

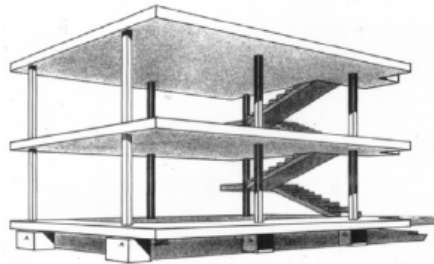
The Lesson On Le Corbusier: The painterly element in Le Corbusier's purist architecture

The modern man, architect of tomorrow, Le Corbusier; the grandfather of modern architecture, the inventor, and the catalyst for creating new discourses of building and re-thinking architecture. Le Corbusier had witnessed the era of machine advancements and their effects on reforming humanity, economies of scale, and reshaping the static life that human beings have been living for decades and perhaps centuries. He kept in touch with these exponential inventions and forecasted on the future of the modern man. His awareness and interest in modernly advanced artefacts of technologies at that time led him to surf over many notions of arts, history, and sciences. He realized the universal relationship between mathematics and art. As a result, in 1920's together with his friend Amée Ozenfant, wrote many articles on this topic where they started together an avant-garde magazine "L'Esprit Nouveau" in Paris. In the articles, they both criticized discourses and manifested new doctrines. They have situated architecture and the art of modern life in relation to emerging technologies, cinema as merging art, psychoanalysis, and politics.



• Artist - Max Bill - The New Spirit
Museum für Gestaltung-Swiss exhibition

Le Corbusier, also perceived the effect of technologies on architecture when he encountered a new way of building construction at the architectural studios of Auguste and Gustave Perret in Paris, and Peter Behrens in Berlin. He illustrated these innovative building methods in the "Dom-Ino" Archigram in which free plan slabs are manifested throughout pillars on their edge, and a staircase connecting several layers of the concrete skeletal forming new typology of architecture. The latter has set a free field of architectural experimentations and rejuvenation since the time of Le Corbusier, till our contemporary days.



• Dom Ino - Research Gate

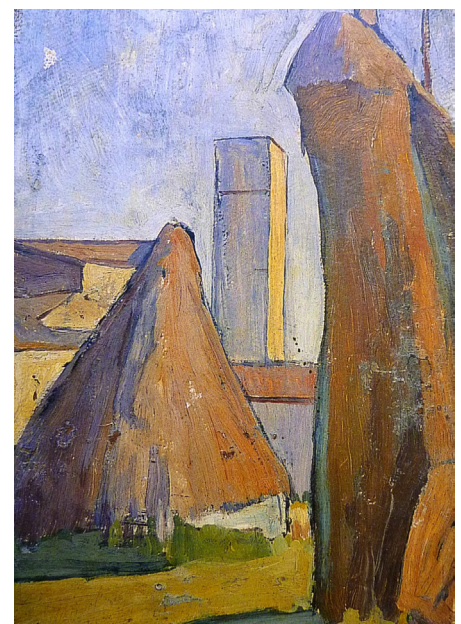
Nevertheless, the melange of plasticity, sensitivity, purity, and then the derivation of colour palette on one hand; and the medley of engineering and architecture, on the other hand, are well preserved and obvious in his architectural accumulated production.

Le Corbusier was sensitive to many artistic movements back then, and he judged and criticized many notions and disciplines of art. For him, art is an inspirational tool which an architect could learn from and perhaps reshape his skills. The architect was inspired by Frederick Etchells, Charles l'eplattenier, and many more. His artistic tendency was evident in his early years in Paris when he met and collaborated with the painter Ozenfant where they both contributed to the artistic/literacy circles in Paris. Under Ozenfant's tutelage, Le Corbusier took up painting and they joined together in many exhibitions where they shared the rational and lucid pictorial language of Purism. Purism was the successor to Cubism according to Ozenfant. They published the booklet manifesto *Après le Cubisme* (after Cubism).



• Charles l'eplattenier Swiss, *Bassins du Doubs*, Oil on canvas MOMA

In their joint-venture the avant-garde magazine; "L'Esprit Nouveau", they strongly insisted that architecture is the art which has an intellectual order, a mathematical order, and it's expressed by order and economy. They described the economy as the law of natural selection "mechanical election" where man has created everything according to this notion. These notions respond to his imperative needs and suit the need of maximum capacity, which in return is the manifestation of purification.



• Frederick and Jessie Etchells Painting,
oil on canvas MOMA

In addition, they arose the idea of conception, where "God" the creator/artist should put himself in a certain state of mind before picking up his tools.

Moreover, the notion of composition was the optimum interrelation between art and architectural elements in its three-dimensional aspect. Yet, the unity in plasticity is a homogeneous relationship between surface and volume which is a result of the play of densities distribution and the values of light and shadow, in which this fact reflected on the analysis of colours in paintings in relation to architectural forms.

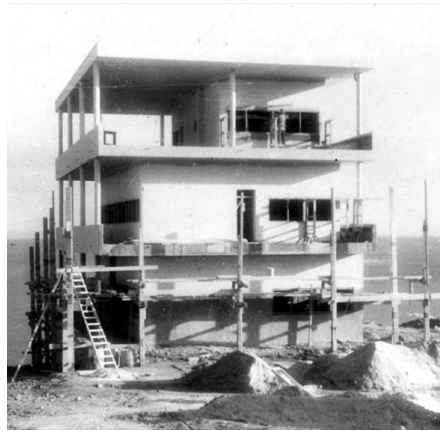


• Le Corbusier Still life 1920 oil on canvas



• Ozenfant still life with glass of red wine 1921

Furthermore, they have also highlighted on the notion plasticity in relation to the sensations, and they have categorized it as primary and secondary sensations, fixed sensation, and the series of associations. From this idea, I want to intervene on this topic with a remarkable example of Le Corbusier's early works in 1920's Villa Biaseau

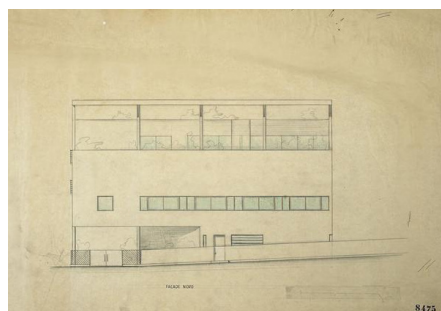
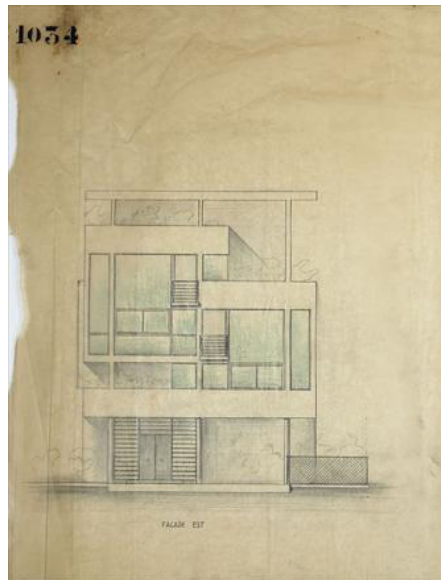


• Old footage of Maison Biaseau - Construction Process

in Carthage-Tunisia, where I want to associate its facade with Mondrian's painting.

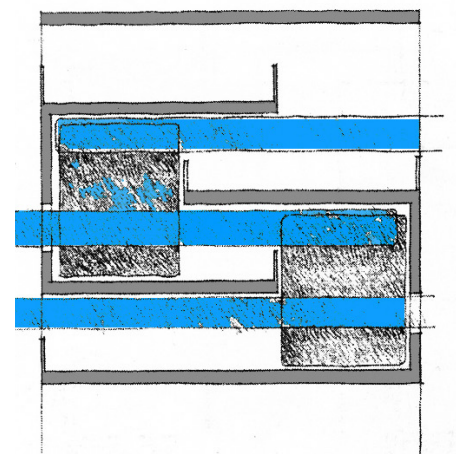
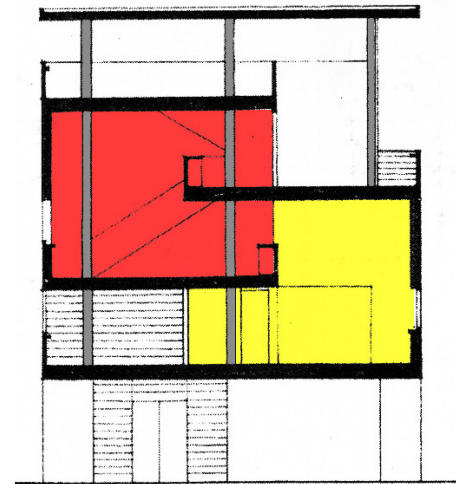
The distant connection between Purism and the De Stijl movement in The Netherlands have affected Le Corbusier unconsciously.

His several attempts on villa Baizeau



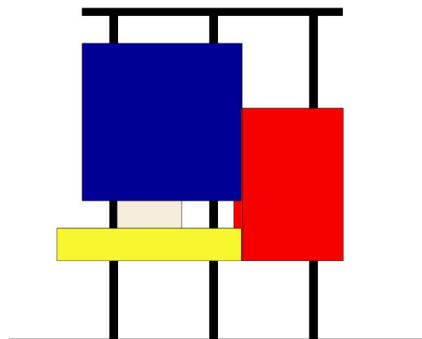
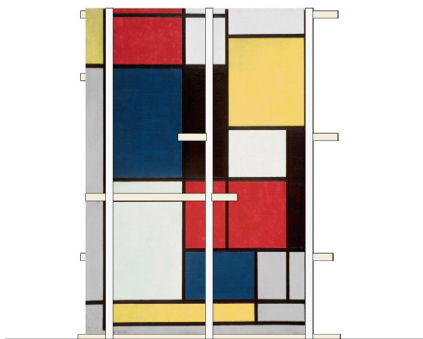
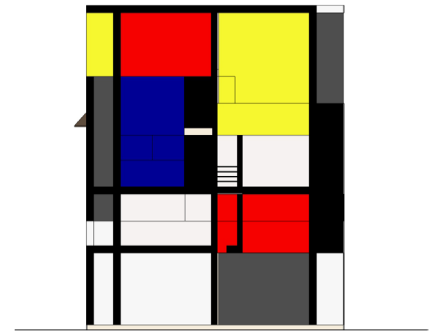
• First and second attempts - Facade Study

have clearly shown that it was designed as an amalgamation of Villa Citrohan and Dom-ino model. Its interlocking spaces are clearly illustrated in the cross-sectional diagrams by introducing double-height spaces, and a roof shading parasol for aeration purposes and the exploitation of the free plan. It is also illustrated by introducing the wide horizontal vitrage (glazing) superimposed on the skin (facades), in addition to the recessed ground floor plan which elevates the mass on free-standing pillars.

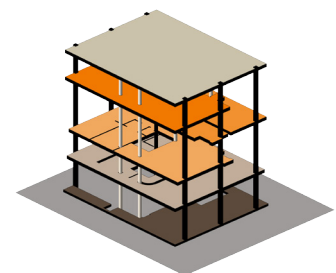
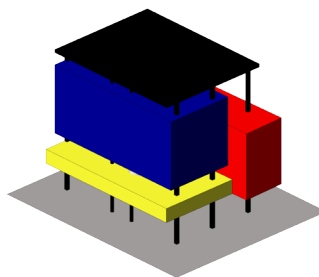
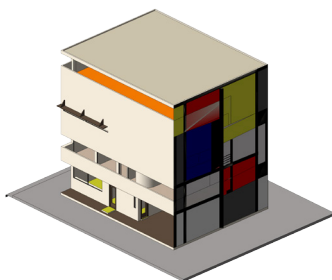


• Schematic Sections representing the volumetric formulation Vs aeration analysis:
"Trying to avoid the sun while assuring a constant ventilation in the house. The cross section provides the following solutions: the house carries an umbrella which shades the interior rooms; from the ground floor to the upper level the interior space flows from one room to another, thus establishing a constant air current. The final execution was based upon a second project which involved several essential modifications."

Yet, sometimes those columns are embedded as part of the building's facades, forming a grid indissociable to a Piet Mondrian paintings, in which I want to highlight on through the following diagrams:

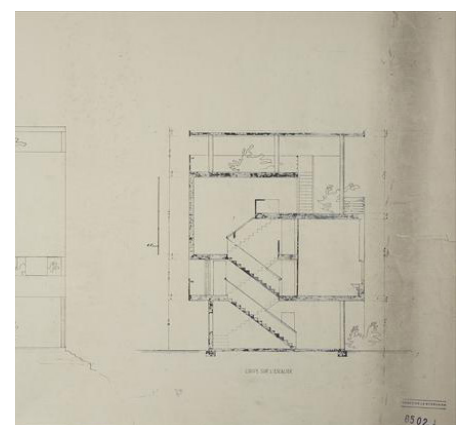
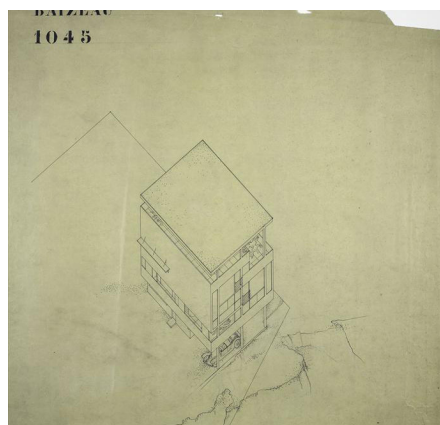


- Facade analysis, grid abstraction, and association with Mondrian's painting

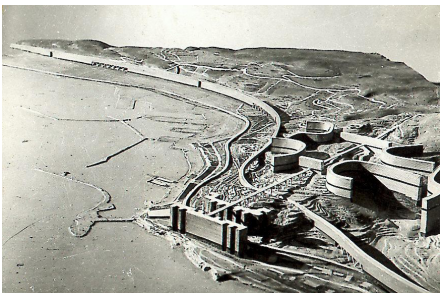


- Axonometric analysis, Skeletal abstraction of the grid, a superimpose of modrian 2D into 3D

Nevertheless, Mr Baizeau rejected the first two attempts and imposed his own reflections on the final design. A hybrid evolution of the Maison Dom-ino, as the as-built scheme features large cantilevered terraces, which serves as horizontal solar shades and also create a climate control by generating air-corridors in the building. The architect never visited the site, and a local contractor hired by the client supervised the construction.



This example and many other examples, reflect on the endless duality which Le Corbusier lived and how an ambiguous man he was as he was full of contradictions. "I'm a double character, Man Ray the Poet, the artist Vs the Prophet". His latest works imply his tendency to transform his paradigms into architectural thinking. He appreciated plasticity, yet we can sense the rigid forms in his early works. However, he later came back to this notion in his later work in the velourical-shaped of the Ron-Champ cathedral as well as in the organic curved proposed city of Algérie master plan. Then we can see him retreating from his colour palette in his project Cité de Refuge, where primary un-earthly colours are crystal clear on the facades.



• Algérie masterplan

Le Corbusier was no doubt one of a kind architect of his time. He was a reformist who learned from the past, analyzed it, and added to it as a surplus of architecture. His tens of books, hundreds of articles, paintings, sculptures, and architectural works created his legacy. In association and in comparison to our modern days, one can position a great name Rem Koolhaas, an alternative to the postmodern era. Yet, still, nobody had the chance to witness a transformational epoch after Le Corbusier's.

One can slightly relate the globalization and the Americanization as a phase in humanity, economy, and politics which derived a huge step towards technologies and communications. Yet, it hasn't changed the notion of architecture as a whole. Architecture in the post-modernism could be subjected

to criticism easily. Common people are blaming architects for being in-human as they serve their desires and not the mass. We should learn from the past and observe the megalithic structures which are still standing strong till now. They were impossible to replicate, unidentified, yet sustainable, and many civilizations had inherited them and used them. That is true architecture, and history is on its way to be written again, and the idea of the primitive hut of Marc-Antoine Laugier is no more valid with the recent excavations. Yes, we should re-think architecture again, and always from a new starting point. We are looking forward to a new phenomenology "Dom-Ino", a totally un-expected architectural paradigm, accompanied with unconventional building technologies. Maybe this time, the Dom-Ino would be more vernacular, preserving its identity and charter, and blocked from manipulating the nature and the human social behaviour.

Personal Reflection:

Today the future of architecture is vague and virtual. The need of space is reducing with time. Museums, Libraries, Banks, Hospitals, Parks, Civic Centers, Religious Facilities, Schools,

new forms of architecture will come through clothing and fashion, or maybe through compact objects which transforms into dwells, or field use on spot. Maybe a surface won't be part of architecture anymore, and levitated structures would be dominant. Unlimited possibilities of inventions and reinventions.



• Cité de refuge



• Ron champ Chathedral

and Universities will be abandon with the advancement of cutting-edge technologies. Reinventing new typologies is becoming part of the history of architecture. I haven't heard any recent invention of a new typology since the invention of the aeroplane where an airport was a new typology to be added to the list. The architecture will survive on an individual basis only, so personal just like prosthetics. Maybe,

Resources:

- **Foundation Le Corbusier website**
- <https://modernistarchitecture.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/le-corbusier-and-amedee-ozenfant%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%99Cpurism%E2%80%99D-1921/>
- <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/leonard-lauder-research-center/programs-and-resources/index-of-cubist-art-collectors/le-corbusier>
- **Vers une Architecture**
- **Raumplan vs. plan libre book**
- **Le Corbusier: A Life Hardcover – Deckle Edge, November 11, 2008**

Thank you!