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History of Modern Architecture
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University of Texas at Dallas
Spring 2019
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Tuesday March 5

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the Significance of Fact

It then became clear to me that it was not the task of architecture to invent form. I tried to understand what that task was. I asked Peter Behrens, but he could not give me an answer. He did not ask the question. The others said, "What we build is architecture," but we weren't satisfied with the answer... since we knew that it was a question of truth, we tried to find out what truth really was. We were very delighted to find a definition of truth by St. Thomas Aquinas: "Adequatio intellectus et rei," or as a modern philosopher expresses it in the language of today: "Truth is the significance of fact."

-- Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1961)

sachlich

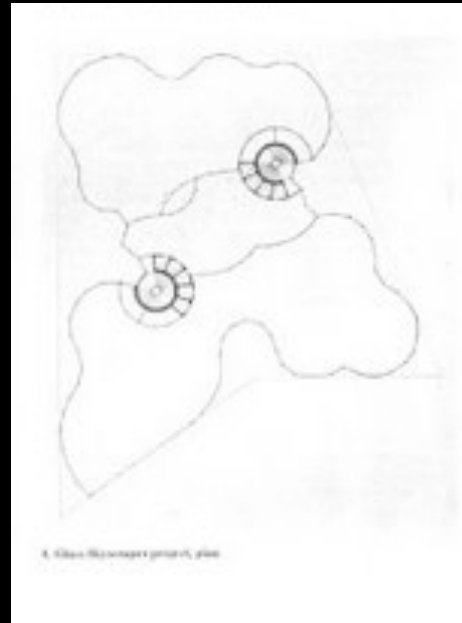
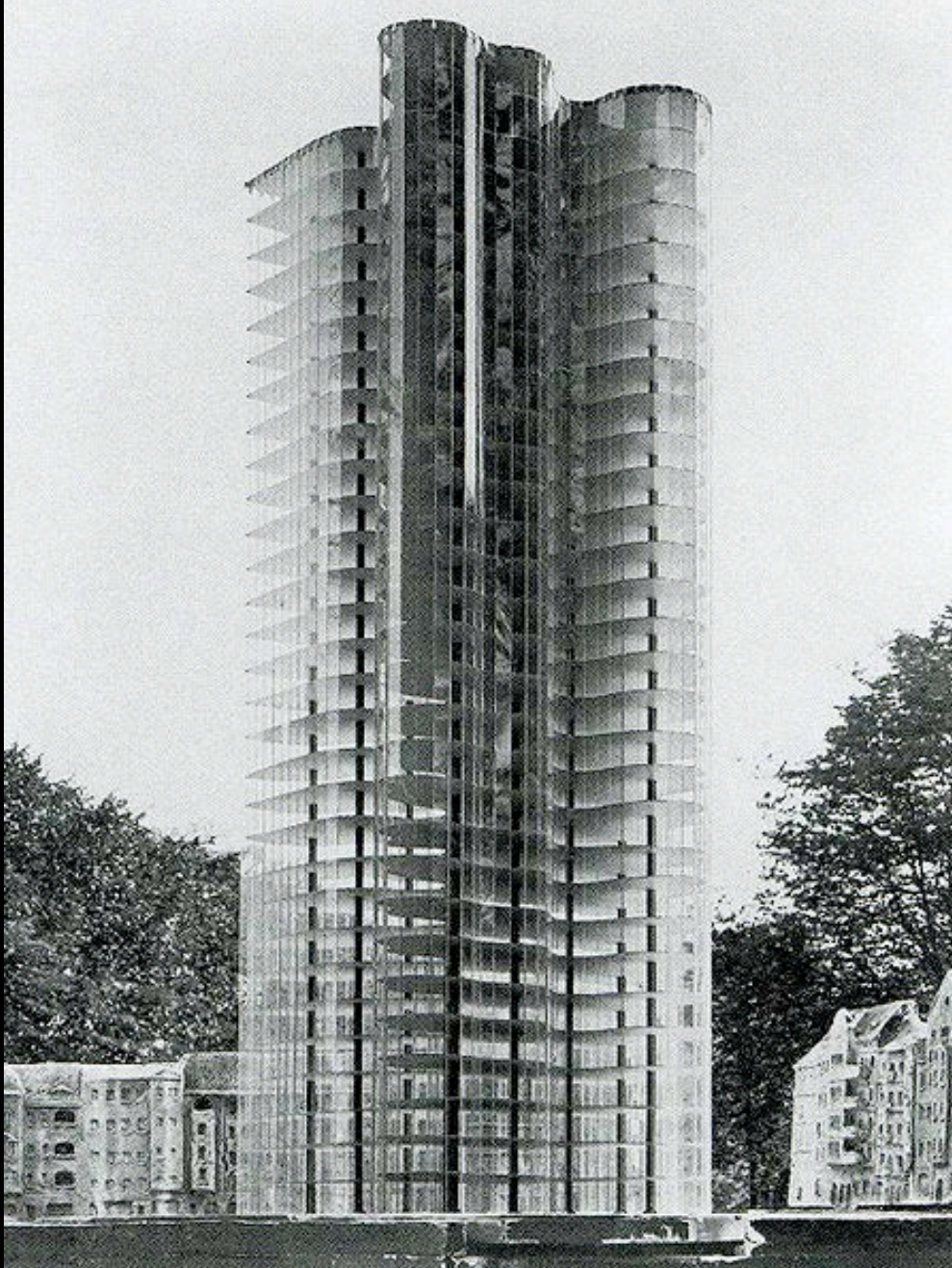
**factual
objective**

Neue Sachlichkeit
New Objectivity



In my project for a skyscraper at the Friedrichstrasse Station in Berlin I used a prismatic form, which seemed to me to fit best the triangular site of the building. I placed the glass walls at slight angles to each other to avoid monotony of over-large glass surfaces. I discovered by working with actual glass models that the important thing is the play of reflections and not the effect of light and shadow as in ordinary buildings.

-- Mies van der Rohe



The results of these experiments can be seen in the second scheme published here. At first glance, the curved outline of the plan seems arbitrary. These curves, however, were determined by three factors: sufficient illumination of the interior, the massing of the building from the street, and lastly the play of reflections. I proved in the glass model that calculations of light and shadow do not help in designing an all glass building.

-- Mies van der Rohe

Mies van der Rohe, Model for a Glass Skyscraper, 1922

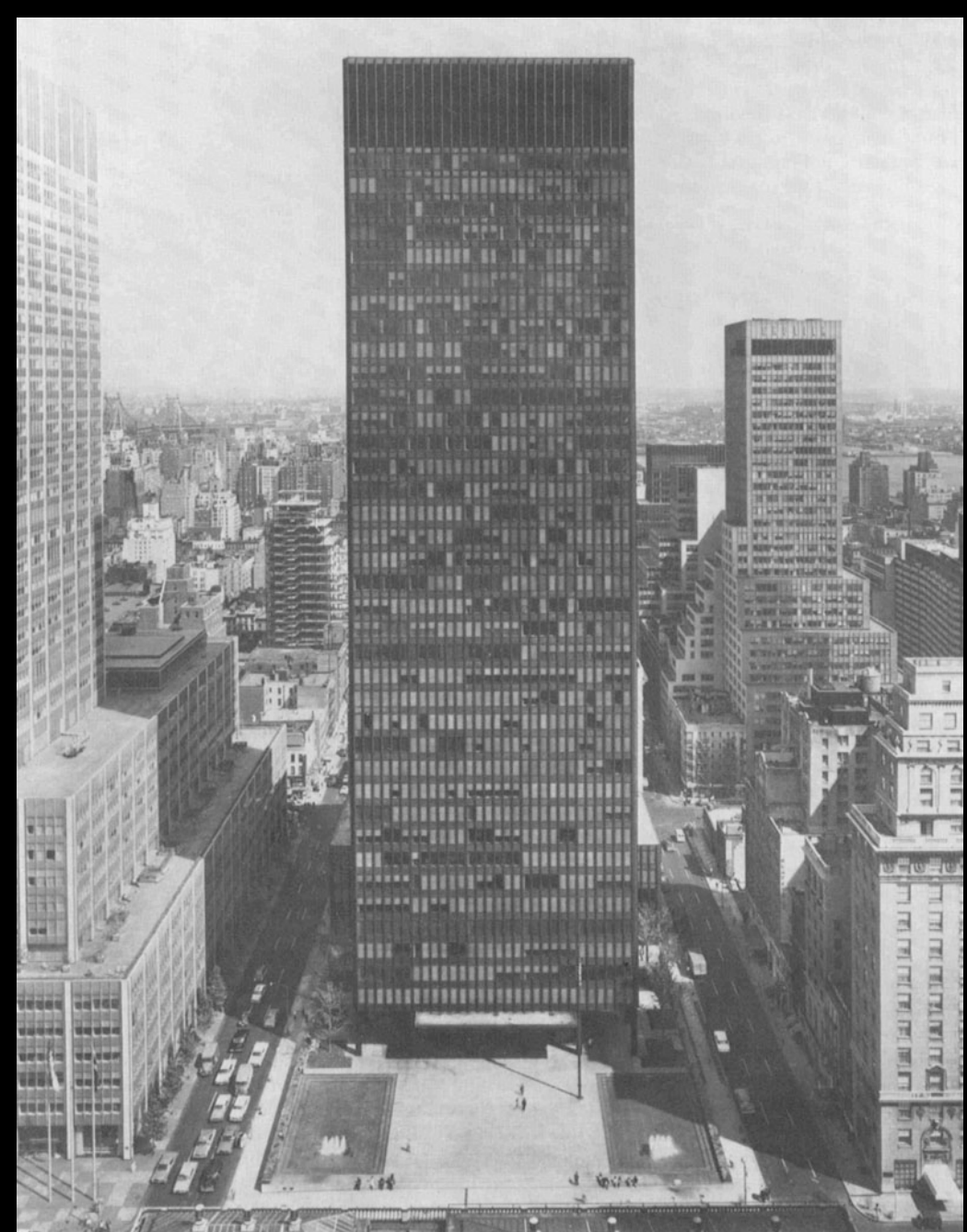


Mies van der Rohe, Glass Skyscraper Project, 1922
elevation study



**International
Style
Modernism**

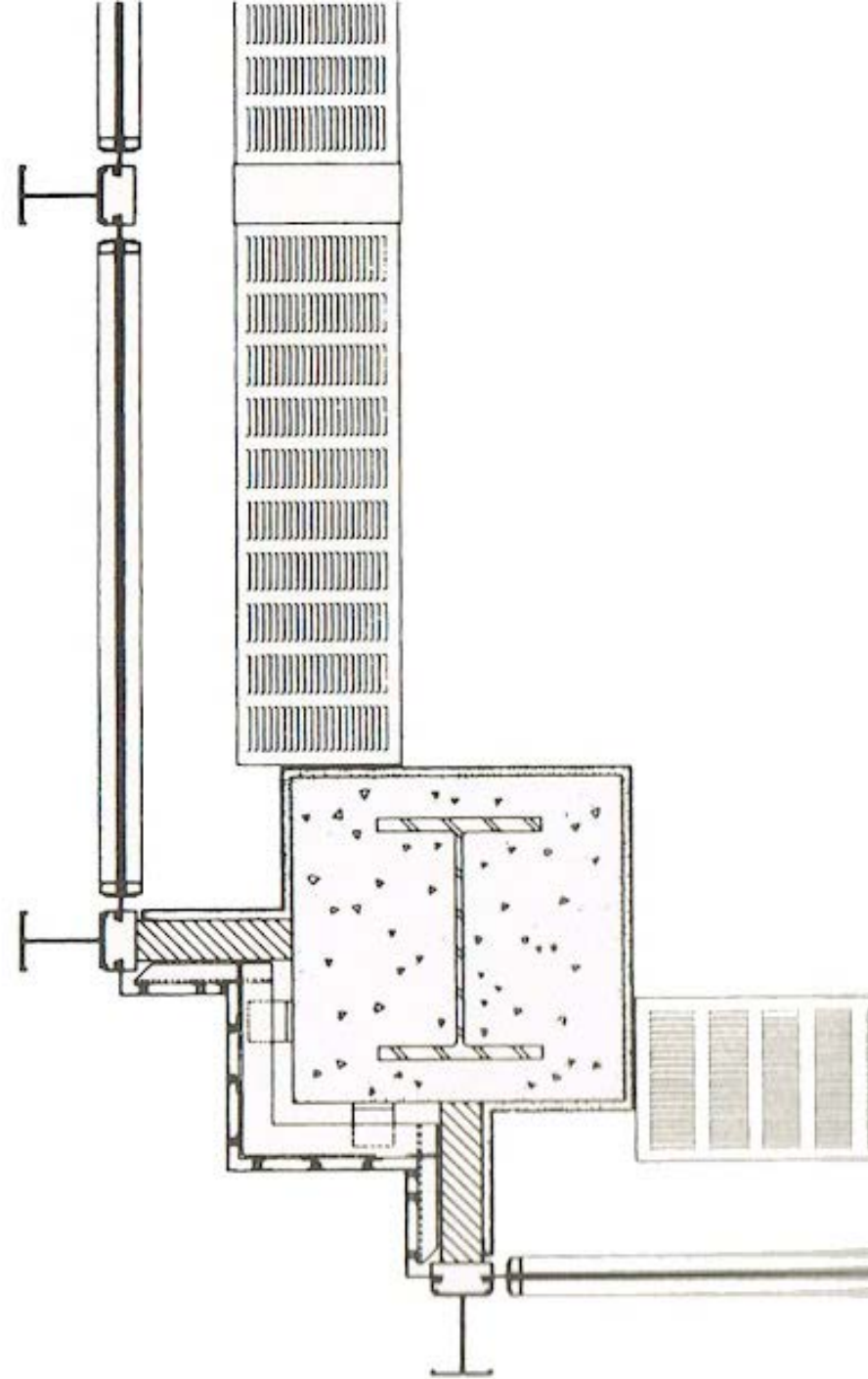
**Modernism
in the United
States**



Mies van der Rohe, with Philip Johnson (interiors), Seagram Building, New York, 1958



- 375 Park Avenue, NYC
- stone faced lobby and distinctive glass and bronze exterior
- 515 feet; 38 stories
- Steel frame
- Non-structural glass walls hung from frame



- Mies preferred that the steel frame be visible
- However, American building codes required that all structural steel be covered in a fireproof material, usually concrete.
- Mies suggested structure with the non-structural bronze-toned I-beams.
- I-beams run vertically, like mullions, surrounding the large glass windows

IG Material zur elementaren Gestaltung

JULI 1923

Die Aufgabe dieses Zeitschrift ist: die allgemeine Situation der Kunst und der Lebens zu klären. Im Hinblick darauf wählen wir das Material: Artikel und Werke, die sich um Klarheit — nicht nur um Ausdruck — bemühen. Alles, was der schöpferischen Arbeit und dem schöpferischen Arbeiter selbst kann (technisch, theoretisch, schöpferisch, wirtschaftlich, schulpflichtig etc.) wird veröffentlicht. Wir bitten um Erlaubnis, die Werke im Katalog, Kataloge, Kataloge, um Reproduktionen-Exemplare von Zeitschriften und Neuausgaben, um Reproduktionen usw. — soweit sie für unsere Arbeit von Bedeutung sein können. Zeitschriften, welche Gr-beurteilen oder Nachdruck bringen, werden um Belegexemplare ersucht. □

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Der Gegensatz zwischen der neuen Gestaltung (in der Kunst) und der gestrigen Kunst ist prinzipiell. Wir wollen ihn nicht überbrücken, sondern vertiefen.

Der Überdruß an der alten Kunsterei und die Tatsache vitaler menschlicher Interessen bilden die Voraussetzung einer neuen Gestaltung.

Unsere „Gefühle“ hindern uns daran, das für uns wahrhaft Wesentliche zu sehen. Vorurteilslosigkeit, auch den heiligsten Traditionen gegenüber, ist notwendig.

Die Tendenz der Kunsterei wie des Lebens heute ist individualistisch und gefühlsmäßig. Methodisch und ungenügend zu handeln ist heute ein Kulturproblem. Die Kunst kämpft seit zwei Generationen darum (Überwindung des klassischen Vorurteils, des Humanismus, des Mittelalters).

Die Grundforderung elementarer Gestaltung ist **Ökonomie**.
 Reines Verhältnis von Kraft und Material.
 Das bedingt **elementare Mittel, völlige Beherrschung der Mittel, Elementare Ordnung, Gesetzmäßigkeit**.

In Frankreich, dem Lande der künstlerischen Tradition, kam man zur Auflösung des Bildgegenstandes; in Holland („Stijl“) und in Rußland (Konstruktivismus und Malewitsch-Tatlin) zur praktischen Arbeit — in Deutschland haben die letzten Konsequenzen bisher offenbar nur die Malerei erreicht, es handelte sich wieder einmal um einen neuen Ikonos, und zwar um einen von seltener Barbarei und Rohheit — nämlich was das Gefühlsmäßige anbetrifft.

Es scheint uns ganz unmöglich, daß es nicht auch in Deutschland mehr Künstler gibt, die aus innerer Notwendigkeit den Kunstbetrieb aufgeben, um sich praktisch und theoretisch grundsätzlichen Aufgaben zu widmen.

Wir hatten zwar hier vielleicht nicht, wie in Holland, große Raumlichkeiten, oder wie in Rußland Möglichkeiten für die Ausführung aller modernen Dinge überhaupt, aber **bisher ist ja hier auch nicht einmal die Forderung zur Grundsätzlichkeit gestellt worden**. Diese Forderung muß erlitten werden.

Jede Arbeit besteht durch eine andere. Niemand kann heute etwas leisten, ohne von seinem Nachbarn oder Feinde zu lernen. Subjektive Einseitigkeit ist in allen Lebensgebieten zulässig und die eigentliche Ursache aller Katastrophen — in der Kunst auch. **Die neuen Künstler handeln kollektiv**.

Wir werden zunächst theoretisch und praktisch auseinandersetzen, was unter elementarer Gestaltung, Gesetzmäßigkeit, Kollektivität, Aufgaben etc. zu verstehen ist; und das durch unsere eigenen Arbeiten und die ausländischer Kameraden belegen.

Unsere Aufgabe ist destruktiver und konstruktiver Natur.

Das **klassische Vorurteil**, die Grundlage der vergehenden Kultur, **muß zerstört werden**.

Dann bilden sich neue Neigungen und Bedürfnisse.

Die **elementare Aufgabe des schöpferischen Menschen heißt nicht nur:**

den Neigungen und Bedürfnissen der Zeit entsprechen, sondern vor allem: **neue Neigungen und Bedürfnisse schaffen**.

Es handelt sich also nicht um eine neue Richtung, die wir vertreten. Wir wenden uns auch nicht an Kunstliebhaber, sondern allgemein an Menschen, die Grundsätzliches lieben, in der Kunst, wie in allen Zusammenhängen des Lebens.

Von solchen können wir erwarten verstanden zu werden in dem Willen, das Problem der Kunst nicht vom ästhetisierenden, sondern vom allgemein kulturellen Standpunkt aus zu lösen.

Wir brauchen keine Schönheit, die als Schönheits an unseren (sexuell orientierten) Sinnen klebt, sondern **innere Ordnung unseres Seins**. **Wer die Zusammenhänge bildet, wer die Mittel des Gestaltens vertieft und organisiert, schafft neues Leben und Überfluß**.

Hans Richter — Werner Grifff

Zur Elementaren Gestaltung.

Es wird notwendig zwei einander entgegengesetzte Ausdrucksweisen scharf zu trennen: die **dekorative (ethnographische) und die monumentale (gestaltende)**.

Diese zwei Ausdrucksweisen bestimmen zwei gänzlich verschiedene Kunstauffassungen: die der Vergangenheit und die der Gegenwart. Dabei das dekorative Prinzip sich nach Zentralisation, so kennzeichnet Dekentralisation das Prinzip des Monumentalen.

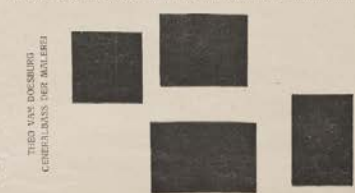
Die historische Kunstentwicklung durchläuft alle Stadien vom Individualismus bis zur äußersten Verallgemeinerung.

dekorative Ausdrucksweise	Dekoration	Vergangenheit	Zentralisation	Monumentalität	Gegenwart	Dekentralisation
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In dieser Spannung liegt das Problem der neuen Kunstgestaltung, des neuen Stils.

In der dekorativen Auffassung war die schöpferische Tätigkeit abhängig von präexistenter Gewohnheit, Wulke oder intuitiver Wirkung der Elemente des Kunstwerks. Diese laienhafte Arbeit entsprach aber nicht der Forderung unserer Zeit: **PRÄZISION**.

Diejenigen nun, die diese Forderung (z. B.) intellektuell begriffen haben, glauben den Widerspruch zu überwinden, indem sie ihre ebenso laienhafte wie spekulative Arbeit mit dem Worte „Problem“ bezeichnen. Sie stellen fest, daß es sich in der bildenden Kunst nicht mehr um „ästhetische Komposition“, sondern um „problematrische Konstruktion“ handeln müsse. Im rechten An, daß der Unterschied zwischen Komposition (Zusammenstellen) und Konstruktion (Zusammenfassen) eine nicht zu unterschätzende Zeitersparnis ist, aber weder das eine, noch das andere kann zu einer trutzbaren, monumentalen



G: Material for Elementary Construction was an avant-garde journal edited and published in Berlin by Hans Richter. Five issues were produced in German between 1923-26. Subsequently the architects Ludwit Mies van der Rohe and Friedrich Kiesler joined Richter as editors.

“G” stands for “Gestaltung” – form, form-making, form in process

G's first two issues consisted of a large folded sheet with just four pages, but from June 1924 it became a more conventional magazine. The first rubric changed, with the third issue, to *Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* [Journal for Elementary Construction]. International in outlook, the magazine was primarily interested in modern constructive form, including buildings, airplanes, cars and town planning, and it drew into its orbit film and photomontage.



G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung/ G: Material for Elementary Form (1923)

1G Material for
 JULY 1923

EDITOR: HANS RICHTER
 EDITORIAL BOARD: GRAFF, LISSITZKY, RICHTER
 EDITORIAL AND DISTRIBUTION: BERLIN-FRIEDENAU,
 ESCHENSTRASSE 7. TELEPHONE RHEINGAU 9978.

The opposition between modern form-creation (in order to bridge it but to deepen it).
 Weariness with the old artsiness and the fact of visual form-creation.
 Our "emotions" impede us from seeing what is true; traditions, is required.

Today, the trend of both artsiness and of life is in...
 Operating methodically and impersonally is a cultural challenge for generations (overcoming the classical prejudice, humanism, and the...)

The fundamental demand:
 Pure relation of power.
That requires elementary form.
Elemental order, r

In France, the land of artistic tradition, the pictorial object (as in Malevich-Tatlin), practical labor emerged; in Germany the last time we are dealing with a new ism, and, to be sure, one of exceptional emotional.

It seems to us entirely impossible that even in Germany... out of inner necessity — in order to devote themselves to fundamental...
 Though perhaps we do not have here, as in Holland, to produce modern things, **until now the call to that which is fundamental** now be made.

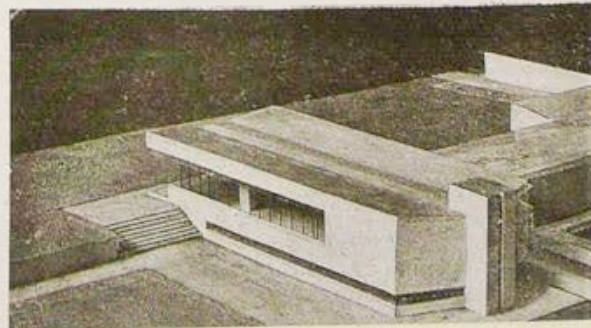
SUM

G MATERIAL FOR I
 Sept. 23

EDITOR: HANS RICHTER. EDITORIAL BOARD FOR THIS ISSUE: GRAFF, MIES v. d. ROHE

BUILDING

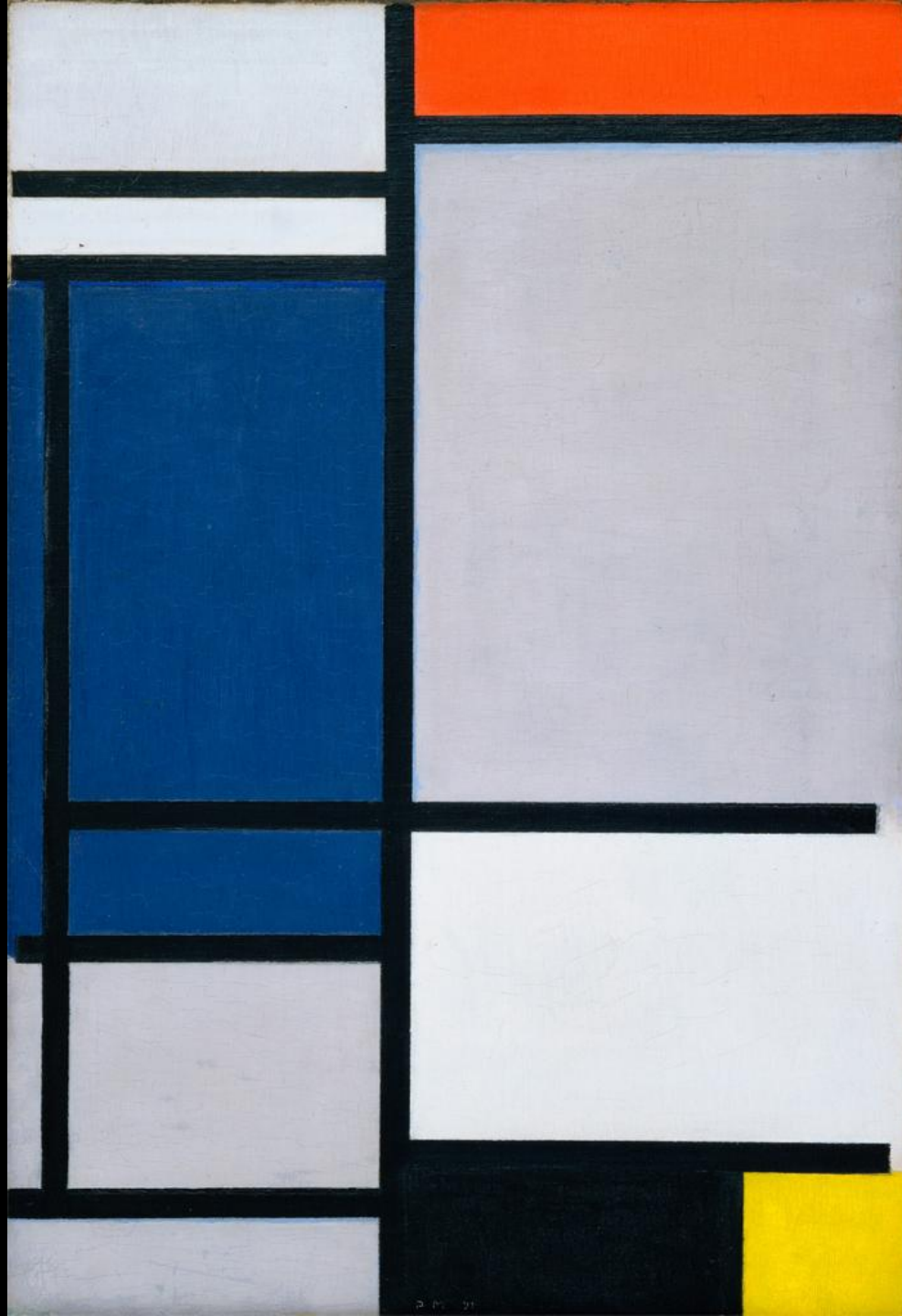
We know no formal problems, only building problems.
 Form is not the goal but the result of our work.
 There is no form in itself [an sich].
 The truly formed thing is conditioned, grown together with the task. Indeed, it is the most elemental expression of the solution of that task.
 Form as goal is formalism; and we reject that. Nor do we strive for a style.



Mies van der Rohe, Project for a Concrete Country House, 1923 on bottom right



Mies van der Rohe,
Project for a Brick
Country House,
1923



DUTCH DE STIJL

Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue, Black, Yellow, and Gray*, 1921

Neo-Plasticism

Piet Mondrian, Neo-Plasticism, and De Stijl

DE STIJL

MAANDBLAD VOOR NIEUWE KUNST, WETENSCHAP EN KULTUUR. REDACTIE: THEO VAN DOESBURG. ABONNEMENT BINNENLAND F 6.-, BUITENLAND F 7.50 PER JAARGANG. ADRES VAN REDACTIE EN ADMINISTR. HAARLEMMEERSTRAAT 73A LEIDEN (HOLLAND).

4e JAARGANG No. 11.

NOVEMBER 1921.

LETTERKLANKBEELDEN (1921)

IV (in dissonanten)

U ^l	J—	m ^l	n ^l
U	J—	m ^l	n ^l
V—	F—	K ^l	Q ^l
F ^l	V—	Q ^l	K ^l
X ^l	Q ^l	V ^l	W ^l
X ^l	Q ^l	W	V
U ^l	J—	m—	n—

g^l

A—	O—	P ^l	B ^l
A—	O—	P ^l	B ^l
D—	T—	O ^l	E—
d	t	o	e

O^l E^l

B^l D^l

Z ^l	C	S	B	P	D
~~~~~			~~~~~		
j					

Aanteekening: te lezen van links naar rechts. Voor de teekens zie men Stijl no. 7.

### X-Beelden (1920)

hé hé hé  
hebt gij 't lichaamlijk ervaren  
hebt gij 't lichaamlijk ervaren  
hebt gij 't li **CHAAM** lijk er **VA** ren

Oⁿ

— ruimte en  
— tijd  
verleden heden toekomst  
het achterhierenginds  
het doorelkaar van 't niet en de verschijning

kleine verfrommelde almanak  
die men ondersteboven leest

#### MIJN KLOK STAAT STIL

ZIG — ZAG  
uitgekauwd sigaretteteindje op't  
**WITTE SERVET**

vochtig bruin  
ontbinding  
**GEEST**

346 **VRACHT AU TO MO BIEL**

DWARS

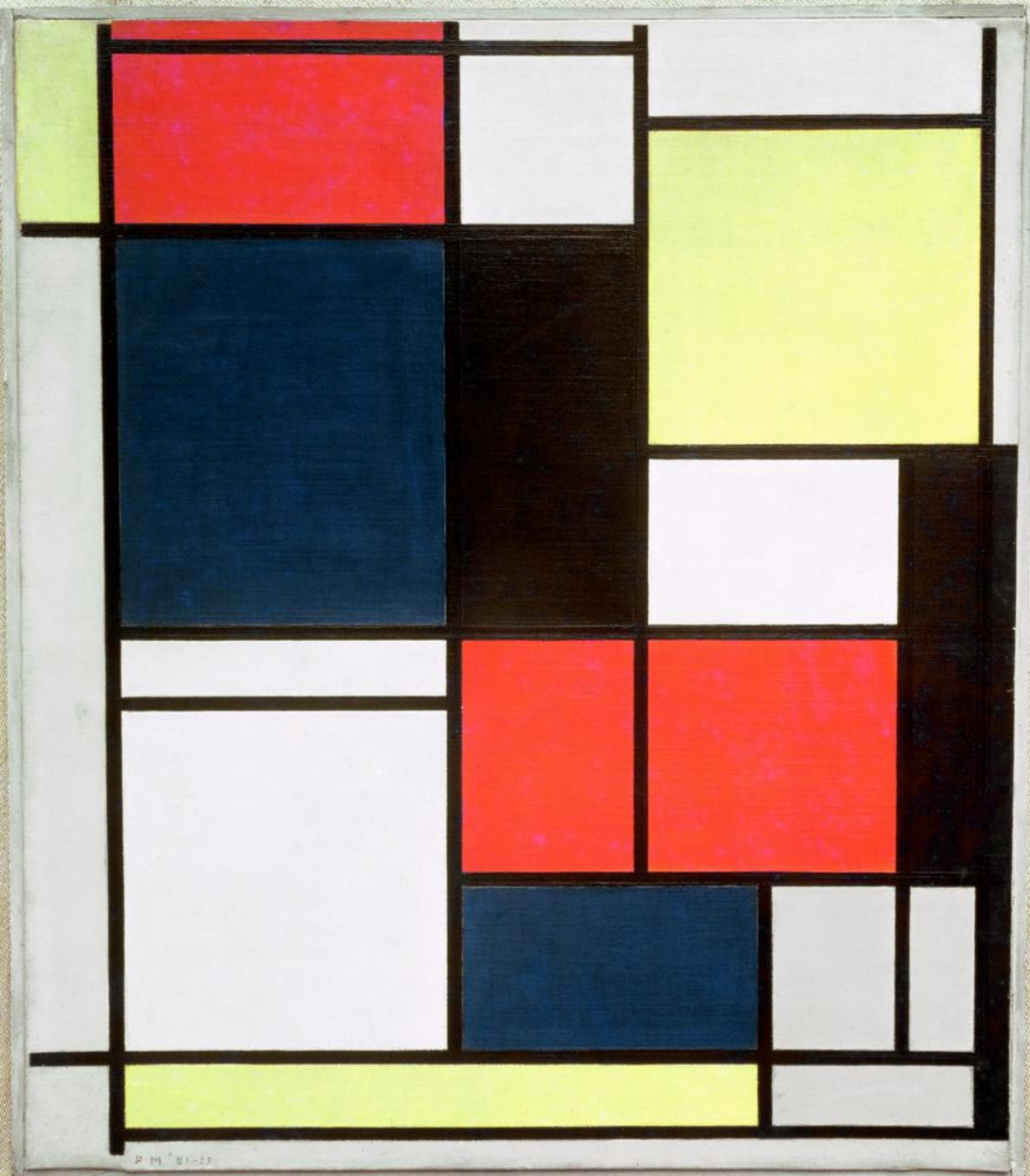
trillend onvruchtbaar middelpunt

caricatuur der zwaarte  
uomo electrico

rose en grauw en diep wijnrood

de scherven van de kosmos vind ik in m'n thee

Aanteekening: Oⁿ: te lezen nulⁿ; — ruimte en — tijd: te lezen min ruimte en min tijd.



Mondrian, Tableau No. 2 with red, blue, black and gray , 1923

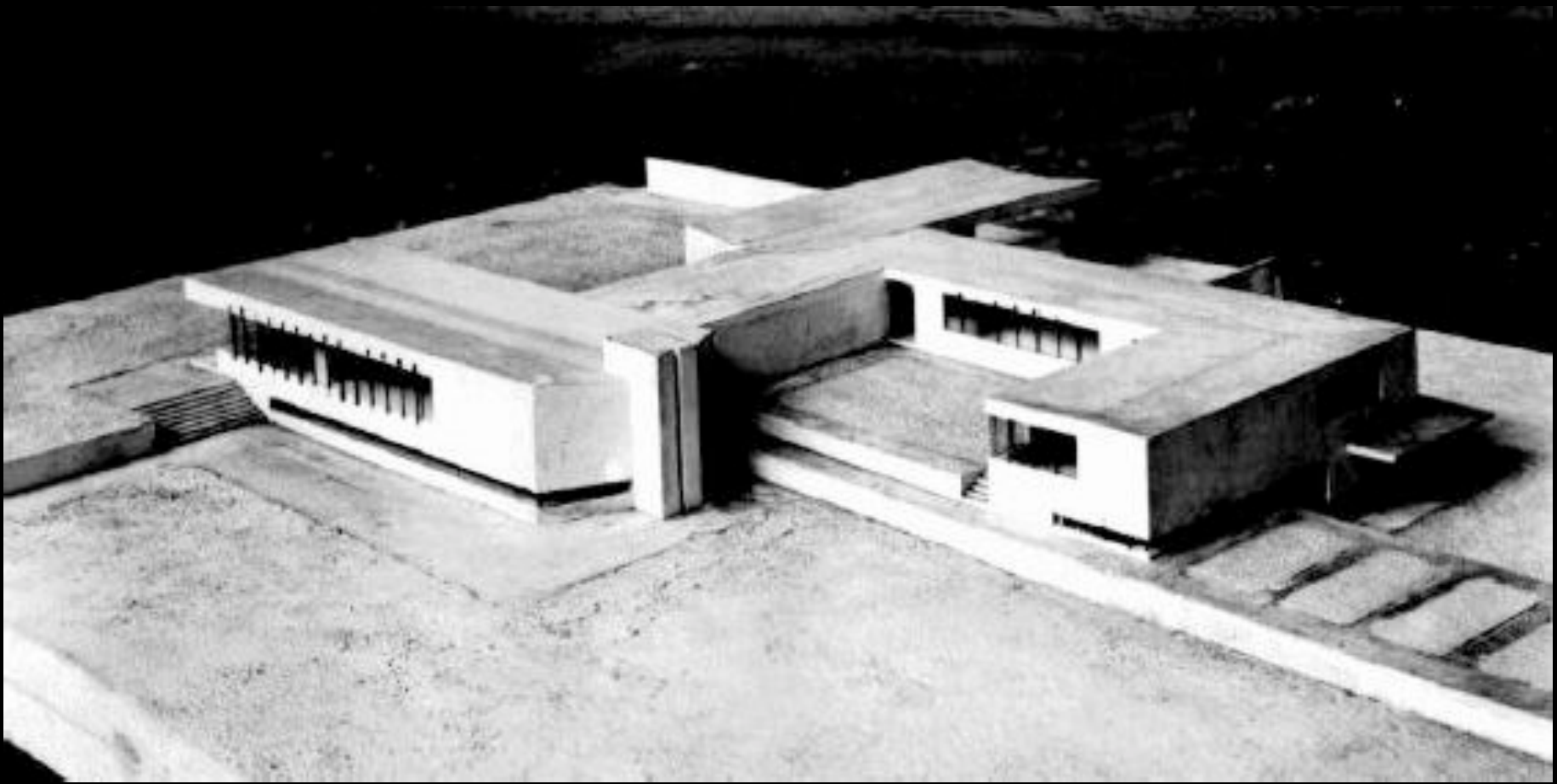


Gerrit Rietveld, Red-Blue  
Chair, 1917-18

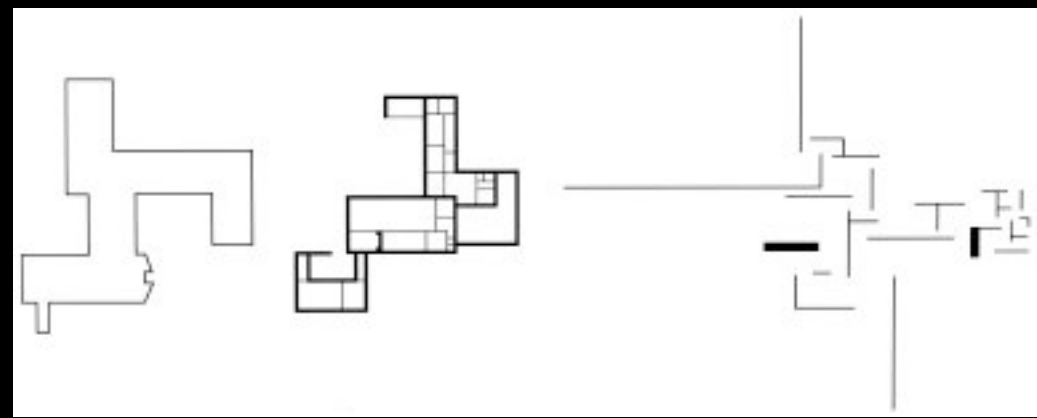
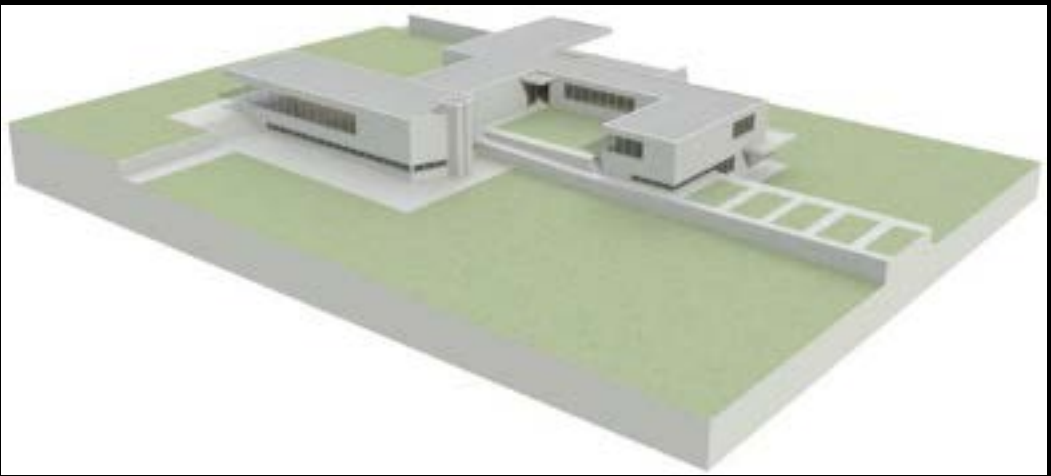


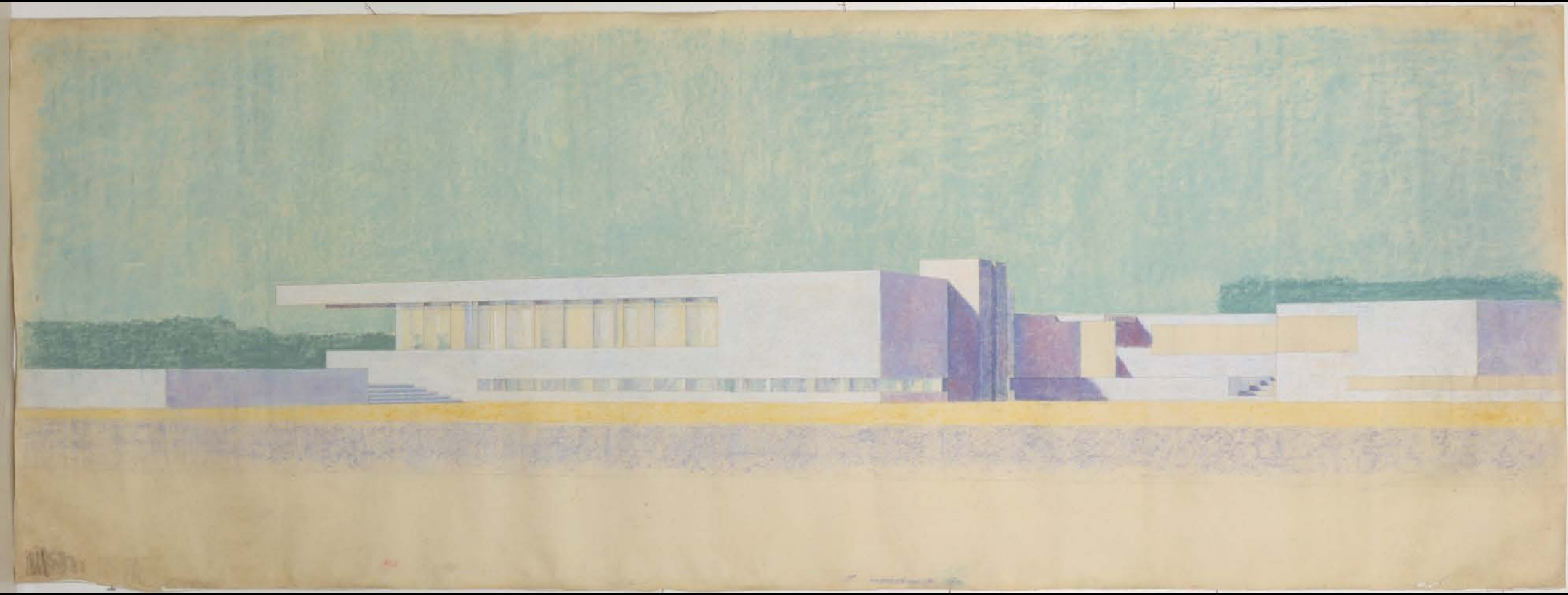
Mies van der Rohe,  
Project for a Brick  
Country House,  
1923





Mies van der Rohe, Project for a Concrete Country House, 1923



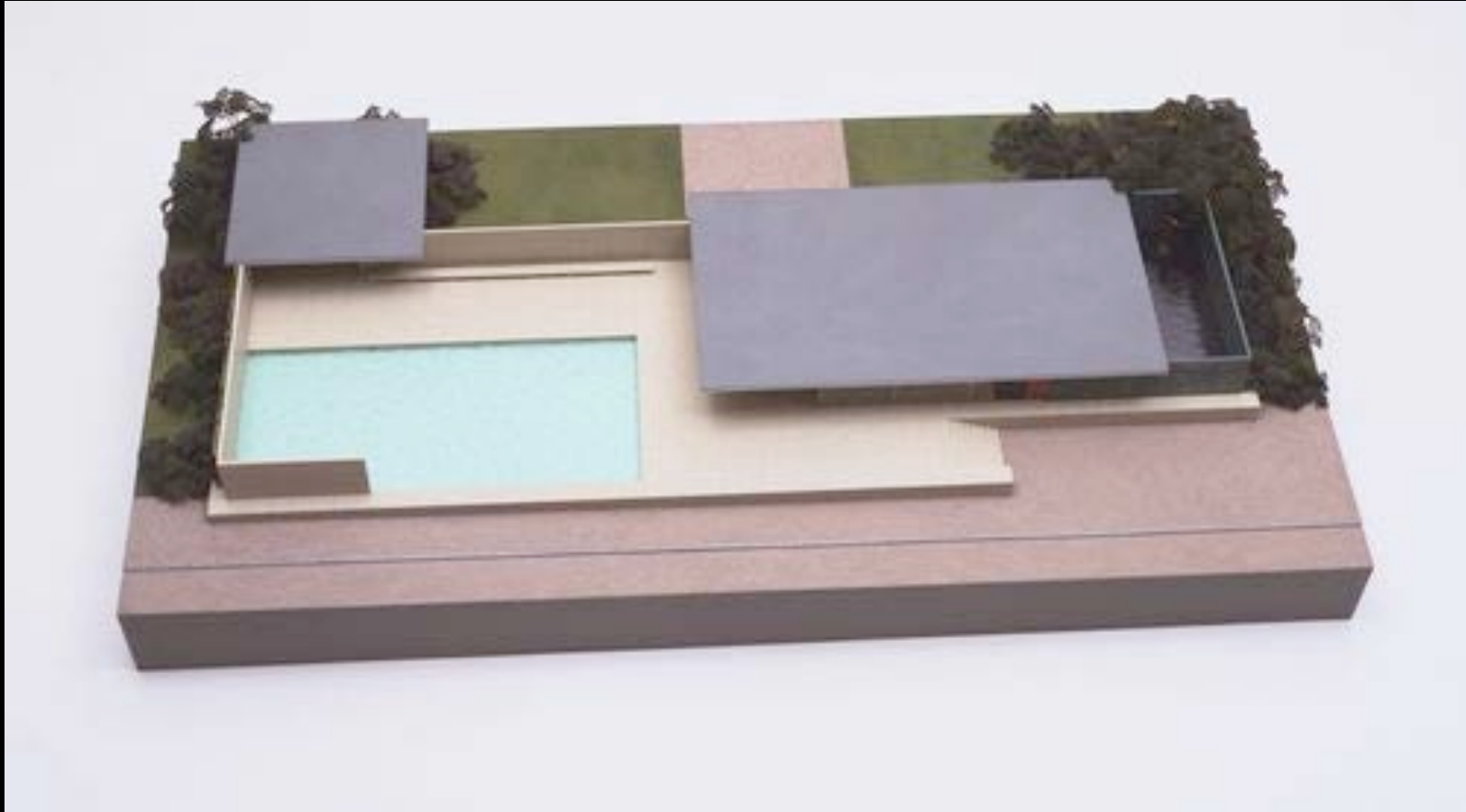


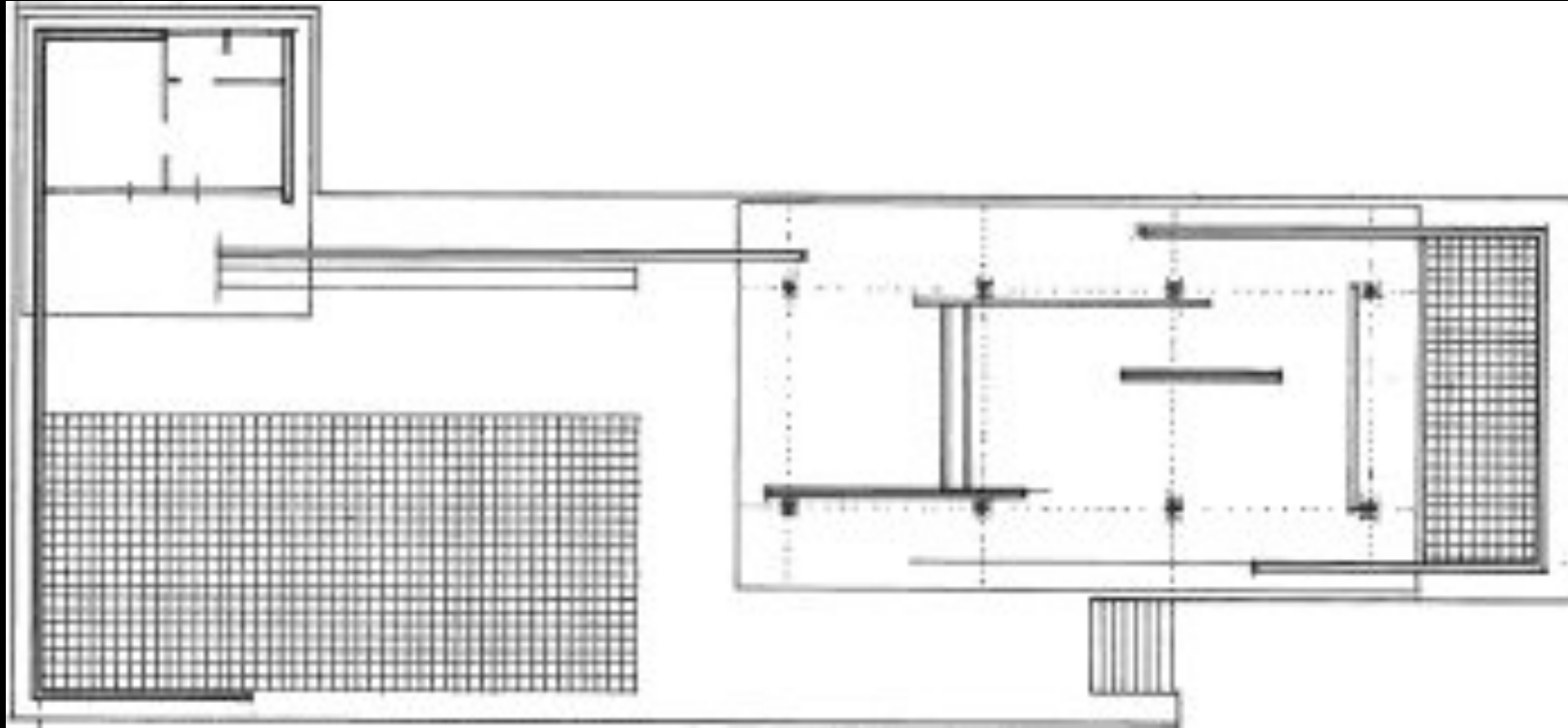


The German Pavilion was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) as the German national pavilion for the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition. Built from glass, steel and different kinds of marble, the Pavilion was conceived to accommodate the official reception presided over by King Alfonso XIII of Spain along with the German authorities.

Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, German Pavilion, World Exhibition, Barcelona, 1929

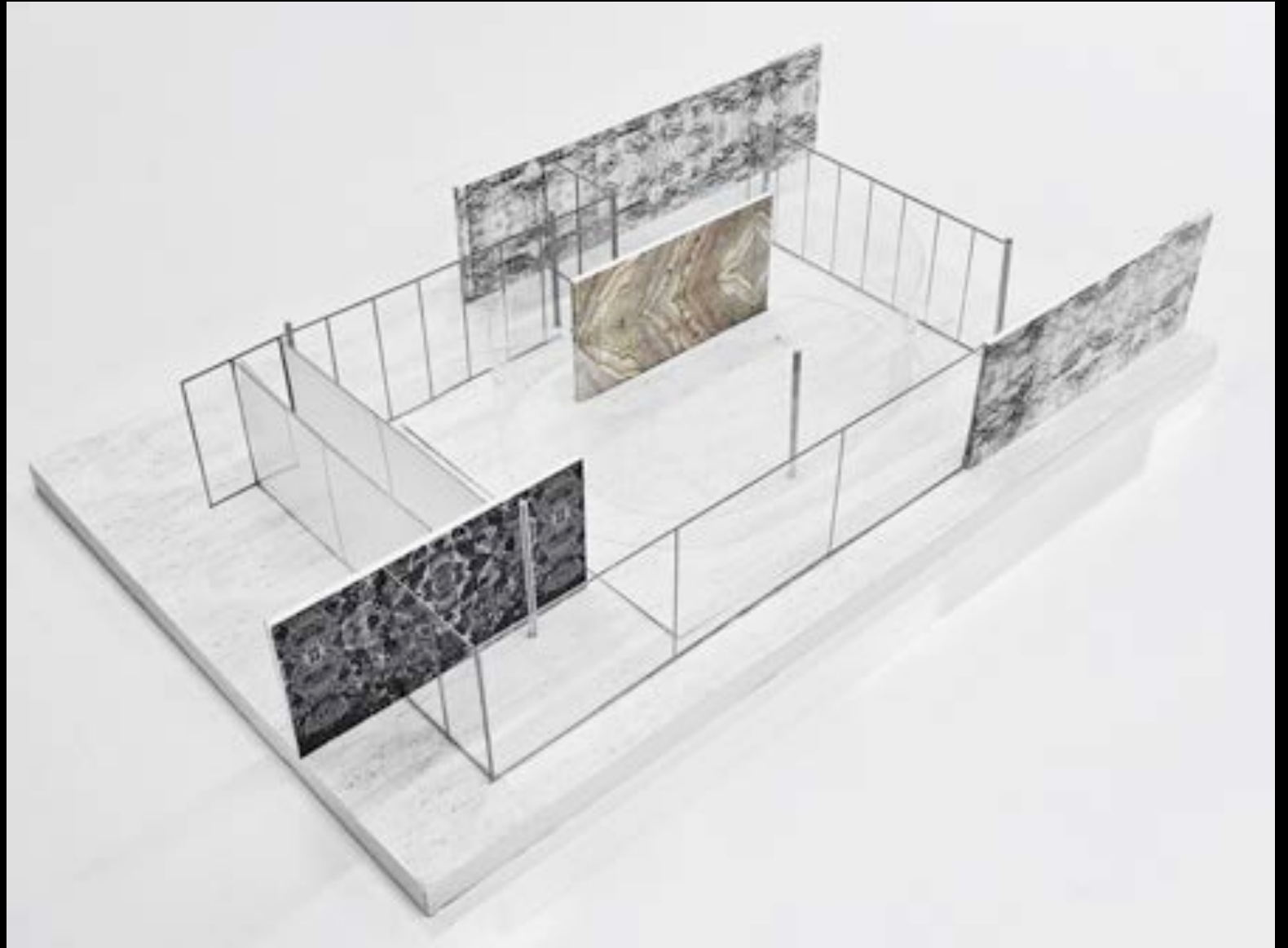
- Designed as the German national pavilion for the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition.
- Built from glass, steel and different kinds of marble, the Pavilion was conceived to accommodate the official reception presided over by King Alfonso XIII of Spain along with the German authorities.
- After the closure of the Exhibition, the Pavilion was disassembled in 1930.
- Reconstructed 1986

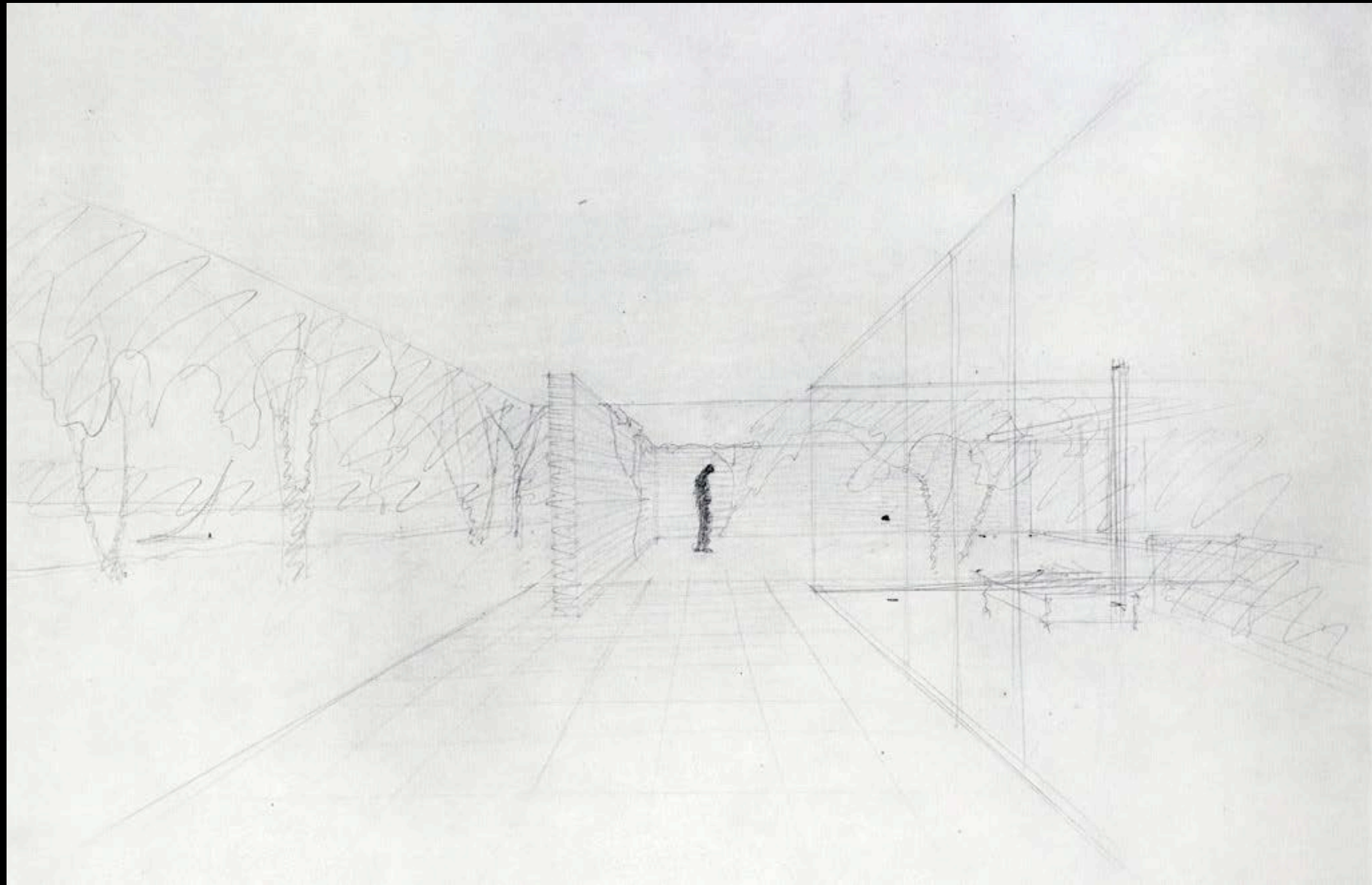




- Between 1925 and 1938 Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe collaborated closely on different projects, and in 1928 she was named “artistic director” of the German section of the Barcelona Exhibition, thus sharing the same position held by Mies van der Rohe.
- Her situation in the National Socialist Germany was not easy, she spent three years in a forced labor camp during the war.
- After the conflict, she struggled to try to get Berlin back to normal, and was responsible for the restoration of the Deutscher Werkbund, which was finally restored in 1950, after her death.

Glass, steel and four different kinds of stone (Roman travertine, green Alpine marble, ancient green marble from Greece and golden onyx from the Atlas Mountains) were used for the reconstruction, all of the same characteristics and provenance as the ones originally employed by Mies in 1929.





*beinahe nichts* – almost nothing





Glass, steel and four different kinds of stone (Roman travertine, green Alpine marble, ancient green marble from Greece and golden onyx from the Atlas Mountains) were used for the reconstruction, all of the same characteristics and provenance as the ones originally employed by Mies in 1929.

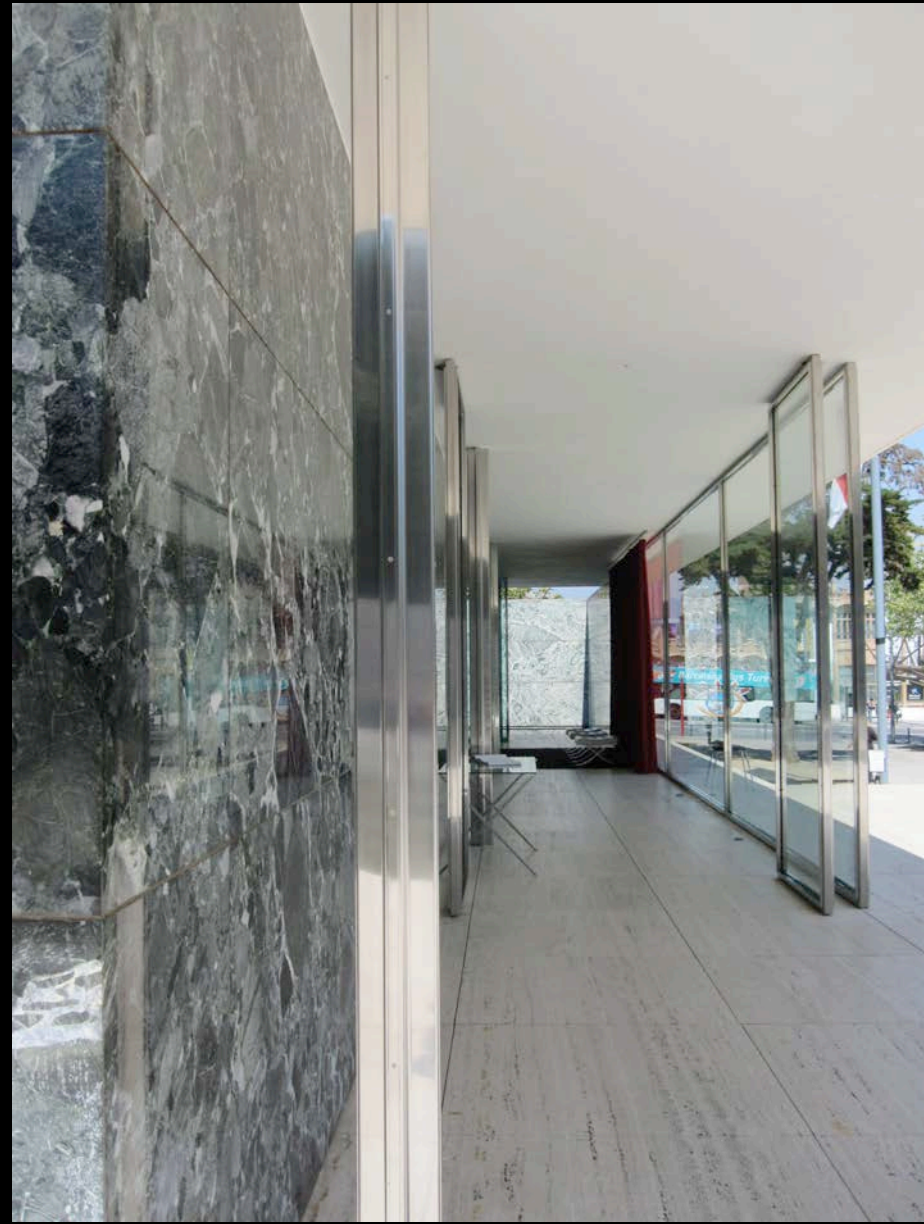
Building reconstructed 1983-86

The sculpture is a bronze reproduction of "Dawn" by Georg Kolbe, a contemporary of Mies van der Rohe. Placed at one end of the small pond, the sculpture is reflected not only in the water but also in the marble and glass, thereby creating the sensation that it is multiplied in space, while its curves contrast with the geometrical simplicity and minimalism of the building.



Barcelona Chair







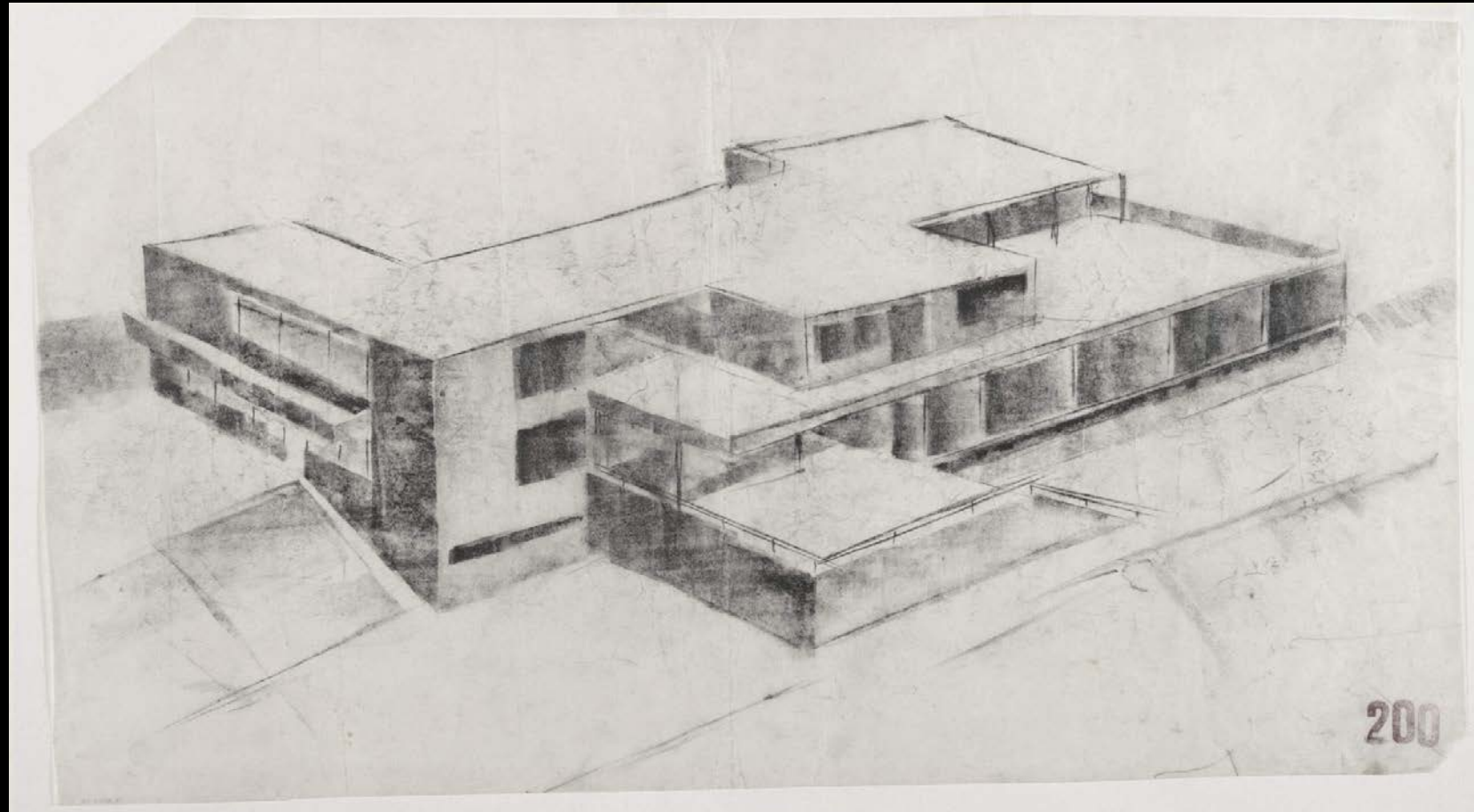
Horizontal Column Section

Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat House, Brno, Czech Republic, 1930



The Villa Tugendhat was commissioned by the wealthy newlyweds Grete & Fritz Tugendhat, a Jewish couple with family money from textile manufacturing companies in Brno. The couple met Mies van der Rohe in Berlin in 1927, and was already impressed by his design for the Zehlendorf house of Edward Fuchs. As fans of spacious homes with simple forms, Mies' free plan method was perfect for the Tugendhats' taste.

Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat House, Brno, Czech Republic, 1930

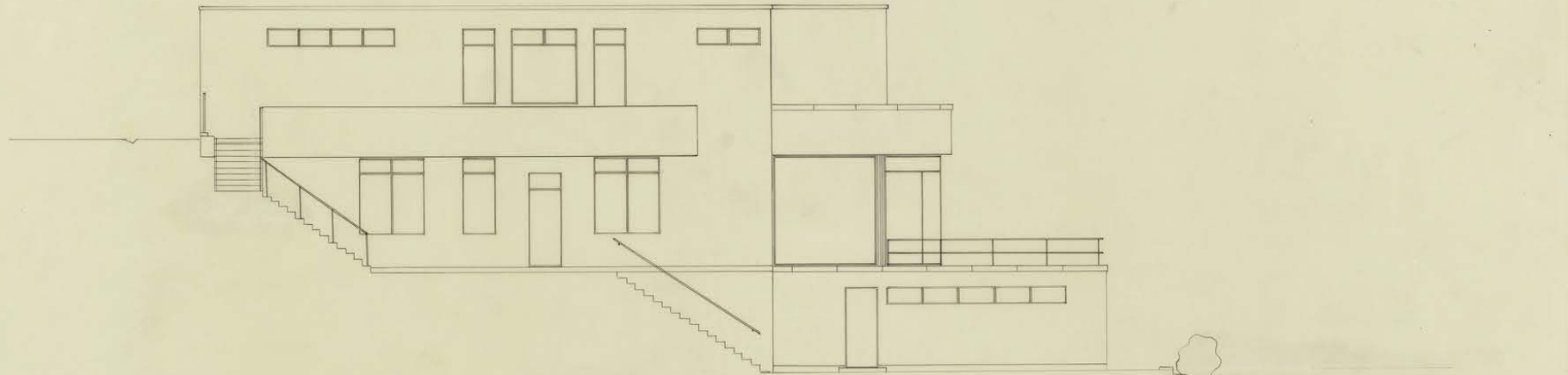






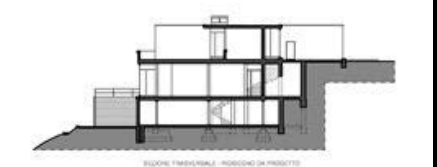
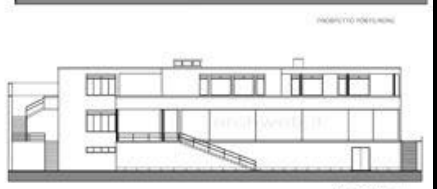
HAUS TUGENDHAT BRUNN

WESTANSICHT M. 1:50





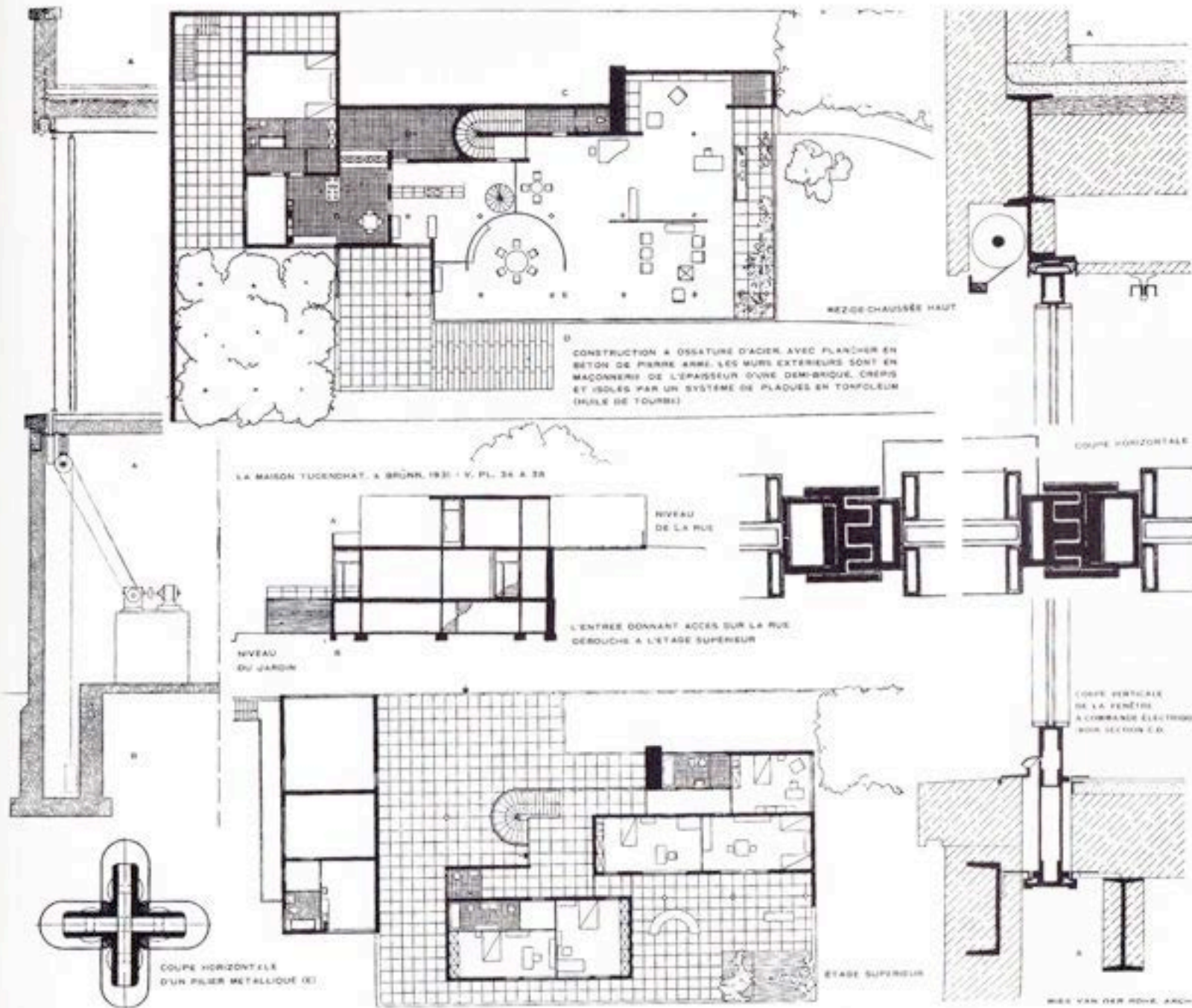
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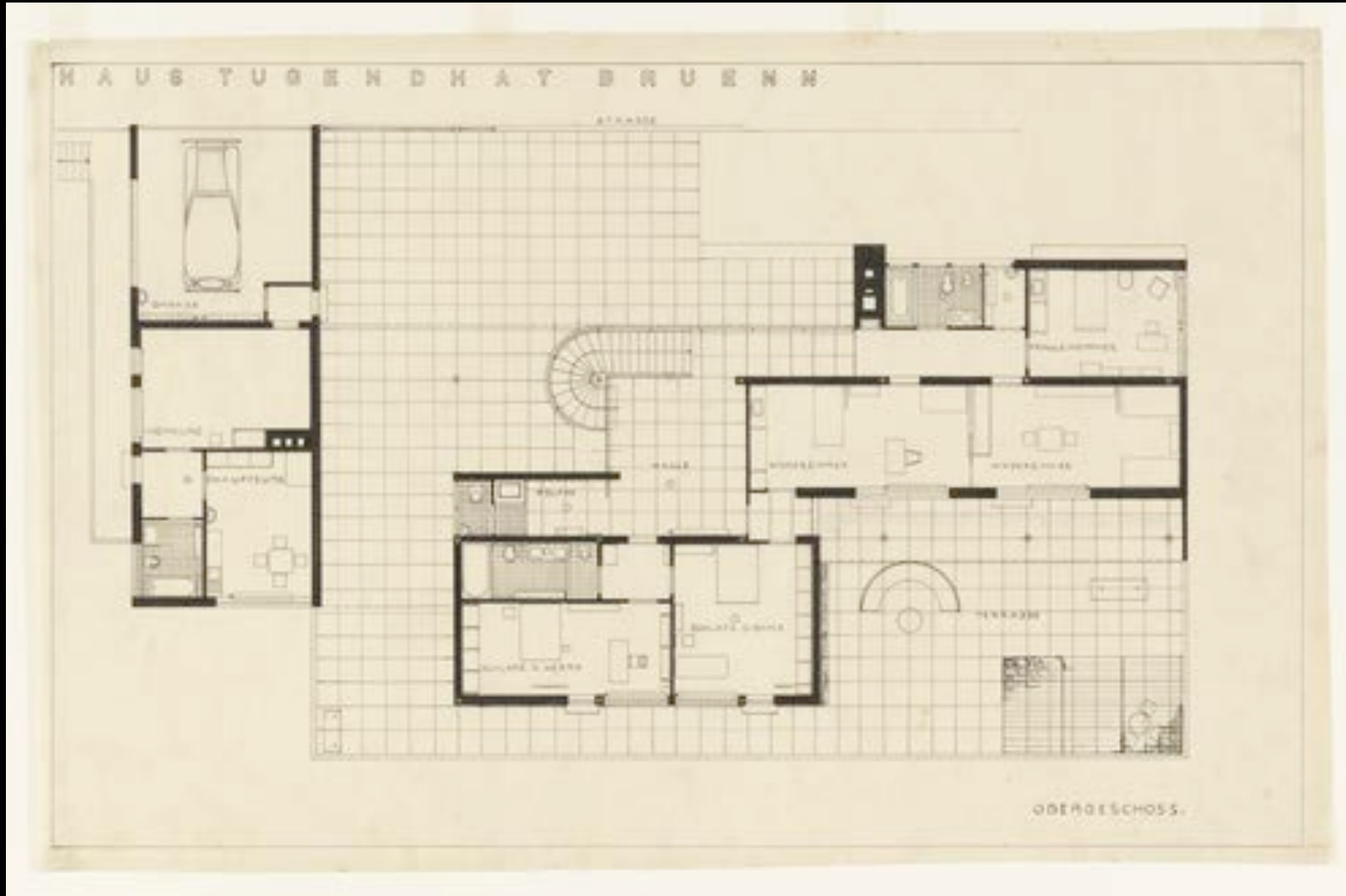


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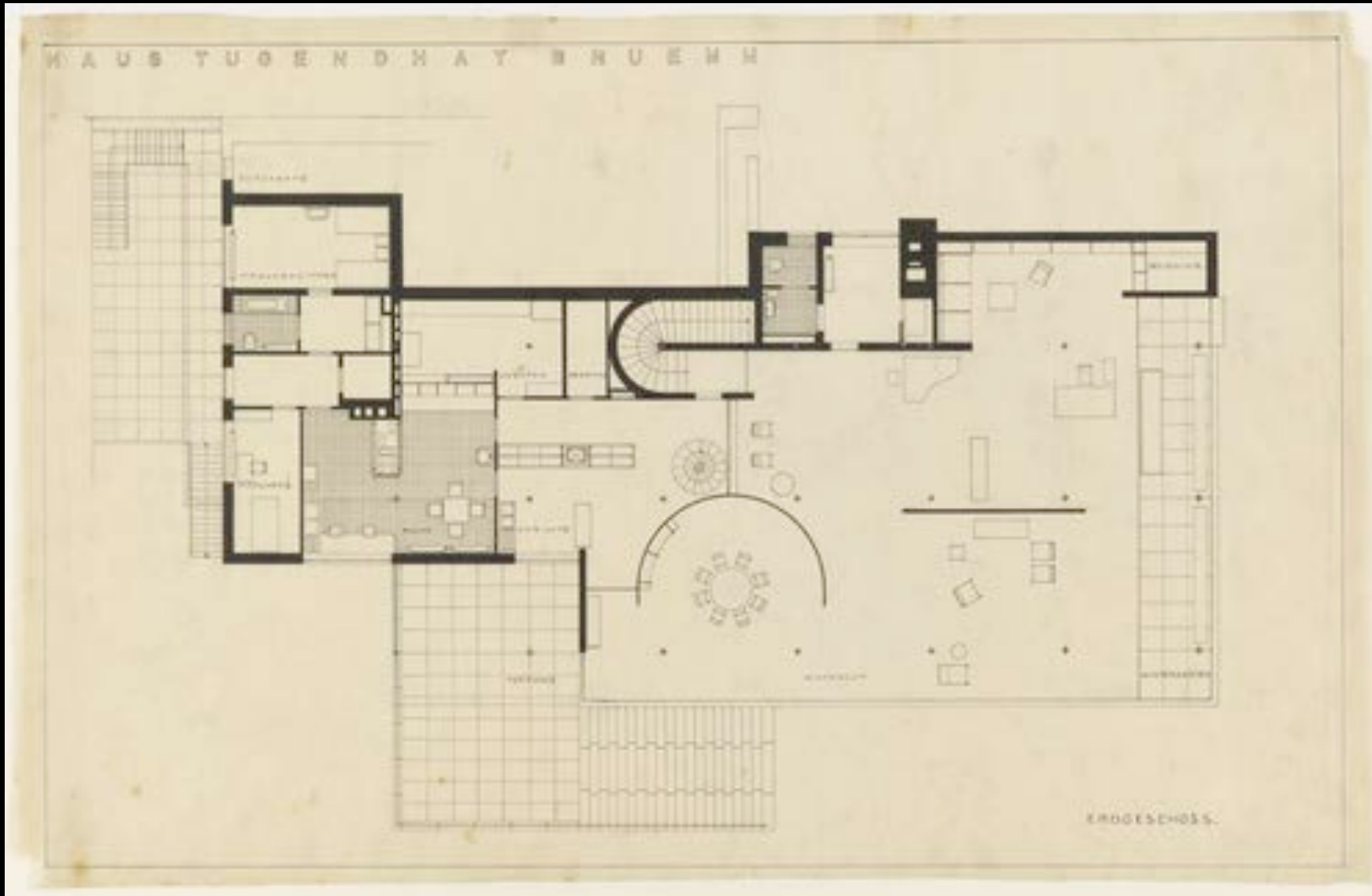
The Southeast and garden facades were completely glazing from floor to ceiling. The villa Tugendhat was a rather large house, complete with two children's bedrooms and nanny's quarters that shared a bathroom at the front of the house, while the master bed and bath were at the rear and connected to the terrace. A housekeeper's flat and staff quarters were also included in the design.

## Tugendhat House, First Floor Plan

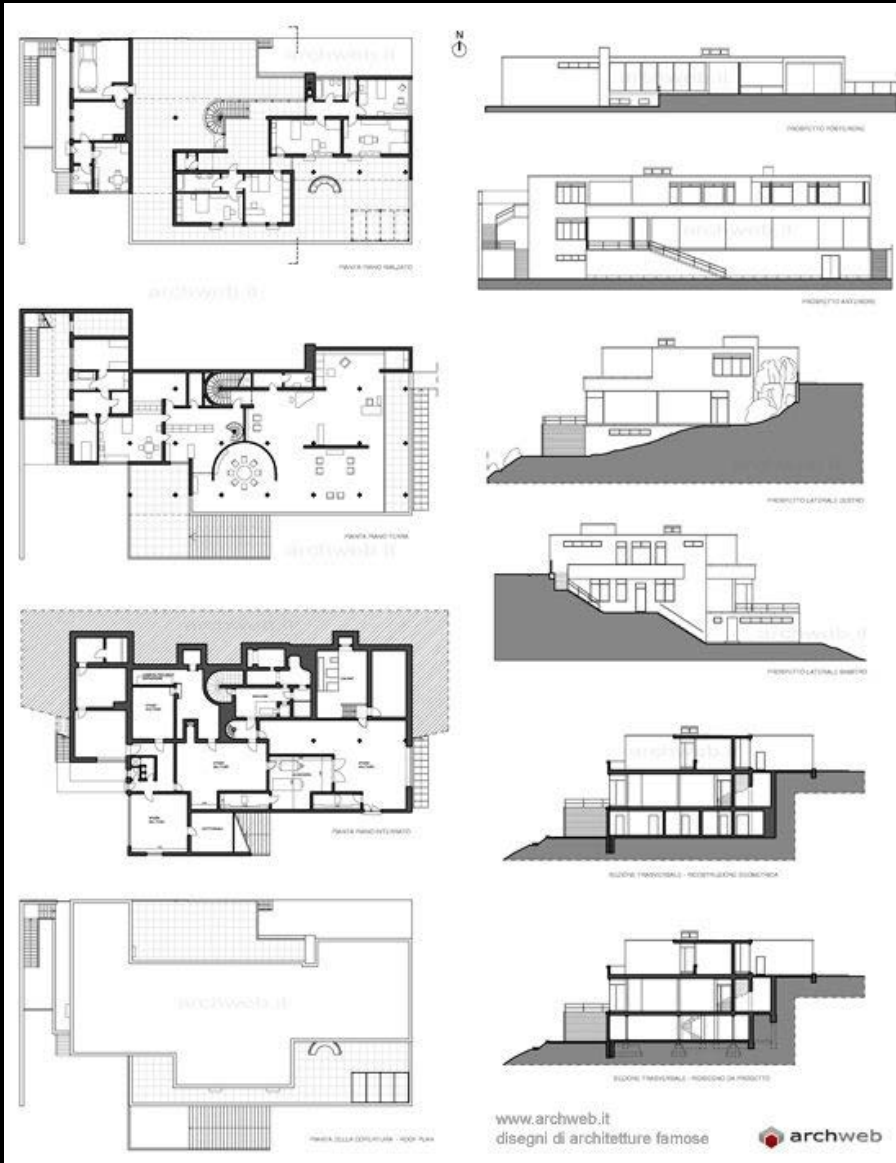


- The third story (first floor) includes a small entrance, hidden from the street, with a hall and communication core, which on the street side leads into the corridor and the two children's rooms, governess' room, bathroom and WC. On the garden side it leads to Mr. Tugendhat's vestibule, Mrs. Tugendhat's suite and bathroom, before which there is a dressing room and, on the opposite side, another vestibule leading onto the terrace. From the hallway there is also a straight stairway leading down to the main story.

## Tugendhat House, Main Story



- The second, main story (ground floor), to which there is an entrance via a spiral clockwise staircase from the hall, and which is also accessed from the side, north-west front, is made up of three parts: the main living area with a winter garden measuring ca. 280 m², i.e. almost two-thirds of the entire floor space, with only subtle divisions between the other rooms with other functions: reception room, music corner, study with library and seating corner, larger sitting area and dining room.



- On the first storey (basement), accessed from inside the building by a spiral staircase from the food preparation hall, and two exits to the outside, there are utility rooms, which were used for the domestic economy and technical running of the house and a photographic laboratory.
- The second, main storey (ground floor), to which there is an entrance via a spiral clockwise staircase from the hall, and which is also accessed from the side, north-west front, is made up of three parts: the main living area with a winter garden measuring ca. 280 m², i.e. almost two-thirds of the entire floor space, with only subtle divisions between the other rooms with other functions: reception room, music corner, study with library and seating corner, larger sitting area and dining room.
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MICHAEL SEAN LEE















- The Tugendhat family left Czechoslovakia for Venezuela in 1938 shortly before The Munich Agreement and never returned.
- The Nazi Gestapo set up flats and offices in the abandoned house during the World War II, when most of the windows were blown out during air raids and the original furniture was eventually all stolen.
- The villa was used in 1992 for the formal signing that separated the country into the present day Czech Republic and Slovakia, and since 1994 has been open to the public as a museum.
- Heirs of Fritz and Grete Tugendhat filed for the reinstatement of the villa into their ownership in 2007 on the basis of laws in place regarding works of art confiscated during the Holocaust.

