

Museum goes who are tired of museums' routinely rehabilitating yesterday's geni-uses, fallen giants, or undervalued saints will no doubt scoff at Centre Pompidou's latest effort to revitalize public interest in Le Corbusier. Hardly his first Pompidou exhibition, this certainly won't be his last, because his life's work and its influence are definitely unrivaled in many ways. On the hundredth anniversary of Corbu's birth, the Pompidou presented 'L'aventure Le Corbusier, 1887-1965,' so it is only fitting that they would organize another for the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

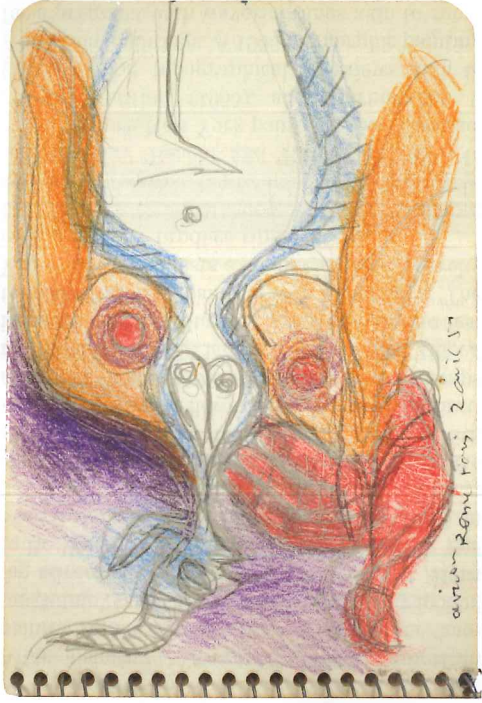
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Since there still remains a lot of fascinating research to do, it seems odd that the Pompidou would organize an entire exhibition of Le Corbusier's work, including paintings, furniture, buildings, and urban planning around his interest in the human figure. Isn't the human figure at the center of all design practices? Or is the human figure just a ruse to lend a summer show, organized to boost the uber-rational architect's cuddlier side, its theoretical angle? 'Mesures de l'Homme' would have felt particularly 'a propos' in the nineties, when artists were especially concerned with the body. Now that artworld interests have drifted toward activism, land art and archives, being so focused on the figure seems decidedly retrograde and thus counterproductive to the Pompidou's intent to frame Corbu's legacy as vital. I make this point not because fashionable topics matter, but because museums typically mount surveys to present the past in dialogue with today, yet 'Mesures' sounds like a soliloquy. Le Corbusier was foremost an activist architect, who believed in architecture's

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surrounded by greenspace. Furthermore, no one has produced an exhibition that explores Le Corbusier's green architecture, even though his homes from the twenties had built-in rainwater collection, roof runoff systems, sculpture splashes, green roofs (not just roof gardens), clerestory windows, window baffles (the list is endless). He produced archives, which 'Mesures' does capture, given its virtues featuring ephemera, photos, films, manifestos ('Après le Cubisme')(1918), journals (L'Esprit nouveau: Revue internationale d'esthétique (1920-1925), and books 'The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human' (1950).

Eventually, 'Mesures' makes a few points, however subtly. Believing that the sphere of architecture is responsible for every facet of the house from street to closet, Corbu's 'Esprit Nouveau Pavilion' (1925), presented during the very same International Exhibition of Modern and Industrial Art that launched Art Deco, eschewed that era's decorative furniture and objects in favor of the pure forms of industrial mass-production. And with this lucid revolt, we realize how controversial and out-of-line Le Corbusier's vision was stuck in its ways (his love-affair with right angles continued right up through his numerous les Unités d'Habitation of the 1950s), his Purist paintings of the 1920s soon gave sway to the classicist fever sweeping Europe in the 1930s, leading him to produce some rather garish figurative paintings of women. But at the same time, one imagines that had his painting not turned to the female figure, he might never have conceived of either Chapelle Notre-Dame-d'Haut (1954), his crowning achievement, or his theory of the Modulor, his proportional system for designing to accommodate humans (actually, 'men').



Le Corbusier, 2 April 1925, courtesy Pompidou Centre

how Le Corbusier's particular understanding of the human figure, which extends from seating to softies, improved his designs. The same goes for the Cabanon, his modest 144m2 wooden beach house, which the Pompidou could easily have reconstructed. Strangely, one leaves this show with no real understanding of how his Modulor made his designs better than those who didn't use it, or how he altered his system based on 1.83m-tall men to accommodate Chandiigarh citizens.

Although Villa Savoye was built decades before Had the Pompidou built it so that people could lie on its built-in chaise or ship into its tub (the exhibition doesn't even feature images of this infamous bathroom), people might actually grasp

Le Corbusier 'Mesures de l'homme' until 3 August at Centre Pompidou, Place Georges-Pompidou, Paris, FR. Open Wed-Mon from 11am-9pm. www.centrepompidou.fr