Une Petite maison
Éditions Girbberger,
Carnet de la recherche patiente n°1, Zurich, 1954

Piu piccola è la casa e piu in grande bisogna pensare. Questa è la lezione che ci piace ogni volta rinnovare scorrendo le pagine d’Une petite maison.

Un libro che, come nella più parte delle pubblicazioni di cui LC è autore (eccetto fatta per il monumento Œuvre Complète), non è episodio di una collana, ma pezzo unico a sé stante. Ogni libro un capo d’opera, di un’opera unica, esempiare (12 cm x 16,4 di altezza). Ogni coppia di facciate una tavola messa in tensione e maestrosamente bilanciata. Lo scritto alternati a “Mére musicienne, père fervent de la nature” e “Mise en pages et dessins de la couverture par Le Corbusier” offrono una lettura straordinaria che si concluderà con una veste del volume.

Ogni libro un capo d’opera, di un’opera unica, esempiare (12 cm x 16,4 di altezza). Ogni coppia di facciate una tavola messa in tensione e maestrosamente bilanciata. Lo scritto alternati a “Mére musicienne, père fervent de la nature” e “Mise en pages et dessins de la couverture par Le Corbusier” offrono una lettura straordinaria che si concluderà con una veste del volume.

Ogni libro un capo d’opera, di un’opera unica, esempiare (12 cm x 16,4 di altezza). Ogni coppia di facciate una tavola messa in tensione e maestrosamente bilanciata. Lo scritto alternati a “Mére musicienne, père fervent de la nature” e “Mise en pages et dessins de la couverture par Le Corbusier” offrono una lettura straordinaria che si concluderà con una veste del volume.
The smaller the home, the bigger one must think. This is the lesson we like to pass on as we browse through the pages of *Une petite maison*. As with most of LC's literary efforts (with the exception of his monumental *Œuvre Complète*), this book is not merely the episode in a collection, but rather a unique, self-standing piece. Every book is a masterpiece specimen of a unique, unparalleled work of art (12 cm x 16.4 cm in height). Every pair of pages is a table that is at once masterfully crafted and impeccably balanced. His writing is a whirl of dry, uncompromising strokes ("Mère musicienne, père fervent de la nature") chasing after a thrilling narrative, a captivating display of prose that shows the simple nature of things to the amazed eyes that revel in what they see. The building material used for this house are the water of the lake and the mountain in front, as well as the paulownia and the cherry, concrete and iron: *le mur s’arrête et le spectacle surgit: lumière, espace, cette eau et ces montagnes...* Again, the building material of this home are the rising sun, penetrating the hard wall through the skylight, but also the passing of time, which surprises the beholder on the roof-terrace with wild autumn geraniums sprawling to the very edge of the roof. The wall, origin and fate of all architecture: *le mur qui ferme la vue* is a light, overshadowed wing looming against the sky, directing the gaze and forming a cosy, interior ambience in spite of nothing being above our heads but the sky. Does the stare sharpen our reason? And the landscape, to be such, cannot but be contained, secluded, limited, defined: hence the radical decision: *boucher les horizons en élevant des mur et ne les révéler, par interruption de murs, qu’en des points stratégiques. La règle servit ici: murs nord, est et sud ont «cloîtré» le tout petit jardin carré de dix metres de côté et à en on fait une salle de verdure – un intérieur.*

Are houses always the same? Here are Ottoman homes seen in the Orient, or the little courtyard at the Certosa of Erna with the beautiful Tuscan hills as a backdrop, or the formidable surrealist idea of Maison Beistegui, from which I see the monuments laying on the artificial horizon of a wall that stops the gaze. One and all! This is the place (not the context, as intellectuals defined it years later): the retaining walls supporting the vineyards dot the landscape of the first region in the book; walls and the farmers who build them; in the meantime three rippling lines, the earth, the lake and the mountain, are the last sea-green mark of this volume, drawn in matt, solid ink.

What is home, then? Possibly the three steps glimpsed behind a timeless, wicker chair and a glass door opening to the outside, one which Heinrich Tessenow would have doubtlessly loved. Vibrating against the dimly lit interior, a curtain barely moves in white flutters. A thin column supports the large, dark coffers of the jutting roof. Here, light and shadow are, more than ever, construction materials. Learning, but not teaching? You will make your film with white, said Truffaut... and classic was a lesson taught by Ingres, and all the French masters, including our own LC.

A loving home made in its master’s image? Donner d’échelle humaine complements a place where the stare rests idly on the almost motionless lake. After all, like people, houses need to love and be loved.

*Une petite maison* was published in 1923 aux *Éditions d’Architecture* Zurich, with a detailed French colophon in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

*MISE EN PAGES ET DESSINS DE LA COUVERTURE PAR LE CORBUSIER* with the pictures on page 59, as LC himself notes, *made sur le données de L-C, par Mademoiselle Peter, professeur de photographie à Vevey*. Mrs Peter, then, was quite the skilled photographer, so much so that she became a photography professor, but yet under the close scrutiny of the Master, who provides accurate indications on the shots to be taken.

For this comment Firenze Architettura selected the second, 1954 edition, also published by *Éditions d’Architecture* a Zurigo, which was followed by 4 re-prints up to the sixth, published in 1993 by Artemis Verlag AG Zürich. As compared with the first, 1923 edition, in the second edition L-C added a sequence of drawings going from 1945 to 10 September 1951, his mother’s birthday. This second edition appeared to us as the most comprehensive and interesting.

Francesco Collotti