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## Exhibition: PLEČNIK'S STUDENTS AT LE CORBUSIER'S STUDIO

**Opening: Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, at 8 p.m.**

**29th Maj – 20th June 2007**

Open: from Tuesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Galerija Vžigalica, Trg francoske revolucije 7, Ljubljana

1. This year, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the architect Jože Plečnik is commemorated, along with the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Swiss French architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier, and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the architect Edvard Ravnikar, who studied with the former and worked with the latter of the two masters. The exhibition is dedicated to these three architects, and particularly to the memory of the recently deceased architect Marko Župančič (1914-2007), the last of Plečnik's students who collaborated with Le Corbusier.

2. In Slovene writings on architecture, many details about Plečnik's students who worked at Le Corbusier's studio and for his cousin Pierre Jeanneret in Paris are still unresolved because the topic has not been thoroughly explored. The exhibition answers the questions: who were these architects, when did they collaborate with Corbusier and for how long and on which projects did they work? Seven of Plečnik's students are presented as a varied group of architects that featured significantly in the development of modernism in Slovenia in the same order that they arrived at Le Corbusier's studio on Rue de Sèvres in Paris before 1940.

3. Foreign and Slovene archives had to be explored along with other material. The Le Corbusier Foundation in Paris keeps a black book of the studio, the *Livre noir d'Atelier*, where Le Corbusier's associates made entries of plans that they had drawn. Each entry consists of the number of the plan, the abbreviation of the project and the title of the plan along with the scale, date and signature of the person who drew it. From the founding of the studio in the mid 1920s until the Second World War and also during the war, entries of approximately 3,700 plans were made in the book. At least 150 of them were made by Yugoslav architects, as architects from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia were described at the time. The foundation also keeps a list of associates compiled in the 1960s. Unfortunately the book and the list are incomplete. Approximately 100 architects from across the world worked at the studio on Rue de Sèvres before the Second World War. Of these, 17 were definitely Yugoslav, if not more. According to what is known now, 9 architects from Slovenia, 5 from Croatia and 3 from Serbia worked at the studio, including several engineers.

4. The architects Miroslav Oražem, Milan Sever, Hrvoje Brnčič, Marjan Tepina, Jovan Krunić, Edvard Ravnikar and Marko Zupančič learnt from two great masters of architecture and later found their own creative paths. In the exhibition area to the left, selected plans, documents, photographs, books, articles, letters and other items from the estates of the seven architects and other sources are presented, whereas to the right, other Slovene architects and engineers working with Le Corbusier, Croatian and

Serbian architects and other material connected with the main topic of the exhibition are put on display. The exhibition also features books written by Le Corbusier that were bought by Plečnik's students in Paris or elsewhere. Later Le Corbusier and his ideas and works at least partially influenced their writings. The display also features books and articles about Plečnik and Ravnikar, in which all main protagonists are featured and relations between them described.

5. The personalities of Plečnik and Le Corbusier have several points in common, but even more differences. Their oeuvres are diametrically opposed and have a completely different architectural language and expression. Their relationship is complex. They never met although they knew about each other. Plečnik was even intimidated by Le Corbusier and reportedly he detested him, whereas Le Corbusier showed respect for Plečnik's work, although sometimes he slightly patronised him (*votre bel et seu*). During the rise of functionalism, the architects Oražem, Sever, Brnčič, Tepina, Krunic and Ravnikar were not satisfied – actually they were displeased – with the classical foundations of architecture that they had received from Plečnik. They wanted to learn about contemporary architecture at its source – from one of the most important modern architects of the period. They became a bridge between Slovene architecture and the French cosmopolitan scene, a link between two cultures, between two giants of architecture and two different heartbeats of modernism.

6. After a short period of socialist realism after the Second World War, Le Corbusier's ideas became a basis for the rise of “extended functionalism” – of modernist architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. Because of the uncritical imitation and lack of understanding of modernist ideas, among other reasons, the critiques of modern architecture in the late 1970s and later became more frequent. During the postmodernism of the 1980s, we witnessed an international “rediscovery” and recognition of the architect Plečnik and his works, also due to the exhibition held at Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1986.

7. The whole group of Plečnik's students who worked with Le Corbusier and each individual member deserve to be promoted. The architect with the largest and most varied oeuvre among them is undoubtedly Edvard Ravnikar, who brought together the ideas of both architects, because he understood architectural logic and created a brilliant synthesis. Our aim is also to present the exhibition in those environments where its gaps could be filled: Paris, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Cetinje, Zagreb, and other cities. The purpose of this exhibition and its touring displays is to stimulate critical evaluation of the presented material and collect unknown material that eventually will be presented in a multi-lingual monograph entitled Plečnik's Students at Le Corbusier's Studio.

Exhibition curator: Dr Bogo Zupančič, curator of contemporary Slovene architecture at AML

Display and design: Primož Pislak of Luksstudio and Matej Zorec

The exhibition was prepared by the Architecture Museum of Ljubljana (AML) in association with the City Museum of Ljubljana and the Charles Nodier French Institute in Ljubljana.

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