

## 10 franc banknote:

### Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret), 1887-1965

#### Architect, town planner and theoretician, painter, sculptor and writer

Le Corbusier is regarded as one of the outstanding creative personalities of the twentieth century. He was a universal designer who was active in many fields: as an architect, town planner, painter, sculptor and the author of numerous books on architecture, urban planning and design. Le Corbusier's remarkable ability to communicate his ideas helped to gain recognition for his theories throughout the world. His work is a modern Gesamtkunstwerk that combines individual disciplines into a complex whole. This is particularly apparent in his visionary urban planning projects. Le Corbusier pioneered a quintessentially modern approach to architecture.

#### Urban planning

Le Corbusier's concepts of residential building design are based on extensive studies of the social, architectural and urban planning problems of the industrial era. Le Corbusier always placed the human being at the centre of his creative principles. In his book *Urbanisme (The City of Tomorrow)*, published in 1924, and in numerous other studies on this topic, he formulated some of the most important principles of modern urban planning: the city, he wrote, must be planned as an organic whole and designed in spatial terms to support the functions of living, work, recreation, education and transport. One important goal was to separate work and relaxation into spaces that would be experienced separately.

#### Chandigarh (1950 - 1962)

Although Le Corbusier was involved in numerous urban planning projects, only two were implemented: Pessac-Bordeaux (1925) and Chandigarh. In this latter project, Le Corbusier received a contract from the government of India in 1950 to build the new capital of the Indian state of Punjab, which was established after the Second World War. Here in Chandigarh, Le Corbusier applied on a grand scale all the disciplines practised by him. As a planning consultant, he directed the team of architects who were responsible for the project. He himself designed the three major buildings that dominate the government district: the Palace of Justice (1955), the Secretariat (1958), which houses the various ministries, and the Parliament Building (1962).

#### Architectural principles

Le Corbusier's architecture is rich in pioneering discoveries and creative impulses. Le Corbusier formulated a series of innovative principles that laid the groundwork for contemporary architecture. These principles included freely structured plan and facade design, vertical connections in an open floor plan, roof terraces, and the pillars that he frequently used to support his buildings. All these principles were first made possible by the skeleton construction methods that Le Corbusier consistently applied. Le Corbusier's principles also included the control of light from above as well as the use - for both functional and decorative purposes - of brise-soleil to shelter windows.

#### The «Modulor» (1942 - 1955)

Another important principle which Le Corbusier contributed to architecture is the "Modulor", a universal scale of measures which he developed between 1942 and 1955. The "Modulor" represents an attempt to combine the English measuring system, which is based on the foot, with the metric decimal system and, at the same time, to establish relationships with human anatomical stature. The "Modulor" is based on the golden section and the proportions of the human body. Le Corbusier also related his "Modulor" to the concept of the space-time continuum used in modern physics.

#### Architecture

Some of Le Corbusier's best-known public buildings are the *Pavillon Suisse* in the *Cité Universitaire* in Paris (1932), the Ministry of Health and Education in Rio de Janeiro (1936-1945) and the *Philips-Pavillon* at the Brussels World Fair (1958). Le Corbusier's large-scale residential building projects include the *Unité d'habitation* (1945-1952) in Marseille, which provides living space for 1600 people, and the apartment building *Clarté* in Geneva (1930-1932).

Of the large number of private homes designed by Le Corbusier, the *Villa La Roche-Jeanneret* in Paris (1923-1924) and the *Villa Savoye* in Poissy (1929) are representative. Le Corbusier's most famous building is probably the pilgrim church *Notre Dame du Haut* in Ronchamp (1950-1954). A few years later, Le Corbusier completed another religious building: the Dominican cloister *La Tourette* near Lyon (1956-1960).

## Painting

Le Corbusier anticipated the formal elements of architecture in his paintings. Painting was his laboratory. In 1918 Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant founded the Purist movement in opposition to Cubism. In 1928 the period of *objets à réaction poétique* began for Le Corbusier. In his later years, Le Corbusier turned to complex symbolic representations linked to the surrealist style of the late 1930s. At the Palace of Justice in Chandigarh he employed large tapestries, which he had himself designed, as sound-muffling elements.

## Chronology

1887	Charles Edouard Jeanneret was born on October 6 in La Chaux-de-Fonds. His father was an engraver of watch and clock faces, his mother a musician.
1900-1907	Student of Charles L'Eplattenier at the Ecole d'Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds.
1905	First architectural assignment: Villa Fallet in La Chaux-de-Fonds.
1907-1911	Travelled to northern and central Italy, Budapest, Vienna, Lyon and Paris, Germany, the Balkans, Greece and Constantinople.
1908-1909	Worked as an architect in the studio of Auguste Perret in Paris, further studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.
1910	Worked with Peter Behrens in Berlin.
1912	Instructor at the newly founded architecture department of the Ecole d'Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds.
1919	Founder and co-publisher of the periodical <i>L'Esprit Nouveau</i> . Began to sign his architectural works with the name "Le Corbusier."
1925	"Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau" at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. "Plan Voisin" for Paris.
1930	Married Yvonne Gallis.
1934	Honorary doctoral degree from the University of Zurich.
1941	Began studies for "Modulor".
1950-1955	Construction of the Pilgrim Church at Ronchamp.
1950-1962	Planning of Chandigarh. Construction of the Secretariat.
1955	Honorary doctoral degree from the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.
1965	Le Corbusier died on August 27 at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin.