



The Letter

The Letters ABCD is Steiner Architecture's inaugural magazine. Necessarily open-ended, protean, confident, cheeky. It strives to be more than a glorified business card. But can it? Never mind. It showcases the studio's built projects, unbuilt projects, preliminary arguments, not-so-preliminary arguments, inchoate ideas.

In this issue we look at the sun. Yes, the sun. Sunlight. Sun worship. Dying in the sun. Staring at it. Windows, circles, things that look like the sun. A new era and its potential joys. **The Sun** yearns for eternal daylight. **I see, Therefore I Am** describes the additional layers of meaning that architectural photography can provide.

Winterbourne sweat speaks of transcending the anguish of a new global temperature. And **Spooky Drawer** narrates a trip to see the spot where the Swiss architect Le Corbusier drowned swimming towards the sun in 1965.

Sincerely,
The Editor

Despite all my efforts
I haven't managed to like the Moon.
Its gracious delicacy escapes me.
Its shadow leaves me indifferent.
Despite all my efforts,
I haven't managed to like the Night.

Of darkness I now care only for Fire
Which is the patrimony of the Night
And a colony of the Sun.
But of all the fires there are,
I prefer the Sun.



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2. I see, Therefore I am

E-mail from our Munichois photographer.
His photos are in.

F is excited – such are the moments before an architect gets his pro images. You fight the urge to feel that good architecture means good architectural photography, but it's a tough battle. Uneven. We see therefore we are. And that seems to be the end of it.

We'd been waiting three months to photograph Mankei, the friendly pit stop on the Grossglocknerstrasse. Plus our latest house in Zell am See, and a small house in Salzburg, had just been moved into. So this was three for one. The buildup was intense. The stakes were high.

From dawn to dusk they photographed Mankei. The steel pavilion aligns perfectly with the East, where the sun rises in mid-September over snow-capped mountains. Early in the morning the pavilion seemed to extend its slender body yearning for the inchoate sun, stretching farther than the concrete pillar that cantilevered it. It looked ritualistic. On the day Mankei held its last event before winter break, the sun set directly behind the pavilion,

totally aligned with its axis as you exited. Tough luck that the authorities think so highly of birds that we needed to cover the pavilion's glass windows with a wooden lattice.

In Zell am See we had built a cheeky annex to an old hotel for the proprietors to live in. With its red paint it looks a little kinky. Its Southeast orientation and the soaring height of its glass façades allowed one to trace the sun's path. From their living room the clients will be able see its whole trajectory during the winter solstice. There's a half moon window at the back, a single puncture on an otherwise mute concrete wall. And if you look at the pillar that supports the steel staircase you will see its section is also a half circle. The mezzanine above projects in the shape of a quarter of a circle.

In a suburb of Salzburg we had just redone the interior of a Siedlung house. The cylindrical fireplace conversed with the circular window of the extant building. And a sphere-shaped lamp on a blue wall shone like a star.

This we all knew. But we hadn't seen it that way.

Pavilion at Mankei on the
Grossglocknerstrasse.
Photo by Florian Holzherr,
2023.

NEXT PAGE: Mankei on
the Grossglocknerstrasse.
Photo by Florian Holzherr,
2023.





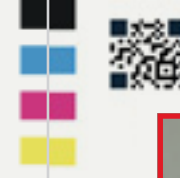
ABOVE LEFT: Bedroom lamp. House in Salzburg. Photo by Florian Holzherr, 2023.

ABOVE RIGHT: Living room window. House in Salzburg. Photo by Florian Holzherr, 2023.

NEXT PAGE: Living room. House Schmitten. Photo by Florian Holzherr, 2023.



PAGES 8-9: Exterior and mezzanine. House Schmitten. Photo by Florian Holzherr, 2023.





3. Spooky Drawer

I Someone of certain repute has written that Le Corbusier wished to die swimming towards the sun. His wish was granted.

It happened in '65. Heart attack. August. A little before midday.

He'd been swimming in the bay of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin where he spent his summers in a modest cabin he built for himself. They buried his ashes in the town cemetery.

II Fifty years later: my train stopped at the modest station of Roquebrune, and I found my host waiting to help me carry my suitcase up to the house. No cars were allowed in that part of town.

I'd booked a room in a villa owned by a peculiar Italian named Toni and his dog Hermine. The house faced the ocean. Breakfast was served under an olive tree.

"Do you know the Submarine?", Toni said, pointing to the horizon. "No". "It's a yacht designed by Philip Starck. But it doesn't dive. It's a regular boat. Like a pair of shoes designed with the toe cap facing backwards, but you'd still have to walk forwards. It's a bit silly".

I told him I had come to swim in the sea that drowned Corbusier and the story about the heart attack. Toni said these days he used to swim from one end of the bay to another, and as he got closer to the farthest end, he could feel a cold-water current flowing down from the rocks. "I wonder if that's what triggered the heart attack", he said.

III My appointment to see Corbusier's cabin was up. Mildly disappointing. The tour guide was a nerd who spoke three languages and wouldn't let us touch anything. All we could do was stand in the middle. And we had to take turns. I was given more time to see Lenin's embalmed body than this hut. I picked up a bergamot outside, and a hopelessly dressed man in sandals turned out to be Tim Benton.

IV I walked up to Roquebrune cemetery. LC's ashes are buried there. The gravestone is modest and is next to his wife's, who was born in Monte Carlo. I had printed a copy of the speech André Malraux gave at Corbusier's funeral. I read it out loud.

V Second visit to Corbusier's cabin. But the tour guide is new. She's saucy and fans herself enticingly. She waited till it was just me and another visitor to go off-script, made sure no one was watching, and opened one of the drawers. To our surprise, there were three pieces of bone inside. One of them is a jaw.

"It's Corbusier's dog", she said.

I dashed back to the villa and found Toni on the chaise longue. I told him about the drawer. Little Hermine was sniffing around. He looked at me, looked at his feet, as if searching for the right words, and then he cried: "Spooky!"

I grabbed my towel and went to the beach. I picked up two rocks and a twig. Then went into the water and swam to the farthest end of the bay.

Floating with my belly to the sun, I looked at Corbusier's cabin. Someone had swum up to the rock below and was soaking some sun there.

Suddenly, I felt the cold-water current.

END

The Death of Le Corbusier.
Two stones and a twig on
bronze pedestals.
Max Moya, 2016.



4. Winterbourne Sweat

Photo by Steiner Architecture ff, 2023.

Winter should have been cold but it wasn't.
So we fussed about the end of the world.
We grieved and sanctioned.

But the end of the world had lost its novelty,
and the ill-timed warmth beckoned us outside.
Someone looked out the window and said:
"well isn't it nice?"

We put on shades and jumped in the pool.
What else were we supposed to do with all that
summer?

We looked up at the sun and closed our eyes.
We saw red, and realised that eyes can't really
be shut.