























**LE CORBUSIER &
PIERRE JEANNERET**

**RESTORATION
OF THE CLARTÉ
BUILDING, GENEVA**

17 **Preface**

Jean-Pierre Duport

19 **Introduction**

Sabine Nemec-Piguet

22 **THE CLARTE BUILDING
REFLECTIONS ON
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

24 **The historical context of the Clarté site –
Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret**
Catherine Courtiau

32 **“A milestone of modern architecture ...”
The Clarté building in the creations of
Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret**
Arthur Rüegg

42 **THE RESTORATION IN QUESTION**

44 **Lessons of a rehabilitation**
Bernard Zumthor

49 **The restoration of the Clarté building,
an introduction**
Jacques-Louis de Chambrier

52 **BUILDING PLANS
HISTORICAL PLANS
RESTORATION PLANS**

74 **THE RESTORATION OF 2007–2011
AT THE HEART OF THE WORKS**

Sabine Nemeč-Piguet, Marielle Savoyat

76 **Introduction**

78 **The site installation**

82 **The roof**

90 **The balconies**

100 **The metal facades and windows**

110 **The roller blinds and their enclosures**

116 **Masonry and reinforced concrete**

118 **Travertine cladding**

120 **The glass bricks**

124 **The technical services**

128 **The communal areas**

138 **Colours**

150 **ANNEXES**

152 **Chronology**

155 **Regulations for co-owners 2008**

158 **Excerpts from the Inventory undertaken
by the firm of architects Laurent Chenu**

160 **Principles for conservation of interior areas –
rules of intervention for the owner’s attention**

163 **Construction of 1931–1932**

164 **Restoration project of 2007–2011**

165 **Biographical notes**

171 **Select bibliography and sources**

175 Acknowledgements

176 Credits

pp. 1–4 and 8–11

Collection of colour photos taken after building restoration.

p. 5

5-roomed full-depth apartment, south side, eighth floor of No. 4, belonging to Robert (brother of Pierre) and Paulette Jeanneret, parents of Jacqueline. Behind the balcony's round table, Pierre and Jacqueline Jeanneret. In the foreground, Francis Quétant and a 1931 Werner Max Moser chair. Photo delivered 12 June 1933, by Boissonnas.

p. 6

View of the roof terrace. On the left, Madame Quétant, to the right, her sister. Photo dated 19 October 1932, courtesy of Boissonnas.

p. 7

View of Francis Quétant's apartment, in the "wagon". Photo dated 19 October 1932, courtesy of Boissonnas. – Caption taken from "La maison de Verre", in *L'Art en Suisse*, Geneva, No. 45, April-May 1933: "G.A. Hufschmid, arch. dec. [architect decorator] Studio of Mr. Quétant, Metal furnishings manufactured by Wanner & Cie. Trimmings and fabrics: G.u.R. Desponds, upholsterers. Walls: wallpapers Le Corbusier (Salubra) pale blue and dark red."

Preface

Jean-Pierre Duport

President of the Fondation Le Corbusier from January 2003 to December 2012

After completion in 2010, following a long programme of works, the “House of glass” has recovered its transparency, its lightness, and its colour. The only building realized by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret in Geneva (in collaboration with Edmond Wanner) has regained its presence in the city. The Clarté building assumes its full meaning in the context of works by the architect.

The scope of the Clarté building restoration bears witness to the new approach to today’s heritage adopted by governments, experts, and building owners. This is especially true of work by Le Corbusier. Over the past decade we have been lucky to witness the rescue of abandoned buildings designed by him, like the Jeanneret-Perret House at La Chaux-de-Fonds, allowing a rediscovery of work often overlooked by the public and critics. Simultaneously, other renovation projects have started, notably in Germany and France, often motivated by the need to maintain structures that are fragile, principally due to their experimental nature.

It should also be welcomed that these projects have all been undertaken with the greatest respect for the original. They have benefited from methods that today permit an understanding of the history and better knowledge of the materials used. The extent of work undertaken during a restoration such as Clarté represents a unique opportunity to “X-ray” all elements of a building, analyse the materials, and document its many layers. These studies enrich the original documentation and contribute to the theoretical and aesthetic knowledge of Le Corbusier’s creations. Dissemination of this knowledge benefits the entire network of property owners and managers confronted by the same questions in different contexts.

The rebirth of Clarté required substantial scientific, technical, and financial resources, which contribute to the long-term preservation of the building. I would like to thank all those who,

over recent years, have fought to prevent this building from falling into oblivion, and who have campaigned to ensure its exemplary restoration. The State of Geneva and the Federal Office of Culture have made available all their skills to ensure full scientific support of the project. They have financially supported the efforts of the community of owners, favouring the realisation of particularly complex and expensive work. I also salute the commitment of the project manager, Jacques-Louis de Chambrier, and that of his colleagues, who bravely decided to set up their workshop at the heart of the worksite, thereby sharing the daily challenges of the team.

This groundswell, which today benefits many of Le Corbusier’s built projects, will allow us to reassess and revisit other more or less well-known buildings in years to come, thus providing their residents with a better appreciation of them. We must hope that, encouraged by these examples, new restorations will be undertaken, consolidating the experience and allowing the understanding of this legacy to prosper. This is also the approach taken by the seven countries that are committed to the addition of Le Corbusier’s architectural work to the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. Beyond the recognition of the universality of such work, it is a question of obtaining long-term commitment to preserve this exceptional heritage from the regions, communities, and other concerned partners. The re-birth of Clarté will undoubtedly help convince them.

