

## Guido Guidi

Le Corbusier - 5 architectures

[Guido Guidi and Le Corbusier]

The series of photos taken by Guido Guidi of some of Le Corbusier's projects constitute a reading of the 'oeuvre' of the master conceived within an editorial project developed with publisher Einaudi as part of the series 'I millenni'. This series focuses on major literary works and is directed by Mauro Bersani. This volume was published in 2003 with the title: *Le Corbusier, Scritti*, by Rosa Tamborrino, Photos by Guido Guidi.

The idea was to look at the famous architect from a specific point of view that placed him in the world of books. This particular viewpoint originated from a reflection on Le Corbusier as a writer, but also in a broader sense it was driven by a strong desire to work on the facets of a work that, beyond its critical fortunes and misfortunes, remained extraordinary.

It was extraordinary, monumental, impossible to synthesize however, in some aspects, still little explored. His numerous, various and original books were still elusive. They were all conceived as actual planned projects of which the author followed the entire process, as the carefully conserved documentation showed. He did not just write them but, each time, he pushed himself to *create* with words, form, graphics, dimension, typographical characters.

The project *Le Corbusier, Scritti* intended to reexamine this approach to the book as a unique as well as serial object that contains reproductions but generates new production, uses images autonomously and finally presents itself as a tool that offers fragments of different projects.

From the very beginning, Guido Guidi's photos are an integral part of the editorial project and contribute to the volume with a reflection on a selection of works. In the context of creation, no illustrative addition would have been coherent, nor any *architectural* image would have been conceivable. Guido Guidi is the artist who, with a camera, dialogues with the architect - 'homme de lettre', as Le Corbusier loved to present himself: both aware of the deep interpretative value of the act of *observation*.

Several times in his writings and drawings Le Corbusier emphasizes the value of the eye, *des yeux qui ne voient pas*, thus inviting the reader to lay a wise look as a cognitive form of architecture.

This is how Guidi's photos 'invent' an exhibition space in the volume, adapting the format of the series by Einaudi through an ad hoc modification: a serial and yet unique work. Guidi's work has had such a tremendous impact on editorial rigidity - including the expected costs - that it brought a distinctive quality to the volume within the series published by Einaudi with a special insert.

In a volume dedicated to a writer who created his books with collage of texts and images, the work of Guido Guidi draws a portrait of the architect through fragments. Partial visions, nothing other than details that nonetheless, are details that turn out to be enlightening.

The subjects were chosen by Guidi from a long list of buildings and cross the themes proposed in the introductory essay in a completely autonomous way. The marginal investigations on the main oeuvre - in the archives as well as in the photos - led to research

on lesser-known works. Guidi's photos reveal some of them practically for the first time, such as the Duval factory.

The work that Guidi created for this project is far more expansive than what has been included in the volume. With this exhibit, an extensive selection of the reading of Le Corbusier by Guido Guidi is presented for the first time. Compared to the admittedly generous selection in the volume by Einaudi, this exhibit shows - not just quantitatively but also in its facets - a wider project and more interpretations.

The Usine Duval, the factory for the Manufacture Duval in Saint-Dié des Vosges in the aftermath of World War II (started in 1946), was an extraordinary construction site for Guido Guidi as it was for Le Corbusier too. Designed and realized in conjunction with the famous project of the Marseille Unity House, the factory offers a congenial space of reflection and work. For Corbu it is the experimentation of the *béton brut*, the great dimension, *brise-soleil*, bright colors on a rough concrete that carries the signs of the shutterings, large sculptural pilotis. But it is also an experimentation of work spaces on a human scale: that of the definite proportions of man with his arm raised, but also that of work and relationships, the place for the bicycle and the bench to sit on to eat a meal.

The photos show us an inhabited space, not so much for the passage of time, but for the nature of habitual habitats and the compromises of making (the traditional brick). It is possible to recognize the five LeCorbusierian points, for example in the ramp leading to the indispensable garden roof, but also a design that aims not only at forms but also at techniques, such as the hardware utilized to open windows.

Guidi's perseverance in framing the details of a place, the materials combined during the construction, the colors of the spaces, together with the notes glued on the walls or on the textile containers, deals deeply with a work that Le Corbusier had conceived for a different factory, a 'usine verte', as he wrote in the *La Ville radieuse*.

This view of Le Corbusier's work was shared by the commissioner, Jean-Jacques Duval, who became both a supporter and a friend and whose portrait appears in Guidi's photo framing the collage created by the portraits of Corbu and Duval that are juxtaposed and overlapped against the background of a drawing by Le Corbusier that covers a whole wall. The portrait of the master struck by the light recalls those ghosts, traces of human presence, which appeared in the early nineteenth-century photographic experiences.

Photographic fragments define the articulation of the large volumes, of the pure geometries outlined by color contrasts, by the play of solids and voids, by the 'pan de verre', the first glass wall by Le Corbusier at the Cité de Refuge (completed in 1933). The imposed framing is an invitation to think of signs and spaces - of which the tridimensional perception is emphasized - seizing the sudden moments they appear through 'slow' shots that actually indicate minimal movements of the shooting point.

The series of houses compares with an architectonic theme radically questioned by Le Corbusier in favor of an innovation of the idea of living.

The house of Monsieur Planeix, far from the center of Paris and still a beloved family home for the next generation, hands down the memory of a shared project. It is a small 'immeuble de rapport' cut out in the curtain of houses (1924) of which Guidi's photos show the

complexity, in a small size, of volumes and spaces through repeated interconnections between the inside and the outside, on the back.

With the same viewpoint, programmatically unfamiliar with every synthesis or illustrative compromise, Guidi's photos also frame La Roche (1923) and Villa Savoye (1928). Fluid geometries combine with geometric figures designed by light, the planes turn out to be opposed to the gaps that open windows on a depth that speaks of the lecorbusierian space as a place conceived for a total immersion.

A feeling of revelation described by a young Charlotte Perriand returns to mind: *To enter that space impregnated by the sonatas of Johann Sebastian Bach - Corbu had inserted the gramophone - was like penetrating religiously into an unknown, musical, harmonious world, finding your whole Self in osmosis, in complete communion with Totality. Corbusier had taken me.*

The work of Guido Guidi, rather than lingering on the symbols of a vocabulary, inspects with apparent simplicity the signs that reveal traces of a thought. What emerges are the clues of Le Corbusier's constant research.

[Italian text by Rosa Tamborrino]