

Redrawing Le Corbusier, Part II

Description

Our interview with architect Steven Park, who's redrawn 130 of Le Corbusier's houses for a new book from Princeton Architectural Press, continues today:

What did you learn about Le Corbusier in the process of doing this book?

I learned that his houses for high-profile clients were based on his low-cost housing prototypes. (This should tell you how little I started out knowing about Le Corbusier's work). As many great works of architecture demonstrate, it is not how much a building costs that dictates its quality but rather the nobility of an idea, where "even after all the necessary concessions and compromises, a work of architecture [is] left in the end." I found Le Corbusier's work to exemplify this. I also learned that his ideas were multi-scalar and multi-functional. An equally important revelation was learning how Le Corbusier designed a small house for an individual with a larger environment in mind—not just considering its physical context but also the client's pattern of life and work.

Why do you feel it's so important for this work to be redone in perspectival sections?

This project did not begin with a goal of generating sectional perspectives. The sectional perspective is just one of many ways of studying and understanding a building. So this book is not a statement about why we should study Le Corbusier's architecture in perspectival sections, but only another way of looking at his work, which I hope complements existing discussions and publications.

Nonetheless, there are distinctive advantages to the sectional perspectives. I personally think that it is more beautiful than a simple section; it is my favorite type of drawing. I have always admired Norman Foster's and Paul Rudolph's work. As I followed their work, I learned that Norman Foster once studied at Yale under Paul Rudolph and worked on the sectional perspectives of the Art and Architecture building (This is a really beautiful drawing!); the sectional perspective became Foster's favorite type of drawing. Foster later used perspectival sections extensively to illustrate his own projects such as Reliance Controls building or Carre d'Art. There is also a tradition at IIT that students draw sectional perspectives with construction details. This type of drawing illustrates how constructional logic is manifest in the design of spaces. Later when I saw a sectional perspective of the Hearst Tower by Foster and Partners that showed in one simple view the resolution of old and new, it reaffirmed that I was headed in the right direction.

There are other useful methods of studying and representing architecture—physical modeling, 2D drawings, sketching isometrics by hand, etc. There is no one right way.

What were the major challenges?

Establishing the project's scope was the most difficult part. At first, I did not know whether I should redraw the houses displaying as-built conditions or work from the archived design drawings. There were dimensional conflicts within Le Corbusier's drawings as well. When multiple schemes existed for

the same client, whether to document all the schemes or just the finished design was also challenging to determine. In the end, for all the plans, sections, and elevations, archived drawings were referenced. For most of the sectional perspectives, as-built conditions as well as information from the archived drawings were used.

Selecting the right method of representation also presented a challenge. I could render the models to give them a more realistic look in terms of materials and texture. So this selection process — deciding which information was superfluous, filtering it, verifying it, and finally including it in the drawings — proved challenging.

Anything else you'd care to add?

Thank you for this opportunity. I hope that many readers will find this book enjoyable and perhaps that it will be one of the first books that lead some to Le Corbusier's diverse work.

Also, I would like to add that this collection of sectional perspectives is my personal essay. Another might have selected other sections at other locations with different eye levels and viewing angles. These are just what I thought best represented each building with a minimum number of sectional perspectives. It is only a partial picture of Le Corbusier houses, but one that I think illustrates them quite clearly, and thus will help architecture students to more quickly decipher Le Corbusier's architectural thoughts in three dimensions.

For more information, go to <http://www.papress.com/html/book.details.page.tpl?isbn=9781616890681>

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