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**New Light on Le Corbusier's Early Years
in Paris: The La Roche-Jeanneret Houses**

By the time Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier) had arrived in Paris,¹ and settled himself² in a garret above the Rue Jacob (Fig. 28), a narrow street of apartments, hotels, and antique shops, the great European war of the masses had reached the last exhausting stage of the Somme offensive.

Jeanneret's departure from La Chaux-de-Fonds was the result of a multiplicity of pressures, a compound of idealism, opportunism, and professional embarrassment.³ Intermingled with these pressures Jeanneret experienced the psychological necessity to exchange the Rousseauistic atmosphere of the Swiss town of La Chaux-de-Fonds for the manifold stimuli of a great intellectual center. Paris—the symbol and synthesis of French genius, the city of many cultural, political, and economic faces—has never failed to fascinate and draw ambitious young men from the provinces. Like many people before him, Le Corbusier felt the attraction of Paris, and in a letter toward the end of his life he said:

I have the greatest respect for the town of La Chaux-de-Fonds. I weathered the first storms of my life there (in the sphere of ideas). I had come to Paris to seek the marvelous atmosphere of this city where the difficulties are unlimited and fierce; but the battle of Paris is worth being experienced.⁴

Yet, like the people who came to work there in the novels of Balzac and Flaubert, Paris aroused mixed feelings in Charles-Edouard Jeanneret. On the one hand, living in the Latin Quarter gave him the intellectual atmosphere he needed and provided a base in the years to come from which he could broadcast his ideas, using the nearby publishing houses. On the other hand, the urban phenomenon of Paris stimulated Jeanneret into a permanent love-hate relationship which he described in terms of "a dream that I never again left."⁵ Although he loved the vibrance of the Latin Quarter in all its variety and artistic uniqueness, more and more, from the early twenties onward, the general obsolescence and multiple failings of the city as an urban unit

Figure 28
Rue Jacob from rooftop
level, Paris VI^e, a scene
Le Corbusier knew
intimately between 1917
and 1933. (Photograph
by Russell Walden.)



became a constant affront to his ideas of what a great city could and should be.

In this conviction Charles-Edouard Jeanneret belongs squarely within the French Romantic tradition, which was animated to some extent by a spirit of protest against the sordidness of the modern age. More specifically, Jeanneret's concern for and dissatisfaction with the urban quality of Paris has certain affinities with the disciplined yet passionate protest in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*. Jeanneret's affinity with Baudelaire stems not just from the fact that he was influenced by his writings.⁶ Aside from these sympathies, puritanical and passionate elements in the psychological makeup of both men linked them in spiritual kinship to a long line of revolutionary and utopian thinkers reaching back to the eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau provided the spiritual dynamic to this line.⁷ Without a doubt Rousseau occupies a strategic position in European thought. His influence reached across two hundred years to communicate directly with the twentieth century on many levels—as a philosopher, an artist, and a political theorist concerned with the humanity of man in the modern world. In these respects Rousseau profoundly shaped the vision of Le Corbusier.

One could say that Charles-Edouard Jeanneret was a spiritual son of Rousseau.⁸ Although they were born 175 years apart in Switzerland, they had similar formative backgrounds. Both Rousseau and Jeanneret came from families whose ancestors had suffered religious persecution, which had caused them to flee from France and settle in Switzerland. Both were sons of Calvinist fathers who were connected with aspects of watchmaking. Both were initially apprenticed to this industry, and became antiestablishment thinkers without university educations. Both had a genuine understanding and love of nature, and therefore both preserved a certain sense of simplicity. At the same time, both were ambitious, hardworking, and avid for recognition.

Both became voracious readers and writers. Both had been drawn to Paris at the age of thirty and at a time when values and ideas were being questioned and society was in a state of transition.

Twentieth-century sensibilities are largely made up from odds and ends of ideas that have been inherited unconsciously from thinkers whom most people may have encountered only briefly. The mind of any young educated Swiss, born before the end of the last century, would quite certainly hold fragments of the thinking of Rousseau, of the *philosophes*, and of social utopians like Charles Fourier and Victor Considérant, who were their nineteenth-century heirs. Jeanneret, brought up in and around the Swiss Jura, became heir unconsciously to the diffuse Rousseauist tradition that was influential in encouraging a love of nature and a sympathy for egalitarian political theories. This tradition was also fostered by the independent spirit of the peasants of the alpine valleys and by the group of Fourierists living in that area. Such groups were supported intellectually by Victor Considérant, a disciple of Charles Fourier, who exercised influence through the newspapers that he directed, in particular the *Démocratie pacifique* (1843–1850), which was published in the region.⁹

It is difficult to say with authority when Charles-Edouard Jeanneret began to read Rousseau. He appears to have acquired an early edition of *Oeuvres illustrées de Rousseau* before coming to Paris in the spring of 1908.¹⁰ As Paul Turner has already explained, Jeanneret eventually found work with Auguste Perret, who opened his eyes to the practical realities of building in reinforced concrete. This dual influence of Perret and Paris appears to have encouraged Jeanneret to widen his intellectual horizons, and it reinforced the spiritual rhythms he inherited from his native Jura.

This first period in Paris was of great importance to Jeanneret's intellectual development, because, apart from the technological impact of the lessons he learned with Perret, he also came under the influence

of some of the more classic works of France's rich intellectual heritage. For example, besides the architectural theorists Viollet-le-Duc¹¹ and Auguste Choisy,¹² Jeanneret acquired and read Rousseau's *Confessions* and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* during the summer of 1909. Probably soon after, he bought Rousseau's *Du Contrat social*.¹³ Thus, by the time Jeanneret returned to La Chaux-de-Fonds for the winter of 1909, he was in possession of some critical writing, which made passionate protests against slums, the plight of the poor, the place of the machine in society, the distribution of wealth, the source of political power, and the tragedy of man's spiritual alienation as a result of his technological commitment to an industrial world.

Also, while Jeanneret was working in Perret's office in the Rue Franklin, such matters were professionally debated within the city. The word *urbanisme* was introduced into Parisian planning circles around 1910, suggesting something of the changing intellectual atmosphere of prewar Paris. By the time that Jeanneret started a practice in Paris, *urbanisme* was a word whose professional reality was understood.¹⁴ And one must not forget the collective effect of world war, which ensured a more systematic approach to events that town planning sought to control.

The consequences of this political upheaval on architecture were far-reaching. During the whole of the nineteenth century mass housing was largely ignored by the architectural profession.¹⁵ The destruction of the war signaled the opportunity for change. When the war ended, idealistic architects, some of whom had survived the drama of the trenches, were determined to develop the role of the architect toward a wider realization of social mission. In particular, Walter Gropius, Bruno Paul, Ernst May, Bruno Taut, Tony Garnier, Le Corbusier, Hannes Meyer, and Johannes Oud not only "felt the need for an intellectual change of front,"¹⁶ but they also pioneered, each in his

own way, the first postwar working-class housing estates. These experiments forcibly drew attention to a new sense of idealism and provided the vision for mainstream modern architecture.

Thus guided and nourished, the leading modern architects attempted a comprehensive integration with industry. They sought a systematic examination of human needs and, by working in harmony with industry, a full use of modern technology and materials. Within these dimensions, modern architecture was not just another style to be applied with the whitewash render. Modern architecture had a social and technological mission to fulfill. Such idealism was linked directly to the revolutionary social and political thinkers of the French Enlightenment, and provided the driving force that guided mainstream modern architecture in the twenties. Looking back at this period, Catherine Bauer Wurster said:

Instead of the princely patronage which had traditionally sponsored architectural innovations, it was the housing and community planning movement in northern Europe which first opened up major building opportunities to the pioneering theorists of the 1920s.¹⁷

As modern architectural historians like Wurster and Leslie Martin¹⁸ have detected, the twenties witnessed an important social awakening and a corresponding shift in architectural objectives.

Jeanneret made his professional debut in Paris during January 1917. He first started work as a consultant architect to the Société d'Applications du Béton Armé which was involved in diverse studies relating to national defense.¹⁹ In pondering the question of how a young struggling Swiss architect managed to start a practice in wartime Paris, one must refer to his association with a former Swiss engineer, Max du Bois. Jeanneret noted in his 1915 sketchbook marked "A2" that "if all goes well, Jeanneret sets up in Paris,"²⁰ and after this he mentioned the name *du Bois*, though gave no clue as to his iden-

tity. This early reference to du Bois is all the more significant when one realizes that it was through him that Jeanneret arrived in Paris to open an office, as stated by Max du Bois:

I brought Jeanneret to Paris, by associating with him to set up an architect's office. Since he came from Switzerland, without money, friends or acquaintances, it was my duty as well as in my best interests, in order to get the office started, to introduce him to Swiss society in Paris, where I had numerous friendships.²¹

Apart from the acknowledgment of the bonds of Swiss nationality, the partnership was primarily a business relationship nurtured on patronage drawn from within the Swiss colony in Paris.

Among this group of exiles Max du Bois introduced Jeanneret to engineers, industrialists, and rich bankers, some of whom were eventually to provide the patronage and financial support for launching his engineering, architectural, and publishing ventures.

It was only natural that Jeanneret should avail himself of this opportunity and thus fulfill his ambition to start out in Paris, in spite of the commitments that he had in his hometown at the time. As the Villa Schwob was then in its first stage of construction, Jeanneret's client at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Monsieur Anatole Schwob, preferred that his architect stay and concentrate his sole attention on the building. Yet, Jeanneret left for Paris. Though this departure, inopportunistically timed, might appear to suggest that Jeanneret regarded the industrialist's house as relatively unimportant, a letter to Monsieur A. Lavandière in Lausanne proves that this was not so.

In 1916–17 I was called upon to build a villa at La Chaux-de-Fonds for M. Anatole Schwob, conceived on a bold plan which a structure of reinforced concrete permitted. I have always been a strong advocate of reinforced concrete and I brought to the realization of the building in question the fruits of long experience, and I concentrated upon it all my artistic effort and my constructive skills, in the hope of creating a work which would last and which would not simply give just a passing moment of delight.²²

Jeanneret gained his command of a body of theory and practice in

reinforced concrete from the writings of Viollet-le-Duc, Auguste Choisy, and Anatole de Baudot²³ and from the practical systems developed by François Hennebique, which he learned through the teaching of Auguste Perret. His absorption of these ideas is clearly evident in the progression of structural clarity in his work at La Chaux-de-Fonds. By the time Jeanneret designed the Villa Schwob he had absorbed the rudiments of reinforced-concrete construction, though he still had a good deal to learn about the practicalities of this system of building.

Jeanneret's long advocacy of reinforced concrete is further confirmed by correspondence with Tony Garnier of Lyons as early as 1914, when he wrote to him about this very problem of building in reinforced concrete. Garnier's reply, delayed for some seventeen months, gives an interesting commentary on what was animating Jeanneret during this period. After apologizing for the long delay due to pressure of work as *Architecte-en-chef de la ville de Lyon*, Garnier writes:

. . . I wanted to say that your attempt to widen the use of reinforced concrete in buildings appeals to me very much. . . . I have some aerial photographs of my habitations at Saint Rambert, the hospital project and the sports stadium that I am building at the moment.²⁴

By December 1915, when Jeanneret received this letter, he was investigating how to market his Domino plans for housing. This mass housing system was to provide accommodation of the highest quality, at a minimum cost, and for the greatest number of people. He had done site plans and technical studies at critical structural situations. His framework system, to be made of standard components, encouraged a rich diversity in the grouping of houses, and inside the dwellings various arrangements would be possible through the use of flexible partitions. As a project intended for postwar housing reconstruction, Jeanneret's initiative was particularly opportune. As Jeanneret was remote from the corridors of political power, however, and

as the necessary Loucheur legislation was not passed until 1928, there was no likelihood in 1915 of realizing his scheme. Nevertheless, the Domino project is an interesting exercise in industrialized mass housing, illustrating the potential use of reinforced concrete.

If one considers twentieth-century building to have its roots in contemporary economic and sociopolitical realities, then Jeanneret's first employment as consulting architect to the Société d'Applications du Béton Armé was a major step toward the realization that change in architecture and the environment was only practically possible through the use of modern technology.

During his first year of consultancy he designed a water tower in reinforced concrete, which was built at Podensac (Gironde). He also worked on projects for an arsenal at Toulouse, a hydroelectric plant at L'Isle Jourdain (Vienne), and workers' housing at Saintes (Charente-Maritime) and at St-Nicolas-d'Aliermont, near Dieppe.²⁵ Under the impact of having to examine new problems where tradition had no influence or aesthetic prejudice, Jeanneret not surprisingly began to feel he was breaking free from the regressive climate that characterized official attitudes to architecture during this period.

Particularly the project for forty-six workers' houses at St-Nicolas-d'Aliermont brought Jeanneret back to where he had left off in his Domino studies. As the project progressed as far as the completion of working drawings, Jeanneret received minimal economic support during the difficult war year of 1917. Yet what was perhaps more important, it brought Jeanneret closer to the critical realities of launching reinforced-concrete schemes in rural France. No doubt this period was professionally frustrating for him. Nevertheless, he learned some important lessons about the difficulties involved in financing projects that broke with normal technical and political procedures. In effect, further thought on the problem led him to consider modulator systems, technically integrated, as a basis for working in mass housing.

Again with the difficulties at St-Nicolas-d'Alhiermont in mind, and in order to ensure a continuous supply of building materials in the depressingly difficult climate of war shortages, Jeanneret launched, in October 1917, a brick factory in the Paris suburb of Alfortville. The venture was ill-fated, due to the postwar economic inflation; it was forced to close early in the twenties, leaving Jeanneret to join the growing number of "economic shipwrecks." Suffering from this personal setback, a humiliated Jeanneret declared: "Oh, Bohemian of the Boul' Mich! A Bohemian does not get into that arena of tough competition."²⁶

Jeanneret was convinced that the true notion of modern building lay in the use of reinforced concrete, which allowed a new planning freedom. At the same time he was searching for a new approach to contemporary living. In his design for the Villa Schwob he expressed this by a spatial differentiation between the living and sleeping areas. In order to bring harmony to the building as a whole he used the golden mean proportion of regulating lines. In spite of his aesthetic strivings and spatial/technical considerations, however, Jeanneret experienced great anxiety and frustration following the completion of the Villa Schwob, when the dispute with his client, which arose during the construction, formally led to litigation proceedings and he was forced to defend his architectural principles.²⁷

Some time after this bitter experience, in a rather revealing letter, Jeanneret spoke of his anxieties and current feelings to his friend and former traveling companion, Léon Perrin.

It is the first time that I have been able to look comfortably at this construction and I confess with much vanity that I am satisfied with it. It is really architecture such as I feel more and more each day. It is true that since that moment I have not done any architecture, except for a few mass-produced houses for the devastated areas, extremely venturesome projects which didn't find their way to realization. Here neither the straight line nor the primary forms are liked yet. It is

difficult to shake off the influence of the Ecole. I think that after you return from Rome, there is scarcely nothing but this house, at La Chaux-de-Fonds, which has a right to attract your attention. You see that my vanity is complete; no matter, it's all the same good to know oneself what one is worth.²⁸

Such confessions are not uncommon among twentieth-century architects working within the limitations of their age. Jeanneret, who felt himself to be particularly alone in Paris, was forever looking over his shoulder to history to sustain himself and his personal vision in modern architecture.

Paris presented Jeanneret with a particularly difficult challenge. He still had to face the bitter truth that he had been unable to realize his ideas in Paris, and he became increasingly anxious over his failure to obtain commissions, as he revealed in a letter to Madame Schwob: "Many times I have had the opportunity of regretting bitterly that this construction is not situated in the vicinity of Paris where it would be extremely interesting publicity for me."²⁹

An atmosphere of gloom pervaded the period, with the casualty lists mounting in the newspapers. It was as though civilization itself was at its nadir and there was little hope left for the living. Yet, perhaps it is just in such dark times that one can begin to look for signs of the birth of a new era. In a newspaper of December 1917, Jeanneret was attracted to such a sign, which argued the case for stronger action in preparation for this new age. Jeanneret not only identified with the most important points, which he marked in green crayon; he also preserved the newspaper clipping. The first two points, marginally lined, are as follows: "Of the two dangers the atrophy or the depravity of the national spirit in idleness is the worse. . . ." and,

It is not a question of knowing whether there exist ten poets, or even just one single poet, from whom we might hope for a great work. It is a question of not allowing the living tradition of French beauty to be broken. . . . It is this treasure which is precious, it is in this that the

future generations will derive their resources. Let us not allow it to perish. . . .

Obviously the sense of France's classical tradition in architecture was of primary importance to Jeanneret. Thirdly, this time underlined in green crayon to express Jeanneret's agreement:

If the movement which appears to hesitate between various directions is not encouraged by the approval of an intelligent and enthusiastic public, and if it does not become aware of its purpose thanks to the fraternal collaboration of a scrupulous and enthusiastic criticism . . .³⁰ then radical intellectual action must be taken to restore and rescue the situation. Perhaps nothing quite summed up Jeanneret's feelings at the time more poignantly than this article.

Further signs of a new era became apparent from the change in tempo and a greater destructive precision that characterized the final stages of World War I. The importance of physical science and technology was demonstrated clearly when the Germans returned to the Marne battlefields in 1918 with even more ruthlessness, scientific precision, and savagery than before. In a way, the need for precision symbolized the period. Certainly Jeanneret appreciated the importance of engineering precision and sought to express it in his own work.

The first six years that Jeanneret spent in Paris were a period in which he matured. With no building commissions in Paris, he had time to develop the ideas gained during his formative years. Not until 1922 did he have the opportunity of putting his ideas into practice, in building the Ozenfant and Besnos houses.

Through Auguste Perret Jeanneret met Amédée Ozenfant³¹ at an *Art et Liberté* group meeting³² in May 1918. This meeting widened Jeanneret's horizons into Ozenfant's world of painting and journalism. In the summer of the same year, through Max du Bois, who was influential in the Swiss circle in Paris, Jeanneret met the rich young banker Raoul La Roche³³ at the *déjeuner suisse*.³⁴ Both Amédée Ozenfant and

Raoul La Roche were to become vitally important as Jeanneret's Purist ideas were developing. Jeanneret's meeting with Raoul La Roche led to a lifelong friendship; his creative yet stormy partnership with Ozenfant lasted only until 1925, when it finally broke up over the arrangement of paintings in La Roche's Auteuil gallery.³⁵

Meanwhile, however, this partnership had produced two books³⁶ two Purist art exhibitions,³⁷ twenty-eight issues of *L'Esprit Nouveau* (a review of contemporary thought), a studio house for Ozenfant,³⁸ and a certain renown for both Ozenfant and Jeanneret. Nor should one forget that Le Corbusier of 1925—architect, urbanist, painter, journalist, and propagandist par excellence—overshadowed the somewhat diffident and struggling figure of the Charles-Edouard Jeanneret of 1918. In this transformation the influence of Ozenfant and La Roche cannot be overestimated.

Jeanneret's development as a Purist began in September 1918 under the influence of Amédée Ozenfant when, having returned to Paris from a holiday together at Andernos (near Bordeaux), they shared a studio in which they wrote and painted.³⁹ Approximately three months later, in fact four days after the armistice was declared, a joint manifesto was published, *Après le Cubisme*. This declaration of a movement called Purism coincided with the first exhibition of paintings and sketches by Ozenfant and Jeanneret, held at Germaine Bongard's boutique at 5 Rue de Penthievre between December 1918 and January 1919.

The exhibition was indeed timely, for there were then on display around the Place de la Concorde captured German airplanes, tanks, and field and machine guns. For the Purists these articles of war were a prime example of the machine-tooled world, for they manifested the quality of *precision* and were geometrically ordered.

These constant values appealed to Ozenfant and Jeanneret because they symbolized "a system capable of expressing not a mere reflec-

tion of one's personal predilections, but a microcosmic synthesis of contemporary history."⁴⁰ Thus, in the euphoria of the victory celebrations, Purist proselytism was supported by the belief in objectivity, exactitude, and precision, values that were in full accord with what Jean Cocteau was later to phrase as "*le rappel à l'ordre*." The Purist "call to order" heralded the spirit of a new architecture. Jeanneret, having picked up a certain journalistic *joie de vivre* from Ozenfant, confidently announced: "If we pose the question: has the architectural moment of our epoch arrived, the answer is: it has, because since the end of the war period we possess a modern conception of architecture."⁴¹

Yet, in a more reflective mood ten years later, Ozenfant observed: "Our exhibition was premature. We were clear as to the ideas but less so as to how to make them visually apparent. But we worked on obstinately, painting by day in my studio and discussing at night."⁴²

If one looks critically at the so-called revolutionary ideas they were proposing, one finds that their Purist philosophy was based on an absolute quest for harmony of the environment through the discipline of geometry. Such an absolute quest was not uncommon among the writers and artists of the time, for, having done their patriotic duty, they invariably went back to their studios in search of ideals for a new world. Since neither Ozenfant nor Jeanneret had experienced modern warfare at first hand, however, their encounter with and admiration of war machines was a studio-bound psychological reaction to images of precision. Ozenfant, of course, countered with: "It was not a matter of submitting to the period, but of being in it, of working with and for it."⁴³

The fact is that neither had the human experience of the war drama and the companionship of the trenches. It is not surprising, therefore, that Purism, although the doctrine of attaining a structured universal harmony, should be essentially an elitist movement. To this criticism

Ozenfant and Jeanneret often made the point that their search for universal harmony was in keeping with the spirit of the modern age.

The intentions of Ozenfant and Jeanneret were very laudable, but their ideas could be realized in only a limited manner. Politically they were beaten from the outset, because, with the war over, the central preoccupation of the French bourgeoisie (which included many artists and writers as well as politicians) was to return as rapidly as possible to their ideals of prewar days. As one writer has put it: "In 1918, bourgeois France had one supreme aim: to return to bourgeois comforts."⁴⁴

If one must look for a real indictment of the values that supported the slaughter of World War I, there is none more bitter than that made by an American poet living in Paris at the time. In these stanzas from "Pour l'élection de son sepulchre" (1920), Ezra Pound tersely weighed the sacrifice of men against the cultural values of civilization, and found the balance questionable.

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,
Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,
For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.⁴⁵

Pound's pessimistic description would have been untenable for Jeanneret. It was indeed foreign to the ideals of his native Jura and to his moral philosophy. With visionary courage Jeanneret felt bound to act. So, like the itinerant Don Quixote,⁴⁶ he went out into Paris to battle against the suffocating cultural climate of the period.

In a way it was a psychological battle with his time. This is perhaps one explanation why, after Proust won the *Prix Goncourt* in 1919, Jeanneret became one of his reading public.⁴⁷ Jeanneret was perhaps

attracted to the work of Proust because creatively Proust rediscovered the past actively in the present. The idea of ordering disconnected fragments of his experience and bringing these fragments into a higher reality is a realizable attribute of most creative people. Jeanneret's approach to design was a living embodiment of this idea.

His solution to the problem of providing a bachelor and family living complex illustrates this creative process in architecture. The houses were located at the bottom of a garden in the Square du Docteur Blanche at Auteuil, in the sixteenth *arrondissement* of Paris. In these houses in upper middle-class Auteuil, Le Corbusier brought together the fragments of his vivid imagination in a dramatic Purist synthesis.

This program began indirectly as a result of the influence of the first Purist exhibition on Raoul La Roche (whom Jeanneret had met a few months earlier), for not only did La Roche become interested in the Purist movement, he also decided to start a modern art collection.

Raoul La Roche was a wealthy young banker in the *Crédit Commercial de France*, one of the business class that had ruled France in alliance with various notables since the beginning of the Third Republic. La Roche did not make rash decisions or judgments. Therefore, his decision to start an art collection was important and revealed in him a measure of aesthetic discernment. It was not only fortunate for Ozenfant and Jeanneret that La Roche became interested in Purism, it was even more important for art history. In the words of Franz Meyer:

If in 1920 you gave yourself the brief to build a museum collection of Cubism and Purism out of the important works of Picasso, Braque, Gris, Léger, Lipschitz, Le Corbusier, and Ozenfant you could hardly have chosen in any other way than he [La Roche] did. In 1920 there were no curators and no commissioners who could tell you which pictures should have a place in a museum.⁴⁸

La Roche had an eye for the significant. By 1920 he had acquired the *Flacon, guitare, verre et bouteilles à la table grise* by Ozenfant (Fig. 29), and *Composition à la guitare et à la lanterne* by Jeanneret

Figure 29
Amédée Ozenfant's
*Flacon, guitare, verre et
bouteilles à la table
grise*, 1920. (Photograph
courtesy of
Kunstmuseum, Basel, La
Roche bequest.)

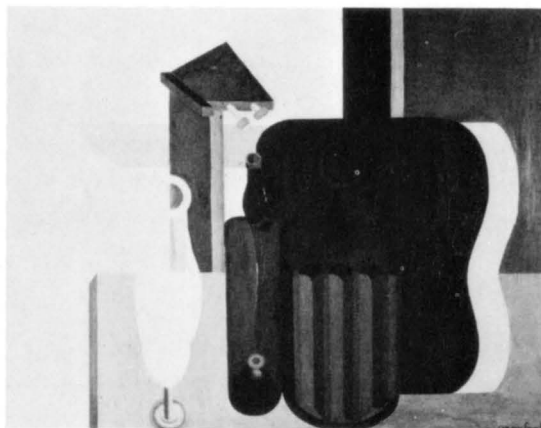
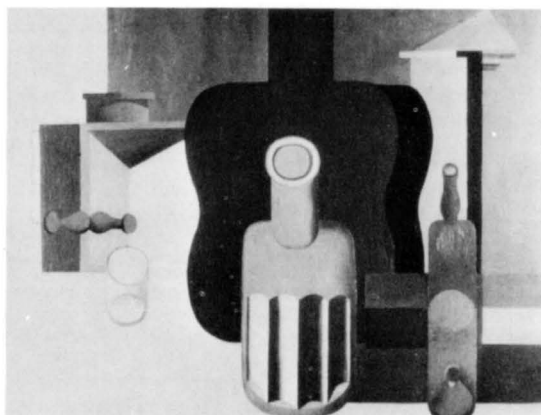


Figure 30
Charles-Edouard
Jeanneret's *Composition
à la guitare et à la
lanterne*, 1920.
(Photograph courtesy of
Archives Fondation Le
Corbusier.)



(Fig. 30). La Roche continued to make discerning purchases throughout the twenties. In 1923, he wrote to Jeanneret:

I remind you that the total sum that I have paid to date for the purchase of your paintings, following verbal agreement, amounts to 7,500 francs, in exchange for which you have delivered to me, on account, four paintings and one drawing with which I am delighted.⁴⁹

La Roche's patronage and interest in Purism extended further than his own ambitions as a collector. His personal conviction led him to support the Purists in their broader objectives.

The problem before the Purists was not only the development but the circulation of their ideas. In order to achieve this, Ozenfant and Jeanneret with Paul Dermée outlined the program of a journal (to be called *L'Esprit Nouveau*) in a policy statement dated 28 February 1920. The aims of this international journal were to review contemporary currents in painting, literature, music, architecture, scientific aesthetics, cinema, and sport. Due to the war, such journals were rare in Paris, and *L'Esprit Nouveau* would serve as an open forum for the polarization of contemporary debate.

In this venture Jeanneret had the difficult task of managing the business side of the magazine, as well as contributing toward it intellectually. Under financial pressures it is not surprising that he should turn to his friend Raoul La Roche. In March 1920 Jeanneret wrote:

I enclose for you two documents concerning the editions of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, one program (strictly confidential) and a financial account. I repeat that I attach very great importance to the realization of this business and I would like to thank you now for the interest that you have shown in it, which gives me the most complete confidence in the result which your assistance and that of your friends will bring me.⁵⁰

Following this initiative, La Roche applied for five shares in the *Société de L'Esprit Nouveau*.⁵¹ To ensure his continuing patronage, he received special bound copies of the review, under the title of *Actionnaires de la Société de L'Esprit Nouveau*.⁵²

The first edition of *L'Esprit Nouveau* appeared in October 1920, and,

apart from four breaks in the monthly sequence, the journal continued in publication until the final issue, Number 28, in January 1925. With the first issue of *L'Esprit Nouveau* Jeanneret took from one of his ancestors the pseudonym of *Le Corbusier*, though his friends continued to call him by his family name of Jeanneret. The whole enterprise marks the transformation of Jeanneret from being a backwoodsman to his Parisian identity as Le Corbusier.

With the successful launching of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Le Corbusier and Ozenfant were under some obligation to their patron and friend Raoul La Roche. They repaid his encouragement by giving his Purist collection a new momentum, by acting as his bidders for the confiscated Kahnweiler paintings of Picasso, Braque, Léger, and Gris,⁵³ at the four art auctions held in June and November 1921, July 1922, and May 1923. La Roche had great confidence in their judgment and, in a way, one could say that Ozenfant and Le Corbusier were lucky. The big dealers for various reasons did not seem to be alert to the significance of these painters, besides which there were eight hundred Cubist works from which to choose. So Ozenfant and Le Corbusier were able to acquire their selection cheaply. The real problem, of course, was the selection of what was important, and in this respect Ozenfant and Le Corbusier did a superb job for La Roche. His Cubist collection was unequaled by any other private collector.

Raoul La Roche's interest in this adventure developed into a lifetime pursuit.⁵⁴ With such a growing collection, the problem soon arose of housing the paintings; Le Corbusier did not miss his opportunity. "La Roche, when one has a beautiful collection as you have, one must have a house constructed worthy of it." And La Roche replied: "OK, Jeanneret, build me this house."⁵⁵

The first problem to solve was that of finding a suitable site, which was not an easy matter. Several possibilities were examined until Ozenfant, who frequented the sixteenth *arrondissement*,⁵⁶ mentioned

the recent “Jasmin” subdivision in Auteuil. This area of Paris lies alongside the Bois de Boulogne, and was in the twenties, as it is still today, the spiritual home of the *grande bourgeoisie*.

Le Corbusier responded to the challenge and produced a design in the manner of the studio houses and Citrohan projects that he was to exhibit during the year at the Salon d’Automne of 1922. The interesting feature of this design for La Roche’s house⁵⁷ was the spatial exploration of the double volume living room through the use of an internal zigzag ramp.

Because of difficulties in securing the site in the Rue du Docteur Blanche at Auteuil, however, this first project did not mature. Le Corbusier was forced to abandon the program as he and Pierre Jeanneret (who had recently joined him from Perret’s office) turned to the demanding task of developing the conception of a *ville contemporaine* for three million people on the right bank of the Seine. It was not until this Paris project was finished and exhibited at the 1922 Salon d’Automne that Le Corbusier came to reexamine the Auteuil problem early in 1923.

This Auteuil site, the property of the famous Docteur Blanche, was subdivided in about 1920.⁵⁸ Land, street patterns, and ratable values inevitably produce narrow-frontaged, deep, oblong plots, which leave unusable the land in the center of a rectangular development. To solve this problem Le Corbusier planned to take a private roadway off the Rue du Docteur Blanche and form a square at its termination in the center of the development. This area thus became known as the Square du Docteur Blanche (Fig. 31).

There followed a tortuous tale of haggling for building land along the private roadway from March until September 1923 between Le Corbusier, J. M. Esnault, Director of the Banque Immobilière de Paris, and M. Plousey, the architect of the development site, who together controlled the sale of land from this Auteuil subdivision.

Figure 31
Plan of the La Roche-Jeanneret building site at Auteuil, September 1923. (Photograph courtesy of Archives Fondation Le Corbusier.)

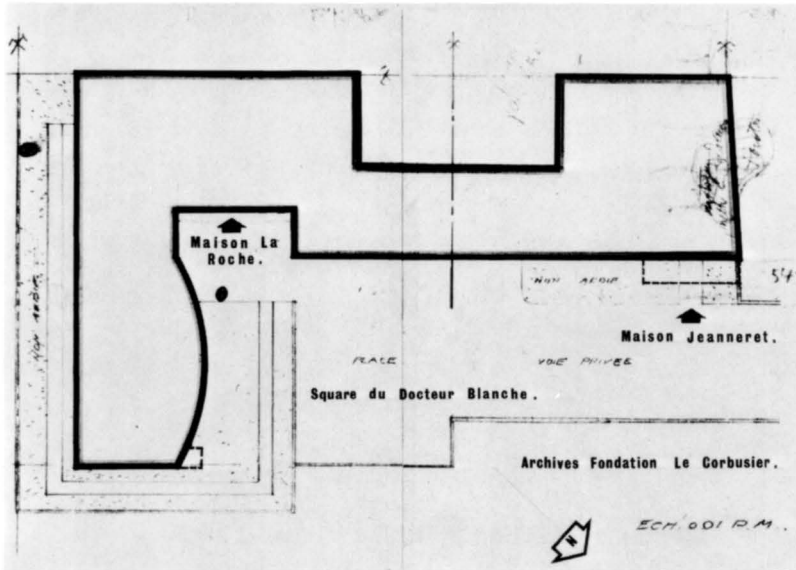
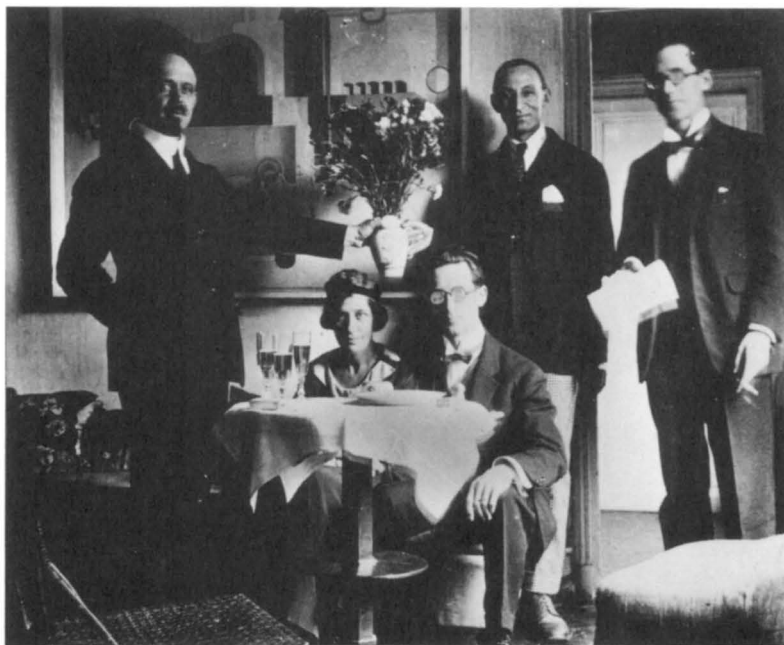


Figure 32

The wedding celebration group at 20 Rue Jacob, showing the Pastor Huguenin and Amédée Ozenfant holding flowers over the head of the bride and groom, Lotti and Albert Jeanneret. Le Corbusier is on the right of the group in winged collar. His present to his brother and sister-in-law was the Purist painting on the wall, entitled *Grande nature morte des Indépendants*. (Photograph courtesy of Kerstin Rääf.)



In the meantime an event occurred which was to influence the final solution of the Auteuil program. This was the marriage of Le Corbusier's brother Albert Jeanneret⁵⁹ to a Swedish student named Lotti Rääf, at the *Mairie* of the sixth *arrondissement* on 26 June 1923.⁶⁰ Albert Jeanneret, the teacher and composer, had been living with his younger brother Charles since arriving in Paris in 1919, and he took his bride back to live temporarily at 20 Rue Jacob. Seeing them there after the wedding, enjoying a celebration drink with the Pastor Huguenin, Ozenfant, and Le Corbusier (Fig. 32), one can understand why Lotti Jeanneret later wrote: "We lived together for a year in a small, old-fashioned flat in the Latin Quarter. I longed for more space, air, modern facilities and ordered a house by Le Corbusier."⁶¹

Le Corbusier now had two clients with whom he was deeply involved, but the land question remained critical. Indeed, if one examines Le Corbusier's letters on the subject of August and September 1923, one senses the mounting tension between Le Corbusier and Messieurs Esnault and Plousey.

Le Corbusier had naturally been seeking plots on the left of the private roadway, as these plots faced in a southerly direction. When he discovered early in August that he definitely could not obtain any land at all on the left, Le Corbusier became concerned. By now he had had to abandon three schemes because of this land question, and, as he wrote to Esnault, "owing to lack of agreement between yourself and M. Plousey, this spring, you made me lose two [other] clients. . . ."⁶² On 14 August 1923 Le Corbusier wrote a long letter to architect Plousey expressing his annoyance over "the purchase under dispute": "You will realize the considerable detriment that a change in our agreements would be to me, my clients would be within their rights to find me in the wrong and to be seriously annoyed with me."⁶³

With similar sentiments Le Corbusier wrote a fortnight later to

Esnault: "La Roche . . . would not forgive me for having led him up the garden path in this way. . . . I venture to rely on your great kindness to settle without delay this disagreement."⁶⁴

The banker replied briefly on 6 September that as soon as Plousey returned in a few days' time they could meet in order to reach a final agreement; however, as Esnault through illness was absent from the meeting, Le Corbusier felt bound to express his "formal point of view" to Esnault in a letter of 12 September:

In all this business I have never changed as far as my desires are concerned, on the contrary the Banque Immobilière has constantly brought in modifications leading to a real incoherence in its work.

. . . You understand certainly the categorical sense of my letter and you will, in writing, give me the satisfaction that I ask for.⁶⁵

Le Corbusier had become increasingly impatient and anxious, for La Roche had written to Le Corbusier asking him to complete the purchase of two plots of land on his behalf by 30 September.⁶⁶ Le Corbusier persevered in his efforts to find a way out of this dilemma. To the architect Plousey his appeals were more subtle:

To reassure you, I let you know that these houses will be constructed without a visible roof, with a single terrace, that they will have an extremely correct and very careful architecture and that they will be an embellishment rather than a disfigurement.⁶⁷

Le Corbusier said nothing controversial. He kept quiet about his intellectual search for a universal harmony. Nor did he mention *les tracés régulateurs* or reinforced concrete. His choice of words was designed to curry favor. And again in a letter of 18 September to Plousey he supported his plea by using the traditional ploy of exhibition propaganda: "Furthermore, the houses which will be constructed around the square are to be exhibited as a large model at the Salon d'Automne where a place is reserved for me at present under the dome."⁶⁸

Thus, in this rather tense situation Le Corbusier was finally able to secure, on 21 September 1923, the remaining three plots of land at the bottom and on the right of the Square du Docteur Blanche.

The agreement was subject to three conditions. First, his clients had to bear the charges for the private roadway and the cost of its construction. Second, Le Corbusier had to observe the *non aedificandi* covenant of 2.50 meters along the back of the La Roche property. And third, the two large trees on these plots had to be preserved, especially the tree at the end of the private roadway.⁶⁹

In effect, this meant that all the available land would be built upon. Le Corbusier would have to lose one more client and for a fourth time revise his plans for two houses on a frontage of thirty meters.⁷⁰ He was able to exhibit his now dated model (Fig. 33) in the Salon d'Automne, knowing that at last a real opportunity had arrived for him to realize an imaginative architectural synthesis.

On the program formulation Le Corbusier wrote:

These two houses coupled together to form a single block realize two very different problems: one of the houses shelters a family with children and requires a number of small rooms and all the services needed for the running of a household. The other house is destined for a bachelor, owner of a collection of modern paintings and a man passionately fond of *objets d'art*.⁷¹

One must not undervalue the influence of the site limitations on the final solution to this program. Besides the limited area of available land to build on, the plots faced the cold north side of the roadway, neighbors were critical, and height restrictions were set. Within this network of constraints Le Corbusier set to work. And yet for Le Corbusier architecture was not just a simple matter of functional analysis. Architecture had to work, of course, but it had to work beautifully and meaningfully, with emotional as well as rational significance.

The instructions of Le Corbusier's clients must not be forgotten. Lotti Jeanneret wanted a family house with light, air, and modern facilities, while La Roche gave Le Corbusier a free hand in working out the design for his house.⁷² As the building land available lay at the end of the private roadway, it was possible to exploit the idea of living

Figure 33
Model of the La
Roche-Jeanneret houses,
as exhibited in the Salon
d'Automne, 1923. Le
Corbusier's final solution
to the La Roche gallery
was later modified.
(Photograph courtesy of
Archives Fondation Le
Corbusier.)

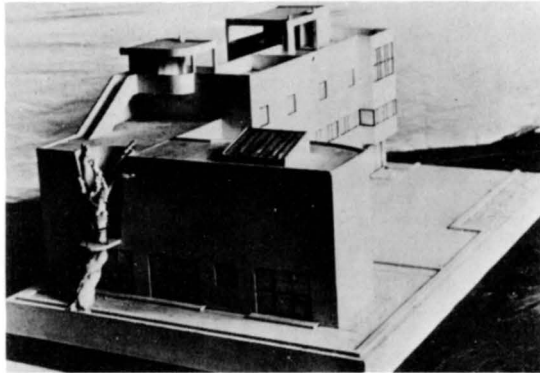


Figure 34
Lotti and Albert
Jeanneret dining on the
roof deck. (Photograph
courtesy of Kerstin Rääf.)



Figure 35
The Jeanneret living
room. (Photograph
courtesy of Kerstin Rääf.)



in a back garden rather than in a street. Thus family life, like the branches of a tree, gravitated toward the upper part of the house into the sunlight and fresh air. Such a progression, from the enclosed compartmentalized spaces of garages and rooms for maids and caretakers, through bedroom and living room floors, finally culminating in the sunlight and a roof garden, was thoroughly consistent with Le Corbusier's lifelong experiences, which taught him to value the divinity of Nature.

For a psychological reaction to this spatial progression one can do no better than draw attention to the comments of clients. Of the roof garden Lotti Jeanneret said, "It was the best area of all."⁷³ Three floors up, cosseted by sunshine and trees, the garden roof-deck was ideal for outdoor dining (Fig. 34), for observing nature, for children's games, and for sunbathing. At night, one could imagine oneself oceanbound on the deck of a liner beneath a canopy of stars.

From this roof garden it was only a flight of stairs to the living room below (Fig. 35). About the impact of this room Lotti Jeanneret has said:

The aim was to capture as much as possible of the sun and the free view in the place where one lives the most. The room is 12.5 meters long, which is the width of the house. The first impression is: light, air, gay coloring. . . . The colors in this big room are white, soft pink, light green, clear blue, dark red-brown, burnt umber, and grey. . . . It is a symphony created by an artist, it is a feast for the eye.⁷⁴

Such a solution took advantage of a light-court to overcome the problem of a cold, northerly site. In the north wall of the living room on the second floor, Le Corbusier used square windows, which provided a visual counterpoint to the strip windows of the south wall.

Although the north façade (Fig. 36) does not visually acknowledge the internal division between the two houses, Le Corbusier's niece Kerstin Rääf conceded: "My sister and I find it a plus that the two

Figure 36

North façade of the La Roche-Jeanneret houses nearing completion, late autumn 1924.

(Photograph courtesy of Archives Fondation Le Corbusier.)



houses are built as one. It makes the façade more beautiful. Our house alone would have been small and less interesting.”⁷⁵

One should not leave this studied facade without mentioning two interesting examples of Le Corbusier’s design intentions. The cantilevered extension on the right side of the Jeanneret house acts as a visual exclamation to halt the eye. Similarly, the small protruding balcony off the La Roche gallery gives visual definition and finality to the other end of the housing complex. This play of one element against another can again be appreciated by comparing the four square windows of the second floor with the adjacent atelier window. Because this atelier window is the main source of light in the north wall, its proportion is greater than its neighboring windows. Thus, Le Corbusier solved both a light and a visual problem by various expressive means, which was distinctive to Le Corbusier’s approach to design.

Below this second floor are the long horizontal strip windows interrupted by the regular reinforced concrete structural grid of the columns. Of the effect of these windows on the bedrooms Lotti Jeanneret has said: “All the bedrooms have low and long windows which give a very homely atmosphere.”

Commenting upon her husband’s bedroom Lotti Jeanneret said: The room is small but sufficient for a person who only spends his nights there. A couch covered with silver grey velvet, two white chairs, a cupboard for clothes, fastened to the wall. . . . “A cell,” said a visitor. “The bedroom of a man with common sense,” answered Le Corbusier.

She continued with a description of her own bedroom (Fig. 37): Further away is my bedroom, a bit more elaborate than the others. Two walls are white, one is burnt umber. Against this wall is a low, large bed covered with velvet in a leopard pattern with white flounces around the sides. Opposite are big cupboards fastened to the wall, stretching from floor to ceiling, painted in light blue, the same as the window sills. . . .⁷⁶

Figure 37
Lotti Jeanneret's
bedroom. (Photograph
courtesy of Kerstin Rääf.)



Figure 38
Temporary lighting in La
Roche's painting gallery,
1925. (Photograph
courtesy of Archives
Fondation Le Corbusier.)



Such simplicity in arrangement and economy of needs and decoration are commonplace today, but one must remember that in 1925 the rich middle class was still thinking in terms of visually complicated and rich interiors on a grand scale. Le Corbusier had clearly begun a reexamination of human needs. He was also deeply committed to the attainment of a visual order, the expression of his conceptual sensibilities.

Le Corbusier treated the Jeanneret house and the domestic portion of the La Roche house in a similar manner. His economy of means and articulation of elements were rigorously controlled to support the conceptual simplicity he sought to express. Overall, the quest for harmony and purity was the ethical and psychological force behind Le Corbusier's work.

There were some technical problems with these houses at Auteuil. The low-pressure hot water boiler in La Roche's house broke down in 1927, 1932, 1934, and again in 1939.⁷⁷ After this rather checkered performance Raoul La Roche wrote to Pierre Jeanneret in April 1939:

On the subject of the central heating, I remind you that this would give complete satisfaction, if it were not for the extremely disagreeable noise that it makes and that can be heard throughout almost the entire house. Could not at least a partial solution be found for this question?⁷⁸

Similar technical problems had to be endured by La Roche in relation to electric lighting (Fig. 38). On 18 October 1925 he wrote to Pierre Jeanneret:

I understand perfectly your hesitations about the way you want eventually to provide lighting in my rooms. But until you have found a very good solution, it is essential that at least I see clearly in my house. For more than six months when I come in I am obliged, especially in my painting gallery, to have makeshift lighting. What must the many visitors think about it and what would you have me say to them?⁷⁹

Not the least troublesome was the low thermal insulation inherent to plastered walls consisting of two skins of lightweight cinder blocks,

held five centimeters apart, in panels between a post and beam reinforced-concrete framework. As Philipp Speiser, a grand nephew of Raoul La Roche, has written: "The only reason [for La Roche] to leave the house in 1963 was his painful arthritis, which made him unable to live longer in the badly insulated house."⁸⁰

Such specific technical problems, following the traditional procedure of French professional offices, were handled (as indicated in the correspondence) by Pierre Jeanneret, who was Le Corbusier's *chef d'études*. In spite of this arrangement, there can be no doubt but that these problems must have caused Le Corbusier some embarrassment, particularly as he was so fond of using machine-age propaganda.

In the formal solution of the La Roche house and gallery, Le Corbusier tried very hard to realize an architectural synthesis in harmony with the spirit of the modern age.

This second house will be rather like an "architectural promenade." You enter: the architectural spectacle at once is evident, you follow an itinerary and the perspectives develop with great variety. You play with the rush of light which falls on the walls or creates shadows. The bays provide perspectives of the exterior where you find again the architectural unity.⁸¹

By poising the gallery at first floor level on slab and *piloti* supports Le Corbusier was able to give expression to the plasticity and variety of his formal program (Fig. 39). By emphasizing the unity of curvilinear and rectilinear geometry he could shape the character of his building and exploit the changing light and shade relationships between these idealized forms. In so doing, he realized fully in building form the nature of the Purist language. From his bedroom balcony La Roche could enjoy a daily Purist experience through the spatial exploration of forms in light.

The raised gallery provides a sense of enclosure to the Square du Docteur Blanche and signals the entrance to the La Roche house. The hallway is a spatial experience in itself. From this point onward one is

increasingly made aware of the nature of cubic volumes. Visually one is compelled forward from under the entrance balcony into the hallway that opens upward in a burst of light from the large studio window above and behind. This sectional element gives the space—seven and a half meters in height—its effect of light and shade.

Above and to the left an overhanging stair landing dramatically signals the direction of the itinerary (Fig. 40). Rising through this dogleg staircase, one is taken away and then brought back to the central hall space, and on the landing one can pause and observe the play of light on the walls and floor. Such is the intensity of light falling on the Purist volume that Le Corbusier could well have written in 1925 what he wrote thirty-three years later of his pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp: “The key is light/and light illuminates shapes/and shapes have an emotional power.”⁸² This principle of light on geometric forms links his early and his late work in direct progression.

Continuing the visual itinerary, one moves forward from the landing to the painting gallery (Fig. 41). Here Le Corbusier’s intentions were clear. La Roche’s collection specifically from the Parisian school of Cubist and Purist painters gave Le Corbusier, whose own paintings were displayed in the gallery, the unique opportunity to match the significance of this collection in architecture.

Upon entering the painting gallery, one is directed in the spatial progression by the curved wall and ramp (Fig. 42). Le Corbusier relied upon the potency of these poetic elements to indicate the direction of the itinerary wherein one turns back along the length of the gallery as one rises up the ramp along the curving wall to the final destination of the library above.

The poetic elements needed to be highly charged if they were to fulfill their psychological and symbolic functions; in this last idealized gesture Le Corbusier found himself in some difficulty. Visually he re-

Figure 39
Bay view from La Roche's domestic balcony toward the painting gallery. Here Le Corbusier is expressing the varied functional-symbolic curved and rectilinear elements, and therefore the sense of structure is suppressed. (Photograph by Russell Walden.)

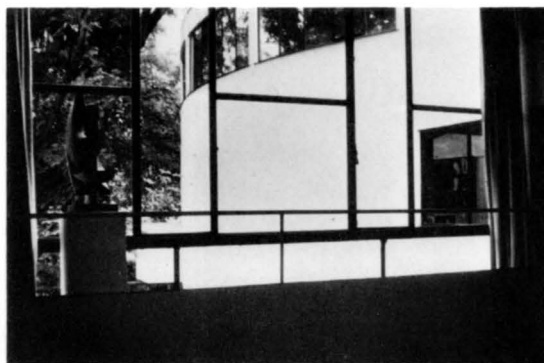


Figure 40
View from the opposite side of La Roche's hallway showing the first-floor stair landing and the library above. (Photograph by Russell Walden.)



Figure 41
Raoul La Roche seated in
his painting gallery
among the Cubist
paintings of Juan Gris
and the sculpture of
Jacques Lipchitz.
(Photograph courtesy of
Thomas Speiser.)



Figure 42
The curved ramp in La
Roche's painting gallery.
(Photograph by Russell
Walden.)



quired a ramp, but the steepness with which it had to rise made it impractical to use, for one cannot really descend the ramp without losing balance or gripping the rail with both hands. Such a problem indicates just how far Le Corbusier was prepared to go to ensure the fulfillment of his philosophical intentions and formal program. In this instance the higher symbolic functions of the program took precedence over more practical considerations.

In preserving the purity of his design concept, Le Corbusier was ruthlessly consistent, fully exposing his idealistic and Rousseauist sympathies. Like all visionaries, Le Corbusier was deeply committed to the preservation of *all* the dimensions of his vision. He could be as interested in details as in the large-scale city plan. In architecture as well as in *urbanisme* Le Corbusier tried to mobilize the idealists in his campaign against the abuses of the established order. Because of his sympathies with the tradition of social thought that stretched back to Rousseau, Le Corbusier was able to fascinate and disturb in a way that few architects in the twentieth century have managed to do.

Le Corbusier sought to bring together spatial, visual, social, and technical elements in his new architecture, and in the Auteuil houses this reintegration was first and most potently demonstrated. On this back-garden site Le Corbusier first crystallized the precise yet dramatic geometrical forms in a Purist spatial synthesis. He “created a building of manifest architectural quality, using the materials of workmen’s dwellings.”⁸³ By giving his design intentions precedence over the technical and standardized vocabulary he used, Le Corbusier not only took up a highly individual position but he also exposed his idealistic and philosophical lineage.

Ultimately, however, an architect’s work has to be judged by his client, and in this light the final words must be left to Raoul La Roche. I quote *in extenso* his letter of 13 March 1925 to Le Corbusier.

I thank you for the letter which you handed me last night at the moment of the inauguration of my house, 10 Square du Docteur Blanche.

This house gives me great joy and I convey to you my gratitude. You have brought to completion an admirable work which, I am convinced, will mark an epoch in the history of architecture.

Firstly the house contains, at different points of view, innovations which have allowed technical progress but which up until now architects have not thought to use; the success of these innovations will mean that they will be used more and more and the credit is yours for having worked them out.

But what especially moves me are these constant elements which are found in all the great works of architecture, but which one meets so rarely in modern constructions. Your ability to link our epoch to the preceding ones in this way is particularly great. You have "overrun the problem" and made a work of plastic art.

In confiding the construction of my house to you, I knew that you would make a thing of great beauty; my hopes have been more than fulfilled. The relative independence of my life has allowed me to leave you free to work according to your ideas and I can only be well pleased with the result thus obtained.

The price of a work such as this which you have just completed cannot be calculated; if I offer you, as a result, a small supplement in the form of a 5HP Citroën, I shall not feel that I have paid my debt of gratitude toward you. I would rather offer it to you as a souvenir and as a most useful instrument for the work of Paris architects. Will you be so kind as to accept it as such and to let me know what model you prefer.⁸⁴

Surely no client was more pleased with the completion of a modern building.

Finally, I should like to turn to what Le Corbusier thought of the La Roche-Jeanneret houses. It is fortunate that a record was made of an interview with him two months before his death in August 1965. When asked which of his works he regarded as essential and was fondest of, Le Corbusier cited as his first example, "La Maison La Roche. It was a crisis, and it was also an open door . . . a point of departure."⁸⁵ It is quite clear from this admission, made as his life was

drawing to a close, that Le Corbusier considered the La Roche-Jeanneret houses an important landmark in his career.

Thus, with the completion of these Auteuil houses by March 1925,⁸⁶ Le Corbusier's formative development was complete. The Auteuil houses can be regarded as epitomizing his intellectual and spiritual position following World War I. Le Corbusier could now eagerly look forward to giving his next shock to the sensibilities of the architects of Paris. With the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs just around the corner, and his Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau in his mind's eye, Le Corbusier could look down upon Paris from his attic window above the Rue Jacob, and in the spirit of Rastignac, the hero of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, he could defiantly exclaim, "*A nous deux maintenant!*"

1 I have taken the date of Jeanneret's arrival in Paris during World War I from the evidence supplied by his Swiss passport, which was officially stamped by the Prefecture of Police, Paris, on 29 October 1916. This document gave Jeanneret a residence permit and stated that his occupation was architect. I am grateful to Brian Brace Taylor for drawing my attention to Jeanneret's passport, held in the Archives Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris (hereafter AFLC).

Jeanneret's passport records the first shift in his professional activities to Paris, though because the Villa Schwob was under construction he seems to have commuted between La Chaux-de-Fonds and Paris. This was definitely brought to a halt with Jeanneret's dismissal as job architect for the Villa late in January 1917. See Maurice Favre, "Le Corbusier à travers un dossier inédit et un roman peu connu," in the *Musée Neuchâtelois*, no. 2, 1974, p. 54.

All the French documents supporting this paper have been translated by my wife, Helen Walden. The German documents have been translated by Igor Kolodotschko, and the Swedish article written by Lotti Jeanneret was translated for me by her daughter Kerstin Rääf, niece of Le Corbusier.

- 2 In a letter from Paris to William Ritter of La Chaux-de-Fonds, dated 26 January 1917 (Archives Bibliothèque Nationale, Berne), Jeanneret stated that he had moved into an apartment at 20 Rue Jacob, Paris VI^e. The letter also referred to his provisional installation in an office at 13 Rue de Belzunce, Paris X^e. This office was adjacent to that of the Société d'Applications du Béton Armé, which was based at 11 Rue de Belzunce. He used this office until 1 October 1917, when he moved to 29 bis Rue d'Asstorg, Paris VIII^e.
- 3 "Embarrassment" denotes Jeanneret's professional dilemma with reference to the cost of the Villa Schwob. On 23 January 1917, a bill of quantities revealed that the Villa Schwob would cost approximately 100,000 Sw.F. more than Jeanneret or his client had anticipated. See Maurice Favre, "Le Corbusier à travers un dossier inédit et un roman peu connu," pp. 53–55.
- 4 Le Corbusier, letter from Paris to Monsieur Louis Secretan at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 12 July 1961, sent 27 July 1961. Archives Bibliothèque de La Chaux-de-Fonds, ref. Af 15.
- 5 Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse*, Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1935. English edition: *The Radiant City*, London, 1967, p. 12.
- 6 Paul Turner, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de Le Cor-*

Notes

- busier avant 1930*, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris, 1970, p. 3. Le Corbusier owned Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (acquired 1909), his *Modernité et surnaturalisme*, Paris, 1924, and his *La Peinture romantique*, Paris, 1924.
- 7 Ronald Grimsley, *The Philosophy of Rousseau*, Oxford University Press, 1973.
 - 8 Russell Walden, provisionally entitled "Le Corbusier, Ideals and Realities," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham.
 - 9 Pierre Hirsch, *attaché de recherches*, Bibliothèque de La Chaux-de-Fonds, in a letter to Russell Walden, 8 November 1973.
 - 10 Turner, *Catalogue*, p. 11. Le Corbusier's copy of the illustrated work of Rousseau was printed in 1851.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 12. Le Corbusier bought the ten volumes of Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, 1854, with his first paycheck from Auguste Perret in August 1908.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 5. Le Corbusier acquired the two volumes of Auguste Choisy's *Histoire de l'architecture* in 1913.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 - 14 Françoise Choay, *L'Urbanisme: utopies et réalités, une anthologie*, Paris, 1965.
 - 15 John Tarn, *Five Per Cent Philanthropy*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 16.
 - 16 Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (German edition published in 1918), English edition, London, 1935. Paperback edition, 1955, p. 48.
 - 17 Catherine Bauer Wurster, "The Social Front of Modern Architecture in the 1930s," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Yale University Press, March 1965, vol. 24, no. 1, p. 48.
 - 18 Leslie Martin and Lionel March, *Urban Space and Structures*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, pp. 28–54.
 - 19 Jeanneret's dealings with the Société d'Applications du Béton Armé can be verified by correspondence dating from 7 April 1917 to 3 January 1919, AFLC.
 - 20 C. E. Jeanneret, Sketchbook "A2," 1915, AFLC. I am grateful to Silvia Sutton of Boston, Mass., for drawing my attention to this point.
 - 21 Max du Bois, letter from Antibes to Russell Walden, 20 February 1974.
 - 22 C. E. Jeanneret, letter from Paris to Monsieur A. Lavandière, D.P.L.G., in Lausanne, 20 April 1919, AFLC.
 - 23 Turner, *Catalogue*, p. 3. Le Corbusier's copy of Anatole

- de Baudot's *L'Architecture: le passé, le présent* was a 1916 edition printed in Paris.
- 24 Tony Garnier, letter from Saint-Rambert, Rhône, to C. E. Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 13 December 1915, AFLC.
 - 25 Brian Brace Taylor, *Le Corbusier et Pessac*, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris, 1972, pp. 3–4.
 - 26 Le Corbusier, *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1925. New edition, Paris, 1966, p. 217.
 - 27 For an explanation of the legal proceedings of the Villa Schwob see Maurice Favre, "Le Corbusier à travers un dossier inédit et un roman peu connu," pp. 49–59; the translation of it appears in this book.
 - 28 C. E. Jeanneret, letter from Paris to Léon Perrin, sculptor, at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 12 June 1920, AFLC.
 - 29 C. E. Jeanneret, letter from Paris to Madame Anatole Schwob at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 9 October 1920, AFLC.
 - 30 Charles Morice, "Nécessité présente du travail intellectuel," in the Paris newspaper *L'Homme libre*, 20 December 1917, p. 1, AFLC.
 - 31 Amédée Ozenfant was born in 1886 at Saint-Quentin, Picardy. Son of a building contractor, he studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and painting at the Académie de la Palette, Paris. He founded a patriotic journal *L'Élan* in 1915. He was cofounder of Purism and *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Ozenfant's *Mémoires 1886–1962*, edited by Katia Granoff, were published posthumously in Paris in 1968.
 - 32 Maximilien Gauthier, *Le Corbusier ou l'architecture au service de l'homme*, Paris, 1944, p. 40.
 - 33 Raoul Albert La Roche was born 3 February 1889 at Basel. Son of a banker, he was educated in Basel, and at the Ecole de Commerce of Neuchâtel. He underwent training in banking in Basel and Paris, with short periods in Berlin and London. He settled in Paris in 1911. Later he became head of the foreign section of the Crédit Commercial de France. He was also President of the Swiss Society in Paris. He was a collector of French modern art, a client and lifelong friend of Le Corbusier. La Roche died two months before Le Corbusier in June 1965. See *Basler Nachrichten*, 17 June 1965, no. 250, for his obituary.
 - 34 See *Raoul La Roche (1889–1965)*, a commemorative brochure by the Fondation Le Corbusier, 23 October 1970, p. 2.

- 35 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to Ozenfant, 16 April 1925, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 506.
- 36 Ozenfant and Jeanneret, *Après le Cubisme*, Paris, 1918, and *La Peinture moderne*, Paris, 1925.
- 37 The first Purist art exhibition was held between December 1918 and January 1919 at Germaine Bongard's boutique, later renamed Galerie Thomas. The second took place from 22 January to 5 February 1921 at the Galerie Druet, 20 Rue Royale. See *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no. 7, pp. 807–832.
- 38 The plans for Amédée Ozenfant's house at 53 Avenue Reille, Paris XIV^e, were done in 1922; the construction was completed in 1923.
- 39 Amédée Ozenfant, *Mémoires 1886–1962*, Paris, 1968, p. 102.
- 40 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1910–29*, 1964 edition, p. 11.
- 41 Ozenfant and Jeanneret, *Après le Cubisme*, preface.
- 42 Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art* (French edition 1928), New York, 1952, p. 326.
- 43 Ozenfant, *Mémoires 1886–1962*, p. 105.
- 44 Herbert Tint, *France Since 1918*, London, 1970, p. 9.
- 45 Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems 1908–1959*, London, 1975, p. 101.
- 46 Pierre Emery, letter from Geneva to Russell Walden, 7 February 1974. "Par contre, il me semble que personne n'a parlé de la portée de l'oeuvre de Cervantès sur L.C. Il disait faire de *Don Quichotte* son livre de chevet. En 1946, ma femme et moi avons relié, en peau poilue de vieille chèvre (c'est lui qui l'avait demandé ainsi) l'édition de jeunesse du *Don Quichotte*, annotée par lui, à laquelle il tenait par-dessus tout et qui était dans un état lamentable."
- 47 Turner, *Catalogue*, p. 10. In 1919 Jeanneret purchased *Du Côté de chez Swann* (1913) and *A l'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (1918), the first two books of Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu*.
- 48 Franz Meyer, "Die Schenkungen Raoul La Roche an das Kunstmuseum," Separatabzug aus dem Jahresbericht 1963 der Öffentlichen Kunstsammlung Basel, p. 47.
- 49 Raoul La Roche, letter to C. E. Jeanneret, 4 November 1923, AFLC. From the sketches of paintings in this letter that La Roche had purchased it is possible to account for the following: *Livre, pipe et verre*, 1918, pencil sketch, 46 x 55 cm.; *Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes et au livre*,

- 1920, 81 × 100 cm.; *Composition à la guitare et à la lanterne*, 1920, 81 × 100 cm.; *Nature morte claire*, 1922, 114 × 146 cm.; and *Bouteille de vin rouge*, 1922, 60 × 73 cm.
- 50 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to La Roche, 22 March 1920, AFLC.
- 51 The shares were set at 1,000 francs each, but La Roche made four payments of 1,250 francs for his five shares. The first payment was acknowledged by Jeanneret on June 1920 and the second on 13 September 1920, AFLC.
- 52 La Roche's volumes of *L'Esprit Nouveau* are now in the Kunstmuseum in Basel.
- 53 Ozenfant, *Mémoires 1886–1962*, p. 117. Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's Cubist collection of eight hundred paintings and drawings, dated between 1907 and 1914, was confiscated by the French government at the outbreak of war in 1914, because of Kahnweiler's German nationality.
- 54 Most of Raoul La Roche's art collection was bequeathed to the Kunstmuseum in Basel. A small number of paintings were also given to the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris and to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyons.
- 55 Comment recalled by Raoul La Roche in a letter to C. E. Jeanneret, 24 May 1926, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 506 bis.
- 56 Ozenfant, *Mémoires 1886–1962*, p. 48.
- 57 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1910–29*, 1964 edition, p. 58. The first sketch design for a villa at the entrance to the Square du Docteur Blanche at Auteuil has been described by the editor, Willy Boesiger, as the "Premier projet de la maison double (La Roche et Albert Jeanneret)." Until Albert Jeanneret married Lotti Rääf in June 1923, such a project was not financially possible for him; therefore, this first project must have been for La Roche himself.
- It is interesting to compare this sketch design with the brief given to Jeanneret for Amédée Ozenfant's house at 53 Avenue Reille, Paris XIV^e, built 1922–1923. See Ozenfant, *Mémoires 1886–1962*, p. 126.
- 58 Pierre Emery, letter to Russell Walden, 7 February 1974.
- 59 Albert Jeanneret (1886–1973) studied the violin at the Royal Conservatory in Berlin and later taught the violin at the Institut de Ribaupierre at Vevey in Switzerland. He was a follower of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the master of rhythmic composition. In 1919 Le Corbusier had him come to Paris where he first taught at the Schola Can-

torum, before opening his own school, the French School of Rhythm and Body Education. He wrote twenty-five symphonies for "sound elements." He also founded an orchestra for children whom he enthusiastically introduced to his experiences in sound.

At the beginning of the Second World War Albert Jeanneret returned to Switzerland and settled in the house at Vevey that Le Corbusier had built for his parents.

He composed the "Symphony of Exchanges" for the National Exhibition of 1964 and in 1970 he received the *Prix de la Fondation "Pro Arte"* at Berne.

For his obituary, see *Feuille d'Avis de Vevey*, no. 96, 26 April 1973, p. 14.

- 60 Lotti Rääf (1887–1973), Swedish journalist, was born in Halmstd, Sweden. After an unhappy first marriage she went to Paris in 1922, where she studied French at the University and started as a pupil of Albert Jeanneret at his Jaques-Dalcroze School of Rhythm in the Rue de Stockholm. They were married in June 1923, and lived at 10 Square du Docteur Blanche at Auteuil, with Lotti Rääf's two daughters, Brita and Kerstin Rääf, from the winter of 1924 until 1938.

This information is from Kerstin Rääf in a letter to Russell Walden, 16 December 1973.

- 61 Lotti Jeanneret, "Mitt hus i Paris av Le Corbusier," in the Swedish journal *Svenska hem och trädgårdstidningen*, no. 3, 1958, pp. 49–52. This article was sent to me by Kerstin Rääf.
- 62 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to J. M. Esnault, 29 August 1923, AFLC.
- 63 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to M. Plousey, 14 August 1923, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 101.
- 64 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to J. M. Esnault, 29 August 1923.
- 65 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to J. M. Esnault, 12 September 1923, AFLC.
- 66 Raoul La Roche, letter to C. E. Jeanneret, 6 August 1923, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 0.
- 67 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to M. Plousey, 14 August 1923, AFLC.
- 68 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to M. Plousey, 18 September 1923, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 102.
- 69 M. Plousey, letter to C. E. Jeanneret, 21 September 1923, AFLC, Dossier Maison Jeanneret-Rääf, ref. 84.
- 70 C. E. Jeanneret, letter to M. Plousey, 24 October 1923, AFLC, Dossier Maison Jeanneret-Rääf, ref. 89.

- 71 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1910–29*, 1964 edition, p. 60.
- 72 Raoul La Roche, letter to C. E. Jeanneret, 4 January 1924, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. A and B.
- 73 Lotti Jeanneret, “Mitt hus i Paris av Le Corbusier,” p. 52.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Kerstin Rääf in a letter to Russell Walden, 22 January 1974.
- 76 Lotti Jeanneret, “Mitt hus i Paris av Le Corbusier,” p. 51.
- 77 Raoul La Roche, letters to Pierre Jeanneret, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, 27 December 1927, ref. 364; 13 April 1934, ref. 372; 3 January 1939, ref. 391.
- 78 Raoul La Roche, letter to Pierre Jeanneret, 3 April 1939, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 72.
- 79 Raoul La Roche, letter to Pierre Jeanneret, 18 October 1925, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 235.
- 80 Philipp Speiser, letter to Russell Walden, 8 March 1974.
- 81 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1910–29*, 1964 edition, p. 60.
- 82 Le Corbusier, *The Chapel at Ronchamp*, London, 1957, p. 27.
- 83 Le Corbusier, *My Work*, London, 1960, p. 68.
- 84 Raoul La Roche, letter to Charles-Edouard and Pierre Jeanneret, 13 March 1925, AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. 13 bis.
- 85 This interview with Le Corbusier on a record entitled “L’Architecture contemporaine” was produced by Réalisations Sonores Hugues Desalle, Paris. The record bears the date of his death, 27 August 1965.
- 86 Refer to AFLC, Dossier Villa La Roche, ref. A and B, 4 January 1924—construction commenced; ref. 13 bis, 13 March 1925—construction completed and inauguration. AFLC, Dossier Maison Jeanneret-Rääf, ref. 90, 25 October 1923—construction commenced; ref. 156, 20 February 1925—construction completed.

This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/5146.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5146.001.0001)

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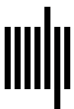
DOI: [10.7551/mitpress/5146.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5146.001.0001)

ISBN (electronic): 9780262367882

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 1982

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from The National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Humanities Open Book Program.



The MIT Press

First MIT Press paperback edition, 1982

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Open access edition funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Humanities Open Book Program.

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This book was set in Univers by DEKR Corporation printed on R&E Book by Murray Printing Company and bound in G.S.B. #9 by Murray Printing Company in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

The Open hand.

Includes index.

1. Jeanneret-Gris, Charles Édouard, 1887-1965—Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Architecture, Modern—20th century—Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Walden, Russell.

NA1053.J4063 720'.92'4 76-40046

ISBN 0-262-23074-7 (hard)

0-262-73062-6 (paper)