

# **LUCIEN HERVÉ: CONNECTING EYE**

## *the journey as a source of intercultural dialogue*

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[EN]

### **Abstract**

*Lucien Hervé, Le Corbusier's photographer, found in his "world tour" and several "tours de France" a source of creation. In 1961, he parted on his biggest (six-month long) journey to fulfil photographic commissions for architects in the Mediterranean Basin, in Asia and in the Americas. This tour — with some other shorter ones — led him to discover and understand diverse cultures, their modernity and their contribution to the technical and artistic development of the Western societies and became the principal source of his reflexions and exhibitions in the following decades. Paralyzed by multiple sclerosis from 1965 he wouldn't be able to undertake big trips anymore.*

*His articles — most of them unknown today —, published in the first illustrated professional magazines of the 1950s reveal the photographer's immediate impressions as well as the results of his deep studies on the countries and cultures visited, inviting his public to follow him on an imaginary journey. His itinerant exhibitions composed by himself initiated a contemplative dialogue — a renewed, metaphorical journey — between these exotic places and the scenes of his "tours de France", that lasted more than 30 years. In his quest to reveal a universal human language he linked these distant and close 'terrae incognitae' and transfigured them.*

*This article focuses on the tour-experience as a fundamental resource of the oeuvre of the photographer. It proposes the study of commissioned subjects as well as personal discoveries, of the shots on distant cultures beside those taken in France hoping to understand more this unique photographic language.*

### **Keywords**

*Lucien Hervé, journeys, exhibition, publications, linking cultures.*

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### *Resumo*

Lucien Hervé, fotógrafo de Le Corbusier, encontrou no seu *world tour* e nas várias *tours de France* uma fonte de criação. Em 1961, ele iniciou a sua maior viagem, que duraria seis meses, com o objetivo de realizar missões fotográficas na bacia do Mediterrâneo, na Ásia e nas Américas. Esta viagem — e outras mais curtas — permitiu-lhe a descoberta e a compreensão de culturas diversas, da sua modernidade e contribuição para o desenvolvimento técnico e artístico das culturas ocidentais. Essas viagens tornaram-se as principais fontes das suas reflexões e exposições durante as décadas seguintes. Paralisado pela esclerose múltipla, a partir de 1965, Hervé já não podia organizar grandes viagens.

Os seus artigos — a maioria dos quais permanecem ainda inéditos — pertencem à primeira geração de revistas profissionais ilustradas e revelam quer as impressões instantâneas quer os resultados dos profundos estudos levados a cabo pelo fotógrafo sobre os países visitados, convidando-o seu público a segui-lo numa jornada imaginária. As exposições itinerantes de Hervé foram compostas por ele e oferecem um diálogo contemplativo — como uma jornada metafórica — entre lugares exóticos e lugares visitados em França durante trinta anos. Na sua tentativa de desvendar uma linguagem humana e universal, Hervé ligou e transfigurou estas *terrae incognitae*, fossem elas distantes ou próximas.

Este artigo centra-se, pela primeira vez, nessas jornadas como recursos da obra completa do fotógrafo, propondo o confronto das fotografias por encomenda com aquelas que nasceram de sua curiosidade pessoal, os disparos efetuados em culturas remotas com aqueles realizados em França, na esperança de melhor compreender esta linguagem fotográfica única.

### *Palavras-chave*

Lucien Hervé, viagens, exposição, publicações, *culturas de ligação*.





Figure 1— *Lucien Hervé on a journey*. Anonymous photographer.  
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The most interesting tour into the universe of an artist happens when we let him direct us. Even a random choice of photos can wake up curiosity or evoke memories. Facing a thoughtfully composed series of images and thoughts, «your soul starts to radiate, the spectator feels dizzy» (*Langage de l'architecture*, 1963). These enthusiastic words were written by a critic visiting one of Lucien Hervé's exhibitions in the 1960s. Mostly silent and attentive in his private life Hervé was surprisingly outspoken in his photographic language. He agreed with Paul Klee, that art should not show the reality but make it visible! For Hervé his photos were tools to zoom on what people are not used to notice, to look at his subjects, as people are not used to see them. Doing this he hoped to make them discover the essential. Essential of a view in front of him, essential of an architectural construction most of the time, but also the essential of a street, a landscape or even a human gesture. Through his articles, books and exhibitions the photographer invited his contemporaries to follow him towards a new way of looking.

When in 1949 Le Corbusier invited Lucien Hervé to collaborate, he recognized in him the «soul of an architect», the eyes that «know to see architecture» (Le Corbusier, 1949). The pair that they formed between 1949 and 1965 was not uncommon between an architect and a photographer, but it was unique as they shared their social and artistic values as well (Iuliano, 2016). Key-element in the promotion of the architect's works, the photograph enjoyed a primordial importance since the apparition of the illustrated and professional magazines in the 1930s. Hervé's photos contributed to the world-wide recognition of his mentor as he had an active role in the propaganda of his other collaborators, like Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, Oscar Niemeyer, etc. The sharp contrasts, the high and low-angle shots, the importance of diagonals, the close-up photographs and the series reveal his main inspirations, the Bauhaus and the avant-garde cinema (1920s – 1930s). By the variations of his points of views and the predominance of the details he renewed the architectural photography (Bergdoll, 2005; Bajac, 2011). His enthusiasm for the minimalist language — he often used his pairs of scissors hoping to direct the attention to the most essential elements of the photograph — and for the aesthetics of the new materials in modern architecture

made him able to translate the architectural space into a two-dimensional image, to evoke his subject instead of demonstrating it. He never joined any photo-agencies, nor followed the rules prefixed for the operators of the photographic campaigns like that of the DATAR or other built heritage commissions in France (Bertho, 1913). The neutrality of the documentary had no interest for him.

During his most active years, between 1949 and 1965, Lucien Hervé travelled a lot in France, in Europe and in other continents as well. These new experiences did not change his “style”, his photographic language, but they enlarged his view on different cultures, offering him a comparative look on humanity. His rich albums of negative films became the main source of creation, holders of his message. His publications and exhibitions prepared by himself offer an exciting journey into what he understood from the world and its habitants. Lucien Hervé’s life and art can be regarded as a metaphorical approach to the journey, central theme of this article.

The archives of the photographer are a major resource to the details concerning his work. Unfortunately, Hervé did not conserve but a few letters in connection with his journeys. This little, fragmented information can be completed by the manuscripts and published versions of his articles and by the personal discussions with Judith Hervé, the artist’s wife. Some photos and paper-models inform the researchers about the past exhibitions conceived, composed and executed by the photographer himself.

### Journeys and photo essays

«If he likes adventure, the traveller having made up his mind to go on a journey, hurriedly throws into a bag a few necessities, and for the rest, lets fate take its course. He likes to improvise [...]. Others, on the contrary, prefer a meticulous preparation, thinking that a precise plan and the preliminary, deep study of the country to visit can only help the adventures to come, if not provoke them» (Hervé, 1963: 27).

The artist himself has been a big traveller already from the age of 18, when he left Budapest and the stifling milieu of the upper-middle class where he was

brought up. A big number of other journeys could be cited already from the beginning of his career as a journalist, among which the one to Marseilles in December 1949 that would change his whole life. The short time he disposed to fix his views on the *unité d'habitation* of Le Corbusier was decisive to concentrate on the essential. He had found his vocation, photography; his main subject, architecture; his materials, shadow and light and his mentor, Le Corbusier.

Soon other architectural commissions arrived and meant journeys as well, like those from Marcel Breuer to photograph the new Bijenkorf store under construction in Rotterdam (1954) and the American Embassy in Hague (1957-59), or others, like the one for Le Corbusier at the Heilsberger Dreick and different architects of new constructions at the Hansaviertel at Berlin at the end of the 1950s.

Obviously, Hervé did not find all of his photographic subjects interesting, but with those which touched him, he spent lots of time — even years — to understand and to be able to seize better their importance. He cited with Paul Valéry: «Have you not noticed, in walking about this city, that among the buildings with which it is peopled, certain are mute; others speak; and others, finally — and they are the most rare — sing?» (Valéry, 1932: 22). Thus, the creation did not finish for him after shooting the picture, neither after the development of the film, nor after cutting and re-cutting his images according to his strict criteria. Although in his above cited article he didn't reveal to which group of travellers he belonged to, we know that his journeys were preceded and even followed up by deep studies as it is reflected by his rich personal library. He studied the vernacular architecture of distant cultures, architectural history, the requirements of urban developments, and the challenges facing to his contemporaries, the architects, a lot of them his collaborators. The literature of each period served him to build a privy collection of thoughts reflecting the soul of their time and at the same time questioning in the most striking way the men of all ages.

His first big journeys in 1955 and 1961 led Hervé to India in the company of Le Corbusier to take photos on the constructions of Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab.

«Here, in this immobile and effervescent furnace, smiling and contorted, indescribably rich and unimaginably hungry, sane and feeble, have Le Corbusier and three other CIAM architects been called to build. A capital? Yes. The villages? Yes. The future? Yes. The human dimensions reveal here their exceptional and eternal nature» (Hervé, 1956: 17).

The inherent contrasts of the local circumstances increased the respect of Hervé for the local decision makers and to the architects. Strongly impressed, he greeted with enthusiasm the new project, conceived by the meeting of Indian and European ways of thinking and which would not look like anything we knew before. Through this article Hervé expressed his adherence to the principles formulated by Le Corbusier, its social and technical novelty that embodied modernity in his eyes.

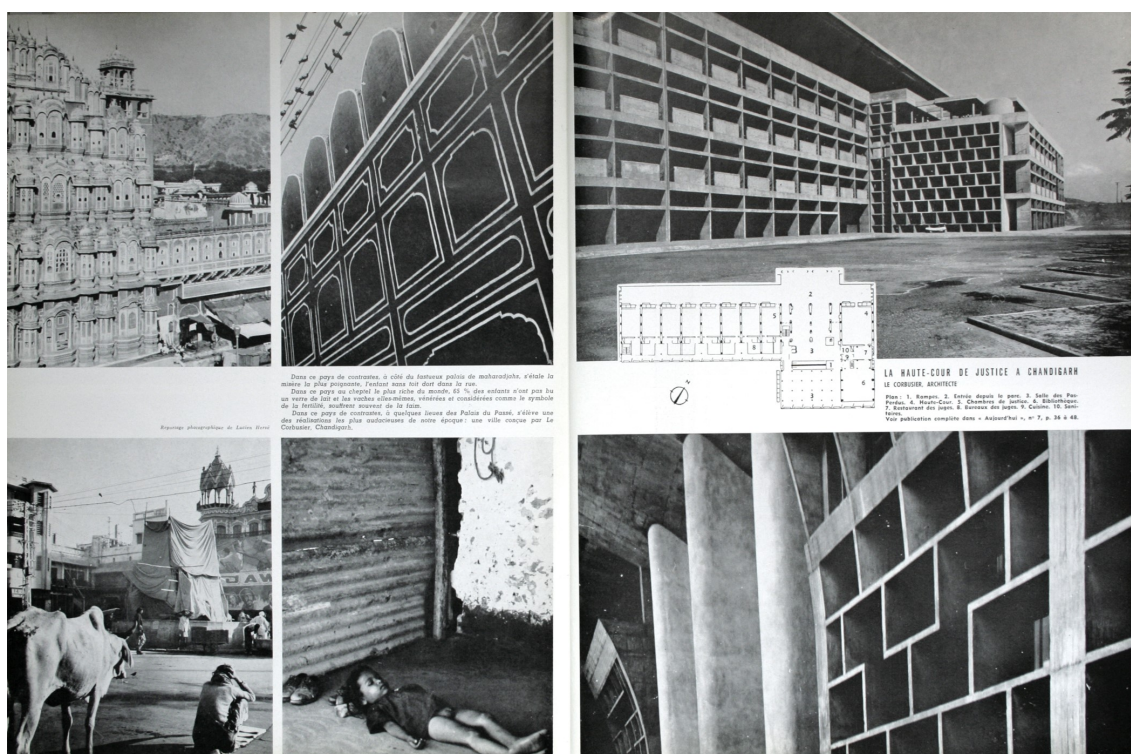


Figure 2 — Reproduction of the double-paged article on India, published in *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1956). Text and photos by Lucien Hervé. © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

The second visit to India was a part of a *grand tour* that Lucien Hervé organized around the world. He received several orders from the architects for whom he worked in Europe and contacted French companies based in foreign

countries to finance his expenses. Walter Gropius ordered him photos of the new American Embassy in Athens; later in Tokyo he captured the National Museum of Western Art for Le Corbusier; in Brasília he was invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and met with the leading architects of the new capital's construction. These examples represent only a few stops on his tour of six months touching more than ten countries (Greece, Turkey, Cambodia, Japan, Brasilia, Peru, Mexico, United-States, etc.) on three continents. The meetings and exchanges (Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi, Junzō Sakakura, Kiyonori Kikutake, Isamu Noguchi, Oscar Niemeyer, Lucio Costa, Wilson Reis-Netto, etc.) allowed him to widely understand the contemporary problems of urbanists and to compare the propositions set in diverse local conditions. On his return to Paris he published several photo-essays on some profound experiences accompanied by his personal impressions, observations, analyses, often with deep reflexion on the tasks of his contemporary architecture not only on India but on the architecture of Cambodia, Japan and Brasilia as well. While a big number of his commissioned photographs published in architectural magazines presented contemporary architect's works worldwide, Hervé came out with more and more articles that dealt with the constructions of other ages and cultures, met during the same journeys.

Analysing the plans and the constructions of Angkor, this «gigantic work of Humanity», Hervé confirmed that «nowhere else the society of people was able to better harmonize its religious and aesthetic concepts with the rational organization of the city-life, and orientate it towards efficiency» (Hervé, 1962: 36-37). He expressed, though, his astonishment over the lack of interest from our society towards the technical developments of this site's revolutionary hydraulic system. On his arrival in Japan, where he visited Kyoto, Osaka, Tokyo, Hervé recognized «in a seemingly modern life the survival of the signs that talk about the past» (Hervé, 1961: 6). He reflected the traditional features of this architecture of musical and geometrical rhythms «where we feel the craftsman's hand, the mathematician's idea, the stonemason's tool, the poet's dream, where the philosopher's contemplations join to the ineffable well-being of the user» (Hervé, 1961: 10). He didn't miss underlining the Japanese influences in our Western art, values present in the



# EN ECOUTANT LES PREMIERS VISITEURS

Des rapports immuables entre les Rois-Prêtres et Sujets-Cultivateurs s'établissaient sur la base d'une harmonieuse collaboration, dont de nombreux bas-reliefs portent témoignage. Nulle part, la société des hommes n'a su mieux mettre en accord ses conceptions religieuses et esthétiques avec l'organisation rationnelle de la vie de la cité, orientée entièrement vers l'efficacité.

Vingt rois successifs ont construit les temples, les palais et les canaux d'Angkor, durant sept siècles. Les travaux ont dû être exécutés avec célérité. Le plan absolument symétrique de chaque édifice permettait de les aborder simultanément de chaque côté avec des éléments "préfabriqués". Cette méthode n'a jamais appauvri l'esprit, le sens de l'architecture et la variété des formes d'expressions des édifices, se ressemblant pourtant par une commune volonté d'aboutissement liturgique, prêtant à l'édifice les vertus symboliques de la Montagne, du Cosmos situé autour des axes déterminés par les points cardinaux.



Photo n° 1

# D'ANGKOR

Texte et photographies  
de **Lucien HERVÉ**

La ville était entourée de douves, qui transformaient la cité en une véritable île. De chacune des portes de la ville, une chaussée conduisait vers les portes extérieures. Elle permettait non seulement une double circulation, aquatique et terrestre, mais répartissait le rôle de chacune de ses voies en hiérarchies nettement définies : Voies d'accès, d'alimentation, d'approvisionnement, de nettoyage.

Photo n° 2

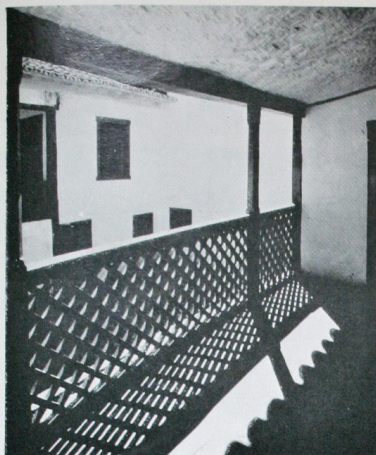


Figure 3 — "En écoutant les premiers visiteurs d'Angkor". Reproduction of title page of the article on his visit to Angkor, published in *Courrier des Messageries Maritimes* (1962). Text and photos by Lucien Hervé. © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

architecture Le Corbusier: «free plan, free façade, free volumes, the use of modules, the contrasts and the frankness of the materials and the methods until the pure tension of the forms to which Mondrian’s painting made us universally sensible». What is more, Hervé’s sensibility signalled that in Japan everything «is built around the void and reserve a noble place for men. In each house that he saw, the man — being as modest as possible — is his own statue without a pedestal, without excessiveness» (Hervé, 1961: 8). The article is a fascinating dialogue between the personal impressions and the analysis of ancient and modern architecture. A third article, related to this world-tour, deals with the “surprises” amongst the baroque architecture in Brasilia. The accentuation of the structural elements reminded him of the abstract geometrical tendency in modern art. This “modernism”, inherent of the arts of the past, reappeared before Hervé “victoriously” as he discovered the geometrical “proto-Mondrian” style of the Golden Museum of Sabara (Hervé, 1963: 31).



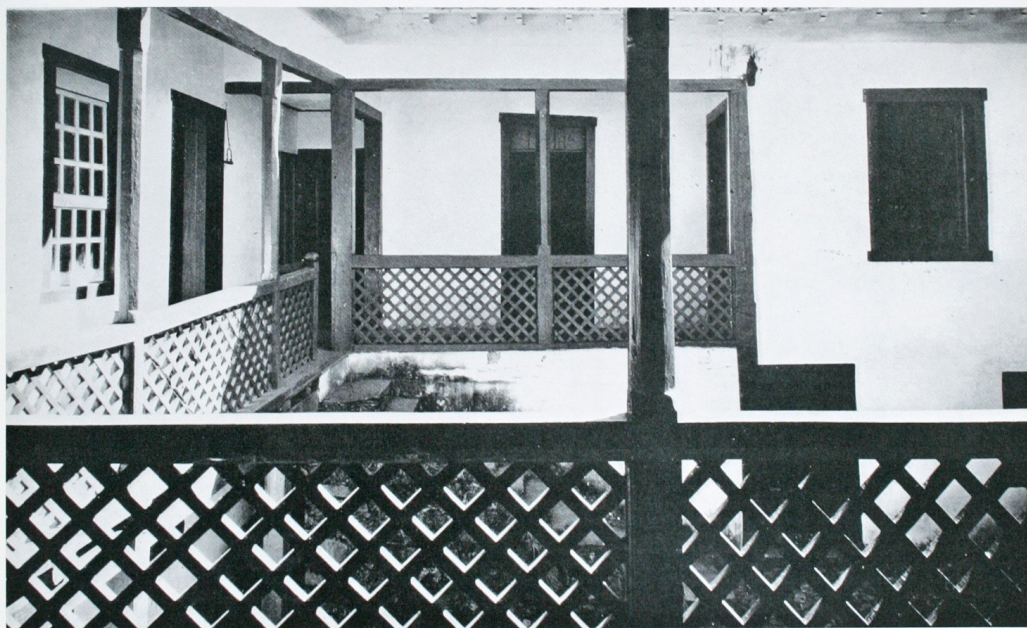
Figure 4 — “Japon : parallèles et divergences”. Reproduction of the title page of the article on his visit to Japan, published in *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1961). Text and photos by Lucien Hervé. © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.



Pourtant la mission Lebreton n'est arrivée en ce pays qu'en 1816, alors que les tentatives hollandaises, axées du reste sur le littoral septentrional, se situent de 1624 à 1654, et ne dépassèrent jamais la région d'Olinda. De plus, nous avons de nombreuses raisons de supposer que ces intrusions de toute nature n'eurent jamais pour mobile d'étendre une zone d'influence culturelle, encore moins, de jeter les bases d'un style proto-mondrianesque dans une région assez impénétrable en apparence, mais ouverte à ceux que la fortune rapide aguichait. Cette rencontre prouverait plutôt qu'en dehors de similitudes régionales, raciales, traditionnelles ou contemporaines, il existe par-dessus les mers, au-delà des époques, un terrain commun sur lequel les hommes différemment conditionnés, soudain se reconnaissent.

A-t-on le droit d'en tirer la conclusion pessimiste que rien ne change au monde, que tout a déjà été dit ? " C'est qu'il m'importe sur toute chose, d'obtenir de ce qui va être, qu'il satisfasse, avec toute la vigueur de sa nouveauté, aux exigences raisonnables de ce qui a été... Pas de géométrie sans parole. Sans elle, les figures sont des accidents, et ne manifestent, ni ne servent, la puissance de l'esprit. " (P. Valéry).

Lucien HERVÉ



there is no symmetry. The Pythagorean words harmony and proportion represent more closely the real meaning of symmetry. In this building, no volume corresponds slavishly to any other volume, but all is rhyme, rhythm and harmony. At first sight, it would seem as though French or Dutch influence had been at work.

But the Lebreton mission only arrived in the country in 1816, and the Dutch effort to annex the country was around 1624/1654. Moreover, it would seem that these intrusions were not interested in providing cultural influence, but were more interested in making money quickly.

This similitude would go to indicate

quite clearly that apart from regional, racial and traditional similarities, there must exist across the seas, across the ages, a human language where men brought up in different circumstances, suddenly know one another, and become members of the same family.

Lucien HERVÉ

Figure 5 — Reproduction of the last page of the article on his visit to Brasilia, published in *Courrier des Messageries Maritimes* (1963). Text and photos by Lucien Hervé. © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

In 1962 an order from the French Institute of Archaeology of Beirut directed by Henri Seyrig and a contract with the Gallimard edition company led Hervé to Syria (Palmyra, Alep, etc.), Lebanon (the surroundings of Beirut and Byblos) and Iran (Persepolis, etc.). Besides the unusual task of taking photos of museum objects and those of the excavations, he prepared a big series of photos on the fields of antique ruins and the spectacular constructions of the nearby Christian villages settled in the surroundings of Qalaat Seeman, North of Aleppo. In his article, *Les villes mortes du Syrie du Nord* (The dead towns of North Syria), he proposed a deep analysis on history, geography and architecture revealing that he was touched by this country «whose history blends into an important part of the history of man» (Hervé, 1963, p. 32) and praised the builders, those «fantastic protagonists of the prefabrication of our modern times» (Hervé, 1963, p. 36) for their rational, specialized way of working. Then, he dealt with a particular attention to the development of the churches and dwellings across the centuries. Once more he was not interested only in the monuments of the past, but he linked his experiences to modern times precisising his intention by this article as «to show how much can thank our art and our medieval architecture to this region which has just come out from the twilight of the times and so unknown» (Hervé, 1963: 43).

The historical monuments that Lucien Hervé remarked, appreciated and studied in his journeys share certain values that the photographer praised in modern architecture: simplicity, functionality, monumentality, the sensitivity of the materials. What is more, these articles published in different magazines compose a sort of public diary for Lucien Hervé on his journeys. In a discreet way, he built his articles on one another, using more and more references developed in his precedent texts. The common trait of the photo-essays is their technical, historical precision and unceasing comparison of past and present, matched with a spontaneous, anecdotic and personal tone that testifies that the author wished to catch the interest of a non-professional public. This dialogue appears even through the photos, where beside the geometrical compositions and the surprising details appear relatively frequent human figures letting the narrative enter into his article. By these elements his essays take the diary's spontaneity and contemplations.

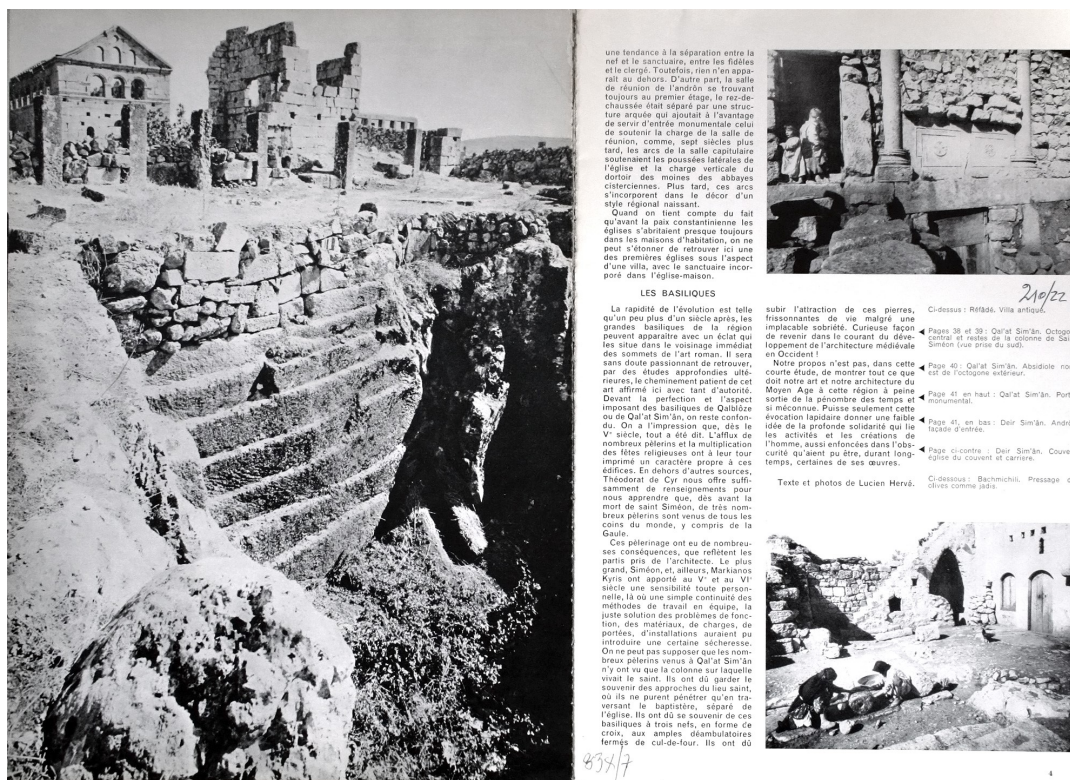


Figure 6 — Reproduction of the double-paged article on the “dead towns” of North-Syria published in *Jardin des Arts* (1962). Text and photographs by Lucien Hervé. © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

## The exhibitions: metaphorical journeys

Beside the articles, the exhibitions composed and organised by the photographer reveal a different, but not less important role of the journeys in his oeuvre. The work following his travels gained an importance even bigger as Lucien Hervé was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1965. The death of Le Corbusier in the very same year represented the end of his journey in the company of one of the most influential personalities of the 20th century's architecture. Fortunately, his health permitted him to continue his profession but he would never leave for another *grand tour* as before. A new, metaphorical, and inner journey took the place of the former ones that directed him to re-visit a number of familiar scenes of his life. Already from the 1950s he composed his own photo exhibitions and sent them to journeys to meet people. They were invitations to follow him on a surprising journey.

On his routes Hervé entered into a real dialogue with the subjects he captured. However, through his exhibitions a new context would reveal new possibilities opened to multiple dialogues. Therefore, entering into his exhibition rooms was either a real-world tour or a deep dive into Human Culture. In a common culture composed of diverse ones, photos and “guiding-ideas” were merely discussed as cultures and ages. Hervé’s humanism manifested through his amazement in front of any human creation.

One of his itinerant exhibitions invited his public to walk with him amongst the monuments of an entire mogul city, the Indian *Fatehpur Sikri*.<sup>1</sup> He offered a visit — as much aesthetic as urbanistic — to the 16th century town of the Great Moghul accompanied by the carefully selected thoughts of Le Corbusier. The big *Language of architecture*<sup>2</sup> exhibition is one of the most important creations of Hervé. He created an order by the juxtaposition of forms and lines even if they originated from very distant subjects, even if they represented very distant cultures, or very distant ages. In this exhibition he drew a lot out of his photos on modern architecture taken on commissions and other ones, shot in the little villages, during the decades of his “tours de France” with his family. He didn't mind if a Khmer temple appeared beside a Romanesque church or a French garden right next to a Japanese home. On the contrary! The surprise, an unexpected meeting, is an integral part of any journey. When he remarked the similarity between a hull of a boat and the roof of the Ronchamp chapel and placed them beside each other it was a daring act from his part. He had to count on the spectator's imagination and sense of humour as well! The multiplication of the points of views did not belong exclusively to his photographing methods, but it reappeared through the dense compositions of some series of photos as well: the indecipherable curves of the Jaipur and Delhi observatories, the geometry of the exuberant elements in the Versailles palace or the rigor of the monumental volumes at the Escorial royal complex in Spain organized in friezes offered a reflexion on the expressions of faith, metaphysics and earthly power (Hervé, 1965). These photographic sequences with their delicate but dense rhythms of the lines and curves that intensified the visual experience had their inspiration in the music and the cinema, passions that Hervé shared with Le Corbusier.



Figure 7 — Frieze representing the Versailles palace, as displayed at the exhibition *Language of architecture*, held in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (1964). © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

The poetic dialogue of Phaedrus and Socrates written by Paul Valéry (1932) guided discreetly the visitors all through the exhibition towards a new perception, new sensitivity and comprehension of the world. What is more, in harmony with his engagement beside the conceptions of Le Corbusier, Hervé based two above-mentioned exhibitions on the propositions of the Modulor<sup>3</sup> completed by the colours of the architect. Nevertheless, the most puzzling exhibition Hervé offered to his public was the *Beauty roams the streets*.<sup>4</sup> The “journey” proposed was composed by photos of insignificant details of an everyday street with contemporary abstract artworks and various citations as dialogue partners. «So goes the memory of a travelling photographer looking for the surprising, marvellous, fantastic beside that lots of people live the most naturally possible», wrote Hervé (1962: 110) on his mental peregrination.

These mental peregrinations demanded, though, a big liberty and open mind from the visitors. The philosophical guiding thoughts, the brave choice of juxtapositions of the photos and their unusual sizes, spatial organisations offered many different levels of lecture. The exhibition’s world does not exclude the human presence at all, but avoids the narrativity, more exactly the anecdote as the photographer called it. Concentrating on the essential unveils the beauty inherent of the world. Hervé was deeply convinced that through the experience of *seeing*, people would be able to form their ideas on their own environment. Thus, photography for him had a real educational value. In an unpublished text on his challenging exhibition on the Beauty he exclaimed: «Our eyes can see, but they understand only depending on a preliminary preparation, depending on a systematic education of its behaviour. [...] Everyone's eyes can become poets».

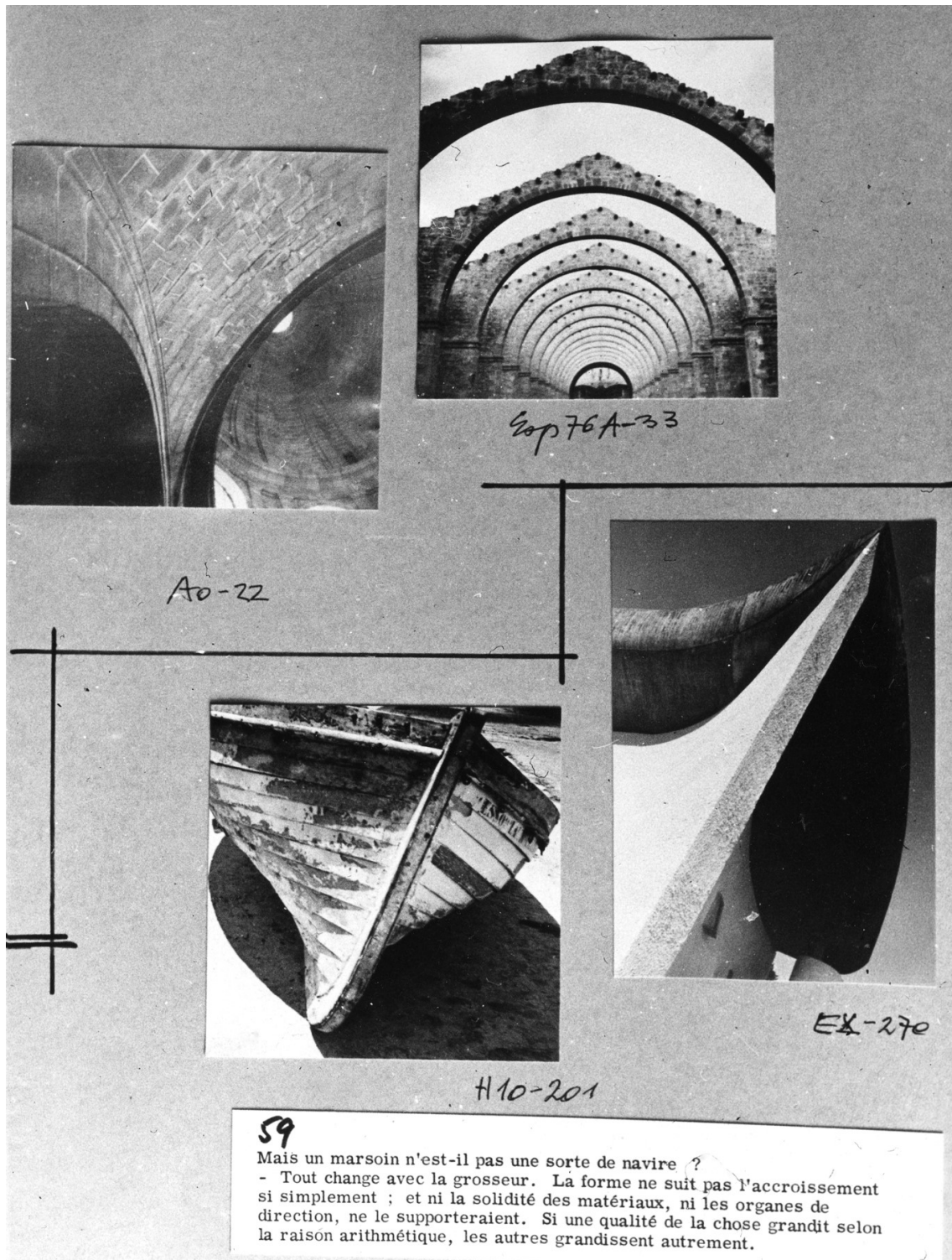


Figure 8 — *Language of architecture* (1960s): Details of the layout of the exhibition.

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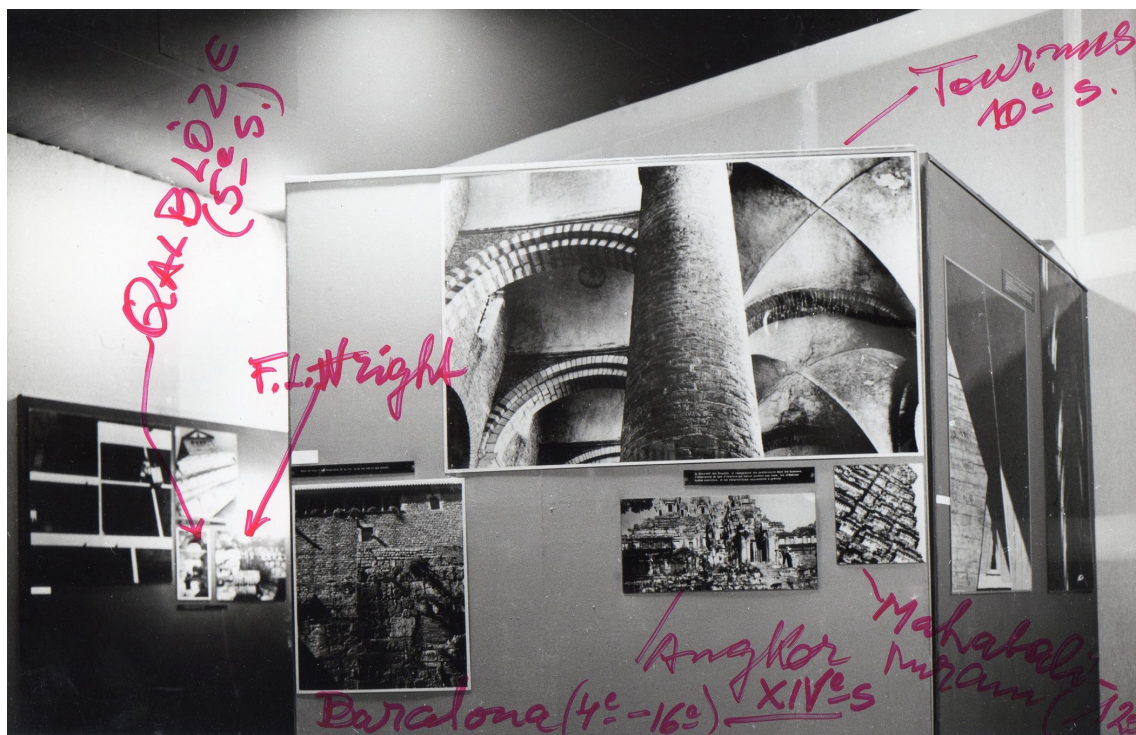


Figure 9 — *Language of architecture* (1963): photo of the exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, with the notes of the photographer © Archives Lucien Hervé, ALH.

### The subjectivity of the objective

The already mentioned critic of an Hervé-exhibition described the visitors experience as “visual emotion” (*Langage de l'architecture*, 1963). Indeed, this observation makes a nice echo of the photographer's own thought: «I was restless to express by my photos what I felt as well as what I saw. I wished that those who look at my pictures feel the same as me and so as I could transmit contradictory feelings also» (Batár, 1992: 33). Between 1957 and 1997 five itinerant exhibitions (*Language of architecture*, *Fatehpur Sikri*, *Capital of the Moghols*, *Beauty roams the streets*, *Le Corbusier*, *The post-war Paris*), composed by the photographer himself, travelled over the world. Whenever he could — mostly in France — Hervé went to meet his public in museums, youth and cultural centres, architectural associations in form of projections, conferences or free discussions. Surprise, emotion, beauty, humanity and universal language appear as key elements of his journeys, writings and exhibitions. His approach to transmit not only his factual observations on whatever

he took on photo but also his personal opinion, and going further than a simple evaluation differ fundamentally from those of the specialists. «When a photographer places himself in front of an object, by an act purely mechanic he opens an objective and creates, after several manipulations in the dark box, a seemingly objective picture» (Hervé, *Architecture*). Hervé refused this objectivity and dared to look for the beauty, despite its subjective unseizable character. His *own* surprise and emotion as those provoked by his photos offered a real possibility to meet his public and to form it.

«The image becomes one of the most universal language of men. [...] The photographer hopes to seize through the fragments, through its numerous aspects — of which architecture is a part of — the universe» (Hervé, *Architecture*). Conscious of having in his hands one of the most influential instruments of his age, Hervé served history, architecture and urbanism as tools to understand the contexts where men lived and live. If Lucien Hervé had been an architect, the tour of Babel could have reached the heights, feels the researcher dealing with his archives and photos! Architect in his soul, he was a committed humanist: «apart from regional, racial and traditional similarities, there must exist across the seas, across the ages, a human language where men brought up in different circumstances, suddenly know one another, and become members of the same family» (Hervé, 1963: 31).



## NOTES

- 1 *Fatehpur Sikri, Capitale des Moghols. Une ville nouvelle au XVIIe siècle* (Fatehpur Sikri, Capital of the Moghols. A new town from the 16th century) itinerary exhibition, presented between 1976-1979 at various places.
- 2 *Language of architecture*. Itinerary exhibition, presented between 1963-1968 at various places.
- 3 Proportions based on the human body, elaborated by Le Corbusier.
- 4 *La beauté court la rue* (Beauty roams the streets) itinerary exhibition, presented between 1963-1968 at various places.

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