

Fig. 1 Portrait of Pierre Jeanneret in Chandigarh, not dated, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal © Jeet Malhotra



Fig. 2 Pierre Jeanneret in his house in Chandigarh seated in a bamboo chair designed by him, not dated, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal © Jeet Malhotra

## Introducing Pierre Jeanneret — architect, designer, educator — in Chandigarh Maristella Casciato

My objective in this lecture is to give an account of the architect Pierre Jeanneret's contribution to the construction of the new capital of the state of Punjab in India, to be later named Chandigarh. The city, marked by its modern buildings and neighborhoods, its housing and leisure parks, its infrastructure and landscapes, has been fully associated with a single Western designer, known worldwide as Le Corbusier.

The title of tonight's presentation intentionally situates the two poles of my presentation – Pierre Jeanneret in his relationship to Chandigarh – as equally essential. While examining the multifaceted aspects of Pierre Jeanneret's responsibilities during his long mandate as "Senior Architect" for the Capital Project, I wish to reveal his role as one of the major actors in the development of the city – a role that was also instrumental in the transfer of knowledge that operates as a means of creating the language of modern Indian architecture.

Let me also point out that by using the term "introducing", I am literally proposing to initiate you into an appraisal of Pierre Jeanneret's professional and cultural contributions to the construction of the new Punjabi capital, and beyond (Figs.1 & 2). In that respect, I would like to acknowledge the opportunity I have been given to access the extensive and not yet fully researched archival documentation – Pierre Jeanneret's Chandigarh papers– that the Canadian Centre for Architecture has recently acquired.



Fig. 3 Cover page from Amédée Ozenfant and Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *Après le cubisme* (Paris, Altamira, 1999), Call no. 178129, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal



Fig. 4 Cover pages from *L'Esprit Nouveau* (Paris: Éditions de L'Esprit Nouveau, 1920-1925), Call no. CAGE W. E86, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

I have organized my lecture according to a narrative scheme that begins with a short introduction on Pierre Jeanneret's personality, continues with the background of his position within the capital's design, and finally describes his assignments in Chandigarh. These range from building supervisor for the monumental area of the Capitol, to project manager, developer of plans for housing and public premises, and furniture designer to his full involvement in training the young team of Indian architects, who were his collaborators for fifteen years.

### 1. Pierre Jeanneret: Personalia

While I am positive that you are well acquainted with Le Corbusier's biography, Pierre has to this day remained to a large extent in his shadow.

Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, later known as Le Corbusier, and Pierre Jeanneret were first cousins. Pierre, nine years younger, was born in Geneva in 1896. He was educated at the École des Beaux-Arts of his native town, where, as opposed to his cousin, he graduated in architecture. Though their cultural background showed some similarities, Pierre was by training more technically oriented than Charles-Édouard, as well as by character more meticulous. Both of these qualities would have an impact on their future work relationship.

In 1917 Charles-Édouard Jeanneret settled in Paris (Fig.3). One year later, upon his cousin's invitation, Pierre followed suite, leaving his native "*country of cows and bankers*", as he ironically portrayed Switzerland. On his cousin's advice, he entered Perret Brothers' agency to complete his education in architecture. Although August Perret was keen on keeping him in his office, in 1920 Pierre chose to join his cousin's atelier, which was at the time fully engaged in theory and painting "*après le cubisme*", borrowing the title of one of Charles- Édouard's early writings. Pierre began taking part in all the activities initiated by Le Corbusier, who by that time had adopted this pseudonym.

As an example, Pierre was from the very beginning involved in the production of the influential magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, co-launched by Le Corbusier and the painter Ozenfant, even to the extent of designing the magazine's covers (Fig. 4).



Fig. 5.1 Cover page from W. Boesiger, O. Stonorov, eds., *Le Corbusier / Pierre Jeanneret, Gesamtwerk 1910-1929* (Zurich: Éditions Girsberger, 1929; 1956), Call no. NA44.L433.2 L4 1930 v.1 c.5, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

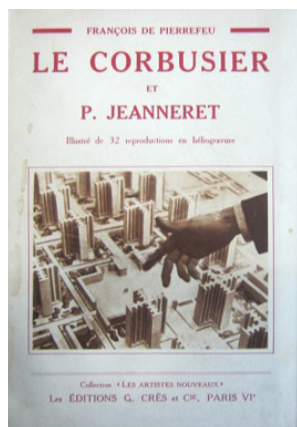


Fig. 5.2 Cover page from François de Pierrefeu, *Le Corbusier et P. Jeanneret* (Paris: Éditions G. Grès, 1932), Call no. 9083, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

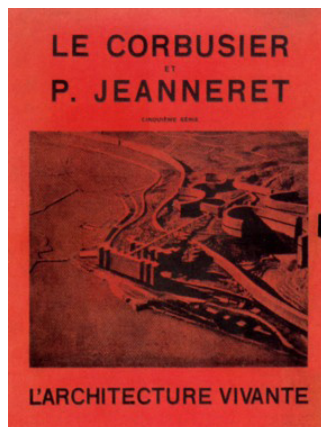


Fig. 5.3 Cover page from *Le Corbusier et P. Jeanneret* (Paris: Éditions A. Morancé, 1927-1937), Call no. CAGE NA44.L433 (ID:86-B3693) v.5, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

The year 1922 marked the birth of their architectural partnership, designated Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. From then and until 1940, they co-signed all the major designs, competition entries, town-planning projects produced in the Parisian atelier they shared.

By mutual agreement Pierre was appointed *chef d'atelier*, a position that put him in charge of the office's daily practice. Truly construction-oriented, he was the builder in the partnership. As one of the office's collaborators recalled:

Pierre was... deeply concerned with everything related to buildings, including the solution of minor details, which he knew how to solve in the most ingenious ways.

Pierre also participated in exhibitions and conferences and significantly contributed to his cousin's theoretical thinking. Yet, of the two, Le Corbusier was the public figure, the esteemed intellectual, and the warrior who publicly devoted his life to the fight for modernity.

Despite the wide scope of their collaboration, which touched on many fields, in the 20th-century architectural literature, Pierre Jeanneret's role and production have received only marginal notice: Le Corbusier the brain and Pierre the hand, to use the metaphor of the body so much tied to the former's vocabulary.

This assessment seems abnormally shortsighted considering, for instance, that the most comprehensive overview of Le Corbusier's work, the well-known and celebrated *Oeuvre Complète* series, has acknowledged the double authorship ever since its appearance in 1929 (Fig. 5). Given that Le Corbusier himself was the author of the texts, this attribution further proves how highly he valued Pierre's contribution to the design process, and viewed him as essential to his production, even on a par with him.

It is worth understanding more deeply what kind of relationship they had and how each behaved towards the other. In essence, they fully trusted each other, although in the different stages of their long partnership the way they expressed themselves, or better, the way Le Corbusier spoke of Pierre, went from showing a spirit of solidarity, I would even say fraternity, to the most trenchant and bitter criticism.



I quote few lines from the genuinely sincere testament that Jean Petit assembled two years after the master's death:

Between me and Pierre Jeanneret there always existed unlimited and complete trust, despite the difficulties of life, despite the inevitable differences... Pierre Jeanneret has been my best friend. His modesty, and may be the grumpy temperament of "father" Corbu, has at times prevented us from having a better dialogue... [Nevertheless] he was able to boost my confidence... This is friendship. And friendship is what counts in life.

In June 1940, just a few days after German troops invaded Paris, Le Corbusier and Pierre were forced to close down the atelier in rue de Sèvres. They moved to Ozon, a village in the French Alps, and lived in neighboring houses. At that point, faced with the harsh circumstances of war, the cousins broke their long partnership and separated.

Le Corbusier made himself available for collaborating with the government of Vichy, where he eventually settled in early 1941 (he was back in Paris by 1942, however). On December 6, 1940 Pierre Jeanneret left Ozon, then in the occupied French territories for Grenoble where he joined a group of colleagues – architects, engineers, craftsmen, and journalists –, who were politically close to the Communist party and involved in the Resistance.

In a recently published document, dated Ozon, December 23, 1940, one can witness Le Corbusier's love/hate feeling towards his cousin, and his resentments about Pierre's unexpected departure. Le Corbusier was left alone with his wife, Yvonne, hesitant and trying to find good reasons to assist Maréchal Pétain and his government in what he thought could eventually be the reconstruction of France.

In this fairly long text, Le Corbusier surveys twenty years of his professional life and relationships with people with whom he associated, and Pierre was one of them, of course. These are few significant passages:

For several years now Pierre's attitude has made me think. No longer is there unfettered loyalty to a cause, but deaf rivalry, activity without me, repeated whenever he gets the opportunity...

Our 1921 agreement, when I was director of L'Esprit Nouveau and Pierre was a 25-year-old novice in life and in his career, we decided to open an atelier that I would manage. My position was not ambiguous because

we agreed to share the profits according to the ratio 2 for me and 1 for Pierre...

Little by little Pierre became absorbed in personal works he hide from me until a certain event revealed them...

In 1940 Charlotte [Perriand] left for Japan, telling me about her departure in passing one week in advance. At Ozon, in June forced to reveal his plans, Pierre told me he was also going to Japan, where Charlotte had houses to build... So Pierre and Charlotte had already decided to leave for Japan before the collapse. They would have presented me with a fait accompli...

On several occasions I told Pierre: many would be happy to be in your place, to be on the same team as Corbu. He considers it mutual.

Only random contacts between the two cousins occurred in the following years. Back in occupied Paris, they re-opened their practices separately. Le Corbusier returned in 1942 to rue de Sèvres, while Pierre Jeanneret moved into the old apartment in rue Jacob in 1944, where he also set up his office.

But a new season of collaboration would begin at the very end of 1950 on the occasion of Corbu's involvement in the planning of the new capital of Punjab, in India.

At this point, I wish to give you a brief overview of India's political situation in the late '40s, before explaining how and why the collaboration between the two cousins was resumed.

## 2. INDIA as a Nation

The background to Le Corbusier's involvement with the planning of Chandigarh was the partition of India after independence from the British Rule in 1947 (Fig. 6). Punjab's ancient capital, Lahore, was lost and became part of Pakistan. This prompted the first post-colonial Indian government to try to transform the loss into a banner for the identity of the recently freed Indian nation. At the time, Prime Minister Nehru made a decision to build a new capital city of outstanding and progressive architecture.

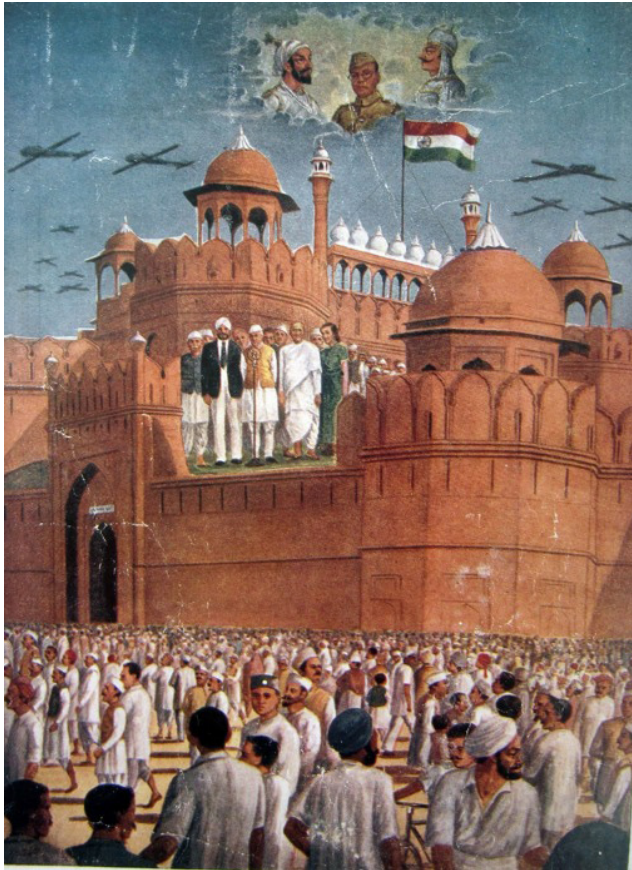


Fig. 6 Address to the Nation by Prime Minister J. Nehru on Independence Day (August 15, 1947) from ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi, print reproduced in *Traces of India : photography, architecture, and the politics of representation, 1850-1900* (Montréal, Canadian Centre for Architecture; New Haven, Yale Centre for British Art, 2003), p. 288, Call no. CAGE CCA P2003-1 c.1, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

The organization of India as a nation-state was implicit in the imagination of India as a nation. The demand for a nation-state with its own modernity, one that differed from Western modernity was mandatory for an apostle of modernization like Nehru as well as for nationalists. As it turned out, the critique of the West by Indian post-colonial champions brought together Gandhi and Nehru, even though these two men had widely differing visions of modernity.

As Gyan Prakash remarks in his *Another Reason. Science and Imagination of Modern India* (1999):

India ended up with a modern nation-state because both Nehruvian and Gandhian critiques of Western modernity were articulated in the historical context of nationalism.

Although it is not the objective of this lecture to discuss how nationalism and modernity were closely intertwined as the core of India's timeless cultural singularity, the birth of Chandigarh still needs to be placed in the ideological context of the anti-colonial nationalism.

Another idea strikes me with regard to the cosmopolitan nationalism of Nehru's personality: his gendering of India as a woman, "this lady – mysterious and wanton – with a past" he stated as he unveiled her image. It was a way to institute the logic of modernity within the constitutive body of the nation. The nation as mother and as woman provided a nurturing home to modernity.

It would be too precipitous to jump to the conclusion that Le Corbusier was aware of this discourse when he drew his famous sketch "the birth of a capital". Doubtless he was taken by the legend of the location of the new capital, to be planned in the vicinity of the temple called Chandhi Mandir, devoted to the Hindu Goddess Chandi, in the foothill of the Shivalik ranges. His plan for Chandigarh was very much produced under the influence of Nehru's optimistic vision, tinged by his brand of "scientific humanism".

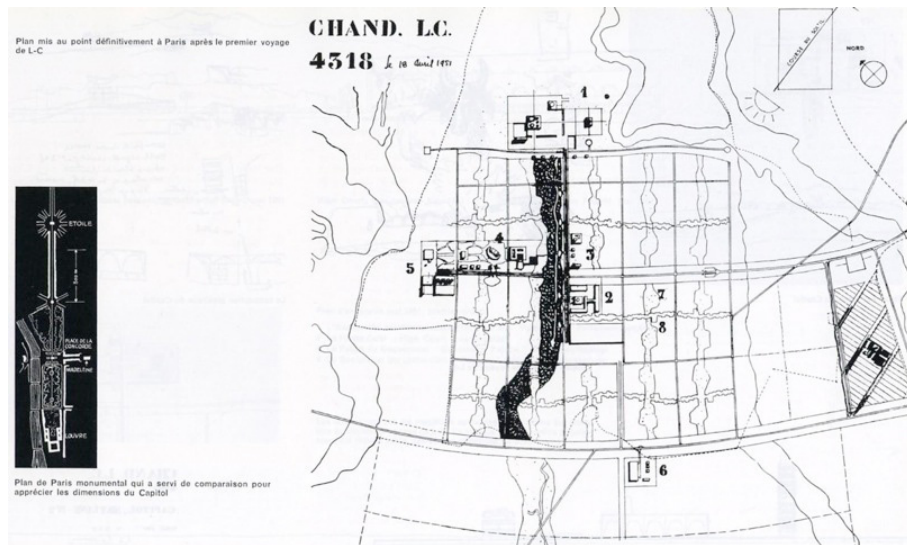


Fig. 7 Le Corbusier: Plan of Chandigarh, India, no 4318, April 18, 1951 in *Oeuvre complète*, 1946-1952 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1953), Call no. NA44. L433.2 L4 1930 v.5 c.2, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

### 3. CHANDIGARH's signature and authorship

Le Corbusier's signature on the Capitol complex esplanade with its modern monuments is evident (Fig. 7). They are – borrowing Prime Minister Nehru's words – the “*expression of the nation's faith in the future*”.

What is less known is that in the Chandigarh building enterprise, which lasted for over a decade, the famous Swiss-French architect was not the solo player and that Chandigarh's urban fabric and modern buildings were shaped by several other people, among them western architects and Indian architects, town planners, and engineers.

Two books that appeared ten years apart – *The Open Hand* published in 1977 as a collection of essays, and Ravi Kalia's informative narrative on the making of Chandigarh – were the first to help us to reconsider the issue of authorship in the construction of the new capital.

*The Open Hand* contains the first accounts of another analysis of Chandigarh's myth as the city uniquely attributed to Le Corbusier. The editor gave voice to Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, the British couple who collaborated with the master in the Chandigarh project. Both their essays incorporate vivid recollections of their early involvement along with some illuminating anecdotes.

This book also includes the epic text by the town planner Madhu Sarin, then still very young, on the clash between the preoccupations of the great master and the material reality of the people for whom he designed his creation.

Kalia's *Chandigarh. The Making of an Indian City* is more a survey than a critical essay, yet it is the first comprehensive history of Chandigarh written by an Indian scholar from a post-colonial perspective. In Kalia's second chapter, titled “Architects”, all the professional actors – architects and town planners – are described, their roles in the various stages of the Chandigarh project discussed in detail.

Both books help us to understand that the construction of the new capital of Punjab, “a city planned literally from A to Z” – borrowing the title from Chandigarh daily newspaper *The Tribune* of January 26, 1954 – needs to be reconsidered as a truly Indian endeavor, with the

participation of several Western architects, whose names have been long overshadowed by one solo actor, namely Le Corbusier.

Interestingly enough, the covers of both publications feature the “open hand”: a Corbusian sketch in the 1977 book (the architect had died in 1965) and a picture of the open hand monument in Kalia’s book. This notorious monument, to which Le Corbusier had argued for since the beginning of his Indian engagement, was built and finally inaugurated in 1985. It is once again the subject of controversy, specifically, after the creation of the two different states of Punjab and Haryana sharing Chandigarh as their capital.

Returning now to our two major protagonists, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret: the post-WWII reunion between the cousins was helped by the circumstances through which Le Corbusier was assigned the commission. In late summer 1950 engineer Varma and State official Thapar, delegates of the Indian Prime Minister Nehru were sent on a visit to Europe to identify the most suitable designer to carry out the difficult task of building the new capital. This assignment became even more urgent after the withdrawal of the American planner Albert Mayer caused, among other reasons, by the sudden death of his partner, the American-Polish architect Matthew Nowicki.

Eugène Claudius-Petit, then the French Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism and an unflagging advocate of modern architecture, received the Indian delegates in Paris in early November 1950.

A few years earlier, he had favored awarding the commission of the Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles to Le Corbusier. A fervent admirer of Corbu’s modernism, Claudius-Petit firmly supported his candidacy to the Indian delegation, which already considered Corbu an option. In fact, Claudius-Petit did more. Personally acquainted with the Jeanneret cousins, he was convinced that only that team – with “*the diversity of their natures and the mutual respect of their qualities*” as he commented– could face the challenge offered by the Indian government. In short, Claudius-Petit acted as mediator between the cousins and encouraged their reunion.

Le Corbusier himself gives us his own account of the commission’s brief in a letter to the architect José Luis Sert, dated November 30, 1951. He wrote:

Le Corbusier will be nominated “Architectural Advisor” to the Government of Punjab – Capital Project. Maxwell Fry and Pierre Jeanneret will take the position of “Senior Architects” working on site at the head of the Plan Office and as coordinators of a team of young Indians architects, trained in the USA, England and abroad. A connection will be set up between the Plan Office and Le Corbusier’s atelier in Paris... Jane Drew will join Maxwell Fry as soon as she can.

It is clear from these very preliminary words that Corbu envisaged a kind of vicarious practice. It is obvious that in his mind there were two rooms: one in Paris and one in Chandigarh. The room in Paris was a drawing machine and a direct extension of his hand. In Chandigarh, he wished to establish a laboratory or field station to allow a certain degree of education that would foster architectural modernity to be born in India. There was no question about his leadership; at the most, Pierre Jeanneret would be his right hand on site.

In a following paragraph in the same letter, Le Corbusier explains that his cousin “*was afraid to go to India*” and that finally it was Charlotte Perriand who was the only capable of convincing him:

She was completely enthusiastic about Pierre’s acceptance of the offer, considering that it was for him a way to escape the difficult conditions of his present life.

It would take me another lecture to unfold the story of Pierre and Charlotte’s relationship in all its intimate as well as professional dimensions. On one hand Charlotte Perriand could well appreciate the esprit d’aventure that animated the two cousins and she understood the exceptional nature of the commission; on the other hand, she showed a rather cunning attitude towards her beloved Pierre, aiming to force him to give up his renewed practice in Paris as architect and town planner as well as all his friends.

But, let’s keep our narrative close to the facts. The scene moves now to Corbu’s office at 35 rue de Sèvres, where he, Pierre Jeanneret, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew gathered to discuss the Chandigarh endeavor.

According to the minutes of this meeting held on December 6, 1950, after he had met the two Indian delegates, he proposed that:



Chandigarh Plan Office will be managed and led in two-fold fashion... Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry on one side, and Pierre Jeanneret on the other side.

Le Corbusier teamed his cousin Pierre with the young British couple, who themselves had earlier suggested his name to the Indian delegates during their first European stop, in London.

Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry were well acquainted with construction in equatorial climates, having worked and built in the British West African Colonies from 1944 to 1947.

Without doubt this specific qualifications secured them a complete involvement in early stage of the project, fully satisfying the Indian delegates, let alone the fact that, as Le Corbusier wittily remarked:

Maxwell Fry is well known for his ability in writings reports. In fact, one of his reports was inadvertently left on my table and I was able to understand how perfectly it dealt with administrative issues.

Yet, speaking about authorship, the most significant statement appears at the end of the introductory paragraph of the Parisian meeting's minutes. Le Corbusier confirmed that Jeanneret, Drew and Fry would be his partners: "*Vous aurez la signature avec moi.*" (You will have your signature along with me), that is: we will all be equally credited.

Finally, on December 19, 1950 Le Corbusier signed the formal contract with the Indian government and two months later, on February 20 1951, the two cousins left Geneva for their first trip to India (Fig. 8).

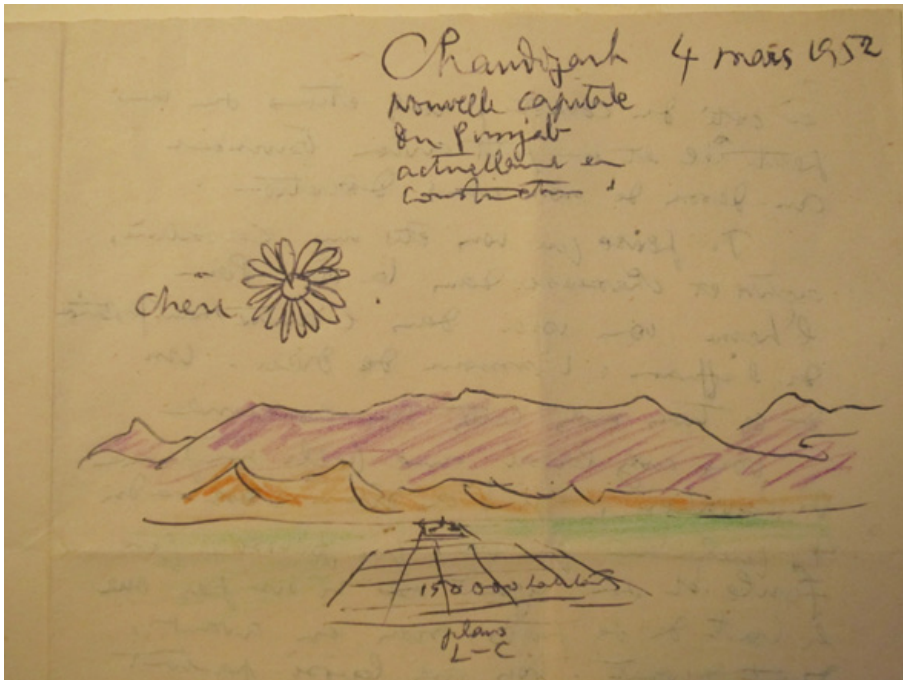


Fig. 8 Letter from Le Corbusier to Marguerite Tjader Harris with sketch of the grid of Chandigarh, India, 4 March 1952, DR1984:1654, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal





Fig. 9 Pierre Jeanneret, photographer: Views of Chandigarh before the start of the development of the capital of Punjab, beginning of 1950s, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal  
Not dated, beginning of 1950's. CCA Collection, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret



Fig. 10 Pierre Jeanneret, photographer: Four scenes from daily life in India, beginning of 1950s, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

#### 4. CHANDIGARH before CHANDIGARH

While Corbu recorded his immediate thoughts and vibrant sketches in his notebook, the “Album Punjab Simla Chandigarh, Mars 1951”, Jeanneret chose his Rolleiflex camera to explore the social and anthropological dimensions of the Indian villages that populate the plain where Chandigarh would be planned (Figs. 9 & 10).

It is worth noting that the Corbusian “Album Punjab” like his letters to his wife, Yvonne, and to his mother have been little studied, yet they represent an essential source for any detailed work on Chandigarh. Plus, the “Album Punjab” is the last of Le Corbusier’s notebooks that have neither been reprinted nor fully transcribed.

Similarly, Jeanneret’s photographic records of Chandigarh before Chandigarh, among many other images (a total of almost 3,000 negatives) have just been acquired by the CCA and have never been exhibited or published.

Under the leadership of Le Corbusier, who would work in Paris and travel to India twice a year, it was Pierre Jeanneret who remained in charge of the coordination and management of the project to a much larger extent than what emerges from official documents. His extended and close partnership with his cousin and their mutual trust account for Jeanneret’s ultimately predominant role, as well as the fact that the British couple had already left Chandigarh in 1954, at the end of their three-year contract, when the city was still largely under construction.

It was soon established that Jeanneret would send full reports to the office in Paris every other week. From that moment on, a constant flow of drawings, sketches, letters and notes traveled back and forth between Paris and Chandigarh. These letters became the diaries of a joint endeavor conducted with the daring spirit the two cousins shared.

In the very first letter Pierre sent to Corbu from Simla – the British resort north of the Chandigarh’s plain where the architects lived in the early stages of the project, he wrote:

Dear Corbu. These lines are late, because they were meant to tell you the pleasure I have had during this month spent with you in India—we hadn’t worked together for 10 years, and this resumption was cloudless. Since your departure, we have continued to work very hard.

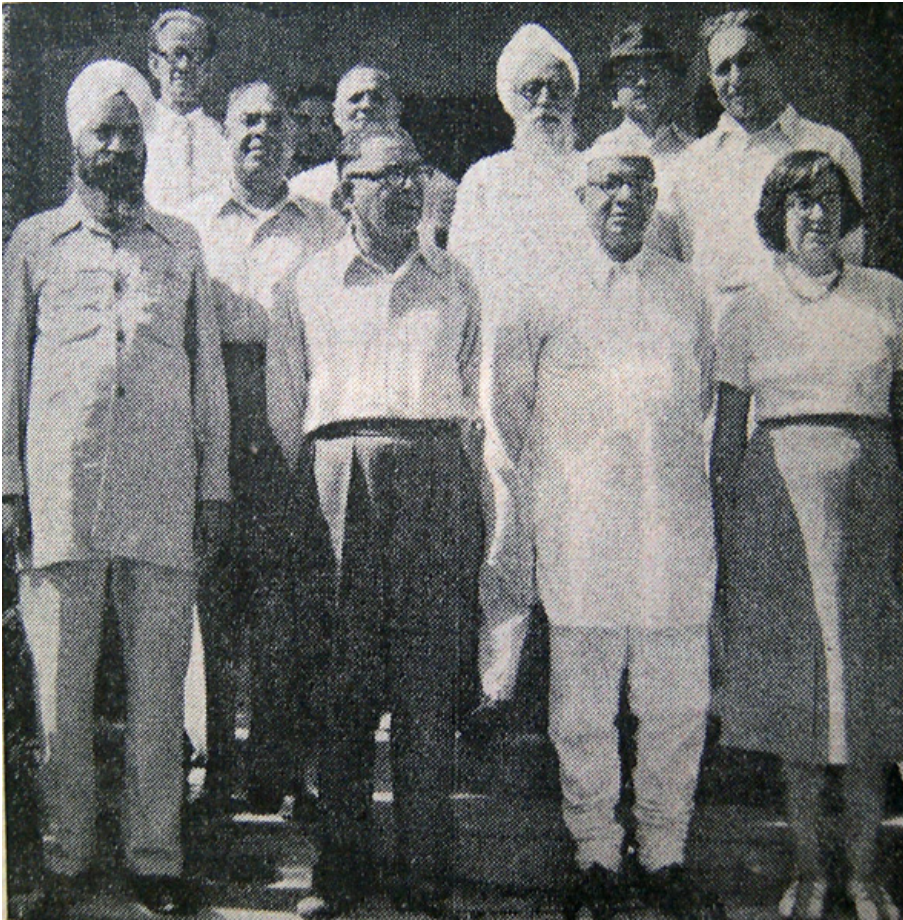


Fig. 11 The New Capital Advisory Committee at Chandigarh. Among others in the photograph : E. Maxwell Fry, architect (top row, first left); Pierre Jeanneret, architect (top row right, with the hat); P. N. Thapar, administrator of the capital project (middle row, first left); P. L. Varma, chief engineer (lower row, second from the left); Jane B. Drew, architect (lower row, at the far right). Press clipping from *The Times of India / Chandigarh*, October 20, 1951, Fonds Jane B. Drew, RIBA, London

Hundreds of missives were mailed on a regular basis over a period of 15 years, with some moments of crisis when the exchange of telegrams and memos became a daily occurrence. This correspondence, which until now has never been systematically investigated, is the key to a thorough understanding of Jeanneret's responsibility in the construction of the capital.

Here is another example of the flood of exchanges:

Fry has gone to London to attend his daughter's wedding, and afterwards he will be dealing with his business in Africa. Then in early October he will return to Simla with Jane Drew. I'm not too pleased about this and I would need your support, because 2 against 1, including one woman, who, on top of everything, is, I think, rather scheming.

From the very beginning Jeanneret's role involved negotiating with Indian authorities, a task that, according to the letters and reports, turned out to be extremely demanding (Fig. 11). It was often a real battle to get plans approved or changed without their coherence being betrayed. The fundamental reason for these disagreements is obvious: the new urbanism of the capital was designed from a distance, astride two cultures, and, most significantly, under the direction of Western architects just when India finally entered the post-colonial stage.





Fig. 12 Furniture and rug designed by Pierre Jeanneret, not dated, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal © Jeet Malhotra

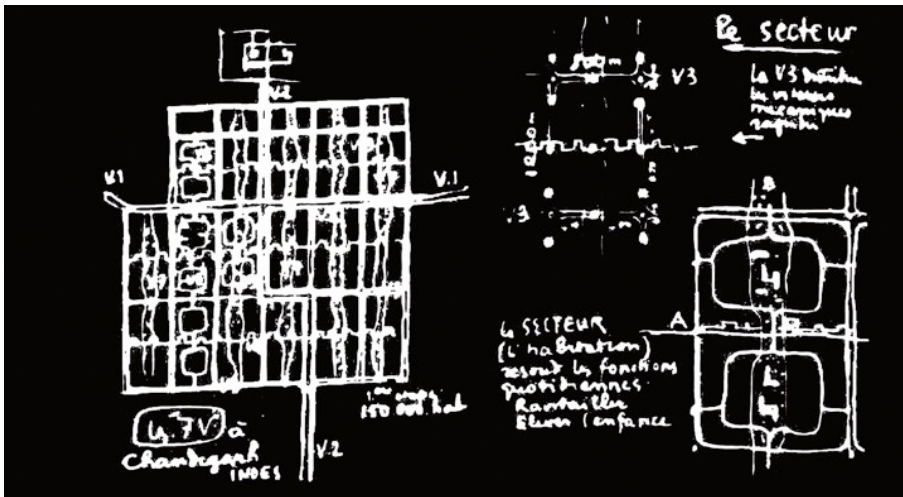


Fig. 13 System of the « 7 Vs » and sector scheme, Chandigarh, India, in *Le Corbusier, L'urbanisme des trois établissements humains* (Paris : Éditions de Minuit 1959), p. 46 and p. 51, Call no. NA44. L433. A35 1999 c.1, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

## 5. Working in CHANDIGARH

Jeanneret's move to Chandigarh from 1951 to 1965, which could be seen as a hard choice for a European to make, allowed him to mediate between the design demands coming from Le Corbusier, who had total faith in his skill as well as in his loyalty, and the requests of Indian authorities, who eventually relied on him owing to his boundless devotion to the building of the new capital.

The “Chandigarh family”, portrayed by Le Corbusier, vividly conveys the individual story of each member: he is the crow and a rooster his cousin Pierre, while a kid and a goat embody the relationship between Fry and his wife Jane Drew.

Let me return to the two cousins. Once again Corbu's letter to Pierre states:

Listen, my dear old Pierre, there are no secrets about our relationship. You are the man of mystery, cryptic, inscrutable, and yet you are the best companion I could wish for. You have learnt to use the word “balance” in English. Our equilibrium is propitious. Let us keep things as they are.

The faithfulness with which Jeanneret defended the cause of the modern architecture he had envisioned with Le Corbusier and, at the same time, his aptitude at sharing ideas and options with the Indian colleagues in charge of management for the creation of Chandigarh, allowed the miracle to happen.

Le Corbusier himself explicitly acknowledged the degree of responsibility his cousin had accepted when commenting: *“L'architecture Corbu à Chandigarh ne serait peut-être pas sans Pierre”* (Fig. 12). (Without Pierre, Corbu's architecture in Chandigarh might never have been). This wording contains a revealing idiosyncrasy: Le Corbusier refers to his own production as a kind of trademark. The cult of personality thus expressed, and encouraged by Corbu himself, probably obscured the work itself and may account for the fact that Pierre has remained relatively unknown.

In the first years Pierre Jeanneret's most pressing tasks included the definition of the Master Plan grid and the application of the “7 Vs” model for the road network, the development of the urban scheme for the residential sectors, and the program for government housing (Fig. 13).



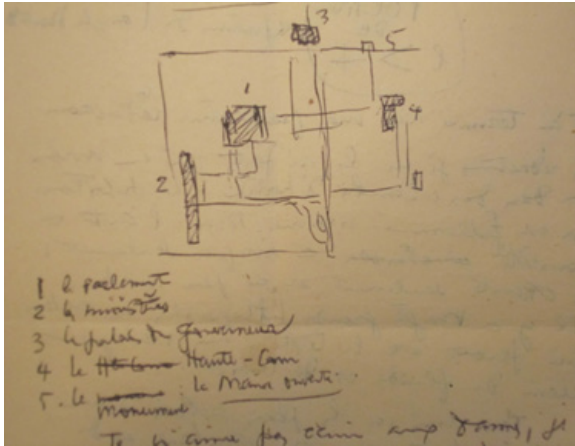


Fig. 14 Letter from Le Corbusier to Marguerite Tjader Harris with sketch plans of Chandigarh, India, 4 March 1952, DR1984:1654, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

Last, but not least, was the need to begin work on Le Corbusier's plans for the Capitol complex, comprising the High Court, the Assembly, the Secretariat, and the Governor's Palace (all but the Governor's Palace were built).

For the Capitol complex, whose drawings came from Paris (remember that Corbu had accepted the city's mandate on the express condition that he would design the Capitol himself), Jeanneret prepared vast quantities of building details and oversaw the daily construction work. This involved dealing with budget, workers, and building supplies, as well as defending Corbu's choices in design, such as the use of exposed reinforced concrete for the Capitol edifices, the first time that this material was so widely adopted.

The Chandigarh Capitol thus represented the largest complex to date to exploit this technical solution [Fig. 14]. Although the Indian school of civil engineering was not unfamiliar with, Le Corbusier's knowledge of building with exposed concrete was limited, especially considering that his Unité in Marseilles, which was his first real experience on a large scale in that field, was not yet completed. In this respect, Pierre's remarkable technical talent and skills, coupled with a team of Indian engineers, were essential to the Capitol project's success.

At a point of crisis, during the construction of the Ministerial Palace, known as the Secretariat, the defense of the corbusian béton brut is echoed in the following words: Regarding the office spaces of the Ministries, I made the decision to have pillars in béton brut (exposed reinforced concrete)...with tapestries, carpets, furniture, quite extraordinary office spaces. Indian tradition is the tradition of rough materials like the stone, the roughest known, as well as of the most magnificent colors (certainly the most intense of the whole world). Our powerful Gentlemen in Chandigarh have been educated at Oxford and used to looking at British middle-class houses in the foggiest climate on earth. They took back with them the idea of grey and of the nuances of beige, quite the opposite of any Indian esprit. I'm absolutely resolute in insisting upon my ideas and I am ready to manifest this fundamental aesthetic point of view as a government advisor to the Prime Minister.

Pierre Jeanneret's monitoring presence in Chandigarh was indeed as decisive as Corbu's inspiration and initial design (Fig. 15). His success can be measured under a double perspective: on the one hand, Jeanneret gained the necessary trust of the project's Indian partners; yet, and more specifically, he was instrumental in bringing to completion works of extraordinary constructive quality, as visitors to Chandigarh would instantly appreciate.



Fig. 15 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret in the Architects' Office in Chandigarh with the Chandigarh grid in the background, 1956, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal © Jeet Malhotra

## 6. Living in CHANDIGARH

The issue of government housing also deserves particular attention because it marks a watershed in the definition of an Indian post-colonial dwelling architecture, which at the time was still in debt to the British bungalow type.

Although Corbu was keen on testing in Chandigarh the vertical living model he was at the time building in Marseille, the only housing plan that was in fact developed for Chandigarh was a scheme for a peon's horizontal village, whose immediate precedent was to be found in the CIAM Grids and in the experimental units proposed by young French architects then working in Morocco and Algeria.

Despite Le Corbusier's limited involvement in detailing the sectors' planning, the model for Chandigarh remained that of his *ville radieuse*, in accordance with his indications in terms of green areas, city center, and traffic separation. The major change was the replacement of the *redent*, the high-rise housing blocks, laid down in long lines stepping in and out, with a horizontal model of one to two story houses.

Jeanneret with Drew and Fry provided layouts for 13 different types of houses, with reference to the different social classes for which they were intended. To cut down on land use and construction costs, the lower categories of housing, from Type 8 to Type 13, were planned in rows, most of them in back to back layouts with inner courtyards. This housing disposition was conceived in order to build four "villages", separated by green areas, for each residential sector. In this way the module of the horizontal village initially proposed by Le Corbusier's peons housing was directly evoked albeit with a less rigid and more varied layout.

Drew and Fry were mainly involved in planning residences for senior and intermediate civil servants (Figs. 16 & 17). In the early phase Jeanneret worked to design low cost governmental housing for the more underprivileged classes. These were mainly built in sectors 22 and 23, the first areas to be developed in Chandigarh as a whole.

Housing Type 13, designed by Pierre Jeanneret for Chandigarh's lowest class, was either a single- or double-storied row house, generally consisting of two rooms, a kitchen, a water-closet and a bathroom, with an average area of about 42 square meters, more or less matching what



Fig. 16 Photographs (detail) of the model of Sector 22, Chandigarh, India. Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

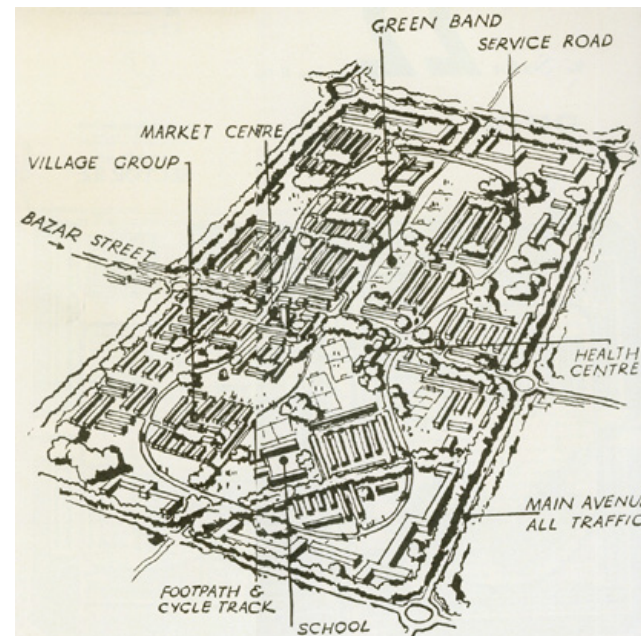


Fig. 17 Jane B. Drew (?): Planning of Sector 22, 1953-1955 from *Marg*, (December 1961), p. 24, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

was debated in the Second CIAM Congress in Frankfurt and indicated as the modernist *existenz-minimum* dwelling.

Jeanneret wrote about the constrained budget he was confronting as follows:

I have 4 types of houses that ought to begin, for which I have had to constantly remove and then remove again various elements that were to me of some satisfaction, and it's like that all the time. The garden walls have almost totally disappeared, the verandas too. Your minimum size houses, which I think perfect, are too expensive by 60%... One thing you should know: all prices were established by engineers before our arrival, and in spite of my hopes, there is no way can they be topped.

The shared feature of all the housing constructions designed by Jeanneret was the use of locally produced bricks, left exposed or sometimes plastered and white washed. In an assortment of patterns, Jeanneret employed these bricks in load-bearing walls, in trelliswork or latticed brickwork, parapets, balustrades, brise-soleils, and even in built-in furniture, echoing the extraordinary geometric patterns of colors and fabrics in traditional Indian weaving. The building process, relying on unskilled workers and based on the virtues of craftsmanship, made the best of the qualities of bricks.

The use of bricks in his housing complexes, in schools, in the university buildings contrasts with the edifices Pierre Jeanneret designed and built in exposed reinforced concrete in sector 17, where he tackled the issue of laying out the heart of a modern city center, complete with office space, public facilities, and shopping arcades. In planning the sector 17 he was firmly convinced that the architectural solution ought to be in line with the CIAM debate on the concept of the city core and with the interpretation Corbu was simultaneously elaborating for Bogotá. This is amply discussed in the correspondence between the two architects. In fact, this is merely one of the as yet unexplored subjects that the mostly untouched Chandigarh archives reveal.

Jeanneret's signature in Chandigarh is just as powerful and present as that of his renowned cousin. Also, and this is far more important, it is precisely Jeanneret's input that gives Chandigarh's urban morphology that overall design quality resulting from a slow process of layering. What Jeanneret introduced in Chandigarh was an oxymoron, that of

the “ordered discontinuity” that modified the Western model of the modern city, contributing to its critical evaluation and introducing the discourse of post-colonial planning.

In a way Pierre embodied the live metaphor of the Corbusian “Open Hand”. The “open hand” suggests being both open to give and to receive. What I mean here is that Jeanneret as a person readily made his skill and abilities available to the Indians, while also being entirely devoted to his cousin. Chandigarh generously returned the favor, granting Pierre a kind of strength, extra independence from his cousin, who accepted this, given Pierre's enduring loyalty.

His authority have been fully recognized at all levels from government officers and colleagues, to young students he tutored in the Chandigarh School of Architecture (Fig. 18). If in 1951 Prime Minister Nehru had stated: “Chandigarh must constitute a living school of architecture, a school on the site”, later in the same decade he came back to underscore Pierre Jeanneret's commitment more specifically:

Things have turned well (it is not so every day!) thanks to the personality of Pierre Jeanneret who has occupied the post of Senior Architect since February 1951. His temperament is perfectly adapted to the task set before him. Effectively, he is respected like a father, and liked as a brother by the fifty or so young men who have applied to work in the Architects' Office. Pierre Jeanneret by means of his persistent work, his fundamental loyalty and his real capacity, has won over the respect of his staff and of every body in Chandigarh.

Yet, despite the quality of his work and the different figures he embodied—the designer, the planner, the construction expert, the mediator, and finally the teacher for the younger Indian generations—Jeanneret's part has been diminished in Western eyes (Figs. 19 & 20). He has suffered the critical fate of the city that in architectural history books has received recognition for the monumental area of the Capitol alone. In a reductive synecdoche, the Capitol represents Chandigarh, although it is outside and almost unrelated to the city, and the Capitol's author, Le Corbusier, is considered the single designer of the entire city. The sun of India has faded the figure of Pierre Jeanneret, its co-designer.





Fig. 18 Publicity Department, India. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru shaking hands with architect Jeet Malhotra during an official visit in Chandigarh, not dated, Fonds Pierre Jeanneret, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal © Publicity Department, India



Fig. 19 Sketch showing Pierre Jeanneret holding the Capitol over his head, in Sneh Pandit, Guide to Chandigarh, 1965, Call no. BIB P0728; ID:88-B8615, p. 72, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

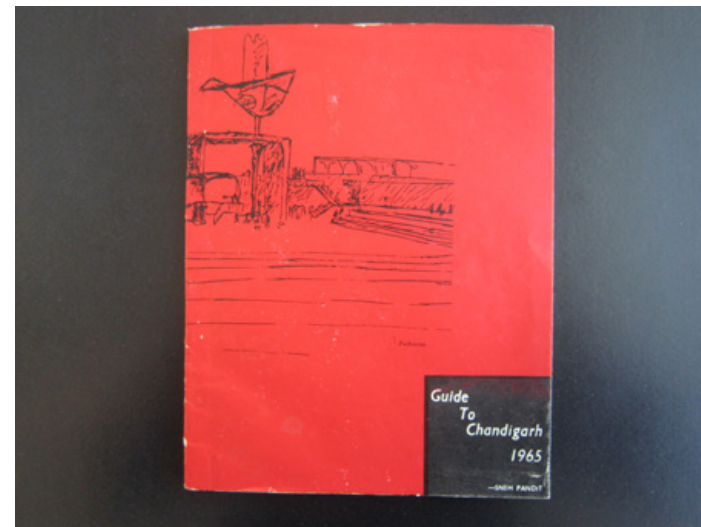


Fig. 20 Cover page to Sneh Pandit, Guide to Chandigarh (Chandigarh, India: The Author, 1965), Call no. P0728; ID:88-B8615, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

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