



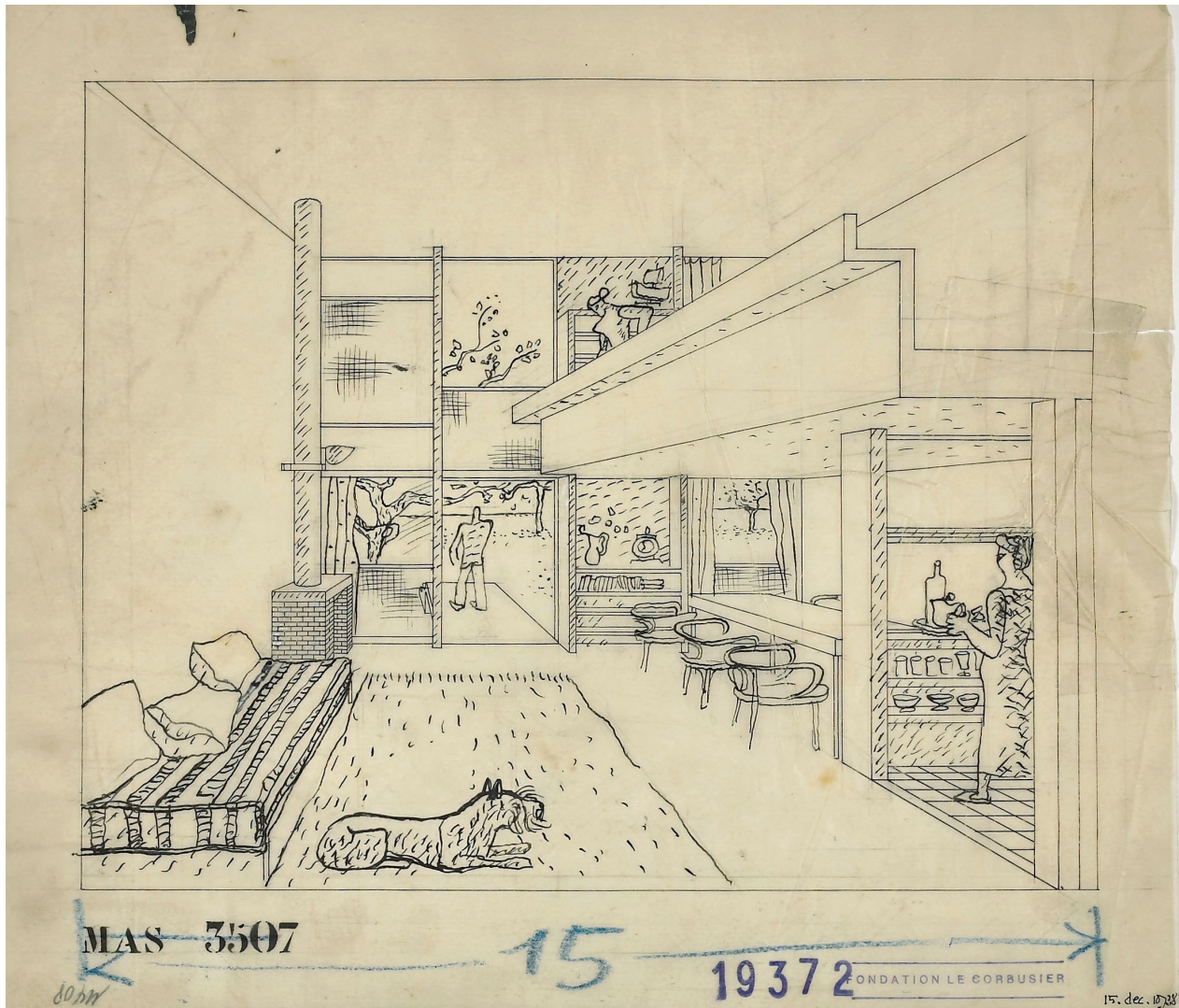
Septembre 2021

**LC. REVUE
DE RECHERCHES SUR
LE CORBUSIER**

No. 4

LC. REVUE DE RECHERCHES SUR LE CORBUSIER #4

Le Corbusier. Maisons
montées à sec MAS.
Perspective intérieure.
MAS 3507. FLC 19372



Septembre 2021 / Septiembre 2021 / September 2021

LC. REVUE DE RECHERCHES SUR LE CORBUSIER #4 (10/2021)

DIRECTION

Juan Calatrava
Arnaud Dercelles
Jorge Torres

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE / EXPERTS

Iñaki Ábalos	Richard Klein
José Ramón Alonso	Elise Koering
Santos Barea	Mickaël Labbé
Rémi Baudouï	Alejandro Lapunzina
Tim Benton	Marta Llorente
Veronique Boone	Clara E. Mejía
Luis Burriel Bielza	Xavier Monteys
Juan Calatrava	Guillemette Morel Journal
Jean-Louis Cohen	Hiroya Murakami
Carlos Eduardo Comas	Cecilia O'Byrne
Ricardo Daza	Jean-Pierre Porcher
Arnaud Dercelles	Anna Rosellini
Marie-Jeanne Dumont	Olivier Salon
Laurent Duport	Marta Sequeira
Bénédicte Duverny	Catherine de Smet
Panayotis Farantatos	Maria Candela Suarez
Yuri Fujii	Marida Talamona
Pierre Hyppolite	Jorge Torres Cueco

EDITORIAL BOARD

David Arredondo
Alejandro Campos
Raúl Castellanos
Ana del Cid
Juan Deltell
Francisco Antonio García

Paula Lacomba
Alejandro Martínez
Ricardo Meri
Manuel Sánchez
Carla Sentieri

ADVISORY BOARD

Maristella Casciato
Toyo Ito
Caroline Maniaque
Carlo Olmo
Antoine Picon

Bruno Reichlin
Arthur Ruëgg
Tetsuyu Shiraishi
Stanislaus Von Moos

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Alejandro Campos

LAYOUT

Emilio López Creativos S.L.

COVER

Giuliano Gresleri



Editorial

Universitat Politècnica
de València



FONDATION LE CORBUSIER

PERIODICITY

Two annual issues that may or may not correspond to a single thematic structure

JOURNAL STRUCTURE

- Editorial
- Invited paper (member Scientific Committee or prestigious researcher)
- Research papers by peer-review
- Documentation: unpublished text by Le Corbusier, with critical introduction and footnotes by a commissioned researcher. Documents from the FLC funds (drawings, projects, correspondence, postal letters)
- Le Corbusier contemporain: contemporary artistic manifestations around Le Corbusier
- Reviews (books, news, exhibitions or events on Le Corbusier)
- Closure (photograph, text, drawing, from a publication by Le Corbusier)

LANGUAGE

Français/Spanish/English, with abstracts in all three languages

EDITORIAL STRUCTURE

- Editorial Board
- Scientific Committee
- Advisory Board
- External journal reviewers

EVALUATION

- Acceptance by the Editorial Committee (compliance with the journal's guidelines)
- First review by the Scientific Committee, deciding if it will be subjected to peer-review
- Peer-review, necessary (if any) changes will be requested
- Definitive acceptance and publication

PATRONS

Fondation Le Corbusier
Departamento de Proyectos Arquitectónicos, UPV
Grupo de Investigación Proyecto Arquitectura, UPV
Grupo de Investigación Arquitectura y Cultura Contemporánea, UGR

PUBLISHER

Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València

SUBMISSIONS AND AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Submissions are welcome in response to the themes outlined.
Please check the website for current calls and author guidelines on:
<http://polipapers.upv.es/index.php/LC/index>

CONTACT

Jorge Torres Cueco
Departamento de Proyectos Arquitectónicos, UPV
Camino de Vera s/n. 46022 Valencia, Spain
Tel: +34 963 877 380 - jtorrescueco@gmail.com

SALE - SUBSCRIPTION

For further information, contact the Editorial UPV: pedidos@editorial.upv.es

- © Papers: their authors
- © Illustrations: their authors
- © Illustrations related to Le Corbusier: FLC/ADAGP, Paris

ISSN: 2660-4167 / e-ISSN: 2660-7212

EDITORIAL

- 6 **Giuliano Gresleri, *in memoriam***
Juan Calatrava - Arnaud Dercelles - Jorge Torres

ARTICLE INVITÉ

- 10 **The Cat and the Ball of Yarn.
Interweaving the Threads of the History and Restoration of the Villa Savoye
(1970- 1986)**
Susanna Caccia Gherardini - Carlo Olmo

RECHERCHES

- 38 **Pour Giuliano**
José Oubrierie
- 42 **Giuliano Gresleri: « interroger l'histoire » ou « les leçons du voyage »**
Danièle Pauly
- 46 **Immagine e parola scritta. L'Esprit Nouveau 1920-1925, la costruzione del Purismo**
Giuliano Gresleri
- 100 **Aesthetics of Architecture in Le Corbusier: From Sensory Knowledge to Design**
Aurosa Alison
- 112 **Antecedentes y aportaciones en las utopías materializadas de
Le Corbusier en Lège y Pessac**
Bartolomé Serra Soriano - Alfonso Díaz Segura
- 132 **The Corb Legacy. A Conversation with Kenneth Frampton**
Veronique Boone - Gregorio Carboni Maestri

DOCUMENTATION

- 150 **Enquête de M. Frédéric POTTECHER sur l'Unité d'Habitation de MARSEILLE**
Le Corbusier
- 194 **Description Systématique de « L'unité d'habitation Le Corbusier » à Marseille**
André Wogenscky

LE CORBUSIER CONTEMPORAIN

- 208 **El Trascendentalismo se encuentra con el Positivismo**
Iñaki Ábalos

RECENSIONS

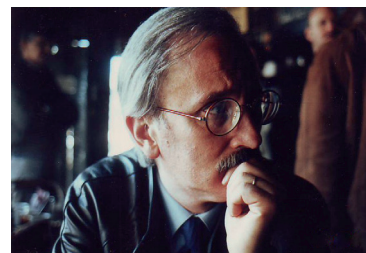
- 218 **Rémi Baudouï (ed). Le Corbusier. 1930-2020. Polémiques, mémoire et histoire**
Jorge Torres
- 220 **Giuliana Altea, Antonella Camarda (eds). Le Corbusier. Lessons in Modernism**
Jacopo Gresleri

CLÔTURE

- 223 **Le Corbusier. Paysage du lac Léman avec bateau. s/f. FLC 4910**



Giuliano Gresleri, Table "La Roche" et siège Thonet, 2019.



Giuliano Gresleri. Photo Vincent Polsinelli.

Authors

Giuliano Gresleri est né à Bologne en 1938 dans une famille d'origine tchécoslovaque. Après avoir fréquenté le lycée d'études scientifiques Augusto Righi et l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de Bologne, il poursuit son éducation à travers de nombreux voyages d'études en Autriche, en Allemagne, en Espagne, en Grèce, en Égypte, dans les pays scandinaves ainsi qu'en Laponie. Diplômé de la faculté d'architecture de Florence sous la direction de Leonardo Benevolo, il entre dans la foulée à la rédaction de la revue "Chiesa e Quartiere", revue dont il sera le rédacteur en chef de 1963 à 1968. Au cours des années soixante il rencontre successivement Le Corbusier, Kenzo Tange puis travaille avec Alvar Aalto à la réalisation de maquettes pour l'église de Riola (1965-1968). Outre ces nombreuses associations et collaborations architecturales, il enseigne l'histoire de l'architecture, à l'université de Pescara, Florence et Bologne. A partir de 1970 il débute ses nombreuses recherches sur Le Corbusier, sujet qu'il n'aura de cesse de poursuivre au fil des années. Ses contributions demeurent aujourd'hui encore essentielles à la connaissance corbuséenne. C'est à la même époque qu'il cofonde la revue "Parametro" dont il est le rédacteur en chef de 1974 à 1984. En 1977, il travaille avec José Oubrerie à la reconstruction du Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau de Bologne. Il reçoit, en 2014, des mains du Maire de Bologne, la prestigieuse distinction "Turrita d'oro" pour son exceptionnelle contribution culturelle. Giuliano portera son érudition, sa culture et sa pédagogie à travers le monde par le biais de nombreuses expositions ou conférences, sur Le Corbusier bien sûr mais aussi sur l'histoire de l'architecture moderne. Auteur de plus de 350 publications, il serait bien compliqué de toutes les évoquées, signalons toutefois :

L'Esprit Nouveau, costruzione e ricostruzione di un prototipo dell'Architettura Moderna, Electa, Milan 1976; *La Città Mondiale*, Marsilio, Venise, 1982; *Josef Hoffmann*, Zanichelli, Bologne, 1982; *Le Corbusier Viaggio in Oriente*, Marsilio, Venise 1984; *Le Corbusier Viaggio in Toscana*, Marsilio, Venise, 1987; *Le Corbusier "il Linguaggio delle pietre"*, Marsilio, Venise, 1988; *Alvar Aalto il Baltico e il Mediterraneo*, Marsilio, Venise, 1992; *Carnets du Voyage d'Orient et d'Allemagne*, Electa, Milan, 1987; *Architettura delle colonie italiane in Africa*, Rassegna, 5; 1992; *L'Architettura italiana d'Oltremare*, Marsilio, Venise, 1993.

Chercheur érudit et passionné, Giuliano témoigna également de son amour profond pour Le Corbusier en s'engageant dans la vie de la Fondation dont il fut un membre actif et engagé de son conseil d'Administration de 1989 à 2007. Cette même année il rejoint le comité scientifique du *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre dessiné de Le Corbusier*.

Enfin, au-delà de l'architecte, Giuliano Gresleri était aussi un peintre accompli et exigeant. Entre art figuratif et abstraction, son œuvre venait d'être mise à l'honneur par sa ville de Bologne à travers une exposition rétrospective.

LC. #04 EDITORIAL



Le Corbusier à la
Chartreuse à Rome. En
arrière-plan Amédée
Ozenfant y Germaine
Bongard. 1921.
FLC L4(14)42

Giuliano Gresleri, *in memoriam*

Ce quatrième numéro de LC est malheureusement marqué par le décès de Giuliano Gresleri, survenu le 20 décembre dernier. Architecte, historien de l'architecture, critique, théoricien, professeur, Giuliano Gresleri était un pilier historique essentiel de la recherche sur Le Corbusier, et nous souhaitons saluer sa mémoire à travers un numéro hommage.

A numéro particulier, couverture particulière. Il s'agit d'une peinture vive et colorée, qui pourrait évoquer un intérieur corbuséen, réalisée par Giuliano Gresleri en 2019. La section "Recherche" se devait également de rendre compte de l'empreinte qu'il laisse sur la connaissance de l'œuvre de Le Corbusier. Deux textes commémoratifs sont ainsi présents : José Oubrière rappelle son étroite amitié avec Giuliano, qui s'est entre autre illustrée à travers leur collaboration pour la reconstruction du Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau à Bologne, tandis que Danièle Pauly évoque son importance en tant qu'historien de l'architecture. En outre, nous présentons également (dans sa version originale italienne et dans une traduction espagnole) un article inédit de Giuliano Gresleri, sélectionné par son fils Jacopo qui aura accompagné avec une grande générosité la réalisation de ce numéro.

Cette section est complétée par deux autres articles et une interview. Aurosa Alison se penche sur la pensée esthétique de Le Corbusier et sur l'importance d'une certaine forme de connaissance sensorielle dans ses réflexions. Dans cette optique, elle avance l'hypothèse d'une relation conceptuelle entre Le Corbusier et le grand penseur de l'espace, Gaston Bachelard. Bartolomé Serra et Alfonso Díaz analysent deux des grands projets urbains du milieu des années 1920, les agglomérations de Lège et de Pessac, comme des tentatives d'illustrations de réflexions contenues dans *Vers une Architecture*. Leur étude constitue une nouvelle contribution à la connaissance du parcours continu de Le Corbusier entre théorie et projet et entre urbanisme et habitat. Cette section se termine par la publication de l'entretien réalisé par Veronique Boone et Gregorio Carboni Maestri avec Kenneth Frampton. Ce témoignage rend compte de l'importance de Le Corbusier dans la construction de sa vision historique de l'architecture du vingtième siècle. Il nous force également à reconsidérer le rôle des entretiens comme un outil majeur de connaissance.

L'"Article invité" est signée Susanna Caccia Gherardini et Carlo Olmo ; ils nous offrent la première partie d'un article dont la suite paraîtra dans le prochain numéro de la revue. Sur la base d'un nouvel examen, abondamment documenté, le problème de la restauration de la Villa Savoye est désormais lié, dans un exercice historiographique sans précédent, à la mémoire de la première génération d'historiens qui a dû affronter, dans les années 1970, l'architecture de Le Corbusier, dans le contexte du changement profond de la vision de l'architecture contemporaine qui commençait alors à se dessiner.

La section "Documentation" comprend deux écrits passionnants sur l'Unité d'habitation de Marseille. Tout d'abord, un entretien radiophonique avec Le Corbusier réalisé par Frédéric Pottecher en 1950 (présenté en français dans la transcription dactylographiée originale ainsi qu'une traduction espagnole). L'architecte, à travers une visite du bâtiment encore en construction, répond aux questions du journaliste en esquissant un résumé accessible aux profanes tout en dévoilant les aspects essentiels de son projet. Une description détaillée du bâtiment réalisée par l'architecte André Wogenscky, publiée dans le magazine Le Point en 1950, est ajoutée comme complément.

Dans la section "Le Corbusier contemporain", Iñaki Ábalos présente une comparaison, de primes abords surprenants avant de prendre pleinement sens, entre Le Corbusier et l'architecte paysagiste Frederick Law Olmsted.

Ce numéro se termine par les comptes rendus de deux publications récentes sur Le Corbusier ; l'une rend compte du rapport complexe de Le Corbusier avec la politique dans les années trente quand l'autre propose une réflexion nouvelle sur son œuvre plastique.

Une fois encore, nous sommes heureux de constater l'intérêt pour la revue LC ne cesse de croître. Nous tenons donc à remercier nos lecteurs, les chercheurs qui poursuivent leurs envois, les membres de comité éditorial qui veillent à l'objectivité et à la transparence des contenus et, de manière plus globale l'ensemble des personnes et des institutions qui nous aident et rendent l'existence de cette revue possible.

Juan Calatrava / Arnaud Dercelles / Jorge Torres Cueco

doi: <https://doi.org/10.4995/lc.2021.16301>

Giuliano Gresleri, *in memoriam*

El nº 4 de LC está marcado, desgraciadamente, por un acontecimiento luctuoso: el fallecimiento, el 20 de diciembre de 2020, de Giuliano Gresleri. Arquitecto, historiador de la arquitectura, crítico, teórico, Gresleri ha sido una referencia fundamental en la investigación sobre Le Corbusier y desde LC queremos rendir homenaje a su memoria.

A número especial, cubierta especial. Se trata de una pintura viva y colorista, que podría evocar un interior lecorbusierano, realizada por Giuliano Gresleri en 2019. La sección "Investigación", debía igualmente dar cuenta de la impronta que él ha dejado en el conocimiento de la obra de Le Corbusier. Se presentan, así, dos textos conmemorativos: José Oubrière recuerda su estrecha amistad con Gresleri, materializada, entre otras cosas, en la colaboración de ambos en la reconstrucción en Bolonia del Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, mientras que Danièle Pauly glosa su importancia como historiador de la arquitectura. Pero, además, como no podía ser menos, presentamos (en su versión italiana original y en traducción española) un artículo inédito del propio Giuliano Gresleri seleccionado por su hijo Jacopo, que ha acompañado generosamente la realización de este número.

Esta sección se completa con dos artículos y una entrevista. Aurosa Alison profundiza en el pensamiento estético de Le Corbusier y en la importancia que adquiere en sus reflexiones un cierto modo de conocimiento sensorial. En esta línea, avanza la hipótesis de una relación conceptual entre Le Corbusier y ese gran pensador del espacio que fue Gaston Bachelard. Bartolomé Serra y Alfonso Díaz analizan dos de los grandes proyectos urbanísticos de mediados de los años 20, los asentamientos de Lège y de Pessac como tentativas de dar forma a las reflexiones contenidas en *Vers une architecture*. Su estudio constituye una nueva aportación al conocimiento de ese continuo viaje de Le Corbusier entre teoría y proyecto y entre urbanismo y vivienda. Finalmente, cierra esta sección la entrevista realizada por Veronique Boom y Gregorio Carboni Maestri a Kenneth Frampton. En ella se traza un amplio panorama de la significación de Le Corbusier en la construcción de su visión histórica de la arquitectura del siglo XX. Nos induce también a reconsiderar el papel de las entrevistas como herramienta de conocimiento de primer orden.

En la sección "Artículo invitado", Susanna Caccia Gherardini y Carlo Olmo nos ofrecen la primera entrega de un artículo que tendrá continuación en el próximo número de la revista. A partir de una nueva revisión, abundantemente documentada, la problemática de la restauración de la villa Savoye aparece ahora ligada, en un inédito ejercicio historiográfico, a la memoria de la primera generación de historiadores que tuvo que confrontarse, en los años 70, con la arquitectura de Le Corbusier, en el contexto del profundo cambio en la visión de la arquitectura contemporánea que por entonces comenzaba a esbozarse.

En "Documentación" se incluyen dos interesantes escritos sobre la Unité d'habitation de Marsella. En primer lugar, una entrevista radiofónica realizada a Le Corbusier por Frédéric Pottecher en 1950 (que se presenta en francés en la transcripción mecanográfica original y también en traducción española). En ella, visitando el edificio aún en obras, el arquitecto responde a las preguntas del periodista trazando un resumen que tiene el interés de explicar con sencillez a los no especialistas los aspectos esenciales de su célebre proyecto. Como complemento se añade una descripción detallada de este edificio realizada por el arquitecto André Wogenscky y publicada en la revista *Le Point* en 1950.

En la sección "Le Corbusier contemporáneo" Iñaki Ábalos nos presenta una mirada comparativa (en un principio quizás sorprendente pero que enseguida revela su plena justificación) entre Le Corbusier y el paisajista Frederick Law Olmsted.

Cierran este número dos reseñas de sendas publicaciones importantes recientes sobre Le Corbusier, que inciden, por una parte, en el debate sobre la compleja relación de Le Corbusier con la política y, por otra, en una nueva reflexión sobre su obra plástica.

Una vez más, tenemos la satisfacción de constatar que el interés suscitado por la revista LC no deja de crecer. Por ello queremos expresar nuestro agradecimiento a los lectores, a los investigadores que nos envían sus trabajos, a los referees que aseguran la objetividad y la transparencia de los contenidos y, en general, a todas las personas e instituciones que nos aportan su ayuda y hacen posible la existencia de esta revista.

Juan Calatrava / Arnaud Dercelles / Jorge Torres Cueco

doi: <https://doi.org/10.4995/lc.2021.16301>

Giuliano Gresleri, *in memoriam*

This fourth issue of LC is unfortunately marked by the death of Giuliano Gresleri, on December 20th. Architect, architectural historian, critic, theoretician and professor, Giuliano Gresleri has been an essential historical pillar of research on Le Corbusier, and we wished to pay tribute to his memory through a tribute issue.

A particular issue, a particular cover. This is a lively and colourful painting, realized by by Giuliano Gresleri in 2019, which could evoke a Le Corbusier interior. The section “Recherches” [Research] also had to reflect the imprint he left on our knowledge of Le Corbusier’s work. Two memorial articles occupy this section: José Oubrière remembers his close friendship with Giuliano, materialized in, among other things, their collaboration for the reconstruction of the Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau in Bologna, while Danièle Pauly summarizes Gresleri’s relevance as an architectural historian. Moreover, we could not do less than present an original and unpublished article written by Giuliano Gresleri (in its original Italian version and in a Spanish translation), selected by his son Jacopo, who has generously accompanied the production of this issue.

This section is completed with two more articles and an interview. Aurora Alison deepens into Le Corbusier’s aesthetic thinking and the importance that a particular mode of sensory-based thinking has in his reflections. She proposes, in this line of thought, the hypothesis of a conceptual relationship between Le Corbusier and the great thinker of space that was Gaston Bachelard. Bartolomé Serra and Alfonso Díaz analyze two of the great urban projects from the mid-20s, the settlements of Lège and Pessac, as attempts to formalize the reflections contained in *Vers une architecture*. Their study presents new contributions to the general knowledge on Le Corbusier’s continuous travel between theory and project and between urbanism and housing. Finally, this section closes with the interview by Véronique Boom and Gregorio Carboni’s with Kenneth Frampton. It traces an ample prospect of Le Corbusier’s significance in the construction of Frampton’s historical vision of 20th century architecture. This interview also induces us to reconsider the role of interviews as a tool for producing knowledge of the highest value.

In the section “Article Invité” [Guest Article], Susanna Caccia Gherardini and Carlo Olmo offer the first installment of an article that will be continued in the following number of our journal. From a new revision, abundantly documented, the problems involving Ville Savoye’s restoration, appear now linked, in a historiographic exercise, to the memory of the first generation of historians who had to confront, in the 70s, with Le Corbusier’s architecture, within the context of deep change in the vision of contemporary architecture that was emerging at the time.

In “Documentation” two interesting texts are included about the Unité d’habitation at Marseille. In the first place, the transcription of a radio interview to Le Corbusier by Frédéric Pottecher in 1950 (presented in French through its original typescripted transcription and also a Spanish translation). In it, while visiting the construction site of this building, the architect answers the journalist’s questions through a quite interesting summary that explains, in simple terms for a non-specialized audience, the essential aspects of his celebrated project. Secondly, a detailed description of this building, elaborated by André Wogenscky and published in *Le Point* magazine in 1950, has been added as a complementary element.

In the section “Le Corbusier Contemporain” [Contemporary Le Corbusier] Iñaki Ábalos presents a comparative overview (perhaps surprising in the beginning but soon fully justified) between Le Corbusier and the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

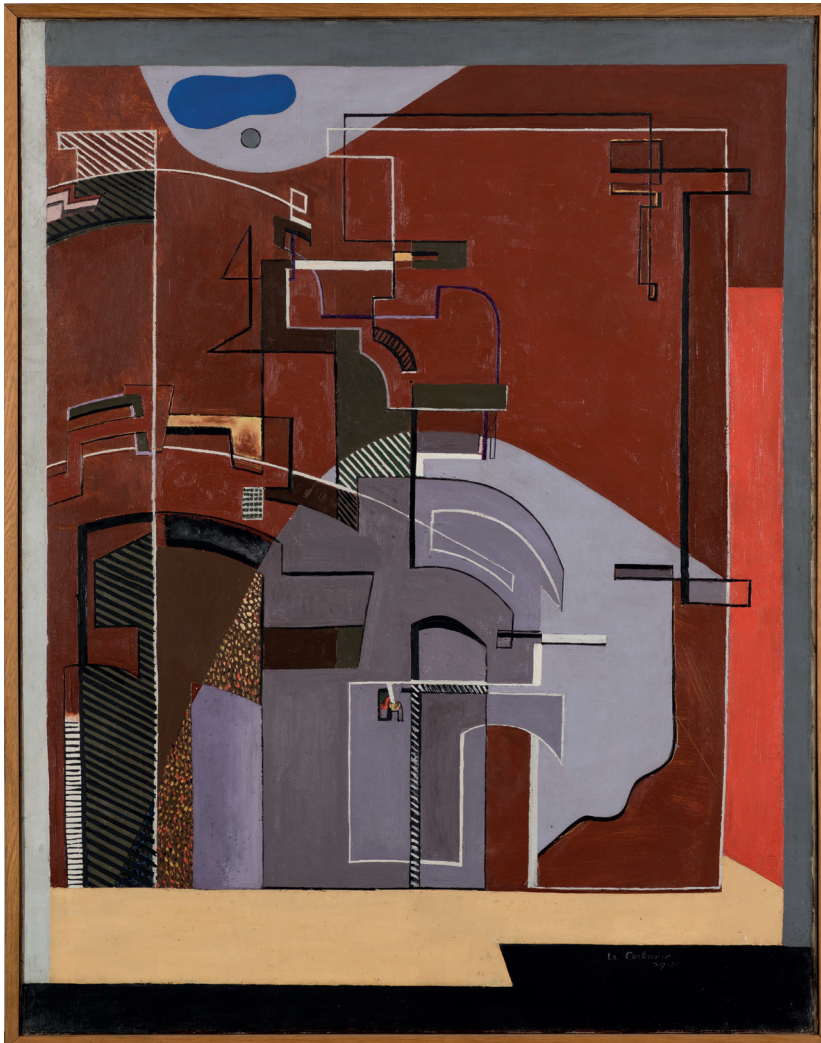
This issue closes with reviews of two recent publications on Le Corbusier, on the one hand, examines Le Corbusier’s complex relationship with politics in the 1930s, on the other, on a new reflection on his plastic production.

Once more, when presenting this fourth issue of our journal, we have the satisfaction of observing how the interest generated by it continues in rising progression. For this, we want to express our gratitude to our readers, to the researchers who submit their work, to the referees who ensure objectivity and transparency in our content, and, in general, to all the people and institutions supporting the journal.

Juan Calatrava / Arnaud Dercelles / Jorge Torres Cueco

doi: <https://doi.org/10.4995/lc.2021.16301>

LC. #04 ARTICLE INVITÉ



Le Corbusier. *Saint-Sulpice*.
Huile sur toile 146x114 cm.
FLC 96

The Cat and the Ball of Yarn.
Interweaving the Threads of the History and Restoration of the Villa
Savoye (1970- 1986)
Susanna Caccia Gherardini and Carlo Olmo



FIG. 1
Villa Savoye, 1984.
FLC – Fondation
Le Corbusier, Paris

THE CAT AND THE BALL OF YARN. INTERWEAVING THE THREADS OF THE HISTORY AND RESTORATION OF THE VILLA SAVOYE (1970- 1986)

*Susanna Caccia Gherardini,
Carlo Olmo*

doi: <https://doi.org/10.4995/lc.2021.16215>

Abstract: The essay, the first of two writings, reconstructs the events of the generation of historians who between the seventies and mid-eighties studied and interpreted the written and designed works by Le Corbusier. This picture is part of the reading of different phases of the restoration of villa Savoye conducted by architect en chef Ivan Gury after the first operation by Jean Dubuisson, leading to a season of infinite authorial restorations of the modern. The authors deal with the complex issue of the interpretation of Le Corbusier's works during the formation phase of the history of contemporary architecture, when the sources are almost all accessible and the literature on the subject explodes. The text investigates unpublished materials and documents, offering a new interpretation both of the villa Savoye and of the texts on the French-Swiss master.

Keywords: Historiography, Le Corbusier, villa Savoye, restoration, micro-history.

Résumé: L'essai, le premier de deux écrits, reconstitue les événements de la génération d'historiens qui, entre les années 70 et le milieu des années 80, a étudié et interprété les œuvres de Le Corbusier, écrites et projetées. Cette image s'inscrit dans la lecture des différentes phases de restauration de la villa Savoye menée par l'architecte en chef Ivan Gury après un premier achèvement par Jean Dubuisson, ouvrant une saison de restaurations infinies du moderne d'auteur. Les auteurs abordent également la question complexe de l'interprétation des œuvres de Le Corbusier dans la phase de formation de l'histoire de l'architecture contemporaine, lorsque les sources sont presque toutes accessibles et que la littérature sur le sujet explose. Le texte explore des matériaux et des documents inédits, offrant une nouvelle interprétation à la fois de la villa Savoye et des textes sur le maître franco-suisse.

Mots-clé: Historiographie, Le Corbusier, villa Savoye, restauration, micro-histoire.

Resumen: El ensayo, el primero de dos escritos, reconstituye los acontecimientos de la generación de historiadores que, entre los años 70 y mediados de los 80, estudiaron e interpretaron las obras escritas y proyectadas por Le Corbusier. Esta imagen forma parte de la lectura de las diferentes fases de restauración de la Villa Savoye dirigidas por el arquitecto jefe Ivan Gury tras una primera realización de Jean Dubuisson, abriendo una época de interminables restauraciones de autor de lo moderno. Los autores también abordan la compleja cuestión de la interpretación de las obras de Le Corbusier en la fase de formación de la historia de la arquitectura contemporánea, cuando las fuentes están casi universalmente disponibles y la literatura sobre el tema se dispara. El texto explora materiales y documentos inéditos, ofreciendo una nueva interpretación tanto de la Villa Savoye como de los textos sobre el maestro franco-suizo.

Palabras clave: Historiografía, villa Savoye, restauración, micro-historia.



FIG. 2
Villa Savoye, Scaffoldings during
restoration works, 1966
(picture by Félix Thyès).
FLC – Fondation
Le Corbusier, Paris.

Ouverture

In the sixteen years covered by this paper historians of architecture and conservation could experience the deformation and modifications generated by shifting from one text to another, and how, almost in a mockery of history, *la longue durée* (of the Savoye) was affirmed by the persistence of the first reception (which in our case arose from the complicity between critic and author) and the many metamorphoses of its *mise en scène* which, as Georges Duby taught us, would generate alongside the event what the French historian called *une partie légendaire*,¹ up to the almost paradoxical situation of introducing the villa “à l'épreuve de sa restauration”². A unique reversal of authenticity and evidence, but also one of the most complex expressions of a *histoire du temps présent* capable of mobilising the most diverse and varied fields of investigation and at the same time claiming its social role as guarantor of the *mémoire* played by conservation³.

This paper operates on three levels, attempting to investigate them and relate them to each other. The first concerns discovery, the set of rules and the first studies of Le Corbusier's archive, the second focuses on the second restoration of the Villa Savoye, and the third on the construction of an architectural historiography which, starting with studies on the architect of La Chaux-de-Fond, would characterise an entire generation of studies on modern architecture. It does so by seeking to investigate a process that first assumes extensive use of the source (of everything that can be a source⁴), and then making the relationship with the source its own epistemic legitimacy. Up to the point of overturning the relationship between matter and narration at the very end of this period. But it also does so by re-establishing, with the second restoration, the consolidation of that *retour à l'origine* that would mark an entire season of restoration of the modern and more besides, and finally by shining a light on its debts with social historiography, ethnography and linguistics while still remaining suspended between the reworking of the reminiscence.

All three paths run through the biographies of very different actors, the establishment of a temporal scanning, the modern, which precisely in that period became a true form of identity and at the same time a *mémoire obligée*⁵, gradual awareness of the complex nature of documents and a set of sources that the Villa Savoye⁶ produced, generated and ordered in those sixteen years⁷. If each document is not only a past, present or the presence of an absence, the architecture of the villa and its restoration do not report a present as a horizon and emotion as a vehicle⁸, but also the existence of a source that is not “representation” but manipulated matter, *sursignifiée*, for a long time deprived of a function, almost a paradigm of architecture's resistance to the linguistic storm that runs through contemporary studies. It is this twofold path, the history and restoration of this architecture *sans public*, that places the status of what a document is at the centre of a truly unique game of exchange.



FIG. 3
Villa Savoye, Detail of the
stair, 1966 (picture by Félix
Thyes). FLC. Paris.



Des crayons aux mots

A catalogue on the organisation of Le Corbusier's library prior to 1930, edited by Paul Venable Turner, was published in 1970⁹. The very same Turner who, in a note to an article a year later, reported how Maurice Besset had completed his catalogue with Le Corbusier's *livres de chevet*: the Bible, Cervantes and Rabelais¹⁰. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the paper years were consolidated through a text on the books in Le Corbusier's possession, published by *Fondation Le Corbusier*, which in the same year published a short brochure on its legal and organisational status¹¹. Writing was once again the focus of a second text published that same year, suspended between memories and anecdotes¹². But by this time memory had started to give way to the written text.

The library marks the fragile start of a hegemony of papers on the work - transcribed in the literary genre of the still prevailing tyranny of artistic literature and in particular of one of its expressions - the monograph - which brought the historiography on Le Corbusier to the centre of contemporary debate on literary genres.

The biography, which moreover at that time represented the essentially Nietzschean narration of a heroic modernity that re-evaluated both author and critic, contrasted with a historiography that at the time was rediscovering avant-gardes, movements, journals and the collective dimension of artistic, and especially architectural, work. It would suffer the full criticism of Giovanni Levi years later.¹³.

In this sense, the historiography on Le Corbusier represents an exemplary case study that all researchers would like to investigate. Biographies - with the consequent glorification of individual action that the construction of the Le Corbusier character implies and facilitated by the accompanying rhetoric - are in fact intertwined with monographs that examine themes and individual projects. Two approaches that also come with different writings and narrative structures: high popularisation and investigation which starts to pose the problem of philology as the legitimisation of its argument. The difference can be seen, for example, in the nature and number of footnotes¹⁴, which were absent up until then even in texts by the most important art and architecture historians: a frontier that was also crossed in those years by historians of contemporary architecture. Besides others.

FIG. 4
Villa Savoye, Scaffolding
details during restoration
works, 1966 (picture by Félix
Thyes). FLC. Paris.



After Besset's text, which is more than a simple biography and Stanislaus von Moos's *Le Corbusier Elemente einer Synthese*, constructed without access to the Fondation's archives¹⁵, seven biographies on Le Corbusier by *professional* historians or critics were published between 1969 and 1975, not counting those by Hervé, Jean Petit¹⁶ and Yukio Futagawa¹⁷, and those by Franchetti Pardo¹⁸, Carlo Cresti¹⁹, Stanislaus von Moos²⁰, Robert Fourneaux Jordan²¹, Charles Jencks²² Stephen Gardiner²³, Peter Serenyi and Martin Pawley²⁴. The architectural works analysed in the monographs were La Tourette²⁵, Ronchamp²⁶, Pessac²⁷, and L'Unité in Marseilles²⁸, while the almost one hundred articles published in that same period covered the villas of the Twenties up to Firminy²⁹. It was the few thematic articles though that raised the problem of a text that seeks evidence (with all its rhetoric³⁰) in the archive and its narration through *mise en intrigue*, as Paul Ricoeur would write, which cannot disregard existing arguments. Texts by Turner³¹, Corboz³² and Taylor³³ raised the problem of documentary evidence, up to the first book that was not only entirely based on archival work but in which the text that included the archival materials on which it was based, at the foot of the text, was *Le Corbusier e L'Esprit Nouveau*³⁴. But what of the Villa Savoye?

The Villa Savoye followed the same course, but differentiated the media. Yukio Futagawa's popular and iconographic text, with an introduction by Richard Meier, was published in 1972³⁵. In 1975, William Curtis developed an Open University course on the Villa Savoye, evocatively titled *Le Corbusier: The evolution of the architectural language and the crystallization in the Villa Savoye*³⁶, while that same year Tim Benton launched a study of the preparatory drawings for the design of the villa³⁷, which would find its final outlet years later in the introductory essay to Garland's volume on Le Corbusier³⁸ and even more so in the first edition of *Les villas de Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret*³⁹.

Historiographical revisionism, critical contextualism and a philological foundation began to intertwine, with texts by Benton, Curtis, Gabetti and Olmo anticipating the radical turning point of the next eight years. However, this opened up a contradiction. Namely, a historiography that replaces the lack of an examination of the work with archival investigation and increasingly uses philology as an almost exclusive way of pursuing loyalty to the memory, but ultimately this would start an interminable quarrel with the truth in history, which would find its topos years later and in the *bataille de Ronchamp*⁴⁰.

FIG. 5
Villa Savoye, Restoration works, 1966 (picture by Félix Thyès). FLC. Paris.



What emerges is also a twofold interpretative path, which is also less and less convergent: between an architectural historiography that searches for its own paradigms and narrative structures in the papers - Tim Benton's recent work on Le Corbusier's agendas is exemplary in this sense⁴¹ - and a restoration capable of anticipating one of the most debated themes for decades, and not only by restorers: *le retour à l'origine*⁴². In the resolve (and illusions of the restorers), a modern view *d'ailleurs*, without ideological, avant-garde or aesthetic charges to defend⁴³. Ultimately it would be the word, not the material, that would test the interpretation, only to be overturned in the material called to confirm the word after 1986, the object of the *remise en état*. Restoring the status that every translation (historiographic or material) gives to the "name test"⁴⁴.

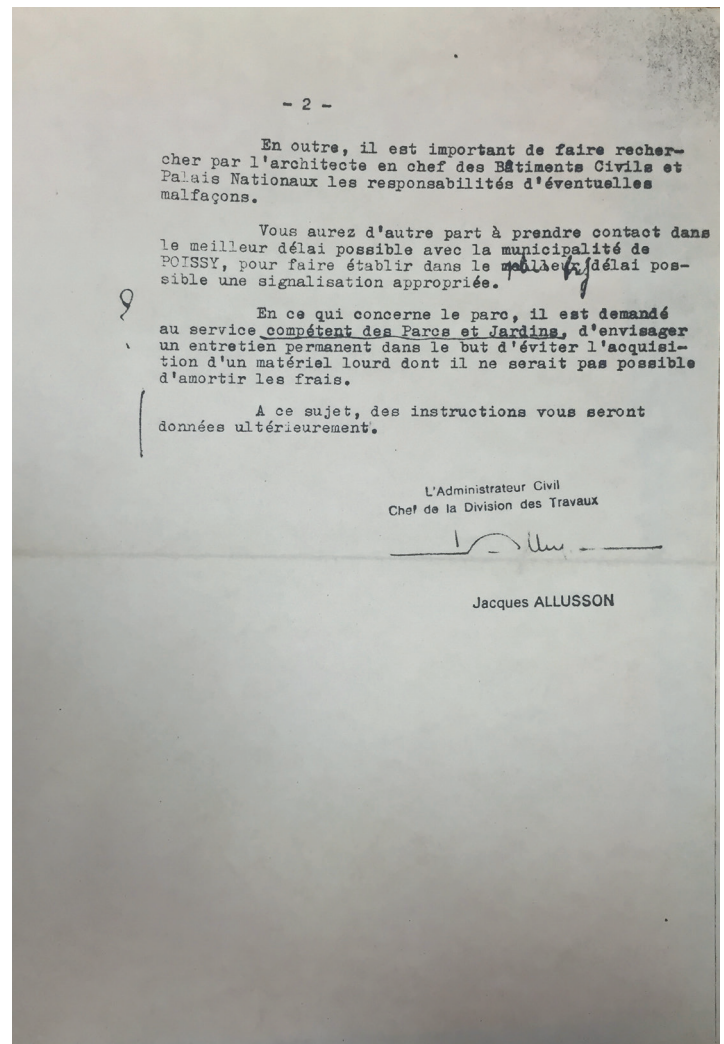
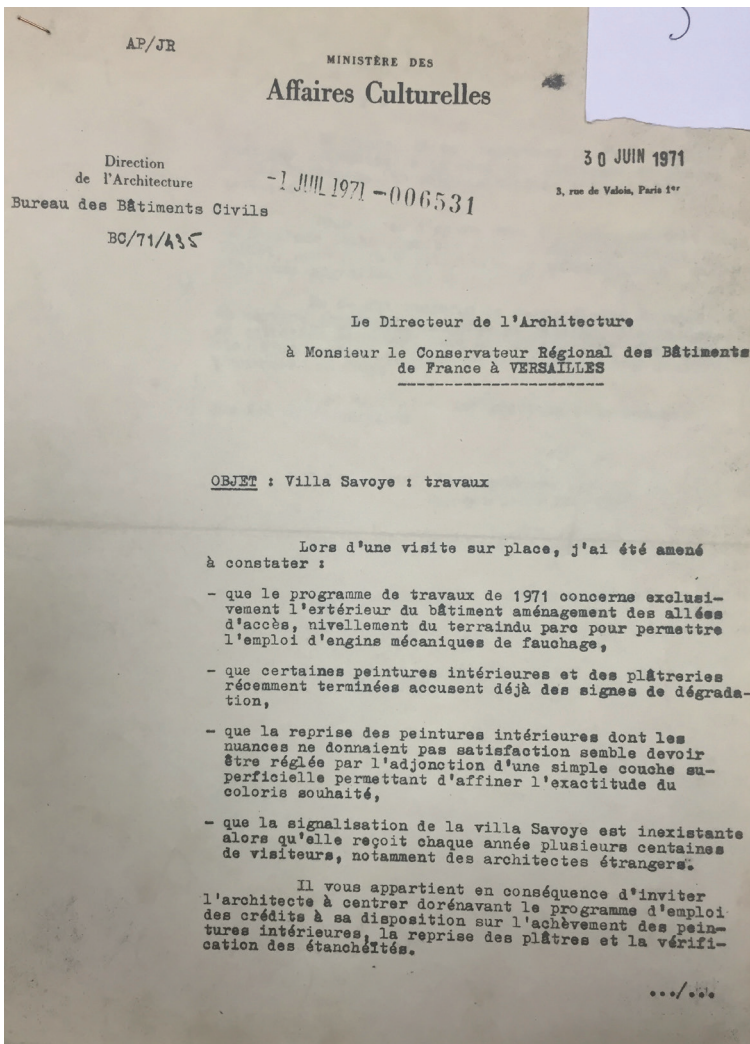
But how does historiography move forward? Above all, by replacing the examination of the artefact with the examination of its design, and surveys of the built architecture with sketches, drawings and notebooks that can assist with research into the genesis of the work by focusing on the author's intentions and the historiographic issue of authorship. Work that would become systematic with the recent work by Danièle Pauly⁴⁵. What is increasingly interesting is the possible reconstruction of the design process and not the material configuration of the work, including the construction site. And this, as said, years after the essays by Roland Barthes on *La mort de l'auteur*⁴⁶ and Michel Foucault on *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*⁴⁷. Thus, almost paradoxically, the foundation of a discursive tradition would mark the new season in the history of architecture.

But how does restoration move forward? Between the tyranny of image and syntagma (*villa blanche*) and historicism *au second degré*, given that the ruin is of a restoration, albeit almost dictated on 3 June 1965 by the author.

Contradictions that include what is still a no-man's land between historiography and restoration: the oblivion into which the state of the villa entered, while it is *l'image* that *prend position*, that of *villa blanche*, that marked the true form of appropriation of the image *d'une chose absente* (that of the Villa Savoye as it was represented in *Cahiers d'art* 1930⁴⁸) and that appeared in all contemporary publications. An architecture that was not only independent from the state the villa was in, first restored and then returned to its state of ruin, paradoxically turned oblivion into an opportunity to radicalise beliefs and mythologies about its unity, coherence and above all uniqueness.

FIG. 6

Villa Savoye, Restoration works, 1966 (picture by Félix Thyès). FLC. Paris.



It is in the travellers' diaries, while the gradual reduction of the second restoration to a *entretien vigilante*⁴⁹ brings into play an old metaphor of its designer: architecture as "une image de la technique" which Le Corbusier had wanted to create in 1963, when he himself promoted the Savoye as a prototype of a *blanche* modernity.⁵⁰

Papers in place of stones, images in place of ruins.

The Loss of History and the Rediscovery of Origins was the title Keuth Loftin gave to an article in 1980 on the restoration of the Villa Savoye, as well as a reading of the historiography that was accumulating, changing the historiographic paradigm⁵¹. The process of transcribing the villa into a Weberian idealtype (as it was already in *Précisions*⁵²), demands that the object of study (and subsequently of restoration) was not history or reception, but the origin, recovering, and not always consciously, the splendid reading of this procedure first given by Pierre Hadot, attributing it to metanoia⁵³, and then Foucault, when authorship was made to depend on the response that can be given to the *origine*.

The same mythopoeic root of the *retour à l'origine* that organises practices and then clashes with the paradox that the *origine* itself not only cannot be practised (only Le Corbusier had achieved this by proposing an invented origin in drawings

FIG. 7-8
Letter by J. Allusson to the local conservator of historic buildings of France in Versailles, 30 June 1971. IFA - Centre d'Archives d'Architecture du XXème siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.



he had chosen from the four designs for the villa!), but it produces an authentic paradox: the freezing of the function that was the original substance of the design (living, producing, showing⁵⁴) and opening up to the infinite season of a potential architecture that exists as a “metamorphosis” without object that would accompany the entire complex season of restorations of the Villa Savoye up to 1998⁵⁵.

What actually emerges is a “twofold” realism – its existence as a work and its existence through the representation given to it by the papers⁵⁶- which makes the “Villa Savoye” document perhaps one of the most complex and ambiguous texts to investigate due to the succession of restoration campaigns and its emphasised exemplary nature as a *fabrique* of a modernity independent of contemporaneity. All of these games were played with the representations that historiography would make of the *function-auteur*, to return to Foucault⁵⁷ and the difficulty of defining the nature of the document being worked on: architecture, drawing, representation, reception, as well as survey, construction site, mortar, and colours. There is certainly a risk that everything could become a document.

But the common thread of that “*retour à l’origine*”, to the arche, is the process of the symbolic re-appropriation of an asset that is now public, that has cultural value irrespective of the meanings that resulted in its construction (housing) and that has now entered into an almost indefinite polysemy, removed not only from the use for which it was built, but from the theory of values ordered by that use. At least Le Corbusier went further by replying to Madame Savoye and describing the villa as the *Panthéon de la modernité*⁵⁸!

This polysemy often undermines the invoked realism of the design by Le Corbusier (and Pierre Jeanneret, Albert Frey, Ernst Wiessmann), translated into matter by the Bertocchi company and the many artisans called to the construction table⁵⁹, creating the conditions for a hyperealism that characterises the events of the villa to this day. What started to be glimpsed between the late Sixties and early Seventies was the very use of the *retour à l’origine* to propose ever new theories on authorship, touching on Mircea Eliade’s “archetypes and repetitions”, as in the case of the abuse of metaphors⁶⁰. Then again, what does a recurring ruin, whose origin is investigated by historians and restorers in different ways, imply if not a dialectic between archetype and repetition?

FIG. 9

Villa Savoye, facade,
end of Seventies.
IFA - Centre d’Archives
d’Architecture du XXeme
siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.



La remise en état, the first definition to appear since 1961, is perhaps the closest syntagm to *retour à l'origine*, but not surprisingly it emphasises its contradictions: there would come a time when the work has outlived the author, and is no longer Madame Savoye's residence: but merely a public and then meta-historical time. A timeless state that can therefore be placed at the basis of the antinomy between the villa, which presupposes housing, and the villa as a palimpsest (what Le Corbusier proposed after all in Buenos Aires) capable of hiding not only the absence of an intended use, but, at least up until 1998, also excluding the nature of a public asset which had prevented its sale and demolition and then allowed the inclusion of the villa among the monuments of the twentieth century to be preserved as early as 1964: thus creating an authentic hypostasis.

A hypostasis that exists irrespective of its material existence (continually manipulated by the restoration work carried out to this day), the child of two memories, one *commandée* and the other *manipulée* by the villa, where historiography appears *commandée* by the *function-auteur* and the restoration *manipulée* by the image, the *Maison blanche*. Hiding a precocious affirmation of a transcription-translation that is only more cultural, and not more interpretative of the work, in the very years when cultural studies were appearing on the scene⁶¹! But the Seventies also set forth another process: the attributions of meaning recognised to the work through studies on the genesis of its design were constructed while a *rezeptiongeschichte* prevailed, from the interpretative polysemies now set in motion by increasingly openly analogical literature⁶².

These two paths are somewhat separate but somewhat linked. The story of *villa blanche* conceals the confrontation between two words – testimony and reminiscence – whose history is the very essence of the historical and conservative knowledge with which the architecture is imbued. The *villa blanche* is called on – for example – to bear witness to a cultural and artistic season, that prefigured by Guillaume Apollinaire's *Méditations Esthétiques*⁶³, but it also incorporates all of the reminiscence, as defined by Ricoeur⁶⁴, which first Hervé and then Giedion would guide and that Giedion would definitively introduce, first in *Cahiers d'Art* and finally in the first edition of *Space Time and Architecture*⁶⁵.

Resorting to isolating a work and translating it into a "monograph"⁶⁶, as we have just seen, appears to be an attempt to escape this dichotomy, attributing to a reduction in scale "confirmed and legitimised by images" the power of evidence of the document

FIG. 10-11
Villa Savoye, details of decay,
end of Seventies.
IFA - Centre d'Archives
d'Architecture du XXème
siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.



FIG. 12
 Villa Savoye, details of decay,
 façade,
 end of Seventies.
 IFA - Centre d'Archives
 d'Architecture du XXeme
 siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.

FIG. 13
 Villa Savoye, details of decay,
 plaster,
 end of Seventies.
 IFA - Centre d'Archives
 d'Architecture du XXeme
 siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.

one is called to work on⁶⁷. It is perhaps no coincidence that the prevailing source at that time in the already hypertrophic literature on Le Corbusier was photography. Photography as a testimony to Le Corbusier's ability to see and to Le Corbusier as a photographer⁶⁸, but also as a representation that prevents us from crossing the Sargasso Sea being generated by "tout est source"⁶⁹. The 61 images of the architectural promenade taken between 2002 (and the work of Barbara Mazza⁷⁰), 2012 (and the exhibition *Construire l'image: Le Corbusier et la Photographie*⁷¹), and 2018 (and the work of Zaporain, Ramos Jular, Llamazares on *La promenade fotografique de la Villa Savoye*⁷²) assumed the status of a source capable of existing autonomously also in the production of form.

The *Villa Blanche* is undoubtedly a rhetorical construction, and the power of images appears - and this is not an absurdity - all the stronger the more historiography moves towards a legitimisation through papers and ignores the constructed work⁷³. But if the construction of the images of his works for Le Corbusier was part of a strategy, both professional and intellectual, for the construction of his biography after he was deprived of the possibility of redesigning the Savoye⁷⁴, *la villa blanche* as a historiographical and conservative topos arises from the need for research that legitimises itself through the simulacrum of the built work: those photographs which, while Le Corbusier was alive, were the reading (almost always retouched⁷⁵) legitimised by the Swiss architect.

The period between 1979 and 1982 marked the greatest ambiguity as to what constitutes a document for research on architecture and the Savoye in particular. Papers, photographs, drawings, notebooks, *livres noirs* and agendas exchanged roles



and legitimacy, along with the work itself, which moreover in those years was the subject, as mentioned, of the CEBTP's first "scientific" investigation into the material with which the villa was made. But literature on the villa did not pursue this approach of calculations, correspondence, accounts, techniques and materials until very recently⁷⁶.

A few years later, Lawrence W. Speck, in a lucid article, seized on another polysemy reflected in the magic mirror of *villa blanche*. The reference to mainstreaming, in this case of rationalist architecture, tends to exclude or ignore important elements of the building if they do not fully support a now consolidated "*mainstream point of view*"⁷⁷. The linguistic reduction of the built work necessarily leads to its trivialisation, and as Ellwood writes to a *politics of myths*.

The mechanism set in motion is the reduction of physical identities to cultural identities: *villa blanche* selects and reorganises functional elements for the new representation of rationalism, after rationalism – from Kaufman's texts to Aldo Rossi's introduction to Boullée's *Architecture* – had become an almost genealogical writing.

But can a collective memory really be deposited in a work of architecture, an archetype, that can be unveiled through almost any kind of investigation and point of view or various types of "coring", an architecture whose status actually oscillates between representations, narratives, ruin and icon - and that thinks it can resolve the most disturbing steps of a continuous reconfiguration of the work, using images as a reference? Or do cognitive (and epistemological) procedures diverge because they are no longer

FIG. 14
Villa Savoye, details of decay,
interiors,
end of Seventies.
IFA - Centre d'Archives
d'Architecture du XXème
siècle, Paris - Fond Hourlier.

Para seguir leyendo, inicie el proceso de compra, [click aquí](#)