



GUEVREKIAN, GABRIEL

GUEVREKIAN, GABRIEL (b. in Istanbul, 1900, d. 1970), Armenian avant-garde architect, an influential figure in the development of modern architecture in Persia, linking Persian architects with Europe's pioneers of the modern movement. Guevrekian was raised in Tehran and retained his Iranian citizenship most of his life (he was naturalized as an American citizen in 1955). He studied architecture in Austria's Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, received his diploma in 1919, and worked with Oskar Strand and Josef Hoffman until 1922, when he settled in Paris. He was actively involved in the early stages of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) and served as its general secretary. His association with the European circle of avant-garde architects, (including Henri Sauvage, with whom he worked in 1922, Robert Mallet-Stevens [1922-24], Le Corbusier, André Lurcat, and Sigfried Gideon) made him the representative of the modern international movement in Persia when he returned there in 1933 by government invitation. During his four-year stay in Persia, he was appointed the chief architect of Tehran municipality. He constructed important public buildings, including the Tehran Officers' Club and the amphitheater of the Military School, as well as twenty villas and residences for the official and business elite of Tehran. He was also in charge of drafting plans for a number of government buildings (e.g, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Tehran, but it is not clear whether these buildings were constructed precisely according to his designs. Although the designs of these government buildings as implemented might be called academic and neoclassical, Guevrekian's drawings and earlier schemes reveal more inventive modern explorations. In fact it is in his residential designs,



such as the Vilā Siāsi, Vilā Panāhi, or Vilā Firuz that Guevrekian was able to exercise a higher degree of freedom.

Guevrekian was a member of the Union of Modern Architects (1929), a founding member of the French journal *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1930), and a member of Union des Architectes Modernes, Paris. He also participated in the Vienna Werkbund exhibition of 1931, in which he built two houses (next to one by Le Corbusier). Guevrekian's first-hand association with the European leaders of his profession and his own position in Persia made him an influential pioneer and a member of the new professional elite who shaped modern Tehran. After he left Persia in 1937, Guevrekian spent three years in England before returning to France, where he was involved in prefabricated housing projects before he took a teaching job at the French Academy at Sarrebruck. Between the years 1940 and 1944, however, "he stopped all professional activity in order not to work with the Nazi and Vichy governments" (Guevrekian's CV at the archives of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). He moved to the United States in 1948, where he taught for a year at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute in Auburn, Alabama, before his appointment at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a position he held until his retirement in 1969.

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