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LE CORBUSIER

HISTORY and **TRADITION**

Edited by

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AUGUSTE KLIPSTEIN'S *ORIENT-REISE*,
COMPANION TO
LE CORBUSIER'S *JOURNEY TO THE EAST*, 1911

This essay argues for the importance of the art historian and art dealer August Klipstein (1885-1951) to the education, and perhaps the publishing history, of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). In 1911, the two friends decided to take a “Journey to the East.” Le Corbusier’s account of their joint journey is well-known. His *Le Voyage d’Orient* was the first book he wrote (between 1911 and 1914) and the last he approved for publication—in 1965, a little over a month before his death.¹ But the travel diary that Klipstein kept in his native German during this year has never been published. Known as *Orient-Reise*, it has received some scholarly attention, but it has never been studied as a whole.² For the most part, Klipstein’s account of their travels has remained in the shadow cast by Le Corbusier’s later world-wide fame. In 1911, however, Jeanneret was the junior party. Klipstein was completing a PhD dissertation in art history at the University of Munich. As elder mentor and daily interlocutor to the young and professionally still unsettled Jeanneret, he surely exercised considerable influence on their common journey—even if Le Corbusier had the habit, later in life, of downplaying the influence of those people who helped shape his maturing aesthetic worldview and first forays into writing.³ The “companion” in the essay’s title thus plays a dual role. It refers both to the text and to the man: *Orient-Reise* as a companion volume to *Le Voyage d’Orient*, and Klipstein as an ideal travel companion for Le Corbusier during his formative years (Fig. 1).



1. Portrait of August Klipstein.
Photo attributed to Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, ca. 1911.



2. August Klipstein.
Sketchbook, Tagebuch, 79.

he wrote to Klipstein, reminding him that he, Klipstein, “would be dealing with an architect, a person determined to fill his sketchbooks with drawings.” He hoped his friend was planning to do the same. And then he added: “I remember the several sketches you made while in Spain. You can be my drawing master [*mon maître*]” (Figs. 3, 4).

Jeanneret was right to see a potentially useful, and perhaps a stern, pedagogue in his friend. As his travel diary makes clear, Klipstein could be opinionated, dismissive, and quick to negative judgment in his writing. Although he was no sentimental Romantic, Klipstein was critical of art historians and their “dry explorations.” We don’t need such history any more, he wrote in the opening pages of his travel diary; “we need a philosophy of art,” a “philosophical-aesthetic interpretation” that will permit us to appreciate, for example, the magnificence of Muslim art without applying to it our own Western criteria (diary entry of May 11, 1911). By temperament Klipstein was a comparativist. For him, history (or histories) was interesting when studied “laterally” rather than linearly. But lateral comparisons between cultural traditions also revealed careless borrowings and hybrid monsters. As he jotted down during their stay in Constantinople (June-July 1911), Western influence (and particularly the Baroque) on Turkish sensitivities had produced “the most loathsome things one can imagine.” But then these same traditional “sensitivities,” pure and unpolluted, would unexpectedly emerge in the local vernacular: in a piece of pottery, a simple household utensil, or in Turkish house (the *konak*).

This essay focuses on one aspect of the complex, productive, at times sardonic friendship between these two quite different personalities. Drawing on *Orient-Reise*, it speculates on Klipstein’s quest for “philosophical-aesthetic interpretations”—which he felt could be realized better through the juxtaposition of artistic traditions rather than by mere “dry history”—in light of Jeanneret’s more unstructured, sensual receptivity to his surroundings. The two men often describe the same physical item or event. On the plane of day-by-day events, both get seasick, bitten by bedbugs, irritated by hagglers at the bazaar, or suddenly charmed by the sight of some beautiful



3. August Klipstein.
Drawing of Toledo and
St. Martin Bridge.

4. August Klipstein.
Drawing of Toledo near
St. Martin Bridge.

local pots or veiled Turkish women.⁷ But Klipstein's descriptions are sober, abstract, and analytic. He was not easily carried away and always sought to grasp the principles of the artistic whole. In Pera, the European district of Constantinople, Klipstein jotted down the following cautious note, which is very characteristic of his approach:

No matter what, the whole of the city is complicated in every way. But I will be able to move towards judgment once I've been here a few days and have had a chance to take a thorough and systematic look at the architecture. You must be able to move from details to the whole here. On the other hand, the whole is too chaotic to take in at a glance. It will take a long time . . .⁸

Jeanneret, in contrast, tends to be more immediate, emotional, personal, and poetic in response to events and stimuli. Overall, he moves from the impression of the whole to its artistically worthy details. In his description of the catastrophic fire in Constantinople that the two travellers witnessed on July 24, 1911 ("The Stamboul Disaster" in *Journey to the East*, 153-58), Jeanneret placed himself squarely inside the event, and marveled at the impassive fatalism of the city's inhabitants. "The nightmare is over. What a tragic night!" he begins. His evocative chapter recalls a "colossal sacrifice," a "fantastic plume of fire," a night leaving them "stupefied, overcome by a great melancholy," like in a theatre.

Klipstein was not inclined to record events in this highly-wrought theatrical register, although he did try his own hand at a description, over a full four pages. With his historian's eye, he puts the event in perspective and in the context of earlier conflagrations: "Fires are no rarity in Constantinople . . . Yesterday a fire of extraordinary dimensions was announced, with which even the fire in Çirçir in 1908 cannot compare . . . Yesterday's fire stretched all the way to the Sea of Marmara, as far as the eye can see (*Orient-Reise*, 16, 16b). Klipstein provides data from an official report as it appeared in some unidentified press release: 2,650 houses, 600 shops, 16 mosques. Throughout his account of the Fire, Klipstein uses the pronoun "we." "We

could recognize very well the Turkish national character, and in particular the marked fatalism that allows them to accept their immutable fate with the greatest calm . . .” But ultimately his context is a static one, the horizon of the entire city’s architecture.

Anyway, we feel good here, we have a great dwelling, with a magnificent view of the Golden Horn, Istanbul with the Hagia Sofia, the Sultan Ahmet, the Sultan Süleyman, the Sultan Mehmet, and a whole bunch of smaller mosques. Beyond them all you can see a small strip of the Sea of Marmara and then, on the horizon, the high walls of the Asiatic mountains, with the snow-crowned peak of Mt. Olympus. It’s all a little too panoramic; still, we do have here the highly praised beauty of Constantinople. You’ll have read about the Istanbul fire. You’ll find our impressions in Jeanneret’s article, which, by the way, is very good in itself.⁹

Klipstein recommends that the reader of his *Orient-Reise*—whomever that might be—read Jeanneret’s account of the fire, soon to appear in the local newspaper of La-Chaux-de-Fonds. Klipstein claims to share his friend’s impressions. But he could not himself describe the emotion-charged *art* of that spectacle. Among the often noted paradoxes of Le Corbusier’s early period is that the greatest modernist architect of the 20th century left such an intensely subjective, Romantic account of his first prolonged exposure to the artistic genius of the past.¹⁰ The counterpoint of a cool-minded travel companion like Klipstein, who was looking for other forms of aesthetic expression, might have kept Jeanneret’s effusive enthusiasms in check. Or, on the contrary, the continual presence of Klipstein might have prompted Jeanneret to even higher flights of imaginative fantasy. Jeanneret was a creative artist *par excellence*. Klipstein was an observer, an analyst; what moved him was not the passion of participation but the voice of ironic detachment. Both men often loved the same things, but they internalized them differently. Consider this description by Klipstein from early in the journey (June 5, Budapest), of one excursion in search of authentic folk art:

When it's windy there's unbelievable dust, and when it rains there's unbelievable muck. The potter did not disappoint us. After going through a charming garden, we had to climb up a steep and narrow staircase to get to his loft, where we almost suffocated from the heat, but we discovered a whole mountain of wonderful black-glazed vessels with yellowish and brick-red flowers. Edouard sank into pure ecstasy and began right away to select what to buy. The potter's old mother lived in his room; she was 102 years old. She shrieked for joy, because for the first time in thirty years she was hearing German words. She came from the Frankfurt region . . .

Klipstein bemusedly observes his friend Jeanneret, who is in "pure ecstasy." Out of these differing temperaments watching each other, step by step and stop by stop, both men furthered their own education and, consciously or not, their own modes of self-expression.

KLIPSTEIN'S POSTHUMOUS LEGACY

Klipstein believed in travelling as a prerequisite for aesthetic education. He had previously visited Spain, Morocco, Italy, France and Belgium, always with an academic agenda and occasionally sketching what he saw. As we saw, Jeanneret appreciated his friend's drawings of Toledo, referring to them in a letter at the end of September, 1910. There are also hints that Jeanneret had urged Klipstein to purchase a Kodak Brownie camera; he took many pictures with it, especially of subjects related to his dissertation research. However *Orient-Reise*, as it was eventually formatted in typescript, did not include any images. Only in 2015 did the original notebook for the diary become available.¹¹ It resembles a "Tagebuch" [daybook] compiled of three sketchbooks containing 109 double pages with notes and descriptions, interspersed with illustrations in a manner similar to Jeanneret's own carnets *Le Voyage d'Orient*. This Tagebuch records impressions jointly experienced by him and Jeanneret, alongside anecdotal events and historical information that also appears in *Orient-Reise* (Fig. 5).



5. August Klipstein's "Tagebuch."
Volume compiled from three sketchbooks.

Beyond serving as a diary and memory prompt, it is not clear for what purpose Klipstein documented these 1911 travels, or what target audience he had in mind. At times in *Orient-Reise* he addresses a direct identifiable audience, as on his first page, where he seems to be speaking to Jeanneret in a sort of open letter. At other times the addressee is more difficult to determine. Sometimes Klipstein's tone suggests he is writing notes for a guidebook, or notes taken down *from* a guidebook; other sections more resemble notes to himself. Unlike Jeanneret, who was sending his diary "dispatches" home for serial publication in the local La-Chaux-de-Fonds newspaper *La Feuille d'Avis* to be read by a close circle of his parents, neighbours, and friends, Klipstein made no known attempts to publish *Orient-Reise* during his lifetime. Upon completing his doctorate in Art History in 1916, he became a professional art dealer in Bern.¹²

In 1951, Klipstein died at age 66 of a heart attack. His widow, Frieda Klipstein, began to take an interest in his travel notes and correspondence between the two friends from almost a half-century before. The distant journey, seemingly forgotten by both sides, began to be revived. For reasons doubtless connected with her own mourning, Frieda began a nostalgic and respectful correspondence with Le Corbusier, now at the peak of his fame, that might have exercised a certain sentimentalizing pressure on the architect. Le Corbusier would always respond politely to these letters, which in turn encouraged Frieda to provide more details, about Klipstein's writings and his commercial business (Gutenkust & Klipstein), which continued after his death. Frieda continued to correspond with Le Corbusier until 1965, exchanging momentos (images and artefacts) with him relating to the eastern journey and sharing the occasional tantalizing detail of her husband's life. The last known exchange is dated May 2, 1965, a few months before Le Corbusier's own death at Cap Martin.

The available correspondence between Le Corbusier and Frieda Klipstein makes no specific mention of the typescript that August had left behind. It is possible that Le Corbusier was not even aware that his friend's travel diary had survived. We know that Frieda was eager that her late husband's literary

legacy be published; there are indications that she hoped the famous Le Corbusier would help her in this task. Le Corbusier did not. But this tender and constant pressure from his friend's widow appears to have rekindled Le Corbusier's interest in his own long-dormant travel articles from 1911, assembled into a book before the Great War but collecting dust since 1914. When Jean Petit, the indefatigable entrepreneur and businessman, asked Le Corbusier for fresh material from the master's hand that he could publish and market, Le Corbusier offered his own unpublished travel manuscript. Frieda, meanwhile, continued to re-read her husband's correspondence and his version of the journey, and to enter an occasional marginal comment into the typescript. This typescript eventually ended up in various European libraries.¹³

THE CRITICAL ANALYST AND THE ROMANTIC POET

Klipstein, in the self-portrait he provides in the diary, complained and found fault with a great deal. He did not modify or soften his immediate reactions. He was writing these travel notes mostly for himself, rather like "footnotes" to a future research experiment, with no distinct outside audience in mind that had to be informed, educated, or amused. Jeanneret had larger ambitions. His approach from the start was subjective. He must have felt what every artist feels: that the best way to turn strong, negative, even painful experiences into something positive and inspirational is to turn it into art. This is what Jeanneret did with the peak experiences of his journey—whether it was the Fire of Stamboul, his illness on Mount Athos, or the Grand Bazaar. He aestheticized the experience. Klipstein, a far more sober eye, is the foil and "control" for his companion's poetic visions. He rarely "aestheticizes" and does not add colour, melody, or theatrical frame to the events he describes. (He does add irony and irritation). If Jeanneret represents the essential artist as transfigurer of reality, then Klipstein is the traveller-chronicler. Both testimonies are valuable to the historian, but they

are also necessary to each other. For six months, they mutually shaped each other in their daily rituals, dialogues, and observations.

Often the mix of voices and worldviews is only implicit: both men were curious about other cultures and respond eagerly to the same stimulus. At times the interaction is more explicit: the same event is written up in the two diaries. Overall Klipstein is serious, as befits a PhD candidate in search of academically useful information. Jeanneret, on the other hand, can be very jocular, especially when describing Klip—perhaps to amuse his friends at La Chaux-de-Fonds, perhaps to gain some distance on his own sentimental tone and provide comic relief, perhaps even to play off his friend as a sort of alter-ego. The younger man, seemed to enjoy “sketching” the more sophisticated Klipstein in a satirical vein as a prankster or eccentric. Here are several examples from *Journey to the East* of Jeanneret “moulding” his friend into a sketch.

In the chapter “A Jumble of Recollections and Regrets” we read:

Sometimes I have quoted the remarks of my august companion, and yet I have never described him. Here is his portrait. Ancestry: Flemish, but crazy about modern Paris. His people tighten the lips on the letter ‘b,’ which they obliterate. As to his personality: a decent fellow. And here are a few small revealing details about him. He dares to love Jordaens, Brouwer, and Van Ostäde, about whom he says: Long may they live! They drink, laugh, eat!¹⁴ At those times when we were in agonizing misery, reduced literally to nothing but black bread, he would disappear furtively behind street corners to buy cigars. He nearly died when all we could fill our drinking glasses and coffee cup with was water! Another revelation of his real self (once when we spent the night on a bench): he awakes, sits up, rolls his eyes heavy with sleep which he fixes on me in a long gaze, and after a seeming eternity, and while regaining consciousness, he wonders out loud: ‘Maype we could have a *peer!* (as if there were a keg right there under the bench!’¹⁵

Comments on the eating and drinking habits of his friend begin early in their journey, during their stop in Negotin, Serbia, witnessing a marriage celebration.

They drink a lot of this ruby-red wine to overcome their uneasiness; they want either to feel happy on a day designated as festive, or simply to sink into a reassuring torpor. I also drank my part of the good little wine of Negotin, and was lost in a reverie . . . Auguste continued to extract the ruby-red wine from the little vials. But oddly enough he couldn't take it and was sick that evening!¹⁶

Or later:

Auguste, physically: the build of a fakir . . . He eats with the conviction of a sleeping cat and the seriousness of a drinking cow! Jordaens, Brouwer! Auguste, when I send these articles to the editor of this little journal, I will beg him to omit this defamatory information!¹⁷

But in the end Jeanneret did not omit it.¹⁸ This alter-ego was an important part of his own self-portrait.

For example: viewed through Jeanneret, the image of Klipstein (with his dry tone and continual fault-finding), often comes together into something like an aesthete, a dandy: “. . . Auguste listens to my complaints; smoking his pipe, he philosophizes, and, philosophizing, he puffs on his pipe.”¹⁹ He had a sense of the theatrical about him:

Another revealing event in Pera (this time Auguste has all the bedbugs in his bed): at three in the morning he lights the candle and starts roasting them. He gets all excited in pursuit of these mean little vermin, who burrow under his long fingernails (because he has style, this art historian, this theoretician!) He taps his fingernails on the marble table top, and the tiny beasts drop out; he runs them through with his writing pen, then fries them; the cadavers drown in the hot wax, next day forming a nougat, conspicuously Turkish. Auguste

perspires, and once the massacre is accomplished, he cannot help but conclude: — Oh, la, la, let's roll a little cigarette. He goes back to sleep, the pacifier in his mouth, happy about the carnage, and complacent with his smoke!²⁰

Klipstein had exacting standards and strong opinions, about both folk and academic art. Jeanneret wrote to his friends from the Ateliers d'Art at La Chaux-de-Fonds about their common search for Balkan pottery: “. . . Auguste caught sight of a flash of enamel and cried out, just like Columbus's lookout-man: Pots!”²¹ Jeanneret could admire his friend while making affectionately light fun of his pedantic and academic approach.

Auguste, who is preparing for his doctorate in Art History, suddenly felt overcome by the birth of a revelatory theory [Jeanneret writes in his *Journey to the East*]. He had perceived this ultimate crisis evident in the pottery of Hungary and Serbia, and, envisaging in one stroke all the arts and all the epochs, he formulated the theory of ‘the psychological moment in popular pottery in the twentieth-century arts.’ In German it sounds much better: ‘Der psychologische Moment,’ etc. Auguste, I swear to you, never was able to finish it. Nor could I have helped him.²²

Jeanneret affectionately mocks Klipstein's tendency to turn the most modest things into a momentous theory. But in his *Orient-Reise*, Klipstein is not in the least embarrassed to take seriously his own gift for formal theorizing, extending his occasional insight into a theory about the psychology of the applied arts.

In these fragments of a theory, one can detect traces of Klipstein's teacher and mentor William Worringer. A telling example from the journey, one focused on a single artwork, comes from their visit to the Valide Mosque in Istanbul. Jeanneret took the time to draw in detail a small decorative tile (Fig. 6). At the centre was the black stone of the Kaaba, about which Jeanneret wrote in the tone of an ethno-architect: “The orientation of the axis of every mosque on Moslem soil toward the black stone of the Kaaba



6. Le Corbusier.
Valide Mosque, Istanbul.
Drawing with a note
referring to Klipstein.

is an awe-inspiring symbol of the unity of the faith.”²³ Embedded in the caption to the same image is a reference to Klipstein’s reaction to this iconic image: “Intellektualistische Vorstellung, ainsi parle Auguste” [an intellectual representation, thus speaks Auguste]. Klipstein will also refer to a similar detail in his *Orient-Reise*, not in the emotional tones of a tourist’s on-the-spot observation but in the language of theory appropriate to an art historian and apprentice academic.²⁴ Elementary, abstract geometry still plays a role, but it is bolstered by a quote from Wilhelm Worringer’s 1907 *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* [Abstraction and Empathy]:

The instinct for ancient art has nothing to do with reproducing nature. It seeks pure abstraction as the only way of establishing coherence in the confusion and obscurity of the world picture, and it creates out of itself, from pure, instinctive necessity, a geometric abstraction.²⁵

Worringer, as noted above, taught at the University of Munich and was a sponsor at Klipstein’s dissertation defense (that PhD study was later published as *Die Persistenz gotischer Kunstanschauung und gotische Rückfallserscheinungen in der Entwicklung der Renaissance des italienischen Quattrocento* [The persistence of Gothic views on art and relapses into the Gothic in the development of the Renaissance in the Italian Quattrocento], Bern, 1916).

The ideological relationship between Worringer and Klipstein—and by extension, the possible influence of Worringer’s ideas on Jeanneret during this journey—is a topic that has received only slight attention.²⁶ *Abstraction and Empathy* is now classic in the psychology of aesthetics. Among its more provocative statements is that “the aesthetic sense is an objectivised sense of the self.” Human beings need art for two basic reasons, Worringer suggests: to tell us “who we are” (this is accomplished through mimetic or representational art), and to establish communication patterns with what we are not and what we do not know (this through stylized or abstract art). Mimetic art stimulates sympathy and empathy. It fosters a sense of community, domesticity, and comfort. What rules it is human creativity,

variety, a sense of “being at home among familiar shapes,” and thus freedom. Abstract art, such as is often produced by non-Western cultures, represents a different relationship of the soul to reality and to higher powers. It is more severe, less empirical and self-explanatory. What rules this type of art is not freedom but necessity. Worringer believed that these two psychological worldviews were not sequential—that is, one was not “progressive,” nor was the other “primitive”; both co-exist in every society because each responds to a different psychological need.

It is intriguing to note that the elementary abstract geometry as described by Worringer begins to play an ever more important role in Jeanneret’s drawings during this 1911 journey, especially if compared to his earlier *Voyage d’Italie* of 1907. In 1911, this abstraction is evident not only in Jeanneret’s drawings, but also in his verbal descriptions: in his chapter titled “The Mosques,” he writes “. . . an elementary geometry orders these masses: the square, the cube, the sphere.”²⁷ Perhaps Jeanneret’s most unexpected use of volumetric abstraction comes in his description of the music he heard at a wedding celebration in the town of Negotin. In describing the unusual voices and harmonic arrangements, Jeanneret wrote the following: “Suddenly the group takes off, and a cube of music comes out of it . . . Everything has ended in an awesome geometry . . . the hymns were like huge squares laid down, or like towers.”²⁸ The eruption of these pure geometric metaphors into Jeanneret’s otherwise Romantic and impressionistic prose evidently owes something to Worringer and to his doctoral student August Klipstein, a travelling companion with a sharp, intellectual, abstracting eye.

As an art historian, Klipstein displayed a special interest in painting in his diary. In Paris he had studied such modern painters as Cézanne, Manet, Vuillard, Toulouse-Lautrec. In his travels through Spain, he focused on El Greco. As early in the Eastern journey as Vienna, Klipstein began his evaluation of the El Greco canvases located in the Imperial Art History museum, its collection of the Spanish School (16th-17th century): “El Greco, Gastmahl bei Simons [Feast at the House of Simon].” The El Greco collection at the Royal Court of Romania was a mandatory stop.²⁹ But both

were disappointed with what they saw—and Klipstein's negative opinions, sustained throughout his diary, surely infected the judgment of his travel companion.

These mutually-conditioned judgments “infected” genres of literary expression as well. In his *Journey to the East*, Jeanneret composed a short chapter in the conventional literary-sentimental form of a letter to an unidentified lady, who expressed her admiration for Carmen Sylva, Queen of Romania.³⁰ He was not averse to adorning an event with some imported culture. As Jeanneret records his friend's reaction to this same collection, however, the picture is different: Klipstein, he noted, disliked both the quality of the art and its architectural setting, and among the collection he was even certain there was a “fake.”³¹ In his own *Orient-Reise*, August dismissed the flawed exhibit the way a researcher would dismiss a disappointing archive: “Christ with a cross (at least a copy of it) . . . We saw only one El Greco, and I got so involved in it that I hardly noticed any of the rest of the paintings.” And as regards the entire collection, Klipstein did not mince words: “It borders on the highest kitsch and shows how little the El Grecos are valued . . . they are displayed together with the crappiest German pictures . . . and El Greco's Christ must be called into question.”³²

The two men were also in agreement about an exhibit of Romanian Art Nouveau, which Jeanneret refers to as the “secessionist group.” But in this instance, Jeanneret was more critical than his art-critic friend. “Well, those imbeciles! They have allowed themselves to be assassinated by Europe! We had to put up with entire walls of Munich academicism . . .”³³ Klipstein was more sober, detached, but reflected the same basic sentiments, declaring that “the modern Romanian painters are kitsch and undistinguished descendants of the Munichers,” adding: “. . . It's sad.”³⁴

The two travellers were also interested not only in high art or the Modern Art movement, but in popular art as well. They visited ethnographic museums, and in their diaries they describe folk objects and methods of their production. They also amassed a collection of peasant pottery, which they pack up and send back home. Jeanneret devotes an entire chapter, “A Letter to Friends at

the Ateliers d'Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds" to the discovery of vases. He calls the art of the peasant "a striking creation of aesthetic sensuality"³⁵ adding, in an interesting variant on Worringer's binary paradigm, that "considered from a certain point of view, folk art outlives the highest of civilizations. It remains a norm, a sort of measure whose standard is man's ancestor—the savage, if you will."³⁶ Klipstein too notes, with a certain pedantic familiarity and always thinking as the historian, that "Western Romania seems to have the richest folk art . . . In the last five years, Transylvanian ceramics have undergone a substantial change in the area of colour . . . Still decorative, but no longer with its distinctive elegance and sophisticated use of space."³⁷ This interest in the history of folk art extended into Romanian embroidery and other painstaking craftsmanship such as wood-carvings, which Klipstein saw as essentially Byzantine forms.

Both travellers were interested in cities as architectural ensembles—in city planning, loosely conceived—and the urban stops throughout their travels provided exemplary raw material. In 1910 the young Jeanneret was writing a text to be titled "La Construction des villes," which was left incomplete and consequently abandoned. His interest in urbanism, however, continued throughout his life, leading to the 1924 publication of *The City of Tomorrow* and in 1933 to his most elaborate and authoritative statement, *The Radiant City*. Chapter 5 of *The City of Tomorrow* begins with a sketch from the 1911 Journey, with a caption (which also might reflect the influence of Worringer's binary distinction in art) that reads: "Pisa: cylinders, spheres, cones, cubes"³⁸ (Fig. 7).

Klipstein does not shy away from critical forays into the architectural field and even into urbanism. Many of his descriptions remain no more than a jotting-down of his immediate impressions, saturated with his colourful personal biases. He also made comments at the other stylistic extreme, in the style of a neutral narration reminiscent of a guide-book. An example of the former type is Klipstein's reaction to the city of Budapest: "There are few cities that offer as panoramic a view of all sides as Buda does. If only the grimy mass of Pest weren't over there. I can't get rid of this feeling;



7. Le Corbusier.
Sketch of Pisa, October 1911.
“Pisa: cylinders, spheres, cones, cubes,”
wrote Le Corbusier.

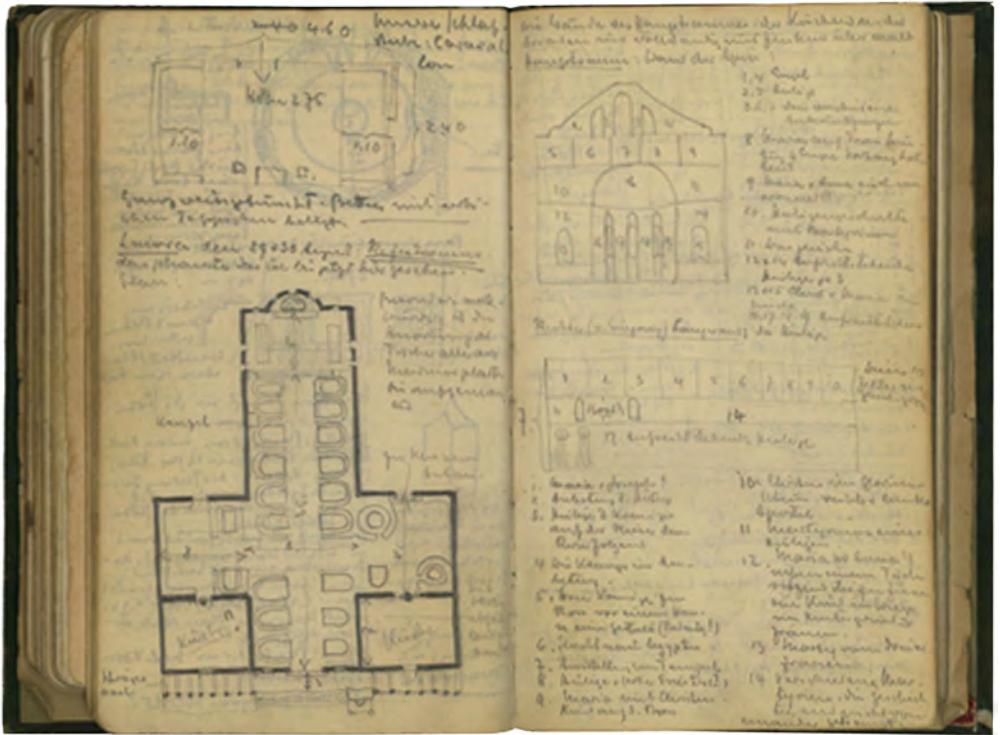
Pest simply repels me.”³⁹ Another city that received devastatingly negative criticism (from both men, but from Klipstein especially) was the Serbian capital of Belgrade.⁴⁰

Klipstein characteristically sought the measured, sober images and was fascinated by repeating patterns. He was not very familiar with Turkish art, however. Partly for that reason he disapproved of it, claiming that the really good things were actually “not Turkish, but came from the East.”⁴¹ “The West,” he wrote, “has had a devastating influence here.” He points out the great influence wielded by Hagia Sophia on the subsequent forms of the mosques: “Eternal representations of Hagia Sophia, yet ingenious and often brilliant repetitions, which very often surpass the original.”⁴² Klipstein’s predisposition is always to favour the Byzantine and Greek period. While still in Istanbul, he was already anticipating their future visit to Mount Athos, especially the opportunity to see “Byzantine miniatures.” The Istanbul portion of *Orient-Reise*—and even its historically-oriented discussion of the city’s history of fires—is written in a disjointed, conflated, prosaic style.

After Istanbul, the two companions travelled by sea to Mount Athos, where they arrived on August 23. They stayed for two weeks, visiting various monasteries on the Holy Mountain. Jeanneret was sick through most of it, which could have been a serious matter, since cholera was sweeping the East at this time. Klipstein observes that just a few days after they left Istanbul, this region was closed and quarantined off by the military. Jeanneret’s severe digestive problems (chronic diarrhea) throughout the Mount Athos sojourn was the most likely reason why he did not write up this stage of their journey until 1914, three years later. He did, however, make a series of sketches in his notebook. In contrast, during this peak spiritual pilgrimage, Klipstein was profoundly active and writing continually, sustained by his passion for Byzantine art. His commentary about Mount Athos takes up over eight pages of *Orient-Reise*. Throughout his account of events and impressions he uses the pronoun “we,” perhaps co-speaking for his temporarily silenced, enfeebled friend.

Klipstein's most detailed descriptions are devoted to works of Byzantine art (Fig. 8). Prominent among these were icons, iconostases, miniatures, frescos, and illuminated books on the Life of the Virgin Mary, to whom the entire peninsula and mountain of Athos is devoted (it is for her chaste sake that all other female humans or animals are denied access to the Mountain). But even an adoration of art had its limits. Interspersed among length descriptions of artworks and Biblical references, Klipstein cannot refrain from noting the painful prosaic details of their daily physical survival. Special attention is given to the meals offered them by the monks. This young German, it appeared, was not attracted to a Mediterranean diet: "For lunch there were anchovies, though only for us, boiled green vegetables in oil; miserable . . . In a piece of skin, sausage-shaped, boiled fish eyes."⁴³ August complained even about the hospitality offered them, which inevitably included food, and he seems unaware of the poverty (and thus the generosity) of these humble monastic folk. As a historian, he was clearly more comfortable among the relics of the past than the necessities of the present. "For supper we were served rice soup and scrambled eggs with wine. The monastery, and also the few people there, made a wretched, miserable, unfriendly, almost hostile impression on us. I was glad to be outside again the next morning."⁴⁴

The culmination of their misery came with their visit to the Monastery of Lavras on August 29-30, which possibly they had assumed would be like a tourist hotel rather than a spiritual retreat or house of worship under a vow of poverty. "We have just complained to the gatekeeper and other monks about how badly we were received," Klipstein writes. "They wouldn't open the churches, we hardly got fed, they asked us five times when we were planning to leave . . . In the evening and at noon we had to run to the kitchen and shout into the head cook's ear that we were hungry . . . God knows, here on Athos you learn what hunger is . . . You can have these idiotic monasteries any time you want them."⁴⁵ Klipstein, it appears, was sour about any institution that contained art but wasn't organized as a museum. In contrast, Jeanneret, writing about the Athos experience three years later from his comfortable home in La Chaux-de-Fonds, was far more reflective and appreciative.



8. August Klipstein's "Tagebuch," 76. Sketches and notes.

Jeanneret-Le Corbusier's emotional and architectural relationship to the monastery was entirely different than his travel companion's. Ever since 1907, when he spent some time at the Carthusian Monastery of Ema near Florence and been powerfully inspired by it, very possibly he had dreamed of visiting others, such as those on Mount Athos. In his chapter "Recollections of Athos," the longest in *Journey to the East*, Jeanneret had written about this remote, desolate, and fragile spiritual environment not in terms of its lack of Epicurean delights but precisely because of this deprivation. The invitation to an ascetic life—outside the context of any religious conversion—attracted Le Corbusier to the end of his days.⁴⁶ One of the more remarkable aspects of Jeanneret's text is the number of times he refers to Athos as a radiant, inexpressible experience, which shines especially brightly in his memory now that he is back in a small town. He recalls the two weeks, even weakened by illness, with admiration, respect, perhaps even envy. He confessed that the "hours spent on the mountain were the happiest he had ever experienced." This monastic ideal might be found later in many of Le Corbusier's dwellings, including, of course, the one he built for himself at Cap Martin.

After Mount Athos, the two friends travelled through Salonika on the way to Athens. Despite their short stay for one day, both were serious students of the local landmarks. Klipstein records his impressions, and sketches (among other buildings) Hagia Sophia, St. Demetrius Church, the Arch of Galerius, St. Parasceva Church (being restored at this time), and the St. George Rotunda. Jeanneret jots down a few descriptive notes and draws in his sketchbook (no. 3, 87; see also *Orient-Reise*, 65) the plan and perspective of the Roman Rotunda—the mausoleum of Galerius converted to a church in the 5th century and to a mosque in the 16th. Before reaching Athens, however, they were taken into quarantine. Along with all the passengers on their point, they are held on the island of St. George, "a stinking quarantine on a desolate island about the size of a public square. A stupid quarantine, administered against all the laws of common sense: a hotbed for cholera," as Le Corbusier wrote in *Journey to the East*.⁴⁷ After the feverish heights of Mount Athos, this unpleasant dangerous delay in their travels must have

seemed galling. Both were anticipating, with great impatience, their visit to the Parthenon (Fig. 9).

Klipstein's reactions to the quarantine were succinct and more to the point. "The Devil's Island couldn't be much worse," he wrote.⁴⁸ He then recorded the short poem in French that someone had left in the Visitor's Book:

Un jour de fête,
Un jour de deuil
La vie est faite
en un clin d'oeil
L'île Saint Georges?
Quelle coupe-gorge
quelle saleté
En vérité.⁴⁹

This summed up the impressions of those who visited, or were detained, there. Klipstein did not feel well. His body was weak; he had been reduced to a skeleton by this journey, weighing in at 104 English pounds (94 German). He had also developed gall-bladder problems. After spending a few days in bed, he concludes that he must try to return home as soon as possible. At this point the two part company. Klipstein set off from the port of Pireus toward Brindisi on September 27, 1911. He visited Paestum on September 30, Pompeii on October 2, then Rome, to see what he considered "absolutely necessary." Finally he arrived in Munich and then home to Laubach, just before the outbreak of the Balkan War. He was anxious about his travelling companion's fate; but Jeanneret followed him a month later, arriving safely at La Chaux-de-Fonds on November 1, 1911.

What was the enduring legacy of this journey in the minds of these two friends? In closing, we might return to Worringer's two psychological-aesthetic categories for human personality, and apply them to these two travellers. Worringer considered these categories timeless, neither modern



9. August Klipstein.
Le Corbusier in Athens, September 1911.
From Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même* (1970).

nor primitive in essence but mental orientations relevant to all people everywhere. He contrasts the “abstracters,” who pursue an objectified, stylized sense of the self that serve necessity, with the “empathizers,” who are more receptive to mimetic art, which fosters creative freedom. At this stage in his life, if we are to trust his ecstatic and pathos-laden travel letters home, Jeanneret was seeking above all artistic freedom; he was open to empathy, spontaneity, creative response. Klipstein, from the beginning, had been more interested in necessity: in abstract geometry, repetition, stylization and constraint. As a parallel study of their two travel diaries attests, elements of both these psychological responses to the world of art are interwoven in their stories (Fig. 10).

NOTES

- 1 Le Corbusier, *Le Voyage d'Orient* (Paris: Forces Vives, 1966). Why precisely Le Corbusier chose to return to this early text in 1965 is a matter of scholarly speculation. In my longer book-length treatment of this topic, *Eastern Journeys, 1911: The dual diaries and legacies of Auguste Klipstein and Le Corbusier*, which includes a full annotated translation of Klipstein's *Orient-Reise* and juxtaposes many moments between the two travel diaries, I provide more documentation for the argument that one crucial prompt for returning to the 1911 travel notes was his long friendship with August Klipstein, and especially his correspondence in the 1950s with Klipstein's widowed wife Frieda. This thesis is discussed only briefly in the present article.
- 2 See, for example, Tim Benton, *LC Foto. Le Corbusier Secret Photographer* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013), the chapter “Handheld Photography,” 100-120, and Adolf Max Vogt, “Remarks on the ‘Reversed’ Grand Tour of Le Corbusier and Auguste Klipstein,” *Assemblage* no. 4 (October 1987, MIT Press): 39-51.
- 3 In the case of *Le Voyage d'Orient*, a very special role was played by William Ritter, who not only urged his young protégé to complete the account of his travels, but proposed to publish it in 1914, in a German translation by his companion Montadon and with an introduction and epilogue

by Ritter himself. See Marie-Jeanne Dumont, ed., *Le Corbusier – William Ritter correspondence croisée 1910-1955* (Éditions du Linteau, 2014), 272.

- 4 Klipstein was a student of Wilhelm Worringer, who taught at the University of Munich and was a sponsor at the oral defense of Klipstein's dissertation, later to be published as *Die Persistenz gotischer Kunstanschauung und gotische Rückfallserscheinungen in der Entwicklung der Renaissance des italienischen Quattrocento* [The persistence of Gothic views on art and relapses into the Gothic in the development of the Renaissance in the Italian Quattrocento], Bern, 1916. In his August 3 diary entry on some disturbing aspects of Turkish painting, Klipstein cites Worringer: "The instinct for ancient art has nothing to do with reproducing nature. It seeks pure abstraction as the only way of establishing coherence in the confusion and obscurity of the world picture, and it creates out of itself, from pure, instinctive necessity, a geometric abstraction (from Worringer, *Empathy and Abstraction*)."
- 5 In his *Orient-Reise* Klipstein often notes his dissertation research. Among the Constantinople entries (mid-summer 1911), musing about upcoming Mount Athos, he writes: "We'll probably have to stay in Athos a long time. The only thing is that it will be awkward with the language. They only speak Modern Greek and Russian there. I would particularly like to get a close look at the Byzantine miniatures." A handwritten note appears to the left in the typescript on this page, in what appears to be Klipstein's hand: "and see the frescoes and compare them to El Greco."
- 6 These cities were recommended to Jeanneret by his mentors, Charles L'Épplatenier and William Ritter, who had provided him with contacts and letters of recommendation.
- 7 The Grand Bazaar, for example, fascinated and infuriated both travellers. Their mutual reactions, recorded in their separate accounts, reinforce a single reaction, although Jeanneret is the more irritable, Klipstein more philosophical. "So far I haven't bought too much," Klipstein noted in his diary, "since the prices are colossally high . . . I found only two pieces that I really liked. One costs at least 500, the other 600, although the dealer was asking thousands . . . I saw some very nice Persian brocade with gold, marvellous pieces. I did buy two scraps of that, and also two carpets from Anatolia . . ." And then he adds: "Edouard is in a bad mood. The antiquities dealer swindled him; he hung up in front of him a galvanized plastic instead of something handmade from Cambodia . . . he is incensed." (*Orient-Reise*, 13-14). Jeanneret was indeed outraged, and the experience of being cheated would inspire an entire chapter, "Sesame," in *Journey to the East*, where he describes with relish how he got his revenge for this incident. Jeanneret appreciated his friend's support on the matter: "Concerning this subject,

Auguste remarked gravely: 'I believe these characters dream of the same hunger as do the bedbugs, during our absence from Bursa, but for gold!'" (*Journey*, 142).

- 8 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, Ch. 3, 34-35.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 10 For a recent discussion that confronts this issue directly and persuasively, see Armando Rabaça, "The Philosophical Framework of Le Corbusier's Education: Schuré and German Idealism," delivered at *Le Corbusier, 50 Years Later*, International Congress, Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, 2015 (DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4995/LC2015.2015.671>).
- 11 After many inquiries, beginning in 2009, with surviving family members and friends, in 2015 I was able to locate in a private collection the sketchbook with annotations and many drawings, some of which are used as illustrations to the present article. The images recall Jeanneret's own *cahiers d'Orient*, 1911. But differences in approach and quality should be noted, given Klipstein's careful attention to details.
- 12 A concise biography of August-Maria Klipstein (1885-1951) was written by Giuliano Gresleri for the 1987 Centenary exhibition at Centre Pompidou, Paris, and in the companion publication: *Le Corbusier: une encyclopédie*, published by Éditions du Centre Pompidou, CCI, Paris, 1987, 216. See also Erhard Göpel, "Der Kupferstichhändler und Auktionator Dr. August Klipstein," in *Ein Jahrbuch für Bücherfreunde* Bd. XI. O. O. Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen 1952/53, Bern, 1953. The biography is speculative and contains several inaccuracies. More recently, Rolf Haaser has edited a collection of writings on the Spanish travels of Felix Klipstein (August's elder brother) that includes a sketch titled "Mein Bruder und andere" [My brother and others]; see Felix Klipstein. *Spanische Erinnerungen* (1907-1909), herausgegeben und kommentiert von Rolf Haaser (Litblockin, 2011): 79-86. A brief biography of brother August is included in the Commentary to the volume, 185-187.
- 13 Versions of the typescripts were deposited in the Bibliothèque de Ville-La-Chaux-de-Fonds, the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris, and ETH Zurich.
- 14 The reference here is most probably to the Flemish Baroque master Jacob Jordaens, and his series titled *Le Roi Boit* [The King Drinks], ca. 1640.
- 15 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 160-161.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 48-49.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 162.
- 18 This passage appears in all versions of his manuscript, including *Le Voyage d'Orient* as published. We can only assume that the promise to delete was a stylistic deceit.

- 19 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 70.
- 20 Ibid., 161.
- 21 Ibid., 21.
- 22 Ibid., 19.
- 23 Ibid., 104.
- 24 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 18.
- 25 In this reference in his travel diary, Klipstein reverses the nouns in the title of Worringer's most famous book, which was also a doctoral dissertation. See also Jeanneret's sketchbook no. 1, 43, for a reference to Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*. The note reads: "à lire dit Klipstein" [Klipstein says, this should be read]. Later, on June 1, 1914, Jeanneret wrote to Klipstein concerning his mentor: "So where's the publication of the thesis? . . . I'm very interested in reading your work. Worringer was very smart to guide your research toward that theme. An abundance of facts and tendencies will be explained, and a tighter connection made between architecture and painting during those periods. I'm curious to see the illustrations which you're using to enlighten your text." (FLC E2-6 155-6)
- 26 One exception is noted by Tim Benton, *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer*, 13: the Portuguese architectural historian Armando Rabaça and his article "Documental Language and Abstraction in the Photographs of Le Corbusier," *Jornal dos Arquitectos*, no. 243 (December 2011). See also H. Allen Brooks, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 256.
- 27 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 104.
- 28 Ibid., 47-48.
- 29 Through the intercession of William Ritter, both men carried letter of introduction that would provide access to the two regal locations, Bucharest and the royal summer residence of Sinaia.
- 30 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 50-56. This "unidentified lady" has now been identified as Editha Klipstein (1880-1953), the wife of August Klipstein's brother Felix. I am grateful to Dr. Rolf Haaser, who kindly read a draft of this manuscript in April 2015, for clarifying the reference in his e-mail of May 10, 2015: "Before the *Orient-Reise*, the four of them were together for a few days. Editha and Felix met each other in Madrid in 1908 when the *El Greco*-mania reached the Spanish capital in the person of the art critic Julius Meier-Gräfe, with whom Felix traveled through Spain after the traces of *El Greco*. It was this milieu . . . into which August Klipstein entered when he joined Felix and Editha in Spain . . . Editha also showed interest in *Carmen Sylva* . . ." This might explain August's infatuation with *El Greco*, as well as Jeanneret's letter to

“a lady who told him of her admiration for the queen of Romania.”

- 31 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 52-53.
- 32 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, ms., 10-1, 10-2.
- 33 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 55.
- 34 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 10-a.
- 35 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 15.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 37 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 10-1.
- 38 In his letter to William Ritter on November 1, 1911, Jeanneret wrote: “Je suis fou de couleur blanche, du cube, de la sphere, du cylindre et de la pyramide du disque . . .” [FLC R3-18-130]
- 39 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 6.
- 40 Jeanneret’s reaction to this city was negative as well, but limited mostly to its location and layout: “It is a ridiculous capital, worse even: a dishonest city, dirty and disorganized . . .” (*Journey to the East*, 43). Later, when re-reading his own notes in 1965, Le Corbusier commented on this passage with an apologetic footnote, explaining that he was only 23 years old, that Serbia at the time was “enslaved by the Hapsburgs,” and that the revolt in Sarajevo had triggered World War I, thus darkening the reputation of the entire region and giving rise to the hostile epithet “the Balkans.” Klipstein is both more precise and less generous, expanding his judgment from the city of Belgrade to the people and the country as a whole. “Serbia is a tiny military state which goes with the warlike spirit of the landscape,” he wrote. “Part of the Serbian character is to see enemies both on the left and on the right . . . everything that is not connected with the military seems in a bad way . . . All the public works, undertaken at huge financial cost, are only half-finished or not finished at all . . . Belgrade seems to have united in itself all possible negative characteristics . . . and there is a terrible lack of culture. You can hardly take one step in the city when disappointment begins to follow disappointment” (*Orient-Reise*, 6c-9).
- 41 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 11.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 46 See Ivan Zaknic, “Le Corbusier’s Epiphany on Mount Athos,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 43, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 27-36.

- 47 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, 214-215.
- 48 Klipstein, *Orient-Reise*, 29.
- 49 “A day of celebration / a day of mourning / Life is made / in the blink of an eye / St. George Island? / What a cut-throat place / What filth / In truth.” See also *Orient-Reise*, 65.