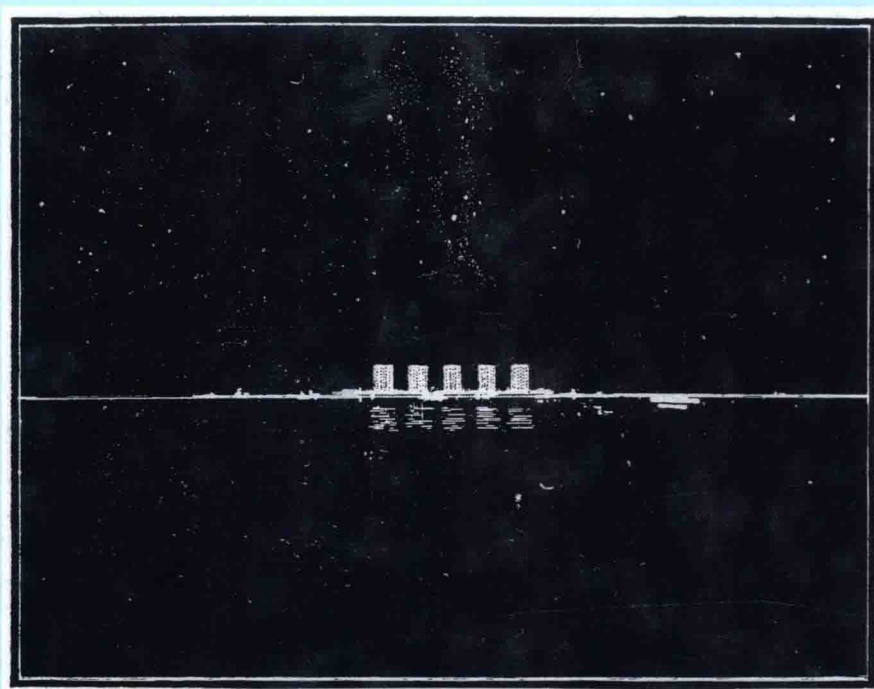


LE CORBUSIER

# PRECISIONS

**ON THE PRESENT STATE  
OF  
ARCHITECTURE  
AND  
CITY PLANNING**



Le Corbusier

Precisions on the Present State  
of Architecture and City Planning

Reprint of the Original American Edition

With a New Introduction by Tim Benton,  
58 Original Lecture Sketches by Le Corbusier,  
and Explanatory Notes



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Lisa Schons, Zurich

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Marie Lusa, Carmen Tobler

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Le Corbusier

Precisions

# Contents

A 7

Tim Benton – Introduction to *Precisions* (2015)

49

Precisions on the Present State  
of Architecture and City Planning  
Reprint of the Original American Edition

B 333

Original Lecture Sketches

C 397

Explanatory Notes

A

Introduction to *Precisions* (2015)

Tim Benton

The book that Le Corbusier published in 1930, *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme avec un prologue américain et un corollaire Brésilien suivi d'une température Parisienne et d'une atmosphère Moscovite*,<sup>1</sup> to give its full French title, is the most important book about architectural design written by him before his book on Ronchamp (1957) in the series *Les Carnets de la recherche patiente*.<sup>2</sup> In a letter to his mother from September 25, 1929, he said of his lectures, "It's a Bible."<sup>3</sup> Writing to his wife Yvonne, he was even more enthusiastic: "My ten lectures will be something impressive, overwhelming, uncontestable. I'm going to have them printed in Buenos Aires, since it's a powerful document."<sup>4</sup> He also put together a list of people to whom the book should be sent, including many politicians and men of influence outside the world of architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Summarizing eight years in which he and his associate Pierre Jeanneret had created a corpus of buildings and a body of theory which arguably changed the face of modern architecture, the book also marks a turning point in his attitudes and design method.<sup>6</sup> As Mary McLeod says in her excellent review of the first English edition:

"In *Les Arts decoratifs d'aujourd'hui* (1925), Le Corbusier stated that 'it is an excellent thing to keep an element of the savage alive in us—a small one.' In *Precisions*, the message is that a big element of the savage may be an excellent thing."<sup>7</sup>

In these lectures, we see Le Corbusier turning away from machinist imagery towards a celebration of the simplicity, dignity and "spirit of truth," to be found in humble working people and very simple vernacular buildings. Some of the most lyrical writing in the book concerns the modest shacks of the Argentinean suburban dweller or the black men and women of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro.

1 Le Corbusier. (1930) *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme avec un prologue américain et un corollaire Brésilien suivi d'une température Parisienne et d'une atmosphère Moscovite*. Paris, G. Crès et cie [hereafter *Precisions*].

2 Le Corbusier. (1975) *Ronchamp* (*Les Carnets de la recherche patiente* 2). Stuttgart, Gerd Hatje (first edition 1957).

3 FLC R1(12)318.

4 Letter to Yvonne, September 24, 1929. He described his lectures as "something dense, extreme, incontestable" ("quelque chose de tassé, carabiné, d'incontestable").

5 FLC B2(9)664.

6 For an excellent and well-informed review of *Precisions* as a turning point in Le Corbusier's thinking, see McLeod, M. (1996) "On the Present State of Architecture and City Planning by Le Corbusier, Review." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (1): 89–92. For a comparison between the South American (1929, 1936) and North American (1935) lecture tours, see Boyer, M. C. (2011) *Le Corbusier: homme de lettres*. New York, Princeton Architectural Press: 433–485. Of particular interest is her analysis of the theme of haute cuisine (metaphor for the Academy) and cannibalism, concluding that Le Corbusier was inviting his Argentinean audience to anthropophagic consumption to acquire his strength (p.449).

7 McLeod, op.cit.: 90.



The book consists of ten lectures given in Buenos Aires in October 1929 and an indication of the content of four more lectures given in Montevideo, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. But the book also contains four other texts, of which the first two, "American Prologue" and "Brazilian Corollary" are the most significant.<sup>8</sup> I will turn to these later.

### Origins of the lecture tour

On August 27, 1928, Le Corbusier was asked by the Comtesse de Vera to prepare a project for a house for the wealthy and highly cultivated Argentinean intellectual Victoria Ocampo, on a plot she owned in Buenos Aires.<sup>9</sup> The plans, closely based on the third project for Madame Meyer (April 1926), were dispatched on September 18, 1928.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that Victoria Ocampo had no intention of using Le Corbusier's plans, since she had already asked another architect, Alejandro Bustillo, to design a house for her on another site in the Palermo Chico quarter.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Victoria Ocampo became a friend who helped organize the lecture tour, along with the engineer Alejo González Garraño, whom Le Corbusier says he met in the home of the Duchess of Dato in Paris.<sup>12</sup> On April 19, 1929, Le Corbusier wrote to Garraño from the Hotel Bellevue in Berne, proposing to give

- 8 Le Corbusier had already used the device of adding an article entitled "Temperature" in the nineteenth edition of *Vers une architecture* in 1928. He used this piece to stir up the polemic over the League of Nations project. Le Corbusier. (1928) *Le Corbusier. Vers une architecture. Nouvelle [19<sup>ème</sup>] édition revue et augmentée*. Paris, G. Cres et Cie.
- 9 See Benton, T. (2007) *The Villas of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret 1920–1930*. Basel/Boston, Birkhäuser: 150–153 and 223 [check 2007 edition for page nos]. Adela, Comtesse de Vera was a Communist who frequented the avant-garde circles in Paris (see Liernur, J. F. (2008) *La Red austral: obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en la Argentina (1924–1965)*. Bernal, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Prometeo 3010: 67. This book and the one by Fernando Perez offer the most detail on Le Corbusier's reception in South America (Perez Oyarzun, F. (1991) *Le Corbusier y Sudamerica: viajes y proyectos*. Santiago, Ediciones ARQ.
- 10 Work on the project began with a sketch on August 27, 1928 (FLC 31043), and it was sent to the client as a set of plans on September 18, 1928 (FLC 24231-5).
- 11 Bustillo published a critical article, "Reflexiones sobre arquitectura," in *La Nacion* on October 28, claiming that Le Corbusier lacked practical experience and was only concerned with introducing a new style. Furthermore, the elimination of ornament reduced the possibility of poetic expression. (Liernur, op.cit.: 91).
- 12 *Precisions*: 18. See Pérez Oyarzún, F. (2003) "Le Corbusier in South America: Reinventing the South American City." *Le Corbusier and the Architecture of Reinvention*. Edited by M. Mostafavi, London, AA Publications: 140–153. Le Corbusier met Adelina del Carril Güiraldes, widow of the Argentinean poet Ricardo Güiraldes, who had just died in Paris, on the *Massilia*, since he mentions her name on a sketch. He visited the Güiraldes estate in San Antonio de Areco. Garraño and Güiraldes had been close friends (see the passenger list for the trip on the *Massilia* (FLC A3(11)49).



ten lectures in Buenos Aires and hoping for some architectural commissions as a side effect.<sup>13</sup> The formal invitations came from the Amigos del Arte (Friends of the Arts), a cultural association of Argentinean intelligentsia, and the Faculty of Exact Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires.<sup>14</sup>

Preparations for the extension of the trip to Brazil also began early. On May 7, 1929, Le Corbusier wrote to his friend Blaise Cendrars, saying that he wanted to visit São Paulo and asking for his advice.<sup>15</sup> Cendrars had already alerted him to discussions in Brazil concerning the construction of a new capital, Planaltina, which would eventually take concrete form as Brasília. Le Corbusier mentions three lectures that he could give in Brazil (on architecture, urbanism and interior equipment). Cendrars offered to help get him invitations to lecture in São Paulo and Rio.<sup>16</sup> This initiative seems to have paid off, because Le Corbusier wrote to Cendrars' friend Paolo Prado at the Hotel Claridge in Paris on July 28, explaining that the Argentineans were going to pay him full expenses and 6,000 francs per lecture and hoping that the Brazilians would match this.<sup>17</sup> Upon learning that the Brazilians were not intending to pay him for his lectures, he hesitated, but eventually a deal was arrived at. Also on July 28, Le Corbusier sketched out his full program of ten lectures in Buenos Aires.<sup>18</sup>

### Le Corbusier's lectures

From 1923 onwards, Le Corbusier had been giving lectures regularly, in Paris and elsewhere, to a wide range of audiences.<sup>19</sup> He claimed that lecturing was not simply a transmission of ideas, but also a moment of invention:

"I never prepared my lectures. [...] This improvisation is a wonderful thing: I made drawings [...] in the early days, I worked with chalk, colored chalks on a blackboard, always assuming there was one. And when you draw on the basis of words, you draw with useful words, you create something. And my whole theory—my introspection and my reflection on the phenomena

13 FLC C3(5)291.

14 One of the lectures was hosted by the Friends of the City.

15 FLC C3(5)290.

16 FLC C3(5)289. The letter is undated but is clearly a response to Le Corbusier's of May 7, since Cendrars refers to the man from Oklahoma who, according to Le Corbusier, wants him to design a housing project.

17 FLC C3(5)288. In a letter to his mother, he claimed that the Brazilians would pay him 10,000 francs a lecture. (FLC R2(1)63).

18 FLC C3(7)108.

19 For a fully documented introduction to Le Corbusier's early lectures, see Benton, T. (2009) *The Rhetoric of Modernism. Le Corbusier as a Lecturer*. Basel/Boston, Birkhäuser.

of architecture and urbanism, derives from these improvised and illustrated lectures.<sup>20</sup>

Research into the manuscripts at the Fondation Le Corbusier, the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the Getty Research Institute has shown that Le Corbusier did, in fact, prepare fairly specific notes for his lectures.<sup>21</sup> These notes usually consisted of a few pages including his opening remarks and any special thoughts he had for the occasion, followed by one or two sheets of pictograms summarizing his usual arguments. It is not always possible to identify how closely he followed these preliminary notes, but on the few occasions where his lectures were stenographically transcribed, it appears that he read or memorized his notes and reproduced them quite faithfully, as far as they went. His preparatory notes were typically written on his way to the lecture venue. When visiting a country or city for the first time, he would often spend his first hours or days energetically exploring the place; a typical device in his opening lecture would be to demonstrate his understanding, and even admiration, for the city, before demonstrating its faults.

Le Corbusier had published all or part of a lecture on several occasions before. Part of a lecture on urbanism delivered to the French Society of Urbanists in 1923 at Strasbourg was published in an article entitled "La Grande ville" in *L'Esprit Nouveau* and then in his book *Urbanisme* of 1924 (*The City of Tomorrow*, 1929).<sup>22</sup> His lecture on architecture, delivered at Geneva, Lausanne and at the Sorbonne and the Salle Rapp in Paris between February and October 1924, was published twice, in his book *Almanach de l'architecture moderne* and in a special brochure published by the *Bulletin de l'Ordre de l'Étoile d'Orient*, both in 1925.<sup>23</sup> Le Corbusier usually responded to requests to lecture by delivering two papers, one on architecture and one on

20 "Je ne préparais jamais de conférences. [...] Cette improvisation est une chose formidable: je dessinais [...] au début je travaillais avec des craies, des craies de couleur au tableau noir, encore fallait-il qu'il y en ait. Et quand on dessine autour des paroles, on dessine avec les paroles utiles, on crée quelque chose. Et toute ma théorie—mon introspection et ma rétrospection sur le phénomène Architecture et Urbanisme—vient de ces conférences improvisées et dessinées." Interview with rector Malet, 1951, extract from the recording, *L'Aventure Le Corbusier*, Fondation Le Corbusier.

21 Benton, T. (2009) *The Rhetoric of Modernism. Le Corbusier as a Lecturer*, op.cit.

22 "La Grande ville." *L'Esprit Nouveau* 23, May 1924; and Le Corbusier. (1925) *Urbanisme*. Paris, G. Crès et Cie.: 88–95. See also the conference proceedings from Société française des urbanistes. (1924) *Où en est l'urbanisme en France et à l'étranger?* (Strasbourg 1923). Paris, Librairie de l'enseignement technique Léon Eyrolles: 247–257.

23 Le Corbusier. (1925) *Almanach d'architecture moderne: documents, théorie, pronostics, histoire, petites histoires, dates, propos standards, apologie et idéalisation du standard, organisation, industrialisation du bâtiment*. Paris, Editions Connivences: 17–54; and Le Corbusier. (1925) "L'Esprit Nouveau en Architecture." *Bulletin de l'Ordre de l'Etoile de l'Orient*: 24–54; FLC X1(3)64.



urbanism. These lectures principally spoke of the need to radically change architecture and urbanism and were more about a theory of modern culture than about the practice of architecture or urban design. From 1927, however, his lectures began to develop more specific themes. For example, in January 1927 he gave a lecture on “Le Plan de la maison moderne” (The Plan of the Modern House)<sup>24</sup> and in November, at Berne and Zurich, the lecture “Une maison—un palais” (A House—a Palace), which was the basis for his book of the same name.<sup>25</sup> These titles were shoe-horned into the series of ten lectures he gave in Buenos Aires.

### The political context

1929 marked a turning point in Le Corbusier’s career for a number of reasons. He had just played a leading role in the formation of CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture) at a meeting held in his friend Hélène de Mandrot’s castle at La Sarraz in Switzerland.<sup>26</sup> This followed two years of increasingly violent controversy over the competition for the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva, where the project by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret was awarded first prize together with eight other schemes. In the unseemly process that followed, the commission was given to the oldest competitor, the academic architect Henri Paul Nénot, assisted by four of the other awarded competitors. Aided by the Swiss critic and historian Sigfried Giedion, Le Corbusier managed to whip up a storm of protest among modern architects and sympathizers, which laid the groundwork for the CIAM meetings. Also in 1928, Le Corbusier landed the commission for the Centrosoyuz building in Moscow, the Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives (completed in 1933). He visited the city in October 1928 and again in March 1930.<sup>27</sup> It was on that second occasion that he wrote “The Atmosphere of Moscow” (pp. 259–266). Simultaneously, he was designing the last of his “Purist” villas for the Savoye family at Poissy near Paris. The preliminary project for this villa, along with that for the Centrosoyuz and many other projects, featured in the first volume of his *Complete Works*, published 1930 in German in Zurich, but handed over to the publisher in

24 FLC X1(4)7.

25 Le Corbusier. (1928) *Une maison—un palais. “À la recherche d’une unité architecturale.”* Paris, G. Crès et Cie. On page one, Le Corbusier explains that the text is based on lectures given in Zurich, Madrid and Barcelona, each time in a different form. For notes from this lecture in Berne, see FLC B3(4)504–541.

26 Mumford, E. (2000) *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960*. Cambridge (MA), MIT Press.

27 Cohen, J.-L. (1987) *Le Corbusier et la mystique de l’URSS: théories et projets pour Moscou, 1928–1936*. Brussels, Mardaga.

1929.<sup>28</sup> 1928 also saw a fierce controversy between Le Corbusier and the Czech functionalist and former admirer of Le Corbusier, Karel Teige, who accused him of formalism and “lyricism” (a negative word in Marxist circles). There followed a general split within the circles of the modern movement between those who believed that architecture should be considered an art and those who wanted to limit it to functional and social purposes.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Le Corbusier was attacked by both the Swiss Fascist architect Alexander von Senger (or in his Francophile persona Alexandre de Senger) and the French critic of the newspaper *Figaro* Camille Mauclair, both of whom painted Le Corbusier as an agent of Bolshevism, intent on destroying the art of architecture.<sup>30</sup>

One effect of these debates was that Le Corbusier drifted increasingly towards the extreme right of French politics, lecturing to George Valois’ *Faisceau des combattants* and including among his friends men like Pierre Winter and Philippe Lamour, co-founders of a short-lived fascist revolutionary party in 1928.<sup>31</sup> He would later collaborate with Lamour and Winter, along with Hubert Lagardelle, on the editing of the anarcho-syndicalist journals *Plans* and *Prélude*, to which he contributed articles on architecture and urbanism, many of which were reprinted in his book *La Ville radiieuse* (1935).<sup>32</sup> Although it is impossible to find in the South American lectures any trace of Fascist ideology, in the conventional sense of the term, there is plenty of evidence of an impatience with existing forms of administration and

28 Boesiger W. and O. Stonorov. (1930) *Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret. Ihr gesamtes Werk 1910–1929*. Zurich, Girsberger. The second edition of this book, in three languages, was not published until 1937, with some significant changes, and it is this later edition which has been republished since: Boesiger W. and O. Stonorov. (1937) *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret. Œuvre complète 1910–1929*. Zurich, Girsberger.

29 Teige’s article, first published in the first issue of the Czech journal *Stavba*, was translated and reproduced in Teige, K. (1974) “Mundaneum.” *Oppositions* 4: 83–91. A similar conflict took place within the Bauhaus, when Walter Gropius resigned in 1928 and was replaced by a functionalist, the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer.

30 Senger, A. v. (1931) *Le Cheval de Troie du bolchevisme*. Biel, Chandelier; Senger, A. v. (1931) *Die Brandfackel Moskaus*. Zurzach, Verlag Kaufhaus; Mauclair, C. (1930) *La Farce de l’art vivant II. Les Météques contre l’art français*. Paris, Éditions de la Nouvelle revue critique; and Mauclair, C. (1932) *La Crise du panbétonisme intégral. L’Architecture va-t-elle mourir?*, Paris, Éditions de la Nouvelle revue critique.

31 For a knowledgeable, if unreadable, dive into these right-wing connections, see Chaslin, F. (2015) *Un Corbusier*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil; and its journalistic spin-off, De Jarcy, X. (2015) *Le Corbusier. Un fascisme français*. Paris, Albin Michel. Despite confirming Le Corbusier’s connections with right-wing groups and his opportunism in attempting unsuccessfully to collaborate with the Vichy regime, these books fail to persuade that Le Corbusier accepted the militaristic, anti-Semitic and anti-libertarian aims of Italian Fascism or German National Socialism. For a milder and less well-informed version, see Flint, A. (2014) *Modern Man. The Life of Le Corbusier, Architect of Tomorrow*. Boston/New York, New Harvest/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

32 Le Corbusier. (1967) [*La Ville radiieuse*, 1935] *The Radiant City. Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-Age Civilization*. New York, Orion Press.



a desire for the means of finding radical solutions to the problems of the modern city. The fantasy of a decree which could clear away obstructions and allow the imposition of an urban plan is spelled out on pages 183–186 in the lecture on “The Voisin Plan for Paris: Can Buenos Aires Become One of the Great Cities of the World.” The argument is based on the methods used by Baron Haussmann in Paris in the 1850s: persuading property owners to allow their buildings to be demolished on the promise of increased revenue from taller, more modern buildings. But as he dreamed of a new authority—a new Colbert—capable of providing him with the opportunity to carry out his urban projects, he simultaneously became increasingly concerned with individual privacy and the simple values of the peasant or fisherman living close to nature. The South American experience would reinforce this search for origins and vernacular simplicity.

### The lecture tour

Le Corbusier boarded the *S.S. Massilia* at Bordeaux on September 14 and berthed at Montevideo on the 27th, before arriving in Buenos Aires later that night.<sup>33</sup> In his penultimate lecture he recalled the spectacle of Buenos Aires seen from the ship:

“I was intensely moved by the infinite line of lights and the little twinkling that indicated the center of the city.”<sup>34</sup>

He incorporated this vision into a sketch, with the addition of the skyscrapers of his proposed business district, built out over the Rio Plata on a concrete platform (FLC 30304). This drawing bears an uncanny resemblance to a photograph he took in 1911 of a fortified city on the Danube.<sup>35</sup>

### The text of *Precisions*

The documentation for the lectures in Buenos Aires is particularly rich. In addition to various sheets of notes with plans for the series, there are preparatory manuscript notes, numbered by lecture, a typescript draft with corrections and two sets of annotated page proofs.<sup>36</sup> Most of the illustrations in *Precisions* are based on the

33 A sketch of Montevideo is dated September 27 (FLC sketchbook B2: 21).

34 *Precisions*: 206.

35 A print exists at the Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC L5(1)124) and a glass plate in the library of La Chaux-de-Fonds (LC108-0584). There is also a poor print in the CCA archive. The place has been identified as Semendria/Smederevo on the Danube near Požarevac.

36 This documentation is divided between the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris and the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Of the seventy-seven large drawings which have survived from the lecture tour, fifty-six correspond to those illustrated in *Precisions*. Three of the drawings (FLC 30297B, 33525A and 33526B) were not selected for publication, and the remainder are variants of those published.

drawings made during the lectures. The color illustrations in the French edition were created by adding crude color overlays to the black-and-white photographs of his lecture drawings.

None of this, however, quite resolves the question of what exactly constitutes the text of the book *Precisions*. Knowing he was going to publish his lectures, as was the case for his lecture at the Ordre de l'Étoile d'Orient, he asked for stenographic transcripts to be made during his talks. On September 25, he told his mother that he intended to publish the Argentinean lectures. In the case of the lecture which opens *Une maison—un palais*, however, it seems that he wrote out the text in between different presentations of the lecture. He makes this clear, saying that in Madrid he read his text, since the book had been commissioned, whereas on other occasions he had improvised.<sup>37</sup> There is no clear evidence that a stenographic transcript of the Buenos Aires lectures was made. It is quite possible that Le Corbusier wrote the text on the *S.S. Lutetia* on his return to Bordeaux. He says: "I can [...] undertake the writing down of the ten lectures of Buenos Aires, which were improvised."<sup>38</sup> He told William Ritter the same thing: "Upon my return to the boat, I wrote a book which will come out in two months: '*Précisions*.'"<sup>39</sup> The main part of the text (pp. 1–231) was signed on December 21, 1929 in the estuary of the Gironde, just before disembarking at Bordeaux. In addition, the twenty-one pages of "American Prologue" were apparently written on the first day of the voyage, on December 10, on board the *Lutetia*. Writing 252 pages in thirteen days is quite a feat, even for Le Corbusier—a task that would have been made easier by a transcript. He also found time to give an illustrated lecture to the passengers one evening.<sup>40</sup> In my book *The Rhetoric of Modernism*, I was convinced, by the free-flowing style of the writing, that Le Corbusier probably did have a transcript in front of him when he edited the lectures on the *Lutetia*. He certainly writes as if addressing a live audience. For example, Le Corbusier dramatizes the creation of his drawings before the eyes of the audience:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I begin by drawing a line that can separate, in the process of our perceptions, the domain of material things, daily events, reasonable tendencies, from that especially reserved to spiritual ones. Below the line, what exists; above, what one feels. Continuing my drawing from the bottom [...]"<sup>41</sup> (FLC 30298).

37 Le Corbusier.(1928) *Une maison—un palais*. "A la recherche d'une unité architecturale." Paris, G. Crès et Cie.: 1.

38 *Precisions*: 1.

39 Letter to William Ritter, April 22, 1930 (FLC R3(19)423).

40 According to the note of the arrival of the *Lutetia* at Bordeaux in *Liberté du Sud-Ouest* (December 23, 1929), the lecture included transparencies of several villas, the League of Nations project, the Centrosoyuz and the Plan Voisin (FLC X1(10)135).

41 *Ibid.*: 35–36.



If Le Corbusier wrote these descriptions post hoc, they are extraordinarily vivid. Also, there are sharp differences in style in the original French between different passages, as if marking the addition of a more formal writing to the transcribed or reconstructed oratory. It remains an open question. What is certain is that he wants the reader to believe that they are present at a lecture rather than reading a more formal text.

There are questions to be answered, however. The length of the ten chapters varies considerably between nine and twenty-one pages. It is difficult to understand why this should be so, if the book was composed on the *Lutetia*. There are some additions which derive from earlier printed texts. There are also some passages added in manuscript to the page proofs. For example, he added a response to a recent book on aerial warfare.<sup>42</sup> There are certainly excisions due to a consideration of his French readership. For example, we could imagine that Le Corbusier reproduced large parts of his lecture on “Une maison—un palais” for his Argentinean audience, confident that they had not read his book of the same name, but omitted them in his book for a French readership.

There are also clues to the fact that parts at least of the text were written after the completion of the lectures. For example, in the course of his first lecture on October 5, he advises, “Go up in a plane above the great plains of *nature*.”<sup>43</sup> But his first flight in an airplane did not take place until the 23rd, when he was invited to take part in the inaugural flight to Asunción, Paraguay.<sup>44</sup> As he explains in his “American Prologue,” this flight made a profound impression on him, giving rise to what he called “the law of the meander,” which he first explained in his lectures in São Paulo and Rio.<sup>45</sup> In *Precisions*, this discussion, and the drawing which accompanies it, occurs in the sixth lecture (pp.141–143), delivered on October 13.<sup>46</sup> From this we can deduce that the discussion at the beginning of this lecture was transposed from the later lectures. Confirmation that the “law of the meander” metaphor and its accompanying drawing dates from after the Argentinean lectures is derived from the preparatory sketch, which was made on the back of letter paper at the Hotel Terminus, 98 Rua Brigadeiro Tobias, São Paulo.<sup>47</sup>

42 *Precisions*: 192. This note about Vauthier’s text was added to the page proofs by hand (FLC B2(9)192). See also the manuscript note about discovering the text on his return to Paris (FLC B2(9) 673).

43 *Precisions*: 29.

44 An enthusiastic description of this flight was given in a letter to his mother on October 27 (FLC R2(1)60).

45 “[...] in the course of my lectures at São Paulo and at Rio, I used this miraculous symbol to introduce my propositions for reforms in city planning [...]” *Precisions*: 5.

46 The lecture drawing is FLC 30294B.

47 FLC B2(9)670.



The notes for his lectures are of two kinds. There is a set of neat handwritten pages, each page numbered according to the sequence of lectures as originally conceived. On September 24, on board the *Massilia*, he told Yvonne that he was preparing one lecture per day; nine were already in the bag.<sup>48</sup> For example, for the first lecture, there are fifteen such pages.<sup>49</sup> Part of the content of these pages is repeated in the lectures, but they include no content based on his experience of visiting Buenos Aires, Asunción and Montevideo. Furthermore, their order does not reflect the changes in the order of the lectures made during the tour. I have thus deduced that they were written on the *Massilia* on the journey out. Another group of notes, much more scrappy in form, includes sketches and ideas derived from his Argentinean experience. I assume that these were written just before each lecture. Several of them are written on the back of headed paper from the three hotels he stayed in: the Hotel Majestic in Buenos Aires, the Hotel Terminus in São Paulo and the Hotel Gloria in Rio de Janeiro. For example, a page of sketches of vernacular architecture in La Plata (discussed on p.228) can be found on one of the pages of notes in the Getty Research Institute, and this formed the basis of the lecture drawing on page 229.<sup>50</sup> It goes with a sheet of stationery of the Hotel Majestic in Buenos Aires, which includes on one side notes on the visit to La Plata and on the other notes for summing up his message to the Faculty of Science audience.<sup>51</sup>

The lectures were delivered between October 3 and 19, in a slightly different order than he had planned. This plan, laid out on a sheet of paper on July 28, 1929, and in more detail on a double page in September, corresponds to the manuscript notes made on the *Massilia*.<sup>52</sup> Just before the fifth lecture, on October 11, Le Corbusier changed the order slightly, bringing forward the lecture on “The Plan of the Modern House,” perhaps because he thought it more fitting for the Friends of the Arts. He later moved “The Undertaking of Furniture” to the end, also addressing it to the Friends of the Arts. Le Corbusier distinguished between the general public (Friends of the Arts) and the professionals (Faculty of Exact Sciences), among whom he counted many students of architecture. There are signs of his deliberately addressing these different audiences, as in the beginning of lecture

48 Letter to Yvonne, September 24, 1929.

49 FLC C3(7)1-15.

50 GRI 920083-11(4). The lecture drawing is FLC 30295.

51 FLC C3(7)56-15 and 16.

52 FLC C3(7)108 and GRI 920083-01(2)3. The manuscript notes are at the Fondation Le Corbusier, boxes C3(6) and C3(7), as well as at the Getty Research Institute (GRI 920083-1(1-11)). See Benton, T. (2009) *The Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier as a Lecturer*. Basel/Boston, Birkhäuser: figs 3 and 5.

three and in lecture eight, which, he admits, was intended more for the general public than the professionals. Accordingly, he cuts short the discussion of the World City and launches into a direct address to the students in his last lecture at the Faculty of Exact Sciences: “If I Were to Teach Architecture” (p.219). In general, however, the series of ten lectures runs on logically, irrespective of the audience.

Nos indicated on the first plan and on the notes	Revised order (c. October 11, 1929)	Date of presentation	Chronological sequence	Place	Lecture
1	1	October 3	1	AA	To Free Oneself Entirely of Academic Thinking
2	2	October 5	2	FS	Techniques Are the Very Basis of Poetry
3	3	October 8	3	FS	Architecture in Everything, City Planning in Everything
4	4	October 10	4	FS	A Dwelling at Human Scale
6	5	October 11	5	AA	The Plan of the Modern House
5	6	October 13	6	AC	A man = a Dwelling; Dwellings = a City
8	8	October 15	7	FS	A House—a Palace
10	10	October 17	8	FS	The World City
9	9	October 18	9	AA	The Voisin Plan for Paris: Can Buenos Aires Become One of the Great Cities of the World?
7	7	October 19	10	AA	The Undertaking of Furniture

Table 1. Numbering of lectures

In addition to the ten lectures in Buenos Aires, Le Corbusier found the time to visit San Antonio de Areco (October 12), Asunción (October 23–24, by airplane), Mar del Plata (October 25–26, by train) and Montevideo (November 6–9, where he gave two lectures at the invitation of the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Leopoldo Agorio).<sup>53</sup> On November 14, he boarded the *S.S. Giulio Cesare*, arriving at Santos and São Paulo on the 20th, after a brief stopover in Montevideo.

53 Liernur and Pschepiurca locate this visit before the beginning of the lecture series, perhaps between October 6 and 7 (Liernur, op.cit: 105–106). Testimony to Le Corbusier’s visit to the Uruguayan capital can be found in “Leopoldo Carlos Artucio (1903–1976).” *Documentos para una historia de la Arquitectura nacional* 274, Montevideo, 1987. Artucio described taking Le Corbusier around the city. He also noted that the colored drawings which Le Corbusier made during his lectures were all taken by students. Liernur speculates that the drawing published in *Precisions* was produced later, since it does not correspond to commentaries in the Uruguayan press.