



LCAXN

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Nicolas Grospierre

*LCAXN* is the latest cycle by Nicolas Groszpiere, an architectural photographer awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2008. The Le Corbusier foundation in Paris will celebrate a solo show with this body of works and will be open to the public during Paris Photo 2021.

In *LCAXN*, Nicolas Groszpiere was inspired by the architectural drawings of the ‘pope of modernism’, Le Corbusier. The Franco-Swiss architect left behind an immense heritage of architectural drawings and plans, many of which never saw the light of day in the form of physical constructions. It was these drawings that attracted Nicolas Groszpiere’s attention: he embodied in photographic form those buildings imagined by Le Corbusier that remained in his drawer as potential constructions, never realized.

Over the years, Nicolas Groszpiere has developed a style of photographic representation that is neither pure photography nor pure drawing, and which he calls “axonometric photography”. Axonometry is the representation of space without perspective, and has been used for decades by architects to show their buildings as projects. Theoretically, axonometry is in visual contradiction with photography, which obeys the laws of perspective. However, thanks to digital photomontage, it is possible to represent architectural forms in photographs that look like axonometric projections. Nicolas Groszpiere’s axonometric photographs thus resemble architectural projections of buildings, but with the feel of photography, and appear old, worn by time.

In *LCAXN*, Groszpiere has taken the axonometric drawings of unrealized projects by Le Corbusier and brought them to life through his photomontages. Nicolas Groszpiere has systematically chosen projects of individual houses, designed by Le Corbusier before and after the Second World War. These are, before WWII, modernist villas conceived for the refined amateurs of avant-garde architecture, but, after WWII, one will find also simple houses designed for workers and craftsmen.

To achieve his photomontages, Nicolas Groszpiere has used the textures and details of many different houses photographed in as varied places as Tel Aviv, Warsaw or Lima, done by local architects who were, most of the times, under the strong influence of Le Corbusier. The results are thus axonometric representations of Le Corbusier’s never built houses, achieved thanks to the real works of architects that were inspired by him.

*LCAXN* shows the breadth and density of Le Corbusier’s oeuvre, seen through the eyes of a photographer who embodied them in ways he would have never imagined.

*Primary school in Warsaw (after Le Corbusier, Maison de Weekend, 1922)*

At the request of Daniel Niestlé, administrator of Esprit Nouveau and owner of Editions d'art, Le Corbusier sketched a house, designed on the Citrohan model, which he conceived as an architectural promenade structured by a concrete footbridge (linking the garage to the house) and punctuated by an exterior ramp leading to a relatively narrow terrace. This project combines long windows and bay windows so that the integration with nature and the landscape is total. In many respects, this unrealized project is related to the Mietschaninoff villa. This project will not see the light of day but will be presented at the Salon d'Automne of 1923 through a very beautiful plaster model.

This project was finally completed in Poland, under rather unusual circumstances. The Second World War left Warsaw in ruins, and everything had to be rebuilt. Le Corbusier, in solidarity with the Polish people, joined forces with the architect Romuald Gutt and reused the plans of the weekend house to convert it into a primary school. The open plan ground floor serves admirably as a classroom, bathed in light from the bay window. A local art collective adorns the façade with a socialist-realist bas-relief showing children at play.



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*Primary school in Warsaw (after Le Corbusier,  
Maison de Weekend, 1922)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and  
cut to shape.

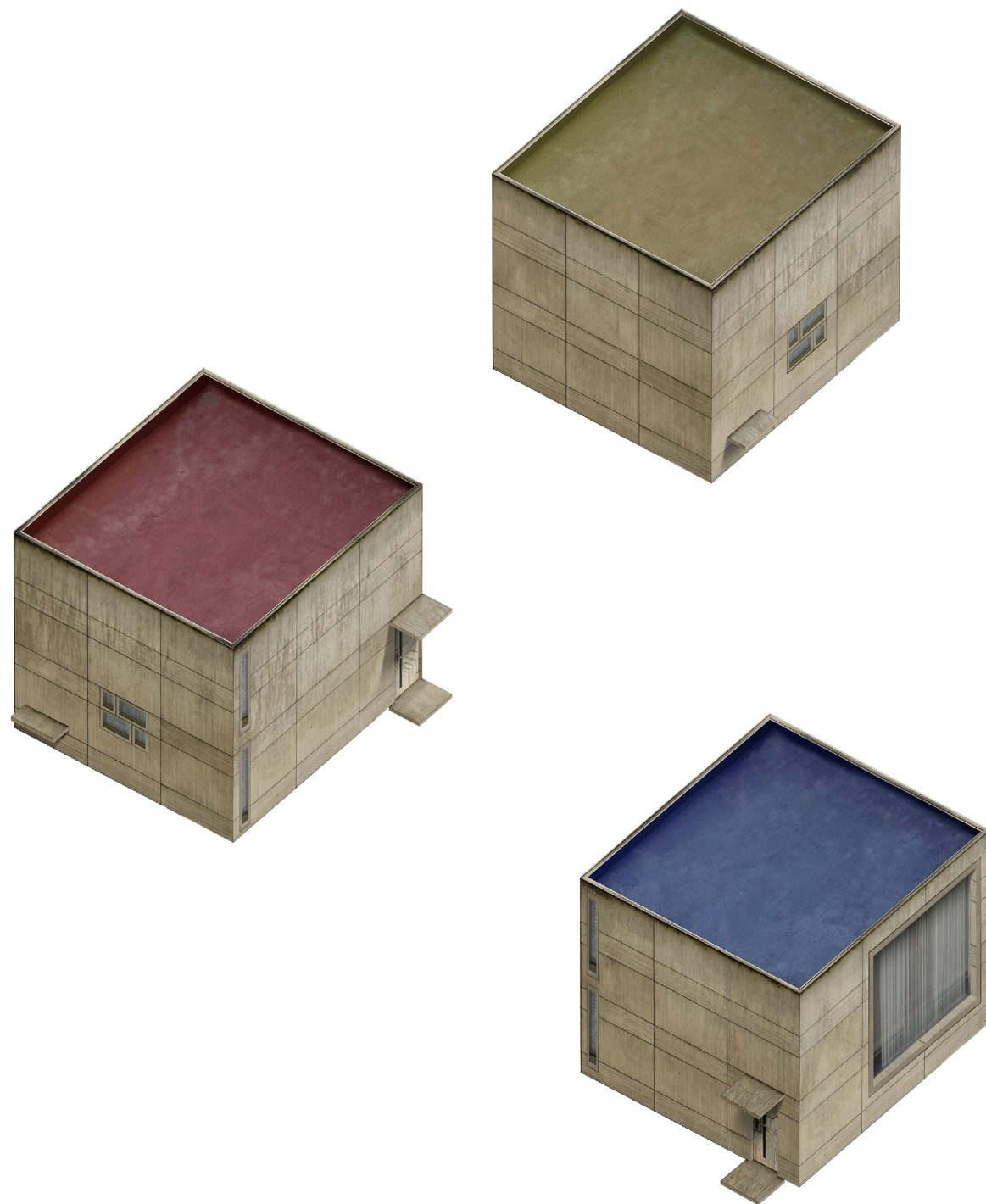
75 x 75 cm

Ed. 1/5

***Serial Houses for Franciscan Sisters***  
***(after Le Corbusier, Serial Houses for Craftsmen, 1924)***

Eager to develop mass-produced housing projects, Le Corbusier designed housing for craftsmen in a large, well-lit workshop. As with all of his mass-produced housing, the challenge was to obtain the lowest possible manufacturing costs. He therefore reduced the surface areas and the height of the rooms and made do with two doors, a difficult exercise because he had to preserve the light. Everything rests on the composition of the space and the treatment of the verticality – a large free wall of 7m x 4.50m which allows him to materialise what he calls “the diagonal of the loft” and which allows him to create “an unexpected dimension”.

Originally designed for manual workers, these houses were eventually built for spiritual workers. In 1965, the monastery of the Poor Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Schwäbisch Gmünd commissioned the architect Werner Groh from Karlsruhe to design monastic houses. With the agreement of the rue de Sèvres studio, Groh took up the minimalist and “cellular” formula imagined by Le Corbusier and adapted it to the needs of the Franciscan sisters.



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*Serial Houses for Franciscan Sisters (after Le Corbusier, Serial Houses for Craftsmen, 1924)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and cut to shape.

Set of three elements, 28 x 32 cm each

Ed. 1 / 5

*Brutalist villa (after Le Corbusier, Villa Goldenberg 1930)*

This project for a Parisian villa was planned for Mr Goldenberg, a dentist established on Boulevard de Strasbourg. It is obviously an adaptation of the Villa Jacquin, designed a year earlier. This project, abandoned by clients who refused to pay the price set by Le Corbusier, was therefore taken up again with very few changes. Built around four supporting posts, the house borrows its vocabulary from Loucheur and Citrohan type houses. In order to contractualise the commitment of both parties as well as the request for a first deposit of six thousand francs, Le Corbusier sent his clients a set of plans, an agreement. But Le Corbusier never heard from the dentist again. He tried to send a reminder a month later, in May 1930... in vain!

The project remained in the drawers of the rue de Sèvres studio until 1963. The plans were bought by a notary from Lima, who was charmed by the compact and monumental character of the house. He commissioned the Peruvian architect Walter Weberhofer to take over the plans and adapt them to his needs. The resulting house, built in Lima in 1972, is built with the brutalist aesthetic, which was very much in vogue in Peru at the time, and which finally underlines the monumentality of the original project.



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*Brutalist villa (after Le Corbusier, Villa  
Goldenberg 1930)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and  
cut to shape

67 x 75 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

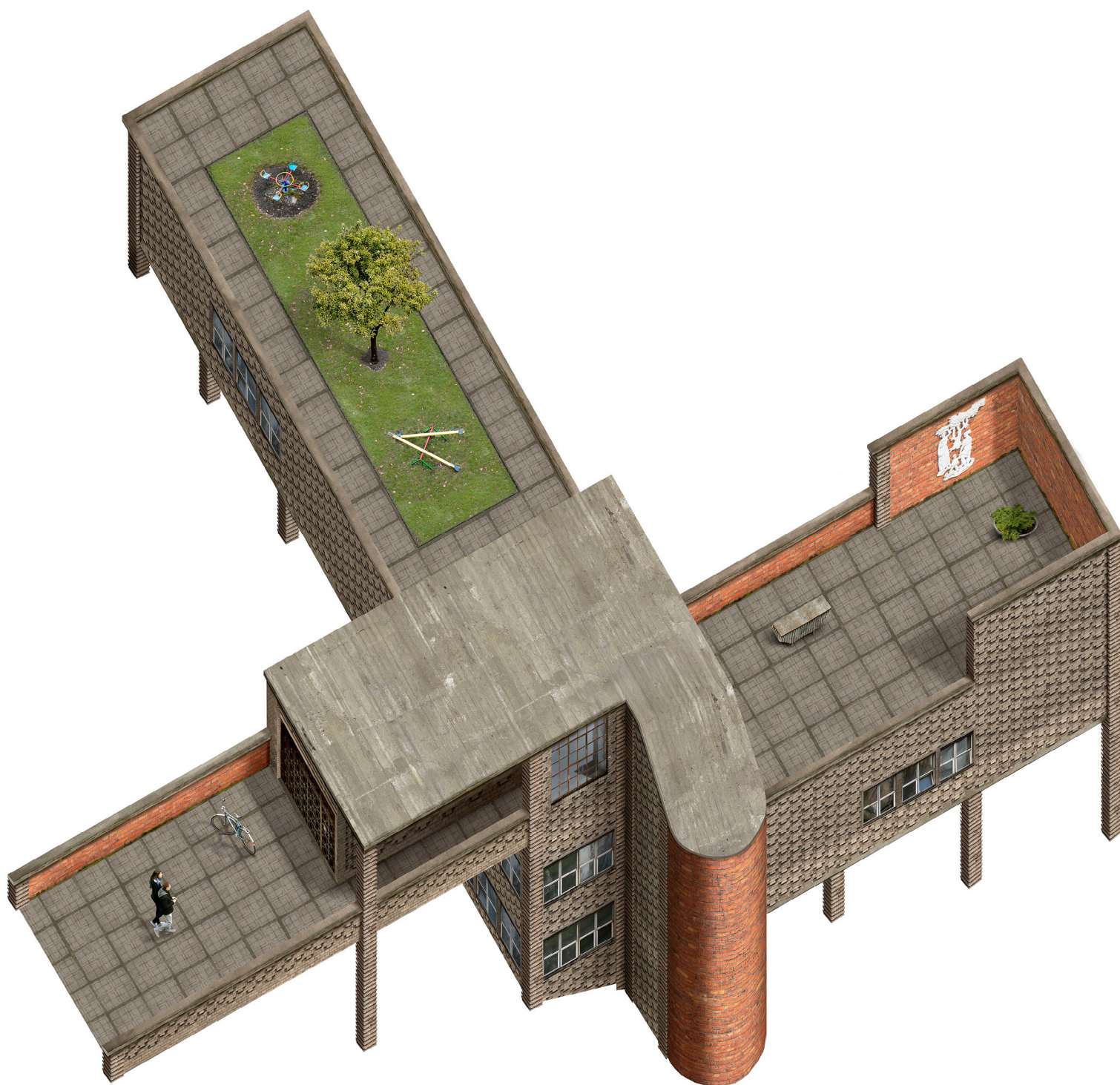
**Nicolas GrosPierre**

***“The Harvest” Housing Estate (after Le Corbusier, Villa Harris 1930)***

It was during a trip to Corseaux with Le Corbusier’s mother that Marguerite Tadjer Harris fell in love with the area and decided to build a pied à terre. Before any written commitment was made, Le Corbusier began drawing up plans for a house on the hillside with the lake below. Le Corbusier still had the land in mind when he proposed a first set of plans. In a letter of March 1932 Le Corbusier already calls it “your little house”, a sure echo of the “little house” built a few years earlier for his own parents. Affected by the financial crisis, Marguerite Tadjer Harris postponed the execution of this project and finally abandoned it in May of that year.

The architect Juliusz Żórawski was a great promoter of modernist ideas in Poland, creating buildings according to the five points of modern architecture from the mid-1930s onwards. In 1938, he proposed a collaboration with Le Corbusier, which the latter accepted. Together they decided to take over the plans for the Villa Harris, to be built on a plot of land on the steep banks of the Vistula, near Kazimierz Dolny, for a client who was desperate to have a house in the shape of a cross. Miraculously spared by the World War II bombings, the villa was converted after 1945 into a block of flats, and the sculptor Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, invited to redecorate it, adorned it with a bas-relief entitled The Harvest, a metaphor for the hope of a bright future.





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*“The Harvest” Housing Estate (after Le Corbusier, Villa Harris 1930)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and cut to shape

77 x 75 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

*Kibbutz Meyer (after Le Corbusier, Villa Meyer, 1925)*

This project is wildly ambitious, Le Corbusier imagines it as “a box of beautiful proportions”, an imposing construction that borrows from the Stein-de-Monzie villa and the villa building. The villa is five storeys high, resting on twelve stilts and ending with a roof terrace, an obvious desire on Le Corbusier’s part to place his project between the sky and nature, two of the elements that constitute the “essential joys” of his radiant city. The composition of this roof terrace evolves over the course of the projects, becoming in turn a garden, a set of terraces and even a swimming pool. Stairs and ramps are also an important issue in the many variations. In the end, two perpendicular staircases provide the circulation.

The Villa Meyer was to have an exceptional destiny. Two Israeli architects, Moshe Shilon and Avraham Erlik, who were both fascinated by Le Corbusier and involved in the kibbutz movement, decided in the mid-1970s to take up these plans and transpose them to a kibbutz that was being set up. In the absence of suitable land, the building was eventually constructed in Holon, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, making this building the first de facto urban kibbutz. Collectively owned by its members, all can enjoy its various amenities: swimming pool, roof terrace and hanging garden.



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*Kibbutz Meyer (after Le Corbusier, Villa Meyer, 1925)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and cut to shape

62 x 88 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

Nicolas GrosPierre



***Modern ruin (after Le Corbusier, Maison Citrohan 1922)***

The Citrohan House embody the archetypal purist house of the 1920s, the Corbusean “machine à habiter”. Its name is a distortion of the name “Citroën” to underline the industrial character of these “mass-produced houses”. Although developed between 1920 and 1921, the second version of this project was presented at the Salon d’Automne in 1922. The particularity of this parallelepiped is the abandonment of the initial load-bearing walls, which are replaced by piles inherited from the Dom-Ino system (1914). The emphasis is on the living room, which extends over a double height, as well as a terrace that serves as a solarium. The floors are served by an internal spiral staircase and an external straight staircase. The building also has a partially glazed façade, a foretaste of the glass panel.

The Citrohan House remained an unrealised project until the early 2000s. At that time, an unscrupulous Polish property developer took over the plans – perhaps considering them to be part of the public domain – and decided to erect a series of houses on this basis. This was a bad decision, as his financiers, on learning of his subterfuge, withdrew their support and only one house was started, only to stop halfway through the work. The house remains to this day a modern, unfinished ruin.

*Post Scriptum.* This real estate misadventure foreshadows another such incident that also took place in the Polish capital, and which is illustrated by the *BBL Unltd* photograph (also presented in the exhibition).



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*Modern ruin (after Le Corbusier, Maison  
Citrohan 1922)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and  
cut to shape

67 x 73 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

*Warsaw Motorway Station (after Le Corbusier, Maison rurale à Chessy, 1956)*

Interested in the question of the peasant dwelling from the beginning of the 1930s, Le Corbusier imagined in 1955, for the commune of Chessy, and at the request of the Orly-Parc housing company, a set of rural houses based as much on the Dom-Ino system as on the Modulor. These hybrid wood-metal houses are made up of a prefabricated metallic alveolar structure (2.26m square, according to a patent by Le Corbusier) whose construction was entrusted to the Jean Prouvé workshops. The rest of the construction elements were to be made of wood by Le Corbusier's usual carpenter, Charles Barberis. This ensemble would have constituted a set of separate parts that could easily be assembled by the peasants themselves, on concrete blocks. Aware of the already problematic rural exodus in the mid-fifties, Le Corbusier wanted to provide modern and fulfilling living conditions.

The prefabricated and modular character of these houses interested the Mazovia region (around Warsaw). From 1980 onwards, it was planned to construct a network of such buildings, which were to serve as local motorway stations. In particular, the large covered balcony was to allow passengers to watch the arrival of buses. The advent of Solidarity and the declaration of the Martial law in Poland in 1981 unfortunately put an end to these projects, and only one such station was built in the suburbs of Warsaw.





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*Warsaw Motorway Station (after Le Corbusier,  
Maison rurale à Chessy, 1956)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and  
cut to shape

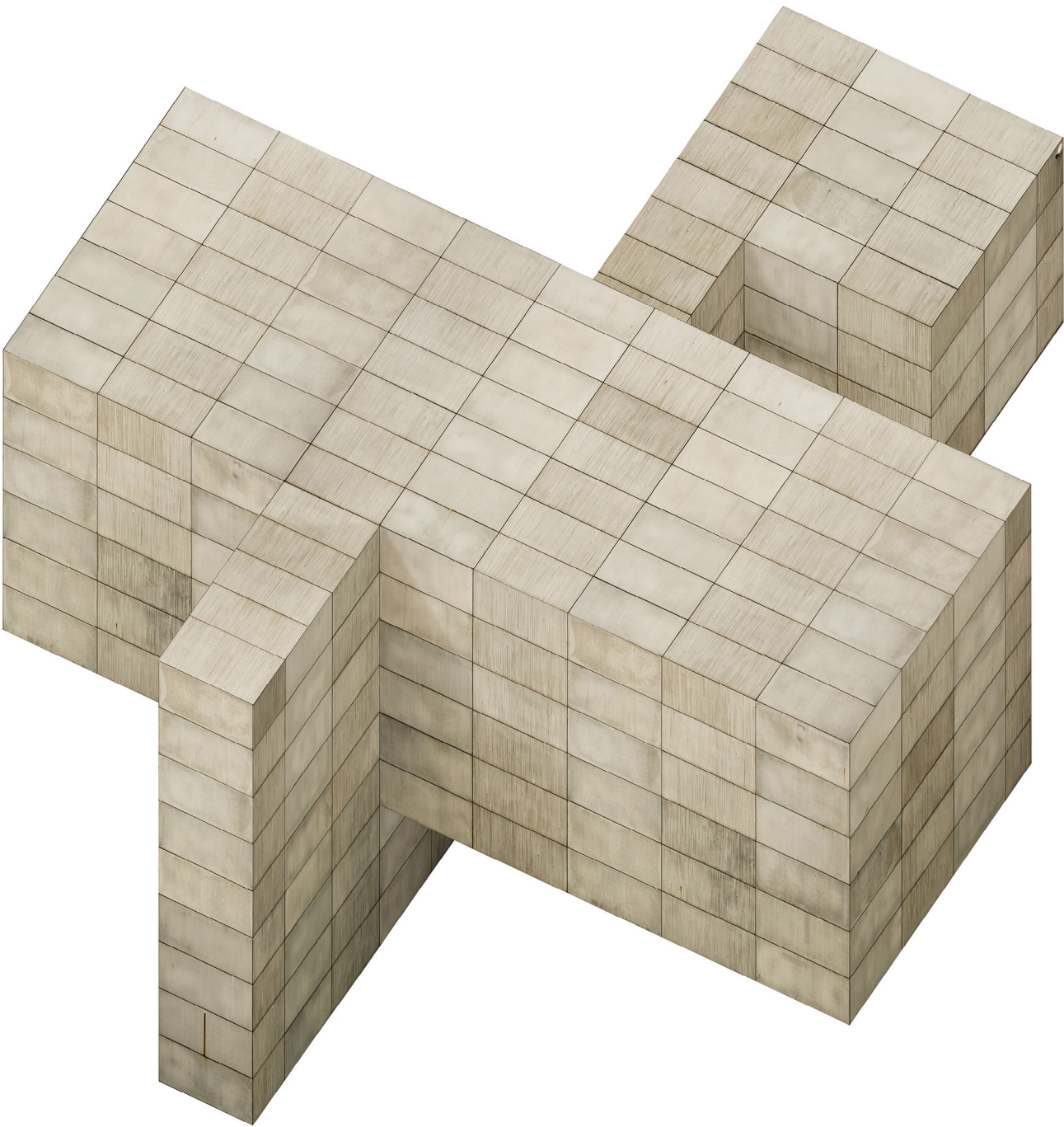
60 x 75 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

***Corbusean Architekton***  
***(after Le Corbusier, Small House, CMA, in Algiers, 1933)***

This family house, of reasonable size, is planned to fit into a rectangle of about 12 by 10 metres. With two floors, it is designed as a “sentinel placed in the best location”, on the heights of Algiers in El Biar, this “admirable country” according to Le Corbusier. While the ground floor is devoted to amenities and services (garage, caretaker’s quarters, laundry room, etc.), the first floor concentrates the entire dwelling, with two bedrooms, one of which is larger and punctuated by a long window that opens the dwelling onto the landscape. This dwelling was not built, but it was to serve as a model or reference for the flats that Le Corbusier planned to build for the Obus plan in Algiers.

Suprematism, in Soviet Russia, with Malevich, established a new sculptural form, called “architekton”: pure architectural volumes devoid of any function. Inspired by these formal ideas, a Bavarian collector, Klaus Großstein, decided in 2012 to put them into practice on the basis of the Small House, CMA, and on the scale of the latter. Großstein wanted to use a Corbusean architecture to verify Le Corbusier’s famous definition that “architecture is the learned game, correct and magnificent of forms assembled in the light”.



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*Corbusean Architekton (after Le Corbusier,  
Small House, CMA, in Algiers, 1933)*

2021

Lambda print mounted under plexiglass and  
cut to shape

70 x 72 cm

Ed. 1 / 5

## BIOGRAPHY

Geneva, Switzerland, 1975.

GrosPierre Nicolas lives and works in Poland. He works and understands the medium of photography extensively. Before dedicating his career to his artistic practice he studied at the Institut d'Etudes Politique de Paris and the London School of Economics. His work as a photographer focuses on documentaries as well as conceptual work. In his documentary work he explores the collective memory and the feeling of hope that can be linked to modern architecture at a particular time, and how certain idealizations linked can be dismantled. Another aspect of his photography is to explore conceptual puzzle games, and capture their attractive and sensual display and functions. Nicolas GrosPierre has been awarded the Golden Lion at the 11th edition of the Venice Biennale (2008) for the exhibition Hotel Polonia in the Polish Pavilion, and has also received the Polityka Passport Award Artistic Residence at Stadtgalerie der Schedule,

Bern (2012), the Prize of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Poland (2009) and Graham Foundation of Chicago scholarship in 2014. His monograph, Open-Ended, has been published by Jovis Verlag (Berlin, 2013) and his work has been included in SHOOTING SPACE: ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY (Phaidon) and in Modern Forms. A Subjective Atlas of 20th-century Architecture, edited by Elias Redstone and Alona Pardo. Which has been a part of individual and collective exhibitions in different parts of Europe and America: All Pales Before The Book en PhotoEspaña (Centro de Arte de Alcobendas, Madrid), Modern Forms.

A Subjective Atlas of 20th-century Architecture, Architectural Association School of Architecture of London, La Memoria Finalmente Arte in Polonia dal 1989-2015 in Galleria Civica di Modena (2016) Viewfinder in the Signum Foundation of Poznan and

Lost in Architecture, Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art, Słupsk in 2015, A glass shard in the eye (with Olga Mokrzycka) in BWA Warszawa Warsaw and The Oval Offices, Maison de la Photographie, Lille (2014), a project that exhibited in 2013 at the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Poland and the State Gallery of Art, Sopot, and elsewhere such as Bunkier Sztuki in Krakow, Graham Foundation, Chicago, Raster Gallery, Warsaw, Signum Foundation of Venice, Artist 's House, Jerusalem, Ecco-Espacao Cultural Contemporaneo, Brasilia, Kunsthalle, Bratislava, National Art Museum of China, Beijing. His work is present in collections such as the National Museum in Warsaw, Polonia, Rubell Family Collection, Jan Michalski Foundation Switzerland, Coleccion Los Bragales, Colecciones DKV, Signum Foundation Collection, ARUP Collection, APT Collection, PAMM Miami, Jozami Collection and the 21st Century Museum.