" because he had "saved" the Villa Savoye from immediate destruction." Smith recalled, "When I learned from Giedion, an old friend, that the Villa was to be torn down the next week I sent 20–30 cablegrams to important souls and architects around the world asking them to cable M. Malraux. When the minister walked into his office on the next Monday morning he encountered a pile of 'outrage' from a score or more important people declaring that this was one of France's treasures. All it took."



FIG. 49

“These documents are very precious to me and I extend my personal thanks to you for your kindness. I am certain that given the occasion you will again perform other miracles around the chapel (with your lens, that is!).”¹⁴³ [49] And when Lucien Hervé sent him his book of photographs of Cistercian architecture, Le Corbusier replied by writing him, “Received your magnificent book, you have done truly creative work here. It is very beautiful... It is not photogenic, it is photography to the highest degree” and eventually wrote the book’s introduction.¹⁴⁴ Even when rejecting

143 FLC T1(3)71. Letter dated 5 November 1956 from Le Corbusier to Monsieur Bueb / Services Gazette / Mines domaniales de Potasse / 11 Faubourge d’Altkirche / (Haut-Rhin). One of the photographs referenced in this letter is found on p92, upper-left corner, of Ronchamp, credited to ‘Charles Bueb, Pulversheim (Haut-Rhin).’ The idea of presenting to the public the hidden structure of the roof is found also in the photographic documentation of the work of Entreprises Limousin as featured, for instance, in *L’Architecte* (1931) in a “vue intérieure” of the reservoir at Chatillon-sous-Bagneux (Seine). On several occasions Le Corbusier illustrated his articles with photographs of this Entreprises Limousin’s work.

144 Lucien Hervé in a 29 April 1992 interview with the author, Daniel Naegele, “Interview with Lucien Hervé,” *Parametro*, 206 (Feb. 1995), 70–83. The English translation of Hervé’s book, *Architecture of Truth*, was published by G. Braziller.

unsolicited material, Le Corbusier was kind and encouraging to photographers, understanding their efforts as an apprenticeship and no doubt appreciating the sincere praise of his work which often came in writing with the photographs.

All this to say that Le Corbusier's relationships with his photographers were in most respects quite normal given his status as one of the century's most celebrated architects. Photographs of his buildings from the 1920s and 1930s, although closely supervised by his office, in their original, full-frame form are very much like photographs of many other contemporary Parisian buildings. Photographs from the postwar period are comparable to those of the work of other architects worldwide. What distinguishes Le Corbusier from most of his contemporaries is his conscious and artistic use of photography as an operative element in the manifestation of an architecture that extends well beyond the buildings that he built. For this reason, Le Corbusier, unlike other architects, seems to have shunned the 'signature' photograph. He understood the photographic image not as an end in itself but as illustrative text, as pictorial writing. The photograph was to be not just a representation of the building, but a part of a new context, of a new medium, the book, and Le Corbusier understood that the experiences of reading a book were of great value in themselves—though not the same as the experience of visiting the building. To this end, he cropped and framed each image and placed it on the page to become part of an illustrative text conjoined with a verbal text.

Which is to say that, for Le Corbusier, the photograph was seldom an end in itself, but always a part of a larger picture. It was his habit to recycle material, and images that appear in one context are frequently found in many other. In this respect, images were like components of a building—be they pilotis, roof gardens, ribbon windows, ramps, or later, *brise-soleil*. They were intended to be used and re-used in different combinations again and again.

As such they should be identified not with their creators but with their presenter. Always their meaning is colored by their context.

Yet both the photography industry and individual photographers did influence the presentation of his work. There is the obviously essential role played by Pierre Jeanneret, of course. Besides Jeanneret though, it is perhaps enough to note that one photographer, Marius Gravot, was responsible for the majority of those photographs that so many have made so much of: the Beistegui solarium with fireplace and a distant Arc de Triomphe [50]; the Villa Savoye [51]; the Villa Stein-de Monzie kitchen with fish [52]. Criticism that examines these images seldom concerns itself, however, with composition or context, though it is exactly here that Le Corbusier should appear. Unfortunately, critics who discuss these photographs often display little knowledge of the photographers or the publication histories of the images. They crop and edit the photographs under examination, massaging them into a new context, that of the journal or book for which they are writing. In doing so, Le Corbusier's 'design' of the photo—its visual ambiguity residing in its carefully calculated composition—is neglected and ultimately undermined. Le Corbusier's careful composition is devalued and the apparent content of the image becomes the sole criteria of critical evaluation.¹⁴⁵

145 Consider, for example, the Marius Gravot photograph of the Villa Stein kitchen that shows a fish, a fan, a pitcher and a teapot on a counter top in the foreground (Figure 52) [FLC LI(10)53]. This relatively obscure photograph never played an important role in Le Corbusier's œuvre yet it has been resurrected again and again by writers for various reasons, mostly, it seems, for its capacity to evoke surrealist or "presence of absence" sensations. It is the still life content of the image and not its composition that critics typically discuss. In re-publications of the image, its composition had been altered repeatedly, cropped randomly from left or right, top or bottom. Yet in its original, full-frame printing [*L'Architecture Vivante* (Spring 1929), pl. 12], it clearly exhibits what I've described elsewhere as a 'truncated pyramid construction,' that is, a highly ambiguous compositional structure that encourages the image to oscillate from a readily perceived receding view to a less pronounced projecting view. >>



FIG. 50



FIG. 51

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- >> I would maintain that this composition is as much responsible for the “surreal” sensations evoked by the image as is its contents, and that this subscription to ambiguity itself offers new factors to consider for those concerned with its significance.



FIG. 52

In the interwar years, the piercing, precise views of large format photography portrayed Le Corbusier's work as polished, exact, rational, and imminently credible, and thus established his architecture as a serious and lasting challenge to traditional building. After the war, Le Corbusier's architecture was still a serious and lasting challenge, but it was no longer polished, exact, or exceedingly rational. After the war, Le Corbusier no longer needed photography to convince the profession of the correctness of his approach. Secure in his position 'above' the profession, he needed photography to advance not architecture as technology, but architecture as art. The photo essay was ideally suited to that end.

Conventional presentation frames the photograph as an entity in itself, often as an addition to rather than a part of the book. By-lines reinforce this division, as do signature photographs that distinguish themselves as something other than the book or the building. Anonymity allowed the photograph to be both material and representation simultaneously. On the one hand, the

photograph was ink; it was the page; it was the book. On the other, it represented the building. It elaborated and protracted the myth of the building. This capacity to present oneself in two roles at once is a distinguishing quality of Le Corbusier's photography. It makes of the photograph an ideal transformer of object to text, of building to book.

In Le Corbusier's hands, the photo essay became an extension of the architecture that it described. It licensed his personal interpretation of his art presenting it in the guise of documentary reportage. The photo essay could bring narrative life to building. It could suggest the work as metaphor, implicitly connecting it to some ancient knowledge. Image and text coalesced employing the integral *subscriptio* explanation of the building to elevate it to a place of myth, to serve it up as an offering to the universe. Le Corbusier emblemized his architecture, placing building in a literary world, implicitly giving literature a spatial dimension.

This was not unique to Le Corbusier or to the photo essay. Prominent avant-garde artists and photographers had explored it earlier in visual books, as had Le Corbusier. Contemporaneous with the publication of the first *Les Carnets* photo essay, *Ronchamp*, was his *Le Poème de l'angle droit*, a visual book conceived as a work of art.¹⁴⁶ The illustrations of *Le Poème de l'angle droit* are brightly colored lithographs of imaginary scenes and are fictive. The illustrations in *Les Carnets* books are photographs and, one assumes, 'factual', documentary reportage that visually legitimated Le Corbusier's large story of the chapel. Mediation artistically construed, it allowed Le Corbusier to draw out and protract the presence of a building, the ideal within the real.

¹⁴⁶ See my "Architecture in a Book: Le Corbusier's *Le Poème de l'angle droit*" in *Architettura – Forma e narrazione tra architettura e letteratura* (Bologna: University of Bologna, 2020), 513–529.

Illustration credits

- 1 Marius Gravot. Villa Savoye rooftop ramp. *Le Grand*, 209, t.
- 2 Boissonas. Interior with children, Immeuble Clarté. *OC-2*, 69, t/r.
- 3 Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. Pessac street on opening day. *Le Grand*, 166, b.
- 4 Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. Pessac under construction. *Le Grand*, 166, c/l.
- 5 Jeanneret's preview image of the entry hall, ground level of the Villa Savoye. FLC photo L2(2)2-6
- 6 G. Thiriet. Interior of bibliothèque, Villa Meyer. *OC-1*, 203.
- 7 Marius Gravot. Under the pilotis, Pavillon Suisse. *OC-2*, 84.
- 8 Albin Salaün. L-C & Yvonne on balcony of Porte-Molitor. *OC-2*, 150, t/r.
- 9 Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. Le Corbusier on balcony at Pessac. *Le Grand*, 167.
- 10 Marius Bar. Villa de Mandrot, exterior, front. *OC-2*, 61, t/l.
- 11 Marius Bar. Villa de Mandrot, interior, living room. *OC-2*, 61, b/l.
- 12 Boissonas. Immeuble Clarté with Pierre Jeanneret. *OC-2*, 69, b/l.
- 13 Albin Salaün. Yvonne L-C in pants at Porte-Molitor. *OC-2*, 150, b/r.
- 14 Albin Salaün. Interior of Porte-Molitor apartment featuring dog 'looking out'. *OC-2*, 153, b/l.
- 15 Boissonas. Vase. *Almanach d Architecture Moderne*, 167.
- 16 Boissonas. Detail of the Parthenon. *Almanach d Architecture Moderne*, 62.
- 17 Marius Gravot. Villa Savoye, kitchen with cut bread on table. *OC 2*, 29.
- 18 G. Thiriet. Rooftop with pergola, Villa Church. *Le Grand*, 177.
- 19 Albin Salaün. Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. *Le Grand*, 312.

- 20 Albin Salaün. Model of skyscraper. *Le Grand*, 274
- 21 Title page of Ronchamp. *Ronchamp*, 11.
- 22 Marius Gravot (?). Maison Cook interior. OC-1, 135, b/l.
- 23 Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. Maison de Weekend, interior. OC-3, 124.
- 24 Albin Salaün. Front door, Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. *Le Grand*, 313,t.
- 25 Page with furniture and salon interior. OC-1, 43&44.
- 26 Postcard of Vevey. OC-1, 75, t/r.
- 27 Marius Gravot. Three contiguous photos of the Beistigui solarium (rooftop). OC-2, 53.
- 28 Unknown. Model photo, skyscraper. OC-3, 103, b/r.
- 29 Unknown. Le Corbusier drawing. OC-3, 6.
- 30 Unknown. Le Corbusier with Picasso at Marseilles Unité d'habitation. OC-5, 9.
- 31 Unknown. Le Corbusier with pencils and a sketchbook. OC-6, 7.
- 32 Unknown. Le Corbusier with Einstein. *Le Grand*, 383.
- 33 Photographie Industrielle du Sud-Ouest. Under the Marseilles Unité d'habitation. *Le Grand*, 417, b/l.
- 34 Lucien Hervé. Marseilles Unité d'habitation with duck. *Le Grand*, 416, t/l.
- 35 Lucien Hervé. Le Corbusier at Chandigarh. *Le Grand*, 485.
- 36 Lucien Hervé. Le Corbusier at Chandigarh. *Le Grand*, 440.
- 37 Marius Gravot (negative owned by Hervé). Beistigui rooftop. *Le Grand*, 213, b/r.
- 38 Jeet Mandrot. Chandigarh rooftop. *Le Grand*, 493.
- 39 Claudine Peter. Interior of Vevey house. *Une Petite maison*, 32 & 33.
- 40 Claudine Peter. Geraniums on rooftop of Vevey house. *Une Petite maison*, 44.
- 41 Yousuf Karsh. Portrait of LeCorbusier. online
- 42 René Groebli. Construction crew, Ronchamp. *Ronchamp*, 127.
- 43 Sciarli. Children on Marseilles Unité d'habitation rooftop. *Le Grand*, 428, t.

- 44 Sciarli. Crowd at Ronchamp inauguration. *Ronchamp*, 23.
- 45 René Burri. Crowd around pyramid at Ronchamp inauguration. *OC-4*, 113.
- 46 René Burri. Le Corbusier with monks at La Tourette. *Le Grand*, 612, t.
- 47 Ernst Scheidegger. Chandigarh with brise-soleil, new autos, cart. *OC-6*, 74, b.
- 48 Unknown. Villa Sarabai interior with Bertoia chair. *OC-6*, 129.
- 49 Charles Bueb. Roof cavity, Ronchamp. *Ronchamp*, 92.
- 50 Marius Gravot. Arc de Triompf, Beistigui. *Le Grand*, 213, c/r.
- 51 Marius Gravot. Villa Savoye living room/terrace. Françoise Choay's *Le Corbusier*, #51
- 52 Marius Gravot, Villa Stein, Garches, fish in kitchen. *Le Grand*, 174, b/r.

Who were Le Corbusier's photographers? The question is seldom asked yet is germane to understanding the architect's work. Le Corbusier used photography to promote modern architecture in ways no others did. He directed the photography of his buildings, selected the images that he liked, cropped them, abstracted them, and placed them on the pages of his many books. He mediated the medium of photography manipulating visual facts in an era when "the camera never lied". Yet always he began with images that others provided him. Photographers and advancing photo-technology were essential and when they changed, his imagery changed, and between 1922 and 1965 both changed often. Once a craft practiced by skilled technicians with large-format cameras and glass plate negatives, by the mid-1930s, architectural photography had become an art that could be executed by amateurs with hand-held cameras, faster films, and superb lenses. This altered the nature of the photograph and subsequently Le Corbusier's understanding of his endeavor. For him, photography never simply documented a completed building, it created a new one. He saw through photography.