



**Latin America in Construction:
Architecture 1955 - 1980**

Edited by Barry Bergdoll,
Carlos Eduardo Comas,
Jorge Francisco Liernur, Patricio del Real
Publisher: The Museum of Modern Art
(MoMa)

ISBN: 978-0-87070-963-0
Language: English
Year: 2015

A large-format, heavy, hard cover book with a well-known photograph by Guillermo Zamora of Enrique del Moral's Mercado de la Merced on its cover is the way the exhibition *Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955 - 1980* gets shaped into a book. One could not expect different from the Museum of Modern Art, which is well known for having the same format catalogs with traditional design and pristine images. Next to its contemporaries (Henry Matisse; *The Cutouts, Design and Violence* and Björk), *Latin America in Construction's* physicality doesn't speak loud enough to stand out. It is a more modest, academic and introspective publication.

The catalog opens with *Portfolio* a contemporary photo-essay by the multi-published São Paulo-based architectural photographer Leonardo Finotti that separates an inch from his commercial work and captures good frames that serve as homage to the great modern photographers that are about to come to life in the next pages of the book. This editorial decision comes across as a bit strange. Why introduce a retrospective exhibition book with a photo-essay that, rather than speaking of the present, somehow mimics the technique, ambience and composition that the primary sources are about to deliver? One can start to tell, even from here, a more naive introduction to the publication, Brazil will be pictured as one of the modern favorites.

Glenn D. Lowry in his brief but concise foreword doesn't miss mentioning MoMA's

influence in the construction of the modern architectonic discourse through the exhibitions *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (1955) and *Brazil Builds* (1943) setting the current exhibition at the same level of its predecessors, announcing the making of ongoing historiography: "An exhibition and publication that function as an ongoing laboratory for constructing new histories" (p. 15).

Barry Bergdoll's "Learning from Latin America: Public Space, Housing and Landscape" excels by far the other texts in the book. His last exhibition inside the institution had to amalgamate his academic DNA with the precise coordinating skills that require the heavy machinery of professional research teams in more than ten countries in Latin America. It is a grand-finale that sets the bar high in terms of ambition, inventiveness and an important conjuncture in a period that can unite nations under one nostalgic sense of progress and equality (later depicted as faux hopes of developmentalism, struggle and regime). It also gives us the answer we are all curious about: why 1955? Why 1980? Although the latter is not properly answered, starting in 1955 was a strategy to consider not only the first results being built, but rather them being debated. Stepping aside from the turmoil of conservatism and entering the conversation completely aware of the critique was a means to critique the critique too. Bergdoll has a couple of statements that make clear his conclusions i.e. "Latin America as the new sources of not only forms, but attitudes" a diplomatic strategy when one has to amalgamate a complete history of modern architecture in so many different nations and conditions. His text is an intense and rich journey from economic models, to political processes and even the evolution of technique making the reading interesting, not only to scholars of the topic, but to a general audience that can relate to a rapid-growth period that shaped most of the cities we live in. Leaving value judgments aside, Bergdoll manages to speak on a broad spectrum that provokes new readings when weaving all the pieces and examples together. Although loose ends remain towards a present day history and the void between 1980 to 2015, it seems like that can be a story for another exhibition, and another conceptual discourse.

After the curator's introduction, comes a loud voice that plants itself like a life-lesson. "For better or for worse, Brazilian Modern Architecture has a story of its own, and it's a long one", writes Carlos Eduardo Comas professional scholar of the discipline. Brazil was a modern beast, and it was fed by two schools:

The *Carioca* School and the *Paulista* School. Comas, guest curator to the exhibition, writes about the similarities and differences of the two groups of architects and planners that shaped Brazil into its modern suit. He intelligently analyzes them through architectural elements and purposes that lets the text disseminate and weave both schools inside the concepts. Foundation, rule, continuity, divergence, balance and extension are the methods to evolution within the time-frame of the life span of the modern architects and their buildings.

The last individual essay is by Jorge Francisco Liernur, also guest curator, who addresses a more contextual piece of writing. He searches for a correlation between architecture and new general conditions of modernization. He worries and disseminates on the city as the platform where architecture is planted and embodies deeper and greater problems that shape progress, critically concluding and thoroughly ambushing the utopian ideas of modernity with the rise of capitalism's pragmatism. Idea is dead.

Plates is the section of the book that can better translate the physical panorama of the exhibition to the support the editorial intent. It reincarnates a modern-day-editorial-World Fair where pages serve as pavilions to showcase the power of construction and how architecture shaped progress, cities and regions. The authors of the different plates are part of the modern research network, **docomomo's** usual suspects, great academic eminences from each country depicted in the exhibition that have devoted their lives to the study of modern architecture. In each one's own style, but tracing a common structure to context the illustrations, the authors set fly to a general state-of-the-art panorama on the characteristics of each nation that make them so special. Ordered alphabetically, Argentina heads the plates also chronologically, one of the few nations that showcases its historicist architecture, fruit of the European heritage in the region, a cosmopolitan Buenos Aires that shows glamour and economic progress in a more traditional and aesthetic way. The illustrations, although a very impressive gathering of material, lack "traditional" qualities looked for in modern material. The quality of the opening photograph of Ruth Verde Zein's *Brazil*, for example, differs a mile from the Argentinian imagery. Brazil is represented with by-the-book modern history, opens with *Brazil Builds*, stating just how important the nation is in this piece of research. The chapter shows a cohesive notion of modernism with its glorified giants like the Pilot Plan for



01 Carlos Raúl Villanueva, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Aula Magna, Caracas, Venezuela, 1952-53. © Leonardo Finotti, 2014.



02 Oscar Niemeyer, Palácio do Itamaraty, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Brasília, Brazil, 1962. © Leonardo Finotti, 2007.

03-04 BERGDOLL, Barry, "Learning from Latin America: Public Space, Housing, and Landscape", in *Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955-1980*, New York, MoMa, 2015.



05-06 COMAS, Carlos Eduardo, "The Poetics of Development: Notes on Two Brazilian Schools", in *Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955-1980*, New York, MoMa, 2015.



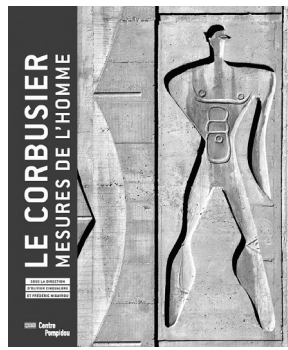
Brasilia by Lucio Costa (1957). Both schools are depicted in the panorama, referencing the previous essay by Carlos Eduardo Comas. Brazil is a brutal architecture of power and diplomacy that can only be compared to the number of spreads given to Mexico. Even though these two countries have a parallel emancipating progress in architecture, Mexico shows a completely different panorama than Brazil. Louise Noelle managed to showcase a broader spectrum of typologies, styles and experimentations showing how imbricate and autochthonous Mexican culture is and how strongly it is engaged with architecture. From State projects, to housing projects, skyscrapers, immigration, poetic Barragan, the cover picture by Guillermo Zamora, the 1968 Olympics and even stretching the research to experimental Agustín Hernández, the illustrations and their text paint an effervescent panorama of the country. The Caribbean region sadly misses out important research developed by scholars in the region including Gustavo Luis Moré and Alex Martínez Suárez. It would've been interesting to see this tropical smaller, but very valuable modernity, juxtaposing with the rest of the nations. It is difficult to detail all the research in the Plates section, and also unfair to do it isolated from the exhibition.

Authors: Argentina — Silvio Plotquin, Brazil — Ruth Verde Zein, Caribbean — Barry Bergdoll, Chile — Fernando Pérez Oyarzún, Colombia — Carlos Niño Murcia, Cuba — Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, México - Louise Noelle, Peru — Sharif Kahatt and Jean Pierre Crousse, Uruguay — Gustavo Scheps, Venezuela — Silvia Hernández de Lasala.

Alas the book ends with an authored bibliography that has a digital component to keep building the repository of research. Along with the boldness and value of the statement of putting together all these pieces of history, the project *Latin America in Construction* has a few, but very, contemporary intentions. The authored bibliography and the digital networked platform #archimoma keeps the contemporary discourse of a cutting-edge institution like the MoMA continuing.

The catalogue is, without a doubt, an important publication in recent architectural historiography and is a titanic effort that rarely could have been done without the powerful machinery of MoMA. It becomes a key bibliography in a new history of readings and is the stepping-stone towards constructing a more integral umbrella when studying Latin American modern architecture.

María García Holley



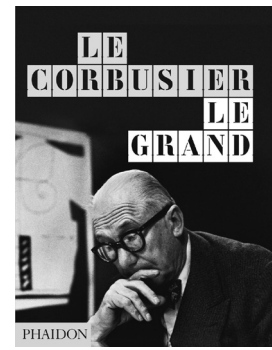
Le Corbusier. Mesures de L' Homme

Coordinated by Olivier Cinqualbre and Frédéric Migayrou
 Publisher: Centre Pompidou
 ISBN: EAN: 9782844266996
 Language: French
 Year: 2015

Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Le Corbusier's death, the exhibition organized at the Centre Pompidou invites to a reread of his work through the prism of the humane figure, not only in its physicality, but also in the perceptive and spiritual dimensions. Conceived in 1943, the *Modulor* influences a whole generation of architects. Even though, such a reflexion about an essential and universal measure — “the series Man”, thinker and perceiver — is at the hearth of the multifaceted work of Le Corbusier, to date, there was no publication to apprehend such fundamental notions about the architect's work.

Expanded by the contributions of young researchers, the catalogue presents the Corbusean course in the light of this theme, from the Jurassic origins until the last days along the Mediterranean. It highlights the ubiquity of the human in its production, from elements of the painted works, achievements or architectural projects, furniture and writings, which testify/reflect the richness and complexity of his thought.

Translated publisher's notes.



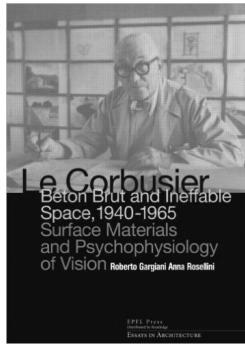
Le Corbusier Le Grand

Edited by Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton
 Publisher: Phaidon
 ISBN: 978-0-714-84668-2
 Language: English
 Year: 2008

Drawing on an array of archival material, including sketches, photographs, and correspondences, *Le Corbusier Le Grand* depicts in roughly chronological order not only the vast and varied output of Le Corbusier, but also the major events, people, and forces that shaped the life of an artist who continues to fascinate those in and outside the architectural world.

Le Corbusier (1887–1965) is one of the giants of twentieth-century architecture and design. Born Charles Edouard Jeanneret in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, the self-named Le Corbusier was not only the creator of some of the most important and impressive buildings of the last century—Villa Savoye at Poissy, the Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, the Parliament Building in Chandigarh, India—he was also an accomplished painter, sculptor, furniture designer, urbanist, and author. His work and social theories continue to be a dominant force in the world of architecture and design, while his elegant bearing, typified by his round black eyeglasses, which are still today a signature look for architects around the world, helped cast him as an heroic figure out of Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*.

From the Publisher.



Le Corbusier: Béton Brut and Ineffable Space (1940 – 1965): Surface Materials and Psychophysiology of Vision (Essays in Architecture)

Edited by Roberto Gargiani and Anna Rosellini
 Publisher: EPFL Press
 ISBN: 978-0-4156-8171-1
 Language: English
 Year: 2011

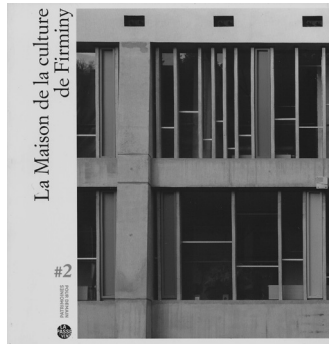
Béton brut and ineffable space: two concepts defined by Le Corbusier after World War II that speak about a stronger dialogue between materials and artistic vision of his work. Invented to designate his own particular use of exposed concrete, *béton brut* is analysed from different perspectives: its fabrication with a rigorous selection of its constituent materials; its textural imprint obtained by a refined assembly of formwork; and the treatment of its surface with special types of paint.

In the synthesis of his artistic vision, ineffable space is explained in all its forms and meanings, from the insertion of the tapestries and paint in the qualification of the spaces, to the way in which photography is used to study the unexpressed potentialities of architecture and painting.

The genesis of Le Corbusier's work, the quality of constructions materials and questions of optics, artistic vision and the psychophysiology of perception are analysed in relationship with the contemporary artistic phenomena such as the automatism of Breton, the Art Brut of Dubuffet, the Concrete Music of Varèse, Klein's research on monochromes, Pop Art and the concept of transfer.

In this essay, a new vision is revealed about the last and fundamental works of Le Corbusier.

From the Publisher.



La Maison de la Culture de Firminy

Edited by Gilles Ragot, Sophie Omère, Jean-Marie Refflé, Franck Sénant and Michel Kneubühler
 Publisher: Éditions la Passe du Vent
 ISBN: 978-2-84562-230-2
 Language: French
 Year: 2013

At the end of 1966, the journal *L'Architecture d' Aujourd'hui* devoted a special issue to cultural buildings. The part devoted to French cultural centers was introduced by extracts from a report by Emile Biasini¹. The report concerned both the result of the first cultural centers open to the public and a prediction for the next phase of construction. The text clearly emphasized the program's flexibility as a main goal, which implied the awareness of the unpredictability of uses and architectural implications: "which activities to expect in a house of culture. The answer is all of them, even those that are not yet invented. If it is difficult to imagine the latter, you must hunt down all the constraints that architecture can impose on the course of a cultural activity (...). These technical requirements need to be solved taking into account not only the present but also the future"². In this journal issue, released only a year after Le Corbusier's death, the Firminy Cultural Center, recently completed, evidently functioned as a model, even if it was not a cultural center according to the definition of the leading cultural policy program launched by the Secretary of State of André Malraux in 1959.

The book *La Maison de la Culture de Firminy* is the second issue in a collection entitled *Patrimoine pour Demain*, which aims to inform the wider public about a restored building. So this is the ambition of this richly illustrated book, with several contributions and essays by Gilles Ragot, Sophie Omère and Michel Kneubühler.

Upon his election in 1953, the Mayor of Firminy, Eugène Claudius Petit, began to work on a new urban plan by calling former employees of the reconstruction department, to create the new district of Firminy Vert, on hilly terrain on the south of the old city. The

civic center of Firminy Vert was a commission to Le Corbusier in 1955 with a program consisting of a church, a stadium, a swimming pool and a "house of culture and youth". The first civic center is the product of a troubled genesis. A first project combined the cultural center with the stadium stands (1956–1958). The complex profile resulting from this dual function a single-slope roof and inclined facade over the playing field that protected the stadium stands. The second project presented in July 1958 was based on the separation of the two facilities, whilst keeping some essential characteristics from the original proposal. Even if Le Corbusier designed an open-air theatre and a "miracle box" to help ensure good theatrical performances, the program of the Firminy Cultural Center is that of a large youth center. A plan with a relatively narrow width (18 meters) and considerable length (112 meters) make the building function as a linear promenade punctuated by double-height activity spaces where it is necessary. The structural system of the roof, which is composed by autoclaved cellular concrete (ACC) boards and tensioned cables as well as the articulation of three floor levels with the topography, makes this building totally different from other cultural centers based on compact solutions. The 16 bays punctuated by wavy ceiling boards confirm the direct link to the *La Tourette* convent in which Iannis Xenakis had developed these harmonic timber partitions. Le Corbusier visited the site on the 21st of May 1965, and died in the same year before construction was fully completed. André Wogenscky finished the construction and Pierre Guariche designed the interiors and a large part of the furniture. The cultural center was inaugurated on the 15th October 1966.

Gilles Ragot essay "*Firminy Toute une Histoire*" evokes the friendly and intellectual ties that linked Eugène Claudius Petit, Minister of Reconstruction and Town Planning (MRU), to the architect Le Corbusier. He then describes the genesis of the Firminy urban project, conceived as an illustration of the *Athens Charter* principles, and the role of Firminy Youth House in the context of the Firminy Vert ensemble composed of housing, cultural and sports venues. In a precise and documented narrative, the author insists on the programmatic hesitations that would make the Firminy House something more than a youth center and something less than a house of culture, including the attention paid to the topography and landscape, the origin of certain technical decisions such as the roof or the vicissitudes of construction (1961–1969) detected in the archives. Sophie Omère considers the study of Firminy furniture as a significant testimony of 1950's and 1960's design. The design of specific furniture for working spaces and for the shows, as well as the provision of

furniture was ensured by Pierre Guariche in the period between 1966 and 1969, although it continued without him in the following period 1969–1972. The analysis of lighting fixtures that would probably require further studies or the furniture restoration are featured as captioned pictures. Jean-François Gange-Chavan, in an interview, reminds us that architects in charge of historical monuments are generalists but nonetheless highlights some peculiarities of the restoration and of the preservation of the “building’s identity”. Michel Kneubühler returns to the programmatic hesitations and what they disclose of French cultural policy: the houses of culture after 1959, the legacy of the People’s houses and the tensions between culture and popular education. The reproduction of a personal note from Eugene Claudius Petit, “*Eléments de Réflexions sur la Maison de la Culture de Firminy*” clarifies precisely the point of view of the main stakeholder, from the project management point of view, on hesitations, temptations to organize human activities, and attempts to reconcile popular education and cultural policy.

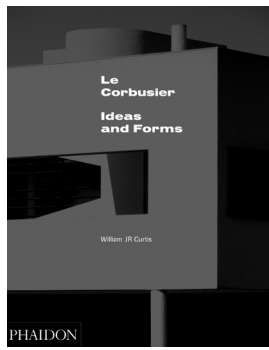
The book does not focus too much on the dark years of the House of Culture that became sadly known for neglect and property loss in the late 1980s. Thus the text quickly jumps from genesis to restoration and the recent process to make this house a key element of a heritage ensemble. The absence of some bibliographical sources and notable references about Houses of Culture as well as the sequence of the project’s contributions — which begin with urbanism and architecture, end with cultural policies and their resulting programs, inserting furniture in the middle — may astonish the informed reader who may however take advantage of the organization by jumping from section to section, according to his or her needs or curiosities, without fear of compromising a scholarly, organized publication.

The tour guide, the last part of the book, is perhaps the one which gives us a better understanding of the building at several levels: those of the site and the urban structure as a whole, in its programmatic components, and interior design and detail. In a descriptive and educative manner, illustrated with contemporary images, this part reinforces the understanding of the turbulent history of the building but also the sequence of spaces and the Corbusean plasticity.

Richard Klein
docomomo France

Notes

- 1 “Les Maisons de la culture en France”, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, 129, Décembre 1966 – Janvier 1967, p. 64–66.
- 2 *Idem*.



**Le Corbusier
 Ideas and Forms**

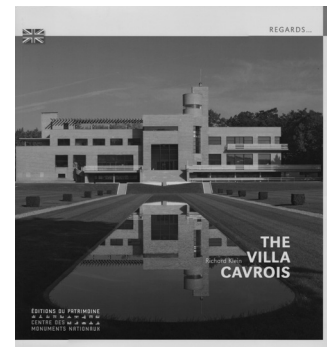
Edited by William J. R. Curtis
 Publisher: Phaidon Press Limited
 ISBN: 978-0-7148-6894-3
 Language: English
 Year: 2015

This book celebrates the genius of Le Corbusier and his oeuvre, and exposes the creative process that gave rise to his architecture. Not only a visionary architect, urban planner and theorist, but also a painter and sculptor, Le Corbusier made a thorough impact on the 20th century by dramatically changing architectural design and the way people lived in it. Today, over a quarter of a century since *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* was first published, the relevance of the legacy left by Corbusier is not called into question.

This second edition preserves the structure and main core themes, although developed in the light of new knowledge, bearing in mind the temporal hiatus between the two publications. The previously existing chapters have been completed or changed in some way to accommodate a more profound analysis of buildings. The author documents individual projects in detail, contextualizing his ideals and the cultural predicaments of the time, but above all exploring the relationship between ideas and forms in Le Corbusier’s architecture: through concepts, drawings and paintings that register his train of thought. In fact, the wide range of drawings, present in the book, purport to clarify the architectural understanding of the architect, while representing highly condensed abstractions of his vision of the world. Therefore, great emphasis has been given to the visual and physical qualities of the works themselves,

Published in the year of the 50th anniversary of Le Corbusier’s death, the book aims to epitomise the genesis of Le Corbusier’s vast body of work, focusing on the physical and environmental context, by plunging into the architect’s rich universe of forms and concepts.

José Pedro Cardoso
docomomo International Collaborator



The Villa Cavrois

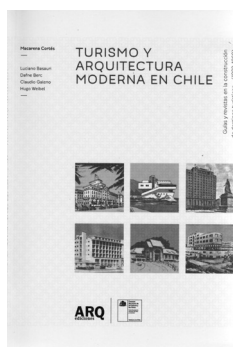
Edited by Richard Klein.
 Publisher: Éditions du Patrimoine. Centre des Monuments Nationaux.
 ISBN: 978-2-7577-0423-3 (French);
 978-2-7577-0354-0 (English);
 978-2-7577-0461-5 (Dutch)
 Language: French, English and Dutch
 Year: 2015

A masterpiece of 20th century architecture designed by Robert Mallet-Stevens between 1929 and 1932, the Villa Cavrois had an eventful history before its restoration and opening to the public in 2015.

The man who commissioned it, Paul Cavrois, a well-established industrialist from northern France, wanted a residence large enough to house his family and servants. His meeting with Robert Mallet-Stevens was to make his project an object manifesto, an ocean liner rising on the heights of Roubaix, in a striking contrast to the neighboring traditional bourgeois houses. Mallet-Stevens mastered all aspects of the design: the silhouette and geometry of the villa: the material chosen specifically for each room — marble and precious woods in the reception areas and tiles in sober colors in the bathrooms and kitchen — the lighting fixtures, the heating and sound systems.

Occupied during the Second World War, sold by the heirs in the mid-1980s, abandoned and vandalized, the villa was purchased in 2001 by the French state, which decided to undertake its complete restoration. The work carried out — overseen by the *Centre des Monuments Nationaux* (Centre for National Monuments) since 2012 — had only one objective: to re-establish the villa’s original splendor. Now open to the public, the Villa Cavrois is one of Mallet-Stevens’ most beautiful creations, as well as a milestone in history of modern architecture.

Translated publisher’s notes.



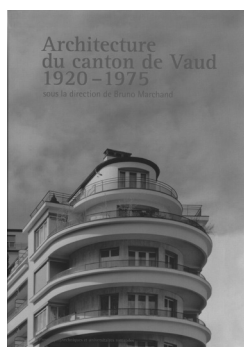
Turismo y Arquitectura Moderna en Chile
Guías y Revistas en la Construcción de Destinos Turísticos (1933–1962)

Edited by Macarena Cortés
 Publisher: Ediciones ARQ
 ISBN: 978-956-9571-02-2
 Language: Spanish
 Year: 2014

Turismo y Arquitectura Moderna en Chile. Guías y Revistas en la Construcción de Destinos Turísticos (1933–1962) by Macarena Cortés offers a particular look at the heritage of modern buildings that allowed Chile to become a tourist destination country from the mid-thirties. This examination is based on how these buildings were shown in publicity produced by the *Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile* railway company that, for more than three decades, promoted tourism and knowledge of both the Chilean countryside cities.

Natural landscapes, architecture and cities are shown in the light of an aesthetic that aspired to a large audience and wanted to make them desirable “destinations”. The articles of Claudius Galen, Hugo Weibel, Luciano Basauri and Dafne Berc allow a deepening of this perspective from different points-of-view, ranging from local urban history to the consideration of international cases.

Translated publisher’s notes.



Architecture du Canton de Vaud 1920–1975

Edited by Bruno Marchand (Director) and Marielle Savoyat (Coordination).
 Publisher: PPUR. Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.
 ISBN: 978-2-88074-924-8
 Language: French
 Year: 2012

The Swiss Canton of Vaud has several well-known buildings such as Le Corbusier’s *Petite Maison* in Corseaux, Marc Piccard’s Bellerive baths in Lausanne, and Jean Tschumi’s Nestlé headquarters in Vevey. It also has different building complexes and less well-known architectural works, which are, nevertheless, also interesting and representative of a high quality of architecture. This book, through commentaries and illustrations, presents around 350 works, broken down by typologies, highlights the architecture of the Vaud Canton from 1920 to 1975. At the same time, it strives to raise public and professional awareness of the qualities of a heritage that is still often unrecognized and, until now, has never been the subject of such a comprehensive publication.

Translated publisher’s notes.



Cahiers Thématiques No. 12
Représentations de l’Architecture Contemporaine

Edited by Richard Klein and Éric Monin
 Publisher: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme
 ISBN: 978-2-905865-05-2
 Language: French/English
 Year: 2013

Devoted to representations of contemporary architecture, this twelfth issue of *Cahiers Thématiques* proposes a polymorphic vision of an art not restricted just to its built form. Dematerialized, architecture journeys at the whim of techniques and media. Seriously commented, scrupulously figured or released from its weight by impertinent artists, architecture gives way to new horizons that open up spontaneously in the public imagination. The building then passes to its secondary plan in favor of its media format. From the Corbusian declamations to the spontaneous impressions that cover advertising plastic bags, the contributions collected in this volume describe the field of architectural representations that ranges from the more structured discourse to more banal applications.

Translated publisher’s notes.