

LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE

Acknowledgments

The author thanks those who contributed to the preparation of this work, initially published in 1994, in a series conceived by Éric Hazan and designed by Roman Cieslewicz. The early research received the support of Pierre Adler and Terence Riley at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Cristina C. Carbone at the Prints and Photographic Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The majority of articles cited in the text were collected by Petra Marguc, Hasan Dolan, and Ariela Katz. The generosity of Lord Palumbo made it possible for the author to visit the Farnsworth House, which was then closed to the public. Philip Johnson kindly shared with the author his memories of Germany in the 1930s.

The development of this edition, revised and greatly expanded in 2007, which was reprinted here, is due to the initiative of Jean-François Barrielle. The ground was laid for it during a seminar held at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in the fall of 1997. The 2007 edition took into account the wise comments of Phyllis Lambert, which had been included in translations of the first edition, as well as stimulating exchanges with Claire Zimmerman and Dietrich Neumann. The text also took up aspects of an essay published in 2001, at the request of Barry Bergdoll and Terence Riley, in *Mies in Berlin*. The bibliography was updated with the help of Anna Jozefacka. Some of the many new illustrations were added thanks to Louise Désy and Howard Shubert at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. Finally, the 2007 book benefited from the efficient editorial coordination of Emmanuelle Levesque.

The text of this third edition, which has been made possible by the unfailing support of Ria Stein at Birkhäuser, and the help of Jérôme Gille at Editions Hazan, has been left mostly unchanged. Some footnotes have been updated or added, and the bibliography substantially expanded.

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Sylvie Milliet with Marie Donzelli, Vanves
LAYOUT OF THE ENGLISH EDITION: Alexandra Zöller, Berlin
COVER DESIGN: Jean-Marc Barrier, Vanves,
adapted for the English edition by Alexandra Zöller, Berlin
EDITORIAL COORDINATION: Emmanuelle Levesque with
Anne Chapoutot, Vanves
TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH:
Elizabeth Kugler, Wayland, MA
COORDINATION OF THE ENGLISH AND GERMAN EDITION:
Ria Stein, Berlin
PRODUCTION: Amelie Solbrig, Berlin
LITHOGRAPHY: Reproscan, Orio al Serio
PAPER: Magno matt, 150 g/m²
PRINTING: Beltz Grafische Betriebe GmbH

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018946879

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek
Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the
Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

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Original title "MIES VAN DER ROHE," written by Jean-Louis Cohen,
published by Editions Hazan, 2007
© Editions Hazan, Paris, 1994
© Editions Hazan, Paris, 2007

English edition:
© 2018 Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH, Basel
P.O. Box 44, 4009 Basel, Switzerland
Part of Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

This publication is also available as an e-book
(ISBN PDF 978-3-0356-1681-1) and in a German language edition
(ISBN 978-3-0356-1665-1).

Printed on acid-free paper produced from chlorine-free pulp. TCF ∞

Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-0356-1664-4

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

www.birkhauser.com

Jean-Louis Cohen

Ludwig **Mies van der Rohe**

Third and updated edition

Birkhäuser
Basel



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Opposite:
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,
Berlin, 1934.

PREFACE

Mies Today

The following pages might have seemed presumptuous when the first edition of this book was published in 1994. To try to convey in such a slender volume the depth and scope of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's contribution to the architecture of the twentieth century was no easy task. It is no less difficult a dozen years later. After decades of bland criticism, the architect's doctrinal positions, biography, and conceptual work have been elucidated by the publications that accompanied or followed the centennial of his birth, celebrated in 1986 in Europe and in the United States.¹ Previously, apart from the occasional creative aperçu, the accepted image of Mies van der Rohe's work was based on a small number of buildings and a collection of aphorisms worn out by repetitive use or misuse.

Of course, Mies never went through the purgatory sometimes required for artistic or literary giants to become the father figures that are customarily conjured. Despite several vigorous critiques, such as the one by Robert Venturi, his stature was not lowered during the high season of Postmodernism. However, the "Mies effect" relied on simplifications and shortcuts even more schematic than those which were just beginning to be discredited in the study of Le Corbusier. But if the initial foundations of the historical mausoleum raised to glorify the German-American architect were often built upon textual and visual falsifica-

tions, the paucity of source material was in no way compensated for by the accumulation of clichés and shallow half-truths. The flood of details and anecdotes brought on by the opening of the archives has, fortunately, been accompanied by a body of refreshing reinterpretations, virtually erasing decades of generalizations.² And the two major exhibitions – "Mies in Berlin" and "Mies in America," mounted in 2001 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal – marked the high point in a research campaign that became more collective in anticipation of a new generation of monographs made possible by this research.³

Thus began a true rediscovery of Mies van der Rohe, clearing away the generalizations and factual errors, but also accompanied by new interpretations of his thinking and architectural approach. The sources of his work now appear more numerous and more diffuse. His early work in Berlin escapes the mythification of the figure of Behrens, who used to dominate, and the intellectual milieu that he frequented before 1914 come into new relief.⁴ Formerly neglected, the exterior spaces and the urban developments conceived by Mies are now better known. The German and American sponsors become more concrete figures in their often enduring fidelity toward Mies. Without the persistence of Hermann Lange or Herbert Greenwald, his built work would not have been

able to take on its full dimension either in Germany or in the United States. With such clients, Mies's professional practice, long nebulous or rather reduced to a sort of black box, reveals its collective dimension through the testimonies given by his former collaborators.

As was the case with Le Corbusier, the images produced or used by Mies were studied in their mode of production and use. These privileged mediums for project work and for the dissemination of his oeuvre now appear as documents developed between Mies and his collaborators, often drawing on issues of artistic modernity, as in the case of the collages. Mies was very aware of the stakes of representation of his work, and the relationships he maintained with photographers are also greatly elucidated, at least with regard to the German phase of his work.⁵ Even more surprising for an architect whose creations have nothing immaterial about them, the corpus of his built work continues to grow with the discovery of archival documents attesting to the construction of projects considered unfinished, such as the Warnholtz House, whose destruction went as unnoticed as its construction.... Moreover, as buildings partially or entirely attributable to Mies – such as the Heusgen and Ryder Houses and a modest expansion of a school in Potsdam – come to light, they reveal the existence of works that were often hybrid, carried out in the margins of his canonical production.

Mies always had the greatest difficulty in writing texts more than half a page long, and he never completed the only book project that he ever planned, a work entitled *Baukunst*, commissioned in 1925.⁶ Since the 1930s Mies's relatively few words left open the space for a mythic discourse that was substantiated by first-hand witnesses such as Philip Johnson, then by historians such as Arthur Drexler and by former staff members at his Chicago office. This rendered still more deafening the silence of Sigfried Giedion, who omitted Mies from several successive editions of *Space, Time and Architecture*, that monumental chronicle of the Modern Movement.⁷ It was the very holes in the fabric of knowledge that afforded such scope to sensational analyses concerning, for example, Mies's relationship with the Nazi regime;⁸ new interpretations started to appear in the mid-1970s, and their authenticity was put to the test at the centennial. The most outspoken of the sworn enemies of the Modern Movement saw in the work of an architect who “wanted to be free – new every morning” the “spirit of the triumphant industrial world,”⁹ even though most research tends to support the image of a Mies who profoundly respected the great edifices of European history.

A study of his correspondence and designs reveals a new picture of the architect, with his intellectual, philosophical, and religious outlook more clearly defined.¹⁰ It is this view

of Mies – as seen through his daily work, his professional strategies, his philosophical reflections, and his private person – that makes possible an undertaking such as the present book. Whereas his architecture was once reduced to a closed set of icons, he now appears as a more cultivated figure than Philip Johnson was prepared to admit when he sarcastically alluded to the three thousand books that Mies said he had left behind in Germany.¹¹ Mies's desire to be considered a profound thinker and his propensity for aphorisms and sententious statements have been unfairly interpreted as indicative of “a deep, pervasive, and lifelong insecurity about his intellectual qualifications,”¹² but now that his philosophical and literary contacts and interests are better known, the picture becomes more complex. The philosophical and scientific material that his patrons in Berlin and no doubt his wife encouraged him to read makes it possible to better understand the essential ideas and expressions in his discourse, and his artistic reading matter gives a useful index to interpret the guiding features of some of his projects.

His architectural work, built and unbuilt, designed over six decades of professional activity, has often been reduced to clichés about the “open plan” or “modern space” or an obsession with structural engineering. As we now see, this body of work is in fact shaped by a philosophy of construction and the definition

of new spaces, which is inseparable from a concern for order, both structural and monumental. A solitary figure whose work was rooted in the technology and ethos of the second machine age, Mies was no nihilist. The direction of his work cannot be explained simply by his own experiences; it is inseparable from explicit and implicit relationships established with several generations of architects – as is shown by the notes written in 1959 for his acceptance speech for the RIBA gold medal, in which he lists the inspirations in his initial quest for an understanding of architecture: Messel, Behrens, Olbrich, Berlage, Lutyens, Voysey, Baillie Scott, and Mackintosh.¹³ In fact, beyond the figures of his elders, Berlage and Behrens, Mies never lost sight of either Viollet-le-Duc (with his precept that “any form that is not determined by structure must be rejected”) or Schinkel, whom he considered “the greatest classicist we had.”¹⁴

Further back in history, Mies always maintained an intellectual affinity with medieval architecture and with Greece, which (unlike Rome) was a world of culture and not of mere civilization.¹⁵ For the same reasons as Auguste Perret, he offered a new interpretation of the ideal of a “Graeco-Gothic” architecture, as expressed by the French rationalists of the nineteenth century. Unlike Perret, he did this by integrating the issues of modern art into his work.

His relationships with his contemporaries remained more complex: Mies never missed an opportunity to point out everything that separated him from individuals like Walter Gropius, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier and from avant-garde groups such as De Stijl and the Constructivists.¹⁶ Presenting himself, in the interviews that he gave at the end of his life, as a solitary hero who rebelled against passing fashions, and reproaching his contemporaries for their obsession with the present, Mies emphasized the distinction between the meaning of continuity and mere historicism, conscientiously applying the slogan formulated in his manifesto of 1924, “Baukunst und Zeitwille!” (Construction and Contemporaneity!), which states: “It is not possible to go forward while looking back.”¹⁷ One year earlier, he had confirmed his strong desire to free *Bauerei* – “buildery,” we might say, as distinct from architecture – from aesthetic fancy, to give the word *Bauen* (to build) its full force.¹⁸

Drawn toward constructive rationality on the one hand, and, on the other, toward the search for a *firmitas* that would be more institutional than physical, Mies always saw architecture as the expression of a certain *Zeitwille* (will of the age). The refined expression is based on those unchanging values that can be read in a Platonic perspective.¹⁹ The monoliths of steel and glass built in American cities reflect this inclination toward *Bauen*: building using a lim-

ited repertoire of forms devoid of aesthetic intention and intended to serve rather than to interpret.

Mies van der Rohe’s belief in Order and Truth, independent of human circumstances, evolved over many years and found its expression in his personal relationships with his clients and with those closest to him. There has been much talk – sometimes too much – of his lack of interest in some clients’ expectations. As he said in 1964, he “never sought commissions,” but always “let the clients come to [him]”: “He who comes to me knows what he will have: the true Mies. And this is simplest and best, at least for the client himself.”²⁰ If the Farnsworth House is not uninhabitable, as some have suggested,²¹ it is true that the Esters sweltered behind the glass of their fully south-facing house. Trivial by comparison with the daily tribulations of the inhabitants of houses built by Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright, these clients’ troubles were accepted by Mies with a certain amused condescension. In 1930 he imposed on the Tugendhats, in their Brno villa, a whole set of furniture that, he said, they “must learn to like”; in 1959 he declared, “We should treat our clients as children, not as architects.”²²

Here we see his character. Distant with his family, reserved with regard to feelings – “Everybody has emotions and this is the hell of our time” – he had, by his own admission,

nothing of the sentimentalist about him.²³ A monolithic figure clad in wool and silk, he was rendered still more of an immovable object late in life, when arthritis struck; this elegant massiveness in some way served as a human metaphor for his American architecture.

What, then, can be the role of this book in the face of Mies's monumental achievement? It is no longer possible to restrict a commentary to the finished work of his "major" buildings alone, as in the compact monographs published from the 1960s onward; but at the same time, the limitations of this series, conceived by Éric Hazan, make it impossible to cover all the ramifications of ten years' research. I have therefore decided to concentrate on a limited number of designs and structures and to discuss them in depth, with full reference to their specific historical and biographical significance. In particular, I have tried to let Mies speak for himself, something he did more often than people might think. His own comments on his work, often retrospective, will in this way give a personal resonance to the places that he created – a resonance that he would no doubt have wanted to eliminate, but without which his comments are difficult to understand.

The 2007 edition did not contradict the original approach, but rather consolidated it in some ways. It corrected the blunders and slips scattered in the original edition, introduced more

in-depth analyses of buildings that had been inexplicably neglected, such as the Esters and Lange Houses and the Toronto Dominion Center, and it offered a more generous visual survey, thanks to the new format of the book. Some of the initial hunches have been replaced by more developed arguments that I have had the opportunity to make, especially with regard to Mies's relationship with America before his exile. Other reflections, which were too brief, have been clarified thanks to 'Miesologues' on both sides of the Atlantic, to whom I offer a brotherly tribute.

This third edition remains substantially unchanged, while listing the overabundant literature published since 2007.²⁴ The scholarly production by Barry Bergdoll, "Fifteen Years of Publication on Mies van der Rohe (2000–2015)," published 2014 in *Architectura*, which has been rich in new interpretation, has brought to the light several unknown buildings of Mies built during the Weimar period and early Nazi Germany.²⁵ Other practices of Mies, such as film, and the design of wallpapers, have been investigated.²⁶ The new contributions have been listed in an expanded bibliography. Some footnotes indicate relevant new sources.

Paris, June 2018



1. CHILDHOOD IN THE RHINELAND AND EARLY DAYS IN BERLIN (1886–1914)

Opposite:
Hugo Perls House, Berlin-
Zehlendorf, 1911, garden
façade.

Above:
Peter Behrens, German
Embassy, St. Petersburg,
1912.



Impressions from Aachen

Ludwig Mies built his first house at the age of twenty, in Neubabelsberg, a very middle-class residential suburb of Berlin. Like the chalets that the young Charles-Édouard Jeanneret built at La Chaux-de-Fonds and then meticulously deleted from his oeuvre in spite of the favorable publicity they attracted upon their completion, Mies's early creations would remain absent from major exhibitions and publications on his work until the 1980s. And yet his early career led him in just a few years from a provincial childhood and adolescence in the Rhineland to Berlin, where he became a fashionable success.

The impression left by his early life in Aachen remained strong. He often claimed that his Catholic family had Celtic origins.¹ His father, Michael Mies, was a mason and stonecutter, and Ludwig was steeped in the building trade from the outset. The youngest of five children of Michael Mies and Amalie Rohe, he would remain the lifelong friend of his older brother Ewald. But the negative connotations of his surname (in German *mies* means wretched) would lead him to coin a new one for himself by borrowing the name of his mother (Rohe is the Germanized version of the Walloon Roé)²: starting in 1921, he would call himself Miës (van der) Rohe, adding a diaeresis to his legal name.

In a town transformed by growth and modernization, Michael Mies built fireplaces, main-



Palatine Chapel, Aachen,
796-805, the modern
marble cladding on a
column.
MIES VAN DER ROHE

tained the cathedral masonry, and built many tombs in partnership with his brother. The young Ludwig would remember the traditional houses that were progressively replaced by speculative apartment blocks, as well as the impression of strength of the cathedral and the Palatine Chapel, built by Charlemagne between 796 and 805:

“I remember seeing many old buildings in my hometown when I was young. Few of them were important buildings. They were mostly very simple, but very clear. I was impressed by the strength of these buildings because they did not belong to any epoch. They had been there for over a thousand years and were still impressive, and nothing could change that. All the great styles passed, but they were still there. They didn’t lose anything and they were still as good as on the day they were built. They were medieval buildings, not with any special character but they were really *built*.”³

Mies attended the Catholic Cathedral School from 1896 to 1899, then the Craft Day School from 1899 to 1901. Following this technical and vocational training, quite different from the classical curriculum at the Gymnasium (which he attended for two years), he completed his education with evening classes in building, civil engineering, mathematics, and life drawing.⁴ Often enlisted by his father to carve inscriptions on headstones, he worked for a year as an unpaid apprentice bricklayer on local build-

Below left:
Bruno Paul, Westend
House, Berlin-
Charlottenburg, 1906.

Below right:
Bruno Paul, tennis club,
Berlin-Grunewald, 1908.

ing sites. Reminiscing in later life about brick-work, he would stress the difficulties involved in making angles and copings, but he insisted on the value of the experience in teaching him the details of construction.⁵

The Aachen cathedral, whose silhouette dominates the city, was only a symbolic center for the young Mies, who said he went there quite regularly with his mother.⁶ The Palatine Chapel, built on an octagonal plan that called to mind the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna,

could not but make an impression on him during the services. Its columns clad in slabs of landscape marble seem to anticipate the great onyx walls of the Barcelona Pavilion and the Tugendhat House. The importance of these columns is all the greater because their surface treatment took place just as Mies joined his father's stonecutting business. The Swiss Cipollino marble cladding, which was in fact conceived by the Hanover architect Hermann Schaper for the visit of the Kaiser in 1902, sparked a revolt among German architects

and historians against a regrettable "disfiguration." It is a safe bet that the job was assigned to Michael Mies and, even if he did not do the work himself, it is certain that the matter would have been discussed during meals at the family house... With the juxtaposition of its Carolingian columns covered in marble and its High Gothic stained-glass windows, the cathedral at Aachen announces two main themes of Mies's work: wall treatment and transparency.





Alois Riehl House,
Neubabelsberg, 1907–10,
general view up the slope.

The young Ludwig acquired practical experience both with craftsmen and architects. He was apprenticed to Max Fischer, a maker of plaster moldings, where he used vertical drawing boards, a habit he retained for a long time. Then, working for the architects Goebbels and (later) Albert Schneider, he became a draftsman valued for his skill in decorative ornament.⁸

While working in Schneider's office on the Tietz department store building, he found a copy of the literary review *Die Zukunft*, edited by Maximilian Harden; he continued to read more on his visits to the municipal library.⁹ Having thus whetted his interest in the intellectual life of the capital, he let himself be persuaded by Dulow, one of the architects in the practice, to

apply for jobs in Berlin advertised in *Die Bauwelt*. And so he left his native city in 1905 to start work as a draftsman in the municipal architecture department of the urban district of Rixdorf, southwest of Berlin, run by John Martens. There, under Reinhold Kiehl, he designed the paneling of the council chamber of the town hall – not without some difficulty, for up until then he had worked only with masonry.¹⁰

His time in the Kaiser's army was extremely short: he was discharged after a case of bronchitis that flared up following a collective punishment of his unit. Back in civilian life, he met the architect Bruno Paul in early 1906, when the latter was moving his practice from

Munich to Berlin. It was a decisive meeting. Mies became both a draftsman in Paul's office and a pupil at the two institutions where Paul taught, enrolling in the school of the Museum of Arts and Crafts (Kunstgewerbemuseum) and at the school of Fine Arts (Hochschule für bildende Künste) from the summer term of 1906 to the summer term of 1908.¹¹ He had a special position in the practice on account of his previous practical experience in construction. He specialized in furniture design. Paul had long been a successful caricaturist in the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*; over the next few years he expanded his work in Berlin, building blocks of flats and town houses and even fitting out the interiors of a number of German transatlantic liners.¹²

At left:
Alois Riehl House, entrance
hall.

Below:
Alois Riehl House,
floor plans.

At right:
Alois Riehl House, alcove
on the upper floor.



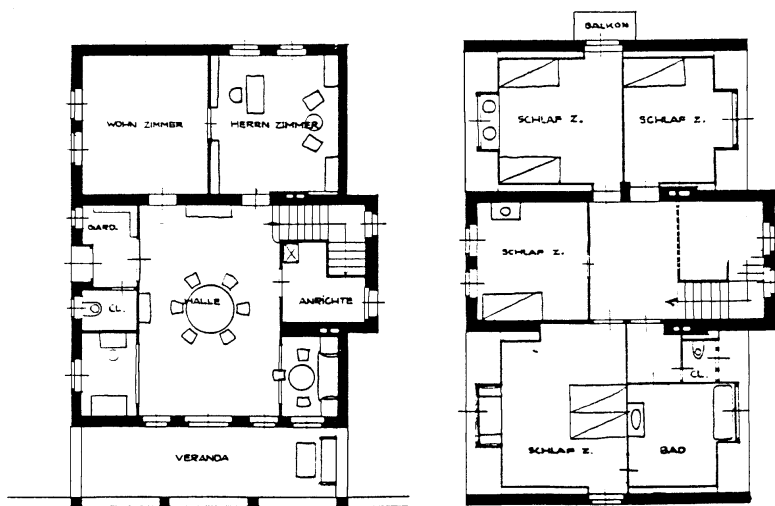
In 1906 Joseph Popp, an assistant to the artist Emil Orlik, in whose studio Mies was studying engraving, recommended the young architect to the wife of Alois Riehl, a professor of philosophy at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and a leading expert on Nietzsche. The Riehls were looking for a young architect to design a weekend and vacation house. From them, Mies obtained his first commission at the age of twenty; he insisted on carrying out the work unaided, refusing all offers of advice from Bruno Paul.¹³ It was completed in 1910 in an area of detached houses on a wooded slope in Neubabelsberg, an urban district later annexed by Potsdam; Mies was to design many other projects there, including the Urbig and Mosler Houses. Klösterli (the "Little Cloister") was built in 1907, a house of rendered brick with a steep roof.¹⁴ The end wall overlooking Lake Griebnitzsee opens into a loggia, which reproduces the rhythms used by Bruno Paul in his Westend House, built at the same time.

The interior of the house has a rectangular plan, which centers on a large hall, opening onto two lateral alcoves and onto a loggia similar to the one at Paul's Berlin Tennis Club, which Mies must have studied while working in Paul's office.¹⁵ The appearance of the end wall and that of the loggia perched on a long retaining parapet wall also recall the crematorium built the year before by Peter Behrens in the Ruhr, several dozen kilometers from Aachen.

A degree of English influence, received by way of Hermann Muthesius,¹⁶ appears in the design of the hall, whose paneling has a finesse that characterizes all of the interior detailing of this remarkably compact interior, right down to the alcoves on the second floor. The kitchen, the bookcases, and the radiator grilles reflect Mies's interest in built-in furniture. The layout of the house is dominated by the right angle between the axis of entry and the downhill view, with the lateral extension of the building treated as a platform, overlooked by a façade that

seems somewhat compressed by the top-heavy bulk of the roof. The detailing is faithful to the Prussian Biedermeier tradition of the early nineteenth century, which Paul Mebes praised in his successful book *Um 1800*, first published in 1908; from Mebes's book, the Stuckshof, next to the Langfuhr (today Wrzeszcz, outside Gdansk), seems to have given Mies the design motif for the main façade.¹⁷

This building, remarkably mature for such a young architect, was favorably received in





At left:
Alois Riehl House, side
façade in 1992.

Above:
Stuckshof farm, Langfuhr,
early nineteenth century.
Photograph published in
Paul Mebes, *Um 1800*
(1908).

the architectural press, which stressed the “skill” shown by an “irreproachable” work that gave a lesson in “balance” to Mies’s older colleagues.¹⁸ Hermann Muthesius paid homage to the quality of Mies’s project by including it in a new edition of his book *Landhaus und Garten*,¹⁹ for he recognized, in its relationship with the site and in the treatment of exterior spaces with arbors and low walls, a good response to the “architectonic garden” program, which constitutes one of the essential themes of his *Wohnungsreform* (housing reform) initiative.²⁰ A shot of the house would appear in 1924 on the cover of a book by the landscape architect Karl Foerster, hired by the Riehls to work on the garden.²¹

Delighted with Mies’s talents and with his company, Alois and Sofie Riehl brought him into their social circle, where he met some of the founders of modern Germany, such as the industrialist Walther Rathenau, the philologue Werner Jaeger, the philosophers Eduard Spranger and Max Dessoir, and the art histo-

rian Heinrich Wölfflin, as is shown in the guest-book of the house, rediscovered by Fritz Neumeyer. In his company, Mies was prompted to reflect on the notion of space through the work of Riehl himself, and on the question of the spiritual legacy of Greek classicism, explored by Jaeger, whose theses on a “third humanism” of the modern age Mies read.²² The key intellectual issues uncovered after the soirées at the Riehls would remain of fundamental importance to Mies for decades.

Mies matured with growing freedom in this world where he met the clients of his future houses, the Gerickes, Noldes, Dexels, Wolfs, and Eliats. Only Riehl’s death in 1924 brought an end to the relationship, which Mies commemorated by designing the philosopher’s gravestone in the Neubabelsberg cemetery. This friendship gave him access to the ideas of Nietzsche, for whom Riehl was a well-known proponent.²³ His frequent visits to the Riehl household also threw him into the arms of Ada Bruhn, the daughter of a former Danish officer

turned manufacturer of measuring instruments. After breaking off her engagement with Heinrich Wölfflin, she became a pupil at the Émile Jacques-Dalcroze dance school in Hellerau garden city, which Albert Jeanneret, the brother of Le Corbusier, also attended. Meanwhile, in 1908, the Riehls gave Mies a grant that enabled him to take a six-week trip to Munich, Rome, Florence, and Vicenza in the company of Joseph Popp. Mies was especially struck by the Pitti Palace and the villas of Palladio – “not only La Rotonda, which is very formal, but also the others, which are more free,” he was to say sixty years later. On his return from Italy, however, he noticed that the details of Alfred Messel’s houses in Wannsee, which he discovered while he was in Rixdorf, were “more delicate than those of Palladio.”... Mies also mentioned the admiration he felt for Messel’s “wonderful” Wertheim department store, with its glass façade overlooking Potsdamer Platz.²⁴

Peter Behrens and the Architecture of Industry

Impressed by the qualities of the Riehl House, Paul Thiersch, manager of Bruno Paul's firm, advised Mies to introduce himself to Peter Behrens, who took him on in October 1908. Behrens had been appointed the previous year by Emil Rathenau's AEG concern to create a corporate identity for its buildings, products,

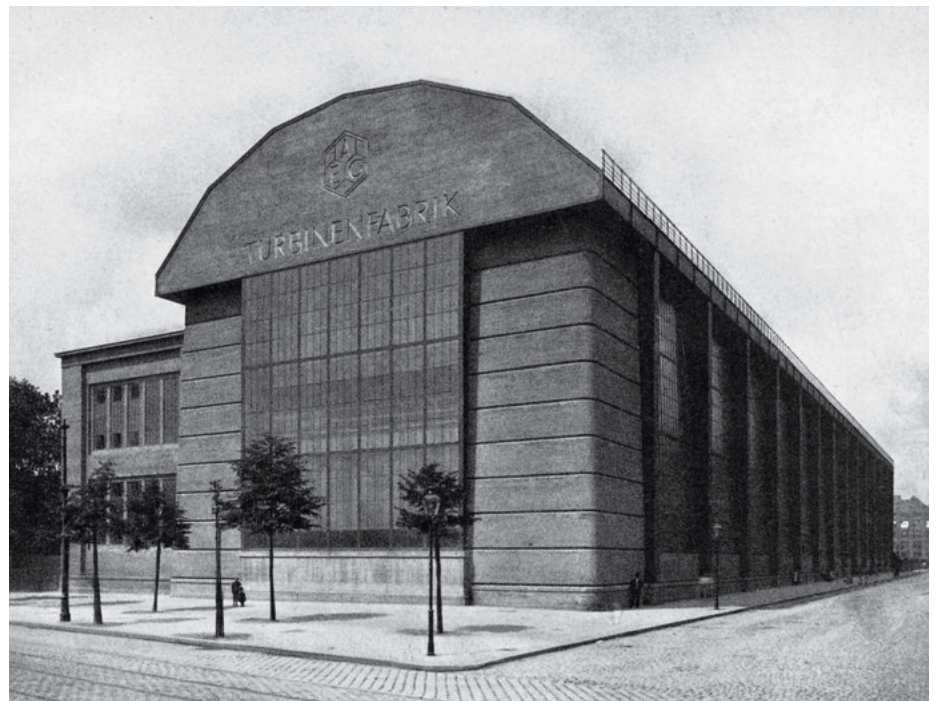
and advertising. He had made his name in 1901 by building his own house in the artists' colony of Darmstadt, and later by his teaching and his architectural work in Düsseldorf.²⁵

On one of his last trips to Berlin, Mies was to announce that he himself had designed the

courtyard façade of Behrens's AEG-Turbinenhalle, which was simply defined by the plate-glass wall, the profile of the metal piers in a double T-shape, and the brick base: "Behrens didn't realize what he was doing," said Mies, for, intending to build a factory, he "resolved all the problems of architecture."²⁶ In addi-

Below:
Peter Behrens,
Kleinmotorenfabrik for the
AEG, Berlin-Wedding,
1910–13 (photograph
published in Fritz Hoeber,
Peter Behrens, 1913).

At right:
Peter Behrens,
Turbinenhalle for the AEG,
Berlin-Moabit, 1909
(photograph published
in Fritz Hoeber, *Peter
Behrens*, 1913).





At left:
Competition project for a
monument to Bismarck,
Elisenhöhe, Bingen,
1910, perspective view of
the main courtyard
(autograph, Mies van der
Rohe Archives, Museum
of Modern Art, New York).

Above:
Competition project for a
monument to Bismarck,
Elisenhöhe, Bingen, 1910,
side elevation (autograph,
Mies van der Rohe
Archives, Museum of
Modern Art, New York).

tion to this contribution, which foreshadowed the buildings of the Illinois Institute of Technology, Mies collaborated on the small motor factory (Kleinmotorenfabrik) in the Wedding section of Berlin.²⁷ For Mies and other young architects in the practice – including Walter Gropius, his future partner Adolf Meyer, and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, whom Mies remembered having “met in a doorway”²⁸ – Behrens was the archetype of the Nietzschean artist who had sealed an alliance with modern industry. But Behrens was also responsible for Mies’s lifelong passion for the architecture of Karl Friedrich Schinkel.²⁹

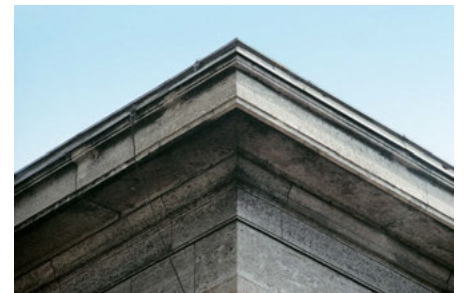
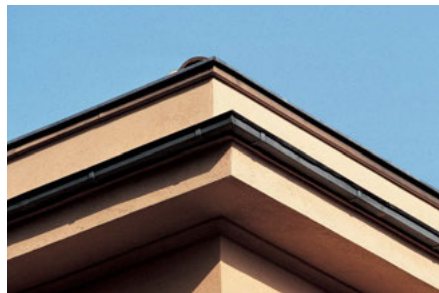
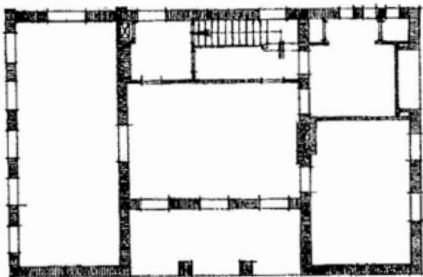
Behrens took his young colleagues to look at some of Schinkel’s buildings near the office in Neubabelsberg, including the mansion and garden buildings in Glienicke park and the gardener’s house and the Roman baths of Charlottenhof, in Potsdam. Mies’s interest in

Schinkel – recorded in 1927 by Paul Westheim, who spoke of the “amazing feeling” the two architects shared for “the mass, the relationships, the rhythms, and the harmony of forms” – sprang from these visits.³⁰

Mies wasted no time in turning his interest in Schinkel into practice. In 1910 he entered a competition for a monument in Bingen intended for the centenary celebrations of the birth of Bismarck, which were planned for 1915. All German architects were invited to participate, and the event constitutes an essential episode in the rejection of historicism.³¹ Mies visualized a stone bastion, built against the Elisenhöhe hillside overlooking the Rhine, on which a colonnade framed a rectangular space before a statue of the Iron Chancellor, to be designed by Mies’s brother Ewald. There are striking affinities between the situation of this colonnade and that of the palace that

Schinkel designed for the tsar at Orianda, in the Crimea.³² Nevertheless, Mies felt no nostalgia for the graphic techniques of the nineteenth century and used in his submission a large collage of a photograph of the model on a photograph of the site, thus pioneering the architectural use of montage, a technique that he would turn to on many subsequent occasions.³³ Entitled “Germany’s Gratitude,” his entry was on the shortlist of 40 selected out of 379 for more detailed study, but the evident cost of its foundations meant that it was set aside. The competition provoked lively debates, and in the end it was Wilhelm Kreis who was given the commission, after an initial vote in favor of a more modern project by German Bestelmeyer.³⁴

The love of Schinkel brought Mies his second commission, from the wealthy lawyer Hugo Perls, a collector of contemporary art and a fel-



Top:
Hugo Perls House,
Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1911,
garden façade.

Bottom left:
Hugo Perls House,
Berlin-Zehlendorf,
ground floor plan.

Bottom center:
Hugo Perls House,
Berlin-Zehlendorf,
detail of the cornice.

Bottom right:
Peter Behrens,
Wiegand House,
Berlin-Dahlem, 1912,
detail of the cornice.



Above:
Peter Behrens, Wiegand
House, Berlin-Dahlem,
1912, entrance.

Opposite page:
Peter Behrens,
Mannesmann headquarters,
Düsseldorf, perspective
(published in Fritz Hoeber,
Peter Behrens, 1913).

low enthusiast for the work of the great Prussian architect. In 1910 Perls hired Mies, whom he had met at one of the artistic soirées that he organized, to build him a house at Zehlendorf. Mies worked on it with Ferries Goebbels, one of his friends from Behrens's firm. The relationship between the main block of the house and the roof is very different from that in the Riehl House. The ground floor, intended for Perls's art collection – comprising works by Picasso, Matisse, and Munch – centers on a dining room that was to feature frescoes by Max Pechstein, a painter from the artists' group *Die Brücke*.³⁵ It opens onto a loggia fronted by two columns, like that of

Schinkel's pavilion at Charlottenburg, but brought down to ground level. On one side of the dining room is a study and on the other a library/music room, with the bedrooms relegated to the second floor of this compact building of stuccoed brick.³⁶ Other echoes of Schinkel are present in the ochre color of the exterior and in the layout of the geometrical gardens that surround the house.

The Perls House reflects not only the relationship that Mies had forged with Schinkel but also the reinterpretation of Schinkel's work attempted by Behrens in the large house that he built the very same year at Dahlem for