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Perret and his Artist-Clients: Architecture in the Age of Gold

by LOUISE CAMPBELL

Among Auguste Perret's papers is a letter from Le Corbusier thanking him for a brief holiday spent in the south of France in May 1915 as Perret's guest.¹ The importance of this visit for the development of Le Corbusier's Dom-ino project has been noted by several writers.² It is, however, important in another way. The holiday was spent at Saint-Clair, near Le Lavandou, the home of the painter Théo van Rysselberghe, who had lent it to Perret so that he might recuperate from an illness (Fig. 1). At Saint-Clair, escaping from a cold Swiss spring and the unfolding horror of the war, and surrounded by works of art, Le Corbusier discussed architecture with his former teacher in a setting of unspoiled natural beauty. A tiny sketch contained in Le Corbusier's letter evokes the place: sea, mountains, and luxuriant vegetation viewed through the enormous window of a studio filled with paintings and *objets d'art*.³ Here, it seems, Le Corbusier's fascination with the world of art was incubated; significantly, it occurred under the aegis of Perret.

Although Perret's links with artists before the First World War are well documented, those of the inter-war period have not been systematically studied.⁴ Yet they allow a valuable insight into the nature of the Parisian art market, into contemporary architectural polemics and the role played by Perret in both. They also provide an intriguing parallel with Le Corbusier's relations with artists, a topic which has attracted considerable attention.⁵

Perret's pre-war artist-clients, Maurice Denis and Théo van Rysselberghe, were closely connected with his commission to design the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. For Denis he built a small studio at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1912, and for van Rysselberghe (responsible for introducing Perret to Henri van de Velde and thus to the Théâtre project) he built a studio in Paris in 1913–14. The sculptor Antoine Bourdelle (who like Denis worked with Perret at the Théâtre) did not commission a studio from Perret, but later asked him to construct a museum to house his work. Towards the end of the war, Perret became involved with a broader spectrum of artists. He maintained close friendships with Denis, Bourdelle and van Rysselberghe, designing a new studio for the latter at Saint-Clair around 1920.⁶ Most of his commissions, however, came from a younger generation, able to take advantage of the increasingly buoyant state of the French art market in order to commission studio-houses in or near Paris.

The youngest of these clients was the graphic artist Adolphe Mouron (1901–68), known professionally as 'Cassandre'. The house, built in 1925–26 in a new street in

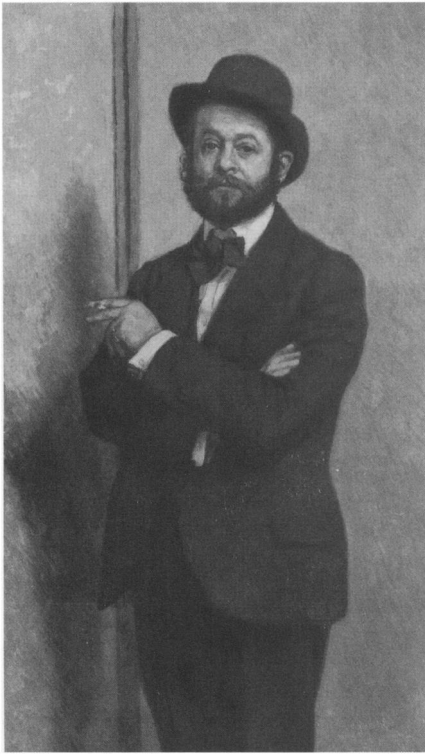


Fig. 1. *Théo van Rysselberghe: Portrait of Auguste Perret, 1914 (Musée du Prieuré, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, on loan from the Musée d'Orsay)*

Versailles, presented a marked contrast to the buildings with which Perret and his family firm had established their reputation in the 1900s as leaders in the architectural use of reinforced concrete.⁷ In the flats at 25 bis rue Franklin and at the Garage Ponthieu, distinctions between structural and non-structural elements are clearly and elegantly expressed on the elevations. Unlike these, the smoothly-rendered exterior of the house at Versailles offered little indication of its structure, a combination of load-bearing brick cavity walls braced by reinforced concrete columns, concrete floors and roof-slab. It has been convincingly suggested that this design was tailored to the client, an enormously successful designer of advertising posters whose technique and formal vocabulary drew upon the work of Léger and the Purist painters, and their fascination with the manufactured object.⁸ Cassandre himself compared his mode of working to that of the modern technician, claiming that his working environment was as uncluttered and practical as a factory. At the house, wrote a critic, 'he has claimed a large room, amply lit by windows opening onto the garden. Bare walls of grey plaster ... a radiator, an unframed mirror, like items of decoration. A roll-top desk for business, a drawing-board to "manufacture" posters. No painter's materials, but an architect's instruments; set-square, compass, ruler, protractor ... Poster designs like diagrams ...'.⁹

Yet it is not only through the client's stylistic affiliation that the house was connected with Purism. The commission was reputed to have been given first to Le Corbusier.¹⁰

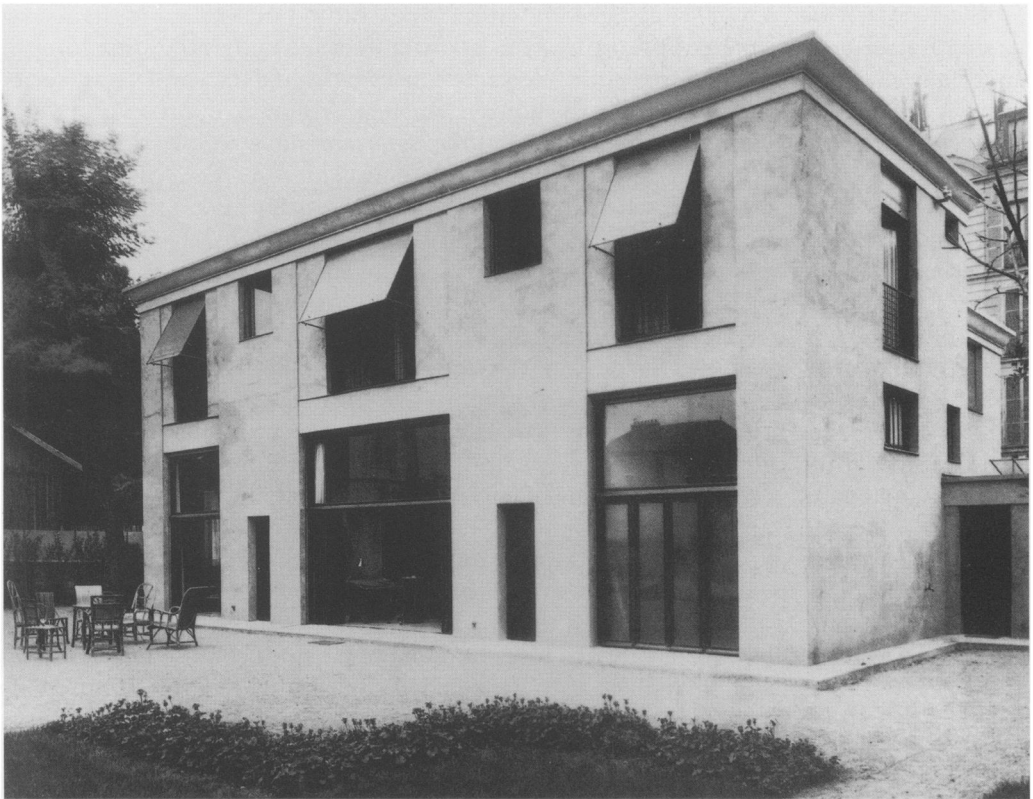


Fig. 2. Perret: house for Cassandre, rue Albert-Joly, Versailles, garden front (Photo: Chevojon; Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)

Perret's design — in spite of the classical, tripartite organization of the elevations — shared elements with Le Corbusier's Purist villas: windows extending from floor almost to the ceiling, openings without architraves punched into sheer wall planes, and a roof terrace (Fig. 2).¹¹ Perret, responsible for introducing Le Corbusier to Ozenfant in 1917 or 1918, was a shareholder in the company which published their magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, and maintained a close relationship with Le Corbusier until 1922.¹² The early 1920s saw Perret, like Le Corbusier, experimenting with designs for a domestic architecture which was compact, economical and appropriate to the needs of the post-war period.¹³ The Cassandre house followed on the heels of these experiments. In terms of function as well of construction it was something of a hybrid; although built for an artist, it was conceived primarily as a house for a large family.¹⁴ The ground-floor studio doubled as a living room, and Cassandre was obliged to retreat to the small auxiliary studio adjoining it in order to work. The fact that, the year after completion, the client almost immediately asked Perret to extend the house to provide a new, double-height studio annexe suggests that workspace was being squeezed here by the demands of domestic and social life.¹⁵

The 1920s yielded a more specialized building type: studio-houses commissioned by a single artist or artist-couple, allowing an architect considerable freedom to experiment.¹⁶ Perret and his firm built five such houses between 1926 and 1930. Perret himself did not differentiate between the houses which he designed for artists and those for other sorts of clients in the 1920s, and most historians have followed suit when discussing his architecture.¹⁷ These buildings nevertheless represented a distinct genre within Perret's domestic work; artists' particular requirements for light and space, their restricted budgets and cramped sites called for a different approach and different solutions from commissions for houses in fashionable areas. As Collins has noted, Perret's 'first frame house in reinforced concrete' was for an artist; the extensively glazed façades which studio-building on difficult sites necessitated ran quite contrary to the avoidance of dramatic effect evident in Perret's other domestic work.¹⁸

Studio-houses — by Perret and other architects — were a conspicuous feature of the Parisian streetscape of the inter-war period. Their significance is not just architectural. These buildings indicate the desire of contemporary artists to secure optimum working and viewing conditions for their art, and their increased willingness and ability to pay for them. Moreover, and inevitably, given the financial well-being which they connoted, studio-houses were implicated in far-ranging debates about the condition of the arts in France, and about the effect of the post-war boom in the art market upon attitudes towards the disinterested pursuit of art as a vocation.

The post-war proliferation of galleries and exhibiting opportunities and the emergence of new types of contracts linking artists to dealers had contributed to a re-configuration of the French art world in the 1920s.¹⁹ In her memoirs, the painter Alice Halika caustically referred to it as an 'age of gold' for artists: 'What painter didn't have or wasn't on the point of buying a car? New streets sprang up in which the artists lived in town houses in the style of Le Corbusier and Mallet-Stevens. The painters carried themselves like *nouveaux-riches*, talked lots about country property, makes of cars, jewels they'd given their wives, etc.', she wrote. 'Montparnasse was the cradle of the new over-optimism.'²⁰

In Montparnasse, studio-space had become scarce and expensive by the mid-1920s, and land to the south-east of the central Carrefour Vavin (the junction of the Boulevard du Montparnasse and the Boulevard Raspail) was developed in response to demand from artists. Development generally took the form of a series of parallel culs-de-sac behind a principal street frontage. The narrowness of these culs-de-sac — known as 'impasses' or 'villas' — meant that there were tight restrictions on height and projection, and plots were generally hemmed in by buildings on three sides (Fig. 3). It was in one of these newly-created streets, villa Seurat, that Perret built his first and most celebrated Parisian studio-house for the sculptor Chana Orloff (1888–1968). Orloff, born in the Ukraine, came to Paris via Palestine in 1910, intending to train as a dressmaker, and by 1913 was producing prints and sculpture and exhibiting at the Salon d'Automne. In the 1920s, widowed and with a young son, Orloff began to enjoy critical success.²² Her purchase of a building plot with a loan from her bank was made possible by improving prospects. She asked Perret, whose portrait bust she modelled in 1923, to create for her a 'workshop'.

It was designed and constructed between March and September 1926. The frontage measured only 7.35 metres, wedged between neighbouring plots, and the height was restricted by building regulations to 9 metres (Fig. 4).²³ The bulk of the building was

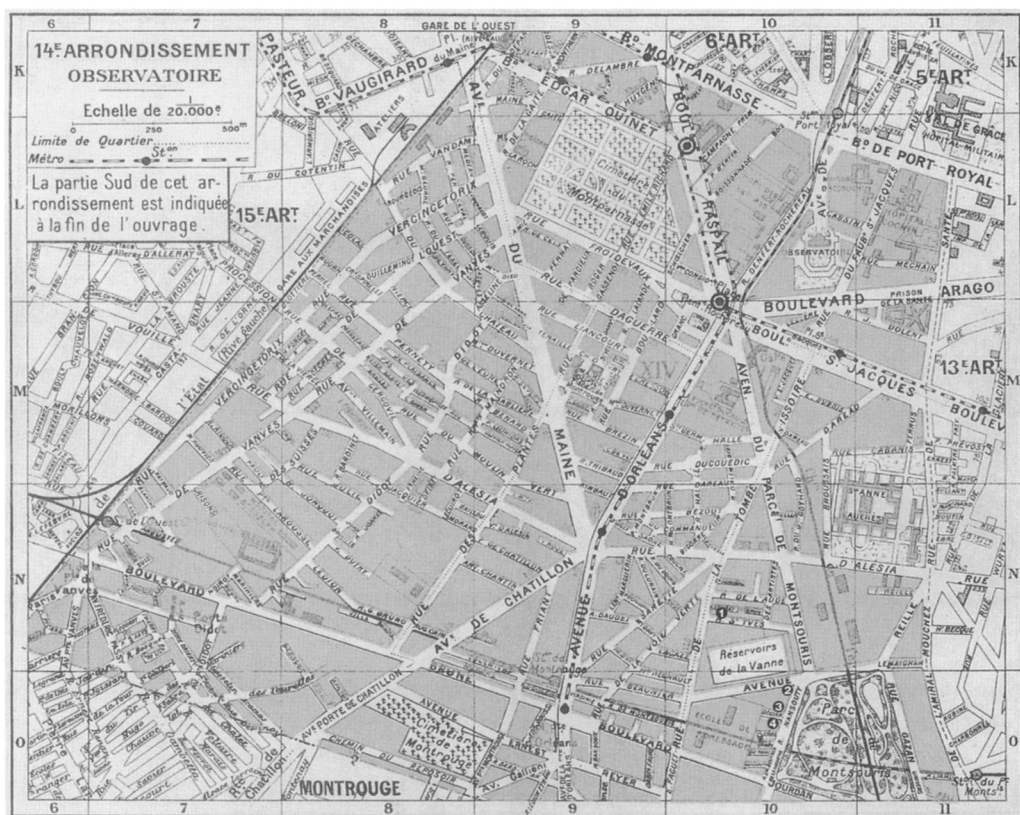


Fig. 3. Plan of 14th arrondissement, Paris (Plan de Paris par Arrondissement, Paris (L. Guilmin & A. Leconte, n.d., c. 1929)) Key: 1 Orloff; 2 Ozenfant; 3 Braque; 4 Derain



Fig. 4. Perret: house for Chana Orloff, villa Seurat, Paris. The neighbouring houses were designed by André Lurçat (Photo: F. R. Yerbury; Architectural Association)

given over to studios — a large, north-facing, double-height studio with windows looking over the street and a mezzanine gallery running around two sides to allow sculpture to be viewed from above, and a smaller, top-lit studio to the rear (Figs 5, 6). Living accommodation — a living-dining room and two small bedrooms — was relegated to the top floor.

The façade was accordingly treated in a way which privileged the studio; the glass panes of the large studio dominate the classically proportioned elevation, and the domestic areas above them read as an attic storey. The Orloff house was of hybrid construction, with concrete columns and beams and brick infill walls, but — unlike the Cassandre house — it paraded the materials of which it was made.²⁴ The lintels and the window surrounds are of un-rendered concrete, presenting a marked contrast to the treatment of other parts of the façade: the timber sub-frames of the studio windows, and the panels of decorative brickwork used between the doors and on the upper elevation. The pronounced cornice appeared to be a riposte to Le Corbusier, whose formulation of the principles of the new architecture, presented in a lecture in 1924 and published in 1926, demanded the suppression of the cornice.²⁵ The dialogue between the two architects was conducted in the context of an increasingly polarized architectural debate. In mid-1926, harsh treatment of Perret in the competition to design a new church dedicated to Joan of Arc prompted an outcry from the architectural profession and a subsequent re-evaluation of his achievements in designing with reinforced concrete. In the aftermath, Perret came to represent for some critics a valuable middle ground, between the provocative polemic of Corbusier and the conservatism of the architects who directed ateliers at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.²⁶

The Orloff house presented a marked contrast to its immediate neighbours — eight houses, built mostly for artists by André Lurçat between 1925 and 1927.²⁷ Most contained several apartments, and comprised an artful variety of solids and voids: angular and curved projections, recessed bays sheltering terraces and formal gardens, a 'cité cubiste' in miniature, constructed of concrete frame, brick and breeze-block, covered with a uniform render. In the context of the period, these different approaches to housing the artist assumed a particular significance. Some critics contrasted the iconoclasm of Lurçat's treatment with the more sober aspect of Perret's design.²⁸ Marcel Mayer, writing in *L'Amour de l'Art*, dismissed the Lurçat houses with their rigorous elimination of ornament, as a 'dead-end fantasy'. The Orloff house, he wrote, 'teaches them a lesson, functions as a call to order, to good sense, to good taste ... it is frank, likeable, robust, distinguished. Down-to-earth architecture, up-to-the-minute architecture, French architecture.'²⁹

Perret's work is used here as a means of attacking new architectural tendencies, but it is intriguing to find the house of a foreign-born artist like Orloff being used as a model of excellence. When we discover that Orloff had originally considered using Lurçat as her architect,³⁰ and only turned to Perret in the year in which she became a French citizen, we begin to understand how carefully she was picking her way between the friends of her youth — Modigliani, Pascin, Soutine — and a more acculturated, prosperous, post-war milieu. Golan has described the pressure to assimilate experienced — and generally accepted — by immigrant artists, in common with other newcomers. Montparnasse, as she has pointed out, was the most modern

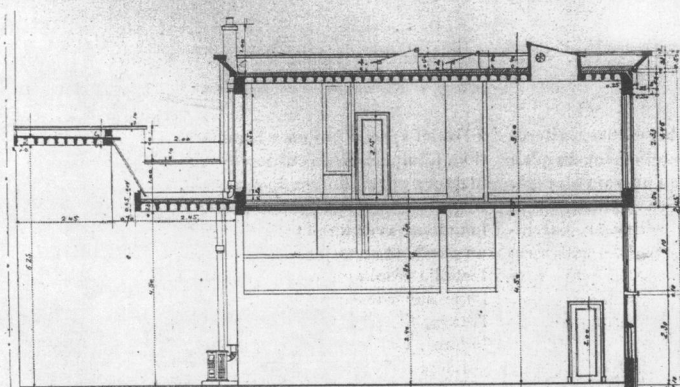
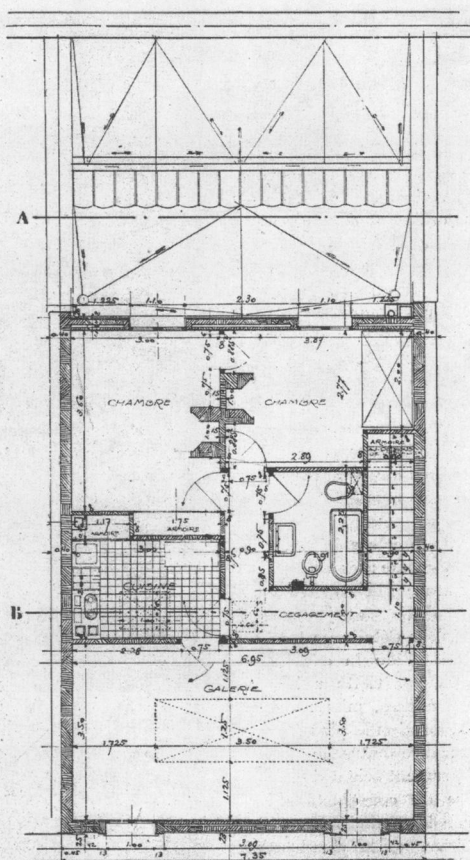
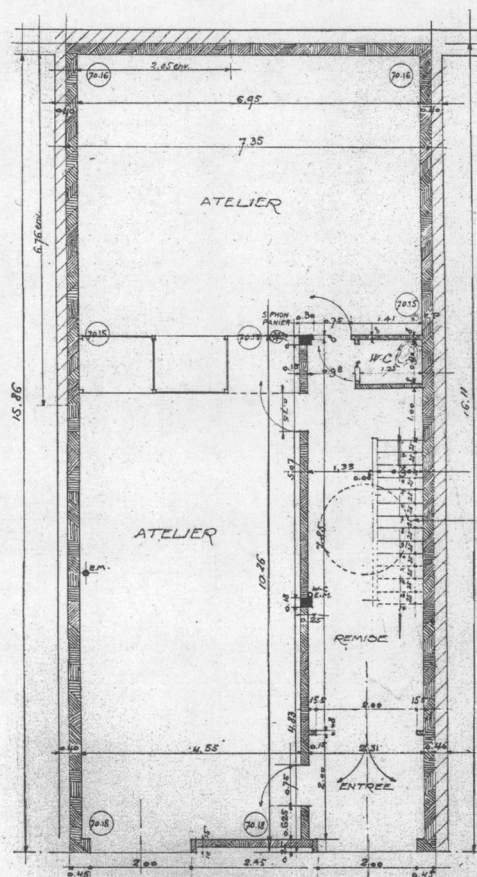


Fig. 5. Perret: plans and section of Orloff house (L'Architecte (1928))

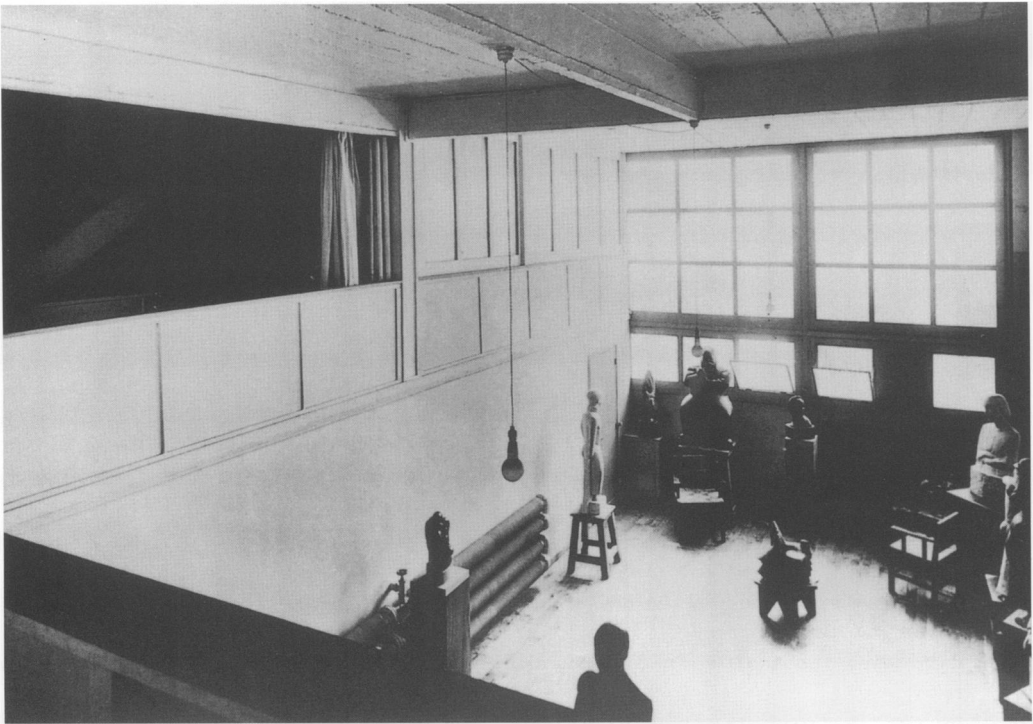


Fig. 6. Interior of Orloff studio (Photo: Chevojon; Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)

arrondissement in Paris, with a large population of foreigners. It was often singled out by conservative critics as a place in which were manifested the worst aspects of metropolitan life; it was too full, they said, of newcomers and too fast-changing to have any real sense of a *quartier*, 'a denatured, decadent, cosmopolitan place', which offered a disquieting spectacle of difference and modernity.³¹ In some senses, Perret's design could be seen as helping to root Orloff in tradition. The house, with its pronounced framework and its use of timber, brick and glass, had antecedents in the vernacular of an older Montparnasse: the nineteenth-century sculptors' workshops like those where Bourdelle worked off the avenue du Maine.

This basic structure Perret dignified with the symbols of high culture; references to classical architecture and also to Orloff's occupation as sculptor are present in the majestic cornice and the ostentatiously sculptural treatment of the upper façade, where bricks are set obliquely in a zig-zag profile.³² Other features suggested that this is the house of an artist who relied on selling work from her studio as well as from exhibitions. The studios were, supposedly, for different sorts of sculptural activity, modelling and carving. In reality, the rear studio seems to have functioned more as a working studio and the front one as exhibition space, through which, as Ragot has pointed out, visitors heading upstairs were obliged to pass.³³ Contemporary

photographs show the upper floor containing stylish furniture by Pierre Chareau and Francis Jourdain, with whom Orloff had worked at the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs. The bedrooms were described in *L'Architecture* as 'cells without austerity, mother's room and child's room, cheerful, neat and sober', so that even in these domestic areas there was an emphasis upon tidy formality, and upon display.³⁴ The impression emerged of an industrious widow whose life revolved around her art and her child, someone with a taste for rich textures and up-to-date design, for studio viewings and decorous entertainment, neither an ascetic, nor a wild bohemian, nor the new breed of flamboyant film-star artist epitomized by Tamara de Lempicka, but something in between. Her studio indicated that she was someone who, although a modern woman, had not lost touch with the artisanal surroundings in which Parisian sculptors traditionally worked, that she was an *artist* and not a sybarite.

In 1927 the painter Mela Muter (1876–1967) (born Marie-Mela Klingsland in Poland), followed the example of her friend Orloff by asking Perret to design her a house containing exhibition space, a studio and living accommodation. In organizing the house in terms of a semi-public ground floor with garden and garage, and a private upper floor, Perret apparently responded to the particular situation of his artist-client. Like Orloff, Muter had no regular dealer, but showed her work in group exhibitions, at the Salons, and, after the First World War, in solo exhibitions in private galleries.³⁵ A significant factor in both artists' decision to build was probably the need to supplement their access to exhibiting opportunities.³⁶ Orloff proceeded by stages, acquiring an additional plot next to the first in 1928 and building a house upon it in 1931, thereby greatly increasing her studio and living space, providing a garage for her motor-car and three floors of self-contained, rentable apartments.³⁷ Muter proceeded differently, building a house which could be adapted to various uses: her own personal and professional activities, exhibiting and selling her paintings, and teaching pupils. Perret's final designs of 1928 were shaped by these requirements, and the restricted, irregular site in a cul-de-sac off the rue de Vaugirard in Montparnasse. The site — hemmed in by existing buildings — encouraged a tightly organized ground-plan. The entrance was flanked by a garage and an exhibition room, with a lobby separating the latter from the kitchen and dining room. Exhibition room and dining room opened onto a garden courtyard which brought light to the rear of the house. Elements such as a second staircase and an additional bedroom, eliminated from the original plans, suggest a curtailed budget, or perhaps an eye to dual occupancy.³⁸ The final version, however, remains adaptable to both commercial and domestic uses; the ground floor was equally suited to private views, to painting classes or to social purposes (Fig. 7).

Wall surfaces were extremely lively. Within a strongly articulated concrete framework, the walls were clad with red and white bricks, arranged in groups of three and laid alternately horizontally and vertically to form a chequer-board pattern. The squares formed by the horizontally laid bricks projected from the wall-surface and — combined with the broad courses of mortar separating them — produced an effect of strong relief and bold texture, perhaps intended as a reference to Muter's handling of paint and strong colour (Figs 8, 9).³⁹ Contemporary photographs show the boldly striped curtains shown hanging at the windows which accentuated this effect.

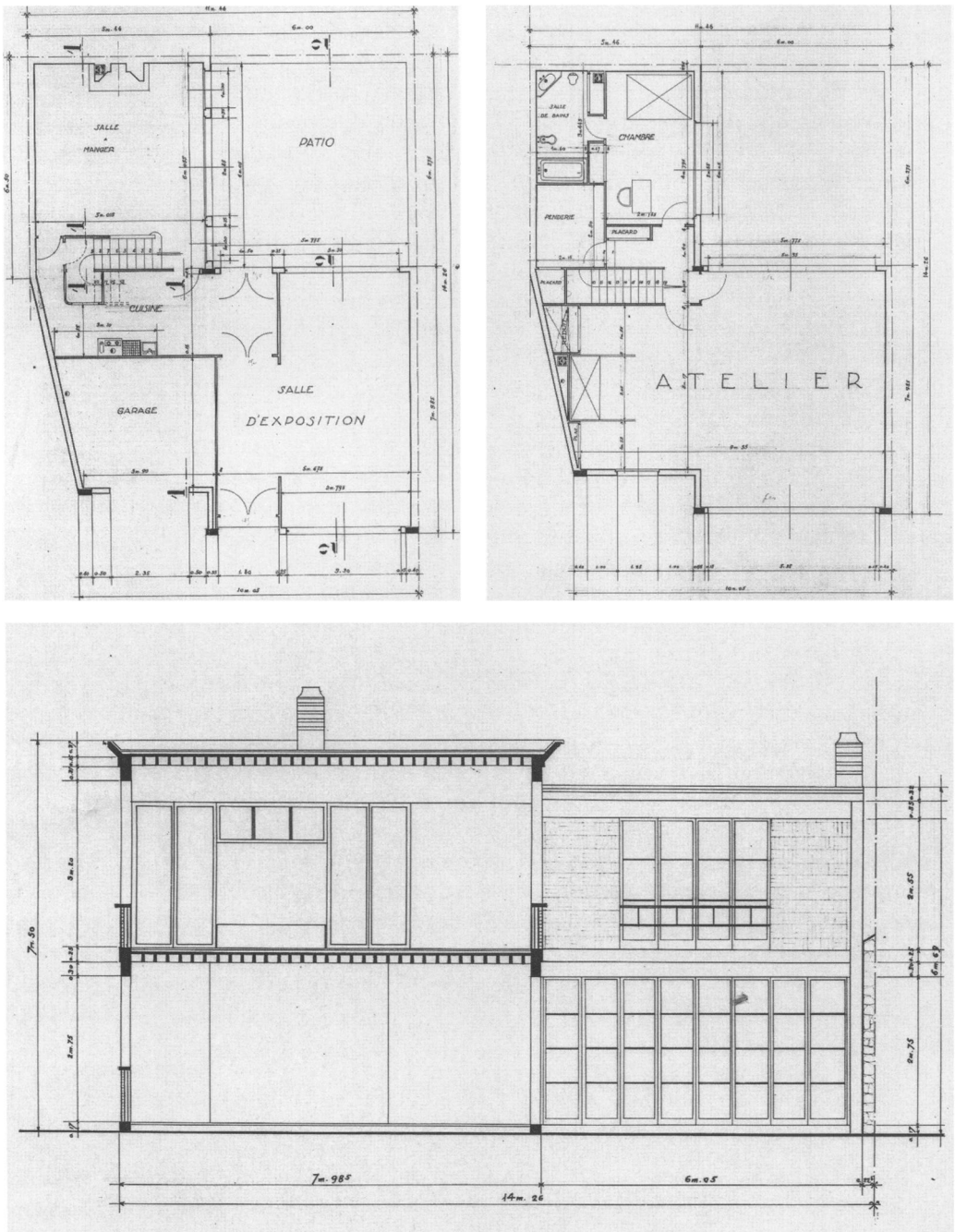


Fig. 7. Perret: plans and section of house for Mela Muter, allée de Maintenon, rue de Vaugirard, Paris (Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)



Fig. 8. Perret: house for Mela Muter
(Photo: Chevojon. Institut Français
d'Architecture, Archives
d'architecture du XXe siècle)

Fig. 9. 'Chez Mela Muter' (Photo:
Marc Vaux; L'Architecture
d'aujourd'hui (1933))



The front elevations were dominated by the horizontal windows of the exhibition room and the studio. Perret compensated for their squat proportions (dictated by restrictions upon building height) by means of raising the height of the main bay slightly, by adding a cornice to the building and by inserting French doors into the glazing of the studio window.⁴⁰ The relative merits of the vertical and horizontal window represented a bone of contention between Perret and Le Corbusier in the late 1920s;⁴¹ here the glazing pattern rendered the appearance of the wide window openings which the artist required less gaunt, and gave the studio-house a more domestic and less industrial character. Perret thus demonstrated his ability to endow small buildings with pleasing proportions, thereby underlining the dignity of the artist's endeavour.

Perret was enabled to develop and refine his ideas with two further commissions, designed in the course of 1929, in the municipality of Boulogne-Billancourt, west of Paris. The new residential streets of the area offered significant advantages compared with the cramped culs-de-sac of Montparnasse; plots were deeper, allowing small gardens, and there were extensive views across private gardens towards the Bois de Boulogne, encouraging balconies and terraces (Fig. 10).⁴² Le Corbusier, Lurçat, Mallet-Stevens and Raymond Fisher had all recently worked in the area; building there brought Perret face to face with a demonstration of the 'five points of a new architecture' and helps to explain the rather self-conscious formality of these houses, designed for the sculptor Dora Gordine (1898?–1991) and the stained-glass designer Marguerite Huré (1896–1967).

Compared with Perret's other artist-clients, Gordine was a relative newcomer to the French art world. Born in Latvia, she arrived in Paris in the early 1920s, and — encouraged by Maillol and Pompon — created a sensation as a novice sculptor at the Salon des Tuileries in 1926 where she exhibited two bronzes.⁴³ By 1928 she was occupying a flat at 25 bis rue Franklin, where her architect also lived and worked. That autumn Perret began to plan a studio-house for her on a more lavish scale than those for Orloff and Muter. The brief included three studios for different activities, an exhibition gallery, living quarters with three bedrooms, and a garage: grand accommodation for a single artist.⁴⁴

The design went through numerous changes, and the volume of drawings suggests the importance of this house for architect as well as client.⁴⁵ Preliminary designs suggested a free-flowing interior space, but Gordine's specialism in portrait heads meant that a mezzanine gallery for high-level viewing was superfluous, and it was eliminated.⁴⁶ The spatial effects achieved in the house are relatively conventional. Perret's final layout for Gordine's house (which included a small garden to the rear) placed a plaster studio and modelling studio at ground level, overlooking street and garden respectively, with the main studio and exhibition gallery occupying the floor above. Living accommodation, pushed up to the top of the house, enjoyed light and views from a roof-terrace. The design of the street elevation articulated its organization: a partly sunk ground floor devoted to utilitarian functions, a *piano nobile* whose entire breadth is occupied by the main studio, and a top floor discreetly recessed and slung over the rear portion of the studio and the gallery (Figs 11, 12).

Here, as in Orloff and Muter's houses, the plot was sufficiently narrow to make a full concrete frame unnecessary; brick side walls acted together with two internal concrete

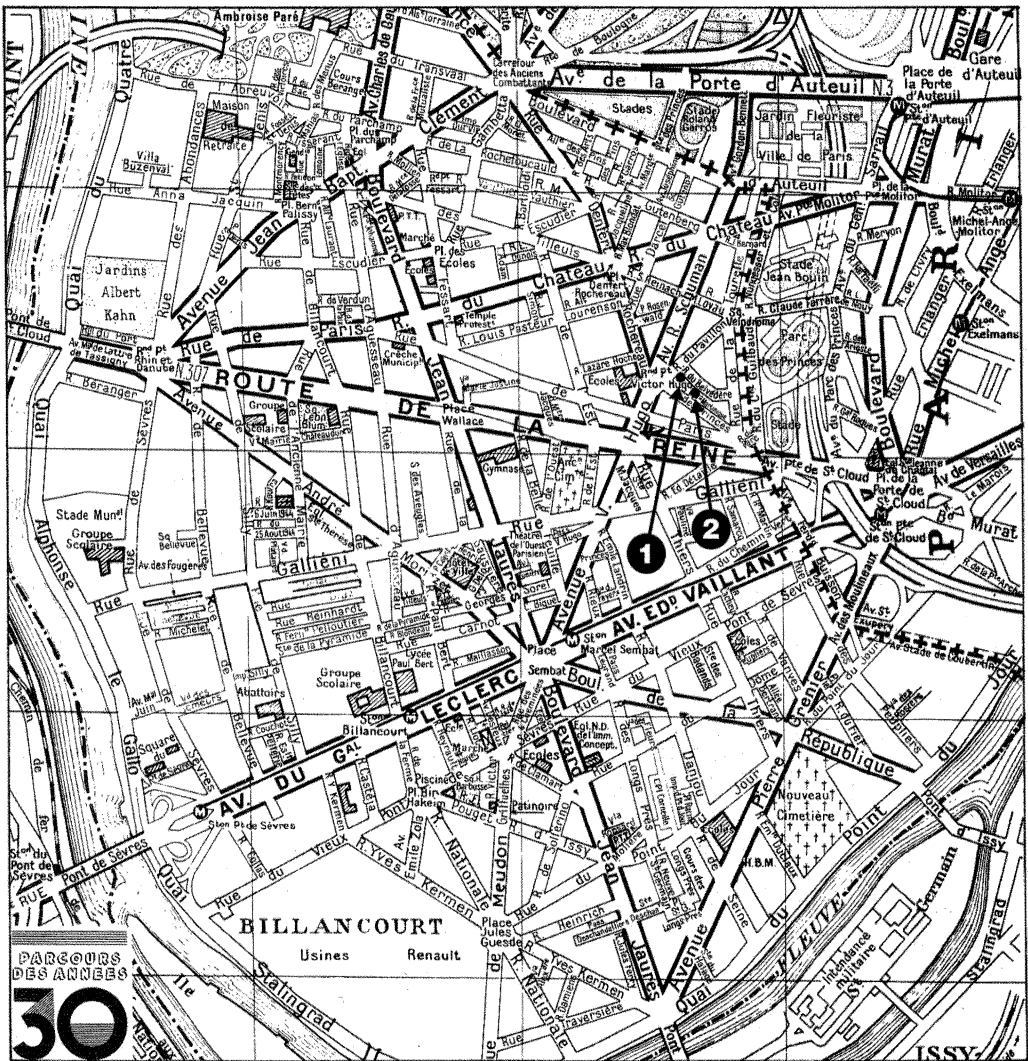


Fig. 10. Plan of Boulogne-Billancourt (Courtesy Musée des Années Trente)
Key: 1 Huré; 2 Gordine

columns to carry the upper floor spans. The reinforced concrete frame, however, was deployed for visual reasons: to stabilize the elevation, counteracting the effect of extensive glazing.⁴⁷ Four columns — the outer two serving to demarcate the house from its neighbours — articulated an imposing and elegant tripartite façade, crowned by a voluptuous cornice. This achieved an effect which was strikingly different from three adjoining houses in nearby rue Denfert-Rochereau which Mallet-Stevens, Le Corbusier and Raymond Fischer had built between 1925 and 1929. The horizontal emphasis of the elevation designs achieved by these architects by means of strip windows, balconies (and in Fischer's case by a projecting bay) was accentuated by their alignment.⁴⁸ In this



Fig. 11. Perret: house for Dora Gordine, rue du Belvédère, Boulogne-Billancourt (Photo: author)

context, Perret's design for Gordine assumed the nature of a demonstration house, a manifesto of his dislike of the horizontal window and of the de-materialization of wall-surface achieved by contemporary architects by means of reinforced concrete, and served as an affirmation of his belief in an architecture based upon the frank expression of structure. In 1929 he wrote that:

... the balanced and symmetrical skeleton of the animal contains and supports the most diverse and differently located organs. Similarly the skeleton of our building should be composed, rhythmical, balanced, even symmetrical, and should be able to accommodate the most diverse elements required by the programme. This is the very basis of architecture. If the structure is not worthy to be seen, the architect has done a bad job.

Cladding and infilling materials should complete the skeleton without disguising it; one should be able to distinguish a beam where there is a beam, and a post where there is a post. Such arrangements would avoid many unpleasant surprises ...⁴⁹

Significantly, this was written in connexion with Perret's design for a museum of fine art, an environment in which sculpture was intended to be seen to advantage. Consistent with his recommendation of high-level side lighting, Gordine's main studio was equipped with a roof-light.

The exterior of the house was clad in cream-coloured Burgundy brick, arranged, as at Muter's house, to form a chequerboard pattern, but without strong colour contrasts or surface projections. The effect was of subtle texture, rather than bold faceting,

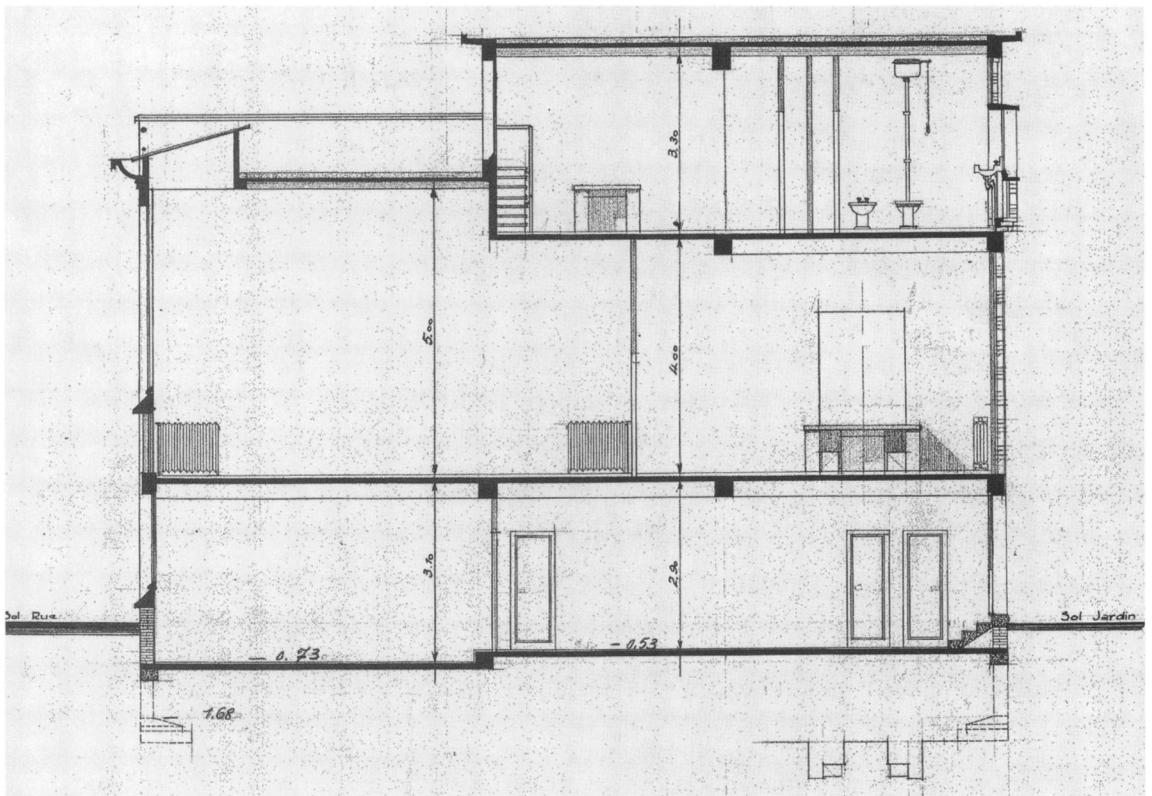
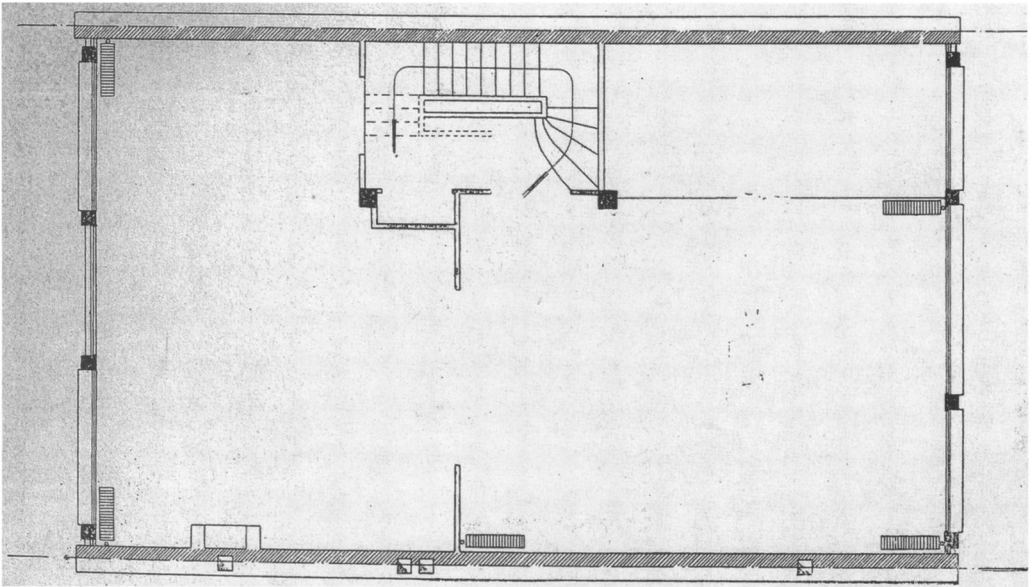


Fig. 12. Ground floor plan and section of Dora Gordine house (*L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 1934, Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)

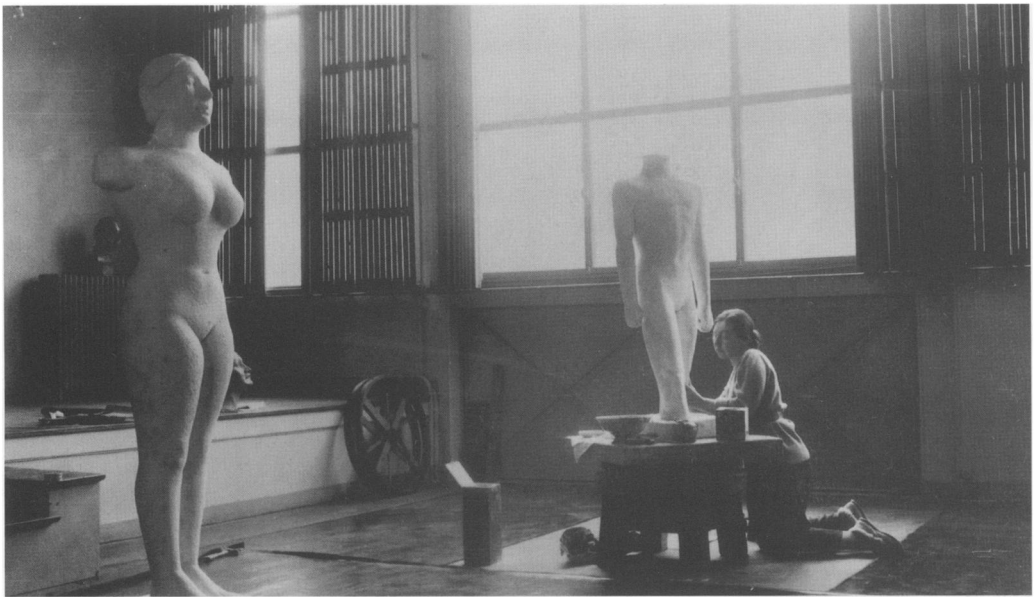


Fig. 13. Dora Gordine in her studio, c. 1930 (Photo: National Monuments Record)

comparable to the manner in which Gordine customarily finished her sculptures (Fig. 13). Other aspects of the façade perhaps referred to the sculptor's artistic formation. Gordine told the critic Marie Dormoy of watching her architect-father at work in St Petersburg.⁵⁰ The device of a keystone, cast in concrete, at the centre of the cornice may originate in such apocryphal accounts of Gordine's early life. A further point of reference was provided by the studio of Joseph Bernard nearby in Boulogne-Billancourt, a building with three great glazed bays and a deep cornice containing the sculptor's frieze of *La Danse*.⁵¹ That Gordine should thus inscribe herself within the tradition of high culture (in contrast to Orloff's references to a workaday Montparnasse) reveals much of her aspirations and artistic alignment, with Bernard, Maillol and the French sculptural tradition, rather than with the cosmopolitan Cubist circle of modern Montparnasse.

Marguerite Huré's house was separated by a single plot width from Gordine's. Although designed over the same period⁵² and forming a compositional unity with it, this house had to meet the requirements of a very different kind of artist.⁵³ Introduced to Perret by Maurice Denis, Huré collaborated with both men on the stained glass windows for the church of Notre Dame de la Consolation at Le Raincy, consecrated in 1923. The work occupied her from 1925–28 and involved the interpretation of Denis' cartoons and their integration into the geometric web of *claustra* which made up the side elevations and chancel of Perret's church.⁵⁵ After the enthusiastic reception of the glass at Le Raincy, and with another major commission nearing completion, Huré asked Perret to design her a studio-house. Her requirements included tall windows to provide back lighting for the lightweight metal framework on which she composed her

windows, a high-level vantage point from which to view cartoons and windows, and separate studios in which to design and make the glass.⁵⁶

A building plot narrower than Gordine's (5 metres as compared with 9) was secured and plans initiated in spring 1929. Huré herself produced sketch plans and elevations to show Perret her ideas: a garage and a small studio at street level, a double-height studio with a suspended gallery and living accommodation above, and generous roof terraces. Her drawing of the façade showed a simple, cubic building, which although dominated by a studio window retained an essentially domestic character.⁵⁷ Perret initially rationalized Huré's layout by rotating the position of the staircase to the centre of the house, thus allowing the main studio to occupy the breadth of the building. These preliminary plans were then revised in order to give more height — and a raised gallery — to the lower studio, with the living quarters pushed up into the area previously earmarked for the terrace. The resultant plan was both open and functional; on the lowest floor, a passage led from garage and street door into the small studio, allowing glass to be brought in and out. The gallery above the small studio led into the large studio — earmarked for painting — allowing Huré to move easily between the processes of painting cartoons and making and firing windows (Figs 14, 15). Her living quarters were located at the rear of the broad gallery suspended over the large studio, and the bedroom-cum-living room — overlooking a courtyard to the rear — was provided with a balcony by means of which to compensate for the lost terrace.

The free-flowing plan, prompted by the narrowness of the plot (5 by 21 metres) as well as by Huré's particular needs, was exceptional in Perret's work.⁵⁸ Exceptional too was the street elevation of Huré's house, where an unbroken expanse of glass provided maximum light levels in the large studio, with no transom to register the presence of an upper floor level (Fig. 16).

Expressive as well as practical considerations came into play here; a cascade of glass suggested that this was the house of the designer responsible for glazing the 'window-wall' of the church at Le Raincy. Other features reveal Perret's concern to subtly tailor the design to the client. A design for the balustrade of the staircase was a simple geometric lattice resembling the *claustra* forming the basic window unit at Le Raincy. Drawings for the concrete cornice crowning the façade show that Perret considered a sharply stepped profile, as well as one with a zig-zag profile, features reminiscent of the abstract patterns of Huré's contemporary glass.⁵⁹

As executed, the street elevation was poised between this decorative modernism — a modernism manifested in the adjacent house (designed by Jean Hillard in 1928) with its paired, stepped window bays and ornamental ironwork grilles — and the grand, classicizing idiom of Gordine's house. In its final form, Huré's house had a concave cornice, deeply notched at top and bottom, from which two slender concrete pilasters emerged to drop over the great studio window. The effect — enhanced by the proportions of the metal-framed panes — was to emphasize the verticality of the window and at the same time to provide a foil for the more complex geometry of Gordine's elevation. The presence in the same street of houses by Fischer and Lurçat no doubt encouraged Perret in this endeavour (Fig. 17).⁶⁰

For the same reason, perhaps, although his elevation design for Huré was so evidently shaped by the needs of the user, Perret appeared determined that it would

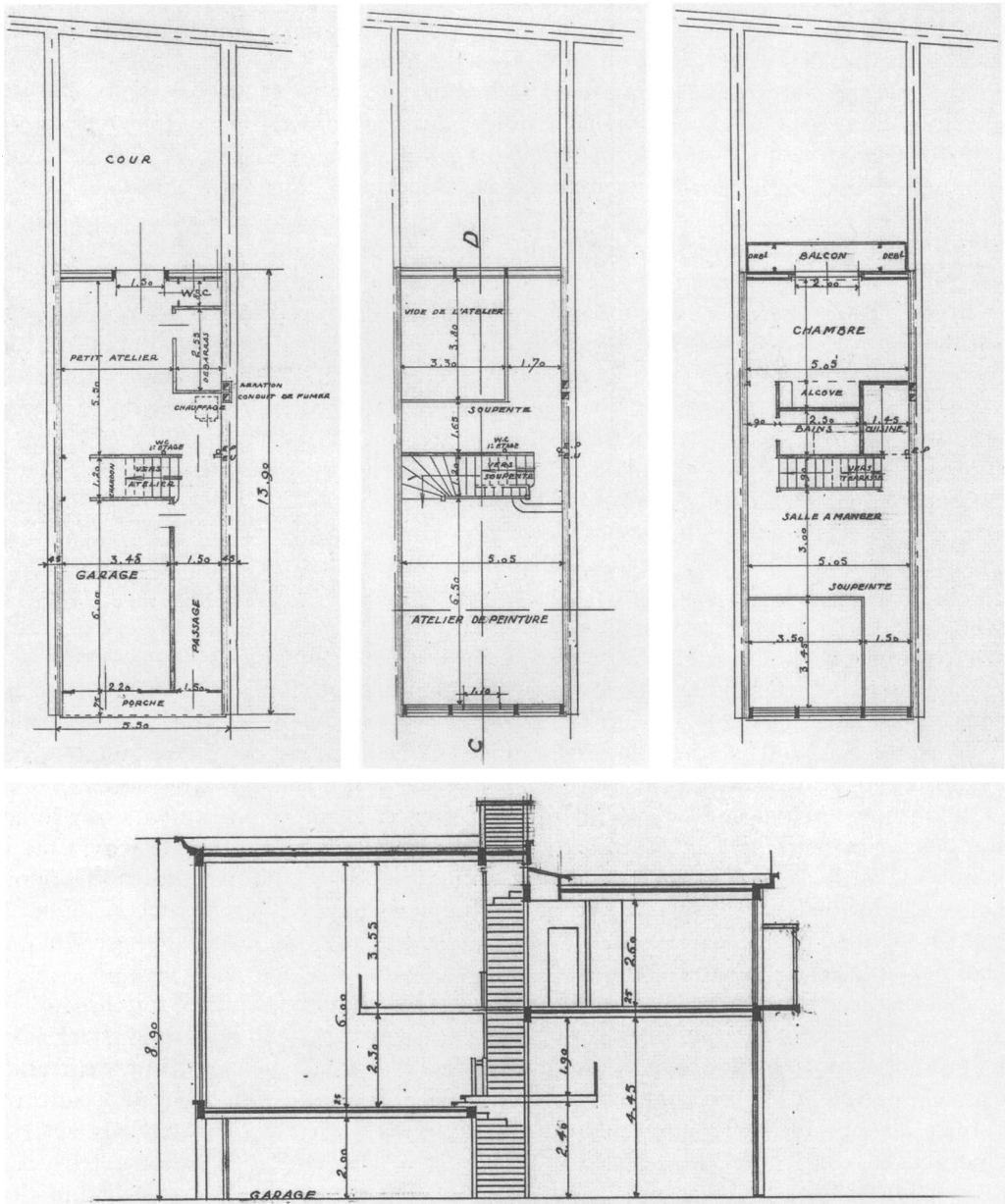


Fig. 14. Perret: plans and section of house for Marguerite Huré, rue du Belvédère, Boulogne-Billancourt (*L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1934)/ *Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle*)

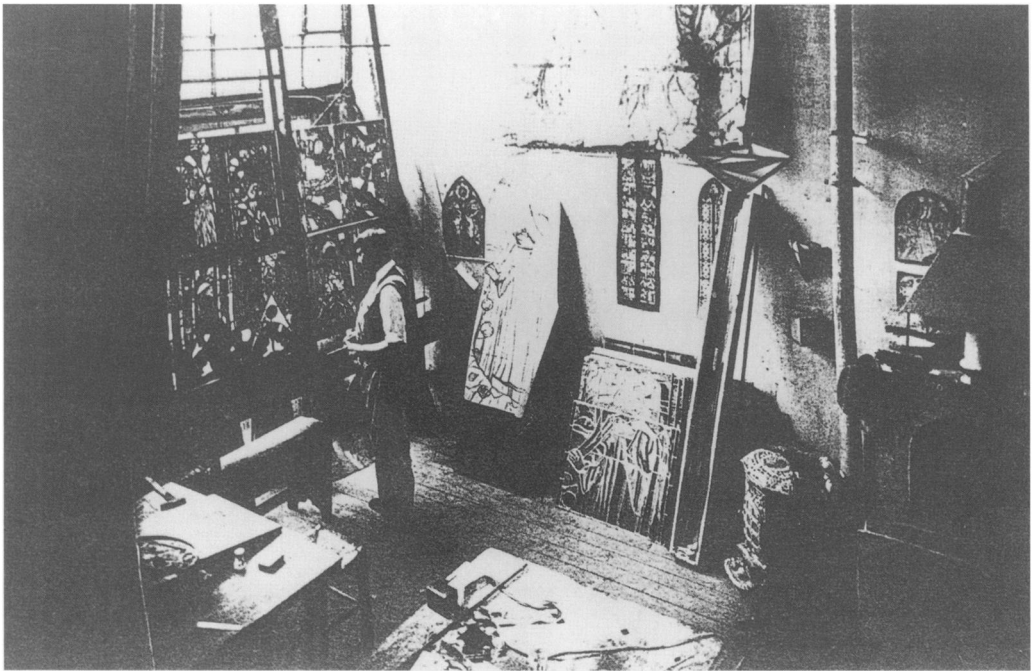


Fig. 15. *Marguerite Huré in her studio* (L'Illustration (1933))

articulate his conviction that, practically and aesthetically, the best way to treat reinforced concrete was in terms of a trabeated structure. In the context of this street as a whole, Perret's two studio-houses served to signal a rational alternative to the sleight of hand involved in both modernist architects' predilection for smooth rendered surfaces and in the traditionalists' dressed stone claddings. Today, however, at a distance of over seventy years from the polemic of 1929, Perret's own elevation treatment appears equally mannered.⁶¹

The house designed in 1927 by Perret for his near-contemporary Georges Braque (1882–1963) was significantly different from the compact studio-houses of these women artists. Interestingly, the personality of the artist was evoked less vividly in the design of this house than in those of Orloff, Muter, Gordine and Huré. Braque had purchased a double plot in a cul-de-sac christened villa Nansouty, a short distance from villa Seurat, upon which a large, detached house with a garage surmounted by a floor of studios was constructed by the end of 1929.⁶² This and the neighbouring streets were carved from an awkwardly shaped parcel of land left over after the main roads were built. Less enclosed than villa Seurat, they were laid out in parallel on a sloping site overlooking the Parc Montsouris (see Fig. 3).⁶³ Planning regulations which specified that houses be set back at least 3 metres from the road combined with Braque's unusual desire for a south-facing studio to lead Perret to place the house to the rear of the plot, where it abutted the backs of the houses in the next street, the Square de Montsouris.⁶⁴ The top (studio) floor, equipped with a roof-light and a glass mansard, enjoyed

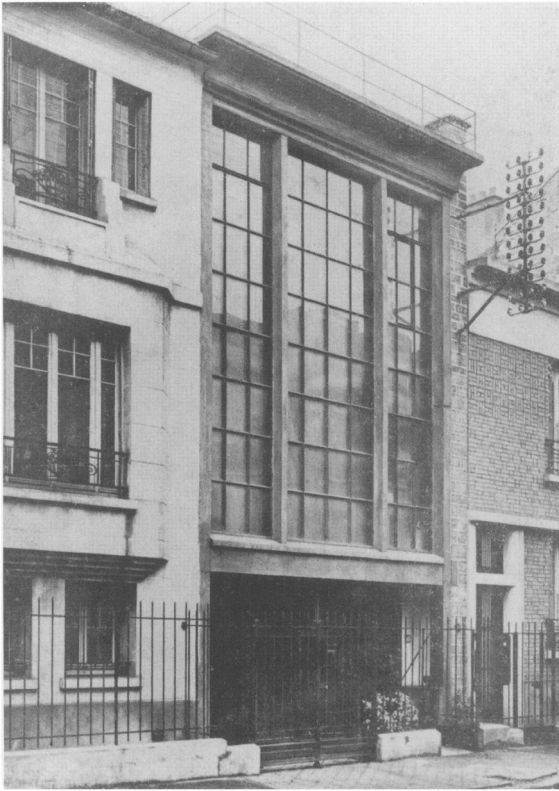


Fig. 16. Perret: house for Marguerite Huré, rue du Belvédère (Photo: Salaun; *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1934))



Fig. 17. Houses in rue du Belvédère, Boulogne-Billancourt, by André Lurçat (second from left) and Raymond Fischer (third from left). Perret's house for Gordine is at the far right (Photo: author)



Fig. 18. Perret: house for Georges Braque, villa Nansouty (now rue Georges-Braque), Paris (Photo: Chevojon; Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)

optimum light and views towards the park, whilst a garden, created at the front of the house, screened the living quarters from passers-by.

Perret demonstrated his continuing commitment to particular architectural ideals by aligning Braque's house with Orloff's in terms of the integration of design and structure, and in its balance of formal and functional requirements.⁶⁵ A contemporary photograph taken from a high vantage-point revealed the house's structure clearly: the framework of concrete columns and beams on front and side elevations, and the infill walls of brick (Figs 18, 19). This structure served to articulate the separation of functions within the house. Sunk into the lowest part of the site was a basement, containing cellar and garage. The ground floor, with its reception rooms and service rooms, and the first floor, containing bedrooms and a boudoir, were separated by an emphatic cornice from the extensively glazed studio floor, producing an effect of visual rupture.⁶⁵ On the street elevation, the change in walling materials and the unconventional ratio between the heights of different stories created the impression of a glass box perched atop a brick house, whose double-height bay window signalled its domestic character. The elevation struck contemporaries as utilitarian rather than graceful. In 1934, the art dealer René Gimpel described the house as large but lacking in character: 'It's a little like a brick factory building', he wrote in his journal.⁶⁷

The compressed living quarters of Orloff, Muter, Gordine and Huré meant that their workspace often doubled as a social space. This integration of dwelling and studio — such a distinctive feature of the Parisian *atelier* — was neither required nor attempted

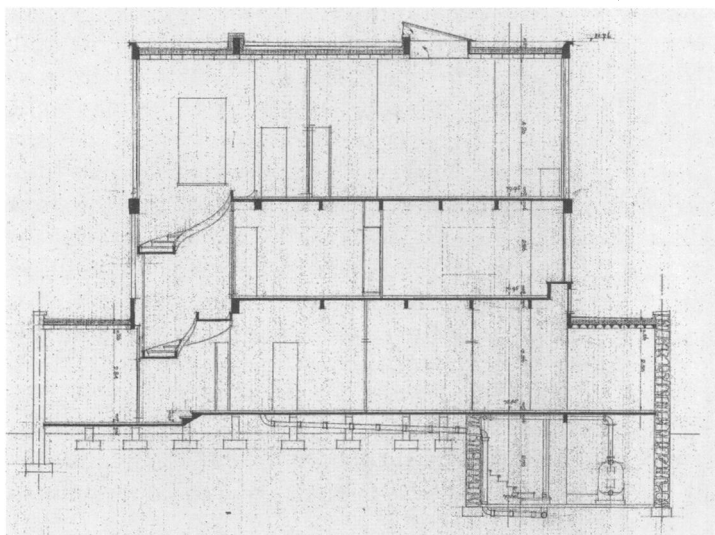
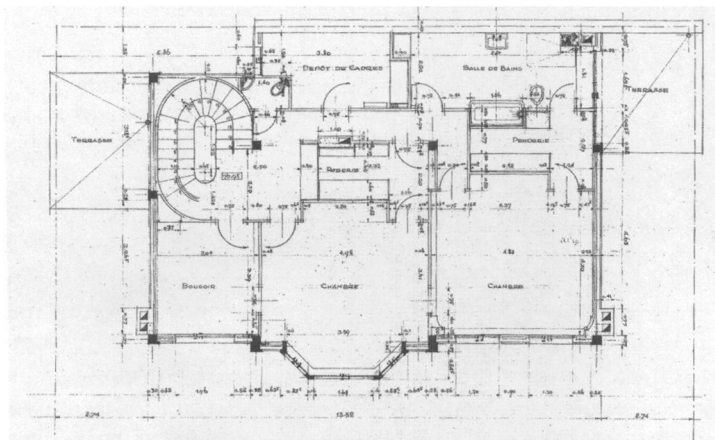
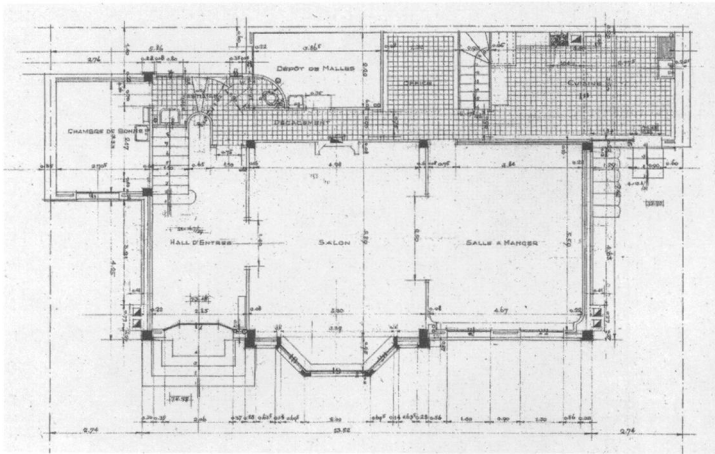


Fig. 19. Perret: plans and section of Braque house (Institut Français d'architecture, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle)



Fig. 20. Brassai: *Braque in his studio*, 1946 (Brassai, *The artists of my life* (London, 1982))

at Braque's house. The numerous photographs of Braque at work in his studio emphasized that this was a place of solitary endeavour (Fig. 20). While such images constitute a visual trope of creativity — part of the familiar iconography of the artist in the studio — in Braque's case, they suggested the dignified distance which he was able to maintain from the marketplace. Braque enjoyed a degree of financial security, and artistic autonomy, unique among Perret's artist-clients of the 1920s. Protected from fluctuations in the art market by his contract with the dealer Paul Rosenberg from 1924 onwards, Braque had no need to use his studios (as others did) for showing his work to prospective purchasers, or for teaching.⁶⁸ Although Gimpel's account reveals that Braque did sometimes receive art dealers and clients in his studio, the main business of exhibiting and selling work occurred elsewhere: in Rosenberg's gallery in the rue la Boétie and in the exhibitions which he organized.⁶⁹ The house which Perret designed for Braque suggested that this was a more private

place, and that within it, artistic and domestic activities were pursued in separate areas. The top floor of the house, containing a large and a small studio together with a frame-store, was dedicated to painting and print-making, while domestic and social life, shared with his wife Marcelle, unfolded tranquilly below.

Braque had moved from Montmartre to the Avenue Reille in Montparnasse in the early 1920s. In an area densely inhabited by artists, he had ample opportunity to compare the studio-house built by Le Corbusier for Ozenfant, those by Perret and Lurçat in villa Seurat, the house by Arlabosse rented by Foujita in the Square de Montsouris, and that built by Zielinsky for Derain opposite his own plot. Delorme has suggested that Braque's choice of Perret as architect indicates a clear affinity between Braque and Perret, as near-contemporaries, veterans of the pre-war Cubist epoch and witnesses of the post-war '*rappel à l'ordre*'.⁷⁰ Yet neither in terms of spatial relationships nor surface treatment can Perret's design be related to Braque's work. The internal organization of the house was quite conventional, organized around the nine regularly spaced columns of the frame, with little exploitation of the freedom which it allowed. The wall surfaces were clad with thin bricks, laid horizontally; a design for the elevation showing brickwork arranged in a pattern of pronounced squares⁷¹ was abandoned in favour of a more discreet motif of a textured strip at the base of the windows on the upper floors, at the and bottom edges of the brick panel separating the studio windows, and on the panels of the side elevations.

Recent research reveals the dangers of proposing 'affinity' without evidence. It transpires that any affinity Braque may have felt with an architect was not with Perret but with the American painter and student of architecture Paul Nelson, with whom he had a close friendship between 1922 and 1927. Braque's choice of architect for his Parisian studio-house was probably steered by Nelson, who had entered Perret's atelier in the Palais de Bois in 1924.⁷² An alternative perspective on the commission is provided by Braque's heirs who have claimed that the artist specified that Perret include certain features in the house: the graceful curve of the corners of the dining-room walls, where he liked to hang fabric, and the bay window of the salon, beside which hung magnificent pedestal still-life canvases. Apparently Braque liked to set his own stamp upon his surroundings, sub-dividing the space of his studio with curtains and angled screens; the house gave the impression of an austere frame within which his antique Spanish furniture, his collection of African artefacts and his own work could be viewed to advantage.⁷³

However, the influence of the client should not be over-stated. Although Braque's bay window may have been created in response to the painter's wishes, it was undoubtedly also a response to the central feature of the spectacular studio-house constructed by Lurçat for the Swiss painter Guggenbühl on an adjacent plot in 1926–27.⁷⁴ This contained an enormous bay window over which hovered a pierced concrete canopy of the roof-terrace. Perret's choice of a traditional form for the bay window in Braque's house assumed the nature of a discreet rejoinder to this demonstration of the sculptural potential of concrete, and to the cacophony of architectural styles ranging from vernacular to modernist in villa Nansouty and the network of streets surrounding it.⁷⁵

At the time, critics such as Marie Dormoy and Marcel Mayer were doing their best to encourage architectural sobriety. In 1929, Dormoy wrote that '... our houses should be simple without appearing impoverished, refined without ostentation.'⁷⁶ The text of her article was accompanied by a full-page photograph, captioned 'Maison du peintre Georges Braque'. In 1927, when comparing the houses by Perret and Lurçat in villa Seurat, Dormoy had written enthusiastically of both architects as creators of small houses at once representative of their era and perfectly adapted to modern life.⁷⁷ In 1929, however, she wrote in terms of 'true' and 'false' approaches to concrete, of structural systems rendered illegible by cladding, of concrete surfaces as weightless as cardboard, of walls prone to weathering and discoloration, of Lurçat as wilful formalist and Perret as structural rationalist. This opposition between honesty and deception was to assume a new significance during the economic crisis which soon gripped France.

After 1929, Perret, in common with most other architects, received no more commissions to build houses for artists.⁷⁸ The Wall Street Crash in October effectively signalled the end of the 'age of gold' for artists in France. Although the impact of the Crash is said to have been 'belated and muted', with the crisis assuming serious consequences for the art market only in 1931 following the restrictions on the export of currency imposed by most European countries, buyers were nervous.⁷⁹ In the uncertain conditions after the Crash, few artists in France had the financial resources or the confidence to build which they had enjoyed in the boom years of the late 1920s.

Perret's artist-clients reflected the effect of the slump in the French art world in different ways. Cassandre, whose clients included state-owned monopolies such as the SNCF and the Régie Française des Tabacs, was to some extent immune from the consequences of a depressed art market. He remained in occupation of his house until 1947.⁸⁰ Braque enjoyed a regular stipend from Rosenberg, and his work apparently continued to sell; he remained in his house until his death.⁸¹

Orloff and Gordine were far more vulnerable. Neither was contracted to a dealer, and they relied entirely upon sales from exhibitions and commissions from collectors. Orloff, who exhibited in the United States in 1928, and had begun to establish an American clientele, had particular grounds for worry. Nevertheless her bold decision to build a second house adjacent to the first provided her with a regular income from tenants from 1932 onwards.⁸² She continued to occupy her expanded studio-house until 1942, when she fled to Switzerland to escape arrest by the Gestapo. She reclaimed her house in 1945, and lived there until her death.⁸³ Gordine, with patrons in Switzerland and in England, and thus ostensibly in a stronger position, lacked Orloff's network of loyal patrons in France. In 1930, having occupied her studio-house for barely a year, Gordine departed for Singapore to execute a lucrative commission.⁸⁴ She let her house (using the proceeds to repay Perret the fee which she still owed him), returning to Paris only briefly before moving permanently to England in 1936.⁸⁵

The experience of her former neighbour Huré was quite different. Although in 1928 Huré claimed to be earning the 'small salary of a worker', her career, rather than suffering in the slump, appears actually to have prospered.⁸⁶ The Chantiers du Cardinal, the church-building programme initiated after the First World War in the Ile-de-France was stepped up in the 1930s.⁸⁷ Financial considerations meant that concrete was favoured over traditional building materials, and stained-glass designers like Huré who responded imaginatively to the new conditions secured many commissions.⁸⁸ She survived the crisis better than the sculptors; in 1939, she moved her living quarters to an apartment in Paris, retaining the studio-house in the rue de Belvédère for use as work-place and showroom until at least the 1950s.⁸⁹

Muter perhaps suffered the most. As a figurative painter, with strong links to the work of the Pont-Aven School, her work appeared deeply unfashionable in the experimental years of the late 1920s. House-building over-stretched her already precarious finances; exhibitions of work in the United States in 1930 failed to generate the sales for which she had hoped. An article about her work published in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* in 1933 (probably at Perret's instigation) suggests the profound scepticism with which the art market was viewed in the aftermath of the crisis. Muter was described as an artist 'whose talent is unsullied by deception', an artist of integrity in an era of speculators and of painters launched by dealer-critics: 'In an epoch when bluff often takes the place of talent and when many painters are either the prey or the accomplices of picture-dealers, it is good to note that some artists continue to exercise their profession honestly and courageously. Their task is thankless and the present crisis at times renders their situation tragic.'⁹⁰ Perret, who was shown in Muter's studio sitting for his portrait, by such association lent his support to this defence of Muter as an innocent victim of circumstance (Fig. 9). Despite this support, Muter was obliged to let her house to tenants the following year, and was never able to resume occupancy of it.⁹¹

The alignment of Perret and Muter in the pages of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* is significant. In 1932, in a feature run by the magazine on the role of ornament in contemporary architecture, the editor André Bloc criticized the 'easy formulas' and lack of talent of many contemporary architects. The criterion of excellence was honesty; an architecture which clearly articulated its underlying structure was deemed preferable to 'large façades covered with various coatings [which] often mask the truth on [sic] the system of building. Sincerity and logic are the principal qualities of Architecture.'⁹² Bloc's article, in which Dormoy's distinction of 1929 between 'true' and 'false' concrete was developed, acquired a topical resonance in the context of the economic slump. The invocation of moral values such as honesty and integrity has a considerable pedigree in nineteenth-century architectural writing, and in the work of Ruskin and of Viollet-le-Duc becomes heated when discussing how to use new materials such as iron.⁹³ It is intriguing to find it recurring in the twentieth century in connexion with the use of concrete. *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* featured Perret's work as an example of rare architectural integrity and consistency in an era of sham and ephemeral success. His house for Mela Muter was illustrated in order to demonstrate the way in which colour and the contrast between frame and infill constituted a form of ornament integral with the building fabric. As in the discussion of Muter's painting, the emphasis was upon straightforwardness and reason against bluff and fantasy.

In the context of French art criticism of the 1930s, with its growing preoccupation with national identity, architecture played a significant role. The jaundiced eye with which observers now regarded the artistic and economic developments of the previous decade were trained upon the built environment. As conspicuous consumers in the late 1920s, artists were particularly vulnerable to allegations of profiteering. Studio design — such a spectacular new area of building in the 1920s — was the conduit by means of which such notions percolated from the discussion of the money market and the art world to that of architecture. Sparked by claims that the art market had been manipulated and collectors and the public hoodwinked by unscrupulous dealers, the metaphor of truth and falsehood now re-emerged in the criticism of architecture.⁹⁴ Suggestions that the new houses and apartments which were appearing in the new streets of Montparnasse and the western suburbs were characterless, shoddily constructed and of no lasting significance echoed some of the allegations levelled at the work of modern artists.

In this reactionary climate, continuity often enjoyed a privileged place at the expense of experimentation. In 1934 the critic Waldemar George — an old friend of Perret — called in 1934 for an end to the 'machinist exhibitionism' of modern architecture, and suggested that a more fruitful source of inspiration might be found in the simple, well-proportioned houses of the period of Louis XVI, with their spirit of quiet refinement. As if to illustrate his claim, he described Perret as 'the uncontested leader of contemporary French architects'.⁹⁵ George's references to the 'purity' of eighteenth-century houses, and of the way in which they represented what he called France's 'ethnic and aesthetic reality', provides an interesting perspective from which to consider Perret's commissions from artists during the 1920s.

Despite the longstanding Republican policy of assimilation, the role of foreigners in the French art world and the character of their work became a matter of debate in the

late 1920s, the terms 'Ecole de Paris' and 'Ecole de France' indicating on the one hand an acknowledgement of Parisian art as richly diverse and inclusive and on the other a preoccupation with national and racial difference.⁹⁶ In this nationalistic climate of criticism, one might therefore expect responses to Perret's studio architecture to have been inflected by attitudes towards his artist-clients, their country of origin and religious faith. Interestingly, however, although critics often characterized the art produced by Orloff, Muter and Gordine (all foreign-born and of Jewish extraction) as eastern and exotic, the houses which Perret built for them were variously described as 'classical', 'frank' and — a favourite term with Waldemar George — 'humane'.⁹⁷ Such contradictions indicate the ambivalence and inconsistency which surrounded the discussion of the character and direction of culture in inter-war France.

Perret's own work helped to shape, and was in turn shaped by, the tenor of contemporary criticism, and critics' preoccupation with architectural tradition. Gargiani and Fanelli have convincingly suggested that the polemic of Le Corbusier stimulated a vigorous reaction from Perret, who clarified his own theoretical position in relation to the younger architect and mobilized his contacts in the artistic and literary world to help publicize his ideas.⁹⁸ In the process, inevitably, perceptions of Perret's architecture were gradually transformed. The growing tendency to characterize Perret as a classicist, supported by the architect's own statements, served to obscure the experimental and extraordinarily varied aspects of his work in the 1920s. Formerly represented in terms of the pioneer of reinforced concrete, Perret was increasingly identified by writers like Dormoy and Mayer with the continuation of the Classical tradition in French architecture.⁹⁹ This interpretation was to prove remarkably tenacious.¹⁰⁰

Perret's commissions from artists afford a glimpse of a more protean architect just prior to this critical re-evaluation of his work. His response to the technical and aesthetic challenges posed by studio-building on urban sites was informed by a sympathetic understanding of the endeavour of his clients, and the knowledge that in the competitive conditions of the Parisian art world of the 1920s, a studio-house could usefully provide more than just a neutral framework for making art. A recent study of Perret has claimed that the studio-houses which he designed in no way reflected the character of their occupants' work, and Perret's restrained handling of form (characterized by Abram as an 'anti-plastic' approach compared with that of Le Corbusier or Mallet-Stevens) has been interpreted as a deliberate suppression of artistry in deference to that of his clients.¹⁰¹

In the present article, it has been argued that, on the contrary, these studios were carefully individuated. Just as important as distinguishing between different architects' handling of this specialized building type is the consideration of the context in which they were designing, the careers and artistic personalities of those for whom they were built, and the competitive conditions of the art market in the 1920s.¹⁰² In the light of such information, studio-architecture begins to assume a different aspect. Further research might well reveal that the expressive considerations which emerge as such an integral aspect of Perret's approach to studio-design also informed the work of other architects of this period.¹⁰³

Examination of Perret's artist-clients indicates that women played a more prominent role in the Parisian art world than has often been assumed.¹⁰⁴ Although male and female

artists were similarly concerned to invest money in property as an insurance against hard times, there were significant differences between their requirements as far as studio accommodation is concerned. A remarkable fluidity between public and private spaces, in which the functions of making, exhibiting and selling art were simultaneously provided for was evident in the houses of Orloff, Muter, Gordine and Huré. Enjoying a more limited access to public exhibition space than their contemporaries, these women seem to have needed more ample studio space, appropriate to the display of works of art and to receiving prospective purchasers. As patron and personal friend, Perret brought his knowledge of the work of these artists to the design and the spatial organization of their houses. His approach to the architecture of the studio-house, 'works on a human scale which underline the personality of the occupant', suggests both the buoyant optimism of the years before the Wall Street Crash and the potential of architecture to project the artistic identity of the client.¹⁰⁵

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PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

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British Architectural Library, RIBA: figs 9, 16.

Musée des Années Trente, Boulogne-Billancourt: fig. 10.

National Monuments Record/English Heritage: fig. 13.

NOTES

1 Letter of 29 March 1916. Paris, Institut Français d'Architecture, Archives d'Architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Perret: Relations avec Ch. E. Jeanneret dit 'Le Corbusier', 535 AP 558/1.

2 H. Allen Brooks, *Le Corbusier's formative Years: Charles Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds* (Chicago, 1997), p. 458, and Roberto Gargiani and Giovanni Fanelli, *Perret e Le Corbusier confronti* (Bari, 1999), pp. 40–44.

3 The sketch is reproduced in Brooks, *Le Corbusier*, p. 459. See Kenneth E. Silver, *Making Paradise: Art, modernity and the myth of the French Riviera* (New York, 2001) for a discussion of the significance of the South of France for artists and architects in the early twentieth century.

4 On Perret and artists before the First World War, see Roberto Gargiani, *Auguste Perret 1874–1954: Teoria e opere* (Milan, 1993), pp. 11–14; Jean-Michel Nectoux (ed.), 1913. *Le Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris (1987–88); Jane Riches, 'Auguste Perret and his contacts with artists, Paris 1900 to 1914' (MSc thesis, Bartlett School of Architecture, 1990).

5 See Tim Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier* (New Haven and London, 1984); Lauren Soth, 'Le Corbusier's clients and their Parisian houses of the 1920s', *Art History*, 6, no. 2 (1983), pp. 188–98; Michael Raeburn and

Victoria Wilson (eds), *Le Corbusier Architect of the Century* (London, 1987); Eve Blau and Nancy Troy (eds), *Architecture and cubism* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1997).

6 Undated drawings in IFA, Fonds Perret, 535 AP 89/5. Letters from van Rysselberghe to Perret dated February–March 1920 refer to unexecuted plans to enlarge the house with a new studio and a bedroom, 535 AP 318.

7 Perret Frères was established in 1905 by Auguste, Gustave and Claude Perret. Claude had responsibility for business matters, while Auguste and Gustave took joint credit for designs. Of the two, Gustave was concerned primarily with construction, and Auguste, who maintained close relations with the world of art, is customarily given overall responsibility for design. See Karla Britton, *Auguste Perret* (London and New York, 2001), p. 20.

8 See Maurice Culot, David Peyceré and Gilles Ragot, *Les Frères Perret: l'oeuvre complète. Les archives d'Auguste Perret (1874–1954) et Gustave Perret (1876–1952) architectes-entrepreneurs* (Paris, Institut Français d'Architecture, 2000), p. 152. Christopher Green, *Cubism and its enemies: modern movements and reaction in French art 1916–28* (New Haven and London, 1987), p. 214, makes the connexion between Cassandre and the Purists.

9 Louis Cheronnet, 'Les maîtres de l'affiche: Cassandre', *L'Art vivant*, 15 November 1926, p. 854, quoted in Green, *Cubism*, p. 314, n. 50.

10 Gargiani and Fanelli, *Confronti*, p. 144.

11 See Pierre Lahalle, 'Une Maison à Versailles', *Mobilier et Décoration*, October 1927, pp. 141–46.

12 See Gargiani, *Auguste Perret*, p. 13 and Soth, 'Le Corbusier's clients', p. 189. The relationship ended with a dispute over a commission for the Maison Gaut. See Gargiani and Fanelli, pp. 138–45.

13 See for example his designs for 'Maisons en série' of 1921 and the Maison Gaut of 1923, illustrated in Gargiani, *Auguste Perret*, pp. 295 and 296.

14 Perret, 'Maison Mouron (Cassandre)' typescript, 535 AP 416/5, IFA and Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 151.

15 Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 151.

16 For a spectrum, see Reyner Banham, 'Ateliers d'artistes. Paris studio houses and the Modern Movement', *Architectural Review*, 120 (1956), pp. 75–83; Jean-Claude Delorme, *Les Villas d'artistes à Paris* (Paris, 1987); Benton, *The villas of Le Corbusier*.

17 Auguste Perret, 'Chana Orloff — G. Aghion — G. Braque — F. Cocca Bressy' typescript, n.d., 535 AP 329, IFA. Despite the title of his book, Delorme included a spectrum of Perret's domestic commissions of the 1920s; Gargiani, *Auguste Perret* and Britton, *Auguste Perret* do not discuss artists' houses as a special category. Gilles Ragot in his catalogue entries in Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, is unusual in proposing such a distinction.

18 Peter Collins, *Concrete: the vision of a new architecture. The contribution of Auguste Perret and his precursors* (London, 1959), pp. 230–31.

19 Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, critics and collectors of modern painting: aspects of the Parisian art market between 1910 and 1930* (London and New York, 1981).

20 Alice Halika, *Hier: souvenirs* (Paris, 1946), p. 101, trans. Kenneth E. Silver, *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish artists in Paris 1905–45*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York (1985), p. 45.

21 See Silver, *Montparnasse*, p. 112; Felix Marcilhac, *Chana Orloff* (Paris, 1991).

22 Charles Imbert, 'Le quartier artiste de Montsouris, la cité Seurat, 101 rue la Tombe Issoire (Paris)', *L'Architecture*, 40, no. 4 (1927), p. 110.

23 Imbert, *L'Architecture*, p. 110.

24 See Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 162.

25 Gargiani and Fanelli, *Confronti*, p. 167, n. 1. These ideas, reduced to a few key axioms — the five points of a new architecture — were published in German in 1927. In the French version published that autumn, 'Où en est l'architecture', *L'Architecture vivante* (1927), a sixth point was the suppression of the cornice. Ibid, p. 178.

26 Ibid, pp. 212–13.

27 See Jean-Louis Cohen, *André Lurçat 1894–1970: autocritique d'un moderne* (Paris, 1995), pp. 29–40.

28 By describing villa Seurat as a 'rue de Caire', a popular attraction at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, Imbert mischievously suggested that it was both un-French and ephemeral.

29 Marcel Mayer, 'Une Oeuvre Classique', *L'Amour de l'Art* (1928), pp. 267–69. '... elle s'y dresse comme un rappel à l'ordre, au bon sens, au bon goût ... Architecture cela, architecture actuelle et architecture française' (p. 268).

30 Fonds Lurçat, 'Journal des activités', 533 AP 450, IFA, reads '1925 juin. Paris. Commande de l'étude d'un maison particulier pour le sculpteur Chana Orloff.'

- 31 Romy Golan, *Modernity and nostalgia: art and politics between the wars* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 141–42.
- 32 One is reminded of Federico Zuccaro's Florentine studio of 1578, decorated with plaques emblematic of the arts of painting, architecture and sculpture and the ground floor of rough-textured freestone, from which door and window frames emerged to represent the skill of the occupant to impose form upon raw materials. See Rudolph Wittkower, 'Federico Zuccari and John Wood of Bath', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), pp. 219–20.
- 33 Ragot in Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 162.
- 34 Imbert, *L'Architecture*, p. 112. In photographs of 1926–27, the living room and the tiny nursemaid's room on the mezzanine level are arranged as ancillary exhibition spaces.
- 35 See Gill Perry, *Women artists and the Parisian avant-garde* (Manchester, 1994), p. 157, and *Mela Muter 1876–1967*, catalogue of exhibition at Musée de Pont-Aven (1993–94).
- 36 This is also suggested in the houses of other artists. Lurçat's early plans for his brother Jean Lurçat's house in villa Seurat included an exhibition gallery (repr. Cohen, *Andre Lurçat*, p. 32). Soon afterwards Jean Lurçat was given a contract by a dealer, and the gallery was eliminated from the final plans (see plans repr. Imbert, *L'Architecture*, p. 109).
- 37 Isabelle Montserrat-Farguell, 'Villa Seurat', in *Hameaux, Villas et Cités de Paris* (Paris, Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1998). Orloff's second house, and a room for a nursemaid constructed on the roof of the first house, was designed by Zéev Rechter, a young Palestinian architect studying in Paris.
- 38 Plans dated October 1927 and May 1928, 535 AP 24/4, IFA.
- 39 'Mela Muter travaille comme un sculpteur dont chaque boulotte d'argile vient se placer où il faut pour occuper un volume déterminé d'espace', wrote André Bloc, 'Portraits de Mela Muter', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1933), p. 94. Gargiani, *Auguste Perret*, suggests a link between client and design, p. 94, n. 28.
- 40 He also experimented with the glazing design of the folding doors separating the garden from the dining room, and of the bedroom above it. 535 AP 24/4, IFA.
- 41 See Gargiani and Fanelli, *Confronti*, p. 179.
- 42 *Vingt ans d'architecture à Boulogne-Billancourt 1920–40*, catalogue of exhibition at the Musée Marmottan, Paris (1973).
- 43 See Brenda Martin, *Dorich House Guidebook* (Kingston University, 1998) for Gordine's biographical details.
- 44 The brief is at 535 AP 34/7, IFA: 'Ecrits'.
- 45 There are 125 drawings for Gordine's house in the Fonds Perret at 535 AP 34/7.
- 46 Drawings at 535 AP 29.5.35 and 29.5.36, n.d.
- 47 The columns of the frame are more narrowly spaced on the garden elevation.
- 48 I am indebted to the analysis of the three houses given in *Vingt ans*.
- 49 Auguste Perret, 'Le Musée moderne', *Mouaison*, III, no. 9 (1929), pp. 225–35. '... le squelette rythmé, équilibré, symétrique de l'animal contient et supporte les organes les plus divers et les plus diversement placés. De même l'ossature de notre édifice devra être composée, rythmée, équilibrée, symétrique même, et elle devra pouvoir contenir les organes les plus divers exigés par le programme. C'est là, la base même de l'architecture. Si la structure n'est pas digne de rester apparente, l'architecte a mal rempli sa mission.
- Les matériaux de revêtement et de remplissage devront compléter l'ossature, mais sans la dissimuler, il faut que se montre un poutre, là où il y a un poutre et un poteau, là où il y a un poteau. Ces dispositions éviteront bien des surprises désagréables ...' (p. 230).
- 50 Marie Dormoy, 'Dora Gordine, sculpteur', *L'Amour de l'Art* (1927), p. 166.
- 51 See Maurice Culot and Bruno Foucart (eds), *Boulogne-Billancourt: ville des temps modernes* (Paris/Liege, 1992), p. 337.
- 52 Estimates produced for Gordine's house in October 1928, plans date from March–May 1929; plans for Huré's house date from March–September 1929, probably completed December 1929.
- 53 See *Vingt ans*, 'Hotel Particulier, 23 rue du Belvédère'.
- 54 Véronique Chaussé, 'Marguerite Huré et le décor des claustra entre 1924 et 1933: contribution à la modernité', *Dossier de la commission royale des monuments, sites et fouilles*, 7, *Art, technique et science: la création du vitrail de 1830 à 1930* (Liège, 2000), pp. 33–41.
- 55 Glass with Marcel Imbs for the church of St Thérèse at Elisabethville by Paul Tournon.
- 56 See Marguerite Huré, 'Le vitrail: techniques modernes', *Glaces et verres*, October 1928, pp. 17–21.

- 57 Drawings 535 AP 29.5.35 and 29.5.36, n.d., IFA.
- 58 Culot, *Les Frères*, p. 189, suggests that these were not the definitive plans. However, the publication of the plans in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, v, no. 1 (1934), p. 10, 'Maison d'un peintre-verrier à Boulogne-sur-Seine, architectes A. et G. Perret' (my Fig. 14) indicates that they were.
- 59 Drawing 535 AP 29.5.12, 19 September 1929, IFA (balustrade); 535 AP 29.5.21 and 29.5.25, n.d., IFA (cornice).
- 60 Fischer: 4 rue du Belvédère, 1928 and 11 rue du Belvédère, 1925–28; Lurçat: 9 rue du Belvédère, 1926. See Delorme, *Villas d'artistes*, pp. 121, 136–42.
- 61 Ragot points out that a steel frame might actually have been more economical. Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 189.
- 62 Site plan, 535 AP 24/5. The street was re-named rue du Douanier and subsequently rue Georges-Braque. See Jean-François Delmas, 'Autour de Montsouris' in *Hameaux, Villas*, p. 114.
- 63 Plots were larger than in the neighbouring streets, perhaps to compensate for the presence of a riding school at the end of the street.
- 64 Ragot in Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 166.
- 65 Perret, 'Chana Orloff — G.Aghion' typescript, 535 AP 329.
- 66 Ragot, p. 168 and Olivier Cinqualbre, 'Braque bâtisseur', in *Braque: l'espace*, catalogue of exhibition at the Musée Malraux, Le Havre (1999) give perceptive analyses of the elevation. An awkward effect was created by the projection of the street elevation beyond the perimeter of the side walls, giving the effect of a crust applied to the surface of the building.
- 67 René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, entry for 13 March 1934 (London, 1986), p. 425.
- 68 Michael Fitzgerald, *Making modernism: Picasso and the creation of the market for twentieth-century art* (London and Berkeley, 1995) analyses the autonomy which Picasso enjoyed thanks to Rosenberg.
- 69 Christopher Green, *Art in France 1900–1940* (London and New Haven, 2000), provides a stimulating discussion of the cultural significance of the artist's studio in general, and Picasso's in particular.
- 70 Delorme, *Villas d'artistes*, p. 58.
- 71 Reproduced in Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 167. Drawing 535 AP 27.5.8t.
- 72 See Cinqualbre, p. 105. Nelson built a house for Braque at Varengeville, followed by a studio there in 1949.
- 73 Interview with Madame Claude Laurens, Paris, 3 November 2000. See also Gimpel, *Diary*, p. 427.
- 74 The Guggenbühl house was built between July 1926 and July 1927. For an analysis and photographs see Cohen, *André Lurçat*, pp. 46–49.
- 75 See Delmas, 'Autour de Montsouris', pp. 112–16.
- 76 Marie Dormoy, 'Le faux Béton', p. 132.
- 77 Marie Dormoy, 'La Cité Seurat', *L'art vivant*, 15 January 1927, p. 69.
- 78 The Fonds Perret contains designs for an unexecuted house for Marc Chagall dating from 1927. It is not clear whether this was to contain a studio. 535 AP 24/9 IFA. See Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 169.
- 79 Green, *Art in France*, p. 57; Gee, *Dealers and critics*, p. 283, and see Janet Flanner, *Paris was yesterday 1925–1939* (New York, 1988), pp. 61–62: 'Letter from Paris, 1929'.
- 80 Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 396.
- 81 *Braque: l'espace*, p. 134; Gimpel, *Diary*, entry for 13 March 1934: 'Braque sells a good deal', p. 426.
- 82 Isabelle Montserrat-Farguèll, 'Villa Seurat', pp. 231–33.
- 83 Silver, *Circle of Montparnasse*, p. 112.
- 84 *Dorich House Guidebook*.
- 85 Letter from Rene Dacbert to Richard Hare, 18 February 1935, Dorich House archives.
- 86 Huré, 'Le vitrail', p. 19, n. 1.
- 87 See *L'Art Sacré au XXe siècle en France* (Boulogne-Billancourt, 1993), p. 62.
- 88 So apparently did the stained glass designer Louis Barillet, who commissioned a studio-house from Mallet-Stevens in 1931 (see Delorme, *Villas d'artistes*, pp. 160–63).
- 89 Information kindly supplied by Véronique Chaussé. The 'Marguerite Huré' file at the Musée des Années Trente at Boulogne-Billancourt contains an invitation to an exhibition at Huré's rue du Belvédère studio dating from the 1950s.
- 90 André Bloc, 'Les portraits de Mela Muter': 'une excellente artiste, dont le talent ne s'entache d'aucune supercherie.' '... A une époque où le bluff tient trop souvent lieu de talent et où beaucoup de peintres sont, ou la proie ou les complices des marchands de tableaux, il est agréable de constater que certains artistes ont continué à exercer honnêtement, courageusement leur profession. Leur tâche est ingrate et la crise actuelle rend parfois leur situation tragique.' (p. 96).

- 91 *Mela Muter*, p. 9.
- 92 André Bloc, 'The Question of Ornament', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1932), no. 1, p. 1.
- 93 See David Watkin, *Morality and architecture* (Oxford, 1977), part I.
- 94 See Flanner, *Paris*, p. 132, for a verdict on the 1920s as 'unrestrainedly dishonest'. Berthe Weill, the art dealer, looking back from 1933 to the boom year of 1925, wrote: 'the epoch is disastrous for art, disastrous for commerce, an epoch of speculation, of bluff, an unwholesome epoch', quoted in Billie Kluver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: artists and lovers 1900-1930* (New York, 1994), p. 236, n. 5.
- 95 Waldemar George, 'Une mise en accusation de l'architecture moderne: culture et architecture', *Le Bulletin de l'Art ancien et moderne*, May 1934, pp. 181-84 (p. 182).
- 96 See Romy Golan, 'The "Ecole française" versus the "Ecole de Paris": the debate about the status of Jewish artists in Paris between the wars', in Silver, *The Circle of Montparnasse*, pp. 80-87, and Green, *Art in France*, chapter 10.
- 97 Muter converted to Catholicism in 1923, according to Catherine Puget's biography in *Mela Muter*, p. 9. Kenneth Silver points out the orientalist interpretation of Orloff's work in 'Made in Paris', *L'Ecole de Paris 1904-29: la part de l'Autre*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2000), pp. 46-47. In *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1934), no. 1, p. 10, the elevation of Gordine's house was captioned: 'Exemple type d'une portique constructif qui reçoit en façade une expression humaine.'
- 98 See Gargiani and Fanelli, *Confronti*, pp. 180-81 and chapter 7.
- 99 This was developed by Dormoy in her *Histoire de l'Architecture Française* of 1938.
- 100 This was a major theme in Peter Collins, *Concrete*.
- 101 Britton, *Auguste Perret*, pp. 107-09, and Joseph Abram, 'Une structure de production insolite', in Culot, *Les Frères Perret*, p. 30.
- 102 Marcel Zahar, *D'une doctrine d'architecture: Auguste Perret* (Paris, 1959) made the following observation of Perret's houses of the 1920s: 'Elles sont donc diverses, tant pour la dispositions des plans que par l'apparence des façades ... De même que le peintre pour un portrait, l'architecte, dans son ouvrage, ne cherche-t-il pas à refléter l'impression qu'il reçoit du caractère de son modèle, c'est-à-dire de l'usager de la demeure?' (p. 31).
- 103 For example, Le Corbusier's designs for the studios of Ozenfant, Lipchitz and Ternisien suggest an intriguing response to the character of the work of his artist-clients which warrants fuller investigation.
- 104 Lea Vergine, *L'autre moitié de l'avantgarde 1910-1940* (Paris, 1982), and Perry, *Women*, have pioneered the reinstatement of women in the history of the Parisian avant-garde.
- 105 Zahar, *Perret*, p. 31.