

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM TO SHOW MODEL OF FIRST ALL GLASS AND STEEL APARTMENT HOUSE

A large model of a glass and steel skyscraper apartment house designed by the well-known Chicago architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe will go on view in the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, on March 1 and will remain in the northwest gallery of the first floor until May 7. The 6-foot high, 700-pound model is of a new co-operative apartment building which is already under construction on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. It shows an open steel skeleton construction with complete floor-to-ceiling glass exterior walls in every apartment. When completed the project will consist of 2 glass and steel towers, each 25 stories high. They are being built at a cost less than that of most of Chicago's slum clearance projects.

In addition to the model, plans of these buildings will also be exhibited to show the flexibility of the open planning for which Mies van der Rohe is famous. With apartments of varying sizes placed around the utilities in the core of the tower, the outer shell of glass opens up the view toward Lake Michigan and surroundings. The lower portions of the window walls open like hoppers for ventilation; the upper portions pivot at the center for complete rotation and ease of cleaning.

This achievement of an all glass and steel tower has been the dream of this internationally famous architect since the early days of his career. The exhibition will present, in addition to the Chicago example, 2 early projects for glass and steel skyscrapers of revolutionary design done by Mies in 1919 and 1920-21. Mies wrote of the early glass designs that "the important thing is the play of reflections." The intended effect of these early projects was that of a huge prism. The new apartment house is a practical realization of Mies's startling early designs.

Philip C. Johnson, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, has made the following statement:

"Unlike the jagged and curved plan shapes of the earlier projects, the new apartment towers are perfectly rectangular

in plan, an undisguised expression of their regular steel frame. But the 'play of reflection' is still there, more subtly perhaps than it was in the earlier designs. For here it is caused by the division of the facades into narrow, vertical sheets of glass, separated by applied fins of steel that soar up against the sky, and by the close juxtaposition of the two towers.

"These glass towers are monuments to order. Their simplicity is deceptive for, as in all great works of art, it is the result of a painstaking process of reduction until all that is left is the essential statement: a pure and unadorned crystal. When Mies came to the United States, he said: 'The long path...to creative work has only a single goal: to create order.' When that goal is attained, as it is being attained here, modern architecture will have reached another milestone along its 'long path' toward perfection."