

# LE CORBUSIER FINDS THE SLEDGEHAMMER: BODY, SPACE AND MODERNITY IN THE FILM THE MAN NEXT DOOR

Denise Vieira  
Ana Elisabete Medeiros

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**Denise Sales Vieira** is a researcher at the Post-Graduation Program of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Brasilia. She studies relationships among female body, city and representation in cinema.

**Ana Elisabete de Almeida Medeiros** is Doctor in Sociology and Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Brasilia. She coordinates the Urbe Studies Lab, LabEUrbe. She studies cultural heritage, urban design, identity, memory, local development, space and housing.

### ABSTRACT

This article is the result of the analysis of the argentinian film *The Man Next Door* (2009), which unfolds itself in an iconic space of modernist architecture: the House Curutchet, the only residential project built by Le Corbusier in Latin America. The film's plot shows a very common conflict between neighbors: a window built in a wall that divides their two houses. From this quarrel, a plot starts, in which Leonardo, a resident of Le Corbusier's house, will try in every way to prevent his neighbor Victor – a man of opposite habits and personality – from opening that window. Victor, on the other hand, will do everything that he can to get a bit of the light that Leonardo has to spare. From this duel, which takes the caricatured contours of this dramatic comedy, as well as the analysis of the design process of the house, this article intends to explore the relationship between the work of the radical modernist Le Corbusier, his conception of living machine and the body that occupies it.

**Keywords:** Radical modernists, modernist architecture, body, cinema.

## INTRODUCTION

This article proposes to make some reflections on the relationship between body and space in modern architecture design, under the cut of Le Corbusier's Curutchet House, viewed from two evidences produced by it: design and movie. From this observation, I intend to discuss the inherent conflict in radical transformation of the project that modernist architecture is proposed: a profound change of perspective in ways of living and the resulting clash between what is imagined and what materializes in space. The story of an imagined way of living, built in the movie from the relationship between body, space and time. It provides a glimpse into the constructed space able to counter the logic of its design and construction, the dynamic relationship of invention and occupation between body and space.

Design in architecture comes historically from the modern separation between body and space. Until Renaissance, the architect was the builder, and the design was only used to perform sketches along the process. From Renaissance, architecture becomes conceptualized and understood as an intellectually elaborated discipline, and the project becomes an essential instance for architectural design – to think, calculate and design before building.

To conceive a space conceptually would imply deep understanding on the relationship between people, nature and society. According to Argan, it is part of Renaissance concept the belief that ancients would have established, in the purest way, their relationship with nature, and this would be reflected in how their buildings were represented: '[...] the ancients were the best knowledgeable of nature, were those in nature and of nature should extract all the elements of his spiritual life' (Argan, 1973, p.15, our translation<sup>1</sup>). As this relationship was no longer possible for the modern individual due to the evolution of science and religion, it was necessary to rescue this model to build and rationalize it in the light of modernity. Therefore, the Renaissance will seek its elements on Classical Greece's architecture, the rescue of the relationship between body and space to be taken as ideal and to play as the only valid model. This view was critical to all modern architecture literature: the rationality in composition theories and the use of classical elements are already modern characteristics. Although, only since Industrial Revolution – the First Machine Age, according to Banham – new resources and a range of new materials application possibilities started to be the field for what came to be called Modernist Architecture.

For a more accurate understanding of modern rationality and its reverberations in architectural thinking, the writings of Rene Descartes are essential. In his Discourse on the Method (1637), Descartes conceptualizes a radical duality: the mind, or 'soul', is entirely distinct from the body. The soul would be the representation of the self, and its essence or nature consists only in thinking and do not depending on anything material to exist. This duality mind/body had already been anticipated in philosophical thought since Plato. However, Descartes reinforces the separation of soul and nature, imposing the superiority of the first in opposition to the other. This Cartesian nature includes the nature of the body. The modern conception of architecture will be precisely based in the attempt to dominate the body by reason; it is the domination of nature by human rational action.

Bearing in mind these introductory questions, let's discuss the fiction feature film *The Man Next Door* (2009) of Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn. The film shows the conflict between two neighbors in La Plata city: Leonardo, a famous designer,

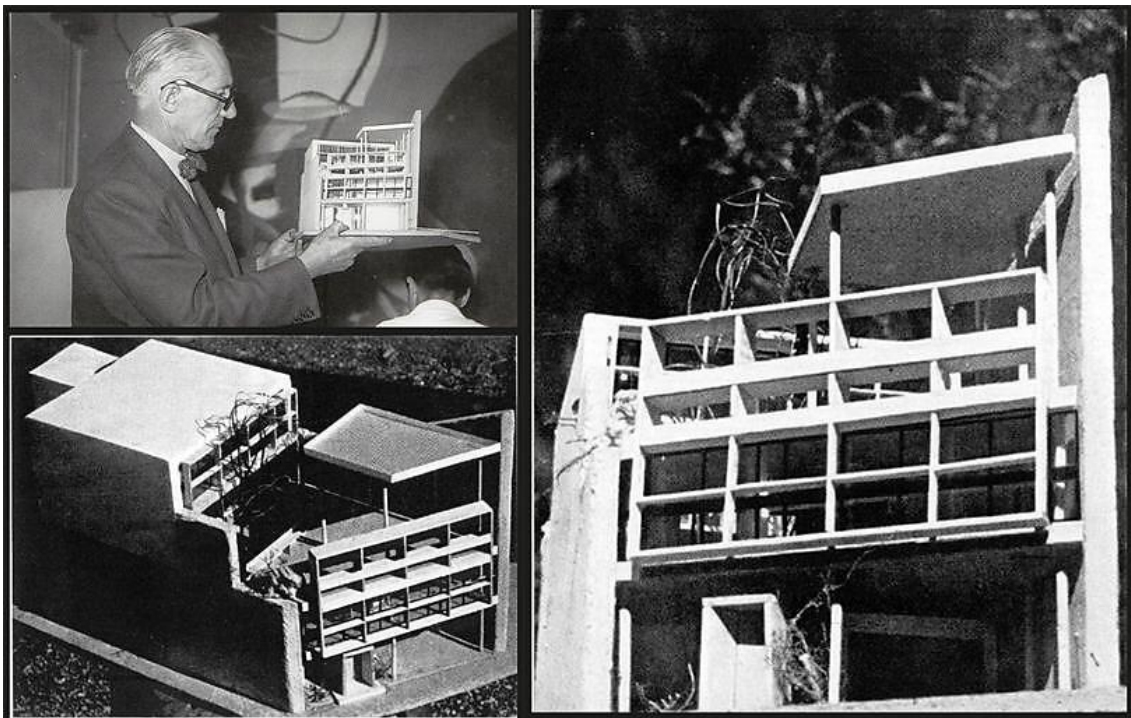
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<sup>1</sup> **From the original in Spanish:** '[...] los antiguos eran los más grandes conocedores de la naturaleza, puesto que eran los que en la naturaleza y de la naturaleza debían extraer todos los elementos de su vida espiritual' (ARGAN, 1973, p.15).

resident of the only house built by Le Corbusier in Latin America – Casa Curutchet; and Victor, a *bon vivant*, owner of an exotic van that makes sculptures from pieces of waste iron. Victor decides to open a window in the gable that divides the two sites, facing to Leonardo's house. The conflict around the opening of the window will trigger the events throughout the film.

The house designed by Le Corbusier is practically the only set on the film, so let's get back to its creation genesis: the project. This article will investigate then, in general, how it was designed, from which architect's and client's intentions, how was its integration into the urban fabric centre of La Plata, and what representations it figures in architectural readings. Secondly, seeking a symbolic characterization of bodies that inhabit the film, it will present the dichotomy between representations of the modern body and the grotesque body in parallel with the characters of Leonardo and Victor. And finally, it will bring the description of some situations of the film that, by showing the dynamic relationship between body and space, problematize not only Le Corbusier design on modernist house, but also the design activity itself.

### LE CORBUSIER'S HOUSE IN LA PLATA



**Fig. 1:** Le Corbusier and the model of Casa Curutchet. Available at: <<http://tecne.com/casa-curutchet/>>.

The Curutchet House is the result of a project commissioned for Le Corbusier in 1948 by the Argentine surgeon Pedro Curutchet: a typical modern man. Ergonomics scholar, he created his own surgical objects. As a doctor, he admired Corbusian concerns about insolation and hygiene, and these were probably the characteristics that led him to hire the Franco-Swiss architect (Leño, 2007, p.4).

Le Corbusier answers Curutchet's invitation in a letter:



'This program – the home of a doctor – is extremely seductive (from a social point of view). Your land is well located and in good conditions. Finally, having worked on the urban plan for Buenos Aires between 1938-1939, which is currently being considered by the government, I am interested in the idea of holding a small home construction, which would be a small masterpiece of simplicity, convenience and harmony, always within the limits of an extremely simple construction with no frills, perfectly in line, on the other hand, with my habits' (Le Corbusier and Dr. Peter Curutchet correspondence in 1948, cited in Gardinetti, 2012, n.p., our translation).

Since then, the project begins to be developed by distance by Le Corbusier, who was working concurrently in the Marseille Housing Units design. Le Corbusier had never personally met Dr. Curutchet, and not even visited the land where the house was built. His only passing through La Plata took place years before, in 1929, on his only trip through Latin America.

The whole design process and the home run are recorded in exchange of correspondence between architect and client. In the first letter to Le Corbusier, Dr. Curutchet sends photos of the area, the cadastre plan and program needs. Married with two daughters, he makes two programmatic requirements: that he wanted an office at home, but with independent access, and that the main rooms should be facing the park in front of the house. Le Corbusier shows, in response, concerns with the limits for the construction:

'How are built the neighboring houses to yours, right and left? Do they reach the sidewalk limit? Do I have to build up to the limit of the municipal line, or can I get away from this limit? I can take advantage of the municipal line if forced to do so. Can we build counters that advance the facade, as seems indicated in one of the photos you sent me? It would be very helpful if you draw sketches in the occupation of the land by its neighbors' (Le Corbusier and Dr. Peter Curutchet correspondence in 1948, cited in Gardinetti, 2012, n.p., our translation).

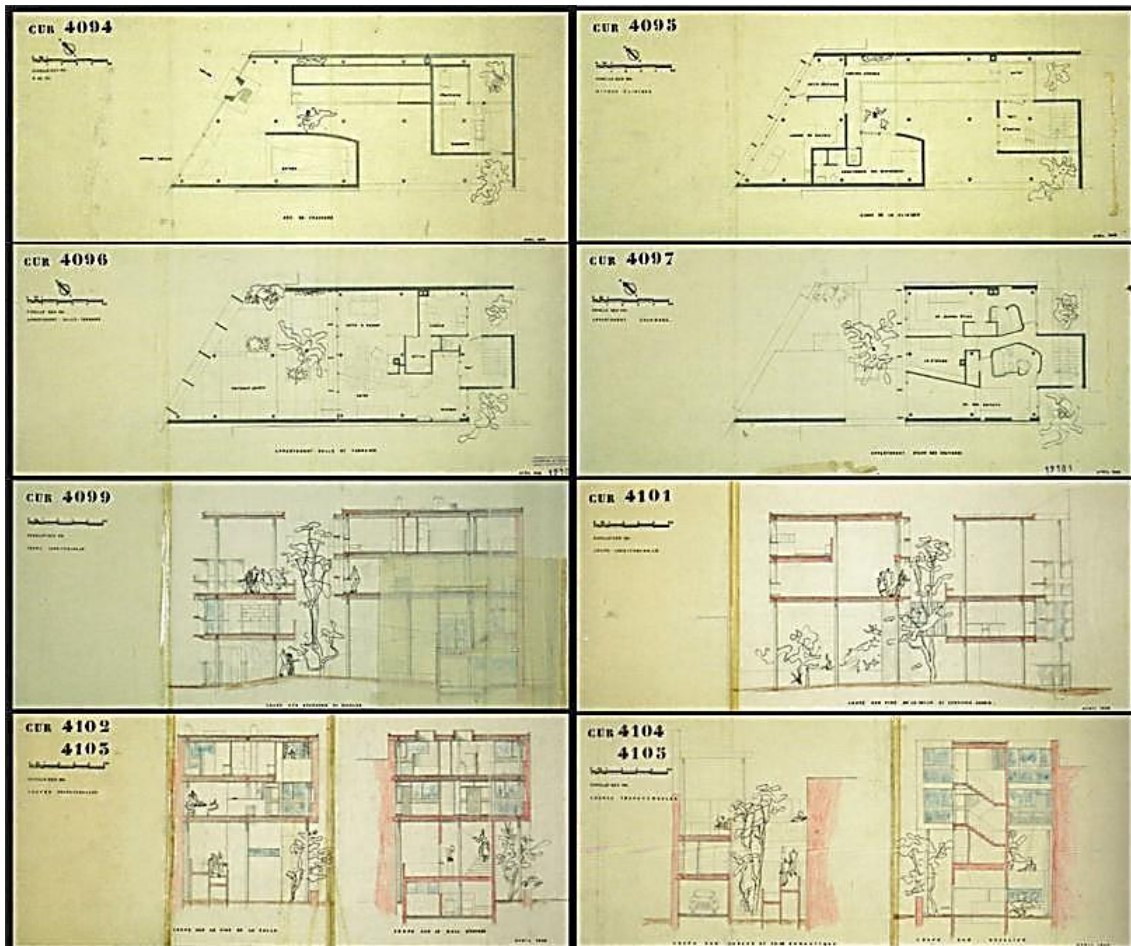
The project is completed and Le Corbusier sends the boards to Dr. Curutchet, accompanied by a descriptive memorandum on May 24, 1949. At the memorial, the architect describes the project synthetic and objectively, highlighting some important aspects of its design. Following are some excerpts that are relevant for the present discussion, with some marks added on porpouse:

'It occupies all the ground with stilts in order to raise the house to an open floor under the roof garden, benefiting the views of the park, **protected from traffic and the curious.**

The construction is **extremely bright and will not disturb the place**, allowing you to take all possible advantages of the land. [...] **The Curutchet build is independent of the side walls in order to ensure the soundness for work and to avoid disturbances of neighboring homes** and threats to the security of its construction.

Let me be clear that I am at your disposal to make all the changes you want. However, I say that **this should not be anything but changes in detail**, because I have the precise feeling of having held its ground as effectively as possible to respond to your program and its resources, as well as to the ground's imperfections.

The entire project is established through the Modulor [...]. That is an harmonic measurement system that we have created for over 7 years and apply to our buildings [...]. It is from the Modulor that we have achieved, on one hand, considerable savings in volume, and on the other, **a harmony that would have been impossible without it'** (Le Corbusier cited in Gardinetti, 2012, n.p., our emphasis, our translation).



**Fig. 2:** Le Corbusier's project for the Casa Curutchet, boards sent to Dr. Curutchet in May,1949. Available at: <<http://tecne.com/casa-curutchet/>>.

In general, Le Corbusier's project consisted of an ingenious solution to Dr. Curutchet needs: two volumes interspersed by a compartment inside – where it should be planted, and in fact was, a large tree – being the front composed by the office and dependency services, and the other retreated, where is the residence itself. The two are connected by a ramp that allows access from the ground level, both to the hall which gives access to the residence, as to-next level, the office. The residence unfolds on two floors: the first corresponds to the living area and kitchen, whose floor quota is the same of the office coverage quota, over which develops a terrace giving view to the park; and the second corresponds to house rooms. The traffic between floors is given by a ladder located at the bottom of the whole construction.

Le Corbusier responds to the key demands of Dr. Curutchet: house and office separated, and rooms overlooking the park. Moreover, what he owns is a Le

Corbusier house, as Dr. Curutchet himself will write the architect in 1957, four years after moving:

'The piece is visited by students and professionals... The general public has increasingly understood what seemed strange to them at first. **This is 'the house of Le Corbusier'; I am proud to be the owner.** So I tell you and I want to repeat, you can make any statement that will be fulfilled and grateful. It is and will remain your home' (Le Corbusier and Dr. Peter Curutchet correspondence in 1948, cited in Gardinetti, 2012, n.p., our emphasis, our translation).



**Fig 3:** Casa Curutchet house in 2008. Source: Olivier Martin-Gambier 2008 © FLC/ADAGP. Available at: <<http://tecnne.com/casa-curutchet/>>.

The Curutchet House is legitimized as a milestone in modern architecture by several aspects: first, because it is a Le Corbusier work and the only one in Latin America; second, by bringing together the key assumptions of Le Corbusier's architecture of the 20s: pilotis, tape window, patio with garden, independent structure, free facade, as well as the concept of an architectural promenade; and third by also gather characteristics of a transition in the work of Le Corbusier, beginning in the 1930s to the post-war, where a concern with the spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*) gives gradually a certain space to the spirit of the place (*genius loci*). Thus, House Curutchet is usually considered as a conceptualist work, respectful with the alignments, conditions and geometry of a traditional city like La Plata, differentiating itself from an isolated building on the lot, characteristic feature of architectural modernity of years 20-30 (Leão, 2007, pp.16-17).

In the passage of the letter transcribed above, Dr. Curutchet seemed taken by a transcendent feeling that, in addition to resolve their family organization issues, the house built for him would have a greater contribution to art. However, the Curutchet family moved into the house in 1953, and the harassment of onlookers eager to see Le Corbusier's house, intensified and broke into the family routine. Moreover, Curutchet claimed excess of light and privacy issues that were not solved with a simple curtain because of the owner's fear of disfiguring the work. In 1965, eight years after moving, the Curutchet's left the house (Leão, 2007, p.12).



'It is rather the tyranny of architecture, the idea of the architects that sometimes tyrannize the life of the owner, requires them to live under concepts, sometimes theoretical; life does not require abstraction, see the light only by light, or plans, or volumes, it depends on the dweller psychology' (Interview of Peter Curutchet Daniel Casoy in 1983, cited in Johnston, 2012, our translation).

## **MODERN BODY AND GROTESQUE BODY: REPRESENTATIONS OF A MODERN DUEL**

What can we say about Dr. Curutchet and Le Corbusier house strangeness relationship? There is a question to be raised, that is in modern architecture thought genesis, which is fundamental to their projects design, and that will impact mainly residential projects: the relationship that modern rational thought establishes with the body.

The seventeenth century marks the advent of the mechanistic philosophy in Western Europe, and reflections about nature started to avoid transcendent causes to bring them to man's reason. Astronomy and Galilean physics will then introduce a definite epistemological fracture, where mathematics abstract formulas will refute sensory data and men's orientation sense in space. Nature, therefore, empties its mysteries to become a mechanical device at men's hands. Knowledge must be useful, rational, devoid of feeling and capable of producing social effectiveness.

In philosophy, Descartes' thinking is fundamental to modern rationality rise. Descartes will write: 'The universe is a machine in which there is absolutely nothing to consider except the figures and movements of its parts' (Descartes cited in Le Breton, 2013, p.102). The Cartesian mechanical metaphor attributed to-universe is also truth in its assignment to body. Descartes will establish a body subordinate to the mind, opposing them in a radical duality: individual is divided into two parts, the body and the mind, connected by pineal gland. In his Discourse on the-Method (1637) the soul (mind) would be the representation of the self, and its essence or nature consists only in thinking, not depending on any material thing (the body) to exist. -The Cartesian man is composed of a bond between a soul that finds meaning only in thinking, and a body, or rather a body machine, reduced to a simple extension of the soul.

'[...] and truly one can very well compare the machine nerves that I will describe to the pipes of this fountain machines; your muscles and tendons to the various gears and features that serves to move them; its animal spirits to the water that moves them, whose heart is the fountain and the hollows of the brain are the looks. Furthermore, respiration and other such actions, which are natural and common and depend on the course of the spirits are as movements of the clock or the mill that makes the ordinary course of water continuous' (Descartes cited in Le Breton, 2013, p.120, our translation<sup>2</sup>).

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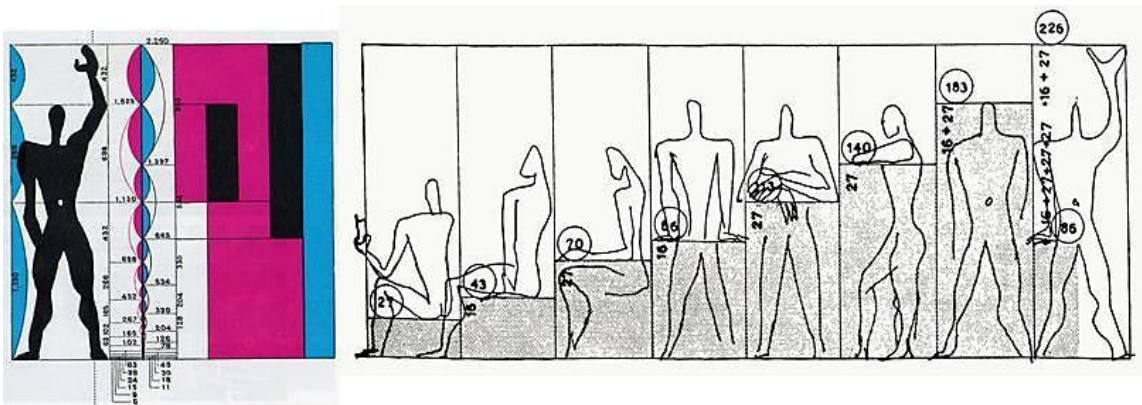
<sup>2</sup> **From the original in Portuguese:** '[...] e verdadeiramente pode-se muito bem comparar os nervos da máquina que eu vos descrevo às tubulações das máquinas dessas fontes; seus músculos e seus tendões às diversas engrenagens e recursos que servem para movimentá-las; seus espíritos animais à água que os move, cujo coração é a fonte e as concavidades do cérebro são os olhares. Além disso, a respiração e outras tais ações, que lhe são naturais e ordinárias e que dependem do curso dos espíritos, são como os movimentos do relógio ou de um moinho que o curso ordinário da água pode tornar contínuo' (Descartes cited in Le Breton, 2013, p.120).

Conceptually, this body machine is like a simple extension of what Le Corbusier had in mind when he designed his project. It can mainly be noted from a measure system adoption that he, himself, elaborated: the Modulor.

This system, developed from a standard human body, should apply to the project as a whole, from measures of furniture to ceilings heights and facade proportions. The word *Modulor* is composed from *module*, or unit of measure, and *section d'or* (golden section), the classical proportion played throughout the renaissance and assumed here by Le Corbusier. The article Modulor 1, from 1948, brings the subtitle: *Essay on a harmonious measure to the human scale, universally applicable to architecture and Modern Mechanics*. When starting this studies around 1942, Le Corbusier was commissioned by the French National Association for Standardization (AFNOR), that had the task of assisting country's reconstruction after war and to establish standardization measures in national construction. In a first study, Le Corbusier asks one of his assistants:

'Take a man with his arm raised to 2.20m tall, register it in two overlapping squares of 1.10m, put him astride on the two squares and a resulting third square will give you a solution. The place of the right angle should be able to help you to put the third square. With this tangled, ruled by a man installed inside, I'm sure you'll come to a series of measures that may place according to human height (arm raised) and mathematics'. (Le Corbusier, 1954, p. 35)

This was just a first study and, through a first definition, which considered a man 1.75m tall, Le Corbusier comes to a set pattern from a man 6 feet tall, or 1,829m, provided accordingly to golden section and Fibonacci sequence. The publication of Modulor 1 was followed by numerous changes suggested by mathematicians, engineers, etc. which were incorporated into a new system, perfected in Modulor 2, published in 1950.



**Fig 4:** Drawings of Le Corbusier representing the mesure system of Modulor. Source: Le Corbusier, 1954.

The concept of the Modulor is a literal reproduction of Le Corbusier's thoughts on the relationship between body and space, which is purely mathematical, operating in terms of architectural design that same mechanistic thinking related to Cartesian body. It is considered a prototype for body in an attempt to find optimal architectural proportions that could only be derived from a body with ideal proportions - a man with 1.829m height.





According to Le Breton, the constitution of modern body, which passes through this mechanistic conception also implies the 'subject's isolation from others (a social structure that is individualist) in relation to cosmos (raw materials that make up the body has no match elsewhere), and in relation to himself (having a body, more than being a body)' (Le Breton, 2013, p.9).

It is noted that this view goes beforehand by a denial of grotesque body, that body presented in medieval festivals in street carnivals, which are at the heart of sociability, mainly in the fifteenth century. At these parties, bodies mingled indiscriminately in public streets and squares, in a kind of distinct sociability of carnival show current notion, consisted of a collective outpouring mediated by direct physical contact.

According to Alain Corbin, the smells of Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century, result of both bodies agglomeration in public space as—moods from latrines, markets, etc. will awaken the supervision of hygienists. Confinement and overcrowding are seen as synonymous of disease and bad smell, and 'the perception of social fumes dangers leads to crowd putrid – people and animal mix - distrust' (Corbin, 1987, p.66). A new odor sensitivity starts to be installed since the need for individualization is growing. The intolerance of other's people odor is also part of a modern body sensibility establishment.

'The **grotesque body** (emphasis added) is formed of reliefs, bulges, it brims with vitality, it is mixed with the crowd, indiscernible, open, in contact to the cosmos, dissatisfied with the limits that it continues to transgress. It is a kind of 'great popular body of the species' (Bakhtin), a body eternally renascent: pregnant of a lifetime to be born or a life to lose, to be reborn yet' (Le Breton, 2013, p. 47, our emphasis, our translation<sup>3</sup>).

It is worth noting that despite the modern body and the grotesque body have been placed here in historic opposition, this grotesque body was not holded back, this is not a transition where the individualistic and rational thinking is the founder of a new body. Studying the body means studying what takes shape as a symbolic construction, on the border between individual and relationship with what is external to it. It is the manifested limits of what is individual to what is collective. Therefore, the body can not be seen as a reality itself, but as one of the representations in the social system.

Throughout Western history, this conflict, or rather, this duality between modern body and grotesque body was always present, and one can say that we are just made up the symbolic struggle between the two. And it is this symbolic clash that the film *The Man Next Door* will bring to discussion.

## **THE MAN NEXT DOOR – LE CORBUSIER FINDS THE SLEDGEHAMMER**

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<sup>3</sup> **From the original in Portuguese:** 'O corpo grotesco é formado de relevos, de protuberâncias, ele transborda de vitalidade, está mesclado à multidão, indiscernível, aberto, em contato com o cosmo, insatisfeito com os limites que ele não cessa de transgredir. É uma espécie de 'grande corpo popular da espécie' (Bakhtin), um corpo eternamente renascente: grávido de uma vida a nascer ou de uma vida a perder, para renascer ainda' (Le Breton, 2013, p. 47, our emphasis).



**Fig. 5:** Frames from *The Man Next Door*.

From the questions about Curutchet House design process and conceptualizations about the body, we want to use the movie *The Man Next Door* as a way to problematize the relationship between designed space and the bodies that inhabit it. In general, we will see below that there are several aspects of the narrative that connects Leonardo with the meaning of modern body, which will be confronted directly with your opponent: Victor, the neighbor, the grotesque body. The film's narrative structure, which sets a clear contest between the two, with opposite behaviors, contributes so that we can see, symbolically, the characteristics of this duality represented by these two characters.

The film begins with a sound of a hammer, and the image of a frame divided in two, one side darker than the other. As the initial credits are shown, the



hammering starts from the darker side. The picture, as we see, is the two sides of the same wall, inside and out.

Leonardo wakes up with the hammering sounds, runs through the house looking for the source of the noise. He goes to the street, and discovers that the noise comes from inside his own home. Then, he sees the hole being started on the nearby wall, upstairs, and runs back up to the ramps. At this point, as Leonardo moves through the house, the viewer realizes it is a big house, spacious, modern, with large glass windows and a long ramp. We can already see Le Corbusier's house, with the modernist elements presented by this first scene.

As it is shown, the hole is being done by the neighbor just in front of one of Leonardo's windows. Noting the fact, he tries to reason with the operator in charge with an authoritative tone, asking him to stop, then calls for the house's owner, Victor, who is *not around till noon*, as said by the worker. Leonardo orders the worker to inform the owner that he is looking for him when he arrives. After closing the window, now with his wife and daughter besides him, he sentences – *What a terrible country, dammit!*.



**Fig. 6:** Frames from *O Homem ao Lado*.

The conflict between the neighbors around the window opening help us to put into question various aspects throughout the film: the need for privacy and individuality *versus* the closeness between neighbors; the transparency and permeability throughout Le Corbusier's project when facing the park, *versus* the need to protect the house of neighbor's look; and mainly puts face to face the modern body of Leonardo, *versus* the grotesque body of Victor.

As we see along the film, Victor is always trying to establish contact with Leonardo, which evades systematically. He tries to please Leonardo and his wife with gifts, calling to the traditional closeness between neighbors in small towns. But all that is grotesque to Leonardo – Victor's van with a mirror globe, a cup made of a cattle



paw, the preserved boar Victor hunted himself, red flowers with a poem, an iron sculpture – Victor is the grotesque representation and their habits, their way of talking that confronts Leonardo.

The duel between Leonardo and Victor is the duel between modern and grotesque body, mediated by the desire for transparency or resistance to it. Victor just wants a little of the sun that Leonardo has to spare: – *I need some sun you do not use*, says Victor. The guy who lives in the modern house, all in glass, contradictorily wants to protect himself from abroad: pretends to be working, always busy, always making excuses to avoid straight contact with Victor. In one scene, Victor shouts to Leonardo in the street, calling him to talk about the window. For Leonardo, they could have talked there, but Victor didn't accept, they should have gone to a bar, as friends. Leonardo claims to be busy, working, and Victor: – *You've been dozing on the computer for half an hour!* He was looking at the office from the street.

For Victor, the logic is simple: a person who lives in a house so open, so visible from the street, would mind with a small window? There's the conflict: the man next door do not want to be seen and do not want to be confronted by the man that threatens him. Despite the desire for privacy, Leonardo appears to be conceited to have his home seen from the street by groups of students, but proves to be bothered when they are tourists; he seeks to install an alarm in the house, but would not put bars avoiding interference on architecture design. It is noted that he shares the same transcendent feeling that Dr. Curutchet showed in his letters to Le Corbusier.



**Fig. 7:** Frames from *The Man Next Door*.

This grotesque body, here attributed to Victor, is the body of immediate passions, of that one that expresses it by extensions of his skin, which is not ashamed to be seen shirtless, that dances and have sex, which *is* his body, and the film strongly builds that image. In contrast, Leonardo's body is coldly built, systematic, it is always well dressed, even indoors, the object that surrounds it are meticulous, bold design objects, the physical relationship with his wife is given by systematic little kisses (*biquitos*) that she asks him, music is experienced in an intellectual way. And these oppositions are emphasized in order to highlight the differences between the two, between modern and grotesque, between mechanical and organic, reason and passion, light and dark, the projected and the improvised, between the house of Le Corbusier and its neighborhood.



By allowing his neighbor to die at the end of the film, Leonardo is letting what bothers him dies too, which is what Victor represents: passion, improvisation, a threat to his rationality, which he considers rude, crude, disgusting. Leonardo is the allegorical representation of a modern man, a body that deploys the world that surrounds it, the body-machine, which sees his passions as weaknesses, and that should maintain, through its rationality, control of all situations.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the film *The Man Next Door* trivializes the architectural design of the *machine of living* in an everyday context and puts building transparency, a dear element to modernist architecture design, into question it also puts into question the relationship between modernism and modernization, as problematized by Marshall Berman:

'Our vision of modern life tends to bifurcate into two levels, the material and the spiritual: some people devote themselves to the 'modernism', seen as a kind of pure spirit, which develops due to artistic and intellectual autonomous requirements; others are in the orbit of 'modernization', a complex of structures and materials processes – political, economical, social – that, in principle, once initiated, develop on their own, with little or no interference of spirits and the—human soul' (Berman, 1986, p.128, our translation<sup>4</sup>).

The radicality of modernist architecture is evidenced mainly through their 'artistic and intellectual imperatives autonomous' in the sphere of what Berman calls 'modernism' and materializes in buildings precepts of ways of living radical transformation, which later will come into conflict with the same 'complex structures and material processes' that makes up the so-called 'modernization', also by the resistance to it. This brings us closer to the notion of modernity as a complex network of internal contradictions, own by the system that characterizes it – the capitalism. This is not simply making an anachronistic criticism of modernist architecture developed in the twentieth century, but inserting it in the complex process that is modernity, which denies itself all the time because 'you cannot step twice in the same modernity' (Berman, 1986, p.138).

The opening scene of *The Man Next Door* was inspired by a video installation called *Productos Caseros*, by the Argentinian artist and architect Gaspar Libedinsky. The vídeo documents the transformation of *Cárcel de Caseros*, a Buenos Aires prison that operated between 1979 and 2000, created to temporarily house men accused of crimes while waiting for trial, but lastly it came to be a proper prison. The project conceived in the 60s provided a number of conveniences to detainees, promising 'a prison that will not be used to punish' and 'comfort behind bars,' which actually never happened. In a rebellion that took place in 1984, detainees brought cells bars down and also the dividers of the visitor's area, they made holes in building facade, so they could communicate with people outside. I would like to end this article with an excerpt of video's narrative.

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<sup>4</sup> **From the original in Portuguese:** 'Nossa visão da vida moderna tende a se bifurcar em dois níveis, o material e o espiritual: algumas pessoas se dedicam ao 'modernismo', encarado como uma espécie de puro espírito, que se desenvolve em função de imperativos artísticos e intelectuais autônomos; outras se situam na órbita da 'modernização', um complexo de estruturas e processos materiais – políticos, econômicos, sociais – que, em princípio, uma vez encetados, se desenvolvem por conta própria, com pouca ou nenhuma interferência dos espíritos e da alma humana' (Berman, 1986, p.128).

'These windows served as communication system for 30 years. Through them prisoners accessed the facades and jumped like spiderman, from hole to hole. Thus, architecture, once the primary means of control, is now the main enemy: the panopticon antithesis. While prison system, which seeks to transform human behavior through architecture, Caseros is the equation inversion: a transformation of architecture through human conduct' (Productos Caseros, 2008, our translation).



**Fig. 8:** Frames of *Productos Caseros*.

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