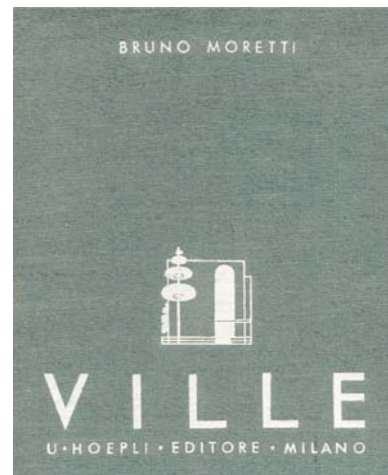


Masterpiece-*Merit*pieces

By : Anthony C.Antoniades

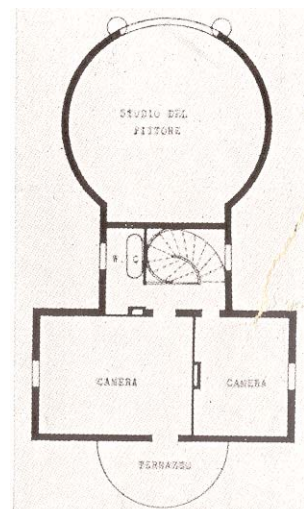
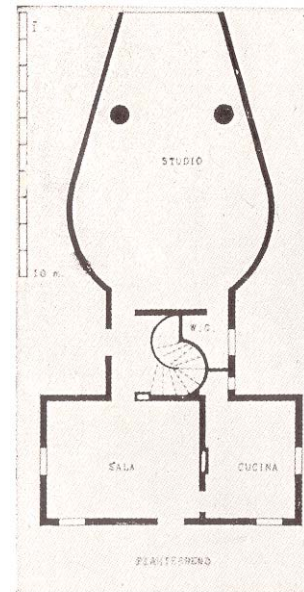
I have caught myself many times over the years, with no reason at all, to grab certain books from my library and to go through the pages I have marked. I have spent hours upon hours looking at some buildings that were I not an architect accustomed to rationalize on architecture I would say they have magic. Some of them are buildings I would have liked very much to have done myself ; some others they attract me for their remoteness to everything everybody else was doing at the time they were built ; nonetheless they teach me and always make me think and understand certain things better, even feel happy for the little I have managed to do myself ; After all, these instances prove that there were and will always be meritorious architects ,who even through the tiniest contribution they help advance the evolution of ideas and the eventual betterment of our lives . These are instances of buildings and "heroes" that somehow made it into a publication, as if like meteors that passed a night over our sky and fell somewhere on this earth , perhaps never to be seen or heard again, perhaps never to have been heard by the majority of the others. I am sure you may know that because some of you might have had similar experiences with such meteoric encounters , some visions and thoughts that you may treasure and you might want to share with others ;

A particular book in my library , is by Bruno Moretti's, *Ville* , Ulrico Hoepli publisher, Milano 1942 -XX ; It features 110 architects from 17 countries. In the first 112 pages there are houses of the International Style morphology , by some of the best known architects in the world ; Strangely enough, Le Corbusier whose clichés of his early period were followed by others, is not included. We will find variations upon variation of his Villa Garche, and many of his other well known projects; but we'll find not even one building by Le Corbusier. There are certainly houses by Gropius, Mies, Breuer and Rudolf Schindler, while there is no Neutra. It would be very interesting to know why Le Corbusier was not included; Was he perhaps not invited ? Was it because Italy was undergoing at that time it's twentieth fascist year and Le Corbusier decided not to send material for something produced by the Fascists ? Others from France were included; Was he more patriotic even though not born in France? Was he bound by contract to his publishers and he could not disperse his projects for other books ? Perhaps; and Perhaps not . What interests me though in this whole book are five projects :the Villa in Vaucresson and the Villa in the Parc de Marne, by Raymond Fischer, the Villa Heyrovsky in Zell am Zee by the architect Lois Welzenbacher of Innsbruck, his other house in the Mountains, the Villa in Vaucresson by Pol Abraham in Paris, and



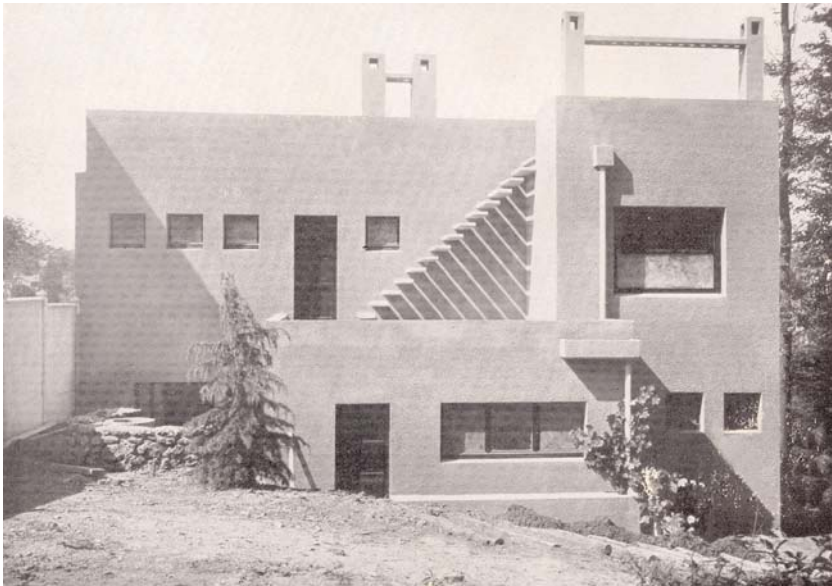
the Villa of the painter Locatelli in Colle Bastia in Bergamo, by architect Giuseppe Pizzigoni. .

And I will start with the last one: I really love it even though it is symmetrical and I have already stated my problems with symmetry and frontality; And I love it because it is clumsy and played games with me for quite sometime; Look at the ground floor plan : if you have a car you want to get straight into what you might think is a garage, perhaps the most grandiose garage to accept a beautiful Porsche, between the two round columns left and right; for a grand entry to the upper floor. But , no Sir ! The main entrance is on the "neck" side of the plan to the left, while , at the other end of the axis, there is the exit of the living room to the terrace; Polar system of design we have here; The Kitchen to the right; what you mean Palladian symmetry? Bergamo is far from Vicenza; there is no symmetry here. And look at the stair, "organic" , you start, go up half level, then the curve turns to your right over the toilet of the ground floor studio to take you to the two bedrooms and the bathroom above; You can't imagine going down and not singing or whistling a tune; What you mean you don't whistle ? don't you feel it ! But don't you ever think there is a second floor studio; the cylinder you see from the outside and you think it is a second floor studio is the two storey volume of the studio on the ground floor you had thought it was the garage; And the huge opening on the cylinder you thought it was a majestic gate to a roof terrace is nothing else but a skylight to bring natural light all day ; to reflect it on the wall and leave the work area below evenly lit with northern light ; How could it have access to the ridge of the pediment of the "garage" below ? No, this is a no nonsense plan , you get in, say a few words and then let's pass to the studio to see some works. Or "where is John", "he is working at the studio, let's go see him". No closets in the bedroom? But how many artists you know that don't stuck everything on the floor ; Cloths and paintings; They love to be in the spaces surrounded by everything; An artist's studio , an Art Space, a composite space, for work and total contemplation, a cathedral , no destruction to views and such; There is probably no woman in the house and for sure no children. Could I work myself in it? Not for one minute; I have been so much used to see the st. Nicholas rock island from my own window and listen to the sound of the waves; But I love this studio by Giuseppe Pizzigoni ! Why ? Because I sense how different from me his artist client Locatelli was, since he was able to live and work in a house so unique and so different to what I could have worked in . Because his architect must have had great fun and care to Locatelli's needs and life style; To do such authentic thing, a plan that looks like a kerosene lamp and yet so well lighted, what a delight, and how ingenious ! Wouldn't you like to know how it evolved ? I believe this little house is not unlike everything Venturi told us in his Complexity and Contradiction ; Everything is there; Duality, front and back, two scales, combination of the mundane with the profane, mystery and surprise, I believe it is a lot more than the initial you



The Villa of the painter Locatelli in Colle Bastia in Bergamo.
Architect Giuseppe Pizzigoni.

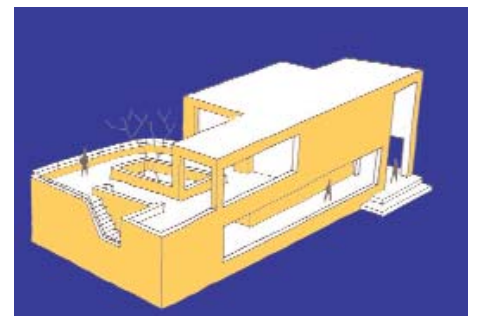
Picture and Plans, see: Ville op.cit.



The Villa in Vaucresson by Pol Abraham

see from the outside as you approach it polarly. The room you thought is the garage, is the studio of the artist with a cylindrical drum to the back to bathe it in light just from the opposite side of the bathroom; it can't get out of your memory, no matter what;

The Villa in Vaucresson by Pol Abraham in Paris also fascinates me; I can't help but admire the man's mastery in manipulating plasticity and his courage in daring to work in the language of plasticity and mass-extraction of mass, while everybody was working within the well known clichés of the International style. The Cantilevered steps and the small wall openings, the rhythmic square openings combined with larger rectangular of very appealing proportions, can be very well thought of as predecessors to the Ronchamp. I am inclined to think there are a few more elements from this project, like the sculptural emphasis on the water spouts, square collection boxes and exposed drainage pipe, that were probably noticed by Le Corbusier. I always felt that this house, was really way ahead of its time, way before Luis Barragan and the Greek Stamo Papadakis adopted similar language; Papadakis had dared the morphology of mass and extraction of mass in the Greek Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which I have attempted to reconstruct in the sketch I append. This project by Pol Abraham always fascinated me, but I really became aware of the charm and significance of its language only after I had seen houses of Barragan and Legorreta, to whom I believe it is an early predecessor. It is one of the hidden treasures of the modern movement, just because it had dared to stay outside of it.

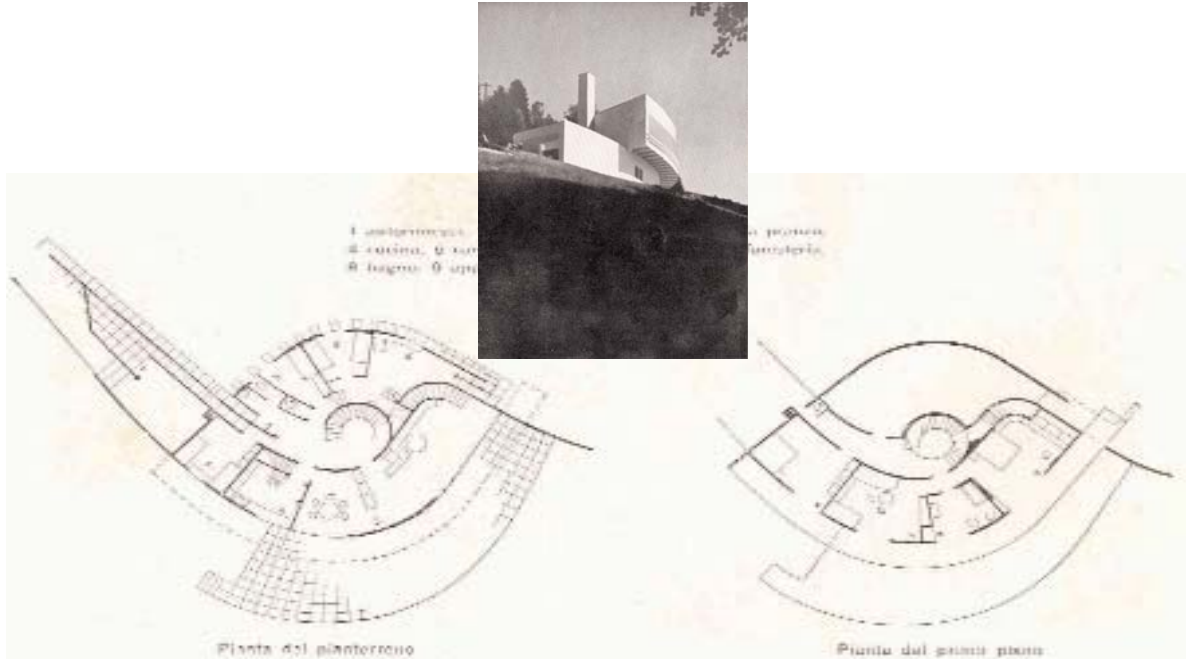


The Greek Pavilion in the Venice Biennale, by Stamo Papadakis, in axonometric reconstruction sketches by the author (A.C.A 2000)



The Villa Hyrovsky, in Zell am See (left), and a mountain cottage in Innsbruck (right) by austrian architect Lois Welzenbacher.

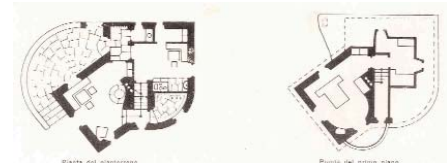
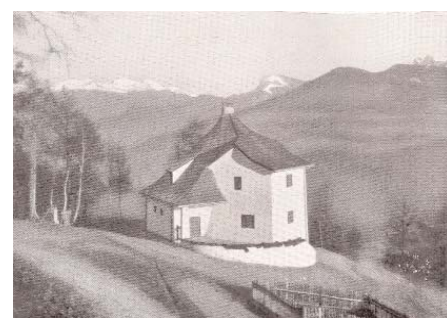
And similarly I had felt for many years for the houses of Lois Welzenbacher, the Villa Hyrovsky, in Zell am See, and a mountain cottage in Innsbruck. Let me say at the outset that I had thought that the architect was a woman; Lois... and a such I had registered the works in my mind and I had admired and explained their authenticity; Because nobody in the high modernism of the



The Villa Hyrovsky , in Zell am See . Approach view and plans.

architect Lois Welzenbacher.

late twenties early thirties was daring a dynamic curvilinear house, of helical organic form suggested by the landscape contours in order to create dynamic entrance tendencies transformed in into interior circulation , both horizontal and vertical, and integrate them with the function ; And somehow , for many years I was thinking of the voluptuousness of the Hyrovsky villa as the only modernist work with feminine sensitivity , which had managed to enter into the pages of a book on modern architecture. Years later, when I was going repeatedly through Hitchcock's and Johnson's book on the International style, I was further upset, because the only person these writers had dared criticize openly and gave photos with negative critical captions was ... Lois : "The curved corner cannot be justified by function nor does it appear necessary to the design"(p.c 226, caption criticizing the plan of an apartment house in Innsbruck-1930) . And there was an earlier equally derogatory caption for the Schulz house of 1928 in Westfalia-Germany; it was criticizing it for its "unfortunate contrast of vertical and horizontal brick courses."(p.225.International Style) All this had upset me, till the advent of the Internet ; In the first place, I felt bad to learn that the architect of this daring house was not a woman but a man , and I also felt very bad that nobody had ever told me anything before, nor had I ever found anything about this architect , since he had been one of the leading exponents of organic architecture in Europe, together with Erich Mendelsohn , Hans Scharoun, Hugo Häring and Alvar Aalto; Don't try hard; you will not find him in Giedion, in Banham, in Jencks, in Frampton or in Zevi , or in any other book on Modern architecture , not even the encyclopedic ones . He was one of those who had stayed in Germany ; when Hitler came to power he returned to his craftsmanship trade of masonry construction the sculptural approach with the folk tradition of South Tyrol; The strength of the mountain lodge and the plan speak for themselves; The writers who shaped the twentieth century had a way to leave so many good architects outside; But don't we don't do it at times, knowingly or unknowingly ; Thank God for the historic accidents that might salvage some reputations ! Lois Welzenbacher , from a trained brick layer turned architect, became in 1947 a professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. I believe he is one of

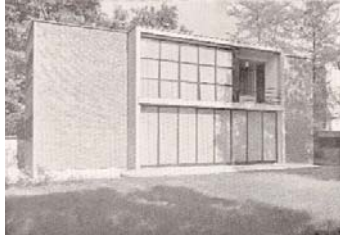


Mountain cottage in Innsbruck .Approach view and plans.

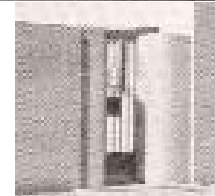
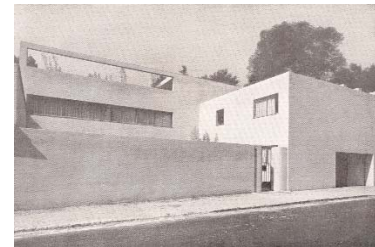
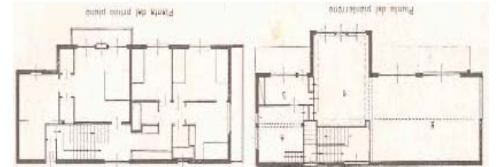
architect Lois Welzenbacher.

the really meritorious architects with really critical inclusivist stance in the hey of the modern movement.

Finally I want to talk about the two villas of Raymond Fischer in the Park de Marne (photo and plans : top right, and photo and plans below). I consider them pioneering in the idea of minimal housing, even though they are part of the suburban single family house mentality. Both are extremely frugal in plan , openness and economy of means , messengers of the possibility of modular



housing complexes of higher densities ; I always thought that were Philip Johnson to make his glass house two storey, he would have followed the villa Vaucresson model, while I believe that everybody, from Moshe Safdie to Paul Rudolph, had probably seen at some point or another the precedent of the stacking suggested by the relief of the volumes of the Villa in the Park de Marne.



There are some more projects in this book that sometimes make me stop; They call me to make connections , to relate to more recent happenings. The House of Andre Lurcat in Hefferlin, has definitely two languages , Villa Garche and Barragan with overall Barragan/Papadakis solidity, while it

is a model of total privacy in a suburban layout. And it has some extraordinary move that make the architect excel and unique. The detail of the minute recession of the two curvilinear pieces of wall that mark the entrance : a tiny move to the back which makes a whole world of difference ; Although it does not take away from the language of mass, it lets all the volumes in their integrity, while at the same time it absolutely individualizes and marks the entrance. One could actually classify this move as one of the great design details of all time and never forget to point it as a prototype in this respect. I can think of a great number of recent architects of merit who may or may not have borrowed inspiration from this precedent; I'd include among them the Mexicans Antonio Atolini, Ricardo Legorreta and Luis Barragan and the Greeks Manetas-Maneta, especially with regard their making the point of entry and with regard the overall privacy of



Notice this minute yet extraordinary move
The House of Andre Lurcat in Hefferlin



House in Mexico
Antonio Atolini,
Architect



Luis Barragan ,
Gilardi Residence ,
Mexico City
(Photo A.C.A)



Accenting the gate by Giorgos and Eleni
Maneta, Architects, in Kefalari Residence;
(Photo A.C.A)



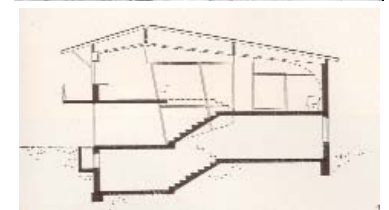
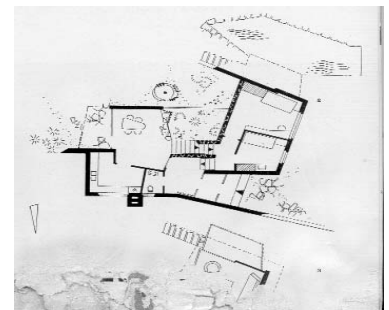
Condominium in Saronis.
Anthony C. Antoniades, Architect.
Photos A.C.A)



the house, which is best exemplified by the Embiricos residence in Kefalari. I would also add that the duality of expressions of this residence had also influenced me in the adoption of two languages in unity in my condominium in Saronis.

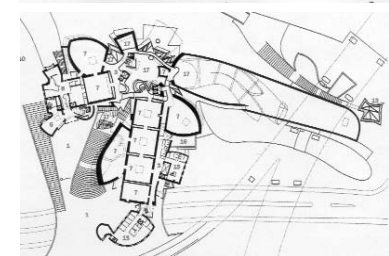
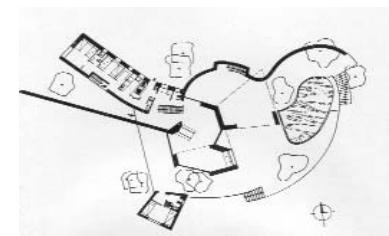
From my Magazines it is the "Zodiac 5" , which has suffered the most by my handling and time ; in much better condition I keep a copy I have of the January 1938 issue of the Architectural Forum on Frank Lloyd Wright , with a string spiraling binding . Both have suffered repeatedly; and I believe that most of the architects of the last 60-70years must have inflicted similar damage on their own particular copies; I believe if you study these particular issues, especially "Zodiac 5" you'll be able to trace most of the influences exerted upon younger people by the featured architects. I urge you all , to seek these issues and spend sometime with them ; But here I'd like to focus only on one person, whose work stays in my own memory as a real "meteorite" who passed over my own architectural sky ; A name almost never to be heard in architecture lectures or his work to have been sighted as precedent even by those who where teaching the language he was working on. Chen Kuen Lee's architectural language was that of Hugo Haring and Hans Scharoun , whose philosophy he openly admired and with whom he had collaborated in research following world war II, for the new urbanism in China. The fluidity and aetheriality of the space as well as the integration with the landscape and the generation of the overall form , particularly through the tool of the architectural section are without precedent ; Whenever my colleague and very talented architect Martin Price , who was forcefully guiding his students to work in expressionistic manner, was inviting me to the review of his students' projects, I was always bringing these two houses to their attention : "It is not just Alvar Aalto, Pietilä and Scharoun; Just take a look at Kuen Lee in Zodiac 5". I will never forget a particular student, who came back to me a few days later, to tell me "Mr. Antoniades, I think Frank Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao has something from one of the houses of Kuen Lee you sent me to see; But did you also see the house in Ibiza by Jose Goderch and Manuel Valls ? "; he was referring to the Straub house of Kuen Lee... but I could not recall the house of the Spanish group he was talking to.There is a complicated layering effect in the process of "influencing" and influences in architecture ; I couldn't tell him he was not perhaps right ! And I went back to check my "Zodiac 5" before answering him. He was absolutely right ; not only the house in Ibiza I reproduce here had something of the curvilinear flair of the Bilbao, but the two Spanish architects were exquisitely astonishing as well. ...Well, I'd go along with you if you insist ; Don't call the buildings and the precedents of my favorite magazines above "masterpieces" ...meritpieces will suit me fine ; after all it is , I believe, more human !

Thank You
 Anthony C.Antoniades for Mag11/ Hydra -Nov.2005



Sample of Architectural expressionism by Chen Kuen Lee.

Source of Photo and drawings: Zodiac 5



Top : Plan of House in Ibiza by architects Jose Goderch CE/ÆØ Manuel Valls (Source : "Zodiac 5")

Below: Plan of the Museum Guggenheim in Bilbao, Architect: Frank Gehry.

Source: The World of Buildings no. 21