



Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation

The Marseille *Unité d'habitation* brings together Le Corbusier's vision for communal living with the needs and realities of post-war France. Up to 1600 people were to live in a single-slab (block) 'vertical village', complete with an internal shopping centre half way up, a recreation ground and children's nursery on the roof and a generous surrounding area of parkland.

The *Unité* introduced the world to raw concrete or *béton brut* with its texture defined by the wooden planks shaping it when it was poured. This involuntary prototype for the *New Brutalism* to follow came from necessity: not only was there insufficient steel in post-war France for a steel construction, but there was insufficient skilled labour for consistent precise construction. So Le Corbusier made a virtue of this necessity: "... I have decided to make beauty by contrast. I will find its complement and establish a play between crudity and finesse, between the dull and the intense, between precision and accident. I will make people think and reflect: this is the reason for the violent, clamorous, triumphant polychromy of the façades".

ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 What two elements did Le Corbusier bring together for this project?
- 2 Is there anything else besides the apartments?
- 3 What are the walls made of and why?
- 4 How would you explain Le Corbusier's concept of beauty?