

## Esprit Nouveau Pavilion

*«Une grande époque vient de commencer. Il existe un esprit nouveau. Il existe une foule d'œuvres d'esprit nouveau; elles se*



*rencontrent surtout dans la production industrielle. L'architecture étouffe dans les usages. Les « styles » sont un mensonge. Le style, c'est une unité de principe qui anime toutes les œuvres d'une époque et qui résulte d'un esprit caractérisé. Notre époque fixe chaque jour son style. Nos yeux, malheureusement, ne savent pas le discerner encore.»*



The Esprit Nouveau Pavilion is a two-part building, projected by Le Corbusier to display his proposal for a new urbanism in European cities. The building is composed by a "base cell", i.e. a prototype of urban home unit, to be replicated within the *«Immeuble Villas»* modular project of a new city, and a "Diorama", a space devoted to the illustration of innovative theories for a better quality of urban life.

The two components of the building were originally two separate projects in 1922, that Le Corbusier did merge and integrate in 1925 to create a temporary Pavilion for the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts, which was held in Paris in the park near Grand Palais.



The *Diorama* was originally conceived to conveniently display a synthesis of the *Atelier Le Corbusier's* best projects between 1920 and 1925, together with two Le Corbusier's visionary concepts on urban policies renewal: the "Three million inhabitants city" and the "Plan Voisin de Paris". You can see these concepts sketched on the walls of the Pavilion. The Le Corbusier's proposal for a "new

City" became soon the most innovative idea for the future of the European urban areas. The Le Corbusier's innovative proposals were welcomed at first as apparently unrealistic. The key-principle was that new urban architecture wouldn't be based anymore only on wealthy middle-class requirements, but would follow and support public decision makers to create a new wealth for all in urban areas. Only this change in cultural approaches to cities life would lead to a real renewal and better quality standards for urban areas.

When the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts was closed, all the Pavilions (Le Corbusier's for Paris, together with Tony Garnier's for Lyon, Mel'nikov for URSS e Hoffmann for Austria) were dismissed; lately, Le Corbusier et Jeanneret did rebuild their Pavilion in the Paris's neighborhood, recycling the same materials used the first time, trying to evolve their dream, and adapting their *Diorama*.

Of course, the Le Corbusier and Jeanneret stress on the need for a new urban policy caused a great impression on public opinion. The hypothesis of a modern mass-produced house would be a guarantee of a high quality standards in housing, accessible to all social categories, and governed by public sector. The "base cell" would allow people to live in their house without conceptual restrictions concerning furnishing and daily management.



In Bologna, the 1977 was a year of great and fruitful debate on urbanism and urban policies; therefore it was easy for an "Initiative Group", composed by former Le Corbusier's pupils, making a proposal for the rebuilding of the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion. The Le Corbusier's Foundation was

actively involved and gave his support to this idea: the architects Oubriere e Aujame took care of technical aspects, while Giuliano Gresleri followed the artistic ones. Part of the 1925 studies and original furnishing details were lost during the years, so they were forced to start reconstruction works from original picks of the '25 building details. Furthermore, some Le Corbusier's building which date back to 1925: Villa La Roche, Pessac, Villa Cook were studied, to find out what the key principles of Le Corbusier's thought could be considered as *invariants*, and the rebuilding of EN Pavilion followed these guidelines.



Observing nowadays the remaining furnishing details (for instance the iron stairway into the living area), anyone can notice the great attention Le Corbusier's was used to pay to the craftsman work and to the industrial components transformed for a new daily use. Things and materials, the cheaper the better they are, are reused, re-thought for new functions. This is part of the architecture inspiration as Le Corbusier intended to foster, and you can verify yourself, visiting the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion, how much the concept is innovative and forerunner, not only for the 20's, but also nowadays.



Interiors picks



Front view



Lateral view





Tree – in – a hole view



Original W/B pick and same view nowadays in Bologna



Original picks: interiors view



Original pick: the stairway and external view

