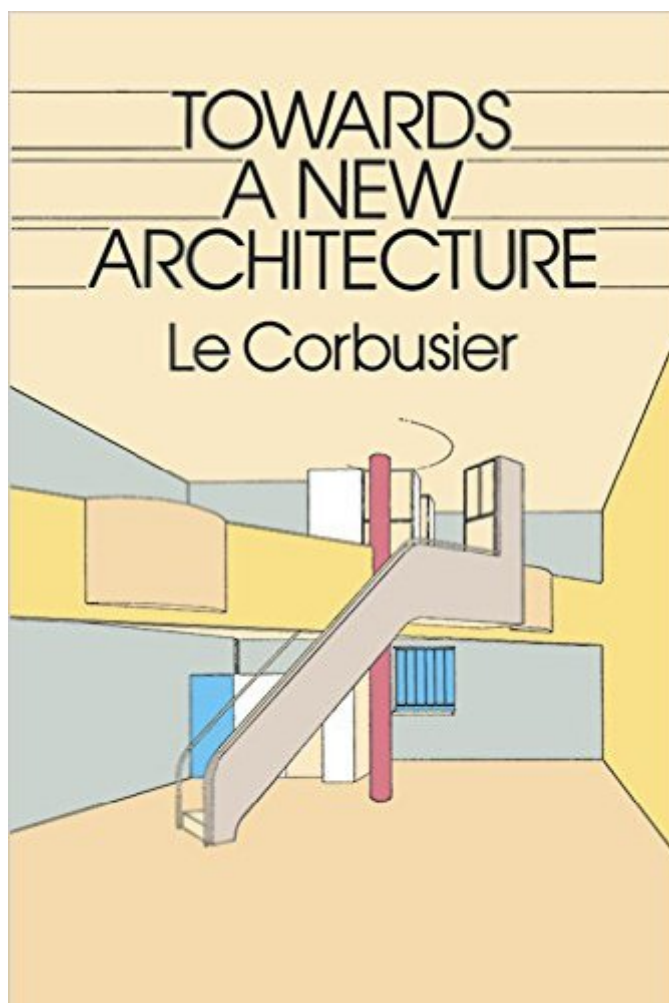


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Towards A New Architecture (Dover Architecture)



Synopsis

For the Swiss-born architect and city planner Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 1887–1965), architecture constituted a noble art, an exalted calling in which the architect combined plastic invention, intellectual speculation, and higher mathematics to go beyond mere utilitarian needs, beyond "style," to achieve a pure creation of the spirit which established "emotional relationships by means of raw materials." The first major exposition of his ideas appeared in *Vers une Architecture* (1923), a compilation of articles originally written by Le Corbusier for his own avant-garde magazine, *L'Esprit Nouveau*. The present volume is an unabridged English translation of the 13th French edition of that historic manifesto, in which Le Corbusier expounded his technical and aesthetic theories, views on industry, economics, relation of form to function, the "mass-production spirit," and much else. A principal prophet of the "modern" movement in architecture, and a near-legendary figure of the "International School," he designed some of the twentieth century's most memorable buildings: Chapel at Ronchamp; Swiss dormitory at the Cité Universitaire, Paris; Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles; and many more. Le Corbusier brought great passion and intelligence to these essays, which present his ideas in a concise, pithy style, studded with epigrammatic, often provocative, observations: "American engineers overwhelm with their calculations our expiring architecture." "Architecture is stifled by custom. It is the only profession in which progress is not considered necessary." "A cathedral is not very beautiful . . ." and "Rome is the damnation of the half-educated. To send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life." Profusely illustrated with over 200 line drawings and photographs of his own works and other structures he considered important, *Towards a New Architecture* is indispensable reading for architects, city planners, and cultural historians—but will intrigue anyone fascinated by the wide-ranging ideas, unvarnished opinions, and innovative theories of one of this century's master builders.

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Customer Reviews

This is probably the stupidest book I've ever read. It amazes me that people still read it as if it has something worthwhile to offer. I read it 21 years ago when I was 17, and I filled the margins with harsh criticism. I looked at it again a couple years ago to see if I still agreed with those criticisms and I did. The book is a monument to illogic, and what's frightening is that it's been enormously influential. The basic thesis is this - airplanes, ships and grain silos look cool, so our buildings should look like them. If anyone tries to convince you that the message is deeper than that, don't be fooled. It's rubbish. Unfortunately it goes beyond buildings to urban planning. And it was very influential in this realm also. To devastating effect. This is probably a good point to refer anyone who's considering this book to Jane Jacobs' The Death and Life of Great American Cities, not only because of her specifics, but because of her method. Corbusier envisioned utopias and decided they were perfect models for a brave new world without any research or logical basis whatsoever. Jane Jacobs studied real cities, real neighborhoods and real people and came to conclusions from her observations of reality. Another book I'd recommend as an antidote to Towards a New Architecture is Christopher Alexander's A Pattern Language. I'm not a mindless devotee of Alexander - the book is a mixture of wisdom, common sense and nonsense. But it has real value, unlike Towards a New Architecture (except for it's historical importance), and my point here is Alexander's methodology. He and his colleagues did a lot of research and studied real situations in real places, from which they drew their conclusions. There's no question in my mind that Le Corbusier was a genius.

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