

Built to live in

Author

Johnson, Philip, 1906-2005

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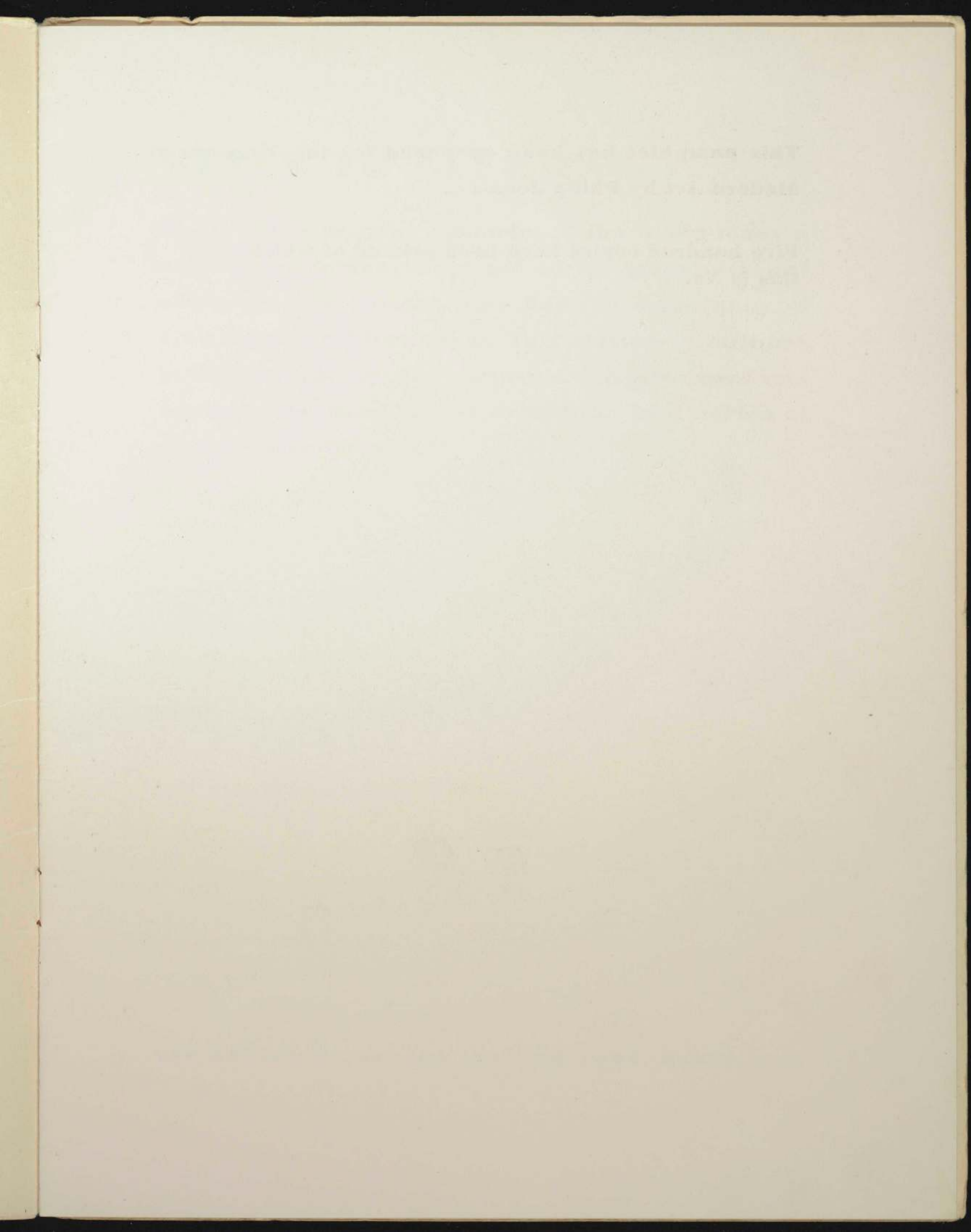
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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.

15 Modern Architecture, International Exhibition

from lists & early material

BUILT TO LIVE IN



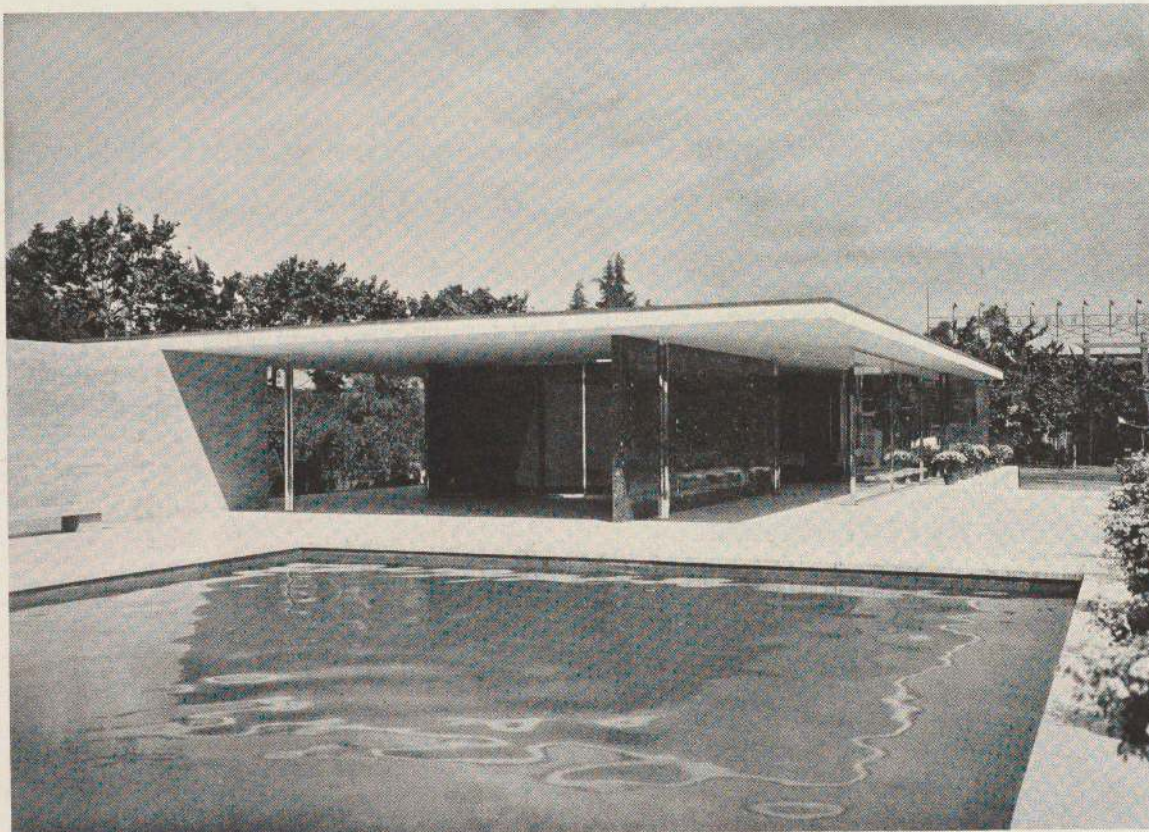
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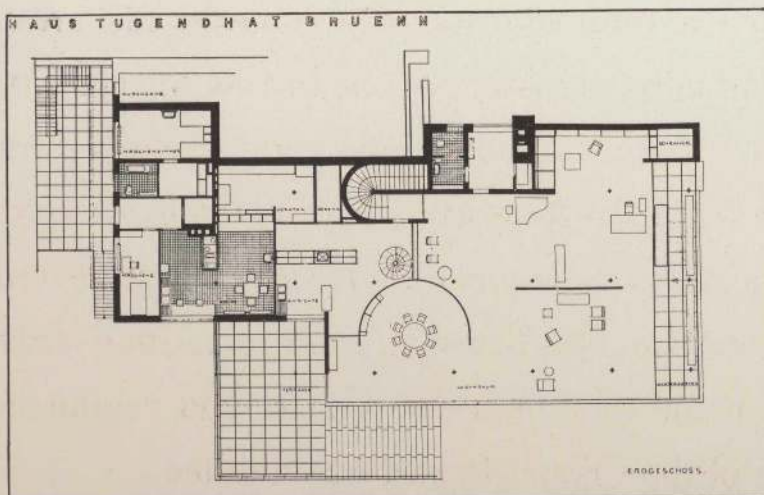
BUILT TO LIVE IN

There exists in many countries of the world today a new architecture. Because of its international character, few persons have had the opportunity of viewing the modern style. This statement outlines briefly the history and nature of the movement and explains the need for an exhibition in America of modern architecture.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, MARCH, 1931



Miës van der Rohe, German Pavillon, Barcelona Exposition of 1929



**Miës van der Rohe,
house with two walls
of glass, Brunn,
Czechoslovakia, 1930**

BUILT TO LIVE IN

"Can I make this building serve its purpose?" The architect has asked this question since the beginning of time. Today technical knowledge, new materials and a fresh outlook have made his answer an emphatic "Yes." Progressive architects all over the world have struck out vigorously along new paths.

As far back as 1851 Joseph Paxton gave the first prophecy of the new style when he built the Crystal Palace, an amazing structure of iron and glass, for the London Exposition. The next half century saw striking advances in the technique of building with iron and steel. The great bridges, railroad stations and factories were regarded first as unheard of feats and then as commonplaces. Meanwhile architecture kept tranquilly to its copy-book tradition of designing in styles borrowed from the past, indifferent to the progress being made in its sister art of engineering.

**Early
Beginnings**

Nevertheless, at the same time, a few independent men, one of whom was Richardson in America, refused to continue imitating past greatness. Their number gradually increased. At the turn of the century, Berlage in Holland, Behrens in Germany and Perret in France and above all Frank Lloyd Wright in America, made a definite stand for originality. Such progress laid the foundation for a complete revolution in building. The revolution was based on a full realization of the possibilities inherent in the new materials—steel and reinforced concrete. The promise of the Crystal Palace was fulfilled.

**A
Revolution
in Archi-
tecture**

All the discoveries made by the engineers while architecture had remained stagnant were now at the disposal of the architects. Examples of American grain elevators and factories furnished immediate inspiration. Engineering and architecture were united once more. A new style of architecture had been invented.

**Activity in
America**

Today the style has passed beyond the experimental stage. In almost every civilized country in the world it is reaching its full stride. In America the houses of Frank Lloyd Wright, the skyscrapers of Raymond Hood, the buildings of Howe & Lescaze, the work of Richard J. Neutra in Los Angeles and the Bowman Brothers in Chicago, to name the most outstanding examples, bear witness to the widespread nature of the movement in our country. Le Corbusier is famous as a leader of modern architecture in France. In Germany, to build in any other manner would be an anachronism. Russia has "gone modern." She has borrowed the energetic planners and builders of Frankfort and has directed them to build fourteen cities in five years! The Dutch have been prominent in the field from the beginning. Moreover, new buildings in Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Finland and Japan indicate that the style is international in character.

**Activity
Abroad**

WHAT IS MODERN ARCHITECTURE?

Modern architecture was born and exists in an era of applied science. Modern architecture does not fight the machine age but accepts it. The architect is solving anew the old problems presented by the home, factory, school, railroad station, civic building and church. Heavy



**Left,
Raymond
Hood,
McGraw-Hill
Building, New
York, 1931**



**Right,
Howe &
Lescage,
Philadelphia
Saving Fund
Society
Building,
Philadelphia,
1931**

walls of stone or brick with small windows were formerly a necessity. Now steel posts carry the load, converting the outer wall into a mere curtain. This has made possible walls of glass framed with steel, light walls of metal or tile and, in some cases, no walls at all. Flat roofs have become practical.

The building is composed of standardized construction units economically made in mass production. When the units are thus standardized and the houses designed purposely for middle class homes or workers' dwellings, no competitor can enter the field with the

**Mass Pro-
duction—
Low Cost**

modern architect. On the other hand, if the house is custom built for the rich man and the materials are expensive, the cost will be in proportion, but relatively much lower than that of a building done in the old way.

**The Plan
Is the Thing**

Modern architecture is *based* on planning. The architect builds to keep the plan inviolate. He does not allow a traditional style to interfere with the logic of his original interior arrangement. His facade reflects the plan. The needs of the building determine the exterior and interior design.

**Planning
the City**

The logic of the new planning reaches beyond the conception of a building as an isolated problem. Numerous buildings are grouped together according to their corporate functions. Communities, like buildings, are planned from the point of view of serving function. Formal gridiron plans, like that of New York, or radial planning, like that of Paris and Washington, D. C., are superseded by planning of streets according to the districts which they connect. The immense waste caused by New York's congestion is estimated by Mr. McAneny, President of the Regional Plan Association, to be as high as \$1,000,000 a day. A thorough study of functions both of skyscrapers and streets would eliminate such waste.

**Flexibility
of Modern
Architecture**

Since planning is the guiding spirit of the modern architect, his building becomes a flexible instrument. In temperate climates extensive wall areas are made of glass. In cold climates the north walls have small windows. For light and warmth the southern exposure has large windows of double glass. Thick curtains insure privacy and control



Richard J. Neutra, Private House, Los Angeles, California, 1930

the light. The window area toward the noisy street side is reduced. Houses in the country may be open on all sides. Sun porches, gardens or gymnasiums utilize the flat roof space. The size and shape of the site is carefully considered. There may be a long thin house on a thin lot or a square house on a square lot.

The new style adapts itself to every kind of structure, whether it be a factory, church or home. In every instance, the building will be ^A **New Style** modern architecture without a single change in principle. It will not be a Greek temple made into a bank, a Gothic church become an office tower, or, worst of all, a "modernistic" hodge-podge of half-hidden construction and fantastic detail.

Beyond the practical advantages, modern architecture is beautiful. For while the modern architect accepts the machine age, he also transcends it. The building can serve every function of structure and utility and at the same time have elegance and refinement of proportion. The architect works consciously to create flat surfaces where he can apply sheets of metal and glass, and panels of wood and marble. Beautiful workmanship of the machine is striven for rather than imitation by the machine of what was originally hand-made ornament. The modern architect builds to reveal beauty of construction, plan and materials.

AN ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITION

The Museum of Modern Art in New York has followed closely this international activity in architecture. The Museum was founded in the summer of 1929 by a group of American art patrons, principally New Yorkers but including trustees from Boston, Chicago and Washington. They believed the art of our time was not receiving adequate presentation in existing institutions. Since the fall of the same year exhibitions have regularly been held at the Museum's quarters in the Heckscher Building, 730 Fifth Avenue. During the first year of its services approximately 200,000 people have visited the galleries.

Although the Museum has until now exhibited only works of painting and sculpture, it has long felt the need for a comprehensive exhibition of modern architecture. Never in this country or abroad has such an

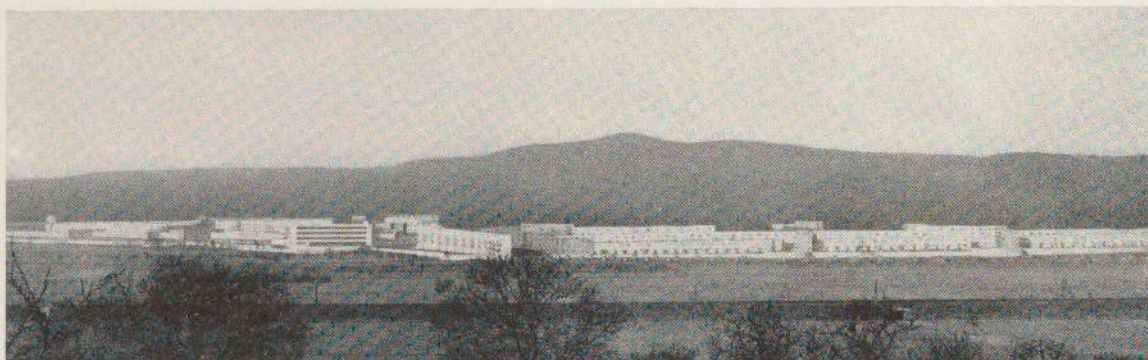


Walter Gropius. Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, 1926

exhibition been held. Obviously, an exhibition is by far the best way of presenting effectively to the public every aspect of the new movement. The hope of developing intelligent criticism and discussion depends upon furnishing the public a knowledge of contemporary accomplishments in the field. Our present limited vision in this respect is caused by the very lack of those examples which the exhibition will supply. An introduction to an integrated and rational mode of building is sorely needed. The stimulation and direction which an exhibition of this type can give to contemporary architectural thought and practice is incalculable. It is desirable that we view and ponder the new mode of building which fits so decidedly into our methods of standardized construction, our economics and our life.

The Exhibition and the Future of Building

The Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art have appointed a Committee to organize the Exhibition of Modern Architecture to be held in 1932. The Committee has given careful study to the presentation of the Exhibition.



**City Architect Ernst May and Associates, Civic Housing Development
Römerstadt, Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, 1925-1929**

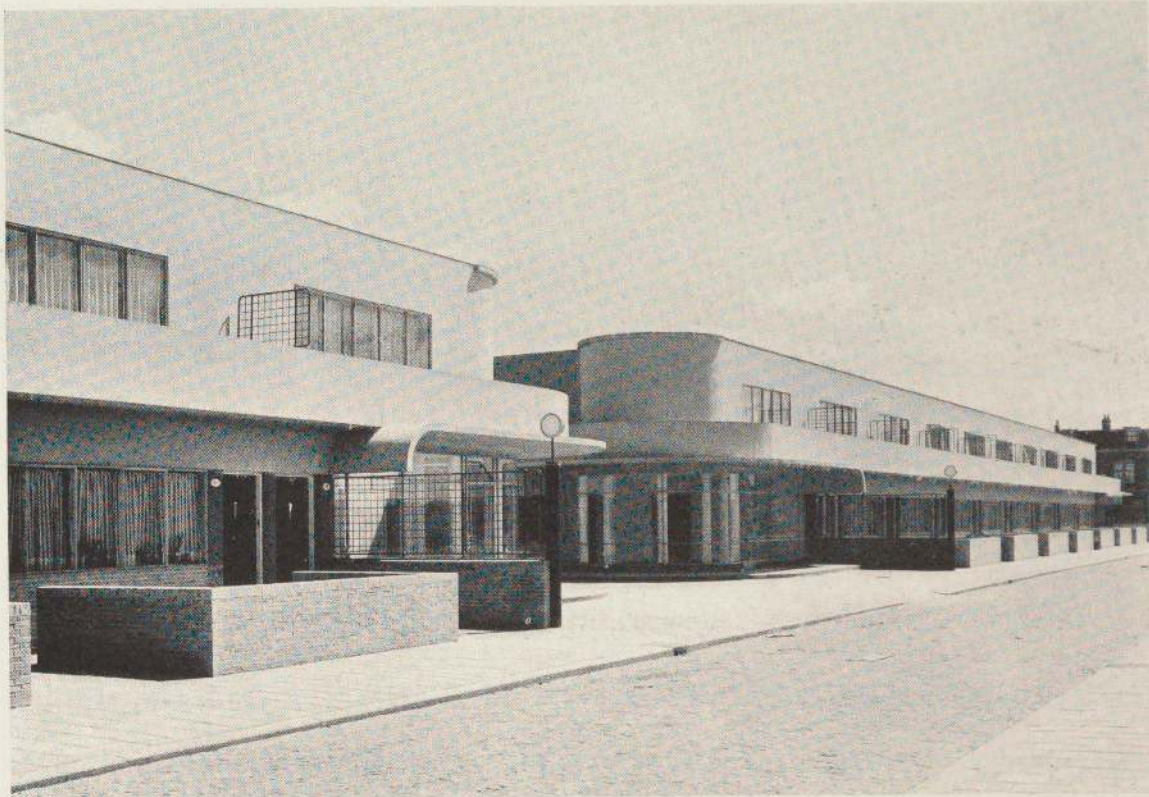
THE NATURE OF THE EXHIBITION

There will be two main divisions of the Exhibition :

I. Models by American and Foreign Architects

A group of the most prominent architects of the world will construct models of the type of building best suited to their individual genius. These men will be chosen as representing the highest artistic achievement in twentieth century architecture. Their models will demonstrate that modern architecture can achieve practical expression in every line of building—home, school, railroad station, apartment house, theatre, department store, civic building, skyscraper, prison and church. The majority of architects will represent America; the others, Germany, France and Holland.

Explanatory plans, elevations and perspectives will be placed on the wall behind each model. Enlarged photographs of actual buildings by these architects will also be shown. Each architect will be invited to write a comment on his respective model. This comment, together with a biographical sketch and a critical survey of his works will appear in a special catalogue.

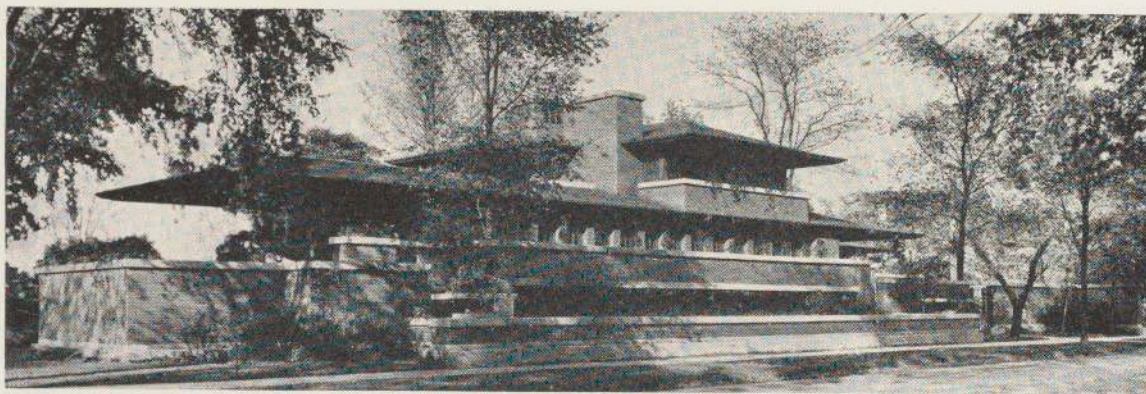


J. J. P. Oud, Workers' Houses, Hook of Holland, Holland, 1924-1926

II. Solutions to Three American Building Problems

1. CITY BUILDING—MODEL

Modern architecture seeks to extend the principles employed so successfully in the well-planned house or office building to organizing groups of buildings which may cover a city block or city section. The single structures of such a group will be planned, not as isolated units, but as dependent parts of a large community. Such a community contains within itself many functions of hotel, business offices, restaurant, theatre, etc. The advantages of this planning are: substitution of short building-to-building communications for round-about and congested street routes, reduced construction expenses by elimination of unnecessarily tall buildings and finally a general economy inherent in large scale undertakings.



Frank Lloyd Wright, Robie House, Near Chicago, 1910

2. FACTORY—MODEL

Research in factory organization has led to important innovations. The model will show a windowless factory artificially lighted and ventilated.

3. HOUSING PROJECT FOR MINIMUM WAGE EARNERS—MODEL

Housing of minimum wage earners is a subject claiming the attention of the nation. Private enterprise, under existing construction methods, realizes a return of but 2% on capital invested. The state and city governments are faced with the problem of subsidizing this type of building. The model with accompanying reports will propose a solution, taking into account lower construction cost while maintaining a high standard of living conditions.

The preparation of detailed printed reports will be an important adjunct of this part of the exhibition. A concise, understandable presentation of plans, construction methods and costs will be prepared for easy access to those visiting the Exhibition.

The art of exhibiting is in itself a province of modern architecture. In view of this fact, one of the most prominent modern architects, Miës van der Rohe of Berlin, has been chosen to plan the installation of the Exhibition. His arrangement of the German exhibits at the Barcelona Exposition in 1929 won him an international reputation. He is a director of the Berlin Building Exposition of 1931.

**Miës van
der Rohe**

The work of arrangement includes designing bases for the models, tables for the literature, chairs, photograph racks and partition screens of glass and metal.

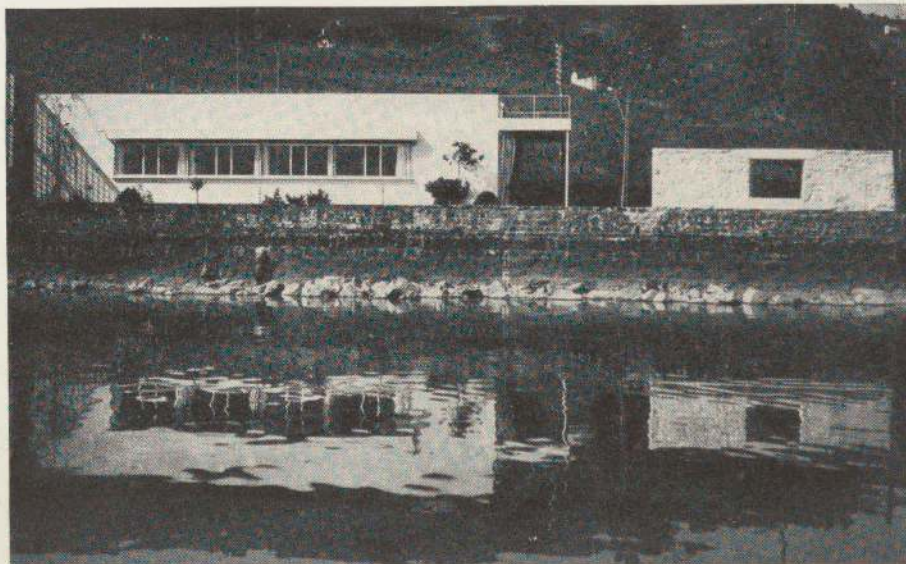
Though space, of course, prevents the display of any full-sized work of architecture, these incidental fixtures and the furniture will show to some extent in actual objects what has been achieved in modern architecture.

The date of the Exhibition has been tentatively set for February 15, 1932. The advantages of holding the Exhibition as soon as possible cannot be over-emphasized.

The Date

The Exhibition will remain in New York eight or ten weeks and will then travel to museums in all the principal cities of the country. Judging from the keen interest abroad in new ideas in architecture emanating from America, the unique character and selectivity of the Exhibition will necessitate a European and Japanese itinerary.

**A World-
wide Exhibi-
tion**



**Le Corbusier,
House on
Lake Geneva,
Switzerland,
1925**

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