Amâncio Guedes. Purism is the least known of modern movements. It is not one of those now popular movements you can find on the shelves of Exclusive Books in paperback - a whole instant movement for around R30. Yet architecturally Purism was the most influential of all modern movements. It shaped the definitive image of the 'International Style' through the work of Le Corbusier. There was a strong dependence of much early modern architecture on painting. Cubism, Constructivism, De Stijl and Purism were all instrumental in the creation of the various currents of modern architecture. Many of the architects were also painters or had close friendships with painters. De Stijl was the movement in which painting and architecture come closest to each other, but perhaps because of that very literal similarity it spent all its vitality in one wonderful building: Rietveld's Schroder House. The dependence of Le Corbusier's seminal ideal villas, Ozenfant, La Roche-Jeanneret, Cook, Guiette, Cannile, Garches and Savoye on his own Purist paintings is of another order; it is of a complex and poetic nature.

When Jeanneret met Ozenfant he was already a painter and a critic with an established reputation. He had edited an avant-garde magazine, L'Elan, and owned a small fashion shop. Jeanneret's relation with Ozenfant, at first, was that of a disciple. To his mentor he wrote: "Of those I know you are the one who seems to be carrying out most clearly what is stirring within me" and "In my confusion I try to evoke your tranquility, sensitive, clear will. I feel that I am at the threshold of discoveries, while you are concerned with their realization". These, and other outpourings were, no doubt, to cause Le Corbusier excruciating embarrassment later.

Purism was an avant-garde movement only in the broadest sense. Its position was idealistic and restorative. It glorified order, logic, culture and technological progress. Purism was seen by its founders as the successor to both Cubism and Dadaism. They claimed to be constructivist where Dada was just negative, and vigorously intellectual where Cubism had become decorative. The Purists claimed that a work of art should provoke a sensation of mathematical order and the means by which this order is achieved should be sought in universal means.

They believed that man is a geometrical animal, animated by a geometric spirit, that machines are the solution to given pro-blems, lessons of method, and that technical realization is no-thing more than a vigorous materialization of the concept. They set out to revitalize the original geometric basis of Cubism which they accused of having degenerated into another decorative and tired style.

In September 1918 Ozenfant and Jeanneret met at Andernos and there they wrote Après le Cubisme (Beyond Cubism). Of all the avant-garde manifestos Après le Cubisme was both more polemical and more old-fashioned in its views. The introductory quotation from Voltaire set the mood: "Decadence is produced by facility in making and by laziness in making well, by the sartorial beauty and the taste for the bizarre". Après le Cubisme was launched simultaneously with the opening of their exhibition in the Gallery Thomas towards the end of 1918. Jeanneret exhibited only two paintings, Ozenfant a far larger number. The works shown were illusionistic and formal. Ozenfant was taken for the leader. Following the exhibition the two friends became inseparable and dedicated themselves intensely to painting. They worked together in Ozenfant's studio. His comment on their collaboration already hints at future difficulties between them: "It was truly joint labour: I sounded the tone and he was the echo that occasionally reinforced it". Their science of art led to mechanization of method.

The two purists composed their paintings from the shapes of everyday objects such as bottles, pipes, glasses and musical instruments. For them, these objects had reached an anonymous sort of standardized purity in their simple shapes which coincided with purist aspirations for an industrial art. They assembled their paintings not only out of standardized objects but out of standardized pictorial parts, as if in creative mimicry of mass production. These industrial qualities - planning and standardization - apply to their work throughout the lifespan of the movement. So carefully are such paintings planned that their flat surfaces of colour rise in low plateaux of paint, bordered by ridges or valleys, the result of a laborious and long process of filling and adjusting colours in clearly mapped out.

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areas. Behind these paintings lie drawings as precise and as finished as the paintings themselves. Their pictures no longer evolved on the canvas as they had before the war with the cubist painters. The process of painting had become the process of manufacturing an idea defined almost down to the last detail. In this it was like the process through which architects realize their ideas.

In 1920 they launched a monthly publication *L’Esprit Nouveau* (The New Spirit) which was dedicated to "*L’esthétique de la vie moderne*". Its first issue appeared in October and it ran to a total of 28 issues. The first number proclaimed *L’Esprit Nouveau* as the first magazine in the world truly dedicated to living aesthetics. Articles by various well-known contributors dealt with the work of Picasso, De Stijl, Loos, poetry, psychology, etc.

In 1922-23 Jeanneret designed and built the Ozenfant Studio House. It is the most pure of all the architectural equivalents of their purist paintings. The house is also a shallow box containing various levels, volumes and simple geometric elements within the frame of its boundary walls. The whole of the composition converges on the 'cube of light' of the studio, which is the architectural equivalent of the cube in "Le bol rouge" of 1919 (fig. 1). The two spiral stairs, one internal, one external, are like the up-right cylindrical bottles in the paintings.

Various separate articles on Architecture which had appeared in some of the issues of *L’Esprit Nouveau* under the name of Corbusier-Saugnier (Corbusier being Jeanneret's pseudonym and Saugnier Ozenfant's) were in 1923 rewritten and edited by Jeanneret into what was to become his most famous book *Vers une Architecture* (Towards an Architecture and not its persistent English title). Ozenfant later claimed that *Vers une Architecture* was made up of articles that they had co-authored for their magazine, but from the later publications of both it is obvious that Jeanneret-Le Corbusier was by far the major contributor. By then it must have seemed clear to contemporaries that the Ozenfant and Jeanneret friendship was foundering. Jeanneret had committed the most unforgivable of crimes. He had painted more significant and intensely personal paintings than his mentor and he had become a notorious architect with a clientele and a following. The opportunity for a decisive break in the relationship arose in an argument over the hanging of the paintings in Maison La Roche.

Jeanneret exhibited often during the hey-day of Purism. In January 1921 he showed his paintings at the Druet Gallery (figs. 2, 3). One of those pictures (his seventh painting) is now in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It is the "Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes et au livre", in brown, pink, oranges, greys and blues (fig. 3). Another painting with an almost identical composition is the green "Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes" of 1920, which was in the Raoul La Roche collection and is now in the Kunstmuseum at Basel. I have recently completed a full-size copy of this painting from a reproduction in a catalogue. I learnt more about Jeanneret's Purism from drawing and painting this beautiful and absurd machine than from everything else I have read and looked at.

In 1922 he exhibited his first large picture at the Independents (fig. 5); it was followed by a second large picture in 1923 and an extensive exhibition at the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne.
Le Corbusier was later to write in his biographical note of 1948:

For seven years I was able to give only Saturday afternoons and Sundays to painting, each week throughout the year. For twenty-five years I have painted every Sunday, and that whole day-of-painting adds up. Then later, until the war I was able to paint every morning from eight to one. In 1933 I decided to have no further public exhibitions of my pictures.

A heated controversy was going on about Vers une Architecture, my first book which has just appeared, and about my campaign in L’Esprit Nouveau which was dedicated to architecture and urbanism. I signed my paintings: Jeanneret; my architecture: Le Corbusier. Those were years of extreme intensity during which, with very simple themes (the La Roche house and other houses, or bottles and glasses on canvasses), I tried passionately to find certitudes.

A painter who does architecture!...
An architect who paints!...
The mind of an engineer!...
Poet (as an insult)...artist!...
And from the first: "Bolshevik"!...
And since 1933 "Fascist" or "Communist" according to taste.

Le Corbusier’s villas of the 1920s were spatially organised with all the perfection of his contemporary paintings. Their facades and spaces were ordered and checked by geometrical devices closely related to the theories of Renaissance architects and identical with those he had used to verify his preparatory drawings for his paintings. The curved solarium walls, the swinging or skewed internal partitions, the spiral stairs and ramps of these villas are of the same family as the outlines of the rotund objects depicted in the paintings and the smooth, flat plastered walls have the evenness of the painted surfaces in the pictures. The pastel shades and browns of the villas are those of the paintings. His early buildings evoke machinery in a mad way; they are indeed ‘machines à émuvoir’, machines whose purpose it is to move us, which he had defined as the real purpose of architecture in Towards an Architecture. “The purpose of construction is to make things hold together, of architecture to move us.” In his later Purist paintings, the “Natures mortes aux nombreux objets” (figs. 7, 8), the objects multiply and the contours fuse in a glowing brightness of plans and elevations until by 1928 the still lifes are puzzles of fragments of objects which flow into each other and generate linear and flickering movements within the paintings.

By 1928 and simultaneously with the variations of Purist still lifes (fig. 9) which he was to do throughout the rest of his life, he paints “La dame au chal et à la théière” (fig. 10) and “La femme au guéridon et au fer à cheval” (fig. 11) using the same device of alternating three-dimensional fragments with areas of flat paint which are typical of the earlier still lifes. These works are the beginning of a new kind of painting for Le Corbusier which have the female figure as a theme. It was to become another recurring subject for him. The paintings are carefully executed and incorporate many of the devices learned from Purism. The drawings on the other hand, gouaches and water-colours are mostly intensely agitated. Some of these works found their way to South Africa before the war.

They are the coloured drawing (fig. 12) he gave to Martienssen and which he reproduces quite inappropriately as the frontispiece to “The Abstract Art Congress” in the South African Architectural Record of July 1937, and the gouache and the collage of recumbent women and the oil “Trois femmes assises” in the Fassler Collection. This painting forms part of the sequence of drawings, gouaches and collages (fig. 13) which resulted in “Sous les pilotis”, the graffiti mural of 1939 in the Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici Villa at Cap Martin. It is the only mural of Le Corbusier where he did not ‘destroy’ the wall but enriched it with fluid and flowing lines representing three superimposed women.

In the Fassier oil the linear definition of the figures is independent of the blobs of colour. The blobs are like those on the site plans of the Centrosoyuz, the Palace of Soviets, the plan Obus for Algiers which was later to materialize into the double studio wing of the Carpenter Center at Harvard, the captive soft volumes within the Mill-Owners Association building; and these ‘blobs’ return to his painting in the “Taureaux” (fig. 14) and “Icônes.” (fig. 15) The Fassiers have a few letters from Le Corbusier about a misunderstanding by Martienssen over the cost of the painting when he chose the work in Paris and a description with sketches of how Le Corbusier wished the painting to be framed. In New World of Space, Le Corbusier describes his invention of such frames:
6 Nature morte pâle à la lanterne, 1922, oil on canvas.
7 Étude pour la Nature morte du pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau, 1925, water colour on paper.
8 Nature morte avec plusieurs objets, 1925, oil on canvas.
9 Composition avec la lune, 1929, oil on canvas.
10 La dame au chat et à la théière, 1928, oil on canvas.
11 La femme au guéridon et au fer à cheval, 1929, oil on canvas.
12 Deux femmes, 1928, pen, ink and water colour on paper.
13 Personnages assis, 1937, collage and gouache on paper.
14 Taureau II, 1929-1953, oil on canvas.
15 Icône III, 1956, oil on canvas.
16 Le bûcheron, 1931, oil on canvas.
17 Femme couchée, cordage et bateau à la porte verte, 1935, oil on canvas.
For a long time picture frames caused me the most painful distress. Some said 'Frames are useless'; others liked to surround the most daring modern pictures with old carved and patinaed Italian and Spanish frames, (obviously, the pseudo-daring did likewise!). I noticed first of all that frame-makers never hesitated to cover a half inch or more of the edge of the picture. In general painters are not bothered by that; they don't notice it. Finally in 1938 I hit on a frame which is flush with the canvas, it is made of two-by-two inch wood and the canvas slips in from the front and becomes encased. As a result, the edges of the canvas are exposed. Thus, the exact mathematical or geometric relations may be appreciated, as they are no longer falsified or distorted by the frame-maker.

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An influence on Le Corbusier's painting during the 1930's is that of his friend, the painter Fernand Léger, whom he had known and admired since his arrival in Paris. This influence is however more in terms of subject matter, the "objets a réaction poétique" and women, than in actual pictorial terms. Behind both painters, however, there is the influence of Surrealism, the most disturbing and intense art movement of the time.

Some of the works of this period, such as "Le boucheron" (fig. 16) of 1931 which contains a suspected self-portrait, timber logs and wood cutter's tools, were deliberately connected to the Errazuris House designed during 1930 by Le Corbusier on a page of New World of Space with two tiny intermediary photographs of cut logs. The "Femme couchée, cordage et bateau à la porte ouverte" (fig. 17) of 1933 is the contemporary of the Durand Apartments project with the meandering row-housing and roads. The rope painted flat and the complex out line of the woman's body which is shaded into relief move the eye separately over different areas of the painting that are contained by a number of squared elements, just as the roads and row-housing at Durand scheme meander towards the stepped apartments' stoppages. And is not the prow of the boat in the painting a premonition of Ronchamp?

When the war came and France was defeated and occupied by the Nazis he isolated himself in the Pyrenees and drew and painted strange presences which he later names "Ubus". Le Corbusier himself relates how these works and the "Ozons" became sculptures:

A Breton cabinet-maker who did not know that he was a sculptor has carved panels of wood after pictures of mine. I had not noticed that my pictures were 'sculptable', which is probably the cruelest judgment that can be made of them. It is true that I always try to achieve full volume in an unlimited perspective. My painting can become polychrome sculpture. Colour brings life into sculpture and architecture. It is possible to carve a picture. Is this the confusion of methods, the verdict without appeal? I have no a priori judgment: when a thing is beautiful, it is beautiful!

The idea of making sculptures out of Le Corbusier's drawings and paintings came from Joseph Savina, a wood carver who produced his first sculpture from a Le Corbusier drawing in 1946 and from then on collaborated with him until his death in 1965. For the first five years Savina worked on his own from drawings, reproductions and written instructions, but after 1951 Savina often made full size working drawings to avoid misunderstandings, although he sometimes took the initiative and invented his own interpretations. The sculptures group themselves in
different series, Ozons (fig. 18), Ubus (fig. 19), Femmes, Totems (fig. 20), Panurges etc. They consist of a base upon which a number of differentiated pieces are assembled. Most of the early pieces have a marked frontality, with areas of low relief alternating with well rounded carving. Many of the pieces are coloured, partially coloured or stained, the areas of bright colour or white contradicting and flattening the volumes. Sometimes the separate and indefinable objects which make up what at first glance appear to be a still life are connected by extraneous bits of flat material and are held together by bolts and nuts. They often have the promise of movement or at least reassembly. They are a strange collection of private symbols and personal signs which Le Corbusier commented on as follows:

On reflection I think that all this means one thing. It is a question of a work of art, that is, of a will to reveal and to seize the emotion in relationships. These relationships are determined by precise facts like exact words, put together in accordance with the kind of logic which is precisely the reality of art. It is obvious that these precise facts, words or objects, are within grasp; if they are grasped clearly, a certain quality of spirit in the artist is shown. They are facts which are painted or built. They evoke relationships as subtle, on occasion, as the most winged verses. Why not? If the hand can seize them or move freely among the secrets of their interrelating, it is because they are conceived, willed and executed with firmness and with truth. And perhaps with subtle overtones. Then it is UBU, polychrome sculpture in which there are hints of landscape, of lagoons or beaches, or other things. It is also a house or a large building raised up on posts: it is a city lifting up in the sky of its future the spheres, cones and cylinders, arranged in a certain order, of a Saint-Gaudens, of Barcelona, of Algiers or of Paris, or of Rio de Janeiro.

His painting after the war was hampered by the many architectural commissions he undertook. A part from the Taureau and Icône series he repainted earlier works, made new variations and carried on doing small oil sketches where he managed to capture the vitality of his drawings which eluded him in the larger works.

The opportunity to work creatively with other craftsmen and artists was explored not only in the collaboration with Savina but also in the design of cartoons for tapestries which he called the "nomad's murals"; and in the sketches for huge enamel panels such as those which make up the doors at Ronchamp and Chandigarh.

Soon after the war, during his stay in the United States for the setting up of the United Nations project, he often stayed with Nivola, a young Italian American sculptor who had developed a technique of casting plaster panels onto wet sand moulds. Le Corbusier experimented with Nivola in the casting of some of his own pieces arid painted murals on the walls of the modest beach cottage of the Nivolos. This manner of realising his ideas is much the same as the one he had decided upon earlier for the execution of his architectural work. He surrounded himself with assistants so that he could distance himself from the actual working out of the details and retain the intensity of the concept.

One dominant concern of architects and artists after the war was the "Synthesis of the arts", and there was much publishing and positive criticism about this which took the form of collaboration among architects and artists where each kept to their circumscribed areas. Outstanding examples of this were the glazed tile wall decoration and Lipschitz'Prometheus at the Ministry of Education in Rio and the azulejo murals by Portinari in the Pampulha Chapel of Niemeyer. Le Corbusier was the only one who could conceive of that synthesis by himself through his unique way of collaborating with assistants and craftsmen. In this he had succeeded in returning lo the age-old tradition of the master artist who worked in his 'bodegga' surrounded by disciples and assistants.

Amâncio Guedes. See his biographical note on article number 45 of this publication: Isabel Maria Rodrigues, "Vers une promenade architecturale: Le Corbusier - Martienssen - Guedes, O Léão que Ri - Team 10"