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	APF	Mies van der Rohe Archive

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Archive

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The Museum of Modern Art

To Staff

From Arthur Drexler

Date October 12, 1970

Re Mies van der Rohe Archive

I am pleased to announce that the Mies van der Rohe Archive has begun its work of cataloging and restoring more than two thousand drawings bequeathed by the architect to the Museum.

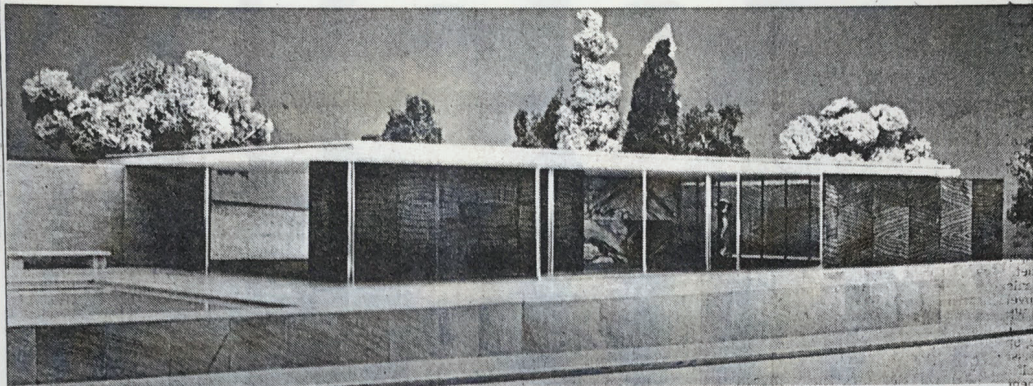
Ellen Marsh was appointed Archivist on July 1, 1969; she will be coordinating and supervising catalog and conservation work. The Archive is located in Studio 2 and the Staff Room of the former Art School (extension 6128).

The Department of Architecture and Design plans occasional small exhibitions of many of the drawings that have never been seen or published, and we also plan a comprehensive publications program.

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MOMA

Ny Times MARCH 26, 1987 p. C22
Architecture: Mies Masterpiece's New Incarnation



Model of pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe. The reconstructed building opened last year in Barcelona.

By PAUL GOLDBERGER

Special to The New York Times

BARCELONA, Spain, March 23 — For lovers of modern architecture, walking through the newest architectural wonder in this city is something like being in Shangri-La — for this building is not supposed to exist. It is the pavilion Mies van der Rohe designed in 1929 as the German exhibition at the Barcelona World's Fair, and although photographs made it one of the most celebrated and influential buildings of the 20th century, it was torn down after only six months. A few years ago a movement began to reconstruct the pavilion as a permanent structure, and in the middle of last year, just in time to be part of the celebrations marking the centennial of Mies van der Rohe's birth in 1886, the brand-new pavilion opened.

It is an extraordinary building, but as remarkable as the structure itself is the curious sense it engenders. The crowds wander through it as if it were some sort of archeological artifact, recently unearthed, and in a sense that is what it is — not uncovered, of course, but rediscovered just as completely. Most demolished buildings slip away from the public consciousness after they are torn down; the pavilion, however, only grew in stature. Writers, historians, critics and architects acclaimed the original pavilion as one of the seminal buildings of the modern age; virtually none of them had ever seen it, of course, but that did not stem their enthusiasm for the building, and their determination to confer upon it legendary status.

The reconstruction, which was done with the help of plans, photographs and drawings in the Mies van der Rohe Archive at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, is as faithful as these documents would permit. The travertine, the green

marble and the glass are all essentially as they were in 1929, and of course so are the tufted leather chairs for the original pavilion, a piece of furniture that for generations has been known, in homage to the pavilion, as the "Barcelona chair." And the pavilion has been re-erected on its original site, with the ornate, Spanish colonial wall of one of the old Barcelona exposition buildings as a sumptuous backdrop and architectural counterpoint, just as it appeared in the photographs of the original.

So there is reason to believe that the experience of visiting this new pavilion is fairly close to what it must have felt like in 1929. Indeed, what is most astonishing is how new and fresh the pavilion feels, even though its image is now familiar and the radical rethinking of architectural space that it represented is no longer anything new or startling. But so perfect is Mies's art that we feel in 1987 as if we were seeing all of this open, flowing space for the first time — as if we, like the visitors to the original pavilion in 1929, had known only tight, overstuffed rooms and were having our first breath of modernist fresh air.

The Barcelona Pavilion was where 20th-century concepts of open, flowing architectural space found their eloquent, mature expression. The pavilion is not a conventional building with four walls; it is a composition of vertical and horizontal planes, which appear to be freestanding and almost to float in space. The roof is supported on columns that are independent of the walls, so as to emphasize that the walls exist only to define space, not to hold up the building. And the space within the pavilion could not be described as a series of rooms, though it is hardly amorphous. These walls of glass, of marble and of onyx define spaces with great precision —

spaces of sublime proportion, balance and light.

It is luxurious in the extreme; the building reminds us how much Mies loved lush materials, and how distant he was from the pure functionalists who were his distant modernist cousins. His architecture was disciplined, but it was not parsimonious; it was as rich, in its way, as anything produced by the Beaux-Arts, and surely as exquisitely crafted.

But it is the composition itself, the arrangement of lines and planes, that is the most remarkable thing here. The walls stretch out beyond the end of the roof, to break down not only the conventional sense of the room but also the traditional distinctions between inside and outside space, as well as to remind us that these vertical planes are parts of a larger abstract composition. Every plane, in fact, roof and wall alike, seems to float free, on its own; the floor plan of this building has often been compared to a Mondrian drawing.

It is the purist of the pure compositions of the 1920's, purer than any building that would have had to fulfill more conventional functional demands could ever have been. The pavilion was only a ceremonial structure, intended to demonstrate the esthetic potential of contemporary architecture; it did not even have to fulfill the modest function of displaying German products, since the German Government had other exhibition space elsewhere on the fairgrounds.

In a sense, then, the pavilion was always a kind of folly — an unreal building for an unreal purpose. But this makes it no less extraordinary, and it makes the extent to which many of its architectural motifs have become commonplace no less appropriate. For we can now understand, as we could never have understood in the days when the pavilion existed only in photographs, how truly sublime this building is. Most important,

we can sense what it is like to move through the pavilion, something still photographs could never tell us; the truth is that it is like walking through a dream of spatial perfection. From almost every vantage point the pavilion makes a superb backdrop for the human figure, but more exciting still is to see it alive with constant movement — what an extraordinary place this would be in which to choreograph a dance piece, for example.

Some Mies purists have complained that some of the glass as well as the onyx used on one of the interior walls is not precisely like the original, but these things matter little in the face of the nearly perfect level of execution here. The only real problem with this re-creation is that the 1987 pavilion has one neighbor that the 1929 pavilion did not — a dreadful building of concrete that looks like a parking garage and in fact houses offices for the upcoming Olympics in Barcelona.

The greatest service the City of Barcelona, which has already done so much for architecture by rebuilding the Mies pavilion, could perform now would be to demolish this structure, which squats in front of the Mies pavilion, squeezing it and clamoring for attention. For it is worse than a vulgar intrusion — beside Mies van der Rohe it becomes a living demonstration of how far down modern architecture has come since 1929.

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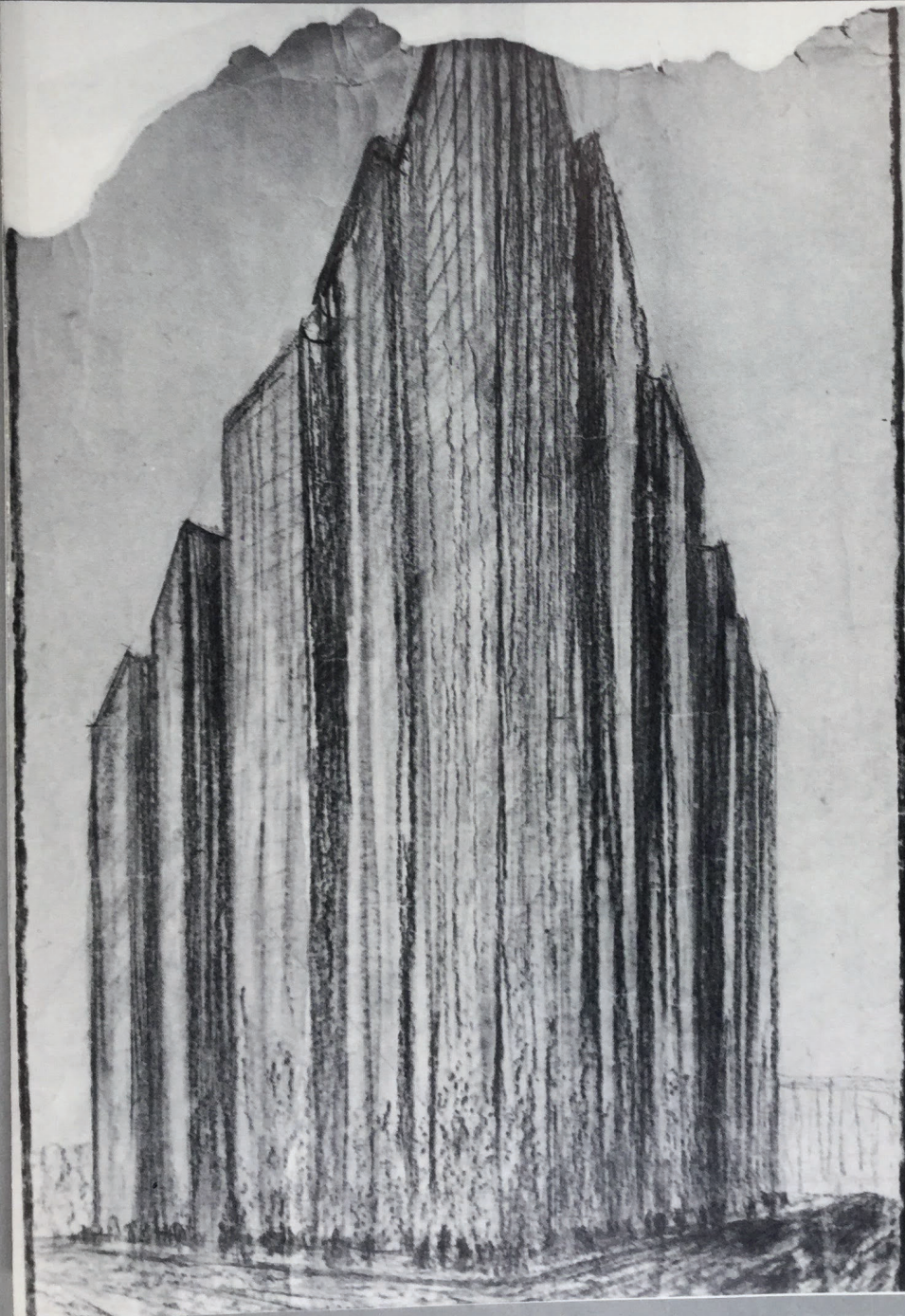
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Mies Van der Rohe Archive.

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The Mies van der Rohe Archive of the Museum of Modern Art

edited by
Arthur Drexler

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An Illustrated Catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art

Part I: 1907-1938

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- unpublished variants of well-known masterpieces
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Contents of the Set

These four (9" x 12") volumes include complete documentation of all 2,445 drawings in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art from the period 1907-1938 (virtually all the extant drawings). Almost 2,000 of the drawings are presented here, many in a full page format. All six of the color drawings in the collection from this period are faithfully reproduced. Introductory notes on each building and project are provided by Arthur Drexler.

Format of Volumes

The 9" x 12" volumes are bound with the highest quality library bindings and are printed on a special stark white acid-free, 250-year-life paper. The illustrations are faithfully reproduced using 150-line screens.

Price

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Publication Schedule

All four volumes will be published in the Fall of 1982. We would be pleased to put your name on our mailing list to receive announcements of future segments of the Archive.

SAVE \$150

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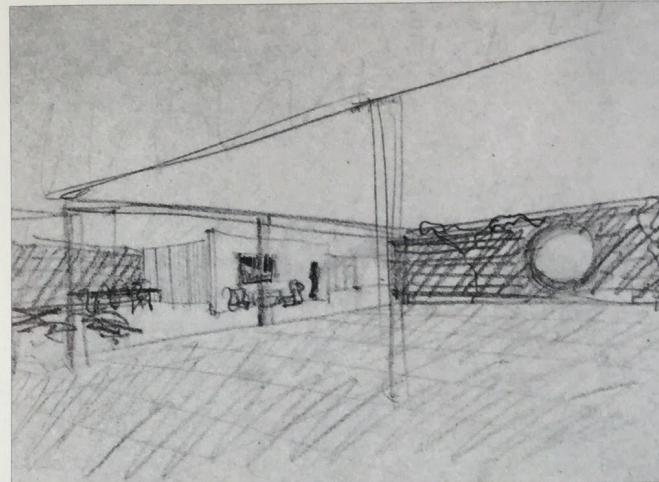
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Ulrich Lange House, 1935
Krefeld
Perspective sketch.
Pencil, red pencil on tracing,
20.9 x 29.3 cm
Archive: 7.6



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was, with Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the major innovators in 20th century architecture. The Museum of Modern Art's Mies van der Rohe Archive was established in 1968 as a division of the Department of Architecture and Design, and was the logical outcome of a long and cordial relationship between Mies and the Museum.

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Some 45 drawings originally assembled by Philip Johnson for his 1947 exhibition of Mies' work had remained in the Museum, on extended loan, for sixteen years. In 1963, as Director of Museum Collections, Alfred Barr wrote to Mies at the request of Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, to ask that those drawings be donated to the Museum. Mies readily agreed and added in his letter: "If in the future there is some interesting material you wish to have, please let me know. I will be delighted to give it to the Museum."

WORK PRESERVED INTACT

This response led to a series of work sessions in which Mies, Dirk Lohan, his grandson and associate, and Arthur Drexler, reviewed the drawings with the intention of selecting the most important for immediate transfer to the Museum. But as the sessions continued it became apparent that Mies himself wanted the entire body of work to be preserved intact.

A STAGGERING 20,000 ITEMS

In view of the enormous quantity of drawings involved, the Museum formally established the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe Archive. Between 1963 and 1969 all materials still in Mies' possession were transferred to the Museum of Modern Art. Dr. Ludwig Glaeser, Curator of the Mies Archive from 1968 to 1980, undertook the complicated task of cataloging and storing more than 20,000 items.

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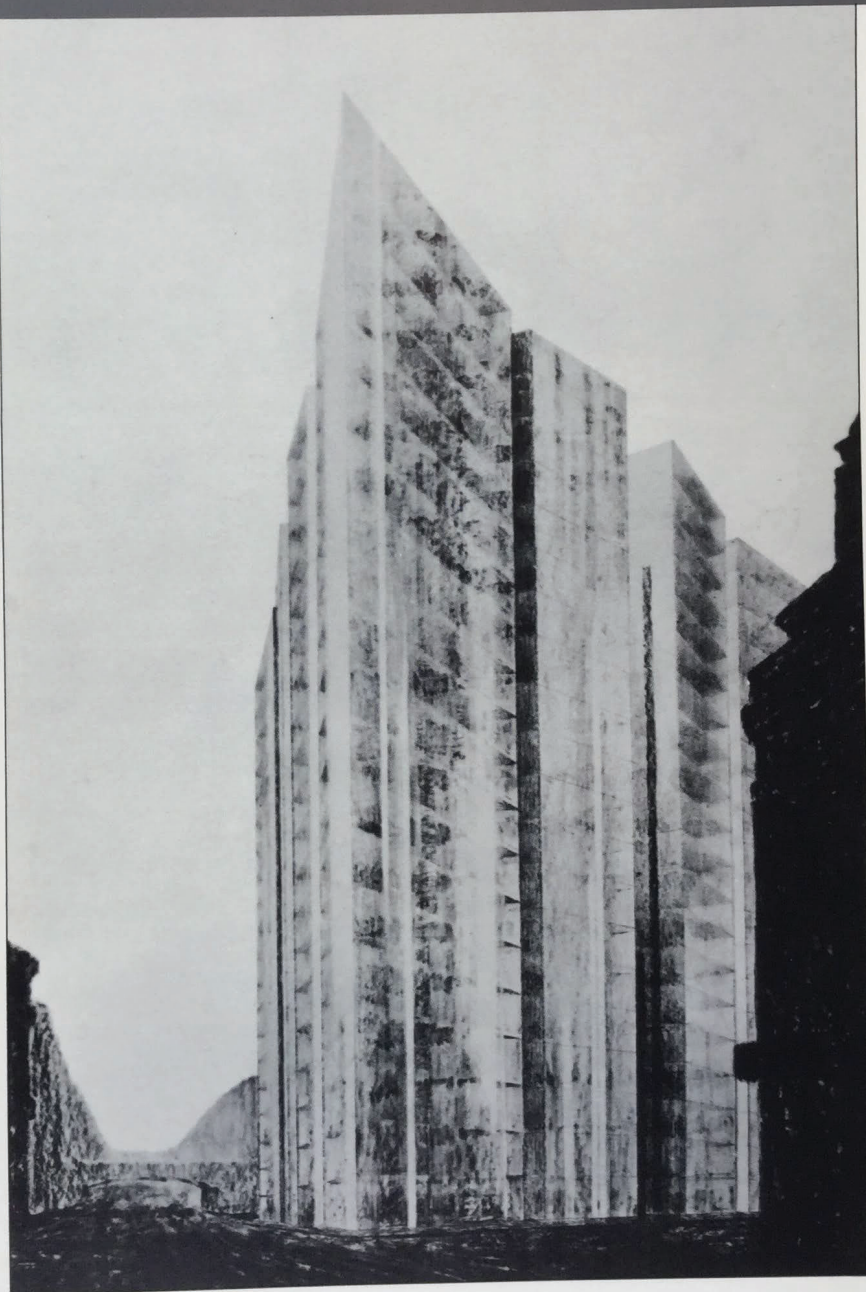
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Friedrichstrasse Office Building. 1921
Competition Project, Berlin
Perspective, north and east sides
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Charcoal, pencil on heavy beige paper.
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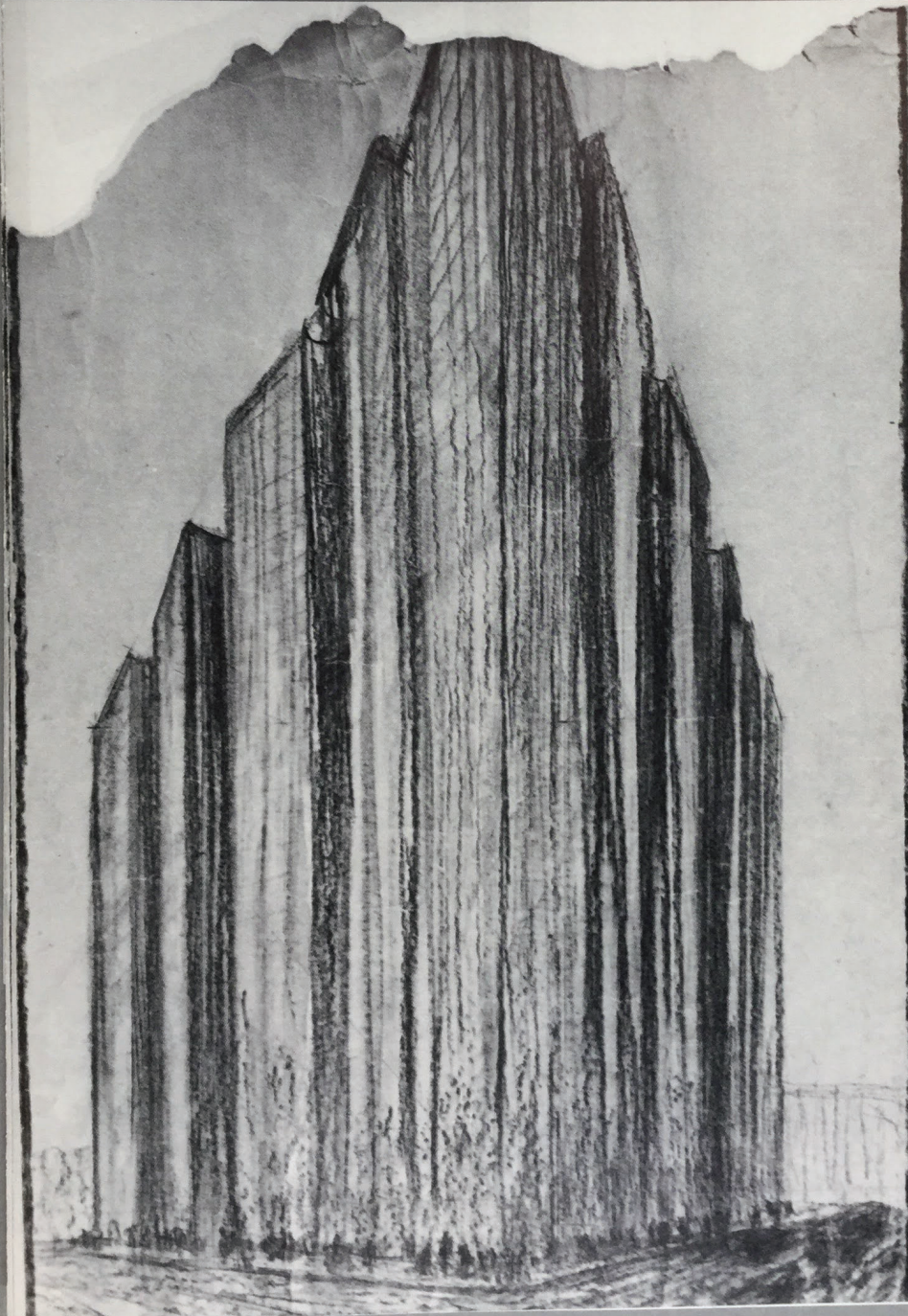
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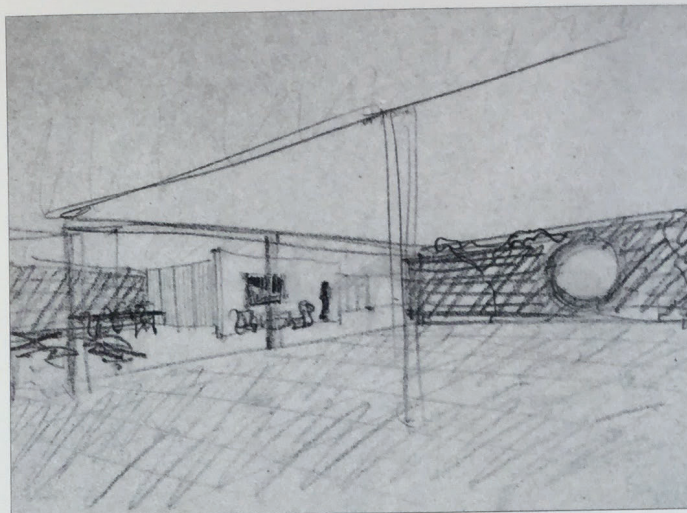
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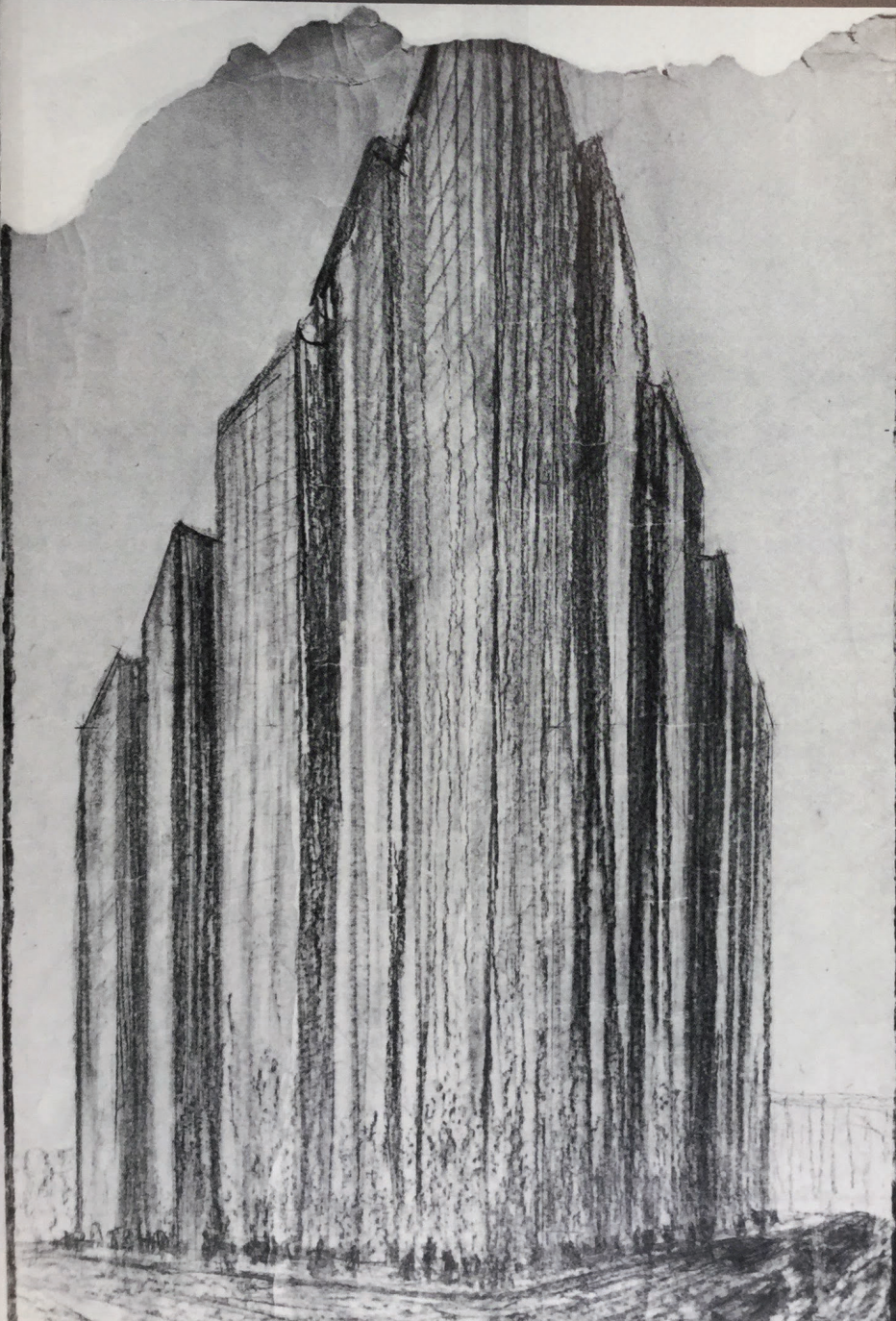
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Edited by
ARTHUR DREXLER

*With introductory
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building and
project by
Arthur Drexler
and
Franz Schulze*

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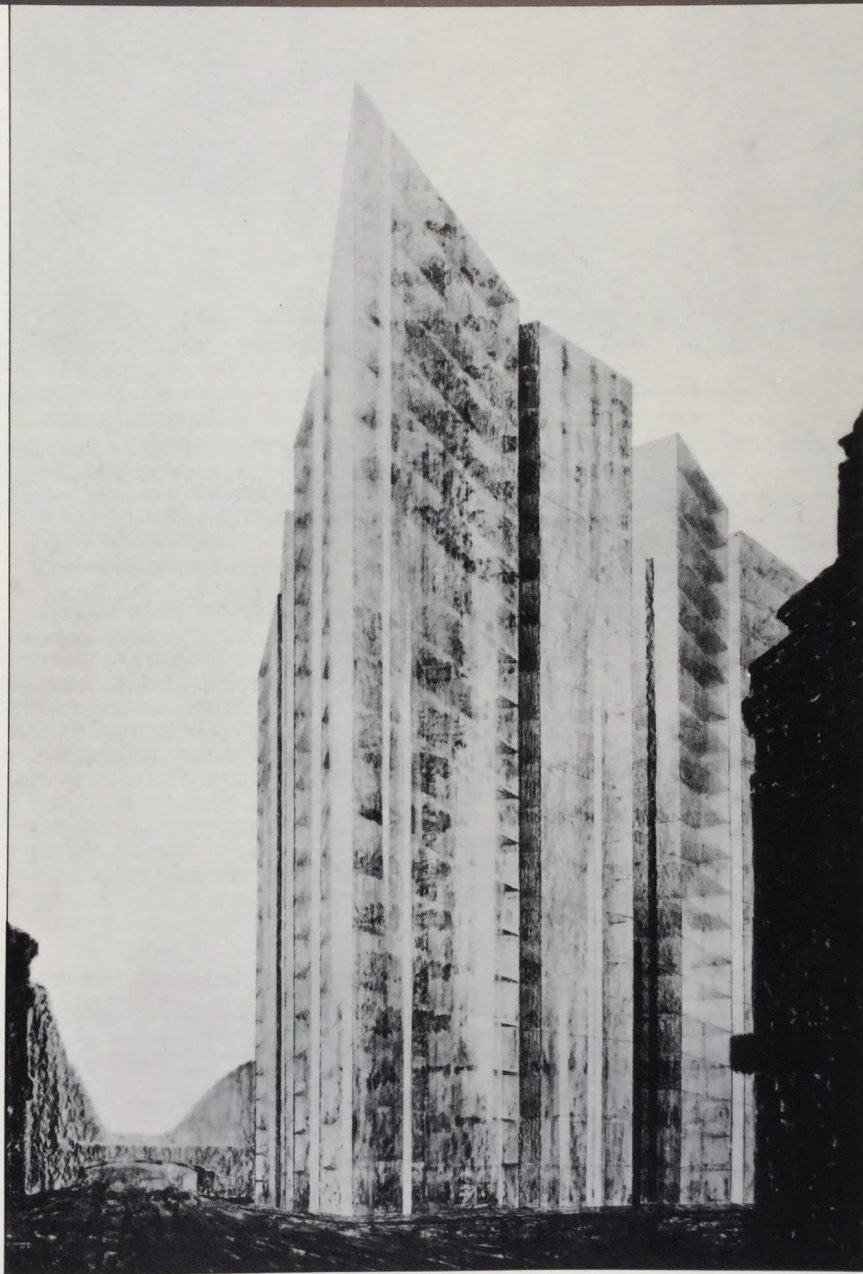
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Stepping Back in Splendid Isolation

Mies van der Rohe at the Modern and the Whitney
by M...

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M I E S

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and his followers reinvented the urban landscape in the twentieth century. Now, two exhibitions explore the stimulating work and rich legacy of this influential architect, designer, and thinker.

MIES IN BERLIN
The Museum of Modern Art
through September 11, 2001


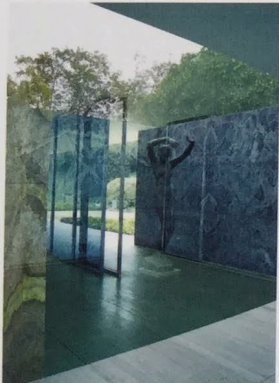

Mies in Berlin presents his early career, from his roots in traditional German architecture through the formulation of his "less is more" philosophy. Drawings, models, and contemporary photographs reveal the heart of modern building.

This exhibition is made possible by UBS PaineWebber and the Getty Grant Program. Generous support is also provided by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., Peter Norton, Norton Family Foundation, Tishman Speyer Properties, and Knoll, Inc. Additional funding is provided by Elise Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown, Mrs. Frances Lewis, Sarah Peter, and The Government of The Federal Republic of Germany.

MIES IN AMERICA
Whitney Museum of American Art
through September 23, 2001

Mies in America traces his career from his arrival in 1938 through the construction of such landmarks as the Seagram Building. See how Mies developed new concepts of urban space that are among the ultimate expressions of modern architecture.

This exhibition is sponsored by the Solow Art and Architecture Foundation and UBS PaineWebber. The exhibition is made possible by Vivendi Universal. Jointly organized by the Whitney and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.



to Otto von Bismarck which Mies failed to win.

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Mies

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Clockwise from lower left: **Kay Fingerle**, German Pavilion, Barcelona International Exposition, 1928-29. Detail, 2000. Chromogenic color print. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**, Kröller-Müller Villa, view from garden. Pergola and large exhibition hall foreground, 1912-13. Pastel and watercolor on print. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands. **William Leftwich**, Mies van der Rohe viewing his Farnsworth House model at *The Architecture of Mies van der Rohe* exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1947. © The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000. **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**, Honeycomb, Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper, Berlin, Competition project, 1921. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect. **Guido Guidi**, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 860 Lake Shore Drive Apartment Building, Chicago, 1948-51. Chromogenic color print. Centre Canadien d'Architecture /Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. Gift of Elise Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown. © Guido Guidi

Cover, top to bottom: **Kay Fingerle**, German Pavilion, Barcelona International Exposition, 1928-1929. Detail, 2000. Chromogenic color print. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. **Irving Penn**, Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson with the model of the Seagram Building, 1955. Gelatin silver print. Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. Donation PaceWildenstein MacGill, New York © 1984 by Irving Penn. Courtesy Vogue

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MIES AND MORE: AN ARCHITECTURAL TOUR

Celebrate the legacy of Mies in simultaneous exhibitions at *The Museum of Modern Art* and the *Whitney Museum of American Art*. A noteworthy third architecture exhibition can be enjoyed on foot, walking from *MoMA* to the *Whitney* or vice versa.



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- 16** Whitney Museum of American Art
MARCEL BREUER & ASSOCIATES/HAMILTON SMITH, 1963-66; RICHARD GLUCKMAN, 1995-98
945 Madison Avenue at 75 Street
- 16** French Consulate
(originally Charles E. Mitchell House)
WALKER & GILLETTE, 1926
934 Fifth Avenue between 74 and 75 Streets
- 15** Gertrude Rhinelanders Waldo House
(current tenant: Polo/Ralph Lauren)
KIMBALL & THOMPSON, 1895-98
867 Madison Avenue at 72 Street
- 14** Frick Collection
CARRERE & HASTINGS, 1913-14
1 East 70 Street at Fifth Avenue
- 13** Russell Sage Foundation
(originally Asia House)
PHILIP JOHNSON, 1959
112 East 64 Street between Park and Lexington Avenues
- 12** The Bank of New York
FRANK EASTON NEWMAN, 1921-22
706 Madison Avenue at 63 Street
- 11** The Knickerbocker Club
DELANO & ALDRICH, 1913-15
2 East 62 Street at Fifth Avenue
- 10** The Metropolitan Club
STANFORD WHITE of MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE, 1912
1-11 East 60 Street at Fifth Avenue
- 9** Central Park
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED and CALVERT VAUX, 1858-76
Fifth Avenue to Central Park West and 59 to 110 Streets
- 8** The Plaza Hotel
HENRY J. HARDENBERGH, 1905-07
768 Fifth Avenue between 58 and 59 Streets
- 7** LVMH (Louis Vuitton, Moët Hennessy) Offices
CHRISTIAN DE PORTZAMPARC, 1999
19 East 57 Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues
- 6** IBM Building
EDWARD LARRABEE BARNES ASSOCIATES, 1983
590 Madison Avenue between 56 and 57 Streets
- 5** Sony Building
(originally AT&T Headquarters)
PHILIP JOHNSON / JOHN BURGEE, 1984
550 Madison Avenue between 55 and 56 Streets
- 4** University Club
CHARLES MCKIM of MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE, 1899
1 West 54 Street at Fifth Avenue
- 3** Austrian Cultural Institute
RAIMUND ABRAHAM, 2000
11 East 52 Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues
- 2** Lever House
GORDON BUNSHAFT of SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL, 1952
390 Park Avenue between 53 and 54 Streets
- 1** Seagram Building
LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE with PHILIP JOHNSON, 1958
375 Park Avenue between 52 and 53 Streets
- The Museum of Modern Art**
PHILIP GOODWIN and EDWARD DURRELL STONE, 1939; PHILIP JOHNSON, 1951, 1964, CESAR PELLI & ASSOCIATES, 1985, and, soon, YOSHIO TANIGUCHI
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For more information, see *AIA Guide to New York City*, Fourth Edition, by Norval White & Elliot Willensky (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000).

Whitney Photo: Jeff Goldberg/Esto
MoMA Photo: Peter Harholdt



known works as the colored drawing entered in a competition for a monument to Otto von Bismarck which Mies failed to win.

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Stepping Back in Splendid Isolation

Mies van der Rohe at the Modern and the Whitney

by Myrna Katz Frommer and Harvey Frommer

Mies

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With the Frank Gehry retrospective at the Guggenheim, and the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe exhibits at the Modern and Whitney, this has been quite a summer for architecture in New York. Although we've yet to make it to the Guggenheim, we did get to see both of the Mies' shows which document the evolving vision of the great architectural modernist. It's possible to see "Mies in Berlin" at MoMA in the morning, walk a block and a half east to Madison Avenue and take the bus uptown to the Whitney to see "Mies in America" in the afternoon, and still have time to catch the Fifth Avenue bus downtown to 52nd Street, walk the two blocks to Park Avenue and witness the Seagram Building in the flesh - or rather glass and steel -- at the end of what, we assure you, will be quite a day.

The two exhibits present a Mies chronology from his classicist Berlin beginnings in 1907 as architect of country houses to the visionary executor of apartment and office towers in post war America using drawings, models, photographs, films, paintings, sculptures, and digital creations that actually walk you through structures. Through them, such Miesian concerns as the flow between exterior and interior, focus on landscape, movement through open space, and importance of context emerge with stunning clarity.

MoMA has the longest association with Mies of any American institution having featured his work at its first architecture exhibit in 1932 which was organized in part by his long time champion Philip Johnson who subsequently organized the first Mies retrospective, also at MoMA, in 1947. Well known structures like the Riehl House (one of the virtual walk-through's), the moderate income apartment house project in Stuttgart, the German Pavilion in Barcelona where the lines between inside and out begin to blur are represented in the current exhibit along with such newly discovered and little known works as the colored drawing entered in a competition for a monument to Otto von Bismarck which Mies failed to win.

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Another competitive entry is a 1921 skyscraper of glass and steel. He failed to win this competition as well, but a photograph of the envisioned building on the cover of the avant-garde publication "G" won attention and admiration. Today it appears as a striking harbinger of what was to come.

A model for the glass and stone Resor House Mies designed in 1937 for a Jackson Hole, Wyoming site shown in animated digital format virtually leads you to the Whitney to pick up the story of "Mies in America." Increasingly isolated and unable to win commissions in Nazi Germany, Mies emigrated to the United States in 1938, settling in Chicago. He designed the campus for the Illinois Institute of Technology and worked there for twenty years. His campus plans and models, shown at various stages of completion, demonstrate how the architect succeeded in realizing the Bauhaus ideal of fusing art with technology in a context where buildings were used for the teaching of technological subjects.

"We have no clearly defined cities anymore," Mies had said. "They come on like an unending forest." Accordingly he set off city structures, redefining them with free standing towers and pavilions grounded on a podium as in Chicago's Lake Shore Drive complex which the exhibit showcases in much detail.

Ethereal music accompanies you through the spacious rooms. No louder than a whisper, sounds of chimes, distant pipes and rustling wind enhance the experience of being in a Miesian world where architecture is, to quote the architect, "the poetry of structure and space."

The Whitney exhibition was organized by Phyllis Lambert, the Bronfman family member who succeeded in convincing her father to give the commission for the Seagram Building to Mies. Seeing the actual building today amidst the glut of Park Avenue glass and steel, one can only wonder at its impact in 1958 when its walls reflected a boulevard of Beaux Arts buildings. The Seagram's grace and power, however, still overwhelm; it still "steps back in splendid isolation," as the architectural historian Carole Rifkind has said, an enduring monument to the master of modernism.

The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
(between Fifth and Sixth Avenues)
New York, NY

Phone: 212 708-9400
"Mies in Berlin" runs until September 11, 2001

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"Mies in America" runs until September 23, 2001

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The Mies Behind the Myth

Joan Ockman takes a look at two blockbuster exhibitions that reexamine the career of the modernist master.

Review Last June, hundreds of guests gathered to toast the ghost of Mies van der Rohe on the plaza of the Seagram Building under a great white tent with a transparent roof, as the skyscraper sublimely loomed overhead against the night sky. An institutional handshake had produced a pull-out-all-the-stops double retrospective at two museums. The Seagram stands close to the intersection of the axes: Three blocks west on 53rd Street, *Mies in Berlin* was opening at the Museum of Modern Art. North on Madison Avenue, *Mies in America* was bowing at the Whitney. Between the two museums, over 500 drawings, some 20 new models, scores of photographs, video projections, and computer animations were presented, along with a joint Web site and 1,000 pages of catalogue. Mies had triumphantly cornered New York. Maxwell Anderson, director of the Whitney, proclaimed 2001 the "Year of Mies."

Mies in America: The architect stands before the stairs of his Arts Club of Chicago in 1952.

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Forty years pass, and an idea becomes a monument. Mies's S. Adam Department Store project of 1928-29 (right) hints at the "almost nothing" of Seagram, 1958 (left).

The idea for the double blockbuster was Phyllis Lambert's, curator of the Whitney exhibition. She had been working on the American part of Mies's career for years. Lambert is the doyenne of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, to which the American half of the exhibition will travel this fall. A scion of the Bronfman family, she was responsible for Mies's commission to design the Seagram Building close to half a century ago. Lambert has carried the torch for Mies ever since, long after Philip Johnson defected for more eclectic inspiration. Some two-and-a-half years ago, Lambert approached Terence Riley, the Museum of Modern Art's architecture curator, about collaborating on a show on Mies's American years. Discovering that Riley was already working on a show about Mies's career in Berlin, Lambert persuaded Riley to pair their shows.

The striking thing about the turn that pivots around Seagram from crosstown to uptown is how different the two exhibitions are. In terms of contemporary architectural curatorship, they could hardly offer a more fascinating and instructive comparison. This is already clear

from the asymmetry of the titles. If it is *Mies in Berlin*, why not *Mies in Chicago*? Alternatively, why not *Mies in Europe* and *Mies in America*? After all, Mies built two of his major projects of the earlier period (the Barcelona Pavilion, 1929, and Tugendhat House, 1930) in Spain and Czechoslovakia, while the New National Gallery in Berlin culminates his later career. What then, do "Berlin" and "America" signify?

Another question: Why, exactly, *Mies in 2001*? It isn't a centennial—that took place in 1986, the 100th anniversary of Mies's birth, when MoMA staged a frostily received retrospective curated by Arthur Drexler. Postmodernism was at high tide, and Mies was the wrong man for the moment. But much has changed since the years of "less is a bore." The reevaluation of modernism in the 1990s, the "new" minimalism, provocative rereadings of Mies's canonical works by younger theorists and historians like Michael Hays and Detlef Mertins—all this has given currency to the idea of looking afresh at the work of the last century's master of rigorous form.

So on to the real million-dollar question: Would this be a hard, challenging reexamination, or primarily a celebration? At MoMA, Terence Riley and cocurator Barry Bergdoll, the Columbia University architectural historian, opted for the former. Their exhibition moves chronologically

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and lucidly from Mies's first house designed at age 20 for the philosopher Alois Riehl in Neubabelsberg in 1907, to the transitional Resor House, an unbuilt vacation home for a wealthy American couple in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, of 1937–38, on which Mies began working during a first trip to the U.S. before finally deciding to leave Germany. In between he designed four dozen projects. All are, for the first time, scrupulously displayed and documented, with superb new scholarship.

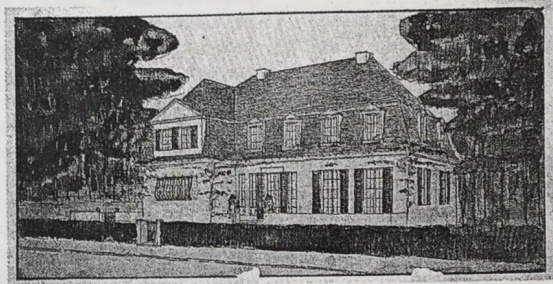
As Riley elaborates in an exemplary catalogue essay tracing the history of Mies's reception—shaped largely by MoMA since 1932, when Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock staged their International Style show, featuring Tugendhat in the central gallery—critical understanding of Mies's oeuvre has, up to now, rested on the works that he himself selected. This editing amounted to what Riley calls “a systematic revision of his career.” Mies excluded from the record all but one of his buildings prior to World War I (the Krölller-Müller project), and also suppressed the more traditional work he was doing alongside such epochal projects as the Glass Skyscrapers of 1921–22.

The real million-dollar question: Would this be a hard, challenging reexamination, or primarily a celebration?

Mies's self-fashioning was codified by Johnson in a landmark show at MoMA in 1947. Designed by Mies himself, it featured floor-to-ceiling photomontages of the chosen projects, models, and furniture groupings in a pinwheeling configuration within an idealized square plan. Riley describes: “Mies's design reflected no chronological or thematic narrative. The viewer would have had to glean any such references from the project titles, and from the abbreviated project descriptions discreetly placed next to the projects. The title of the exhibition—simply *Mies van der Rohe*—had no bracketing dates or other modifiers, and there were no extensive wall texts.... Mies's design was a visual experience....”

Riley and Bergdoll evidently made the decision not to compete with these Miesian aesthetics and to err on the side of didacticism. If the extensive installation is less visually ravishing than the one uptown, it is engaging, open-minded, and generous. The new models, constructed with an eye to accuracy rather than showiness, invite study of both the building and context. And while the “virtual walk-throughs” are more like fly-throughs (with door handles magically opening into empty rooms), and some new photographs of the extant buildings are undistinguished, they convey useful information.

An opportunity is missed, however, with respect to Mies's designs for ephemeral spaces, particularly exhibition designs (many done in collaboration with Lilly Reich). These are, with a few exceptions, relegated to a 12-minute video. Inasmuch as Mies considered exhibition design an architectural project in itself, a large-scale reconstruction of one or two of these would have been welcome.



This is the Mies that Mies chose to forget: The spare yet traditional Werner House reenters Mies's resume, courtesy of MoMA.

The major concession to “artiness” is the presence of images by German photographer Thomas Ruff interspersed throughout the exhibition. Ruff's photographs of Mies's built and unbuilt projects are digitally manipulated, with surrealistically heightened detail and altered color, provoking a second look at the originals and acting as a metaphor for historical reinterpretation, or for the variables of architectural representation. In this context, two nearly identical perspectives by Mies of his Concrete Country House project (1923), one of which is rendered white, the other pink, resonate with Ruff-like fantasy.

There were other revelations. The influence of Schinkel's romantic neoclassicism on Mies's early architecture has long been acknowledged, as has the Prussian strain coming through Peter Behrens, for whom Mies worked from 1908 to 1912. But the profound relationship between building and landscape in Mies's Berlin work, whether suburban villas or urban interventions, is persuasively demonstrated in both the exhibition (where Frank Lloyd Wright emerges as an equally important inspiration) and in an illuminating catalogue essay by Bergdoll. (Erich Mendelsohn has yet to get his due with respect to Mies's urban projects of the late 1920s.) It is this engagement of the work with the site—revising the view of Mies as primarily a maker of aloof object-buildings—that, the curators suggest, he relinquished when he came to America and his buildings became more deracinated, reflecting an existential “homelessness.”

It would have been interesting to test this thesis, which provides one argument for splitting Mies's career along the line of Berlin/America in the Whitney show, along with other questions of continuity or discontinuity. But if the Mies that emerges at MoMA is traditional and innovative, enmeshed in the cultural problems of his time while struggling to overcome their contradictions through the absoluteness of an encompassing philosophical idea, the Whitney's Mies has largely “arrived.” Issues of the day appear reducible to ever more refined essays on proportions and structure. The Miesian “building art” moves inexorably toward its ultimate apotheosis in “universal space.”

Intense and highly aesthetic, the exhibition amplifies but hardly departs from this canonical reading. Upon *continued on page 110*

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The Mies Behind the Myth

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entering, one is plunged into an atmosphere saturated with "Miesticism"—a "Mies Immersion," as Lambert titles her 400-page catalogue essay. An "atmospheric" soundtrack with muted rock beats wafts through the exhibition as one moves through a fluid sequence configured in a U-shaped plan around two central galleries. Freestanding planes, hanging screens for video projections, and waist-high red pedestals with plans inscribed in white lines on their top surfaces partition the spaces. Near the threshold is a wood-grained wall reconstructed from a photomontage of the second scheme for the Resor House, the point of departure for the "American" phase. The designer of this exquisite *Gesamtkunstwerk* is the talented young Chicago-based artist Inigo Manglano-Ovalle, who also orchestrated four video works in the show.

Lambert's curatorial inclusions—and exclusions—raise questions. For example, the wall texts, often containing encomiums ("a solution of supreme elegance," "a spell-binding incantation of space"), identify the birth and death dates of the delineator or photographer and the date the image was made, but, unhelpfully, never give the date of the project itself. While it's nice to see credit given where due, it is questionable what the point is, beyond connoisseurial interest, of harping on the role of Mies's small band of loyal associates if only to conclude, as Lambert does in the catalogue, "Acuity of the eye was his alone."

More significant—and harking back to Johnson's 1947 show—is Lambert's decision to include only those works "most extensively discussed by Mies and his office colleagues." Mies designed nearly 100 buildings after he came to the United States. Only about a quarter of these appear in the exhibition. Loving attention is paid to the various schemes for the Illinois Institute of Technology, the Farnsworth House, Seagram, high-rises in Chicago and Toronto, unbuilt projects like the monumental Chicago Convention Center, and other well-known works. Valuable comparisons of scale and structure are made among them. But a multitude of buildings

are not even mentioned (and scarcely appear in the catalogue). It is thus impossible to gain an overview of Mies's activity during the postwar period, or to place him in the larger American context of dramatic social and cultural change.

If the show's content veers toward worshipfulness, however, the aesthetic impact of the installation is undeniable, and effectively shifts the reading of Mies's American work from the metaphysical and abstract-formal to the phenomenological. At the finale of the circuit is a vast, darkened square room, the sanctum from which music emanates. A model of the New National Gallery sits off-center on a 7-foot-square pedestal, barely visible with a single spotlight trained on it. Ahead, occupying an entire wall, is a video by Manglano-Ovalle titled *In Ordinary Time*, containing 12 hours of time-lapse and real-time footage of the Berlin museum. Part of the artist's "Mies trilogy," the performance piece involves 20 choreographed actors walking across the building's empty podium level in attitudes suggestive of either anomie or assignation.

Is there something self-contradictory—or subversive—about this? Two years ago, in *The Kiss*, Manglano-Ovalle filmed a window washer squeegeeing the glass walls of the Farnsworth House while inside a DJ obliviously mixed music. It was this piece, shown at the Whitney Biennial of 2000, that initially caught Lambert's eye. Yet Edith Farnsworth's unhappiness with the house is well known—the client famously complained that Mies made her into a slave, constantly having to wash the glass because she felt herself always on display (an episode unmentioned in the show). If Manglano-Ovalle's work is an "investigation of Mies's humanism," as stated in the Whitney press material, the concluding space casts him in an ambiguous light.

As Mies understood so well, exhibitions are documents of their own time as much as of their subjects'. MoMA's revision of the received history of his early career gives us a more multidimensional Mies than we have been permitted to see before, while the Whitney retrospective, wittingly or not, reflects the profound contradictions lurking in his glassy surfaces. Together, they provide a fascinating double take on the timelessness of an architect who aspired to transcend ordinary time. ■

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MIES, 1947

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Less is more

The famous paradox *less is more* is often quoted in statements on architecture, and on design, fashion, jewellery and the like. Simplicity is better than abundance, is the message.

As the author of this adage usually the German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) is cited, the celebrated pioneer of sober, perfectly finished, minimalistic country houses and straight-lined high-rise buildings. From 1930-1932, Mies van der Rohe was director of the Bauhaus, the innovative school for applied arts at Dessau (Germany). In 1938 he became professor in Chicago. Already during his lifetime he was considered one of the foremost architects of the 20th century. Although the adage *less is more* is generally ascribed to him, no one has been able to point out an occasion when Mies would have used it. Mies' bibliographer Spaeth called it in 1979 a 'statement which is improperly credited to him', and in the thorough biography by Schulze (1985) it is not mentioned at all, even though Schulze does pay attention to Mies' favorite sayings. He mentions, for instance, that Mies van der Rohe strived to design buildings that were both monumental and 'beinahe nichts' (German: almost nothing), an expression that according to Schulze is frequently quoted. (However, in January 2003 an internet survey revealed that in English contexts, the use of this *beinahe nichts* lags far behind that of *less is more*.)

The earliest known attribution of *less is more* to Mies van der Rohe is to be found in the first monograph on him, published by Philip Johnson (1906) – who knew Mies well – in 1947. In a section on Mies' qualities as a designer of exhibition installations, Johnson wrote:

As in architecture, he has always been guided by his personal motto, 'less is more.'

As stated above, later Mies researchers have not found any trace of this 'personal motto'. Apparently, Johnson ascribed this motto to Mies on the basis of what he knew of his approach to architecture, perhaps intending it as a free translation of 'beinahe nichts' – which by the way Johnson mentions as well.

Already in 1954 *less is more* served as the title of an article on Mies in *Time*, which spoke of 'his famous and sometimes derided phrase, "Less is more."' By this Mies meant, according to *Time*, 'the greatest effect with the least means.' This was an authentic Mies quote, for in 1923, in a note on an office building, he had written:

Grösster Effekt mit geringstem Aufwand an Mitteln.

This quote, too, is to be found in Johnson's 1947 book, albeit in the slightly different form 'Maximum effect with minimum means'.

Judging from the use in titles of books and articles, *less is more* did not become widely known in English until after 1960, while its great fame dates from the late 1980s.

Philip Johnson may have derived *less is more* from an existing source. The remarkable expression occurs in the poem 'Andrea del Sarto' (1855) by Robert Browning (1812-1889), who put it in the mouth of this Italian Renaissance painter. Del Sarto speaks of the ease with which he himself paints, while others labor. They achieve 'so much less!' But 'less is more' says Andrea to his wife Lucrezia, for those others are, in a way, greater than he is. There is no evidence that Browning's expression was generally known before the 1950s – when it became known as a Mies van der Rohe 'quote'.

Differently phrased, the paradox is older. In German, the expression *weniger wäre mehr (gewesen)* 'less would have been more' became current in the course of the 19th century. This is supposed to derive from a text by the well-known German author Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813): 'minder ist oft mehr' (less is often more, 1774). That again was

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a variation on something from a play by the German author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781): 'Nicht so redlich wäre redlicher' (not so reasonable would be more reasonable, 1772). Mies, being a German, might well have characterized his work with 'minder ist oft mehr', but he is not known to have ever done so.

Sources: G.E. Lessing, *Emilia Galotti* (1772) I.iv; Chr. M. Wieland, 'Neujahrswunsch', in *Der Teutsche Merkur* 5.1 (Jan. 1774) 4; R. Browning, 'Andrea del Sarto', l. 78, in *Men and women* (1855); L. Mies, 'Bürohaus', in *G* [full title!] no. 1 (June or July 1923) 3 (reprinted in Fritz Neumeier, *Mies van der Rohe* [...], 1986: 299); Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (1947) 49 ('as in architecture'), 140 ('beinahe nichts'), 183 ('Maximum effect'); "'Less is more'", in *Time* (14 June 1954) 32-33; David A. Spaeth, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: an Annotated Bibliography* [...] (1979) 8; Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: a Critical Biography* (1985) 231 ('beinahe nichts').

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Less is more

De befaamde paradox *less is more* 'minder is meer' wordt dikwijls aangehaald in beschouwingen over architectuur, maar ook over vormgeving, mode, sieraden en dergelijke. Eenvoud is beter dan overdaad, is de boodschap.

Als bedenker van dit devies wordt doorgaans de Duitse architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) genoemd, beroemd pionier van sobere, perfect afgewerkte minimalistische villa's en strakke hoogbouw. Van 1930-1932 was Mies van der Rohe directeur van het Bauhaus, de vernieuwende opleiding voor toegepaste kunsten in Dessau (Duitsland). In 1938 werd hij hoogleraar in Chicago (VS). Hij werd al bij zijn leven beschouwd als een van de belangrijkste architecten van de 20ste eeuw. Hoewel het adagium *less is more* algemeen aan hem wordt toegeschreven, heeft niemand ooit kunnen aanwijzen bij welke gelegenheid hij dit te berde zou hebben gebracht. Mies-bibliograaf Spaeth noemde het in 1979 'een uitspraak die ten onrechte aan hem wordt toegeschreven', en in de grondige biografie van Schulze uit 1985 wordt er zelfs met geen woord over gerept, terwijl Schulze wel degelijk aandacht schenkt aan geliefde uitspraken van Mies. Zo vermeldt hij onder meer dat Mies van der Rohe streefde naar een architectuur die zowel monumentaal was als 'beinahe nichts' (bijna niets), wat volgens Schulze dikwijls werd aangehaald. (Een verkenning op internet in januari 2003 wees echter uit dat de verbreiding van dit *beinahe nichts* in het Engelse taalgebied in het niet valt bij die van *less is more*.)

De vroegst bekende toeschrijving van *less is more* aan Mies van der Rohe is te vinden in de eerste monografie over hem, die in 1947 door Philip Johnson (1906) -- die Mies goed kende -- is gepubliceerd. In een passage over de kwaliteiten van Mies als ontwerper van tentoonstellingsruimten schreef Johnson:

As in architecture, he has always been guided by his personal motto, 'less is more.' (Evenals in architectuur heeft hij zich altijd laten leiden door zijn persoonlijke motto 'minder is meer'.)

Zoals gezegd hebben latere Mies-onderzoekers geen spoor van dat 'persoonlijke motto' kunnen vinden. Het lijkt erop dat Johnson, op basis van zijn kennis van Mies' werkwijze, hem

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deze lijfspreuk heeft toegedicht, misschien als -- vrije -- vertaling van 'beinahe nichts', dat hij overigens óók vermeldt.

Al in 1954 werd *less is more* geciteerd als titel van een artikeltje over Mies in het Amerikaanse blad *Time*, waarin sprake was van 'zijn beroemde en soms bespotten frase *less is more*'. Dit betekende volgens Mies, zo vervolgde *Time*, 'het maximale effect [bereiken] met minimale middelen'. En dat was wél een authentiek citaat, want al in 1923 had Mies in een beschouwing over een kantoorgebouw geschreven:

Grösster Effekt mit geringstem Aufwand an Mitteln.
(Maximaal effect met minimaal gebruik van middelen.)

Ook dat citaat was te vinden in het boek van Johnson uit 1947.

Te oordelen naar het gebruik in titels van boeken en artikelen is *less is more* in het Engels pas echt geveugeld geworden na 1960, en dateert de grote verbreiding pas van eind jaren tachtig. Het gebruik in het Nederlands lijkt daarbij aan te sluiten; als geveugelde uitdrukking is het zeker jong.

Philip Johnson kán *less is more* hebben ontleend aan een bestaande tekst. De markante uitdrukking komt namelijk voor in het gedicht 'Andrea del Sarto' (1855) van de bekende Britse auteur Robert Browning (1812-1889), die ze de Italiaanse Renaissance-schilder Del Sarto in de mond legde. Deze spreekt over het gemak waarmee hij zelf schildert, terwijl anderen ploeteren. Zij presteren 'zoveel minder!' Maar 'minder is meer', zegt Andrea tot zijn vrouw Lucrezia, want die andere schilders zijn als kunstenaars in zekere zin groter dan hij. Er zijn geen aanwijzingen dat deze uitdrukking van Browning algemene bekendheid heeft verworven voordat ze in de jaren vijftig van de 20ste eeuw in zwang kwam -- als 'citaat' van Mies.

Los van de vorm *less is more* is de paradox al ouder. In het Duitse taalgebied is de vorm *weniger wäre mehr (gewesen)* 'minder zou meer (geweest) zijn' in de loop van de 19de eeuw spreekwoordelijk geworden. Men neemt aan dat dit teruggaat op deze woorden van de bekende Duitse schrijver Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813): 'minder ist oft mehr' (minder is vaak meer, 1774). Dat was weer een variatie op een passage in een toneelstuk van de Duitse schrijver Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781): 'Nicht so redlich wäre redlicher' (niet zo redelijk zou redelijker zijn, 1772). Met 'minder ist oft mehr' had Mies, als Duitser, zijn werk mooi kunnen karakteriseren, maar dat heeft hij voorzover bekend nooit gedaan.

Bronnen: G.E. Lessing, *Emilia Galotti* (1772) I.iv; Chr.M. Wieland, 'Neujahrswunsch', in *Der Teutsche Merkur* 5.1 (jan. 1774) 4; R. Browning, 'Andrea del Sarto', r. 78, in *Men and women* (1855); L. Mies, 'Bürohaus', in *G* afl. 1 (juni of juli 1923) 3 (herdrukt in Fritz Neumeier, *Mies van der Rohe [...]*, 1986: 299); Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (1947) 49 ('as in architecture'), 140 ('beinahe nichts'), 183 ('het maximale effect'); "'Less is more'", in *Time* (14.06.1954) 32-33; David A. Spaeth, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: an annotated bibliography [...]* (1979) 8; Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: a critical biography* (1985) 231 ('beinahe nichts').

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OBITUARY

Ludwig Glaeser, 76, Architectural Historian and Curator

Ludwig Glaeser, the first curator of the Mies van der Rohe Archive at The Museum of Modern Art, died on Wednesday, September 27, at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York. He had been ill for two years, and his death was due to complications of oral cancer.

Dr. Glaeser was born and educated in Berlin, receiving a Ph.D. from the Freie Universität in 1961. As a student he was acquainted with Eduard Ludwig, the associate to whom the German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe had entrusted his architectural papers before he left Germany for the United States in 1939. Glaeser came to New York in 1963 to join the staff of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design as an associate curator. In 1968, Mies van der Rohe, then based in Chicago, gave to the Museum all of the surviving papers and drawings from his Berlin office, and Glaeser was appointed the first curator of the newly established Mies van der Rohe Archive, a post he held until 1980. Under his direction, the Archive began the monumental

task of cataloguing more than 20,000 items, making available to scholars some of the most important drawings and documents by the great modern architect.

Glaeser was a leading expert on Mies and wrote the first of numerous books based on the holdings of the Archive. In 1969 he published *Mies van der Rohe: Drawings in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*, an oversized portfolio edition, which reproduced a select group of large drawings and montages by the master architect and is today a rare collectors item. In 1977 he wrote the definitive catalogue on the architect's innovative furniture designs, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Furniture and Furniture Designs from the Design Collection and the Mies van der Rohe Archive of The Museum of Modern Art*, New York, published by the Museum.

He also was the curator of exhibitions in many other areas of modern architecture and design, most notably the first American exhibition of the work of the German architect Frei Otto in 1971, which was installed on an upper terrace of the Museum's garden under a tensile structure designed by the architect for the exhibition, and for which he wrote the catalogue *The Work of Frei Otto*.

Glaeser was the author of several additional books on Mies and numerous articles in journals and encyclopedias. He lectured and taught at the School of Architecture of The Cooper Union, The Graduate School of The City University of New York, and was a Visiting Fellow at The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York.

He left the Museum in 1980 to become the first director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

Surviving Glaeser are his sons Nicolas Köhler and Edward Glaeser, his grandchildren Sophie, Lena, Theodore, and Elizabeth, and his devoted wife, the sculptor Elizabeth Jones. A memorial gathering will be announced at a later date. ■

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