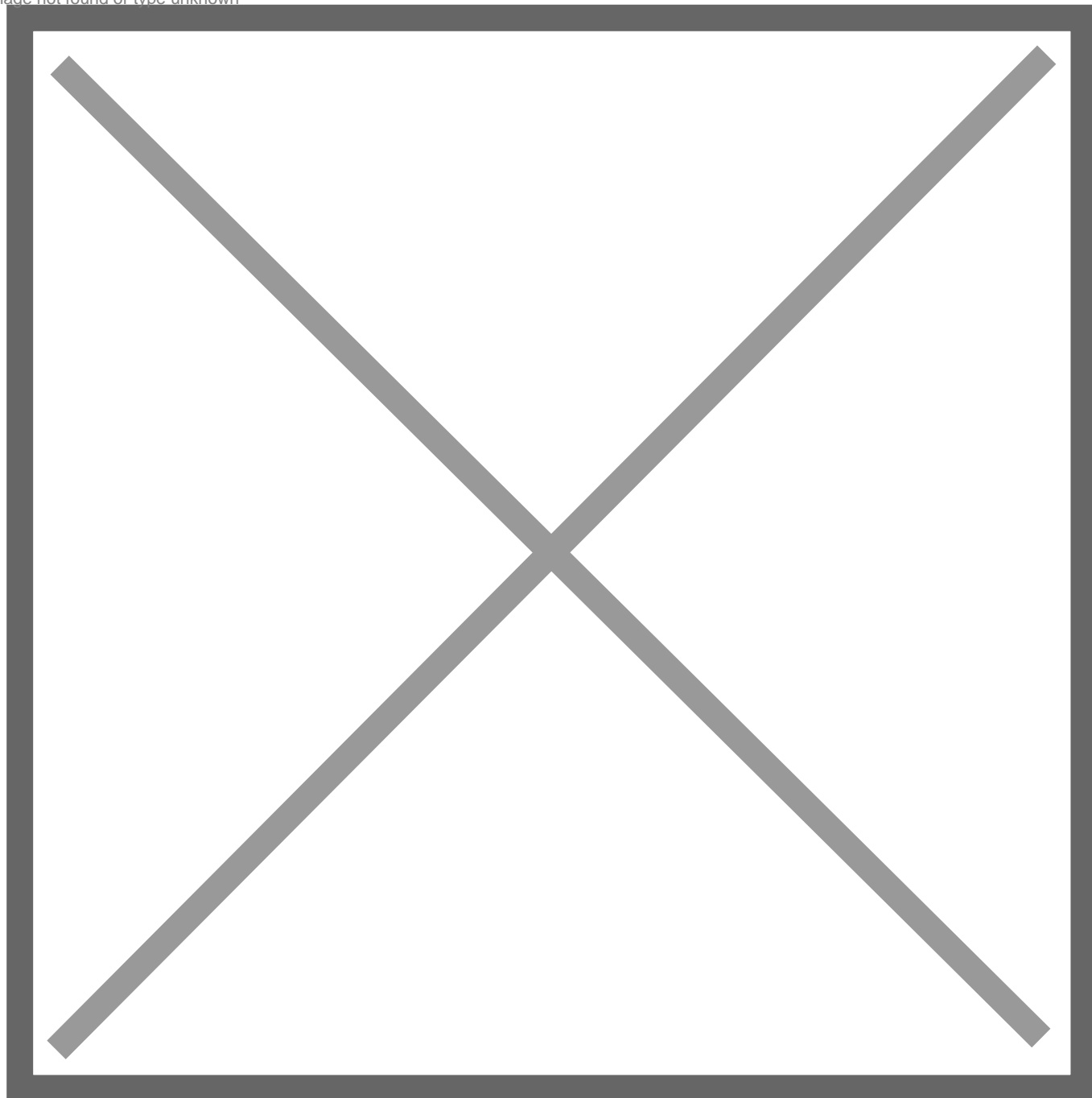


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Couvent Saint Marie de la Tourette / La Tourette

France

Route de la Tourette
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Région), Rhône
(Département) 69210 Éveux-sur-Arbresle

Commission

1953

Completion

1960

Original name

Couvent Saint Marie de la Tourette [Sainte-Marie de la Tourette. Eglise du couvent de la Tourette]

Original use

Religious/convent/monastery

Current use

Religious/convent/monastery

Architects

Le Corbusier, Iannis Xénakis

Engineers

André Wogenscky, Fernand Gardien, Séchaud et Metz (mai 55), Y. Bloch

Concrete by reinforcement

Reinforced concrete

Construction method

Cast-in-place concrete, in-situ concrete

Architectural concrete

Architectural concrete

Structural types

One-dimensional/concrete frame, Two-dimensional/[shear] wall

Description

The Dominican convent of La Tourette, near Lyon, is Le Corbusier's last great work in France. As is traditional in the convent typology, it is organized around a central open space. Unlike traditional cloisters, however, it incorporates the uneven topography of the terrain, which is taken up in the complex volumes of the whole: raised atop pilings supported by the slope of the hillside, the building generates an imposing perspective from afar and a controlled human scale toward the interior. Inside the cloister, the green roofs on top of the common rooms and circulation areas – which occupy the lower levels of the courtyard – serve as the convent garden.

Concrete is clearly the dominant material. In multiple forms, textures and finishes, it has an undeniable expressive purpose: with its material qualities, the béton brut evokes a strict, ancestral

religiousness, stripped of all luxury, harnessed to express the values of monastic life.

The upper floors house the individual cells. The long access corridors look out onto the interior courtyard through the characteristic fenêtres en longueur, whereas the cells themselves open onto the outside landscape. The cross section of both the cells and the hallways is determined by a strict system of measurements based on the Modulor.

The common rooms, on the lower floors, connect with the interior courtyard through access ramps and entrance volumes, characterized by large windows and concrete lattices that frame the views over the valley. The church, a robust rectangular concrete volume, stands out against the rest of the program by occupying the entirety of one side of the cloister: from the outside, it can be identified by the expressive shapes of the bell towers and skylights, whereas the interior is characterized by the masterful, dramatic treatment of the light that filters in from overhead, combining primary colors that infuse the light in sections.

La Tourette flawlessly demonstrates the multiple formal and expressive possibilities of exposed reinforced concrete and remains one of Le Corbusier's greatest works.

Links

[Couvent La Tourette Official Website](#)
[Fondation Le Corbusier - La Tourette](#)
[DOCOMOMO Virtual Exhibition](#)
[UNESCO WHL](#)