

Architecture in the Modern Era

Summer Semester 2016 (Friday 1-2:30pm)

Wesley W. Posvar Hall (Room 1501)

Instructor: Matthew Schlieb



Lecture 2 (2016.07.15): An introduction to Le Corbusier and his influence on high modern architecture

Leitmotifs:

“Whatever you do, see that you do it” (Mother’s family motto): never procrastinate not even for a minute, Calvinist values of hard work ethic, discipline and frugality, proud of French rebel ancestry (Albigenses Cathars) fled persecution to Swiss Jura.

Valley of Ema Charterhouse (Carthusian monastery): combined community living with sanctity of individual existence, austere, humble, purer way of life, “All human housing should provide the solitude and tranquility enjoyed by the monks”.

House of the Tragic Poet (Pompeii): axis not a rigid thing of theory, the feeling is richer by clever distortions, variations on buildings by changes in sunlight and states of the sky, sun acts on the human with an efficiency rooted in the species, feelings.

Mount Athos (Macedonia monastery): on the Mediterranean found meaning in the flatness of the horizon, where the sea meets the sky, at noon when the sun imposes a uniformity, most humanly possible perception of the absolute, universal vista.

L’Esprit Nouveau: a review published with Ozenfant (painter) and Dermée (poet), defined a new spirit, a new way of life, the modern individual motivated by life as a work of art, adopted alter-ego Le Corbusier as a shelter in which to recoil.

Towards an Architecture: architecture as a machine (tool) based on function and pure form, embrace engineering structures, beauty and perfection in the logic of mathematics, defined Five Points of a New Architecture, standardization from within.

Precisions: architecture is circulation (liberties of plan for air, light and human movement), architecture is lighted floors (for living), streets are independent of buildings (collective functions), breathing is the basis of life (universal house for all climates).

The Modular: relational scales derived from the human dimension and the space he occupies, the natural structure and order found in the Alpine fir tree, navel centerline, doubled by up reaching hand defining ceiling height, ergonomic dimensions.

Partis pris:

Dom-Ino system: standardized structural skeleton multiplied horizontally and vertically, reinforced concrete slabs, grid of columns and staircase, factory made, poured on site, locally sourced enclosure customized by inhabitant, free plan (no walls).

Citröhan Cell: reinforced concrete ‘cell’ house within larger City of Three Million Inhabitants concept, two-story living room with full wall of glass, stacked kitchen and bedroom, spiral staircase, roof garden, based on Citroën motorcar principles.

Five Points of a New Architecture: grid of *pilotis* raising floor slabs off the ground (fourth dimension), *free plan* of interior partitions, *free façade* suspended from floor slabs, horizontal *ribbon window* for even natural light, *roof garden* on flat roof.

Unité d’Habitation: housing block based on Radiant City concept, stacked ‘cells’ in modular system along central axis ‘interior roads’, rough cast ‘bare’ concrete (béton brut), collective ‘factory’ functions, rooftop communal athletic facilities.

magnum opuses:

1923 – **Une Petite Maison** (first ribbon wdw.) Lake Léman, Switzerland

1927 – **Haus 13 und 14/15** (Dom-Ino/Citröhan/Five Points prototype)
Weissenhof quarter, Stuttgart, Germany

1928 – **Villa Savoye** (Five Points of a New Architecture)
Poissy, France

1952 – **Unité d’Habitation, Marseilles** (Unité d’Habitation prototype)
Marseille, France



bibliography:

Towards a New Architecture, Le Corbusier (John Rodker, London, 1931)

Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning, Le Corbusier (MIT Press, Boston, 1991)

Creation is a Patient Search, Le Corbusier (Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1960)

Bau und Wohnung, Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Werkbund (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1992)

Une Petite Maison, Le Corbusier (Birkhauser, Basel, 1954)

The Chapel at Ronchamp, Le Corbusier (Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1957)

Le Corbusier: A Life, Nicholas Fox Weber (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2008)

Le Corbusier, Stephen Gardiner (Viking Press, New York, 1975)