

**IN THE LIGHT OF THE LIGHT AVALANCHE OF LE CORBUSIER**

**About Le Corbusier**

PUBLISHED IN

Minerva. Ed. Círculo de Bellas Artes. Madrid, 2006

Pensar con las manos. Ed. Nobuko. Buenos Aires, 2009

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE LIGHT AVALANCHE OF LE CORBUSIER

About Le Corbusier

I finish this text on the Light in Le Corbusier in Manhattan-Kansas, trying to be brief because "what is good if brief, is twice as good", or as they say around here I have the ice-cream in the car and I can not delay.

In Le Corbusier, Light was always a central theme. As it could not be less. Light is the central theme of architecture. An architect can no longer speak of Light without quoting Le Corbusier. Nor can an architect work with light without studying in depth the miracles that Le Corbusier has done with the richest material we use. When I insist time and again that "architecture without light is nothing", I do nothing more than look at Le Corbusier. And when I add that "light builds time", I am simply spreading what I have learned from Le Corbusier.

And I want to bring up here some drawings by Le Corbusier that are even more expressive than his words about Light. The drawings he made of the Pantheon in Rome, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and his chapel in Ronchamp. Two lessons taken and one given by the master about Light from which we are still learning.

The Pantheon of Rome where the cannon of light that crosses its great oculus of 9.5 meters in diameter and 3 meters thick sweeps with its luminosity that infinite spherical space.

Hagia Sophia, where the direct sunlight that enters through its towering windows battles with the no less intense light reflected in the deep jambs of those same openings in such a way that it seems impossible that the clash of crossed swords of LIGHT that puts the astonished spectators in tension.

The great wall of Ronchamp, where with rubble, Le Corbusier builds a wall unbridledly thick to excavate in it a collection of deep loopholes with which to catch the light in a brilliant way and dye it with colors and fill it with letters and flowers to make that space divine. Hole by hole he measures and decides depth and size and shape and color, until he is able to set up that miraculous poem of light.

I once wrote that we could imagine that one day the sun would not rise, or that there would be a prolonged eclipse.

The Pantheon would remain mute and sad and dark waiting for the light that no longer comes. And it would resign itself to wait for the moon, which, with the reflected sunlight, would console the air of its space as if following the script of that wonderful story by Henry James describing the tremendous scene of Count Valerius kneeling inside the Roman temple, illuminated only by the moonlight, set in vibration by the raindrops. Fascinating.

Saint Sophia would not come out of her astonishment waiting for the avalanche of light that in so many ways enters there every day. And she, so clear and so wise, would not understand what could be happening.

And Ronchamp would die of grief. With its dull colors, its suspended words and its withered flowers: so nothing is without light that wall that is all illuminated.

And I wrote all this to emphasize that without light architecture is not possible. And I do not know if my drawings of Le Corbusier would end up dissolving without light or would remain as indelible witnesses of the master's proclamation of light as the material, the central theme of architecture. How could we not speak of light when we speak of Le Corbusier. And how could Le Corbusier not also speak of light in his "poem of the right angle". In that beautiful "poem of the right angle" that gives rise to the exhibition currently on display at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, the most intensely repeated words are those that refer to light. The wonderful edition of Le Corbusier's book by the Círculo de Bellas Artes is an unexpected gift. Juan Miguel Hernández León, as president of the institution, and Juan Calatrava, as its factotum, can be proud.

And although the text of Le Corbusier's "Poema del ángulo recto" was already translated into Spanish in 2003 by Andrea Ortega on the occasion of her provocative doctoral thesis at the ETS de Arquitectura de Barcelona, UPC, I will keep this 2006 version.

The fact is that translating, giving the light of words to a text in order to enlighten people, has always been a key issue in culture. Cervantes had Shelton translate his *Don Quixote* into English a few years after writing it. This is universality and clear-headedness. Homer took a little longer, for it was Chapman, a little after Shelton did it with Cervantes, who translated the Homeric texts. And he did it so well that, after a few hundred years, Keats dedicated a poem to Chapman for such an epic.

And Mújica Laínez, translated some of Shakespeare's sonnets with a beautiful Spanish that I recommend, and the wonderful Greek of Kavafis is translated into English by Elliot, and into French by La Yourcenair. And Vargas Llosa says that these poems are so beautiful that they resist any translation.