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MIES VAN DER ROHE:

An exploration of his doctrines for the purpose of illustrating the problem of architectural pontification.

sub-title: LESS IS MORE: MORE OR LESS ?

G. GORDON.

MIES VAN DER ROHE: an exploration of his architectural doctrines and the factors and circumstances that might have influenced them, for the purpose of illustrating the problems associated with architectural pontification generally.

(Less is more : More or Less ?)

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To Adam for being the devil's advocate's devil, and to Justin Mueller for his assistance with the illustrations.

To my colleagues who secretly knew this was a story worth telling.

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CHAPTER 1: PREFACE

Preface

This study is based on an invited lecture I gave on several occasions at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria. I am indebted to Mr J.P.Bonta (Bonta:1979) for demonstrating that Mies's critics and commentators all carry their own bias. I take comfort in acknowledging my personal interpretation, which stems from thirty-five years' practice as an architect; a career that started in Mies's heyday when the architectural periodicals considered Mies so important that each stage in the construction of the Seagrams building was published monthly (Jordy:1958). I have built as many buildings as Mies, b of a much smaller scale and importance and in a much less 'relevant' part of the globe. I must confess to having always felt slightly sceptical of and foreign to Mies's architectural pronouncements, and I only came to probe the world of Mies to explain certain paradoxes to students.

CHAPTER 1: PREFACE

As a teacher of architectural design I am only too well aware of the student's need for architectural canons - Mies knew that as well no doubt. Since Mies van der Rohe has by and large been supplanted by later generations of architectural apostles, it remains of concern to me that students see the Mies story as a pointer to the need for greater critical insight in architectural ideas and philosophies. Architectural hero-worship robs the student of the need for self-experimentation and advancement, and contains the seeds of built in design obsolescence.

The journey into Mies's ideas has been most rewarding because of the fascinating scenery on the way, and I have even developed an appreciation of his architecture. Mies van der Rohe continues to fascinate and perplex. Three major books have been written and another exhibition has taken place since this study was first begun.

Mies is a very large subject, and my text is bounded in the following ways:-

CHAPTER 1: PREFACE:

Mies van der Rohe as one of its founding fathers was the complete embodiment of the modern movement in architecture and as such an unchallenged apostle of this movement. Just about every idea he espoused can be shown to have had roots and derivation in the architecture and other developing social attitudes of that period. It is beyond the scope, and therefore will not be the purpose of this study, to sketch the modern movement as such or indeed justify Mies's involvement in it.

Most references to Mies's philosophical justifications make allusions to certain distinct influences. These influences are often vast topics with a large body of associated literature. It cannot be the purpose of this study to offer anything more than the briefest thumb-nail sketch of these influences. While these cursory postage stamp descriptions of Mies's influences must be inadequate in themselves, they are however necessary to give a slightly more complete understanding of his stated influences, rather than merely alluding to them as most commentators do.

The biographical details sketched are intended primarily to map the development of his ideas and not as a definitive biography which has already been recorded by others. It follows therefore that details of Mies's biography will be omitted where they throw no new light on his ideas and influences.

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I have made liberal use of the aphorism and sayings attributed to Mies to be able to cast a net of rational analysis and interpretation. These sayings have mostly been taken from David Spaeth recent work (Spaeth:1985) which appears reliable in this content. Most other standard texts include many of the same or similar aphorisms sometimes worded with slight differences. They are however not as comprehensive as Spaeth.

Mies van der Rohe is probably the foremost claimant to philosophical justification and direction in his architecture. He claimed to be guided by profound and universal insights.



fig: 1.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

INTRODUCTION

Man is reflected in his built environment. The built world grows from his culture, his material and social order, and expresses his ideas and dreams.

However buildings, by and large, outlast many of the cherished ideas that gave them birth. Even their physical use is often changed at some later date. Buildings are more than the living artifacts of temporary human existence (snuffing out when that existence expires). They are artifacts that absorb vast human resources and effort. We therefore have an obligation which extends further than their appreciation as static works of fine art. We need to understand the rationale and mental climate of their conception.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

Our obligation is to the future, particularly today when the dissemination of visual material and ideas through publications, TV and film is so fast and vast. It is more urgent that the whys and wherefores of what we build be examined critically for appropriateness and validity, before some 'tin-pot design fad' squanders billions of precious resources, only to be discredited and repudiated before the buildings are halfway up.

To postulate two extremes: is good architecture empirical problem-solving within a topical style elevated by a dash of flair? Or is better design achieved by adherence to a carefully conceived [illegible]itated doctrine?

Where do our influences come from, and are they properly understood and digested? Fashion and topicality of ideas clearly plays an important part in the inspiration of architectural design, but the permanence of building structures and their high cost suggests that the underlying motivations and philosophies should be able to bear the most careful assessment and scrutiny.

Mies van der R[illegible]e is an ideal case study in this regard. He is acknowledged as one of the four 'greats' of the modern movement in architectu[illegible].

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

A brief gloss through his curriculum vitae reflects the following. He was:-

1. A member of Peter Behrens'stable of young architects (where Gropius and Corbusier also worked).
2. A member of the 'Novembergruppe' which was the cultural fountainhead of the Weimar Republic.
3. The Assistant Director then later Director of the Deutsche Werkbund, and its first Vice-President.
4. The assistant director of the WeissinghofSeidlung.
5. Commissioned by the German government to design their International Exhibition Pavilions at Barcelona and Brussels.
6. In charge of the German government exhibition 'The Dwelling'.
7. Director of the Bauhaus (1930-33).
8. Director of the faculty of Architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology (1940).
9. Awarded the Honorary Doctorate in Engineering at the Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany (1950).
10. Awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Engineering at the Institute of Technology, Braunschweig, Germany (1955).
11. Awarded the Hon. Doctorate of Laws, University of N. Carolina (1956).



fig. 2.

With 7 honorary doctorates, 3 Gold Medals and the Presidential Medal of Honour, Mies must have been the most acclaimed and celebrated architect in recent history.

12. Elected member of the German Order 'Pour la Merite',
13. Appointed Emeritus Professor of Architecture, Illinois Institute of Architects (1958).
14. Awarded the Commanders Cross of the German Order of Merit (1959).
15. Awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects by the Queen (1959)
16. Awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects (1960).
17. Awarded the Hon. Doctorate of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Technology (1960).
18. Awarded the Hon. Doctorate of Humanities, Wayne State University (1961).
19. Awarded the Gold Medal for Architecture, National Institute for Arts and Letters (1963).
20. Awarded the Hon. Doctorate of Fine Arts, North Western University (1963).
21. Awarded the United States Presidential medal of Freedom (1963).
22. Awarded the Hon. Doctorate of Fine Arts, University of Illinois (1964).
23. Numerous books and one entire issue of L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui devoted exclusively to praise of him and his work (L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui,1958 vol 29).

This illustrious career contains seven honorary doctorates, three gold medals and the presidential Badge of Honour (see Fig.2.) - possibly the greatest list of distinctions any architect has ever received.

He continues to be admired and criticised. The modern movement is under attack today, and blame for the bleakness and blandness of many of our modern cities is laid unfairly at his door. Indeed he is blamed for much of the discredit of modern architecture, yet he continues to influence and inspire many architects. The quality of his design undeniably transcends much of the criticism. He remains unique in having produced designs of universal inspiration. But he is blamed today for having fathered the vogue for energy-hungry and wasteful buildings while paradoxically, he was so concerned about being practical and minimal. The paradox of Mies is the paradox for all architects. Contemporary writers have referred to it as 'the problem of Mies'(Jencks:1973).

Mies is identified as an architect with strong dogmas, which have later become unshakeable labels. While he was the complete embodiment of modern movement ideas in architecture, his philosophical justification of these ideas is unique. He is recognised as having had a distinct architectural philosophy, one that has influenced many succeeding architects, who in turn have

had a strong influence on our city profiles.

It remains surprising that his forays into philosophy did not produce some real original thinking, unless of course the principal motive of the philosophy was simply to give these current thought fashions authority.

The problem of Mies is a problem for architects generally, as they tend to supplant one set of dogmas with another.

Criteria for evaluating architectural doctrines should be broadened, so that adherences are more critically measured, as is the practice in other cultural fields. To do this, architectural philosophy has first to be perceived and identified as such, rather than going unnoticed. It then has to be evaluated in relation to a wider spectrum of ideas and influences.

Mies's lifespan charts a course from the late 19th century Schinkel to the American skyscraper, through the intellectual kaleidoscope of Weimar Germany and the turmoil and social change of two world wars. His 'Platonic' view of architecture is rooted in his education, class, religious beliefs and the prevailing circumstances of his time, and as such is circumstantial rather than the insight of a far-seeing seer. It is worth assessing his choice of doctrines in relation to the circumstances which

nurtured them.

I aim to plot a path back through the revealed circumstances of his biography and to examine the principles attributed to Mies in the light of the educational, cultural and social circumstances which might have influenced him.

It is the purpose of this study to show that profound architectural dictums may be mostly circumstantially ,sed and personal, and that caution should be observed in transporting these ideas to other situations and circumstances. In the need to be convincing to both client and public there is the temptation among studer d architects to clothe their ideas wich such hyperbole as ll of an epoch'. The purpose of this story of Mies must .o point to other situations where the very temporary fashions of the day are passed off as universal truths at enormous public expense.

I hope by this analysis to suggest the circumspection required in understanding and evaluating other architectural pontificators.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

CONTEXTUAL SHORT BIOGRAPHY :

Mies was born in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) the Carolingian German town near the Belgian border in 1886. He came of a Catholic artisan family and went to the local Domschule (Cathedral school) till the age of 13. There were great sectarian differences between Catholics and Protestants in Germany at that time and it is likely that his catholic teaching would have been emphasised.

This was the highest level his formal education reached as from thirteen he spent two years as an apprentice mason at the local Gewerbschule (trade school). At fifteen he worked for a local firm of decorators sketching Renaissance ornaments for local architects.

This limited formal education contrasts with the legendary German 19th century Gymnasium (grammar school) where Greek, Latin, and Science instruction was emphasised and prolonged until the late teens. His Domschule education might have been excellent but the tender age at which he left school suggests that he could not yet have obtained a multi-faceted education. Mies's further academic studies would have been directed by his own free choice as he endeavoured to educate himself. This pattern of education does suggest that familiarity with a wider range of alternate philosophic influences and options might have escaped him eg: Newton, Francis Bacon, Descartes.

At the age of 19 he commenced working for a local architect who specialised in wooden buildings, also developing an interest in astrophysics. After a year he went to Berlin to work for Bruno Paul, a leading furniture designer working in the Art Nouveau style.

Two years later he received his first commission and patron : a house for Alois Riehl, Professor of Philosophy at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. He did a good job and became a family friend. Through Riehl he was introduced to a highly cultivated circle and his further education was broadened and guided significantly. Riehl introduced him to the contemporary catholic ascetic philosopher Romano Guardini. Riehl even sponsored a trip for Mies to Italy to study Palladio's architecture. It is interesting that Mies does not refer later to Palladio in any significant way.

The leading Berlin architect Peter Behrens was impressed with the Riehl House and offered the twenty-one year old architect a job in his office, which was then employing Walter Gropius and was later to employ Le Corbusier as well. In this office Mies would have become familiar with the latest debates in architecture. He differed with Peter Behrens over the German Embassy building, St Petersburg (see fig.4.), stating that Behrens was angry that the building under his control was "within budget". Behrens's version of the story might have been somewhat different. The plan of the German Embassy building in St Petersburg contains the traditional 'closure' of room format which Mies has been criticized posthumously for ignoring to the detriment of the usefulness of his planning.

Mies shared his employer's admiration for Schinkel (See fig.3.). He cited (a) wide pedestals, (b) a feeling for precise rhythms, proportion and scale and (c) purity of form as Schinkel's influence. Schinkel of course developed a holistic Hegelian interpretation of architecture (not surprising considering the years in which he practised) which, coupled to Mies' education, could have been influential in the origin of Mies' specialised dogma.

In 1910 there was a significant exhibition of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture in Berlin which left a lasting impression that was to emerge later. In 1911 Mies designed the Perls house which was already a bit self-consciously boxy and then with Behrens he worked on the first Kroller 'Villa'. This assignment took him to the Hague where he spent a year living with the Krollers amid one of the worlds finest collections of art. During his stay in Holland he was to study and become influenced by the Dutch architect Berlage (who had himself been influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright in America). Mies also entered a competition for a monument to Bismarck and finally failed to impress Mme Kroller with his own independent design for her house.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

Mies demonstrated in his early years an opportunism and self-assuredness that was to characterise his professional career. A picture emerges of a bright, talented, dedicated young architect who was aware of the need to enhance his professional image and be opportunistic in terms of employment, clients and self-education. He later added his mother's maiden name Rohe and the more aristocratic 'von der' to his family name 'Mies', which can mean 'ugly' in German.

His relations with Behrens were a little precocious in view of his lack of formal architectural training. The Riehl and Kroller client relationship demonstrated that the young Mies was becoming very adept at customer-relations. Experienced architects will know client relations at the outset can be a heady affair with praise and adulation that is not always commensurate with one's real knowledge and ability - the danger lying in self-delusion and an invitation to megalomaniacal tendencies.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

The 1914-18 war was humiliating to the young Mies where lack of education or title would not have assured him rank. During this wasted military period he may have decided that the 'modern movement' was an ideal vehicle for his emerging neoplatonic philosophy. Immediately after the war he became a founder member of the socialist 'Novembergruppe' because it was dedicated to modern art. What was 'modern' was avant-guarde, and a path to acceptance in a society that would have been denied him because of lack of formal education and title. Mies's class humiliation during the First World War would have assisted his natural gravitation to the left-liberal Internationalists of the Novembergruppe.

The Novembergruppe had an annual exhibition and Mies was to use this exhibition to demonstrate four of the famous 'Five Projects' - projects in theoretical design - created between 1921 and 1924. The group's receptiveness to modern and constructivist art was an invitation to Mies to demonstrate his personal examples of pristine modernity as exemplified for example by his glass skyscraper and his severe charcoal rendering techniques (see figs 8,9 &10). It is interesting to note that the other favoured trend of the modern movement at this time was the expressionist and surrealist movement which was given to sombre neo-gothic images in charcoal drawings. Mies's charcoal, with sharp severe hard edge lines must have been the ideal counterpoise to an art movement that was uncomfortable in its imagery at best. Mies's designs needed less intellectual commitment in the sense that expressionist art was filled with metaphor, which needed 'decoding' to appreciate.

These exhibitions stamped him as an architect's architect and he was becoming noted and respected. Mies was learning the value of publicity and he directed the Group's exhibitions from 1921 to 1925. In 1923 he financed the first three issues of the design magazine 'G' (Gestaltung - creative force) as a forum for his views.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

David Spaeth (Spaeth:1985) says that Mies was apolitical and that contrary to the generally held view he was not influenced by the current trends of de Stijl or expressionism, rejecting the latter's subjectivity. Mies was not alone in rejecting expressionism at the outset of Wiemar, but he was unique in basing his justifications for non-representational and 'modern' art on the Greco-Germanic philosophic tradition. Both Spaeth and Mies fail to see that Mies's emergent philosophy was no less subjective and based on a well known and documented German holistic idealism with elements of subjective ascetic minimalism. Wiemar Germany was awash with philosophic cross-currents and innovative ideologies. Mies's views and philosophies of this period are characterised by their absence of reference to other philosophies, such as Descarte, Hume, Locke or even Kant. The lack of critical assessment and evaluation of architectural philosophies remains a mystery in that day as much as it remains today.

From the end of the war to 1924 (owing to the economic blight) Mies built only three houses and designed the Afrikanischestrasse municipal workers housing project in Berlin. The Wolf House (see fig.14) is on a steeply sloping site and the illustrations of it show a marked insensitivity in the landscaping: presumably landscaping had not yet been embraced into the holist philosophy.

In emphasising 'epochal will', order and clarity etc. he was beginning to drift with the growing autocratic right wing of the Weimar period. It is probable that Mies was politically cynically inclining to the right as he detected that the politics of the left might be too self destructive for his personal ambitions. His practice ambitions, clients and friends however, for the time being, located him physically elsewhere; his association with Hugo Perls (for whom he had designed the Perls House), and through him the communist philanthropist Karl Fuchs, was to gain him the commission for the Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg memorial (see fig.12.) and was eventually to lead also to the Tugendhat House. Mies was later at pains to point out that the design of the communist memorial carried no ideological commitment, yet in revealing the circumstances of that appointment Mies demonstrates another example of his machiavellian opportunism.

If Mies's philosophic utterances were designed as propaganda to give him prestige and win him clients they succeeded admirably. Mies had become vice president of the Werkbund - a position that secured him significant work and was to lead to his appointment as director of the Weissenhofsiedlung at Weissenhof, Stuttgart (see fig. 13). This well known socialist housing development was criticized for monotony although Mies had deliberately invited many of Europe's leading architects to participate in an effort to achieve variety. The criticisms were seen as right wing philistinism and Mies and his friends were oblivious to any truths they may have contained.

Mies and other modern architects were now also involved in furniture design and with his training and his careful attention to detail he could claim superiority - citing more appropriate and honest use of materials etc. We have here an early example of Mies being self-convinced by his own philosophy. The Barcelona chair (to be designed later) was only symbolic of a machine aesthetic as the actual detailing of the metalwork by its nature was only possible by a laborious craft metalwork hand grinding process. The naturalness of the stresses and forces proved to be a fiction, as the chairs ultimately distorted with metal fatigue. Mies was now being oracular about structural and material honesty and appropriateness oblivious to some obvious contradictions. (see fig. 19.)

Mies also left his wife and family during this period - we do not have personal justifications and details, but we do recognise at this stage a man totally dedicated to ideals and goals of his own making that had little room for divisive influences. In 1927 he began a business and intimate association with Lily Reich (see fig.20.) who was a designer and specialist in fabrics and interiors, and who had worked for Josef Hofman in Vienna. Weimar Germany had become relatively prosperous. Lily Reich is credited with giving him "that exquisite disposition of costly materials", which he was to retain.

Mies and Lily Reich were to collaborate until 1930. Apart from the Krefeld houses and further projects for office buildings, two germinal buildings were produced by Mies in this period that have had a legendary impact on architecture generally. The first, commissioned late in 1928, was the Barcelona Pavilion, which was a non-utilitarian sculptural building form comprising intersecting vertical and horizontal planes constructed from high precision and expensive finishes. This building was demolished soon after the exhibition and like some martyred saint proceeded to gather fame in uncritical memory. This idealized planning and spatial form did generate for Mies and others a planning generic, a new planning morphology which was to prove as problematical as it was attractive.

The other project, the Tugendhat house (see figs. 15,16,17 & 18), was a transfer of this notion to a real building coupled to an exotic taste for finishes. As Germany began to prosper Mies found himself designing villas for the new rich, epitomising a more general trend towards diffusion of the modern movement for the benefit of the luxury consumer, rather than the less well off. The Tugendhat house including the furniture was designed in every detail like a studied home exhibition centre. Mies as a poor brickmason made good, for all his architectural insights and ascetic pontification, was by this time becomming lured by opulence and costly perfection. This new collaboration with Lily Reich he began to point to another architectural sub-philosophy (which he never openly expounds) namely that exotic and expensive finishes - the most expensive available - are a passport to client acceptance and architectural glory. Mies the thinker never questioned the social or circumstantial appropriateness of this architectural direction; even though Wall Street had collapsed and privilege was being examined around him with such intensity, real history was being made, and the history of ideas changing every hour. This he left disdainfully to Hannes Meyer and others. Mies the erstwhile socialist became Mies the snob.

It is not suggested that Mies should have spurned a rich paying client's brief, but in a singular way he now began to see expensive elitism as the most important prescription for design.

Mies had by now been made head of the Bauhaus. He and his students were attempting to contain the 'free plan' within a 'site box' (the court houses) (see fig.24). He was beginning to turn his ideas of planar geometry and space, to situations where more than one building was involved, which was the first attempt at realistic urban context and led to a renewed consideration of the need for landscape integration. The photographic collage technique of his early Weimar years was extended to include murals by Braque and Klee which provided a rich but necessary contrast to sombre minimal line drawings and bland surfaces. He was fond of Paul Klee and collected his paintings (even though Klee's declared philosophy was that 'nothing could replace intuition'). Mies's teaching style notwithstanding its merits, deprecated most other architectural influences and directions, which might also have served to cut him and his students off from other valuable architectural teachings and inspiration.

Mies's autocracy and evangelism for order and clarity made him a sure candidate for Hindemith Germany - the point to be stressed was that in 1930, after Streseman's death and Bruning's rule by presidential decree, only someone who was inclined to the 'right' would have been acceptable as head of the Bauhaus. Mies's handling of the Bauhaus dissidents and left-wingers - the brief closing of the school when he took over and his arbitrary interviewing and dismissal of students - would have been unacceptable by today's standards (Stern:1969); but his authoritarianism was never questioned then or now. It demonstrated an autocratic mind-set which is a key to his later unshakeable confidence and pontifications in America. What had been self-advertising polemic in the early twenties now became architectural dogma. He was beginning to feed on his own influences.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

Much has been said about Mies's closing of the Bauhaus, and indeed one has the feeling that this episode gave him considerable postwar mileage. The facts are that he tried and begged the Gestapo every day for three months for permission to reopen, knowing well the sort of people he would be teaching and the probable curriculae he would be obliged to follow. We also know that he tried to get work from the Nazis from 1933 to 1937. Philip Johnson was to say later that Mies would have taken a brief from the devil himself. Mies's rigid commitment to his own singular ideology was to ensure that the devil was not interested. He remained steadfastly committed to the Modern movement and his own ideas and would have nothing to do with Nazi "volkisch" vernacular.

In 1937 Mies was invited to America by Philip Johnson to design a country house in Wyoming. It was never built but while there Mies was invited to Chicago to become head of the Armour Institute, later the Illinois Institute of Technology. Mies was given a free hand as demanded (and a low salary). He set about reorganising the faculty on Bauhaus lines, inviting Hilbersheimer and Peterhans to join him. Teaching helped Mies to clarify his ideas. He acknowledged the need to extend them to embrace more sophisticated technology - but never to change or question their basic assumptions. Mies by now had the prescription for teaching and the prescription for good architecture, which merely had to

unfold. The dullness and blandness of some of his American buildings can be ascribed to an all too rigorous belief in and adherence to his own philosophy. Whereas he had been inventive architecturally in Germany at a certain level, the need he felt to be some sort of oracle in the States made him somewhat less venturesome.

He was to redesign and execute the new campus at I.I.T. in yellow-brown facebrick and exposed steelwork. Much has been writen about the campus, the "hierarchical ordering of parts" (justified by his philosophical notions), the purity of form and module, the "superior site positioning" of the building blocks etc. Despite all the theory it remains a dull campus by world standards (see fig.24.), and when last visited (visit:1985) lacks cohesion and looks somewhat forlorn. Wright was to refer to the design as "flat-chested" and suggested that Mies had invented a "new classicism" (classic being derogatory in the days of modern movement jargon). It remains to be seen whether Mies conservationists and acolytes will ever succeed in restoring and propping up what was never there in the first place. Mies referred disdainfully to being oblivious of the Chicago school tradition, referring to their influence being limited to way back in his pre-first world war years, and Wright work with Oak Park at Mies's Chicago doorstep appeared irrelevant to his architectural purpose.

CHAPTER 2: MIES'S BIOGRAPHY CRITICALLY REVIEWED:

In 1945 Mies was to extend his notion of intersecting and vertical planes to include transparent planes, as a transparent house in a verdant landscape (see fig.35.). The site required elevated terraces and Mies developed a new expression of the raised platform or podium that had been a preferred detail from Schinkel-influenced days. The house was a piece of high-tech sculpture and the subsequent dispute with its owner Dr Edith Farnsworth did not contribute much to perceptive architectural assessment except to herald the commencement of criticism of Mies's ideas. Edith Farnsworth stated "Less is not more, it simply is less".

The Farnsworth house and the dispute surrounding it highlights in retrospect the lack of sophistication of both architect and client.
The Farnsworth house and some of the buildings on the I.I.T. campus (notably Crown Hall) (see figs. 29 & 31) were examples of the decorative use of structural steel.

Mies directed his inventive talents in the service of a clientele of property speculators. The availability of a wide range of structural steel sections and contractors to utilise them excited Mies. In working with steel he was bound to make contact with structural steel designers. With creditworthy skill he sought to make design capital and commercial opportunities from their stock in trade design principles, eg using large span girder trusses and diagonal bracings. In 1945 he met Herb Greenwald, a real estate developer and builder who shared his interest in philosophy. For Greenwald Mies was to use his familiarity and skill with steel to develop curtain wall alternatives for high-rise apartment buildings, and presumably their shared philosophy gave them the courage to display studied bland facades in the hope that the sophisticated public would acknowledge and appreciate them (see figs.32&33). The public were and remain bewildered, but the architectural and building fraternity were quick to take up these ideas as presenting a visual justification and comfort for the boxlike forms that zoning regulations were imposing on them.

Mies was imaginative and inventive in translating steel and aluminium technology in the service of expedient building. These utilitarian building could be easily clothed in an ascetic philosophy. The new client and initially the media loved this new respectability. To use Miesian details and principles for

the high-rise apartment or office building was like receiving divine absolution for this commercial work. Mies, the patron saint of the straight up and down, could make them feel comfortable. Time has suggested that this "philosophic liason" with Herb Greenwald will also be remembered for what it failed to contemplate. When the pendulum swung Mies was blamed for the energy crisis, blamed for town planning failures etc, which was just as absurd as the hysterical praise heaped on him in 1958.

A range of successful buildings and projects followed. He designed a drive-in restaurant in Indianapolis, utilising large over-roof girder truss beams to ensure uninterrupted large-span floor space This recurring theme was used at Crown Hall, the National Theatre project, Mannheim, and was to culminate in the colossal Convention Centre where the trusses became space frames, and the walls were huge long-span girders (see figs.36 & 41). There were of course many 19th century precedents for such expressive use of structure, but Mies by this stage saw his architecture as an unfolding of his doctrines rather than following precedents. Mies produced one substantial mixed low and high-rise in Lafayette Park, Detroit which was hailed as an urban planning masterpiece (see fig. 34 & 35). In 1958 Mies designed a building that was to become a monument to the American corporation, and the symbol and metaphor of its age - the Seagram building, Park Avenue New York (see fig.40).

The Seagram building spawned other megalith urban office complexes, notably Chicago Federal Centre, Dominion Centre - Toronto, and Westmount Square - Montreal.

The Prodigal son was to return to Berlin to design a temple - a temple to his notions of a long-span steel roof slab and transparent ground floor. This temple was to be the New National Gallery in West Berlin (see figs 38 & 39). A man of 'few well chosen words' had become a man a 'few well chosen architectural themes'(see fig 42). These tranparent ground floors transposed the concept of 'beinah nichts' (almost nothing) into 'almost nothing useful'.
It is ironical that a devastated Germany whose new youth utterly rejected 'holist hegelian idealism' should import a Hegelian temple because of the uncritical architectural popularity it enjoyed in America.

Mies achieved premature fame in America through a comprehensive retrospective exhibition in 1947 at the Museum of Modern Art with Philip Johnson writing the monograph. An 'oration' that transformed deserved praise into an uncritical cult.
Architectural students of today may not be required to have more than a passing academic interest, which is certainly worthwhile - his story should however alert the student to the misdirection of architectural hero-worship.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: PLATO.

Plato (Greek philosopher 428 - 348 B.C.)

Plato's influence on the ideas of Mies van der Rohe is principally as the father of a crucible of ideas that sucessive philophers and christian theologians were to extend and consolidate into a family of philosophic movements known as Neo-Platonism. Mies's philosophies are often referred to as being neo-platonic (Jencks:1973).

Neo-platonic philosphies derive their ultimate inspiration from the more than two dozen "Dialogues" of Plato. Plato was the second of a trio - Socrates, Plato and Aristotle - who laid the philosophical foundations of western culture. Building on the life and thought of Socrates, Plato transmitted a body of metaphysical, ethical, political, aesthetic and mystical thought which he developed and modified over a period of fifty years. His chosen vehicle, the 'dialogue', with its dialectical cross-examination, dramatic elements and irony probably intentionally does not lend itself to simple systematic exposition as a definitive system. Plato however sought to establish a realm of absolute values based on universal abstracts which, by

incorporating the ethical, could addressed the moral confusion of his time.

Some concepts in the Dialogues which have significant bearing on Mies are:-

- Forms or Ideas. Central to Plato's work was a concept of eternal transcendent realities directly apprehended by thought, as contrasted with and independent from the transient contingent phenomena of empirical existence as perceived by the senses. (Earlier Dialogues). These Forms or Ideas functioned sometimes as ideal standards, sometimes as the intelligible model or blueprint of the sensible world. A sensible thing is a complex or meeting place of a plurality of forms. Sensible things temporarily partake in or communicate with the Idea of Form - they are a dim reflection of an unseen eternal world. (Phaedo, Republic). If the visual world was an imitation of the ideal forms, art was an imitation of an imitation, and of value only insofar as it directed the soul towards the real, ie truth, beauty or the highest good.

- Knowledge or learning as 'recollection' (Meno, Phaedo). The soul was originally a spiritual substance able to grasp the intelligible directly. The way to truth lay in contemplation of the ideal, by which the soul could recover the knowledge it

originally possessed.

- Form as an object of mystical contemplation and a stimulus of mystical emotion. Good is the supreme beauty or principle form. (Symposium, Republic). (Plato's 'Good' later became 'God' in Christian theology).

- Reality sought through contemplation or intuition; by assumption and deduction rather than by observation and experiment; by working things out from abstract principles through logic.

- The significance of negative propositions - 'what is not, in some sense also is' - as one of the foundations of logic; and the value of careful classification (Sophist).

- Certain theological truths can be strictly demonstrated by reason (Laws)'

- Forms as numbers. Aristotle defines Plato as having intercalated between his Forms (or numbers) and sensible things an intermediate class of mathematicals. (Timaeus) In Plato's scheme for the philosophic training of rulers (Republic) the exact sciences - arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, astronomy and harmonics - are studied first to familiarise the mind with

relations that can only be apprehended by thought. The relations of numbers are the key to the mystery of nature.

Platonism and Neoplatonism

Platonism is a term applied to any philosophy derived ultimately from the "Dialogues" of Plato, based on a belief in unchanging and eternal realities, independent of the changing things of the world perceived by the senses. It is always ethical, often religious and sometimes political.

Platonism has charted a path from ancient Greek origins through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the present, as philosophers sought in various ways to systematise Plato. 'Neoplatonism' , as it came to be called, was thus a long process of exegesis, interpretation and reinterpretation of Plato. Mies is notable for having consciously attempted to use derivations of this philosophy as a basis of architectural thinking and a guide to building.

Characteristics of the Platonist world view include:-

- The original dichotomy between intelligible and sensible becomes a plurality of spheres of being in hierarchical

descending orders.

- Each sphere if being is derived from its superior.

- Degrees of being are degrees of unity. The universe is a series of emanations or degenerations from absolute unity. From the One comes Mind or spirit. From that comes Soul or life. Soul is the intermediary between the spheres of spirit and sense. Matter is the lowest product of the unity. The potentiality of evil is identified with unformed matter - as the point of maximum departure from the One.

- Each sphere has a departure and return relationship to its superior; to ascend from Soul through intellect to the One is not to travel in space, but to awake to a new kind of awareness. Each sphere's relation to its superior is that of image to archetype.

- The supreme sphere of being is beyond being; ie not separate, determined or limited. It is the 'One', the 'Good' (containing the immaterial ideas - Plato's Forms).

Plotinus, (AD 205 - 270) the greatest early Neoplatonic philosopher, fused Platonic with Stoic, Aristotelian and Neopythagorean teachings. Like him his successor Porphyry (AD

234 - c305) was to accent the ascetic and monistic aspects of neoplatonism; while Iamblichus (AD 250 - c325) another disciple, emphasized 'levels of being' which set the mould for the platonic schools of the 5th and 6th centuries. There was a platonic school at Pergamum and a Platonic Academy at Athens. Proclus (AD 410 - 485), another important thinker, was the last head of this academy. It was finally closed by Justinian in 529 as a rival philosophical system system, Christianity, superseded.

Philo of Alexandria was a Jewish 'Platonist' who attempted to show that Genesis was consistent with platonism. These were not christian platonists (who emerged later) and they demonstrate that platonism was influential for all aspects of western philosophy, and was to re-emerge as a non-christian influence in the Middle Ages with two great Muslim philosphers who deeply influenced the West, Ibn Sina (980 - 1037) and Ibn Rushd (1126 - 1198); and the Spanish-Jewish philospher Ibn Gabriol (b1021).

Mims was therefore to propound his ideas in the 20th century in secular circles where he would strike chords receptive to his ideas in non-christian and general philosophic environments. The special characteristic of platonists throughout the centuries has been belief : the existence of a spiritual or intelligible reality which is independent of the sense world, is normative, and is the source of values.

Christian neoplatonism was an important influence in the early Christian era through the patristic tradition, which tried to harmonise Greek philosophy with Christian teaching. It gained ground through Dionysius the Areopagite, and later the greatest Christian platonist who was to have the most profound influence in the West - St. Augustine (354 - 430).

Philosophy in the Mediaeval West had platonist origins. These were eclipsed in the 12th and 13th centuries by new translations of Aristotle, Plato's greatest pupil, who corrected platonism in a this-worldly direction. However platonism and aristotelianism cannot be entirely separated in Christian philosophy.

A revival of antiquity by Humanists took the form of re-emphasizing platonic motifs. In the 15th century the Dialogues of Plato and neoplatonic works, in particular the Enneads of Plotinus, became available in the West in the original greek and led to a new infusion of platonism into Renaissance and post-Renaissance thought. Cosimo de Medici sponsored a 'Platonic Academy' in Florence, which was extensively influential, notably in the later ideas of the 17th century Cambridge platonists.

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The rediscovery of Proclus by Hegel (1770 - 1831) had an important influence on the history of 19th century idealist

philosophy. Every western philospher has been exposed to platonism, which thus continues to be pervasive, reflecting the variousness of this corpus. There can be little doubt about the importance of platonism in the history of European thought. Plato is a philosopher for mystics, a political guide for advocates of unity and order, including modern authoritarian thinkers. He has been cited as the author of both revolutionary and traditional authoritarianism. His philosophy in various forms infused the central tradition of western religious philosophy, has deeply influenced Christian theology where it is still influential, and has been important in science, literature and art.

Saint Augustine (c453 - 430)

St Augustine's "Confessions", written at the age of forty-five, detail his progression from philosophy to a flirtation with Manichaeism - a popular sect of the time holding existence to be a dualism of good and evil with matter as the source of evil - to Scepticism and then the Neoplatonism of Plotinus which led him, through St Ambrose of Milan, to Christianity.

Augustine's mind was the crucible in which the religion of the New Testament was most completely fused with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy. The Plotinian system thus fused by St Augustine was transmitted to the christendoms of mediaeval Catholicism and Renaissance Protestantism.

The point for Christian thinkers of assimilating pagan Neoplatonism into Christian doctrine was to try to provide a rational interpretation of Christian faith. The task of reason was that of elucidating things already accepted by faith as divine revelation. Religion and philosophy co-operated in the Middle Ages, thus, only becoming more separated during the Renaissance.

Augustine owed to the platonists the concept of transcending the material world to reach the ideal, eternal, spiritual realm of truth. The orientation was contemplative, encountering reality by turning inward to the mind, and above the mind to the intelligible light in which to see truth. The platonic Idea was identified with truth, therefore mental images were identified with intelligible reality.

These were however harnessed to their source in a personal God of Christianity - not a 'Good', 'One' or assemblage of qualities. Creation was not as in neoplatonism an eternal process or by-product of divine self-contemplation; but a contingent act by a personal God acting voluntarily, in which time was introduced (thus the Fall, death, judgement etc).

In contrast to the neoplatonic view that contemplation sufficed for a return to the One, Augustine as a Christian acknowledged supernatural aid as needed to transcend the finite contingent material world. Knowledge can only come from belief. There must be righteousness before understanding. This was obtained through grace, as a supernatural gift. "I believe so that I may understand". Augustine, in his theory of knowledge, believed that "true judgements can never be inserted into the mind from without". His favourite examples were the propositions of mathematics and the appreciation of moral values. Following on

Plato's theme of knowledge as reminiscence, he maintained these did not come from the contingent world or the individual mind. When properly formulated they were accepted by all minds. The soul grasped these ideas by illumination - recognised them - thus 'demonstrating God's existence by demonstrating these necessarily immutable truths.

C ion, sourced by divine will, must be all good. Because there were evidently degrees of goodness, there must be degrees of being, or of value. This universal order required the subordination of lower in the scale of being to higher; man must know his place in the order of the universe. Upon everything must be set the value that is roperly due to it.

Grace conferred on free will the desire to do good. This theme of predestination was elaborated in his theological and literary masterpiece De Civitate Dei (City of God). His political philosophy in this work took the form of a Christian apologia for the sacking of Rome by the Visigoths in c410. His view was authoritarian, and a unique transmutation of Plato's Republic. The state had a divine origin. Because of the Fall it was a necessary judgement, chastisement and remedy for sin. Terrestrial and heavenly cities were symbolic of the two invisible societies of the elect and the damned, or faith and unbelief - intermixed in this world but divided on the Day of

Judgement, when the elect were saved by grace. History is a progress toward the final emergence of the Heavenly city. This doctrine of predestination although not accepted by the church, appeared virtually unmodified in the scholasticism of Aquinas and the reform of Calvin.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: ASCETICISM:

Asceticism

The Greek noun 'askesis' meaning exercise or training, applies equally to the contemporary notion of physical training for better subsequent performance, as it was applied to the Olympian performances of the past. (Witness the spiritual sense of doing good on the face of the contemporary jogger).

Hardly any religion has been without as least some features of asceticism, which in religion has meant the denial of physical or psychological desires in order to obtain a spiritual ideal or goal. The Christian ethic, Protestant or Catholic, suggests that to be spare, to be constrained is to be better. (Indulgences in Catholicism, could be only for the glorification of God). Even Judaism while eschewing celibacy is characterized by fasting, sackcloth and ashes and countless other elements of asceticism. Plato believed that it was necessary to suppress bodily desires so that the soul could be free to search for knowledge. Aztec and Catholic priests had to be celibate. The widely known activities of Indian fakirs and Buddhist beggar-monks are indications of the universal human acceptance of abnegation for heightened spiritual rewards.

Asceticism is not characterised at best by extreme forms, but by

a tendency towards moral upliftment by denial, or the most for the least - a minimalist form that brings it almost back to its philological origins.

Mies, drawing on his Germanic philosophical traditions had in addition to Christian neoplatonism the precedents of Schopenhauer who advocated a type of asceticism that annihilates the will to live and Kant who believed in a moral asceticism for the cultivation of virtue according to the maxims of the Stoics. The 20th century philosopher and patron of Mies, Eloïs Riehl, himself a student and expert on Kant, was to introduce the young Mies to the contemporary catholic theologian Romano Guardini. Writing in German only during Mies's formative years, Guardini was advocating asceticism as a means of rescuing human existence. He maintained that man, having lost his identity because of the effects of the growing technological process upon him, must once more renounce the world to regain his spiritual position.

Mies's use of asceticism in architectural design during the chaotic years of the Wiemar Republic had supramaterial levels of significance. And the United States with the Quaker and Pilgrim Father tradition, latterly invaded by a polyglot of conflicting European traditions, was ripe for the simplistic aphorism "Less is more".

Saint Thomas Aquinas (c1224 - 1274)

St Thomas Aquinas is generally regarded as the theorist who integrated into Christian thought the Aristotelian position, preserved by the Arab world and returned to the West through translations from Spanish Arab philosophy, notably that of Averroes. Briefly summarised, Aristotelian analysis was more empirical than that of Plato. Accepting the senses rather than Ideas as one of the most important sources of knowledge and emphasizing the primacy of intelligence, it laid the way open to discovering the laws of the physical universe through examination, and thus to the principles of science.

The rediscovery of a Greek scientific culture confronted Christendom with a doctrinal crisis, as it competed with the integration of Platonic thought effected by the Church Fathers during the first twelve centuries of the Christian era. Church authorities thus tried to block the rigorous naturalism and rationalism emanating from this philosophy.

However the thirteenth century, with its urbanisation, increasing production and the rise of new social classes, was ripe for a

matching theological renewal. The other-worldly orientation of traditional christian teaching was out of phase with political, economic and social change. Arab-Aristotelian science offered a legitimation [illegible]he increasingly felt need for technological mastery through the intervention of reason.

Aquinas rebelled against his feudal family background to join the Dominican order, and arrived at the University of Paris to study, at the height of the influx of these new ideas. His often stormy career took place within university walls as he studied and lectured on the works of Aristotle.

Mediating between the Augustan and Averroist positions, he maintained that the two truths - of philosophy and theology - were distinct, but not contradictory. He sanctioned the autonomy of reason, operating within faith but according to its own laws.

The natural world was not supernaturally moved, he claimed. It operated according to determinable laws, permitting the rational construction of science. The order of nature however was willed by Providence, and nature viewed thus could assume its proper religious value.

Providence willed each being to act according to its proper nature. Man's proper nature was rational, and therefore human

liberty was possible, based on this particular relationship with God. "To take something away from the perfection of the creature is to abstract from the perfection of the creative power itself".

On the relation of matter and spirit, thus also soul and body, Aquinas claimed that there was a distinction but also an intrinsic homogeneity, Man was situated ontologically 'like a horizon of the corporeal and the spiritual.' Aristotle provided him with explanatory concepts: form and matter were the two intrinsic causes constituting ever aterial thing. Matter was potentiality, form actualised it. The soul was thus the 'Form' of the body.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: KANT AND RIEHL.

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) and Alois Riehl

Kant is such a large figure in German philosophy, and it is acknowledged that he furnished many of the most significant themes that are found in the currents of contemporary world philosophy. For Mies to omit reference to him while founding his architectural ideas on his German philosophic predecessors must in itself be significant. The mystery deepens when one realises the very important part the Austrian philospher Alois Riehl played in Mies's education and development.

Riehl is cited as being a Realistic Neo-Kantian, and published in 1876-7 a critical philosophy for positive science maintaining that "all perception includes reference to things outside the subject". The same Alois Riehl was to employ Mies to design his new house in Berlin-Neubabelsberg in 1907, and to sponsor Mies's travels to Italy.

So why the absence of Kantian influence? Kant was of course the most rationalised and analyzed of German philosophers and most people had taken issue with his ideas in some form by the 20th century. Kant attempted to bring Newtonian rationalism to philosophy and criticized religion. Kantianism was at its height from 1850-1918 (Mies's formative years) and remains influential

today. Even Hegel started out with Kant but later rejected his anti-christian stance.

In the prevailing maelstrom of ideas Mies must have deliberately chosen to link the Idealism of the Modern Movement in architecture with traditional German idealism, which meant Hegel and the neoplatonists to the exclusion of Kant. We can only assume that the "Critique of Pure Reason" contained analytical method that did not appeal to Mies. He appears to have selected from German philosophy guidelines suited to his architectural needs. This selective view gave him authority and conviction and could only be criticized in its own terms.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1770 - 1831)

Hegel, a classical scholar who studied theology and later philosophy, followed Kant as the final German philosophical system builder of modern times. An absolute Idealist, inspired by christian insights grounded in mastery of a very broad range of concrete knowledge, his philosophy was characterised by 'wholeism' (or 'holism'). His wholeism was to characterise a trend in philosophy that influenced the later existentialism, marxism, positivism and analytic philosophy.

Hegel, drawing on neoplatonic roots, held that an atomist perception of finite or discrete units was illusion. Ultimate reality or truth was a systemic whole, conceived within the functionalist paradigm, and theoretically perceptible to a perfect or total vision. Truth and falsity were not sharply defined opposites. Nothing was wholly false - separateness was partial reality - nothing that we could know was wholly true.

Characteristic of Hegel was the triadic movement or dialectic. Any thesis has contained within it or will generate its opposite or antithesis. The unification in which these partial or contradictory positions are contained and transcended is a higher and richer synthesis - ie a new thesis. Truth = the whole =

reality was achieved by continual correction, each higher stage containing the previous ones, culminating in the notion of the Absolute.

Hegel's approach was that of a historian, giving this purely logical process a time dimension from the less to the more perfect. (Ultimate reality was timeless - time was an illusion generated by our inability to see the whole). In his work "Phenomenolgy of Mind" Hegel described the rise of the human mind from mere consciousness through self consciousness, reason, spirit and religion to absolute knowledge. Mies's explanation of architectural process follows a similar pattern.

We also see a key to Mies's embodiment of contradictions, and to his use of the words 'geist' and 'zeitgeist' (spirit of an age or epoch). 'Geist' as selected by Hegel meaning spirit as well as mind, contained religious overtones. Thought as an activity of indwelling spirit enabled man to transcend the Kantian finite world of appearances to a unity in which contradictions were embraced and synthesized.

In Mies's use of Hegel and back through him of platonic and neoplatonic thought, he chose from German philosophy a trend that suited his purposes - the Greco-German philosophic scholarship that received its original impulse through Hegel. Although

other, contradictory, postwar philosophic views prevailed during Mies's time, based on eg the Enlightenment, Bacon, Descartes; and although idealism had been attacked in the early 20th century by eg British philosophers such as Russell and Moore, Mies's use of Hegelian doctrines to support his architectural notions remained unchallenged.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: NIETZSCHE.

Nietzsche, F. (1844-1900)

Nietzsche was atypical of German philosophers. He was a literary rather than an academic philosopher, inventing no new technical theories in ontology or epistemology. His importance lay primarily in the field of ethics and as an acute historical critic. His writings, especially the later collections of aphorisms, are best seen as belonging to the great tradition of European moral essayists and aphorists. His style is not easy to interpret or summarize; and his ambiguous reputation is due to the differing uses made of various parts of his works by subsequent philosophers and others.

In spite of Nietzsche's criticism of the Romantics his outlook owed much to them; it was that of aristocratic anarchism, like Byron. Nietzsche propounded the capacity to endure as well as inflict pain for important ends. He admired strength of will above all - compassion was sign of weakness. He did not stress the state or the collectivity however (cf Hegel), but was a passionate individualist. This did not hold for all men though, (the ideal of the liberal enlightenment). He made a case for the sole rights of an aristocratic elite minority - the few who achieved excellence.

This was also the basis of his attack on christianity - it teaches equality. He viewed christian theology - and with it all 'dualistic' beliefs, based on a metaphysical other-worldliness (including the Platonic) - as inducing a slave morality that undermined pride, passion and self-respect.

He emphasized the 'will to power' as the basic drive behind everything, including philosophy. According to this view, all reasoning was rationalisation. 'Truth' was merely a perspective issuing from the centre of some ascendant will. Thus he criticised man's need for the metaphysical, as it led to a situation where the aspirations of life-denying groups (eg priests) could dominate the strong and healthy.

In place of the christian saint, Nietzsche wanted to see a type he termed the 'ubermensch' - the noble man, who demanded more of himself. Such heros would form a ruling race, based on severe self-discipline, and thus the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants would be stamped upon history.

Nietzsche first gained public attention with a new interpretation of the Greek achievment in his first book, 'The Birth of Tragedy.' He acknowledged the rationality, measure, restraint and harmony present in the 'Apollonian' Greek genius, but argued that there was another factor present - the 'Dionysian',

representing the irrational, the passionate, unconscious, orgiastic and destructive. These powers had to be fully harnessed to make the Apollonian achievment possible.

The main feature of Nietzsche's work used by contemporary theorists is his conception of the historical process. He opposed traditional historical method of seeing any process of events constituted in assumed origins, essences, high points etc. In contrast Nietzsche's genealogy dissolved unity, identity and order. It did not focus on events as the product of destiny or the intention of the constitutive subject. It revealed a multiplicity of events, of haphazard conflicts, chance and error, and power relations and their unintended consequences.

If in Nietzsche's view there were no universals, no constants, it was absurd to view the historical process as one of relentless progress. There were no recoverable points of origin, no timeless and universal truths. Once it has been certified that there is no hidden meaning, genealogical analysis becomes synonymous with the endless task of interpretation. Important here also was Nietzsche's critique of language as distorting reality, as always necessarily containing a philosophical mythology.

Fritz Neumayer has described Mies's philosophy as being poised

between Hegel and Nietzsche - Mies took comfort in the irresolution and dichotomy architecture offered in never being one or the other. Could this mean that Mies was always aware of the inherent paradox of many modern movement architectural battlecries, his own included, that he was aware of the Dionysian paradoxes of his Apollonian solutions? It is possible that these contradictions cause some of Mies's architectural polemics of the fifties to be misunderstood often by his critics.

Nietzsche was fond of communicating his ideas by aphorisms, and so too was Mies. The aphorism is astoundingly suitable for architectural polemic. By its nature it contains paradoxes and contradictions. (Surrealism and dada were conspicuous in the Weimar years). Mies might perhaps have been more forthcoming with his hidden allusions had he been addresssing more sophisticated European students, (or students a decade later).

However the principal impression one is left with in considering to what extent Nietzsche was an influence,is that Mies personified Nietzschian concepts in the whole shape of his career, rather than subscribing to them consciously. Nietzschian philosophy was part of the very fabric of the culture in which Mies and his contemporaries operated, and embodied every issue they felt to be relevant. Nietzsche's influence, through poetry, novels etc was incalculable.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: NIETZSCHE

Many aspects of Mies's biography bring to mind the 'ubermensch'. Nietszche approved of passionate men who mastered their passions and employed them creatively. Mies's neo-philosophy in itself was a way of being powerful - it epitomised singleminded will and action.

It is interesting to note that Nietzschian philosophy, filtered through contemporary theorists, influences the way we today examine Mies and his ideas. If there are no facts, merely interpretations, we are now concerned with the sociology of knowledge, ie the relations between the truth of a doctrine - any doctrine - and its historical and sociological genesis, which is what this thesis is concerned with.

ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCES ACKNOWLEDGED BY MIES VAN DER ROHE:

Mies van der Rohe was a contemporary of many of the most famous names in 20th Century architecture - Gropius, Le Corbusier, Behrens, Mendelsohn, Van der Velde, Lutyens etc. As a member of the Novembergruppe he must have known all the artists and architects of that time personally. He was a life long friend of Gropius who was instrumental in recommending him as head of the Bauhaus. Yet Mies consistently only cites three architectural influences, namely Schinkel, Berlage and Lloyd Wright. This fact alone is significant -almost as if no one else had anything to offer him. This strange selectivity is reported in the Miesian literature without comment. It could only be that Mies dismissed his contempraries - perhaps they were shallow thinkers not having the philosophic depth of his own ideas. Of the influences he acknowledges Schinkel appears to be the most important.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: ARCHITECTURAL (acknowledged)

Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781 - 1841) (See fig.3)

Distinguished career as Architect-in-Chief of the Kingdom of Prussia.

His work can be clearly located in the juncture of the Enlightenment and its Romantic critique. Schinkel's architecture embodies the features of both modes. On the one hand a clearly classicist, rational and logical endeavour (showing clarity, order, harmony and proportion); and on the other showing the qualities that were Romantic - the free spirit, vision and dreams, the allusive, the associational, the emotional. The Romantic signature is also clearly evident in the exploration of the relationship of man and nature, particularly in Schinkel's paintings which fuse buildings and nature into harmonious settings. Schinkel shows a distinct relation to the broader Romantic current flowing at the beginning of the 19th century.

These two polarities of Schinkel's architecture may be characterised by a comparison of the Alte Museum in Berlin - symmetrical, imposing, heavy, axial, restrained, classical - with the Hofgartnerei in Potsdam which is asymmetric, additive, whimsical, containing organic unities of ornament and construction, of plan and facade, of building with its natural and artificial surround.

The combination of Classicism and Romanticism may be put another way: as a combination of historical consciousness with a direct concern with the present. The work of Schinkel is overtly oriented, betraying a studied return to antiquity. The elements of Greek, Roman, Renaissance are evident. Schinkel represents in architecture a cultural link with the basic sources of Western civilization and culture. He was in his lifetime renowned for his pioneering efforts in the field of architectural preser ation.

Yet Schinkel is distinctively anti-historicist in holding the view that all forms of architectural subject matter, old or new, foreign or native, elegant or common are of interest to the architect. He was an untiring student of contemporary life.

Schinkel was Architect-in-Chief of Prussia at a time when the State operated within very limited resources. Which meant that Schinkel was discouraged from enormous and lavish projects. Schinkel's buildings are characterised by economic use of materials, human sizes and simple proportions and uncomplicated technical devices. Of necessity his endeavours were directed at creating 'beauty' without the need for abundance. Hence his most famous statement: "an artist must combine necessity and beauty".

The dominant ideology of his time was one of personal sacrifice towards a spiritual strenghtening; the protestant ethic. A fundamentally practical art emerged, determined by the need for clarity, economy and simplicity. Schinkel's best work is achieved in spite of (or perhaps because of) material constraint.

Mies van der Rohe was to say to Graeme Shankland on the BBC Third Programme. (Shankland:1959)

"Around 1910, Schinkel was still the greatest representative in Berlin; Das Alte amuseum in Berlin was a beautiful building - you could learn everything in architecture from it - and I tried to do that". "In the Alte Museum he has separated the elements, the columns and the walls and the ceilings, and I think that is visible in my later buildings."

It is clear that Mies drew inspiration from the clarity of ideas, the economy of means and the simplicity. He even later attempted to re-introduce some of the forms - wide floating stairs (see figs 30,36 & 39). There may also have been a philosophic affinity in that Schinkel belonged to the golden age of Hegel and Goethe, an age that inspired Mies in other ways. Neumeyer (Neumeyer:1985) suggests that German romanticism is ever present with Mies and sometimes the reason for the perplexing contradictions in his work and his explanations about them. (eg His attitude to construction. The roof over Crown Hall (fig. 29) is not a direct simple solution but a preferred romantic structural image.)

Having found Schinkel so important he chose unfortunately to be highly selective in the aspects of Schinkel that he was to acknowledge as an influence, and it can only be regretted that Schinkel's historicism, flexibility and attitude to conservation appear to have been purposely excluded.
Mies was choosing from Schinkel what suited his purpose:

Schinkel believed that a new age should develop an appropriate architectural expression free of historical influence. Schinkel's own Bauakademie intimates what he had in mind. He expressed the building's structure and spatial organisation on its exterior with clarity and economy of means. The result was handsome in its own right and re[illegible] free of historical references and surface decoration. (Spaeth,1985)

Mies's interpretation of Schinkel is so selective and circumscribed that one is left wondering whether Mies really bothered to understand Schinkel and as a consequence if Schinkel can be seen as anything more than a superficial influence on Mies van der Rohe. It is like saying that one is influenced by Paris when all you can recall is the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysees.

H.P. Berlage (1856 - 1934)

The only contemporary Mies was to admire and whose influence he was to acknowledge was Hendrik Petrus Berlage, a Dutch architect. He came to see his work while spending an unsuccessful year in 1912 in Holland attempting to satisfy the redoubtable Madame Kroller-Muller. It was Berlage who later actually designed a hunting lodge for the Kroller-Mullers in 1915.

Berlage has been referred to as the "Voysey" of Dutch architecture and his embodiment of the late arts and crafts movement in architecture is no surprise when one finds that his architectural training started with Gottfried Semper (father of De Stijl) in Zurich, who was himself at that time a refugee from autocratic Prussia.

Berlage started practice in 1882 in a Holland tired of the ponderousness and academic symmetry of its early 19th century architecture. In 1885 he received fourth prize for the proposed new Amsterdam stock exchange which was to be his commission later (to a different design) (see fig 5.). After the patronage of a Dutch insurance company (De Algemeene) Berlage came to be known as a progressive architect with advanced social ideas, and collaborated with sculptors and painters (Anton der Kinderen). He visited the U.S.A. in 1911 where he saw Louis Sullivan and

Frank Lloyd Wright and was one of the first architect to recognise their genius.

His buildings became simpler and simpler, but although still belonging to the neo-classical school he was to turn his inventiveness to structural detail and its emanating motifs. Berlage, like Peter Behrens, Mies's other contemporary mentor, was an important forerunner of 20th century architecture, both giving shape to space, Behrens proceeding from form and Berlage from construction.

Mies admired his integral approach to materials, his simplicity and directness in detailing - Berlage's simplicity never lost dynamic excitement, and Mies in his post rationalisation of Berlage's influence appears to have confused Berlage's simplicity with his own overly plain and -sometimes ponderous- handling of detail.

In pointing to Berlage Mies is really pointing to the significant branch of 19th century protestant architecture which culminated in the arts and crafts movement. Mies also admired Mackintosh which he admitted in a student interview (Library of Congress archives:1985). Mies sees Berlage as a talented individual architect, and not as an exponent of a movement of ideas. Mies's point of departure, when he later formulated his philosophies was

to interpret the current preference for simplicity and natural materials in a highly personal way by rationalising the self same ideas in terms of Hegelian neo-platonism.

Frank Lloyd Wright

There was an exhibition of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in Germany in 1910. - Mies wrote the catalogue notes. This must have been the first contact Mies had with Wright's work. Mies acknowledges that this exhibition was very influential at that stage of his career.

In 1923 Mies was to design a 'brick villa project' (see fig 11.) which has been attributed possibly to Wright's influence. This project does however bear more striking resemblance to the ideas of De Stijl. (See Van Doesberg: Rhythm of a Russian dance - 1918).
The Rosa Luxemburg-Karl Leibknecht monument (see fig.12) does have a brick sculptural quality that could have been inspired by Oak Park.

It is ironical that when Mies finally settled in the U.S.A he found himself in the same city as Frank Lloyd Wright i.e Chicago. But here any influence seems to have ended. Wright appears to have helped and supported Mies initially, only to condemn Mies's architecture later as being "flat-chested". In common with the hysteria of the time, Wright saw Mies as a European socialist. Wright's criticism of Mies appears to have been instinctive and he certainly did not have the facility to attack Mies's philosophic justifications which were gaining steam-roller like popularity. It was Mies who gained popularity with the business community and erected the next most important city-centre development (The Federal Centre). Mies the teacher and philosopher knew better than to be influenced by Wright or Sullivan on his own doorstep.

"...we would not do what Sullivan did. We see with different eyes, because it is a different time. Sullivan believed in the facade. It was still the old architecture. He did not consider that the structure could be enough. Now we go for our own time - and we would make an architecture with structure alone. Likewise with Wright. He was different from Sullivan, and we for equal reasons are different from Wright." (Spaeth:1963)

Mies as a lieutenant of the modern movement felt licensed to

exclude - justified it seems by the highly questionable notion of "epochal will" (see Scruton:1979).

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: WEIMAR GERMANY.

Discussion on Miesian Influences - Weimar

The tragic Weimar Republic was born on 9th November 1918 and died on the 30th January 1933. These fourteen years are regarded today as being one of the most vital periods of cultural explosion this century (some [illegible] many centuries) in music, theatre, art, literature and [illegible]ture. The people involved then read like a who's who of famous names today. This was a period of great artistic invention: twelve tone musical scales, dada, expressionism and surrealism in art and theatre, the Bauhaus.

Mies's mid-life and mid-career as a practising architect spanned this period. He spent it in Berlin - vortex of much that was avant guarde in postwar Europe. He matured his philosophy and started publishing his ideas during these years. He was actively involved, as a member of the Novembergruppe, as Director of the Weissenhofseidlung and later as head of the Bauhaus.

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Although he had a successful late-blossoming second career in the U.S.A. following the rise of Nazism, the philosophy underlying his work there dates from the Weimar period, and its debates are important in understanding the context of his utterances. When Mies addressed audiences in the U.S.A. he always seemed to remain in dialogue with his Weimar contemporaries. The range and scale of his buildings was extended but his architectural philosophy, formed in the Weimar years, remained essentially the same, and it bears all the hallmarks of the polemic of the modern canon of that period.

During pre-World War I years, in the formative period of his own career, Mies assimilated all the formative influences of the modern movement which were forged into a new philosophy and direction after the war.

Most of the ideas that were to develop in the Weimar period were incubating in Imperial Germany before the war, despite intolerance and harrassment. Modern art and expressionism were developing as a counter to Wilhelminian taste which ran to glittering medals, gaudy parades and sentimental portraits. The ostentatious universities were nurseries of woolly-minded militarist idealism and Jews, democrats and socialists were considered 'outsiders'. The new art made the ruling circle

literally sick and Mies with his origins and lack of formal education would definitely not have been 'in'. Imperial Germany, though autocratic and philistine, somehow became a magnet for foreigners and permitted visits by Frank Lloyd Wright (1910), Henry van der Velde, Antonio Gaudi and Marinetti (1913).

Mies wrote (for the catalogue of a Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition) of his early searching, explaining the felt lack of a valid convention, and that attempts to revise architecture from the point of view of form were doomed: "We young architects found ourselves in painful inner discord. Our enthusiastic hearts demanded the unqualified and we were ready to pledge ourselves to an idea."

War swept away the old order, and the new ill-fated socialist republic started in agony. It emerged following German defeat and the social upheavals of the war, pre-empting a revolution on the Russian pattern. The first Weimar period from 1919 to roughly 1923 was a time of domestic violence against the revolutionary left which amounted to civil war; it saw the political assassination of the Spartacists Luxembourg and Leibknecht, the repression of revolutionary councils eg in Bavaria and the murder of its independent socialist leader Eisner. There were also attempts at counter-revolution from the right - the Kapp putsch in 1920 and the Hitler-Ludendorf putsch

in 1923.

The original Weimar coalition was led by the Social Democrats (parliamentary socialists), and included the Catholic Centre - mild republicans - and the Democrats, supported largely by intellectuals and progressive industrialists. Imminent revolution - a complete economic transformation and social reconstruction as foreseen by the Communists - did not come about. Domestic upheaval was aggravated by foreign pressure - the imposition of the Versailles Treaty which imposed heavy burdens including reparations payments; the French occupation of the Ruhr, and astronomic inflation - all of which made the socialist led republic more fragile.

Weimar government was always a compromise. Although through the twenties power passed from socialists to the centre and right and back again, it was essentially a coalition of forces that excluded the extreme left and right - a perhaps fragile parliamentary support of a republican system based on reason rather than the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary slogans and direct paramilitary actions waiting in the wings.

Architecturally it was a time of little work, but through publications and exhibitions ideas were forming which would find expression in later building. In the arts international

influences were being sucked in - from the West, particularly France, and from Russia to the East. The new republic permitted outsiders and internationalists to dominate its initial ideas, and many unlikely people found themselves bedfellows in heady movements of reform. The 'Novembergruppe' (to which Mies belonged), formed under mainly expressionist leadership to promote the interests of radical artists, included Emil Nolde, Ernst Toller, Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius, Bertold Brecht, Kurt Weill, Alban Berg, Hindemith, Paul Klee, Feininger, Kandinsky, Max Beckman, George Grosz, Otto Dix, Kathy Kollwitz and others.

There was also the architect-led Arbeidsrat fur Kunst, which was limited to exhibiting utopian projects as the war had interrupted all building. Gropius was authorised by the socialist-led coalition in Thuringia to give the name Bauhaus to the newly formed Art and Applied Art Schools which he was to head. (The Bauhaus was related to the Arbeidsrat fur Kunst similarly to the way the Russian Vkhutemas (art-technical studios) and Inkhuk (Institute of Artistic Culture) were, in the initial years of the revolution under the cultural Commissarship of Lunacharsky who had a sympathetic knowledge of the avant garde.) During its brief existence and despite several changes of direction, the Bauhaus revolutionised art education through its aim to fuse the arts, to remove the (essentially class) differentiation between

aft and fine art and to unify art and technology.

The years 1921-3 also saw the effective last phase of the pre-1918 avant-garde movements - cubism, futurism, expressionism and dada. Expressionism in art, theatre and literature was the first phenomenon of Weimar culture. While not all expressionists liked Weimar, the enemies of Weimar hated all expressionists. And with good reason. There was something revolutionary about their vitality, their unremitting search behind appearance. The expressionists detested authoritarianism and militarism, had sympathy for the poor and a tough-minded realism about society. Brecht and Ernst Toller were to parody class structure and society and Grosz and Beckmann drew satirical cartoons. Walter Hasenclever's anti-war play Antigone is still performed today and The Cabinet of Dr Caligari remains a milestone in expressionist film-making. Erich Mendelsohn insisted that architecture must unite analysis and dynamics, reason and unreason.

CHAPTER 3: INFLUENCES: WEIMAR GERMANY.

The middle Weimar years saw six cabinets, with a conservative-centre continuity. By 1923 the main avant-garde movements of pre-1918 were fading. The defeats of the left changed the outlook of many and undermined expressionism, the kind of art most closely associated with its hopes. Mies and Gropius disliked expressionism and Max Beckmann repudiated it in 1922. "Die neue sachlichkeit" was a popular shorthand term expressing the new mid-twenties mood in the arts. Connoting utility, sobriety, objectivity, neutrality of the subject, matter-of fa.tness, this mood reflected new realities, as opposed to expressionism's subjective, romantic, passionate, humanitarian aspects. This outlook was extended to the new functionalism in architecture and design, with which it was very much in tune.

These were years of political-economic reordering: stabilisation of the currency by Stresemann backed by American capital through the Dawes plan; evacuation of the Ruhr; loans to Germany, reduction of reparations. Hindenberg, aged war hero, became a compromise chancellor. Germany's international isolation gradually ended. For several years the spirit of Locarno guided European diplomacy: the western frontiers were settled, and Germany entered the League of Nations. Germany was also brought closer than other European nations to the Russsian revolution. After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk it was the one major country not involved in the Allied invasion of Russia. Culturally there were active links between Russia and Germany during the Weimar years. These took place against the background of the New Economic Policy in Russia and the Rapallo agreement concerning diplomatic and economic relations, in the context of which there was increased travel abroad by Russians, many of whom came to Germany.

The second half of the 1920's saw seeming stability and prosperity - business recovery, plant modernisation, high employment and wages, and real building. The new administrative pattern in the arts was mainly a socialist one. Culture was a 'Land' responsibility. For example Prussia, the largest 'Land', was SDP-run throughout this time. In areas such as housing there was strong public patronage with a socialist slant in provincial and municipal schemes. Based on the example of the introduction of a housing tax by the socialist municipality in Vienna in 1923, large scale rehousing projects were funded by a tax on rents funnelled to the building societies; and the wave of modern building began. The Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung organised by Mies was its temporal centre. He said of it later "In Stuttgart that was a certain hour in history that we could show at once that all these forces were at work, but never visible."

Almost from the outset of Weimar, a second Germany had begun to emerge: Rilke, a popular poet, first greeted the revolution with impetuous joy and later resorted to pseudo-religion, false noble ancestry and warned of the great danger in the confusion of his age. Emil Nolde (founder member of the Novembergruppe) later turned out to be a rightwing christian mystic and anti-semite - he was one of the first to join the Nazi party. The distinguished German historian Meinecke, a cultural aristocrat converted to the Republic, saw "deep yearning for the inner unity and harmony of all laws and events in life remain a powerful force in the German spirit."

Then there was Stefan George, poet and seer, leader of a tight, humourless, self-congratulatory coterie of right-wing gay young men with eccentricities of dress and typography who after Nietzche discovered Holderlin and Kleist. This group included Bundolf who wrote a biography of Caesar, Norbert von Helingrath (Holderlin scholar), Ernst Kantorowicz who wrote a scholarly biography of Kaiser Friedrich 2, and Ludwig Klager, a notorious anti-semite. This influential group was stressing Greco-Germany's heroic past (Griechendeutschtum), Insularity and Siegfried-glory.

Greco-German philosophy was deeply ingrained in enlightened educational establishments eg the Warburg Institute in Hamburg where "Athens must be recovered over and over again from the hands of Alexandria" and who were publishing a new world view of St Augustine. Even the Institut fur Sozialforschung, Frankfurt, was left-Hegelian to the core. It would seem that neoplatonism in the holist Hegelian mould would have been in Mies's background from the 19th century to the most current debates in Weimar Germany's cauldron of ideas.

The two Germanys and the problem of authoritarianism were graphically illustrated in literary themes. Walter Hasenclever's play Der Sohn was about sons suffering under a tyrannical father. Notable literary figure Frans Werfel wrote about successful filial rebellion titled 'Not the murderer, the victim is guilty The revenge of the father was later protrayed by by Arnolt Bronen's play Vadermord, and Joachim van der Goltz was to write a popular play Vater und Sohn about Prince Frederick of Prussia's unsuccessful attempt to escape an authoritarian role.

The debate about authority and anti-authority was a major issue in Weimar. The right wing, moving hand in hand with authoritarianism gradually took command. It had continued to exist in hibernation, with secret rearmament and ideas of

liberating the enslaved fatherland from war guilt and the November Revolution. Stresemann's death at the end of 1929 signalled the beginning of the end for Weimar. Stresemann had belonged to the Peoples' Party,(big business and right-wing), and formed his first cabinet in 1923, adopting a conciliatory approach. He was foreign minister in succeeding conservative and centre governments and later collaborated in social-democratic cabinets. At his death the right wing of the Peoples Party reasserted itself.

The world economic crisis at this time proved worst for Europe's least stable regime, and foreign affairs and domestic class struggle reinforced one another to Germany's misfortune. Stability had been based on foreign loans; reparations and occupation were still an issue, and in the face of polarisation of the extremes of right and left at the expense of the centre the communists did not co-operate with the socialists against the strengthening right wing extreme and thus the Weimar coalition fragmented. Following Hindemith's appointment of Bruning as chancellor and Bruning's rule by decree the country steadily slid into Nazism.

This led to defeat of the modern movement in the arts and the exile or silencing of its protagonists. Mies was asked by Gropius to head the Bauhaus in 1930 after Hannes Meyer no longer had the political or organisational skills necessary to achieve stability and satisfy the Dessau council who by now were right-controlled. The atmosphere in Weimar had changed to such an extent that no-one who was not at least acceptable to the right could hold public or important office, and Mies was seen as politically more neutral. However the Bauhaus and all it stood for was seen as part of 'cultural bolshevism' (an equating of subversion in the arts and politics) and could not ultimately survive and there could be no compromise with modernism in architecture. Mies, after a period of trying to co-exist with the new regime, took the same path as many of his colleagues - emigration.

Mies Neo-philosophy - Modern

It is important to situate Mies not in Weimar culture as a whole - which embodied various contradictory strands - but in its modern movement, based in Berlin, encompassing all the arts. His organisational links were with groups involved in creating the modern discourse and his later statements, emerging in an oracular manner as an original philosophy, were extracts from that discourse. A comparison of the interlocking themes underlying its aesthetic procedures and values with Mies's compendium of personal statements reveals a remarkable co-incidence of texts.

The central metaphor of this discourse was the machine. Not its outward appearance, but the kind of thinking that underlay its design and operation. This was the outcome of an age dominated by technology, in the practical service of industrial expansion and postwar reconstruction. It was the outcome of a new vision emerging from world war 1 - a new realism, which sought ways of dealing with real subjects and human needs. It encompassed a critical view of society and a determination to master new media. Applied in all art fields, it used principles deriving from the rapidly developing technological sphere.

This trend could be seen as early as 1917 in the influence on architecture and design of De Stijl. Mondrian's 'nieuwe beelding', abstraction, use of the simplest elements; J.J.P.Oud's 'Art and Machine' and the example in his work in Holland of the trend to economy of means, was expressed unforgettably by Mies later as "Less is more". Elsewhere he spoke of "Beinahe nichts" (almost nothing).

Another aspect of De Stijl was its technical-industrial trend, which linked aesthetic form and the products of technology. Strong influences came from France, where many foreigners had settled after the war. Interesting here was the 'rappel a l'ordre' and neo-classicism, in which precision, logic and taste were seen as the values to be taken from classicism. This philosophy can be seen in the manifesto 'Apres le Cubisme' by the painter-theoretician Ozenfant who teamed up with Corbusier. Also in their Purist exhibitions and their magazine 'L'Esprit Nouveau', which in a few years from 1920 onwards covered architecture, painting, town planning and interiors.

L'Esprit Nouveau represented an approach to life that took the evidence of the modern world. It covered a very wide international field, high and lowbrow, artistic and materialistic, and interpreted it in the light of a unitary principle - a technologically based aesthetic - indicating how a rational and consistent core of the modern movement might be framed. "There is a new spirit: it is a spirit of construction and synthesis guided by a clear idea".

The aesthetic derived from their thoughts about engineering - its logic and economy, purity and exactness - and the dynamic relationships underlying the machine, which was the product of constructive thinking. The perception of order was seen as the highest gratification of the human spirit. In this sense L'Esprit Nouveau represented a return to order. That is, not a dictated or preordained order or one rooted in a particular tradition, but a process of ordering. It was in this sense that a house was a 'machine for living in', ie architecture that fulfilled its task as economically and well as a machine.

This idea of calm exactness was expressed by Mies's contemporary and colleague Schlemmer (Bauhaus): "If today's arts love the machine, technology and organisation, if they aspire to precision...this implies an instinctive repudiation of chaos and a longing to find the form appropriate to our times".

Mies: "Education must lead us...from chance and arbitrariness to rational clarity and intellectual order" (Blaser:teaching principles).

"We should judge not so much by the results as by the creative process. For it is just this that reveals whether the form is derived from life or invented" (Spaeth:1985)

" Since a building is a work not a notion, a method of work, a way of doing, should be the essence of architectural education." (Blaser:teaching)

Many emigre Russian artists spent time in Berlin and there were several important reciprocal exhibitions. Influential in the sense of West-Russian art links was Constructivism. The journal 'Vesch' (object) founded by Lissitzky and Ehrenberg in 1922 was a mouthpiece of "constructive art whose task is not to decorate our life but to organise it". Or, as Lissitzky said elsewhere "(we are) against art as a priesthood and the use of its works for decorative purposes". Among its contributors was the architect Hilbersheimer, later at the Bauhaus, and later still taken by Mies to the Armour Institute.

A statement coming from Berlin Constructivism via Moholy-Nagy (later at the Bauhaus) is of interest: "Technology, machine, socialism...constructivism is pure substance. It is not confined to picture frame and pedestal. It expands into industry and architecture, into objects and relations. Constructivism is the socialism of vision "

Mies collaborated on and partly financed the German Constructivist magazine 'G' (Gestaltung or formation) which had a strong architectural bias. In the dichotomy which was emerging between abstract-constructivism and a concentration on down-to-earth real things, he can be said to represent the latter. Both were marked by classicism, simplicity and impersonality.

Let us hear him speak (much later) "It is absurd to invent arbitrary forms, historical and modern forms, which are not determined by construction, the true guardian spirit of our times". (Blake:1960)

Or again: "Precisely because a building is determined by technology, we may say that only where our purposes find expression in a significant and logical structure are we justified in speaking of architecture".(Spaeth:1985)

or: "We should judge not so much by results as by the creative process. For it is just this that reveals whether the form is derived from life or invented for its own sake".(Spaeth:1985)
Or: " Form as a consequence of structure" "The whole, from top to bottom, to the last detail, with the same ideas"
(Spaeth:1985)
Or: "My idea is...a clear structure and construction. I am...completely opposed to the idea that a specific building should have an individual character".(Blaser:1965)

Associated with these aesthetic concepts was an anti-romantic bias against individual inspiration and expression in the arts. A fundamental assumption, although not always explicit was that the products of culture were - or ought to and could only validly be - derived from the underlying social-economic and technical relations in society.

Democratic social concepts and a new internationalism went with a new mid-twenties mood in the arts. Expressionism's subjective, romantic, passionate, humanitarian elements no longer wholly reflected new social and technical conditions. Everything combined to make art more consciously impersonal

Opposed to expressionism was self-discipline, scepticism and dry humour - a generally cooler more impersonal approach. This strand of mid-European culture was sober, functional, technologically conscious, and socially oriented, reflecting the process of industrial expansion and reconstruction in Germany and Russia and practical engagement of the arts with industry.

'Americanism' was valued for its perceived qualities of advanced technology, precision, efficiency and a 'no-nonsense' approach. Culture was urban. Urban images in art were international and - particularly - American, and generally the city theme, (responded to earlier with expressionist trauma), began to impose its own economical impersonal style.

The term 'die neue sachlichkeit' which was popular, expressed the spirit of the time, connoting utility, sobriety, objectivity, neutrality of the subject, matter-of-factness. The actual term came to be extended to the new functional architecture and design with which it was very much in tune. In fact, in the modern movement in Germany by the second half of the twenties there was a closely interwoven consistency of outlook and method embracing all the arts.

One of Mies'n favourite aphorisms expresses this perfectly. He pulls from Aquinas something that very closely corresponds to the spirit of the times: "Truth is the significance of facts".

Or: "They are bored with my objectivity. Well, I am bored with their subjectivity."(Blake:1960)

Again: "The whole trend of our time is toward the secular. We shall build no cathedrals. Ours is not an age of pathos; we do not respect flights of the spirit as much as we value realism". (Blake:1960)

Technological changes in art production media - film, radio, gramophone, photography - also influenced what was produced and why. These were mass media in the sense of consumption, techniques of their use were more 'objective', and they were more collective in the production.

Mechanical reproduction in the arts seemed to demand an abdication of individualism. An article in De Stijl in 1922 calling for photomechanical reproduction stated "We have buried all names, starting with our own". Documentaries, reportage and photomontage (giving the author a mechanic-like role) became prominent.

There was a new appreciation of supposedly lowbrow forms of art. This was tied up with a shift in the social basis of the arts - a politically grounded concern with the popular audience and the 'social task' of the arts (as seen for example in documentary theatre).

Everything combined to make art more consciously impersonal. There was a revolutionary sense of belonging to a huge community - the masses - and a corresponding sense of the irrelevance of individual artistic subjectivity in such a vast social context. Artists such as Grosz commented that individuality was outdated. The progressive artist is one who "denies and opposes the dominant place of subjectivity in art, founding his work on...the principle of new universally intelligible expression". (Statement published in De Stijl on behalf of the internationalist fraction of constructivists.) There was concern for the object, leading to objective art. The search for new forms slackened - content seemed to be more important, and whether it was understood. "Nothing is more important than matter-of-factness" said the communist journalist Kisch whose writings on reportage were influential in Germany. Long before Isherwood, he presented himself as an impersonal screen, a neutral observer, letting the facts speak for themselves.

Let us hear from Mies - (here seeing the ancient world through Weimar eyes):

"Greek temples...are significant to us as creations of a whole epoch rather than as works of individual architects. Who asks for the names of these builders? Of what significance are the fortuitous personalities of their creators? Such buildings are impersonal by their very nature. They are pure expressions of their time".(Spaeth:1935)

"Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space". (Blake:1960)

Or: "We are concerned today with questions of a general nature. The individual is losing significance...the decisive achievments in all fields are impersonal...they are part of a trend of our time toward anonymity. Our engineering structures are examples." (Spaeth :1985)

And: "Construction itself is the truest guardian of the spirit of the times because it is objective and is not affected by personal individualism or fantasy." (Blaser:1965)

On education (at I.T.T.): "To try to express individuality in architecture is a complete misunderstanding of the problem, and today most of our schools either intentionally or unintentionally let their students leave with the idea that to do a good building means to do a different building". (Blaser:teaching priciples)

Or: (reflecting L'Esprit Nouveau particularly): "I have tried to make an architecture for a technological society. I have wanted to keep everything reasonable and clear - to have an architecture that anyone could do". (Blake:1960)

CHAPTER 4: AN ANALYSIS OF MIES'S NEO-PHILOSOPHY:

Mies's Neo--philosophic Connections (Refer Fig.44)

Mies had the most extensive philosophic commitment that could be claimed by any modern architect. He had a thoroughly developed intellectual and spiritual reason for everything he did as an architect, and intended that his buildings convey these 'truths'. He was not known as an observing christian, and it is most likely that his invocation of neoplatonic theory into architecture stemmed principally from his interest in Germanic philosophy. However one can speculate, as Niemayer does, that his early catholic education - although it would not have put him directly in touch with the writings of the church fathers he liked to quote - and his early contact with a historic christian environment planted in him a disposition for the absolute and the metaphysical, and a tendency towards a comparable world view. Augustine is popularly regarded as having tried to underpin christianity with pagan philosophy, and Aquinas as having brought in the concepts of Aristotle. Mies in a curious way tried to fuse these concepts with the modern movement- to canonise it in a sense. It remains arguable whether he used, selected, emphasised and refined aspects of the modernist hegemony that fitted his philosophic bent; or, conversely, whether he selectively introduced philosophic concepts that suited modernism; in order to impress his public and clothe his interpretation of 'modern'

with respectability and authority, to legitimise it with the patina and charisma of eternal verities. Be that as it may, he produced a personalised neo-philosophy, which could be classed as a mere curiosity were it not for the fact that it became a built cult.

In the same way that he differentiated between appearance and reality in structure - making metaphorical use of 'appearance' - he was always conscious of the relation between 'seeming' and 'being'. Behind his work lurks the platonic notion of unchanging and eternal realities underlying the changing surface; realities which were, as Augustine said, if properly formulated accepted by all minds. As Mies said, "The Classicists believed that mankind needed universal solutions." Also, "I would rather be good (essential) than original".(Blake:1960)

Neoplatonic mysticism relied on the principle that the inward was superior to the outward. The material world was transcended by thought, by abstraction to universals (Plato's 'Forms'). In Mies's design, an attempt was made to reduce buildings to the platonic pure minimum evocation of the idea or, as he said, "Almost nothing". He tried to realise in building the neoplatonic concept of image reflecting archetype. Ascending degrees of being were degrees of unity, with detail (unfolding) being further from the source. In his quest for simplicity, whether

through choosing to solve only certain things and excluding some problems; or in his simplicity (some would say poverty) in structure and detailing and little division of internal space, he sought the expression of spiritual purity or a higher level of abstraction, closer to the Form or idea, or the Absolute ("Less is more").

This holistic concept flowed the other way too. One is reminded of Mies's aphorism "God is in the details"(Blake:1960), which is reminiscent of the words of the early church father John Scotus Erigena: "The One descends into the manifold of creation and reveals himself in it". Elsewhere Mies said: "The Whole, from top to bottom, with the same ideas."

Minimalism went hand in hand with asceticism - denial to attain a spiritual good which, dating from the time of Plato, was a strand still very much alive in contemporary philosophy, eg Guardini. And it chimed in well also with the modern movement trend in the arts to abstraction and economy of means.

Platonism constituted form as an object of mystical contemplation, and 'good' as the supreme beauty (or principal Form). Mies, alluding to this, specifically quoted St Augustine "Beauty is the splendour of truth". 'Beauty' and 'truth' had a special meaning for Mies, (emanating from St Augustine) and

sometimes confusing his critics. He did not ever choose to interpret these concepts in any way other than within this neoplatonic framework.

Truth had a further connotation or dimension of form, whether of the structure of a building, or the flux of culture/historical phenomena constituting an age or 'epoch'. As Mies said, "To understand an epoch is to understand its essence and not everything you see, and when this great form is fully understood, then the epoch is over..." He quoted Aquinas "Adequatio rei et intellectus" (conformity of object and intellect" in his speech on receiving the A.I.A. Gold Medal: "Only a relationship which touches the essence of the time can be real. This I call the truth relation. Truth in the sense of Thomas Aquinas as the 'adequatio rei et intellectus', or as a modern philosopher expressed it in language of today: truth is the significance of facts. Only such a relation is able to embrace the complex nature of civilisation. Only so will architecture be involved in the evolution of civilisation, and so will express the slow unfolding of its form". (see Scruton:1979 for philosophic counter arguement).

Thus Mies drew inspiration from Aquinas to link 'truth', 'form' and 'facts', - words which had a specialised meaning for him which often escaped his critics.

Elsewhere he said "Between facts and ideas there exists a true relationship, and the challenge to human beings lies in the understanding of this relationship". And also, "It is not the task of the architect to invent forms".(Spaeth:1986)

Mies believed that the 'form' or 'truth' of the contemporary epoch was 20th century technology and the scientific and engineering principles and processes underlying its operation. The correct process was to abstract back from its manifestation in the world of 'facts'to understand its workings or construction. When one got these principles right, one reached the truth or significance. This 'truth' was, then, the aesthetic or 'beauty' of the product or design.

In other words, an architect could not himself create a valid aesthetic of any kind. This to Mies was an entirely false way of working. He manifested an aesthetic truth by aligning himself with historic forces - in the case of our epoch, technological ones. Let us hear Mies speak:-

CHAPTER 4: *AN ANALYSIS OF MIES'S NEO-PHILOSOPHY:*

"Whenever technology reaches its fulfillment it becomes architecture. It is true that architecture depends on facts, but the real world of activity is in the realm of significance. Technology is far more than a method, it is a world in itself". (Spaeth:1986)

"Architecture is a historical process, it has nothing to do with the invention of interesting forms or personal whims". (Spaeth:1986)

"I believe that architecture belongs to an epoch, not to the individual". (Spaeth:1986)

"Construction is the truest guardian of the spirit of the times because it is objective and not affected by personal individualism or fantasy". (Spaeth:1986)

To align oneself with historic forces was to manifest Aquinas's 'conformity of object and intellect' and gave in the Hegelian sense the correct direction for progress. Mies: " I believe that real acceptance of the present will be the basis of the future."

CHAPTER 4: *AN ANALYSIS OF MIES'S NEO-PHILOSOPHY:*

German Idealism-Hegelianism focussed on history and logic, a history which saw the'rational is the real' and a logic which saw 'the truth is the whole'. Hegel dwelt on the 'will of an epoch' and 'intrinsic order'. Mies was to say that "Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space" and attempt to translate reason and logic into space and structure. Mies embraced Hegel's construct of Augustine and Aquinas to determine that "form" was linked to "order", and the nature of "order" was hierarchical. Mies went further to lay down that this hierarchical order was "logic" (ie Miesian logic).

To unravel the threads making up this concept one has to recall the neoplatonic concept of the universe as a plurality of spheres of being in hierarchical descending order. For Augustine there were degrees of being or of value. Universal order required the subordination of lower in this scale of being to higher, valuing each thing correctly according to its place in this order. For Aquinas the order of nature was Providentially willed - an order in which each being was to act according to its proper nature.

Mies alludes directly to the Augustinian thread when explaining his site planning of the I.I.T. Campus. "There are different stages of order. The Real order is what St Augustine said about the disposition of equal and unequal things according to their nature. Crown Hall reflects spiritual order compared to other campus buildings' practical order."(Spaeth:1986) Elsewhere he said: "I would not build a church as a movie house and I would not build a factory as a church, so we make a clear distinction what value these buildings are. There is not only a hierarchy of values, there is a hierarchy of works too."(Shankland:1959)

In a remark with Hegelian echoes Mies said "The long path from material through function to creative work has only one goal: to create order." It is important to realise that while living in the philosophically rich milieu of Weimar Germany, Mies was giving particularised interpretations of such common notions as 'order' or 'logic'. He chose the German classicist-Hegelian framework, purposefully excluding other philosophies and interpretations.

CHAPTER 4: AN ANALYSIS OF MIES'S NEO-PHILOSOPHY:

Order was very much in the Weimar mind generally. World War 1 was both a cause and a consequence of a flood of social, technical and historical change. The threat of chaos was real. Many personal accounts of the Weimar period convey an acute sense of the social precariousness of the times and a feeling of disillusion and despair. Mies was born in autocratic Prussia and despite his later association with left-leaning liberals and internationalists he found no spiritual home in the uneasiness and murkiness of expressionism, dada and other conjectural contemporary philosophies. He had a religio-psychological need for order and clarity, almost as a life raft while adrift in the swim of diverse ideologies in Weimar Germany.

CHAPTER 4: AN ANALYSIS OF MIES'S NEO-PHILOSOPHY:

The analogy of 'The City of God' written as a result of witnessing the sack of Rome could not have escaped an Augustinian disciple in the turmoil of the Weimar republic. The current of authoritarianism (including predestination) which had flowed through platonism and neoplatonism and had its Hegelian link in German thinking was reassuring. Many of Mies's aphorisms carry an emotional nuance of the elect and the damned, believers and unbelievers. He rejected speculation and, as Blake has said (Blake:1960), considered debate a waste of time; logic led to truth and truth led to beauty. There was nothing to discuss. He took a cue from Augustine and Aquinas in his faithlike insulation against criticisms and other viewpoints. As they too had lived in times of turbulent polemic he was to invoke them while he lived in the turbulent years of the republic.

[illegible] in the scientific and technical sense was admired and emulated in the arts and architecture of the modern movement. Its objectivity permitted Mies to weave his wish for order into a philosophy of clarity and reason. In other words, he added a further twist and intensification of his own, the classical Hegelian. He produced an intellectual reasoning or justification for his personalised procedures, clothing them in a hermeneutic order of a particular kind.

The escape from chance and arbitrariness had a teleological end aim. Order was a matter of significance, directed towards higher ends. Mies was also fond of the word 'clarity'. This rather open term is demystifiable when one grasps it as containing within itself and referring back to his total chosen frame of reference (see fig.44). "Don't confuse simplicity with easy," he said. "I love simplicity for reasons of its clarity." This statement can be puzzling unless placed within Mies's framework. 'Simple' did not mean easy to do or understand. It meant, rather, closer to the Absolute. Therefore, in his terms, 'simplicity' meant the work was correctly directed or aimed, in terms of its significance.

Clarity, in this light, was obtainable through the operation of 'reason'. Aquinas had maintained that man's proper nature was rational, and Mies quoted Aquinas: "Reason is the first principle of all human work". The operation of Miesian reason proceeded in a particularised sense inductively. Reason or understanding was dedicated: it could be neither random nor self-directional, but was the servant of a deliberate purpose. As Mies remarked about open speculation "It consumes rather than directs our energies." Within this framework the task of reason was to select or order facts or the empirical into significance. "Education" said Mies "must lead us from chance and arbitrariness to rational clarity and intellectual order".

Clarity was the result of the correct process of ordering, towards the correct goal, based on what were seen as correct (rational) principles.

As Mies said: "We have science, we have technology, we have industrialisation. All are accepted as part of the progressive existence. The question is how to guide them in a direction that is beneficial to us.' (Spaeth:1986)

Or, most oracularly, "You can talk about civilisation when you have order in the material world. To achieve this order there must be unity of action, and there cannot be unity of action without creative thought. In this respect I am convinced of the need for clarity in both thought and action. Without clarity there can be no understanding, and without understanding there can be no direction, only confusion."(Spaeth:1986)

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

This chapter does not aim to give an inclusive description or evaluation of Mies's work, about which there exists a vast literature, but to render a cursory examination of some aspects of the actual building work - a little bit of geography - in the service of understanding his ideas. His philosophic themes need to be borne in mind - the unique personal way he used or distorted them; or selectively used them or purported to be using them while doing something else; or how in any event a philosophic validation did or did not help.

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES ARCHITECTURE:

A: THE CLASSICAL PHASE:

(The Bismark monument project; [illegible]-oller Mueller House; Riel House; Perls House.) (see Figs. 6 & 7)

Mies demonstrates his ability to work fastidiously and conscientiously within a tradition. He tries to absorb and understand Schinkel's philosophy and detailing. He demonstrates all-round competence and a feeling for good proportion, with an ability to capitalise on the circumstantial difficulty. (eg the ground slope in the Riehl House.) Mies was familiar with traditional planning norms, which had reached a high level of development by the end of the 19th century. He supervised Behrens' German Embassy for St Petersburg,(fig 4) and his own Perls house showed he knew how this planning tradition translated into fine building.

Unlike Frank Lloyd Wright and Lutyens who imaginatively developed extended personal versions of this planning tradition, Mies later chose to ignore these principles and invent the unique 'open plan',(see fig 24.) only to be criticised later for causing furnishing, privacy and accoustic problems.

B: EARLY WEIMAR:

a. (Glass office buildings on the Freiderichstrasse)
(see Figs 9 & 10)

Highly prophetic inventive notion for its time. The massing however still limited to an 'extruded plan'.

It is a sad irony that Mies van der Rohe's dream of faceted glass buildings in the 1920's was to remain by and large an impractical dream till ten years after his death, until the manufacturers of napalm were to produce the 'silicone miracle'.

b. (Brick House, Rosa Luxembourg-Karl Leibknecht Memorial)
(see figs. 11 & 12.)

Shows the distinct influence of 'De Stijl' and also the beginnings of the theory that was to become a Miesian design hallmark - the use of overlapping, interlocking 'spatial' arms.

c. (Wolf House, Lange House, Esters and Krefeld Houses.)
(see fig 14)

Controlled brick detailing with modern movement fenestration - landscaping minimal. Demonstrated here is the almost obsessional care and significance afforded to detailing, which assumes almost more importance than form-making, leaving the impact and feeling of the overall result rather bland.

C: LATE WEIMAR:

(Barcelona Pavilion, Tugendhat House, Courtyard houses)
(: 7-18, 21 & 24.)

a. The planning of the Tugendhat House is a typical example of flowing modern movement planning. The opulence of the interior has often been commented on. It began to mark Mies's 'love affair' with expensive finishes. It also illustrates the first use of the star shaped column motif, that was to be repeated later.

b. The Barcelona Pavilion combined opulent finishes with a special Miesian innovation which was to use space as the 'de Stijl like' interlocking arms, between the planar forms. Compare the brick house of 1923 where the rooms and spaces are separated by 'solid wall' interlocking arms.

Flat slabs, even marble ones, that register as 'planes in space' don't waterproof easily. It will be interesting to see how this problem is handled in a permanent way now that the Barcelona Pavilion has been rebuilt.

c. The courtyard house projects at the Bauhaus illustrate developmental work which included the flow of space between the room dividers as an 'open plan' arrangement. The inside-outside relation to the courtyards is the first example of articulated landscaping. This phase is also characterised by the drawing technique utilising stark charcoal line drawings offset by colourful Braque collage murals.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

D: AMERICA:

a. THE ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS:
(see Fig 25.)

The site layout is an attempt to translate the spatial experiments of the courtyard houses into an urban planning scale. The terrain of the campus at I.I.T. is flat, located in a depressed area of the city, with main roads flanking it; a typical planning problem with many historic precedents from the Renaissance architects to Lutyens. These precedents in planning for this scale and topography are ignored to the detriment of the design. A visit to this campus recently reveals that the use of modular planning imposes additional limitations without contributing much. The 'space slipping past building' theory is too self-involved to offer anything more, and the campus will always suffer.

This site planning is an example of how doctrinal guidance (here an Augustinian doctrine), is not sufficient to determine good architecture. The majestic grand wide steps of Crown Hall are forlorn and cracked and one entrance is no longer used because of the inevitable change in planning use. They also look very exaggerated for the occasional tourist and Miss devotee.

The academic flirtation with steel and brick detailing is interesting but inappropriate for the size and spans of the buildings involved. The buildings and spaces between them remain dull despite all the polemic.

b. HIGH RISE: (See figs 37, 40 & 41)

Here we find Mies developing the very important attribute of containing, simplifying and structuring the client-brief (inducing new real estate perceptions). It is this relationship with the client, and his ability to achieve control in a profit-seeking speculative arena fraught with legislative controls, that is one of Mies van der Rohe's underrated major achievements and a remarkable use of neo-philosophical clout.

By and large these high rise buildings do not produce any detail planning or structural advancements. His work to achieve workable curtain walling and cladding refinements was historically innovative and significant. Ironically, the long term value of this work might lie in the proliferation of the genre to many cities, and the soul searching urban planning reassessment that followed.

E: MOTIF: (see Fig 42, 26, 29, 38)

Mies is successful in utilising recurring design motifs: the star shaped column; the raised podium plinth and extended low flight of stairs (supposedly derived from Schinkel); and the recessed re-entrant corner column.

This 'themology' - the same ideas used in different projects - conveys a messianic 'voice'; it reinforces the idea that one has invented the best forms, or unearthed fundamental truths that others should use. It is of value to pontificators to have a series of image-building logos.

F: URBAN PLANNING: (see fig 34.)

Miesian urban planning ideas are best illustrated at Lafayette Park, Detroit. The design is successful because of the many mistakes it could have made and does not make. Pedestrians are separated from vehicles and the majority of buildings are low rise with a passing relationship to the external garden space. The buildings themselves remain bland and undistinctive, and their positioning somewhat hesitant. The tradition and expertise in landscaping that exists in America contributes strongly to the success of the project. The praise heaped on this project by Peter and Alison Smithson must be a sad comment on the state of urban design as they know it. The lack of 'private external space' in a low rise development will in all probability give rise to future user transformations to the detriment of the schemes homogenuity.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIESS ARCHITECTURE:

6: STRUCTURE INDUCED DESIGN:

a. (Farnsworth House, Biccardi building, National Gallery - Berlin.) (see Fig 42, 31, 36, 38 & 39))

The Biccardi Building (1958) in Santiago, Cuba was a precursor of the National Gallery in Berlin. The massive coffered 2-way roof slab with wide spans perched on star shaped piloti offered wide cantilever overhangs and was to be constructed utilising reinforced concrete. Mies spoke of the 'plastic possibilities' of concrete but would not be side-tracked by this potential. This pre-conceived design vision was to re-emerge in steel with the National Gallery Berlin. Here column spacing and the column to beam junctions are designed to exploit the visual, not the structural qualities of steel. The 'high-tech' visual image was very successful (and continues to be), but the juxtaposition of steel sections and large glass areas requires complicated and expensive detailing to achieve a simple junction, and thus the clean look. The interiors have too much light and too little insulation. It is costly to have God in the details.
It is interesting to compare the differences in proportion and massing of concrete (Biccardi) and steel (National Gallery)- both have an overpowering strength quite oblivious of the building'

intended function.

b. (Crown Hall, Kantor Drive-in, Chicago Convention Centre, Museum project etc.) (see figs 29, 30, 31 & 37)

The wish to achieve unobstructed large spaces led to the development of the over-roof portal truss or beams and roof space frames. These solutions are Engineering fantasies which often exaggerate the need for flexibility and do not recognise the inherent need to articulate space. The major activities of the National Gallery, and Crown Hall take place in the basement and the voluminous space under large expensive spanning structure is largely decorative.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

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c. (Barcelona Chair) (see figs 19 & 33)

The Barcelona chair reposes in ante-rooms throughout the world as a badge of perfection. People are unconcerned that the elegant machine look can only be achieved by hand grinding in a painstaking way, or by the lack of bracing that will cause the steel legs to eventually creep.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

MIES VAN DER ROHE AND CONSTRUCTION:

"Ruskin had quite romantic views about art, he says you know, every decoration should be thrown out if it does not support the construction, and look what he did himself. It is very strange that someone can have a clear idea and work in a different way, because he is a son of his times".
(Shankland:1959- interview BBC 3rd Programme)

We too find Mies most oblique when we consider his buildings and his attitudes to construction.

Mies had in his early years produced some neo-classical designs (eg the house for Madame Kroller-Muller and his entry for a Bismark monument), but by the middle 20's he was clearly immersed in and part of the modern movement rhetoric about construction and style. "These pro-crustean mutilators" as Mumford was to refer to them later were to lop off all "decoration" in the notion that they could invent everything anew, new planning, new forms, new everything. (Mumford:1958)

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

The debate about honesty of construction and new forms being generated by the new technologies surged around Mies in the early Weimar and his later teaching years. We now see with hindsight that, as with previous styles, this was not a rational insight, but rather a modernist preferred image. The tone of Mies's statements paid homage to this polemic.

Whenever technology reaches its fulfilment it becomes architecture. It is true that architecture depends on facts, but the real world of activity is in the realm of significance. Technology is [illegible] than a method, it is a world itself. (Space, ... ed)

Mies is squarely in the modern movement's celebration of construction and technology. His pronouncements however sound like a complex musical chord alluding to overtones of his philosophical schema.

It is probable therefore that certain paradoxes in Mies's work in this regard were deliberate but no less perplexing in the following ways:

a. He was aware that the idealistic architect of that era spoke of 'honest interpretation of structure'. If he was no apostle of this doctrine he made little effort to repudiate it, on the contrary many of his statements on construction, while containing ambiguities, fostered the notion of honest and truthful expression of materials and structural forms. While there may be allusions to poetic expression of structural form, these are located generally among statements of appropriateness and honesty of purpose.

b. Mies of all the modernists (who rejected a prior historicist preoccupation) harked back to a past, to Schinkel in particular who was neo-classical, and to universal truths.

c. Nearly all his buildings contain obvious examples of 'structural dishonesty' or of structural priorities being relegated in the quest for a special purpose or effect. (see figs 26, 29, 31 & 33)
Or of cases where structure was applied decoration even though structural reasons could be adduced. "We looked at it on the model without the steel sections (I beams) attached to the corner columns and it did not look right. That is the real reason. Now the other reason is that the steel section was needed to stiffen the plate which covers the corner column so this plate would not ripple, and also we needed it for strength when the sections were hoisted into place. Now of course that is a very good reason - but the other one is the real reason."(Blaser:1965)

d. His charcoal drawings and his form preferences may have been sparse,(see fig 8) but his choice of finishes and textures in the Tugendhat House, the Barcelona Pavilion and the later Seagrams building were sumptuous and highly decorative. High class and expensive finishes were sanctioned as legitimate decoration by some of the modernist theorists.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

Mies's statements on construction are easily (and perhaps deliberately) misinterpreted and must be seen in the context of his neo-religious philosophy -when Mies says "God is in the details", he was not referring to the deification of constructional elements, but rather to his wholeist and idealist preferred form of clarity and order, ie the details should reinforce and support this visual (Miesian) imagery of clarity and order.

When Mies says that he is not interested in the "invention of new forms", he is saying that the forms should be part of a whole family of forms making one composite whole - rather than the 'free invention of form' such as may have been claimed by expressionism etc. Clearly there were forms that Mies didn't like, perhaps because they did not belong to some overall order, these are the forms he considered to be a needless invention. Mies of course also invented forms or re-structured forms to suit his purposes but considered his inventions to be legitimate, being part of an overall design or intention. This viewpoint was expressed as the need to refine existing forms rather than indulge in the exhuberance of new form making. This control in design may have been a refining process but also collected around him acolytes who could be made to believe that dull was beautiful because it accorded with this Miesian philosophy.

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

If there were verbal paradoxes inherent in Mies's aphorisms and statements on construction and design, there was certainly no mistaking the tone and this tone was 'honesty'. His honesty was appealing and deeper than other peoples honesty. If it wasn't honesty of construction in its narrowest interpretation, it was honesty of a pseudo-religious order or 'pseudo honesty'. This baffling stance was to misdirect many a Miesian critic, then and now.

We have discussed what Mies might not have been doing or what he might have pretended to be doing, but what in fact was he doing?

He was creating a Miesian 'constructivist iconography'.
It was a language or semiotics of constructional honesty.
Throughout Mies's work we see a pallete of ideas which he re-uses again and again - the planar wall slipping past the end of another, the straight portal or virindeel frame acting like a suspension bridge, the delight in the RSJ section and its use as a decorative motif etc. (see fig 42)

This constructivist iconography added up to a series of preferred picture frames which could hold most end-user variables, and the philosophy dictated that the contained parts should be consistent with the containing frame.

This system of design had many benefits. For one, architects and designers always worried about their creative potency could work within a framework that required less innovation, a sort of adherence to new orders. Design became respectable, businesslike and less arty.

Simple engineering norms, (eg truss and bracing illustrated in most textbooks) were given spiritual value. Divine absolution was there for those who were simple and straightforward and also regrettably for those who were dull and less imaginative.

It is not surprising that the Miesian design and construction formula proved very contagious. Architects found comfort in applying the formula, engineers were transformed into aesthetes, the property developer and the component manufacturer could make profits and be god-like as well and the American public discerned a breath of puritan fresh air in their over-chaotic cities.

The Miesian 'system' could be and was applied to almost any situation, from an art gallery to drive-in restaurant or school of architecture, and contradicts his well known statement that:

CHAPTER 6. AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

"I would not build a church as a movie house and I would not build a factory as a church, so we make a clear distinction what value these buildings are. There is not a only a hierarchy of values, there is a hierarchy of works too."
(Shankland:1959)

Adherence to Mies's formula became like the use of a p ern book, like the use of orders in a style. As a style it had many virtues but also certain significant failings. The building were easily described in 2-dimensions which was easy to conceive on the drawing board and the to translate into practice. It did not facilitate the creatio dex 3-dimensional or sculptural form or transition betw ces as contained in say Le Corbusier's architecture.

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

H: SUMMARY:

The work of Mies van der Rohe regardless of philosophical origins, argument and counter argument is characterised by the following attributes -

1. It remains empirical, contextual and with problem solving end goals.

2. It is structurally generated and induced.

3. It is concerned with the assemblage of components.

4. The blandness and asceticism is stylistic.

5. It utilises expensive finishes and processes to denote excellence.

However, notwithstanding inconsistencies in his philosophic approach and the questionableness of this philosophy particularly as it influenced his followers, his work does demonstrate the following distinct virtues:-

CHAPTER AN EVALUATION OF MIESS ARCHITECTURE

MIES'S VIRTUES

1. The buildings, especially the photographs of them, continue to have a profound artistic quality.

2. Mies had an instinctive insight into form and symbol that would have prestigious and popular appeal.

3. Careful consideration and devotion to detail are pre-requisites for any architecture. Miss's care and attention to detail formed the foundation upon which he could build his theories.

4. A straightforward architectural solution requires the minimal intrusion to be a good solution.

5. Much of what Mies said has enduring relevance, and should not be automatically discounted if some of his ideas are now questioned.

6. Mies was prepared to be innovative in incorporating usages and spin-offs from engineering and other disciplines.

7. Mies was prepared to focus his effort and talent on 'speculative' or any building type or market.

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

THE CRITICS EXAMINED

For and Against

It is worth presenting a sample of the extensive literature evaluating Mies - both positive and negative - to give a flavour of the type of discourse surrounding such a seminal figure. The purpose is to examine the evaluations rather than the works themselves.

For example, the tributes to Mies:

Siqfried Gideon:

Mies's great integrity of form exploited the essence of modern technology.

Werner Blaser: (Blaser:1985)

Mies recognised structure as the basis of his construction and raised it to a level of an art. There was construction in the way Mies thought, acted and talked. His aim was to evolve a clear simple structure, amidst the confusion of the eternally new in

which we live.

Professor William H. Jordi: (Jordi:1958)

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe probably had the greatest impact on the architecture of the large 20th century structures in the United States, his adopted country, and abroad. He was recognised as the high priest of the so-called international style - the unadorned steel framed glass box that looms as visibly in Nairobi, Tokyo and Caracas as in Berlin and Chicago. Mies's language must be judged firstly by looking at those buildings closest to Mies in that they both frankly resemble his work and partake in some measure of its quality. Thus to mention only the familiar vanguard, there is the Eerio Saarinen's General Motors Technical Centre. There are the best business buildings of the sizable firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, as inspired by the leadership of Gordon Bunshaft. There are the suburban houses of Phillip Johnson (who wrote the first book and collaborated with Mies on Seagrams

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

Mies's neoclassicism was only partly apprehended in the manner in which he conceived his architectural vocabulary. He was also profoundly neoclassical in the way he squeezed different types of experience from his universal image. If his emotional range was narrow, it was the very narrowness which made his point. He did not turn somersault to create a new experience. A change of material, a shift of proportions, an adjustment in profile, a realignment of his simple masses and - with "almost nothing" - what was, becomes something new, whilst yet remaining essentially the same.

Peter and Alison Smithson: (Smithson:1973)

Mies's immortality, neutralising skin and open space structure of the urban layout. The essentialist use of materials - the thinness of brick. Lafayette Park is certainly the most civilized dwelling this quarter of the century.

CHAPTER 6: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

From criticisms, when the tide of almost universal praise began to turn, we take the following:- (my comment follows between brackets)

1. Frank Lloyd Wright had some outspoken reservations, which reflected social and political differences. He stated that the "international style is totalitarianism". "These Bauhaus architects ran from political totalitarianism in Germany to what may seem as their own totalitarianism in art here in America"..."Why do I defy and distrust such 'internationalism' as I do communism? Because both must by their nature do this levelling in the name of civilisation"..."The promoters of the international style are not wholesome people". He also suggested that Mies had invented a "new classicism" and described his work as "flat-chested".

(Frank Lloyd Wright was commenting in the McCarthy anti-communist witch hunt era and saw himself as the propagandist for architectural individuality. His comments do not reveal any deeper understanding of Mies's architecture.)

2. The editor of the magazine 'House Beautiful' became embroiled in an ideological dispute with Mies van der Rohe, with 'House Beautiful' championing the tastes of the man in the street. (Gordon:1953)

(The magazine was contemptuously dismissed by Mies and his modern movement puritans. The issues of this dispute look different today, with a rediscovery by architectural theorists of 'historicist' motif in 'kitsch' and a less judgemental attitude to 'popular' taste.)

3. Dr Edith Farnsworth as a disillusioned client was to say "I thought you could animate a predetermined classic form like this with your own presence. I wanted to do something meaningful - and all I got was glib false sophistication" "Less is not more, it is simply less".

(Dr Farnsworth's belated insights became clouded by a fees dispute (which she lost), and the fact that she must have been such a willing cohort initially. If there was a lack of sophistication in the exercise she certainly contributed to it.)

4. Other critics such as Lewis Mumford (Mumford:1958) were to write: "Since the 17th century we have been living in the age of system makers, and what is worse system appliers, the procrustean mutilators of life who lop off its essential irregularities to suit a single set of principles and ideal ends. Utilitarianism with its crass mechanistic notions of 'efficiency', 19th century utilitarianism, happens to be alive and well in the 20th century under the guise of technocratic scientism. Mies van der Rohe used the facilities offered by steel and glass to create elegant monuments of nothingness. They had the dry style of machine forms without the contents. His own chaste taste gave these hollow glass shells a crystalline purity of form; but they existed alone in the platonic world of his imagination and had no relation to site, climate, insulation, function or internal activity."

(If according to Mumford Mies's architecture had such little relevance or appropriateness, it is surprising that his imagery, ideas about space and particularly his skin details for high rise buildings were found to be useful precedents taken up and used by so many architects throughout the world. Mumford also does not give Mies credit for having identified a slick high tech imagery which has had and continues to have world wide appeal.)

5. Robert Venturi: (Venturi:1966) "Rationalisations for simplification are still current. Paul Rudolph has clearly stated Mies's point of view: 'All problems can never be solved...indeed it is characteristic of the 20th century that architects are highly selective in determining which problems they wish to solve...Mies for instance makes wonderful buildings only because he ignores aspects of the buildings. If he solved more problems his buildings would be less potent'. When modern architects righteously abandoned ornament on building, they unconsciously designed buildings that were ornament. In promoting space and articulation over symbolism and ornament, they distorted the whole building into a duck. They substantiated the innocent practice of applied decoration on a conventional shed and the rather cynical and expensive distortions of the programme to promote a duck; mini-megastructures are mostly ducks. It is time to re-evaluate the once horrifying statment of John Ruskin that architecture is

decoration of construction, but we should append the warning of Pugin: it is allright to decorate construction but never to construct decoration.

(On Seagrams): "In modern architecture we have operated too long under the restrictions of unbending rectangular forms supposed to have grown out of the technical requirements of the frame and mass produced curtain wall. Kahn once said that the Seagram building was a beautiful lady with hidden corsets. Mies allows nothing to get in the way of consistency and order, of the point, the line and the plane of his complete pavilions. If Wright camouflages his circumstantial exceptions, Mies excludes them: less is more. Since 1940 Mies has not used a circumstantial diagonal, and in his court house project of 1930 the diagonal is the function of the free plan rather than a condition of the circumstantial.

The 'doctrine' bemoans complexity and justifies exclusion for expressive purposes. It does permit the architect to be highly selective in determining which problems he wishes to solve - he can exclude important considerations only at the risk of separating architecture from the experience of life and the needs of society.

Less may have been more, but the 'I' section of Mies's fire resistant columns, for instance, is as complex ornamentally as the applied pilaster on a Renaissance pier. In fact 'less' is 'more work'.

Where simplicity cannot work, simpleness results. Blatant simplification means bland architecture. Less is a bore."

Venturi falls into the trap- trapped by a superficial understanding of Mies's philosophies. Mies would have acknowledged the complexity of his details, and he most certainly saw the 'ornamental' in his buildings. He even admitted to using (and the need to use) structure ornamentally. In referring to 'essentials', to various forms of 'architectural ascetism', Mies is actually referring to a type of order, an order of priorities if you like - in fact a Hegel'.n order, which was supposed to be a way of seeing the problem, of ordering it, ie simplifying it

and thereby taming it. Mies, Rudolph, and all other architects know that "all problems can never be solved", and most clients' briefs are a hopeless conglomerate of conflicting needs. Mies's skill lay in using his idiosyncratic logic to impose a restraint and discipline on the client brief to enable him to make the most of a straighforward solution. Venturi is too emotional and self assured in support of the cause he espouses to comprehend Mies's use and handling of the concept less is more. Venturi like Mies falls into the trap of using glib aphorisms that are more impressive than convincing.

Venturi states that poet after poet has chosen paradox and ambiguity rather than plain discursive simplicity. It is not enough for a poet to analyse his experience, breaking it up into parts as a scientist does - his task is finally to unify his experience - he must dramatise the oneness of his experience, even though paying tribute to diversity. Venturi might hardly care to admit it but the above theses is almost precisely what Mies is attempting to do.

6. Bernard Rudofsky: (Rudofsky:1969) "Tall buildings are a pedestrian bane. Their acres of outer walls deflect winds downwards, multiplying their force, making walking on the windward side a torment. This funneling action has been known ever since the first high-rise buildings made their appearance. More than sixty years ago a guidebook called attention to New York's Flat Iron Buildings (a mere dwarf by today's standards) with its "curious effect in increasing the violence of winds at its apex, so that during a storm people are sometimes whirled off the sidewalks". Since then air turbulence in the city's canyons has been magnified, and artificial squalls have been buffeting the man in the street. As if to mock his plight, architects have placed 'plazas' for his pleasure at the foot of their man made mountains. I. the process of simplification of architectural problems we might often create irrelevant solutions."

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:

(It is very fashionable to show Seagrams, Dominion Bank Towers Toronto, etc and to blame Mies for this urban blight. High rise buildings existed (as Rudofsky admits) long before Mies, and many other architects were equally culpable. The real culprit of course is urban zoning and planning regulations and the high cost of real estate that makes the high rise inevitable and even dictates the overall form and preferred building envelope, given the underlying enabling technology existing in the 20th century.

Mies has attracted notoriety in this regard berause of his skill in producing an elegant solution, where most architects have even failed at that. Mies of course did not recognise the inherent defects of the high rise, which later generations are so concerned about (but for which they still have no answers). This building type is today all too often dismissed as speculative commercial stuff. Mies must be given credit for having stepped into this most compromising arena to produce an architecture that accorded with some aspects of his (slippery) philosophy, satisfied the client and is still admired today.

7. Manfredo Tafuri (Tafuri:1976):-

"In their absolute asemantic quality the Seagrams building in New York and the Federal Centre in Chicago are objects that 'exist by their own death', only in this way saving themselves from their certain failure.

(On Farnsworth) "Mies's conception of space as a horizontally infinite layer where staircases never rise in a two storey volume, and indeed where two-storey volumes do not exist."

(Bad 'semantic' buildings also have a tombstone-like quality, the sort of over-ornate ridiculous tombstones that are unintentionally funny. Tafuri's comment on Farnsworth is an interesting observation but not necessarily a criticism.)

9. Peter Collins: "The lesson of literary sincerity is when an artist becomes so priggishly aware of his own sincerity that it dominates his work, other values of equal importance become pushed into the background; while no-one will deny that the architect must have integrity to achieve greatness, this integrity must be incidental to his desire to please, to create environments which will give genuine pleasure to those for whom they are built."

(Mies would have agreed with Peter Collins' remarks, which are the sort of truism that every architect subscribes to without being aware of his own abuses.)

9. The most remarkable about-face in architectural evaluation occurs with Peter Blake who in the 'Master Builder' series (Blake:1960) quoting liberally from Mies wrote:-

(a) The most important quality of Mies's work is its apparent timelessness.

History is of course on Mies's side; no-one remembers if the Parthenon worked well.

The most self effacing architect of his epoch, the only architect modest enough to create an anonymous architecture.

(b) Mies began to think in terms of structural honesty and clarity; 'Less is more' - Mies a man of few well chosen words. 'Skin and bone construction'. 'Everything depends on the use of the material not the material itself'. 'The need of our epoch - the mass need for shelter, and the free individual human need'. Mies was never tempted to wander into the Disneyland of architecture. There are laws that demand responsibility, clarity and intellectual order.

(c) Miss felt that if you are an architect you might as well treat your site architecturally, rather than let your site

swallow you up in untrammeled contours.

Then in 1975 the same Peter Blake was to write in the Atlantic Magazine (followed later by his book 'Form Follows Fiasco')

(a) Nothing we were taught by our betters in architectural schools has stood the test of time. There is a great temptation for a professional man to commit oneself to the dogma of one's youth, and then to build one's entire work on that dogmatic foundation. The radical dogma is likely to make you feel young and daring even after you have become middle aged and timid.

(b) Structure is not the ethic of architecture; most buildings today are shaped more significantly by plumbing, wiring and air conditioning than 'skin and bones'. Attempts to express structure have made buildings expensive. In a real world all glass buildings leave something to be desired, inside and across the street.

(c) The ground floors of our buildings need to be tightly structured spaces not pilotis or wind-swept plazas.

(d) High rise buildings are a disaster to live in (Prutt-Ingoe, St Louis) - a monument to the failure of the well intentioned idealistic planners of the 1950's.

(Peter Blake's prose is emotional; his later criticisms contain as much debateable comment as his book of praise in 1960. Glass buildings continue to be fashionable, utilising special glasses with insulation and reflection properties and new synthetic sealants. The debate on high-rise is not over as the world struggles to limit time and energy waste in suburban communication networks.)

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIESS ARCHITECTURE

The Critics Criticised.

The modern movement is blamed on Mies. But the modern movement was part of the 20th century's technological revolution arising from the industrial revolution and urbanisation, which brought about immense changes in population and standards. The sheer scale and volume of building has set it aside as a special period in the history of building. Its theories were formulated in the 19th century, and all architects of the present century have been obliged to become involved in some way. Mies tried to give it respectability, religio-philosophic justification, imagery and beauty. To blame Mies for the modern movement is like blaming the ship's purser for the sinking of the Titanic.

On the whole, criticisms of Mies do not appear to be scholarly; they are generally as superficial as the aphorisms they criticise, and as such do not reveal sufficient insight into Mies's philosophies. Criticism often proceeds by allegiance, taking the fo . of one set of fashionable ideas disparaging another.

Mies had such an articulate philosophy, it is surprising that critics do not seem to have come to grips with it more. What level of philosophic discussion was there? Were his ideas carefully scrutinised and assessed? Were they related to broader levels of cultural discourse? Did critics examine their own philosophies?

The picture seems to be that critics looked - with whatever view they had - at Mies's building solutions only, and then advocated or hinted at other building solutions, based on other philosophies which are also not explicit, but are there all the same. In this way architectural critics, for or against, are ideological.

The entire modern movement was underpinned in fact by ideology - the ideology of 'realism', of which Mies was certainly the most strikingly articulate proponent. According to this doctrine, there is something concrete and objective 'out there', something technically and socially determined, which is 'reality'. When Mies says that "architecture should be related only to the most significant forces in the civilisation", he contends that his form-making grows without a gap from this 'reality' - that there is an unbroken continuum joining it to himself as thinking subject. Its content or 'function' determines form.

CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE

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CHAPTER 5: AN EVALUATION OF MIESS ARCHITECTURE

Mies tried to give the impression that correct architectural design was somehow 'natural' or 'logical' - that he, the architect, had merely taken dictation from a truth-telling force in society (in this case technology and the social relations surrounding it). Truth and beauty were attained in this way ("truth is the significance of facts"), and not by the inventing of an imaginative subject ("it is not the task of the architect to invent forms") (Blake:1960).

He would obviously concede, if pressed, that he designed a building, but the doctrine he personified tried to prevent that question from arising. He proceeded as though his particular form or style arose so spontaneously from the "spirit of the age" that the gap between it and his style seemed to be closed. His own imagination and creation was presented as reality.

Even if we believe that an age has a spirit, we are not bound to believe that the only thing creative work can do with the spirit is to exemplify it.

CHAPTER 6: *AN EVALUATION OF MIES'S ARCHITECTURE:*

Mies was trying to gain for his architectural preferences something of the authority of eternal verity. Ideology when presented as truth in this way *conferred* design power. This would be merely of academic interest if an abstract debate was all that was at stake, - if these aesthetic principles had not become buildings.

PHILOSOPHY AS A DESIGN METHOD

People who commission buildings spend a good deal of money, sometimes more than they possess or are ever likely to earn - this is a terrifying responsibility, and they choose an architect who by repute knows it all, and who will inspire confidence and support. Sometimes for smaller buildings such as houses the client's ambition is for 'self expression' and justification for his inner whims. The philosophic talk in this latter instance serves to tell the client that he 'is' the profound thinker he thought he was.

The Nietzschian aphorism is the ideal balm for the insecure client, especially when couched in a manner that alludes to divine sanction and endorsement.
Paradoxes can be cleverly stated, reversed if necessary, and all this clever talk can sometimes take place without really probing the meanings of what is being said.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: PHILOSOPHY AS A DESIGN METHOD:

Every momentous stage in the building is further endorsed by some clever rhetoric. -"God is in the details" said Mies.(Blake:1960) Mies went as far as giving Greco-German philosophic meaning to ordinary words such as 'beauty', 'truth', 'form', ''facts', 'order', 'clarity' and 'reason'. This could be a slippery act, as he would talk about 'structural honesty' in the ordinary sense of the word when it suited him, then was metaphysical when trapped by some inconsistency.

Mrs Phyllis Bronfman Lambert (daughter of the chairman of the Seagrams Corporation), was supposed to have done a great deal of research before choosing Mies van der Rohe.(See Fig.40) Her choice may have been correct; but if so was correct for reasons other than his profound architectural philosophy. If some of Mies's buildings were undoubted successes and have a special quality and presence, this may be due simply to his empirical attitude to problem-solving and his fastidiousness at every level, coupled to an undoubted design flair. His philosophies may have won him clients or even inspired him to perform as a good architect, but they are too spurious and suspect to be given the credit. Philosophy may have been the justification for giving the buildings the attention they required. Good architects may perform well for the wrong reasons.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: PHILOSOPHY AS A DESIGN METHOD:

An examination of the Mies story is a circumstantial examination of one of the four 'Greats' of this century's architects to reveal an example of the integration of philosophy and architecture, an uncovering of how the 'mind-engine' drives the applied art and science. The Miesian formula is no longer fashionable today (although it persists and is still much alive). But in a world that is grappling with its own perplexity of postmodernism, such an interplay of ideas and building form must be a classroom lesson.

Mies rocketed to fame after Phillip Johnson's first book of discovery in 1947. His fame has therefore largely been an American media creation as well. German Hegelian idealism might have died on the beaches of Normandy and in the streets of Stalingrad until Mies invoked it in architectural terms to give seer-like vision to an uncynical American building public. It would not matter that the think tank of architectural criticism and philosophy was located in America, in American publications or their European counterparts, if these contributions were multi-faceted, all embracing and critically incisive (they are now improving). This suggests more criticism and a richer level of philosophical insights would be beneficial to the interplay of architectural theories.

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For example Roger Scruton (Scruton:1979) states that the Hegelian philosophy of history has been attacked, particularly by Karl Popper but that only very recently has its consequences for art and architecture been critically examined. He makes the very interesting observation that Burckhardt 'steeped in Hegelian metaphysics' had a pupil called Wolfflin who passed it on to Frankl who passed it on to Giedion and Pevsner- thus establishing the orthodoxy of English and American architectural scholarship. Mies in fact could rely on establishment architectural academia who would be uncritcal and well disposed towards the rationalisations and explanations he offered.

It is significant to note that many of the the publications and articles on Mies written in uncritical allegiance have been by colleages (Hilbersheimer, Blaser, Drexler, Johnson etc.) or by pupils (Carter, Lambert, Dansforth, Dearstyne etc.) - a sort of mutual admiration society whereas circumstantially, by virtue of Mies and the Modern Movements ability to excise large tracts of architectural knowledge, these self same students might themselves only have had a 'stunted' education at best.

Mies and the modern movement in their propaganda for special causes, omitted so many other architectural ideas. Corbusier at the height of fame was asked in Britain what he thought of Edwin Lutyens and his reply was 'Qui est-il' (who is he). It is precisely this sort of arrogance that has robbed the architectural devotee of a proper education, and this ignorance becomes manifest in the buildings that are produced, whether in postmodern parody or reflecting glass walls. In many much vaunted buildings and their associated glossy publications we often see ignorant planning and form development.

Some will argue that good planning and form development are linked to old fashioned methodologies which are now being deliberately rejected. There are however isolated rare recent examples of a successful integration, to demonstrate that the absence of good planning is mostly due to ignorance.
Mies' open plan is now rejected for being inappropriate for human needs and climatic considerations. It certainly was an idea and it certainly can still be used where appropriate - the problem seems to be Mies's relentless evangelism for the idea and its unquestioning usage by his acolytes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: PHILOSOPHY AS A DESIGN METHOD:

There are precedents for every architectural idea in every fashionable period in history and some were particularly clever. For example, the arts and crafts movement was a laboratory for assymmetrical form; curvilinear shapes were explored in the Art Nouveau, and Mr Soane showed us how to design in very tight spaces. To be locked on to any one set of ideas is often to cut ourselves off from a vast and wonderful bank of other precedents.

It can be argued that architects have always been and must be the vendors of illusion and to expect anything else is to destroy this illusion. The trauma of building has to be anaesthetised with the hypodermic of illusion. Mies was so successful, judging by his acclaim and awards, that this success in itself must be the validation of illusion. What cost this illusion?

Architects have to be reminded that they are still part of the human race and that their own interpretations of what they are doing will ultimately be secondary to the judgement of society. 'Spondeo spirito artis' (the artist guarantees his expertise) is a common law legacy from Justinian which will always ultimately prevail over fashionable and selective architectural preferences. Architects must not only reflect on how they see themselves and the world, but also spare a thought as to how society will assess them. If they recognise this responsibility they would want to draw on as wide a range of human experience as possible.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS

LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

Mies van der Rohe believed that he had produced a formula for good architecture. It worked for him (see Fig. 2) and must therefore work for others.

I have tried to make an architecture for a technological society; I have wanted to keep everything reasonable and clear,- to have an architecture that everyone can do.

(Spaeth:1986)

In his self assurance in later years he failed to see his own contribution from any other point of view, and failed to take into account what compromised or lesser mortals would do with his system - even manufacturers have to consider how their products can be abused.

He was frozen in the modern movement discourse where the well established semiotics of planning were played down - entrances or even chapels did not have any special signification and his architecture relied in a compensating way on the most expensive and exotic finishes and processes.

Paradoxically Mies's planning norms were relatively simple and undemanding (having been developed in the depressed Germany of the first world war and its aftermath, where customer whim was

also nicely caged).

What of his followers? They were to take the gospel to many different parts of the world. However, in many cases Miesian technology and finishes could only be approximated; a growing affluent post-war world was beginning to require symbolic expression and planning requirements were becoming more complex. The extent to which the Miesian aesthetic travelled the globe was remarkable. This may also have been due to another coincidence. Real-estate and development costs yoked by town planning strictures were to result in the architect being staight-jacketed into the blandest building envelope.

Here the doctrines of module, bronze curtainwall, 'I-beam' decoration a-la Seagrams, was to be forlornly applied in the hope that these would ultimately give these compromises divine absolution via the prophet Mies. These Miesian followers could no longer hope to sustain the clarity of form or idea that was so essential for his architecture. These structures stand as monuments to the silent aggression of architects who take themselves too seriously, and those who permit them to in a world of ineffectual architectural criticism.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS.

We need to dwell slightly on architectural pontification: The student of design is all at sea and faces immense psychological trauma and is constantly questioning and coming to terms with his ability to design. In this insecure world formulae become life-rafts. Hanging on to these life-rafts brings a measure of comfort and success which is very reluctantly discarded.

The problem is compounded because students of architecture do not often have an opportunity to put up real buildings until much later. Young teachers and studiomasters are themselves as yet relatively inexperienced and can only pass on their own theoretical homilies to compound the situation. In the recent past this was aggravated further by many teachers having been educated in an exclusive modern movment curriculum that deliberately circumscribed the scope of architectural influences.

The need to pontificate stems also largely from psychological motives and from the fact that architecture is a 'hungry' profession. After a long and arduous training the architect, in order to survive, has to believe in himself and convince others into believing in him too. He has to forage for his prey and don peacock feathers. His custom will not simply arrive at his door step 'having a sore tooth'. The client has to be wooed and enchanted into spending vast sums of money. Mies was no exception and his story reveals how skilful he was at each stage of his career. This entymological need for self projection can be identified in most successful members of the species.

Another problem seems to arise from the architectural media's latching on to simplistic formulae and the unquestioned acceptance of the posturing and trading in other peoples theatrical costume. Simplistic labels supply a terminology for acceptance - give the public something to hang their hat on, a criterion for discerning between good and bad, but run the risk of becoming shibboleths of enlightened taste. Pontification can be nothing more than propaganda. There may be value and ideas in other peoples' propaganda, but its re-assembly in a scholarly way is a measure of ones discernment, ability and training.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS. LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

Fashions change faster than the average person's lifespan and an overzealous commitment to a current fashionable set of ideas leaves the designer with no time or energy left to expand his knowledge and to equip himself with knowhow that could be useful in a change of circumstance. Call it ADDS - acquired design deficiency syndrome. People are of course creatures of their times, and design fashion is a rich regional scenery. When ideas move on as they must, there is a vast difference between those who are left behind who are ethnic and those who are parochial.

Architectural pontification sometimes reaches the level of a love poem or ode - when architect and client are so much in tune that they are transcended and reach heaven holding hands. This happens sometimes with the one-off residence. Client and architect define a lifestyle and image and speak a rare communicative language and have the knowing winks of lovers. The problem comes with the wish to propagate this love potion to others. It is easy to see how such a personal relationship should be meaningful, beautiful - and non-exportable.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

We will not escape a class-structured grouping of architectural values. Elitist and expensive architectural colleges will have different agendas to technical training colleges and night schools. Universities will interpret theory differently from technical colleges, and an architecture that is meant to be built will be different and spoken of differently from an architecture that is meant to be appreciated only as a drawing or idea. That both exist is fact. It is important however that the pontifications of the one should be distinguished from the needs of the other.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

The building industries in various parts of the world vary in the extent to which the architect can participate directly in the building process. The architect in India or China or even Australia will have a different role from the architect in New York. The influential architectural media are however geared to a small elitist Euro-American community. Their angst and soul searchings may have a message for a like-trained architect practising in some other part of the world, but an unedited acceptance of the ideas they postulate can be disastrous. The media reflect a local and sometimes neurotic set circumstances (eg Michael Graves's New York apparel shop built as a temple to a single garment). 'Culture cringe' will yearn for an immediate idea transplant. Mies van der Rohe in edictal citation of universal truths and universal order would not have seen the danger of an unmutated transplant.

If there is 'culture cringe' there is also 'class cringe' where the architect takes comfort and draws clientele by being 'with it' or 'up to date' as they and their clients yearn to be transported to a architectural Garden of Eden. The dreams and visions of many people are derived from the magazine. This influence is mostly visual and sometimes the philosophy associated with these images is misleading and oversimplistic. It is my opinion that architects learn, grow and enlarge on their ideas mostly through the actual process of building and for the most part do not need or can actually be harmed by other peoples philosophies that are uncritically examined. If they cannot build or are not satisfied with the way their building opportunities present themselves, they will find little long-term relief in the unquestioned application of other peoples' experiences. Mies has gone but there is no shortage of succeeding pontificators. The architects of China are creating an architecture with the American magazine as their main inspiration.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

Architectural students and academics persist in thinking that architecture is enhanced by a doctrinal purpose. Louis Kahn, Aldo Rossi, Mario Botta, Robert Venturi, Michael Graves are just a few architects who have caught the fancy of the architectural media since Mies van der Rohe, and they have all professed some strong philosophic guidelines. What they are doing must be richer because of a richer understanding of the building purpose and the society which is to use it. This proposition seems to be impeccable, and only breaks down circumstantially when considered in the following ways:-

- There is good and bad architecture within every mind-set (style or stylistic discourse). Some reasons for the good or bad are common to all systems, styles and mind sets. Architectural theories must therefore always be reassessed and handled with care, to sort the useful and valid from the useless and harmful.

- Good buildings have an elusive quality of charm and appropriateness regardless of the merits or demerits of the underlying philosophy that nurtured them, and conversely the best theories can produce the bad and the dull.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

- Architecture can be made with or without theories. Theories are there to make design more meaningful and not to detract from the design because of questionable theoretical validity. (Maybe theories are post-facto insights anyhow). Theory may be justifiable through its role of giving design the degree of attention and concern it deserves, however it does not follow that good buildings must be preceded by spurious philosophy.

- Architectural polemic is all to often propaganda designed to attract and mesmerize clients, and to enhance the architect's own professional standing.

- The philosophies of architectural theory-makers generally fall within a closed mind-set, and as such are better seen as religion or articles of faith, and their apologists must be seen as evangelists and not as rational thinkers.

- The theories about real buildable buildings must be for real buildings and not confused with phantom theories for phantom buildings.

- Immodesty may be a feature of creative minds, but it does not follow that self advertisement is automatically linked to competence or talent.

- The sophistication of the building industry will vary, and modesty in design considerations can also be highly regarded, sometimes saving the designer from worthless trips. Thinking small in a limited growth society, with complex, multi-faceted, ever changing and evolving architectural experience is at least as worthwhile a goal for architects to pursue.

- Preoccupation with smug philosophies often cuts the designer off from time tested traditions and background.

- One set of rationalistic ideas is substituted for another, leading to enormously wasteful obsolescence.

- Buildings based on new theory trade mostly on novelty and are not required to meet the recognised principles of design and performance associated with traditional or vernacular building.

-Styles (such as the 'modern movement') are characterised very coarsely, and extensive research and development is dismissed together with outmoded styles.

- The pursuit of imagery is not always consistent with good building practice. Buildings leak, plaster walls crack, paint peels and maintenance becomes a millstone.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM PONTIFICATORS:

- A popular philosophy begets a new fashion which induces the designer to suppress his natural creativity in favour of conformity.

- The designer is unfortunately left bereft of conviction and principle as one ideal answer supplants another.

- A highly sophisticated design notion 'concretised' is an arrogant and insensitive imposition, that does not take into account that all the current or future users may not share the original sophistication.

-Every building should pass a 'time test machine', to test its continued use and value after its current planning considerations change. Beware the designer or client who is unconcerned with the building after his personal whims have been satisfied.

Building problems are not new problems, and when 'new designs'are considered, 'invention' should take place only after a journey through many well established precedents and not according to the blandishments of some convincing thespian.

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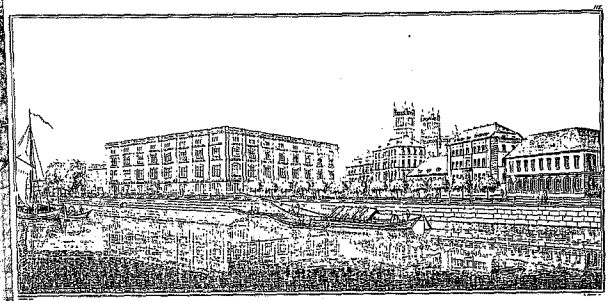
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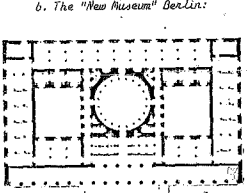
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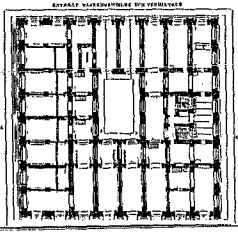
PERSPECTIVISCHE ANSICHT DER GEBÄUDE DER ALLGEMEINEN BAUSCHULE IN BERLIN.

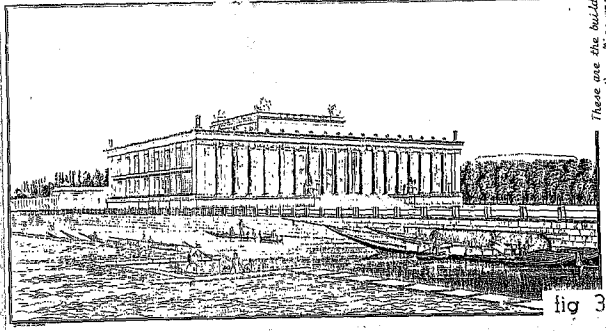
a.

a. The Academy of Building Berlin:
b. The "New Museum" Berlin:



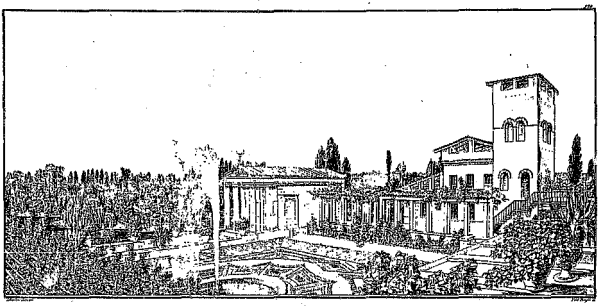
b.





These are the buildings which Mies said inspired him: or rather, Mies was most selective in choosing from Schinkel certain building types that were meaningful to him.

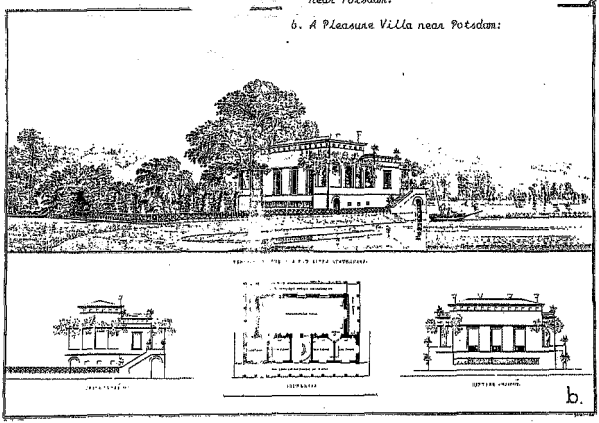
fig 3a.



PERSPECTIVE VON DEM GÄRTNERHAUSE IN CHARLOTTENHOF BEI POTSDAM VOM PUNKTE A. IN GRUNDRISSE AUF DEM PLATTEN RECHTS ANGEGEBEN. a.

a. *The Gardener's house in Charlotenhof near Potsdam.*

b. *A Pleasure Villa near Potsdam:*

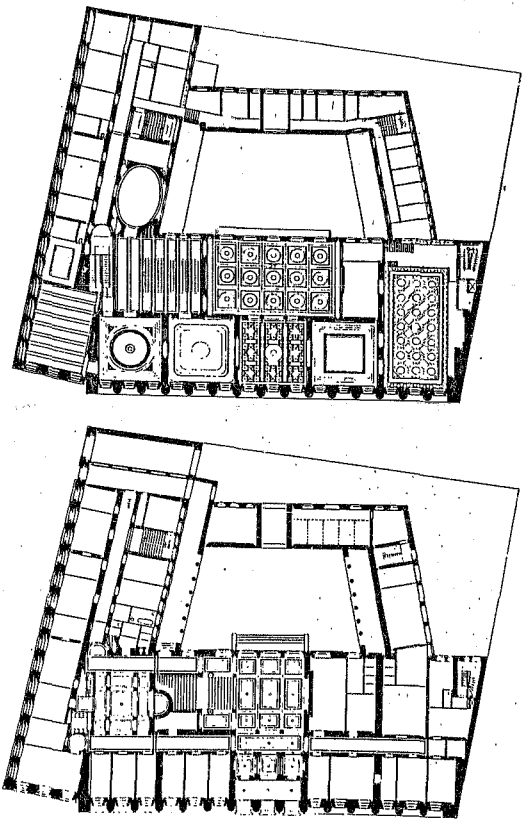


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PERSPECTIVISCHE ANSICHT EINES LUSTHAUSES IN DER NÄHE VON POTSDAM.

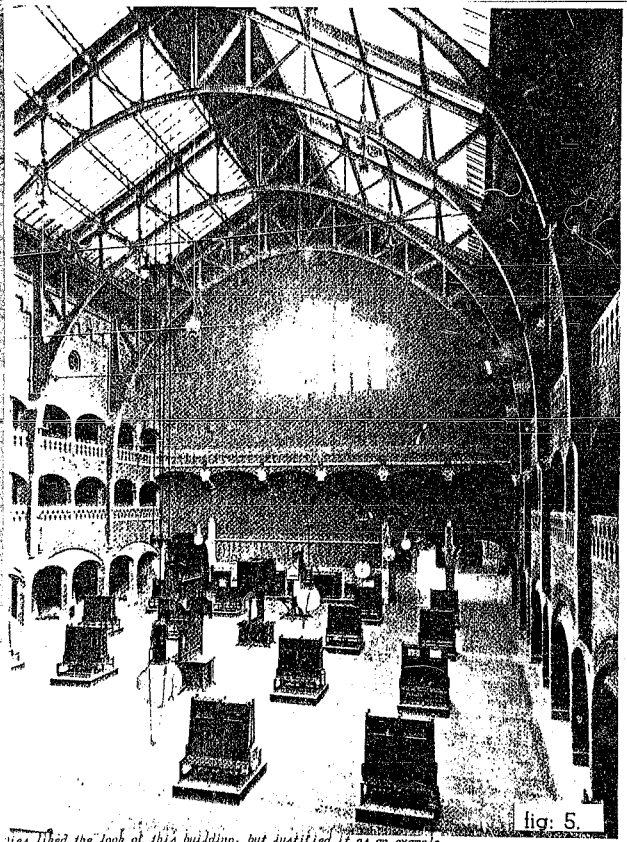
Schinkel was a stylist, a historicist, a conservationist a classicist and a romantic: - all of which Mies chooses to ignore.

fig 3b.



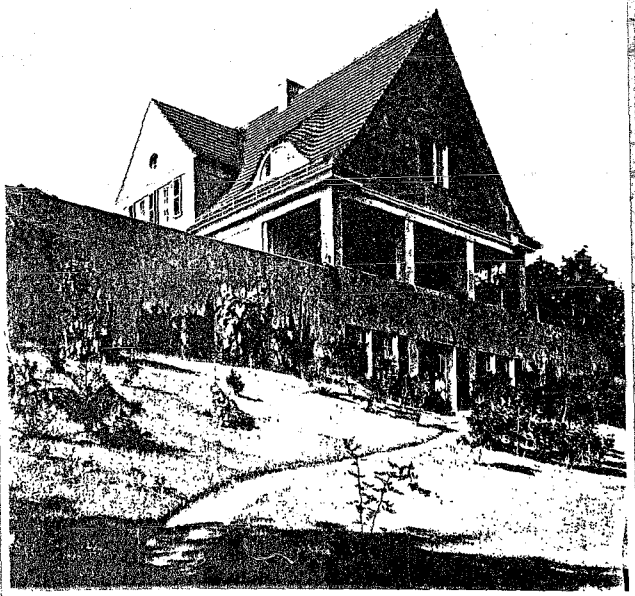
German Embassy, St. Petersburg. First and second floor plans.
Mies supervised the construction of this building which is part of a long tradition in the handling of space. He was aware of what he was choosing to ignore.

fig: 4.



ies liked the look of this building, but justified it as an example
f 'structural honesty': Stock Exchange, Amsterdam. The Netherlands. Hendrik Petrus
Berlage, 1909.

This house for the philosopher Aloise Riehl is in a vernacular tradition and demonstrates an empirical and contextual handling of site contours that is sometimes lacking in his later work.



Riehl house. View from the lower garden. fig: 6.



Fig. 1. The Perls house, now being restored shows the beginnings of fastidious but often unexciting architecture.

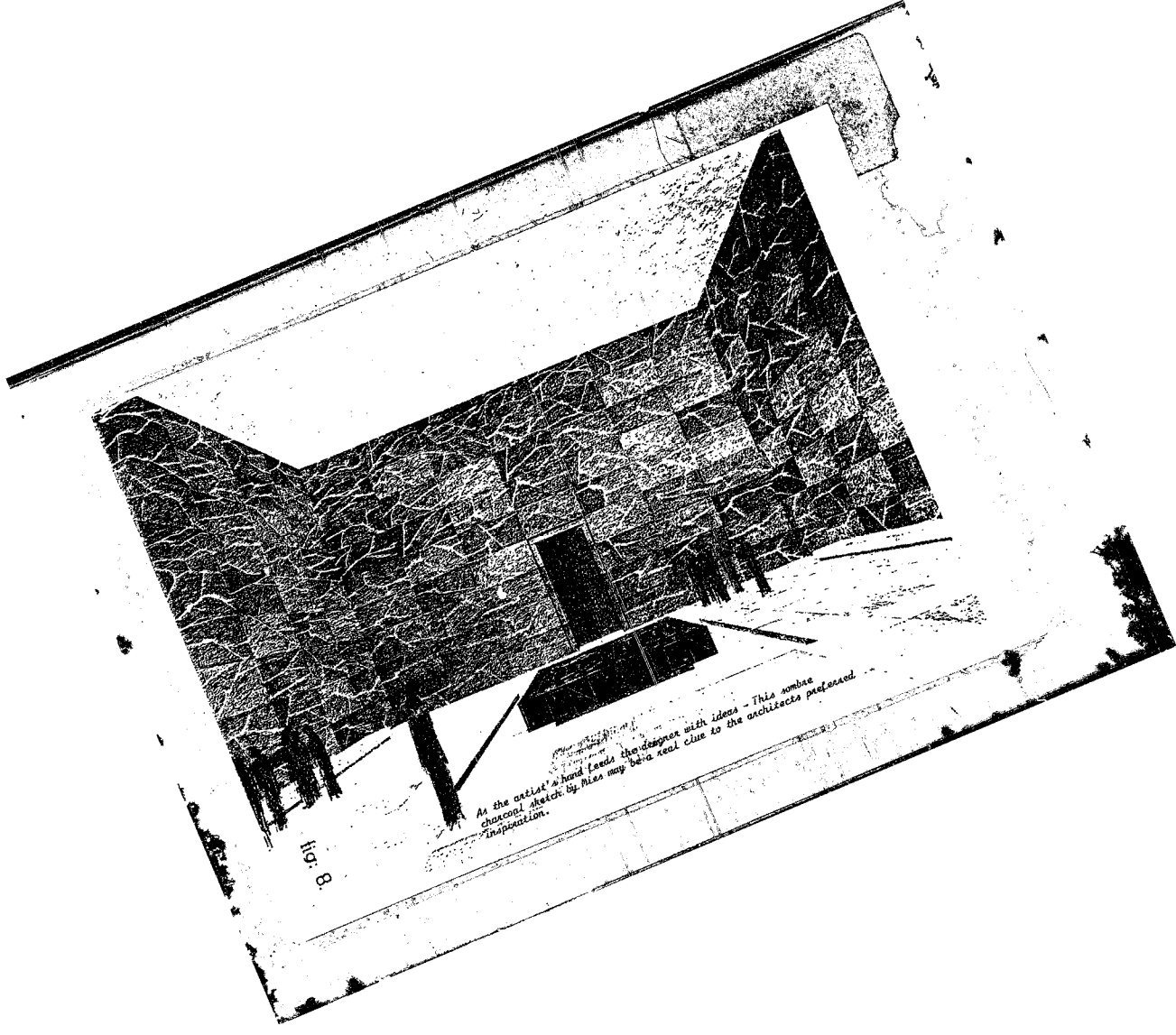
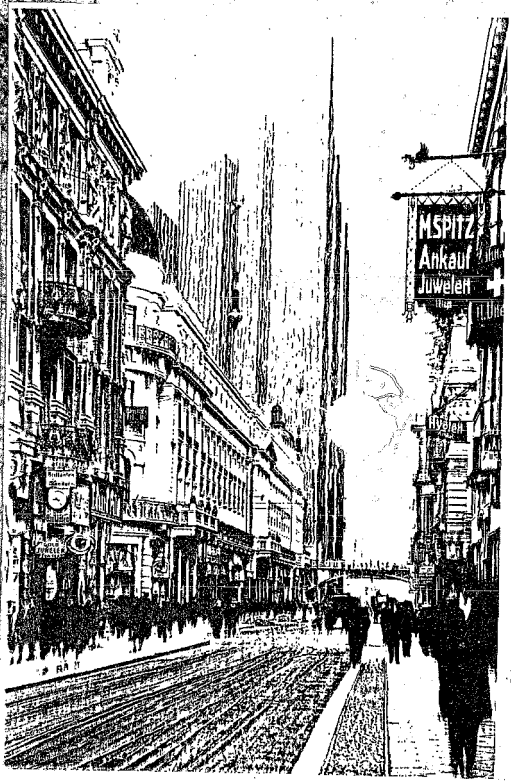


fig. 8.

As the artist's hand feeds the designer with ideas - This sombre charcoal sketch by Nies may be a real clue to the architects preferred inspiration.



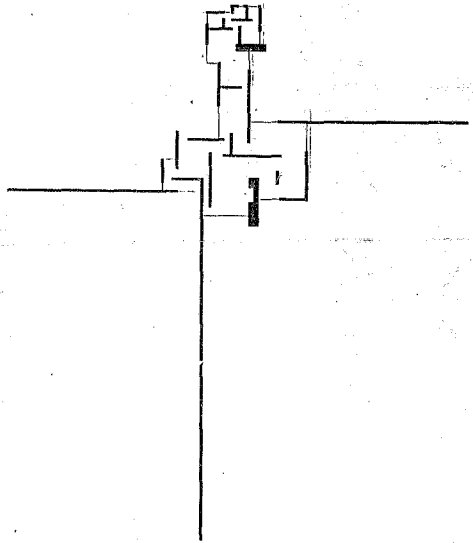
. Office Building, Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, Germany, 1919. Collage.

Mies was prophetic about urban high rise in his early years. These designs were also more sensitive to the variegated fabric of the city street than the ones he was to erect in the U.S.A. later.

fig: 9.

It is said that the silicone technology for building these facetted glass boxes designed in the early 20's was to emerge ten years after Mies's death.

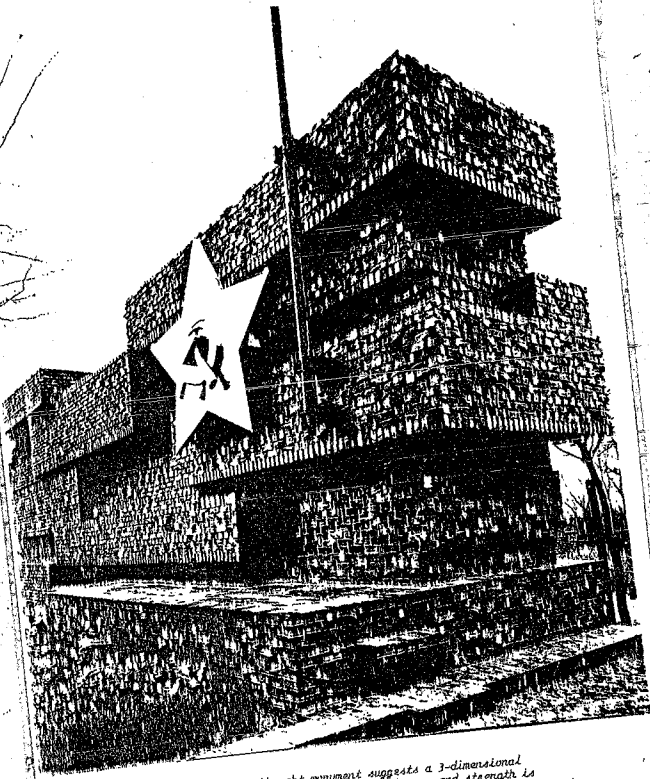
fig: 10.



Brick Country House, 1923. Plan.

Recent commentators seem to wish to expunge the De Stijl influence on Mies 'overlapping planes' design principle. This plan and the time of its design show very strong evidence of this influence.

fig: 11.



The Rosa Luxemburg-Karl Liebknecht monument suggests a 3-dimensional development of these De Stijl-like ideas. Its vibrance and strength is in contrast to later work where Mies was being influenced by his own singular philosophies.

fig: 12.

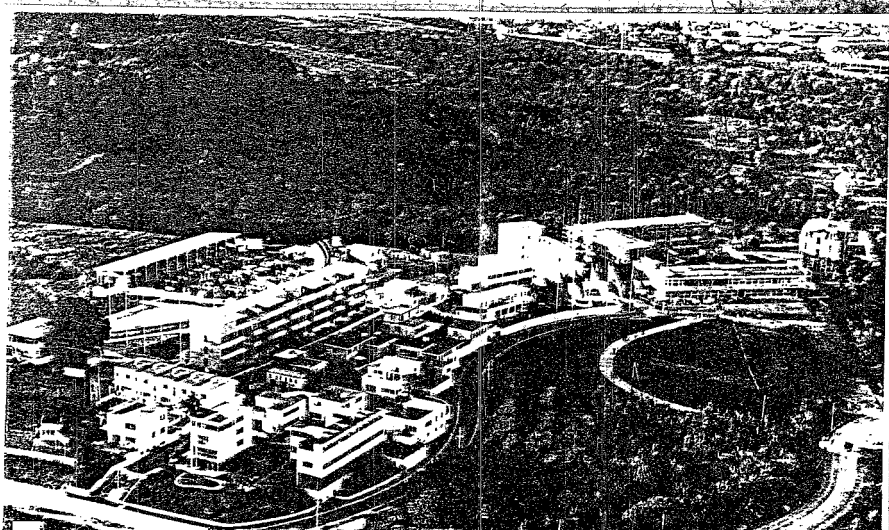
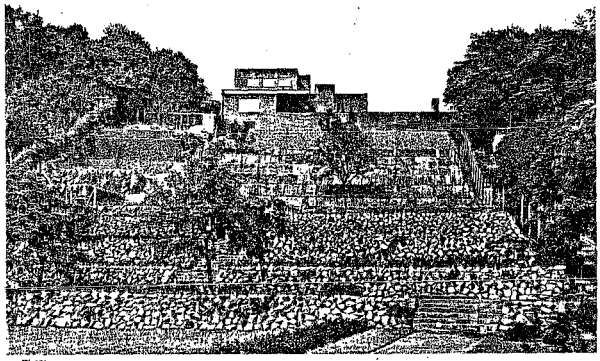


fig. 13

Weissenhofsiedlung. General view.

Fascists sneered at the blandness of the Weissenhofsiedlung and the modern architects felt aloof and smug. The 'will of an epoch' may not always be the will of the people.

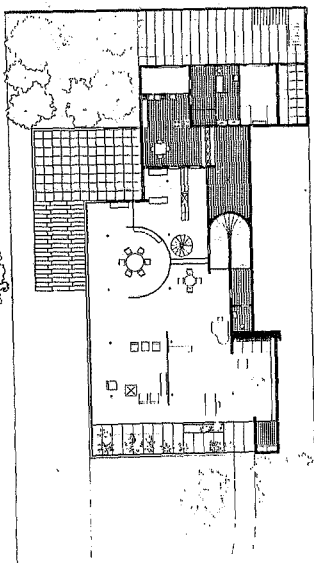


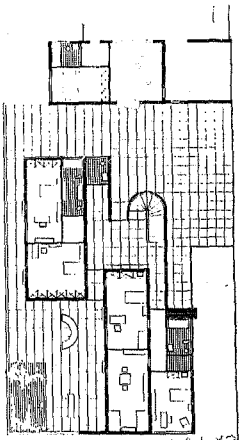
Wolf house.

Later commentators wax lyrical about Mies's use of landscaping. This example from the Wolf House does not exhibit much sensitivity to building on sloping ground.

fig: 14.

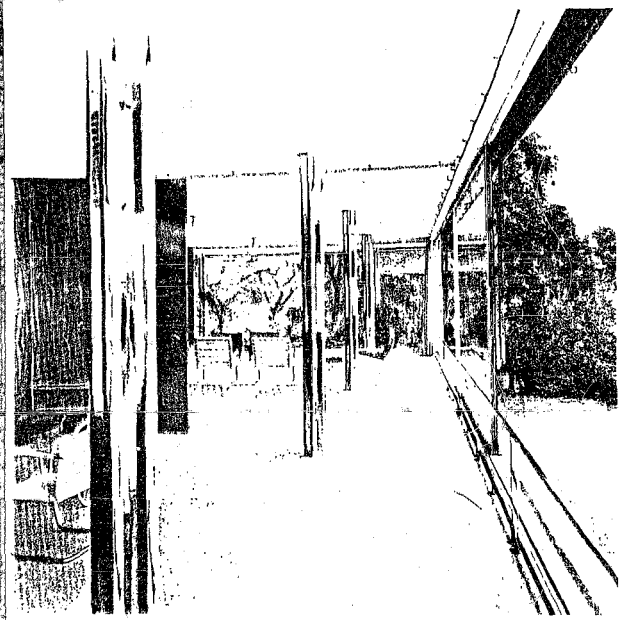
The Planning of the Tugendhat House is typical of the modern movement. There is a distinction between closed spaces and spaces that can merge. The general form is less ordered and more imaginative than later doctrinal Miesian planning.





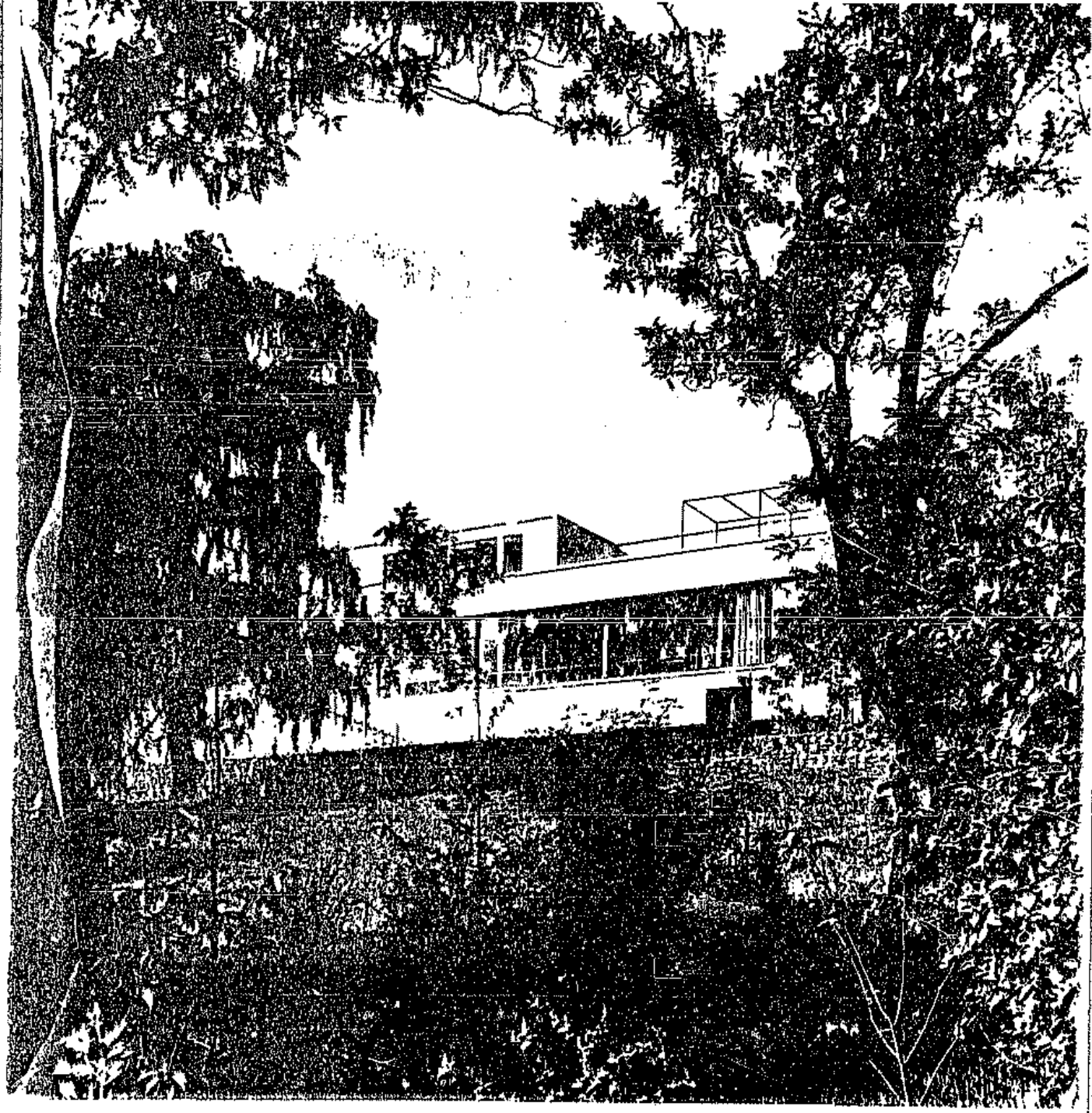
Tugendhat house. Brno, Czechoslovakia. 1928–30.
Entrance and lower level plans.

fig: 15.



The Tugendhat House with chromed star shaped columns, the Tugendhat chair and large glass external walls was a forerunner for bleak northern climates, provided they were adequately air-conditioned.

fig: 16.



The extenion of the Tugendhat house is a good example of the 'modern movement' style.

fig: 17.

Author Gordon G
Name of thesis 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. 1987

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