

**THE ELUSIVE FACES OF MODERNITY:
THE INVENTION OF THE 1937 PARIS EXHIBITION
AND THE *TEMPS NOUVEAUX* PAVILION**

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To Jasminka

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Danilo Udovicki-Selb

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE ON 13 JANUARY 1995
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ABSTRACT

The 1937 Paris Exhibition, the "final European enactment of the ritual of peace and progress before the deluge," remains the least researched and most misunderstood in the history of the World's Exhibitions in France. This study deals primarily with the years that preceded the opening of the Exhibition and with the broad debates that led to its "invention."

In order to establish the historical foundations of the Exhibition, attention is given first to the political, aesthetic and economic discourses developed throughout the nineteenth century in France on the occasion of its *Expositions Universelles*. This analysis reveals the existence of a specific typology of the French *Exposition Universelle* grounded in the French Enlightenment and in its encyclopedist ideals. The present study claims that this type culminates in the 1867 Exhibition, when, for the first time, the Diderotian encyclopedist ideal and the Saint-Simonian modernist credo--two theoretical premises of these exhibitions--receive their most convincing spatial translation. Conversely, the 1937 Exhibition appears as the "end" of this long typological development when the specific spatial concept of the *Exposition Universelle* created in the eighteenth century finally collapses. This evolution reflects two different approaches to the Enlightenment. One stems from an authoritarian interpretation of the encyclopedist universalism which appeals to Napoleon III's regime. The other emerges as a populist, and perhaps Voltairian interpretation of the *Siècle des Lumières* that reaches its full expression in 1937, hand in hand with the advent of the Front Populaire.

The evanescence of the nineteenth century universalist authoritarianism, and its concomitant quest for a controlling style creates an ambiguous space for the emergence of a planned stylistic pluralism. Such relativization of the concept of style, evident in 1937, in turn announces the end of the concept of "style" altogether, or else of modernity understood as an issue of style.

The principled openness to "all styles" propounded by the leadership of the 1937 Exhibition alienates from the outset, the most radical proponents of modernism in the arts, on suspicions of cultural fraud. Such accusations set the stage for still enduring misinterpretations of the event, namely for the belief that the leadership of the 1937 Exhibition was part of a conspiracy against "progressive" modernity. Under such circumstances, current scholarship explains the apparently paradoxical presence of many modernist architects and artists at the 1937 Exhibition as the work of the Front Populaire. The present study explains why this was not the case.

The central place given here to Le Corbusier reflects the major role the architect played in his militant efforts to take control over the

Exhibition. Information is also provided on Le Corbusier's attempts at polarizing the debate over the question of modernity, style and architectural purpose that shook the French cultural world on the occasion of the 1937 Exhibition.

Through this discussion, the present study demonstrates the keen interest the Exhibition had in Le Corbusier as the leader of European architectural modernism--an interpretation that challenges Le Corbusier's own claims to the contrary.

While providing some little known aspects of Le Corbusier's professional *modus operandi*, the study reveals that Le Corbusier had, ultimately, only a minor role in designing the noted *Pavillion des Temps Nouveaux*--one of Le Corbusier's greatest professional failures. The discovery may serve as the first step in the clarification of the role Pierre Jeanneret, the actual designer of the *Temps Nouveaux*, played in the so called "*Œuvres Complètes*" in general.

Finally, through the analysis of the Exhibition's Commissioner-General Edmond Labbé's relationship with the *Front Populaire*, and the real contributions of the *Front* to the Exhibition, this study revises some received notions about the role of both. While highlighting Labbé's deep commitment to modernity in general and to Modernism in particular, the end result of this study is to lay the grounds for a new synthetic vision of the 1937 Paris Exhibition.

Thesis Supervisor:
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Thanks go as well to Madame Bonazzi of the Archives de France who gave me access to Jean Locquin's papers; to Monsieur Alexandre

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Finally, I should mention my wife Jasminka Gojkovic-Udovicki who, with her unique sense of solidarity, spent incalculable hours in keen criticism and editing of a work I dedicate to her with my greatest gratitude.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1937 Paris Exhibition bore a long title. Officially, it was called "General International Exposition of the Arts and Techniques Applied to Modern Life."¹ This rather awkward title concealed internal tensions stemming from the contradictory demands that were put on the Exhibition throughout the period of its preparation, including the very reasons for organizing an exhibition; the social groups the exhibition would represent, and the interests it would articulate; the goals it would strive to fulfill; and, last but not least, the degree to which the Exhibition would be imbedded in tradition, or the extent to which it would be able to anticipate the future. Indirectly, the way the Exhibition itself was anticipated reflected the lingering anguish of French society in the face of industrial modernity which had been at the heart of all preceding Universal Exhibition. This anguish, symbolically expressed in the ire the raising of the Eiffel Tower provoked among the French cultural elite fifty years earlier,² was most dramatically evident in the state of French

¹ *Exposition Générale Internationale des Arts et des Techniques Appliqués à la Vie Moderne*. The 1937 Exhibition was, like the *Expositions Universelles* that preceded it in the nineteenth century, a World's Exhibition.

² The presence of the Eiffel Tower in the heart of Paris was still widely questioned in the 1930's. This discomfort, expressed even by a Frantz Jourdain, with an engineering aesthetic that clashed with the "authentic classicism of Paris" was reflected, on the occasion of 1937, in the array of

applied arts and architecture ever since.³ Despite the apparent success of the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*--a Pyrrhic victory if any--French applied arts and architecture were faced with a growing competition from abroad, not only in industrial output but pointedly in a domain in which France had claimed primacy for at least two centuries. The Exhibition was thus expected to provide answers to a multiple crisis--economic, social and cultural. It was also expected to furnish a convincing proof of the ability of French society to redefine itself in the face of the Modern world, and to consolidate the belief in its own capacity to reformulate paradigmatic answers to the French quest for survival in the machine-age.

The need to reconcile such a broad range of conflicting and contradictory claims, elusive as they were, was best illustrated by the initial intention the Exhibition's leadership had to temporarily "camouflage" the antiquated 1878 Trocadero Palace in a new "1937 style." This desire to disguise the past expressed both an inability--or else a lack of will--to transcend that past, and a painful consciousness about the loss of the present.⁴

proposals for the camouflaging, demolishing, or even replacing the Tower with a stone skyscraper more "faithful" to the traditional French culture. Le Corbusier's mural in the *Temps Nouveaux* pavilion featuring prominently the Eiffel Tower was no doubt a provocative response to such proposals.

³ For an insightful and highly informative history of the French design movements, see Suzanne Tise, "Between Art and Industry: Design Reform in France, 1851-1939," Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1991.

⁴ Camouflaging had already been tested in 1925, when the 1900 Grand Palais was given a temporary "modern look."

Masking underlined yet another aspect of the intrinsic cultural conflict that pervaded the architectural profession itself: the understanding that modernity was an issue of "style"-of style for style's sake. The final solution for the Trocadero, the permanent cladding with marble of the old, partly gutted-out structure, only further underscored the disconcerting ambiguity that plagued the cultural identity of France. The semblance of stability provided by the new Doric pilasters offered yet another symbol of illusory compromise. The desperate efforts (illustrated by intense debates in the decade preceding the Exhibition) to define France's own position regarding modernity only reinforced the disquieting sense of loss of clear cultural references.

Inevitably, the immediate answer the Exhibition offered was, again, a definition of modernity in terms of style, much as half a century of tortuous soul-searching had suggested. Yet, the Exhibition added to its definition of modernity a masterful twist. It avoided a definitive answer by leaving it to the public to decide which style would represent modernity: a "Modern style" was a matter of choice and taste. However, by deliberately introducing the concept of stylistic pluralism, the Exhibition ultimately opened the way to the final break-down of the concept of style itself.

The 1937 Exhibition was the occasion of the first encounter between the proponents of the New Architecture and the tenets of the "*Retour à l'Ordre*." The various modernist choices of the Exhibition were emblematically represented in the eloquent architectural sequence of the Champ de Mars axis. The backbone of

the Exhibition was, in fact, the locus of a triple encounter. At one end of the axis rose, perched on top of the Chaillot hill, Jacques Carlu's Trocadero Palace, designed in his 'modernized' neoclassical style.⁵ This was a tame, somewhat bloodless version of another neoclassical project conceived on the same occasion by Auguste Perret in 1933. Carlu's Palace was of sufficiently monumental dimensions to arouse the enthusiasm of an architect such as Albert Speer (Fig. 1); yet, at the same time, it was sufficiently well proportioned and elegantly crafted to blend effortlessly into the majestic context of this unique Parisian site, sustaining a harmonious dialogue with its historic legacy. At the far end of this imposing axis, temporarily concealing Gabriel's seventeenth century Ecole Militaire, stood Robert Mallet-Stevens' Palace, closing the sequence, like the Trocadero, with a gently curved façade. Both glowed with radiantly white surfaces. The only, albeit significant difference in their whiteness was that the first beamed with light reflected from marble, while the other shone with its whitewashed stucco surface sprinkled with crystal beads. Indeed, Mallet-Stevens' *Palais de la Lumière* and the Trocadero Palace did not speak the same modern language. His palace was expressed in a frozen modernist style.⁶ Far from being fortuitous, this unlikely encounter was carefully planned by the very leadership of the Exhibition.

⁵ Jacques Carlu, an architect of the establishment who had worked in the United States, and taught at MIT among other places, by 1934 held an influential position in the Paris city administration. He was thus well placed to obtain the commission without challenge.

⁶ Hitchcock, H.-R. "The International Style Twenty Years After," *Architectural Record*, Vol. CX, n. 2, August 1951, pp. 89-97.

The mutual rapprochement and collusion of the two worlds, each claiming the right to speak for modernity, had an intriguing background. Just a few years earlier, Mallet-Stevens was engaged in a team with Jacques Carlu on another version of the Trocadero Palace, so similar to the second Trocadero that Mallet-Stevens publicly declared that much of what Carlu designed represented his own ideas (Fig. 2). In the context of the French architectural scene of the 1930's, this was hardly surprising. Simply, the program of the Electricity Palace,⁷ and the program for a venerable museum and theater, did not belong to the same style. Yet, one underlying condition tied the two together: while the style of the Trocadero could easily be categorized as "modernized academism," the style of the Electricity Palace was a clear case of "academized modernism." Thus, beyond the elusive whiteness, their strongest common denominator was their flaunting modernity doubled with academism.

Another structure, no less relevant, occupied the very center of this eloquent *enfilade*, emphasizing the point even stronger. This was the 1889 veteran of the glorious *Expositions Universelles*, the Eiffel Tower. Relieved of some of its decorative elements, and thus a bit "modernized" for the occasion (rather than 'camouflaged,' as had been also strongly suggested in the name of modernity) the Eiffel Tower appeared paradoxically to be the most authentic *Modernist* monument of 1937. This perception was equally shared by many public figures such as Laszlo Moholy-

⁷ The name *Palais de la Lumière* or *Palais de l'Electricité* is used alternately.

Nagy, but also by Edmond Labbé, the Exhibition's Commissioner-General himself.

This was not all, however. Placed just under the Eiffel Tower, in the very heart of the Exhibition, stood three unlikely pavilions. These were the pavilions of the Radio, of the Cinematography and of the Press--the powerful "media" which were in themselves a form of modern "exhibition." The three pavilions promoted a new concept in communication and "exhibition" of ideas, products and inventions (Fig. 3).⁸ Behind their carton de pâte appearance (Fig, 4), their unconventional exhibits suggested ostensibly that a "pavilion" was an outmoded means to represent their message. Present throughout the precinct of the Exhibition and beyond, the pavilions' "products" featured every evening lavish pageantries that transcended by far their own pavilions. They inundated the entire Exhibition with light, sound and 'information.'⁹ Their ephemeral, yet at the same time astoundingly powerful message was perhaps the most potent detractor of the cultural concept of style, or at least of modernity understood as an issue of style. The three pavilions, with electricity as their common denominator, appeared to be, in 1937, the harbingers of a

⁸ One exhibitor, the Dutch radio-maker "Philips," understood this with great lucidity. Instead of building yet another "pavilion," Philips chose to install on the Pont Alexandre III a series of loud-speakers, elegantly dissimulated in lantern like "art deco" objects, on both sides of the bridge. Using sound literally as a "space making" device, Philips fascinated the public with a music which was, according to witnesses, somehow "every where," making it "impossible to determine its source."

⁹ Based on a strict regulation Edmond Labbé, the Commissioner-General, imposed, the entire "sound" program of the Exhibition, day and night, was planned, controlled and coordinated out of the "media" pavilions. This was done in explicit criticism of the "radio cacophony" that had prevailed at the 1925 Exhibition, but was also suggestive of an entirely new consciousness regarding these new means of communication.

radical change of cultural paradigms. Buttressing this assertion, the Exhibition shone with a significant absence: for the first time in an *Exposition Universelle*, the "Gallerie des machines" had been eliminated.

To the chagrin of those who had invested their frivolous hopes into the emergence of a new miraculous style--one that would confirm the vitality of the *Exposition Universelle* as a peculiarly French invention--the 1937 Exhibition turned out to be an exhibition without style. The dominant role of a controlling style acting as a favored cultural model--in the way it did throughout the history of French fine and decorative arts--was replaced in 1937 by an open-ended stylistic relativism. The negation of the given, rather than the premeditated invention of styles, were to emerge as the true measure of modernity, and the permanent condition of art. Still only diffusely understood by the general public in 1937, this state of permanent 'avant-garde' was finally to impose itself at the dawn of the post-war era, albeit again, inevitably, in the form of a dogma.

What was, therefore, the essential aesthetic dimension of the Exhibition? The consideration of the overwhelming use of Light as an architectural material *sui generis* and a symbol of the Enlightenment on which all French exhibitions thrived, points to the most intriguing means the Exhibition leadership employed to fulfill their main goal: to represent art and technology, two apparently antithetical human practices--simultaneously and concordantly. The analysis of this premise leads to the consideration of yet another self-imposed goal of the Exhibition:

to offer an answer to the question of how art and technology, stemming from two fundamental dimensions of human experience, may be reconciled convincingly in an uncertain and ambiguous modern world.

On a more concrete level, the collapsing of art and technology into one, was bound to excite a demon the French had been wrestling with, mostly unsuccessfully, for at least a hundred years. The collapse, indeed, was bound to raise the contentious question relative to the role art should play--if any--in the machine society, in regards to the disconcerting adventure of the industrial revolution. And, even a more anguished question: would the very soul of French culture survive under the massive influx of industry, grounded as this culture was, economically in the enterprise of small manufacturers and farmers, and, spiritually, on a highly trained humanist *intelligenza*? How would industrialization affect the fine craftsmanship that since the seventeenth century made France's name the world-over; how would it affect France, still predominantly a nation of luxury craftsmen, select vintners, and fine food makers?

Electric light offered itself, intriguingly, as a "non-mechanical entity," a fluid, elegant, and even 'supernatural'¹⁰ invention that scintillated with the glittery dreams of Paris as a "Ville Lumière." Complementing the French tradition of serene luxury, electricity seemed to enjoy, in addition, a privileged connection with the *Siècle des Lumières*. In one magical stroke,

¹⁰ The term "supernatural" was used by the Commissioner-General himself to qualify the nature of electricity. He called it "cette force surnaturelle." Edmond Labbé. Rapport Général, Vol. 5, p. 301.

the "Fée Electricité" as it was called, did the trick: electricity, the highest product of fine reasoning and industrial ingenuity, mediated seamlessly between art and technology.

Light, therefore, was the answer for 1937: it had at once the ability ~~simultaneously~~ to blur and luster. This capacity carried yet another potential benefit. At the time of the debacle of France's design-revival--a revival started by mid nineteenth century, but largely derailed since by a conservative crafts economy--the brilliant phantasmagoria of light pageantries and ephemeral architecture produced by electric light united and blended together the most disparate architectural statements, the most radically opposed "styles"--while generating consensus. Electric light, the ultimate symbol of modernity, brought together the apparently unreconcilable: progress and conservatism.

In 1798, when France organized its first *universal* industrial exhibition, François de Neufchâteau, the republican Minister and aristocrat, called upon all the artists of France to let themselves be "*electrified*" ¹¹ by the brilliant perspectives that the first public industrial exhibition had opened before their eyes. Electricity was already invoked as a metaphor at the very inception of the Expositions Universelles, in clear resonance with the Enlightenment.

This circumstance is cause in this study for a focused reexamination of the history of the French industrial exhibitions. The analysis reveals ~~is~~ the existence of a very coherent tradition

¹¹ Quoted in Maurice Isaac, Les expositions internationales, Paris, 1936, p. 22.

of French exhibitions which nurtured some specific thematic issues setting apart the French *Exposition Universelle* as a type. The pursuit of these issues reveals a tradition significantly grounded in the Enlightenment and in its encyclopedist ideals. This tradition is a recurrent reference of the present study.

On scrutiny, it appears that the French Exhibition differs considerably from similar institutions in other countries. The central issue of Light, also brings to the fore other thematic pursuits related to the Enlightenment. These issues encompass broad political, aesthetic and economic discourses developed throughout the nineteenth century in France. Any analysis of the 1937 Exhibition, the last *Exposition Universelle* in France, has to be set against this backdrop.

The typological phenomenon of exhibitions I examine culminates with the 1867 Exhibition, when, for the first time, Diderot's encyclopedist ideal and the Saint-Simonian modernist credo--two theoretical premises of these exhibitions--receive their most convincing spatial translation. The establishment of a curve of development of the *Exposition Universelle* typology necessarily introduces the notion of a beginning and of an end of the concept itself.

Further scrutiny uncovers yet another internal movement, also closely related to the Enlightenment. While the structural/spatial typology of the *Exposition* based on encyclopedist, "totalizing" tendencies manifests a notable decline after 1867, to reach its lowest point in 1937, a revival of manifold social concerns, also rooted in the

Enlightenment/culminates in 1937.¹² This development explains why, contrary to still entrenched scholarly beliefs, the *Front Populaire*--the radical French movement that, for the first time, brought to power through the electoral process a wide range of left-wing parties--did not have to intervene at the Exhibition to open up progressive avenues, either in the political or the aesthetic domain. The same forces that brought about the *Front Populaire* had already acted upon the "deep structures" of the Exhibition itself in the course of its "invention."¹³

*

This study is divided in two parts. The first deals specifically with the preparation of the Exhibition within the complex constellation of divergent demands put upon the 1937 *Universelle*. The "end" of the *Exposition Universelle* as a type is therefore examined through the controversies leading to the formulation of the 1937 Exhibition. This controversy reveals the frustrations and contortions critics, practitioners and art historians alike wrestled with as they engaged the unresolved question of modernity which prevailed in France up until the opening of the Exhibition on 25 May 1937.¹⁴

¹² This process, amounts to a radical democratization of the *Exposition* that parallels a corresponding process of democratization of the French society.

¹³ In the aftermath of 1925, the early proposals for a new exhibition in 1937, as expressed in the Parliament's debates, call explicitly for an "Exposition de la vie ouvrière et paysanne." If still tainted with a degree of populism, the very fact that such topics can be seen as themes of an international exhibition definitely speaks to a radical departure from nineteenth-century more overt paternalism.

¹⁴ The debate would pick-up again, as a masquerade, under the Pétain régime, as demonstrated by Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac, *Histoire de l'Art: Paris 1940-*

With this date, we witness the final symbolic dissolution of the *Exposition Universelle* typology gradually built since the eighteenth century. The emptied carcass of a defunct concept created an ambiguous space for the emergence of stylistic pluralism. The relativization of Style as an aesthetic concept announced, in fact, the final end of all "styles" which obsessed with particular acuteness French debates in the applied arts and architecture since 1889, the year the Eiffel Tower was built. In addition, the 1937 Exhibition was not, strictly speaking, an "Exposition Universelle" anymore, but had become an "Exposition Internationale."¹⁵ Its name was, in part, a reflection of a newly emerging concept--internationalism--formulated in the nineteenth century but central to the twentieth. This concept not only characterized the new relationships among nations, as exemplified by the emergence of the League of Nations, but also the new role industrial laboring classes, organized in two distinct "Internationals," (the Second and the Third)¹⁶ played in European and French politics as revealed by the emergence of the Front

1944. *Ordre National--Traditions et Modernités*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris 1986.

¹⁵ This is not to be confused with the classification of the 1925 *International Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts* which remains a specialized exhibition. By contrast, 1937 is still a "World's Exhibition" as the term is understood in English. Yet by 1889, the French World's Exhibition is already called "Exposition Universelle Internationale," as is the one in 1900. It is to be noted, however, that, beyond the change of some ideological premises, the elimination of the term Universal is also due to the regulations of the recently founded *Bureau International des Expositions*. This international body calls an exhibition "Universal" when no specific theme is chosen by the host country. This allows the guest countries to exhibit whatever they deem fit. An exhibition is "International" when a specific theme is set, and guest countries must abide by a program the host country defines. In the case of "International" exhibitions, the host country is required to pay for the larger part of the exhibitors' expenses.

¹⁶ The Fourth International was founded by Trotzky in the year that followed the Exhibition.

Populaire. Perhaps even more important, the concept relativizes, as it were, the encyclopedist ideals of the Enlightenment, at the very moment when the grand, universalizing philosophical systems of the nineteenth century entered in crisis. The actual preparation of the 1937 Exhibition was best reflected in a long series of competitions held between January 1932 and May 1935. These competitions mobilized not only architects and "decorators" but virtually the entire French cultural world. The first part of the present dissertation shows how the competitions which were organized, first, to determine a new site for the Exhibition, and, second, to select the architects who would be called to work for the Exhibition, ultimately failed. While the first series of competitions in 1932 were conceived as a genuine "consultation" of professionals, organized by united art associations including the Union de Artistes Modernes, the second, in 1935, were appropriated by a conservative Beaux-Arts establishment on the one hand, and the *Grands Patrons* of the architectural world on the other. Despite some extremely compelling solutions addressing the global development of Paris, the results of the site competition were dismissed under the pressure of narrow pragmatism and conservatism, and, last but not least, of the economic crisis. The second series of competitions, cunningly misappropriated, failed to produce any significant result, or to uncover any new talents among the younger participants. The academic circles succeeded in keeping the younger generation under the tight control of the "patrons," a delusive "democratic" rhetoric notwithstanding. Ultimately, this misappropriation also meant

that most of the progressive elite were virtually excluded, leaving the Exhibition, for the longer part, to the mercy of generally irrelevant figures--to the cream of the official academic world. Two grand names were strikingly missing: Auguste Perret and Le Corbusier. One single exception was registered: two CIAM¹⁷ members, Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods. Not surprisingly, however, they were entrusted with the Exhibition's light pageantries, precisely the architectural realm which had the capacity to muster a consensus across the lines of the stylistic battles.¹⁸

Understandably, this situation alienated some "modernists" from the outset, while provoking an a priori hostility towards the Exhibition as a whole. Actually, such suspicions of cultural fraud set the stage even for current misinterpretations of the period, namely for the belief that the leadership of the Exhibition itself was part of the conspiracy. Still based on this assumption, current scholarship explains the apparently paradoxical presence of many modernist architects and artists at the Exhibition as the result of alleged last-minute interventions by the Front Populaire.

The second part of this work is an effort to demonstrate that this explanation is false. It is an effort to "rescue" conclusively the Exhibition from accusations of conservatism and

¹⁷ The Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). Founded in La Sarraz, Switzerland in 1928, to assemble architects adhering to the New Architecture and who shared a common intellectual and professional distaste for the aesthetic and social sterility of the Academies. The primary purpose of the CIAM was to establish a common program of action through a series of encounters that took place over a period of almost three decades.

¹⁸ The fact that Beaudouin himself was a "Prix de Rome," though, may have played a role in his success.

to show, quite to the contrary, the deep commitment to progressive modernism that characterized the exhibition's leadership, the Commissioner-General Edmond Labbé's and chief architect Jacques Gréber's in particular.

While the first part of the present study establishes the general context in which the 1937 Exhibition manifested itself, and thus includes an examination of Edmond Labbé's cultural and political persona, a synthetic reevaluation of the canonic view of the 1937 Paris Exhibition emerges in the second part through the case study of a central figure, indeed central to both the saga of Modernism and of the 1937 Exhibition--Le Corbusier.

The place given to Le Corbusier in this work is in itself reflective of the major role the architect played, consistently and militantly, in his manifold attempts at redefining the Exhibition over a period of several years. I examine Le Corbusier's efforts to polarize the debate over the question of modernity, style and architectural purpose, a debate that shook the French cultural world on the occasion of the 1937 Exhibition, as discussed in the first part.

A detailed analysis of Le Corbusier's exchanges with the Exhibition's officials, concerning six projects he conceived between 1932 and 1936, shows conversely the keen interest that the Exhibition held for Le Corbusier as the leader of European architectural modernism. The revelation of this support for Le Corbusier challenges Le Corbusier's own claims to the contrary.

Le Corbusier used his first project as an occasion to launch a thorough, if mostly implicit criticism of the "Exposition" as a type. While the project boldly introduced the issue of modern housing as a radically new central theme for a world's exhibition (even though the issue had always been part of the French tradition) Le Corbusier's criticism of the *form* of the Exhibition did not reach beyond what he saw in 1925. Instead, quite surprisingly, and despite his own claims, Le Corbusier recreated-- albeit with a modernized approach--the very traditional, totalizing nineteenth century *Exposition Universelle*. Le Corbusier's contribution was to revive the classical type of *Exposition Universelle*, both in its spatial apodictic conception, and in its ideological tendencies towards encyclopedic universalism. The authoritarian concept of 1867, which prefigured urban and social control through form, was replaced by an authoritarian model of a different form but of equal intransigence. In fact, Le Corbusier went even further than the 1867 model, as his exhibition was not meant to "represent" the world, but rather to dominate it.

Le Corbusier also used the project as an occasion to redefine large urbanistic issues of the modern city in general, and Paris in particular. However, what emerged from Le Corbusier's analysis of the urban condition of Paris was a city-form strikingly emblematic of the 1867 exhibition fairgrounds on the one hand, and, on the other, a planning model far closer to that of a Renaissance concept than to the model of the Athens Charter.

This study also brings to the fore one of the few detailed accounts of Le Corbusier's *modus operandi* in a government context and with fellow architects. This depiction presents the man and the professional in a new light. In addition, the analysis of Le Corbusier's efforts to put together a convincing project for 1937, reveals--contrary to the myth of the preconceived clear "concept"--the significant role that chance could play in the evolution of his designs. As a whole, the chapters dealing with Le Corbusier's input into the 1937 Exhibition offer a basis for the exploration of three related yet distinct issues. The first may be defined as "Le Corbusier and the Problems of Modern Life;" the second as "Le Corbusier and Politics;" and the third as Le Corbusier's professional behavior.

Perhaps the major side-discovery of this study, is that, except for part of the interior installations, Le Corbusier did not design the noted 'Corbusian' *Pavillion des Temps Nouveaux*, a pavilion on which some scholars have based interpretations of the last period of his work. As documents show, Le Corbusier was primarily concerned with the displays of the pavilion intended to represent only the program of a future World Exhibition he hoped to organize in 1941. While modifying to a certain degree the canonical body of Le Corbusier's *œuvre*, this reassessment also may serve as the first step in the effort, not yet attempted, to clarify the role Pierre Jeanneret, the actual designer of the *Temps Nouveaux*, played in the so called "*Œuvres Complètes*" in general.

The analysis of Labbé's relationship with the Front Populaire, and the real contributions of the Front to the Exhibition, revise the role of both. Highlighting the deep commitment of Labbé's, not only to modernity, but also to an understanding of Modernism that meets contemporary criticism of the so called Modern Movement, I hope to have laid the grounds for a new vision of the 1937 Paris Exhibition.

PART ONE

THE 1937 EXHIBITION, AN EXHIBITION WITHOUT STYLE

CHAPTER I

Elements for the Constitution of a Type: The Tradition of French *Expositions Universelles*

This chapter traces back a series of critical themes that emerged at the *expositions universelles* in France, and which eventually shaped the logic and objectives of the 1937 Paris Exhibition. The purpose is to evaluate historically crucial, aesthetic, social, and political issues surrounding the *Expositions Universelles* throughout the nineteenth century, and to bring those issues to bear on the conceptualization of the 1937 Exhibition, the last of the French *Expositions Universelles*. Those themes have an added significance as the nineteenth-century debates also represented a backdrop against which Le Corbusier formulated his own position regarding 1937--a question examined in the second part of the present study.

Encyclopedism and Saint-Simonianism

The analysis of the Expositions Universelles reveals that, following its first industrial exhibition of 1798,¹⁹ France developed within the general concept of the "World's Exhibition" a very particular type of exposition, distinct from that of other countries, England in particular.²⁰

¹⁹ On June 6 1796, Citizen Echassériaux, member of the Conseil des Cinq-Cents, presented a plan to redress the industrial input of the country, and revive its national self-confidence in the aftermath of the Terror. He proposed that manufacturers be given yearly awards for excellence, as an incentive to the improvement of their products. In fact, this proposal amounted to the creation of a "Salon" for industrial commodities to be held yearly, like the Beaux-Arts Salon itself.

François de Neuchâteau, Minister of the Interior, conceived the first state sponsored Exhibition of National Industries (*Exposition publique des produits industriels français*) in conjunction with the 1798 celebrations of the Republic. Art as such was not yet present. However, the organizers articulated clear architectural intents, indeed the foundation for a new architectural type as they required that the Exhibition be "decorated, protected and covered." (Maurice Isaac, *Les expositions internationales*, Paris, 1936, p.21).

On the planning of the first French industrial exhibition see: Ministère de l'Intérieur. Recueil des lettres circulaires, instructions, programmes, discours et autres actes publics, émanés du citoyen François de Neufchâteau, pendant ses deux exercices du Ministère de l'Intérieur. 2 vols, Paris, an VII-VIII (1798-1800). Not until the 1830's was serious consideration given to establishing a permanent building to house the exhibitions. (See Jean Rey, Mémoire sur la nécessité de bâtir un édifice spécialement consacré aux expositions générales des produits de l'industrie. Paris, 1827).

²⁰ For general histories on French Exhibitions see in particular Démy Adolphe Essai sur le expositions universelles de Paris, Paris, 1907. Raymond Isay, Panorama des expositions universelles, Paris, Gallimard, 1937. Pascal Ory, Les expositions universelles de Paris, Paris 1982. For general histories on World's Exhibitions see in particular John Allwood, The Great Exhibitions, London, 1977; For an exhaustive account on the origins of world's fairs see op. cit. Isaac, 1936 and Maurice Isaac, Les expositions en France et dans le régime international, Paris, 1928. See also Rosalind Williams, Dream Worlds, Berkley, 1982; Paul Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, World's Fairs, 1851-1939, Manchester, 1988; Linda & Carlo Olmo, Le esposizioni universali, 1851-1900: il progresso in scena, Turin 1991. Aimone Robert Rydell World Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993.

Central to the "French" idea of the *Exposition*

Universelle is a concept derived from Diderot,²¹ of assembling the entire material and intellectual production of a given time (initially from one country, France, and later, beginning with 1855, from the "entire world") to create a living Encyclopaedia, an "Encyclopaedia" materialized in space. While the English tradition of trade and industrial fairs stemmed from private institutions organized by noblemen, and was aimed at restricted circles, the French exhibition, drawing on the nascent eighteenth century Republican ideas, was to be an open, public institution, primarily organized and financed by the State, and, until 1855, open to all free of charge.²² Forty-seven years after the

²¹ See Denis Diderot, Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers par une société de gens de lettres, 35 vols. Paris Neufchastel, 1751-65 (in particular "Industrie," "Art," and "Maîtrise.")

For references to the Enlightenment see Madeleine Réberieux, "Approches de l'histoire des expositions universelles à Paris du Second Empire à 1900," Bulletin du centre d'histoire économique et sociale de la région Lyonnaise, n.1, 1979, pp. 1-17. About the resistance of the aristocracy to the unity of the arts and the enforced split between art and artisanship under the Ancien Régime, see Patricia Mainardi, Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867, New Haven and London, 1987.

²² All 11 French exhibitions that preceded 1855 were open and free to the public. In 1855 a fare was introduced: 5 francs during the week (later reduced to 2F,) but only 0.20 on Fridays and 0.5 francs on Sundays. See Isay, Panorama, 1937, p.23.

The first modern industrial exhibition was organized in England in 1756, privately, by an aristocrat, William Shipley. Three years earlier, he had founded the *Royal Society for the Advancement of the Manufacturing and Commercial Arts* better known as *Royal Society of Arts*. This exhibition had a strictly private character and was limited to a select circle of connoisseurs and businessmen (Pascal Ory, Les expositions universelles de Paris, 1982, pp.8-15). The next English industrial exhibition, held in 1851, was also organized by an aristocrat, Prince Albert. It was financed through private, corporate and personal donations, including from the Royal family (A railway contractor, for example, donated 50,000 pounds, while the Queen, the incarnation of the British state, offered only 1,550 pounds) (John Findling, ed. Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988, New York, 1990, p.8).

Even though it has been rightfully noted that the first English international exhibition was directly inspired by an already well established French tradition, and notably the 1849 Exhibition in Paris (Patricia

publication of Diderot's main œuvre, the first such exhibition in France opened as one of the crowning moments of the Enlightenment.²³

After the Revolution, the bourgeois Republic added a political dimension to the already existing intellectual,

Mainardi, Arts and Politics of the Second Empire: the Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867, New Haven/London, 1987, p.22) the modifications that the British introduced were highly indicative of a significantly revised approach. Most notable was the English rejection of the elaborate French encyclopedic system of classification they saw as mere "abstractions." (see in particular the criticism of the young English scientist Lyon Mayfair regarding the French expositions, quoted in Asa Briggs "The Crystal Palace and the Men of 1851," in Victorian People: A reassessment of Persons and Themes, 1851-1867 London, 1970 p.38).

Whereas French exhibitions were primarily oriented to the interpretation of the world, the English were mostly concerned with its use. Indeed, the classification of the exhibited products in 1851 reveals a pragmatic rather than a "scientific," or encyclopedic intent. While the 1851 Exhibition had six "groups" (Raw metals; machinery; manufacture: textile; manufacture: metals; glass and ceramics; miscellaneous; fine arts (emph. added); the French 1855 Exhibition had roughly the same number of groups but of a markedly different epistemological nature. These were (as quoted in Ory, 1982, p.153): 1. Industries ayant pour objet principal l'extraction ou la production des richesses brutes. 2. Industries ayant pour objet l'emploi des forces mécaniques. 3. Industries spécialement fondées sur l'emploi des agents physiques et chimiques ou se rattachant aux sciences ou à l'enseignement. 4. Industries se rattachant aux professions savantes. 5. Manufactures de produits chimiques. 6 Manufacture de tissus. 7. Ameublement et décoration, modes, dessin industriel, imprimerie, musique. 8. Beaux-arts.

For a detailed factual account of the "Great Exhibition" see C.H. Gibbs-Smith, The Great Exhibition of 1851 Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981.

²³ Whereas the concept of a *Beaux-Arts* exhibition, the predecessor of the *Salons*--of which Diderot was a noted art critic--was well established since Louis XIV, such tradition did not exist in England. The connection to the *Salon* tradition was explicitly and vigorously emphasized in France throughout the nineteenth century, while any association with merely commercial "Fairs" was outright rejected. Yet, the idea of exhibiting the "useful," or "Mechanical Arts," as Plato called them, and of endowing them with the aura of the "Fine Arts," emerged only after Diderot urged that *les arts utiles* and *les beaux-arts* had equal preeminence. Diderot promoted the idea of the "unity of industry and art" originally developed by Voltaire in his writings on the nature of commerce and industry. From Rousseau, Diderot adopted the reverence toward simple, industrious labor.

The "enlightening," encyclopedic mission of the 1798 Exhibition was expressly stated in its own program. The Exhibition was not only a place where diverse industrial commodities would be presented for future sales, but it was also called to facilitate the study and the advancement of Commerce, as well as to contribute to the "*instruction and enlightenment*" of the general public. (François de Neuchâteau *Fête de la fondation de la République. Programme. 1er vendémiaire, an VII. Fructidor, an VI*) On this particular character of the French exhibitions, see also Isay, Panorama, 1937, pp.7-12.

commercial, and social aspirations informing Diderot's vision. In 1798, the political intent was quite specific: regarded by contemporaries as a "truly Republican spectacle"--a festival of nascent industrial capitalism²⁴--the 1798 Exhibition was expected to give an emblematic and spatial expression to a new "economic federation" of the French provinces, just as their "civic solidarity" had been triumphantly proclaimed on the same site eight years earlier (Fig. 5).²⁵

Each *Exposition* was conceived as a veritable "fête," indeed a celebration of work on the Champ de Mars. This tradition had its roots in the revolutionary festivities designed and orchestrated by the painter Louis David under Robespierre's regime. It was David who, in 1794, launched the idea of a "fête de l'industrie."²⁶ Thus, the notion of associating all later exhibitions to this kind of festivities--which acquired a

²⁴ Mainardi (Op. cit. p.12) calls it 'festival of capitalism.'

²⁵ Reberieux, "Approche...", 1979.

The site--the birth place of the French Nation proclaimed in 1790 and celebrated since as the *Fête de la Fédération*--remained the site of the most important French exhibitions, thus underscoring the political and civic significance attributed to these events.

²⁶ Mainardi, 1987, p. 12.

Labor was explicitly celebrated in Revolutionary pageantries and fêtes which were, in a way, a 'cross breeding' between traditional *Fêtes de village* and aristocratic pageantries, much as the exhibitions were an encounter between 'Fairs' and 'Salons.' Literally, thousands of people were involved in these mass performances bearing the symbols of the Revolution. Robespierre's regime considered these festivals as powerful means designed to unite the "peuple" behind the Revolution (See James Leith, The idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799, Toronto, 1965). The very fact that the French Exhibition owes its origin to Robespierre's regime, and therefore to a specific political and cultural aim, already sets it clearly apart from the primarily commercial and practical character of the English Exhibition.

A useful comparison can be made between the French mass celebrations and those held in the young Soviet Republic in the early days of the October Revolution. Such was, for example the reenactment of the storming of the Winter Palace in which the citizens were engaged as actors. Like in the case of the painter David, these huge theatrical events were designed and staged by the best artists of the avant-garde.

particular significance at the 1937 Paris Exhibition--stemmed directly from the tradition of French Revolutionary pageantries related to the Enlightenment.

The 1798 Exhibition was dryly crowned by a round Doric *Temple de l'Industrie* (Fig. 6), replacing the 1794 Temple for the *Fête de l'Etre Suprême*, an artificial "Acropolis" built for the occasion (Fig. 7).²⁷ The introduction of the new "temple," affected the future *expositions universelles* in two crucial ways. It established a long genealogy of "Galleries des Machines," and ushered in the Saint-Simonian transcendental faith in industry.²⁸ While a certain typological continuity persisted, both

²⁷ The connection between the *Fête de l'Etre Suprême* and the *Temple de l'Industrie* is made by Réberieux, 1979, p.1-17.

²⁸ The code of beliefs the Comte de Saint-Simon left to his followers was a faith in progress and in shared power of entrepreneurs and workers, in a "rationally organized world," free of "parasites"--nobles and priests in the first place. The Saint-Simonian School evolved in different directions after its founder's death, including into a near-to-religious sect that merged romanticism and scientism, liberal industrialism and conservative social thinking. On Saint-Simon himself see Kieth Taylor, ed. Henri de Saint-Simon 1760-1825. Selected writings, London 1975. For a broader discussion of Saint-Simonism see Paul Bénichou Le Temps des Prophètes. Doctrines de l'âge romantique. Paris, 1977.

The Suez Canal, as well as Haussmann's urban reform of Paris, were projects influenced by Saint-Simonian ideology. The urban works, which anticipated Haussmann's *grands travaux*, were indebted to a great extent to the ideas of Michel Chevalier, a heir of Saint-Simonism. See Michel Chevalier, Les intérêts matériels en France. Travaux publics. Routes. Canaux. Chemins de fer. Paris, 1836, and Charles Duveyrier, La ville nouvelle ou le Paris des Saint-Simoniens, Paris, 1837. Michel Chevalier was a close ally and lifelong friend of Le Play, the *spiritus movens* of the 1855, 1867 and 1878 exhibitions. Chevalier's ideas appeared first in 1832 in the Saint-Simonian magazine Le Globe. Michel Chevalier was also responsible for the important 1867 Exhibition Rapport du Jury international publié sous la direction de M. Michel Chevalier. 13 vols. Paris, 1868. On Chevalier and his central role in defining the approach to the Expositions Universelles before and during the Second Empire see Marcel Blanchard, "Le journal de Michel Chevalier," Revue Historique 171 (1933), pp. 115-42; and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, "Michel Chevalier saint-simonien," Revue Historique 1956, pp.233-266. For a synthetic and critical evaluation of the specific role Saint-Simonism played in the definition of urban projects in the first half of the nineteenth century in France see unpublished paper by Leila Whittemore (Columbia University), "Utopia (Limited): 'Saint-Simonian' urbanism under the Second Empire."

the *Gallerie des machines* and the Saint-Simonian industrial transcendentalism disappeared from the last Exposition Universelle in 1937, under the influence of growing democratic institutions only implicitly present in the nineteenth-century *expositions*.

At the closure of the 1798 Exhibition, Minister François de Neufchâteau²⁹ made a momentous address to all the administrations of France, inciting them to:

electrify the artists in their respective localities, by explaining to them the importance of their artistic work to the Government, *all this art that truly comes from the people, whose perfection and activity so powerfully affect the riches and well-being of all nations*" (emph. added).³⁰
[*électriser les artistes de leur arrondissement et et de les pénétrer de l'intérêt que le gouvernement attache aux travaux des arts, à ces travaux vraiment populaires dont la perfection et l'activité ont une si puissante influence sur la richesse et le bonheur des nations.*"]

Neufchâteau's oblique reference to "electricity" in the context of art was prophetic. Seen as a symbolic marriage of art and science, *tehne* and *poesis*, electricity was to become a central theme of all the *Expositions Universelles* after 1867.

The call to the artists of France to "electrify themselves" was also the first significant attempt at opening the doors of industrial exhibitions to the *Beaux-Arts*, in a clear-sighted anticipation of their necessary convergence, as predicated indeed by Saint-Simonians. Neufchâteau's populist reference to the "true artistic work of the people," foreshadowed yet another "union" closely related to the convergence of art and industry: the union of the arts and the crafts. The idea was to be launched

²⁹ On Neufchâteau's role in creating the first French exposition see Charles Simian, *François de Neufchâteau et les expositions*, Paris 1889.

³⁰ Quoted in Isaac, 1936 p.22

in France by the design reform movement in the aftermath of the London 1851 *Great Exhibition*.³¹ The debate on this reform was sustained well into the twentieth century, and culminated on the occasion of the 1937 Exhibition.³²

Following a long series of eleven national exhibitions, the French government decided, on March 27, 1852--barely a year after the London Exhibition--that its first international "Exposition Universelle des produits de l'agriculture, de l'industrie et des Beaux-Arts," would open in 1855.³³ At the closing of the London Great Exhibition, Marquis Léon de Laborde (1807-1869), the official French representative to the exhibition, presented the French Government with a celebrated report of over 1000 pages on England's striking technical and industrial accomplishments.³⁴ Laborde's solution for France's redemption in

³¹ The first attempt to present together arts and crafts was made in 1801, in an exhibition held in the gardens of the Louvre, under one hundred and four porticos imitating a variety of colored marbles. Artists, however, strongly resisted being associated with manufacturers and, ultimately, only commerce and industry were shown. Thus, even though in the immediate proximity of the art Salon, the direct association between artists and manufacturers did not occur for another half a century. See Isay, 1937, p.34.

For a brief but informative account of the industrial exhibitions in France between 1801 and 1849 see Mainardi, pp 17-20.

³² For an informative discussion on the debate at the turn of the century on Art Nouveau and craft modernism see Debora L. Silverman, Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, psychology and Style, Berkley, 1989 p.109 ff. For a critical reappraisal of Silverman's interpretation see Tise, pp xii-xiii (1991).

³³ Agriculture was not accidentally spelled first in the title. The supremacy of this economic branch in France persisted, unlike in Germany or in England, well into the twentieth century. In the context of this economy, the process by which industry and art found a common purpose was slowed down. This assertion does not contradict, but rather reinforces the thesis that the design reform in France was "hindered" by the overwhelming economic and social importance luxury crafts and craftsmanship had in the French cultural tradition. (Tise, "Between Art..." 1991.)

³⁴ See Marquis Léon de Laborde Exposition Universelle de 1851. Travaux de la commission française sur l'industrie des nations. 8 vols., Paris 1856-1873. This text was also published under the title: De l'union des arts et de l'industrie, Paris 1856.

the applied arts was mass education in the arts on all levels, organized by the state, with the ambitious objective of creating, quite in the spirit of the Enlightenment, "a nation of artists."

Few artists shared Laborde's views, however. They saw neither the merging of art and industry, nor the industrialization of artisanal design, as compatible with the basic tenets of either French art or French culture. In 1867, the brothers Goncourt summarized the controversy by claiming that "the Universal Exhibition was the last stroke of what amounted to the Americanization of France: Industry preceding Art, the combine steam machine ruling where a painting used to be."³⁵

Such a stance clearly described the conflicting and contradictory character of France's attitude towards modernity, still intensely present in the debates that surrounded the planning of the 1937 Exhibition. This conflict was highlighted in 1855 by the bold decision of the Exhibition's leadership to open a full-fledged display of "fine arts" alongside industrial commodities--a feature essentially absent at the London World's Exhibition.³⁶ However, as has been noted, this innovation was implemented at the Exhibition only in the guise of a "Super-

³⁵ Quoted in Ory, 1982, p.50. Baudelaire coined the term "américaniser" in reference to the ill-effects of the 1855 Exhibition.

³⁶ There was, for sure, a "fine-arts" section in London as well. However, this section, last on the list, included only "Sculpture, Models, Plastics, Mosaics and Enamels," a distribution based on the old classification of the Useful Arts, to which architecture and sculpture belonged but not painting, an art that "translates on canvas subjects and passions foreign to industry." Yet, it is precisely for that reason that the dream of a union between art and industry took hold early on in the British Exhibition. This union was to be achieved through a renewed consciousness of the necessity to rehabilitate the decorative arts in an avant-garde pursuit of new furnishings and utensils (Mainardi, 1987, pp.22-30; Ory, 1982, pp.54-71; Tise, 1991, pp.1-28).

Salon."³⁷ This meant that, instead of the usual annual production, the exhibition was to display a ten year's retrospective of French "official" artistic activity.³⁸ Art and the machine were simply juxtaposed, with no dialogue intended. Art was firmly secured within the framework of the established eclecticism, and spared any pondering of its possible role within the new, industrial society. The *Exposition* allowed art and industry to face each other as equal for the first time, but stopped short of opening avenues towards their integration. This enduring dichotomy was still visible on the cover of the 1937 Official Guide to the Exhibition (Fig. 8).

Léon de Laborde's specific interest in architecture--the practice he called "the first art, the art that contains them all"--led him to assign architecture a dominant role in the exhibitions. He boldly claimed in his *Rapport* that, in an exhibition, architecture should be both "the envelope and the content,"³⁹ a view Le Corbusier adopted in 1937, in reference to the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilion. Laborde's approach played indeed a significant role in determining a place for architecture in French exhibitions from 1855 to 1937. Those exhibitions featured a succession of architectural "styles."

The didactic display of art and industry in France's first international Exhibition reflected yet another intent related to the Enlightenment. Even though the *Exposition* was a

³⁷ Pascal Ory, Les Expositions Universelles de Paris, Paris 1982, pp 54-71

³⁸ Later *Expositions Universelles* presented retrospectives which displayed the work of an entire generation, or even of a century.

³⁹ Quoted by Isay, 1937, p.41.

place where diverse industrial commodities were presented for future sales, it was, to a large extent, an instrument for the study and advancement of commerce, and for the "edification" of the general public.⁴⁰ A Dideroan aspiration to general enlightenment formed the core of the Exhibition's program,⁴¹ giving the French *Exposition Universelle* the character of a pedagogic tool serving the "masses."⁴² The didactic mission was to remain the objective of all successive French exhibitions, culminating in 1937.⁴³ Ultimately, unlike the more narrowly conceived British

⁴⁰ Mainardi perceptively noted that the very choice of the term "exposition" is in itself a subtle indication of the overtly *didactic* intent of such exhibitions. Mainardi, 1987, *p. 36.

⁴¹ See *Exposition Universelle de 1855, Atlas descriptif, dressé par ordre de SAI le Prince Napoléon, président de la commission Impériale*, Paris 1855; also *Catalogue officiel publié par ordre de la commission impériale*, Paris 1855.

⁴² It is necessary to note, however, that a degree of didactic public purpose characterized the *Great London Exhibition* in its own right. In a very practical manner, Prince Albert used the proceeds of the Exhibition to establish a museum and school of applied arts in South Kensington. The Prince who was the exhibition's organizer, also headed a Royal Commission for the study and the promotion of the Fine Arts in Britain. The Commission was set to find "the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and of the principles of design among the people." (*C.Denvir, *The Early Nineteenth Century*, pp 20-21).

For a further discussion of the 1855 Paris Exhibition see Werner Plum *Les expositions universelles au XIXème siècle, spectacle du changement socio-culturel. Aspects sociaux et culturels de l'industrialisation*: (English title: *World Exhibitions of the nineteenth Century: Pageants of Social and Cultural Change*) Bonn, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1977; For the impact of the Exhibition on art see Elizabeth Holt, *The Art of All Nations, 1850-1873: The Emerging Role of Exhibitions and Critics*. New York. 1981; Guillemette Delaporte, "L'exposition universelle de 1855 à Paris: Confrontation de cultures et prises de conscience." *L'Écrit-Voir*, 5-10, 1985; Arthur Chandler, "Fanfare for the New Empire: The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1855," *World's Fairs* 6 n. 2. (Spring 1986), pp.11-16. Refer also to op. cit. Isay, *Panorama* pp.13-79.

⁴³ See Edmond Labbé, Ministère du Commerce et de l'industrie, "Introduction," *Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques dans la vie moderne, Rapport Général*. 12 vols. Paris, Impr. Nationale, 1938-1940.

model, the French *Exposition* was an officially sponsored display of a nation's culture in the broadest sense of the term.⁴⁴

The 1855 Exhibition

The French *Exposition*, founded by the Republic, remained, even under the Napoleonic monarchy, a public and national enterprise.⁴⁵ The selected project for 1855, a Palace related to the 1798 "Temple" but intended as a permanent building, was designed by the engineer Alexis Barrault⁴⁶ (Fig. 9). Specifically conceived for the display of state-of-the-art machines, the 1855 "Palais de l'Industrie" was a building of glass and iron akin to that long line of "Galleries des Machines" that followed, and strove to surpass the Crystal Palace throughout the nineteenth

⁴⁴ For a critical reading of intended and unintended symbols of French Expositions Universelles, see Raymond Isay, *Panorama*, 1936.

⁴⁵ Prince Albert was vehemently censured by the numerous opponents of the London Exhibition who saw it as a French Republican idea with dangerous subversive underpinnings. They perceived the whole 1851 project as a threat to the establishment. Such were the proportions of the hostile campaign, that the King of Prussia, alarmed by the dangerous "Republican assassins" who would haunt the Exhibition, prevented the Royal Prince and Princess from accepting Queen Victoria's invitation to the Exhibition. France's enthusiasm for the Exhibition, it is to be conceded, did not contribute to calming the suspicious spirits (Isaac, 1936, p.33). In fact, fears were not totally unfounded: the London Exhibition did act as a catalyst for the first international workers movement as described below; Rebérioux, "Ouvriers" 197-208)

For additional critical information on the London 1851 Exhibition and its social and political setting, see Briggs, 1970; For a full factual account see Victoria and Albert Museum, catalogue, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, London, 1981; See also Charles R. Fay, *Palace of Industry, 1851: a Study of the Great Exhibition and its Future*, London 1851. For a formal analysis see Nic. Pevsner, *High Victorian Design: a Study of the Exhibition of 1851*, London, 1951

⁴⁶ Alexis was the younger brother of the writer and parliamentarian Emile Barreault, one of the most fervent apostles of Saint-Simonism. The two brothers went to the Middle East on the occasion of the Saint-Simonian efforts to revive the Napoleonic saga. Once in Egypt, Alexis conceived the first plans for the future Suez canal. He was later a collaborator of Ferdinand Lesseps.

century.⁴⁷ Yet, on official demand,⁴⁸ this magnificent Palace--boasting a larger structural span than Paxton's building--ended up wrapped in a heavy mass of ornamented masonry that concealed its most important innovations (Fig. 10). The ponderous stone facade masking the slim and crystalline interior structure was designed by the architect Jean-Marie Viel. Echoing the triumphal arch at the other end of the Champs-Élysées, the palace's main entry--itself a triumphal arch--glorified Napoleonic continuity and a parvenu aesthetics (Fig. 11).

Two inherent and related contradictions were strikingly apparent at the Exhibition. First, only academic art was recognized as acceptable, despite the need for living art to be encompassed as a relevant dimension of an industrial show. Second, the industrial nature of the building's structure was contradicted by its eclectic container, although the nineteenth-century Saint-Simonian industrial spirit called for giving a robust voice to modern industry. The Palace, indeed, crystallized the contradictions of the Second Empire, combining, not unlike Saint-Simonianism itself, romanticism and realism; authoritarianism and democracy; chauvinism and internationalism; scientific positivism and industrial mysticism.

The Exhibition opened triumphantly in Paris under the tunes of *L'Impériale*, a cantata Hector Berlioz composed for the

⁴⁷ The structure was 250m long, with a single frame span of 180m--a distance never achieved before, and thus exceeding the Crystal Palace. This type of structure was part of a series of buildings designed by several brilliant engineers of the same generation. These buildings included Hector Horeau's (1801-1872) winning project for the London 1851 Exhibition; Henri Labrouste's (1801-1875) libraries; Victor Baltard's (1805-1874) Halles; and large department stores such as the Bon Marché by architect Boileau.

⁴⁸ Isaac, 1936, p. 34.

occasion.⁴⁹ Written for 900 musicians and choristers to evoke the power of the modern factory, the cantata was nicknamed "symphonie industrielle." Itself a symbol of the rise of mass society, this thunderous musical event addressed the "masses" in general, and the working class in particular. As a didactic tool, the exhibitions were aimed at a particular kind of "acculturation" of the working force emerging from peasantry into bourgeois civility. It is in this sense (the assimilation into a prescribed social order) that the words of the Exhibition's Commissioner-General, Frédéric Le Play: "le plus important produit de la mine, c'est le mineur," should be understood.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ This musical overture to the Exhibition anticipated Camille Saint-Saëns' overture "Feu céleste" for 1900 (obviously referring to electricity), and Arthur Honegger's composition for 1937 which combined both sound and electrical effects.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Pascal Ory, Les expositions, p.36. Ory suggests a different meaning by implying an unlikely connection with the Marxian theory of value. As has been noted, Le Play has often expressed opinions that misled people into thinking that he was a socialist. "On the contrary, he held a fundamentally paternalistic and antidemocratic view that, while the government should try to improve the lot of the working class, this task should never be entrusted to the working class itself." (Catherine Bodard Silver, ed. Frédéric Le Play: On Family, Work and Social Change, Chicago/London, 1982, p.21. However, Ory has correctly suggested that the workers' familiarization with the new industrial machines at the exhibitions, as well as the opportunity this gave them to freely intermingle with the middle and upper classes, allowed them "to contemplate the highest stages of the modern revelation--progress inspired by the spirit of permanent innovation." Such vision, it was hoped, would instill in the workers both a sense of social mobility and the desirability of concord among classes.

Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882) the French high administrator who conceived the 1867 Exposition Universelle, supervised the exhibitions both under Napoleon and under the Third Republic. His explicit goal was to achieve peace through technical progress while fostering the extinction of pauperism through workers cooperation.

A professor of economy and a founder of French empirical sociology, he graduated at the Ecole des Mines. In 1855 he became Conseiller d'Etat and was a Senator from 1867-70. In 1856 he created the Société d'économie sociale where he professed his liberal political economy. Hostile to interventionism and socialism, he also opposed liberal optimism. A founder of Social Christianity, he defended in his main work, La réforme sociale (1864), the authority of the enterprise, the Church, the State and the family which was to be enforced with compassion rather than coercion. These principles led

It is also with an analogous objective that the two imperial exhibitions (that of 1855 and of 1867), featured models of workers' housing projects--a personal concern of the Emperor who designed many himself (Fig. 12).⁵¹ In these projects, pragmatism and mysticism encountered each other. The projects had a clear, if paradoxical propensity for modernity and tradition, for industrial efficiency and social progress. The 1855 Exhibition was the first to include an "exposition sociale" alongside industry. This placed the French exhibition tradition decidedly within a cultural framework transcending the character of a purely industrial institution. Thus, yet another significant difference with the British model was established. Committed to such cultural approach, which included both a degree of Saint-Simonian influence and of Le Play's theory of patronage and social mobility, the Imperial government sent selected workers delegations to both French and English international exhibitions.⁵²

him to become the main theoretician of the paternalist social movement among employers. In the characterization of Le Play's social and political role, however, one should bare in mind that, before acquiring its negative connotation by the end of the century, the practice of patronage originally represented a form of control over the devastating effects of the liberal market economy. (On Frédéric Le Play's ideological career see Bodard Silver, Le Play, 1982.)

⁵¹ On these social policies see Georges Duby, ed. L'histoire de la France urbaine: Le cycle haussmannien, Vol.4: Seuil, Paris, 1983, p. 318-319; See also a case study of a French factory town created after an elaborate paternalist model, B. Huet, Le Creusot, Paris, 1979.

⁵² Eluding, however, the establishment's expectations of fomenting "social peace," the London encounters of French and English industrial workers in 1862 represented the starting point of a broad independent international workers movement. The Workers International, founded in London in 1864 on a French initiative, was the first organization of contemporary Socialism. Karl Marx, a political émigré from Germany, wrote the inaugural address of what came to be known as "The First International." The address was published in 1867, the year of the Paris Exhibition, in the first volume of Das Kapital.

The official French workers reports from the London exhibitions, on the other hand, soon became part of the founding documents of the French trade

By 1867, the International Exhibition and the International Association of Workers, emerged as two closely connected, if antithetical institutions.⁵³

The 1867 Exhibition

A central event of the Second Empire, the 1867 Exhibition achieved the most elaborate typological model of French World's Exhibitions. Le Play, its Commissioner-General, was particularly committed to a strict and all-encompassing classification and spatial distribution of the exhibited artifacts, leading to the fruition of an encyclopedic concept transfigured into space. Radicalizing the ideas he had already tested in the Empire's first exhibition,⁵⁴ Le Play devised in 1867 a minutely crafted plan, boasting Haussmannian clarity and technocratic discipline. The building, that housed the products

Union movement that remained illegal until 1884. The culmination of this process occurred in 1889 when the Workers' International met in a Congress on the very premises of the Exhibition.

For a discussion of the workers' delegations at the Expositions Universelles between 1855 and 1900 see Madeleine Réberlioux, "Les ouvriers et les expositions universelles de Paris au XIXe siècle." in Le livre des expositions universelles, exhibition catalogue, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1983, 197-208.

⁵³ See Bron, J. Histoire du mouvement ouvrier français, 1884-1950, Paris, 1970. Also: Noiviel, G. Les ouvriers dans la société française XIX-XXème siècle, Paris, 1986. Bernard Charlot & M. Figeat, Histoire de la formation des ouvriers, 1789-1984, Minerve, Paris 1984, p. 568.

⁵⁴ Most certainly influenced by the recent publication of the Encyclopédie Nouvelle to which he had taken a strong interest (op.cit. Whittemore, "Utopia... 1994), Le Play introduced at the Exhibition of 1855, for the first time, his system of classification of human products--a classification that distinguished exhibited items, as we saw, less by their *type*, as the English did, than by their *process* or *purpose of production*.

Yet, since it did not have a decisive influence on the design of the exhibition's Palace, his classification fell short of being clearly reflected in the spatial organization of the structure. This changed in 1867. Moving away from the undetermined eight groups of his 1855 classification, Le Play, the mathematician, chose a more abstract, markedly "Pythagorean" number of 10 groups representing the universe.

of 52,000 exhibitors, was a striking triumph of modern rationality. Disavowing the 1855 hybrid structure, the new Palace was designed by a former student of the *Ecole Polytechnique*⁵⁵ in Paris, the engineer Jean-Baptiste Krantz, who was not a man given to aesthetic afterthoughts. A conceptual precursor of the Eiffel Tower, the Palace was built of iron and glass, and was distinguished by its sober logic (Fig. 13). Reminiscent of a modern Colosseum, its elliptical shape and rational organization also recalled Ledoux's oval plan for an industrial city.⁵⁶ Like Ledoux's city--itself emblematic of a solar system--Krantz's City-Palace provided a trope for the human universe as a whole (Fig. 14).⁵⁷ The countries best represented were the two main rivals,

⁵⁵ The *Ecole Polytechnique* where Michel Chevalier had also studied counted with a significant number of Saint-Simonian followers, Jean-Baptist Krantz among them. The exhibition building was based on a conceptual sketch by Le Play.

⁵⁶ The elliptical form and the universalist scope of the building referred to a Saint-Simonian *temple of the future* which, some thirty years earlier, was mystically "revealed" to Chevalier after a conversation he had with one of the founders of Saint-Simonism, the engineer and economist Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin (better known as "le père Enfantin," 1796-1864).

This oval temple was evocative of Saint-Simon's own dreams of a Newtonian temple. Conceived both with esoteric inspiration and scientific insight, utopian lyricism and cold positivism, the building of the temple was actually begun (but never finished) in 1832 in the working class hamlet of Ménilmontant, then still at the outskirts of Paris. Parisian volunteers helped the construction of the building, under the supervision of Emile Barrault (Alexis' older brother). (Ann van Zanten, "The Palace and the Temple: two Utopian architectural visions of the 1830's" *Art History* 2, 1979, pp.179-200).

Here again, electricity--a source of light in Boulée's Newtonian cenotaph--was projected into center stage as an intrinsic part of the temple. A mediator between magic and science, electricity was expected to be literally generated by the harmonious communion of scientists, artists and industrialists assembled in the temple. Such lyrical outbursts prefigured, surprisingly, the mystical fervor of the Darmstadt artists combined with a touch of Werkbund pragmatism.

⁵⁷ The 1867 methodic representation and classification of the totality of the human experience, in keeping with Diderot's attempt at organizing reality into a compendium of taxonomies, was based on two overlapping systems. First, the Palace was composed of a series of concentric galleries, each displaying artifacts of the same kind produced by the participating

England and France, exhibiting one to the right, the other to the left of the main entrance, much in the way they strove to divide that universe (Fig. 15).⁵⁸

The Exhibition's simple plan conveyed a sense of scientific order: like an encyclopaedia filled with positivist certitudes, the plan implied that reality was a transparent structure to be subjected to exact classificatory procedures and unquestionable cross-sections, as if shaped by some superior will. The whole of "reality" shown at the Exhibition was divided into ten general groups. The Palace itself was broken down into seven galleries. Two overlapping ontological systems--the Pythagorean number ten on the one hand, and the Biblical number seven on the other--clearly referred to a homogenous, if metaphysically complex idea of the Universe.⁵⁹ And indeed, Le Play wrote in a letter to a

countries. Second, radial alleys that separated one country from another cut through the gallery rings. Moving along one gallery allowed the comparison of objects of the same nature produced by different countries, while the radial alleys allowed the visitor to cut across the entire production of a single nation. In this way, the organism of the Exhibition as a whole presented itself unquestionably as a blueprint of scientific origin in an unquestionably "scientific" manner. Every object exhibited was part of an elaborate system of classification, where "Groups" and "Classes" tended to encompass each and every branch of human activity.

As a system with "double entries," Krantz's palace resembled Hector Horeau's early model for the 1851 London exhibition. Horeau's system, however, had a more limited, orthogonal organization, one that reemerged in 1878, as will be discussed later.

Architecture and the Crisis of Individualism." Oppositions 8 Spring 1977, pp.71-91). The classificatory system and general planning of 1867 served as a *model* for all subsequent French *Expositions*. As Pascal Ory has rightfully pointed out "never [after 1867] such a rigorous, such a clear system for a Universal Exhibition was to be seen again." (Ory, Les Expositions, p.22)

⁵⁸ On the role the ordering, categorization and ultimate objectification of the universe played at the exhibitions in favor of world domination by colonizing powers see Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney, "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Univrseelles," Assemblage, 13, 1990, pp.35-61.

⁵⁹ Le Play's conception was no doubt religious in its essence: the "present" world and its classificatory hierarchies reflected by the Palace, was, according to his own Scholastic concept, the representation of classificatory

friend: "La vie présente est le poste où nous devons gagner le classement dans la vie future."⁶⁰ [emph. added]

Along this hierarchical taxonomy, the outer ring was reserved for large industrial machines; the first inner ring and the central open area were dedicated to art. Highly visible from each radial alley, art was casting back upon the Exhibition its lofty serenity visible from each radial alley. However, with the exception of works by Ingres who died that same year, and by Delacroix who died three years earlier, the artists allowed to exhibit were strictly those who had bowed to fashionable eclecticism and had made it to the earlier Salons.⁶¹ In the midst of the "Bataille du Réalisme," and in sharp contradiction with the declared modernism of its Saint-Simonian sponsors such as Michel Chevalier, current artistic research was excluded from the Palais de l'Industrie.

Such incoherence of vision was not the only contradiction plaguing the 1867 Exhibition. French artists were also trapped in an ironclad system established by the Beaux-Arts.⁶² In the oval

orders to be earned in "future life." A mind such as Le Play's, with his severe Catholic upbringing, could see an *Exposition Universelle* only as a worldly transposition of a heavenly structure, an examination of the merits and deeds preceding the "Final classification."

⁶⁰ Quoted in Isay, *Panorama*, p.92.

⁶¹ For an informative discussion on the intricate art policies under the Second Empire and the social and aesthetic issues raised by the Fine Arts section of the exhibitions see in particular Mainardi, *Art and Politics*, 33-96

⁶² An artist who would have ventured in collaborating with an industry, was banned forever from exhibiting in the Salon. This regulation was in force since the Ancien Régime (see Statuts et règlements, 2 September 1777, article XXXIV, CXLVIII). For the historical and political context of this regulation see Mainardi, 1987, pp.10-11). There were some sustained efforts among artists to reverse this situation as well. The founding of the "Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie" in 1864 is a case in point. On the foundation of the Union Centrale see Yolande Amic, "Débuts de l'UCAD et du musée des arts décoratifs," in *Cahiers de l'UCAD*, no.1, 1978, pp.52-54. For an analysis of the role of the *Union* see Tise, 1991 pp.28-37. The main

"palace" itself artists were more than symbolically captives of the iron cage of Krantz's structure. The space assigned to them was the building's inner core--Gallery I and the "jardin central." The outer, tallest "galerie des machines,"⁶³ specifically reserved for heavy industry (Fig. 16), appeared as an "inverted" panopticon, as it were, controlling from its vantage point the inner court of the Palace. Within this innermost space at the heart of the Exhibition, art displays were intermingled with displays of monetary currencies,⁶⁴ seemingly indicating the role assigned to art by nineteenth-century bourgeois pragmatism.⁶⁵ Presented as transcending common experience, but also displayed in the form of discrete, tradable objects in the world, art was simultaneously idealized and commodified.⁶⁶ Those among the contemporaries who would have been tempted to read the

source on the Exhibition of 1867 is: P. Dupont Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris. Rapports du jury international--Introduction by Michel Chevalier, 13 Vols. Paris, 1868). See also Paul Mantz, "Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle" in Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1 July 1867, p.131 and F. Ducuing, "Le jardin central, Du Pavillon des monnaies au grand vestibule" in L'Exposition universelle de 1867 illustrée, 7 Oct 1867, 239-40 For the most comprehensive contemporary account in English on the 1867 Exhibition see also: Report of the United States Commissioners to the Paris Exposition, 1867, 6 Vols. (1870). For recent analyses see Allwood, The Great Exhibitions. (1977) and Mainardi, 1987, pp.128-134.

⁶³ The later use of the term "Galerie des machines" for the industrial exhibition halls probably originated here.

⁶⁴ F. Ducuing, "Le jardin central, Du Pavillon des monnaies au grand vestibule" in L'Exposition universelle de 1867 illustrée, 7 Oct 1867, 239-40.

⁶⁵ In fact, initially, art was supposed to be displayed only in Gallery I surrounding the central court, as a last step in the process of the "spiritual elevation" of human work from heavy industry to money as its most abstract representation. It is the lack of space that induced the organizers to put sculpture among the currency exhibits (Mainardi, 1987, p.131). This fact, of course, rather underscored than it invalidated the meaning of the adopted distribution of exhibits.

⁶⁶ The comparison with 1937 is significant. Displayed through large murals and monumental sculptural programs, art was in 1937, as opposed to 1867, an integral part of the exhibited architecture. Thus integrated, and responding both to an aesthetic and populist demand, art could neither be commodified nor appropriated: it adhered inextricably to the public realm.

distribution of the galleries as a grand progression, from heavy industry in the outer ring of the Grande Galerie des Machines, to the finest expression of the spirit hidden in the innermost precinct of the Temple,⁶⁷ had to concede upon evidence, that the ultimate mediator of all human action was marketable value. The rigor of science and human labor, displayed in the "temple of industry," was buttressed by commercial pragmatism.

Yet, the economic cosmology of this industrial universe cast in Le Play's plan concealed an added meaning. In-between Gallery I and the *Jardin Central*, an un-numbered gallery was inserted.⁶⁸ This gallery mediated, as it were, the space assigned to art and the space displaying money. Indeed, reflecting with great precision the spatial representation of the Saint-Simonian economic credo, this space was dedicated to the History of Labor. Between art, as the most spiritualized form of human work, and money--the ultimate crystallization of value--stood the representation of Labor itself, the ultimate source of all value according to Saint-Simonian economic theory. In other words, the interaction, throughout history, between Labor, at one end of the economic process (the inner gallery,) and the Tools at the other (the outer gallery) conveyed a Saint-Simonian explanation of the creation of value represented both by the exhibited merchandise

⁶⁷ A contemporary, Paul Mantz, wrote precisely that, referring to the spatial distribution of the rotunda: "Material things occupy the first ring and, with each circle crossed, you approach the spiritual." Quoted in Mainardi, 1987, p.131.

⁶⁸ Auguste Vitou, "Exposition Universelle 1867," Paris il y a Cent Ans, Paris 1975, pp. (no numbers)

and the monetary currencies located in the Central Core of the Palace.⁶⁹

Finally, this elaborate description of the sources of *industrial* and *economic* power was crowned by the symbol of the Empire's *political* power: at the very core of the Central Garden, visitors to the Exhibition could admire the diamonds of the Emperor's crown. Ultimately, the Temple's oval configuration with radial avenues intersecting circular boulevards within surrounding parks projected an abstracted and universalized image of the Haussmannian Paris (Fig. 17), not only as the capital of France, but also of the world⁷⁰

The 1878 Exhibition

Despite the fall of the Empire in 1871, following a disastrous war with Prussia, the 1878 Exhibition maintained a remarkable continuity with the previous 1867 Exhibition.⁷¹ The entire Exhibition was now directly entrusted to Jean-Baptist Krantz,⁷² the chief architect who had distinguished himself with the elliptic glass and iron Palace.

⁶⁹ This Saint-Simonian principle was later elaborated by Marx in his Theory of value.

⁷⁰ See Benjamin, W. "Paris, Capital of the nineteenth century," in Charles Baudelaire, London, 1973, for a similar conclusion.

⁷¹ See Rapport Administratif sur l'exposition universelle de 1878, Paris ed. J-B Krantz, Paris 1878. Also, "L'Exposition universelle de 1878," Journal hebdomadaire illustré, Paris 1878. In English, Reports of the United States Commissioner to the 1878 Paris Universal Exposition, 1880.

⁷² He introduced an important structural innovation: a new system of trusses invented by Albert de Dion (1856-1946), and called "fermes continues," that allowed considerable savings in material. Eiffel also used this system for his Tower. Later de Dion applied it for automobile frames and light, highly resistant constructions, for another half a century.

The classificatory method of 1855 and 1867 was applied for the third time. However, in the new *Palais de l'Industrie* Krantz attempted to correct the problem of an ambiguous entry-way into the 1867 oval structure. He chose an orthogonal distribution of the galleries (Fig. 18) thus, in fact, reverting to a less complex system Hector Horeau proposed for the 1851 London Exhibition.⁷³

Beyond a majestic "Vestibule d'honneur" was a central axial alley called "Rue des Nations," linking the river and Gabriel's *Ecole Militaire*. The street thus "split" the compound into two halves, with the internal façades of the Palace featuring traditional architecture of the exhibiting countries. (Fig. 19) The "Rue des Nations," a still unselfconscious assemblage of "regionalist" architectural typologies, encroached on the forbidden domain of academic eclecticism. The intrusion into the body of a once homogeneous and self-referential architectural system underscored, for the first time, the advent of the "national" over the "universal," the nineteenth century over the eighteenth. The Age of Reason was yielding to the Age of Nationalism.⁷⁴

⁷³ Parallel to the Seine were the exhibited products. Perpendicular to it were the displays of the exhibiting countries. The galleries thus formed a checkerboard field, a Pythagorean table of its own kind. Although this rectangular structure offered a better opportunity for a clearly defined entry point, the orthogonal distribution of the exhibiting spaces obviously diminished both the clarity and coherence of the considerably more complex Palace of 1867.

⁷⁴ Regionalism as an architectural movement reached in 1937 the proportions of entire section of the exhibition.

The ultimate separation, in 1878, of the "Super-Salon" from the Palais de l'Industrie⁷⁵ (a separate Beaux-Arts palace was built that year on the Chaillot hill (Fig. 20) was manifestly the consequence, on the one hand, of the Academy's consistent exclusion of the avant-garde, and on the other, the triumph of nineteenth century's dominant cultural ethos. The Second Empire had defined this ethos in terms of the new paragon of the bourgeois world: the symbolic Trinity of the "Opera," the "Factory" and the "Church."⁷⁶ If the 1867 immense glass and iron rotunda with its outer ring of powerful machines was a clear embodiment of the Factory, the Opera and the Church were soon to be emblematically crystalized in the two upcoming exhibitions.⁷⁷ Whereas the image of the Factory summarized the 1867 imperial Exhibition, the emblem of 1878, with architect Davioud's immense concert hall within the new Palais des Beaux-arts was evidently the Opera. The eclecticism of the new Palace of the Arts facing the "iron rationalism" of the Palace of Industry across the Seine, sealed the schism between art and industry in France, with all the predictable consequences for its concept of modernity.

In 1878, the political split between the "two Frances"⁷⁸ found an echo in the split between the two "arts," the innovative

⁷⁵ A separate "Palais des Arts" designed by Haussmann's chief city architect, Gabriel Davioud (1823-1881), and built on top of the Chaillot hill, accelerated the breakdown of the homogeneous concept of a *Palais de l'Industrie*. Failed attempts at integrating art and industry ultimately led to the failure of French design reform as well.

⁷⁶ Réberieux, "Approches..." 1979, pp.1-17.

⁷⁷ Both, the "Factory" and the "Opera," facing each other across the Seine, were now permanently inscribed in the 1878 Exhibition's iconography. Both were to be demolished in 1937--a probable sign of the gradual erosion of a code established in the previous century.

⁷⁸ I refer to the historical division of France between the political left and the right. This division in "two" Frances was clearly articulated for the

and the academized, the living and the Salon art. Scientific and industrial modernity were affirmed with ever greater passion at each new exhibition. And yet, each exhibition seemed to reject ever more resolutely modernism in art. A clear reversal of this condition did not occur before 1937.

The 1889 Exhibition

The anticlerical Third Republic gave the Centenary Exhibition in 1889 the form of a church. As has been cogently noted,

the entire [1889] project embodied one huge cathedral. The Eiffel Tower, actually modeled on Notre-Dame's soaring steeple, formed a lofty spire. Directly behind it, the long central axis of the Champ de Mars created a sweeping nave, culminating in the massive Central Dome and Palace of Machines, an impressive horizontal transept."⁷⁹

In fact the paradox was only apparent. The memorial character of the Exhibition sanctifying a revolution seemed to justify putting forward the ceremonial image of a church. This "church" reinvoked in its own way the secular cult of the Etre Suprême the Revolution had established. The new "Etre Suprême" to which the project clearly alluded was industry itself. The ecclesiastic references already used for the 1798 Temple de l'Industrie, had a long history.⁸⁰ In 1889 such references denoted

first time by the Paris Commune. Revived with the Boulangiste threat and poignantly exacerbated by the Dreyfuss affair, it was institutionally confirmed with the election of the Front Populaire.

⁷⁹ Silverman, "The Paris Exhibition..." pp. 71-91, 1977.

⁸⁰ Vicomte Melchior de Vogüé, a regular contributor to the Revue des deux mondes, noted on the occasion of the 1889 Exhibition that the "Eiffel tower [was] a giant 'crucifix,' the wrought-iron steeple in a new universalist church of technological progress." (M. de Vogüé, "A travers l'Expo" Revue des deux mondes. 94-96, 1889, p. 201).

the public's sustained effort to assimilate the modernity of iron as a dignified architectural material. The Palace of Machines itself was being compared to a "cathédrale de fer et de verre." With such cultural re-appropriation, the iconographic Trinity of the French nineteenth century bourgeois world, had reached its completion.⁸¹

Despite the growing discrepancy between a rigid, totalizing system of classification and its translation into space, a new aesthetic consciousness was nevertheless emerging. A new type of monument, the Eiffel Tower, celebrated both a political and an industrial revolution as it reshaped the skyline of Paris. Built for the Exhibition, the Tower appealed to the industrial aesthetics, while the first structure of its kind to be accepted as compatible with the existing urban context.⁸² And not only that. The emerging aesthetics did not preclude the effort to reconcile the new industrial object with the established norms.⁸³ The Tower was now competing on its own with the most important

⁸¹ On the Exhibition of 1889 see, primary sources: Adolphe Alphand, Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris, Monographie, Paris 1891-1895; Alfred Picard, Rapport général. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris, 10 Vols. 1891-1892. Significant contemporary articles: Henri de Parville et al. in vol. 2 of Les Annales politiques et littéraires, Paris 1889; For secondary sources see Joseph Harris, The Tallest Tower: Eiffel and la Belle Epoque, 1975; op. cit Chandler, "Revolution: The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889," World's Fair 7, n.1 Winter 1987 pp.1-9; Joy Hall, "Sheetiron, Syphilis, and the Second Internationale: The Paris International Exposition of 1889," in Proceedings of the Western Society for French History 11, 1984, pp. 244-54. On the Commissioner-General of 1889 and 1900, see doctoral dissertation Xavier Ryckelinck, "Alfred Picard, Commissaire des Exposition 1889-1900." (DEA Université de Paris I) Paris, 1984.

⁸² This perception, of course, was not shared by all. Many prominent figures from the literary and artistic circles voiced, as we know, their vehement protest regarding the building of the iron Tower.

⁸³ The Eiffel Tower was enhanced with ornaments referring to historical or to symbolic signs, such as the statically useless arches; the simulation of the Triumphal Arch or the steeple of Notre-Dame.

monuments of the architectural history of Paris. The new type of monument was directly juxtaposed to "the decorative and, in a sense, overwrought stone Opéra, competing for recognition as the primary statement of the new bourgeois industrial world."⁸⁴ For the first time, the eclectic "nouveau riche" architecture the bourgeois world had adopted as its best representation, was giving way to a newly acquired aesthetic consciousness whose undisputed source, the factory, was projecting a new image of respectability.

Emulating previous exhibitions, the 1889 Exhibition also boasted an elaborate principle of classification and categorization, placing a taxonomic label on every dimension of human thought and activity.⁸⁵ Yet, in 1889, the legacy of the Enlightenment, essential to all French *Expositions*, was evident not only in the classificatory style already displayed before, but also in a new technology: electric light. (Fig. 21).⁸⁶ The brilliant aura of the eighteenth century courtly *fêtes*--the

⁸⁴ Silverman, 1977, pp.71-91

⁸⁵ On the Exhibition of 1889 see, primary sources: Adolphe Alphand, Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris, Monographie, Paris 1891-1895; Alfred Picard, Rapport général. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris, 10 Vols. 1891-1892. Significant contemporary articles: Henri de Parville et al. in vol. 2 of Les Annales politiques et littéraires, Paris 1889; and Eugène Melchior Vogüé, "A travers l'Exposition," in vols. 94-96 of Revue des deux mondes. For secondary sources see Joseph Harris, The Tallest Tower: Eiffel and la Belle Epoque, 1975; op. cit Chandler, "Revolution: The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889," World's Fair 7, n.1 Winter 1987 pp.1-9; Joy Hall, "Sheetiron, Syphilis, and the Second Internationale: The Paris International Exposition of 1889," in Proceedings of the Western Society for French History 11, 1984, pp. 244-54.

⁸⁶ For a description of the role of electricity in 1889 see Silverman, 1977, p. 71-91. The real triumph of the "electrical revolution," however, occurred at the 1878 Exhibition rather than in 1889.

In 1877 the Jablochkov "electric candles" were tested in the Louvre department store, and next year the Place de l'Opéra, and a number of streets, were filled with electric light (Duby, Histoire, 76). Electric lighting of a poorer quality, produced by carbon lamps, were used even earlier, in the 1860's, during night shifts on Haussmann's huge building sites

"siècle des lumières"--was recaptured as early as 1878. Paris was then literally transformed into a "Ville lumière," a name it carries to this day. Electricity, an eighteenth century dream, came to occupy since 1878 the center stage of the *Exposition Universelle*. However, the utopian Encyclopedist striving to establish the *Exposition* as an institution where Lamarck's⁸⁷ categories would also apply to industrial products, emerged by 1889 only as an empty concept. Falling even further behind the unsurpassed 1867 model, the 1889 Exhibition failed to achieve, even more strikingly than the 1878 one, a convincing spatial transfiguration of the classificatory system. Not only was the whole Exhibition broken up between two main areas, the Invalides Esplanade and the Champ de Mars, but the tightly integrated *Palais de l'Industrie* was itself subdivided. Furthermore, the main body of the 1889 Exhibition--also evocative of a triumphal arch and thus iconographically distinct from the abstract universality that characterized the 1867 Exhibition--was composed of four separate halls (Fig. 22).⁸⁸ Each foreign country was given a separate pavilion. This fragmentation, started in 1878, broke down even further the logical system of the 1867 *Exposition*. Such dislocation reduced the space allocated to industry, as it moved

⁸⁷ Ory, 1982 p.22. Jean-Baptiste de Monet, Chevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829), French botanist and zoologist published, among others, an *Encyclopédie botanique* (1783-1817). In his *Philosophie zoologique* (1809) and the *Histoire naturelle des animaux sans vertèbres* (1815-1822) he appears as the founder of two theories: the theory of "spontaneous generation" and the theory of "transformism," developed later by Darwin.

⁸⁸ To the East and the West of the Champ de Mars axis, and parallel to it, were the Palais des Beaux-Arts and the Palais des Arts Libéraux. To the North, it was flanked by the Galerie des machines, built by engineer Contamin.

the industrial products to a marginal position. Heavy industry was evidently receding as electricity advanced.

What was significant, however, was that while losing ground on encyclopedic clarity, the organizers of the Exhibition revived its ties to the Enlightenment by shifting their interest to education, a trademark of the Third Republic. Yet, despite the democratic significance of assigning a separate section to education, the Exhibition remained in essence an ideological vehicle for the institutionalization of the instruments of social control.⁸⁹ The lingering antagonism between the establishment and the Workers' Movement appeared clearly in the Exhibition. While two Socialist congresses were held in Paris in the year of the Exhibition, the Exhibition remained committed to what was called, not without condescension, "La Paix Sociale," a term already used in 1878, and reintroduced by its organizer Emile Cheysson, a disciple of Le Play.⁹⁰ Autonomous workers' unions, legalized since 1884, were, nevertheless, allowed to be represented, even if to a limited extent. This representation was only a precursor to the large scale workers' presence at the 1937 Exhibition, when, for the first time, the purposes of labor and government intersected.

The 1900 Exhibition

Like the first Exhibition in 1855, the last International Exhibition of the century, held in 1900, coincided

⁸⁹ Silverman, 1977, pp.71-91.

⁹⁰ Isay, 1937, pp.183-184. See also Emile Cheysson, "L'Exposition d'Economie sociale en 1889. Programme. Situation actuelle." in Revue des Institutions de Prévoyance, February 1889, p. 62. Also E. Cheysson L'Economie sociale à l'Exposition Universelle de 1889, Paris, 1889.

with the publication of a major Encyclopaedia, the *Grande Encyclopédie* by Marcelin Berthelot (1827-1907), the noted French chemist and politician.⁹¹ By 1900, the traditional site for French Universal Expositions, the Champ de Mars, was tightly integrated into the urban fabric of Paris. The Champ de Mars had become by then a new Haussmannian 'nodal point.' The Exhibition was the occasion for the expansion of the Paris Metro system, itself an underground extension of Haussmann's model. The Metro reached into the heart of the 1900 Exhibition, with an exit at the Grand Palais, built for the occasion, and lavishly illuminated by electric light. A direct link was thus established between the phantasmagoric electricity magically permeating the Exhibition itself, and the subway, invisibly propelled by the newly mastered energy.

While electricity was central to every exhibition after 1878, in 1900 for the first time the *Palace of Industry*, featuring heavy machinery that enthralled most of the nineteenth century, was not only upstaged, but was reduced to an empty structural carcass devoid of cultural relevance.⁹² Hissing steam was replaced

⁹¹ On the 1900 Exhibition for primary sources see Alfred Picard, Rapport général administratif et technique, 8 vols. Paris, 1902-1903; also Picard, Le bilan d'un siècle, 1801-1901, 6 vols., Paris, 1906; and the very informative Catalogue général officiel, 20 vols., Paris 1900; for secondary translated contemporary excerpts relating to art and architecture, Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, ed. The expanding World of Art, 1874-1902, vol. 1: Universal Expositions and State-Sponsored Fine arts exhibitions, 1988; Adolphe Démy, Essai historique sur les Expositions universelles de Paris, Paris, 1907 pp. 438-688; Philippe Jullian, The Triumph of Art Nouveau, Paris Exhibition 1900, trans. Stephen Hardman, 1974; op. cit. Allwood, 1977; op. cit. Ory, 1982; op. cit. Williams, 1982; op. cit. Arthur Chandler, "Culmination: the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900." in World's Fair 7, n. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 8-14.

⁹² Contamin's 1889 Galerie des machines was reused in 1900, but its traditional machines were replaced with displays of luxury crafts.

by silent electricity.⁹³ The Factory was to be banned forever from the Exhibition's grounds. The changes anticipated the disappearance, in 1937, of the Champ de Mars railway station. The celebration of industrial might characterizing earlier exhibitions was now replaced by the glorification of science and technique displayed at the *Palais de l'Electricité* in anticipation of the 1937 *Palais de la Découverte*:⁹⁴ Electricity was turned into a new commodity but a commodity with a twist: it was endowed with superior and almost transcendental qualities that topped all others. As the Commissioner-General of the 1937 Exhibition, Edmond Labbé, wrote in his 10 volume Rapport Général: "Our goal [at the Exhibition] was to help the *apotheosis* of that *supernatural force*, electricity." [emph. added] Clearly, electricity appeared as the latest incarnation of the *Etre Suprême*.

⁹³ Electricity was formally introduced as a group in 1900 for the first time. (Ory, 1982, p.154.)

⁹⁴ While such development was no doubt, in part, the result of a decline of interest for heavy industry towards the end of the "industrial revolution," the change of paradigm was at least as much the result of a deliberate cultural choice. One has to keep in mind that France all but renounced to reach the level and kind of industrialization achieved by such countries as England or Germany. By 1900, France was claiming that this competition would be lost anyway in a country which was unparalleled in highly rewarding luxury crafts. Indeed, disavowing Laborde's plea, by 1900, even those who had wholeheartedly defended the Eiffel Tower in 1889, such as Roger Marx (the noted art critic and general inspector of national museums), or for that matter Emile Zola and even Frantz Jourdain, all concurred with Georges Berger, a French deputy, that their infatuation with engineering aesthetics had been a mistake and that "France's greatest contributions to the world were not her scientists and engineers, but her artists and artisans." Silverman, 1989, p.7.

As a consequence of such choice, at the eve of WWII, for example, France had a lower level of industrialization than Czekoslovakia. The industrialization (or "capitalization" as it was called) of agriculture did not start before the early 1960's, and this with considerable resistance on the part of a powerful Communist Party backing small farmers, as the sociologist Serge Mallet has repeatedly shown.

However, the evanescent ushered in by the *Fée Electricité*, had an apparently paradoxical aesthetic effect. Its dazzling aura of modernity helped supersede the public infatuation with the "mechanical." Electricity allowed a graceful resumption of established stylistic values of nineteenth-century eclecticism, while subverting the aesthetics embodied in the *Galleries des machines* and the Eiffel Tower. That aesthetics was now perceived as having been a dead-end.⁹⁵ The handsome steel and glass structures that, half a century earlier, grew wild in the mind of a gardener, to blossom into a Palace, had now turned back into greenhouses, even if still of considerable proportions (Fig. 23). Yet, the attempted last retreat to a perceived *terra firma* of the eclectic model--already passionately subverted in the preceding decade by the languid, but persistent forms of anti-industrial Art Nouveau craftsmanship--merged into the frivolous self-assuredness, of a new, melted down "Rococo" that came to be known in France as *Modern' Style*, or the "Style 1900" (Fig. 24).⁹⁶ As the central

⁹⁵ Silverman, 1989, p.7. See also footnote 92.

⁹⁶ The *Modern' Style* was even claimed to be the "final style," coming at the end of a long historic evolution of "styles"--an eternal Rococo of sorts. Not surprisingly, Salvador Dali called it: "the most original and most extraordinary phenomenon in art." Quoted in Duby, *Histoire*, 1983.

A striking example of this radical reversal, is the Pont Alexandre III, built for the Exhibition, in complete disregard for Eiffel's engineering achievements. Priority was given to 'style.' As a consequence, the weight of the bridge reached three times that of the Eiffel Tower.

At the 1900 Exhibition, indeed, economic and industrial concerns started to recede behind matters of aesthetics. Symbolic of this change was the demolition of the Palais de l'Industrie, built on the Champs-Élysées for 1855. The palace was replaced by two "Palais des Beaux-Arts"--soon to be called *Grand Palais* and *Petit Palais*--separated by an axial avenue facing the *Dôme des Invalides*. Most notably, a grand centennial French art retrospective opened its doors to celebrate the end and the beginning of a century. In the face of a general dissolution of Beaux-Arts composure, a reversal of fortune met the Impressionists as well: for the first time, their art was fully rehabilitated as authentic Art. On that occasion too, the

majestic iron and glass dome, tinted in a color described as "bleu de rêve," already proved in 1889, the 'modern' was allowed to indulge in frenzied eclecticism, provided that it was flooded with light that only large glazed surfaces, iron and electricity, could afford.

For the first time, in fact, a newly experienced self-consciousness irrupted forcefully into the public realm: the tantalizing question of stylistic "authenticity," on the one hand, and radical innovation on the other. The unexpected freedom to create a style liberated from historical precedents, a style which would crystalize the new modernity, the authentic Spirit of History, exacerbated growing tensions. For the first time, several styles competed for recognition as authentically modern,

Gazette des Beaux-Arts published an article by Marcel Proust, in memory of John Ruskin who died that same year. This public recognition in a major art journal represented a visible, if still timid sign of the establishment's shifting position regarding both the decline of academic art, and a renewed approach to industry and craft. The English Arts and Crafts movement stirred some interest in France towards the end of the century, but primarily in leftist and Anarchist circles, and was connected to the democratic wing of the Art Nouveau movement. The first translations of William Morris appeared in the Anarchist Journal Les Temps Nouveaux (1892), a name which may have lingered in Le Corbusier's memory. [On the relationship of French Decorative Arts reform and the Arts and Crafts movement see Silverman, 1989, pp.23-25. See also Tise, 1991 for a criticism of Silverman's conclusions regarding an assumed "deradicalization" of Art Nouveau, in opposition to the Arts and Crafts ideology. The Salon d'Automne in 1903 was the first to adhere to the principle of 'unity of the arts' by refusing to establish a hierarchy among painting, sculpture, architecture, and the decorative arts at the exhibition. A crucial role was played by the newly founded Société des artistes décorateurs (Tise, 1991, pp.83-98). Yet, contradictions abounded. If, on the whole, 1900 appeared to be, essentially, a new edition of 1889--both regarding its plan and its architectural composition--in reality a profound transformation had occurred. It was not only a 'repeated performance' lavishly garnished with "crème chantilly," to use the derisive expression of its contemporaries, but it was one that had also put in crisis a nineteenth century typological coherence. In 1900 the number of Groups had grown from the Pythagorean 10 in 1867 to 18. This produced 121 classes--a number obviously rather arbitrary and impossible to control within a unitary and coherent spatial arrangement. Actually, a new concept of exhibition design was emerging in France with the proliferation of a once shy appendix to a grand unitary system--the Pavilion.

each claiming to have been historically predicated (Fig. 25). From then on, the central debate concerning future exhibitions was dominated in France by the relentless question: "Quel sera le style..." of the upcoming exhibition, and would a style emerge at all.

The retreat from industry had opened, once again, the way to the frivolity of "style." The answer to the question of style, deemed crucial, was chosen as the ultimate criterion of the exhibition's success or failure. Furthermore, the success of the new style was to be a measure of France's sustained cultural preeminence. This test was to be attempted once more at the next, 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts.

On the whole, the 1900 Exhibition represented a considerable set-back for the design reform movement Laborde had started half a century earlier, as well as for the contradictory processes of architectural renovation undertaken since the 1890's. If the *Gallerie des machines* was reused, it was so only after due effort at its concealment.⁹⁷ Other minor features specific to 1889, such as the "Rue des Nations," were reintroduced with added picturesque modifications.

The conclusion one was expected to reach after experiencing the 1900 Exhibition was that iron architecture was ugly and that it had to be repressed and hidden. Even a person such as Frantz Jourdain, the architect of the *Samaritaine* who defended Eiffel against the cultural elite his Tower had offended,

⁹⁷ The Gallery was hidden behind the massive neo-rococo "Château d'eau" which, significantly, was also the Electricity Pavilion.

declared, not without sarcasm, that "d'instinct, l'ingénieur va au laid, comme le canard va à l'eau." (emph. added)]⁹⁸ Style for style's sake prevailed.

*

Each exhibition left an indelible mark either in the collective memory or on the city's landscape, a mark later generations invested with new functions and myths. The exhibitions partook in the transformation and expansion of Parisian urbanism, from their role as simple background scenery to the Champs-Élysées axis in 1855, to their ultimate inclusion into Haussmannian visions of the metropolis. These visions were best exemplified by two complementary grand projects for the 1937 Exhibition: one by Le Corbusier in 1932 (engaging the East-West axis of Paris) and the other by Auguste Perret in 1933, (attempting to open a North-South "Champs-Élysées of the Left bank.") Both projects presented a radical criticism of exhibitions that had grown increasingly fragmented into loosely connected and temporary pavilions. Both projects, too, called for an exhibition understood as an integrated, homogenous city organism Le Play had envisioned emblematically in his grand synthetic concept of 1867.

⁹⁸ "Instinctively, the engineer goes for the ugly, as the duck goes to water." A pun is intended: *Laid*, ugly, is pronounced as 'lait'--milk. "Aller au lait" means "to go for (buy) milk." See Architecture, number 1, 1900.

CHAPTER II

The Democratic Reversal of the *Exposition Universelle*

What is great, what comes out powerfully from this powerful place, is that such triumph is the work of thousands of human beings who contributed to its invention. They all followed, knowingly or unknowingly, a profound and generous movement, a young, happy, enthusiastic fervor, which rose France to the advent of the *Front Populaire*. While elating both Foreigners and the French people, this surge of the heart, of the spirit and of the arms, helped the *Front Populaire* contribute to this gigantic exhibition ... in a tragic moment for the world.⁹⁹

Ozenfant

The debates on "style," started in the nineteenth century, continued unabated until the 1930's, following the success of "Art Deco,"¹⁰⁰ the latest in the panoply of the twentieth century gallery of styles. Simultaneously, a parallel movement was also taking place inexorably: the rise in the public's consciousness of art as Modern Art, an anti-academic art, whose very definition was to be "modern," that is irreverent to

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"Ce qui est grand, ce qui émane fort de ce lieu fort, c'est que cette victoire est l'œuvre des milliers d'êtres qui contribuèrent à son invention. ...Tous ils ont, le sachant ou ne le sachant pas, obéi à ce profond et généreux mouvement. cet élan jeune, gai, enthousiaste, qui souleva la France à l'avènement du *Front Populaire*, et qui, exaltant Etrangers ou Français, d'un même mouvement de cœur, de l'esprit et des bras, le fit contribuer a cette gigantesque expo ... en un moment tragique du monde.

Ozenfant, "Notes d'un touriste à l'exposition." *Cahiers d'Art*, #8-10, 1937, pp. 241-47.

¹⁰⁰ The name was derived from the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative Arts discussed later.

the past, and uncompromisingly innovative. The latter, gradually assimilated by the successive leaderships¹⁰¹ of the 1937 Exhibition, had two crucial consequences: a non prescriptive attitude towards the idea of premeditated "styles," and a feverish hunt for artists and architects with a modernist reputation. The ultimate consequence of such stylistic indeterminism was the dissolution of the very concept of modernity as an issue of style--an issue raised already once before, when the "styleless" Eiffel Tower was built in 1889.¹⁰² This circumstance is the key to the understanding of the 1937 Exhibition.

A second crucial development occurred in the course of the "invention" of the last Exposition Universelle. The growth of the grass-root movement, which would ultimately bring the Front Populaire to power, coincided, as it were, in time and cause, with the final decision to build the 1937 Exhibition. This was the crush of the February 6, 1934 riots.¹⁰³ Born out of the same

¹⁰¹ Edmond Labbé replaces François Latour in June 1934, while Jacques Gréber replaces Charles Letrosne in early 1935, a sign of such changes.

¹⁰² The Eiffel Tower is the first architectural monument to address--even more radically than the Crystal Palace--the modern concept of transparency and inter-penetration of inner and outer spaces: the notion of "style" was replaced by the more modern concept of organization of space--space appreciated primarily for its inherent aesthetic qualities.

¹⁰³ Following the revelation of a corruption scandal in the "Stavisky affair," and the dismissal of the right-wing (Action Française) Police Prefecture Jean Chiappe (a figure sympathetic to Le Corbusier), bloody demonstration broke off under the no less scandalous leadership of armed right-wing deputies. The event, which appeared as the beginning of a "coup d'état," provoked the fall of the Daladier Government. Perceived as a Fascist threat by the Left, especially in the context of Hitler's recent victory, the riots were followed by a growing movement of unprecedented mass demonstrations throughout France, which culminated on February 12 with a general strike of the entire country. Initiated by the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and the Socialist Party (SFIO), the movement was soon joined by the CGT (Unitaire) and the Communists. The Front Populaire was thus sealed at grass-root level, if not yet at leadership level. On the February events and the start of the Front Populaire see Jean Bouvier ed., *La France en Mouvement*, Paris, 1986, pp. 12-22. On the February 6 riots see Alexander

crisis, the Exhibition was actually "appropriated" by the artists and virtually reimposed to the government, as discussed later. In other words, the same forces that built the Front Populaire had a notable influence on the ultimate profile of the 1937 Exhibition itself. While falling back, once again, on the still vital forces inherited from the Enlightenment, the Exhibition leadership opened avenues for the unfolding of two events: the integration of the aesthetically progressive art on the one hand, and, on the other, the introduction of social concerns carried, not by paternalism as was the case at the nineteenth century *Universelles*, but by autonomous forces of human emancipation. While pavilions celebrating "Social Solidarity," "Labor," "Peace" and democratic education were inscribed in the first rudiments of the future exhibition's program, artists such as Le Corbusier were invited to play a major role in the definition of the Exhibition's modernity, as early as 1935.

The 1925 Exhibition

Both in reaction against the failures of 1900, and as an attempt at redressing the decline of French design, Roger Marx (1859-1913) proposed, as a model of an exhibition of applied arts, the 1902 Turin Exhibition. Inspector of provincial museums and friend of the Goncourts, the art critique Roger Marx was editor-in-chief of Gazette des Beaux-Arts, and an advocate of applied

arts reforms.¹⁰⁴ Convinced that non-mechanical craft production was utopian in an age of competitive world markets, Marx encouraged French artists to accept the machine and the division of labor this would inevitably require.¹⁰⁵

Another proposal was formulated on behalf of the *Société des Artistes Décorateurs*, on 17 December 1910. The Society's program was aimed at "bringing to the attention of the government the need to salvage the old supremacy of the French arts décoratifs."¹⁰⁶ The Society saw this supremacy endangered by the influx of industrial mass production which debilitated the traditional luxury crafts, a dominant in French economy. Therefore, the Société--founded to promote modernity in the decorative arts--conceived this modernity purely as a question of luxury and style.¹⁰⁷ These two statements summarized the extreme positions that were to prevail in the upcoming controversy.

The next exhibition, initially scheduled for 1914 largely in response to the Werkbund initiatives, was to open in 1925 under the name *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs*

Werth, *The Twilight of France, 1933-40*, 1942. See also Bernstein, S. *Le 6 Février 1934*, Paris, 1975.

¹⁰⁴ For more on Roger Marx, see Madeleine Rebérioux, "De l'art industriel à l'art social: Jean Jaurès et Roger Marx," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, February 1988, 155-158.

¹⁰⁵ See Roger Marx, "De l'art social..." in *Notes sur les Arts*, February 1912, pp. 68-74, and, same author, "L'art décoratif s'atrophie en France," *Le Matin* 27 February 1909.

¹⁰⁶ *Procès-verbal du comité de la société des artistes décorateurs*, 17 December 1910.

¹⁰⁷ The *Société des artistes décorateurs* was founded in the aftermath of the 1900 Paris Exhibition. This was the first association of artisans and designers since corporations were dissolved in 1791. Aimed at promoting a modern style, the Société was inspired by the reform movement started by Laborde. One of the specific catalysts leading to the Société's foundation was the German decorative arts display at the Paris 1900 World's Exhibition. For more on the Société, see Tise, 1991, pp.83-98.

et Industriels Modernes. This exhibition was a specialized one, and therefore differed in some essential ways from the *Expositions Universelles* to which the 1937 Exhibition belonged. The limited scope of the 1925 Exhibition was reflected most notably in the absence of almost any visible reference to the Enlightenment and its "civilizing mission." As has been noted, science was relegated to three small rooms in the Grand Palais, while education ranked last in the classification of exhibited categories.¹⁰⁸ In comparison to the Universal Exhibition of 1900, and despite its title, 1925 went a step further in the process of expurgation of industry from the panoply of exhibited categories, as a radical reversal of the dominant ethos occurred. Whereas the Exhibition of 1867 was, in some ways, the incarnation of industry as an almighty, controlling force that subjugated art itself, 1925 engulfed references to industry into "art," an art that rejected any association with the machine ethos. Ornament "wrapped" the structural and spatial reality of the architectural object in a new stylistic cloak (Le Corbusier would call it "camouflage"). Art thus produced concealed the reality of industry's advances.

Pavilions such as Le Corbusier's, or those of Robert Mallet-Stevens, appealing to an industrial aesthetics, remained the exception. At this exhibition of "decorative arts," the machine aesthetic was shunned away in the name of a tradition that associated modernity--and the essence of the nation's greatness--with luxury and highly specialized, handicraft industries. Not unlike in 1900, the main effort of the Exhibition was directed,

¹⁰⁸ See Tise, 1991, pp. 326-327.

at formulating a style which would be both "modern" and "French." This "modern style" was to be firmly rooted in the French tradition of "style making," even if, this time, devoid of any immediate historicizing pastiche. Conceiving successfully such a style was seen as a warrant of cultural and commercial preponderance. While the horrors of the recent war were still painfully felt in the collective consciousness, Lucien Dior, the Minister of Commerce, described the goals of the future exhibition in combative terms. "In the pacific battle for the supremacy of style", he claimed, "in the arts (...) and architecture, we shall have our victory of the Marne ..." (emph. added)¹⁰⁹ The decision to revert to tradition, while deliberately inventing a new "style" appealing to luxury, clashed, however, with the original, pre-war project of an exhibition dedicated to an "art for the people." The betrayal of the ideal of a "democratic exhibition"--an ideal that was to reemerge on the occasion of the International Exhibition of 1937--was cause for bitter criticism even before the Exhibition closed.¹¹⁰ Thus the continued official obsession with

¹⁰⁹ François Crucy, "La future exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes--L'opinion de M. Dior, Ministre du Commerce et de l'Industrie," L'Information, 31 August 1922.

¹¹⁰ See immediately after the closure of the Exhibition, D.-Alfred Agache, "Les Fautes contre l'urbanisme à l'exposition des arts décoratifs," in Les Arts Décoratifs Modernes, 1925, special issue of Vient de paraître, pp.52-54; Francis Jourdain in Bulletin de la vie artistique, 15 November 1925, p.494, and Waldemar George in L'Amour de l'art, "L'exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes de 1925: les tendances générales." 1925, pp.285-286. This criticism which reemerged forcefully in the 1932 competitions, as we shall see later.

issues of style only exacerbated the upcoming debate on the future of the applied arts and architecture.¹¹¹

The Central Question: *Un "Style 1937" va-t-il surgir?*

The entire post-World War I era was dominated by calls encouraging new speculations on the role of the artist in society.¹¹² The related controversy over style centered either around efforts to find modern forms for traditional aesthetic precepts, or else around efforts to dismiss historic styles altogether and invent new ones. The controversy did not abate until 1937, when the Exhibition opened its doors to a public still comfortably convinced in France's unchallenged cultural supremacy (Fig. 26).

¹¹¹ For the most recent, and enlightening study on the 1925 Exhibition in the broader social, economic and aesthetic context of the decorative arts history in France since 1895, see Nancy Troy Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France: Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier, Yale University Press, 1991. For a critical overview, see also Les Arts Décoratifs Modernes: 1925, No. spécial de "Vient de Paraître," Paris 1925.

¹¹² The economic crisis, felt increasingly after 1932, opened the way to a number of new professional associations with corporatist character, such as the *Union corporative de l'art français* or the *Union des artistes modernes*. While welcoming both 'artists' and 'artisans,' these associations were divided along two main lines of defense: the safeguard of the traditional "goût français" and luxury craftsmanship endangered by the industrial crisis and industrialization itself on the one hand, and on the other, its opposite, the acceptance of simplified machine produced unornamented forms and industrial materials, making it possible to absorb the unemployment of traditional artisans and artists through mass production. On the ideological battlefield, a 'nouvel art de vivre' was opposing a 'nouveau style.' [See on the subject Y. Brunhammer, "Quand l'art d'habiter se substitue au style" in Centre George Pompidou: Paris 1937-Paris 1957.]

For these professional associations, the 1937 Exhibition was the first opportunity of exposure at a grand scale. After 1934, the Exhibition itself was programmed to put an end to the economic and political crisis. In the short run, the goal was to alleviate the living conditions of artists and artisans. By so doing, the exhibition was expected to be the touchstone of a profound renewal of France itself and its reemergence as a 'beacon of civilization.' [See in particular, Stéphane Sinclaire, Les arts de l'intérieur à l'Exposition internationale des Arts et Techniques de Paris, 1937. (Thèse pour l'obtention du diplôme d'archiviste-paléographe, Ecole nationale des Chartes, 1988.)

Synthesizing a new, unified, modern style meant of course abandoning past ones. Yet, deeply entrenched positions caused relentless clashes among the proponents of the 'retour à l'ordre,'¹¹³ against the overwrought *Modern' Style*, or else the "horrible pan-bétonisme," or "nudisme intégral." Those terms referred indiscriminately both to the avant-garde, and to those who, reacting to the "exaggerations of the past," rejected ornament and color but not the search for a *priori* forms.

The ideal, apparently shared by most, was to create a "logical" and "balanced" style. This usually amounted to little more than a quarrel over fashion, even though many voiced sincere concerns over what they perceived as a real threat to the survival of the entire French culture. The linchpin of the debate was the still prevalent view of modernity as predominantly an issue of style. Style, in turn, was approached primarily as an issue of form rationally regulated by geometry. As has been noted, "geometry was the only formal language that could express the

¹¹³ *Retour à l'ordre* (at times also referred to as "rappel à l'ordre") was first used by painter Roger Bissière in reference to the 1919 exhibition of cubist paintings by Braque. Later it was used in reference to 'purism' as well. In architecture, "retour à l'ordre" is usually connected to the reclaiming of French tradition of Neo-classicism, a 'modernized' neo-classicism this time. In both cases the call for order and disciplined action came in reaction to the claims of the 1900 style's claims to modernity. Its opponents saw 1900 as the result of an obsessive search for the "new" that led to a dispersion of artistic efforts, and by the same token brought the project of modernity itself to a dead end.

See Bissière, *L'Opinion*, 29 March and 29 April 1919. For the ramifications of the notion of *retour à l'ordre* on post-war painting see K. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: Cubism and its enemies*, New Haven, 1988; and groundbreaking studies edited by Jean Laude, *Le retour à l'ordre dans les arts plastiques et l'architecture*, Saint-Etienne, 1975. See introduction by Laude, "Le Retour à l'ordre," 7-8. See also *On Classic Ground. Picasso, Léger, De Chirico and the New Classicism, 1910-1930*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London, 1990. See also Bouillon, J-P. *Le retour à l'ordre*. Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur l'Expression Contemporaine. Travaux VIII, Saint-Etienne, Université de St.-Etienne (12 vols.) 1975.

community, and link the community with history."¹¹⁴ The fixation on geometry as the eternal classical informed a broad spectrum of stylistic positions appealing both to "modernized academism," and to what could be termed "academized modernism." This applied to the smallest handcrafted objects as well as to the most complex urban schemes. Le Corbusier poignantly expressed the fixation saying that "the modern city will be saved by geometry."¹¹⁵

Calls for a unified "modern style" dominated most debates; believed to be a cross-section of contemporary culture and history, exhibitions were regarded as the heralds of new styles. Therefore, both the professionals and the public at large expected that the upcoming 1937 Exhibition would reflect the current state of French culture. The assessment of how sound that culture was would largely depend on the success of the new style. The success of the style, in turn, would depend on the ability of the artists to develop a formal program that the cultural establishment would find to be properly "French"--at least until the next exhibition. But most of all, the program was to have an immediate "rayonnement" abroad, consolidating France's preeminence in matters of taste to which it had grown accustomed ever since Louis XIV.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Tise, 1991, p. 244.

¹¹⁵ Le Corbusier develops this theme in The City of Tomorrow, first published in England in 1929. Le Corbusier understood the "city" as a synthetic whole composed of constitutive parts, going from a dwelling cell (Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, 1925) to the city (The City of Three Million Inhabitants, 1922), integrated by the "esprit de géométrie."

¹¹⁶ These aesthetic concerns were particularly highlighted in a series of interviews the noted French critic Yvanhoë Rambosson--who applauded the closing of the Bauhaus by the Nazis because of its "cult of the abstract language" and its advocacy of "moral and aesthetic disintegration of man,"--launched in 1933, in a major art magazine Comedia, in view of the 1937 Exhibition. [Comedia "Hebdomadaire des, spectacles, des lettres, et des arts"

The French decorative art scene upheld a pronounced anti-industrial bias since the nineteenth century. The bias stemmed from a resilient academicism of a centralized art establishment on the one hand, and from the cult of the manual arts and crafts preserved in a nation of small entrepreneurs and artisans, on the other. The latter were now finding vindication in the perceived failure of the machine mystique the 1929 Big Crash revealed. Waldemar George, another important art critic who, like Yvanhoë Rambosson, abandoned his progressive positions of the 1920's, now advocated a "retour sur soi-même," a reawakening, that is, of the "national conscience." He saw the invasion of the arts by "machinism" as a sign of human resignation. For the process to be reversed, he claimed, human dignity, no less, had to be restored. "Human dignity," a concept prevalent in the nineteenth century in the context of human labor, was thus reemerging opportunistically out of the ashes the economic debacle left behind. Waldemar George's conclusion was that France should not compete with other countries on the level of output, but should rather maintain quality and fine craftsmanship, France's traditional field of superiority. As Rambosson himself declared, France should restrict its production to the "petite série," to the finely handcrafted, well finished

was founded in 1906 by René Délanges. Its main art critic was the noted architectural historian Pierre du Colombier. Collaborators included: Auguste Perret, Jean-Louis Barrault the actor, André Derain the painter, Jean Anouilh the author, Serge Lifar the dancer, Henri de Montherlant the author, Anatole de Monzie deputy and Government Minister...Publication was interrupted in 1937, to be resumed in 1941 under Nazi occupation, when a new contributor appeared: Le Corbusier.]

The central question Rambosson asked was: "What course should the artistic and industrial creation now take?"

object, and thus avoid the pitfalls of overproduction, the evident cause of the Crash.¹¹⁷

A similar call could be read on the columns of the influential art journal Beaux Arts¹¹⁸ which advocated not only the revival of "beautiful" materials such as wood or stone, but also a voluntary decision by industry to reduce the use of machines, and employ more highly qualified artisans to perform manual crafting instead. The goal was, ultimately, to resuscitate (even through state sponsorship) "luxury industry" seriously hurt by the depression. Such revival would in turn create employment for the large population of fine craftsmen, France's greatest pride.

Those most enlightened in the art world establishment, such as Louis Cheronnet, called, on the pages of Art et Décoration, for a compromise between "standardized production" and the culture unspoiled by industrialization. In regard to the 1937 Exhibition itself, he cautioned against the dangers of the term *Technique* placed in its very title: he pointed out that such vocable "could open the door to all kinds of things that have nothing to do with art, such as canned foods or any other industrially manufactured goods."¹¹⁹

As for the style to be invented for 1937, a number of architects and 'artistes décorateurs,' speaking for the cultural magazine Comœdia, claimed that excessive ornamentation, as well as excessive geometrization, was to be avoided. Rounding up the

¹¹⁷ Rambosson, "Enquête," Comœdia, 13 AUGUST 1933.

¹¹⁸ Charles Kunstler "L'exposition Générale Internationale de 1937" in Beaux-Arts 3 March 1933.

¹¹⁹ Louis Cheronnet "A propos de l'Exposition de 1937," Art et Décoration, April 1934.

corners of the "cube ennemi," was a first step towards the recovery of the well balanced 'middle ground,' associated with the finest traditions of French spirit. What was feared most, was the "odieuse standardisation" so evidently the cause of pervasive human alienation in the present world. Ultimately, the rejection of standardization would have the added benefit of "making French manufactured products more difficult to be copied abroad."¹²⁰

Advocates of a return to ornament saw in it the possibility of reconciling an international aesthetic that required sobriety and simplicity, with a "national" spirit expressed through the language of its ornament. Ornament on a building, claimed architectural critic Henry Favier, should be "organic."¹²¹ Mouldings and overhangs should be employed to control volumes and surfaces, to refine the form, and to protect from water. Ornament should be combined with a new openness to mural paintings and sculpture. The employment of ornament would favor the return of the "résonance humaine." In other words, following a 'retour à l'ordre,' a 'retour à l'ornement' seemed to be the logical next step. An implicit new classicism was to be given form.

At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum, a radical and long ruminated project was formulated by the artists of the young *Union des Artistes Modernes* founded by Rob Mallet-Stevens.¹²²

¹²⁰ H. Favier, *Comedia*, 21 August 1933.

¹²¹ Ibid. 7 April 1933.

¹²² The UAM was created as an independent avant-garde design group, in reaction to the increasingly academic and conformist Société des artistes décorateurs, the challenges of the Bauhaus, and the appearance on the French market of new industrial products, such as mass produced metal furnishings inspired by the German example. For a brief period between 1929 and 1937,

The UAM wanted to make the Exhibition into the most consistent expression of the arts and techniques applied to modern life, by turning the entire Exhibition into a "bazaar." This was a bold attempt at awakening an interest for the ordinary, everyday objects produced in series,

those anonymous, reasonable objects, good, honest objects, that are beautiful because they are reasonable, that attract the eye because they satisfy the spirit.¹²³

Within a context that for the most part associated modernity with a version of luxury, the UAM stance marked a bold departure from the prevailing norm. In an ironic, but significant reversal, French artists who, a century earlier, had rebuffed the Marquis de Laborde for wanting them to expose in an exhibition they scornfully called a "bazaar," now in the 1930's were demanding that the Exhibition be actually turned into one, in order to celebrate modernity and their own art in the most appropriate circumstances.¹²⁴

Yet, outside the restricted UAM circles--and even there not always without ambiguity--few advocated functionalist or rationalist principles, but they derided the effort to predict

this circle of about twenty designers and architects, frankly advocated and practiced modern industrial design, explicitly adopting the machine aesthetic. For more on the history of the UAM see, Yvonne Brunhammer et al. eds. Les Années UAM, 1929-1958, exhibition catalogue, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1988-1989. See also, Arlette Barré-Despond, UAM, Paris, Ed. du regard, 1987.

¹²³ Quoted by Charlotte Perriand, from an unpublished manuscript by Francis Jourdain. [Interview with Perriand, July 1988]. This project for the entire Exhibition was later reduced to the *Pavillon de l'étalage*, which, ultimately was replaced by the *Pavillon de la Publicité* (Coulon, arch.).

¹²⁴ The idea of of a "bazaar" for 1937 can be traced, though scantily mentioned, throughout unpublished documents. It was confirmed to me in an interview with Charlotte Perriand (December 1986.) This attempt was not without precedent, however. A similar idea had been already formulated in 1889.

"future styles," or simply to dismiss attempts at defining the problem in terms of style altogether. However, Ruhlmann, one of the most refined cabinetmakers to whom, ironically, Le Corbusier had to revert, in 1925, for his "standardized" elements in the *Esprit Nouveau* pavilion, lucidly announced that "le luxe meurt."¹²⁵ He had no illusions: he knew his own market of unique, handcrafted objects and furniture made of rare materials was regrettably doomed; the future belonged to the design of serial furniture, requiring a minimum of handicraft, and offering a maximum of comfort and pleasure. He concluded, however, that this should not be a reason for despair. If the concept of "art décoratif" was to disappear, the quest for beauty was not: "the forms of equal resistance are always beautiful, and the fastest and safest airplane is likewise always the most beautiful."¹²⁶ Gaston Deyris supported this position by claiming that beauty was not an issue of luxury;¹²⁷ and artisan Michel Dufet, an industrial designer, denied the Exhibition the capability of truly modifying artistic and intellectual activity which depend on much deeper and less controllable issues of culture.¹²⁸

In tune with the latter position, Edmond Labbé, Commissioner-General of the 1937 Exhibition, voiced concerns very similar to the early principles of both the Werkbund and the Bauhaus, calling for concerted efforts among artists, artisans,

¹²⁵ Ruhlmann, *Comedia*, 2 August 1933.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ G. Deyris *Comedia* 20 September 1933.

¹²⁸ M. Dufet *Comedia* 21 June 1933.

creative industrialists and designers.¹²⁹ His concern for issues of regionalism added a degree of complexity to his thoughts about modern architecture. He saw in the discovery of the "soul" of a region, or of a particular country, a necessary deflection of the modernist discourse, an answer to the "néant de l'architecture internationale." In the name of the revival of long forgotten cultural, climatic and other differences between specific regions, he requested "the death of international architecture, because it does not correspond to anything natural"¹³⁰ He criticized France's overly centralized cultural administration which stifled the individuality of specific regions, and saw the same danger at a global level with regard to the International Style. He thought it inconceivable that one and the same "cube" would describe the architecture of widely different locations, and for widely different purposes.¹³¹ While much less would have sufficed to alarm the tenets of the Modern Movement, Labbé inscribed his thought well within a complex debate on Regionalist architecture in France that did not exclude relevant modernist quests.¹³² Indeed, Labbé did not neglect "sound functionalist" precepts either, as he responded to the debate on ornament and the machine aesthetic in almost Corbusian terms. He claimed that "an automobile should not be disguised as a horse-drawn coach," and that "the very function of the object should always be clearly

¹²⁹ *Comedia*, November 8, 1934. On Labbé as a cultural figure, see further in this chapter.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² For the debate on Regionalism in France, see Jean-Claude Vigato, "Le Régionalisme dans le débat Architectural en France, de 1900 à 1945," Doctoral dissertation, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, 1990.

expressed."¹³³ He insisted that the "fascinating beauty of a locomotive" stemmed from the fact that it was "an engine exposed without hypocrisy." In keeping with this position, Labbé placed all his hopes in the architecture of the Centre Régional, a project to which he intended to dedicate the best part of the Exhibition. Yet, he did not avoid the general temptation regarding style. In L'Europe Nouvelle, he concluded that "each era needs a style. We need a brand new style." But he put a spin on his claim as he reminded that "we also need a National style, Regional styles."¹³⁴

Georges H. Pingusson, author of the *Union des Artistes Modernes* pavilion (Fig. 27), one of the most successful at the Exhibition, declared on the pages of L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, in June 1935:

We have to use this opportunity to untangle our production from the dualism that has been dominating it: on the one hand industry, the domain of mathematics and fine reasoning; and on the other aesthetics, a purely formal tradition, the last glimmer of our great eras.¹³⁵

[Il s'agit à cette occasion de dégager notre production du dualisme où elle se traîne, par un côté: industrielle, du domaine du calcul et de la raison fine; de l'autre: esthétique, appartenant à une tradition purement formelle, dernier reflet de nos grandes époques.]

The task ahead, as formulated by Pingusson speaking for the UAM chart of principles, was to establish a productive

¹³³ See also Edmond Labbé "L'exposition de 1937" in L'Europe Nouvelle, September 15 1934, p. 917.

¹³⁴ "A chaque âge convient un style. Nous avons besoin d'un style neuf..." "Nous avons aussi besoin d'un style national: styles régionaux." Op. Cit, p.918.

¹³⁵ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1935, p. 35.

synthesis between industrial and aesthetic field, that is, to realize precisely what had been both obstinately resisted by mainstream 'artistes décorateurs,' and passionately longed for by a minority, for almost an entire century. Pingusson certainly voiced the beliefs of the "United Modern Artists" such as René Herbst, Charlotte Perriand, Francis Jourdain and others.

At the eve of the opening of the 1937 Exhibition, Pingusson added to his 1935 comments that the Exhibition would succeed only if it "addressed clearly the relationship between the artisan and the machine; the industrialist and the artist; the specific production (national, regional) and the universal production of a place, (i.e. the production of an area, and the production of a place); [finally] the relationship of the artist to the public and to the state."¹³⁶

Such position, in fact, was surprisingly in tune with that of the Commissioner-General, Edmond Labbé. This convergence is of crucial importance for the understanding of the mainstream current of the Exhibition as a whole, as discussed later.

1937

The first and last "Universal Exhibition" held in France in the Twentieth Century was the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*. This Exhibition was also both the ambiguous culmination and the radical negation of the nineteenth-century *Exposition Universelle*. Nineteen-thirty-seven was grounded on an encyclopedic and didactic legacy. Civic

¹³⁶ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1937, p. 120.

and political role of the past exhibitions having to do with their specific placement in the City, also played a part, as did their social motives; their concerns for art and architecture; their shifting need to transgress the boundaries between major and minor arts. Yet at one and the same time, the 1937 Exhibition contradicted significantly each of these points in the way it approached them. The Encyclopedist legacy, interpreted by the nineteenth century establishment as an "authoritarian," positivist ideology best exemplified by the 1867 Exhibition, had steadily declined since then. Conversely, the social and educational dimension of the Enlightenment reached its most significant expression in 1937.

We have seen that the classificatory and encyclopedic ambitions had started to erode early on, as the theoretical construct of the French exhibition typology gradually lost its spatial reference. Sixty years later, and despite a surviving form of resilient taxonomic classifications, little remained in the spatial organization of 1937 that could justify such a theoretical construct. The classification itself had been reworked several times to accommodate new unforeseen applicants. Sections had to be added to already completed "Classes" and "Groups,"¹³⁷ the result resembling more a patchwork than a positivist scheme with specific theoretical intentions.¹³⁸ The

¹³⁷ 1937 had 14 groups divided in 114 classes. Exposition de Paris 1937: Catalogue Officiel, 1937. Table of contents.

¹³⁸ This aspect was particularly criticized in the Italian professional journals such as Piacentini's Architettura. The Italian press contrasted the French "disorder" with the future Esposizione Universale di Roma, scheduled for 1942.

once all-encompassing "Palace" was now conspicuously replaced by a myriad of atomized pavilions, an archipelago of disconnected realities, like a disordered memory of bygone certainties. Even though, as a rule, each pavilion harbored a Class, very often several classes shared a single pavilion, or a single class was spread over several pavilions.¹³⁹

Two colonial empires, the French and the English, each claiming global preponderance, dominated the nineteenth century. Other exhibiting nations served primarily to reinforce the two nations' image of prestige. Now, the two were replaced by an unexpected and unprecedented number of states¹⁴⁰, each flaunting ostentatiously their own claim to national pride, even to supremacy.¹⁴¹ Along the Seine, and without a sense of hierarchy, tiny Belgium and its immense pavilion (Fig. 28), was placed in between the transparent Swiss pavilion (Fig. 29) and the opaque mass of Great Britain's representation (Fig. 30). The very folkloric United States pavilion with its "skyscraper" decorated as an Indian totem and perforated with the spangled banner's shining stars rubbed one side with the no less folkloric French Provinces (Fig. 31). All of them, in turn, competed with the flamboyant, and most convincing modernism of the Czechoslovakian

¹³⁹ Such was the case of Painting, sculpture, Applied Arts, Furniture and Graphic Arts.

¹⁴⁰ For the first time in the history of World's Exhibitions as many as 42 nations participated. *Le Temps* (July, 15 1937*) called this unprecedented gathering "un bilan de la civilisation moderne dans une pacifique réunion de la pensée et du travail"

The size of the area allocated to the Exhibition grew from 27 hectares in 1934 to 106 by the end of 1936.

¹⁴¹ Anne O'Hare McCormick, *New York Times*, 10 July, 1937.

pavilion (Fig. 32) and the elegant and restrained rationalism of the Swedish (Fig. 30).¹⁴²

This Exhibition was accurately called "International," rather than Universal. Beyond the mandatory rules of the recently created *Bureau International des Expositions* which imposed the term "International" rather than "Universal" for the specific case of the 1937 Exhibition, this term also accurately resonated the deep transformations underway on the world scene. If the foreign countries were now all diplomatically referred to as "*Puissances étrangères*," most were also members of the newly created "League of Nations." More important, the term "International" had been popularized since the middle of the nineteenth century by a powerful workers' movement. This indicated that the Enlightenment's "universality," and the recognition of nationhood of the nineteenth century, were now rescued in the twentieth by a new order, the order of internationalism, itself carried by a modern, industrial class in quest of emancipation.

¹⁴² The surprisingly dull Belgian Pavilion was designed by Henry van de Velde. Brauning, Leu, and Durig, were responsible for the Swiss pavilion which received an important critical recognition, while Oliver Hill from the F.R.I.B.A. conceived the British pavilion.

Paul Lester Weiner authored the U.S. pavilion. He intended to symbolize both the inner city skyscraper and use it as an Indian totem covered with the appropriate imagery. The whole was sprinkled with the stars of the spangled banner, over red, blue and white wall surfaces. The "skyscraper," however, had to be cut short to a third of its original height for lack of funds, despite a generous contribution from the French government.

Jaromir Krejcar, was the architect of the much admired Czechoslovakian pavilion, probably the best of the Exhibition. Krejcar left Czechoslovakia in 1948, as an exile in London. His archives are presumed lost.

Sven Ivar Lindt designed the Swedish Pavilion.

The other three important foreign pavilions by Alvar Aalto, José Luis Sert, and Junzo Sakakura were not displayed on the Seine's barges. For a detailed overview of both French and foreign pavilions see Bertrand Lemoine, ed. *Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire*, exhibition Catalogue, IFA/Paris Musées, 1987.

Yet, all three categories, universalism, nationalism and internationalism were still present side by side at the 1937 Exhibition, as they drew common roots in the collapse of the Ancien Régime. The appearance at the nineteenth century exhibitions of workers as a class, but perceived and treated as the "other," was acknowledged only through the mechanisms of the "Economie Sociale." In 1937, by contrast, the working classes took center stage at the Exhibition as an authentic, self-governed force directly represented by its own *Pavillon du Travail* (C.G.T.) and indirectly through the *Front Populaire* and the Socialist government's visible presence at the Fair (Fig. 33).¹⁴³ As Edmond Labbé himself emphasized as early as September 1934, the Exhibition was to have "a democratic character. The peasant's farm, the miner's habitat, concern us as much as an *hôtel particulier*."

In fact, what emerged in 1937, was a new awareness of a close convergence of interests between the manual workers and the intellectuals, namely the white collar laborers as the new class of salaried employees.¹⁴⁴ Yet, unlike its nineteenth century precursors, the International Exhibition of 1937 eliminated all references to heavy industry *per se*. Contamin's *Galerie des machines* that survived two exhibitions, was finally demolished.

¹⁴³ The "reified" 'Economie Sociale' of the Saint-Simonian Exhibition was replaced in 1937 with a series of Palaces and Pavilions called *Santé Publique, Education Nationale, Loisirs, Solidarité* and so on.

¹⁴⁴ This was already clearly formulated in 1931 when Minister Berthod suggested to the Parliament that in 1936 an international exhibition be held on "La vie ouvrière et paysanne" to which soon was added "et intellectuelle." Traces of this first concept remained ingrained in the Exhibition which was held in 1937. This circumstance, among others, as we shall see, allowed Léon Blum's government to "appropriate" the Exhibition with no need for significant modifications.

It was triumphantly replaced by a "Centre des Métiers," which Labbé passionately supported--probably in part as the son of an artisan himself. This support indicated, however, that the duality between industry and artistic production that Georges Pingusson chastised had not been fully resolved, while a nostalgic ideology stemming from a William Morris was anachronistically resurrected.

A new social class that appeared at the Exhibition was at long last, joined by the non academic, "living art" as well. The new art, of course, shared the Exhibition's space with the last flickers of more established artistic expression, inlaid on the official, permanent buildings, which claimed modernity in their own right (Fig. 34).¹⁴⁵ This very integration of art into the architectural object at an international exhibition broke down irrevocably the distinction between minor and major arts at a grand scale. The disintegration of the Exhibition as a Super-Salon echoed the disappearance of the Palais de l'Industrie where the machine had been displayed as a discrete artifact, in clear distinction from Culture. As the doors of the Exhibition opened widely to contemporary aesthetic research, and modern technology and science permeated the very fabric of the Exhibition, art itself was merged into the folds of architecture. This reversal signaled unambiguously a new turn in the history of French design reform. Not surprisingly, the Eiffel Tower, this beacon of

¹⁴⁵ It has been the tendency to attribute to the Front Populaire the merit of this change. In fact, while the Front Populaire did help, the opening of the floodgates to modern art, was not, as we shall see, a specific, even less a unique merit of Blum's government. The opposite would rather be true, namely that the Front Populaire was itself, like the Exhibition, the product of the same general populism and democratization of French society.

nineteenth century industrialism, was now fully perceived--without even a need of reinterpretation through any kind of special effects, save for simple light¹⁴⁶--as an object with intrinsic aesthetic claims, independent from any utilitarian purpose.¹⁴⁷ The Tower was finally accepted as the ultimate monument to Modernity. Underlying this new consciousness was the removal of the decorative arcade that surrounded the platform with picturesque intents--one of Eiffel's concession to nineteenth century eclecticism--with a stated purpose to give the Tower a fully "modern look."

In the realm of art, in the more restrictive sense of the term, the traditional patrons catering to individual easel painting were disappearing, due to the economic crisis,¹⁴⁸ while the system of marketable art they helped create appeared now as deeply suspect. Cultural institutions of a democratized establishment were seeking new avenues in a country of traditionally state-sponsored art, for an art that would be broadly accessible to a large public. In what could be described as the "Grands travaux de l'art"--a concept resonant with the position of such artists as Le Corbusier, Léger, the UAM and the like--the call of the growing artistic left, increasingly close to the centers of power, called for the abandonment of easel art in favor of mural painting or of large-scale sculptural programs

¹⁴⁶ On the Eiffel Tower and the uses of light, see the next chapter.

¹⁴⁷ This consciousness did not really captivate the minds of the cultural elite until the Exhibition itself. As is well known, Citroën was allowed to use the Tower as a light bill-board for its advertisement throughout the 1930's.

¹⁴⁸ Saury, A., "The Economic Crisis of the 1930's in France," Journal of Contemporary History, n. 4, October 1976, pp.75-107.

related to architecture. The favoring of the integration of the arts, and their "democratization" (or "popularization" to use a term of the time), echoed the 1930's debates on the Left regarding the new social role of the artist. The debate went on not only in France, but at a larger international scale as well, from Mexico to the United States,¹⁴⁹ and from Italy to the Soviet Union.

This general tendency, reflective of the dominant artistic research, was articulated in France around the debate on "Realism" and "Social Realism."¹⁵⁰ The latter was defined by a central aesthetic theme of the "Retour au sujet," with a variety of interpretative approaches. The debates involved intellectuals and artists ranging from Louis Aragon to Le Corbusier, Sonia and Robert Delaunay to Fernand Léger, Picasso to Raoul Dufy and Ozenfant among others.¹⁵¹ This tendency was fully attuned to the position of the Exhibition's Commissioner-General Edmond Labbé and his Architect in Chief Jacques Gréber.¹⁵² Indeed, behind an ironic

¹⁴⁹ Diego Rivera's monumental mural in Detroit, dedicated to Ford, is a striking example among others.

¹⁵⁰ See Jean Lurcat et al. *La Querelle du Réalisme*, Editions Sociales, Paris 1936, and in particular Le Corbusier "Le destin de la peinture," speech at the *Maison de la Culture*, 29 May 1936. Also J.Martin et al. "The Quarrel with Realism," *Circle*, pp. 67-74. "Social Realism," to which such painters as Orozco, Siqueiros and Diego Rivera also subscribed, differed substantially, even though not without organic connections, with Stalin's "Socialist Realism"--a merely state directed reversal to nineteenth century romanticism, glazed with populist overtones. *Socialist Realism* also differed radically from the French new *Social Realism*--even if often mistakenly perceived, at a distance, and especially by Communists such as Louis Aragon, as carried by an authentic, innovative aesthetic pursuit.

¹⁵¹ These heated discussions were organized by Aragon in the *Maison de la Culture*, primarily under Communist sponsorship. The *maison de la Culture* was founded in 1934 by the AEAR group (Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires.) By 1937 the *Maison* claimed 70,000 members, with an extended network throughout France. (See Mary McLeod, 1985, p.202.)

¹⁵² As will be shown in the second part of this study, Labbé and Gréber not only strongly supported Le Corbusier but had been engaged in an active collaboration with other progressive figures in the arts, all of which had a powerful effect on the final shape of the Exhibition.

and somewhat patronizing remark, Louis Hauteœur expressed just that. "The Commissioner-General, Monsieur Labbé, Hauteœur claimed,

had a utilitarian concept of art; he would have liked to see painters and sculptors "celebrate democracy." 'We had it, he remarked, 'with all their naked women. Tell them to represent the working class people.' He was thinking like some 1848¹⁵³ realists. I managed [however] to safeguard the freedom of the artists.¹⁵⁴

[Le Commissaire Général, M. Labbé, avait de l'art une conception utilitaire; il aurait voulu voir peintres et sculpteurs 'célébrer la démocratie'. 'On en a assez, me disait-il, de toutes leurs femmes nues. Dites leur de représenter la population ouvrière' Il pensait comme certains réalistes de 1848. Je parvins à défendre la liberté des artistes."]

Jacques Gréber, on the other hand, established a bridge with the new tendencies in the United States, specifically articulated at the 1933 Chicago Fair.¹⁵⁵ Gréber had probably in

¹⁵³ 1848 refers to a workers upheaval in an unsuccessful attempt to reestablish the Republic.

¹⁵⁴ L.H. Les Beaux-Arts en France, passé et avenir, Paris, 1948, p. 154, quoted by S. Sinclaire, 1988.

¹⁵⁵ The Chicago Fair's "trade mark," one could say was the intense use of colored architecture. Such was the importance of polychromy that many of the leading pavilions were repainted in strikingly different colors for the second opening of the Fair in 1934. See Liza Schrenk, unpublished paper "The architecture of the 1933-34 Chicago Fair," University of Texas at Austin, 1993

Jacques-Henri Gréber was born in Paris in 1882. He studied with architects Bernard and Redon at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and graduated in 1909. He soon became a specialist in urban design. While he taught urban planning at the Paris University and presided on many government agencies, he also was a winner in the competition for the rehabilitation of the Paris fortifications and for the new urban plan of Lille. In France he was architect-city planner of the cities of Marseilles, Roubaix, Abbeville and Salins. He built a considerable number of villas and apartment buildings in Paris and on the Mediterranean coast. In the United States he founded the Philadelphia Fairmount Parkway, and designed among others the presidential park at Palados Verdes, and the gardens of the Museum of Fine Arts in Detroit. He was Doctor Honoris Causa at the Lafayette University. At the Art Deco Exhibition in 1925 he was in charge of the "Gardens and Parks" section, while he built at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris a replica of Washington's Mount Vernon house for the American Section. (See Jean-François Pinchon "La conception et l'organisation de l'Exposition," in Paris 1937,

mind the early experiments of both the Soviet avant-garde, and those of some German and Austrian followers of the New Architecture of the same period, when he passionately exclaimed

I wish to turn the Exhibition into a polychromatic whole; not to be afraid to color the buildings that will be displayed on both sides of the river as a harmonious show.¹⁵⁶

["Je désire faire de l'Exposition un ensemble polychrome, ne pas avoir peur de colorer les bâtiments qui formeront sur les deux rives une suite harmonieuse.."]

No doubt, with this program, Gréber was also attuned to Fernand Léger's theories on monumental colored surfaces to be displayed in urban environments.¹⁵⁷

The underpinning assumption of the return to large scale, non-easel painting and architectural coloration was the perception that a rebirth of monumental art had been the trade mark of all great eras of artistic production. This is why, in

Cinquantenaire, Paris, 1987, p. 40, Fn.17). He wrote a book, *L'architecture aux USA: la force d'expansion du génie français*, Paris, 1920.

An admirer of Albert Speer's architecture he travelled with him to Nürenberg and visited the Luitpold Stadium and the Zepelin Fields. Upon his return he wrote back to Speer on 2 December 1936: "It was a pleasure to meet you and have the opportunity to admire your work." Following his visit to Hitler's Germany, Gréber included Speer's work in his course in urban planning at the *Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris*. (See correspondence between Speer and Gréber in Archives de France, F12-12442). In 1942, during Nazi occupation, he took part in a controversial trip of French artists to Germany under the official sponsorship of Hitler's government the Arno Breker "Comité d'Honneur." The group included Maurice de Vlaminck, Cocteau, Louis Hautecœur and Auguste Perret. About the circumstances surrounding this trip, see Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac, *Histoire de l'Art: Paris 1940-1944. Ordre National--Traditions et Modernités*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris 1986.

¹⁵⁶ Gréber's intervention at the fourth meeting of the "Commission des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris," 28 February 1936 (Archives de la Seine VR 259).

¹⁵⁷ See F. Léger "Les besoins collectifs de la peinture: la peinture de la cité" in *Encyclopédie Française: Arts et littératures dans la société contemporaine*, t. XVI, 1935, pp. 70/6 and other essays. These concerns were shared with Le Corbusier himself. See also J.L. Sert, F. Léger, and S. Giedion, "Nine Points on Monumentality," reprinted in *Monumentality and the City*, *The Harvard Architectural Review*, IV, Spring 1984, pp. 62-63.

the same decade, a historic tradition was revived through the renewed interest for Romanesque fresco painting.¹⁵⁸ With this context in mind, the Paris Exhibition appeared to all--official administrators and artists alike, both left and right oriented--as a grand vehicle for a revival and "purification" of the French artistic scene. The Paris Exhibition was an occasion to reexamine past and new trends, in a dramatic national soul searching.¹⁵⁹ Like many others, Amédée Ozenfant observed that, a broad rebirth of a collectivist spirit in France started on February 12, 1934, when the counter demonstration of the Left managed to undercut the attempted *coup d'état* by the Far-right.¹⁶⁰

Artists, therefore, were not to present their work in "splendid" isolation, as in previous fairs, but were asked to collaborate with each other and to work in conjunction with architects. As Louis Hautecœur concluded,

It is obvious that in a Fair, isolated, displaceable works of art can be of very limited use. It is essential to give the architects what they need so that they could realize in their pavilions the frescoes, the

¹⁵⁸ The reference to frescoes is a constant in the 1930's. See Henri Focillon Peintures romanes des églises de France, Paris 1938; Fernand Mercier, Les primitifs français et la peinture clunysienne, Paris, 1932. The Encyclopédie française dedicates an entire chapter on mural painting with the symptomatic title: "Divorce de l'architecture et de la peinture". See in particular: Georges Huisman, "L'Art médiéval" in Encyclopédie Française, Vol. XVI, 1935, pp. 10/10-10/12.

In 1937, a frescoes section is also created at the *Musée des monuments français*, which was until then only a *Musée de sculpture comparée*.

¹⁵⁹ The renewed interest for the Romanesque fresco is, of course, also to be related to the recent rediscovery of Byzantine art stimulated by the Impressionist and Cubist rejection of perspectival space.

See J. Loubet Del Beyle, Les non-conformistes des années 30, Paris 1969 Anatole France, Arts et littératures dans la société contemporaine. T. XVII, 1935 pp70/2-70/6, and A. Ozenfant "Les besoins collectifs de la peinture: la peinture murale" in Encyclopédie française "Art et littérature:... Volume. XVI, 1935 pp. 70/2-70/6.

¹⁶⁰ See Sinclaire, 1988.

friezes, the sculptures, the bas reliefs, the wrought irons, the ceramics they have conceived. ... A healthy artistic conception, the way it has always been in great artistic eras, puts painting, sculpture, decorative art, in the service of architecture. The Exhibition will be an opportunity for an artistic renaissance thanks to the reinstatement of a full collaboration between architects and artists.¹⁶¹

[Il est évident que dans une Exposition, les œuvres d'art isolées, mobiles, ne peuvent servir qu'en des cas restreints. Il importe en effet de donner aux architectes les moyens de faire exécuter les pavillons qu'ils ont conçus avec des fresques, des frises sculptées, des bas reliefs, des ferronneries, des céramiques, ... Une saine conception artistique, qui est celles de toutes les grandes époques d'art, soumet la peinture, la sculpture, l'art décoratif à l'architecture ... l'Exposition peut permettre une renaissance de l'art en facilitant à nouveau la collaboration des architectes et des artistes.]

Edmond Labbé

Whereas 1937 still glorified modernity, as had been the case with nineteenth-century exhibitions, it did not do it anymore in the spirit of Saint-Simonianism.¹⁶² If 1937 did grow out of that tradition, it did it in opposition to it. The sharp departure from the celebration of industry per se, and a clear turn toward popularization of both art and the sciences--instead of treating them as sacred objects--had to do with the choice of the Exhibition's Commissioner-General, Edmond Labbé. No doubt, his own position was conditioned by the general climate that underlined the rise of the front Populaire, between 1934 and 1936.¹⁶³ An authentic son of the Third Republic, carrying a

¹⁶¹ Louis Hautecœur letter to the *Directeur des Finances*, 2 July 1936. Archives de France F12 12196 (3).

¹⁶² It could be claimed, however, that residual forms of Saint-Simonianism reentered the exhibition through its Socialist interpretation, in part ushered in with the Front Populaire.

¹⁶³ More or less implicit themes that appeared regularly throughout the nineteenth century were now revived as central themes of the Fair. The

mission passed down to him by the Enlightenment, Labbé was not an engineer, a "Grand Bourgeois" with aristocratic affinities, but a former elementary-school master who grew to the rank of *Inspecteur Général de l'Enseignement Technique*: a technical mind perhaps, but an educator in the first place inclined to the traditional leftist leaning of the profession. The offspring of a small Parisian artisan, a son of the "Peuple," Labbé, thus, belonged to an elite radically different from the one fostered by the Saint-Simonian economic liberalism. Labbé's political and cultural profile emerges forcefully from numerous statements he made to progressive art and architecture publications, but also from his own Rapport Général published after the closure of the Exhibition. His accession to the post of Commissioner-General of a Universal Exhibition, was in itself a symbol of the radical transformation, and democratization the institution had undergone. It is this profound change that made it possible for the Front Populaire not only to claim the Exhibition as its own so effortlessly, but even to be credited, *a posteriori*, for having "invented" it, or at least modified substantially .

None of the radical innovations the Exhibition displayed--the works of the artistic and architectural current research, Le Corbusier's in the first place, but also Rob Mallet-

Enlightenment's aspect that related to social solidarity and progress moved from the stage of paternalist concerns of the Saint-Simonian exhibition to an autonomous, democratic plight. This plight informed significantly the very Program of the 1937 Exhibition. The democratization of science, as conceived by Perrin in his Palais de la Découverte; the Pavillon de l'Enseignement, as well as those of Solidarity, Labor and Trade Unions, were all part of a vast program depicting a singularly new approach to human emancipation--no doubt inspired by the principles laid down by the Enlightenment, and succinctly expressed in the 1789 principles of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*.

Stevens' and Georges Pingusson's, Eugène Beaudouin's and Marcel Lods', René Herbst's and Charlotte Perriand's, Dufy's, Lurçat's and the Delaunays, to name just a few, were due to the Front Populaire. This, of course, does not diminish the fact that the *Front* did give its full support to the Exhibition as it was, and to those artists standing at the cutting edge of current artistic endeavor.

Labbé's position on decorative arts vs. industrial design was nuanced, expressing at once a double concern: on the one hand, fears over the shaken foundations of French culture based on the tradition of fine craftsmanship, and on the other, anguish in the face of industrial overproduction which was largely regarded not as an economic but as a structural problem. The solution of both issues depended on a democratic approach. As early as 1934, Labbé declared to the Exhibition's *Conseil Supérieur*:

The industrialization of production endangers national taste. But the threatened values will not be served by anathemas against technical progress pronounced from an ivory tower. What is at stake is safeguarding live forms, supporting still viable artisanal forms. [...] The pitfalls of serial production have to be avoided [...] while using at the same time its advantages, to impose simple models; to hunt down senseless anachronisms; to renovate the environment of modern life.¹⁶⁴

[Il faut que l'Exposition de 1937 soit une exposition démocratique. L'industrialisation de la production met en danger le goût national. Mais ce n'est pas en anathémisant du haut d'une tour d'ivoire le progrès technique qu'on restaurera les valeurs menacées ... Il s'agit de sauvegarder les formes vivantes, de susciter les formes encore viables de l'artisan. Il s'agit d'éviter les dangers de la production en série ... et d'en utiliser les avantages, d'imposer des modèles simples, de

¹⁶⁴ E. Labbé *Rapport Général*, 1938-40, Vol 5, p. 167.

faire la chasse aux anachronismes ridicules, de renouveler le décor de la vie moderne.]

Historians have assumed that, because of the Exhibition's alleged anti-industrialism, the Centre Rural, with its state of the art, mechanized "Ferme modèle" (built in the heart of the *Village 1937* located at the Porte Maillot Annex) was a creation of the Front's government. In fact, the Centre Rural and its Centre Artisanal, conceived as "synthetic displays of [French] agriculture" by the *Ministère de l'Agriculture*, were already planned and financed with 15 millions francs by the government that preceded the Front Populaire, and by the Commissariat of the Exhibition.¹⁶⁵ Almost two months before the elections, on March 22, 1936, the Parliament approved an additional 22 millions Francs for the Centre Rural, out of which 2 millions were allocated for the construction of the "Ferme Model."¹⁶⁶ An additional million and 200 thousand Francs was granted by the Commissariat General itself.¹⁶⁷

The new subsidies, it should be added, were requested from the Parliament by Georges Bonnet, then Minister of Commerce and Industry, who later became Minister of Agriculture in the Front Populaire government. As a new Minister, Bonnet (who had been also a member of Le Corbusier's *Comité d'Honneur*)¹⁶⁸ obtained another grant for a small pavilion designed by Charlotte Perriand

¹⁶⁵ Labbé, 1938-40 P. 172

¹⁶⁶ Journal Officiel 15 March 1936.

¹⁶⁷ Labbé, 1938-40 p. 133.

¹⁶⁸ See Part Two, Chapter VIII of the present study.

and which illustrated the agricultural policies of the Front.¹⁶⁹ (Fig.34bis). Strictly speaking, this small pavilion was the only one that came directly from the Front Populaire. Yet, needless to say, both Léon Blum's Government and the Exhibition's Commissariat supported fully the entire project of the Centre Rural.¹⁷⁰ Edmond Labbé explained his own position, referring to himself in the third person, by saying that

he was the first to rejoice about an outcome he was the first to desire, but without success, due to financial circumstances independent of his will.¹⁷¹

[il était le premier à se réjouir d'un résultat qu'il avait été le premier à souhaiter, et auquel il n'avait pas pu parvenir, de lui-même, par suite de circonstances d'ordre budgétaire indépendantes de sa volonté.]

An apparent anti-industrialism perceived in Labbé today, stems more from Labbé's affinity for the socialist Arts and Crafts movement, and his reversal from the traditional Saint-Simonianism which nourished the history of the nineteenth century *Expositions Universelles*, than from any conservative anachronism. Indeed, Labbé, at times, when emphasizing that "l'Exposition s'est efforcée de réagir contre le nudisme architectural devenu excessif,"¹⁷² may have been caught unawares in the fallacious

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Charlotte Perriand, August 1989. Perriand hesitated in giving me access to the documentation on this pavilion as she was, at the time, preparing for publication a retrospective on her own work. On Perriand's Pavilion see Pierre Migennes, "Un salon d'attente et un salon de réception au Ministère de l'Agriculture," *Art et Décoration* LXVI 19337, p.158 ff.

¹⁷⁰ It is important to note, for a better understanding of this episode, that the Socialist party, not unlike the Communists, has always supported small farmers and small scale business who represented the greatest part of French economy, and who therefore informed significantly the essence of French culture, seemingly threatened in its own destiny by the end of the 1930's.

¹⁷¹ *Rapport Général*, Tome 5, p. 70 and Annexe p. 396.

¹⁷² Edmond Labbé, in journal *Préface*, 4 October 1937.

discourse on architectural modernity reduced to an issue of style and ornament. Yet, while doing so, he did not express a position that was necessarily different from the position of a Sullivan, or even of a Frank Lloyd in regards to ornament, modernity and the machine. He was probably not far removed either from the positions defended by Le Corbusier, when he reminded that:

the lesson of the French Classicists, those who built Versailles, has to be heard by those who are involved in the formidable task of giving Paris a new face.¹⁷³

[la leçon des Classiques français, de ceux qui firent Versailles, doit être entendue par ceux à qui incombe la redoutable mission de donner un nouveau visage à la capitale.]

Labbé was even closer to the essence of the Werkbund's principles when, he added in Comedia that the goal was to achieve "une fusion nécessaire des efforts des artistes, des artisans, des industriels créateurs ou éditeurs de modèles."¹⁷⁴ He claimed ostensibly that a collusion between artists and industrialists was clearly missing in 1900 as well as in 1925, and that the latest "effort corporatif admirable: en 1932, 1933, 1934" (an obvious reference to the noted UAM exhibitions) was a clear indication of a new departure.¹⁷⁵

Labbé also articulated his acceptance of functionalist and anti-academic demands on Modern architecture when he claimed that the 1937 Exhibition "doit avoir un sens pratique...résoudre certaines difficultés propres à notre temps."¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, he

¹⁷³ E. labbé, "Discours" in Comedia, 9 November 1934.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "L'Exposition internationale de 1937" in L'Europe Nouvelle, p.918

conclusively distanced himself from a certain kind of anachronism when he demanded that:

the Exhibition be daring, creative: it is important to show to an immense public what modern techniques and art are capable of, when applied to the problems of contemporary life.¹⁷⁷

[l'Exposition soit audacieuse, créatrice: il s'agit de montrer à un immense public ce que peuvent...les techniques et les arts appliqués aux problèmes de la vie présente.]

The Exhibition's Commissioner-General did not hesitate even to chastise "la France Républicaine [qui] n'a pas toujours accordé assez d'importance à la technique," thus aligning himself decidedly with the concept of applied arts that the Marquis de Laborde defended prophetically, if unsuccessfully, as early as 1855.¹⁷⁸

Labbé was also unambiguous in his praise for the use of new materials and new building technology; in his admiration for the Swiss Pavilion "où le métal joue un si grand rôle" (Fig. 35); in his laudatory remarks on the Czechoslovakian pavilion, certainly aesthetically the most progressive and innovative pavilion in 1937. This Pavilion was for Labbé "à coup sûr un des plus remarquables [...] auquel le fer et le verre donnent un si curieux cachet d'originalité"¹⁷⁹ (Fig. 36). He did not fail either

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Labbé's aesthetic stance, of clear functionalist and "machine" extraction was an echo of Locquin's own when he declared that architecture needed "des lignes simples, une ornementation sobre, émanant de la destination de l'édifice." Locquin in *Comedia* 26 July 1933.

¹⁷⁹ E. Labbé *Rapport Général*, Vol. 10, pp. 193-200. Labbé's criticism of the Chicago Columbian Exhibition and of the 1900 Paris Exhibition is also highly significant.

"Il était souvent d'usage que les sections étrangères fussent des pastiches de monuments célèbres dans les divers pays, même si elles devaient montrer des progrès de leur industrie; il en résultait quelquefois un contraste choquant entre l'extérieur traité en château

to mention in his Rapport Général Le Corbusier's "regrettably" unrealized project at the Bastion Kellermann, which promised to be "a striking demonstration of the latest building methods in concrete and steel."¹⁸⁰

In many ways the Commissioner-General was even ahead of his own time in resisting the extreme positions of the "International Style." He linked modernism to regionalist concerns already visible in Alvar Aalto's pavilion invoking the Finish forest (Fig. 37); or Jose-Luis Sert's pavilion recalling the sun-screens of Mediterranean market places shaded by Guernica's sacred oak (Fig. 38);¹⁸¹ or, in a broader sense, to the first signs of an emerging post-rationalism Roberto Aloi correctly perceived.¹⁸² In the statement that could have been written by such architects as Kramer or De Klerk, Labbé claimed that

Modern art does not have to be monotonous. Each province offers the builder, the decorator, all artists, hundreds of opportunities to show their originality, an originality adapted to the climate, to customs, to local traditions; or, more precisely, an originality born from each creator's effort to adapt his work to all these particular conditions.¹⁸³

médiéval, et l'intérieur, aménagé en une salle de machines. Les célèbres Expositions de Chicago en 1893, de Paris en 1900, quelque grand que fût leur succès, n'échappaient à ces tendances."
Op. cit. Vol. 5, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰ Labbé, Rapport Général, *Vol. 5, p. 163.

¹⁸¹ The Pavilion's entrance hall displayed Picasso's Guernica, painted for the occasion as an immediate reaction to Franco's bombardment. The goal of the Fascist rebels was to destroy the centuries old Baskian oak where kings of Castile used to come to pay respect to Baskian autonomy. Ironically, while the entire village was destroyed, the sacred oak remained defiantly untouched.

¹⁸² Roberto Aloi, Esposizioni: architetture, allestamenti, Milano, 1960.

¹⁸³ Labbé, Comedia, July 1933. Labbé's discourse had also a progressive and almost prophetic political dimension, as he interpreted Regionalism as a step away from the overly rigorous centralism of French public life, a bold statement for a State *fonctionnaire par excellence*.

[Un art moderne n'est pas nécessairement un art monotone. Chaque province offre au constructeur au décorateur, à tous les artistes cent occasion de montrer de l'originalité, une originalité adaptée au climat, aux mœurs, aux traditions locales, ou, plus exactement, une originalité qui naisse de l'effort fait par les créateurs pour s'adapter à toutes ces conditions particulières.]

Regionalist concerns, however, did not obscure in Labbé's mind the necessity of standardized, serial production, the sore point of the debate on the continuity and survival of traditional "métiers d'art." In a sense, Labbé merged his position on the Exhibition's "Centre des Métiers"---a center he personally fostered, and his position on the *Centre Rural*, attributed to the Front Populaire,¹⁸⁴ as he lucidly claimed that serial production can be "subjected to art."¹⁸⁵

The best summary of Labbé's ideological position can be found in an article for L'Europe Nouvelle of September 15, 1934, which still resonated with the lyricism of Laborde's dream of a "nation of artists".

One has to explain to the people that what is beautiful does not necessarily have to be austere, expensive, useless, and that it should not be confused with the superfluous; that art is not unavoidably the slave of luxury. Let us therefore prophesy. ... Let

¹⁸⁴ The creation of the Centre Rural was an addition to the Exhibition, aimed at illustrating the agricultural policies of the new government, rather than a counter proposal to an artisanal activity incompatible with the Front's ideology..

For example, the Manufactures de Sèvres, an important branch of the national economy whose brilliant pavilion Robert Camelot designed for the Centre des Métiers was potentially an ultimate example of collaboration between artisanship and industry. There was certainly no reason for the Front's government to oppose it, or contrast it with the projects for a modern agricultural industry at the Porte Maillot annex.

¹⁸⁵ Speech held on 8 November 1934, reproduced by Bâtiment Français and Commedia on 9 November 1934.

This incisive and unambiguous position clearly contradicts any suggestion regarding Labbé's alleged conservatism, as has been claimed, for example in Jean-Claude Vigato, Exhibition catalogue, Exposition Internationale. Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire, Paris, 1987.

everyone, whatever their social condition, get involved in the art we visualize: *music of the [radio] waves, transparent palaces, floating architecture, masterpieces of glass, or masterpieces of steel* (emph. added)¹⁸⁶

[Il s'agit de faire comprendre au peuple que le beau n'est pas forcément austère, couteux, inutile, et ne se confond pas avec le superflu, que l'art n'est pas inévitablement l'esclave du luxe. Qu'on nous autorise donc à anticiper... Que chacun, quelle que soit sa condition sociale, participe à l'art que nous imaginons: musique des ondes, palais transparents ou architectures aériennes, chefs d'œuvres de verre ou chefs d'œuvres d'acier.]

Labbé, therefore, not only decidedly disassociated modernity from luxury, but had a vision of architecture the most rigorous "Rationalist" of the 1930's could have expressed. Also, his progressive effort to untangle modernity from social privilege led him to visionary conclusions that had nothing to do with the stiff neo-academism, or retrogressive regionalism that has been ascribed to him. And indeed, Labbé's and Gréber's achievements were hailed as a triumph by Amédée Ozenfant at the Exhibition's opening:

As soon as I saw the Exhibition's grand spectacle, I was stunned, bemused: such grandeur! It is vast, diverse, orderly, majestic, and so natural, easy going, young. What a shock [...] This jovial, witty architecture [...] is an exhibition of a victorious progress; an accepted, definitely accepted, confirmed progress: the general integration, acceptance of the new, healthy architecture.¹⁸⁷

[Dès que je pus voir le grand spectacle de l'Expo, je fus sonné, stupefait: quelle grandeur! c'est vaste, varié, ordonné, majestueux, et comme tout naturel, aisé, jeune. Quel choc ... Une architecture--gaie spirituelle ... c'est l'exposition des progrès acquis, définitivement acquis, enterinés: ... l'intégration, l'acceptation générale de la nouvelle architecture saine.]

186 "Interview" in Comedia, 8 June 1935*

187 Ozenfant, 1937, pp. 241-47. This position was echoed by L. Moholy-Nagy in Architectural Record October 1937, pp. 92-93. Moholy-Nagy assessed the Exhibition as the "victory of the New Architecture."

Only the timing of the Exhibition's works, and--as explored in the next chapters--the mystifying rhetoric of some participants such as Le Corbusier¹⁸⁸ in the highly "combative" and polarized atmosphere that surrounded both the rise of the Front Populaire and the making of the 1937 Exhibition, made it seem that Léon Blum's government had considerable cause for intervention in the name of modern art and progressive aesthetics.

Quite to the contrary, it was the Front Populaire, represented at the Exhibition by Jean Locquin, which fully embraced a number of achievements of the Exhibition.¹⁸⁹ The Front, or rather the leftist organizations supporting it, "regrouped" some of these achievements with a renewed sense of purpose, into logical (and ideological) sequences of "Front Populaire itineraries" through the Exhibition. Such was the case of the

¹⁸⁸ See also Delaunay's mystifications regarding the Pavillion de l'Air, pp.337-338 of the present study.

¹⁸⁹ It is important to note in this respect that Jean Locquin, a Socialist and the man most often credited for helping Le Corbusier and other modern artists in the name of the Front Populaire during his tenure as Léon Blum's representative at the Exhibition's Commissariat General, was already "Commissaire Adjoint" to the Exhibition as early as 1933, and exerted from the outset, at least indirectly, a steady influence on the Exhibition's Program. What is also important to note is that Locquin was nominated the representative of the Government to the Exhibition in March 1936, as member of the *Commission des Commandes de l'Etat* to the artists, and was therefore granted a free hand in the selection of artists and architects, before the Front came to power. Indeed, as documents show, Locquin's and Labbé's respective positions regarding the goals of the future Exhibition differed little. Labbé only reiterated Locquin's devotion to the "recherche du cadre et du décor de la vie ouvrière et paysanne (amélioration de leur condition)" in most of his speeches regarding the democratic character he sought to imprint on the 1937 Exposition, which he contrasted with previous Exhibitions. At the core of both men's approach was a vision of "Science and Industry conjured in providing for the essential needs of the masses." Edmond Labbé, *Rapport Général*, Tome 1, p. 53.

organized visits the Socialist daily offered to the attendants of the "Amis du Populaire" congress.¹⁹⁰

The Front Populaire

Two major misconceptions mar the current scholarly assessments of the role the Front Populaire played in the 1937 Paris Exhibition. The first applies to the character and the assumed anti-modernist "ideology" of the Exhibition itself, historians routinely viewed as adverse to the progressive ideology of the Front Populaire. The second concerns the role the Front Populaire played in getting an allegedly resistant Exhibition leadership to allow modern artists and architects to obtain commissions. The misinterpretations have not only blurred some important distinctions in evaluating the role that the ideology of the Exhibition and the ideology of the Front played in the making of the Exhibition. Distorted also was the perception of the actual relationships between such figures as Le Corbusier, Pingusson, or Sonia and Robert Delaunay on the one hand, and the Exhibition on the other. Ultimately, the misinterpretations affected the historical reading of the Exhibition itself.

The *Gouvernement de Front Populaire*, or the "People's Front Government," an alliance of leftist parties, supported by the Communists¹⁹¹ was formed on May 6, 1936, after a landslide

¹⁹⁰ See Le Populaire 12 September 1937.

¹⁹¹ Even though allied with the Socialist and the Radical Party during the election campaign, the French Communist party self-defined as a "revolutionary" party, refused to join the government for reasons of principle.

electoral victory of the Socialist Party.¹⁹² This victory could be compared, in a sense, to the analogous electoral success that the left Republicans achieved after defeating the Boulangiste threat in 1889, following the Centennial Exhibition. Indeed, the Front Populaire victory was in part a reaction against the Fascist menace that had been mounting in three neighboring countries, Italy, Germany and Spain. In France the threat of fascism rose visibly for the first time during the 1934 February riots. While the Front Populaire was started in part because of this threat, it is, on the same occasion that a parallel impetus was given to the Exhibition as the artists *imposed* it to the government.¹⁹³

The notable difference with the prosperous 1889, however, was that in 1936 the unprecedented economic crisis in the United States, that had hit France in a ripple effect in the early 1930's, was easily perceived as the historic failure of Capitalism, vitiated by unbridled commercial industrialism. Such a perception pushed the nation even further to the Left as the ideals of the Paris Commune, once more, seemed to be at a hand's reach, this time through the electoral process.

The Front Populaire was devoted to the radical and immediate improvement of labor conditions and the introduction of historic "social laws," reducing the working week to forty hours, and granting paid vacations to all. What differentiated this reformist movement of partly Marxist vintage from the ideology of anti-industrial Socialism--now again discernable in France due to

¹⁹² Wreth, A. The Twilight of France 1933-1940, New York, 1942.

¹⁹³ With the fall of the Government, the Exhibition was cancelled as well. See next chapter.

the apparent failure of the industrial revolution that the 1929 crisis revealed--was a sustained conviction that the merging of the artisan and the industrial worker was still possible. The new Front Populaire government encouraged a genuine "philosophy of the human condition," a philosophy based on the emancipatory effects of the machine and on the faith in industrial abundance serving "human needs" rather than profit. This philosophy was equally imbued with a belief in the final liberation of humankind, made possible by unprecedented physical and spiritual enrichment.

Unsurprisingly, the new government immediately recognized the *Exhibition of the Arts and Techniques in Modern Life* as a privileged vehicle for the propagation of its own policies, and the mass promotion of the bright side of industrialism and modernity. The Exhibition was also perceived as the opportunity for a grand fete that would channel the enthusiasm the electoral victory had unleashed across the "other" France. In a symbolic gesture, Léon Blum decided that the ceremonial opening of the Exhibition would be set for May Day, to celebrate the Exhibition as a "a victory of the laboring classes."¹⁹⁴

Embracing at once the Voltairian tradition, the ideals of the Commune, and the democratic thrust of the Third Republic, the Front Populaire saw the 1937 Exhibition also as a powerful educational platform, a place of exchange and mutual enrichment between "intellectual and manual workers"--a concept already

¹⁹⁴ In fact, the Exhibition opened uncompleted only on May 25, to the sarcastic delight of the Right.

May Day was first observed in the United States as "Labor Day" in 1890 to commemorate the killing of striking workers in Chicago on May 1 1887.

implicit in the Exhibition's own program.¹⁹⁵ For the first time since 1855 (when patronizing pedagogical concerns and only randomly sampled scholastic achievements from elementary and high schools were included in the broad landscape of an industrial exhibition), in 1937 the entire French educational system was represented with Cartesian rigor, in its own monumental pavilion (Fig. 93).

Jean Zay, the Front's Public Instruction Minister, captured the message the Pavilion was set to convey, by claiming, in Jules Ferry's spirit, that "République et Ecole sont institutions solidaires."¹⁹⁶

Designed by Eric Bagge, the Palais de l'Enseignement, often christened *Palais des Lumières*, was symbolically placed at one end of the Champ de Mars axis, in conjunction with the Palais de l'Electricité, called *Palais de la Lumière*. The placement was, of course, another homage paid to the tradition of the French *Expositions Universelles*, drawn from the Enlightenment. As Edmond Labbé wrote,

...The School...revives the Republic in the minds by opening them up to the lights of truth, and revives it in the hearts by opening them up to the love of Humanity.

This is why [the Exhibition's] Commissariat-general...assigned to the Palace a symbolic place... by putting next to each other the *Palais de la Lumière* and the *Palais de l'Enseignement* which we could have called as well the *Palais des Lumières*.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ As mentioned above, the early ideas presented to the Parliament about an exhibition to be held in "1936" called for a show celebrating the "Vie ouvrière" proposed by deputies from the Left. See allusions to this proposal in Bulletin Municipal Officiel 12 April 1934.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in Edmond Labbé, *Rapport Général*, Vol. 4, p. 162.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 162

[...L'Ecole...entretient la République dans les esprits en y répandant les lumières de la vérité, et dans les cœurs, en y répandant l'amour de l'Humanité.

C'est pour cela que le Commissariat général... a voulu assigner à ce palais une place symbolique... placer côte à côte le Palais de la Lumière et le Palais de l'Enseignement que nous nommerions tout aussi bien Palais des Lumières...]

Even though it was not the work of Blum's government, and was not even sponsored by the Public Instruction Ministry,¹⁹⁸ this large Pavilion, subsidized by the Exhibition, captured the full attention of the Front. In the words of Jean Zay

the organization of our display rooms reveals in itself the structure, the character, the methods, the spirit of our educational system. The large room of the elementary school is wholesome, bright, happy, and expressive of the simple and synthetic character of its teaching. The five neat, precise and elegant halls on the ground floor display cabinets and stands, like in a museum of modern life: we know immediately that we are viewing the exhibits of the Technical Education--an education woven into the entire fabric of the Exhibition.¹⁹⁹ [emph. added]

[le seul aspect de nos salles révèle l'organisation, la structure, les caractères, les méthodes, l'esprit de nos divers enseignements. La grande salle toute unie, toute claire, toute joyeuse de l'école primaire manifeste aussitôt le caractère simple et synthétique de son enseignement [...] Dans les cinq grandes salles du rez-de-chaussée d'un agencement si net, si précis, si élégant et dont les vitrines et les stands ... sont comme un musée de la vie moderne, on sait tout de suite que l'on est dans l'Exposition de l'Enseignement Technique [...] inscrit un peu partout dans la trame de l'Exposition.]

The very fact that Jean Zay, a prominent Front Populaire Minister, appropriated the Pavilion's Program established long before the elections, and that he found that this program informed the entire Exhibition, speaks in itself to the steady convergence

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 163. The program of the Pavilion was conceived by the University and sponsored by the young *League de l'Enseignement* long before the new Government was elected.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 162

that existed between the Exhibition's goals and the Front Populaire's own. The new sense of enthusiasm of the Front Populaire regarding the "invention" of the Paris Exhibition undoubtedly influenced the way the Exhibition was perceived later on. Yet as far as the Program itself, elaborated painstakingly by the Commissioner General, Edmond Labbé (and certainly under the influence of the political and artistic Left directly represented by Georges Huisman since 1934)²⁰⁰ nothing contradicted *per se* the goals of the Front. Quite to the contrary, the Program offered a welcome ground on which to express unambiguously the Front's ideals. This is precisely what Edmond Labbé meant when he wrote at the end of his Rapport Général, referring to Léon Blum, that "the 1937 Exhibition was a superb opportunity for the *Président du Conseil* to implement the program he advocated."²⁰¹

The programmatic intentions of the *Palais de l'Enseignement* was crowned by the *Palais de la Découverte*, placed at the other end of the Exhibition and inserted in the 1900 Grand Palais. The new Palace, where the latest scientific and technological discoveries were displayed, embodied the final achievements of a democratic concept of a high-standard national education system accessible to all. As one of the main attractions at the Exhibition, the *Discovery Palace* also brought to completion the Exhibition's mission as a broadly based pedagogical instrument. Conceived by Jean Périn, a Socialist and

²⁰⁰ Huisman became Directeur des Beaux-Arts in February 1934 and held this function until 1940 when he was replaced by Louis Hautecœur.

²⁰¹ "L'Exposition de 1937 a été une magnifique occasion de réaliser le programme préconisé par l'ancien Président du Conseil." Rapport Général, Vol. 7, p.

a Nobel Prize physicist, before the advent of Léon Blum's government, the Palace was largely hailed as the major success of 1937. Brilliantly designed by Jacques Bouterin and Armand Nerret and lavishly decorated with murals by the Communist painter Fernand Léger, the Palace undercut the Grand Palais' Rococo "Modern' Style," and its elitist concept as a Beaux-Arts Salon (Fig. 40). The first in its kind, and the predecessor of the contemporary Science Museum, the Palace was described by Labbé as "French in spirit, and universal in scope."²⁰² The legacy of the Enlightenment was fully re-appropriated.

The main sections that the Government of the Front Populaire oversaw closely were, the Department of Public Health (*Palais de l'Hygiène*); Aeronautics (*Palais de l'Aéronautique*); Merchant Navy (*Palais de la Marine marchande*); the Public Works (*Palais des Chemins de Fer*); the Department of the Interior (*Pavillon de la Sécurité*);²⁰³ and, finally, as mentioned earlier, a Pavilion under the Ministry of Agriculture at the Annexe Maillot by Charlotte Perriand. Most of these Palaces and Pavilions

²⁰² Indeed the Palais de la Découverte was "French in spirit" in the sense that, due to the tradition of the Enlightenment as well of Saint-Simonism, the theme of "discovery" had already an important place in earlier exhibitions as well.

To insure the Palace's complete success, and to compensate for the Exhibition's partial financing of official government Pavilions, Edmond Labbé requested and obtained from the Front Populaire an additional 22 millions Francs for the Palais de la Découverte. This circumstance, as well as the fact that Jean Perrin became a Minister in the Front's government, has been sometimes misinterpreted by scholars and contemporaries as the Front's intervention into the Exhibition's supposedly restrictive and retrograde program.

For a detailed discussion of the Palais de la Découverte see Gilles Plum, "Le Palais de la Découverte et le Grand Palais" in Paris 1937 Cinquantaire, exhibition catalogue, Paris 1987, pp.294-299.

²⁰³ The architects were, in this order: Robert Mallet-Stevens; Audoul, Gérodias; Jacques Bonnier, Marc Saltet; Audoul, Bagge, Gérodias, Hartwig; J. Marrast.

obtained a final site only after 16 August 1936,²⁰⁴ when the third expansion of the Exhibition was approved by the Parliament.

This circumstance left the impression, in retrospect, that the sites, grants, and construction had to do exclusively with the efforts of the Front, and that the late attributions may have reflected a conflict with the Exhibition's leadership. Le Corbusier's case is most often quoted to substantiate this point. Yet, besides the fact that most of these "political" pavilions were already part of the Exhibition's program before the elections, they were not the only ones to receive a site at such a late date, and even much later. The late list included such pavilions as the *Pavillon des Tabacs* (a government monopoly), the *Comité des vins*, the *Aluminium* or the *Caoutchouc*, and a number of others.

The reason for these late site attributions was that a rapid and unexpected increase in the number of foreign applicants was constantly pushing toward the Exhibition's periphery the sites to be allocated to national pavilions. They, naturally, could not be given precedence over the foreign ones, which were all located in the central area of the Exhibition. As the Socialist deputy and the President of the Exhibition's Architecture and Urbanism Group, Henri Sellier²⁰⁵ recalled in a slight overstatement in his 1938 Architecture d'Aujourd'hui interview,

²⁰⁴ See Journal Officiel, Senate debate 11 August 1936, Chambre des Députés debates, 2ème séance, 13 August 1936, and Law voted on 16 August 1936.

²⁰⁵ A noted Socialist Senator, Paris City Councilor and *Conseiller Général de la Seine*, Henri Sellier was a strong supporter of L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui. Sellier was on the editorial board of the town-planning journal Urbanisme as well, throughout the 1930's. As a *Directeur de l'Office des Habitations à Bon Marché* (HBM) for Paris, and as Mayor of Suresne, he

It is important not to forget that as late as July 1936, nothing was yet completed; that the general programs were still being discussed, and that, except for some excavations for the Trocadero and the Museums of Fine Arts, *not a single building was even started.* (emph. added)²⁰⁶

[Il importe de ne pas oublier qu'en Juillet 1936 rien n'était encore fait, que les programmes généraux étaient encore en gestation, et qu'en dehors de quelques fouilles pratiquées au Trocadéro et sur les emplacements futures des Palais des Beaux Arts, pas un seul édifice n'était commencé.]

played an important role in defining the City's policies on public housing. In 1929 Le Corbusier invited him to join the CIAM, even though this never materialized. It is significant that a figure of this stature within the context of modernist pursuits was also assigned early on the presidency of Group V (Urbanism and Architecture.) For more on Sellier see Labbé, Rapport Général, Vol. 5, 289 ff.

²⁰⁶ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, n. 8, August 1937, p. 5.

Referring to this most disturbing situation, Edmond Labbé wrote at the end of his Rapport Général:

..."Nous voudrions...tirer une leçon utile des difficultés bien inattendues dans l'exécution des travaux.

Ne pas entreprendre une tâche aussi considérable, en pleine ville, sans avoir une marge de sécurité de 6 mois au minimum. sur les prévisions les plus larges.

Limiter l'extention des demandes, au risque de perdre d'importantes participations, à un programme préalablement et définitivement arrêté.

Tenir implacablement les dates de rigueur pour les adhésions, afin de ne pas immobiliser des terrains pendant des mois, sans affectation certaine.

Pour la même raison, assimiler les participations ministerielles et étrangères à toutes autres demandes de terrain.

Passé le point de départ fixé par les graphiques d'exécution, pour la mise en chantier des bâtiments, *refuser tout changement de programme, quel qu'en soit l'avantage.*

Pour l'exécution, concentrer les projets des architectes en un organisme unique, standardisant les plans d'exécution, l'étude de la structure, la distribution et la surveillance des travaux, mais laissant aux architectes d'opération la direction esthétique dans l'exécution de leur œuvre." (Rapport, Vol. 11, p.345)

While this self-critical statement somewhat nostalgically refers to the errors of method and organization an inexperienced Commissaire Général may have committed, it also stresses the extreme openness and good will this same Commissioner demonstrated throughout the Exhibition's construction. It is also evident, however, that, had he followed his own recommendations for a timely and orderly performance, neither Le Corbusier nor the United States would have been represented at this event. Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin might have been easily the only guests, as they were not only the first to answer France's invitation but only they were ready with their pavilions when the Exhibition opened on May 25 1937.

Historians have assumed that the *Confédération Générale du Travail*, the workers' union closely affiliated to the Front Populaire, had to fight its way against the officials of the Exhibition. In fact, like most French representations, the C.G.T did not request participation at the Exhibition before the end of July 1936. The documents show, however, that Edmond Labbé undertook a successful fund-raising effort for the Union's *Palais du Travail* (even though the Exhibition had no formal financial obligations towards this group). He did the same thing on behalf of the *Union des Artistes Modernes* a month later, when this splinter association requested a separate pavilion, out of the *Société des artistes décorateurs*. Labbé emphasized that, despite the difficulties of a limited budget,

it was not possible any longer to avoid providing funds for these pavilions, *given the extreme importance their programs had for the Exhibition* (emph. added).²⁰⁷

Clearly, Labbé asserted again the convergence between his goals and those of Léon Blum's Government. And, indeed, the 1937 Exhibition was the first Exposition Universelle to give an independent representation to a major workers' organization. This fact distanced it unambiguously from the nineteenth-century sections which addressed the issue of "Paix Sociale." Yet, it is not irrelevant for the sake of an appropriate evaluation of the impact of the Front Populaire at the Exhibition, to note that the CGT, a Pavilion so close to the Blum Government, did not use a single progressive artist or architect. Quite to the contrary,

²⁰⁷ Labbé, *Rapport Général*, Vol 1, page 81.

much of the art displayed was rather conventional and even stiffly academic (Fig. 41).²⁰⁸

The *Centre des Métiers* and the *Centre Rural*, could not either be compared in reductive terms of "progressive" and "conservative." Notwithstanding the fact that the politically and aesthetically progressive were not necessarily overlapping categories, the modern *Centre Rural* at the porte Maillot (Fig. 42) included a conservative *Centre Artisanal* (Fig. 43), at times aesthetically far more conservative than the *Centre des Métiers* located in the heart of the Exhibition (Fig. 44), and which historians have often assumed to be the retrogressive counterpart to the *Centre Rural*. As Edmond Labbé himself wrote,

The *Centre Rural* was, therefore, an homage to the French provinces; it *recreated*, if not within the Exhibition's precinct itself, at least in its closest proximity, in an *official* annex [official now meant Front Populaire], the farm life in its most expressive form. The Center offered its visitors a synthetic view of Agriculture in the *Village 1937*, designed by Lecomte, Metz, Japy, Hennequin, Martineau and Gumpel.²⁰⁹

[Le *Centre Rural* fût ainsi l'hommage que l'on devait à nos provinces de France, en *reconstituant* (emph. added) sinon dans le cadre de l'Exposition, du moins tout près d'elle, en annexe officielle, la vie agricole avec tout ce qu'elle a d'expressif. Il a offert à ses visiteurs une présentation synthétique de l'Agriculture dans le *Village de 1937* qui fût l'œuvre de MM. Lecomte, Metz, Japy, Hennequin, Martineau et Gumpel.]

The architects Labbé mentions were indeed hardly "modernist" architects themselves. The *Centre Artisanal* was, actually, just an overflow of the *Centre des Métiers*, which

²⁰⁸ The fact that Léon Blum and the Front Populaire may have favored modernist--that is innovative art--does not allow us, of course, such generalizations as to necessarily equate progressive politics and progressive art.

²⁰⁹ Op. cit. p. 135.

quickly exceeded the framework it was granted. This is how the idea of a *Centre Artisanal* was born.²¹⁰

[a dépassé bien vite le cadre qui lui était assigné, et c'est ainsi qu'est née l'idée du Centre artisanal...]

The Centre Artisanal at the Porte Maillot boasted the most traditional crafts still practiced in French villages, with a declared intention to preserve what was still salvageable among the dying *métiers artisanaux* in the most traditional sense of the term.²¹¹ Conversely, Labbé's cherished "Centre des Métiers" did not feature traditional work by regional craftsmen, but rather applied arts already undergoing the processes of industrialization.²¹² Edmond Labbé's clear stance on industrial design and the importance, in his view, of a concerted action between art and industry was clear

It has always been the intention of the organizers [of the *Centre des Métiers*], he claimed, to display innovative works ... produced by artisans, artists and *industrial designers in the field of modern decorative and industrial arts* ... This is precisely what we expect from the *union of artists and industrials*. Therefore, we have never ceased to claim the necessity of such association ... We wanted to give our Exhibition a demonstrative character, to prove that technical progress can be put to the service of art ... The most

²¹⁰ Ibid. p. 70.

²¹¹ While the Porte Maillot annex may have reflected, to a certain degree, the limits of the Blum Government's technological dream, one has to take into account that the issue is a fairly complex one, and that a close historical analysis of the French Left's options regarding agrarian and industrial policies would be indispensable before passing any final judgement regarding the Front's "progressive" or "conservative" choices in art and architecture.

²¹² The history of the Pavilion of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs is significant in this respect. Built with the Exhibition's support by architects Patout and Chaume, it was at first supposed to be a "Hôtel pour amateur d'Art," in pure Beaux-Arts terms. The project was already finished when a group of dissatisfied members succeeded in having this theme canceled, in favor of a more contemporary approach, shying away from exclusiveness and luxury. Op. cit. p. 83*

humble objects have a right to be beautiful. [emph. added]²¹³

[Il s'est toujours agi pour ses organisateurs [Centre des Métiers] de présenter les œuvres d'une inspiration nouvelle... exécutées par les artisans, les artistes et les industriels créateurs de modèles ou éditeurs, dans le domaine des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes ... C'est ce que nous attendons de l'union des artistes et des industriels Aussi bien, n'avons nous jamais cessé d'affirmer la nécessité de cette juxtaposition des artistes et des industriels ... Nous voulions donner à notre exposition une allure de démonstration, prouver que le progrès technique peut-être mis au service de l'art ... Les objets les plus humbles ... ont une sorte de droit à la beauté ... La fabrication en série, à la chaîne, [peut] elle même être assujétie à l'art.]

Despite changes in leadership, concepts and programs, a certain continuity of a left-oriented ideology and politics was maintained throughout the gestation of the Exhibition, since the very beginning in 1929, when Socialist parliamentarians such as Pierre Cot (future prominent Front Populaire Minister) or Jean Locquin (future representative of Léon Blum) expressed their support for such an Exhibition. Most notably, however, a strong link between the Exhibition and the avant-garde had been maintained since 1934--the year Labbé became Commissioner-General--through the Socialist leaning Georges Huisman, the *Directeur des Beaux-Arts* and friend of Le Corbusier, as discussed later. Huisman was one of those *intellectuels d'état* and "hommes de gauche" passionately dedicated to contemporary art and its democratic dissemination. He maintained strong personal links with the most prominent representatives of the avant-garde.²¹⁴

²¹³ Rapport Général, Tome 5, p. 167; p. 170 and p. XVII.

²¹⁴ Such were--besides Le Corbusier--Charlotte Perriand, René Herbst, Fernand Léger, Yves Brayer, Chaplain-Midy, Othon Friesz, Edouard Georg and others. This position, and his personal friendship with Jean Zay, helped him introduce in the State institutions distinguished figures associated with the Left, such as the art critic Jean Cassou and the ethnographer George-Henri Rivière. (On Georges Huisman see Sinclair, 1988, p. 210.)

Huisman actually served as a bridge between the Front Populaire and the previous regime as he remained *Directeur des Beaux-Arts* until 1940, thus carrying over to the Exhibition his support of the Moderns.²¹⁵

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A revival of manifold social and artistic concerns rooted in the Enlightenment amounted, in the course of the building of the 1937 Exhibition, to a radical democratization of the *Exposition* as an institution. The same forces that brought about the Front Populaire had already acted to a considerable extent upon the "deep structures" of the Exhibition itself in the course of its "invention," under rapidly evolving political circumstances. On the other hand, the rescinding of the pursuit of styles went hand in hand with a profoundly redefined understanding of art as permanent negation, rather than "imitation" of pre-established models. In all three cases we were, in a sense, witnessing the demise of nineteenth-century authoritarianism.

There is apparently no record of any conflict between Huisman and Edmond Labbé or Jacques Gréber, while there is considerable evidence that the Exhibition leadership always reacted favorably to his efforts in bringing the avant-garde to the Exhibition. There is no doubt that Huisman's support helped Labbé and Gréber introduce architects that were not selected in the 1934 competitions.

²¹⁵ Huisman's central responsibility for the politically democratic and aesthetically progressive transformation of the Exposition Universelle still remains to be fully elucidated.

CHAPTER III

L'Exposition de 1937 n'aura pas lieu The Last "Beaux-Arts" Competitions²¹⁶

Central to the intense debate that preceded the opening of the 1937 Exhibition were two independent series of competitions that, in a sense, mobilized the entire decade of the 1930's. While both had as a subject the upcoming Exhibition, the two could not have been more widely at odds.

The competition of 1932--which coincided both with a major competition concerned with the never-ending Voie Triomphale, and with Henri Prost's study for the first urban plan of Paris--was deeply involved with vital urban issues regarding the French capital. Significantly too, the competition was organized by the *Comité d'étude de l'exposition internationale d'art moderne à Paris*, formed for the occasion, and which assembled the live forces of the French "applied arts" in the broadest sense. Its purpose was a wide call for proposals that would determine the best location of an international exhibition. This was also the first attempt to "decentralize" the traditional fairgrounds of the *expositions universelles*. The result was an array of remarkable

²¹⁶ A modified version of this chapter was first written in French for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Paris Fair, exhibition catalogue. See Danilo Udovicki, "Projets et Concours" in Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques dans la Vie Moderne: Paris 1937--Cinquantenaire, Bertrand Lemoine ed., Institut Français d'Architecture et Paris Musées, Paris 1987.

solutions, dominated by two distinguished teams: the Beaudouin and Lods team, and the team of Patout and Japy. Yet, in the shadows lay a third major project, a project that was disqualified for having missed the deadline, and violated the principle of anonymity. The project's author was Le Corbusier.

Counteracting, in essence, the previous competition were two series of fourteen competitions held in 1934 and 1935.²¹⁷ Nominally organized by the Exhibition's administration, they fell under the control of the traditional government committees, themselves infiltrated by powerful established architectural offices.

Whereas the 1932 competition was based, in essence, on a radical criticism of the 1925 "Art-Deco" Exhibition, regarding its

²¹⁷ Besides a first competition for two Museums of Modern Art held independently in October 1934, the series of competitions that followed included:

1. The Trocadero Palace (Camouflaging of the existing facades, and redesigning of the gardens down to the river).
- 1.bis. Redesigning of the Trocadero's concert hall (interior). The two projects could be treated separately or in conjunction.
2. Foreign sections.
3. Decorating the Eiffel Tower.
4. Decorating the Trocadero Square.
5. The Sceaux Gardens.
6. The Seine. Designing the use of water and light for nighttime festivities.
7. The Transportation and Tourism Exhibition.
8. The Applied Arts and Manual Arts Exhibition.
9. Adaptation and Decoration of the Alma Bridge.
10. Country life and private architecture (cancelled).
11. The Regional Center.
12. Adaptation and Decoration of the Passy Bridge, treated in conjunction with competition 9.

The competitions were held in three successive series with respective deadlines on December 31, 1934 (1, 1bis, 2, 3, and 4); February 15, 1935 (6, 7, and 8); March 25 (9, 12, and 5); Program 11, divided in 17 sections, was restricted to "regional" architects. The Museums of Modern Art were not part of this series of competitions. Unlike the case of the Museums competition, the 13 competitions that followed were not organized to designate a project but to select those architects the Exhibition would retain as official architects for a variety of commissions to be determined later.

glaring lack of concern for urban relevance and social responsibility, and for its failure to respond to the contentious issue of the "unity of the arts;" the 1934-35 contest epitomized, with rare exceptions, a capitulation to Beaux-Arts inertia. In one word, the official government competitions reinstated with glamour an old understanding of modernity in France which identified modernity with mere skin-deep stylistic renovation. This position had already been seen in 1925, and was now strikingly revived with an official proposal to temporarily camouflage, in a pertinent style, the old façade of the Trocadero. Since the results of the second series were legally binding to the Exhibition--at least in terms of the list of architects it was given to employ--much of its efforts went into compensating for the Competition's failures.

This chapter argues that the independent grass-roots movement of modernist artists that sprang up in support of an exhibition, after the government cancelled it in February 1934, is largely responsible for the progressive dimension of the 1937 Exhibition. In fact, as already mentioned, the same forces that led to the election of the Front Populaire contributed to the ideological bent of the Exhibition, long before the Front itself was elected.

A Criticism of the 1925 Failures

The basic concept of this Exhibition is the following: seek out Art and make it loved, seek out beauty and make it the choice. Show art in all its expressions, in all its branches, in all its forms, present it as it is today, attempt to look ahead into its possible tomorrow²¹⁸

The above statement summed up rather accurately the spirit in which, some months earlier, the *Comité d'Etude de L'Exposition Internationale d'Art Moderne à Paris* called on the artists of France to submit their proposals for the selection of the Exhibition's site.²¹⁹ The propositions of the competitions required that the Exhibition be open to all aspects of art, regarding forms and color as well as concepts and ideas, sounds or movement. The Exhibition would, therefore, be a display

not just of architecture, sculpture, painting and their counterparts, the art of city design and landscaping, but also of music and dance, film ... and even of eugenics since the beauty of man, woman and child has since time immemorial been a principal source of inspiration for the fine arts.²²⁰

[Non seulement l'architecture, la sculpture, la peinture et ses succédanés, l'art des villes et des paysages, mais aussi la

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"L'idée générale de cette Exposition part de ce principe: chercher l'art et le faire aimer, chercher la beauté et la faire élire, Montrer l'art dans toutes ses expressions, dans toutes ses branches, sous toutes ses formes, le présenter tel qu'il est aujourd'hui, le pressentir tel qu'il pourra être demain." ("Concours pour l'emplacement d'une exposition internationale d'art moderne"
Masson Detourbet in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, n. 9, December 1932, p.78.

219 The Study Committee was formed in May 1931 at a meeting to which the *Société des Artistes Décorateurs* had invited representatives of six professional art and architectural associations, including the recently founded *Union des Artistes Modernes*, to join in a discussion on the direction to be imparted to the 1937 Exhibition.

220 See *Urbanisme*, 5, August 1932, p.144.

musique, le drame lyrique et la danse, le cinéma ... et même l'eugénisme, puisque la beauté de l'homme, de la femme et de l'enfant ont été de tout temps une des principales sources d'inspiration des arts plastiques.]

The issue at stake was, above all, to define a position with regard to the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts. Primarily called into question was the pernicious dichotomy, that characterized to a certain extent the 1925 Exhibition. The dichotomy set apart what was generally called the Fine Arts, or "pure arts," and the "decorative arts" or "applied arts." The controversy was not new, of course, but what mattered here was defining a clear position regarding the arts, once and for all. The various associations represented in the Study Committee made it clear that they rejected any division of art, and that such a division was incompatible with a true understanding of Modern Art²²¹

There were two inseparable aspects to the question of the site to be selected for the Exhibition. The noted art critic Brunon-Guardia provided a graphic formulation of one when he asked in Les Nouvelles Littéraires²²² whether an exhibition "dedicated to the new times" should use a site "already used in the times of the hackney coaches" or whether it would not be better to take advantage of the occasion to develop new districts for Paris in a

²²¹ Donat-Alfred Agache wrote in *Les arts Décoratifs Modernes-1925*: "For many of our compatriots, modern art is not yet anything more than an art of knickknacks and furniture; they do not grasp the unity which relates them with the various manifestations of life required in order to provide an artistic transposition of their own." Likewise, Pingusson wrote in June 1935: "Art and engineering are precisely the synthesis of the art of our times and this should not be just words but become a living reality." L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1935, p. 35. These were also founding principles, in 1931, of the *Union des Artistes Moderns* (U.A.M.)

²²² Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 2 March 1935.

frankly "modern" spirit. The other, more immediate question, involved the role the Exhibition should play with regard to the Regional Plan for Paris whose elaboration had just been undertaken under the direction of Henri Prost.²²³ These two questions, one

223 The Regional Plan of Paris:

Following the decision of France's Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré, a *Comité Supérieur de l'Aménagement de la Région Parisienne*, under the direction of Louis Dausset, was created in 1928 by the Ministry of the Interior. The Committee was asked to study the available options for the containment of the uncontrolled growth of Paris.

The concept of a "Larger Paris" (*Grand Paris*) was officially accepted for the first time. The Grand Paris comprised an urban territory that went beyond the traditional Paris *intra muros* which was Haussmann's only concern. The need for such a plan appeared in an increasingly acute form principally due to the profound economic and social transformation France underwent in the aftermath of WWI. The Committee's starting premise was that the Larger Paris needed to be reorganized but not extended.

The preliminary study, therefore, made no attempt at applying any of the theoretical concepts of the modern urban planners: no linear cities; no satellite cities; but only an effort to improve structurally the existing large conurbation comprising a circle of 35 kilometers around Paris, with Notre-Dame at the center.

Actually, the city of Paris had already started, to work on plans for the reorganization and development of a number of suburban districts, as early as 1920.

The main guidelines for a future plan were thus established as follows:

To improve circulation by all means

Few or no new extensions

To define imperative measures of hygiene

To pursue the implementation of an existing zoning plan

To protect existing urban or natural sites

To improve the aesthetic of suburban settlements.

By May 14, 1932 a law was voted in the Parliament prescribing that a detailed Development Plan of the Paris Region be elaborated in the following two years, and be ultimately approved by the same legislative body within two years. Henri Prost, who distinguished himself as an urban planner in Morocco, was named head of the planning team.

This law was long overdue. Initiatives and calls for a Regional Plan of Paris were heard from administrators, artists, sociologists already by the turn of the century. As early as 1904, Albert Thomas emphasized the need to establish clearly the close interdependence that exists between the various elements forming the Grand Paris. This statement already implied the idea of a regional development.

The so called *Musée Social* under the direction of Marcel Poëte, played another crucial role in forming the first ideas about a new, comprehensive approach to the urban problems of Paris. Indeed, all the texts on which large urban undertakings of Paris were based originated from the *Musée Social*. The new Regional Plan was no exception.

In 1911 the Conseil Général de la Seine created a "Commission de l'Extension" which opened a very clamored competition of ideas for a "rational" development of the Larger Paris. The competition Program was very

about the "extension" of art, and the other about the siting of the Exhibition, remained to the end a subject of rallying and discord.

Selecting the Site

The idea of a new exhibition for 1937 was first launched by Fernand David in the Chamber of Commerce of Paris shortly after the 1925 Exhibition. David saw the new exposition as basically a continuation of the previous one and thought it should be held on

an essentially unchanged site²²⁴. By June 1930 the idea had reached the French Parliament and the question of site immediately became divisive. The Socialist deputy Pierre Cot and deputy André Breton,²²⁵ for instance, wanted a centrally located site in Paris

broadly defined but asked the competitors to include extensive suburban areas, whether adjacent or not to the city walls of Paris. The name of Léon Jaussely emerged as one of the main winners. (This veteran of French urbanism died a few months later, on January 2, 1933). The competition results, however, had no follow up as the idea of an 'urban region' appeared to be still hard to accept. Paris continued to be treated exclusively within its administrative borders i.e. within its fortification walls. Le Corbusier was among those who refused to consider Paris beyond these limits, or accept the notion of a "Regional Plan." He continued to do so at least until the end of the 1930's.

Zoning and road networks were the basic concerns. Within that framework, the creation of green belts between districts, and most of all maintaining a semi rural character to the environment were the next priority of the plan, which remained flexible, and adaptable to local conditions. Established urban or rural aesthetic sites were to be strictly respected even by the road network, thus raising early concerns for the preservation of the environment. Population density was to be maintained low and high-rises were banished. Long, compact buildings were to be avoided for reasons of security (bombardments and spreading of fire), as well for aesthetic concerns in an environment of small cottages and villas which the plan tried to preserve.

For an overview of contemporary debates regarding the Regional Plan see Edouard Renard (Préfet de la Seine) "Paris, ses sorties et ses dégagements, L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, June/July 1931 pp.6-7; M. E. Jayot (Directeur Général des transports, de l'extension et de l'inspection générale), "Urbanisme et ses extensions," L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, June/July 1931, pp. 36-39; M.E. Fiancette (Député, Conseiller Municipal de Paris,) "L'Extension de Paris" Ibid. pp.15-20; Le Corbusier, "Pour continuer la tradition de Paris: manifeste de la nouvelle génération," Ibid. pp.116-121; André Lurçat, "Les méfaits de la Réglementation urbaine actuelle," Ibid. pp.136-144; Léandre Vaillat, "Le fleuve de Paris," Le Temps, 20 July 1932. For the law on the Regional Plan see reprint "La loi sur l'aménagement de la région parisienne," Urbanisme 23 April n. 1, 1932, no p. 8, and in particular the special double issue of Urbanisme, n. 34, December 1935-January 1936, dedicated to the *Région Parisienne* and the Plan.

²²⁴ Technically, in virtue of the 1928 international convention controlled by the International Bureau of Exhibitions, France could not hold an exhibition of such importance before 1941, i.e. ten years after the Colonial Exhibition planned for 1931. The issue was raised in the Parliament by Lucien Durand, President of the Chamber of Commerce. He maintained that, since the 1931 Exhibition was scheduled before France had signed the Convention, the limitation should not apply in its case. The Parliament adopted his position, and a law regarding the future exhibition was signed in June 1930. Furthermore, since no signatory nation raised any objection, the IBE went along with Durand's argument. The year 1937 was firmly reserved for France.

²²⁵ Pierre Cot would become the noted Minister of the *Front Populaire*, and continued to have an influence on the Exhibition. See Part Two of the present

while the Radical Emile Faure suggested the Bois de Vincennes,²²⁶ the site which was the host of the Colonial Exhibition the following year. The press on the whole remained rather indifferent, although a pure and simple replay of 1925 awakened no enthusiasm. As early as 1931, proposals began to appear in artistic circles, and leading art societies entered the debate, joined by the recently founded *Union des Artistes Modernes*.

This was the situation in the spring of 1932, when the Study Committee announced its competition, with government support. One stated aim was to provoke the largest possible number of site proposals and stimulate a vast confrontation of ideas. Referring to the unfortunate experience of 1925 which brought no worthwhile results to Paris as a city, the Study Committee convinced that the Exhibition should be organized on the outskirts of Paris where it would best influence its future growth. Before the 1925 Exposition had even shut its doors, Alfred Agache, Vice-President of the *Société des Urbanistes Français*, wrote:

The great mistake committed against urban development is to have set up an event of this importance in the very center of Paris where instead of serving the embellishment and future development of our capital by what it could have left behind (important buildings, streets and avenues, parks, etc.) it will leave nothing but ashes and dust."²²⁷

study. The deputy André Breton is not the same person as the surrealist poet.

²²⁶ It is important to note early on that the initial ideas and impetus for a new exhibition after 1925 were primarily coming from the political Left. This leftist bent, as will be shown, played a significant role in the Exhibition's later modernist choices.

²²⁷ Agache, 1925, pp. 52-56.

[La grosse faute que l'on a commis envers l'urbanisme ce fût d'installer, en plein centre de Paris, une manifestation de cette importance qui, au lieu de servir à l'embellissement et à l'aménagement futur de notre Capitale, par ce qui aurait pu subsister d'elle (palais, voie de communication, jardins, etc), ne laissera que cendre et poussière.]

Agache had a specific alternative in mind:

the free land extending out from the *Place de la Défense*, that is, there where the growth of the *Larger Paris* will be felt most ... on that marvelous location where our *Voie Triomphale* comes to an end."

[les terrains libres qui s'étaient autour de la place de la Défense, c'est-à-dire là où se fera particulièrement sentir la poussée du Grand Paris ... ce bel emplacement, aboutissant à notre *Voie Triomphale*]

Adopting these principles as its own, the Study Committee urged entrants to "develop a site or a city district which will be best served by the most recent city planning concepts."²²⁸

The view was buttressed by the coincidence in time between preparations for the competition for the site of the Exhibition and the opening of another important competition, the one organized by the *Société Française des Urbanistes* for precisely the *Voie Triomphale*. In fact, some entrants would include an "International Exhibition for 1937" in their proposals for this "Kingly Road," a road envisaged already by Henry IV (Fig. 45).²²⁹ The publication of the results of these two competitions would--rather symbolically--coincide with the promulgation, on May 14, 1932, of the Law on the Regional Plan of Paris.²³⁰

²²⁸ *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n.9 December 1932, p.89.

²²⁹ See in particular the project of André Granet published in *Urbanisme*, n. 1, April 1932, and the Patout/Japy project in *Urbanisme*, n. 20, Nov. 1933, p.347.

²³⁰ *Journal Officiel*, May 15, 1932.

Nonetheless, a certain ambiguity remained. The Study Committee saw the new city district to be created as a satellite exhibition. The actual 1937 Exhibition should consist of temporary structures:

A successful exhibition has to be primarily a large public confrontation of ideas and proposals among artists of all nations for a better and more complete adaptation of Art--still too much under the influence of formulas from the past--to the spiritual and material needs of modern life. This confrontation can be achieved through the artificial concentration in a limited space and for a limited period of time of the most characteristic samples of our investigations. It is precisely the impermanence of this part of the exhibition which will allow audacity, and inventiveness...²³¹

[Une belle exposition doit être pour la plus grande part une vaste confrontation publique des recherches et de propositions des artistes de tous les pays pour une meilleur et plus complète adaptation de l'Art--encore trop influencé par les formules du passé--aux besoins spirituels et matériels de la vie moderne. Cette confrontation peut être obtenue par la concentration artificielle dans un espace et dans un temps restreint des types les plus caractéristiques de nos recherches. C'est justement précarité d'une partie de l'exposition qui permettra ses audaces, sa fantaisie ...]

The Study Committee concluded on a somewhat mystical note that "the Exhibition must disappear for its spirit to strike, and its lesson be understood and carried into the future."

During July 1932, 78 entries arrived at the Grand Palais. A Preparatory Committee, chaired by deputy Louis Bonnier, with the two grand urbanists, Henri Prost and Adolphe Dervaux, sorting and evaluating the projects along two criteria: feasibility of the projects, and possible gains for the urban improvement of Paris. The Committee, in addition, drew the jury's

²³¹ See *Urbanisme* n. 5 August 1932, p. 144, Program for the competition of ideas for a location of the 1937 Exhibition.

attention to the financial balance of the projects--the depression could not be ignored--while pointing out that a priority should be given to the most attractive and most accessible site. The Committee, finally, suggested to the jury the approval of the following sites: areas outside of Paris, included Issy-les-Moulineaux; the Porte Maillot, the Bois de Boulogne, in the vicinity of Bagatelle in particular; Mont-Valérien; Nanterre, extending beyond the Voie Triomphale; the Parc de Sceaux; and finally, within Paris itself, the banks of the Seine, including the area of the *Manutention Militaire* and the former *Garde-Meuble National*. The jury was headed by Paul Léon, Director of the Academy of the Beaux-Arts, and the Commissioner-General of the 1925 International Exhibition.²³²

Site Proposals

If younger generation competition winners, such as the young "rationalist"-oriented CIAM members (authors of the noted housing project *La Mouette* at Drancy) Beaudouin and Lods (First Prize) (Fig. 46) were to be found together with more established men like Pierre Patout (Second Prize) who already dominated the Parisian architectural world with his moderate "modernism" (Fig. 47), other important names in contemporary modern art were conspicuously absent; Le Corbusier, for example, was passed over--mainly for his own fault. The project Le Corbusier submitted, it

²³² Paul Léon was later to become Assistant Commissar General of the 1937 Exhibition itself.

must be admitted, was both too anti-decorative and anti-urban to seriously rally a jury whose "modernism" was still sufficiently academic. Le Corbusier began by proposing that the name of the Exhibition be changed. He preferred "1937, Exposition Internationale de l'Habitation." This name, he claimed, modified only apparently the theme of the Exposition. In fact, it highlighted the one aspect of contemporary culture reputed to bring together most completely the elements of a correctly understood modernism: the home. Starting with the housing issue, Le Corbusier would look at such questions as

home equipment; breathing of the home; silence in the home; the introduction of a new home economics through some collective facilities; physical and nervous recovery; the upbringing of children; the pre-school and school life; the harmonious development of the solar day; allowing a balanced physical and spiritual life." 233

[l'équipement du logis; la respiration du logis; le silence du logis; l'intervention d'une nouvelle économie domestique par l'étude de certains services communs; la récupération des forces physiques et nerveuses; l'élevage de l'enfant; la vie préscolaire, l'école; la préparation des lieux nécessaires à la réalisation d'une journée solaire harmonieuse ... apportant l'équilibre physique et mental]

The home would thus provide the grounds for developing a whole series of themes which, in the final analysis, all led back to the subject of modern art, as architecture would cease to be an issue of style, but one concerned with an "art de vivre." His plan addressed

Home builders; furniture designers; the inventors of home equipments; all those who think they could offer

233 Le Corbusier, Brochure '37 p. 4.

appropriate solutions to the new problems in the life of the men of the present era."²³⁴

[aux constructeurs de maisons; aux créateurs de meubles; aux inventeurs de tous objets destinés à l'équipement domestique; à tous ceux qui pensent pouvoir fournir des solutions opportunes aux problèmes nouveaux de la vie des hommes de l'époque présente.]

Of course, "makers, industrialists, the whole of the building industry" were not forgotten. Their "universal character" appeared to him as fit to solve fruitfully "the general crisis of industrial production."

Le Corbusier's plans anchored the Exhibition "in a specific place at the edge of the Parc de Vincennes [...] in the Saint-Mandé district." Faithful to the concepts he had enunciated in the 1920's and firmly opposed to the idea of a Greater Paris extending 100 km in diameter as the Regional Plan envisaged, for him the "ebb" of the city had to be "towards the center." Vincennes was to be the first element of his Ville Radieuse with one thousand inhabitants per hectare concentrated along an axis traversing the metropolitan area from east to west, and pushing its way through Paris and beyond the Porte Maillot, and into the Voie Triomphale. The exposition would be, if Le Corbusier had his way, the starting point for a radical, *intra muros* recasting of metropolitan Paris. His plan, in other words, was to situate the Exhibition outside the city--the better to penetrate it.²³⁵

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ This project is analysed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Jean Bossu, a young architect from Le Corbusier's office, was also among the "Conspicuously absent." His proposal carried a clearly Corbusian stamp (Fig. 48) Influenced by the Mundaneum concept, he would have half the left bank invaded by a "City of the World" straddling a superhighway running east to west. A second highway would cut the City of the World in half, as it would the Ile de la Cité, along a north-south axis.

There were several proposals which included pulling down the Palais du Trocadéro and replacing it with a new complex. The Preparatory Committee took a dim view of the idea: "This structure overlooks magnificent gardens which would be greatly diminished were the Exhibition to be built there."²³⁶ None of the candidates suggesting this site were among the prize winners.

One entry that, in contrast, impressed the Committee, included plans for an airport to be built over the Batignolles railroad station inside Paris. "This might be the good solution for the most central of Paris airports," concluded the Preparatory Committee. Generally speaking, the entrants envisaged rather easily the visitors arriving to the Exhibition directly by airplane, or, even better, by hydroplanes landing in the heart of it.

The Beaudouin and Lods proposal, one of the four first prize winners, located the Exhibition at the Mont-Valérien (Fig. 46). The bastion, still surviving there, would be the centerpiece of the Exhibition. The reclamation of this site would have to fit the plans for the city's extension, most notably the

²³⁶ Urbanisme number 5, August 1932, p. 148.

new Regional Plan for Paris. Since the development of this plan had only recently been started, Beaudouin and Lods could do no more than make educated guesses: that the Suresnes Bridge was destined to become the principal entrance to Paris from the West; that the Avenue Foch was to be extended for rapid transit without intersections; that a centrally located metro station would be built as a junction for the three express and suburban lines; and that an airport was to be built at the very door of the Exhibition.

Beaudouin and Lods also made every effort to take full advantage of the main virtue of this site--a veritable observatory, offering a panoramic view of Paris with the Seine in the foreground and the Bois de Boulogne within a bend in the river, just behind the *Arc de Triomphe*. The river, in addition, could provide virtually ideal water surfaces for aquatic festivities, hydroplane landings, and water-sports events. The proposal included the building of locks, piers and breakwaters. Thick trees would set off a yacht harbor, further enhanced by the pylons and towers of a new dam "of particularly suitable design."

The principal concern of the designers was, as can be seen, how to facilitate the Exhibition's "organic" but also "rational" insertion into the city. Before being a point of attraction in itself, the Exposition had to allow an unhindered flow of the city traffic. Far from becoming an obstacle to traffic it had to accelerate it. Finally, the Exhibition had to be just one functional element of a larger system. The basic principle for Beaudouin and Lods was that "if the current

development of the city had a determining influence on our choice for the Exhibition site, the Exhibition, in return, would have to leave its stamp on the future of the city,"²³⁷ and that future would not fail to have an impact, generally, on the whole country. In more general terms, the stated goal of the two architects was to

give back to art the place it has to assume in the production of any great era (to destroy the notion of 'work of art,' as useless work), to therefore give back to art its role of harmonizer of each and every element of our life.²³⁸

Restituer à l'art la place qu'il doit occuper dans la production des grandes époques (destruire la notion de l'œuvre d'art, donc inutile), lui redonner le sens d'une harmonie générale sur l'heureuse adaptation de chaque élément constituant le code de notre vie.]

More academic, perhaps, in their city planning approach, the Pierre Patout team chose the districts lined up along the Voie Triomphale, between the Seine and the Defense traffic circle. These authors argued that the site given the Exhibition, as well as the urban development of the site should both in themselves be exhibition objects, "creating in the totality and modifying entirely" the appearance of these city districts.²³⁹ The new city district should therefore be, above all, an exhibition of city planning, "an art almost unknown to the crowds." This proposal set out to create "a main avenue connecting the Louvre, that is, its close vicinities, with the terraces of Saint-Germain." The Exposition of modern art would thus be connected in a straight line with the Louvre, the Concorde, and the Etoile: Continuity

²³⁷ Op. cit. p. 146-161

²³⁸ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, IX, December 1932, p. 80.

²³⁹ Ibid, p. 87.

and Progress. "From these points of major importance the view would be clear and attractive, the fires and lights visible."

Among the proposals which received special mention from the jury was that of André Japy. He also chose the Voie Triomphale as the main axis of the Exhibition: at Nanterre, to be more precise, down the Avenue de la Défense. Like Patout, Japy envisaged the urbanization of an entire district, in this case the area south of the Avenue de la Defense. The coincidence in their views led these two architectural teams to join forces and come forward, somewhat later, with a joint proposal bringing into play, for the Exhibition, the entire western region of metropolitan Paris (Fig. 49). The Patout-Japy Committee based their proposal on three closely interdependent aims: first, to achieve the urban renewal and complete sanitation of an entire district," as a starting point for the development of the entire Paris Region; "second, to create a very large district serving intellectuals, scholars, artists, artisans, etc. with a complete and integrated municipal infrastructure of its own, as well as the necessary commercial facilities; finally, this project would allow the creation of a complete center for sports and physical education facilities. The plan included as well, in celebration of modernity, a double airport: for airplanes and hydroplanes. This airport, believed the authors, would eventually become the regional aeronautic base for Paris.

The only other proposal equalling these two as a great urbanization effort on the occasion of the Exhibition was a somewhat later one, by Auguste Perret (Fig. 50). This proposal

(inspired by an earlier, 1911 project by architect Charrier (Fig. 51), used the Exhibition as a pretext, to present an *intra muros* grand project for urban renewal along a city axis running from the Porte Dauphine to the Porte d'Italie. These three proposals, by Beaudouin and Lods, the Patout-Japy Committee, and Perret, were the most ambitious and clear-sighted to come out of the ten years long debate on the site for the 1937 Exhibition. Yet none of these projects were ever taken further.

While the first two proposals came out of a competition, the Perret proposal, as we shall see, emerged from the cabinet of a government minister, a minister who, indeed, considered himself virtually its author.

With the competition for the site of the Exhibition completed, and the mission of the Study Committee accomplished, the Committee was disbanded. Distrustful of the government whose bureaucratic slowness and political hesitations seemed to put into question repeatedly this important manifestation of the arts, the *Fédération des métiers d'art* and the *Fédération des Artistes Créateurs* together formed the *Union Corporative de l'Art Français* under the co-chairmanship of Frantz Jourdain and Adolphe Dervaux. The purpose of this new body was, among other things, to coordinate all the different professional efforts for the success of the Exhibition. The entire "Nation de l'art" had united, more than a few contemporaries would note, to confront the government in defense of what henceforth would be "their" Exhibition. At the same time, studies, proposals, and suggestions were being sent in from all sides to government offices and to the Paris City

Council.²⁴⁰ Some groups, like the *Association des Architectes Anciens Combattants*²⁴¹ organized their own internal competitions. Individuals submitted their work to the Exhibition High Commissioner. Others reminded him of the significance of one or another of their ideas.

Significantly, one principle was reiterated in a Manifesto of associated artists carried by the press: most important was to ban the term "decorative art" (and all the anachronisms implicit in that term) and to speak exclusively of Modern Art.

The Daladier Government came to power and turned responsibility for the Exhibition over to the Ministry of Trade. Aimé Berthod, deputy and former Minister, was nominated Commissioner-General. Paul Léon, whose role in the site Competition we have seen, was nominated Assistant Commissioner-General, and the architect Charles Letrosne, another important figure in 1925, was nominated Architect in Chief with an assistant Jacques Gréber, noted for his city planning work in the United States throughout the 1920's. Finally, a Higher Council--under direct supervision of the Minister--topped this administrative body. A new name was given to the Exhibition as well. From now on it would be an "Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs

²⁴⁰ This early "takeover" of the Exhibition by the "nation of artists" is crucial, as it prefigured the progressive aspects of the Exhibition itself. The same "wave" that carried on this movement, contributed to the forming of the Front Populaire itself, so that from this point on, contrary to current beliefs, Exhibition and Front Populaire became largely indissociable events, long before the 1936 elections.

²⁴¹ The organization of architects veterans was a politically and aesthetically regressive organization under the honorific Presidency of the ultra-conservative Beaux-Arts Professor Georges Umbdenstock.

(sic!) et Industriels de la vie Ouvrière et Paysanne."²⁴² And soon, in order to please just everybody, "et de la *Coopération Intellectuelle*" was added to the title.²⁴³

Now, only a site was missing. The choice fell on none other than the Jardins du Trocadero! The Paris Municipal Council confirmed the site on April 14, 1933.²⁴⁴ The famous "mistake of 1925" would, therefore, be repeated. The art world accused the public opinion of Paris, or at least the most influential part of that "opinion"--that is, the small businessmen and merchants of the inner city--to have twisted the government's arm into situating the Exhibition in an area of their liking, i.e. in the heart of the city.²⁴⁵ The Musée Social published a protest against using open spaces, it considered to be notoriously in short supply in Paris, and reiterated its desire to see the Exhibition held on

²⁴² Despite all the confusion which evidently went hand in hand with the effervescence of the "struggles" the artists led for an exhibition of their liking, it is important to note the significant appendage of "vie ouvrière et paysanne" that was bestowed upon the Exhibition's name. This was another clear indication of a sharp ideological distancing from the nineteenth-century hierarchies, and of a renewed relationship to the Enlightenment.

²⁴³ The first title of the Exhibition, as we saw it, was an "Exposition Internationale de l'Art Moderne à Paris en 1937." In January 1932 this thematic framework was broadened. The Senator Tournan suggested an "Exposition Internationale de la Civilisation," with the declared intention to buttress the activity of the *Institut de Coopération Intellectuelle*. The idea of such exhibition was to give "a response" to the Chicago Exhibition perceived as having dealt only with the technical and material dimension of a "Century of Progress," without reference to broader philosophical consequences of such progress. Finally, another member of the parliament (and Paris City Councilor), the Left wing deputy Eugène Fiancette, launched successfully the theme of an "International Exhibition of the workers' and peasants' life," supported by the Paris City Council. The Government later merged the three themes into one, with the intention to give an image of coherence to the International Bureau of an Exhibition with the result being that no one knew what the Exhibition actually should be, beyond offering a boost to the sagging economy.

²⁴⁴ The Paris City Council added to this area the military base of Issy-Les-Moulineaux, to the South-West of the Trocadero.

²⁴⁵ See Meyer-Levy "L'Exposition de 1937" in *Urbanisme*, November 1933, p.345.

a site chosen in conformity with the General Regional Plan of Paris.

At about the same time, on April 8, 1933, L'Illustration published, for the general public, the Exhibition's master plan by Letrosne and Gréber which was to remain unchanged to the very end (Fig. 52), except for two extensions added later Southward to the edge of the Ecole Militaire, West to include the Iles des Cygnes, and East up to the Esplanade des Invalides .

The art world, or at least "its most influential part," was dismayed: there was talk of a strike.²⁴⁶ The demand was made for the Exhibition to be placed under the Ministry of National Education and submitted to the direct authority of the Academy of the Beaux-Arts.

In support of the artists, the fiery deputy Anatole De Monzie--an ally of Le Corbusier in 1925 and Radical Party member²⁴⁷--who meanwhile became Minister of National Education, flanked by M. Bollaert, the new *Directeur des Beaux-Arts*, decided to take the question of the Exhibition in his own hands. He formed and fully empowered a *Conseil Restreint*. In July, he announced that the Letrosne-Gréber plans would be "amended." There were rumors about a plan which "encompassed all of Paris." The Minister, meanwhile, was keeping one member of his *Conseil Restreint* a secret, and that was none other than Auguste Perret.

²⁴⁶ See a series of articles by Yvanhoë Rambosson in Comœdia, under his regular monthly column on the Exhibition.

²⁴⁷ See Le Corbusier's Villa Stein-De Monzie, at Garches, 1927.

The Perret Proposal

The Perret project, unveiled in the autumn of 1933, created an immense axis along a series of avenues leading from the *Porte Dauphine* to the *Porte d'Italie* and passing through the Trocadero and the *Ecole Militaire*. This powerful continuous movement of avenues would add to Haussmannian Paris a magnificent perspective well within the classical spirit of the city. His intention was to create "the Champs-Élysées of the Left Bank"²⁴⁸.

Yes, I pull down the Trocadero, the sad remains of the 1878 Exhibition. Yes, I eliminate the barracks of the *Ecole Militaire* which block the fine Gabriel facade. And this is what I replace them with: The Trocadero becomes a *Palais* where all the large museums scattered about in Paris are centralized²⁴⁹. From the architectural point of view ... the plan includes at the center a colonnade allowing a wide view of the Gardens. The columns, 23-meter high, would carry a 7-meter thick attic containing sky-lit exhibition spaces. Two buildings flank the 190-meters long and 30-meters wide portico. Two large square courts would be used for important large scale sculpture. Facing the Seine, gardens would descend to a double Iéna bridge, and over to the Champ de Mars where not a single tree would be removed, and where palaces would rise among the existing landscaped greenery.²⁵⁰

[Oui, je dérase le Trocadéro, ce pauvre vestige de l'Exposition de 1878. Oui, je supprime les casernes de l'école Militaire qui entravent la belle façade de Gabriel. Et voici par quoi je les remplace: Le Trocadéro devient un Palais où sont centralisés de nombreux musées, égaillés un peu partout dans Paris.

²⁴⁸ The reconstruction of this part of Paris had been a matter of discussion for a while. As early as 1911, reviving Haussmann's idea, M. Cherier presented to the City Council a plan for a large avenue connecting directly the *Porte Dauphine* to the *Gare Montparnasse*, along the Trocadero, the Iéna bridge, the *Champs de Mars* and around the *Ecole Militaire*, thus ending up into the *Boulevard Montparnasse*, by the *Avenue de Saxe*.

²⁴⁹ These museums were: the *Musée Guimet*, the *Musée d'Ennean*, the *Musée Henner*, the *Musée Gustave-Moreau*, the *Musée du Luxembourg*, the *Jeu-de-Paume*; the *Marine* and *Ethnographic* museums, already there, would stay.

²⁵⁰ See interview with Perret in the March 2, 1935 issue of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. The general idea was not new in itself. The tearing down of the Trocadero and opening wide the view of Paris had already been proposed in the *Site Competition*, most notably by *Debat-Ponsan*.

Au point de vue de l'architecture ... le plan comprendrait au centre une colonnade, qui permettrait d'avoir une large vue sur les jardins. Les colonnes hautes de 23 mètres supporteraient un fronton épais de sept mètres, qui contiendrait des salles éclairées par le haut. Deux édifices flanqueraient chaque côté de ce portique long de 190 mètres et large de 30. Deux grandes cours carrées servirait aux expositions des œuvres statuaire importantes. Des jardins devant, jusqu'à la Seine, qu'un double pont d'Iéna enjamberait. Des jardins jusqu'au Champ de Mars où pas un arbre ne serait touché, où des palais seraient construits en épargnant les quiconces.)

This was Auguste Perret's vision of the 1937 Exhibition (Fig. 53). To this program Perret described in 1934, a huge auditorium would be added on the Avenue du Président Wilson (Fig.54). The Gare aux Charbons at the Champs de Mars would be covered and a model, low-cost housing development for workers would be installed within, while on the other side of the Eiffel Tower, a French Village would be built on the site of the old Garde-Meuble. Perret concluded: "We would put together our prefabricated buildings on site, as is done with a log cabin, just three months prior to the Exhibition." This project had the support of the "Nation des artistes."

Perret's transversal avenue of the *Rive Gauche* established a direct connection between the working class districts of La Bierre and the luxurious avenues of the West. The idea of such mutual penetration could not but please the democratic Minister de Monzie.

From the standpoint of the Exposition itself and of its links with the urban fabric, the Perret proposal had certain real advantages. With regard to city traffic, the plan did not spread out along the quays. It would not interfere with traffic except at a few fixed points where the problem could be dealt with easily

by underpasses or overpasses and these would remain after the Exhibition ended. This, in fact, was the case with the underpass, perhaps inspired by the Perret proposal, built for 1937 at the former Tokyo Quay facing the Eiffel Tower.

According to Perret and Minister De Monzie, the 1937 Exhibition would also mark a renaissance of French architecture and its construction could provide jobs for thousands of workers and artists who were "eager to live," to use an expression heard at the heated meetings of artists.

Nevertheless, by December 1, the City of Paris had still not announced its decision on the Perret plans, despite an ultimatum laid down by de Monzie in September. The City maintained its support of the less threatening Gréber proposal. The conflict amounted to a confrontation between two teams of architects, the one supported by the national government, the other preferred by the City--reflecting to a certain extent a political cleavage between a left-leaning government and a conservative City Hall. The Minister was trapped: he could not move without the consent of the City of Paris, which owned the land. But he refused to admit defeat, and he turned with urgent appeals to the other ministries concerned. In January 1934, the Minister of War agreed to the barracks at the Ecole Militaire being pulled down; the national government and Parliament seemed to be getting used to the idea of the Trocadero's demise; the press appeared more and more determined in its support of the Minister. Hope was far from lost. Confirmation for the Perret proposal seemed just around the corner.

Uncertainties

That's when all fell apart. The "wave" of the February 6 riots swept away the government. Radical Daladier was replaced by Gaston Doumergue, a left leaning politician, and a former President of the Republic. It soon became known that not only was the Perret proposal definitely rejected, but also that the whole idea of an exhibition was cancelled. There would be no 1937 Exhibition.

The commotion was great. A storm of protests burst forth from everywhere. The artists started to organize. On March 23 Comœdia ran the headline: "*Whatever else, there will be a 1937 Exposition.*" Yvanhoë Rambosson began his article with:

God helps those who help themselves, says the proverb. This is the stance assumed by the *Union Corporative de L'Art Français* which yesterday held its first plenary meeting in the offices the *Commissariat Général de l'Exposition de 1937* loaned to it. This meeting of the entire "*Nation des arts*" formally decided and proclaimed its determination to join together and realize an exhibition in 1937 *regardless of the position the State or the City of Paris may assume.*

[Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera, dit le proverbe. C'est la doctrine de l'Union Corporative de l'Art Français qui tenait, hier, sa première réunion plénière dans les locaux qui lui ont été concédés par le Commissariat Général de l'Exposition de 1937. Dans une réunion solennelle, toute la "Nation des Arts" proclamait sa détermination de réaliser ensemble une exposition en 1937, quelle que soit l'attitude de l'Etat et de la Ville de Paris ... C'est une décision d'une importance capitale, parceque c'est, à ce jour, la première assurance sérieuse d'une réalisation en ce qui concerne une exposition restée jusqu'ici très problématique.] Comœdia, March 23, 1934

And Rambosson concluded: "This is a decision of capital importance because it is the first serious promise to date that an

exhibition which until now has been very problematic will really take place."²⁵¹

Artists and industrial designers were firm in their decision. The Exhibition's scope would depend on their means. Leaflets were distributed. Calls were sent to the members of the Union Corporative urging them to apply before March 25, 1934. A temporary admissions Committee was set up. Delegations after delegations were meeting with the government and the City officials. Indeed, the bustle was as frantic in the Government as it was in City organisms.²⁵² Finally, on May 15, 1934, agreement was reached between the national government and the City.²⁵³

By an ironic coincidence, the *Plan Directeur pour la Région de Paris* was officially filed the day before the agreement was reached. Started at virtually the same time, these assumed vehicles for the future of Paris which were pledged for this reason to round out each other, the 1937 Exhibition and the Regional Plan ended up totally ignoring one another.

The Exhibition, at this point, had still not received an official name, or rather, had lost its name for having had too many. And it was no closer to a clear purpose either. It did not

²⁵¹ *Comœdia*, 20 March, 1934.

²⁵² Numerous reports throughout the daily press.

²⁵³ This entire episode is of crucial importance. It has to be noted that it is thanks to this grass-roots movement of exceptional impetus that the Exhibition was reinstated, thus opening up to the artistic Left significant avenues of influence since the very beginning of the actual building of the Exhibition. This influence was never to cease and was, actually, reinforced by the simultaneous and parallel rise of the Front Populaire which drew on common causes. There is no doubt that the final choice of Edmond Labbé as Commissioner-General was conditioned by these circumstances.

The final act of this episode was the vote in the Parliament on 6 July 1934 reinstating the project of an international exhibition for 1937.

even have a legal existence.²⁵⁴ Only the site had survived: the same one already used throughout the previous century.

Nevertheless, a new executive team was soon formed. In July, Edmond Labbé replaced Aimé Berthod, who was transferred to the Ministry of National Education. The Minister of Commerce, for his part, signed a decree defining the responsibilities of the various offices. A new *Conseil Supérieur* was named. Meanwhile, the two chief architects, Letrosne and Gréber,²⁵⁵ pushed ahead with their plans. De Monzie was no longer Minister but would write, with a certain wistfulness, some time later in *Renaissance*: "The plan I had conceived was probably too ambitious for 1937. But, once again, wisdom was sought after in pettiness."²⁵⁶

Despite the harsh criticism the 1925 Exhibition received for failing to tackle any of the urban problems of Paris due to the choice of site, the 1937 Exhibition was now on its way to commit the same error. "To begin," wrote Pingusson in 1935,

the choice of site, the most important decision for imparting its real importance to an undertaking of this kind [the Exposition] is definitely a mistake. Instead of choosing, for urbanization, a zone in the immediate outskirts of the city in order to leave the City a new district with new traffic arteries, important buildings and gardens, public facilities and sensible housing, the center of Paris has been chosen where a traditional procession of big structures and pavilions will be crowded into a narrow strip of quay

²⁵⁴ Parliament did not vote the legislation necessary to regulate the Exhibition until July 7, 1934.

²⁵⁵ Letrosne started as chief architect while Gréber was deputy chief. The roles were to be inverted in early 1935 in the aftermath of the fiasco with the camouflage of the Trocadero Palace. The event is discussed later.

²⁵⁶ "Une interview avec Anatole de Monzie,"* *Renaissance*, December 1934, p.216.

lands and, with the exception of the museums, nothing will survive but traces of plaster.²⁵⁷

[Déjà le choix le choix de l'emplacement le plus important à faire pour donner sa vraie signification à une œuvre comme [cette exposition], constitue une erreur certaine. Plutôt que de fixer dans la proche périphérie une zone à urbaniser pour y laisser un quartier neuf pourvu d'artères nouvelles, de palais et de jardins, d'édifices d'intérêt public et d'immeubles d'habitation rationnelle, c'est au centre de Paris, sur l'étroite bande de terrain des quais, que va s'entasser le cortège traditionnel de palais et de pavillons dont il ne restera, exception faite de Musées, que traces de plâtres]

There were contradictions in the minds of the very top leaders of the Exhibition as well. Paul Léon and the jury on which he had presided for the site competition had maintained that

the present gardens [of the Trocadero] blossom as a glorious whole and they appear difficult to use; the Eiffel Tower, in addition, has been there for more than 40 years and it would seem difficult to install an event dedicated to modern art around this structure so well known in the world.²⁵⁸

[Les jardins actuels [du Trocadéro] sont en complet épanouissement et [qu'il] paraît difficile de les utiliser; la Tour Eiffel [ayant], en outre, plus de quarante années d'existence et [qu'il] semble difficile de constituer une manifestation d'art moderne autour de cet édifice trop mondialement connu.]

In 1934, however, this same Paul Léon, now a deputy Commissioner General of the Exhibition, declared that

in front of the Iéna Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, that marvel of French engineering, will celebrate in 1937 the fiftieth anniversary of its construction.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui June 1935, pp. 88-89. It is amusing to note here the irony of the fact that the site Pingusson was given for his UAM pavilion ended up being precisely on this "narrow strip of quay lands." Pingusson actually expressed a great satisfaction with such a site-- especially with its "magnificent views" on Paris and the Exhibition.

²⁵⁸ "L'Exposition de 1937: autres Suggestions" in Urbanisme, n. 20, November 1933, pp. 345-347.

²⁵⁹ Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 2 March 1934, p.13*

[Face au pont de Iéna, la Tour Eiffel, gloire de la technique française, pourra, en 1937, fêter le cinquantenaire de sa construction.]

He was clearly trying to find a justification for a site choice which had never been fully convincing. Yet, the choice was made, and too much time had already been wasted. The organizers were already running a serious risk of being left with insufficient time.

A Palace of Steel

Activity in preparation for the Exhibition was now gaining in intensity. Bypassing anything approaching a competition, but faithful to a certain populism, Labbé set up something like a "suggestion office" for the Exhibition, with the intention to give "everybody" a chance. There, according to a contemporary with less than good faith, "the worst follies" were piling up.²⁶⁰

One such suggestions (Fig. 55). came from a "committee" supported by the periodical La Cité Moderne. Although in favor of "celebrating steel at the Exhibition, [...] as a material so specific to our modern times, and which we recommend should be represented at the Exhibition with an outstanding construction," this self-appointed "Citizens' Committee for the Development and Organization of the 1937 International Exhibition," suggested that the Eiffel Tower be torn down--"a demolition which," the

²⁶⁰ This contemporary was no less than Pierre du Colombier, writing in Candide, 13 September 1934.

Committee admitted, "may still, temporarily, make certain minds recoil."²⁶¹ In its place, more appropriately, would be built a skyscraper of much greater height than the demolished Tower. The skyscraper would, "put steel to its best use" but of course duly veneered with stone, "in keeping with our national taste".²⁶²

Again on the subject of steel, the *Office Technique d'Utilisation de l'Acier* (OTUA) convoked a competition for ideas to correct the well-known deficiencies of the Grand Palais as an exhibition hall. The competition sponsors wanted "the new *Palais des Expositions* to include a large vaulted hall; it should cover a rectangular 12-hectare surface without any intermediary support; the shorter sides of the rectangle should be no less than 250 meters" in length, thus encompassing a surface the size of the Place de la Concorde. Its height would be equal to the first floor of the Eiffel Tower. This monument was thus meant to be an engineering feat that celebrated the first quarter of the twentieth century, as the famous Tower had glorified the last of the nineteenth. The results produced by the competition were, as we know, brilliant. First Prize went to Paul Tournon, the author of the Museum built for the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, and

²⁶¹ *Comité d'Initiative pour l'Aménagement et l'Organisation de l'Exposition Générale Internationale de 1937.*

²⁶² See a Brochure entitled Au cœur de Paris: Exposition générale internationale de Paris Archives de France. Exposition Internatioanale de Paris 1937. [Was not yet accessioned with a number when my research was started in the Spring 1987.]

What is particularly interesting in this project, the foolishness of the idea notwithstanding, was its markedly "American" look. In fact, this project, like the majority of projects in the 1934-35 competitions, radiated with a very definite image of "modernity" based on an American catalogue of precedents. The Beaux-Arts that had fed generations of American architects was now glowing back its aura of modernity through the filter of the American prestige. See Jacques Gréber, L'architecture aux USA: la force d'expansion du génie français, Paris, 1920.

Chappey²⁶³ who came up with a parallelepipedic plan that the jury praised for its "especially suitable proportions." Its rhythm flowed from the alternating of steel-plate covered solids with glazed surfaces. The most attractive design, and structurally the most daring since Krantz's 1867 Exhibition elliptical hall, was by Beaudouin and Lods (Fig. 56). Unfortunately, like in Krantz's case, the design proposed a circular form, which was in violation of a basic proposition of the competition calling for a rectangular shape seemingly more in tune with later exhibition halls. The project was thus disqualified.

Yet, in the end, none of the projects were built. The *Tour Eiffel*, it seems, was still good enough.

*

On September 10, 1934, Edmond Labbé published his Program for the Exhibition. In this document, the exposition was baptized: The *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques Appliqués à la Vie Moderne*. It would keep this name to the end.

Five days later, the *Commissariat* opened the first design competition for the actual structures of the Exhibitions. It was a competition for two museums of modern art, one a City Museum, the other a National Museum--both of Modern Art.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Tournon was later the designer of the Pontifical Pavilion in 1937.

²⁶⁴ This was a compromise solution to satisfy the City of Paris which was giving the site to the Government, free of charge.

The Two Museums of Modern Art

The history of the 1934-1935 competitions and of their impact on the Exhibition is, in a sense, also the history of the dislocation and disintegration of the Perret Plan. Dislocation because the new Program spared the old Trocadero and so the museums would have to be displaced. Disintegration, because the land now made available for the Exhibition was relatively limited, the number of museums and hence the magnitude of the cultural undertaking would have to be reduced. But it is clear from a quick glance at the winning designs that the Perret Plan had not died in the minds of most of the entrants. Whatever the "option" chosen-whether "double pavilion" by Jasson and Coquet (Fig. 57) or "stacked up pavilion" by Pierre Sardou and Roger Lardat (Fig. 58)²⁶⁵ Perret's colonnaded portico was still there, even though it no longer made much sense. Instead of opening on a grand panoramic view of Paris, it now faced an unimpressive drop to the very edge of the Seine. The entrants were not unaware of this. Most of the designers tried to remedy the situation with somewhat forced drawings and perspectives. Trees were made to disappear (although no tree was supposed to be touched), esplanades were given elegant width, graceful bridges leapt out over the Seine but never landed anywhere. First Prize was won, as is known, by the team of Jean-Claude Dondel, A. Aubert, P. M. Viard, and Dastugue (Fig. 59). Whatever merit may be found today in their proposal, some contemporaries considered awarding this

²⁶⁵ It should be noted that the double-pavilion idea favored by a large number of entrants had already been seen in the initial sketch of the Letrosne-Gréber Master Plan.

entry an act bordering on lunacy. "It would be madness," wrote Beaux Arts magazine, "to build this project."²⁶⁶ Architect Debat-Ponsan, for his part, commented in Architecture d'Aujourd'hui:

I think I am not wrong in stating that First Prize was given to a pretty drawing made up of a square, stairs, and a big hall."²⁶⁷

[Je crois ne pas me tromper en affirmant que le premier prix a été attribué à un joli dessin, qui se compose d'un square, d'un escalier et d'une grande salle]

Le Corbusier saw "just another street; I thought there were already too many streets in Paris." Perret was more categorical:

The construction of the two museums on the Avenue de Tokyo, must be stopped. The land is absolutely detrimental to the preservation of paintings: just clay washed by fogs from the river, sunken under a 12-meter high abutment. The art works will be drowned in fog (Fig. 60).²⁶⁸

[Il faut empêcher la construction des deux musées avenue de Tokio sur un terrain absolument contraire à la conservation des tableaux, terrain de glaise, balayé par les brumes de la rivière et dominé par une butte de 12 mètres. La peinture y baignera dans la brume.]

Le Corbusier, a loser in the competition, summed it all up: "We've been had like rats!"²⁶⁹ (Fig. 61)

It is true that there was evidence of infringement of competition rules, raising doubts as to the presumed anonymity of entrants and the very fairness of the proceedings. This was admitted even by the very established magazine L'Architecture,

²⁶⁶ Beaux-Arts December 1934, p. 4.

²⁶⁷ Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, January 1934, p. 22-23.

²⁶⁸ Les Nouvelles Littéraires, *March 2, 1935, p. 26.

²⁶⁹ Architecture d'Aujourd'hui January 1935, p. 22.

which was otherwise satisfied with the results. A more general injustice, because it would be the case in all the other competitions to come, and a more serious one, perhaps, because it made hypocrisy of an expressed concern, was one affecting the young, as yet not established architects. While loudly proclaiming that these competitions should be a high forum where the largest number of ideas and new talent would have the opportunity to be heard, the competition organizers started out by telling young architects to temper their youthful passions and associate with architects whose value--and above all experience--had been proven by time. It is not difficult to appreciate how this attitude made it possible to filter out young, still unknown architects and assure the supremacy of the *Patrons*, in one single blow. Another problem was the membership selection and number of the jury itself. Art critic Brunon-Guardia, in Nouvelles Littéraires, summed it up with humor: "The jury [was] made up of 57 members, several of whom [were] even competent" (Fig. 62).

The large majority of the jury were, indeed, representatives of national or city authorities, holders of elective office or administrators, among them the presidents of 15 more or less professional organizations.²⁷⁰

Again there was a conspicuous absence, this time from the jury. The *U.A.M.*, although it had been a member of the jury for the 1932 competition, was not invited to join this Areopagus. Among the big names passed over in this competition were Le

²⁷⁰ See the Program of the Competition in the Archives de France. This document was not accessioned yet at the moment of my research.

Corbusier, Mallet-Stevens, Pingusson, Bossu and Roux-Spitz, to say nothing of Beaudouin and Lods. There were a total of 28 entries, the work of 300 architects. Second Prize went to Paul Bigot (Fig. 63), Third to M. Abella (Fig. 64) and Fourth to Jacques Carlu, Louis Boileau and Léon Azéma (Fig. 65). According to the press, and L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui most emphatically, the authors' names were known to the jury well before the end of the proceedings.

In December 1934, at last, opened the first series of a total of 14 competitions. These, on the whole, related to various areas of the Exhibition, including the annex at the Parc de Sceaux, and would follow one upon the other at a breathtaking pace up to March 25, 1935. The competitions were not intended to select projects but to select architects who would be invited to work with the Exhibition.

Camouflaging the Trocadero

As a starter, the Trocadero had to be hidden. The idea, it seems, came from Letrosne.²⁷¹ The Master Plan had assigned a "place of honor" to the Trocadero. Yet, considering that this Exhibition was expected to celebrate modern life, something had to be done to conceal the fact that Davioud and Bourdais' Trocadero had already served this purpose on several occasions, since 1878. Entrants were, therefore, asked to "present a proposal for a temporary solution to completely mask the present facades." In

²⁷¹ For declared health reasons, Letrosne would later, in 1935, be replaced by Gréber, as chief architect of the Exhibition.

this way a "1937 style" would be achieved at almost no cost. Several hundred architects took up the challenge. This was the competition that attracted the greatest number of entries. "It was, no doubt, the most exciting competition," noted without irony the conservative L'Architecture.

If more than a few voices were raised against this "odious caricature of an assignment, unworthy of a great city,"²⁷² those who, earlier, had suggested certainly more honest proposals for the Trocadero's demolition were confronted with allegations regarding the prohibitive price of such an undertaking and the lack of time. Finally, as A. Louvet added in L'Architecture,

where would we end up if we were to embark on the destruction of monuments which, right or wrong, have ceased to please? Remember that not so long ago, when the architecture of the Middle Ages was held in diminished esteem, architects could be found, ready to see Notre-Dame disappear without displeasure.²⁷³

[Où irions-nous, d'ailleurs, si l'on se mettait à démolir les monuments qui, à tort ou à raison ont cessé de plaire. Songez qu'à une époque pas bien lointaine où l'architecture du moyen-âge était assez méprisée, il se serait trouvé des architectes pour voir sans déplaisir disparaître Notre-Dame.]

Perret was sent back where he belonged.

Of the 303 entries, eight were retained by the jury. Among the entries, there were "proposals to suit all tastes" as L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui noted sarcastically²⁷⁴--from a Neo-Romanesque cathedral (Fig. 66) to an amusement park complete with

²⁷² Brunon Guardia, in Nouvelles Littéraires, *January 1935, p.34.

²⁷³ L'Architecture, January, 1935, p. 82.

²⁷⁴ "These projects give us an idea of the kind of spirit the 1937 Exhibition is going to have. Judging by the photographs that we are presenting to our readers with pleasure, there will be projects to suit all tastes..." L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, January 1935, p.42.

roller coasters cascading down the Trocadero, by none else than Patout (Fig. 67).

Boileau, Carlu and Azéma--one of a winning teams in the competition²⁷⁵--hid the old building within a huge shell, recalling, in overall treatment and illumination, certain expressionistic sets in Fritz Lang's Metropolis (Fig. 68). At the center, a sharp, back-lit spur, with a huge figure in front, rose high above the camouflaged towers. The sky was crisscrossed by moving search lights, recalling again cinematographic sources akin to a recent Twentieth-Century-Fox logo. The left and right banks of the Seine were tied into a whole by a broadened Iéna Bridge. The general lay-out resembled Gréber's Master Plan, with two immense "foreign pavilions" closing symmetrically the composition along the Seine. The two were to reemerge as a monumental "gate" formed by Boris Iofan's and Albert Speer's pavilions whose imposing silhouettes imparted a lasting memory of the 1937 Exposition.²⁷⁶ by Herr, Roth and Thibault (Fig. 69). The authors saw their entry as providing for "not only effective camouflage of the Trocadero, but the utilization of the body of this landmark as a surface for exhibitions." Images would be projected over a large veil of water sliding down the façade, thus hiding the Trocadero

²⁷⁵ There was no ranking in these competitions as their goal was only to select a number of architects who would be later employed by the Exhibition. The first four competitions yielded a total of 21 winning projects. The award winning architects were later to work for the Exhibition on projects that were not necessarily related to the projects for which they won an award. The complete list of architect (domestic and foreign) who worked for the Exhibition is quoted in Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire, exhibition catalogue, IFA/Paris Musées, 1987, pp. 488-490.

²⁷⁶ According to Jean-Louis Cohen, this idea goes back to Perret's plan in which the two symmetrical Pavilions housed the *Museum of Modern Metropolitan and Colonial Decorative Art*.

with a translucent screen. Joseph Marrast, for his part, covered the Trocadero, as mentioned earlier, with a huge construction of such "sovereign dignity" it resembled a Romanesque cathedral. Indeed, the author seemed to have appreciated this as well, as he declared to the jury: "With regard to my proposal I can say no more than the following: my project was drawn up not as a temporary camouflage but as a permanent building." Jean Favier also found, in La Construction Moderne, that, despite "a somewhat perhaps overly religious appearance, this project [had] a powerful effect. Exquisite design, extremely skilfully rendered." His colleague A. Louvet in L'Architecture²⁷⁷ was even more convinced by the project. In his view, "the Trocadero [had been] clad in a monumental construction endowed with a strong character; the facades are well proportioned.. and ... beautifully ornamented" This "fine, skilful, and artistic" design, had only one defect: "In the perspectival rendering, the masses of houses in the background were replaced by masses of trees making the design a bit removed from reality." All in all, the quality of criticism in these journals matched the quality of the "architectural discourse" it had set itself to assess. Thus the entry code named "Par Avion," by Bouutterin and Neret (Fig. 70) obviously influenced by American art Deco precedents, was an "uncomplicated and generous" arrangement, distinguished by "an effective camouflage of the body of the building and its towers" and offering, in addition, "an attractive appearance seen from the Champ de Mars;" in a word, it

²⁷⁷ La Construction Moderne and L'Architecture, both representing the architectural establishment, were the only journals to deal with the competitions in a systematic way.

was a "very good proposal." The "*Trois Cocottes*" (Fig. 71) entry by Charles Halley stood out for its "good layout, framed, all the way down to the Seine, by four well distributed Palaces; a generous arrangement of central waterfalls framed by two broad avenues." In short the project had "an excellent overall appearance, of a generous composition and very decorative." Indeed, "generosity" seemed to be a well regarded virtue. There was also an entry qualified as "very skillful but confused" while another offered "nighttime effects of admirable virtuosity."

But there were also more courageous competitors who risked having their entries disqualified by protesting through their projects against the propositions of the competition. The Niermans brothers who had worked with the Perret brothers in Algiers, referred to Auguste Perret's earlier proposal, through a compromise between the radical approach of that proposal and the preservation of the past. They kept the building's "belly"--the most expensive part--but did away with the two towers and the wings (fig. 72) This central part was built up to provide a museum of comparative sculpture. Under the esplanade a garage would be built for 1200 cars, and, back again to the Perret plan, two museums were placed symmetrically at the ends of the main building.

Once the results of the competition were made known, public opinion let loose a storm of indignation. In Le Jour, the art critic Claude Roger-Marx wrote,

Here is the marvelous heresy we are offered:
camouflaging the Trocadero, an exhibition building, for
the duration of the 1937 Exhibition, in order to later

give back this temporary structure its permanent ugliness.²⁷⁸

[Voici l'admirable hérésie qu'on projette: camouflage pendant la durée de l'Exposition de 1937, de ce bâtiment d'exposition qu'est le Trocadéro, afin de rendre ensuite à cette construction provisoire sa laideur permanente.]

Under the pressure of such general scorn, in which even a Jean Effel joined (Fig. 74) the Exhibition authorities reversed themselves: the Trocadero would not be touched, but would "undergo only interior changes." More precisely, the landmark would be "presented," but not masked, by a simple screen built between it and the Seine and which "would in no way prevent the monument from remaining visible at the center of the panorama it crowns in such an undeniably impressive manner."²⁷⁹ The decision was made official on February 2, 1935--only a few days after the publication of the competition results. With this, the immense and expensive effort asked of France's architects, at a very difficult time for them, was made useless.

A few weeks later, things took another dramatic turn. Despite the misunderstood, but now rediscovered qualities of the Trocadero, the *Commissariat* renounced the "presentation" plan as well: the grand palace of the Chaillot Hill would be pulled down.²⁸⁰ "The Trocadero, which after all, crowns 'in such an impressive manner' the panorama of Passy-Chaillot, the silhouette dear to [the art critic] Clément Vautel and the authorities of the

²⁷⁸ Quoted in L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, August 1935, p. 82.

²⁷⁹ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, February 1935, p.27

²⁸⁰ According to Isabelle Gournay, Carlu himself convinced the commissariat to renounce any camouflage. Isabelle Gournay, Le Nouveau Trocadero, IFA/Mardaga 1985, p.29.

1937 Exhibition, is destined to disappear." A dismayed Pierre Vago could say no more.²⁸¹

Actually, a compromise had been reached. The central body and the towers (the "lobster," as Perret called it) would come down and the wings would be camouflaged--but this time in a permanent and "really modern" way. The whole thing was entrusted to Jacques Carlu, conveniently named Chief Architect of the Palais de Chaillot, thanks to his title of *Architecte des Bâtiments Civils et Palais Nationaux*, but thanks also, it would seem, to his friendship with Paul Léon, the Deputy Commissioner-General of the Exhibition.²⁸²

The anger reached new heights. Architects protested against the arbitrary choice of the Carlu team. L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui was the forum of a heated exchange between the Carlu team and others who believed that first choice should have been granted to an architect from among those who from the beginning had proposed removal and opposed camouflage. Even worse, the new Carlu plan was accused of having picked up the ideas of passed-over entrants, such as Charles Siclis, who was excluded from the camouflage competition--for having refused to camouflage.²⁸³

The leading names of French and world culture then came out with an indignant Protest against the imminent reconstruction

²⁸¹ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, February 1935, p. 28.

²⁸² His success in the camouflage competition only adds a twist of irony to the entire enterprise.

²⁸³ Architect Siclis tore down the central part but retained the two towers as had, before him, Mallet-Stevens and Carlu in a September 1934 proposal. The two proposals also had in common a large underground or semi-underground theater designed to take advantage of the steep grade of the gardens. Interestingly this idea was already part of an earlier project for the Trocadero Carlu had designed in collaboration with Mallet-Stevens.

of the Trocadero. Architects were excluded to avoid any accusation of vested interests. The Protest was published in the January 1936 issue of L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui.

The artists, writers and art critics, whose signatures appear below, rise up with determination against the present plan for the reconstruction of the Trocadero. Without putting in question the choice of architects, they consider that an important problem of city planning distinctly exceeds the framework of just one exhibition, and that, in this matter, all improvisation is dangerous. They consider the mongrel solution adopted to represent a true waste of public moneys and a serious mistake. They call, finally, on the highest authorities of the Nation and City to undertake with urgency all the measures required to stop a badly conceived and already discredited initiative.²⁸⁴

[Les artistes, écrivains et critiques d'art, dont les noms suivent, d'élèvent avec vigueur contre le projet actuel de reconstruction du Trocadéro. Sans mettre en cause les architectes choisis, ils estiment qu'un important problème d'urbanisme dépasse singulièrement le cadre d'une simple exposition et qu'en cette matière toute improvisation est dangereuse. Ils considèrent que la solution bâtarde adoptée comporte un véritable gaspillage des deniers publics et constitue une grave erreur. Ils s'adressent enfin aux Pouvoirs publics pour qu'ils prennent d'urgence toutes les mesures pour arrêter une initiative malheureuse et déjà déconsidérée]

284 The Protest included:

Writers

Louis Gillet, François Mauriac, Pol Neveux, André Suarès, Jean Cocteau, Pierre Crenage, Jean de Fabrègues, François Le Gris, Henri-Philippe Livet, Jean Loisy, Gabriel Marcel, Thierry Maulnier, Louis Salleron, Robert Valéry-Radot, Henri Martineau, Pierre Pascal. [Significantly most of these writers did not belong to the political Left, as could have been expected, and were rather representative of a broad political spectrum.]

Painters

Jacques-Emile Blanche, Maurice Denis, Aman-Jean, Vuillard, Picasso, Henri Matisse, André Derain, Georges Rouault, Raoul Dufy, Marc Chagall, Braque, M. Gromaire, Ed. Goerg, Jean Lurçat, Cassandre, André Lhote, Chaplain-Midy.

Sculptors:

Maillol, Despiau, Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipschitz, Csaky, Morice Lipsi, O Zadkine, Marcel Gimond.

Art Critics:

Bernard Champigneulle, Pierre du Colombier, Maximilien Gauthier, Waldemar-George, André Salmon, Brunon Guardia.

Theater Directors:

Jacques Copeau, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet.

According to the appeal's signatories, some of the personalities approached had to decline signing their names since they were holders of certain public offices or positions associated with the Exhibition.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, nobody was found to come out publicly in favor of the Carlu, Boileau and Azéma design.

And yet that project was built.²⁸⁶

These developments resulted in the waste of another competition. The competition of the "reconstruction" of the interior of the Trocadero became inconsequential once the building was sentenced to destruction. The competition had been described as "quite difficult and somewhat unrewarding." It would have been essential, however, had the Trocadero been preserved. It attracted a relatively small number of entrants, and their task was to "modernize" the concert hall, an auditorium whose disastrous acoustics had from the start kept musicians away.

Quoted as "Personnalités:"

Henri Focillon, Pierre Cot, André Bloc etc.

²⁸⁵ It is possible that the Exhibition leadership was divided about the whole Trocadero affair. The removal of Charles Letrosne and Paul Léon "for health reasons" soon after these events may be an indication of this rift and of a general realignment of the leadership. The *Protest* was published by L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, as a brochure. See Archives de France, F12. 184.

Jacques Carlu et al. responded with a Mémoire relatif à la transformation du Trocadéro, Jan. 1936. The architects replied that their monumental concept was "used by the Romans, as well at the most brilliant periods of French architecture from the renaissance to the XVII century." Louis Gillet who was one of the signatories of the protest, and who had complained that the Third Republic did not have a single "monumental thought" in 30 years, declared in 1937 that he was fascinated by this "grand ensemble 'à la française' which offers a fine blend of urbanity and nobility, of elegance and austerity." L.Gillet, "Coup d'œil sur l'Exposition," La Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 May 1937. See also A. Ozenfant, "Notes d'un touriste à l'Exposition," Cahiers d'art, n. 8-10, 1937, p. 245. Both citations quoted by Bertrand Lemoine, Le Palais de Chaillot, in 1937 Cinquantenaire, exhibition Catalogue, 1987, p. 86.

²⁸⁶ The decision to go ahead with the building was taken by the Paris City Council.

Among the three prize winners were the Niermans brothers, passed over in the camouflage competition. Their "exterior," in a way, was rejected while their "interior" would be built. Such outcome was, it would seem, an accurate reflection of the kind of logic the competitions were subjected to. True, the Niermans project had the merit, according to La Construction Moderne,²⁸⁷ of being "riche par la matière et sobre par ses lignes," which qualified, according to L'Architecture,²⁸⁸ for "a good mannered modernism" (Fig. 73).²⁸⁹

The Foreign Section

The area of the foreign pavilions was the subject of the second competition.²⁹⁰ Some entrants had already included the foreign sections in their project for the "Camouflage competition." Therefore, Azéma who had won with Carlu the previous competition, submitted now, at a larger scale, the same typical pavilion in a scheme, as mentioned earlier, that followed Gréber's Master plan (Fig. 75). In the Azéma project, this pavilion "stretched" rhythmically along the banks of the Seine,

²⁸⁷ La Construction moderne, 12 February 1935, p. 48.

²⁸⁸ L'Architecture, March 1935.

²⁸⁹ Ultimately, the brothers Niermans were given to build the theater, and Louis Sue and Gustave-Louis Jaulmes the halls within Carlu's overall design. I reproduce here images of the project as built, having been unable to find the actual competition entry.

²⁹⁰ The Competition for the Museums was not counted. Foreign participants were originally to be grouped in four buildings along the Seine. However, the growing number of countries announcing their participation eventually forced this plan to be abandoned in favor of separate pavilions, not only along the Seine as initially planned but scattered throughout the gardens of the Chaillot Hill. The foreign section competition, like all others, was there to generate architectcs, not ideas or specific projects. Thus, the results were not architecturally binding for the actual foreign countries.

symmetrically split in two groups by the Iéna Bridge. The pavilion's design, recalling the recently built Rockefeller Center in New York (Fig. 76) influenced, in turn, Iofan's design for the Soviet Pavilion.²⁹¹ Both the Azéma-Carlu design and Iofan's own seemed to be an effective transposition of Raymond Hood's concept into a Parisian context (Fig. 77). That Iofan struck a chord, indeed, in the American sensibility is convincingly demonstrated by the admiration Frank Lloyd Wright expressed for the Soviet Pavilion.²⁹² Also interesting to note, was another awarded entry from this competition, by Robert Danis. The project displayed symmetrically on each side of the Eiffel Tower, two identical pavilions highly suggestive of the pavilion Albert Speer later designed for Germany in a classicizing mode (Fig. 78).²⁹³ Both the German and Soviet pavilions, formed a similar "gate" on either side of the Eiffel Tower axis. The difference with Madeline's scheme was the set up of the towers. While the Soviet and German Pavilion "closed," as it were, the Eiffel Tower in a sweeping vertical movement, Madeline's towers were set "back to back" and seemed to swing out and open the way. One thing is certain, however. The silhouettes of the two pavilions which later won fame, glowed with the memory of this competition.

²⁹¹ Iofan spent an extended time in the United States in the early 1930's. He saw the Rockefeller built, and probably had the opportunity to see the "Owens Block Building" at the 1933 Chicago Exhibition by Elroy Ruiz. (Fig. 76).

²⁹² On his return from Moscow, where he had attended the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Architects, F.L. Wright who met Iofan on several occasions, stopped in Paris to see the Exhibition. In an article later carried by Architectural Record, he said of the Iofan Pavilion: "I admire Iofan's Paris building [it] is a master architect's conception that walks away with the Paris Fair." Architectural Record, September, 1937.

²⁹³ Speer's interest in French modernized neo-classicism is confirmed by his admiration for Carlu's Trocadero that he also emulated in his own pavilion.

The Eiffel Tower

The Trocadero was not to be the only object to camouflage. Something also had to be done with the Eiffel Tower. Such was approximately the challenge of the fifth competition. Among the prize winners was one offering a "visionary" atmosphere of gigantic smoke clouds and dramatic lighting effects, which would have, no doubt, pleased a Boullée (Fig. 79). Its author was again the architect Robert Danis who began by dressing up the famous tower with a series of neon lights cascading down in the style of 1925 (Fig. 80). All considered, it was a proposal "bien exposition," to borrow a phrase dear to Louvet. The main difference between the only two winners of this competition was in their treatment of the Ecole Militaire. While Danis opened the view on Gabriel's facade, Oudin and Neret, the other winners, concealed it with a relatively high building. That both these entries would be rewarded by the jury, although the competition proposition explicitly required Gabriel's facade not be blocked, should not surprise anyone. Much the same had happened more than once before.

Trocadero Square

The last competition of this first series was to dress up Trocadero Square in keeping with the important role it would have as the main entrance to the Exhibition. In order to understand just how difficult the assignment was, it must be remembered that the decision had not yet been taken to "pull the

cork" out of the Trocadero itself. In other words, it was an entrance with no entry: one had to squeeze around the "cork," inching along tightly fit arcades.

The entrants were told not to change the overall design of the square, but to place at its center a structure which would serve to identify the Exhibition and be visible down the five avenues which run into the square. This "marker" could, but did not have to have links with the Trocadero itself; ornaments were permissible provided nothing "blocked the sidewalks." In short, the competition propositions sought a beautiful esquisse for a "decorative" program: an ideal subject, it was claimed, for recent *Beaux-Arts* graduates who shone in the famous "concours d'esquisse." The propositions, what is more, required explicitly that the drawings "resemble those of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts." Yet, even in this, as in all other cases, awards went to already established architects. One of these, architect P. Farges, made up for his huge cataract running down the camouflaged Trocadero on the gardens' side, with a minuscule fountain for the plaza dominated by an improvised obelisk reminiscent of the Place de la Concorde arrangement (Fig. 81). In contrast, Laprade and Bazin raised at the center of the square a tower, "of excellent taste" we are told, finely crafted with floral ornaments (Fig. 82). The linden trees forming a crown at the center of the square were preserved, and spanned by a series of arcades. This adornment allowed extraordinary plays of light, a favorite detail for Laprade. A third winner was more in step with the times and, under the code name "*Circuler*," proposed the separation of car and

pedestrian traffic by providing for their movement on different levels. From the sidewalks, pedestrians reached the center of the plaza, and from there, entered the Exhibition through the camouflaged Trocadero. The giant marker was a great globe of the world, 35 meters in diameter, set at the center of the pedestrian platform.

The second series of competitions

An exhibition of the entries for the second series of competitions opened on February 15, 1935. Once again, there was an uproar of protest. Competitors were enraged by the rule violations the jury had indulged in. A series of articles carried by Comedia and signed by Yvanhoë Rambosson echoed the indignation.²⁹⁴

The irregularities fueled heated criticism, especially, and once again, with regard to the sensitive issue of anonymity. A quick look at the exhibition was enough to conclude, wrote Rambosson, that "far from demanding strict compliance with this clause [paper size and drawings presentation], the jury had allowed and awarded entries set off by moulded and silver-plated framing or of triple the size permitted by the competition rules." These were irregularities not only clearly in violation of the rules but which most easily permitted recognition of the author of an entry. The protests, however, remained unanswered.

Competition Six was for a general "lighting plan" to which a "sound plan" was added later to avoid the raucous

²⁹⁴ Comedia, March-April 1935, in Rambosson's regular column.

atmosphere caused in 1925 by the uncontrolled din of "recorded music" and radio broadcasts. Jacques Gréber, by then chief architect, decided that in 1937, sound, light and water should be orchestrated down to the last detail.

The illumination of the Seine was at the focus of the first of these plans. Some architects even hoped to light up the bottom of the river. As mentioned earlier, no classification of the entries were made. Among the winners, however, one proposal was considered especially impressive: the plan by Beaudouin and Lods. Their watercolors were found so beautiful it was decided to use them for the official Exhibition poster (Fig. 83). Light and color received once more the *imprimatur* as the central theme of the Exhibition. The plan proposed received such accolades as "magical vision," "orgy of colors," etc. Artificial clouds and waves set ablaze, ably manipulated, could be combined and alternated with light to obtain the widest variety of colored water motifs. "Our effort will be to compose a great symphony of light and water, sustained and exalted by music," the architects said of their plan.

Each night, after dark, we plan to organize the greatest variety of pageantries both in programming and layout, but always involving the entire Exhibition. The movement of music, light, and water could be conducted by radio from a single podium set, either in Rome, Beirut, or New York.²⁹⁵

[On purpose d'organiser chaque soir, à la nuit, des fêtes extrêmement variées dans leur succession comme dans leur ordonnance, mais toujours liées à un ensemble de l'Exposition sous la direction d'un seul chef d'orchestre, qui pourrait commander par T.S.F., musique, lumière et mouvements d'eaux, du pupitre de Rome, Beyrouth ou New-Yok.]

²⁹⁵ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, March, 1935, p.

The Seine would become a brilliant orchestra performing music scored for illumination, sound and hydraulics. The combined effects would be set against a background of fountains and water jets intimately synchronized with light from different sources and fireworks.

The plan was accepted as such for the Exhibition. Beaudouin and Lods came up with very simple technical solutions: wood, metal and reinforced concrete barges and pontoons, of which there was no shortage in Paris. These were joined together, but with great flexibility so that the overall disposition of artificial islands could be different from night to night. Islands, in combination with footbridges, enabled the free circulation of visitors, while cafe-restaurants, of course, lined these promenades across the Seine. After the festivities, the "island-arrangements" were tugged off to be docked at the Quay D'Auteuil and returned the next evening in a new arrangement, befitting the program for that night. During the day floating fountains were tied underwater to the bottom of the Seine and every night reappeared on the surface at night to play their part in these rites to the ephemeral. The most illusive, phantasmagoric, architecture at the Exhibition was therefore confided to the two most frankly rationalist architects among the very few in France--not the least of the paradoxes of these early stages of the Exhibition's invention.

At the opposite extreme, the Brandon brothers had done their best to treat water and light as architects, that is, to treat those materials as if they were solids. (Fig. 84) There was

no question anymore of unbridled movement. Theirs were calm visions; vaulted cascades, reflected light to illuminate facades, flood lights turned vertically upward to cast parallel beams like columns supporting the heavens.

Charles and Jean Dorian, J.P. Paquet, and Bernard Vitry, for their part, set out on the Seine various arrangements of floating and brightly illuminated islands, recalling a *spina* of ancient circuses (Fig. 85). These could be modified according to the programmed festivities.

Other entries also varied the theme of fountains anchored in the Seine or staking out areas of its banks, as so many sharp sprays, monumental water pyramids, colonnades and other fluid compositions

Competition Seven was to deal with the Transportation and Tourism group. The latter would be located on both banks of the Seine, between the *Pont de l'Alma* and the *Debilly* footbridge, scheduled to be widened and decorated. On the right bank, entry would be nearby the Alma Bridge, including the sidewalk on the Seine side, the former Tokyo Avenue and the river banks. This narrow site planted with trees could not allow extensive construction, meaning that the exhibition would have to be set out on the water over pontoons and boats. On the left bank, the main entrance was to be nearby the Alma Metro station with access from the *Quai D'Orsay* to the exhibits located over the covered train station, and the river banks. It was important to treat the *Debilly* footbridge in such a way as to preserve its slender outline, so the view of the Seine would not be obstructed.

This competition--helped by its theme--lent itself to what appeared to be a new, emerging current in architecture, distinguishable by a certain "international" modernism. This was especially so of the Ventre, Nanquette and Aillaud team and the interior decorator Kohlmann whose reputation was on the rise (Fig.86).²⁹⁶ The core of their design was a series of glass palaces with flat, gridded surfaces and "held up" at their ends by cylindrical solids reminiscent of silos. The whole was connected by high platforms set on *pilotis*. There were entrances below, at street level, porticos suggestive of covered main entrances to large American hotels. Overall, most of the entrants celebrated the new age in tourism and transportation with a wealth of glass and concrete towers: light-towers, clock-towers, marker-towers, set off by vast landing platforms.

Competition Eight was for the Applied Arts and Manual Arts Exhibition. Its site was the former *Garde-Meuble National*, which had been recently redesigned by Perret in another location, at the *Goblins*. The Elysée stables, however, were left in place. This competition was especially dear to the Exhibition's new Chief Architect, Jacques Gréber, who, in reaction to 1925, wanted to see the creation of an urban commercial district, articulated as a continuous, coherent space encompassing everything from the designed spoon to the designed city. Rather than in showcases set in a large building, the displays of the manual arts would be incorporated in a series of small buildings and stores evocative

²⁹⁶ This same team would triumph at the next competition for the Applied Arts and *métiers d'art*.

of a modern city district. The city blocks and streets thus arranged would be reserved for pedestrians only, while motor vehicles would have access only to the principal thoroughfares kept on the edges. Jacques Gréber wanted to see emerge from this overall concept a model district highlighting the advantages of segregated pedestrian and motor traffic. This approach in itself stated at the outset a radical turn towards modernism in the mind of the Exhibition's leadership, and especially of the new Architect in Chief.

Chappey's entry organized the district around an "irregular" central square and was not without aspects reminiscent of the "new city" Sabaudia inaugurated by Mussolini only a few months earlier (Fig. 87). The tower, signal of power, as well as a neatly traced *cardo* and *decumanus* over a *castrum* shaped city, completed the Italianate reminiscences of this colony of craftsmen. Closer, in contrast, to an urban design by Piacentini, the Italian official architect, (Italy led Europe in matters of urbanism in the 1930's) were the district's layouts around symmetrical squares, submitted by architects such as Patout, Aillaud or Tournon. These entries, as A. Louvet aptly observed in L'Architecture, recalled "somewhat features of the plan of Rome or of Pompeii."

On the whole, the prize-winning projects provided rather flat answers to a question undeniably of importance to city planning. Other, more ingenious entries were passed over. One such case was Mallet-Stevens' proposal. He submitted exceptionally well-grouped exhibit designs and linked them to

pavilions on the Seine by ramps. H. Favier organized his exhibition space around patios with well-worked out visitor circulation. First came the small shops for exhibits, at the center were artisans' workshops, and areas could be traversed by footbridges. It provided a harmonious and logical network of exhibits.

It may be asked, as Rambosson noted in Comœdia (who had himself spent some ten hours, that is, about as long as the jury itself, studying the exhibited entries) was it possible at all to make better judgments in the face of 250 entries on display, totalling some one thousand drawings. Once again, "renderings" carried the day.

This second series ended with the competition for the Exposition annex at the Parc de Sceaux. The park had already been the object of several ambitious restoration projects, tending mostly to recreate its original, eighteenth century charm. Now, the 1937 Exposition would be the occasion to hasten and complete the process of its revival but also to make of these 17 hectares a living display of diverse and, one hoped, "modern" creations. Plots would be separated from each other by planted screens and transformed into a wide variety of model gardens: public gardens for city, town and village, gardens for public institutions, hospital gardens, private gardens for city, suburb and village, produce gardens and orchards, and so on. An entrant was free to include other types of his choice. Participation in this competition fell far below the ambitions of its programme. L'Illustration thought the task was "appealing, fertile, rich in

possibilities for the future," but, nevertheless, the competition attracted few entries.

The last two series of the 1934-1935 competitions were for the "decoration" (by now the term "camouflage" was to be avoided) of the Alma and Passy bridges, on their Exhibition sides. The job at hand was, in a sense, to give the Exhibition its lateral walls.

Also covered by these competitions was the development of the Regional Center. The wish of the Exhibition's top officials, notably Edmond Labbé the Commissioner General, was to avoid any sentimental return to the past, to the deplorable pastiches of France's regional architecture. He sought, instead, a new start, the "renaissance" of an architecture "vraiment française", imparting renewed strength to a secular tradition. However, the results of these competitions, open only to architects "from the provinces," ended up being, for the most part, exactly the opposite. According to the perceptive judgment of the art critic Louis Cheronnet published in L'Intransigeant²⁹⁷ these were projects "better-suited to light opera sets, to the suburban homes of sentimental, retired businessmen, to the aesthetics of tourist posters," than to an Exhibition celebrating the culture of a nation.

L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui reproduced this article without any comment. In fact, as the competitions progressed, the journal's silence had grown thicker. This journal, one of the few in France engaged in favor of an authentically modern

²⁹⁷ Quoted in L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, April 1935, p. 83.

architecture, had soon become disillusioned by the competition saga. On the occasion of each competition, the review ended publishing only just three or four images of projects with the names of the authors selected by the jury, but without any comment. After the initial enthusiasm, as disappointment and frustrations grew, other professional reviews such as Art et Décoration, Comœdia, or Beaux-Arts to a lesser degree, ended writing in more or less disenchanted terms about the competitions, an opinion that soon was generalized to the Exhibition in the making itself.

In May 1935, the competitions for the Paris Exhibition of the Arts and Techniques Applied to Modern Life came to an end. What was not known yet, is that these competitions, probably the last "Beaux-Arts" exercises on a grand scale in France, came as a serious disappointment to the Exhibition leadership as well.

Electricity as a Deus ex Machina

As we saw earlier, both Labbé and Gréber had clearly expressed their vested interest in committing the Exhibition to a modern vision of architecture and art. What is more, they had a perfect understanding of the significance that the *unity of the arts* had for the project of modernity, at the end of the fourth decade of the twentieth century. If their vision of modernity could be termed "eclectic," given their pluralistic approach, this did not diminish their concern for having inherited, through the competitions, a large number of dubious architects in terms of any modernity. Even greater was their concern to have been deprived

of the most radical proponents of a modernity understood as a permanent quest for the radically new.

We have seen--as we are going to see it again through a more thorough study of Le Corbusier's case--that the Exhibition's leadership ultimately managed to recuperate some of the best artists France could count on in 1937, thanks to steady effort. Yet, at a more general and systematic level, the solution was, once more, a call to the crux of French *Expositions Universelles* tradition: the Enlightenment. The "Enlightenment," that is, translated into its most direct and most recurrent physical form since the eighteenth century, and since the very first industrial exhibition of 1798: Light. Light, electric light, was to provide that power of transformation, of innovation and of fascination capable of connecting the Exhibition, in the most immediate way, both to its tradition and to Modernity.²⁹⁸ Labbé was to write later in his Rapport Général about his overall intent: "We chose as a goal the apotheosis of that supernatural force: Electricity."²⁹⁹ And indeed, if not necessarily a "supernatural force," electricity was certainly a welcome *deus ex machina*.

The Exhibition of 1937 represented the crowning moment of more than half a century of experimentation with the use of

²⁹⁸ As early as 1934, Charles Letrosne, then the Exhibition's first Chief architect, proposed to assemble in one single architectural study all the elements that referred to light, water, color and sound. Following suite, the Exhibition's first "Commissaire général" insisted that light become a central issue at the Fair. Bonnier, a government member, who also supported the idea of giving light such prominent role, proposed that the majority of the pavilions be "made out of glass and steel," most notably those built under the Eiffel Tower, destined itself to be the "anchor" of the Exhibition. Archives de France, Dépôt du Conseil des Ministres, P60 945-951.

²⁹⁹ Labbé, Rapport Général, Vol.5 p.301.

light in architecture.³⁰⁰ A modern "architecture of light" was inaugurated.³⁰¹ Contemporaries described the magnificent spectacle that "Fée Electricité" was able to command, as a "scientific apotheosis," an art-form representing the 'era of mechanical reproduction' and mass consumption. Edmond Labbé concluded in his Rapport Général that

if attempts were made in some ways to revert to the past and to tradition, the nightly enchantments were in themselves the flamboyant and lively expression of what may be science's greatest legacy: the victory over darkness. 302

[si par certains côtés on avait voulu retourner au passé et à la tradition, la féerie nocturne fût, elle, l'expression chatoyante et vivante de ce que la science nous a donné de plus précieux peut-être: la victoire sur les ténèbres.]

While obviously referring to the conservatism he had to deal with, given the quality of the majority of architects selected by competition--even though he certainly also expressed his own esteem for a historically conscious modern architecture--Labbé was stating very explicitly the importance he attributed to

300 Regarding the types of lamps and the power installed, the types of lamps used and the density of the electrical network, the sophistication of automatic commands, the unprecedented use of color, and the association of light and sound, the Fair employed a technology unsurpassed to date. Labbé, 1938-41, Vol 2, p.427.

301 In the late 1930's in France, where many rural homes were still lit by gas, electricity was still regarded as something rather miraculous. Dufy created for 1937 a 60m long and 10m high mural in the *Palais de la lumière*, the largest ever created (Fig.88). The mural was dedicated to the still venerated *Fée Electricité*, expressing the pervading fascination with electricity. Featuring Jupiter's lightning and the Olympian gods in its center, the mural interpreted electricity as a link connecting the 1937 *Exhibition of the Arts and Techniques in Modern Life*, with the scientific endeavors since the Presocratics. The "Electrification of France" was initially to be part of the Group "Urbanisme et Architecture" within the Class "Aménagement des Villes et des Campagnes." Yet, as Edmond Labbé notes in his Rapport "il apparut très vite que cette activité nationale était d'une importance si grande qu'elle devait faire la matière d'une classe à part." (Labbé, Rapport, vol. 5 p.299. Emph. added.)

302 Edmond Labbé Rapport Général Vol. 2, p. 427.

light in his efforts to overcome the imposed shortcomings. Moreover, reference to science showed quite unambiguously that the legacy Labbé was falling back on was no less than the Enlightenment itself. If the technology, which necessarily stood behind the cited flamboyant pageantries, was not directly spelled out, reference to the "nightly enchantments" clearly echoed the eighteenth century fascination with the sublime. In fact, the whole passage, like many others in his writings about the Exhibition, highlighted the astonishing means the Exhibition's leadership had devised to successfully bring art and technology into one single and unchallenged expression of modernity. Celebrating this newfound unity, as well as popular fascination with electricity, was Dufy's monumental mural dedicated to the *Fée Electricité* in the *Palais de la lumière* (fig. 89). With Jupiter in its center brandishing lightning sparks while surrounded by the Olympian gods, the mural interpreted the history of electricity as a thread connecting all scientific endeavors since the Presocratics to the 1937 *Exhibition of the Arts and Techniques in Modern Life*, seen as a vast celebration of light.

At the eve of World War II, the reference to the "victory over darkness" had an added meaning. The pageantries performed at the Exhibition stood as a symbolic effort to dissipate the dark reality of a world subjected both to a profound economic crisis and to a rapidly mounting Fascism. It was no accident that the "victory over darkness" Labbé ascribed to the Exhibition, was underscored by the emblematic link between the

Pavillon de la Paix and the *Pavillon de la Lumière*,³⁰³ facing each other across the *Champ de Mars*.³⁰⁴ Yet, the glorification of peace itself, as the ultimate condition for progress and enlightenment of a nation, was just another homage paid to the age of illuminism.

The strategic juxtaposition of the *Palais de la Lumière*, an official building, and the *Trocadero* clearly demonstrated the organizers' intent to make light the central feature of the Exhibition. Matching the curve of the *Trocadero*, the *Palace* closed the triumphal sequence (Fig. 89) dominated by the luminous Eiffel Tower, lit by André Granet, Eiffel's grand son (Fig. 90). The Seine, flooded with the liquid light of its fountains, carved its way through this gigantic space like a golden vein (Fig. 91).

The new architecture sculpted by light opened an endless field of possibilities for aesthetic, ideological, technical, and commercial uses.³⁰⁵ Never did night-representations of an

³⁰³ This reference to Light, as will be seen later, stems from yet another dimension characteristic of all French World's Exhibitions, i.e. its privileged connections to the seventeenth century Enlightenment.

³⁰⁴ The most staggering effect of the use of science and technology for purposes of mass destruction, a first in modern warfare, was the bombardment of an "open" city, Guernica in early 1937. Picasso painted the event in black and white tones for the Exhibition's Spanish Republic Pavilion. With an electric bulb holding center-stage, Picasso's mural referred to the feebleness of light in the world engulfed by "the night that has fallen upon Guernica [while even] the white immured and closed up, remained lifeless." (Rosi Huhn, "Guernica and the 1937 International Exhibition," Doctoral Dissertation University of Hamburg, 1986.)

This association between the two Pavilions was mediated by the *Champ de Mars* symbolizing National defence since 1790, and the Eiffel Tower, celebrating France's industrial might since 1889. Loaded with symbols and history, the *Champ de Mars* was a military training field since the end of the 17th Century. As mentioned earlier, on July 14, 1790 Revolutionary France celebrated there the *Fête de la Nation* for the first time.

³⁰⁵ Commercial advertisement played a pivotal role in this vast artistic experimentation. To the question "Que feriez-vous si vous aviez à organiser l'Exposition de 1937" Fernand Léger answered in 1935, in a surprising

exhibition figure as frequently in professional and lay publications as in 1937 (Fig. 92).³⁰⁶ The power of transformation electric light allowed was seen as the ultimate artistic and technical symbol of progress. This dimension did not escape the art critic Christian Zervos who wrote in an essay on commercial advertisement in 1936 that

our era has made light into a poetic element, as Fernand Léger will soon show it at the upcoming International Exhibition. In fact, the majority of artists have thought of using [electrical] light at one time or another. Picasso ... also experiments with light and ... many other artists are waiting for the moment electrical industry will ask them to determine what are the poetic possibilities of [electrical] light and what functions it can fulfill in this sense.³⁰⁷

[Notre époque a fait de la lumière un élément poétique qui sera bientôt rendu sensible aux yeux par Fernand Léger, à l'occasion de la prochaine Exposition Internationale. A vrai dire, l'idée d'en user est venue à la plupart des artistes, Picasso...s'est aussi porté sur la lumière...Nombreux sont aussi les peintres qui attendent le moment où les Compagnies d'électricité leur demanderont d'établir de quels moyens poétiques dispose la lumière et quelles fonctions elle peut remplir dans ce sens.]

anticipation of contemporary experiments with neon light, that he would immerse the exhibition in an "atmosphère lumineuse" and, "au lieu d'illuminer immeubles et monuments par leur silhouette, se servir des rues comme fond à un décor lumineux complètement indépendant du profil de l'immeuble ou du monument, créer des lignes lumineuses qui courent sur les rues, s'élèvent au-dessus, vont jusqu'au sol en se continuant tout le long. Lignes décoratives et harmonieuses à inventer. Les camelots doivent nous sortir pour cette exposition les cravattes électriques et les boutons de manchettes lumineux..." (Quoted in 1937, Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques, Centre G. Pompidou 1979.)

This approach to art and technology was also an interesting anticipation of what was to be called Pop-Art three decades later.
³⁰⁶ See in particular the photographic series by Baranger and Chevojon, drawings in L'Illustration Spécial issue, 29 May 1937, as well as the posters by Eugène Beaudouin and Paul Colin reproduced in the Labbé's Rapport Général Vol. 11.

³⁰⁷ Christian Zervos, "Architecture et Publicité," in Cahiers d'Art 1936. Indeed Dufy's mural at the Fair was commissioned by the Compagnie Parisienne de Distribution d'Electricité. It shows that such expectations were not far fetched.

Another landmark in the use of electricity for architectural purposes was the 1931 Maison de verre by Chareau which was illuminated by André Salomon, member of the UAM (Union de Artistes Modernes).

The shows of light and sound were intended explicitly to celebrate an exhibition dedicated to the "arts and techniques in modern life." L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui called the ephemeral orchestrations of light, music, and water an "architecture à quatre dimensions."³⁰⁸

Indeed the 1937 Paris Exhibition reached its peak at nightfall. At dusk, dim electric lights gradually flooded the night with dark-red, orange, yellow, and green lights (Fig. 93). Colored water jets, brightened by fireworks and search-lights, burst into the obscured sky. The rhythms of shooting water and flaming lights accelerated gradually. Loudspeakers blasted 'live' music, fountains swirled up bursting into glowing mists, fluorescent gases, exploding rockets. Airplanes crisscrossed the sky leaving behind brilliant streaks (Fig. 94). And then, after a final explosion, this unbridled world of lights, mists and fumes suddenly came to a halt. After a few moments of suspense, a new blast of light--pure, white, and dazzling, shot up again; then, slowly, it would dissolve into the night where only the dim echo of 'silenced' music and quiet fountains remained (Fig. 95).³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1937, p. 100.

³⁰⁹ An eye witness to these festivities, Siegfried Giedion wrote in 1942: "These spectacles [Paris 1937 and New York 1939] form one of the rare events where our modern possibilities are consciously applied by the architect-artists. They use the structural values of different materials as the medium to intensify the emotional expression, just as the cubists liked to introduce sand, fragments of wood, or scraps of paper in their paintings. In this case, the architect made use of different "structural" values: incandescent and mercury light, gas flames, colored by chemicals, firework, smoke, water-jets, painted on the night sky and synchronized with music. Siegfried Giedion "The Need for a New Monumentality" reprinted in Monumentality and the City, The Harvard Architectural Review IV, Spring 1984, pp53-61..

This monumental spectacle, accompanied by a score Arthur Honnegger wrote for the Fair,³¹⁰ was one of the eighteen such tableaux that the CIAM members Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods, designed for the Exhibition. They had won, as we know, the 1934 competition on the theme of light. Moholy-Nagy could have easily referred to Beaudouin's and Lods' architectural creation when he wrote in the Architectural Forum, on the occasion of the Paris Exhibition that "exposition does not mean the enlargement of ordinary architecture [but rather] the bold use of utopian elements [which can be] "not only amusing [but] convincing as well."³¹¹

Beaudouin, indeed, noted that the designers' aim was "to create a very big spectacle that very large crowds could observe simultaneously."³¹² The simultaneity of view-points this

³¹⁰ Arthur Honnegger, who was a contributor to the journal Plans, wrote about his interest for music on film i.e. of associating music and the visual arts. He directed *in vivo* his new piece "Mille et une Nuits" composed for the Fair. Seventeen other composers, such as Messiaen and Darius Milhaud, participated in the musical arrangements of the "Fêtes de Lumière." Granet, the architect, wrote later: "On se souvient des belles Homélies de F. Gregh et des carillons qui faisaient vibrer ce clocher de 300 mètres," referring to the Eiffel Tower. A. Granet, Décors éphémères, Paris 109-1948, Paris 1948, p. 27.

The musical themes were: LIGHT (composer Florent Schmitt), NATIONAL (Jacques Ibert), COLONIES (Elsa Barraine), MUSIC (Darius Milhaud), The Seine APOTHEOSIS (Raymond Loucheur), DAY PAGEANTRIES (A. Koeschlin; B. Messiaen), DREAM (Jean Rivier), (Manuel Rosenthal), DANSE (Marcel Delanoy), SPRING (Paul Le Flem), SUMMER (Louis Aubert), FALL (Claude Delvincourt), THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHT (Arthur Honnegger), ENFANTINE (Ingelbrecht), FIRE (Henri Barraud), FANTASTIQUE (Pierre Vellones), SONG (Maurice Yvain)

³¹¹ "Moholy-Nagy, Picture Hunter, Looks at the Paris Fair," Architectural Record, Vol. LXXXII, October 1937, pp. 92-93.

³¹² L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui May-June 1937.p.117

This "four-dimensional architecture," where music underscored the temporal dimension, was orchestrated from a single center. Honnegger and twenty other modern composers had under their direction not only regular musicians, but also "musicians" of lights and water springs who activated a complex system of commands on actual organ keyboards. Such a piano keyboard, featuring 150 keys, and connected by 500 cables to 80 meters of water fountains displayed along the Quai d'Orsay on pontoons, could also be found in the luxurious Restaurant du Roi George, facing the Seine. When official pageantries

architecture-of-light offered,³¹³ forcing the spectators to move around, also evoked the non-perspectival spatial concept of a Gothic cathedral. Iconographically too the Eiffel Tower, which played a role in the Temps Nouveaux Pavilion as well, could be seen as a modern structure echoing the spire of Notre-Dame.³¹⁴ In order to root their project firmly within the overall concept of the Fair, Beaudouin and Lods emphasized that, in resonance with the Exhibition's program, they sought after the "most recent scientific achievements,"³¹⁵ and an approach that probably would not be unfamiliar to a Gothic engineer either.³¹⁶ The attempt at offering an architectural experience of equal intensity all along a lengthy stretch of the Seine (between the Alma Bridge and the *Ile des Cygnes*), made it possible to engage space at an urban scale, while using grandeur as an aesthetic device.³¹⁷

abated, the restaurant customers could activate the keyboard on their own to compose at will similar visual effects with lights, springs and fire-works.

313 See Silverman, 1977, pp 71-91. Such absence of vantage points had also its drawbacks. Most of the time, the spectators experienced a sense of frustration as they tried unsuccessfully to find the spot from which they would get "the best view" of the show.

314 Ibid.

315 L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1937, 8, pp.115-119

316 In L'Illustration's celebrated special issue on the Exhibition, G. Gay, a contemporary artist, represented the Tower in the form of a Gothic cathedral. (L'Illustration, numéro spécial Exposition de Paris 1937, 29 May 1937, Paris 1937)

317 This ephemeral "cathedral," domed by the nightly skies, was equipped with an immense organ floating on pontoons, with innumerable lighting systems, and fountains recycling the river's water. As light had no firm screen to bounce off, light was used to create an impression of a "total environment." The only "screen" to speak of was the water itself: the river, the fountain sprays, and the vapors above and around them. All associated unstable volumes, moving forms, variable light, and shifting grain-densities. High above the viewers, fumes sprang at various speeds, contrasting with the water below. The moving "screens" reflected light, according to minutely crafted schemes. These compositions were the result of designing and experimenting for over a year on the Paris outskirts, upstream the Seine.

To create as great a variety of architectural forms as possible, Beaudouin and his partner conceived three different patterns of highly mobile

The full recognition of the Tower as a genuine monument worth highlighting in the same way as the Triumphal Arch, was in itself a triumph for the modernist aesthetic. In fact, it is precisely due to electric light that the specific aesthetic qualities of the Eiffel Tower became part of the common experience of the public at large.³¹⁸ It was an implicit but forceful answer to the false dilemma about the Tower's "purpose" and "usefulness" that plagued its history since the very first day it rose into the sky of Paris under the thunderous recrimination of the cultural elite.

water "screens." The largest groups of water canons were orchestrated like classical compositions; other, smaller ones, were designed as English gardens. The third type of arrangement established simple linear patterns along the river (L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1937).

Such complex and powerful "hydro-luminous" architectural ensembles were without precedent, surpassing by far all similar experiments at the 1929 Barcelona World's Exhibition. Spotlights of 2 and 3 kilowatts projecting 400 to 500 feet into the sky were a technical novelty. For the water effects, two kinds of sprays were installed: pulverizing sprays on the edges to conceal the pontoons, and rotating ones, forming 150 feet high domes. By inflation and deflation of air buoys, 200 fountains and spotlights were allowed to sink to the bottom of the river, leaving the central portion of the waterway open to the cruising of commercial boats during the day. In addition, a non submersible complex system of thousands of sprays was installed on the left bank with pumps reaching close to 5000 HP. See L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, *June 1937, p.47

Indirect light sources, evenly distributed along the barges, were complemented by sharper, pyrotechnic ones, launched from the Eiffel Tower. On certain nights, luminous airplane tracings rhythmically crisscrossed the vertical spraying fire-works, as extensions of the water fountains below. The visual effects were enhanced by the loudspeakers installed on the trees and on the ground. Other powerful loudspeakers, installed vertically along the Eiffel Tower, resonated like immense musical "columns."

Three types of lights formed the basic "architectural material" employed: diffuse light creating glowing ephemeral masses; focused light emanating from convergent beams; and multiple sources of light sweeping the sky.

³¹⁸ Today's lighting of the Tower in a soft, golden glare that gives the Tower a crystalline appearance is taken from the repertoire of the 1937 Exhibition.

The under-skirt of the Tower, its "vault," was decorated with a 10km long web of the recently commercialized fluorescent light tubes ³¹⁹ emphasizing the tensility of the Tower's structure and creating the illusion of an immense stained glass vault exposed to the sun (Fig. 96). These gas tubes, used as a new type of luminous advertising that radically transformed the modern city, produced blue, emerald green and pink colors with an immense Paris blazon reflected in the Seine. Above, the platforms were decorated with another technical novelty: a garland of 32 gigantic, upward soaring mercury vapor projectors in fact Navy search lights reaching several kilometers--that reasserted the Tower's vertical integrity.³²⁰

Stripped for the occasion of their original decorative arcades--another recognition of the Tower's intrinsic aesthetic significance--the Tower's platforms were used as spring-boards for the fire works. The nocturnal pageantries submerged the Tower's structure with cascades of lights washing the Tower's flanks in a series of waves, down to the fountains springing from the river's darkness, while fiery spires exploded rhythmically all along the monument's shaft. The Eiffel Tower's size itself seemed constantly modified under the phantasmagoric effects of the swirling winds of light (Fig. 97).

³¹⁹ Neon was discovered in 1889.

³²⁰ Advertisement per se was banned at the Exhibition, and the Eiffel Tower regained its status of "pure" monument, instead of a commercial billboard for Citroën. In fact, even earlier illuminations, such as those of 1889 and 1900, treated the Tower more as a support of electric ornaments than as an artifact with independent, self-referential aesthetic value.

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Light, the central theme of the Exhibition, and the best expression of the much sought-after union between the Fine and Technical Arts, drew its deep origins from the very first exhibition of this kind held in France. In 1937, man-made light acted temporarily as a powerful medium capable of unifying and holding together an array of contradictory statements regarding modernism and modernity that this Exhibition of Art and Techniques Applied to Modern Life strived to express.³²¹ From a modernized academicism to an academized modernism, from the half century old Eiffel Tower to a 'modernized' folkloric architecture of the *Centre Régional*, and the camouflaged Grand Palais where the latest discoveries of modern science were housed, the artifice of light, in its most modern expression, appeared as a shifting common denominator for all. Light gave to the pursuit of modernity the luster of a common goal, the shine of a consensus. Untouched by issues of style, free of historic references, the perfectly modern and ungraspable light electricity produced in conjunction with other artificial sources of light, appeared in 1937 as an elusive, yet comforting, if paradoxical terra firma. In a world in which new universal models had failed to emerge--and the consequences of the loss of any canon were far from being fully understood--the poetics of light pageantries and ephemeral architecture prefigured, in a sense, what was to emerge by the end of the

321 When Labbé replaced Latour in 1935, plans were made to "disseminate" the Fair's light pageantries throughout France and as far as its African colonies, thus clearly assigning light the powerful role of bringing together diversity.

century as, perhaps, the end of architecture itself: an architecture dissolved in electronic "virtual reality." Under the Eiffel Tower, a small silvery screen called "television"--shown for the first time in a World's Fair to disbelieving crowds--appeared as the discrete harbinger of a possible end.³²²

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Faced with inconclusive results from the two series of competitions, and limited by the imperatives of an economic crisis calling for expedients, the leadership of the Exhibition drew on a well established tradition of the French *exposition universelle*: they opted for Light, as the best way of appealing both to the Enlightenment and to technological modernity. This expedient helped avoid resolving France's still lingering ambiguities regarding Modernity, as was blatantly revealed both by the competitions and the decade long debate on style and culture. What is more, electricity, the highest product of fine reasoning and industrial ingenuity, was invoked to mediate seamlessly between art and technology. Blurring under its glare the confines between modern art and modern technology, the fine arts and the applied arts, electric light and its phantasmagoria solved through a brilliant stratagem a century old controversy.

³²² A closed circuit television was installed in the Pavillon de la Radio, and made it possible to "see" from various points of the Exhibition the activity that was taking place in the Pavilion's radio-broadcast studio where commentators and movie stars spoke to the crowds.

PART TWO

**THE 1937 EXHIBITION AND THE MODERNIST
ARTISTS:
The Case of Le Corbusier.**

CHAPTER IV

THE 1932 VINCENNES PROJECT: LE CORBUSIER'S CRITICISM OF THE EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE

"The very principle I was suggesting, immediately projected the Exhibition into an entirely new adventure, a type of exhibition that had never yet been conceived."

Le Corbusier³²³

"A contemporary of ours, acting in a country that the proletarian dictatorship had renovated; a country where, indeed, everything had to be created from scratch, almost launched in France a cruel fashion. In order to urbanize Paris, this Nero without torches anticipated the elimination of everything that was there, demanding that the place be wiped out."

Adolphe Dervaux

President of the French Society of Urban Planners.³²⁴

The Brochure '37: For an International Housing Exhibition

Le Corbusier's little-known and tortuous adventure with the 1937 Paris Exhibition started with a bizarre oversight: the architect all but missed the widely publicized first national competition calling for ideas regarding the choice of the Fair's location. He learned about the competition only a few weeks

323 "Le principe même de ce que je proposais projetait immédiatement l'Exposition dans une aventure entièrement nouvelle, type non réalisé d'exposition internationale." In Edna Nicoll, "Une interview de Le Corbusier" in Notre Revue 1937, n. 8, 1936, p.43.

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"Certain contemporain, agissant dans un pays que la dictature prolétarienne a renouvelé; où, en effet, tout est à créer, faillit lancer en France une mode cruelle. Pour urbaniser Paris, ce Néron sans torches ne prévoyait-il pas la disparition de tout ce qui existe, réclamant qu'on fit place nette?"

Adolphe Dervaux, "L'urbanisme et les arts coloniaux," in Urbanisme #5, August 1932, p. 140.

before its closing date in mid-July 1932.³²⁵ As he said in his cover letter to the jury, in June 1932: "The author of this brochure, a French citizen fully eligible to participate in this competition, was unaware that a competition was opened on January 30, 1932."³²⁶

This is not to say, of course, that the leading figure of the French architectural avant-garde lacked interest in, or was unaware of, the ongoing plans to organize in Paris an exposition dedicated to the Modern Arts. Quite to the contrary, according to his own claims, he had devoted considerable attention to the problem since the very moment the French Parliament decided to stage such an exhibition. Le Corbusier's failure to take note of the competition is surprising, but may be explained by his general mistrust of competitions--provoked by his defeat in the League of Nations competition of 1927-29. At the time Le Corbusier claimed to have learned of the competition, on May 19, 1932, he was about to publish a series of articles discussing the objective and the

³²⁵ This, however, did not prevent him later from claiming consistently, and throughout the years that preceded the opening of the Exhibition, that he was first to conceive a program for the Exhibition. For example, in his letter to his friend Dr. Delore, a City councilor of Paris, loosely associated with the *Prélude* circle (on the syndicalist journal *Prélude*, organ of a new "Comité central d'action régionaliste et syndicaliste" and Le Corbusier's association with it, see McLeod, 1985, pp. 141-148; 151-166), he wrote in April 1936: "J'ai été chassé de 37 bien qu'ayant fourni les premières idées." Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC) H2-14. It is not irrelevant to note, however, that the President of the Jury was Francis Jourdain, a figure sympathetic to Le Corbusier.

³²⁶ "L'auteur de cette plaquette, citoyen français, remplissant les conditions du concours, ignorait qu'un concours avait été institué le 30 janvier 1932" Anonymous brochure titled: *1937 EXPO. INT. DE L'HABITATION PARIS: Concours en vue de la réalisation d'une exposition internationale en 1937*. Dated: 15 June 1932. A copy is to be found in the papers of Jean Locquin, Léon Blum's Government delegate to the 1937 Fair. Archives de France, Présidence du Conseil des Ministres: F60-970. The handwritten note "Projet 1" is in Jean Locquin's handwriting. The complete set of six projects were numbered in December 1936 for chronological order.

program of an international event of this kind. Instead of an exhibition reassessing the state of Modern Arts since 1925, (supported by the Parliament and endorsed by the artistic community), Le Corbusier suggested a timely, but inevitably "subversive," exhibition on the problem of modern housing. He sent to the competition jury, at the last minute, one of the articles he wrote on the issue, in the form of a pamphlet. He called the pamphlet *Brochure 37*.

In doing so, however, Le Corbusier ignored the competition's anonymity clause. He clearly identified himself although he did not sign the article. His characteristic writing style, his graphics, and his typography alone strongly suggested his authorship. Yet Le Corbusier went further and illustrated his article with photographs of his projects, quoted extensively from books he made a point to call his own, and gave precise references to his earlier articles in "*L'Esprit Nouveau*." Finally, to dispel the last trace of doubt, Le Corbusier concluded: "Since 1922 (*Salon d'Automne*) and most specially in 1925 (the *Esprit Nouveau* Pavilion at the *Arts Décoratifs* Exhibition) we have relentlessly pursued this line."³²⁷

The entire episode was indicative of Le Corbusier's attitude regarding the principles and the mechanics of the Exhibition. He was to maintain the same attitude to the end, consistently avoiding the Exhibition's established institutions. He focused on what, in his eyes, appeared to be the behind-the-

³²⁷ "Depuis 1922 (*Salon d'Automne*), et tout particulièrement en 1925 (Pavillon de l'*Esprit Nouveau* à l'*Exposition des Arts Décoratifs*) nous n'avons cessé de poursuivre cette ligne." *Brochure*, p. 4.

scenes center of authority, the seat of what he called the Exhibition's "Potentate."³²⁸ By deliberately violating the established criteria regarding the form and content of the Exhibition, Le Corbusier himself set from the outset the pattern for his future perceived "expulsions" from the Exhibition.

The pamphlet he sent to the competition was to acquire considerable importance. For each of the six projects he prepared for the Exhibition between June 1932 and October 1936, he sent to individuals and institutions numerous samples of his privately published pamphlet. Throughout this period, he consistently presented his idea as a point of reference, despite manifest modifications of his theoretical position after the CIAM Congress in Athens, as we shall see later.

PROJECT A

"Project A," as Le Corbusier called it, described his ideas on the "Radiant City" adapted to an international exhibition.³²⁹ While the Radiant City gave a context to his ideas on the Exhibition, the project was a framework of Le Corbusier's intentions both for the 1937 Exhibition and, consequently, for the entire Paris cityscape. The *International Exhibition on the Modern Dwelling (Logis)*, as Le Corbusier understood it, would anticipate a profound remodeling of the metropolis. Conceived a decade

³²⁸ Le Corbusier targeted a number of such "potentats" or "homme tout puissants," most of whom were not even part of the Exhibition's staff.

³²⁹ The principles of the Radiant City were developed earlier in the first eight issues of *Plans* with which Le Corbusier was affiliated. For a thorough analysis of the journal's profile and of Le Corbusier's contribution to it, see Mary McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy" (Doctoral Dissertation: School of Architecture and Planning, Princeton University, June 1985.)

earlier, the *Plan Voisin* served as the general model of urban development, whereas the initial housing cluster in the *Bois de Vincennes* was to serve as a generating principle of such development. Le Corbusier called the cluster "a seed," curiously reviving El Lissitzky's own term for the PROUNS also regarded as "seeds" of future architectural and urban transfigurations (Fig. 98). The justification for transforming an exhibition dedicated to the Modern Arts into a metropolitan urban plan was, according to Le Corbusier, his "poignant and passionate conviction [that] architecture, urbanism, furniture, works of art...the individual and the collectivity belong to a single and indivisible whole. Hence, the Exhibition would comprise" as he put it, "one 'Radiant City' redent, i.e. 2328 meters of a 50-meter high building, producing 20,000 meters of apartment *façades* over 10 floors"³³⁰

As in 1922, such urban 'expurgation' was to be achieved in 1937 through the active involvement of the "*Grande industrie*." The industry's motivation to participate would be the prospect of future commissions engendered by an international exhibition. Le Corbusier introduced, however, two significant changes in regards to his earlier projects. On the one hand, he shifted the emphasis from a call to the automobile industry alone--the symbol of high technology and redemptive dreams of the 1920s³³¹--to a general

³³⁰ "L'Exposition comporterait donc un redent de "Ville Radieuse", soit 2328 m de bâtiments de 50 m de haut fournissant 20.000 m de longueur de façades d'appartements repartis sur 9 étages." *Brochure*, p. 3.

³³¹ Like many, in the first decades of the century, Le Corbusier himself had been fascinated by the apparent redemptive potential of the assembly line, whose most powerful epitome was Ford's production of the "T" model (A celebratory memorial plaque can still be read to this effect in front of Ford's dilapidated factory in Detroit. Echoes of this fascination is evident in Diego Rivera's monumental fresco dedicated to Ford and his "T," now in the Detroit Museum of Fine Arts. Not surprisingly a Ford (renamed ZIS: "Stalin

"call to *producers*, to Industry." He insisted that his call was not "only directed to the furniture makers," but to the entire range of building industries. "The PLAN will implement this thesis: the *GRANDE INDUSTRIE* takes over the building [process]." On the other hand, and for related reasons, he welcomed the prospect of vast Public Works--the "*Grands Travaux*" that a formidable enterprise such as rebuilding a city on the occasion of an international exhibition would have required. The architect's primary concerns were the economic crisis that had reached France,³³² and the necessity of correcting Liberal capitalist practices.³³³ However, far from renouncing such practices, he

Factories") was exhibited as the central object in the Soviet 1937 pavilion, a tribute to the promises of progress through technology.

³³² Sauvy, A. "The Economic Crisis of the 1930's in France.," *J. Contemp. Hist.* #4, Oct. 1969.

Sauvy, A. *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres*. vol. 3, Paris, 1972.

³³³ *Liberal* is used here in the nineteenth-century sense of the term, describing "Laissez faire--Laissez passer" policies of unrestricted market policies still prevailing in the United States until the 1929 Crash.

This stance regarding Industry and Le Corbusier's relentless efforts to obtain its involvement remains valid throughout the thirties, if with some modifications, as Le Corbusier's attitude towards modern industrial technology, and "Capitalist" modes of production evolved from an unquestioned fascination, to a more cautious reconsideration of its limits, expressed in his embrace of reformist attitudes. Such were his calls for the implementation of a "Plan" akin to the New Deal concept introduced in the United States after 1930.

Such correctives to the mercantile system, rather than its circumduction or replacement, as it has been suggested [see Mary McLeod op. cit.], were at the root of the New Deal policies widely debated at the time, including in Mussolini's Italy. There is little doubt that Le Corbusier and his collaborators in the journal *Plans* followed this debate closely. The fascination with Taylorism in the 1920's was now replaced by an equal interest in economic planning within the mercantile society. Similar inflexions of capitalist practices, of which Le Corbusier was fully aware, were undertaken by Mussolini, an admirer of Roosevelt's policies, through the "Bataglia del grano," the reclaiming of the Pontine Marshes and, most of all, the massive demolitions of old city centers--the *sventramenti*-- replaced by powerful business headquarters. These vast Public Works were echoed in Le Corbusier's pamphlet as a call for radical "*aménagement*s" of both the cities and the countryside.

insisted that "the Home (Logis) [was] a prodigious market for the Industry." He believed that the takeover of the housing market by the building industry ("*La Grande Industrie*") would in itself "lead to the most potent solutions to the general crisis of industrial production." This had to be done, Le Corbusier conceded, "even by cruel means" if necessary.³³⁴ Le Corbusier was now introducing the "Plan" as an all-encompassing *programme d'ensemble*, "a "functional" program rather than a "rational" form. The Plan was to mediate comprehensive practices that would "dictate the life of Paris and of its region"³³⁵

Le Corbusier had little doubt that the incisiveness of his proposal would have an immediate impact on the jury and, by the same token, demonstrate the obsolescence of competitions he saw as little more than futile exercises. He thus expressed his rejection of competitions as instruments to determine such far-reaching matters as the future of a city. True to his own elitist tendencies, he considered that no genuine progress in architecture was possible by means as demagogic as a hypocritically "anonymous" competition.

He insisted to the end that the technical and conceptual leadership of the Exhibition should be entrusted to a select group of artists, to the *chefs de file* of the trade, probably headed by

It is no accident that, when he went to Italy, Le Corbusier visited the Minister of the *Corporazioni* as well as the trade unions under Fascist control.

³³⁴ See unpublished document: FLC H14-102.

³³⁵ Brochure. p. 4.

himself,³³⁶ and possibly backed by the CIAM, an idea that came to him a few months later.

Indeed, as Jean-Louis Cohen has claimed: "Le Corbusier never brought the debate about the necessary reform of urban centers to the representatives of the civic life but always rather addressed restricted circles and staff headquarters."³³⁷ Such a strategy, marked by Le Corbusier's incessant search for an infallible as much as mythical *Autorité*,³³⁸ was not the least among the reasons of his later failures in dealing with the Exhibition. But Le Corbusier attributed the failures more often to vile conspiracies against himself than to his own ineptness. It is ironic, however, that his ultimate presence at the 1937 Exhibition was salvaged, at the last minute, by the least-established *Autorité*: the government of the *Front Populaire*.

In an effort to give his ideas an air of respectability in the eyes of the well-meaning establishment, Le Corbusier also invoked the authority of Maréchal Lyautey, the Governor of Morocco. The latter had successfully organized, just one year earlier in 1931, the celebrated "Exposition Coloniale" in the Bois de Vincennes. Furthermore, Le Corbusier invoked the Maréchal's suggestion to open a throughway across Paris, a suggestion that corroborated Le Corbusier's own proposals formulated a decade

³³⁶ During 1934 and 1935, in a few instances, as can be seen in his letters, he made attempts, through acquaintances, at joining or replacing the Fair's current leadership.

³³⁷ J-L Cohen, "Droite Gauche: invite à l'action," in Le Corbusier une Encyclopédie, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987, p.310.

³³⁸ On Le Corbusier's pursuit of the *Autorité* see Robert Fishman, Urban Utopia in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1982

earlier. On the other hand, by having reshaped the prospective Fair into an "Exposition Internationale de l'Habitation," Le Corbusier addressed the catastrophic state of the capital's housing conditions, and revived his own ill-fated *Plan Voisin*. This time, however, he elaborated the Plan and stretched his scheme in four stages along the entire East-West axis of the city, to the north of, and parallel to, the Haussmannian rue de Rivoli and Champs Elysées (Fig.99). Le Corbusier hinted at the idea of a linear development of the urban core in his 1925 Plan for the Center of Paris.³³⁹ The Exhibition itself was to be the Plan's testing ground and its legitimating force.

Consistently opposed to a sterile repetition of the 1925 Exhibition, with its "innumerable pavilions" and "thousands of disjointed initiatives," Le Corbusier preferred a "disciplined exhibition under the control of four or five strong, leading individuals." In fact, hesitant about their number, he suggested the possibility of further reducing this "directorship" to two or three professionals acting as a single "maître d'œuvre." This leadership was to inspire "an infinite number" of individual or team collaborators.³⁴⁰ Le Corbusier strove for "Constructions en vrai," a solid, permanent series of buildings offering rich elaborations of various housing programs.³⁴¹ His goal was to

³³⁹ It is important to mention that such an East-West axis traversing Paris was not a novel idea *per se*. This longitudinal stretch connecting the two extremes of Paris was first formulated by Eugène Hénard before 1910.

³⁴⁰ In a sense, perhaps unconsciously, Le Corbusier was reproducing the actual rapports established within the CIAM by 1932, with Le Corbusier emerging as the dominant figure at the 1933 Congress in Athens.

³⁴¹ Le Corbusier often referred sarcastically to what he called the architecturally distasteful habit of "Pavillonner" (a word he probably derived from "Papillonner," meaning to act in a flaky, superficial manner, as a butterfly), unfortunately common to traditional World's Exhibitions.

create, amidst the greenery of Vincennes, an initial nucleus of the *Ville radieuse*, "un élément de quartier d'habitation" (Fig. 100).

The dominant idea was the elimination of the street, replaced by parks Le Corbusier described as a pedestrian's Eden, here exemplified by the Bois de Vincennes.³⁴²

The second master idea was the development of a highly industrialized building process where houses would be built "en usine comme des automobiles." Le Corbusier did not provide details about just what this construction method would be other than vague references to the "production en série"--he left to the Industry to resolve. Yet, what dominated both ideas was the role and place the automobile was assigned in the modern city. Paradoxically, however, even the automobile issue was largely left to chance. In a city of eight million people, squeezed vertically within the *intra muros* Paris at a density of 1000 people per hectare, he never addressed the problem of the stationary traffic. Indeed, his elevated highways and access roads, hanging on pilotis as any other building, appeared more as powerful urban sculptures carrying the fast-wheeled technological wonders of the time, than technically solved 'machines à transporter'--to use a Corbusian image [Fig. 93]. While his *Ville Radieuse* demonstration segment at Vincennes--designed to contain an entire world's exhibition--

"J'aime autant m'occuper d'une oeuvre féconde et durable que de "pavillonner:" cette terrible tentation pour un architecte..." Notre Revue, n.8, 1936, p. 24.

³⁴² Le Corbusier counted on the immense success of the Colonial Exhibition, set in the same woods just a year earlier, to offset hesitations about infusing it now with a different exhibition, albeit destined to remain permanently there.

allowed cars to reach at high speeds the very heart of the housing complex, not a single area, under or above grade,³⁴³ was dedicated to parking. In the same vein, while the vehicles the modern Phidias had invented were carried on high pedestals, the floor level under the overpass, nominally reserved for pedestrians, served for "heavy traffic" such as trucks, and buses. [Fig. 94] The project's dominant *Unité à redent*, a segment of the *Ville Radieuse* "formant un ruban d'une arabesque variable," was two linear kilometers long. The minimum distance between two building fronts was 200 meters, but could reach as much as 400 meters or more.

Le Corbusier determined the dimensions of his *quartier* through a twofold approach: on the one hand, he created a community sufficiently large to allow all kinds of housing experiments and, on the other, he gave his "Unités" a semblance of historical legitimation, as he used a venerable icon such as the Louvre to establish a scale [Fig. 95]. The housing complex itself comprised a space roughly the size of the Haussmannian Cour Napoléon. What he did not show, however, is that his typical building was several times higher than the Louvre. This meant, as has been noted, that his courts were most of the time cast in deep shadows, while exposed to cold drafts from under the pilotis. As if to compensate for this, fifty meters above the ground, the rooftops became endless 25-meters-wide "sunny sand-beaches," which

³⁴³ In contrast with this characteristic omission, we have seen the very close attention most of the competitors in 1932 paid to solving specific traffic issues in a modern city, where even airports were included.

included strolling paths, solariums, physical therapy centers, and the like.

The description of the *Logis* itself was a succinct definition of the "machine à habiter":

The home: A FLOOR SURFACE FLOODED WITH LIGHT; an airy space kept at an adequate temperature. It is a closed cube, insulated from outside noise. It provides partition walls for daily life to unfold efficiently, economically, and harmoniously: a space between floor and ceiling³⁴⁴

[Le Logis: UNE SURFACE DE PLANCHER ECLAIRE, un espace ventilé et maintenu à une température favorable. C'est un cube fermé, isolé des bruits extérieurs. C'est un compartimentage qui permet à la vie domestique de se dérouler dans l'efficacité, l'économie, et l'harmonie: un espace entre plancher et plafond].

Evidently inspired by far more complex experimental models that Moisej Ginzburg and other modern architects developed in the Soviet Union between 1925 and 1930 for the Housing Ministry,³⁴⁵ Le Corbusier introduced variable ceiling heights responsive to the "human scale," that is, to patterns of use, circulation, and social status.³⁴⁶ The typical floor section alternated between 4.50 meters and 2.10 meters. The main postulate was a maximum flexibility of the building's spatial

³⁴⁴ Brochure, p. 6.

³⁴⁵ Le Corbusier went to the Soviet Union in 1929 and had the opportunity to visit the Housing Department under Ginzburg's directorship. One of the most striking examples of such alternative housing projects, based on the principle of "Communal Housing" with centralized common services, was Ginzburg's NARKOMTIAZHPRM housing complex built at the end of the 1920's. Conceived with extremely complex sections, the building deployed with great flexibility several types of apartments to meet the various and evolving needs of its dwellers, in combination with common services. Because of their rich "architectural biology" closely reflecting the general social experimentation the country was undergoing in the first decade after the Revolution, these highly standardized, but flexible housing structures were also known as "Social Condensers."

³⁴⁶ While introducing in France the "variable section," Le Corbusier criticized the French standardized apartment height of 2.60 meters.

arrangements in plan and section. This flexibility, following the Soviet model, implied diversity of needs but also, in its Western translation, diversity of income. The worker would be happy with a 2.10 m ceiling height ("le problème du grand rendement"), while the wealthier client would expect 4.50 m ("le problème de grand luxe"). He referred to that difference in "needs" as a question of "échelle humaine," thus, in a way, collapsing human nature and social status. Betraying the unacknowledged sources³⁴⁷ of his new typology based on the concept of Soviet Communal Housing³⁴⁸ he remarked: "A fair introduction of common services into the home economy can become a social asset," but he would add immediately that "[different social classes] cannot in the real life of Western societies, exist in cohabitation; [...] one excludes the other."³⁴⁹ His conclusion was, therefore, that "the Vincennes housing project, the International Exhibition," would become a workers' housing project, once the Exhibition closed: it would be incorporated into Eastern Paris, historically a working-class neighborhood.

³⁴⁷ Le Corbusier was already known in the professional circles as "un certain contemporain, agissant dans un pays que la dictature prolétarienne a renouvelé."

Urbanisme #5, August 1932, *p. 146

³⁴⁸ "Communal Housing" referred to apartment residences where the daily routine of household chores such as cooking, dining, watching children or washing laundry were taken care by services available to all within each housing complex. "Condensing" such activities into common facilities saved on the floor surface and equipment of each individual apartment, not unlike in the Kibbutzim, first created in Palestine in 1909. (Indeed, the Kibbutz were also 'Social Condensers': in Hebrew, "kibbutz" means "to gather," "to assemble.") The idea was also a response to Lenin's (and his companion Krupskaja's) campaigns for the emancipation of women, particularly intense in the early 1920's, even during the Civil War.

³⁴⁹ "Une juste intervention des services communs dans l'économie domestique peut devenir un bienfait social."... "On ne peut pas, dans la vie vraie des sociétés occidentales, cohabiter; l'un exclut l'autre." Brochure, 6.

The buildings' structural system, consisting of either concrete or steel frames, would be the only unchangeable element, in addition to stairwells deployed every 200 meters. The façade, an absorber of light open to "infinite" views, was to be entirely glazed to northern exposure, combining the technologically most advanced transparent materials. Less favorable exposures were blocked with masonry walls and windows.³⁵⁰ A layer of various *services communs* was deployed just above the pilotis, with a constant 4.50-meter section. During the Exhibition, this floor would be used for display purposes by "architects, economists, sociologists, educators, and reformists alike who will explain the problem of contemporary housing, offer solutions, establish answers."

Conceived as a prototype, the Vincennes housing complex was to demonstrate the new art of building and "dwelling." Both a "content" and a "container"--the exhibited *object* and its *context*--the buildings of "Project A" were to remain partially unfinished for the entire Exhibition. The buildings that included shopping, sporting, and educational facilities would be used as huge open lofts for the participating architects, artists and industrialists, national and foreign exhibitors, to unravel the eminently "modern" problem of contemporary life: "the dwelling." (Fig.101-102) In other words, Le Corbusier imagined this demonstration as a sort of "international laboratory" where "the plan of the exhibition [would act] as a source of energy, as the

³⁵⁰ Interestingly, the openings in the wall were not strip windows. However, this kind of contrast of materials created a typically Corbusian "lyrical" tension between opaqueness and translucency, density and lightness.

core of future developments, the pretext all great movements need in order to be started, a seed that would germinate later, after the exhibition, outside the exhibition."³⁵¹ This laboratory would remain in place for five or even ten years--as long as "the problem of the modern dwelling equipment remains an issue" [Brochure, 5].³⁵²

Thus the Exhibition, a Corbusier version of the German *Siedlung* knocking at the gates of Paris, was to remain open one full year. This would allow the Exhibition to be a testing ground for the installations during all four seasons. The surrounding Vincennes woods were themselves to be used as a prototype of the "Ville verte" the entire Paris was bound to become eventually.

Le Corbusier saw his proposal for an exhibition as "une aventure nouvelle: TYPE non encore réalisé d'exposition internationale." What used to be the Exhibition's pavilions (and he mostly had in mind 1925), would be absorbed into the redent building's floor levels. The 'pavilions' would be, in fact, consolidated into a unitary structure with its own totalizing logic, with its own preordained, all-encompassing system, displaying twenty kilometers of floor surface, twenty kilometers of exhibition space. Reminiscent of the grand structures of the Saint-Simonian *Exposition Universelle*, such an Exhibition would be, not unlike its nineteenth-century model, the work of a "Maître d'Œuvre," of two or three *personalités fortes* at the most.

³⁵¹ Brochure, p. 6

³⁵² "... la question de l'équipement domestique de la vie moderne sera en cause." Brochure, p. 5.

Just a few architects would be in charge: the others, those innumerable international architects, would contribute under the inspiration of the "Maitre d'Œuvre"³⁵³

[Quelques architectes seulement pourraient être chargés: le reste, au niveau international, d'innombrables architectures apportent leur concours: tous inspirés par le "Maitre d'œuvre."]

Modern Housing, the theme of the Exhibition, was itself a universal category of the twentieth century as Le Corbusier saw it, one that could encompass the totality of human existence. While convinced that he had invented a new type of World's Exhibition, Le Corbusier had in fact recreated 1867. There was no fundamental change in concept, but a radical transformation in content: Housing equipment had replaced the machine. In his writings on urbanism, Le Corbusier often referred admiringly to Haussmann. He was obviously now--consciously or not--claiming for himself the role of a Frédéric Le Play or a Krantz. For each of their exhibitions, like his own, "instead of being an event reflecting thousands of initiatives, was a disciplined event under the guidance of a few leading minds."³⁵⁴

At the closing of the Exhibition, the structures were to be immediately turned into fully equipped dwellings, using the results tested in the "laboratory." Once turned into apartments, the Exhibition's grounds would repay their cost, and yield a profit for the investors. More sophisticated housing programs would be gradually developed to be housed within the same

³⁵³ Even though Le Corbusier conceded that this "Maitre d'Œuvre" could consist of two or three architects, it is evident that he thought primarily of himself.

³⁵⁴ "Au lieu d'être une manifestation expressive de milliers d'initiatives, elle deviendrait une manifestation disciplinée sous le contrôle de personnalités directrices." Brochure, p. 3

prototypical structure. Vincennes would be left behind, as the new city district grew closer to the Voisin business center boasting its eighteen Cartesian skyscrapers, the nerve center of Paris.³⁵⁵

A Renaissance Urban Concept

While the Vincennes plan called for the most advanced building technologies, Le Corbusier believed that he established a continuity with the city's history by linking Beaux-Arts-derived compositional principles to Haussmannian functionalism. A nineteenth-century understanding of town planning, combined with contemporary technology, led Le Corbusier to further radicalize Haussmann's concept of urban remodelling. What Le Corbusier proposed was not only a massive surgical reconstruction and re-ordering of Paris within its walls but, in addition, a systematic large-scale elimination of all its congested and ill-planned suburbs, through increased densities and expanded green spaces within the city's historical boundaries. He differed widely, however, from Haussmann who had walked, foot by foot, through every section of the city he considered, by his astounding ignorance, or neglect, of the urban detail he was dealing with.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ In fact Le Corbusier was considerably vague and tentative regarding the distribution of the "Unités" along the social scale. It seems that his position varied according to the audience he was addressing. That is how, for example, Le Corbusier's 1934 Kellermann housing project (Project B, to be discussed later), fully equipped with sophisticated car accesses, garages, and swimming pools, became "dwellings for workers," as 1936 approached and his involvement with the Left increased.

³⁵⁶ The "reshaping," that is the razing of the *quartier du Marais* with the Vincennes project would have inevitably done away with a number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century "Hôtels"--Hôtel de Beauvais, Hôtel Marsan, Hôtel Sully, Hôtel Sévigné etc. all dependent on the street, without counting at least three Gothic churches that were to be overrun by his East-

Le Corbusier's vision was of a "Paris [that] shrinks into itself, [while the fugitive] suburbs are reabsorbed [by the city]." "We want," he argued in the Brochure 37, "to have the city flow back towards its center."³⁵⁷ He derided the 1932 Paris Regional Plan extending far into the suburbs to encompass 3600 square kilometers. Le Corbusier's own plan, with its "eight million people within the rectangle of the fortifications" contracted this surface to a mere eighty square kilometers. Such feat was made possible by the systematic application of two symbols of modernity *par excellence*: reinforced concrete and the steel frame. The Exhibition celebrated both with huge sections of 5m-high lofts left unfinished and innovative structural systems, displaying the majestic interior organism of the modern building as a didactic tool dedicated to the public's enlightenment (Fig.104).

The underlying premise of such a project was of significant theoretical consequence. Despite his claims, Le Corbusier saw the city, in the first place, as an aesthetic object, rather than a complex, multi-layered and contradictory, if controllable, organism. The city was not to grow outward through a planned integration of its region; instead, it was to implode into a compact, solidly crafted organism, honoring its almost metaphysically preordained limits (Fig. 105). In that respect, Le

West highway "Axis" raised on pilotis. It is not clear what would happen to the Place des Vêges either, even assuming that it was charitably "engulfed" into his system of *Logis à redent*. The innumerable stately courtyards of minor residencies, with their finely crafted *portails* at street were even less taken into account. A psychological explanation of such an attitude could be found, perhaps, in the fact that Le Corbusier, an artist, an autodidact, passionately striving to be a technician, an engineer, a "real professional," tried to overcompensate his condition by outrage. In his first French I.D., under "profession" we read: "Homme de lettres."

³⁵⁷ "Nous voulons que la ville reflue vers le centre." Brochure, p.8

Corbusier's urban project was a setback in comparison to Haussmann's plan which was based, unlike Le Corbusier's, on statistical data and on a profound knowledge both of the city's morphology and of its economic, sociological and political dynamics.

Most surprising, however, was that, with an explicit refusal to take the region into consideration, i.e. with looking at the city as an independent self-enclosed artifact--the way a Renaissance planner would--Le Corbusier's project patently contradicted the CIAM principles of a "Functional City," articulated in Athens only a year later. The Athens Charter stipulated that "the city is part and parcel of an economic, social and political entity, the Region," and that "no problem of town planning can be understood without constant reference to the Region." "The city plan is only one element of a whole, of the Regional Plan."³⁵⁸ Le Corbusier advocated the opposite. His formalist and, in fact, para-technocratic approach, excluded any comprehensive reference to the city's Region as evidenced in his project of Paris of eight millions inhabitants.³⁵⁹ What Le

³⁵⁸ "...On ne peut envisager un problème d'urbanisme qu'en se référant constamment aux éléments constitutifs de la Région. [...] La ville n'est qu'une partie d'un ensemble économique, social et politique constituant la Région [...] le plan de la ville n'est qu'un des éléments de ce tout que constitue le Plan Régional." J-L Cohen, "Droite Gauche: invite à l'action," in Le Corbusier une Encyclopédie, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987, p.310. La Charte d'Athènes, Plon, 1943 p. 75.

³⁵⁹ A theoretical modification occurs to a certain degree after the Athens Congress. This change appears in Le Corbusier's 1935 *Plan de Paris 1937*, later exhibited in the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*. However, this was done primarily through the implementation of formal, indeed symbolic, road connectors established with distant provincial towns. All the roads intersect in the business center of Paris, creating, at best, unsolvable traffic congestions. Defined in almost mediaeval terms, the logical corollary to his premise is that "la route définira le centre de Paris." Brochure 1937, p.12.

Corbusier called, in this case, "un programme sain de Région Parisienne" (emph. added) was the program of a mythical city that had indeed turned its back on its broader context: a city, abstractly "kept *intra muros*," anchored "within its historical boundaries," away from the external world that remains an unknown, indeed an irrelevant unknown. And Le Corbusier concluded the description of his project by claiming: "Now the 'Twentieth Century Paris' will stand where it belongs, in its *natural* place since the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Kings, the Emperors." As for Le Corbusier himself, he was ready to become the city's new Colbert, with the boldness and prerogatives of a Haussmann, yet still in quest of an Emperor or a King.³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ "Le Paris du 20ème siècle se dressera alors à sa place naturelle, comme toujours d'ailleurs le Paris du Moyen-Age, celui de la Renaissance, celui des Rois, celui des Empereurs." Brochure, 12.

Evidently, given his position, Le Corbusier could not pretend to be among the large number of winners of the Competition that included CIAM members such as Beaudouin. Yet, he commented on that fact sarcastically, as he referred to his proposal: "Nous n'en reçumes plus de nouvelles" [Le Corbusier, Des Canons, des munitions: Merci, des logis s'il vous plait, Paris: 1938, p.10.

CHAPTER V

THE 1934 KELLERMANN PROJECTS: Le Corbusier's invention of a Housing Annex to the Exhibition

"Il m'est venu alors une idée, tenez vous bien, cette
idée fût ma perte"

Le Corbusier
Interview for *Notre Revue*, 1936

The CIAM as a Trojan Horse

Ultimately, the 1932 Competition proved of little practical consequence. Largely conceived as means to collect ideas from French artistic and professional circles, the competition was not in the focus of any decision-making center. Indeed the ultimate power resided in the hands of the Paris City Council. As we have seen in a previous chapter, for purely pragmatic reasons, and in contradiction with the prevailing recommendations of the winning competitors, the Council decided a year later, on April 8, 1933, that the Exhibition would be held on and around the Champ de Mars. Paris, potentially either the greatest loser or the greatest beneficiary of the Exhibition, intended to remain in charge of its profile and of the outcome of the Exhibition. This became even more evident when, in early 1934, following the February riots, the Government decided to cancel the Exhibition altogether.

Only a month later under sustained pressure by Paris and its artists, artisans, businessmen and professionals, the Government reassessed its decision. The ultimate showdown with the Government, however, followed after the latter decreed that the Exhibition would take place only if the City paid the largest share of its price, namely 95 percent of it. Under these circumstances, even the Government-appointed officials such as Labbé, Gréber, or Latour, depended greatly on the implicit or explicit acquiescence of the Municipal Council.

Two architects, however, pursued an independent approach through the channels of the State high administration: each hoped to be granted a major input in the Exhibition, indeed to become its sole planner and designer. These architects were, as we saw, Auguste Perret and Le Corbusier. Perret worked behind the scenes with the Minister of National Education, Alphonse de Monzie. Le Corbusier, on the other hand, appealed to various personalities receptive to the idea of modernism. He chose them among those who, in his mind, could have some connections to the ever sought-after "Autorité." To all these figures of the world of politics, culture, and business, including the State Minister Raoul Dautry,³⁶¹ the author Jean Giraudoux, the industrialist André Citroën, the writer Etienne Gril³⁶² and the Beaux-Arts Director

³⁶¹ A French engineer and administrator, Director of the State Railways in the 1930's, and responsible for its modernization and ultimate prestige, Raoul Dautry (1880-1951), became Minister of *Réarmement* in 1939-40, and Minister of the *Reconstruction* from 1944-45, in the first post-war Government.

³⁶² Etienne Gril, editor of the *Almanach*, published on May 10, 1934 an article by Le Corbusier "La mort de la rue" in which the architect developed his position on the role industry could have in his project.

Georges Huisman,³⁶³ he wrote and kept sending relentlessly his Brochure 1937, which he called "Le Programme même de l'Exposition."

Unlike Perret's campaign, Le Corbusier's had a public face, and rumors about his radical claims regarding Paris inevitably reached the Paris City Council, not always to his advantage. A resistance was building among some of the most alert councilors, particularly among the conservative majority--a resistance that was best represented by Georges Contenot, the Council's President himself.³⁶⁴ Beyond their "dreadful" memories of the Plan Voisin (not always maliciously attributed to Le Corbusier's presumed "Bolshevism"),³⁶⁵ the Council's members resented being bypassed through government channels. Yet, the

³⁶³ The "Directeur des Beaux-Arts" is the chief administrator of the highest state organism for the management and conservation of the French artistic and architectural patrimony had been.

Georges Huisman--Beaux-Arts Director since February 1934--belonged to the political Left, with a passionate interest in contemporary art and its dissemination. He remained head of this administration under the Front Populaire government. He thus ensured a continuity in progressive art policies throughout that period regardless of the changes of regime. His close collaboration with the Exhibition leadership was paramount in its artistic choices, and his personal friendship with such artists as Le Corbusier, Perriand, Herbst, Léger, Yves Brayer, Chaplain-Midy, Othon Friesz, and Edouard Georg served as a bridge between these artists and the Exhibition, before the arrival of the Front Populaire.

His friendship with Jean Zay, the Front's Minister of Public Instruction helped him introduce at the Direction des Beaux-Arts intellectuals such as Jean Cassou, George-Henri Rivière, and Julien Cain. See Sinclair, 1988, p. 67-70.

³⁶⁴ G. Contenot, a center-right politician was the Secretary General of the *Office d'Habitation à Bon Marché*. (Low cost housing)

³⁶⁵ Le Corbusier went later to great lengths in an effort to prove that he was not a "Bolshevik" ("even though," he stated candidly in a letter, "I see nothing wrong with that"). So, for example, in October 1934 he asked Massimo Bontempelli, the editor of *Quadrante*, to send him all the issues in which his projects and articles were published, so that he could prove to his "innumerable enemies" that he hardly could be a "Bolshevik" since his ideas were accepted "en pays fasciste d'Italie." Letter to Bontempelli, October 26, 1934, FLC H2-14

final collapse of Perret's project signaled the beginning of Le Corbusier's first successes.³⁶⁶

Perhaps realizing the potential vulnerability of a project of such dimensions and scope--in case it was perceived as the work of a single architect--Le Corbusier presented his plan as if it had been not only endorsed by an international organization (the CIAM), but in a certain way even as if it had been the work of CIAM's French section itself.³⁶⁷ This subterfuge had the advantage of both distracting the attention from his own name, and of legitimating the broad prerogatives he was seeking. In February 1934, without consultation with either the CIRPAC or CIAM France, yet claiming his plan was "endorsed" by the entire organization,³⁶⁸ Le Corbusier sent the Brochure 1937 to Georges Huisman, head of the *Direction Générale des Beaux-Arts*.

³⁶⁶ Bulletin Municipal Officiel, p.1731. The misadventure of Perret's project was summarized by the City Councillor des Isnards in the following terms:

On a sorti un invraisemblable projet qui consistait à démolir le palais du Trocadéro, et on a essayé de nous l'imposer.

Pour ne pas nous exposer au reproche de faire échouer l'Exposition, nous avons dû au mois de juillet revenir devant vous pour vous exposer que le Gouvernement avait une autre compréhension de la situation.

M. le Prefet de la Seine et la commission des Expos s'étaient trouvés en présence d'un projet tellement différent de celui que vous avez adopté, qu'ils ne pouvaient prendre sur eux de ne pas vous mettre au courant [...] nous vous avons mis au courant, laissant au temps et à la raison le soin de faire son oeuvre.[...] Ces propositions qui, je le répète, étaient à l'opposé de celles que nous vous avons apportées et que nous avons défendues devant vous, et qui heurtaient la volonté presque'unanime de l'Assemblée, n'ont eu, d'ailleurs qu'une existence éphémère.

Cette base de négociations nouvelles n'a pas été retenue; l'on est venu à une conception plus sérieuse, je dois dire aussi à des dimensions un peu plus modestes de l'oeuvre que l'on vous a convié de créer en 1937.

³⁶⁷ " Je suis en train de réussir," wrote Le Corbusier to Bontempelli, "la grande participation des CIAM." Letter to Bontempelli, 26 October 1934. FLC H2-13 85.

³⁶⁸ "Les CIAM, par l'organe de son Comité directeur, CIRPAC se sont ralliés à la thèse exprimée dans la brochure 1937 établie à Paris en 1932..." See:

Le Corbusier asked Huisman that "the CIAM" be given the opportunity "to intervene in some way in the preparation and implementation of the Exhibition." He asserted as well, with no grounds whatsoever, that the CIAM would have the capability to muster the financial support of the "Grande Industrie," in France and abroad. This was the essence of his idea. He was thus offering to the Exhibition a grand experiment, free of charge. Amidst the protests and solidarity meetings of the Paris artists and intellectuals provoked by the cancellation of the Exhibition, Georges Huisman's reaction was immediate. Fascinated by Le Corbusier's idea, he wrote back to him: "Je vous soutiens à fond."³⁶⁹

NOTE POUR MONSIEUR LE DIRECTEUR GENERAL DES BEAUX ARTS 15 March 1934, unpublished manuscript, FLC H2-13 26. [CIRPAC, the executive Committee of the CIAM, stands for: Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes d'Architecture Contemporaine.]

In order to understand fully Le Corbusier's behavior, it is also necessary to mention that Le Corbusier's relationship with CIAM-France was complex and far from being free of more or less open conflicts, not always due to Le Corbusier himself. Thus bypassing the organization while making use of it was not entirely surprising. CIAM-France had its own contradictions and was in no way ready to help Le Corbusier spontaneously. Le Corbusier had been in conflict with André Lurçat since 1928. Both had their claim over the leadership in the organization. What is more, part of the Swiss and German members readily backed Lurçat. Lurçat continuously maneuvered against Le Corbusier through manipulation of the "young" CIAM members, especially on the occasion of his own trip to Moscow in early 1934. For an account of these multifaceted relationships see Jean-Louis Cohen, "L'Architecture d'André Lurçat, 1894-1970: L'autocritique d'un moderne," Doctoral dissertation, Ecole Nationale des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, October 1985

Reference to these circumstances is not irrelevant as it coincides chronologically with the discussions regarding the CIAM involvement in the 1937 Exhibition. It would be important, on this subject, to check the CIAM internal archives (correspondence, meeting minutes) kept in Zürich at the GTA/ETH--and which may not have been available to Le Corbusier.

The CIAM/CIRPAC caution regarding Le Corbusier's proposals has to be seen under the light of the Lurçat-Le Corbusier conflict.

³⁶⁹ FLC H-13; also the CIRPAC letter to Huisman: Archives de France, F21-4727.

Later on, Le Corbusier was to present the entire episode in even more dramatic terms. He had the CIRPAC members believe that Georges Huisman came fortuitously across a sample of his *Brochure 1937*, and summoned him

On April 10, after a few meetings between Huisman, Le Corbusier, and Martzloff, the Director of the Architectural Services of Paris, a proposal for a new site was ready.³⁷⁰ This proposal was conceived with two main concerns in mind: the role of the CIAM and the role of the building industry.

The leading role, offered to the CIAM, was presented in quite glamorous tones. Yet the role Le Corbusier was ready to concede, once the project was approved, was of incomparably lesser significance.³⁷¹ Supposedly conceived by the French group (a claim not entirely deceitful since Le Corbusier easily perceived himself as being the entire Section), the proposal expressed CIAM's readiness to serve as a sponsor, and under CIAM-France leadership, a program for a new housing branch of the Exhibition. A sophisticated decision-making process was established through a special *Comissariat* to include representatives of the CIRPAC, of the City of Paris, and the Exhibition. Le Corbusier suggested also that a financial committee be formed by the CIAM, comprising representatives of various industries selected by the CIRPAC itself. The tasks related to the material execution of the projects were to be incumbent on this committee, under CIAM

immediately with the words: "Votre affaire est du plus haut intérêt. Que pourriez-vous proposer aujourd'hui?" See Le Corbusier, Des Canons, de munitions: Merci, de logis s'il vous plait Paris: 1938. He also wrote that after his meeting with Huisman: "Ordre est donné de nous octroyer un terrain. Nous choisissons le Bastion Kellermann... Muni de cet encouragement je ne voulais pas conserver pour moi seul le bénéfice d'une [telle] entreprise." Revue Hebdomadaire 24.1.35

³⁷⁰ In a letter Le Corbusier remarked that Jacques Gréber, the Head Architect of the Fair, also commented favorably on his plan. FLC, H2-14.

³⁷¹ In fact, Le Corbusier never consulted nor even contacted the French Group, much as he completely ignored the rest of the CIAM that served him only as a façade. This circumstance resulted in an embarrassing scandal for Le Corbusier, as discussed later.

supervision. Le Corbusier also suggested that the CIAM assume full responsibility for devising a program, raising the funds, and for the transfer of the buildings to any appropriate legal entity after the closure of the Fair.³⁷²

The crucial role Le Corbusier envisioned for the "Grande industrie--armature de ce Programme,"³⁷³ (as exposed in the Brochure 1937,) formed the second theme of Le Corbusier's plan, as exposed to Martzloff. In Le Corbusier's words, "this section of Paris 1937 Fair would, hence, have an extremely precise and rigorous character: it would promote the most advanced research in the housing field and its implementation by large industrial concerns. In the housing projects, industry would find specific programs for new large-scale production. This would help reduce

Relatively small, the French group included personalities such as André Lurçat, Pierre Chareau, Beaudouin, Lods (winners at both 1932 and 1934 competitions), Charlotte Perriand, Pingusson, Badovici etc. However, the group CIAM-France largely existed just on paper, in part due to Le Corbusier's systematic efforts at circumventing it, and internal strife referred to above.

³⁷² The broad "responsibilities" to which Le Corbusier liberally committed himself in the name of the CIAM he did not consult, implied serious financial and legal matters that went far beyond CIAM's mandate. This situation was to become a source of a major conflict between Le Corbusier and the members of the CIRPAC, and primarily with its President Van Eesteren, who would ultimately bear the main responsibility for the "(ad)venture."

³⁷³ "L'armature de ce Programme est l'appel à la grande industrie, sous ce vocable expressif 'La Grande industrie s'empare du bâtiment.'" In this Program, Le Corbusier also left space for the "petite industrie," replacing "dead or dying" craftsmanship by industrial design.

Le Corbusier emphasized also that "the advertisement potential, as well as the primacy in placing new technologies offered by an international Exhibition, would represent an increased incentive to the industry's participation." This would in turn be "an exceptional occasion to give the housing question a decisive boost into progress" Program sent to Martzloff on April 10, 1934, FLC H2-13-447.

As far as the CIAM were concerned, this opportunity would be the Movement's first significant breakthrough in the limelight of international attention, at the highest level.

unemployment and offer society high quality products at exceptionally low prices made possible by serial production."³⁷⁴

Le Corbusier concluded in a note to the Paris Chief Architect saying that

once formulated in these terms by creative minds, and implemented by the *grande industrie*, the problem could be presented to the scrutiny of the world public opinion.³⁷⁵

[Le problème ainsi posé par les créateurs, ainsi réalisé par la grande industrie, se trouverait soumis à l'examen de l'opinion publique universelle.]

Two days later Le Corbusier wrote for the first time to Giedion, then secretary of the CIRPAC, to inform him that "serious negotiations were underway" regarding CIAM participation in the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, and to urge him to include the topic in the agenda of CIRPAC's meeting, scheduled for the end of May in London.³⁷⁶

In the same express manner, Le Corbusier was offered an open site, squeezed between a cemetery and a rundown shanty area of the "Zone," on top of the Bastion Kellermann, marked for demolition.³⁷⁷ On early century photographs by Eugène Atget, the

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leur réalisation par la grande industrie qui y trouverait des programmes précis de fabrication nouvelle en grande série, destinées à les arracher en partie au chômage et à mettre à la disposition de la société des produits de haute qualité, aux prix exceptionnels de la grande série.

Program sent to Martzloff by Le Corbusier on April 10, 1934. FLC H2-13 447.

³⁷⁵ Le Corbusier, letter to Martzloff, April 10, 1934. FLC H2-13-447.

³⁷⁶ Letter to Giedion, April 12, 1934. FLC H2-13 *54.

³⁷⁷ Situated at the South-East edge of Paris along the Boulevard Jourdan, in the 13th *arrondissement*, the site was part of the Military No-Man's-Land that separated the fortifications and the City, now invaded by shantytowns. Most of the land left after the demolitions of the military belt around Paris went to various housing projects including the HBM Housing agency run by the City. This site was considered to be of little value to the City, and thus, it was hoped, would be easily granted to the CIAM.

Bastion appeared as a dark mass settled along the squalid Kellermann boulevard. Le Corbusier was "fascinated by the beauty of the terrain," and spent an entire afternoon taking snapshots.³⁷⁸ By April 20, a detailed scheme for the Housing Section, accompanied by the first two plans, was ready.³⁷⁹ This Section of the Exhibition was a half a mile long and fifteen stories high experimental building, meant to house 9360 inhabitants in one single block of 1200 apartments (Fig.106).³⁸⁰ The steel and concrete building spanned like a tense bridge over a depression formed by the Napoleonic fortifications. This dramatic configuration made it possible for a highway to speed, as it were, through and under the mass of the building which now appeared as a new monumental gate pierced into a city wall of vast dimensions. The intimate interweaving of disparate programs of the urban infrastructure and housing developments referred to some initial stages of those "inhabited highways" Le Corbusier developed for Algiers three years before. With other transversal access roads leading the Boulevard Kellermann itself, the slanted building, thinned at its two extremes, appeared as a complex traffic node of a new Haussmannian type. Conceptually connected to a cultural center at one end, and to a sports grounds at the other, the project was conceived as a prototype, a schematic principle,

³⁷⁸ Paradoxically two years later, in an interview to Notre Revue, 1937 n. 8, p. 43. 1936, as difficulties were underway, he would complain that he had been "expelled" far away from the real Exhibition; while only a few months earlier, as he was relating the same story to the *Revue Hebdomadaire* on 24. 1. 1935, he claimed, closer to the truth, that he had "chosen" the site.

The snapshots were apparently taken from the Swiss Pavilion.

³⁷⁹ FLC H2-13-571 *Section du logis*, and plans E 37-3.252; E 37-3.253.

³⁸⁰ In the 1924 plan, the Bastion Kellermann was to be replaced by scattered housing projects, while the remaining part of the 'Zone,' already taken by a cemetery, would not be touched.

rather than a full-fledged design. As such it was both a distant precursor prefiguring the various postwar *Unités d'habitation* as well as the mute herald of the "Vertical Ghettos." As a new type of *Unité*, this emblematic building, meant to establish the "statut de l'habitation moderne," was gauged, according to Le Corbusier, so as to display a complete range of housing issues:

urbanism, industrialization of the building field, definition of standards, use of new technologies--acoustics, isothermy, insulation etc--plastic materials, general aesthetics, housing and urban ethics.³⁸¹

[pour que tous les problèmes puissent s'exprimer: urbanisme, industrialisation du bâtiment, recherche des standards, application des nouvelles techniques,--acoustique isothermie, insolation, etc--plastique, esthétique générale, éthique du logis et de la ville.]

Indeed, as a single *Unité d'Habitation*, placed at the edge of the City, somewhat like a deployed *Immeuble à redent*, the slab appeared as an impregnable wall reaffirming the theoretical severance of the City from its condemned suburbia. Displayed as an immense billboard, this *Unité* was to present simultaneously, like *Vincennes*, the entire building process in various stages of completion, from the steel and concrete carcasses of its structural components, to the complete equipment and furnishing of a modern apartment building. The ultimate result would be, according to Le Corbusier's favorite phrase of the period, a "véritable leçon de biologie architecturale." The various portions of the building afforded a variety of façades, from opaque and translucent to the transparent ones. The materials

³⁸¹ Le Corbusier, Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches Paris, 1936, p.29.

were either those already available on the market, or new ones yet to be proposed by the industry. Simultaneously, the visitor to the Exhibition's "Housing Section" would be able to examine and assess various building technologies clearly set apart from the mechanical systems, sound and heat insulation, as well as the diverse amenities of the building. A section of the structure, as in Project A, was to remain open to exhibition stands for several years, "ten years, perhaps, or as long as the housing problem remains under the scrutiny of contemporary society; these solid buildings would be open to all kinds of specialized exhibitions."³⁸²

Particular attention was given to vertical and horizontal circulation, where delivery, pedestrian and automobile circulation were, of course, strictly segregated. Related to the early *Unité* typology were the common services that combined features observed in transatlantic liners, convents, and, as we saw earlier, Soviet communal apartment buildings. Le Corbusier hoped that he would be able to attract the attention of, and obtain sponsorship from the hotel industry, which would in turn run the kitchens and common dining rooms, provide home-delivered meals and offer cleaning and other maintenance jobs. Other social services would include schools and day-care centers, hygiene, leisure, and sports facilities. A final section of the building was to exhibit studies done by the national CIAM groups, from the "Minimum Dwelling," presented in 1929 in Frankfurt, to the "Functional City" of the Athens Congress, as well as other works

³⁸² Program, April 10, 1934, FLC, H2-13.

yet to be elaborated by the national groups before 1937.³⁸³ Finally, reflecting a range of concerns voiced in Athens, and earlier in the CIAM Frankfurt Congress, Le Corbusier anticipated that the studies would, "as a matter of course," principally take into consideration workers' housing "from the smallest one to the one sheltering large families." In order to demonstrate clearly that the new methods did not imply the principle of class differentiation, a part of the Exhibition would deal with dwelling amenities destined to another kind of clientele as well, and "these dwelling exhibition spaces would remain available to all kinds of specialized expositions."³⁸⁴

The project would be specific only in as much as it would "truly express the modern home." Like any practical tool, the dwelling (*logis*) was to be regarded as a simple object for consumption, but of a kind that could not yet be found anywhere in the world. The mobility, adaptability and transformability of the living spaces conveyed by the unfinished structure where only the skeleton was obviously permanent, offered a vision intended to affect profoundly the received notions of permanence and uniqueness of the built object conveyed by brick or stone. The "clasp in" inhabitable volume was meant to be used and discarded. The transparency of the unfinished building was there to prove it. "The 1937 Exhibition would hence ensure a twofold magnificent

³⁸³ This exhibition of CIAM projects would, eventually, become the only real CIAM contribution that Le Corbusier admitted in his final program for the Bastion Kellermann, despite Van Eesteren's repeated protests.

³⁸⁴ Program April 10, 1934.

cooperation of the industry and the technicians of architecture."³⁸⁵

From Form to Process

I was fascinated by the beauty of the site.
Le Corbusier

On May 4, Huisman called Le Corbusier to inform him that an agreement of principle about the site and the program had been reached between the Ministry of Commerce and the City's administration; an article relative to a "Housing Annex" of the Exhibition would be included in the convention waiting for approval in the City Council, to be followed by the Parliament's final approval.³⁸⁶ Le Corbusier was overjoyed and wrote to Huisman: "I owe you to have obtained for CIAM and myself a role in 1937."³⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, on March 15, Le Corbusier had submitted to Huisman a first outline of a program defining his position on the "équipement du logis et de la ville" as opposed to the "décoration de l'appartement et de la rue."³⁸⁸ This outline was, in a sense, a reassessment of the Brochure '37, along with new priorities. While departing from a general discourse on the

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ As Martzloff, the Paris Chief Architect, emphasized to the City Council:

Il a paru intéressant d'en faire l'objet d'une annexe à l'Expo. Il n'en coûtera pas un centime à la Ville, ni à l'Expo, s'il en devait être autrement, cette section ne serait pas ouverte.

Bulletin Municipal Officiel, 12 May 1934, p.1821.

³⁸⁷ "Je vous dois d'avoir obtenu pour CIAM et moi-même une participation pour 1937." Le Corbusier, letter to Huisman, 5 May 1934.

³⁸⁸ FLC, H2-13 26.

City predetermined by mythical boundaries, this new program alluded to further readjustments of Le Corbusier's concerns, raised after the Fourth CIAM Congress in Athens. Even though the document claimed that the CIAM had given, through the CIRPAC, its full approval to the thesis presented in the Brochure, the reader of the new program was now referred only to the "spirit" of that document. As the symbolic and formal level was abandoned in favor of more concrete, specific solutions for the revival of decrepit urban sectors, in the new outline Le Corbusier was clearly displacing the thrust from the city to the dwelling, and from grand urban upheavals to the methodic reform of the housing concept applied to a concrete situation. Such was the case of the "îlot numéro 6"--the result of a study similar to the plans other CIAM sections presented in Athens, two years earlier. In addition to its spirit, the only, albeit significant, reference to the *Brochure* was its call to the "*Grande Industrie*" which could now intervene in the general question of the dwelling's equipment." The standardized dwelling (*logis*) and its industrially produced amenities were the new focus of attention. The document went on to claim that an Exhibition dedicated to the "Arts Décoratifs" could assume its full significance in 1937 only if part of its efforts were redirected from the "décoration" of the apartment or the street, to the "fittings of the dwelling," and the "*constitution of the city*;" this integral remodelling that must extend beyond the street façade, where Haussmann had stopped. The term, "*constitution of the City*," appearing for the first time, was significant in itself. As opposed to *institer*, the

term *constituer* implies tying together, assembling, forming, that is composing a whole out of distinct, preexisting elements. Instead of instituting an *a priori* form, imposed upon the world of "existing facts," Le Corbusier was now beginning to produce a form resulting from specific conditions, from empirical data. His urban concept was gradually moving from *form* to *process*.

These principles called for two specific tasks at the Exhibition: first, that necessary attention be given to the issue of modern dwelling and its equipment; second, that it be demonstrated that the notion of modern dwelling "équipement" requires the involvement of industry, both through the use of the most up-to-date building technologies, and through the dissociation of industry from the production of "superfluous, or even sterile, consumers' goods"--an implicit reference to the perceived causes of the 1929 crisis. The CIAM would be charged with producing such design programs of consumer goods responsive to the needs of the modern dwelling. Based on these programs, the Exhibition would present experimental buildings--experimental on the purely technical level, and on the level of common services and community life. Such a program for "Housing and Urbanization" would call upon "creative minds around the world" to imprint the Exhibition with a spirit "clearly oriented towards the future of the building industry and the urbanization of towns."³⁸⁹

Thus conceived, this new focus on the processes of "urbanization of towns" was, in a sense, a reversal of the *Plan*

³⁸⁹ Manuscript: *NOTE POUR M. LE DIRECTEUR GENERAL DES BEAUX ARTS*, March 15, 1934. FLC H2-13

Voisin method³⁹⁰. Now the design was developing from within the rationally conceived cluster of dwellings ("le logis et sa conséquence, l'urbanisme moderne"), instead of emanating from a pre-established, frozen icon superimposed on an imploding city confined within its historically closed borders. The movement toward rationally conceived dwellings was emblematically expressed in the *Plan de Paris '37*, by introducing four speedways, projected from within the heart of the city outwards into its still abstract and distant Region (Fig. 106). For Le Corbusier this was the first step out of a self-imposed straitjacket. The *Plan de Paris 1937*, now gradually adapting to the principles that were to be exposed systematically in the *Athens' Charter*, showed more than a simple "descent" into the "realm of existing facts," as claimed in the *Œuvres complètes*. This change was evident in the new treatment of the city center. Where once stood a *Plan Voisin* braced by 18 rigid skyscrapers, arranged in axial symmetry as perfect as the the existing city fabric permitted, the Center of *Paris 1937*, albeit still monumental, was now more reflective of the needs of a "Functional City" with its diversified functional and typological arrangement, translated into a dynamic, rather than axial, formal composition (Fig.108).

This was indeed a departure from the Beaux-Arts compositional principles and therefore, from aestheticizing, academist urban design, still evident in the 1932 Vincennes-Voisin

³⁹⁰ This new course was not entirely due, however, to an internal evolution of Le Corbusier's thought. This change has also to be looked at in conjunction with the 1928 *Loi Loucheur* relative to the new programs for public housing.

project. Also for the first time, Le Corbusier was basing his design on some statistical data, as provided by studies of the seventeen decrepit urban blocks ("Ilôts insalubres"³⁹¹) of the Parisian urban fabric, completed by the City. As is admitted in the Œuvres as well, "this concept (*Ville Radieuse: Monumentale*) is completely abandoned...and a greater freedom in the treatment of spaces is achieved." ³⁹²

PROJECT B

Before the meeting of the City Council scheduled for May 9, Le Corbusier returned to his Bastion Kellermann design to recast his gargantuan slab into an architecturally well-defined *Patte de poule* type, that he called "Projet B." (Fig. 110) This "T CIAM" skyscraper used the principle of the "gratte-ciel cartésien" which appeared for the first time in his plans for Barcelona in 1932, and then reedited for Antwerp and Geneva in

³⁹¹ The seventeen *Ilôts* were ranged according to the degree of insalubrity with death from tuberculosis faring first. Paul Juillerat was the first to start identifying those dangerous spots by the end of the nineteenth century.

³⁹² "cette conception [*Ville Radieuse: monumentale*] est tout à fait écartée...ce qui aboutit à une liberté plus grande dans le traitement de l'espace." Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret, Œuvre complète 1934-1938, Zürich, Les Editions d'Architecture Erlenbach-Zürich, 2e édition, 1947, p.11.

For an informative discussion of this Plan, see Nary McLeod, 1985 p.239. The author links these changes rather to Le Corbusier's overall ideological readjustment along the lines of the Neo-syndicalist circle which published in the journal Plans. If these ideological modifications are certainly accountable for such evolution, one should not, it seems, disregard either the influence of the 1933 CIAM Congress on the "Functional City." I would also add that this is the time when Le Corbusier becomes more aware, hence critical, of the effects of unrestrained mercantilism, in favor of a planned economy--albeit still within the framework of capitalist modes of production--along the line of reforms Roosevelt had adopted. Le Corbusier's trips to the United States in this period attest, I think, to this interest.

1933.³⁹³ The Exhibition appeared now as an unexpected opportunity to test a typology conceived just two years earlier. Here too, the building was going to be presented in a variety of degrees of completion, combining diverse structural systems in steel and concrete. This change of building type gave him also a chance to take full advantage of the Bastion itself as the "last vestige" (or so he claimed), of Napoleon III's grandiose fortifications.³⁹⁴ Thus, Le Corbusier brought into harmony history and modernity, not without signifying, incidentally, the preeminence of the *Dwelling*

³⁹³ In fact, as the positive outcome of his plea appeared closer to his reach, Le Corbusier felt a need to replace the architecturally "neutral" slab of purer CIAM extraction, WITH a project of outright Corbusian vintage.

Gilles Ragot, of the Institut Français d'Architecture, mistakenly postdates the plan, moving it to September, and thus erroneously concludes that the project was redesigned by Le Corbusier "after the Municipal Council refused him half of the site." See Gilles Ragot, "Le Corbusier et l'Exposition" in Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire, Exhibition Catalogue, Paris, IFA/Paris Musées, 1987, p.72. See also G. Ragot "Exposition internationale de Paris, 1937," Le Corbusier une Encyclopédie, exhibition catalogue, Paris 1987, pp. 150-151.

The new "Patte de poule" project, in fact, is to be dated May 6 at the latest: a full week before the *Conseil Municipal* started its deliberations on the subject. On this plan a note in Le Corbusier's handwriting reads: "Plan soumis le samedi 6 mai 34 à 11h à Martzloff pour bien établir la nécessité d'occuper le terrain indiqué sur le plan."

What the Municipal Council *did* "split," but only on May 16 when the Convention was approved by a vote, was the site of the Bastion Kellermann proper over which Le Corbusier had already placed the Cartesian--"Patte de poule"-- skyscraper. Le Corbusier, of course, as he wrote later on 25 October 1934, to Van Eesteren, never accepted this partition: "C'est comme si l'on vous donnait à manger dans une assiette coupée en deux." Letter to van Eesteren, 25 October 1934 FLC-H2-13 80.

This skyscraper was not a "spare" solution either. He intentionally chose this type, as he always looked for opportunities to test some of his "theoretical" projects. This was not the case of the "slab," and this fact may serve as an explanation of why he never published that first Kellermann project. Le Corbusier never considered it to be a fully accomplished design, but rather an abstract, working project, intended primarily to illustrate the principle of his idea. Among the six projects that Le Corbusier devised for the Exhibition, only one, the last, made out of canvas, was originally designed for the Fair. Yet, as it will be shown later, the idea of a "canvas" Pavilion, the 'container,' was not Le Corbusier's.

³⁹⁴ In fact the Bastion was not the "last vestige" as Le Corbusier claimed. There is, even today, a number of vestiges of the kind, in particular the Bercy Bastion. One can also find traces of these fortifications in the eighteenth *Arrondissement*. The Paris Opera has its stage sets workshops in the Bastion itself.

over the *Cannon*. Le Corbusier insisted on this dialectical union of past and present, as his letters to various officials in defense of the Bastion threatened with demolition testify.³⁹⁵ The various levels of the boulevard and the Bastion were skilfully used to separate typical circulation paths. The Bastion's "esplanade" served as a platform under the pilotis to house the sports facilities and a swimming pool. Above, while "adapting pure theory to a difficult site," Le Corbusier distributed the various organs of his "biologie architecturale" such as the "ravitaillement," the "services communs" and, most importantly, his flexible living units "de type Ville Radieuse." Having, therefore, moved away from the pure *a priori* forms cast over the city, such as in the Voisin Plan, Le Corbusier now engaged deliberately in the "process" of "constituting" rather than "instituting" the architectural object and its urban space. The Bastion was used as a vantage point, underscoring the building's prototypical nature. Yet, at the same time, the Bastion's resounding angular volumes seemed reflected in the broken arms of the building itself. In this manner, Le Corbusier's skyscraper was both clearly set apart from the rest of the City and in tight communion with it. Positioned on top of the Bastion the building was presented to the City from an "open palm,"--a gesture already seen in his seminal photograph of the *Plan Voisin* model--but with a symptomatic difference. While the Plan Voisin was "offered" to the City from above, as if by a demiurge, Kellermann, acknowledging to a point history and context, emerged from the

³⁹⁵ See scattered information in FLC H2-15 series.

City's entrails resonant with the powerful geometry of the Bastion (Fig. 111). Yet, at the same time, in its mute monumentality, this ostensibly symmetrical building, refusing both dialogue and doubt, seemed to advance toward the city like a victorious warrior carried on a shield.

The Debate in the Paris City Council and the Question of "Article 10"

"On ajouta une petite phrase..."
Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier's idea to use the CIAM to promote his immense project, giving it a broader institutional base and an international recognition, backfired to his surprise. The architect had hoped the CIAM would serve as the Trojan horse smoothing the entry into a besieged citadel, the *Conseil Municipal*. He expected that appearing under CIAM sponsorship, with a major project at a major international event, would definitively secure him the preeminent position as the Modern Movement's undisputed leader. Ironically, it was precisely the "international" character of his proposal that the hostile members of the City Council used against him. The irony was all the more bitter since, as mentioned earlier, Le Corbusier never had the vaguest intention of sharing the project with anyone in the CIAM. Very soon, he found himself having both to restrain "overly ambitious" CIAM colleagues, and to prove to weary City Councilors that no commissions would be stolen from French architects by

foreigners--a major concern for the City in the midst of the current devastating crisis.³⁹⁶

On Saturday morning, May 12, 1934, still in the midst of caustic political disputes in the City Hall that followed the illegal involvement of some right-wing Councilors in the February 6 street mutiny (a mutiny Le Corbusier praised as the "awakening of cleanliness" in his discussion of the *Cité Radieuse*³⁹⁷), the Government and the City Administration presented the Assembly with a draft proposal of the Exhibition's Convention for approval. Prepared by the Minister of Commerce and, on Le Corbusier's behalf, by Huisman, the government-appointed Beaux-Arts director, the document was finalized by the City Administration after two months of negotiations. The twenty articles of the Convention established the prerogatives and responsibilities of both the Government and the City; determined the site and the size of the Exhibition; and stipulated their respective financial obligations, for a budget amounting to 300 million francs.³⁹⁸ The most novel

³⁹⁶ In a document produced to this effect, and addressed to Edmond Labbé, the Commissioner General, Le Corbusier listed 32 names of presumed UAM, PSM (Peintres et Sculpteurs Modernes,) or CIAM members, with each name ostensibly harboring the ultimate qualifier: "French." FLC H2-13, July 4, 1935.

That Le Corbusier never considered seriously involving the CIAM, even though he presented the matter as if the project would be nothing less than a new Weissenhof for Paris, was soon evident. His equivocal statements created a confusion at the CIRPAC meeting, well illustrated by his angered response that "Some in the CIAM were quick to conclude that wonderful projects were about to fall in their laps." See letter to Giedion, 29 December 1934, FLC H2-13 120. He sharply rebuffed Van Eesteren for insisting on a genuine participation of CIAM France. He reminded CIAM's President that "he, [Le Corbusier] and no one else, had obtained the project, and hence should be granted an undisputed primacy in it." Le Corbusier, letter to van Eesteren, FLC H2-13 80.

³⁹⁷ Under a photograph of the February 6 pro-fascist riots, Le Corbusier wrote "the awakening of cleanliness." See *Prélude* n. 9, February 10, 1934, p. 4.

³⁹⁸ To the bitter disappointment of the Councilors, the City was to bear the major part of the budget, with 285 million francs to be raised through a national lottery, whereas the Government would be responsible for the

part of the affaire, however, was Article 10 of the Convention, which stipulated, without naming it, CIAM's participation in the Exhibition and the modes of its involvement at the Bastion Kellermann--an Annex specifically created for the CIAM as the "Housing Section" of the Exhibition. The Prefect of Paris defended the plan before the City Councilors by claiming,

An international group of modern architects asked to be given the opportunity to realize on a site of a certain importance, and on the occasion of the 1937 Paris Exhibition, a practical demonstration of concepts that should, in their view, bring about notable improvements to the comfort and hygiene of worker's housing. I thought the project to be of sufficient importance to strongly support this group's endeavor. 399

[un groupe international d'architectes modernes [qui] s'est déjà constitué en comité pour réaliser une démonstration pratique de ses conceptions en matière d'habitations et plus particulièrement d'habitations ouvrières...avec le concours financier d'industriels intéressés.]

This "international group of modern architects," in the prefect's words, would realize their project in accordance with plans previously approved by the Exhibition's leadership and with the financial help of industrialists interested in promoting their building technology as well as their products for the equipment of the dwelling. This meant that financing would be sought neither from the City, nor from the Exhibition itself.

If such an explanation did not have the sharpness and panache of a Le Corbusier proclamation, it stated clearly the essential point: that the City of Paris and its Exhibition would get, free of charge, a state-of-the-art housing project of

considerably smaller amount of just 15 million francs. This was the condition set by the Government for accepting the reinstatement of the project, as it yielded to the intense pressure of public opinion.

³⁹⁹ Bulletin Municipal Officiel 12 May 1934, p.1802.

international repute.⁴⁰⁰ The statement ended by claiming that such a project would be of considerable interest not just on an international scale, but also for the architects of Paris and France, for the industrialists, developers, and masons alike. The Prefect concluded: "These grounds are now useless: it would be an easy give-away."

Whether or not all the Councilors had the opportunity to see the second, "*patte de poule*" version of the Kellermann project, most of them were aware of the gigantic dimensions of both projects, soaring more than ten floors above the city's skyline. A number of Councilors, including the Council's President and Head of the main Housing Agency (HBM), Georges Contenot, and its most vocal Communist deputy André Marty, visited the site and reflected upon its significance and its precedents in recent achievements of modern housing architecture.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ All this was claimed, of course, on the faith of Le Corbusier's assurances that he would work out a plan with the *Grande industrie* he was convinced would finance the whole enterprise: "Nous apportons nous-mêmes le capital," he insisted repeatedly.

This position is in sharp contrast with Le Corbusier's later claims to grants from the Exhibition and his complaints in the press about being blackmailed with demands to come up with the 42 million Francs needed for his Kellermann skyscraper.

⁴⁰¹ André Marty, a prominent French Communist Party leader, expelled in the early 1950 over issues related to the Spanish Civil War, published soon after the debate a brochure on the Communist City Policies where he articulates in greater detail his position regarding Le Corbusier's project.

On veut construire ces logements le long du boulevard Kellermann, entre l'avenue de Gentilly et l'avenue d'Italie.

(...) Il semble, à première vue, logique que, pour les maisons qu'on va construire, on impose à ce groupement d'architectes de construire des maisons ouvrières à très bon marché et, naturellement, de les conserver après l'Exposition.

(...) Il est facile d'imposer à ce groupement d'architectes internationaux l'obligation de construire des maisons habitables. C'est une question d'argent, dites-vous, mais ce sont eux qui les construisent comme modèles pour en tirer les bénéfiques. BMO, 12 May, p. 1802.

As the Councillors made in their speeches bewildered, if only indirect, references to Perret's recently defeated project, they were sensitive to the fact that, in Le Corbusier's project they were, once again, faced with giantism and that, once again, gigantism was sponsored by the Government. This situation in itself was almost sufficient to antagonize the more conservative among the Councilors, not the least Georges Contenot, and Noël Pinelli, the Assembly's President and Vice-President respectively. Furthermore, presented as the work of "a group of international architects," the project was an easy target for political manipulation. President Contenot interjected:

The danger here is seeing a number of important buildings built by foreigners, and I declare that this is so much less work available to French architects.⁴⁰²

[J'aperçois la menace d'un certain nombre de constructions importantes faites par des étrangers, et je déclare que c'est autant de moins de travail pour les Français]

Of little avail was the effort by the City Architect Martzloff to explain that

no one is speaking of giving work to architects, but to possibly allow, provided the Exhibition's approval, a practical experiment by French or foreign architects at their own expenses"⁴⁰³

[il ne s'agit pas ici de donner des travaux à des architectes, mais de laisser faire éventuellement, et après examen des plans par la Commission de l'Exposition et par la Ville de Paris, une démonstration pratique par des architectes français ou étrangers à leurs frais, risques et périls]

No more successful was the Prefect's concession that

André Marty, Du travail et du pain ! La politique municipale des communistes, Paris, Les Publications Révolutionnaires, 1934, p. 22-23.

⁴⁰² Ibid. p. 1819.

⁴⁰³ Ibid. p. 1820.

no one would hesitate to agree with you, if the need in housing was limited; but since the market is almost unlimited [...] no French architect will be hurt⁴⁰⁴

[Personne n'hésiterait à tomber d'accord avec vous si les besoins en logements étaient limités; mais puisque le marché en est presque illimité [...] aucun architecte français ne sera endommagé]

It was evident that, if the City or the Exhibition were not expected to finance the project, the Council could hardly be accused of diverting portions of their budget to commissions that would have gone otherwise to unemployed French architects. Yet Georges Contenot insisted that Article 10 be amended so as to ensure that anything built on the Bastion during the Exhibition would be afterwards demolished.⁴⁰⁵

Sometimes verging on the absurd, the Vice-President insisted that if at the end of the Exhibition these buildings were not demolished, "[...] we would have on our hands a number of dwellings built by foreigners, that could have been built by French architects."⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 1820.

⁴⁰⁵ Contenot and his supporters later expressed openly their distaste for the project; no "conspiracies," or else "jeux sournois," were plotted against Le Corbusier behind the scene, as he later consistently asserted. Claiming an overly busy schedule, and having nothing to say that Le Corbusier did not already know, Contenot refused to see him in November 1934. Yet, Contenot probably did not declare from the benches of the City Assembly that "Le Corbusier est anti-Français et travaille contre la France," as Le Corbusier asserted. *Notre Revue* 1937, n.8, 1936. A thorough search through the proceedings of the Paris City Council's debates for 1934 and 1935 showed no traces even of Le Corbusier's name.

⁴⁰⁶...un certain nombre d'habitations, lesquelles normalement auraient été construites par des architectes français, se trouveront, en raison de la faculté de construction internationale de cette section, avoir été construites par des étrangers.

BMQ 12 May 1934, p.1821.

In other words, what was recommended was nothing less than the demolition of the structures built free of charge by foreigners, in order for French architects to build them again on the budget of the City Hall. In addition to petty chauvinism, aimed to please specific constituencies, parochialism was another facet of this position, as some Councilors insisted, without quoting their sources, that there was no need to call upon foreigners since it was well-known that "at 9 out of 10 international competitions, French architects receive the first award."⁴⁰⁷

A second touchy issue was used by both Contenot and Pinelli: the fate of the Great War veterans and the responsibility of the Exhibition towards them, in the wake of an increased marginal displacement of this social group. As Pinelli declared:

After hearing the Veteran architects' loud protests for being excluded from the City's patronage, it would simply amount to a provocation not to raise this issue right now.⁴⁰⁸

[Après les véhémentes protestations que nous avons entendu formuler par les architectes anciens combattants qui n'ont pas été appelés à prendre part à des travaux faits ou contrôlés par la Ville, ce serait comme une provocation de ne pas évoquer en ce moment cette question devant vous.]

To further capitalize politically, these and other Councilors uttered thinly veiled demagogic calls to give half of

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. p.1822.

⁴⁰⁸

...Après les véhémentes protestations que nous avons entendu formuler par les architectes anciens combattants qui n'ont pas été appelés à prendre part à des travaux faits ou contrôlés par la Ville, ce serait comme une provocation de ne pas évoquer en ce moment cette question devant vous. Ibi., p. 1823.

the Bastion to war-veteran architects (with no irony intended).⁴⁰⁹ The absurdity of these claims went as far as requesting that French architects and veterans be granted commissions, as a Councilor put it, "regardless whether these architects were 'modern' or even kitschy (*pompier*s)" ⁴¹⁰ That remark probably caused Le Corbusier to jump from his chair; the number of red exclamation marks he put in the margin of the memorable speech, as he read the proceedings, seems to indicate the degree of his consternation.

Yet, characteristically, as much as Contenot and Pinelli were ready to chop up the site assigned to that "group of international architects," and to distribute them generously to French architects, primarily war veterans, "should they ask for it," they did not expect that the city should do anything else for the veterans than "lend the site free of charge." ⁴¹¹ Indeed, it was an 'easy give-away.'

The position of the right-wing majority with regard to the Exhibition was most clearly summarized by Contenot. This position first stemmed from the specific ambitions different

⁴⁰⁹ Indeed despite such pious calls, and amidst bitter protests, these architects ended deprived of any commission from the Exhibition. Even their own pavilion, which resulted from an internal competition, was denied any subsidies, and could not be built.

⁴¹⁰

... je demande que la place soit faite et grandement faite aux architectes français, qu'ils soient modernes et même qu'ils soient *pompier*s, et je demande un regime de faveur pour les architectes anciens combattants qui l'ont bien mérité." *BMO* May 12 p.1823.

⁴¹¹

Ces travaux seront attribués de preference aux architectes français et par priorité, s'ils le sollicitent.[...] aux architectes anciens combattants. Il ne devront donner lieu, de la part de la Ville, a aucune contribution d'aucune sorte autre que l'utilisation gratuite de terrains nécessaires.
Ibid. p. 1824.

interest groups expected the Exhibition to respond to. On April 8, 1933, after a year of hesitations, the Conseil Municipal expressed through a majority vote its final decision that the 1937 Exhibition would be held in the center of Paris, roughly on the traditional exhibition location. The Paris Assembly's pragmatic stance stemmed both from a keen awareness of a growing economic crisis, and from a clear political will to respond to the most immediate, if perhaps shortsighted, interests of its predominant constituency: luxury business.

The Exhibition would be located within reach of its most important clientèle. The exhibition would not require substantial investments for the urbanization of vacant City areas, or for the reconstruction of working class settlements. As Pierre Dailly, a right-wing Councilor representing the Sixteenth *arrondissement*, emphatically declared:

This is not a time for spending money, be it for wonderful projects: we don't have any [...] the business community is exhausted [...] a great number of business people are stunned. [...] I know what I am talking about, I am a businessman myself. 412

[Nous ne sommes pas à une époque où l'on peut, même lorsqu'il s'agit de réaliser de magnifiques projets, dépenser de l'argent: nous n'en avons pas... Le commerce n'en peut plus. Beaucoup de commerçants sont à quia: j'en sais quelque chose, je suis commerçant moi-même.]

Given the circumstances, Dailly called for the pure and simple rejection of all of the Exhibition's annexes, including the experiment with low-cost apartments suggested by "that

412 Ibid. p. 1795.

international group of modern architects" at the Bastion Kellermann.

The second concern of the Assembly's Right-wing majority was again articulated by Contenot who, short of calling for bread and circuses, described the Exhibition as a means to "create a powerful distraction that will help bring about union and social peace."⁴¹³ Contenot, himself a businessman, with a considerable experience with commercial exhibitions, first as an official in various exhibition committees, and later with his own firm participating as an exhibitor, appeared to be the most intelligent opponent to the Kellermann proposal. While saying that he would accept only a temporary project, he cautioned the Assembly against accepting any permanent projects of the scope and breadth suggested by that

group of modern international architects [who] have already formed a Committee which intends to demonstrate new housing methods, most specially workers' housing...with the financial support of interested industries.⁴¹⁴

[groupe international d'architectes modernes [qui] s'est déjà constitué en comité pour réaliser une démonstration pratique de ses conceptions en matière d'habitations et plus particulièrement d'habitations ouvrières...avec le concours financier d'industriels intéressés.]

The Convention stated the right of the City to require the demolition of the structures if deemed necessary. Yet, Contenot's major concern was that such an immense project on a lot of 35,000 square meters, if built, would never be demolished.

⁴¹³ "...créer un puissant dérivatif susceptible de faire l'union et rétablir la paix sociale." Idem, p.1796.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. p. 1796.

Calling upon his experience as the president of the City subsidized Low Cost Housing (HBM), he warned that this "international committee of architects" would inevitably transform itself, either directly or through a third party, into a corporation for "x years." In addition, according to its President, the City would find itself on the one hand creating a new Heckley Convention,⁴¹⁵ "so vehemently criticized in the past." On the other hand, the City would give away municipal land to foreigners, while French architects, crushed by a growing recession, were already facing the greatest difficulties in obtaining commissions.

Most Councilors probably did not know who the "International Architects" were, as none of the officials reporting on the project explained the scope and nature of the CIAM. Contenot himself, however, seemed very well informed. He used this advantage to attack the project on its own merits as well. Chastising its unacceptable dimensions, he made it clear that the proposed project could not be compared (as the councilor Raoul Brandis suggested) with the *Weissenhofsiedlung* exhibition, precisely because of its scale. ⁴¹⁶ Georges Contenot, indeed,

⁴¹⁵ Contenot alluded to the City Council's law that in 1933 entrusted a single contractor with building some 20,000 apartments instead of dividing it among several developers. Actually, this architect built almost all the apartments given to the SAGI (Société Anonyme de Gestion Immobilière) established with City and private capital, as prescribed by the 1924 housing plan. Of course, the case raised strong suspicions of bribery. Yet, to compare this immense number with the 1170 apartments that Le Corbusier intended to build is rather obvious political manipulation.

⁴¹⁶ It seems that a compromise with the City was possible, as suggested by Gréber's proposal to Le Corbusier to try to reduce the scale of his project by breaking it down into smaller units spread out in green spaces. Yet, since Le Corbusier's primary goal, at that moment, was to test his *Unité d'habitation*, Gréber's advice was rejected with scorn.

presented the Stuttgart housing complex as an example of what Kellermann was not: a convincing case of international collaboration in housing exhibitions that pleaded, with its size and diversity of architectural proposals, against the single gigantic structure proposed for the Bastion.

The gigantism was all the more objectionable since it would be built by foreigners to house permanently a Parisian population. Contenot also used his expertise, as he quoted the example of the German *Siedlung* movement,⁴¹⁷ to convince the City Assembly that, at any rate, the Kellermann experiment would cast no new light on housing. He reinforced his argument, by asserting, with little sympathy for the genre, that similar projects already existed even in Paris: just a day before, he had visited at Drancy "the fifteen-story high towers," built by the *Office d' habitations à bon marché*, "which are of the same kind and of the same conception as the one they want to build on the Kellermann Boulevard."⁴¹⁸

In a sense Contenot was right; not only had a number of *Siedlungen* already been built by prominent CIAM members such as Gropius or Bruno Taut, but even the Drancy Housing Project was built by one of its French members, Eugène Beaudouin. These experiments might have been sufficient, both at an international

⁴¹⁷ An appeal to anti-German reflexes, just 16 years after the war, now exacerbated by Hitler's threat, is not to be underestimated in this choice of argument.

⁴¹⁸ "... les tours à quinze étages et qui sont de la même essence et de la même conception que ce qu'on veut nous édifier boulevard Kellerman." *BMO*, May 12, 1934, p.1796.

and a French level, to "demonstrate in practical ways", as stated the *Mémoire Préfectoral*,

concepts that its members consider likely to bring about considerable progress, in particular from the point of view of comfort and hygiene, in the field of workers' housing. 419

[des conceptions que ses adhérents estiment susceptibles d'aboutir à d'appréciables progrès, notamment au point de vue du confort et de l'hygiène, dans le domaine de l'habitation ouvrière.]

A very admired film by Jean Benoit-Levy, that "moved the spectators to tears by its lyricism," was shot during the building of Drancy's *Cité de la Muette*.⁴²⁰ The film was described by Maximilien Gauthier, a journalist for the Communist daily L'Humanité, the Communist daily, as showing "selected images revealing to the public that an entirely new building method already exists, ready for large-scale application."⁴²¹

The Communist faction pleaded against the "wasteful funds" allocated for the Exhibition. They favored instead large social projects that, in truth, only a revolution could have imposed, but not necessarily implemented. The funds for such projects could be sought primarily from the cancelation of the

419 *Mémoire Préfectoral* as read to the Paris Councilors on May 9, 1934, written on the basis of Le Corbusier's proposal.

420 Among the younger members of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), Beaudouin, born in 1898, Prix de Rome in 1928, adhered to the Movement's social ideals and was politically inclined to the Socialists. He collaborated with the noted Socialist Paris City Councilor and Mayor of working class Suresne, the urban planner Henri Sellier. The Beaudouin and Lods office flourished after the War.

421

...des images choisies pour révéler au grand public qu'une méthode de construire entièrement nouvelle a fait ses preuves d'ores et déjà, prête à être mise en œuvre aussi grandement qu'on le voudra.

[emph. added]

Maximilien Gauthier, "Un film sur la Cité de la Muette," in Nouvelles Littéraires, October 1933, p.5.

police and military budgets. Le Corbusier, and the artistic Left in general, shared the views of the Communists on the Exhibition, if perhaps not always for the same reasons. Great hopes were invested in the ability of the Front Populaire to overhaul completely the Exhibition in the name of an "Exposition telle que nous la voulons, contre l'Exposition telle qu'elle est."⁴²²

The debate on Article 10 ended with a significant compromise, as the option of a permanent structure to be built on the Bastion was not *a priori* excluded, the support for the "Public Housing" Annex coming mostly from the Left. The Council retained the first part of the text stating that, while the permission to build the *Unité* had to be sought from the City, the latter only "reserved for itself the right to demolish the structures after the Exhibition", rather than requiring it as Contenot sought it.⁴²³ However, the second part of the article that stated explicitly that the City *could* authorize the

⁴²² Charlotte Perriand, letter to René Herbst, 5 July 1936: "before leaving on vacation." UAM Archives Musée des Arts Décoratifs. No accession number.

⁴²³ The full text of the Article 10 of the Convention as it was approved by the City Council and later by the parliament was the following:

Les projets relatifs aux bâtiments à construire ou aux aménagements à réaliser sur les terrains de l'enceinte fortifiée ci-dessus visés seront établis et exécutés d'accord avec la Ville de Paris qui se réserve le droit de refuser les projets et d'exiger la suppression des bâtiments après la clôture de l'Exposition.

"La faculté de présenter ces projets sera réservée pour la moitié au moins des dits terrains aux architectes français; sur cette part, la moitié sera réservée, par priorité, aux architectes français titulaires de la carte du combattant. Les projets ne devront donner lieu de la part de la Ville de Paris à aucune contribution d'aucune sorte autre que la mise à disposition gratuite du terrain nécessaire.

BMO, 16 May 1934, p. 1865.

The Council deleted, on Contenot's request: "... ou d'en autoriser le maintien dans des conditions à déterminer d'accord avec le Commissaire général de l'Exposition." The Article was adopted unanimously as even the supporters of the project saw no reason to object to its wording. BMO May 16, 1934.

maintenance of the buildings under circumstances to be determined together with the *Commissaire général* of the Exhibition was deleted. This somewhat weakened, but in no way excluded, Le Corbusier's chances to build a permanent edifice on the Bastion Kellermann. So amended by the City Hall, the Convention was approved by the Parliament as well, two weeks later.

Hence the documents show conclusively that Le Corbusier's later repeated claims that the City Council had managed, conspiratorially, and against the "will of the Government," to "insert a little sentence" (as he called Article 10) into the Convention, *after* the latter was approved by the Parliament--to bar him from building his project, was not only absurd, but simply untrue.⁴²⁴ If anything, a sentence had been

⁴²⁴ In Des Canons? Merci, de Logis!, p. 11 Le Corbusier claims, as in other places that

Le Conseil Municipal avait décidé de m'exécuter. Dans la Loi votée à ce sujet [the bastion Kellerman] et qui, en apparence, semblait *confirmer* les désirs du Parlement on avait simplement *ajouté* la petite phrase suivante: 'Le Conseil Municipal se réserve toutefois le droit...etc.

In other words, while obviously *inverting* the hierarchical and chronological sequence of the vote, Le Corbusier was saying that, the City Council subversively distorted the bill endorsed by the Parliament, by slipping into the Convention an unnoticed "little sentence" that guaranteed Le Corbusier's defeat. Such claims have the ability to mislead scholars even today. In his article published in 1987 in the Exhibition Catalogue, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Paris Fair, Gilles Ragot commits two errors in this respect, as he claims that "Le Corbusier, persuadé que cet *article a été ajouté en vue de lui nuire*" does not realize that

si le Conseil Municipal manifeste une certaine hostilité vis-a-vis de son projet, il n'existe pourtant aucun lien entre cette opposition et la rédaction d'un article destiné a tous les exposants.

Ragot who, unlike Le Corbusier, apparently did not read the Convention, ignores the existence of Article 10 which, as we saw, directly concerned the CIAM project. He therefore confuses the former, with Article 13, which indeed *strictly* requires the demolition of *all* the structures at the closure of the Exhibition, but which relates *only* to the *main grounds* of the Fair and thus had no bearing on Le Corbusier's project.

On the other hand, having studied the debate of the Council very closely, Le Corbusier knew no *Article* had been added. Le Corbusier's later assertion, in various instances, that he was aware

deleted, not added. The *Conseil Municipal* had indeed sought to reinforce its option to demolish the Bastion Kellermann structures; yet that alternative had been there since the very beginning, in the agreement signed between the Government and the City Administration, of which Le Corbusier was party, despite his claims to the contrary.

de cette petite phrase du texte de loi relatif à l'annexe, mais comme il était prévu sur les terrains du Boulevard Kellerman des quantités d'installations provisoires, cette petite phrase m'a paru de pure forme"--

Ragot interprets that as Le Corbusier's "disarming naïveté."
G.Ragot "Exposition internationale," Le Corbusier: Une encyclopédie Paris, Centre George Pompidou, 1987, pp150-151..

CHAPTER VI

The Beaudouin affaire: a "Prix de Rome" at the CIAM

"Mon cher Le Corbusier, ne soyez pas en colère, c'est vous qui a fait des bêtises."

Letter from Van Eesteren 425

In Search of Leverage

Soon after the debate was concluded in the City Hall, and the Convention approved by the Parliament, the CIRPAC met in London to discuss Le Corbusier's proposal. As already mentioned, the proposal was so worded that it made a number of CIAM representatives at the meeting believe that the intent was for the CIAM members to contribute their ideas and projects, as some of them had done at the Stuttgart *Siedlung* Exhibition in 1927. Le Corbusier took pains later to counter these illusions.

Also, to dramatize the event in his peculiar way, Le Corbusier told the CIRPAC that his Brochure 1937 had fallen, quite fortuitously, into Georges Huisman's hands and that Huisman, thrilled by what he read, called up Le Corbusier immediately to ask him "what would you have to offer the Exhibition today?"⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ Van Eesteren, letter to Le Corbusier 5 January, 1935. FLC H2-13 153.

⁴²⁶ Elaborately structured, the committee had also six distinguished deputy members, A. Aalto, M. Breuer, Nikolai Kolli, L.Holm, Gino Pollini and Szimon. Syrkus.

Convinced by the story, the Group wrote back to Huisman from the meeting an equally dramatic letter of appreciation quoting "Monsieur Le Corbusier, [who] told us about the providential route that brought you to entrusting the CIAM with such a high mission."⁴²⁷ The CIRPAC named a Steering Committee composed of Bourgeois, Sert, Gropius, Moser and Le Corbusier, which had the task of creating a technical program; inviting the exhibitors (governments, industrialists and artists); evaluate the proposals; and control the execution of the works. This "Committee," however, was to remain largely ceremonial and was soon to be forgotten, as the Bastion Kellermann project quickly became just an affair between Le Corbusier and the Exhibition authorities. In fact, in addition to this initial formal "sponsorship," CIAM played no effective role in any of Le Corbusier's interventions at the 1937 Exhibition, despite his pretenses to the contrary.⁴²⁸

Following the Parliament's endorsement of the Convention, Le Corbusier met with Martzloff, since he was primarily alarmed by the decision to divide his site--a decision that would not only lead to the demolition of the Bastion itself

⁴²⁷ "Monsieur Le Corbusier [qui] nous a fait connaître par quel chemin providentiel les CIAM ont pu être chargés, grâce à vous, de cette haute mission." The letter was signed by Victor Bourgeois, Le Corbusier, Sigfried Giedion, Walter Gropius, B. Merkelbach, Jose Luis Sert, R. Steiger, Szymon Syrkus, Ernest Weissman, a former employee, and Coates Wells. In appreciation the letter asked Huisman to accept the title of "Président du Cercle des Amis du Groupe français des CIAM." Archives de France, F21 4727.

⁴²⁸ The contrast is, indeed, striking when one compares it with Le Corbusier's claims. In March 1936 for example, referring to his "invitation" of CIAM to join him, he declared: "Devant la splendeur de la tâche à réaliser, je m'effaçais personnellement et j'offrais aux CIAM qui recrutent dans 18 pays les énergies vivantes de l'architecture, d'entreprendre l'œuvre en commun, sous la responsabilité de CIAM France." Interview, Notre revue, n.8, 1936 p. 45.

but would make it impossible for the architect to build his Cartesian "Chicken-Foot" skyscraper as planned.⁴²⁹ Speaking from the position of strength he believed the Exhibition's "Potentat," Huisman, gave him, Le Corbusier lost his temper, and according to his own account, some harsh words were exchanged. Martzloff attempted to emphasize the difficulties Le Corbusier was going to face in the *Conseil Municipal*, urging for more modesty and a sense of reality. Indeed, not only would Le Corbusier have to abide by the Convention as voted, Martzloff told him, but he should know that he would face a strong resistance from the Council's President himself, as well as by few other influential Councilors, should he fail to produce temporary structures. On a more conciliatory note, yet to Le Corbusier's utter consternation, Martzloff suggested that he adjoin to his name, the name of some *Grand Prix de Rome*, as a way of reassuring a conservative *Conseil Municipal*.⁴³⁰ On June 18, Le Corbusier wrote to his friend Hubert Lagardelle, then France's special Ambassador to Rome: "Cher ami, je flaire quelque orage dans le ciel de 1937."⁴³¹

The mentioned obstacles on Le Corbusier's arduous road to the Bastion notwithstanding--obstacles that probably could have

⁴²⁹ If any further proof was needed, this is another instance that confirms, contrary to all Le Corbusier's public claims, that he was not only perfectly aware of such clause in the Convention, but also that such a clause was specifically intended for his own project and not "un tas d'autres constructions."

⁴³⁰ Gilles Ragot mistakenly believes that it was the Municipal Council itself that formally "imposed on the cousins" [Le Corbusier and Pierre Jaeneneret] the collaboration of a *Prix de Rome*, as a way of giving the Council some "hypothetical guaranty." Ragot, *Op. Cit.*, 1987 p.73.

⁴³¹ Le Corbusier, letter to Hubert Lagardelle, 18 June 1934. FLC H2-13. Lagardelle was a former Sorelian Socialist and friend of Mussolini's since 1914. He later became a strong figure of the anti-parlamentarian and regionalist French Reaction. For his relationship with Le Corbusier see Mary McLeod, 1985, pp.94-166.

been overcome--the crucial problem that ultimately proved fatal to his project was the enormous funds needed for it.⁴³² Le Corbusier turned to Italy first. He thought the Italian regime favorably inclined to his ideas,⁴³³ and counted on his reputation being perhaps greater in Italy than in France. Most certainly, he had powerful "friends" there, both in the government and the industrial establishment. During his trip to Italy in July, after the vote in the Parliament, he met with Bruno Bottai, then Minister of the *Corporazioni* and, more ceremonially, with the Artists' trade union⁴³⁴ and the Head of the *Balille*.⁴³⁵ He also met with FIAT's Giovanni Agnelli in Turin and various other industrialists. He may have taken advantage of the opportunity to discuss the pecuniary needs of his grand experiment.

In his general offensive aimed at the promotion of his project, another step Le Corbusier considered was testing the possibilities of taking over one of the key Government-appointed offices to the Exhibition, either as Commissioner General, or as Chief Architect.⁴³⁶ He wanted at least to secure for himself some

⁴³² This sum, estimated at 42 million francs, has to be compared to the total budget of the Exhibition, which amounted to 300 million--to include all international pavilions--and not 800 million as Le Corbusier claimed on various occasions, rather in bad faith.

⁴³³ The respect was mutual. In a letter to Paul Otlet, Director of the Palais Mondial in Brussels, he writes about this trip: "J'ai vu à Rome l'Exposition de la Révolution et à Milan de l'aéronautique: Manifestations capitales qui ont fait des miracles de visualisation et d'enseignement." Letter to Paul Otlet September 1935 FLC H2-13

⁴³⁴ The introduction in the *Plan de Paris 1937* of a "Trade Union building," as well as the character of his "criticism" of capitalist practices in the 1930's cannot be fully understood, it seems to me, without putting it in perspective with his marked interest for the *Corporazioni* regime and the Trade Union system in fascist Italy.

⁴³⁵ The *Balille* were the organization of the female Fascist youth.

⁴³⁶ Although he never showed particular animosity against Jacques Gréber who, after all, strongly supported his project to the end, Le Corbusier did not trust him. On the other hand, he considered Edmond Labbé to be outright

official position that would facilitate his efforts at reorienting the Exhibition along the goals already defined in 1932, while securing for himself a stronger leverage against a recalcitrant City Council. Among the personalities he contacted was Henri Bonnet, Director of the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, a personal acquaintance to whom he wrote:

I just learned that you are a member of the 1937 Exhibition's Committee. Great news! It's a real pleasure to know that people of your breadth and scope are heading an enterprise that will elaborate on the modern times. [...] They will build some beautiful Palaces or Pavilions on the Exhibition's grounds. They may even draw a site plan.

But do they have a Program?

Saturday I spent the afternoon on the Eiffel Tower. I wanted to see the site. It's a very suggestive sight. Something could be done there. Would there be a way to present an overall idea that would not be rejected a priori? [...] I do have an excellent friend at the *Direction des Beaux Arts*, Georges Huisman, but he is a very busy man.⁴³⁷

[J'apprends que vous faites partie du Comité de l'Exposition de 1937. Excellente nouvelle! C'est un plaisir de savoir qu' des gens de votre envergure et de votre tendance d'esprit se trouvent à la tête d'une manifestation qui doit exprimer les temps modernes. [...]

On va faire sur le terrain même de l'Exposition, quelques Palais ou beaux pavillons. On va peut-être même faire un tracé d'ensemble.

Mais a-t-on un programme d'ensemble?

J'ai passé l'après-midi de Samedi au sommet de la Tour Eiffel, à regarder le terrain disponible et le spectacle est très suggestif. Il y aurait quelque chose à faire. Y aurait-il possibilité de soumettre une idée d'ensemble et de pas l'écarter a priori? [...] J'ai un excellent ami à la direction des Beaux-Arts, Georges Huisman, mais il est bien occupé.]

And Le Corbusier concluded: "If you could help me move on from July's 'singing exercises' at the Palazzo Ducale [probably a

incompetent. In February 1935 Le Corbusier even wrote to Van Eesteren about the Commissioner General his favorite characterization of people: "C'est un idiot." FLC H2-13 .

⁴³⁷ Letter to Henri Bonnet, 1 October 1934. FLC H2-13 69.

reference to that summer's courtship of Mussolini], to something more substantial, I'd be glad to contribute [to the Exhibition]."438

Playing two cards at the same time, under Huisman's advice, a letter was also dispatched that day to Paul Léon, deputy Commissioner General of the Exhibition, whom Le Corbusier believed was in charge of the Exhibition's finances and an "Eminence grise" behind Labbé. While sending him another Brochure 1937 he recapitulated, for Léon's instruction, the efforts he had been making since 1932 in order to give a face to the 1937 Exhibition. With his peculiar ability to turn disadvantages into useful circumstances, Le Corbusier emphasized that this was an "exclusively French operation, with the collaboration of international forces at the highest level."439 To further flatter the administrator's French sensibility he added: "Due to the magnitude of the project, France (who owes it to herself) will be the first country to put together the statute of the Modern Times' dwelling (logis)."440 In order to create both a sense of immediacy and of perfect control over the situation, he finished the letter sounding like an army general:

438 "Si vous pouviez m'aider à passer des vocalises du Palais Ducal de Juillet à des exercices plus matériels, je serais heureux d'apporter mon concours..." Le Corbusier's hopes to enter the inner circle of the Exhibition leadership were revived in February 1935, when the press aired rumors about the possible replacement of Labbé as Commissioner General, by the architect's friend Roland Marcel, Prefect of the Bas-Rhin. Letter to Roland Marcel, FLC H13 173.

439 "...une réalisation exclusivement française, avec la collaboration la plus élevée des forces internationales." He underlined the word réalisation to make it clear that, in essence, the project was French. Letter to Paul Léon, 1 October 1934. FLC H2-13 71.

440 "Par l'ampleur de la réalisation, la France (qui se le doit) sera la première à avoir dressé le statut du logis des temps modernes." Letter to Paul Léon, 1 October 1934. FLC H2-13 71.

Everything is ready, feasible, reasonable. We are ready. The Authority has endorsed the principle of the Kellermann project. Let's get started. I am ready to undertake the extraordinary effort of its implementation with the staff headquarters of the French CIAM section.⁴⁴¹ [emph. added]

[Tout est préparé, faisable, raisonable. On peut commencer. L'autorité a voté le principe du programme Kellermann. Il reste à mettre en route. Je suis prêt avec l'état-major de la section française de CIAM à entreprendre l'effort considérable de la réalisation.]

Van Eesteren and Giedion

By the end of October 1934, Le Corbusier wrote, for the first time, to Cornelis van Eesteren,⁴⁴² CIAM's President and Chief Architect of the City of Amsterdam. This was also Le Corbusier's first contact with the Congress since the London meeting in May. The purpose was to send van Eesteren a "draft letter" that he was supposed to sign and address officially to Edmond Labbé, Commissioner General of the Paris Exhibition.⁴⁴³ At the outset Le Corbusier made a point that, even though

I was personally invited by the *Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts* to make an important exhibition on the

⁴⁴¹ Letter to Paul Léon. FLC H2-13 71

It is worth noting that the "French section" was never even contacted, let alone ready, like an army's headquarters, to launch an assault on the fatidic Bastion. Indeed, to the end, Le Corbusier would exclude the French CIAM from any real involvement--nor did he, for that matter, involve anyone from CIAM in general. He only called upon a few individuals such as Charlotte Perriand who was an interior furniture designer in his own office, or José-Luis Sert who was not part of the French Section. With few exceptions, the other architects and a large number of draftsmen and aspiring architects involved in the execution of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, were either people from his office, or young architects from the group "Jeunes 37," all of them unpaid. More about the "Jeunes '37" later.

⁴⁴² Van Eesteren was not present at the May London meeting of the CIRPAC.

⁴⁴³ See copy of the letter with Le Corbusier's additional annotations in FLC H2-13 558.

problem of the Dwelling, as I presented it in a "program brochure" for the 1937 Exhibition. I nevertheless made a special effort, as I explained at the London CIRPAC meeting, to get the CIAM involved in this matter"⁴⁴⁴

[Ayant été appelé par le Directeur Général de Beaux-Arts pour faire moi-même une manifestation importante sur le problème du logis que j'avais exprimé dans une brochure-programme pour l'Exposition de 1937, j'ai tenu, comme je l'ai expliqué à CIRPAC de Londres, a intéresser nos Congrès directement à cette affaire.]

He warned the Dutch architect that such a privileged situation was already provoking "jealousies" everywhere and that "xenophobia, as well as more or less sincere nationalism is sprouting in diverse Assemblies." This shows, ended Le Corbusier, that one has to act with utmost tact."

Le Corbusier also addressed the financial problem explaining that difficulties were already "popping out from everywhere, in this time of crises." At this point, however, there was no more mention of the *Grande industrie*, as a source of financing the project; rather the idea was now to put together a real estate venture--precisely what the Council resisted the most. No mention was made either of the Paris Council's desire for a temporary and not a permanent structure; but Le Corbusier did complain that "some specific difficulties have arisen as the City of Paris requested I add our comrade Beaudouin's name to my own, emphasizing his *Grand Prix de Rome* award."⁴⁴⁵ Despite a rather

⁴⁴⁴ Le Corbusier's letter to Van Eesteren, 25 October 1934. FLC H2-13 80.
⁴⁴⁵

Une certaine qualité de difficulté qui apparait dans le fait qu'il m'a été demandé à la ville de Paris de joindre à mon nom celui de notre camarade BEAUDOUIN, avec son titre de Grand Prix de Rome.
Letter to van Eesteren, 25 October 1934. FLC H2-13 80

cold personal relationship between the two, this was hardly a problem, one would have thought, since Beaudouin was a member of CIAM France, and the project supposed to be a CIAM affair. Sensing, however, that this inclusion of Beaudouin was opening the door to a possible internal CIAM debate about the Kellermann project, Le Corbusier requested from CIAM's President, as a way of avoiding "anarchy," that the Congress grant him a right of veto in all the decisions concerning the Exhibition project. Things were to be made clear at the outset because, as he reminded Van Eesteren,

I was the one to put the program together. I was the one to be endorsed by the official Assemblies (City Council, Parliament); we should avoid at all costs the French Group becoming a steering committee on top of the committee the CIRPAC has already created in London.⁴⁴⁶

[C'est moi qui est (sic) donné le programme, c'est moi qui aie (sic!) obtenu le vote des Assemblées officielles (Conseil Municipal, et Parlement); Il ne faut en aucun cas que les réunions du groupe France puissent devenir un Comité directeur à côté du Comité que nous avons nommé à CIRPAC de Londres.]

Of course, such an unprovoked defensive attitude could only arouse suspicions in van Eesteren's mind about what was indeed happening in the French section and whether anyone there was informed at all about this "CIAM" project. Yet, to conclude this issue and prevent, once more, any misunderstanding, Le Corbusier reiterated that

at one point in London, after my intervention, people suddenly imagined that wonderful projects were going to fall into their laps. This is absolutely not the case:

⁴⁴⁶ Le Corbusier, letter to Van Eesteren. FLC H2-13 80.

the CIAM is to intervene here only spiritually through their Steering Committee [...] The participation of CIAM's members or of its diverse mutually related groups will take place exclusively through the setting up of the *logis*. What we have here is an Exhibition of the dwelling, that is, of interiors.⁴⁴⁷

[il y a eu un moment donné a Londres où, après ma communication, on a imaginé que de magnifiques travaux allaient échoir aux divers membres des Congrès. La question n'est absolument pas là: Les Congrès interviennent spirituellement par leur Comité de direction...L'intervention des membres du Congrès ou des groupes...en relation les uns avec les autres, se manifestera exclusivement dans l'aménagement, l'équipement de logis. C'est d'une Exposition de logis qu'il s'agit, c'est-à-dire d'intérieur].

In essence, this meant bypassing the CIAM. Van Eesteren's suspicions were only further confirmed.⁴⁴⁸

Yet, only to add to the general sense of confusion in his letter, Le Corbusier noted that "a crucial difficulty is appearing these days regarding the site which was stupidly given away by the City officials, representing (sic) only half of the needed terrain."⁴⁴⁹ Hence, in another self-defeating stance, he

⁴⁴⁷ What Le Corbusier means by "architecture d'intérieur," as he puts it in his letter, concerns essentially the mechanical parts of the building, except for the "mobilier." "Ce vocable 'intérieur' comporte...les équipements techniques du logis: mobilier, aération, chauffage, éclairage, insonorisation, isothermie, hygiène, etc" In fact, as he made it explicit at a later date in a Program for the Kellermann project, what Le Corbusier had in mind for the CIAM was simply a large exhibition covering CIAM's "history" since 1928 and the "results" of the various Congresses held before 1937. The show would be held in one of the unfinished lofts of the skyscraper.

⁴⁴⁸ This attitude is to be compared with Le Corbusier's declarative stances in the press where he pretends just the opposite. In March 1936, speaking retrospectively about his efforts he says:

Devant la splendeur de la tâche à réaliser je m'effaçais personnellement j'offrais aux CIAM qui recrutent dans 18 pays les énergies vivantes de l'architecture, d'entreprendre l'œuvre en commun, sous la responsabilité de CIAM France.
Notre Revue, n. 8 1936.

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Une difficulté capitale surgit ces-jours-ci au sujet du terrain qui a été *bêtement* attribué par les services de la Ville de Paris et qui ne

referred to the division of the site (Article 10)--now approved both by the City and by the Parliament--as a simple technical error, caused by some nonsense. Worse, he asked van Eesteren, a foreigner, to request Labbé to "correct" such an inadvertent mistake. Le Corbusier knew that it was not a mistake; he simply hoped that it would go away, somehow.⁴⁵⁰

The concluding sentence of a lengthy letter emphasized again Le Corbusier's greatest fear: that the project would slip out of his hands and become the object of scrutiny and remodeling by other CIAM members. He wrote:

I am sending a copy of this document to GIEDION. I think that, based on the CIRPAC decisions in London ... you can feel free to send the mentioned letter to the Commissioner-General [of the Exhibition], without any convening or intervention by whoever. [emph. added]⁴⁵¹

[J'envois un double de ce dossier à GIEDION. Je pense que, comme conséquence aux décisions prises a CIRPAC de Londres...: vous pouvez adressé (sic) la lettre dont il est parlé ici au Commissaire Général, sans aucune convocation ni intervention de qui que ce soit.]

Not surprisingly under the circumstances, Van Eesteren found the official letter he was supposed to sign and send to Labbé, rather bizarre. Two aspects of the letter caused him particular concern. In the first place he objected to a passage putting on him, i.e. on the President of the CIAM, a financial

comportent (sic) que la moitié du terrain nécessaire. Letter to Van Eesteren, 25 October. 1934. FLC H2-13 80.

Typical of situations where Le Corbusier tries to hide an uncomfortable position, his sentences like this one, are confused and ridden with errors of syntax.

⁴⁵⁰ It is to be kept in mind that Le Corbusier had read carefully, and even annotated with comments, both the Convention and the debate about the project in the City Council.

⁴⁵¹ Letter to Van Eesteren, FLC H2-13 80.

responsibility he neither could nor wanted to accept. Van Eesteren thus requested that no CIAM involvement be considered before a developer, or any another real estate agency, assumed full financial responsibility for the enterprise.

The other passage that had CIAM's President concerned was the claim that "Mr. Le Corbusier and Mr. Beaudouin will bear the entire responsibility for the Bastion Kellermann project, and will sign for us (CIAM) during the intermediary period, that is during the Exhibition."⁴⁵² Van Eesteren wanted to receive a confirmation from Beaudouin personally "that he agreed with this affair" before signing anything. Le Corbusier was caught in his own net: the problem was, as Van Eesteren had well sensed, that Le Corbusier had neither consulted, nor even informed Beaudouin about the matter. Instead, he kept the entire French group out of it, not even reporting to the section, as was expected, about the May CIRPAC meeting in London--a meeting where Le Corbusier had put a great emphasis on the role of the French group.

It was now becoming clear that Le Corbusier never had any intention of genuinely involving the CIAM in completing the resounding "Statut du logis des Temps Modernes." He rather needed the CIAM's façade to justify the ambitious magnitude of his project. Giedion commented ironically on it in a letter to Le Corbusier, as he wrote:

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MM. Le Corbusier et Beaudouin auront toute responsabilité et signeront pour nous (les CIAM) dans la période intermédiaire qui intéresse la manifestation propre de l'Exposition de 1937 au Bastion Kellermann

Draft of letter prepared by Le Corbusier, to be signed by van Eesteren and sent to E. Labbé, 25 October 1934.
FLC H2-13 558.

This is certainly an honor and a sign of growing influence, for you to put the name of the Congress [CIAM] on your own plans, which you want to realize and offer at the 1937 Exhibition.⁴⁵³

[C'est sans doute un honneur et signe d'une influence augmentée [sic], si vous mettez le nom des Congrès à la tête de vos plans que vous voulez exécuter et proposer pour l'Exposition 1937.]

The issue, however, almost burst into a scandal as van Eesteren, still unsure whether Le Corbusier would do it himself, sent to Beaudouin a copy of the official letter stating Beaudouin's responsibility. As Giedion explained to Le Corbusier in his broken French, when he visited him in Paris two weeks later:

I do not know what spirit prevails in the French group at the moment. But we would not like that the 1937 Exhibition cause an internal strife. In London our discussion on the Exhibition was clear and we've put it in the minutes.[...] We do not want complaints by the French group. You started this whole affair yourself [...] Have you spoken to the group at all?⁴⁵⁴

Indeed he had not. Warned by Van Eesteren's note, however, Beaudouin reacted with discomfort at such use of his name. Claiming that both he and Lods were too involved with the Modern Museum Competition deadline, he refused to discuss the issue until the end of that *charrette*. Le Corbusier found himself in an awkward position and wrote, a full month later, to Beaudouin and Lods an even more awkward letter starting in an unusually mellow tone: "Chers Amis." The purpose of the letter was, of course, to get himself out of an embarrassing situation, but most

⁴⁵³ Giedion, letter to Le Corbusier, 16 November 1934. FLC H2-13 98.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

of all to have Beaudouin accept his game. The main thing Le Corbusier sought to prove, in this indeed crystal-clear situation, was that Beaudouin's name was not at all used because of his *Grand Prix de Rome* title but simply because of the high esteem he had for the younger architect.

The importance of the task requires the help of every comrade in the group [CIAM], according to merit. In our French group, you both [Beaudouin and Lods] have a background that justifies your involvement in this task.⁴⁵⁵

[L'envergure du problème envisagé nécessite le concours de tous les camarades du groupe, suivant leur mesure personnelle. Dans notre groupe français, vous êtes tous deux ceux qui avaient (sic) derrière vous un passé qui justifie l'attribution de cette tâche.]

And he added bluntly: "I therefore had you in mind since the very first day as close collaborators in this project." Under this angle, there was also a need to justify somehow the absence of Lods in the official letter. Le Corbusier muddled the issue by adding, as he further betrayed his real intent, that "Mr. Martzloff requested that BEAUDOUIN be added, BEAUDOUIN & LODS or BEAUDOUIN, as you please of course."⁴⁵⁶ And he concluded as bluntly: "I ask you, therefore, to accept the financial responsibilities that are very naturally mentioned in CIAM's letter to the Commissioner."⁴⁵⁷

The lack of logic of his explanation led him to an even greater confusion as he tried to justify why the two architects

⁴⁵⁵ Le Corbusier, letter to Beaudouin and Lods, 30 November 1934. FLC H2-13 102

⁴⁵⁶ "M. Martzloff demande que BEAUDOUIN soit adjoint, BEAUDOUIN & LODS ou BEAUDOUIN, a volonté bien entendu." Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ "Je vous demande donc d'accepter les responsabilités financières qu'évoque tout naturellement la lettre des Congrès au Commissaire." Ibid.

should, all of a sudden, accept such an enormous responsibility for a project not theirs, a project they had not even seen; in addition, their name had been associated with it without their knowledge and for obviously manipulative reasons. So he went further, in a vain attempt at justifying the requested commitment: "Here is the responsibility we have to take on: it's not to take on any financial responsibility for the CIAM and thus none for ourselves either, as long as the 1937 Exhibition is concerned."⁴⁵⁸ This sentence, contradicting the previous at best, was so perfectly unintelligible that he felt the need to add: "This is perfectly clear, it seems to me, even though explained at great lengths."⁴⁵⁹ After all, was he not asking the two architects to just do

what has to be done: urgently edit the CIAM sentence that disturbed you, so that you can be happy, I can be happy, and the CIAM can be happy too.[...] I therefore call upon your trust, your devotion to CIAM's cause, and to your self-control as well. Let's make an appointment as soon as you get this letter, and let's rewrite together the incriminated paragraph, but let's not waste a single day.⁴⁶⁰

[ce qui est indispensable de faire: rédiger d'urgence la phrase de la lettre des Congrès qui vous a alertés, de façon à ce que vous soyez contents, moi aussi et le Congrès également... Je fais donc appel à votre confiance, à votre dévouement aux choses du Congrès et à votre sang-froid également. Prenons rendez-vous dès la réception de cette lettre et rédigeons ensemble le paragraphe incriminé, mais n'attendons plus un jour.]

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Voilà la responsabilité que nous devons prendre: c'est de ne pas admettre de responsabilité financière pour les Congrès et pour nous par conséquent non plus, tant qu'il s'agit de l'Exposition de 1937.
Ibid.

459 "Ceci me parait très clair, bien que longuement exposé." Ibid.

460 Le Corbusier, letter to Beaudouin, 30 November 1934. FLC H2-13 102.

In other words, Le Corbusier tried, not without insult to his intelligence, to have Beaudouin accept that correctly editing a paragraph was all there was to it. Predictably, Beaudouin refused.⁴⁶¹

As Van Eesteren received from Le Corbusier the second version of the "official letter" going to Labbé--this time without Beaudouin's name, CIAM's President expressed new hesitations. It seemed to him that, as formulated, the letter still put too much financial burden on him and on the CIRPAC.

It was natural, Van Eesteren wrote, that if there was any financial responsibility involved [in this venture], that the responsibility should be born by the French section, while the CIRPAC would bear only a moral one

He asked, therefore, that a letter, already signed by Giedion, be rewritten if such letter was to be signed by him. And he added:

In order to be sure that the French group agrees to everything, I'd like to get a note from the group's secretary that you would also sign as the group's delegate. This note should say that the group is aware of the letter sent to the Commissar-General.⁴⁶²

[Pour être sûr que le groupe français est d'accord je voudrais bien recevoir un mot du secrétaire du groupe, aussi signer (sic) par vous même comme délégué, par lequel il m'écrit que le groupe connaît la lettre au Commissaire Général.]

⁴⁶¹ It seems that Gilles Ragot's claim that, "in the name of a certain ethics," Beaudouin declined to sign a project that was not his," cannot be the right interpretation of this event, even though that may have been a polite excuse. [Ragot, p.72]. I found no written trace in support of Ragot's claim; but, since Beaudouin is never mentioned again, we can assume that he did decline Le Corbusier's request, no matter what excuse.

⁴⁶² Van Eesteren, letter to Le Corbusier, 25 December 1934. FLC H2-13 122

In other words Van Eesteren wanted to receive in writing a confirmation that the group in whose name the project was being developed was in fact involved.⁴⁶³

Le Corbusier's response came as a thunderbolt. In sharp contrast with his usually formal and neatly typed letters, this one, scribbled with a pencil, started: "This time I'm going to be direct, because I have had it."⁴⁶⁴ In addition to reproaching Van Eesteren for having waited for 16 days before answering his letter, he accused him of having "acted awkwardly with Beaudouin" allowing another month to pass by before Beaudouin responded. He denied, this time, that any financial responsibility would fall on anyone but on a (hypothetical) real estate agency "to be formed outside the CIAM, once the Exhibition sets the conditions." He reminded the President that "HE" (underlined furiously several times) had obtained the Kellermann commission and had brought it to the Congresses. He had been urged since October by Paul Léon, the Exhibition's assistant Commissioner, to act fast, but that an "imbécile" (the Chief Architect of Paris) had requested to have a *Prix de Rome* attached next to his own name: two months and a half wasted. "And for such ridiculous reason, you, Eesteren, you act as if I had to be watched over." He concluded, refusing to write another letter: "I am sending you back the letter to the Commissar, which Giedion has signed. I demand [that you sign it]

⁴⁶³ Van Eesteren's extreme caution has also to be related to his awareness of Le Corbusier's longstanding conflict with Lurçat.

⁴⁶⁴ "Cette fois-ci je vais m'exprimer nettement car ma patience est à bout." Le Corbusier, letter to van Eesteren, 29 December 1934. FLC H2-13 145

and send it back, as soon as you receive it."⁴⁶⁵ If Eesteren refused to sign he, Le Corbusier, would not accept any responsibility for the project any more.

Van Eesteren, we are here where the action is, and we are not in a platonic situation. If new discussions are to drag, we'll lose the project, and if we lose the project I am leaving the CIAM.

[nous sommes ici en pleine action et non en situation platonique. Si de plus longues discussions interviennent encore, l'affaire sera perdue. Si elle est perdue, je quitte les Congrès.]⁴⁶⁶

Le Corbusier did not send the letter to Van Eesteren, however: not directly, at least. He sent it to Giedion, along with an equally furious letter, asking Giedion to decide whether to forward it to Van Eesteren, or to simply talk to him over the phone about the incident. Le Corbusier feared damaging his relationship with Van Eesteren, a man he still needed; yet, in the letter to Giedion, he called Van Eesteren a "madman, a bureaucrat, an '*administratif*.'" He was fed up being treated with suspicion by the 'comrades,' and was ready to quit the CIAM. Cornelis Van Eesteren responded calmly in his colorful, broken French:

My dear Le Corbusier,

Don't be mad. You are the one who goofed. You don't put the name of a friend (Beaudouin) in an official letter without his consent...

You left me without an answer for four weeks. Now you're saying that you're out of patience because it took me two weeks to answer your letter which totally ignores what I suggested.[...] If I have it right, you

⁴⁶⁵ "Et pour ce motif ridicule, vous, Eesteren, vous agissez avec moi comme si je devais être surveillé ... Je vous renvoie donc la lettre au Commissaire, signée de Giedion. Je vous demande de l'expédier le jour même." December 29, 1934. FLC H2-13 145.

⁴⁶⁶ Le Corbusier, Letter to Van Eesteren, Ibid.

had me wait for an answer because you got into trouble with Beaudouin. But I lost confidence because of these problems with Beaudouin [...] I must say that I do not find particularly grandiose your threat to quit the CIAM. This is already the second time that you have written in this manner. We are not children.⁴⁶⁷

[Mon cher Le Corbusier, ne soyez pas en colère. C'est vous qui a fait des bêtises. On ne met pas le nom d'un ami (Beaudouin) dans une lettre officielle sans qu'il soit d'accord. [...]

Je suis resté sans réponse de vous pendant quatre semaines. Maintenant c'est vous qui m'écrivez que votre patience est a bout, parceque moi j'ai du prendre deux semaines pour répondre sur une lettre laquelle ignore tout a fait ce que j'avais proposé... Si je comprends bien j'ai du attendre votre réponse parceque vous aviez des difficultés avec Beaudouin. Par cette difficulté avec Beaudouin j'ai perdu confiance.[...] Je dois dire que je ne trouve pas très grandieux votre menace de quitter le Congrès. C'est déjà le deuxième fois que vous m'écrivez de cette façon. Nous ne sommes pas des enfants.]

Van Eesteren concluded by proposing to Le Corbusier to come to Amsterdam and talk it over, as writing letters did not make sense anymore. "So," he added in a friendlier tone, "send me a cable to let me know when you are coming."

A solution was finally found. The three sent a letter to Labbé, free of all ambiguities: the financial responsibility, their letter suggested, would fall exclusively on a real estate agency that would sign a contract, at the appropriate moment, with the City and the Exhibition. The CIRPAC, that is the CIAM, would be accountable only morally. So the letter to the Exhibition's Commissioner General, signed by Cornelis Van Eesteren and counter signed by Sigfried Giedion, was finally sent out to him with no CIAM responsibility, but also with no Prix de Rome.

⁴⁶⁷ Van Eesteren: Letter to Le Corbusier, January 5, 1935. FLC H2-13 153.

CHAPTER VII

The defeat at the Bastion Kellermann

"Mademoiselle, when I saw that, I took off to America, to breath some fresh air."⁴⁶⁸

Le Corbusier
Interview for *Notre Revue*, 1936

In the meanwhile, Labbé had the opportunity to study Le Corbusier's dossier as he had received it from Huisman. It was immediately clear to him that, given the Convention signed with the City and approved by the Parliament, difficulties would arise at almost every level. CIAM was no longer claiming that the project would be financed by appropriate industries, through Le Corbusier's mediation. Quite to the contrary, the entire venture was now to be transferred to a developer. The City Council had rejected such a solution almost unanimously. In addition, the proposed project covered twice the size of the site conceded by the City. Finally, and most importantly, the project anticipated permanent buildings, while Article 10 of the Convention left ample, if not exclusive, room for the rejection of such structures. When Van Eesteren's "official request" arrived, and in order to take the burden from his shoulders, Labbé decided to let the CIAM, that is Van Eesteren, deal directly with the City

⁴⁶⁸ "Mademoiselle, là-dessus je suis parti en Amérique pour changer d'air." Interview. in *Notre Revue*, n.8, March 1936.

authorities. He declined, however, to personally endorse any permanent building on City property. For Le Corbusier this was just another proof that the *Conseil Municipal* had mounted an implacable "conspiracy" against him.

Gradually, as the prospects of the project wore thin, Le Corbusier shifted from practical steps toward the implementation of his project, to simple publicizing and propagation of his ideas for the Exhibition, that were eventually to culminate in the *Temps Nouveaux* pavilion.

To Philippe Diolé, editor of the magazine *Beaux-Arts*, he expressed the wish to publish an article. This was for him a way of starting to carve a place for his ideas in the mainstream press. Looking now with some distance at his past efforts, Le Corbusier wrote in a philosophical tone:

Days have passed, and today I finally can undertake an objective, constructive discourse on our involvement with the 1937 Exhibition, and its housing annex, at the Bastion Kellermann.

This objective discourse would bear no polemic. ... The public opinion has to be informed about the achievements of the Congress I represent. 1937 has to become an imposing, useful demonstration.⁴⁶⁹

[Les journées ont passé, il m'est possible aujourd'hui d'envisager un exposé objectif, constructif de notre participation prévue pour l'Exposition de 1937, annexe du Logis, bastion Kellermann.

Cet exposé objectif serait sans polémique aucune... L'opinion doit être tenue au courant de ce qui a été fait par les Congrès que je représente, en tant que manifestation imposante et utile en 1937.]

This (temporarily) "nonpolemical" opening towards the public did not mean, of course, as far as Le Corbusier was

⁴⁶⁹ Le Corbusier, Letter to Philippe Diolé, 22 February 1935. FLC H2-13 166.

concerned, an immediate dismounting of his efforts behind the scene.

Le Corbusier had strong allies in the Council, as well as in the *Département de la Seine*. Not the least among them were the center-left Councilor Georges Prade, and the Socialist Gélis (also member of the Parliament), on whose territory the Kellermann project was to be built. Others were Robert Bos, Ferdinand Gros, as well as Henri Sellier, the Socialist Mayor of Suresne and Paris Councilman, with close friends in L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui⁴⁷⁰. Le Corbusier opened a barrage of letters, visits, and calls aimed at them all, in the hope of provoking organized support for his cause from within the *Hôtel de Ville*.⁴⁷¹ Also, still in the hope that Edmond Labbé could be replaced by someone who would be more favorable to his project, he wrote the same day to Roland Marcel, Prefect of Strasbourg, and a potential candidate (according to ambiguous press reports), asking him to replace the current Commissioner-General Labbé. Depicting the Commissioner in a very unfavorable light, Le Corbusier gave the Prefect a sketchy history of his own chaotic dealings with the Exhibition, in case the Prefect would become the new Commissioner "pour le bien public," as he put it.

⁴⁷⁰ Jean-Louis Cohen has brought to my attention that Henri Sellier was very close to Beaudouin and Lods and offered them constant support, a fact that is not without bearing in this constellation of diplomatic moves.

⁴⁷¹ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui published the project in its January 1935 issue. The journal's comment on the project it called "Une initiative intéressante," was that "en juin 1934 intervient la discussion au Conseil Municipal et le vote est favorable sous des conditions précises." This shows, coming from such a journal, that the position of the *Conseil Municipal* was not generally hostile to Le Corbusier, yet that some qualifying terms had to be respected.

Yet, Le Corbusier did not neglect Labbé either. Still on the same day, he even met with Labbé to respond to his ambiguous reaction to Van Eesteren's official letter. Together, they examined in great detail the Convention and agreed on how to ensure a successful outcome. This means that the Commissioner-General was not *a priori* hostile to the project, and that indeed everything was left to Gréber and the City's Chief Architect Martzloff to decide, in keeping with the Convention.⁴⁷² The principle of permanency of the buildings was, therefore, left open. Ten days later, on March 4, Le Corbusier presented Jacques Gréber, the Exhibition's Chief Architect, with the completed Kellermann plans.⁴⁷³ Gréber's response was unambiguous. Indeed, his consistent support of Le Corbusier now came across with enthusiasm. He found Corbusier's idea to be exactly what he himself had thought should be done at the Bastion:

I thank you for the documents you sent me and which I found extremely interesting. I can tell that when a problem is studied with logic, the same ideas appear even without mutual consultation. I always thought, indeed, that what had to be shown at Kellermann in terms of the housing problem was an analysis of the building process, that is, to show the building site interrupted at various stages. I can see from your documents that this was exactly your own approach. So, I do not need to tell you that I approve this idea with conviction, that it can be enormously useful to the Exhibition's visitors, and that I will give appropriate orders regarding your project with the greatest desire for its success.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Le Corbusier was even advised, some time later, by a sympathetic City Councilor Jean Chiappe, a friend, not to put forward the permanency of the building immediately, but just have the City accept the project on its own merits first.

⁴⁷³ These plans were: 3310 Basement; 3311 Garage; 3312 "Plateforme autoport;" 3313 typical floor; 3314 Cross-section. Archives de France, F12-12173.

⁴⁷⁴ Gréber, letter to Le Corbusier, 6 March 1935. FLC H2-13 192.

[Je vois que, lorsqu'on étudie un problème avec logique, les mêmes idées surgissent sans qu'on se soit concerté. Il m'avait toujours semblé, en effet, que la démonstration à faire au Boulevard Kellermann pour l'habitation, devait se présenter sous forme d'une analyse de l'art de bâtir, en montrant le chantier arrêté à différents stades, et je vois par vos documents que c'était exactement votre pensée. Je n'ai donc pas besoin de vous dire que je défends cette formule avec conviction, qu'elle peut rendre de très grands services aux visiteurs de l'Exposition, et que j'instruirai le dossier que vous avez bien voulu me soumettre, avec tout le désir que la proposition aboutisse.]

Gréber ended his letter by advising Le Corbusier to see Georges Prade, the representative of the *Arrondissement* in which the Bastion Kellermann was located. Actually, Le Corbusier had already scheduled an appointment for the following week. But the impatient Gréber, eager to have Prade see Le Corbusier, added in a postscript to his letter: "I got in touch with Mr. Prade. He is expecting you tomorrow." A few days later Gréber called up Le Corbusier's office to announce him that he had sent his plans to Martzloff with highest recommendations. Indeed, Gréber could not be more explicit about his enthusiasm:

It seems, therefore, quite in order to concede to the Congresses [CIAM] which represent in more than ten countries the entire elite of the architectural avant-garde, a site fifty meters longer than the one initially granted, given the extremely interesting project they are undertaking. They actually intend to present at the Exhibition the totality of the most advanced experiments currently done worldwide in the housing field. This concession, on which CIAM's project absolutely depends, seems to be that much easier to make since the City has given in the past fifteen to twenty kilometers to ordinary private firms which developed very limited solutions to the problem of contemporary housing, and this without ever having preserved any of the eloquent vestiges of Napoleon III's fortifications.⁴⁷⁵

[Il semble donc admissible qu'étant donné l'entreprise extrêmement intéressante que prévoient les Congrès, lesquels

⁴⁷⁵ Jacques Gréber, Letter to Georges Prade. Archives de France. F12-3924*

groupent dans plus de 10 pays toute l'élite de l'avant-garde de l'architecture, entreprise qui aura pour objet d'apporter la totalité des recherches faites aujourd'hui en tous pays sur le logis de l'époque contemporaine, il soit possible d'accorder une longueur de terrain de cinquante mètres plus longue que ce qui était prévu. Cet octroi paraît d'autant plus facile, constituant une condition indispensable de la réalisation des Congrès, lorsque la Ville a, de son côté, attribué de 15 à 20 km de bastion à de simples entreprises privées qui n'ont réalisé que des solutions extrêmement restreintes au problème du logis contemporain, et cela sans même avoir jamais sauvegardé en quelque endroit des vestiges éloquentes de l'enceinte de Napoléon III.]

Firm support also came from Raoul Dautry, the influential Director of the French state railway network, himself passionately dedicated to the modernization of France's infrastructure. Georges Prade intervened left and right in favor of Le Corbusier's project, both in Council meetings, and with the *Prefet de la Seine*.

It is clear from the briefly described events that, far from being assailed by "des ennemis innombrables qui déjà partout relèvent la tête," (as Le Corbusier wrote to Massimo Bontempelli,⁴⁷⁶ and steadily repeated since) he enjoyed as early as March 1935 a solid support for his project. He had everyone's backing from the Exhibition's Commissioner-General, to some relevant City Councilors, from the Government's Beaux-Arts Director to the Chief Architect of Paris, and from the Exhibition's Chief Architect to CIAM's President.

The real problem lay somewhere else. On the one hand, the structure was immense and its anticipated price exorbitant (about one seventh the cost of the entire International Exhibition, or the total payments to the participating artists).

⁴⁷⁶ Letter to M. Bontempelli, 26 October 1934. FLC H2-13 85.

On the other hand, and most importantly, was Le Corbusier's inability to prove and make good on his fundamental claim that the industry of the machinest age, the Grande Industrie, would be interested and would find his own argument convincing: "La Grande Industrie s'empare du bâtiment."⁴⁷⁷ Le Corbusier's unrelenting fascination with the industrial miracle, still alive throughout the 1930's, contrasted (despite increased references to planning) with his almost total ignorance of broader issues, comprising economics, industrial production, sociology and, indeed, urban planning itself. Le Corbusier's voluntarism as an architect "demiurge," still colored by the nineteenth-century utopian precepts, led him inexorably into assembling evanescent sand castles of gigantic dimensions. He was unable to elicit a single cent from the "Grande Industrie," even though industry was the basic premise of his entire enterprise. It is interesting to note that this premise remained largely a rhetorical stance, with almost no attempt on his part to contact and mobilize that industry. The few attempts he made were, in any case, far less assiduous than the pressure he put on the Exhibition. Ultimately he seemed more interested in a positive response from the *Autorité* than he was truly convinced "Industry" would find his project of immediate consequence. Like any architect, in fact, what he cared for most was to see his building up. Clearly conscious of the difficulty, Le Corbusier tried to "minimize" the relative cost of his project as he claimed that the budget of the Exhibition was

⁴⁷⁷ Most of the time, this phrase was used as a simple literary image. Le Corbusier referred to his own thesis (*La Grande Industrie s'empare du bâtiment*) as: "ce vocable expressif."

three times bigger than it really was. Clearly uncertain about how to approach or to convince the industrialists to finance his project, he even tried to have Jacques Gréber search for them. He wrote to Gréber:

If you manage, thanks to your decision-making position at the Exhibition, to open the door of our Kellermann to industrialists eager to exhibit there, and, what is more, to exhibit without any losses, but rather with the certainty of making a profit later--you could prove, eventually, to be, of enormous help to us.⁴⁷⁸

[Si vous arrivez, puisque vous êtes placé au cœur même de l'Exposition, à pouvoir ouvrir la porte de notre Kellermann à des industriels désireux de manifester à l'Exposition et à manifester non pas à fonds perdus, mais au contraire avec une certitude de récupération après coup, vous pourriez peut-être nous être d'une utilité énorme."]

Yet, the little success he had with a much smaller but compatible project on the Esplanade des Invalides (as will be discussed later), made him give up early on any practical attempts to employ his theoretical assumptions.

Le Corbusier also knew that the Convention allowed the City to require the demolition of any structure built on its land for the Exhibition, even if authorized for construction. Under those circumstances, and given some pressures in the City Hall, Le Corbusier could not ignore that it would be almost impossible to find a financing source for a building of such dimensions, which might ultimately be demolished. Yet Gréber's suggestion that,

⁴⁷⁸ Letter to Gréber, April 1, 1935. FLC H-13 197. The industry Le Corbusier contacted were: *Isorel*, *Heraclite*, *ORUA*, *Société de Carosseries d'automobiles* (for interior equipment of the apartments), *Sanitaires*, *FLAMBO*, *Ardoisière* (for all kinds of floor tiles), *Charpentiers de Paris* (for soundproof partition walls) *SELF* (for electric appliances) and so on. These were contacted on behalf of the UAM, PSM, and other CIAM associated groups. Apparently only *Isorel* responded with interest. See letter to René Herbst, October 7, 1935 FLC H2-13 240.

under the circumstances, a more modest project might prove less discouraging to builders, were met, as already mentioned, only with sarcasm--in spite of Gréber's assurances that the Exhibition might even be able to cover part of the cost of putting up such buildings.⁴⁷⁹

In contrast with this reaction, Le Corbusier took very seriously Fernand Léger's amusing idea of building a life size wooden model of the Kellermann skyscraper.⁴⁸⁰ Le Corbusier even obtained an estimate from the *Charpentiers de Paris*, amounting to 5 millions francs--eight times less than the actual building.⁴⁸¹ Without giving any specific explanation on how he would achieve it, Le Corbusier wrote on this occasion:

We will build at the Kellermann Bastion a complete, life-size model according to the plan. We have translated our concept into a temporary structure but one that will maintain all the educational aspects of the program. This means that we will build on the Kellermann Bastion a full-blown model of the dwelling, i.e. at real scale, in accordance with the plans T CIAM 3.309 to 3.314 completed in March 1935. By doing so we will offer [the public] all the elements needed to evaluate the relationship between the building and the surrounding space: architectural and urbanistic event [emph. added].⁴⁸²

[Nous construirons au Bastion Kellermann une maquette complète en grandeur nature conformément au plan...Nous avons traduit notre conception en provisoire de façon à sauvegarder toutefois tous les éléments démonstratifs du programme, c'est-à-dire que nous construirons à Kellermann une maquette complète en

⁴⁷⁹ The grant the Exhibition could offer was justified by the "didactic" character of such project. Le Corbusier, letter to Gréber reviewing what has been said in a telephone conversation between the two, on the same day. 3 October 1935. FLC H2-13 238.

⁴⁸⁰ That a painter like Léger would come up with such a suggestion does not have to surprise. Yet, that Le Corbusier would act on it seriously (even though a painter himself) may be an indication of some specific limitations of his technical thinking as an architect.

⁴⁸¹ Document FLC 2-13 232.

⁴⁸² Le Corbusier, letter to Gréber, 3 October 1935. FLC H2-13 238.

grandeur nature du logis, conformément aux plans T CIAM 3.309 à 3.314, soumis au début de Mars 1935. Ainsi donnerons-nous les éléments exacts d'appréciation du rapport établi entre le bâtiment et l'espace environnant: évènement urbanistique et architectural].

This was a surprising "compromise," one which, as he commented to Georges Prade, the City Councilor, caused him "un grand chagrin" as he was, once more, obliged to "abandon the ground of the real world and step back again into the land of fakery."⁴⁸³ What this seems to indicate, however, is that Le Corbusier was, perhaps, less interested in establishing his proclaimed "Statut du Logis des Temps nouveaux" than experimenting with his 'T' Project, adapted for an "Unité d'habitation." His own justification for accepting a maquette as a replacement for the actual building reinforced this impression as he emphasized that "by doing so we will offer [the public] all the elements needed to evaluate the relationship between the building and the surrounding space." In other words, he would be content with no more than probing the sculptural effect of his building. With a maquette, he would probably manage to test that; the stated major purpose of the experiment, however--the exhibition of materials, structural systems, façade technology and the like, would have been lost inevitably.

Indeed, when it became clear that his 'T' model or "Chicken-paw Skyscraper" would not be built, he readily gave up on the *Problème du Logis*, to reorient his efforts towards another

⁴⁸³ "Cela a été un grand chagrin pour moi d'abandonner le terrain du monde réel pour réemboîter encore une fois le pas de l'empire du toc. Soit! j'ai pris mes dispositions pour pouvoir toutefois développer dans ces conditions la thèse proposée." Le Corbusier, Letter to G.Prade, 26 September 1935. FLC H2-16 17.

"type" produced few years earlier: the *Musée sans façade*, also called *Musée à croissance indéfinie*. The stated purpose of this museum was to change four times. As the opportunities changed, he called the structure a "Musée d'Esthétique Contemporaine," or a "Musée de l'Urbanisme," but also "Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux," and later "Musée d'Education Populaire," as the Front Populaire movement gained in importance.

Such approach distinguished Le Corbusier significantly from most architects, the "professionals." For him, provoking a polemic was as important as realization itself. This may, in part, explain some of his most extreme proposals, the Kellermann slab included.

While keeping at an arm's length the French CIAM section, Le Corbusier increased his efforts, in the coming months, to attract to his fold other groups committed to modern design, such as the UAM founded in 1930 and the recently formed *Peintres et Sculpteurs Modernes*, headed by Fernand Léger. He appealed for their support. For their June 13 meeting, Le Corbusier's case or, as the convocation to the meeting put it: the "Projet Inkermann" (sic), was put on the UAM agenda, at the architect's request, by Pingusson, the future designer of UAM's Pavilion.

According to Charlotte Perriand, that day the three groups decided, in a language typical of the Communist party, to undertake "a collective action on the broadest basis possible, for a successful '37 as we want it, and against '37 as it is now."⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁴ "Une action commune sur les bases les plus larges possible, pour la réussite de 37 comme nous le voulons, contre 37 comme il est." Charlotte

This position was eventually defined through a "Programme Commun," edited by Francis Jourdain in July 1935.⁴⁸⁵ This new association of artists and architects was, as the program put it, a "resurrection of the collaboration of the three arts: architecture, painting, sculpture, celebrating team work with social aims."⁴⁸⁶ In a sense, hinting at a belated would-be French Werkbund--albeit with no industrialists involved in praise of their products--the idea resonated, perhaps, as a faded echo of an already bygone Bauhaus, but certainly as a response to a growing success of the Front Populaire ethos.

While the success of the Bastion Kellermann project was the principal objective of this common front of French modern artists in tune with the political moment, the novelty was a bazaar of mass-produced components for the modern, industrial "équipement domestique." With a hint of a Duchamp humor, perhaps, this huge exhibition of heterogeneous "ready-mades" were to be presented along a covered *rue intérieure* both as utensils for daily use and as exhibition objects carrying an aesthetic message

Perriand, letter to René Herbst, 5 July 1935. UAM archives, Musée des Arts Décoratifs. No accession number.

Le Corbusier, letter to René Herbst, July 1935. UAM Archives, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. This topic: "1937 tel qu'il est, et tel qu'il aurait pu être," was debated once more in July 1937, in a broad meeting, organized by the Communist Party, with "progressive" artists and intellectuals, at the "Maison de la Culture."

⁴⁸⁵ See UAM (Pingusson) Archives at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD). No accession number.

⁴⁸⁶ "...une résurrection de la collaboration des trois arts: architecture, peinture, sculpture; travail d'équipe vers des buts sociaux." UAM Archives, MAD, Paris. The supposed "team work" remained a rhetorical stand for Le Corbusier who vehemently opposed and subverted any semblance of such collaboration with other architects. This, later, caused a split between Le Corbusier and the group of younger architects who worked on the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilion, under Charlotte Perriand. Conversation with Charlotte Perriand, July 1989.

revealed by their contextual displacement. The modern artists did not intend to display these anonymous objects solely as ironical references to the luxury crafts that the machine-made artifacts were now dramatically subverting.

The goal was to stress the importance of reestablishing links with the "traditions heureuses pré-existantes," as Le Corbusier put it.⁴⁸⁷ Anticipating the large murals of the Exhibition, the intended populist character of these *étalages* stressed the resolve of the associated artists to make the Exhibition into a democratic experience.⁴⁸⁸ To signal the Exhibition at a distance, Fernand Léger suggested playfully to create a soaring advertising tower "pour emmerder la Tour-Eiffel."⁴⁸⁹ René Herbst, on the other hand, was given the task of creating an urbanistic plan,⁴⁹⁰ which would include, besides the *Unité d'habitation* and the *Bazaar*, a "Centre de la Jeunesse pour les loisirs et la culture," (designed by André Masson and Jean

⁴⁸⁷ See Le Corbusier's unpublished Program-document for the department store "Bazaar" as presented to Francis Jourdain on 14 January, 1936. FLC I3-1 3. See also document in UAM Archives, Musée des Arts Décoratifs. No title. No accession number. Hand written note: "F. Jourdain. Archives Herbst."

⁴⁸⁸ Such intent later found its way into A. Simon's *Guide to the Fair Paris 1937. Exposition Internationale*, which stressed that the particular role of the murals was "to bring about the birth of popular art," and "to encourage the artist to work for the people." Indeed the murals were created by those same UAM and PSM artists, such as Sonia Delauney and Fernand Léger, who contributed to the *Bazaar* idea. As mentioned earlier the issue of "democratic art" was fiercely debated throughout the thirties among the artistic Left, within the framework of what was known as the "Débat du réalisme." Le Corbusier himself actively participated in these "disputes" held at the *Maison de la Culture*. For an overview of the debate and its impact on 1937 see exhibition catalogue of the Pompidou center Sarah Wilson, "1937: Problèmes de la peinture en marge de l'Exposition Internationale." in *Paris-Paris, 1937-1957* (28 May-2 November 1981) and Patrick Weiser, "L'Exposition Internationale, l'Etat et les Beaux-Arts" pp. 43-65.

⁴⁸⁹ Léger, letter to Le Corbusier, 23 August 1935 FLC H2- 13 230.

⁴⁹⁰ The task was later, in early September, entrusted to Le Corbusier.

Bossu, members of the group "Jeunes 37")⁴⁹¹ as well as a "Centre de l'Enfance heureuse," designed by the architect Mouillot, independently.

In Le Corbusier's eyes this 'counter-exposition' was supposed to be both "une manifestation vivante d'art voué aux choses sociales" and "une manifestation esthétique d'avant-garde."⁴⁹² Indeed, an entire program was emerging, with a specific ideological bent, for an alternative exhibition--against the Exhibition. In a letter to Georges Prade, Le Corbusier emphasized:

⁴⁹¹ The "Jeunes 37" was an *ad hoc* group of Professional and Technical Schools students and young professionals of Paris; assembled spontaneously in November '34 in the aftermath of an inspiring speech by Francis Jourdain on the Future Exhibition. Their idea was to design an edifice "d'utilité collective" for the youth with the support of the *Arts Appliqués, Arts Décoratifs, Beaux-Arts* and the *Bouille* Schools. The program of their project, eventually revised by Le Corbusier, was centered on the "urgent problem of the organization of leisure time for the youth, comprising workshops, meeting rooms and cultural and recreational facilities. The group was invited by Charlotte Perriand to join the efforts of the UAM artists. For the three associations--UAM, CIAM, PSM-- the inclusion of such group represented an added opportunity to "support an enterprise devoted to the public good, which was sole reason for the existence of the association." Under the circumstances, Le Corbusier was compelled to share his site with the "Jeunes '37." His "CIAM" facilities were connected to their building. The group reciprocated with inviting the CIAM to share their Conference Room for the Fifth CIAM Congress scheduled for 1937. The two leading figures of the "Jeunes 1937" group, Masson and Bossu, worked later in one of the teams that put together the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. Their own project never materialized. For the program of the group and its collaboration with CIAM and UAM, see documents EXPOSITION DE 1937 "Proposition pour la réalisation d'un 'Centre de la Jeunesse pour les loisirs et la culture: Participation des groupes UAM, CIAM, PSM" UAM, Pingusson archives, at the MAD, no accession number. Letter from Masson, the group's delegate, to Le Corbusier, 28 May 1936. FLC H2-13 525-527. A different version revised by Le Corbusier: "Proposition pour la réalisation d'un 'Centre de la Jeunesse' pour les loisirs et la culture" July 1935. FLC H2-13 530-534. The group --later renamed 'Groupe Mai 36'--finally built a youth hostel under P.R. Houdin and Jack Neel.

⁴⁹² Letter to Edmond Labbé, 2 September 1935. FLC, H2-13. Le Corbusier's drift to the political left was also due, apart from outside circumstances, to the radicalization of his own office. Perriand, Pierre Jeanneret and Bossu were already directly involved with the Communist Party as members of the AEAR (Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires) that Paul Vaillant-Couturier presided.

We thus represent what can fairly be called an intellectual elite, assembled around the same ideas, where creating the infrastructure of a modern society is concerned. Far from any idea of luxury, we fully devote ourselves to the daily well-being of the city dwellers. 493

[Nous représentons ainsi ce que l'on peut véritablement considérer comme l'élite de l'activité intellectuelle, groupée autour des mêmes idées d'équipement de la société moderne, loin des idées de grand luxe, et consacrée entièrement au bonheur quotidien des populations des villes]

On a more mundane level, this association represented for Le Corbusier a convenient way to circumvent the French CIAM section, i.e. to maintain a firm control over his project while at the same time securing for himself a wide circle of dedicated modern artists and collaborators, among whom he represented the CIAM. Incidentally, this arrangement also came as a handy *motif* to use in his answer to a letter Edmond Labbé had recently sent him. Indeed, on June 7, 1935, and referring to the "T CIAM" plans Le Corbusier had sent to Gréber in March, Labbé noted that these plans anticipated permanent buildings and thus contradicted Article 13 of the Convention which required the clearance of all structures after the Exhibition.⁴⁹⁴ In good faith, however, Labbé urged Le Corbusier to let him know "as soon as possible" what his current intentions were at the Bastion and, if he insisted on a permanent structure, to let him know urgently "so that a timely dispensation request could be made."⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Ultimately defeated, this Program was to be partially revived in 1936 by the Front Populaire. FLC H-2 13 125.

⁴⁹⁴ It is not clear to me why Labbé chose to rely on Article 13. It is possible that Labbé confused the two articles since he had to deal on an almost daily basis with Article 13 which concerned the main grounds of the Exhibition.

⁴⁹⁵ Labbé, letter to Le Corbusier, 7 June 1935. FLC H2-13 209.

Instead of picking up on an error that could have worked in his favor, but rather acting as if he was above such petty matters, Le Corbusier completely ignored Labbé's question.

Maintaining a lofty air, he condescended only to inform Labbé that following various transactions regarding this issue, our association [CIAM] have invited two other associations, the UAM and the PSM, to join us. Please find enclosed the agreement through which this new association was formed last Thursday.

[à la suite des diverses transactions relatives à ce sujet, notre groupement [CIAM] s'est adjoint le groupement UAM... et le groupement PSM...Veuillez trouver inclus (sic) la motion par laquelle s'est constituée Jeudi dernier cette association"⁴⁹⁶

--a quite irrelevant fact, it would seem, in the case at stake. Reminding Labbé, however, of the artistic importance of these three groups, he concluded with a request for an audience, along with René Herbst representing the UAM and Fernand Léger the PSM. This call for a meeting with Labbé, nevertheless, could not disguise a fundamental refusal to facilitate a constructive dialogue between what he viewed as the artistic "chefs de file" and an "imbecile" bureaucrat. Indeed two weeks later, and without waiting for Labbé's answer, Le Corbusier wrote an even more imperative letter, again in complete disregard of the real problem:

In reference to your letter of June 7 1935, and ours of June 15, 1935, we are informing you that it is out of the question that our structure at the Bastion Kellermann be anything short of a permanent building. This project implies the absolute necessity of purchasing the land at the end of the Exhibition.⁴⁹⁷
[emph. added]

⁴⁹⁶ Letter to E. Labbé, June 15, 1935. FLC H-13 211.

⁴⁹⁷ Le Corbusier, letter to Labbé, 4 July 1935. FLC H2-14 222.

[Comme suite à votre lettre du 7 juin 1935, et à la notre du 15 juin 1935, nous vous informons qu'il, ne peut être question, concernant notre Exposition au Bastion Kellermann, que d'une réalisation définitive et que cette réalisation comporte la nécessité d'un droit d'achat du terrain, en fin d'Exposition.]

Hence, along with another attempt to impress Labbé's pettiness with a distinguished roster of artistic "chefs de file," Le Corbusier was now "informing" Labbé that the structures *had* to be permanent; hence, that the land owned by the city *had* to be sold to a real estate developer, even though--as he knew very well--the City had explicitly opposed such sale. This position was even more surprising, on Le Corbusier's part, since the move--privatizing city land--ran pointedly against CIAM's principles established in Athens, two years earlier; what is more, such advocacy probably contradicted even more forcefully the listed artists' own principles. In fact, what was primarily on Le Corbusier's mind, was finding a way, be it in the most irrational guise, of "circumventing" the imperatives of a Convention voted by the City Council and ratified by the Parliament: "evidently," land bought from the City would have escaped the City's jurisdiction over it.⁴⁹⁸ Yet, this is precisely what the City did not want to do. Le Corbusier signed the letter in the name of the three Associations--UAM, PSM and CIAM, listing 32 members, even though it is clear that he was not mandated to do so. The lists were still being compiled by Charlotte Perriand, Pingusson and

⁴⁹⁸ The other hypothesis is that, sensing more or less consciously that he would not be able to go much farther with this project, publicity for his ideas and his own persona was all that really mattered at this point. Fighting windmills at the Exhibition was no doubt part of it.

Léger, so that, for example, the PSM, on Corbusier's roster, had only one member: Fernand Léger.⁴⁹⁹

This letter, with its list, had primarily a pragmatic purpose for Le Corbusier, not unlike the early international CIAM panel: to reach and convince the "Authority" of the significance of a project backed by so many illustrious names. Le Corbusier, therefore, sent a copy of the letter to numerous personalities associated in his eyes to that *Autorité*, and, by underlying that each of the 32 participating artists were French, he attempted, in addition, to invalidate the City Council's main argument against his project: that the whole enterprise was stealing work from French architects.⁵⁰⁰ CIAM's international "Comité des cinq," designated in London in May 1934 at Le Corbusier's request, had all but disappeared from his concerns, and so did the promised grandiose role of an international elite at the Bastion Kellermann.

In October 1934, Le Corbusier had suggested to an enthusiastic Gréber,⁵⁰¹ an alternative project to his Kellermann *Unité*, on rue Fabert, adjoining the *Esplanade des Invalides*, and directly connected with the Exhibition's main grounds.⁵⁰² The

⁴⁹⁹ Le Corbusier, letter to E. Labbé, 4 July 1935 FLC. A copy of this letter was sent to Raoul Dautry with a request that he endorse it "with all the force of [his] high influence." Letter to Dautry, 19 July 1935. FLC H2-13 224.

⁵⁰⁰ Next to each name Le Corbusier wrote: "Français."

⁵⁰¹ Responding to this positive reaction after the crises caused by the decisions of the *Hotel de Ville*, Georges Huisman wrote to Le Corbusier on 16 October 1934: "Je vois avec plaisir que les choses vont s'arranger"... and, with a tenderness and devotion that marked all his supporters and matched only the virulent opprobrium of his detractors, Huisman added. "N'ayez aucune crainte. Je suis là pour penser à tout ce qui vous touche." Huisman, letter to Le Corbusier, 16 October 1934. FLC H2-13 72.

⁵⁰² For a detailed description of the project see the typed document signed by Le Corbusier, 2 October 1935: "A L'INTENTION DE M. HERBST, PRESIDENT DE

project, of a Maison CLARTE type, was commissioned by Jose-Luis Sert's uncle, Juan Sert, in 1932 and had remained in the limbo since.⁵⁰³ For three years Le Corbusier had been waiting for an opportunity to test his new housing typology and demonstrate "pour la première fois, la nouvelle hauteur de 4,5: démonstration décisive."⁵⁰⁴ The structure, like part of the Kellermann's building, was a steel-based framing combined with *Isorel* panels he had not used before.⁵⁰⁵ The land was private and, consequently, the City's jurisdiction did not apply. Imagined as an "habitation moderne, dernier cri," the project was a small 30 units apartment building situated in one of the most prestigious locations in Paris. Not without a touch of surrealist irony, akin to the Beistegui project, "two villas amidst lush greenery " topped the building's roof.

Le Corbusier imagined the structure could be a testing ground for the more daring undertakings at the Bastion, both in terms of program and of the industry's willingness to invest in such undertakings. The pedagogical idea of presenting an unfinished building in various stages of completion was also central to this project.⁵⁰⁶ Le Corbusier wrote to René Herbst, in

L'UAM--EXPOSITION DE 1937: Execution en dur sur le terrain même de l'Exposition." UAM Archives, Musée de Arts Décoratifs, Paris. No accession number.

⁵⁰³ This project was about to be published as part of a series of articles related to the activity of the newly founded Union des Artistes Modernes, when the Parliament approved the call for an International Exhibition of Modern Arts.

⁵⁰⁴ Le Corbusier letter to J-L. Sert. FLC I2-9.

⁵⁰⁵ A brand name for a thin, 1/8" particle board. *Isorel* was the only building material industry that responded favorably to Le Corbusier's calls.

⁵⁰⁶ For a more detailed description of this project see: Gilles Ragot and Mathilde Dion, Le Corbusier en France, Paris, Electa/Moniteur, Collections Monographies, 1987, p. 13.

a note intended to all the members of the UAM, PSM, and CIAM Association, that this

modern house would call for every possible collaboration. A segment of the building would be left at various stages of completion; ...[while] the other would be furnished, furnished, fitted up, painted, decorated, etc. This will make it possible for all our comrades to have real exhibition spaces, under the best possible conditions.⁵⁰⁷

[maison moderne ferait appel à toutes les collaborations utiles. Une partie de l'immeuble serait laissée à l'état de construction à diverses étapes;...l'autre partie serait équipée, aménagée, meublée, peinte, décorée, etc... laissant à tous nos camarades la possibilité d'avoir des stands modèles en vrai et dans la meilleure situation.]

Le Corbusier was convinced that the building firms, once identified as exhibitors, would reduce their prices and that the visitors, impressed by the experiment, would readily invest in the venture, thus helping the building's survival after the Exhibition's closure. Yet, with the exception of *Isorel's* very promising reaction as early as June 1934, even in this case the "Grande industrie" remained largely indifferent to the idea.

Such failure, naturally, meant a financial dead-end as well--the ultimate cause of the unsuccessful outcome of these projects as intended for the Paris Exhibition.

By mid October 1935, invited by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Le Corbusier left for the United States, embittered by his misfortune.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ Le Corbusier, letter to R. Herbst, UAM President 20 October 1935, MAD.

⁵⁰⁸ A few weeks earlier, to Le Corbusier's vain outrage, the City ordered the demolition of the Bastion.

CHAPTER VIII

**The Invention of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*:
Aesthetics, Urbanism and Popular Education**

"One of the gardeners told me that our pavilion is one of the most interesting of the Exhibition."⁵⁰⁹

Pierre Jeanneret to Le Corbusier

Jacques Gréber was perfectly conscious that Le Corbusier's absence from the Paris Fair would have represented a serious blow to the principles it stood for. Hence, despite the odds, and not unlike his later extraordinary efforts to salvage the participation of the United States, also threatened by lack of funds, Gréber devised with Labbé a way out of the stalemate.

Paradoxically, the circumstance that caused Le Corbusier so much trouble with the City Council served, this time, as an opportune solution. In the absence of Le Corbusier, René Herbst was informed on October 28, 1935, that the Exhibition would grant the CIAM a lump sum of 500,000 francs, drawn directly on the budget allotted to foreign guest exhibitors.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, even though the project was Le Corbusier's, the fact that it was "sponsored" by an international institution served as a handy subterfuge for Labbé to circumvent the difficulty. What had

⁵⁰⁹ "Un des jardiniers m'a dit que notre pavillon était l'un des plus intéressants de toute l'Exposition." P. Jeanneret, letter to "Cher Ed." 13 August 1937. FLC H-2 14 34.

⁵¹⁰ Notes about a telephone conversation between P. Jeanneret and R. Herbst, on 28 October 1935. FLC H2-13 244-245.

worked against him till then, was now used to his advantage. To be allocated such a sum represented, in René Herbst's own account, an "immense success."⁵¹¹ A new location was assigned to reflect the change in the project's size, still along the Boulevard Kellermann, but closer to the *Place d'Italie*. This, however, also meant the automatic dissolution of the "common front" of the three artistic associations. Indeed, since the money was given to a "foreign" exhibitor, neither UAM nor PSM could take part in it.⁵¹² Nevertheless, the UAM/PSM group received for their "Bazaar"--officially termed *Pavillon de l'Etalage*--one of the most prestigious locations, next to the Eiffel Tower, east of the Champ de Mars axis.⁵¹³

Le Corbusier was left to re-invent his involvement in the International Exhibition.

CIAM's "Comité des cinq," created 18 months earlier in London, was definitely forgotten. Back from the United States at

⁵¹¹ Herbst, letter to Le Corbusier, In an interview in March 1936 to Notre Revue n.8, Le Corbusier said arbitrarily and with his customary taste for dramatic effects: "Nous espérons obtenir un crédit de 2 millions et demi: le crédit nous fut refusé." In fact, Le Corbusier assured Gréber on a number of occasions that 500 000 F. would be quite sufficient to put together his pavilion.

⁵¹² Independent French entities had very limited access to the Exhibition's budget. Unless the architect had been a winner in the 1934-35 Competitions, or the project reflected some Government policies, or else had a pedagogical/scientific character, French exhibitors were to find financing independently.

The UAM group eventually received a grant of an equal amount, on the grounds that their exhibition had also a "didactic" character, as the Exhibition's by-laws required. This was a subterfuge Labbé found to allow the dissenting artists to participate in the Exhibition after they left the officially sponsored Société des Arts Décoratifs. In the end the sum was raised to 800 000 F, and so was Le Corbusier's amount as part of the general efforts of the Front Populaire to favor a number of specific programs, but also reflecting a rise in prices due to the new social policies of the Government

⁵¹³ UAM's final site, after the collapse of the Bazaar idea and the integration of the *Etalage* pavilion into the *Pavillon de la Publicité*, was later moved to an equally advantageous site along the Seine.

Christmas, Le Corbusier already had on his desk, by January 7, 1936, a single point perspective of the *Palais de l'Esthétique Contemporaine*: a view of its *Hall d'honneur*, in the good tradition of a Beaux-Arts program (Fig.104). The "Palace" replaced the "Logis."⁵¹⁴

Following his own untiring quest, Le Corbusier decided, this time, to experiment with another typology. From the housing problem he moved to the study of the museum typology, a problem that had held his attention since the previous decade. He chose a square spiral structure, akin to his Zigurat-like 1929 *Mundaneum* published by *Cahiers d'Art* in 1931 but with no ascending movement. (Fig.105).⁵¹⁵ As a building "with no façade," able to grow "indefinitely" in its spiral development, this pavilion was immediately conceived as an "outillage standart," a model for a museum that could be readily reproduced and multiplied throughout France, as a "*bâtiment-type* d'exposition de cette nature."⁵¹⁶ The initial purpose of the Museum, as explained to Edmond Labbé in the wake of 1936, was to call upon the "most prominent artists,

⁵¹⁴ In March 1936, on the eve of the Front Populaire's great victory and his increased reliance on the Left for the propagation of his ideas, Le Corbusier "modified" these facts in his interview with *Notre Revue* as he stated: "Pendant mon séjour à New York, Monsieur Labbé m'avisait qu'un terrain m'était concédé à la Porte d'Italie, avec une subvention de 500,000 F. Aussi il a fallu envisager ceci: au lieu d'imprimer le livre, j'imprimerai la table des Matières. Et nous allons faire ainsi le Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux qui sera purement et simplement le PROGRAMME de ce que nous concevons aujourd'hui, ce qu'il y a lieu d'apporter aux millions d'êtres qui souffrent dans des conditions abominables de logement, de circulation et de travail." *Notre revue*, n. 8, March 1936, p. 45.

⁵¹⁵ Locquin marked this drawing as "Projet 3." Archives de France, F60-970

⁵¹⁶ While this Pavilion was destined to give the visitors a notion of the "New Times," Le Corbusier also regarded it as the prototype to be used even in the most remote "settlement that wished to exhibit its own activity, its contemporary research, or the state of its past, through an extremely convenient means of visualization." FLC-H2 17 60. See also letter 3.IV,36, H2-14, 1.

sculptors and painters who would be given a chance to express themselves in the architecture of the new times."⁵¹⁷

By early February 1936, the *Museum for Contemporary Aesthetics* was subsumed under a more general ideological umbrella as *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux: Musée d'Esthétique Contemporaine*.⁵¹⁸ The name "Temps Nouveaux," given to a spiral structure that, indeed, was not without resonating some pervasive themes of early Soviet *Cubo-Futurism* (conceptually present in Tatlin's fast ascending spiral, but terminologically related to the frequent use of the term Novy Mir--"Monde Nouveau"-- in revolutionary Russia) corresponded strikingly to the dynamic character suggested by the form of the building.⁵¹⁹ Le Corbusier was careful to avoid the static concept "Temps Modernes," which conveys the idea of novelty, but a novelty with a retrospective

⁵¹⁷ "En ce moment-ci, notre pavillon qui sera voué à l'expression des "Temps Nouveaux," a l'intention de faire appel à quelques un des artistes les plus notoires: statuaires et peintres, auxquels nous voulons offrir l'occasion de se manifester dans l'architecture des temps Nouveaux." Letter to Labbé February 29, 1936. Archives de France, Conseil des Ministres F60-965.

⁵¹⁸ The name "Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux" already appears in *February 1936*, on a perspective drawing of the spiral museum. This fact shows that the term *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* was not coined in the aftermath, and in response to the electoral victory of the *Front Populaire* Government, as has previously been assumed. The Pavilion bore this name at least 5 months before the elections.

⁵¹⁹ The form and the name "Temps Nouveaux" were not the only direct reference to the Soviet experience in the 1920's. In the Program for the Pavilion dated November 7, 1936, as well as in a number of letters, Le Corbusier repeatedly requested a railway car to be installed on his site. The car would be used for mobile exhibitions to reach the most remote places in France. The idea certainly echoed the tradition of the "Agit-prop" trains in the early years of the Soviet Union. They shared the same populist character.

The Museum has also to be related to the pre-1914 discourse on the "Cité Mondiale" which played a role in Le Corbusier's concept of the *Mundaneum*. It is also worth recalling again that Temps Nouveaux was the name of a noted Anarchist journal published at the end of the century and probably known to Le Corbusier: The Anarchist Movement was particularly important among Russian exiles, most of whom were based in Geneva and Paris. They later played a significant role in the Russian Revolution.

dimension, one that is already established, known and even codified: the notion of Modern as timeless. The "Temps Nouveaux--as opposed to the notion of Modern as timeless-- propounded aesthetic themes of the yet to come, of a present pregnant with future promises, never to be fully grasped. Like the ever growing structure of the "Musée à croissance indéfinie," the open-ended, dynamic concept of the term Nouveau was also reflective of the Museum's exhibits, of an art in constant flux. With its "futuristic" charge (if tamed by the practical intent of an "indefinitely" transformable Museum), this museum dedicated to the "Esthétique des Temps Nouveaux" encapsulated, in Le Corbusier's eyes, like its name, a never fully apprehended, ever unfolding present.

On March 10, the Program was ready.⁵²⁰ A copy was sent to Huisman, Director of the *Beaux-Arts* Office, from whom Le Corbusier hoped to obtain an additional grant. In fact, in order to test his "type décisif à croissance indéfinie...d'exposition de toute nature," Le Corbusier needed a total of 2 million francs, a far cry from the 42 millions he requested for his housing project,

⁵²⁰ On March 11, Edmond Labbé, the Commissioner-General, officially informed Le Corbusier that a site had been granted him to present *Les Temps Nouveaux* à l'occasion de l'Exposition Internationale de 1937." He underlined that the structure should be "strictly a temporary one" to honor the agreements the State signed with the City. In addition, continued Labbé, the Exhibition had granted him a maximum of 500,000 francs as a contribution to the expenses. Additional funds would be raised from sources such as the *Direction des Beaux-Arts* Le Corbusier had claimed to have secured. Gréber ended his letter requesting a prompt confirmation of his agreement with the conditions, and to make sure to inform Labbé about the date Le Corbusier would be ready to deliver his project. Le Corbusier completely ignored this letter.

yet still four times more than the amount the Exhibition could offer him.⁵²¹

Primarily centered on formal and aesthetic issues of Contemporary Art, this first *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* was defined by Le Corbusier as an "instrument of visualization," which included everything from urbanism to architecture.⁵²²

Nevertheless, this Pavilion still encompassed mostly works of art such as "la peinture et la statuaire architecturale," as well as "les œuvres de la peinture et de la statuaire libres (tapisserie y compris)." In this sense the Pavilion echoed the Exhibition's official concept of "integration of urbanism, architecture and art in modern life," best exemplified by Dondel's recently awarded *Musée d'Art Moderne*, albeit in a different architectural language.

Artists ready to contribute to the Museum were Picasso, Mirò, Léger, Delaunay, Brancussi, Helion, Le Corbusier, Lipschitz, Arp, Giacometti and Laurens. Besides new works created by these

⁵²¹ For comparison's sake, let it be noted that Pingusson built the splendid UAM Pavilion with only 800,000 francs.

As government archival evidence shows, Jacques Gréber again fully supported Le Corbusier's idea and urged him to find, by all means, a donor ready to help. In a tone of friendly "conspiracy," Gréber also recommended that, for tactical reasons, Le Corbusier not make it immediately clear to the City Officials that he was going to build a permanent structure. (The Exhibition had signed an explicit agreement with the City that no permanent building would be raised, except for the Chaillot Palace and the Museum of Modern Art.) This detail alone shows to what lengths the Exhibition officials were ready to go in order to ensure that Le Corbusier would be adequately represented at the Fair.

Le Corbusier's assessment of Gréber's support, however, varied accordingly to the person he was writing. Thus he could, on the same day, write: "Gréber nous suit entièrement," as well as: "Gréber prétend nous suivre, ce qui est possible."

⁵²² In another document sent to the Direction Générale des Beaux-Arts two weeks later he explained: "Par urbanisme, on entend ici l'expression de la vie dans tout ce qui concerne la ville, le logis et les questions plastiques connexes pouvant exprimer la direction très nette d'un esprit des Temps Nouveaux." [Manuscript: 1937 "PAVILLON DES TEMPS NOUVEAUX-- Description des travaux pouvant élarger au budget des Artistes et Artisans, distribué par la Direction Générale des Beaux-Arts." March 24 '36. FLC H2-14 156.]

artists for the Museum, Le Corbusier anticipated a section dedicated to the *Art Vivant* displaying some "oeuvres annonciatrices" of painters and sculptors, created in the last thirty years. Set "among these productions," in defiance of the concept of "*grand art*," would be pictorial works by children who worked under the direction of an exceptional artistic educator Pierre Guéguen. A choice of works by his students would be presented in the form of mural enlargements.⁵²³ In another segment of the rectangular spiral, the public would be presented with a didactic exposition, explaining "the reasons for the modifications that occurred in contemporary architecture," including the most striking aspects of the new "*équipement domestique*." The central piece of this daedalian composition, the nucleus that coordinated, as it were, this spatial symphony of the Temps Nouveaux, was a ceremonial hall with 400 seats, where conferences, film projections, musical lectures, concerts and performances of "new theater" would celebrate the expression of the new aesthetic. The building itself would be directly linked, as mentioned earlier, to the "Jeunes 1937" pavilion (Fig.118) despite Le Corbusier's considerable reluctance.⁵²⁴

Finally, *CIAM oblige*, an account of the 43 cities studied at the Athens Congress, would be displayed along with some examples of the architectural production of the CIAM international groups. Also, quite in tune with the spirit of the time, Le Corbusier suggested to Huisman that the participating artists all

⁵²³ This section was maintained in the final, "canvas" version of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*.

⁵²⁴ I hold this remark from Charlotte Perriand.

be paid a "democratic fee," equal for all, regardless their stature. The participation of the French CIAM members, however, from whom "considerable manual work" would be requested, Le Corbusier saw essentially as a contribution in draftsmanship, graphic skills, as well as dexterity in composition and montage of photographic and pictorial material that the "visualization" of the debated issues required. Probably for that reason, besides the young architect Jean Bossu, Le Corbusier's follower, only two important interior and furniture designers appeared on Le Corbusier's list, Pierre Chareau and Charlotte Perriand.⁵²⁵ As revealed later, what was presented to these young artists as motivated by a democratic principle, had for Le Corbusier a purely operative *raison d'être* : the names of artists and architects cited were there only to justify the total sum that Le Corbusier sought while maintaining the myth of a collaborative work.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ This situation was not to change considerably in the final Temps Nouveaux Pavilion, as far as the participation of French CIAM members was concerned.

⁵²⁶ In this respect a conflict arose later between Le Corbusier and the CIAM team of young architects working on the Pavilion in the Spring 1937. They came to realize that Le Corbusier had manipulated them: instead of real responsibilities within a collaborative effort, as the task was presented to them when the Temps Nouveaux project was started, "ce travail collectif," as one of them, Woog, wrote in protest to Le Corbusier, "s'est ramené au découpage et au collage des photos." Woog further showed that his name, and that of other CIAM collaborators was used primarily to obtain grants and credits for Le Corbusier's project. Woog proceeded:

"I'd like to remind you that when Charlotte Perriand asked me to put my name on a list sent to Monsieur le Ministre des Beaux-Arts [he means Huisman] with the purpose of getting a grant of 10,000 francs, I was promised a role with real responsibilities. [...] Now, however, Charlotte Perriand's attitude seems to indicate that the sole reason we were put on that list was to obtain so many fractions of 10,000 francs which were later to be used to fill the pavilion in a completely different way than described in our first meetings. "

["...Je tiens à vous rappeler que lors de la demande qui me fût faite par Charlotte Perriand pour l'obtention du crédit par l'utilisation de mon

From the Musée d'Esthétique Contemporaine to the Musée d'Education Populaire

The name of the Pavilion changed three times. The sequence of the "transformations" encompassed within the same formal structure, reflected the fast paced transformations of the political climate in France, and Le Corbusier's efforts to adapt to these changes with adequate ideological responses aimed primarily at seeking funds for his project. This shifting of Corbusier's political choices, or rather of the increased "political content" of his programs, certainly correspond in part, as it has been suggested, to genuine modifications of the architect's ideological stances. Yet, it is my contention that, for the most part, these shifts were a response to Le Corbusier's perception of the displacement of the political dominant, the

nom sur une liste adressée à M. le Ministre des Beaux-Arts j'acceptais un poste responsable... or l'attitude de Ch. Perriand laisse supposer que l'unique but de l'appel qui nous a été fait, était la recherche de plusieurs fractions de 10.000 francs qui ensuite...auront servi à remplir le Pavillon d'une toute autre manière qu'il était question aux premières réunions."

J. Woog letter to Le Corbusier, 13 May 1937: H2-17-201.

Under pressure from both sides, Charlotte Perriand, as she told me in 1989, ended quitting the job. Obviously, this pattern of "collaboration" is essentially what Le Corbusier had in mind when he first called upon the CIRPAC in London, or Beaudouin and Lods for that matter, when, as we saw earlier, Le Corbusier used without permission Beaudouin's name for his Prix de Rome title, in order to enhance his chances of obtaining the grant he was seeking for his first housing project at the Bastion Kellermann. He put Beaudouin as a "collaborator" on his project without even telling Beaudouin of the existence of such a project. See correspondence between Beaudouin, Van Eesteren and himself in the Fall 1934. FLC H-14 16.

On the other hand, Van Eesteren himself complained at various occasions that, in a Pavilion sponsored by the CIAM such as the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* was supposed to be, CIAM members ended being seriously underrepresented.

Among numerous artists and technicians (about 30 to 50) working on the Pavilion, only six artists--team leaders--were paid (10,000 francs each). In the heroic 1920's and 1930's when there was practically no cash flow in the rue de Sèvres office, no one was paid much if at all. This practice, however, continued even after World War II, when large commissions started coming in.

shift of the perceived locus of the tirelessly sought
"Autorité."⁵²⁷

As the political climate evolved, from the menacing riots of the far Right in February 1934 to the electoral victory of the Front Populaire in June 1936 reflecting the general mobilization of democratic France against the Fascist menace, Le Corbusier found increasing support among the intelligenzia associated with the Left. This included prominent Communist leaders and intellectuals such as Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Communist Party leader and director of the daily *L'Humanité*, or Louis Aragon, director of the *Maison de la Culture* who generally, if at times ambiguously, favored the avant-garde trends in the arts.⁵²⁸ In the same way he had called the riots of the far-right the "awakening of cleanliness," namely the awakening of Order and Authority, Le Corbusier was now calling the Front Populaire "L'Autorité juvénile et propre."⁵²⁹ Both cases--the Fascist or the Socialist alternative--Le Corbusier perceived as not much more than an increase in authoritarian rule,⁵³⁰ able to supersede the

⁵²⁷ This is not to deny, of course, a certain degree of evident idealism if often subjected to opportunism. For a broad discussion of the political background of, and ideological shifts regarding Le Corbusier's understanding of what he called *Autorité*, see Mary McLoed op. cit.

⁵²⁸ In the memorable debate on *Realism* organized in 1935, to which Le Corbusier was brought by Vaillant-Couturier and Léger, intellectuals such as Aragon or Lurçat, both CP members, held at times opposite points of view, Lurçat favoring *Socialist Realism* in the arts.

The *Maison de la Culture* was created by the Communist lead AEAR (Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires).

⁵²⁹ "The young and clean Authority" [emph. added]. FLC: H2-14 165.

⁵³⁰ In a supportive letter to Léon Blum, Le Corbusier wrote, referring to the Popular Front's victory: "C'est l'heure des décisions, des ordres"--even if nothing could have been more foreign as a concept to the man and to the politician Léon Blum was. Le Corbusier had in fact endorsed the attacks by the Right against Léon Blum and the Popular Front in general, but now with a "positive" connotation. January 1937, FLC H2-17.

ever "inefficient" and hesitant democratic process, a recent example of which was the City Council's ruling that, as Le Corbusier claimed, broke the backbone of his "Bastion Kellermann" project.⁵³¹

The changes in program and purpose of his *Musée sans façade* illustrate *in vivo* these opportune shifts of Le Corbusier's allegiances, over a very short span of time as political events in France accelerated, and Le Corbusier grafted each shift onto the same architectural object. Politically neutral, the first Pavilion project, finalized by early January 1936, still reflected lingering traces of his ideological stances of the preceding decade, regarding the transcendent power technology and form could convey to the process of social change. Thus, at first, the thrust was put on formal issues, both in terms of the container and the content.

Through his friends Fernand Léger and Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Le Corbusier was introduced to the Communist led *Maison de la Culture*, founded by a group of young architects and directed by Aragon along with a large number of prominent artists, scholars and writers, bound to a growing influence on Paris cultural

Still, some degree of political innocence has to be granted Le Corbusier when we read that, in order to prove his point to a Socialist Prime Minister, he finds no better argument than to praise Mussolini! In the five page letter, dated 13 April 1937, we read: "Mussolini vient de se donner le titre de 'Lion de l'Islam,' La France peut répondre par: "Alger, capitale de l'Afrique." FLC: H2-16 84-88.

⁵³¹ Le Corbusier had a similar experience with the elected bodies of the City of Algiers that rejected his two urban projects. As the Prefect of Algiers perceptively noted on the occasion of the *Plan Obus*, only a fierce dictatorial system could have possibly managed to implement Corbusier's project.

life.⁵³² Literally "adopted" by this cultural center,⁵³³ Le Corbusier saw in it an important instrument of agitation and pressure in favor of his ideas and, most of all, a source of needed funds for 1937. In the heat of growing leftist activism, preceded by the 1935 immense popular movement that culminated with the Left's direct access to power in May 1936, by June of the same year, at a massively attended meeting in favor of Le Corbusier, the *Maison de la Culture* created a *Comité d'Honneur* for the defense of a "Corbu-1937." His Program had now become the "property" of the entire Left among which only the Communists were newcomers. Precisely at that moment, and for the purpose of the meeting, the term *Esthétique Contemporaine* was dropped, and a new title was added to the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* which was now qualified as: *Palais de L'Urbanisme*, with an emphasis on the social dimension. Le Corbusier explained the term on April 3, 1936 as "Urbanism understood as social life translated into built objects."⁵³⁴

⁵³² In fact, the *spiritus movens* of the *Maison de la Culture*, according to one of its founders Charlotte Perriand, was the young architect Jean Nicolas who served before and after the war as an "organic" link between the French Communist Party and the intellectuals. His role, as an *éminence grise*, was instrumental in coordinating the activity of the French CIAM Section, Le Corbusier and the *Maison de la culture* with respect to the Exhibition. Nicolas was the Secretary-General of the *Maison de la Culture* directed by Aragon. (Conversation with Charlotte Perriand, December 1986). Nicolas was Secretary General of the Fifth CIAM Congress, held at the *Maison de la Culture* (Anatole Kopff, p.162). For more on Nicolas and his cultural role as mediator between the Communist Party leadership and the members of the leftist artistic elite, see Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier, Jean Maitron, ed.Paris, 1976, in particular entries by Jean-Louis Cohen.

⁵³³ In July 1936, for example, the Temps Nouveaux Pavilion is described in a pamphlet as the work by: *Messieurs Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret (Architectes), Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (Groupe France) et La Maison de la Culture*. F2-14 24*

⁵³⁴ "Urbanisme pris dans le sens de la vie sociale sur le plan des choses construites" See unpublished document PAVILLON DES TEMPS MODERNES-1937:

Soon after, without any significant change in either form or content, the qualification of the Pavilion was moved further left with the title: "*Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, Musée d'Education Populaire*."⁵³⁵ Now the Pavilion, in Le Corbusier's eyes, did "not represent any more just an urbanistic or housing fact; it [had] come to represent the PROGRAM itself."⁵³⁶ The Program was outlined in terms of the "education of the masses related to: Social Problems; Economy; Architecture; Home Architecture; Urbanism; and the *évènement plastique*." [emph. added]⁵³⁷ Significantly also, the "aesthetic novelty" now came last on Corbusier's list. The same order of citation characterized the list of the 14 "Collaborators" of the "Museum," where the Confédération Générale du Travail came first, and the avant-garde artists last.⁵³⁸ In a pamphlet the *Maison de la*

Palais de l'Urbanisme "Réunion publique organisée par la Maison de la Culture." The staggering list of the Committee Members included: Aragon, J. Richard Bloch, Bossoutrot, Cachin, Cassou, Eugène Dabit, Y. Delbos, Durtain, A. Farcy, Elie Faure, André Gide, A. Gitton, J. Godard, Herriot (Radical Party President), Prof. Joliot Curie, Jouhaux, F. Jourdain, Prof. Langevin, Malraux, Monet, Montherlant, André Morizet (Socialist Senator), Léon Moussinac, Prof. Perrin, Prof. Rivet, Romain Roland Nobel Prize), Paul Vaillant-Couturier. Most of them were members or sympathizers of the Communist and Socialist Party, with two Radicals: Herriot and Rivet. FLC H2-14 16.

535 FLC: H2-13 dossier "B."

536 "Ce Pavillon ne représente plus un fait urbanistique ou d'habitation, mais représente le PROGRAMME même." Le Corbusier proceeded: " Réalisé avec des collaborations nombreuses et de toute première valeur (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne--CIAM); Groupe-France des CIAM; Groupe d'Artistes d'avant-garde; Groupe d'une part des Architectes de la Maison de la Culture; alliance avec les "JEUNES 1937 pour la construction du Club de la Jeunesse), ce Pavillon sera le plus haut outil d'enseignement des choses de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (notion "savoir habiter") qui aura été réalisé jusqu'ici." Le Corbusier's manuscript: A L'ATTENTION DE M. VAILLANT-COUTURIER; dated 2 June 1936. FLC H2-14 17.

All these "collaborations nombreuses" were mostly a convenient façade, as conflicts with various individuals who felt manipulated confirmed later.

537 FLC H2-13 36

538 The "Collaborators," were listed in this order: *La Confédération Générale du Travail C.G.T.; L'Union des Municipalités; L'Union des*

Culture distributed, Le Corbusier and Jeanneret were not presented as the sole authors of the project but as part of a larger team including the CIAM.⁵³⁹

The culmination of these efforts to find the correct tone and a suitable subject matter that did not interest him and that he deemed irrelevant, came when Le Corbusier accepted that a Communist architect write for him an ideologically "correct" program of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*.⁵⁴⁰ That Program, a 24-page, single-spaced document, was circulated without Le

Locataires; Fédération de l'Enseignement; Le Comité National des Femmes; Médecins et Travail; Fédération sportive et Gymnique du Travail T.C. R.P. ; L'Université ouvrière; Les Architectes et les Jeunes Architectes de la Maison de la Culture; Les Jeunes 1937; Le Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne; des Artistes d'Avant-Garde; etc.

Yet far from hiding his "multiple" allegiances, Le Corbusier would openly resent what he saw as a lack of "flexibility" by the leftist and communist circles. In a letter to Jean Nicolas regarding the people to include in his Committee, he writes for example: "Je vous pose également la question de mon ami Pierre Winter: il est frappé d'un certain ostarcisme dans vos milieux, je déplore une telle attitude et je ne peux me résigner à voir Winter ne pas figurer dans la liste ci-dessus qui n'est pas une liste de politique, mais une liste de personnalités spécifiques. D'ailleurs Winter pense exactement comme moi en tous points et je ne vois pas en quoi nous ne sommes pas d'accord." (Dr. Pierre Winter was affiliated with the political Right). Letter to Nicolas, 26 June 1936, FLC H2-17 28. One has to grant Le Corbusier with a surprising integrity in this respect.

⁵³⁹ In various pamphlets Le Corbusier was described merely as the "iniciateur" of the Pavilion.

⁵⁴⁰ Document dated Paris, 15 June 1936. FLC H2-14 104-125. Naturally, as the expression of a collective consciousness, this Program was not signed. It took an effort of philological and ideological analysis to reach a firm conclusion that the author was a Communist Party member or closely associated with it, a foreigner (albeit perfectly fluent in French) of Germanic (possibly Slavic) extraction. When in June 1990 I submitted these data to Charlotte Perriand, she immediately declared, without a moment of doubt, that the text could only have been written by Helena Syrkus. Excited about it, Perriand had me meet a CP member and friend of hers who was involved with the circle at the time. Perriand presented him with the same question. His spontaneous reply was "Helena Syrkus." Indeed, Helena Syrkus was a Polish CIAM representative; she was of Jewish (Germanic) origin; she had lived in France for many years and, most importantly--still according to Perriand--she was particularly vocal in the CIAM Communist faction that criticized Le Corbusier at the time for his political vagueness.

Corbusier apparently having read it much beyond the first page.⁵⁴¹ While successfully lobbying Socialist and Communist City Councillors who could be brought to his side, Le Corbusier also attempted to raise funds from his friends of the far-right *Parti Social*, founded by the General De La Rocque.⁵⁴² When addressing these friends, he referred to those same Councilors with ironical detachment such as: "Gélis, Communiste ou presque..."

Even the slogans displayed in the final version of the Pavilion that have been quoted as symptomatic of Le Corbusier's ideological evolution in the period between the *Esprit Nouveau* and the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilions were, in all likelihood, neither formulated nor chosen by Le Corbusier.⁵⁴³ According to his own

⁵⁴¹ Despite a number of improprieties throughout the document, only the first page was corrected (in Corbusier's handwriting.) Typewritten Manuscript FLC H2-14 104-125 n.d.

This document is no exception. Between April and July 1936, leaflets and manifests published by the Maison de la Culture proliferate. They are treated as official documents of the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilion, which Le Corbusier clearly did not write. An example of the new terminology to be found even in documents coming out of Le Corbusier's office were passages such as: "Il va sans dire que le contenu du Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux sera le produit d'une collaboration étroite des Architectes, Techniciens, Artistes et autres spécialistes d'une part, d'autre part de toutes les organisations de masse qui luttent pour le progrès et pour une vie meilleure du peuple." FLC H2-13 *180

⁵⁴² See letter to Dr. Delaure, 2 April 1936* FLC: H2-14. The colonel De la Rocque is better known as the founder of a right-wing veterans organization of disgruntled, *Les Croix de Fe*, one of the many *Ligues de Droite*.

The last reversal came in 1939, in Le Corbusier's *Oeuvres Complètes 1934-1938*. With the Front Populaire now forgotten, and the "Authority" "displaced" once again, the Spiral Pavilion regained the old name born in the early 1930's: *Centre d'Esthétique Contemporaine*. (See Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret, *Oeuvre complète, 1934-1938*; Publié par Max Bill architecte Zürich, Textes par Le Corbusier Zürich, Les Editions d'Architecture Erlenbach, 1939, p.153).

⁵⁴³ In her dissertation, Mary McLeod quotes Corbusier's politically loaded slogans in the 1937 Pavilion as an indication of his ideological evolution towards the political Left, an assumption that can be questioned. Of course, authorship should not be taken literally, and what matters is to whom Le Corbusier turns for advice. Yet, ultimately, many of the quotations were taken directly from the *Prélude* journal, which reinforces a sense of ambiguity regarding Le Corbusier's actual political evolution, if there was any.

confession, the only "belle phrase" he could come up with was a quotation by Pope Pius XII, and this as late as May 22, 1937, namely after the official opening of the Exhibition. He took no chances on this subject and depended entirely on others. He wrote to the Communist architect Jean Nicolas:

You promised me the heavens ... I look everywhere around for concise phrases to put them inside the main rooms of the Pavillon. Up to now I got ZERO, both from you and from your comrades.⁵⁴⁴

[Vous m'avez promis la lune...Je réclame partout des phrases lapidaires pour mettre à l'intérieur des grandes salles du Pavillon. J'ai eu jusqu'ici ZERO de vous et de vos camarades.]

Even though Le Corbusier insisted in using his own quotation by the Pope, he urged both Jean Nicolas and "his comrades," to find more quotations: "it's more than urgent and I'm desperate to have constantly to be reminding things."⁵⁴⁵ Besides sending a number of letters to Nicolas, he also wrote, in January 1936, to an acquaintance at the *Bureau International du Travail* in Geneva who had already provided him with a citation by Francis Bacon and another by Fourier: "If you can come up with a bunch of ideas referring to my urbanistic, architectural and other concerns that you know well, I'd appreciate if you sent me some eloquent ones to be used in the Pavillon."⁵⁴⁶

The euphoria created by the political events gave the artists the impression for a while that the entire concept of the

⁵⁴⁴ Letter to Jean Nicolas, 22 May 1937, FLC H2-17 20.

⁵⁴⁵ "c'est archi-urgent et je suis désespéré d'avoir constamment à rappeler les choses."

⁵⁴⁶ "Si vous avez en vrac quelques-unes des idées relatives à mes problèmes d'urbanisme, d'architecture, etc....que vous connaissez bien, vous seriez gentil de me les communiquer afin que nous puissions organiser pour le Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux des pancartes éloquentes." Letter to Dubreuil, 1 February 1937. FLC H-2 17 111.

Exhibition was about to be reversed by the new Popular Front Government.⁵⁴⁷ Because of this heady atmosphere of heated meetings, demonstrations, pamphlet distribution and solidarity motions, along with all the adulation for his person, for three months Le Corbusier had completely neglected the officials of the Exhibition. Gréber's and Labbé's sense of urgency grew as it was still unclear what Le Corbusier's intentions and possibilities were, especially in terms of promised financial arrangements. Obviously 500,000 francs were insufficient for his ambitious spiral museum. Yet, on March 27, three weeks after Labbé's official confirmation of the deal, Le Corbusier was still producing new plans. Those included the Spiral Museum and the *Jeunes 1937* Pavilion, designed by Masson, but also drew into his orbit two other leftist groups, that Le Corbusier thought instrumental in securing a bigger grant.⁵⁴⁸

He wrote to Gréber: "The new 'articulation' [i.e. the various groups of "collaborators"] will allow us to request from the Exhibition a different grant than the one, absolutely miserable of 500,000 francs."⁵⁴⁹ His intentions and prospects

⁵⁴⁷ Despite the Front's possible disagreement with the concept of an Exhibition conceived by the Third Republic establishment which favored "modernized" academicism over the "avant-garde," there was little this Leftist Government alliance could do barely a year before the scheduled opening of the Exhibition. Beyond some cosmetic changes and very few pavilions reflecting its programs, such as Laprade's Pavillon de la Paix, or Perriand's Pavilion for the Ministry of Agriculture--the new Government mostly reversed the semantic denotation attached to the Exhibition, and associated its future success with the success of the working class.

⁵⁴⁸ According to Perriand, Le Corbusier was privately quite hostile to these groups of young architects who appeared on the official list of his Pavilion's collaborators. Interview, June 1990.

⁵⁴⁹ "C'est donc la nouvelle articulation qui nous permettra de demander à l'Exposition un subside autre que le subside absolument misérable de 500,000 francs." Letter to Gréber, 4 July 1936. *FLC. H2-14

were kept rather vague and in blatant discrepancy with his firm assurances, on April 3 1936, that he was about to put together a viable financial scheme of his own through other institutions.⁵⁵⁰

Deceiving a Front Populaire Minister

On May 29, pressed by Labbé's growing impatience, Jacques Gréber called Le Corbusier by phone. He expressed concerns about time running short [7 months since the site and money were granted Le Corbusier]. No viable financial solution was yet in sight. Gréber informed Le Corbusier that the landscaping of the future Park Kellermann, which included the Temps Nouveaux's site, was about to begin. It was critical to know what Le Corbusier's intentions were before June 10. In a cooperative tone Le Corbusier replied that plans and cost estimates would reach Gréber in a matter of a week, at the latest. Gréber took notice of the promise, but felt it necessary to remind Le Corbusier that the grant and the site had been promised to him on the condition that he would be able to account for the means and financial sources with which he was to match the grant. Gréber assured Le Corbusier again that both himself and the Beaux-Arts Director Huisman were "very favorable" to his project, but that no sum greater than the one promised him was available. In case he himself could not secure more money, Le Corbusier should put together a new project that could be realized for the sum of 500,000 francs. Gréber also reminded Le Corbusier that, according

⁵⁵⁰ Manuscript dated 3 April 1936: "Démarche indispensable à faire auprès de l'Autorité Municipale" FLC H2-14 3.

to the Exhibition's bylaws, only architects who were winners at the competitions were entitled to receive commissions from the Exhibition. One single exception was made, and that exception was Le Corbusier.⁵⁵¹ He concluded, however that, given the late date, the Exhibition's Commissariat would find itself obliged to withdraw its offer after June 10.⁵⁵²

Despite the warnings, Gréber was sufficiently aware of the importance of having Le Corbusier at the Exhibition. Gréber did not want to exclude him lightheartedly. It was precisely because of this keen awareness that Gréber put pressure on Le Corbusier: if he continued to drag on his project hoping a *deus ex machina* would solve his financial deficit, he would lose it all by force of circumstance.

In fact, this is precisely what happened six months later, during Gréber's absence. Alerted about the incident, Le Corbusier called upon Jean Zay, the *Education Nationale* Minister and friend from the *Maison de la Culture* days. The Front Populaire Minister immediately asked for clarifications from the Exhibition's *Comissaire Général*, Labbé. Indeed, the coveted site had ended in the lap of Councilor Boulard, the new Vice-President of the City Council and representative of the 13th *arrondissement*,

⁵⁵¹ This fact obviously demonstrates again the importance that Le Corbusier's participation represented to the Exhibition, despite the architect's later claims to the contrary, including that he had been "expelled" from the Exhibition; "Sent to the antipodes of the Exhibition" so that he would not be a "nuisance" to the displays of luxury on the main grounds of the Fair. Le Corbusier was the first to be granted this "exception." The exceptions were later extended to a number of artists, most notably to Rob Mallet-Stevens and Georges Pingusson.

⁵⁵² In fact this threat was mostly a ploy to press Le Corbusier to come up with a solution. Indeed Gréber stretched his patience for another five months, maneuvering between Le Corbusier and Labbé.

where the Kellermann site was located. The decision could not be rescinded now without a major scandal. Labbé's written answer to the Minister referred to the difficulties he went through with Le Corbusier.⁵⁵³ Labbé began with Le Corbusier's resistance to raising a temporary building, as provided by the Convention, concluding that Le Corbusier never produced a viable financial scheme proving he *could* use the grant and the site effectively. Labbé pointed out that this situation dragged for over a year, despite several warnings by the Exhibition officials, and as many unfulfilled promises by Le Corbusier himself.

Labbé's letter to the Minister was shown to Le Corbusier by the art critic and historian Jean Cassou, a member of Jean Zay's cabinet at the time. Le Corbusier wrote immediately to the Minister a three-page, single-spaced letter, denying Labbé's allegations, and often using equivocal terms, if not outright misleading innuendos.⁵⁵⁴ The thrust of Le Corbusier's effort was to prove to the Minister that the Exhibition's Commissioner-General claims were "absolutely arbitrary." He asserted that the situation had always been under control, and that he had been ready to start building at any moment in the last eighteen months, whereas the Exhibition representatives resisted him and the City of Paris sabotaged him all along. Regarding the right the Convention gave the City, that is to demolish the structures after the Exhibition, Le Corbusier asserted with aplomb, without the

⁵⁵³ I did not find Labbé's letter itself. This is a reconstruction from contextual evidence.

⁵⁵⁴ Letter to Jean Zay, Ministre de l'Education Nationale, 25 November 1936. FLC H2-14 26.

naïveté often ascribed to him, that he "knew about this clause in the Law...but, since a large number of temporary constructions were to be built on the Kellermann bastion, this little sentence looked to me as one of pure form."⁵⁵⁵ The letter to the Minister also contained a number of humorous contradictions such as the assertion that the project he otherwise conceived as a "Musée ambulant" *could not be moved to any other site* than the one the Exhibition initially promised him. The letter ended with the familiar mystifying statement that his project involved the participation of the "plus éminents membres des Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne dans le monde entier." In the guise of evidence in his favor, Le Corbusier also provided Jean Zay with a wealth of carefully selected letters he exchanged with the Exhibition, letters he retyped and, slightly but effectively, "adapted" where needed. Among these letters one is central. It was written on June 9, 1936, in response to Gréber's May 29 "ultimatum." It says:

Dear Colleague,

I 'll be happy to respond to the questions you asked me in your letter dated May 29, 1936.

Please find enclosed the plans TN 3.409bis and TN 3.411bis which show the exact location of the building and its precise dimensions. We will build it with the 500.000 francs and on the site Mr. Labbé granted us in his letter of March 11, 1936.

[Le Corbusier quotes 10 plans included]
etc.

⁵⁵⁵ "Comme il était prévu sur le terrain du Bastion Kellermann des quantités d'installations provisoires, cette petite phrase m'a paru question de pure forme." 25 November 1936, FLC H2-14 26.

Le Corbusier, who studied very closely the debate on the Convention (judging by his annotations on the documents), and in particular on Art. 10, later published this statement with the clear intent of making his lie look like a "déconcertante naïveté"--an image of himself he carefully nourished.

"To sum up, with no more commentaries, our plans will show you that we are ready to start the work immediately and that our project is completely finished.

Signed: LE CORBUSIER⁵⁵⁶ [Emph. by L-C. only in the "copy"]

[Mon cher Confrère,

J'ai le plaisir de donner satisfaction aux demandes contenues dans votre lettre du 29 Mai 1936.

Veillez trouver, annexe, les feuilles de plans TN 409 bis et TN 3.411 bis qui donnent l'implantation définitive, ainsi que la dimension exacte du bâtiment que nous élèverons avec le crédit de 500 000 francs alloué, ainsi que la concession du terrain, par M. LABBE, Commissaire Général de l'Exposition, dans la lettre du 11 Mars 1936.]

etc.

"En résumé, sans plus de commentaires, nos plans vous permettront de vous rendre compte que nous sommes prêts à commencer immédiatement le travail et que notre étude est terminée complètement."

signé... LE CORBUSIER]

According to his letter, by June 9, 1936, Le Corbusier had a completed project. What is more, the Exhibition's grant was sufficient to build it and Le Corbusier was "ready to start the work immediately." Surprisingly, however, Jacques Gréber's reply to this letter, on June 11 (a letter which Le Corbusier *did not send* to the Minister) reads as follows:

Dear Colleague,
I rush to answer your letter dated June 9. This letter, I must say, worries me considerably because you answered completely only half of my question regarding the plans and cost estimates. But I am obliged to inform the Commissioner-General that you are requesting a new deadline for finding the money you need to match our grant. You are still short of 1.500.000 (fifteen hundred thousand francs), salaries included. I am afraid you should let us know urgently of your exact plans regarding the financing of your project, and give us the names of people ready to pay for it. If this is possible, you will be welcome to start your work right

⁵⁵⁶ Archives de France, Présidence du Conseil des Ministres. F60-968.

away and, as far as I am concerned, I will be delighted

As far as the art work that the Director-General of the Beaux-Arts is ready to finance, there has never been any problem with that. But it is with your building that I am eager to see you succeed. [Emph. added]⁵⁵⁷

[Mon cher Confrère,

Je m'empresse de répondre à votre lettre du 9 juin qui, je dois vous l'avouer, me met dans un grand embarras, car vous avez parfaitement répondu à la moitié de ma question en ce qui concerne les plans et devis, mais je suis obligé d'aviser Monsieur le Commissaire Général que vous me demandez un nouveau délai relativement aux moyens financiers par lesquels vous comptez compléter la subvention de l'Exposition.

Il vous manque en chiffre rond Fr. 1. 500. 000 (quinze cent mille francs) honoraires compris, je crois donc qu'il y aurait urgence à ce que vous nous apportiez les précisions les plus complètes relativement au financement et que vous présentiez les personnes qui peuvent s'engager à faire cette dépense. Dans ces conditions, vous pourrez commencer votre travail et j'en serai, pour ma part, enchanté.

En ce qui concerne les oeuvres d'Artistes que Monsieur le Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts veut bien prendre à sa charge, cela n'a jamais fait la moindre difficulté, mais c'est pour le bâtiment lui-même que je suis impatient de vous voir réussir.]

How could this concerned letter, which states that Le Corbusier is short a million-and-a-half Francs to make two million, be the answer to a letter that claims, apparently, that the money was sufficient and the work could start immediately? In order to see the blatant discrepancy, one needs to know in addition (and documents abound about it), that between June 9 1936 (when Le Corbusier answered Gréber) and November 25 (when he addressed the Minister), Le Corbusier had been consistently appealing for the missing million-and-a-half. As a matter of

⁵⁵⁷ Gréber, letter to Le Corbusier, 11 June 1936. FLC H2-14 12.

In an amusing post script to this letter, showing, in fact, that Gréber had no real animosity against Le Corbusier, the latter added: "Suivant ma vieille marotte, je vous demanderai de me donner une façade de votre Musée, en couleurs, car vous savez que je suis un fervent amateur d'architecture polychrome." His eagerness to see L-C "succeed in your enterprise" shows instead genuine concern.

fact, Le Corbusier had been appealing for this money before and even after November 25.⁵⁵⁸

What Le Corbusier did was simple. He used an incidental ambiguity in his own letter: "the building that we will put up with the 500,000 grant...",⁵⁵⁹ to make it sound, by emphasizing it, as if this was *all* the money he needed.⁵⁶⁰ The second interpretation becomes possible, of course, if one withholds from the unsuspecting reader--as Le Corbusier did with the Minister--the estimate sent to Gréber that indeed amounted to 1,914 455 Francs. Moreover, in order to explain somehow to the Minister why he had been appealing for more money all along, he writes: "We also gave [Gréber], in addition to these plans, a series of 10 plans for the other project estimated at 2 million and a half." There was no "other project." These 10 plans were simply the complete portfolio of the Spiral Museum, as sent to Gréber, and estimated at 2 million francs.

This overly lengthy "sorting out" of facts that Le Corbusier often masterfully disguised, would be probably irrelevant if this episode did not largely serve as a basis to a myth about Le Corbusier's persecution and exclusion from the Paris

⁵⁵⁸ Le Corbusier, letter to Jean Zay, FLC H2-17 60.

⁵⁵⁹ The whole sentence is obscure and grammatically incorrect: "Veuillez trouver, annexe, les feuilles des plans...qui donnent l'implantation définitive, ainsi que la dimension exacte du bâtiment que nous élèverons avec le crédit de 500 000 francs alloué, ainsi que la concession du terrain, par M. LABBE, Commissaire Général de l'Exposition, dans sa lettre du 11 Mars 1936.-- a kind of sentence, it seems to me, that Le Corbusier produces when he has a bad conscience....See also in this respect Le Corbusier's letter to Eugène Beaudouin, discussed earlier, in which he tries to find an excuse for having used B.'s name in an official document without his permission, 30 November 1934 FLC: H-2-14 50.

⁵⁶⁰ To make sure that the Minister would notice it, he quotes the passage in his cover letter, and underlines it *post festum* in the "copy."

Fair by "reactionary forces of academicism," from which he had to be salvaged *in extremis* by Léon Blum's Government. This version of the events was accepted, however, by an important part of the French cultural world at the time, and is echoed by scholars even today. The representatives of the Front such as the *Education Nationale* Minister; Jean Monnet, the Agriculture Minister; and Jean Locquin, Léon Blum's delegate to the Exhibition, did have to "salvage" Le Corbusier in the last analysis, but for reasons, much simpler, than the ones we have adopted as truth, or the ones the Front's representatives themselves were led into accepting.

What was then the actual course of events? How did Le Corbusier in fact abuse the goodwill and confidence, not only of the Architect in Chief of an exhibition, but also of an important portion of French intellectuals--a confidence that his stature as an artist of course deserved?

Gréber's May 29 "ultimatum" threw Le Corbusier into a fury. He wrote, almost immediately, a two-page note to Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Director of *l'Humanité* and member of the *Comité d'Honneur*, referring to his own Pavilion as

the highest didactic instrument that has ever been conceived to teach the facts of Architecture and Urbanism (the notion of the art of dwelling). [For this reason] *it is necessary that the Pavilion be permanent* and that the Authority take it as such. The 1937 Exhibition, which is about to spend 800 million Francs [in fact it was 300 million, which Le Corbusier knew] to highlight some, certainly very interesting, aspects of French luxury industries and of French good taste. [...] The Exhibition has presented us with stern face because we represent the radical reform that urbanism and architecture need today. We therefore ask, with the support of our *Comité d'Honneur*, if it would be possible to obtain an *additional grant of 2 million francs* needed to build a permanent structure that will stay as a didactic tool, for the enlightenment of both

the Exhibition's visitors and of those who will have to solve the problem of the reorganization of towns and villages (urbanism) [...] This Pavilion will strongly document the Authority on the tasks that it will have to undertake, in the first place: the general reorganization of the home [logis] in the machine civilization." [Emph. added] 561

[le plus haut outil d'enseignement des choses de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (notion savoir habiter) qui aura été réalisé jusqu'ici. Il faut donc que le Pavillon soit permanent et que l'Autorité l'envisage comme tel. L'Exposition de 1937 va disposer près de 800 millions de crédit de diverses natures pour mettre en valeur les points évidemment très intéressants de l'industrie de luxe et du goût français. L'Exposition nous a fait grise mine parceque nous représentons la réforme radicale à apporter dans l'urbanisme et l'architecture. Nous demandons donc, avec l'appui de notre Comité d'Honneur, s'il est possible d'obtenir le crédit de deux millions nécessaires à la réalisation de cette œuvre permanente qui demeurera un outil d'enseignement pour tous les visiteurs de l'Exposition et, dans la suite, pour tous ceux qui auront à résoudre les problèmes de la réorganisation des villes et des campagnes (urbanisme).]

In the end, Le Corbusier added that Gréber's "threat" to withdraw the promised 500,000 F after June 10, "was in no need of comment."⁵⁶² The same day he alerted the group "Jeunes 1937," whose project depended on his own, urging them to exert a pressure on the Exhibition.⁵⁶³ To Romain Rolland, the Nobel Prize novelist, who was on the "Comité d'honneur" for the defense of the *Musée des Temps Nouveaux*, he wrote:

The fight continues and they are trying to push me out of the Exhibition, even though I received a 500,000 grant and a site. In this alarming situation, a Committee [i.e. the 'Comité d'honneur'] was created under the sponsorship of ARAGON, MALRAUX, GIDE, VAILLANT-COUTURIER ... This Committee thinks it will be able to find the two million needed to build the

⁵⁶¹ Letter to Paul Vaillant-Couturier, May 30, 1936. FLC H2-13 290 MODEL format.

⁵⁶² Up until then, Le Corbusier addressed Gréber with "Mon cher Ami." This title now became a slightly scornful "Monsieur l'Architecte" even though Gréber continued to use a friendly tone.

⁵⁶³ Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux--DEVIS ESTIMATIF dated June 3, 1936. FLC H2-13 295.

project: either in the budget of the Exhibition, or in the budget of the newly elected City Council."⁵⁶⁴

[La lutte continue et on cherche à me chasser de l'Exposition, bien qu'une concession m'ait été accordée de 500 000 francs et d'un terrain. Dans cette situation alarmante, un Comité [i.e. the 'Comité d'honneur'] s'est institué sous les auspices d'ARAGON, de MALRAUX, de GIDE et de VAILLANT-COUTURIER...ce Comité pense pouvoir trouver les deux millions nécessaires à la réalisation de l'œuvre projetée...soit dans le budget de l'Exposition, soit dans les nouveaux budgets du Conseil Municipal.]

The latter, the belief that the "Comité" was able to find the missing millions, was, of course, a pure product of his imagination. Le Corbusier attributed to his "Comité" a power that it did not have.

Soon, on June 6, a call for the "defense" of the Temps Nouveaux was published and distributed as a leaflet by the *Maison de la Culture*, calling for a public meeting with the Committee at the *Salle Wagram*. Reflecting Le Corbusier's letter to Vaillant-Couturier, the leaflet said that it was urgent to find a million-and-a-half francs to build the Pavilion as well as 410,000 francs for the original art work to be exhibited in it. The 1937 Fair was criticized "for not having favored sufficiently" a pavilion that "really represents the overdue radical reform of urbanism and architecture."⁵⁶⁵ A paragraph that made a derogatory reference to Gréber's letter of May 29 was wisely deleted from the final version of the leaflet.

⁵⁶⁴ Letter to Romain Rolland, 9 June 1936. FLC: H2-17-210. After the elections, the City Council remained in the hands of a center-right majority.

⁵⁶⁵ "pour ne pas avoir favorisé suffisamment [un pavillon] qui représente pourtant la réforme radicale à apporter dans l'urbanisme et l'architecture." June 6, 1936. FLC H2-14

The situation was tense when Gréber's June 11 letter arrived. Not only was Le Corbusier besieged by "des ennemis innombrables," but he already felt haunted by the Devil himself. The "transcendental" task he thought he was invested with to clear the ground for a new civilization, appeared now hindered by Satanic forces. Drawing perhaps on his Calvinist upbringing, in a three page semi-allegorical text: *SATAN PEUT TOUJOURS ETRE QUELQUE PART*.. written on June 27, Le Corbusier claimed, using an imaginary dialogue with "L'autorité juvénile et propre" (i.e. the *Front Populaire*), that the riches of the Machine-Civilization were diverted and wasted by such diabolic forces.⁵⁶⁶ The material resources in the hands of an Exhibition that was supposed to celebrate the advent of the New Times, were being spent to "raising up corpses: a page turned onto defunct things"⁵⁶⁷ "Indeed," Le Corbusier asserted: "l'Exposition de 1937 est née sous le signe du Diable."

Already in April 1936, Le Corbusier had appealed to the Authority to intervene with determination in defense of his just cause. He requested that "when a new distribution of credits for the 1937 Exhibition occurs [...] an additional grant of one million and a half"⁵⁶⁸ be given to him. Instead, the Exhibition was now informing him that not only could he not be given more than what he was promised, but that his grant would be withheld altogether, in case he did not come up with a financially viable project. Outraged, and generalizing his particular case to the entire

⁵⁶⁶ Manuscript dated June 27, 1936. FLC H2-14 165.

⁵⁶⁷ "mettre debout des cadavres: une page tournée sur des choses défuntes."

⁵⁶⁸ Letter to E. Labbé 6 April 1936, *FLC H2-13 35.

Exhibition, Le Corbusier saw no other solution than having the new Government renounce the Exhibition altogether. This could be done in two ways: either by simply "forbidding the Exhibition by decree," or else deciding "to lose any interest in it, and turn one's back away from that 'diabolic adventure.'" "The Government should simply abandon to its own destiny this event of the *ancien régime*" for it was useless to wrestle with the Devil. Le Corbusier warned that any further effort was in vain because, no matter what was done, after tireless efforts to "clean and straighten it all up, [...] your new regime [i.e. the Front Populaire] will be doing the job of Satan. [...] In a flash you will see in front of you, standing, brand new, Satan the Devil."⁵⁶⁹

Thus, the best the Government could do, according to Le Corbusier, would be "to declare itself foreign to the 1937 Exhibition and by an immediate decree, decide to organize an international exhibition for 1941." As far as he was concerned, for the time being, instead of "printing the book" he would merely print its "table of contents."⁵⁷⁰ In order not to betray the artists and the workers whose many hopes were invested in the Exhibition (a major concern for the new Government), Le Corbusier suggested that, in compensation, the artists should be given Government subsidies for some six, eight or ten months, whereas the workers should get started with the *Grands Travaux*. "Close the 1937 Exhibition," he concluded in his manuscript, "and declare by decree those *Grands Travaux* that will be the right response to

⁵⁶⁹ "réalisera l'œuvre de Satan... d'un coup vous verrez devant vous, debout, tout neuf, Satan le Diable."

⁵⁷⁰ See "Une Interview avec Le Corbusier", in Notre Revue, n. 8. March 1936.

Satan's Exhibition."⁵⁷¹ He urged *La Maison de la Culture* to give up discussing 1937 at the upcoming July 3 meeting, and turn it instead into a "MEETING POUR LA PREPARATION DE L'EXPOSITION DE 1941."⁵⁷²

Whatever happened at the July 3 meeting, this was the time when Le Corbusier decided that, since he had been prevented as early as 1932 from building the Exhibition itself, in 1937 he would just build a space to house the "Program of 1941." He saw it clearly: "The Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux will be the very Program of the 1941 Exhibition."⁵⁷³ With this he formulated succinctly the basic concept of the Pavilion to open a year later, on July 17, 1937. In other words, he was looking for a way out of his professionally rather embarrassing situation for him as the leader of the CIAM and the Modern Movement, which is how he already was perceived, at least since the Athens congress. Satan's 1937 Exhibition did not interest him anymore; only a face-saving retreat.

The Role of Pierre Jeanneret

On July 6, 1936, three days after the *Maison de la Culture* meeting at the *Salle du Petit Journal*, Le Corbusier left for Brazil. Gréber spent the month of July with Jeanneret trying to find alternative sources of financing, as he granted a new

⁵⁷¹ "Fermez l'Exposition de 1937, et décrêtez ceux des Grands Travaux qui sont la réponse même à l'Exposition de Satan."

⁵⁷² He probably did not chose 1941 arbitrarily. In this way he would be one year ahead of Mussolini who planned his own *Esposizione Universale di Roma* for 1942.

⁵⁷³ FLC H-2 14 165.

postponement of the deadline.⁵⁷⁴ The efforts were geared toward Ministries that might be interested in the complex program of the Museum itself and of its dependencies such as the "Maison des Jeunes." The greatest hope was put on the *Education Nationale* Ministry because of the didactic character of the project. Attempts were also made with the newly created *Ministère des Loisirs*, a Front Populaire innovation. None of them, however, gave more than vague promises and Jeanneret left for vacation at the end of July. On August 24 Gréber came back to Jeanneret with a letter urging a solution:

In reference to my earlier letters, I would like to know if you managed to raise the money you counted on to match the budget you will need to build the Palais de Temps Modernes (sic). You know under what conditions you've been promised a site and a grant.

Only 8 months are left before the opening of the Exhibition and I am hard pressed by the Commissioner-General to get a final answer from you...

In case you would not be able to show that you can obtain the additional funds you need for your project, I'll be obliged, to my greatest regrets, to dispose of the site that was offered to you conditionally.⁵⁷⁵

[Comme suite à mes précédentes lettres, je viens vous demander si vous avez pu réunir les concours sur lesquels vous comptiez pour compléter le budget nécessaire à la construction du Palais des Temps Modernes (sic) Vous savez sous quelles conditions un

⁵⁷⁴ By mid July, 36 the Maison de la Culture had conceived, on the Kellermann grounds, a grand program for a *Centre de Loisirs et de Repos* dedicated to the population of southern Paris. This ensemble, destined to become a permanent urbanistic achievement, was organized around the Pavillon "Jeunes 1937;" Facilities for Children and the Youth (arch. Mouillot); the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux and Gréber's *Parc Kellermann* as an initial core.

This ensemble, the organizers thought, would be financed mostly by the *Ministère des Loisirs* and the *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*; the Program, shaped along the policies of the Front Populaire, included a museum for popular education, a theater, a moviehouse, Halls for Radio listening, exhibition galleries, a swimming pool and other sports facilities etc.

The general urbanization of this complex was to be "established in accordance and in collaboration with the large popular organizations" such as the Trade Unions, sporting and cultural organizations. FLC H2-13 522.

⁵⁷⁵ Gréber, letter to P. Jeanneret, August 24, 1936 FLC H2-17 52.

terrain vous a été attribué et une promesse de subvention vous a été faite.]

Mais nous sommes maintenant à 8 mois de l'ouverture de l'Exposition et le Commissariat Général me presse d'obtenir une réponse définitive...

Au cas où il ne vous serait pas possible d'apporter justification d'un financement complémentaire pour l'édification que vous avez projeté, je me verrai, à mon grand regret, dans l'obligation de disposer du terrain qui vous a été attribué conditionnellement.]

The letter ended with a new deadline for August 31.

This message reached Jeanneret only on September 7, at La Sarraz, where Jeanneret was, apparently, attending "a Congress on architecture." Gréber and Jeanneret did not meet, however, before September 25. Meanwhile Gréber had sent yet another letter in an almost desperate attempt to obtain a clear answer :

I would greatly appreciate it, he wrote to Jeanneret, if you would be so kind to write me back immediately if you are able right now to give us some assurances on the financing of the Palais des Temps Modernes (sic), as I have to take a final decision in this respect by the end of the week.⁵⁷⁶

[Je vous serais reconnaissant de vouloir bien me dire, par retour de courrier, si vous êtes en mesure, maintenant, de nous apporter une garantie de financement pour l'exécution de votre Palais des Temps Modernes, car je suis obligé de prendre une décision définitive avant la fin de cette semaine.]

Gréber explained to Jeanneret, on September 25, the pressure he himself was undergoing and the wrestling it took to preserve Le Corbusier's site. Yet, given Le Corbusier's absence-- he was still in Brazil and had left the project in Jeanneret's hands--and in a last effort to salvage the Museum, the Chief Architect postponed the deadline for a fourth time. He even suggested some new approaches with domestic or foreign firms.

⁵⁷⁶ Gréber, letter to P. Jeanneret, September 15, 1936 FLC H2-17 54.

Yet, he also advised Le Corbusier's cousin that, if these funds were not obtained in the next seven days or so, be it from Government or private sources, to give up on that particular project, and present as soon as possible, a new design that *could* be built with the funds the Exhibition had offered them.⁵⁷⁷

The quest gave no results, and Pierre Jeanneret came up with a new project, as Gréber suggested. Soon after his return from Brazil, Le Corbusier left again for Italy to attend a meeting at the Volta Royal Academy without leaving any instructions or contacting Gréber. Hence, at this point, Pierre Jeanneret was left in full charge of the surrogate Pavilion.⁵⁷⁸

Transformed by Jeanneret into a delicate casket that would house the "Program for 1941," the new *Temps Nouveaux* was a pristine cubic volume with the dimensions of the spiral museum central core (Fig. 115). It was turned sideways to give a larger front to the entrance. Around this core, also "devoid of façades," a spiral could grow, later, whenever a need for further expansion appeared. For now, the building would be made of panels, thin "Eternit" and "Rhodoid" membranes that could be dismantled and raised at will--a process Le Corbusier had envisaged all along for his spiral building. The display boards, ramps and pathways of the exposition would be lit through an *impluvium*. Added to these Mediterranean suggestions was a small open-air amphitheater, immersed in a carpet of grass, with the

⁵⁷⁷ P. Jeanneret, typewritten note dated 25 September 1936-3PM. "Visite à M. Gréber." FLC H2-17 58.

⁵⁷⁸ All notes and letters throughout this period regarding the 1937 project and the discussions with the Exhibition leadership, are signed by P. Jeanneret. See box FLC H2-17

Pavilion's one rodhoid wall serving as a backdrop resonator and movie screen. Once the container and its content were disassembled and packed into two distinct and manageable compact modular blocks, the Museum would be ready to travel throughout France as a herald of the "New Times." The culmination of this odyssey would be the "1941 Exhibition," a celebration of the final victory over the forces of Satan. In this version, the Pavilion could fit within the 500,000 francs budget the Exhibition offered to Le Corbusier, exactly one year earlier. Jeanneret took this proposal to Gréber on October 14.

Yet, Jacques Gréber had a stunning idea.

He suggested to Jeanneret during the meeting that he give up on the heavier rhodoid panels and build the "container" of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* in canvas.⁵⁷⁹ The pavilion would gain in lightness and mobility. He knew of a similar experiment with a canvas theater in Salzburg. Jeanneret greeted this suggestion with enthusiasm, as it echoed precisely some of his own current concerns with small vacation canvas houses, in response to the needs created by the new laws on paid vacations for all workers, introduced for the first time by the Front Populaire.⁵⁸⁰ Pierre Jeanneret's new version of the Pavilion was ready on 4

⁵⁷⁹ See notes by Jeanneret 14 October 1936 about the meeting at which Jacques Gréber suggested the replacement of the heavy rhodoid panels with canvas, FLC H2-17 162 This is confirmed by Le Corbusier himself. In a letter to J. Locquin dated 24 March 1937 he writes: "Dès les premiers jours, c'est-à-dire en Octobre 1936 nous avons soumis les plans du Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux à Monsieur Gréber (...) Celui-ci les a acceptés avec grande satisfaction (...) C'est même à ce moment-là que M. GREBER nous a recommandé les toiles de fabrication autrichienne (...) qui permettent la réalisation de constructions de cette nature, constructions qui ont déjà été réalisés en Autriche (le théâtre de Salzbourg)." FLC H2-17 164.

⁵⁸⁰ The detail about the canvas vacation bungalows was recounted to me by Charlotte Perriand. Conversation June 30, 1990.

November (Fig. 116). Liberated from the necessity to immediately fit the future spiral, the floor plan was abstracted into a square--the age-long sacred geometrical form: the form that could generate all others, the form that concealed the secret of the golden section. In this sense, the new Pavilion already carried the future in its folds, both symbolically and geometrically. Given the new condition, however, the impluvium had to disappear. The translucency of the canvas would largely make up for this.

At this stage, Le Corbusier himself showed no interest for a project he viewed at best as a way to offset the threat of losing the site and the grant. Never interested in building a "pavilion" in the first place, he still considered that the "real" project was the Spiral Museum. And indeed, even as Jeanneret was presenting Gréber with a new project on October 14, Le Corbusier was submitting a new request for two million francs to the Government, on October 19, that is after an agreement on a canvas pavilion was reached with Gréber. Le Corbusier's interest was clearly somewhere else. He appealed directly to Jean Zay, technically an outsider to the Exhibition.⁵⁸¹

By November 4, however, Jeanneret was ready with his canvas project in all its essential components. A visualized "table of contents" of the "New Times" Le Corbusier invented,

⁵⁸¹ Le Corbusier even claimed to Jean Zay:

"Un crédit de l'Exposition de 500,000 francs est à notre disposition: impossible d'entreprendre quoi que ce soit avec cinq cent mille francs." (emph. added) Letter to Jean Zay, 19 October 1936. FLC: H2-17-161.

would be housed in a canvas volume Pierre Jeanneret designed on Gréber's impulse.⁵⁸²

Le Corbusier, indeed, did not design the "container" of the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. He continued to pursue possible avenues for his Spiral Museum when he returned to Paris. He never made any mention of Jeanneret's and Gréber's dealings, nor did he ever refer to the significance or merits of the "canvas solution." As mentioned above, letters show that even when that solution was agreed upon, Le Corbusier continued to promote his Museum. Canvas was, after all, Jeanneret's and not Le Corbusier's domain in the office: Jeanneret was the one who experimented with and developed canvas prototypes.

Under Jeanneret's supervision, the collaborators at the rue de Sèvres were now viewing the entire enterprise as a collective effort. Detailed plans of the canvas volume were ready by November 10.⁵⁸³ This also included the exact scheme of the interior displays Charlotte Perriand,⁵⁸⁴ the job captain, presented to Louis Hauteœur, the new *Directeur des Beaux-Arts*. On November

⁵⁸² The Exhibition was, in fact, inaugurated three weeks later than anticipated, with most of the pavilions unfinished, including the Trocadero which was still under scaffoldings. The Temps Nouveaux opening was delayed further, in part because of Le Corbusier's several weeks of sickness, and also because of difficulties in obtaining a fire department permit to operate.

⁵⁸³ See *Archives UAM*, at the Musée d'Art Décoratif (MAD); plans at the *Fondation*, and Le Corbusier's letter to the Minister Jean Zay, (25 November 1936) where he says: "Le 10 Novembre, Pierre Jeanneret remet à M. Crevel en mains propres le projet définitif de 500 000 francs. (emph. added) FLC H2-14 26.

⁵⁸⁴ Her name is scribbled on the perspective drawing in Jeanneret's handwriting.

23, Hauteœur granted the project an additional 130,000 francs to purchase artwork.⁵⁸⁵

The displays of the Museum were to cover more than 1200 square meters divided in three areas: urbanism, sculpture, and painting. Like a medieval cathedral, the whole was described as "un grand livre d'images": not even the "Loge" (Bauhütte) would be missing. Le Corbusier requested specifically that the *Ministère de l'Education Nationale* help him install on the building site "a cabin where the workshop would be set to put together the various displays to be exhibited in the Pavilion."⁵⁸⁶

Yet, before Jeanneret delivered his final project on November 10, Jacques Gréber left abruptly for Washington, in a last minute attempt to lobby the United States Congress into approving larger credits for the American Pavilion in an effort to offset a serious risk that the United States would not be able to

⁵⁸⁵ This contradicts Le Corbusier's later assertions in Des Canons, Des Munitions? Merci! Des Logis...SVP, p. 12, where he says, for example: "Le 15 Décembre je suis appelé par Delaunay: 'On vous exige à la Présidence du Conseil.' J'avais 4 mois pour élaborer le projet." and he says further: "Une équipe provisoire est hâtivement constituée: Perriand, Bossu, Eiffel, Gischia..." In these "recollections" Le Corbusier tried (and succeeded) to convey the impression that everything had to be done from scratch as the Government intervened. In fact, the plans were ready more than a month earlier, and his team of artists, far from being urgently improvised after December 15, had already received nominal payments by early November from the Direction des Beaux-Arts. Le Corbusier confirms it himself in a note to the Minister, dated December 17: "Nous pouvons dès demain...commencer la réalisation du Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. Tous les plans sont terminés, toutes les prévisions sont faites, toutes les collaboration sont assurées." (Le Corbusier's emphasis) Archives de France, F60-965.

⁵⁸⁶ "Un baraquement qui constituerait l'atelier où se réaliseront les divers travaux des démonstrations contenues dans le Pavillon." Archives de France: Présidence du Conseil. F60-695.
The pieces of art were given by the artists free of charge. The subsidies requested were to cover expenses and a "compensation for the participation of the comrades that would be left with no commission." Archives UAM, Musée d'Art Décoratif.

participate in the Exhibition.⁵⁸⁷ In the midst of growing pressure and innumerable problems that were arising as the opening deadline approached, Edmond Labbé, who knew that Le Corbusier's project had been dragging without funds for almost a year, despite several deadline postponements, was apparently unaware that Gréber and Pierre Jeanneret had reached an agreement to produce a new design for a 500,000 francs pavilion. Was not, after all, Le Corbusier still requesting funds from the Ministries?⁵⁸⁸ Hence, in Gréber's absence, and pressed by the City's Vice-President and Councilor Mr. Boulard of the Thirteenth arrondissement (he was seeking a concession at the Bastion Kellermann), Labbé gave away Le Corbusier's site. It could not be retrieved without a major scandal: money and site were lost.

A Translucent Cocoon for the Programme of the "1941 Exhibition"

Amidst this crisis, and after he received Le Corbusier's November 25 letter in which the architect blamed the Exhibition, apparently with success, Jean Zay referred Le Corbusier to Jean Locquin, Léon Blum's representative to the Exhibition. They met on December 17 and Le Corbusier wrote to Locquin after this encounter:

⁵⁸⁷ Gréber was unable to obtain additional funds from the United States. He later appealed to the Socialist Government of Léon Blum, and, on the latter's personal intervention, the French government paid for the difference. Formally, this was only borrowed money the US would repay the French Government at the New York Exhibition in 1939.

⁵⁸⁸ Le Corbusier himself contributed to this lack of communication by dealing exclusively with his friends in the new Government, despite the agreement Jeanneret had already concluded with Gréber.

I wish to thank you with all my heart for the friendly reception you gave me the other night. Since 1932, you are the first in this Exhibition affair to have given me a sincere encouragement. You could see for yourself that the requests I had in mind were both very reasonable and very modest. [Emph. added]⁵⁸⁹

[Je tiens à vous remercier de tout cœur de l'accueil si aimable que vous m'avez fait l'autre soir. Depuis 1932, j'ai trouvé hier en vous, pour la première fois, dans cette question de l'Exposition, une sincérité encourageante. Vous avez mesuré que les demandes que je me suis permis de soumettre à votre examen sont très rationnelles et très modestes.]

The painter Delaunay was also present at the meeting. He encouraged Le Corbusier, and exhorted Locquin, to put together a bigger and more inclusive Pavilion, closer to what the Spiral Museum would have been. Le Corbusier refused, claiming that it was too late. He repeated that he would present in 1937 just his "Table of Contents" and reserve for himself the option of building the "real" Exhibition, the "Book," in 1941. He was by now fully convinced in the significance of a travelling Exhibition that would prepare the public opinion for 1941. Besides, the plans for the Canvas Pavilion were already pretty advanced, and some working drawings had been ready since December 8. Le Corbusier was not, as he wrote later, faced with having to do everything from scratch, organize hastily a working team, design and build a pavilion with only four months to go before the opening of the Exhibition.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Archives de France, Présidence du Conseil des Ministres. F60-680.

⁵⁹⁰ Le Corbusier had in fact very little opportunity to work on the displays themselves. Soon after a deal was struck with Jean Locquin, Le Corbusier fell seriously ill and for several weeks he supervised the development of the project from his bed, not always without serious conflicts with the younger collaborators as mentioned earlier. The "stands" inside the canvas envelope were distributed to several artists, including Miró and Jose Luis Sert. Le Corbusier kept for himself only a few sections in the ground floor. Charlotte

Le Corbusier had, however, another request for Locquin. Could the Presidency of the Council of Ministers offer his Pavillion a better site than the one at Kellermann? What Le Corbusier wished was to obtain a space within the Exhibition's grounds, just next to the Eiffel Tower "en plein Champs de Mars." This would be "a full rehabilitation for me," he wrote to Jean Locquin.⁵⁹¹ He had already gone to find a spot and had chosen the site of the *Pavillion de l'Etalage* (designed, incidentally, by his friend René Herbst). The dimensions of the site were right, and Le Corbusier thought that Herbst's Pavilion could easily be moved somewhere else. Included with this plea to Locquin was the official plan of the Exhibition on which Le Corbusier had pasted at scale his own pavilion, opportunely colored.. in red (Fig.118).⁵⁹²

Despite Le Corbusier's last-minute efforts, his wish could not be fulfilled. Following some bargaining and Jean Zay's site-searching, Monnet, the Minister for Agriculture, decided to offer Le Corbusier part of his own Ministry's site at the Maillot Annex which served to absorb the remaining overflow from the Exhibition's main grounds (Fig. 117). Wasn't he, after all, a former member of Le Corbusier's *Comité d'Honneur* in the *Maison de*

Perriand, on the other hand, played a significant role in coordinating the work.

⁵⁹¹ This last attempt aimed at his "rehabilitation" shows again Le Corbusier's real concern: a "face-saving" retreat. Letter to Jean Locquin 15 December 1936. Archives de France. F60-963.

⁵⁹² Le Corbusier who was bypassing, as mentioned earlier, the Exhibition's officials, wrote in his letter regarding his plea for an Eiffel Tower site: "... Par contre, par suite de votre bienveillante sympathie, je me sens encouragé à tenter une démarche qui eût été une pure folie si elle avait été faite aux services officiels de l'Exposition!" Plans are held in the Archives de France: F60-965.

la Culture? At the same Annex, Charlotte Perriand was working on her own Pavilion for Monnet, "visualizing" the agrarian policies of his Ministry, in collaboration with Fernand Léger. As for Le Corbusier, he obtained through the new Government neither more nor less than the Exhibition had granted since the very beginning: a site outside the main grounds and a grant of 500,000 francs.⁵⁹³

The *Temps Nouveaux* was inaugurated on July 17, 1937, even though considerable work was still to be done. The canvas was put up on June 10, and the Pavilion was fully furnished only by mid August. Before leaving for a vacation on August 13, Pierre Jeanneret wrote to his cousin who was already gone,⁵⁹⁴ about the work that still needed to be accomplished, but more importantly about Jean Locquin's bitter complaints that Le Corbusier had forgotten him completely, and had even omitted his name from the list of guests to be invited for the grand opening of the Pavilion. Jeanneret quoted Locquin saying that "people who had done much less for Le Corbusier" than he had done, appeared on that list. Rather depressed, according to Jeanneret, Locquin also complained that he was receiving "from everybody" harsh criticism about the Pavilion, including the opinion that "this was not Architecture"--a probable allusion to the well known remarks by Auguste Perret. Yet, as a consolation, Jeanneret added in his letter that "one of the gardeners of the site told me that our

⁵⁹³ This sum was later raised to 800,000 francs, and finally 900,000 to match the general inflation rate, to buffer the cost of new social laws, and cover unpredicted technical problems. In addition the interior works were covered by 150,000 francs given by the *Direction des Beaux-Arts*. See FLC H2-13; H2-14; H2-17 series containing various bills, estimates and contracts.

⁵⁹⁴ According to Charlotte Perriand, no matter what, Le Corbusier never missed a single day of a single month of August to take a vacation. Conversation, December 1986.

Pavilion was one of the most interesting of all at the Exhibition."⁵⁹⁵

The dynamic charge of a spiral open to the Temps Nouveaux was now replaced by radiant promises concealed in a translucent cocoon. As a cubic volume, this witty, foldable pavilion appeared as a vigorous phoenix able to beat cunningly the various calamities Le Corbusier saw relentlessly unleashed on him. Once convinced by an idea, Le Corbusier had a rare ability to embrace with the same poetic fervor both the most grand and the most minute projects. Whatever he considered, be it the cathartic reassembling of Paris, or the delicate spanning of a simple canvas cube, he infused the work with some transcendental quality. For he could not envision a scheme that would not be at the same time a logical imperative, an element of some other, more commanding design. Indeed, he never imagined a space that was not at least implicitly endowed with a broader teleological intent he defined as "biologie architecturale."

Far from seeing it as an architectural achievement *per se*, Le Corbusier considered the Pavilion principally as a shelter housing the Program of the "real" Fair he now envisioned, on his own terms, for 1941. The "table of contents" Le Corbusier was set to build instead of the "book" itself, was enshrined in Jeanneret's soft envelope, inseparable from each other, yet promised to separation, like an embryo in the womb. The idea of "building a program" implied a disjunction between the program of the building and its envelope--the "Content" and the "Container"--

⁵⁹⁵ Jeanneret, letter to "Cher Ed." 13 August 13 1937. FLC H2-14 34.

between the substance and the skin. This disjunction between the function, the spatial program, and the shape of the building resulted in an organic whole where the skin determined a volume unrelated to the organs: a volume not defined by the internal ordering of functions. The "organs," therefore, maintained an independent existence, a primordial neutrality. The extreme, functional flexibility of the rigid, opaque slabs and panels, contrasting with an idealized, platonic abstractness of the flexible, translucent envelope, accounted for the surprising lyricism of the whole.

From a grandiose project of a *Ville Radieuse* to be started on the occasion of a World's Exhibition, Le Corbusier's five successive proposals, all with the same goal but changing form and content,⁵⁹⁶ were ultimately reduced to a simple tent, albeit of impressive dimensions, echoing the poetics of wandering entertainers and populist tribunes.⁵⁹⁷ Le Corbusier's long pursuit of a permanent structure, resistant to the trappings of the "pavilloner" syndrome, was resolved by Pierre Jeanneret with a brilliant paradox. The "permanency" would be achieved through the most immaterial instrument, through the use of a means considered an archetypical anti-architecture, as opposed to the solid, enduring, and firmly rooted architectural artifact. Ephemeral, and celebrating the pre-architectural nomadic age, the *Temps*

⁵⁹⁶ "Ce pavillon est la dernière forme donnée au même thème." Le Corbusier, letter December 3, 1936 to Jean Locquin. Archives de France, Présidence du Conseil. F60-965.

⁵⁹⁷ "Le Pavillon de Temps Nouveaux sera réalisé sous la forme d'une exposition ambulante." Programme de Front Populaire, Le Corbusier "initiateur." FLC: H2-13 522.

Nouveaux Pavillon acquired its permanency in the most uncertain temporality, in a body of sculpted spaces that could be folded and raised again at will, whenever the site was suitable. This Pavillon carried the magic essence of an artwork that could be reenacted anew any time, at any place. Ultimately, however, this did not happen either. As far as Le Corbusier is concerned, the permanency reemerged as a surrogate in a book, itself as ephemeral as any fiction, as any reinvention of history.⁵⁹⁸

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At the closure of the Exhibition, looking back at his victories and defeats, Le Corbusier mused over the flaws in the methods he used in the past, desperately seeking an access to the *Autorité*, to the levers of power that would enable him to undertake a fundamental reform of the entire human environment.

Now, after two decades of unsuccessful efforts to force his convictions on what he believed to be that *Autorité*, suspicions were starting to emerge about the correctness of his approach: "May be that just by *starting with little things* at first," he suggested in late February 1938 to Philippe Serre, his friend and former Labor Minister, "one can open doors moire easily later on" [emph. added]. Trying to redefine his strategies accordingly, he asked Philippe Serre: "Wouldn't there be a way,

⁵⁹⁸ Le Corbusier, *Des Canons, de munitions: Merci, de logis s'il vous plait*, Paris, 1938. It goes without saying, of course, that--despite his long sickness during the critical months when the interior was conceived, and his leaving Paris before the Pavillon was finished--much of the material presented in the interior, as well as the few artists who did independent work, were Le Corbusier's choice.

in order to penetrate the *Cercle des Grands Travaux d'Etat*, to join no matter what Ministry, on no matter what occasion?"⁵⁹⁹

Whatever Philippe Serre's response may have been, the "no matter what Ministry" at "a no matter what occasion" was to be found in 1941, in the Vichy Government.⁶⁰⁰

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The Commissariat General under Labbé and Gréber did not try to eliminate Le Corbusier from participating in the Exhibition, but quite to the contrary made every possible effort, despite his innumerable intrigues, to salvage his projects. Rather, it is those intrigues that almost cost him his participation to the Exhibition, and not the assumed anti-modernism of the Exhibition's leadership.

Through his clever publications, Le Corbusier later managed to convince the public--and scholars--of his own version

⁵⁹⁹ "C'est peut-être en commençant par de petites choses que les portes s'ouvrent plus facilement après. N'y aurait-il pas moyen, afin de pouvoir entrer dans le Cercle des Grands Travaux d'Etat, que je sois attaché à un quelconque ministère, à une quelconque occasion aussi...?" Le Corbusier, letter to Ph. Serre, *23 February 1938. FLC *H2-17 123.

⁶⁰⁰ In 1940, following the collapse of France, part of the French Government and Parliamentarians were arrested, as the boat "Massilia," on which they tried to escape to France's overseas territories, was sent back to Vichy France. The Front Populaire Minister Jean Zay, an intellectual and politician of Jewish descent, whom Le Corbusier befriended on the occasion of the help he lent to his Temps Nouveaux Pavilion, was among those captured on the boat. In an event widely publicized by the media, which Le Corbusier could hardly have missed, the Vichy Government deported Jean Zay to Germany. The pro-Nazi *Milices* executed him in 1944, at the news of the Normandy landing.

of the story. That story ultimately cast an opprobrium on the Exhibition as a center of conservative, academist satraps.⁶⁰¹

Of course, Le Corbusier's claims would not have sufficed in themselves. The history of the Exhibition, in its early stages--most clearly illustrated by the 1934-35 competitions⁶⁰²--was burdened by a number of academist setbacks. What is remarkable, however, is that the Commissariat General itself was embarrassed by the results of these competitions, precisely because so many leading artists had been eliminated. Yet, the results were legally binding, and the selected architects had to be employed. As Jacques Gréber remarked, in an interview with L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,

We were able to partially correct the unfortunate results of the competitions by commissioning distinguished architects for special projects who were or were not winners at the competitions. This is how names such as Expert, Gonse, Herbst, Hermant, Le Corbusier, Mallet-Stevens, Moreux, Perret, Pingusson, Royer, Vago, etc., were brought to the Exhibition.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ This is true not only in the case of the 1937 Exhibition. While Susan Tise has shown that Le Corbusier acted in a very similar way in 1925, on the occasion of the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion, (Tise, 1991, p.336), other historians still base their conclusions on Le Corbusier's own myths. (Troy, 1991, p.163). Some Ozenfant's allusions, however, seem to indicate that not everybody believed Le Corbusier. In an apparent polite reference to Le Corbusier's débacle, Ozenfant wrote: "Je sais, certains eussent voulu une démonstration radicale de l'art de bâtir le plus moderne. Une démonstration comme la tour le fût en 89. En fait, on n'en est pas à innover en ce moment, on est à la sommation." Le Corbusier's "demonstration" at Kellermann would have been just that.

⁶⁰² It still remains to be shown how was the jury put together, even though it certainly followed some established avenues, thus escaping from the full control of the Exhibition's leadership.

⁶⁰³ L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, "Enquête sur l'Exposition de 1937," 8 August 1937, pp.3-12. These competitions seemed to have been such an embarrassment to the leadership of the Exhibition, that they were not mentioned with one single word in Labbé's ten-volume Rapport Général.

The Government commissioned Perret to build his *Musée des travaux publics* next to the Trocadéro. The building was not exactly part of the Exhibition but was built in conjunction with it, and was part of his grand, 1933 Exhibition design.

[Nous avons pu corriger en partie le hasard malheureux des concours, désignant pour les travaux spéciaux, des architectes de valeur, associés ou non à des lauréats. De cette manière, les noms de Expert, Gonse, Herbst, Hermant, Le Corbusier, Mallet-Stevens, Moreux, Perret, Pingusson, Royer, Vago, etc., ont pu être associés à nos travaux.]

Gréber's and Labbé's efforts were genuine. The two were even attacked in the conservative press for favoring some architects, such as Rob Mallet-Stevens, who were not selected in the competitions.⁶⁰⁴ Indeed, the Exhibition commissioned Mallet-Stevens for three important Pavilions, the *Palais de l'Electricité*, closing the Champ de Mars axis, the *Pavillon de l'Hygiène*, and the *Pavillon de la Solidarité*, the latter of particular interest to the Front Populaire.

The collaboration between Jacques Gréber and the most prominent modern architects was, actually, very intense. If, indeed, the archives of the UAM show that Georges Pingusson, one of the few French CIAM architects, started working on this Society's Pavilion only in August 1936, it is not because he had to wait for Léon Blum's intervention, nor was it specifically due to the Popular Front's optimistic view of technology that the UAM received a grant from the government, as has been suggested. The

⁶⁰⁴ Rob(ert) Mallet-Stevens, founder and President of the UAM, was the single architect with the greatest number of pavilions at the Exhibition. Alone or in collaboration with other architects he built five pavilions for the Exhibition. These were, besides the Electricity and Light Palace, the small Pavillon des Cafés du Brésil, the pavilion for the Tobacco government monopoly, and "politically engaged" pavilions of Solidarité Nationale and Hygiène. Like for the 1925 International Exhibition at which he built an innovative Tourism pavilion, he was directly recommended by Paul Léon now Associate Commissioner-General for the 1937 Exhibition. See B. Lemoine, Ph. Rivoirard, "Mallet-Stevens et l'Exposition" in exhibition catalogue Paris 1937, Cinquantenaire, Paris 1987, pp.80-83. This shows that Mallet-Stevens received commissions, as a modernist architect, from a full range of sponsors including private companies, the Government, the Exhibition and organizations related to the Front Populaire.

grant was obtained thanks to Labbé's and Gréber's incessant efforts, in "reparation" for Pingusson's failure at the 1934 competitions, as Art et Décoration correctly reported at the time:

The commission granted to Pingusson for the UAM pavilion represents a compensation aimed at making up for his failure at the Competitions [...] In this way Gréber gave another chance to some unfortunate candidates.⁶⁰⁵

[La commande du pavillon de l'UAM constitue la compensation accordée à Pingusson en dédommagement de ses échecs aux concours ... Gréber... donne ainsi une nouvelle possibilité de participation à certains candidats malchanceux.]

Pingusson had already been intensely involved with the Exhibition since early Spring 1936. With Gréber, Mallet-Stevens, and Rotival, he took part in various consultations regarding, among other things, a project for a *Maison de la Radio*.⁶⁰⁶ Gréber had keenly hoped the *Maison* would be built as a major permanent building at the Exhibition, perhaps as a modern counterpart to the twin neo-classical Palais des Beaux-Arts, won by Dondel, Aubert, Viard and Dastugue at the 1934 competitions.⁶⁰⁷ Evidently, Gréber was not only making efforts to have modern architects build temporary pavilions, but was seriously considering leaders of the New Architecture for large state commissions as well--not an insignificant effort in 1937 France.

⁶⁰⁵ "Enquête sur l'Exposition," in Art et Décoration t. LXVI, 1937 pp. 35-36.

⁶⁰⁶ See Elizabeth Vitou "U.A.M." in Exhibition Catalogue Exposition Internationale, Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire, Paris 1987, pp. 260-263.

⁶⁰⁷ This project never materialized, and the *Maison de la Radio* had to wait until 1952 to get its own building, in roughly the same location as initially planned.

Equally unwarranted are suggestions that Prime Minister Léon Blum himself assured the participation of Robert and Sonia Delaunay, and other modern artists, to the Pavillon de l'Air. Far from being brought to the Exhibition "in extremis," as has been claimed,⁶⁰⁸ like Mallet-Stevens, Le Corbusier and Pingusson, Robert Delaunay was already involved in the Exhibition's operations for almost two years before Pierre Cot, the Minister, presumably asked him to work as "decorator" of the Pavillon de l'Air, in August 1936.⁶⁰⁹ With twelve other modern artists, Alix, Dufy, Léger,

⁶⁰⁸ Pascal Ory, "Le Front Populaire et l'exposition," Cinquantenaire, Paris, 1987 p. 32.

⁶⁰⁹ In fact, neither is the month right nor did Pierre Cot invite Delaunay to decorate the Palace. The Exhibition administrators commissioned the design from architects Adoul, Hartwig and Gérodias on April 15, 1936. (See copy of Contract dated April 15 1936. Archives de France F60-967.) The architects were then entrusted with choosing their own interior decorators in the next two weeks: they invited Delaunay and Felix Aublet. The two were then entrusted by the architects with establishing a team of artists and artisans who would work under their orders. (See typewritten document "Affaire: Palais de l'Air," n.d. Archives de France Palais de l'Air, F60-967.) They chose their artists almost exclusively among members of the Maison de la Culture. (See typewritten government document 4 December 1936, Archives de France, Palais de l'Air F60-967.) All these appointments were confirmed by the Exhibition's leadership, the president of the appropriate Class and the Ministère de l'Air (probably even before Pierre Cot became Minister.) In September, however, a conflict broke between the President of the Group "Transports," the engineer Pitois, and the architects of the palace. (See documents under ExD2 Palais de l'Air: Conflit entre Ingénieur et Architecte, Archives de France F60-967) The conflict was of technical character according to the engineer--as well as a case of misinterpretation of respective prerogatives--while the architects raised more personal reasons. The work on the Palace stalled, therefore, amidst attacks and counter attacks until December. Delaunay's work on the interior, naturally, suffered from the situation. Probably in an attempt to rapidly break the stalemate, Delaunay finally decided to write to Léon Blum on December 5 asking for his intervention (Conflit, F60-967). Delaunay wrote a second letter on January 25, 1937 insinuating unwarranted and somewhat absurd political motivations on the part of the entire Exhibition leadership as an explanation of the conflict. The Exhibition leadership was supposedly sabotaging its own Exhibition in order to damage the government. To substantiate his claim, he even sent Blum a clipping from a "reactionary" newspaper Le Jour "qui est malheureusement le reflet exact de ce qui se passe." The newspaper clipping, however, made only veiled accusations of corruption against unidentified official figures (of the Front Populaire?) while singling out Labbé as the only one "grand fonctionnaire probe." This is when, for the first time, Pierre Cot intervened.

Lurçat, and others, he was working on one of the twelve monumental frescoes for the Pavillion de la Solidarité, before the election of Blum's government. The brothers Martel cast the central sculptural motif, and Rob Mallet-Stevens designed the Pavilion itself. Surprisingly, Edmond Labbé was critical of the murals. He found them, "un peu passés de mode"--hardly an academist remark.⁶¹⁰

In some cases, such mis-perceptions have led misleading conclusions regarding not only 1937, but the interpretation of the history of modern art at the French World's Exhibitions in general. In this sense, Pascal Ory suggests that

the gap between contemporary art selected and awarded [at the Exhibitions] and the state of contemporary research grew progressively from 1855 up to the very eve of 1937 when, *in extremis*, Blum, again and always Blum, intervened personally to allow a Robert Delaunay or a Corbusier to be exhibited.⁶¹¹

[L'écart entre les œuvres contemporaines sélectionnées, primées et l'état de la recherche contemporaine est allée en augmentant de 1855 jusqu'à la veille de 1937 où, *in extremis*, Blum, toujours et encore, intervint en personne pour permettre à un Robert Delaunay ou à un Corbusier de s'y exprimer.]

This assessment is certainly correct with respect to nineteenth-century Exhibitions. As we have seen, Ingres and Delacroix were triumphantly displayed in 1855, and Manet still found it relevant to paint the 1867 Exhibition. Some artists such as Courbet challenged the Exhibition by forcing it into a

The Palace was eventually finished, but the "affaire" continued well into 1938 as the architects dragged the case to the Courts, against Pitois, seeking material compensations. The court, however, ruled against the architects, and the Exhibition was exonerated of any wrongdoing.

⁶¹⁰ Rapport Général, Vol. 5, "Questions Sociales" p. 129

⁶¹¹ Pascal Ory, Les Expositions Universelles de Paris, 1982, p. 64.

dialogue. By 1900, however, the entire contemporary nonacademic art was not only absent from the Exhibition's premises, but the 'living art' and the Exhibition ended up simply ignoring each other: no modern artist applied to be exhibited, nor cared to voice any protest.

The 1925 Exhibition brought already significant changes in the opposite direction, but what in 1937 appeared to be a last-minute change of heart due to a political election, was in fact the first sign of a much deeper, ideological, cultural and social transformation. The final collapse of the "styles" and of the "academies" had brought onto the Exhibition's grounds not only an array of most varied stylistic exercises, each in its own "modern" key, but it also affirmed the concept of "avant-garde" as a permanent condition of art, and the definition of art as the permanent negation of the given, including art itself. The old "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes" was over. By the 1930's, everybody had become "modern." No movement, no individual artist, could afford being otherwise any longer.

The nineteenth-century *Exposition* universalism itself, like the great philosophical systems that culminated in the nineteenth century, had become untenable henceforth. The "Universal Exhibition," for the first time, ceased to refer to any past or future stylistic model, as its conscious architectural pluralism opened the door to stylistic relativism, symbolically expressed in the sequence of contradictory statements along the Champ de Mars axis.

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt at a synthetic redefinition of the 1937 Exhibition. Such redefinition is based on a reversal of current perceptions of that Exhibition as an event organized by an elite, itself dominated by the Beaux-Arts cultural paradigm, and thus incapable of overcoming a naive resistance to the project of modernity. Towards this end I reexamined the place the leadership of the Exhibition assumed in reference to the tradition of the French *Expositions Universelles* in general, and the role the leadership played in regards to the modernist artists in particular.

The systematic and sustained support the 1937 Exhibition gave to Le Corbusier--a central figure of the French Modernist discourse--underscores my view that the Exhibition leadership did not oppose modernism. To this end, a detailed historical reconstruction of Le Corbusier's involvement was necessary, because the organizers of the Exhibition could have brought in such figures as Pingusson or Delaunay, Mallet-Stevens or Fernand Léger; still, without the involvement of Le Corbusier, the list would have remained substantially incomplete, and the commitment of the Exhibition's leadership to modernism could have been questioned. This is also why, conversely, it does not come as a surprise that most of the assessments historians hold about this Exhibition rely on Le Corbusier's own accounts.

The role of Edmond Labbé, whom Le Corbusier repeatedly vilified in his correspondence and dealings with the government, remains crucial. Labbé's position expressed, in a certain sense, the profound transformation that the *Exposition Universelle* had undergone since 1867, when the Exposition reached, in typological terms, its most accomplished spatial expression. Labbé's view of modernity, and of the Exhibition itself in the context of modernity, had, no doubt, undergone a significant evolution during the tumultuous years that followed the 1934 February riots until the advent of the Front Populaire in May 1936. Labbé started with a middle-of-the-road compromise between the rejection of the "pan-bétonisme intégral"⁶¹² and his clearly perceived need to "hunt down senseless anachronisms; to renovate the environment of modern life."⁶¹³ The latter position prevailed by mid-1935 with a more decidedly modernist stance when he embraced Le Corbusier's proposal for the Kellermann bastion as a necessary addition to an exhibition of "the arts and techniques in modern life."

An important debate on what controlling style the 1937 Exhibition should endorse dominated a significant part of the discussions that preceded the Exhibition's opening. Thus, the Exhibition's leadership immediate response to the challenge of an event dedicated to modernity, was also to formulate modernity in terms of style. This approach was emblematically expressed in the

⁶¹² For the most extreme position against modernism, see in particular Camille Mauclair, "L'Art va-t-il mourir: la Crise du 'pan-bétonisme intégral,'" in *Nouvelle Revue Critique*, Paris, *March 1933. Mauclair was the art critic of the Center-Right daily *Le Figaro*.

⁶¹³ E. Labbé, "L'Exposition internationale," *L'Activité Moderne*, 1 II, 1936.

early project for the Trocadero's "camouflage."⁶¹⁴ However, the final display of a variety of "modern languages" in the architectural sequence along the Exhibition's main concourse, itself challenged the very concept of a single "controlling" style for the Exhibition. This circumstance, no doubt, contributed significantly to the final rejection of the pursuit of "style" as a dominant cultural and aesthetic referent. With the collapse of the nineteenth century universalist ideal itself, the search for a universal style that characterized the nineteenth century Exhibition became obsolete as well. Such effacement of one of the most enduring French cultural paradigms, removed the last obstacle to the establishment of art as an art of negation and permanent rupture. In symbolic terms, the demise of the styles could be seen as the last act of an exhausted "Querelle des Anciens et de Modernes." By allowing the obliteration of the pursuit of style for style's sake, the organizers of the 1937 Exhibition demonstrated further that they not only did not oppose modern art in favor of an academic one, but also that they considered modern art the only possible art. What they did oppose was the idea that there was only one form of modern art.

The Exhibition's leadership, however, did not have a general theory of modernity. In this respect it differed

⁶¹⁴ It is important to remind ourselves that changes in the composition of the Exhibition's leadership also occurred, and that the more conservative Charles Letrosne was replaced as Architect in Chief of the Exhibition by Jacques Gréber, a firm supporter of Le Corbusier. These changes occurred in the aftermath of the scandal provoked by plans to "camouflage" the Trocadero Palace, apparently Letrosne's idea. It still remains to be established if any causal relationship linked the two events. The official reason for Letrosne's withdrawal was his ailing health. He remained in place as Gréber's aid.

significantly from Le Corbusier who had a developed position of his own, and from the engaged Communist artists and architects such as Perriand, Léger, Delaunay, and others, who articulated a theoretical position in regards to the project of modernity based, to a large extent, on the Communist Party's own.⁶¹⁵ It is, thus, precisely because the Exhibition's leadership did not adhere to any clear theory of modernity that it found itself in a vulnerable position in regards to any radical criticism--whether justified or not. No doubt, the criticism coming from the Communist faction among the moderns--in essence Jacobinist in tone--affected the Exhibition leadership's final rejection of the concept of modernity as a mere issue of luxury and style, a concept which still dominated the 1925 International Exhibition. The same rejection, of course, was also part of the Popular Front's program as expressed at the heated meetings of the *Maison de la Culture* in the years preceding the Exhibition, and during the debate on Realism. Le Corbusier participated in both. His position was, as we have seen, ambiguous at best. Le Corbusier's criticism was indeed based in part on a clever manipulation of the Communist position regarding the Exhibition to serve his own purposes. Most often, he used this criticism to mask what turned out to be one of the greatest failures of his career. The interpretation of the

⁶¹⁵ When Charlotte Perriand, for example, claimed that their common action as artists had to be articulated "sur les bases les plus larges possible, pour la réussite de 37 comme nous le voulons, contre 37 comme il est," she was in essence echoing the position of the Communist Party articulated through its typical populist rhetorics. Indeed, in July 1937, the Communist Party organized, at the *Maison de la Culture*, a broad debate precisely under this heading.

Also significant to this interpretation of the role of the Communists is, among others, the 20 page long "Program" for the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilion that Helena Syrkus wrote for Le Corbusier, as discussed in this study.

Exhibition some historians currently hold corresponds, therefore, to the Communist Party judgement about the exhibition filtered through Le Corbusier's own claims.

From 1932 to 1937, Le Corbusier dedicated a great deal of his energies to the Exhibition, and yet, he ended almost totally absent from it, save for an ephemeral canvas pavilion which was not even quite his own. His attacks against the Exhibition were therefore aimed, for the most part, at masking the actual reasons of his failure, and, of course, at propagating through alternative means the ideas he had not been able to test at the 1937 event, primarily due to his own fault.

Whereas the Champ de Mars was, in 1937, the stage where modernity understood in terms of style finally dissolved, the last duel between modernity proper and institutional anti-modernism happened in the form of a masquerade under the Vichy regime and the Nazi Occupation.⁶¹⁶ At the end of the Second World War, therefore, the victors, and above all the Communist party,⁶¹⁷ were in a position to project France irrevocably into modernity as the

⁶¹⁶ This "duel," of course, did not unfold without contradictions. As Laurence Bertrand Dorléac has shown conclusively, the Vichy government could not exclude modernity completely in the face of an obvious danger of outright sclerosis. Worth of mention are such artists as Jean Bazaine members of the Jeune France mouvement, who, without resisting the regime frontally, managed to avoid falling into the trap of official art. See Bertrand-Dorléac, 1986, p.10.

⁶¹⁷ The Gaullist role in this process can be assessed through the action of André Malraux--the author of *L'Espoir*-- who was an ally of the Communists in 1937 and who, by the end of the 1950's, headed the newly created *Ministère de la Culture* in De Gaulle's government. Malraux had been also member of Le Corbusier's Committee for the "defense" of the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. As a Gaullist ally after the war, he was in charge of the official inauguration of Le Corbusier's Marseilles *Unité d'habitation*.

Party emerged, indeed, as a major protagonist of France's post-war cultural life.⁶¹⁸

What was, therefore, the aesthetic dimension of the 1937 Exhibition? I have suggested that it should be sought in the role given to light as a modern architectural material. Introduced as an inspired expedient, light proved to have the capacity to project an immediate image of "art" and "technology" fused in a seamless expression of modernity. As an expedient, light was hoped to muster consensus, to blend the contradictory "modern" languages embodied in the featured styles. In other words, the Exhibition which also displayed a "modernized" regional architecture in its *Centre Régional*, and a traditional architecture coming from the French colonies, used light to celebrate its own version of architectural pluralism.

Yet, electric light had an added advantage. For a society deeply concerned with the survival of its culture, a culture predicated on a pre-industrial understanding of the Enlightenment, electricity was acceptable because its modernity had the sleek aura of a technological innovation that appeared to be in essence nonmechanical, nonindustrial. Light provided a glittery, ephemeral vision of reality, and appealed to a cherished sense of urbane luxury and festive frivolity. At the same time,

⁶¹⁸ One could speculate that the emergence and popularity of the "Left bank" Existentialism, after 1945, came in part as a reaction to this radical "state of modernity" into which France found itself suddenly "thrown." The post-war intellectual drama in France unfolds, almost up to 1968, through the dialectic tension established between Existentialism and Marxism--the two faces of French modernity of the mid-twentieth century.

On the margins of this grand debate, the Ville Lumière itself was the object of lament through the voice of the existentialist singer Juliette Gréco, as she sang about modernity's dark sides: "C'était dans un quartier de la VILLE LUMIERE, où il n'y a pas d'air, où il fait toujours noir..."

electricity possessed a quality deeply satisfying to the abiding Enlightenment spirit in France: in the eyes of the public there was something profoundly democratic about light. Whether cascading down the Eiffel Tower, or illuminating a modest home, electricity was destined to be available to all.⁶¹⁹ Ever since François de Neufchâteau called on the artists of revolutionary France to let themselves be "electrified" by the brilliant prospects of the first national Exposition Universelle, light was used ever more extravagantly in all subsequent French exhibitions as a symbol of art, and a symbol of modernity.⁶²⁰

Aside from Edmond Labbé, whose role at the Exhibition was examined at length in this study, another pivotal figure, Georges Huisman, the long standing *Directeur de Beaux-Arts*, emerges as a crucial player in the "invention" of the 1937 Exhibition.⁶²¹ Huisman, whose role still remains to be fully assessed, was an ally both of the artistic avant-garde and of the democratic left. As such he acted as a "double link," as it were: on the one hand, he was a link between the modernists and the Exhibition as an advisor to Edmond Labbé, and permanent "provider" of modern artists; on the other, he maintained a certain continuity in artistic policies as he mediated between the regimes

⁶¹⁹ This essentially democratic character of electricity was vividly captured by Lenin who defined Communism as the association of Workers' Councils (political power) and electrification (prosperity).

⁶²⁰ This alliance of light and architecture reemerges after the War, in the spectacles of "Son et Lumière."

⁶²¹ Le Corbusier himself seems to have perceived this. In a note "A l'attention de M. Herbst, président de l'UAM," he writes: "Georges Huisman, le directeur des Beaux-Arts, est tout-puissant à l'Exposition. C'est l'Eminence Grise de l'Exposition." FLC H2-16 25.

of Doumèrgue and Blum which he both served as *Directeur des Beaux-Arts*.

The role of Georges Huisman, however, has to do with yet another essential circumstance in the tumultuous process of the planning of the 1937 Exhibition. Indeed, in order to understand precisely why the Front Populaire did not have to intervene substantially to impose to the Exhibition a progressive program, one has to have in mind two things: that, on the one hand, the Front Populaire and the final version of the 1937 Exhibition were initiated at the same time and under the same political circumstances, and that, on the other, the immediate causes for their emergence were in tight connection. The 1934 pro-fascist riots caused the cancellation of the Exhibition, but signalled in turn the rise of the Front Populaire. Those same leftist forces, which ultimately acted for the advent of the Front, were also responsible for reimposing the Exhibition project to the Government. The "*nation des artistes*" which took "in their own hands" the destiny of the Exhibition were, to a considerable extent, the promoters of the modernist ideas conveyed to the Exhibition's leadership throughout the critical period between 1934 and 1937. Finally, the very fact that the Exhibition was restarted through a people's movement, obliged the Exhibition to remain largely accountable to it throughout the period. This explains, in part, Labbé's unusual call to the "nation of artists" to come forward with "ideas" for the Exhibition. This explains as well his exceptional readiness to listen to, and collaborate with Huisman. Yet, Labbé's call for a democratic Exhibition went even

farther. By embracing mass culture and collectivism in art--a fact certainly also in resonance with the famous "Esprit des années Trente"⁶²²--the Commissioner-General reestablished firm ties with the origins of the *Expositions Universelles*. These beginnings were grounded in the French Revolution. An important aspect of their ideology was succinctly articulated by the founder of the *Expositions*, the Minister François de Neufchâteau. Indeed, he himself, like Labbé, appealed to the 'nation of artists,' to "all this art that truly comes from the people," and which, in his mind, bore a particular significance to the government and the French Nation as a whole.⁶²³

Labbé's democratic impulse must also be related to a much broader issue regarding the general evolution of the *Exposition Universelle*. This evolution reflected two different approaches to the Enlightenment. One stemmed from an authoritarian interpretation of the encyclopedist universalism. Such interpretation appealed to the imperial regime which staged the 1867 Exhibition, when the concept of a universal absolute imposed itself triumphantly. Hand in hand with this "enlightened totalitarianism" went the idea of social responsibility understood as a paternalistic management of the plight of antagonist social classes. This paternalism was often related either to a Social Catholicism exemplified by Le Play, or to a semi-religious Saint-

⁶²² see Touchard, J. "L'esprit des années 1930: Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française," Tendances politiques de la vie française depuis 1789, Paris 1960.

⁶²³ In Neufchâteau's populist stance regarding "all this art that comes from the people" we can recognize some residual Jacobinism that reemerged in Charlotte Perriand's own call for an artistic action "sur des base les plus larges possible."

Simonianism incarnated by Jean-Baptiste Krantz. With the gradual breaking down of the universalist spatial model inherited from Le Play--a breakdown caused by socio-cultural changes and the advent of the Third Republic--a second, populist, and perhaps Voltairian interpretation of the Enlightenment emerged, reaching its apex in 1937.

Linking those two interpretations, throughout the history of the Expositions Universelles from 1798 to 1937, was a peculiar and consistent propensity for the transcendental. Associated with popular festivities and secular celebrations, while held on the sanctified grounds of the French nationhood, the *Exposition* was devoted to one form or another of the revolutionary *Etre Suprême*. With the fall of Robespierre, the *Temple de l'Etre Suprême*, sanctifying the pre-industrial modernity of the Enlightenment, was soon replaced by a more practical one, the *Temple de l'Industrie*. The latter sanctified, in turn, the industrial revolution and its new *Etre Suprême*: the Machine. With the rise of electricity which, in 1937, Labbé still called a "supernatural force," a new deity was replacing the machine, the machine which had haunted the crystal "Galleries" (themselves compared to Cathedrals) throughout the nineteenth century. By 1900, the emerging deity, the *Fée électricité* had, indeed, engendered a cultural reversal, as it provided, in the name of modernity, an alibi for the reinstatement of a new Rococo eclecticism. This reversal had followed the dethronement of the Machine and of its "styleless" aesthetic, embodied in the Eiffel Tower. Thus, in 1900, despite its "magical" advance, electricity

was still subordinated to style understood as a decorative cloak shrouding the modern world. By 1937, however, the series of eidetical transformations of the "Etre Suprême" finally reached its culmination in the form of a triumphant electric light. The Eiffel Tower--that iron steeple echoing Notre-Dame's spire--once again came to occupy center-stage, bathed in the golden halo that lit her ever since. In turn, the soft fusion of light and iron provided the Ville Lumière with its final beacon. The 1937 Exhibition concluded effectively the simultaneous triumph of electricity as an architectural material, and the final demise of modernity as a pursuit of style.⁶²⁴ Before the closure of the 1937 Exhibition, the journal *Beaux-Arts* conducted a last survey on the issue of style with the question: "*L'Exposition nous aura-t-elle donné un style 1937?*" The conclusion of the survey, which had included Mallet-Stevens and Le Corbusier, was clear: "No matter how diverse the answers to our survey may have been, all concurred in saying that the Exhibition had produced no discernible style."

⁶²⁴ "Si diverses qu'elles soient, les réponses faites à notre enquête coïncident sur ce point: tous ceux que nous avons interrogés reconnaissent que l'Exposition n'a créé aucun style." (*Beaux-Arts* September 1937, p. 4).

The name *Internationale* (which was already part of the title of the 1889 and 1900 exhibitions), instead of *Universelle* corresponded to a recent classification established by the newly founded Bureau International des Expositions of a mostly technical character, related to the responsibilities of the host country.

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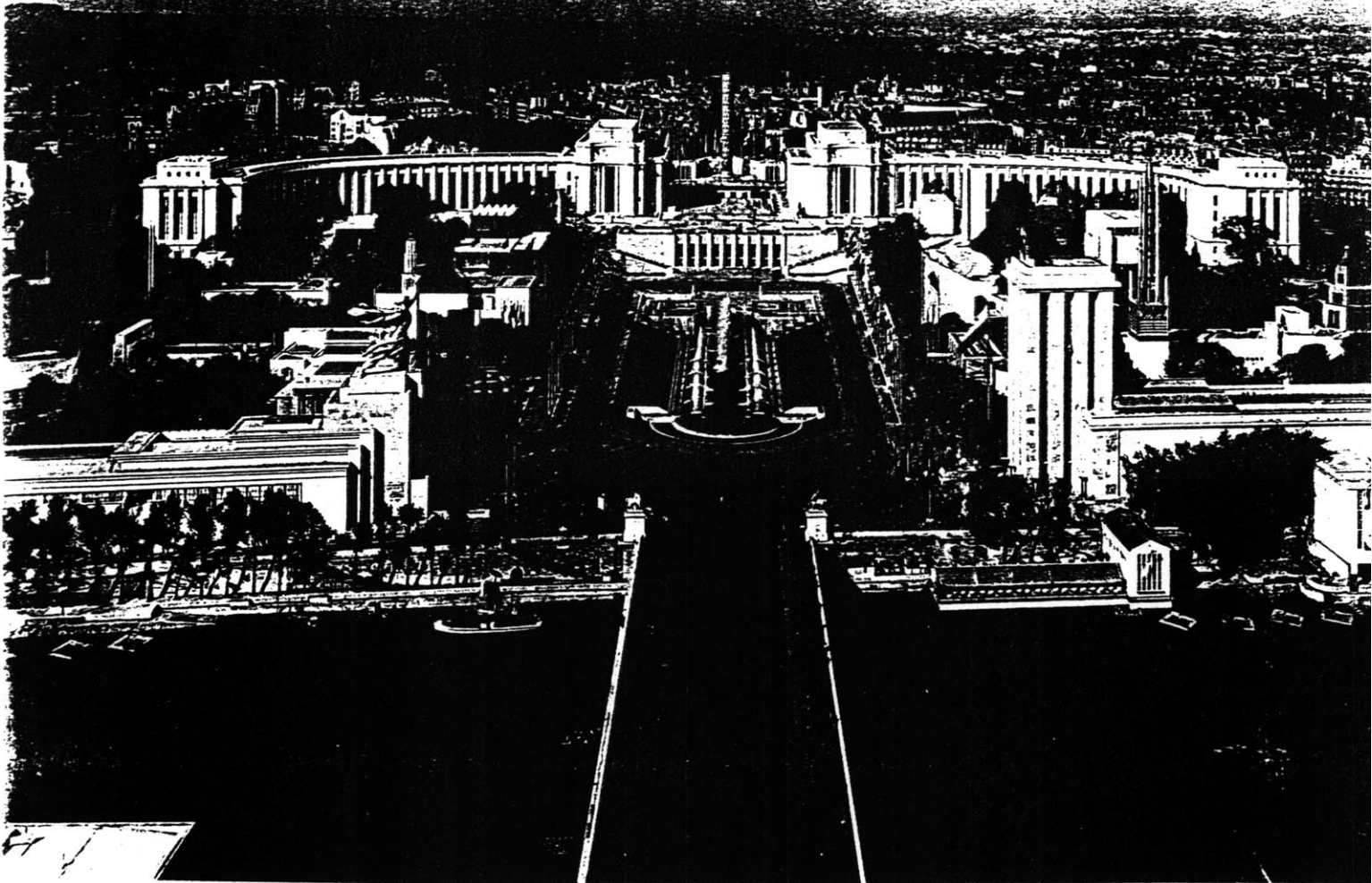
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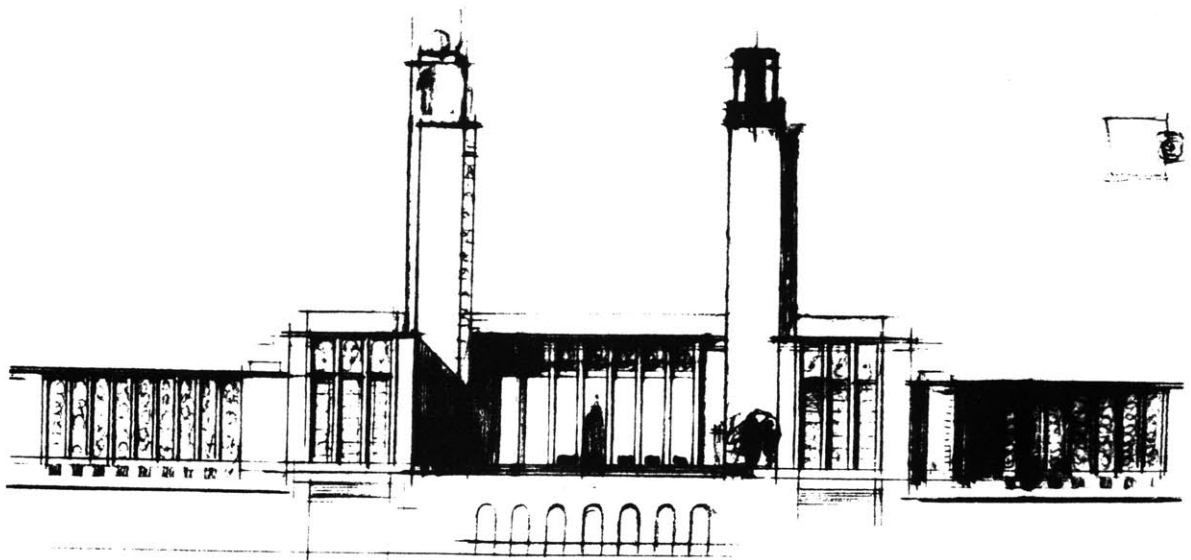
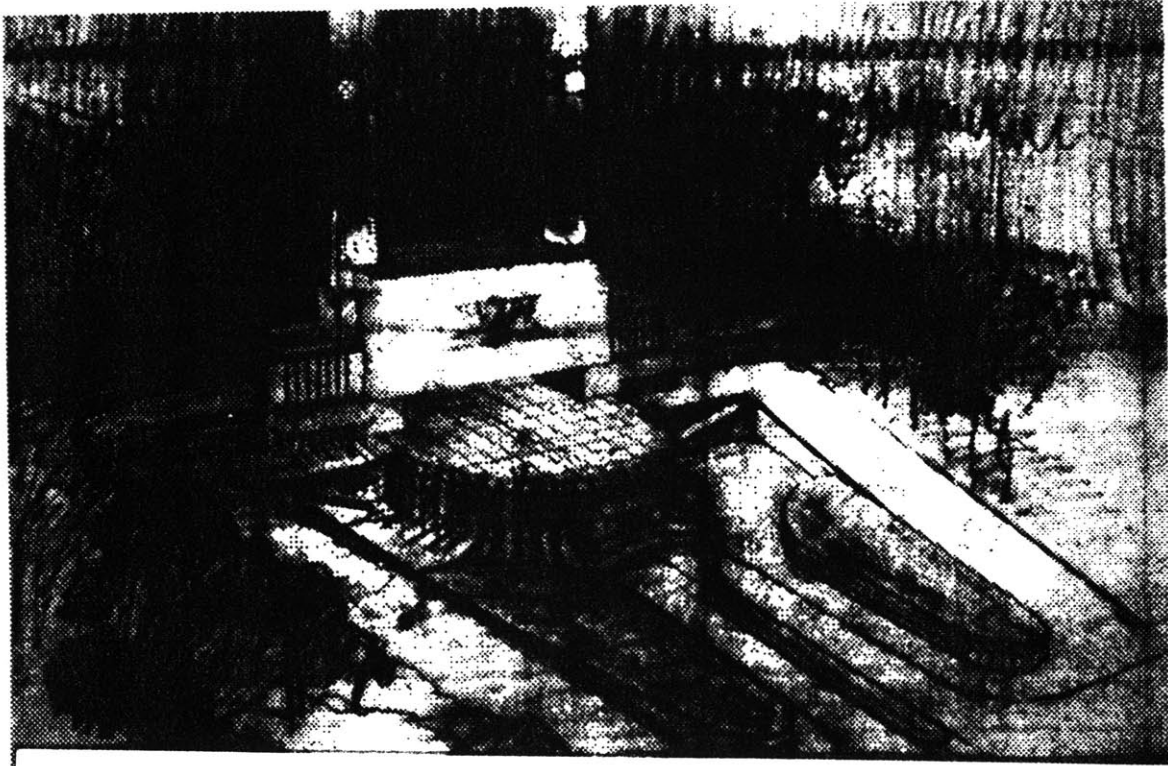
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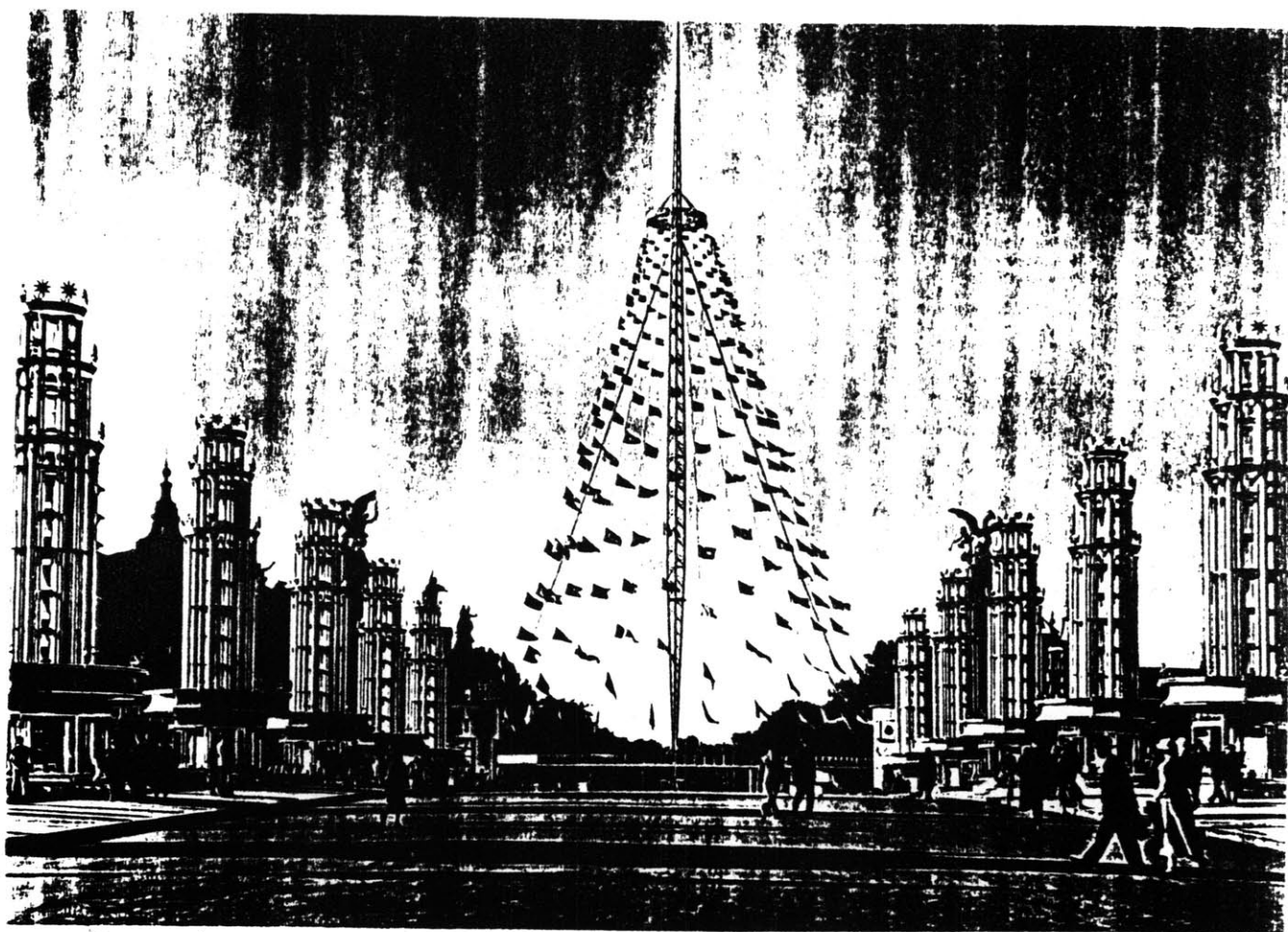
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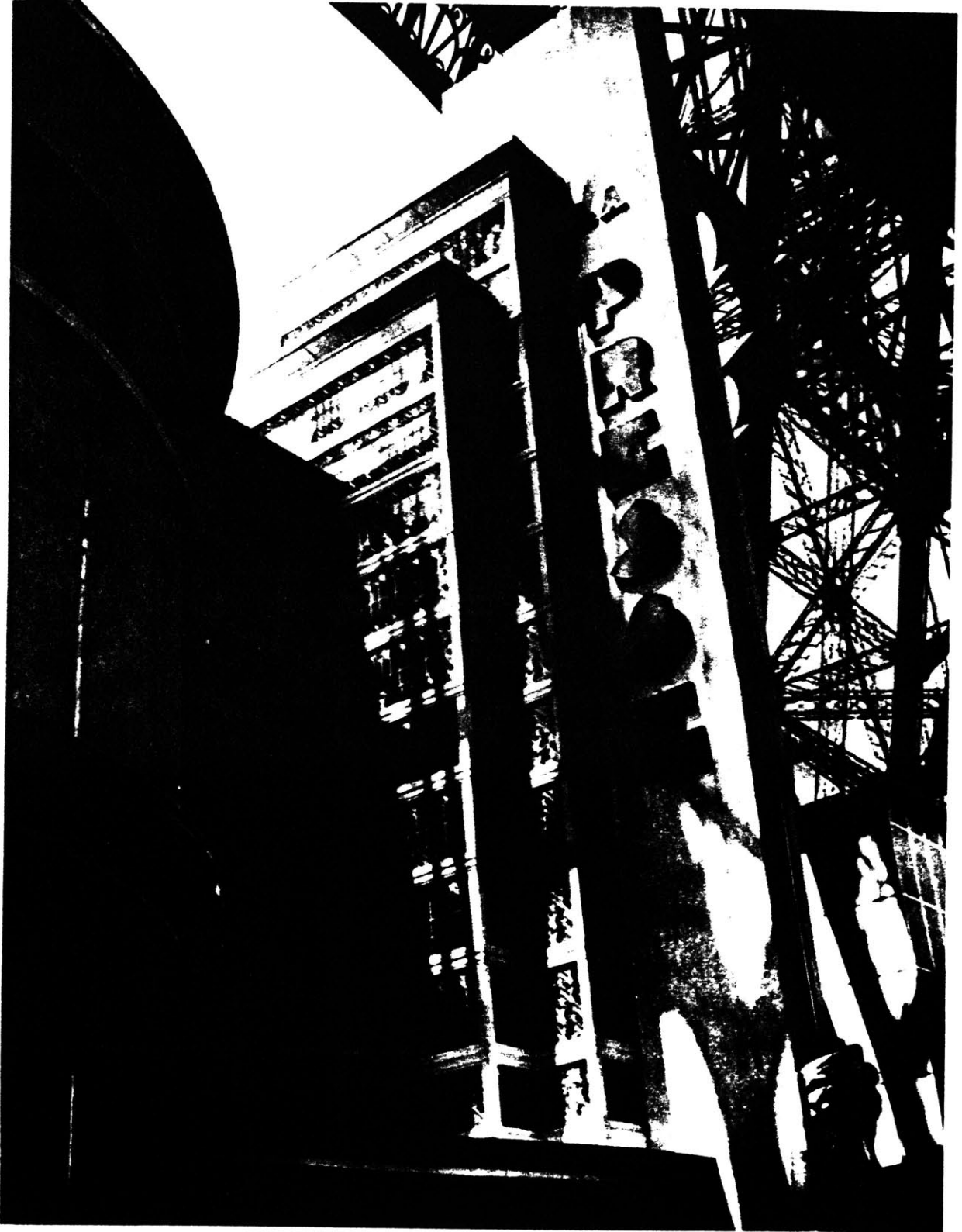


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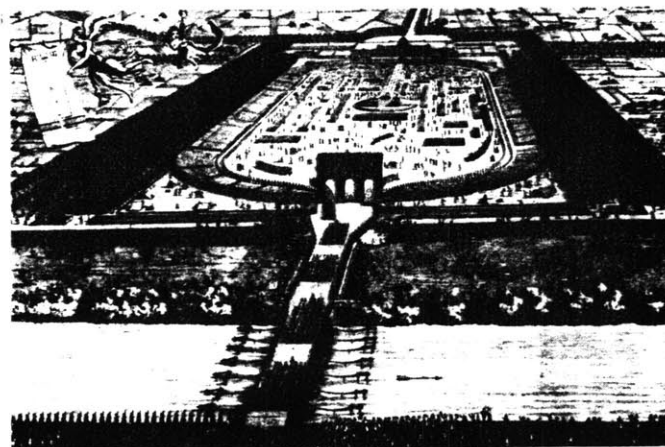


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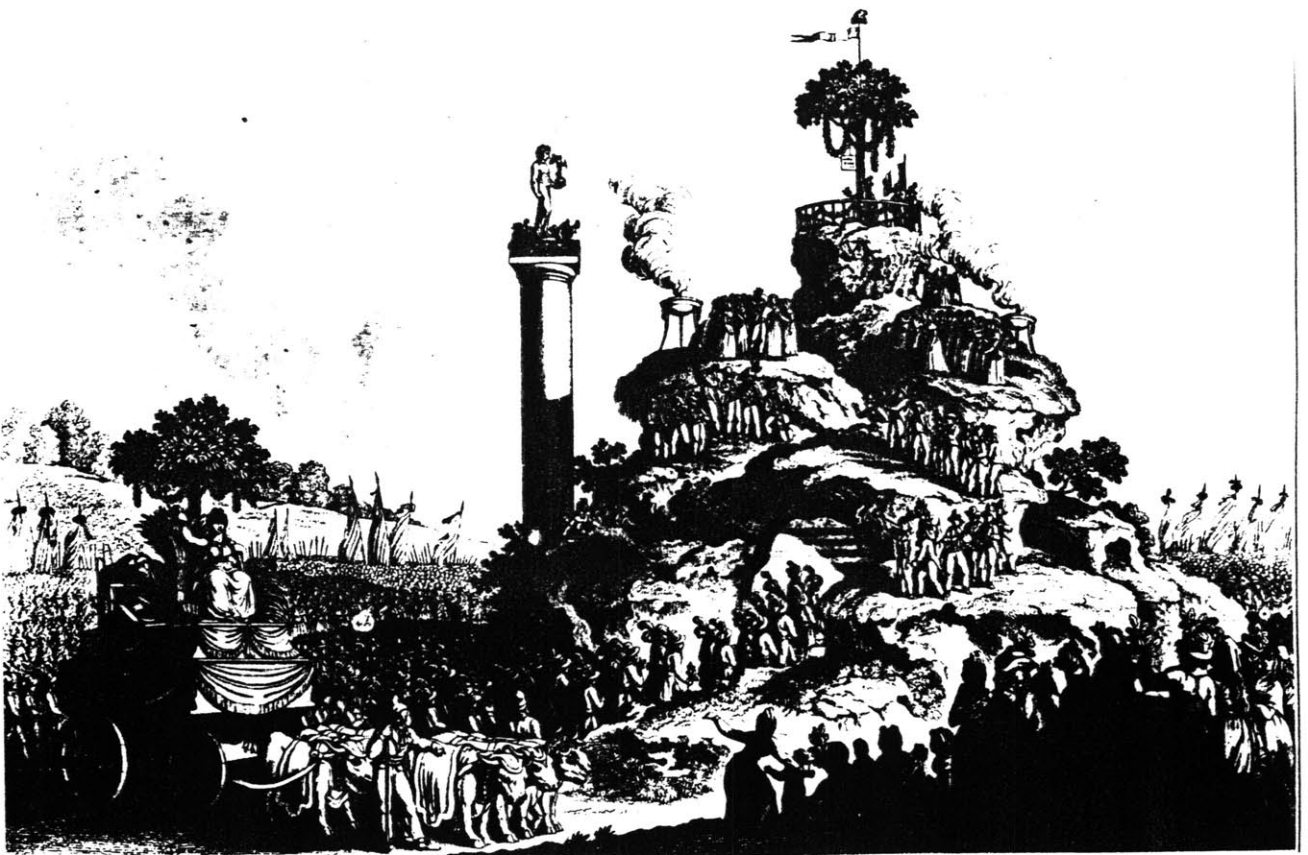


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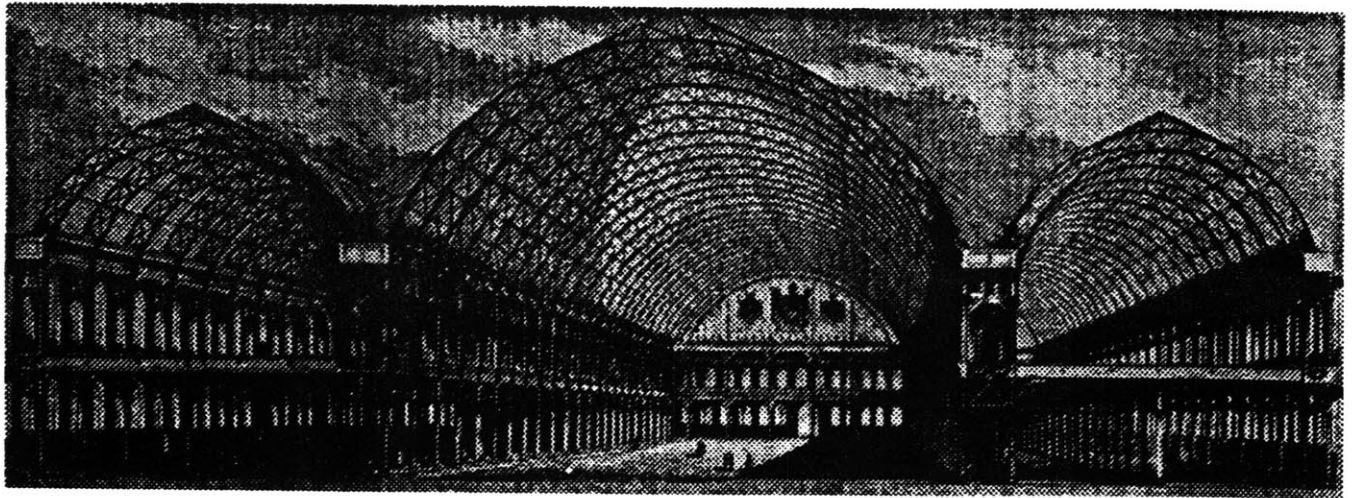
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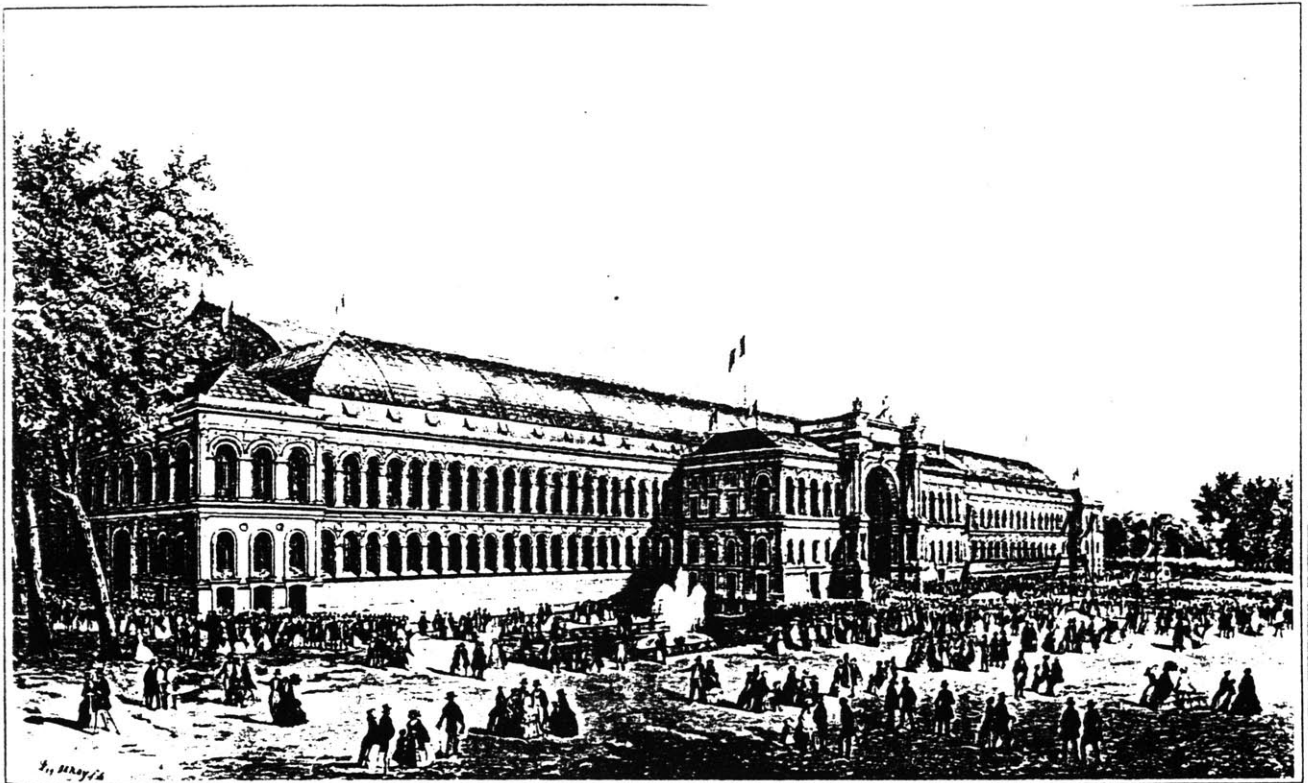
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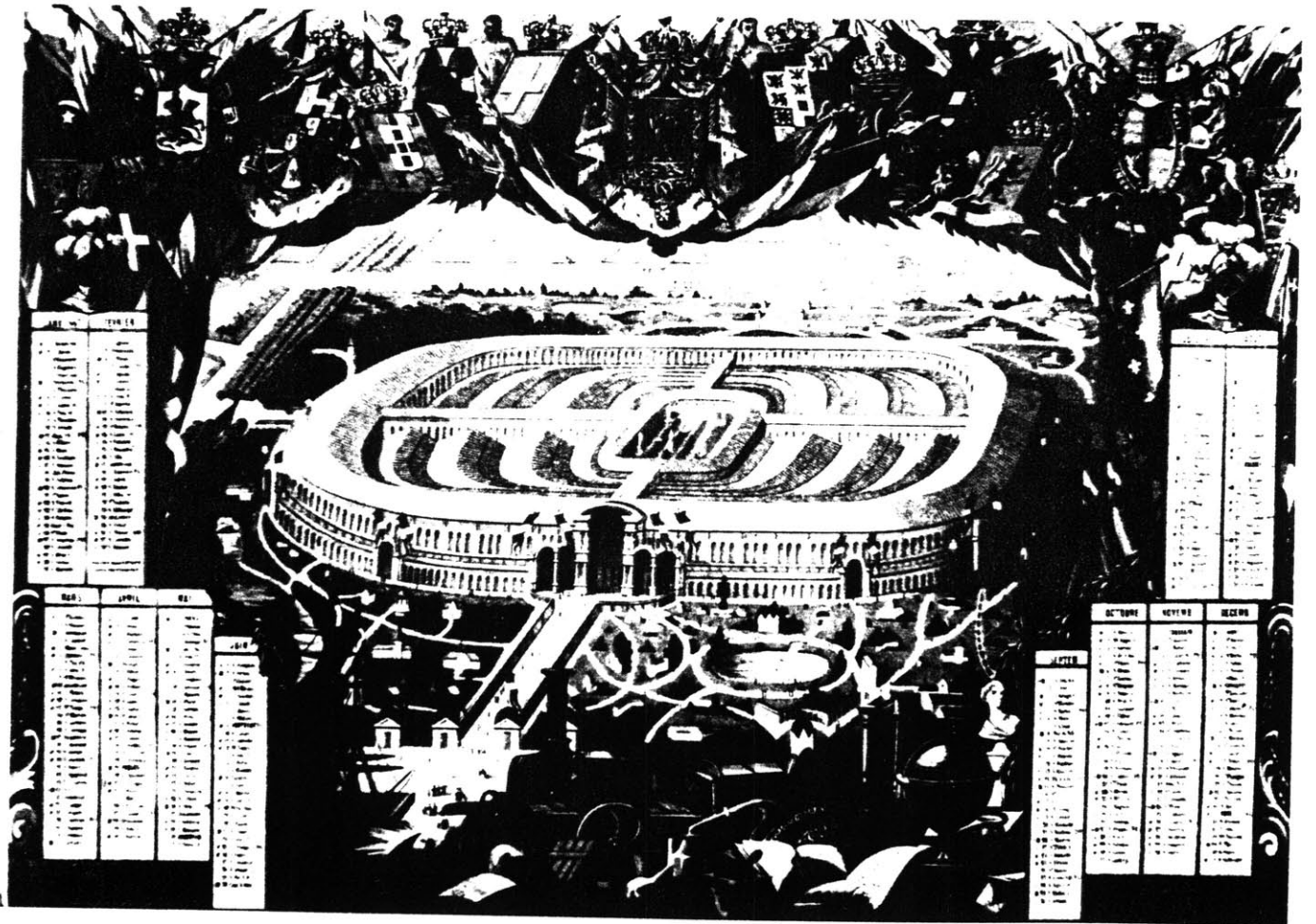


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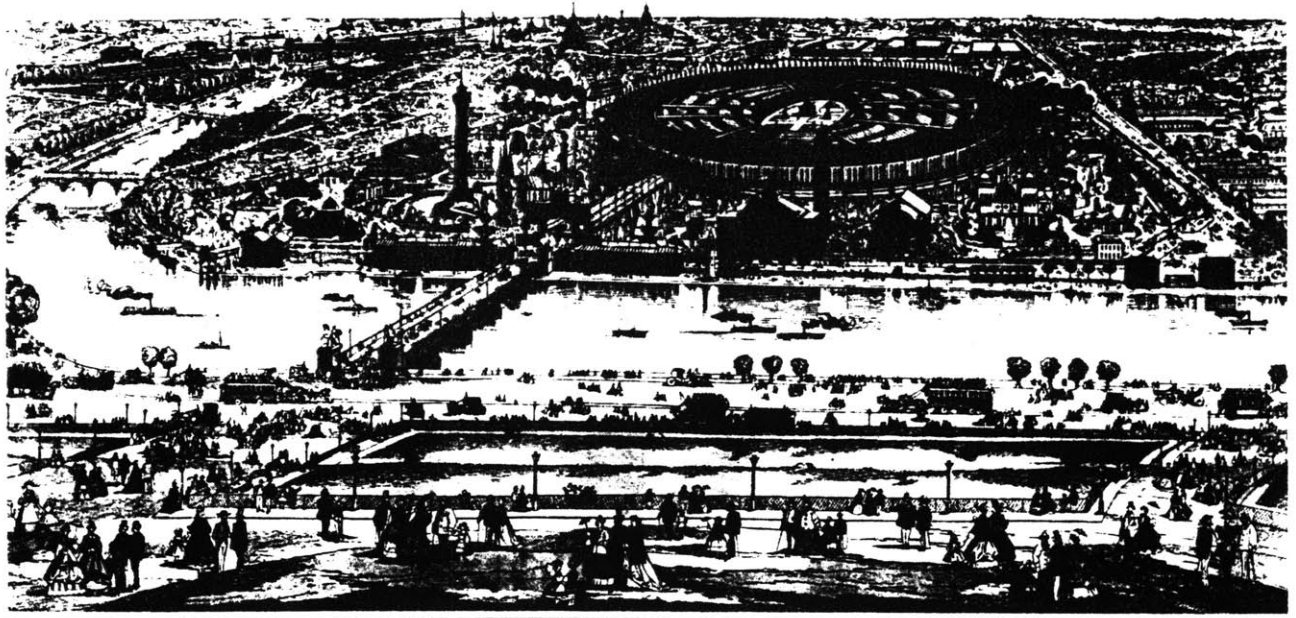


**MAISON OUVRIERE CONSTRUITE DANS LE PARC,
AUX FRAIS ET SUR LES DESSINS DE L'EMPEREUR**

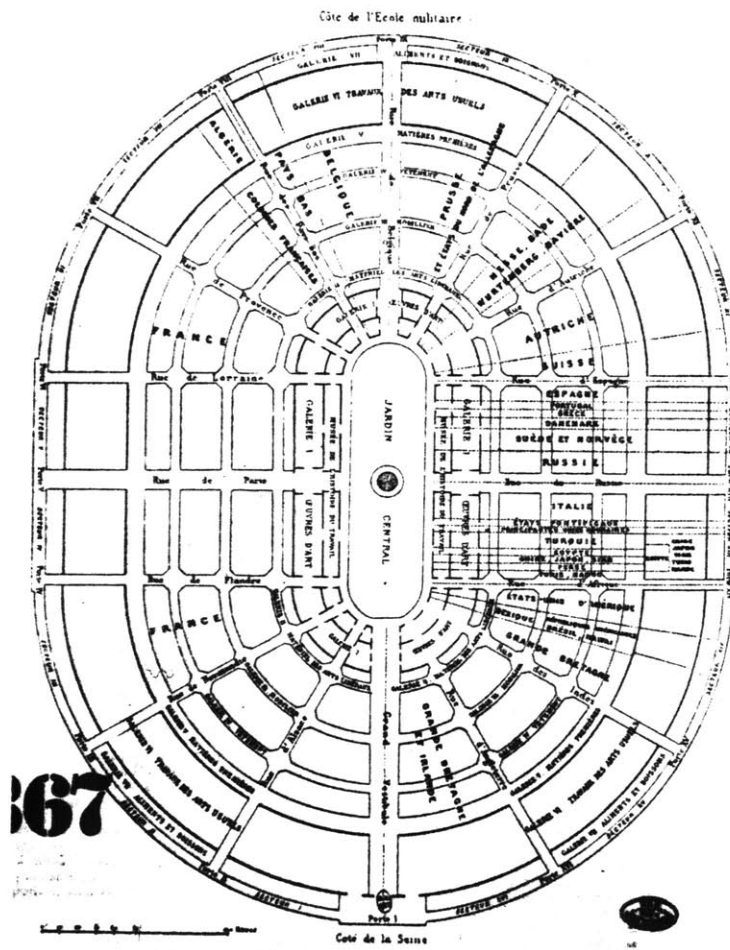
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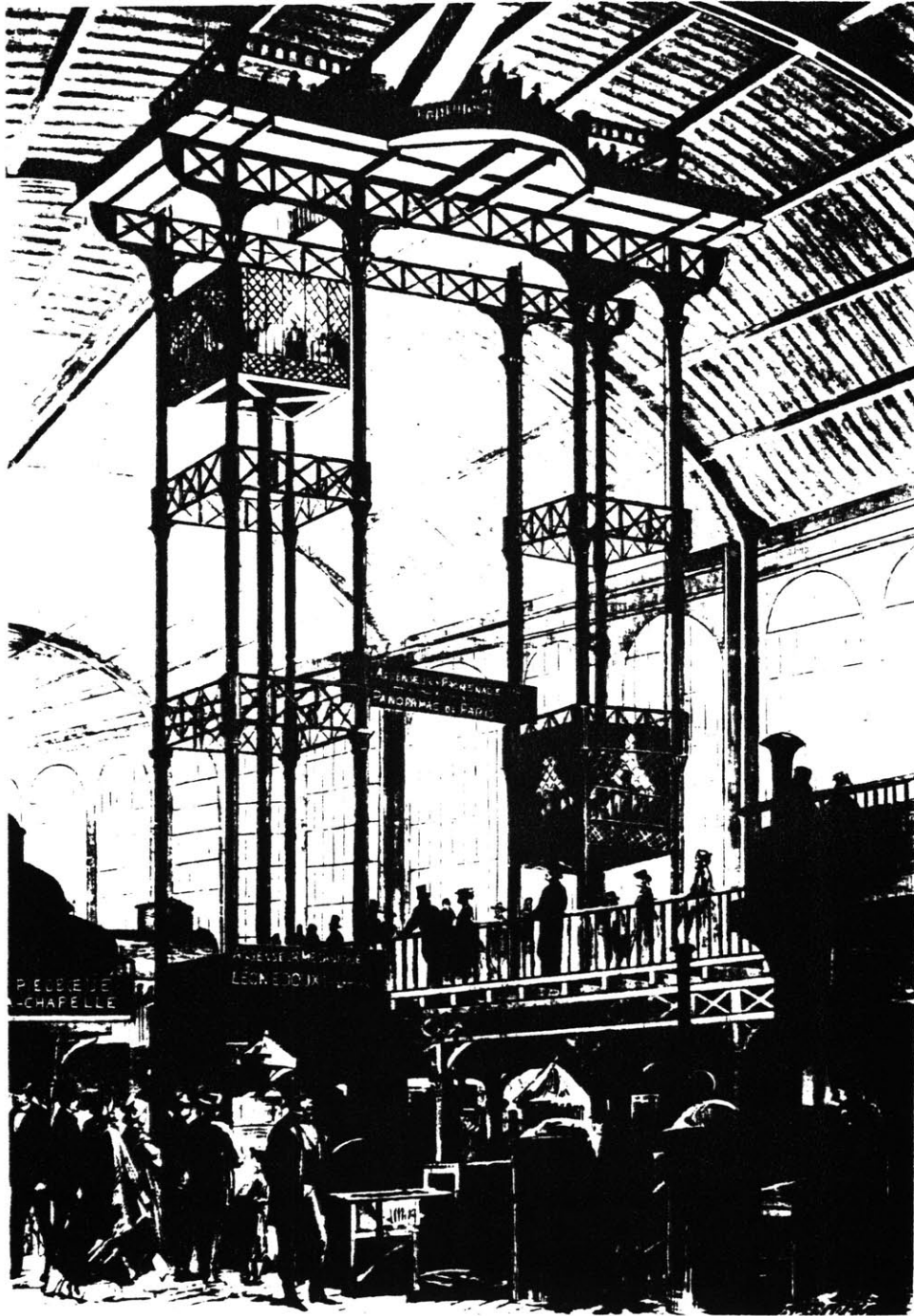
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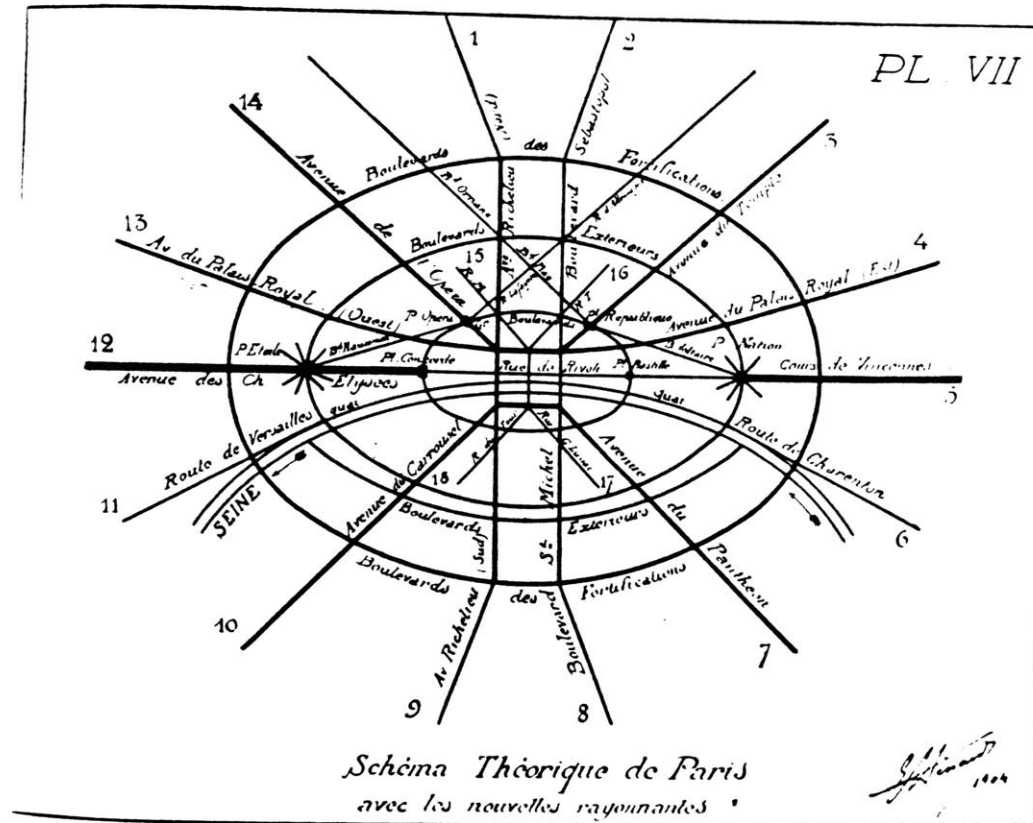
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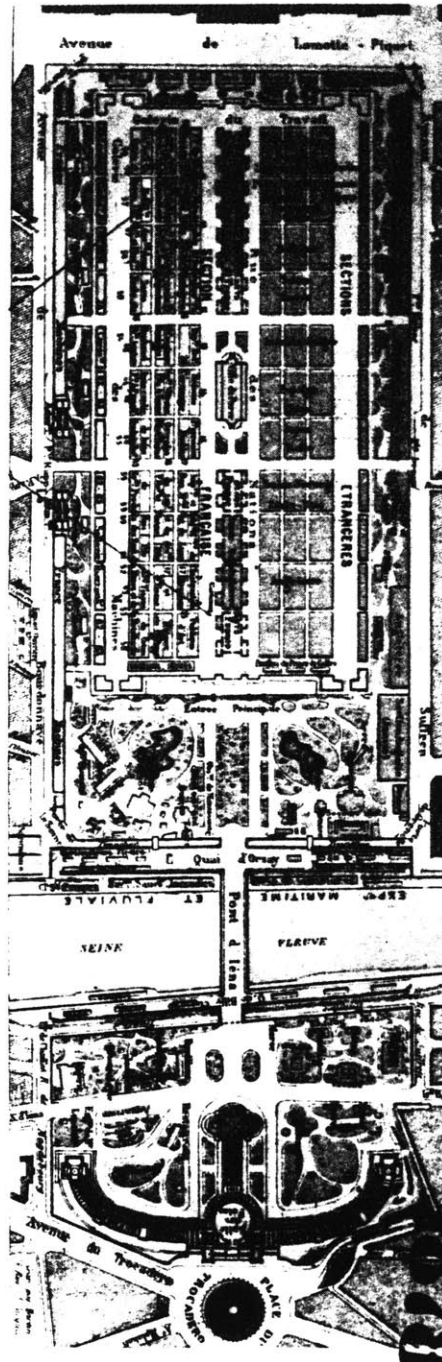
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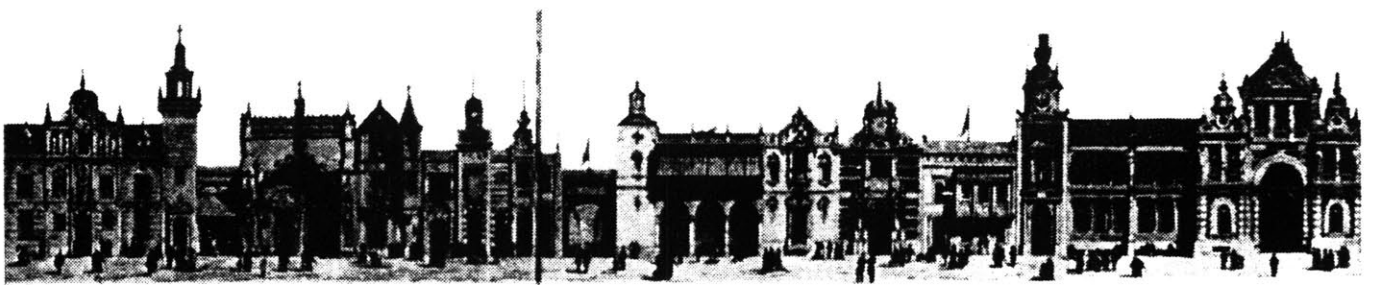
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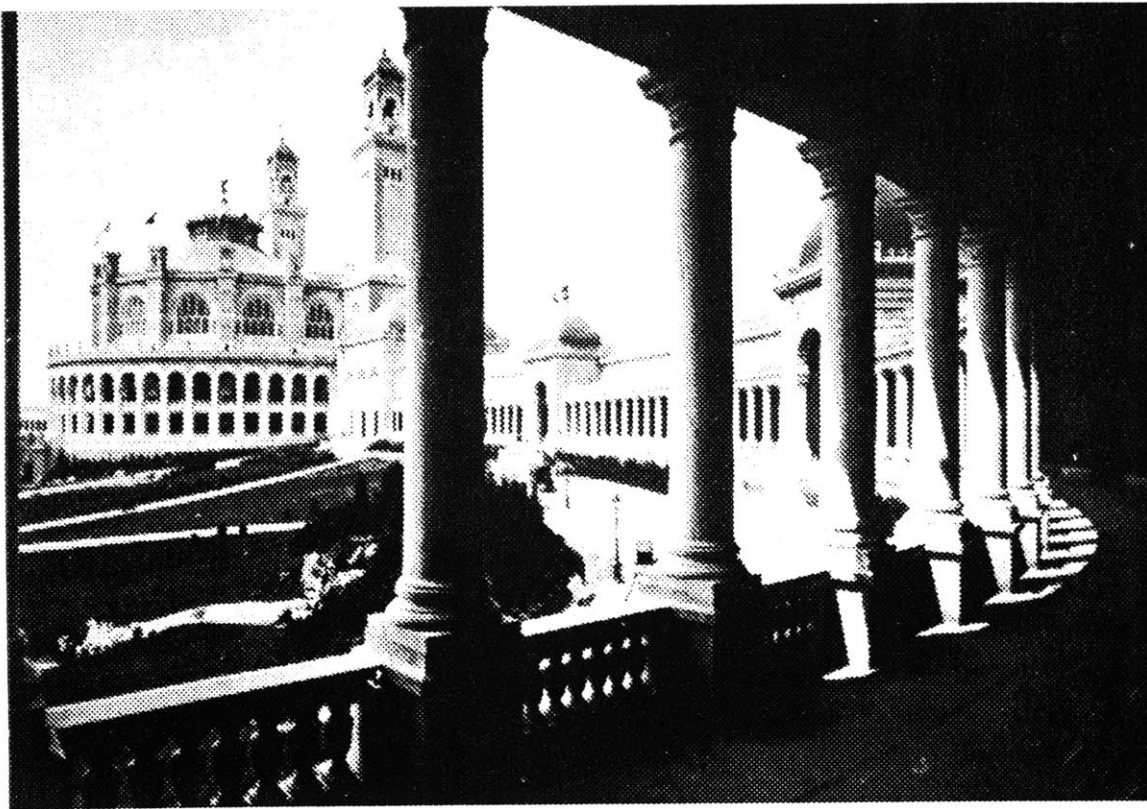
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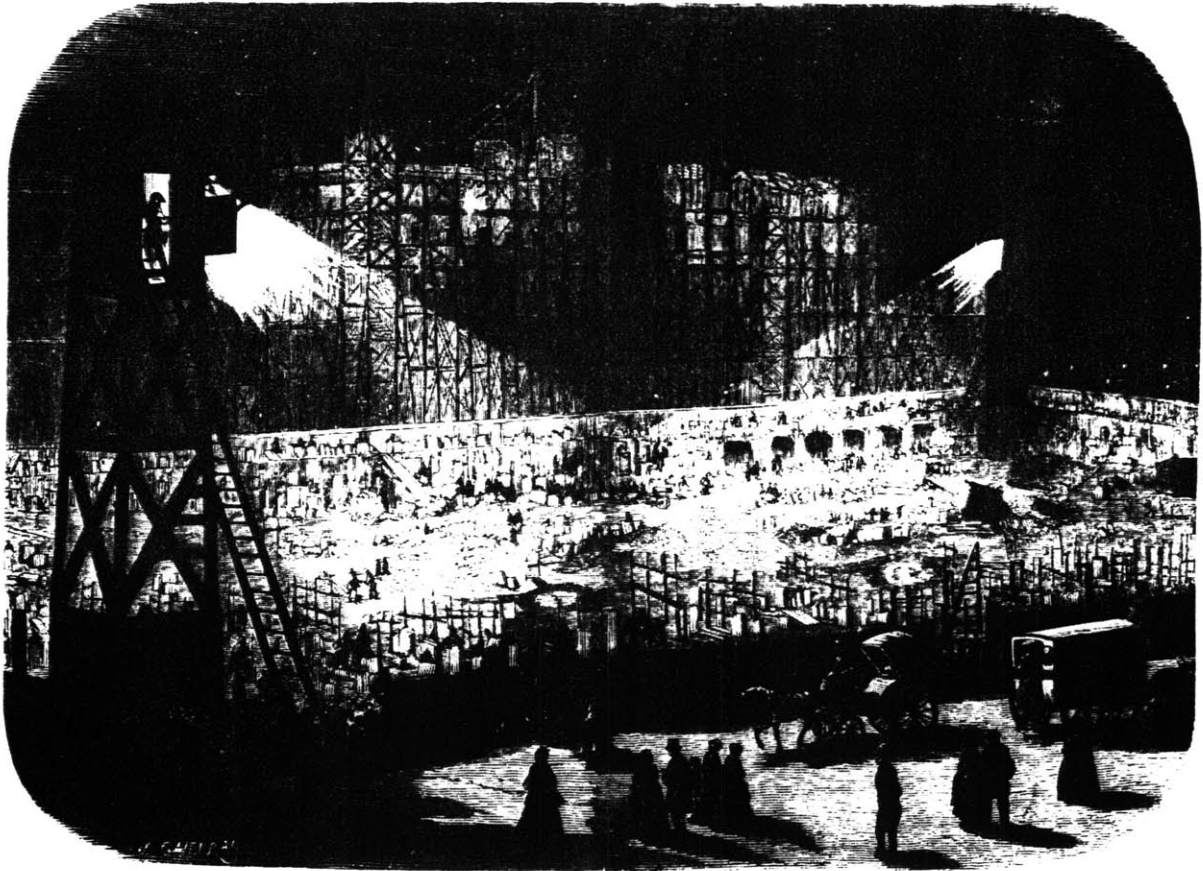
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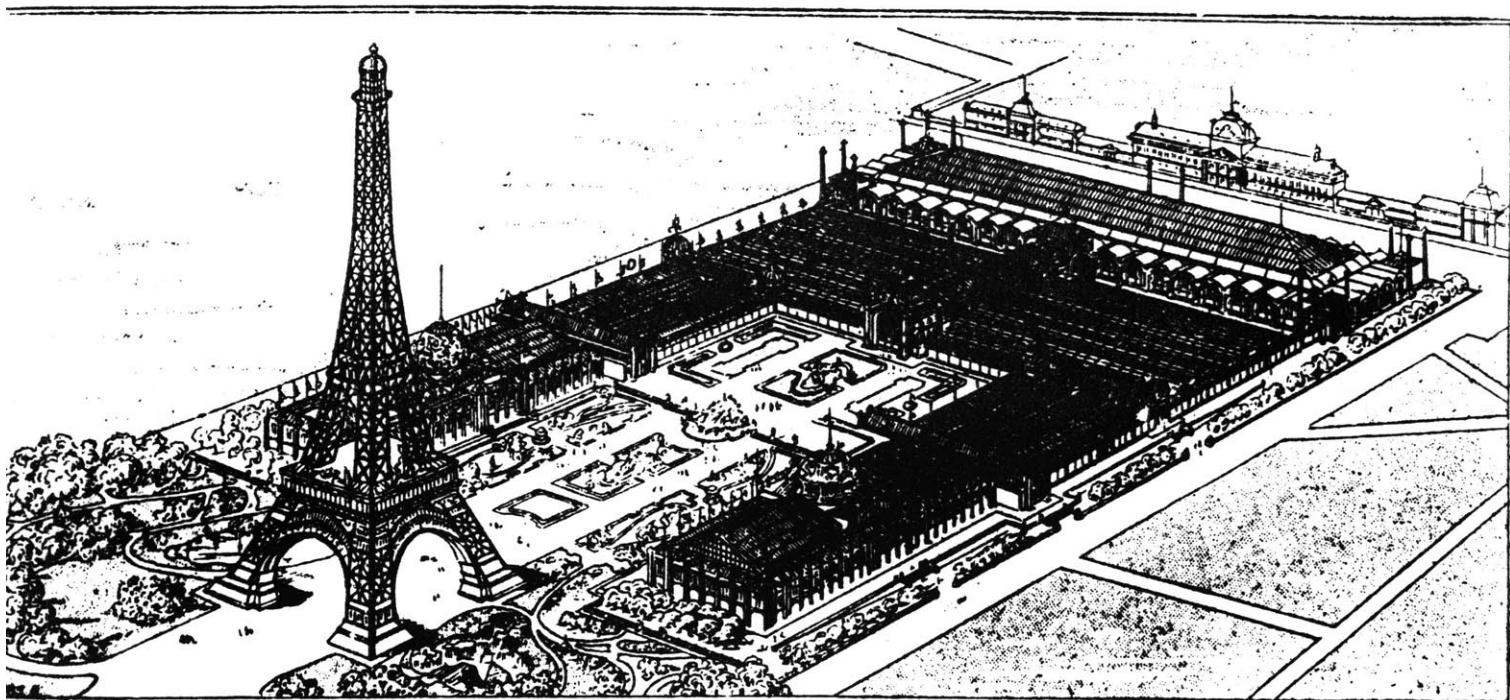
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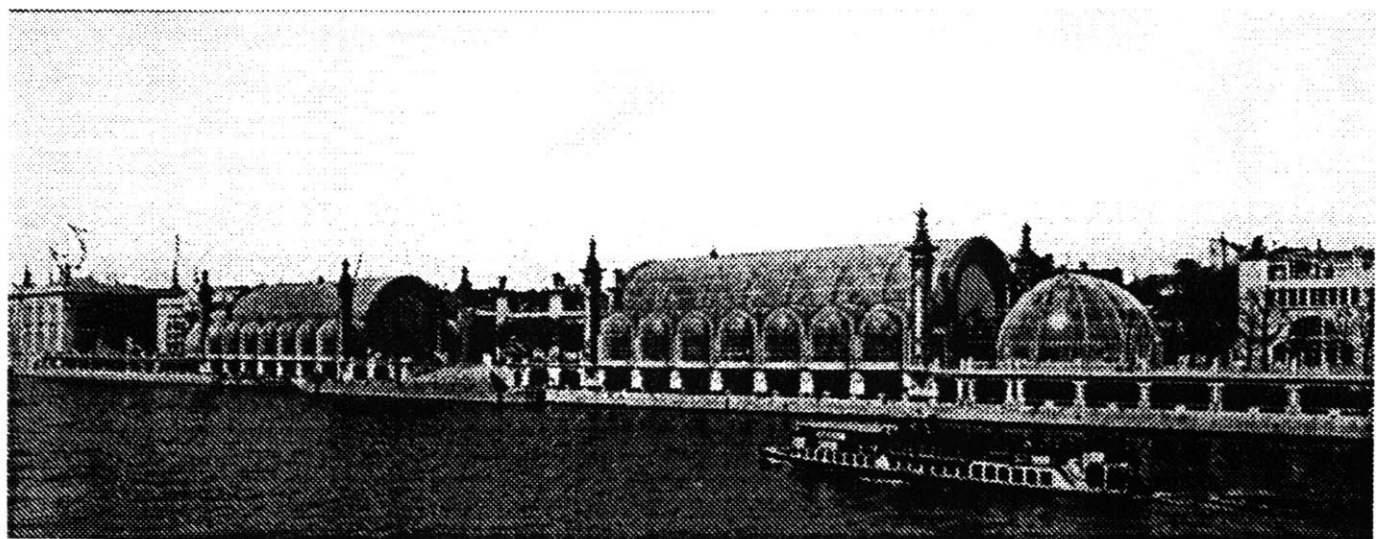
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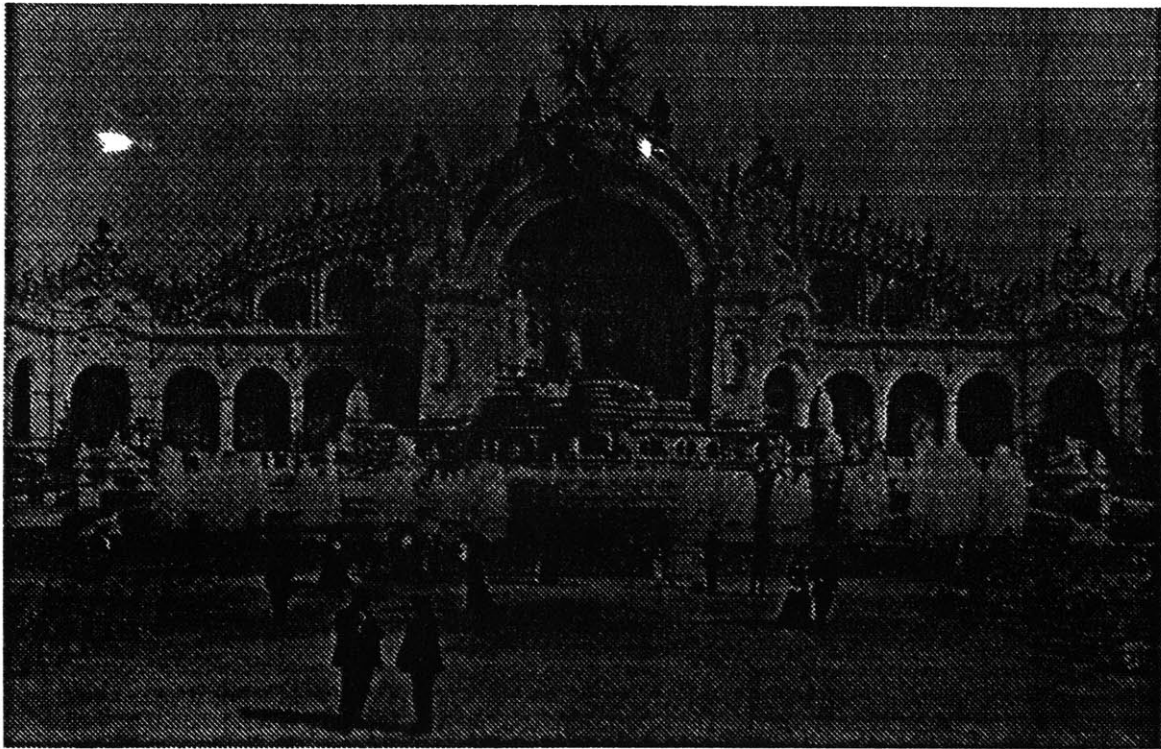
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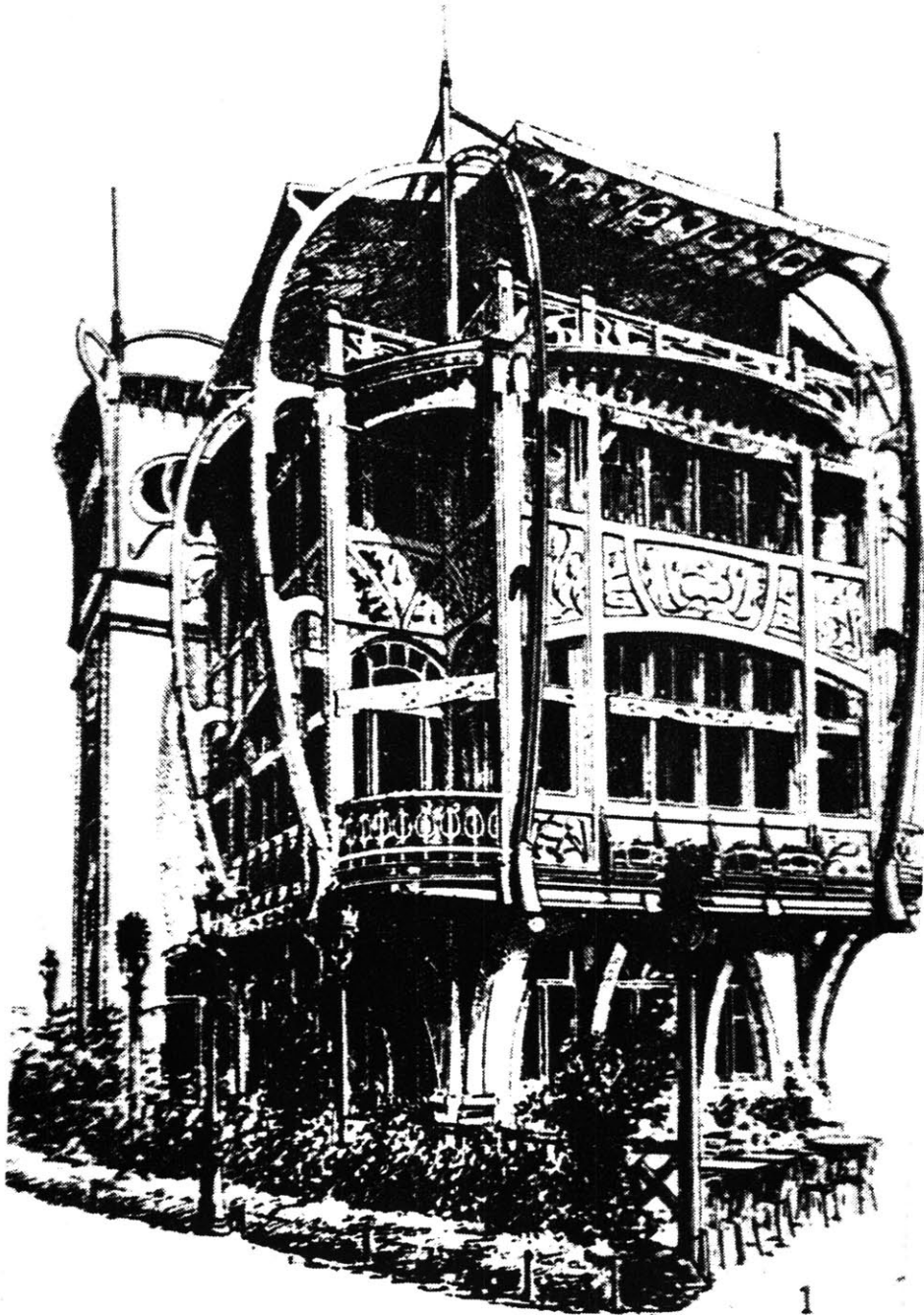
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... UN STYLE 1937, COMME IL Y A EU
en 1925

AVONS-NOUS UN « style moderne ? »

Nous sommes dans l'« appel international »
 Nous n'avons pas l'intention de passer
 vir la cause de l'art français.
 tous les talents créateurs un style de bain
 de jouvence.
 Nous voulons éviter non seulement les
 anachronismes ridicules, mais encore
 excès d'un modernisme déjà démodé
 Nous voulons créer un style
 décoration ne sera pas sacré
 pratiques ;
 Ou les nécessités
 ront pas de

imaginative, mais
 le goût. Les ar-
 ont mieux leur
 et ont l'in-
 de l'utili-
 des bel-
 en

26.- Throughout the press, an obsessive question "Shall we have a new style, a 1937 style."

AVONS-NOUS UN STYLE 1937 ?

26.11.37

Par RAYMOND LECUYER

Je pense sur les caprices des photo-
 monteurs qui placent sans ménance
 dans un tas-fond humide tel château
 en réalité fiché sur un pic, le compte
 pour rien les fantaisies publicitaires
 qui donnent la même importance à
 une ville d'art et à une ville d'eaux de
 troisième zone; et je souris du truc
 qui consiste à dissimuler l'affreuse ba-
 nalité de Bains-les-Bains ou de Trou-
 sur-Mer en faisant crâner « en gran-
 plan » une malade dont le maillot géo-
 graphique... Mais je m'empêche de voir
 la même teinte fade, grise et pauvre
 submerger notre Provence et nos
 Bretagne, les bords de la Loire et les
 bords du Rhin; de voir nos architectu-
 res et si sûres et si fermes représentées
 sur des placards sans relief ni ac-
 tualité qui font se qui fait l'attrait,
 les lignes de contours
 d'œuvre.

L'Exposition nous aura-t-elle donné UN STYLE 1937 ?

« L'Exposition de 1937 est un reflet de celle de 1925... »

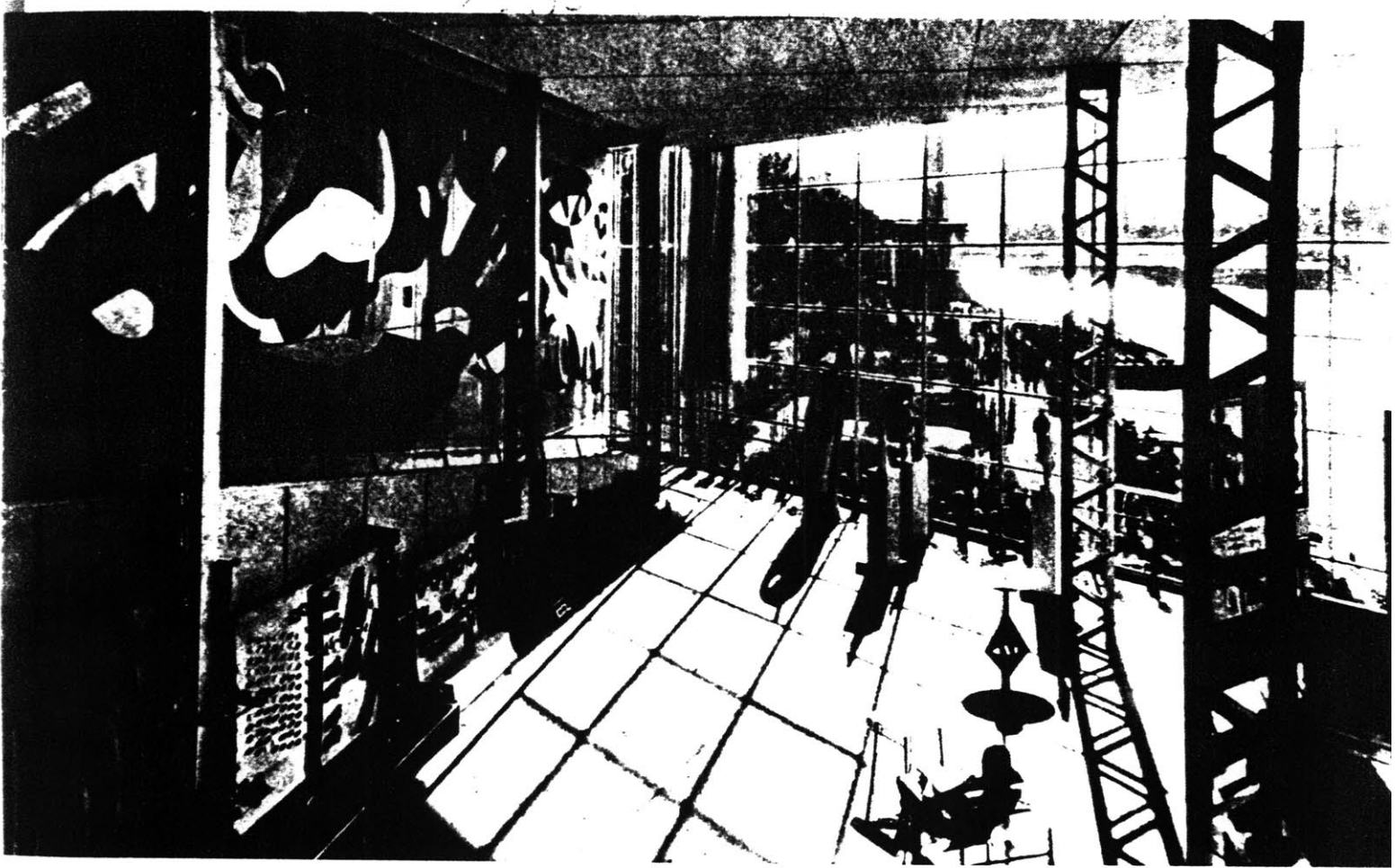
...nous dit MALLET-STEVENS

Si diverses qu'elles soient, les réponses faites à notre enquête coïncident sur un point: tous ceux que nous avons interrogés reconnaissent que l'Exposition n'a créé aucun style. Mais si, pour la plupart, ils s'en sont tenus à cette constatation, Robert Mallet-Stevens, lui, nous a dit les raisons pour lesquelles, à son avis, nous n'aurons pas un Style 1937. Sa réponse est d'autant plus intéressante, membre de l'Union des Artistes modernes, constructeur du Palais de la mière, de la salle du Cinéma 37, des Hygiène, il a joué dans l'Exposition un rôle des plus importants. e entretien a eu pour cadre qu'il occupe à Auteuil, dans l'ortre son nom: les maîtres qui la bordent.

contemporain. D'où les disparates les plus flagrantes, les juxtapositions les plus discordantes.
 On a voulu faire plaisir à trop de gens, satisfaire les commandes et les caprices de trop de maîtres-travailleurs d'ébau-
 intention.

à propos du Pavillon de l'Élégance de Serge Roche ?
 — C'est une petite œuvre, comme il y en a beaucoup. Mais ce n'est pas un chef-d'œuvre.

27.- Interior of the UAM Pavilion by H. Pingusson. Archives de France.



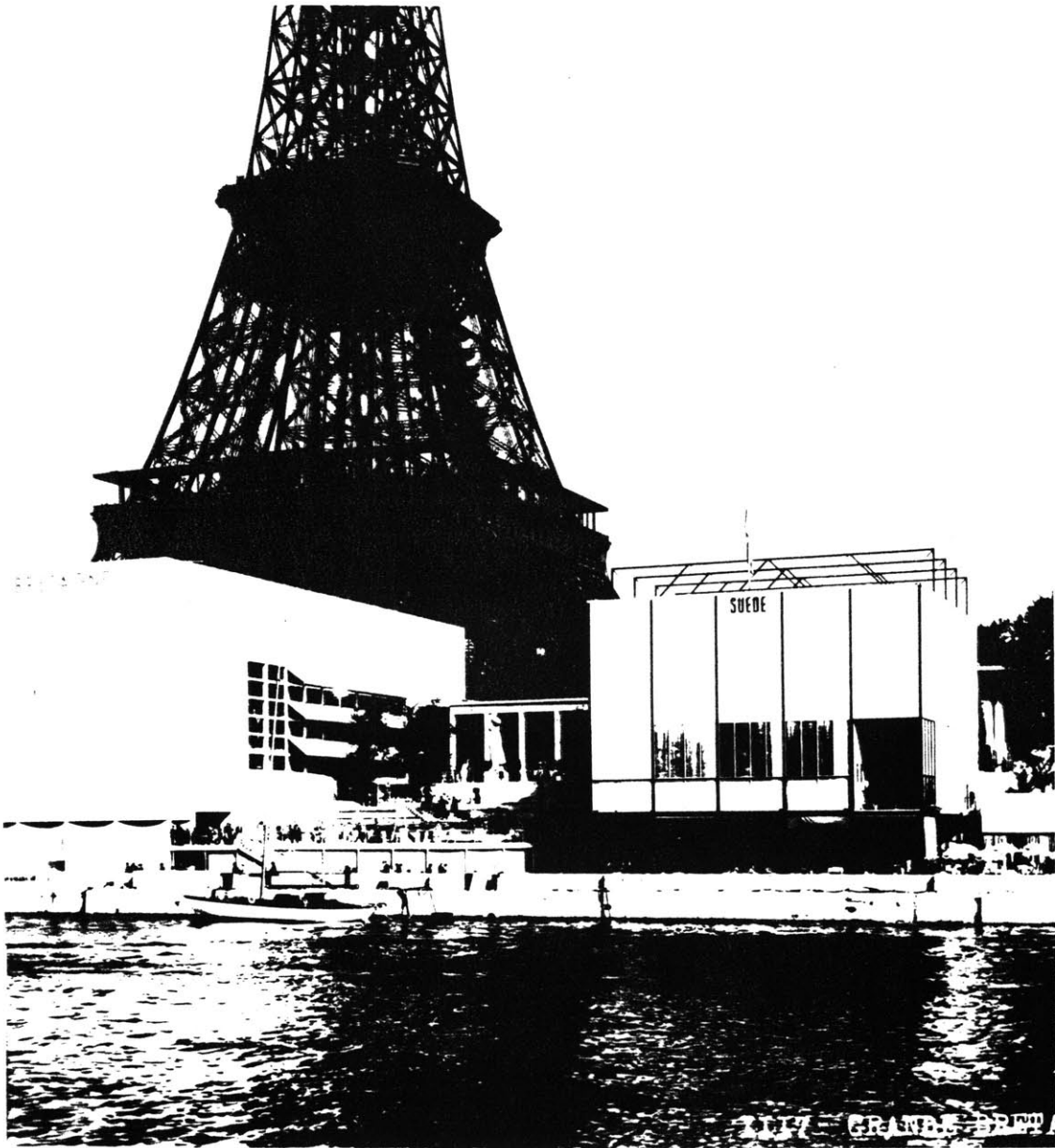
28.- Pavilion of Belgium by H. van de Velde. Archives de France.



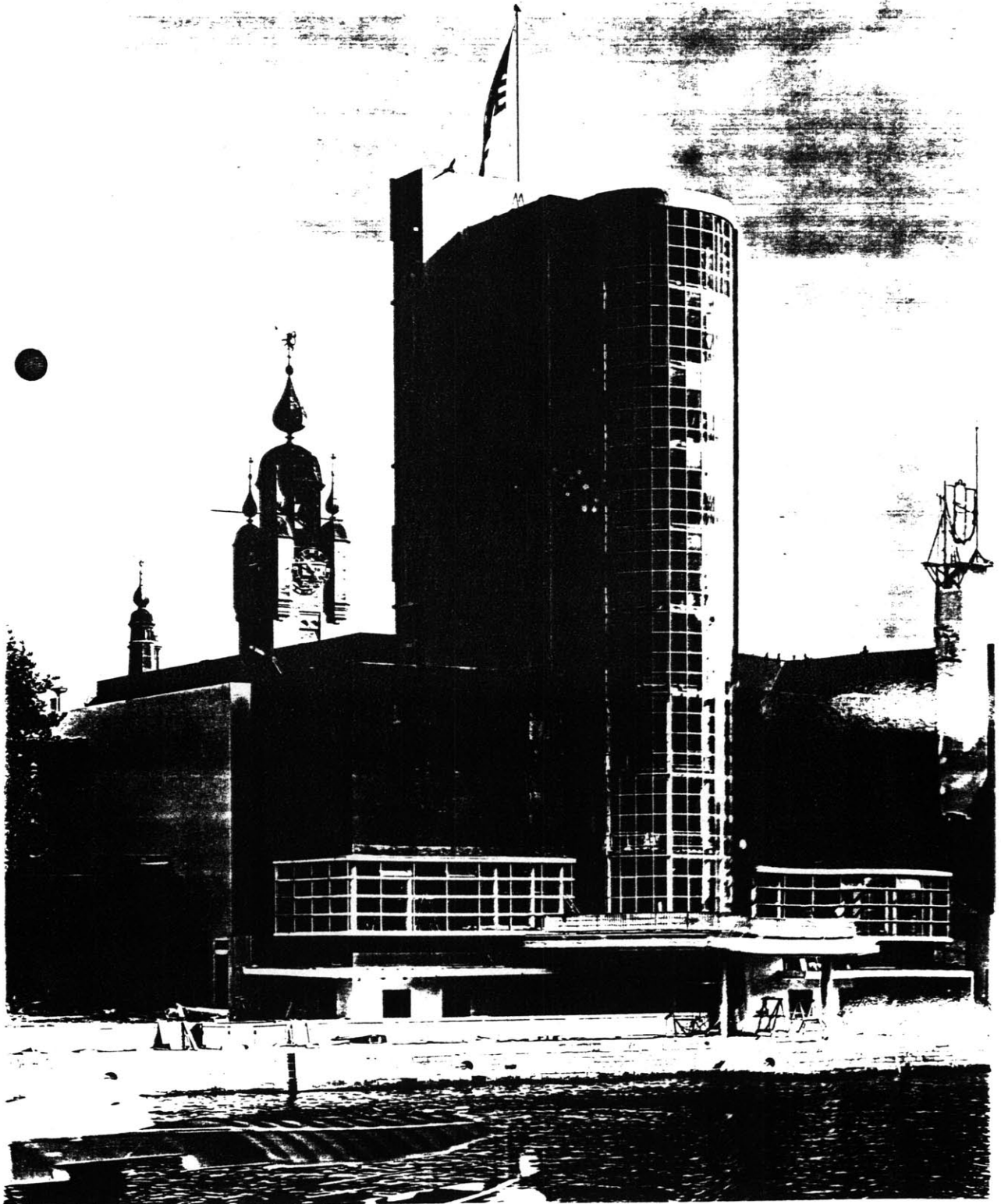
29.- Night view of the Swiss Pavilion, exterior, Durig and Brauning architects. Archives de France.



30.- Pavilion of Great Britain, (left), Oliver Hill, architect. The Swedish Pavilion (right), Sven Ivar Lind, architect. Archives de France.



31.- United States Pavilion, Paul Lester Wiener, architect. Behind, the Centre Régional with the tower of the Artois-Flandre Pavilion (Jacques and André Barbotin, architects). Archives de France.



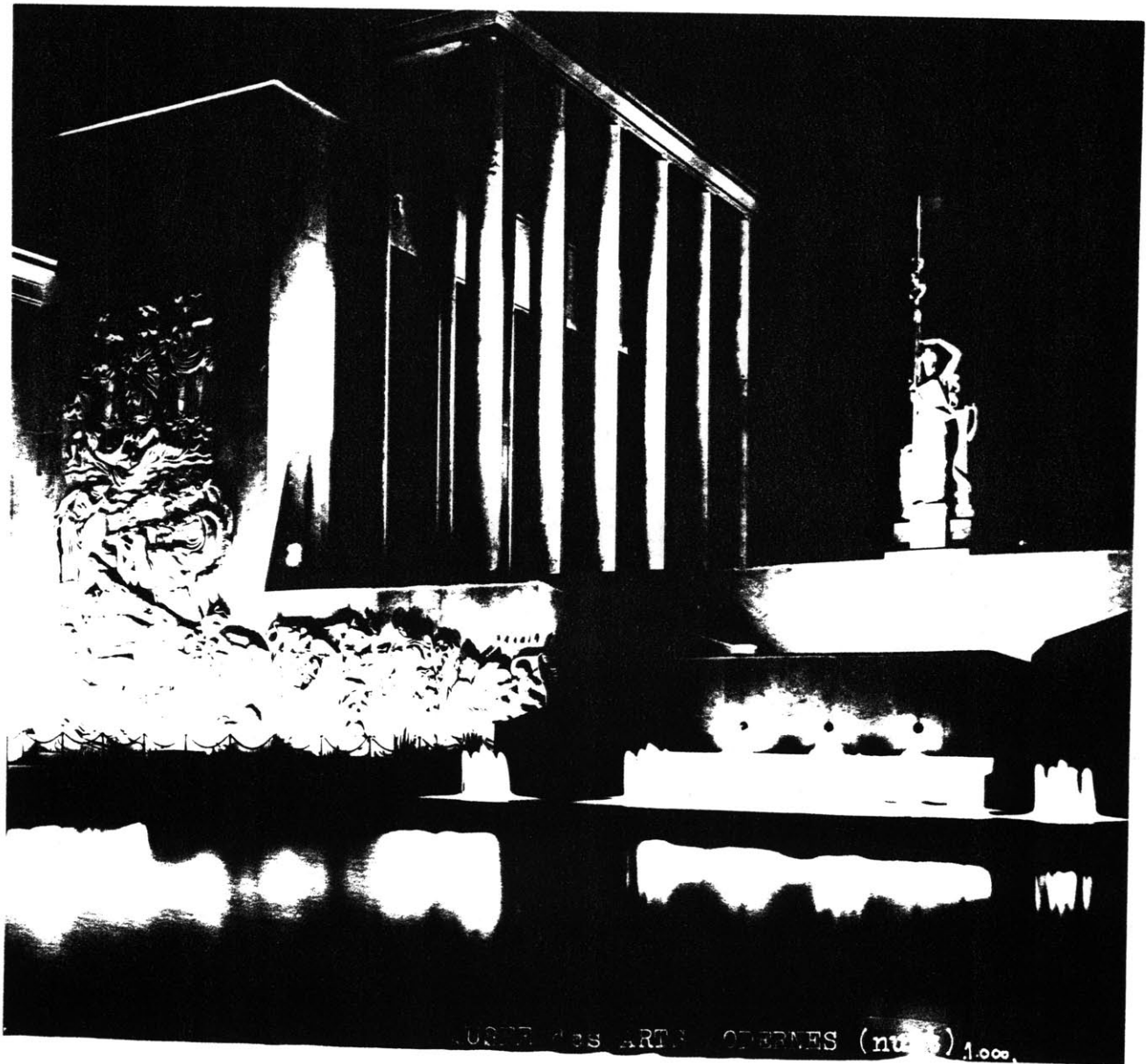
32.- Interior of the Czechoslovakian Pavilion by Jarzomir Krejcar.
Archives de France.



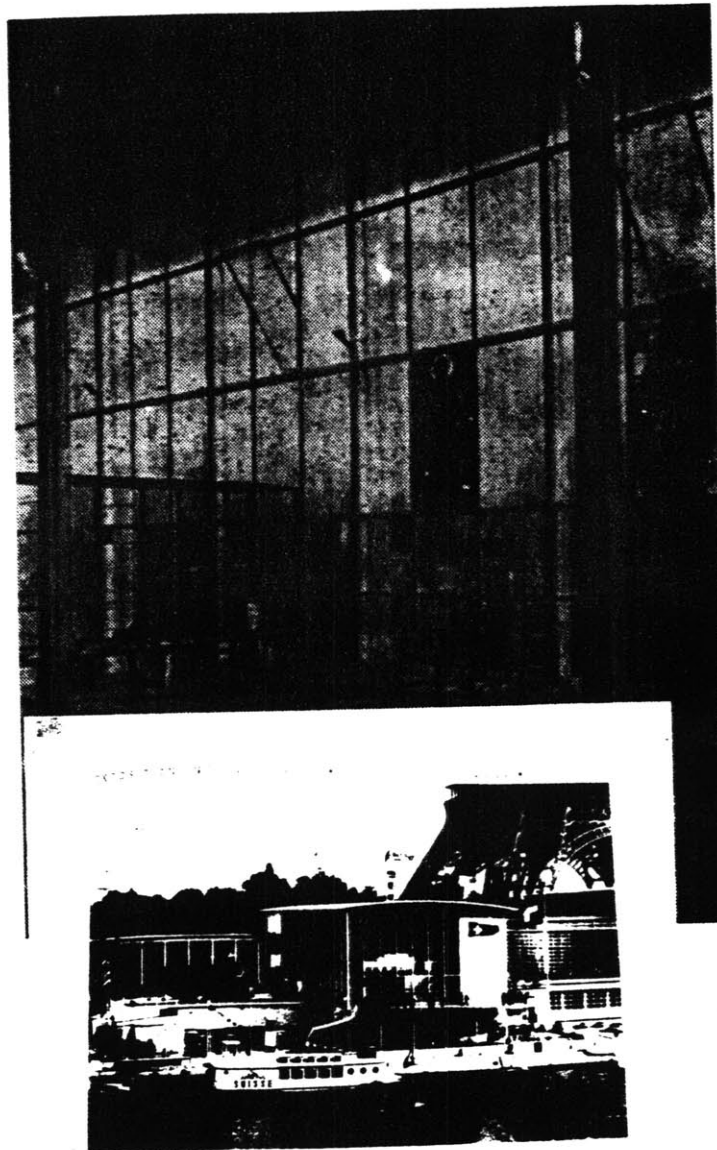
33.- Workers at the Exhibition's site, in front of the demolished 1878 Palais du Trocadéro, flashing the sign of the Spanish Republicans. Archives de France.



34.- The new Musée d'art Moderne (Ville de Paris wing) Architects: Dondel, Aubert, Viard and Dastugue. Bas-reliefs by Alfred Janniot, central figure "Le génie de la France" by Bourdelle.



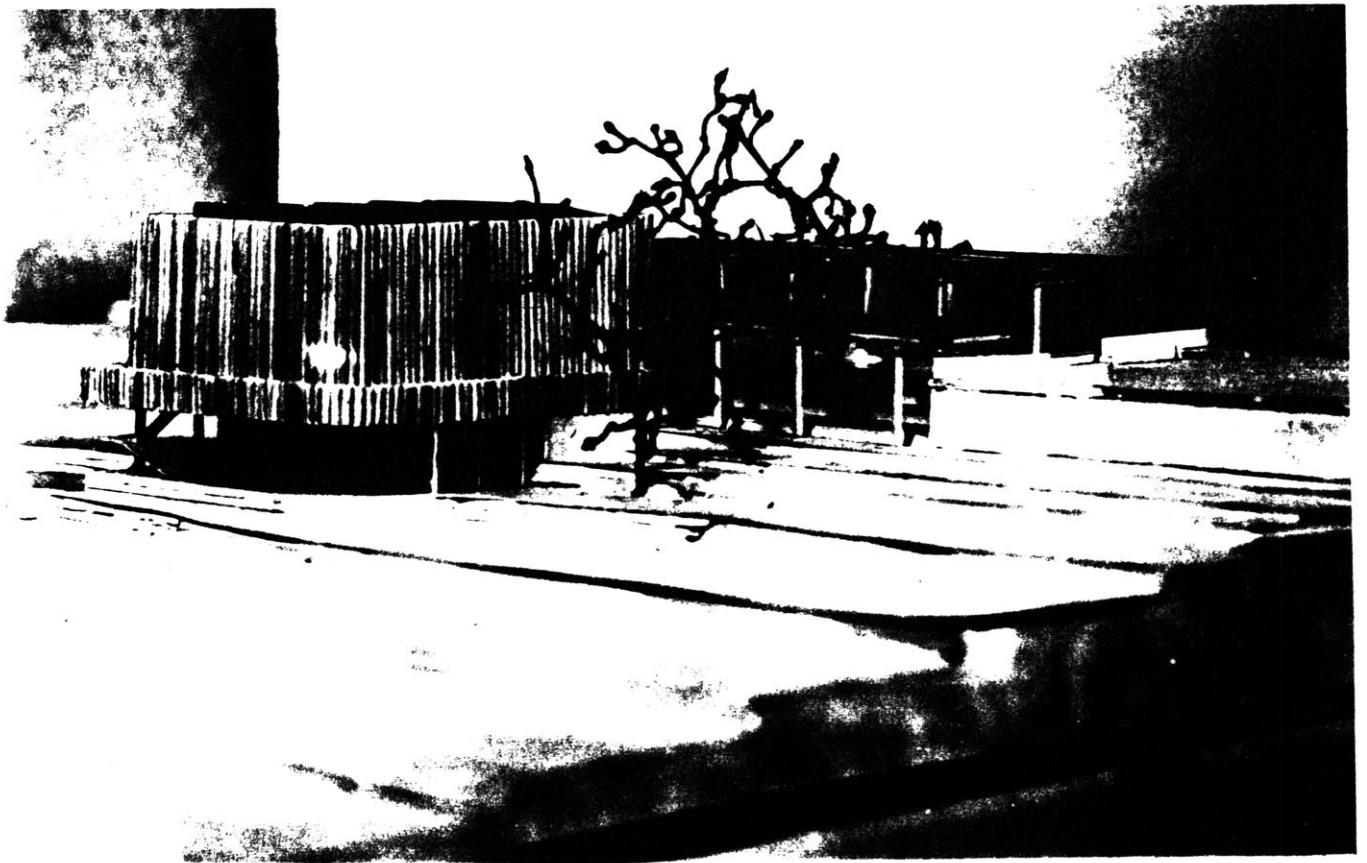
35.- Swiss Pavilion, exterior, Durig and Brauning, architects.
Archives Nationales, and *Exposition de Paris 1937: Album
souvenir*, Paris, 1937



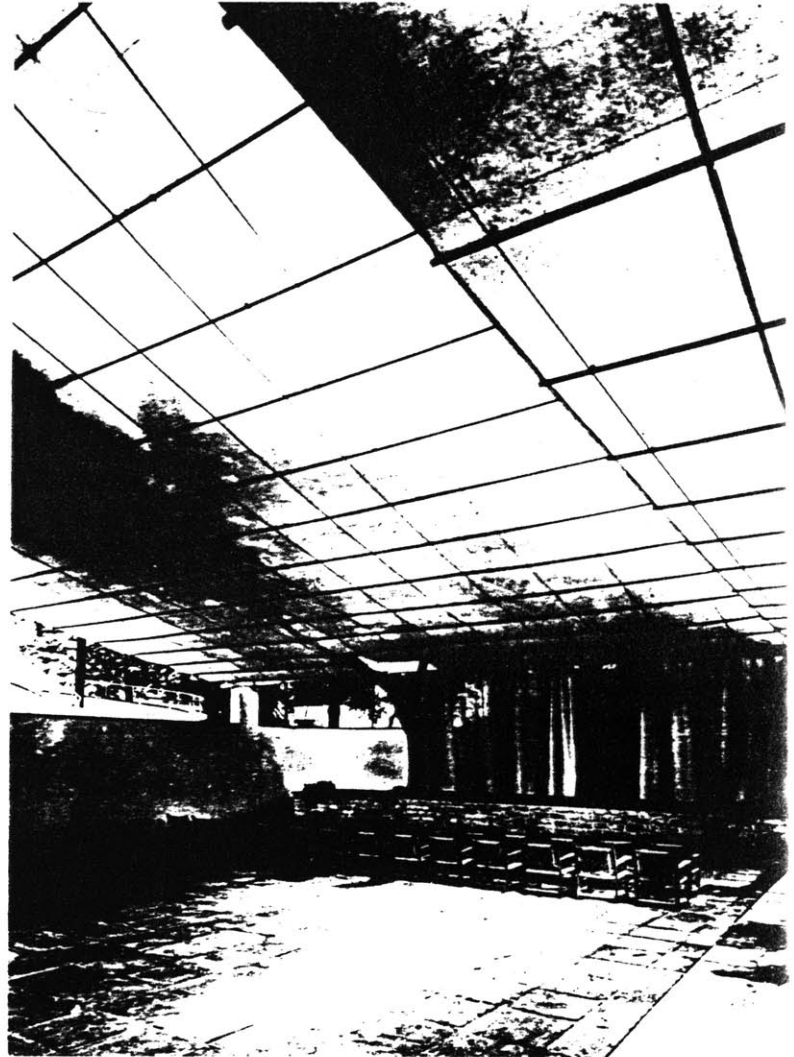
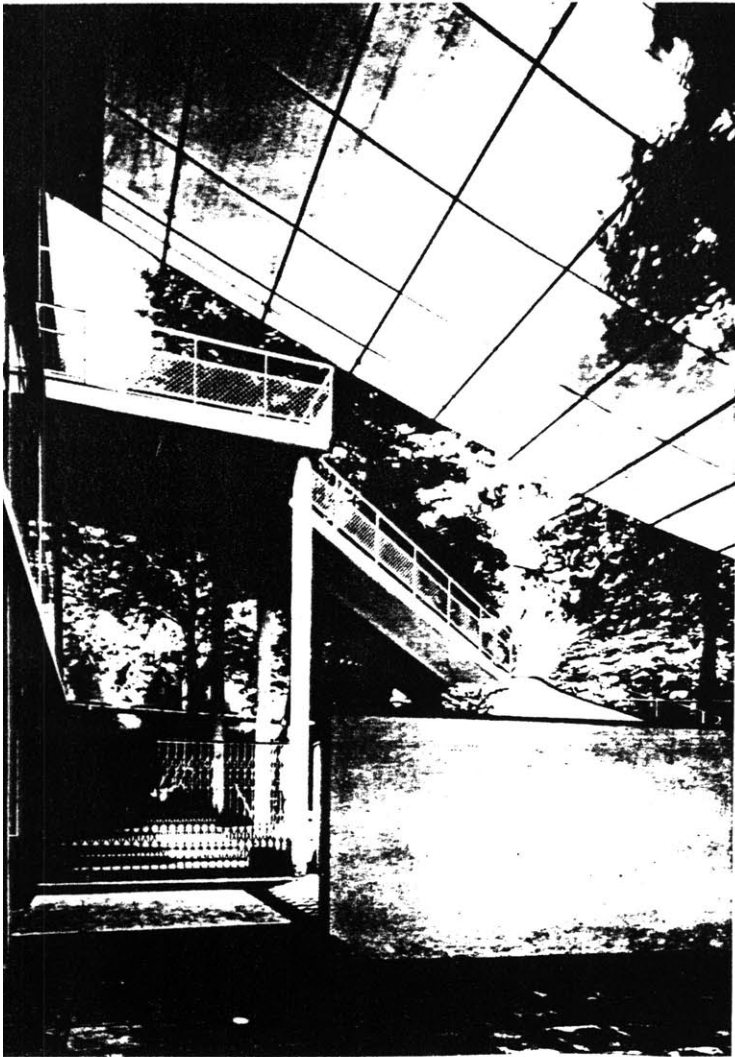
36.- Interior of Czechoslovakian Pavilion, J. Krejcar architect.
Photo Hugo Herdeg.



37- .Finish Pavilion, model. Alvar Aalto, architect. Archives de France.



38.- Spanish Pavilion, José-Luis Sert and Luis Lacasa, architects.
Archives de France.



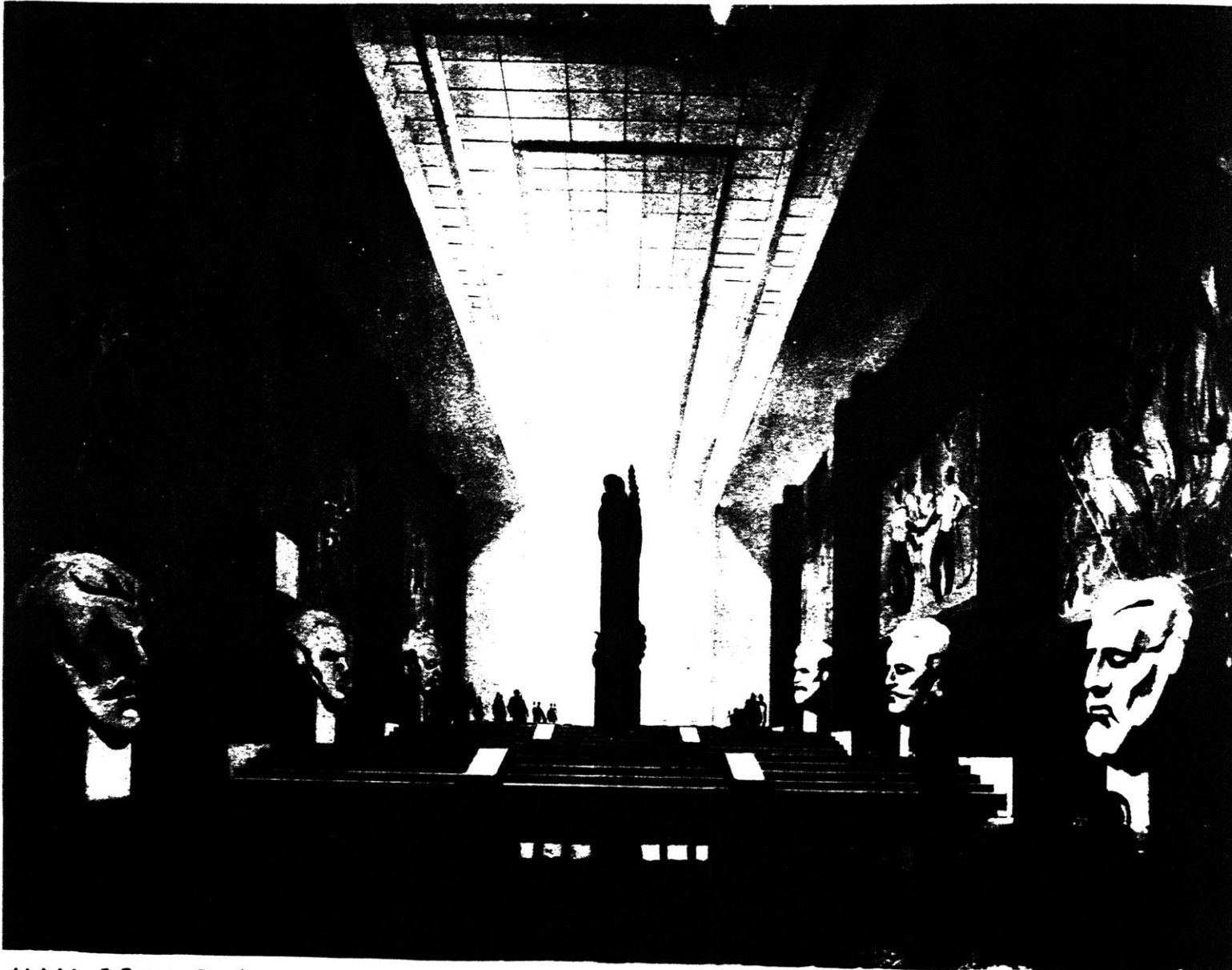
39.- "Palais de l'Enseignement," Eric Bagge, architect. Archives de France.



40.- "Palais de la Découverte," remodelled interior. J. Boutterin and A. Néret, architects. Archives de France.



41. "Maison du Travail," L. Hery, architect. Rendering. Archives de France.

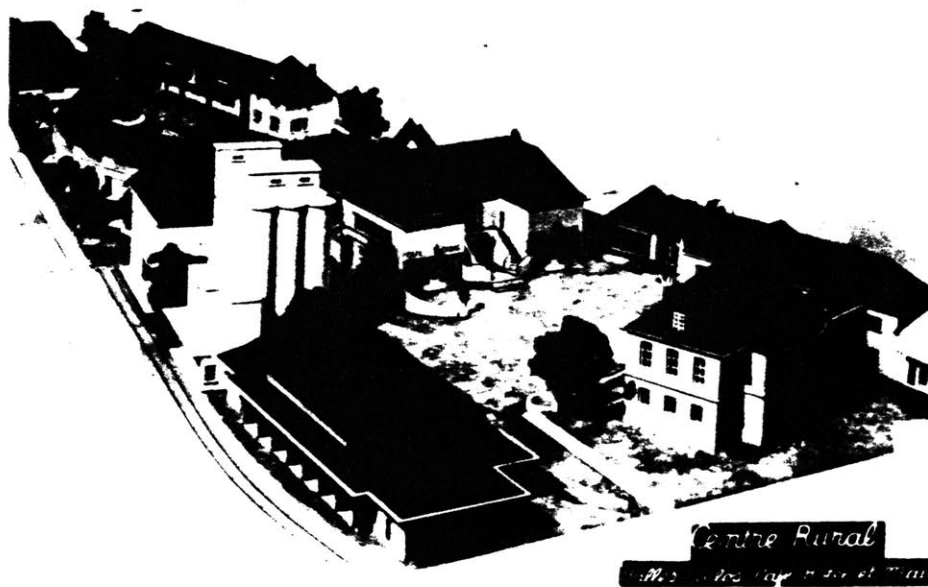


HALL DE LA PAIX

MAISON DU TRAVAIL

814

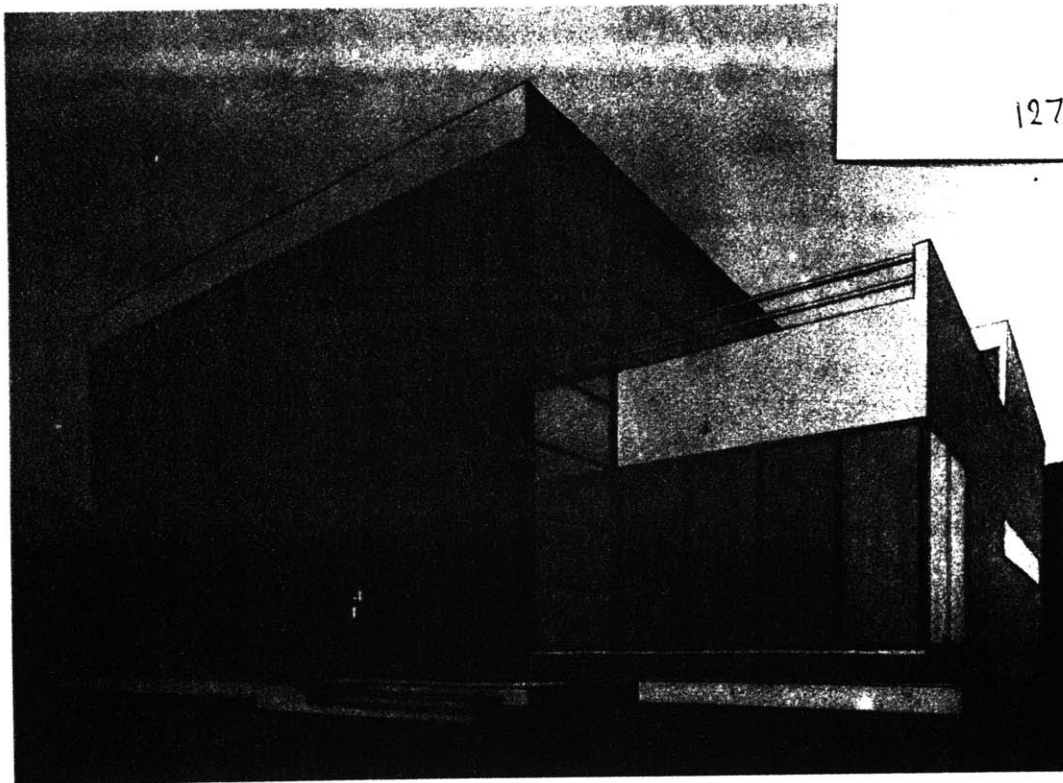
42.- "Centre Artisanal." "Maison du tabletier." Drawing by Picard.
Archives de France.



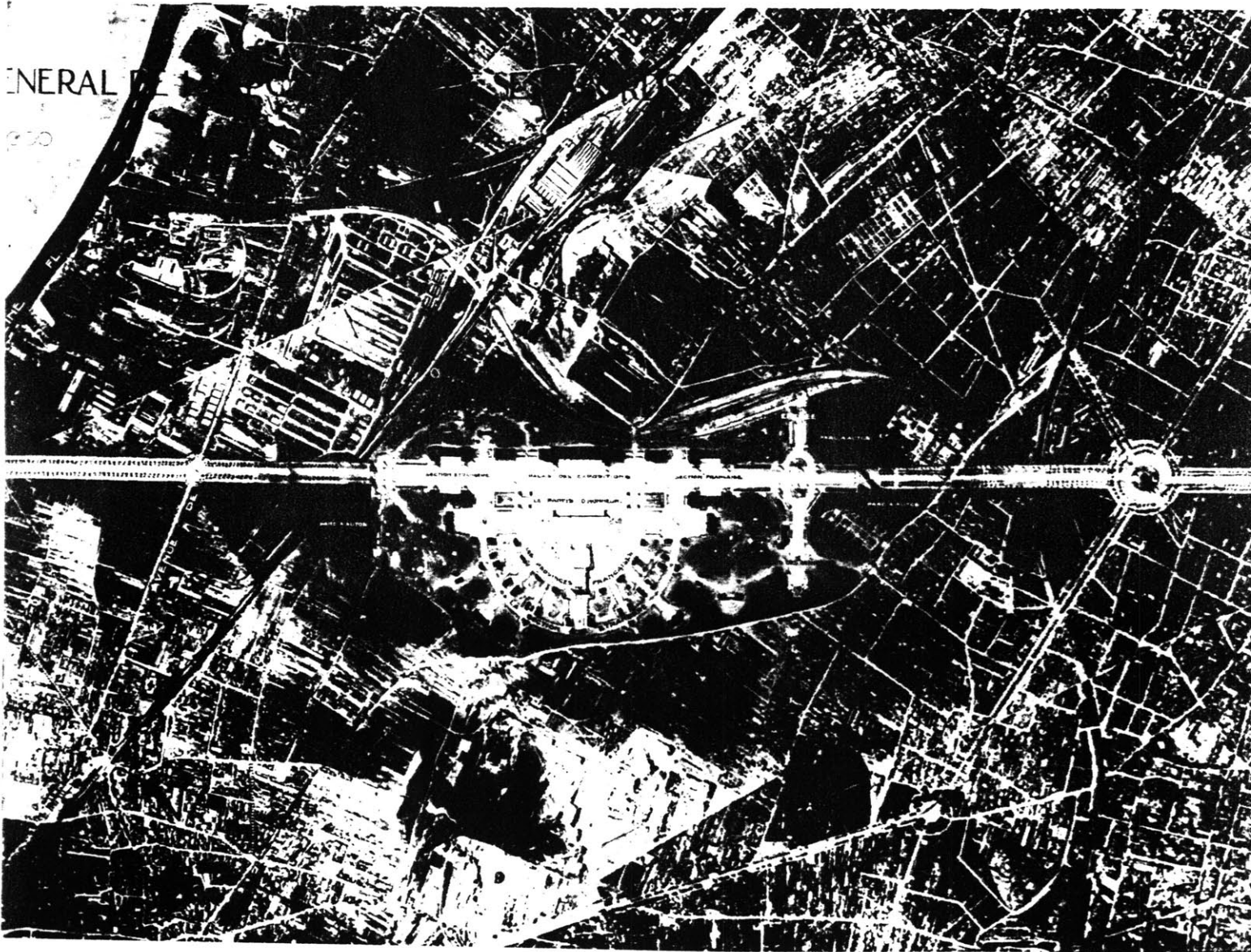
43.- "Centre Rural" with its "Ferme Model." Archives de France.



44.- House of the Glass Cutter. Archives de France.



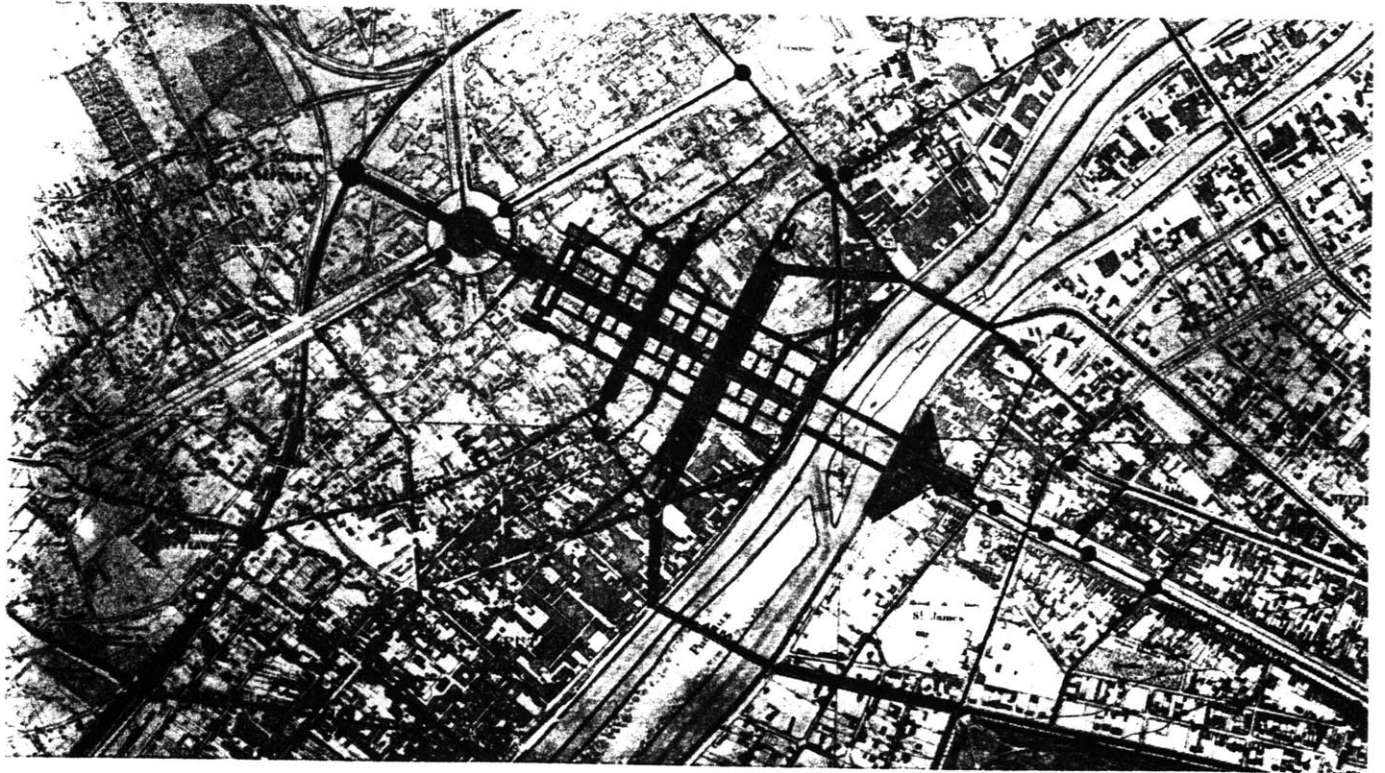
45.- André Japy. Competition entry. Nanterre as the location for the Exhibition, beyond the Voie triomphale. Urbanisme, August 1932.



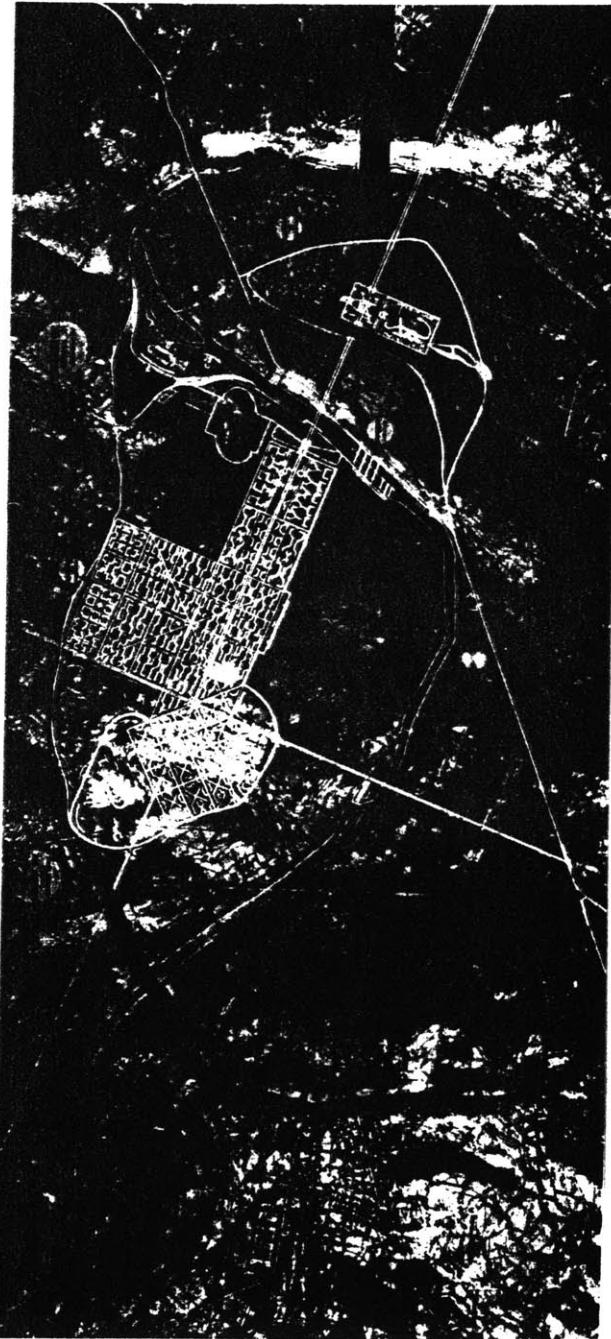
46.- Beaudouin and Lods. Competition entry. The Mont Valérien bastion as the location for the Exhibition. First Prize. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1932.



47.- Patout, Simon and Chaume proposal for the Exhibition location at the Pont de Neuilly. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, IX, December 1932.



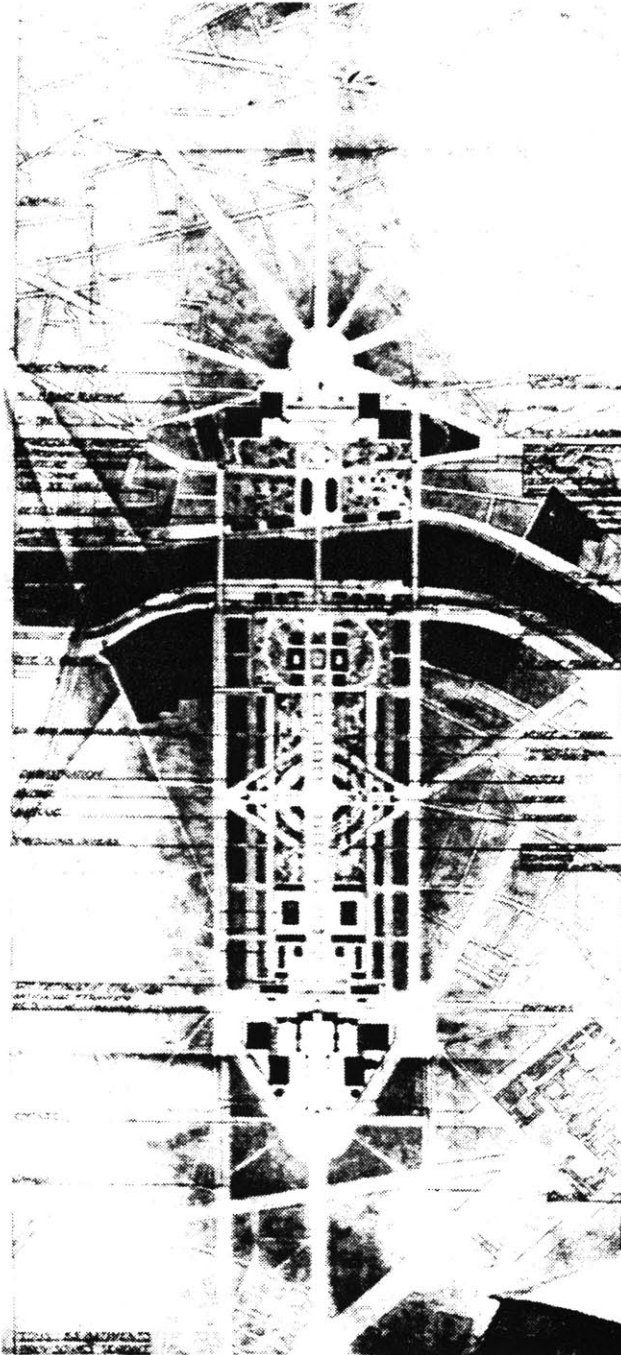
48.- Jean Bossu Competition proposal for an Exhibition located on the Left Bank amidst a "Cité Mondiale." *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, IX, December 1932.



49.- Schematic drawing of the Patout-Japy Proposal. *Urbanisme*, August 1932.



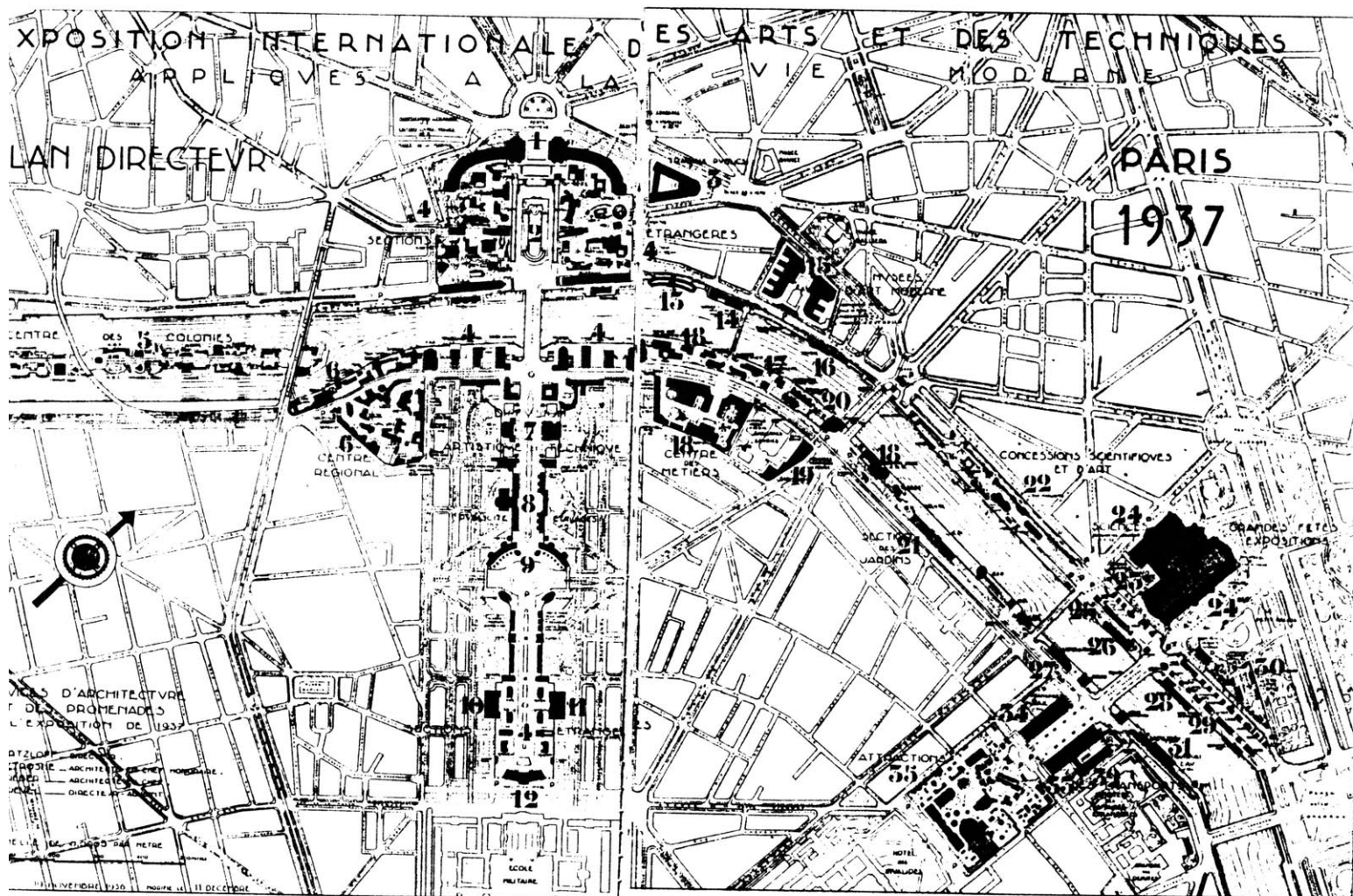
50.- The 1933 "Champs Elysées de la Rive gauche" proposal for the Exhibition. Archives de France.



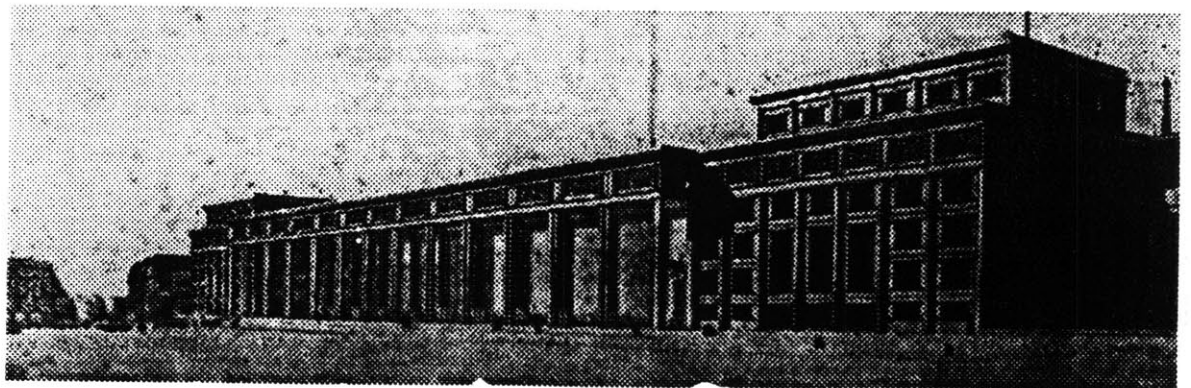
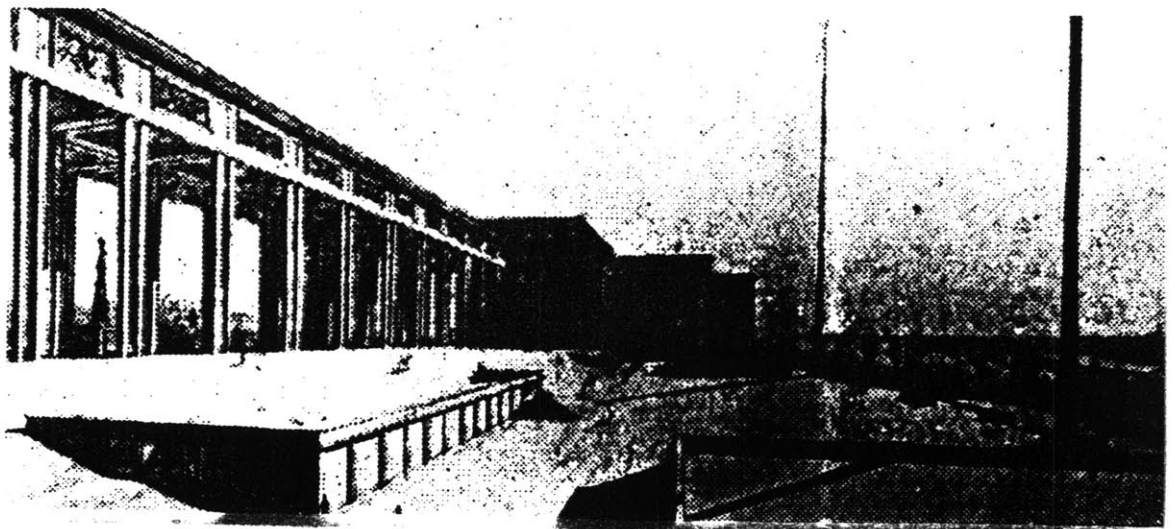
51.- Charrier's 1911 project for a grand Avenue Port Dauphine Ported'Italie. Bibliothèque Nationale.



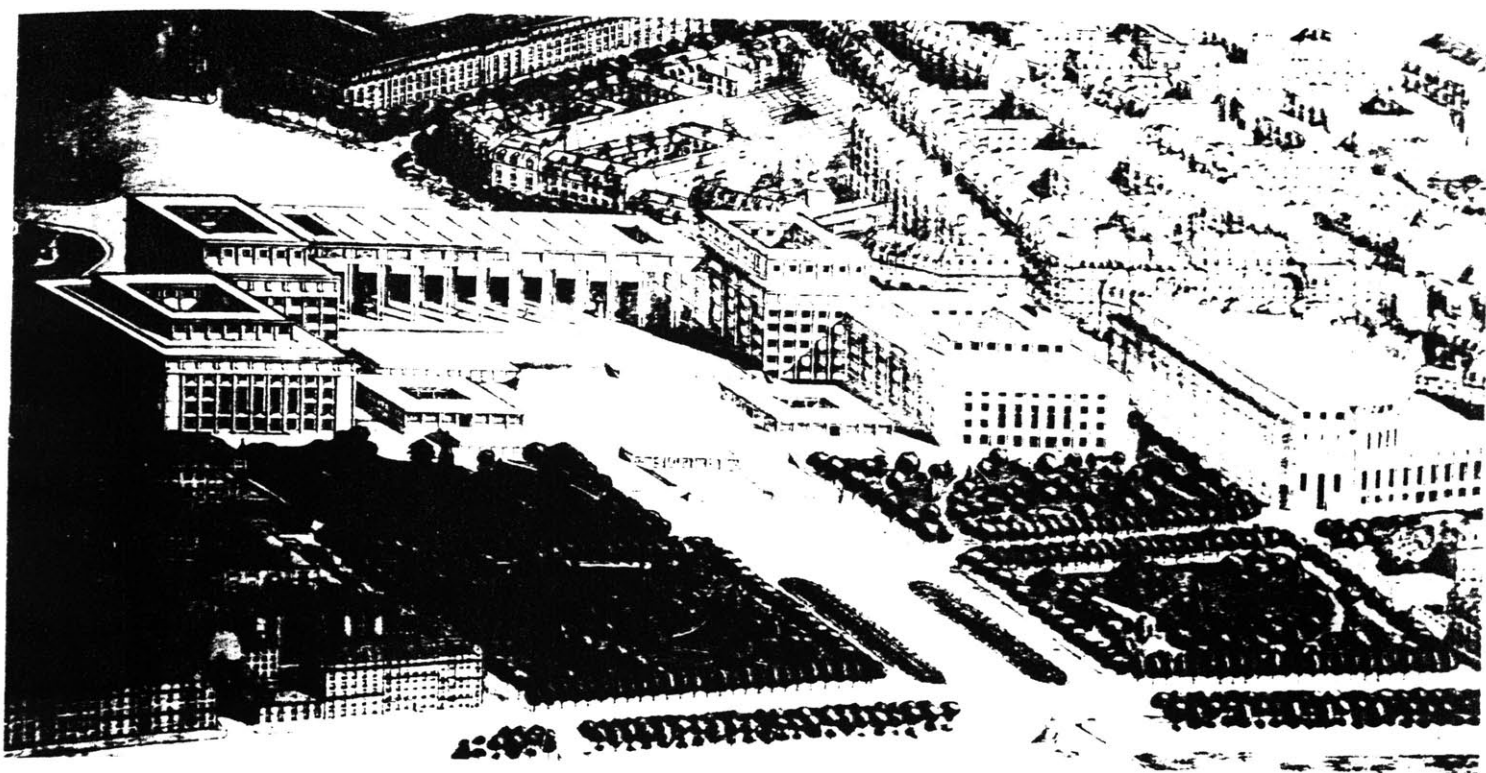
52.- Master plan of the Exhibition. Archives de France.



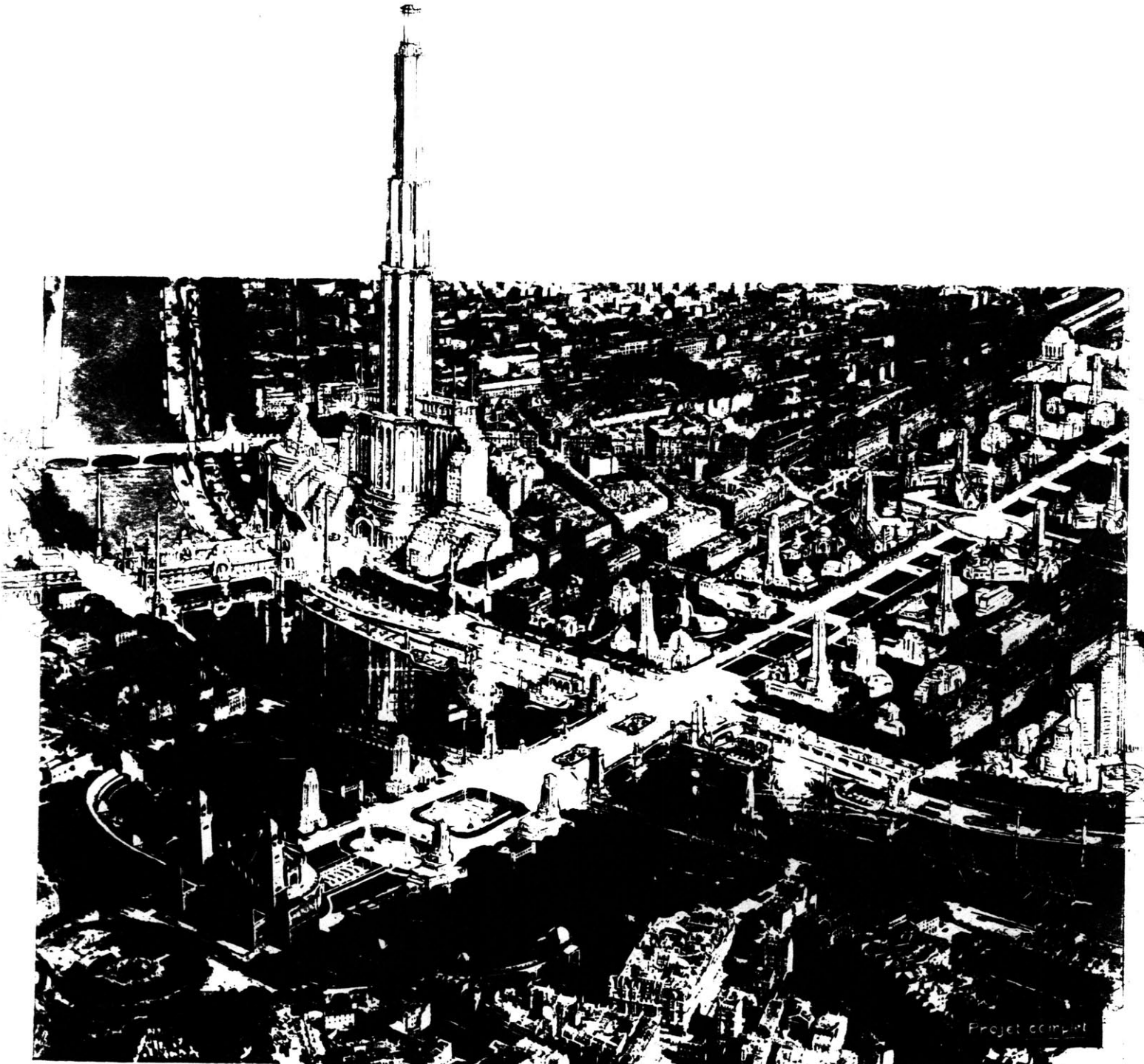
53.- Auguste Perret: Monumental gate on the Chaillot Hill containing an art museum. North and South view of the proposal for the 1937 Exhibition. Archives de France.



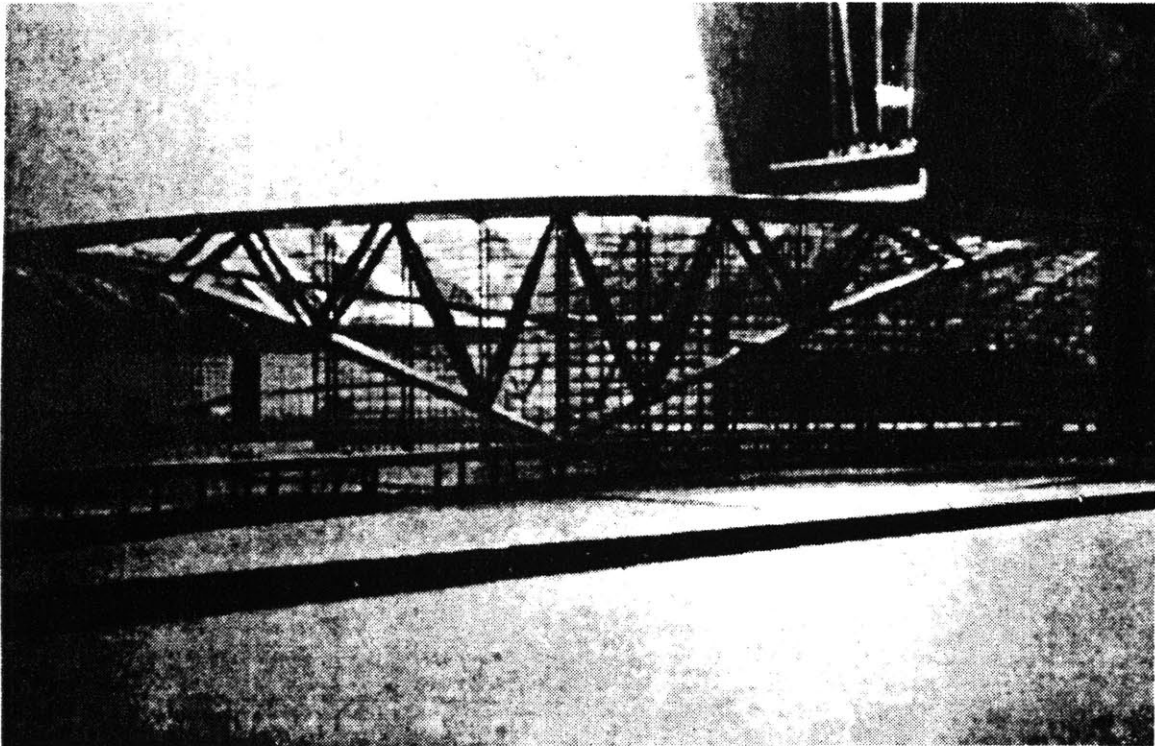
54.- Auguste Perret bird's view of an assembly of Museums on the Chaillot Hill for the 1937 Exhibition. The Musée des Travaux Publics on the right was built. Archives de France.



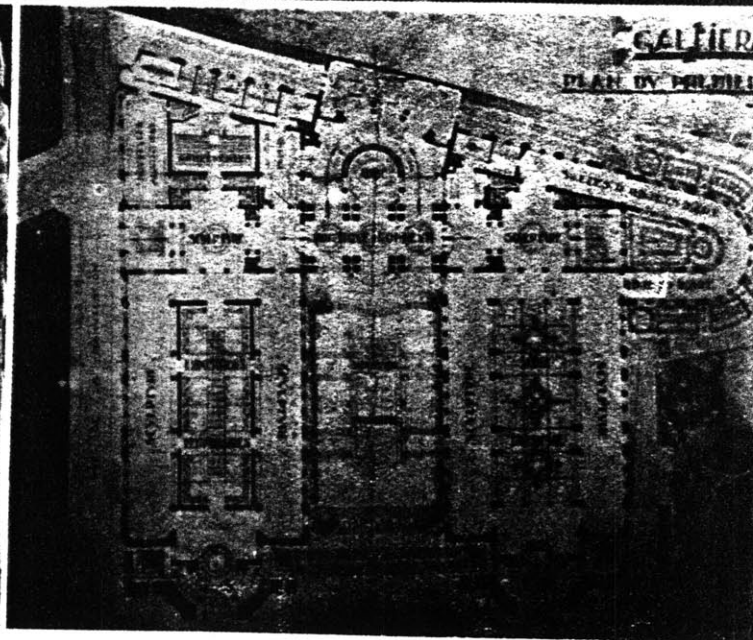
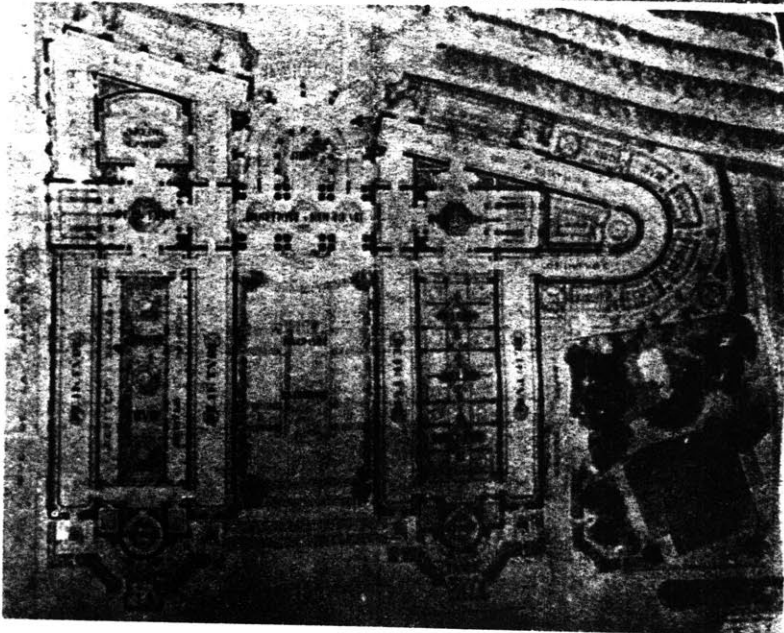
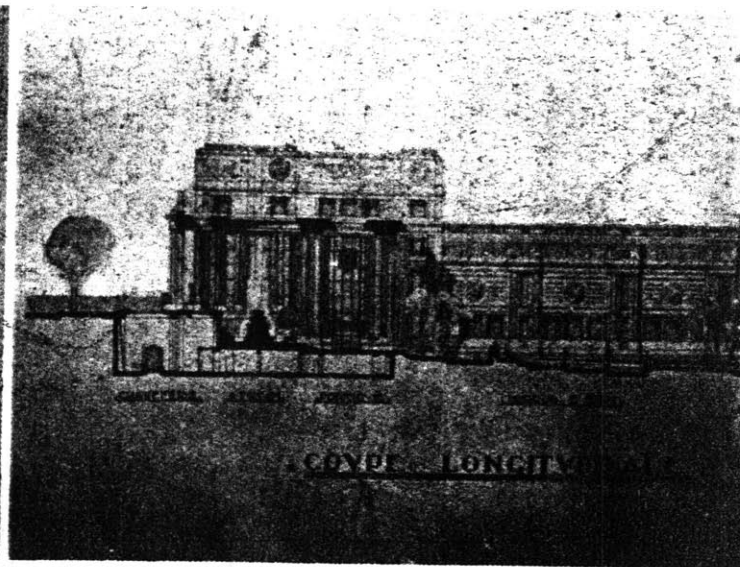
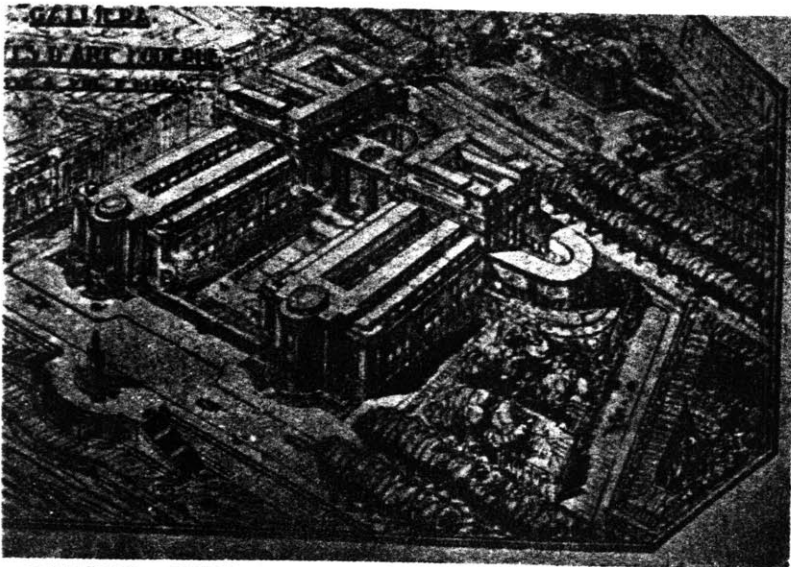
55.- A project by architect Dupré for the demolition of the Eiffel Tower and the rebuilding of a steel skyscraper veneered with stone. Proposal by a "Citizens' Committee." Archives the France.



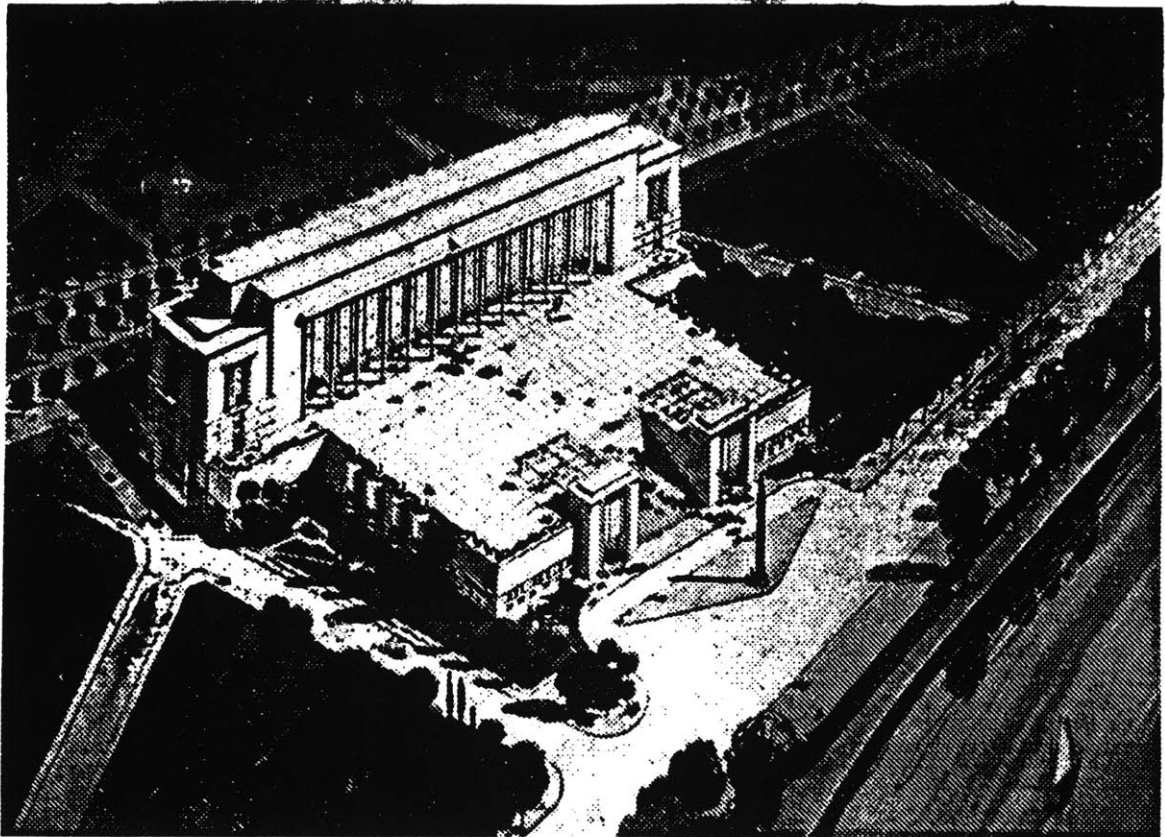
56.- OTUA Competition. Beaudouin and Lods entry. OTUA magazine special issue.



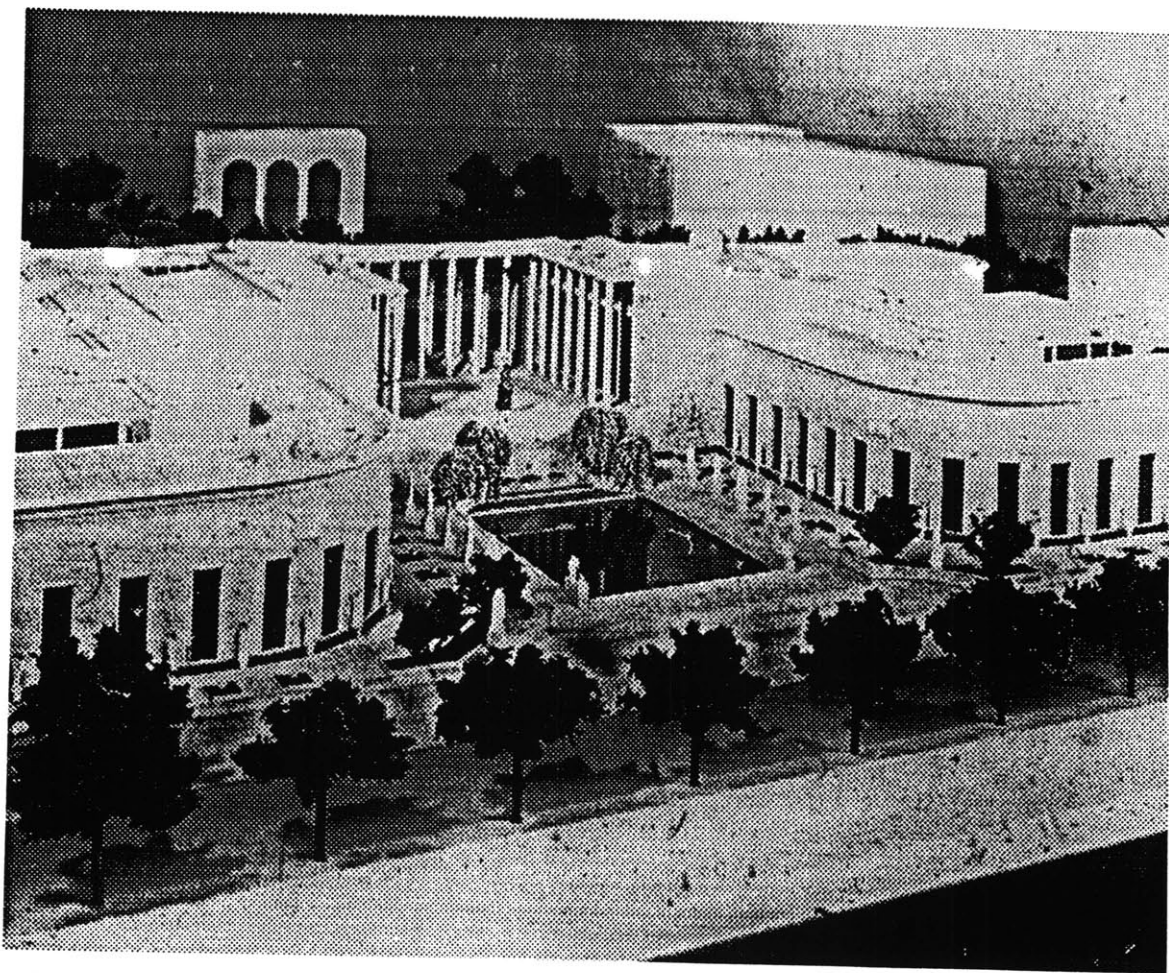
57.- Competition entry for the Museums of Modern Art. Architects
Jasson and Coquet. *La Construction Moderne*, 24 February 1935.



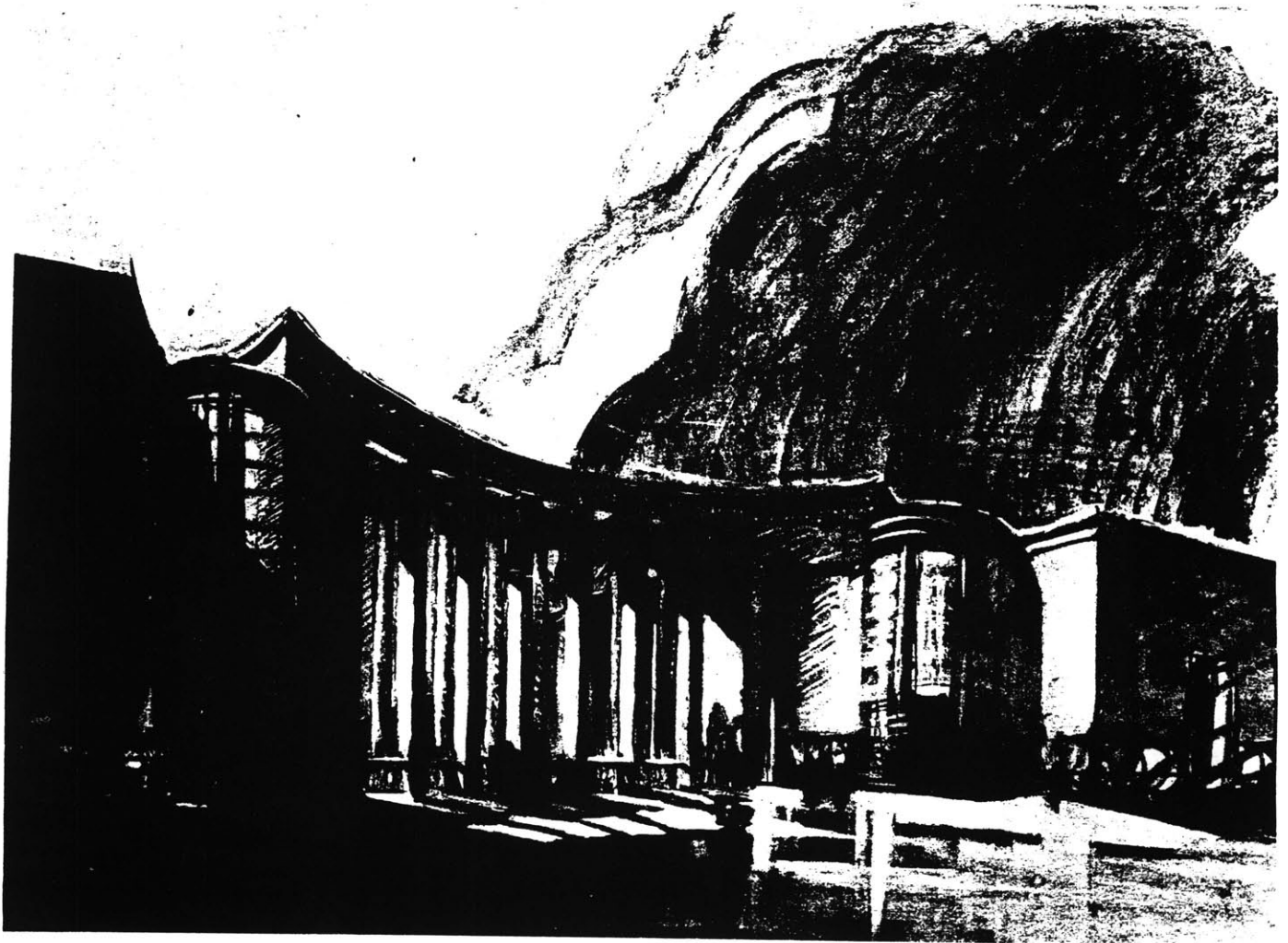
58.- Competition entry for the Museums of Modern Art. Architects
Pierre Sardou and Roger Lardat. la Construction Moderne,
24 February 1935.



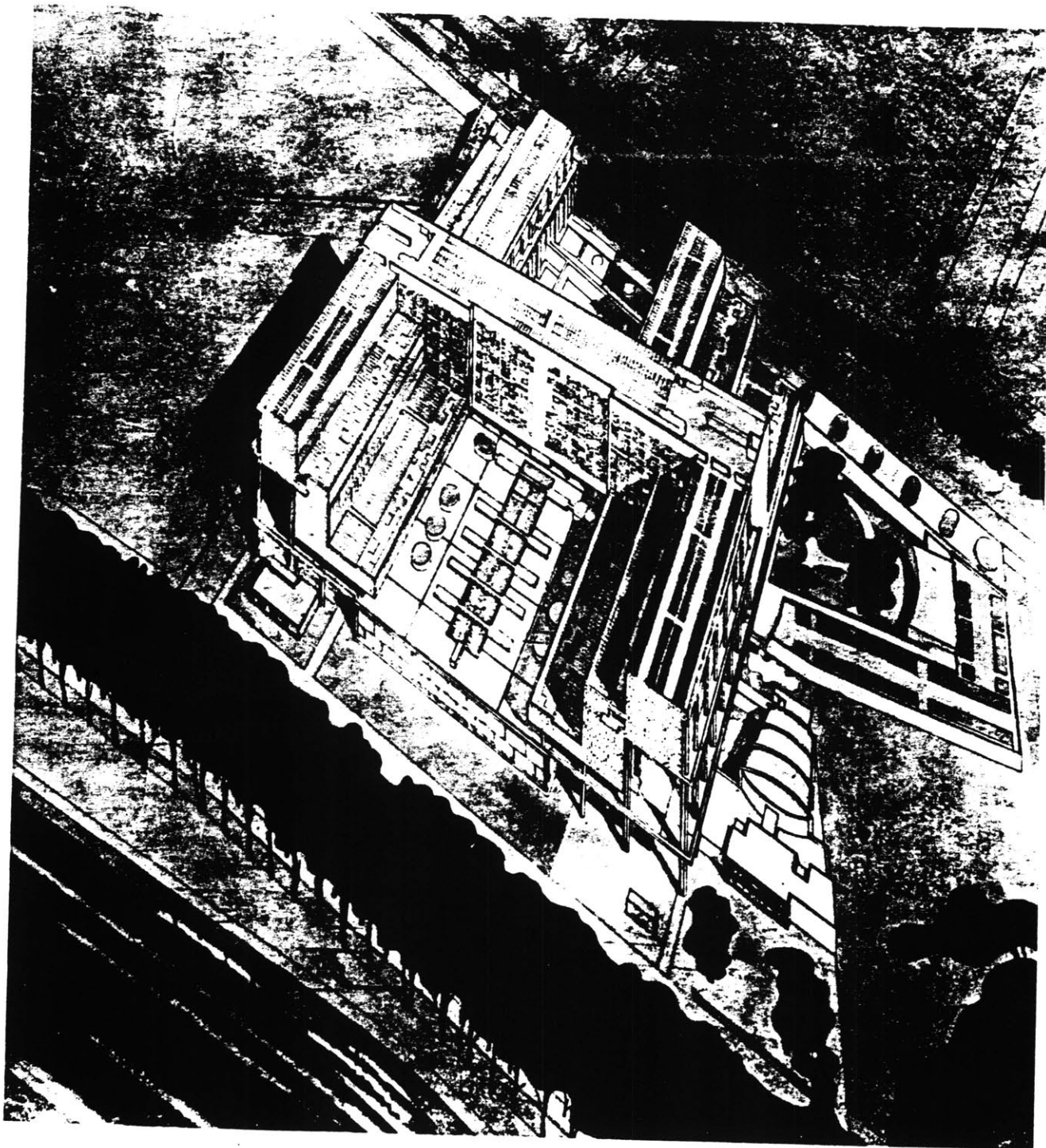
59.- Model of the winning entry for the Museums of Modern Art by Jean-Claude Dondel, A. Aubert, P. M. Viard, and Dastugue. Model. Archives de France.



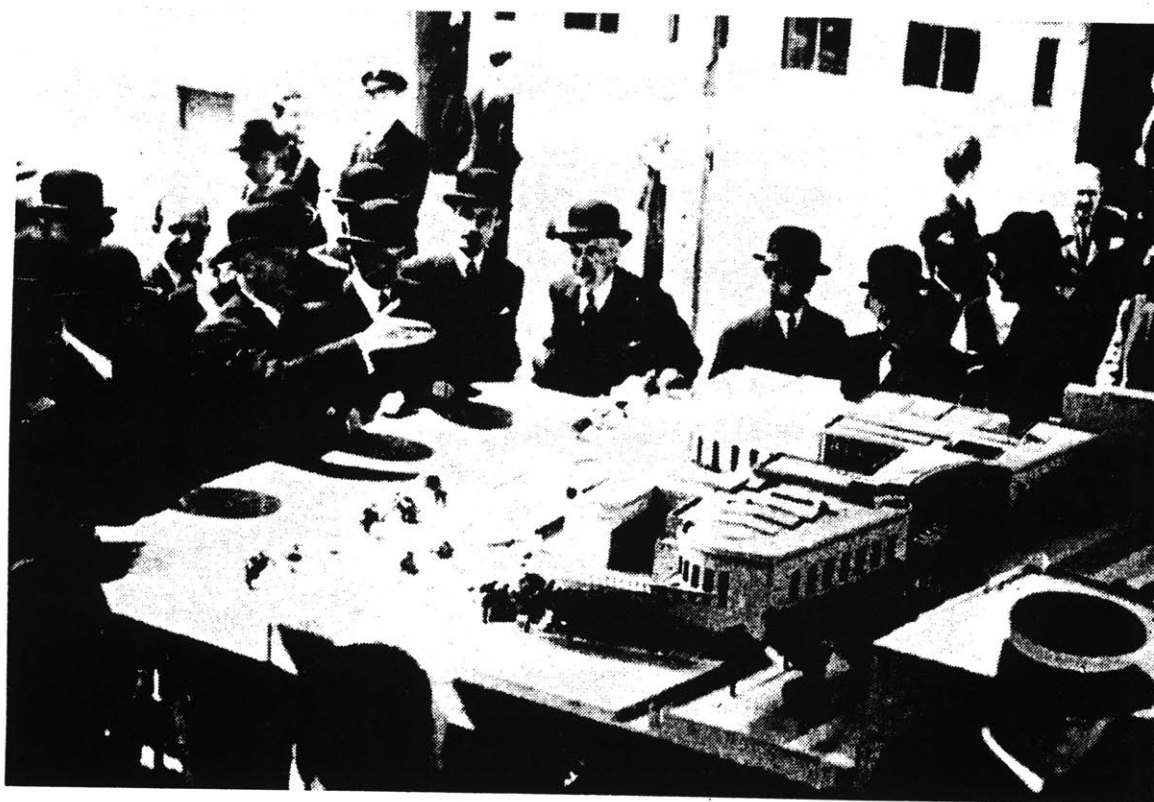
60.- Charcoal rendering of the Avenue de Iena entrance and the interior garden. Archives de France.



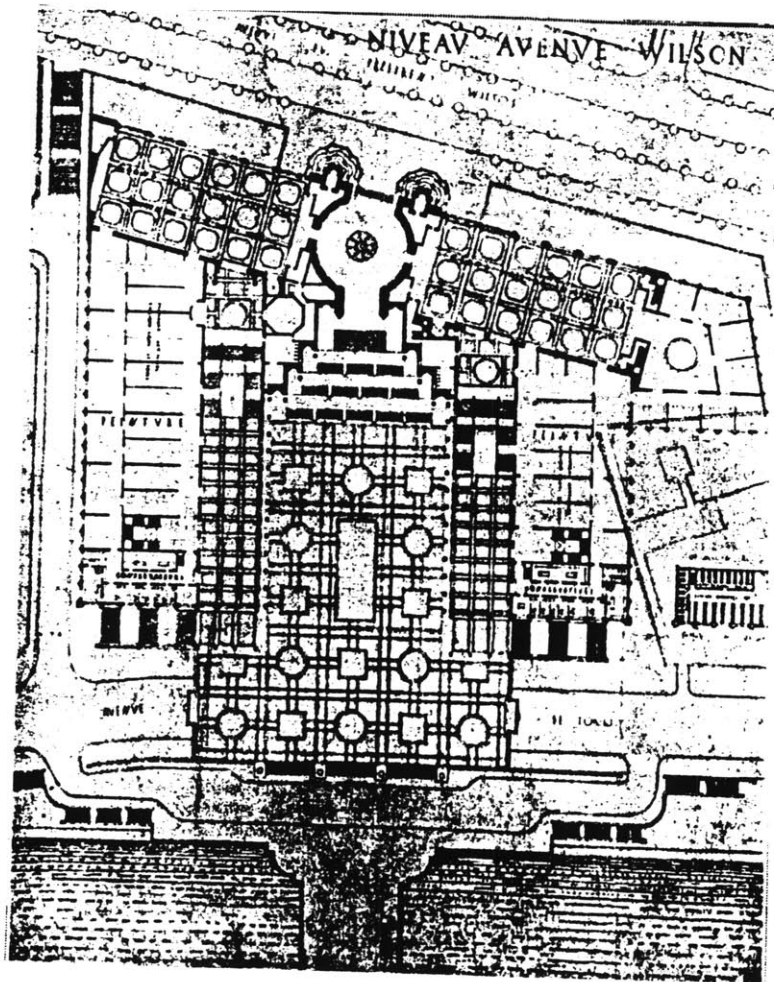
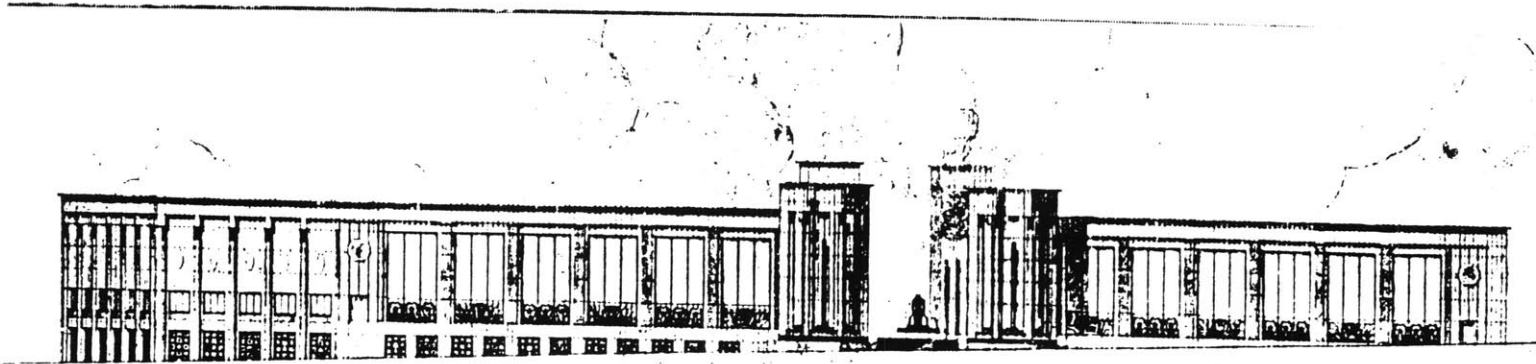
61.- Le Corbusier, entry for the Museums competition.
"L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui," December 1934.



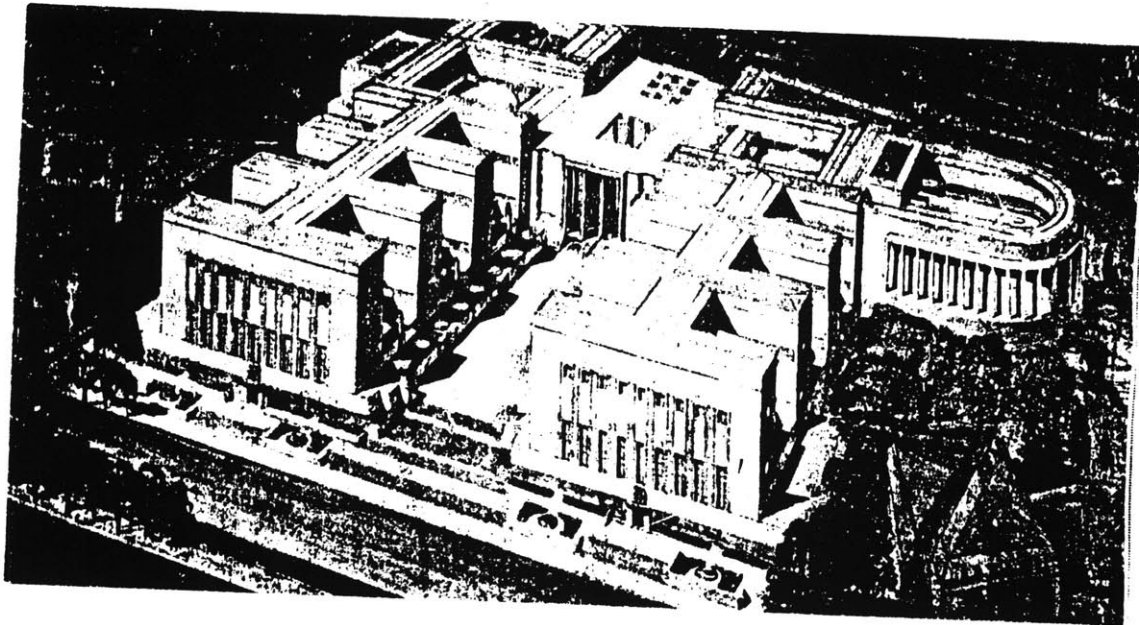
62.- An official visit to the model of the new Museums of Modern Art. Dondel is seen on the left, without a hat. Archives de France.



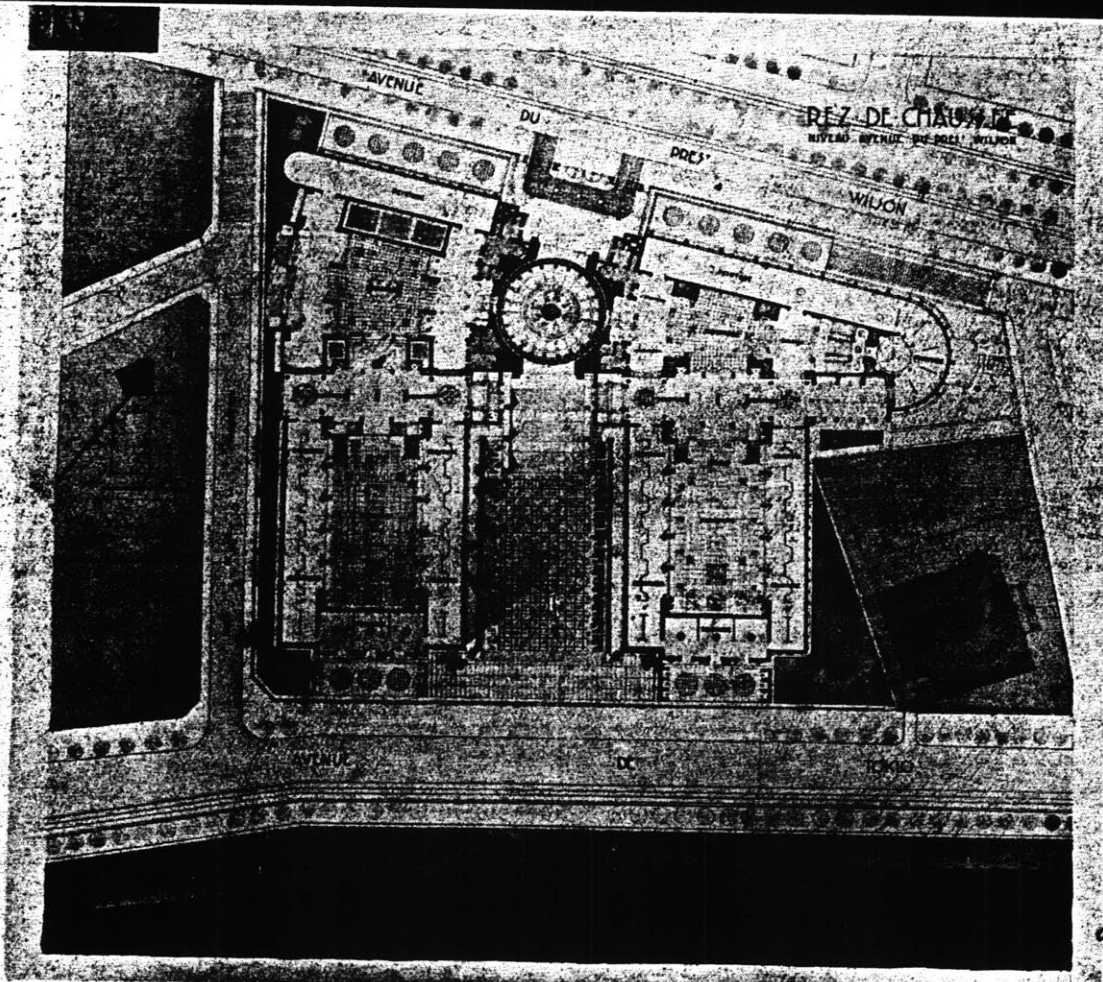
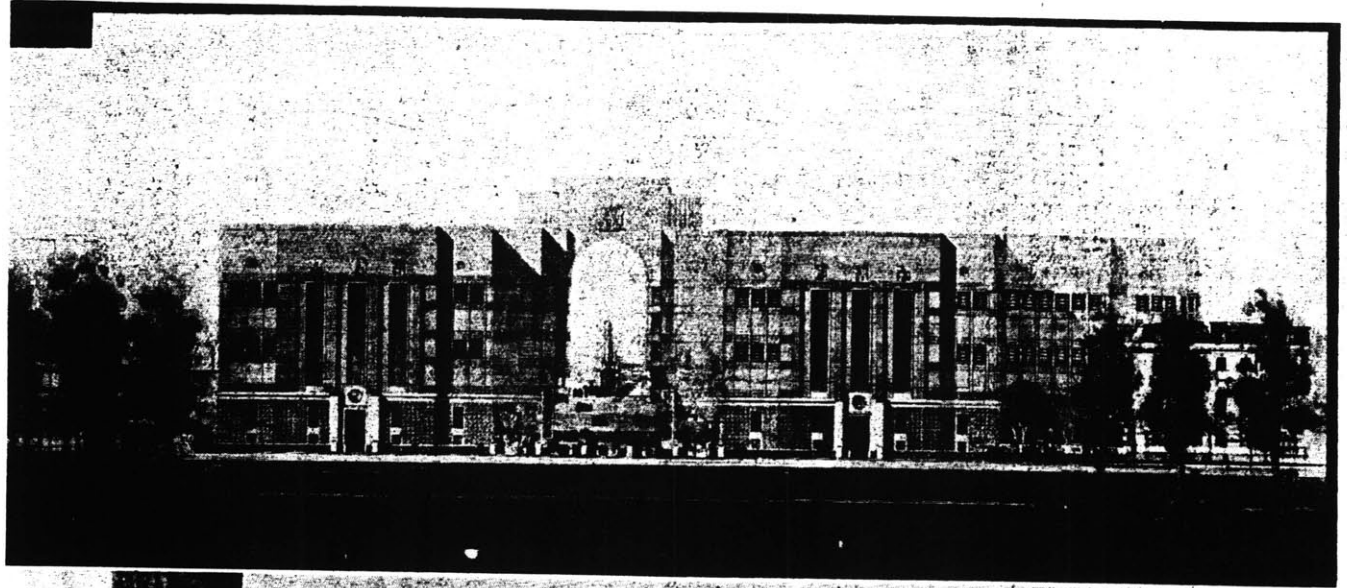
63.- Paul Bigot, Second Prize in the Museum Competition.
L'Architecture, February 1935.



64.- Abella, Third Prize in the Museum Competition. *La Construction Moderne*, 24 February 1935.



65.- Jacques Carlu, Louis Boileau and Léon Azéma, Fourth Prize in the Museum Competition. *L'Architecture*, February 1935.

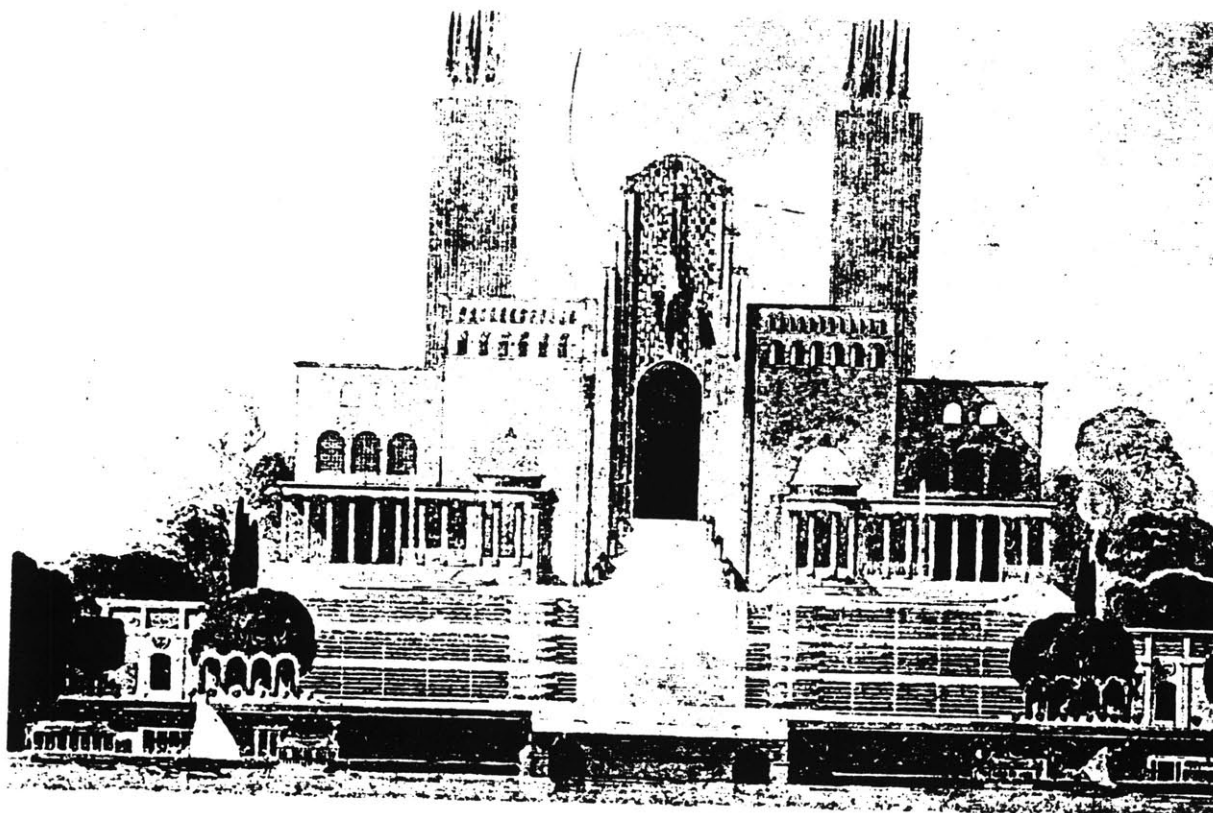
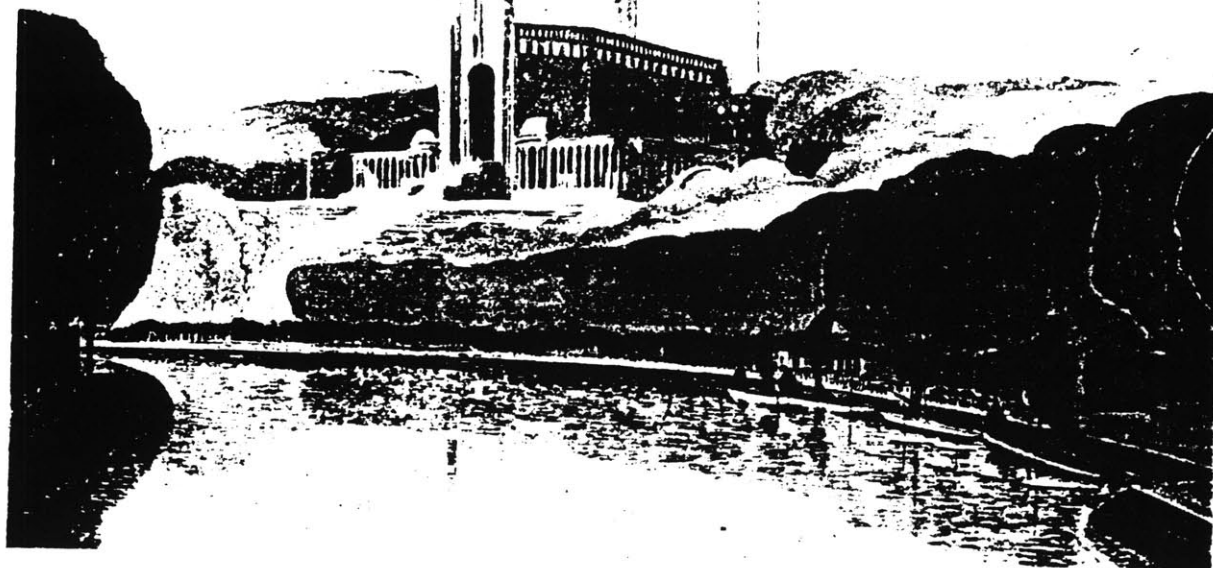


L. N. Boileau
J. Carlu
L. Azéma
Architectes en
Chef.

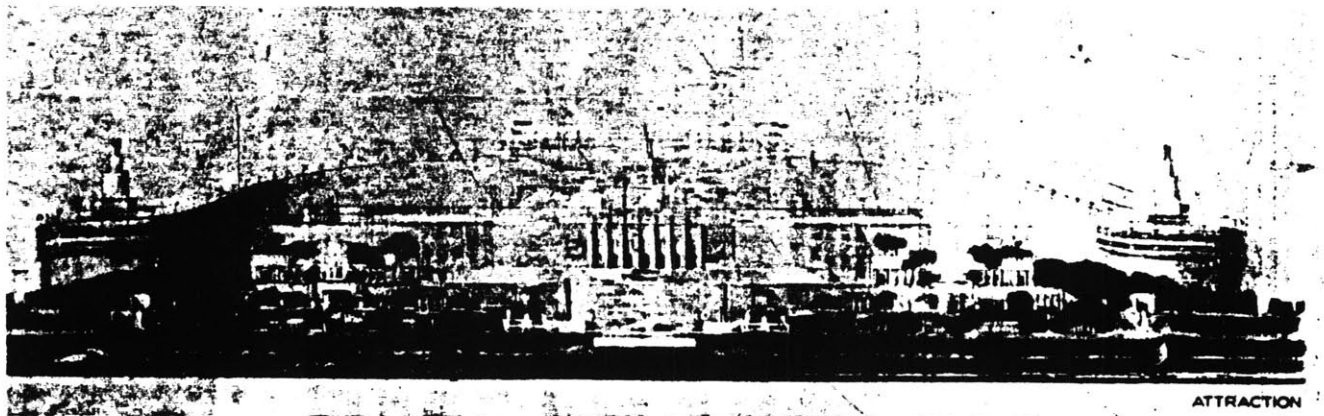
66.- Joseph Marrast, entry for the camouflage of the Trocadero
(awarded). *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1934.

66-

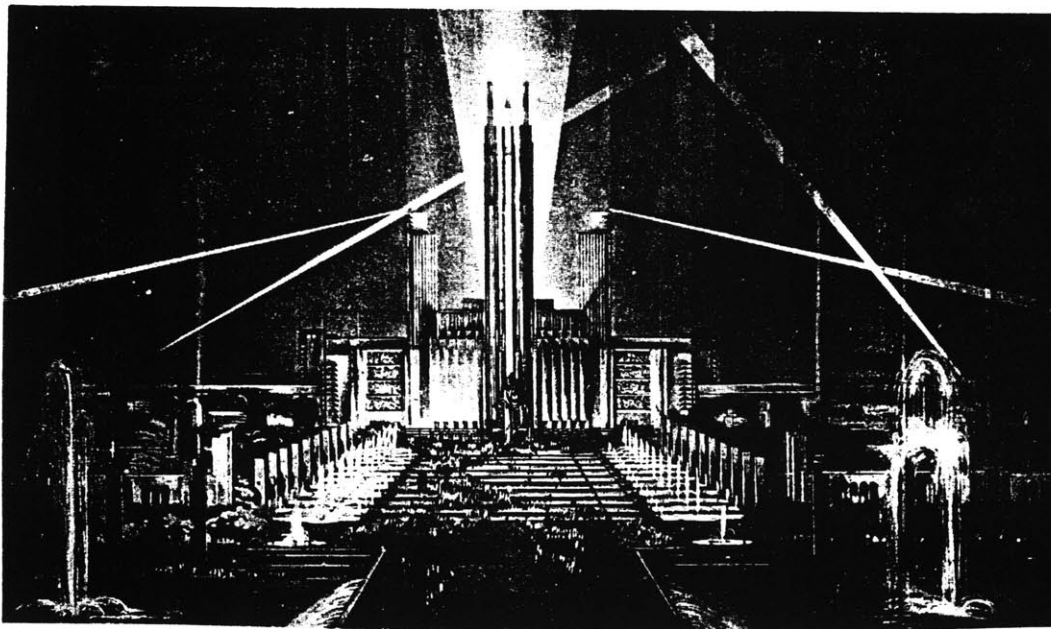
Joseph Marrast, entry for the camouflage of the Trocadero



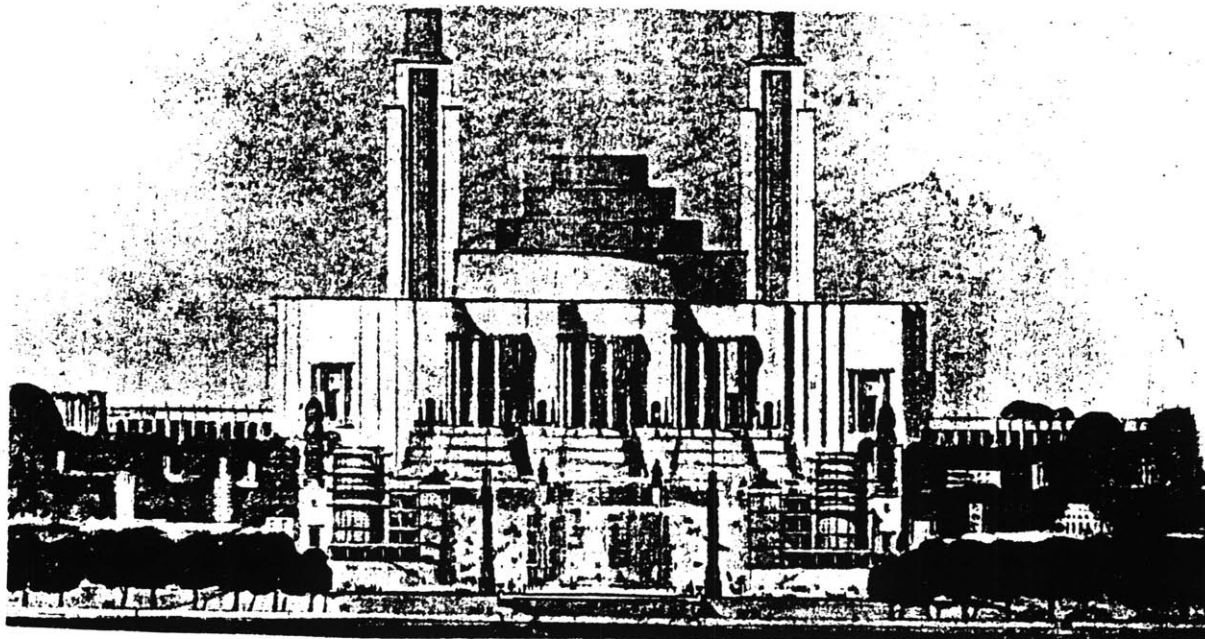
67.- Patout, entry for the camouflage of the Tocadero: an "amusement park" over the camouflaged palace with roller-coaster (rejected). *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1934.



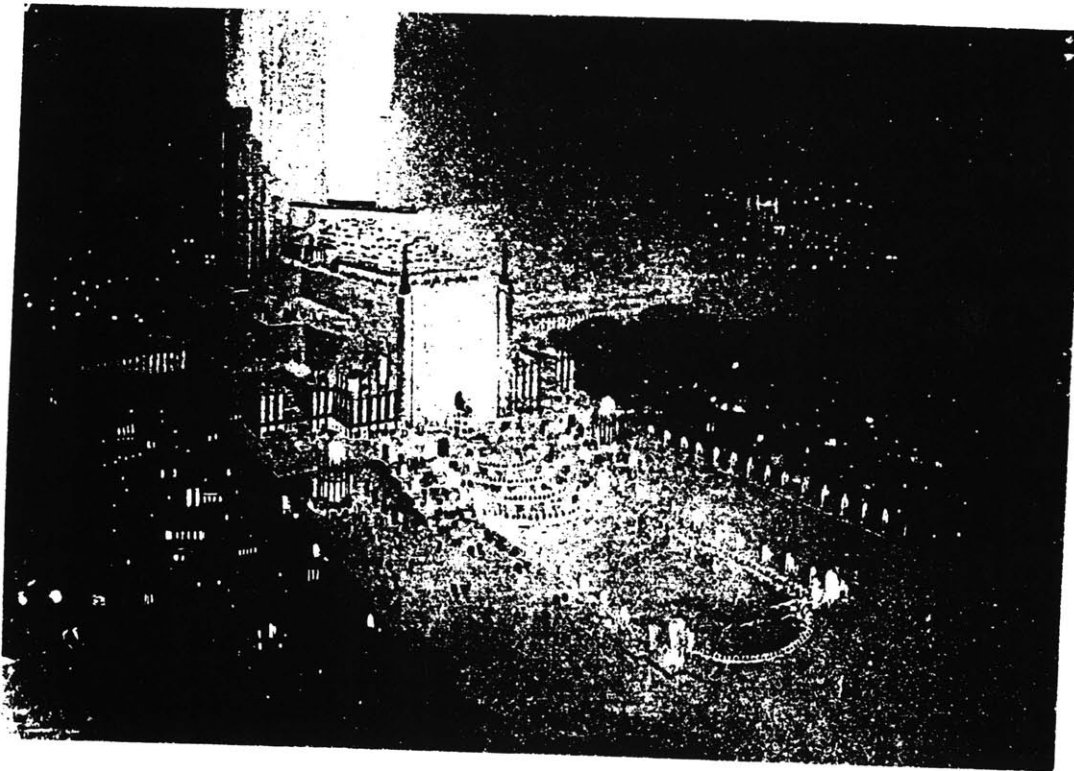
68. Carlu, Azéma and Martel entry for the Trocadero camouflage (competition 1). *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1934. Drawing on tracing paper and rendering for the competition (awarded). in Archives de France.



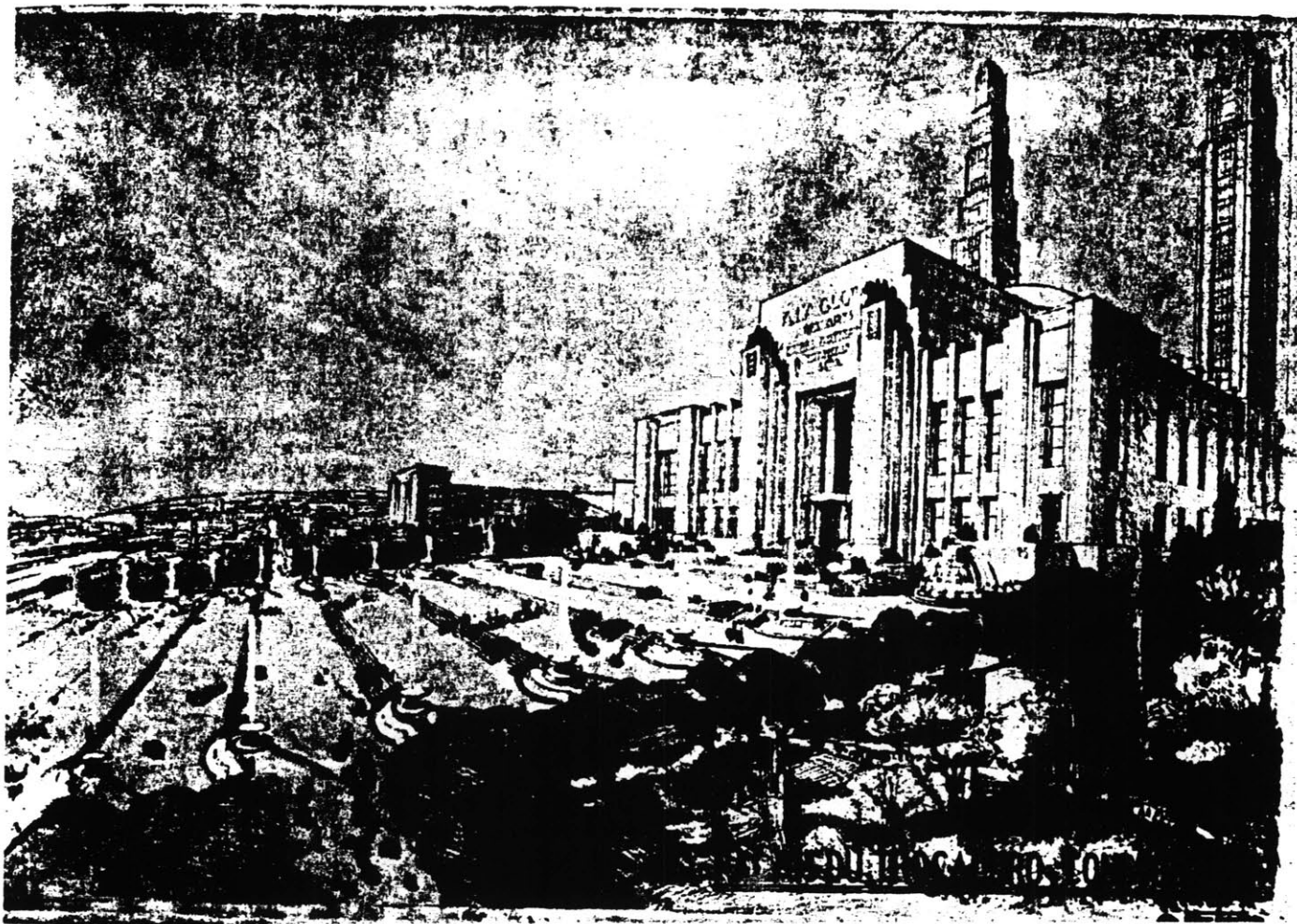
- 69.- Herr, Roth and Thibault, entry for the Trocadero camouflage
(Competition 1.) The facade is camouflaged with an immense
veil of water that can serve as a movie screen (awarded).
L'Illustration December 1934.



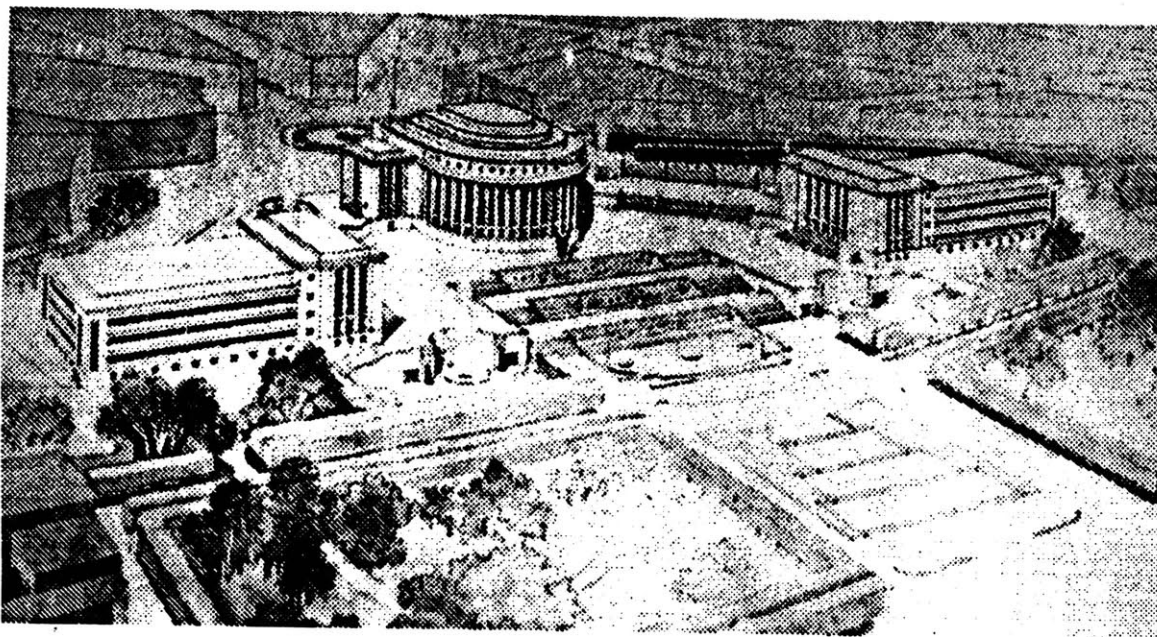
70.- Bouterin and Neret competition entry for the Trocadero
camouflage. *La Construction Moderne*, 10 Mars 1935.



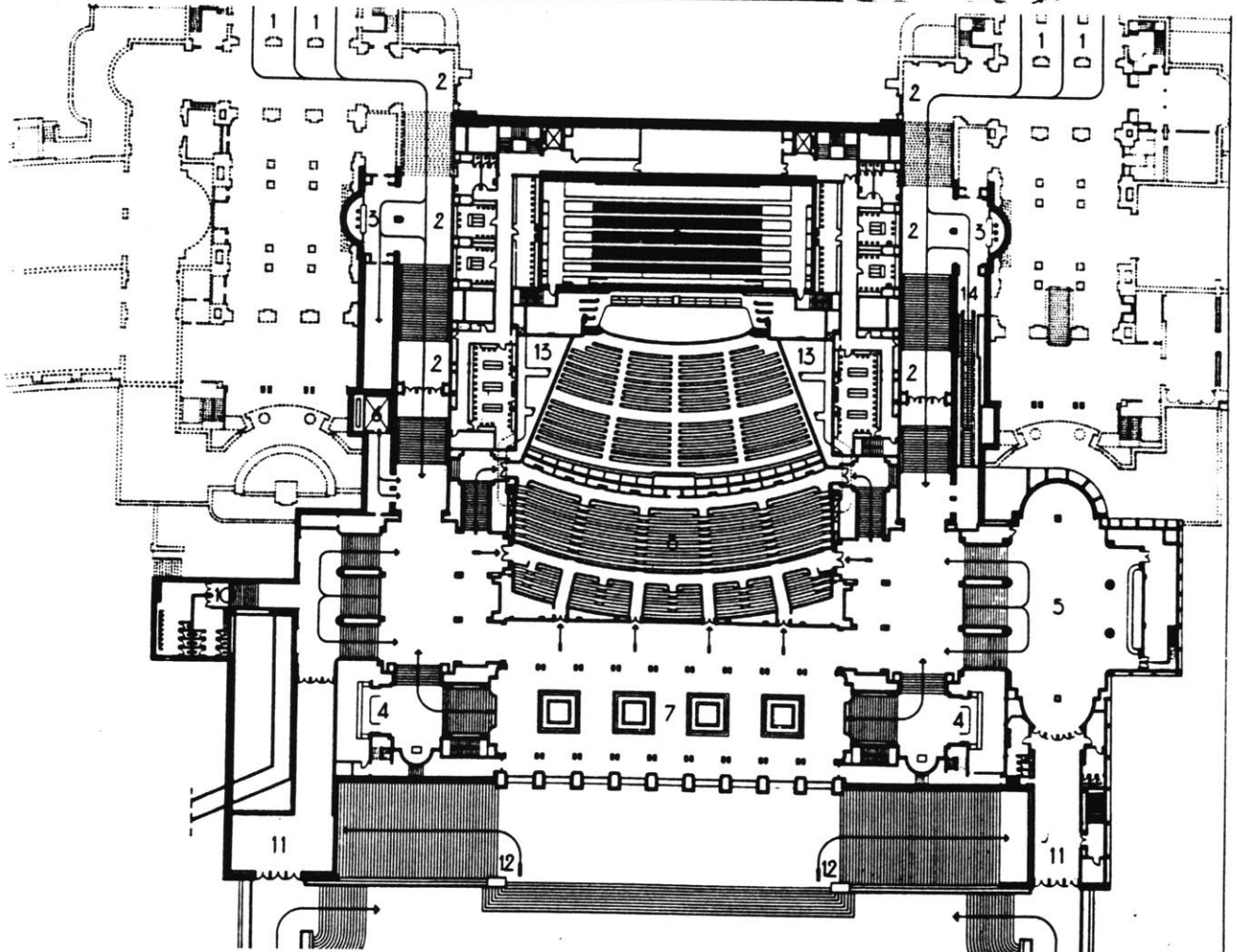
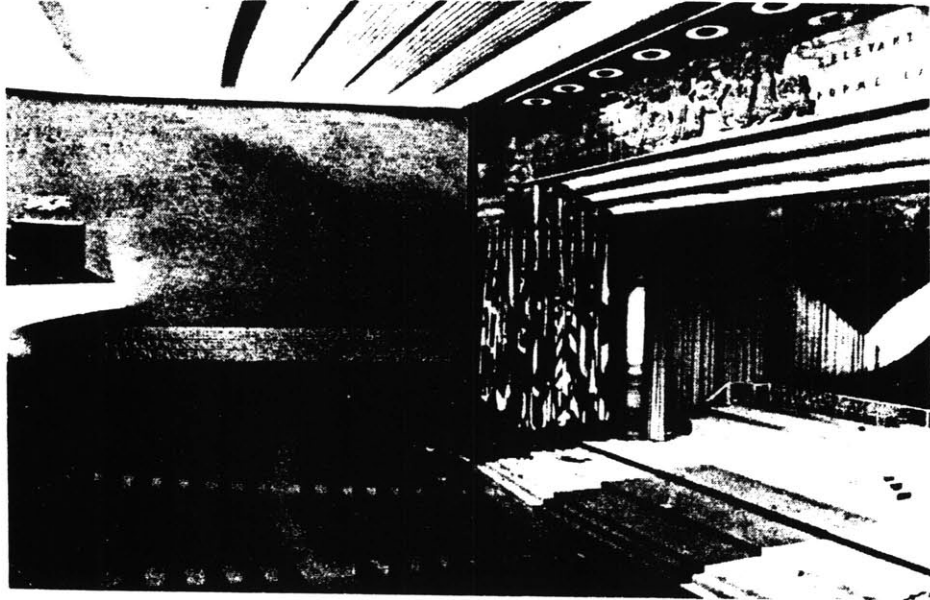
71. Charles Halley, competition entry for the Trocadero camouflage.
L'Illustration, December 1934.



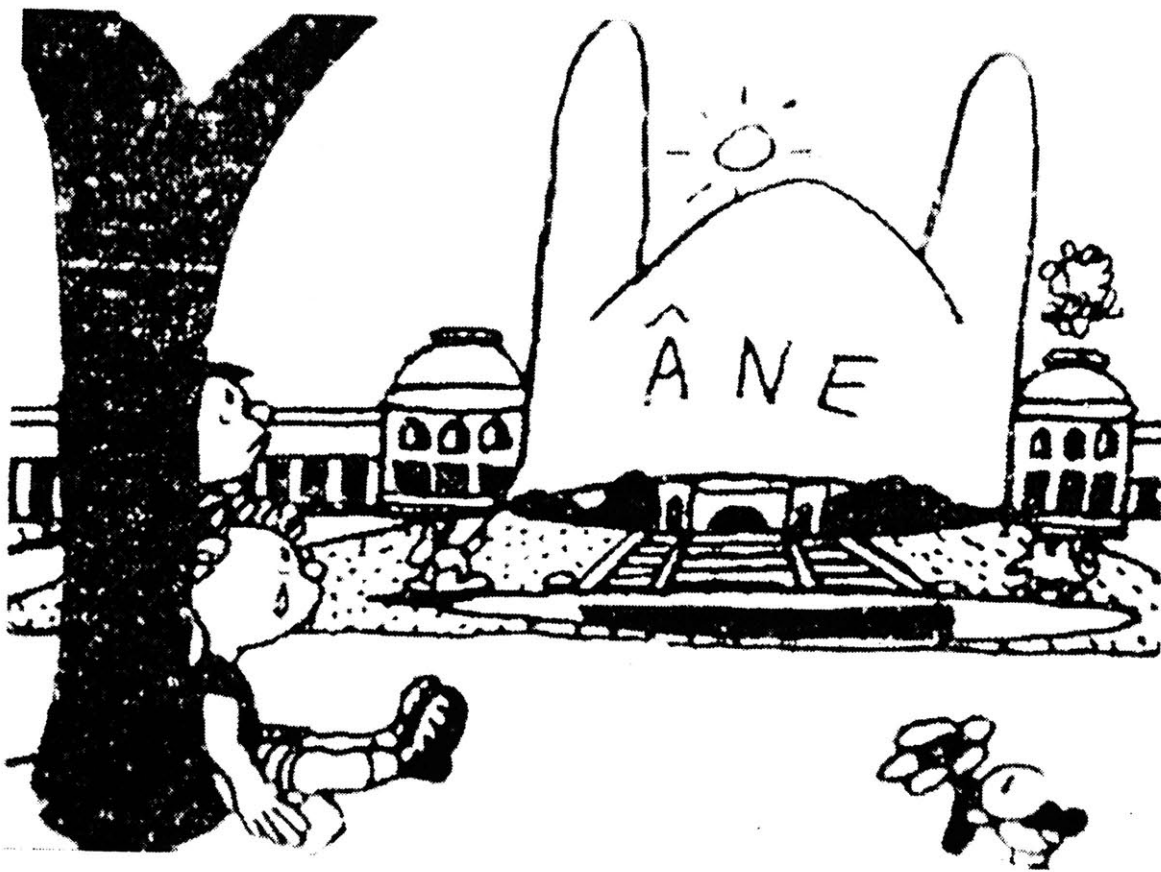
72.- Jean and Edouard Niermans, competition entry for the Trocadero camouflage. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1934



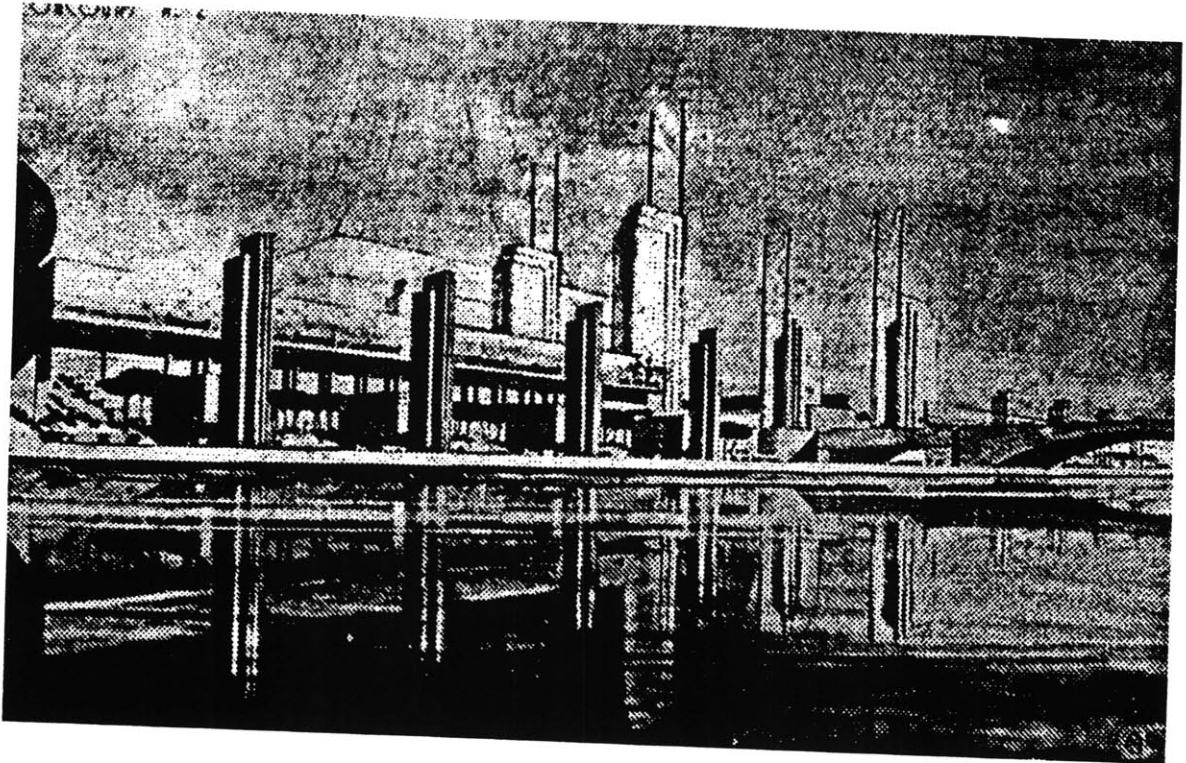
73.- Jean and Edouard Niermans, plans and view of the Trocadero Palace Theater, open to the gardens of the Chaillot Hill, as built in 1937.



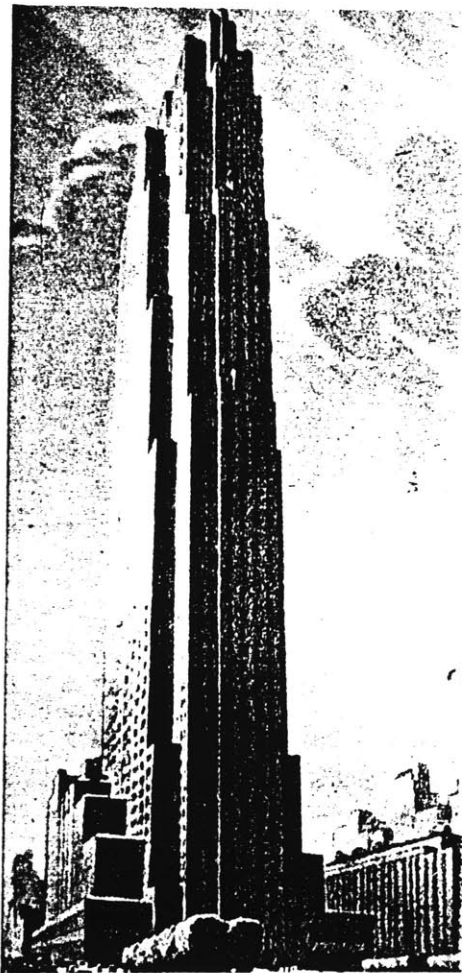
74. The "Camouflage of the Trocadero" according to Jean Effel. Drawing in the daily *L'Humanité*, 22 March 1935.



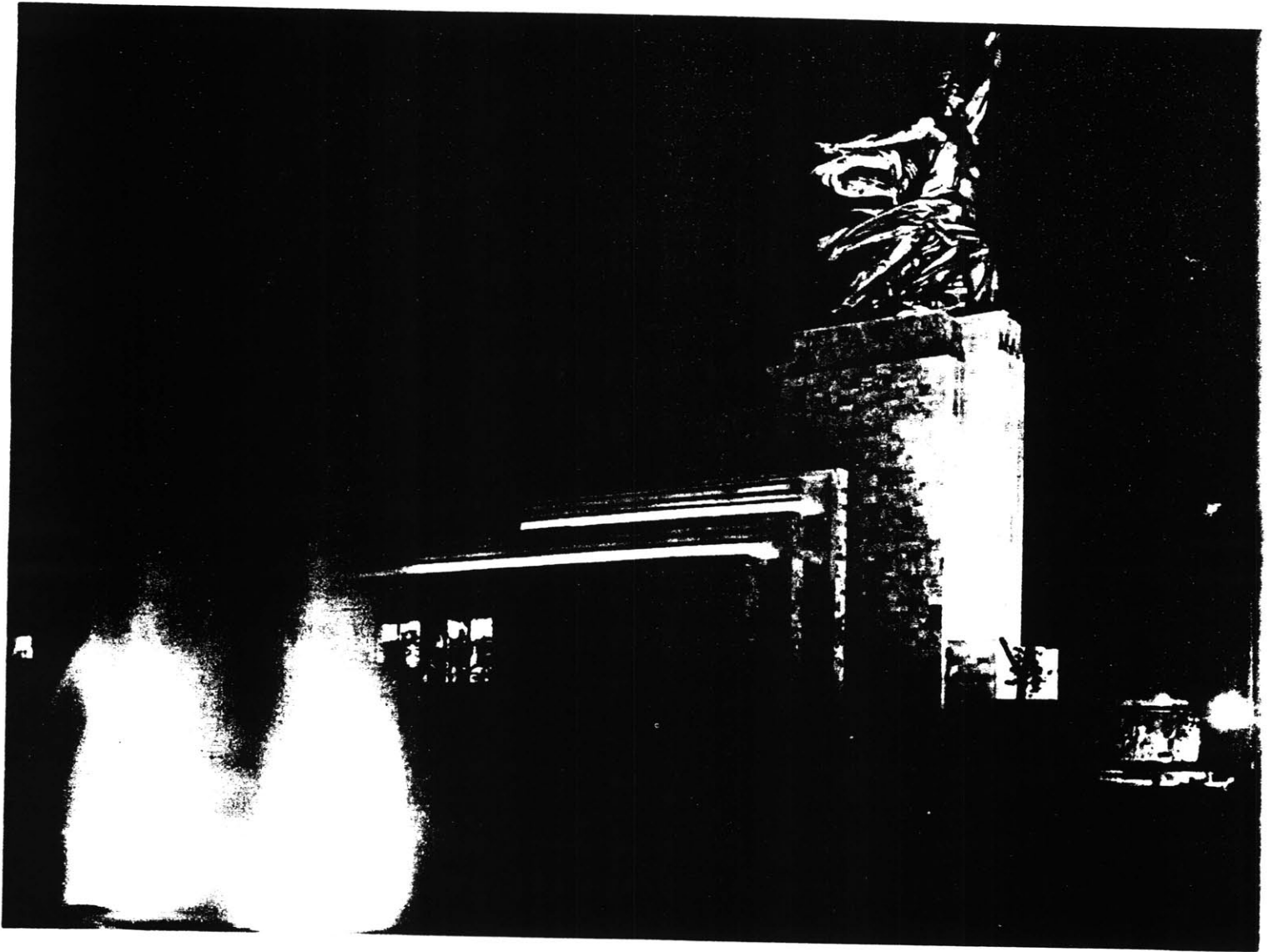
75.- Léon Azéma, entry for the foreign sections (Competition 2).
L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, December 1934.



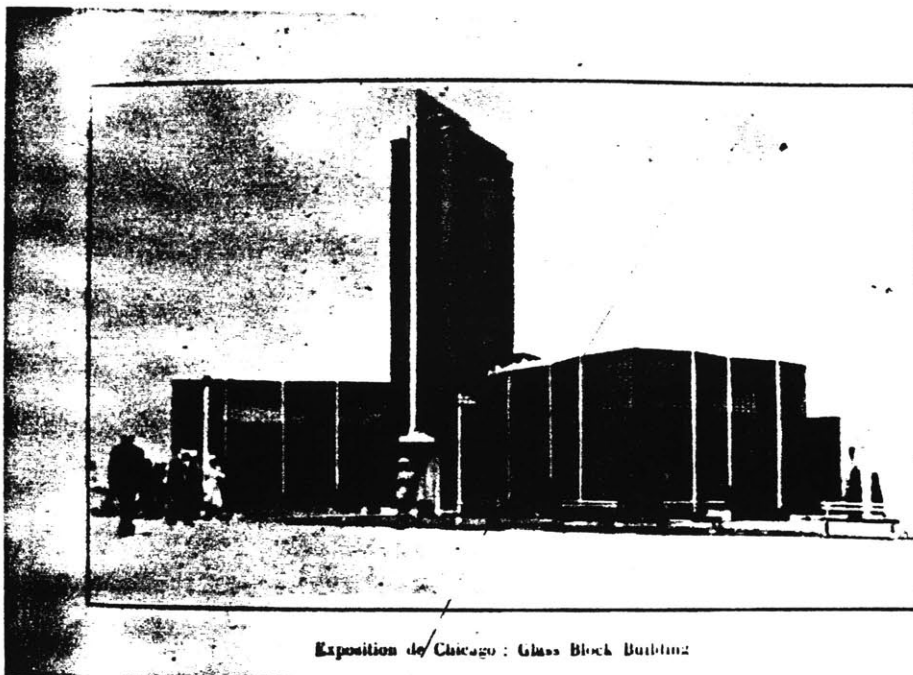
76.- Rockefeller Center, 1932. Rendering Raymond Hood.



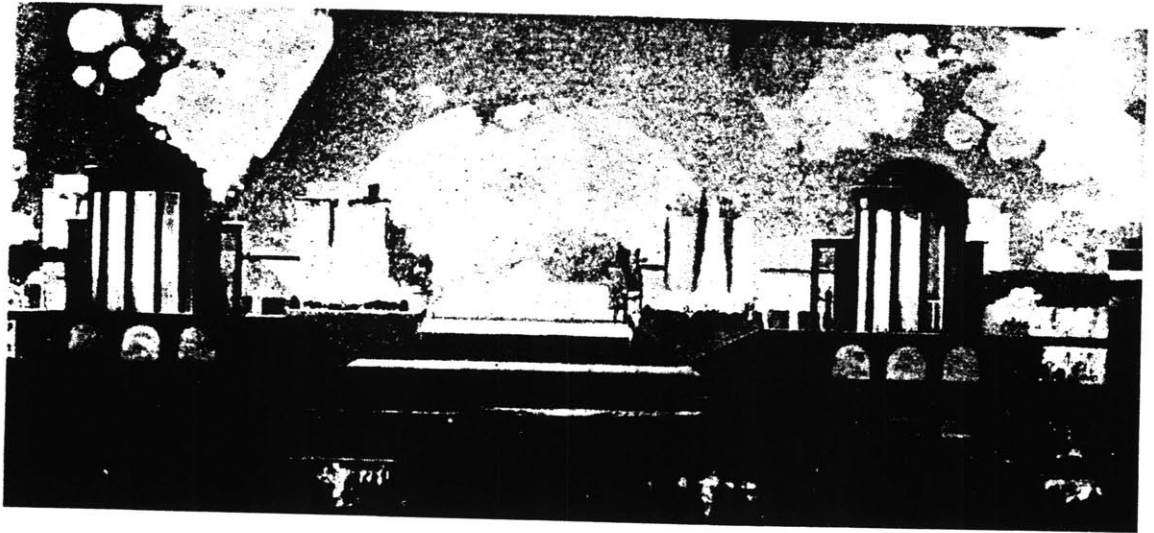
77 - Boris Iofan. Pavilion of the Soviet Union, Paris 1937
Exhibition. Archives de France.



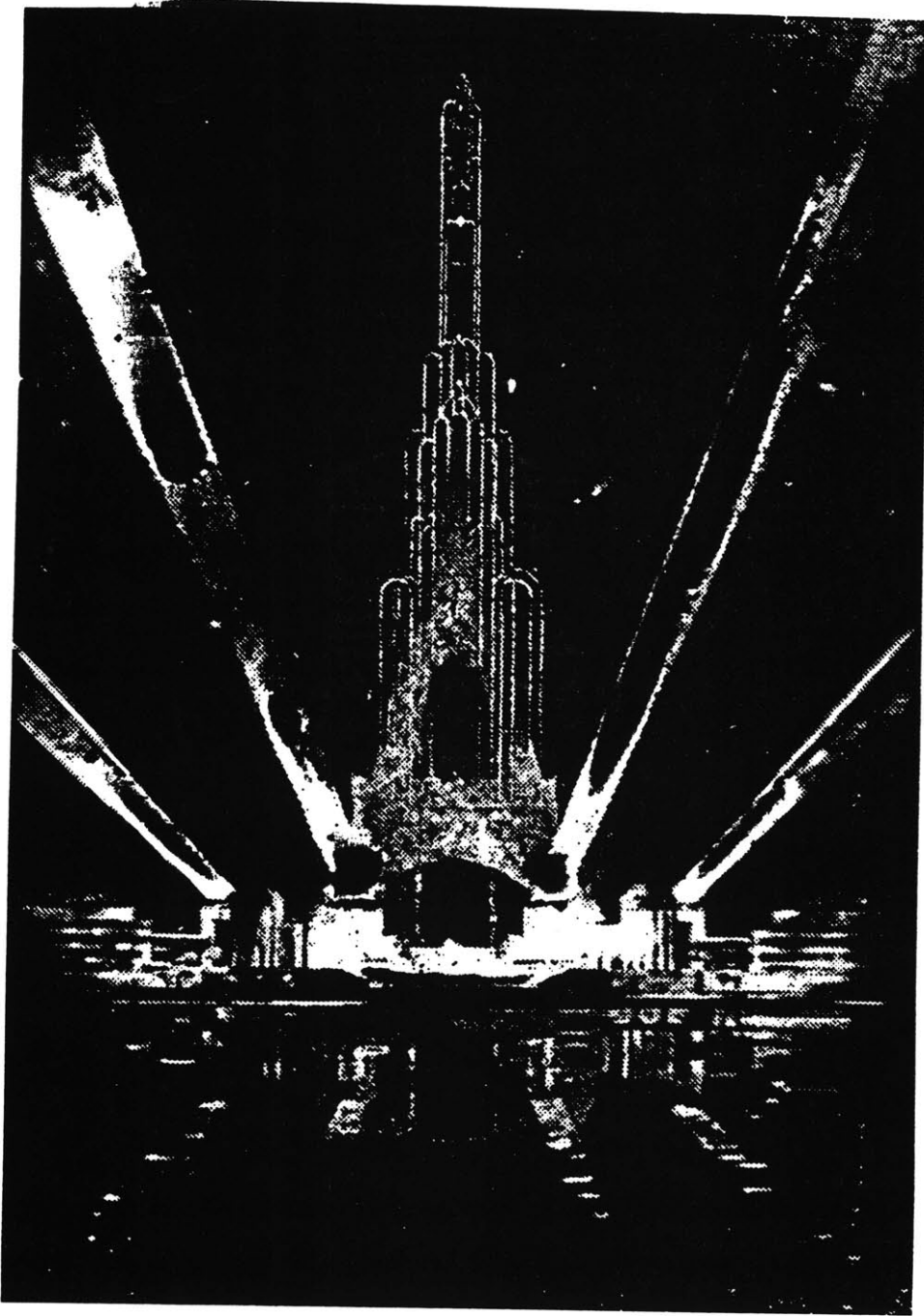
78.- Glass Block Building, Elroy Ruiz, Chicago World's Exhibition, 1933. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, September 1933.



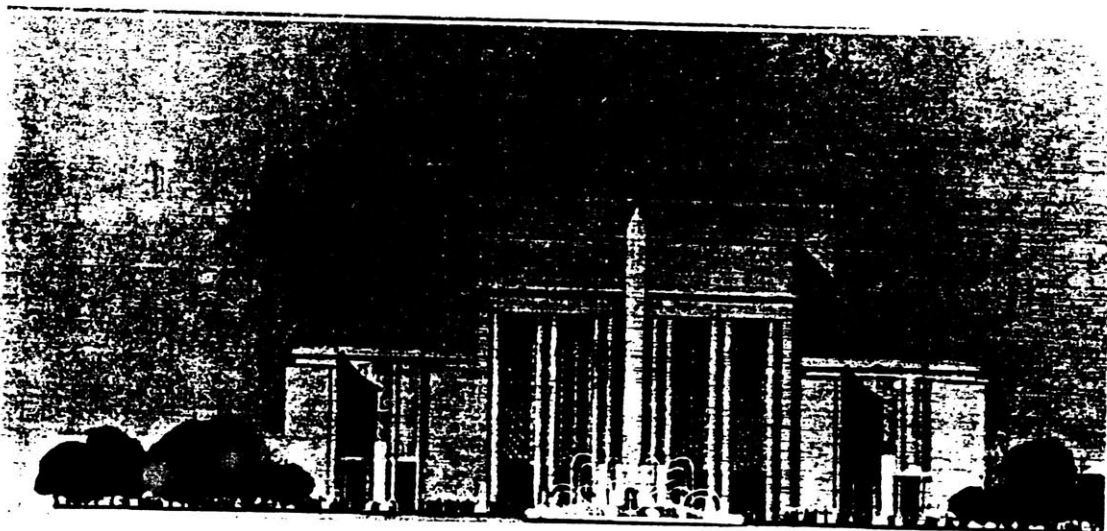
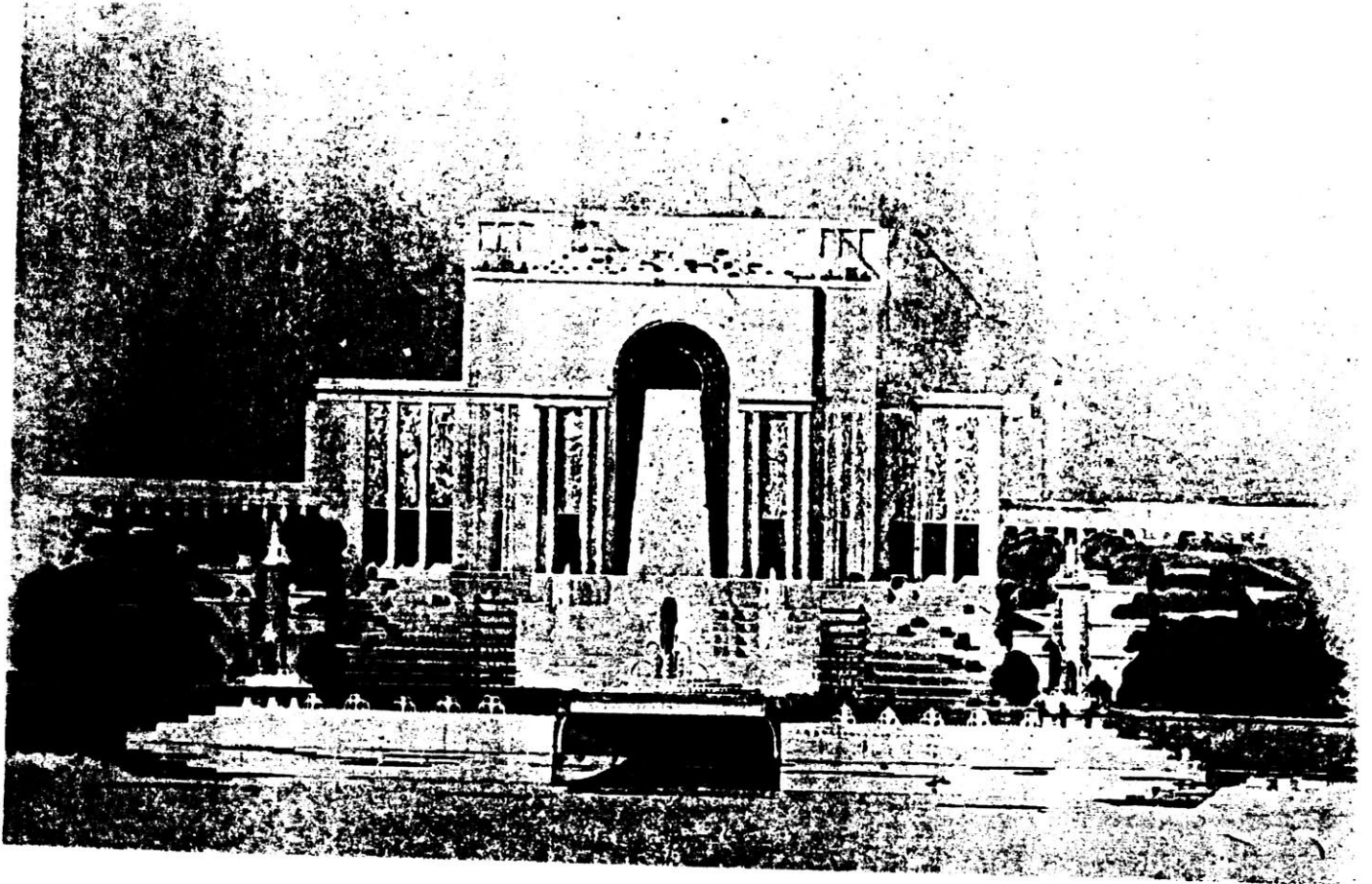
79.- Robert Danis, entry for the foreign sections (Competition 2).
L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, December 1934.



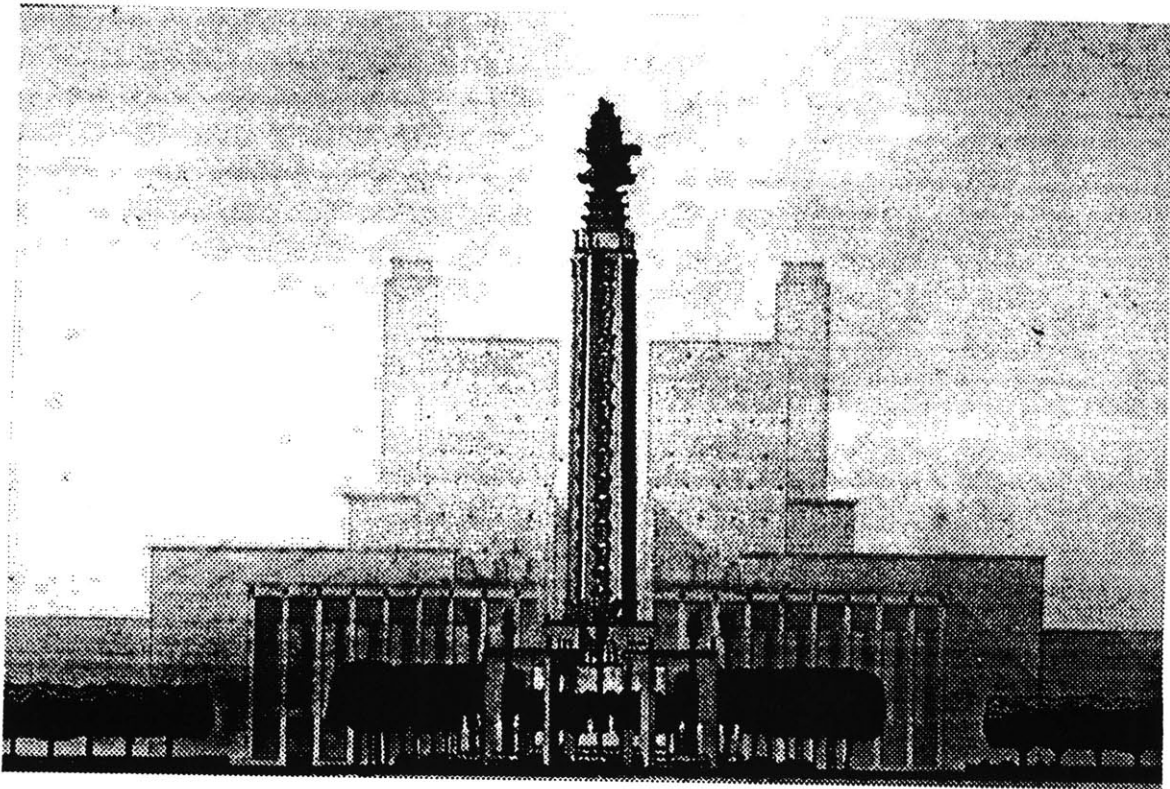
80.- Robert Danis, entry for the decoration of the Eiffel Tower
(Competition 3). La Construction Moderne, 10 March 1935.



81.P. Farges, Competition entry for the Trocadero Plaza (Competitor 4), and his "camouflage" proposal. *La Construction Moderne*, 10 March 1935.



82.- Laprade and Bazin, the Trocadero plaza and signal entry
(Competition 4).



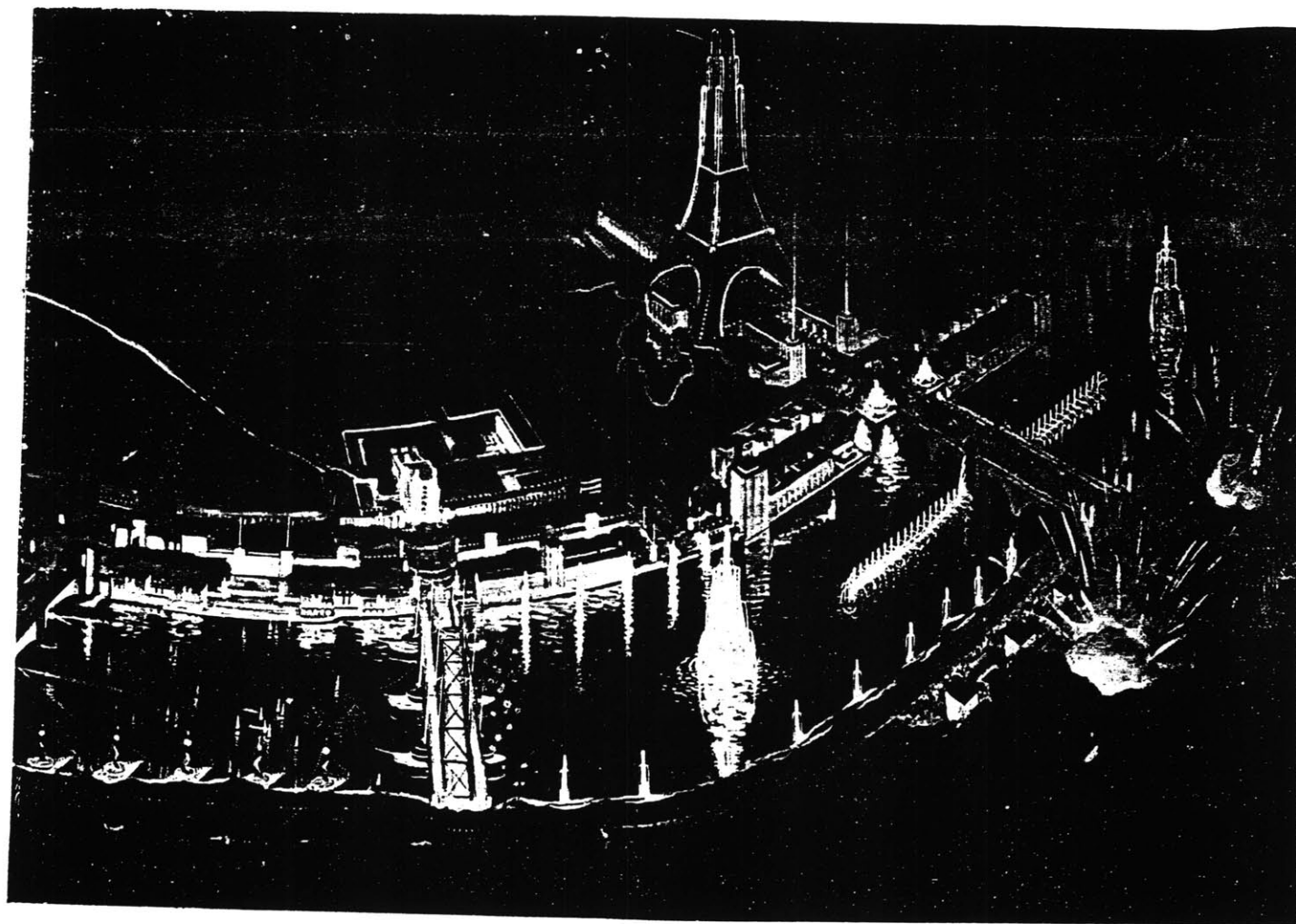
83.- Beaudouin and Lods, competition entry for the illuminations of the Exhibition (water colors and pastels). *La Construction Moderne*, 7 April 1935.



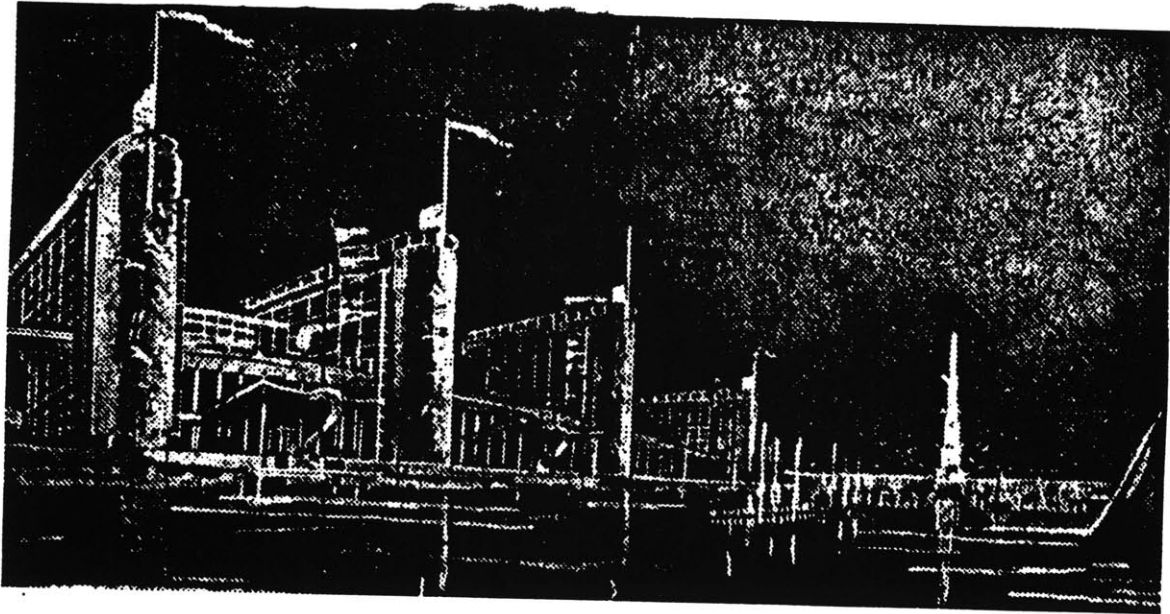
84.- Brandon Brothers, illumination of the Seine. Archives de France.



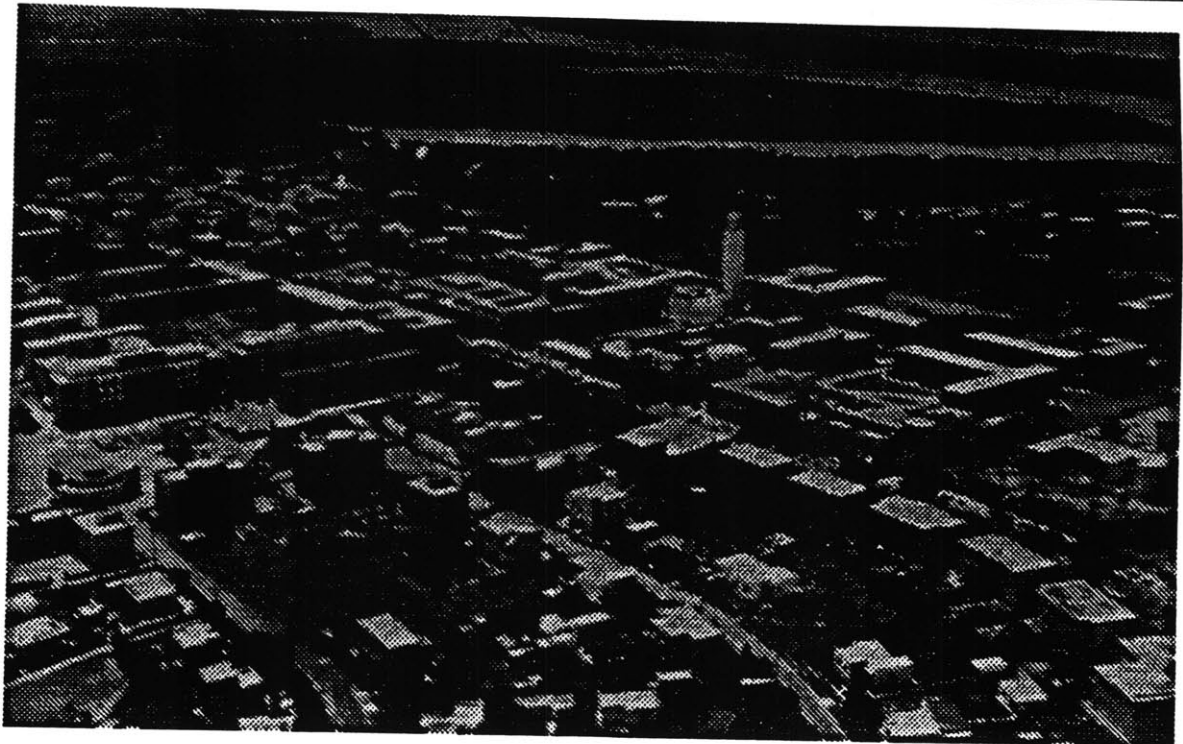
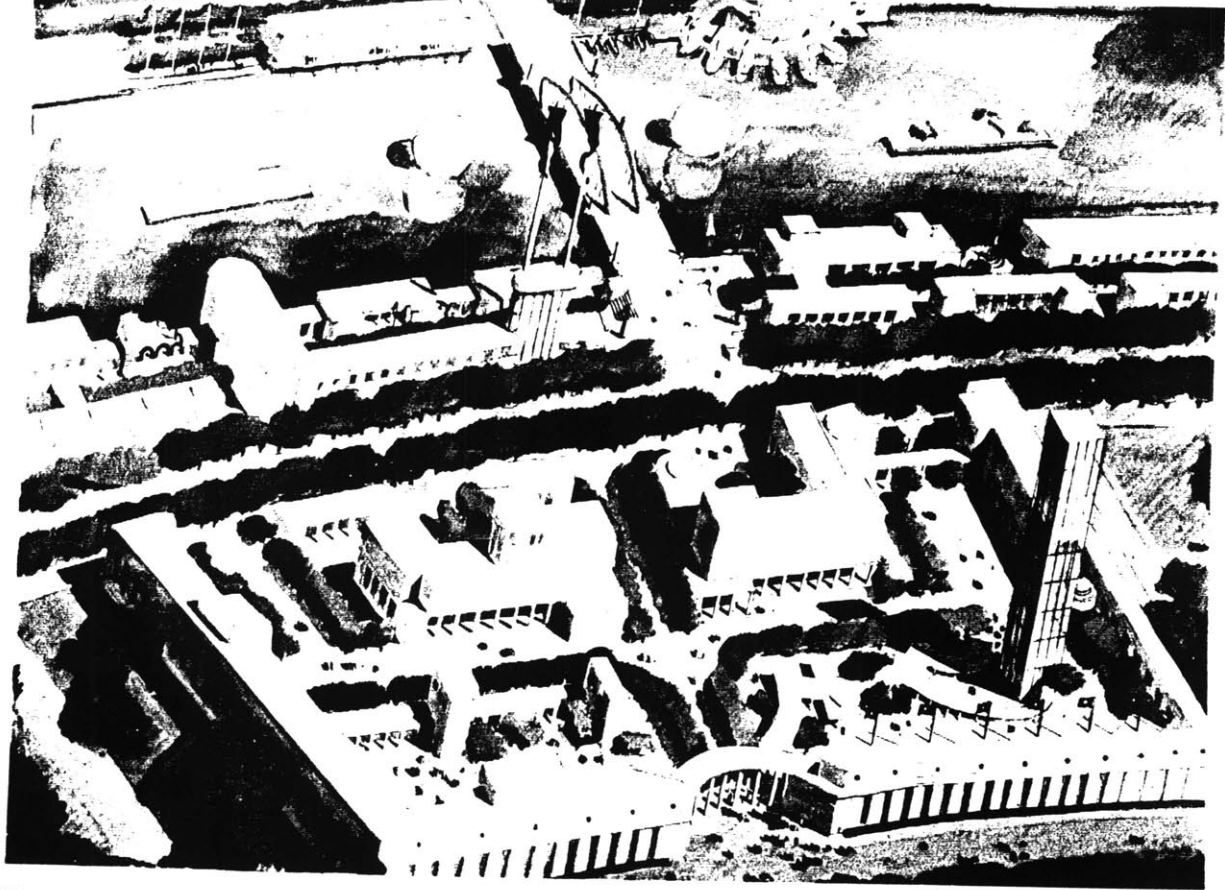
85.- Charles and Jean Dorian, and J.P. Paquet, competition entry for the illumination of the Exhibition. *La Construction Moderne*, 7 April 1935.



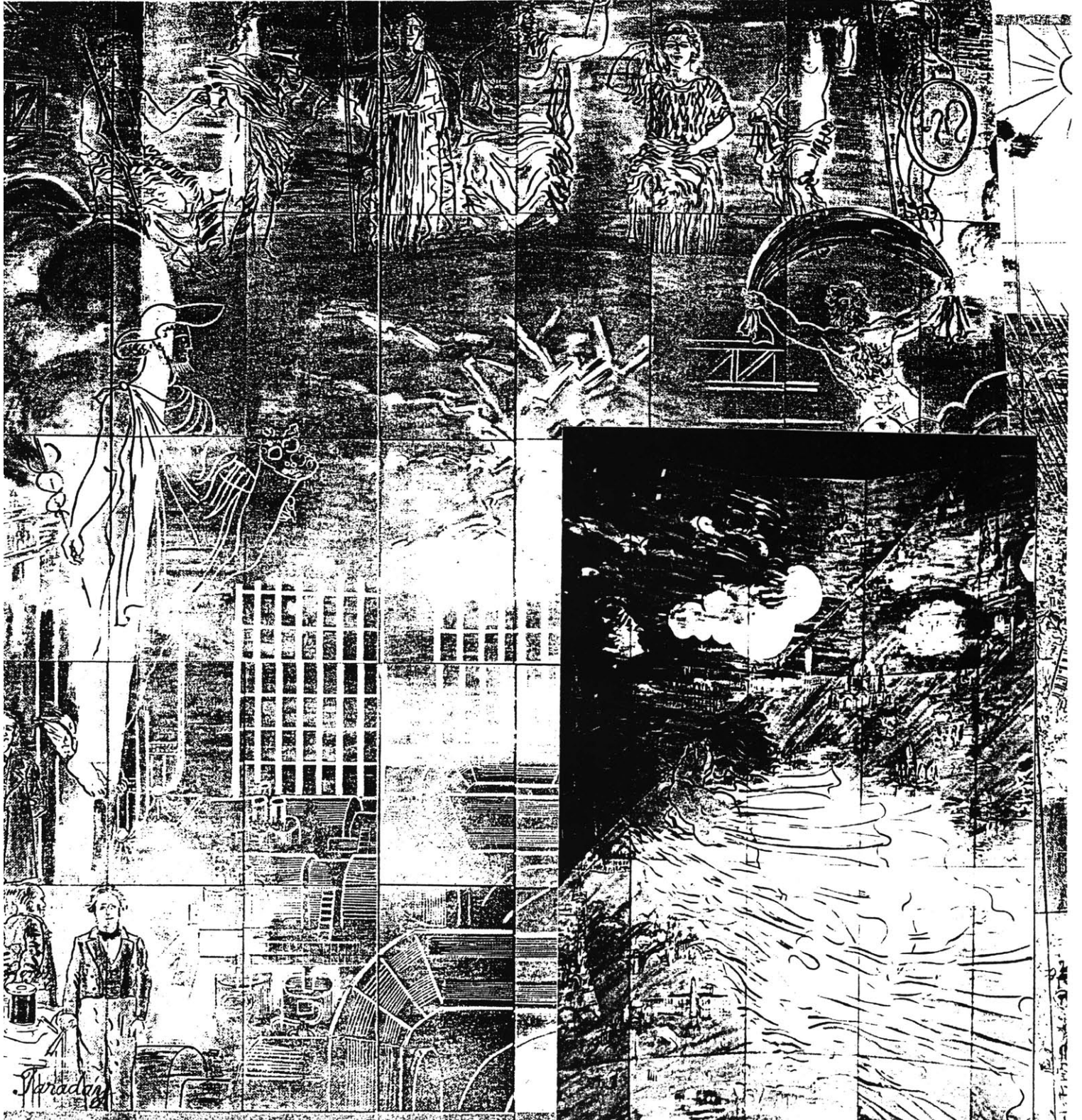
86.- Team Ventre, Nanquette, Aillaud, illumination entry with the international sections. *La Construction Moderne*. 7 April 1935.



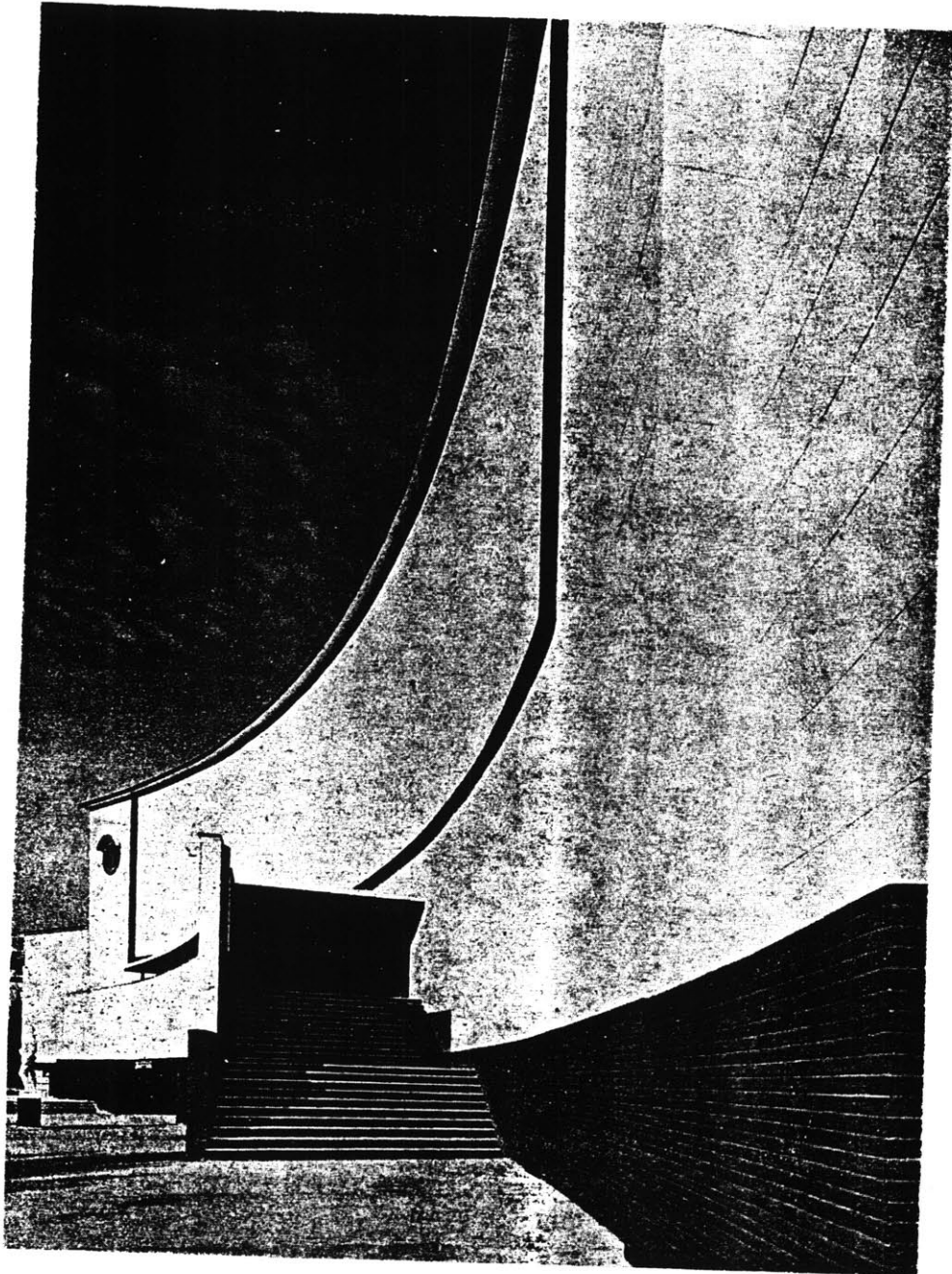
87.- M. Chappey, entry for the Arts and Crafts section (Competition 8), and air view of Sabaudia, Italy, 1935.
La Construction Moderne. 1 April 1935.



88.- Dufy, "La Fée Electricité," monumental mural for the Palais de la Lumière (detail). Now permanently located in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



89.- Palais de la Lumière, Rob Mallet-Stevens, architect. Frontal façade with giant screen for cinematic projections. Archives de France.



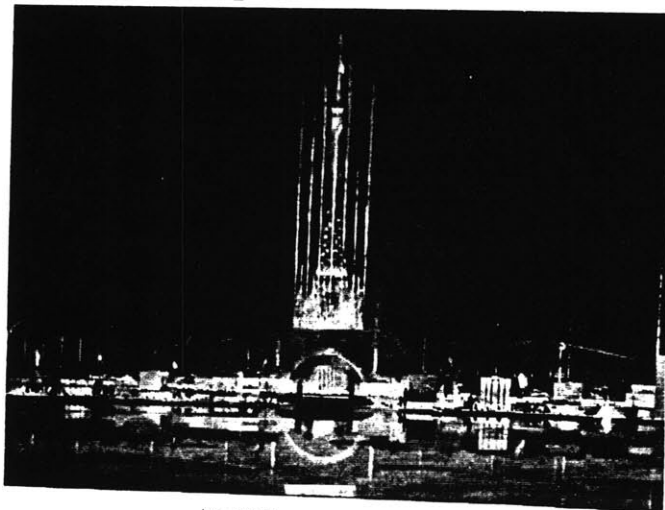
90.- The Eiffel Tower illuminated by Granet, the engineer's grand son. Archives de France.



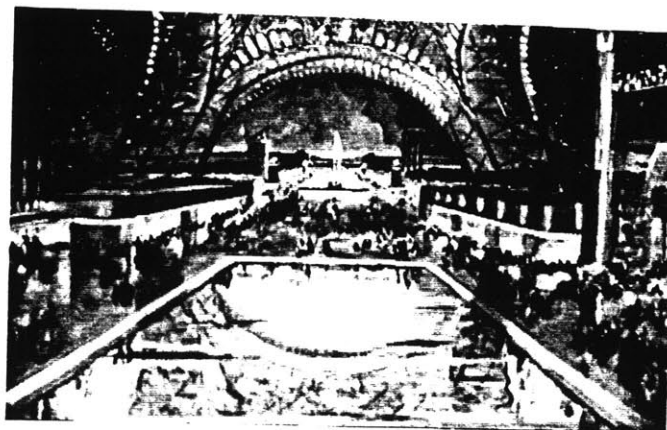
91.- Final model of the 1937 Exhibition traversed by the Seine.
Edmond Labbé Rapport Général.



92.- Color renderings of the Exhibition by night. *L'Illustration*, special issue, 9 May 1937.



Les illuminations de la tour Eiffel de la Seine



93.- Light and sound pageantries at the Alma bridge. German pavilion on the right. Archives de France.



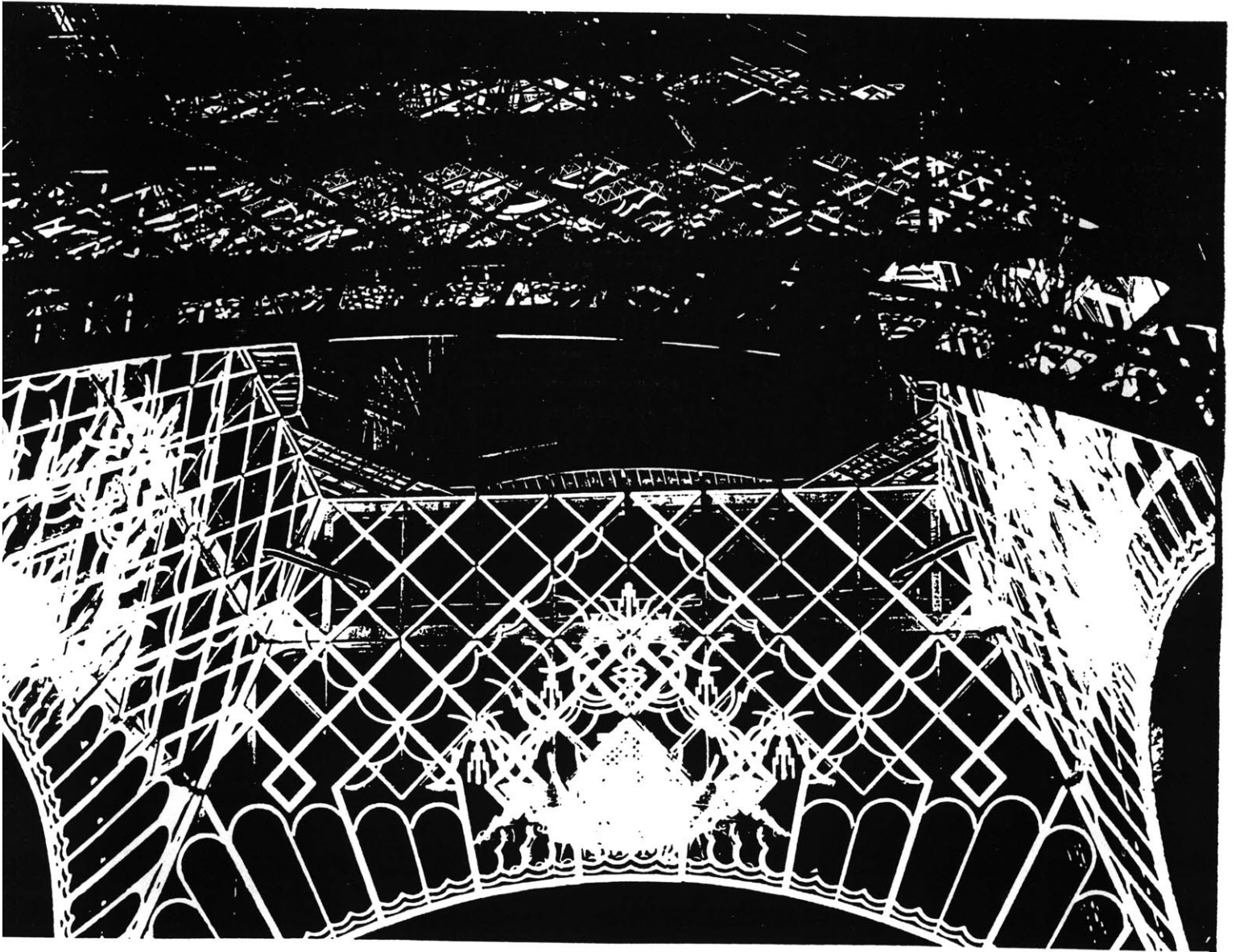
94.- Night view of the Exhibition from the Eiffel Tower with airplane light tracings. At the end of the axis Laprade's Pavillon de la Paix and obelisk. Archives de France.



95.- Night view of the Exhibition at the end of a performance, with illuminated Italian pavilion. Archives de France.



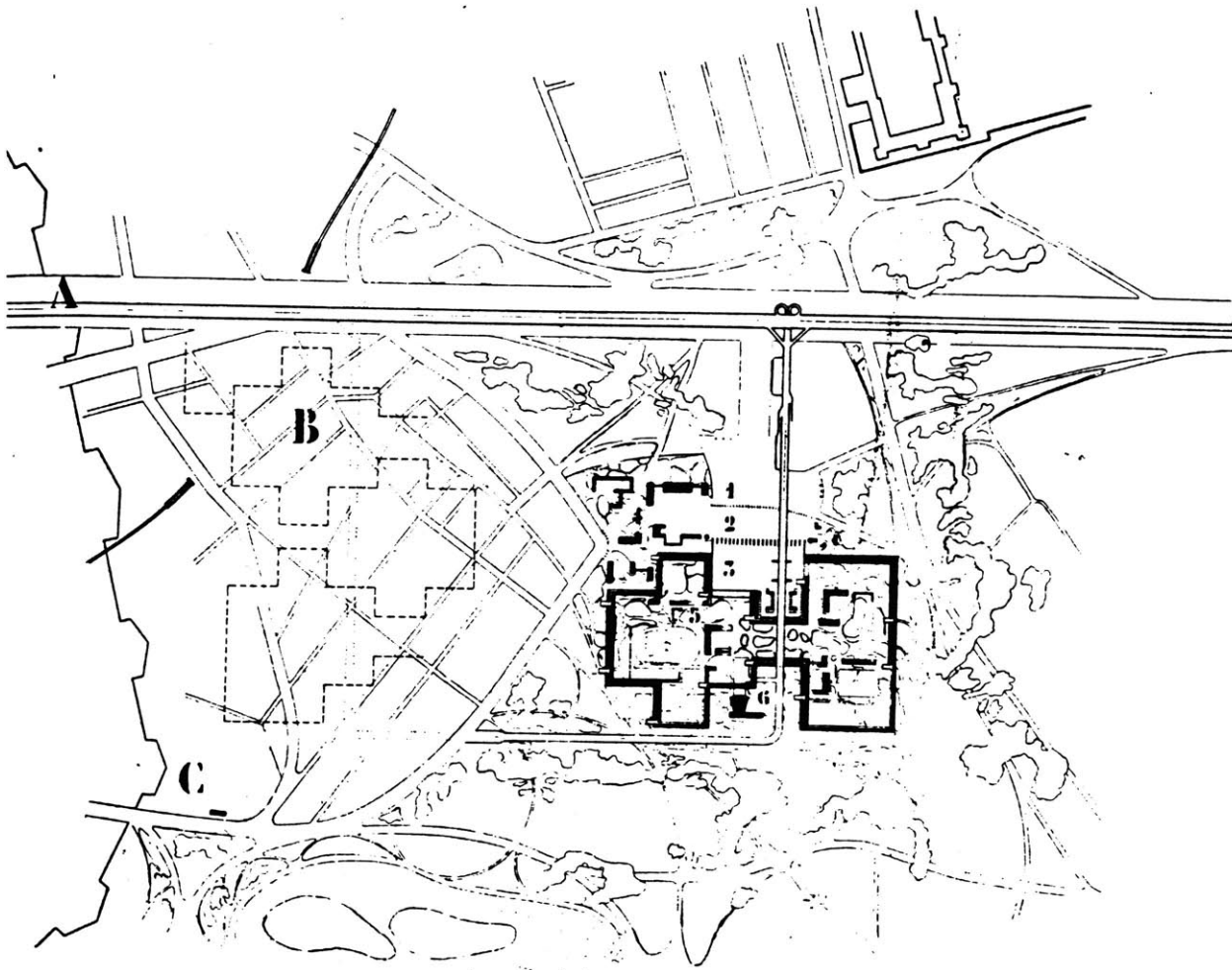
96.- Under the Eiffel Tower: illumination with colored neon tubes.
Archives de France.



97.- Fireworks on the Eiffel Tower seemingly modifying the Tower's size and proportions.



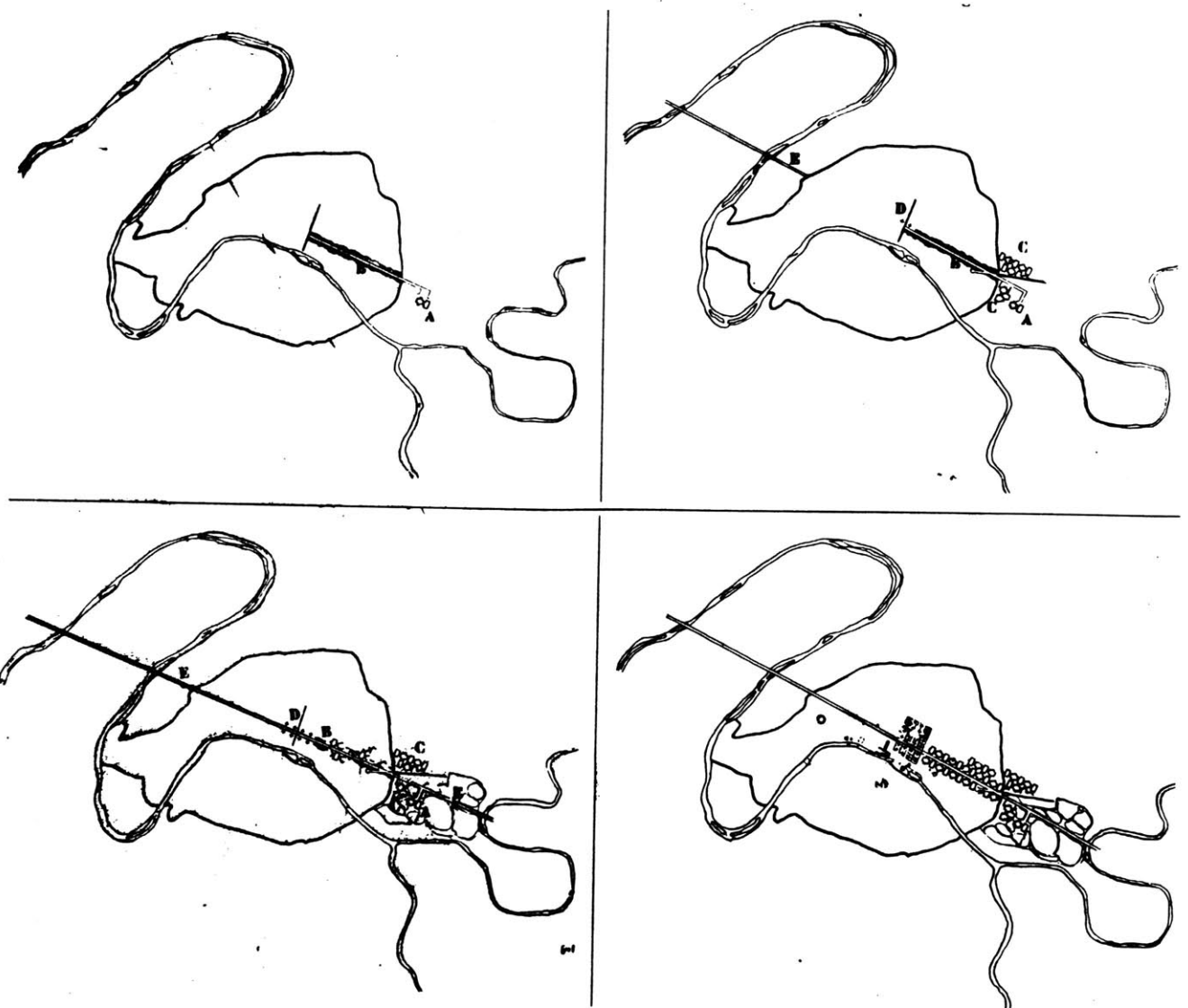
98.- Le Corbusier: 1932 proposal for the 1937 Exhibition in the Vincennes woods--a nucleus of the future development of Paris. Brochure 1937, 1932.



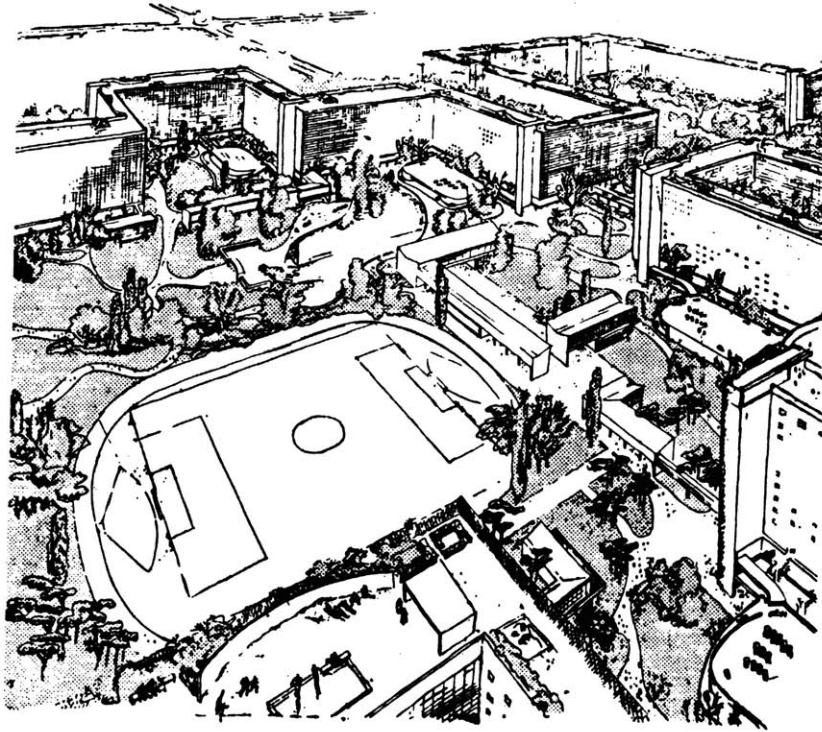
Notre plan de l'Exposition de 1937 :
 a) La grande traversée est-ouest de Paris.
 b) L'aménagement futur du quartier de Saint-Mandé.
 c) Le musée des Colonies.

1. Les caisses d'entrée.
2. Esplanade.
3. Le hall d'honneur.
4. Divers bâtiments : théâtres, restaurants, etc.
5. Un redent avec parcs de promenades et de sport, piscines, écoles, etc.
6. Théâtre de l'exposition relié directement à l'autostrade.

99.- Le Corbusier: After the 1937 Exhibition, four stages of the development of Paris along an East West axis.



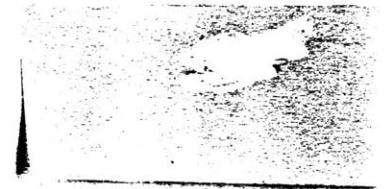
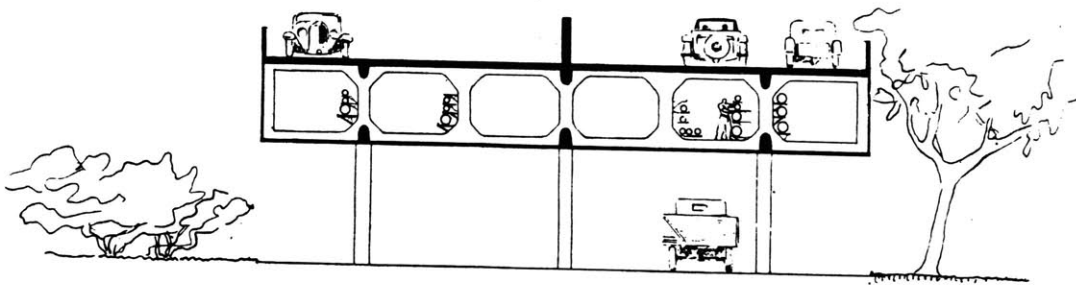
100.- Le Corbusier: "The 1937 Exhibition of Contemporary Housing."
Brochure 1937 (1932).



Tel est le projet de l'Exposition :
Le ruban en redents des immeubles de 50 mètres de haut, construits « en vrai », stands
innombrables à échelle humaine pour toutes les démonstrations relatives à l'habitation.
Les édifices de l'enfance (scolaires et pré-scolaires) calculés pour correspondre à la po-
pulation de ce redent (type de ville à raison de 1.000 habitants à l'hectare).

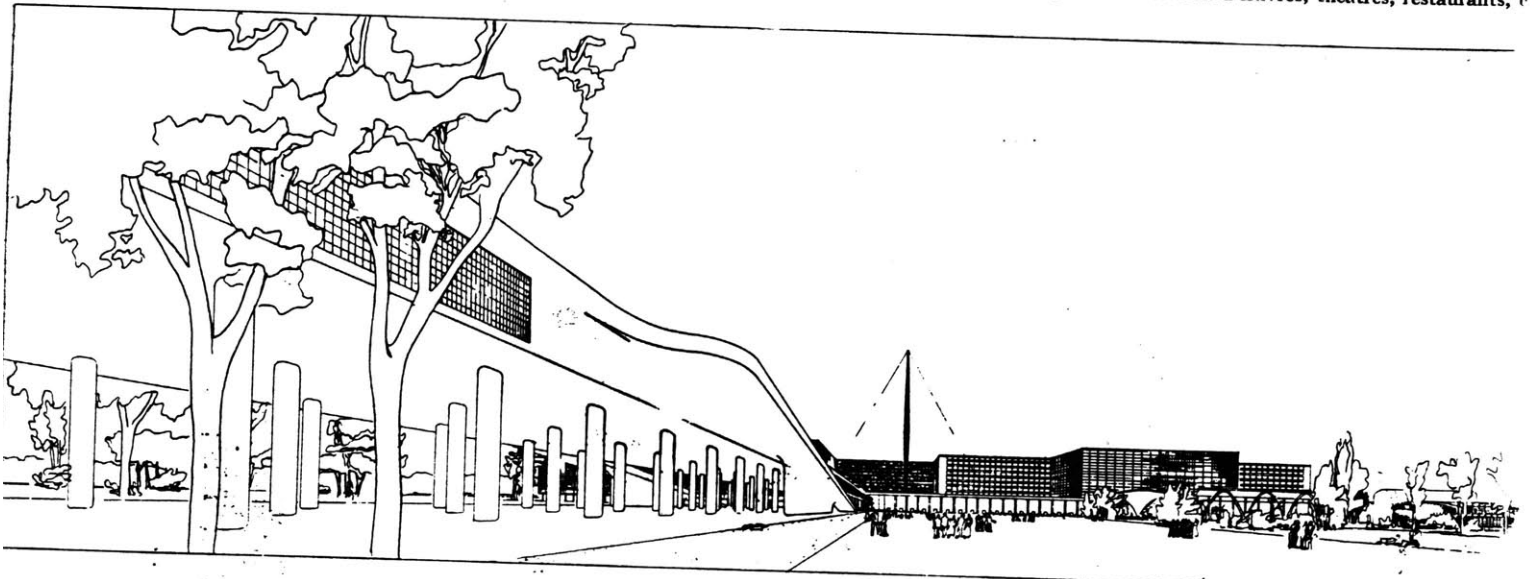
II. ARCHITECTURE.

101. & 102.- Le Corbusier: 1937 Exhibition, inhabitable highways and "machines à transporter." Brochure 1937 (1932).



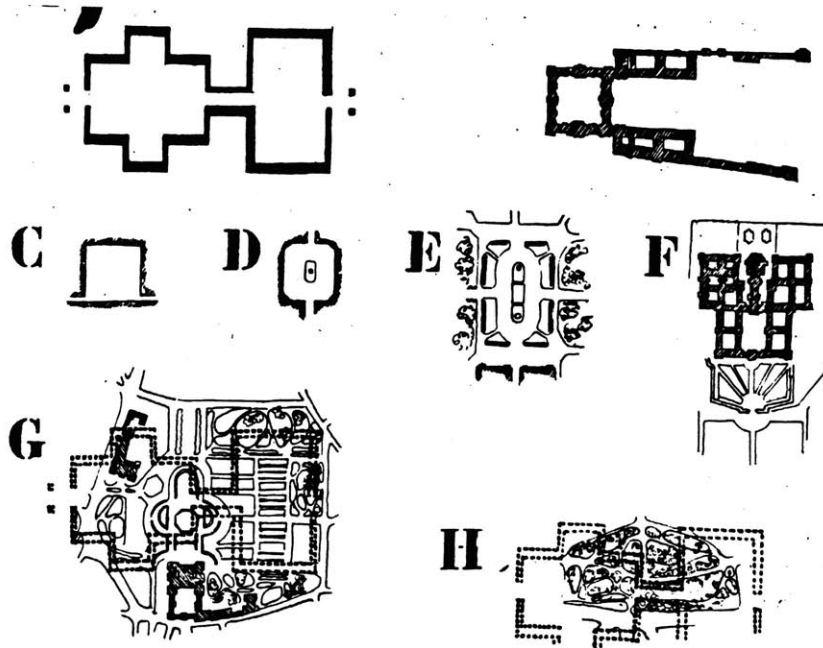
Un type d'autostrade: 12 m. 16 m., 20 m., etc.
 Sur le tablier supérieur, la circulation légère et rapide. Dans l'espace au dessous: les canalisations, accessibles, visitables, réparables. Sur le sol, la circulation lourde: camions, autobus. En bordure: les tramways. Puis, directement au bord, les pelouses et les parcs. Le piéton ne rencontre plus jamais le véhicule.

Aspect éventuel de l'exposition de 1937. L'embranchement de l'autostrade. En face, au fond les constructions du redent, toutes variables, dit motif à exposition, à démonstration, à diversité. Mais l'ensemble de l'exposition demeure un entier pur et net, architectural, fait d'espace, de murailles architecturales et d'éléments naturels. A droite on discerne la seconde partie de l'exposition: les hors-d'œuvres, théâtres, restaurants, etc.



103.- The Vincennes Housing compared to historical urban monuments. Interiors of villas and apartments. Brochure 1937 (1932).

(1.000 habitants à l'hec-
tare) comparé à :
b) le Louvre ;
c) place des Vosges ;
d) place Vendôme ;
e) place de la Con-
corde ;
f) les Invalides ;
g) parc du Luxem-
bourg ;
h) parc Monceau.

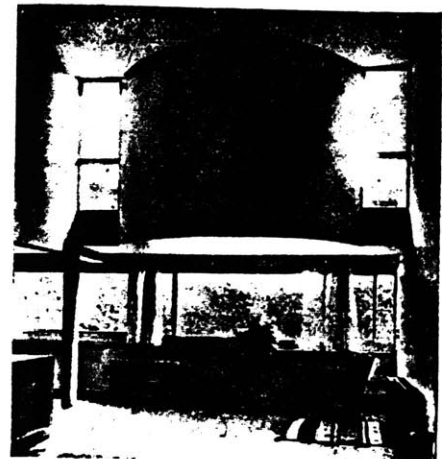


Un autre obstacle enfin : un quartier d'immeubles vrais. Alors ceci (qui est indispensable pour une exposition d'idées créatrices) : logis de grand luxe, logis moyens, logis pauvres, logis minimum. Comment rendre co-habitable ces éléments divers de toute l'échelle sociale et de toute l'échelle mentale. On ne peut pas, dans la vie *vraie* des sociétés occidentales, cohabiter ; cohabiter dans les signes extérieurs manifestes des différences de classe ; l'un exclut l'autre. Un tel quartier basé sur l'artifice verrait son avenir impossible : il n'aurait pas d'affectation après l'exposition.

Villa



Hôtel particulier.



104.- Le Corbusier: Section of a typical 4.50m high floor to be used by exhibitors and a typical floor with apartments. Brochure 1937 (1932).

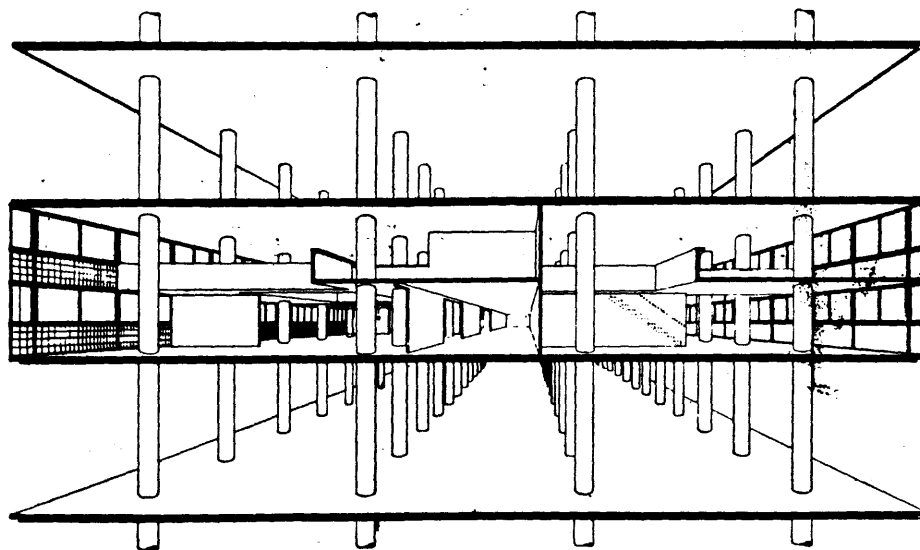
Conclusions : pour manifester l'architecture d'extérieur et permettre à quelques fortes personnalités de s'exprimer, (et ceci dit avec toutes les réserves que peut comporter la désignation de ces personnalités), il faut se tourner vers la seconde partie de notre programme d'Exposition, la partie complémentaire.

Ici encore, deux catégories :

La première : organes complémentaires de la « Ville Radieuse » : crèches, établissements pré-scolaires, écoles primaires, piscines ouvertes et fermées, salles de sports, clubs, etc... Voici des programmes précis d'architecture vraie en *vrai*.

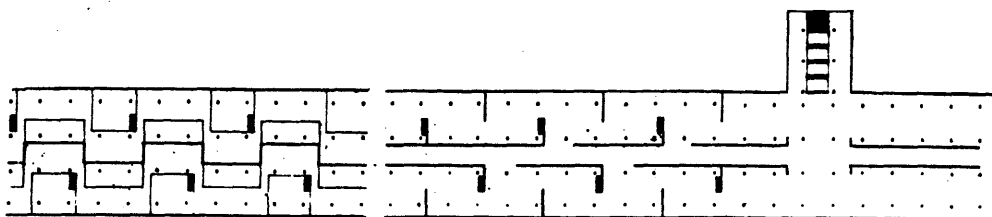
La seconde, hors du redent de la « Ville Radieuse » : ce sont alors les Pavillons d'exposition tels que restaurants, théâtres, cinémas, postes, gares d'autocars, gares de métropolitain, etc., etc... Bâtiments en *vrai* ou bâtiments provisoires, mais d'une destination précise qui autorisera la pleine manifestation de l'architecture d'intérieur et d'extérieur.

Nous répétons avec force : 1937 DOIT ÊTRE L'EXPOSITION DE L'HABITATION, DU LOGIS. UNE FOULE IMMENSE DE CRÉATEURS DE TOUS PAYS ET DE TOUS CONTINENTS DOIVENT Y APPORTER LE FRUIT DU VASTE EFFORT CONTEMPORAIN. ET DE CETTE EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE DOIVENT RÉsulTER DES CERTITUDES INTÉRESSANT TOUTES LES LATITUDES, TOUS LES CAS D'HABITATION, A TOUS LES ÉTAGES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ ET SOUS TOUS LES CLIMATS. 1937 : PARIS, CENTRE D'UNE IMMENSE CONSULTATION INTERNATIONALE.



Un exemple d'aménagement d'une hauteur d'étage à 4 m. 50. Seuls les planchers de 4 m. 50 sont définitifs ; les planchers intermédiaires à 2 m. 20 sont en provisoire, au gré de l'exposant. Il faut bien tenir compte que la hauteur de 4 m. 50 ainsi que la profondeur des locaux, sont strictement étudiés pour permettre de réaliser jusqu'aux appartements les plus petits, ceux de une ou deux personnes,

105.- Le Corbusier: Schematic floor plan and section of a typical Vincennes apartment building raised on pilotis. First floor reserved for 1937 exhibitors. Brochure 1937 (1932).



Voici le détail de l'Exposition elle-même : locaux à disposition pour tous aménagements variés, tant en grandeur qu'en destination. Circulation horizontale à volonté. Circulation verticale tous les 200 mètres. Profondeur des immeubles : 23 mètres abondamment éclairés par les pans de verre des façades jusqu'au cœur des locaux.

dix années d'applications répétées), une hauteur nouvelle, riche en solutions de toutes sortes : la hauteur de 4 m. 50 divisible en deux : deux fois 2 m. 10. Ce nouveau standard est économe ; il permet les problèmes de grand luxe, — faste et splendeur — ; il permet les solutions de plus grand rendement, de concentration : 4 m. 50 et 2 m. 10 — logis ouvrier. C'est une mesure à l'échelle humaine.

L'Exposition comporterait donc un redent de « Ville Radieuse », soit 2.328 m. de bâtiments de 50 mètres de haut, fournissant 20.000 mètres de longueur de façades d'appartements répartis sur neuf étages. La façade de tous les appartements serait un pan de verre ; la profondeur des appartements serait variable ; cette profondeur peut avoir une répercussion considérable sur l'ensemble de la ville car, si, par l'application des techniques modernes, cette profondeur peut être fortement augmentée — du double par exemple —, la ville, par conséquence directe, deviendra deux fois moins étendue. Ce qui signifie quelque chose.

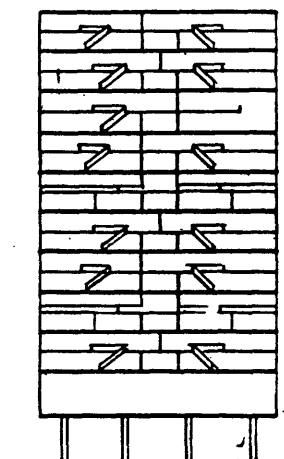
Le redent de « Ville Radieuse » repose, par des pilotis, sur le sol. Au-dessus des pilotis, un étage entier de 4 m. 50 de haut est consacré aux « services communs ». Ici, les architectes, les économistes, les sociologues, les éducateurs, les réformateurs, peuvent exposer le problème, soumettre les solutions, apporter une réponse à cette question dont l'effet peut réagir décisivement sur les conditions de la vie domestique, tout particulièrement dans les milieux modestes mais aussi dans les milieux aisés. Une juste intervention des services communs dans l'économie domestique peut devenir un bienfait social.

Le problème architectural de l'Exposition est donc la question du logis, c'est-à-dire une question d'intérieur. Sans détour ni distraction, l'architecte moderne pourra suivre cette marche naturelle : agir du dedans au dehors. (Sagesse, hélas, oubliée !)

De quelle utilité seraient ici des recherches d'architecture extérieure? Examinons toutefois la conjoncture :

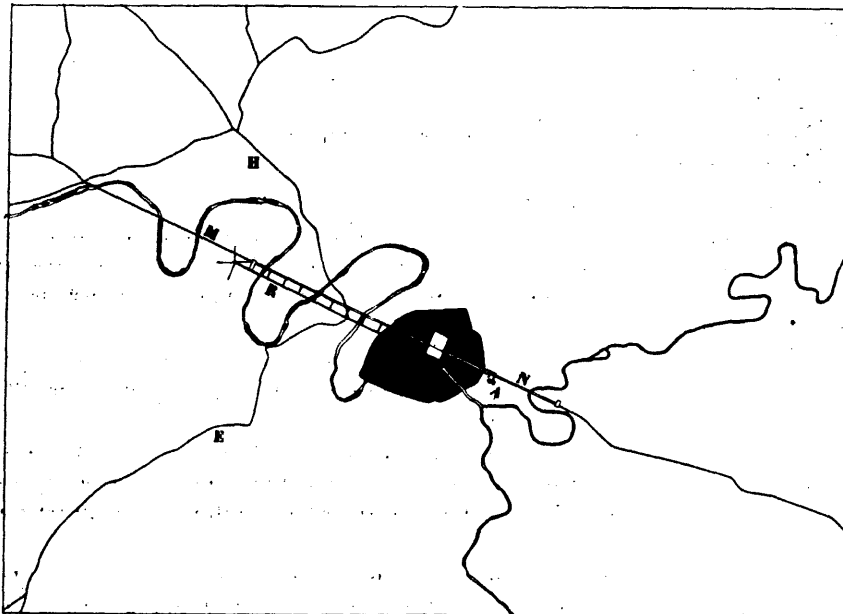
Deux solutions pourraient se proposer : la première, la solution classique « des pavillons d'exposition ». Leur but est d'abriter des manifestations de la vie domestique moderne.

La coupe, hauteur 50 mètres, vide d'étage à étage : 4 m. 50, divisible en deux fois 2 m. 20. Au sol les pilotis laissant le passage entièrement libre. Au-dessus, les locaux pour la démonstration des services communs

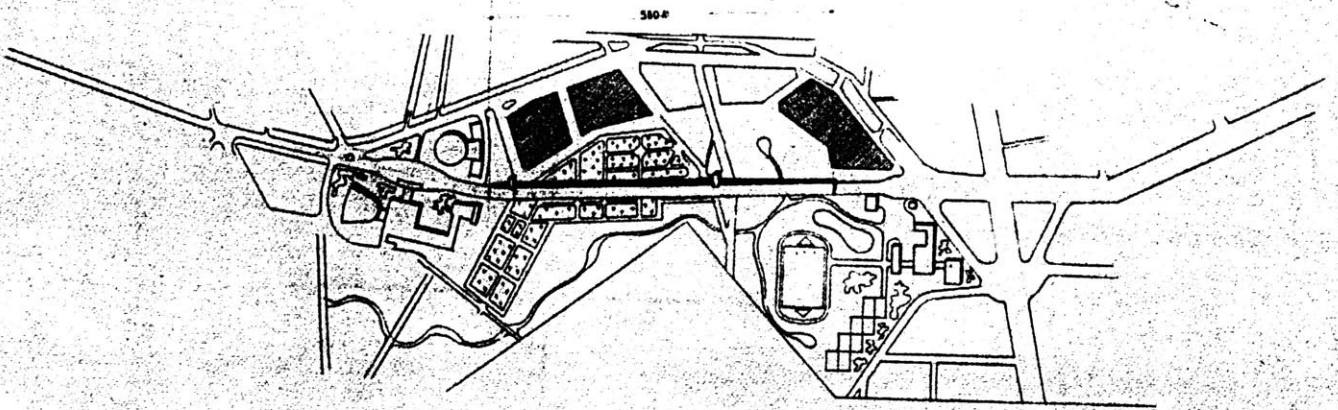


106.- Le Corbusier: A Paris of 5 million inhabitants and no suburbs
Brochure 1937 (1932).

Exposition internationale du logis.
Conflux à Paris, en 1937, de toutes les expériences entreprises sur ce thème
vital, dans tous les pays du monde.
Et corollaire d'importance : Déclenchement de l'ère des grands travaux.



107.- Kellermann demonstration apartment building for 9360 inhabitants. Fondation Le Corbusier.

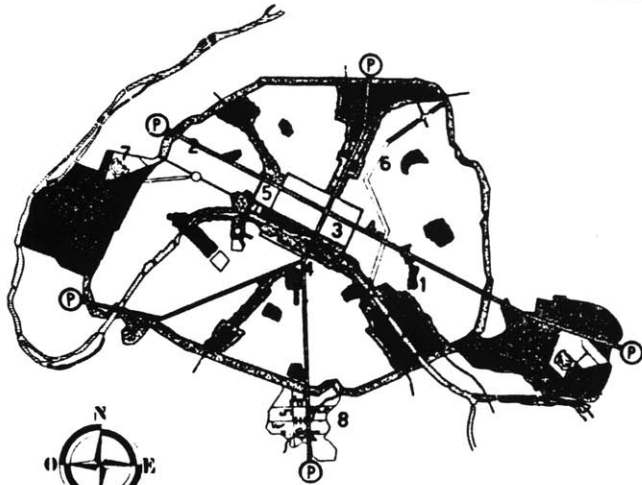


580 M LONG x 4 M WIDE = 430 APPART
45 APPART x 9 FLOORS = 4170 APPART
4170 APPART x 2.25 PERS. = 9360 PERS

PARIS 1934 N° 1934

108.- Le Corbusier: "Ilôt insalubre no. 6" and the system of roads that meet in the heart of the city. "Les banlieues sont résorbées." Le Corbusier, *Des canons, des munitions? Merci! des logis, SVP.* Paris, 1938.

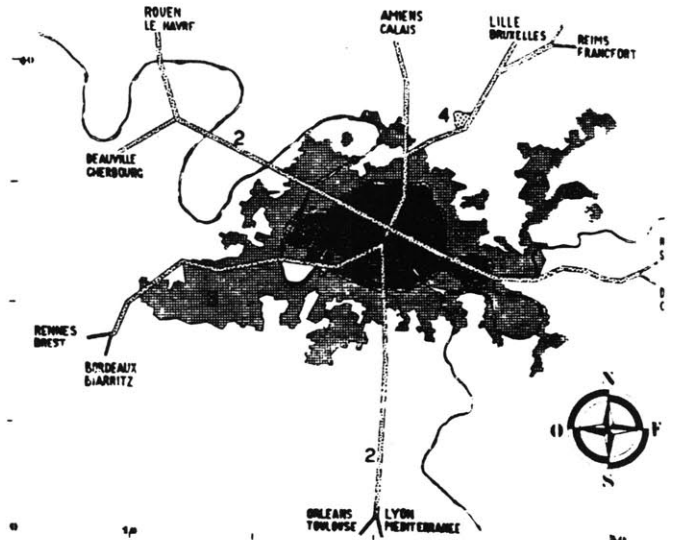
B	ILOT INSALUBRE N° 6.
	L' ILOT N° 6. DANS LA VILLE. Echelle: 1:2000



1. Ilôt n° 6.
2. Les cinq autostrades de traversée (est, ouest, nord, sud-ouest, sud-est).
3. Constitution de la Cité administrative (affaires privées et administration publique).
4. Les quatre gares d'autocars de province.
5. Les deux tunnels autostrades : a) sous la cité ; b) sous les Champs-Élysées (de Saint-Lazare aux Invalides).
6. Le canal Saint-Martin.
7. Centres de réjouissances populaires.
8. Nouvelle Cité universitaire.

L'Ilôt N° 6 tient compte de l'avenir de la ville de Paris. Il comporte un tronçon de la Grande Traversée Est-Ouest de Paris. Cette traversée est tracée en harmonie avec une future traversée Nord-Sud.

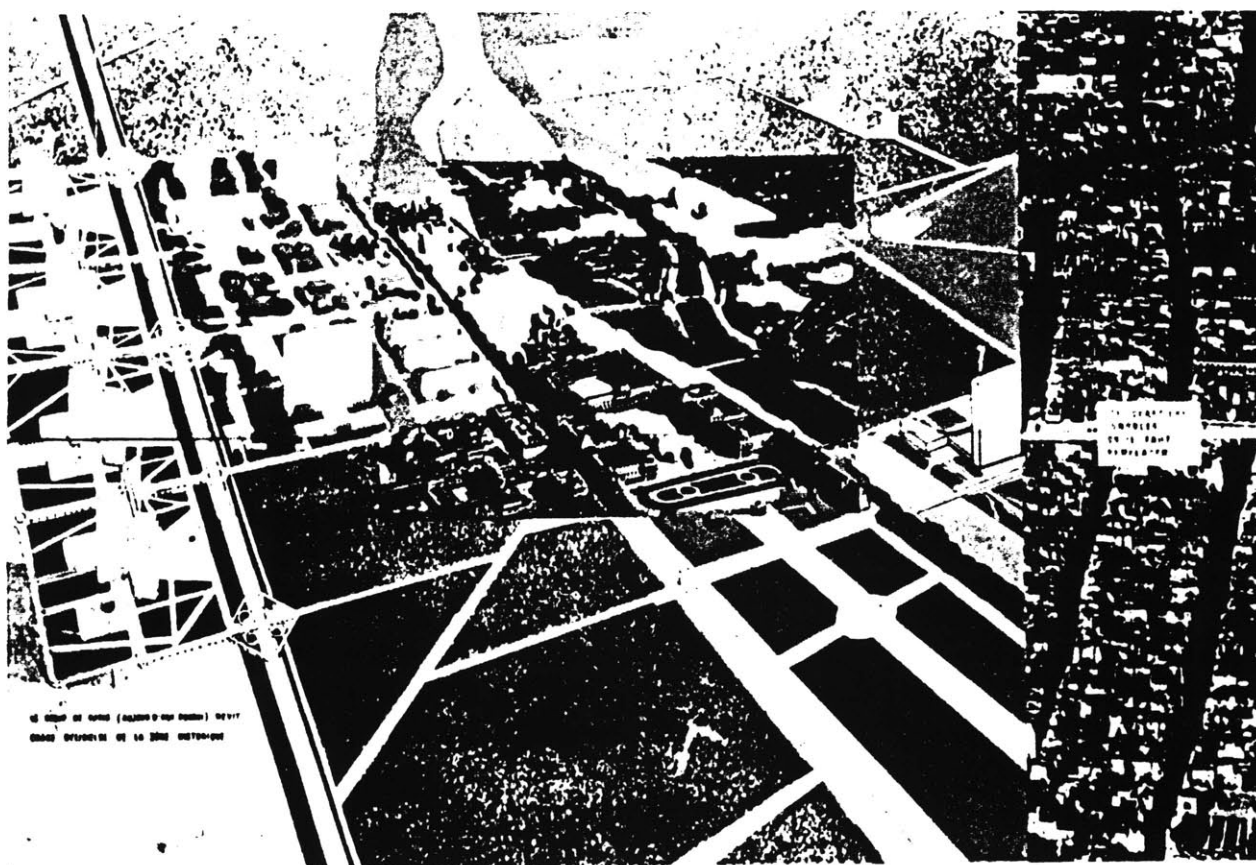
A	ILOT INSALUBRE N° 6.
	PARIS DANS LA REGION Echelle: 1:50000



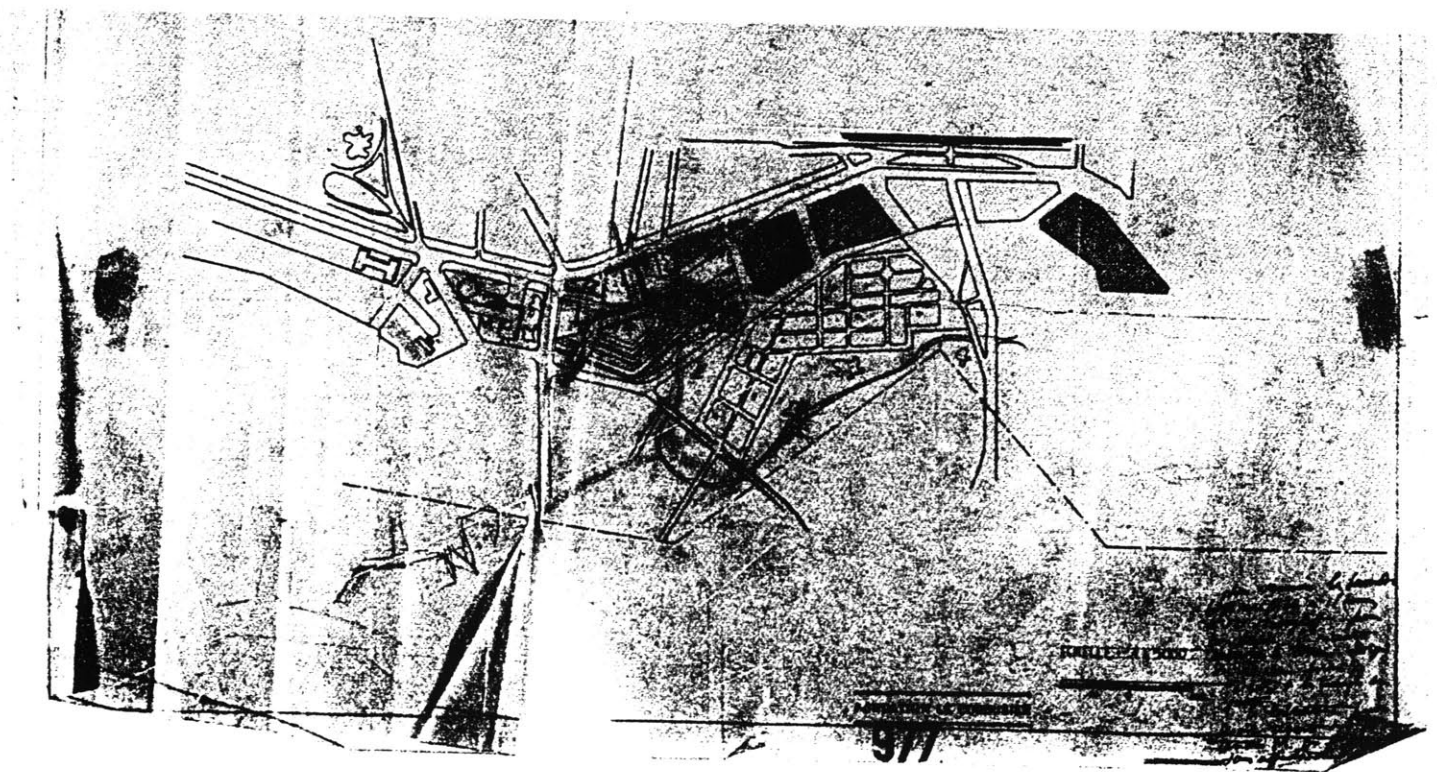
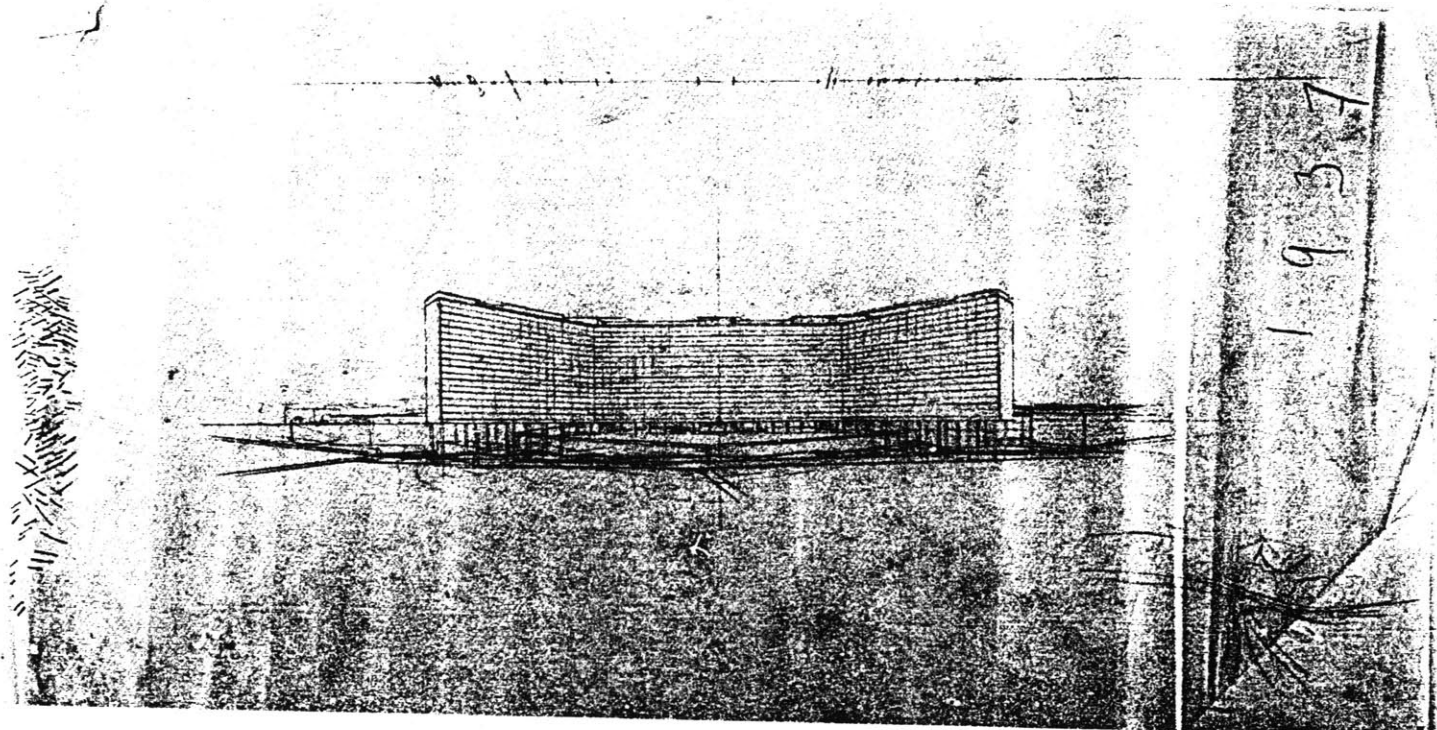
1. Ilôt n° 6.
2. Les autostrades raccordées aux routes nationales et internationales.
3. Les banlieues qui devront être résorbées petit à petit.
4. Aéroport du Bourget.

Ce réseau automobile nouveau, évoqué ici, se raccorde exactement en périphérie avec les arrivées des autostrades de province fixées par le plan de la région de Paris (plan Prost-Dausset).

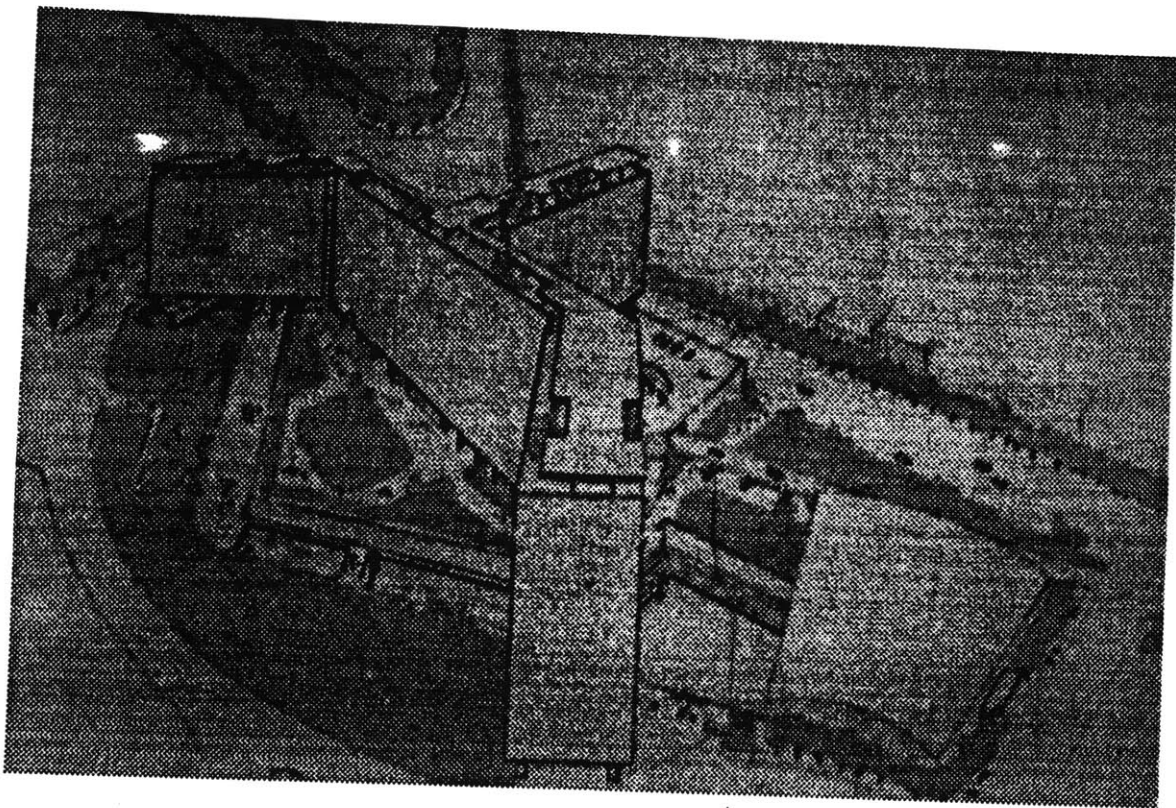
109.- Le Corbusier: Plan 1937 for the center of Paris..
(Le Corbusier, *Des canons*,...1938).



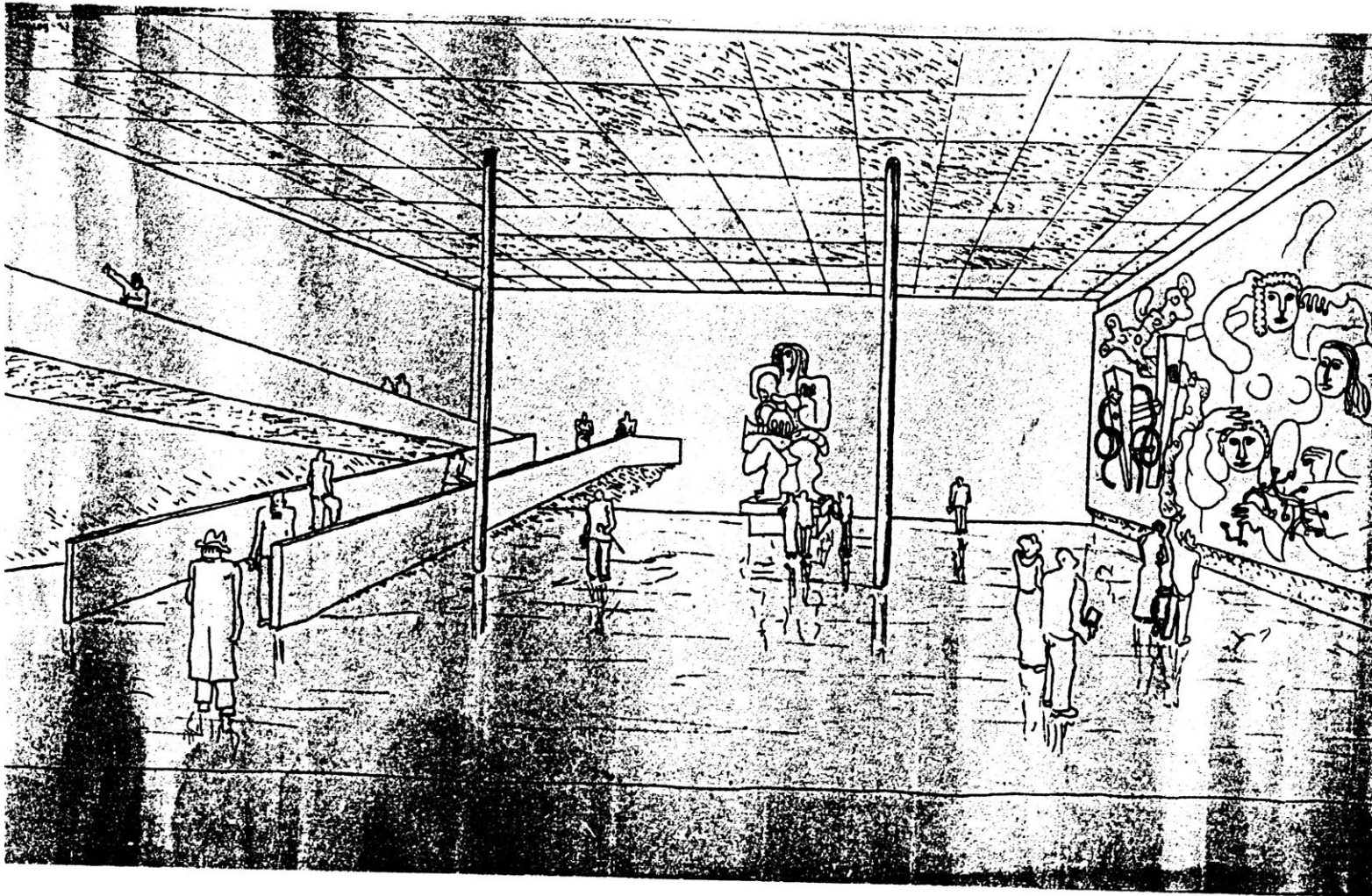
110.- Le Corbusier: "Patte de Poule" skyscraper over the Bastion Kellermann. "Shown to Martzloff Monday 6 May 1934."
Fondation Le Corbusier.



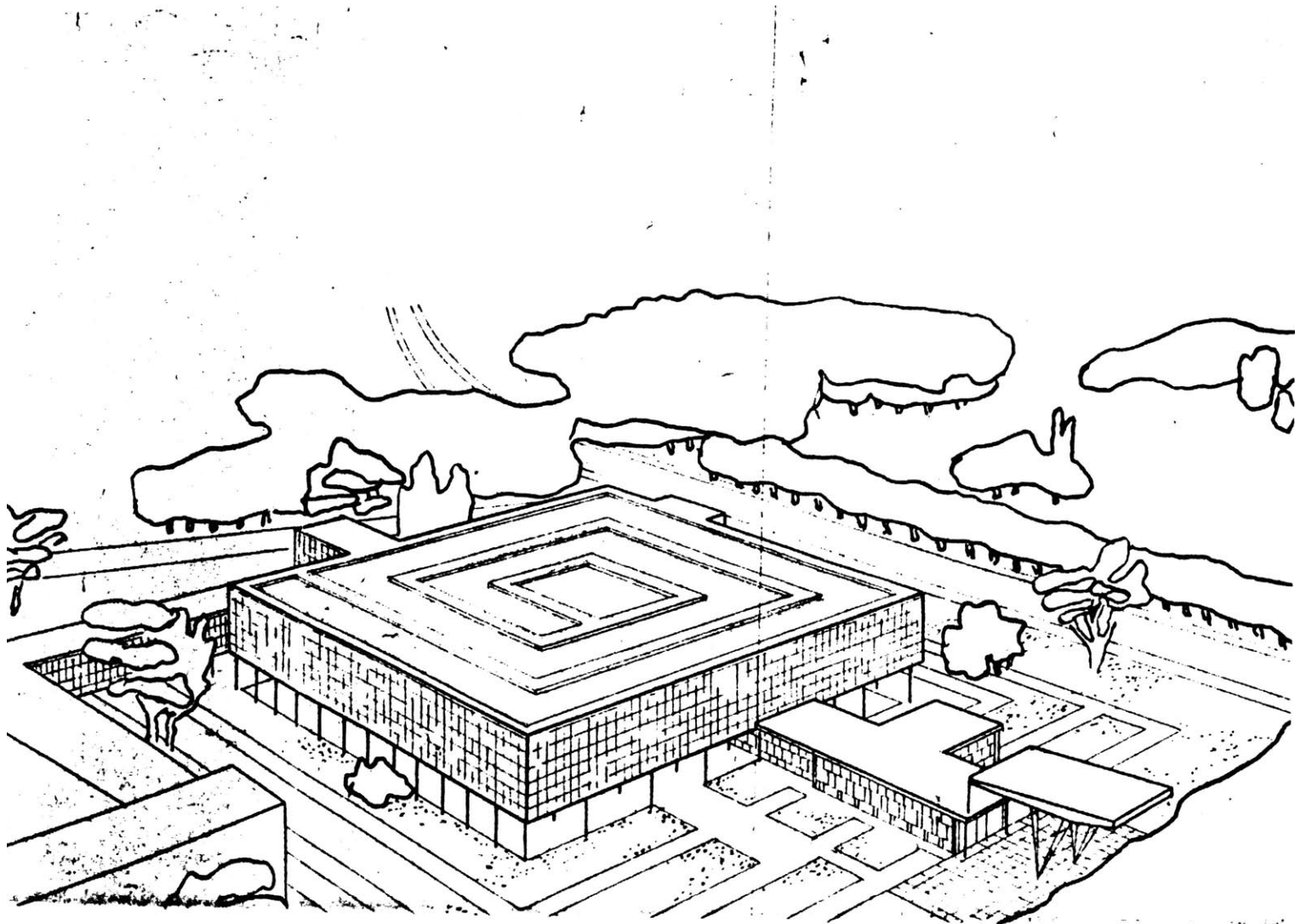
111.- Bird's view of the "Patte de poule" skyscraper.
Fondation Le Corbusier.



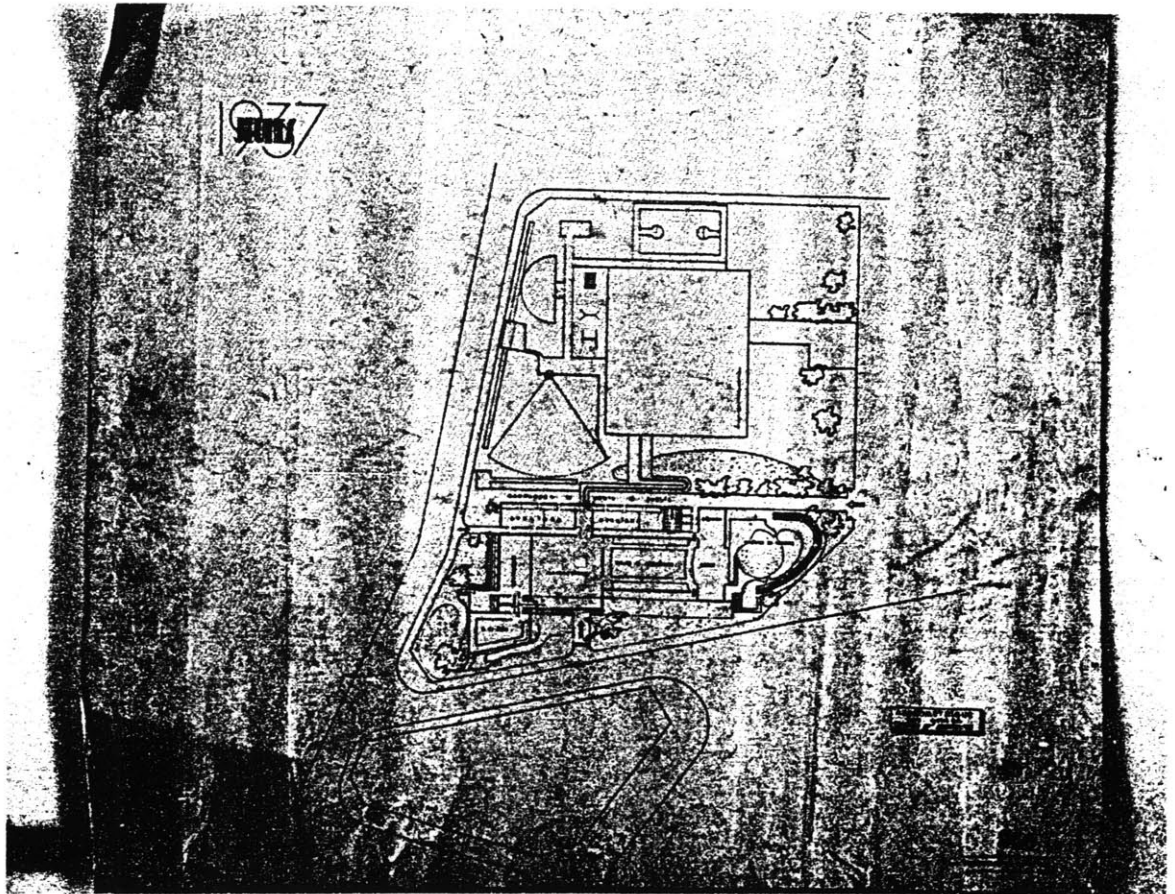
112.- "Musée des Temps Nouveaux," "Hall d'Honneur". Fondation Le Corbusier.



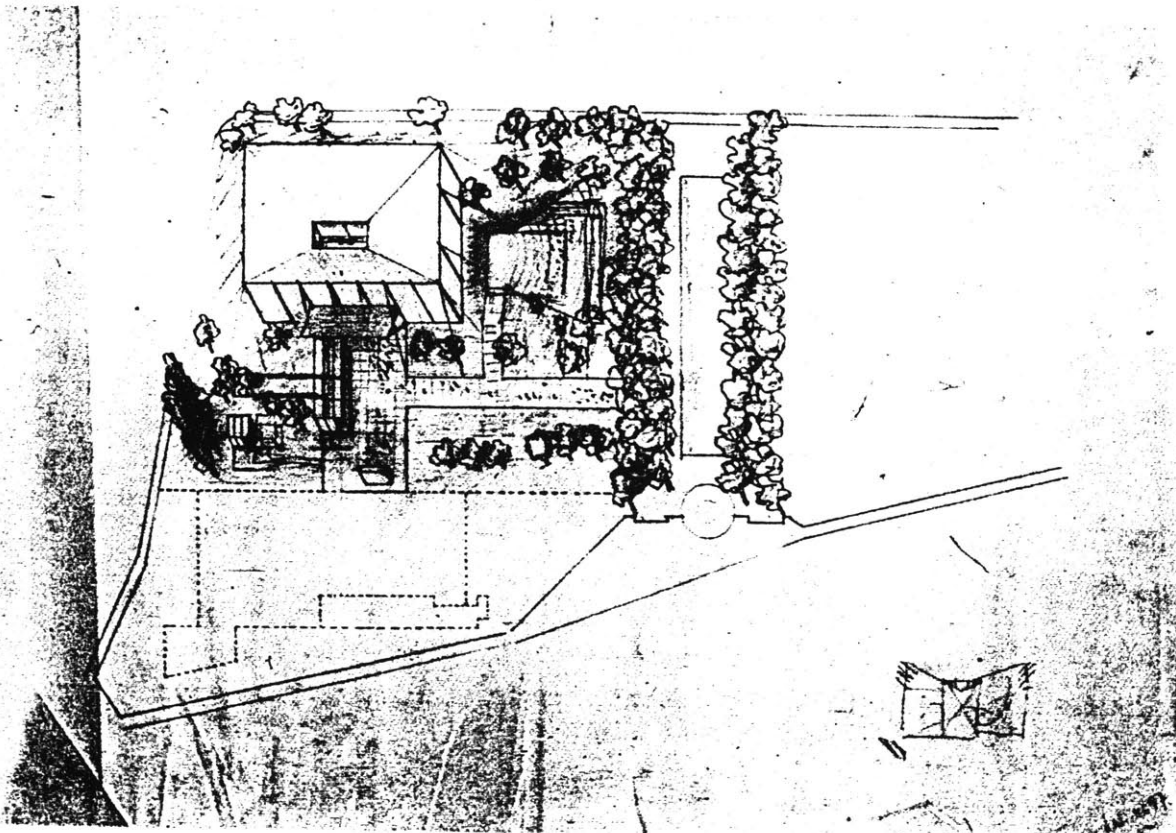
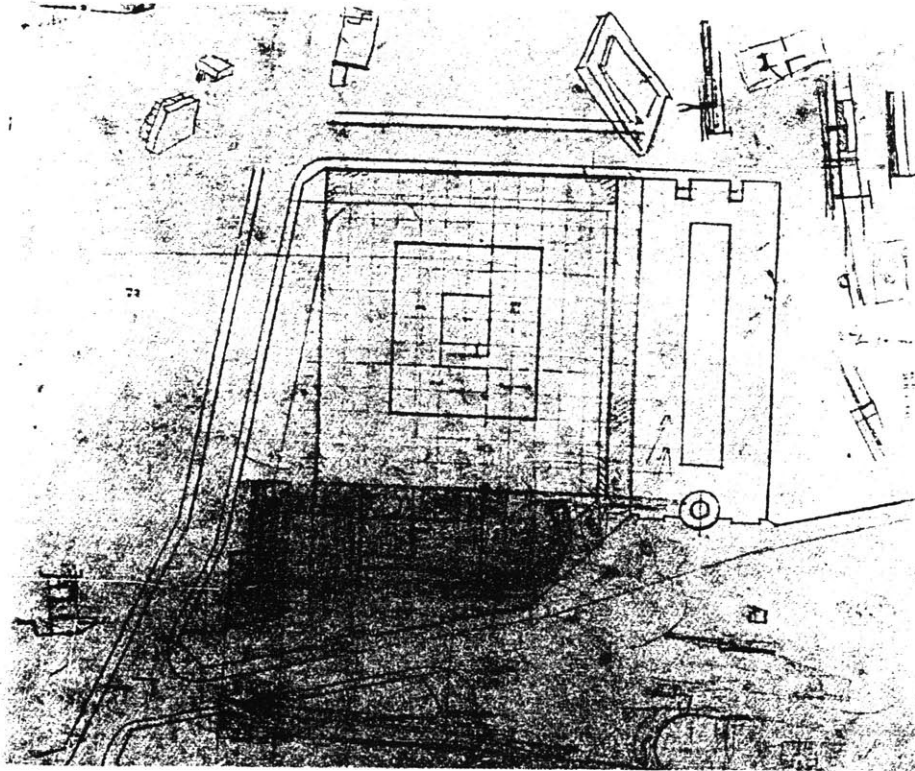
113.- "Musée des Temps Nouveaux, à croissance indéfinie" at the Kellermann site. Blueprint, Archives de France.



114.- Plan of "Jeunes '37" Youth Center next to, and connected with the "Temps Nouveaux" Museum.

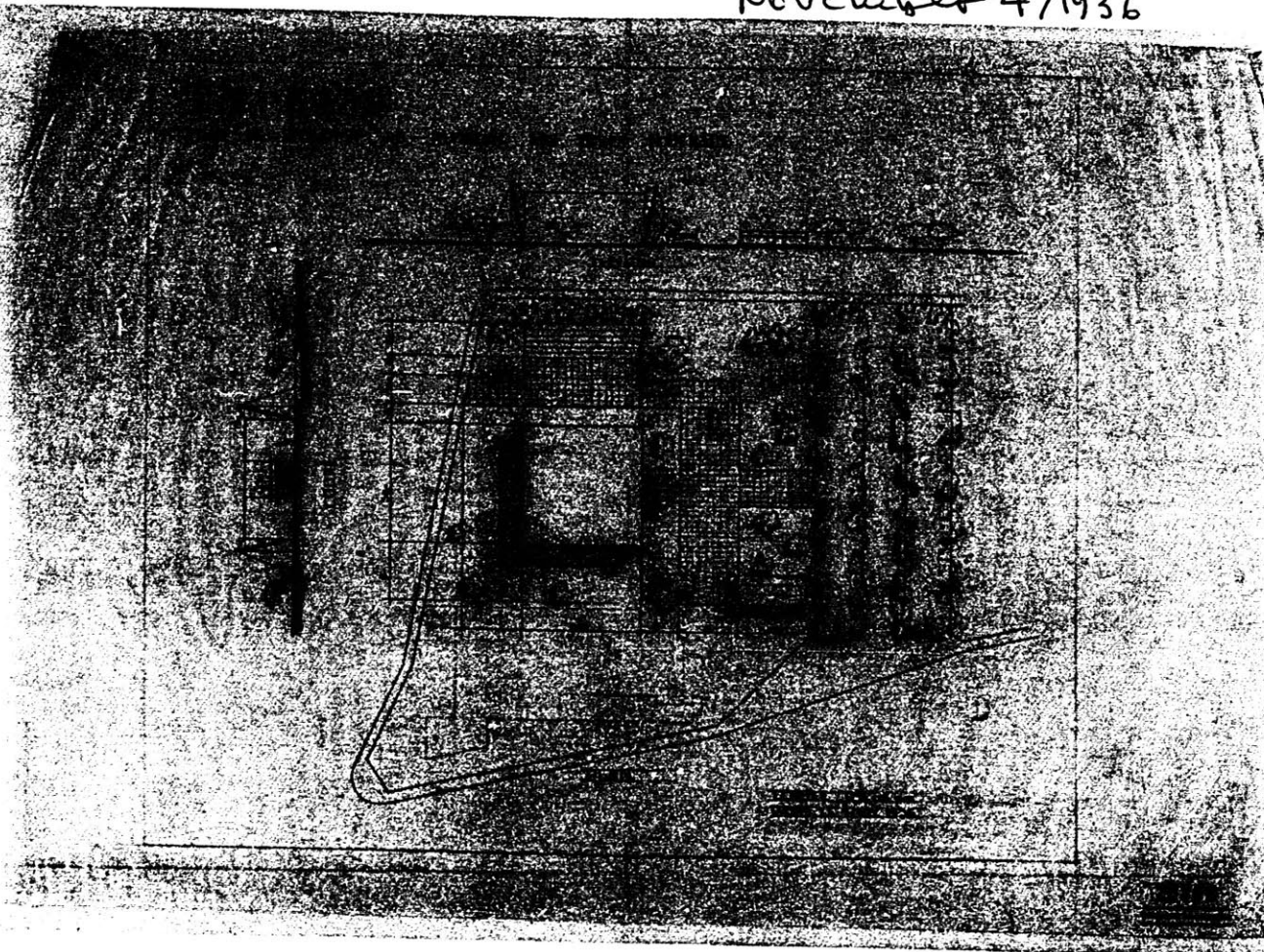


115.- Pierre Jeanneret: First version of the "Temps Nouveaux" Pavilion with fibro-cement panels. Dimensions based on the core of the Musée des "Temps Nouveaux." Fondation Le Corbusier.

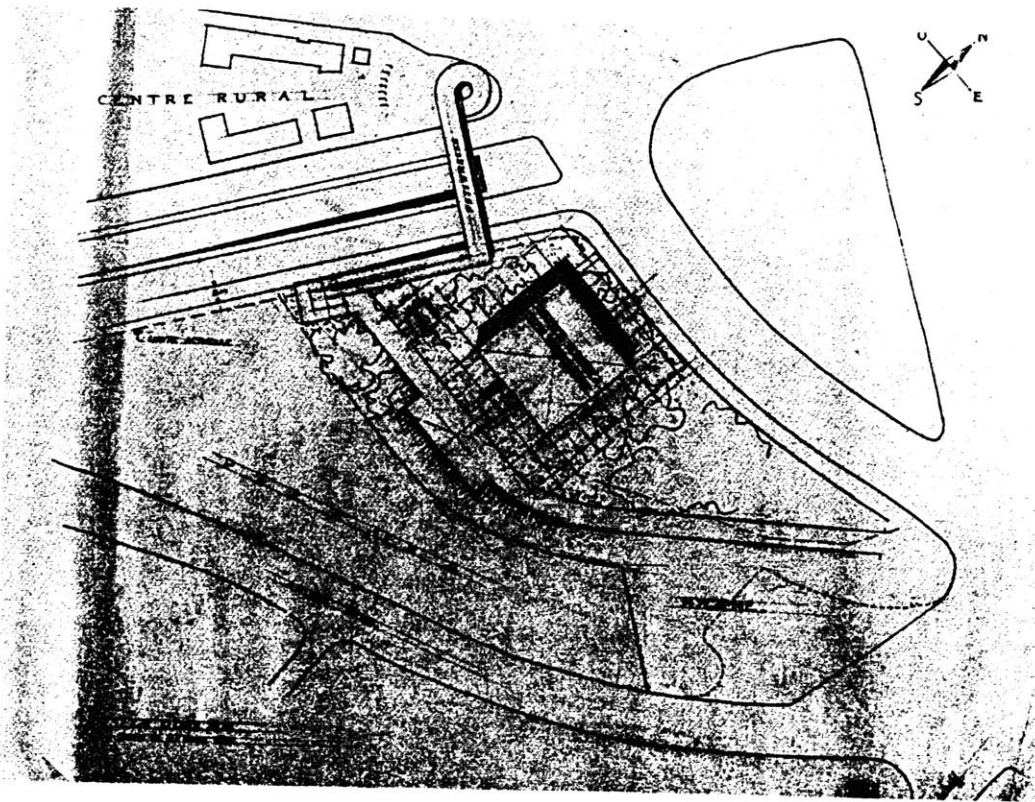


116.- Pierre Jeanneret: First version the canvas Pavilion, at the Kellermann site. Dated 4 November 1936.

November 4/1936



117.- Pierre Jeanneret: "Musée d'éducation populaire," second version of the canvas pavilion, at the Porte Maillot annex.



118.- The "Temps Nouveaux" Pavilion, placed on the Champs de Mars.

