

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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Press Preview Monday,
January 28, 2 -4 p.m.

An exhibition of recent buildings in Europe and India by Le Corbusier*, whose work has had "a more decisive effect on the course of architecture in our time than that of any other architect" will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from January 29 through April 15. The exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and will later be shown at the Art Institute of Chicago.

The exhibition was selected and installed by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design. It includes 13 buildings executed since 1945 which are shown in large color transparencies installed in specially built light boxes. They include government buildings, a chapel and a priory, apartment houses and private houses, a museum, and Le Corbusier's first work in the United States, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts now under construction at Harvard University.

Specially built diagrammatic models and black and white photographs in a separate gallery illustrate the principles of design which first established Le Corbusier's fame in the 1920s.

"Since the end of World War II, Le Corbusier's major commissions have usually required great economy," Mr. Drexler points out. "Roughly textured surfaces of raw concrete, for example, were at first a by-product of cheap construction, but now are a deliberate and carefully cultivated source of strength. Where his early work drew on forms related to painting, his later work is sculptural. Where the earlier buildings strove for lightness, elegance and apparent simplicity, the recent buildings are restless, intricate, sculpturally dense and often aggressive to the point of brutality."

Six of the buildings exhibited have been built in India where Le Corbusier has done much of his major work in the past decade. These include the Capital buildings at Chandigarh, "a monument that ranks with the greatest architectural achievements of the past." The three that have been completed thus far and are shown are: the Secretariat Building (1950-54), a thin slab 775 feet long and nine stories high, handled as a long wall with frequent changes in texture and rhythm; the Courts of Justice (1950-56), and the Palace of the Assembly (1950-61), designed almost as a pedestal for the monumental forms on its roof and in some ways the most adventurous of all.

*Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret) born in 1887.

Other Indian buildings shown are an office building and entertainment center for the local textile industry (1951-54), in which the exterior concrete sun shades are placed at a 45 degree angle almost concealing the glass wall; the Shodhan House (1952-56), in which multi-level terraces are sheltered by a single flat roof pierced to admit light; and a Museum of Knowledge ⁽¹⁹⁵⁴⁻⁵⁷⁾. The latter, a partial realization of an ideal museum proposed by Le Corbusier in 1929, has galleries arranged in a square spiral. The building may be expanded by wrapping additional layers of galleries around it.

Le Corbusier's conception of the apartment house is a kind of self-contained village, a single building incorporating a shopping center, hotel and recreation facilities, and a nursery. This idea is shown at its best in the Marseilles Unite d'Habitation (1946-52), which contains 337 duplex apartments on monumental pilotis with a gymnasium, child's pool, cafe, and sprinters track on the roof and a shopping center, post office and other facilities on the 7th and 8th floors. Similar projects in Nantes-Reze and in Berlin are also included in the exhibition.

The Jaoul Houses in Neuilly near Paris, Mr. Drexler says, have most conspicuously influenced a post-war tendency toward heavier, more sculpturally defined forms. "The massive concrete lintels with their decorative projections, the rough brick and the vaults of unequal widths all contribute to the impression of compact power these small buildings convey."

In the Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp (1950-54), which occupies the hilltop site of an ancient church destroyed during World War II, Le Corbusier has carried architecture further toward sculpture than he has in any other work of his entire career. The main wall of the entrance elevation is itself a giant abstract sculpture; its rectangular openings are filled with clear and colored glass.

The Dominican Priory of La Tourette (1956-59), on a sloping site overlooking a forest near Lyon, Mr. Drexler ranks among the most beautiful of Le Corbusier's recent works. Three of the four wings stand free of the ground on piers. The roof is planted with grass to provide a quiet walk sheltered by high walls.

Models and photographs illustrating Le Corbusier's principles of design as demonstrated in buildings dating from the twenties and thirties are shown in an adjoining study gallery. One series illustrates his use of pilotis (pillars or piers) that hold a building above the ground, leaving the area below free for a sheltered walk or terrace. The second illustrates his treatment of walls and the problems of sun control which led to the development of protective grilles called brise-soleil (sun breakers) which in turn have been exploited for their sculptural qualities. The third shows how Le Corbusier has used the roofs of his buildings both as "architectural promenades" in which plant material is usually kept to a minimum and as miniature gardens without architectural detail.

Photographs and additional material available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

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