

Tugendhat House

Ludwig
Mies
van der
Rohe

Tugendhat House

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Rohe

Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat
Ivo Hammer
Wolf Tegethoff

Birkhäuser
Basel

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Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat,
Ivo Hammer,
Wolf Tegethoff

Foreword



In 2001, UNESCO declared the Tugendhat House in Brno (CZ) a World Cultural Heritage Site, as one of the most important buildings of modern architecture. Based on the 1998 monograph published by Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat and Wolf Tegethoff (in English: in 2000) the three authors describe private and historic aspects of the house, along with issues concerning the theory of architecture, history of art and conservation-science.

Some elements have been added:

- Personal recollections of Irene Kalkofen (1909–2004) who lived in the house as a nursemaid in the 1930s.
- Other, previously unreleased footage belonging to the family, especially black and white photographs of Fritz Tugendhat.
- Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat introduces her father's experimental colour photography, the preservation of which could be described as sensational. Fritz Tugendhat used complicated colour procedures such as Duxochrome and Pinatype, techniques rarely used in the early 1930s by private individuals.
- In the introduction to his section, Wolf Tegethoff deals with the relationship between client and architect and updates the furniture catalogue.
- Ivo Hammer outlines the history of the house since 1997, the conservation-science investigation of the materiality of the house and the presentation of the results of this study. Additionally, he comments on the methodology and technology of the restoration of 2010–2012 including the activities of the International Commission of Experts THICOM, the glossary and the bibliography. For the first time, an attempt is made here to analyse and interpret the materiality of a structure of classical modernism in an aesthetic context. Part of the contribution includes a set of photos of the Tugendhat House after the restoration (September 2012). Professionals and interested readers of the book have access to a website concerning photographs and documents of the conservation-science study (www.angewandtekunstgeschichte.net/forschung/haus-tugendhat).

Unfortunately, in order not to exceed the limit, the contribution of Franz Schulze had to be omitted. The Venice Charter is no longer in print; it is accessible on the Internet, e.g. www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf.

The publication will become available simultaneously in English and German. At the end of 2013, Barrister & Principal in Brno published an edition in Czech.

The authors are indebted to many people and institutions, some of whom include:

Ruth Guggenheim-Tugendhat, Josef Zwi Guggenheim, Eduardo Tugendhat, Gotthart Wunberg (†), Monika Wagner and Agnes Szökrön-Michl; Dieter Reifarh produced with his crew (Maren Krüger, Filipp Goldscheider, Miroslav Danihel, Rainer Komers, Kurt

Weber et al.) a feature documentary that without his co-producers and sponsors (Reinhard Brundig, Inge Classen, Marieanne Bergmann and others) would not have been possible. The filmmakers produced the high resolution scans of the photos in this book and provided helpful advice in the context of this publication; June Finfer gave us her footage of an interview with Irene Kalkofen; Jong Soung Kimm/Seoul, former employee at Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's studio in Chicago, gave us his photos of the Tugendhat House from September 2012; we are grateful for photos coming from the collection of David Židlický/Brno, Gerlind and Peter Zerweck/Nuremberg, from Miroslav Ambroz and Miloš Budík/Brno. We give thanks to the Museum of Modern Art MoMA in New York, particularly Barry Bergdoll and Paul Galloway for their support of the researches. We would also like to thank the family of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, particularly Ulrike Schreiber, Dirk Lohan and Frank Herterich for their generous concessions in the use of image rights to the work of the architect. Thanks also to the participants in the international Conservation Investigation Campaign CIC, the sponsors, including the family of Heinz Dullinger/Salzburg, the students over all, the scientists, the teachers; some of whom are: Karol Bayer, Jiří Novotný and Jakub Ďoubal (University of Pardubice, Litomyšl), Josef Chybík, Hana Ryšavá and Vladimír Šlapeta (Brno University of Technology, FA), Gerti Maierbacher-Legl, Jan Schubert (†), Nicole Riedl (†), Ursula Schädler-Saub, Karin Petersen, Henrik Schulz, Erwin Stadlbauer (HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Hildesheim), Gabriela Krist, Martina Griesser-Stermscheg and Tanja Bayerová (University of Applied Arts Vienna), Thomas Danzl (Academy of Fine Arts, Dresden), Friederike Waentig (Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences, CICS), Peter Szalay (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava); the president of the HAWK, Hildesheim granted support for the Conservation Investigation Campaign (Johannes Kolb, Hubert Merkel, Martin Thren and Manfred Glombik), the Hornemann Institute (Angela Weyer, Barbara Hentschel), the rector of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Gerald Bast, Barbara Putz-Plecko), Brno City Museum, Brno Trade Fair (Kamil Trávníček) and finally the City of Brno (Roman Onderka, Daniel Rychnovský and Robert Kotzian). We owe special gratitude to Mojmír Jeřábek/Brno for his support and commitment. Also providing a supporting and advisory role were Miroslav Ambroz/Brno, Friederike and Hans Deuerler, Rudolf Fischer, Sebastian Jacobi, Helmut Reuter and Mathias Winkler/DFG project ZIKG Munich, Axel Werner (†)/Hannover, Jürgen Pursche/Munich, Josef Janeček and Jarmila Kutějová/Brno, Ferdinand and Margit Trauttmansdorff/Prague. Also thanked for the restoration of House Tugendhat are the colleagues of the International Committee of Experts THICOM (Iveta Černá, Thomas Danzl, Wessel de Jonge, Alex Dill, Petr Kroupa, Karel Ksandr, Arthur Rüegg, Vladimír Šlapeta, Miloš Solař and Zdeněk Vácha, Josef Štulc, Ana Tostões, Ruggero Tropeano, Martin Zedníček), the companies, conservators and craftsmen (representatives of whom included Michal Malásek, Ladislav Chládek, Michal Pech); special

thanks go to Petr Dvořák/Brno, who has done invaluable work as a translator, organiser and communicator. We thank Birkhäuser Verlag, notably Angela Gavran, Katharina Holas and the translator Andrea Lyman. A very special thank you to Anouk Rehorek, Marie Artaker and Christian Schlager and the whole studio VIE for the wonderful book design.

May 2020

Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Ivo Hammer, Wolf Tegethoff

Daniela Hammer-
Tugendhat



Why This Book?



1
Tugendhat House,
Ernst Tugendhat at the
entrance door



The Tugendhat House in Brno (Czech Republic) is the most important private house Mies van der Rohe built during his time in Europe. The house has been preserved as an original and has in addition been documented by more written and visual sources than any other building of its time. The intention of the various contributions to this volume is to shed light upon the building from different and slightly unusual perspectives.

I am the youngest daughter of Grete and Fritz Tugendhat, who commissioned the house. For a long time, I have been hesitant about whether to publish a book about my parents' house. Professional interest seemed too closely tied in with private concerns. I never lived in my parents' house as I was only born after they emigrated. I am an art historian, but not a historian of architecture. Nevertheless, I welcomed the opportunity this book presented to make yet unpublished source material accessible to the public.

We were able to enlist the cooperation of Wolf Tegethoff, one of the most prominent experts on the architect, for this volume. Tegethoff, who has already provided an extensive study on the Tugendhat House in his dissertation on the villas and country house projects of Mies, has in the meantime completed a research project for the World Monument Fund as part of preliminary investigations into the restoration of the house and its furnishings. In the course of this project he examined for the first time all of the approximately 700 intact plans and original drawings from Mies' studio, most of which are kept today in the Mies archive at MoMA, New York and to a lesser extent at the City Museum in Brno. His essay, after an introduction discussing the relation between architect and clients, offers profound insights into the planning and building history of the house. Starting with the contemporary debate about the habitability of the Tugendhat House, Tegethoff engages in an exemplary analysis of the living concepts of the Modern Movement. My husband Ivo Hammer, art historian and conservator/restorer, has been dealing with the fabric of the house and its conservation. The

analysis of materials, their surfaces, and the changes they have undergone is a precondition for both the critical assessment of the sources concerning their interpretation with regard to the history of art, as well as for the conservation and restoration of the surviving original building fabric and furniture. Finally, the reconstruction of missing parts of the building and furniture must also rely on a precise knowledge of the original substance. Ivo Hammer reports in two parts about the history of the house since 1945, about the criteria of conservation upon which scientific conservation studies have been carried out in international cooperation since 2003, and about aspects of the restoration of the house. The city of Brno appointed Ivo Hammer as chairman of the International Commission of Experts THICOM for the restoration of the Tugendhat House in the years 2010–12.

The sources, many of which are made publicly available here for the first time, mostly consist of photographs taken by my father. These pictures offer a different view of the house in two ways. Firstly, the relationship between architecture and natural surroundings experiences a significant correction through these photos. The repeatedly published photos of the house date back to originals by de Sandalo. They show the house immediately after completion in the winter of 1930. This touches on a general problem in architecture photography; photographic views are usually made immediately on completion and therefore show unblemished architectural images. In the case of the Tugendhat House this led to striking distortions. Cooperating with landscape architect Grete Roder, Mies had had in view a close relation between architecture and natural surroundings through lush vegetation on the façades, in the garden and on the terrace. This interplay between interior and exterior space was one of the fundamental intentions behind the house's conception. However, this only became visible when the plants had fully grown according to the design. Therefore, only the photographs my father took, which cover the period up to 1938, reveal the aesthetic effect Mies had intended.



2



3



4



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2
Tugendhat House, south
garden view

4
Herbert Tugendhat
walks from the nursery
to the terrace

5
Ernst Tugendhat sitting
on a Barcelona chair

3
Tugendhat House, south
garden view

Secondly, these photographs provide an intimate perspective into how the family actually lived in the house. Architecture is made for, inhabited and used by human beings. Photographs, which show buildings without their inhabitants, present a merely formal and aesthetic view of architecture. Architectural photography is invariably more than simply 'objective' images of architecture; it is also an interpretation of it. The perfect, partly retouched and hand-coloured photos of de Sandalo also offer a certain image of the house: it becomes a work of art. By organising the 1947 MoMA exhibition of the work of Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson contributed to the view that his work should be received and interpreted in a pure and formalistic manner.¹ Opposing this view, the architect and cultural theorist Bernard Rudofsky advocated taking into account everyday home life in the evaluation of modern architecture. In his article *Problems of Design: Packaging the Human*

Body, published on the occasion of the exhibition, he observed that this type of architecture photography dispelled "the unpleasant suggestion that people live in houses". Rudofsky additionally remarked such a style had the effect of creating a transcendent image of architectural interiors with no sign of any human habitation, in which the ideas of human beings had no place. He emphasised that his intention was not to criticise Mies van der Rohe, but to highlight a specific way of seeing this architectural style, especially espoused by people like Philip Johnson with his *International Style* paradigm. The

question that interests us, according to Rudofsky, is: "[...] how did [the Tugendhats] fit into [the house's] immaculate beauty?" Had they been reduced to "perambulant exhibits of industrial merchandise?" or were they a "sad profanation of their impeccable surroundings"?² My father's photos are the answer to Rudofsky's questions, so to speak. They show how people used to live in this house.

It is a rare stroke of luck that we have accounts from the clients and residents of such a high profile building of modern architecture. Thus we are able to reconsider one of the central issues of modern architecture from a different angle: the question of its functionality. In November 1931, shortly after its completion, the *Werkbund* review *Die Form* published an account of the debate about the habitability of the house in which, along with architecture critics Justus Bier, Walter Riezler and Roger Ginsburger as well as architect Ludwig Hilberseimer, my parents also took a position. In this debate, fundamental questions of modern architecture were discussed. My mother also expressed her views on the relationship between architect and client in the German-Czech architectural review *Was gibt Ihnen der Architekt?* These transcripts from my parents are reprinted in this volume. One of the main sources for researchers is the presentation my mother gave in Czech at the international conference on the reconstruction of the house in Brno on January 17, 1969. Only a short draft was ever published in German, in the *Bauwelt* 36 from September, 1969. The presentation is reproduced here in full length in its original version.

¹With the exhibition "The International Style: Architecture since 1922", Henry-Russell Hitchcock Jr and Philip Johnson had already contributed to the reception of modern architecture as reduced to style.

²Felicity Scott, *Underneath Aesthetics and Utility: The Untransposable Fetish of Bernard Rudofsky*, in: *Assemblage* 38, 1998, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pp. 59–89.

6

Grete Tugendhat and
František Kalivoda at
the conference in Brno
on January 17, 1969



6

7

Conference in Brno,
January 17, 1969 (right
to left) Julius Posener,
Daniela Tugendhat,
Grete Tugendhat, Dirk
Lohan (grandson of
Mies v. d. R.)



7

8

Tugendhat House
at night

³ A big thank you to June Finfer for her kind permission to publish and to Maren Krüger for the transcription of the interview.

A written excerpt from an interview with Irene Kalkofen, which filmmaker June Finfer from Chicago conducted in 2004, is published here for the first time.³ In her film *The Tugendhat House*:

Mies van der Rohe's Czech Masterpiece small passages from their four hour conversation were released. Irene Kalkofen lived in the house between 1931–38 as a nursemaid; after that she emigrated out of political conviction to London, where she died in 2004. Irene was the last surviving person who had lived in the house as an adult, and could therefore claim to have had 'authentic memories' of everyday life there. Apart from Irene Kalkofen's stories, there are also the oral sources, testimonies and memories of other people who lived in the house; particularly my mother, but also a number of recollections from my sister Hanna and my brother Ernst, who at the

time my parents emigrated in 1938 were thirteen and eight years old respectively. In 1996, I visited my parents' house with Irene to record her memories. My contribution is therefore also a piece of oral history, albeit second hand; (I cannot make any statements about my father's memories, since I was still a child when he died).

In a letter dated May 15, 1970, my mother offered architect František Kalivoda, who had been commissioned with the reconstruction of the house and with whom she had partaken in a lively correspondence from 1967 onwards, her collaboration on a book planned by him about the house. Kalivoda was thrilled by her proposal; sadly, my mother had a fatal accident in December of the same year; shortly afterwards, Kalivoda also died, and so the book never materialised.



3





**On the Con-
struction of
the Tugendhat
House**

Evening lecture held in the Brno House of Arts on 17th January 1969 on the occasion of the International Conference in the Moravian Museum in Brno on the Reconstruction of the Tugendhat House.¹

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel deeply pleased and honoured to have been invited to my hometown to say a few words about the construction of our former house.

I have often been asked why, living in Brno, we decided to have our house built by Mies van der Rohe.

During the last few years prior to my marriage I lived in Germany and often visited the house, which Mies van der Rohe had built for the art dealer Perls in Berlin and which at the time was inhabited by the art historian Eduard Fuchs. This house was still built in a conventional manner, but it did already open out towards the garden through three glass doors, and showed a very clear arrangement of the various living spaces. I was also very impressed by the Weissenhofsiedlung. I had always wanted a spacious modern house of clear and simple forms, and my husband had been almost horrified by the interiors of his youth, stuffed with trinkets and lace. After we had decided to have a house built, we made an appointment with Mies van der Rohe. And from the very first moment we met him, it was clear to us that he should be the one to build our house, so impressed were we by his personality. He had a calm, confident assuredness about him, which was immediately convincing. But above all, the way he talked about his architecture gave us the feeling that we were dealing with a true artist. He said, for instance, that the ideal measurements of a room could never be calculated; rather, one had to feel the room while standing in and moving through it. He added that a house should not be built starting from the façade, but from the inside, and that windows in a modern building should no longer be holes in a wall but fill the space between floor and ceiling, thereby becoming elements of the structure. He then continued to explain how important it was to use precious materials in, so to speak, plain and unadorned modern building, and how this had been neglected for example by Le Corbusier too. Being the son of a stonemason, Mies was familiar with precious stone and had a particular predilection for it.

Later, a particularly beautiful block of onyx was searched for on his orders in the Atlas Mountains, it taking a long time until the right piece was found. It was to be used for building a wall of onyx, and Mies himself supervised its sawing and the assembling of the slabs in order to make the most of its grain. However, when it turned out afterwards that the stone was transparent and some parts on the back shone red as soon as the sunset illuminated its front, he, too, was surprised. He chose the *vert antique* that served as a shelf in the dining room and the veneer wood with the same dedication. He travelled to Paris for the sole purpose of finding Makassar veneers for the curved dining room wall long enough to ensure that no partitions would be visible, and that the veneers really reached from floor to ceiling.

At this first meeting Mies showed us all of his designs that were so extremely daring for the time that they were never realised. Then Mies took us to three of the houses that had indeed been built. We particularly liked the most recent one at Guben

belonging to a Mr Wolf, a very spacious brick building. At first our house was meant to be of brick as well, but it turned out that there was no beautiful brick to be had in Brno, and no bricklayers who were able to work flawlessly.

After this first talk we had a look at various recently built houses in Brno, especially by the architect Ernst Wiesner, and there was no doubt in our minds as to which architect we were going to choose — Mies van der Rohe. We therefore asked him to come to Brno in September 1928 to have a look at the site. My parents had given me as a present the upper part of their garden at Parkstrasse 22, which at the top end bounded on Schwarzfeldgasse. Of course Mies was delighted with this site, which offered a view over Brno and Spilberk. This view was preserved by the gap between the house and the garage stressing the structuring of the volume. It is a great pity that it has since been bricked up, thus spoiling the proportions of the whole building.

We agreed with Mies that he should work out the design as soon as possible. We wished it to have five bedrooms, a dining room and a living room, but of course we had had in mind a much smaller and much more modest house. We also had some special wishes, which Mies fulfilled. For instance, I wanted to have direct access to the children's rooms, so a little passage was created between the entrance hall and the terrace. Mies promised that a reliable supervisor from his studio in Berlin would continuously supervise the building without entailing any additional costs. Towards the end of the year Mies let us know that the design was ready. Early afternoon on New Year's Eve we expectantly entered his studio. We were due for a New Year's Eve celebration with friends, but instead the meeting with Mies went on until one o'clock in the morning. First we saw the plan of an enormous room with a curved and a rectangular freestanding wall. (We immediately realised that this room was something unheard of, something never seen before; hand written note by G.T.) Then we noticed little crosses at a distance of about five metres from each other, and asked what they were. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, Mies replied: "Those are the iron supports, which will carry the whole building." At the time there was no private house, which had yet been built with a steel construction, so no wonder we were very surprised. But we liked the plan very much, and only asked Mies for three things, all of which he accepted. Firstly, the iron supports on the upper floor were to be hidden in the walls because we were afraid that in the small rooms one might bump into them. Secondly, we wanted the bathroom, which was to be installed between our two bedrooms so that they basically formed one single room — as was later the case with the apartment realised for the Berlin Building exposition — to be separate and made accessible through a small ante-room. Thirdly, all windows were to be provided with sufficient sunscreens because we were afraid that the rooms would overheat in summer. As I said, Mies readily accepted these demands. When, however, at a later meeting my husband argued against all the doors reaching from floor to ceiling because some would-be experts had convinced him that they would warp, Mies replied, "In that case I can't accept the commission." Here an essential principle of the building was being questioned, and on this point he was not prepared to enter into any discussion. He felt that the partition of walls by windows and doors, which

¹ The address was held in Czech. A shorter German version was published in: *Die Bauwelt* LX, no. 36, September 1969, pp. 1246 s. The two longer passages not reproduced in *Die Bauwelt* are put in italics.

had originated in the Renaissance, was too heterogeneous for a modern building, and he was therefore against it. Again to avoid partitions, the built-in cupboards extended from floor to ceiling; likewise, the kitchen and the bathroom were tiled up to the ceiling and not, as was usually the case, only halfway up. By the way, as one can still see today, none of the tall doors did warp. Indeed, technically, Mies planned the whole building down to the last detail, quite perfect. Right at the beginning of the construction it turned out that the steep slope was in danger of dislodging, so that concrete wells had to be sunk to avoid even the slightest slide, which would have proved disastrous for the large windows as well as for the flat roof. Since my husband was a passionate photographer and, even before there were amateur film cameras, had made films, which he processed himself, it was important for him to have a perfectly dry darkroom in the basement. The whole house was put, so to speak, into an insulated tub, with the result that there was never a hint of dampness in the cellar. The building contractor was the Brno firm Artur and Moritz Eisler, but the steel structure and the chrome sheathing for the columns had to be ordered in Germany. In order to avoid ugly radiators in the large room an air-conditioning system was devised, which could also be used for cooling in summer. Despite the fact that there was no experience yet with such systems in private houses, this air-heating device worked wonderfully: half an hour after turning it on the whole room was warm. I am surprised that this heating system has since been replaced, and radiators installed. Incidentally, everyone in Brno assured us during the construction that because of the large windows we would freeze to death. In fact, on sunny winter days the sunlight falling through the 10mm plate-glass windows heated up the lower room so much that even when it was very cold outside we did not have to heat it; we would even lower the large window-panes electrically, sitting as if in the open. Likewise people told us that the flat roof would prove to be totally unsuitable for the weather in Brno, and indeed it was the only aspect that caused problems at the beginning, but only because lead and copper had been used side by side, creating electrical currents which caused some leakings. After this had been fixed the roof proved to be perfectly sound.

But let me go back. In June 1929 the construction started. At first the overseer was a Mr Hirz who, however, was not good enough and was therefore soon replaced by Mr John, who stayed in Brno until the building was finished.

White linoleum was used for the floor. Mies van der Rohe wanted one uniform surface, which would not have been the case with parquet. White was the most neutral colour, and probably not more impractical than any other smooth linoleum. I have to admit that it easily got dirty, and needed a lot of care. When the house will be restored, and used by the city for representational purposes, it would be worthwhile asking Mies' permission to relay the floor with the same travertine he used for the entrance hall, the stairs, and the lower terrace. In the house in which we now live in St. Gallen, the living room has just such a floor, which is very beautiful and most practical with regard to cleaning.

At the time we probably did not fully realise the enormous amount of work Mies had to put into the construction, since he designed every detail himself down to the doorknobs. Many things widely employed

today were created here for the first time, and one is unaware of their origin.

After six months we asked Mies to send us the designs for the furniture as quickly as possible. He finally gave us a drawing of the large room and the only piece of furniture, so to speak, was a sculpture in front of the onyx wall. It looked like a work of Maillol. Later we chose one by Lehmbruck, which we loved; we were deeply saddened by the fact that it disappeared without trace during the Nazi-period.

As time went by we also received drawings of the furniture, which we then had made precisely according to Mies' designs. For the round dining room Mies designed a round table, whose steel leg, of exactly the same shape as the steel supports for the house, was lowered into the floor. The table-top was made of black pear wood, and on its underside were metal bars with inserted slats on which circular segments were put, so that the table could be enlarged twice while retaining its circular form, necessary on account of the round dining room wall. When fully extended, the table could accommodate 24 people, and looked extremely festive.

The chairs were all of chromed steel. In the living room there were 24 chairs covered with white parchment. The chair was later called the Brno chair; in front of the onyx wall there were two so-called Tugendhat chairs covered with silver-grey Rodier fabric, and two Barcelona chairs covered with emerald green leather. In front of the large window wall there was a chaise longue covered with ruby-red velvet. Mies van der Rohe and Mrs Lilly Reich spent a long time testing all these combinations of colour on the spot. This included, of course, the curtains and carpets: in front of the onyx wall there was a handwoven carpet of light coloured wool, behind the wall there was a brown wool carpet, which also was handwoven, and in the library and under the grand piano lay two Persian carpets we had chosen on our own. The special black colour of the Shantung curtain in front of the conservatory was also carefully chosen to harmonise with the black velvet curtain beside it and the silver-grey Shantung silk of the front wall. Between the entrance and the library there was a white velvet curtain so that this part of the living room could be completely shut off to create an intimate space for sitting.

The furniture of the upper rooms was designed with the same care. In order to give a more feminine touch to my otherwise very austere looking room, the floor was covered with a white lambskin carpet, and the chairs were covered in cherry-red leather.

As is usually the case the construction took longer than originally planned, but nevertheless we could move in at the beginning of December 1930. We loved the house from the very first moment. My husband created a genuine greenhouse in the conservatory with many flowering plants; looking through the greenery it was wonderful to see the snow outside. When we were alone we would normally sit in the library, but when friends came to visit we also liked to spend the evening in front of the glass wall lit from behind, which connected to the round wall and produced a beautifully mild light. We enjoyed living in the house even more in spring and in summer. As long as they were small we lived with the children entirely on the large terrace. There they had their paddling pool and a shady sandpit sheltered by polygonum; they would ride on their bicycles and in their little cars over the whole terrace. During the night the passage from

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Ludwig Mies van der
Rohe and a visitor
(Hermann John?) in
front of Tugendhat
House ca. February 1931

10

Tugendhat House,
garden view



9

the street to the terrace was secured by an electric light barrier so that we could leave open the bedroom doors to the terrace without fear.

Together with the landscape architect Grete Roder from Brno, Mies undertook the design of the garden as well. The garden created a wonderful setting for the house. In my view one should try to restore it as well. During the first years, many visitors came from abroad to see the house, especially, of

course, architects, one of them being Philip Johnson, who afterwards built a model of the house, which is still in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The architect Ludwig Hilberseimer said something at the time, which I found true, and very beautiful: "Photographs will give you no impression of this house. You have to move through this space, its rhythm is like music."

And with these words I would like to close.

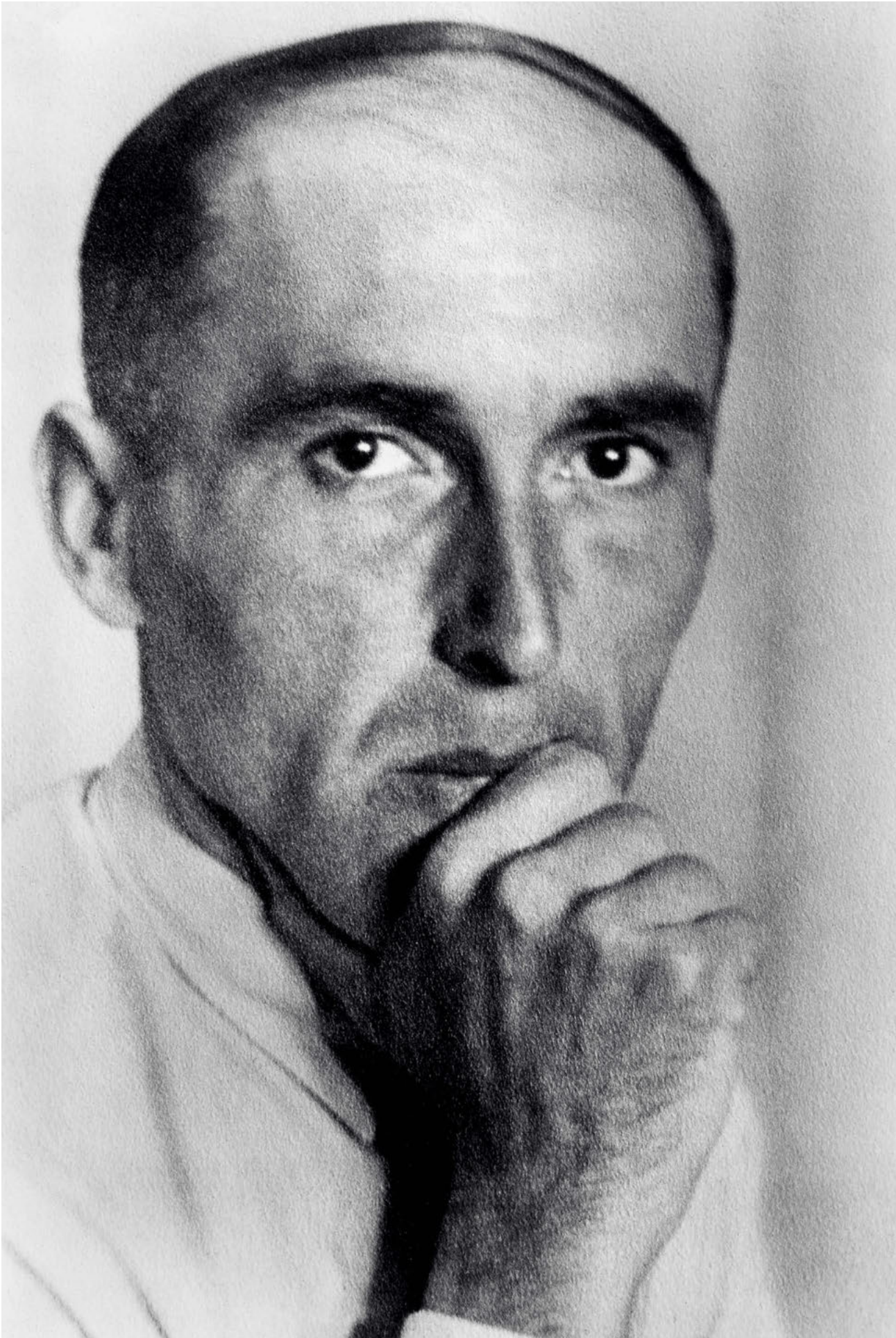


Daniela Hammer-
Tugendhat

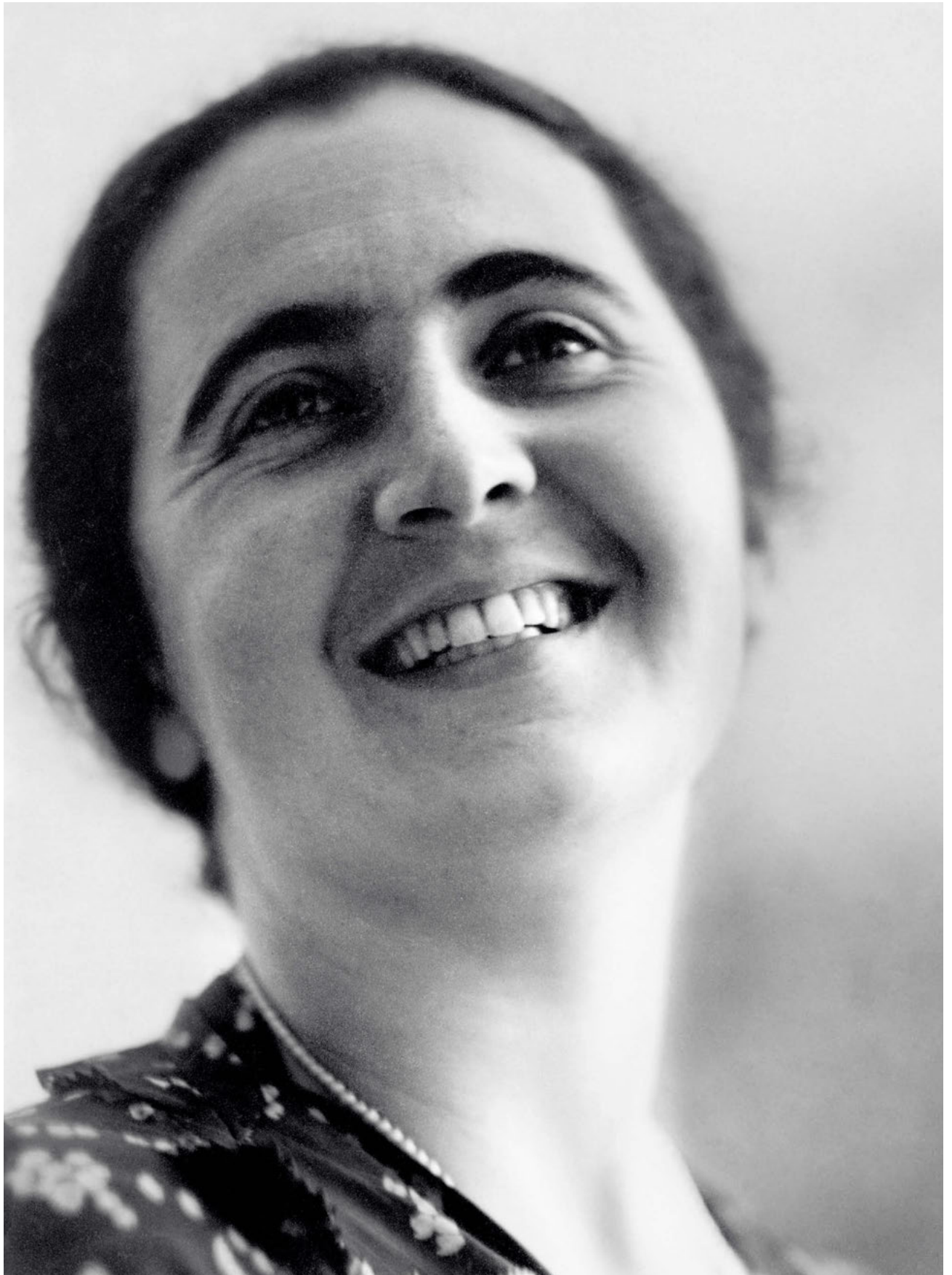


Living in the Tugendhat House





11



Grete Tugendhat was born in Brno in 1903 as the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family of industrialists. Her parents, Marianne and Alfred Löw-Beer, belonged to a large family who played a major role in the industrialisation of Czechoslovakia. The family owned several textile, sugar and concrete factories, not only in Brno and the nearby town of Svitávka, but also in the Silesian town Żagań and in Austria.

13
Brno, Parkstrasse
(Sadova) 22, Alfred and
Marianne Löw-Beer's
house, north-east view,
postcard from the early
20th century



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Svitávka,
Löw-Beer family
on the terrace



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My mother grew up in a spacious Art Nouveau house. After dropping out of a course in political economy at the University of Vienna, she married the industrialist Hans Weiss from Żagań. It so happened that she spent the years from 1922 to 1928 in Germany. Here she came into contact with contemporary art and architecture, and became also acquainted with the works of Mies van der Rohe. She often visited the home of art historian Eduard Fuchs in Berlin, which Mies had built for art dealer Perl in 1911.

After her divorce she married my father, Fritz Tugendhat, in 1928. Like my mother, he came from a Jewish family in Brno involved in the textile industry, though of more modest means. My father initially wanted to study medicine. His interest in wool manufacturing was centred above all on designing aesthetically pleasing quality fabrics, though he was neither attracted to nor particularly gifted in the commercial side of the business.