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THE GARDENER'S HOUSE.
THE HOUSE AS LABORATORY
AND EXPRESSION OF A NEW ARCHITECTURE

DOM OGRODNIKA.
DOM JAKO LABORATORIUM
I WYRAZ NOWEJ ARCHITEKTURY

Abstract

Having as reference “la maison du gardien-jardinier” of the Villa Savoye, we propose a project for the gardener’s house, in some of the most significant “manifest-houses” of modernity. A construction of small dimensions that allow the autonomous life of a couple, that ensures the maintenance of the first house, with all the elements necessary for an independent life subordinate to the original project. A reissue of modern architectural laboratory that produced the “manifest-houses”, which will come into play both compared to the most unique architectural pre-existing twentieth century and contemporary architecture, the 21st century, a minimum habitat. Houses and landscapes designed by Aalto, Mies, Neutra, Gray, Bo Bardi, Scharoun, Smithson, da Roche, Coderch ... will constitute the material basis. An essay that integrates research, heritage intervention and contemporary creativity.

Keywords: house, manifesto, heritage, creation, project, architecture.

Streszczenie

Odnosząc się do „la maison du gardien-jardinier” Villi Savoye proponujemy projekt domu ogrodnika, w kilku znaczących „domach-manifestach” modernizmu. Konstrukcja o małych wymiarach, która pozwala na niezależne życie pary mieszkańców, zapewnia utrzymanie pierwszego domu, ze wszystkimi elementami koniecznymi do niezależnego życia podporządkowanego oryginalnemu projektowi. Następuje wznowienie nowoczesnego architektonicznego laboratorium produkującego „domy-manifesty”, które będą wchodzić w grę zarówno w porównaniu do unikalnych istniejących XX wiecznych i współczesnego XXI-wiecznego – siedliska minimum. Domy i krajobrazy zaprojektowane przez Aalto, Mies, Neutra, Gray’a, Bo Bardi, Scharouna, Smithsona, da Roche, Codercha... ustanowią materialną bazę. Tekst łączy badania, interwencje w dziedzictwo i współczesną kreatywność.

Słowa kluczowe: dom, manifest, dziedzictwo, twórczość, projekt

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In the twentieth century, the century of progress and illusion, architecture was an appropriate means to believe in a better future. While specialized congresses and international exhibitions took the idea forward in the near future setting and summoned European architects to project beyond the functions and common materials, the best-known architects individually imposed their ideas through the construction of singular houses trying to embody their theories. Modern architecture was torn between compliance with a social dimension, a commitment to the task of improving the way of life of its citizens through the development of collective housing, the “minimum” housing and standard, and the formal definition of a different architecture that should establish its rules and standards outside the continuity imposed by history.

It is logical that it is in Europe where the future of collective housing be debated, with real models from the Narkomfin building of Ginzburg, to the Dutch Bergpolder, or the better known models of the “Unité d’Habitation” of Le Corbusier. While collective housing was trying to achieve a standard model, the house in Europe was always a singular residence, linked to the local tradition and closer to the places of second residence or holiday. The progress and the discussion on the residential architecture of the future were developed on the blocks of collective housing.

The traditional collective residence of the pens is transplanted to modern architecture through the residential block. Between 1928 and 1932 Ginzburg built the Narkomfin (abbreviation of people’s Commissariat for Finances) in an attempt to solve the balance between community/privacy. From its construction came the building prototype of the modern residential block. The suspended street or gallery allowed bridges and continuities to be established between different buildings, overlaid other levels of relationship to the plane of the city. Narkomfin starts typological speculation of units of room which are subject to the central idea of building a road vertically, as a meeting place for the community.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a hundred years ago, the industrial development and urban development replaced the aristocracy by the bourgeoisie in the social elite; it seemed imperative to adapt the objects of domestic use to industrial series production. This convulsive period that mixed war with large specialized exhibitions trying to inform and shape the new housing for the new man through a public pedagogy. The great event of meeting between industry in continuous progress and the decorative arts that had controlled objects of domestic spaces during the 19th century, the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925, had to be delayed because of the war of 1914. In this exhibition occurred a violent confrontation between the nineteenth-century mentality and the modern world. The decline of the styles was in Paris richly represented by Art Nouveau and Art Decó, with the presence of refined luxury designers such as jeweller René Lalique, the furniture of Paul Follot, and the French refinement of Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, who organized the House of a rich Coleccionista, a sort of Museum of objects of the present time which asserted the interior of the house of the 19th century: housing as a large warehouse of objects in the exhibition. There were large and well-known architects, such as authors of the decadent surrounding spaces Henri Sauvage (1873–1932), and the spring (Au Printemps) Pavilion, or the haunting room by Pierre Chareau (1883–1959).

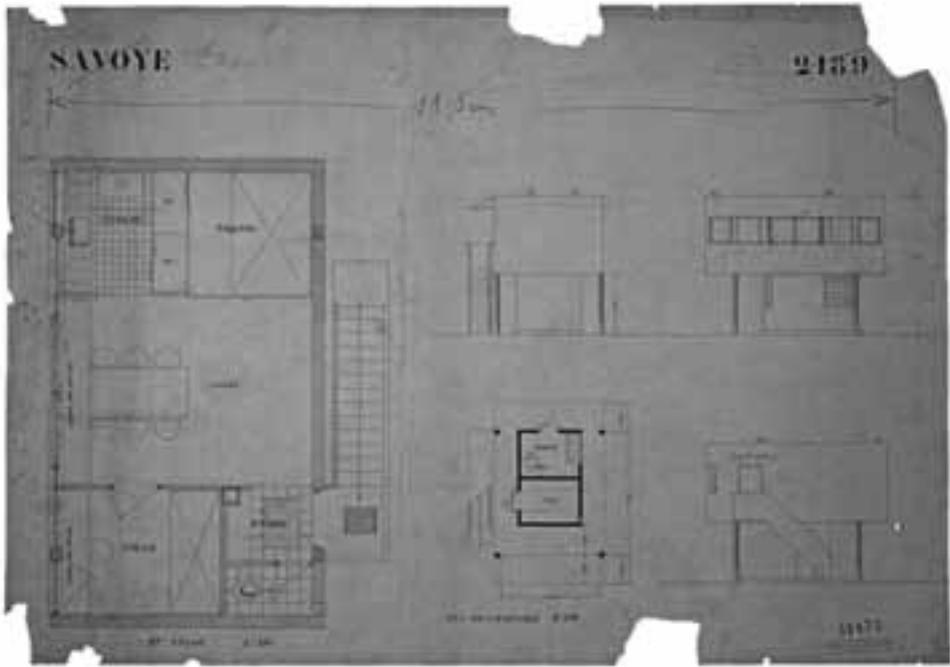
Around the refined objects of Art Deco there was established an aura that fully bridges the domestic space; the most humble homes, those created at the industrial peripheries of large cities, were full of crude imitations. The shape of these objects require their autonomous exposure, even furniture designed for leaning on the walls were exempt status, as can be seen

in Henri Sauvage's tea room. Comfort and accumulation appeared to be dependent terms among themselves. Collectors who had been born in the 19th century, based on the veneration of the archaeological objects from the past, unique objects, witnesses of a common history, became integrated into the home through collections of industrial objects, with no artistic or historical value. To be witnesses of the history, the domestic collections represented the personal memories of their inhabitants. In a certain sense happiness and success were reduced to possession, to the accumulation of objects.

During the Paris exhibition of 1925, society was not prepared for the experience proposed by three great architects from very different places and positions. Friedrich Kiesler eccentrically developed a metal structure with planes suspended from basic colours which dissolved the heavy limits of the architectural container. Kiesler's exhibition, "*The city space*", presented by Austria, was based on his theatrical experience to create innovative scenographies, stereoscopic scenes, resulting in it being one of the first and most brilliant neoplastic constructions. The Soviet pavilion of Konstantin Melnikov (1890–1974) is sufficiently known by all, it is only necessary to indicate that its insertion in the sample used a liberated route of the censorship that the promoters were exercising to maintain the purity of Arts Décoratifs: the pavilion of an invited nation that was chosen after a contest. The technological and structural contribution of this building is surprising even in the work of its author. The newly established Soviet Union took this building as a secondment to the international style. Melnikov broke the classical static composition and offered a suggestive instability of unsuspected spatial perspectives. Outside of the official site of exposure, due to the censorship of the organizers, took place the construction of the Pavilion of the "Nouveau Sprit", a real model of a modern house that developed on two floors and was furnished with a large outdoor terrace, trying to superimpose the qualities of collective housing and the isolated house.

After the 1925 Paris exhibition took place the Salon d'Automne, where Le Corbusier presented a new version of experimental housing. But it was not until the exposure of dwellings built for the 1927 Weissenhof, directed by Mies van der Rohe as director of the Werkbund, when it was explicitly realised that housing the past is not a value, as held by the organizers of the exhibition in Paris of 1925. The exposure of the Weissenhof in Stuttgart allowed a selection of architects not only to design residential models of different types, but to build them.

In 1929, Le Corbusier on a long journey for the dissemination of his work took advantage to construct, in many American cities, a linear building that supported his experimental house and the suspended interior street, would release large areas of urban land for gardens. Their sketch, in the manner of the 19th-century utopians of alternative cities, met the radically peripheral growths of cities such as Sao Paulo, Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. Most meditated, but with the same theoretical basis, between 1930 and 1942, developed the urban Plan for Algiers. The plan that added to the suspended Street a motorway, drawn on the heights of Algiers, two hundred metres above the city, the proposal was unanimously rejected by the Municipal Council of Algiers. Also developed were models of smaller size that had as a reference the street-gallery and housing supported on collective services. The more attractive, due to its metal structure, catalogued as the lightest building in the world, was the Bergpolder, built in Rotterdam in the years 1933 and 1934, with this model is envisaged for the first time the importance of technology in the formation of the "minimum housing". In 1935, José Luis Sert and the Group GATEPAC, also using a steel structure, projected and built the "Casa Bloc", a REDENTS building that connects the experiences of Le Corbusier in the Plan of Algiers and the Plan Voisin



Ill. 1. Pavillon jardinier, Villa Savoye

de Paris (1925). Between 1947 and 1952 Le Corbusier constructed the Unité d'habitation of Marseille building that will remain as a universal reference of the peripheral residential block, a new edition, more refined formally, of the Narkomfin. This model is so important, which makes it difficult to select some other later. Beauty was quoted by Copan in Sao Paulo, designed by Oscar Niemeyer between 1951 and 1966. The critic Reyner Banham, as a disseminator of Brutalism, highlights the construction of Park Hill in Sheffield, perhaps the most likely built suspended street-gallery proposal.

As we have already indicated the evolution avant-garde of the serial housing was accompanied, with different objectives, by the so-called "casas-Manifesto", profusely studied and disseminated by the architectural criticism, we refer to the Villa Saboye (Le Corbusier), the Maira House (Alvar Aalto), the Farnsworth House (Mies van der Rohe) or the Robie House (Frank Lloyd Wright), imposing architectural spaces more formal than theoretical, townhouses with their backs to the social needs, especially little committed to the foreseeable future on the basis of the serious problems caused by the two world wars.

The architectural media of the twentieth century shared the publication of both singular houses, clearly bourgeois, and the blocks of the collective periphery that assumed the social expectations created by the functional dimension of equality and service of the new architecture in its objective to obtain an alternative architecture, better for everyone. Thus Le Corbusier planned domestic spaces differently – the deep housing tube from the "Unité d'habitation" compared to the halls suspended from the Villa Saboye, under a single architectural gesture.

Whatever their use as house shelter in a lonely landscape, the Farnsworth house culminated an investigation of spaces and abstract domestic elements that the author had begun many years earlier with the Tugendhat house, no matter their functional adaptation of the House facing its incorporation into the formal debate of modernity in appearance.

The house 1027 Eileen Gray built for herself in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin in 1926 vindicates the purism of the Mediterranean traditional architecture along with elements taken from nautical technology. The main contribution of this construction is the freedom of its positioning stepped on a rocky mound and the use of mobile elements, including textiles, which are incorporated into the main facade of the house, on the terrace above the sea.

Oscar Niemeyer produces a very particular interpretation of the organic architecture of modernity in the House Canoe of Rio de Janeiro, in which flat shapes, cover and the sheet of water of the swimming pool, closed apparently random curves, as you would for level curves sloughed off of the territory. The pre-existence of rocks emerging and the concealment of the rooms excavated in the field contribute to the powerful image and offered without limits by the new architecture.

Other new organic interpretations are borne by José Antonio Coderch, in the Ugalde House of 1951, and the best known of Villa Mairea by Alvar Aalto, 1939. As we can see in these two examples houses have not only become the new formal structures for research laboratories, but also allow their authors to establish clear differences, architectural nuances that collective housing does not allowed. Mairea manages to combine the difficult objective balance between traditional Nordic construction and the spaces and forms of new architecture, which is also reflected in the variety of the materials used. The functional program that assumes a studio and an art gallery also contributes to the final outcome of this isolated

House in the middle of a forest and away from the version of the new American home that years later would be designed by Mies van der Rohe.

In United States the residential inter-war experience was not as important as in Europe. The way of life was much more disseminated and agricultural, producing more attention for isolated houses, but, excepting that, there was the equivalent to the theoretical debate to which the collective housing had been submitted to in Europe. It is in this context that the “Case Study Houses” elitist experience emerges. *Ars & Architecture Magazine* and its director Julius Entenza, in its issue of January 1945, published a programme of experimental houses that would generate a greater and more uniform experience of modernity.

The city of Los Angeles and California had a creative culture, without restrictions or oppressive traditions, in which prevailing tend was to rely on nature and its integration in the same. A good place and time, after the shortages of housing created by the war, to develop this experience, which was always based on the premises of the international style that proliferated in Europe, although the formal results corresponded more to the American way of life. The city of Los Angeles had the work of Europeans such as R.M. Schindler and R. Neutra, emigrant architects.

On my first visit to the *Ville Savoye*, many years ago, I was surprised by a small and strange disproportionate house hovering behind the door of entrance to the garden of the villa, as if it were a surveillance camera. After visiting the famous *Le Corbusier House* and contemplating the practical application of the five points of the new architecture of the 20th century, I understood that marginal construction, both for their servitude with the main house as by their secondary presence, was the house of the gardener (the *maison du gardien-jardinier*). An ugly but useful interpretation of *Le Corbusier's* five points, distant from the manifest refinement of the house presiding over the plot.

The marginal house turned out to be the only built copy of the minimum house submitted by *Le Corbusier* to the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) held in Frankfurt in 1929. The direct transcription of the speculative and theoretical typology of inter-war minimum housing; a new confrontation between the two models of residence which the architectural avant-garde used to spread its architecture. All visitors to the *villa Savoye* were surprised by the direct confrontation of the bourgeois luxury of the house manifesto with the rationality without concessions from the social accommodation investigated by the modern movement; two avant-garde aspects of the same manifesto House that presided over the plot.

The *House of Poissy* recreates a small paradise for the ‘good life’. The residences of the kinds accommodated have always required auxiliary buildings to accommodate the people who work in them and which in the extreme case of the Royal residences of the Baroque era were becoming whole cities, *Aranjuez*, *Versailles*, *Potsdam*... In the 20th century and with the autonomy generated by the massive use of the car as a means of transport, the most affluent families built their houses in residential areas of urban peripheries of large plots of which the dwelling occupied only a small part, the rest being devoted to accesses, gardens, sports courts, parking gardens, swimming pool, etc. These “wealthy” homes that are in many cases second homes for weekends and holidays, require auxiliary housing where the guardian of the estate that usually exercises other functions, like gardener, chauffeur, domestic service, etc., stays.

A small part of this urban bourgeoisie, surely the most illustrated and interested in the culture in all its manifestations, instructed their homes to be built by recognized architects who saw in them the opportunity to expose and build their ideas that would later be applied to major projects; its diffusion and deep contents of ideological and critical thinking refers to these houses with the generic name of “manifesto houses”. The Ville Savoye, where Le Corbusier materialized his 5 points for the new architecture, formulated in 1927, is one of the most significant of this group of avant-garde buildings from the 20th century examples.

An educational experience that we have conducted during the last year in the universities of Seville and Venezia has consisted of projecting the house of the gardener on some of the manifesto houses more significant than the modernity. An annexed building of small dimension that allows the autonomous life of a couple, with all the elements required for an independent life and subordinate at the same time.

As in the comparative panels of the schools of architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries, *Recueil et Parallèle des édifices de tout genre, anciens de JNL Durand*, we put into play a complete reflection on the contemporary patrimony and the concepts of model and type. The gardener’s house will produce a new relationship with the manifesto House, A kind of modified landscape that arises from the unequal confrontation between the two houses and the two periods. Since in any hereditary intervention there will be a dialogue between “the new thing and the old thing” the debate on which every project will attend. A reissue of the laboratory of modern architecture that produced the manifesto house originals, that will in the game both the comparison with the most singular preexistences of the 20th century, as the contemporary settings, twenty-first century, of a minimum room, from a micro architecture.

Another aspect to meditate in this project is the continued experience that has existed in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, on micro-architectures, According to the terms used by Richard Horden (magazine *Detail* 2005–1), the concept of micro architecture is in objects known by all: hanging hammocks, huts, tents, cabins or telephone boxes. Micro architecture means something more than the creation of an artefact. The micro architecture opens new ways for the education and allows to create an oasis of freedom. What is important here is not the charm of an austere life of withdrawal but the intercom multimedia in a limited space. A small scale increases the possibilities of achievement. It is easy to open a wide frame of reference of these “gardener’s houses” “on the basis of the Cabanon (Roquebrune, 1951–52) by Le Corbusier” and concluding in the last models based on a high technology as the “Microcompact House” projected by Richard Horden.

Concepts as diverse as Pre-existence patrimonial, models, types, minimal housing and prefabrication, are invoked to be part of this project experience, which will have as its main objective the domestic space, the fundamental field of research for the architecture of all times.