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Mies Van Der Rohe :Less is more: more or less?: an exploration of his doctrines for the purpose of illustrating the problem of architectural pontification

Gordon, G

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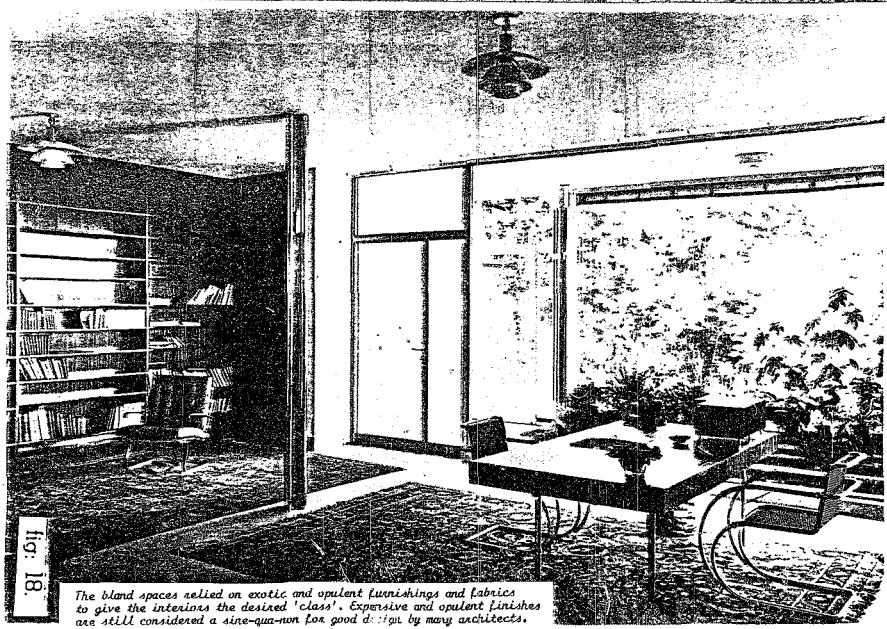


fig: 18.

The bland spaces relied on exotic and opulent furnishings and fabrics to give the interiors the desired 'class'. Expensive and opulent finishes are still considered a sine-qua-non for good design by many architects.

elona chair, 1929. Plan and elevation.

87. Tugendhat chair, 1929–30. Plan and elevation with arms.

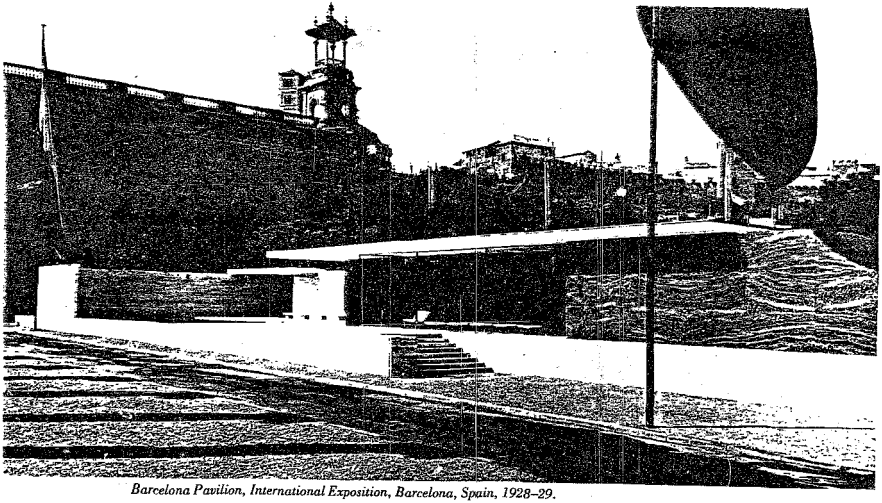
Every architect has had to design chairs as a badge of affiliation. Mies's chairs reveal his 'machine image' rather than the structural perfection, honesty and minimalism etc. that was to perplex his later critics. They have strong visual appeal that caught the public fancy 30 years later.

fig: 19.



fig: 20

Even if you did not know who they were - just by looking at this pictur
you could have guessed what they are saying and the language
in which they are saying it. Mies van der Rohe and Lily Reich.

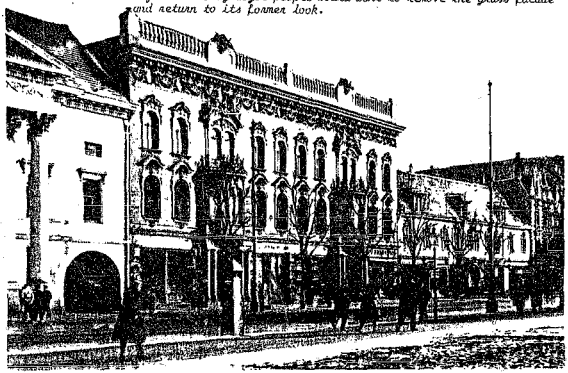


Barcelona Pavilion, International Exposition, Barcelona, Spain, 1928–29.

fig. 21.

The building that became a myth from illustration. It will be interesting to see how this myth will be perpetuated now that the building has been resurrected.

Adherence to a 'style' makes people zealous about blotting out other styles. Today maybe people would want to remove the glass facade and return to its former look.



Under Mies. Eduard Ludwig redesigned an existing department store in Dessau, Germany, 1932. The store and its proposed new facade.

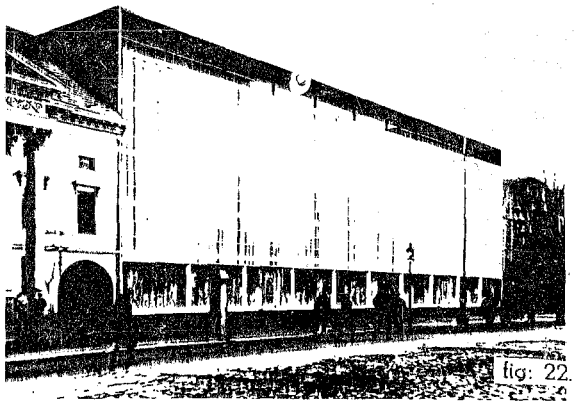
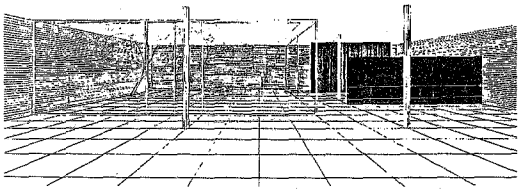


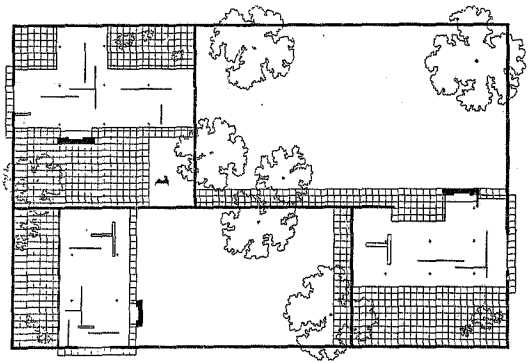
fig: 22.



Two Thespians in characteristic costume and gesture. Mies and Le Corbusier.
The modern movement moving from fringe to centre.

fig: 23





The 'Courtyard House' projects conceived in the barren last turbulent days of the Bauhaus reflect invention in the grouping of buildings and an attempt at converting the intersecting planes into liveable entities. They were to inspire much subsequent housing with leaky flat roofs.

fig: 24.



The campus layout at the Illinois Institute of Technology reflects an attempt to transpose what had become doctrinaire philosophy and planning principles to a large urban scale.

fig: 25.

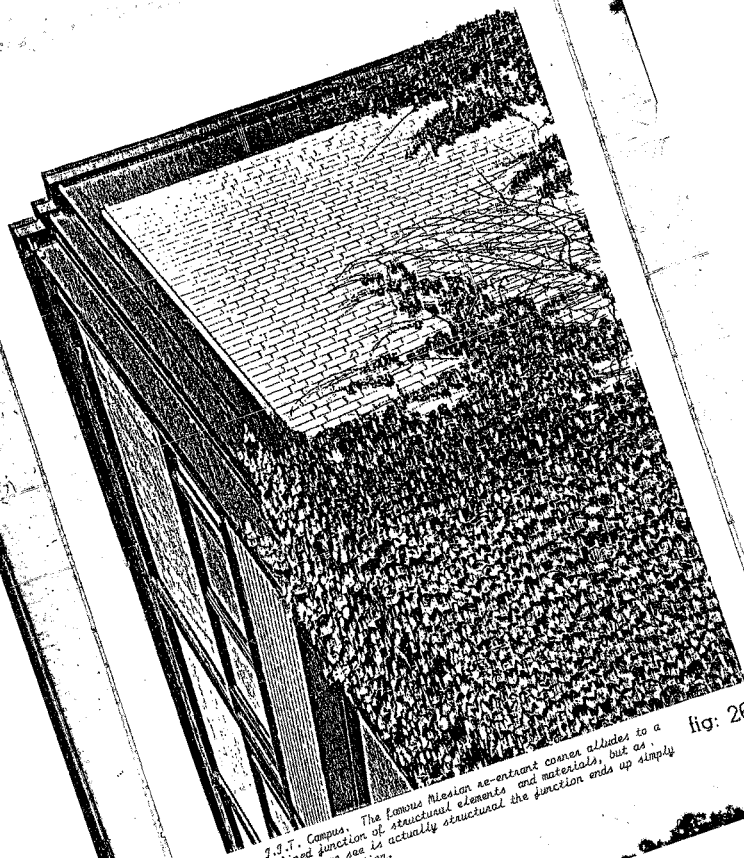
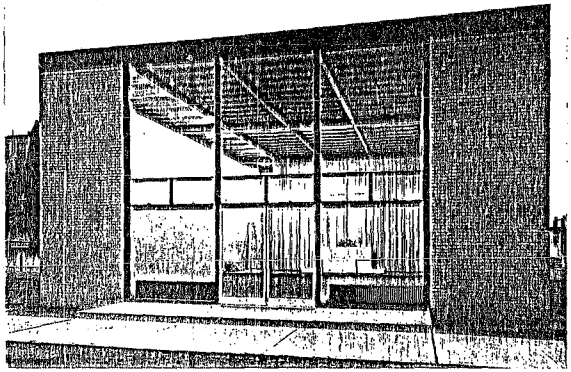


fig: 26.

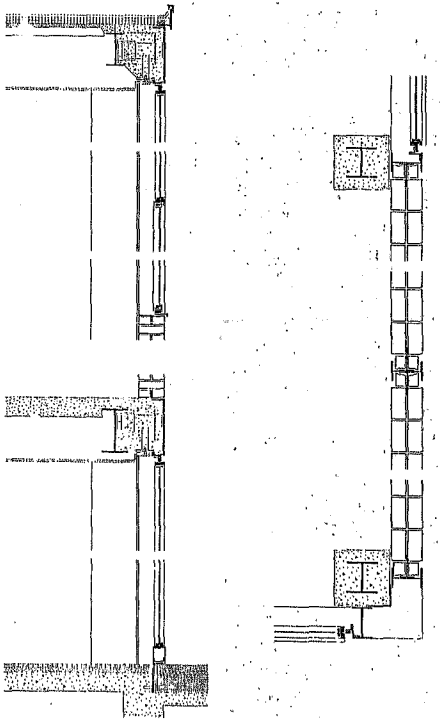
I.I.T. Campus. The famous Mission re-entrant corner alludes to a refined function of structural elements and materials, but as nothing we see is actually structural the function ends up simply as dull decoration.



Kapelle, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chikago. 1952

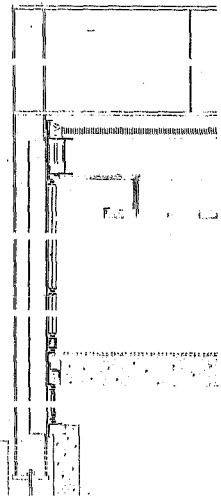
The much criticised I.I.T. Chapel is a plain building among other plain buildings. Its pristine purity is hard to sustain and calls for a cadre of like-minded image worshippers. 'Beinah nichts' as a doctrine does not make a building a delight.

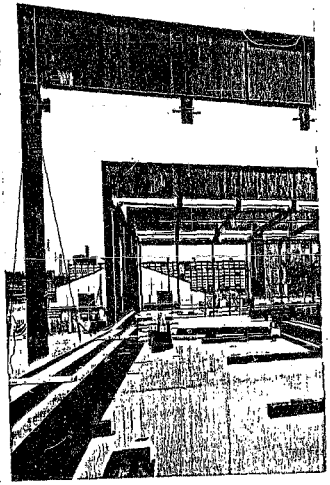
fig: 27.



I.I.T. Campus. This section and plan reveal that the exposed steelwork externally serves only a decorative function for a two storey building. This exposed steelwork is so extensive that it constitutes an entire duplication of structure and cost.

fig: 28.





I.I.T. Campus: Crown Hall. The large 'over-roof' postal beams have only an auxiliary role in supporting the roof slab. Hardly minimalist and essential.

fig: 29.

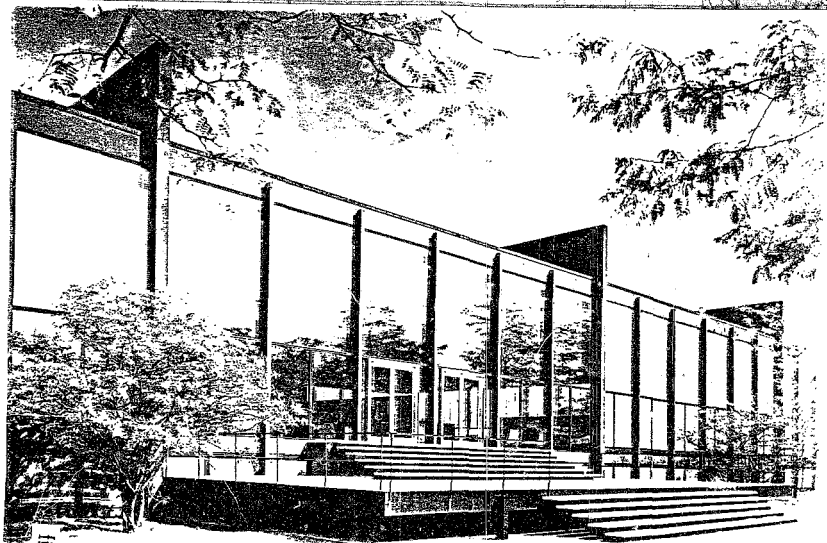
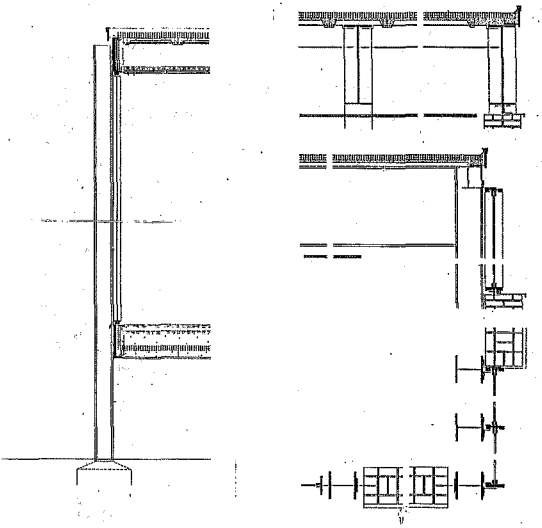


fig. 30.

I.I.T. Campus: Crown Hall. The floating broad stair and the glass facade rythm reflects the sky and foliage well. The use of the inside space has always been questionable and most of the teaching is in the basement. Age has taken the crispness from the building to leave it somewhat dilapidated.



a. Section through the Farnsworth House. The fixing of the beams to the sides of the columns and the sizing of the steel for a single storey structure suggests the principal concern can only be a poetic homage to steel.

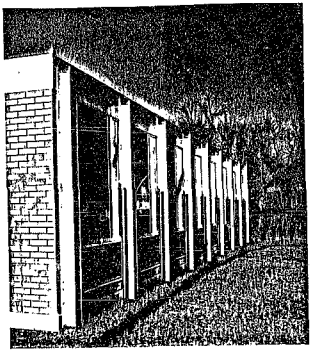
b. This plan again reflects excessive sizing and a duplication of the structural needs.

fig: 31.

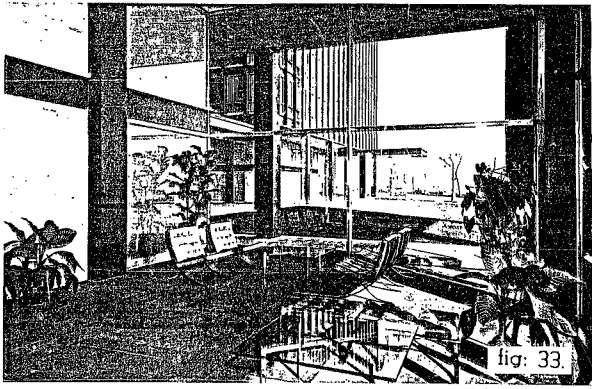
fig: 32.

The towers, familiar symbols of the condominium's dream, dropping like cardboard to real-estate optimization. The many look-alikes sequentially to real-estate optimization. The many look-alikes that followed did not have the benefits of the reflection in Lake Michigan.

a. The Reihen Apartments, 1951.– The steel columns are hardly required for structural purposes on a single storey building. If it is poetry or structural metephor, it is also dull.

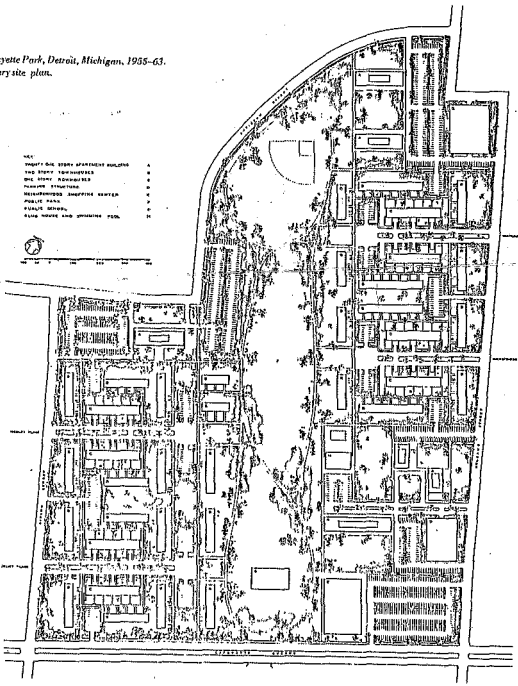


b. The Barcelona chair, the indoor plants, the see-through table and plate glass windows spawned countless similar anonymous office foyers and reception areas.



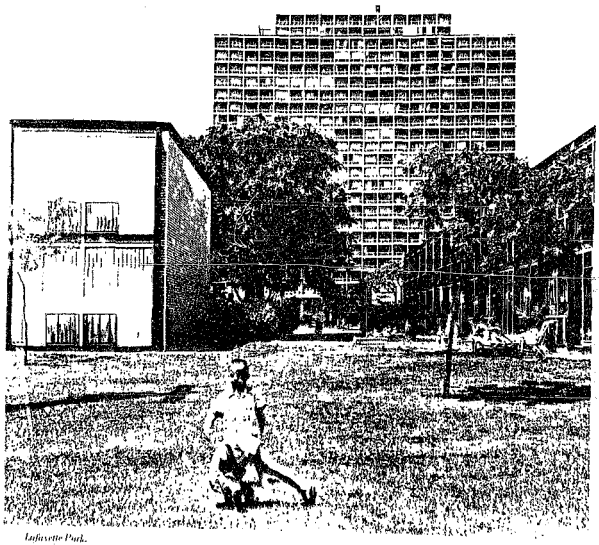
860 Lake Shore Drive. View of the lobby.

Lafayette Park, Detroit, Michigan, 1955–63.
Preliminary site plan.



This was the housing development built when Mies was at the zenith of his career and which brought so much praise from his critics. The slab blocks echo the I.I.T. campus.

fig: 34.



Lafayette Park.

Demarcation of private spaces of the inhabitants is absent and it would be interesting to see what has happened to the development today. A strong measure of social policing would be required to preserve the quality shown.

fig: 35.

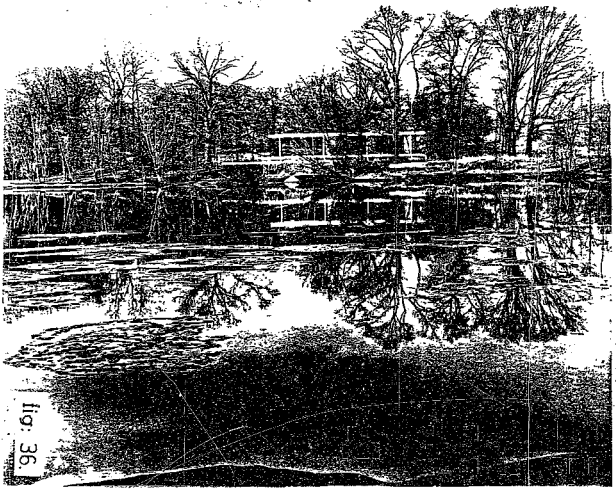
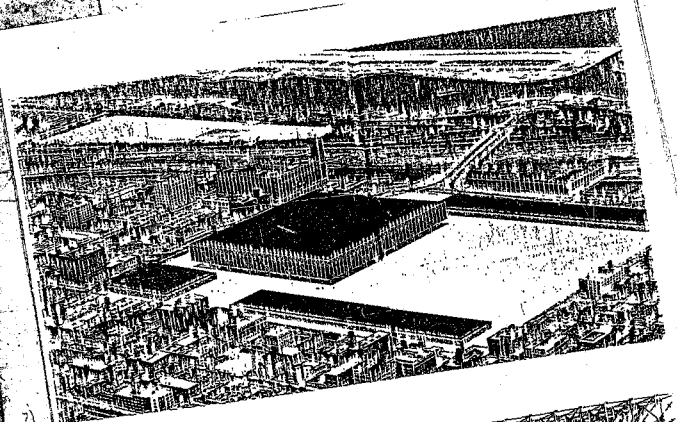
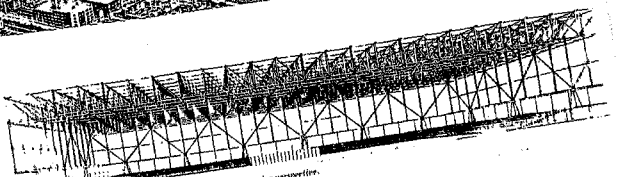


fig. 36.

Farnsworth house, Plano, Illinois, 1945-50. The very photogenic house in a photogenic setting, demonstrating that above all the doctrines Mies was motivated by visual beauty first and foremost.





191. Convention Center, Chicago, Illinois, 1953–54. Interior perspective.

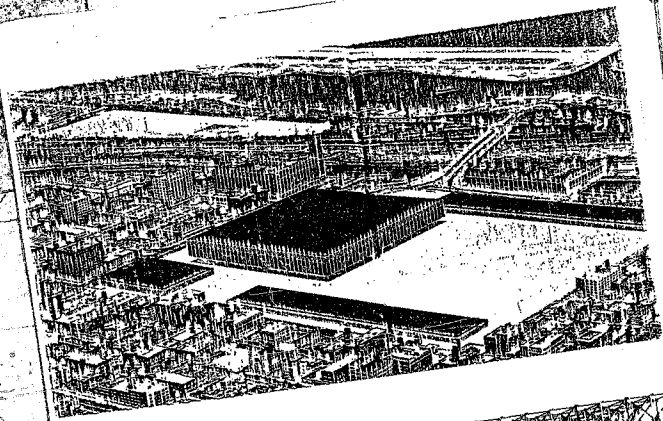


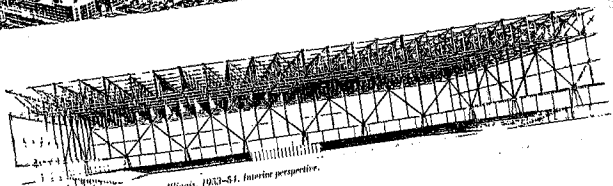
192, 193. Convention Center. Model and plan.

This massive intended Convention Center for Chicago is a large box expressing the pattern of its perimeter trusses. The relation of this massive building to the adjoining open space and to the surrounding urban fabric raises many questions. There are many fine precedents for handling the scale of large buildings and relating to the surrounding open space, if one is still humble enough to look.

18.

fig: 37.





191. Convention Center, Chicago, Illinois, 1953–54. Interior perspective.

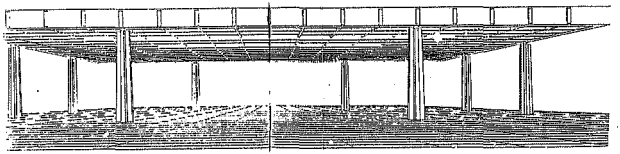


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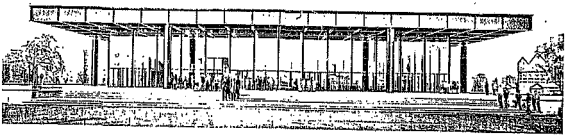
fig: 37.

a.



a. Structural system - Bicardi Building (1958) Santiago, Cuba.

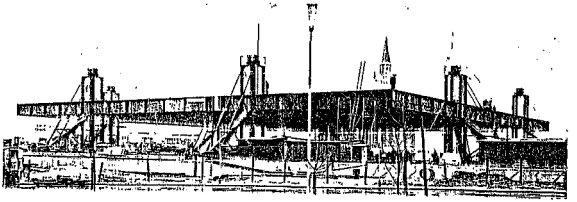
b. Structural system - National Gallery Berlin.



New National Gallery, Berlin. Exterior view.

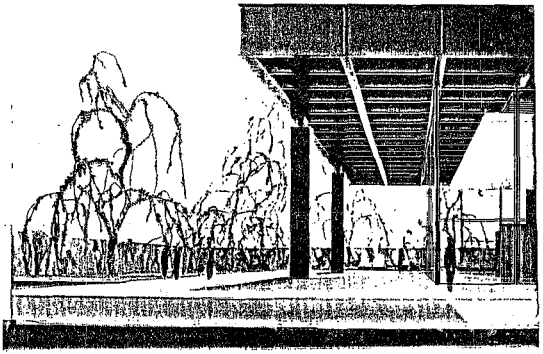
New National Gallery, Berlin. The raising of the roof and columns into position.

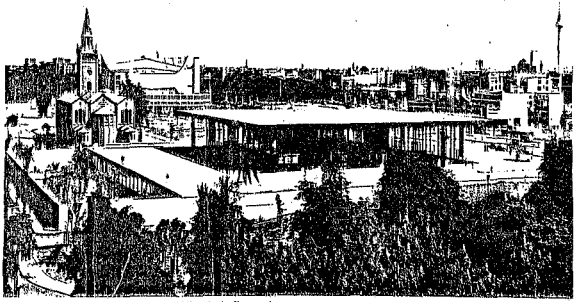
b.



An engineering excercise and an engineering miracle - no wonder Mies was greatly admired by engineers.

fig: 38.





New National Gallery and adjacent buildings in the Kemperplatz.

The transparent glass box as an Art Gallery to display painting and sculpture will taunt and haunt the supporters of the idea. In Berlin today the Mies National Gallery and Scharoun's Philharmonic Building in the background stand finally as monuments to the debate between the expressionists and the modernists of the early twenties.

fig: 39.

Seagram's, New York - an elegant tombstone in a designer's graveyard. To straightjacket the divisive whims of the client and the authorities must be the pinnacle of pontifical virtue.

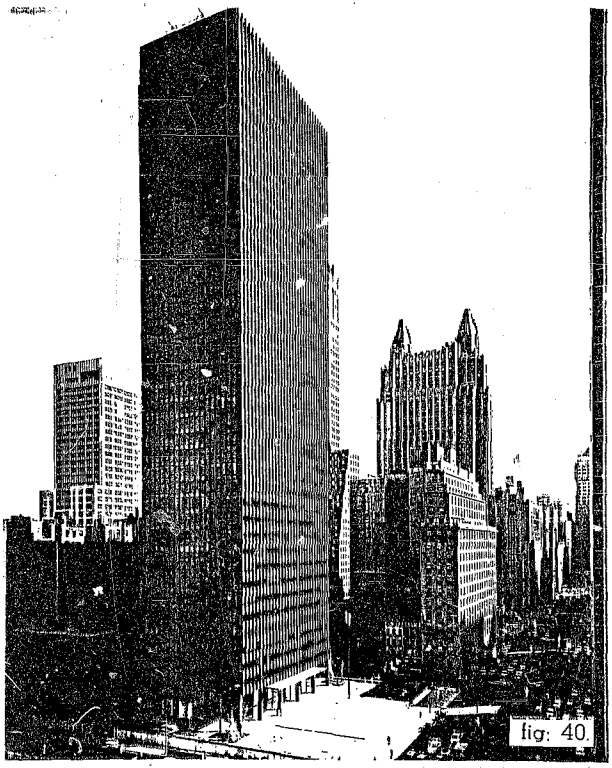
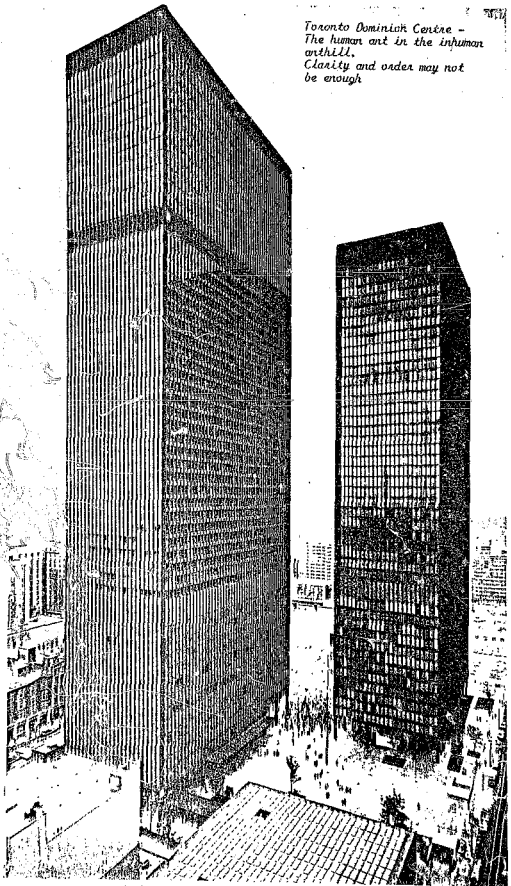
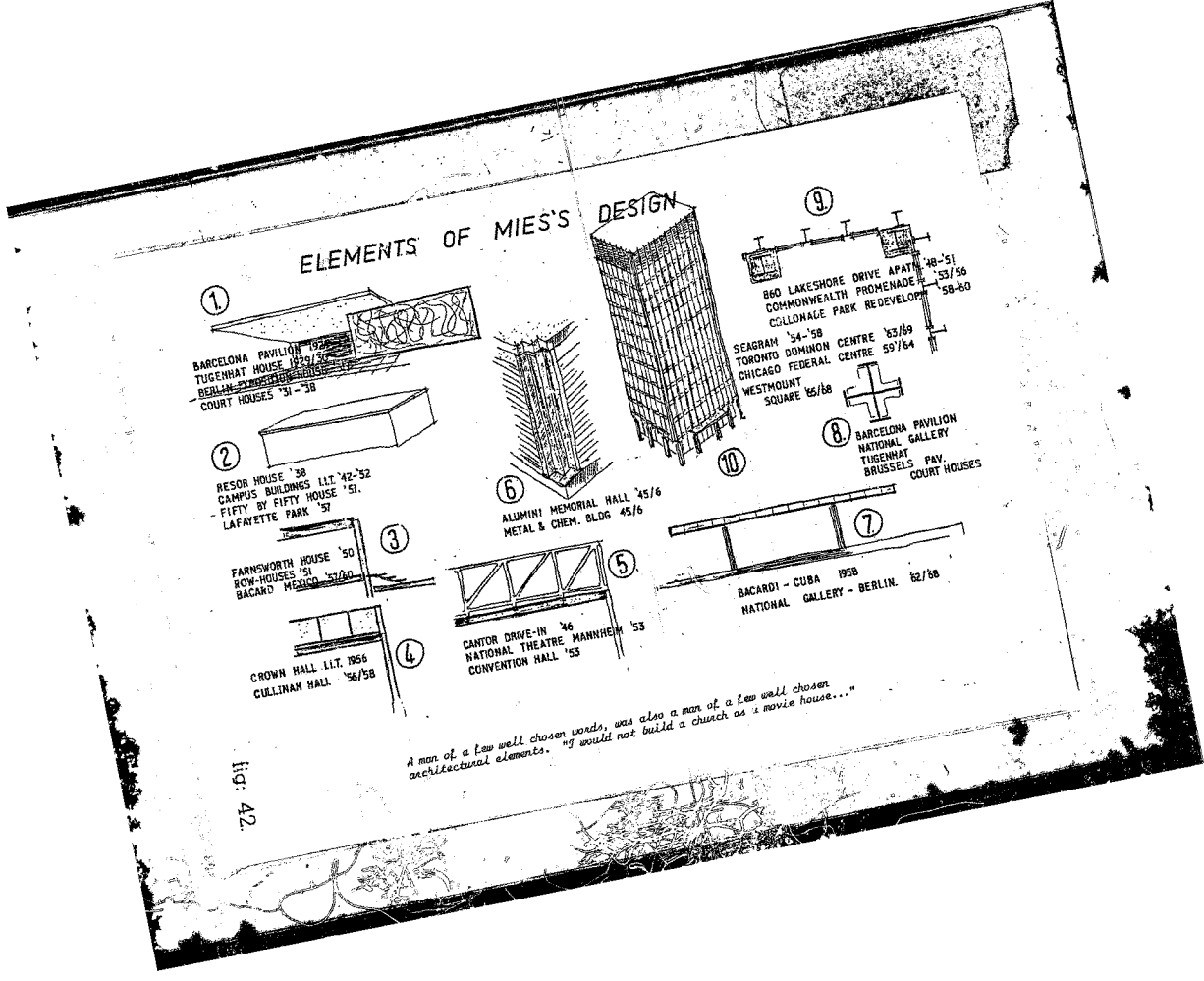


fig: 40.



Toronto Dominion Centre -
The human ant in the inhuman anthill.
Clarity and order may not be enough

fig: 41.


ELEMENTS OF MIES'S DESIGN
1
BARCELONA PAVILION 1929
TUGENHAT HOUSE 1929/30
BERLIN EXHIBITION HOUSE
COURT HOUSES '31 - '38
2
RESOR HOUSE '38
CAMPUS BUILDINGS I.I.T. '42-'52
- FIFTY BY FIFTY HOUSE '51.
LAFAYETTE PARK '57
3
FARNSWORTH HOUSE '50
ROW-HOUSES '51
BACARDI MEXICO '57/60
4
CROWN HALL I.I.T. 1956
CULLINAN HALL '56/58
5
CANTOR DRIVE-IN '46
NATIONAL THEATRE MANNHEIM '53
CONVENTION HALL '53
6
ALUMINI MEMORIAL HALL '45/6
METAL & CHEM. BLDG 45/6
9
860 LAKESHORE DRIVE APATM. '48-'51
COMMONWEALTH PROMENADE '53/56
COLLONAGE PARK REDEVELOP. '58-60
SEAGRAM '54-'58
TORONTO DOMINON CENTRE '63/69
CHICAGO FEDERAL CENTRE 59'/64
WESTMOUNT SQUARE '66/68
8
BARCELONA PAVILION
NATIONAL GALLERY
TUGENHAT
BRUSSELS PAV.
COURT HOUSES
10
7
BACARDI - CUBA 1958
NATIONAL GALLERY - BERLIN. '62/68
A man of a few well chosen words, was also a man of a few well chosen architectural elements. "I would not build a church as a movie house..."
fig: 42.



Poised to pontificate !!

fig: 43.

MIES VAN DER ROHE : NEO-RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

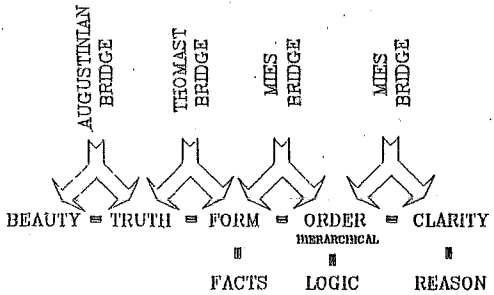
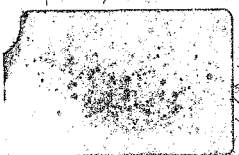


fig: 44



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