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**The Image of the City and the Rhetoric of the Oxymoron.
Le Corbusier and the Apartment of Charles de Beistegui**

Abstract

The architectural narration of the apartment designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for the Count Charles de Beistegui on Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, which specifies an image of the city through the rhetoric of the oxymoron and some considerations by Le Corbusier on the French philosopher's George Bataille thought, lead to wider and more up-to-date reflections concerning the epistemological status of Art. On the one hand, the Artist, a tragic hero whose life is spent as a sacrifice given to humanity in search of those means of expression that allow us to describe the ineffable, on the other the Art, the only tool of knowledgeable to tell concepts, thoughts and ideas when, beyond the limits of rationality, myth is superimposed on reality.

Keywords

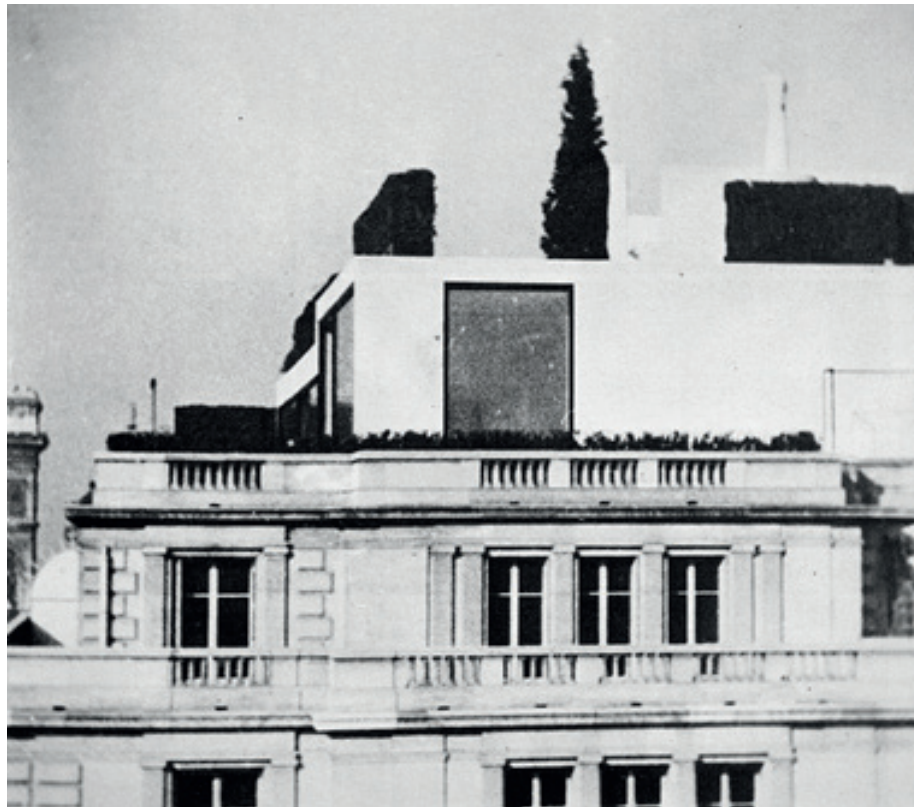
Le Corbusier — Beistegui — Bataille

In 1932 the magazine *Architecte* published the article by Le Corbusier *Appartement avec terrasse, avenue des Champs-Élysées, à Paris* (1932)¹ (Le Corbusier 1932) describing the project of the apartment built on the sixth and last floor of the *hôtel particulier* in avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris between 1929 and 1932 for the eccentric Count Charles de Beistegui².

It is the period of the *années folles* in the French capital and alongside an operating bourgeoisie that has now acquired a central role in the economic and productive system of the new industrialized civilization, a decadent aristocracy seeks its own role and its own social legitimacy through masquerades and social events readily registered and spread on the New York magazine *Vogue*³.

Charles de Beistegui was born in Paris in 1895 from a rich family of Mexican origins⁴. An eccentric multimillionaire and professional interior designer - he called himself a surrealist⁵ with an extravagant and excessive neoclassical eclecticism - Charles inherited a grand estate after his father's death in 1925 and immersed himself completely in the mundane events of the Parisian *haute bohème*.

In 1929, he asked architects Gabriel Guevrekian, André Lurçat and Le Corbusier with Pierre Jeanneret⁶ a project for a penthouse on the top floor of the family's *hôtel particulier* at 136 Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The aim is to have an apartment that, according to Beistegui, «is not intended to be inhabited, but to serve as a frame for big parties⁷». A *decor de fête* then, a *machine à amuser*⁸ where to host the events and evenings of the *Café Society* of those years in Paris and thus be able to legitimize and institutionalize their social position alongside families and figures with a well-established reputation as the Noailles, Faucigny-Lucinge, Pecci-Blunt, and

**Fig. 1**

Le Corbusier, Beistegui Apartment - Façade on avenue des Champs-Élysées (from Laurent Salomon e Jean-Pierre Ammeler, *Appartement Charles de Beistegui 1929-1931*. 136, avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris 1979).

Beaumont.

The description of the apartment, published by the magazine *Architecte* (Le Corbusier 1932), makes explicit, through the construction of the text, the narrative theme that is declined in the work.

Le Corbusier calls it «an act of devotion to Paris» (Le Corbusier 1932, p.100), a *promenade architectural* that «constitutes an architectural landscape, both internal and external, created on different plans established at four successive levels» (Le Corbusier 1932, page 100). Specific *prospéctives émouvantes* (Le Corbusier 1932, p.100), precise views on architecture and urban facts frame the «sacred places of Paris» (Reichlin 2013, p.295): «*The Arc de Triomphe, the Tour Eiffel, the Sacré-Coeur* and finally the green mass that extends from the *Champs-Élysées* through the *Tuileries* to *Notre-Dame*» (Le Corbusier 1932, p.100).

The first terrace «is a green space with stone slabs, enclosed by boxwood and yew walls [...] a pressure on an electric button and the green palisade is slowly eclipsed» (Le Corbusier 1932, p.100). Also, the second *eplanade* is surrounded by green hedge walls, while in the last terrace, on the top of the building, high white walls define the limits of a grass floor and enclose a portion of the sky that becomes the ceiling of a real *open-air room*.

Elements that belong to the conventional vocabulary of an outer space take the form of those referable to an interior space, specifying a strong ambiguity on the level of the character between exterior and interior. This intention becomes even more explicit in the last terrace because of the presence of a fireplace that, as Le Corbusier writes, «is used to turn on the fire during the cool evenings» and, he explains later, «the owner of the place, following the evident influence of a *mode ravissante*, he added himself a Spanish fireplace box in Louis XV style» (Le Corbusier 1932, p.101).

“The outside is always an inside” (Le Corbusier 1923, p.154) we read in *Vers une architecture* (1923) and in the drawings made during the conference *Architecture en tout, urbanisme en tout* (Le Corbusier 1930) in Bue-

nos Aires in 1929. Although we are here facing reflections concerning the relationship of «immanent rivalry» (Le Corbusier 1930, p.78) between architecture and landscape, which translates into a positive conflict between *culture* and *nature* only for those who, Le Corbusier writes, «are able to see it and extract a fruitful benefit» (Le Corbusier 1930, p.78), the syntactic and semantic ambiguity between the form of outer and internal space is not a completely foreign thought for Le Corbusier's architectural research. Just to mention some of the best-known examples, we can think about the wall with square holes towards the lake in the Petit Maison garden (1923-24) in Vevey, or the same wall with the same hole used on the roof of the Villa Stein in Garches (1926), the solarium in the walkable part of the roof of Villa Savoye (1928-31) and the masterful doubling of the liturgical outdoor space towards the green space in Ronchamp (1955).

Le Corbusier writes:

«Let us explain: from this belvedere, Paris is visible on all its horizons: both in the most admirable places and in the dark desert of the roofs and the chimneys. The choice was to suppress that panoramic view and to create another architectural center of stones, gardens, and sky, completely isolated from the turbulence of the panorama» (Le Corbusier 1932, p.100). The selection of specific historical pre-existences of the city of Paris is an operation that Le Corbusier had already done on paper at the Buenos Aires conferences (1929) and in the collage entitled the *Esprit de Paris* exhibited at the *Pavillon des Temps Modernes* (1937); in the Beistegui apartment the «sacred places» of the city are framed and isolated through the form of the architectural space, so that the semantic intentionality connected to the meaning of the *Esprit de Paris* is expressed through the use of specific syntactic devices of the narrative sequence of the *promenade architecturale*. By isolating and decontextualizing the monuments from every day - represented by the dark desert of the roofs and the chimneys of the city of Paris - the historical pre-existences express their own value of permanence and immutability that transposes them within a synchronic dimension of historical time. History, perceived as a danger in the inexorable and unstoppable will of change and progress implicit in modernity, can thus be saved from destruction through an operation of isolation and suspension that produces an inexorable but necessary interruption of its *continuity*. The *tabula rasa* is the only operation historically possible because if on the one hand, it allows a necessary social regeneration of an eschatological character⁹, on the other hand, it gives the historical pre-existence a *chance* of salvation when it becomes a testimony of a past that no longer exists. *Dialectical comparison* thus becomes the only possible relationship between historical memory and Modernity.

Le Corbusier writes:

«The historical past, universal heritage, is respected. I will say more, it is saved. A continuation of the current state of crisis would lead to a rapid suppression of this past.

[...] *The Plan Voisin*, occupies with the buildings only 5% of the surface of the ground, safeguards the remains of the past and places them in a harmonious framework: in the middle of the green. But yes, things like that die one day, and these parks at the *Monceau* are many cemeteries held with extreme care. Here one comes to be an erudite person, to dream and to breathe: the past is no longer something that threatens life, it has found its accommodation» (Le Corbusier 1924, pp. 277-278).

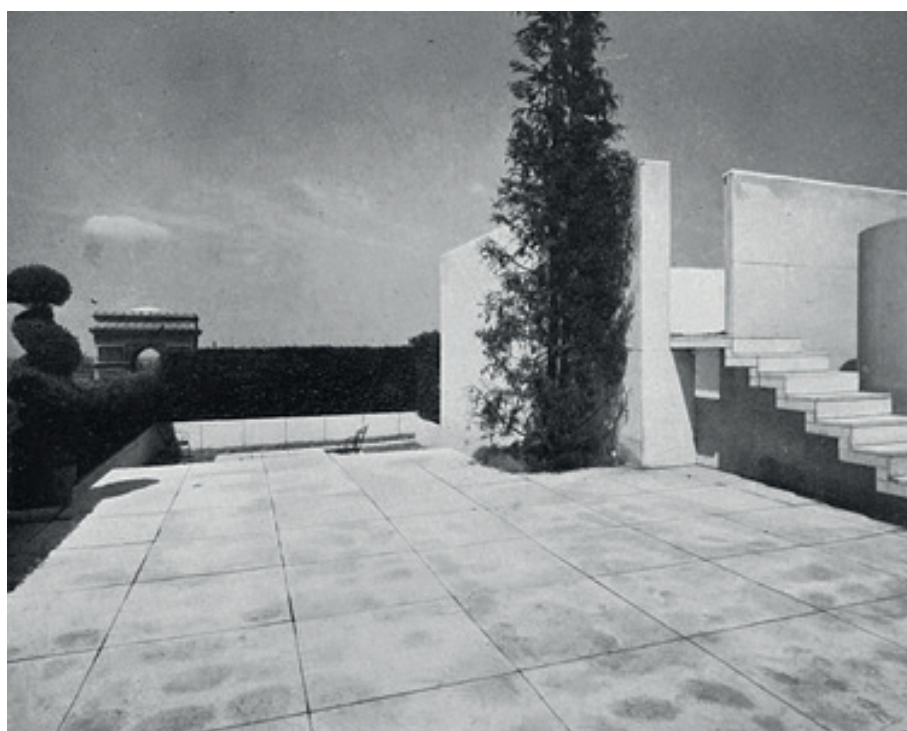
Tafuri, referring in particular to these words, highlights how «the anti-

Fig. 2

Le Corbusier, Beistegui Apartment - external terraces on the 2nd and 3rd floor (from Le Corbusier, *Appartement avec terrasse*, avenue des Champs-Élysées, à Paris, (1932), Paris 1932.

**Fig. 3**

Le Corbusier, Beistegui Apartment - external terrace on the 3rd floor (from Le Corbusier, *Appartement avec terrasse*, avenue des Champs-Élysées, à Paris, (1932), Paris 1932.



historicism of the modern movement has deep roots in history» (Tafuri 1986, p.89), because, he says, «on the one hand it dissolves the traditional function of *continuity* of historical events», in favor of a *dialectical relationship*, «on the other hand, it recovers the values of memory on radically new foundations» (Tafuri 1986, page 93).

Claude Lévi-Strauss states that «*mythical* thought *expresses* itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 31) In the *promenade* of the outer gardens of the Beistegui apartment the historical pre-existences assume the narrative value of «constitutive units of myth, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 33): the language of myth¹⁰. For Lévi-Strauss, «mythical thought appears to be an intellectual form of *bricolage*» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 35) that uses «the remains and debris of heterogeneous events (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 35) only as regards the content, so far as the form is concerned, there is an analogy between them. The analogy consists in the incorporation in their form itself of a certain amount of content, which is roughly the same for all» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 47).

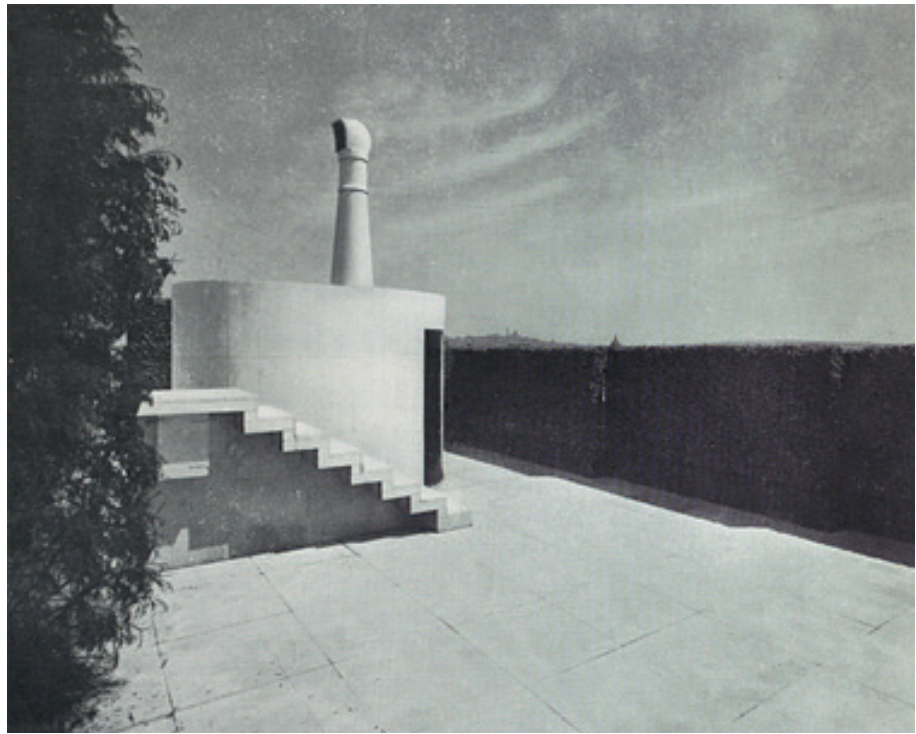
Framing, selecting, suspending and transposing the story within a context other than that of its origins is an operation that builds an *image of the city*, not as an objective fact, but as a pure concept. Its meaning: the *Esprit de Paris* is an idea whose contents are transmitted through a language of the «mythical thought», an expressive form that, according to Lévi-Strauss, «lies halfway between *precepts* and *concepts*» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 47). The narrative sequence of the external gardens that generates the process of metaphorical and mythological conceptualization of the city is interrupted when the contingent reality of the urban is perceived through a sequence of images, captured by a periscope, projected onto a *camera obscura* table and observed in the total darkness and complete isolation of a small pavilion located in the second-last of the four external terraces¹¹. The «sacred places» of Paris transformed through the architectural space into supra-historical entities, expressions of pure universal concepts, are brought back, through the consistency of the image, to the immanent dimension of their existence.

When in Buenos Aires Le Corbusier formulated the following questions: «What is Paris? What is its beauty? What is the Spirit of Paris?» (Le Corbusier 1930, p.154). When questioning issues related to *content* and *form* at the same time, he seems to suggest that to formulate an answer we need a coincidence between the immanent properties of things and the ideas or principles that transcend things, in other words a synthesis between what «the object is as it is and its appearance affected by the particular perspective» (Lévi-Strauss 2015, p. 39).

Baudelaire writes:

The beauty is made of an eternal, immutable element the quantity of which is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative and circumstantial element which will be in turn or at once, the era, the fashion, morality or passion. Without this second element...the, the first element would be indigestible (Baudelaire 1992-2004, p 278).

When the *Spirit of Paris* coincides with the *Beauty of Paris* its meaning can only be expressed through a convergence of antithetical terms: universal and individual, relative and absolute, image and idea, reality and myth. In the Beistegui apartment, to achieve this «presence of opposites» (Eco

**Fig. 4**

Le Corbusier, Beistegui Apartment - the room with periscope (from Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1929-1934*, Paris 1947).

1997, p. 20) *the image of the city* is constructed through a narration that uses the rhetoric of the oxymoron, that is, able to overlap the contents of a metaphysical and transcendent dimension of the city with the properties of its empirical and immanent reality.

The linguistic code, because of some formal limits, must contradict itself to express deeper ideas and thoughts. The oxymoron, used by the mystics and poets to cross the boundaries of the logically representable - about this the gnostics spoke of a dark light; the alchemists of a black sun (Jorge Luis Borges) - allows to delineate and communicate the contents of an image of the city that are inexpressible through the language of logic because their consistency is that of ideas and concepts.

In the avenue des Champs-Élysées apartment, the oxymoron seems to represent for Le Corbusier that instrument which, as Jean Cocteau claims, is used by artists who «feel the sweet sadness of those who know that the human alphabet offers a reduced number of combinations» (Cocteau 1920-25, p.325).

The scientific literature has tried to include Beistegui's apartment - and some moments of Le Corbusier's plastic research - into the thought and investigations of Surrealism¹² even if, although there is certainly some interest in that kind of reflections¹³, the position of Corbusier is very clear if we refer to what he wrote in his essay *L'espace indicible* (1936):

«I am a cubist and I am not surrealist, wanting to oppose the feeling of construction, looking forward, to a consideration of the dead, of the dying, of remembering» (Le Corbusier 1936, p.14).

Considering this reasoning, we may focus on some notes that Le Corbusier took in the margins of the book *The Accursed Share* (*La part maudite*, Bataille 2015) written by the French philosopher George Bataille in 1949¹⁴. The book and the essay *The Notion of «Dépense»* (Bataille 2015), published a few years earlier in *La Critique sociale*, illustrate the principles of a general economy that undermines the economic conventions of capitalist matrix related to the exclusive production and accumulation of goods and, proposing a system that affirms the centrality of «profitless consump-

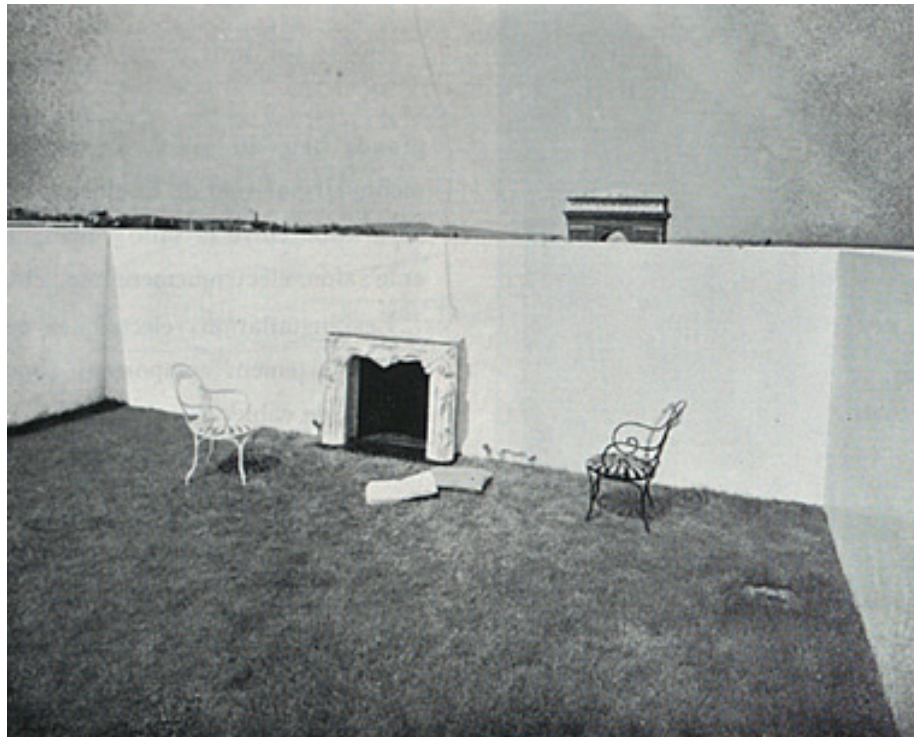


Fig. 5

Le Corbusier, Beistegui Apartment - external terrace on the 4th and last floor (from Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète* 1929-1934, Paris 1947).

tion», re-evaluates the meaning of some commercial practices of the Indian tribes of North America - previously described by Marcel Mauss in his essay *Essai sur le don, form et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (Mauss 1923-24) - connected to the institution of the *potlatch*, that is to the exchange through the gift.

At the base of what could be defined as the eschatological dimension of the heterodox economic principles formulated by Bataille there is the will to emancipate the existence of man from the poverty of profit through the practice of the *gift* that, assuming the same role and value of *sacrifice*, becomes the instrument through which, Bataille writes, «restore to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded, rendered profane». (Bataille 2015, p. 104).

To sacrifice, from the Latin *sacrificare* is made up of *sacrum* «sacred rite» and *ficare*, from the theme of *facere* «making», that is *making sacred*. In giving without any counterpart, man disrupts the relationship of servility that the utilitarian approach generates between the reality of things and its activity in the world so as to be reunited with the *divine* dimension of existence. Through the *gift*, Bataille writes, «the animal or plant that man uses is restored to the truth of the intimate world; he receives a sacred communication from it, which restores him in turn to interior freedom» (Bataille 2015, p. 106).

On page 92 of the book *La part maudite* (Bataille 2015), in the chapter *Theory of the potlatch, the paradox of the «gift» reduced to the «acquisition» of a «power»*, Le Corbusier notes:

«The 5 volumes of the Corbu Complete Works offer, propose and impose Corbu's ideas through enthusiastic adherence. On one side Corbu is tried by rascals, on the other, he is the king. The disinterested practice of painting is a tireless sacrifice, a gift of time, of patience, of love, without any counterpart in money (with the exception of modern traders). It is a sowing to the wind for strangers, one day before or after death, they will thank us. It is too late for the many difficulties experienced. But what does it matter; what matters is the key to happiness» (Duboy 1987, p.67).

**Fig. 6**

Le Corbusier, Fusion (da Le Corbusier, *Poème de l'angle droit*, Parigi 1955).

Later in the chapter *Sacrifice or Consumption* Le Corbusier underlines the following passage:

«This useless consumption is what suits me, once my concern for the morrow is removed. And if I thus consume immoderately, I reveal to my fellow beings that which I am intimate: Consumption is the way in which separate beings communicate. *Everything shows through, everything is open and infinite* [italics of the writer] between those who consume intensely. But nothing counts then; violence is released and it breaks forth without limits, as the heat increases» (Bataille 2015, pp. 106-107).

On the sidelines, Le Corbusier notes the word «fusion».

The term *fusion* refers unequivocally to the «alchemical fusion» described in the lithograph of the fourth chapter of the *Poème de l'angle droit* (1955) and, more generally, to a whole series of studies that have brought the last Le Corbusier's poetics to the symbolic dimension of the sacred¹⁵.

The hermetic concept of not easy interpretation¹⁶, the «alchemical fusion» literally indicates the union and conciliation of opposites, water-moon and fire-sun, masculine *animus* and feminine *anima*, the vertical and the horizontal of the right angle. It also represents a stage in the process of purification (martyrdom) performed by the alchemist on vile metals, to free the pure element, thus becoming a metaphor of the spiritual liberation of consciousness, a crucial moment, after which, for the lonely people that will take the risk, the true knowledge of themselves (Scavuzzo 2006) and of those places of their own interiority where, for alchemists, the *divine* resides.

Intersecting what Bataille writes about the exemplary virtue of the *pot-latch* as «the possibility for man to grasp what eludes him, to combine the limitless movements of the universe with the limit that belongs to him» (Bataille 2015, p.111) and the concept of *espace indicible* (1936) - «the fourth dimension [...] the moment of unlimited evasion provoked by an exceptionally right consonance of the plastic means» (Le Corbusier 1936, p.10), «of incontestable, but indefinable nature» (Le Corbusier 1936, p.17) - we glimpse the sense of a possible *heroic dimension* of the *gift*, where the «alchemical fusion» becomes «fusion with the sacred» through a creative act that, explicating itself as a *sacrifice* given to the humanity, *makes sacred* what is raw material allowing the experience and knowledge of the

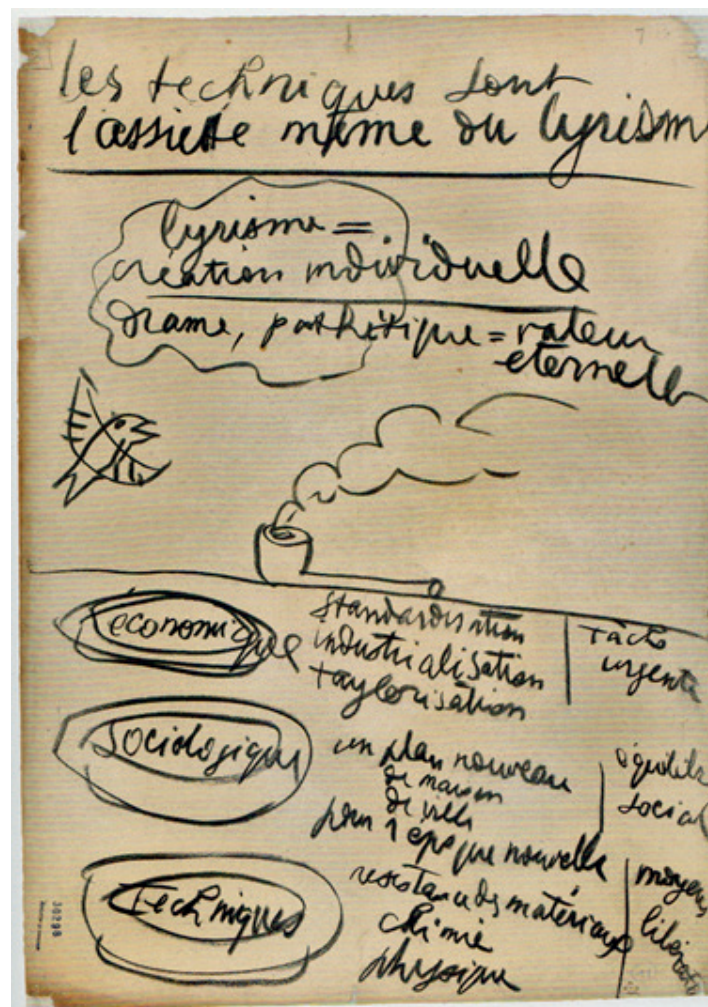


Fig. 7

Le Corbusier, *Techniques are themselves the foundation of Lyricism* (from Le Corbusier, *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme*, Paris 1930).

divine and the ineffable¹⁷.

Deeply different from Baudelaire's *flâneur*¹⁸, who wanders around the city contemplating its modernity, and from Benjamin's «magician-painter» (2013) that, still anchored to the principles of *mimesis*, retains a natural distance to the modern *second nature*, Tafuri (1986) inscribes the figure of Le Corbusier in the category of the «surgeon-operator» (Benjamin 2013) who, constructively introducing himself into reality, actively works in society with the objective of responding to poetic needs through aesthetic principles that lead, on the one hand, to absolute identification between industrial work and artistic work (Tafuri 1986, p.65), and on the other to an unconditional enslavement of the Art to the constructive action of the world (Tafuri 1986, p.64).

Le Corbusier's statement: «techniques are the very foundation of lyricism» (Le Corbusier 1930, p.37) expresses the will to confer a spiritual and poetic character to functions and techniques that are very empirical by their nature, inductively delineating a need for coincidence between the instances of the *material* and those of the *spiritual* that makes the convergence of *usefulness* and *poetic* possible in the work of art.

The *heroic* character of life in modernity recounted by Walter Benjamin¹⁹ - and proposed again by Philip Duboy (1987) - if placed near the reflections of Bataille refers to a further possible critical interpretation of the role of the artist in society. The *sacrifice* that the artist makes in giving himself and unconditionally giving his action to the world becomes the instrument through which the understanding of the *unspeakable* is made possible. A

search therefore of those expressive means that, through a mediation between the instances of the real and the ideal, are able to charge with a different sense energy and, overcoming the boundaries of logic, describe something for which a word has never been created.

Some exponents of the Russian intelligentsia, repeating certain theoretical positions of German idealism - of Schelling in particular - gave art the ability to understand and describe the *truth* or *spirit of the world*²⁰ and gave the artist the duty to pursue this research and its disclosure. The *idea of truth* and the *beauty of things* - terms that for the romantics of Russia at the end of '800 coincided - are not given immediately, they are not the evidence itself, they are instead the product of a mental work that unmasks things from appearances built around them by traditions, commonplaces, deceptive and mystifying ideologies that interprets them (Reichlin 2013, p.296). Framing carefully a cluster of artifacts that must be selected, made intelligible and ordered in what Reichlin (2013) describes Le Corbusier's «analogue Paris», is an operation that specifies an image of the city as a synthesis between the universal requests of idea and myth and those ones of the phenomenon and of reality. Thus preserving the consistency of the mental construct, the *image of the city* lies between its *idea* and its *form*, ontologically revealing its essence, Beauty, and Spirit. Meanings that, referring to a reality beyond the phenomenon of which, however, is used as a support to ensure its existence, can be expressed only through a conceptual convergence of opposite terms proper to the rhetoric of the oxymoron.

From the analysis of the narrative structure of the apartment of Charles de Beistegui and the notes by Le Corbusier on the thought of Georges Bataille, we can read issues that lead to wider considerations on the ever-present question of the epistemological status of Art and the role of the Artist in society. On the one hand, the Artist who, through the creative and expressive act overcomes the limits of an exclusive reflection on usefulness and, boldly advancing through the meanders of the *ineffable* and the *sacred*, becomes a *tragic hero* whose life is spent as a sacrifice given to humanity; on the other, an Art conceived as an instrument of knowledgeable to investigate and describe concepts, thoughts, and ideas when, having crossed the limits of rationality, language requires that the *meaning* replaces *signification*.

Notes

¹ One finds an Italian translation of the text written by Le Corbusier in the essay by Paolo Melis, *Il 'cadavere squisito' di Le Corbusier: Pierre Jeanneret e Charles Bestegui* (Melis 1977).

² One finds a bibliography on this topic in the essays by Alexander Watt, *Fantasy on the Roofs of Paris* (Watt 1936); Ross Anderson, *All of Paris, Darkly: Le Corbusier's Beistegui Apartment* (Anderson 2015); Win van den Berg, *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs-Élysées* (Berg van den 2015); Beatriz Colomina, *The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism* (Colomina 1988); Juan José Lahuerta, 'Surrealist poetics' in the work of Le Corbusier? (Lahuerta 2007); Jean Lucan, *Corbusier: une encyclopédie* (Lucan 1987); Le Corbusier, *Appartement avec terrasse, avenue des Champs-Élysées, à Paris* (Le Corbusier 1932); Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1929-1934* (Le Corbusier 1947); Sylvain Malfroy, *Der Aussenraum ist immer ein Innenraum* (Malfroy 1994); Paolo Melis, *Il 'cadavere squisito' di Le Corbusier: Pierre Jeanneret e Charles Bestegui* (Melis 1977); Bruno Reichlin, *La "Parigi Analoga" di Le Corbusier. L'Attico per Charles de Bestegui, 1929-1932* (Reichlin 2013); Pierre Saddy, *Le Corbusier Chez Les Riches, L'appartement De Beistegui* (Saddy 1979); Pierre Saddy, *Le Corbusier e l'Arlecchino* (Saddy 1980);

Laurent Salomon e Jean-Pierre Ammeler, *Appartement Charles de Beistegui 1929-1931. 136, avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris* (Salomon e Ammeler 1979) Manfredo Tafuri, *Machine et mémoire. La città nell'opera di Le Corbusier* (Tafuri 1984); Anthony Vilder, *Paris: Beistegui Apartment, Or Horizons Deferred* (Vilder 2013).

³ For an in-depth analysis of this particular type of social context of the 1920s, see the essays by Pierre Saddy, *Le Corbusier e l'Arlecchino* (Saddy 1980) and by Win van den Berg, *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs -Élysées* (Berg van den 2015).

⁴ One finds a biographical report on Charles de Beistegui in the essay by Win van den Berg, *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs -Élysées* (Berg van den 2015).

⁵ About the furnishing of the apartment in avenue des Champs-Élysées Charles de Beistegui declares: «My work is surrealist. On this fake fireplace a pendulum clock and small candlesticks. This mirror reflects the sun... The objects that one usually sees under a certain light, give new effects under a new light». Quotation from the essay by Pierre Saddy, *Le Corbusier e l'Arlecchino* (Saddy 1980, p.27) where one finds a brief and eloquent description of some of his works.

⁶ For the description of the three projects see the essay by Win van den Berg, *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs-Élysées* (Berg van den 2015).

⁷ Excerpt from an interview given by Charles Beistegui to Roger Baschet in 1936, reported in the essay by Win van den Berg, *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs-Élysées* (Berg van den 2015).

⁸ A happy parallel with «machine à habiter» suggested by Win van den Berg in his essay *Beistegui avant Le Corbusier: genèse du penthouse des Champs-Élysées* (Berg van den 2015).

⁹ I refer in particular to the thoughts described in the text by Colin Rowe, *L'architettura delle buone intenzioni* (Rowe 2005, p. 84).

¹⁰ About the argumentations discussed in this essay we believe that the most appropriate definition of myth is the one formulated by Gillo Dorfles which states: «[...] these expressive forms derive their origin from an analogical and translated realization of events, images, situations, of which sometimes they are an unconscious recording and sometimes the metaphorical transcription, but always immersed within a halo of rational indeterminacy that is precisely what allows to differentiate them from perfectly rationalized and conceptualized forms, which are those transmissible through the normal linguistic expressions (of the word or of the figuration). (Dorfles 1965, p.51).

¹¹ In his essay, Ross Anderson (2015) puts the darkroom with periscope in contact with some reflections on the concept of *Unheimliche* formulated by Sigmund Freud in *Das Unheimliche* (Freud 1955, pp. 217-56). In Italian, the German word *Unheimliche* can be translated into a disorientation specified by the meeting of the two oxymoronic terms: frightening and familiar. Anderson outlines an affinity between the character of strong ambiguity inherent in the very meaning of *Unheimliche* and the space of the darkroom. Freud writes: «*Unheimliche* [...] on the one hand denotes that which is familiar and congenial on the other that which is concealed and kept hidden [...] therefore *Unheimliche* is a word whose meaning develops in the direction of ambivalence, up to coincide with its opposite *unheimlich*. (Freud 1955, pp. 222-223).

¹² See the article by Alexander Gorlin, *The Gost in the Machine: Surrealism in the Work of Le Corbusier* (Gorlin 1982) and part of the essay by Danièle Pauly, *Il segreto della forma* (Pauly 1987). For further critical work on this topic, see the bibliography in the book by Stanislaus von Moss, *Le Corbusier une synthèse* (Moss von 2013). One finds a confutation of the positions supporting hypothesis of similarity between Le Corbusier's poetics and Surrealism poetic as regards the relationship between architecture and city in the essay by Juan José Lahuerta, '*Surrealist poetics*' in the work of Le Corbusier? (Lahuerta J. J., 2007).

¹³ See the texts by André Breton in Le Corbusier's personal library (Collegi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya 2005).

¹⁴ These notes were published for the first time in the contribution of Philippe Duboy (1987) to the *Encyclopédie* by Jaques Lucan (1987): *Bataille (Georges): Le Corbusier, héros moderne*. On the relationship between the thought of Bataille and Le Corbusier, see the essay by Nadir Lahiji, «... *The gift of time*» *Le Corbusier reading Bataille* (Lahiji N. 2005).

¹⁵ For a critical esoteric reading of the work of the last Le Corbusier, see the essays by Giuseppina Scavuzzo, *Iconostasi: la forma e i segni. Dalla costruzione simbolica alla composizione architettonica in alcune opere di Le Corbusier* (Scavuzzo 2006); Richard Allen Moore, *Le Corbusier: Myth and Meta Architectue. The Late Period (1947-1965)* (Moore 1977). For a work on the *Poème de l'angle droit* which refers only in part to theosophy and alchemy, see the essay by Juan Calatrava, *Le Corbusier e Le Poème de l'Angle Droit: un poema abitabile una casa poetica* (Calatrava 2007).

¹⁶ For a detailed study on alchemy especially as regards the repercussions of psychoanalysis, see Carl Gustave Jung, *Psicologia e alchimia* (Jung 1995).

¹⁷ Thoughts on the concept of *ineffable* can be found in the early writings by Le Corbusier as can be deduced from some considerations formulated in the chapter *Esprit de vérité* in *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (Le Corbusier 1925, pp. 167-184). During a visit at the Tourette, invited by the monks to talk about his work, he says: «They [the places] determine what I call the *espace indicible*, which does not depend on the dimensions, but on the quality of perfection. This concerns the domain of the ineffable» (Le Corbusier 1987, p.36).

¹⁸ For an in-depth analysis of the figure of the *flâneur*, see the essay by Charles Baudelaire, *L'artista, uomo di mondo, uomo delle folle e fanciullo*, in *Il pittore della vita moderna* (Baudelaire 1992-2004, pp. 282-287).

¹⁹ In re-reading Baudelaire's reflections on modernity, Walter Benjamin writes: «*Les héros* is the true subject of modernity, which means that in order to live modernity there is a need for a heroic nature» (Benjamin 1979, 108).

²⁰ For a more in-depth look, see the text by Isaiah Berlin, *Il riccio e la volpe* (Berlin 1986).

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