

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION



FLOOR 2

MUSEU COLEÇÃO BERARDO

Le Corbusier

The Art of Architecture

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Curators:
Stanislaus von Moos, Arthur Rüegg and Mateo Kries

Le Corbusier

The Art of Architecture

Texts by Mateo Kries (curator, Vitra Design Museum)

Le Corbusier (1887–1965) is considered to be the most important architect of the 20th century. His buildings, books, and even the characteristic bow tie and thick black-rimmed glasses affect our idea of modern architecture, of Modernism in general. Despite all the criticism his work has encountered, Le Corbusier still influences architecture and town planning to this day. Therefore this exhibition advances a decidedly contemporary perspective, giving consideration to the latest research and ongoing discourse about Le Corbusier. It can also be viewed as an introduction to the work of an architect, who – especially to younger generations – defines a part of 20th century history.

Three relatively autonomous categories – *Contexts, Privacy and Publicity* and *Built Art* – single out key themes in Le Corbusier's work: his fascination for the modern metropolis, his enthusiasm for the Mediterranean and the Orient, his proclivity towards organic forms in the 1930s, as well as his interest in new technologies and the media. Only the context of these and further aspects provide a comprehensive understanding of an *Œuvre*, which is expressed in an increasingly intense interaction between architecture, urbanism, painting, design, film and other disciplines.



Le Corbusier *Villa Savoye*, Poissy, 1928-31
© Fondation Le Corbusier / s.p.a

Contexts

Le Corbusier's work and theories were influenced by a number of cities. He constructed his first building in La Chaux-de-Fonds, the town where he was born as Charles-Édouard Jeanneret in 1887. He moved to Paris in 1917, where he was able to construct many of the 1920's buildings for which he is known today and where he founded a journal with Amédée Ozenfant and Paul Dermée, which played a major part in establishing the artistic avant-garde of the pre-war years: *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

Le Corbusier extended his sphere of activities with a series of lecture tours at the end of the 1920s. In Moscow he built the *Centrosoyuz* headquarters in 1928, giving an exemplary form to his idea of a large office building. During his travels to Latin America and North Africa he discovered the language of organic forms, regional traditions and natural materials, which also led to the development of his repertoire of forms.

Finally, in 1935 he also visited New York for the first time, which, as the ultimate manifestation of a metropolis and the skyscraper's cradle, was had been a significant point of reference for his urban concepts since 1912. The realisation of his town planning doctrine – be it in a reduced form – as well as the implementation of his idea of architectural monumentality, succeeded between 1952 and 1964, when a number of buildings were constructed in the city of Chandigarh in India.

There are no sculptors only, painters only, architects only. The plastic event fulfills itself in a form in duty of poetry.

Le Corbusier



Le Corbusier *Study for a tapestry in the Parliament building in Chandigarh, 1961*
Gouache on heliograph paper, 49 x 121 cm · © Fondation Le Corbusier / SPA

Privacy and Publicity

The dialectical interplay of privacy and publicity is one of the central themes in Le Corbusier's work. The architect was concerned with questions of interior design, with which he dealt intensely in his role as furniture designer; using colour schemes, lighting and other means during and after his time in La Chaux-de-Fonds. The theories in this field reach from his early interiors to his "objets-types" and tubular steel furniture of the 1920s to the organic forms developed from the 1930s.

For Le Corbusier the examination of private space and interiors was in many aspects also a public issue. The interiors themselves often involve exteriors, dissolving the opposite of outside and inside and repeatedly drawing reference to foreign cultures and times, making them compositions.

From around 1915 his drafts also had a decidedly model character. Reaching far beyond the actual requirements of his commissions, they followed the idea of solving general architectural problems in a model manner and in the style of living in the machine age. By means of journals, books and a seven volume *Œuvre complète* of his work, these ideas were communicated internationally as the epitome of a doctrine. Le Corbusier even used his private home as a stage for his ideas.



Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand *Chaise longue à réglage continu*, 1928
Thonet Frères, Paris (1930, mod. B306) · Col. Alexander von Vegesack · © Fondation Le Corbusier / SPA

Built Art

Whether he was working as an architect, town planner, painter, interior designer, writer or designer of books, Le Corbusier always considered himself a *plasticien*, a sculptor. From the beginning of his career in architecture, he also worked as a painter and interior designer, and circulated his ideas in articles in magazines and books. During the 1930s, in a phase in which he had few commissions, Le Corbusier temporarily concentrated almost exclusively on propagating his doctrine. Later he began creating sculptures, in collaboration with a carpenter. In Le Corbusier's works after 1945, such as the *Unité d'habitation* in Marseille, the *Chapel Notre-Dame du Haut* in Ronchamp or his buildings for Chandigarh, his various themes are consolidated in "built art" – with all the positive and negative implications it entails. The single elements as well as the

structure of his buildings are formed sculpturally, colour is applied generously, paintings, tapestries even audio-visual media become an integral part of the architecture; subordinate to the architectural idea in order to achieve a "synthesis of art". Constructions such as the *Philips Pavilion* in 1958 or the just recently posthumously completed *Saint-Pierre Church* in Firminy, forecast many developments of this aspect, to be encountered in the following decades.



**I am an acrobat of form,
creator of forms, player
with forms. Forms, means to
express all plastic emotion.
Form, expression and style
of the mind.**

Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier *Philips Pavillon* at the World's Fair in Brussels, 1958
© Fondation Le Corbusier / s.p.a

Biography

- 1887**
Charles-Édouard Jeanneret is born on 6 October in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland.
- 1902**
Enters the École d'Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds.
- 1908**
Works in the atelier of August Perret until spring 1909, where he gains his first experience with ferro-concrete.
- 1910**
Extended visit to Germany (until 1911) for study purposes, including stays in Munich and Berlin.
- 1911**
Trip through Eastern Europe and the Balkans to Istanbul ("Voyage d'Orient").
- 1912**
Villa Jeanneret-Perret ("Maison Blanche") in La Chaux-de-Fonds, his first independent work of architecture, for his parents.
- 1917**
Moves permanently to Paris.
- 1918**
Collaborative work with the painter Amédée Ozenfant (until 1925) and first joint exhibition at the Galerie Thomas in Paris. The catalogue proclaims Purism as a new movement in painting.
- 1919**
Founds the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau* together with Ozenfant and the poet Paul Dermée.
- 1920**
Begins to use the pseudonym Le Corbusier. He derives it from M. Lecorbésier, the name of his maternal great-grandfather, but often associates it in later years with the French word for raven [corbeau].
- 1921**
Increasing contact with artists such as Picasso, Braque and Léger. Advises Raoul La Roche on the purchase of paintings at art auctions.
- 1922**
Opens an architectural office together with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret. *Ville contemporaine de trois millions d'habitants*, a project for a contemporary city of three million inhabitants, presentation at the Salon d'Automne in Paris.
- 1923**
Publishes *Vers une architecture*.
- 1925**
Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in Paris. His projects *Ville contemporaine de trois millions d'habitants* and *Plan Voisin* are displayed inside the pavilion.
- 1928**
Founding member of the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (CIAM).
Villa Savoye in Poissy (1928–31).
Centrosoyuz Building for the Union of Soviet Cooperatives in Moscow.
- 1929**
Lecture series in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Montevideo. During this trip he makes the acquaintance of Josephine Baker.
Presents tubular steel furniture developed in collaboration with Charlotte Perriand and Pierre Jeanneret at the Salon d'Automne in Paris.
Cité de refuge, homeless shelter for the Salvation Army, Paris (1929–33).
Pavillon Suisse at the Cité Universitaire, Paris (1929–33).
- 1930**
Contributes essays to the newly established monthly review *Plans*.
Assumes French citizenship and marries Yvonne Gallis.
Immeuble Clarté in Geneva for the industrialist Edmond Wanner (1930–32).
- 1932**
Plan Obus for Algiers.
- 1933**
Attends the fourth CIAM conference on "The Functional City" aboard the ship *SS Patris II* en route to Athens. He subsequently plays a major role in documenting the conclusions of the meeting, which are published as *The Athens Charter* in 1943.
- 1936**
Trip to South America in the dirigible Graf Zeppelin for a lecture series; contacts Oscar Niemeyer, Lúcio Costa and Affonso Eduardo Reidy in Rio de Janeiro.
- 1939**
Paints wall murals in Jean Badovici and Eileen Gray's *Villa E.1027* in Roquebrune-Cap Martin, southern France.
Publishes *Le Lyrisme des temps nouveaux et l'urbanisme* in a special issue of *Le Point*.
- 1942**
First studies on the *Modular*, a universal system of measurement.
- 1943**
ASCORAL (Association des constructeurs pour la rénovation architecturale) is founded as a re-formation of the French CIAM group.
La Charte d'Athènes is published under the auspices of the French CIAM group.

1945

Receives a commission from the Reconstruction Minister Raoul Dautry for a housing project in Marseille. Preliminary designs for the *Unité d'habitation* (1945–52).

1947

Designs for the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. The structure that is eventually built by Wallace K. Harrison incorporates the ideas of Le Corbusier.

1948

Unité d'habitation in Rezé-lès-Nantes (1948–55).

Publishes *Grille CIAM d'Urbanisme*.

La Charte d'Athènes is implemented.

1950

Notre Dame du Haut Chapel in Ronchamp (1950–55).

Appointed Government Architectural Adviser for Chandigarh, which is to be constructed as the new capital of Punjab. Development of a master plan for the city (1950–51) in collaboration with Pierre Jeanneret, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry.

1951

High Court, Secrétariat and *Assembly* as part of the Capitol complex of Chandigarh. Designs for the *Governor's Palace* and a *Museum of Knowledge*. And also, in this context, the symbolic monuments *Open Hand, Martyrs' Memorial, Tower of Shadows* and *Geometric Hill*.

Construction of the *Cabanon* in Roquebrune-Cap Martin, southern France.



Le Corbusier with his "collection particulière" on the second floor at rue 20 Jacob, Paris, c. 1931 · © Fondation Le Corbusier / spa

1953

Brazil Pavilion at the Cité Universitaire in Paris, designed together with Lucio Costa.

Dominican monastery Sainte Marie de la Tourette ("La Tourette") in Evveux-sur-Arbresle.

1955

Maison de la Culture and *Stadium* in Firminy.

Publishes *Architecture du bonheur, Le poème de l'angle droit* and *Modular 2*.

1956

Unité d'habitation in Berlin-Charlottenburg (1956–58).

Publishes *Les plans de Paris*, a compendium of urban renewal projects for Paris that he had created during the past decades.

1958

Philips Pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels

Design of the visual composition *Poème électronique* to music by Edgar Varèse.

1959

Unité d'habitation in Firminy.

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at *Harvard University* in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1964

Official inauguration of the *Chandigarh Assembly Hall* with the symbolic opening of the enamelled steel monumental door designed by Le Corbusier, a gift from France to the country of India.

1965

Dies on 27 August while swimming in the ocean in Roquebrune-Cap Martin, after suffering a heart attack.

Activities

Le Corbusier

Unité d'habitation, Marseille, 1946-52

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FOR ALL THE VISITORS

Guided tours

- May: 25
- June: 1, 8, 15, 22 e 29
- July 6, 13, 20 e 27
- August: 3 e 10

Sundays, 4 pm. Duration: 1h30m

Meeting point: museum reception

DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Thematic tours

1 June

Humanism and utopia

By Isabel Barbas

8 June

The classical heritage and the modern architecture

By Sara Franqueira

15 June

Architecture and spectacle

By Orlando Franco

22 June

Le Corbusier in the Berardo Museum

By Isabel Barbas

Sundays, 12 am. Duration: 1h

Meeting point: museum reception

Visitas guiadas por arquitectos

31 May

Ana Tostões

7 June

José Duarte Gorjão Jorge

21 June

Michel Toussaint

28 June

Paulo Durão

26 June

Fernando Sanchez Salvador

Saturdays, 4 pm

Meeting point: museum reception

FOR THE FAMILIES

Workshops

June: 8 and 22

Le Corbusier in the suitcase

Exercises that invite to discover the work of architect and explore the relationship between architecture and plastic expression.

Concept by Sara Franquero

Sundays, 11 am. Duration: 1h30m. 8 to 12 years old. 2 €

June: 1, 15 and 29 / July: 13 and 27

Making projects with shapes and colours

Create a new architectural project from the geometric shapes found in the exhibition of Le Corbusier.

Concept by Isabel Barbas

Sundays, 11 am. Duration: 1h30m. 6 to 12 years old. 2 €

Informations:

Monday to Friday

10 am – 1 pm / 3 pm – 5 pm

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