

PAST IMPERFECT

PAST IMPERFECT explores the relations between the radical output of the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s and everyday life, gradually moving on to include how radical ideas from the past are linked to those of today. In all corners of life—politics, literature, intelligence, science—radical actions, even if they seem to have disappeared into oblivion, influence and shape the public arena.

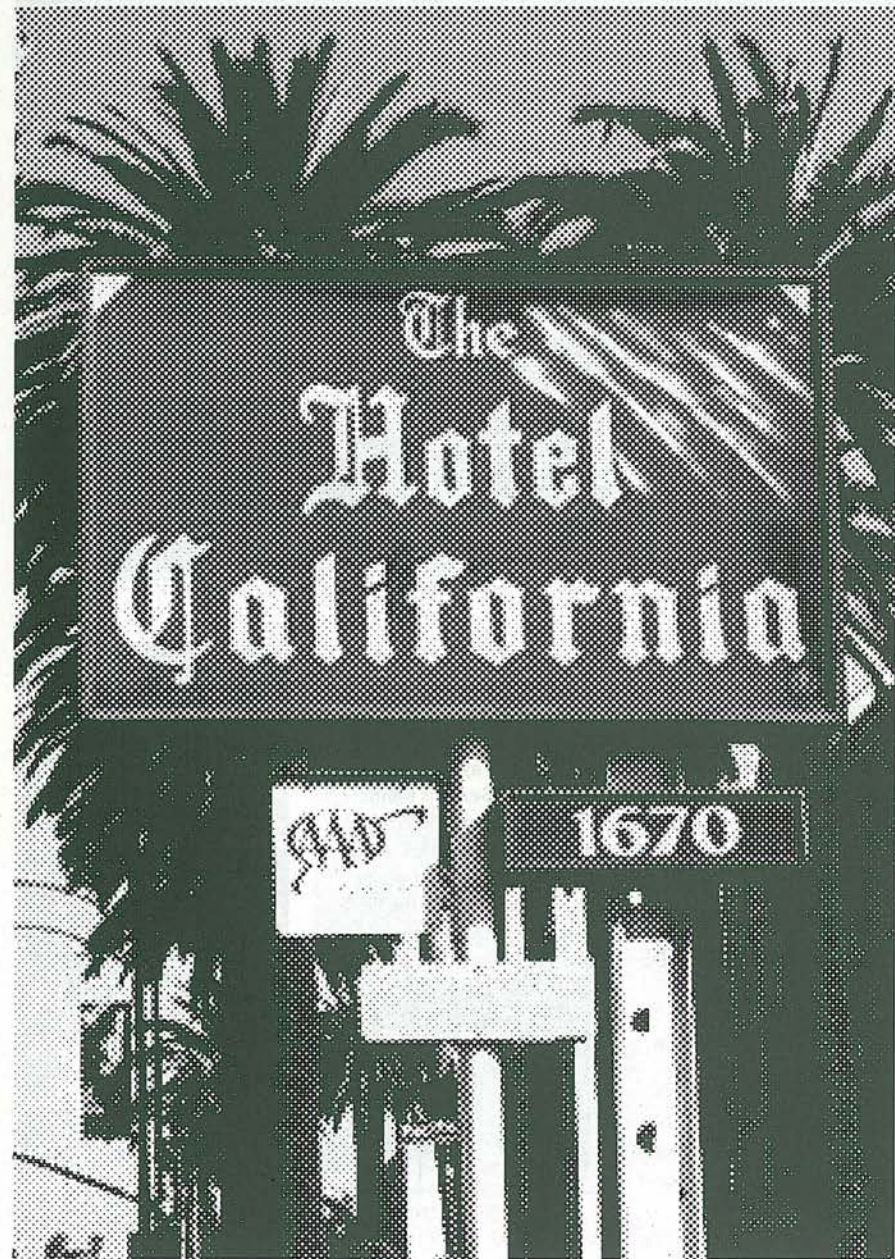
This publication is the result of a research, intensely guided by curiosity, amazement and suspicion, accepting the risk of being totally incomplete or overly thorough. PAST IMPERFECT searches for hidden pasts by lifting stones and poking underneath; collecting cases around notions on disappearance (persons, information), perfection, excessive control, compulsion and withdrawal—as varied as causal developments (Ford boxes), state fiction and ambiguity (Absolut), coincidental histories (from aubergines to Hotel Angst), preservation and destruction (from Amanda Lear to Howard Hughes), dark politics (Elvis meeting Nixon), the haunting of artifacts and economical speculation (Corbis), erasure (from Alfred Loos' archives to Willem de Kooning's drawings), protection (Walden's utopia), the impossible made possible (Houdini), ... and much more.

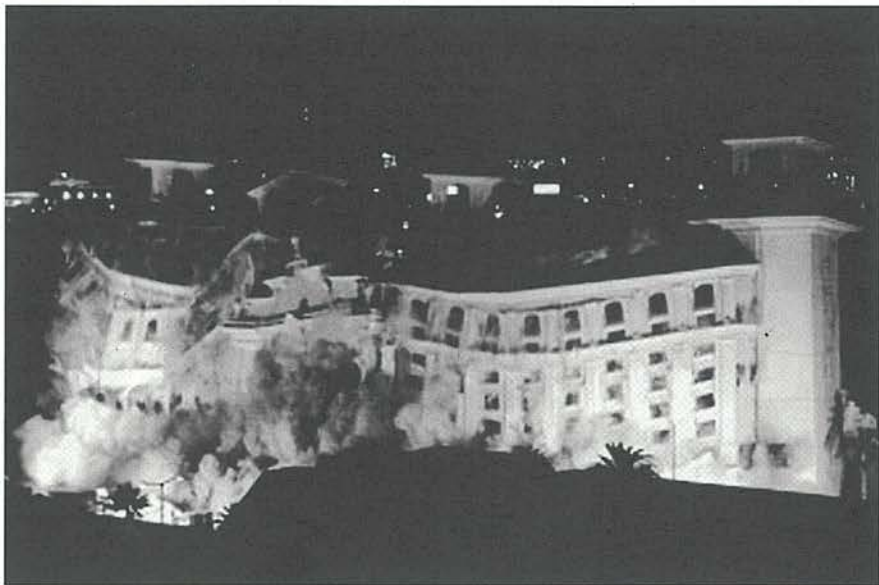
Lisette Smits & Bik Van der Pol, ed.

PAST IMPERFECT...

HOTEL CALIFORNIA
DESERT INN
HOTEL ANGST
MAISON
GRAY
LOOS
vs
LE CORBUSIER
HOLLOW EARTH
FUTURE IMPERFECT







Implosion of The Desert Inn, Las Vegas, 2004

HOTEL CALIFORNIA

After his capture, Saddam Hussein was held in what the CIA calls 'Hotel California', an unknown place where maximum security prisoners are kept. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,278962,00.html>

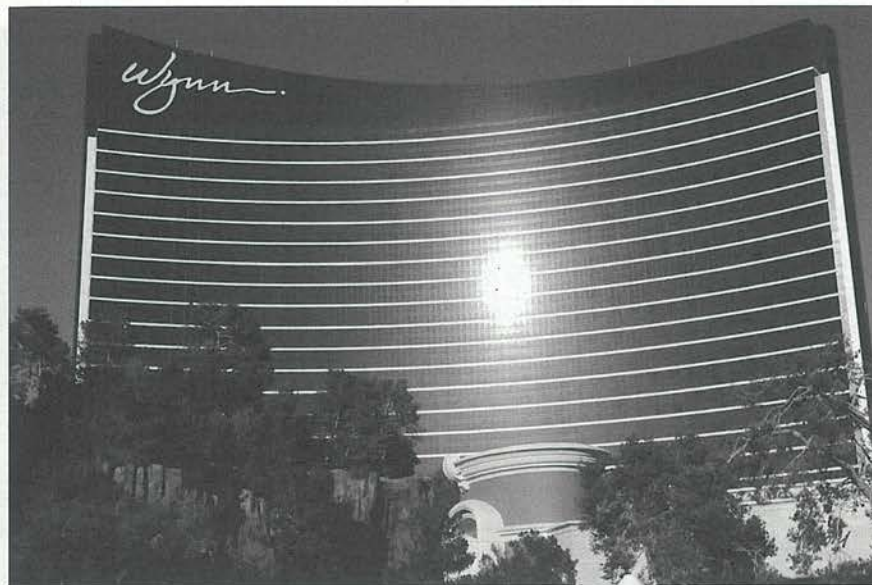
DESERT INN

Howard Hughes was well known as an aviator, movie producer, and billionaire. He died on April 5, 1976, after years of withdrawal in, amongst other places, a hotel room in the Desert Inn Hotel in Las Vegas.

Hughes produced films like HELL'S ANGELS and INVASION U.S.A. and in 1956 he produced THE CONQUEROR, with John Wayne in the leading role of Genghis Kahn. This film was shot in 1954 in the Nevada desert, which was also the ground of the Nevada test sites. In the 1950s, more than 100 nuclear tests had been executed.



Model house, located 1km from ground zero nuclear test site, Nevada desert.



Wynn Las Vegas megaresort, on the old site of The Desert Inn

After shooting on location, Hughes shipped 60 tons of Nevada desert sand to a Hollywood studio to shoot extra scenes. Not long after the movie was finished, an unusual number of the cast and crew became ill and died. Hughes paid 17 million dollars to take THE CONQUEROR out of distribution, leaving only him to see the movie, over and over again.

HOTEL ANGST

Hotel Angst is a neglected contemporary monument – a remnant of a way of spending time. A souvenir, built in Bordighera (Italy) at the end of the 19th century,

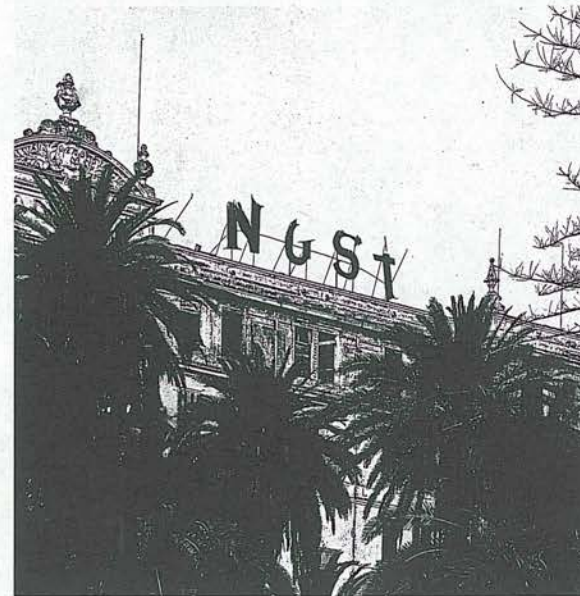


photo: Jochen Helle



commissioned by Adolf Angst. At the beginning of the 20th century this was the place where high society would gather. After World War I, it began to decline, and after the Second World War, the hotel was deserted for the next fifty years. Although the hotel was named after its original owner, the name now reflects the very state that it is in, as if its destination was already imbedded in its birth. It is now a ghost hotel—architecture disappearing.

see also: <http://www.bordighera.it/Monografie/Angst/Angst01.htm>

MAISON GRAY

The seaside villa E.1027 was built by Eileen Gray between 1926 and 1929 as a summer vacation residence in for her friend Jean Badovici. The name of the house was a code for their intertwined initials: E for Eileen, 10 for J, the 10th letter of the alphabet, and, following this logic, 2 for B, and 7 for G. Gray built the house on an isolated stretch of the French Riviera, on the western side of Cap Martin overlooking the Bay of Monaco. She chose this sight for the beauty of its view and built the house directly into the terrain.

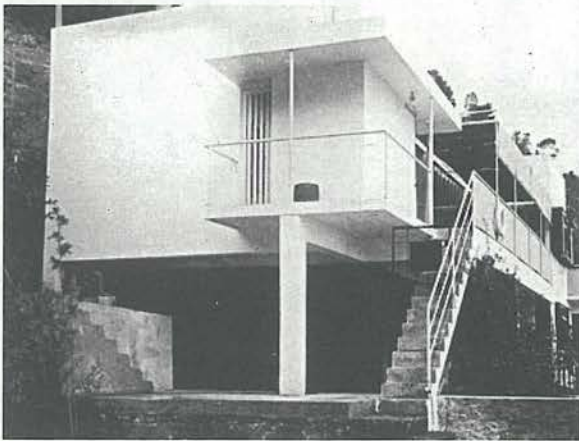
While E.1027 was a modernist movement house and employed many of the key tenets of the movement's chief architect, Le Corbusier,

Gray took issue with Le Corbusier who famously felt that 'the house is a machine to live in'. 'A house is not a machine to live in. It is the shell of man, his extension, his release, his emanation.' She used Corbusian stencils to inscribe admonitions on the walls of E.1027—'entrez lentement' (enter slowly) by the main entrance and 'defence de rire' (no laughing) on the foyer partition. As opposed to Le Corbusier she described the house as a living organism, an extension of the human experience, stating that 'it is not a matter of simply constructing beautiful ensembles of lines, but above all, dwellings for people.' 'Formulas are nothing,' she insisted, 'Life is everything.'

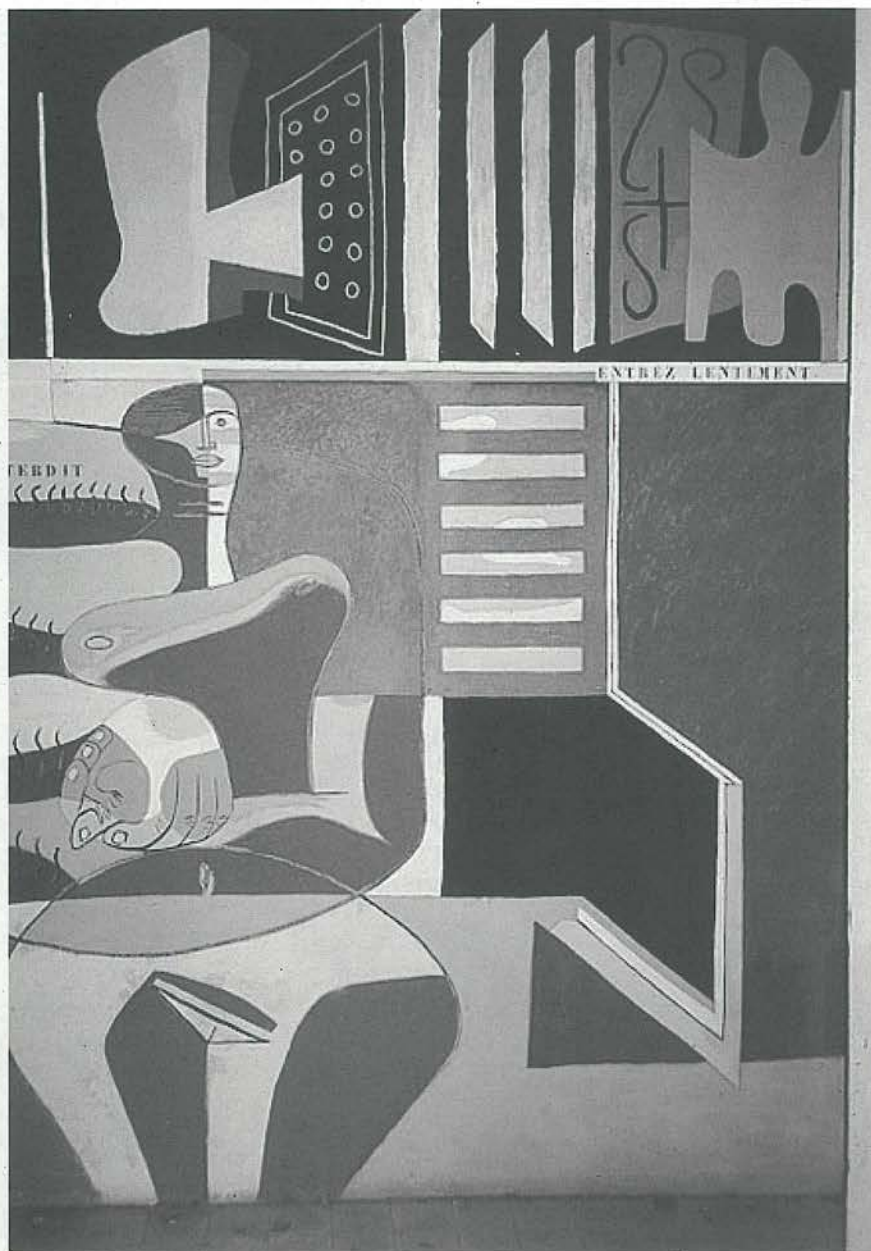
Le Corbusier visited E.1027 on numerous occasions and admired it very much, so much so that he was moved to add his own touch to the clean

white villa, painting a series of murals on its walls between 1937-39. This intrusion onto her design infuriated Gray, who considered the murals outright vandalism. After the war, in 1949, Le Corbusier published photographs of his 'murals at Cap Martin', without mentioning her. 'The villa that I animated with my paintings was very beautiful, white on the interior, and it could have managed without my talents,' he admitted, before claiming that the murals 'burst out from dull, sad walls where nothing is happening ... an immense transformation, a spiritual value introduced throughout.'

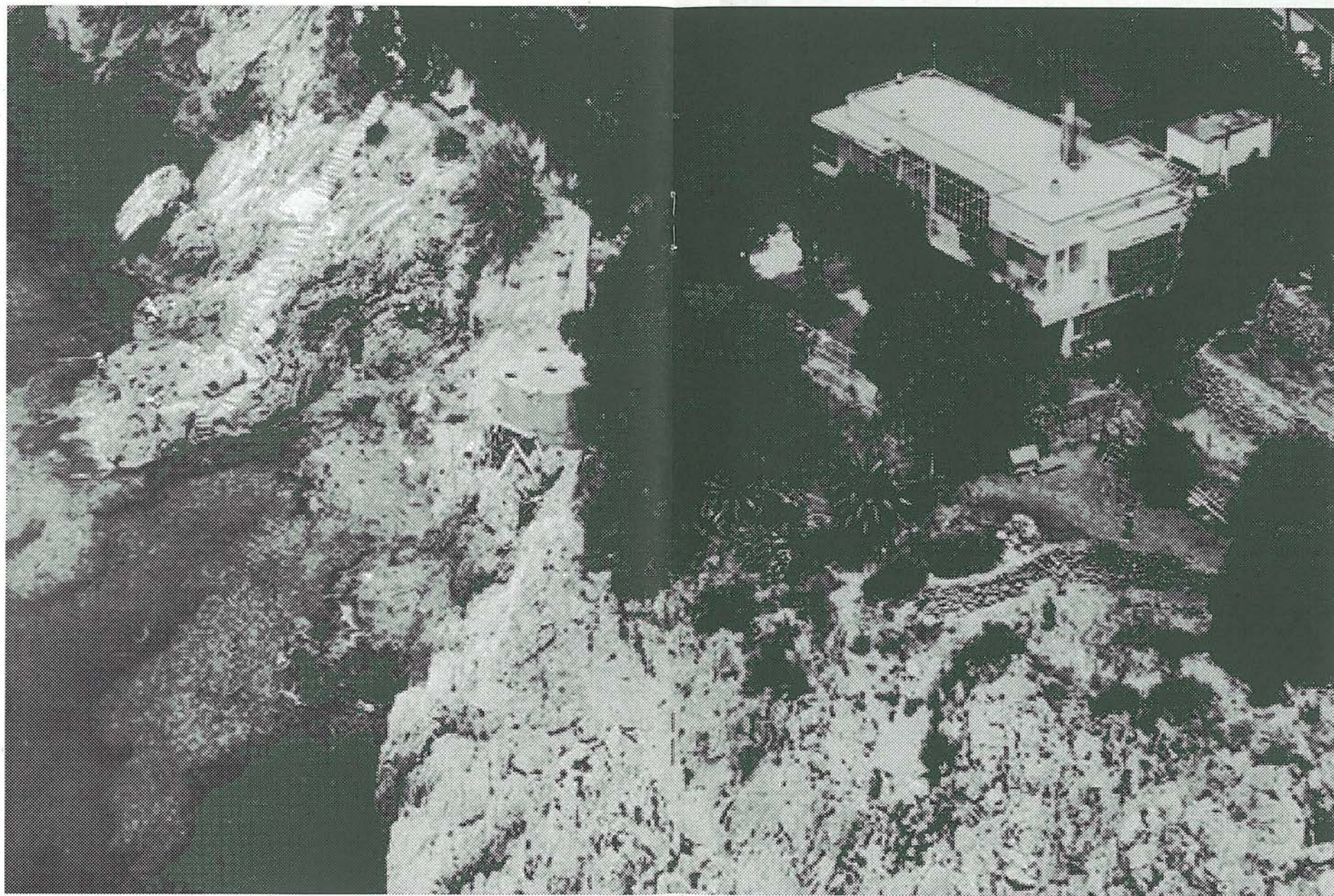
Whether he painted these murals out of admiration for her work or jealousy of her accomplishment, Le Corbusier became intricately tied with the future of the house. Failing to purchase it himself, he eventually bought a piece.



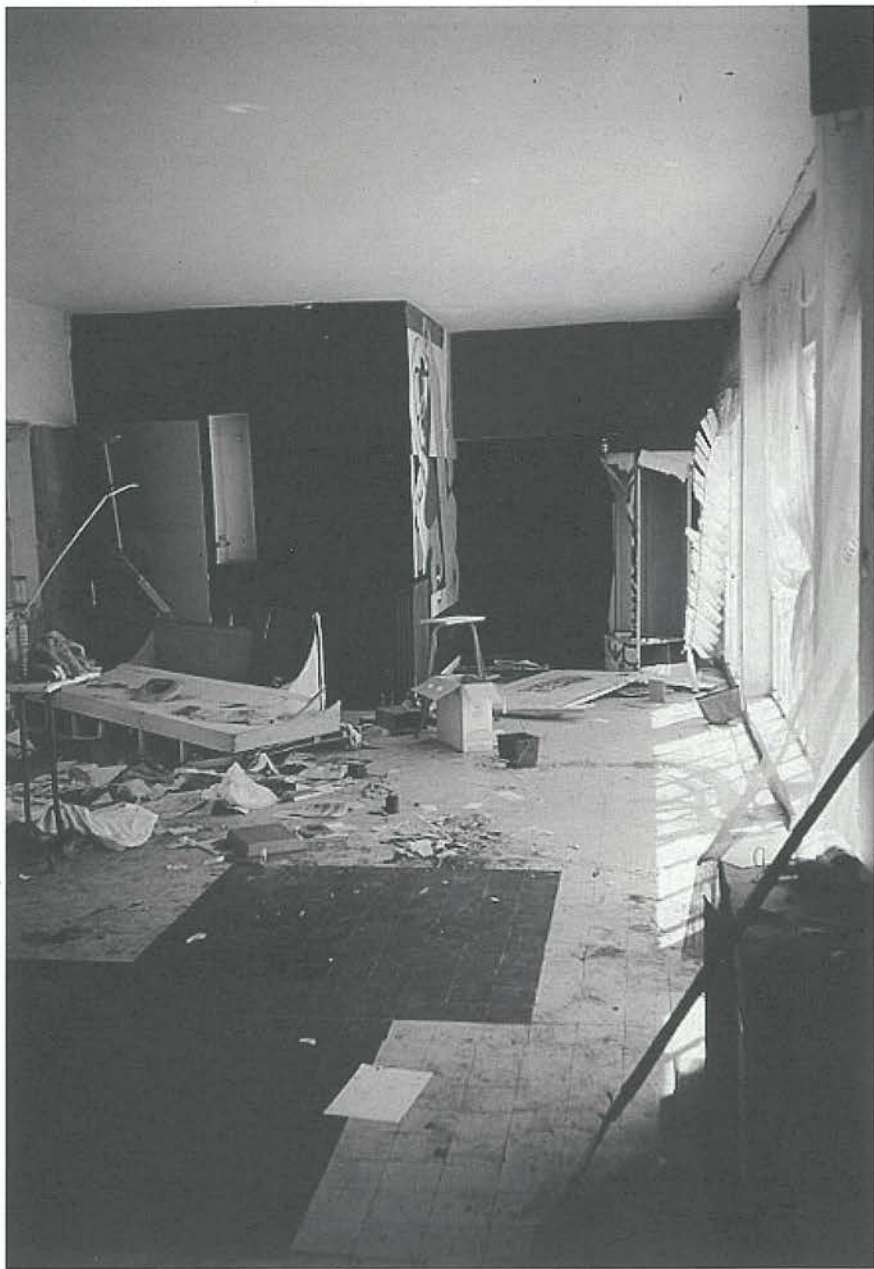
E.1027, 1926-29



E.1027: Le Corbusier mural at main entrance, 1938-39. photo© Daniel Ryan.



Aerial view of E.1027, Roquebrune Cap Martin, 1926-29. photo © Mairie de Roquebrune.



E.1027: living room interior, vandalised, summer 1998. photo © Daniel Ryan

of property just east of E.1027, where he built a small, rustic cabin, LE CABANON, for the birthday of his wife Yvonne.



photo: courtesy of Emmanuelle Morgan
The Twentieth Century Society 2001-2003

Jean Badovici lived in E.1027 until his death in 1956. After he died the house was put up for auction and was bought by a friend of Le Corbusier. Then Le Corbusier built an elevated, two-storey hostel overlooking the villa. Le Corbusier—arguably the greatest architect of the 20th century—was obsessed and haunted by Gray's seaside villa. Over the decades, he sought to possess her 'maison en bord de mer' in a multitude of ways. It may have been the last thing he saw before dying of a heart attack while swimming off the rocks beneath E.1027 in 1965.

Sources: <http://www.e1027.com>
<http://www.irish-architecture.com>

LOOS vs LE CORBUSIER



Beatrixgasse, Vienna, today

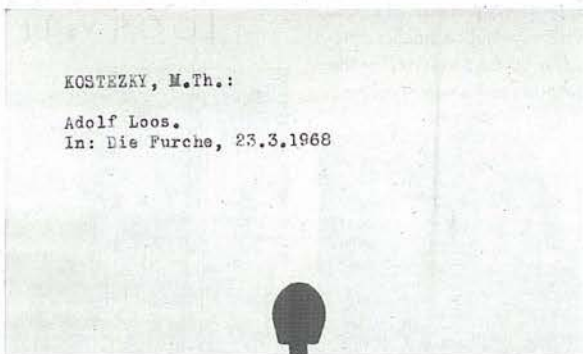
25 Beatrixgasse, Vienna, 1922: Adolf Loos orders all the documents in his office to be destroyed as he leaves Vienna and settles in Paris. His collaborators Heinrich Kulka and Grethe Klimt-Hentschel gather the few fragments that remain and that will become the basis for the first book on Loos, ADOLF LOOS: DAS WERK DES ARCHITEKTEN, edited

by Kulka and Franz Glück in 1931. Over the years, more documents are found (but almost never complete). This collection of fragments will become the only evidence for generations of scholarship. As Burkhardt Rukschcio put it in 1980: 'Today, on the 110th anniversary of Loos' birth, it can truly be said that we are unlikely ever to know more about his work. A sizeable

L o o s, Adolf

part of his designs and projects have completely disappeared and we know of only some of the hundreds of interiors he did for homes.' All investigations of Loos have been marked by his removal of the traces. All of the writing is in, on, and around the gaps. It is even about those gaps, often being obsessed with them.

8-10 square du docteur Blanche, Paris. Le Corbusier decides very early on that every trace of his work, and of himself, should be kept. He saves everything: correspondence, telephone bills, electricity bills, laundry bills, bank statements, postcards, legal documents, court proceedings (he was often involved in lawsuits), family pictures, travel snapshots, suitcases, trunks, filing cabinets, pottery, rugs, shells, pipes, books, magazines, clippings from newspapers, mail order catalogues, samples, mechanical boards, every stage of every manuscript, drafts for lectures, doodles, scribbles, notebooks, sketchbooks, diaries ... and, of course, his paintings, sculptures, drawings, and all the documentation of his projects. This collection, now housed in the La Roche-Jeanneret house as the FONDATION LE CORBUSIER, has been the basis of a massive research into Le Corbusier, culminating, perhaps, in the centennial celebrations of his birth in 1987. The immensity of the materials available has also



Index cards from Brenner Archive, catalogue of the University of Graz and Innsbruck

generated a series of mega-publications intended to make the contents of the archive public, including LE CORBUSIER ARCHIVE, 32 volumes containing 32,000 drawings of architecture, urbanism, and furniture, [...] 'the largest architectural publication ever undertaken'. [...] What other architect's work (or artist's) might have lent itself to such a treatment? This kind of exhausted coverage was anticipated by Le Corbusier when, at the age of 42, he came out with the first volume of his ŒUVRE COMPLÈTE (covering the years 1910-1929), to which seven further volumes were added over the years. [...]

If the research into Loos is organized by the gaps in the archive, the research into Le Corbusier is organized by archival excesses. Loos vacates a space and destroys all traces behind him. Le Corbusier fills a space ahead of him, but not just any space: a domestic space, literally a

house. To think about Loos one has to occupy a public space, the space of publications, his own and others', but also the space of word of mouth, hearsay, gossip, tips; the enigmatic space of circumstantial evidence. To think about Le Corbusier is necessarily to enter a private space. [...]

from: PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY: MODERN ARCHITECTURE AS MASS MEDIA, by Beatriz Colomina. MIT press, 1994

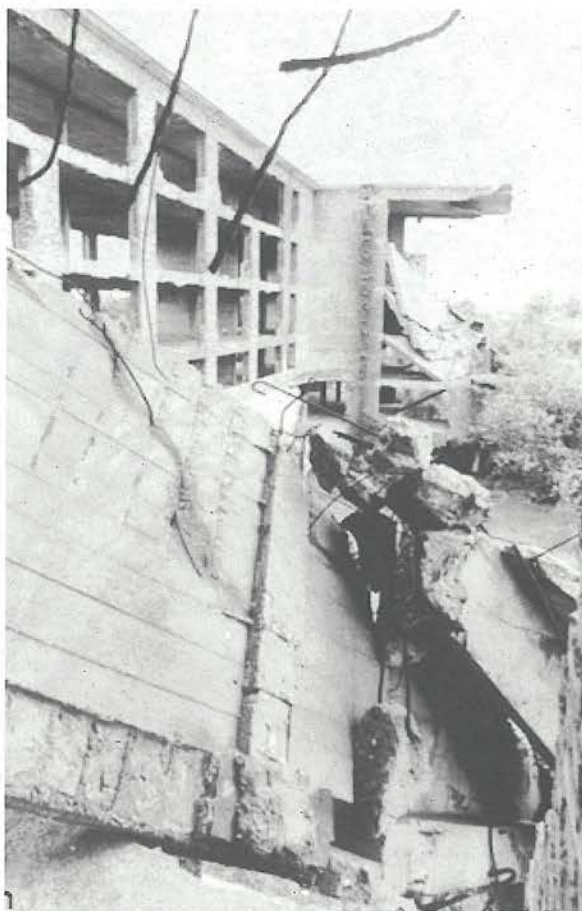
HOLLOW EARTH

On Rügen, an island in the Baltic Sea, Hitler built four miles of seafront flats, the biggest holiday camp in the world. It was never used: holidays were cancelled after the invasion of Poland and the start of the Second World War. Today, Prora has become a tourist attraction.

Based on the hollow/inverted Earth theory, the 'Hohlweltlehre', the Nazis



Caspar David Friedrich, CHALK CLIFFS ON RÜGEN, 1818



Hitler built a mile-long hotel on the Baltic Sea, where his officers and their families could come and vacation. This is what remains. © ion

came to the conclusion that the surface is on the interior of a concave Earth. Hitler sent an expedition with powerful telescopic cameras to Rügen to spy on the British fleet. They did this not by aiming the cameras across the waters, but by pointing them up to peer across the atmosphere

to the Atlantic Ocean.

The expedition was a failure. www.encyclopedia.com/html/R/Rugen
www.geocities.com/wcroston/transfer1
<http://paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa011199>

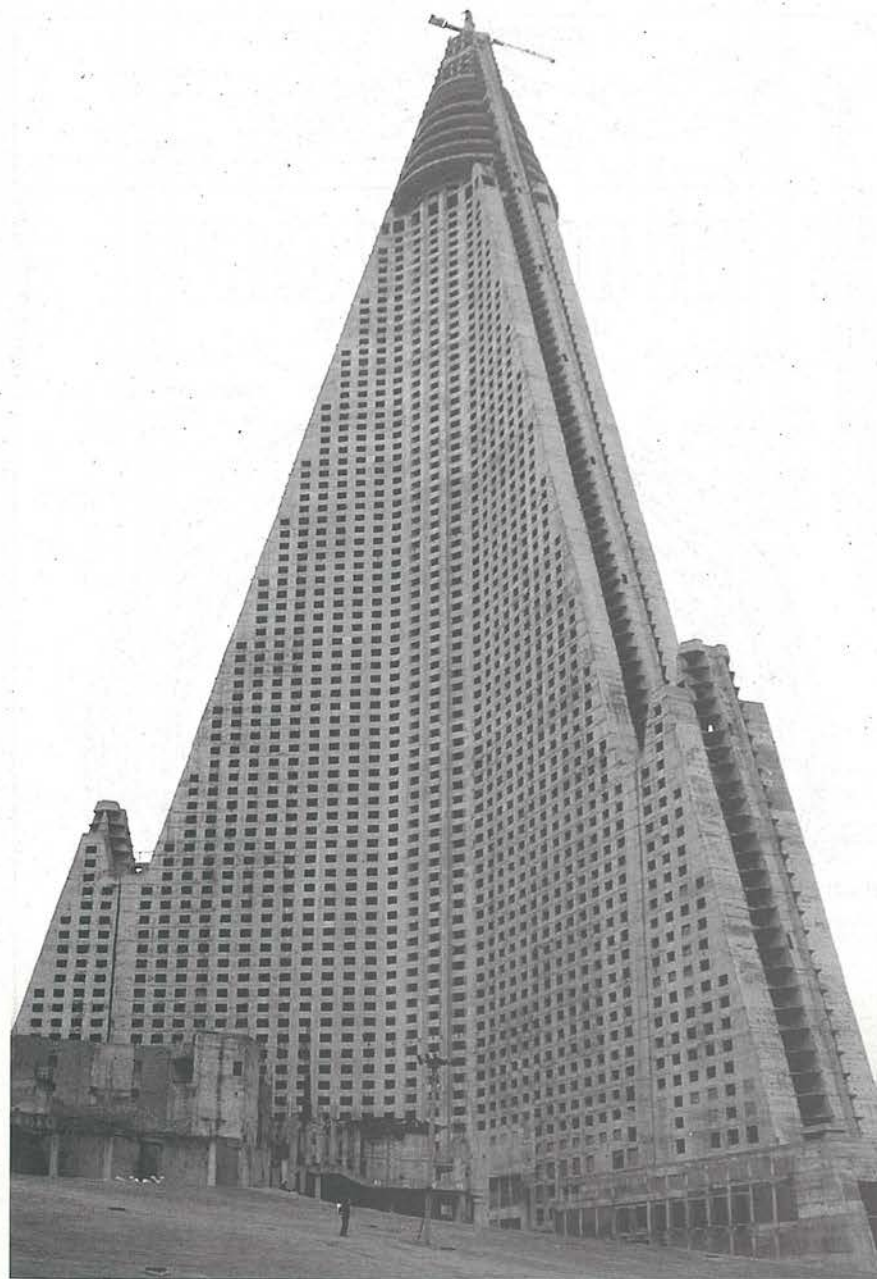
Hollow Earth Map, from: <http://www.soft.com.net/users/vtown/map>.

FUTURE IMPERFECT

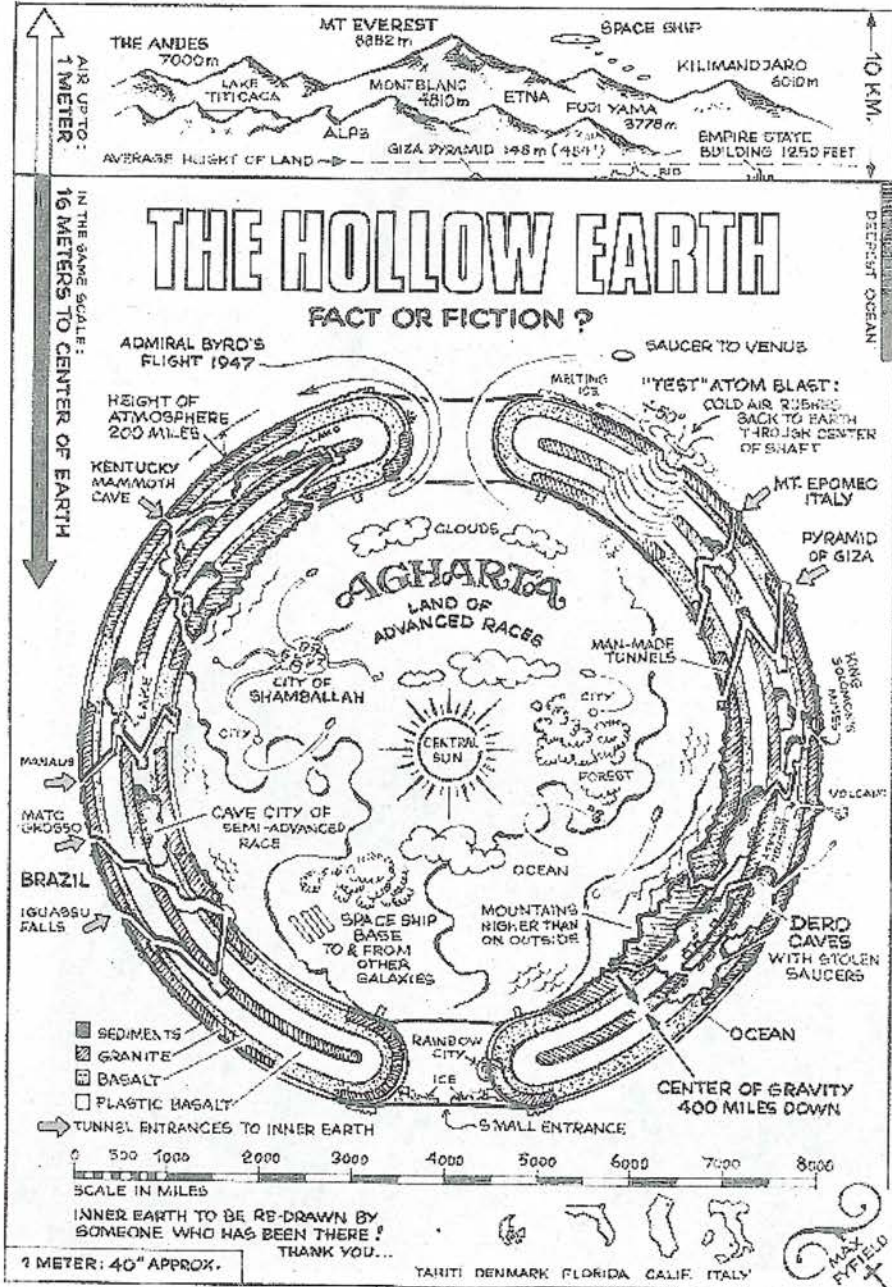
Begun in 1987 to mark the occasion of the world youth games, and to this day unfinished (apparently for financial reasons), the Ryugyong Hotel is a pyramid 330 metres high. It has a Y-shaped base and stands on a hill at the centre of Pyongyang. When operative, the building was to house the 105 floors of an international hotel, a rounded slab of services on the ground floor, and three sloping elevators along the pyramid's oblique lateral walls, plus a series of rings to contain revolving restaurants at the apex.

The pyramidal hotel building, in prestressed reinforced concrete (a test was carried out in 1992 in Skopje, Macedonia), was interrupted at the roughcasting stage. Today, though not completed, it is the city's principal landmark, visible from all points of its territory.

from: Domus 882, June 2005
 see also: www.urbanplanet.org



The Ryugyong Hotel, Pyongyang, North Korea, photographer unknown



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Compiled & edited
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Concept: Bik Van der Pol

Research: Liesbeth Bik,
Jos van der Pol, Lisette Smits
and Will Holder

Design: Will Holder

Texts: Guus Beumer,
Bik Van der Pol, Will Bradley,
Jason Coburn, Stuart Comer,
Steve Rushton, Jan Verwoert, a.o.

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Casco, office for Art,
Design and Theory
Oudegracht 366
3511 PP Utrecht
The Netherlands
Ph +31 30 2319995
Fax +31 30 2319995
www.cascoprojects.org



REVOLVER

Archiv für aktuelle Kunst
Fahrgasse 23
D- 60311 Frankfurt/Main
Germany
Ph + 49 69 446362
Fax + 49 69 94412451
www.revolver-books.de

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