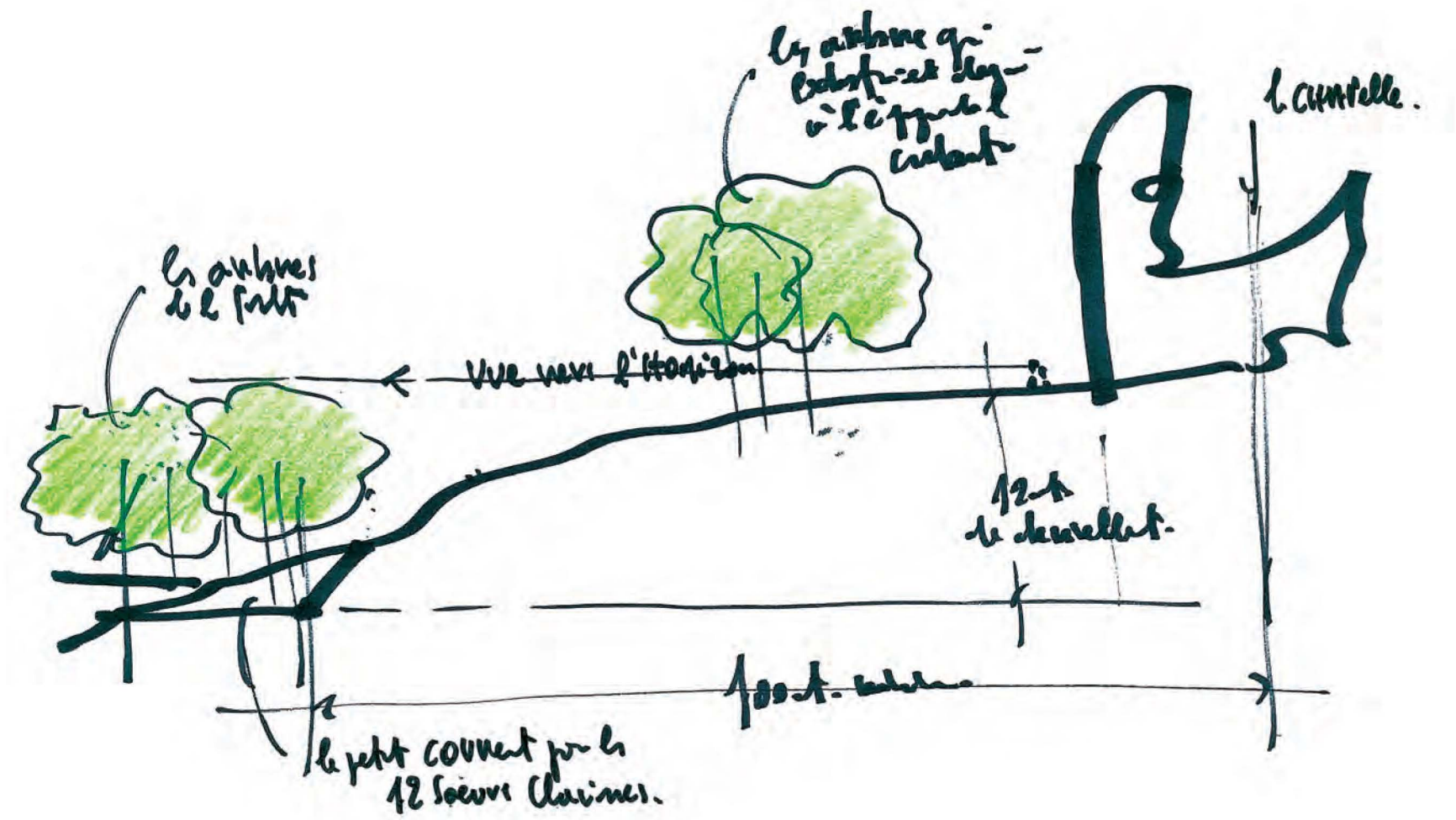
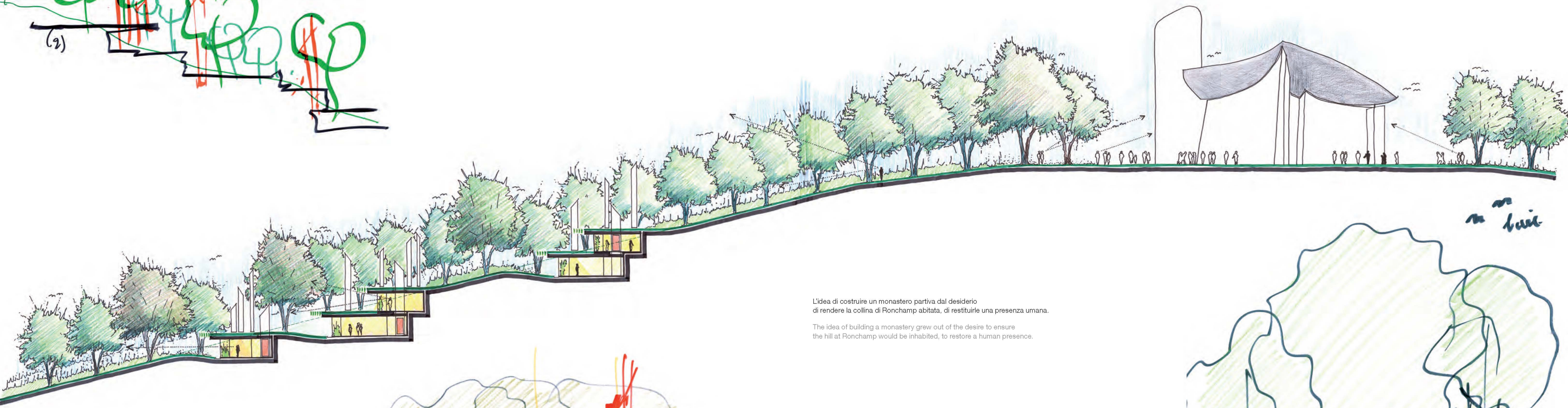


La prima reazione fu chiedermi come avrei potuto costruire un edificio accanto alla cappella di Le Corbusier.
La risposta immediata, e anche la più istintiva, è stata la decisione di non toccare la sommità della collina ma lavorare più in basso, lungo il pendio.

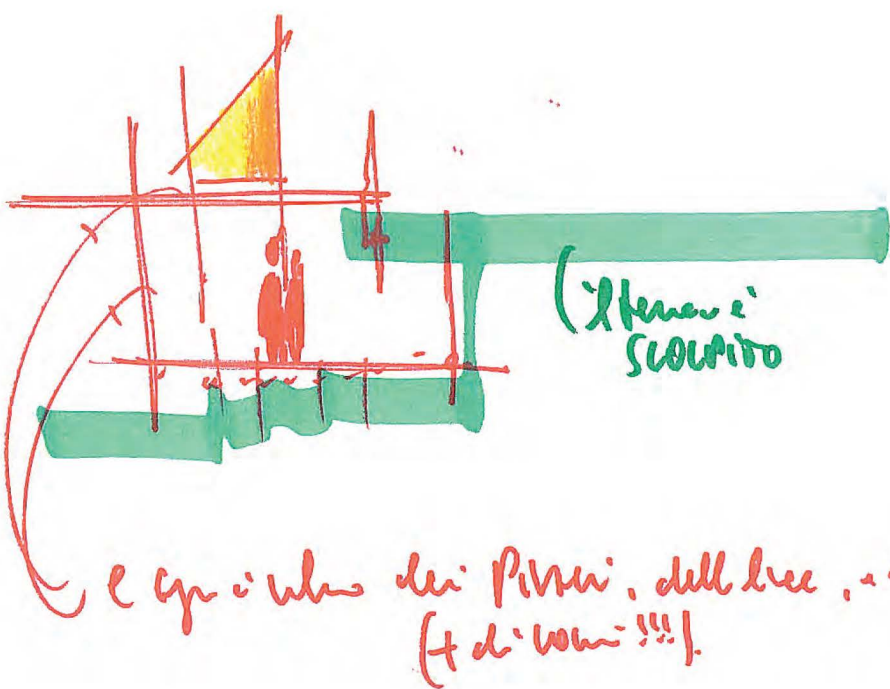
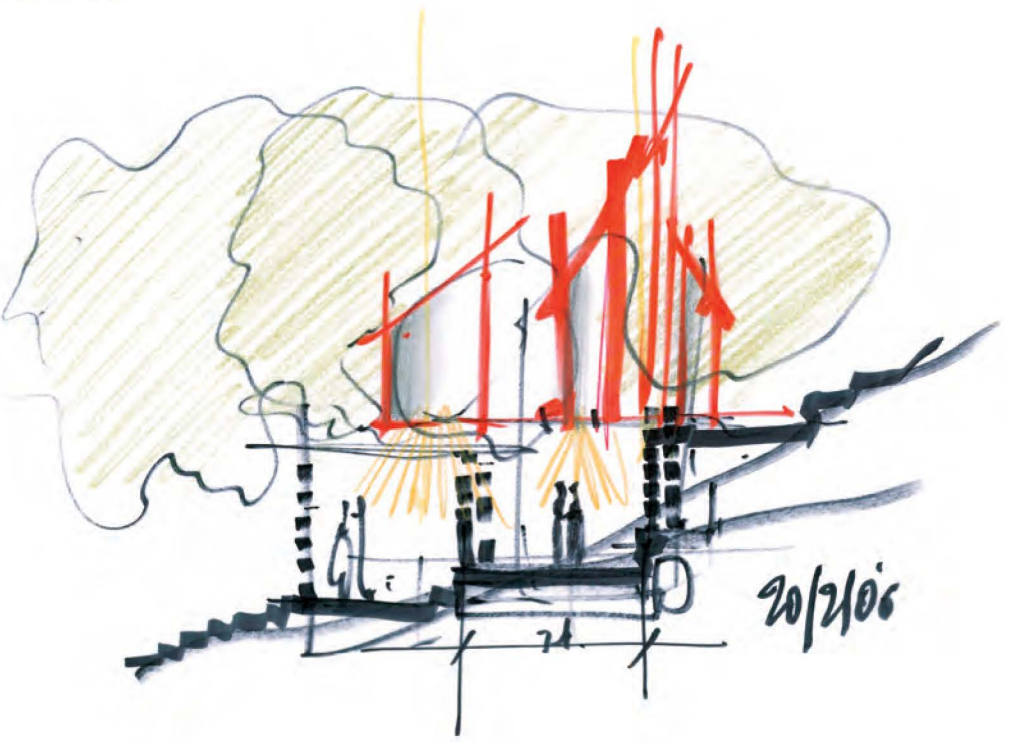
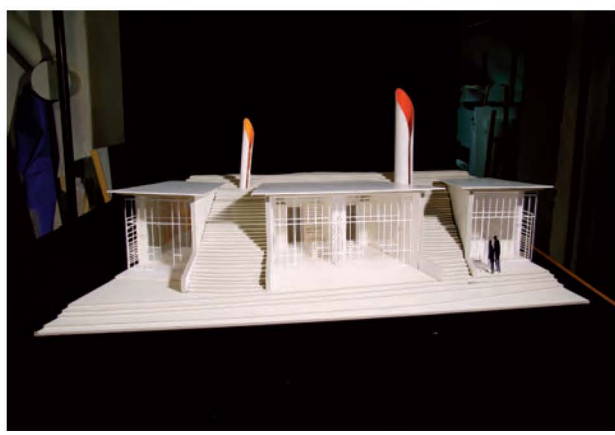
My first reaction was to wonder how I could ever erect a building close to Le Corbusier's chapel.
My immediate response, and also the most instinctive, was the decision not to touch the hilltop, but work further down along the slope.

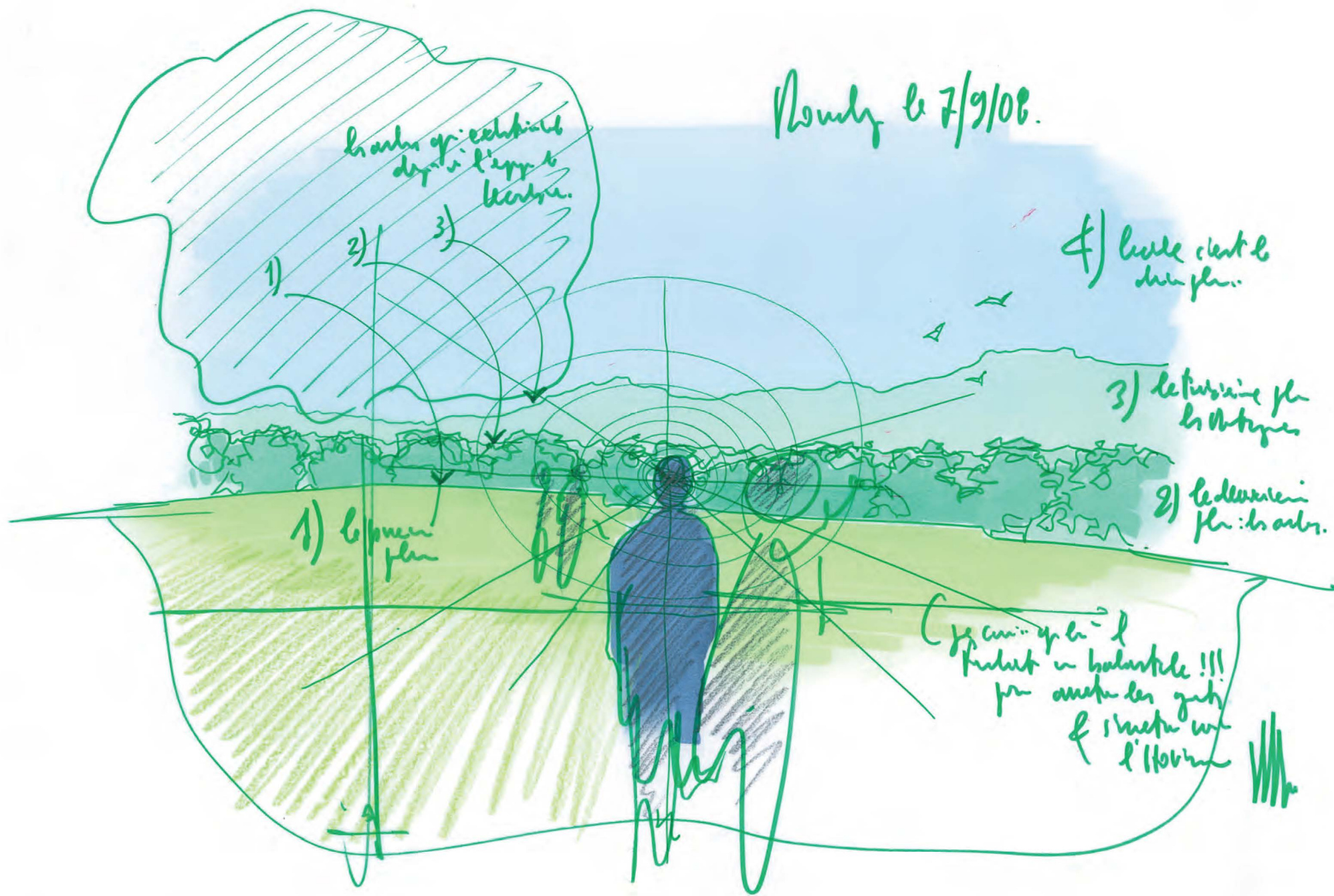




L'idea di costruire un monastero partiva dal desiderio di rendere la collina di Ronchamp abitata, di restituire una presenza umana.

The idea of building a monastery grew out of the desire to ensure the hill at Ronchamp would be inhabited, to restore a human presence.







acer platanoides



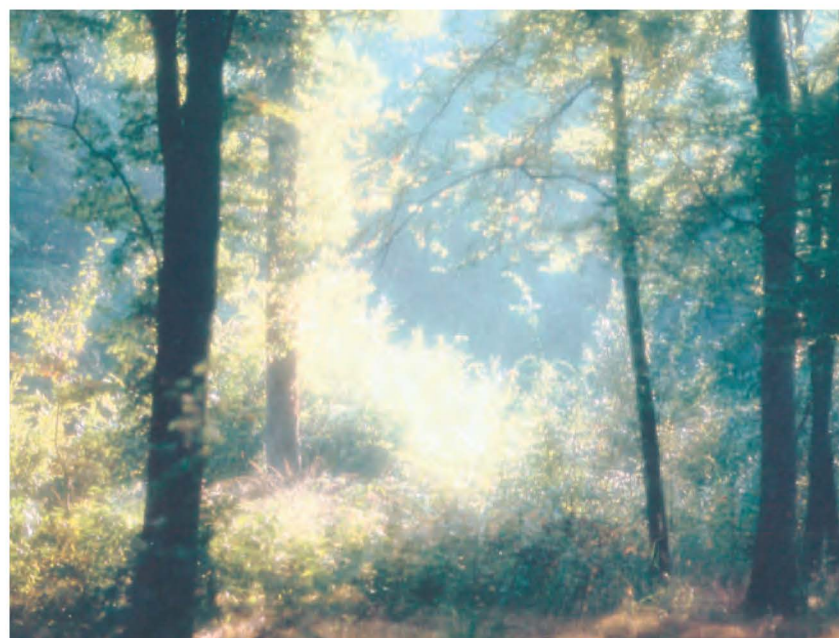
alanthus altissima



carpinus betulus



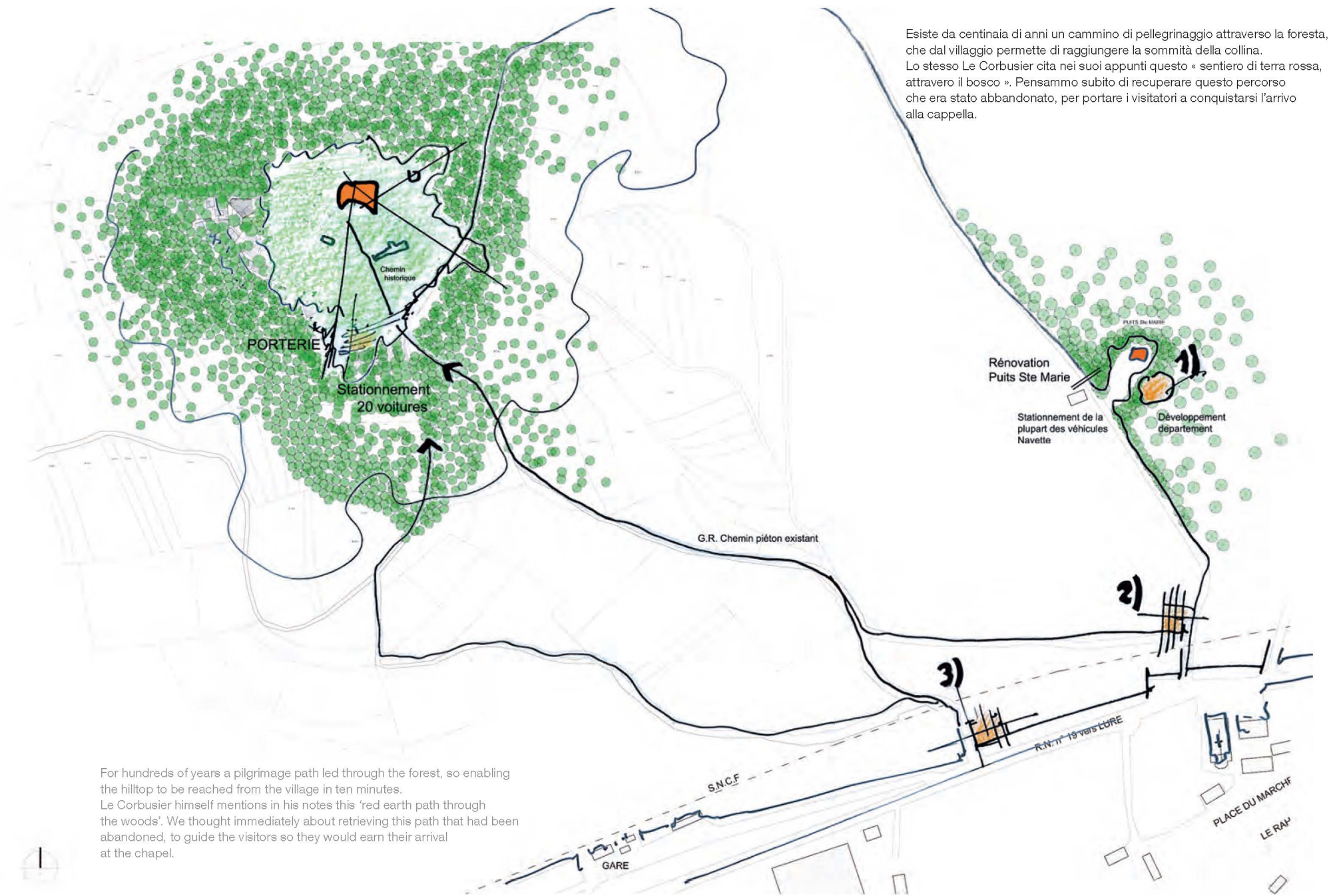
acer ginnala



fagus sylvatica

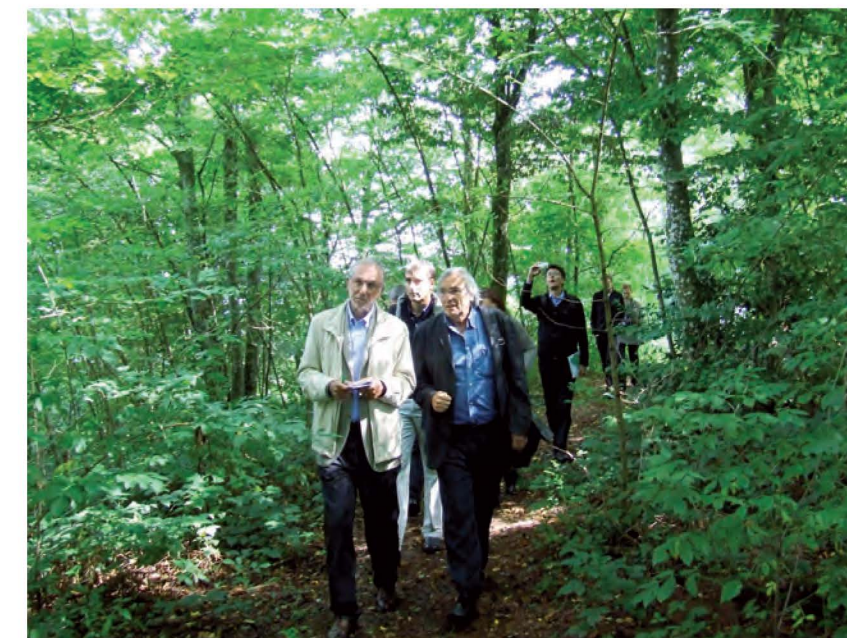


fraxinus excelsior



Esiste da centinaia di anni un cammino di pellegrinaggio attraverso la foresta, che dal villaggio permette di raggiungere la sommità della collina. Lo stesso Le Corbusier cita nei suoi appunti questo « sentiero di terra rossa, attraverso il bosco ». Pensammo subito di recuperare questo percorso che era stato abbandonato, per portare i visitatori a conquistarsi l'arrivo alla cappella.

For hundreds of years a pilgrimage path led through the forest, so enabling the hilltop to be reached from the village in ten minutes. Le Corbusier himself mentions in his notes this 'red earth path through the woods'. We thought immediately about retrieving this path that had been abandoned, to guide the visitors so they would earn their arrival at the chapel.

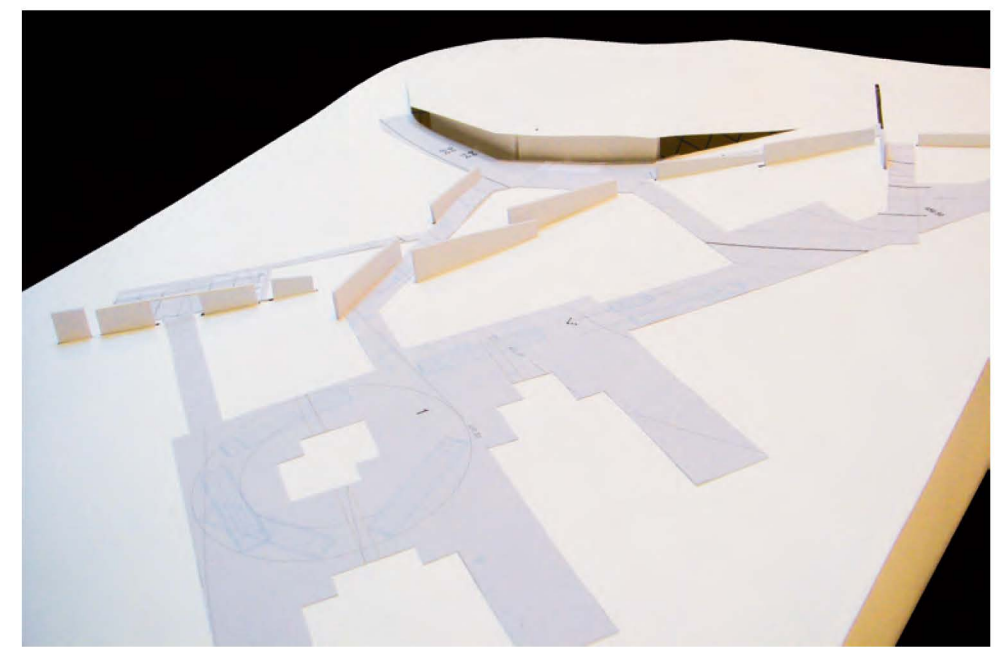
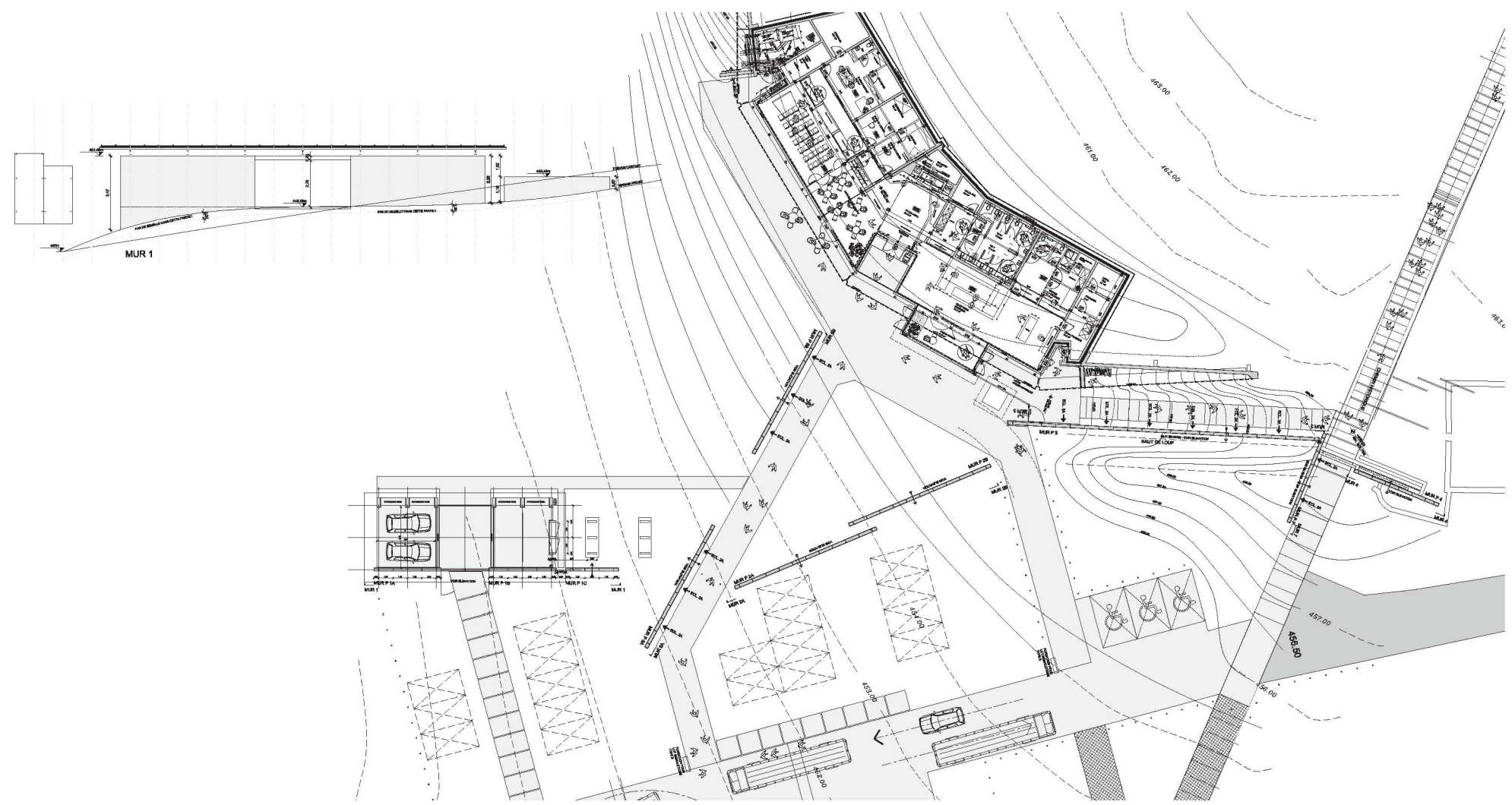
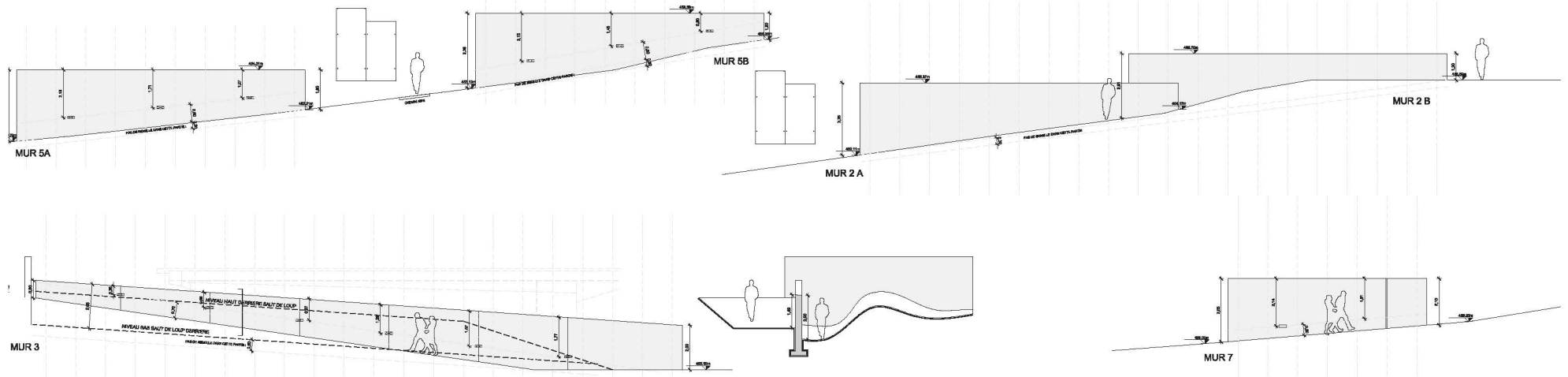


Michel Corajoud

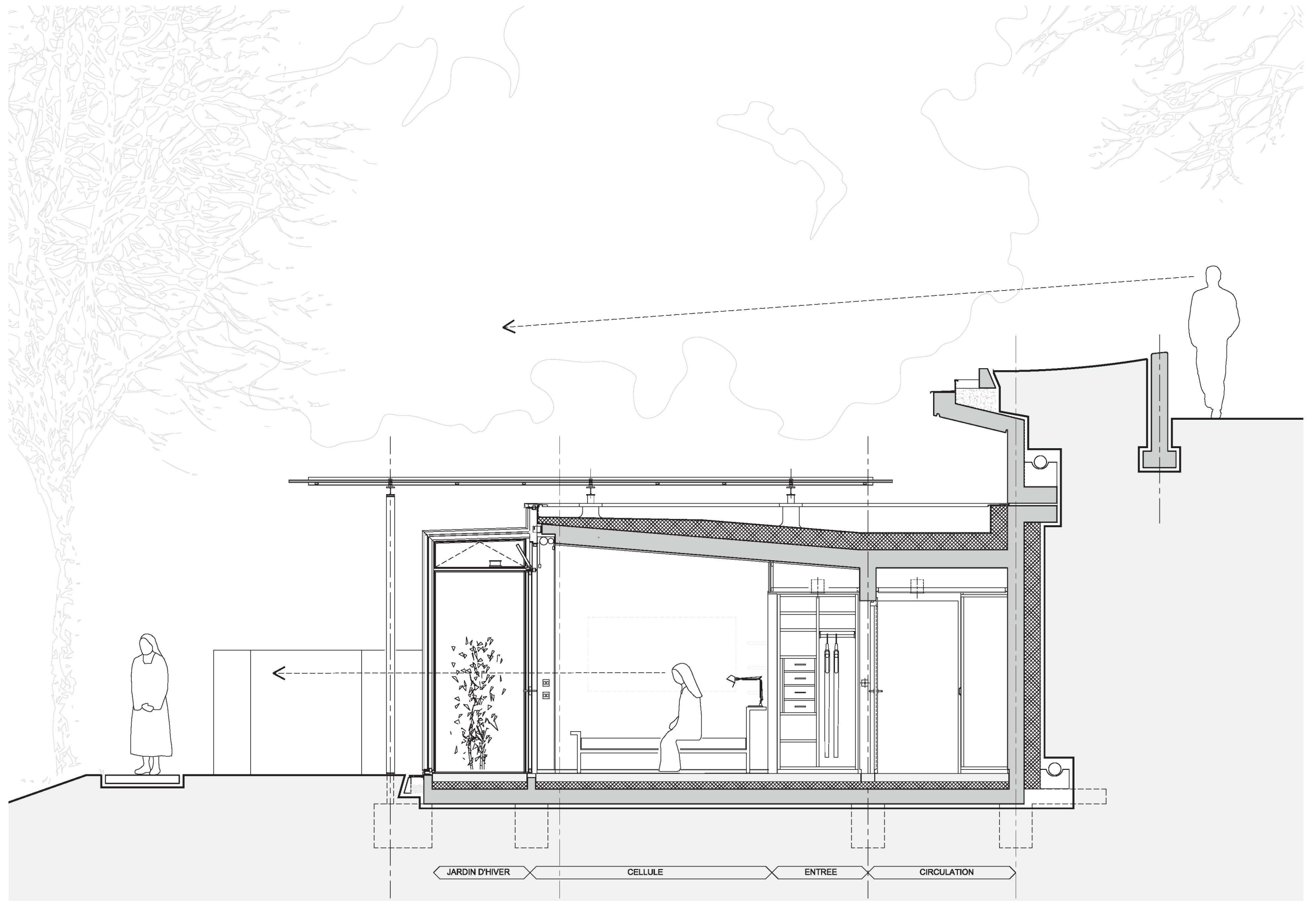


Michel Corajoud, Renzo Piano, José Luis Taborda



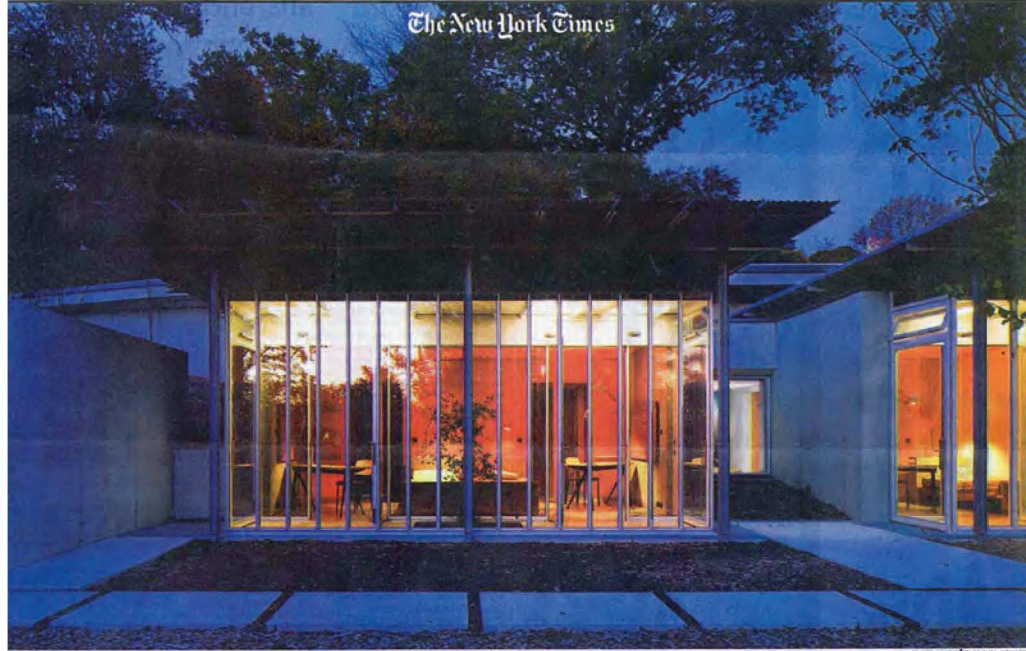












Le Corbusier's hilltop chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France, is shown above, with a view of the hill from the chapel below. Mr. Piano also designed a new visitors' center.

Quiet Additions to a Modernist Masterpiece

RONCHAMP, France — Completed in 1955, Le Corbusier's hilltop chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in this hardscrabble patch of eastern France attracts some 100,000 supplicants each year, architectural and religious. It critics still sometimes blame Le Corbusier for inspiring generations of soulless, cookie-cutter housing projects and office parks, he remains the high priest of Modernism for singular works like this.

So it was predictable that a former brother several years ago after plans circulated for a convent and new visitors' center at the site of the chapel. Renzo Piano was the designer. Big-name colleagues like Richard Meier, Rafael Moneo and Cesar Pelli signed an online petition denouncing the \$16 million project. The Fondation Le Corbusier, keeper of the architect's flame, fumed.

Now the buildings are sited, with some landscaping (by Atelier Corajoud, a Paris firm) and a bit of tinkering yet to come. I took a train from Paris recently and found the chapel empty on a bright, crisp spring morning (a good sign), then visited the monks. They are not quite a dozen elderly Pious Clares, lately moved from their home of 800 years at Besançon, 60 miles to the south, which they had sold to help pay for the new place. Cheerful in their light gray habits, the sisters were finishing lunch in the refectory around a handsome glazed courtyard open to a cloudless sky.

A few minor acoustic problems with the nuns' concrete quarters aside, Mr. Piano and his team (Paul Vincent was the partner in charge at Renzo Piano Building Workshop) have created remarkably light and practical spaces that are virtually invisible from the chapel and gracefully connected to nature. Competing with Le Corbusier's masterpiece

Continued on Page 5



Clockwise from left, the interior of a cell, painted in orange. In the new visitors' center, the room for 12 sisters of the order Pious Clares, a patio at the convent, designed to be open to its surroundings; Notre-Dame du Haut, with its distinctive roof, surmounting a hill in Ronchamp, France, that has been a place of pilgrimage since the fourth century.

steps and a gravel field, which isn't a rectangle of beige concrete as an architect would have it. "But then when you are in the chapel," Sister Brigitte added, "it's like a hole of light, a hole that helps you get inside yourself, whether you are Christian or not."

Le Corbusier's masterpiece unfolds in the round, outside, like a sequence of Mondrian and Fernand Léger and a casually placed composition lines every angle, back and forth, side to side, in color and scale and, crucially, in relation to the ground. It commands the hill as an obelisk-like monument. In a sense, it is a massive rock a great old hillside still appearing to lift the building off the earth, and miraculously seeming to weigh it down, compress it.

She said the entire prayed eight times a day, live in the oratory and there in the chapel, managing several



Le Monde
Mardi 22 octobre 2011

« Silence, prière, paix, joie intérieure »

Les mots inscrits par Le Corbusier dans sa chapelle de Ronchamp ont servi de programme à l'architecte Renzo Piano pour y construire un couvent

Architecture

Ronchamp (Haute-Saône)
Envoyé spécial

Début octobre, le modeste oratoire des sœurs clarisses de Ronchamp (Haute-Saône) a été consacré en grande pompe, sous l'ombre tutélaire, et quelque peu jalouse, de Le Corbusier et de sa célébrissime chapelle, inaugurée il y a près de soixante ans.

Le nonce du Pape, descendant de Paris, et l'archevêque de Besançon, monté de Besançon, sont venus soutenir la foi des Francs-Comtois qui doteraient encore de la grâce du site. Dans la belle mais rude vallée du Rhin, la petite ville qui a donné son nom à la chapelle résonne ce jour-là des clameurs surnaturelles de la Foire à la patate.

Le temps de gravir l'ancien chemin de croix qui conduisait de la bourgade au faite de la colline de Bourlémont, lieu de pèlerinage dont les origines se perdent dans la nuit des temps, et c'est une toute autre cérémonie qui s'annonce, à la fois religieuse et architecturale.

Les sœurs clarisses — un ordre franciscain créé au XIII^e siècle — auraient préféré une chapelle souterraine, abbesse de la petite communauté, ont choisi de quitter Besançon et de s'installer à Ronchamp, répandant ainsi à l'appel de l'Association de l'œuvre Notre-Dame du Haut (AONDH), qui s'occupait de la solitude spirituelle de la chapelle de Corbu.

Après avoir discuté avec Renzo Piano, l'un des auteurs du Centre Pompidou pressenti pour construire leur monastère, elles ont accepté un acte de foi. La construction de leur minuscule oratoire, accordé dans la colline, l'autel au nord, au côté des cellules des sœurs, relève d'une volonté farouche de faire vivre, et leur communauté, et leur engagement religieux.



L'oratoire du couvent de Ronchamp (Haute-Saône), dessiné par l'architecte Renzo Piano. MICHEL DENANCE

Le Corbusier, parpaillotté pur porté sur les bondieuseries mais empli du sens du sacré, avait en 1955 écrit quatre mots, repris sur la pierre de la chapelle: silence, prière, paix, joie intérieure. Il aurait préféré une chapelle souterraine, comme celle qui a déjà été refusée en 1948 sur le flanc de la Sainte-Baume à Marseille. Un couvent, il n'a rien contre. D'ailleurs, il a déjà commencé à travailler sur

La joie évoquée par Le Corbusier trouve à se matérialiser dans les espaces imaginés pour les clarisses

celui de la Tourette, à peine plus au sud, près de Lyon.

Ici, à Ronchamp, sur ce site marial, il peut bien imaginer un couvent, mais il ne peut pas imaginer un couvent public, et pour tous ceux qui ont soutenu leur aventure, c'est un acte de foi. La construction de leur minuscule oratoire, accordé dans la colline, l'autel au nord, au côté des cellules des sœurs, relève d'une volonté farouche de faire vivre, et leur communauté, et leur engagement religieux.

« Il y a de Mr. Piano's great credit that he didn't take for anything matter in the chapel, but he has done so to embrace primitive craft. New buildings are assumed from products of modernism. Mr. Piano's addition are now building a serene, what with all the glass, metal and wood, but light, ordinary thing, especially the oratory, the convent's heart, where a hidden light in the curved chancel wall, a subtle nod to Le Corbusier's handling of interior light in the chapel, first in a concrete ring of arches.

« He said: 'This is not a thing that you need just as much as they need bread or a place to sleep.' Mr. Piano has given the Pious Clares all of these things save the bread.



Arts 26.09.11

Let there be light

Hidden in a French hillside below Le Corbusier's famous chapel, Renzo Piano's new convent is spare, calm and quietly masterful. Lucky nuns, says Jonathan Glancey



"I did something wrong and I got sent to prison. It was appropriate."

« I first I said no, » says Renzo Piano. « We were very busy. For me, the idea of building a convent next to Le Corbusier's chapel was, in any case, a bit crazy. » Certainly, it must have felt like a big risk. The chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut at Ronchamp is one of the 20th century's most treasured buildings, and Le Corbusier a demigod in the architectural firmament, being asked to build alongside this French national monument, an international destination for religious and cultural pilgrims, is like receiving an invitation to knock up a postmodern extension to the Pantheon or St Peter's in Rome.

But then Piano met Sister Brigitte de Singly at his studio in Paris, caved in and said yes. The architect was busy with towering commercial projects such as Shard London Bridge, at 310 metres (1,017ft) Europe's tallest building, as well as the expansion of Boston's museum Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, both due to open next year. Meanwhile, Sister Brigitte and her nuns were hoping to leave their home of 800 years in Besançon, in order to be closer to Le Corbusier's chapel.

With an all-in budget of €9m, at least 60 times less than that of the Shard, the convent for the Clarisses, or Pious Clare Sisters, was to take up a disproportionate amount of his time over the next five years. Funding was a slow and complex process; the money was realised through local government funding, charitable and religious donations, and the sale of the nuns' former convent.

When I meet the architect and the abbess, lunching frugally with pilgrims and builders at trestle tables set on a wooded hill, below Le Corbusier's chapel, I can see why Piano said yes. « If Sister Brigitte was to be my client, then what else could I say? » Piano says. « She has a profound love of architecture, of landscape, of sacred space — and even of people without religion, like me. She wanted a place of silence and prayer. I said: 'I can't help you with prayer, but perhaps I can help with silence and a little joy. »



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Capolavoro del Corbusier: la chiesa costruita da Le Corbusier nel 1955 sul colle di Ronchamp (Francia). Qui è sorto il monastero di Renzo Piano.



MONASTERO NEL BOSCO: La veduta esterna della cella inerte della collina davanti al bosco di Ronchamp (Foto di P. M. M.)



PRIGIONE PER IL SACERDOTE: Veduta interna di una delle celle realizzate per la comunità di suore durante la costruzione del nuovo monastero di Ronchamp.



SPAZI FRANCESCANI: I corridoi di comunicazione tra le celle delle monache (Foto di P. M. M.)

architecture and landscape can offer.

« The cells are spare, calm and chastely beautiful. They are no more than 2.7 metres square, but have custom-designed timber furniture, warm orange walls, superb natural lighting and striking views south and west to the valley below. The rooms are fitted out with private winter gardens, glazed suntraps serving as architectural gaps, or passages between inner and outer worlds. They will also help keep the cells warm in winter, via a radiator. »

Every light evoked, every chair the refectory is gathered around outside of a courtyard, with glazed walls but open to the sky. It must be wonderful to sit here in the rain or snow falls. At the heart of the convent, the chapel's concrete walls curve in two different planes. Like the cupped hull of a boat an image of the Church as a ship of souls, while a coiled slit in the chancel wall facing the hillside brings a halo of daylight into its deepest recesses. « Architecture, » Le Corbusier said, « is the mastery, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. » Piano's work here is quietly masterful, built around a minimal palette of concrete, timber and steel. The fact that he and his team have designed and crafted every last detail, from chairs to light switches, within such a modest budget is a minor modern miracle. Buried into the hillside, the convent should prove cheap to heat and light. Daytime holes bring warmth from the ground, while daylight is reflected through the building at every turn. It felt comfortable here on the intensely humid day I came to visit.

« I have tried to make it like a little hill town, » Piano says. It's an appropriate analogy. Between 1922 and 1935, Le Corbusier planned new city centres (which were never realised), inspired as much by medieval monasteries as by modern life. « I have found the solution to workers' housing, » he wrote to his parents in 1907. « I saw, in the harmonious countryside of Tuscany, a form of city covering the top of the hill. The ring of meek' cells formed the noble silhouette on the landscape. Each cell overlooks the plain and opens at a lower level to a small, enclosed garden. I thought I had never seen such happy living arrangements. »

The pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp and the monastery of Saint Marie de la Tourette at Evreux-sur-Abrarde, north-west of Lyon, were Le Corbusier's last great buildings, both built on shoe-string budgets. Piano has many more buildings in him, and yet it is fascinating to see this thoughtful architect nurturing one of his most considered buildings on a low budget, for men living and praying at the foot of Le Corbusier's chapel. He was absolutely right.