

To start: some introductory remarks, before we cross the boundary into the work this paper properly constitutes. In other words: the boundary between the inside and the outside of this work has a thickness, it will maintain a certain degree of ambiguity; the proscenium through which I present what is to be said, the means by which the interior is separated from the exterior, is inherently complex, inherently not a straightforward line.

Was that merely a metaphor? In invoking the interior and the exterior of this text, was that simply to evoke a “real” interior and exterior? Conventionally, and according to the structures of western thought, it would be said that the “reality” of space as a natural phenomenon comes prior to any use of terms such as “interior” and “exterior” to describe the entry into such a thing as this written work. Such use is therefore metaphorical, a trope which assumes the prior, real and natural existence of that which is metaphorically transposed across to a relatively foreign realm – in this case, of language written and spoken. Is such naturalism, however, justified? Is it not the case that in order to speak of what we claim is a “real” or natural interior and exterior – say, that of a forest, of a cave or primitive hut (those fantasies of the original interior) – we must have always already had to use the resources of language. To name a space as interior, we must already have been able to name the interior of a text, we must already have been using the word metaphorically. To use Derrida’s example in *Qual Quelle*, to speak of the source of a river, one would already have to have in mind that which is supposedly a metaphorical transposition of the word “source”, namely the use of that word to describe the source of a text, or the source of a word, or the source of an idea. What I wish to hint at here, as a background to this discussion, is the intimate intertwining of language and space to such an extent as to call into question any notion that space might have pre-existed language.

Thus when Bourdieu states (in *The Logic of Practice*):

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends, or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them

one would have to respect the potential complexity of the situation here being alluded to, in the sense that the intertwining of that which gets structured and that which does the structuring might disallow any attempt to mark the start of that process; in other

words, would disallow the appeal to a natural prior state and would instead see the structuring-structured movement as precisely that – a movement without origin (perhaps in the manner of Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle). Also, in respect of a designed interior (but are there any interiors not designed? The undesigned interior would be the equivalent of the myth of the natural use of the word) such as the one we will engage with, this passage will call into question the extent to which we can separate out the conscious aiming at ends of the architect, his mastery of the situation which he is attempting to set up. The staging of the work is surely a conscious act of attempted mastery, but the act of creation within which this occurs would result in no “work” worthy of the name unless this mastery also calls itself into question, in other words unless the work remains in some way open.

Judith Butler (in *Bodies that Matter* p94) similarly points to the complexity of the question of mastery, free will and the construction of sexuality: yes, gender is indeed constructed via a performativity, but, as she states:

this performativity of gender [is] far [from being] the exercise of an unconstrained voluntarism....
... On the contrary, constructivism needs to take account of the domain of constraints without which a certain living and desiring being cannot make its way

Now it is perhaps the poignant position of all design – both its strength and its dubious character – that it will help consciously and unconsciously, more or less insidiously, construct gender and the constraints that form it. This is its responsibility, its task, and that for which it will be condemned.

Le Corbusier’s apartment at *24 Rue Nungesser et Coli* constitutes that peculiar staging of an architect’s work represented by their own home, and as this peculiar symbol and creation of domesticity it is not surprising that we will find essayed in this interior the framework for a performance of gender (to use Butler’s terms) or an intimate example of Bourdieu’s *habitas* as “embodied history, internalised as second nature” and in this instance made quite explicit.

That the staging of life was a key concern of Le Corbusier by the time of the construction of his own apartment is evident not only in his post-war modernist work, but even from some of the earlier projects he had undertaken in his Swiss home town of *La Chau de Fonds* as a very young teenage architect. However, the jettisoning of the figurative language of architecture in favour of *tabula rasa* of the five points of architecture – the discipline both returned to its essence and made faithful to the

progress inherent in modern life - allowed this incessant framing to become much more explicit, nowhere more so than in the apartment Beistegui, atop a commercial block on the *Champs-Élysée* and designed at much the same time as Corb's apartment in the early 1930s. Apartment Beistegui works obsessively with the problematic and paradoxical staging of interiors, walls, furniture and indeed the city itself in a manner which in the very act of staging, calls these categories into question in a manner often characterised as surrealist (as some of you may have noted at the recent exhibition at the V&A). Thus, exterior spaces are made ambiguous as to their status; is this a roof terrace, a room without a ceiling, a walled garden (note the grass as carpet), a wall to look over or perhaps not (the height of it precisely calibrated both as a horizon and as an irritating blockage of the view, both as a device to strike out the immediate surroundings and bring the Arche de Triumph into ones grasp); is it a place for furniture and fireplace or are these singularly misplaced? This terrace is presented as a platform, a stage up to which we must ascend, and thus the questioning of spatial status it itself presented to us, explicitly staged, *as* question and *as* problematic. Other terrace walls or parapets are made of hedges, but then placed on electrically operated platforms which move at the drop of a switch and slide back and forth like so much stage scenery, parting to reveal views of Paris which in turn is staged not only by these means but also virtually and by virtue of the swivelling periscope peering anthropomorphically over the whole scene. But we sense that the virtuality of our position as inhabitants on this staged terrace, and the virtuality of Paris as it is reflected in the periscope, is not something added to the reality of this piece of interior design, but that we are being told that this staging is inherent to our position and the status of architecture from the outset. In this sense, Corbusier is Nietzschean: not only does he read Nietzsche, but he takes seriously the revaluation of all values to the extent of overturning the conventional relationship between reality and its staging. Here, there is only the stage; the stage is the means by which we come to reality – reality “is said of” that which is staged, to use a Deleuzian turn of phrase - and this not as a degradation of life but as the positive possibility of architecture as an open work.

Deleuze states in section 33 of *The Logic of Sense* that novelists/artists are the “clinicians of civilisation”. Great authors are more like doctors than their patients – in that, like great clinicians, they create a table or grouping of symptoms out of disparate symptoms. As he says:

There is always a great deal of art involved in the grouping of symptoms, in the organisation of a *table* where a particular symptom is dissociated from another... and forms the new figure of a disorder or illness. Clinicians who... renew a

symptomatological table produce a work of art; conversely, artists are clinicians... of civilisation. It seems, moreover, that an evaluation of symptoms might only be achieved through a *novel*

The novelist, and therefore the designer as author, is a creator therefore *not* of order but of disorders. In apartment Beistigui we can see disorders of a certain type; in Corb's own apartment the disorders relate at least in part to a heightening of and working with the inevitable performativity of gender. Deleuze's characterisation of the act of the artist as one of disorder is felicitous in this regard, since whilst on the one hand we stand in some awe of Corbusier's extraordinary ability to create an intense interplay between differences within the form of the building and an interplay between those forms and spaces and the inhabitation which will occur; on the other we can condemn these created disorders as reinforcing (more extremely perhaps than in less creative work) those conventional binary gender oppositions and this acting as a very deployment (and expression) of gendered power.

Corbusier is condemned to act out some very conventional positions. The kitchen indeed becomes one of the essential rooms of the house – this is Yvonne Gallis, a fashion model who Corbusier had married in 1930 a year or two before he designed their apartment. And Beatriz Colomina has famously analysed his activities at Eileen Grey's masterpiece of a modernist house at the Cap Martin in southern France, where uninvited he took over the main living space and painted a mural on its bare walls. That he did this act naked (as revealed in contemporary photographs) only heightens the aggression; one writer has called it the "rape" of Grey's architecture.

The question of gender specificity helps to structure the whole of Corbusier apartment and, within the ensemble, specific parts of it. The original plans of the flat show its clear division between, on the east side overlooking a sports field, Corbusier's atelier studio, where each morning he would carry out his painting and sculpture activities; and on the west side the family areas of dining, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom overlooking the *Bois de Boulogne*. The rather ambiguous middle zone provides the entrance area, access to a guest suite and terrace on the top floor, and a living space with fireplace, niches and cupboards. Thus even at first glance there is a very clear structuring of explicit contrasting activities at the east and west extremities accessed by a less explicit interior.

In the very northwest corner of the apartment is a small niche, tucked into the side of the bedroom, named "*La cabine de toilette*" in the *Oeuvre Complete*, associated with

the adjacent dressing table and mirror, and shown clearly on the published contemporary plan. This is an intimate, cave-like space for washing at the basin and soaking in the sit-up tub lit from above not by the horizontal strip windows which feature on the rest of the building, but by a small, individual roof-light arrangement set into the curve of the vaults which characterise each end of the flat.

Unshown on contemporary plans and photographs, and located at the diagonally opposite extreme corner of the flat to the *cabine de toilette*, is a second intimate cave-like space, similar in scale, similarly lit with an individual window tucked into the vaulting, a fragment of which remains at this end of the east wing (and which can be seen both in the guest room above and clearly distinguished on the front elevation), and located off Le Corbusier's studio. This space is furnished with a desk and book shelves set under a low timber lined ceiling. Just as the larger elements of the apartment make explicit different conventional familial arrangements, and are set across from each other, so the more intimate spaces at each extreme fulfil a similar purpose and enable the interior spaces to be differentiated in an intense fashion which expresses and makes possible a certain *habitus*, a certain "embodied history", and a certain performance of gender.

Corbusier uses a similar strategy within the bathroom/bedroom space; given that this is the place where the couple most clearly share their life together, it is perhaps not surprising that this acts as a microcosm of the entire apartment and reprises, at more intimate scale, the "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" that Bourdieu mentions. Thus the feminine space of *La cabine de toilette* is juxtaposed with another cave-like space within the bedroom, again adjacent to a second (and noticeably anthropomorphic) basin – this time a shower space where one baths upright and lit by narrow vertical slots from the side. This is an explicitly masculine space, expressed externally by a wall which punches out from the bedroom space (together with the niche for the bed to its left).

Corbusier's drawings show an extraordinary care for the disposition of this bedroom space. Early drawings show a more conventional arrangement of bedroom and bathroom functions; sketches show the planning becoming more complex and cave-like, with a series of associated cross-sections. The final design is preceded by, amongst other drawings, a study which clearly expresses, prior to the fixing of the exact means, the interplay between husband and wife within the space – we see clearly the upright figure of Corbusier scrubbing himself in the shower, Yvonne in the small tub under the

vaulted window; and another study with the womanly figure within the vaulted space. Here are final drawings.

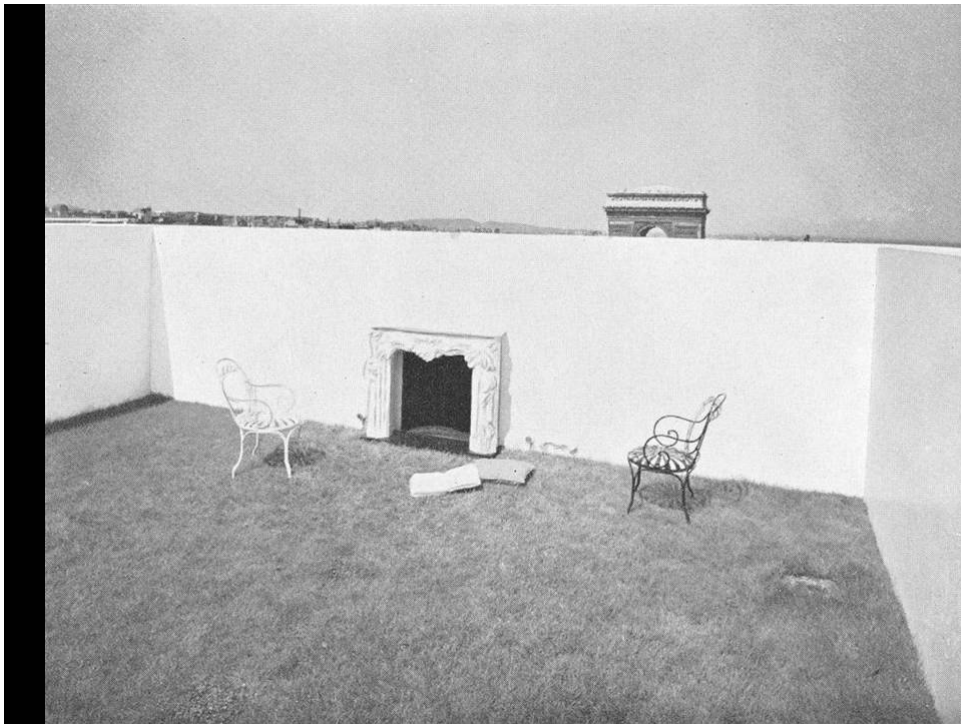
Returning to the boarder scale, Corbusier's genius is to interweave these intimate spaces into the design as part of the boarder issues which he has to deal with. For instance, the cave-like nature of the spaces comes from the vaulting theme which runs through both sides of the apartment and which was a way of solving the issue of rights of light and the permitted line of the building, as can be seen in a cross section through the whole block. This is treated not as a merely legal or functional issue, but as a positive possibility for the creation of disorders – as evinced in this developmental sketch for the rear roofs. It is never a question of an unambiguous implementation of design moves; every formal theme is questioned, broken down, placed into an ever more differentiated series of often interwoven frames.

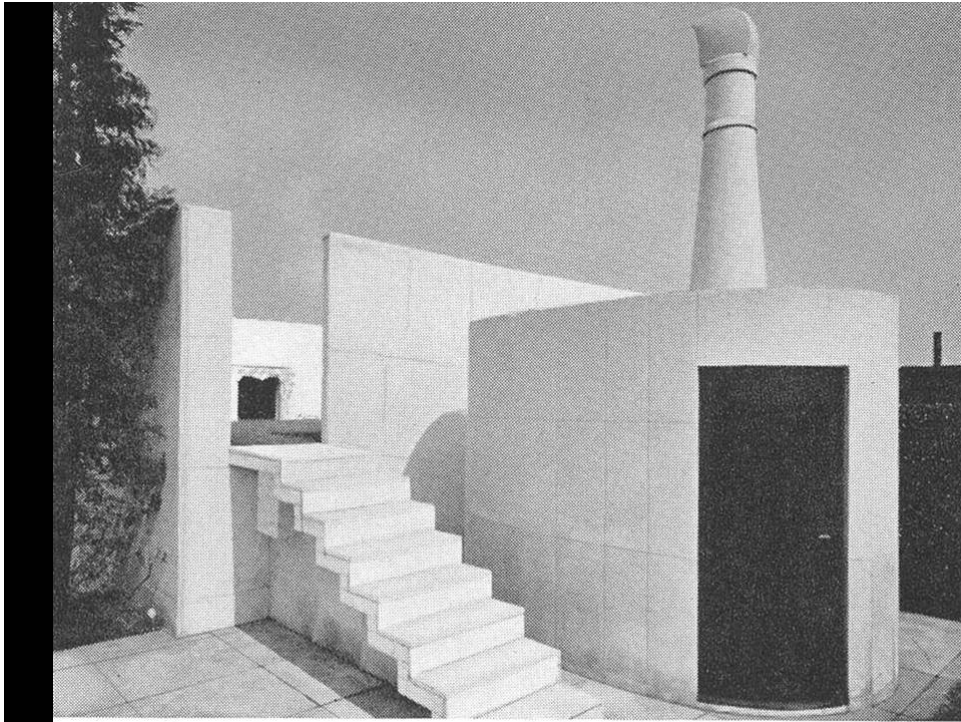
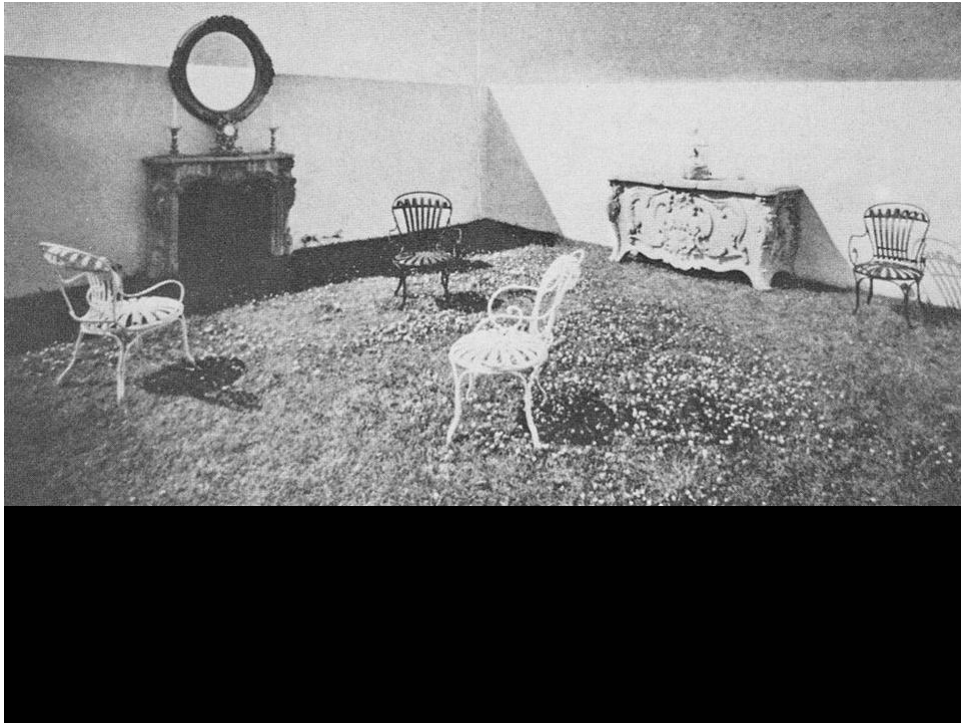
But more than this, this architecture which we can analyse as (and thus reduce to) a series of differentiated forms, is, in acting as a staging of everyday life in terms of binary, conventional and gendered oppositions, nonetheless reframing the position of these oppositions. The question has at least been raised, has been made explicit. To return briefly to Judith Butler:

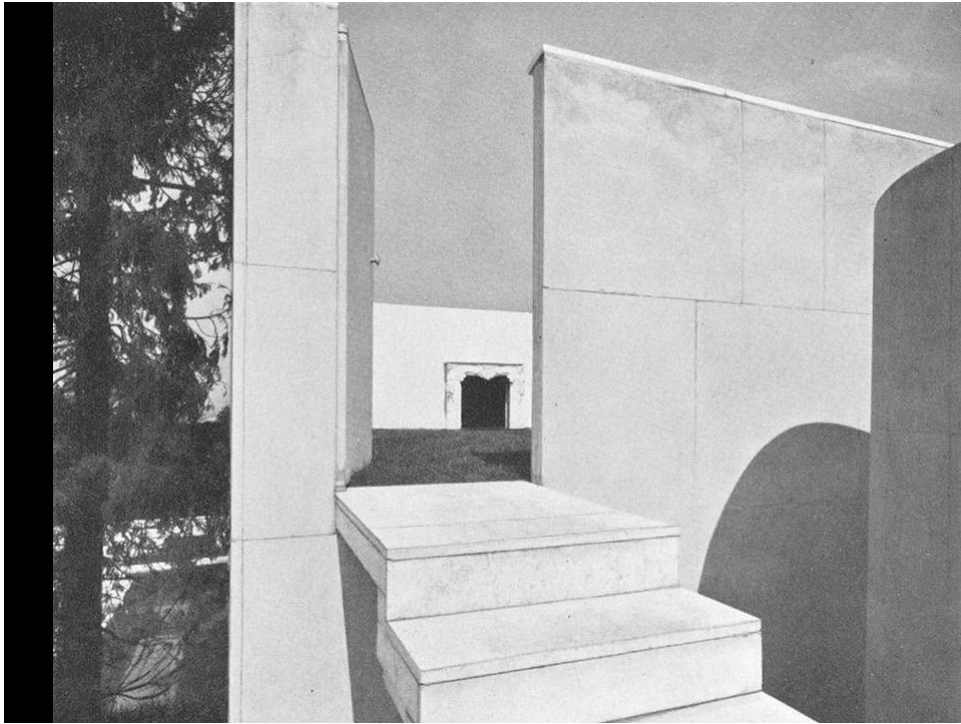
...every.... [living and desiring] being is constrained not only by what is difficult to imagine, but by what remains radically unthinkable

Corbusier, in the differentiating machine for living in which he puts into motion, is true to what Deleuze claims is the act of the artist – the one who engenders by means of a respecting of essential difference a “Dionysian sense-producing machine” which places before us those aspects of life formally difficult to imagine and thus difficult to challenge.

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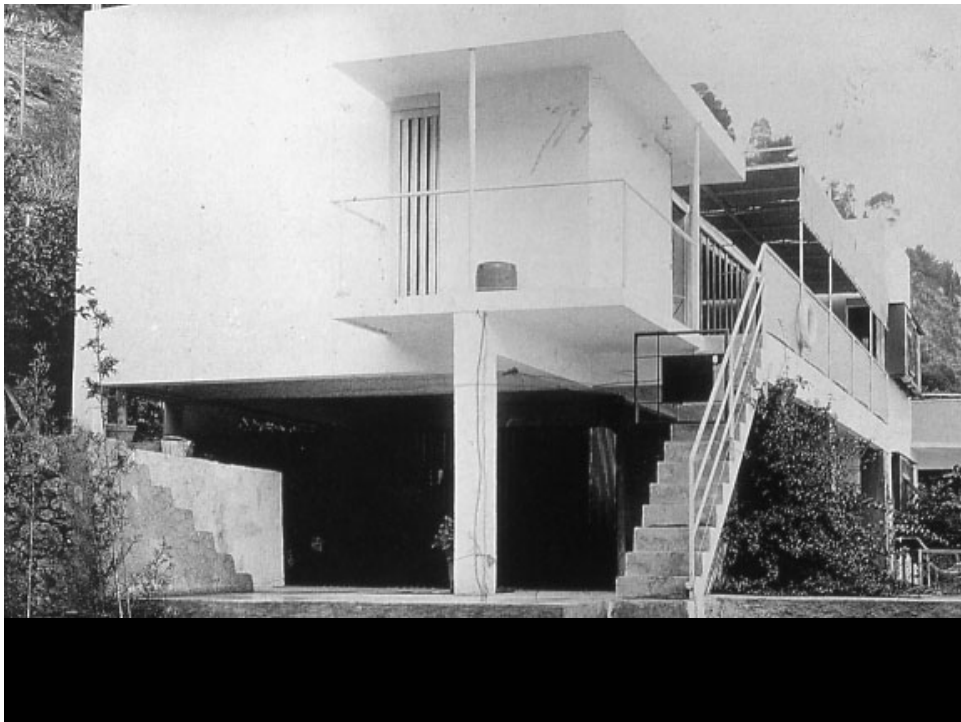








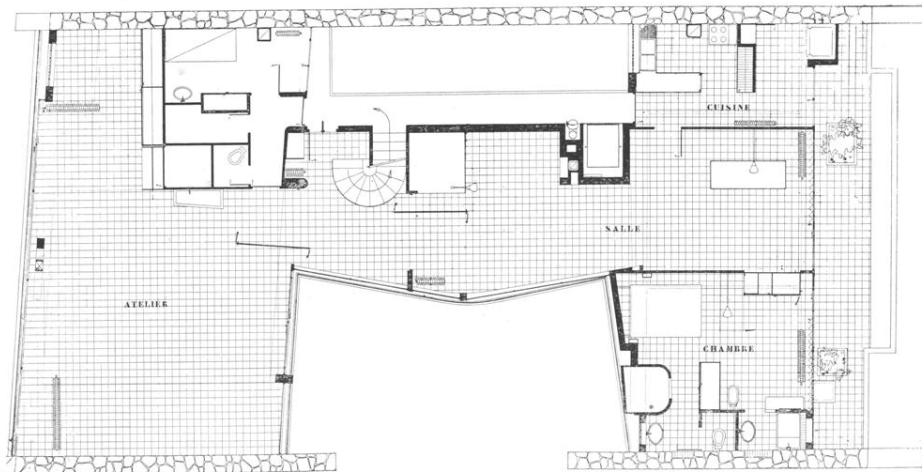
La cuisine devient une des pièces essentielles de la maison





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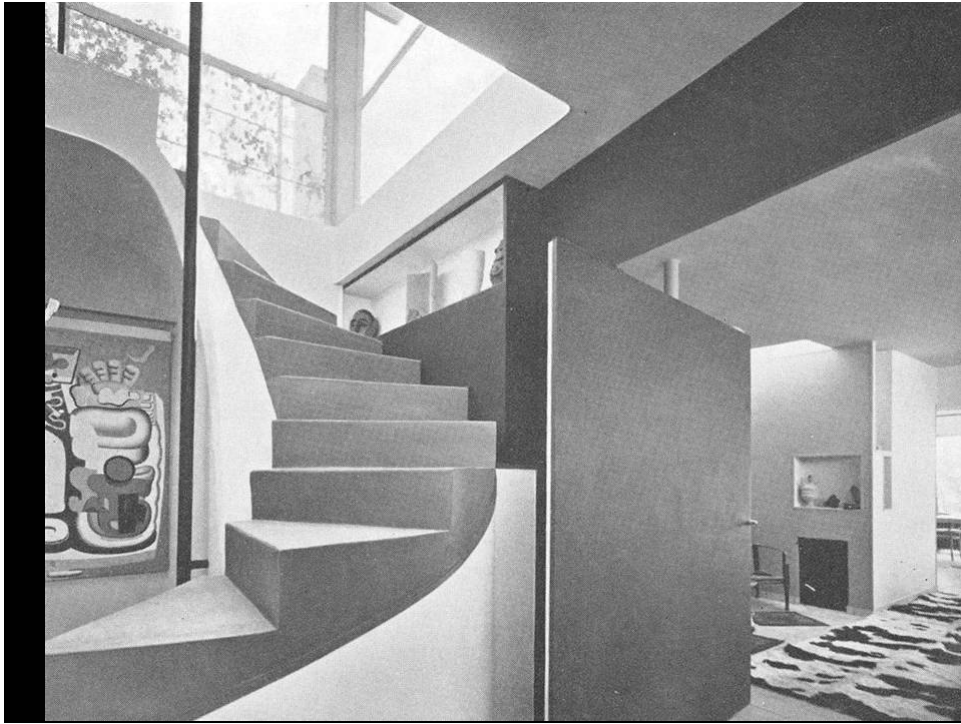
7^{ème} ÉTAGE



Plan du 7^{ème} étage. Ces deux plans soumis à l'étrange réglementation des gabarits ont nécessité une ingéniosité inlassable pour trouver les points d'appui nécessaires et les surfaces habitables. Les gabarits avaient une raison d'être lorsqu'on construisait en charpente de bois. Elles sont un résidu inadmissible à l'époque de la construction de l'acier et du ciment armé

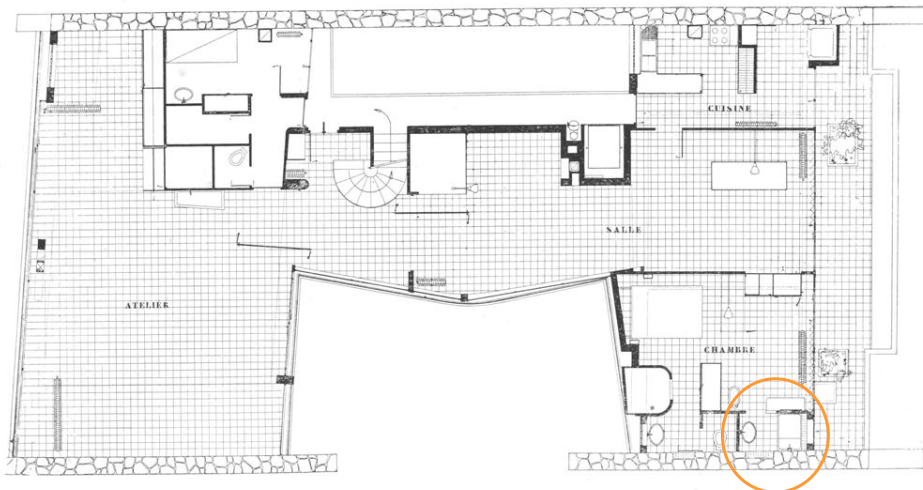




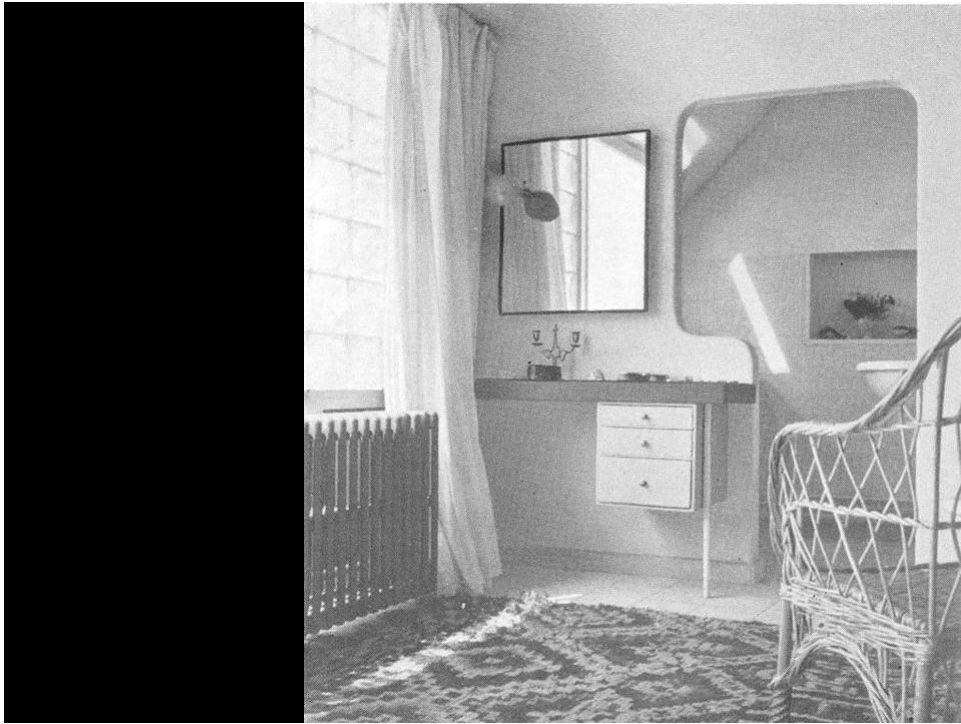


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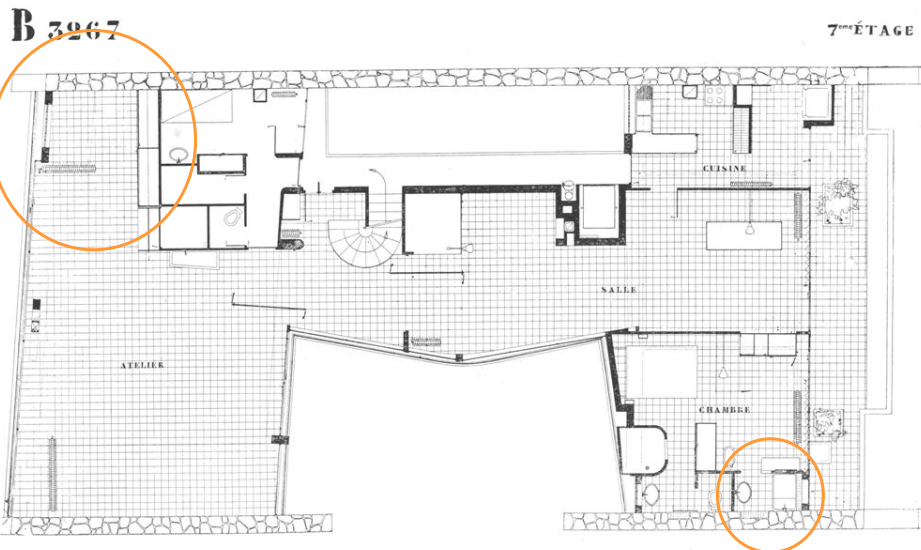
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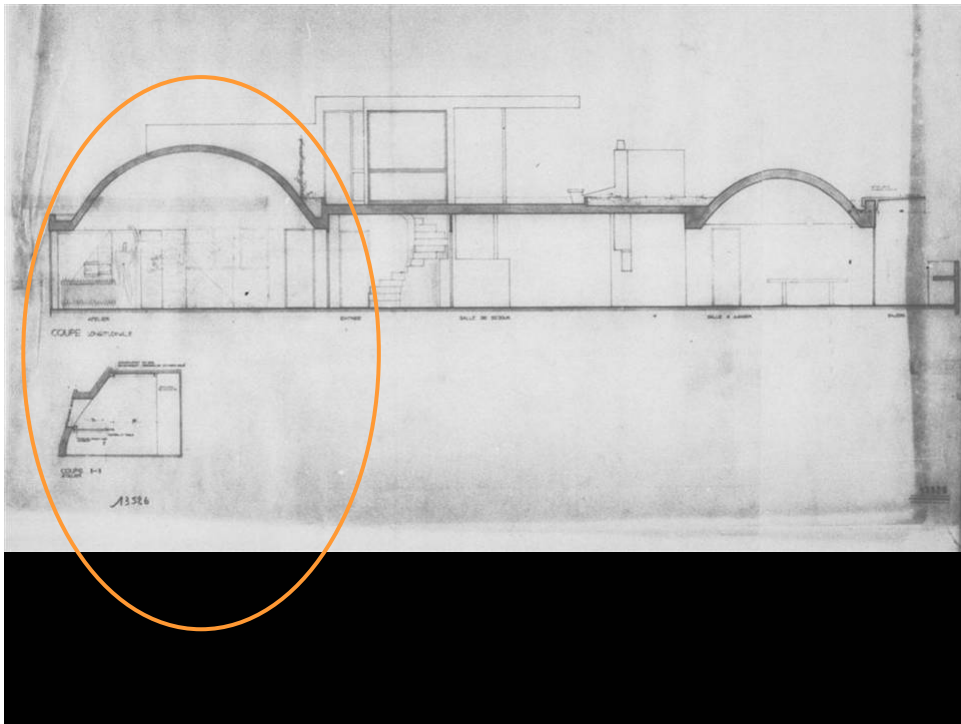
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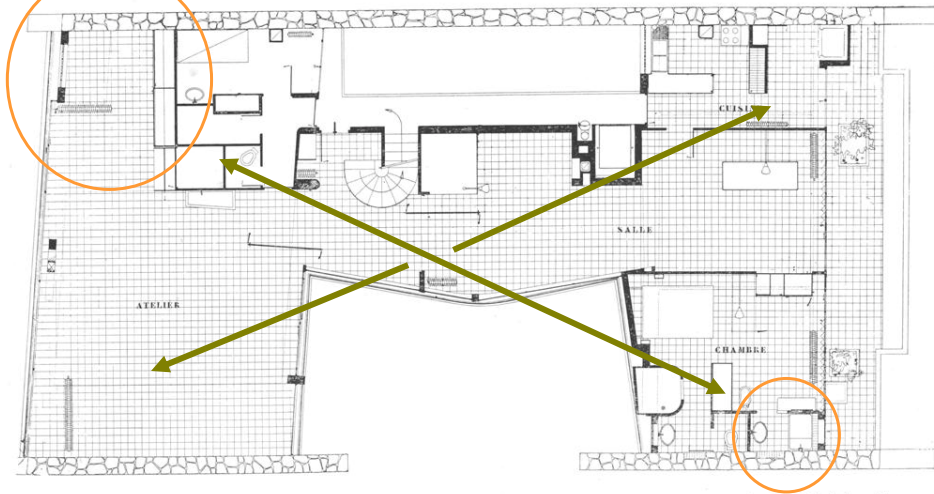






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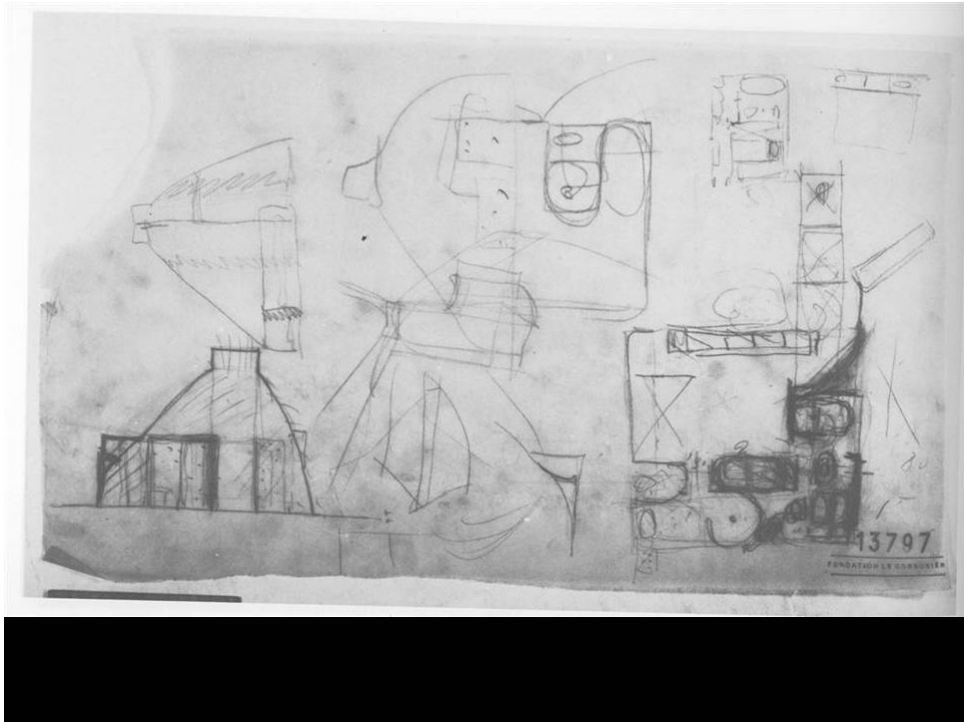
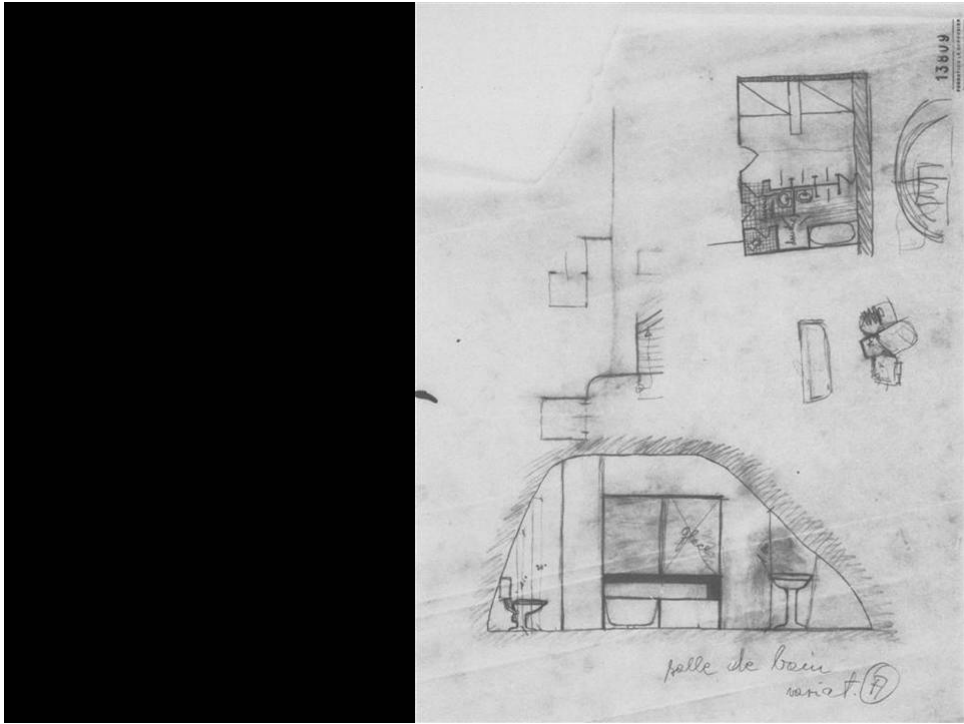
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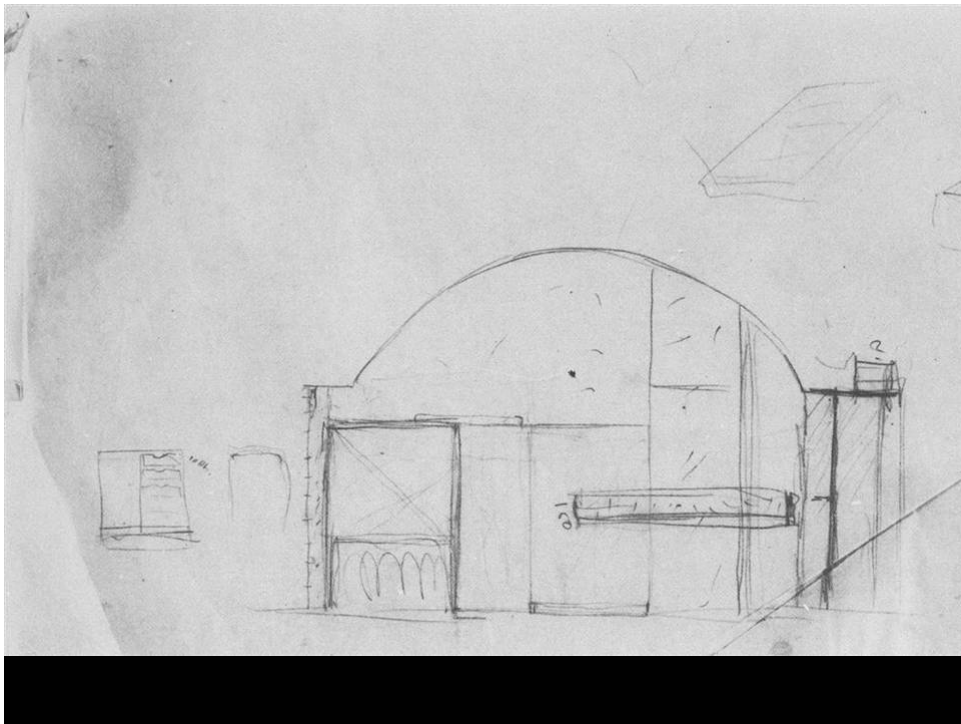
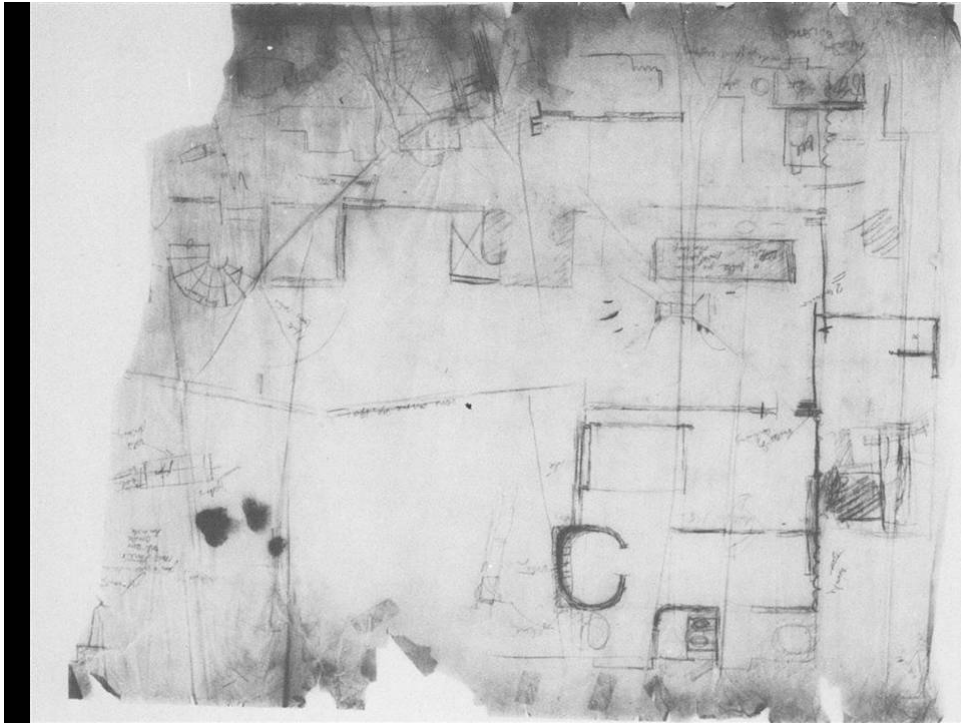


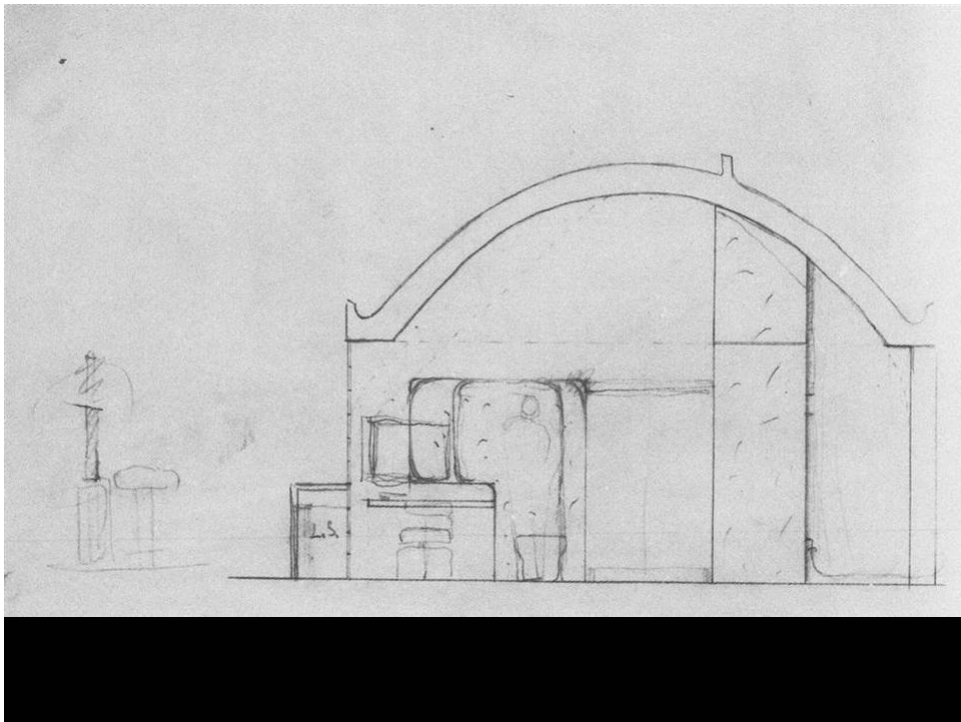
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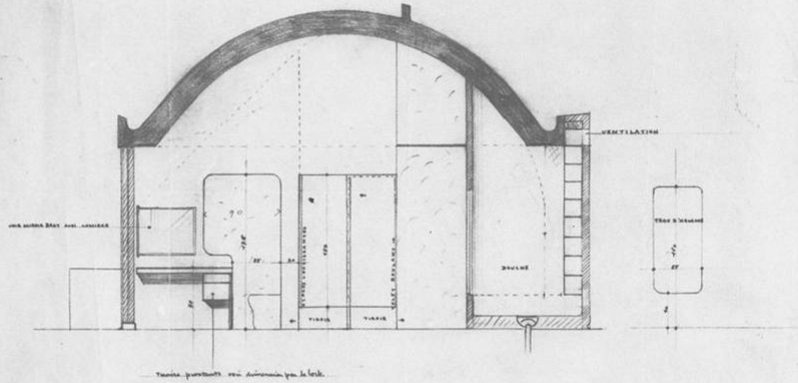








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FONDAZIONE LE COLOSSEI

