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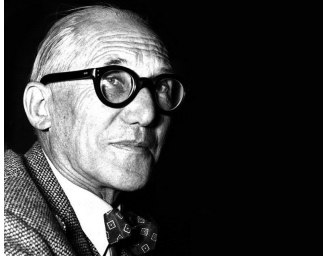
The International Style, Le Corbusier & the Villa Savoye



**“What is Modernism?** In architecture, it’s defined as a design language with an emphasis on form rather than ornament; structure and materials rather than picturesque constructions; and the rational and efficient use of space” (Modern Architecture). Modern Architecture emerged in the first half of the 20th century. It became very dominant after World War II. The ideals of modern architecture was based upon new technologies of construction and a rejection of the traditional neoclassical architecture and Beaux-Arts styles that were more popular in the 19th century. This modern movement in architecture encompassed individual design movements that express the modernist ideals. This included; the International Style, Expressionist, Brutalist, New Formalist, and Guggenheim movements. From these design movements, well known architects emerged including; Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier.

The International Style of Modernism developed a sleek modern look, with absence of decoration and the use of industrial materials. This style developed mainly in “Germany, Holland and France, during the 1920s, before spreading to America in the 1930s” (International Style of Modern Architecture). This style had emerged largely as a result of four factors that confronted the architects at the beginning of the 20th century. First, the increasing dissatisfaction with building designs that incorporated a mixture of the decorative features from all different architectural periods. Second, the need to build large numbers of commercial and civic buildings that needed to serve a fastly industrializing society. Three, The successful development of new construction techniques involving the use of industrial materials such as steel, reinforced concrete and glass. And lastly a “ strong desire to create a ‘modern’ style of architecture for ‘modern man’. This underlined the need for a neutral, functional style, without and decorative features” (International Style of Modern Architecture). Within this style emerged a man who became well know for the use of the International Style; Le Corbusier.

Corbusier was born in Switzerland, but spent most of his life, and architectural learning and design in France. Born into a family of creative people, he started off as a watchmaker. He



then went on to study art and decoration and intended to become a painter. He soon developed an interest in architecture and started to travel through central Europe, working with different architects.

“These trips played a pivotal role in Le Corbusier’s education. He made three major architectural discoveries. In various settings, he witnessed and absorbed the importance of (1) the contrast between large collective spaces and individual compartmentalized spaces, an observation that formed the basis for his vision of residential buildings and later became vastly influential; (2) classical proportion via Renaissance architecture; and (3) geometric forms and the use of landscape as an architectural tool” (Le Corbusier). With this discoveries he became a stronger architecture. It gave him a perspective on design that is showed in one of his famous building Villa Savoye. From the design of this building it generated his own coined idea; the “five points of” architecture.

The Villa Savoye, built 1928-1931 in Paris, France was built as a country retreat on an open field of property surrounded by a wall of trees. The site was immersed in nature, the building itself represents the international style

with its rectilinear form, no use of ornamentation, and industrial materials of concrete and glass.

Corbusier looked at existing classical architecture and represented it in a new and modern way. This building is known as “A promenade architecture”,



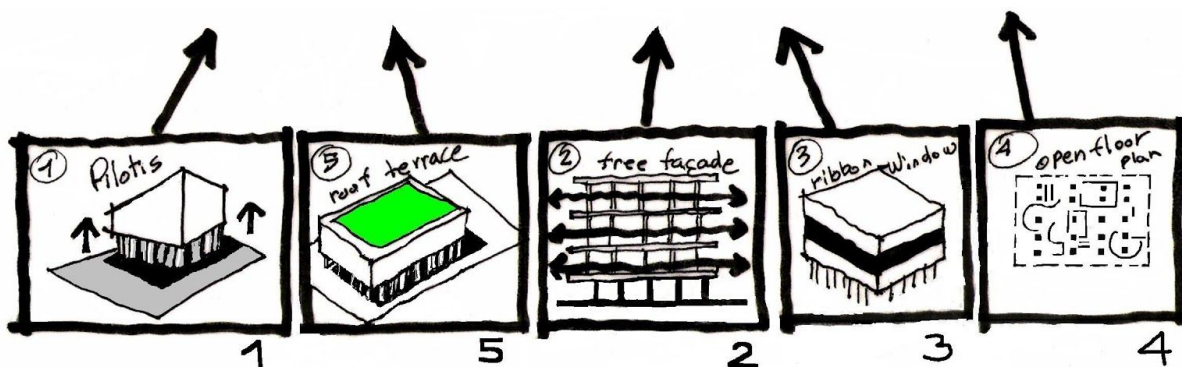
meaning being designed by how the user moves through the space. He uses the curves of the walls and stair to move the observer intentional through thoughtful design.

The interior is stripped of all color. With that, it becomes sculptural. The walls and ramps become the beauty in the function. Form and proportion were key features of the International



style which are shown with the massive expansive windows. Corbusier created a spacious sense using the large expanses of light and bringing an indoor - outdoor connection. He created the “five points” of architecture.

Within this building, it is represented as; 1. The pilotis that elevate the building from the earth, to extend a continuity of garden below. 2. A functional roof, serving as a garden and terrace, so the nature can become a part of the building. 3. Free floor plan, relieve of the load bearing walls, allowing pillars to be placed in a functional space, and the use of 4. Long horizontal windows. Bring in illumination and ventilation. A connection to the outdoors. And finally, 5. Freely-designed facades, becoming the skin of the wall and windows and unconstrained by load-bearing considerations. (Five Points Toward a New Architecture).



Within the interior of the room selected, it is clear to see a direct connection and access to the exterior environment. With the large windows, it extends the views to the outside nature. The materials used within the space connect with the exterior, having a earthy color palette, with neutral and soft tones. He uses leather and cow hide to add texture, and the materials of concrete and ceramic tile - very industrial and international style. With the furniture, the framework is exposed on the outside. This brings unique details to the interior environment.

Looking at the view of the room, it is simple. The foreground shows open space, giving a open view to the area. The middle ground shows pieces of furniture. Still simply placed and giving character to the straight walls and neutral colors. The background one can clearly see the trees. The nature and surrounding exterior environment is transparent into the space. Being in this room, one is surrounded and connected to



the views. The huge open windows make it seem as if the room is unframed in a sense. The industrial materials are sleek and give no distraction away from the experience of being surrounded by that nature. As he has said; the House is a machine for living”, not much is needed to survive in the nature, shown here, the few amount of solid walls, still make it easy to live. With minimal furnishings, this place encompasses the site and its surroundings.

The Villa Savoye encompasses the international style; with the materials use, minimal ornamentation, and sleek structured design of the building. From studying this building and the interior it is clear to see how when on a site surrounded by a wall of trees, one should be influenced to design with that space, and build that threshold connection. An open window with a view of nature, is much better than a solid wall with ornamentation. With Corbusier’s statement “The House is a Machine for Living” it is clear to see that the design of the house can determine what other equipment is needed in the space. Designing a house with all aspects in mind with save time and money on creating a masterpiece. With further exploration, one can look into the ways of incorporating a threshold connection to the exterior, with not a so excluded site. How would one be able to have massive windows and views of nature within a place that is

surrounded by none. How does one create the connections with the use of plants and materials.

The Villa Savoye is an icon in the International Style, as Corbusier left an impact on modernism.

## Text Citations

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"International Style of Modern Architecture." *American Architecture Series*. Encyclopedia of Art and Design, n.d. Web. 06 Apr. 2017.

"Le Corbusier." *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 02 Apr. 2014. Web. 06 Apr. 2017.

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## Image Citation

Le Corbusier

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5 Points of Architecture

<https://archdialog.com/2010/04/22/le-corbusier-les-maisons-domino/>

Villa Savoye Building

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/later-europe-and-americas/modernity-a/p/a/corbusier-savoye>

Interior Stairs

<http://brainmeta.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php?t20315.html>

Interior View to exterior

[http://www.urbanrealm.com/features/280/Corb\\_your\\_enthusiasm.html](http://www.urbanrealm.com/features/280/Corb_your_enthusiasm.html)

Interior view drawn

<http://www.archdaily.com/84524/ad-classics-villa-savoye-le-corbusier>

