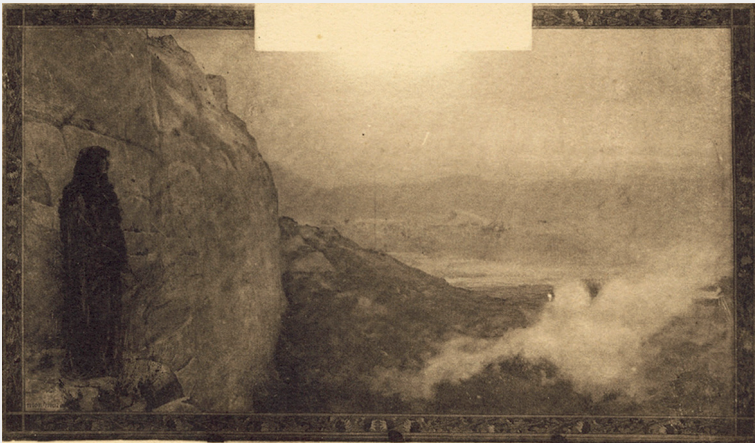


La Sainte-Baume (the “Trouinade”)

Le Corbusier



La Sainte-Baume (the “Trouinade”)

The Basilica, the hotels and the Permanent City. 1948

Le Corbusier

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Márcia Nascimento (b. 1982), **Nuno Costa** (b. 1984).

They have a Degree in Architecture from the University of Minho (DAA-UM, 2007) and a Master Degree from the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC, 2009).

Since then, they run their activity as architects developing their own works from which should be underlined the project Tapio Wirkkala's Saivaara Monument, awarded with grants, among others, from the Arts Council of Finland (TAIKE, 2014) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (FCG, 2017).

They are co-founders of Kärjäkivet (2019, onwards).

Synopsis

"Kärjäkivet" is a periodical publication of thought and criticism that was born from a wider project developed around a proposal which was never accomplished, concerning the Saivaara Monument, elaborated in 1978 by the legendary Finnish artist Tapio Wirkkala.

"In 1975, the President Urho Kekkonen expressed as his wish that his monument should be placed in northwestern Lapland, on the Saivaara mountain. [...]"

How to make a monument on a site that is naturally so beautiful that one cannot take away anything from it, neither is man able to add anything to it? Tapio Wirkkala ended up with a proposal in which all the materials of the monument have been picked from the mountain itself.

The monument consists of a straight, paved, almost imperceptible path crossing over the Saivaara mountain. Five stones will be raised from the mountainside to the summit of the mountain, [...]. These stones will form a circle, similar to the court venue stones of the old days [called in Finnish as "Kärjäkivet"], on which the wise men of the village got together in order to decide about common matters. The one who has the strength to climb up the stony path may sit on these stones, look at the landscape and think.

This artless monument is not going to change or destroy the landscape."

Tapio Wirkkala Rut Bryk Foundation Archive, 1978

In this sense, this publication intends to accomplish, not in form but in content, the idea of Tapio Wirkkala for the Saivaara Monument: the creation of a place where men of all races and colors can gather together to think.

For that purpose, an online platform was created where different invited authors gather together through texts, illustrated and edited in small booklets, expressing their thoughts on architecture, art and culture in general, with the Saivaara Monument as the main driver.

Based in Portugal, it is published, as a general rule, every quarter, by adding a new text that can be viewed or downloaded online.

Editor's Note

Márcia Nascimento
& Nuno Costa

During the next issues of Käräjäkivet, we will sporadically retrieve some texts which, although already published on other platforms, may allow a better understanding of the Saivaara Monument by putting it into perspective with other works and projects from completely different contexts but very similar circumstances.

In this sense, we republish in this second issue Le Corbusier's unrealized project for La Sainte-Baume mountain chain in the Var region of southern France. Together with Edward Trouin, owner of part of these lands and also his client, Le Corbusier, around 1948, dreamed of building in La Sainte-Baume an architectural ensemble, consisting of a Basilica and a City (Basilica of Peace and Forgiveness, and City of Contemplation) to accommodate those who wished to visit this mystical place, once inhabited by Mary Magdalene, as the legend says.

As we mentioned, we are interested in publishing this project to explore those aspects that coincide with the ones of the Saivaara Monument. From the outset, its circumstance of absent architecture, which still survives in the universe of ideas and dreams, probably the most appropriate place for its existence. It also makes us reflect on the paradox of acting architecturally in wild territory, with the main purpose of protecting it. Finally, rather than responding to the utilitarian needs inherent to the program, Le Corbusier gives the project an eminently spiritual character due to the power of place.

This second issue of Käräjäkivet would not have been possible without the indispensable collaboration of the Le Corbusier Foundation by unreservedly agreeing to cede the rights to reproduce part of the endless original material produced by Le Corbusier for this project.

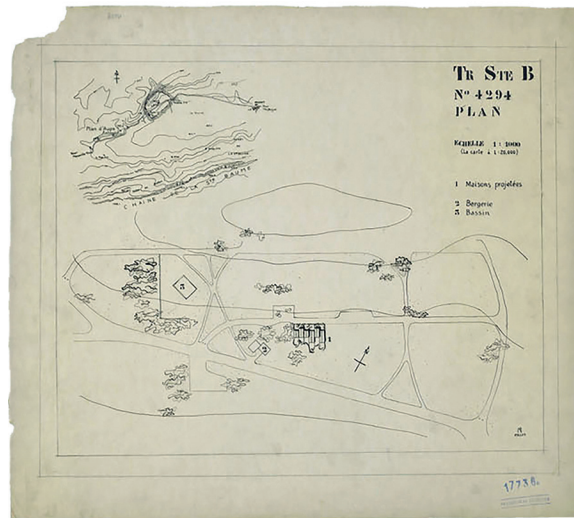


La Sainte-Baume, the forest and the cave. 1950

La Sainte-Baume (the "Trouinade")

- The Basilica, the hotels and the Permanent City

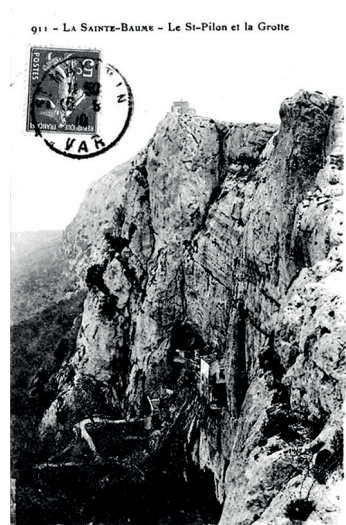
Le Corbusier,
Architect



An astonishing and perhaps marvelous undertaking: inspired by Edward Trouin whose family have been geometers in Marseilles since 1780. He, the last of them, is fifty years old, and is descended from seamen and pirates of St-Malo, and from peasants of Provence. He is a geometer, that is to say that he is devoted to architecture, construction, the management of the land, the countryside and to geometry. He speaks with a Marseilles accent, has the energy of the "thunder of God", as they say in Marseilles, and possesses by chance a million square meters of uncultivated and unproductive land at La Sainte-Baume. He decided to make some use of it. Weekend hunters came and asked him to sell them pieces here and there, but Trouin did not wish to sell, he wanted to realize a noble idea, to save the countryside of La Sainte-Baume from the speculative builder, who had already invaded Le Plan d'Aups. Then began the long search for an architecture worthy of the countryside.

La Sainte-Baume, "a High Place", a formidable wall of rocks on the edge of half a plate (Le Plan d'Aups), the other half, slightly raised, looking to the north as far as the mountain Sainte-Victoire, already made memorable by Cézanne. Halfway up this massive vertical rock face is the black hole of a cave: here lived Mary Magdalen, the friend of Jesus, who came from Palestine in a small boat, with the other Marys. Every morning angels came to the cave and carried her 200 meters up to the summit of the mountain called "Le Pilon", where she used to pray. From there the mountain falls away as far as Toulon and the Mediterranean.

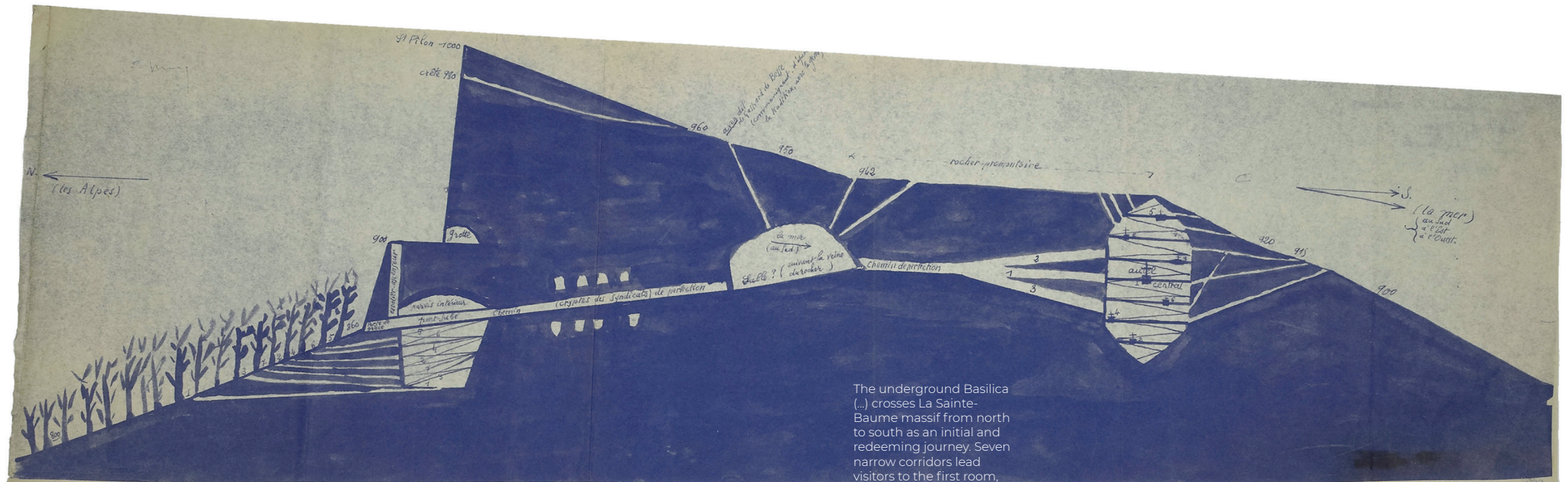
The legend has made La Sainte-Baume a divine place, which today is guarded by the Dominicans. On the plain at the foot of the hills is La Basilica de St-Maximin, where the extremely beautiful head (skeleton) of Mary Magdalen is kept in a golden casket.



Our investigation can only be approached with respect. The cardinals and archbishops of France condemned it. They did it with great sincerity, convinced that they were doing good. They, pastors of souls, are not aware of the humility and grandeur of the task at hand. They wanted to safeguard the dignity of one of the most beautiful human legends, that of Mary Magdalene, the Lord's friend: she washed His feet with a perfume bottle and rinsed them with her hair; the angels lifted her in the morning to the top of the mountain. There is nothing complicated here, nothing ostentatious or misguided. There is nothing overly representative, pompous or ceremonious here.

In about 1946, Trouin went up to Paris, and there he saw everybody including the academicians. He engaged each to make a special project for the Val d'Aups at the foot of the rocks which would establish in this lordly landscape a place of architecture, a place of meditation, a meeting place which would make possible the appreciation of the full value of the spirit which reigns there. He got his project, but when, after some years, the first enthusiasm for his ideas had died down, he found himself left alone with only one architect remaining faithful to him - Le Corbusier. And the extravagant, unbelievable project has indeed become a testament to human emotion, aimed at reaching a class of beings, a type of rare and perhaps unclassified spirits. After all the avatars, there is empty ground and the plans described here. It should be said that after the announcement of the construction of the future Basilica of Peace and Forgiveness, there was a great stir around the world to the point of publicly denouncing the only survivors Trouin and Le Corbusier, accused of sacrilege for wanting to earn money from the most beautiful things, to the extent that one day Le Corbusier said to Trouin: "Prove them otherwise: stand before the rock, naked as a hermit, put your hat in front of you; wait for alms to fall, and from time to time, with a pneumatic drill, dig the rock!"

Postcard. La Sainte-Baume, Saint-Pilon and the cave. 1910



The underground Basilica (...) crosses La Sainte-Baume massif from north to south as an initial and redeeming journey. Seven narrow corridors lead visitors to the first room, where a set of ramps leads to the procession path called the "path of perfection", accessible directly through a larger door to the "Door of Grace". Above, a vertical pipe connects the "Door of Grace" to the cave platform (...). Surrounded by crypts, the processional route branches into three (the Trinity) to access the "Holy of Holies", (...) an ancient arena-shaped room (...). In a second state, the "Holy of Holies" becomes a gigantic room, (...) crossed by a helical ramp punctuated by seven altars (the seven deadly sins). The exits lead to the southern slope of La Sainte-Baume, facing the Mediterranean (...). 1

Cross section: underground church, the central altar and the cave. Paper drawing 22 x 73 cm.

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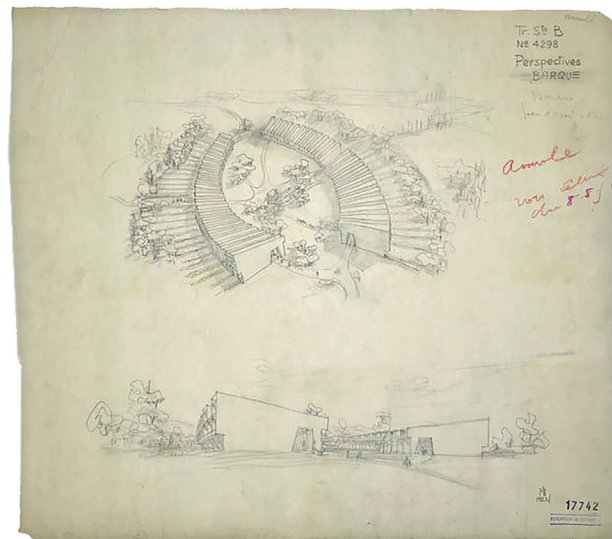
The Basilica was a remarkable architectural enterprise, invisible, enormous effort expended on the interior destined to move only those souls capable of understanding. The building was entirely within the rock; partly artificially and partly naturally lit, it ran from one side of the rock at the entrance of the cave of Mary Magdalen, to the other, opening suddenly on the blinding light and the distant sea.

During these years-long work, Trouin developed an unusual architectural sense, a spirit truly touched by great ideas, and he was strong and true enough to be despised by the ordinary. The plans show first the conception of the Basilica with its inclined ways, and vertical and horizontal rooms which receive the light of day through wells, or from the ends of the galleries. In addition, the electric light would create a symphony of shadows, gloom, and light, which could have been extraordinary.

The corollary of the enterprise was the search for a modern form of hotel, of hospitality, for a clientele desirous of solitude and thought, or simply for people who might come to stay a weekend or more permanently.

The scheme for La Sainte-Baume comprises the Basilica, cut in the rock, the two ring-shaped hotels, and the Permanent City on the other side of the plateau. Near the Permanent City there lies by chance an old ruined sheepfold which might serve as a museum of Mary Magdalen, where Trouin's talent would be able to manifest itself as much in the exceptional iconographical collection as in the manner of displaying it, intense and moving.

The lands of Trouin. Overall plan, colored drawing. 1:5000.



Perspectives. Hotels study drawings. 1951

© FLC/ADAGP

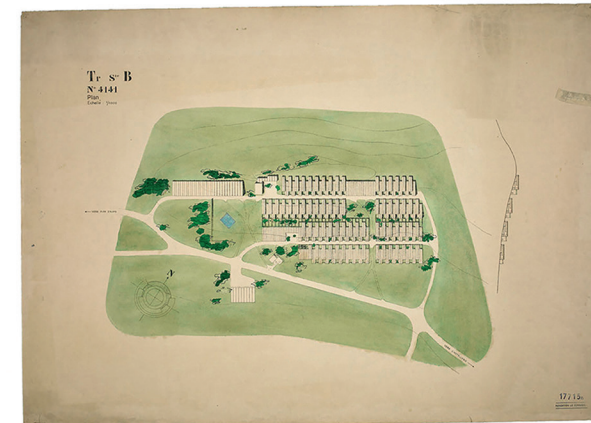
Because of adverse opinions about the enterprise and the changes it would make in the landscape, Trouin made the drafts for two books, astonishing works which still exist and are: one, a history of architecture, set out according to a new method, the other an iconography of Mary Magdalen.

For some years Trouin lived in Paris in a garret the walls of which he covered with plans, drawings and paintings. When the walls were covered, he began to fill the ceiling as well. It is a pity that this extraordinary room was never photographed.

After several years the affair was at a standstill. One might have thought that our modern world was unsuited for such an enterprise, the object of which was to touch the very foundations of the human soul: sin and pardon, weakness and grandeur, magnanimity and courage, simplicity and humility. There was nothing of the banal in it; all was in deference to the landscape, modulated by and even expressive of the landscape: landscape seen from buildings, or landscape made of buildings in a passionately desired harmony. The means employed were those at the disposal of people who desire to do something, but have only the resources of the unfortunate. The Permanent City of residence would have been designed within the humblest existing techniques, the rammed earth (pisé), inside a plank formwork and providing an essential architecture of precision and magnitude, all on a human scale.

With such an architecture the noblest and greatest town plans can be achieved, deprived of emphasis but with inherent grandeur. Life in these pisé buildings can have great dignity and regain for man in the machine age a sense of the fundamental human and natural resources.

But circumstances allowed the use of another material; the firm of "French Aluminum" listened to our proposals, and the result was that an aluminum architecture was conceived, to be built alongside the pisé, in that most exact and the most modern of metals.



South-east view, profile buildings and land.
(Permanent City), 1.500.

The illustrations here show only a miserable portion of all that was made, thought and designed for La Sainte-Baume. At present silence reigns after the hatred and scorn have raged. But Trouin like Le Corbusier can raise his head, satisfied to have attempted, in this age when no one works except for financial or utilitarian ends, an enterprise destined to touch the bottom of the human heart.²



Detail. Chapelle Notre Dame du Haut. Ronchamp, France. 1955

© ADAGP. Photo: Paul Kozlowski

¹ Extracted from Le Corbusier en France. Réalisations et projets., Gilles Ragot et Mathilde Dion, Electa / Moniteur, Paris, 1987, p.161-162.

² Extracted from Le Corbusier, Oeuvre complète, volume 5, 1946-1952. © 1953 Verlag für Architektur (Artemis), Zürich. Twelfth edition 1995.

Bio Author

- 1887 **Le Corbusier** (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret) born 6 October at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland.
- 1919 Launches L'Esprit Nouveau magazine with Amédée Ozenfant and Paul Dermée.
- 1923 Builds the little house "Le Lac" at Corseaux on Lake Geneva for his parents.
- 1925 Builds Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau (Paris) and the Pessac housing estate near Bordeaux.
- 1928 Founder member of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'architecture moderne) at the castle of La Sarraz, in Switzerland.
- 1929 Works on the Villa Savoye (Poissy), the Mundaneum and urbanism in South America.
- 1930 Works on urban designs for Algiers and studies for "Ville Radieuse".
- 1938 Paints eight wall murals in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin in Eileen Gray's house.
- 1943 Publishes the Charte d'Athènes (Athens Charter).
- 1944 Works on the Unités d'Habitation, Marseilles.
- 1948 Works on La Sainte-Baume Project.
- 1950 Starts working on the Chapel at Ronchamp.
Publishes Modulor I, Poésie sur Alger (Poem on Algiers) and L'Unité d'Habitation de Marseille.
- 1951 First trip to India: visits Chandigarh and Ahmedabad.
Cabanon, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France.
- 1953 Builds Dominican Monastery at Sainte Marie de la Tourette (Eveux) and de la Maison du Brésil at Cité Universitaire (Paris) with Lucio Costa.
- 1957 Builds Unité d'habitation (Berlin), Maison du Brésil at Cité Universitaire (Paris) with Lucio Costa, Dominican Monastery Sainte Marie de La Tourette (Eveux), Unité d'habitation (Briey en Forêt) and Museum of Western Art (Tokyo).
- 1965 On 27 August Le Corbusier dies while swimming at Cap-Martin, France.



KÄRJÄKIVET

Finnish word meaning “court stones” or “circle of stones”: places of judgment (originally iron age graves), where judgments were held and justice carried out, accordingly to the Finnish National Board of Antiquities.

In the ancient times, they were important places where the primitive leaders of the North got together in order to discuss and decide about common matters.

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