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From Am Karlsbad 24 to the Tugendhat House:

Mies van der Rohe's Quest for a New Form of Living

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The present dissertation investigates Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's domestic work in relation to his lifestyle and the contemporary discourse of modern living. In so doing, it provides a more variegated picture of Mies and demonstrates that a quest for a new form of living underlay his architectural development in the 1920s.

Mies underwent a remarkable transition in architectural thought in the mid-1920s. It resulted in a new ordering in factors that shaped his architecture: he enthroned spirituality as the goal of his work and shifted his inspirational source from modern technology to modern life. At the time, Mies led a flexible and manifold life in a traditional Berlin apartment at Am Karlsbad 24, and he felt its static spatial arrangement could hardly cope with his liberated lifestyle. This experience led him to believe that modern living featured a constant adaption to the changing life circumstances, and, thus, modern dwellings should be made flexible enough to allow these adaptions. Therefore, in his apartment building for the Weissenhof housing exhibition in 1927, Mies created the device of moveable walls that enabled inhabitants to adapt the spatial layout to their changing needs and in so doing,

affirmed a flexible lifestyle. Alongside meeting the practical demands of modern living, Mies also sought to fulfill its spiritual needs. A series of contemporary discussions on intellectual potentials of modern life led him to keep a distance from the prevalent functionalist approach and instead seek to evoke a sense of spirituality in dwellings. In the Tugendhat House in 1929, Mies, in masterfully manipulating interior reflective materials and exterior landscape view, created a contemplative ambience. In so doing, he proposed a thoroughly transformed domesticity that was centered on reflection, self-consciousness, and inward-looking.

In demonstrating Mies's architectural development as one that strove to affirm an emerging lifestyle and then elevate it onto a spiritual plateau, this study brings out a new, cultural value that constituted the heart of Mies's work.

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Introduction

Any history, by nature, is rigorously selective. It tells about extraordinary people doing extraordinary things. What it does not tell is what really constitutes most of the story: masses of people doing ordinary things. As Otto Friedrich wrote in his book *Before the Deluge*, most people live the same way regardless of time or place: going to work in the morning and returning home at night, worrying about taxes or not worrying about taxes, eating and drinking and marrying and dying.[1] It was the case with those who lived in an extremely turbulent time of 1920s Berlin. It is still true with most of us today, and it must be the same with those great figures. Even Albert Einstein must have dedicated a great deal of his thoughts to mundane things such as holidays, what's for lunch and with whom, which song to play, etc. It is probably wrong to say that these insignificant thoughts and sensibilities have nothing to do with a figure's historic achievement, and it is yet very difficult to prove it. Nevertheless, it is something worth striving for, because it is in the normalness of life, more than in its particularity, that we find most resonance with others, and it is from these ordinary moments that their lives become accessible, relevant, and affecting to us. My work is in one sense an effort to investigate how one transforms something mundane into something significant. More specifically, it aims to demonstrate how Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, an extraordinary architect to be sure, drew from his ordinary living experience an understanding of modern life, and how he funneled it into a

1 Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* (New York, NY.: Harper & Row, 1995),12.

new spatial configuration, which is one of the major contributions he made to the modern world.

In the mid-1920s, Mies underwent a transformation in architectural thought, shifting his inspirational source away from modern technology to modern life. As a consequence, he began to investigate his own daily life and think about what he could learn from it. During this time, he was leading a vibrant and hectic life in a traditional apartment in central Berlin. In enjoying the rich experience and intellectual stimulation brought by the various activities taken place in the apartment, he also found the fixed home arrangement rather restrictive, which was not compatible with his flexible lifestyle.

Reflecting on his residential experience as well as contemporary discussions on life, Mies realized that modern living featured a mutual-shaping experience between domestic spaces and their residents — spaces had a determining effect on their occupants and, inversely, individuals could devise new ways of living by making changes to these spaces. This understanding underpinned his architectural development in the 1920s and drove his efforts in domestic projects. The evolution features two breakthroughs. The first came in the Weissenhof housing exhibitions, when Mies proposed a reformed dwelling: he devised an adaptable spatial arrangement that allowed residents to change their home spaces at will. Later, in the Tugendhat house, he put forward a thoroughly transformed domesticity that embraced a contemplative dimension of life and made it an integral part of everyday living. These works mirrored Mies's evolving perceptions of modern domesticity, from a focus on practical needs for a flexible living to an ideal to

elevate modern living to a realm centered on spirit and humanity. The changed forms of his work were mostly a by-product of this evolution.

In tracing Mies's evolving thoughts in transforming modern dwelling, my work captures his work through a cultural lens. His architectural development in the 1920s was undoubtedly a formal one, as many historians have demonstrated successfully. But his breakthrough is most certainly more than a formal one. A purely formal invention rarely stands the test of time, instead it becomes a trend, and its radiance usually fades away even before another trend replaces it. Yet Mies's influence is by no means transient; it strives over Post-modernists' targeted criticisms. Today we encounter works that carried his legacy very often when we pass by a glass skyscraper, visit its grand reception hall, or when we see a model house labeled "modernist style." His work is so broadly and lastingly influential probably because it corresponds to modern material circumstances, holds a grip of the ethos of its time, and, most importantly, manifests a cultural consensus of a modern age that captivates us. To show how it came about, I approach Mies's work from its biographic aspect, examining how it was related to his life and thought. I also extend the inquiry further to investigate the collective intellectual and cultural context that framed his thoughts and life.

The main body of this work consists of four chapters. Chapter One investigates Mies's writings in the 1920s. Compared to other periods in his life, Mies wrote more frequently and continuously in the 1920s, which allows us to trace his thoughts more closely. Before 1924, his writings showed great enthusiasm for the application of new building technology (materials and constructional methods) and viewed technology as the

remedy for all concurrent architectural problems, whereas, after 1926, he downplayed technology's role and concentrated instead on how to understand modern life and respond to it in architecture. By highlighting this remarkable transition, my work aims to demonstrate how Mies shifted the driving force of his architecture, from modern technology to modern life. It also reconstructs Mies's social circle in the 1920s and explores his library in order to uncover his source of influences. In so doing, I do not aim to identify or examine all the intellectual influence on Mies but focus instead on the major ones, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Georg Simmel, Theo van Doesburg, and Romano Guardini.[2] I will demonstrate how they together shaped Mies's perspective in the interrelations among technology, modern life, and architecture. This chapter is driven primarily by three sets of questions: how Mies understood the relationships between art and life; how he translated the philosophic idea of life into something more tangible as everyday life for his architectural inspiration; and finally, how he redefined the role modern technology played in his work.

Chapter Two focuses on reconstructing Mies's life in 1920s' Berlin and investigates what he learned from it. It interweaves a description of the apartment layout and narration of activities happened there, and in doing so, it presents a vivid picture of Mies's flexible lifestyle and how he used the apartment to cope with it. Namely, he had to constantly adapt the restrictive apartment space to meet the nearly boundless needs generated by the various

[2] Due to the scope of this dissertation, I focus on the intellectual influences that inspired Mies by 1929 on the understanding of the interrelationships between life, art, and technology. Based on this criterion, I have to skip some important figures, such as St Thomas or St Augustine, because their influences on Mies are less relevant to my topic.

occasions of modern life. This part might be the most original one of my project and its research the most challenging. This is because the fragmentary information concerning life in the apartment is scattered, and it requires a new way of using materials. I detect and collect scraps of relevant information from a variety of materials, such as personal letters, registration card of the apartment, interviews with Mies's employees and friends, the biography of his daughter, invitation notes, etc. This kind of information has usually been considered as trivial, and, consequently, is largely overlooked by scholars. Nevertheless, I look at it closely, not because I am interested in particular events but because when pieced together, this information portrays a vivid picture of how Mies lived in the 1920s. This very experience led Mies to see the great incongruity between the flexible lifestyle and the static home arrangement, which consequently urged him to develop a new spatial proposition to amend it.

To make a sense of a life, we have to situate it in time and space. In Chapter Two, I try to evoke the mood and milieu of Mies's neighborhood and metropolitan Berlin to give texture to his life at Am Karlsbad 24. I do so by gradually shrinking my focus of interest: I begin by sketching life in the 1920s' Berlin, and then reframe my focus to portray Potsdamer Platz which was the area Mies lived; after that, I concentrate pointedly on Mies's apartment life. [3] This approach is analogous to the means of changing lens in filmmaking. To provide the background of a story, a film often starts with a long shot, or establishing shot, which aims to set up the background or the location of the story. It then

3 Joseph Conners used a similar approach to situate Francesco Borromini's architecture into the culture of curiosity in seventeenth century's Rome in "Virtuoso Architecture in Cassiano's Rome," an article I read in Professor Mirka Benes's seminar course "Borromini and Baroque Rome" in Fall 2013. It inspired me.

transitions to a medium shot, which introduces the subject in relation to its immediate environment. Finally, the medium shot is adjusted to a close-up view, which tightly frames the most interesting feature of the subject. In so doing, the movie gives an account of the backdrop of the story and locates its subject into it securely. I hope, in gradually shrinking my focus of interest, to locate Mies's life comfortably into the milieu of 1920s' Berlin and present his lifestyle as a natural result growing out of its liberating air.

The latter half of my work examines the domestic projects Mies completed from after his transition to the end of 1920s. So, it concentrates on a very short span of time, from 1926 to 1930. Yet this was an important period in Mies's career, during which he integrated the insights and sensibilities accrued from his transition and his apartment life into propositions of a transformed domesticity and embodied them in his work.

Chapter Three examines the apartments and furniture Mies created for his Weissenhof apartment building at the Werkbund housing exhibition "Die Dwelling" in Stuttgart in 1927. From an understanding of his own living experience and observations of lifestyle of his avant-garde colleagues, Mies believed that people were now having a more spontaneous and unstructured life, but this lifestyle had not found a proper form in dwellings yet. The project of Weissenhof apartment building offered him an opportunity to translate his years of thought and observations on modern living into a feasible form. This chapter looks closely at the various apartment layouts and the device of moveable walls he created for the project. It demonstrates how he tried to design apartments in a way that would support various living modes. It also discusses his furniture designs for the apartments and illustrate how they also conveyed a flexible and manifold lifestyle.

Alongside displaying Mies's development in reforming modern living in this project, this chapter gives an account to its particular cultural and social context. In comparing Mies's efforts with that of his colleagues in tackling the housing problem, I intend to offer a more variegated image of Mies, showing how he was an anomaly within his peer group on one matter and fit in very well on another. This chapter centers on issues concerning how Mies dealt with the outcry for "standardization and typification" at the Weissenhof exhibition, why he created the device of an adaptable spatial arrangement; and finally, how Mies's emphasis on adaptable and free way of living fits in the overall efforts of modernist architects seeking for a new form of living.

Chapter Four investigates the Tugendhat House with a focus on how it evokes a sense of spirituality. After affirming a practical, flexible living in the Weissenhof apartments, Mies proposed a thoroughly transformed domesticity that highlights self-awareness and contemplation as a way of living. The discussion situates Mies's pursuit within a small current that valued spirituality and individuality in dwellings and confronts it against the trend of mass functionalist housing that concerned itself primarily with utilitarian and economic efficiency. It also offers a careful description of the psychological and bodily experience of being in the Tugendhat House. Additionally, through an investigation of the contemporary review of the house, especially debates about whether this house was "livable", it evaluates to which extent Mies achieved a sense of spirituality and discusses its diverse receptions.

The brief outline of my story suggests multiple questions from various fields of study. Some of these are related to the most prevalent discourses in architecture circles and

Mies's perspectives towards them. Other problems concern more on the urban and cultural history side, such as what was life like in Weimar Berlin and how intellectuals lived then. A third set of problems involve the major discourse on modern life and advent of modern technology, not just in architecture circles, but also in philosophic and sociological realms. Bringing these issues into a single study, this work borrows knowledge and approaches from a network of disciplines, including art history, Weimar German history, urban studies, cultural studies, and biography. In so doing, I hope my work could exemplify an expanding scope of architectural history study.

A Brief Literature Review

Mies has been a central figure in the discourse of modern architecture, and the historiography concerning him and his work is in accordance with that of modern architectural history in general. Early experts on Mies, such as Philip Johnson, Peter Blake, and Werner Blaser, believed his major contribution was to grant new building technology a noble and exquisite expression.[4] Their interpretations bore little consideration to specific cultural, economic, and political circumstances but fit very well within the contemporary technology-dominant view of modern architecture in general.

Later scholarship attempts to revise this static image of Mies by offering a more versatile and nuanced interpretation. Franz Schulze's *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (1985, revised and expanded in 2012) provides a comprehensive and meticulous study on Mies's life and career, situating both admirably into their historic context. Fritz Neumeyer's Mies van der Rohe: *das Kunstlos Wort: Gedanken zur Baukunst* (1986, translated into English in 1991) displays the depth and complexity of Mies's architectural thoughts by linking it to the intellectual legacy of Plato, Hegel, Nietzsche and other philosophers. The Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalog of *Mies in Berlin* (2001), edited by Barry Bergdoll, examines Mies's German work from new perspectives, such as its relation to the landscape, its representational techniques, and its lineage to the Prussian architectural tradition. *Mies and Modern Living: Interiors, Furniture, Photography* (2008),

[4] Here I am referring to Philip Johnsons' *Mies van der Rohe*, published in 1947, and Peter Blake's *Mies van der Rohe, Architecture and Structure*, published in 1964, and Werner Blaser's *Mies van der Rohe: The Art of Structure*, published in 1965.

edited by Helmut Reuter and Birgit Schulte, uncovers aspects of Mies van der Rohe's life and career that we knew little previously, such as the layout of his studio, his furniture patents, and his wallpaper designs. Detlef Mertins's recent monograph *Mies* (2014) takes an analytical and interpretive approach and demonstrates the ambiguity, polemics, and contradictions of Mies's work.

My dissertation adds a new, cultural lens to perceive Mies's work, especially the spatial configuration he created in the 1920s, which is one of his fundamental contributions to the modern world. By attributing his architectural development to his evolving perception of modern life, I demonstrate that Mies's work can be understood in cultural terms as well as the familiar formal terms and that its development is a more complex process than it was previously thought. Additionally, my work expands our knowledge of Mies's daily life in 1920s' Berlin and examines how this experience affected his work. Both topics have rarely been discussed in the Mies literature.[5]

My research is supported by an abundance of monographs on Mies's individual work published over the last two decades, including *Mies van der Rohe: The Krefeld Villas* by Kent Kleinman (2005), *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Architecture for the Silk Industry* by Christiane Lane (2011), and *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: The Tugendhat House* edited by Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat (2015 new edition). Each focuses on one step in Mies's

5 Andreas Marx and Paul Weber have offered by far the most detailed account of the layout of Mies's apartment in "From Ludwig Mies to Mies van der Rohe: The Apartment and Studio AM Karlsbad 24 (1915-39)" in *Mies and Modern Living: Interiors, Furniture, Photography,* ed. Helmut Reuter et al. (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008) 25-39. Their work seeks to identify the layout of the apartment and the function of each room, whereas mine investigates how Mies lived in the apartment and how he understood the experience.

architectural development, and my project brings them together to show a successive refinement. Wolf Tegethoff's *Mies van der Rohe: Die Villen und Landhausprojekte* (1981) offers a thorough survey of Mies's house projects through exhaustive archival research and rigorous reading of drawings. My work has a narrower and more concentrated scope, and different from Tegethoff's archival approach, mine is mostly narrative and analytical. I concentrate primarily on the Weissenhof apartments and the Tugendhat House as two pivotal moments in Mies's architectural evolution because they represented respectively Mies's effort to affirm a flexible living and to elevate it onto a spiritual plateau.

My project also helps bridge the gap between Mies's writings and practice. Most scholars have focused on Mies's work with only occasional references to his writings. Fritz Neumeyer, on the other hand, investigates Mies's theory and its intellectual sources but discusses little about his work. Detlef Mertins provides a more balanced account of both, but he does not show forcefully how they are related. Franz Schulze discusses briefly the interrelations between Mies's theory and his works in an article entitled "Mies van der Rohe: His Work and Thought" and concludes that Mies's practice diverged greatly from his writings.[6] He suggests further that it would be more useful to investigate what Mies did than what he said. I disagree with Schulze on this point, and my project uses Mies's theory to measure his work and demonstrates how it framed his outlook and approach to architecture.

6 Franz Schulze, "Mies van der Rohe: His Work and Thought," in *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: The Tugendhat House,* ed. Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, (Wien: Springer, 2000), 100-114.

Chapter One

Mies van der Rohe's Writings in the 1920s: A Transitional Moment

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe has long been acknowledged as a technologist who was primarily interested in new building materials and technologies and endowed them with an exquisite and refined expression.[7] A close reading of his writings in the 1920s, however, shows that he underwent a great transition in architectural thought, shifting his inspirational source from modern technology to modern life. These writings also offer a reflection on the contemporary discourse on the relationship between art and life, the potential threat to traditional values posed by the dominance of technology, and eventually to the question of how we should solve this cultural crisis.

The extensive literature on Mies contains only a few suggestions of his transition in the 1920s. Mies wrote little, and most of his writings are at a rather abstract level. Scholars have thus treated them mostly as supplements to his building work rather than a subject worth studying in its own right. One exception is Fritz Neumeyer, who, through an exhaustive study of Mies's writings, detected that Mies changed his position from a materialist to an idealist and aesthetician in 1926. Nevertheless, his discussion was focused on the year of 1926 and did not document the larger arc of Mies's transition.[8] Detlef

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7 I use the term "technologist" loosely here. It refers to someone who is primarily interested in applying technology properly and endowing it with a refined expression.

8 Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, trans. Mark Jarzombek, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), 147-193.

Mertins, in his recent monograph *Mies*, pointed to Mies's interest in the relationship between modern life and architecture, but he dispersed this idea in several chapters and never put it together as a single, forceful argument. But an investigation of Mies's writings, readings, and his social circles in the 1920s demonstrates that his transition was the consequence of over a decade's reflection about the driving forces of architecture. The key period of transition began around the middle of 1924 and concluded in 1926 (fig. 1.1).

MIES'S WRITING

Mies did not write much throughout his life. He was never fond of writing, nor was he really adept at the craft. When he needed to communicate an idea, he preferred to draw. He expressed his attitude towards writing clearly in a letter replying to an editorial request for lengthening his essay: "because I am no writer, I find writing difficult; in the same time, I could have completed a new design."[9] His writings were usually concise, trying to achieve clarity with minimal means, very much like his buildings.

But, relatively speaking, Mies wrote more in the 1920s than any other periods in his life. He wrote mostly in response to requests for articles or invitations to lectures, and though he declined or remained unresponsive to most of such requests, even though some of them were intended for important projects, his output nonetheless was notably greater than at any other time in his career. For example, Hans Prinzhorn, a celebrated psychiatrist

9 In a letter to Hermann von Wedderkop, the editor of *Der Querschnitt*, Mies wrote: "Da ich kein Schriftsteller bin fällt mir das Schreiben sehr schwer; in derselben Zeit hätte ich einen neuen Entwurf fertig gestellt." Library of Congress, Mies Papers, Mies to Hermann von Wedderkop, 22 February, 1924.

and a friend, who under Mies's request had once written for *G* magazine, asked Mies to return the favor by contributing an essay on architecture for his ambitious and encyclopedic series *Das Weltbild: Bücherei lebendigen Wissen*.[10] He sent many letters urging Mies to write, but they exerted little effect; Mies simply ignored them. Also overlooked was Walter Gropius's request for an essay for a volume of the *Bauhausbücher* series, for which Mies produced nothing, either.

However, if Mies did not write very much, he spared the time to read. He read extensively on various subjects; philosophy, sociology, art history and biology seemed to interest him the most. He read some books very carefully and took notes while doing so, trying to digest the idea and condense it into its very essence. Mies once describes his reading habit as: "When I read, I usually read the same text a few times and make notes. I read so intensely that I no longer recall how the notes I made came about because I am so very concerned with the meaning of it all."[11] Up to the time he left Germany, he had over three thousand books in his library, including works by philosopher Romano Guardini,

10 Hans Prinzhorn studied art history and Medicine at University of Vienna and received training in medicine and psychiatry. His noted work, *Artistry of mentally ill* (Nildnerei der Geisteskranken), represents an early study of works by the psychiatric patients. Mies probably made acquaintance with Hans Prinzhorn at Hellerau on a visit to Ada Bruhn, then his fiancée. Prinzhorn was there visiting Erna Hoffmann who was then Ada's roommate and, later, Prinzhorn's wife. See Museum of Modern Art, interview with Mary Wigman by Ludwig Glaeser, 13 September 1972 in Berlin. For Prinzhorn's essay, see *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film 1923-1926*, ed. Detlef Mertins et. Al. (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 154-155.

11 Quoted in Werner Blaser, "Encountering Mies van der Rohe" in *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Design in Stuttgart, Barcelona, Brno*, ed. Alexander von Vegesack et al. (Mila: Skira, 1998), 214.

sociologists Georg Simmel and Max Scheler, art historians Heinrich Wölfflin and Julius Meier-Graefe, botanist Raoul Heinrich Francé, and many others.[12]

Mies often knew personally the authors of his books. He probably had heard them discussing their ideas before buying their works. For example, he met philosopher Eduard Spranger and classist Werner Jaeger at the house of Alois Riehl, a philosophy professor for whom Mies built a country house in Neubabelsberg, a new suburb of Potsdam. Both Spranger and Jaeger were then Riehl's students at University of Berlin. They visited the Riehl House on various occasions and often spent the evening there discussing philosophy. Mies was a frequent guest of the house as well. Given his great interest in philosophic topics, Mies might have often attended the philosophy evenings and listened to their discussions.[13] At the Riehl House, Mies also met Heinrich Wölfflin, a distinguished art historian and Riehl's colleague at the university. Later, he would have heard a great deal about Wölfflin from his wife, Ada Bruhn, a daughter of a wealthy industrialist and who was originally engaged to Wölfflin. The Riehl House introduced Mies into a particular stratum of society that consisted primarily of philosophers, artists, and historians. It served as an intellectual nucleus, or almost a free college for Mies, providing him, a previously little-educated young man from a mason's family, the opportunity to meet the most

12 In an interview, Mies told that he owned 3,000 books in Germany and spent a fortune to buy them and a great deal of time to study them. He brought 300 books with him to the United States. "Six Student Talk with Mies," *North Carolina State University School of Design Student Publication* 2, no. 3 (1952): 21-28.

13 For more about how Alois Riehl and his circles had an intellectual impact on Mies, see Fritz Neumeyer, "Mies's First Project: Revisiting the Atmosphere at Klösterli,"in *Mies in Berlin*, ed. Barry Bergdoll et al. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 309-317.

important thinkers in Berlin and hear them talking about their ideas. Mies would purchase their works afterwards and study their ideas more closely. Thus, Mies owned books by Riehl, Spranger, Jaeger and Wölfflin — those whom he met at the Riehl house.

In addition to parties of intellectuals, Mies also attended lectures on various subjects and took notes when he heard something interesting. Probably in a lecture series sponsored by Bremen Kunstgewerbeschule (Bremen school of Applied Arts), Mies met the philosophers Romano Guardini and Nicolai Hartmann and joined their lectures.[14] Mies also owned their works.

These are only a few examples to show that Mies socialized extensively in the 1920s. In doing so, however, he got to know some of the most brilliant minds in Germany at the time and followed up-to-date developments in social science and humanities. Mies's story proved to be an inspiring, self-educational experience: he heard them talking about their ideas, bought their works afterwards, and read them carefully, taking notes of sparkling ideas, and reflecting on how they related to his world and eventually what they meant for architecture.

Not only did Mies socialize extensively in various intellectual circles, he also engaged in avant-garde activities in Berlin and soon got to know all the important artists. It was a surprisingly small world, where everyone knew everyone. He joined various artist circles, interacted with their members fluidly and became, at least for a time, a central figure of the group. For example: he joined Novembergruppe in 1922 and soon became the

14 Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 23.

head of its architectural section and, later, its president; he joined the *G* periodical editorial board and contributed to it both intellectually and financially; he joined Deutscher Werkbund in 1924, became its vice-president in 1925 and supervised the 1927 Weissenhof housing exhibition, which was the most important Werkbund project in years; and in 1926 he, together with Hugo Häring, founded Der Ring, an avant-garde architect association in Berlin. By connecting with various avant-garde circles, Mies came in touch and exchanged ideas with the leading figures in Dutch artistic circles, Russian Constructivism, and avant-garde films. Hence, it is fair to say that in the middle of 1920s, Mies stood at the very center of the modern architectural movement. Nevertheless, in bonding with his avant-garde colleagues and other cultural figures at the time, Mies found himself standing in a flood of extraordinary ideas that provided him with rich intellectual stimulation, but that also spurred him to formulate his own thoughts and articulate them forcefully. This perhaps partly explains why he wrote more in the 1920s than in any other time in his life: through writing he tried not only to convey his ideas to the audience, but also to clarify them for himself.

So Mies wrote discreetly, reflecting on ideas and weighing his words. Most of his writings of the 1920s, including journal essays, speech drafts or even letter drafts, show multiple revisions. He was obviously very careful about what he said, trying to be as accurate as possible and avoid any misunderstandings.[15] As a result, he was notoriously

15 Joseph Y. Fujikawa, Mies's former students and associates, said in an interview: "He [Mies] was never one to throw out words just to be throwing words out. He was very careful about what he said and he wanted to be as precise as possible in his meaning. His speaking was like his buildings, he got down to the very essence of it. Mies was very deliberate and precise with the words he used." Even though, Fujikawa referred to the time when Mies immigrated to the United States, we perhaps could imagine he was probably

slow and unproductive in writing.[16] He remained this way throughout his entire life, even more so when he aged, editing even routine letters repetitively and shortening his texts before they were — sometimes — entirely deleted.[17] This, however, makes what he writes carries all the more weight because every single word he wrote came from deep contemplation.

Unlike any other period in his life, Mies also wrote almost continuously in the 1920s.[18] He composed articles and drafted speeches. His articles usually served as introductions to his recent projects, or, at times, they were positional papers prescribing the right path to architecture. His lectures usually centered on a certain theme with a clear argument. These writings allow us to follow his train of thoughts and trace his development in architectural ideas. If we put these writings together and read them in a chronological order, we will find that they demonstrate a remarkable shift in Mies's architectural thinking

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like that when he was in Germany. *Impressions of Mies: an interview on Mies van der Rohe: his early Chicago years 1938-1958*, with former students, Edward A. Duckett and Joseph Y. Fujikawa / conducted by William S. Shell, 8.

16 Mia Seeger described Mies as "colossally slow" when writing; it took him days to write one paragraph for the introduction to the Werkbund Weissenhof Exhibition Catalog. Quoted in Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*, new and revised Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 110.

17 Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe,* 434. Hans Richter verified that Mies wrote less when he aged. In the last years of Mies's life, he received New Year's cards from Mies with only "a pair of words" on them. On the last card he received, there were only four letters: Mies. Hans Richter, *Begegnungen von Dada bis heute; Briefe, Dekumente, Erinnerungen* (Cologne: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1973), 56.

18 Based on Mies's writings collected in Neumeyer's *The Artless Word*, Mies wrote 17 essays and speeches from 1922 to 1929. He wrote frequently in the year 1930 but throughout the 1930s, he wrote 12 pieces. He completed significantly less writings in the United States (though he received more interviews), probably around 20 in nearly 30 years. (Neumeyer did not collect all the writings Mies produced in the United States, I figured this number based on the essays he collected and those I find).

throughout the decade. The major transition began to emerge in the middle 1924, at a time when Mies shifted his focus away from modern technology to modern life.

MIES'S TRANSITION FROM 1924 TO 1926

In the early years of the 1920s, Mies wrote a series of essays introducing his four visionary projects, two glass skyscrapers of 1921 and 1922 respectively, the office building of 1923 and the concrete country house of 1923. He explored new materials in each of them, and most of his texts dealt with how the application of new materials and technology would lead to a new and satisfying architectural outlook. It was clear then that Mies's interest was concentrated on the application of new technologies and their implications for architecture. In a number of writings completed before the middle of 1924, he used the earlier four building projects as examples to show how new materials and technology would play a dominant role in giving form to a new architecture. For example, he explained in 1922 that he used glass curtain walls for skyscraper projects in order to expose his bold constructive thoughts, and he attempted to study the effect of light reflection from glass curtain walls in the curvilinear glass skyscraper.[19] He used a purely mechanic tone discussing the merits and shortcomings of new materials, and he prescribed how to use them in very specific and technical terms. In discussing the concrete country house project, for instance, he claimed that the main advantage of ferroconcrete was its potential to save material, whereas its drawback lay in its low insulating property and its poor soundproof quality, so one needed to provide additional insulation or exclude noise sources to offset these disadvantages.[20] Similarly, when introducing his concrete office building, he stated

19 Mies van der Rohe, "Skyscrapers," *Frühlicht* 1, no.2 (1922), 122-24. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 240.

20 Mies van der Rohe, "Building," *G*, no.2 (September 1923),1. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 242.

that the most economical way to construct such a structure was to use two internal columns spanning eight meters and to have brackets projecting out four meters, so that the office would have sixteen meters room depth.[21] His language is as explicit as a manual instruction, and almost as dry as it.

Mies believed that new building technology is the key to salvage and redirect building activities. In an essay discussing housing problems in 1924, he wrote: "I hold that the industrialization of building constitutes the core problem of our time. If we are successful in carrying out this industrialization then the social, economic, technical, and even artistic questions will solve themselves."[22] He then determined that new materials were the precondition for industrializing building trade:

> The industrialization of the building trades is a matter of materials. That is why the demand for new building materials is the first prerequisite. Technology must and will succeed in finding a building material that can be produced technologically, that can be processed industrially…the processing of which not only permits but actually demands industrialization.[23]

These words manifested his bold materialistic approach towards architectural problems at the time.

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21 Mies van der Rohe, "Office Building," *G*, no.1 (July,1923):3. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*,241. Dietrich Neumann believed that the concrete office building should have included an interior courtyard, even though this feature was not represented in his perspective drawing. Based on this observation, Neumann reconstructed the plan for the office building project. Dietrich Neumann, "Three Early Designs by Mies van der Rohe." *Perspecta* 27 (1992): 87-89.

22 Mies van der Rohe, "Industrialization of Residential Building—A Question of Materials," in *Der Neubau* 6, no. 7 (1924):77. Later it was titled "Industrial Buildings" and reprinted in *G*, no. 3 (June 1924), 8-13, reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 248.

23 Ibid, 249.

Nonetheless, Mies abandoned such a radical attitude soon thereafter, as he began to seek in architecture not just a material connection to the modern world, but more importantly, a spiritual grasp of it. The first sign of his transition appears at the end of a lecture manuscript dated June 1924. For the most part of the lecture, Mies tried to explain what he meant by *elementare Gestaltung*, or elementary form-giving, a term coined by Theo van Doesburg in 1923. He argued that a building form should be determined by its purpose and materials: he showed the images of the Magdeburg housing projects by Bruno Taut and the Garkau farm by Hugo Häring to illustrate how architecture should be designed in response to its purpose; he used his own projects (the glass skyscrapers, the concrete office building, and the concrete country house) to demonstrate the formative effect of new material and technology. Paradoxically, he offered a brief explanation of his brick country house project, claiming it to be an example of how material does not necessarily determine building forms and stating that he was striving for spatial effects (fig. 1.2). In the end, Mies concluded that all the examples he had shown only demonstrated the correct methods to solve architectural problems among many confused efforts, but they were by no means great accomplishments, because the ultimate goal for architecture is to reach a spiritual end, and nothing heretofore had yet achieved it. This is perhaps the first time that Mies suggested that spirituality might be the core value of architecture, and it marked the fact that his previous materialist position was starting to loosen. In the following years, in theory and practice, he revised his inspirational source and working credos, shifting his focus away from modern materials to modern life.

From the middle of the 1920s, Mies's architectural development seemed to be running in an increasingly divergent direction from the general modern movement in Germany during the 1920s. In the early years of the decade, in response to the despair and suffering caused by a lost war, most German artists turned inward and engaged in a form of radical and anti-industrial romanticism. The entire economy was devastated; thus architects, with little prospect of real commissions, produced building fantasies and dreamed a new world associated with them. This condition, however, began to change in 1924 when the Dawes Plan was introduced. With the infusion of American loan money into the German economy, there came real opportunities to build. The architects soon ended their nostalgic "spirit-seeking" attempts and concentrated their attention and energy to real work.

But the enhanced economic conditions also triggered a series of cultural and social transformations during the period from 1924 to 1929, the so-called "Golden Years" of Weimar Germany and many of these transformations followed American models. The qualities of efficiency, the application of new technology, and the attitude of light-heartedness were all perceived as distinctively American traits and necessary components of modernity embraced wholeheartedly by modernist architects. Iain Boyd Whyte summarized the situation insightfully: "as the rule of the spiritual elite and the dictatorship of *Geist* (spirit) had proved a chimera, so the architectural radicals transferred their

chiliastic faith to a new form of mysticism — the mysticism of function, efficiency and Taylorism."[24]

Since the middle of 1920s, "Americanism" had become a fad sweeping over Germany: many worshiped the qualities of industrialization and efficiency that were closely associated with American culture. Henry Ford's autobiography *My Life and Work* was translated into German in 1923 and became popular so swiftly that it went through thirteen editions in a single year.

Mies, however, did not join the frenetic trend and commented somewhat coolly on Ford's book: "what Ford wants is simple and illuminating. His factories show mechanization in dizzying perfection. We agree with the direction Ford has taken, but we reject the plane on which he moves. Mechanization can never be goal; it must remain a means. The Means toward a spiritual purpose."[25] He claimed further that though fully acknowledging reality, one should not give up on ideals: "while we want to stand with both feet firmly on the ground, we want to reach with our head to the clouds."[26] These words signal that Mies had gradually moved away from his previous materialistic position and instead set up a new "cultural" telos for his work.

Mies wrote little in 1925. But starting from 1926, his writings began to show an increasingly confident and clarified approach to architecture, with less intellectual

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24 Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 220.

25 Neumeyer, the Artless Word, 250. Slight modification on the translation.

26 Ibid, 250.

wrestling and confusion. Later, when reflecting on this period, Mies himself described 1926 as "the most significant year" in the development of modern world when a "certain understanding of modern situations ripens."[27] In this year, not only did his previous, vague thoughts clarify themselves, but he also found a number of books discussing profound ideas that paralleled what he himself was then also thinking. He called 1926 as "a year of great realization of awareness," when "great people who may never know each other simultaneously talked about the same thing."[28] It is also in 1926 that Mies examined critically the architectural path he had previously take and decided to abandon it. Accordingly, he had his assistant Sergius Ruegenberg take out all his old drawings and destroy them.[29]

The year 1926 indeed marked the conclusion of Mies's remarkable transition in architectural orientation. From this point on, his writings presented an abruptly altered position towards architecture. This transition was reflected in two major ways: on the one hand, he concentrated his focus increasingly on the idea of life as driving force for architectural creation; and on the other hand, he began to see modern material and technology merely as means to achieve a new spirituality in architecture.

27 Mies van der Rohe, *Conversations with Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 20.

28 Ibid, 20, 21.

29 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Interview with Sergius Ruegenberg, by Ludwig Glaeser, September 8 1972.

LIFE AS DRIVING FORCE FOR ARCHITECTURE

The theme of life first emerged in Mies's writing in 1926 and recurred frequently thereafter. In an unpublished lecture manuscript dated 17 March, 1926, Mies traced how buildings and cities developed over time. He concluded that economy determines politics and life, and then life forms determine architectural forms: "ladies and gentlemen, I did not plan to hold forth on the history of economic or building development, but want only to show to what degree building is intertwined with living and the degree to which transformation in life find their expression in the transformation of our building forms."[30] Mies held that life was a vital forming agent and wrote in 1927: "Only life intensity has form intensity…Authentic form presupposes authentic life…Life is what matters in its spiritual and concrete interconnections."[31]

The idea of life as driving force for human creativity was not new to Mies. When he was young, he read books by Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom investigated the value of life and how it related to art.[32] Unlike the philosophers before them, such as Kant and Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were interested less in the internal constitution of aesthetic judgments as in the purpose of art. They sought to understand the essence of art from the practical and existential ground, or namely how

30 Unpublished manuscript for a lecture, place, date and occasion unknown. First version of March 17, 1926, two further versions undated; in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 256.

31 Mies van der Rohe, "On Form in Architecture," *Die Form* 2, no. 2 (1927),59. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 257.

32 When Mies worked in Aachen, his colleague Dulow invited him to dinner and celebrated Schopenhauer's birthday. It was Dulow who later encouraged him to go to Berlin. Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Mies van der Rohe, interview with Dirk Lohan, Chicago, summer 1968.

artworks may lead us to "revalue" life experience positively, regardless of the inevitable unfulfillment and pain in life. They proposed to assess art from the perspective of life.[33] Nietzsche in particular held that "affirmation of life is essentially an aesthetic or artistic stance," and he claimed this idea repeatedly in *The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, On the Genealogy of Morals,* and *Twilight of the Idols*.[34]

By the turn of the twentieth century, Nietzsche was a household name for the German public. Most of his works, though still controversial, were republished in new and popular editions.[35] Mies's first client, Alois Riehl, was among the first to publish a scholarly monograph on Nietzsche in 1897, entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche: Der Künstler und der Denker*. Unlike previous discussions on Nietzsche that had focused exclusively on the issue of morality, Riehl argued that Nietzsche's philosophical core lay in culture regeneration.

At the turn of the century, Nietzsche's works were a must-read in artist circles, especially *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Mies owned a complete collection of Nietzsche's work. He certainly read them, and he must have paid particular attention to Nietzsche's discussion on art. He must have known very well Nietzsche's idea

33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* ed. Michael Tanner and trans. Shaun Whiteside (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 4. Also see Daniel Came, introduction to *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, ed. Daniel Came (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014),1- 9.

34 Berneard Reginster, "Art and Affirmation" *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, 14.

35 R. A. Nicholls, "Beginning of the Nietzsche Vogue in Germany," in *Modern Philology* 56, No. 1 (August, 1958): 24.

that the mission of art is to affirm life, to stimulate continuous engagement with it, and then to reshape it. This line of thinking was inherited and developed further by Georg Simmel.

Simmel is best known today as a sociologist who opened new prospects for the field.[36] He approached the subject in a more dynamic manner, perceiving the notion of society as a derivative of reciprocal relations between human beings rather than an established entity preceding them.[37] Accordingly, he proposed to study society through substantial examinations of reciprocal relations between various societal roles. Compared to former sociological methods that relied greatly on theories of physics and biology, his ideas pointed to a more specific sociological approach.[38]

Sociology was only one of Simmel's scholarly interests. He was trained in philosophy, and when he started teaching philosophy and ethics at the University of Berlin in 1885, his lectures became immediately popular among students and attracted intellectuals of the city. Only then did he extend his lecture topics to include sociological subjects. Throughout his career as a philosopher, an inquiry of the meaning of life constituted a key part of his metaphysical investigation. His view of life may be best considered together with his philosophy of culture as one coherent theory that explored the evolution of life and its interactions with cultural forms.

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[36] Simmel remained a controversial figure in the field of sociology. Some scholars thought that his study of human relationships laid ground for modern sociology, and some criticized him for failing to establish a systematic framework.

[37] Theodore Abel, "The Contribution of Georg Simmel: A Reappraisal," *American Sociological Review* 24, No. 4 (Aug., 1959): 473-474.

[38] Horst Helle, *The Social Thought of Georg Simmel* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), 3.

Simmel launched his inquiry in 1881, investigating the formation of music for his doctoral dissertation. His thesis was built upon two sources: the idea of his teacher, anthropologist Moritz Lazarus, concerning the adaptive foundations of cultural forms, and Darwin's idea of the evolutionary significance of singing.[39] He used the formation of music to demonstrate how cultural forms first arose from practical demands of life process and only after that developed into autonomous forms.

Such ideas were also expressed in Hendrik Petrus Berlage's work. Mies began reading Berlage in 1912, if not earlier, when he worked on the competition entry for the Kröller-Müller House.[40] He owned Berlage's *Studies over Bouwkunst, Stijl en Samenlving* (1910) and *Grundlagen und Entwicklung der Architektur* (1908), and he brought both with him when moving to the United States. In an essay titled "Architecture's Place in Modern Aesthetics," Berlage referred to Tranhndorff's idea that practical purpose determines architectural forms, and, only after the need has disappeared, does the form have an independent aesthetic existence.[41] This idea is very similar to that in Simmel's dissertation.

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39 Donald N. Levine and Daniel Silver, "introduction to *The View of Life,"* in George Simmel, *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), xx.

40 In replying to Peter Blake's remarks that "in 1919 you seem to have broken completely with everything you had done before", Mies says: "I think the break started long before. The break started when I was in the Netherlands working on the problem of the Kröller museum. There I saw and studied carefully Berlage. I read his books and this theme that architecture should be construction, clear construction." See "A Conversation with Mies," interview with Peter Blake. In Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture: Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Wright, edited by Adolf K. Placzek, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 94-95.

41 H.P. Berlage, "Architecture's Place in Modern Aesthetics," originally published in *Studies over Bouwkunst, Styl en Samenlving*. Translated and reprinted in *Hendrik Petrus Berlage: Thoughts on Style 1886-1909*, trans. Iain Boyd Whyte and Wim De Wit (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center, 1996), 98.

In his subsequent career, Simmel built on his 1881 theory and continued to investigate the relation between cultural forms and life process. He published his study in a book entitled *Lebensanschauung* (the View of Life) in 1918. It was the last publication issued during his lifetime, in which he brought together his former investigation of social and cultural forms and the problem of individuality in relation to "life" in order to achieve a more profound understanding of both.[42] One of his core arguments is that life is a self-transcendent process. It overcomes itself through form creations: life demands corresponding forms that not only affirm it but also bring ideas and values that renew it. Simmel summarized briefly how life and cultural development interact as:

> Culture in general arises where categories produced in life, and for life's sake, become autonomous shapes of intrinsically valued formations that are objective with respect to life. As decidedly as religion, art, and science maintain their meaning as such in superpsychological ideality, certain processes of temporally subjective life are nonetheless their embryonic stages; from their viewpoint these processes seem like their embryonic stages; from their viewpoint these processes seem like their pre-forms; or (in the earlier formulation) exactly the same thing appears in the form of life as those which exist in the form of ideality in its own world. In the instant when those formal driving forces or modes of arrangement (i.e., driving forces or modes of arrangement that form given contents into a defined world) become the decisive thing for themselves (though preciously life and its material constellation of interests instant was decisive), and produce or form an object from themselves — in each such instant there is produced a piece of those cultural worlds that now stand before life, offering it the stations of its progress or a supply of contents.[43]

To a large extent, Simmel's view towards life is analogous with Nietzsche's: life aims toward no final purpose but nevertheless manifests evolutionary movement. For Simmel,

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42 Levine and Silver, "introduction to *The View of Life,"* x.

43 Simmel, *The View of Life,* 33.

the relationships between life and cultural forms are reciprocal. Unformed life processes demand for forms; forms that are estranged from life processes are futile. Not only does a valid form depend on life, it in turn also offers life with an ideal vision that nourishes it and transcends it.

This kind of thinking might have led Mies to see that formal creation must be justified by practical life to be tenable and vital. Not only does life create culture, it is also an innermost driving force to transform it. Based on this kind of thinking, Mies realized that the changing life condition has not been fully addressed in current building forms. He wrote: "despite fundamental changes in the structure of our existence, the exterior form of our life has not yet been able to create its new expression…the urgency of life will increasingly articulate itself and push away the old, long-obsolete forms."[44] It indicates that Mies no longer saw life merely as a dull existence, but rather a vital forming force. Artists, he thought, needed to seek the essence of life and make it the underpinning of their work because only in doing so can their work obtain any significance.

Nevertheless, although Nietzsche and Simmel led Mies to see that life's vital role in art making, they spoke on a highly abstract and philosophical level, and it was thus difficult to apply their thoughts in practice. Hence, the question for him remained: how could one capture the very essence of intangible life and translate it into a concrete form?

Within artists' circles, a series of intellectual infiltrations might have helped Mies to connect life and architecture on a more tangible level: "life" was interpreted to "way of

44 Mies van der Rohe, unpublished manuscript, around 1926, collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 255.

living," and this transported the relationship between life and architecture onto a more realistic and practical ground. Some of such influences may be traced back to the early years of the twentieth century. For example, Hermann Muthesius's monumental *The English House* (*Das englische Haus*) showed that domestic architecture was, to a large extent, shaped by its residents' way of living. Published in 1904 and 1905, *Das englische Haus* was read widely among the German architects. It commends English domestic architecture for its comfort, practicality, and economy and shows very nicely how the arrangements of English houses fit their residents' lifestyle.

Born into a builder family in 1861, Hermann Muthesius studied philosophy, art history, and architecture in college and then apprenticed at an architect's office and a construction firm. From 1896 to 1903, he was appointed as a technical and cultural attaché of the German Embassy in London, and his major job was to observe and report on the condition of English living, manufacturing, education, and other issues that were of interest to Germans. During this period, he and his wife lived in London, enjoyed the privileges of high office position, and they made friends with important artists and architects in England, such as Walter Crane and Charles and Margaret Mackintosh. The couple developed a genuine love for English people and their culture. Such interest, integrating Muthesius's training background in architecture, extended to a great enthusiasm in English houses. Their years' residence in England allowed Muthesius to immerse himself in studying every aspect of English domesticity, observing the daily life of his English colleagues and even adopting some of their manners and lifestyle himself. After returning to Berlin, he published his industrious research in a three-volume survey.

What is particularly noteworthy is that Muthesius did not merely investigate the formal features of the English residential architecture. He also paid great attention to depicting the modest and cultivated lifestyle that was associated with it. He characterized English houses as "rooted in the life-style of its occupants" and tried to demonstrate these connections. In the preface to the first edition of *Das englische Haus*, he stated: "if we are to give an illuminating account of conditions in England we must widen our scope beyond a bare description of the house; we must describe the conditions that govern it, i.e., English domestic life, its mores and, indeed the Englishman's whole philosophy of life."[45] In his text, he interwove commentaries on how English people lived with an exploration of why their houses were arranged in the way that they were. For example, in explaining why a drawing room and dining room were usually adjacent, Muthesius portrayed a vivid picture of how an English family proceeded to dinner:

> ⋯ the route from the drawing-room to the dining-room is considered very important. The occupants of the house assemble in the drawing-room before dinner, the men in tails, or at least in dinner jackets, even for ordinary family meals (tails in England are not gala attire, as they are with us, but ordinary evening-dress). The women, worthy partners to their menfolk, appear in evening-dress, which is usually décolletée. When they are summoned to table, usually by three muffled notes of a gong, the company in its ceremonial attire moves towards the dining-room two by two. This is everyday practice in England, whereas we regard it as appropriate only to a banquet. The daily procession to the dining-room must naturally have a ceremonial route along which to move. The company therefore usually passes through as imposing a room as possible, preferably the hall, if there is one. Thus it is an advantage if the doors of drawing-room and dining-room face one another on the same axis.[46]

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45 Hermann Muthesius, "Preface to the first edition;" *The English House*, trans. Janet Seligman (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 4.

46 Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, trans. Janet Seligman (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 86.

English house arrangements seem to make perfect sense in this context because they corresponded directly to English way of living. By describing English houses this way, Muthesius demonstrated forcefully for his German-speaking audience how English houses were shaped by English lifestyle.

After the first edition came out in 1904 and 1905, *Das englische Haus* became so popular that a second edition was called for and published from 1908 to 1911. Given the wide circulation of the book, Mies must have read it, or, at the very least, he would have been familiar with its ideas. In 1909, Mies found an opportunity to travel to England.[47] The primary purpose of the trip was to visit the Garden City projects in England, but he managed to visit Sir Edwin Lutyens, Charles Voysey, and Baillie Scott's buildings, which were introduced and commended in *Das englische Haus*.[48] Muthesius's teaching and Mies's trip might have led him to see how the development of houses was knitted together with the lifestyle of their residents.

Nietzsche, Simmel, and Muthesius proved to Mies that architecture has to be driven by life to be vital. These influences lurked in Mies's consciousness quietly for years, but in some fashion, they were summoned up in the middle of the 1920s and brought about his

47 Probably through Behrens's connection, Mies traveled to England with Karl Ernst Osthaus, one of the most important patron and promoter of modern art and architecture in Germany at the time, and two hundred members of the Deutsche Gartenstadt Gesellschaft from July 6 to 17, 1909. For more information about the trip and the relationship between Mies and Osthaus, see Birgit Schulte's "Opposing the Age of Short-lived Fashions: Lines Connecting Mies van der Rohe and Karl Ernst Osthaus," in *Mies and Modern Living: Interiors / Furniture / Photography*, ed. Helmut Reuter et al. (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008),41-56.

48 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig and H T Cadbury-Brown, "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in conversation with H T Cadbury-Brown," *AA Files*, No. 66 (2013): 68.

transformation. Around 1924, Mies's frequent intercourse with Theo van Doesburg might have been the catalyst to trigger his transformation. Van Doesburg — painter, architect, and founder of De Stijl — sought in his work a similar integration of art and everyday life. Mies probably first met van Doesburg in 1922 when the latter moved to Berlin.[49] He stayed with his friend Hans Richter, an avant-garde artist and filmmaker, for several months, during which he introduced Mies to Richter and the three got together often to discuss art and architecture.[50]

Mies and van Doesburg's architectural positions were not quite compatible at first. In the early years of 1920s, Mies held a purely materialistic approach to architecture whereas van Doesburg was as an idealist as well as a materialist, who called for an integration of both material and spiritual sides of life in architecture. In 1922, van Doesburg conducted a lecture tour titled "The Will to Style: A New Form of Expression of Life Art and Technology" in Jena, Weimar, and Berlin. The speech criticized the current tendency towards utilitarian functionalism as soulless and argued instead that architecture needed to express modern life, which was a synthesis of many conflicting forces, prominently the material and spiritual forces. The speech was published in the February and March issues of *De Stijl* the same year. It is unclear whether Mies attended any of the lectures, but as a

49 Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings, "Introduction: The G-Group and the European Avant-Garde," *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film 1923-1926*, ed. Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings; trans. Steven Lindberg and Margareta Ingrid Christian, (Los Angeles, Calif.: Getty Research Institute, 2010),8.

50 Howard Dearstyne, *Inside the Bauhaus* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 64.

subscriber of *De Stijl*, he was very likely to have read the article.[51] He considered van Doesburg's approach as formalist and in an essay written for *G* in 1923, he claimed: "Form as goal is formalism; and that we reject. Nor do we strive for a style. Even the will to style is formalism. We have other worries."[52] The wording of "the will to style" was very likely an allusion to van Dosburg's famous tour lecture last year.[53]

Van Doesburg surely read Mies's essay. He quoted its key paragraphs in 1924 in his Vienna lecture "the New Architecture and its Consequences" and responded that "form and style are not to be confounded." He further explained that what he aimed for was a "formless style" that is "resulted from elementarization of architectural means of expression and not of the simplification of form."[54] Aside from the part responding to Mies's critiques, the primary argument of this lecture was that neither materialistic constructive efforts nor the aesthetic speculative approach would solve current architectural problems; the only remedy would be architectural renovations that fulfilled both physical and spiritual needs of life. This lecture was published in the autumn 1925 issue of *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst*.

In addition to the debate in writing, Mies and van Doesburg worked very closely for the *G* journal during 1923 and 1924. Short for *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung*, *G*

51 Library of Congress, Mies Papers, Subscription bill, 1923 July 10.

52 Mies van der Rohe, "Building," *G*, no. 2 (September, 1923), 1. Reprinted in Neumeyer, The Artless Word, 242.

53 Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1974), 56.

54 Theo van Doesburg, "the New Architecture and its Consequences," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst III*, (Autumn 1925) 14-20. Reprinted in Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, 191.

was an avant-garde art journal founded by Hans Richter in collaboration van Doesburg and Swedish painter Vicking Eggeling in 1922.[55] G stands for "Gestaltung," a term that refers to form as well as the form-generating process. It was a highly polemic term at the time, because it suggested a particular approach to art work, in which the formative and constructive process took priority over forms themselves.[56] Such a title already implied the core approach of the journal to put forming before form. In visual terms, it promoted radical abstraction as opposed to the continuance of Expressionism, and it championed the artistic outlook of Dutch De Stijl, Russian Constructivism, and Dada. Mies and van Doesburg were both central figures of the artists group involving with the *G* journal. Van Doesburg was a co-founder, and in order to honor his role, a square was put next to the journal title "G."[57] He also wrote the editorial essay for its first issue, "Zur elementaren Gestaltung," setting the keynote for the journal. Mies was a keen contributor too: not only did he author a number of articles, but he also edited and funded its early issues. When recalling *G* activities, Hans Richter considered Mies a key figure in the group: "Mies's personality, his work and his active collaboration became more indispensable and decisive than all the others."[58]

55 Hans Richter's letter to the Editor, "More on Group 'G'," *Art Journal* 24, no. 4 (1965): 350-352.

56 Mertins and Jennings, "Introduction," 5.

57 Hans Richter, "More on Group 'G'," 350-352.

58 Werner Graeff, "Concerning the So-Called G Group," *Art Journal* 23, no.4 (Summer, 1964): 281. See also Hans Richter, *Köpfe und Hinter Köpfe* (Zürich: Arche, 1967), 69.

During the middle 1920s, van Doesburg and Mies would have met very often at *G*'s editorial meetings and thus had plenty of opportunities to discuss and debate their ideas. They shared the commitment to the "forming before form," a working credo that brought artists from different disciplines to work together for *G*. Probably through their frequent discussions, the two may have sensed their gradual proximity in architectural positions and approach: van Doesburg invited Mies, as the only non De Stijl member, to contribute to that group's architecture exhibition in the fall of 1923 in Paris, to which Mies eagerly accepted and sent a model of his concrete country house.

Nevertheless, Mies refused to acknowledge van Doesburg as an influence. In a draft letter, Mies wrote: "Berlage, but not the modern Dutch achievement, has influenced me…. Why do you believe the Dutch have had this influence over me? I do not really value that building art so much."[59] It seems that this letter was responding to some art critic who remarked that Mies was influenced by modern Dutch art. We are not sure if Mies ever sent out the letter, but it is obvious he was greatly annoyed by such comments. He was willing to acknowledge Berlage's influence perhaps because Berlage belonged to the older generation and was a widely acknowledged father figure among young modernists. But van Doesburg was a peer, and there was real competition between Mies and him. Mies's irritation might also have to do with the concern that such comments would reduce his originality in the public's eyes. But, the back-and-forth debate between him and van Doesburg in the middle of the 1920s indicated that they followed each other's ideas.

59 Draft of a letter to an unknown author, In Museum of Modern Art, Manuscript Folder 2. Reprinted in Neumeyer, The Artless Word, 263.

Starting from 1926, Mies's writings represented a kinship with the ideas or remarks made by van Doesburg previously. In addition, his brick country house project bore uncanny resemblance with the painting of *Rhythm of a Russian Dance* by van Doesburg, which was completed in 1918. Given the close discourse between the two, it is not very likely that Mies had not seen this painting. Or, Mies might have grasped a similar idea of abstract composition from the sculpture work of *Mechanical Dancing Figure* completed in 1920 by Vilmos Huszár. A picture of it was made into postcards, and Mies kept one in his files (fig. 1.3).[60] Or even more conveniently, he might have been inspired by the plan of a private house model produced by van Doesburg and Cornelius van Esteren, which presented the idea of using walls to divide and direct spaces rather than to enclose them. The model was made for De Stijl architecture exhibition in Paris in 1923, in which Mies also participated. All this indicated that Mies was aware of van Doesburg's theories and works and probably assimilated some of them into his own thinking.

The year 1924 also marks a shift of direction for van Doesburg. It corresponds with his moving away from an experimental and theoretical tendency to a more practically oriented approach in architectural research and practice.[61] This shift of stress was well reflected in the essays he wrote for *Het Bouwbedrijf* (Construction Industry) from the middle of 1924 to the early 1930s. These articles introduced and reviewed the contemporary architectural developments in various European countries, and compared

60 Library of Congress, Mies Papers, A postcard, no postmark.

61 Cees Boekraad, Preface to *on European Architecture: Complete Essays from Het Bouwbedrijf 1924-1931*, by Theo van Doesburg (Boston: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1990), 8.

with van Doesburg's previous writings, they were less manifesto-like and far more accessible. *Het Bouwbedrijf* was a journal intended for all those involved in the building industry, including contractors, architects, manufacturers, and dealers. Although the journal placed its primary focus on introducing construction techniques and commercial information, the editors kept an open and cultural outlook of the construction business and encouraged "fresh and interesting reading material in the wider field of construction, needed by the practical worker in order to keep up the lofty vision of his task and the enthusiasm for his work, despite the currently often depressing influence of the worries of daily life."[62]

Van Doesburg fulfilled this task. He explored this notion that "the essence of architecture is determined by the way of life" in the background of his monthly articles. For example, in "Persisting Life-Style and Architectural Innovation," an article written for the first issue of the journal in October 1924, he argued that innovations with new materials and building technology represented only the material base — not the ideological base — for a new architecture, and that was why they received wide resistance in traditional building types such as houses. Instead, practical necessity arising from a changed way of living was the only valid reason that could initiate a key innovation in architecture. He added:

> One can design a house for somebody in the most modern, economical and hygienic way, but he will not feel happy in it as long as this lay-out does not correspond to his way of life… I am convinced that the attempts at architectural innovation can

62 Ibid, 7-8.

> run into obstacles here, but nearly all efforts towards renewal were stranded because the architectural problem was approached from the angle of lifeless construction instead of the willingness to consider the way of life of a nation. [63]

He continued to stress the forming effect of contemporary lifestyles on architecture in his subsequent articles and claimed that architects ought to investigate the interrelations between life style and architecture closely.

> In summarizing we would gain the insight that life itself produces a new style in all our doings, and that the surfacing of this bio-genetic process was bound to lead to other buildings and utensils…it would be incalculably more useful to study the influence of the ever changing life-styles on building forms, which are gradually perfecting themselves, instead of scrupulously studying earlier building forms and ornaments. [64]

In these articles, van Doesburg translated the connection between life and architecture to a much more tangible relationship between lifestyle and architecture. This is a very helpful step towards the creation of a new architecture because not only it underlines the vital connection between life and architecture, but more importantly it also suggests a solid approach to architecture — to find inspiration from real life. As a man who browsed architectural journals extensively, Mies may have read these articles.[65] If he did, he must have felt great sympathy with the ideas expressed in them; and if he did not, he certainly

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63 Theo van Doesburg, "Persisting Life-Style and Architectural Innovation: Auguste Perret and Eugene Freyssinet," *Het Bouwebedrijf* 1, no. 4 (October 1924) 173-177. Reprinted in *On European Architecture: complete Essay from Het Bouwbedrijf 1924-1931*, trans. Charlotte I. Loeb and Arthur L. Loeb (Boston, MA.: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1990), 17.

64 Theo van Doesburg, "Defending the Spirit of Space: Against a dogmatic functionalism" in *Het Bouwebedrijf* 3, no. 5 (May 1926) 191-194. Reprinted in *on European Architecture,* 88.

65 Even though these articles were published in Dutch, this must have been no problem to Mies. Mies's mother is Dutch, and his birth place Aachen borders on Netherland, so he could probably speak Dutch. His subscription of *De Stijl* also indicates that he could read Dutch.

shared the same kind of thinking. Probably in the middle of the 1920s, he wrote in his notebook that: "we can only talk of a new building art when new life forms have been formed…that art lovers and the intellectuals stand too remote from real life to draw meaningful conclusions out of it for forming an attitude."[66]

Mies's transition may have been triggered, with Nietzsche, Simmel, and Muthesius in the background, by active discussions with van Doesburg on the topic of art, life, and technology in the middle of the 1920s. Even though at first Mies found his ideas were not in total agreement with van Doesburg, he appears to have more or less oscillated his position and assimilated part of van Doesburg's ideas into his own. After 1925, when both no longer engaged very much in *G* activities, they worked separately but still kept an eye on each other's development: Van Doesburg published reproductions of Mies's recent works in *De Stijl* in 1928, and he wrote a positive review of the Weissenhof exhibition for *Het Bouwbedrijf*.[67] Mies, on the other hand, tried to invite van Doesburg to participate in the Weissenhof exhibition in 1926, but the Württemburg Werkbund declined his proposal on the grounds that they wanted to have more local participants than foreigners.[68]

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66 Mies's note book, page 6 and 7. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 269-270.

67 *De Stijl* 85/86 (1928): 123-126. Het Bouwbedrijf 4, no. 24 (Nov. 1927): 556-559.

68 Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedung: Experimental Housing Built for the Deutscher Werkbund*, Stuttgart, 1927 (New York: Rizzoli, 1989)41-42. Richard Pommer suggests that the objection of van Doesburg might also have to do with that he quarreled openly with Gropius. Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto*, Weissenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 48.

TECHNOLOGY AS MEANS NOT AS AN END

Acknowledging life's inspirational role, Mies stressed that one's understanding of life played a defining part in shaping architecture because life transfers architecture through human's intellectual input. He reasoned by referring to Plato:

> Even Plato recognized the changes of forms in state and society and saw these changes as transformations in the soul of the populace that forms state and society, while the soul in turn is influenced in a myriad of ways by the forms of life that surrounds it…they [cultural, economic and political transformations] change the living conditions of a particular people, and this in turn leads to a change of formal expression.[69]

Following this train of thoughts, Mies also changed his definition of building art and idea about how artists play a role in it. Until the middle of 1924, Mies defined building art as "spatially apprehended will of the epoch."[70] By contrast, after 1926, he modified it into "building art is always the spatial execution of spiritual/intellectual decisions."[71] This alteration, though subtle and slight, reveals striking change of perspective of what drives architecture. The earlier version (before 1924) indicates that the objective conditions of the time, such as the emergence of new materials and building technology, gave form to architecture. By contrast, the later version (after 1926) suggests that architecture was a

69 Unpublished manuscript for a lecture, place, date and occasion unknown. First version of March 17, 1926, two further versions undated; in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 252.

70 Mies van der Rohe, "Office Building," *G*, no. 1 (July 1923) 3. The same definition also appeared in his "Building Art and the Will of the Epoch!" in *Der Querschnitt* 4, no. 1 (1924): 31-32. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 241, 245.

71 Mies van der Rohe, unpublished manuscript, first version of March 17, 1926, in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. The definition appears twice in the beginning and end of the manuscript. The same definition also appeared in a draft of letter, date unknown, Museum of Modern Art. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 252, 256, 263.

result of one's "spiritual/intellectual decisions" that was made dependent on one's inner perception of the outer world.

Acknowledging one's understanding of life as driving force for architecture, Mies reevaluated the role of technology and concluded that the new material force should never be the end of building art but rather a means to it. This dramatic transition manifested itself distinctively in his changed perspective of current housing problems. In a lecture given at a meeting discussing solutions to housing shortage in 1924, Mies voiced a purely technologist position: "rational economics have to be striven for, and the employment of technological means is a self-understood precondition. If we comply with these demands, then the apartment building of our epoch has found its form."[72] He even went so far as to claim that industrialization was the only remedy to the housing problem and stated in "Industrialization of Residential Building — A Question of Materials:" "I hold that the industrialization of building constitutes the core problem of our time. If we are successful in carrying out this industrialization, then the social, economic, technical, and even artistic questions will solve themselves."[73]

Only three years later, he changed his position completely and instead held that the application of new building technology played a minor role in tackling the housing problem, as he claimed in the Weissenhof housing exhibition in 1927:

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72 Mies van der Rohe, "Building Art and the Will of the Epoch!," *Der Querschnitt* 4, no. 1 (1924): 31-32. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 245.

73 Mies van der Rohe, "Industrialization of Residential Building—A Question of Materials," *Der Neubau* 6, no. 7 (1924):77. Later it was titled "Industrial Buildings" and reprinted in *G*, no. 3 (June 1924): 8-13. Reprinted in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 248.

> The battle cry 'rationalization and typification,' along with the call for the economizing of the housing industry, represent only parts of the problem, for, although important, they have significance only if seen in right proportions. Next to them, or rather above them, stands the spatial problem that can only be solved by creativity rather than by calculation or organization.[74]

This statement indicated that Mies subverted his previous, technologist position, seeing the housing problem no longer as a material issue, but rather an intellectual one. He stressed further that: "rationalization and typification are only the means, they must never be the goal. The problem of the new housing is basically a spiritual problem, and the struggle for new housing is only an element of the larger struggle for new forms of living."[75] In so saying, Mies raised the housing problem onto the cultural level and recognized the configuration of new housing as an attempt to frame a new, modern life. This new vision of housing would greatly shape his approach to design modern domestic space, as we shall see in his Weissenhof apartment building and the Tugendhat house.

Mies's reevaluation of technology's role corresponded to an increasing concern among contemporary thinkers about the potential threat to traditional cultural and value system caused by the unrestricted development of new technologies. Among them, Georg Simmel discussed the problem from a cultural perspective and believed that the crux of the

74 Mies van der Rohe, "Introductory Remarks to the Special Issue 'Werkbundausstellung: Die Wohnung'," *Die Form* 2, no. 9 (1927): 257. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 261.

75 Mies van der Rohe, "Foreword to the Official Catalog of the Stuttgart Werkbund Exhibition 'Die Wohnung'," the catalog was published by the exhibition directorate (Stuttgart, 1927). Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 258.

problem lay in the unsynchronized development of modern material world and human spirit.

Simmel defined culture as two-fold. On the one hand, the demands and interests of life are shaped into forms of "objective culture," which is also known as the material world. On the other hand, subjective culture is personal culture, concentrating on the cultivation of human minds. Between the two, subjective culture takes priority over the objective once because the ultimate purpose of culture is to allow individuals to derive from materials a spiritual state of mind; in other words, the final goal of culture is to cultivate individuals by means of the cultivations of the world of objects.[76] In "On the Essence of Culture," after carefully defining the two cultures, Simmel concludes that: "subjective culture is the overriding final goal, and its measure is the measure of how far the spiritual process of life has any part in those objective entities and their perfection," and only through the modification of subjective culture could the objective entities be endowed with any real value.[77]

Simmel reflected on the problematic relationship between subjective and objective culture and summarized that the development of subjective culture relied on that of objective culture, whereas objective culture, on the other hand, conforms to solely objective norms and develops independently of its subjective counterpart. Modern conditions remarkably widen the rift between the two because the separation of labors accelerates the

76 Georg Simmel, "the Future of Our Culture," and "culture and crisis," in *Simmel on Culture,* 102. 92

77 Georg Simmel, "the Essence of Culture," and "the Future of Our Culture," in *Simmel on Culture,* 40-45, 101-102.

development of objective culture but hinders that of subjective culture. It distances people away from a full engagement in the process of production and thus leads to a general lack of understandings of the material world in which they live. However, such an understanding plays a constitutive role in building one's subjective culture and, thus, a lack of it would result in an extensive decline in subjective culture.

Additionally, objective culture, which serves as raw material for subjective culture, develops too rapidly for people to assimilate and translate inwardly. Simmel believed that this is a major problem of modernity and expressed his concerns in "on the Essence of Culture" that:

> the disharmony of modern life, in particular the intensification of technology in every sphere combined with deep dissatisfaction with it, arises largely from the fact that things become more and more cultivated but people are capable only to a lesser degree of deriving from the improvement of objects an improvement of their subjective lives.[78]

These words describe an awkward modern condition that an improvement in the material world did not necessarily led to a corresponding enhancement in people's inner life. Mies may have followed Simmel's discussions and expressed similar concerns in a lecture in 1928: "Technology follows its own laws and is not man-related. Economy becomes self-serving and calls forth new needs. Autonomous tendencies in all these forces assert

78 Ibid, 45.

themselves…But they assume a threatening predominance. Unchecked, they thunder along. Man is swept along as if in a whirlwind."[79]

What is worse, the vast proliferation of objective culture and the general decline of its subjective counterpart would orient one's interests and efforts increasingly towards the material world and further away from personal cultures. Consequently, the goals of life grew subordinate to its means, which themselves become goals. Simmel warned that such a reversed order would render life worthless:

> The vast intensive and extensive growth of our technology — which is much more than just material technology — entangles us in a web of means, and means towards means, more and more intermediate stages, causing us to lose sight of our real ultimate ends…To treat some means as ends may make this situation psychologically tolerable, but it actually makes life increasingly futile.[80]

In 1928, Mies expressed very similar ideas in a series of lectures. He calls for a more cautious attitude in developing technology by referring to Francis Bacon: "The English statesman and philosopher Francis Bacon spoke out against pure science, against science for the sake of science, recognizing its practical potential and demanding that it serves life. He put knowledge in the service of culture and introduced method and experimental science." [81] Mies might have read Bacon's ideas from Alfred North Whitehead's famous lecture series in 1926 *Science and the Modern World*, which devotes

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79 Mies van der Rohe, "The Preconditions of Architectural Work," lecture first held at the end of February 1928 in the Staatliche Kunstbibliothek Berlin, and twice in March 1928. Unpublished manuscript in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 300.

80 Georg Simmel, "the Crisis of Culture," *Simmel on Culture,* 91.

81 Mies van der Rohe, "The Preconditions of Architectural Work (1928)," Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 300.

great length summarizing and discussing Bacon's scientific thoughts and which Mies regarded as an important book that imparted a profound understanding of the modern world.[82]

Simmel wrote extensively on cultural topics for over two decades. He explored philosophy of culture and various aspects of cultural life. His mastery of the prose form favored popularity among the educated public, and his essays were not only published in academic journals but also appeared widely in newspapers or magazines, such as *Die Zukunft* and *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which were intended for general educated audience. Mies had been a faithful reader of *Die Zukunft* since perhaps 1902 and was likely thus to encounter Simmel's essays.[83] The two essays quoted above, "The Crisis of Culture" and "The Future of Culture," were originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 13 February 1916 and 14 April 1909. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* was a prestigious newspaper famous for its liberal cultural outlook and was particularly well known for its high-quality cultural *feuilletons*, which included essays by the most important cultural figures at the time, including Simmel, Max Weber, Joseph Roth, Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Stefan Zweig, Thomas Mann, and Siegfried Kracauer. It was also the first German newspaper that

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82 In an interview with Gaeme Shankland for the BBC in 1959, Mies highlighted the year 1926 and referred to Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* as a great work of that year.

83 Mies came across *Die ZuKunft* when he worked as an apprentice at the office of the Aachen architect Albert Schneider. The copy he read was volume 52 published in September 1902. Mies later recalled that it awakened his interest in intellectual issues. He became a regular reader of the magazine since then. Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 32-33.

published Adolf Loos's "Ornament and Crime."[84] Mies endorsed the cultural taste of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* so much that he invited the newspaper to engage in *G*'s editorial work (though without success).[85] A number of *Frankfurter Zeitung* clippings stored in Mies archives at Museum of Modern Art indicate Mies was very likely a subscriber. Hence, he may have read Simmel's essays.

Simmel's definition of subjective culture and objective culture as well as his ideas about and the paradox relationship between the two remained consistent throughout his career. They were recurring themes in his discussions on the topic of culture. Mies, thus, had access to these ideas from many other cultural essays by Simmel. For example, he might have grasped these ideas indirectly from "the Concept and Tragedy of Culture," an essay that was reprinted in *Philosophische Kultur, Gesammelte Essais*, of which Mies owned a copy.

Simmel's work unraveled the causal relationship between the booming new technologies and waning cultural development and pointed out that the major sticking point lay in the very immanent of modern world — the increasing unbalanced developments of

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84 Christopher Long, "The Origins and Context of Adolf Loos's 'Ornament and Crime'," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68, no. 2 (June, 2009),206, 215.

85 Library of Congress, Mies Papers, editor of *Frankfurter Zeitung* to Mies (signed by Heinrich Simon), July 17 1925.
Simon rejected the offer on the ground that *G* journal does not suit the framework of *Frankfurter Zeitung.* It is interesting to note that Mies sent the publisher a copy of *G*'s first issue and it crossed Alfred Messel's Simon house as a target to criticize. The Simon house happed to be Heinrich Simon's mother's house. Simon wrote: "ich have durchaus Verständnis für eine solche radikale Zeitschrift, aber sie past zu wenig in den Rahmen unseres Verlages. Dass es ein lustiger Zufall wollte, dass gerade das Haus meiner Mutter rot angekreidet wurde, hat mich ausserordentlich amüsiert, aber selbstverständlich mich in meinen Entschliessungen nicht beeinflusst."

objective and subjective culture. Nevertheless, he failed to offer a solution. Compared to him, Romano Guardini, a theological philosopher and contemporary of Mies, was more constructive in trying to figure out how humankind should deal with such cultural crisis.

While taking a vacation at lake Como in the mid-1920s, Guardini reflected upon the dominance of technology, its deleterious effects on nature, culture, individuality, and finally how modern men should take measures to manage it. He put down his thoughts in a series of essays and published them in succession from 1923 to 1925 in *Schildgenossen*, a theological and philosophical journal of which Guardini was a chief editor and to which Mies subscribed.

The Como landscape had not quite been invaded by modern technology yet and sustained the kind of ancient harmony that unified nature and human cultivations for thousands of years. As much as he enjoyed the delicate balance between nature and human culture, Guardini regretted that the organic interrelations among nature, culture, and humanity had been endangered by the increasing dominance of new technology. He agreed with Simmel on that technology was a self-sufficient realm, independent of previous organic relations, and worked in a solely objective and inhuman way. Nevertheless, instead of submerging himself into a backward-looking nostalgia and turning his back on new technologies, Guardini argued that modern men need to transform the current technological force by mastering it thoroughly, understanding their destructive and inhuman aspects in order to circumvent them and finally reorienting these new technologies in a way that relates to humanity. Only in so doing, he argued, can we substitute the previous integration

between nature and human culture with a new, meaningful interrelationship among nature, technological means and human life:

> We have to become lords of the unleashed forces and shaped them into a new order that relates to humanity…what we need is not less technology but more. Or, more accurately, we need stronger, more considered, more human technology. We need more science, but it must be more intellectual and designed; we need more economic and political energy, but it must be more mature and responsible, able to see the details in the whole contexts to which it belongs.[86]

This paragraph is so beautifully composed that Mies not only absorbed its idea but also borrowed its extraordinary prose pattern in his own lecture in 1928:

> We have to become master of the unleashed forces and build them into a new order, an order that permits free play for the unfolding of life. Yes, but an order also that is related to mankind…We do not need less but more technology. We see in technology the possibility of freeing ourselves, the opportunity to help the mass. We do not need less science, but a science that is more spiritual; not less, but a more mature economic energy. All the will only become possible when man asserts himself in objective nature and relates it to himself.[87]

Probably under Simmel's impact, Mies began to see the potential hazard of the wild development of modern technologies but he did not quite figure out its remedy. Guardini, on the other hand, pointed out the direction of how humankind should deal with such challenges by confronting the new technological forces, understanding them, and eventually domesticating them. Mies assimilated this idea and used it to orient his attempts

86 Romano Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como: Explorations in Technology and the Human Race*, intro. By Louis Dupre and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 83.

87 Mies van der Rohe, "The Preconditions of Architectural Work," lecture first held at the end of February 1928 in the Staatliche Kunstbibliothek Berlin, and twice in March 1928. Unpublished manuscript in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 301.

to balance technology, architecture and nature. This attitude distinguished him immediately from those engaged in the Heimatschutz movement in Germany at the time, which was concerned with the disfiguring effect of modern technology and tried to solve it by using less technology or abandoning it completely.[88]

Guardini further pointed out that to master the unleashed technological and to direct it towards a meaningful goal required a new humanity that was strong enough to match these forces. And the new humanity presupposed a quality of inwardness as "the basis of a new way of seeing and grasping the world." Nevertheless, like Simmel, Guardini saw the challenge and paradox lay in that by releasing modern men from drudgery and daily chores, new technologies, and the whole process of industrialization also distanced them from closely interacting with the objective world they were living in. A loss in such intimate experience would obstruct their self-development. In "the Machine and Humanity," Guardini wrote: "our attention today is claimed for rational and utilitarian tasks in such a way that we can no longer pay attention to that other dimension of our existence."[89] Or, in other words, a mastery of the technological culture threatens human inner awareness.

Mies followed Guadini's publications consistently, even after he moved to the United States. He considered Guardini's teachings to be so important that he gave his

88 The early agenda of Heimatschutz movement was to preserve German landscape by reconciling modern industry, nature and past culture. Its core value, to some extent, overlapped with that of the Deutscher Werkbund. Up to the middle of 1920s, their leading members also overlapped. In the late 1920s, the Heimatschutz movement became more radical and began to assimilate the Nazi ideology. Thereafter, the path of the Heimatschutz and Deutscher Werkbund diverged. Christian Otto, "Modern Environment and Historical Continuity: The Heimatschutz Discourse in Germany," *Art Journal* 43, no. 2 (summer, 1983): 148-157.

89 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como,* 111.

teenage daughters Guardini's books to read.[90] In his library, he had many volumes of *Die Schildgenossen* and thirteen books by Guardini, including the 1927's edition of *Briefe vom Comer See* (Letters from Lake Como), which Mies brought with him from Berlin to Chicago.

Simmel and Guardini directed Mies to see the new technology in a much more sophisticated way: it is a useful tool but it requires great intelligence to master, endowing it with human value and directing it to a meaningful end. Probably under their influence, Mies began to acknowledge the dehumanizing forces of modern technology and the potential loss of spiritual values in the age of mechanization. Therefore, he sought to create in architecture a sense of spirituality to offset such destructive force.

Mies's transition from 1924 to 1926 resulted in a new ordering in factors relating to his architecture: he enthroned spirituality as the ultimate goal of architecture and viewed modern life as the vital inspirational source for it and new technologies as its necessary means. None of these ideas were wholly original, but they represented a summation of various theoretical precepts and influences that had shaped Mies's thoughts since his earliest years. Mies did not just absorb these intellectual influences; he digested them and made them part of his own theory. More importantly, he was later able to translate these ideas into perceptible forms and thus produce a new architectural configuration. Sometime during his transition, he wrote on his notebook: "New demands: Connection with real life. New man. Form relationship to surroundings. Not rejection but [affirmation—crossed out]

90 Library of Congress, Mies Papers, Georgia van der Rohe, "Birthday Greetings to my Father," March 27, 1951.

mastery."[91] These words seemed to summarize well the insights he gained from this remarkable transition and point to the directions he was about to take.

91 Mies's note book, page 21. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 274.

Chapter Two

Mies's Life in Am Karlsbad 24: An Inspiration

BERLIN IN THE 1920S

With over four million residents, or one fifteenth of the nation's population, Berlin was by far the largest city in Germany and the third largest in the world after New York and London. By the end of the First World War, it became an increasingly important cultural center of Europe, standing at the very forefront of art, literature, architecture, film, and music development. Every year, tens of thousands of people poured into Berlin looking for jobs, social contacts, business opportunities, pleasure, and an alternative lifestyle. Its known lax morals, uninhibited liberty, and wild nightlife were all part of its charm luring curious visitors. Its extraordinary sense of freedom and exceptional avant-garde experiments drew intellectuals, visionaries, and bohemians from all over world. In the early 1920s, it was quite common for writers like Ernest Hemingway and Robert McAlmon to take the trouble to cross the France-Germany border and spend a night or two in Berlin to sample its sensational nightlife and enjoy all the inexpensive amusement it had to offer.[92] In 1925, American dancer Josephine Baker came to Berlin with *La Revue Negre* and became so fascinated by the city that she thought of moving here permanently.[93] In

92 After the First World War, an extensive inflation swept Germany. The German mark became quickly worthless whereas foreign currencies kept value.

93 Josephine Baker finally dropped the idea when she returned with *Bitte Einsteigen* in 1928. Then she found her presence was far less favored by the public as the conservative tendencies began to prevail. Nancy Nenno, "Femininity the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin," in *Woman*

addition, Berlin's convenient location as a hub of European transportations further facilitated the influx of people. Lilian T. Mowrer, wife of the *Chicago Daily News* correspondent in Berlin, recalled: "Berlin sometimes reminded me of a huge railway station; it was a stopping-off place between East and Western Europe; everyone, travelling from Paris to Moscow, sooner or later, came there."[94]

With so many people and so much going on, the city represented a kaleidoscopic collection of scenes. Various modes of transit from the most traditional kind to the newly invented — horse-drawn carriage, bicycles, private automobiles, double-decker buses — filled the streets. People from very different origins intermingled: bourgeoisie and bohemians mixed, members of the old aristocracy and the new regime could be found sitting next to each other in a bar.[95] Diverse building styles, old and new, stood side by side, rivaling each other to dominate the cityscape. And all these took place unceremoniously on the street, and a stroll around the city made a rich experience, as Eric Weitz depicted vividly:

> To walk the city [Berlin] is to experience voyeuristically all the varied, vibrant components of Weimar society, from the poor to the wealthy, the downtrodden to the powerful, architectural styles from neoclassical to modern, elegant shops and

in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 145-146.

94 Quoted in Colin Storer, "Weimar Germany as Seen by an English Woman: British Woman Writers and the Weimar Republic," in *German Studies Review* 32, No. 1 (Feb, 2009): 130.

95 Joseph Roth, "the Prince and the Balalaika (1922)" in *Grand Street* 69, translated by Michael Hofmann (Summer, 1999): 51.

> the everyday kitsch of working class apartments with carved, cheap furniture and oilcloth table covers.[96]

These incongruous elements did not just coexist, they interacted. After all, movement was a hallmark of modernity, symptoms of the restless spirit of the age, and it dominated Berlin city life. On a street of 1920s' Berlin, everything was in motion: people were walking, talking, watching, or at times, doing all at the same time; traffic lights were flickering; illuminated advertisements were twinkling; trams were swinging; even animals in the zoo were fidgeting every time a train dashed by. Harold Nicolson, an English diplomat, amazed by such dynamism, remarked: "there is no city in the world so restless as Berlin. Everything moves."[97]

This tireless physical movement found its parallel in the restless minds of Berlin intellectuals, who, in a day, read all the newspapers, planned new projects, attended three or four dinners, and conducted excited conversations at each of them. Late night was a particularly creative and stimulating time for them. Berlin intellectuals went to cafés every night and would not leave until two o'clock in the morning.[98] Enchanted by their endless energy and inquisitive mind, Nicolson portrayed us a live scene:

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96 Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 42. Weitz offers a fascinating tour guide to the 1920s's Berlin in "Walking the City." It inspired me in writing the part on Berlin and Potsdamer Platz.

97 Harold Nicolson, "the Charm of Berlin (1932)" in *the Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 425-426.

98 Among all the cafés frequented by artists and intellectuals, the Romanische Café was perhaps the most famous one. Rabbi Joachim Prinz recalled that: "Everybody went there, the writers, the actors, everybody" and it was "the center of everything." Rabbi Joachim Prinz, interviewed by Otto Friedrich, in Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920's* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 11. For a contemporary portrait of the Romanische Café, see Matheo Quinz, "Das Romanische Café (1926)," in *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 415-417.

> At 3 A.M. the people of Berlin will light another cigar and embark afresh and refreshed upon discussions regarding Proust, or Rilke, or the new penal code, or whether human shyness comes from narcissism, or whether it would be a wise or foolish thing to turn the Pariser Platz into a stadium. The eyes that in London or in Paris would already have drooped in sleep are busy in Berlin, inquisitive, acquisitive, searching, even at 4 A.M., for some new experience or idea.[99]

Mies might very well have been one of them. The Berliner's lifestyle seemed to fit him. He certainly loved cigars and, with a lit one in hand, felt easier to talk. His schedule was also that of a typical Berliner: he started drafting around mid-night and continued working until four or five in the morning.[100] Before immersing himself in work, he read, met friends, attended professional meetings, and like everyone else, went to bars and cinemas.[101]

But Berlin was also controversial in the 1920s. Some of its visitors, domestic and foreign alike, found its deafening loudness, dizzying life pace, and shocking crime rate insufferable. Standing as a center of Germany's artistic, intellectual, economic, and political life, Berlin was not Germany. By the middle of 1920s, only a small number of Germans (about twenty-seven percent) lived in cities of over 100,000 people; the majority of the populace lived in small villages and towns. In the eyes of these provincials, the "spirit of Berlin" was not so much unrepresentative of the "spirit of Germany" as in opposition to

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99 Nicolson, "the Charm of Berlin (1932)," in *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 426.

100 Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile: Mein bedingungsloses Leben*, (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag),54.

101 Georgia van der Rohe, Mies's daughter, recalled that Mies went to cinema frequently. Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile,* 54

it.[102] They condemned Berlin's liberalism as degenerate, a cesspool polluting the pure and noble German soul.[103]And for travelers who visited Berlin only briefly, the city seemed to be given over entirely to pleasure, pursuing it endlessly and frenetically.[104] Indeed, Berlin had an enormous and ever-booming pleasure industry — bars, restaurants, night clubs, bordellos, amusement parks, balls, operettas, theaters and cinemas — supplying amusements to its dwellers of all classes who were thirsty for a thrill. But for those who had a keener eye or simply stayed longer, they saw the traumatized face of the city: homeless refugees from Eastern Europe wandering the streets, disabled veterans begging for money on the corner, unnamed dead found on Alexanderplatz. These unfortunate scenes contrasted sharply with the city's splendid revelry, and fostered a sense of distress and flimsiness under its glamorous veil. During his visit to Berlin in the 1920s, journalist Claud Cockburn felt a sense of doom and wrote: "the sense of impermanence, of foolish vulnerability in the face of inimical and indifferent forces of destruction, which could always be felt so strongly in Berlin. In Berlin you felt that the deluge was always just around the corner."[105]

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102 Ludwig Finckh, "The Spirit of Berlin (1919)" in *the Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 414-415.

103 Wilhelm Stapel, "The Intellectual and His People (1930)" in *the Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 423-25.

104 Colin Storer, *Britain and the Weimar Republic: The History of a Cultural Relationship* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2010), 86.

105 Ibid, 94.

The Potsdamer Platz

The extraordinary charm and degeneracy of Berlin presented itself in a condensed form at Potsdamer Platz. Located at the heart of the city, the square was only ten minutes' walk from Mies's home. It was particularly hectic and energetic. Five major roads converged there, and it was also the meeting point of twenty-five street cars. Every day, uncountable numbers of automobiles, buses, taxis, horse-drawn carts, trucks, bicycles, and pushcarts crossed the square, making it the most trafficked intersection in Europe in the 1920s.[106] (fig.2.1) It was also overwhelmed with people. Each day, tens of thousands of Berliners flooded in and out of the square. They came and went by bus, by private automobile, on foot, or by train from one of the two train stations nearby: The Potsdamer Station was right on the square and Anhalter was only a short walk away. Some people were just passing by, on their way home or hurrying to work, but the majority would linger for a while, meeting friends at bars, treating themselves to a beer or a film, or simply wander around to see what was going on.

But Potsdamer Platz was more than just a transportation hub, it offered rich contents that attracted people to come and kept them coming. A number of grand hotels and department stores and hundreds of small shops, theatres, dance-halls, cafés, restaurants, beer palaces, bars, wine-houses and clubs were located in and around the square. There were also office buildings interspersed among the recreational structures, such as the Vox-Haus, a five-story steel-framed office building located at the corner between Potsdamer Strasse and Bellevuestrasse. It was home of Radiostunde Berlin, Germany's first radio

[106] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 42.

station, since it was founded in 1923. Further to the west of the square was the prestigious "diplomatic quarter," where millionaires' mansions used to site and which now accommodated many foreign embassies.

On the west side of the square was the famous Café Josty (fig. 2.2). It featured a glass-enclosed terrace, a garden at back, many rooms inside and a seating area extending to the square. Known for its exquisite confections and a wonderful view from the terrace, The Café was frequented by intellectuals, governmental officers, and members from the bourgeois society. Its famed guests included writer Theodor Fontane, painter Adolf von Menzel, Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, and many others. Karl Liebknecht, one of the leaders of the German Communist Party, spent a lot of time there reading, writing, and practicing speeches. On the terrace, Erich Kästner wrote part of *Emil und die Detektive*, a bestseller children's book in 1929. In the story, Kästner portrayed Berlin through the eyes of Emil, a boy who was new in town:

> The motor-cars rushed past the tram honking and squeaking, signaling right and left turns, swinging round corners, while other cars followed immediately behind them. How noisy the traffic was! And there were so many people on the pavements as well! And from every side street cam delivery vans, tram-cars, and double-decker buses! There were newspaper stands at every corner, and wonderful shop windows filled with flowers and fruit and other filled with books, gold watches, clothes and silk underwear. And how very, very tall the buildings were. So this was Berlin.[107]

Indeed, this was Berlin, hectic and noisy, vibrant and chaotic. What Emil saw might very well have been what Kästner observed about Potsdamer Platz on the terrace of Café Josty.

107 Erich Kästner, *Emil and the Detectives*, introduction by Walter de La Mare, (London : J. Cape, 1933) 73-74

The east side of the square adjoined Leipzig Platz, where the grand Wertheim department store was located, a building Mies admired greatly (fig. 2.3).[108] Designed by Alfred Messel at the turn of the century, Wertheim was the biggest department store in Europe at the time. Its monumental façade featured slender pillars stretching all the way from the ground to the roof, with vertical oriented windows filling the interspaces. The slim proportion lent the facades a refined look. The interior of the store was equally elegantly arranged and featured bright courtyards and beautiful winter gardens where luxurious commodities were displayed among art exhibits. The store was particularly famous for its fairytale-like decoration during Christmas time, a wonderland that every Berlin child longed to visit.

Compared to the stylish Wertheim department store, Haus Vaterland to the south of the square was kitschy. Yet, it was very popular among local white-collar workers. Formerly known as the Haus Potsdam, it was originally an office building in which Universum Film AG (UfA) was headquartered. After UfA moved out in 1927, it was greatly remodeled and reopened in August 1928 as Haus Vaterland, an immense amusement complex that comprised a theater, a cinema, a large ball room, and over a dozen of globally themed restaurant and bars (fig. 2.4). The highlight of the structure was a huge dome. Illuminated by some four thousand bulbs, it lightened the night sky of the Potsdamer Platz and attracted all the attentions there (fig. 2.8), as a Berlin press remarked that:

108 About the Wertheim department store, Mies said: "im Zentrum der Stadt war Wertheim, das grosse Warenhaus. Das hatte so eine Stirnseite, wunderbar, der Messe war ja wunderbar, wie Palladio. Er konnte Gothik nachmachen, wirklich ausgezeichnet." Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe archive. Mies van der Rohe interview with Dirk Lohan, Chicago, summer 1968.

"Nobody seeing this vast, flood-lit modern undertaking can escape the impression that here, world-capital life is pulsing."[109] Haus Vaterland was also a popular site for foreign visitors. Sydney Clark recommended it enthusiastically in his travel guide *Germany on £10*, stating that it was "exceedingly gay, bright, jolly, and various, All the world comes to Haus Vaterland…I can think of no better way to top off a Berlin night than an hour or two or three in Haus Vaterland."[110]

Haus Vaterland represented a variety of styles. Its grand lobby was modeled in the very fashionable Neue Sachlichkeit style, which only served as a neutral face for the business and, as one would be in abrupt contrast with the exotic decorations of all the other rooms. Haus Vaterland promised to offer "die Welt in einem Haus" (the world in one building) through variously themed bars and restaurants.[111] For instance, Grinzinger Heuriger, or the Viennese Café, created an ambience of a Viennese wine tavern by offering a lovely night view of the tower of St Stephen's Cathedral standing against the starry sky in the background and an electric tram gliding across the Danube Bridge in the foreground (fig. 2.6). Löwenbräu Bar, or Bavarian beer palace, produced an illusion of Bavarian landscape by offering a mountain view with the lake of Eibsee at its foot (fig. 2.7). To strengthen the Bavarian flavor, it also had servants dressed like Bavarian lads enter from

109 "Haus Vaterland," in *Germania* (August 31, 1928) 4. Quoted in Roger Green, "The City and Entertainment: Coney Island and Haus Vaterland," in *Berlin/New York: Like and Unlike: Essays on Architecture and Art from 1870 to the Present*, ed. Josef Paul Kleihues et al. (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 218.

110 Sydney Clark, *Germany on £10*, Ten pound series 2, (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 189-190.

111 Green, "The City and Entertainment,"212.

time to time and dance schuhplattler. The Wild West Bar offered a strange combined view of the Rocky Mountains and the prairie landscape of American Middle West —Great Lakes and ranches —mixed with cowboy songs and dances, and occasionally Jazz played by an African American band (fig. 2.8).[112] But patrons did not need to know that neither the Great Lakes nor Jazz belonged to American West, they came to Haus Vaterland for an exotic and dreamy night that took them away, however briefly, from a dull and stressed everyday life.

Outside the Haus Vaterland was the Potsdamer Strasse. From here, just ten minutes' walk away was the Landwehr Canal and once across the Potsdam Bridge was the Am Karlsbad, a short and quiet street where Mies lived throughout 1920s. Here, his world was busy and vigorous, almost like a microcosm of the nearby hustle and bustle Potsdamer Platz, or by extension, cosmopolitan Berlin.

112 Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (1929), trans by Quintin Hoare, (New York: Verso, 1998), 92. Kracauer's essays were first published in series as "Die Angestellen, Ausdemneuesten Deutschland" in *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1929. They were first published in book form by Societäts-Verlag in 1930.

AM KARLSBAD 24

Mies lived in Am Karlsbad 24 for over two decades, until 1938, when he immigrated to the United States. Am Karlsbad was a short street in the southeast part of the Tiergarten district in central Berlin. It ran parallel to the prestigious Schönerberg Ufer along the Landwehr Canal and was only ten minutes' walk away from the Potsdamer Platz. The street abounded with upscale apartment buildings for wealthy Berlin residents who enjoyed its proximity to the canal, major parks, and the commercial center of the city.

The street was also prominent for its cultural atmosphere: during the nineteenth century, a number of well-known artists lived there, including Martin Gropius, the successful neo-classist architect and great uncle of Walter Gropius, the founder of Bauhaus. During the interwar years, Walther Nernst, a chemist who had won Nobel Prize in 1920, lived in number twenty-six, two doors away from Mies's apartment.[113]

The neighborhood was also filled with an air of avant-garde intellectuality. For less than ten minutes' walk, was Potsdamer Straße 29 (today no. 74), the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute and Polyclinic (later known as the Göring Institute). It was founded in 1920 by Karl Abraham, Hanns Sachs, and Max Eitingon, Sigmund Freud's closest disciples, and at the time it was the first psychoanalytical practice in Germany. It also served as a training center spreading and developing Freud's theories, most of which was then considered as heresy and found little acceptance in European academic circles.

113 Andreas Marx and Paul Weber, "From Ludwig Mies to Mies van der Rohe: The Apartment and Studio Am Karlsbad 24 (1915-39)," in *Mies and Modern Living: Interiors / Furniture / Photography*, ed. Helmut Reuter et. al. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 26.

Mies moved into Am Karlsbad in October 1915. Shortly after that, he left home for army service in Frankfurt. When he returned in the spring of 1916, he was seriously ill and stayed in hospital for two months. He went home afterwards and lived with his family until January 1917, then departed for Romania to continue his army service. After he left, his wife, Ada Mies, moved out with girls to live with her parents, and she subleased the apartment to Rudolf Borchardt, a German writer.[114] Mies returned home in January 1919, and Ada and girls joined him in the apartment in May. Ada was happy about the family reunion and wrote in her dairy: "…at last we all moved to Karlsbad. It is now an indescribably beautiful, harmonious time; the blossoming chestnuts fill our room with light, and in their own little corner the children are lost in their own happy little world."[115]

The apartment served their family life until 1921 when Mies and Ada split up at last. The couple felt their ideal visions of life were becoming increasingly incompatible, and a separation seemed inevitable. Mies wanted to be free. In a letter to Ada in early 1920, he wrote:

> Dear Ada, you are to me the most beloved of all people. But do not adjust your life to mine. Be so strong that you no longer need me, then we will both belong to one freedom, then we will really belong to ourselves. Without impulse nor consideration, bound by nothing. I love this freedom not out of selfishness, but rather because I find it worthwhile to live in such an air.
> I will think of you in deepest love, Lutz.[116]

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114 Ibid, 29-30 and note 17. According to the contract, the apartment was subleased to Rudolf Borchardt except two rooms at the north side. Ada probably kept their personal objects in these rooms.

115 Cited in Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 5.

116 Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile,*18. The original text: "Liebe Ada, du bist mir der liebste aller Menschen. Aber stele dein Leben nicht auf mein Leben ein. Sei so stark, daß du mich nicht mehr brauchst, dann gehören wir beide einer Freiheit an, dann gehören wir uns wirklich. Ohne Zwang und ohne

Ada replied:

> My nature is invested for the internalized intensity of life together, for a certain tranquility or harmony that is impossible to you…If I cannot fly with you, I ought not tie you to my love, I ought not cling to you like a piece of lead on your foot. But let our love, which struggled its way hard through shadows, remain forever an anchor. You should have your freedom and I want to be your haven where you can return home at all time. For that I must firstly be strong and free myself. Help me with love for that! Ada.[117]

Their words were calm and restrained, avoiding referring to any pain and disappointment caused by a failing marriage. In fall 1921, Ada moved out with girls to Bornstedt in the outskirts of Berlin. At that point a new era began: Mies lived by himself and changed the apartment into a bachelor's abode and his atelier.

Am Karlsbad 24 was a four-story apartment building consisting of a basement, a raised floor and two upper floors (fig. 2.9). It was built in the mid-nineteenth century and demolished in 1940 when Albert Speer executed his new plan for Berlin. Mies's apartment occupied the entire top floor and measured over 220 square meters (about 2360 square feet). It comprised six rooms, a hallway, a bathroom, and a kitchen and was organized in a way that was very common in Berlin apartments at the time: the rooms were arranged in a

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Rücksicht, durch nichts gebunden. Ich liebe diese Freiheit nicht aus Eigennutz, sondern weil ich es würdiger finde, in einer solchen Luft zu leben. In tiefster Liebe denke ich an dich. Lutz" My translation.

117 Ibid, 19. The original text: "Mein Wesen ist angelegt für die verinnerlichte Intensität des Zusammenlebens, für eine gewisse Beschaulichkeit oder Harmonie, die dir unmöglich ist…Wenn ich nicht mit dir fliegen kann, darf ich dich nicht mit meiner Liebe binden , darf ich dir doch nicht als Blei am Fuß hängen. Aber laß unsere Liebe, die sich schwer durch Schatten hin durch gekämpft hat, immer der Anker bleiben. Du sollst deinen freien Weg haben und ich will wieder dein Hafen warden, in den du allzeit Heim kehren kannst. Dazu muss ich aber erst selbst stark warden und frei. Hilf mir mit Liebe dazu! Ada." My translation.

ring wrapping the hallway; each room had direct access to adjacent rooms, and the hallway served as a traffic hub leading to the major rooms, the bathroom, and the kitchen (fig. 2.10).

For those who visited the apartment, it left them a bright and peaceful impression. Sergius Ruegenberg, who worked for Mies in the twenties and thirties, recalled it to be beautiful and sedate (behäbig).[118] Rudolf Borchardt, Mies's tenant during the war, found the apartment very suitable for parties. During the time of his sublease, he held a soiree for a friend and remarked that the apartment was "made to hold a lot of people, while the white, together with the gathered fabric, made a beautiful background for groups and figures."[119]

My reconstruction of the apartment came primarily from the recollection and account offered by Sergius Ruegenberg, enhanced here and there by Mies's daughter Georgia van der Rohe and Mary Wigman, a dancer friend of both Mies and Ada who stayed in the apartment once a year when she came to Berlin during her dance tour in the 1920s. In general, rooms along the south side were the more public area of the apartment, whereas rooms on the north side were more private. The room occupying the southwest corner was the largest one in the apartment. It enjoyed plenty of light and had once served as dining room for the family. In Wigman's memory, it was "exceptional beautiful" (bildschön).[120]

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118 Ruegenberg worked for Mies from November 1925 to July 1926, and again from September 1928 through February 1931. Ruegenberg's conversation with Wolf Tegethoff, December 1979, in Berlin. Wolf Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe: The Villas and Country Houses* (Cambridge, Mass.: the MIT Press, 1985),107. See also Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Sergius Ruegenberg, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, Berlin, October 5, 1971.

119 quoted in Marx and Weber, "From Ludwig Mies to Mies van der Rohe," in *Mies and Modern Living,* 30.

120 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mary Wigman, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, Berlin, September 13 1972.

Its four walls were covered by white, elegantly pleated fabric fixed by slender wooden frame at corners; the entire floor was covered by Chinese mats.[121] It had little furniture and was almost "a naked room." Nevertheless, when the girls were there, it was soon turned into their playroom. Yet, even then, it was equipped by nothing other than a small game table and three or four small armchairs.[122] After Ada and the girls moved out, it was changed into the drafting room for Mies's studio. It began to have some tables and chairs for employees: an enormous table stood in the center, and two smaller tables were placed against the wall (fig. 2.11). Mies's employees used the wall between the two tables to hang their drawings, study them, and revise them.[123]

The room next to the drafting room on the south side was once the family's living room, and later it was converted to Mies's private office and study. Its walls were embellished with beige silk curtains falling from the ceiling all the way down to the floor.[124] When the apartment was subleased to Borchardt, his friends visited him here and found the room clear and white. They recalled it as a "room of great, austere style," furnished with an "enormous table."[125] In 1924 when Hans Richter, together with other G group members

121 Ibid. see also Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Georgia van der Rohe, "Birthday Greetings to my father," March 27 1951.

122 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mary Wigman, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, Berlin, September 13 1972.

123 Marx and Weber, "From Ludwig Mies to Mies van der Rohe," in *Mies and Modern Living,* 31.

124 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Sergius Ruegenberg, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, Berlin, October 5, 1971.

125 Hugo Schäfer, "Stunden mit Borchardt," *Die Literarische Welt* 2, no. 15 (April 1926): 2. Quoted in Marx and Weber, "From Ludwig Mies to Mies van der Rohe," 30.

visited Mies at his apartment, he saw a gigantic drawing board of about four meters long lying on two solid posts. On it piled several hundredweights of books and journals. However surprisingly, Mies kept money somewhere between the board and the posts. Although it seemed to take an elephant to move the drawing board, Mies lifted the board anyway, rested it on his shoulder, took some money out and gave it to Richter to help finance the *G* magazine. All present people were astonished, but Mies assured them that no one else could ever lift his library board and thus the money was safe there.[126] In the later years of 1920s, according to Ruegenberg, the room was furnished with a low book shelf running all the way against the wall (Mies blocked the door on that wall). It featured two sitting areas: one at the corner of entrance was intended for individual work or an intimate discussion, and the other one in the center with a large table was meant for meetings of a group of people (fig. 2.11). The only known surviving furniture from the office was a set of table and chairs designed by Mies.[127] They were made of rosewood, and the back and seat of chairs were covered by white pigskin (fig. 2.12). They were austerely simple, aligning with the tune of the apartment. They perhaps constituted the smaller sitting areas at the corner depicted by Ruegenberg.

The last two rooms on the south side had once been the girls' rooms. They were small. Mies's daughter, Georgia, recalled the arrangement of these rooms before they moved out as "[we] had our own little realm. My father devised the play room and bedroom

126 Hans Richter, *Begegnungen von Dada bis heute; Briefe, Dokumente, Erinnerungen.* (Köln: M. Du Mont Schauberg, 1973), 54-55.

127 Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Furniture and Interiors* (N.Y.: Barron's, 1982), 34-37.

lovingly and in a modern fashion…My father designed all the Empire-style furniture himself."[128] No one else ever recalled any Empire-style furniture in Mies's apartment, so perhaps they were taken by Ada when she moved out. The girls' rooms were later changed into Herman John's work station and the maid's room respectively. John was the chief of Mies's studio crew, who often served as project manager and handled most of the correspondence for Mies between 1924 and 1930.[129] He spent a great amount of time in the studio, and at times he must have spent the night there. The inner most room with a balcony was furnished with a bed, suggesting it might lodge overnight guests or employees who worked too late to go home. Ruegenberg called the room the "little girls' room," indicating that it served as Mies's daughter's bedroom when they were visiting (fig. 2.11).

On the north side of the apartment were two moderate-sized bedrooms. Ruegenberg's reconstruction drawing shows that he thought there was only one master bedroom in the form of a typical "Berliner Zimmer" with windows on the chamfer (fig. 2.11).[130] This memory lapse was probably because as an employee for Mies, he was rarely invited into the more private realm of the apartment. Luckily, Georgia's recollection provided us a glimpse of these two rooms in the late 1920s:

> Mies lived luxuriously. The spacious Berlin flat at Am Karlsbad was equipped with the furniture designed for Barcelona. He made some other pieces as prototype only

128 Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile*, 15. My translation.

129 Helmut Reuter, "1925" in *Mies and Modern Living*, ed. Helmut Reuter et al. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 229.

130 For more information about the formation of the Berliner Zimmer, see Douglas Mark Klahr "Luxury Apartment with a Tenement Heart" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 70,* no.3 (September, 2011): 290-307.

> for his private household. The floor of the entire flat was covered by white linoleum. Heavy, dark-blue Shantung silk curtains fall from wall to wall in front of windows like a theater drapery.[131]

For the more public office and drafting room, Mies used beige Shantung silk curtains and for his own bedroom, dark-blue. They endowed the room with an aristocratic and sedate ambience for him to be there, reading and contemplating. And when Mies read, it was "always very quiet around him." He sat on his black-nappa-leather sofa, immersed himself in the book. He did not look up even when his daughter Georgia left and almost remained the posture when she came back weeks later.[132] During the World War II, when Mies was gone and there was a shortage in almost everything, Ada and the girls converted the "endless meters" of the blue silk curtains to clothes, blouses and small pillow cases for their daily necessities.[133]

A comparison between Georgia's accounts and others' recollection reveals that the furnishing and arrangements of Mies's apartment changed greatly over time: the Chinese mat was replaced by white linoleum, and the Empire-style furniture was converted into modern, sleek pieces made for the Barcelona Pavilion. It seems that the style of Mies's

131 Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile*, 53-54. The original text writes: "Mies lebte luxuriös. Die großräumige Belriner Wohnung Am Karlasbad, die er jetzt allein bewohnte, war mit den für Barcelona entworfenen Möbeln ausgestattet. Einige andere hatte er als Prototypen nur für seinen privaten Haushalt anfertigen lassen. In der ganzen Wohnung war der Boden mit Weißem Linoleum ausgelegt. Riesige Vorhänge aus dunkelblauer schwerer Shantung silkseide konnten wie ein Theater-vorhang von Wand zu Wand vor die Fensterfronten gezogen warden." My translation,

132 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Georgia van der Rohe, "Birthday Greetings to my father," March 27 1951.

133 Georgia van der Rohe, *La donna e Mobile*, 82.

apartment evolved very much with his own development in architectural outlook and furniture designs.

Mies's life in the Apartment

Mies had a hectic and vibrant life at Am Karlsbad 24. His career flourished in the 1920s. He joined many artist circles and involved in various affairs, participating in building competitions and exhibitions, arranging gatherings for colleagues, giving speeches, and writing for avant-garde magazines. A great variety of activities took place in his apartment, which at times blurred the functional demarcation of spaces. For instance, as master of his studio, Mies worked in his private office and supervised his employees in the adjacent drafting room. Even though there was a solid wall between the two, such a division was constantly deformed by impromptu activities: Mies was often found studying a drawing in the drafting room, and the entire studio personnel would sometimes gather in Mies's office making models and working on drawings (fig. 2.13 and 2.14). In the late 1920s, when Lilly Reich and Mies collaborated closely, their studio personnel mixed. The masters and their employees usually worked and dined together at Mies's apartment.[134] With so many people, the apartment felt small. Nevertheless, the employees would somehow manage to find a spot to work, whether it was the kitchen or the guest room, as long as there was space to place a drawing on.

134 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Herbert Hirche, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, July 7 1973.

As a founding member of Der Ring, Mies provided his place for colleagues to meet and discuss. The Berlin avant-garde circle was extraordinary active after the war, and Mies's colleagues came to visit him very often in the apartment, turning it into the "nerve-center and meeting place" for modernists.[135] It became even increasingly so after Hugo Häring moved in and shared the office with Mies in late 1921.[136] The two met perhaps at a November group meeting. Mies learned that Häring, who just moved to Berlin, was having a hard time finding a workplace, so he invited Häring to share an office. They debated about ideas of new architecture in the office and expanded their discussion to include more colleagues. Out of their intense discussions, they co-founded the group of Der Zehner-Ring (Ring of Ten) in April 1924, with Häring serving its secretary.[137] Der Zehner-Ring was established as a collective force to promote modernist architecture and to struggle against bureaucratic resistance for new building concepts, such as Ludwig Hoffmann, the official building director of Berlin who was conservative in taste and sought to repress modern architecture. The group had regular meetings at Mies's apartment, very likely around the big table in Mies's private office (fig. 2.11). After it reached its goal to have Martin Wagner replace Hoffman as the building director of Berlin, the organization

135 Peter Blundell Jones, *Hugo Häring: The Organic versus the Geometric* (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 1999), 36.

136 In an interview in 1952, Häring suggested that he was in the office when Mies designed the Barcelona Pavilion. "Gesprächüber die Organische Baukunst: Zum 70. Geburtstag von Hugo Häring," *Baukunst und Werkform* 5 (1952): 14.

137 Recalling the foundation of Der Ring, Häring said: "it was not really a founding at all: at first in 1923 or 1924 a group of Berlin architects met, always at Mies's office, and we called ourselves the 'Zehnerring' to win publicity." Häring to Heinrich Lauterbach, 31 March 1952, Lauterbach Archive. Quoted in Blundell Jones, *Hugo Häring,* 99.

expanded to invite colleagues outside Berlin and changed its name to Der Ring.[138] On May 29, 1926, sixteen members of Der Ring met at Mies's apartment, drafted their program and signed it. Mies's office served as the meeting room and office for the group since its establishment in 1924, until it had its own office in late 1926.[139]

In addition to Der Ring, Mies was also member of a number of artistic circles, including Association of German Architects (BDA), the November Group, and the Deutscher Werkbund. Not only did he participate in their meetings regularly, he also hosted gatherings and parties at home. In late February 1924, Mies arranged an Atelierabend (studio night) of the November group, which was probably a casual occasion for members to intermingle and exchange ideas over beers and snacks.[140] The apartment held official gatherings as well. For example, on May 3, 1924, Mies hosted a Werkbund Aussprach Abend (Werkbund discussion night) to present his work and discuss it with other Werkbund members. It served as an opportunity for Mies, as a newly recruited Werkbund member, to make himself better known to its older members. Werkbund staffer Fritz Hellway sent out formal invitations asking people to attend punctually and warned that

138 Der Ring was considered as a rather exclusive avant-garde group, and its members undertook to support each other professionally. Mies was criticized and questioned about that he picked too many Der Ring members for the Werkbund Weissenhof housing exhibition.

For the controversy of the Weissenhof architect lists, see Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, trans. by David Britt (New York : Rizzoli, 1989),41-46. Richard Pommer and Christian F Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the modern movement in architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Chapter 6.

139 Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, trans. by David Britt (New York : Rizzoli, 1989), 16. For an account of the development of Der Ring, see Blundell Jones*, Hugo Häring*, 99-102.

140 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Invitation to November group Atelierabend.

doors would be closed by eight.[141] Additionally, Mies also held administrative meetings at home. For instance, on Aug 26, 1924, Mies wrote to Hans Siebert von Heister, an Expressionist painter and member of the November group, and asked him to help arrange a meeting to discuss the work plan of November group for the coming winter.[142] The meeting took place at Mies's apartment.

Mies's apartment was even more versatile than that. As Mies actively engaged in *G*'s editorial work, many of its activities happened in his apartment. Though Mies did not write much in any other periods of his life, in the 1920s he authored several essays for the *G* magazine and was genuinely interested in editing and formatting it. He had colleagues come over to discuss issues such as how to finance the periodical or miscellaneous affairs, such as where to find an intact set of skeleton script type for its printing.[143] According to Werner Graeff, Mies was as an excellent host, generous with both his time and money, and with good wine and the right company, he could be an eloquent speaker: sketching continuously while talking and getting through reams of typing paper.[144] For quite some time, the apartment served as the official editorial department of *G*, where all contributors gathered and discussed. Accordingly, Mies's address, "Berlin W 35, Am Karlsbad 24,

141 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Invitation to Werkbund Aussprache Abend.

142 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Mies to Hans Siebert von Heister, Aug 26, 1926.

143 Hans Richter, *Begegnung von Dada bis heute; Brief, Dokument, Erinnerungen* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1973), 54. See also Graeff, "Concerning the So-Called G Group," 281.

144 Werner Graeff, in conversation with Sandra Honey, Mulheim, May 1977. In Sandra Honey, "Mies in Germany," *Mies van der Rohe European Works* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 15

Telephone Lützow 9667," was printed at masthead on the third number of *G* periodical (fig. 1.15).

In addition to active professional life, Mies also had a colorful personal life in the apartment. His daughters visited him during holidays, and friends requested accommodation when coming to Berlin. During his occupancy, Mies registered a total of twenty-nine people under his apartment address (although some of the names were listed twice) on the resident registration card. Entries on the card included his wife Ada, his daughters, employees, housekeeper, maids, and a number of friends.[145] For example, the name of Gerhard Serverain, Mies's childhood friend, was on the registration card. In 1907, Mies followed Serverain to attend the applied art school in Berlin and for some time shared an apartment with him.[146] The name of Berthe Trümpy, assistant of the celebrated dancer Mary Wigman, also appeared on the card. Wigman was once Ada's roommate when both attended Jacques-Dalcroze's dance school in Hellerau in the early 1910s. During this time, Mies visited Ada frequently and got to know Wigman, Erna Hoffmann, and Elsa Knuper, Ada's three roommates, as well as Hans Prinzhorn, a famous psychiatrist and later husband of Erna Hoffmann. According to Wigman, the small society got along very well and led a life that was "free, open, and self-consciously modern."[147] After school, Wigman became

145 Werner Breunig, "SpruenbekannterPersönlichkeiten in der alten Berliner Einwohnermeldkartei*,"* in *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2004), 104.

146 Dietrich Neumann, "Das Haus Ryder in Wiesbaden (1923) und die Zusammenarbeitzwischen Ludwig Mies van der Rohe und Gerhard Serverain," in *Architectura Band* 36 (2006): 199-200.

147 Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 45.

a professional dancer and was famous for her spontaneous movement that brought a deep sense of existential experience onto the stage. Once a year in the 1920s, she and her dancer troupe, a total of over twenty people, stayed at Mies's apartment for about a month during their performance trip to Berlin.[148] They slept on the floor or tables, found any possible spaces they could use and changed the apartment temporarily into "a gipsy camp."[149]

Thus, in the 1920s, Mies's professional, personal, and part of his social life converged at his apartment. Such an apartment life continued into the 1930s: Bauhaus graduates walked in and out; the German delegates to CIAM met there for discussions; and Philip Johnson visited him frequently in the apartment.[150] For Mies, Am Karlsbad 24 was much more than a home; it was rather the center of his life for diverse professional work and intellectual meetings blending pleasantly with occasional social events.

Many of Mies's friends led a similar, liberated life at their homes. For instance, Mary Wigman lived in a big, modern villa in Dresden, which served as her office and residence, an entire floor of which was dedicated to her dance school with lecture and music rooms and a rehearsal hall. Mies might have easily observed a lifestyle similar to his during his visits to friends. For instance, when he traveled from Berlin to Stuttgart at the early stage of planning the Weissenhof exhibition, two friends, Gustav Stotz and Willi

148 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Mary Wigman to Mies, Nov 26, 1924. Also see Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mary Wigman, interview with Ludwig Glaeser, Berlin, September 13 1972.

149 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Georgia van der Rohe, "Birthday Greetings to my father," March 27 1951.

150 Sandra Honey, "Mies in Germany,"22.

Baumeister, threw him a party at Baumeister's studio, "with mattresses and phonograph," and dancing.[151] The mattresses suggested that the studio might also have served as Baumeister's residence. Immersing in such an environment, Mies must have got quite used to the idea that a home is a versatile and flexible place where one's professional, social, and personal lives blended.

Mies's lifestyle was quite normal among German liberals during the 1920s. In his circle of friends, it was not uncommon for artists to integrate their personal, professional and social lives at home and kindly offer accommodations, temporary or long term, to friends or colleagues. For example, when Hans Richter and his wife moved back to Berlin in the early 1920s, they rented an apartment that simultaneously functioned as their home and studio. Their place served as a hub of avant-gardists, where artists of all trends visited and intermingled, and naturally it was there that the group engaging in the *G* periodical began to coalesce. The apartment even held the press reception for the newly founded Deutsche Liga für den unabhängigen Film (German League of Independent Film) in 1931.[152] Additionally, the Richters provided accommodations for friends: van Doesburg and his wife stayed here for months when they visited Berlin, and Werner Gräff, a protégé and friend, lived with the couple for more than three years.[153]

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151 Heinz Rasch and Felicitas Karg-Baumeister, in conversation with Karin kirsch. Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedung,* 12.

152 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Invitation to the Presse empfang, November 13, 1931.

153 Raoul Hausmann, "More on Group 'G'" in *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film 1923-1926*, ed. DetlefMertins. 250. See also Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings, "introduction: The G-Group and the European Avant-garde" in *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film 1923-1926*, 8.

In avant-garde circles, it was extensively so. For instance, the Expressionist painter Max Pechstein combined his personal life and career in one flat at Durlacher Straße 14. In the same building, sculptors Gernard Marcks and Richard Scheibe had their studios and homes. Not only did Pechstein work and live in the apartment, he also launched a private art school there with his colleague Ernst Ludwig Kirchner when the latter moved in next door in 1911. They called the school MUIM Institute, with MUIM standing for "Moderner Unterricht in Malerei" (modern lessons in painting). They offered a variety of courses in their apartments (more often in Kirchner's apartment), including painting, graphic art, sculpture, textile, stained glass windows, and metal work (fig. 2.16).[154]

In other intellectual groups, domestic life also became increasingly informal and impromptu, and diverse activities might take place at home. For example, when Arnold Schönberg, the influential expressionist composer and music theorist, moved from Vienna to Berlin in September 1925, he lived in an apartment on the Nürnberger Straße and made it headquarters of his private and professional life. There he had a music room equipped with a piano, a harmonium, and a guitar, as well as a play room devoted entirely to his passion for Ping-Pong. He lived, worked, and exercised at home. From time to time, he even taught at home. Since Schönberg usually did not feel like going to classes at the

154 Bernard Fulda and Aya Soika, *Max Pechstein: The Rise and Fall of Expressionism* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 80-81, and 112-113. For more about the MUIM Institute, also see Hanna Strzoda, "Das MUIM-Institut" in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in Berlin*, (München: HirmerVerlag; Berlin: Brücke-Museum, 2008), 58-62.

Mies probably knew Pechstein personally since the Pechstein designed wall murals for the dining room in Perls House, which Mies designed in 1912. Additionally, Pechstein founded the November group with César Klein in 1908. He quitted it around 1922. In the same year, Mies joined November group and became its president the next year.

Academy, he had students come over to his apartment for classes of music analysis.[155] (If we extend our investigation to other cities, we may find that avant-garde intellectuals lived alike. In Vienna, Sigmund Freud held his office and clinic in the same apartment where he and his family lived. In Paris, the Maison de Verre, a fashionable private residence for noted gynecologist Dr. Jean Dalsace and his wife Annie, also served as Dr Dalsace's clinic and as an intellectual salon that was frequented by Walter Benjamin, Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, Jean Cocteau, Joan Miró, and Max Jacob.)

To make sense of a life, we have to situate it in time and space. The 1920s was an age of restless spirit, Berlin a city of turbulent varieties. Such vibrant energies also found resonance in domestic settings. Mies and many of his contemporaries exemplified a home life that was as dynamic and manifold as the activities that took place at any corner in Berlin. Their lives demonstrated that the peace and stability of traditional household was gradually dismantled by changing life circumstances and replaced by a far more impromptu, more inclusive, and more unstructured kind of home life — a life we now call modern.

155 Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge*, 177.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPATIAL FLEXIBILITY

Every residence, by its very configuration, suggests a way of life. The fixed organization of a traditional apartment, which once served fittingly a formal and static domesticity, proved to be rather incompatible with the new, liberated way of living. This conflict between a new lifestyle and old fashioned housing was noted by Wilhelm Michel, a contemporary architecture critic who questioned that: "how come we already developed a freer, more spontaneous (unmittelbarere) and more mobile, or in a sense, a more 'sporty' order of life and yet continue to live in houses and spaces that acknowledged nothing of it?"[156] Speaking of inhibiting home space, Mies's Am Karlsbad 24 was an apt example: each room was rigidly confined by solid walls that demarcated a specific function associated with the space. However, each day, various activities took place in the apartment, that constantly blurred the division between the public and private spheres and rendered any predetermined room purposes into moot.

However, to cope with various life scenarios, Mies used his apartment as flexibly as possible: instead of designating a fixed purpose to a room, most rooms in this apartment served multiple functions simultaneously, and they were also adapted constantly to accommodate the changing needs of various occasions. For example, his private office at times could be turned into the studio's model room, Der Ring's meeting room, *G*'s editorial office, and a bedroom for Wigman's dancers. The diverse activities sometimes generated

156 The original text: "wie dem Konflikt entgehen, dass wir ueberall schon in eine freiere, unmittelbarere und beweglichere, ja in gewissem Sinn "sportlichere" Lebensordnung hineingestellt sind und doch fortfahren, in Haeusern und Raeumen zu wohnen, die von ihr nichts ahnen?" Wilhelm Michel, "Vom Neuen Bauen und Neuen Wohnen: das Bekenntinis zum Leben der Gegenwart," in Innen-dekoration (January 1927): 3. My translation.

some real creativity in using spaces: for instance, in case that Mies had to accommodate multiple overnight guests, he slept in the bathroom, and since there was usually not enough space in the office, he sometimes made models on the balcony (fig. 2.17 and 2.18).[157] Such apartment life might have led Mies to realize that a modern living features a constant adaption to varied life circumstances. It was important for individuals to create their own ways of living by making changes to home spaces, and accordingly modern spaces must be flexible enough to allow such changes.

Based on this understanding, Mies began to value spatial flexibility and considered it "a vital necessity" for modern architecture.[158] He once discussed the idea with Häring but found the latter held an opposite theory. Unlike Mies, who sought for a universal solution to various conditions, Häring sought to create an architecture that responded specifically to its individual case. Or, in Mies's words, Häring attempted to design "a tight corner for everything," whereas he believed in creating space that could be used in a variety of ways.[159] Mies valued the quality of adaptability in space probably because it was more practical for a spontaneous and manifold way of life he and many others led. Once, in an

157 For the information about Mies slept in bathroom, see Ruegenberg's drawing and also seeMuseum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Ludwig Glaeser's interview with Herbert Hirsche.

Mies once told Rolf D. Weisse: "we had little space in office. I made the model of glass skyscraper on the balcony." (Wir hatten ja wenig Platz im Büro. Die Modelle für Glashochäuser habe ich auf dem Balkon gebaut). Rolf D. Weisse, *Mies van der Rohe, Vision und Realität: Von der Concert Hall zur Neuen Nationalgalerie, Entwicklungeiner Idee* (Posdam: Strauss, 2001), 55.

158 Mies van der Rohe, Interview with Graeme Shankland, "Architect of 'the Clear and Reasonable'," in *The Listener* (October 15, 1959): 621.

159 Peter Blundell Johns, "Hugo Häring & the Search for a Responsive Architecture," in *AA Files*, No.13 (Autumn 1986): 40.

interview, when asked what kind of house he would build for himself, Mies answered that he did not like to live in a cubical house with a lot of small rooms; instead, he would "build a simple but very large house," so that he could do inside whatever he likes and may change things around.[160]

Mies preferred large spaces for its sense of liberty and its great potential to be changed. He explained this predilection clearly in an interview in the middle of the 1960s:

> I always liked large spaces because I could do within them whatever I wanted. I often discussed this question with Häring…I told him: "For heaven's sake, why don't you plan the building big enough so that you can walk freely and not in only one predetermined direction? We don't know at all if the people will use it the way we would like them to. First of all the functions are not clear and secondly they are not constant—they change much faster than the building."[161]

These words indicated that in the middle of the 1920s, Mies already realized that it was futile and unpractical to assign a fixed purpose to a space, because functions were subject to change, and people might want to use spaces in a way that architects could hardly foresee. The only thing architects could therefore anticipate was the fact that space would sooner or later be changed and thus they would better to be made easily adaptable. In other words, due to the fleeting nature of modern function, spaces need to be flexible to remain practical and viable in the long term.

At the time, many modernist architects and theorists embraced the idea that buildings were not meant to last long. Already in 1914, Antonio Sant' Elia argued that

160 Mies van der Rohe, "Architect of 'the Clear and Reasonable'," 621.

161 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Interview entitled "Mies in Berlin," probably took place in 1965 when Mies returned to Berlin for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new national gallery.

buildings should be conceived as temporary and last only a single generation. In the Futurist manifesto, he and Marinetti declared that the sense of monumental, heavy, and static architecture belonged to the past and must be abolished; modern men developed a sensibility and taste for "the light, the practical, the ephemeral and the swift." They held Futurist architecture will therefore be characterized by its "impermanence and transience," and claimed that "things will endure less than us. Every generation must build its own city."[162] Likewise, van Doesburg characterized the temporary quality as a major feature of a new architecture. He wrote in 1925: "we are not building for eternity any more…Light, open, clear and, above all, temporary — those are the tasks for the new architecture. Temporary but not superficial; open and clear but not empty and hollow; light but not flimsy."[163] Additionally, Siegfreid Giedion, a Swiss architecture historian and critic, saw temporary dwelling as a means to release people from the traditional ways of living. In his booklet *Befreites Wohnen* (Liberated Living), published in 1929, he claimed that dwellings should be liberated from the traditional notions of eternal value, high rents, and household chores. He justified temporary dwellings on the ground that "the house is a service value. It should be written off and amortized in the foreseeable future."[164]

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162 Antonio Sant'Elia, "Manifesto of Futurist Architecture," in *Architecture and Design in Europe and America, 1750-2000*, ed. Abigail Harrison-Moore and Dorothy C. Rowe (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006),367.

163 Theo van Doesburg, "The significance of Glass: Toward Transparent Structures," *Het Bouwebedrijf* 2, no. 6 (June 1925). Reprinted in *Theo van Doesburg on European Architecture,* 63-39.

164 Siegfried Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen* (Zürich, O. Pösh, 1929) 8. My translation. The original text writes: "Das Haus ist ein Gebruchswert. Es soll in absehbare Zeit abfeschriben und amortisiert warden."

The idea of temporary buildings emerged partly in response to ever-changing and destructive modern conditions and partly to an aesthetic predilection for the light and transparency. Such a view offered a solution to the problem of changing building functions, but Mies rejected it. Mies held that eternal value was still very much relevant to modern times, and modern architecture, like great architecture of all time, needed to be both timely and timeless, corresponding to its immediate cultural and historical context and going beyond it to retain something universal.[165] His idea of flexible spaces represented an effort to reconcile the contradiction between changing building functions and eternal value of architecture, at least on a practical level.

Mies's insights about the transience of modern functions was certainly not conjured up in a moment of sudden enlightenment, but, rather, arose slowly from the accumulative experience of daily living in his apartment at Am Karlsbad 24. It demanded retrospection and introspection. "One cannot climb into a perception," he once said, "as one does into a streetcar."[166] Mies's way of developing an idea was a gradual process of uncovering latent senses and thoughts and then formulating them into a theory. He explained his approach: "these things [new ideas], I believe, are at first not conscious, but they become clearer and clearer, and then one day, one expresses them as theory, but actually the thoughts really

165 In an interview with Peter Blake, Mies said: "let me say that I think that the idea of rapid obsolescence is a very funny idea. I don't even think it is a good idea. I think that obsolescence is a kind of excuse. I don't think it is a real fact…You don't have to build like the pyramids, to las thousands of years. But a building should live as long as it can live. There is no reason to make it just provisional. In that case, they should build a tent." In Peter Blake, "A Conversation with Mies," in *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture: Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Wright* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 96.

166 Quoted in Elaine S. Hochman, *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich* (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1990), 51.

unfolded themselves—little by little."[167] His way of developing a new idea corresponds to how everyday life may have an impact on one's thoughts: the experience and sentiments from daily life percolated in the background, accumulated, and emerged little by little until it came fully to the fore.

It would be interesting to inquire if there was any intellectual influence that lead Mies to investigate his seeming inconsequential daily life and try to draw a conclusion out of it. From Nietzsche and Simmel's writings, Mies began to see life as a vital forming agent for architecture. The writings of Muthesius and van Doesburg grounded this connection on a more tangible level to relate architectural developments with transformations in ways of living. Finally, Alfred North Whitehead's critique of abstraction may have led him to value experience as an essential way to understand the world, and Viktor Shklovsky's theory of estrangement perhaps enlightened him on how to draw insights from one's mundane life experience.

Mies had many books on epistemology in his library. His enthusiasm for this subject did not merely originate from his general interest in philosophy, but rather was based on the belief that a clear and rational understanding of the world was a prerequisite for a lucid architecture. Among the books he read on epistemology, Mies considered Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* particularly illuminating.[168] *Science*

167 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Interview "Mies in Berlin."

168 In an interview with Graeme Shankland for the BBC, Mies identified the year 1926 as the most important year of the modern world and mentioned Max Scheler, Rudolf Schwarz, and Alfred North Whitehead and their works published in that year. "Interview with Mies van der Rohe," *Interbuild* 6 (1959).

and the Modern World reviewed the major scientific developments throughout seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and examined how they reshaped people's cognitive approaches. It demonstrated how the thriving of science had made abstraction and generalization the primary way to understand the world. As much as it was efficient, this method was also rather restraining because it cut out elements that did not fit preset parameters. Consequently, it led one to see only fragmentary truths and screened out a proper understanding of human experience through abstract conceptual models and scientific structures. As a remedy, Whitehead recommended a return to the virtual experience of concrete reality as a way to refresh and enrich our understanding of the world.

Despite that the book disclosed the limitation of abstraction as a method, Whitehead evaluated the importance of virtual experience in an abstract, philosophical way. The book does not demonstrate what kind of experience is considered helpful, how one could obtain it and learn from it. Viktor Shklovsky's theory of estrangement discussed how one can make use of experience, especially daily life experience, to obtain new observations on a more tangible level.

Shklovsky was a Russian literary theorist and art critic. In his seminal essay, "Art as Device," Shklovsky pointed out that as our daily life becomes habitual, we live it so unconsciously and automatically that we lose the ability to really perceive or understand it; consequently, life is deprived of meaning and "fades into nothingness."[169] He argued that the aim of art is to awaken us from such numbness and to channel our sensitivity back

169 Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. by Benjamin Sher and introduction by Gerald R. Bruns (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 5.

into life.[170] To help artists fulfill this goal, he brought up his theory of estrangement, which is a method to scrutinize daily routines or over-familiar forms with a fresh eye in order to investigate their meanings and stimulate a new perception of them. He illustrated the method by analyzing Leo Tolstoy's work, how Tolstoy repetitively applied the method of estrangement to prick readers' consciousness by depicting the world through a horse's eye or by not naming a familiar object and describing it as if it were seen for the first time.

The essay "Art as Device" was written in 1917 and published in 1925, and the theory of estrangement became very influential among Russian literary and artistic film circle. Shklovsky was a close friend of avant-garde director Sergei Eisenstein, whose work was greatly valued by German film critics and avant-garde filmmakers. Mies's close friend and *G* colleague Hans Richter was a key figure in introducing Soviet film theories into German discourse of the 1920s and a great admirer of Eisenstein's work.[171] In 1926 or 1927, Richter founded the New Film Society to introduce new film theory and promote experimental films. Though the organization was short-lived, through it Richter got to meet Eisenstein personally for the first time and later wrote the screenplay for his *The Storming of La Sarraz* in 1929.[172] Mies was keenly enthusiastic about experimental films and had long been involved the Berlin avant-garde film circles. He was surrounded by film directors, composers, and theater designers, such as Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling,

170 Ibid, 6.

171 Martino Stierli, "Mies Montage," in *AA Files*, No.61 (2010)61.

172 Ibid, 61.

George Antheil, Frederick Kiesler, Walter Ruttmann, and others. In 1923, George Antheil wrote to Mies and asked if he could help finance the Dadaist experimental film *Ballet Mecanique*.[173] Later, in 1930, Mies became one of the founding members of the German League of the Independent Film (Deutsche Liga für den unabhängigen Film) and was the only architect on the organization's board. He was so keen on the new film that the German journal *Filmkurier* called him "a fighter for movies from outside" (Filmkämpfer von Aussen).[174] Mies thus was certainly aware of the latest cinematic experiments, and he was in a position to know Shklovsky's theory of estrangement. Shklovsky's theory probably showed Mies that everyday life was not so banal after all, and one needed to break the familiar acceptance of it in order to really see it and understand its true implications. Such an understanding would turn a mundane life into a productive impetus for architectural creation.

Probably under the influence of these contemporary thoughts calling for a fresh look of everyday experience and a closer scrutiny of familiar things, Mies began to take notice of his apartment life and consider it as an essential source of inspiration. Sometime in the late 1920s, he wrote in his notebook that: "the art lovers and the intellectuals stand too remote from real life to draw meaningful conclusions out of it for forming an

173 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. George Antheil to Mies, 1923. *Ballet Mecanique* was directed by Fernand Leger and Dudley Murphy, and Antheil composed a musical score for it. Mies probably met Antheil through the Novembergruppe meetings. For more about Antheil's life and career in Germany, see Susan C. Cook, "George Antheil's Transatlantic: An American in the Weimar Republic," in *The Journal of Musicology* 9, No.4 (Autumn, 1991): 498-520.

174 "Filmkämpfer von aussen," *Filmkruier* (1 Jan. 1931), quoted in Lutz Robbers, "Modern Architecture in the Age of Cinema: Mies van der Rohe and the Moving Image" (PhD diss., Princeton University 2012).

attitude."[175] It indicates that Mies believed artists need to find inspiration and aesthetic vision in real life and transfuse them into a kind of architecture that not only corresponded to, but facilitated, real life. In so doing, he fulfilled his dear master Berlage's definition of artist, as someone who "experiences contemporary existence more intensively than others and anticipates the lives of others."[176] Very soon, in his work at the Weissenhof housing exhibition, he began to focus on what he had learned from his daily life and tried to formulate a new spatial configuration that was relevant to the kind of modern living that he had experienced at Am Karlsbad 24.

175 Neumeyer, *Artless Word*, 270.

176 H.P. Berlage, "the Foundation and Development of Architecture (1908)," translated and reprinted in *Hendrik Petrus Berlage: Thoughts on Style*, trans. by Iain Boyd Whyte et al. (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996), 231-32.

Chapter Three

The Weissenhof Apartment Building: Affirmation of a Modern Living

MIES'S STATEMENT FOR THE WERKBUND EXHIBITION "DIE WOHNUNG"

By the end of the World War I, Germany was facing an unprecedentedly severe housing shortage. It was a long-standing problem dating back to the era of industrial expansion in the middle of the nineteenth century: then, general living conditions in German cities were already among the worst in Europe.[177] In the notorious *Mietkaserne* (rental barracks), cramped apartments often accommodated more than one family, and some lived in dwellings that were considered uninhabitable even by the lax standard of local housing codes.[178] The lost war accentuated the housing problem gravely. Due to a lack of raw materials and labor, few housing units were built during the war, and by the end of it, one million units were needed to shelter the returning veterans and newly founded families. Berlin was then denounced as "die größte Mietskasernenstadt der Welt" (the greatest city of rental barracks of the world), as there the housing shortage was the severest and living condition the most terrible.[179]

As the dwelling shortage became so acute, local government took a number of special measures in attempt to alleviate it: they withdrew the prohibition against the use of

177 Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 454.

178 Ibid, 454.

179 Werner Hegemann, *Das Steinerne Berlin: Geschichte der größten Mietkassernenstadt der Welt*, (Berlin: G. Kiepenheuer, 1930), 1.

cellars and attics and converted empty shops and even schools into temporary dwellings. These measures, however, exerted little effect in relieving the pressure.[180] The condition was worse than before the war: families often had to share their poorly ventilated and ill-lighted rooms with wounded veterans; dark and damp hallways were full of smoke and odor of cooking and washing. Rooms were cramped and crowed, rendering any kind of privacy impossible and casting consequently a threat to morality.[181]

The trauma of death, the destruction of the war, the shame of defeat, the poor economy, and the extensive hyperinflation gave rise to upheavals and deprivation of a post-war society. The lack of housing, and the filth and disease in existing ones only aggravated the suffering, making it all the more unbearable. The housing crisis became a catalyst for potential social problems. Hermann Muthesius noted the gravity of the situation and wrote in 1919: "the unfortunate outcome of the war has vastly increased the importance of housing development; it has become a question of survival for the German people."[182]

The dire situation and the urgency of the problem fostered a sense of social responsibility in German architects, and many of them in turn called for a standardized and rationalized building industry to help tackle the housing scarcity. Under this condition, a number of progressive architects played an instrumental role in exploring new materials

180 Gwilym Gibbon, *The Housing Problem in Germany, Report prepared in the Intelligence Department of the Local Government Board* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1919), 9.

181 Ibid, 16, 17.

182 Hermann Muthesius, *Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1920),3. Quoted in Cedric Bolz, "Constructing 'Heimat' in the Ruhr Valley: Krupp Housing and the Search for the Ideal German Home 1914-1931," in *German Studies Review* 34, No. 1 (Feb, 2011): 18.

and constructional methods that would facilitate the development of building industry. For example, Muthesius, while serving at the subcommittee of the Normenausschuss der deutschen Industrie (standards committee of German industry), investigated new constructional methods in building industry and published his study in 1918 in a book entitled *Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung* (small house and small settlement).[183] It aroused wide interest around the country and soon published a second edition in 1920. Likewise, in attempt to experiment with industrial-prefabricated components and new building materials, the Bauhaus built the Haus am Horn (designed by Bauhaus teaching staff Georg Muche, and advised technically by Adolf Meyer and Gropius) and presented it at its Weimar exhibition in 1923. Despite the active role modernist architects played in supporting a rationalized building industry, due to the lack of material and financial supports in the early 1920s, they were then unable to conduct their experiments on a more extensive or systematic level.

The bleak conditions improved in 1924. With the infusion of American investment from the Dawes Plan, the hyperinflation ceased, and the country began to stabilize. Consequently, governments had more money to spend on public housing and were eager to do so. They hoped to build as efficiently as possible, as the money was limited whereas the housing demands were overwhelming. It was under this circumstance that the Deutscher Werkbund initiated the idea of building a housing colony that later turned into the housing exhibition "Die Wohnung" (the Dwelling) in Weissenhof, Stuttgart in 1927.

183 Hermann Muthesius, *Kleinhaus und kleinsiedlung* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1920). The first edition was published in 1918.

Founded in October 1907 by twelve leading German artists and industrialists, the Deutscher Werkbund was the country's most powerful and prestigious association of artists, craftsmen, and industry. It promoted close collaboration among the three groups in attempt to reform German products. By offering excellent designs for mass production, the organization aimed to enhance the reputation and competitiveness of German products in the global market and hence to increase exportation. Domestically, it integrated economic goal with social and cultural ones: in incorporating artists and craftsmen into industrial production, it offered the two groups a useful role in a capitalist society. It also carried an educational agenda to enhance the taste of the large population through extensive exhibitions and lectures. In doing so, it sought to extend artistically designed items into the everyday life of ordinary people.

Compared to most of his colleagues, Mies joined the Deutsche Werkbund rather late, in the middle of 1924. (By comparison, Taut and Gropius were already active Werkbund members before the war, and Mies's former employers, Bruno Paul and Peter Behrens, were founders of the organization) Nevertheless, he chose the right time to join. On 22 March, 1924, the day he received a formal invitation from the Werkbund, he wrote to Friedrich Kiesler, an Austrian architect and *G* colleague, and encouraged him to join as well, because he believed that there would be a "blood replacement (Blutauffrischung) in Deutsche Werkbund" and the younger forces would determine what was to happen.[184] Sure enough, within two years, Mies was elected vice-president of the organization and

184 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Werkbund's invitation to Mies, 22 March 1924; Mies to Kiesler, 22 March 1924.

even sooner than that, in 1925, he was appointed as the artistic director of the housing exhibition "Die Wohnung," Werkbund's most important project in a decade.

"Die Wohnung," also known as the Weissenhofsiedlung, was a housing exhibition held in Weissenhof, a suburb of Stuttgart from July to October, 1927. It included a series of apartment buildings, town houses, and single family houses designed by sixteen renowned modernist architects, including Mies, Le Corbusier, Gropius, J.J.P. Oud, and the Taut brothers. It was funded with public money and became city property after its completion. At the administrative level, the Weissenhof exhibition stressed using industrialized construction as an effective and economic way to solve the housing problem. This idea was stated explicitly in Werkbund's first policy document of the exhibition:

> The rationalization that has affected every area of our life has also extended to the housing problem. The economic circumstances of our time forbid any extravagance; they demand that the greatest ends be attained with the smallest means. For house building and home economy itself, this entails the use of the kind of materials and technical installations that will reduce the cost of the building and administration of housing, simplify housekeeping, and improve living conditions. A systematic pursuit of these objectives signifies an improvement of conditions in large cities, and of the quality of life in general; it thus serves to strengthen our national economy.[185]

The official policy highlighted the economic and social value of a rationalized building industry. A few years earlier, Mies had embraced the industrial constructional methods wholeheartedly and believed that it would resolve the housing problem properly. However,

185 Karl Lautenschlager (mayor of Stuttgart) and Peter Bruckmann (president of Deutsche Werkbund), draft policy of the Werkbund exhibition "Die Wohnung," dated June 27, 1925. Quoted in Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedung,* 17. Translation slightly modified. A slightly different translation was quoted in Pommer and Otto, *Weissenhof 1927*, 22.

at this point in 1927, his thoughts had evolved. He no longer saw the technical and economic realities of industrial standardization as the goal or theme of building art. So in his foreword for the official catalog of the exhibition, he contradicted the policy pointedly and claimed that "rationalization and typification" was merely a tool and should not be overemphasized:[186]

> The problems associated with the new housing are rooted in the changed material, social, and spiritual structure of our time; only from this vantage point can the problems be understood.
>
> […] The problem of rationalization and typification is only part of the problem, Rationalization and typification are only the means, they must never be the goal. The problem of the new housing is basically a spiritual (geistig) problem, and the struggle for new housing is only an element of the larger struggle for new forms of living.[187]

Mies's foreword was short, less than one hundred and fifty words in total, but it articulated two important points: that industrialized building method, or so called "rationalization and typification," was merely a means rather than the goal of architecture. Moreover, he insisted that, the housing problem was not a material problem, but rather a "spiritual / intellectual" (geistig) one within the realm of mind.[188] And most remarkably, he

186 Here, the term "typification" [typisierung] does not refer to the process of typological codification as in the context of the 1914 Werkbund debate between Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde; it is rather associated with "standardization" or "mass production" in this context. Rationalization [Rationalisierung] referred to the process of increasing in industrial efficiency not only by standardization of parts but also more importantly, through systematic and scientific management of labor and resources.

187 Mies van der Rohe, "Foreword to the Official Catalog of the Stuttgart Werkbund Exhibition 'Die Wohnung'," Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 258.

188 The German word "geistig" is difficult to translate into English. It originates from the word "Geist", which includes meanings of both "spirit" and "intellect" and also associates with the idea of unknowing soul.

proclaimed that the ultimate task of this exhibition was to reform life through new dwellings.

Mies's Position in"Rationalization and Standardization"

After his thought transitioned in middle 1920s, Mies sviewed the new technology and building materials in a more rational and sensible way. He held that the core values of architecture lay in its cultural mission, and new technology was only a tool to help achieve it. Through a series of readings and lectures, he reflected on technology's role and wrote in his notebook that: "any attempt to solve building art problems by calculating means must fail…Against the dominance of technology, for serving. Technology as means to freedom."[189]

Since technology was a tool, architects should use it sensibly and apply it only where it fit. For Mies, "standardization" ought to be applied only to building components rather than the entire structure. While working on the Weissenhof project, he articulated this idea in a letter that: "we need not and cannot fall into the usual error of standardization-mania…I consider the current efforts at standardization to be false, and now as before, I believe that, particularly in the single-family house, only parts should be standardized, never the whole, which would exclude worthwhile possibilities."[190] In addition, Mies

189 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies's note book, page 12. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 272.

190 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies to Döcker, Dec. 13 1926. Quoted in Pommer and Otto, *Weissenhof 1927*, 58.

believed that excessive reliance on standardization would diminish or even expel architects' free will to create. He wrote in his notebook: "do not standardize everything. Only where it makes sense. Why tie one's hands voluntarily?"[191]

Mies sustained this attitude towards "rationalization and typification" after he immigrated to the United States. Even though the building industry in the new continent was much more mature and advanced than that of the 1920s' Europe, for Mies, its role did not change, which was to serve, not to dominate. Mies enjoyed the convenience and efficiency brought by the modern building technology but refused to be shackled by it. He articulated this idea in an interview in the late 1950s:

> I do not think it is an advantage to build planned prefabricated houses. I think the value of prefabrication is the value of getting elements which we can use freely as we have doors and bath tubs…to prefabricate a house or standardize a house from top to bottom is too complicated a process. So I think it is much better that industry should deliver elements which we can use in a free way. Otherwise it would be terribly boring.[192]

Mies did so throughout his career: using mass-produced building components but never designing a completely prefabricated building.

To Reform life through Building Art

As the economy began to stabilize in 1924, how to grapple with the housing problem became a heated subject for discussions among German architects and politicians.

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191 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies's note book, page 8. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 270.

192 Mies van der Rohe, Interview with Graeme Shankland, "Architect of 'the Clear and Reasonable'," 622.

In 1926, the popular magazine *Uhu* invited Paul Schultze-Naumburg and Walter Gropius to write on this topic and presented their essays as opposite sides of a debate under the title "Wer hat Recht? Traditionelle Baukunst oder Bauen in neuen Formen." (Who is right? Traditional Architecture or Building in New Forms).

The ideas expressed by Schultze-Naumburg and Gropius demonstrated two distinctive attitudes towards the problem, which also represented, to a large degree, the two dominant positions among German architects in general. In the years before the war, Schultze-Naumburg was one of Germany's most respected architects working in neo-Biedermeier style. Nevertheless, after the war, he witnessed the old values as well as his architectural practice discredited by a new generation of architects who worshiped new technologies. To protect treasured tradition from being trampled, he founded the Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz (German League for Heimat Protection) and became its president. It was a conservation organization that concerned itself primarily with conserving objects that composed Germany's unique characters, including beautiful landscape, folk culture, and vernacular architecture, from the "intrusion of modern life with its brutally one-sided pursuit of practical goals."[193] The organization was dominated by educated elites and its leadership consisted primarily of secondary school teachers, university professors, lawyers,

193 It also stated that the league would try to find a balance among the preservation of German spirit, the modern technology, and the desire for the economic development. "satzungen," the founding document of Deutsche Bund Heimatschutz, quoted in John Alexander Williams, "'The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature': The Movement to Preserve the Natural Heimat from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich," in *Central European History* 29, No. 3 (1996): 374. This article demonstrates how the agenda of the organization shifted from preservation of natural habitat to a more vaguely defined German "heimat," and how it became increasingly racist and anti-semitic during the Weimar period.

doctors, and writers. Being an architect himself, Schultze-Naumburg paid extraordinary attention to traditional German homes, which, in his eyes, preserved the core and lifeblood of German culture but the distinctive characters of which were threatened increasingly by the vast introduction of new technology. In his article for *Uhu*, he claimed that traditional residential architecture embodied an irreplaceable cultural and psychological value that had nourished the German soul for centuries. He argued that modern dwellings should be modeled on traditional ones as opposed to be inspired by new technology because people's domestic needs did not change much from previous times. Otherwise, it would lead to a decline of the distinctive German culture and a loss of the racial characters of German people.[194]

By contrast, Gropius, as the founder and director of Bauhaus, was an influential, modernist figure of the younger generation. He maintained that to promote and develop industrialized building construction was a vital architectural and economic task.[195] He suggested repeatedly that because individuals' residential and daily needs were generally similar, unified dwellings were legitimate and well justified on economic and aesthetic ground. He later posed a somewhat contradictory view that to make housing utterly uniform was unacceptable but it could be avoided by producing only building components

194 Paul Schultze-Naumburg, "Wer hat Recht? Traditionelle Baukunst oder Bauen in neuen Formen," originally published in *Uhu*, no. 7 (April 1926). Reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 443-445.

195 Gropius wrote: "the subjection of all aspects of building for our needs to industry and the economy, to their precision and efficient exploitation of space and material, will determine the form of our creations." Wer hat Recht? Traditionelle Baukunst oder Bauen in neuen Formen," originally published in *Uhu*, no. 7 (April 1926). Reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 440.

industrially instead of prefabricating the entire building. Gropius had long been interested in industrializing building trade and producing prefabricated parts for housings.[196] As early as 1910, when he left Behrens's office and started his own practice, he proposed the idea of prefabricating building parts and assembling them on site to AEG, (Allegemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft, or general electricity company) one of the most prestigious and progressive companies in Germany.[197] In his proposal, Gropius advocated a rational industrial production of standard and interchangeable housing components on the belief that it would offer a controllable variety of choices for individuals and, at the same time, still retain formal consistency in each case. In his words, "It is by the provision of interchangeable parts that the company can meet the public's desire for individuality and offer the client the pleasure of personal choice and initiative without jettisoning aesthetic unity."[198]

Neither Gropius nor Schultze-Naumburg represented Mies's position. Mies shared with Gropius the idea of applying industrial production only to components, but he did not believe that technology played such a primary role in building art, nor did he consider economic aspects of buildings as one of architects' chief concerns. The major divergence

196 For more information about Gropius's obsession and contribution to the industrialized houses in the 1920s, see Gilbert Herbert, *The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), 29-162.

197 Walter Gropius, "Programm zur Gründung einer allgemeinen Hausbaugesellschaft auf künstlerisch einheitlicher Grundlage m.b.H" (Program for the Founding of a General Housing Construction Company Following Artistically Uniform Principles), paper presented to the AEG in 1910. published in English under the title "Gropius at Twenty-six" in *The Architectural Review* 130, (July 1961): 49-51.

198 Ibid, 50.

between Gropius and Schultze-Naumburg's positions lay in the question what role technology played in housing, and Mies clarified his attitude towards this issue in his foreword for the catalog of Weissenhofsiedlung published by the Deutscher Werkbund:

> It is not entirely useless today to highlight explicitly that the problem of the new housing is a problem of the building art, despite its technical and economic sides. It is a complex problem and therefore can only be solved by creative forces but not by calculative or organizational approach.[199]

Regardless of the urgent call for using industrialized construction as the effective cure for the housing problem, Mies maintained that it remained a marginal problem because the housing problem was essentially "a problem of the building art" that belonged to the realm of culture.

With Nietzsche and Simmel's teaching in the background, Mies's cultural position of architecture might have been strengthened by many discussions he had with Hugo Häring when the two were sharing an office. Häring maintained that building art carried great cultural value whereas mass-produced housing spoiled it. He believed that the mass-produced housing should only serve as a temporary provision at times of extreme material shortage, but it was unsustainable and would threaten individual values in the long term. In "Probleme des Bauens" (problems of buildings), an essay published in 1924, he stated:

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199 Mies van der Rohe, Foreword to *Bau und Wohnung*, *Bau und Wohung: die Bauten der Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart errichtet 1927 nach Vorschlägen des Deutschen Werkbundes im Auftrag der Stadt Stuttgart und im Rahmen der Werkbundausstellung "Die Wohnung"* (Stuttgart, F. Wedekind & Co., 1927), 7. My translation.

> The mass-produced house cannot be the goal of a culture; it is always a makeshift. It is schematic, uniform, and a template (schablone). It is not a problem of building but rather of fabrication…Typification devalues, or degrades individual cells in favor of the mass…Typification is a makeshift, in the condition of the inadequacy.[200]

For Häring, industrialized housing would lead to a highly unified home type, which, under the disguise of democracy and social equality, would repress individual values in favor of a mass type. Häring was not the only one worrying about the threat to individuality by an artificial uniformity; in fact, this issue had caught the attention of a number of intellectuals at the time. For instance, Stefan Zweig, a most read writer in Germanic world then, expressed a similar concern in "The Monotonization of the World" (Die Monotonisierung der Welt), an essay published in February 1925 on *Berliner Börsen-Courier*.[201] Zweig observed with great despair that the rich and distinctive European customs were monotonized and sterilized by a vast invasion of American culture, and he worried that it would consequently lead to a great spiritual loss for Europeans. In his essay, he discussed how the flood of mechanization monotonized every aspect of life and synchronized souls

200 Hugo Häring, "Probleme des Bauens," originally published in *Der Neubau* 17, no. 10, September 1924. Reprinted in *Hugo Häring: Schriften, Entwürfe, Bauten* (Stuttgart: K. Krämer, 1965), 14-15. My translation.

201 At the time, Berlin had forty-five morning papers and *Berliner Börsen-Courier* was among the most read ones. It enjoyed a circulation of 40,000 to 60,000 during the 1920s. It focused primarily on prices of securities traded on the stock exchanges and securities information about the mortgage market, but also featured news and reports from all other areas, especially culture.

unconsciously and warned against an extinction of individuality in favor of a uniform mass as its result.[202]

Häring's "Probleme des Bauens" was published slightly earlier than Zweig's essay in 1924. At the time, he and Mies were sharing an office, and thus it was likely that he discussed his ideas with Mies when drafting the article. They both understood that the harsh economic conditions favored mass-produced housing. But for Mies and Häring, to produce large quantities of unified dwellings seemed to suggest an imposition of social equalization that would threaten the development of individuality. Mies wrote in his notebook: "The social equalization of the masses does not cancel the differentiation of soul. Therefore, a dwelling cannot merely be made from an economic angle."[203]

For Mies, the core question of new housing was how people wanted to live and how to translate this vision into a built form? Both Schultze-Naumburg and Gropius referred to the issue of lifestyle briefly in their essays, but neither of them provided any insightful observation of it. Gropius claimed that individuals lived alike nowadays while Schultze-Naumburg maintained that they lived in the same way as they did in the past. In so doing, they dodged the question of how people should live in a modern world, and could we perhaps present for them any new possibilities of living? Neither of them had a genuine

202 Stefan Zweig, "the Monotonization of the World," originally published as "Die Monotonisierung der Welt," in *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (February 1, 1925). Reprinted in Kaes and Jay, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 397-400.

203 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies's note book, page 12. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 272.

interest in the question, nor did they develop a sophisticated understanding of it. They talked of living forms perfunctorily and in a way that would support their agendum.

Mies, however, tried to understand new ways of living as they constituted the driving force for building art. He wrote in his notebook: "we can only talk of a new building art when new life forms have been formed."[204] From his apartment life and his observation of the lifestyles of his friends, he knew that individuals were leading a more spontaneous and unstructured way of life than previous times. Thus, for him, now the question was how we could respond to this new lifestyle or better still, help improve it through dwellings. This mindset shaped Mies's approach to new dwelling, seeing it as a way to reform life (note 181).

At the planning stage of exhibition, Mies wrote in a letter that he hoped that the Weissenhof exhibition would equal the significance of Darmstadt Artists' Colony.[205] The Darmstadt Artists' Colony was a group of exhibiting houses built in the early 1900s by a group of prominent Jugendstil artists in Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. The common goal of participating architects and artists was to bring their artistic proposition of modern houses into the everyday life of the middle class through this widely-publicized exhibition. By comparing the Weissenhof exhibition to Darmstadt artists' colony, Mies revealed his

204 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies's note book, page 6. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,*269.

205 Mies wrote: "Hier durch könnte diese Siedlung eine Bedeutung erreichen, wie etwa die Mathilden-Höhe in Darmstadt sie seiner zeit erreicht hat." Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies to Stotz, 11 September, 1925. My translation.

ambitious goal in directing the Weissenhof exhibition: to situate building art into the everyday life of the public and, more importantly, make an impact on it.

MIES'S APARTMENT BUILDING AT THE WEISSENHOFSIEDLUNG

As the artistic director of the Weissenhof exhibition, Mies coordinated the administrative affairs, set the tone for the exhibition and created the site plan. As a participant, he designed a massive apartment building and two interior exhibitions in collaboration with Lilly Reich to display glass and linoleum. Much as the site plan and the indoor exhibition were intriguing in their visual and spatial effects, our scope of inquiry limits us to concentrate primarily on his apartment building (fig. 3.1).

Experts on Mies usually treat the Weissenhof apartment building rather cursorily, viewing it merely as Mies's first, immature exploration with steel skeleton construction.[206] Their scarce interest may have to do with the fact that the building looks rather plain and lacks the refined and elegant structural expression of Mies's later skyscrapers. They mostly considered the flexible plans Mies developed in Weissenhof apartments as a happy by-product of the application of steel frame structure rather than a deliberate effort in its own right. Some directly argued that in the Weissenhof apartment building, Mies focused primarily on its exterior surface, privileging it over the interior spatial innovation.[207] Nevertheless, I believe that the Weissenhof apartment building presented a turning point

206 David Spaeth, Philip Johnson, and Franz Schulze, in their monograph on Mies, applauded the unified style achieved at the Weissenhofsiedlung and believed that it was based on a shared appreciation and application of the new technical and structural development. Detlef Mertins approached it from a different perspective and pointed out that Mies's apartment building, like his site plan for the Weissenhofsiedlung, provided a neutral framework for collaborated interior designers to develop their own expressions and exploration. He did not elaborate this point fully. Only Fritz Neumeyer acknowledged sufficiently that Mies was primarily interested in space in the Weissenhof projects. See Neumeyer, "A World in Itself: Architecture and Technology" in *The Presence of Mies,* ed. Detlef Mertins et al. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 71-83.

207 Mark Stankard, "Re-covering Mies van der Rohe's Weissenhof: The Ultimate Surface", *Journal of Architectural Education* 55 (May 2002): 247-256.

in Mies's career, the moment at which he began to concentrate on what he had learned from his everyday life and tried to infuse it into a new spatial configuration.

From 1924 to 1926, Mies revised his architectural thoughts and position critically, shifting focus from new technology to new life. Bearing a fresh outlook towards architecture, he determined to do something new and groundbreaking at the Weissenhofsiedlung. He asserted this ambition in a letter in May 1926:

> I consider it necessary to start out a new approach at Weissenhof, because I believe that a new dwelling is to have an effect extending beyond its four walls. This does not come from creating exemplary house plan in the old sense, but here [in the site plan] and also in the building [apartment building], I want to break new grounds. I saw therein the meaning of our entire work above all.
>
> […] I would not waste an hour on such work [exemplary work in the old sense]. Twenty years ago, I took troubles to build good, clean and reasonable houses. Since then my ambition changed. To build is an intellectual job, and not in trivial but in essence, a creative one.[208]

As we shall see, the "new ground" Mies meant to break has little to do with new technology but a great deal to do with a new spatial arrangement. He made numerous sketches to study apartment layouts, and in his official statement of the apartment building he claimed explicitly that his focal point lies in the creation of flexible spaces rather than the application of steel skeleton.

Mies's apartment building consisted of four units, which were described in the exhibition's official catalogue as house one to four. Each house had the same vertical arrangement: a basement, an elevated first floor, two upper floors and a roof terrace. Each

208 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies to Richard Döcker, 27 May 1926. My translation.

floor was composed of a stair shaft in the center and two apartments at its two sides. The building block was two rooms deep and had windows on both sides. It was then a common housing arrangement known as the "two-span type" (Zweispännertyp), which was used many apartment buildings, including am Karlsbad 24.[209]

The form of the apartment building underwent a succession of changes from parallel, staggered cubes to the ultimate simple rectilinear building. Austere in appearance, the façades of the building maintained only the necessary components and eliminated ornamental elements of any kind. Mies did not display the steel skeleton literarily and covered it and the infilling brick walls with stucco. The skeleton served as an underlying framework organizing the elements on the façades. The arrangement of the long-banded windows indicated its presence: the thin vertical strips between windows marked the location of steel columns, and interspaces between the window lintels and sills suggested the position of the steel beams.

The longitudinal façades of the apartment building had a monumental length of 72 meters (235.5 feet). The long-banded windows alternating with strips of stuccoed columns established a highly regular keynote for the façades. Mies adjusted the uneven site to a level platform for his apartment building, just as Greek temples were placed on a leveling stylobate. The stylobate was a universal solution because it simply overlooked any site characters and transformed all into a flat platform. This indifferent gesture towards sites regulated the building to an average condition, or "a condition of absolute placelessness"

209 Ronald Wiedenhoeft, *Berlin's Housing Revolution: German Reform in the 1920s* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), 34.

as Kenneth Frampton would describe, and further contributed to a sense of anonymous regularity of the façade.[210] To avoid a monotonous visual effect of the facade, however, Mies introduced groups of vertical elements to break the repetitive rhythm of the façade: the balconies on the western façade and the staircase on the eastern façade were aligned vertically to interrupt the expansive façade, creating a balanced composition and a subtle variation (fig. 3.2). Nevertheless, the highly regular façades belied what they enclosed; the ordered and impersonal fronts gave little clue to the diverse interior.

To work out an optimal spatial arrangement, Mies conceived various living scenarios and produced piles of sketches studying apartment layouts (and by comparison, his sketches of building facades were much fewer in quantity).[211] He might have started it by outlining something he knew best: his own apartment at Am Karlsbad 24. By reducing the number of rooms and adjusting them to a much more modest size, he worked out the layout of half of the apartments in House One. Their layout (apartment 2, 4, 6) resembled very much that of Am Karlsbad 24: entrance opened to a hallway, which served as traffic hub of the apartment; bathroom and kitchen were placed at the same side of the hallway while other rooms were arranged around it (fig. 3.3). Each room had direct access to the adjacent rooms, which resulted in an inconvenient and yet very private position of the room

[210] Frampton did not refer to Mies specifically. He considered the act of "bulldozing of an irregular topography into a flat site" as a gesture to achieve "a condition of absolute placeless." In Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Foster Hal, (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 26.

[211] In the MoMA Catalogue of Mies's drawings, in the phase of the preliminary project of the Weissenhofsiedlung, there are over twenty listings of house or apartment plans and none elevation sketches. There were a few small sketches of elevation details at the margin space of two drawing of apartment plan (archive 4.109 and 4.197b). *The Mies van der Rohe Archive* vol. 1, edited by Arthur Drexler, (New York: Garland Publisher, 1986) 184-185, 211-215.

at the northwestern corner. Its position resembled that of Mies's bedroom at Am Karlsbad 24: it had not direct access to the hallway, and one had to go across either the living room or through another bedroom to get to the hallway.

Starting from this plan model, Mies explored diverse solutions for various life scenarios, such as an apartment for a family, a childless couple, or a single, professional woman, etc. Mies continued to use the method of scenario designs in his America period. When the program was less rigid, Mies usually liked to explore a variety of options by corresponding to diverse circumstances that life could possibly invent. For example, in the fifty by fifty house project, he asked his assistant Myron Goldsmith to consider a series of scenarios, including the growing population of the family, a guest, a sick person, and so on.[212]

At Weissenhof, Mies made a great number of drawings studying apartment plans.[213] He focused on one layout at a time, paying attention to the position of the bathroom and kitchen, as well as how other rooms were connected. He drew swiftly and repeatedly. And each time he redrew, he varied the previous version a little, by moving the positions of the bathroom or kitchen and, also, adjusting the number and size of the rooms (fig. 3.4). In most cases, bedrooms and the bathroom were bundled to the south side of the block while the living and dining room and the kitchen were grouped to the north open to the garden or

212 Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 302.

213 The Mies archives at MoMA had over twenty listings of plan sketches and over thirty listing of apartment building floor plans and individual apartment plans. *The Mies van der Rohe Archive* vol. 1, 184-185, 211-215.

balcony. In the completed floor plans, he created ten different layouts for the eighteen apartments of Houses One, Two and Three, and, in so doing, demonstrated a variety of solutions for modern dwellings.[214] (a group of architects from Swiss Werkbund designed the plans for the apartment in House Four)

Mies's interest in exploring apartment layout over the expression of the skeleton structure was also manifest in his statement of his apartment building. I cite here the full version of the statement:

> Today rationalization and typification is demanded in the construction and production of apartment buildings for economic reasons. On the other hand, however, the increasing differentiation of our housing needs calls for greater freedom in ways of using. It will become necessary in the future to do justice to both tendencies. Therefore, the skeleton structure is the most suitable system of construction. It enables a rational production and yet allows every freedom of spatial disposition in the interior. If one restrains the installations of the kitchen and bath at a fixed place, and if then one divides the remaining living space by movable walls, I believe that all legible living requirements can be fulfilled this way.[215]

In this statement, Mies justified the use of skeleton structure on economic grounds and as a means to achieve a free spatial disposition. He summarized his strategy in organizing an apartment plan: to predetermine the location of the bathroom and kitchen as servicing spaces, and then the inhabitants would have an intact living space at their disposal. Perhaps feeling that the ten plans he created could not possibly exhaust all life scenarios, Mies invented the device of moveable walls and introduced it earnestly at the end his statement.

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214 Of the ten different apartment layouts, Mies employed moveable walls in four. Mies displayed two of them in apartment ten and twelve.

215 Mies van der Rohe, "about my Block," in *Bau und Wohnung* (September 1927), 77. My translation.

It enabled residents to adapt their home layouts to various circumstances, from a long-term family transformation to a temporary urgency, or, even, at a momentary whim. This great freedom to create one's own environment represented Mies's vision of how people should live in a modern world.

Flexible Living: Adaptable Space

Mies led a vibrant life at Am Karlsbad 24. His busy professional life was often interwoven with various improvised activities. As his life circumstances changed frequently, Mies had to adjust his apartment constantly to cope with them. This experience became a constitutive part of his everyday life and thus led him to believe that to accommodate such a changing home life, dwellings had to be adaptable. This understanding motivated him to create the device of moveable walls and employ it in his Weissenhof apartments. He explained his intention in a letter to Erna Meyer in January 1927:

> As you know, I intend to try out the most varied plans in this apartment house. For the time being, I am building only the outside and common walls, and inside each apartment only the two piers that support the ceiling. All the rest is to be as free as it possibly can be. If I could contrive to get some cheap plywood partitions made, I would treat only the kitchen and the bathroom as fixed spaces, and make the rest of apartment variable, so that the spaces could be divided according to the needs of the individual tenant. This would have the advantage that it would make it possible to rearrange the apartment whenever family circumstances changed, without spending a lot of money on a conversion. Any carpenter, or any practically minded layman, would be able to shift the walls.[216]

216 Erna Meyer was an expert on how to conduct household more efficiently. She was a disciple of Christian Frederick, and her work *Der Neue Haushalt* (The New Household), published in 1926, was a bestseller book in Germany. It is not clear how she met Mies. Mies invited her to the Weissenhofsiedlung

It shows that Mies was convinced that modern people were having a more dynamic rather than static lifestyle, and the changing life circumstances would in turn require a variable home arrangement. This understanding of modern life mirrored his own life at Am Karlsbad 24.

Mies explored multipurpose wallboards, which were used previously mostly in temporary structures, in attempt to make the moveable walls light and easy to install. The walls were made of plywood panels and measured one meter wide each. They stood on the floor in a nickel-plated metal shoe that kept some buffer room so that they can be raised and lowered with the aid of a pair of screws. In this way, the walls were braced between floor and ceiling and stand fast. Then the joints were covered by strips of felt seal.[217]

The device of moveable walls could create four different plans to accommodate varied family circumstances. From variation one to four, the spatial layouts changed from a traditional type to an open one and suggested accordingly an increasingly liberated lifestyle.[218] (fig. 3.5 a-d).

Variation one (fig. 3.5a) had three bedrooms, and it served the case when the family needed to shelter many people (children and/or overnight guests). Variation two (fig. 3.5b) released one bed room from variation one and made a bigger living space. It would serve

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to give advice on how to make dwellings more practical for housewives, especially on the question of how to reform kitchens. Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 47-48.

217 Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung,* 63.

218 My analysis is based on Karin Kirsch's reconstruction drawings of the plan variations published in *The Weissenhofsiedlung,* 64.

the circumstance when the family had only one child or a guest. Even though these two layouts were the more traditional ones of the four, they were already more efficient and open than most apartment plans in Germany at the time. A typical apartment plan in Germany then usually had its entry open to a hallway (*Diele* or *Flur*) which gave access to all rooms, including the kitchen and bathroom (Mies's apartment at Am Karlsbad 24 was an example).[219] By contrast, variation one and two eliminated the hallway and had their entrance open directly to the living room, which now incorporated the hallway function and gave access to all the other rooms in the apartment.

This subtle but useful alteration corresponded to Alexander Klein's study on how to make home space more efficient. Klein was a contemporary German researcher who investigated how to enhance spatial efficiency in apartments. He condemned the conventional hallway as a waste of space because it cannot be used for anything but traffic. He suggested instead that one could improve it by incorporating it with the living room to make a larger public space for the family. He further proposed to integrate all the public spaces in a home, including vestibule, dining room, living room and study, into one large space subdivided with glass doors or curtains.[220] Klein was appointed as *Baurat*, or councilman, for Berlin's town planning in 1927. Afterward, he tried to infuse his knowledge about rational and efficient apartments into the establishment of new housing standards for working class. He published his study in 1928, offering careful analysis of

219 Wiedenhoeft, *Berlin's Housing Revolution*, 34.

220 Alexander Klein, "Beiträge zur Wohnungsfrage," in *Probleme des Bauens: Der Wohnbau*, (Potsdam: Müller & Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1928), 126-127.

room dispositions and orientations, shape of rooms and their relationships to openings, and detailed advices on interior arrangements and furnishings. Within a close circle of Berlin architects, Mies might have heard Klein's idea of eliminating hallway before it was published, or he might have reached a same result on his own by examining his own daily living experience. Mies himself constantly lacked space in his apartment, and this certainly would lead him to reflect on the deficiencies of the apartment layout and consider how to improve it. Variations one and two were possibly a product of these revising thoughts.

This modification, though moderate, was recognized and appreciated greatly by a group of participating interior designers from Schweizer Werkbund, who conducted interior design collectively for the six apartments of the House Four. Max Häfeli, director of the group and who was responsible for most of the floor plans in House four, applauded the idea of integrating hallway and living room. Upon the completion of exhibition, he published a detailed account of their work and concluded that

> Above all, the apartment must have a large, communal living room…which allows the maximum freedom of movement and in any case can accommodate very different groups of furniture and so transcend the tedious explicitness of the usual dining room and salon in favor of a less formal arrangement. This living room absorbed the unlit central passage, which became unnecessary just as soon as we had gotten used to the idea, perfectly acceptable within a self-contained house hold, that the less-used bedrooms could be entered direct from the living room.[221]

These words indicated a tendency in domestic arrangement to merge various public functions into one space without distinguishing each clearly. And Mies's mild revision of

221 *Das Werk*, no.9 (1927): 273. Quoted in Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 75.

the traditional apartment plan in variation one and two seemed sound and useful in this context.

Variation three had no bedrooms, but instead it created an integrated home space that served all the daily rituals: eating, working, chatting, and sleeping (fig. 3.5c). The moveable walls stood freely in the center of the room and divided the space vaguely into two areas: an open, public living area and a private sleeping area that was located right behind the moveable walls, even though space flows around the sleeping area continuously, the moveable walls blocked most of the visual lines from the public living space and hence created a sense of privacy for it. This layout was employed in apartment twelve, and it would work nicely for a single professional people, or a childless family who did not entertain much. In creating a single home space to accommodate mixed daily purposes, Mies achieved an entirely open space for the first time in a realized work.

Mies adopted variation four in one of the apartments he furnished. It had only one bedroom and served best for a single person or a childless family (or when the child moved out) or for the occasion that the family needed a large, open space to throw a party (fig. 3.5d). Although open, the apartment was arranged sensibly for an everyday life: living area and dining area, which served more social activities, were grouped at one side of the apartment; studying and sleeping spaces, which required a more private and quieter environment, were arranged at the other side. The bedroom, the most personal area of a home, was placed at the very end of the spatial sequence. Inhabitants sitting in the living room had a visual control over the path to the bedroom and thus were able to filter the unwanted guests from intruding into the most intimate realm of their home.

The four variations created by movable walls served life scenarios from what was typical to what was possible then. Instead of assigning a fixed home arrangement to the inhabitants, the device of moveable walls urged them to shape their homes thoughtfully and deliberately for themselves. In so doing, it not only affirmed a flexible modern way of living but also celebrated a release of individuality, a character that had just begun to be valued since the late nineteenth century and up to then, was only tolerated in big cities.

In "The Metropolis and Mental Life," a seminal essay written in 1903, Georg Simmel discussed how the lives of big cities would have an impact on individuals' mind. He demonstrated that the intimacy of social relations in small towns tended to strengthen community bondage and stifle individual development, whereas the anonymity and aloofness of metropolitan life offered a new horizon of freedom for individuals to define themselves and to develop a personality of their own. The distinctive personalities would in turn articulate themselves in diverse life forms:

> This fact makes it obvious that individual freedom… is not to be understood only in the negative sense of mere freedom of mobility and elimination of prejudices and petty philistinism. The essential point is that the particularity and incomparability, which ultimately every human being possesses, be somehow expressed in the working out of a way of life. That we follow the laws of our own nature — and this after all is freedom — becomes obvious and convincing to ourselves and to others only if the expressions of this nature differ from the expression of others.[222]

222 Georg Simmel, "the Metropolis and Mental Life (1903)," reprinted in *Simmel on Culture,* 182.

"The Metropolis and Mental Life" was one of Simmel's most widely read essays. It was reprinted in 1923 in *Fragmente und Aufsätze aus dem Nachlass und Veroffentlichungen der letzten Jahre*. Mies owned a copy of the book.

Mies was living in Berlin, undoubtedly a metropolis, and he might have felt the effect a metropolis had on its dwellers just as Simmel summarized: its rich variety provided individuals inexhaustible options, and its mutual detached social relations allowed them to develop their desired way of life freely. Mies valued variety and individuality in life, and he also believed that if given opportunities, people would very much like to devise their own way of living. He stated this idea in a lecture in 1927: "The masses do not appear to us quite as characterless as the mass-production clothier see them. Especially the masses demonstrated clear, strong impulses for living and a great urge toward functionality and an undistorted affirmation of life. These forces residing in them will become effective and will make themselves heard."[223] In providing a variety of layout options through moveable walls, Mies encouraged inhabitants to define their own ways of living and then determine accordingly which layout suit them best.

Before the Weissenhofsiedlung, Mies designed public housing at this scale only once in the Afrikanischestrasse in Berlin. It was a communal housing complex constructed from 1925 to 1927, which cast a stark contrast his the Weissenhof apartment building (fig. 3.6 and 3.7). It consisted of four buildings arranged along the street and was a municipal housing project built in response to the pressing issue of low-cost housing in Berlin after

223 Draft of lecture given at the "Immermannbund" in Düsseldorf. March 14, 1927, the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 262.

the war. Compared to the apartment building in Weissenhofsiedlung, it was far more conventional in plan, materials, and structure. The symmetry of the forms, the tripartite division of the fenestration, the masonry construction, the U-shaped plan, the use of decorative brick, the pilaster at entrances, and the general proportions, all reflected a continued influence of neoclassicism.[224] By contrast, the apartment building for the Weissenhofsiedlung offered Mies an opportunity to explore the formal and spatial potentials of the steel skeleton. Although he was not so much interested in exploring the structure itself than its spatial consequence, the use of structural frame in arranging façade, the open living space and the level platform are all inventions that pointed to Mies's later skyscrapers.

At Weissenhof, Mies designed and employed the device of moveable walls for the first time in his career. He liked the versatility of large, open space but at the same time felt it need to have the capacity to be subdivided when needed. The moveable walls solved the problem nicely. In his subsequent career, Mies kept reusing the idea and employed the device repeatedly in the Lange House, the Tugendhat, the museum for a small city project, and the fifty by fifty house project — just to name a few. In creating open spaces at home, Mies granted the residents great freedom to develop their own living environment. Open home space could be challenging and liberating, and sometimes playful. George Danforth described his experience living in an open planned apartment at 860-880 Lake Shore Drive as: "there is an ease of working in the apartment. I'm constantly playing around and

224 Marianne Eggler-Gerozissis, "Afrikanischestrasse Municipal Housing", in *Mies in Berlin*, ed. Barry Bergdoll et al. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 206.

changing the furniture. It's surprising in one week or a few days if I haven't changed something."[225]

Flexible Living: Movable Furniture

Mies reserved three apartments to show movable walls: one was left unfurnished to display the device alone (Apartment Eleven), and Mies created interior designs for the other two (Apartment Ten and Twelve). In all his apartments, doors extended all the way to the ceiling. Such a generous opening lent the space a sense of grandeur. In his instructions to all the interior designers of his apartment building, he asked them to avoid anything "salon-like" or "superfluous."[226] He himself conformed to this guideline unmistakably but still managed to create an air of class in his apartments.

Even though the apartments were small, Mies granted them a sense of spaciousness and fluidity by furnishing them cleverly. In his interior designs, aside from the fixed kitchen and the bathroom, the rest of the space of the apartment was conceived as an open whole. Movable walls stood mostly in the center of the apartments, not intending to enclose any rooms but only to demarcate spaces loosely. In so doing, they posed a relaxed gesture and activated a flowing air.

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225 Chicago Architects Oral History Project, Oral History of George Danforth, interviewed by Pauline Saliga, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1993.

226 Mies wrote: "Ich möchte nicht verfehlen nochmals auf den angestrebten Charakter der Austellung hinzuweisen, die einfache gut durchdachte wohnungen zeigen will, unter Vermeidung alles salonhaften und überflüssigem." Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies to (Richard) Herre, 12 April 1927. (Mies sent out same instruction to other interior designers l, here I use the one he sent to Herre as an example)

Mies positioned furniture in a way to facilitate the flow: it was mostly freestanding, conversing with the surroundings and suggesting mobility for improvised activities. Only a few pieces of furniture, usually massive ones, were placed at an angle to the wall to claim a reserved area. For example, in the living room of Apartment Ten, Mies placed a couch at a right angle to the wall, which suggested a sitting area helped guide the traffic (fig. 3.8). However, in the bedroom area, Mies placed the headboard of the bed against a wall, probably because he felt that after all, "in submitting to the helplessness of sleep, one needs to feel a sense of protection."[227]

A strong sense of evenness pervaded this interior. The purpose of a space was mostly annotated by furnishing rather than represented by the architectural features or its spatial relationship with other rooms. One can merely tell the bedroom area from other spaces due to its slightly more private and isolated location. If we remove all the furniture in this apartment, the identification of each space will be gone with it. Here, Mies downplayed the distinctive characters of spaces in order to maximize their adaptability, and the sense of evenness is a natural product of such a strategy.

A thoughtful selection of furniture also contributed to the airy and spacious impression of the room. Mies designed a set of furniture particularly for his Weissenhof apartments, including MR Table, MR Chair, MR armchair and MR stool. It presented one of Mies's earliest attempts to design furniture, and it was also the first time for him to make

227 Howard Dearstyne, "Miesian Space Concept in Domestic Architecture", *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture,* (unpublished manuscript, New York, School of Architecture, Columbia University, 1963), 138.

furniture out of tubular steel. His furniture was like his architecture, simplified to their structural necessities, spacious and elegant.

Mies felt a modern living demanded flexibility, which should not only represent in adaptable spaces but also in mobile furniture. Bearing this in mind, Mies tried to design furniture in a way that was simple, light and remarkably easy to move. His chairs were cantilevered, an idea inspired by Mart Stam. When preparing for the Weissenhof exhibition, Mies, Le Corbusier and Stam met in a hotel in Stuttgart in November 1926. At a dinner meeting, Stam talked about his idea of making a chair out of a continuous tube of steel. To illustrate his idea, he sketched it on the back of Willy Baumeister's wedding invitation. This idea caught Mies's great attention, and after he returned to Berlin, he discussed it with his assistant Sergius Ruegenberg.[228] He revised upon it, replacing the straight front of the chair with a graceful curve, which increased the elasticity of the material, reduced friction, and created a more lithe and elegant look (fig. 3.9). To further enhance their mobility, Mies designed a sled-like base for the stool and the chairs so that they can be pushed on the floor smoothly without damaging the floor.

Such a fluid form was suggestive of mobility, inviting people to push them around for improvised activities or at a whim just to see how they might fit elsewhere. Movable

228 Ruegenberg recalled that: "we had mounted a drawing board on to the wall and Mies drew Stam chair, right angles and all, starting from the top. He included the small fittings inside the bends and said:' Ugly, these ugly fittings. He could at least have made the chair round – it would be much more beautiful like this…' and he drew a curve. Just one single curve from his hand and he had made a new chair out of Stam's sketch." Quoted in Otakar Mácel "From Mass Production to Design Classic: Mies van der Rohe's metal furniture," in *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Design in Stuttgart, Barcelona, Brno*, ed. Alexander von Vegesack et al. (Mila: Skira, 1998), 18-63, quote in 22.

furniture thus made the living spaces more useful for free-time activities and social occasions. In addition, their smooth and fluid form avoided inaccessible dusty corners, offering no hiding place for dirt and insects and thus contributing to the hygiene of the room. In this sense, this design also helps alleviate housewives' daily chore to clean the room and promotes a more comfortable and practical living.

The furniture Mies designed was not only mobile, but it also looked extraordinarily light and enhanced the sense of spaciousness in the apartment. Simplified to its structural essence, it was conceived as a frame to allow air to flow through. It was light in both weight and appearance and hindered neither movements nor views through space. Additionally, the elegant curve of the chairs suggested a spatially expansive gesture that seemed to lighten the air around them. The MR table featured a round glass top supported by a crossed frame (fig. 3.10). The glass top seemed weightless, floating as if insubstantial, light-filled, and thus uplifted the airy feeling of the living room. After all, Mies liked large space, and if it was not really large by size it should be made felt so. At Weissenhof, he once told Heinz Rasch that he was building homes not tin cans.[229]

In the Weissenhofsiedlung, Mies intended to make his apartment as practical as possible by making it readily adaptable. But in making the space felt bigger than it was and thus granting the space a sense of liberty, Mies seemed to have hoped to dignify the life of those residing in it. Kurt Schwitters, a Dadaist artist who visited the exhibition, sensed this attempt and commented on it enthusiastically:

229 Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 64.

> Mies van der Rohe unifies the spirit of the time with Format. What is Format? … Format means quality of perception. Hence, a very small thing can have format. At the same time, the house of Mies van der Rohe is large, the largest of the entire settlement. And inside it has enormous effect because of the giant doors which go up to the ceiling. I cannot imagine that one simply goes through these doors — one strides. Great noble personages stride through these doors, filled with new spirit. …It could happen that the inhabitants would turn out to be not so mature and free as their own doors. But let us hope that the house ennobles the people who live in it.[230]

This remark seemed to touch upon Mies's core value in architecture, which aims not only to affirm a life, but, more importantly, to refine it. If this intention was somewhat unfulfilled due to the restricting economic concerns for a public housing at Weissenhof, it made itself manifest more prominently in the Tugendhat House.[231]

230 Kurt Schwitters, "Stuttgart, 'Die Wohnung'; Werkbundaustellung" in *i10*, no. 10 (1927): 345-348. Translated by Suzanne Frank and reprinted in *Opposition* no. 5 (Jan., 1976): 80-83.

231 Mies probably felt that his ideas were greatly restricted by the difficult economic situation at Stuttgart and wrote in his note book that: "To come up against limits. Stuttgart. Limit-testing. Limits set by the economic situation of society are insurmountable." Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 270.

A Collective Tendency towards Flexible Living

Upon the completion of the Weissenhof exhibition, there seemed to be a growing consensus among modernists to consider a sound conception of what constituted a good living as a prerequisite for the formulation of a new dwelling. For instance, Adolf Behne, one of the most perceptive critics of modern architecture, argued that the essential question of a good building lay in what kind of life it envisioned and meant to support. He wrote in his *Neues Wohnen — Neues Bauen* (New Dwellings — New Buildings) in 1927:

> Buildings are nothing more than the organization of space in a way that life can best unfold itself and exert an effect (auswirken). To think about a good and right building means to think about good and right living. Because — to say it once more — the new architects do not want to enforce any new forms of style, they want to contribute to a better and more sensible life organization for the general public.[232]

Behne redefined architects' major task as to devise a sensible living rather than to create a new form. He believed that a thorough understanding of new men and their ways of living played an instrumental role in the development of a new building. As he reasoned that "new building presupposes a new dwelling… a new dwelling, however, presupposes new men," Behne considered it of prime importance for architects to detect how the new men wanted to live.[233] Very much like Mies's statement that "the struggle for new housing is only an element of the larger struggle for new forms of living," Behne held that dwellings were a

232 Adolf Behne, *Neues Wohnen, Neues Bauen* (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker Verlag, 1927), 109. My translation.

233 The text is: "Neues Bauen setzt voraus ein neues Wohnen…neues Wohnen aber setzt voraus den neuen Menschen." Ibid, 7, my translation.

physical manifestation of a living culture.[234] And they both believed that the problem of building was essentially a formulation of human life.

In this redefinition of the building problem, Mies and Behne also suggested a new approach to conceiving dwellings: they should be inspired by a soundly devised domesticity. For most modernists, an ideal lifestyle was to live freely. And accordingly, an ideal domesticity meant to do whatever they want at home, to be spontaneous and liberate, and their homes should be flexible enough to support it ably.

Around the same time, Marcel Breuer, a modernist architect and designer, also detected the changing lifestyle and pointed out its implication for designers:

> Since the external world affects us today with the most intense and various impressions, our way of life is changing more rapidly than in earlier times. It is only logical that our surroundings must undergo corresponding changes. We are approaching furnishings, spaces and buildings which, to the greatest possible extent, are alterable, mobile, and can be combined in various ways.[235]

In short, the changing lifestyle demanded furnishings and spaces to be readily changeable to work with it.

Werner Gräff expressed a similar idea in his introduction to the Werkbund catalog of the Weissenhof Exhibition Bau und Wohnung. He stated that the lifestyles of both the intellectual elites and the ordinary people were undergoing great transformations. But as

234 Mies van der Rohe, "Foreword to the Official Catalog of the Stuttgart Werkbund Exhibition 'Die Wohnung'," Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 258.

235 Marcel Breuer, "Metallmöbel und modern Räumlichkeit" (Metal Furniture and Modern Spatiality), *Das neue Frankfurt* no. 1 (1929) 11. Reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 453. Translation with slight modifications.

the transitions were still going on, a clear, new form of living was yet to emerge. Therefore, it was only logical and sensible for architects to fix things as little as possible when creating dwellings so that those were yet developing would take form in needs. He claimed that under this situation, variable plans were the best solution for this forming process, because they would allow the changing will to reside and clarify itself gradually.[236]

The pioneering work that fulfilled a flexible living was the Schröder house designed by Gerrit Rietveld and built in 1924 in Utrecht, Netherland (fig. 3.11). The client, Truus Schröder, was a well-educated woman who had a strong idea about how she wanted to live, and her vision of life shaped in the configuration of the house greatly.

In 1911, Truus Schräder married Frits Schröder, a successful lawyer eleven years older than her. The marriage, however, proved to be a confrontation of two worlds, filled with conflicting ideas about taste, hobbies, the education of children, and nearly all other aspects of life. Mrs. Schröder was not used to the conservative bourgeois lifestyle her husband led, nor did she enjoy the grand, prominent mansion they inhabited. Probably out of the tension of their marriage, Mr. Schröder suggested that she remodel a room according to her wishes alone, making it her realm where she could retreat and be herself.[237] Mrs. Schröder commissioned Gerrit Rietveld, then majorly a furniture maker and member of the

236 Werner Gräff, "Zur Stuttgarter Weißenhofsiedlung," in *Bau und Wohnung*, ed. Deutscher Werkbund. (Stuttgart: F. Wedekind & Co., 1927), 8-9.

237 Truus Schröder, interviewed by Lenneke Bükker and Frank Den Oudsten, in Paul Overy, *The Rietveld Schröder House*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 42-107

De Stijl group, to do the alternation. She was utterly satisfied with his work, and therefore when her husband died and she could redesign her residence, she went to Rietveld again.

Mrs. Schröder decided to live more modestly and intimately with her three children. She admired the free lifestyle of her old sister An, who inhabited a liberated world of artists and intellectuals. It inspired her to create a similarly liberating and stimulating ambience at home, as she also believed it would be good for her children. Intending to live less formally, she asked Rietveld to create an open room upstairs but also to keep the options of subdividing it into smaller rooms when needed. Rietveld listened enthusiastically and proposed the device of sliding partitions.[238]

The system of sliding partitions was made of very thin wooden panels and deployed along the tracks on the ceiling. Employed upstairs, it could enclose or half close, making different combinations of open, half-open, or closed spaces. When closed completely, it divided the upper floor into a boy's room, girls' room, master bedroom and a living area (fig. 3.12). The partitions were very light and thus easily operable on a daily basis. The device provided a novel and pragmatic solution to facilitate the casual and free lifestyle Mrs. Schröder desired.

Mrs. Schröder lived in the house happily for over sixty years. In the early years, the house was used as conceived, but thereafter it proved to be even more versatile than anyone had foreseen. For example, a friend of the girls once visited the house and did not want to return home. So an extra bed was added, and she stayed and became a member of the family

238 Ibid, 57.

for a year. After working close on the house together, Mrs. Schröder and Rietveld became good friends and later collaborated in a series of building projects. The ground floor workroom was, for a time, turned into their office and studio. In the late 1930s when children moved out, the girls' room was changed into a bed- and workroom, while the son's room became the guestroom. As the house proved to be too big for a single person, Mrs. Schröder later moved the kitchen upstairs to her bedroom and turned the kitchen downstairs into a bedsit for leasing. During a time when she was out of town, the upper floor was rented first to a friend and later to a Montessori infant school.[239] These events exemplified the many changes taken place in the house over the years.

The story of the Schröder house manifested a life that was not static but in a state of dynamic flux. It also verified how a house had to be adaptable and responsive to the needs created by impromptu activities and long-term family transformation. It was the feature of extraordinary flexibility that kept the house useful and thriving over various life circumstances.

As a frequent guest to the Schröder house, Rietveld must have witnessed most of the conversions of the house and even involved in some himself. They might have evoked in him a new and deeper understanding of the role of program in architectural creation, as he later claimed: "I did not think that function as a point of departure was a sound approach. Function was an accidental, casual need that would change with the time and indeed always

239 Bertus Mulder and Ida van Zijl, *Rietveld Schröder House* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 34.

changes in the course of time."[240] It corresponded very well to what Mies had grasped from his own apartment life. However, it took forty years for him to articulate the idea: "The functions switch so rapidly today that actually only a great flexibility in a building has value. I believe that the flexibility is actually the important and characteristic feature of our buildings. Not the expression of function."[241]

The Schröder House drew great attention among the architect circles soon after its completion. J. J. P Oud, Bruno Taut, and Kurt Schwitters visited the house and admired it. Pictures and descriptions of it circulated among important architectural magazines. Gropius, in the first series of the *Bauhausbücher* and Jean Badovici, a French architecture critic, in *L'Architecture vivante* introduced the house favorably but somehow believed mistakenly it was built of reinforced concrete and iron (the house was actually built mostly with wood). The most enthusiastic promoter of the house was perhaps van Doesburg, as he believed that it fulfilled the formal and spatial ideas of the De Stijl group in a built form. He published photos and descriptions of the house in the *De Stijl* magazine and referred to it repeatedly in his articles.[242] Slightly before the images of the Schröder House were spread widely, van Doesburg published a manifesto entitled "Towards a Plastic

240 Quoted in Paul Overy, introduction to *The Rietveld Schröder House*, 13-41.

241 "Als Sullivan davon sprach, dass die Form den Funktionen folgen sollte, war es mehr eine Reaktion auf das, was er sah. Heute kann ich nicht mehr glauben, dass das wirklich ein verbindlicher Ausspruch ist. Wir haben erfahren, daß unsere Bauten sehr viel länger halten und die Funktion veraltet. Die Funktionen wechseln so rapid heute, daß eigentlich nur eine große Flexibilität in einem Bau Wert hat. Ich glaube, die Flexibilität ist eigentlich das Wichtige und Charaktervolle an unseren Bauten. Nicht mehr der Ausdruck der Funktion." Mies van der Rohe, "BDA ehrt Mies van der Rohe in Berlin," in *Der Architekt* 15, no. 10, (1966) 324. My translation.

242 The Schröder house was first published in *De Stijl*, vol. 6, No. 10-11, (1924-25): 160.

Architecture" in 1924, which revealed a vision of a new architecture that anticipated the house:

> The new architecture is open. The whole consists of one space, which is divided according to the various functional demands. This division is accomplished through the use of separating planes (in the interior) or by projecting planes (on the exterior).
>
> The former planes, which separate the different functional spaces, can be mobile, which means that the separating planes (formerly the interior walls) can be replaced by moveable screens or slabs (doors can also be treated in this manner).[243]

As a subscriber of the *De Stijl* magazine since at least 1923, Mies must have read the article and very likely saw images of the Schröder house.[244] They would certainly interest him greatly for they provided a viable solution to the adaptable home space that he had valued and hoped to create. He followed van Doesburg's prescription almost rigidly at his Weissenhof apartments, employing moveable walls and treating the doors as part of the plane system extending all the way to the ceiling.

The Schröder House represented an early example of adaptable space in response to an informal and liberated lifestyle. By the time of the Weissenhof exhibition, a number of architects and interior designers also recognized the need for spatial flexibility and sought to accommodate it in their work. For example, Lilly Reich, who designed several interiors in Mies's apartment building, felt that people were now living in a complex way and it was difficult to anticipate how they would use the apartment, let alone to tailor an accurate form for it. Therefore, she designed interiors in a way that could be used in a

243 Theo van Doesburg, "Tot een beeldende architectuur" (Towards a Plastic Architecture), *De Stijl*, VI, No. 6/7 (1924), 81. Translated and reprinted in Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, 144.

244 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Bill for subscribing one year's *De Styl* journal, 10 August, 1923.

variety of ways: living room and study room were integrated into a single big space, and she furnished it with a large table, with which, as she presumed, people could work, dine, discuss, play and do whatever they wanted (fig. 3.13).[245] On the other side of the apartment, the bedding area and the dressing room were divided softly by white velvet drapes (fig. 3.3, Apartment Eight). The concern for adaptable space also preoccupied Adolf Rading, who designed an open living room in his single family house at the Weissenhof housing exhibition. He employed folding walls to divide the living, dining, terrace, and traffic areas into separated rooms (fig. 3.14). These folding walls enabled the inhabitants to open spaces to one another in a variety of combinations at their disposition. Rading believed that dwellings needed to be liberating rather than confining or oppressing, and inhabitants should be able to articulate their personal preferences at home; therefore, it is necessary for architects to create spatial elasticity in mass housings to suit the various needs of the inhabitants.[246]

Of all buildings in the Weissenhof exhibition, Le Corbusier's work presented the most illuminating experiment with convertible space and mobile furniture. He and Pierre Jeanneret, his cousin and collaborator, contributed two building projects for the exhibition: House Thirteen, a single-family house, and House Fourteen and Fifteen, a double house. Both presented very well the five points he soon raised for a new architecture: building on pilotis, major living space on the upper floor, long banded windows introducing a broad

245 Sonja Günther, *Lilly Reich 1885-1947: Innenarchitektin, Designerin, Austellungsgestalterin* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), 19.

246 Adolf Rading, "Neues Wohnen," *Die Baugilde* 8, no. 24 (December 29, 1926): 1315.

vista, and a roof garden to enjoy good air in fine weather.[247] In House Thirteen, Corbusier introduced sliding screens to divide the open second floor into a sleeping area, a bathroom, and boudoir. The double house could be converted into a day version and a night version. It not only allowed but actually required inhabitants to carry the daily conversion to perform a day function and a night one properly. Its main living floor featured two walls standing freely in the center bundled with built-in closets. From these two walls extended sliding screens that could extend to columns (fig. 3.15 and 3.16). During the day time, all beds would be pushed into the built-in closets and sliding screens would open the room and thus release a large, living space (fig. 3.17). At night, inhabitants needed to take out the convertible beds from the closets and set them up. They slid the screens to the end, closed off the room, and turn the day-time living room into sleeping cabins.[248] A narrow lane (60 cm, or 2 feet, that was the width of a passage way in the sleeping car of a train) connected the sleeping cabins with the rest room. In its minimal dimension at night it served reduced traffic, and during the day it was released and bundled with the living room.

Corbusier was inspired by railroad sleeping cars, and his sleeping cabins were modeled on sleeping cars on a train. In dividing a big space into several sleeping cabins, he hoped to create an adjustable organization for this type of house. On occasions when there were overnight guests, the room sequence could be expanded along the long direction

247 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, "Fünf Punkte zu einer neuen Architektur," in *Bau und Wohnung* (1927), 27-28.

248 Le Corbusier, "Wie wohnt man in meinen Stuttgart Häusern?" in *Das Neue Frankfurt* 2 (January, 1928): 13-15. Quoted in Kirsch*, The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 114.

without changing the building structure.[249] To show how it worked out, he designed the two houses of different lengths, and the one to the south expanded one bay longer to represent an expanded version.

The double house embodied many of Le Corbusier's earlier, unfulfilled ideas of domestic spaces since the early 1920s. Beginning with the Domino project, he conceived interiors as a contrast between fixed spaces, such as stairs, and free open spaces, such as the living room and studio. He further developed the idea in the double house. He separated the staircase from the building block and bundled with it fixed and quiet functions such as storage room and library. These spaces had a good connection with the open, public areas while remained somewhat independent of their own (fig. 3.15).[250] In his parents' house in 1925 (petite villa au bord du lac Leman), Corbusier created an open living space and employed sliding walls to enable subdivision (fig. 3.18). The house served in many ways as a prototype of the Weissenhof double house. It was a long, narrow block with a splendid view through a ribbon window. The main bedroom opened to the living room through a narrow passageway. Corbusier employed sliding walls at the end of the living room to enclose a guest room in times of need.[251]

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249 Alfred Roth, *Zwei Wohnhäuser von Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret*, (Stuttgart, F. Wedekind, 1927), 32. Roth was the executive architect sent by Le Corbusier to represent him and monitor the progress of the construction at the Weissenhof exhibition. Soon after the two buildings were completed, Roth published the *Zwei Wohnhäuser* which included Corbusier's "fünf Punkte zu einer neuen Architektur" (five points to a new architecture) and explained the ideas and construction of the two houses. It was published at the end of August 1927, long before the official Werkbund publication *Bau und Wohung* was released.

250 Pommer and Otto, *Weissenhof 1927*, 87.

251 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complete 1910-1929*, 9th edition, (Zurich, Editions d'architecture, 1965), 74.

Corbusier's houses at Weissenhof suggested an unconventional lifestyle, and he was well aware of it. To explicate this problem, he wrote an essay entitled "Wie wohnt man in meinen Stuttgart Häusern" (how one lives in my Stuttgart houses) to teach people to enjoy this new lifestyle. He described an informal and delightful way of living in his Stuttgart houses and claimed that such a lifestyle, though might seem uncommon in Germany, presented "great advantages for anyone living in Paris."[252] He introduced the functions of each floor by painting a picture of how one would enjoy its adaptable arrangement and facilities. In this way, this essay not only served as a manual instructing the inhabitants how to use the house, but also justified his houses as both practical and livable. For him, the houses offered an alternative, and in his view, freer and superior, lifestyle for the inhabitants.

Such a free lifestyle entailed accordingly a flexible furnishing arrangement. From early 1920s on, Le Corbusier imagined a chair typology that would be so versatile that it could be adapted to all sitting positions and circumstances, like "a machine for sitting in." He made drawings to study different chairs and sitting positions in hope of finding a universal solution to the various problems of sitting for his Weissenhof house, though it did not really work out (fig. 3.19).[253] Clearly he valued the quality of adjustability in furniture, preferred "a seat for 100 purposes instead of 100 seats for 100 purposes" and probably for that reason, he commended Morris chair for having "a movable tray for the

252 Le Corbusier, "Wie wohnt man in meinen Stuttgart Häusern? Quoted in Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 114.

253 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complete 1910-1929*, 157.

book you are reading, a place to put a cup of coffee, a footrest if you wish to put your feet up, and a tilting backrest that allows you to find the perfect position for everything from resting to working, hygienically, comfortably, correctly."[254] He also envisioned a system of furniture that was light and mobile, and easily combinable, take tables for an example:

> Tables? Why so many kinds of table in my apartment? If, once a week, I entertain ten of my friends to dinner for three hours, am I going to be burdened, all my life, with a gigantic table that completely fills my dining room?
>
> I have proposed the following sensible course of action: define, as a type, a table of minimum useful dimensions (for example, 80×120cm [$31^1/2 \times 47^1/4$ inches]). Instead of five different sort of table in my apartment, I have five identical ones; but they can be combined…The top has a stout frame, but it is made of plywood sheet and is consequently light in weight. I can move my tables around with ease, and I can dine anywhere I like in my apartment, as the mood takes me.[255]

In recommending this kind of light and practical table, Corbusier conveyed a spontaneous way of living and his commitment to it.

Corbusier's Weissenhof houses received varied reactions. While acknowledging (and in some cases, applauding) that his houses facilitated a new mode of life, critics were concerned that they were too intellectual (or, in some critic's word, "immoral bohemian") to suit the everyday living of ordinary people. For most people, it seemed to demand too

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254 Siegfried Giedion, "Sitzgestaltung," Cicerone 21 (1929). Quoted in Reinhold Happel "Simplicity as the Vehicle of a New Beauty: Technology, Industry, and Mies van der Rohe's Principle of Minimalization," in *Mies and Modern Living,* 87-97, quote in 88.

Le Corbusier, "Manuel de l'habitation," in *L'Esprit nouveau*, No. 9, (June 1921) 984. Quoted in Arthur Rüegg and Klaus Spechtenhauser, *Le Corbusier: Furniture and Interior 1905-1965* (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2012), 87. I'd like to thank Francesco Passanti for recommending this article to me.

255 Le Corbusier, "L' Amēnagement Intērieur," translated into German by Alfred Roth, his assistant at Weissenhof, into "Die Innenausstattung unserer Häuser auf dem Weissenhof," was published in Werner Gräff, ed., *Innenräume*, 122-25. Quoted in Kirsch*, The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 115.

much of reorientation of living habits to enjoy a life there. Edgar Wedepohl, a German architect and professor, perhaps provided one of the most pertinent criticisms:

> If dwelling type should correspond to the human type, then one can imagine only a particular kind of intellectuals as the [suitable] inhabitant of Le Corbusier's houses: an eccentric, who is unbound by "historical ballast," unsentimental, easy and homeless, free from all ties, would perhaps like to inhabit such a nomad's tent built of concrete and glass.….Sure, the intellectual is one kind of contemporary human beings, but is he the type, whose expectations and needs are to determine the form of an apartment building that is produced by industrial mass production and serves the mass need?
>
> It is not everyone's wish for the long term to have only a sleep place for the night and to push the bed into a closet for the day, as in Le Corbusier's houses. Many would wish an enclosed bedroom, where they can not only rest and dream, but also make love, parent (zeugen), give birth and die.[256]

This comment was bitter but insightful. It pointed to the very sore point of new dwellings: they were created based on a kind of living favored by avant-garde artists and intellectuals, which was very different from the living mode of ordinary people and thus could not fully grasp their pragmatic needs. Corbusier defined architecture in lofty terms and believed that program was merely prerequisite for achieving a higher, emotional end.[257] In the 1920s, he was lucky to have the ideal patrons for any modernists, who supported his experiments with new dwelling forms and were interested an alternative, liberated domesticity associated with them. Because many of his patrons were part of the art world (artists and

256 Edgar Wedepohl, "The Weissenhof Settlement," in Wasmuth's *Monatshefte für Baukunst* 11, no. 10 (1927): 396-397. My translation.

257 In *Vers une architecture*, Corbusier wrote that: "by the use of inert materials and starting from conditions more or less utilitarian, you have established certain relationships which have aroused my emotions. That is architecture."

art collectors), Le Corbusier's work till then had mostly been based on the atelier-maison type. In general, his clients were usually rootless cosmopolitans of foreign origin.[258] They were not stuck in the rigid hierarchies and customs of the French society and willing to try out the alternative lifestyles that Corbusier's work proposed.[259] Therefore, so far, Le Corbusier's houses represented more of a cultural vision of the avant-garde elites and less of the everyday living culture that ordinary people had.

Mies's work was very much so as well. It presented a living culture that was mostly based on perceptions gained from his own life and observation made upon lives of his intellectual friends. Mies perhaps noticed the distinction between the ideal life style of intellectuals and that of the ordinary people, but he decided that if people were not used to the lifestyle suggested by his building, they needed to submit to it. When there was a conflict between what Mies envisioned and what his clients wanted for their life, "I will teach people to live in my buildings," Mies once told Bertram Goldberg, one of his students in Chicago.[260] Like Corbusier, he believed that the core value of architecture lay in its ennobling cultural mission, which, though derived from ordinary life, must in turn transfigure it by infusing into it the insights and visions of creative individuals. At Weissenhof, Corbusier's work undoubtedly impressed him, probably because it

258 Le Corbusier's artist clients included Ozenfant, Liphitz, Miestchaninoff, the musician Ternisien, Planeix, and collectors were La Roche, Stein and Cook.

259 William Curtis, *Le Corbusier: ideas and forms*, 2nd edition. (New York: Phaidon Press, 2015), 126.

260 Bertram Goldberg, letter to Elaine S. Hochman, 3 January 1973. Quoted in Elaine S. Hochman, *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich* (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1990), 55-56.

represented a lifestyle that he admired. He called Corbusier's work at Weissenhof "exceptionally charming and fabulously French" and defended it strongly when others cast doubts over it.[261]

After the Weissenhofsiedlung, the Werkbund attempted to promote modern dwellings and the new living fashion associated with them among the public. After all, one of their aims was to educate the large population and synchronize their perspectives with that of the elite. Many chapters of the Werkbund hosted a housing exhibition modeled on the Weissenhof project. For instance, the Swiss Werkbund planned in Basel the first Swiss housing exhibition (also known as WOBA) and commissioned Hans Richter to make a film to familiarize the public with the idea and image of modern dwelling as the prelude of the exhibition. Richter, in investigating the recently-built public housing and houses, keenly observed that adaptable space and moveable furniture had become definitive characters of a casual and inclusive lifestyle and made it a major theme in his movie *Die neue Wohnung* in 1930. Given the close relationship between him and Mies, it is tempting to think that he discussed the subject with Mies while preparing for the film.

The film featured a series of compelling contrasts between traditional dwellings and new ones as well as the kind of living associated with them respectively. For the first half of the movie, Richter demonstrated the great inconvenience living in traditional, sumptuous houses: it was impossible for a young lady to open an overfilled window and it required strenuous manual labor to move heavy pieces of furniture. A montage sequence

261 Museum of Modern Art, Mies van der Rohe Archive. Mies to Erna Meyer, January 11, 1927. Quoted in Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 104.

of modern life, which was hectic, fast-paced and full of variety, transitioned the scenes from the old dwellings to the new, and it displayed the argument of the movie: "the forms of life have changed…housing changes as well, not just in our country…Everywhere. Housing is becoming adaptable, furniture is becoming more practical."[262] After that, the focus of the film was concentrated on presenting how variable space and mobile furniture facilitate a practical and free home life.[263] The following sequence showed that a little girl pushes effortlessly a sliding screen to incorporate the dining room and living room into one single space; it is followed by scenes showing how a folding table and rolling storage cabinet made fit underneath save space. It celebrated an informal and manifold living that was facilitated by variable space and lightweight furniture — Mies van der Rohe's MR chair was shown as an example. They make the dwellings more useful for free-time activities and social occasions.[264]

The film represented, to a large extent, an alternative living mode and how modern dwellings were made responsive to it. The film showed works that were not only by Mies but also many of his modernist colleagues, who were inspired by a new trend of informal and flexible living and made an effort to create an adaptable home arrangement in their work.

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262 Hans Richter, *die Neue Wohnung*, (Praesens Film, 1930)12:28 to 16:10. Screenshot of film sequences printed in Andres Janser and Arthur Rüegg, "Selected Film Sequences with Commentary," in *Hans Richter: New Living: Architecture. Film. Space*. (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2001), 66-78.

263 Ibid, 83.

264 Andres Janser, "New Living: A model Film? Hans Richter's Werkbund Film: Between Commissioned Work and Poetry on Film," in *Hans Richter*,30.

In this context, Mies's work at the Weissenhof was not an individual case, but rather it was under the influence of the new ethos that demanded a form for an emerging lifestyle. But, to give form to a preferable living was not enough, as it only attended to the practical needs of life. Under Mies's definition of architecture, it was only the perquisite for its more ambitious task to fulfill life's spiritual demands. For Mies, the ultimate goal of architecture was to ennoble life and add to it a fresher and more profound world view. He focused on pursuing it in his following work.

Chapter Four

The Tugendhat House: Seeking Spirituality in Architecture

TOWARDS A SPIRITUALITY IN ARCHITECTURE

The problem of Minimal Housing and Neue Sachlichkeit

After the completion of the Weissenhofsiedlung, there was a debate among the German modernist architects about Mies's waste of space, or Mies's way to make space larger than needed. Few architects seemed to be on Mies's side. Bodo Rasch, a Stuttgart architect and Mies's colleague at Weissenhof, explained that Mies favored large spaces for their potential to be adapted and thus longer viability.[265] This undoubtedly was Mies's practical reasons for making large space simply because it would remain useful despite function changes.

Nevertheless, most modernists had a completely different mindset. Younger modernists, like Mart Stam and J. J. P. Oud, advocated for building minimal dwellings in order to shelter as many people as possible under the confining material and economic conditions. Minimal Dwellings directed to an approach to dimension individuals' habitation unit on the basis of what was necessary to meet their exigencies. The design of minimal dwellings involved primarily calculations based on biological consideration, and

265 Rasch noted: "Scharoun and Häring looked for a form that would exactly match the function. Mies later gave this the name of efficient form. He was against it, for the following good reason: complicated forms are hard to build and cost a lot of money. So, if I now make the space rather bigger and leave plenty for room for the function, I attain my object very much more cheaply and have the additional advantage of being able to vary the function." Sybille Maus, "Bodo Rasch zum Achzigsten," in Bodo Rasch, *Ideen Projekte Bauten*. Quoted in Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 70.

the goal was to provide dwellers with a basic amount of air, light, and space so that they could operate their life functions. This rigid design method contradicted pointedly with the approach Mies committed to. For him, the ideal measurements of a room could never be calculated but rather it depended on how one feels when standing in and moving through the room.[266]

The idea of minimal dwellings was a most discussed subject at the time among architects who were tackling the housing problem. Under the pressure of enormous housing demands but with little means, they found the proposition of minimal dwellings pertinent and urgent. Thus, when Ernst May, a modernist architect from Frankfurt, proposed at CIAM's (Congres International d'Architecture Moderne) founding meeting in 1928 to make "minimal dwellings" the theme of its next conference, not surprisingly, he achieved a great consensus.[267]

May was a keen promoter of minimal dwellings. He was appointed official building officer (Stadtbaurat) of Frankfurt in 1925 and had since then built an impressive number of housing units within only a few years. This achievement made Frankfurt an ideal location to hold the CIAM conference of "minimal dwellings." Along with the extensive housing projects, May also launched a monthly magazine, simply entitle *Das Neue*

266 Grete Tugendhat recalled that Mies told her so when they first met. Grete Tugendhat, "On the Construction of the Tugendhat House," in *Tugendhat House: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, new edition, ed. Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015),18-23, quoted in 20.

267 CIAM was founded in 1928 at the Chateau de la Sarraz in Switzerland. It aimed to propaganda and advance the cause of new architecture that was developing in Europe in the 1920s. The congresses held regular conferences and provided a platform for modernist to discuss themes in new architecture and city planning that interested them. The first conference was about its foundation, and therefore the second conference dedicated to minimum dwelling was the first meeting with a theme.

Frankfurt (the new Frankfurt), to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the design and construction of modern housing and to provide a platform for discussions of various housing problems. The magazine laid its focus chiefly on pragmatic subjects such as industrialization of the construction process and the application of Taylorism in space use. It exerted great influence among socialist modernists soon after it was launched.

Although the new Frankfurt program was viewed as exemplary functionalist today, at its beginning (1925 and 1926), its pursuit laid less on social and economic considerations than on an ideological struggle for truth.[268] Its core idea was based on the belief that the essence of objects manifested only when all the excesses and superfluous were removed from these objects. In adopting this idea in housing and stripping ordinary dwellings off to irreducible minimal units, the new Frankfurt program was attempting to bring about a purer and truer dwelling culture.

Nevertheless, the cultural ideal took priority in efforts towards minimal dwellings only briefly. As the economic condition turned worse in the late 1920s, architects were forced to put their earlier ideology aside and to concentrate more on economic and social necessities. In 1928, on the occasion of the CIAM conference, *Das Neue Frankfurt* published a special issue on low-cost housing (*billige Wohnungen*), marking a great shifting of interest and putting a pronounced emphasis on reducing building cost.[269] The earlier lofty tone of seeking truth through simplified homes faded away; the entire public

268 Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 45-46.

269 Ibid, 48.

housing program was treated increasingly as a financial problem, and its design was thought of and evaluated mostly in terms of cost-effectiveness.

Dedicating to the subject of minimum subsistence dwelling ("Die Wohnungfür das Existenzminimum"), the second conference of CIAM took place in Frankfurt am Main in October 1929. The meeting attracted attention internationally: about one hundred and thirty architects from eighteen countries attended its opening on 24 October, 1929.[270] It featured four lectures given by Walter Gropius, Victor Bourgeois, Hans Schmidt and Le Corbusier and offered extensive discussions following each lecture. Most speeches concentrated on pragmatic matters of minimal housing: Bourgeois discussed building regulations relating to minimum housing and analyzed their merits and flaws; Schmidt and Le Corbusier talked about the program and technical issues of minimum dwellings respectively. Gropius was the exception: his speech advocated the development of high-rise housing and collective households because it would facilitate a socially superior community living.[271]

It is evident that at this point, the early, lofty ideology of minimal housing faded, and the focus of the conference lay on a more realistic question of how to achieve the

270 Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, (Cambridge, Mass.: the MIT Press, 2000), 34.

271 Gropius considered collective households as a means to facilitate a mode of harmonious community living and this idea was probably inspired by sociologist Franz Müller-Lyer's theories of the emergence of a New Man. However, he also offered in his proposal sports equipment that intended to enhance one's individuality and competitiveness, a gesture contradicting with the ideal of community. To read more about Gropius's attitude towards the issue of community living, see Tanja Poppelreuter, "Social Individualism: Walter Gropius and his Appropriation of Franz Müller-Lyer's Idea of a New Man," *Journal of Design History* 24, No. 1 (2011): 37-58.

maximum social effect through rational resource distribution. Ernst May's opinion was representative:

> Let us suppose we put this question in the army of the underprivileged, who eagerly and impatiently demand decent accommodation. Should they have to put up with a situation where a small number of them enjoy sizable dwellings while the great majority are condemned to go on suffering deprivation for many more years? Shouldn't they rather be content with a small home that, despite its limited space, would still meet the requirements one has the right to expect of a contemporary dwelling, if this will ensure that the evil of the housing shortage can be abolished in a short period of time?[272]

It indicated that now not only did the idea of minimal dwellings shifted away from its early ambition to reform living culture, but rather it was dealt as "a choice between two evils."[273] And May decided it was better to have minimal dwellings for the more than sizable homes for the few. This position presented the general attitude of the CIAM members since the organization viewed architecture primarily as a means to social reform, and in terms of housing, the concern was how to shelter as many people as possible within the confining material and economic circumstance.

Mies never served as a delegate of CIAM, and it is unclear if he was ever a member. He was not very involved: among the five CIAM conferences held before his immigration, he only attended the third one, "Rational Lot Development," in Brussels in 1930. He made few comments at the meeting, though. Mies had been active in various activities and absorbed ideas from diverse avant-garde circles in the early years of the 1920s, but he grew

272 Ernst May, "Die Wohnungfür das Existenziminimum" (1929), quoted in Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity,* 49.

273 Ibid, 49-50.

less so in the late 1920s. It might have to do with the fact that after going through a thought transition in the middle of 1920s, he formed his position firmly. He was not very keen about the CIAM activities probably because he found his thought and positions diverged greatly from that of his colleagues. He was not interested in the subject of minimal dwellings nor the tendency towards "Neue Sachlichkeit" (new objectivity), an approach to architecture that many modernists embraced then.

The term "Neue Sachlichkeit" was coined in 1924 by Gustav Hartlaub, at the time director of the Mannheim Art Gallery, to name an exhibition he was preparing. It referred to a post-Expressionism tendency among painters to work with "an interest in immediate experience and in taking things entirely objectively, on a material basis, without immediately investing them with ideal implications."[274] Even though Hartlaub used "Neue Sachlichkeit" to describe a momentary trend that rejected the Expressionist utopianism and took a firm stand on realities instead, the term spread quickly to vast publicity as the exhibition toured around the country. From 1926 onward it found widest circulation to mean an attitude, or a state of mind, to confront reality coolly with a deliberate cultivated unsentimentality. After a period of exuberant hopes had collapsed mercilessly one after another, the term grasped the current ethos so pertinently that its application soon extended to various disciplines such as literature, music, and plastic art.[275]

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274 Hartlaub, letter to Alfred H. Barr, July 8, 1929. Quoted in Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the great disorder, 1918-1924*, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) 158.

275 Fritz Schmalenbach, "The Term Neue Sachlichkeit," in *The Art Bulletin* 22, No. 3 (Sep., 1940): 163-164.

The term came to architecture circles around 1926, referring to an approach aiming to achieve the most rational solution for building problems through thorough analysis and the building form should emerge from the pragmatic solution of the commission's requirements. It took a realistic stand and grounded itself on exact facts of the present situation. In this light, the idea of minimal dwelling could be seen as product of applying the Neue Sachlichkeit approach to solve the housing problems.

Mies understood very well that the Neue Sachlichkeit was a approach in response to the severe economic and material condition, but he found it inadequate because for him, it addressed only the utilitarian part of life and that constituted only the premise of a true building art. He claimed: "It is fundamentally wrong to assume that the problem of the modern architecture has been recognized as soon as one admits the need for a rational solution. This belief, today taken as self-evident, is only a precondition."[276] For Mies, to get grip of the practical issues was simply preliminary for architecture, as it spoke to "not an artistic nor a building aim but simply a necessary precondition, a basis."[277]

What also annoyed him was the excessive emphasis on economic concerns. He blamed it for causing a prevalent misconception to see modern architecture merely as a question of function and economy. He stressed that the core value of architecture lay in its cultural mission and that had little to do with functionalist and economic concerns: "no

276 Mies van der Rohe, "Build Beautifully and Practically! Stop This Cold Functionality" in the *Duisburger Generalanzeiger* 49 (Sunday, January 26, 1930) 2. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 307.

277 Ibid,307.

matter how much function and economics are preconditions for new building, the ultimate problem is of an artistic nature. No matter how much function and economics determine our building, they say very little as to its artistic value."[278] He defined the artistic value as "something immaterial, something spiritual, and thus independent of the material conditions of a period."[279]

This conflict between the artistic value and functional and material concerns represented an underlying opposition between culture and civilization, an unresolved dichotomy that most German modernists tried to mediate in their work in the 1920s. If we translate the dichotomy in Simmel's terms, material conditions speak for the character of a civilization and belong to objective culture. Artistic values stand for the height of a culture and thus constitute of subjective culture. However, functionalist modernist confused the two on the belief that to seek truth in form equated with an expression of functional values only. For them, the innermost essence of every object conformed to its function, and beauty would emerge once the essence was expressed as accurate as possible. But, as sculptor and art critic Adolf Hildebrand pointed out, this kind of thinking overlooked the fact that the quest of truth cannot rightly be discussed independently of the process of artistic construction.[280]

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278 Mies, Radio Address, manuscript of August 17, 1931, in the collection of Dirk Lohan, Chicago. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 311.

279 Ibid,311.

280 Adolf Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1907), 118.

For Mies, to express the functional value of an object only validated a starting point of its transfiguration. Art work transcended life, and to develop a functional form into a work of art demanded an original process of artistic reconstruction and idealization. The oversimplified equation of beauty with function must have upset Mies greatly. Not only did he counter it in his note book that: "everything is in the service of utility. One even justifies artistic things and preferences [with] utility," but he also argued against the idea in a public speech that: "Beauty in architecture, just as necessary and just as desired as in former times, can only be attained if in building we have more than the immediate purpose in mind."[281]

Around the same time, Le Corbusier was trying to eliminate the misunderstanding of "living machine" (Wohnmaschine), a term he coined in his 1923's book *Toward an Architecture*. Even though he stated explicitly that "ARCHITECTURE is an artistic fact, an emotional phenomenon that is outside questions of construction," people grasped from the book primarily a functionalist attitude to see buildings as bound merely to their program and construction.[282] And, the term "living machine" was circulated widely as a catchword for this attitude. Feeling perhaps obliged to eliminate the misinterpretation of the term, Corbusier wrote "Where Does Architecture Begin" (Wo Beginnt Die Architektur) and published it in *Die Form* in 1929. It criticized that the machine-inspired and function-

281 Mies van der Rohe, Mies's note book, page 11. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 271. Mies van der Rohe, "Build Beautifully and Practically! Stop This Cold Functionality," reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 307.

282 Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, Tran. John Goodman, (Los Angeles, Calif,: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 97.

oriented dwellings served only men's existential necessities but overlooked their emotional and intellectual needs.[283] Corbusier illustrated that to live meant more than to sustain biological operations; it involves activities that pleased and inspired us. We read good books, listened to music, went to musicals and films because they catered to our personal desire. We made judgment voluntarily and in so doing, obtained the feeling that we were free.[284] In catering to men's intellectual and emotional needs, art works made men feel their humanity (Menschtum) by offering an "impression of freedom and personal choice."[285] Corbusier argued that architecture, as an artistic fact, ought to offer a sense of lyric poetry that pleased us and freed us. He added at the end of the article that if a living machine did not supply any spiritual nourishment, it should be abandoned.

But the wave of Neue Sachlichkeit spread Germany swiftly and won many modernists' commitment. Feeling perhaps quite alone fighting against the overwhelming trend, Mies complained about the situation to Corbusier in a letter: "Especially in Germany, the land of the organizers, it seems to me necessary to emphasize with special clarity that

283 Le Corbusier, "Wo Beginnt Die Architektur," *Die Form* IV, no. 7(April 1929): 180-181.

284 "wenn erst einmal Not und Tod vertrieben sind, taucht das Gefühl auf; der Mensch sagt: 'ich möchte wissen, wie ihr euch meine Wohnmaschine vorstellt? Habt ihr alles durchdacht? Wohnen: ich komme nach Hause, esse, schlafe, gut! Aber ich denke auch. Ich möchte etwas, das nur dazu dient, mir zu gefallen oder mich zu begeistern. Denn ich esse und schlafe ja nicht immerzu; ich lese gute Bücher, höre Musik an, gehe ins Variete, ins Kino, fahre an die Riviera. Und warum, wenn nicht darum, daß ich mich erfreue? Das heißt, daß ich freiwillig die Beziehungen zwischen verschiedenen Dingen ausfindig mache, die meiner persönlichen Unternehmungslust schmeicheln und die mir das Bewußtsein meines freien Entschlusses und die Gewißheit, daß ich ein freier Mensch bin, geben.'" Ibid, 180.

285 "Denn die kunst ist nichts anderes als ein individuelles Ausdrüche der Freiheit und der persönlichen Wahl: hier erst fühlt der Mensch sein Menschtum." Ibid, 180. My translation.

architecture is something other than raw functionalism. In Germany, the fight against the rationalists will be harder than against the academicians."[286]

A Focus on Spirituality

Mies could not agree with the utterly functionalist approach to housing mostly because it overlooked the fact that a dwelling should have a spiritual/intellectual dimension beyond its utilitarian value. He believed home spaces should support inhabitants' spiritual life, and this also explains his favor for large spaces: they were not only readily adaptable but also more importantly, liberating. Mies believed that large spaces offered a sense of freedom that small rooms could not possibly supply. And, to obtain such a sense of freedom was crucial for people to cultivate a personal culture. Based on this belief, Mies refuted the critiques on his waste of space in the Weissenhofsiedlung (as Hans Richter recalled):

> We are not mice that we want to live in mouse holes. If you squash people this way, they will eventually in every aspect, spiritually and physically, become smaller and narrower. But if you give people space to breathe, to walk and to live, then they will become better humans — and this may in the end resolve social problems better than if you reduce them to mice.[287]

286 Here Mies might have borrowed the term "rationalist" from Adolf Behne's *Der Moderne Zweckbau*, referring the current Neue Sachlichkeit. By contrast, Adolf Behne's functionalist referred to what we today would call organistcism as exemplified buildings by Hugo Häring and Hans Scharoun. Mies to Le Corbusier, February 1929, Paris, Foundation Le Corbusier, societe des Nations, EI-20. Quoted in Richard Pommer, "Mies van der Rohe and the Political Ideology of the Modern Movement in Architecture" in *Mies van der Rohe: Critical Essays*, edited by Franz Schulze (Cambridge, Mass.: the MIT Press, 1989), 116.

287 Hans Richter, *Begegnungen von Dada bisheute; Briefe, Dokumente, Erinnerungen*, (Köln: M. Du MontSchauberg, 1973), 55. My translation.

In understanding the matter of living this way, Mies raised the question of housing beyond bare necessity. He put aside the harsh economic situation that most modernists were struggling with and maintained that despite all these difficulties, a dwelling served more than as a physical shelter; it was more importantly the locus of one's inner sphere, where one connected with himself/herself and reflected on the world beyond. Hence, a dwelling should be made worthy of its noble role in propping up one's spiritual world.

Mies's stress on the importance of ample personal space might have found its theoretical ground in Helmuth Plessner's criticism on the ideology of community. Plessner was a sociologist who explored the social phenomena of the increasing idealization of community in Germany after the First World War and tried to discern its causes and possible results. He published his study in 1924 as a book entitled *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft. Eine Kritik des sozialen Radikalismus* (The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism). It was a contribution to the sociological discourse on community and society, a subject initiated by Ferdinand Tönnis in 1886 in his influential treatise of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society). Under Tönnis's definition, the idea of community was associated with pre-industrial villages, referring primarily to groupings of people who lived together based on mutual trust and shared value; the concept of society, by contrast, was related to big cities and referred to groupings that featured individuality and tied by mutual interest. Tönnis characterized the relationships in a community as organic, intimate, and durable whereas the societal relationships as mostly temporary, artificial, and, more often than not, built upon monetary connections.

Plessner's inquiry was built upon Tönnis's work but in its turn worked against it. He did not follow Tönnies's linear framework that viewed society as stemming from an urban and capitalist setting and community was associated with the pre-industrial village. Instead, he asserted that both conditions coexisted all along. He characterized the ideology of community as a romanticized and over-glorified idea that served nothing more than a self-indulgent placebo to expel the shock of modernity; it was merely an antithetical reaction to the turbulent political climate, harsh economic situations, and hopeless living conditions of the Weimar society. For him, the nostalgia for community was essentially a denial, an escapism that could not stand any confrontation with reality, let alone helped alleviate any real problems.

This work, very strikingly, highlighted the downside of the communitarian ideology. It reproached that the creation of community, in advocating a closely knitted relationship among all its members, eliminated the necessary bodily distance that most individuals, especially urban dwellers, longed for. Our human beings could not stand too much closeness, Plessner claimed, we needed disguise in social life and space in private life; a social distance was essential for us to reconcile the environmental hassle and maintain the vital drive and dynamic of our souls. He illustrated his point by depicting a scenario in the environment of a hypothetical community: during the day, people had to bear at work — voluntarily or involuntarily — tightly-pressed humanity, but even after work, they were forced to socialize with others and could not relax and be themselves. Plessner argued that this kind of communal life suffocated the development of individuality

of all sorts. he put the situation vividly as: "The person pays to enter the community with the coin of his individual personality."[288]

Along with its sociological argument, Plessner's work implicated a pointed critique on the concurrent public housing projects, for modernist architects usually played a collaborating role in embellishing the ideal of community and supported it enthusiastically in built form. In tackling the housing shortage, they created communal housings that offered minimal-sized dwellings, transported a number of living functions to the public area, and in so doing, made residents share spaces and socialize. For Plessner, in removing inter-distances between individuals, these minimal housing contributed to a repression of personal spaces and furthermore, humanity.

The Limits of Community drew great attention and received diverse reactions upon its release. It was highly controversial as it invalidated the dream of organic community that many had embraced and attempted to achieve since the late nineteenth century. Given Mies's extensive interest in social science, he must have read it or at least was familiar with its ideas. Mies owned books by Plessner and knew him personally. Probably out of great interest of his ideas, Mies invited him to lecture at Bauhaus and the Werkbund meeting in Berlin respectively in the early 1930s.[289] In acquainting with the sociologist, Mies must

288 Helmuth Plessner, *The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism*, trans. Andrew Wallace (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1999), 104.

289 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Otto Bauer to Mies, 31 Aug, 1932. Also see Volker M. Welter, "The Limits of Community – the Possibility of Society: On Modern Architecture in Weimar Germany," in *Oxford Art Journal* 33, no.1 (2010): 76. The lecture at Bauhaus was lost, but his Werkbund lecture was kept and translated into English as "Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age" by Jonathan Blower and published in *Art in Translation* 3, issue 1 (2011) 37-52.

easily have grasped his perspective on the idea of minimal dwellings and how it would undermine the development of individuality.

Plessner's theory might lead Mies to redefine the idea of dwelling in a modern time: in providing a shelter, it also offered individuals a retreat from the demands of the public domain and the destructive forces of the outer world. It needed to create a favorable environment for individuals to connect with their inner world, filtrate and collect memories, and in so doing, allow a personal culture to take form. Only through a detachment and isolation from the social realm could individuals possibly cultivate a personal culture of their own.

On the other hand, Plessner's work also argued collaterally that spaces could shape souls. And so had Mies long believed: countering the blame of his waste of space, he accused minimum housings of treating people like mice that in turn undermined their spiritual and physical development (see note 24). He held that building art should aim for a higher goal to influence people positively. This idea could find its root in Nietzsche's thoughts on the relationship between art and life: art must affirm life, stimulate continuous engagement with it, and then reshape it. Simmel continued this line of thinking and claimed that art was originated from practical life; then it developed into an autonomous realm through artistic idealization and reconstruction, which in turn enhanced life. Both Nietzsche and Simmel emphasized the reciprocal relationship between art and life: art emerged from life and in turn reacted upon it.

With Nietzsche and Simmel's teaching in the background, Mies might have also found his belief in the forming effect of architecture echoed by Wilhelm Michel, a

contemporary architect critic. In "Von der Sprache des Raumes: Raum is Seelenhaft, die Seele Raumhaft," (On the Language of Space: Space is Soul-like, Soul Space-like) an essay published in *Innen-Dekoration* in 1927, Michel discussed the interaction between space and soul and, very much like Mies, claimed that large space would inspire better humanity:

> Large space meant wide vibration of the soul, increase of our power, and inspiration to a braver, freer humanity. On what the incomparable effect of landscape distant view depends? It depends on the fact that the landscape is the "biggest space" with which we can build a specific sensual relationship and which inspired therefore the widest vibration of the soul per se. We may never fathom out how the mysterious connection between soul and space come out. But we must acknowledge it because it is a fact that space is soul-like, — as the soul is space-like.[290]

In the following text, Michel reinforced his argument by illustrating how the magnificent cathedral naves of the middle ages manifested and resulted from the enormous mind strength and powerful humanity of medieval people and how the rotundas of the Renaissance time represented the earth-bound mind of its people who retook the great "now and here" of the antiquity as their motto. At the end of the essay, Michel warned that the meager spaces built today served merely an expediency to address the high demands of housing but we should not mistake it for a worthy representation of the actual greatness

290 The original text is: "Weiter Raum bedeutet weite Schwingung der seele, Steigerung unserer Macht, Aufruf zu kühnerem freierem Menschentum. Worauf beruht die unvergleichliche Wirkung des landschaftlichen Fernblicks? Darauf, dass die Landschaft der "größteRaum" ist, zu dem wir in bestimmte sinnliche Beziehung treten können, und der daher die Seele zur schlechthin weitesten Schwingung aufruft. Wir warden nie ergründen, wie dieser geheimnisvolle Zusammenhang zwischen Seele und Raum zu stande kommt. Aber wir müssen ihn anerkennen, weil er eine Tatsacheist. Raum ist seelenhaft,--- wie die Seele raumhaft ist." Wilhelm Michel, "Von der Sprache des Raumes: Raum is Seelenhaft, die SeeleRaumhaft," *Innen-Dekoration*(September, 1927): 357. My translation.

and strength of today's humanity. He called for a more powerful and richer spatial language to articulate our beings justly and if possible, to elevate them.[291]

Spatial spirituality had been a central subject in architectural discourse but was largely substituted by more realistic concerns in functional efficiency under the overwhelming economic and social pressure. In spite of the prevalent materialist position and Neue Sachlichkeit approach among modernists, in architecture circles, there were a few modernists calling for spirituality in architecture. They exerted little impact in general, Mies found resonance in their writings, which, in turn, strengthened his determination to evoke a sense of spirituality in architecture.

Among works that tried to relocate spirituality into the kernel of architectural values, Siegfried Ebeling's *Der Raum als Membran* (Space as Membrane) proved to be a particularly stimulating and revealing one for Mies. Ebeling was an architect and inventor who had studied at the Bauhaus from 1922 to 1925. Among all the courses offered there, he was most interested in Paul Klee's teaching of intuitive painting. He grew dissatisfied after 1923, when Gropius realigned the focus of the school from a spiritual orientation to a working credo that aimed to integrate artistic ideas to industrial products, concentrating on factors concerning economy, mass production, standardization, function thinking, and the notions of minimum existence. So, he quit the school in 1925 and criticized it publicly on

291 The original text is: "Neigen wir heute dazu, uns in einer raum kargen Architektur sprache aus zu drücken, so müssen wir uns doch klar darüber sein, dass wir in ihr wohl Fragen des Bedarfs, der Zweckmässigkeit abhandeln, nicht aber das eigentlich Grosse und Starke der heutigen Menschheit darstellen können. So gewißals Kraft und Kühnheit in ihr leben, so gewiß wird sie immer wieder einmal zu einer mächtigeren, reicheren Raumsprache greifen müssen, um ihr Dasein richtig auszusprechen." Ibid, 357.

several occasions.[292] This certainly caused resentment from Bauhauslers, who did their best to make sure that his name would not become part of the Bauhaus legacy. This also partly explained why Ebeling was largely neglected in Bauhaus publications and, by extension, the history of modernist movement.

Published in Dessau in 1926 (though not a Bauhaus publication), *Der Raum als Membran* took a stand opposing against the prevalent functionalist approach to housing. Ebeling reproached the mass housing for reducing the problem of dwelling to a mere, technological issue and treating "to each man his own home" as "to each man his own minimum home."[293] He worried that such minimum homes, concerned only with physical operation, would in turn cramp the spiritual value of dwellings and gave rise to an express-train humanity that was shallow and frivolous.

In the book, Ebeling redefined space as an expansion of human body, a light, thin, and intelligent skin as alternative of solid, hard, heavy, and thick building walls. Based on this vision, he later designed the rotating Gazmetall-Rundhaus (All-metal round house) which, in many aspects, was similar to Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House.[294] He also proposed to shift the perception of spatial effect from posing an initiative influence to

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292 Walter Scheiffele, "Membrane and Ecological Architecture," in Siegfried Ebeling, *Space as Membrane*, translated by Pamela Johnston (London, Architectural Association, 2010), I-XII.

293 Ebeling, "Space as Membrane," in *Space as Membrane*, 22. Mies underlined this part in his copy of the book. Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 174.

294 Scheiffele, "Membrane and Ecological Architecture," X.

serving as a responsive background that worked with the mood of inhabitants and created an independent realm for them:

> Space should no longer be perceived as a positive agency that exerts a certain psychological influence on the people who inhabit it and are exposed to its tensions, which they have to deal with mentally or experientially in some way or another. Rather, space has to be perceived more as a negative, as something that merely creates the physiological preconditions under which the individual, in accordance with his psychological make-up, can develop in complete autonomy, free from all external influences into a self-contained Being-for-oneself — a microcosm.[295]

In addition to Ebeling spatial perception, what intrigued Mies most must have been his discussion about how spaces should be created to support men's spiritual needs and served to bridge men's inner world with the outer cosmos. Ebeling maintained that humans had an eternal need for spirituality and therefore men of all times demanded a space to contemplate, to converse with their inner self, and to connect to the outer universe. It was as a space "for free, rhythmic dancing movement and a Dionysian fervor for life or for absolute concentration, a site for mystical ceremonies; for a place where star-gazers could commune with the night sky in a state of peace, with no impediments of sight or light."[296] Spiritual moments, whose modes may change over time, played a constitutive role in men's life. Hence architects were obliged to respond to this eternal need and configure a space that would draw out the spiritual in men, and eventually perhaps, brought humanity into a larger, cosmic relation.

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295 Ebeling, "Space as Membrane," in *Space as Membrane*, 10-11.

296 Ibid, 26.

Mies read the book enthusiastically and made many annotations.[297] The thoughts expressed in the book echoed many of his own thinking at the time. He expressed similar ideas, though less radically, in his notebook: "The apartment is a use item, …may one ask to what it relates? Obviously only to physical existence… And yet man also has the needs of his soul, which can never be satisfied by merely making sure that he does not get stuck in his walls."[298]

A speech delivered by Gustav Hartlaub at a Werkbund conference in Mannheim in September 1927 also inspired Mies. Hartlaub was the director of the Mannheim Kunsthalle who had planned the "Neue Sachlichkeit" exhibition in 1925 and incidentally coined the term. Simply entitled "Was ist zu tun" (What to do), his Werkbund speech advocated that Werkbund should take spiritual quality as prior concerns of its work.

> It is necessary to illuminate the tendencies of our spiritual and material life, to put in order and direct our work in its track of development….Necessary, more important than the demand for material quality is that for spiritual quality. Sharpest spiritual demonstrations are necessary. Werkbund work must be a battle, not against but rather for something, fight for spiritual things.[299]

Hartlaub's speech was concise and pointed. His words seemed to summarize very nicely what Mies had come to believe: between the material force and spiritual force, the latter was more important; therefore, to illustrate the spiritual force of the time must be at the

297 Neumeyer, The Artless Words, 171-193.

298 Mies's lecture note, page 22. Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 274.

299 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Gustav Hartlaub, "Was ist zu tun," speech at Mannheim Werkbund conference, September, 1927. My translation.

very core of artists' efforts. Mies kept a copy of the speech in his file. Over the years, he revisited it and learned it so penetratingly that it became part of his own thought. Thirty years later when responding to a colleague's harsh attack on functionalist architecture, he quoted Hartlaub possibly without knowing it: "But just one thing, I believe one should always only fight for something, never against something."[300]

In the Weissenhofsiedlung, Mies affirmed a mobile, ever-changing contemporary life. Judged by Nietzsche's thought of art development, his apartment building represented an early stage of art emerging from practical life. After the Weissenhof exhibition, Mies became increasingly interested in spirituality in building art as a channel to reshape life. Despite the prevalent functionalist tendency towards architecture, he was able to find his ideas echoed and nourished by thoughts developed by Plessner, Michel, Ebeling, and Hartlaub, which in turn, reinforced his determination to explore the spiritual value in building art. But the question remained how to achieve it? In practical terms, how a space could be created in a way that evokes a sense of spirituality in modern men? Bearing these questions in mind, Mies resorted to Romano Guardini's *Letters from the Como Lake* once again. What he learned from the book directed him on a more practical level to mediate a variety visual and bodily factors and to finally achieve a sense of spirituality in the Tugendhat House in 1929.

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300 "Aber etwas: ich meine, man sollte immer nur für etwas kämpfen, nie gegenet was." Mies van der Rohe and Rudolf Schwarz, "The Honorary Award, Düsseldorf, June 18, 1953" in Thilo Hilpert, *Mies van der Rohe im Nachkriegsdeutschland: das Theaterprojekt: Mannheim 1953* (Leipzig : Seemann, 2001), 180-181.

THE TUGENDHAT HOUSE: AN ELEVATED ART OF LIFE

The Importance of Consciousness

For Mies, the core value of building art lay in its cultural mission, and the ultimate purpose of culture, as explicated by George Simmel, is to allow individuals to derive from materials a spiritual state of mind, or in other words, the final goal of culture is to cultivate individuals through a masterful use and development of the world of objects.[301] This idea helped Mies orient his effort, but it was nonetheless a too lofty ideal for building practice. To transfuse it into design, Mies had to figure out what factors constitute an environment that stimulates and evokes a creative mind?

Seeking an answer, Mies found Romano Guadini's discussion on the relationships among nature, consciousness, and creativity pertinent and enlightening.[302] In *Letters from Lake Como*, Guardini tried to figure out how a subjective culture takes form and what factors play an instrumental part in its development. Reflecting on how the masterpiece of past cultures developed, he came to believe that a consciousness of one's being and his interrelation with the outer world was a premise for a development of subjective culture. In turn, the sense of consciousness was triggered by the very act of one's retreating from the nature but still maintaining a connection with it.

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301 Georg Simmel, "the Future of Our Culture," *Simmel on Culture,* 102.
See also Simmel's "culture and crisis," *Simmel on Culture,* 92.

302 Of all the books in Mies's library, Guardini's *Letters from Lake Como* is the most heavily marked. Mies highlighted passage after passage with bold and rapid margin strokes and occasionally wrote key words on the side. He also extracted the main ideas from it, rephrasing them and recording them in his note book.

In the Second Letter, "Artificiality of Existence," Guardini investigated the relationship between human culture and natural environment. He mourned the fact that modern technology and mechanization, though providing us with more material wealth, distanced us farther away from nature. Along with that, it deprived us of the act of interacting with the natural world and in so doing, eliminated the human-nature experience that used to play an instrumental part in stimulating a creative spirit and moreover, a sound development of humanity.[303]

Guardini observed that the development of human world featured a process that distanced itself increasingly from the wild natural world but remained connected with a cultivated version of it. This marked the great distinction between human beings and animals: animals lived in "untouched" nature whereas men lived in a cultivated world, which, though originated from nature, was elevated above it. Moreover, the process of developing a culture was one that tamed the nature world by arraying and positing natural things and relations after men's thought and will:

> In truth, nature begins to relate to us only when we begin to indwell it, when culture begins in it. Culture then develops and, bit by bit, nature is refashioned. We create our own world, shaped by thoughts and controlled not merely by natural urges but by ends that we set to serve ourselves as intellectual and spiritual beings, an environment that is related to us and brought into being by us.[304]

Mies was impressed. He tried to assimilate this elegant idea into his own thought by rephrasing it in his own word and into a more concise version. "Nature is truly affecting

303 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 15-17.

304 Ibid, 10.

only when it begins to be dwelled in; when culture begins in it," he wrote in his notebook, "Piece by piece nature is formed. Man creates in it his own world, not only out of natural need, but with deliberate purpose, serving spiritual ideas."[305] These words revealed to Mies that a humanized landscape, rather than nature in its original form, could have a stimulating effect on human spirit.

Guardini devoted his fourth letter exclusively to consciousness. He argues that the very act of distancing oneself from the immediate reality triggers a crucial sense of being conscious, a state that, in turn, promises a start for all creative work and an initiation of subjective culture. He stressed that only by not fully engaging into the immediate reality could we become truly aware of it: "culture presupposes distance from direct reality. The decisive act, however, by which we distance ourselves from this reality is that we become conscious of it," and from here can we really think about the reality and try to make improvement, he added "Everything else follows. We adopt a position, we set a goal, we find means. Only on the basis of consciousness can we freely lay hold of the world creatively to shape it."[306]

For Guardini, "to be human is to have mind and spirit at work," and consciousness was a premise for any intellectual work.[307] Seen in this lifht, consciousness is a constitutive part of culture, "perhaps its first presupposition, the plane on which it develops."[308] He

305 Mies van der Rohe, note book page 40. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 281.

306 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 25-26.

307 Ibid, 10-11.

308 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 10-11, 25-26.

stressed that an expanded consciousness is distinctive modern phenomena. Due to the great development of scientific studies and wide spread of their research results, our knowledge about ourselves and the world we are living in increased exponentially. Modern techniques such as newspapers and photographs also enhanced our awareness greatly. These modern means to expand our knowledge and vision made consciousness an even more important factor in cultural development: "Consciousness is our attitude, our atmosphere. And it is becoming increasingly so… What seemed important above all to me was that consciousness is becoming an attitude, a basic feature, of our cultural life."[309] These ideas left a mark in Mies's mind, and he drew from it an idea on how a sense of consciousness facilitated cultural creations. So he wrote: "Consciousness is part of culture, is perhaps its prime prerequisite; the basis from which it rises. Culture presupposes a distance from immediate reality. Only from the realm of consciousness can the creative and form giving hold on the world be set free."[310]

Paradoxically, although consciousness was the premise for intellectual creative work, it prevented one from fully engaged into that particular job, simply because being aware of what one was doing required one to detach himself from that action. In other words, awareness distracted, as Guardini reasoned:

> We are told this already by the universal psychological law that we cannot perform an intellectual act and at the same time be aware of it. We can only look back on it when it is completed. If we try to achieve awareness of it when we are doing it, we

309 Ibid, 30, 33

310 Mies van der Rohe, note book page 50. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 284.

> can do so only by always interrupting it and thus hovering between the action and knowledge of it. Obviously the action will suffer greatly as a result.[311]

This necessarily led to a question as how to reconcile the contradiction between the stimulating role of consciousness and its side effect of distracting. Guardini left it unresolved. It made Mies inquire in his note book that: "Awareness as atmosphere…. All life must be founded in an unconscious. But can life also become conscious and remain alive?"[312]

Guardini characterized the activity of creation as a process in which one retreated from nature but remained conscious of it through mental reconstruction. He believed that the three key factors — a creative mind, consciousness, and nature — worked in an interconnected way. For a creative mind to effect, it needs to retreat from nature, because "all intellectual and spiritual activity presupposes a kind of asceticism, of breaking up of nature, of dissolving and dematerializing it. Only then can we do our human work."[313] On the other hand, a creative mind must also remain connected to nature through intellectual reconstruction and idealization of it, since "the human mind or spirit can create only when the sphere of natural reality has to some extent been released by that of the consciousness, of the ideal, only when it has been challenged and rarefied by this."[314] Mies condensed these intricate relationships into one sentence in his notebook: "culture, spiritual work, can

311 Ibid, 31.

312 Mies van der Rohe, note book page 56-57. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word,* 287.

313 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 10-11.

314 Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 10-11.

only be created by overcoming, by overcoming nature. But yet close to nature, in harmony with it."[315]

From Guardini's teaching, Mies began to see the need for a new form of living that could foster a sound development of subjective culture through a conscious union of culture and nature. He also realized that, in practical terms, building art, by alienating individuals from their familiar surroundings, may help enhance their overall consciousness, making individuals more aware of themselves and the space they occupied. It will therefore lead them to recognize their environment anew and open to collective experience. Bearing this in mind, Mies developed a better idea of how to enhance spiritual consciousness in architecture, and he finally achieved it in the Tugendhat House.

A Trip to the Tugendhat House

After the Weissenhof exhibition, Mies sought opportunities to realize his proposition for a new, elevated form of living. Following the Weissenhof apartment building, he designed the Lange and Ester houses at Krefeld in 1927 (fig. 4.1 and 4.2). In balancing his own artistic will and the clients' wishes to retain a conventional, stable bourgeois lifestyle, he was forced to make compromises. He urged the clients, Hermann Lange and Josef Ester, to glaze the walls facing the garden completely, but they declined.[316]

315 Mies van der Rohe, note book page 43. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, 282.

316 In an interview Mies talked about the Lange House: "I wanted to make this house much more in glass, but the client did not like that. I had great trouble." "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in conversation with H T Cadbury-Brown," *AA Files* 66 (2013): 68-80.

He proposed an open layout and tried to convince them its feasibility and liberating effect, but Lange rejected it resolutely and insisted on clearly separated rooms enclosed by walls.[317]

Hermann Lange was then a leading figure in textile industry in Germany. Serving as the director of Verseidag, a united corporation of four Krefeld textile factories, he had an extraordinarily busy social schedule. Groups of guests might visit him at home every day and various board meetings were held at times not in corporation buildings but at his house.[318] To make sure that his business life would not interfere with the lives of other family members, he requested a clean segregation of the private and public areas in the house. Moreover, there might be occasions when different groups of guests visited simultaneously but must not see each other, it was necessary to have enclosed rooms to keep them apart. Additionally, Mr. Lange cultivated a great interest in modern art, and over decades of careful selecting and continuous purchasing, he had become a renowned art collector in Germany. He owned art works by Georges Braque, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, and many German artists associated with Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter, and Der Sturm groups. Naturally he wished to have enough walls in the house to display his collections. These concerns made perfect sense for the household of a successful industrialist and art collector, but they contradicted with Mies's desire to reform a

317 Lange and Esters were good friends and often spoke in once voice; between the two, Lange was responsible for decisions concerning artistic matters. Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Architecture for the Silk Industry*, trans. by Michael Wolfson, (Berlin: Nicolai, 2011), 99.

318 Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe & Lilly Reich: Furniture and Interiors* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz), 58.

traditional domesticity through open spaces. As a result, Mies soon lost interest in this project.[319]

In the end, in the Lange house, all rooms were enclosed with solid walls and open to a central hall through normal doors (fig. 4.3). Mies reemployed the device of moveable walls between the central hall and the dining room so that once they were removed, the two rooms could be incorporated into one single space. In the Esters house, Mies applied a series of sliding doors between rooms so that they can be open up to each other and form a continuous spatial sequence (fig 4.4).

After the lesson of the Lange and Ester House, Mies became more aggressive and was willing to make few compromises in the following commissions.[320] He was lucky enough to work with the Tugendhat couple who exemplified the ideal clients for any avant-garde architects at the time. The couple believed that men's lifestyle needed to be determined practically and esthetically, and thus they were willing to give up old living habits for an alternative lifestyle.[321] They were a great match to Mies's ambition and pursuit at the moment. Thanks to their open-minded support, Mies was able to fulfill his

319 Lilly Reich, a close friend and collaborator on the project, complained the situation to a friend that the Krefeld house "gives no pleasure." Lilly Reich, letter to Richard Lisker, November 1927, collection of Sonja Günther. Quoted in Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, 103.

320 When Fritz Tugendhat objected that all the doors reaching all the way from floor to ceiling, Mies threatened to quit and Mr. Tugendhat gave in. see Grete Tugendhat, "The Construction of the Tugendhat House" in *Tugendhat House: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, new edition, ed. Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015), 18-23.

321 Grete Tugendhat, "The Architect and the Client" in *Tugendhat House,* 83.

artistic will and concentrate in introducing a transformed form of living in the Tugendhat House in 1929.

It was primarily Mrs. Tugendhat's decision to choose Mies to build the house. Born Grete Löw-Beer, Mrs. Tugendhat came from a prominent Jewish family of industrialists in Brno. She was well educated, bore a liberated worldview and developed a taste for modern art. In the years prior to this marriage, she divorced once and lived in Berlin for four years, during which she visited art historian Eduard Fuchs at the Perls house which was built by Mies in 1911 for the lawyer and art collector Hugo Perls. It featured a dining room mural by the expressionist painter Max Pechstein and a loggia open to the garden (fig. 4.5). Grete found the house delightful so she asked about the architect and began to consider Mies as a candidate for her own house project. Intending perhaps to know more about Mies's work, she also visited the Weissenhofsiedlung in 1927 and was impressed by the bold, simple dwelling forms presented in the exhibition.[322]

The couple's first meeting with Mies proved to be successful. Together they visited the Lange and Esters houses in Krefeld and the Wolf House in Gubin; the couple liked the latter particularly. Generally satisfied with Mies's previous work, they invited him to visit their site in Brno in September, 1928. The site was a wedding gift from Grete's parents, Alfred and Marianne Löw-Beer, which occupied the upper end of their extensive backyard garden. It enjoyed a sweeping view of the sloping meadow and a commanding view over the old Brno town highlighted by Špilberk, a medieval castle landmark on a hilltop at the

322 Grete Tugendhat, "On the construction of the Tugendhat House" in *Tugendhat House,* 18-23, quoted in 20.

other side of the city. Mies was delighted with the site and started working on the project immediately. For the following nine months, he concentrated on the design of the house and furniture for it, prepared drawings and sent his employee to supervise the construction on site. In early December 1930, the house was completed, and the Tugendhat family moved in.

It was a spacious three floor house for an upper middle class family. Its top floor consisted of a garage wing and a main part devoted mostly to the family and nanny's bedrooms (fig. 4.6a). These bedrooms were arranged with mostly furniture pieces designed by Mies or Lilly Reich. Stylistically, they resembled those of the Weissenhof apartments — simple and elegant (fig. 4.7 and 4.8). All family members' bedrooms were open to an extensive terrace that served as an outdoor living room for them. It provided a paddling pool and a shady sandpit under a planted pergola, forming a wonderful playground for children (fig. 4.9). The family spent a lot of time there, and the children would ride on their bicycles or drive their little car moving around it (fig. 4.10).[323] The lower floor served as an open living room for the family, including areas for working, reading, piano playing, dining, chatting, and entertaining guests. It also contained a kitchen hidden behind the open living spaces (fig. 4.6b). The basement was devoted entirely to housekeeping purposes, accommodating storages, laundry, technical systems, and other service functions.

Today, the Tugendhat House is a museum and has been restored to its original state. The following text is a phenomenological interpretation of the house, enriched here and

323 Ibid, 21.

there with an analysis of Mies's design strategy and an account of how the Tugendhat family once lived there. It will focus on the living floor as it best represents Mies's pursuit for spatial spirituality, portraying the bodily and visual experience visiting the floor and paying great attention to describing how the rich spatial and viewing experience enforces a sense of self-consciousness and leads one to meditate.

The Tugendhat House is located in the prominent Schwarzfeld district to the northeast of Brno. The area underwent a development boom in the nineteenth century and became a favored site for the upper middle class in the city to build their houses. The Tugendhat House occupies a particularly attractive plot, crowning the upper edge of a grassy hill sloping towards south-west. Its major entrance is located on the other side of the building, open to the street of Schwarzfeldgasse facing north-east.

From the street side, the structure looks tranquilly flat (fig. 4.11). Rising only one floor above the street level, it consists of two separate volumes: they are white and rectangular, and connected by a roof slab. The left wing is highlighted by a curve of frosted glass, whereas the right wing, as suggested by its wide garage door, was the chauffer's quarter. Despite its rather plain façade, the house, with its massive volume and expansive roofline, radiates quietly an aura of grace and confidence.

The two wings framed a void in the center of the structure, which draws in a landscape view and enlivens the scene. As one walks closer, the view unfolds gradually. It presents an intermittent panorama of the old Brno framed by the outlines of the tree tops (fig. 4.12). For the beholders, the front of the house works like a giant telescope for it condenses a distant landscape view into a picture and incorporates it into the facade as if it

were a backdrop of the structure. This view showcases what one is about to encounter inside.

Seeking to enter the building, one is obliged to retreat from the view-framing tunnel and follow the lead of the curved glass wall to the entrance door (fig. 4.13). The entry opens to a modestly sized vestibule, not too big to lose its welcoming tone nor too small to undermine its role as a public space. The pleasant scale gives the room a secure and serene impression. The frosted glass walls contributed further to the feeling. They screen out the curious looks from the street and soothe the glaring sunshine. Thus, soft, ethereal light diffuses in the room and endows it with an air of composure (fig. 4.14).

The vestibule is simply furnished with two chairs placing against the back wall (fig. 4.15). Such an arrangement was necessary at the time when the house was built, since unannounced visits were then considered as appropriate and could be quite common.[324] Unexpected visitors were usually received by a maid who would pass their calling cards and explain their purpose of visit to Mr. and Mrs. Tugendhat, who in turn would decide whether they wanted to meet them. As the procedure took time, the visitors had to wait in the vestibule, and the chairs and magazines on the side table would serve as a casual sitting area to make the waiting more agreeable. Today one visits the house by appointment and waits in the vestibule for the curator to lead the tour. The curved glass walls wrap a staircase leading downstairs, and by taking it, one reaches the living floor.

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324 Wolf Tegethoff, "The Tugendhat 'Villa': A Modern Residence in Turbulent Times," in *Tugendhat House,* 90-139, quoted in 127.

Upon one's arrival at the living floor, her attention is immediately attracted by the extensive glass curtain walls at the other end of the room. They admit light and a delightful view of the exuberant plants in the conservatory into the room (fig. 4.16). Amazed for a moment, one shifts her sight from the outside to the interiors. The floor is an open space. A freestanding wall stands in the center, pointing to the glass curtain walls and directing the air to circulate. Groupings of furniture are placed at two sides of the space alternatively, lending scale to the room and suggesting the purpose for their domain. Though each area stands independently, they lead to each other in a zigzag form.

At the right corner of the floor entrance is a round table with four chairs, inviting an intimate conversation, an arrangement reminiscent of Mies's office at Am Karlsbad 24 (fig. 4.17). Here it suggests more of a casual chatting during the afternoon tea or a piano concerto, as a grand piano stands only a few steps forward. They together imply an informal music area, comparable to the music room in a traditional house. Further ahead is a sideboard positioning perpendicular to the onyx wall. Designed by Lilly Reich, it looks heavier and solider than other furniture and obstructs part of the view to the back. Further back in the center of the room stands a desk with two armchairs, suggesting a working area for Mr. Tugendhat. The desk and chairs are simplified to their structural necessities and look extraordinarily light, injected with air and hindering neither movement nor view through the space.

The contour of the furnishings delineates a flow of air waving forward, accentuating a sense of spatial depth. The groups of furniture are more than furnishings; rather they serve also as architectural elements and play a constitutive role in the spatial composition. For

example, the sideboard serves as much a parapet wall as it is a piece of storage furniture; similarly the grand piano is as much as a traffic roundabout as it is a musical instrument.[325] This particular arrangement is reminiscent of Adolf von Hildebrand's theory of spatial representation that the volume of air can be indicated by putting several objects thoughtfully together because the boundaries of these objects limit the volumes of air that lie between them, just as the volume of a single object is suggested by the outlines of its form.[326]

Hildebrand was an art theorist who considered the representation of space a key subject in painting and sculpture. His decisive writing, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture), was first published in 1897, and it aroused great interest in various art disciplines. Although this book discussed primarily the expression of space in painting and sculpture, many architects and theories at the turn of the century found the ideas easily adaptable to architecture. It seems as if Mies had positioned furniture after Hildebrand's advice: he conceived the volume of air as what left between solid furniture, and, accordingly, the placement of furniture pieces was for him a means to delineate space. As an effect, his zigzag arrangement of furniture outlines a movement of air swinging forward towards the outside.

325 Kent Kleinman and Leslie Van Duzer, *Mies van der Rohe: The Krefeld Villas* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 44.

326 Adolf Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1907), 49.

Compared to that groups of furniture serving to represent the shape of space, the semi-circular Makassar ebony wall and the freestanding onyx direct one's movement in the space. They work together to induce one to turn right: the onyx wall hinders sight to the right and makes one wonder what is there while the curve of the ebony wall suggests a movement to the right to find out (fig. 4.18). Following their lead, one turns right.

A spectacular panorama of old Brno unwraps suddenly (fig. 4.19). It is unexpected, and it is magnificent, more expansive and powerful than the view one has just seen upstairs. It immediately broadens the apparent scale of the house as if it were extending so far to where the sight goes. The view side of the building is enclosed by glass curtain walls that open the interior to the outside and admit landscape scenes into the room. Mies believed that glass walls played an instrumental role in relating the man-made world to the larger landscape. He extoled their "space-toppling power" for "they permit a measure of freedom in spatial composition" and allow architects to "articulate space freely, open it up and connect it to the landscape, thereby filling the spatial needs of modern man."[327]

The other side of the space is defined by the onyx wall. A piece of wool rug extends at the foot of the wall, demarcating softly a sitting area (fig. 4.20). It contains a row of Tugendhat armchairs and a row of Barcelona chairs, positioning at a right angle to the onyx wall and facing each other. Between the chair rows is the Tugendhat coffee table that features a clear glass top supported by a crossed frame. The glass top seems so weightless

327 Library of Congress, Mies Papers. Mies van der Rohe, "What Would Concrete, What Would Steel Be Without Mirror Glass?" contribution to a prospectus of the association of German Mirrorglass Factories, 13 March, 1933. Reprinted in Neumeyer, Artless Words, 314.

as if it were floating in the air. The chairs are massive, yet they look elegant and air-infused, not interrupting nor diminishing the spatial flow of the house. Their majestic and graceful look uplifts the airy feeling of the space and grants it with an ambience of ceremonious solemnity.

Sitting on a chair and looking around, one has an unusual viewing experience: what she sees seems to contradict with what she knows. Here she possesses a commanding view of a dramatic landscape panorama; she knows that it is at the other end of the city and yet it presents as if it were only an arm's length away. More strikingly, the natural scene contacts with the interior setting in a peculiar way. Without any buffering, the landscape view collides with the architectural surroundings, completing it and competing with it. The two worlds do not really blend but rather knock together as a collage.

Such a composition affects one in several ways. It evokes an awareness of space, frames a heightened perception of natural and human realms, and arouses a sense of self-consciousness. First, one becomes more aware of the space she is occupying, within the glass encirclement and beyond and between herself and the Špilberk at the far end. This spatial awareness echoes again with Hildebrand's theory of spatial representation. Hildebrand proposed to conceive space as a succession of visual planes confined in depth and claimed that we begin to be conscious of a space when we attend to the distant plane behind it. Seen in this light, an awareness of space commences usually with the farthest plane since a penetration into the distance evokes a sense of space.[328] In the case of the

328 Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, 60.

Tugendhat House, when one sees the Špilberk, she senses simultaneously its great distance from her and hence the immense space between them.

But the Tugendhat House does not offer a continuous landscape view stretching from the house all the way to the Špilberk. Instead, it juxtaposes the close interior scene with the far landscape view and cuts out what is in between. As the house erects at a hillcrest, one's visional line runs naturally at a high level there and anything below this level will be screened out. Consequently, the middle ground view of the sloping meadow and the urban valley at large is screened out, and thus the impression of a seamless spatial continuum is avoided. Mies probably devised such a view deliberately in order to enforce self-awareness based on the belief that ruptures and discontinues in landscape viewing leads one to reflect on distant, pictorialized views and arouses self-consciousness. The loss of the middle distance view was a leitmotif of early nineteenth century's Romantic landscape paintings and designs of villa gardens. The great Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel used the method constantly in his country houses to create a marriage between architecture and landscape.[329] Mies admired Schinkel greatly and studied his work carefully, so he might have grasped the idea from it.

The abrupt juxtaposition also shed a refreshing light on the architectural setting and natural environment. The twin cosmos is settled side by side in a confronted integration, in which the distinctive attributes of each is made more prominent by its immediate contrast with the other. The natural and artificial are acknowledged as opposite realms of existence

329 Barry Bergdoll, "The Nature of Mies's Space," in *Mies in Berlin*, ed. Barry Bergdoll et al. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 66-105.

but joined tightly through a thin layer of glasses. Their immediate confrontation sharpens the characters of each. Or in other words, the artificial is affirmed by being countered by the natural, and vice versa. As a result, the two distinctive worlds imbricate, one within the other, complementing each other without sacrificing a bit of oneself. For Mies, the lack of compromise in such a confrontation would probably offer a starting-point for an open observation and interpretation: the connection and distinction between the two worlds manifests and comes readily into one's purview.

This approach of confrontation recalls once again Hildebrand's teaching of spatial representation. Hildebrand believed that spatial perception could be stimulated by positioning two objects in direct contrast; for example, a plane is more clearly perceived when something upright is placed upon it, like a tree. The horizontal portion of the surface manifests itself at once, and the tree is affected in the same way and becomes more active spatially.[330] The effect of such an uncompromised contrast is a revealing one, making the presence of each object seems more prominent against the other. Mies might have been inspired by this theory and applied it in his houses to provide the inhabitants a lens through which everything seemed to be more expressive. He used the Farnsworth House as an example to explain the effect: "if you view nature through the glass walls of the Farnsworth House, it gains a more profound significance than if viewed from outside. This way more is said about nature — it becomes a part of a larger whole."[331] The Tugendhat House also

330 Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, 50-51

331 Mies van der Rohe, interviewed by Christian Norberg-Schulz, "A Talk with Mies van der Rohe," published in *Baukunst und Werkform* 11, no. 11 (1958), 615-618. Reprinted in Neumeyer*, the Artless Word*, 338-339, quoted in 229.

possesses this enlightening effect. Mrs. Tugendhat sensed it and commented: "for just as one sees in this room every flower in a different light and as every work of art gives a stronger impression, individual too and others stand out more clearly against such a background."[332]

In the Tugendhat House, landscape is presented mostly in relation to human life. It is framed by the interspace of the steel columns or represented through the overlaid reflective effect of glass and the onyx wall. In this way, nature is presented not in its raw form but rather in a manipulated version. It may be chopped, embellished, or reframed into a sharper relief that captures one's attention. Under Romano's teaching, Mies appreciated the value of humanized nature and believed that in order to obtain a heightened living experience, human beings need to connect to cultivated nature rather than "untouched" one. His approach to framing a landscape view, however, might have been inspired by Schinkel. Like Romano, Schinkel was primarily interested in the inhabited, tamed, civilized landscape and sought to integrate it into the man-made world.[333] In his Altes Museum, he designed a spectacular double colonnade for the porch. Visitors could obtain a view to the near Lustgarten and the distant Berlin city center only through the interspaces of these columns (fig. 4.21).

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332 Grete Tugendhat, "the Inhabitants of the Tugendhat House give their opinion," first published in *Die Form* 6 (Nov. 1931): 437. Reprinted in *Tugendhat House,* 76-77, quoted 76.

333 Christoph Martin Vogtherr, "Views and Approaches: Schinkel and Landscape Gardening," in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1781-1841: The Drama of Architecture*, edited by John Zukowsky, (Tübingen, Germany: Wasmuth; Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1994), 80.

Finally, the ambience of the house arouses mixed feelings and invites contemplation. The panorama of the old Brno appears to be a pictorialized backdrop of the room; on the other hand, paradoxically, the room is so comfortably wrapped within nature that it seemed to be an integral part of it. The feeling of mutual belonging evokes a sense of relief, or in art historians' term, a sense of empathy, or a state of pleasure brought by the knowledge of mutual belonging between the viewer and the object perceived.[334] But the feeling does not last long. A glimpse of the near items affirms immediately the great distance of the viewing landscape and reminders one its remoteness. In attempt to resolve the conflicting senses, one shuttles her views between the near items and distant landscape, but the continuous oscillation between vista views and close-up visions makes her feel lost. Bewildered, she cannot help but wonder where she is and why she is here.

In addition, the highly reflective quality of the architectural elements adds a new visual dimension to the space that fosters self-consciousness. The onyx wall condenses layers of interior and landscape reflections into a smooth tableau and overlays it onto its fluid fabric. One finds herself mirrored onto the wall within a matrix of reflections. As she turns around looking outside, she sees once again her reflection and that of the interiors interfering with the view towards the outer landscape, creating a phantom impression as if there were a parallel world at the other side of the glass and she were sitting there

334 The term "empathy" was introduced by Theodor Lipps in "Raumästhetik und geometrisch optische Täuschungen" (Aesthetics of Space and Geometrically Visual Illusions) in 1897. Architecture theorists such as August Schmarsow adopted the term, developed it further, and incorporated it into their theory. Mitchell W. Schwarzer and August Schmarsow, "The Emergence of Architectural Space: August Schmarsow's Theory of 'Raumgestaltung'," in *Assemblage*, No. 15 (Aug., 1991): 53.

simultaneously (fig. 4.22). It renders her to question once again where she is, what is real, what is not, and how could we know? The multiple, overlapping reflections impose self-awareness, and when staring at them, one feels easily immersed and absorbed.

In creating an environment conductive to reflection, the Tugendhat House is reminiscent of Nietzsche's idea of "an architecture for minds," which mirrors one's inner world and fosters meditation:

> One day, and probably soon, we will need some recognition of what is missing primarily in our big cities: quiet and wide, expansive places for reflection — places with long, high-ceilinged arcades for bad or all-too-sunny weather, where no shouts or noise from carriages can penetrate and where refined manners would prohibit even priests from praying aloud: a whole complex of building and sites that would give expression to the sublimity of contemplation and of aloofness…We want to have us translated into stone and plants; we want to take walks in ourselves when we stroll through these hallways and gardens.[335]

Nietzsche envisioned an architecture that bears a spiritual dimension and evokes a sense of empathy. A tour in this building is a self-explorative journey for one to converse with his inner self. Although Nietzsche must have imagined his "architecture for minds" as a public secular building for intellectuals, Mies achieved it in a private house and proposed with it a contemplative lifestyle for its intellectual inhabitants.

Leaving the sitting area, if one walks from there towards the conservatory, she will encounter once again the desk and beyond it a library niche that nestles comfortably at the corner (fig. 4.23). It is rather dark but seems to be cozy and intimate. When there were no guests, the Tugendhat family usually sat here reading and enjoying a view to the

335 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro, (New York, NY.: Cambridge University Press, 2001):280-281. Translation slightly modified.

conservatory and the garden. If one chooses the other direction from the sitting area, she will come to the circular dining area (fig. 4.24). It is half-encircled by the Makassar ebony wall and opens to the garden side. It is furnished simply with a round dining table with several Brno chairs, all of which were designed by Mies. The table top is supported by a single steel pedestal foot, and it could be expanded and accommodate up to twenty-four people. The family had lunch here and after that, listened to music and danced together. The glass curtain walls facing the sitting area and the dining area could be lowered completely into the floor, turning the two areas into a loggia.

The large, open living space could be further divided into smaller spaces by black and white velvet and Shantung silk curtains. The Tugendhat couple made frequent uses of them to enclose smaller spaces at will (fig. 4.25). Mrs. Tugendhat felt that this adaptable arrangement evokes a sense of detachment and belonging simultaneously and remarked that: "while providing seclusion and privacy, there was a feeling of belonging to a larger totality at the same time."[336] This feeling could apply to the subdivided areas in relation to the open living space as well as the living space in relation to larger landscape beyond. George Danforth sensed a similar experience living in the 860-880 Lake Shore Apartments: Enjoying a commanding view of the Chicago urban area; he felt that he was part of the big city but somehow also "a little bit away from it, too, just a touch away from it."[337] Mies

336 Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, "Living in the Tugendhat House," in *Tugendhat House*, 24-55, quoted in 41.

337 Chicago Architects Oral History Project, *Oral History of George Danforth*, interviewed by Pauline Saliga, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1993. Transcript, 122.

probably devised such an experience deliberately to evoke a sense of spirituality based on the belief that a feeling of within a larger space while alienating from it signaled a starting point for reflection.

A contemplative air pervades the living space of the Tugendhat House. The experience ambulating in it is one that features a visual kaleidoscope of light and shadow, the overlapping reflection and the shuttling view of distant vista and close-up visions. One's focus continually shifts, and her mind follows correspondingly. The glass curtains manage to separate the landscape from the artificial world but yet keep it at arm's length. This sense of being close to nature but somehow remaining detached from it arouses a sense of self-consciousness and pushes one to reflect. The bodily experience lingering in the house is also an enlightening one as it offers a new framework that presents the world in a polemic and yet revealing way. The composure and yet stimulating ambience of the house filters out mundane concerns and instead elevates one's thought to a realm that focuses on the inner meaning of the world.

The Tugendhat House brought together theoretical precepts and life experiences that had shaped Mies's development to this point. It marked the summation of his professional life for a decade. From Nietzsche and Simmel's teaching, Mies acknowledged modern life as a vital forming agent for architecture. Reflecting on his daily life, he recognized the importance of spatial flexibility for a modern living. He experimented with the idea of flexible space at the Weissenhof apartments and refined it in the Tugendhat House. He created an open, living space for the Tugendhat House which was large enough to accommodate various activities for the family and which could also be subdivided by

silk curtains into a series of smaller, individual "rooms" at the inhabitants' discretion. Furthermore, influenced by Plessner, Ebeling and Romano's writings, Mies understood that a dwelling was much more than a shelter, but more importantly, it served as the locus of the inhabitants' inner world and the cradle for their subjective culture. And thus, a dwelling needed to acknowledge and support such a spiritual dimension of the inhabitants' life. In the Tugendhat House, Mies manipulated the landscape view and the reflective effects of the onyx and glass walls deliberately in a way that enforced self-awareness and propelled reflection. In so doing, the Tugendhat House fulfilled the ultimate task of a dwelling for Mies to allow inhabitants to live freely and to foster their spiritual world.

Spirituality vs. Livability: Is the Tugendhat House Habitable?

At the time when the Tugendhat House was constructed, Brno was already a center of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia. Many Czech avant-garde architects had built housing projects here.[338] But their reception of the Tugendhat house was moderate, if not totally hostile.[339] Few professional magazines ran a proper introduction to the house and when it was mentioned, it usually served as a target for criticism. Most of the Czech avant-grade architects held architecture foremost as a social matter and thus viewed the

338 Following the Weissenhof housing exhibition in Stuttgart, Brno held the New House exhibition (Nový Dům) in 1928 as part of the *Exhibition of Contemporary Culture,* and most renown modernist architects in the country had contributed in the exhibition.

339 For more about how the Tugendhat House was received in Czech avant-garde circle, see Lenka Kudelková and Otakar Mácel, "The Villa Tugendhat in Brno," in *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Design in Stuttgart, Barcelona, Brno*, ed. Alexander von Vegesack et al. (Mila: Skira, 1998), 181-213.

Tugendhat House as extremely inappropriate at a time of economic crisis and housing shortage. For example, Karel Teige, a leading figure in Czech avant-garde circles, in his 1932 monograph *Nejmenší byt* (*The Minimum Dwelling*) criticized the Tugendhat house, villa Müller by Adolf Loos, and expensive villa projects by Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, as the "pinnacle of modernist snobbism" and stated all they were merely "new versions of opulent baroque palaces…a machine for representation and splendor" rather than a machine for living.[340] Jaromír Krejcar, a Czech functionalist architect and friend of Teige, also believed that despite its technical innovations, the Tugendhat House remained an exclusive toy for the privileged few and diverged from the main tasks of the modern architecture.

The Tugendhat House aroused controversy in Germany, and the Werkbund official journal *Die Form* provided a platform for the debate. It started with Walter Riezler, editor of the *Die Form*, who published an article in the middle of 1931, introducing the newly built Tugendhat House and applauding that it evoked a sense of spirituality. In the article, Riezler claimed that the eventual goal of architecture was to make "art" that overcame the functional construction through a spiritual and emotional mindset (Haltung) and eventually elevated the factual matters to the free realm of absolute.[341]

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340 Karel Teige, The Minimum Dwelling, originally published in 1932, trans.by Eric Dluhosch, (Cambrdige: MIT Press, 2002), 7.

341 "[…]es fehle der neuen Baukunst alles das, was sie eigentlich erst zur 'Kunst' mache, was jedenfalls als das innere Wesen aller früheren Baukunst zu gelten habe, also die Überwindung des Zweckhaft-Konstruktive durch eine geistig-seelische Haltung, die Erhöhung des sachlich Gebundenen in das freie Reich des Absoluten." Walter Riezler, "Das Haus Tugendhat in Brünn," in *Die Form*, no. 9 (1931): 321-332.

He remarked that compared to the "living machine" that produced a restraining life experience, the Tugendhat House created a sense of freedom in life. Its skeleton construction served not only for "rationalization" but rather supplied a great freedom of spatial order and arrangement. A sense of liberation dominated the overall form of the house, and its lively, seemingly random rhythms were somehow bound harmoniously through a very fine, genuine artistic-musical feeling.[342] Moreover, the dynamic rhythm of the spaces did not end interior but rather flowed outwards to form an integrated union with the larger nature. In its particular sense of freedom, the space conveyed a general sensation of the world (Weltgefühles) and heralded an entirely new worldview.[343] In conclusion, Riezler declared that the Tugendhat house exemplified that the design of modern buildings today could still be driven by spiritual ideas and was capable of representing them by using the modern material and constructional means.

Riezler's article evoked a series of rebuttals, and the focus of the debate broadened beyond the subject of Tugendhat house itself to more general questions concerning what a modern residence should offer and what the goal of modern architecture is. The first reaction came from Justus Bier, an art historian of Renaissance art and enthusiastic exponent of modernist art. Not long before, he had published a positive review of the German Pavilion designed by Mies for the Barcelona International Exhibition in 1929, but he took the problem rather differently this time. Entitled "Kann man im Haus Tugendhat

342 Ibid, 326.

343 Ibid, 328.

wohnen" (Can One Live in the Tugendhat House), his reaction essay argued that it was inappropriate to elevate a residence onto the realm of spirit.[344] Much as he admired the original spatial arrangement of the Barcelona Pavilion for displaying a spirit of the modern age (Zeitgeist), he held that the approach was not transferrable to dwellings. For him, pavilions were a representational building type unburdened by any real life functions; by contrast, dwellings were a use type that had a practical program to cater for, and therefore they could not commit themselves fully to pure artistic expression. On the other hand, it would also be too demanding for its inhabitants to reside in a house that devoted primarily to spirituality.

In pragmatic terms, Bier criticized the open living room as highly unpractical and was as representational as traditional houses. Men needed a closed space to read and write, he believed, which had to be absolutely quiet so that they could concentrate. Therefore, it would be inconvenient, if not entirely impossible, to work at a designated area in an open living room: one had to ask everyone else to leave or keep quiet so that he/she could focus. The semicircular dining room was another problem for Bier. It should have been allowed to be closed off so that the chores there would not disturb the activities in the living room. Additionally, as the furnishings in this house were arranged in such a unified style, the inhabitants would not dare to add any furniture of their own out of the fear that it would not match with others. Moreover, the rich visual effect of the onyx and Makassar wall

344 Justus Bier, "Kann man im Haus Tugendhat wohnen?" Die Form no. 11 (1931) 392-393.

materials reached the status of art in their own right and thus deprived the possibility for inhabitants to hang paintings in the room.

Though fully acknowledging the house's spiritual quality and its status as a piece of artwork, Bier believed that its very artistic features rendered it unlivable because no one could endure the dramatic pathos of the spaces without rebelling it internally. The magnificently pure, austere, and monumental style, in its innermost essence, would force inhabitant to lead a kind of representational living (Ausstellungswohnen) and eventually overwhelm their real lives.[345] He argued instead that in attending to the intimate necessities of living, sleeping, and eating, a dwelling required "a more reserved and softer language."

Riezler responded, rebuking Bier's critiques and defending his own position. His essay was published in the same issue following Bier's piece, making the argument more pointed. He stressed that the Tugendhat house represented a new ethos of lifestyle that could not be judged from criteria founded upon traditional ways of living. The traditional dwellings focused on comfort but, today, individuals no longer valued comfort so much as they used to in the Wilhelmine period. Instead, we, or at least some of us, he argued, wanted to lead a spiritual life that traditional dwellings failed to support. Therefore, we needed new dwelling forms that could correspond to this desire for a spiritual domesticity. If these forms looked shockingly new now, he added, it only proved that a new spirit, a new humanity was taking form.[346]

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345 Ibid, 393.

346 "Wenn diese Kompromißloskeit da und dort scheinbar ein Opfer verlangt, so bedeutet dies in Wirklichkeit nur, daß der Gesichtspunkt der individullen Behaglichkeit in der Form, wie sie vor allem durch das englische Haus im Gegensatz zur dutschen 'Villa' der Gründerzeit in aller Bewußtsein kam,

The debate carried on. In the following issue of *Die Form* published Marxist architecture critic Roger Ginsburger's reaction. He insisted that great architecture was not accomplished by transcending the practical goal and aiming solely for the realm of absolute, but instead it integrated the two nicely. He observed that under the severe economic and social circumstances, a pure artistic pursuit such as the Tugendhat House was condemnable, representing an immoral decadence.[347] For him, its exquisite form did not reflect the wishes and ethos of a new society but rather the world view and needs of today's ruling classes. In practical terms, he believed spiritual pursuits and trivial everyday life were incompatible: artistic features of the house were hostile for mundane life and conversely a lively everyday life would ruin the sacred ethos. He conveyed this idea by envision living in a house devoted to spirituality:

> Let us imagine how we should live in the space: that we come home tired and sit unceremoniously in an armchair, leg crossed; or we entertain friends, play record-player, move all furniture in one corner and dance, or we erect a big table and play Ping-Pong. Can we do these in this room? Can we even just go in or must we stride or not? Can we take the table out of the center of the half-circular dining niche or take away the carpet in front of the onyx wall without committing a blasphemy to the sacred? No, we cannot help it.[348]

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heute nicht mehr so wichtig genommen wird…allmählich auch wieder ein anderes Bedürfnis erwacht: das Bedürfnis nach einer Gestaltung, die dem geistigen Leben gemäß ist, das wir — oder wenigstens einige von uns — führen oder führen möchten. Das ware keineswegs etwas grundsätzlich Neues, — es bedeutete nur die Rückkehr zu der Gesinnung, aus der heraus in früheren Jahrhunderten jeder über die nackte Notdurft hinausgehende Bau gestaltet war. Wenn die Formen heute unerhört new erscheinen, beweist das nur, daβ ein neuer Geist, eine neue Menschheit im Entstehen ist." Riezler, responding to Bier, *Die Form* no. 11 (1931) 393-94, quoted 394. My translation.

347 Roger Ginsburger and Walter Riezler, "Zweckhaftigkeit und geistige Haltung: Eine Diskussion zwischen Roger Ginsburger und Walter Riezler," in *Die Form*, no. 11 (1931): 431-437.

348 "Es gibt ein sehr einfaches Kriterium für die Wohnlichkeit, d.h. den funktionellen Wert eines Wohnraumes. Man stellt sich vor, daß man in dem Raume leben muß, daß man müde nach Hause kommt und sich ganz unzeremoniös in einen Sessel setzt, mit überschlagenen Beinen, daß man Freunde empfängt, Grammofon spielt, alle Möbel in eine Ecke rückt und tanzt, daß man einen großen Tisch aufstellt und Ping-

In portraying a picture of everyday life in the house, both Ginsburg, like Bier, tried to demonstrate that the nature of dwellings is too intimate and versatile to carry a spiritual dimension.

Perhaps invited by Riezler, Grete and Fritz Tugendhat each contributed an essay to the debate. They answered the questions raised in the debate about the practical issues of the house and how they felt about living in a house that aimed to support an elevated life.

Mr. Tugendhat mostly focused on settling the questions about the practical issues in the house.[349] He explained that the open living space could be subdivided into "closed rooms" by heavy curtains so one could concentrate and not be interfered by what was going on outside. Or, if one required isolation, he/she could withdraw to his/her own bedroom which was furnished with desk and chairs to be used also as a study (fig. 4.8). The couple noticed few odor emanating from the open dining room, and if there were any, they could solve the problem simply by lowering the glass curtain walls to accelerate the air exchange. They could also pull the velvet curtain to close the dining room and thus block the bustle scene of preparing for meals. Mr. Tugendhat acknowledged that it was indeed impossible to hang any paintings in the living room, but he did not see it as a disadvantage since the beautiful onyx and Makassar walls already served as works of art in their own right. And

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Pong spielt. Kann man das in diesem Raum, kann man überhaupt noch gehen darin und muß man nicht schreiten, kann man den Tisch aus dem Zentrum der halbkreisförmigen Eßnische herausnehmen oder den Teppich vor der Onyxwand wegnehmen ohne eine Heiligtumsschändung zu begehen, ohne daß die ganze Stimmung zerrissen ist? Nein, man kann es nicht." Ibid, 433. My translation.

349 Grete and Fritz Tugendhat, "Die Bewohner des Hauses Tugendhat äußern sich," *Die Form* no. 11 (1931): 437-438. Reprinted and translated in *Tugendhat House*, 74-77

they were better than paintings, he added, because they also served as a dramatic backdrop that helped bring out the features of anything placed in front of them. Mrs. Tugendhat supplemented that it was not true that inhabitants could not change anything without spoiling the artistic feature of the room. Quite to the contrary, they felt free to change things around in the house because the rhythm of the large room was so strong that small changes usually seemed so insignificant that they exerted little effect on the overall impression of the space.

Mrs. Tugendhat, in her essay, concentrated more in refuting the idea that the spiritual quality of the space would overwhelm the inhabitants' personal lives. She found residing in the house a liberating experience. Instead of feeling repressed, she experienced the space as soothing, enriching and exalting:

> […] I never experienced the rooms as possessing pathos. I find them large and austerely simple — however, not in an overwhelming but in a liberating sense. This austerity makes it impossible to spend your time just relaxing and letting yourself go, and it is precisely this being forced to do something else which people, exhausted and left empty by their working lives, need and find liberating today. For just as one sees in this room every flower in a different light and as every work of art gives a stronger impression, individuals too and others stand out more clearly against such a background.[350]

Mr. Tugendhat felt largely the same way, especially about how the space presented things in a sharper relief. It drew out the characters of often overlooked, mundane things, represented them in a fresh light and led people to appreciate these little things in life in a more profound way.

350 Ibid, 76. Translation slightly modified.

> […] a sculpture by Lehmbruck, is highlighted by this space in an unusual way, as is the case with the personal lives of the inhabitants, who can feel free to an extent never experienced before. Whenever I take a look at the leaves and flowers singly standing out against a suitable background, whenever I let these rooms and all they contain take their effect, I am overcome by the feeling that this is beauty, this is truth.[351]

In revealing truth, the Tugendhat house goes beyond beauty. Or as Mies often quoted St. Augustine's words, "beauty is the radiance of truth," the sense of beauty is a by-produce or effect of an unfolding truth. As the Tugendhats described, the liberating feeling of living in the house came from its refreshing power that released one from the numbing and tiring daily work and inspired an alternative state of mind, to reflect, be aware of oneself and to connect with the world beyond in a more revealing light that shed by the house. This experience makes one feel free and sense his humanity.

For Mies, a vital task of modernist art was to provoke thoughts and foster contemplation. In *Toward an Architecture* in 1923, Corbusier also claimed that if arts wanted to make themselves relevant in a modern time, they had to lend themselves to facilitate meditation:

> Art no longer tells stories; it prompts meditation; after labor it is good to meditate. On the one hand masses of people await decent dwelling places, and this is among the most fiercely pressing questions of the day. On the other hand, the man of initiative, of action, of thought, the FOREMAN, demands that his meditation be sheltered in a space that is serene and solid, a matter essential to the health of elites.[352]

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351 Ibid, 77.

352 Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, 97-98.

Corbusier divided the task for modernist architecture into two categories: one had to do with solving the server housing shortage and the other concerned itself primarily with creating in buildings a spiritual dimension for intellectuals. These two directions characterize respectively Mies's major domestic projects in the 1920s: in the Weissenhof project he focused on sheltering the mass whereas at the time of the Tugendhat House, his interest shifted to evoking a sense of spirituality in architecture.[353] And he achieved it admirably. Although the house received various critiques, no critics could deny being affected by its extraordinarily exalting ambience. And the most pertinent comment came perhaps from Mrs. Tugendhat, who sensed that in creating the house, Mies tried to "restore the primarily spiritual sense of our life to its proper place, beyond the mere necessities."[354]

The Tugendhat family lived in the house for only eight years. They were Jewish, and thus when the Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, they had to leave, going first to St Gallen, Switzerland, in 1938, and then to Caracas, Venezuela, in 1941. Thereafter the house fell into several different hands, and its functions changed accordingly. During the war, the Gestapo was said to set up offices here. Later, after the bombing of northern Germany and Saxony, the house served as the construction office of Messerschmitt aviation engineers. Later, a small group of Red Army moved in, setting up in the living room camps for their soldiers and stables for their horses. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the house was converted first to a dance school in 1945, and,

353 Mies van der Rohe, "The Preconditions of Architectural Work (1928)," reprinted in Neumeyer, Artless Word, 299-301.

354 Grete and Fritz Tugendhat, "The inhabitants of the Tugendhat House Give their Opinion," in *Tugendhat House*, 74-77, quoted in 76. Translation slightly modified.

subsequently, from 1950 onward, into part of a children's hospital (fig. 4.26, 4.27 and 4.28). The large living room served first as a classroom and then a gymnasium for children suffering from orthopedic problems. From the middle 1980s to 1990s, the Tugendhat house was transformed into a conference center and guest house for the municipal authorities. One of the historic events it hosted was the signing of the separation of the Czech and Slovak to form two new nations by Valclav Klaus and Vladimir Meciar in August 1992. In 1993 the city council voted to restore it to the original condition and dedicated it for cultural purposes. Since then it has become a museum. In sixty years, the Tugendhat house has undergone great changes and witnessed the vicissitude of time. In constant alternations, it also attested Mies's theory of changefulness of building function and proved his flexible space to be practical.

The Tugendhat House was Mies's last residential project in the decade, and it signified a fulfilled conclusion of Mies's quest for a modern living. The Weissenhof apartments and the Tugendhat House marked two culminating point in Mies's transformation of living culture in the 1920s. In offering an adaptable spatial arrangement, the Weissenhof apartments thrust the residents into an underdetermined dwelling space where they were free but were also nudged to determine for themselves how they wanted to live. Though being a communal housing project, the Weissenhof apartments avoided enforcing a standardized lifestyle and devised living experience created by most mass housing programs. In encouraging residents to decide their own way of living, this work signified an explicit disapproval of submitting individuality to an artificial unity implied by communal housing lifestyle.

In the Tugendhat House, Mies proposed a thoroughly transformed domesticity that propelled its inhabitants to live free on a spiritual plateau. In contrast to the prevalent functionalist housings that focused primarily on meeting one's physical operations and compared to the more traditional dwellings that concentrated on domestic comfort, the Tugendhat House, in its liberating spatial effect, helped its inhabitants to overcome the excessive material desires and immerse in contemplation. Its skeleton structure, steel columns and glazing glass walls were represented in exquisite forms but nonetheless gave themselves to a reflective ambience. With its central theme dedicated to spirituality, despite of its material glamour, the house served as an antidote to the threat of the dominant material culture. In the end, Mies conveyed through the Tugendhat House an alternative lifestyle that is self-conscious, inward-looking, and as a self-discovery journey in a refreshed connection with the world beyond.

Conclusion

This dissertation views Mies's work through cultural and intellectual lenses and demonstrates his architectural development in the 1920s to be a result of his evolving perception of modern life. Most Mies experts have approached this development from a formal perspective and demonstrated how his new spatial formulation was inspired by De Stijl's paintings. This view raises a series of questions, such as why Mies chose this form over other forms and why the so called "flowing space" was a valid invention rather than a whimsical idea that struck him?[355] These questions reveal certain limitation of a formal interpretation: it can represent Mies's architectural evolution but cannot justify it sufficiently. To help solve this problem, this work examines Mies's work majorly from his intention rather than from its formal result. It investigates how his formal decisions were grounded and explicates why they constituted a vital development for an emerging living culture. In so doing, it also leads us to appreciate Mies's ideas and buildings not just for the sake of architectural history but more for how they make sense for a modern domesticity.

This dissertation offers an alternative, cultural interpretation of Mies's domestic architecture. Such a perspective prompts us to understand a residence from the lifestyle it suggests. Residing is living. Every residence, in its very layout, embodies a particular way

355 I avoid using the term "flowing space" in my dissertation because it is loaded with formal implications. I use "flexible space" instead to stress the practical nature of such a space.

of life and, in turn, when planning a dwelling, architects are inevitably promoting their visions of life.

Many noted residential works suggested a living pattern that reflected the designers' lifestyles, either as a direct mirror of it or a reform upon it. For example, in the late 1920s, Corbusier proposed a system of furniture that was moveable and combinable. Taking tables as example, Corbusier claimed that he preferred light and small tables because they could be moved easily so that he could dine anywhere, and by combining them into a large table, he could entertain a party group.[356] His explanation revealed a spontaneous lifestyle that he was obviously favored of and probably practiced very much himself. R.M. Schindler's Kings Road house provides another apt example. In an article published in *Los Angeles Times* in 1926, Schindler proposed that in an ideal house, "the garden will become an integral part of the house…each individual will want a private room to gain a background for his life. He will sleep in the open."[357] This arrangement mirrored that of his Kings Road House in 1922 and conveyed very much he and his wife Pauline's bohemian lifestyle.[358] In the genial weather of southern California, they spent a lot of time

356 Le Corbusier, "L' Amēnagement Intērieur," translated into German by Alfred Roth, his assistant at Weissenhof, into "Die Innenausstattung unserer Häuser auf dem Weissenhof," was published in Werner Gräff, ed., *Innenräume*, 122-25. Quoted in Kirsch*, The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 115.

357 R. M. Schindler, "Shelter and Playground," in Philip M. Lovell, "Care of the Body," *Los Angeles Times* (2 May 1926).

358 Schindler built the house in 1922 for two young couples, including himself and Pauline, and their friends Clyde and Marian Chace. It consists primarily of four studios arranged in two pairs. Each inhabitant has his private studio, and each pair of studios formed an L-shape open to patio through sliding doors. The house provides no bedrooms, and inhabitants sleep in open porches on roof.

living outside, enjoyed intimate connections among friends, and, from time to time, desired solitary retreats for creation.[359]

Corbusier and Schindler's examples demonstrated how architects tended to propose in their works a lifestyle based on a revision of their own living experience. Therefore, it would be helpful to understand their work from a biographic perspective. Yet surprisingly, historians have rarely approached the question this way: they examined the biographic aspects of architects in search of their educational backgrounds but rarely in order to understand how their lifestyles may have affected their work. This is probably because available sources of a personal inquiry were mostly elusive and fragmented to support a comprehensive investigation. But we do not need to know everything in order to understand something, sometimes a small part of it informs us an overall picture. It is especially true when we are dealing with something as banal as one's ordinary life. The very regularity of one's daily life renders it accessible: if we piece together the known facts, as long as they feature a pattern, the unknowns are dissolved into this pattern.

Some residential works, on the other hand, had little to do with their architects' living experience. Instead, they promoted a more radical vision of life framed by contemporary social and cultural hypotheses. Gropius's high-rise tenement project in 1929 and 1930 offers a meet paradigm of this type. This project was inspired by the social-individualism theory put forward in early 1910s by Franz Müller-Lyer, a German

359 Robert Sweeney gave an account of how the Schindler couple lived and their colorful social life in the Kings Road house based on a close examination of their personal letters and interviews with their friends, in "Life at Kings Road: As it was, 1920-1940," in *The Architecture of R.M. Schindler*, ed. Elizabeth A. Smith et al. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001), 86-115.

psychologist and sociologist.[360] Müller-Lyer believed that the modern age represented the final stage of human cultural development, which characterized social-individualist beings and focused on interactions between the single person and the society. This stage featured a social transformation in which the discrete structure of family would disintegrate and be subject to socialization. Müller-Lyer proposed to reform dwellings accordingly and promoted the idea of master households as a means to facilitate the interactions among individuals and accelerate the transformation.[361] But, Müller-Lyer himself had never experienced master households, nor had Gropius, who, at the time, lived in a luxurious twelve-room apartment near the Leipzig Platz in Berlin.[362] Despite that, Gropius found great resonance in Müller-Lyer's theory and implemented many of its ideas in his high-rise tenement project, including the master household. In attempt to enforce residents to socialize, Gropius designed a grand communal lounge for all inhabitants, relocated many living functions here and compressed individual spaces to a minimum size.[363] In this kind of work, the proposed life mode was informed by contemporary social or cultural theories,

360 Although Müller-Lyer was best known today for Müller-Lyer illusion, a visual illusion named after him, in the 1920s he was a celebrated sociologist and his sociological writings enjoyed a high circulation in Germany.

361 The idea of master households was informed by nineteenth-century ideals of utopian socialists such as Robert Owen and Charles Fouier and was further spread by Ebenezer Howard on Garden City.

362 Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius: An Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991),150.

363 For more about Walter Gropius's high-rise communal housing projects and its relation to the lifestyle of a new man, see Tanja Poppelreuter, "Social Individualism: Walter Gropius and his Appropriation of Franz Müller-Lyer's Idea of a New Man," in *Journal of Design History* 24, No. 1 (2011): 37-58.

so it is helpful to understand their connection through a close reading of these theories and analyze how they framed the architects' design decisions.

Mies's view of modern living was informed by both his personal experience and the contemporary discussions on the intellectual potentials of modern living. Each inspired a culminating project in his quest for a new form of living, and this work employed both biographic and analytical approach to understand his development.

With little prospect to build anything in the Nazi regime, Mies moved to the United States in 1938 and became the director of the architecture school at Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. In his Inaugural Address, he elucidated the great distinction between the elemental and the ultimate goal of education: "All education must begin with the practical side of life. If one wants to address real education, however, one must transcend this to mold the personality, leading to an improvement of mankind."[364] The two discrete levels of education seem to mirror nicely his own development in the 1920s, which started by fulfilling the practical needs of a flexible living and then aimed to facilitate a sounder subjective culture. From the practical to the spiritual, his architectural development also conforms to Nietzsche and Simmel's idea of art formation: art stems from a will to serve life and eventually channels new ideas back to life and transforms it.

If we compare Mies's personal evolution against the larger development of modernist movement, he seemed to be an anomaly within his generation and did not quite fit in. Since the early 1920s, he stood at the very center of the modern architecture

364 Mies van der Rohe, "Inaugural Address as Director of Architecture at Armour Institute of Technology," November 20, 1938. Manuscript in the Library of Congress, reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 316.

movement, but he was never in the center of its most prevalent discourse. In most heated discussions and debates, his positions remained ambivalent, and more often than not, he went against the prevalent propositions of his modernist colleagues. For examples, when most avant-garde architects embraced industrialized construction and advocated "rationalization and standardization," he claimed that it was merely means and should not be overemphasized. In facing the severe housing shortage, most modernist architects were concentrating on cutting down the cost and increasing building efficiency, but Mies viewed the economic problem as minor concerns and maintained that the core value of architecture lay in its cultural mission. When most of his colleagues explored scientific methods to create minimum dwellings, he simply condemned it as inhuman and insisted on offering generous private space for individuals. All his oppositions came from one simple conviction that building art is a cultural affair and thus architects should concern themselves most with what kind of value they wanted to convey through their work.

Seen in this light, Mies's acclaimed role as a leader in the modern movement seemed rather suspicious, if not misleading. Cast as a pioneer in the modern architecture movement, he was usually considered foremost as a functionalist and technologist.[365] This work shows that he was neither, at least not in a pure sense. In order to fulfill architecture's cultural task, he was willing to let technical or functional concerns slide. Scholars also tended to attribute the beauty of his work to his masterful wielding of new materials and construction. This may be partially true but I believe it somehow misses the point, because

[365] I use the term "technologist" loosely here. It refers to someone who is primarily interested in applying technology properly and endowing it with a refined expression.

it is the intention to evoke human spirit, rather than to represent technology, that constitutes the overriding keynote of his work and casts a glorifying spell on the technology he employed.

For Mies, one of the critical problems of modern times was that as technology impinges on everyday life, the spiritual dimension of life was diminishing swiftly. Just as his colleagues chose to tackle the problem of housing shortage, Mies selected to restore the spiritual dimension of life as his battle field. In masterfully expressing technology, Mies did not intend to celebrate it, but, rather, he wished to offset its deficiencies and compensate for them. This very intention was founded upon a balanced understanding of both the merits and downsides of modern technology. From Simmel and Romano's teaching, Mies understood that the new technology was a fact of modern times that one had to deal with, but the act of engaging with modern technology was a highly dialectic one as it was impossible to embrace the new technology without simultaneously being subjugated by it. This process represented the very contradictory feature of modernity in general. "To be fully modern is to be anti-modern," as Berman Marshall put admirably, "it has been impossible to grasp and embrace the modern world's potentialities without loathing and fighting against some of its most palpable realities."[366]

Mies's efforts and struggle in the 1920s indicated that at the very heart of his architecture is humanity. In his quest for modern living, he accomplished primarily two things. For ordinary people, he created a free, underdetermined space in his Weissenhof

366 Berman Marshall, *all that Is Solid Melts into Air*, Penguin edition (New York, NY.: Penguin Books, 1988), 14.

apartments and urged them to determine a lifestyle for themselves through the application of movable walls. For educated, elite clients, he proposed in the Tugendhat House to make reflection a dominant part of their lifestyle and in so doing, fostered a sound development of subjective culture.

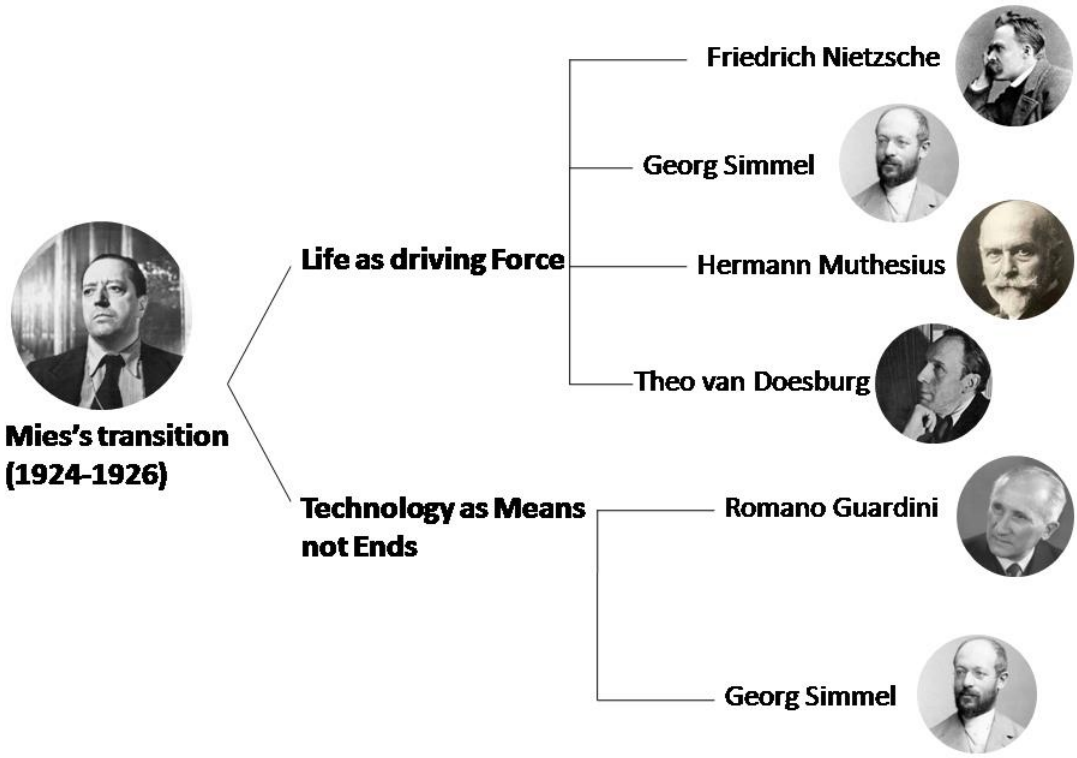
Mies's domestic architecture in the 1920s and his propositions for a transformed living provide us a new framework to rethink what architecture is and what it ought to offer. We might apply Mies's criteria to test our work, as if he were asking once again

> Is the world as it presents itself bearable for man?
> Is it worthy of man or too lowly?
> Does it offer room for the highest form of human dignity? Can it be shaped so as to be worthwhile to live in?
> And finally: is the world noble enough to respond to man's duty to erect a high and magnanimous order?[367]

This mentality, more than his refined spatial and technological language, constituted Mies's most valuable legacy for us.

367 Mies van der Rohe, unpublished lecture manuscript, occasion and date unknown. Its heading on cover sheet: "Manuscript of one important address Mies gave here in German." It suggested that it might be for a speech in Chicago not long after he immigrated here. Library of Congress. Reprinted in Neumeyer, *the Artless Word*, 325-326. Quoted in 325.

Figures



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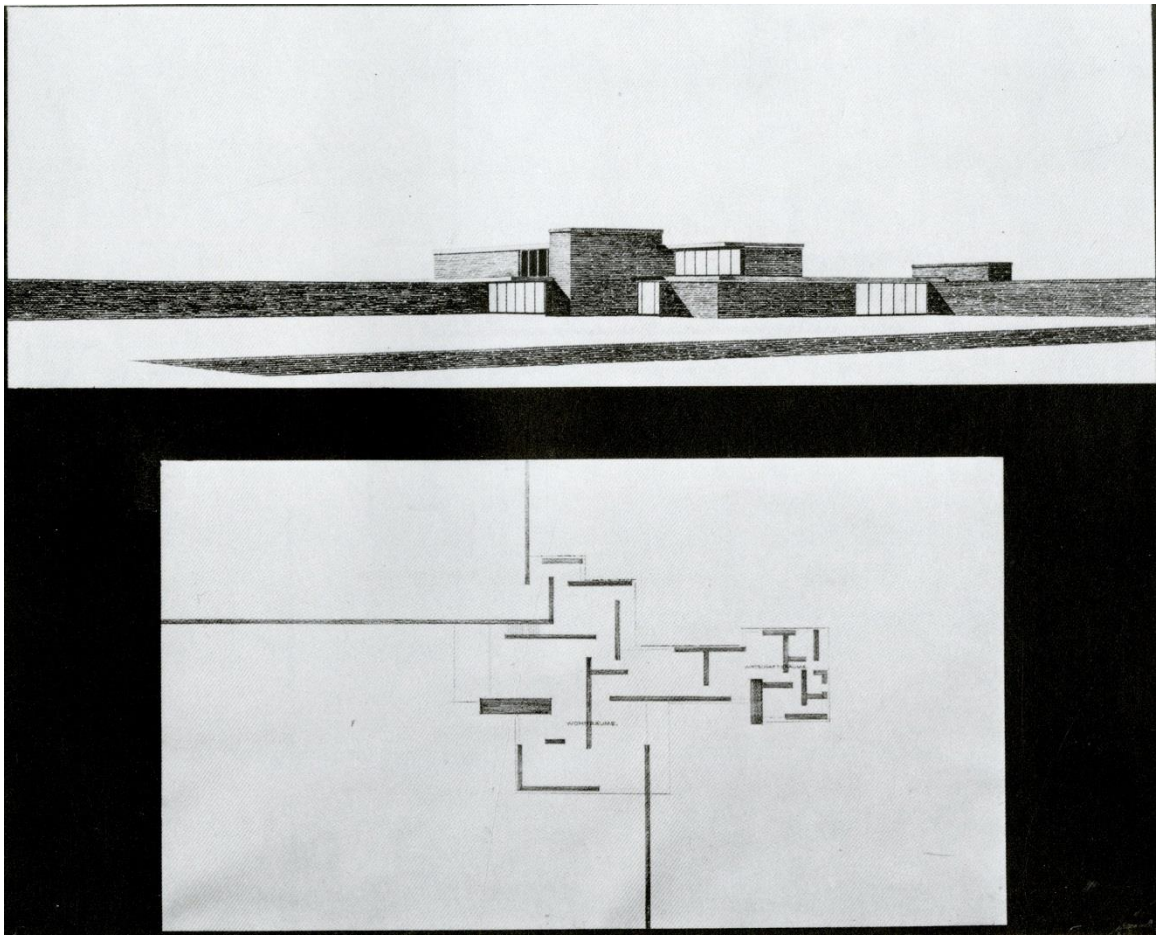

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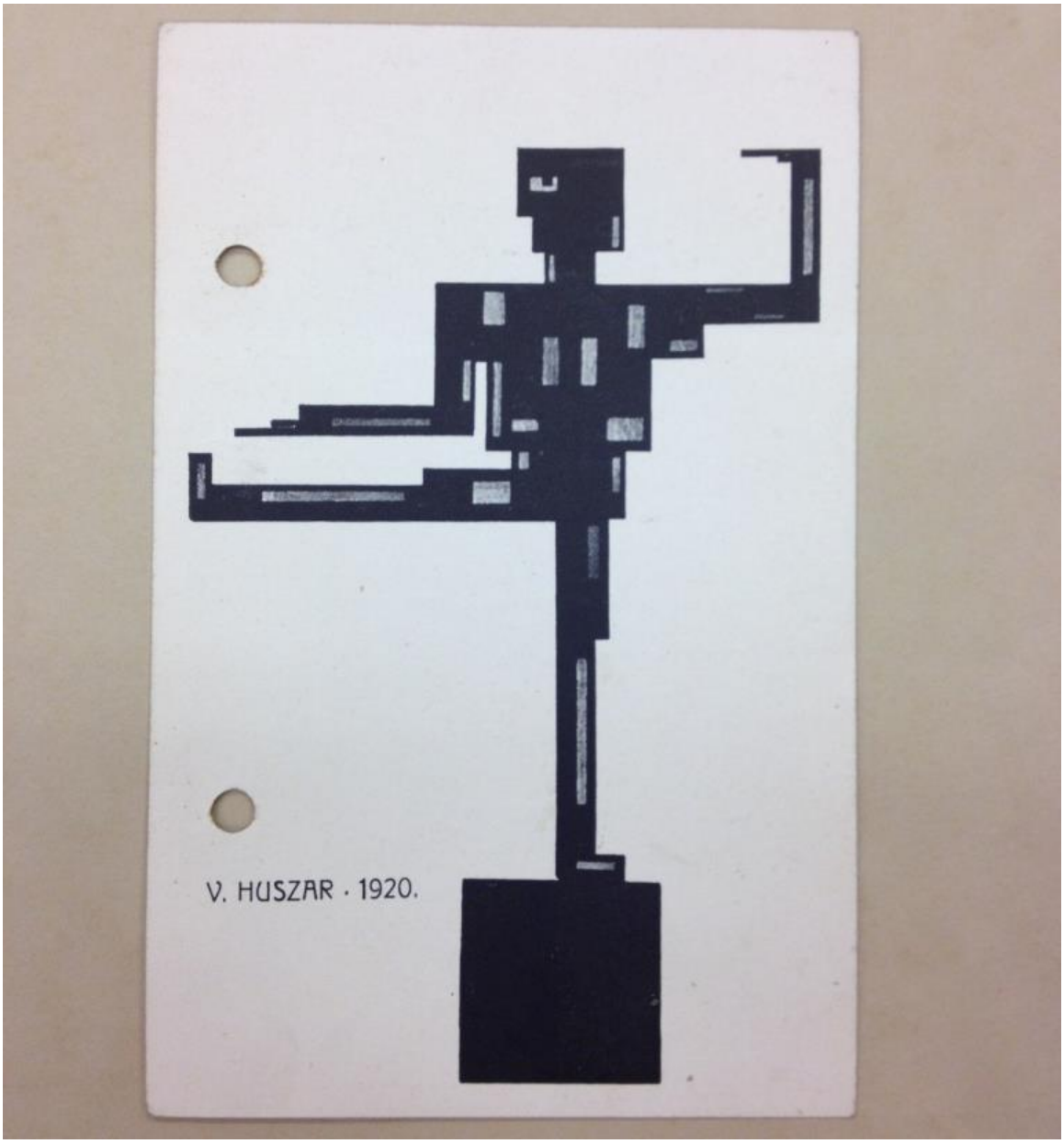

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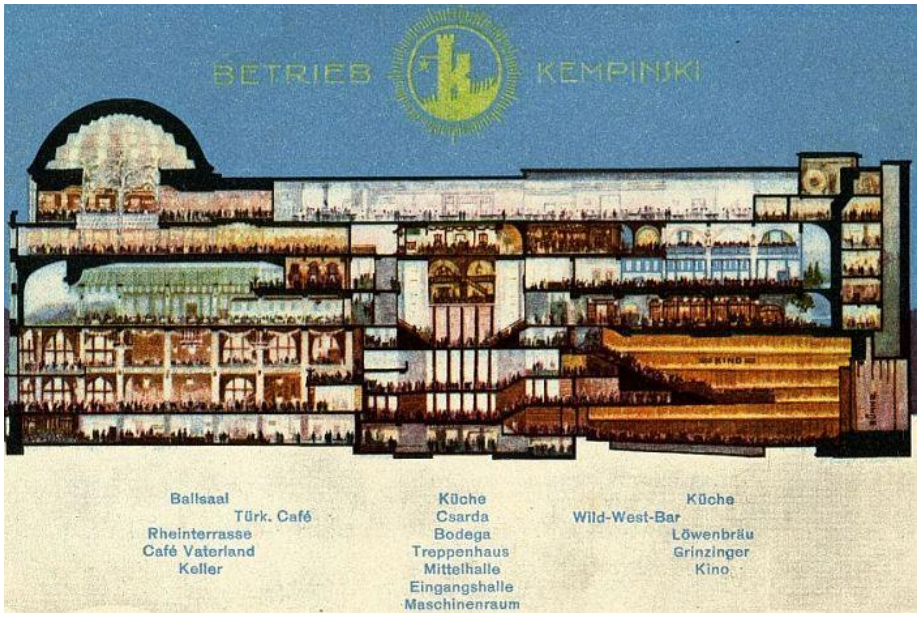
Figure 2.3. Wertheim Department Store on the Leipziger Platz, 1927. (Wikipedia."Potsdamer Platz." Last modified on 15 October, 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsdamer_Platz).



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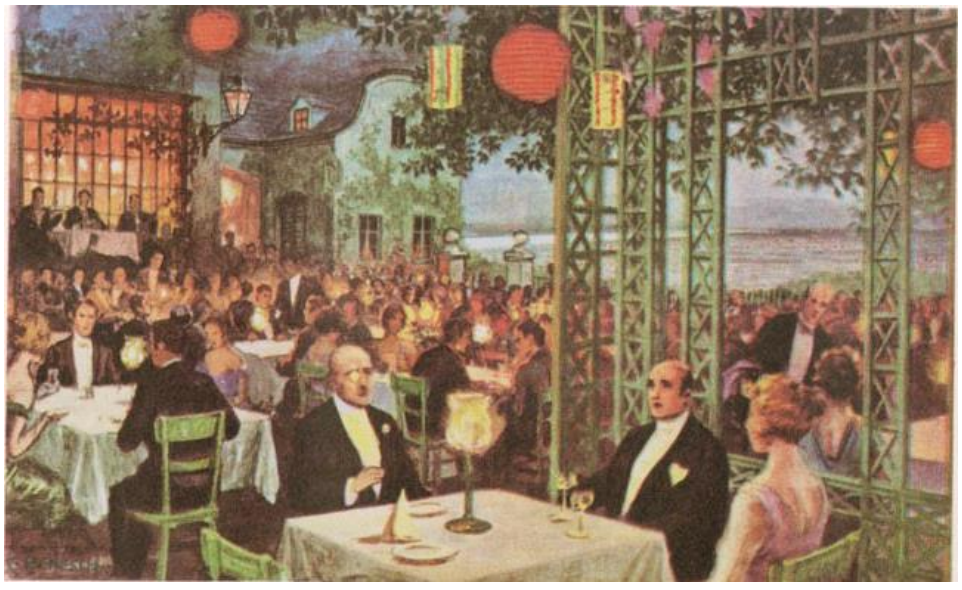

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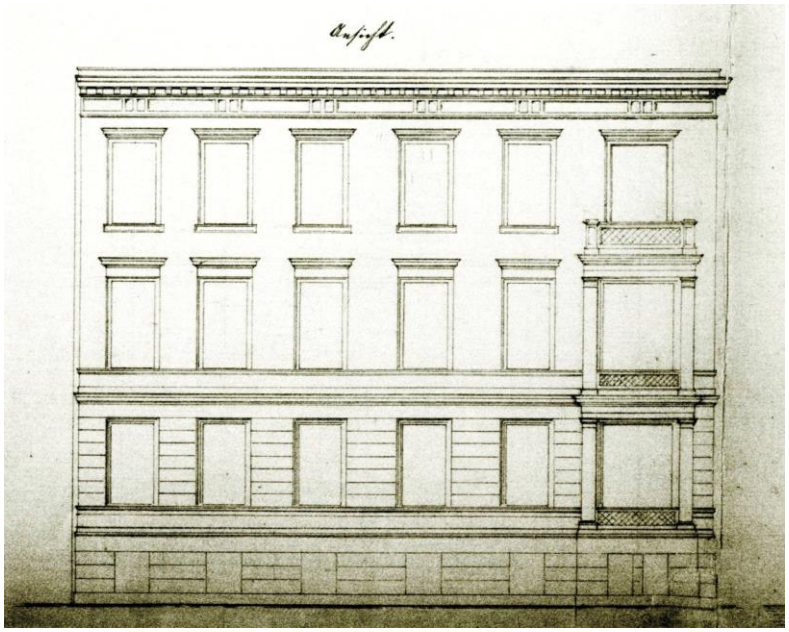

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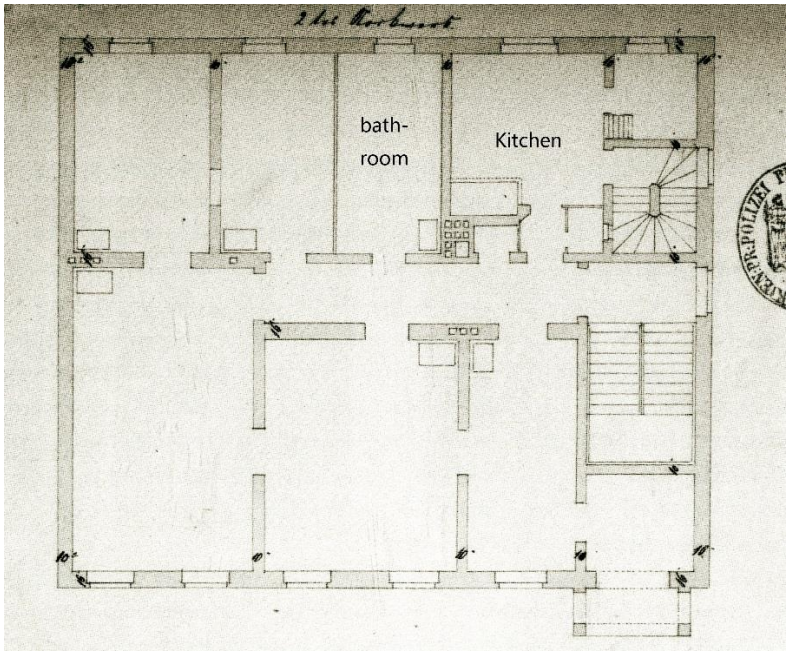

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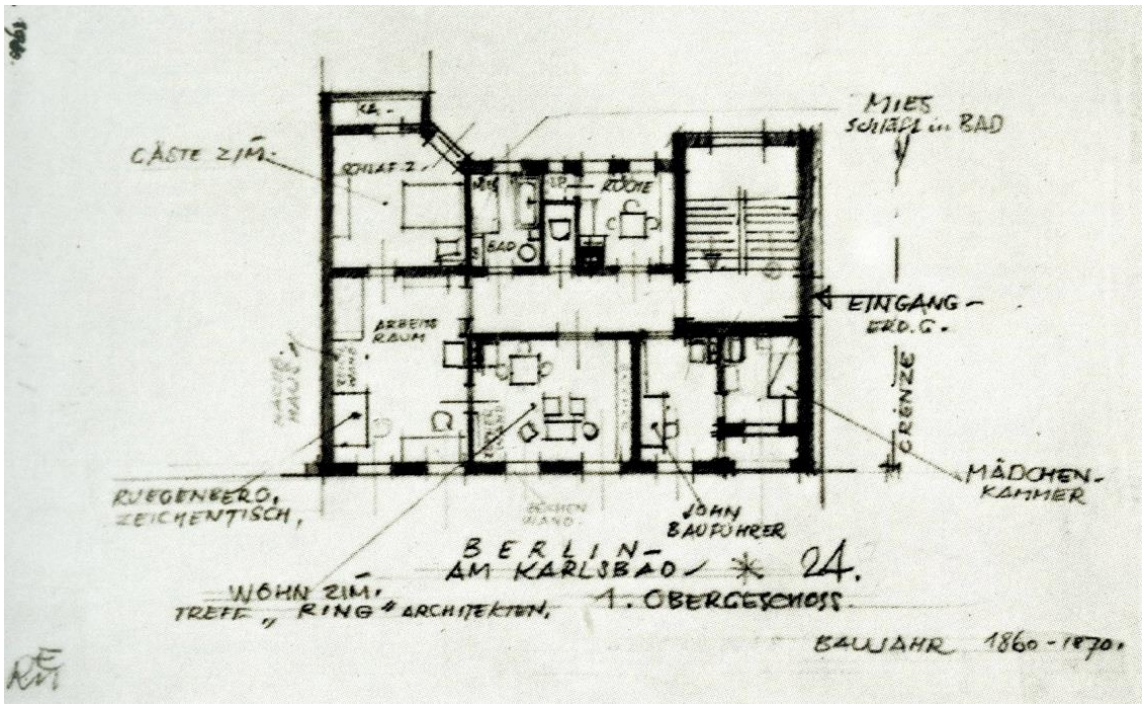

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Figure 2.13. Mies van der Rohe in his studio working on a drawing, 1927/1928. (Wolf Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe: The Villas and Country Houses* [Cambridge: The MIT Press] Illus. 28).

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Figure 2.15. masthead of G no.3, Mies's address "Am Karlsbad 24" was in the middle part. (Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* [Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1991], 17).

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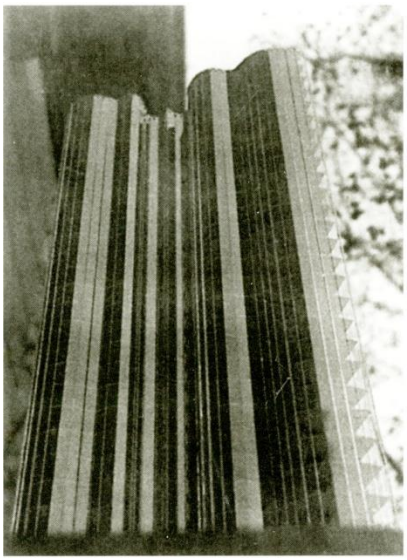

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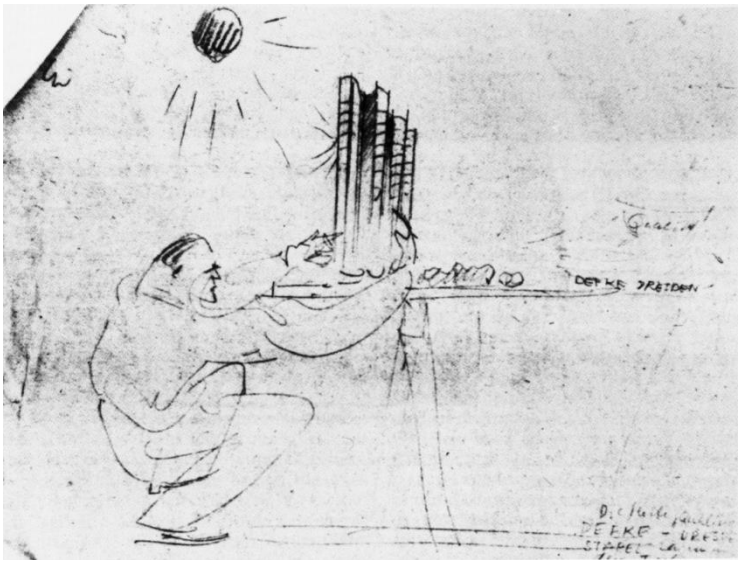

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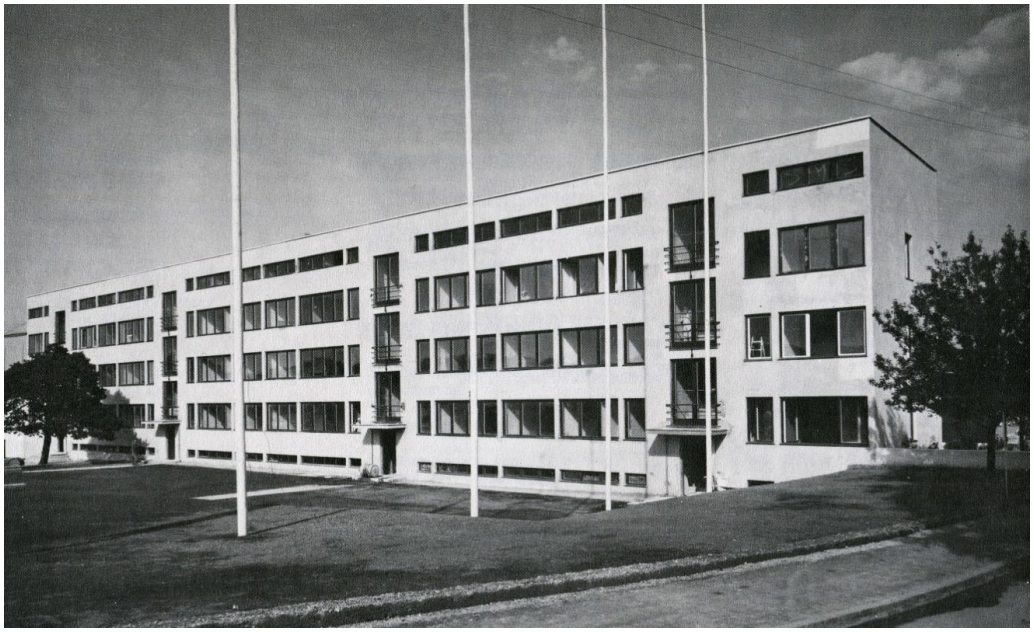


Figure 3.1. Apartment Building, Weissenhof Housing Exhibition, 1927. (*The Mies van der Rohe Archive*, 216).

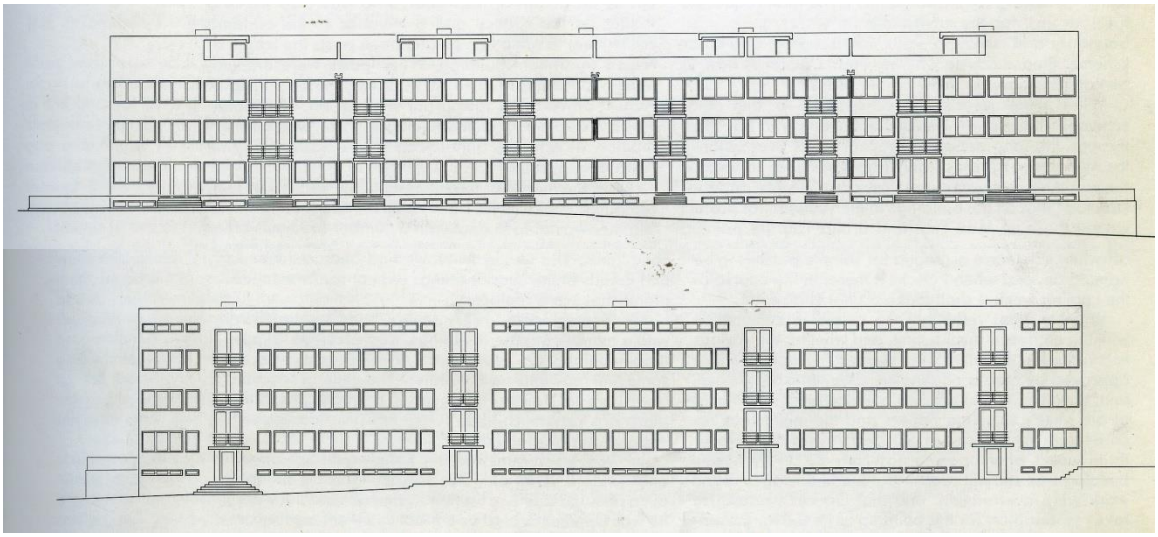
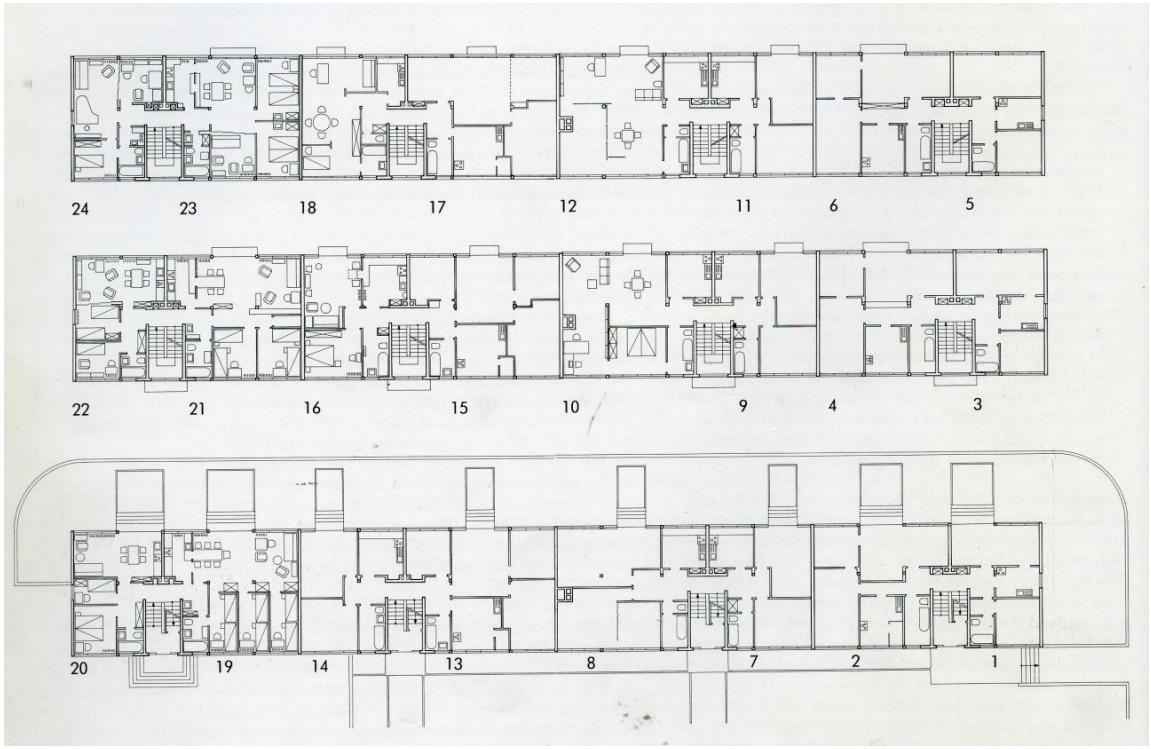


Figure 3.2. (upper) Southeast elevation, (below) Northwest elevation, Apartment Building, Weissenhof Housing Exhibition, 1927. (Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung: Experimental Housing Built for the Deutscher Werkbund*, Stuttgart, 1927 [New York: Rizzoli], 53).



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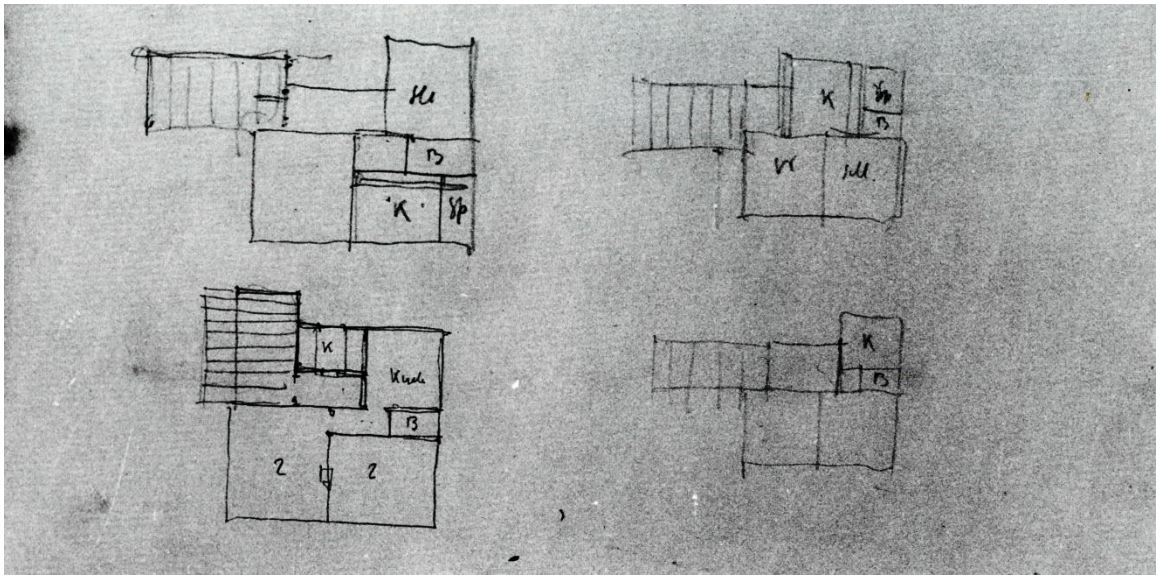
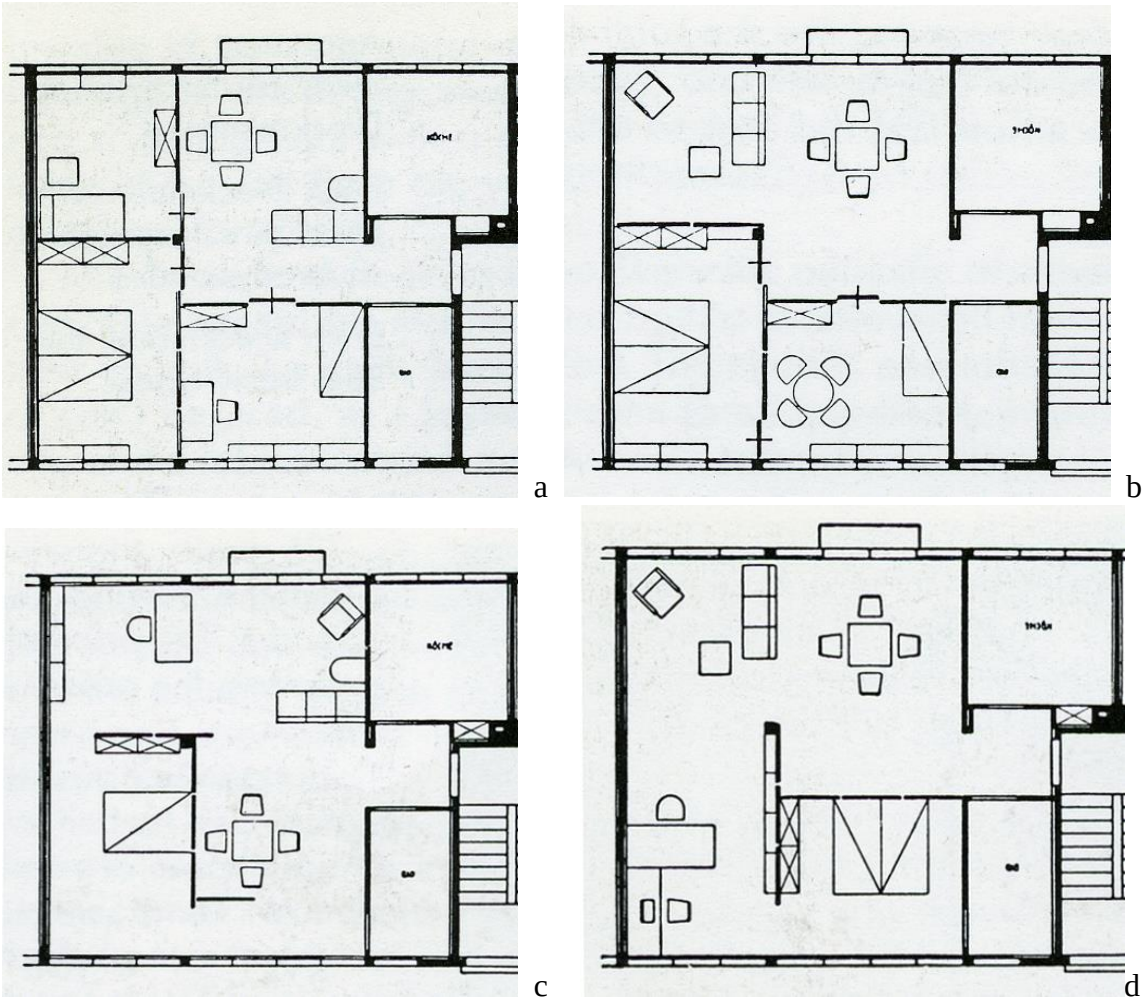


Figure 3.4. Mies's sketches studying apartment plans, Weissenhof apartment building, 1927. (*The Mies van der Rohe Archive*, no. 4.178)



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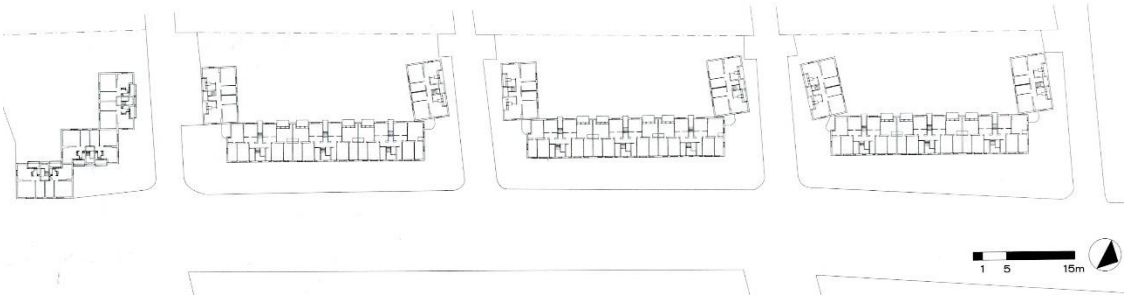

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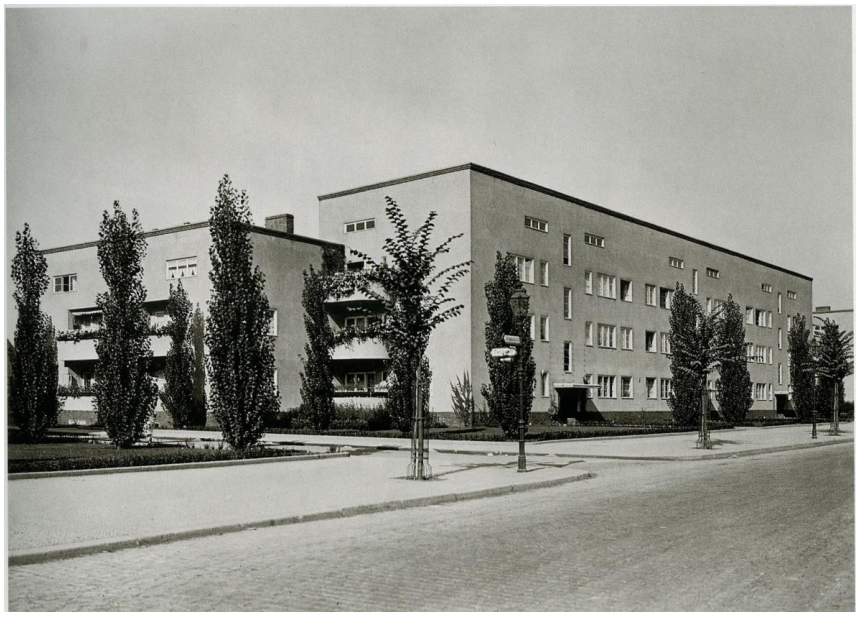

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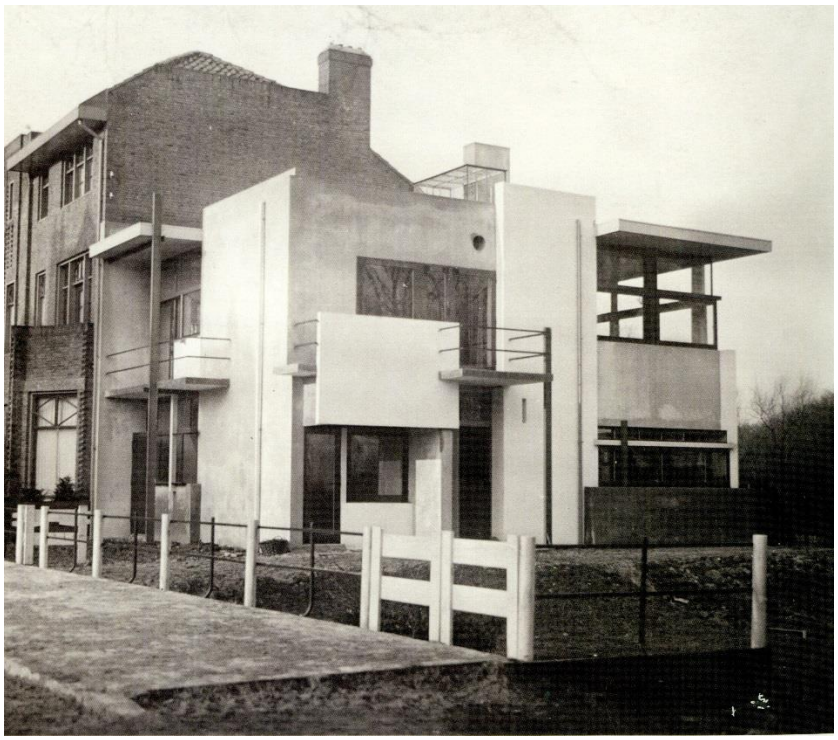
Figure 3.8. Apartment 10 by Mies van der Rohe, Apartment Building, Weissenhof Housing Exhibition, 1927 (Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung*, 65).

Figure 3.9. MR Chair, 1927. (Knoll. “Knoll Studio: MR Chair.” Accessed October 19, 2016, http://www.knoll.com/product/mr-chair)

Figure 3.10. MR Table, 1927 (Knoll. “MR Table,” accessed October 19, 2016, http://www.knoll.com/product/mr-table)



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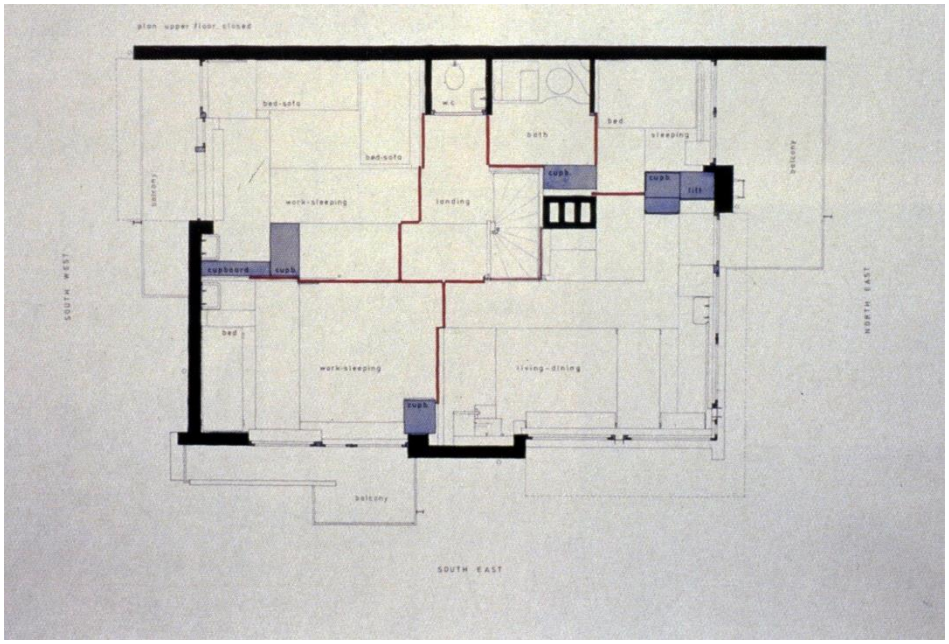


Figure 3.12. Plan of upper floor, Rietveld Schröder house, Utrecht, Netherland, 1924. (Zijl, *Gerrit Rietveld*, 62).

Figure 3.13. Weissenhof Apartment, furnished by Lilly Reich, 1927. (*Bau und Wohnung* [Stuttgart: F. Wedekind & Co., 1927] 86).

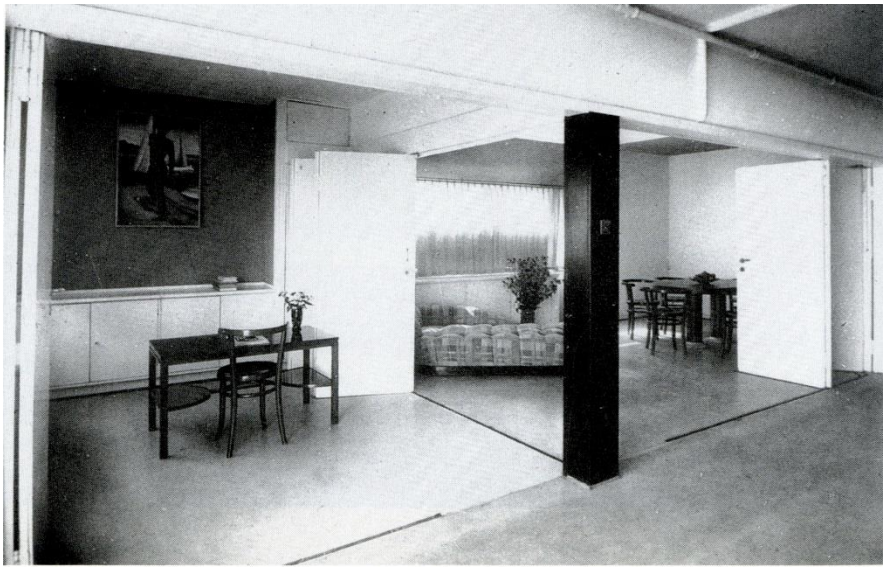


Figure 3.14. Adolf Rading, Single Family House at Weissenhof, a view to the living-dining room. (Richard Pommer and Christian Otto, Weissenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], fig. 157)

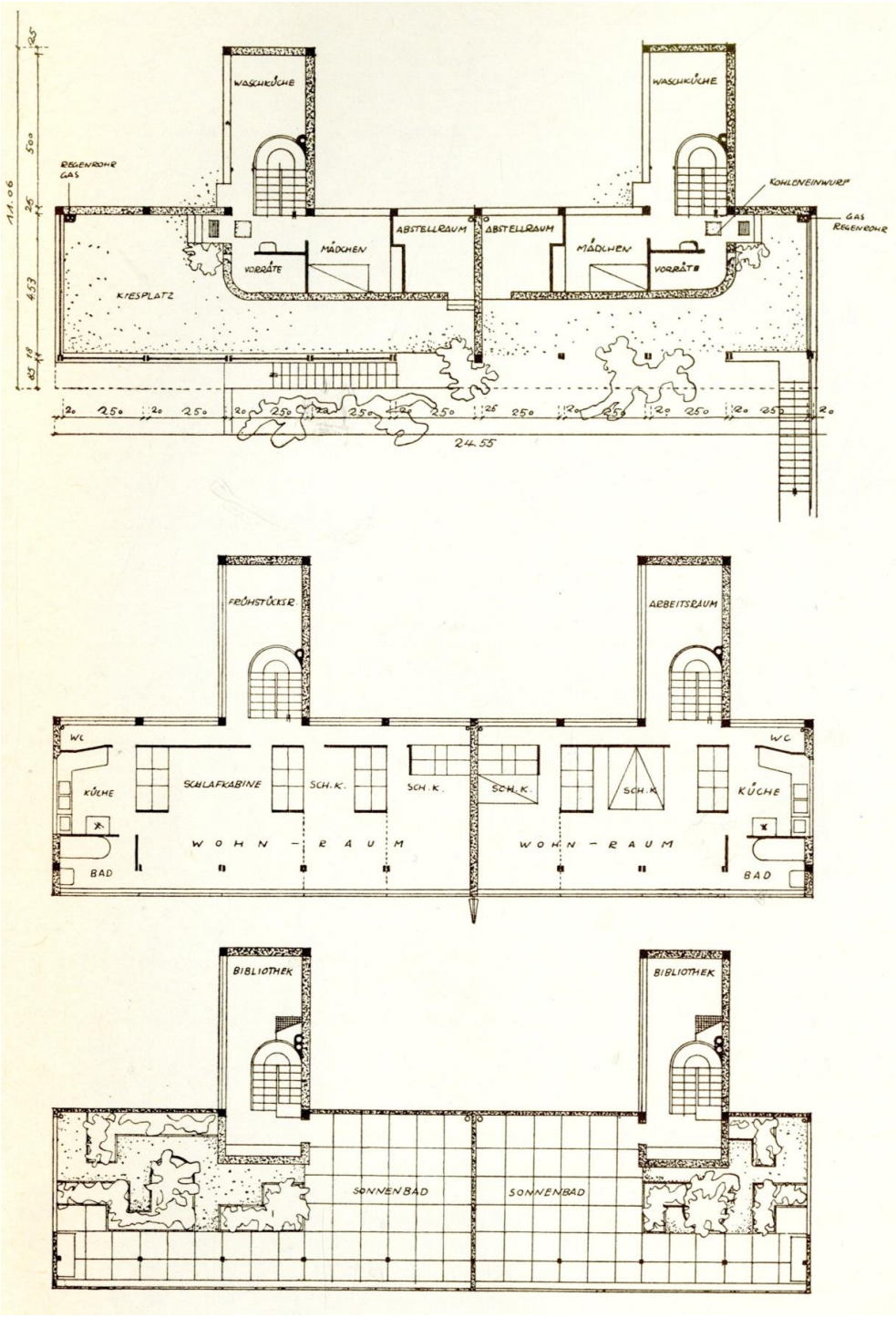
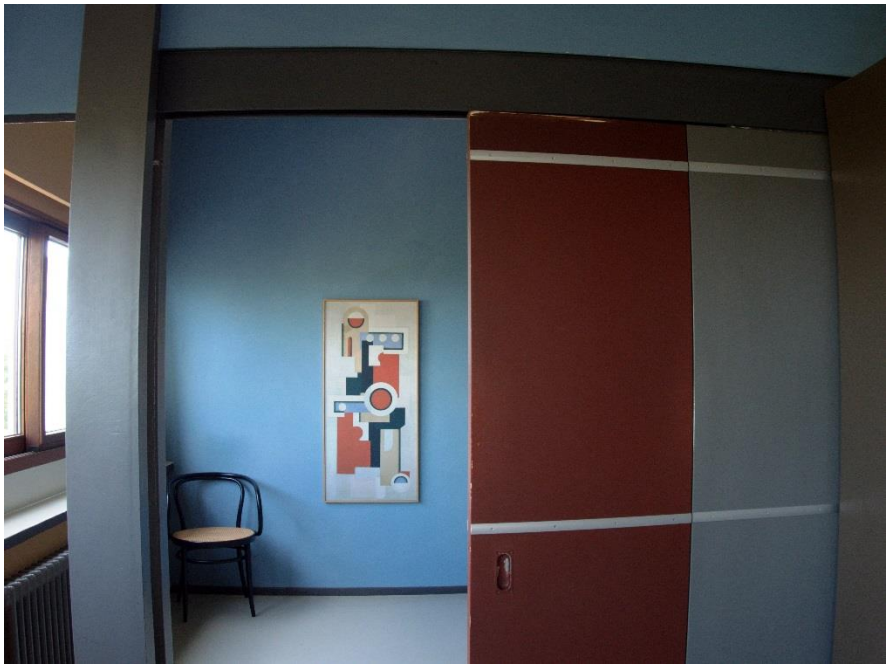


Figure 3.15. (top to bottom) gound floor, living floor and roof garden floor. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, double house, Weissenhof Housing Exhibition, 1927(*Bau und Wohnung* [Stuttgart: F. Wedekind & Co., 1927], 29).



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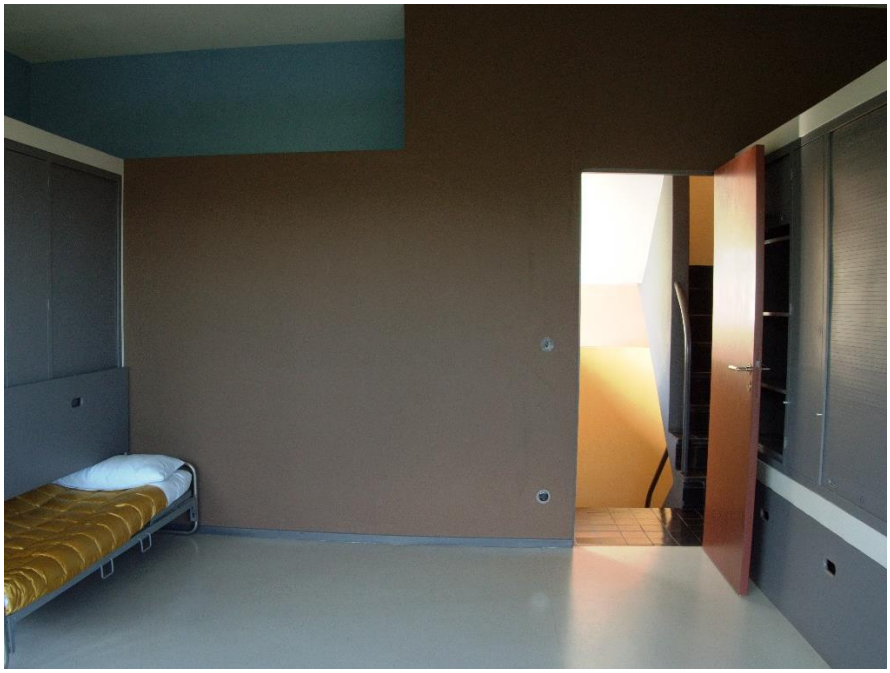

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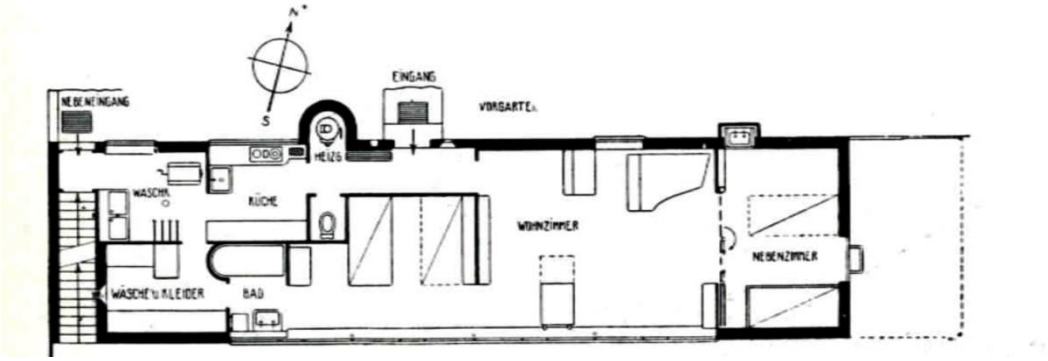

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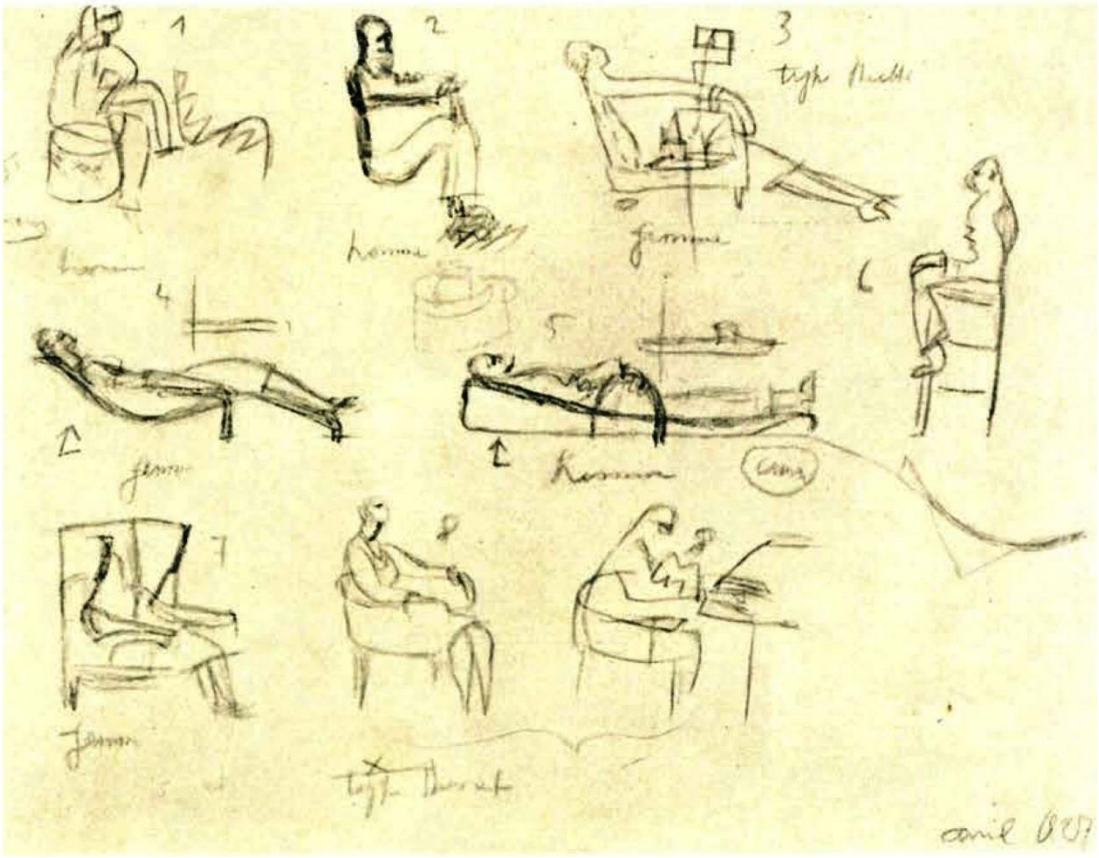

Figure 3.19. Le Corbusier, Study of different chairs and sitting positions, April 1927. The drawing was probably made in preparation for the design of new pieces of furniture for the houses at the Weissenhof exhibition (Arthur Rüegg and Klaus Spechtenhauser, Le Corbusier: Furniture and Interiors 1905-1965[Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2012], 101).

Figure 4.1. Lange House, garden front, Krefeld, 1927-1930. (Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Architecture for the Silk Industry* [Berlin: Nicolai, 2011]), 113).

Figure 4.2. Ester House, garden front, Krefeld, 1927-1929. (Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, 120).

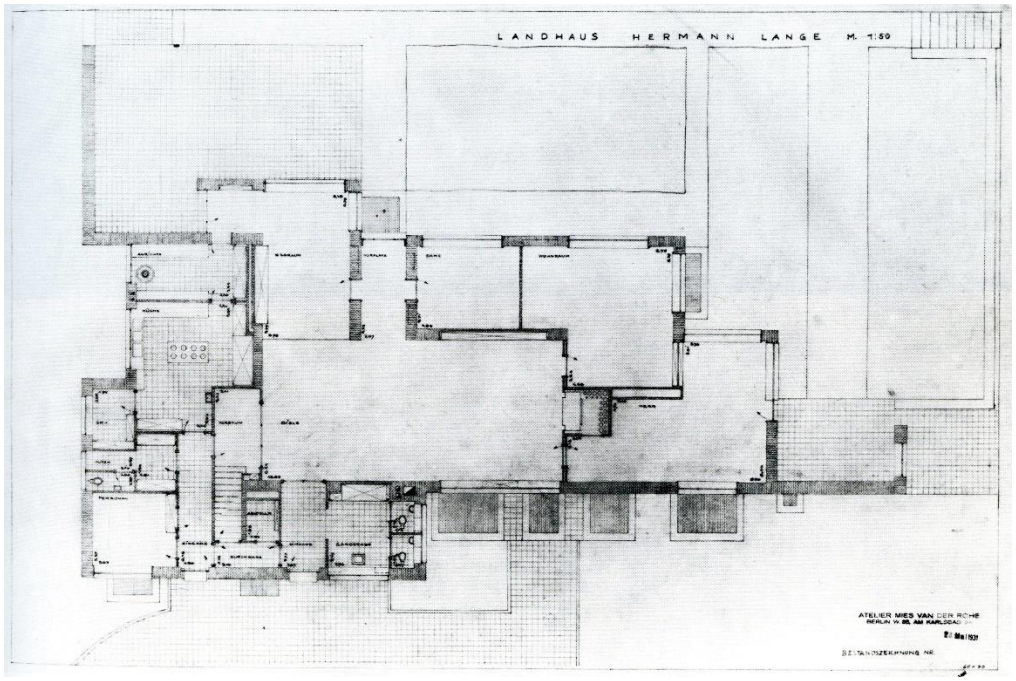

Figure 4.3. Ground Floor Plan, Lange House, Krefeld, 1927-1930 (Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe*, Illus. 8.5).

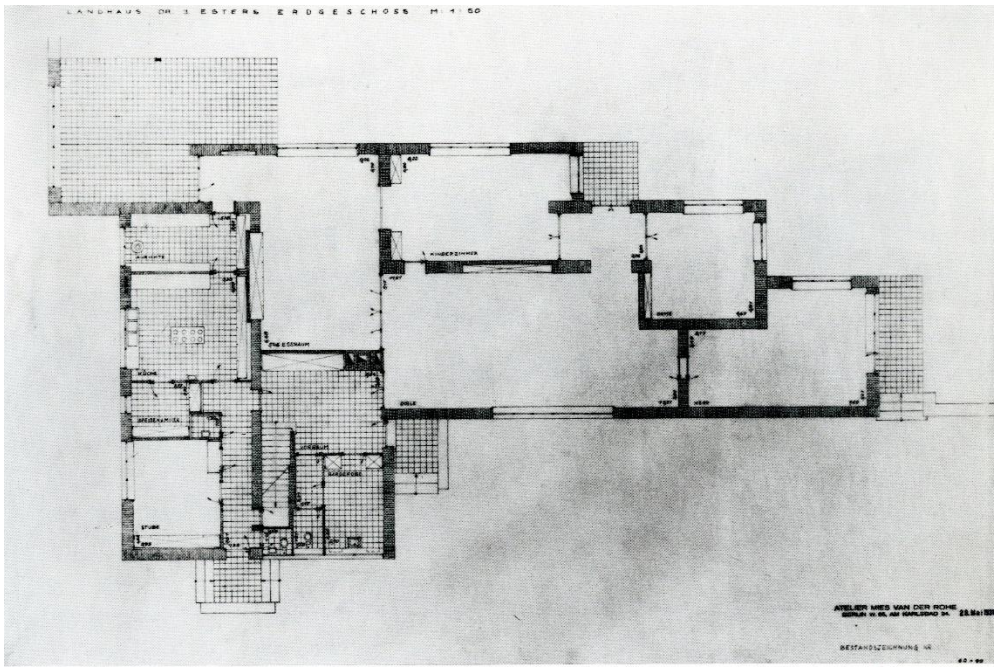

Figure 4.4. Ground Floor Plan , Esters House, Krefeld, 1927-1930 (Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe*, Illus. 7.9).

Figure 4.5. the Perls house, view of loggia from the garden, Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1911-1912 (*Mies in Berlin*, Fig. 19).

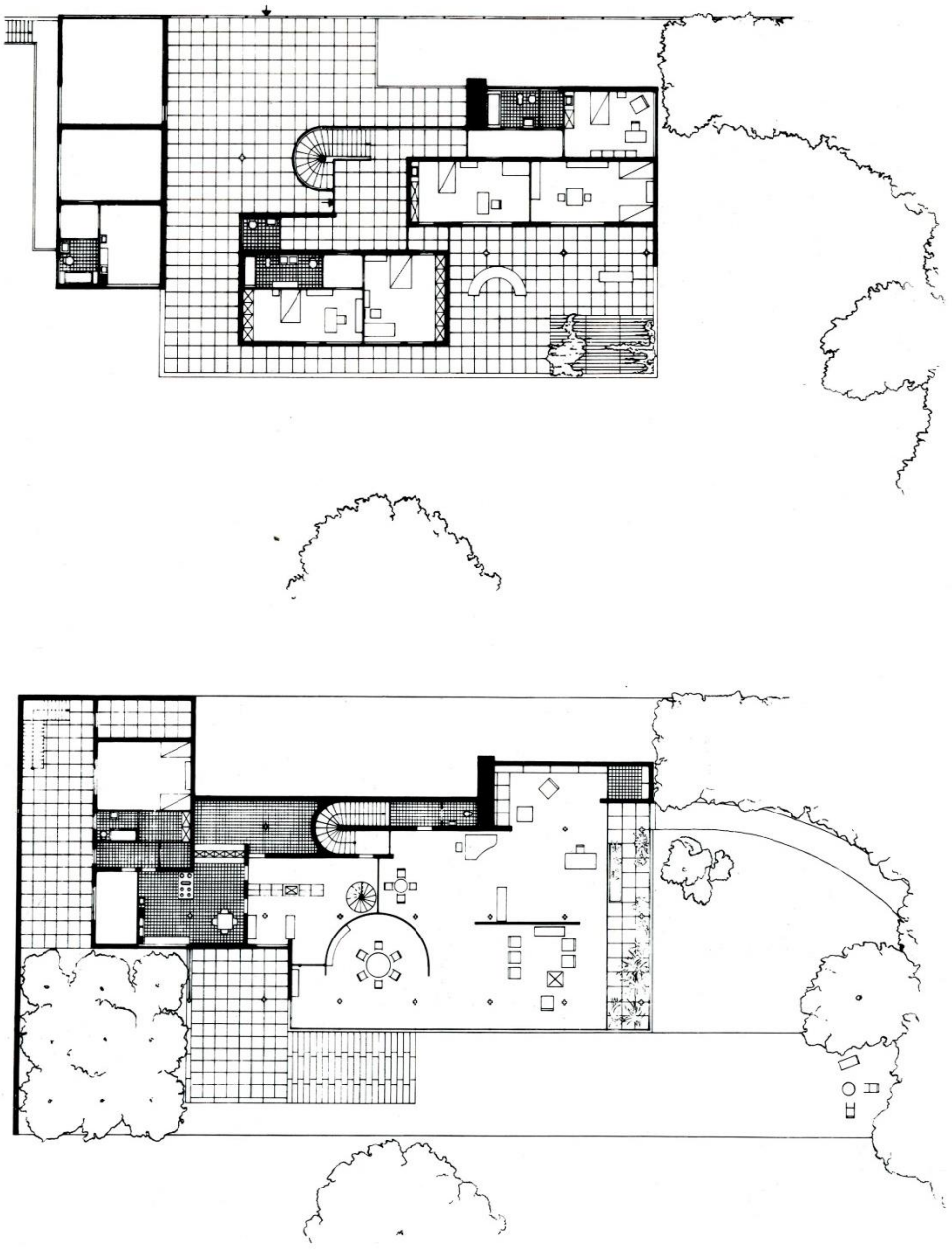

Figure 4.6. (upper, a) plan of upper floor; (lower, b) plan of living floor, the Tugendhat House, Brno, 1929 (Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe,* Fig. 11.18, 11.19).

Figure 4.7. Grete Tugendhat's bedroom (Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, *Tugendhat House: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe* [Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015] Fig. 68).

Figure 4.8. Fritz Tugendhat's bedroom (Hammer-Tugendhat, *Tugendhat House*, Fig. 71).

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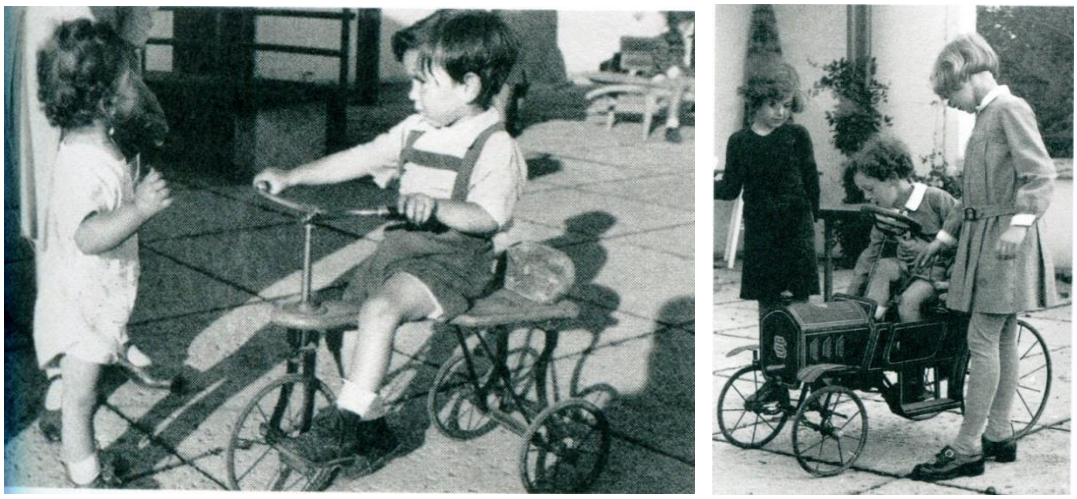

Figure 4.10. (left) Upper terrace, Ernst Tugendhat and cousin ride a bike (right) Upper terrace, Hanna and friends (Hammer-Tugendhat, *Tugendhat House*, Fig. 35 and 37).

Figure 4.11. Tugendhat House, view from the Schwarzfeldgasse. (Villa Tugendhat. "Photogallery 2012." Accessed October 19, 2016. http://www.tugendhat.eu/en/photogallery-2012.html)

Figure 4.12. A view to the old town on the upper floor (Photographed by author).

Figure 4.13. the public entrance, Tugendhat House, 1929 (Photographed by author).

Figure 4.14. the frosted walls of vestibule, Tugendhat House, 1929 (Photographed by author).

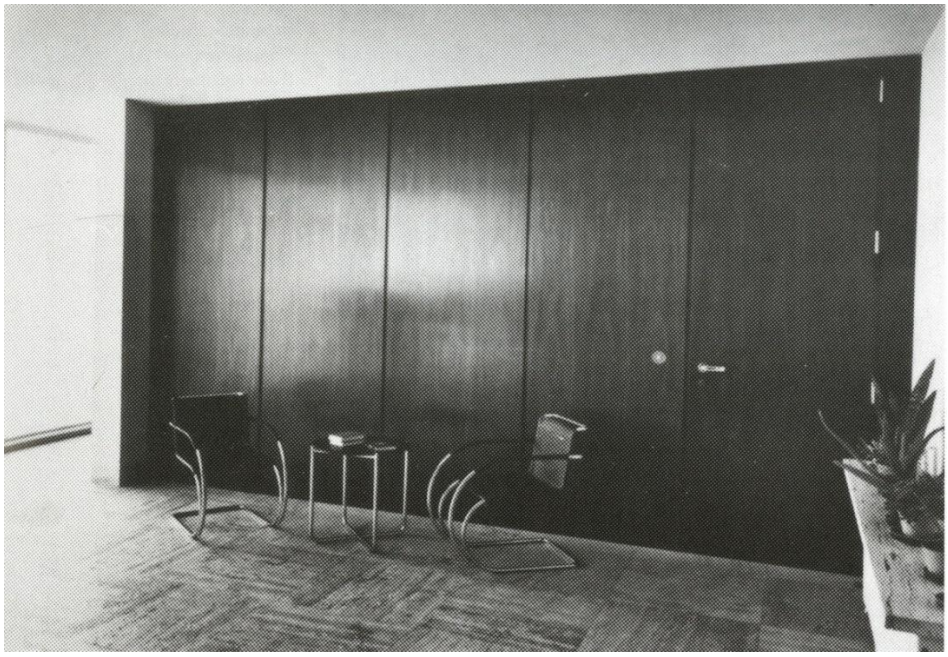

Figure 4.15. the vestibule, the Tugendhat House, cantilevered side chairs and table in front of rosewood back wall.(Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: The Tugendhat House* [New York: Springer, 2000] Fig. 79).

Figure 4.16. A view at the entrance of the living floor, Tugendhat House, 1929 (Photographed by author).

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Figure 4.19. A view to the outside from the sitting area. (Photographed by author).

Figure 4.20. The sitting area in front of the onyx wall (Photographed by author).

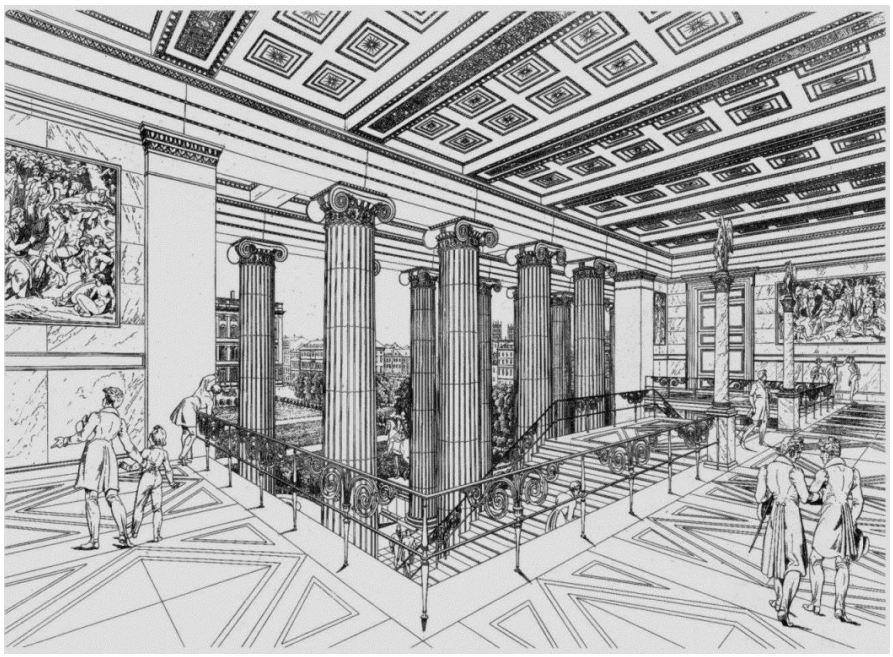
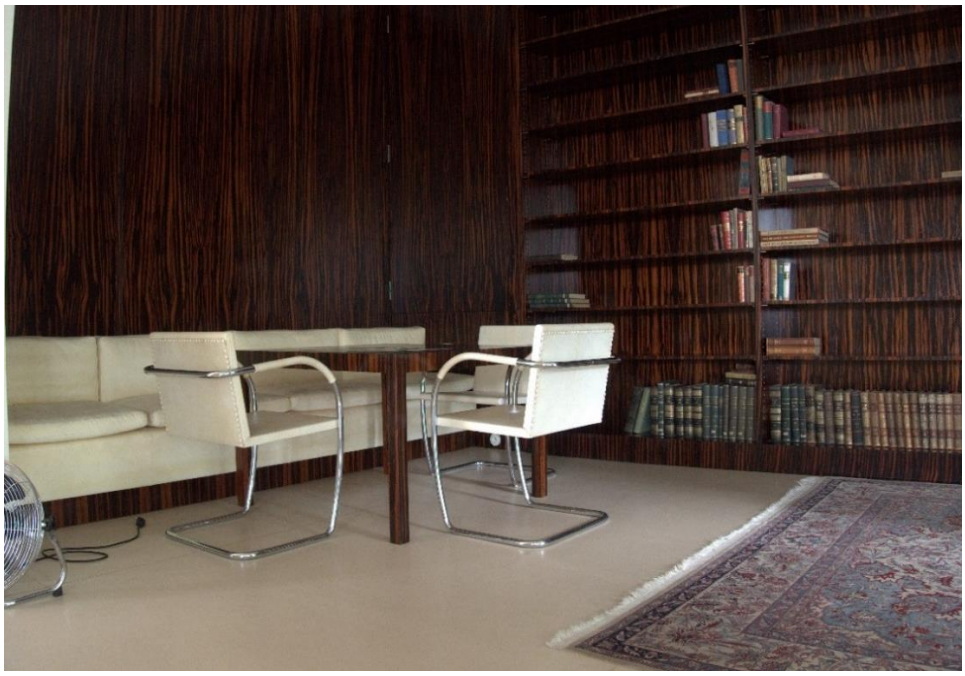


Figure 4.21. A view of the Lustgarten and Berlin city center from the upper vestibule, Altes Museum, 1831 (Christoph Martin Vogtherr, "Views and Approaches: Schinkel and Landscape Gardening," in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1781-1841: The Drama of Architecture*, ed. John Zukowsky et al. [Germany: Wasmuth, 1994], Fig. 15).

Figure 4.22. The reflective effects of glass curtain walls. (Photographed by author).



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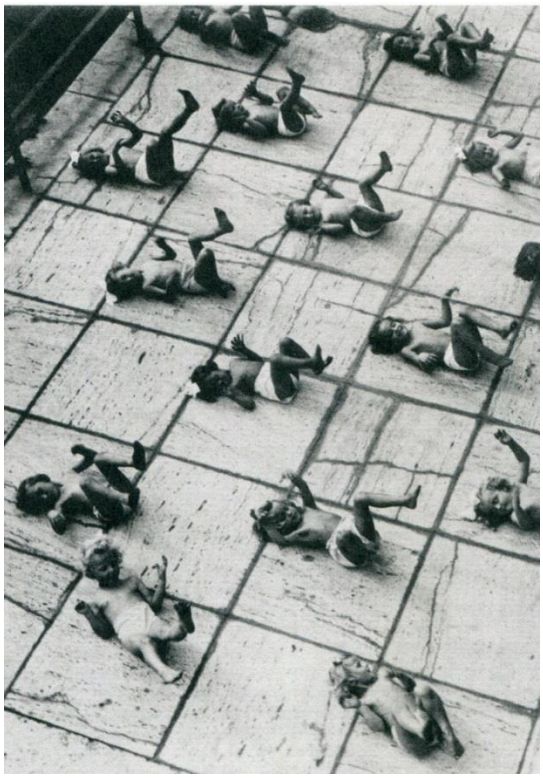

Figure 4.27. Dance practice on terrace with Karla Hladká dancing school, 1947-49 (Hammer-Tugendhat, Tugendhat House, Fig. 180).

Figure 4.28. The vestibule used as a waiting room for a children hospital, Tugendhat House, 1959 (Hammer-Tugendhat, Tugendhat House, Fig. 182).

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