

change in the relationships between things he sees as he moves through the visual field. The meanings with which he imbues these changes are, of course, personal, and it is only with unusual temerity (for Rowe) that he broaches the possibility of intersubjectivity when he proposes that Le Corbusier might have contrived this experience for the viewer.

This extraordinary overlapping, which we never think about sufficiently, forbids us to conceive of vision as an operation of thought that would set up before the mind a picture or representation of the worlds, a world of immanence and of ideality. Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by looking, he opens himself to the world.

*Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind"*

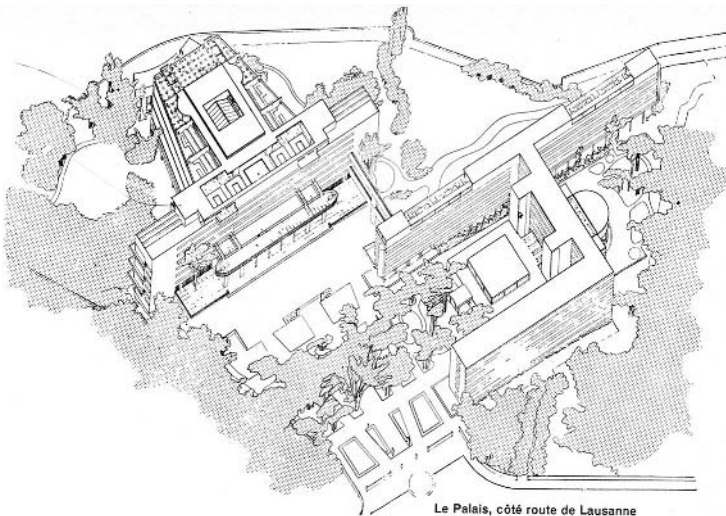
Rowe and Slutzky's essay "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," previously discussed with reference to depth which is visible in two dimensions, turns in its final pages to another work of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, the competition entry for the League of Nations in Geneva – a three-dimensional version of phenomenal transparency. In this case Rowe and Slutzky had to hypothesize the subjective experience of the complex site plan because this work was never built (Figure 1.21).

The League of Nations programme required a large volume for the Secretariat, but the architects mitigated its size and singularity by producing a site plan in which the "highly assertive" deep space of the vast entry court is:

repeatedly scored through and broken down into a series of lateral references – by trees, by circulations, by the momentum of the buildings themselves – so that finally, by a series of positive and negative implications, the whole area becomes a sort of monumental debate, an argument between a real and deep space and an ideal and shallow one.

*(Rowe and Slutzky 1997, p. 174)*

There is no single overview of the great entry court. Instead, the viewer becomes aware of these lateral scorings, or striations, by moving along an axis



Le Palais, côté route de Lausanne

**Figure 1.21** Le Corbusier. Genève: Palace of the League of Nations 1927 Plan FLC 23185 © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS)/ADAAGP, Paris/FLC.

that cuts through and past planes – of trees, of a terrace, of the narrow building blocks. The changing relationships of these elements can only be apperceived when the viewer is in motion. A screen of trees, for example, is discerned as a plane when it first “intersects” the viewer’s vision, but then becomes simultaneously the lateral edge of one space and parallel edge of another when the viewer has moved beyond it. Again, Merleau-Ponty’s comments on depth resonate: “[B]y virtue of depth [things] coexist in degrees, they slip into one another and integrate themselves” (1968, p. 219). The viewer’s movement sets all this in motion. As he or she moves, depth and scale fluctuate, objects displace each other and reappear. So, too, do the emergent meanings of these varying relationships between the things and the subject. Parallax requires a subject and it requires time; it is “an intertwining of vision and motion.”<sup>17</sup> What are the possible means of representing both the embodied viewer *and* time?<sup>18</sup>

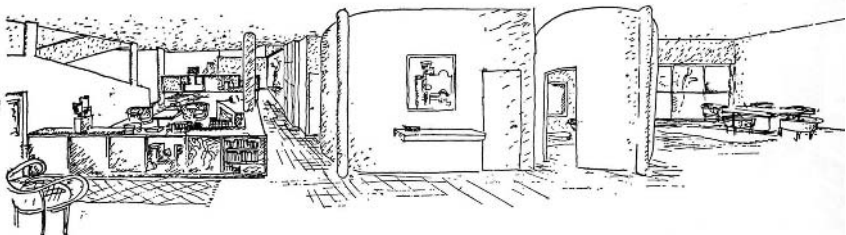
The hyper-real experience of the League of Nations had to be surmised by Rowe and Slutzky largely on the basis of the axonometric drawings. While perspective drawings were included in the competition documentation, they were composed only to describe the objective properties of the project, with the station point being a physical impossibility unless the viewer was suspended in mid-air by a crane. In short, there exist no representations of the League of Nations project that are intended to convey the experience that Rowe and Slutzky describe.

Le Corbusier’s perspective sketches often delineate spaces with discontinuous wall surfaces and freestanding elements such as columns (verticals), tables (horizontal), and stairs and ramps (diagonals) which, at least conceptually, allude to the experience of parallax which will be induced by the viewer’s movement (Figure 1.22). But it requires an effort of imagination, such as Rowe and Slutzky’s, to extract temporal experience from such an image. Steven Holl has experimented with paired representations that more literally speak of the changing relationships between architectural elements when the subject’s point of view changes (Figure 1.23).

Depth . . . is the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as in inexhaustible reality full of reserves.

*Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non-sense*

Holl’s watercolours are more enticing, more suggestive of a multiplicity of views and changing relationships between things. The presence of the viewer is always implicated by the eye-level station point and the presence of a strong focal point, even when it is hidden from view (Figure 24). From the single point of view that suggests a primary path, there exist multiple spaces of



**Figure 1.22** Le Corbusier. Neuilly sur Seine: Villa Meyer 1925 Plan FLC 31514 © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS)/ADAAGP, Paris/FLC.