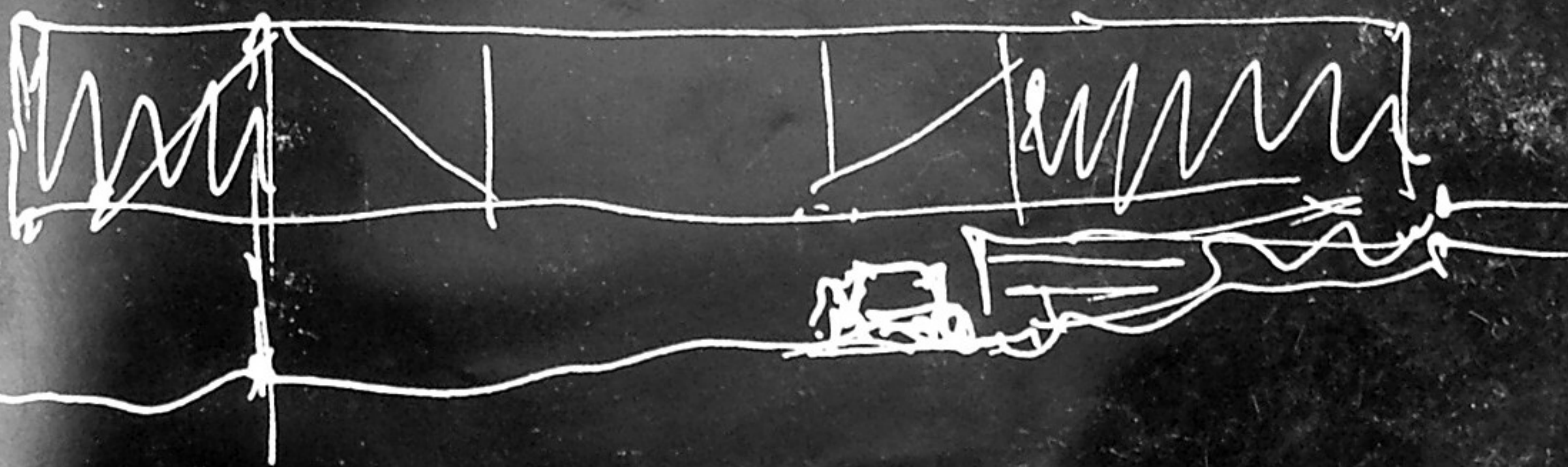


Mies Van der Rohe
Architectural Monographs

Mies
van der Rohe
EUROPEAN WORKS





ARCHITECTURAL
Monographs 11

Mies
van der Rohe
EUROPEAN WORKS

Academy Editions · London/St. Martin's Press · New York

ARCHITECTURAL Monographs 11

Subscriptions and Editorial Offices
7/8 Holland Street London W8

Publisher
Dr Andreas Papadakis

Editor
Frank Russell

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to the Mies van der Rohe Archive at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Bauhaus Archive, Berlin, for making material available for publication. Individual photographic credits are as follows. Academy Editions 6, 10 (1), 13 (8). Bauhaus Archive 2, 15 (17,18), 19 (33), 20 (40,41), 30 (3-6), 37 (5-7), 81 (4). *Berliner Bild Bericht* 50 (2,3), 65 (7). Hedrich Blessing Studio 13 (10), 19 (37), 23 (50), 24 (55), 46 (1), 49 (1,2), 82 (2), 83 (3,5), 84 (1-3), 85 (4), 97 (3). Building Centre Trust 17 (26), 20 (39), 21 (43,44), 22 (46,48), 31 (7), 33 (3), 43 (1), 44 (4), 52 (3), 53 (1-3), 68 (9-16), 69 (17-19), 72 (1), 73 (4,5), 74 (6,7), 75 (8,9), 80 (1), 91 (2), 92 (2). Carrer de la Cuitat 20 (38), 50 (1), 63 (2,3). Dutch Architectural Documents Centre 14 (12), 18 (28). *G Magazine* 17 (24), 42 (2). W. Graeff 38 (3,4), 42 (3). J. Hoffmann 18 (29), 57 (3). Institut für Denkmalpflege 14 (14), 27 (5), 35 (1), 36 (2). *Das Kunstblatt* 32 (1), 47 (1), 82 (1). Landesbildstelle Württemberg 45 (2). Dr Lange 28 (2). O. Meyer 12 (3). *Moderne Bauformen* 1910 12 (2), 27 (4), 27 (6,7). Collection, Mies van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Mod-

ern Art, New York, Gift of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe © The Museum of Modern Art, Cover, 13 (6,9), 16 (19, 21-23), 18 (27), 19 (36), 21 (45), 23 (49, 51), 38 (1,2), 39 (5), 40 (1-3), 41 (1-3), 42 (1), 46 (2-3), 48 (1), 51 (4), 52 (1), 55 (2), 56 (1), 57 (2), 62 (1), 64 (4,5), 65 (6), 66 (8), 70 (1), 72 (3), 76 (10), 83 (4), 88 (1), 89 (1), 91 (1), 93 (1-3). Muller & Reutsch 12 (5), 13 (7). Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris 53 (4), 54 (1,2). C. Norberg-Schulz 97 (2). F. Otto 24 (53). P. Pahl 18 (32). M. Pilkington 12 (4), 13 (11), 14 (13), 15 (15,16), 18 (30,31), 31 (8,9), 33 (4), 34 (6-8), 43 (2), 44 (5), 58 (3), 59 (4,5), 60 (1,2), 61 (3), 78 (1-3), 79 (4-6), 81 (3), 90 (1). G. Urbig 37 (3,4). R. Werner 28 (1), 29 (5-7). B. Zevi 24 (54-57), 45 (1,3), 55 (1), 72 (2). Sandra Honey redrew the following plans: 19 (34,35), 23 (52), 26 (1-3), 28 (2-3), 30 (1-2), 32 (2-3), 43 (3), 45 (4), 52 (2), 58 (1-2), 80 (2), 86 (1), 87 (3), 88 (2), 89 (2), 90 (2-3). M. Johnson redrew 36 (1).

All plans redrawn by Sandra Honey are copyright Academy Editions and Architectural Monographs. This issue of Architectural Monographs was originally commissioned by the then editor, David Dunster.

Half-title: Sketch for a glass house on a hillside, see page 91. (Collection Mies van der Rohe Archive, the Museum of Modern Art) *Frontispiece:* Mies van der Rohe c. 1930. (Bauhaus Archive)

Published in Great Britain in 1986 by
Academy Editions, 7/8 Holland Street, London W8

Copyright © 1986 Architectural Monographs
and Academy Editions

ISBN 0 85670 685 X (paper)
ISBN 0 85670 881 X (cased)

All rights reserved

No parts of this publication may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without permission in writing from the copyright holders

The opinions expressed by writers of signed articles appearing in this publication are those of their respective authors for which the publisher and editors do not hold themselves responsible

Published in the United States of America in 1986 by
St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 86-042539
ISBN 0 312 53215 6 (paper)
ISBN 0 312 53214 8 (cased)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Raithby Lawrence & Co Ltd., Leicester

Contents

- 7 Foreword
11 *Mies in Germany*
Sandra Honey
-
- Early Houses**
26 Villa Riehl
28 Villa Werner
30 Villa Eichstaedt
32 Villa Perls
35 Villa Mosler
36 Villa Urbig
- Early Projects**
38 Office Building
40 Glass Skyscraper
41 Concrete Office Building
Brick Country House
42 Concrete Country House
Traffic Control Tower
- Social Housing**
43 Afrikanische Strasse
45 Weissenhofsiedlung
- Skin Projects**
46 Alexanderplatz
47 Adam Building
Stuttgart Bank Building
- Exhibitions**
48 Weissenhof Exhibition
'Mode der Dame' Exhibition
50 Barcelona Exhibition
52 Berlin 'Deutsches Volk' Exhibition
Berlin Building Exhibition
53 Furniture
- Buildings and Projects**
55 Luxemburg/Liebknecht Memorial
56 Haus Wolf
58 Haus Lange
60 Haus Esters
62 Barcelona Pavilion
70 Model Houses
72 Haus Tugendhat
78 Silk Industry Complex
80 Haus Lemke
- Projects**
82 War Memorial
Reichsbank
84 Krefeld Administration
Building
- Court-houses**
86 Court-house projects
88 Gericke House
89 Hubbe House
90 Ulrich Lange House
- Single Space Projects**
91 House on a Hillside
Brussels Pavilion
93 Resor House
-
- 95 *Mies van der Rohe: An Appreciation*
Adrian Gale
-
- 101 *Mies*
James Gowan
-
- 102 Chronology of Mies' work in Europe
-
- 104 Bibliography
-
- 106 Résumés: French, German, Italian, Spanish
-



Foreword

A certain paradox, one amongst many, afflicts the attitudes of current critics to the architecture of the founding fathers of the Modern Movement. Many of the most publicised architects move now towards a revival of neoclassical imagery, while retaining the planning techniques of the Modern Movement. However their greatest scorn seems reserved for the most classical, in sensibility at least, of those forebears – Mies van der Rohe. The paradox is then as follows: how can the work of such an architect so clearly based in a classicising heritage, be declared *hors de combat* in the present debate dominated by problems of historicism and eclecticism when he was, and saw himself to be, deeply concerned with the heritage of the classical tradition?

The subject of this issue is Mies' early career before he left Europe for America in 1938, by which time he had already built enough to establish his name in the canon. This first half of his career can be split into two parts around the year 1922. Sandra Honey's biographical essay makes clear that until that time Mies was an extremely skilful journeyman, building in a stripped and austere classicised idiom which owed much to Muthesius, to Berlage, and above all to Schinkel and the productions of the office of Peter Behrens. The turning point came, it seems, when Walter Gropius refused to exhibit Mies' project for the Kröllner House in his 1919 'Exhibition for Unknown Architects'. According to Mies, Gropius justified his decision thus: 'We can't exhibit it, we are looking for something completely different'.

A single criticism like that makes for neat periods in history but cannot be the whole story. His immersion in the hothouse atmosphere of post-Versailles Berlin, together with his own feeling for the spirit of the times, form a credible contribution to the change that occurred. And there was also the fundamentalist approach within – the questions for Mies were always grand ones: what is a structure, an enclosure, space? His background suggests that this was a private quest, no less zealously carried out for its lack of Gropius' support.

But to return to the paradoxical treatment Mies now receives, is it not perhaps rather more a matter of that fundamentalism which makes him so hard to understand? The Smithsons are on record as saying that 'Mies is great, but Corb communicates'. Others have described his as an architecture of silence.

If however Mies tackled some more fundamental issues and successfully answered them, those answers would be of the form of archetypes, copiable because they provide convincing solutions. But then of course Mies takes the blame

for every curtain walled high rise, every grid of housing and every bland interior. By investigating certain fundamental issues, Mies almost *de facto* lays himself open to such a charge. His own work is however indissolubly linked to the classicising tradition, and the early buildings make this abundantly clear.

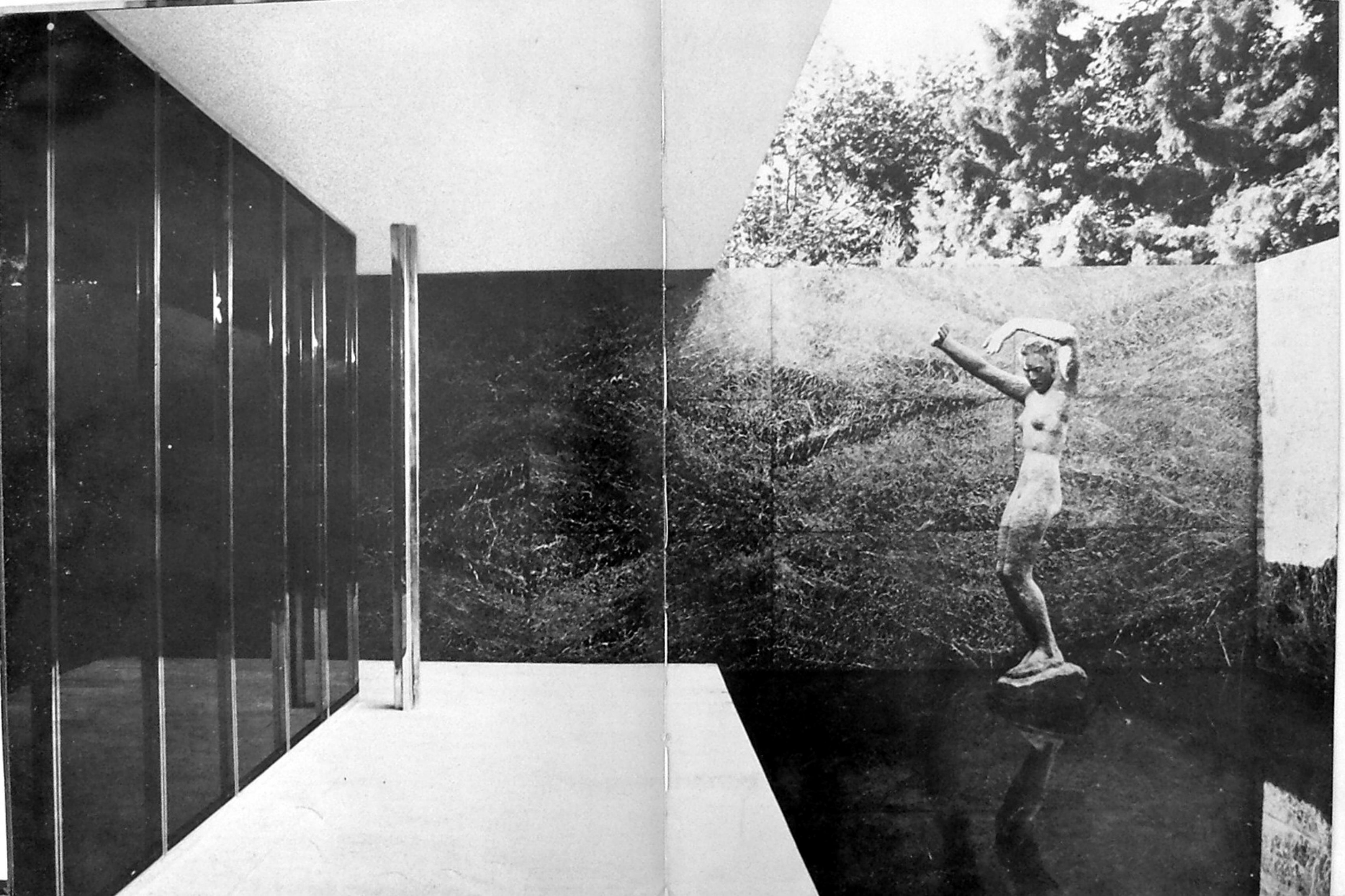
In contrast to Le Corbusier, Mies was not much of a communicator. His reluctance to speak in public, his small output of written pieces, make it if anything easier to dismiss him as a monomaniac intent on building his own unquestionable ideas. But his approach to his work was almost that of an inventor. He was the first to really investigate a totally glazed skyscraper, the first to incorporate machinery in a quiet and calm way – think of the motors which lowered and raised the huge glass wall of the living room at the Tugendhat House – and the first to organise a real manifestation of the International Style at Weissenhof in 1927.

Mies' greatness lies at least in his ability to look for the margin of experiment in architecture. The confidence to do this must have come not so much from an intensive delving into history or philosophy – though he was surely a cultured man of the sort that could only have existed in the Berlin of the inter-war period – as from the knowledge of how to construct. James Gowan, surely one of the most craftsmanlike of architects, takes up this point and makes the observation that while this was true, it seems to have been allied to a certain unconcern for the specific qualities of the site because Mies' buildings have the character of universal solutions. If that is achieved, as Paul Rudolph has pointed out, by leaving out problems, it is also allied, as Gowan says, to the two most hazardous materials, glass and steel.

Adrian Gale discusses this problem in his essay, speaking as one who underwent a sort of apprenticeship in Mies' office. For him it is not so much a question of 'fitness for purpose' as a moral duty to search for the most economical expression of an idealised perception. The Farnsworth House is then perhaps the ultimate statement, an enclosed space with one very capacious cupboard set within the plan so as to make other kinds of space.

The economy of gesture is surely what makes Mies so hard to comprehend, especially at a time when the architectural profession seems to be deluged by such a wealth of ornament and articulation. What is obvious, however, in his work is a clear reference back to that idea of architecture which insists that an idea of space be at the root of any production.

David Dunster





Mies in Germany

SANDRA HONEY

The plan is the thing; modern architecture is based on planning. The architect builds to keep the plan inviolate.¹

In Germany Mies van der Rohe studied modern building types and developed a number of architectural concepts based on the organisation of space. In America, where he was given ample opportunity to build, he developed and refined the building type and studied structural order and materials. He was already familiar with stone and brick – in Germany he used them in the manner of the master builder – but the technology of steel and concrete was new to him.

The American architecture of Mies van der Rohe has been analysed almost exclusively in terms of its structure and his German work is largely ignored. This has led to widespread misinterpretation. This essay provides a brief *exposé* of the foundations, the roots of Mies' architecture: the spatial concepts he developed in Germany, the period during which he lived, and his personality. His life as a Berlin architect is its theme and his German career is shown in the context of the major social, cultural and political developments of the twenties and thirties.

Mies' German architecture falls into three slightly overlapping sequences: the first, an early neoclassical and vernacular period, covering all his pre-modern work; the second, a period for experiment and accomplishment, beginning with his glass skyscraper projects of the early twenties and ending with the Barcelona Pavilion; and the third, a period for thought and development, a return to classicism.

Ludwig Mies began his career when, as a boy, he worked for his father, a master stonemason in the ancient stone city of Aachen. He came from a Roman Catholic family of four children. Every Sunday his mother took him to the Aachen Cathedral where, sometimes hiding behind an enormous pillar, he would count the stones during the service. He attended the cathedral school founded by Charlemagne in the ninth century.

*'My father had many wonderful blocks of marble or other stone in his shop. I learnt about stone from him.'² Michael Mies employed four or five workmen and the shop supplied carved stonework for cemeteries, fountains and buildings. After school young Ewald and Ludwig would go to the shop and were sometimes allowed to lend a hand. *We always had something to do with buildings. Our main task, though, was to buy coffee water, a little jar full for two Pfennig, and a sausage and cheese for five, for all the masons. But then sometimes we could do a mason's work as well, and later even cut a quoin. That was for**

*us a masterly affair, you see, and it happened only rarely. They hadn't enough confidence in us.'*³

Ludwig's education was fairly rudimentary – the family was neither well-educated nor well-off. After attending two primary schools, he went to the local trades' school for two years and, at the age of fifteen, he was sent to work on building sites. (In Berlin Mies used to boast that he learnt about architecture the hard way.) His father had noticed his talent for drawing – Ludwig used to outline the lettering on gravestones – and he apprenticed his sixteen-year-old son to a firm of local designers and architects. *'I got into the stucco business, and it was there I learnt to draw. One had to draw details, large on vertical walls, life-size, one quarter of a ceiling. Louis XIV maybe in the morning, and Renaissance for a dining room in the afternoon, or Gothic for a library. And every now and then a new ornament was invented, modern ornament, chestnut leaves, with burst chestnuts on them.'*⁴ Mies worked like this for over two years and afterwards never wanted to see another stucco ornament. But perhaps his feeling for linearity had its origins here.

When his father died, Mies' elder brother inherited the family business and Ludwig decided to pursue his career in Berlin. In years to come he returned often to admire the old city of Aachen and its mediaeval buildings; he was particularly fond of the simple Westphalian peasant houses, with their sparsely furnished interiors. In 1905 he arrived in Berlin and found work with the Borough of Rixdorf (now Berlin-Neukölln). He was asked to detail the wooden furnishings of a council chamber. *'But of wood I had no idea and so, although I tried for two or three months, I finally decided to leave the job and go to Bruno Paul to draw details of furniture.'*⁵ Mies was apprenticed to Paul for two years and registered at the school of the Decorative Arts Museum in Berlin, headed by Paul. In his master's atelier, Mies came into contact with those who wielded power in the artistic and architectural fields – men like Hermann Muthesius and Peter Behrens.

Two years later Ludwig Mies received his first architectural commission and left his apprenticeship. His first client, Professor Riehl, sent Mies to Italy for three months and here he took an interest in Palladio and Brunelleschi. In Florence he was particularly impressed by the Palazzo Pitti, *'a huge stone wall with windows cut out of it. And that is that. You see with how few means you can make architecture – and what an architecture!'*⁶

¹ Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe

Early Work

Through the writings of Muthesius, English architecture and the Arts and Crafts movement had gained enormous popularity in Germany. Mies, no doubt, had read *Das englische Haus*, but his first building showed no signs of any English influence; nor were there any references to Italian architecture. Villa Riehl was a simple two-storey house in the local style of Werder, an island city not far from Potsdam. It was built in the year that Muthesius founded the Deutscher Werkbund and Behrens was appointed artistic director to AEG, the German electrical industry.

In 1908 Mies joined Behrens' office in Potsdam. The master's influence on Mies was far-reaching – it set the tone of his early and not-so-early life style. Behrens was a *grand seigneur* architect who, before he joined AEG, worked only for the German *haute bourgeoisie* and the State. He believed that monumental architecture was the highest and most individual expression of a nation's culture and was strongly influenced by classical ideas of organisation; in detail he was indebted to the work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

Behrens' practice was effectively divided in two: the AEG work, in which Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer were involved, and the neoclassical work assigned to Mies. Villa Wiegand, built in Berlin-Dahlem in 1911-12, was one job on which Mies worked briefly. His main task was that of job architect on the German Embassy in St Petersburg, a much criticised, monumental palace with a vast equestrian statue looming above the main entrance. Mies took no credit for the design, and indeed he had no part in it, 'except perhaps for the shaping of a few door knobs'.⁷ But oversee the construction he did, on long visits to tsarist Russia. He was stunned by the extraordinary wealth of the people he met; the main contractor invited him to dinner and he found the table laid in solid gold!

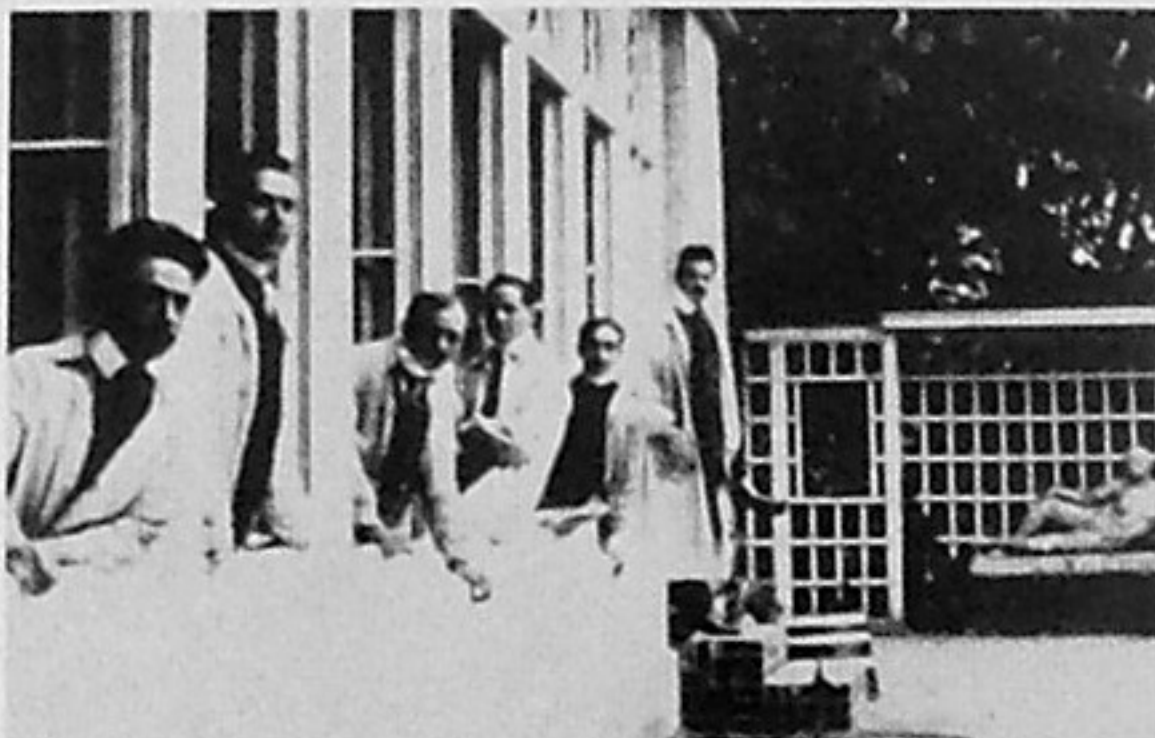
'Under Behrens I learnt the grand form, if you see what I mean, the monumental.'⁸ But Behrens also gave Mies a respect for detail, a deep admiration for Schinkel, and valuable experience in the management of a large commission. While in Behrens' employ Mies did a bit of 'moon-lighting' in Berlin-Zehlendorf where, in 1911, he built a neoclassical villa for the Perls brothers. Philip Johnson wrote that 'Mies at the age of twenty-five had become as accomplished a designer in the Schinkel tradition as his teacher.'⁹

In 1911 Behrens put Mies in charge of a commission from Mrs H.E.L.J. Kröller, the owner of the Kröller-Müller collection, who asked Behrens to design a house for her near The Hague. Behrens and Mies travelled to Holland together to present the drawings in 1912 and Mies stayed behind to supervise the construction of a full-scale canvas and wood mock-up of the project. This design was rejected and the commission went to Hendrik Petrus Berlage; whereupon Mies declared that he was prepared to work as Berlage's assistant. 'And then, one fine day, Mrs Kröller said to me she had thought it over with her husband, and wouldn't I like to produce a design.'¹⁰

Mies stayed with the Kröllers for nearly a year, and a very large work room was put at his disposal – a room full of Van Goghs. Here he worked on his own Kröller project and executed his first competition project, for the Bismarck Monument. Both projects are distinctly Schinkelesque, with references to Klein Glienicke in the Kröller House and to Orianda in the Bismarck Monument. But there is also a hint of Frank Lloyd Wright's influence in the horizontality of the Kröller project. Wright had come to Berlin in 1909 to prepare for the publication of the Wasmuth Portfolios, a review of his work since 1900.¹¹ This work was exhibited in Berlin in 1910 and caused a sensation. Thirty years later Mies wrote: 'At this moment, so critical for us, the exhibition of Frank Lloyd Wright came to Berlin. . . . The encounter was destined to prove of great significance to the European development. The work of this great master presented an architectural world of unexpected force, clarity of language and disconcerting richness of form.'¹²



2

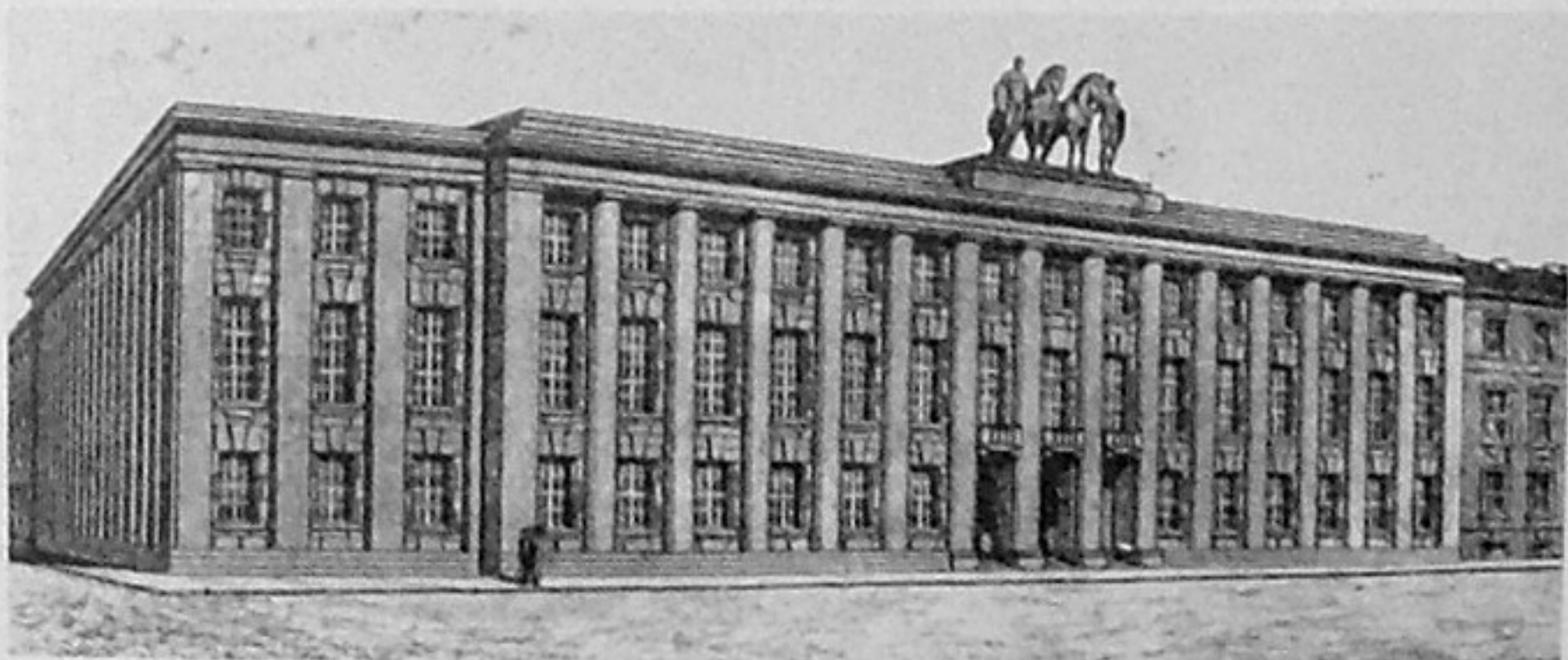


- 2 Villa Riehl, 1907
- 3 Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier at Peter Behrens' atelier in Potsdam
- 4 Behrens, Villa Wiegand, 1911-12
- 5 Behrens, German Embassy, 1911-12
- 6 Villa Perls, 1911
- 7 Behrens' Kröller project, 1912
- 8 Schinkel, Schloss Orianda
- 9 Kröller House project, 1912
- 10 Bismarck Monument, 1912
- 11 Schinkel, Klein Glienicke

3



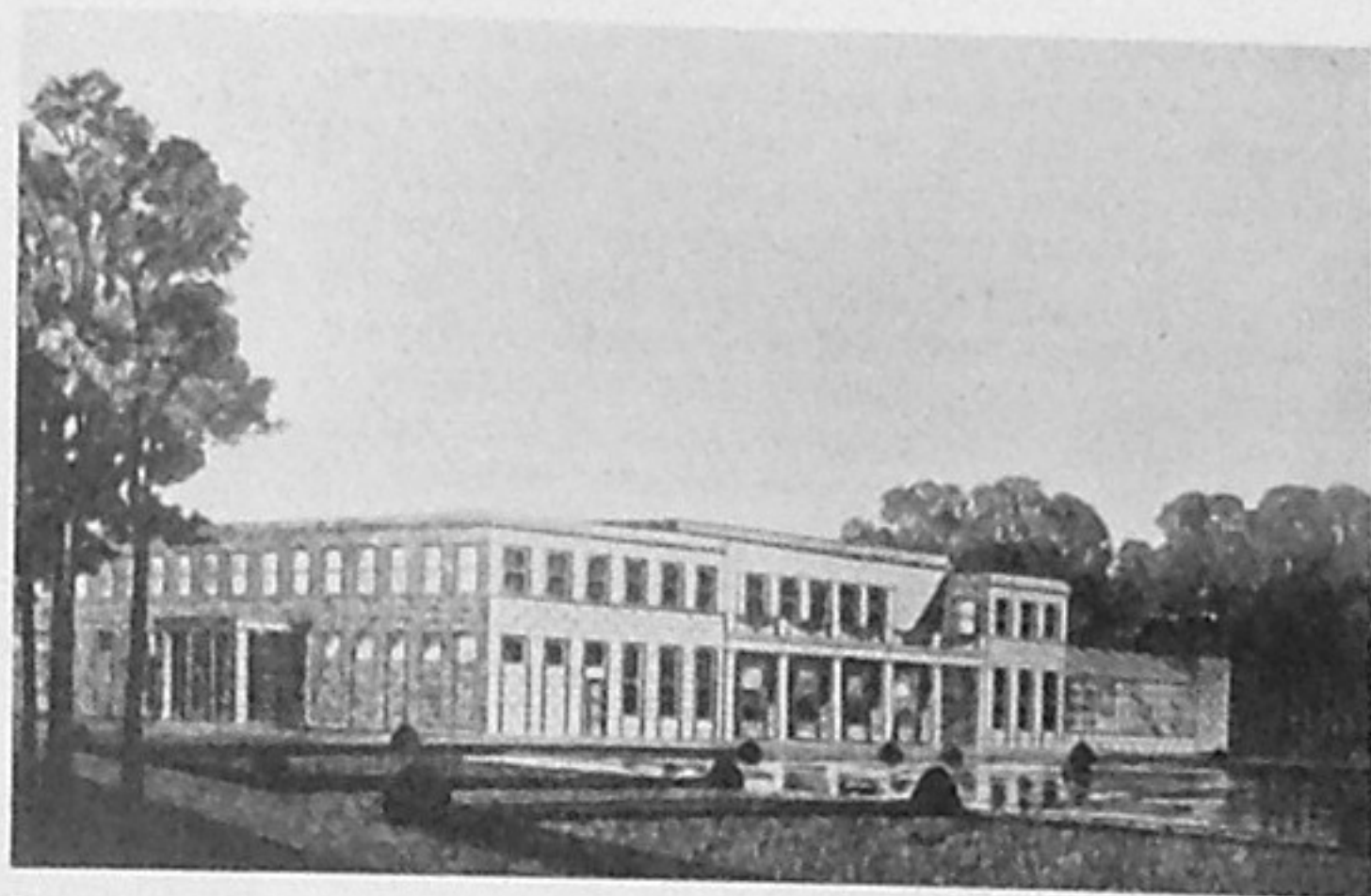
4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11

Mies supervised the construction of yet another full-scale mock-up for the Kröllers, but this design was also rejected and the commission reverted to Berlage. In Holland, Mies had come to admire the work of this great Dutch architect. *What interested me most in Berlage was his careful construction, honest to the bones. And his spiritual attitude had nothing to do with Classicism, nothing to do with historic styles whatsoever. Berlage's Stock Exchange had impressed me enormously. It was really a modern building. Behrens was of the opinion that it was all passé but I said to him: "Well if you aren't mistaken." He was furious; he looked as if he wanted to hit me.*¹³

The working relationship between Behrens and Mies terminated none too happily – it would appear that Mies had hoped to set himself up in private practice with Mrs Kröller's backing. On his return to Berlin Mies opened his own atelier in the Berlin-Lichterfelde area and thenceforth he never again worked for another architect. As if in celebration of this step towards independence, he changed his surname to Miës van der Rohe.¹⁴ In 1913 he married Adele Bruhn, daughter of a well-to-do, well-educated, upper-middle-class Berlin family who frequented a circle of philosophers and professors. It was from his wife's family connections that Mies had drawn his first clients – the Riehls and the Perls brothers.

In 1914 Mies' first daughter was born and he designed a house to be built at Werder for his family. The war intervened and the project never got beyond the sketch stage. Instead the family moved up in the world in Berlin, taking an apartment in the Tiergarten district, near the Potsdamer Bridge spanning the Landwehr Canal – a stone's throw from where the New National Gallery now stands. It was an exclusive district and fashionable for architects – the Taut brothers, Gropius and Meyer and many other architects had their ateliers there. In 1915 Mies was drafted, and when he returned from the Eastern Front his family had moved out of Berlin into the Brandenburg area. The marriage was not a happy one; two more daughters were born but, around 1920, Mies left his family and moved back into his Berlin atelier. Even though this amounted to a permanent separation, Mies never divorced his wife.

The first commissions to come into Mies' new practice were Villa Warner (1913) and Villa Urbig (1914). The war and the economic depression which followed in its wake called a halt to nearly all building activity in Germany. Mies received no further work until 1921 when he built a house for the Kempner family. The building has been destroyed and the only known drawing is a sketch of the first project. According to Philip Johnson, *this was Mies' last Romantic design*.¹⁵ Schinkel's influence was evident in the tall, narrow windows, cornice and flat roof. After meeting Berlage, Mies said, *I had to fight myself to get away from the Classicism of Schinkel*.¹⁶ But he never escaped from it; as he grew older, it became more and more evident in his work: *Schinkel's Das Alte Museum was a beautiful building. You could learn everything from it and I tried to do that.*¹⁷ While the Kempner House was under construction, Mies was commissioned by Georg Eichstaedt to build a small residence, and he designed a simple suburban villa which was completed in 1922 – the year Mies designed his second glass skyscraper. The last house Mies built in the traditional manner was Villa Mosler (1924).

Mies' early designs were all extremely well worked out, well proportioned and balanced, and there was no doubt about his intimate understanding of organisation and detail in their execution. The houses were very well built, accomplished in their idiom too. However, considered in the context of their period, they were unremarkable; in comparison with the work of Behrens, Mies van der Rohe's early work cannot even be termed progressive. But he was a competent architect who had shown himself to be extremely astute. The way he dealt with Behrens' clients, the Kröllers, would indicate that he was something of an opportunist. (Mrs Helena Kröller was the first of Mies' distinguished lady clients.)



12



13



14

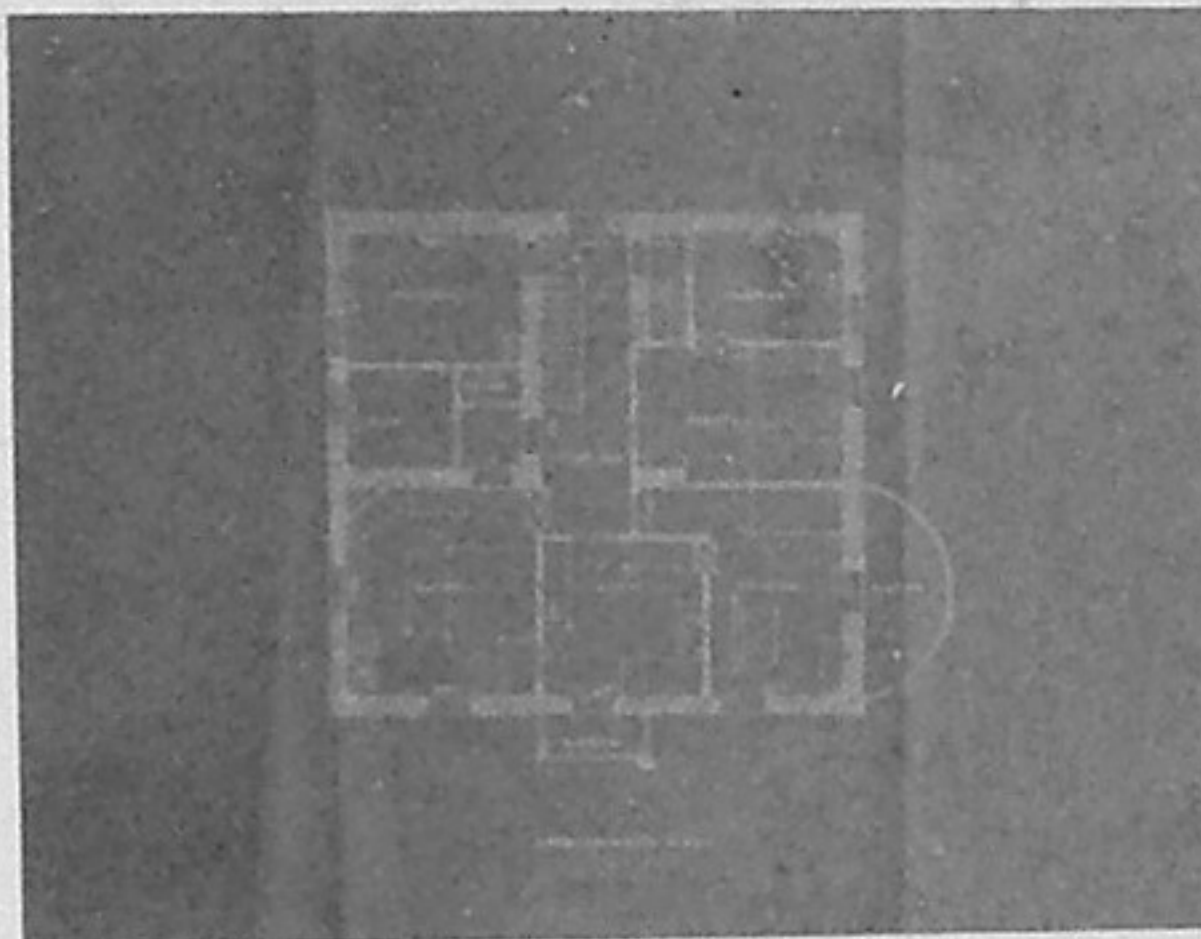


15

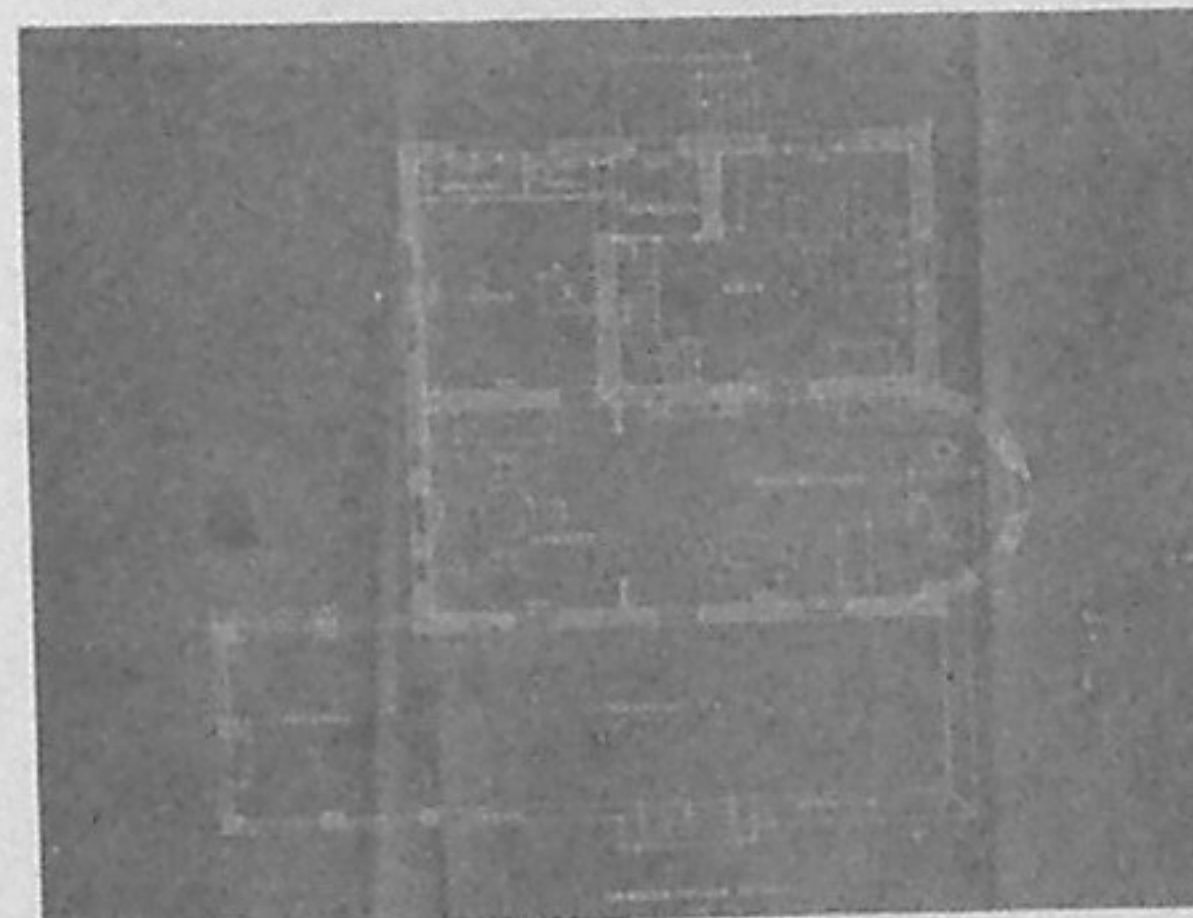


16

- 12 Berlage, Amsterdam Beurs, 1898-1903
- 13 Villa Werner, 1913
- 14 Villa Urbig, 1914, street elevation
- 15 Schinkel, Altes Museum, 1823-30, front elevation
- 16 Schinkel, Altes Museum, 1823-30, rear elevation
- 17 Villa Eichstaedt, 1922, upper floor plan
- 18 Villa Eichstaedt, 1922, ground floor plan



17



18

The break between Mies' early work and his first modern projects seems surprisingly abrupt. It came at the end of 1921 – surprisingly late for one who was to play such a major part in formulating Modern Movement architecture. In 1919 only the Kempner House project was entered in his catalogue of works and in 1920 nothing was listed. These years of inactivity had, perhaps, given him time to think and to look around. (A similar but not so obvious change in Mies' work occurred in the thirties – another period of inactivity – when the dynamic, asymmetrical flow of his high modern work was quietened into classical symmetry.)

At the end of the First World War revolutionary societies were formed throughout Germany, claiming for modern art and architecture a social and cultural role within the new Weimar Republic. In late 1918 in Berlin, artists associated with the Sturm Gallery founded the Novembergruppe; and Bruno Taut, along with Walter Gropius, Adolf Behne and Cesar Klein, founded the Arbeitsrat für Kunst. In 1919 Hans Poelzig was elected chairman of the Deutscher Werkbund and Gropius was called to Weimar to found the Staatliches Bauhaus (an amalgamation of the Academy of Arts with the progressive School of Applied Arts, headed by Henri van de Velde). Berlin became the most feverishly active centre of art and culture in Europe; the city sucked in the new artistic movements which had sprung up elsewhere while Germany was at war – De Stijl, Constructivism, Dadaism, Cubism – and German Expressionism gained impetus. The architectural style espoused by these new societies and the Bauhaus was, initially, Expressionism. They rejected the academic education of the architect and aimed at a new fusion of the visual arts – a mixture of mediaevalism, utopianism and revolution. It was a time for experimentation; manifestoes, new publications, and endless discussions were the order of the day. Only when inflation ended in 1924 did building start again in earnest.

Mies van der Rohe never joined the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (which only lasted two years), nor was he a member of the Gläserne Kette.¹⁸ He was not involved with either the Bauhaus or the Novembergruppe in their early stages; he joined the Werkbund only in 1921. In the early twenties Mies began to keep open house in his atelier; it became the meeting place for a circle of architects within the Novembergruppe known as the Zehner Ring (Circle of Ten). Mies acted as chairman of this group which, in 1925-26, expanded its membership and changed its name into the Ring. Mies was also put in charge of the Novembergruppe's architectural exhibitions and organised them until he was made vice-president of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1926.

In 1923 and 1924 Hugo Häring shared Mies' workroom since he had no atelier of his own. They became close friends and tales were told around Berlin of the discussions they entertained until the early hours of the morning. Mies' atelier was also, on occasions, the meeting place of the G Group, 'a group of artists who were in search of universally valid, super-personal, elemental media of artistic creation.'¹⁹ Membership included a number of De Stijl collaborators, the Constructivist, Lazar El Lissitzky, and the Bauhaus master, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Hans Richter and Werner Graeff, along with Lissitzky, became joint editors of the group's magazine *Zeitschrift für Elementare Gestaltung*, known as *G*. The first issue appeared in July 1923; Lissitzky then dropped out and Graeff suggested Mies as his replacement. In September 1923 the second issue appeared, with Mies as joint editor, and the third was published in June 1924. But the magazine failed, leaving Mies in debt to the printers to the tune of the purchase price of the complete typescript ordered especially for *G* no. 3. Werner Graeff became one of Mies' closest friends and collaborators, and worked for Mies as publicity officer for the Weissenhof exhibition. Graeff described Mies as an excellent host, extremely generous with both his time and his money. 'He was a warm, friendly man who could sit around endlessly talking.'²⁰ He was a great raconteur, a great drinker too; he sketched continuously as he talked in his atelier and got through reams of typing paper.



High Modern Work

In 1919 Mies van der Rohe wanted to exhibit his Kröller project in the 'Exhibition for Unknown Architects' organised by Gropius, but Gropius returned his project saying, 'We can't exhibit it; we are looking for something completely different.'²¹ The Friedrichstrasse Competition of January 1922 gave Mies the opportunity to exhibit his first modern project – a skyscraper using glass in the manner of Paul Scheerbart.

'In my project for a skyscraper at the Friedrichstrasse Station in Berlin I used a prismatic form which seemed to me to fit best the triangular site of the building. I placed the glass walls at slight angles to each other to avoid the monotony of over-large glass surfaces.'

'I discovered by working with actual glass models that the important thing is the play of reflections and not the effect of light and shadow as in ordinary buildings.'

*'The results of these experiments can be seen in the second scheme . . . At first glance the curved outline of the plan seems arbitrary. These curves, however, were determined by three factors: sufficient illumination of the interior, the massing of the building viewed from the street, and lastly the play of reflections.'*²²

The second scheme mentioned here was a glass skyscraper with a free-form plan, suggestive of Hugo Häring's work, designed in 1922 for an imaginary site. Although both projects were influenced by the aesthetics of Expressionism, there was a certain cold logic behind Mies' approach to the glass skyscraper that was sorely lacking in the work of his Expressionist contemporaries. Mies was altogether too down-to-earth to believe that inspiration for architecture could come through music or from some mystical source (said to inspire Expressionists). The Friedrichstrasse Competition marked the turning point between Expressionism and what was to follow – the 'new architecture'. Here the two stylistic sides met and clashed. The first prize was awarded to a design which made timid use of the vocabulary of Expressionism; the second prize, however, went to a horizontal slab block designed by the Luckhardt brothers – a project well on the way towards the new and more sober approach. Mies did not enter the seminal Chicago Tribune Competition of 1922 and it was not until 1923 that his architecture reflected the changed approach.

In his Concrete Office Building project of 1923, Mies paid homage to Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building of 1905 (as illustrated in the Wasmuth Portfolios). The cantilevered up-stands of Mies' project were designed to house a filing system, as in Wright's building. Mies explained the concept of his project in terms of function, space, materials and structure; but it is clear that the entire design was based on a rigid structural system. He wrote, *'Reinforced concrete structures are skeletons by nature.'*²³ In its clear, strong expression of structure, this project is unique in Mies' work; as a concept he never repeated it. Perhaps he had said all that was needed in this one drawing (for there was no plan). The ribbon window, however, did reappear – in his projects for the Reichsbank (1933) and the Krefeld Administration Building (1937). In these projects, too, the building is wrapped round a central courtyard well.

In quick succession to the Concrete Office Building came two country house projects – one in brick and the other in concrete. Once again Mies paid homage to Frank Lloyd Wright; the Brick House is planned like a Wrightian country house – a core of rooms screened from one another – but with none of Wright's fussy detailing. In a stroke, Mies had modernised Wright. The project is best described by Philip Johnson:

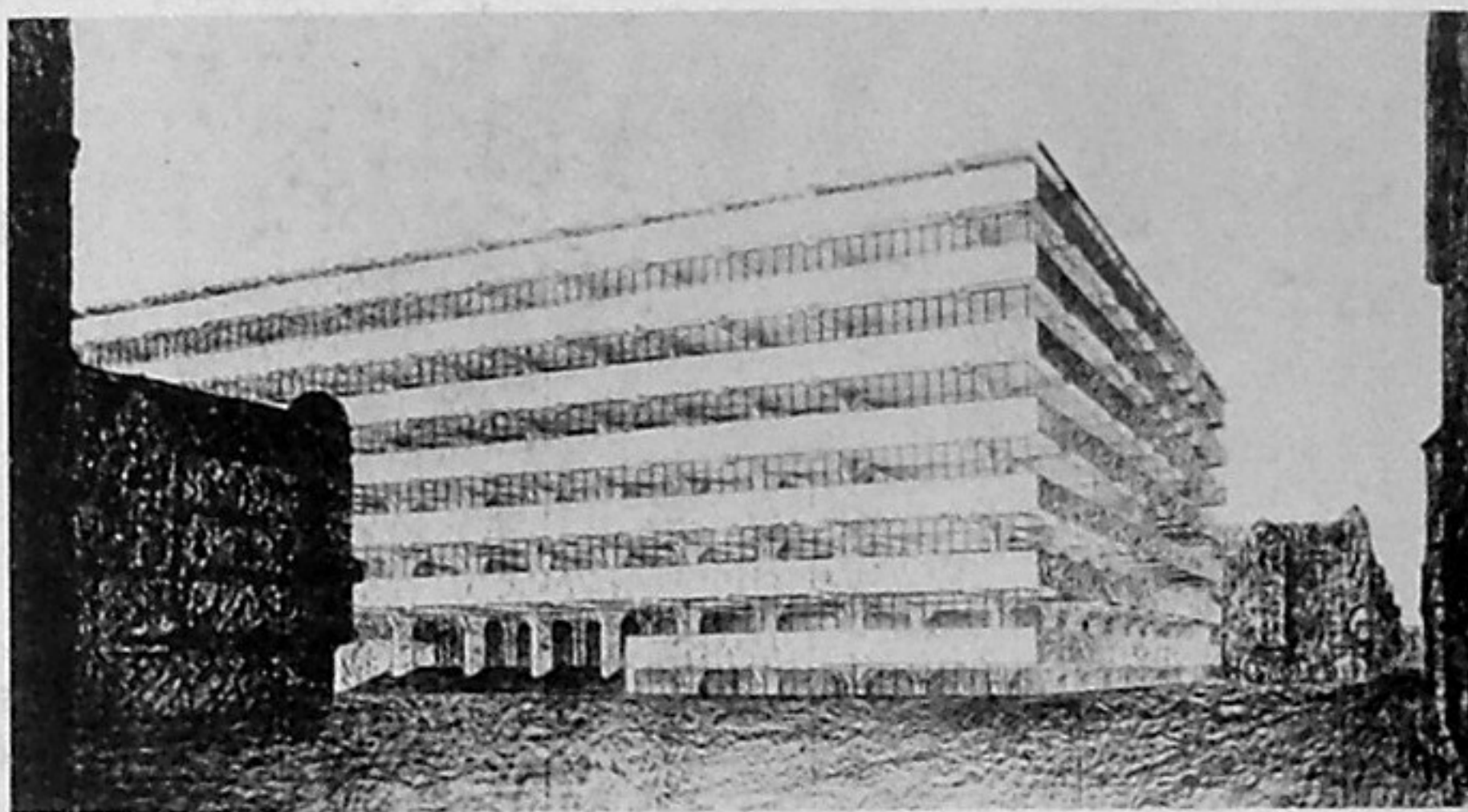
'It depends on a new conception of the function of the wall. The unit of design is no longer the cubic room but the free-standing wall, which breaks the traditional box by sliding out from beneath the roof and extending into the landscape. Instead of forming a closed volume, these independent walls, joined only by planes of glass, create a new ambiguous sensation of space. Indoors and outdoors are no longer easily defined; they



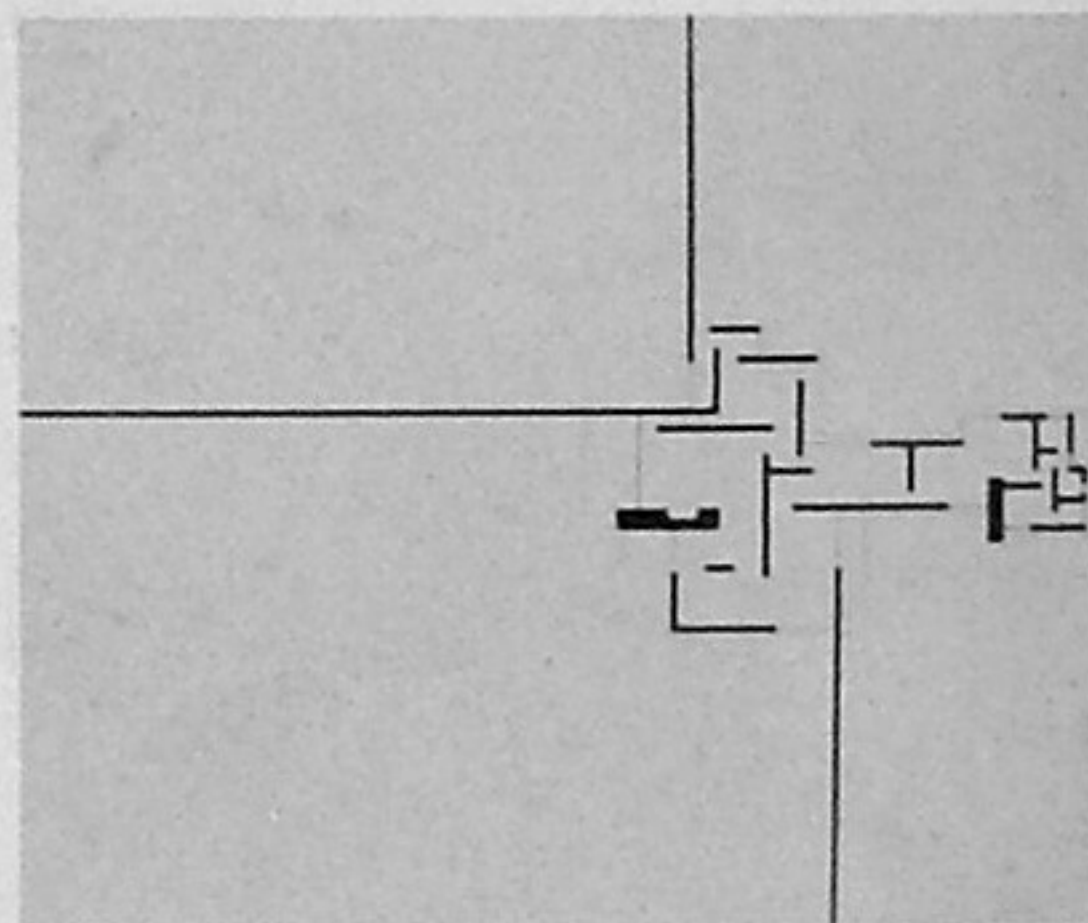
19



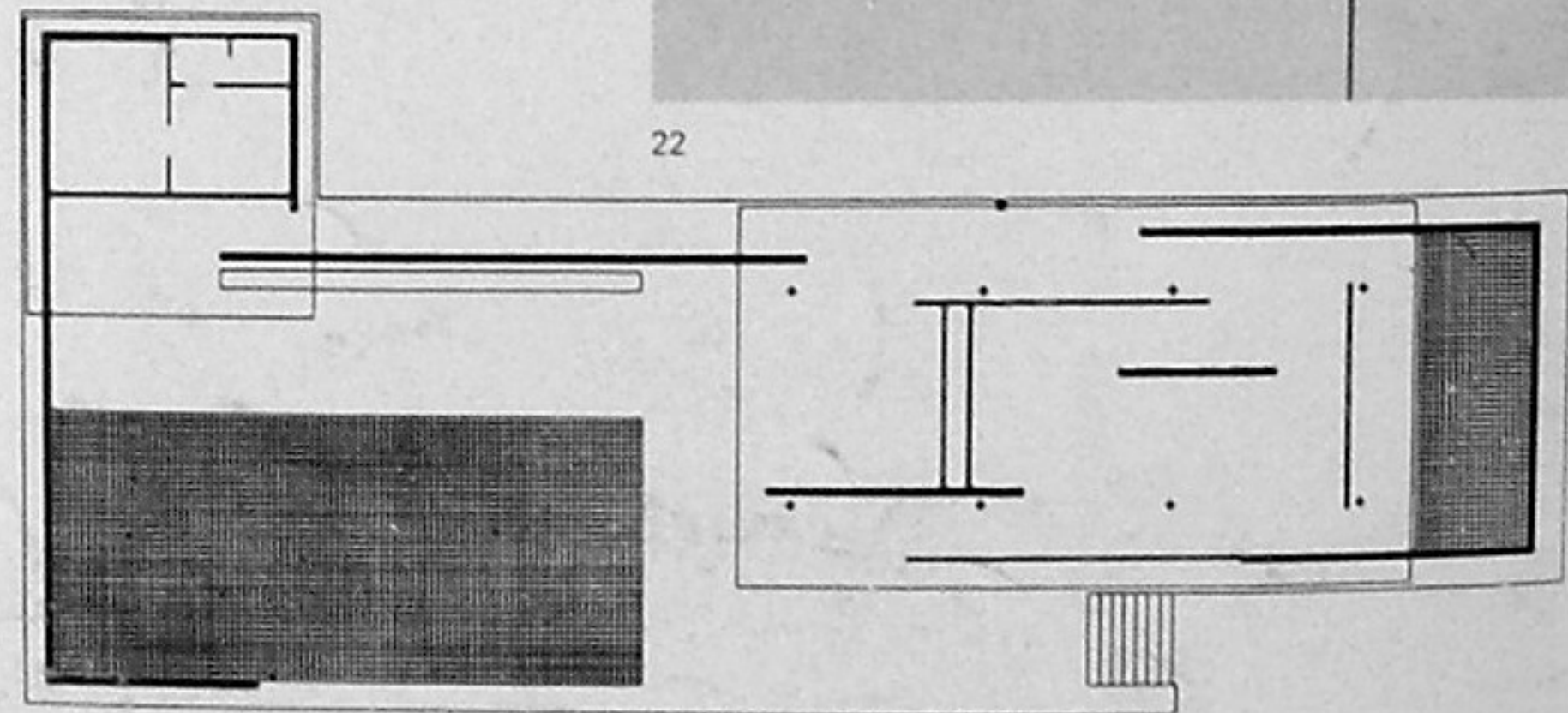
20



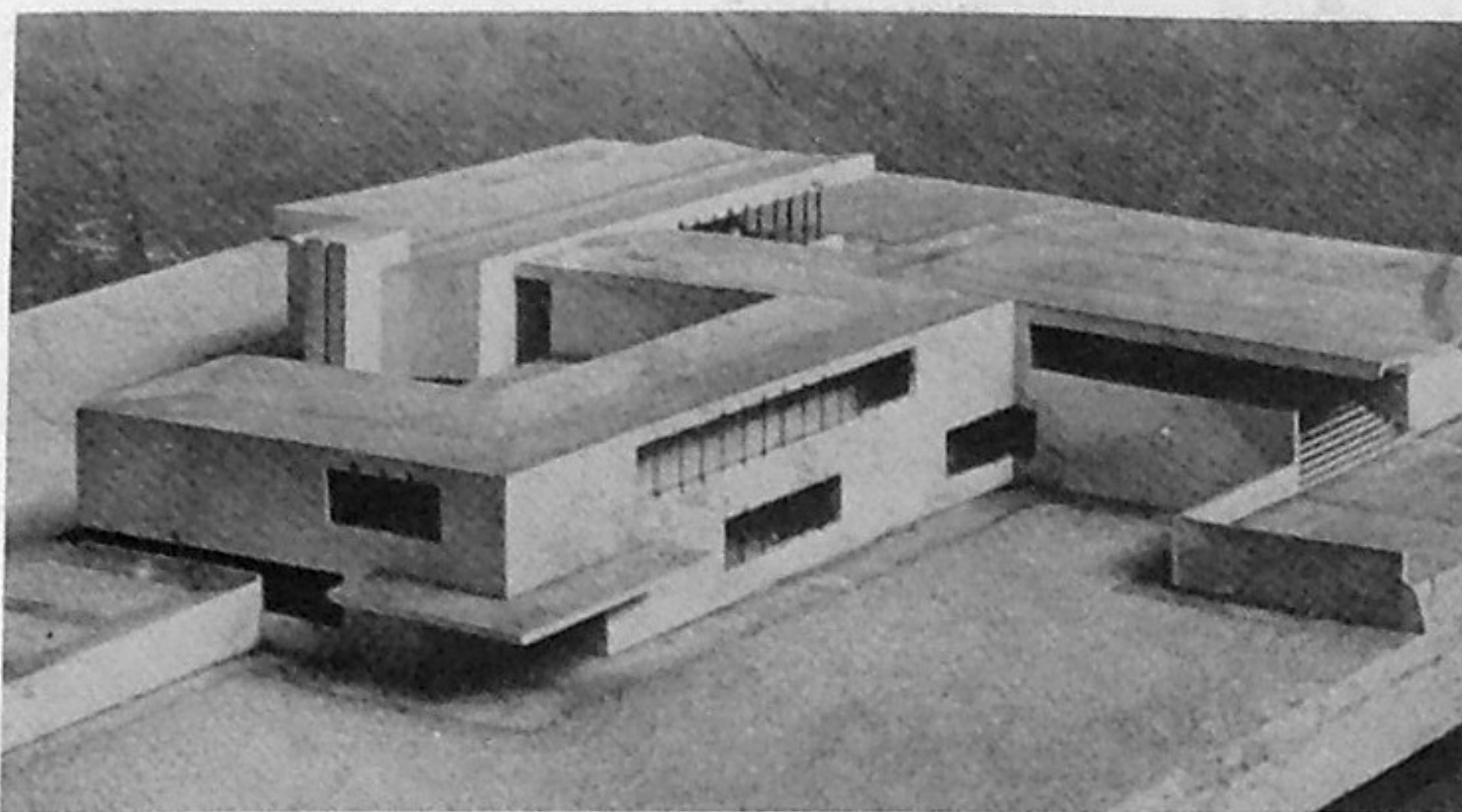
21



22

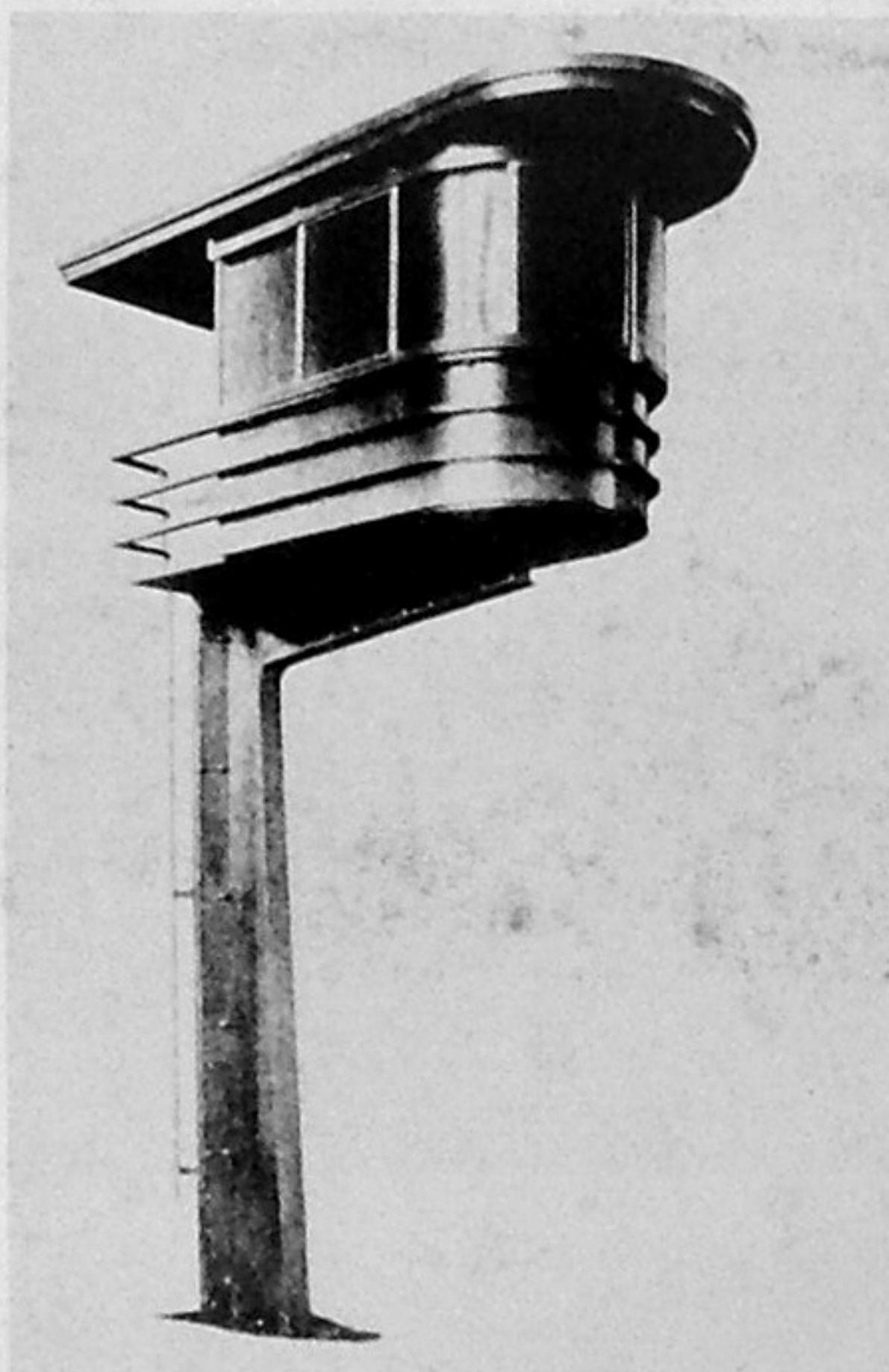


23



24

- 19 Friedrichstrasse Office Building, 1921
- 20 Glass Skyscraper, 1922, model
- 21 Concrete Office Building, 1922, exterior perspective of project
- 22 Brick Country House, 1923, plan
- 23 German Pavilion at Barcelona International Exposition, 1929, final scheme plan
- 24 Concrete Country House, 1923, model
- 25 Traffic Tower project, 1924
- 26 Apartments at Afrikanische Strasse



25



26

flow into each other. This concept of an architecture of flowing space, channelled by free-standing planes, plays an important role in Mies' later development and reaches its supreme expression in the Barcelona Pavilion of 1929.²⁴

Aesthetically, the project is indebted to the work of the De Stijl Group; the plan was said to resemble the orthogonal pattern of a Van Doesburg painting entitled *Rhythms of a Russian Dance*.

The Concrete Country House project was the first of what Philip Johnson termed the 'zoned' houses: the living, sleeping and service areas were isolated from one another in wings, separated by courts. 'Here the box is not indiscriminately sliced by a profusion of independent walls, but carefully divided and pulled apart . . . in an admirably balanced swastika-like plan that combines the maximum of indoor and outdoor privacy with the minimum dispersal of architectural units.'²⁵ The specification of brick for one project and concrete for the other was, it seems, arbitrary, since the concept of the Concrete Country House was realised in brick at Guben and Krefeld. It is interesting to note that brick was considered by the avant-garde to be a dated material, whereas concrete was fashionable; Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower, for instance, was block finished in render to look like concrete construction.

In these five remarkable projects of the early twenties Mies van der Rohe announced some of the ideas he was to develop and realise in the years to follow: the skyscraper as a building form and the spatial concepts of the Brick and Concrete Country Houses. The presentation of these projects was also remarkable and they were extensively published. Beautiful models were made, as Mies believed in designing and presenting his projects in a realistic manner, in relation to their surroundings. In order to do this he had developed his own use of the photo-montage technique: pencil or charcoal drawing on photography, or photography on photography. In 1924 he used this last method to present his little-known Traffic Tower project.

At first the 'new society' in Germany gave radical architects little opportunity to translate their visions into reality. Between 1924 and 1930, however, the 'new architecture' gained acceptance in almost every field of building. Bruno Taut pioneered the concept behind the social housing programme in his book *The New Dwelling*, published in 1924. He discussed in detail the social and cultural implications of the new housing and said that new social behaviour would emerge partly from the use of compact, functional planning and partly from a new aesthetic of design; a symbolic language expressive of the 'new age' would be created. Through the writings of several influential critics, the new building style came to be known as Functionalism (*Zweckmässigkeit*) or the new objectivity (*die neue Sachlichkeit*).

In comparison to Bruno Taut's extensive theoretical and practical contribution to the social housing programme, Mies' contribution was tiny. He was the architect of only one development in Berlin: the apartment blocks at Afrikanische Strasse (1926-27), a development which proved, however, that he could build as cheaply as his radical contemporaries. And in 1924 he wrote two extremely interesting but short pieces entitled 'The Industrialisation of Building Methods' and 'Architecture and the Times'.²⁶ Mies van der Rohe's more significant contribution to the social housing programme came through his organisational work with the Deutscher Werkbund. Largely due to his activities with the Novembergruppe, he was appointed first vice-president of the Werkbund in 1926. This coincided with the Werkbund's decision to stage its next exhibition at Weissenhof – a suburb of Stuttgart – on the theme of dwelling (*Wohnung*).

In 1926 Mies presented a scheme for Weissenhofsiedlung. The model of the project showed a flowing, inter-connecting, sculptured massing of buildings. Stuttgart city councillors, prompted by local opposition to the project, rejected the scheme on the grounds that it was not suitable for a housing development: there were no streets, no

divisions between properties, no thoroughfares for service vehicles. The exhibition area had to be divided up into separate building sites, serviced by roads. Mies retained the site on the crown of the hill for his own project – a block of flats which became the focus of the whole development and acted as the *Stadtkrone*, or city crown.²⁷ The decision as to who was to build on the remaining sites was negotiated between the Werkbund and the Stuttgart City Council, and the names of about twenty-five architects were submitted. In autumn 1926, as soon as the final list was settled, the sites were offered to participants on a first-come-first-served basis, and Le Corbusier got first choice. He walked around the site with Mies and chose what Mies considered to be the best sites for his single and double-family houses. Drawings had to be presented as soon as possible so that construction could begin in early spring 1927.

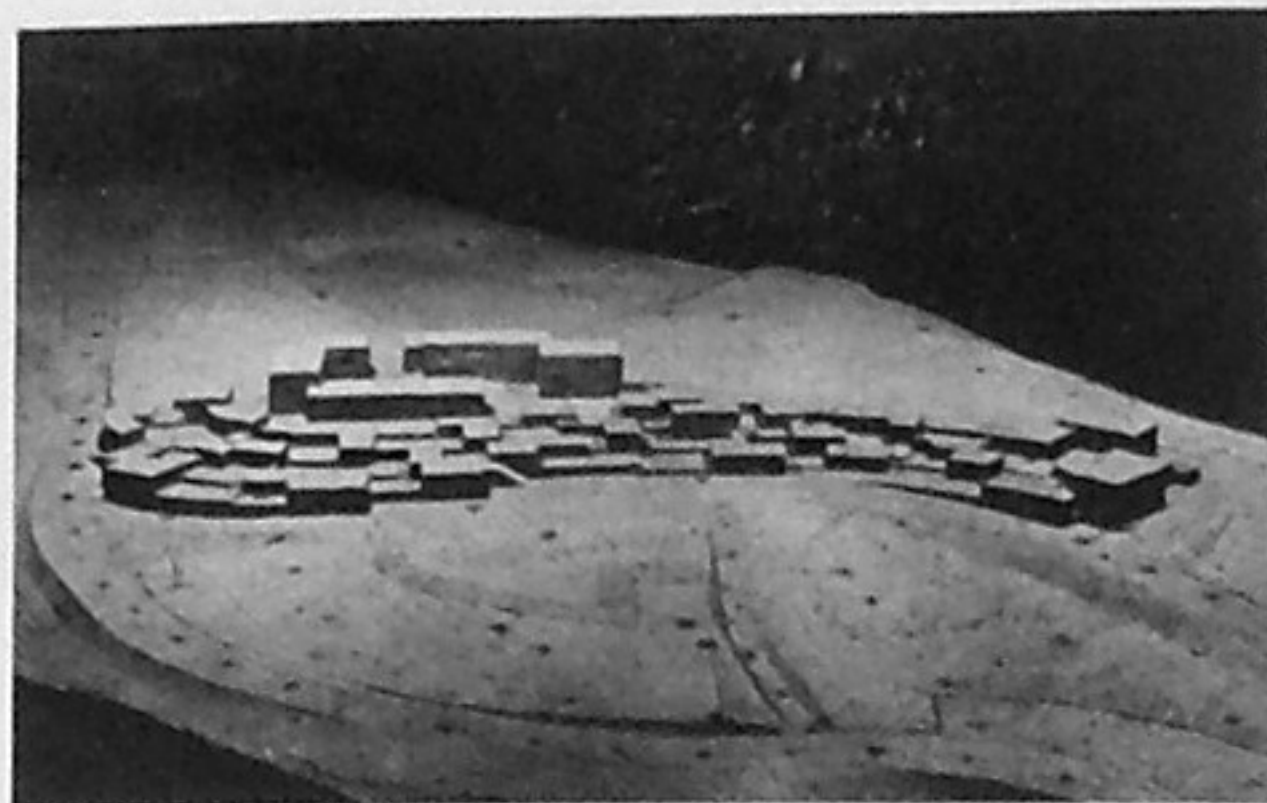
Although Mies had the final say over the architecture exhibited, he exercised this power only through the selection of participants: no-one exhibited without his agreement. Weissenhofsiedlung opened on schedule in July 1927 – an organisational *tour de force* for which the job architect, Richard Döcker from Stuttgart, deserved much credit. Visitors from all over the world – as many as 20,000 daily – saw the exhibition, and the publicity it received was overwhelming. In general the reaction was favourable, but a minority of conservative architects and critics argued that the technological developments at Weissenhofsiedlung represented a threat to German culture, that the role of the traditional building trades would be eroded and that construction workers would find themselves out of work. These arguments were eventually adopted and embroidered by the National Socialists.

The years of the *neue Sachlichkeit* were good years for the arts and architecture – the years of the 'golden twenties'. The period was described as 'a search for reality, for a place to stand in the actual world; it was a struggle for objectivity that has characterised German culture since Goethe'.²⁸ Weimar culture was in continuous, tense interaction with society and followed a course parallel with politics in the Republic. By 1925 the atmosphere in Germany was relatively calm; inflation had ended and industry was in full swing.

While the German social housing programme was keeping most radical architects fully occupied, Mies van der Rohe concentrated on building up his private practice. He was neither a popular nor a fashionable architect; Erich Mendelsohn was the only modern architect in the Berlin of the twenties to have a large, thriving private practice, employing up to forty draughtsmen. But Mies, who employed only one or two draughtsmen, was fashionable in appearance: his suits were made from the best fabrics by the best tailors, his shoes were handmade for him in England and he sported an immaculate Homburg. He enjoyed good food, good wine and good company; he was a lady's man. He had a fine sense of humour but, on the other hand, was also reputed to be lazy, egocentric, difficult and contemptuous of his contemporaries, especially Mendelsohn.

Between 1925 and 1930 Mies built four large and luxurious modern houses for wealthy clients – Wolf, Lange, Esters and Tugendhat. In sharp contrast to this work, and seemingly uncharacteristically, in 1926 he designed and built a simple brick memorial to the Communist martyrs Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Although his sympathies lay with his friends on the Left, he was politically uncommitted, disinterested even. But there is no doubt that he abhorred political murder. He knew Liebknecht, and the secretary to the committee in charge of the memorial was Dr Eduard Fuchs, who had recently purchased Villa Perls.

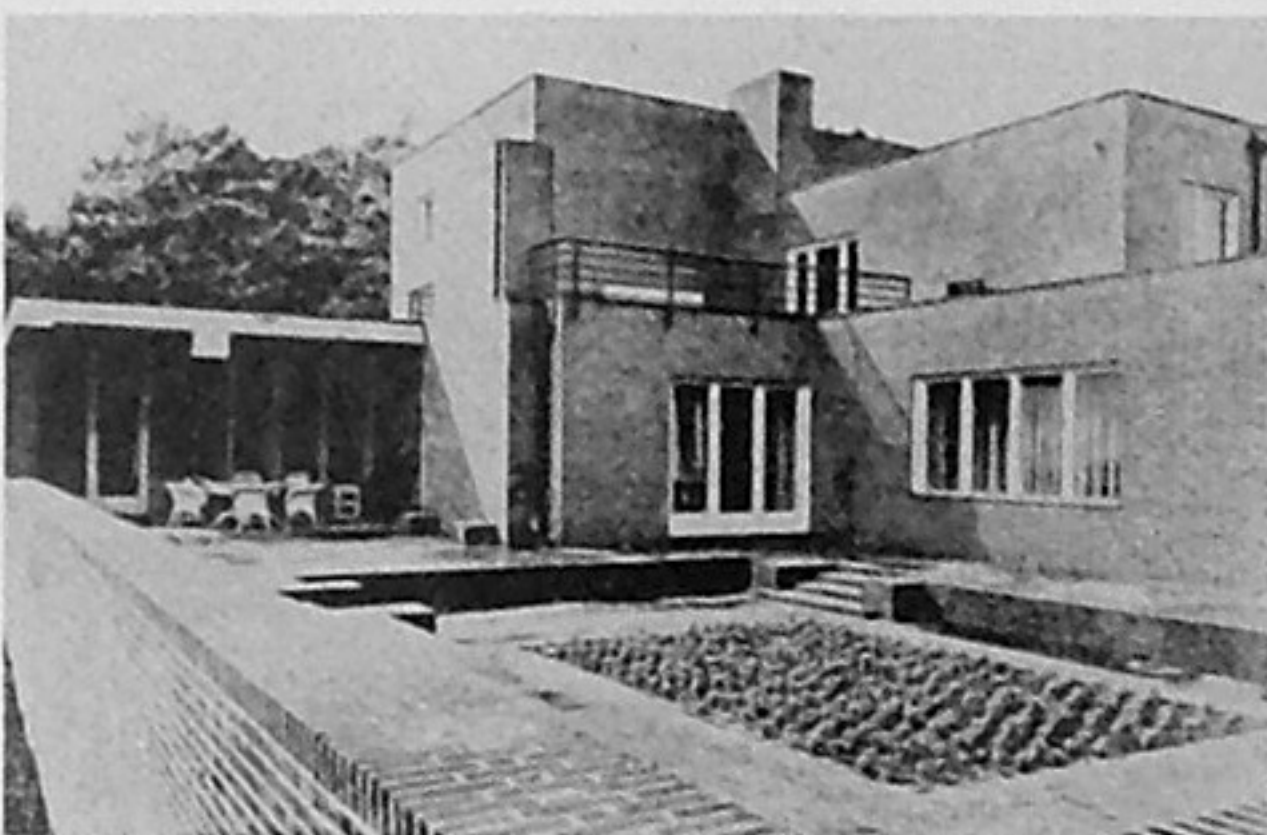
Mies van der Rohe was the only modern German architect who used brick in the twenties. His contemporaries refused to do so



27



28



29



30

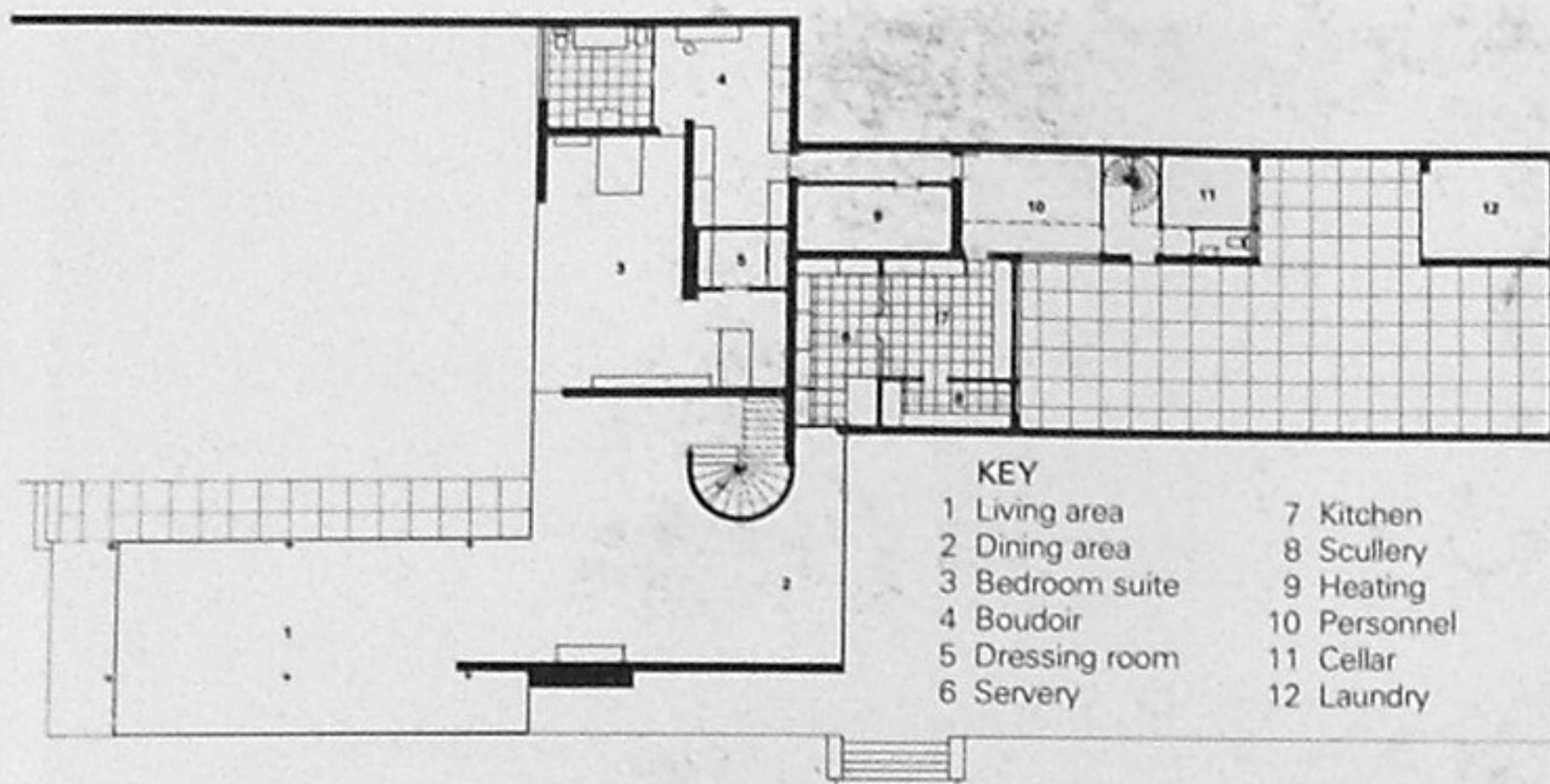


31

- 27 Weissenhofsiedlung project, 1925, model of early scheme
- 28 Berlage, Amsterdam Beurs, 1898-1903
- 29 Wolf House, 1926, terrace
- 30 Lange House, 1928
- 31 Esters House, 1928
- 32 Mies talking to Bauhaus students
- 33 Lilly Reich
- 34 Gericke House, 1930, lower floor plan
- 35 Krefeld Country Club, competition project, 1930, plan
- 36 Tugendhat House, 1930, lower floor plan
- 37 Tugendhat House, 1930, garden elevation



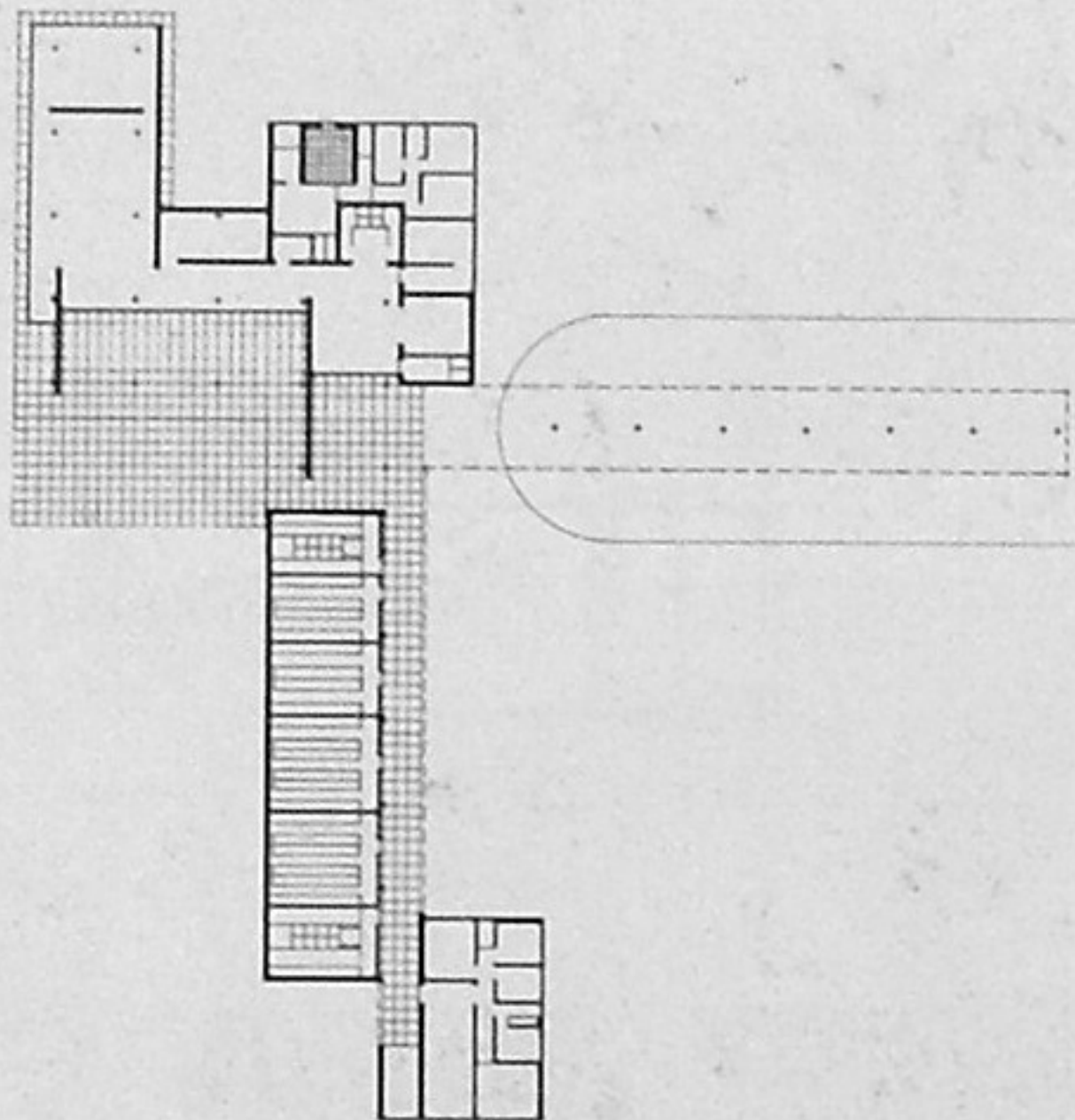
32



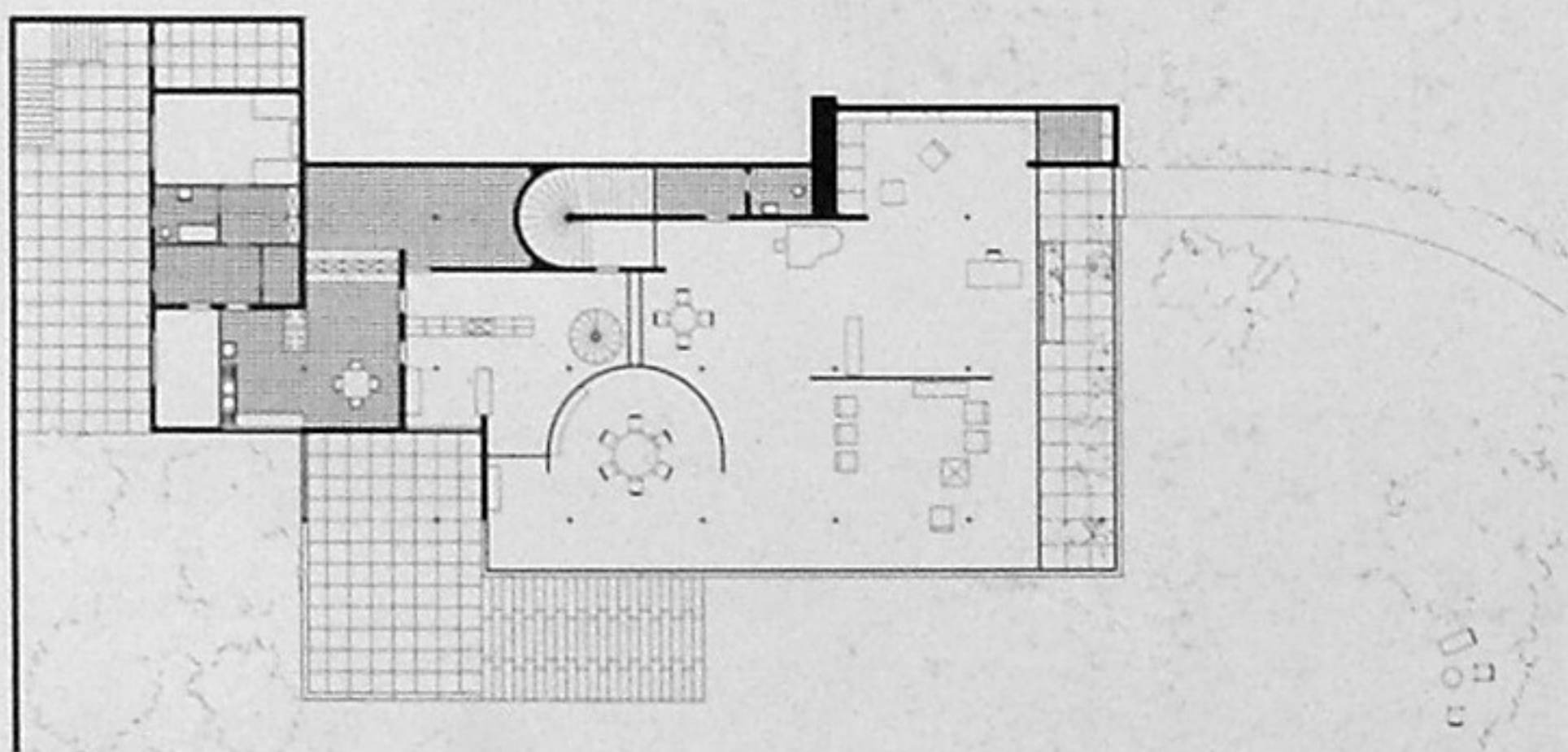
34



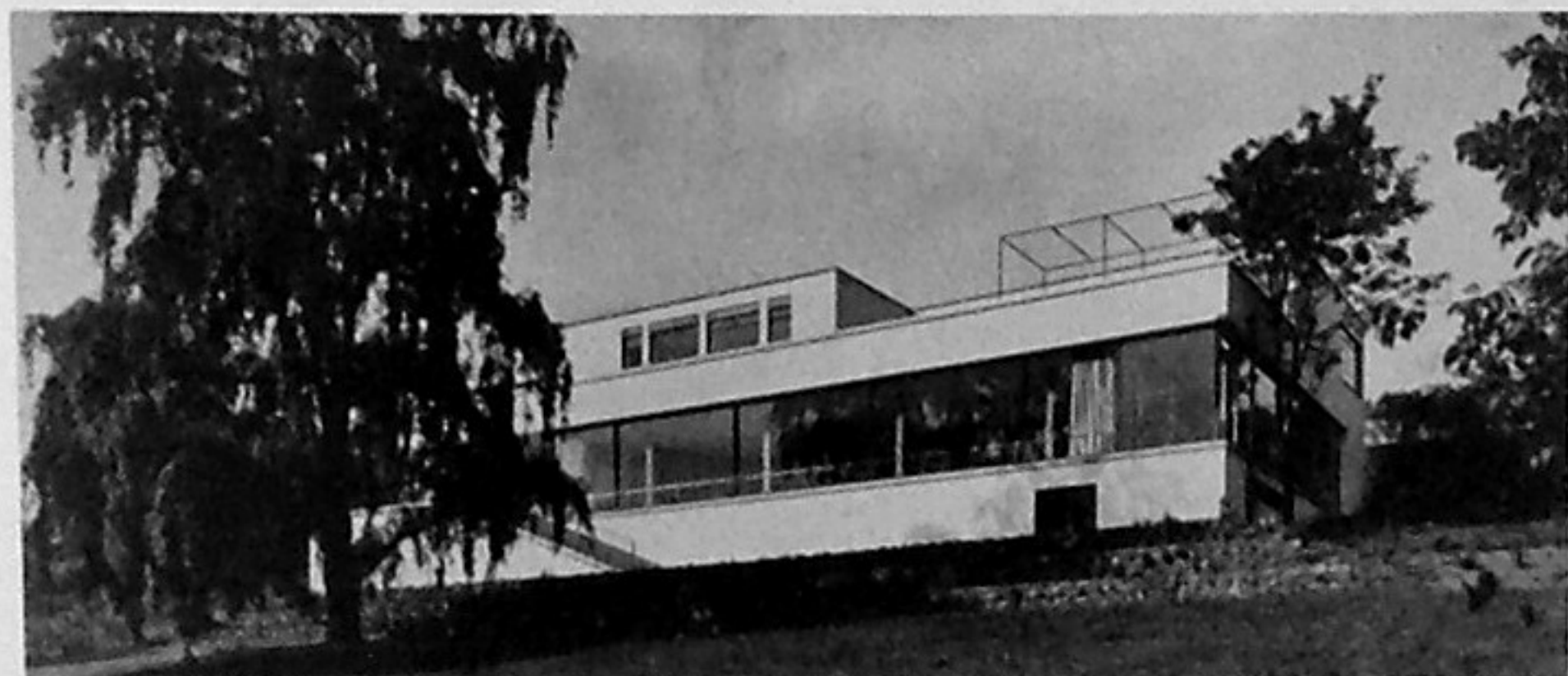
33



35



36



37

because of its handicraft connotations, rough texture and suggestion of mass rather than surface. Exposed brickwork was not considered to be a 'machine-age' material but Mies, via Berlage's work, appreciated the fact that it was a structural material which need not be concealed. Berlage, Mies said, 'was a man of great seriousness who would not accept anything that was fake, and it was he who said that nothing should be built that is not clearly constructed. And Berlage did exactly that. And he did it to such an extent that his famous building in Amsterdam, the Beurs, had a mediaeval character without being mediaeval. He used brick in the way mediaeval people did.'²⁹ Mies liked the regular rhythm achieved by the repetition of a brick module and he enjoyed the craftsmanship involved in the coursing and bonding.

Mies realised the concept of the Concrete Country House project (1923) in brick – at Guben (Haus Wolf, 1925-26) and at Krefeld (Haus Lange and Haus Esters, 1928). The inspiration for the facades of these three brick houses came from the study of volumes and their definition in flat, perforated planes (as demonstrated in the Concrete Country House model). The spatial organisation of this project – the separation of activities into a zoned plan – also inspired Mies' entries in two architectural competitions of 1930. In the Gericke project, the two floors of the double-storey house were divided into wings attached to a core; and in the Krefeld Country Club project the wings were attached to the core by covered open spaces.

Mies had always liked comfort and luxurious materials; he cultivated a taste for luxury while working for Behrens and had experienced it at first hand in Russia and Holland. His own modern interiors, however, tended to be austere and muted. After working with Lilly Reich this was to change. Weissenhof-siedlung marked the beginning of his long and fruitful partnership with Ms Reich. She had been a member of the Werkbund since before the war and had directed the annual Werkbund exhibit on the Frankfurt Fair from 1924 to 1927. She worked with Mies on the design of all the exhibits in the hall at Weissenhof and, with her help, Mies raised exhibition design to a minor art form. It was 'certainly more than a coincidence that Mies' involvement in furniture and exhibition design began in the same year as his personal relationship with Lilly Reich'.³⁰ At the 'Velvet and Silk Café' where they collaborated on the 'Mode der Dame' Exhibition (Berlin 1927), a new and richer vocabulary was introduced. Ms Reich was an expert in textiles and it can be assumed that she chose the fabrics and colours for this exhibition stand.

Lilly Reich was an extremely energetic and enterprising woman, forceful, intelligent and a liberated feminist in the true style of the period. In 1926 she moved from Frankfurt to Berlin and opened her own showrooms, along the road from Mies' atelier. Here she displayed her own furniture as well as Mies' designs and ran her interior decorating business. Soon after her arrival in Berlin she took over the organisation and management of Mies' architectural practice, attending to all the things he hated to do and leaving him free to get on with the design work (in which she too was active). In 1930, from Berlin, she organised the interior design of Philip Johnson's New York apartment. Johnson described her as strong, unpleasant, puritanical and dour, and said that she 'watched over Mies like a hawk'.³¹ The beginning of their partnership coincided with the most productive period of Mies' career. 'Mies, according to one of his employees from these years, rarely solicited anybody's comments but was always eager to hear her opinion.'³²

The Tugendhats gave Mies and Lilly Reich the freedom they needed to explore the aesthetic of the 'Velvet and Silk Café' in a luxurious house. And at Brno they gave a demonstration of an elegance, combined with a sensuousness, that Mies alone failed to achieve either before or after their collaboration. The stylishness of this classic modern interior can be attributed to Lilly Reich. The fame of the Tugendhat House rests largely on

the use of the materials and the handling of space in the main living-cum-dining area – a huge room measuring 50 feet by 80 feet. The plan, derived from the Brick Country House project of 1923, was articulated by a straight screen of onyx and a curved screen of Macassar ebony. The feeling of endless, flowing space was increased by the huge, floor-to ceiling panes of glass which formed the outer walls.

Mies has this to say about the house: *'Of my European work, the Tugendhat House is considered outstanding, but I think only because it was the first house to use rich materials, to have great elegance. At that time modern buildings were still austere and functional. I personally don't consider the Tugendhat House more important than other works I designed considerably earlier.'*³³

The expression of endless, flowing space reached its zenith in the Barcelona Pavilion (built in 1929 before the completion of Haus Tugendhat). *'For me working in Barcelona was a brilliant moment in my life'*, Mies said.³⁴ In the Barcelona Pavilion two features of the Brick Country House were preserved: the aesthetics of De Stijl and the screens, both horizontal and vertical, creating a flow of space between interior and exterior. But, at the same time, Mies demonstrated a new structural principle – a principle announced by Le Corbusier in his Dom-ino House studies of 1914 – the separation of structural elements from screening elements. Eight chrome-sheathed, cruciform columns defined the space, while screens of onyx, marble, and clear transparent glass channelled it.

In reality, the Barcelona Pavilion was a patched-up structure. Technically Mies was unable to erect the pavilion as a pure 'Dom-ino' structure: the eight cruciform columns alone could not support the roof and a number of extra columns had to be lodged in the double-skinned marble screens to help carry the load. But this makeshift structure did the job Mies asked of it and the plan remained inviolate. He pursued the idea in his model house at the Berlin Building Exhibition of 1931, but here a new spatial concept emerged simultaneously – that of the 'court-house', a concept he worked on in the thirties.

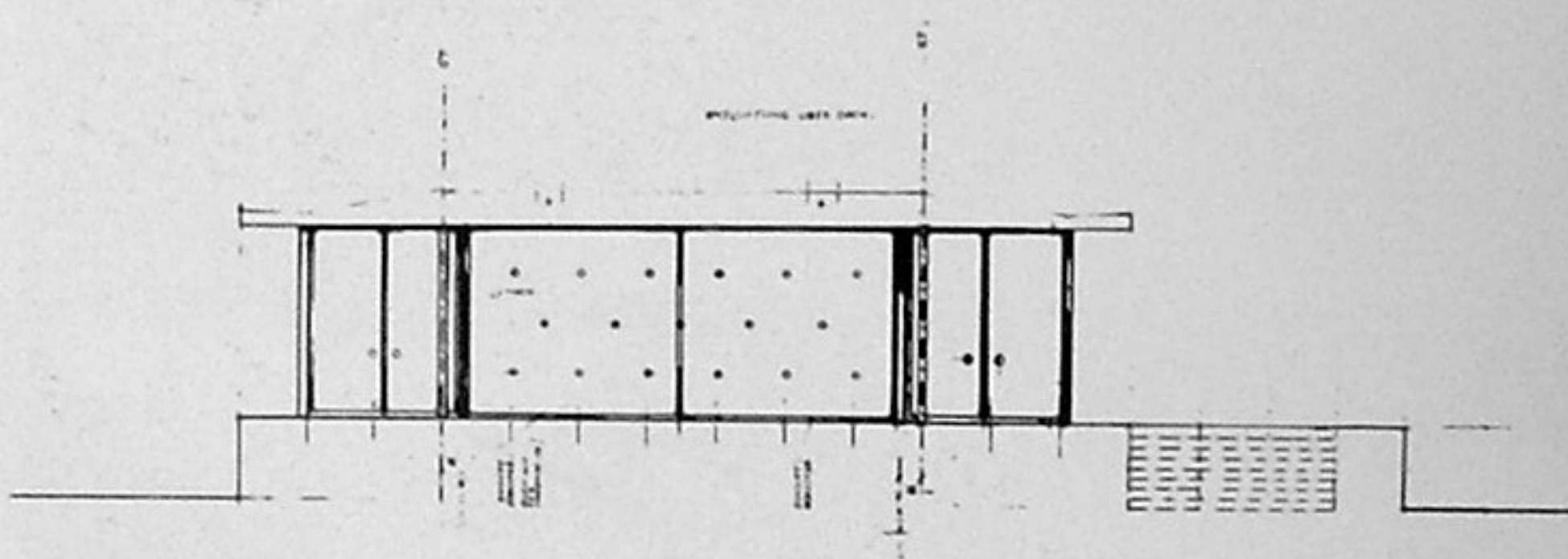
Towards the end of the twenties, attacks on modern architecture became more virulent. Opposition to the 'new architecture', as developed by the Bauhaus, (and to the social housing programme in particular) arose around the mid-decade. It was voiced most effectively in its initial stages by conservative architects and intellectuals. In 1928 the National Socialist propaganda machine began to take an interest in architecture; Alfred Rosenberg, like Hitler a frustrated architect, took the initiative. He founded the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur, the first Nazi cultural organisation, and in 1930 he enlisted the services of Paul Schultze-Naumburg who became its chief spokesman on artistic questions and was sponsored by the Kampfbund to campaign against the new architecture.

Right-wing opposition to the Bauhaus was manifest from the day it was founded: it was forced to move from Weimar to Dessau in 1926 and Schultze-Naumburg was instrumental in its closure in 1932. Mies had been appointed director after Hannes Meyer's dismissal in 1930. He ran the school with the aid of Ludwig Hilberseimer and Lilly Reich and conducted his own seminars in architecture, choosing to teach final-year students only. The first problem he set was a single-bedroom court-house: he used to remark that if a student could design a house well, he could do almost anything else.

Mies and Ms Reich commuted between Dessau and Berlin, spending three or four days a week at the Bauhaus, where they lived in one of the 'master houses'. When the Nazis closed the Dessau Bauhaus in autumn 1932, Mies immediately transferred the school to Berlin where it became his own private teaching and research institute. It lasted for only six months. In April 1933, shortly after the beginning of the summer semester,



38



39



40

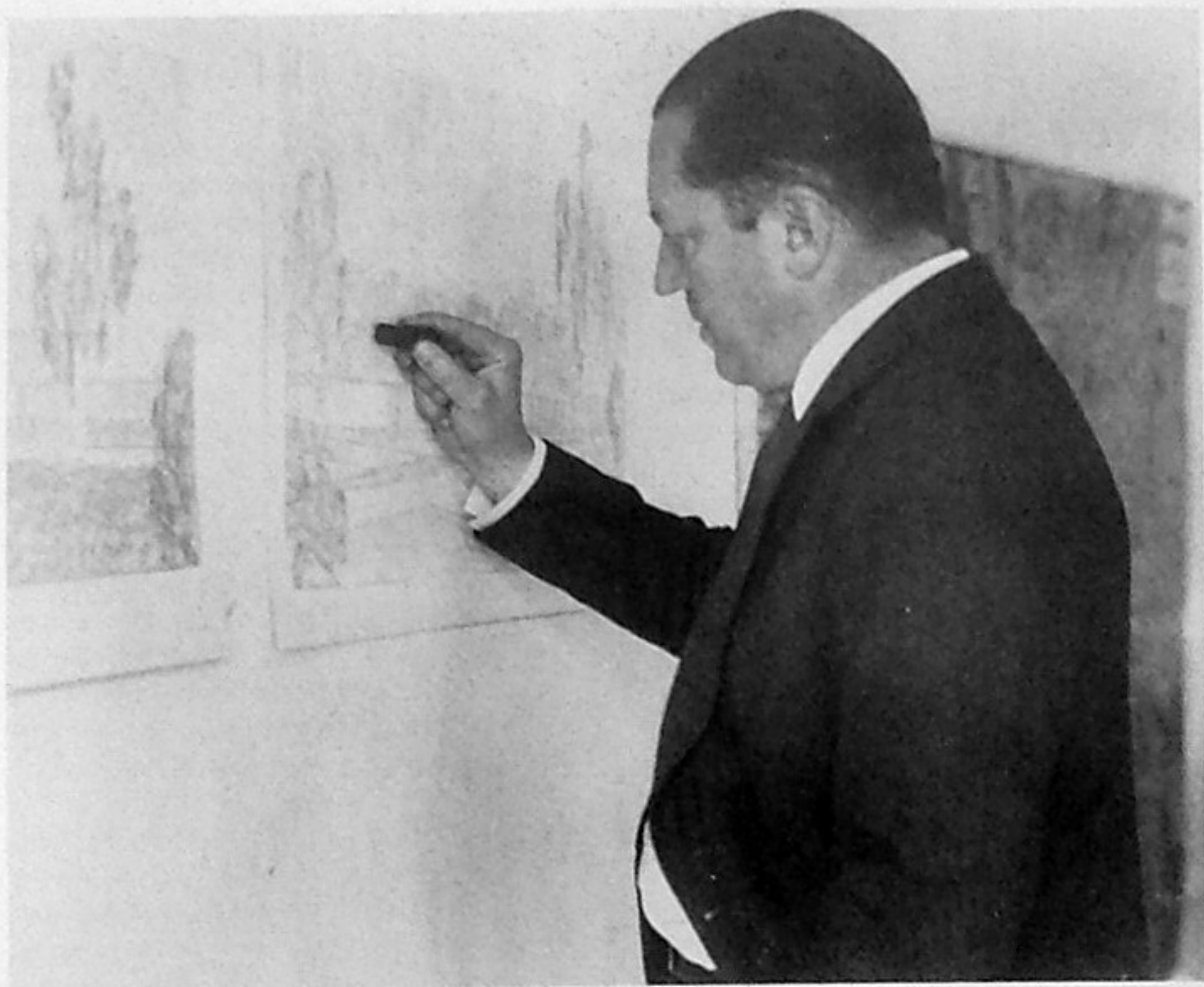
- 38 King Alfonso XIII speaking to Mies van der Rohe in the Barcelona Pavilion
- 39 Barcelona Pavilion, 1929, preliminary section
- 40 Ludwig Hilberseimer and Mies
- 41 The Berlin Bauhaus warehouse
- 42 Students at the Berlin Bauhaus
- 43 Mies pretending to sketch
- 44 Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit Exhibition, 1934
- 45 Bank building, 1928, exterior perspective, photomontage



41



42



43



44



45

the school was raided and searched by the Gestapo and storm-troopers; the building was sealed off and the Gestapo retained the keys. Mies negotiated with Rosenberg and repeated visits to Gestapo headquarters eventually resulted in terms for the conditional reopening of the school. But a meeting of faculty and senior students had already decided to close the school permanently.

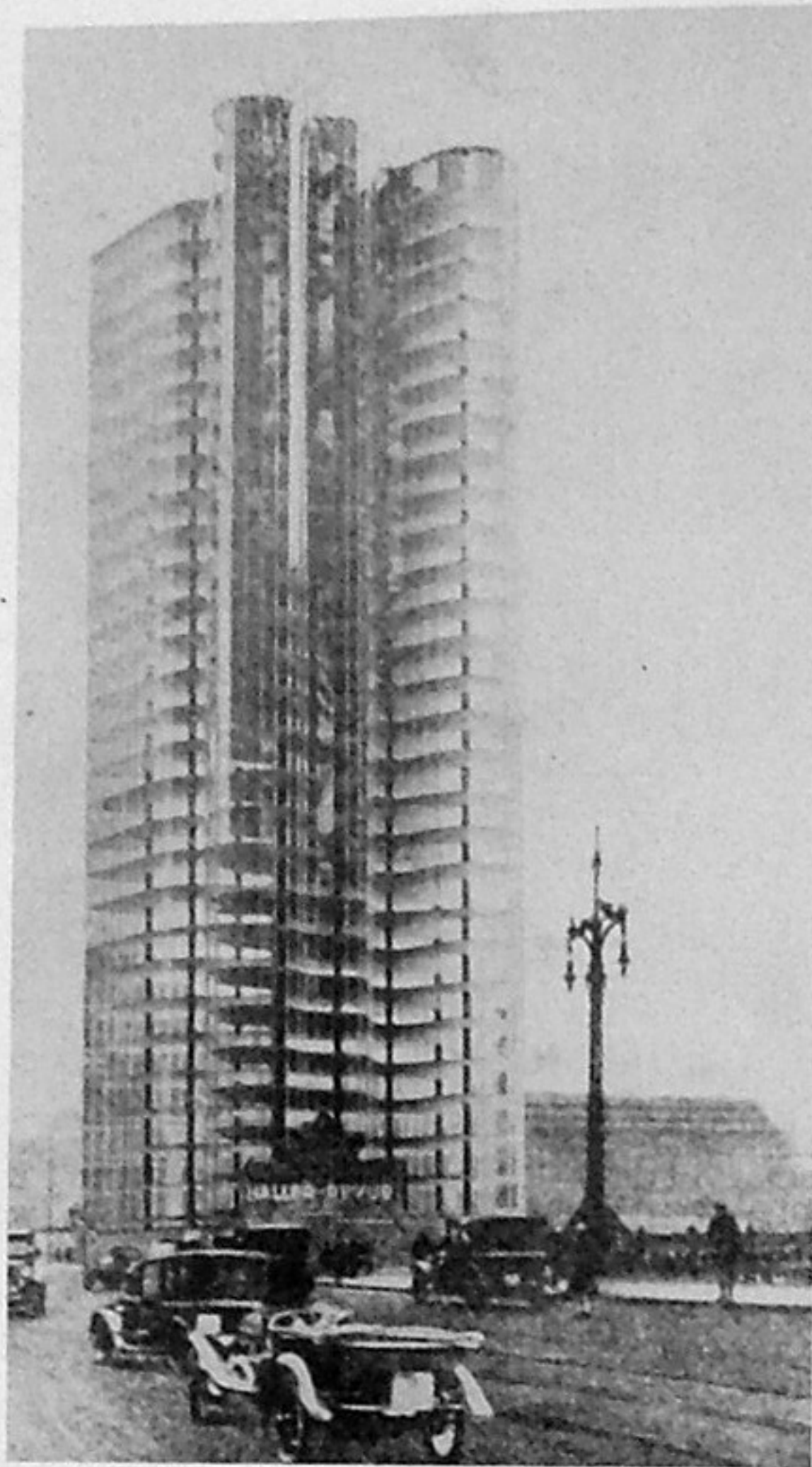
In the early stages of his rise to power, Adolf Hitler made no direct attacks against modern architecture but, in the spring of 1933, the new government began a systematic attack on the creators of the new style, depriving them of their jobs in schools, building societies and local government, and their positions of leadership in the national professional organisations. In November 1933, Goebbels founded the Reichskulturkammer to control all cultural affairs. This all-powerful organisation absorbed and supplanted the Kampfbund, along with all the professional and arts associations throughout Germany. Membership qualifications excluded all those with left-wing political affiliations or Jewish origins. The Werkbund was reorganised and purged (Mies had already resigned from the council in 1931). The Prussian Academy of Arts, to which Mies had been elected a member in 1931, was absorbed into the Reichskulturkammer der bildenden Künstler. (Mies retained membership until 1938.) No radical architect of any standing received any significant commission after Hitler became Chancellor. Gropius, among the most politically aware of radicals, emigrated in 1934; Mies van der Rohe waited until 1938 before he left Germany to settle in the United States of America.

Return to Classicism

In the thirties, when he was approaching his fiftieth birthday, Mies returned to the drawing board. Again it was a time to develop new ideas as weeks, months and even years without work passed by. In the last few years before he emigrated he took to reading extensively and explored the works of the mediaeval scholastics, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas and Spinoza. In America their writings seemed to give him the inner strength he needed in a foreign land. They also helped him to order and clarify his own ideas.

After his fruitless efforts to reopen the Berlin Bauhaus, Mies' attitude turned to pessimism. He was very fond of Germany and extremely loath to emigrate: 'I felt like a flower plucked from its plant', he said after leaving.³⁵ He tried to get work from Nazi-sponsored enterprises – he did a project for a filling station on the autobahn – but his appeals were ignored. However, he did get one small commission: to design the mining and coal exhibit in the great Nazi propaganda exhibition of 1934. Here he exhibited in good radical company: Walter Gropius did the non-ferrous metals display; Cesar Klein designed the Nazi eagle tapestry; Werner Graeff did some propaganda photomontage work; and Herbert Bayer did the graphics for the catalogue. None of their names was mentioned – 'They were all on the list of degenerate artists.'³⁶

The only steady income Mies received during the thirties came from his furniture patents, but he found some interior design work through Lilly Reich. In 1936 nothing was listed in Mies' catalogue of works – he had even stopped working on his court-house projects. Then, in 1937, Mr and Mrs Stanley Resor (who knew of Mies through Alfred Barr, Philip Johnson and New York's Museum of Modern Art) invited him to America to design a house for them in Wyoming. On this trip he was able to finalise a contract to direct the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. In 1938 he worked out the educational programme with the help of William Priestly and John Rodgers (ex-Bauhaus students) in New York. After this he returned briefly to Germany to hand over his practice to Lilly Reich. He left finally and inconspicuously, crossing the Dutch border and taking only a few clothes and books with him. He did not return to Berlin until the sixties.

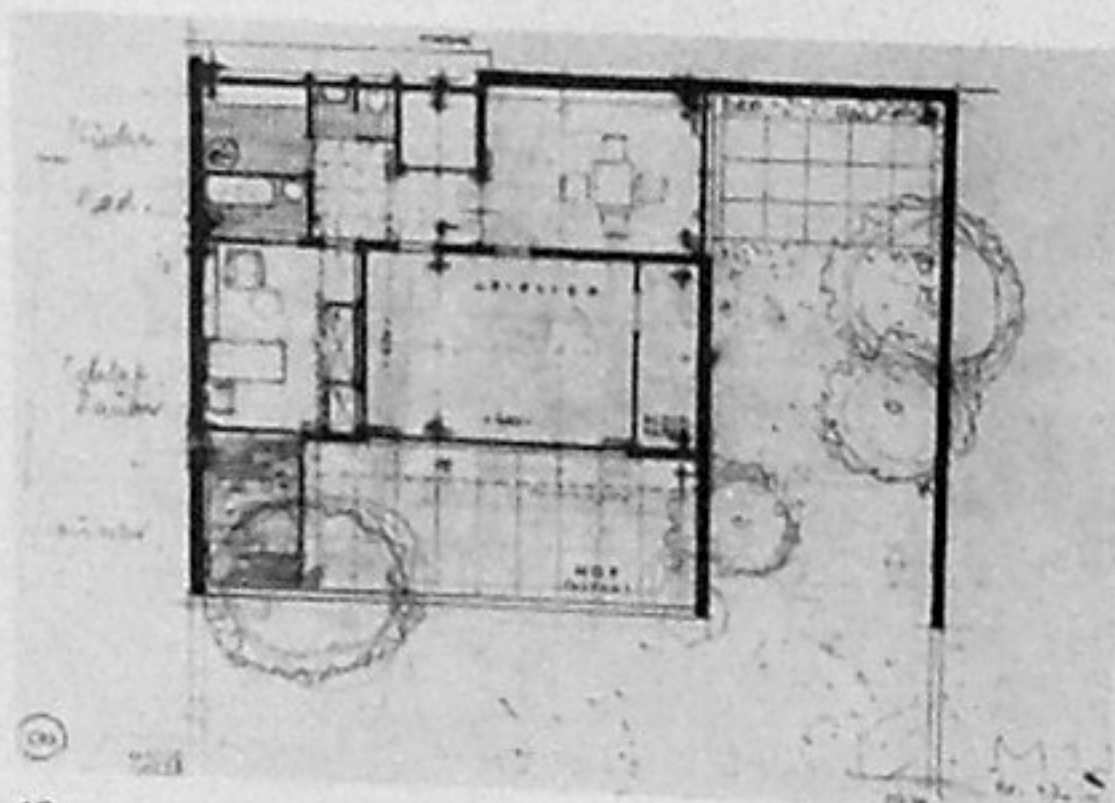


46 1928 version of 1922
Glass Skyscraper project
47 Krefeld Silk Factory, 1933
48 Haus Nolde, project, 1930

46



47



48

During the thirties Mies continued to keep 'open house' in his Berlin atelier. Ex-Bauhaus students wandered in and out; the German delegates to CIAM met there after Gropius' departure; Philip Johnson was a frequent visitor. *'They were very sad years. We used to drive around together and discuss the situation, but Mies refused to talk politics. I told him he would never find work in Germany. . . It was like wine to spend an evening talking about architecture with him, but he could not, or would not, discuss his own aesthetic – he knew these things in his guts.'*³⁷

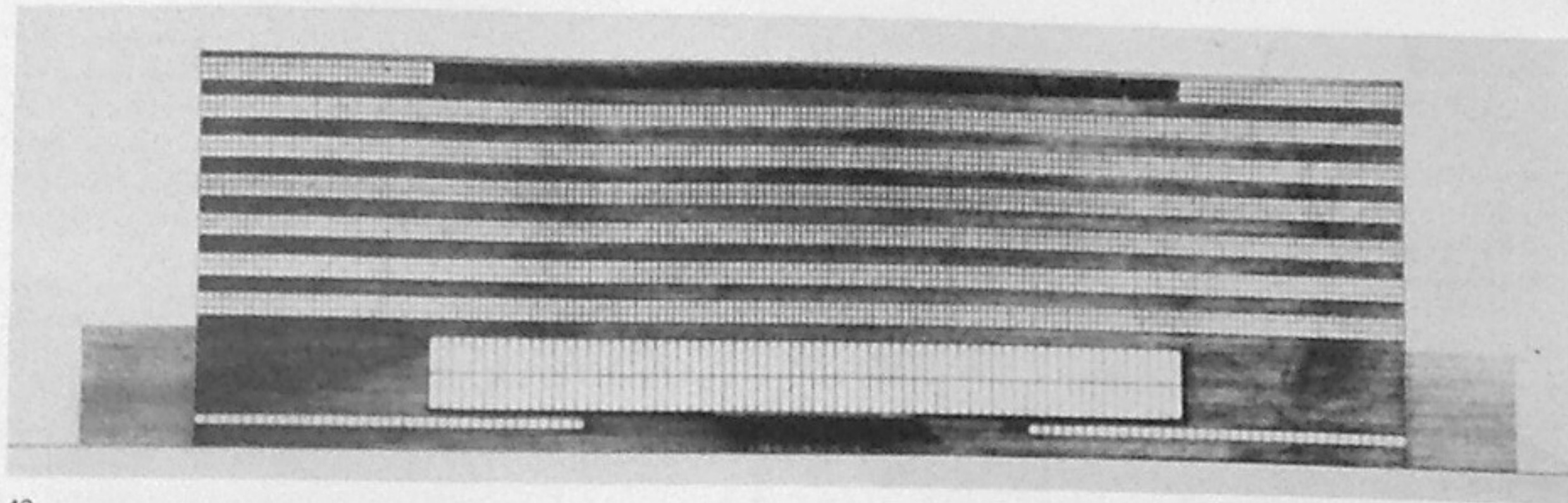
As the political and economic climate began to deteriorate at the end of the twenties, architectural competitions were revived. In 1928 and 1929 Mies entered four competitions: the Remodelling of Alexanderplatz, the Adam Building, the Bank Building (Stuttgart), and the Friedrichstrasse Office Building. His projects were all studies of the building envelope – the smooth glass curtain-wall applied to the slab block. In a sense they were a refinement of his earlier glass skyscraper projects, but more commercial in character. He even redrew the glass skyscraper of 1922 in a harder urban setting. He received no awards.

Through his contact with the Lange and Esters families, Mies was invited to build a factory and power station complex for the silk industry in Krefeld. This commission was the last Mies was to build in Germany and it was completed in 1933. He drew on the ideas he had developed in the so-called 'skin study' projects of the late twenties but, at the silk factory, another concept emerged – *'an open-space-structured building-recessive, calm, green, urban pattern.'*³⁸ The volumes, clothed in a repetitive, neutralising skin, played an equal part with the voids which were softened by grass and weeping willows. Here Mies laid the foundations for his work at the Illinois Institute of Technology campus and his housing scheme for Lafayette Park (Detroit 1955) designed with Ludwig Hilberseimer.

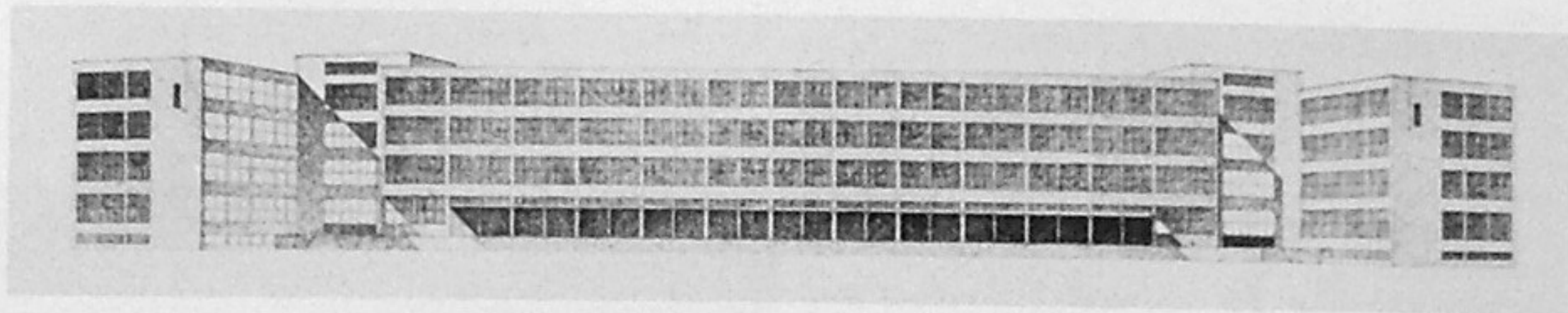
In February 1933 thirty leading German architects, chosen by the Reichsbank and each in receipt of a fee, were invited to design the new Reichsbank building. Among them were Walter Gropius, Hans Poelzig and Mies van der Rohe. Peter Behrens was among the judges. Mies' design won an award – the only modern one to do so. It was also the most monumental and ordered, on a symmetrical, splayed plan. Two features of the Concrete Office Building project of 1923 recurred: the ribbon window and the enclosed court or light well. Four years later Mies designed another rigidly ordered building with a similar splayed plan – the Administration Building for the Krefeld silk industry. The concept of these two projects reflected the grim political and economic climate of the decade: rigidly heavy facades stared blankly at a chaotic world.

Mies' domestic architecture of the thirties reflected a desire for isolation. There were few openings in the enclosing walls to his court-house projects. He began work on the concept of the court-house with his Bauhaus students and developed it in projects for imaginary sites. The internal flow of space was confined within a single rectangle, formed by the outside walls of the court and house conjoined. He designed some court-houses for specific clients but they never got beyond the drawing board stage. A sketch for Haus Nolde showed the house focused on two courts, while the Ulrich Lange and Hubbe Houses, both of 1935, were centred on semi-enclosed, paved courtyards. The walls in all the court-house projects were loadbearing; where there were extensive areas of glass, columns were introduced to help carry the roof. Only a small 'patio house' on an L-shaped plan was built (Haus Lemke, 1933).

In 1931 Mies van der Rohe organised another exhibition for the Deutscher Werkbund, entitled 'The Dwelling in our Time' and sponsored by the City of Berlin. It amounted to a kind of celebration of the Modern Movement's official recognition and wide acceptance. The staging of this exhibition was an act of extreme optimism: the rapidly deteriorating political situation in

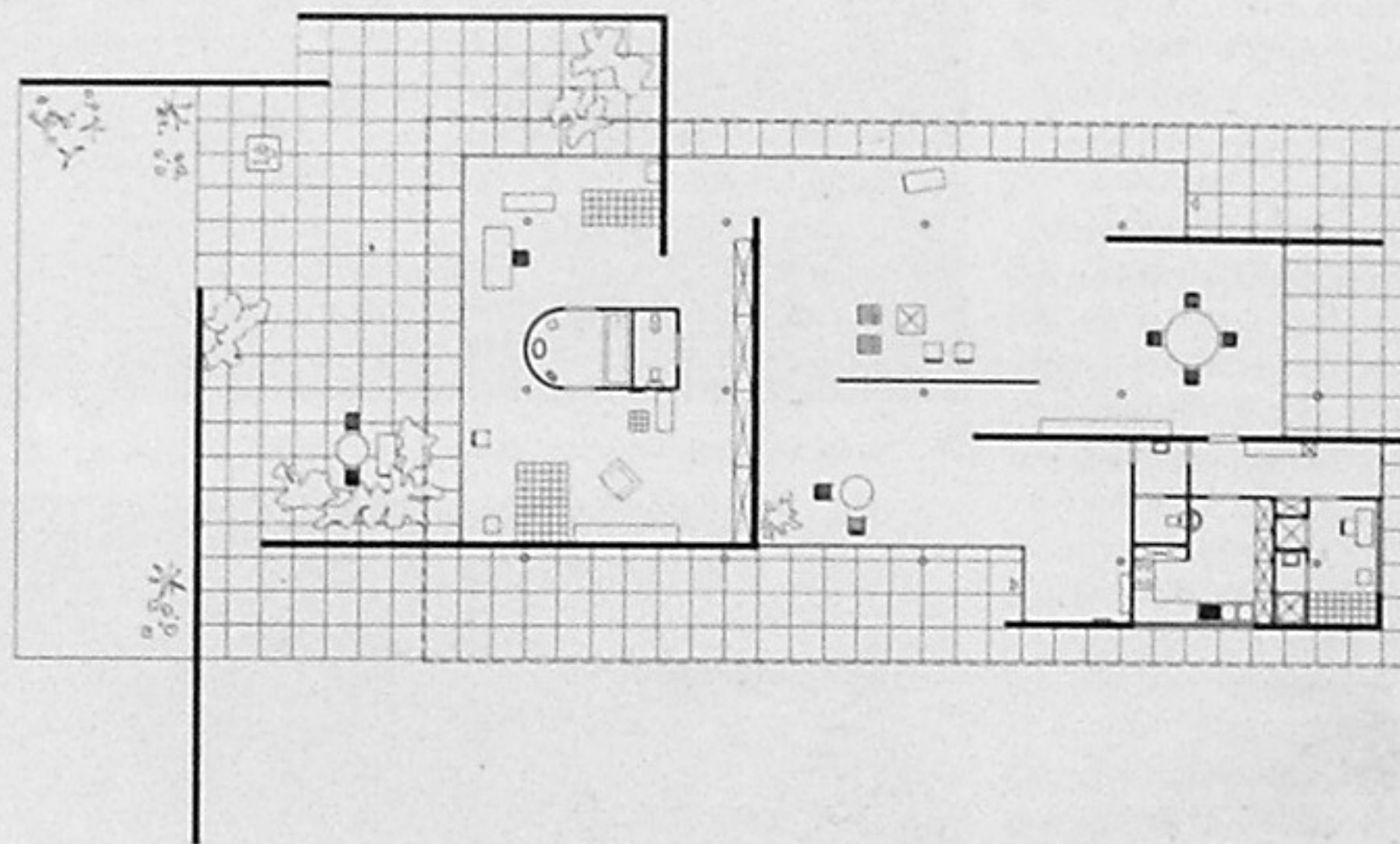


49

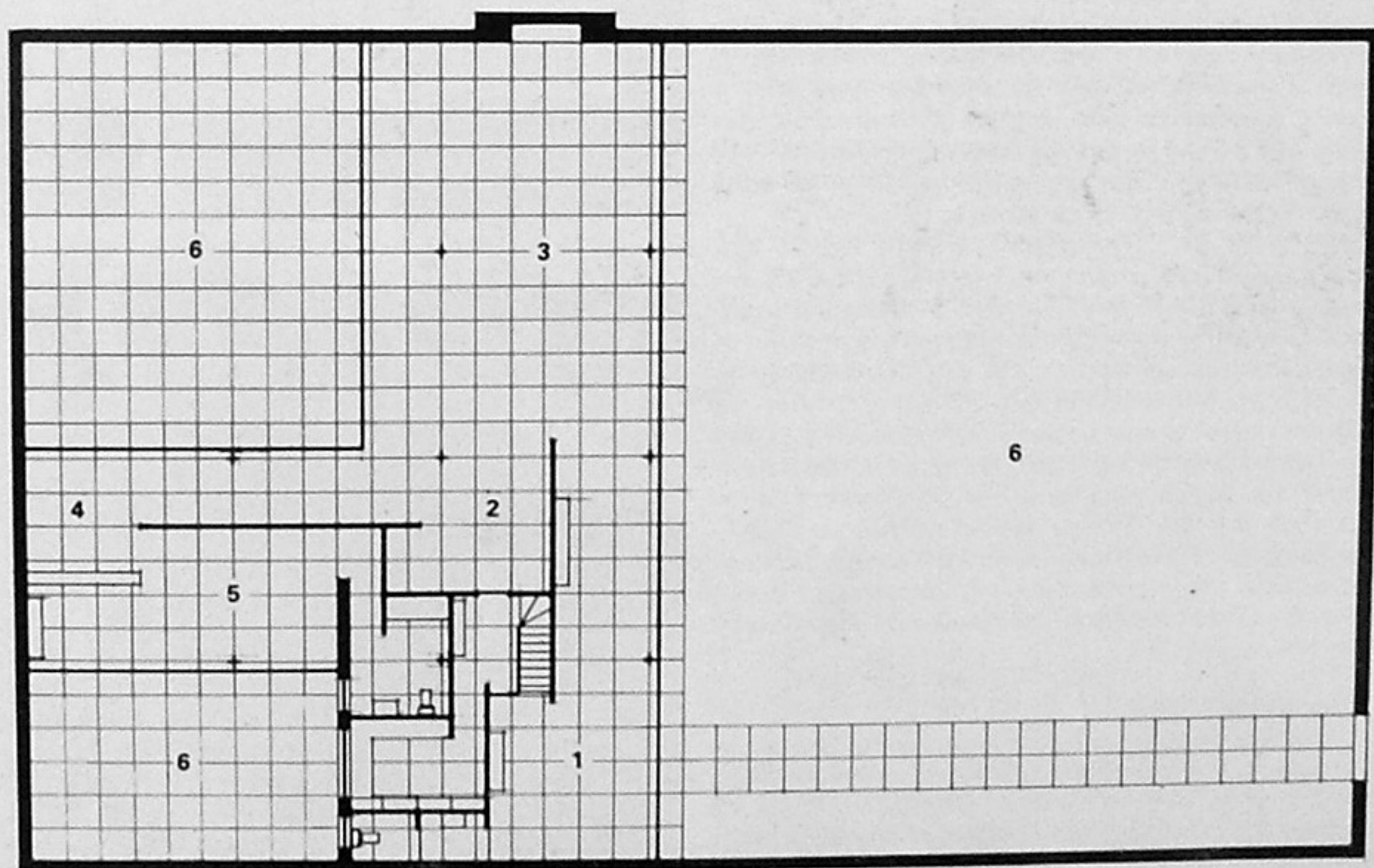


50

- 49 Reichsbank competition, 1933, elevation of main facade
- 50 Administration building for the Krefeld silk industry, project, 1937
- 51 Plan of house for Berlin Building Competition, 1931
- 52 House with three courts



51



- KEY
- 1 Lobby
 - 2 Dining area
 - 3 Living area
 - 4 Study
 - 5 Bedroom
 - 6 Courtyard

52

Germany, coupled with a worldwide economic crisis, had already robbed most participating architects of work. Mies shared the direction of the exhibition with Lilly Reich and, in many ways, she played a far more important part. They were given a free hand to choose exhibitors and design the layout. It was the last work they did for the Werkbund; Mies resigned from his vice-presidency after this exhibition.

In his model house, Mies introduced a semi-enclosed court, but the concept of flowing space was still drawn from the Brick Country House project of 1923 – the walls slid out from under the roof, giving a feeling of openness. Lilly Reich's model house was conceptually an entity with that of Mies: they were physically linked by a long wall, as if to symbolise their architects' close collaboration.

In the thirties Mies started work on another spatial concept which has been described as his 'universal space concept' or as a building type – the clear-span building or the 'big box' building. While on a visit to Berlin to supervise the raising of the roof of the New National Gallery in 1966, Mies spoke about the origin of his single-space pavilion:

*'I don't know if it was a conscious process. I have always liked big rooms in which I could do what I wanted. I often discussed it with Hugo Häring who wanted to realise his "Leistungsform" as he called it. And I said, "Make the place big enough so that one can walk around as one likes, not just in a preconceived way, or as you imagine it being used."*³⁹

In 1934 Mies submitted an entry in the competition to design the German National Pavilion in the forthcoming International Exhibition at Brussels (1935). One of the sketches for this project showed a square, clear-span pavilion, with two parallel, free-standing walls defining the central area. In Berlin Mies built just such a pavilion – the New National Gallery (1962-68) and parallel walls define the central area here as well. Mies' Brussels project incurred the wrath of Hitler himself who, along with Albert Speer, judged the competition. Mies took the precaution of leaving Berlin for a while and went to stay at the house of a friend at Bolzano, in the southern Tyrol.

Here, in the Austrian Alps, he sketched a court-house for himself at the entrance to a mountain pass. His house was to have had an L-shaped plan, fully glazed onto a court and the ends of the 'L' were also to be fully glazed so that the mountainous landscape could become an integral part of the interior. Mies expressed this concept powerfully and simply in collages of the Resor House project (1938). This house was conceived as a floating, self-contained cage – an idea which also came to Mies in the Tyrol. It was illustrated in a deceptively casual sketch for a House on the Hillside. The Farnsworth House (Illinois 1945-50) is the purest realisation of this concept.

In all these pavilions, whether they hug the ground or are suspended above it, the concept is the same – a single, outward-looking space, a multi-purpose, classical space, fit for all occasions. Mies described it this way (remembering the conversations with Hugo Häring in the twenties):

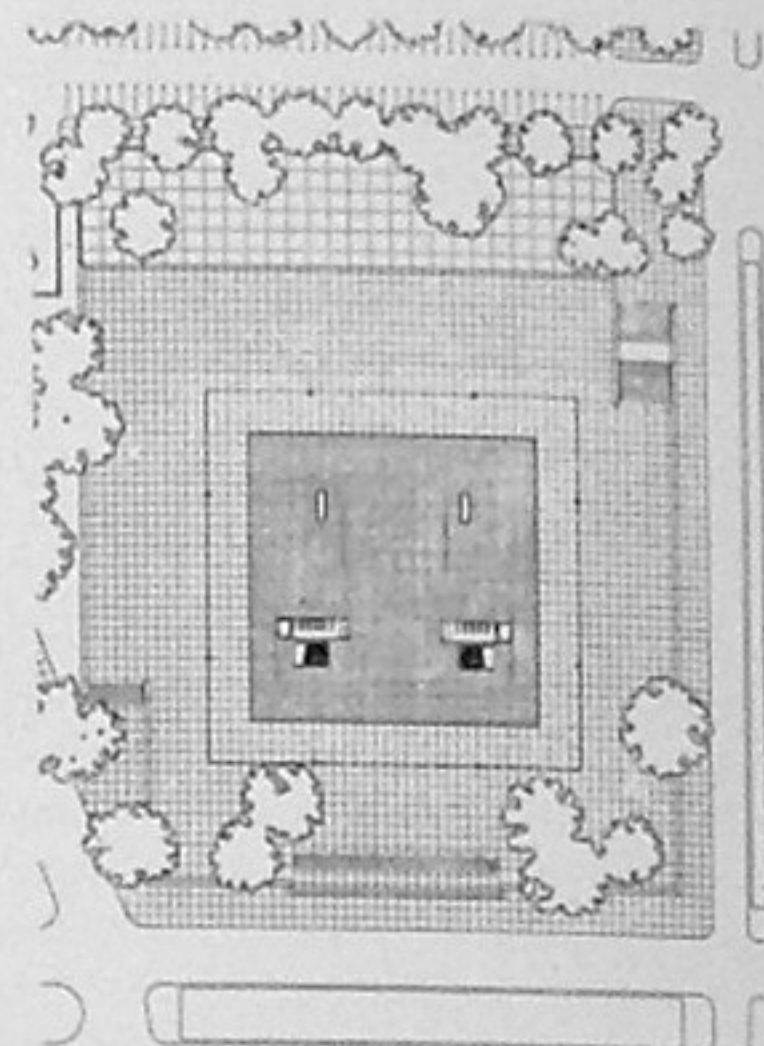
*'We never know if people are going to use the building the way we would like them to. Firstly the functions are not easily determined; also they are not constant. Our buildings last for a few centuries; only the lifts and heating systems wear out – structures do not. These things are, I think, not very consciously worked out; they become clearer and clearer, and later one formulates them into a theory. But these thoughts were worked out little by little.'*⁴⁰

Conclusion

In Germany, Mies van der Rohe developed his architectural concepts slowly and carefully; when he was satisfied that a concept could be taken no further, he moved on to develop another one. In America, the concepts became buildings, but he worked in a similar way. Having spent the war years on the



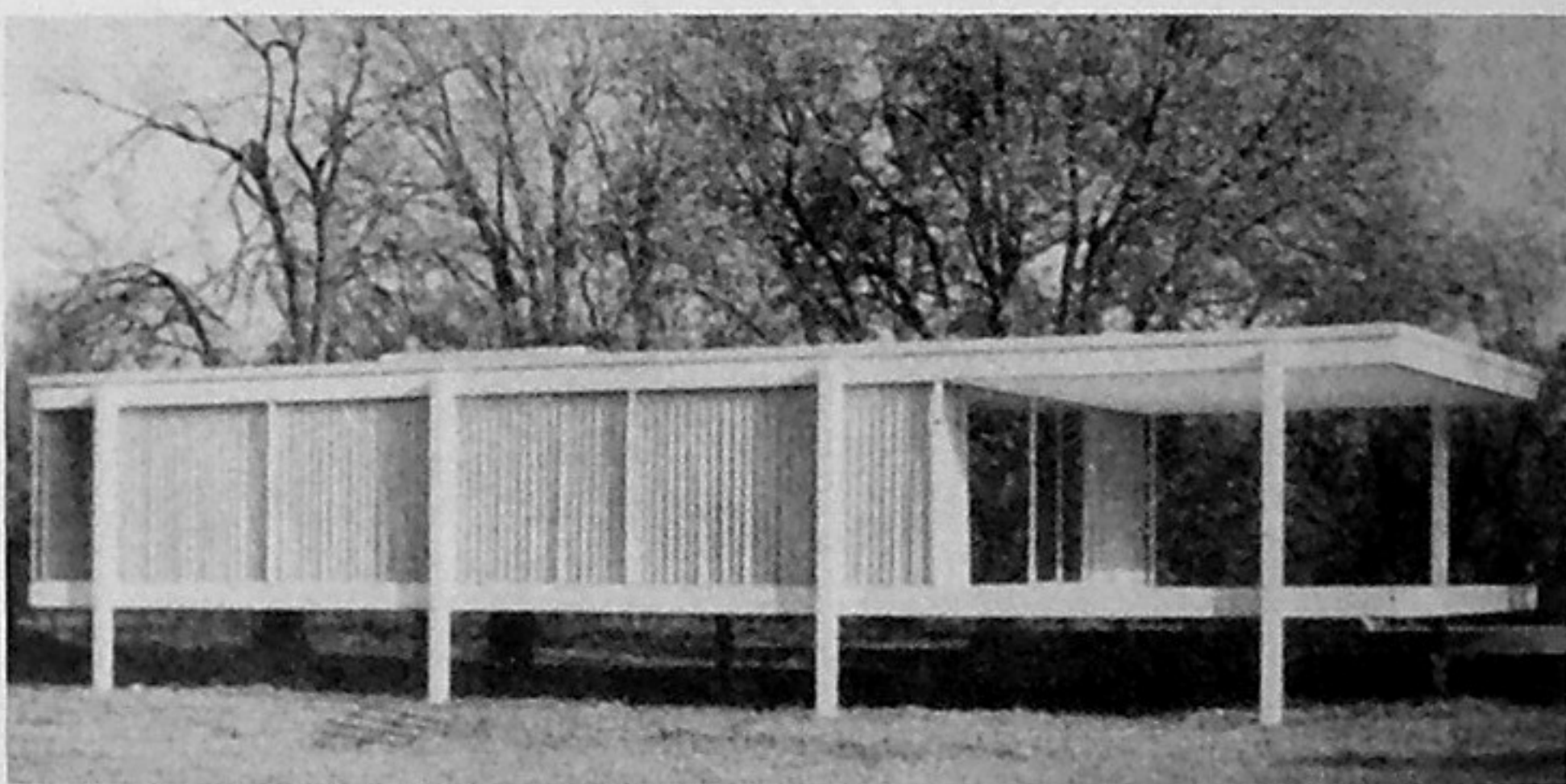
53



54



55



56



57

Illinois Institute of Technology Campus, he then devoted his energy to the high-rise building; on completing the Lake Shore Drive Apartments, he concentrated on Crown Hall. The pattern of his career seemed to flow like the space of the Barcelona Pavilion – a channelling of slightly overlapping streams of thought, on a podium but never idealistic. His architecture is a synthesis of conceptual order and realistic application, of universality and particularity. A concept would be announced, developed and applied to a real site with a rare combination of sensitivity and pragmatism.

Mies was a very private person; he let few close to his creative process and very seldom discussed it. His published writings and speeches are couched in generalities, but one or two sentences he wrote in Germany give us a hint:

'Skyscrapers reveal their bold structural pattern during construction.'⁴¹

'Only what has life on the inside has a living exterior.'⁴²

The bold structural pattern in the work of Mies van der Rohe lies in the plan. In his glass skyscraper project of 1922 the transparency of the skin revealed the dynamic strength of the plan, repeated thirty times. In America, where his plans became more symmetrical and static, the 'life' on the inside was expressed in the classical order and refinement of the exteriors; the quality of the plan can only be experienced at ground level, therefore other means had to be found to express it in the facades.

The strength of Mies' architecture is not often visible; the muscle and bone are hidden by the skin. 'Works of art', said Mies van der Rohe, 'have a life of their own; they are not accessible to everyone. If they are to have meaning for us we must approach them on their own terms.'⁴³ Mies had great difficulty with words; he was unable to describe his own work. Conversations about architecture with him would end, more often than not, when he said, 'Look and you will see.'

- 53 Mies watching the raising of the roof of the New National Gallery, 1966
- 54 New National Gallery, 1962-68, plan
- 55 New National Gallery, 1962-68, model
- 56 Farnsworth House, 1950, rear elevation
- 57 Farnsworth House, 1950, terrace

Notes

- 1 'Built to live in', *Philip Johnson Writings*, (New York 1979), p30.
- 2 Quoted in Peter Blake, *The Master Builders: Mies and the Mastery of Structure*, (London 1960), p132.
- 3 'Mies speaks', *Architectural Review*, (December 1968), pp451-52.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Quoted in Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, (London 1974), p174.
- 7 Quoted by Sergius Riegenberg, in conversation with the writer, Berlin, August 1978.
- 8 'Mies speaks', *op cit.*
- 9 Philip Johnson *Mies van der Rohe*, (New York 1947), p14.
- 10 'Mies speaks', *op cit* pp 451-52.
- 11 *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*, (Berlin 1910), *Frank Lloyd Wright Ausgeführte Bauten*, (Berlin 1911).
- 12 'Tribute to Frank Lloyd Wright', quoted in Philip Johnson, *op cit*, pp 195-96.
- 13 'Mies speaks', *op cit* pp 451-52.
- 14 Mies added his mother's family name, Rohe, to his own with the Dutch preposition 'van'. Aachen lies but a few miles from the Netherlands' border and Mies, perhaps, wished to stress his geographical origins: interest in things Dutch ran high in Germany at the time. He added the umlaut to the 'e' of Miës so that the name would be pronounced in two syllables (as it was spoken, Mies maintained, in Aachen). Without this umlaut the word in German is an adjective meaning awkward, nasty, miserable, poor, seedy.
- 15 Philip Johnson, *op cit* p20.
- 16 'Mies speaks', *op cit* pp 451-52.
- 17 Quoted in Peter Carter, 'Mies van der Rohe', *Architectural Design*, (March 1961), p97.
- 18 The Gläserne Kette (Glass Chain) was a circle of Expressionist correspondents inspired by the poet Paul Scheerbart and who wrote under symbolic pen-names in Bruno Taut's magazine *Frühlicht*.
- 19 Werner Graeff, 'Concerning the so-called G Group', *Art Journal*, (Summer 1964), p281.
- 20 Werner Graeff, in conversation with the writer, Mulheim, May 1977.
- 21 Quoted by Mies van der Rohe in an interview with Ulrich Conrads, Berlin 1966 (recorded on a long-playing album, 'Mies in Berlin', *Bauwelt Archiv* 1).
- 22 'Hochhausprojekt für Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse in Berlin', *Frühlicht* 1, (1922), pp 122-24 (translated by Philip Johnson, *op cit*, p182).
- 23 'Bürohaus', *G* 1, (July 1923), p3 (translated by Philip Johnson, *op cit*, p183).
- 24 Philip Johnson, *op cit* p30.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 'Industrielles Bauen', *G* 3, (June 1924), pp 8-10; 'Baukunst und Zeitwille', *Der Querschnitt* 4, (1924), pp31-32 (translated by Philip Johnson, *op cit*, pp 184-87).
- 27 Bruno Taut had sensed the danger in modern planning methods of erecting new cities without a focal point. In 1919, inspired by Scheerbart, he collected a number of essays and published them under the title of *Die Stadtkrone*.
- 28 Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, (London 1968), p121.
- 29 Quoted in Peter Carter, 'Mies van der Rohe' *op cit* p97.
- 30 Ludwig Glaeser, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, (New York 1977), p10 (exhibition catalogue published by the Museum of Modern Art).
- 31 In conversation with the writer, New York, September 1976.
- 32 Ludwig Glaeser, *op cit* p10
- 33 Interviewed in Chicago in 1964, *The Open Eye*, 1971.
- 34 Letter to the Editor, *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, (February 1957).
- 35 Quoted by Howard Dearstyne, letter to the Editor, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, (October 1965), p254.
- 36 Sergius Riegenberg, in conversation with the writer, London, October 1978.
- 37 Philip Johnson in conversation with the writer, New York, September 1976.
- 38 Alison and Peter Smithson, *Without Rhetoric: An Architectural Aesthetic 1955-1972*, (London 1973), p37.
- 39 In an interview by Ulrich Conrads, *op cit.*
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Frühlicht* 1, (1922), p122.
- 42 Letter to the Editor, *Die Form* 2, (February 1927), p59.
- 43 'Über Kunstkritik', *Das Kunstblatt* 14, (June 1930), p178 (from an impromptu speech delivered at a symposium on art criticism; translated by Philip Johnson, *op cit*, p191).



Early Houses

Mies van der Rohe's early houses were accomplished in their idiom; they were well proportioned, well detailed and well built; the rooms were generous and comfortable and his clients were well satisfied. He secured

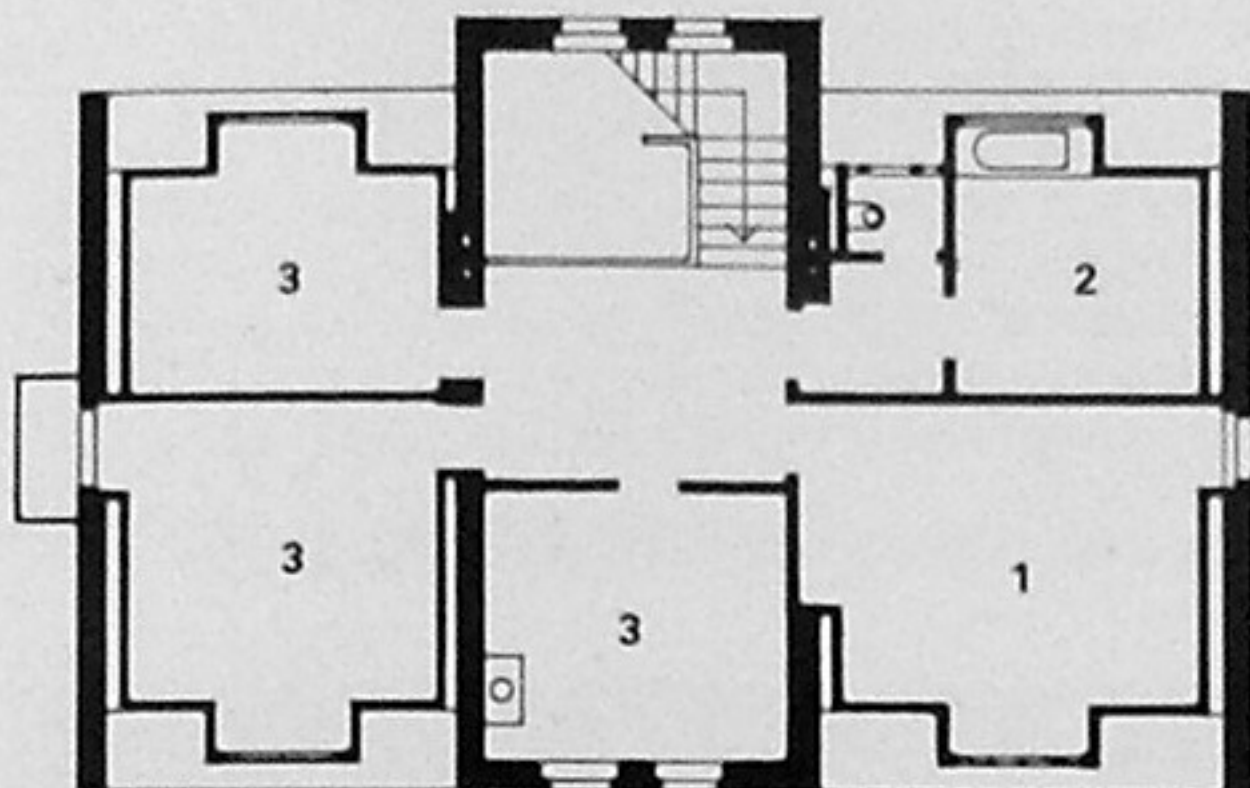
nearly all his first commissions through his wife's family connections. In *Mies van der Rohe* (Philip Johnson, 1947), Villa Riehl and Villa Mosler are merely listed, and Villa Werner and Villa Eichstaedt receive no mention.

Villa Riehl 1907 Neubabelsberg, Potsdam, German Democratic Republic

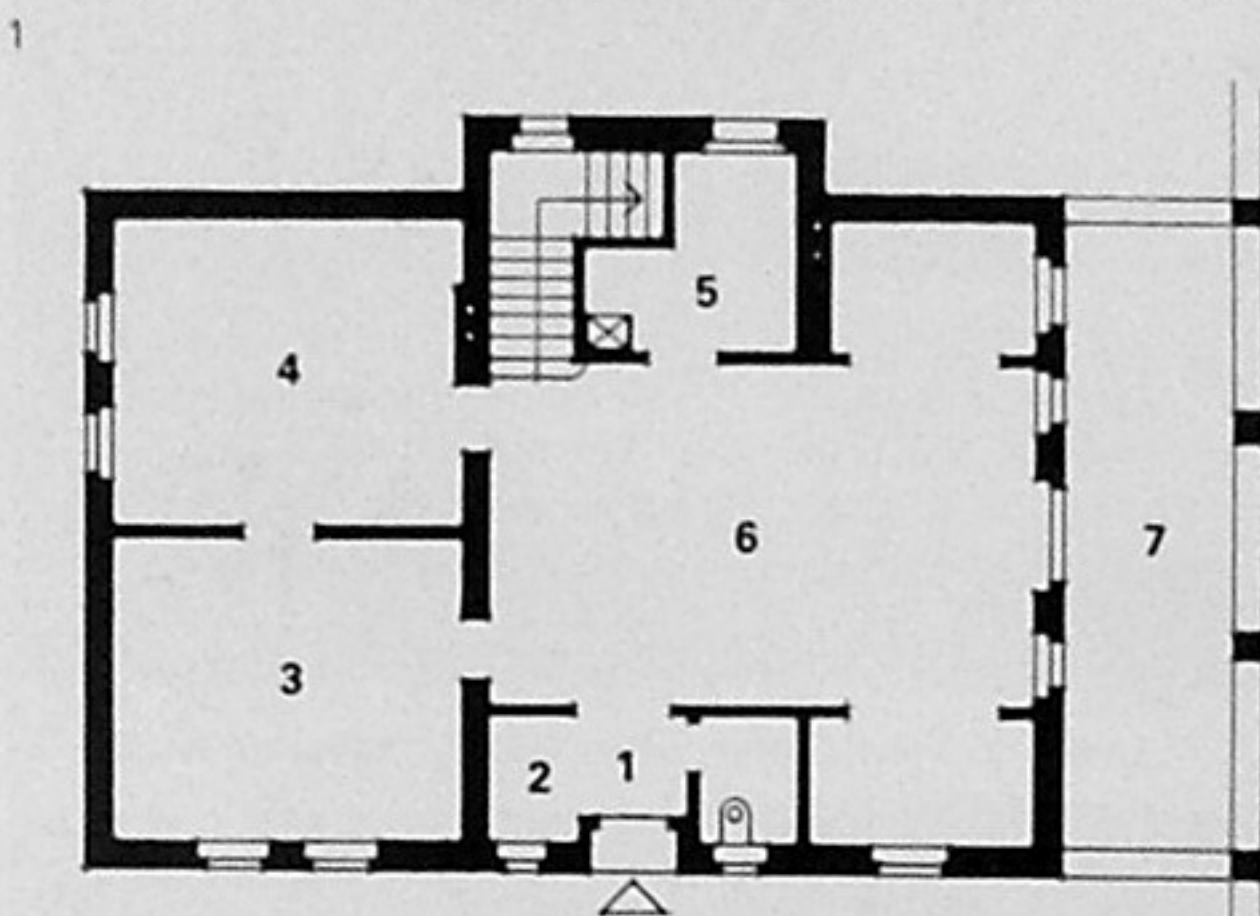
The Riehl family had made up their minds to build a house, but they wanted a young man, not a famous man. And young is what I was. I was twenty. ('Mies Speaks', *Architectural Review*, December 1968.)

Professor Riehl, a doctor of philosophy, sent Mies to Italy for three months before allowing design work to proceed. But despite this visit the house shows no Italian influence. 'It wasn't a villa; it was rather like a house in the local style of Werder, the style of Mark Brandenburg – simple roofs, a few dormers, mostly curved.' (*ibid.*) A contemporary critic wrote: 'The work is so faultless that no one would guess that it is the first independent work of a young architect.' ('Architekt Ludwig Mies: Villa des Professor Dr Riehl in Neubabelsberg', *Moderne Bauformen*, September 1910.)

The house is now occupied by a film school and there have been some alterations to it: the hall has been divided up, the verandah facing the garden closed in and the little balcony on the side elevation has been removed.

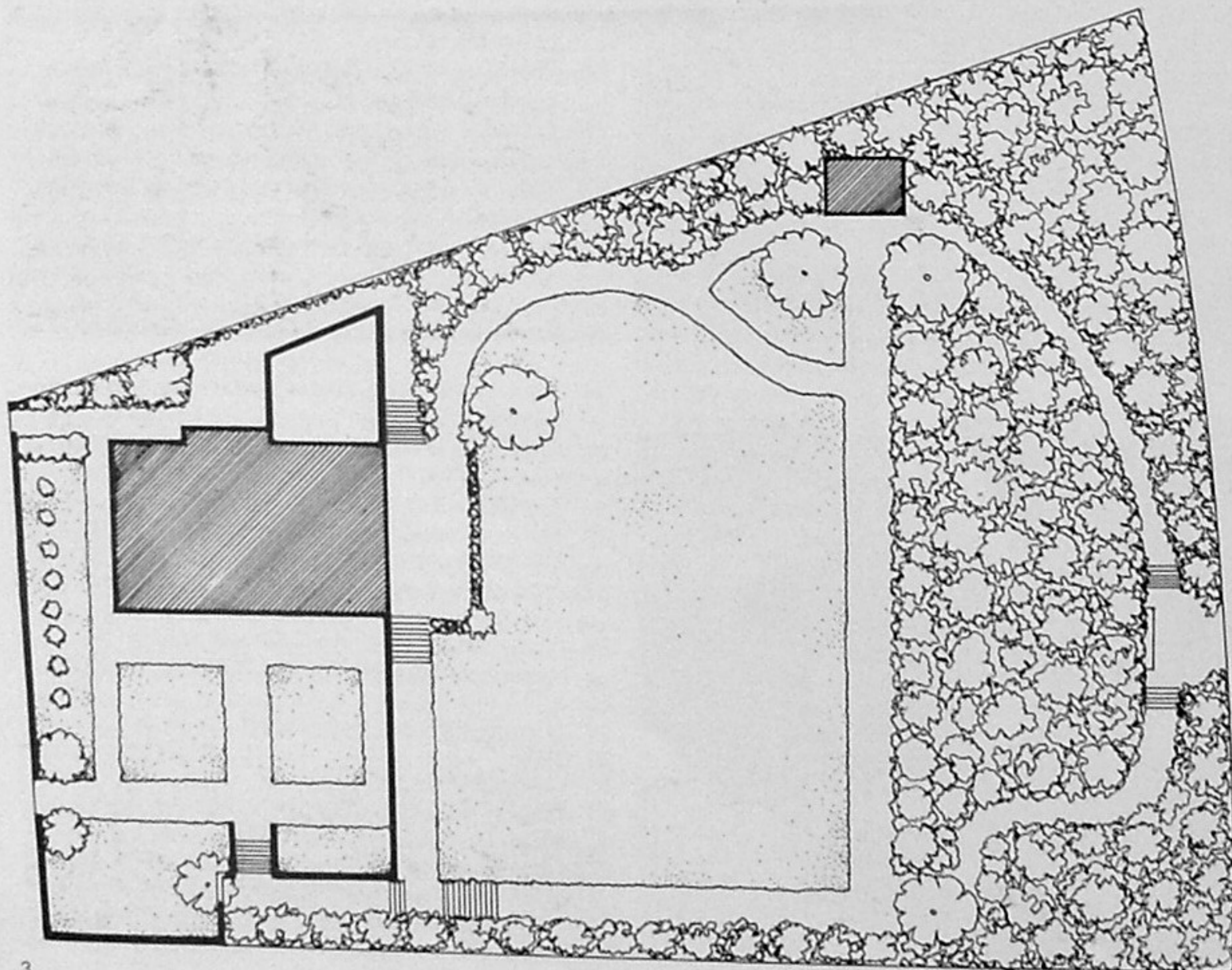


- KEY
- 1 Main bedroom
 - 2 Bathroom
 - 3 Bedroom



- KEY
- 1 Entrance
 - 2 Garderobe
 - 3 Living room
 - 4 Gentlemen's room
 - 5 Servery
 - 6 Hall/dining room
 - 7 Verandah

2



3



4

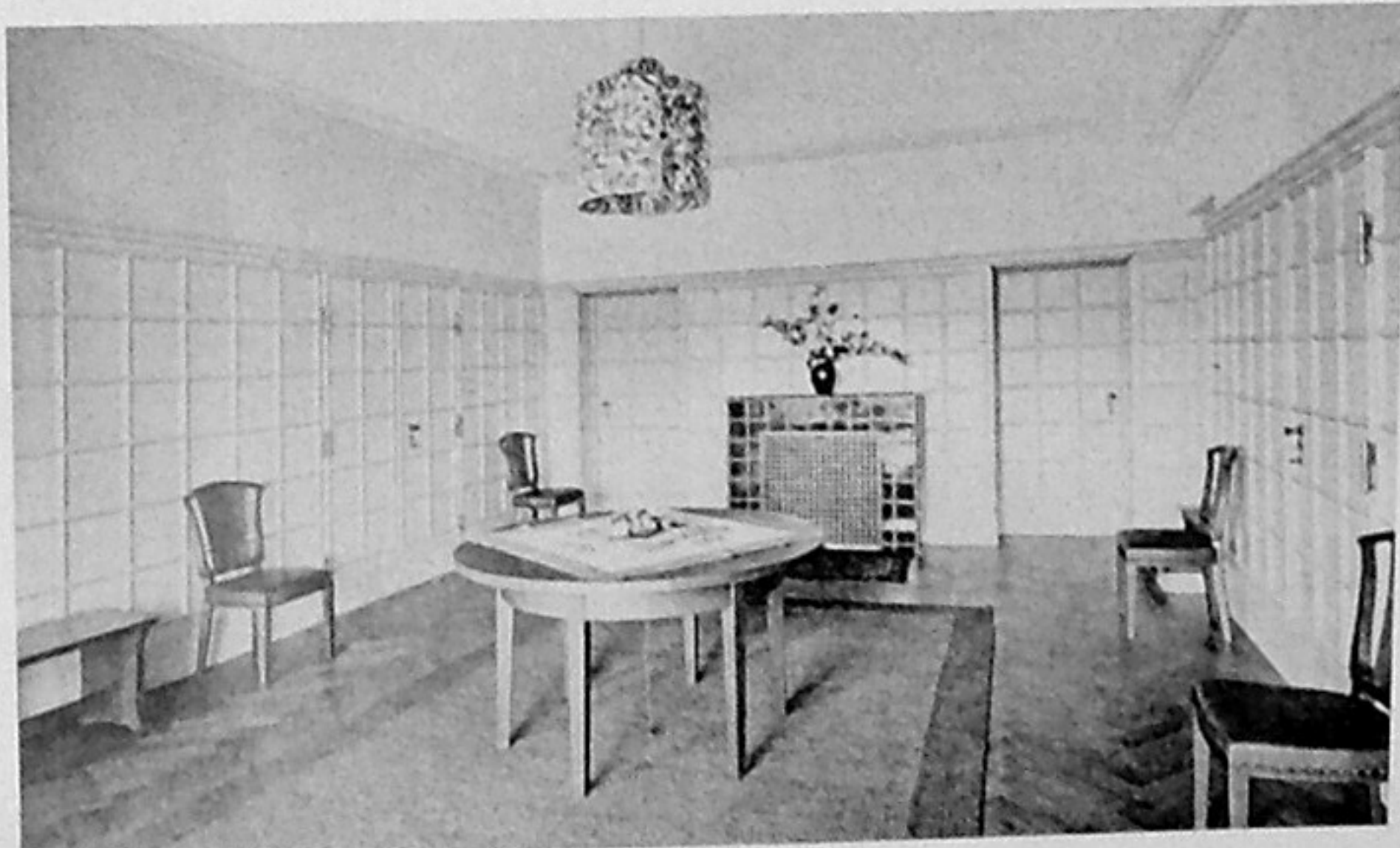


5

- 1 Upper floor plan
- 2 Ground floor plan
- 3 Site plan
- 4 Garden (east) elevation
- 5 South elevation showing recent alterations
- 6 Original verandah
- 7 Hall



6

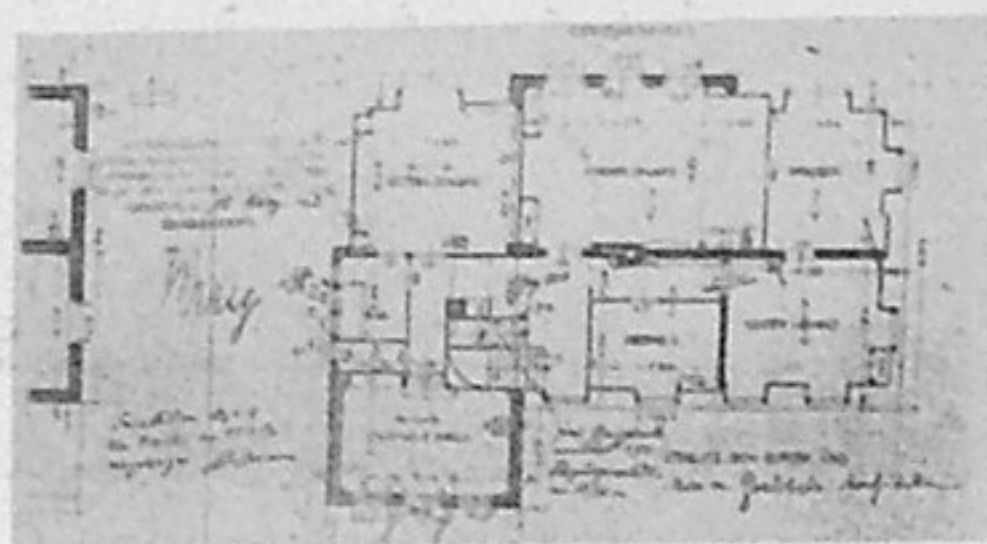


7

Villa Werner
1913
Zehlendorf, Berlin West

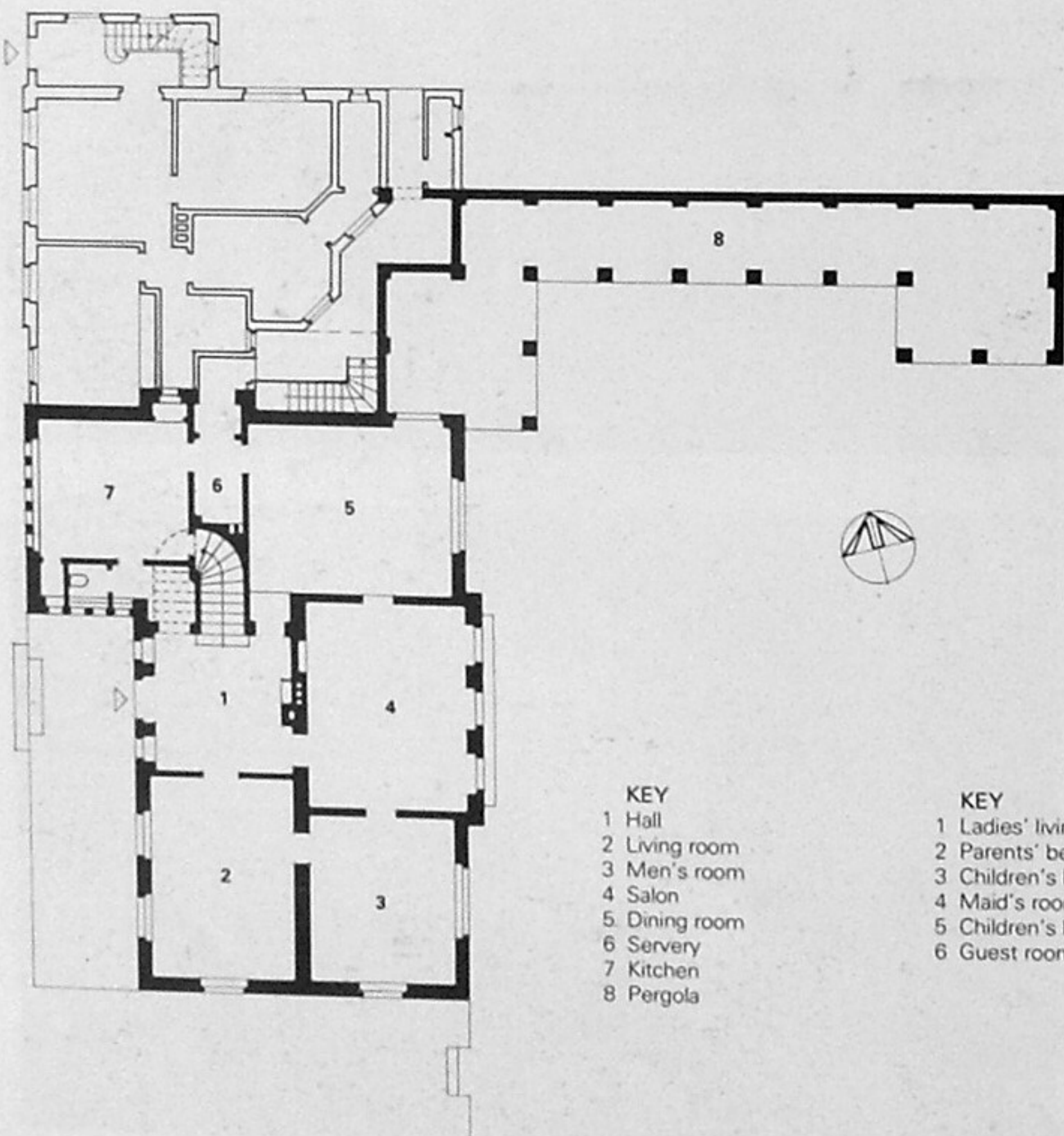
The Werner House was registered in Zehlendorf under the architect Goebbels, but it was designed by Mies – the drawings attest to this and are signed by him. It was built for Dr. Ernst Werner, a civil engineer, on a piece of land adjoining Villa Perls. In 1928 the house was extended by another architect to form a double house – two self-contained units. The attic dormers have been altered and the pergola closed in.

There are references to Muthesius in this house – in the gable and the very tall French windows to the garden elevation.

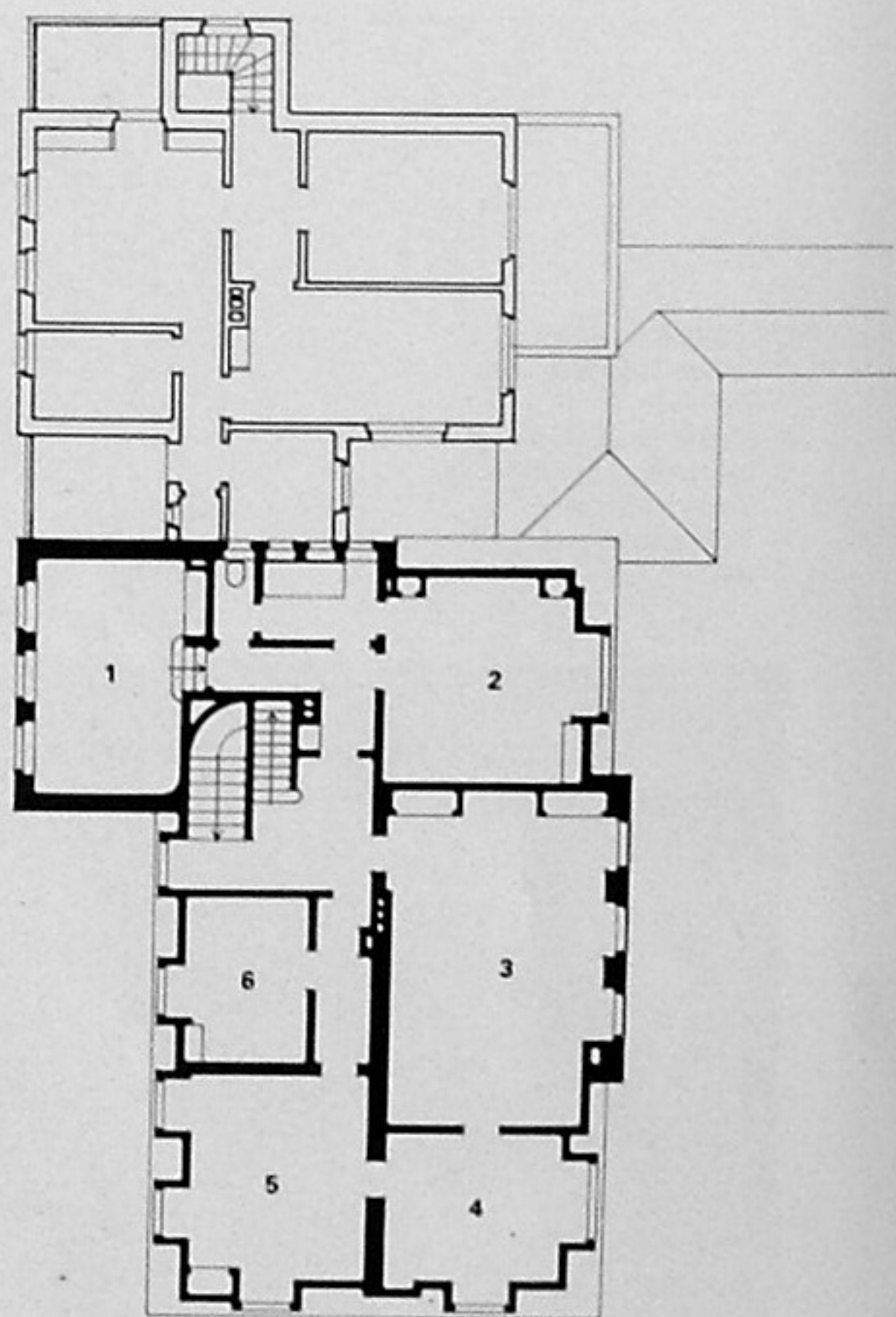


- 1 Original working drawing of upper floor signed by Mies van der Rohe
- 2 Street elevation, showing 1928 extension
- 3 Ground floor plan with original Mies house shown solid and 1928 extension in outline
- 4 Upper floor plan
- 5 The Werner family in their new garden
- 6 Pergola
- 7 Salon with chairs designed by Mies van der Rohe

2



- KEY
- 1 Hall
 - 2 Living room
 - 3 Men's room
 - 4 Salon
 - 5 Dining room
 - 6 Servery
 - 7 Kitchen
 - 8 Pergola



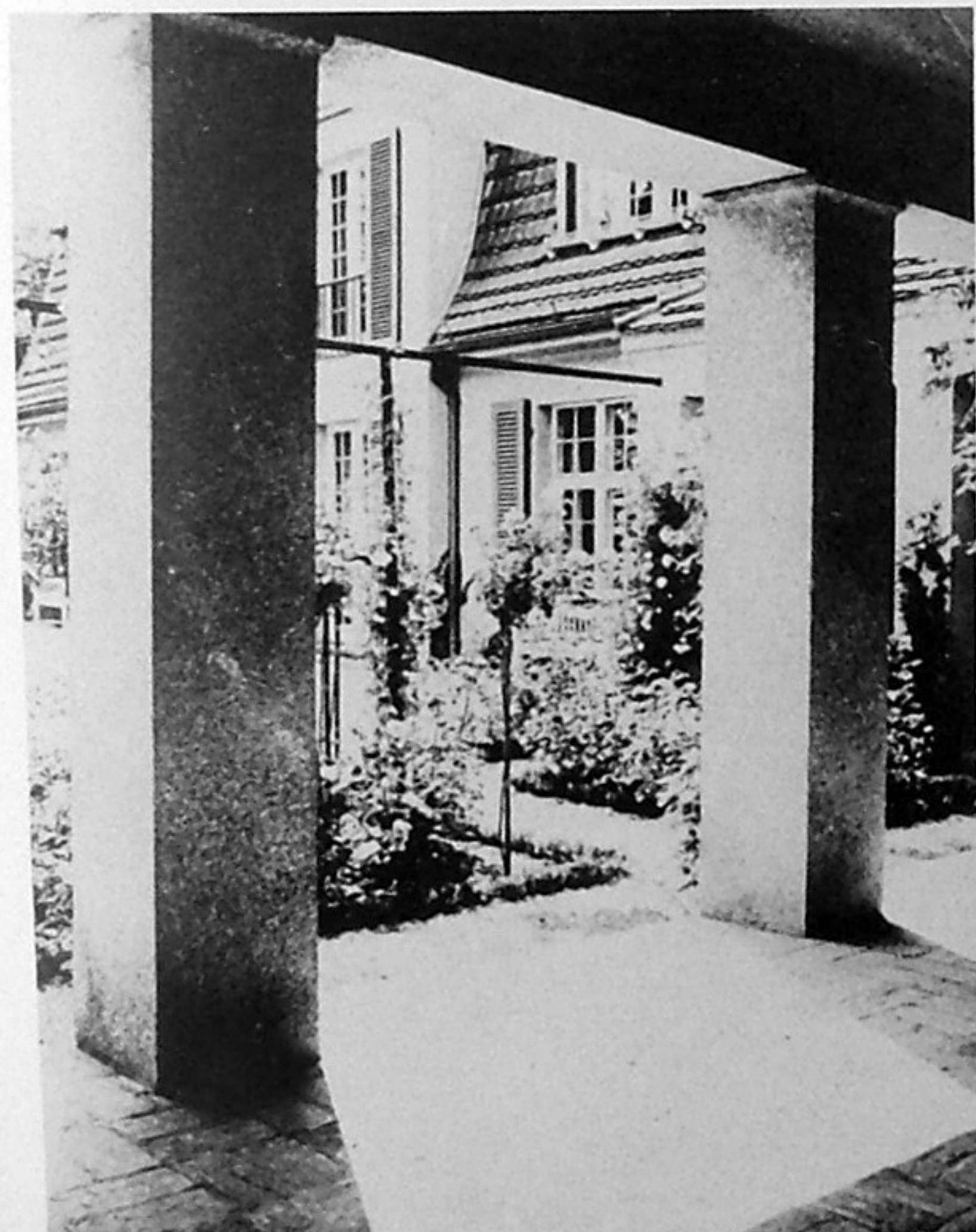
- KEY
- 1 Ladies' living room
 - 2 Parents' bedroom
 - 3 Children's bedroom
 - 4 Maid's room
 - 5 Children's living room
 - 6 Guest room

3

4



5



6



7

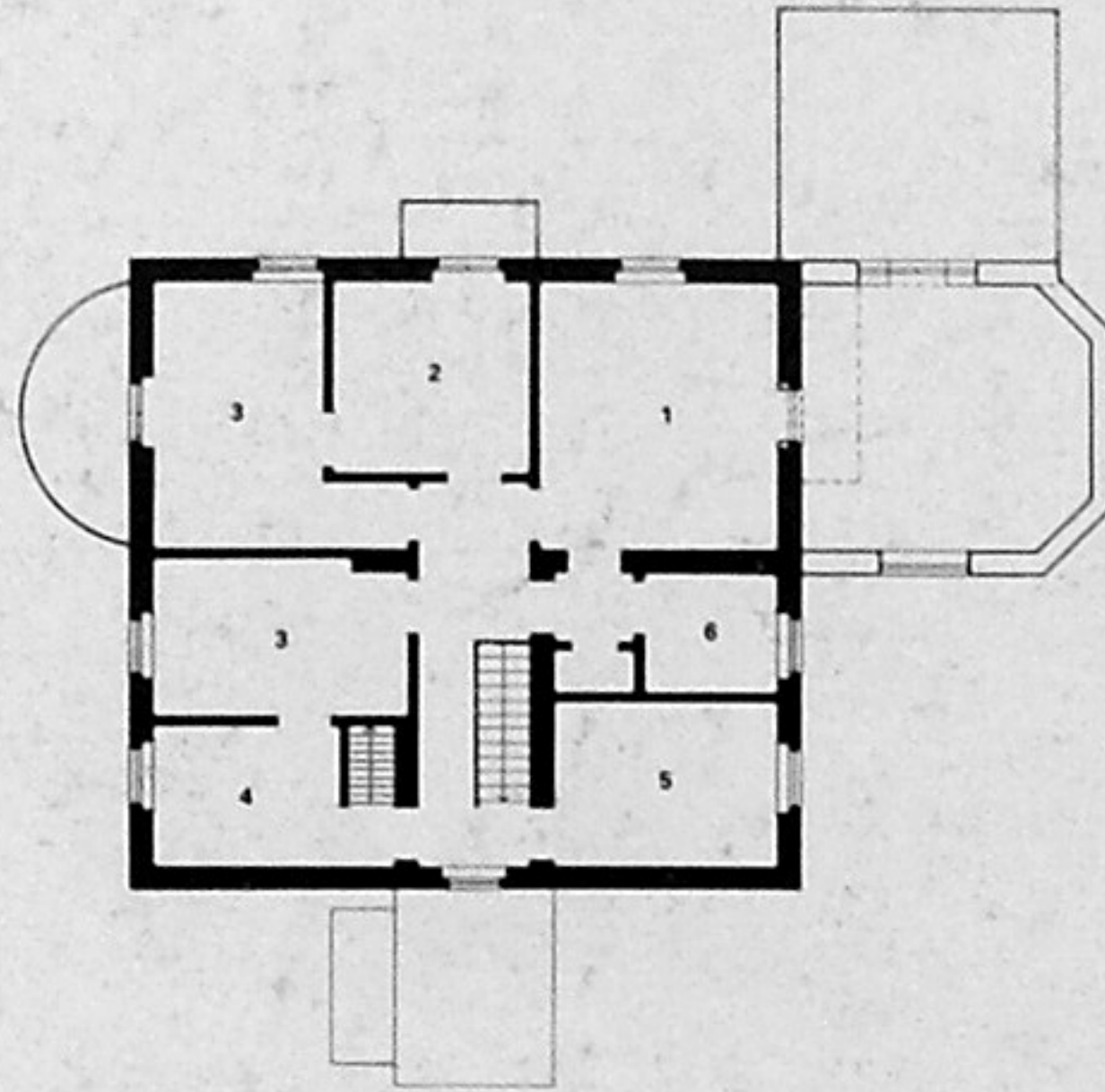
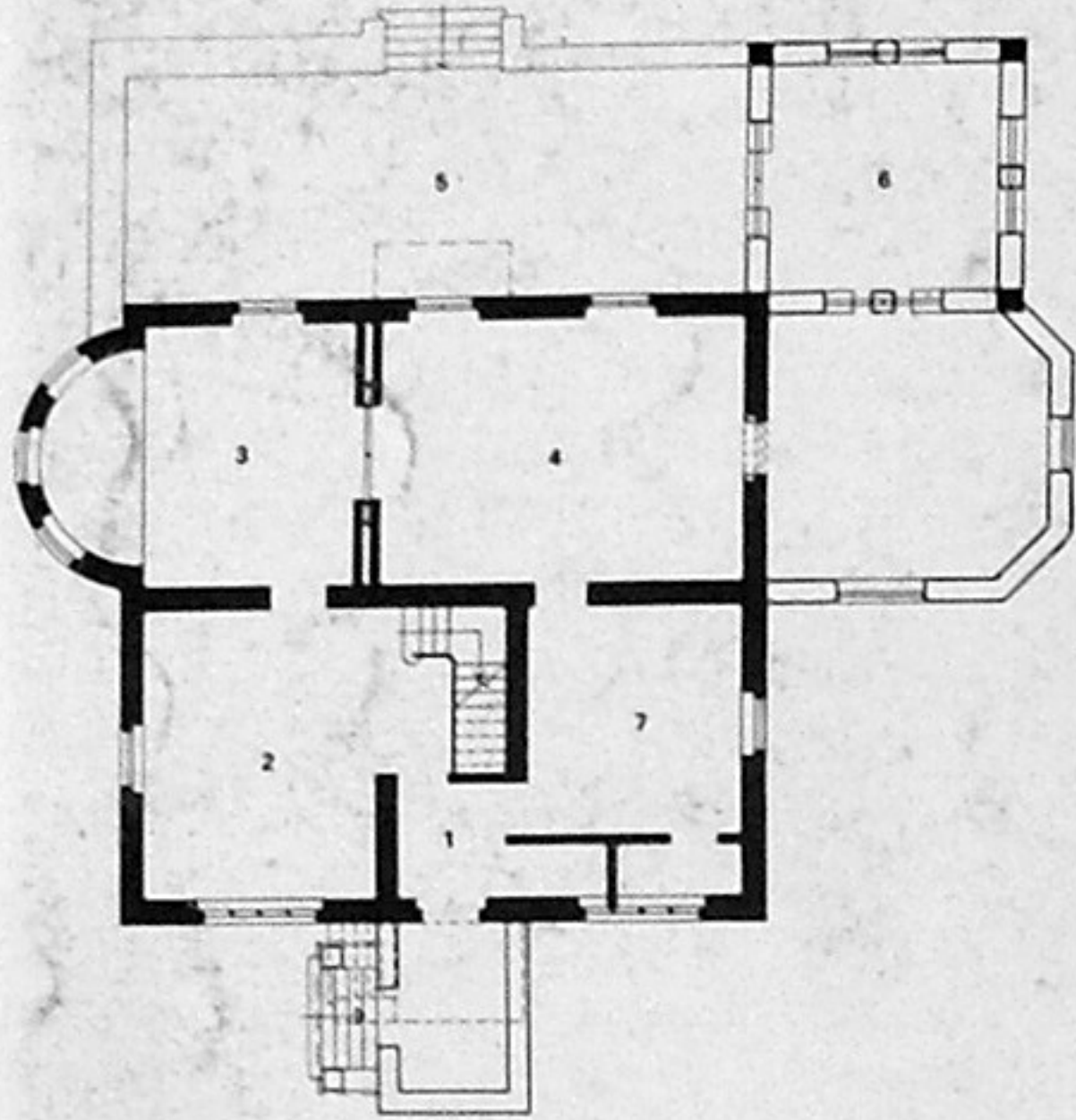
Villa Eichstaedt
1922
Wannsee, Berlin West

This simple, suburban house with a large bay window was built in the year that Mies designed his second glass skyscraper. The client was Georg Eichstaedt, a publisher's clerk.

The original pergola has been enclosed to form a 'winter room' and roof terrace. Behind this, two rooms have

been added and a porch built to shelter the original front door.

The original drawings, signed by Mies, are held by the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin. Much of the original painted decor can still be seen in the interiors.



GROUND FLOOR

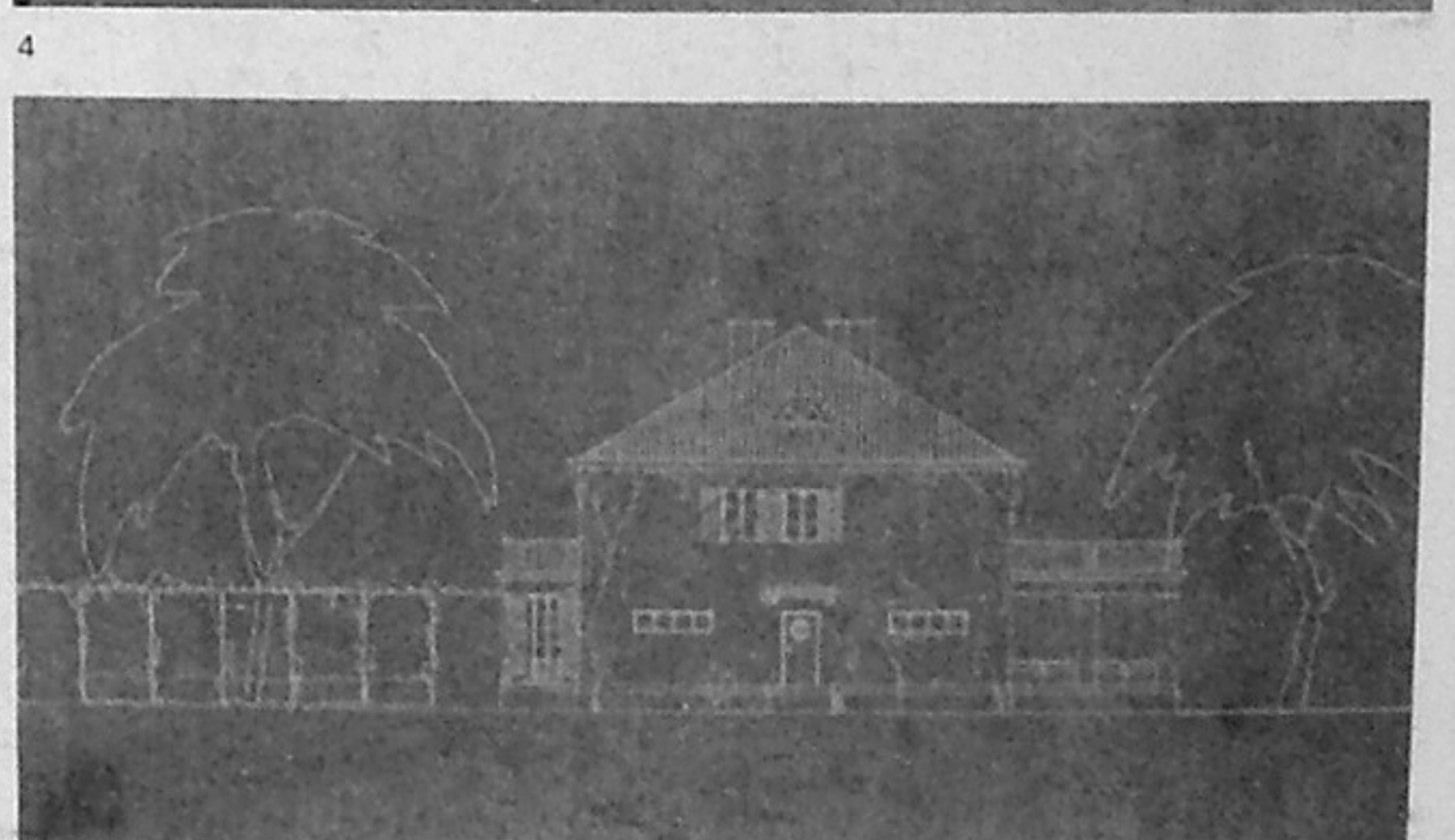
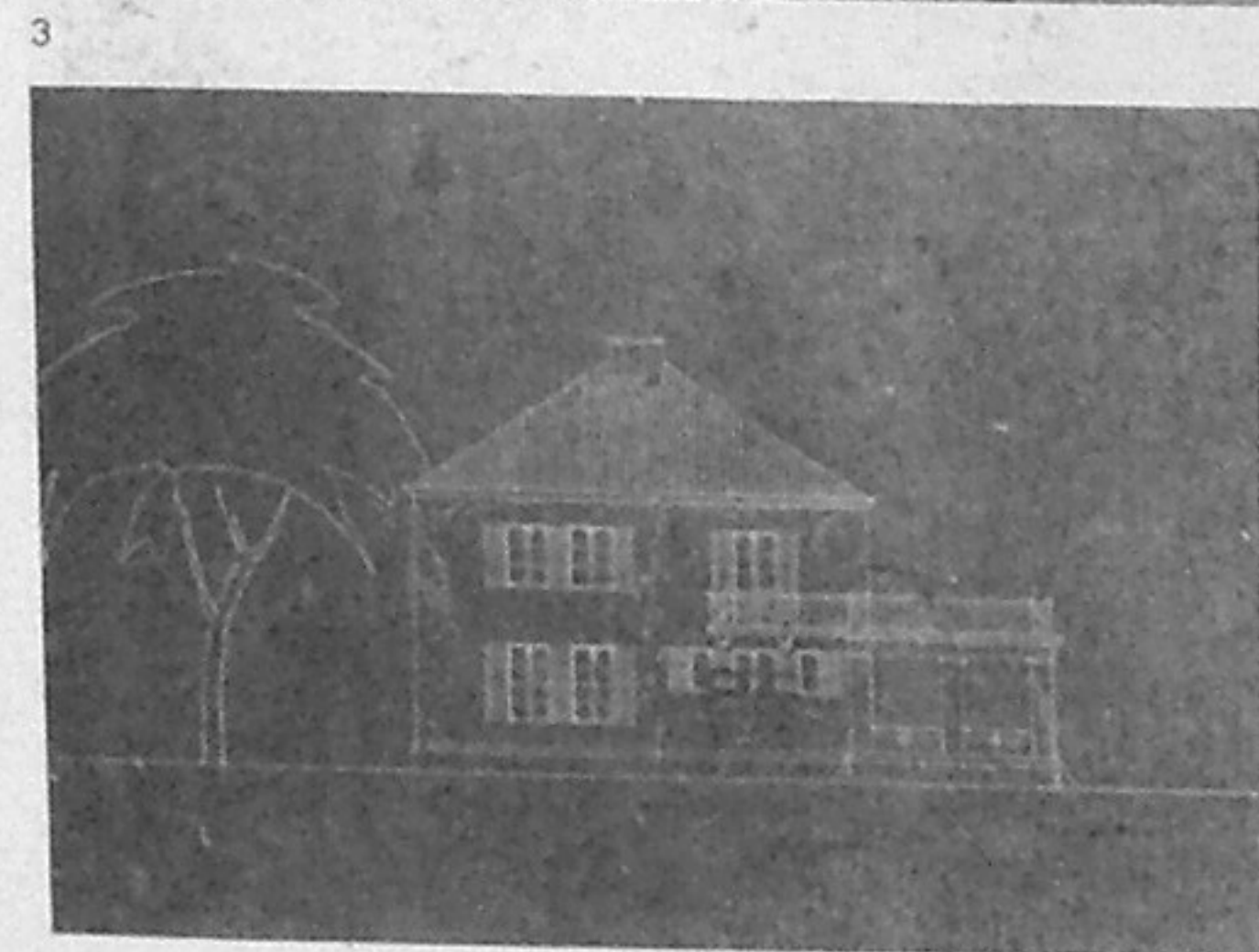
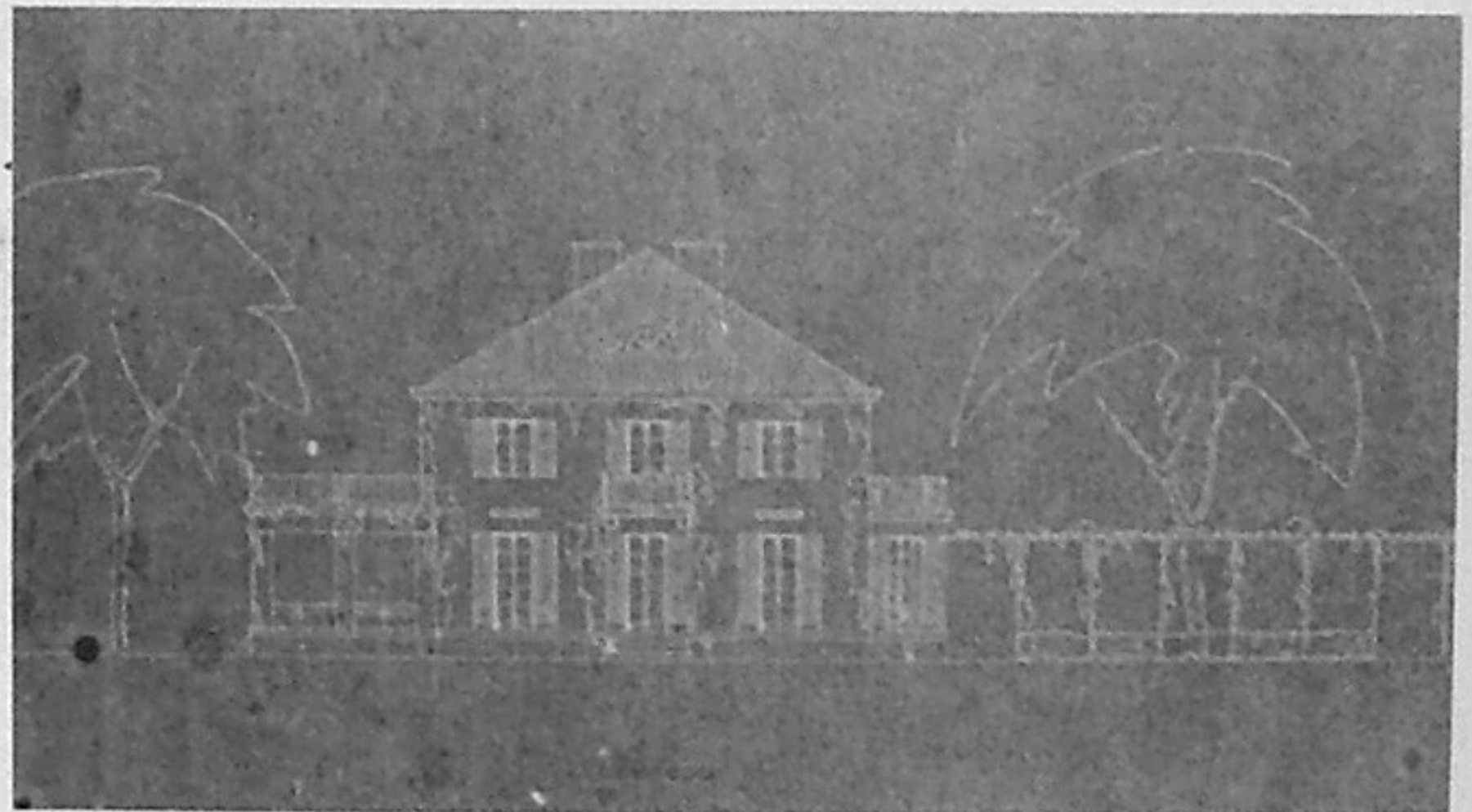
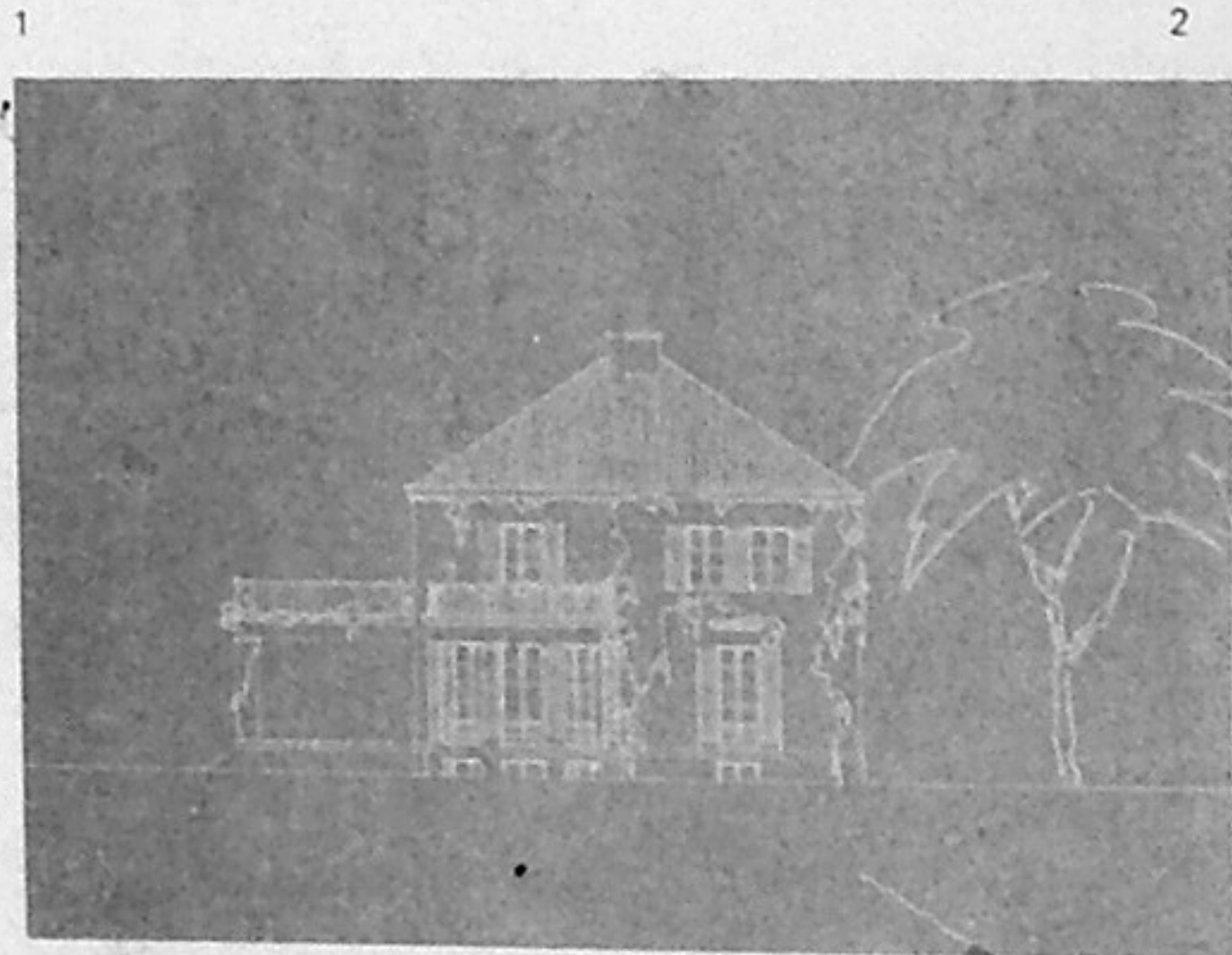
KEY

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Hall
- 3 Living room
- 4 Dining room
- 5 Terrace
- 6 Verandah
- 7 Kitchen

UPPER FLOOR

KEY

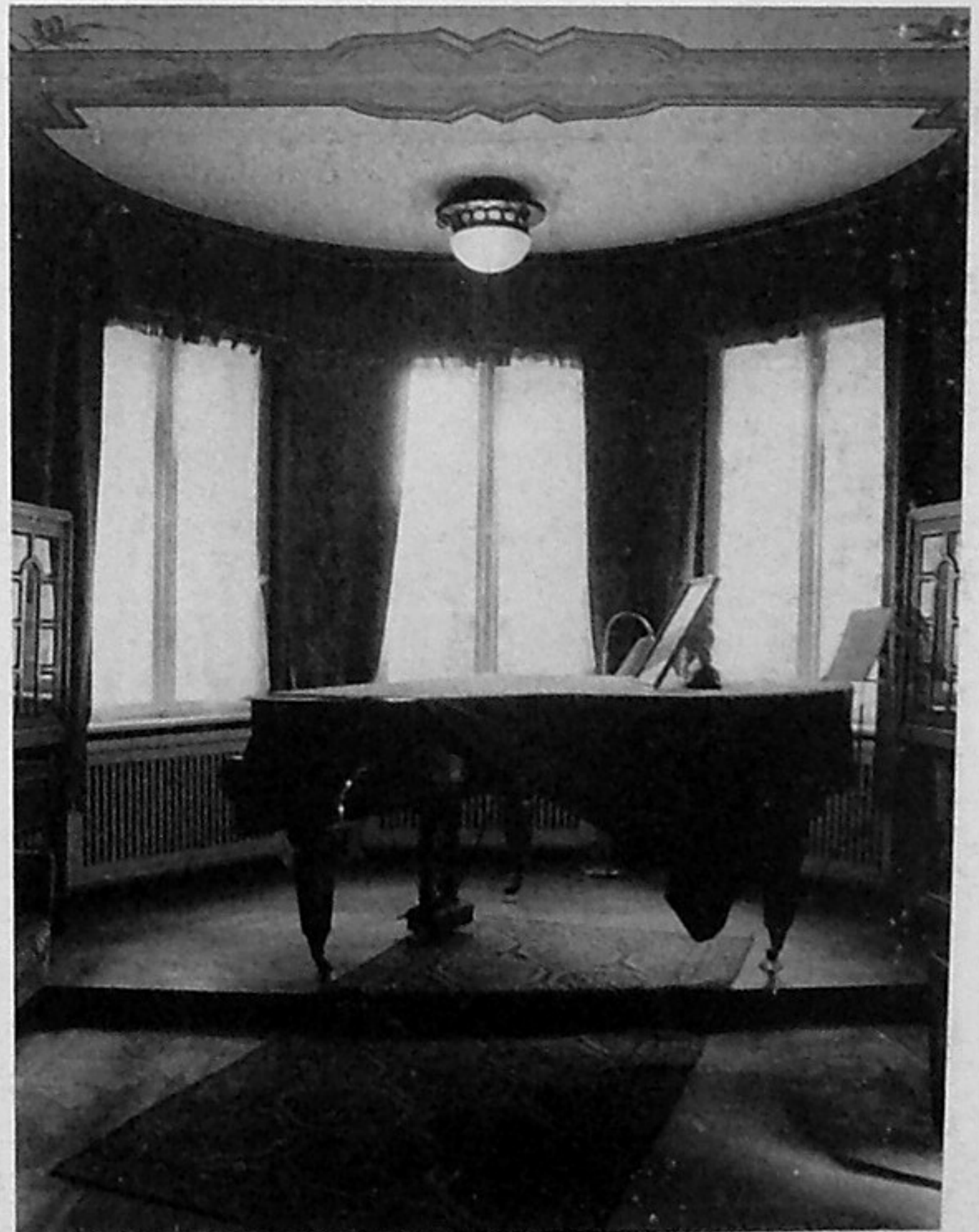
- 1 Parents' room
- 2 Son's room
- 3 Daughter's room
- 4 Maid's room
- 5 Guest room
- 6 Bath



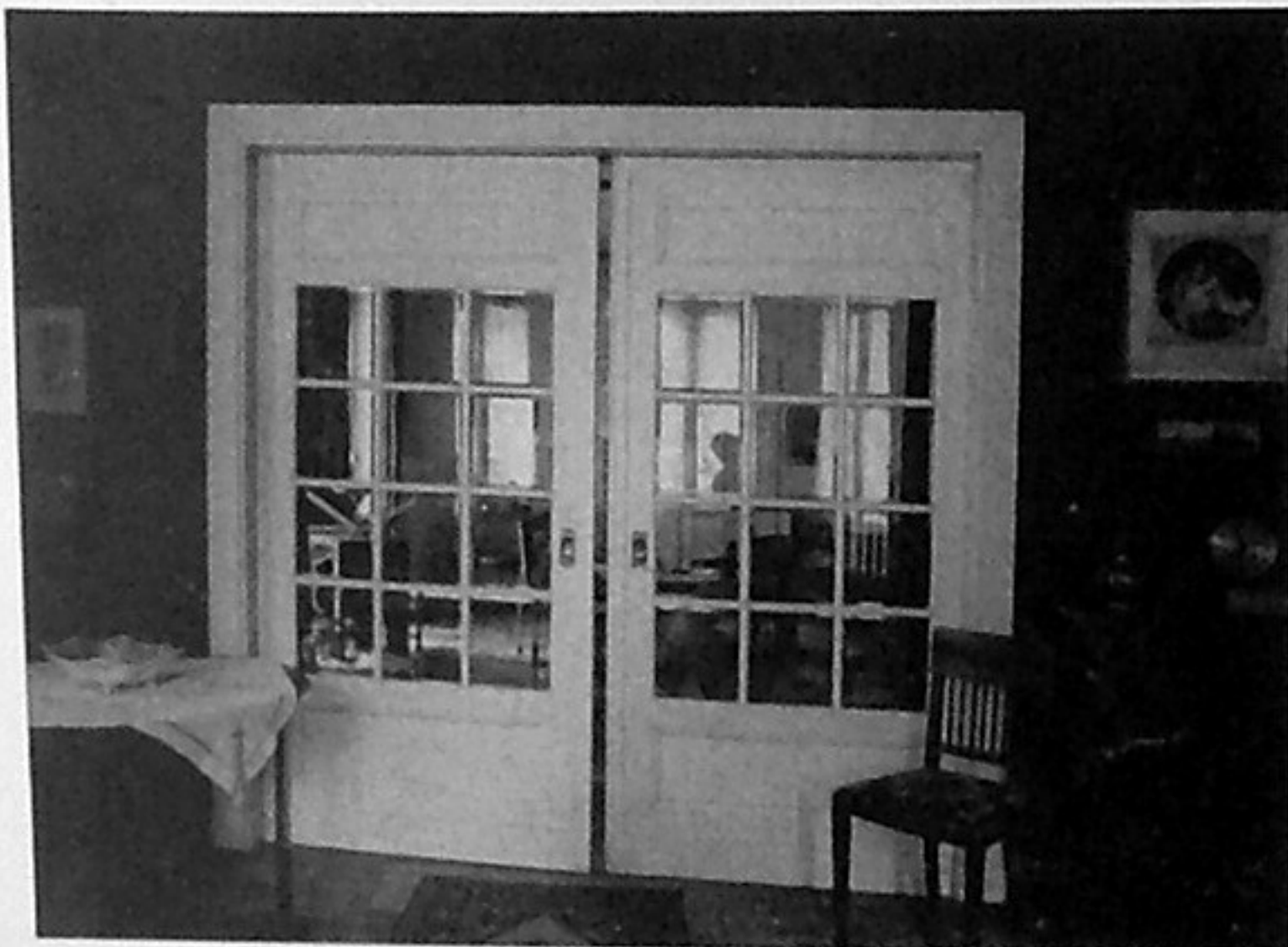


7

- 1 Ground floor plan
- 2 Upper floor plan
- 3-6 Original elevations
drawn by Mies van der Rohe
- 7 Front elevation
with porch extension
- 8 Sliding door to dining room
- 9 Bay window to living room



9



8

Villa Perls
1911
Zehlendorf, Berlin West

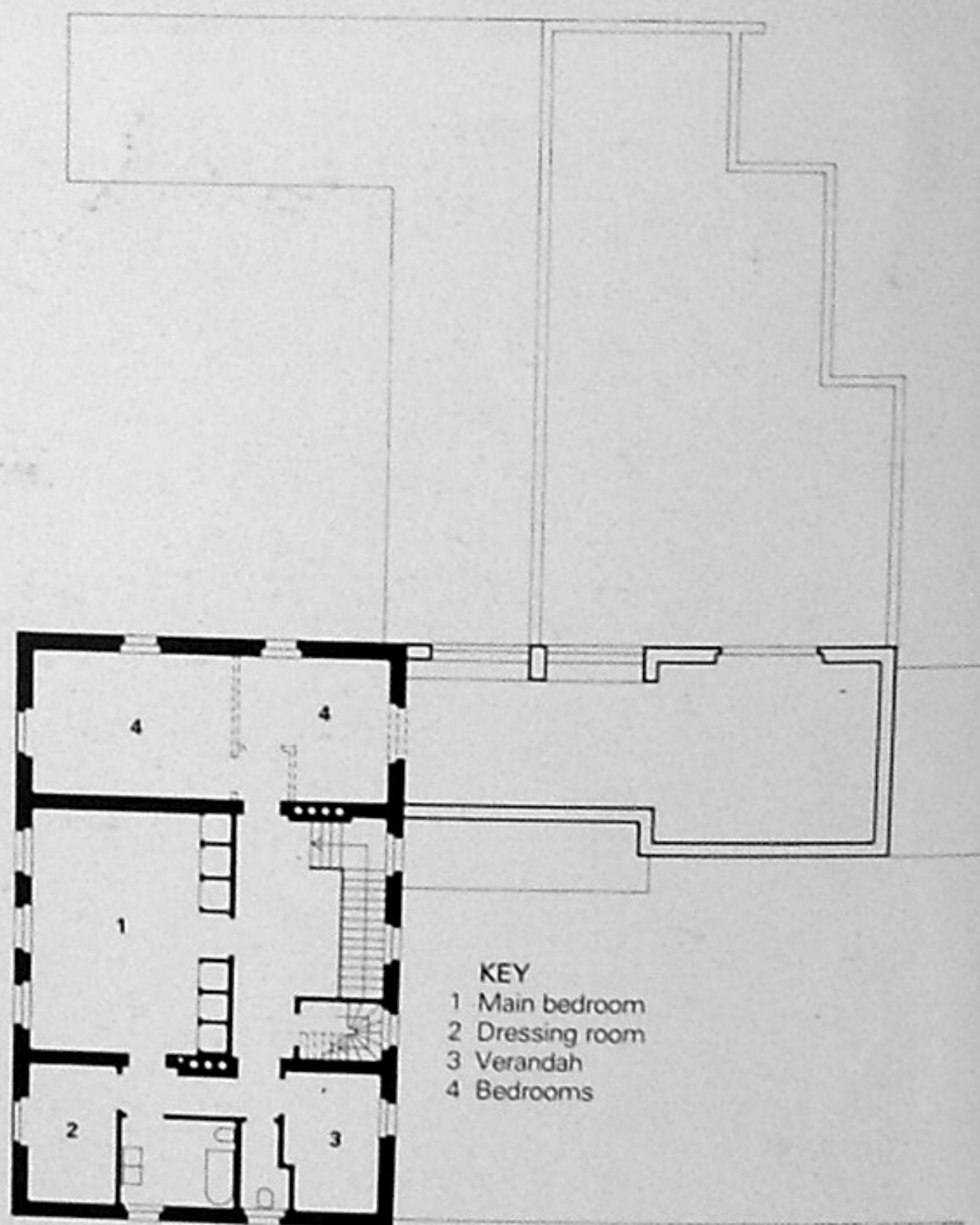
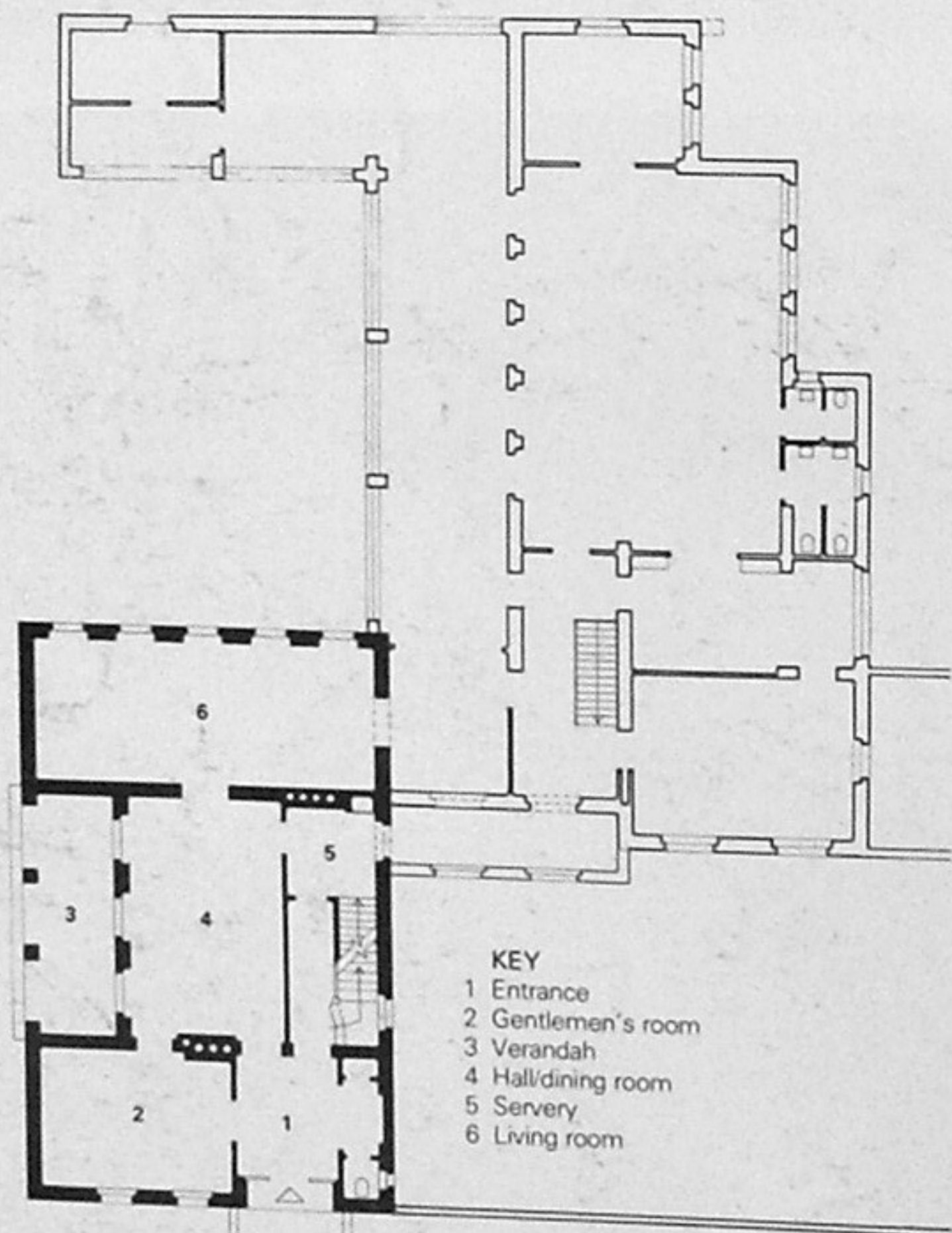
Mies was still working for Behrens when he accepted the commission from Hugo Perls. The house was registered in Berlin-Zehlendorf under the architect Goebbels, but Mies recognised it as his own work. (When he visited Berlin in the sixties he visited Villa Perls but paid no attention to Villa Werner, although they are on adjoining sites.) The original villa is an extremely accomplished work in the style of Schinkel. The counter-sunk portico, the deep cornice and the low-pitched roof are all Schinkel motifs.

After the First World War the house was purchased by Dr. Eduard Fuchs, a cultural historian who owned a large collection of art works which he housed in Villa Perls. In 1928 Mies extended the house and tacked on a gallery with ancillary rooms. This later work is surprisingly heavy-handed and in it Mies showed little consideration for his own earlier work.

Since the Second World War the house has changed hands once more and has suffered further alterations and extensions. A corridor has been driven through the principal room on the ground floor and the loggia has been closed in; the front door and ground-floor windows to the street elevation have been replaced. Recently the house was sold again and further conversions are planned.



- 1 The original house from the south
- 2 Ground floor plan (with original house shown in solid and extension in outline)
- 3 Upper floor plan
- 4 Street (east) elevation with extension
- 5 North elevation of original house and east elevation of extension





4



5



6



7



8

- 6 Gallery extension
- 7 Balustrading to upper floor of original house
- 8 Original villa stairway

Villa Mosler

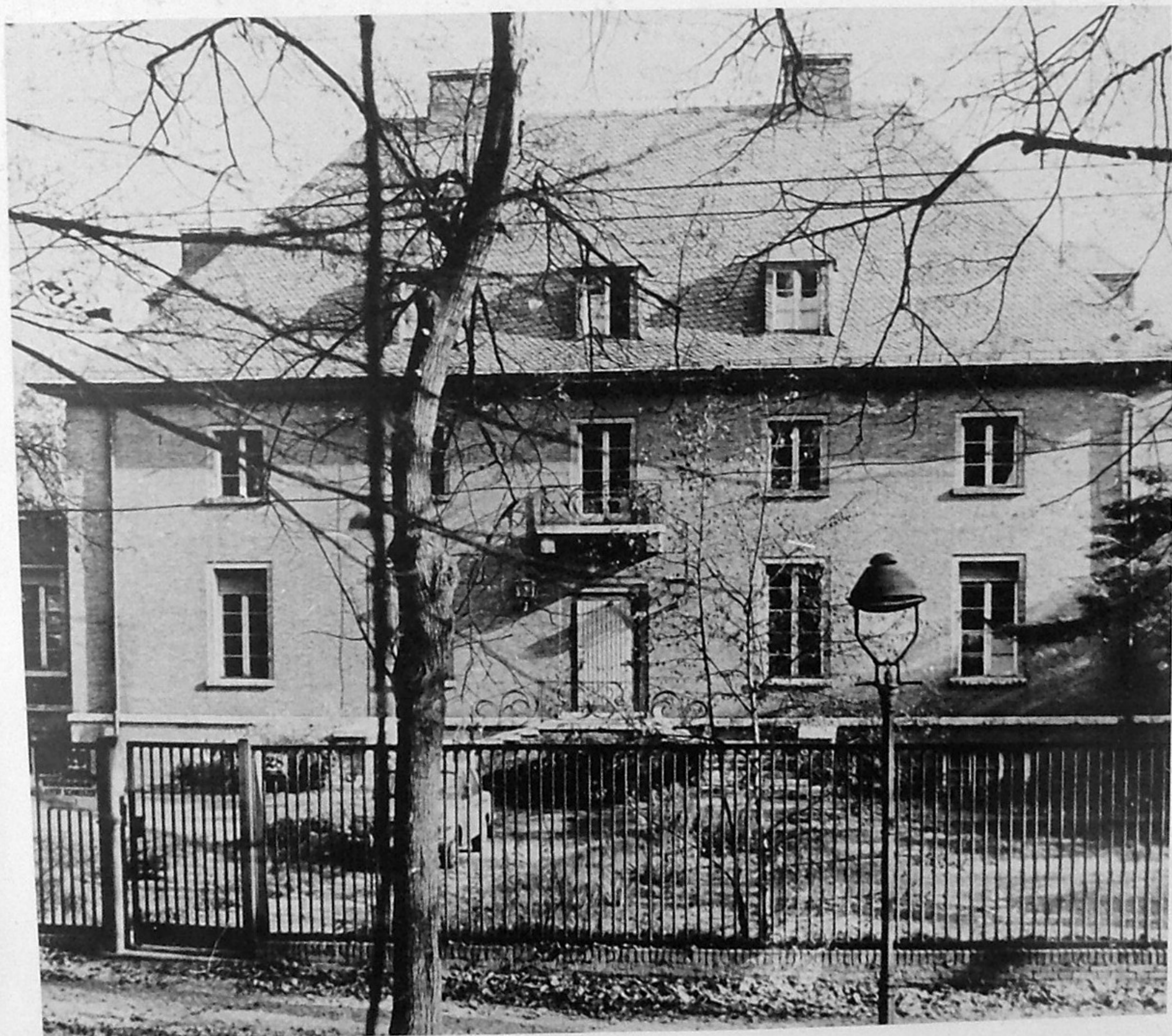
1924

Neubabelsberg, Potsdam, German
Democratic Republic

Villa Mosler was the third house that Mies built in Potsdam. Its pale red brickwork and steeply pitched roof give it a Dutch character and the decorative railing to the front door steps and balcony above add a romantic, Art Nouveau element. Unfortunately the simple, symmetrical street elevation has been defaced by the addition of a new front door and frame. The house overlooks a lake and the garden elevation is graced by a pillared loggia. It is now a district children's nursing home.



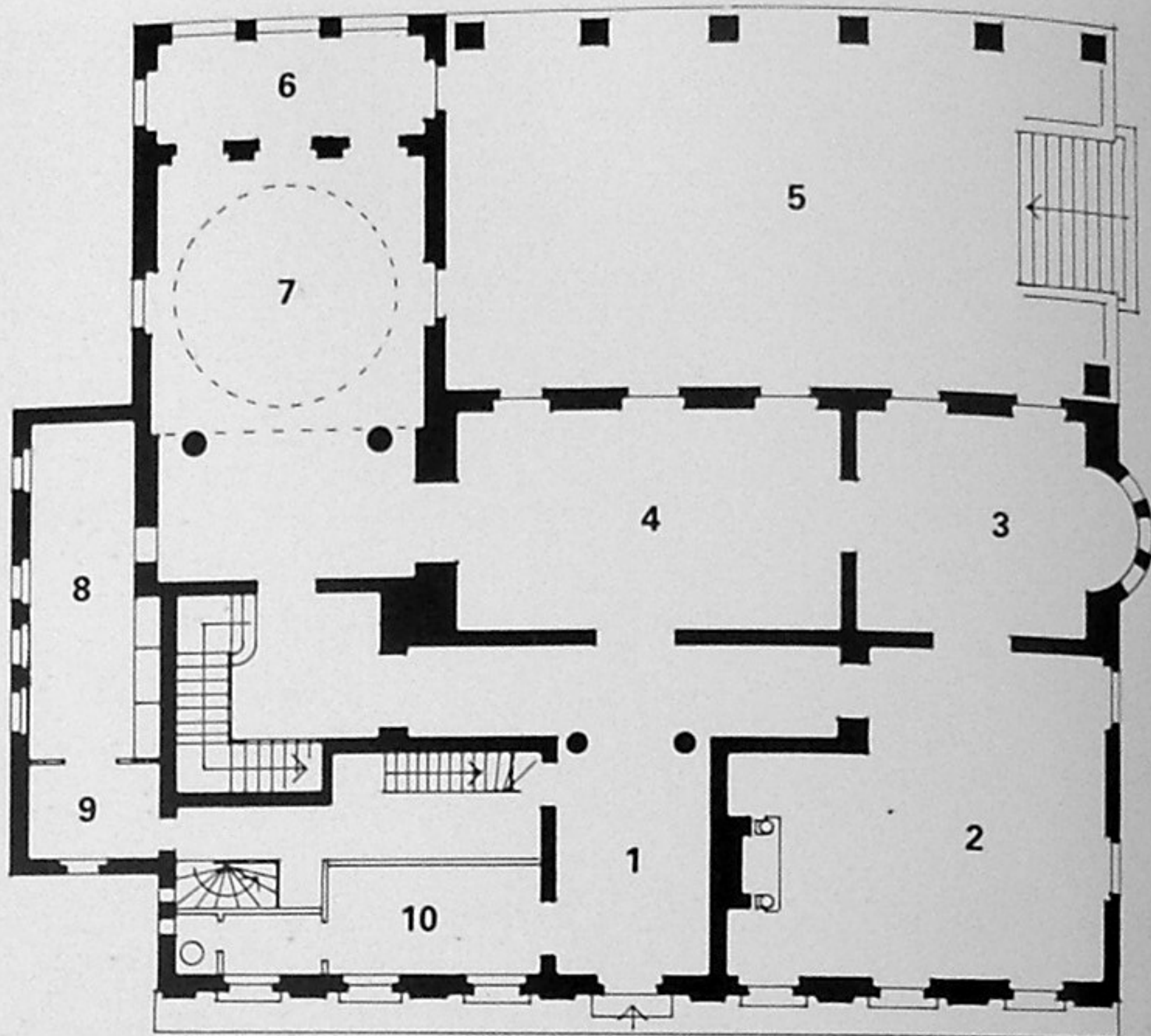
1 Street elevation



Villa Urbig
1914
 Neubabelsberg, Potsdam, German Democratic Republic

Mrs. Urbig, wife of a prosperous Berlin banker and friend of the Riehls, commissioned Mies to design the family residence near Potsdam because she had *fallen in love with the Riehl House* and knew that Mies, like herself, admired Schinkel. (Letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Urbig to Sandra Honey, August 1977.) Mr. Urbig, however, did not want a flat roof, so they agreed to build in the then popular eighteenth-century villa style.

This extremely large, somewhat Italianate house, designed in collaboration with the architect Werner von Walthausen, stood in a very beautiful garden with travertine marble steps leading down to the lake which separates Babelsberg from West Berlin. It was luxuriously decorated and furnished under Mies' direction. In 1945 the Russian army took possession of the building and during the Potsdam conference Winston Churchill was housed there. It was then stripped of all its glory and today a tall wire fence surrounds it, cutting through the front garden which is patrolled by East German border guards. The building is now the guest house for a State academy.



1



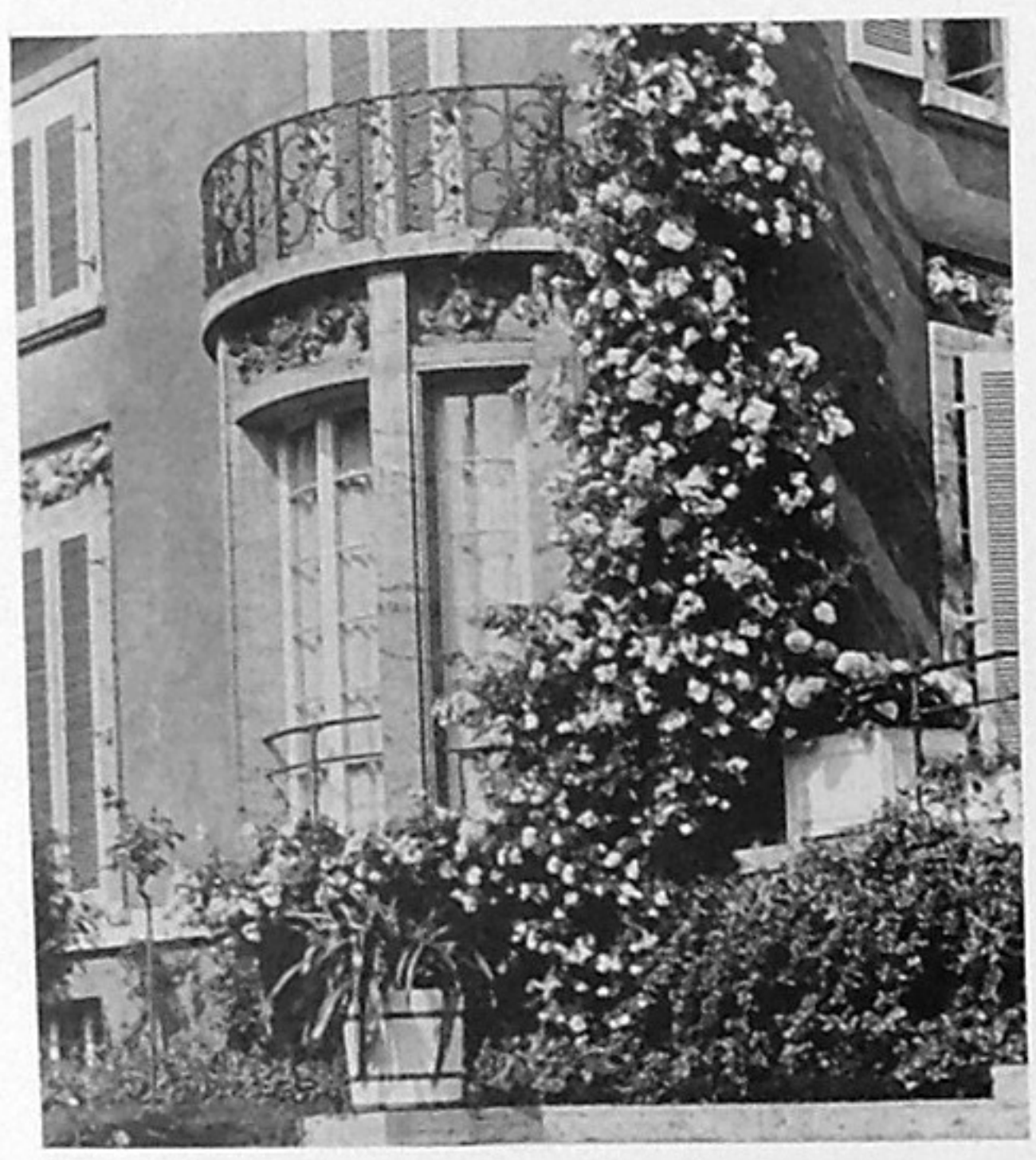
2

- KEY**
- 1 Entrance
 - 2 Gentlemen's room
 - 3 Ladies' salon
 - 4 Music room
 - 5 Terrace
 - 6 Hall
 - 7 Dining room
 - 8 Servery
 - 9 Personnel
 - 10 Garderobe

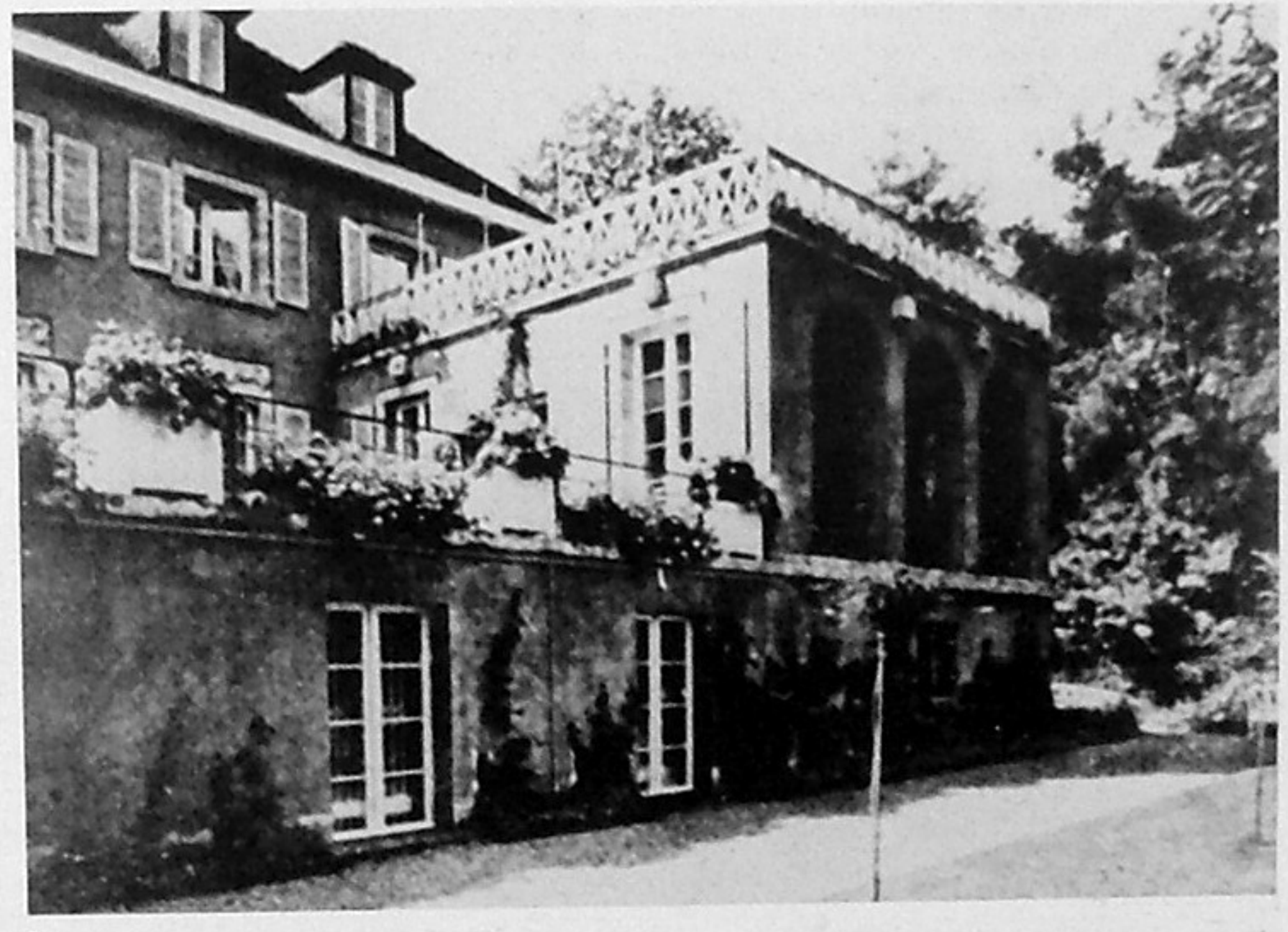
- 1 Ground floor plan
- 2-3 Views of the entrance elevation from the street
- 4 Bay window to side elevation
- 5 Elevation to lake
- 6 Dining room
- 7 Music room



3



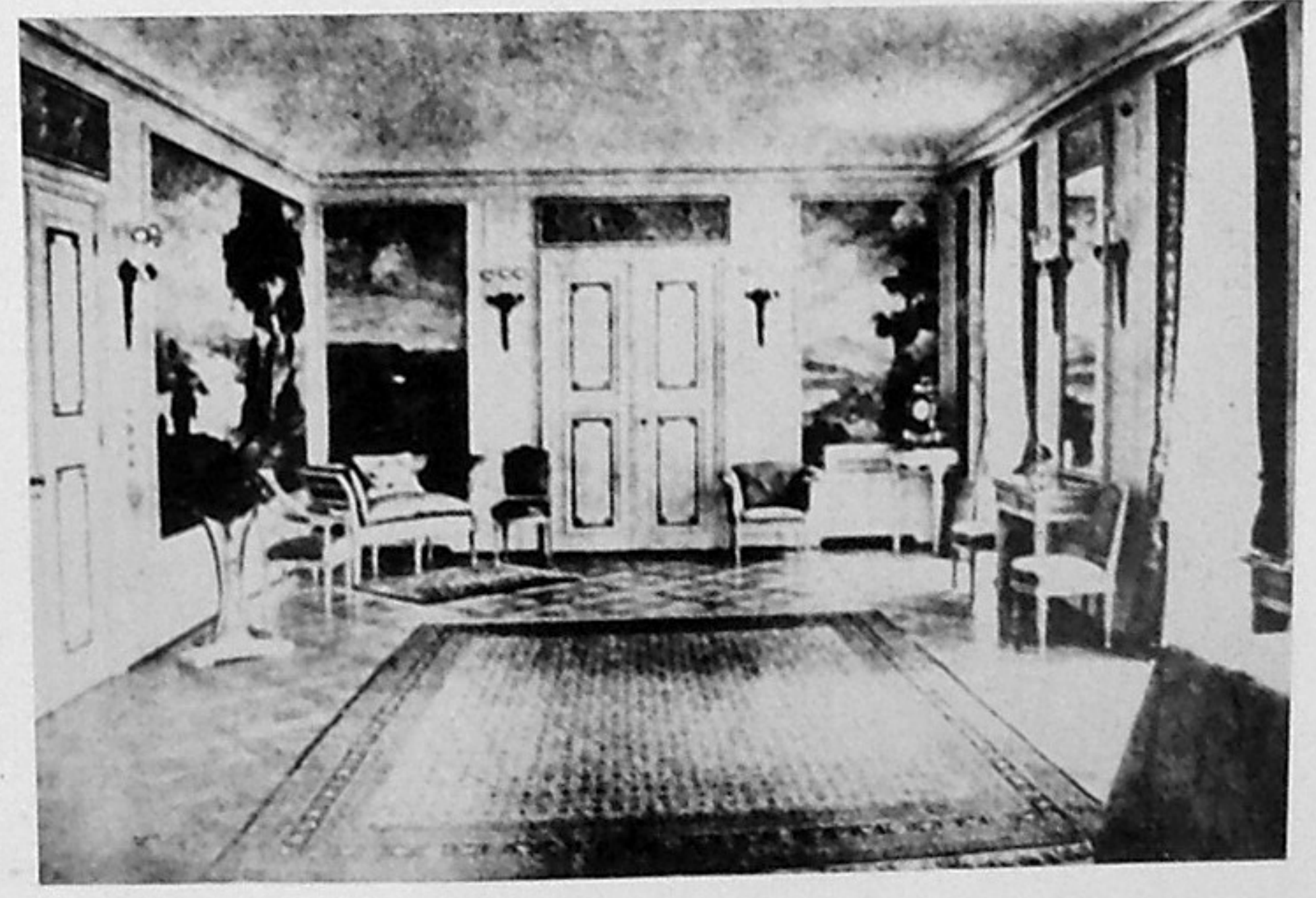
4



5



6



7

Projects 1921-1924

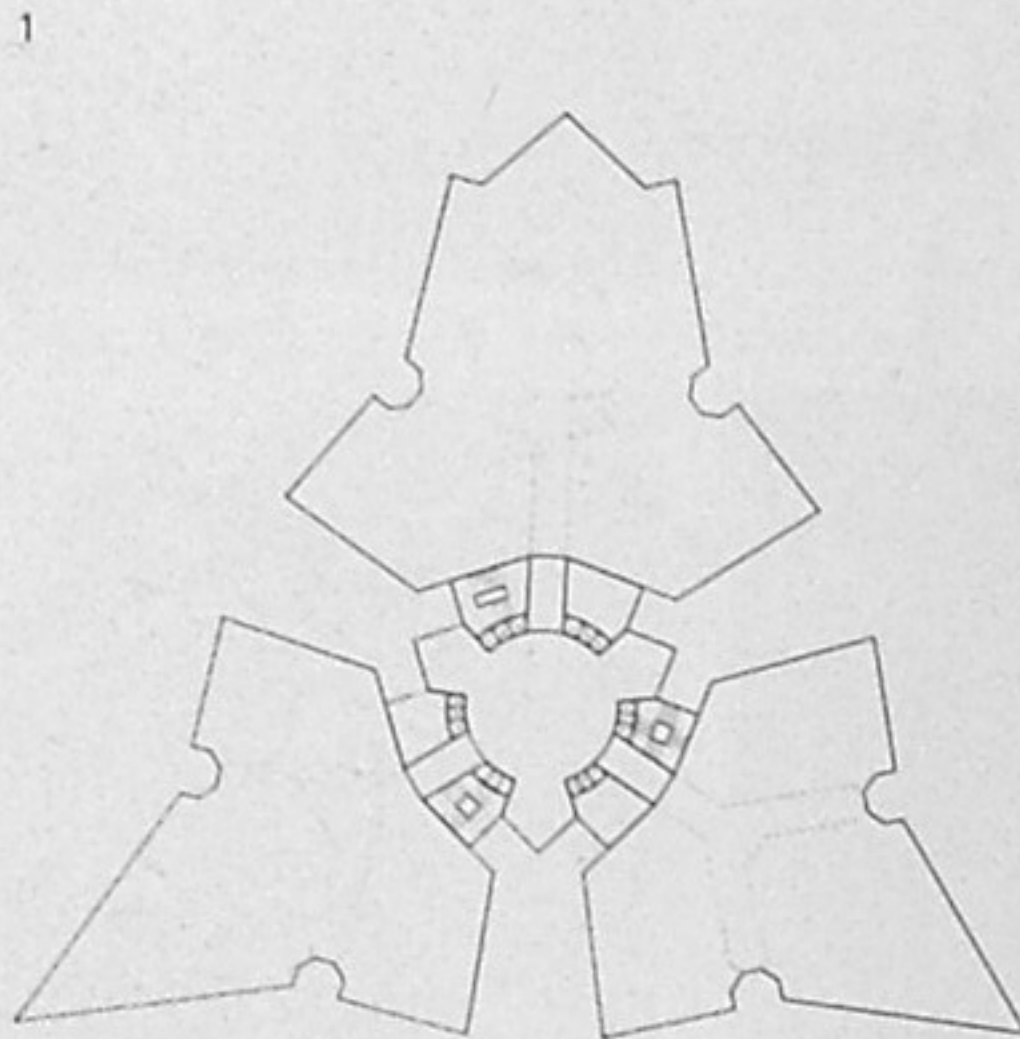
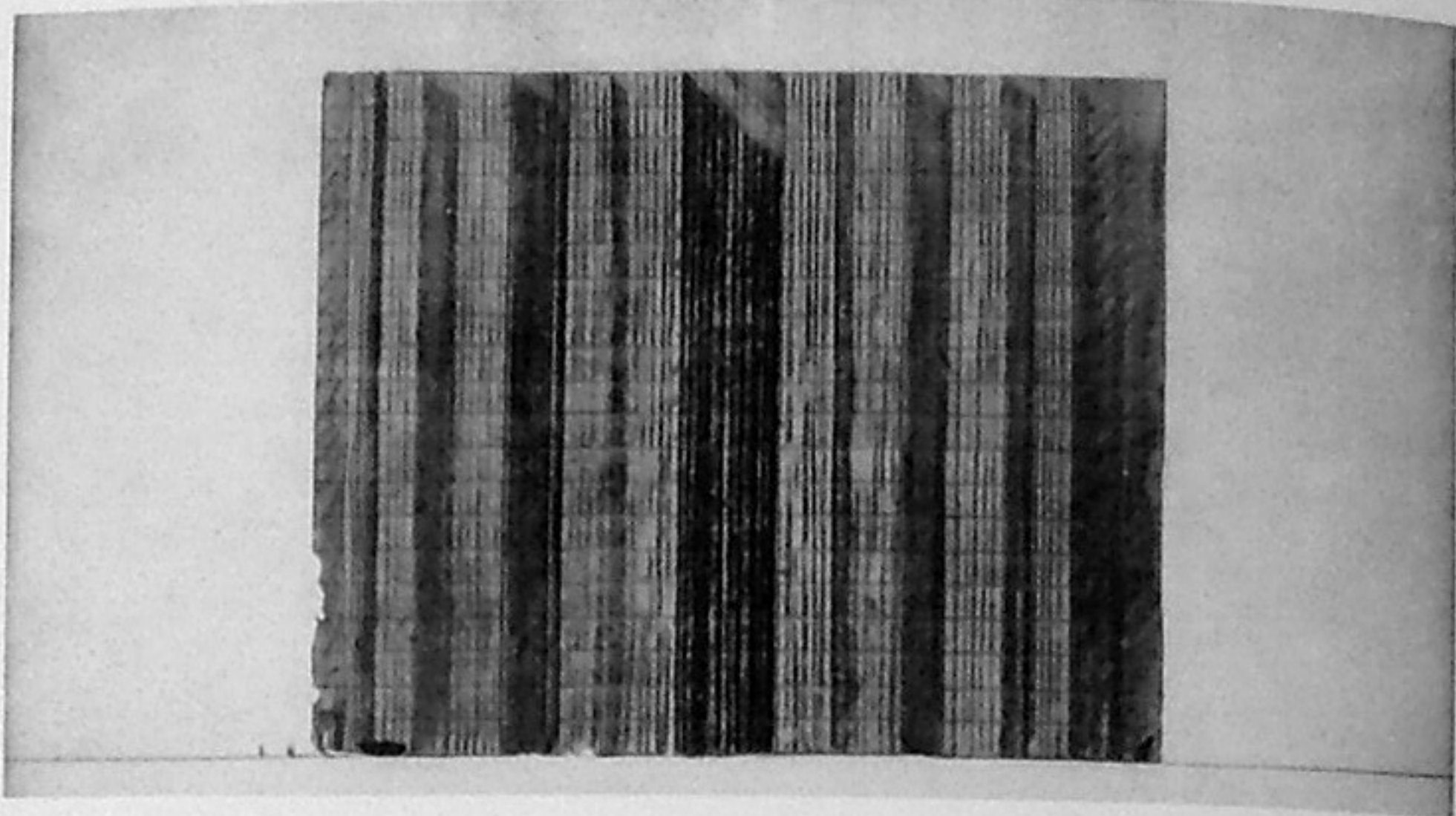
The years 1918 to 1924 produced little built architecture in Germany – projects, experimentation, new publications and associations generated endless discussion. The city of Berlin became the most feverishly active centre of art and culture in Europe. German Expressionism gained impetus, reached its peak and died away between 1919 and 1923.

Mies van der Rohe would appear to have been isolated from the new developments in architecture until late 1921. His architecture remained neoclassical or vernacular in concept until his first glass skyscraper project.

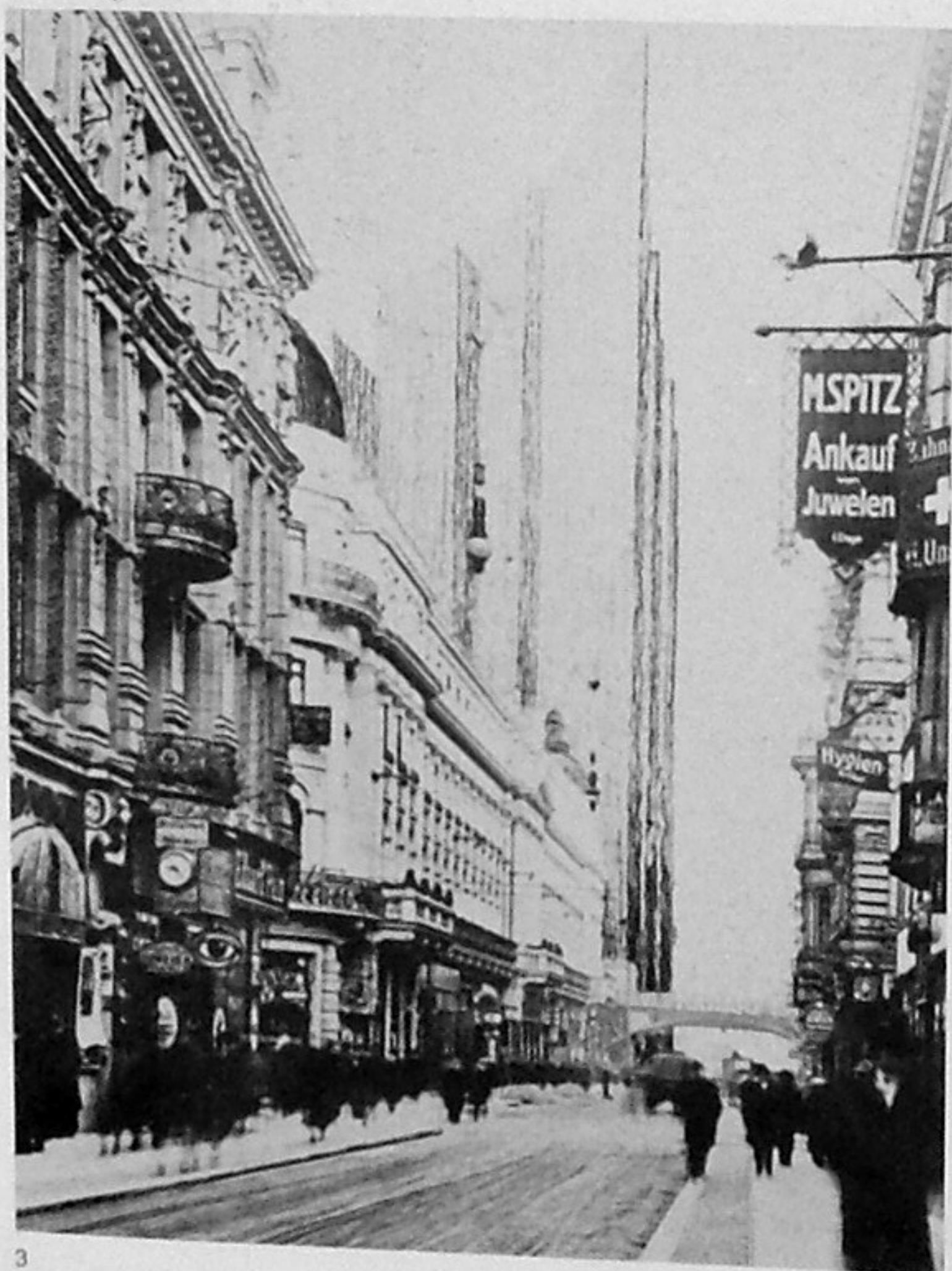
Office Building (1921)

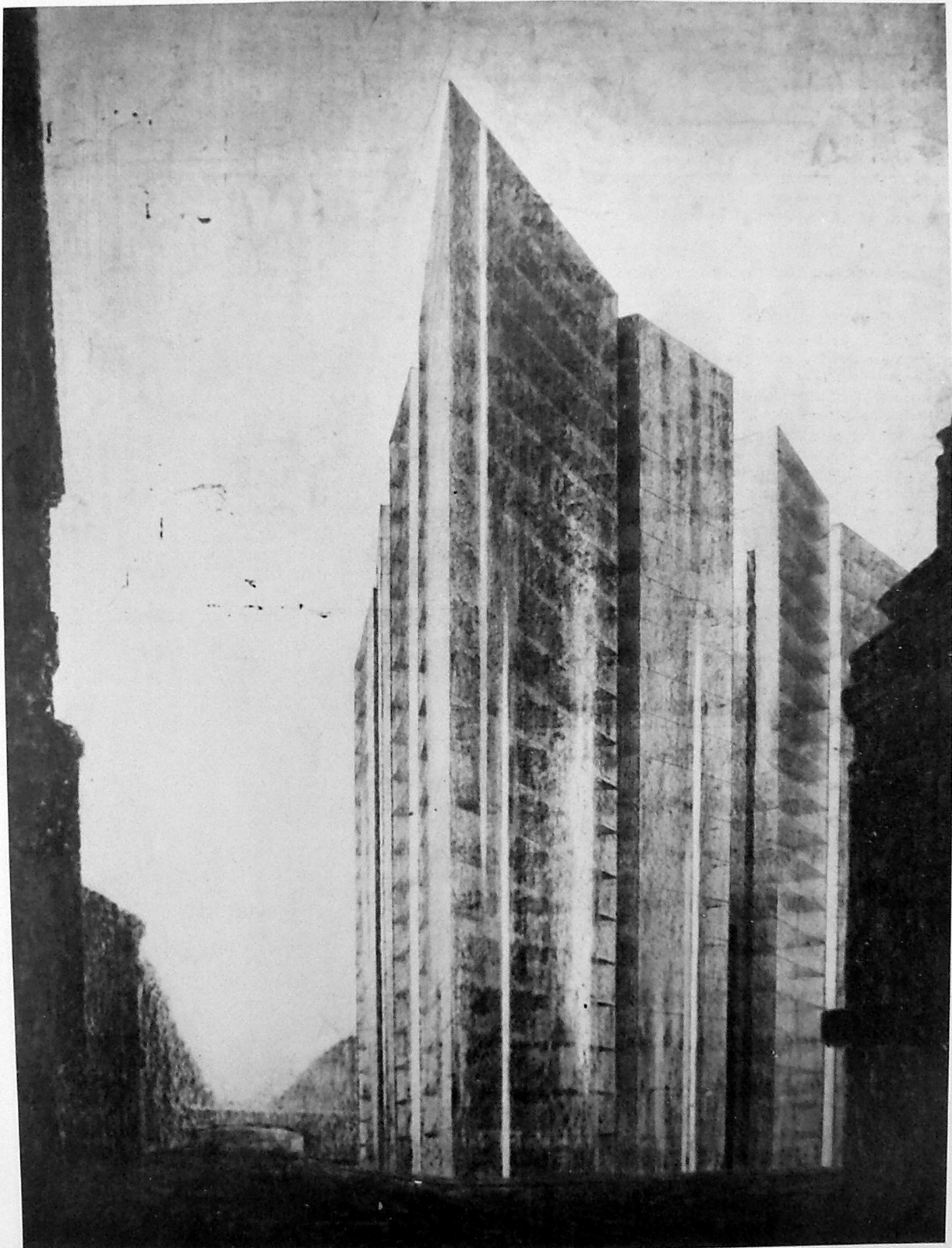
The Glass Office Building was Mies' entry in the Friedrichstrasse Competition of early 1922. It was a well-supported competition and all the entries were exhibited in Berlin. Mies later complained that no one had paid any attention to his offering and it received no award. In 1968 he said:

'Because I was using glass, I was anxious to avoid enormous dead surfaces reflecting too much light, so I broke the facades a little in plan so that light could fall on them at different angles: like crystal, like cut-crystal. That was for a competition – it was exhibited in Berlin in the old town hall. They pushed my design into a dark corner, probably because they thought it was a joke.' ('Mies Speaks', *Architectural Review*, December 1968.)



- 1 East elevation
- 2 Site plan
- 3-5 Montages with pencil and charcoal drawings



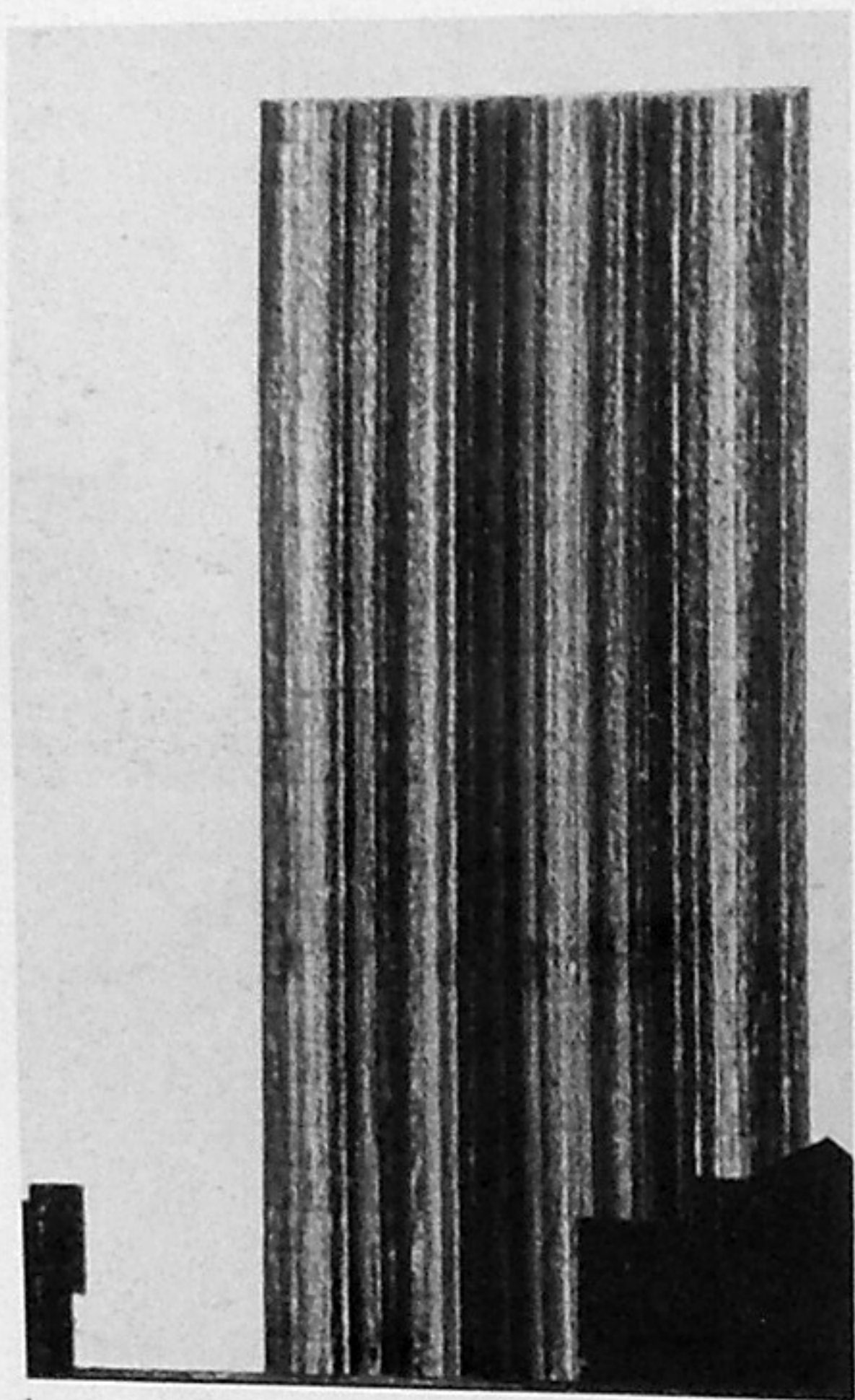


Glass Skyscraper (1922)

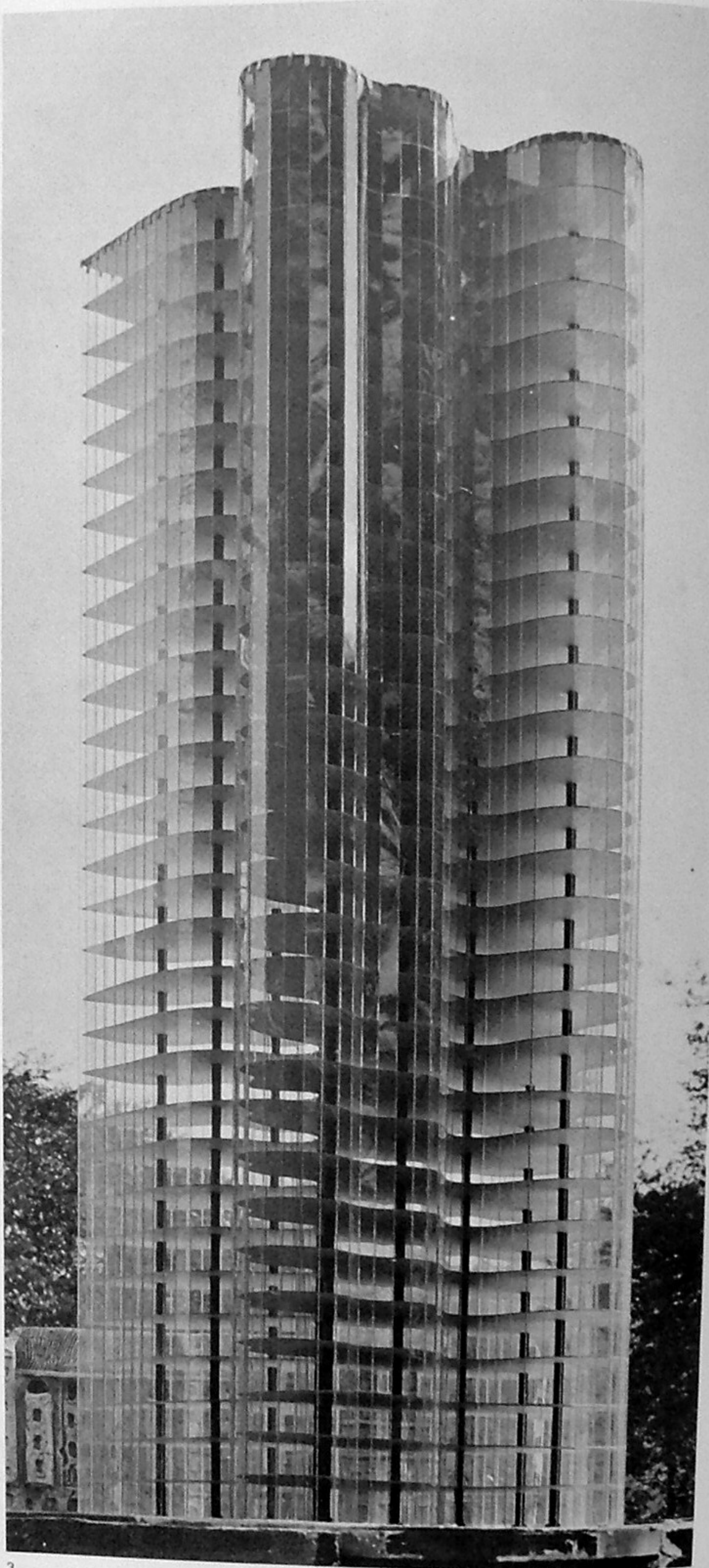
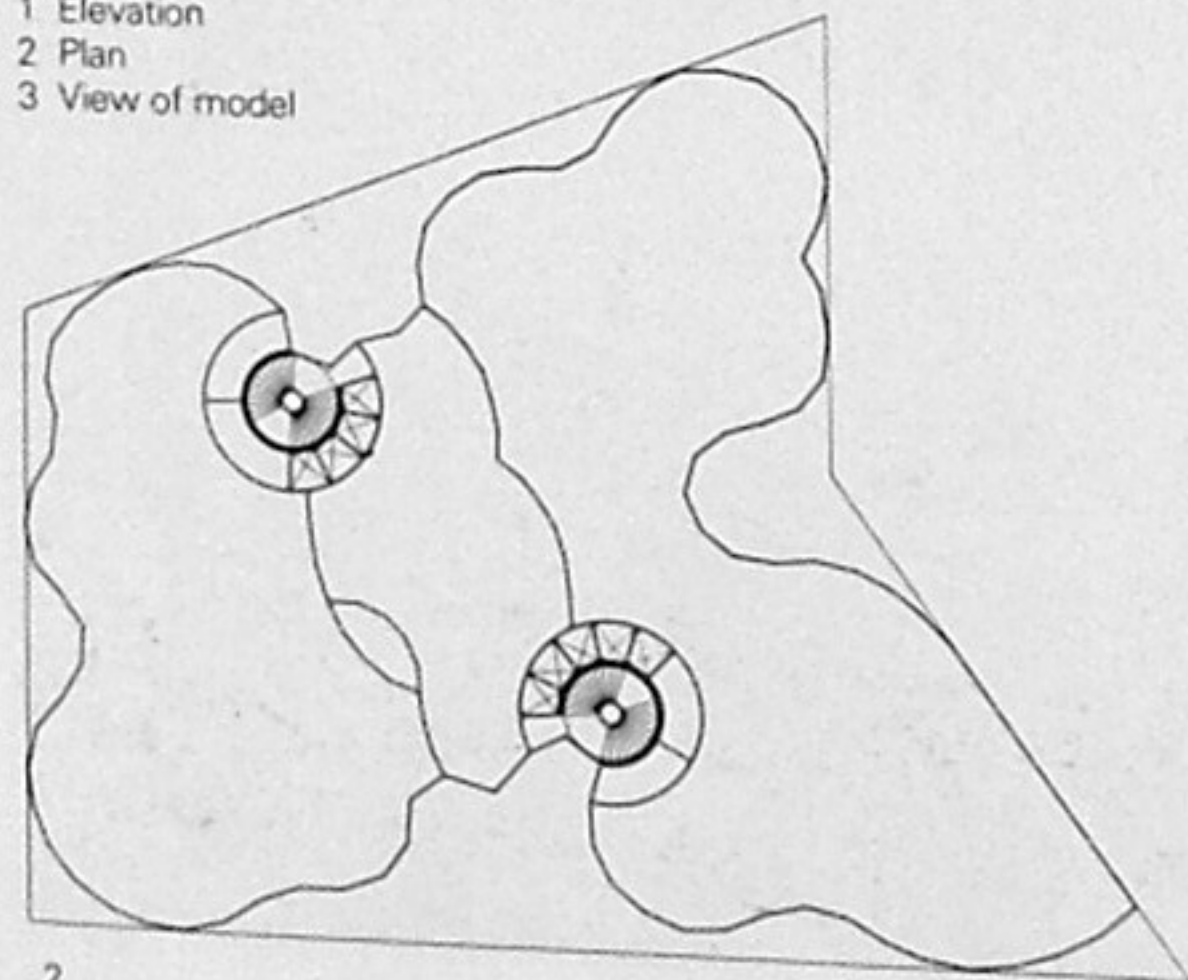
The second glass skyscraper Mies designed was for an imaginary or ideal site. According to Mies, its faceted plan was by no means arbitrary — it was a second experiment to test the reflective quality of glass curtain walls. Mies said:

'I tried to work with small areas of glass and adjusted my strips of glass to the light and then pushed them into the plasticine planes of the floors. That gave me the curve . . . I had no expressionist intention. I wanted to show the skeleton, and I thought that the best way would be simply to put a glass skin on.' (Mies Speaks', *Architectural Review*, December 1968.)

Mies asked a sculptor friend to model some typical Berlin houses to the scale of his skyscraper model so that his building could be shown in context.



1
1 Elevation
2 Plan
3 View of model



3

Concrete Office Building (1923)

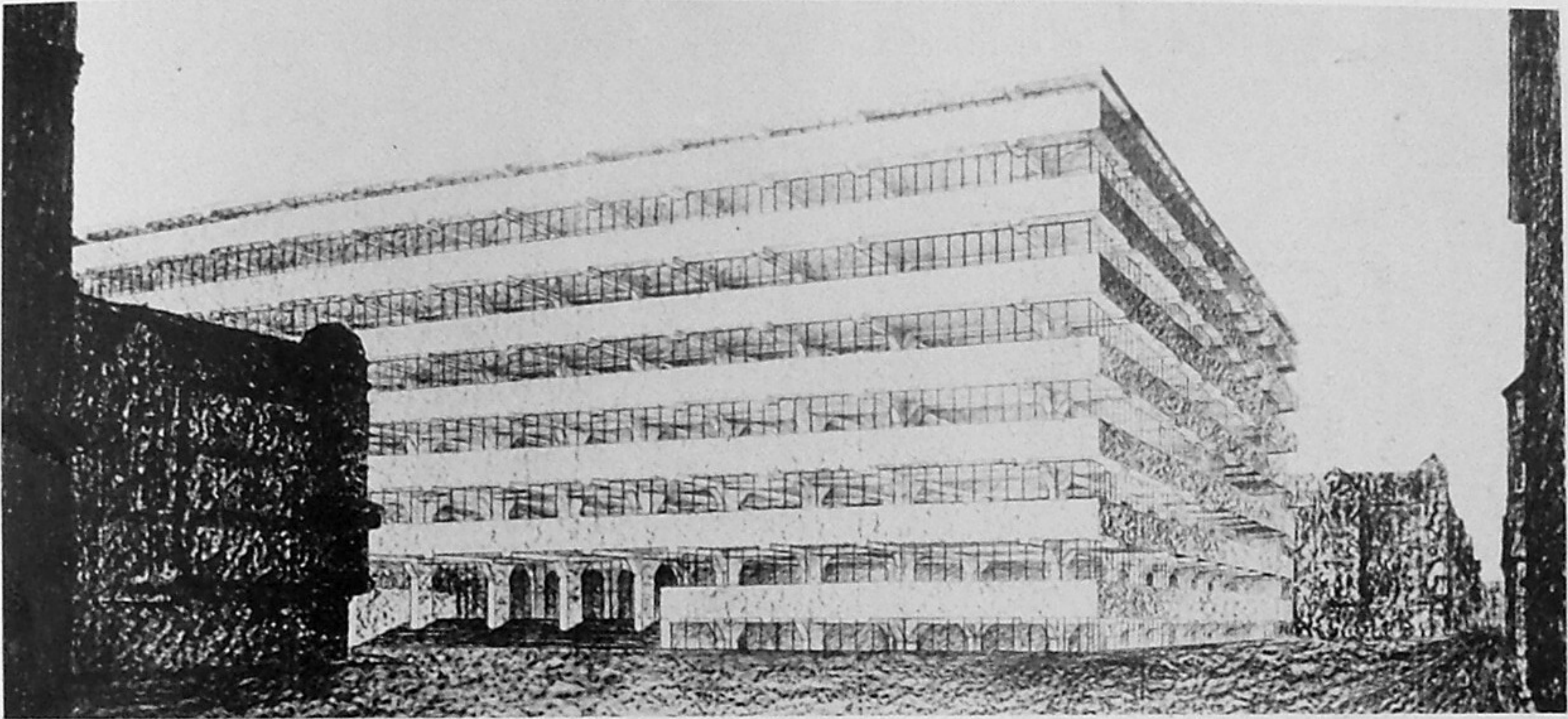
This project was Mies' first design in line with the new hard, sober and utilitarian approach to architecture (epitomised by the entries in the *Chicago Tribune* Competition of 1922). The design was based on a rigid structural system: the edge of each floor was cantilevered from regularly spaced columns and was turned up to form parapet walls which housed a filing system below the ribbon windows. The floors stepped out gradually as they rose. Mies wrote:

The office building is a house of work, of organisation,

of clarity, of economy. Broad, light work-space, unbroken, but articulated according to the organisation of the work. Maximum effect with minimum means. The materials: concrete, steel, glass. Reinforced concrete structures are skeletons by nature. No gingerbread. No fortress. Columns and girders eliminate bearing walls. This is skin and bone construction. (G, No 1, July 1923.)

Mies drew no plan, but the building was understood to wrap round a rectangular central courtyard.

1 Perspective



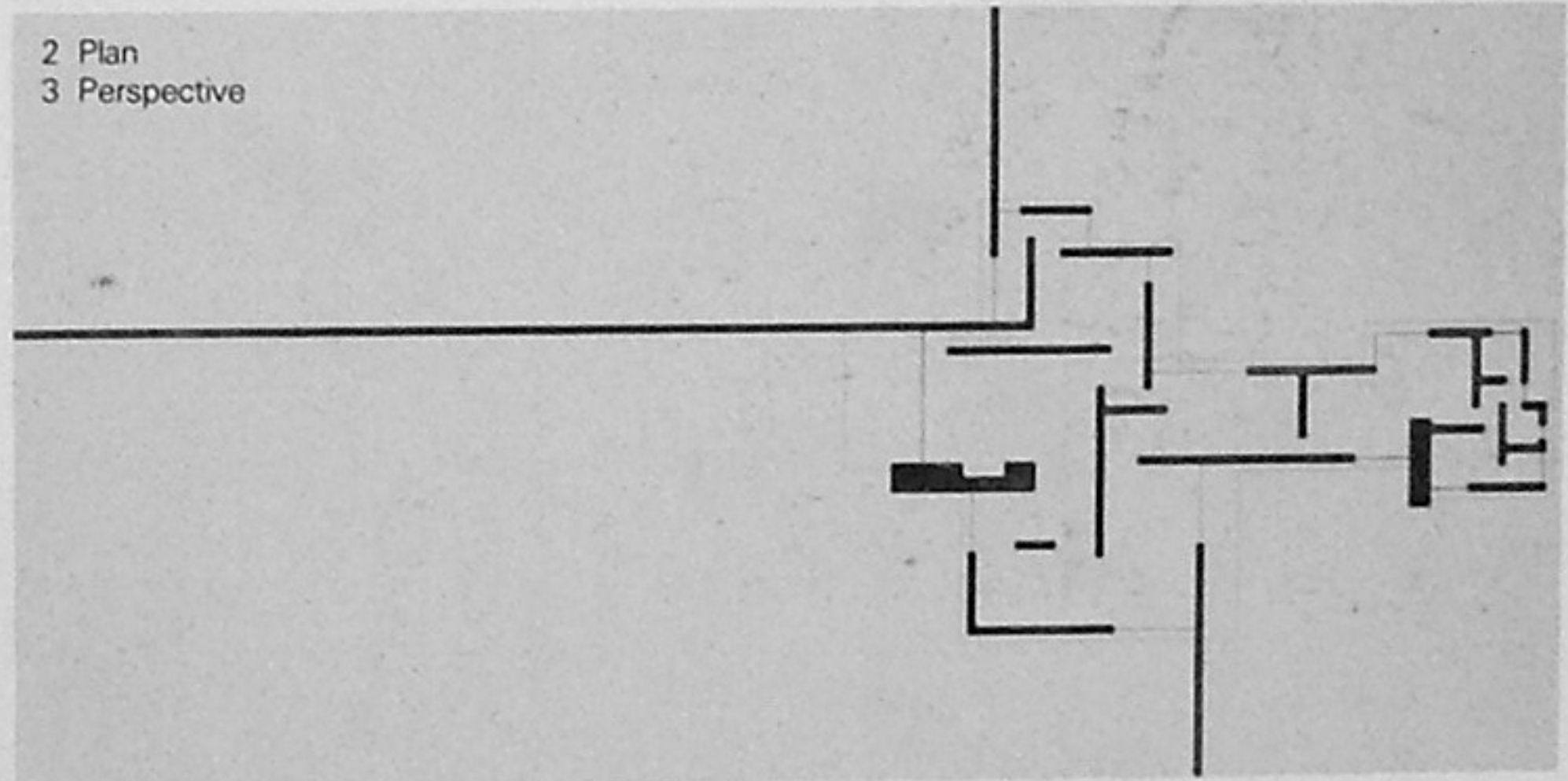
1

Brick Country House (1923)

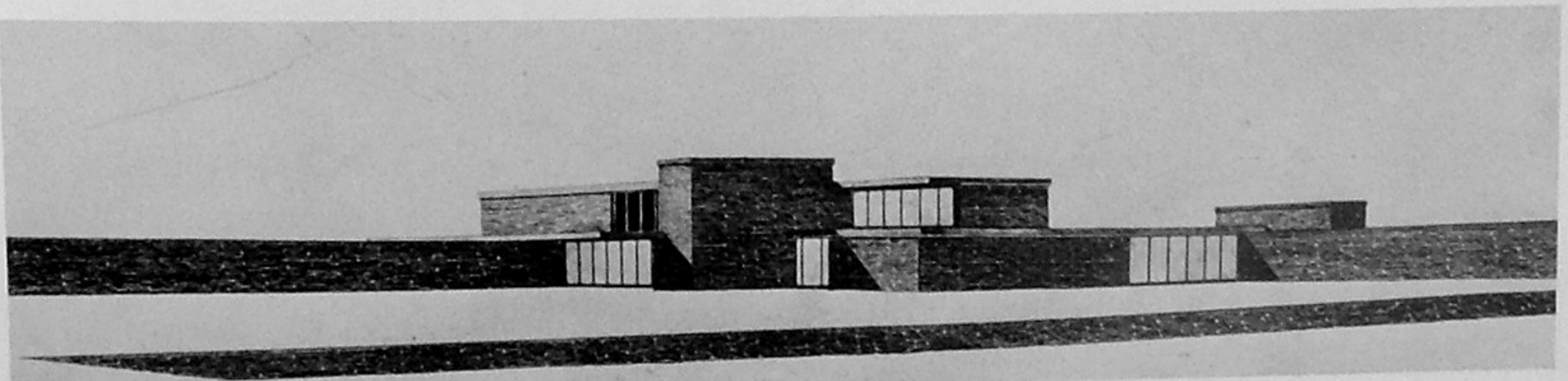
The two country house projects encapsulated the ideas Mies drew on for the modern houses he built at Guben and Krefeld, as well as Haus Tugendhat and the Barcelona Pavilion. The Brick Country House was planned like a Wrightian country house – a core of rooms screened from one another. The unit of design was no longer the volume of the rooms but the free-standing wall which broke the enclosure by sliding out, beneath the flat roof, into the landscape.

This concept of an architecture of flowing space, channelled by free-standing planes, played an important part in Mies' later development and reached its supreme expression in the Barcelona Pavilion of 1929.

2 Plan
3 Perspective



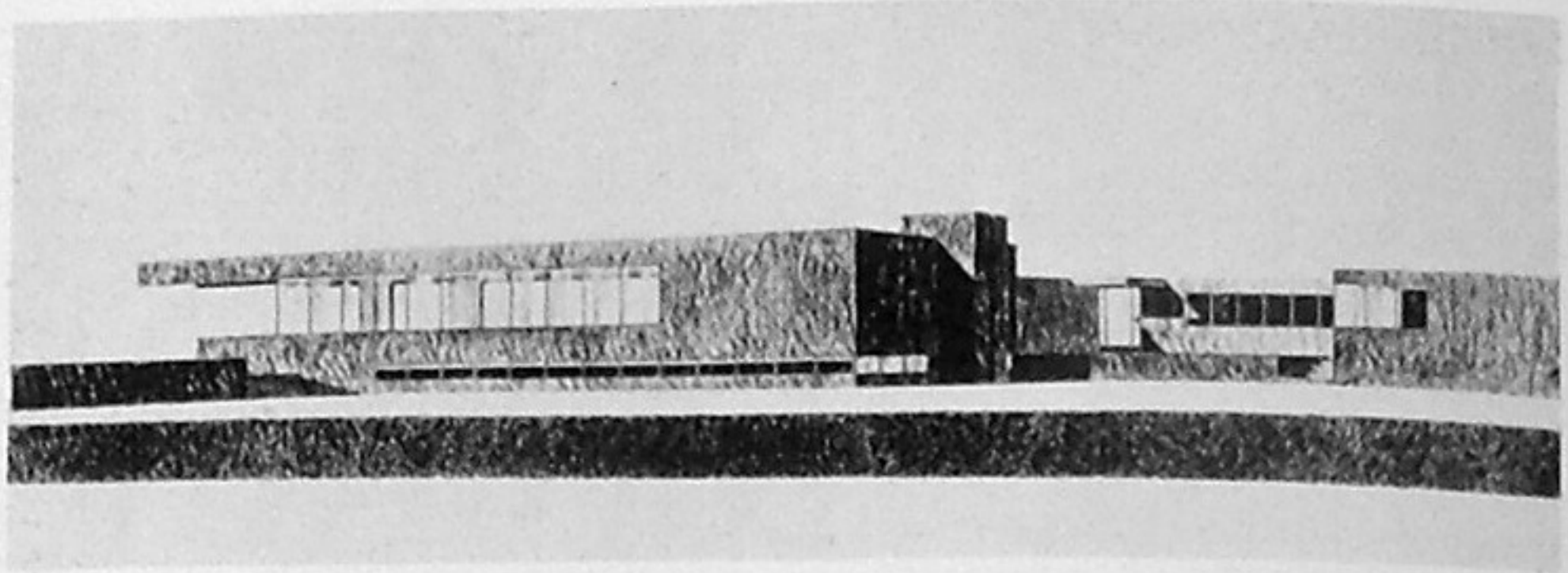
2



3

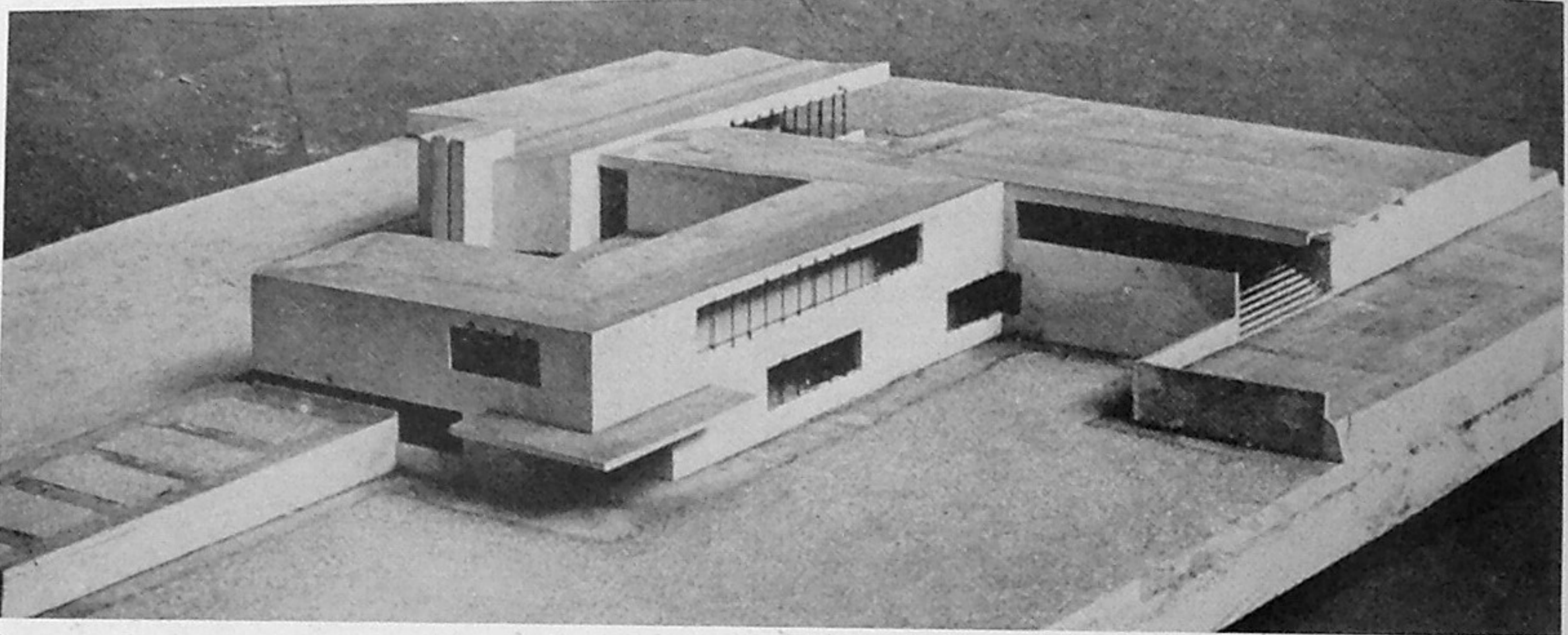
Concrete Country House (1923)

This project was the first 'zoned' house designed by Mies. He drew no plan, but the model illustrates the division of living, sleeping and service areas into wings which were isolated from each other by courts or patios – a completely different solution for breaking up the traditional 'box'. Rectangular horizontal windows of varying dimensions punctured the simple, geometric volumes.



1 Garden side perspective
2 Model

1



2

Traffic Control Tower (1924)

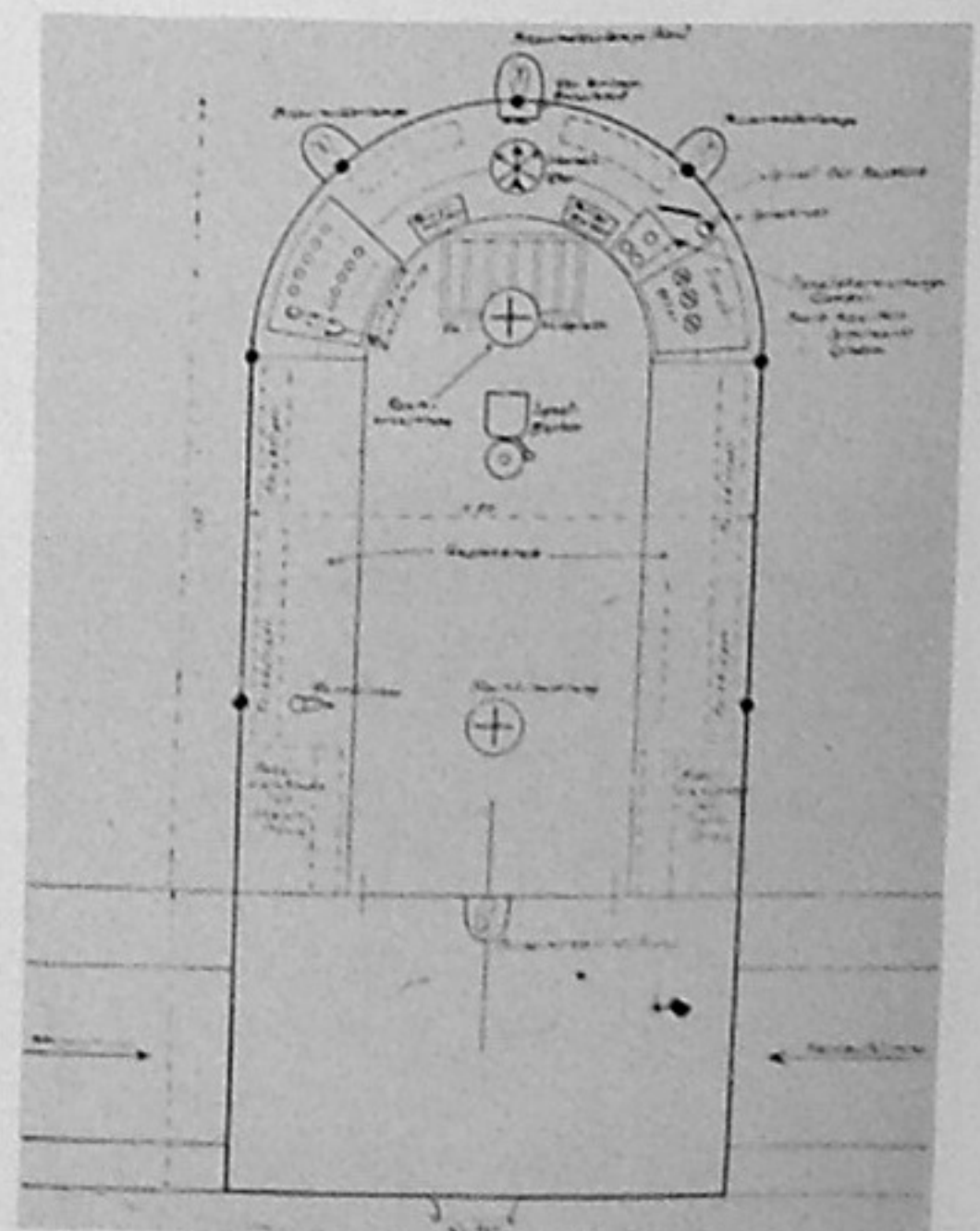
Mies executed this little-known project in collaboration with Heinrich Kosina. The tower was designed to stand at the intersection of Leipziger – and Friedrichstrasse. From this vantage point a controller could view the traffic flow and operate the traffic lights accordingly.

A bronze model was made by Paul Marcus and Mies used the photomontage technique to portray the tower *in situ*. (Werner Graeff was the photographer.)

3 Montage view
4 Plan of observation deck



3



4

Social Housing

The German social housing programme was firstly an attempt to remedy the critical post-war housing shortage but since there was also a shortage of building space in cities, the pioneers of the programme experimented with the planning of mass housing. The dwelling, said radical architects, had to be re-organised: blocks of small, single-family units would replace larger, detached houses and the new rooms would have to serve many functions.

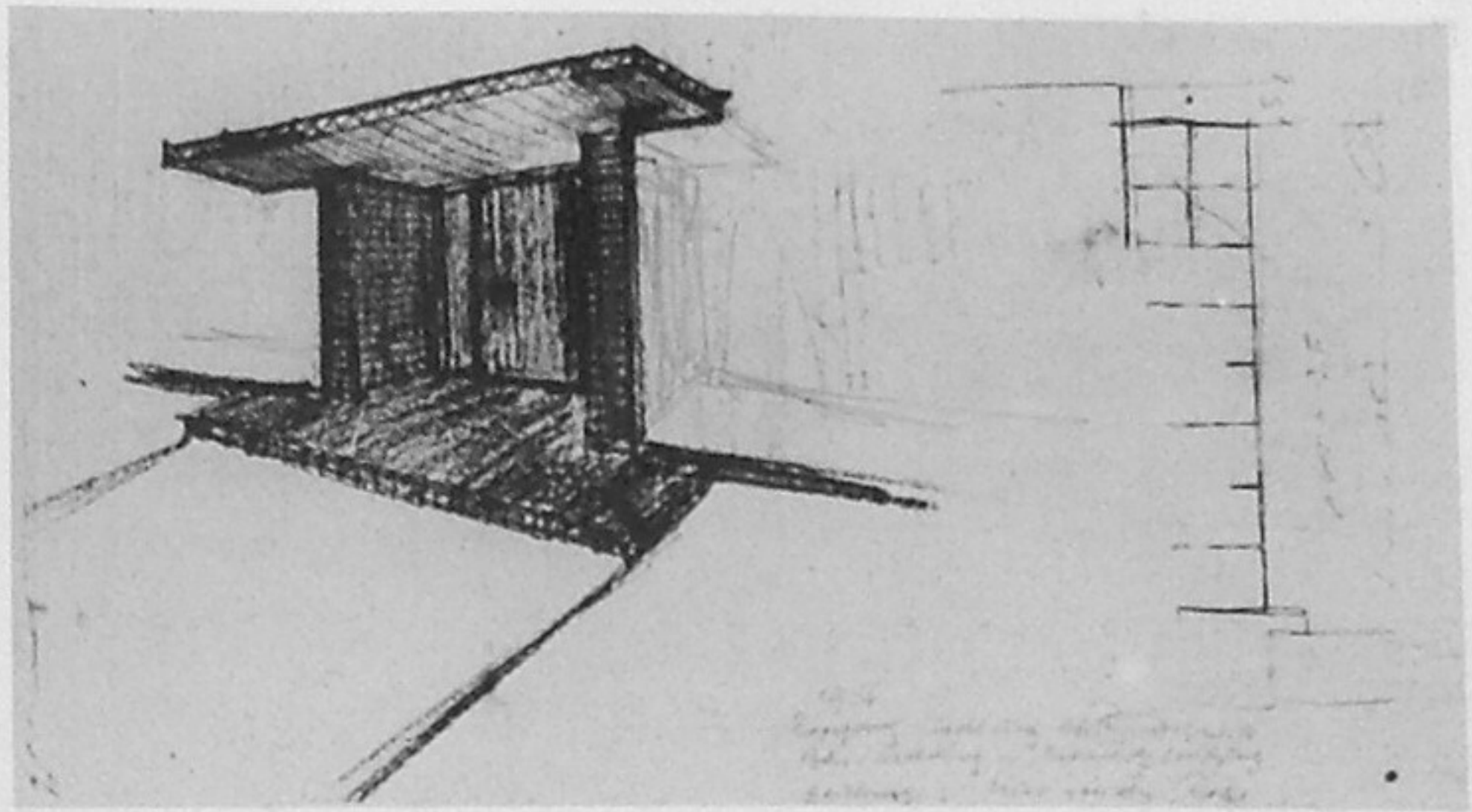
The new concept of mass housing was purportedly expressive of the 'new age', and radical architects claimed that a new social consciousness would emerge partly through the use of compact, functional planning and partly from exposure to the new design aesthetic.

Municipal Housing Development 1926-1927 Afrikanische Strasse, Berlin West

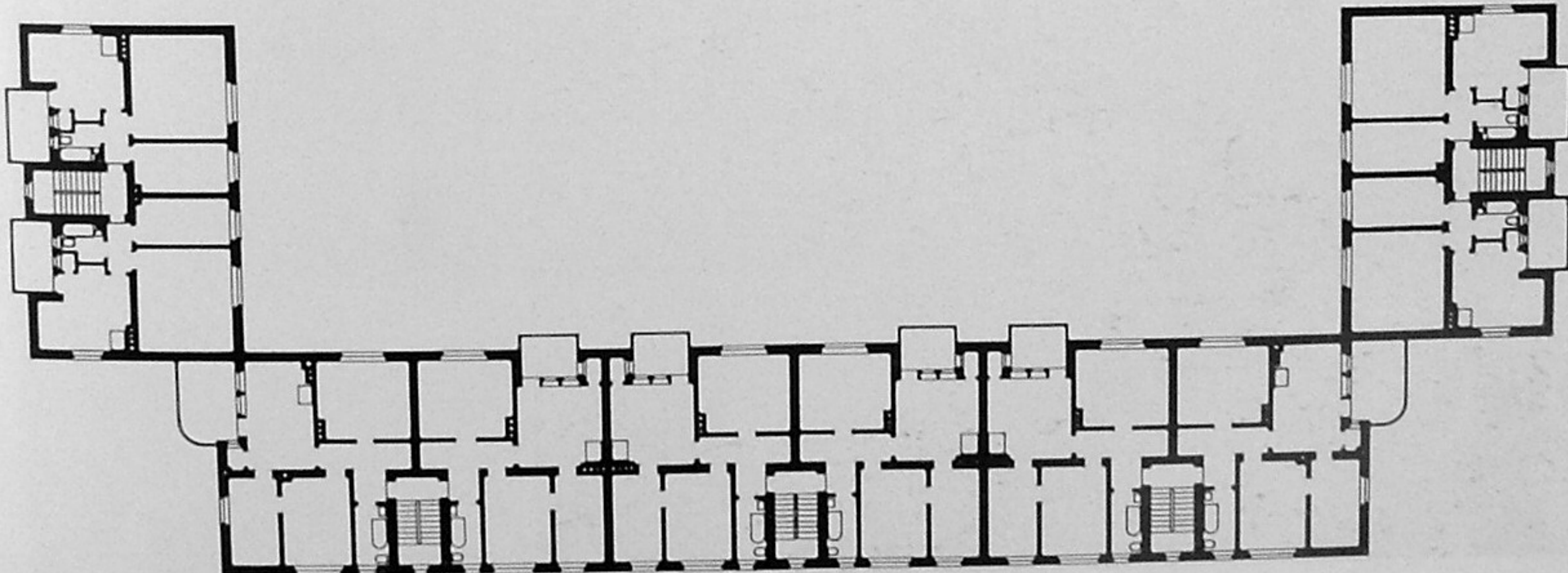
This development of three identical slab blocks, with a shorter end block which housed some commercial activities, was Mies van der Rohe's only contribution to the social housing programme in Berlin. The buildings were finished in typical machine-age style – a taut skin that used to be painted white. The details were simple and carefully considered and the steel windows were designed with the help of a British manufacturer's catalogue (Crittall's). Behind each block is a quiet, secluded, communal garden.

At Afrikanische Strasse Mies proved that he could build as cheaply as his radical contemporaries. The method of construction was traditional and the generous apartments are still fully occupied.

- 1 Sketch by Mies van der Rohe for entrance
- 2 Typical entrance
- 3 Typical floor plan
- 4 Apartment block on Afrikanische Strasse
- 5 End block



2



3



4



5

Weissenhofsiedlung 1927 Stuttgart, Federal Republic of Germany

Mies van der Rohe was made director of the extremely ambitious Weissenhof Exhibition sponsored by the Werkbund on the theme of *Wohnung*, or dwelling. Every European architect of any importance was represented, with the exception of Adolf Loos, Hugo Häring and Erich Mendelsohn. At Weissenhofsiedlung in 1927 the world was able to witness a remarkable consistency in the new modern style.

The architectural exhibition was primarily an attempt to explore the technical developments in construction. The buildings were not proto-types for mass housing – they were too luxurious and too expensive for this. Mies laid down his policy for the exhibition in the official catalogue: *I have refrained from laying down a rigid programme in order to leave each individual as free as possible to carry out his ideas. In drawing up the general plan I felt it important to avoid regulations that might interfere with free expression.*

But in the interests of uniformity throughout the exhibition it was stipulated that all buildings had to have a smooth finish.

Apartment Block 1927 Weissenhof, Stuttgart, Federal Republic of Germany

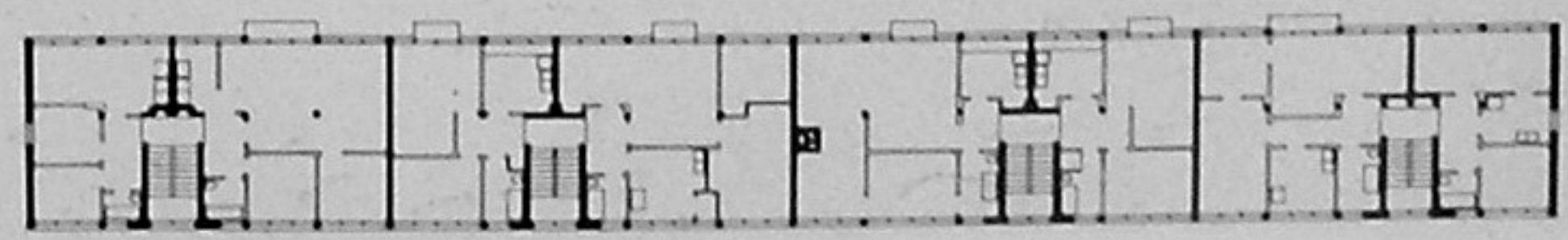
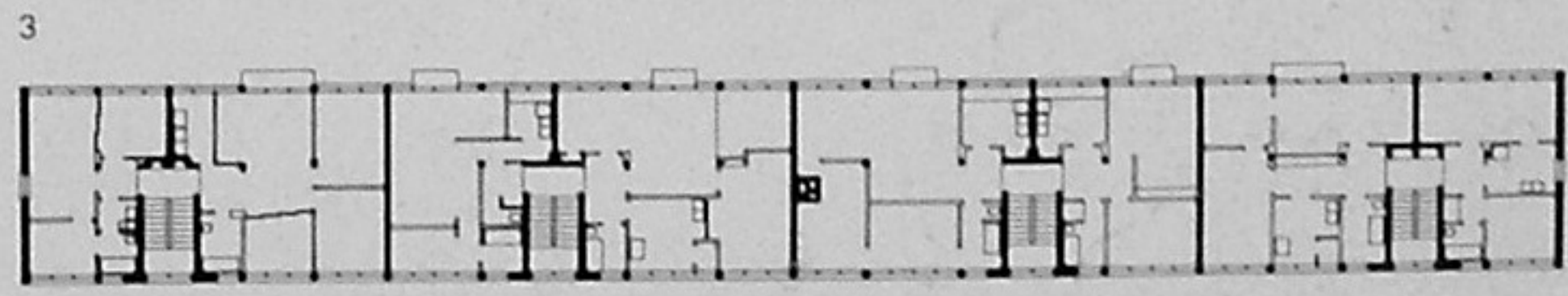
Mies' apartment block crowned the Weissenhof exhibition site. It was a steel-frame structure in which freedom of interior planning was seriously intended. By the use of moveable partitions he created twelve apartments, all differently arranged, for each of the two basic units. Despite the complex interior, the exterior design is quiet and relies on the subtle proportions of the window bands and stairwell fenestration. Mies wrote:

Today the factor of economy makes rationalisation and standardisation imperative for rental housing. On the other hand, the increased complexity of our requirements demands flexibility. The future will have to reckon with both. For this purpose skeleton construction is the most suitable system. . . If we regard kitchens and bathrooms, because of their plumbing, as a fixed core, then all other space may be partitioned by means of moveable walls. (From *Bau und Wohnung*, translated by Philip Johnson, Mies van der Rohe, New York 1947.)

The block was not finished in time for the opening ceremony because, at the last moment, Mies insisted on the removal and replacement to his own design of all the windows. (Standard outward-opening casements had been installed by the job architect Richard Döcker.) No partition wall has ever been moved.



- KEY
- 1 Josef Frank
 - 2 J.J.P. Oud
 - 3 Mart Stam
 - 4 Le Corbusier
 - 5 Peter Behrens
 - 6 Richard Döcker
 - 7 Walter Gropius
 - 8 Ludwig Hilbersheimer
 - 9 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
 - 10 Hans Poelzig
 - 11 Adolf Rading
 - 12 Hans Scharoun
 - 13 Adolf Schneck
 - 14 Bruno Taut
 - 15 Max Taut
 - 16 Victor Bourgeois



- 1 Weissenhof Exhibition site plan
- 2 Dwellings at Weissenhof with those by Richard Döcker, Max Taut in the foreground and Mies' apartment block at the rear
- 3 Weissenhof dwellings with Mies' apartment block to the right
- 4 Typical floor plan

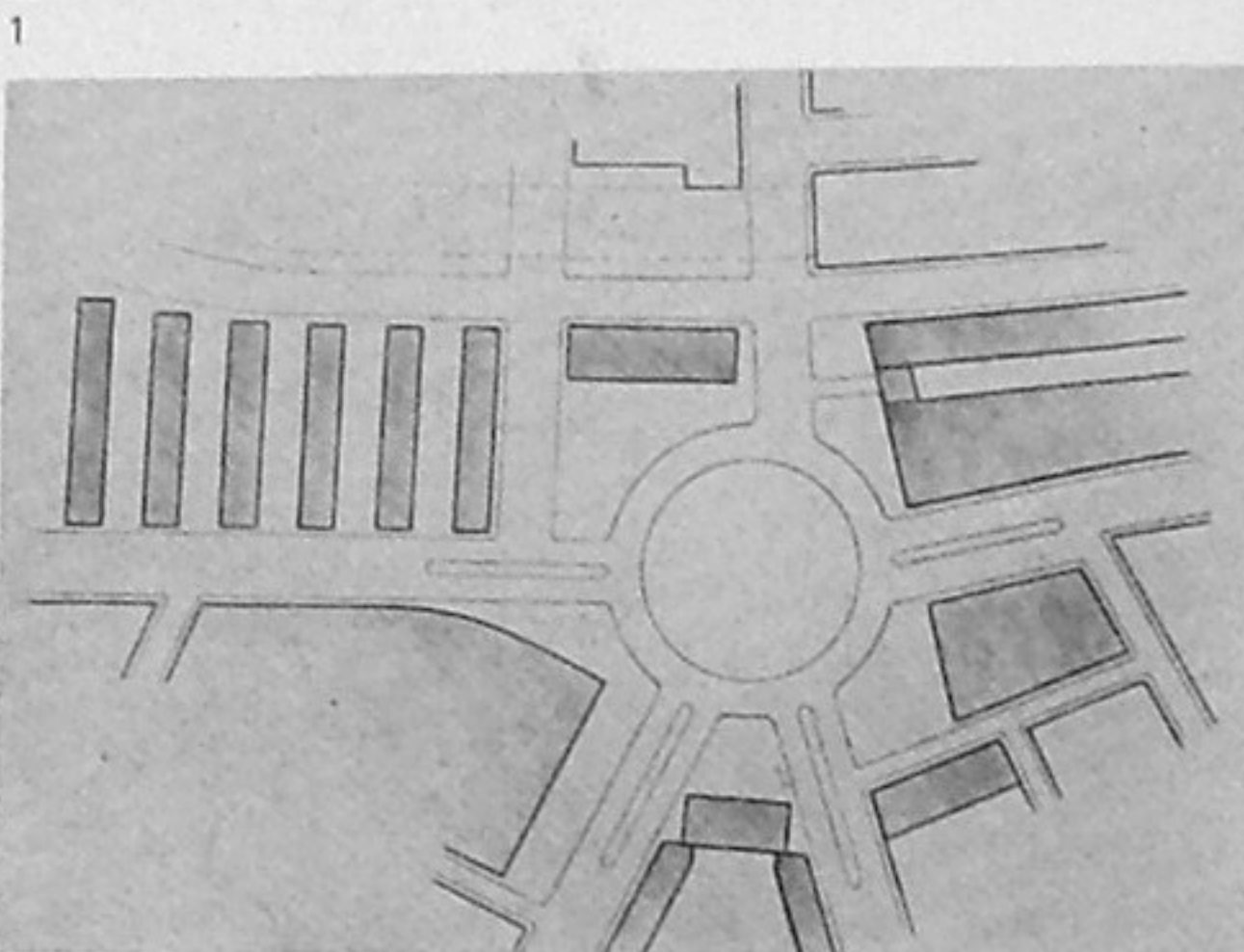
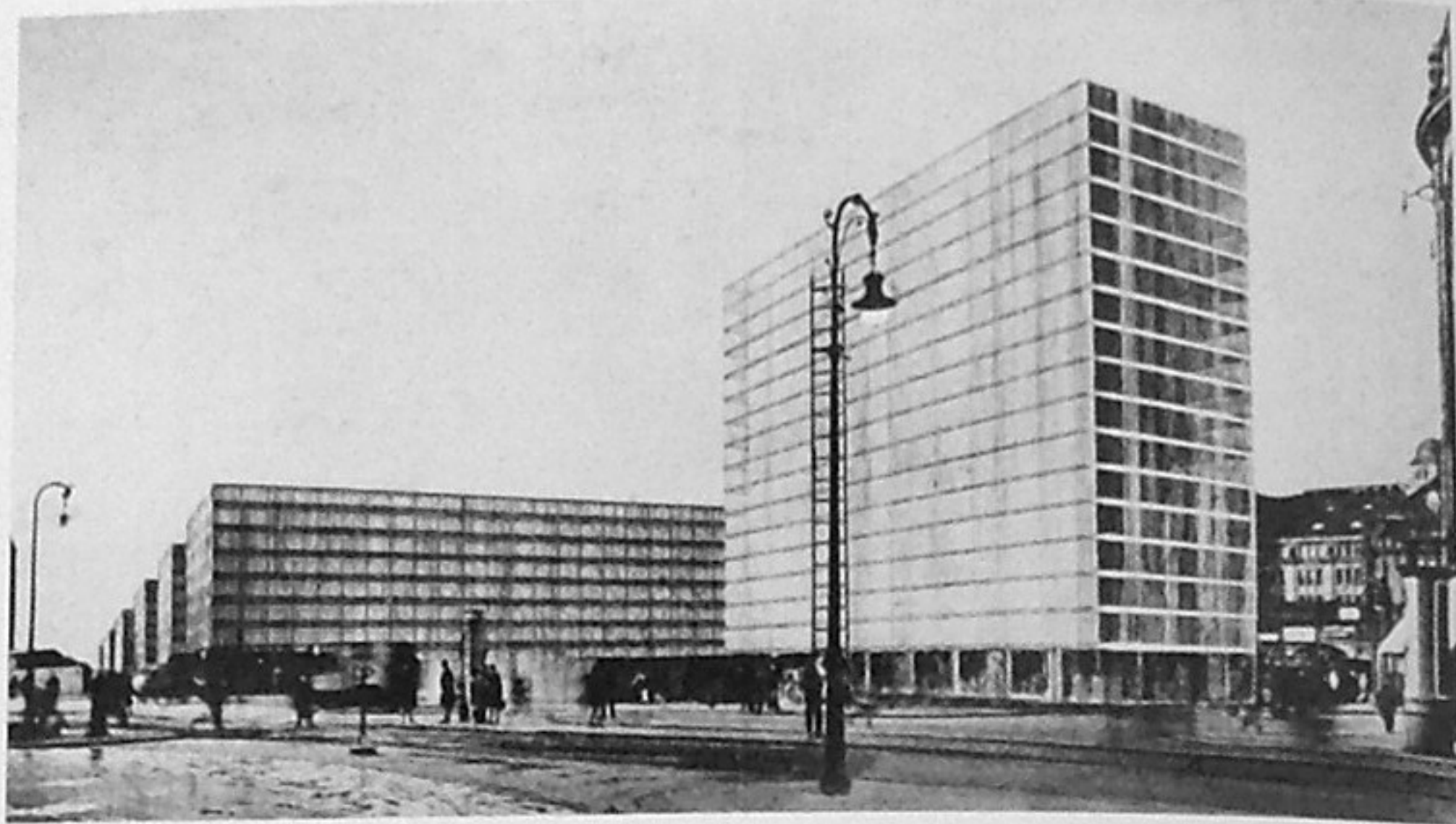
Skin Study Projects

As the political climate began to deteriorate once again at the end of the decade, the architectural competition (which had been the highlight of the early twenties) was revived. In 1928 Mies entered three competitions and his projects were all studies of the building envelope, the curtain wall. These so-called 'skin studies' were, in a sense, the refinement of his earlier glass skyscraper projects, but more commercial in character. There is a 1928 version of the 1922 glass skyscraper, showing the model set in a harder, urban environment.

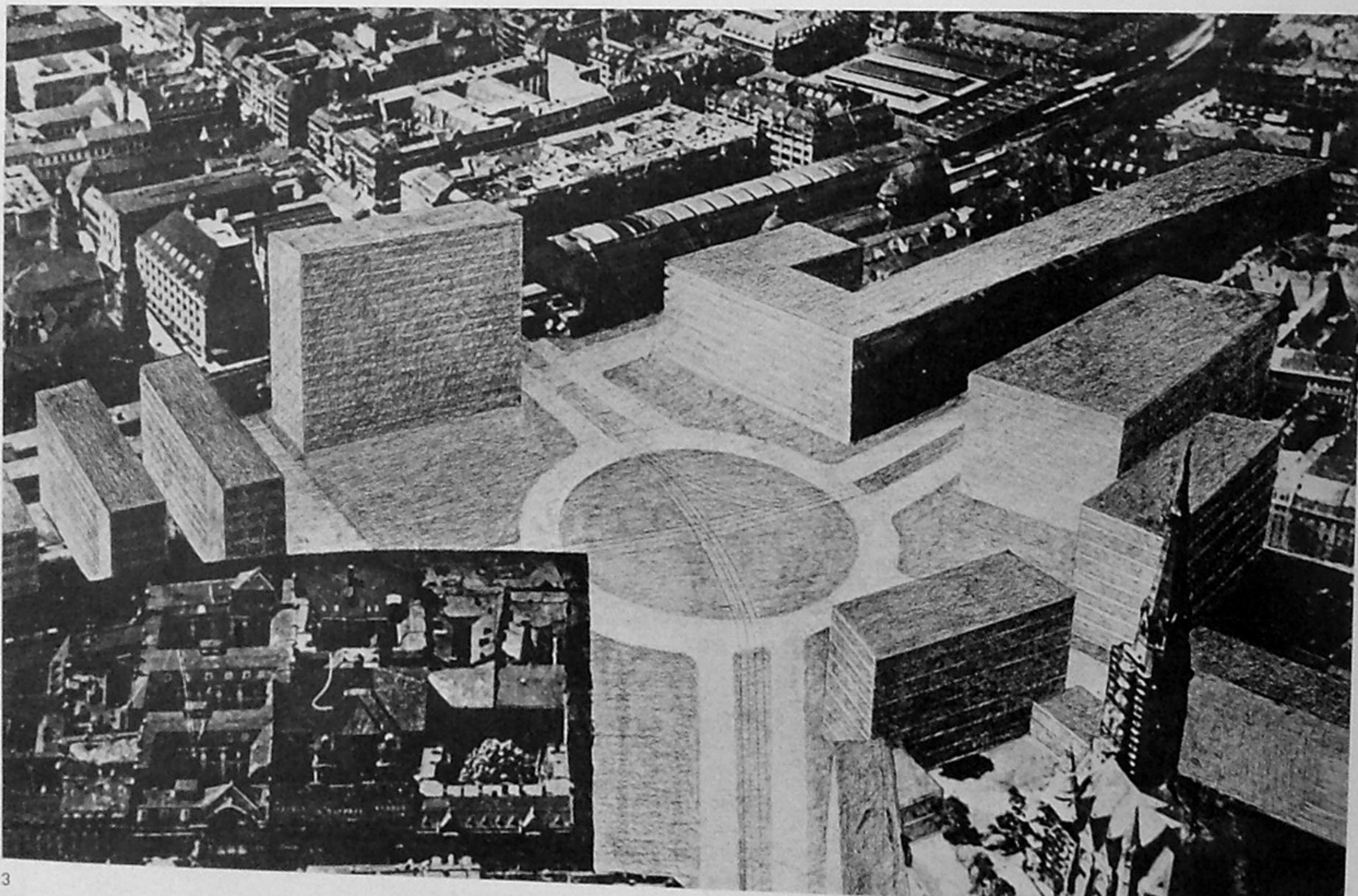
Mies tried to present his projects realistically and in context with their surroundings. He used the photomontage technique with charcoal and pencil drawings. (Werner Graeff was the photographer.) None of his competition entries received an award.

Remodelling of Alexanderplatz (1928)

This was Mies' first town planning project. He ignored the closed, almost classical plan proposed by the City of Berlin, thus eliminating his entry from consideration by the competition jury. Several streets led into Alexanderplatz and it was proposed that a circular traffic island unite them all. Most competitors took the circle as the basis for their architectural development and designed buildings around the periphery. But Mies created an open, asymmetric space of impressive proportions and attempted to impose order on the square through the positioning and grouping of his buildings.



- 1 Perspective
- 2 Site plan
- 3 Montage



Adam Building (1928)

The site for the Adam department store was on Leipzigerstrasse, Berlin, at the same intersection for which Mies had designed the traffic control tower of 1924. The simple, rectangular slab block, with a rounded corner at the intersection, was broken at top-floor level to form a roof terrace.

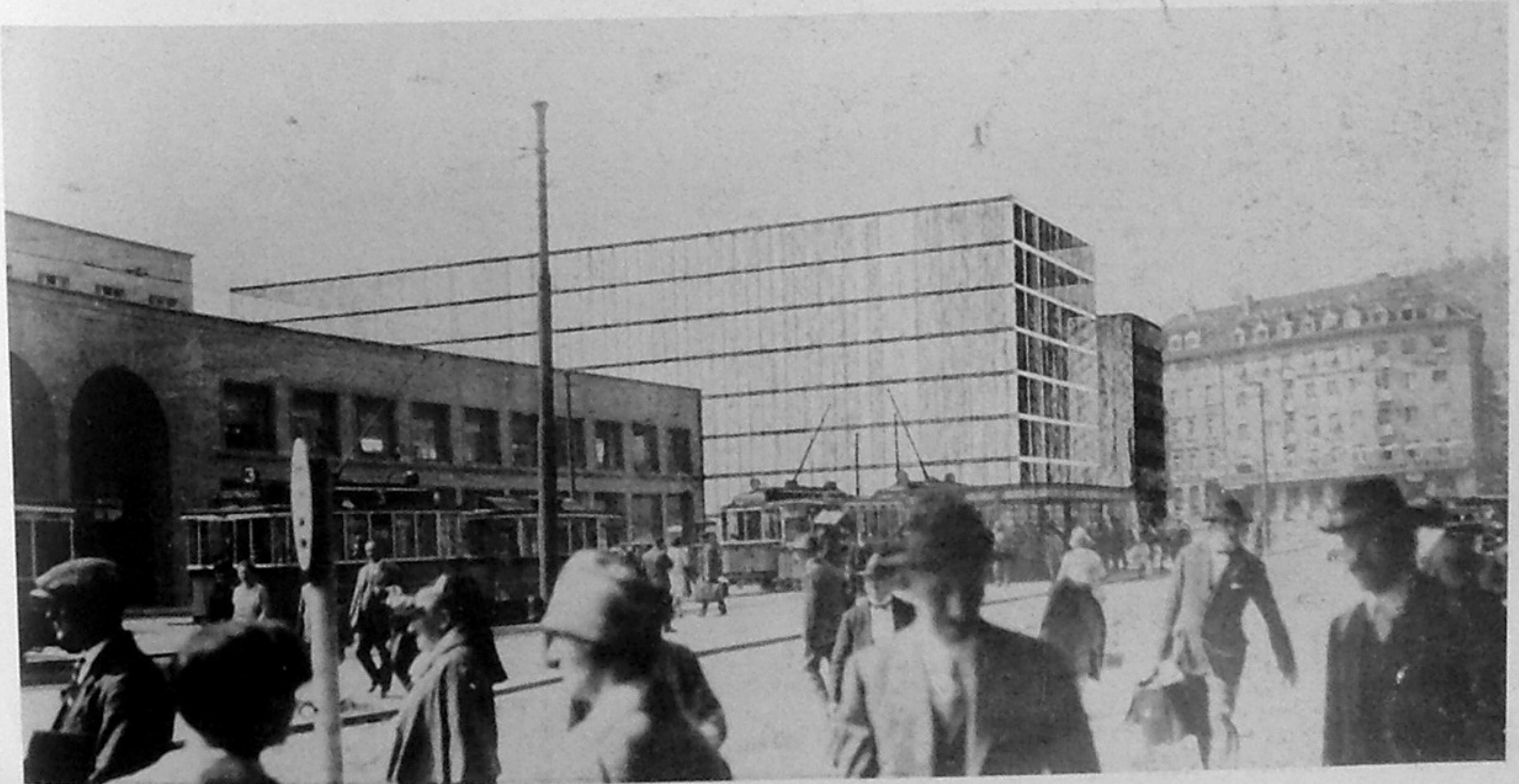


1,2 Montages

1

Stuttgart Bank Building (1928)

The site was next to Paul Bonatz' railway station, and Mies' skilful use of photomontage shows his bank building as a back-drop to the imposing station building.



2

Exhibition Design

Mies van der Rohe first became involved with exhibition design when he was appointed organiser of the architectural exhibitions for the Novembergruppe in late 1921.

'Weissenhofsiedlung' Exhibition (1927)

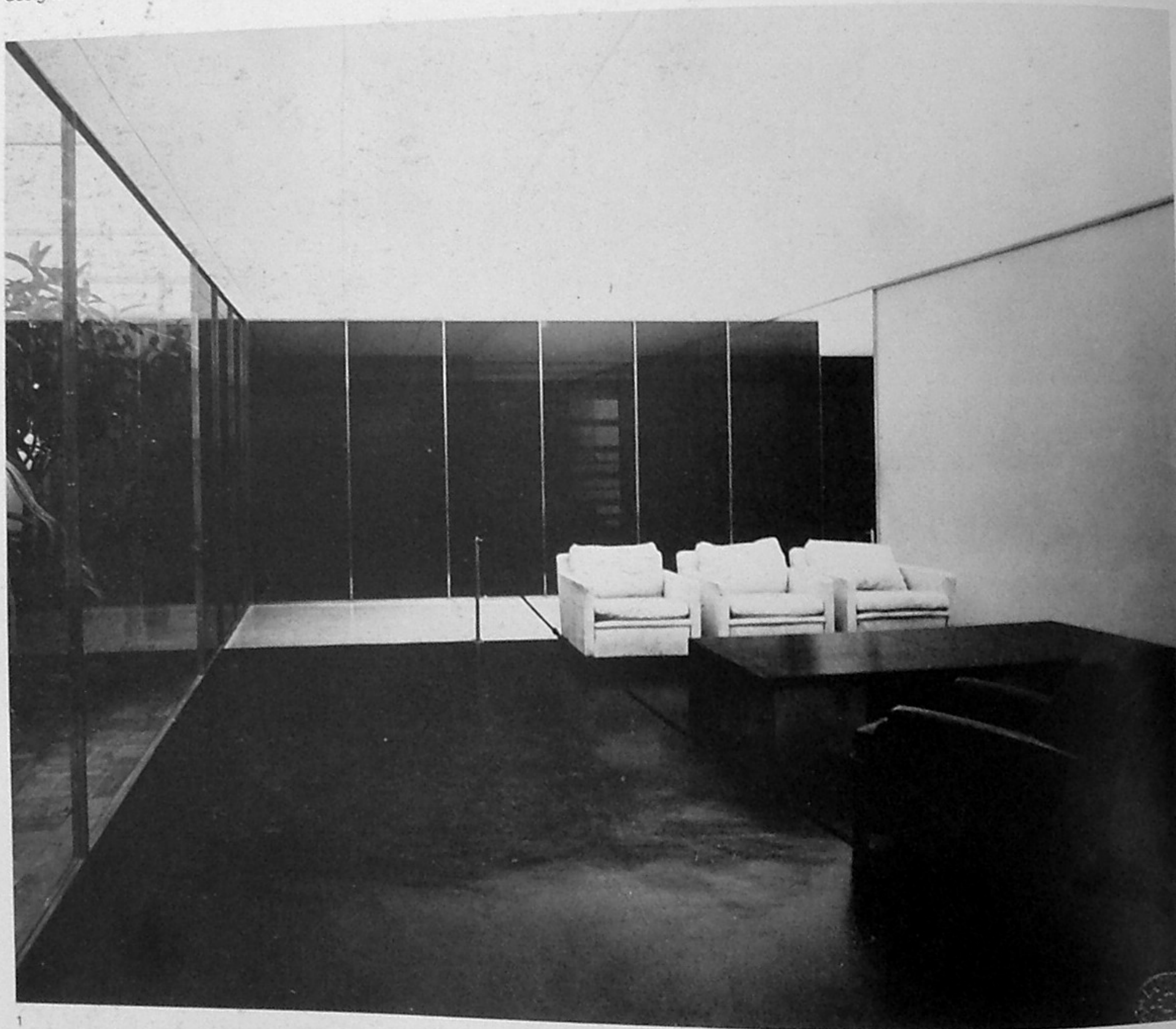
Mies brought in Lilly Reich to assist him with the industrial exhibits in the hall at Weissenhofsiedlung. Together they decided what was to be displayed and had the final say as to which firms could exhibit their products – typewriters, light fittings, furniture, etc – on stands designed by Mies and Ms Reich. Wherever possible the designs were based on the materials to be displayed.

He held this position until he became vice president of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1926 and was put in charge of the 'Weissenhof' exhibition.

The walls of the glass exhibit were of glass; those of the silk exhibit were of silk.

In the glass industry exhibit, the floors were covered with black and white linoleum; the walls were of etched, clear and grey opaque glass; the chairs were covered in white chamois and black cowhide; and the bench table was in rosewood.

1 Exhibit of the glass industry
2-3 Silk exhibit at Mode der Dame

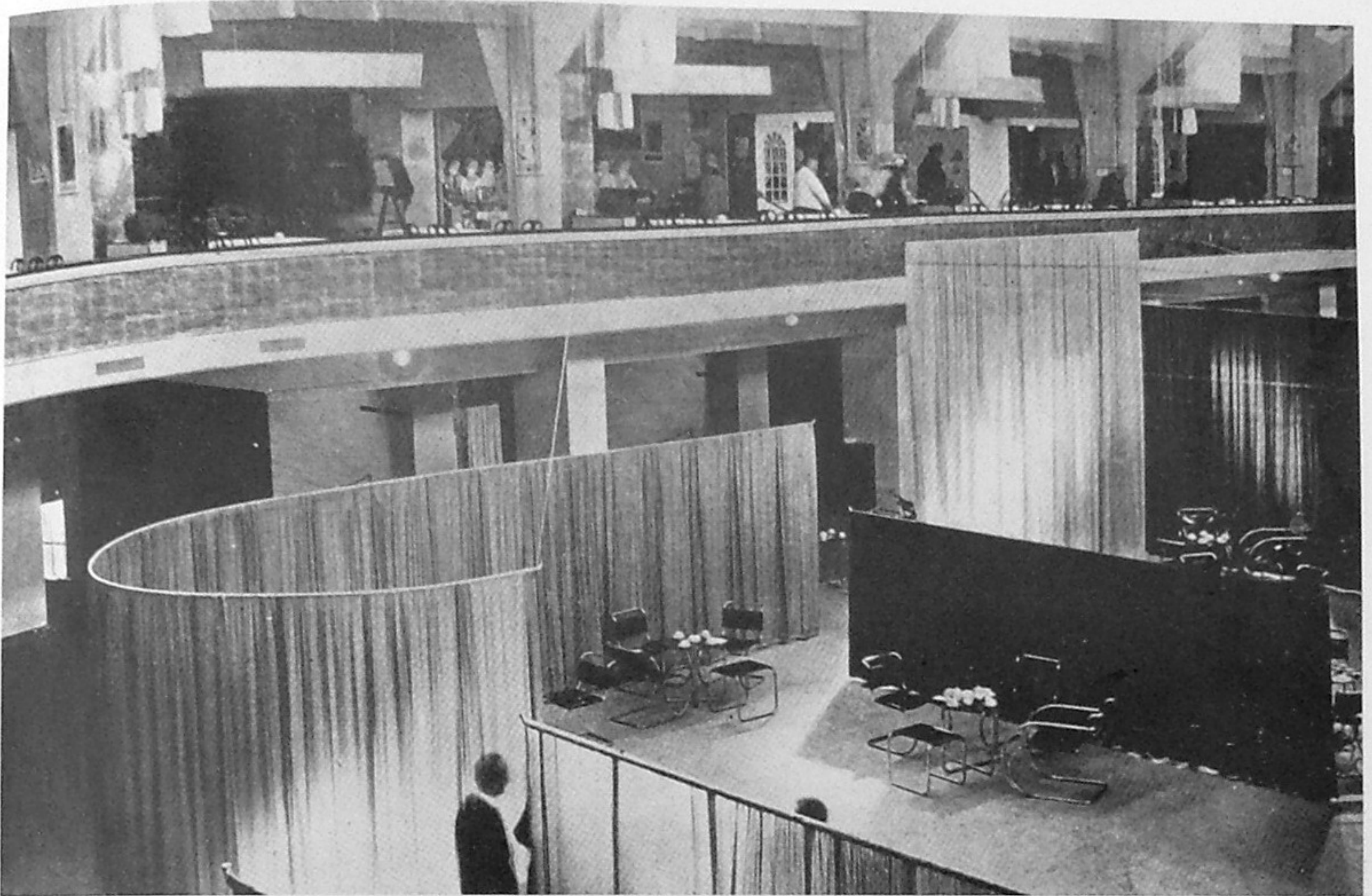


'Mode der Dame' Exhibition (1927)

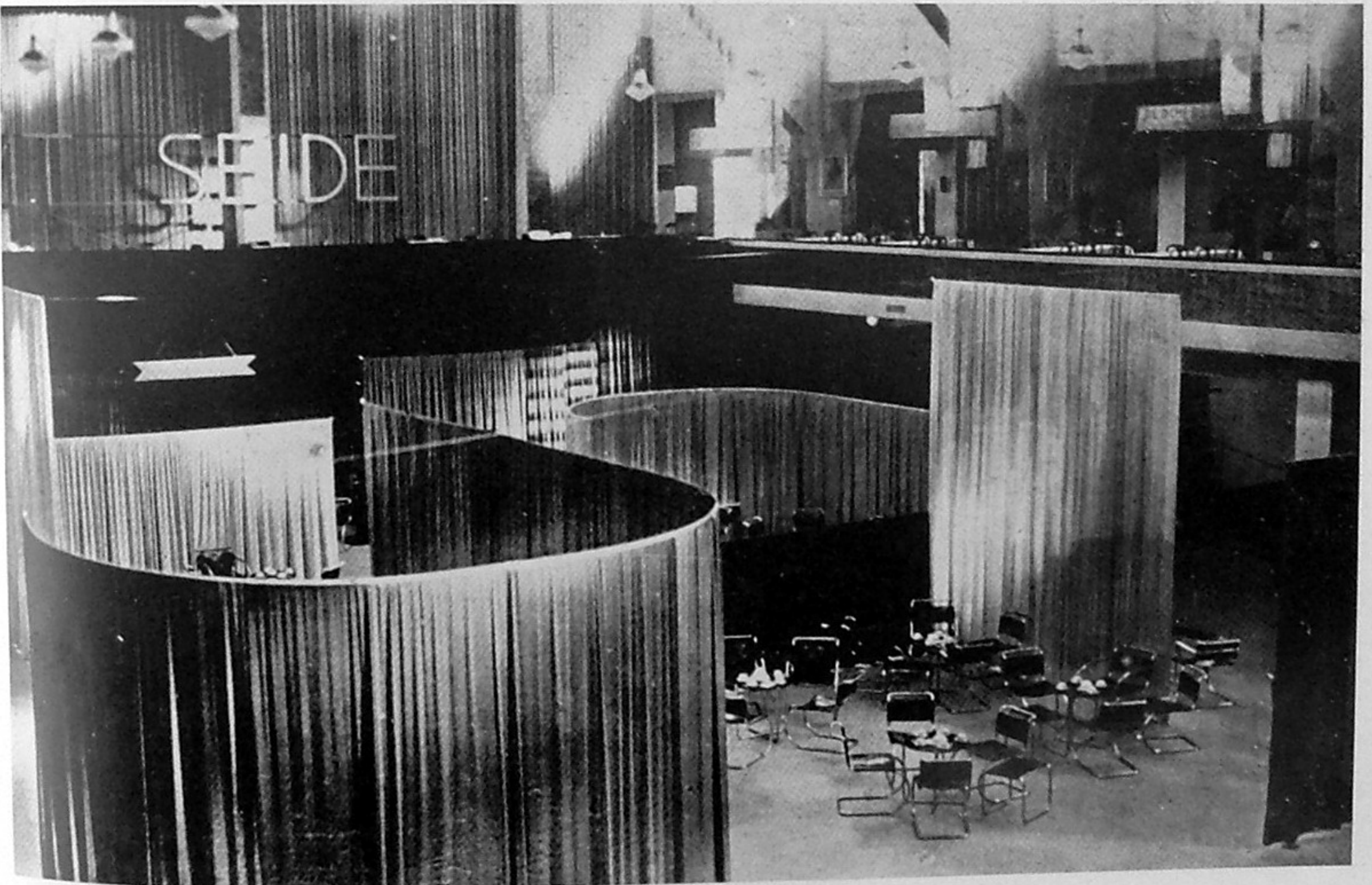
Lilly Reich had a special expertise with textiles and at this Berlin fashion exhibition she and Mies together designed the silk exhibit.

The stand provided a showcase of quantities of Mies'

tubular steel furniture. The silks and velvets hung from chromed-steel tubular frames, forming sensuously flowing screens. Black, orange and red velvet 'screens' were contrasted with gold, silver, black and lemon-yellow silk hangings.



2

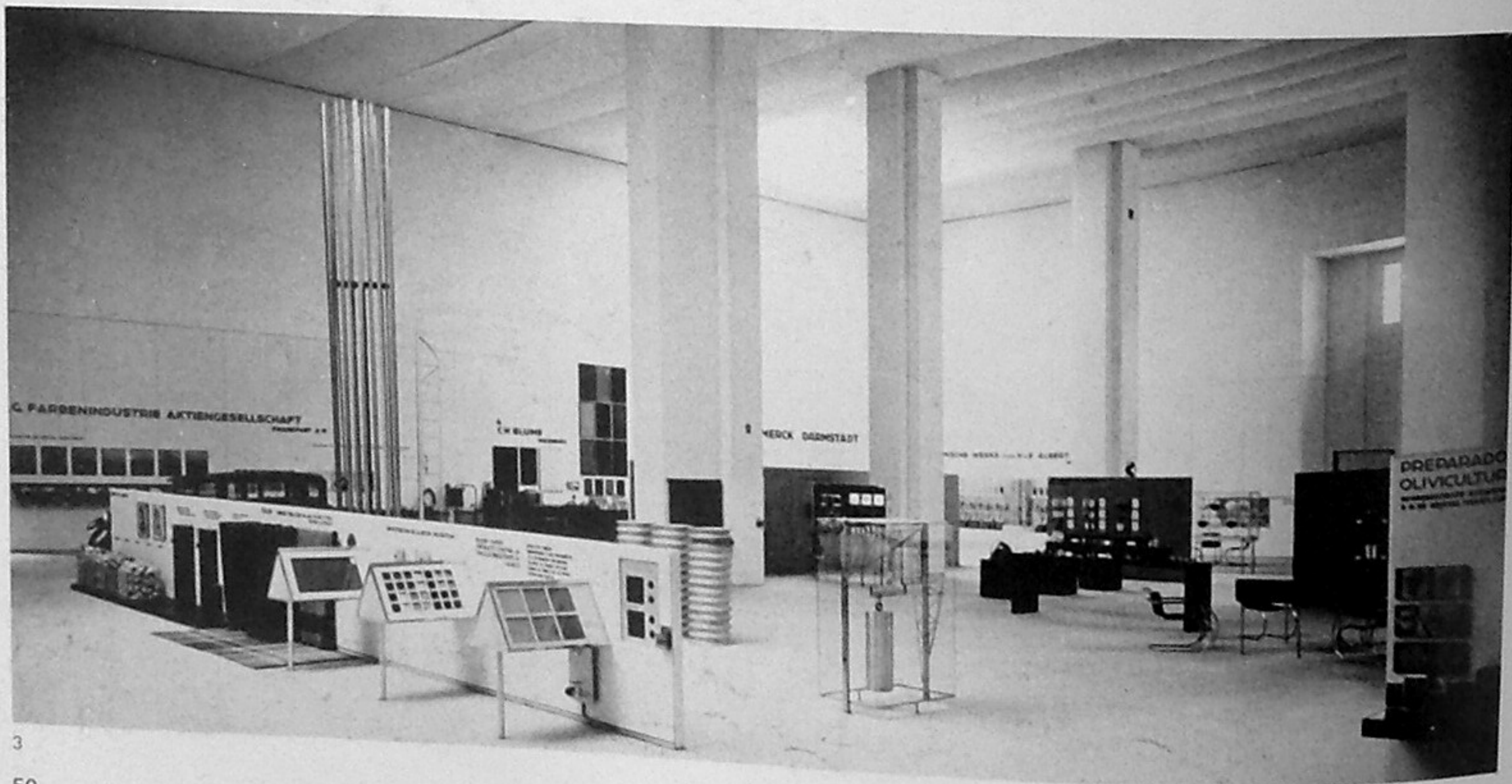
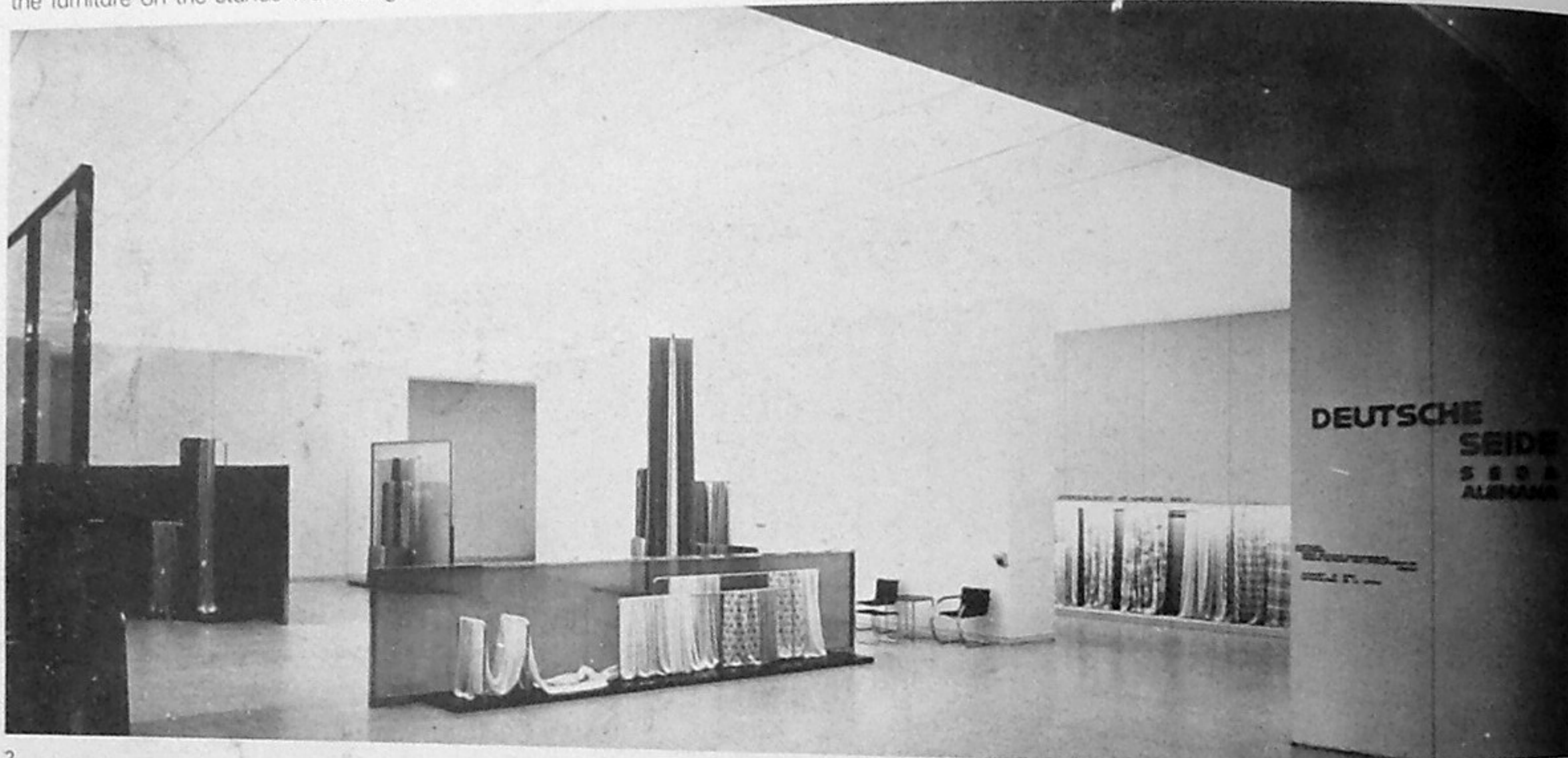


3

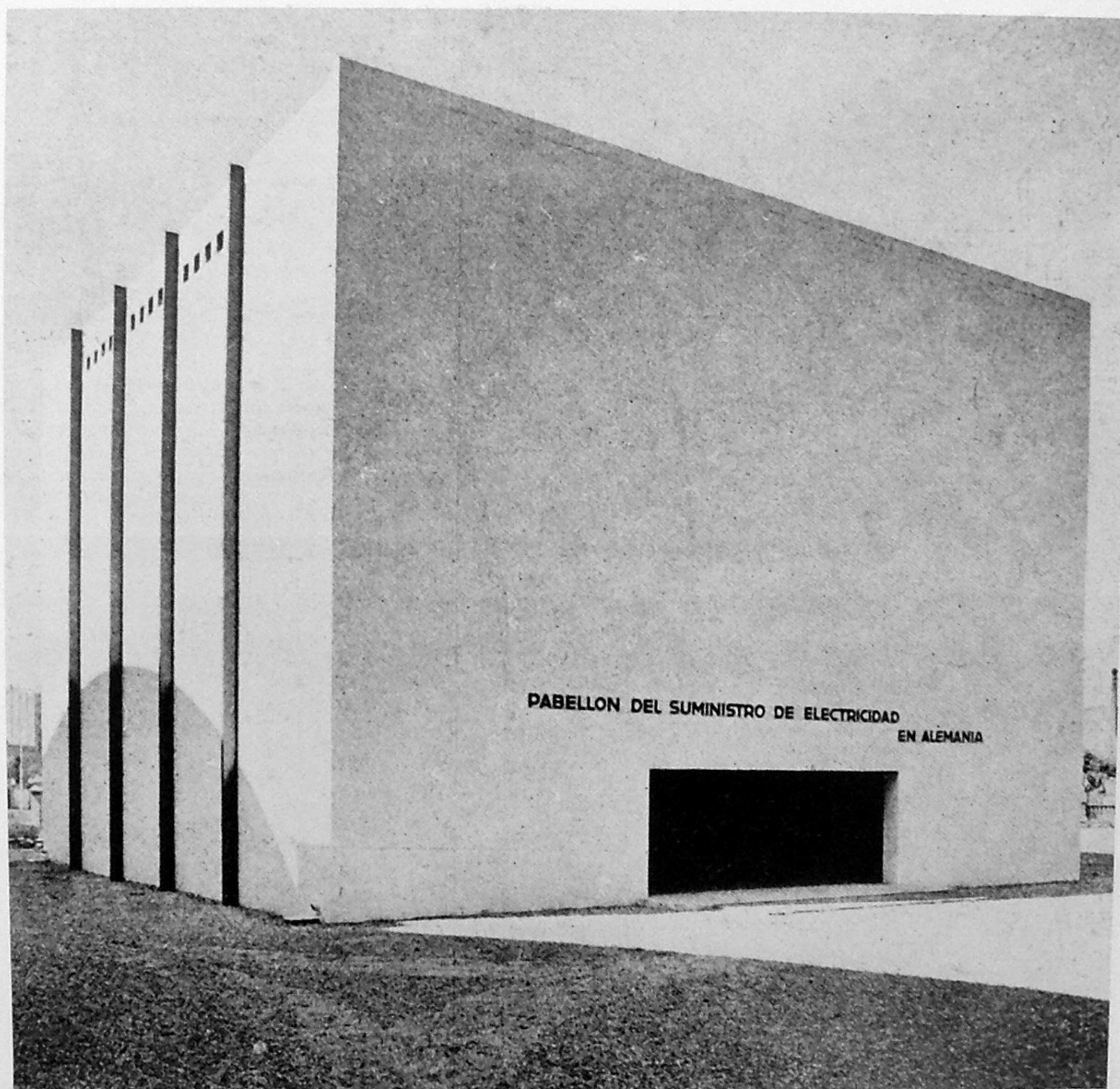
Barcelona International Exhibition (1929)

Mies van der Rohe was responsible for the entire German contribution to the Barcelona Exhibition. He designed two pavilions – the German national pavilion and the German electrical industry pavilion to house the AEG exhibits. The AEG Pavilion was largely ignored – all attention centred on the so-called 'Barcelona Pavilion'.

Mies put Lilly Reich in charge of all the industrial exhibits: she decided who was to exhibit, designed all the stands and built them with the help of a team of workers. In the interest of continuity, all the graphics were designed by Mies' office in Berlin. The lettering used throughout was designed by Sergius Ruegenberg – later it became a standard German typeface, known as 'Skelettschrift'. All the furniture on the stands was designed by Mies.



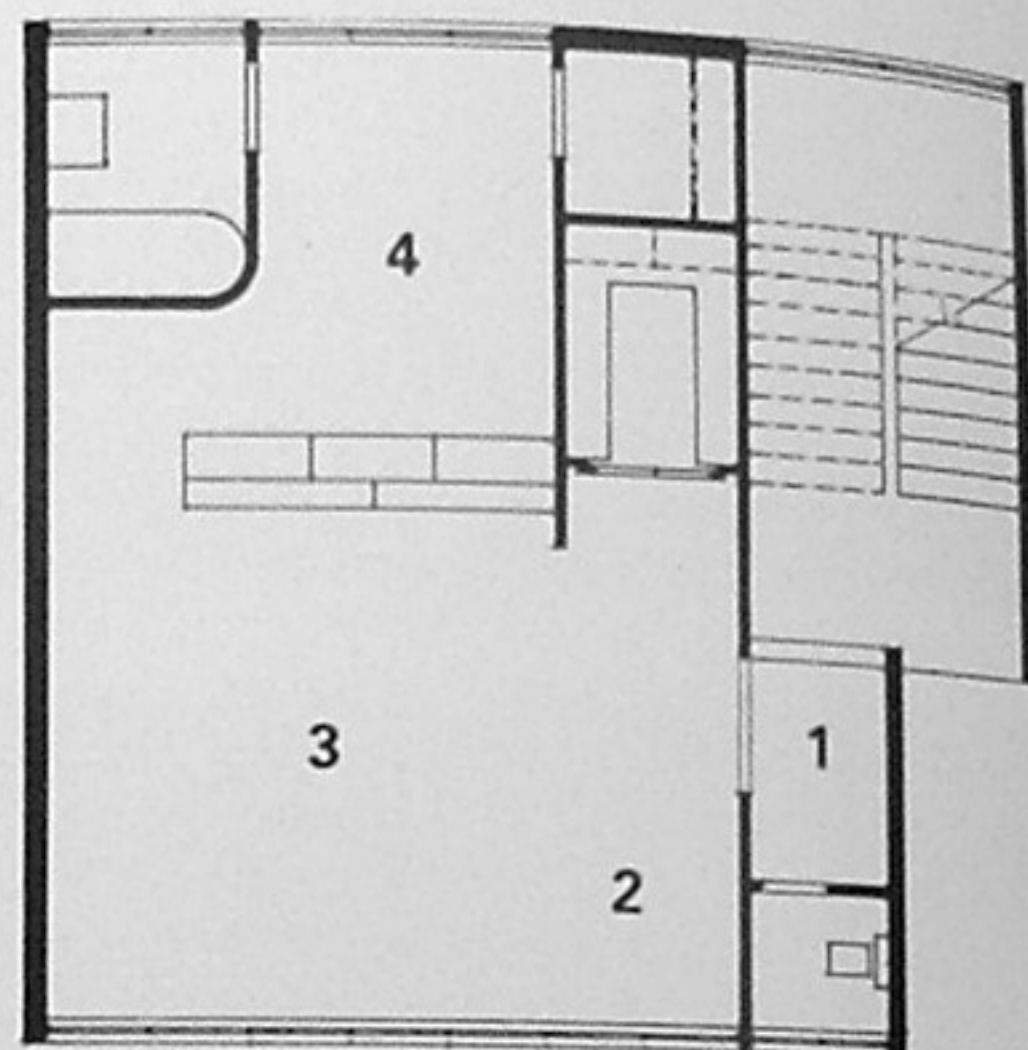
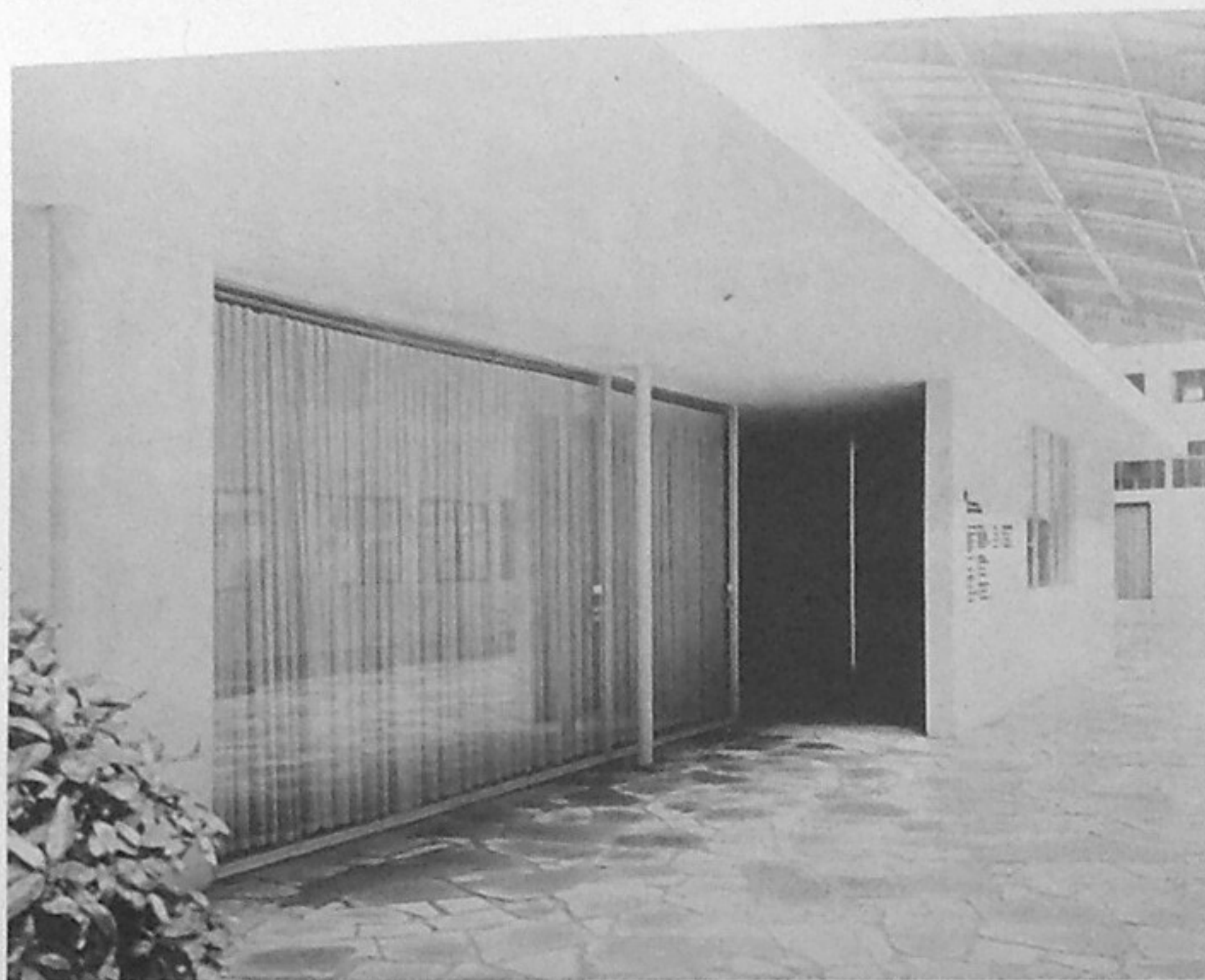
- 1 General view of the exhibition with AEG Pavilion, bottom right
- 2 Silk exhibit at Barcelona
- 3 Industrial exhibits at Barcelona
- 4 AEG Pavilion for the German electrical industries exhibit



Berlin Building Exhibition (1931)

Mies and Lilly Reich officially shared the direction of this exhibition, but Ms Reich did the bulk of the work and exhibited her own model house alongside Mies' house. Mies also designed an apartment for a bachelor – a

rectangular single-space design, with a head-high storage unit for books and clothing dividing the living area from the sleeping area. All the free-standing furniture came from the Mies catalogue (see furniture design).



2

KEY
 1 Lobby
 2 Dining Room
 3 Living Area
 4 Bedroom

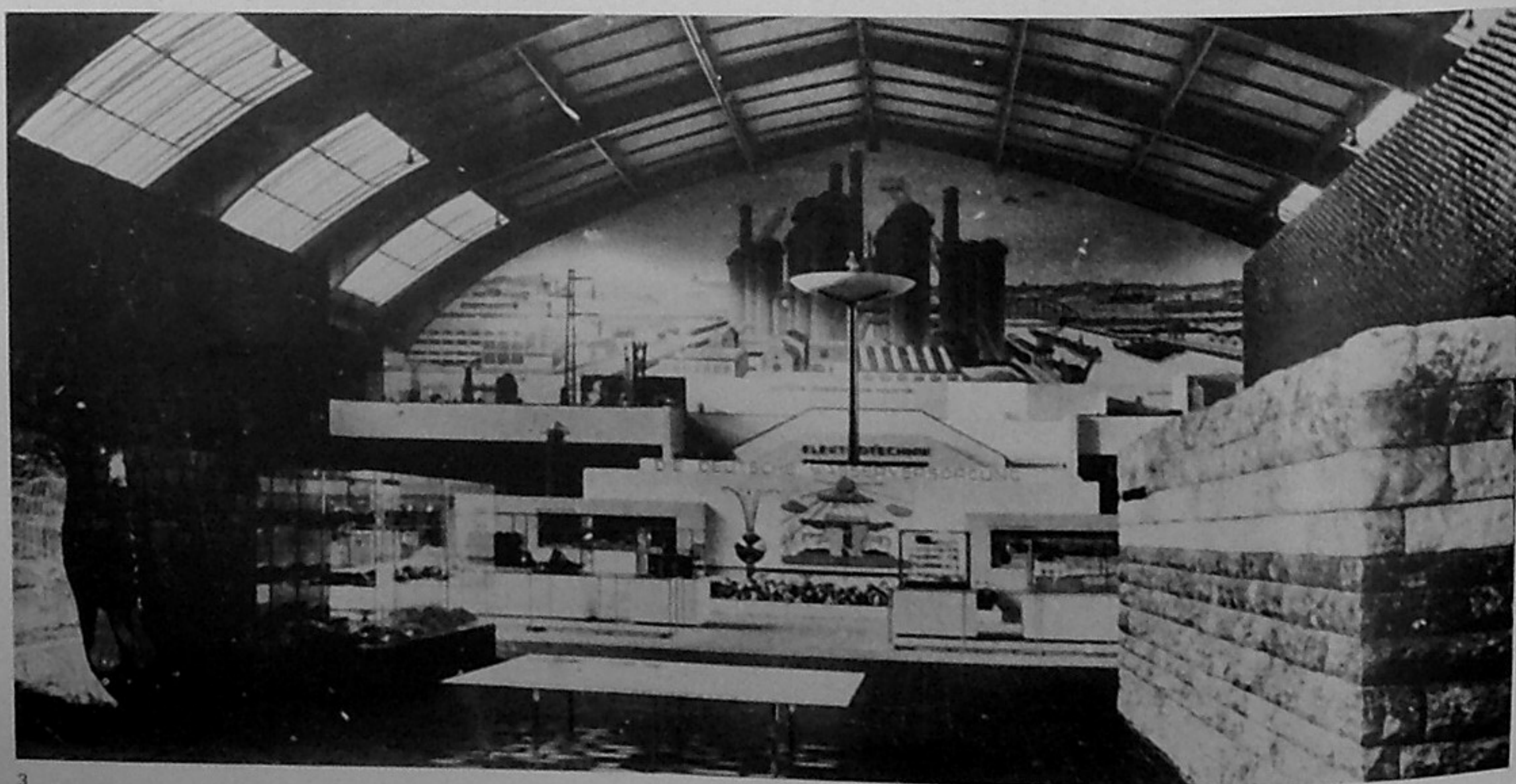
1 Model house
 2 Apartment for a bachelor, plan

'Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit' Exhibition (1934)

Mies was commissioned to design the mining and coal exhibit – a small exhibit in one of the large halls – on this Nazi propaganda exhibition. He followed the principle established at Weissenhofsiedlung – the exhibit was built from the material on display. There were walls of coal –

one of large black coal blocks and another of thousands of brown coal bricklets – and a wall of potash and rock salt. A small display cabinet contained the iron ore exhibits and the stand was furnished with Mies' cantilever chairs and a round glass-topped table.

3 Mining and coal exhibit



3

Furniture Design

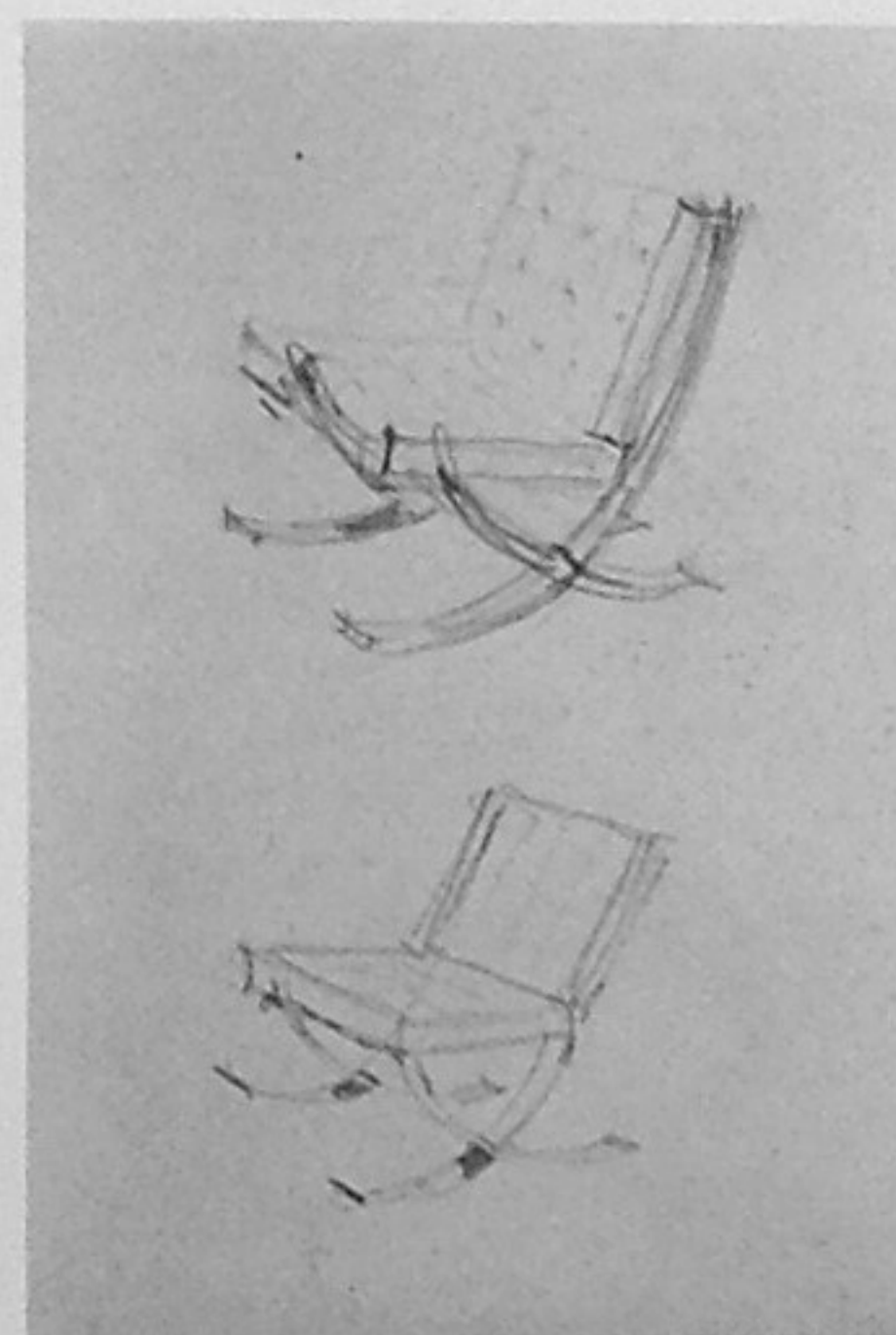
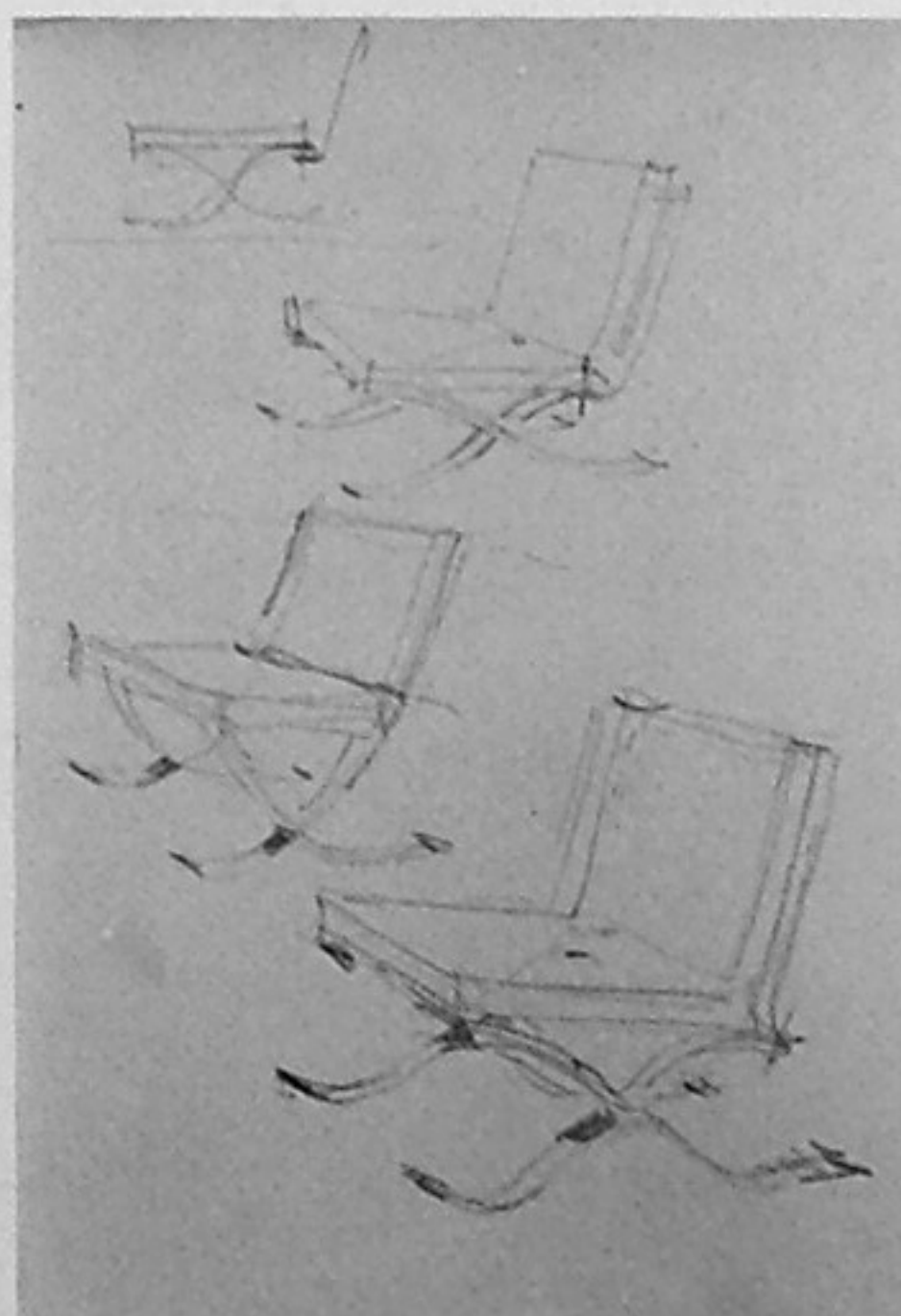
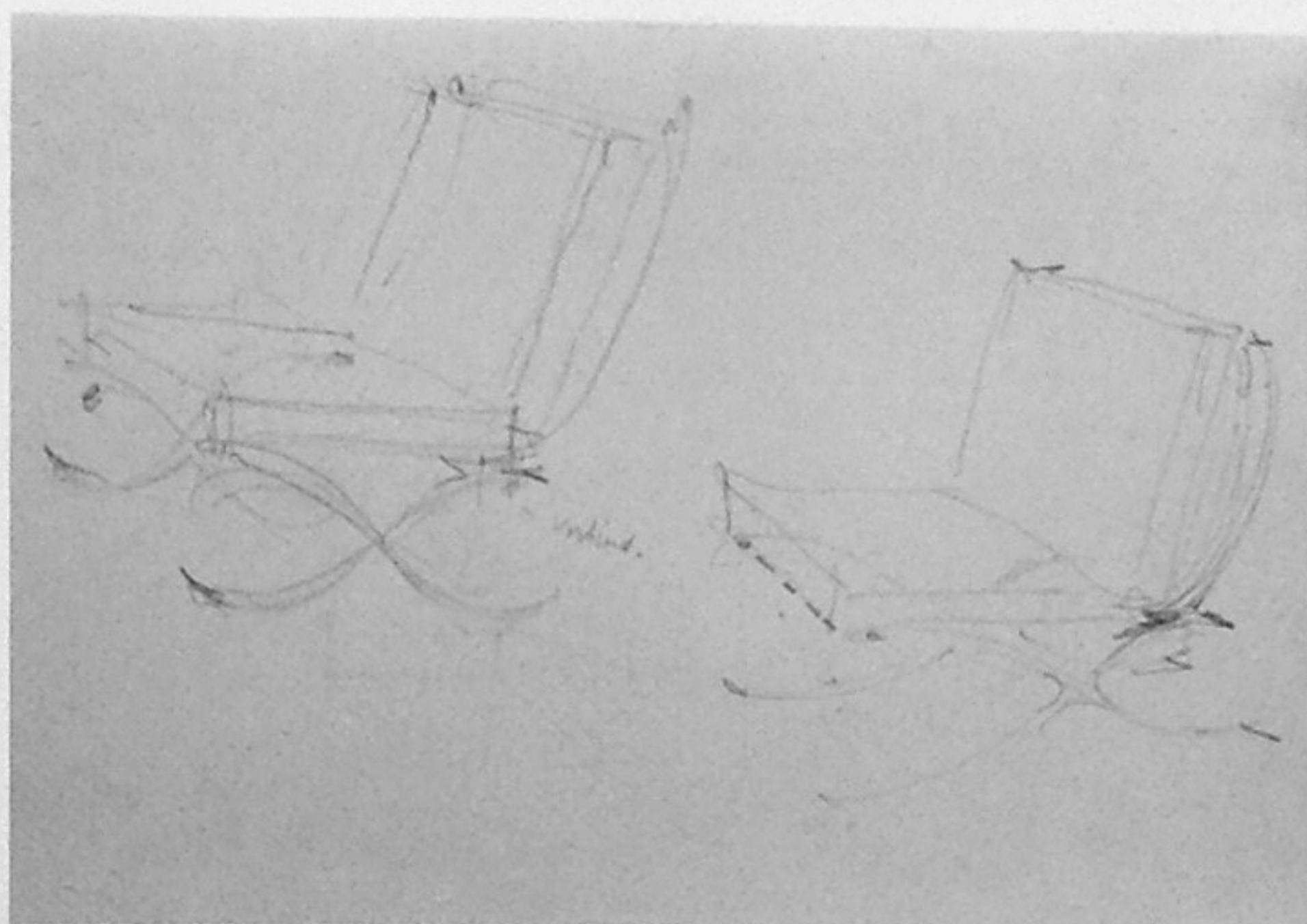
Mies van der Rohe first became involved with furniture in 1905 when he was asked to detail the wooden furnishings of a meeting hall in the Berlin borough of Rixdorf. He soon joined Bruno Paul's atelier in order to study wooden furniture design. Mies designed some furniture for all his early houses, particularly for Haus Werner where the dining room chairs can still be seen. For Haus Tugendhat, he designed everything.

Mies' first sortie into furniture design for mass production came at Weissenhof – at the beginning of his successful partnership with Lilly Reich. Here the world saw the first cantilever chairs – the now commonplace tubular steel chairs used throughout the world, developed simultaneously by Mart Stam and Marcel Breuer. Mies produced two versions of a cantilever chair (models MR 10 and MR 20), which were first shown at Weissenhof and which he managed to patent. Although Stam is credited with the invention (and Mies never denied his priority) he failed to patent his design. Later Mies produced further versions of his cantilever chair: models MR 30 and MR 40 are more deep-seated, and models MR 100 and MR 110 are reclining versions. For Haus Tugendhat Mies designed an upright chair (model MR 50), and an easy chair with and without armrests (models MR 60 and MR 70). The Tugendhat furniture has not been as successful as the Barcelona furniture: thousands of reproductions of the ottoman (model MR 80) and the chair (model MR 90) have been sold.

In its stainless steel version, the Barcelona chair has become a mass-produced prestige symbol. Even today the welding of the joints and polishing of the frame is mostly done by hand and the chair is criticised as an anachronism. It has been forgotten that the chair was originally designed as a ceremonial seat worthy of the royal glance at Barcelona. It was never meant to be comfortable.

Until Mies signed a contract with Thonet-Mundus of Zurich in November 1931, all his furniture was manufactured in Berlin, at first in what Mies described as a small locksmith's shop – the Berliner Metallgewerbe. Josef Müller, the shop's technical manager, established his own firm and, in 1931, opened a showroom designed by Mies. Mies' office drew up the sales catalogue for this new firm – the Bamberg Metallwerkstätten. Whether this entire line of furniture was part of the Thonet contract is uncertain. The 1934 Thonet catalogue lists only the tubular steel chairs, with caning or fabric seats and backs, and the reclining chair (model MR 100). This limitation may have had political as well as commercial reasons, since after 1933 the Nazi regime disapproved of metal furniture.

Lilly Reich also designed furniture. The nature of her collaboration with Mies makes it nearly impossible, in some preliminary sketches, to pinpoint which ideas came from which hand.



1–3 Sketches for the Barcelona chair by Sergius Ruegenberg

4 The Barcelona chair and ottoman, 1929

During the Nazi period Mies derived an acceptable income from royalties on the tubular chairs. He conceded a part of this income to Anton Lorenz, who was connected with some of the major legal battles fought over the design priorities of the cantilever chair. Legal action had to be taken by Mies over infringement of patent rights: a major lawsuit – begun in 1937 by Mies, at Thonet's instigation – was continued throughout the war years on his behalf by Lilly Reich.

- 5 Left, Brno chair (MR50); right, cantilever chair (MR10)
- 6 Cantilever chair (MR30), bed (600) and table (LR520)
- 7 Catalogue sheet for metal furniture



5

6

BAMBERG METALLWERKSTÄTTEN • BERLIN-NEUKÖLLN • LICHTENRADER STRASSE 32 • FERNSPRECHER: F2 NEUKÖLLN 1122

MR 1	Hocker	L	N	CHR	MR 80	Hocker, Flackstuhl	L	N	CHR	LR 500	Tisch	L	N	CHR
	1.1 Eisengarnstoff 23.- 30.- 36.- 1.2 Rindleder 36.- 42.- 50.- 1.3 Korbgeflecht 31.- 37.- 44.-					80.8 Stoffkissen 240.- 280.- 300.- 80.9 Schweinsleder- kissen 310.- 350.- 370.-					500.1 Sperrholzplatte 46.- 56.- 68.-			
	Stuhl 10.1 Eisengarnstoff 34.- 44.- 54.- 10.2 Rindleder 48.- 58.- 68.- 10.3 Korbgeflecht 42.- 53.- 64.-					Sessel, Flackstuhl 90.8 Stoffkissen 400.- 460.- 500.- 90.9 Schweinsleder- kissen 450.- 485.- 520.-					Tisch 510.1 Sperrholzplatte 42.- 48.- 57.-			
	Sessel 20.1 Eisengarnstoff 56.- 76.- 95.- 20.2 Rindleder 75.- 96.- 115.- 20.3 Korbgeflecht 69.- 92.- 105.-					Liegestuhl 100.4 Kissen mit Gummibezug 190.- 210.- 230.-					Blumentisch 520.1 Kristallglas- platte 57.- 66.- 75.-			
	Stuhl 30.3 Korbgeflecht 66.- 84.- 98.- 30.4 Kissen offenbar mit Kar. Leder blau-weiß, blau- gelb, blau-rot 30.5 deckl. mit auflieg. Hülseisen, blau- gelb und beige 122.- 136.- 150.-					Liegestuhl 110.4 Kissen mit Gummibezug 200.- 220.- 240.-					Kleiner Tisch 530.1 Kristallglas- platte 45.- 55.- 65.-			
	Sessel 40.3 Korbgeflecht 84.- 120.- 132.- 40.4 Kissen offenbar mit Kar. Leder blau-weiß, blau- gelb, blau-rot 40.5 deckl. mit auflieg. Hülseisen, blau- gelb und beige 147.- 171.- 192.-					Stuhl 120.5 Stoffpolster 120.- 128.- 136.- 120.6 Lederpolster 175.- 185.- 195.-					Bett 600.1 Stahlmatratze 115.- 150.- 180.- 600.2 Gummibänder 140.- 170.- 198.-			
	Sessel 50.5 Stoffpolster 95.- 111.- 123.- 50.6 Lederpolster 105.- 123.- 135.- 50.7 Pergament- polster 140.- 156.- 168.-					Tisch, 80 cm Durchmesser 130.1 Sperrholzplatte 57.- 66.- 75.- 130.2 Kristallglas- platte 60.- 69.- 78.- 130.3 Schwarzglas- platte 75.- 85.- 93.-					Couch 610.1 Stahlmatratze 110.- 140.- 170.- 610.2 Gummibänder 135.- 160.- 190.-			
	Sessel mit Stahlrohr 60.3 Korbgeflecht 90.- 105.- 118.- 60.4 Kissen offenbar mit Kar. Leder blau-weiß, blau- gelb, blau-rot 60.5 deckl. mit auflieg. Hülseisen, blau- gelb und beige 140.- 153.- 165.-					Tisch, 70 cm Durchmesser 140.1 Sperrholzplatte 63.- 72.- 81.- 140.2 Kristallglas- platte 68.- 77.- 86.- 140.3 Schwarzglas- platte 98.- 108.- 118.-					Couch 620.1 Stahlmatratze 100.- 125.- 150.- 620.2 Gummibänder 125.- 155.- 180.-			
	Sessel, Flackstuhl 70.8 Stoffkissen 320.- 430.- 480.- 70.9 Schweinsleder- kissen 500.- 580.- 650.-					Tisch, Flackstuhl 150.1 Polsterplatte 285.- 280.- 300.- 150.2 Kristallglas- platte 420.- 440.- 460.- 150.3 Schwarzglas- platte 520.- 560.- 600.-								

Zeichenerklärung: L – farbig lackiert gelb, rot, blau; N – vernickelt; CHR – verchromt • Alle Modelle sind patentrechtlich geschützt
 Mit dieser Preisliste verbinden die alten Listen ihre Gültigkeit

Memorial to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht

1926

Berlin (destroyed)

The secretary to the committee in charge of building the memorial was Dr Eduard Fuchs, recent purchaser of Villa Perls. Mies happened to visit the house one day and Fuchs showed him a project by another architect for the memorial. Mies told Fuchs that he had not the slightest idea what he would do in his place, 'but as most of these people were shot in front of a brick wall, a brick wall would be what I would build as a monument'. (Letter to Donald Drew Egbert, published in *Social Realism and the Arts*, New York 1970.)

Mies then made a large charcoal sketch of the symbolic wall; Fuchs showed it to the committee and it was accepted. The wall was built at the graveside of the martyrs in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde. It was the site of many demonstrations in early Nazi years and was subsequently destroyed by the National Socialist regime.

Mies used rough, twisted purple clinker bricks. The articulation of the brickwork is cubist in inspiration, but the pattern bears some resemblance to a de Stijl composition, although the overlapping rectangular forms do not interlock and they suggest weight rather than planes. The hammer and sickle were ordered separately since Krupp had refused to supply the insignia intact.

1-2 Views of the memorial



1



2

Three Brick Houses

In Guben and Krefeld Mies set himself apart from his radical contemporaries and built three houses in brick. His admiration for this material led him to extraordinary measures: in order to ensure the evenness of the bonding at corners and apertures, he calculated all dimensions in brick lengths and occasionally went so far as to separate the under-fired long bricks from the over-fired short ones, using the long in one dimension and the short in the other. The bricks were all imported from Holland and Mies personally travelled to the brickfield to inspect every batch of every firing in order to choose and match the colours.

As in the two country house projects of 1923, the landscape at Guben and Krefeld became an extension of the house which is settled by means of steps, terraces and walls – an articulated podium. Mies admired Wright's gift of integrating his architecture with its surroundings and in these houses he succeeded in modernising Wright. The facades are smooth and unarticulated – no fussy detailing, only the hint of a cornice at Guben (even this disappears at Krefeld).

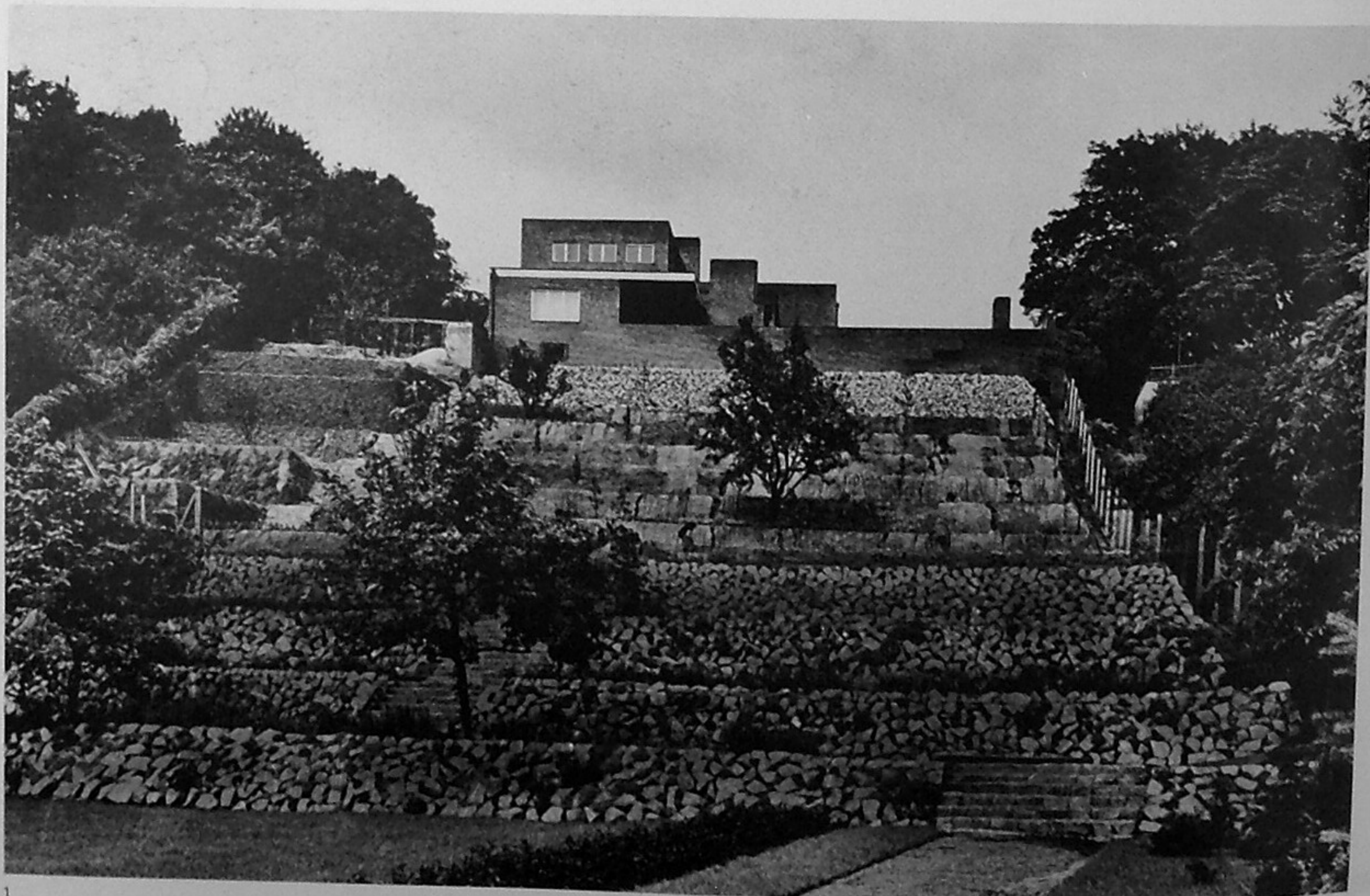
Haus Wolf

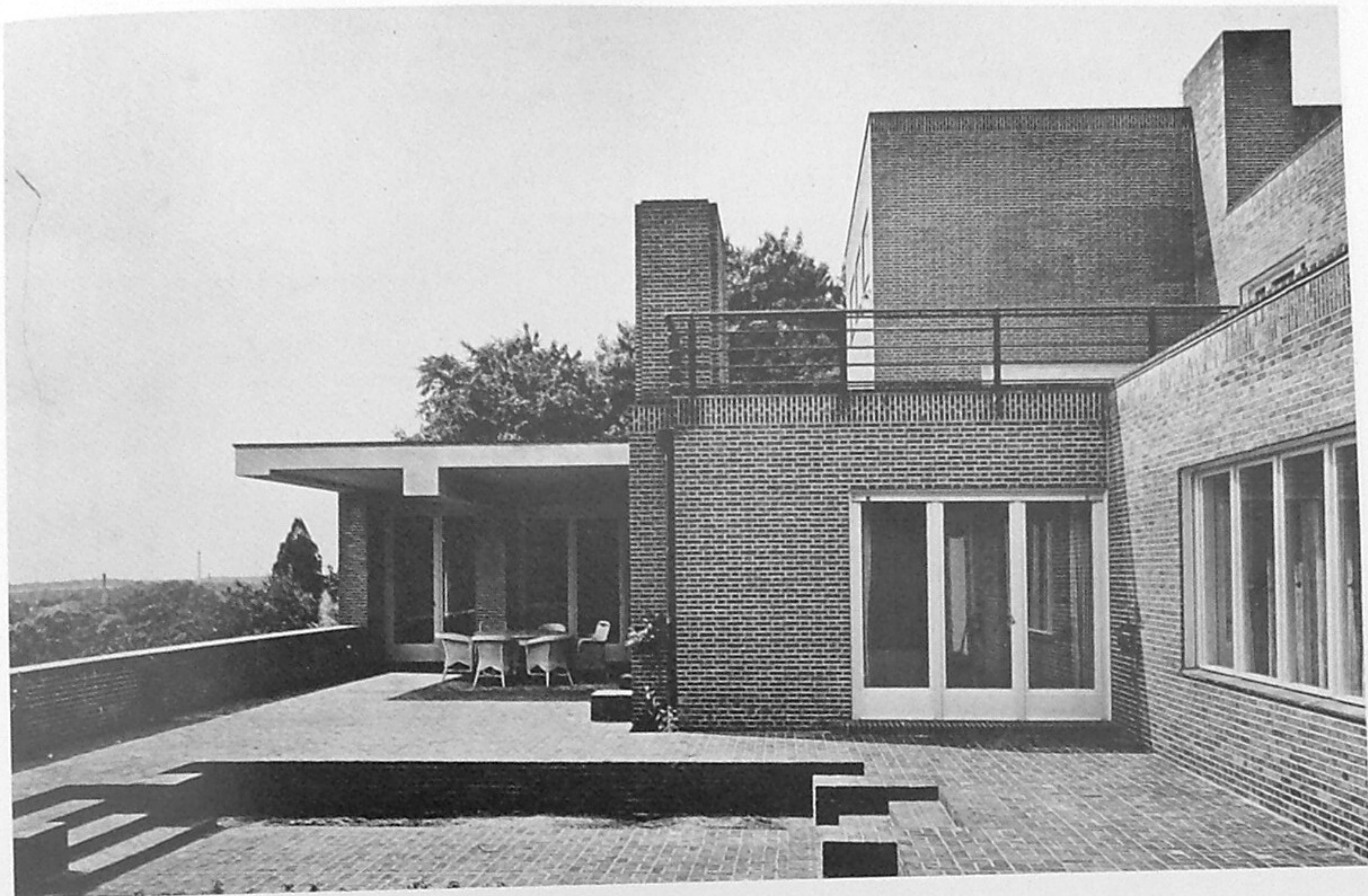
1925-1926

Guben (destroyed)

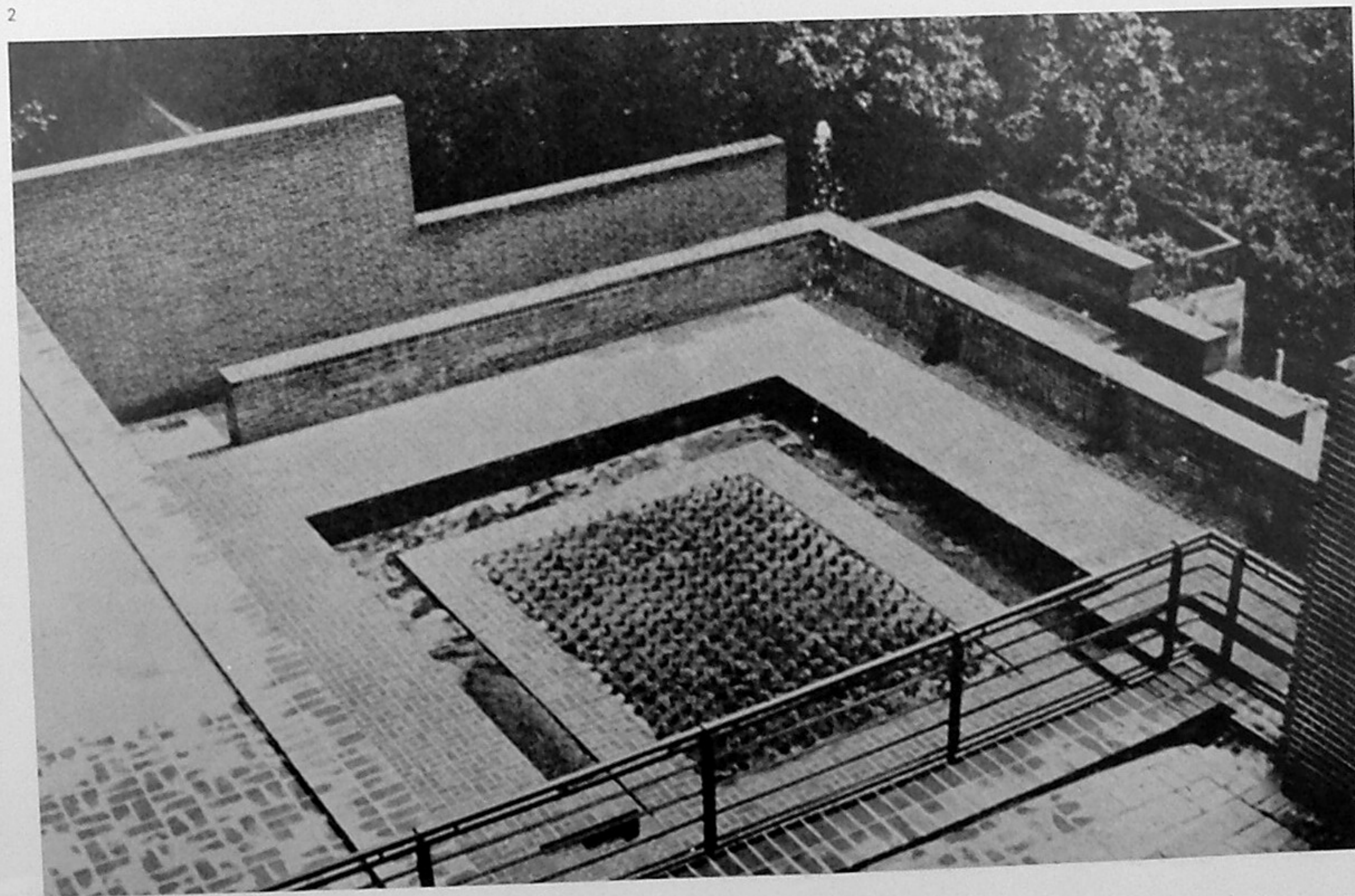
In contrast to the rough brickwork of the Communist memorial, the bricks in the Wolf House were smooth and laid in a refined manner, reminiscent of Dudok, Wright's Dutch admirer. The building was set into the hillside by means of a podium which was part of the wall plane itself. Unfortunately it was destroyed during the Second World War.

- 1 The house from garden
- 2 Ground floor terrace
- 3 View from upper floor terrace





2



3

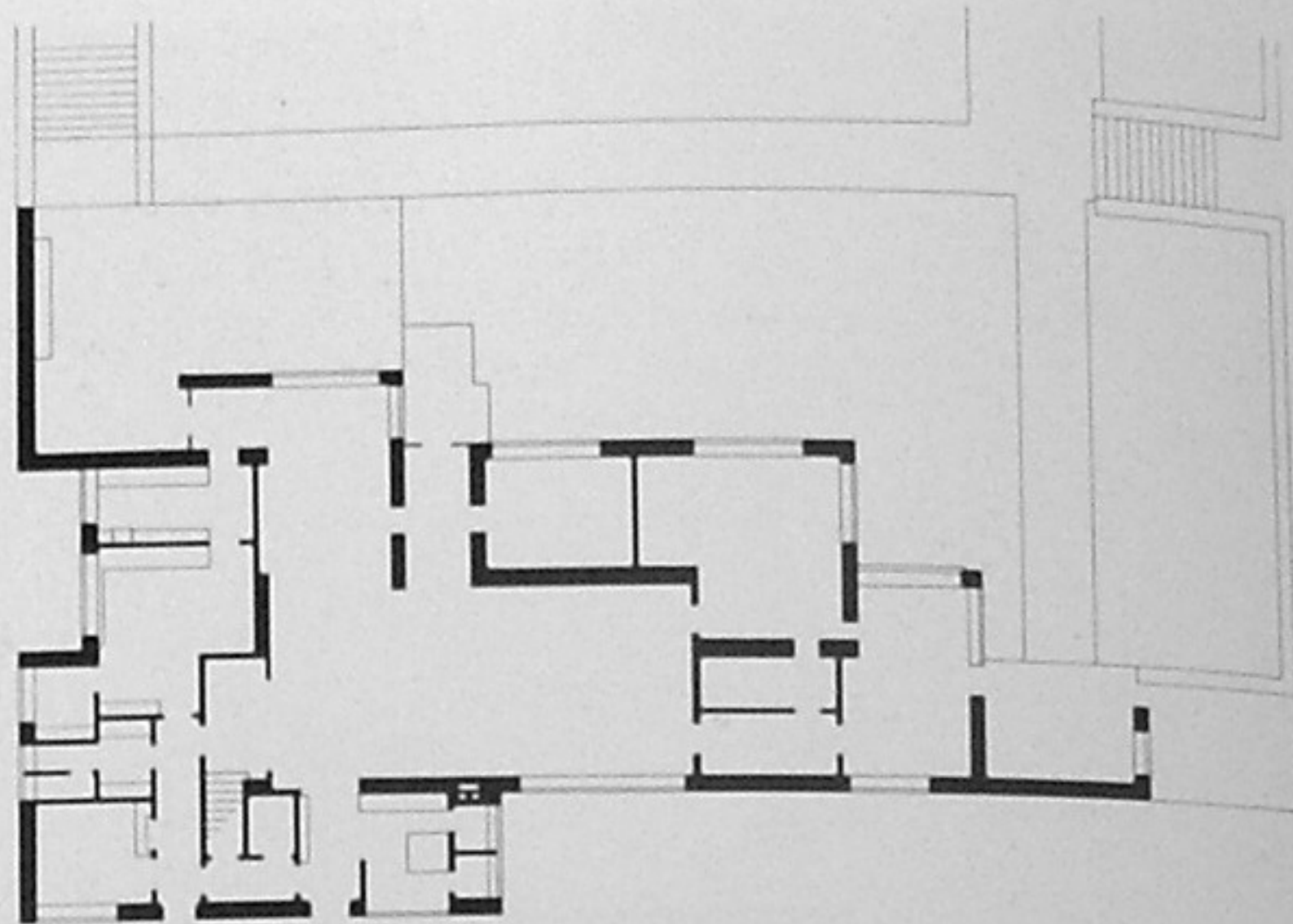
Haus Lange
1928
Krefeld, Federal Republic of Germany

Hermann Lange and Dr Josef Esters were directors of the state-owned silk industry in Krefeld. In Frankfurt the two families had known Lilly Reich and one year they visited her small silk exhibition at the Frankfurt Fair (designed in collaboration with Mies). It was here that they met Mies and commissioned him to build two houses on adjoining sites in a select area of Krefeld.

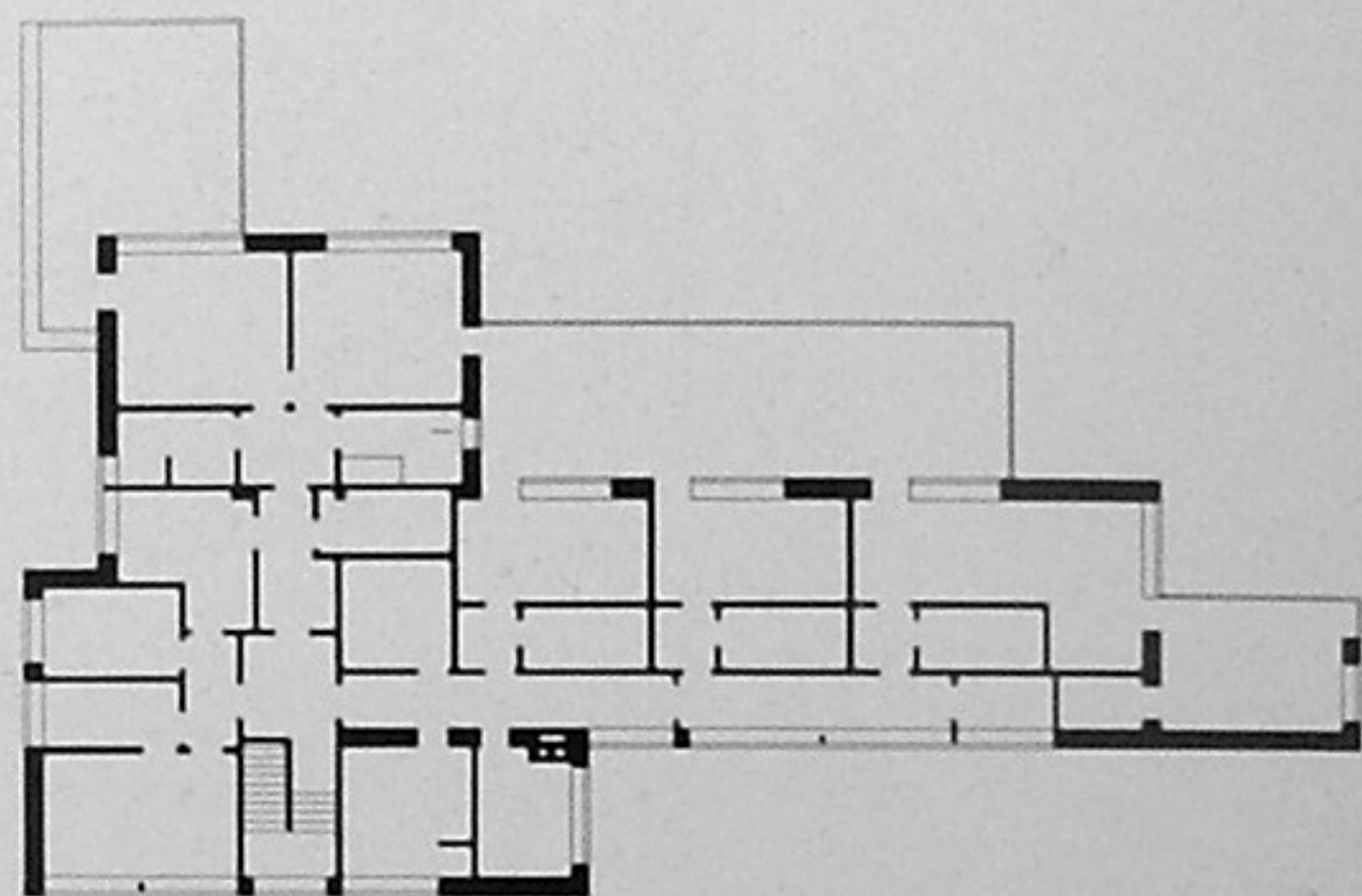
For the Lange and Esters houses Mies chose light red bricks and added light purple accents. The wooded sites slope gently away from the street, and the houses are settled on terraces bounded by brick walls and steps leading to the garden. The elevations are serene and asymmetrically balanced, without any articulation. The windows are large and simple; the plain, smooth doors stretch up to the smooth plane of the ceiling, so that the internal walls read as screens.

In the Lange House the huge picture windows on the garden elevation slide down at the press of a button, powered by Parsons electrical motors imported from England. The roller-shutter blinds are also operated in this manner. Mies chose natural silk curtains to complement the blond wood floors. The building now houses a gallery – appropriately enough since Hermann Lange was a collector himself and stored his paintings in the basement.

The house has been carefully restored, but the ground floor is no longer quite as Mies designed it. During the Second World War a bar was installed at one end of the open-plan living area and it was later enclosed to form a small room.



1



2

- 1 Ground floor plan
- 2 Upper floor plan
- 3 Garden elevation
- 4 Entrance
- 5 Covered terraces



3



4



5

Haus Esters 1928

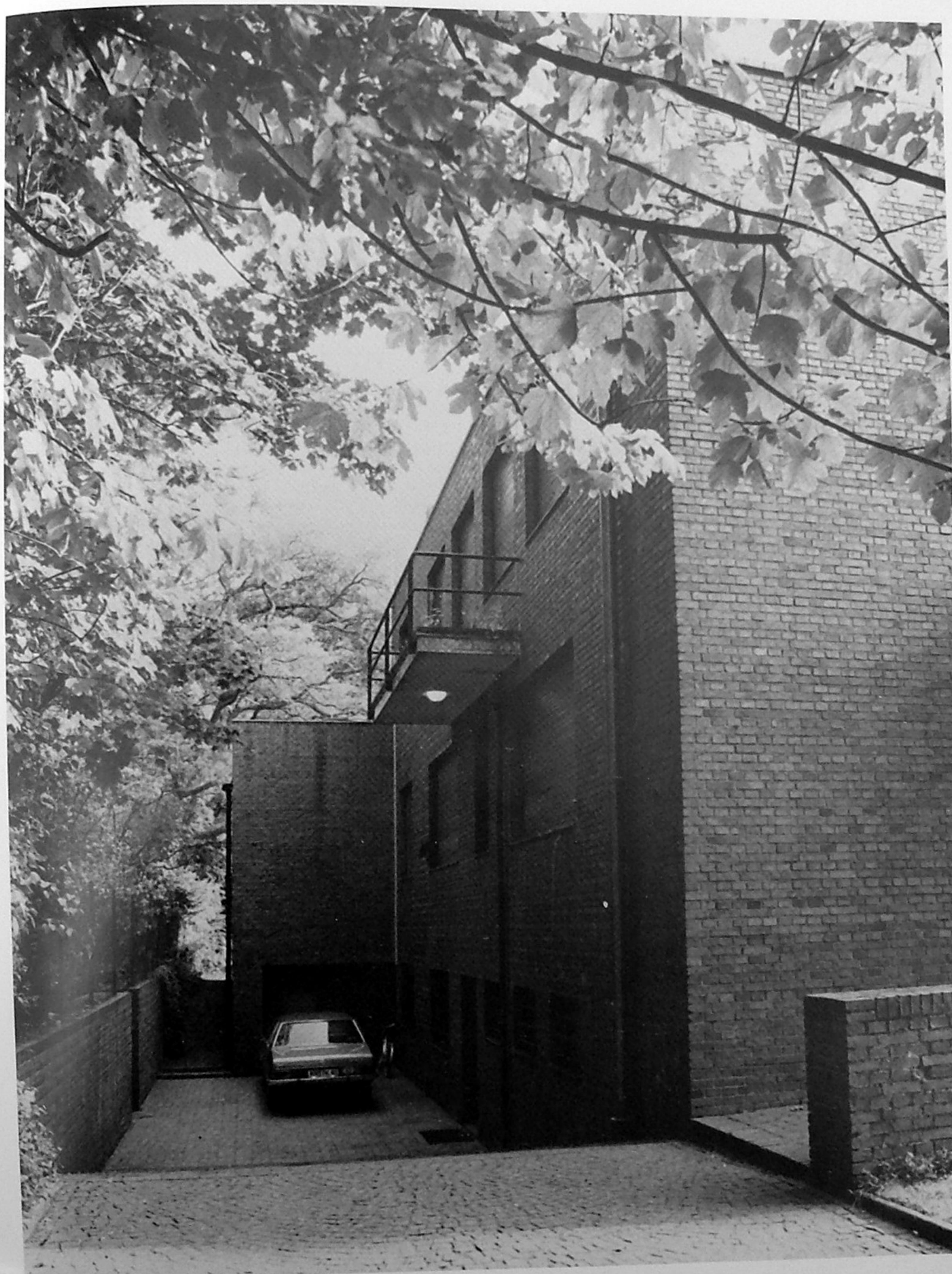
Krefeld, Federal Republic of Germany

The house is very similar in plan to Haus Lange. The main entrance is to the side of the wing which houses the service area and the garage court is somewhat more restricted. On the ground floor the built-in furniture designed by Mies is still in place. (These sideboards and bookshelves were removed or covered over in Haus Lange when it became a gallery.)

Unfortunately Haus Esters has been neglected of late and the ground floor is unoccupied. But the house is owned by the city of Krefeld and restoration work will be carried out.

- 1 Garden elevation
- 2 Service entrance
- 3 Garage court





Barcelona Pavilion

German National Pavilion

1929

Barcelona (dismantled)

The Barcelona International Exhibition was meant to follow the nineteenth-century tradition of presenting industries rather than nations. But the German government got word that France and England were erecting separate national pavilions and, at the last moment, Mies was commissioned to erect a pavilion for Germany. The initiative came from an industrialist of rare understanding, Freiherr von Schnitzler of I G Farben. This paint company financed the pavilion and offered it to the German nation.

The Barcelona Pavilion had to be designed and erected in a hurry. First of all Mies visited the showrooms of a marble stockist in Hamburg. There he saw a block of onyx, but it was already sold to be carved into vases. Mies persuaded the firm that the stone was unsuitable for this purpose – he hit the block right in the middle with a hammer and off came a thin slab. The dimensions of the pavilion, so Mies maintained, were determined by the size of this onyx block: twice the width of the slabs fixed the ceiling height, and twice the length set the dimension of the free-standing screen wall.

Mies chose Roman travertine for the whole floor area, the podium supporting walls, the steps, the enclosing wall round the open pool and the office space, and the screen wall connecting this outbuilding to the main pavilion. The wall enclosing the sculpture pool was made from green Tinian marble. Mies also used a variety of coloured glass: the screen between the sculpture pool and the hall was made from bottle-green transparent glass; the sculpture pool was lined with black glass; the screen at the rear of the hall was made from grey transparent glass. The

double panel enclosing the light source (the 'light wall') was made from etched glass. A black wool rug ran from the onyx free-standing screen to the front of the hall.

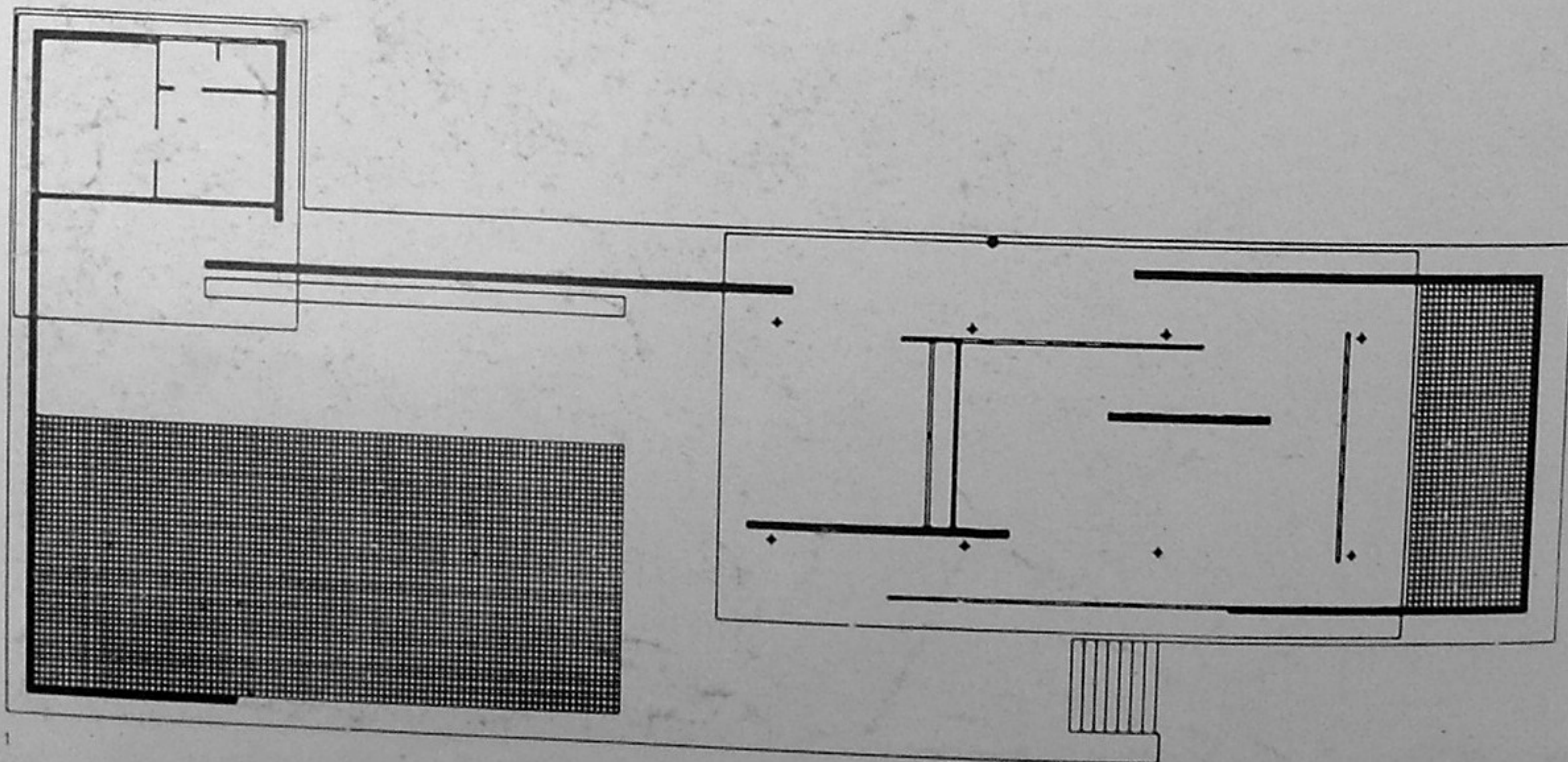
For the opening ceremony Mies designed and produced the so-called Barcelona furniture: a table placed against the onyx screen held a golden book; a larger table placed against the 'light wall' held the champagne; two chairs were placed at right angles to the onyx screen for the King and Queen of Spain; and a number of ottomans were carefully deployed around the pavilion. Mies looked for a Lehmbruck sculpture to grace the enclosed pool; he could not find one and took a Kolbe instead. At Barcelona Mies demonstrated the separation of the organs of construction from those screening the space, or so it seemed. The eight, slender, cruciform columns appeared to support a supposedly flat, reinforced concrete roof. But, as the working drawings show, the roof in profile is not flat. The framework of steel and timber members was designed to keep the construction as light as possible. A complicated system of cantilevers and moment connections was devised to stiffen the structure. Despite these efforts, the eight cruciform columns alone could not support this roof and five more columns had to be lodged in the double-skinned marble screens around the exterior. (The roof drained into these hollow screens and when it rained the whole pavilion was awash.)

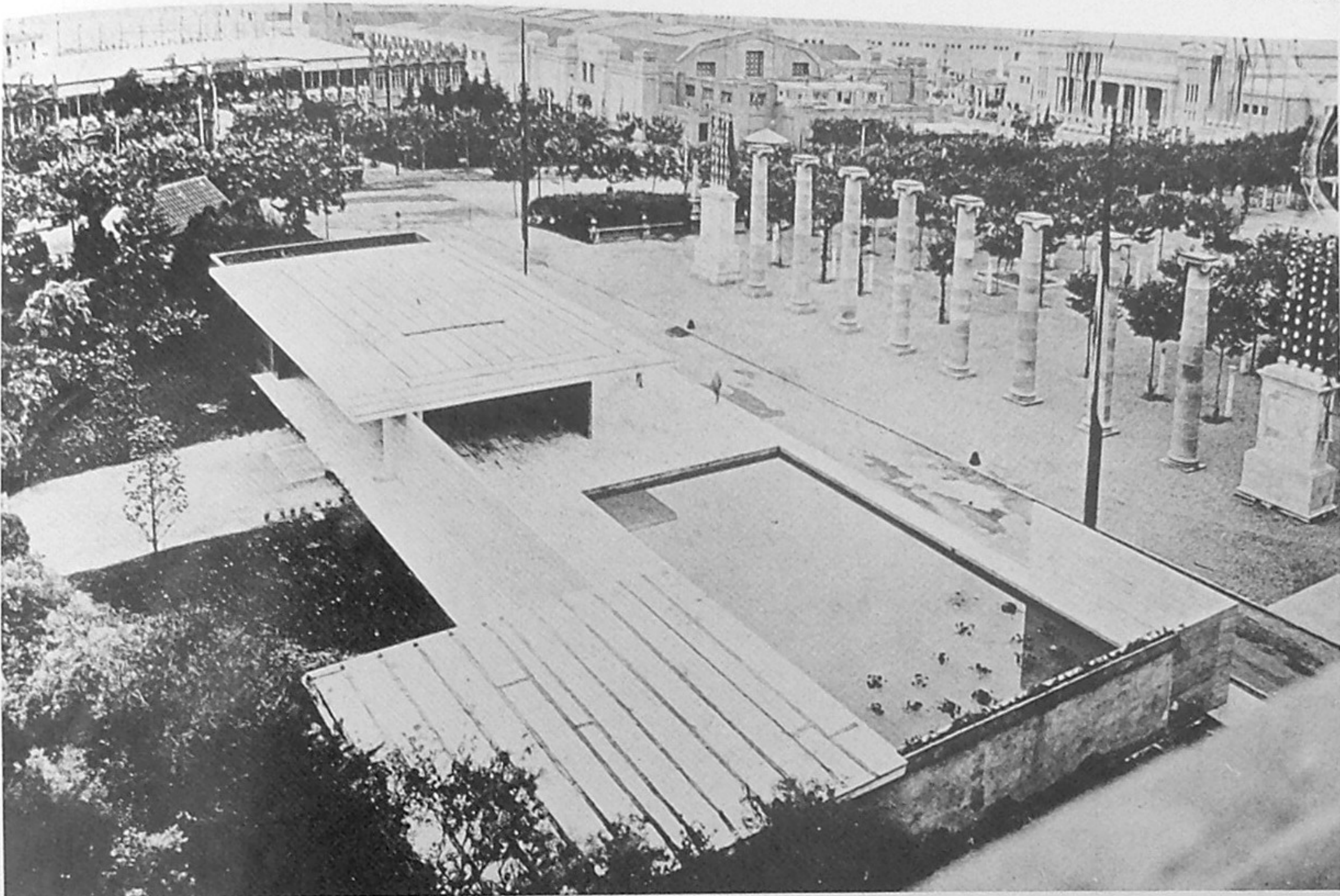
After the exhibition the pavilion was dismantled, crated and shipped for Germany. It has never been seen since. (But the Kolbe stands in the garden adjoining the Schöneberg Town Hall in Berlin.)

- 1 Plan
- 2 View over the Pavilion from the terrace
- 3 King Alfonso XIII and the Kolbe sculpture

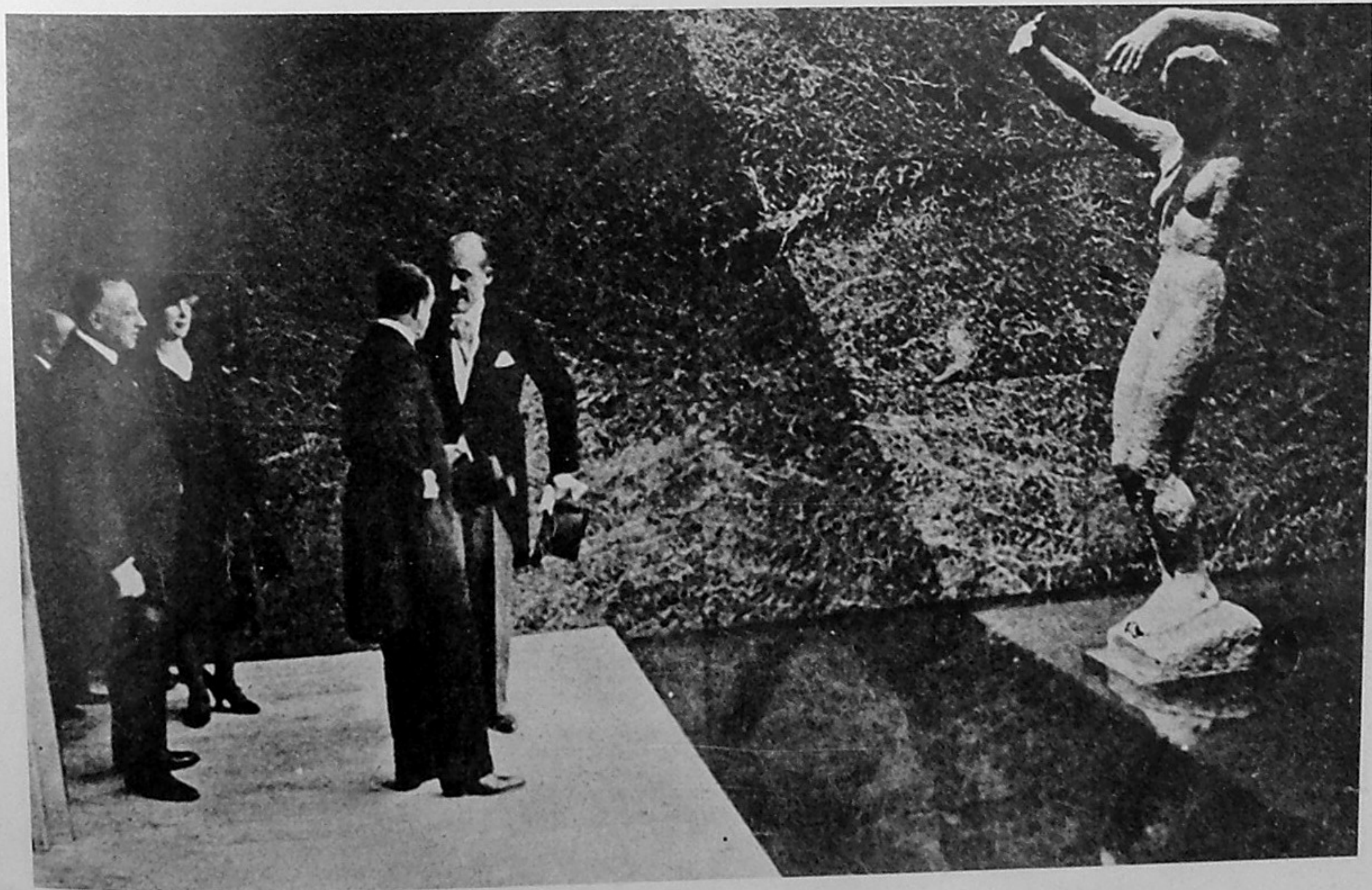
- Pages 64–65
- 4–6 Exterior views
 - 7 A table to hold champagne in front of the 'light wall'

- Pages 66–67
- 8 The onyx wall

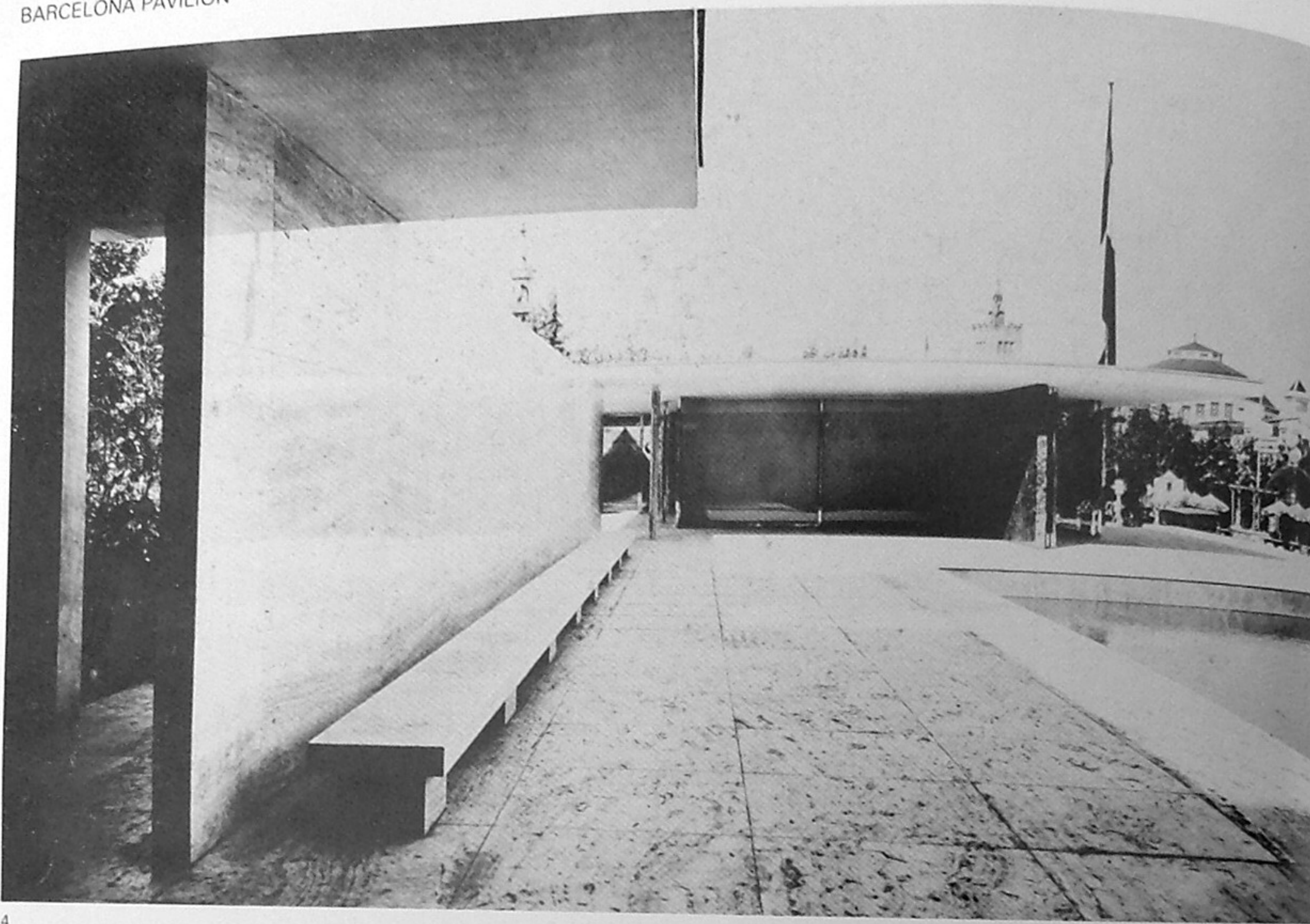




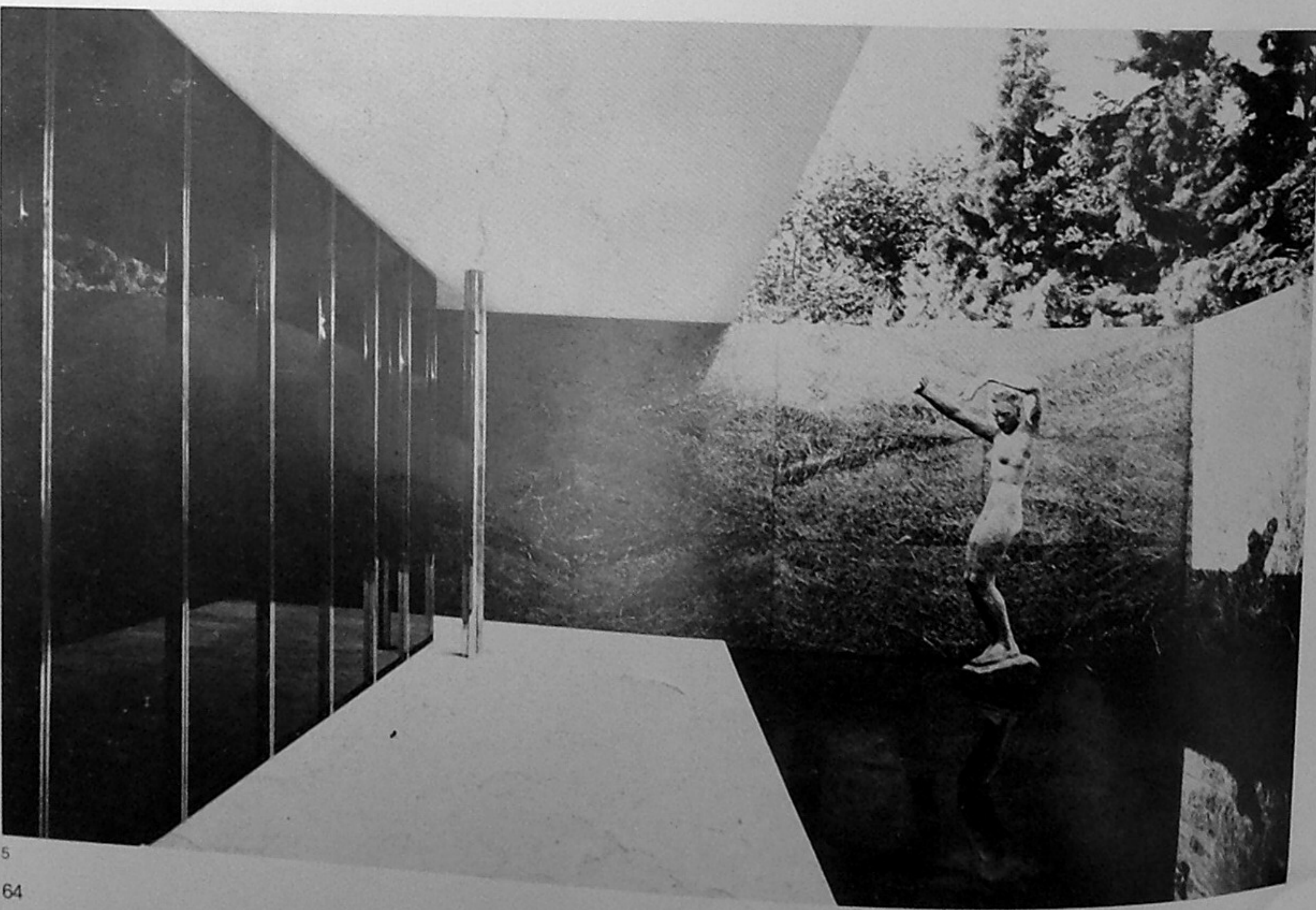
2



3

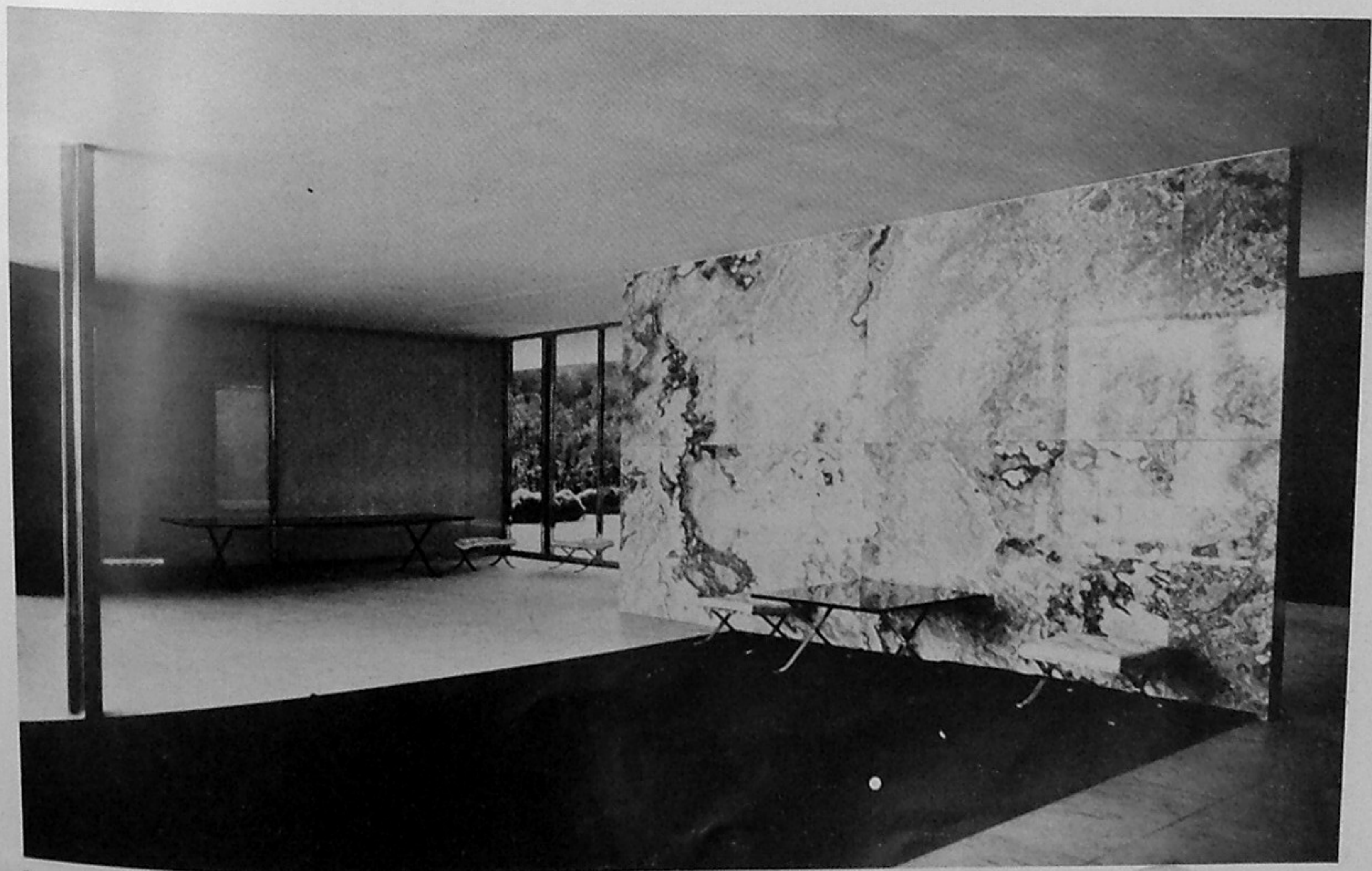
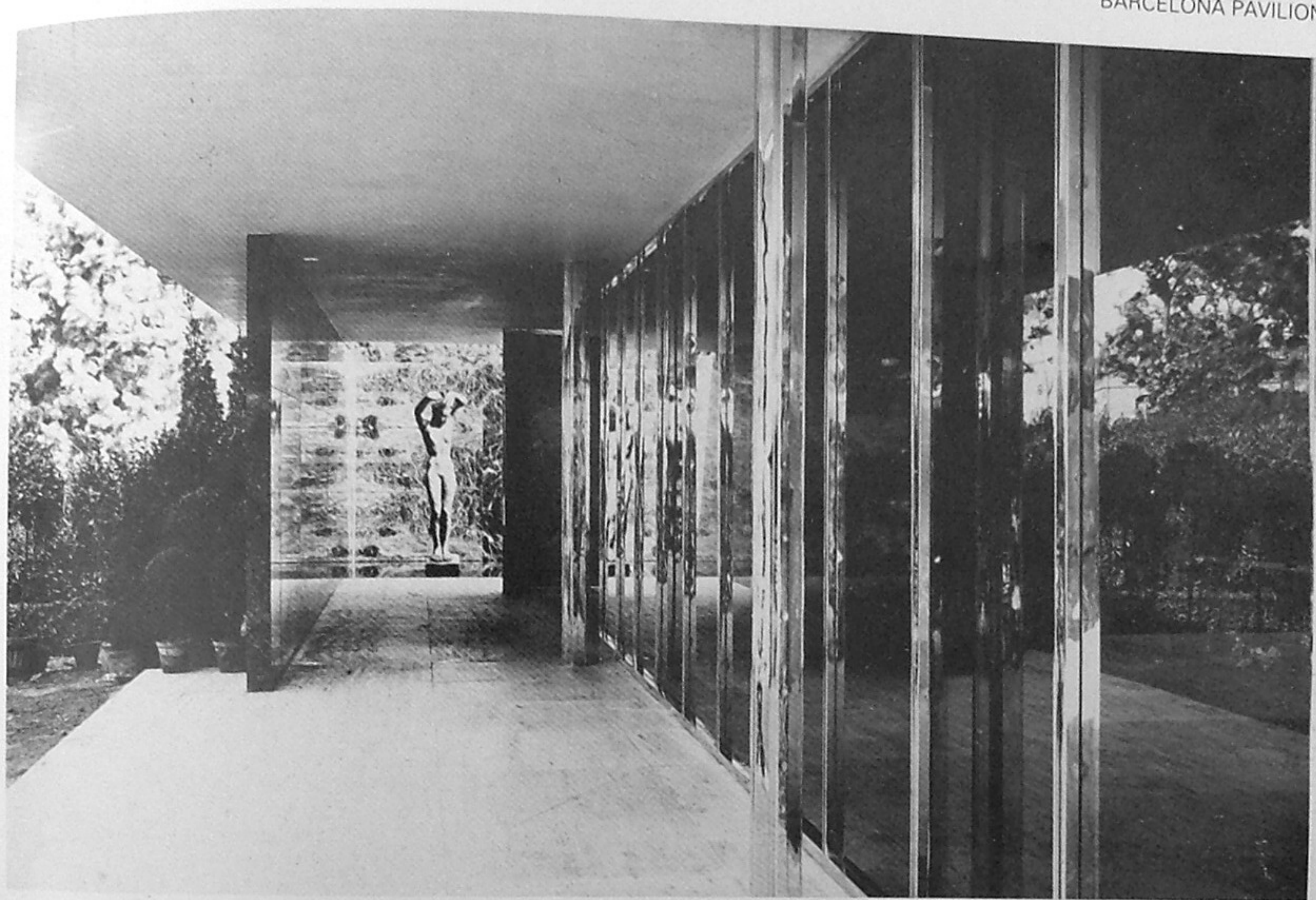


4

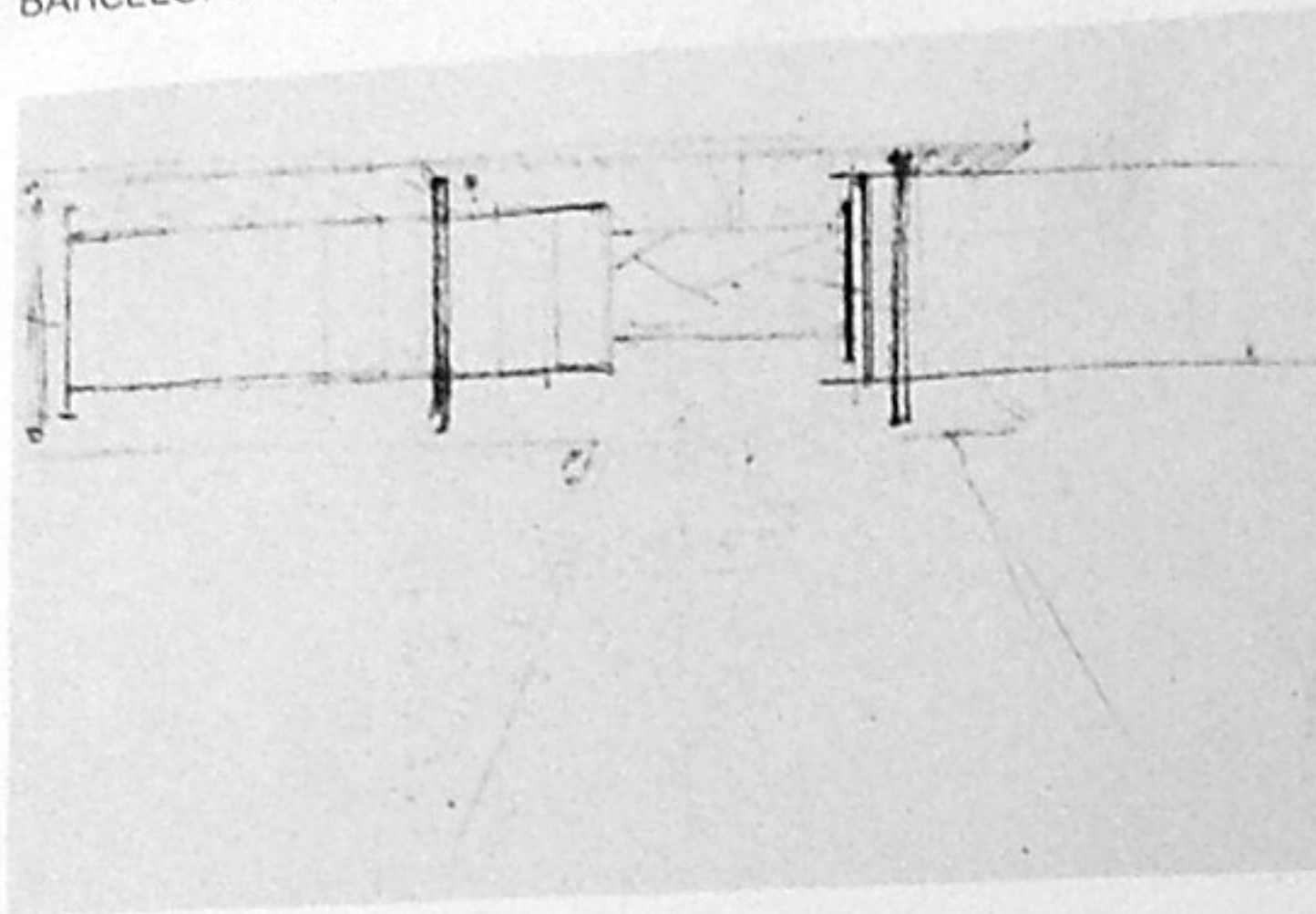


5

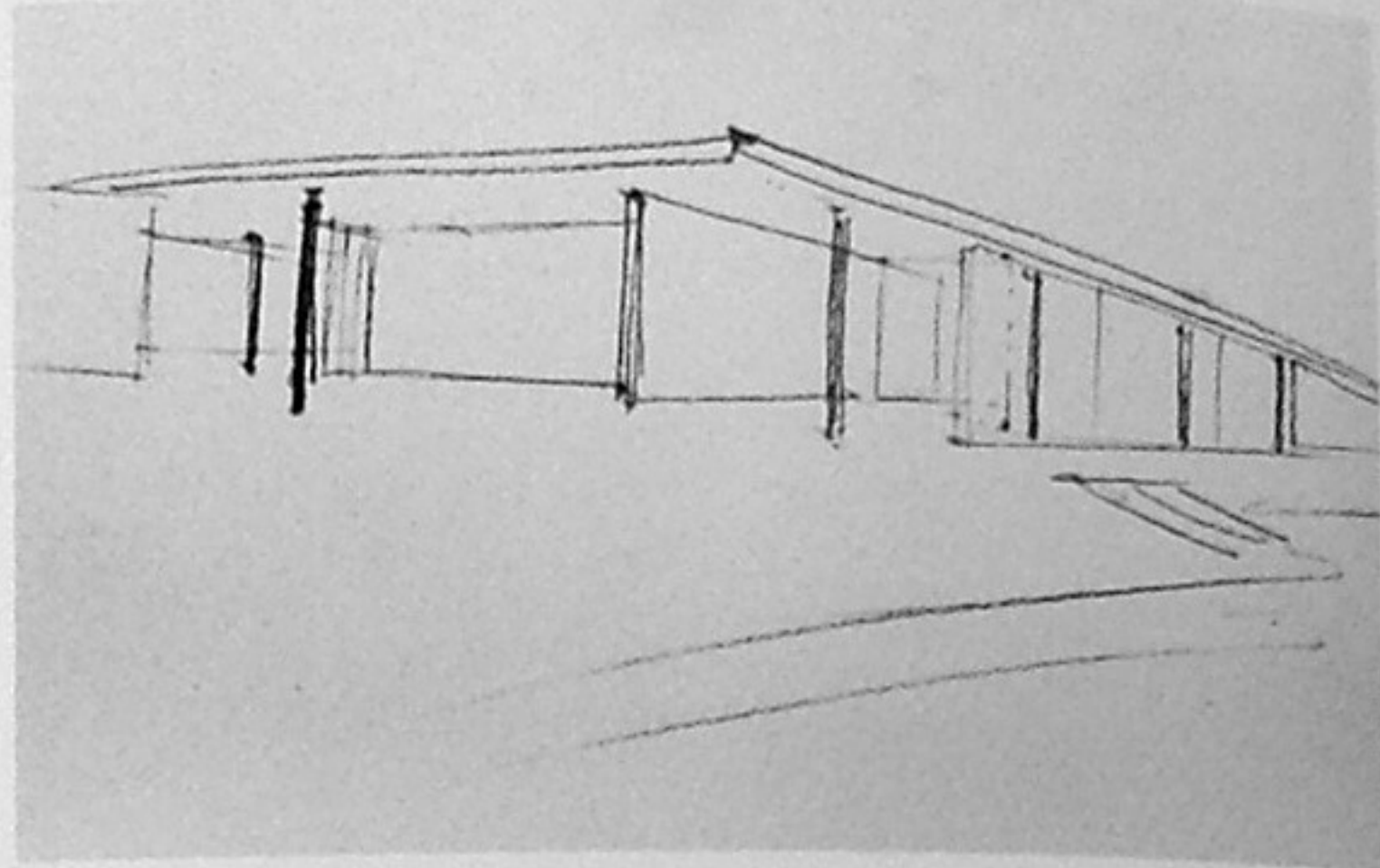
64



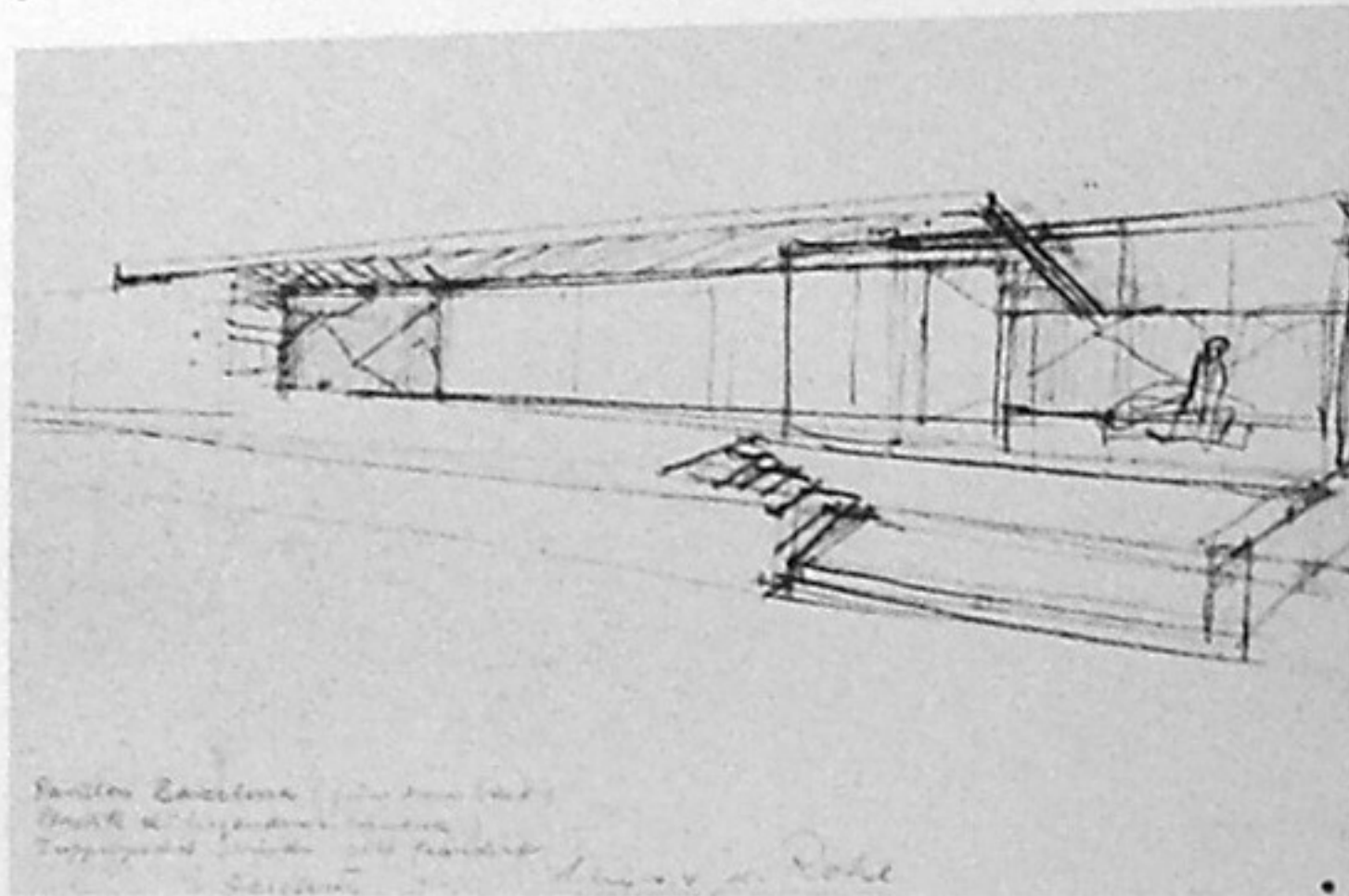




9

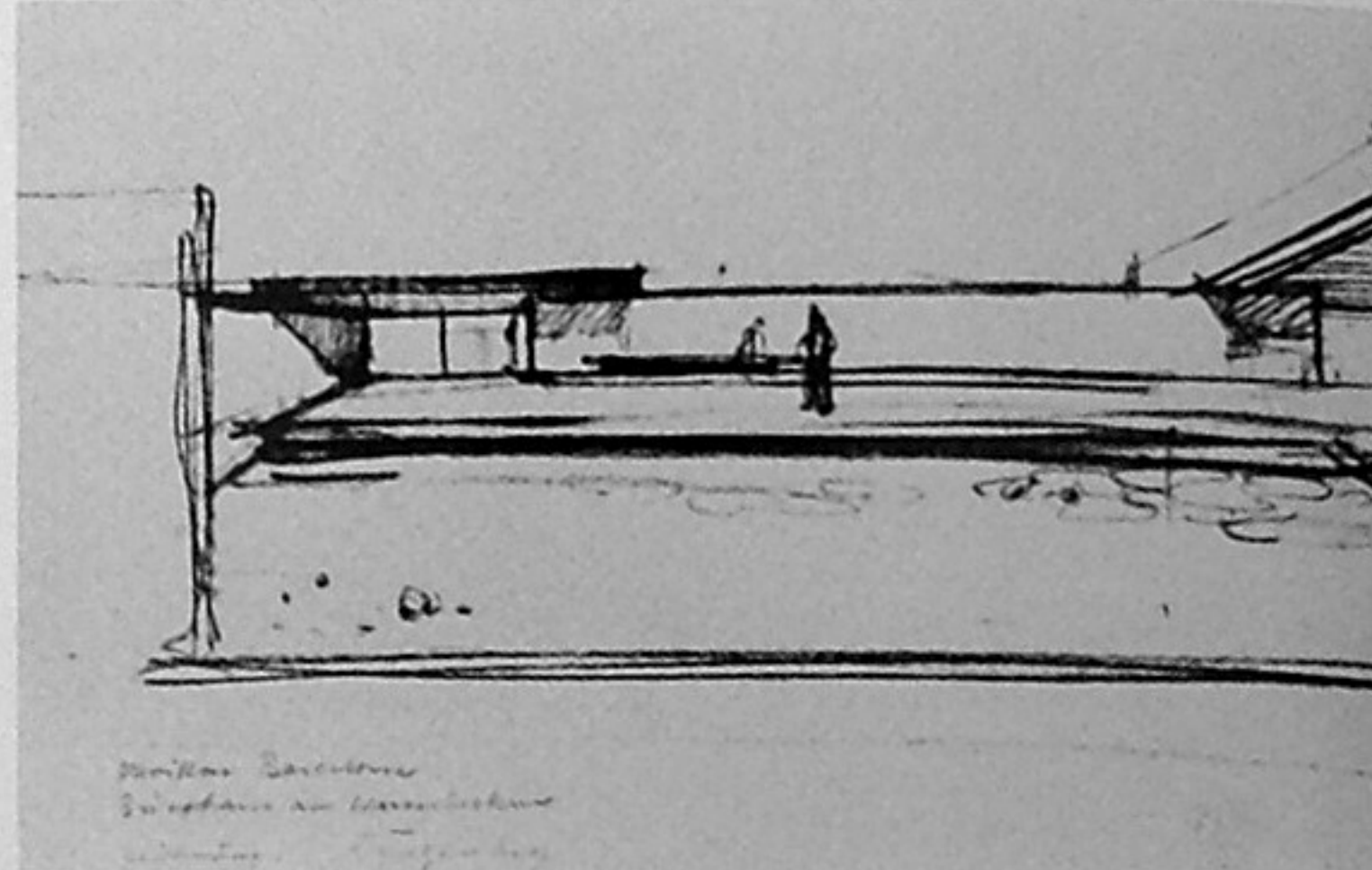


10



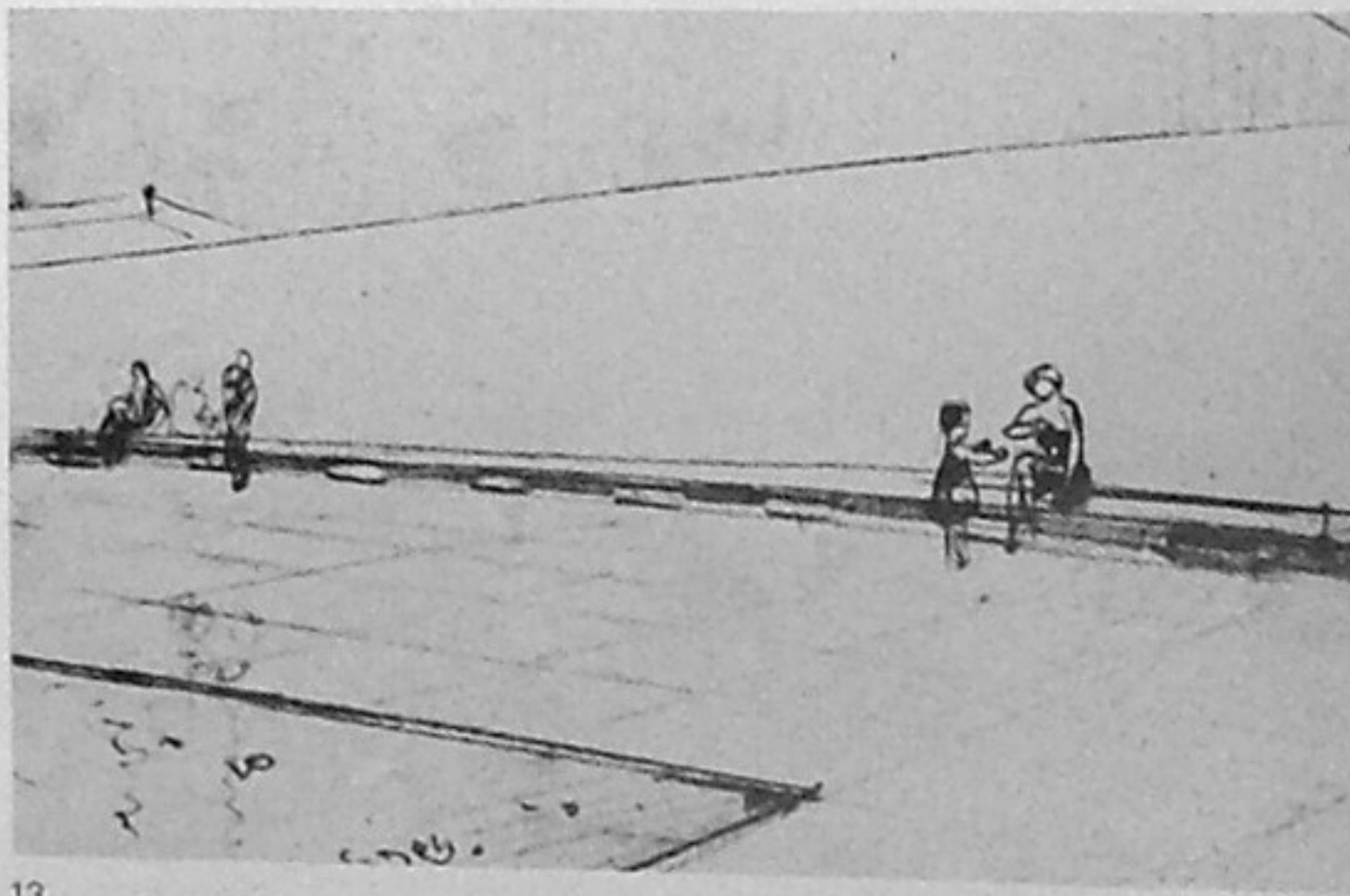
Barcelona Pavilion
Plan & perspective views
Suggested by the architect
Luis Domestico

11

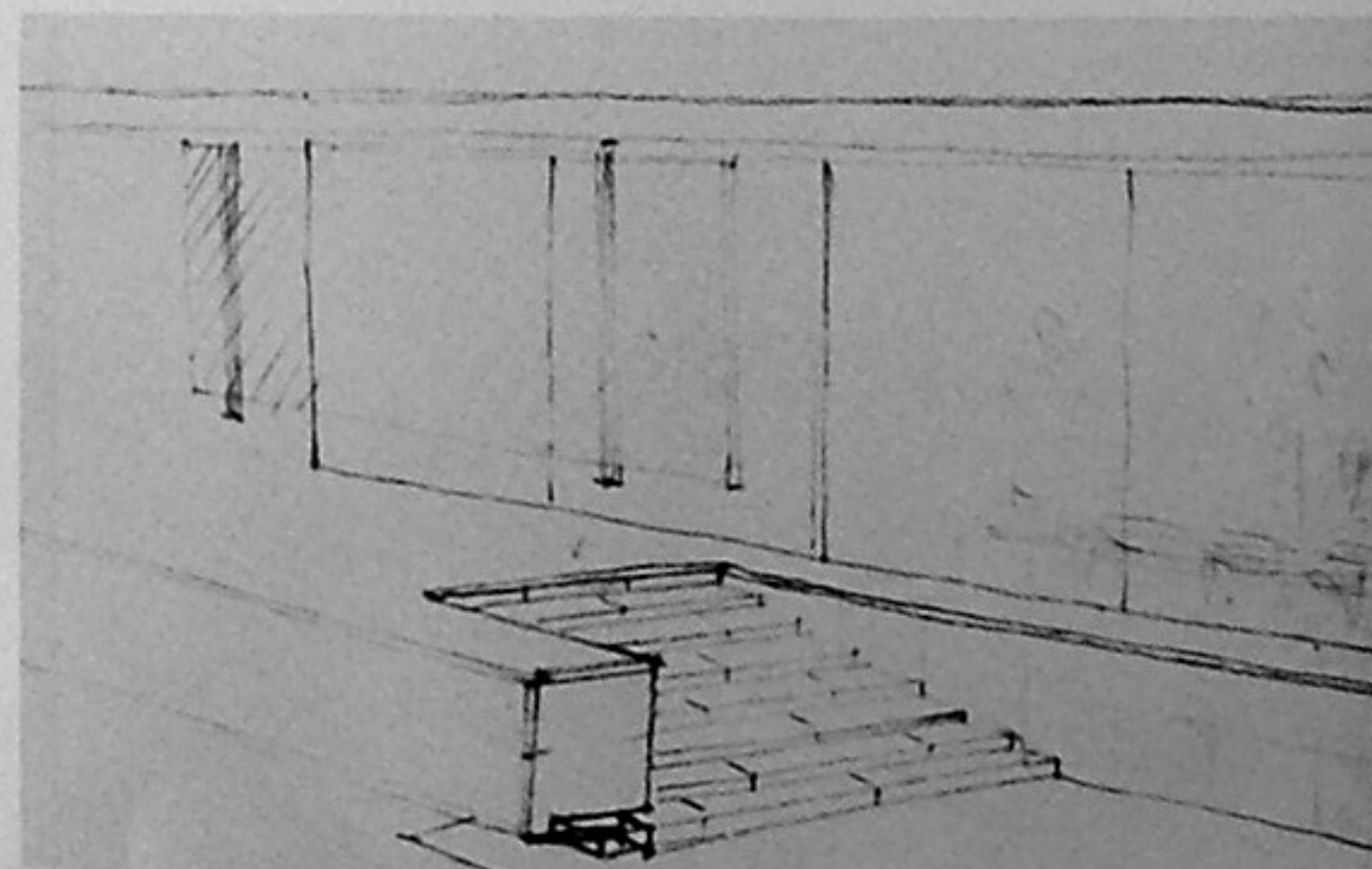


Barcelona Pavilion
Perspective view
Luis Domestico

12



13

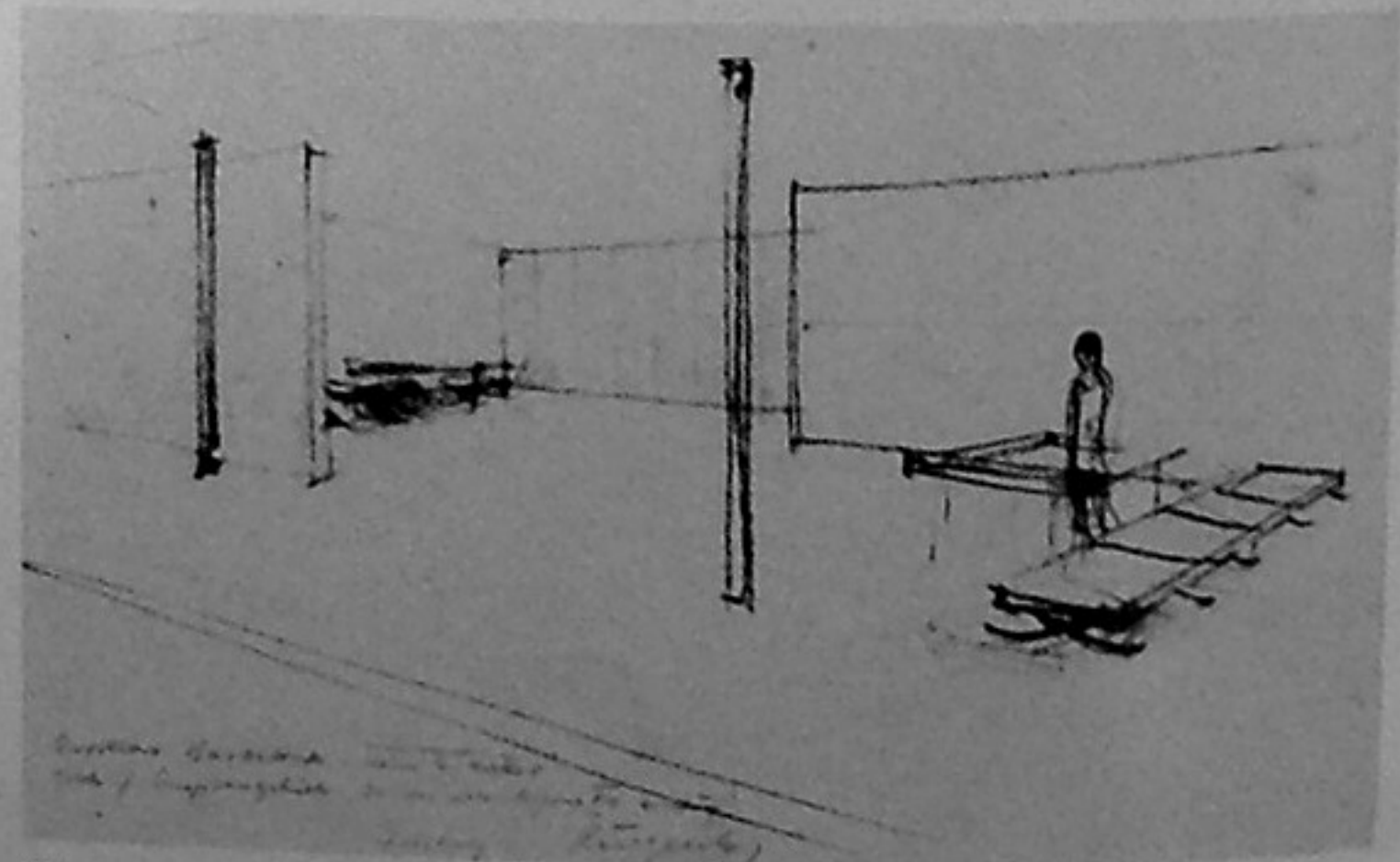


14



Barcelona Pavilion
Perspective view
Luis Domestico

15



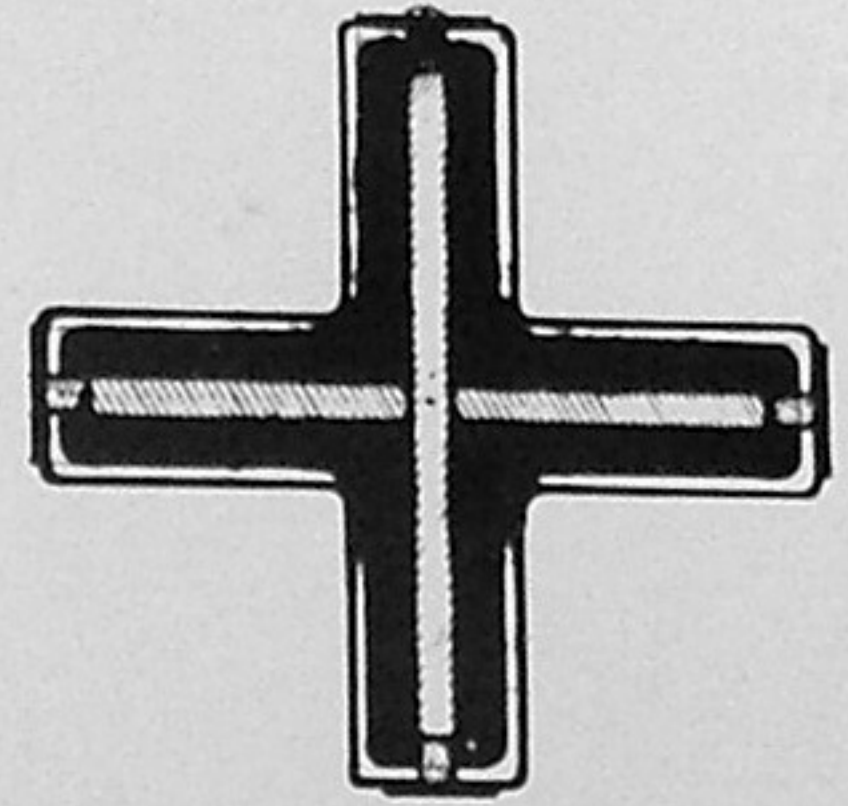
Barcelona Pavilion
Perspective view
Luis Domestico

16

Working Drawings of the Barcelona Pavilion

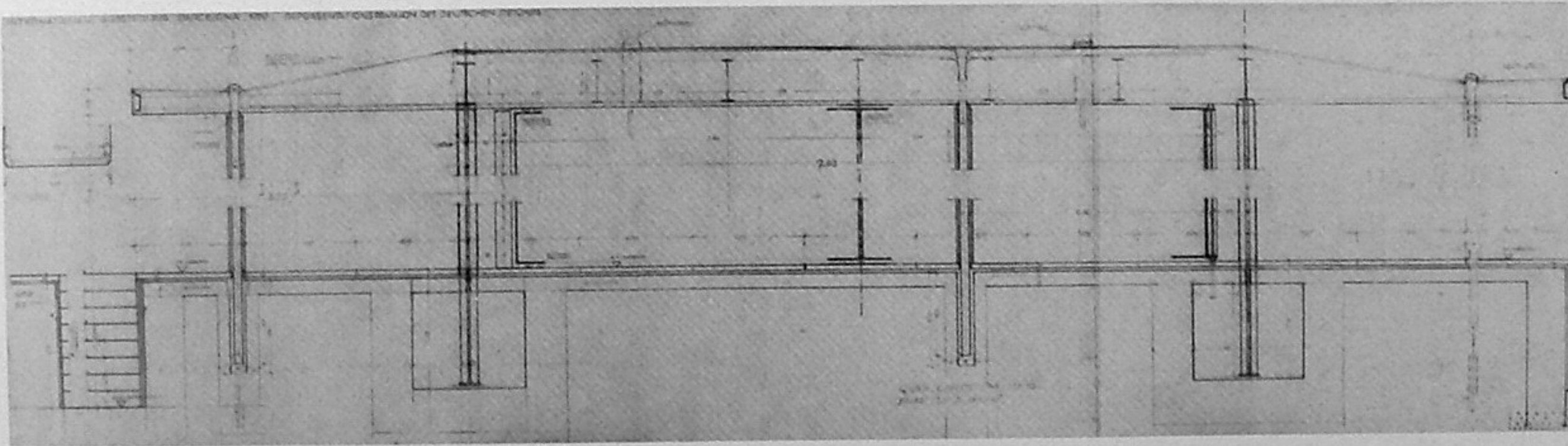
The plan shows the main pavilion and a small 'outbuilding' which was built in a more conventional manner, with steel-framed windows. The extended area of podium and steps at the back of the pavilion was not built. The two pairs of entrance doors to the main pavilion were removed after completion. Mies felt they had no place there since they interrupted the flowing plan and broke up the interplay between exterior and interior spaces. The column detail was redrawn at a later date by Sergius Ruegenberg who supervised the construction of the pavilion.

The section shows the entrance doors and the so-called 'light wall' – a pattern of electric light bulbs between two sheets of milky glass. It was not illuminated during the opening ceremony because Mies disliked the effect of shadows cast by people moving in front of it.

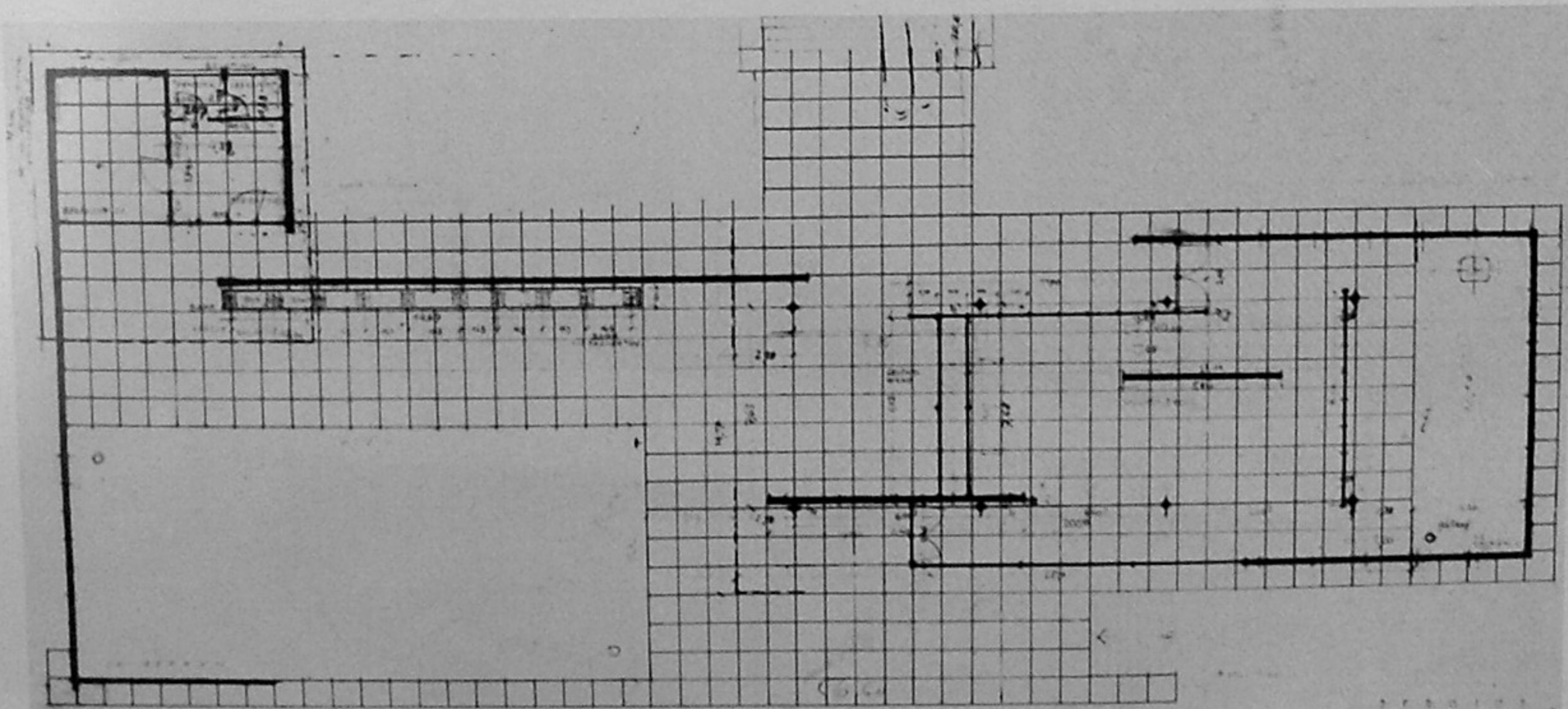


- 9-16 Sketches for the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe and Sergius Ruegenberg
- 17 Column detail, redrawn by Sergius Ruegenberg
- 18 Preliminary section
- 19 Preliminary plan

17

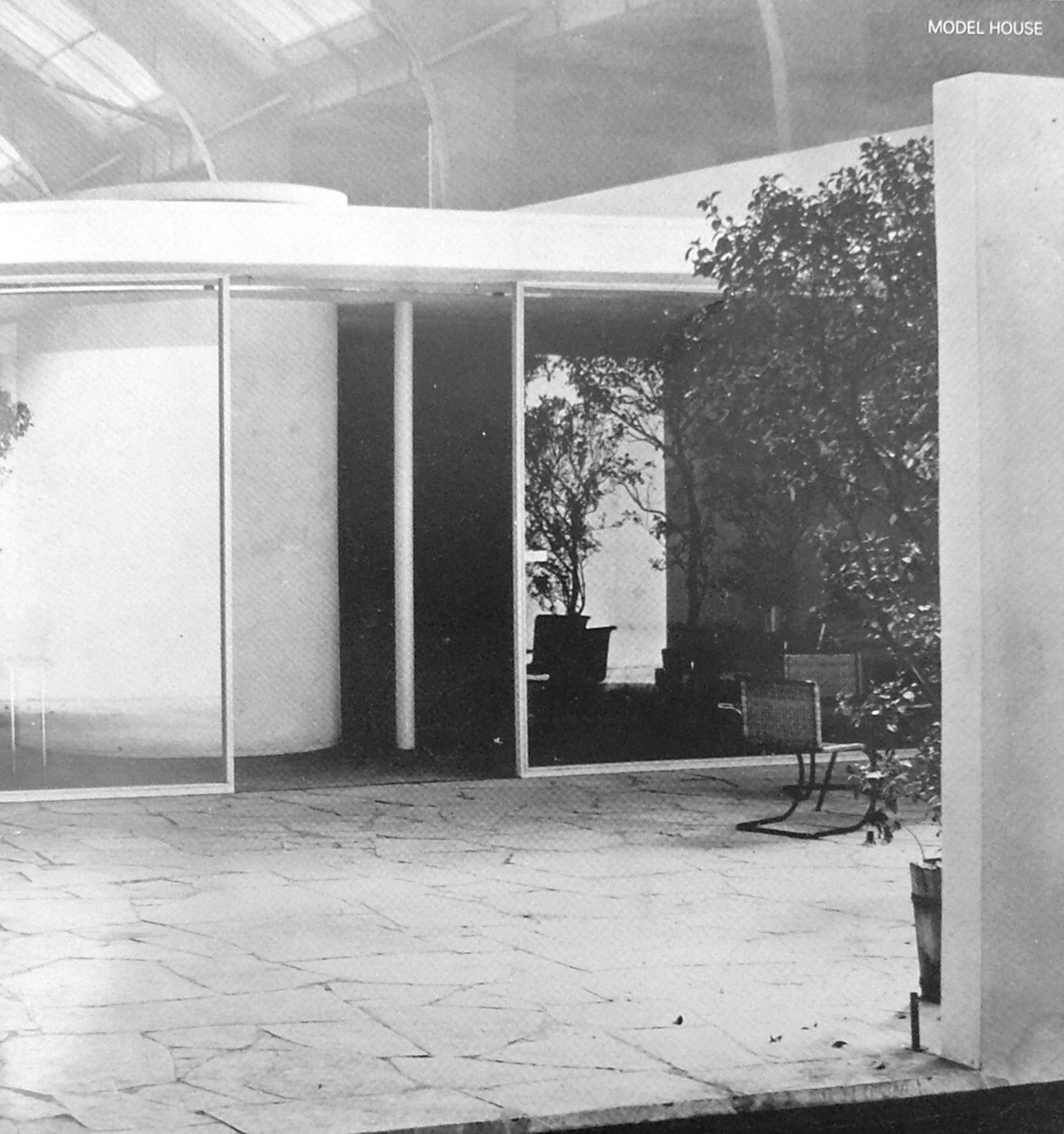


18



19





Model House
1931
Berlin Building Exhibition (dismantled)

This exhibition, entitled 'The Dwelling of Our Time', was organised by the Werkbund four years after Weissenhofsiedlung. Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich officially shared the direction of the entire exhibition but, in many ways, Ms Reich played a far more important part. The bulk of the work was hers; and she exhibited her own model house, which was conceptually an entity with Mies' house and linked by a long wall.

1 View showing the enclosed garden

In his model house, Mies introduced a semi-enclosed court; the walls slide out from under the roof like those of the Brick Country House project (1923). As at Tugendhat and the Barcelona Pavilion, a free-standing screen (here in ebony) defined the 'ritual centre' of the building, marked by the hearth in a Frank Lloyd Wright house, the heart of the home.

Haus Tugendhat

1928-1930

Brno, Czechoslovakia

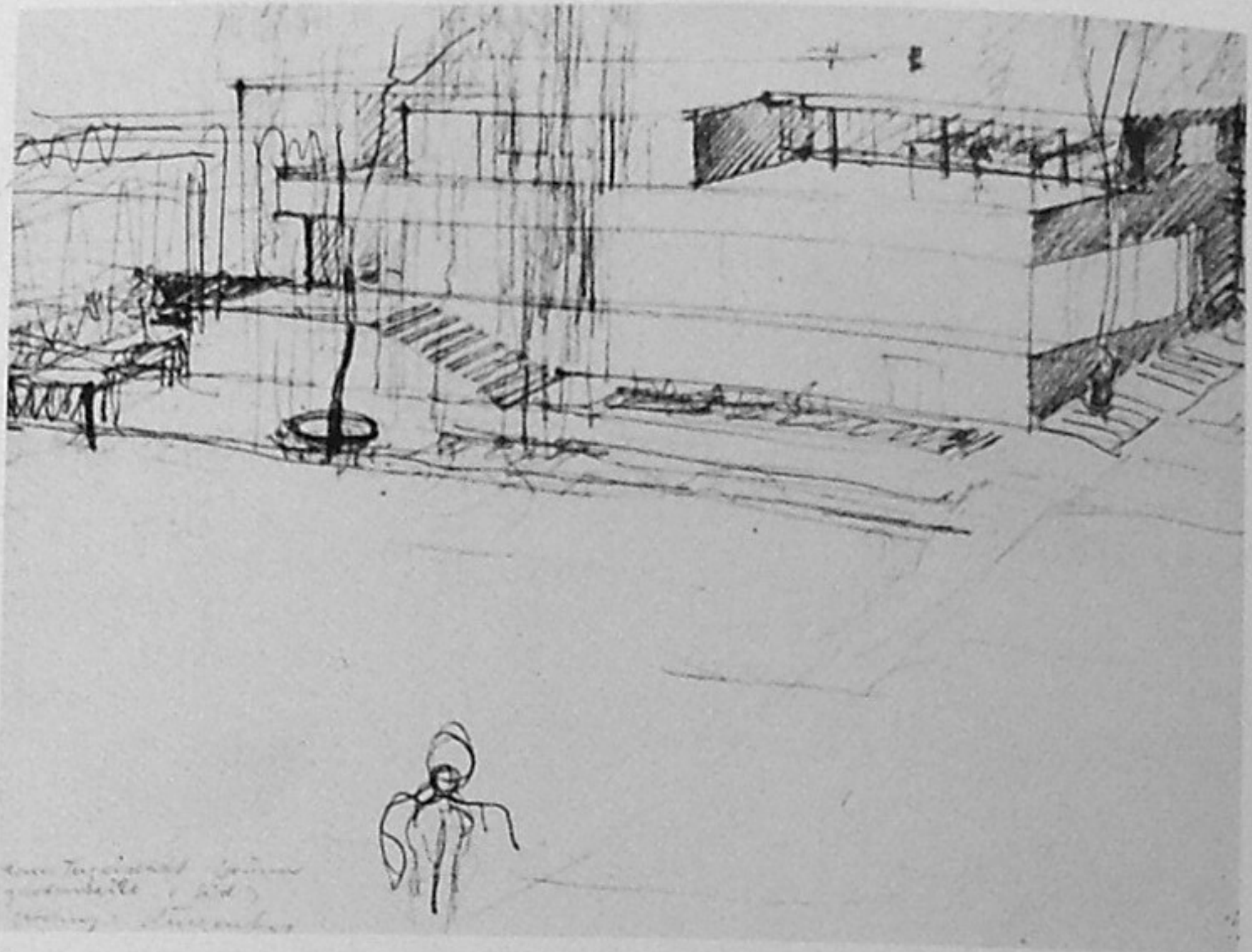
Today the Barcelona Pavilion and Haus Tugendhat are still known only through the same original sets of contemporary black-and-white photographs. Tugendhat still stands, but the house is now a mere shadow of its former glory. Mies van der Rohe and Mrs Reich devoted endless care and attention to this family home. On his rare visits to Brno, Mies said to have infuriated the local builders and craftsmen with his exacting demands.

Mr Tugendhat was the scion of a highly successful manufacturing family and Haus Tugendhat was a wedding present to his young wife from her father – possibly the richest man in Brno in the twenties. The young couple had visited Berlin where Mrs Tugendhat was so impressed by the home of a relative that she asked for the name of the architect – it was Mies. He was commissioned to design a house in Brno and was invited to dinner to discuss the sketch plans. Mies' proposals for this extraordinary modern house were accepted that evening (although it is said that Mr Tugendhat was considerably surprised and expressed some reservations about the design).

Throughout the house everything was designed by Mies' Berlin office, and Sergius Ruegenberg was the draughtsman. Everything was detailed, from the construction, furniture and fittings down to the plumbing. Details of the heating and cooling systems were provided; one of the first air-conditioning systems in Europe was installed at Tugendhat – a system where air was blown over ice stored in the basement and circulated round the living area. The vast single-pane windows could be lowered electrically into the basement for ventilation. In the collection of 385 drawings in New York's Museum of Modern Art there are details of bathroom and toilet fixtures, radiators, curtain tracks, doors, door-frames, window-frames, sills, ironmongery; details of such incidentals as the library ladder, the coal hatch and the wardrobe hooks. A garden plan was supplied by a landscape designer, and the garden furniture was designed in Mies' atelier.

The richest materials were sought all over the world: Algerian onyx, Swedish linen, Indonesian mahogany and many more. The cost was enormous: somewhere in the region of four million Czech Crowns – enough to build a well-appointed block of eight luxurious apartments in those days. But the Tugendhats were delighted, and the young family lived there until the outbreak of the Second World War.

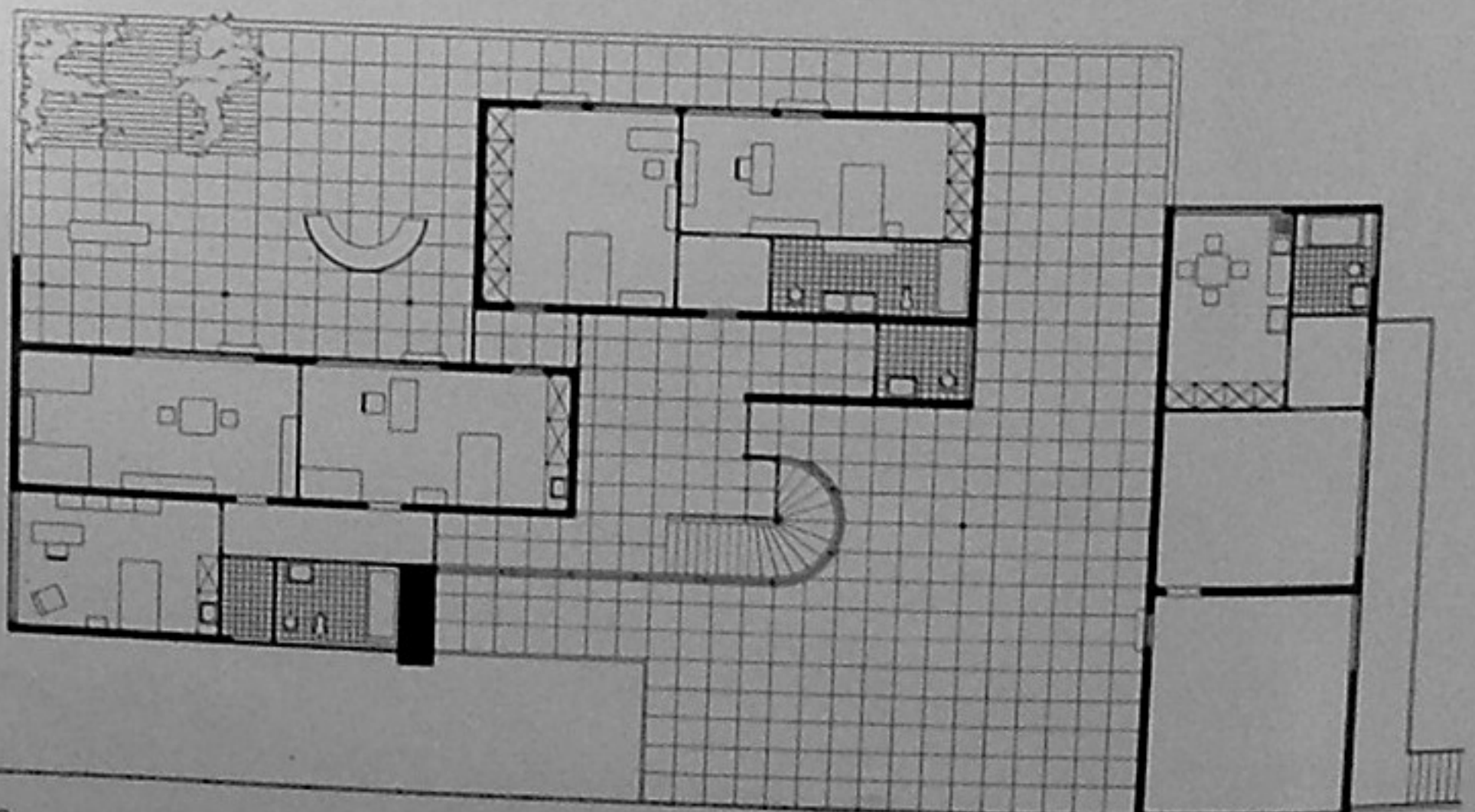
During the war the house was damaged when mounted troops were billeted there and the plate glass windows to the living area have been replaced by standard, multi-light frames. It now belongs to the State and is used as a recuperation centre and gymnasium for children.



1



2

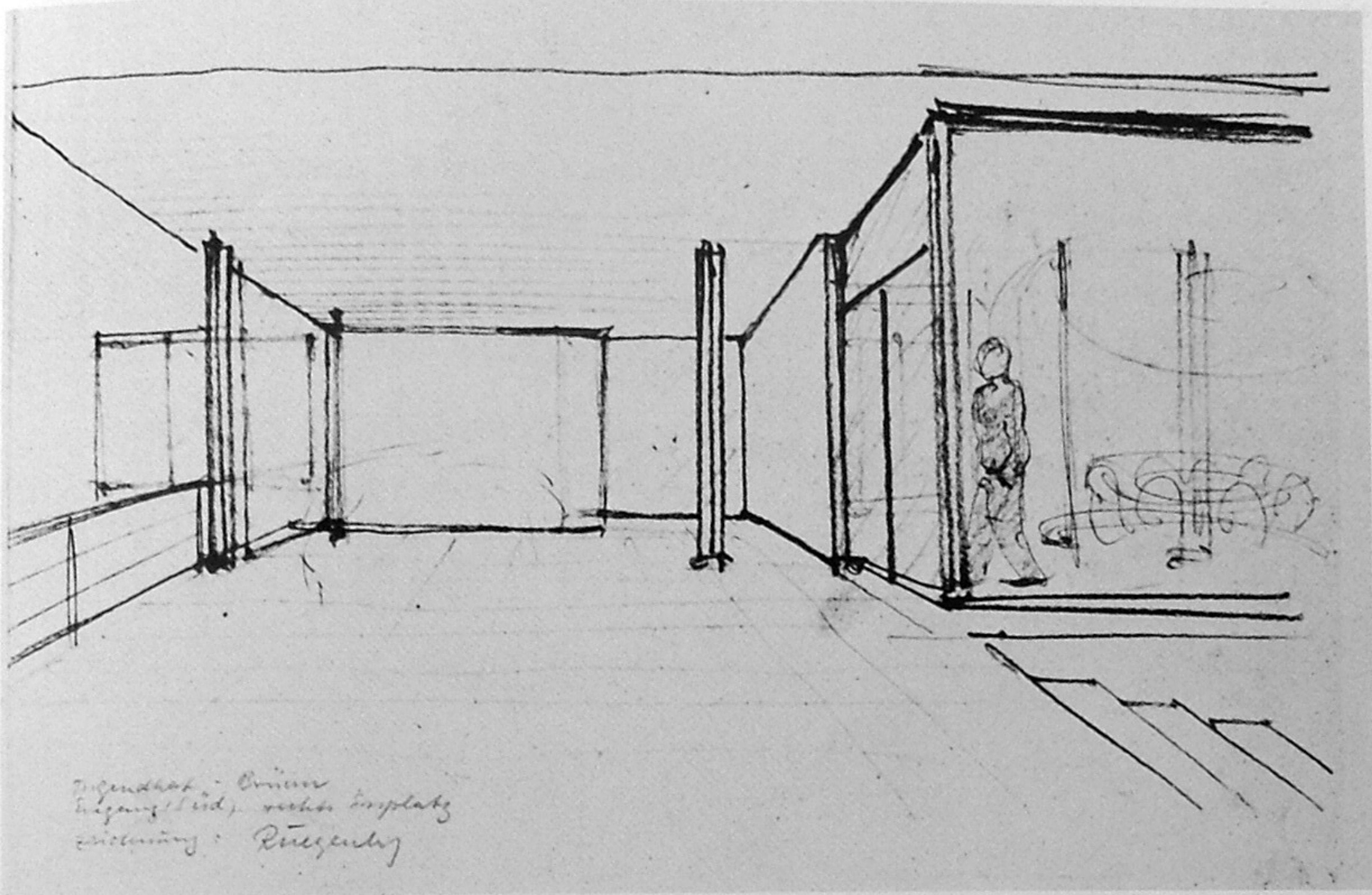


3

- 1 Sketch of garden elevation
- 2 Garden elevation
- 3 Upper floor plan
- 4 Lower floor terrace
- 5 Upper floor terrace
- 6 The long window
- 7 Winter garden room
- 8 Servery
- 9 Mrs Tugendhat's bedroom
- 10 Living room

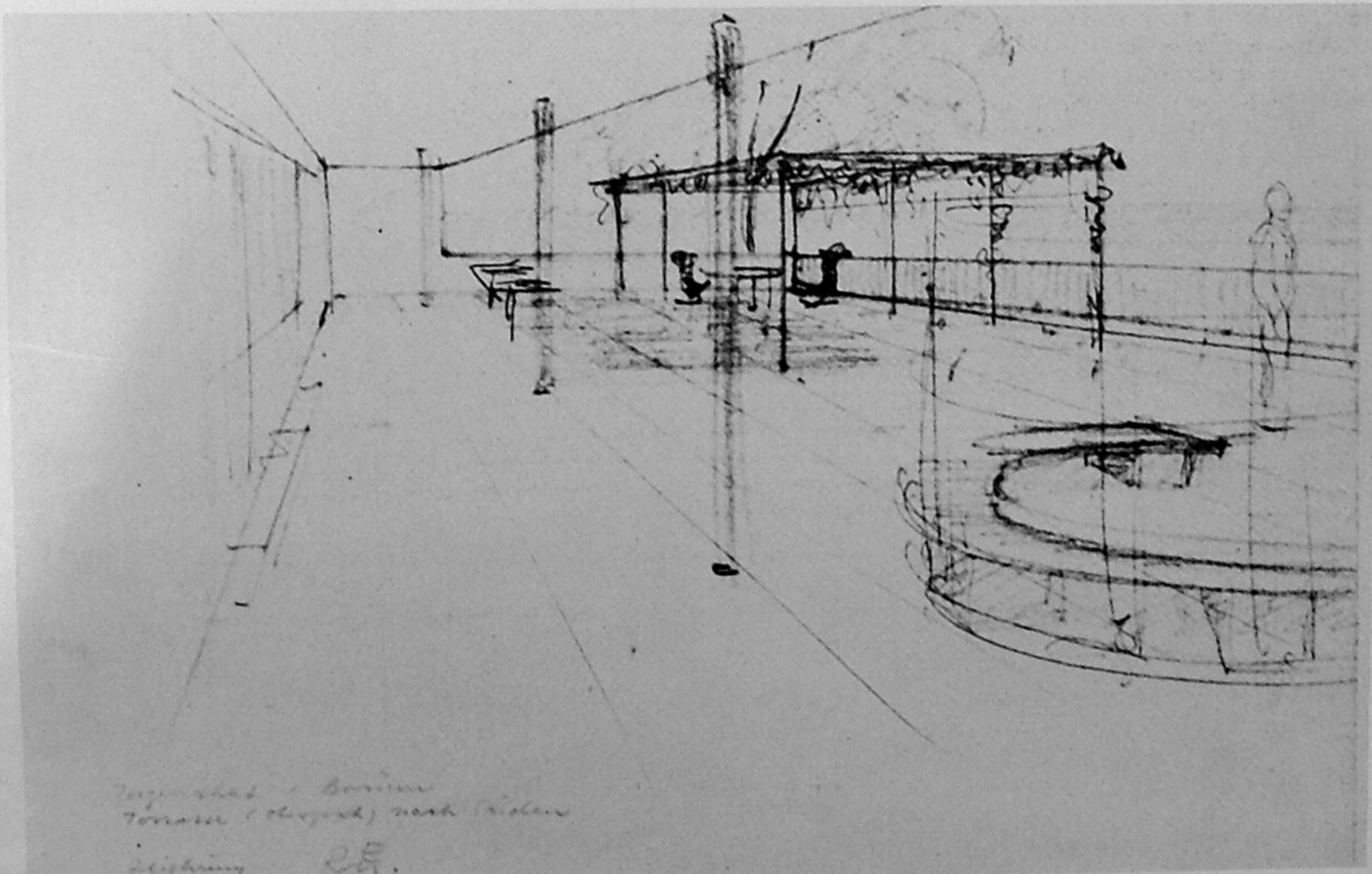
Pages 74-75

Pages 76-77



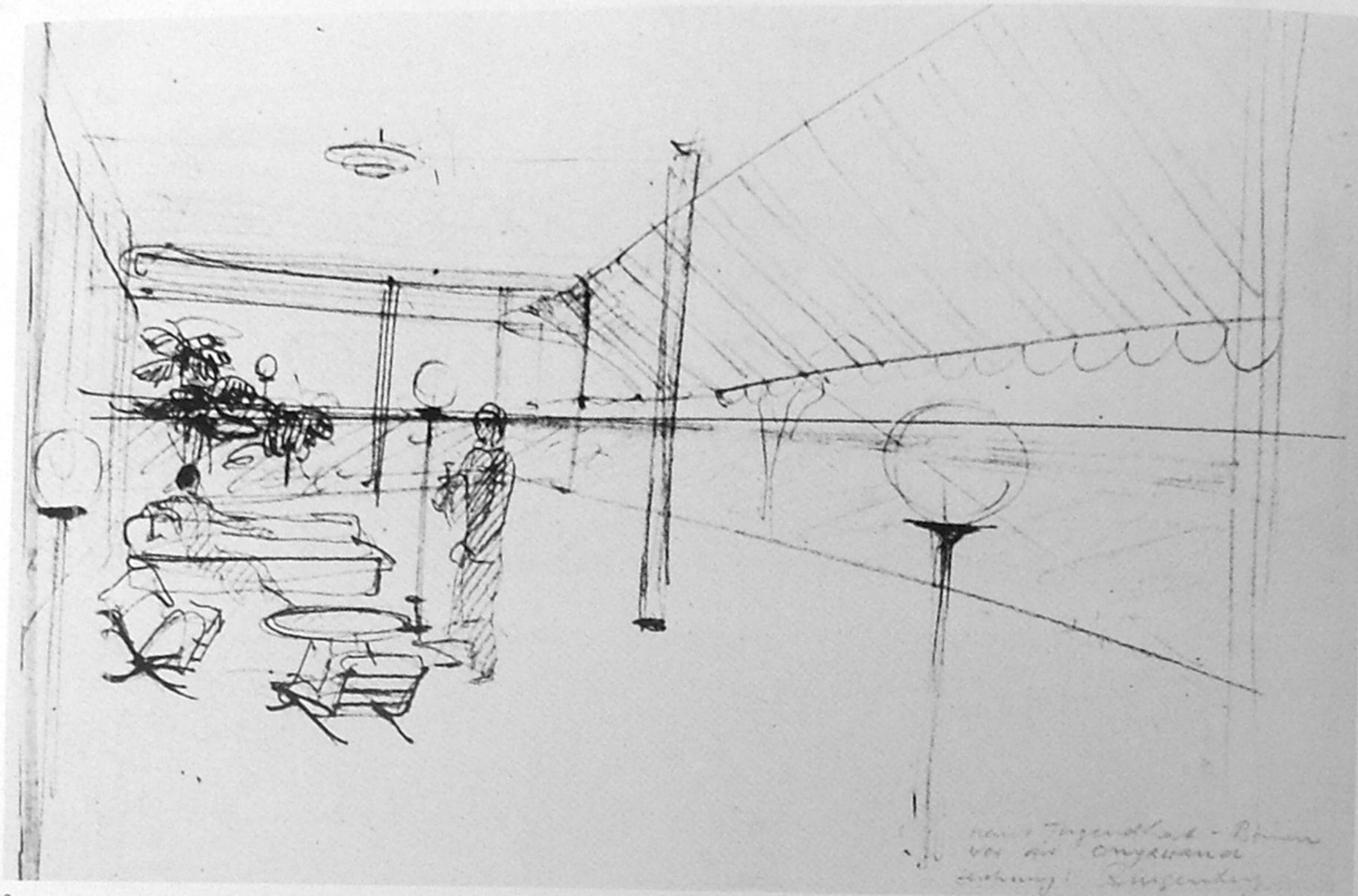
Tugendhat - Einraum
 Eingangsbereich, rechts Empfang
 Zeichnung: R. Tugendhat

4

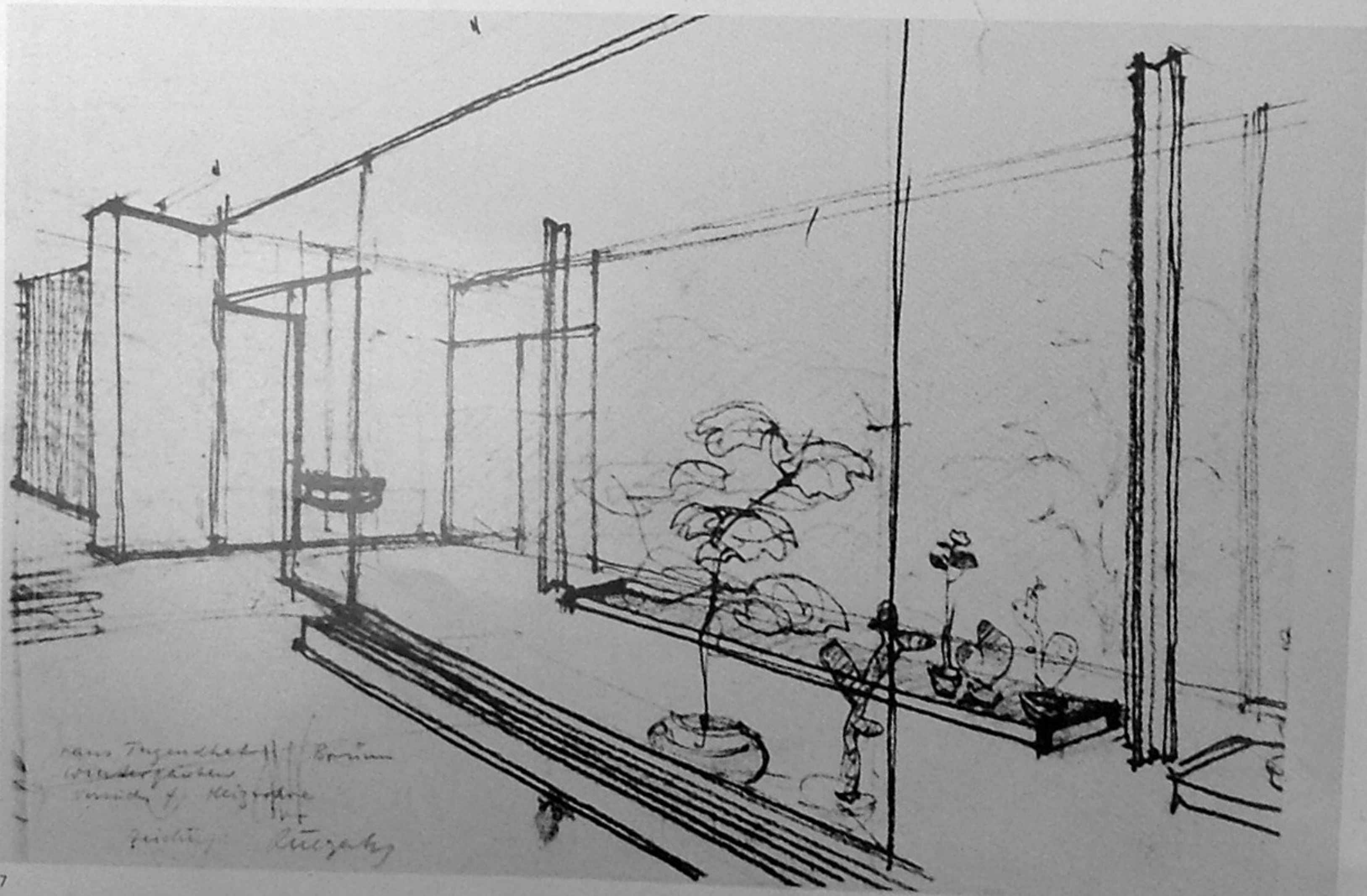


Tugendhat - Einraum
 Terrasse (Büro) nach Süden
 Zeichnung: R. T.

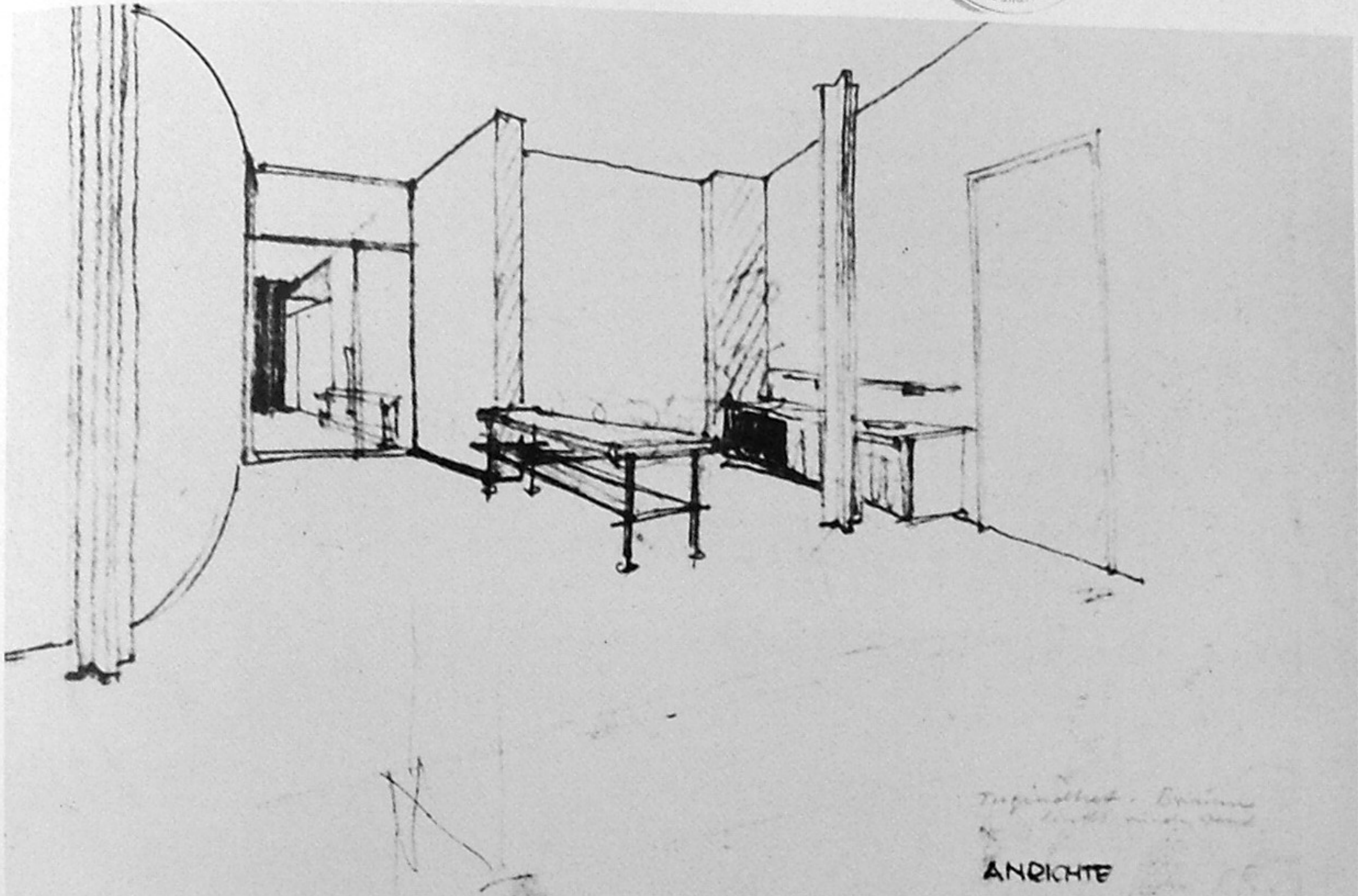
5



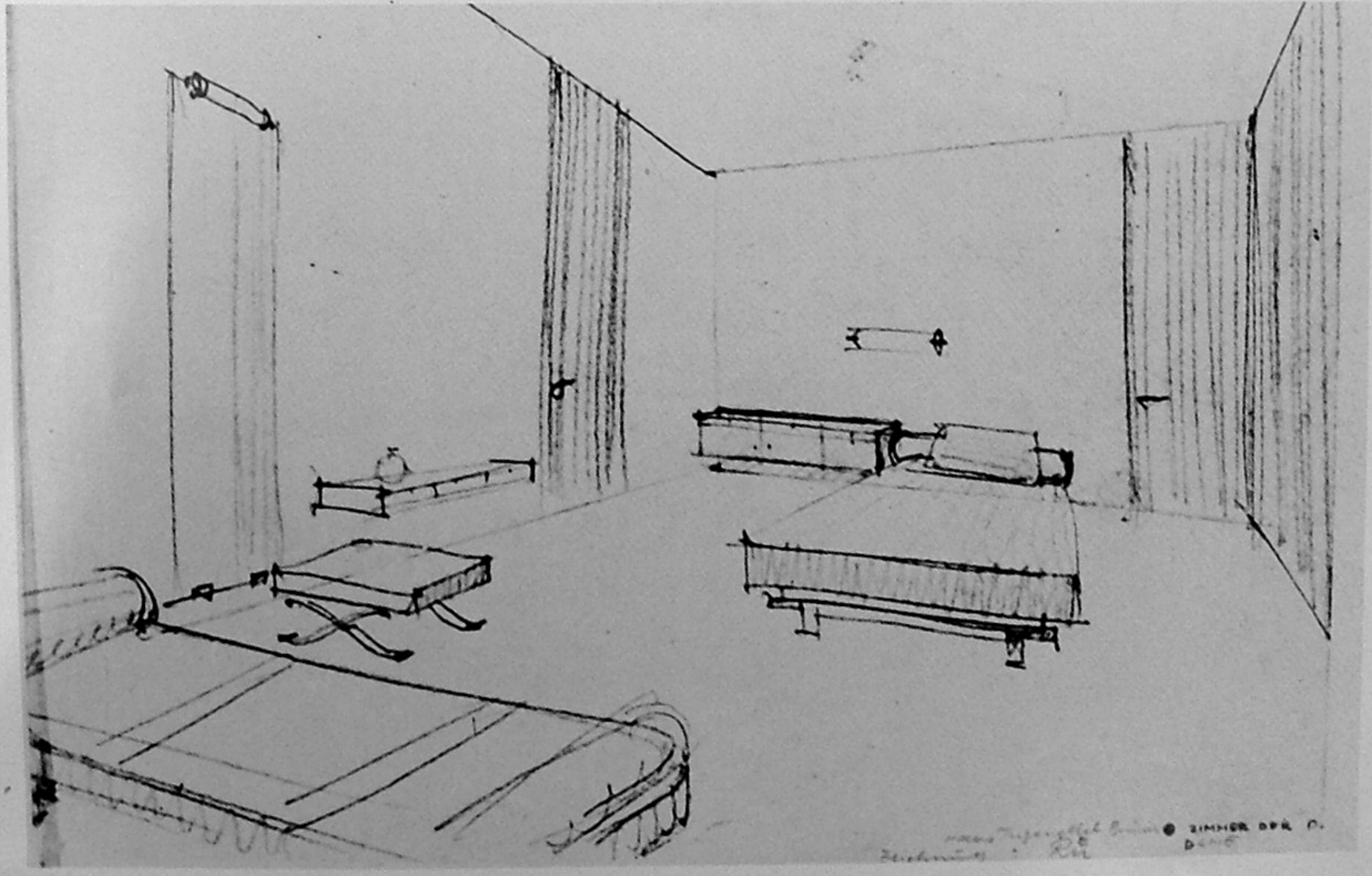
6



7



8



9



Silk Industry Complex

1932-1933

Krefeld, Federal Republic of Germany

After the successful completion of the Lange and Esters commissions, Mies van der Rohe was invited by the board of the Vereinigte Seidenwebereien (State-owned silk industry) to build a factory and power station in Krefeld. He drew on the ideas he had developed for office buildings in his projects of 1928 and 1929 – the so-called 'skin studies'. The proportion of the windows was related to that of the whole building, with the interplay of spandrel panels and mullions. Mies combined the use of a repetitive, neutralising skin with the structuring of an urban pattern of volume and void, softened by weeping willows and grass.

The complex designed by Mies consists of a rectangular four-storey block on one side of an open-ended court; a three-storey block, along the back of the court, connects with a three-storey wing and clock tower on the side of a single-space factory floor area which is covered by a glazed saw-tooth roof. (Unfortunately there are no drawings available in Krefeld as they were destroyed during the Second World War; the originals are held by the Museum of Modern Art.)

The power station has since been rehoused in a new building. In the four-storey block, with the exception of the stairs, very little of the original interior remains. Most of the steel window-frames have been replaced by GRP frames with wider mullions (but following the same pattern of lights). There have been some alterations to the single-space factory block: some windows have been removed and additions made.

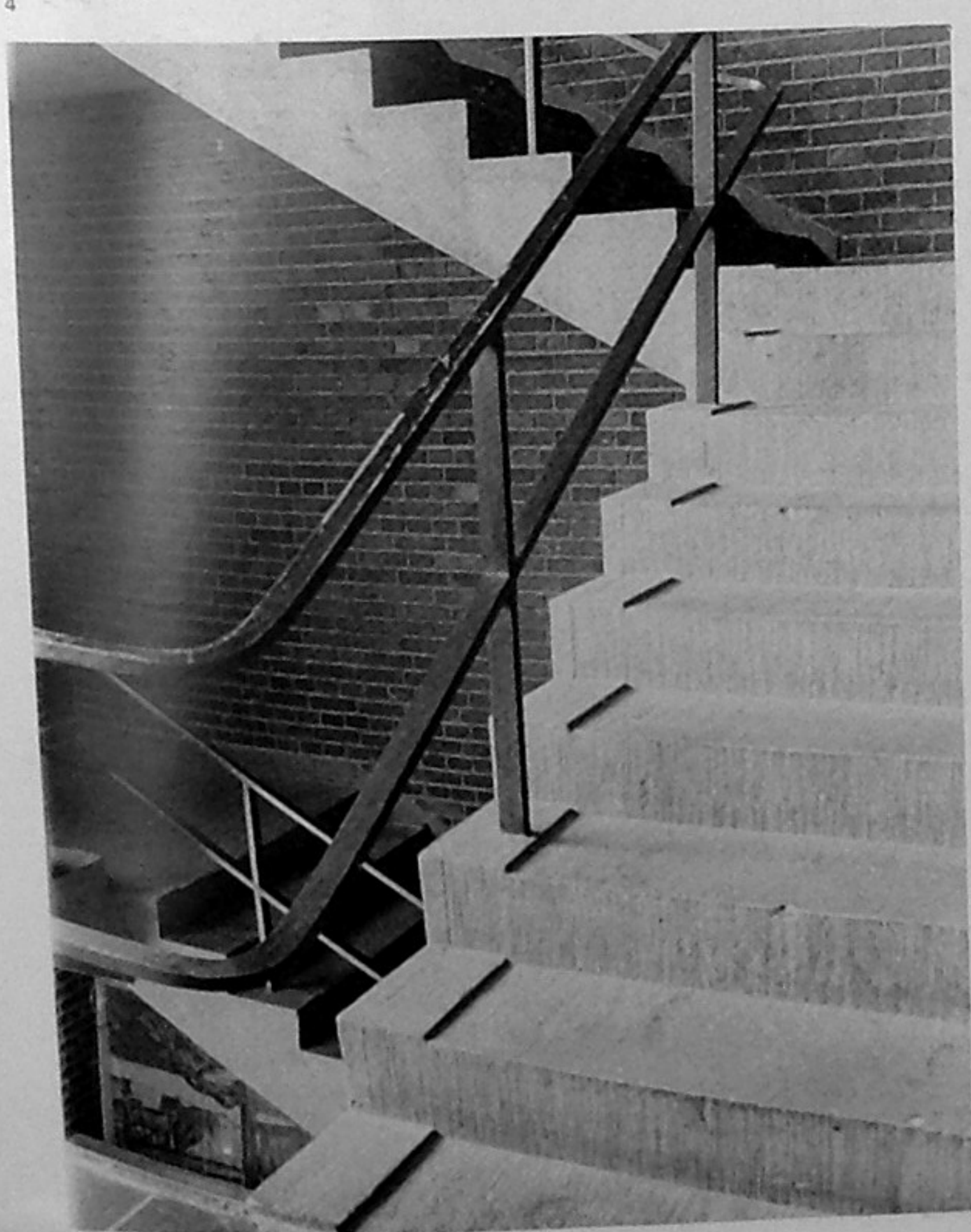


2



3

- 1 The open-ended court
- 2 Clock tower
- 3 Entrance to the factory floor
- 4 Entrance to the four-storey block
- 5-6 Stairway in the four-storey block



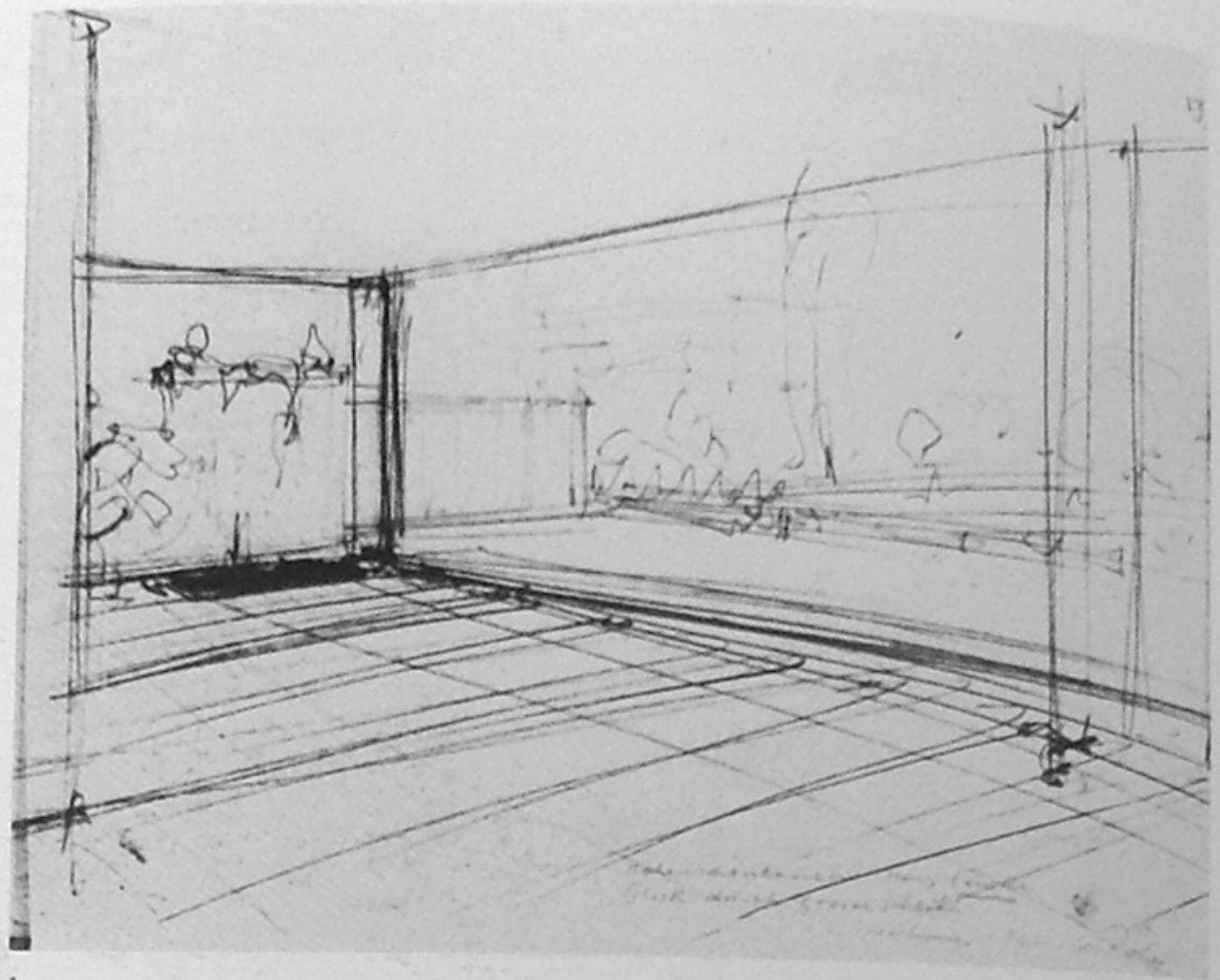
Haus Lemke

1932

Weissensee, Berlin-East

The last house Mies built in Germany was a very modest brick 'patio-house' on a narrow lot bordering a small lake. The client, Karl Lemke, once worked for the Werkbund publishers and became editor of *Die Rote Fahne*, a Communist newspaper.

The full-height steel windows on to the patio were designed with the aid of a Crittal's catalogue. From the paving stones, the grass slopes gently down to the water where weeping willows grow. The house is still in private hands.

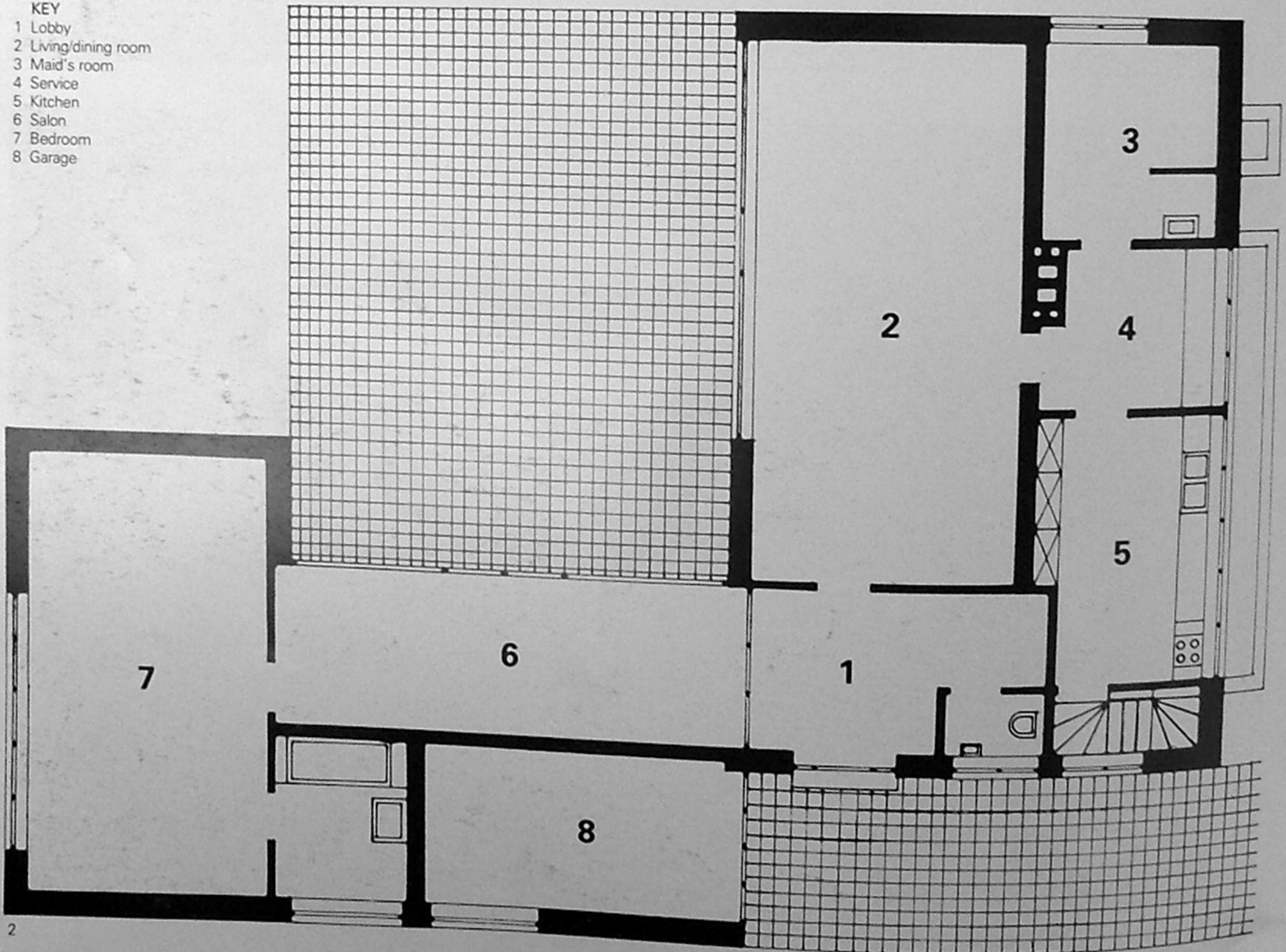


1

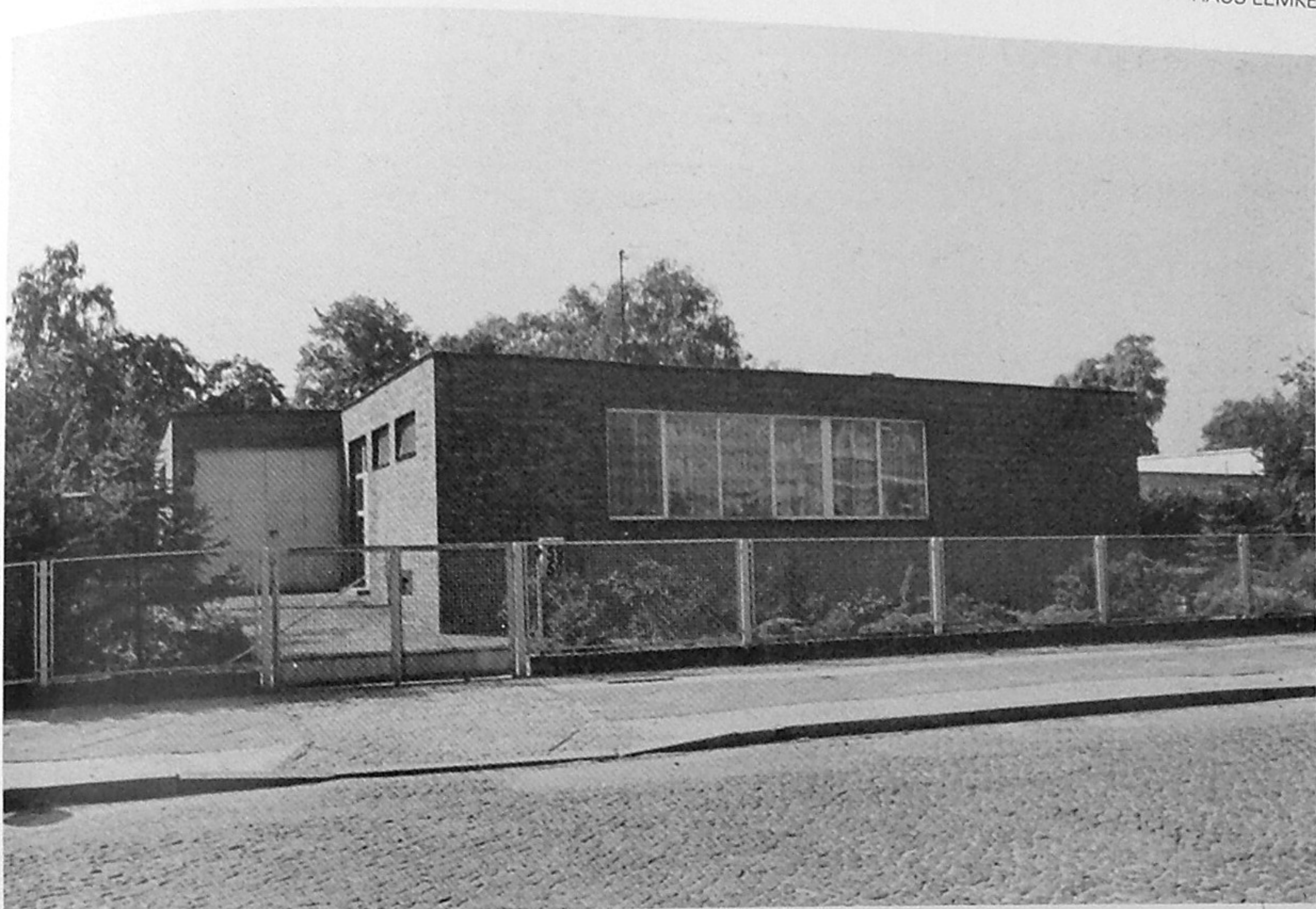
- 1 Sketch by Mies van der Rohe
- 2 Plan
- 3 Entrance
- 4 View from the garden

KEY

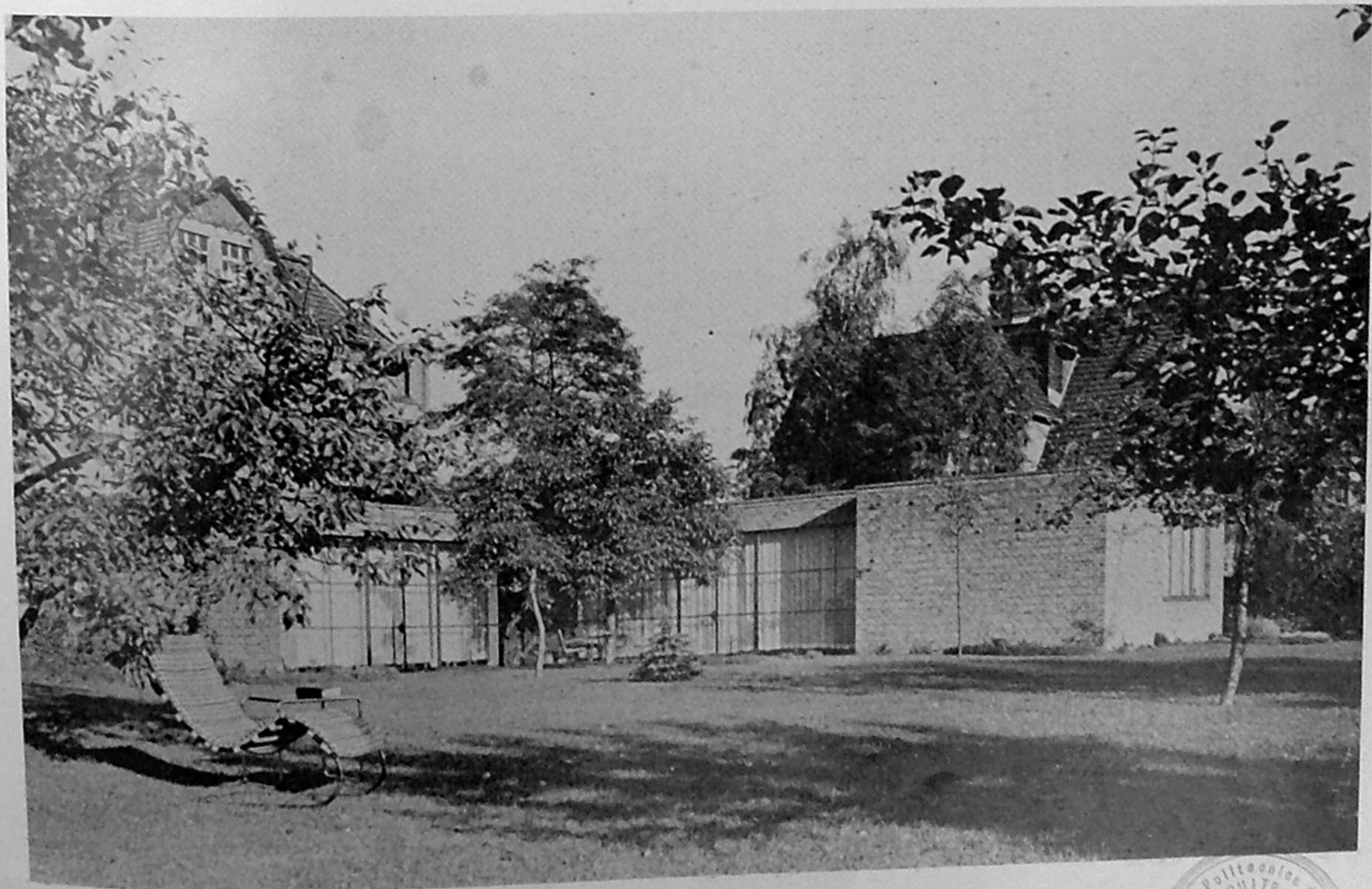
- 1 Lobby
- 2 Living/dining room
- 3 Maid's room
- 4 Service
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Salon
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Garage



2



3



4



81

83

Projects 1930-1937

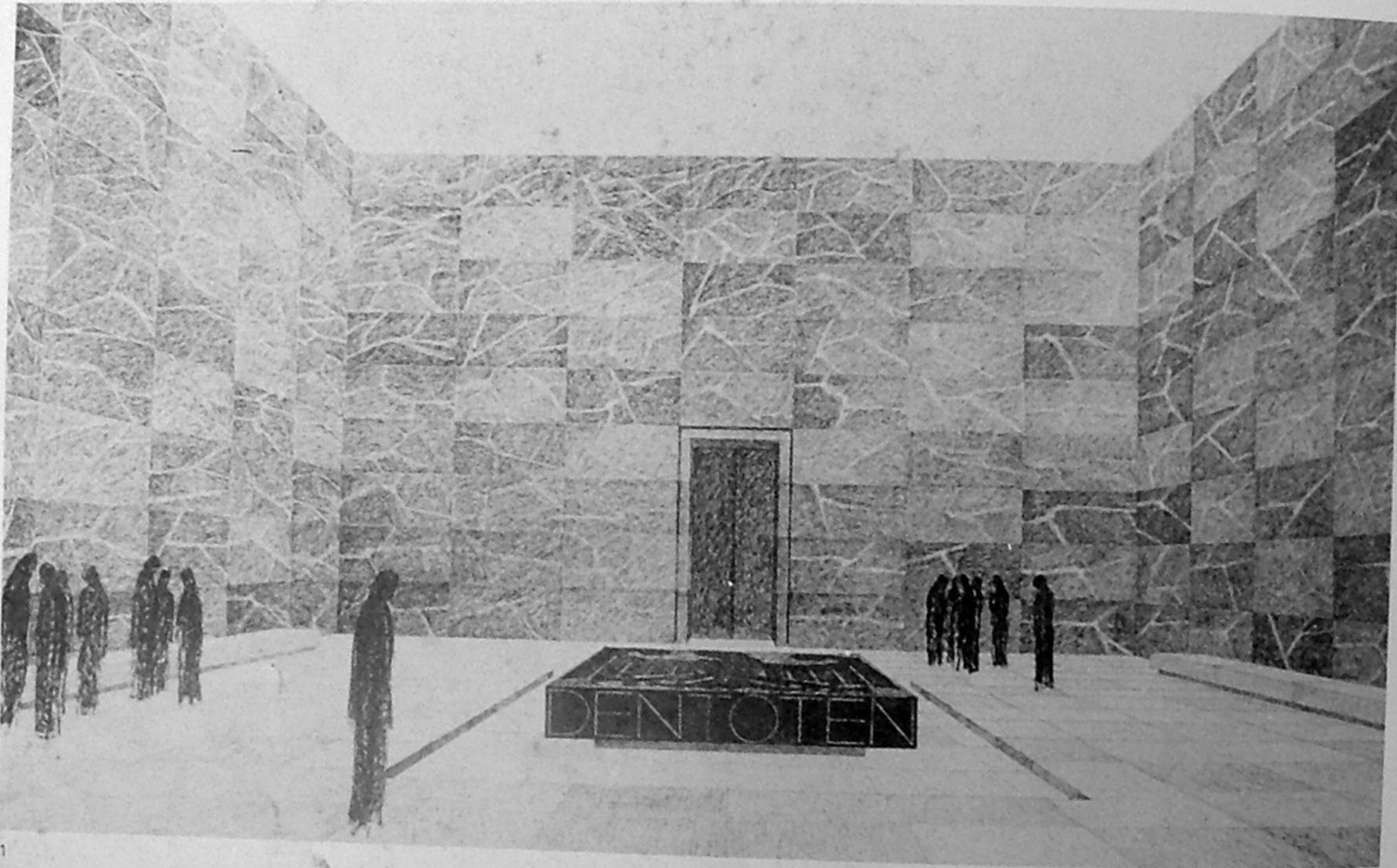
Opposition to modern architecture was voiced as early as 1925 by right-wing critics and conservative architects. The National Socialist Party joined the attack in 1930 and, in the spring of 1933, Hitler's new government began a systematic purge on radical architects. The

Krefeld silk industry complex was Mies' last built work in Germany – it was completed in 1933, and he emigrated in 1938. The grim political, social and economic climate of the thirties was reflected in Mies' architecture.

War Memorial (1930)

Mies entered the competition for a memorial to the dead to be built in Schinkel's Neue Wache complex in Berlin-Mitte. The monolithic nature of this project, with its bulky stone walls and black, slab-like gravestone, announced a variation in Mies' handwriting – away from lightness to heaviness. Sergius Ruegenberg executed the presentation drawing.

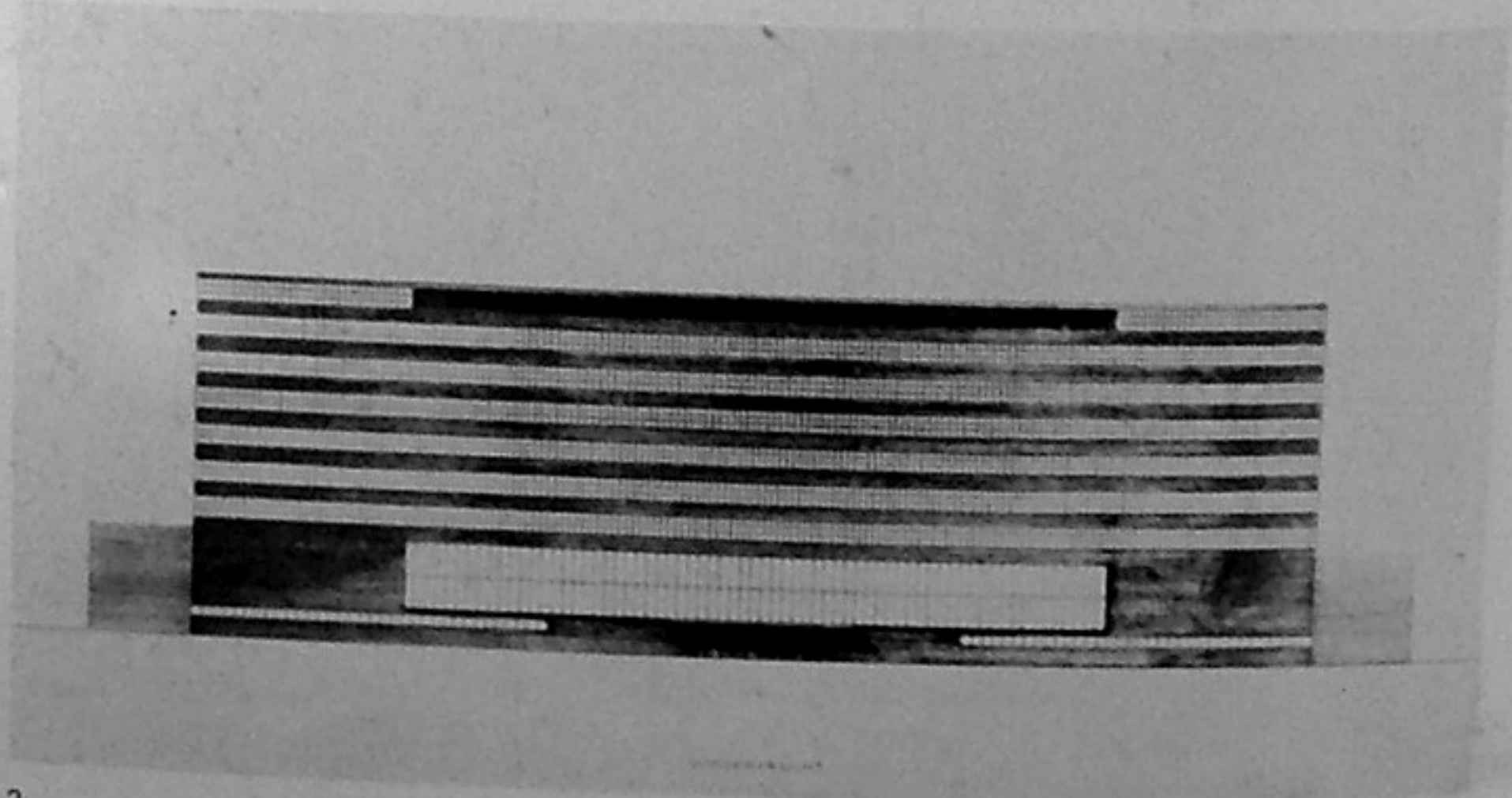
- 1 War memorial
- 2 Elevation
- 3 Perspective
- 4 Typical floor plan
- 5 Perspective

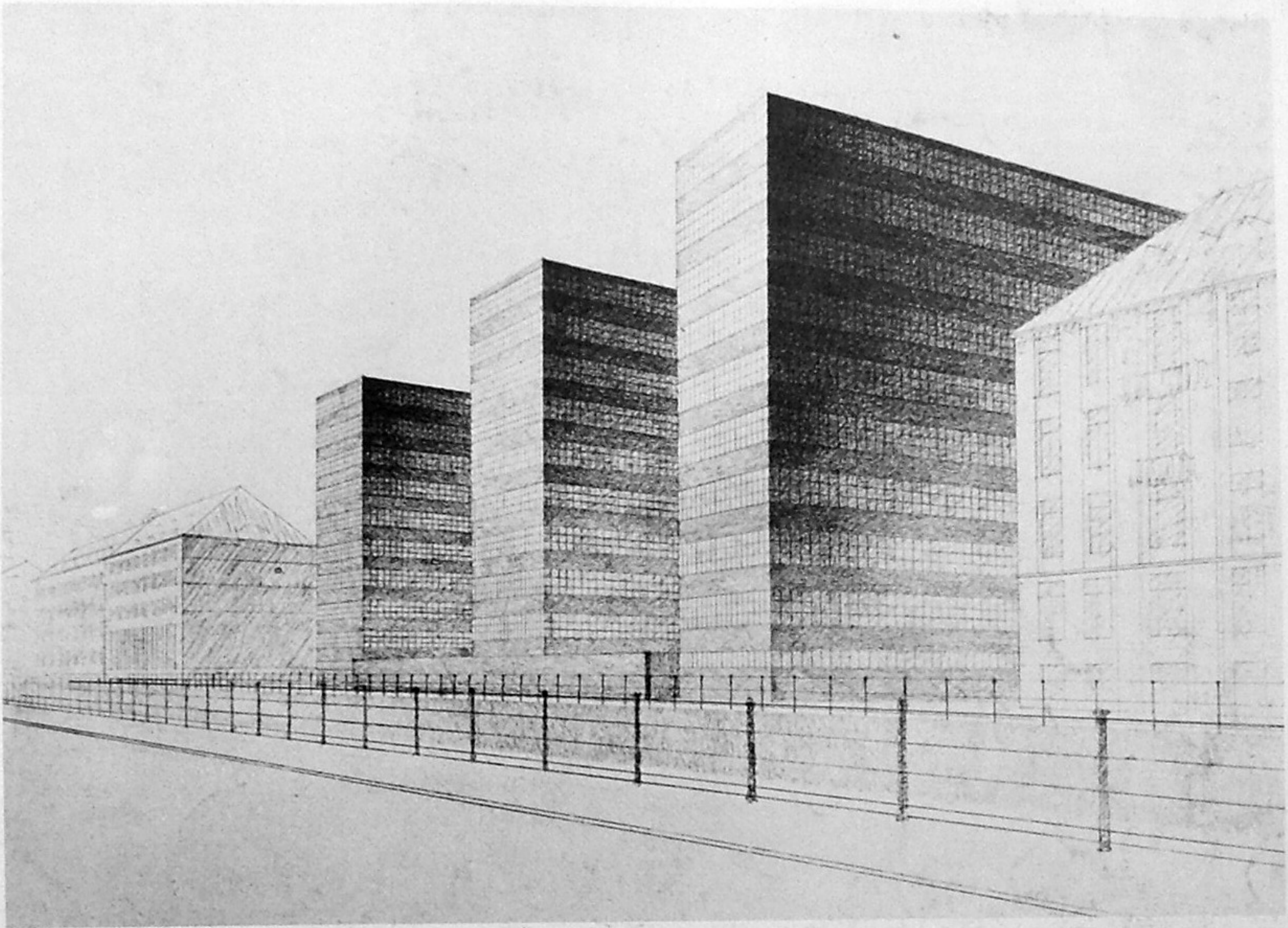


Reichsbank (1933)

After the office of the Reichsbank had made a preliminary design for their new building, a competition was issued in February 1933. Thirty leading German architects were invited to compete. Mies won an award; his project was the only modern one of the six prize-winning designs.

The plan was symmetrical – oddly so, since those of the neoclassical and neo-baroque entries (which would be expected to be symmetrical) were all influenced by the irregularity of the site. Mies' building was rigidly ordered and monumental, containing an enormous lobby 350-feet long by 50-feet wide by 30-feet high, with a grand staircase worthy of a baroque palace. The presentation drawings were executed by Eduard Ludwig, Mies' ex-Bauhaus student and assistant.

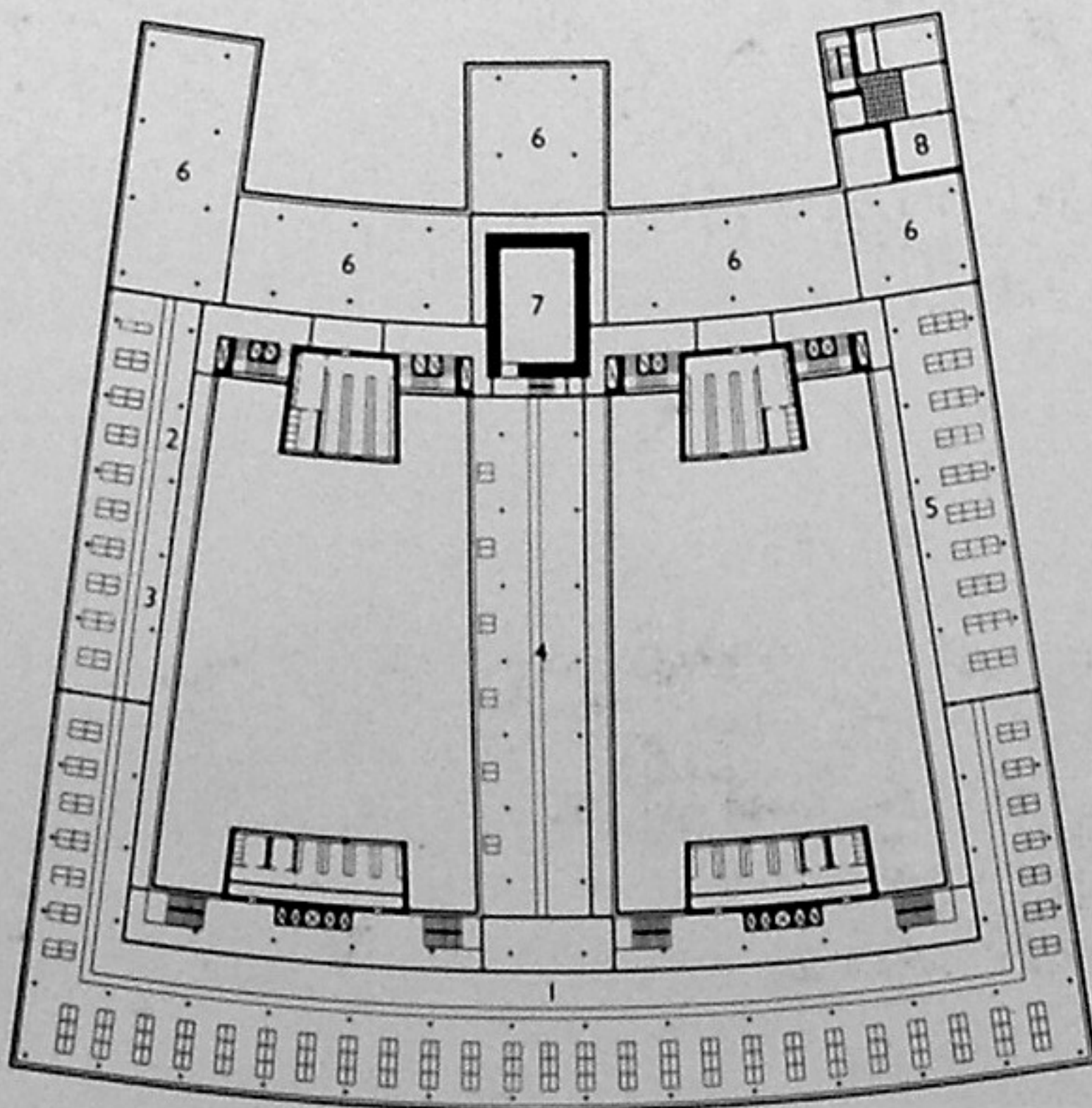




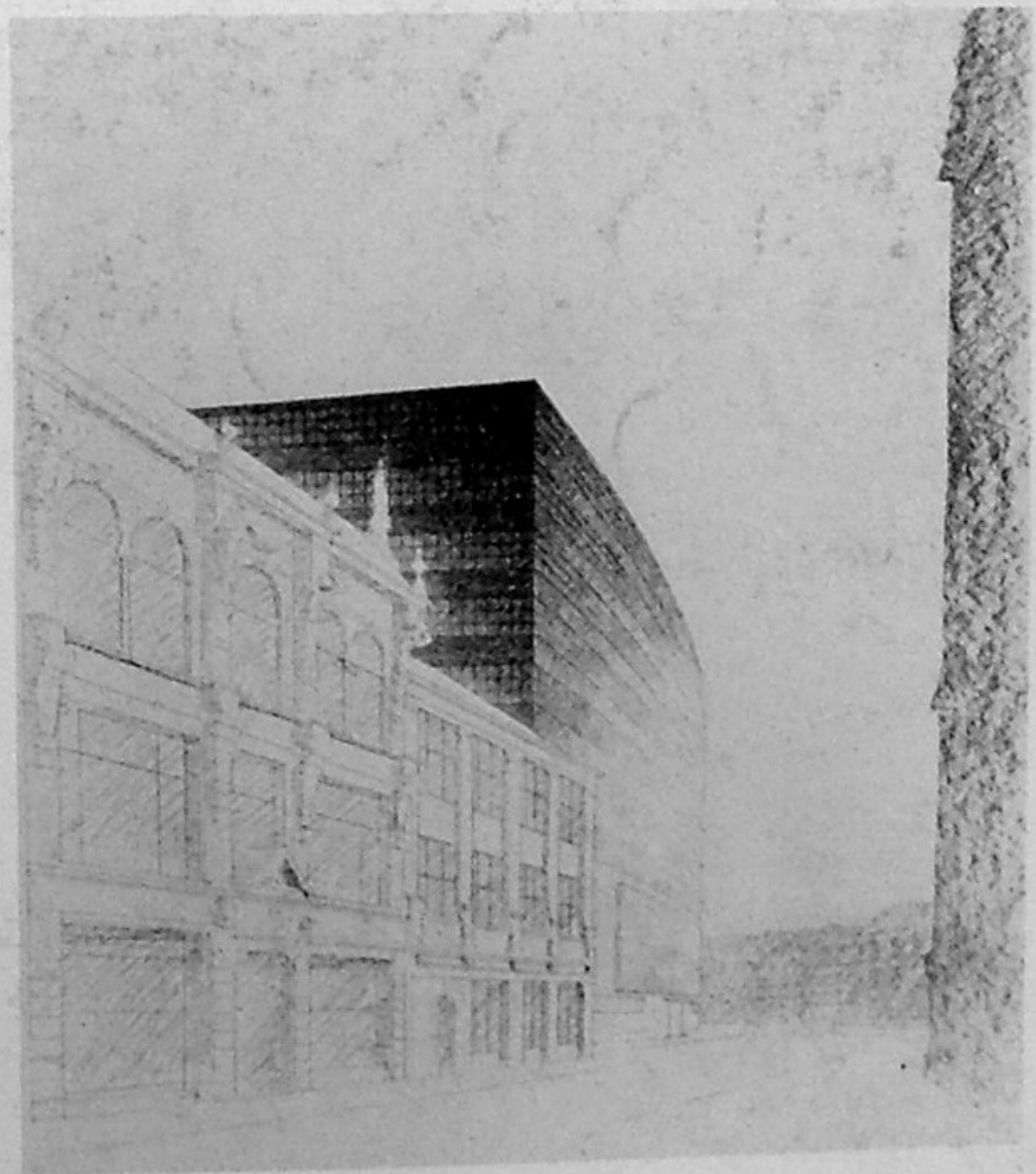
3

KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Office of the clearing department | 5 Clearing department |
| 2 General books | 6 Bookkeeping machines |
| 3 Salary department | 7 Security vault |
| 4 Clearings | 8 Building superintendent |



4



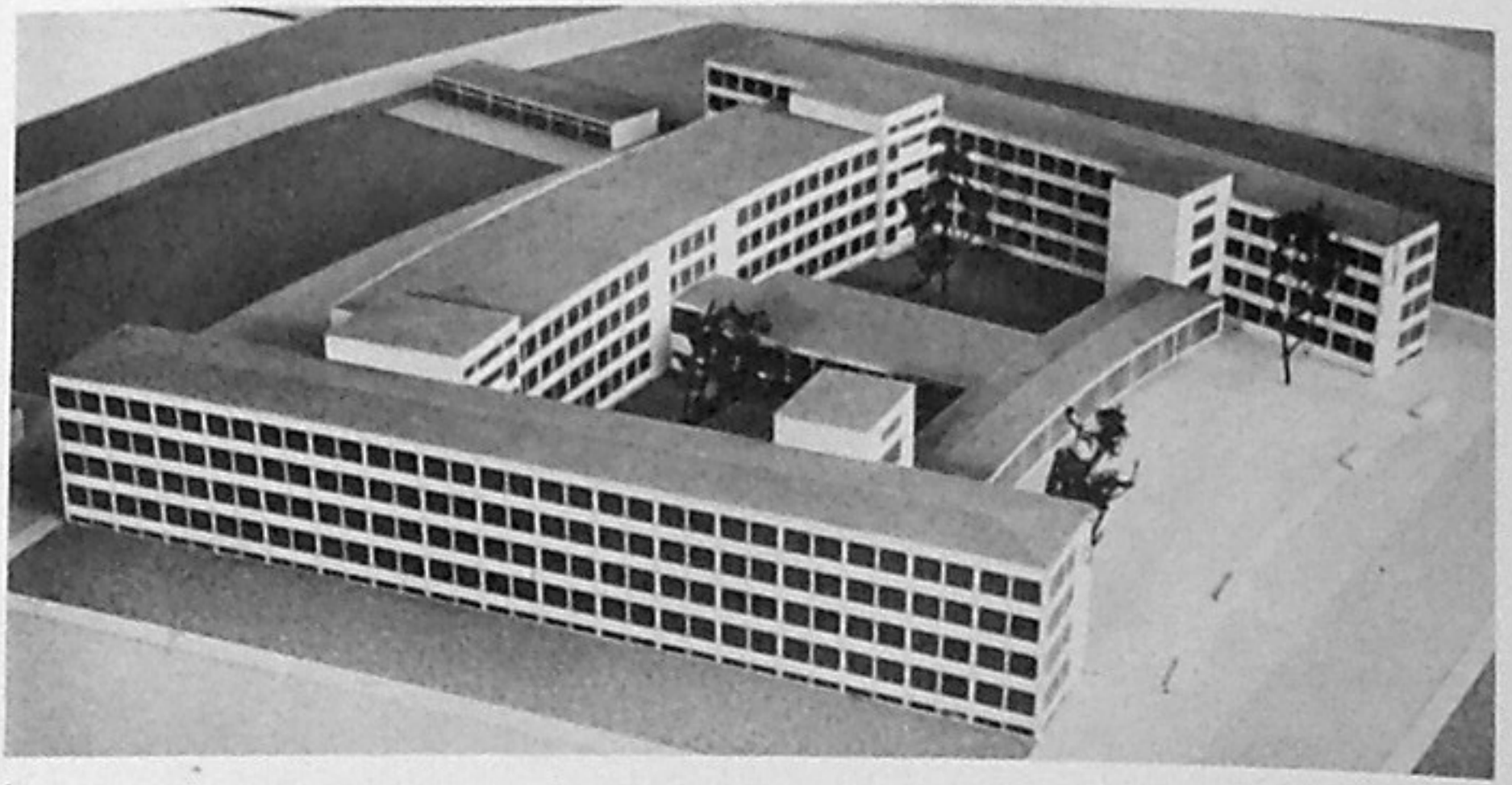
5

Krefeld Administration Building (1937)

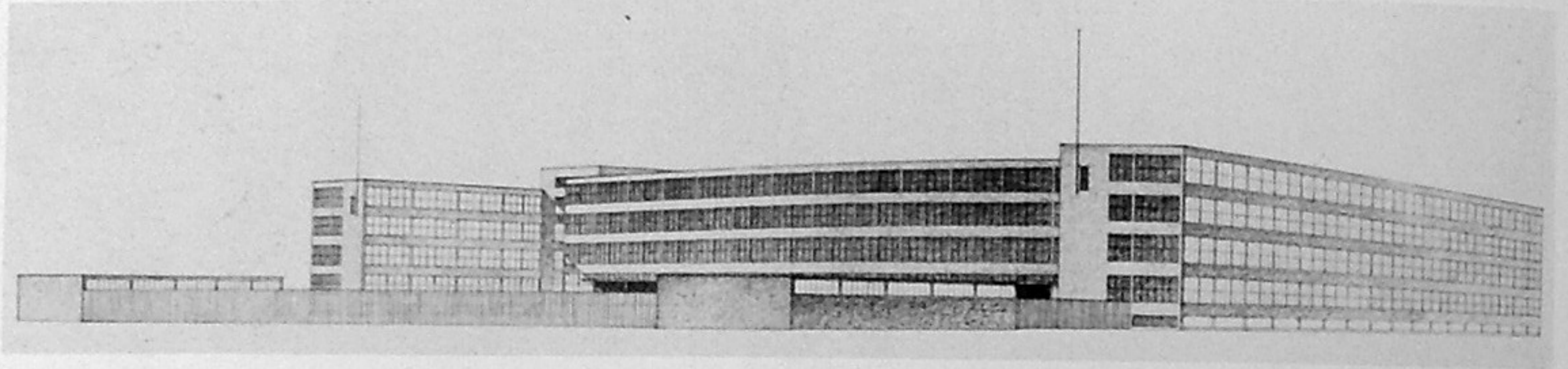
The last major building Mies designed in Germany was the administrative headquarters of the silk industry in Krefeld. Mies himself probably had very little to do with the project – he was in the United States of America for the large part of 1937 and had left his office in the charge of Lilly Reich.

The symmetrical splayed plan strongly resembled that of the Reichsbank project and, once again, Eduard Ludwig was the draughtsman.

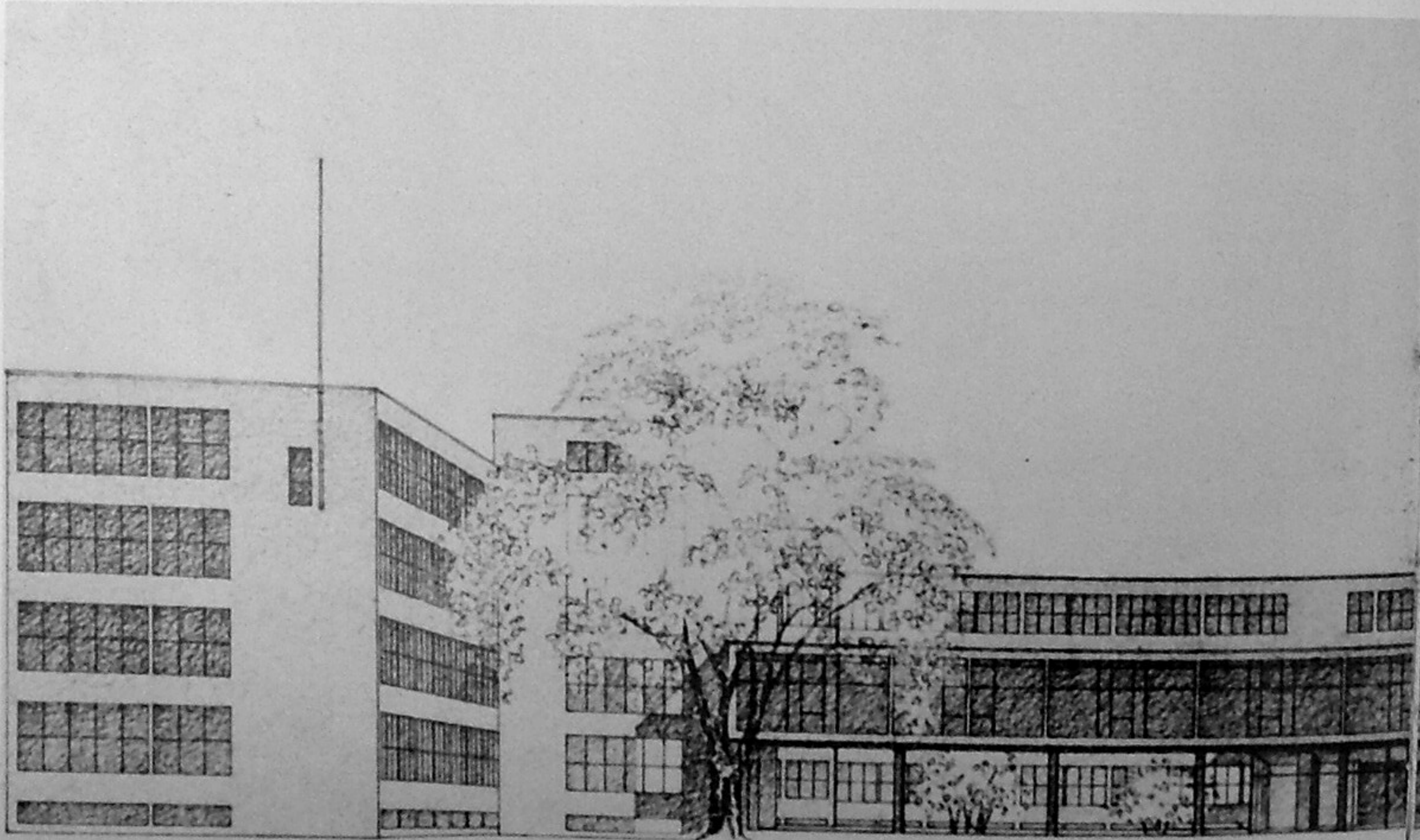
- 1 Model
- 2-3 Perspective drawings
- 4 Main hall



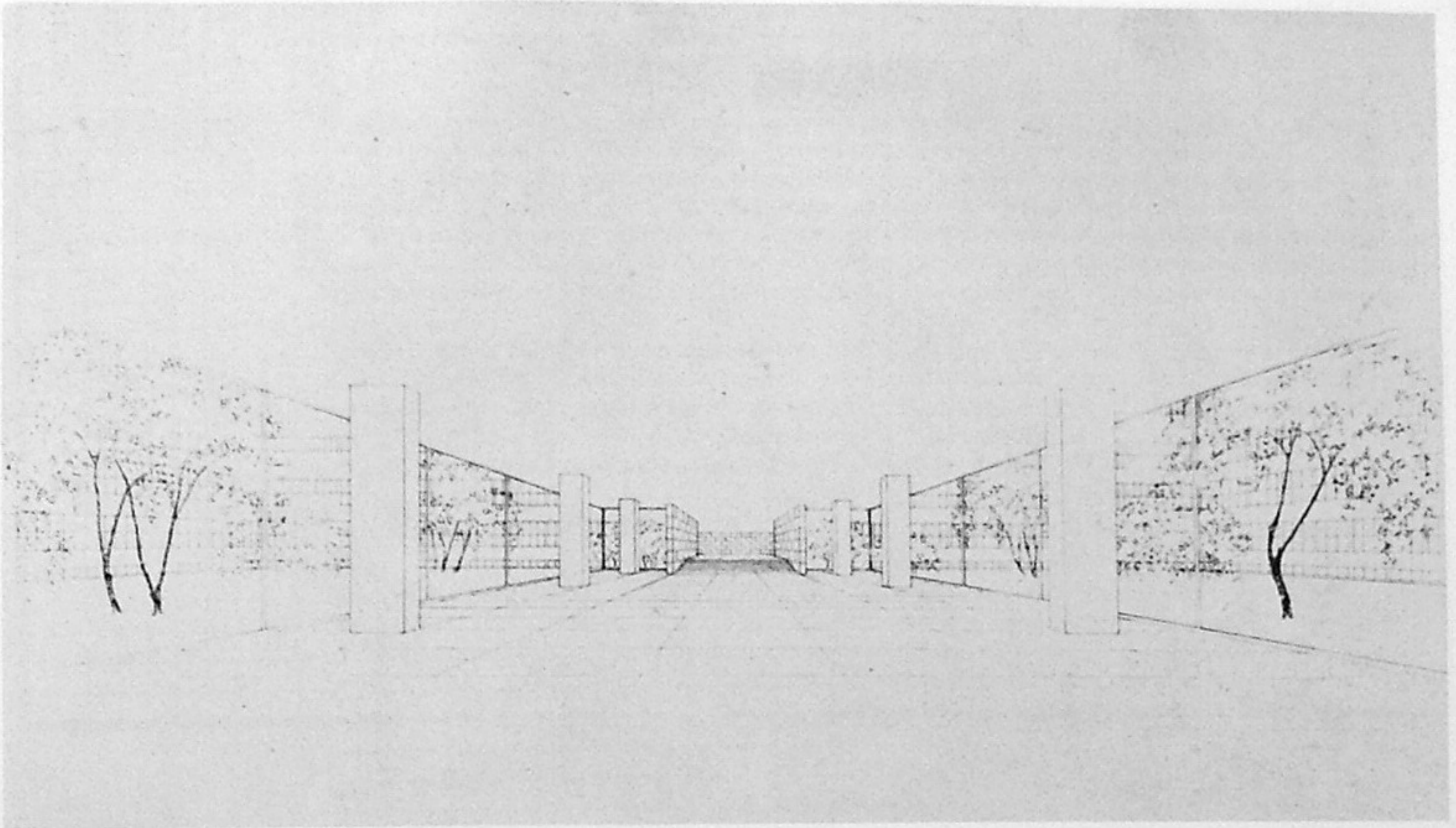
1



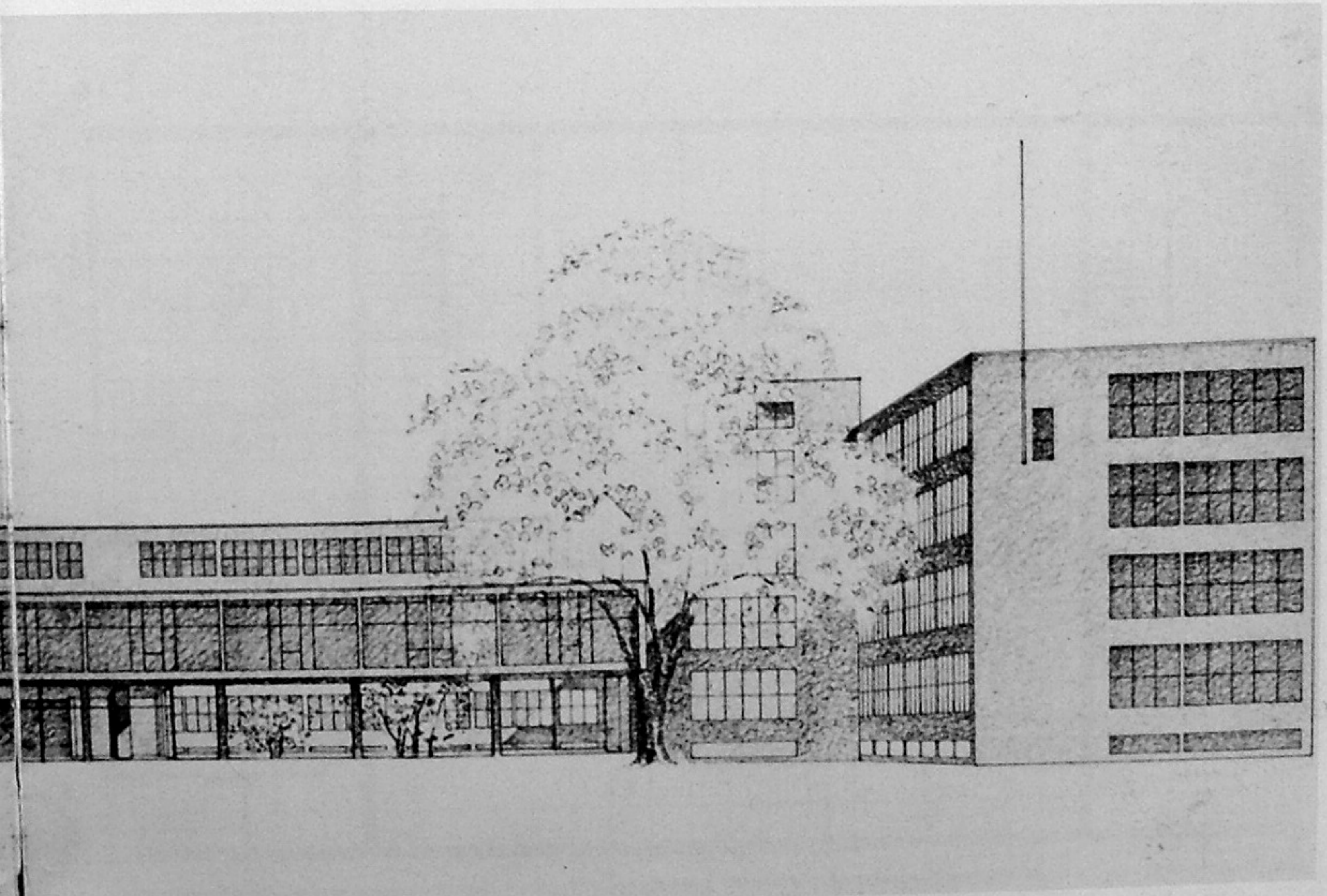
2



3



4



Court-House Projects

In the thirties, Mies van der Rohe developed a series of projects for court-houses on imaginary sites. He began these studies in 1931 with his Bauhaus students to investigate the urban possibilities of the court-house. The houses were all confined within a single rectangle formed by the enclosing walls of the court and the exterior walls of the house. Some houses were grouped together in an overall rectangle; some were designed in rows.

The plans of the houses were shaped as L's, T's or I's, and their exterior walls to the court were glazed in their entirety. The walls forming part of the enclosing rectangle were all of brick and windowless – the entrances were the only openings to the 'outside'. All the projects were rectangular in planning except one: a virtuoso study in

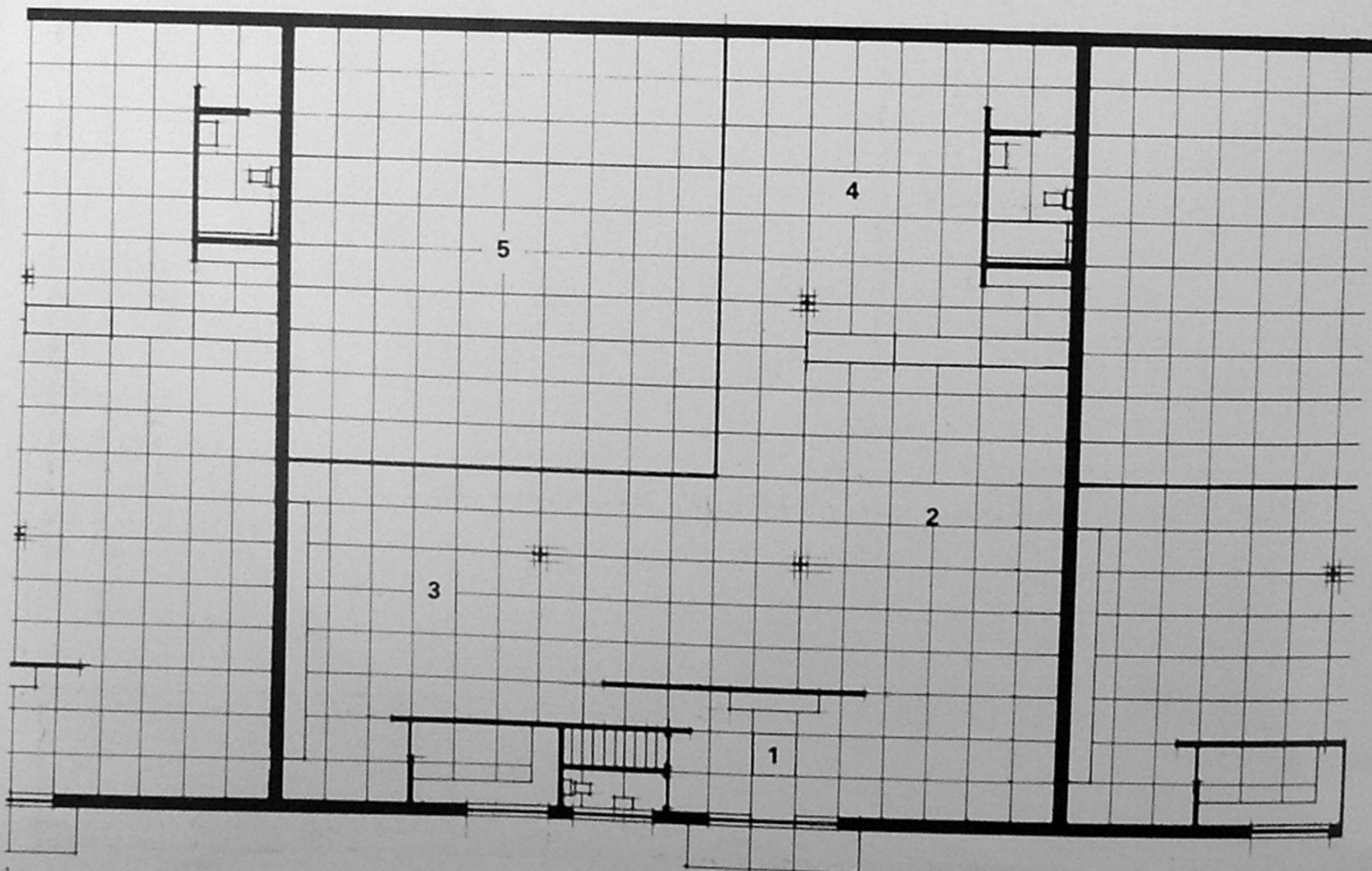
which Mies introduced a diagonal axis inside the rectangular frame and successfully avoided oblique and acute angles by curving the interior screens.

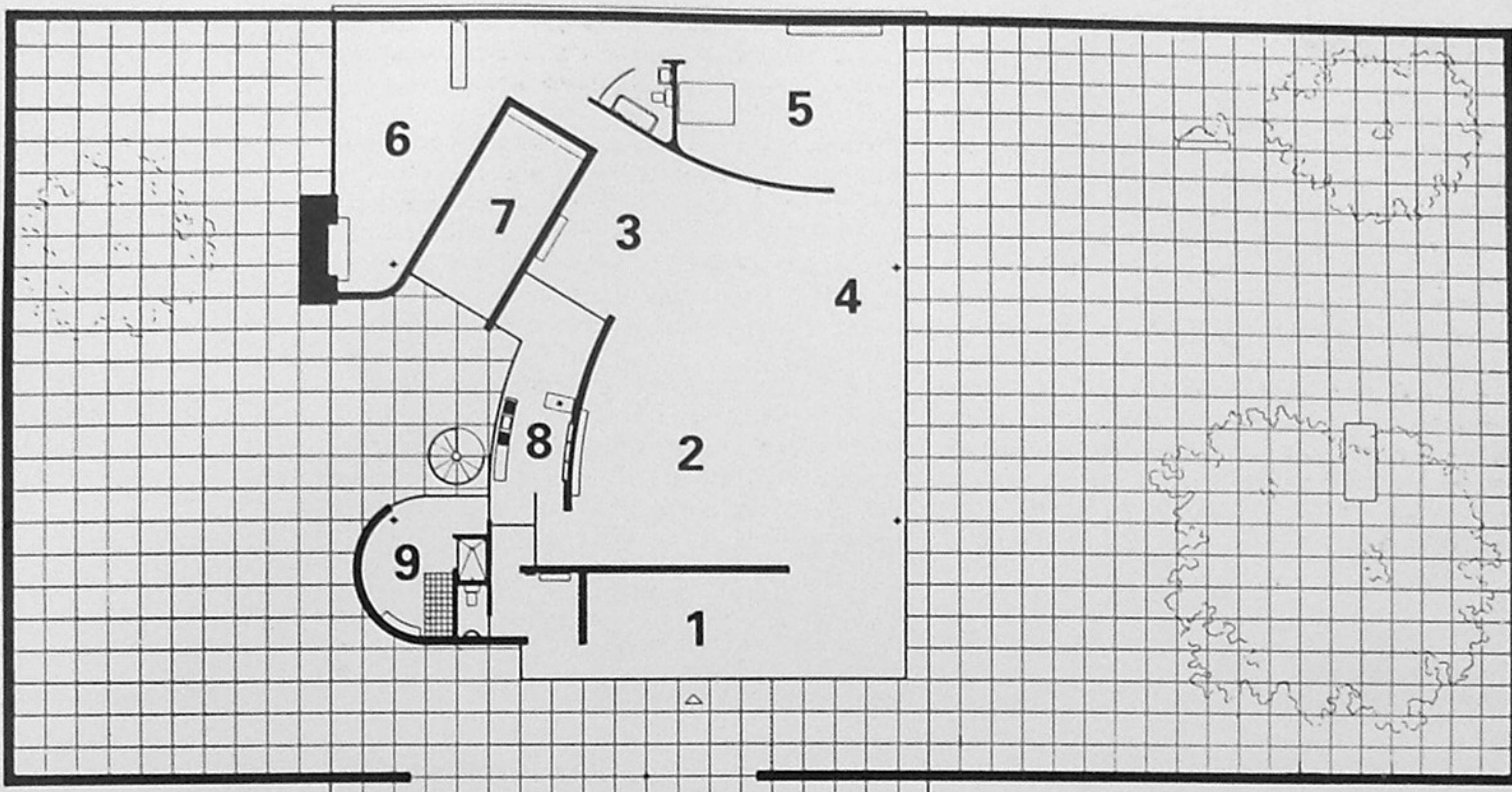
In the Row Houses (1931), each identical unit occupied a square site; glass separated the L-shaped house from the interior court – another square which gave both wings of the house the same width. In the House with Three Courts a rectangular garden court occupied just over half the site, while the other courts were formed by the T-shaped of the house abutting the perimeter walls on three sides.

The interior perspectives with collaged screens illustrating these two projects were executed in Chicago in 1939, with the help of Mies' students at the Armour Institute of Technology. Although Mies had used the montage technique before, he never used it as a teaching method in Germany.

- 1 Row Houses plan
- 2 Court-House with garage
- 3 Group of Court-Houses

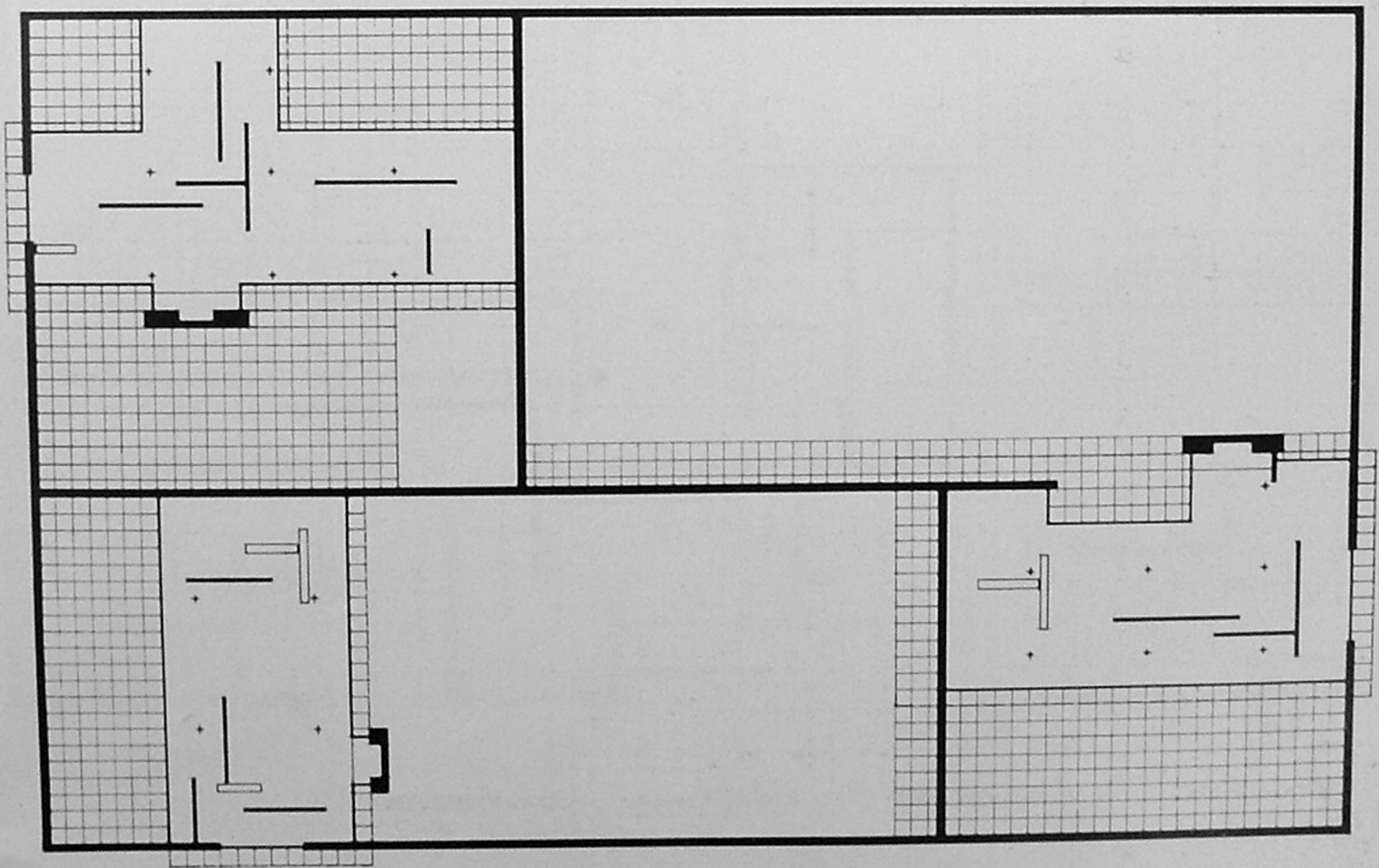
- KEY
- 1 Lobby
 - 2 Living area
 - 3 Dining area
 - 4 Bedroom
 - 5 Courtyard





- KEY**
- 1 Entrance
 - 2 Living area
 - 3 Dining room
 - 4 Guest sleeping area
 - 5 Bedroom
 - 6 Study
 - 7 Garage
 - 8 Kitchen
 - 9 Maid's room

2

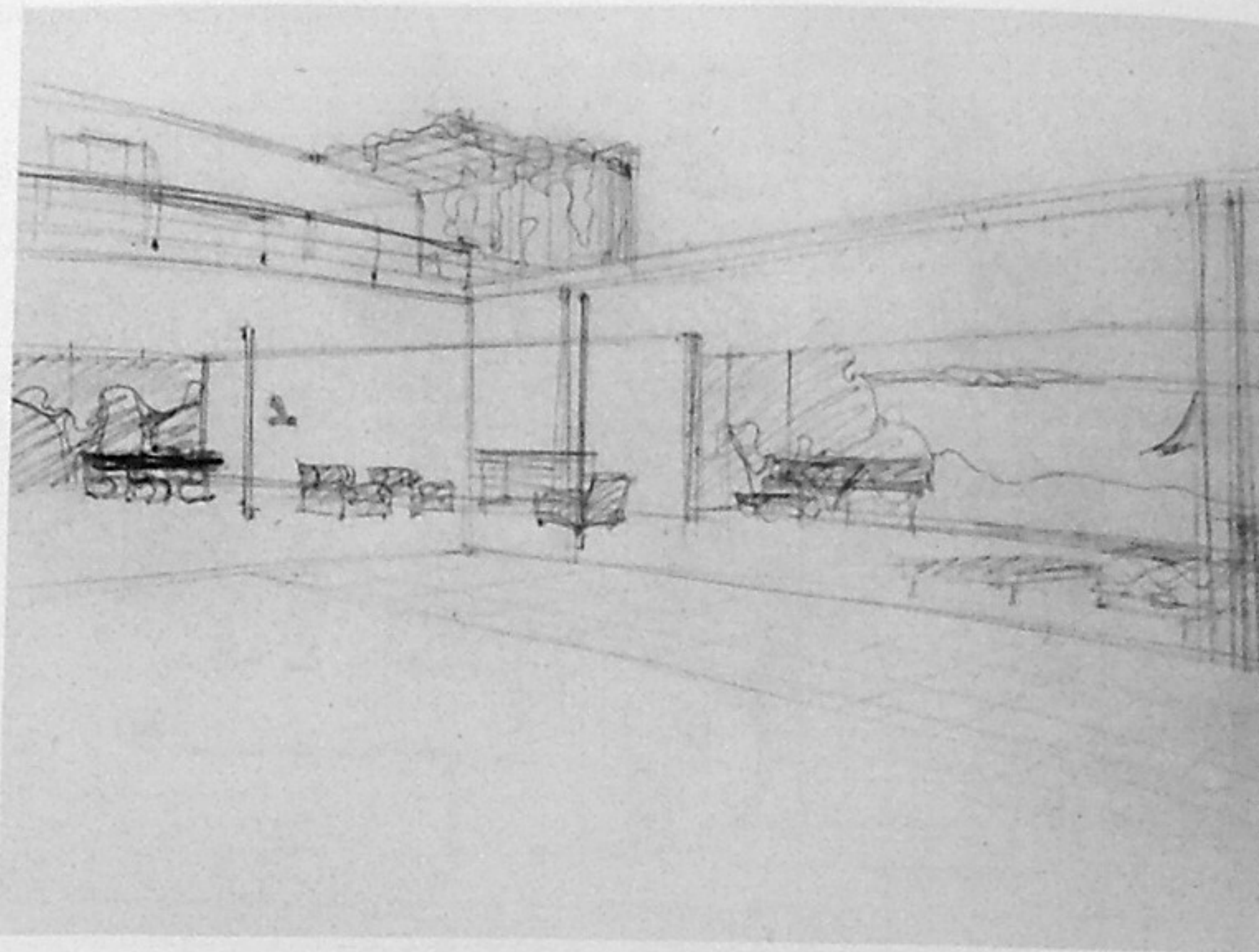


3

Gericke House (1930)

The house drew its inspiration from the Concrete Country House (1923), but here was the first example of Mies' interest in the court-house: its lower level branches out to enclose a court on two sides, with the third side closed by a retaining wall and the fourth left open. As in the Tugendhat House, a semi-circular staircase leads from the street level to the living areas on the lower floor.

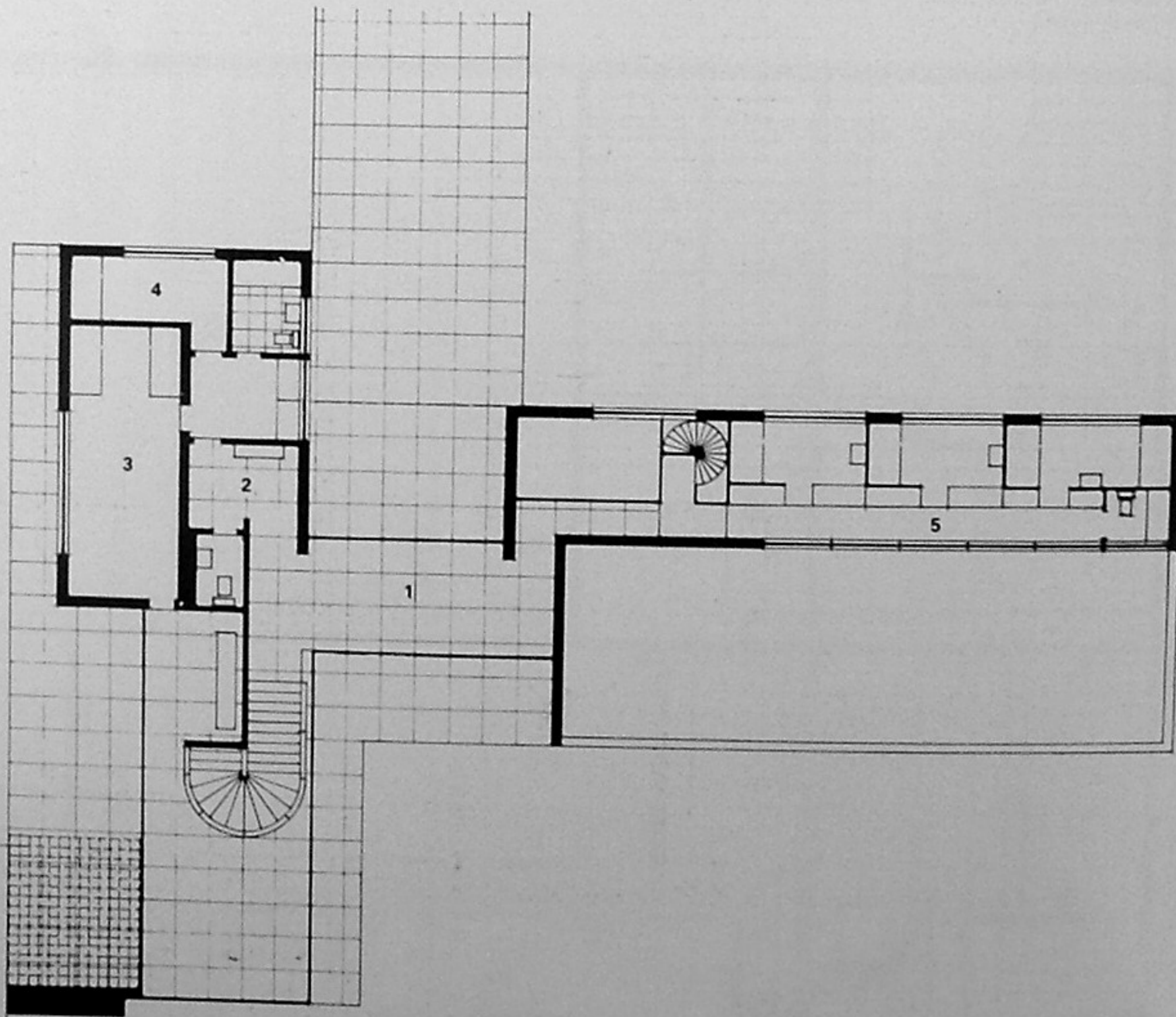
The client, an art historian, took the unusual step of holding a competition for the design of his own house on a sloping site bordering the Wannsee in Berlin. Five architects were invited to submit designs, but none of the projects was built – Gericke preferred his own design.



- 1 Interior perspective of dining area (left), and living room (right), seen from court
- 2 Upper floor plan

1

- KEY**
- 1 Entrance
 - 2 Garderobe
 - 3 Children's room
 - 4 Maid's room
 - 5 Servants' wing

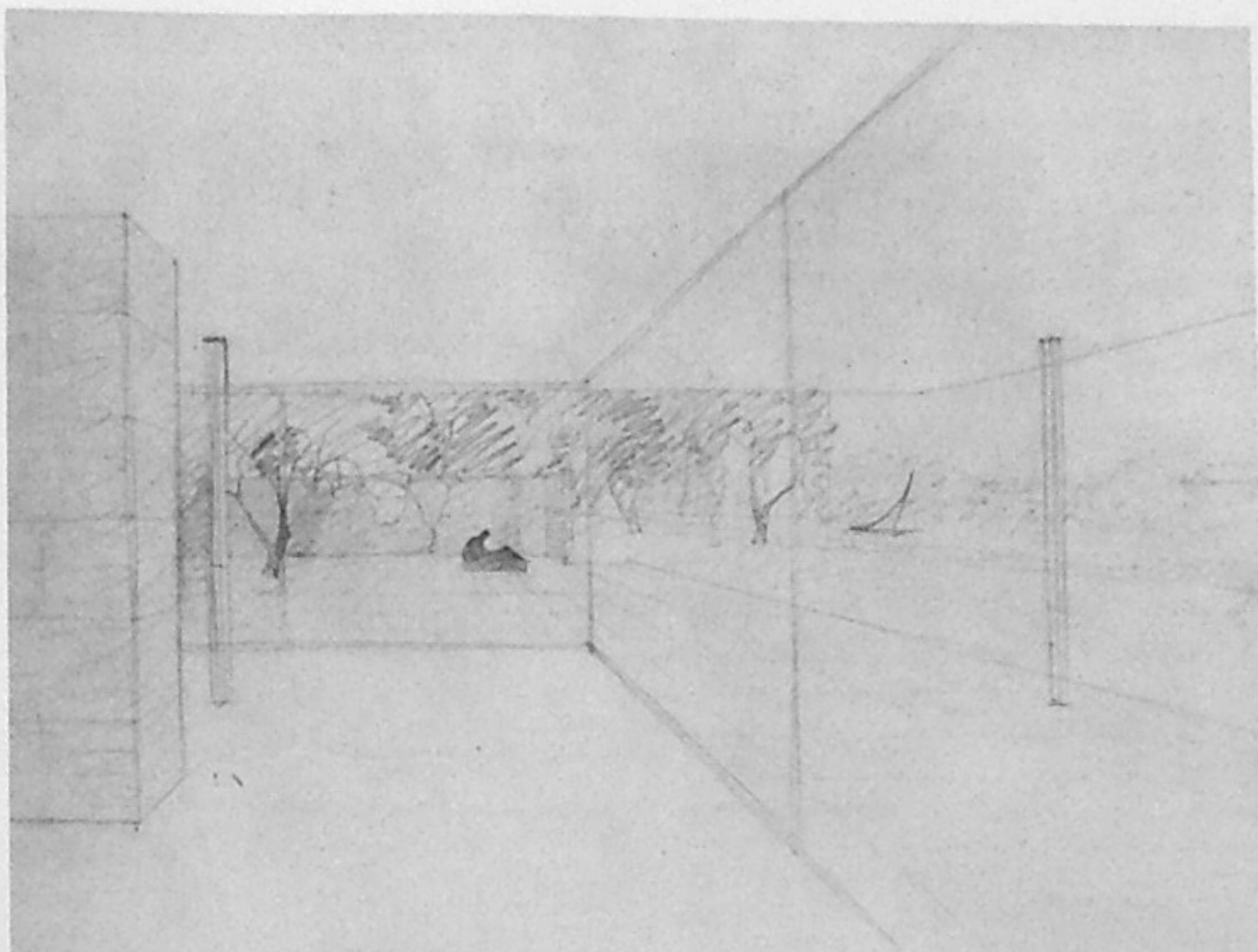


2

Hubbe House (1935)

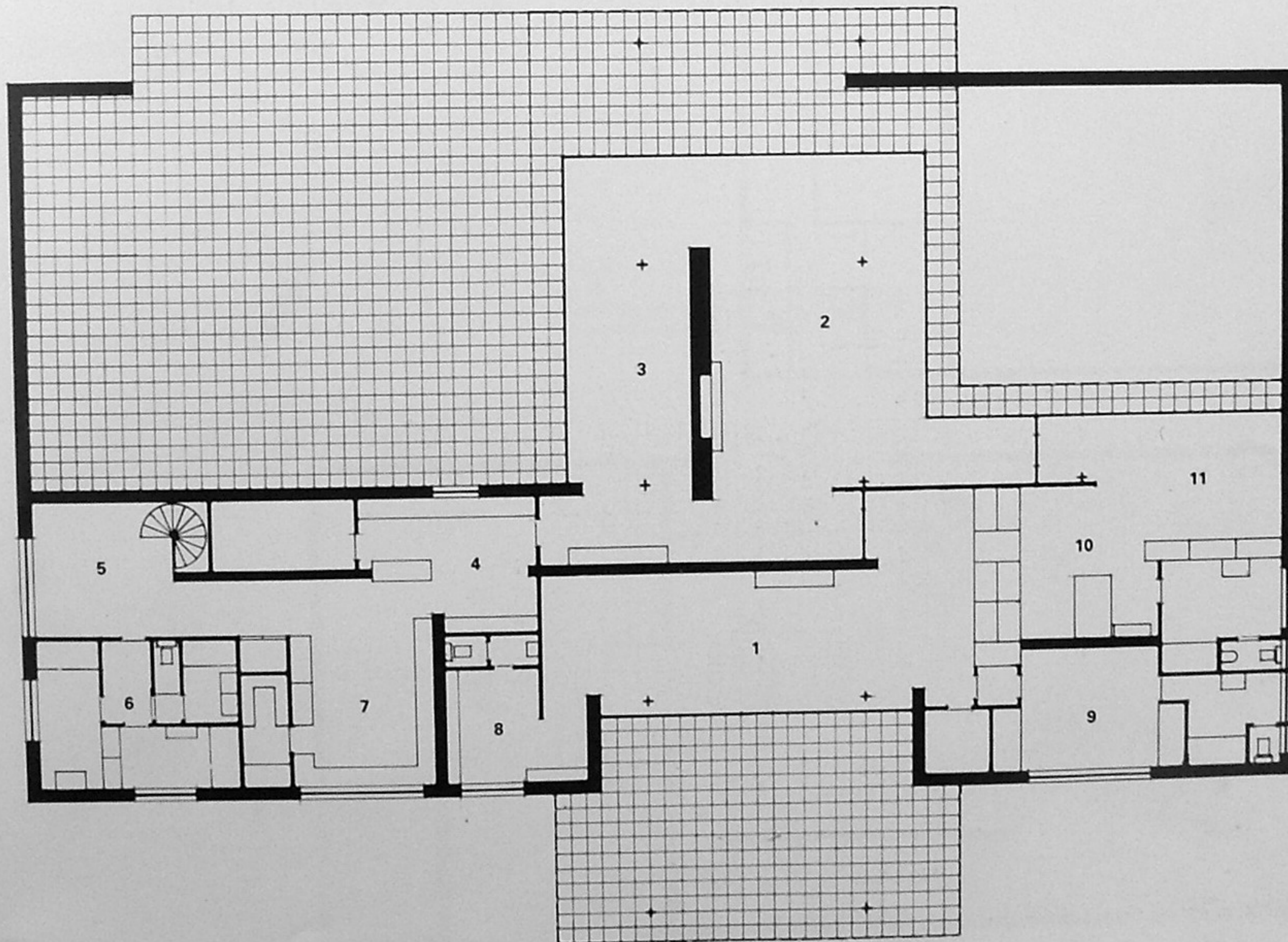
The last house Mies designed for a specific client in Germany was the Hubbe House. The site was on an island in the Elbe River in Magdeburg, and the client lived on her own but entertained frequently.

Both the Lange and Hubbe projects show the perfection to which Mies brought the court-house. The use of carefully selected and framed views was inspired by traditional Japanese architecture.



1 Perspective of living room and terrace with Elbe River
2 Ground floor plan

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| KEY | 6 Servants' quarters |
| 1 Entrance | 7 Kitchen |
| 2 Living area | 8 Garderobe |
| 3 Dining area | 9 Guest bedroom suite |
| 4 Servery | 10 Main bedroom suite |
| 5 Personnel | 11 Study |



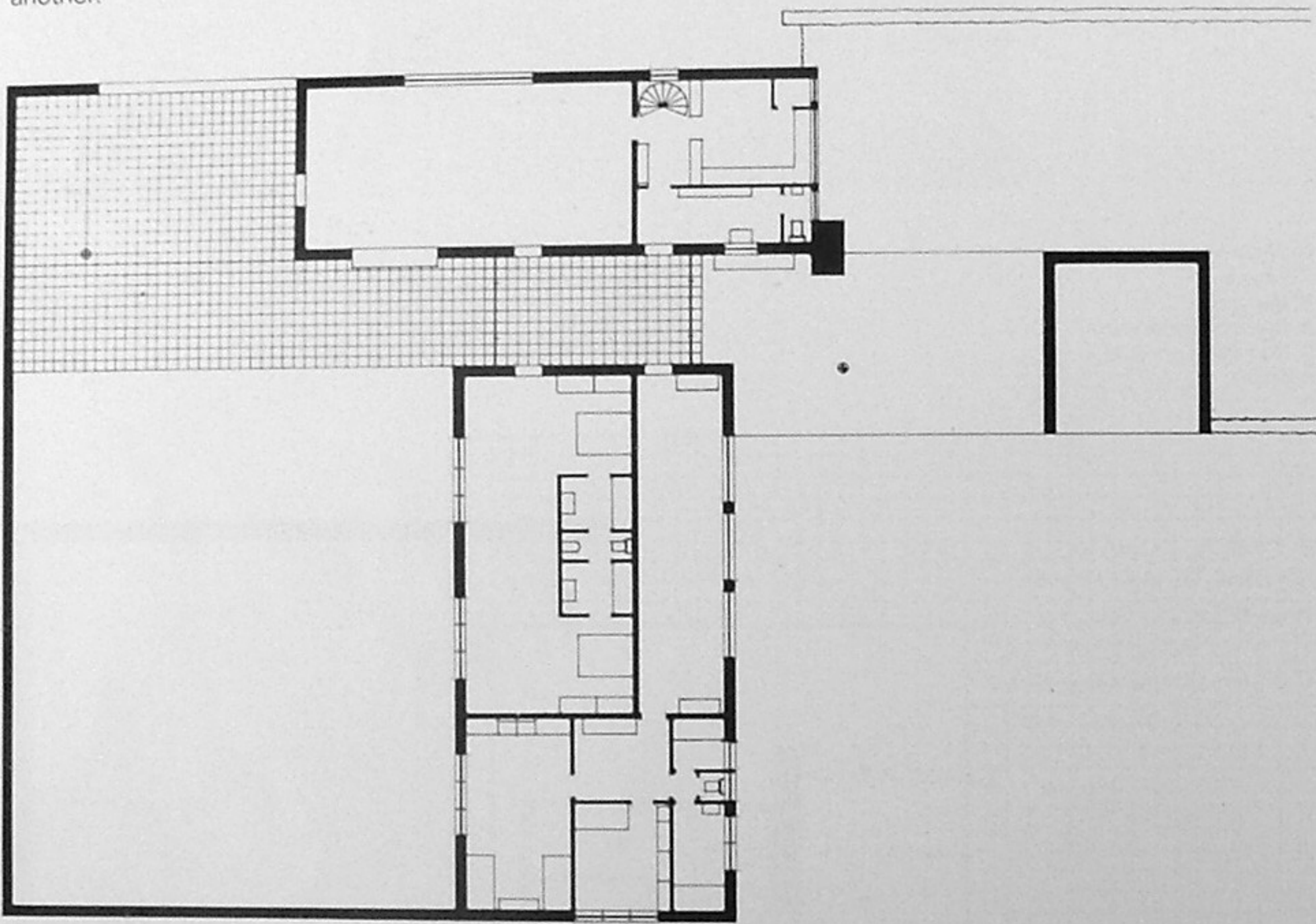
Ulrich Lange House (1935)

The Lange family of Krefeld were very kind to Mies during the Nazi years. The textile industrialist's son, Ulrich, commissioned Mies to design his house, and two schemes were proposed. The first project was still inspired by the Concrete Country House – the division into separate wings; while the second project came closer to the classic Miesian court-house – the confinement within a single rectangle.

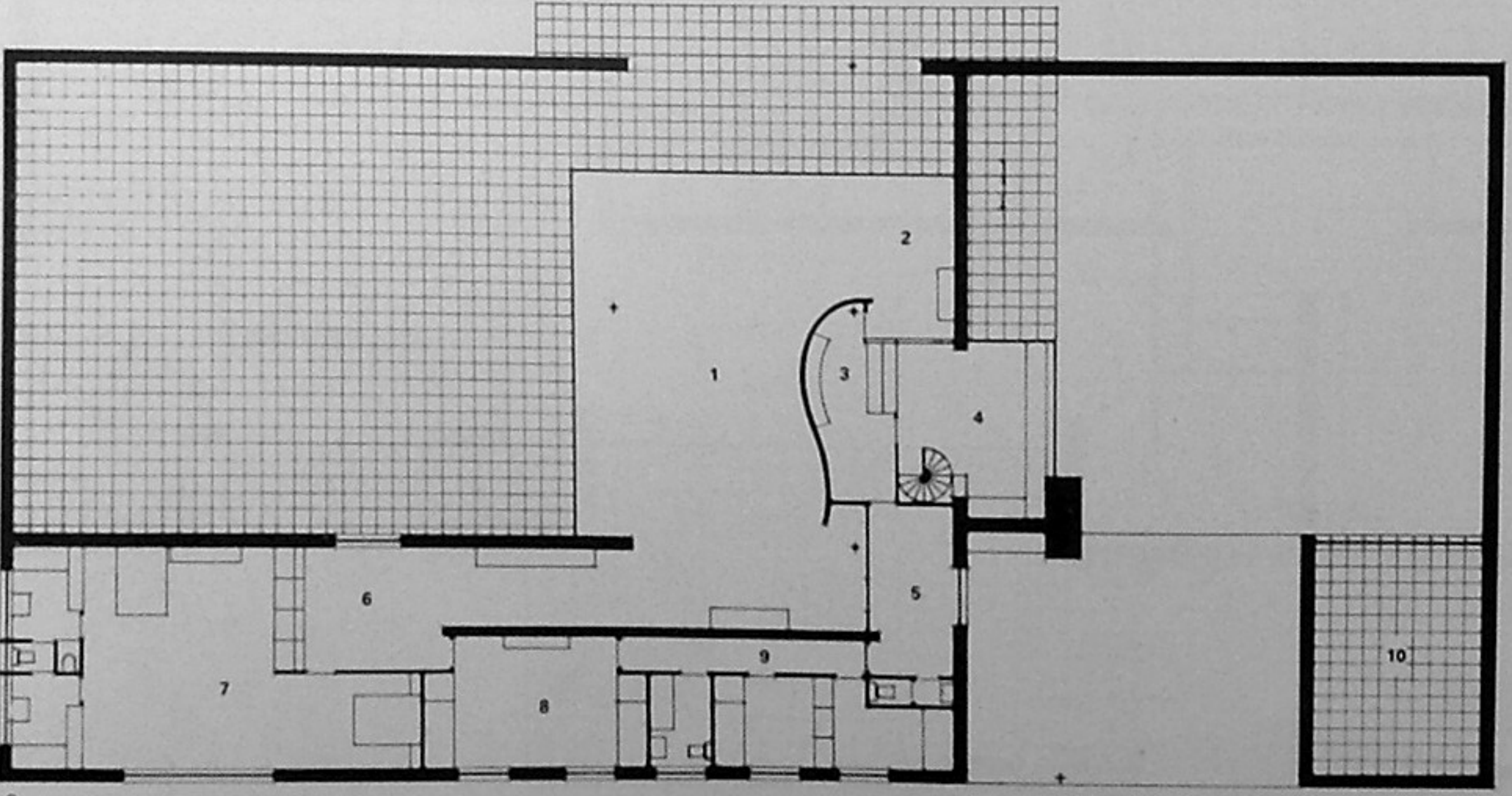
Neither scheme was built because the local authorities refused to issue a permit unless the house was hidden from the street by an earth berm (and modern architecture was 'banned' in 1933). It is interesting to note that in each project there are two beds in the main bedroom and the beds could be screened from one another.



1



2



3

- 1 Street elevation
- 2 First scheme plan
- 3 Second scheme plan

- KEY**
- 1 Living area
 - 2 Dining area
 - 3 Servery
 - 4 Kitchen
 - 5 Entrance
 - 6 Study
 - 7 Main bedroom suite
 - 8 Children's room
 - 9 Servants' quarters
 - 10 Garage

Single Space Projects

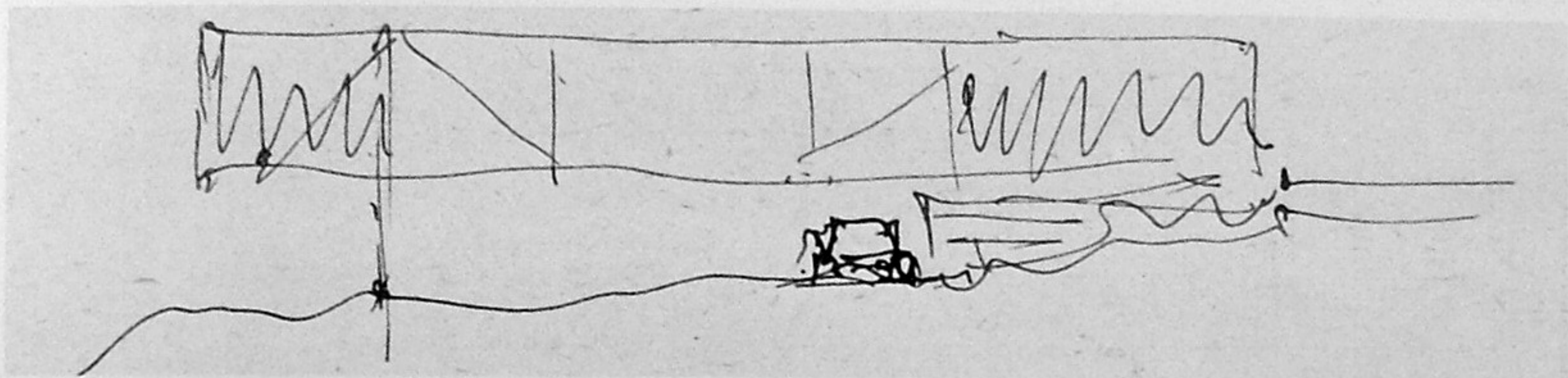
From childhood Mies had liked sparsely furnished rooms. He remembered the white-washed interiors of peasant houses around Aachen; the simple, bare rooms had to serve many functions. In the early twenties Mies

used to criticise Hugo Häring for imposing a functional order on his buildings; he suggested that Häring design large, flexible spaces instead.

House on a Hillside (1934)

In the Tyrol Mies produced a number of deceptively casual sketches for country houses. One particularly striking sketch illustrated a glass house jutting out from the hillside on stilts – a floating, self-contained cage. Mies realised this concept in the Farnsworth House (Illinois, 1945-50).

1 Elevation



1

Brussels Pavilion (1934)

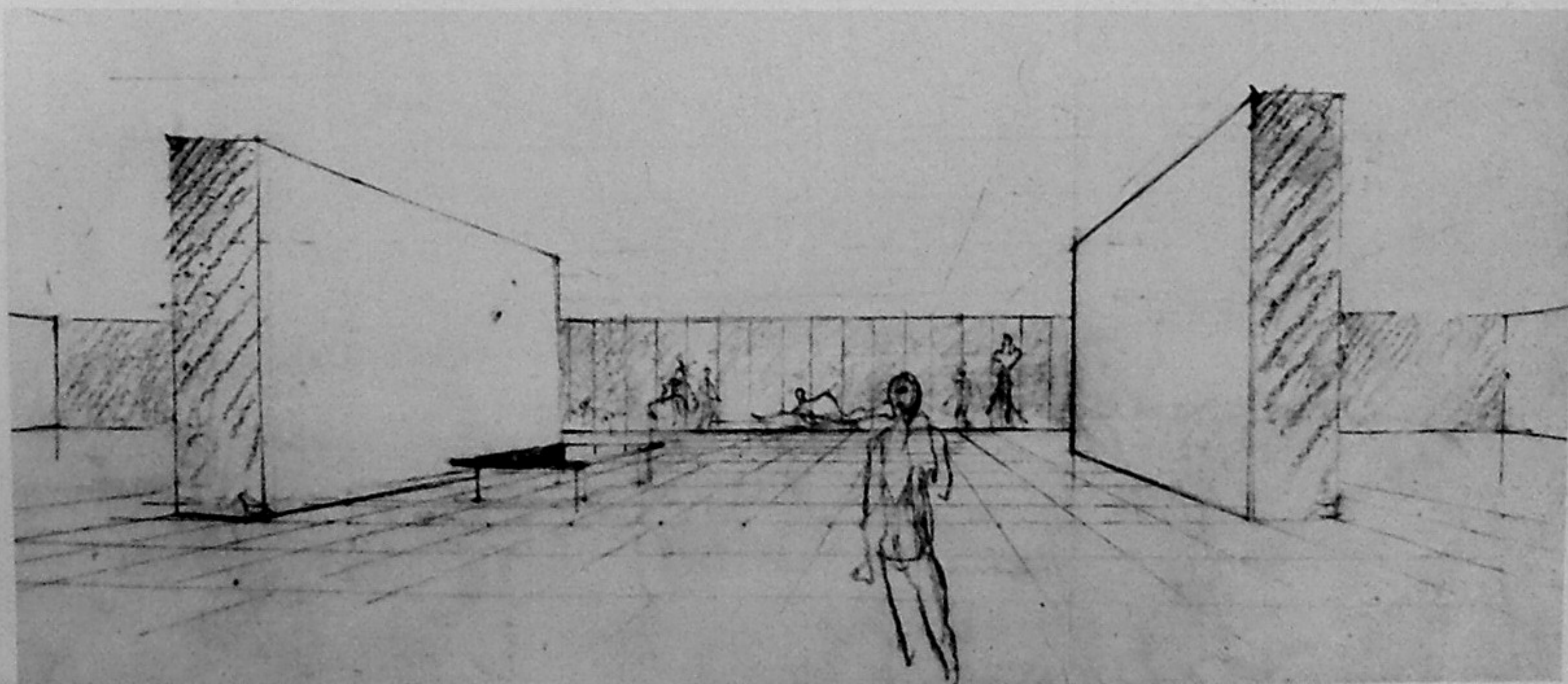
Mies van der Rohe submitted an entry in the competition to design the German National Pavilion at the forthcoming Brussels International Exhibition (1935). He went to Brussels with a group of friends to see the site.

Some of the first sketches (drawn by Sergius Ruegenberg) show a square, single space pavilion, glazed on two sides. This project inspired the large, fully glazed pavilions Mies was to design and build in the future. (The final Brussels scheme became more complex, but it was modern and provoked the wrath of Hitler.)

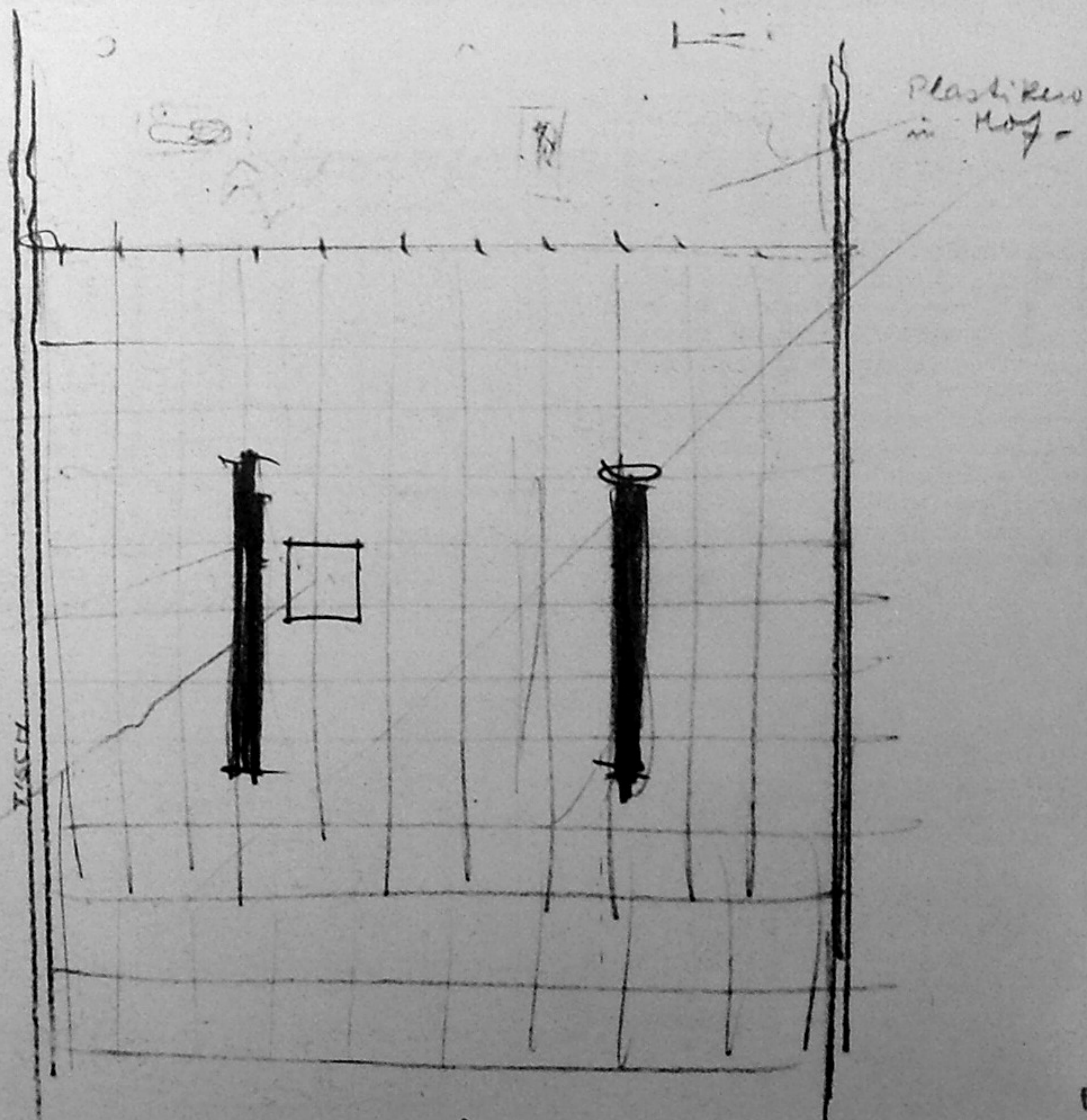
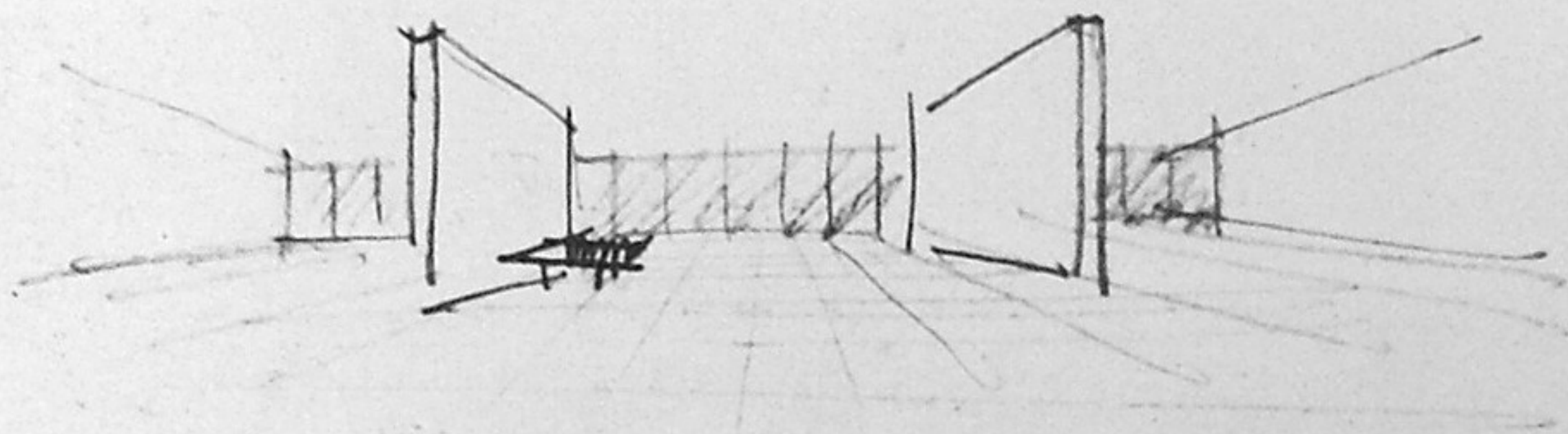
2 Interior perspective

Page 92

3 Sketch plan and perspective
(drawn by Sergius Ruegenberg)



2



Zeichen

TISCH

Plastikew
in Hof-

Tische
Eintragungen



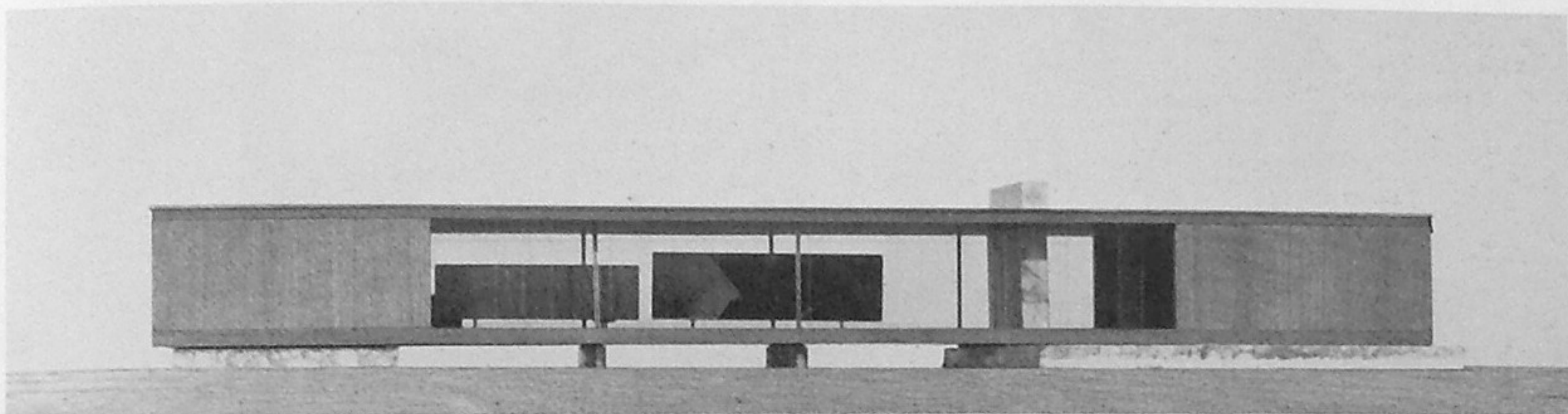
Brinck 1935

Resor House (1938)

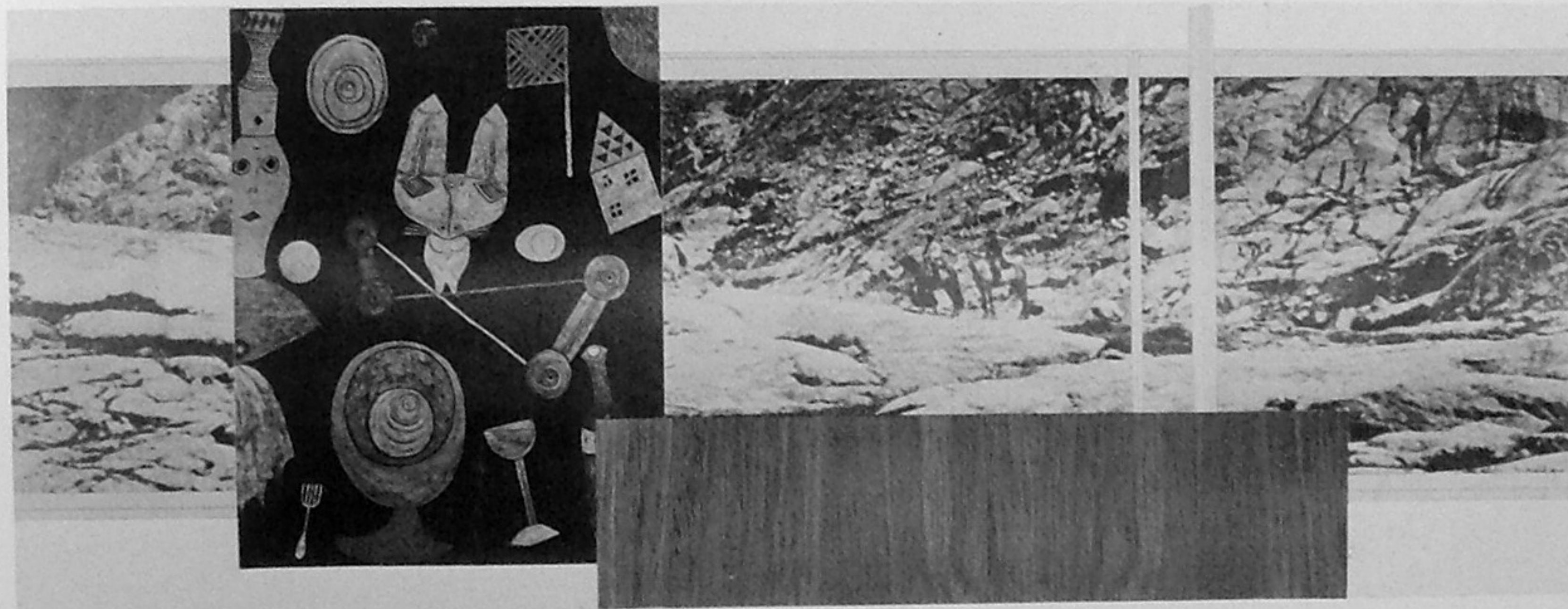
In 1937 Mr and Mrs Stanley Resor invited Mies to design a vacation house for them at Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He went to the United States of America on a prolonged visit (all expenses paid by the Resors) and first visited the Wyoming site. In New York he prepared the drawings with the help of two American ex-Bauhaus students, John Rodgers and William Priestly.

A long rectangle in plan, the house was designed to bridge a millrace, its steel and wood frame resting on two piers and on platforms on either shore. (These platforms replaced an existing bridge structure in order to bring the house closer to the ground.) It was to have been sheathed in cypress planking wrapped round either end and joined by two indented stretches of glass. Interposed walls sub-divided the living area which offered framed views of the mountainous landscape and stream.

- 1 Model
- 2 Interior perspective of living room looking south through window
- 3 View from interior



1



2



3



Mies van der Rohe: An Appreciation

ADRIAN GALE



Mies spoke little and wrote less. In conversation he appeared almost reluctant to discuss his work. What he did write or say was terse, aphoristic and at times enigmatic. This can partly be explained by a difficulty that remained with Mies all his life – a difficulty in speaking English.¹ As Mies' biographers have tended to catalogue the building projects, without analysis or criticism, the cloak of obscurity has never been penetrated. No essay has illuminated his work or attempted to examine the work of the office in a fresh light. The first monograph, written by Philip Johnson in 1940 at the time of Mies' first exhibition in America at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and recently reprinted, still remains the most informative and observant survey to date. Philip Johnson was responsible for Mies' first visit to the USA when he asked Mies to design a new apartment for him in his brownstone terrace house in New York.

Mies' productive life as an architect consisted of two distinctly separate periods of thirty years' work; the first in Europe from 1908 to 1938, and the second following his arrival in the USA in 1939 to his death in 1969. These two phases of his architectural development are usually described as one logical sequence starting with the Riehl House in 1907 through to the New National Gallery in Berlin of 1968, the last of his works. It is interesting to note that in the last ten years of his life, Mies was called back to Europe to be commissioned on a number of projects, the New National Gallery being the only one to survive to construction.

This essay examines this development, showing how Mies' work responded to the experimental and innovative period in Europe from 1910 to 1930, a period of Mies' most vigorous, active work. It then goes on to show how the emphasis of his work shifted retrospectively, following his settlement in Chicago, to become more orthodox, more conventional and more nineteenth-century in character.

The background to this is a life split in half by the tide of Nazism in Germany, forcing Mies to seek a future in the more certain conditions of the confident and optimistic American Midwest. Was Mies influenced by the ambience of the economic and philosophical climate that he found around him? His emigration to the USA involved coming to terms with a new culture, learning to speak a new language, and acquainting himself with a new building technology that stemmed from the skin and bones architecture of the Chicago School. Together, these

resulted in a new architecture, an architecture, however, which was possibly much closer to his formal nineteenth-century origins than were the more inventive projected and executed European schemes of the twenties and thirties. The seminal European work, celebrating the use of glass, concrete and brick, formed the basis of his international reputation, established overnight, and was an atypical deviation from the mainstream of Mies' work which preceded and followed this period.

The important innovative projects were never iconoclastic. They were not an attack upon contemporary convention. They were daring examinations of what might be done with new materials in the art of building construction. They had no revolutionary or social zeal. Mies did not interpret his role as architect as being connected with social radicalism. In fact he remained apolitical for the whole of his life, preferring to keep out of any political limelight. Shy and taciturn in conversation, he seemed anxious to avoid any light of dissension or controversy being shone on his work. His writings in *Gestaltung* and in the papers published by the Novembergruppe were terse and enigmatic without taking up any consecutive argument. Mies preferred the discussion to be limited to 'how' rather than 'why'. As the buildings were never instruments of reform they did not signal any meaning beyond their own programme. Mies' work, of whatever period, does not appear to question the orthodoxy or status quo of the time. If anything, it achieves the reverse, endorsing the moderate view of the bourgeoisie.

Mies began his life as an essentially conservative architect, developing through the twenties by pointing to the dramatic possibilities of the technological revolution with his unexecuted studies of glass towers, single-storey houses, and concrete cantilevered office buildings. Even the seminal building, the Barcelona Pavilion, has a reassurance about it that appeared orthodox and conventional. Later, after the flurry and excitement of the projects of the early twenties, Mies settled back into more austere and conservative solutions. After all, onyx and travertine are not materials normally associated with revolutionary or innovative architecture. Once he had secured recognition by virtue of the extreme projects undertaken in Europe, and found a safe haven in the USA, Mies appeared able to relax as an avantgardist. This sudden shift in emphasis following his arrival in Chicago can be illustrated by studying Mies' spaces and the way in which volume and space became modified by a developing attitude towards structure.

¹ Farnsworth House, 1950, interior

Space

Although throughout his life Mies remained concerned with two different building typologies, the pavilion and the tower, they were both made up entirely of single-storey spaces. Thus Mies remained solely interested in the pavilion or single-storey building: he was preoccupied by horizontal space. The vertical emphasis of the towers was dependent upon the number of single-storey spaces that were stacked on top of each other, and did not reflect any internal programme or vertical organisation.

The only exceptions to this horizontal perception of space are the competition project for the National Theatre at Mannheim (1953), the preliminary study for the First National City Bank at Des Moines, Iowa (1958), both unbuilt, and the Bacardi Office Building in Santiago de Cuba (1957), all of which have widely pierced first floors providing a double-height space stretching from ground floor up to first floor ceiling above. Nevertheless, in each case the predominant statement remains a major space floating above a minor. The truth of one single space connecting the two is thinly disguised.

The importance of the ceiling plane as the upper definition of the interior space is reinforced in the former two projects by a practice peculiar to Mies, namely that of positioning the trusses outside, above the roof which hangs beneath them, suggesting a downward force which squeezes the space horizontally. The enclosing plane overhead is complemented by the enclosing plane underfoot, made invariably of a dense and impenetrable material such as marble or granite. The horizontal pressure of space is again exaggerated by the transparency of the all-glass perimeter wall plane through which the space escapes to the outside.

This exclusive concern for the horizontal space defined between ceiling and floor planes is in strong contrast to the vertical emphasis that Le Corbusier gave to space which was usually prescribed between vertical planes of wall. Sections illustrate little in Mies' work that is not already apparent from studying the plan. On the other hand, for a full understanding of Corb's spaces, examination of the section is as important as the plan.

These two quite different interpretations of space by Mies and Le Corbusier can be more easily understood by examination of their individually different techniques of handling a staircase connecting any two levels. Corb makes play of the diagonal generative geometry of a stair or ramp by use of the solid balustrade. Mies, on the other hand, suppresses any suggestion of vertical contiguity with imperceptible, minimalist steel tubed or bar handrails which incise their way precisely through the floor.

Wright, like Mies, was concerned with horizontal space but explored its vertical layering by continually piercing flat ceiling planes to leave the vertical edge of the punctured strata running continuously round the volume, frequently with a clerestory between the layers.

Lilly Reich began her collaboration with Mies in 1927 when together they designed a series of exhibits for the silk and glass industry. These relied on textiles and glass being used as display screens of varying heights and importance. The screens, free-standing in a single volume, were not interruptions of space but allowed space to flow around, between, and in some cases over the display, giving continuity to the composition. A series of minor spaces became implicitly defined within the total space. The effect that these exhibition projects had can be shown in the plans of the projects, built and unbuilt, that followed immediately afterwards while Mies was still in Europe.

It was a three-dimensional manifestation of the influence of De Stijl's concern with line (as opposed to mass) which first showed itself in the plan of the Brick Country House. The composition was not at rest, was not concluded or resolved, and so imparted a powerful sense of dynamic. Thus the flow of space was forced

to the edge. In the building projects the edge of the roof was the equivalent of the edge of the De Stijl picture, with the space running out beyond it. The impetus of space was always forcing itself outwards. In the case of the Brick Country House the explosion was equal on both axes. In the buildings that followed the volume controlled the pressure, defining major axes and direction. The space became less dense in progressive contours as it ran outwards from the centre. Mies used this spatial technique to define a hierarchy of sub-spaces within the plan. Bathrooms, kitchens and storage spaces are densely confined in the centre of the plan, and as the volume became freer towards the perimeter, so the use of space implicitly became of more consequence. Ultimately the accommodation against the invisible, outer wall of glass became synonymous with the public realm beyond – a passage from the particular to the general. Thus the restraint of Mies' facades, which never allow the particular or empirical any evidence in the public realm.

The two archetypes of Mies' manipulation of space moderated by column and screen are the Barcelona Pavilion and Tugendhat House of 1929. The Barcelona Pavilion was the abstract pilot project which employed the principles in a building without function. These same principles were then applied to the more challenging situation of a house on a sloping site. Not typical of the period, Mies' design for the Tugendhat House conceived the entrance and supplementary rooms at street level. Sloping sites provoked house designs that usually either swept out horizontally into space on concrete stalks, or used the space enclosed between a flat roof at the upper level and the slope below to give a descending arrangement of floor levels culminating in a double-height section.

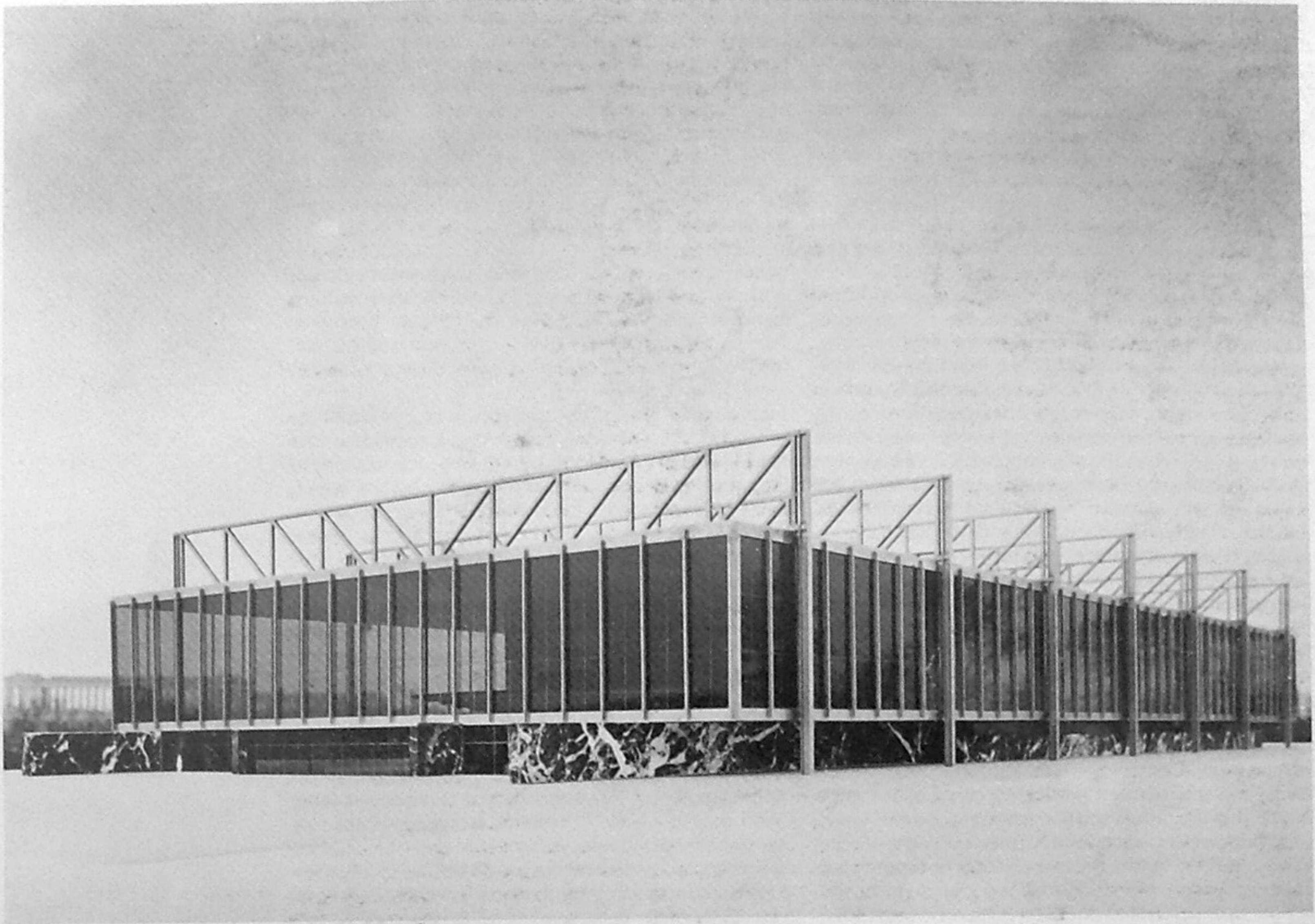
Mies always remained embarrassed by sites that were not flat, so he incorporated into the conception a podium which formed a platform on which the building could then be constructed. Examples of this include both his first and last European commissions, namely the Riehl House of 1907, his entry for a competition for the Bismarck Monument of 1912, the Gericke House of 1930 (a developed variation of the Tugendhat House), the Seagram Building, New York, of 1955, the Bacardi Office Building, Cuba, of 1957, the Krupp Office Building of 1960 and finally the New National Gallery in Berlin of 1962.

Although Mies writes about skeletal structures in an essay published in the first issue of *Gestaltung* in 1923, it is not until 1933 that the column and floor both appear on the face of the building in the same plane. Both the factory at Krefeld and the silk industry administration building are examples of this first expression of skeleton.

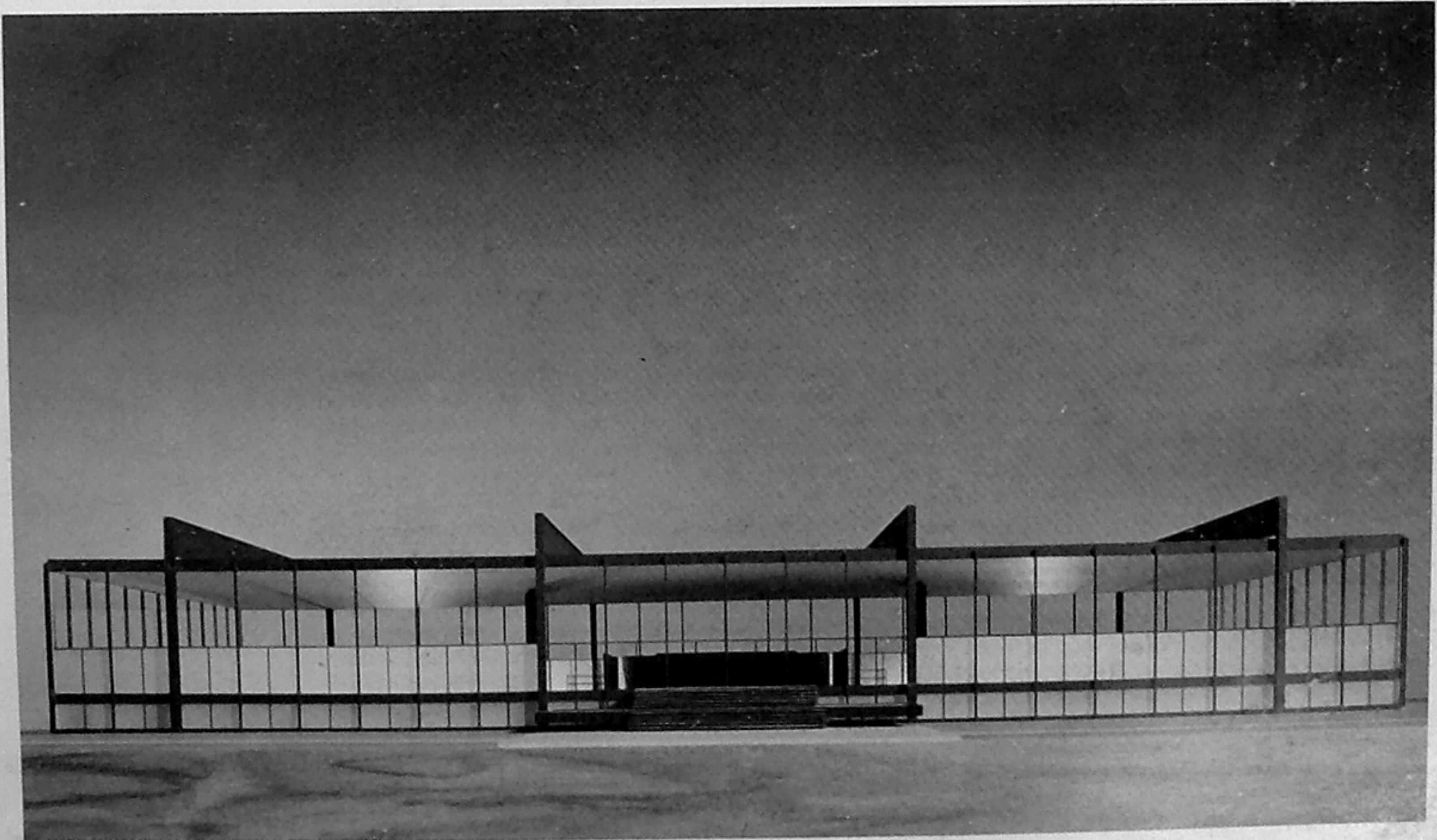
However, it was not until Mies had made his first studies for a steel structured building at the Illinois Institute of Technology after his arrival in the USA, that a continuous expression of ribbed column and beam is evident. Even so, the undulating soffit to the floor construction is concealed above a hung plaster ceiling, maintaining an expression of a flat-slab ceiling plane. It was only subsequently that the ribbed ceiling skeleton became exposed, with the IIT Chapel and Commons buildings being the first example of steel work to appear in the ceiling plane of one of Mies' buildings.

Some of these projects have been criticised, particularly the latter, where the podium, an expressly subordinate space, houses the main collection, whereas what appears to be principal accommodation above, is merely a pavilion consisting of entrance hall and a space for visiting exhibitions. Additionally the statement of dense platform is vitiated by the open garden court lying at the end of the podium with only a thin wall of granite between between court and street. Mies used the same principle in his design for the Tugendhat House. The principal floor lies beneath the secondary floor with a connection made only by a discreet staircase. The two levels of the Tugendhat House coexist as separate horizontal spatial entities – the entry hall, cellular and other supplementary space at the upper street

- 2 Mannheim Opera House project, 1953, model
- 3 Crown Hall, IIT Chicago, 1955, model



2



3

level, and the main formal living spaces beneath. The only element immediately visible on the two floor plans which locks them together is the semi-circular winding stair which drills its way down through the ground floor entrance level to the main floor below. At the main lower level, the stair is secreted between two wall planes, deep in the centre back of the house. From this point of arrival on the floor, the space ebbs out towards the different principal functions around the glazed perimeter wall.

Neither floor admits the presence of the other. Intense concentration is forced upon the virtually invisible connecting staircase. It is a single-storey building split in half with the two fractured pieces piled on top of one another. In the same way that the sharp edge of the Roman travertine ground floor at the Barcelona Pavilion describes the perimeter of the two pools, so does the entrance level floor veneer round the stair at the Tugendhat House. The glazed, semi-circular wall around the head of the stair forces the space outwards, ignoring the opening that is so finely cut into the travertine surface on the ground plane. The top of the diagonal handrail descending with the line of the staircase is kept down, out of sight, below the level of the floor surface. The only element hinting at the presence of an opening in the floor is the horizontal, square, polished chrome tube lining the inner edge of the stairwell.

The plan forms of the European buildings were quite different from the American. The European ones have an asymmetrical dynamic whilst the American buildings revert to a more formal, symmetrical plan that remains in repose. However the European dynamic was retained in the way in which some major groups of American buildings were associated with one another. The identical towers of 860/880 Lakeshore Drive were set at opposite axes to one another and overlapped each other by one bay. The two dissimilar buildings of 900 Lakeshore Drive, the same in height and axis, overlap each other by one bay. The office accommodation to both the Federal Centre complex and the Toronto Dominion Centre is arranged in two buildings, which differ in both height and length but which similarly slide past one another. The two towers in each Centre are complemented and contrasted with a single-storey pavilion at ground floor level, in one case a Post Office and in the latter a bank. The composition of the projected but incomplete scheme for the four Commonwealth towers is symmetrical about one axis – in repose, and asymmetrical about the other – dynamic.

The principle of horizontal space was retained by Mies throughout both European and American periods of his work, although the relationship between structure and space in the tower buildings went through several changes, due to a fundamental decision to abandon the steel skeleton frame in favour of a concrete slab and column system.

Structures

The Farnsworth house is unique in that it appears to be the cross-fertilisation of the two architectures of Mies, namely the dynamic of the European plan and the repose of the American regular structure. It is the embodiment of the dynamic of plan with the structural clarity of skeleton. It remains the only American building (and the first of only two houses that Mies constructed in the USA) with an asymmetrical plan. Now owned by an Englishman it is kept in impeccable condition, resplendent with a comprehensive collection of Mies' furniture.

In the European projects, the insistent, vigorously executed, square structural grid becomes a moderating overlay to the free space. The omni-directional, round or cruciform column used as a prop is an endorsement of the two-way spanning, square bay, maintaining distance between the floor and ceiling planes much as a pit prop in a mine. This prop is representational only of structure, with the columns acting as a reminder of its existence without revealing the continuity of its system.

Structure was not used as an illustration of building systems

engineering but as an architectural device which, together with the free-standing screens, describes the perpetuity of space. The visible continuity of the arcading is constantly interrupted by the screens which have been slid as interventions into the horizontal space that separates floor from ceiling. No downstand beam is allowed to interfere with the plane overhead. Space becomes moderated by screen and ordered by column; the column arcading is used to orientate and counter the flow of space. The syncopation of screen with screen and screen with column maintains a dynamic which prevents the space from being concluded and coming to rest.

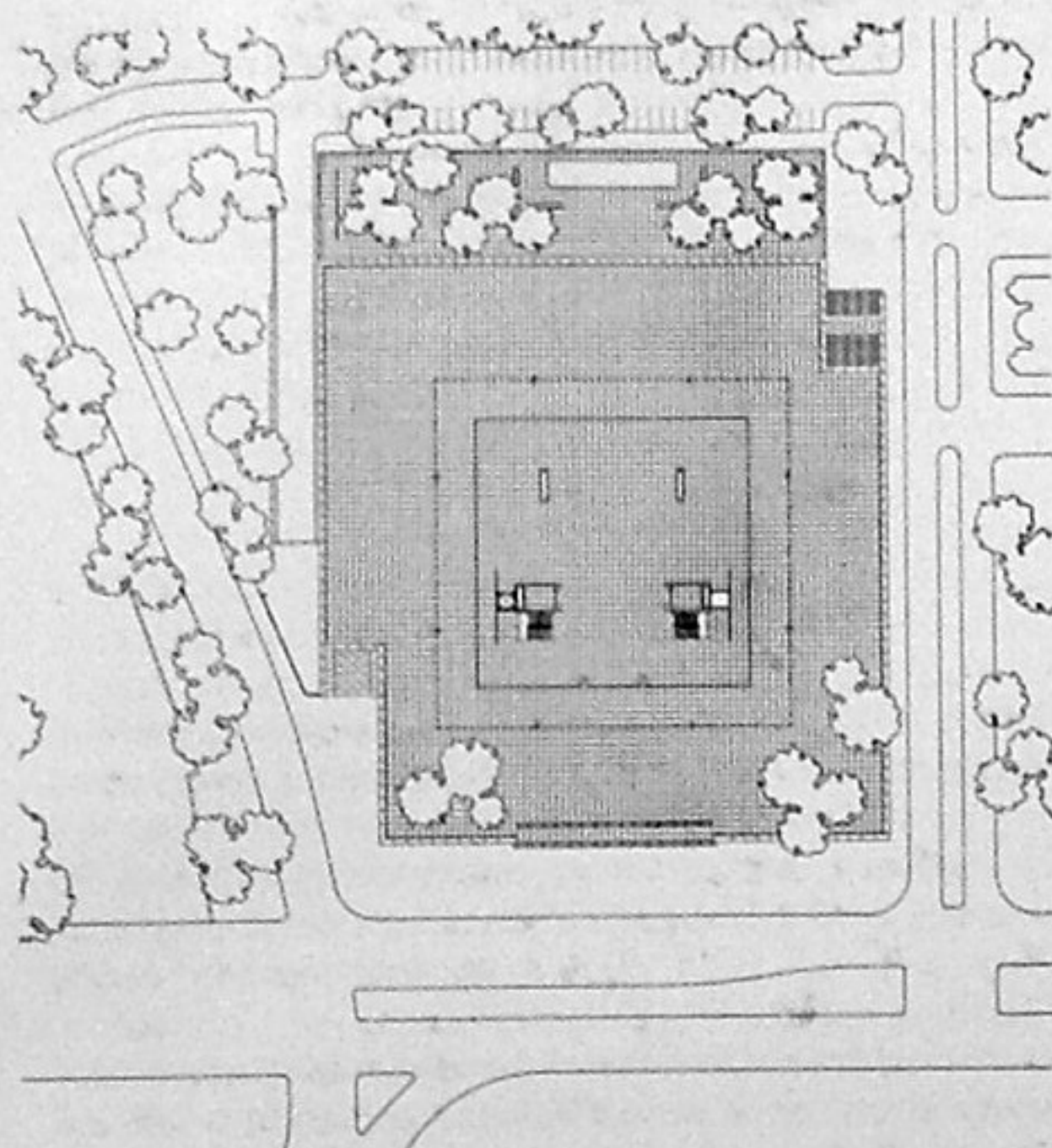
Illustrating the pragmatic attitude to structure that a closer look reveals Mies to have had in Europe, the original working drawings of the Barcelona Pavilion, which were on show in London during 1978, reveal additional steel supports embedded invisibly in the screen walls behind the onyx veneer.

What is certain is that Mies relied to a great extent on those working with him. The eventual quality of any particular work being undertaken in the office at the time depended on the commitment, determination and skill of the individual working on the project with Mies. It must be remembered that all Mies' assistants had been trained at IIT before coming to the office in Chicago. There was an unwritten expectation that all the good students would come to work in the office. If there was pressure of work, students could be drafted in to work in the model shop at short notice. The distinction between student at IIT and assistant in the office was very thin. Mies treated all his assistants as qualified architects and expected them to work as such. An ability to make good accurate models in the well-fitted out model shop was as important as being able to draw well.

Mies used models to develop the design of a building as early as 1912 when he built a full-size mock-up of the Kröller Müller House at The Hague in Holland. Surprisingly, Mies was uncertain and sometimes diffident. His buildings were not designed by a conventional method sense. The development of a building was subjected to the most rigorous study in model form. The process started with simple timber block models showing the accommodation required in varying mass configurations to establish the most satisfactory proportion and relationship between other buildings on the site as well as the neighbouring buildings. The assistant involved in the project would make the models in the shop and when they were ready, Mies would spend lengthy sessions studying the blocks from all angles. Such sessions were frequently inconclusive, either because Mies preferred to postpone the decision or because another solution appeared possible and Mies required to see it in block form. The building's development edged forward, the rhythm of structure and then mullion becoming evident as each successive stage in the process hardened up. As the design became more resolved so the scale of the study models increased. Drawings were not finalised until the information they were intended to show had been verified in model form. Finally full-size mock ups of a window bay would be constructed. In effect the building was constructed in the office before being transmitted onto paper as a working drawing for site. Being littered with half-modified, half-discarded models, the office resembled a mausoleum to modern architecture.

The twin steel-framed towers of 880/860 Lakeshore Drive with their exposed structural steel frame have always been cited by the purists as representing the apotheosis of structural clarity in Mies' work. Mies himself, when asked whether he agreed with this hypothesis, appeared unwilling to make such a sweeping distinction between the steel Lakeshore apartments and those that were to follow using flat slab concrete for the same client, Herbert Greenwald.

The juxtaposition of the mullions of the exterior skin wall with the perimeter columns lying at the face of the building produce a steel caged network. Vertical RSJs are welded to the face of the steel sheet cladding to column and beam.



4

4 New National Gallery,
1962-68, plan

But certainly of all Mies' towers, 880/860 Lakeshore Drive reflect most strongly the influence of the Chicago School on the building being designed in the office at that time. As with the major group of buildings at IIT, a quite separate weathering skin of steel is applied as an outer coat to the concrete fire-proofing surrounding the structural steel. Simultaneously, the steel cladding represents the material's characteristics of the invisible structural frame buried in the concrete.

For Mies a more exact and new architecture had logically evolved out of his recent acquaintance with the steel frame. The grid of mullions, spandrels and columns appears to impose a denser, more opaque perimeter wall to the building. The presence of the column at the edge of the building appears to impart the wall with a thickness approximating to the thickness of the column itself. Likewise, internally, for the same reasons, Mies tried to avoid a half column projecting from a wall.

The explanation for the column being positioned at the perimeter appears to have less to do with the question of structural clarity, and more to do with the practicality of steelwork construction. A cantilever cannot be achieved in structural steelwork at the edge of a floor without introducing a longitudinal perimeter downstand beam parallel with the edge of the building on the centre line of the perimeter columns. This is necessary in order to connect the cantilevered edge to the floor with the columns set back from the edge. If this downstand is not to project beneath the ceiling plane, so interrupting the horizontal integrity of the space, a false ceiling is required to be hung beneath the beam to conceal it. If the optimum ceiling height is then to be retained on each floor, it has a consequential effect on the height of the building and so on the cost.

However the overall effect of the building is stiffly, conventionally classical. Mies stated a preference for the discipline of steel, mistrusting the disordered and somewhat haphazard process of pouring concrete into a mould. Mies enjoyed the absolute character of structural steel assemblies with the exact and precise manner in which all connections are made. It was therefore perhaps surprising that Mies was so versatile when it became necessary to choose concrete as the principle structural material, as at Barcardi, Santiago, due to the scarcity of steel in Cuba or, for reasons of economics, as in the later apartment towers built for Herbert Greenwald. With the exception of the apartment buildings at Newark, New Jersey, where the ground floor and corner columns were visibly naked concrete, the material evidence on the face of the building, namely on the

mullions, spandrels and casing covers to corner and ground floor columns, was metal. As a result of the language of steel facing adopted for IIT Campus buildings and the 880/860 towers, the concrete structures of 900 Lakeshore Drive and Commonwealth apartments read as metal framed structures. It was generally accepted in the office that they were made of concrete because of the difficulty of servicing the perimeter convector with hot or cold water via vertical risers within the column casing when the column was out at the edge of the floor. There is, however, the possibility that Mies preferred the lighter, more elegant solution of the horizontal expression of the edge of the floor only, allowing the implicit presence of column to lie behind the glass and so requiring the use of concrete as the structural materials to achieve the cantilever.

Elsewhere, Mies did use concrete as a naturally expressed material, as at the IIT dormitories of 1953, the Promontory apartments of 1949 and Highfield House, Baltimore of 1960, exploiting the quality of the material to its fullest extent by such techniques as projecting the column away from the face of the skin, and allowing it to reduce front to back as the load further up the building decreased.

What is interesting to note is that Mies, whether using steel or concrete, frequently detailed both materials as if they had equally plastic properties. The problems of connecting steel work by continuous welding presents considerable problems if distortion is not going to result from the concentric heat of the welder's torch. Precautions must be taken to release the stresses set up in the metal. Steel prefers to be dry connected by bolting. There are never any visibly bolted connections in Mies' work. Following welding, the welds must be ground smooth to merge the profile with the neighbouring metal. This is never a strictly straightforward and economic business. A good example of the manner in which Mies prefers to eliminate the joint is the complicated halved joint of the frame to the Barcelona chair which is finished to emulate a casting. The steel coffered rib roof members of the two-way spanning roof structure of the Berlin National Gallery appear similar to the concrete ribs of the Bacardi Office Building. Like Chippendale, Mies deliberately suppressed the legibility of the joint. However, at the same time, Mies was always careful to make an explanation of the allegiance and relationship of elements of construction one to another. The window frame and spandrel panel beneath it, supported between the vertical mullions of the office tower buildings, each have their own framing profile surrounding all four sides and clearly describing the discreet character of each, a technique which involves technically complicated details to achieve a visually simple solution.

Paradoxically, but in parallel, examination of the monument to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht shows a basic cube design that might have been executed by any member of the De Stijl group, such as Vantongerloo, Van Esteren, or Van Doesburg: a design concerned with projected and recessed planes, a design superficially appearing to be concerned with surface. Yet, the manner of execution is in heavily articulated, deeply raked joints of clinker brickwork. Thus, the detailed implementation of both the Barcelona chair on the one hand, and the Liebknecht/Luxemburg Monument on the other, reveals a perversity that borders on mannerism. In the case of the Liebknecht/Luxemburg Monument, the joints are not detailed in a manner which endorses the clarity of the architectural idea. In the case of the Barcelona chair, the connection is not one that exploits the nature of the material.

It is interesting to note that Mies built only three 'white' housing projects in Europe, Afrikanische Strasse, the flats at Weissenhof and the Tugendhat House. The remainder were in brick.

Note

1 Three years after Mies had taken over the architecture department, the Director of the Illinois Institute of Technology was finally obliged to instruct him to conduct his lectures in English.

Mies

JAMES GOWAN

A Mies building sits on the surface of the earth without compromise. It demands attention, focuses the senses and, like many a miracle, it defies reason. The style is simple and direct and more than a few architects have misjudged the strategy by assuming it to be as childish as it looks. The prose should have warned them:

'The long path from material through function to creative work has only a single goal: to create order out of the desperate confusion of our time.' Mies ended his inaugural address to the Armour Institute of Technology with a sentence that must have sent a wave of panic through the audience: *'Nothing can express the aim and meaning of our work better than the profound words of St Augustine . . . Beauty is in the splendour of Truth.'*

The thinking behind this architect's work is elaborate, convoluted and inconsistent. The fragmented commentaries make sense only when one reminds oneself that this is a neoclassical architect addressing himself to high art, not a rationalist struggling with twentieth-century technology. In an *Architectural Association Quarterly* article on Mies at the Bauhaus, Sandra Honey tells us of his parable of the two sisters: one ugly, one beautiful, but otherwise equal in every respect – which would the student choose to marry? – which, by my reckoning, Mies got wrong. If he had been stronger on his fairy tales he would have known that the plain girl becomes beautiful when kissed by the prince.

Of teaching he says: *'Education must lead us from irresponsible opinion to true responsible judgment.'* Most of us would agree with this but would, however, be less than happy with the location of the two departments in the Arts and Architecture building at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT); one on the spacious, well-lit ground floor, and the other in the basement. *'Education . . .'* he says, *'must lead us from chance and arbitrariness to rational clarity and intellectual order.'*

The steel-frame building has two pronounced characteristics; one, it looks extremely elegant, and, two, it collapses quickly in fire. So, inevitably, its place in the scheme of things is at the bottom of the pile, propping a primitive integument. A concrete frame also has two main characteristics; one, it has a clumsy appearance, as the Mies 1923 office block project illustrates, and, two, it has resistance to fire. Mies van der Rohe combines the advantages of both of these by screwing them together in his later, multi-storey projects – the Chicago Commonwealth apartments, Seagram in Park Avenue and so on. This has the effect of reducing the role of the steel components to applied decoration; an assembly that is linked together by an intricate technical articulation that is far removed from the source of its practicality . . . like vestigial elements on a Doric entablature. He tells us: *'At this point the problem of technology of construction arises. We shall be concerned with generic problems – problems related to the value and purpose of our technology. We shall show that technology not only promises greatness and power, but also involves dangers; that good and evil apply to it as to all human actions: that it is our task to make the right decision.'*

The construction of most buildings is beset by cramping restrictions and regulations, particularly those of glass. Indeed, it would seem that Mies is attracted to the two most hazardous types of structure, steel and glass. There is a Code on glass, numbered 152, which puts architects in a position of culpable irresponsibility if they use glass at low level in housing or in a context where the young are frolicking. It is a technical inhibition of which most, but certainly not all, architects are aware, and it has obvious aesthetic consequences which most, but again not all, engage. Mies explains: *'We must understand the motives and forces of our time and analyse their structure from three points of view: the material, the functional, and the spiritual.'*

In the corpus of Mies van der Rohe's work there are several town planning projects of assertive neoclassical bluntness – and here I am thinking particularly of the 1928 remodelling of the Alexanderplatz in Berlin – spare blocks in a bleak, urban environment, redeemed only by an internal inventiveness that must largely be presumed. The site preliminaries of the IIT campus and the Chicago Convention Hall of 1953 are vast ground-levelling undertakings; clearances that provide a plane, a pristine surface for building upon. As the projects increase in scale their beauty becomes more ephemeral on the one hand, more Victorian on the other; open floor spaces furnished with workers, structures redolent with overtones of the last century with its lattices and its iron industrialisation. As late as 1954, in the Seagram Building where there were clearly no first-cost inhibitions, the use of single, tinted glass suggests that the concern was more for heat entering the building than leaving it.

In these urban projects, the boxy buildings and their proliferation find very little back-up in the assertion that: *'We shall examine one by one every function of a building and use it as a basis for form.'* The context and the surroundings of these exercises could reasonably invoke: *'Buildings of stone as well: what natural feeling they express . . . what better examples . . . for young architects?'*

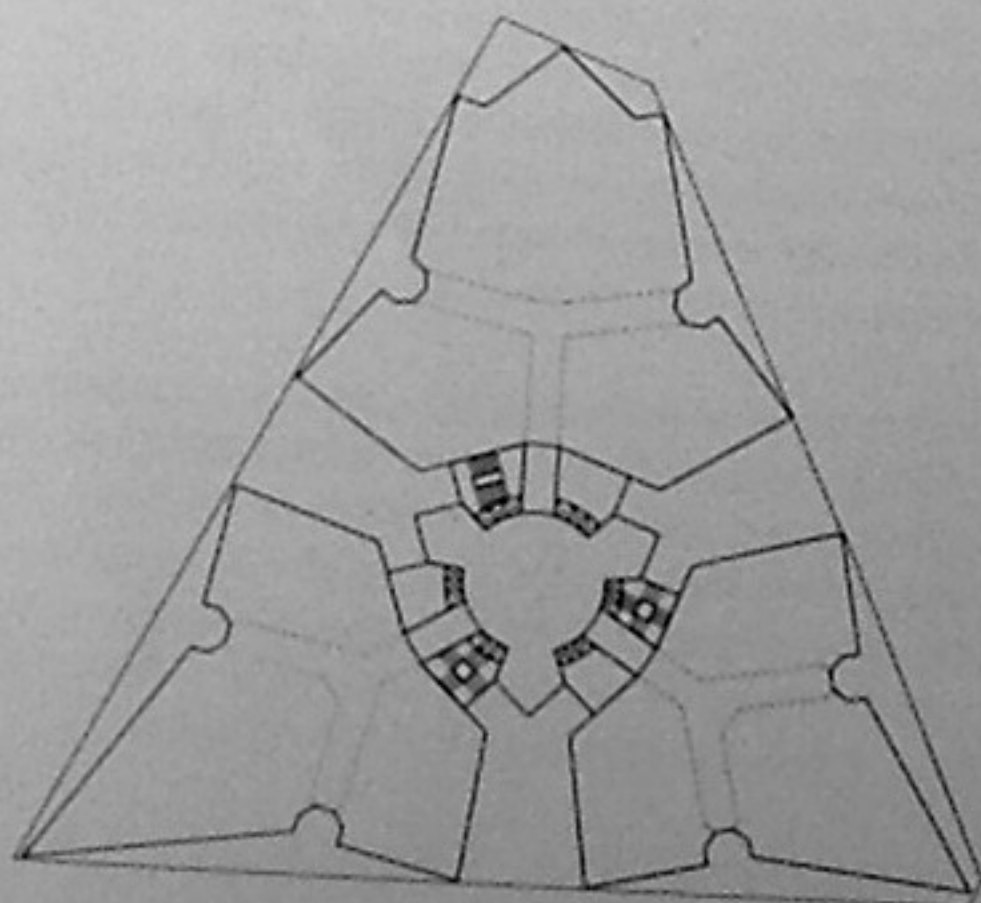
As Mies van der Rohe's work extends from his early housing studies and the perfection of Brno, it becomes less preoccupied with human activities, more general, more abstract, and through this anonymity gathers to it new alliances: the business, the corporate, and the organisational worlds. The architecture that has disengaged itself from its inspired roots in the senses – individual pleasure, touch, feeling, and sight – has found through an accumulation of its inherent ambiguities unsuspected and chillier usages.

One wonders what would have happened if Mies had stayed in Europe; would he have simply been allowed to starve gracefully? In the States, before he understood the New World culture and its demands he said, with what now appears to be a considerable innocence: *'By our practical aims, we are bound to the specific structure of our epoch . . . Our values, on the other hand, are rooted in the spiritual nature of man.'*

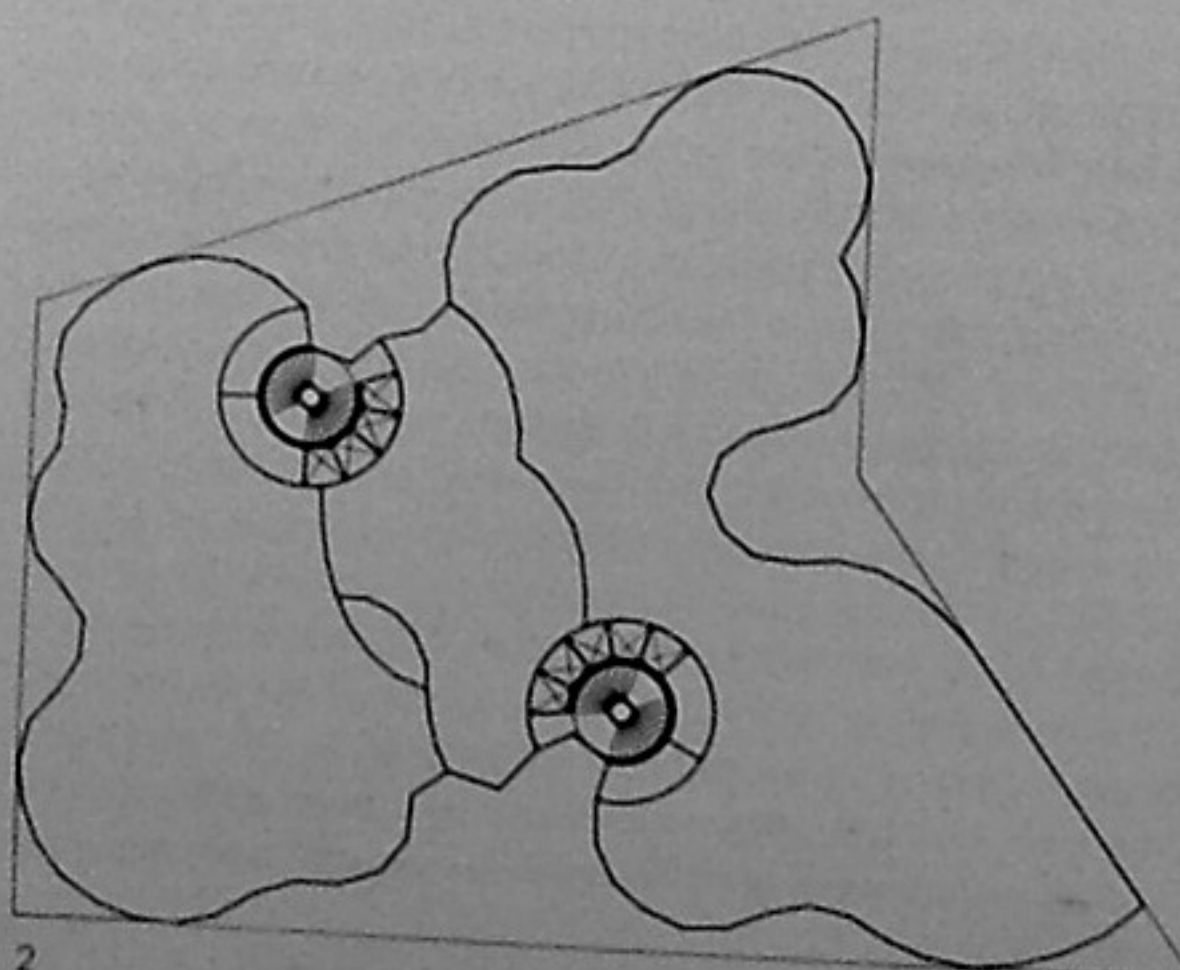
All quotations are from *Mies van der Rohe* by Philip Johnson, (Museum of Modern Art, New York), pp191–95.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Chronology of his Life and Work in Europe

- | | | | |
|---------------|--|---------|---|
| 1886 | Ludwig Mies born on 27 March in Aachen (Died 17 August 1969 in Chicago) | 1914 | Moved to Berlin-Tiergarten
House for the Architect projects |
| 1892–
1904 | Educated at the Volksschule, Domschule, and Abend-und-Sonntagschule in Aachen | 1914–5 | Villa Urbig |
| 1902 | Trainee on building sites; worked for his father | 1915–6 | Military service |
| 1903–4 | Apprenticed to a firm of architects and designers in Aachen; worked as a draughtsman | 1919 | Villa Kempner project |
| 1905 | Moved to Berlin; employed by Berlin Borough of Rixdorf to furnish council chamber | 1921 | Joined the Deutscher Werkbund
Glass Office Building project
Villa Kempner (destroyed)
Villa Petermann project |
| 1905–7 | Apprenticed to Bruno Paul; designed wooden furniture | 1922–5 | Joined the Novembergruppe
Glass Skyscraper project
Villa Eichstaedt |
| 1906–7 | Attended Staatliche Kunstschule des Kunstgewerbe Museums zu Berlin | 1922–5 | Director of architectural exhibitions for the Novembergruppe |
| 1907 | Visited Italy
Villa Riehl | 1923 | Concrete Office Building project
Brick Country House project
Concrete Country House project
Villa Eliat project
Villa Lessing project |
| 1908–12 | Employed by Peter Behrens; job architect on German embassy in St Petersburg | 1923–4 | Joint editor of the magazine <i>G</i> |
| 1911 | Villa Perls | 1923–5 | Chairman of the Zeheerring |
| 1912 | Visited Holland
Krölller House project
Bismarck Monument project | 1924 | Traffic Tower project |
| 1913 | Opened private practice in Berlin-Lichterfeld; married Adele Bruhn; changed surname to Miës van der Rohe
Villa on the Heerstrasse (destroyed)
Villa Werner | 1924–6 | Villa Mosler |
| | | 1925–6 | Haus Wolf (destroyed) |
| | | 1926 | Memorial to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (destroyed) |
| | | 1926–32 | Vice-President of the Deutscher Werkbund |
| | | 1926–7 | Director of Werkbund exhibition 'The Dwelling' at Weissenhof, Stuttgart |

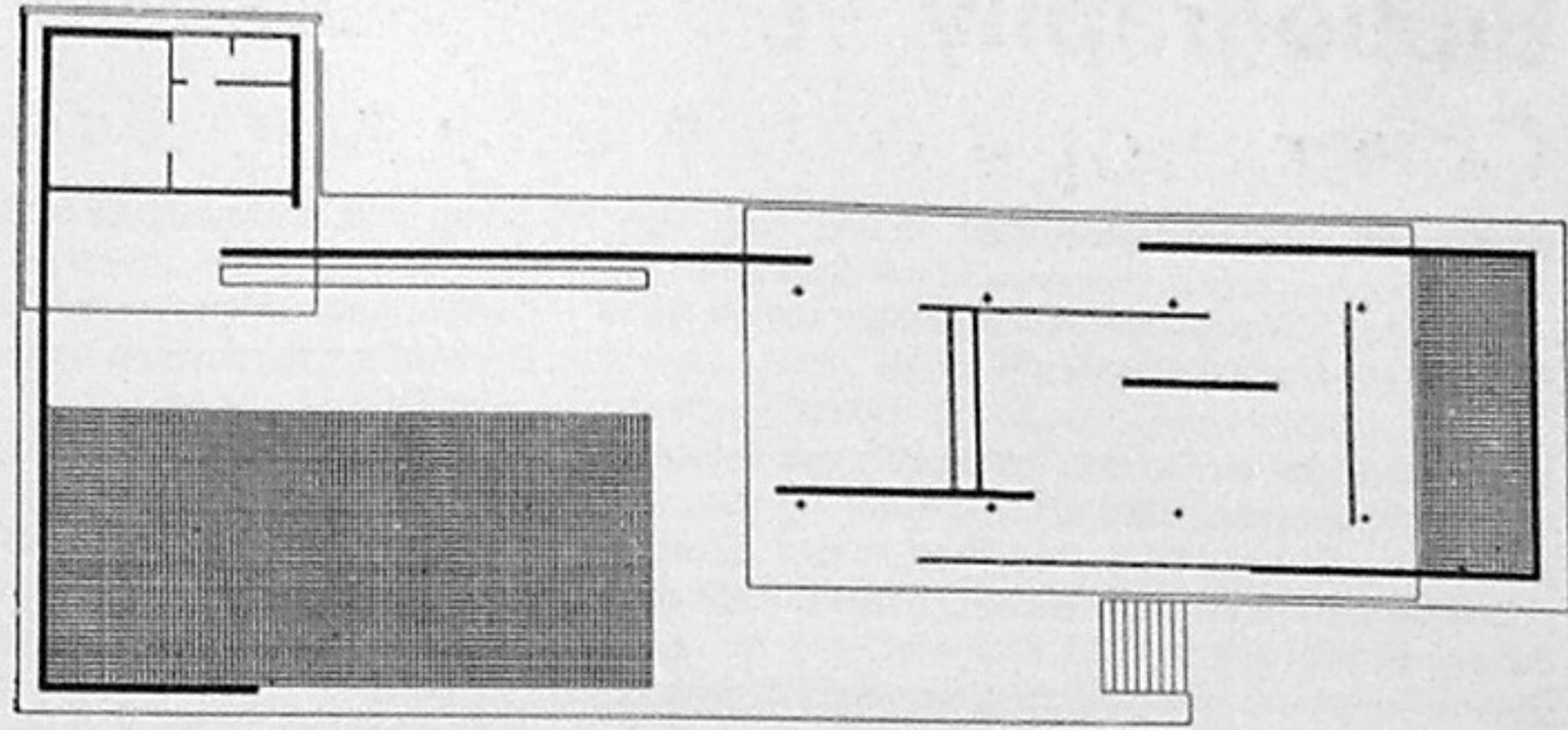
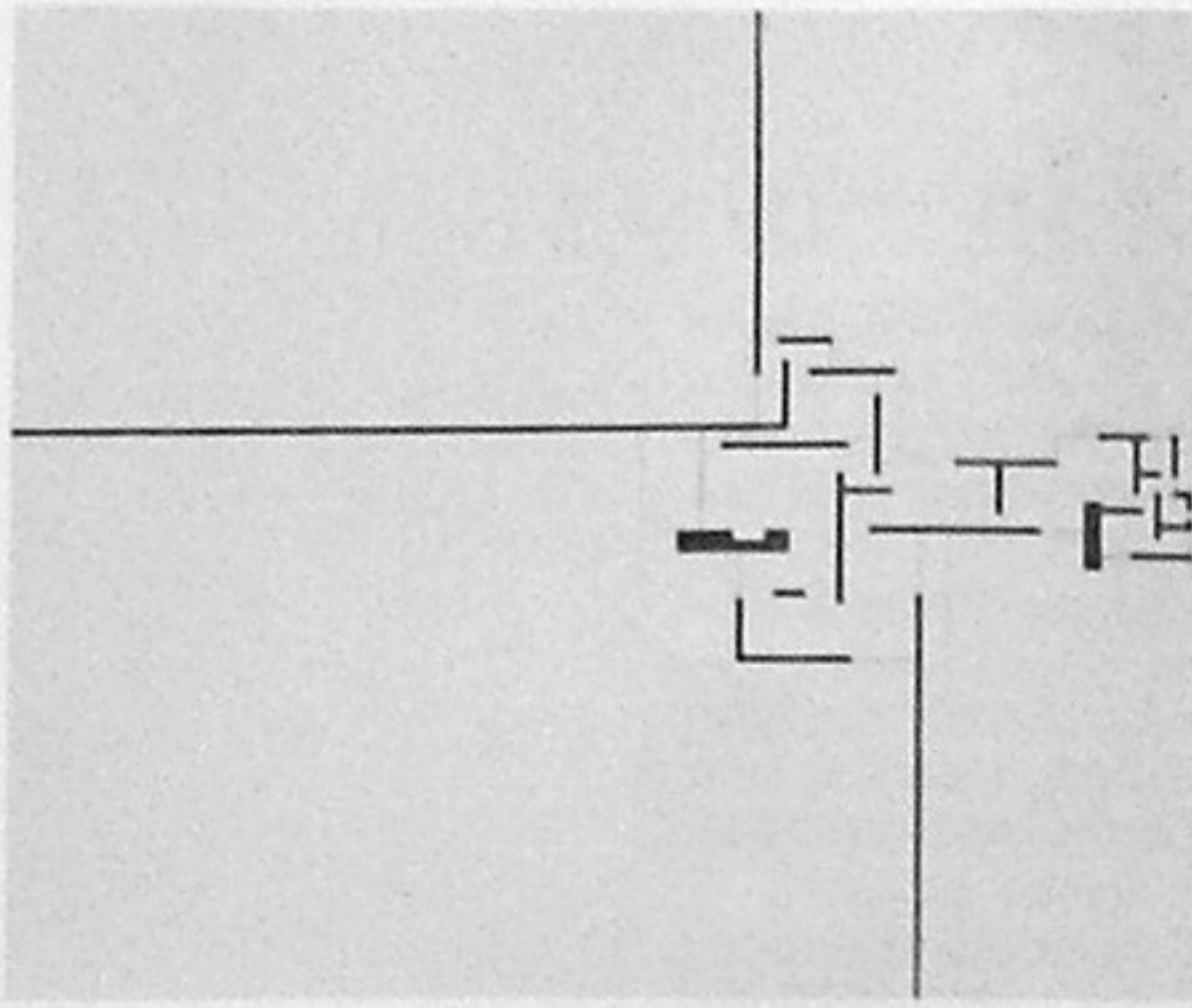


1



2

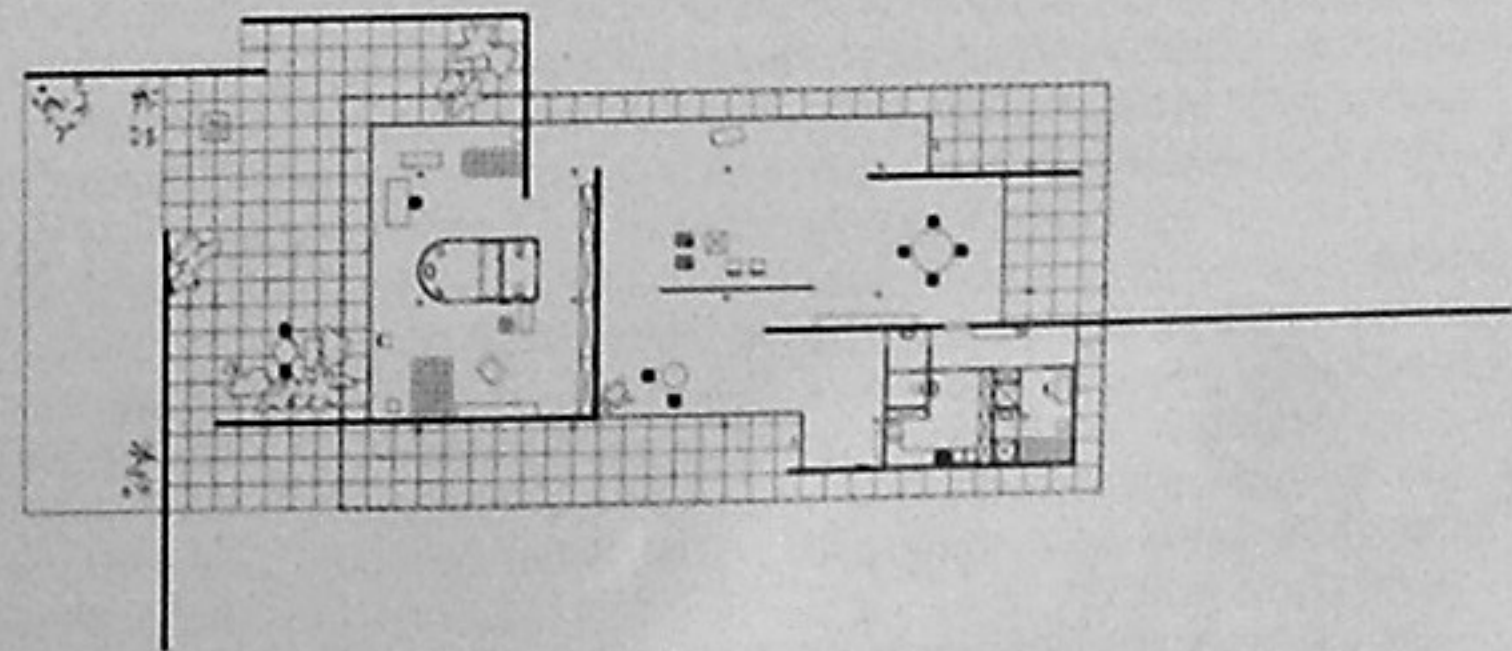
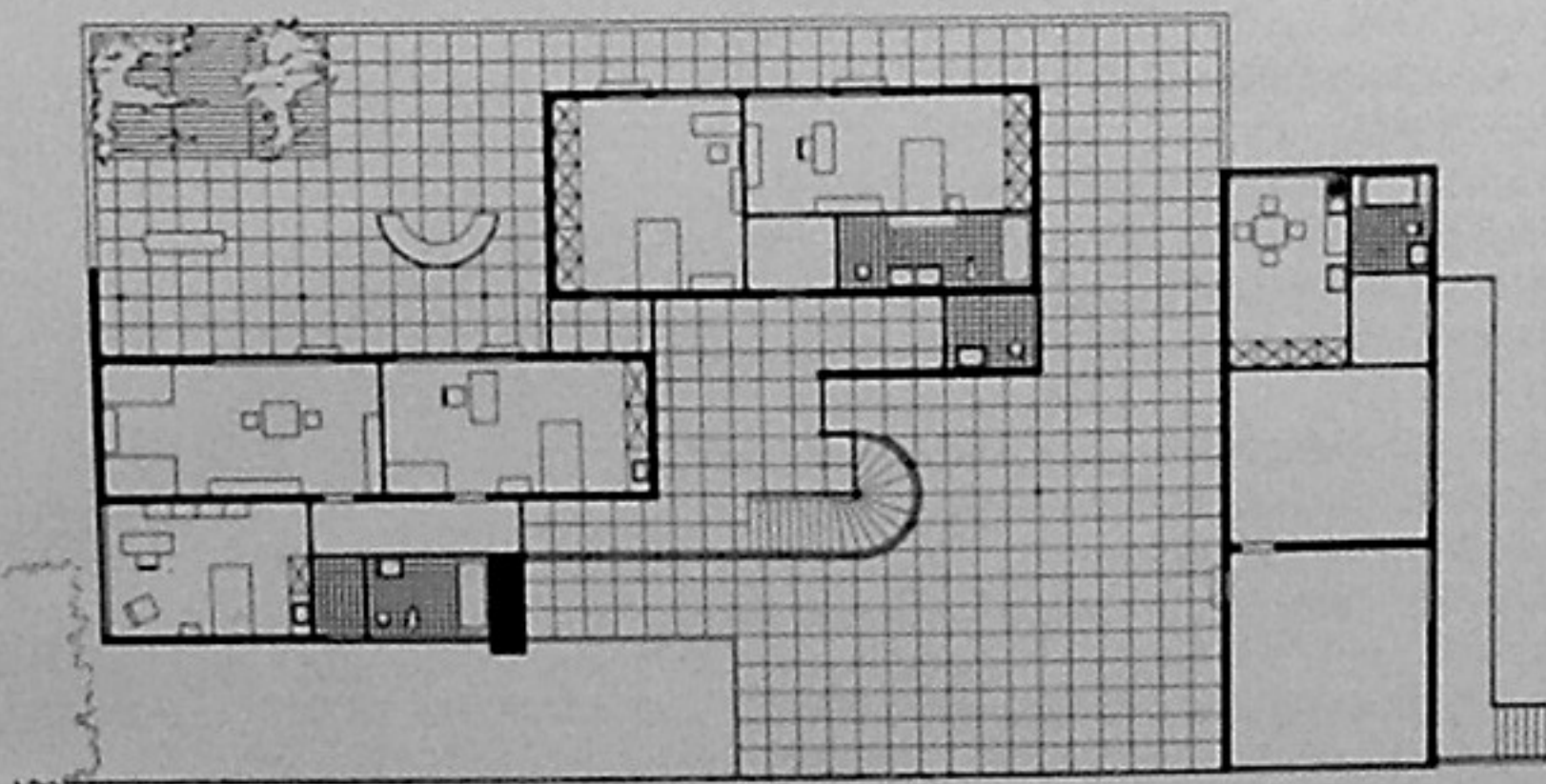
- 1 Office Building, 1921
- 2 Glass Skyscraper, 1922
- 3 Brick Country House, 1923
- 4 German National Pavilion, 1929
- 5 Haus Tugendhat, 1928-30
- 6 House for the Berlin Building Exhibition, 1931



3

4

- | | | | |
|---------|---|--------|---|
| | Apartments on Afrikanische Strasse | 1931 | Joint director (with Lilly Reich) of Werkbund exhibition 'The Dwelling of Our Time' in Berlin |
| | Apartments at Weissenhof | | Model House, Apartment for a Bachelor (both dismantled) |
| | Industrial exhibits at Weissenhofsiedlung | | Court-house projects |
| 1927-38 | Collaboration with Lilly Reich | | Row Houses project |
| 1927 | 'Velvet and Silk Café' (silk exhibit with Lilly Reich) | 1932 | Haus Lemke |
| 1928 | Extension to Villa Fuchs (previously Villa Perls) | 1932-3 | Krefeld Silk Factory Complex |
| | Remodelling of Alexanderplatz project | 1933 | Director of Berlin Bauhaus |
| | Adam Building project | | Reichsbank project |
| | Stuttgart Bank Building project | 1934 | Mining and coal exhibit in 'German People, German Work' exhibition |
| | Haus Lange | | Filling station project |
| | Haus Esters | | German National Pavilion project (for 1935 Brussels International Exhibition) |
| 1928-9 | Director of German contribution to Barcelona International Exhibition | | Country House projects |
| | German National Pavilion and AEG Pavilion (both dismantled) | | Mountain House for the Architect project |
| | Industrial exhibits at Barcelona (with Lilly Reich) | 1935 | Hubbe House project |
| 1928-30 | Haus Tugendhat | | Ulrich Lange House projects |
| 1929 | Office on Friedrichstrasse projects | 1937 | Krefeld Administration Building project |
| 1930-2 | Director of the Bauhaus at Dessau | 1937-8 | Visited United States of America; appointed Director of the Armour Institute, Chicago |
| 1930 | Interior of Philip Johnson's New York apartment (with Lilly Reich) | 1938 | Resor House project |
| | Krefeld Country Club project | | Group of Three Court-houses project |
| | War Memorial project | | Emigrated from Germany and settled in Chicago |
| | Gericke House project | | |
| | Nolde House project | | |
| 1931-8 | Member of Prussian Academy of Arts | | |



5

6

Bibliography

Writings by Mies van der Rohe

This list has been extracted from *Mies van der Rohe* by Philip C Johnson, p221, where most of the writings can be found translated into English on pp187–96

- 'Hochhausprojekt für Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse in Berlin', *Frühlicht*, January 1922, pp122–24
- 'Bürohaus', *G*, June 1923, (reprinted in part by Adolf Behne in *Der Moderne Zweckbau*, Munich 1926, p70)
- 'Bauen', *G*, September 1923, p1
- 'Gelöste Aufgaben: Eine Forderung an unser Bauwesen', *Die Bauwelt*, 27 December 1923, p719
- 'Baukunst und Zeitwille', *Der Querschnitt*, April 1924, pp31–32
- [Review] 'P Tropp: Entwicklung und Aufbau der Miete', *Die Baugilde*, 15 March 1924, p56
- 'Industrialisierung des Wohnungsbaus—eine Materialfrage', *Der Neubau*, 10 April 1924, p77
- 'Industrielles Bauen', *G*, June 1924, pp8–11
- 'Briefe an *Die Form*', *Die Form*, January 1926, p179
- 'Zum neuen Jahrgang (an Dr Riezler)' and 'Rundschau: Zum neuen Jahrgang', *Die Form*, February 1927, pp1 and 59
- 'Vorwort' and 'Zu meinem Block', *Weissenhofsiedlung* (Deutscher Werkbund exhibition catalogue), Stuttgart 1927, pp7 and 76–85
- 'Einleitung, Werkbundaussstellung: Die Wohnung Stuttgart', *Die Form*, September 1927, p257
- 'Zum Thema: Ausstellungen', *Die Form*, April 1928, p121
- 'Baukunst in der Wende der Zeit', *Innendekoration*, June 1928, p262
- 'Über Sinn und Aufgabe der Kritik', *Das Kunstblatt*, June 1930, p178
- 'Die neue Zeit: Schlußworte des Referats Mies van der Rohe auf der Wiener Tagung des Deutschen Werkbundes', *Die Form*, 1 August 1930, p406 (reprinted on cit 15 October 1932, p306)
- 'Haus H, Magdeburg', *Die Schildgenossen*, no 6, 1935, pp514–515
- 'Museum', *Architectural Forum*, May 1943, pp84–85
- [Introduction to] Ludwig Hilberseimer, *The New City*, Chicago 1944, p xv
- 'A Tribute to Frank Lloyd Wright', *The College Art Journal*, Autumn 1946, pp41–42
- [Address to the 37th Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Annual Convention], *Journal of Architectural Education*, Summer 1951, pp13–15
- 'The End of the Bauhaus', *North Carolina University State College of Agriculture and Engineering*, Spring 1953, pp16–18
- [Acceptance Speech Upon Receiving the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects], *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, June 1960, pp90–91
- Additional, in part unpublished writings in Philip C Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, 3rd revised edition, New York 1978, pp186–204

Books

- Bill, Max, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, Milan 1955
- Blake, Peter, *The Master Builders*, New York 1960
- , *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Structure*, Harmondsworth 1963
- Blaser, Werner, *Mies van der Rohe: The Art of Structure*, London 1965
- , *After Mies*, Chicago 1977
- , *Mies van der Rohe: Furniture and Interiors*, Woodbury 1982

- Bonta, J P, *Mies van der Rohe: Barcelona 1929*, Barcelona 1975
- Carter, Peter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, London 1974
- Drexler, Arthur, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, New York 1960
- Hilberseimer, Ludwig, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, New York 1960
- Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, New York 1932
- Johnson, Philip C, *Mies van der Rohe*, New York 1947, 1978
- Jordy, William, 'The Laconic Splendor of the Metal Frame: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 860 Lake Shore Drive Apartments and His Seagram Building', in *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, William Pearson (ed), pp221–77, New York 1972
- Pawley, Martin, *Mies van der Rohe*, New York 1970
- Schulze, Franz, *Mies van der Rohe: Interior Spaces*, Chicago 1982
- , *A Critical Biography*, (published in association with the Mies van der Rohe Archive of the Museum of Modern Art, New York), Chicago and London 1985
- Spaeth, David A, *Mies van der Rohe*, foreword by Kenneth Frampton, London and New York 1985
- Speyer, A James, *Mies van der Rohe*, Chicago 1968
- Tegethoff, Wolf, *Die Villen und Landhausprojekte von Mies van der Rohe*, Essen 1981 (English edition, *Mies van der Rohe: The Villas and Country Houses*, New York 1985)
- Wingler, Hans Maria, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, Cambridge, Mass 1969

Articles

- 'Architekt Ludwig Mies: Villa des Prof Dr Riehl in Neubabelsberg', *Moderne Bauformen*, no 9, 1910, pp42–48
- Beeby, Thomas, 'Vitruvius Americanus: Mies' Ornament', *Inland Architect*, May 1977, pp12–15
- 'Die Bewohner des Hauses Tugendhat äußern sich', *Die Form*, 15 November 1931, pp437–39
- Bier, Justus, and Walter Riezler, 'Kann man im Haus Tugendhat wohnen?', *Die Form*, 15 October 1931, pp392–94
- Bier, Justus, 'Mies van der Rohes Reichspavillon Barcelona', *Die Form*, 15 August 1929, pp423–30
- Blake, Peter, 'Ludwig Mies van der Rohe', *Architectural Forum*, November 1947, p132
- Carter, Peter, 'Mies van der Rohe: An Appreciation on the Occasion, this Month, of his 75th Birthday', *Architectural Design*, March 1961, pp95–121
- 'Crown Hall, Illinois Institute of Technology', *Architectural Record*, August 1956, pp134–39
- Drexler, Arthur, 'Seagram Building', *Architectural Record*, July 1958, pp139–47
- 'Farnsworth House', *Architectural Forum*, October 1951, pp156–62
- Genzmer, Walther, 'Der Deutsche Pavillon auf der Internationalen Ausstellung, Barcelona', *Die Baugilde*, no 11, 1929, pp1654–57
- Glaeser, Ludwig, and Yukio Futagawa, 'Mies van der Rohe: Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois 1945–50', *Global Architecture*, no 27, 1974
- 'Glass House Stones: Farnsworth House', *Newsweek*, 8 June 1953, p90
- Gowan, James, 'Reflections on the Mies Centennial', *Architectural Design*, vol 56, no 1, 1986
- Gravenkamp, Curt, 'Mies van der Rohe: Glashaus in

- Berlin', *Das Kunstblatt*, April 1930, pp111-13
- Hilberseimer, Ludwig, 'Eine Würdigung des Projektes Mies van der Rohe für die Umbauung des Alexanderplatzes', *Das Neue Berlin*, February 1929, pp39-41
 - Honey, Sandra, 'Mies at the Bauhaus', *Architectural Association Quarterly*, no 1, 1978, pp51-59
 - ———, 'Who and What Inspired Mies van der Rohe in Germany', *Architectural Design*, no 3/4, 1979
 - ———, 'The Office of Mies van der Rohe in America', *UIA/International Architect*, no 3, 1984
 - 'IIT Dedicates Crown Hall, New Design Building by Mies', *Architectural Forum*, June 1956, pp17 and 21
 - Jordy, William, 'The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America: Gropius, Mies and Breuer', *Perspectives in American History*, no 2, 1968, pp485-543
 - Kuh, Katherine, 'Mies van der Rohe: Modern Classicist', *Saturday Review*, 23 January 1965, pp22-23, and 61
 - 'Metals and Minerals Research Building, Illinois Institute of Technology', *Architectural Forum*, November 1943, pp88-90
 - 'Mies Designs Plans for the World's Largest Convention Hall', *Architectural Forum*, December 1953, pp43 and 45
 - 'Mies' Farnsworth House Wins 25 Yr Award', *American Institute of Architects Journal*, March 1981, pp9 and 12
 - 'Mies' One-Office Office Building', *Architectural Forum*, February 1959, pp94-97
 - 'Mies Speaks "I Do Not Design Buildings, I Develop Buildings"', *Architectural Review*, December 1968, pp451-52
 - 'Mies van der Rohe', *Arts and Architecture*, April 1955, pp16-18
 - 'Mies van der Rohe: A Chapel', *Arts and Architecture*, January 1953, pp18-19
 - 'Mies van der Rohe's New Buildings', *Architectural Forum*, November 1952, pp93-110
 - 'Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin', *Die Bauwelt*, 16 September 1968, pp1209-26
 - Peterson, Steven K, 'Idealized Space: Mies-Conception or Realized Truth?', *Inland Architect*, May 1977, p4-11
 - Rawls, Marion, 'An Exhibition of Architecture by Mies van der Rohe', *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago*, December 1938, p104
 - Read, Helen Appleton, 'Germany at the Barcelona World's Fair', *Arts*, October 1929, pp112-13
 - Riegenberg, Sergius, 'Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969)', *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1 September 1969, p660
 - Serenyi, Peter, 'Spinoza, Hegel, and Mies: The Meaning of the New National Gallery in Berlin', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, October 1971, p240
 - Sweeney, James Johnson, 'Tribute to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe', *Illinois Institute of Technology*, 25 October 1969
 - Westheim, Paul, 'Mies van der Rohe: Entwicklung eines Architekten', *Das Kunstblatt*, February 1927, pp55-62
 - Winter, John, 'Misconceptions about Mies', *Architectural Review*, February 1972, pp95-105
 - Zervos, Christian, 'Mies van der Rohe', *Cahiers d'Art*, no 3, 1928, pp35-38
 - Zevi, Bruno, 'Mies van der Rohe e Frank Lloyd Wright: poeti dello spazio', *Metron*, July/August 1950, pp6-18
- July 1961, pp229-48 (contains excerpts from an interview)
- ———, 'Mies', *20th Century*, Spring 1964, pp138-43
 - Conrads, Ulrich, 'Mies in Berlin', *Bauwelt Archiv 1* (long-playing gramophone album), Berlin 1966
 - *Conversations Regarding the Future of Architecture* (recording), Reynolds Metals Company, Kentucky 1956
 - [Excerpts from an interview with the Bayrischer Rundfunk on the occasion of his 80th birthday], *Der Architekt*, October 1966, p324
 - Kuh, Katherine, 'Mies van der Rohe: Modern Classicist', *Saturday Review*, 23 January 1965, pp22-23 and 61
 - 'Mies Speaks', (English translation of part of recorded interview with Ulrich Conrads), *Architectural Review*, December 1968, pp451-52
 - 'Mies van der Rohe: Ich mache niemals ein Bild', *Die Bauwelt*, 6 August 1962, pp884-85 (contains, among other things, excerpts from a BBC interview of May 1959)
 - Nelson, George, 'Architects of Europe Today 7: Van der Rohe, Germany', *Pencil Points*, September 1935, pp453-60
 - Norberg-Schulz, Christian, 'Talks with Mies van der Rohe', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, September 1958, p100 (in German as 'Ein Gespräch mit Mies van der Rohe', *Baukunst und Werkform*, November 1958, pp615-16)
 - Schulze, Franz, 'I always wanted to know about truth', *Panorama* (supplement to the *Chicago Daily News*), 27 April 1968
 - Shankland, Graeme, 'Architect of the "Clear and Reasonable": Mies van der Rohe', *The Listener*, 15 October 1959, pp620-22
 - '6 Students talk with Mies', (interview of February 13, 1952), *Master Builder*, North Carolina State College, Spring 1952, pp21-28

Catalogues and Special Publications

- *Early Work of Mies van der Rohe*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Building Centre Trust, London 1979
- *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture* (verbatim record of a symposium), University of Columbia, New York 1963
- *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Furniture and Furniture Drawings* (exhibition catalogue: text by Ludwig Glaeser), Museum of Modern Art, New York 1977
- *Mies van der Rohe* (exhibition catalogue: text by Frederick Koeper), Art Institute, Chicago 1968
- *Mies van der Rohe: The Barcelona Pavilion 50th Anniversary* (text by Ludwig Glaeser), Museum of Modern Art, New York 1979
- *Mies van der Rohe: Drawings in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (text by Ludwig Glaeser), Museum of Modern Art, New York 1969
- *Mies van der Rohe: European Work 1907-1938* (exhibition catalogue: Danish text by Sandra Honey), Selskabet for Arkitekturhistorie, Copenhagen 1980
- Smithson, Alison and Peter, *Mies van der Rohe*, (English and German text), Technical University, Berlin 1968

Bibliographies

- Blackwell, Jessie F F, *Mies van der Rohe: A Bibliography*, Royal Institute of British Architects (limited edition), London 1964
- Spaeth, David A, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: An Annotated Bibliography and Chronology*, New York and London 1979

Interviews

- Cadbury-Brown, H T, 'Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at the AA', *Architectural Association Journal*, August 1959, pp26-46
- Carter, Peter, 'Mies van der Rohe', *Bauen + Wohnen*,



Résumé en français

Un certain paradoxe, un parmi tant d'autres, afflige l'attitude des critiques actuels de l'architecture des pères fondateurs du mouvement moderne. La plupart des architectes les plus connus se dirigent maintenant vers un renouveau du style néo-classique, tout en retenant la technique du mouvement moderne. Cependant, ils semblent éprouver le plus grand mépris à l'égard du plus classique, en sensibilité du moins, de ces ancêtres, Mies van der Rohe. Le paradoxe est donc le suivant: comment l'oeuvre d'un tel architecte si clairement fondée sur un héritage classiciste, peut-elle être déclarée hors de combat dans le débat actuel dominé par les problèmes d'historiographie et d'éclectisme alors qu'il était, et se voyait lui-même, profondément concerné par l'héritage de la tradition classique?

Le sujet de cette publication repose sur la jeune carrière de Mies avant qu'il ne quitte l'Europe pour l'Amérique en 1938, alors qu'il avait déjà eu le temps d'exercer son talent et de se faire un nom dans les canons. La première moitié de sa carrière peut être divisée en deux parties, ceci vers 1922. L'essai biographique de Sandra Honey précise bien que jusqu'à cette époque, Mies était un artisan extrêmement habile, construisant dans un style dépouillé et austèrement classique qui dut beaucoup à Muthesius, Berlage et surtout à Schinkel et aux productions du bureau de Peter Behrens. Il semble que le moment décisif de sa vie arriva lorsque Walter Gropius refusa d'exposer le projet de Mies pour la Maison Kröllner dans son 'Exposition pour Architectes Inconnus' de 1919. Si l'on en croit Mies, Gropius justifia sa décision ainsi: 'Nous ne pouvons pas l'exposer, nous sommes à la recherche de quelque chose de complètement différent'.

Une simple critique comme celle-ci contribue aux périodes élégantes de l'histoire mais ne fait pas toute l'histoire. Son immersion dans l'atmosphère passionnée du Berlin post-Ver-sailles, ainsi que son propre sentiment de l'esprit de l'époque, contribuèrent réellement au changement survenu. Il y eut également sa propre approche fondamentaliste. Pour Mies, les questions étaient toujours ambitieuses: qu'est-ce qu'une structure, qu'une enclosure, qu'un espace? Son expérience nous laisse penser qu'il s'agissait d'une recherche personnelle, entreprise avec d'autant plus de ferveur qu'il n'avait pas le soutien de Gropius.

Mais si nous en revenons au traitement paradoxal que Mies reçoit maintenant, peut-être n'est-ce pas plus cette question de fondamentalisme qui le rend si difficile à comprendre? Les Smithson n'ont-ils pas déclaré publiquement: 'Mies est grand mais Corb communique'. D'autres ont qualifié son oeuvre d'architecture du silence.

Si jamais Mies s'attaquait à des questions plus fondamentales et pouvait y répondre brillamment, ces réponses se trouveraient sous la forme d'archétypes, copiables parce-qu'ils mènent à des solutions convaincantes. Mais bien sûr, on reproche à Mies le moindre building revêtu de murs rideau, la moindre grille de logement et le moindre intérieur neutre. A examiner certains points fondamentaux, Mies s'offre lui-même presque *de facto* à de telles accusations. Son travail est de toute façon indissolublement lié à la tradition classiciste et les premières constructions en furent bien la preuve.

Contrairement à Le Corbusier, Mies n'était pas vraiment communicatif. Sa réticence à parler en public, sa faible production de pièces écrites suffisent à l'écarter et à interpréter son attitude, bien facilement d'ailleurs, comme une intention monomaniaque de travailler sur des idées personnelles et incontestables. Son attitude au travail se rapprochait cependant de celle d'un inventeur. En réalité, il fut le premier à étudier la possibilité de bâtir un gratte-ciel de verre, le premier à introduire une machinerie discrète et silencieuse—pensez aux moteurs qui actionnent la fermeture et l'ouverture de cette immense baie vitrée dans le salon de la Maison Tugendhat—et le premier à organiser une véritable manifestation du Style International à Weissenhof en 1927.

La grandeur de Mies repose au moins sur son aptitude à rechercher les limites de l'expérimentation architecturale. Sa confiance en la matière provient moins d'un approfondissement sérieux de ses connaissances historiques et philosophiques, bien qu'il fut certainement un homme cultivé d'un genre qui n'a pu exister que dans le Berlin de l'entre-deux guerres, que de son savoir construire. James Gowan, certainement un des architectes les plus habiles, retient ce propos et observe que bien que cela fut vrai, il semble que ce ne fut pas étranger à une certaine insouciance à l'égard des qualités spécifiques du site car les

constructions de Mies ont la nature des solutions universelles. Si ce but est atteint, comme Paul Rudolph a remarqué, en écartant les problèmes, il est également lié, comme le dit Gowan, 'aux deux matériaux les plus hasardeux, le verre et l'acier'.

Adrian Gale débat ce problème dans son essai, en tant que personne ayant entrepris une période d'apprentissage chez Mies. Pour lui il ne s'agit pas tant de fonctionnalité que d'un devoir moral de rechercher l'expression la plus économique d'une perception idéalisée. La Maison Farnsworth en est peut-être la preuve irréfutable, un espace clos avec un vaste placard inclus dans le plan de façon à prévoir d'autres espaces.

L'économie du geste est sûrement ce qui rend Mies difficile à comprendre, d'autant plus que la profession architecturale semble avoir été à cette époque riche en ornements et en articulations. Ce qui est toutefois manifeste dans son oeuvre, c'est cette idée de l'architecture qui insiste sur le fait que toute idée d'espace devrait être à la source de toute production.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die heutigen Kritiker, die sich mit der Architektur der 'Gründerväter' der modernen Bewegung befassen, leiden in ihren Ansichten an einer gewissen Paradoxie, die nur eine von vielen ist. Ein Großteil der meistzitierten Architekten tendiert zu einer Wiederbelebung der neoklassischen Bildersprache, während sie sich gleichzeitig weiterhin der planerischen Techniken der modernen Bewegung bedienen. Ihre größte Verachtung scheint allerdings dem zumindestens in bezug auf seine Sensibilität klassischsten aller Klassiker unter diesen Vorläufern, Mies van der Rohe, vorbehalten zu sein. Das Paradoxon ist also dieses: Wie kann man das Werk eines solchen Architekten, das so eindeutig auf klassischem Stilbestreben und Erbgut beruht, in der heutigen Debatte für *hors de combat*, also für erledigt erklären, einer Debatte, die von Problemen historischer und eklektischer Natur beherrscht ist, wo er doch—auch in seiner Eigenauffassung—selbst so eingehend um die ererbten klassischen Traditionen bemüht war?

Thema dieser Ausgabe sind die frühen Jahre in Mies' Karriere, bevor er 1938 von Europa nach Amerika ging. Zu jenem Zeitpunkt hatte er bereits genug gebaut, um sich seinen Platz im Kanon zu sichern. Diese erste Hälfte seiner Laufbahn läßt sich in zwei Abschnitte unterteilen, die Trennlinie ist das Jahr 1922. Aus Sandra Honeys biographischem Essay geht hervor, daß Mies bis dahin ein außerordentlich versierter 'Geselle' war, dessen Baustil die entblößte und nüchterne, klassisch orientierte Sprache wiederspiegelte, welche weitgehend Muthesius, Berlage und vor allem Schinkel und den Arbeiten des Büros von Peter Behrens zu verdanken ist. Der Wendepunkt war offenbar erreicht, als Walter Gropius es ablehnte, Mies' Projekt für das Kröller Haus in seine 'Ausstellung unbekannter Architekten' von 1919 aufzunehmen. Laut Mies rechtfertigte Gropius seine Entscheidung so: *'Wir können das Projekt nicht ausstellen, wir suchen etwas vollkommen anderes!'*

Eine einzelne kritische Äußerung dieser Art macht sich gut in der Geschichtsschreibung, sagt aber längst nicht alles. Sein Eintauchen in die Treibhausatmosphäre des Berlins nach dem Versailler Vertrag und sein eigenes Gespür für den damaligen Zeitgeist stellen einen glaubhaften Beitrag zu dem Wandel dar, der sich vollzog. Auch war da die innere, fundamentalistische Einstellung—die Fragen,

die Mies sich stellte, waren immer höherer Ordnung: Was ist eine Struktur, eine Fläche, Raum? Der Hintergrund läßt vermuten, daß es sich hier um ein privates Forschungsstreben handelte, das ob der mangelnden Unterstützung seitens Gropius nicht weniger eifrig verfolgt wurde.

Um jedoch auf die paradoxe Behandlung zurückzukommen, die Mies heutzutage erfährt, liegt es nicht vielmehr gerade an diesem Fundamentalismus, der es so schwierig macht, ihn zu verstehen? Die Meinung der Smithsons ist bekannt: *'Mies ist großartig, aber Corb teilt sich mit.'* Andere bezeichneten seine Arbeit als eine Architektur der Stille.

Wann immer jedoch Mies sich Fragen fundamentalerer Natur zuwandte und diese erfolgreich beantwortete, trugen diese Antworten die Form von Urbildern, kopierbaren Originalen, weil sie überzeugende Lösungen darstellten. Aber dafür nimmt Mies natürlich auch die Schuld für jedes mit Vorhangwänden verblendete Hochhaus, jedes Häuserraster und für jede sanfte Innenansicht auf sich. Dadurch, daß Mies bestimmte fundamentale Fragenkomplexe erforscht, gibt er sich beinahe *de facto* solchen Anschuldigungen preis. Seine eigene Arbeit ist jedoch untrennbar mit der klassisch ausgerichteten Tradition verbunden, seine frühen Bauwerke machen die mehr als deutlich.

Im Gegensatz zu Le Corbusier war Kommunikation nicht Mies' Stärke. Seine Abneigung gegen öffentliche Reden, seine geringe Produktion an geschriebenen Abhandlungen machen es nur noch einfacher, ihn als einen Monomanen abzutun, der nur darauf aus ist, seine eigenen, unbestrittenen Ideen baulich umzusetzen. In seiner Art, an seine Arbeit heranzugehen, wirkte er jedoch beinahe wie ein Erfinder. Er war der erste, der seriös die Möglichkeit eines vollkommen verglasten Wolkenkratzers studierte, der erste, der in unaufdringlicher, bedachter Weise Maschinen in sein Konzept integrierte—man denke an die Motoren, welche die riesige Glaswand im Wohnzimmer des Tugendhat-Hauses hoben und senkten—und 1927 organisierte er als erster eine echte Manifestation des 'Internationalen Stils' in Weissenhof.

Mies' Größe liegt zumindestens in seiner Fähigkeit, in der Architektur den Spielraum zum Experimentieren zu finden. Das hierzu

erforderliche Selbstvertrauen muß er wohl weniger aus seinen intensiven Streifzügen in die Geschichte oder in die Philosophie geschöpft haben—obwohl er sicherlich einer jener kultivierten Menschen war, die nur im Berlin der Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen existieren konnten, als aus seinem Wissen, wie man baut. James Gowan, der zweifelsohne der beste Handwerker unter den Architekten ist, weist auf diesen Aspekt hin und bemerkt dazu, daß dies zwar stimme, daß aber damit auch eine gewisse Gleichgültigkeit in bezug auf die spezifischen Eigenschaften eines Standortes einherginge, weil Mies' Gebäude die Merkmale universaler Lösungen tragen. Wird dies, wie Paul Rudolph hervorgehoben hat, durch die Eliminierung aller Probleme erreicht, dann ist diese Universalität laut Gowan auch *'an die zwei gefährlichsten (Materialien), nämlich Glas und Stahl'* gebunden.

In seinem Essay setzt sich Adrian Gale mit diesem Problem auseinander als einer, der eine Art von Lehrzeit in Mies' Büro durchgemacht hat. Für ihn geht es nicht so sehr um die Frage der 'Zweckmäßigkeit', als um die moralische Pflicht, den ökonomischsten Ausdruck einer idealisierten Idee zu finden. Wahrscheinlich ist denn auch das Farnsworth-Haus die am weitesten gehende, äußerste Äußerung: ein umschlossener Raum mit einem sehr geräumigen Schrank, der so in den Plan eingefügt ist, so daß andere Räumlichkeiten entstehen.

Die sparsame Gestik ist zweifelsohne der Grund, warum Mies so schwer zu verstehen ist, vor allem zu einer Zeit, in der der Architektenberuf von einem derartigen Reichtum an Ornamenten und Artikulationen überschwemmt zu werden scheint. Aus seiner Arbeit tritt jedoch klar der eindeutige Verweis auf jenes architektonische Konzept hervor, das an der Idee festhält, daß am Ursprung jedes Entwurfes der Raum stehen sollte.

Sommaro in italiano

Un certo paradosso, uno dei tanti, affligge le attitudini dei critici contemporanei dell'architettura dei maestri fondatori del Movimento Moderno. Molti degli architetti più pubblicizzati si dirigono ora verso una rinascita dell'iconografia neoclassica, mantenendo allo stesso tempo le tecniche di progettazione del Movimento Moderno. Il loro disprezzo più profondo sembra però venga riservato per il più classico, almeno in quanto a sensibilità, di questi antenati—Mies van der Rohe. Il paradosso sta quindi in questo: come può il lavoro di un tale architetto, basato così chiaramente su un retaggio classicheggiante, venire dichiarato *hors de combat* nel corso del presente dibattito dominato da problemi di storicismo e di eclettismo dal momento che lui era, e si considerava egli stesso, profondamente interessato nel retaggio della tradizione classica?

L'argomento di questo numero tratta della carriera iniziale di Mies prima che lasciasse l'Europa per l'America nel 1938, e a quel tempo aveva costruito già abbastanza da incidere il suo nome nel canone. Questa prima metà della sua carriera può essere suddivisa in due parti intorno all'anno 1922. Il saggio biografico di Sandra Honey rivela che fino ad allora Mies era stato un giornaliero estremamente abile, costruendo con un linguaggio classicizzato nudo ed austero per il quale era debitore verso Muthesius, verso Berlage, e soprattutto verso Schinkel e i progetti dello studio di Peter Behrens. La svolta decisiva avvenne, sembra, quando Walter Gropius rifiutò di esporre il progetto di Mies per l'Edificio Kröller alla sua 'Mostra per Architetti Sconosciuti' del 1919. Secondo Mies, Gropius giustificò la propria decisione in questo modo: 'Non possiamo esporlo; stiamo cercando qualcosa di completamente diverso.'

Una critica unica come questa aiuta a suddividere la storia in periodi chiari e precisi, però non può essere il racconto completo. La sua immersione in quell'atmosfera di serra della Berlino post-Versailles, assieme al suo sentimento per lo spirito di quel tempo, offrono un contributo attendibile al cambiamento che si avverò. E vi era inoltre l'approccio fondamentalista dall'interno—i problemi per Mies erano sempre grandiosi: che cos'è uno spazio chiuso, lo spazio? I suoi precedenti suggeriscono che questa era una ricerca privata, intrapresa con non meno zelo pur senza

l'appoggio di Gropius.

Ma, per ritornare al trattamento paradossale che Mies riceve ora, non si tratta forse piuttosto di quel fondamentalismo che lo rende di così difficile comprensione? Si afferma che gli Smithsons abbiano dichiarato: 'Mies è grande, però Corb comunica.' Altri hanno descritto la sua come un'architettura del silenzio.

Se comunque Mies affrontò alcuni problemi più fondamentali e li risolse con successo, queste risposte avrebbero forma di archetipi, che possono essere copiati in quanto danno risposte convincenti. Ma poi naturalmente il Mies viene biasimato per ogni fabbricato con muri perimetrali non portanti, per ogni piano urbanistico residenziale, per ogni interno blando. Investigando certi problemi fondamentali, Mies si espone pressoché *de facto* ad una tale accusa. La sua opera è però indissolubilmente legata alla tradizione classicizzante, e i suoi primi edifici lo dimostrano molto chiaramente.

Al contrario di Le Corbusier, Mies non era un buon comunicatore. La sua riluttanza a parlare in pubblico, la scarsità delle sue pubblicazioni, rendono se non altro più facile di liquidarlo come un monomane intento a costruire le sue proprie incontestabili idee. Però il suo approccio nei riguardi del proprio lavoro era quasi quello di un inventore. Fu il primo ad investigare veramente un grattacielo completamente vetrato, il primo ad incorporare i macchinari in una maniera calma e silenziosa—pensate ai motori che sollevavano e abbassavano l'enorme parete vetrata del soggiorno di Casa Tugendhat—e il primo ad organizzare una vera e propria manifestazione dello Stile Internazionale a Weissenhof nel 1927.

La grandezza di Mies giace per lo meno nella sua capacità di cercare un margine sperimentale nell'architettura. La confidenza per fare questo deve essergli venuta non tanto da uno studio intenso della storia e della filosofia—quantunque fosse certamente un uomo di cultura, del tipo che poteva essere esistito soltanto nella Berlino del periodo interbellico—quanto piuttosto dalla conoscenza della tecnica costruttiva. James Gowan, certamente uno degli architetti più artigianali, solleva questo punto e osserva che, mentre questo era esatto, tuttavia sembra si accompagnasse ad un certo disinteresse verso le qualità

specifiche dell'ambiente, in quanto gli edifici del Mies possiedono il carattere di soluzioni universali. Se questo viene ottenuto, come Paul Rudolph ha fatto notare, lasciando da parte i problemi, è anche alleato, come dice Gowan, 'ai due (materiali) più pericolosi, il vetro e l'acciaio.'

Adrian Gale discute questo problema nel suo saggio, parlando in qualità di uno che passò un periodo come dire di apprendistato nello studio del Mies. Secondo lui non è tanto una questione di 'idoneità allo scopo', quanto un dovere morale di ricerca della espressione più economica di una percezione idealizzata. La Casa Farnsworth è quindi forse la dichiarazione finale, uno spazio chiuso con un armadio molto spazioso inserito nel piano in maniera da creare altri tipi di spazio.

L'economia di espressione è certamente ciò che rende Mies di così difficile comprensione, specialmente in un periodo quando la professione degli architetti sembra essere inondata da una tale ricchezza di ornamenti e di articolazioni. Quello che è tuttavia ovvio nella sua opera è un riferimento chiaro all'idea di architettura che insiste che una idea di spazio dovrebbe essere alla radice di ogni creazione.

Resumen en español

Entre muchas paradojas una aflige a las actitudes de críticos modernos hacia la arquitectura de los fundadores del Movimiento Moderno. Muchos de los más publicados arquitectos están moviendo en este momento hacia una reanimación de imágenes neoclásicas, mientras que conservan las técnicas de planificación del Movimiento Moderno. Sin embargo, parecen desdeñar más que a nadie al más clásico, en sensibilidad por lo menos, de esos antepasados—Mies van der Rohe. La paradoja es entonces la siguiente: ¿cómo la obra de un tal arquitecto, tan claramente basada en una herencia clásica, puede ser declarada 'fuera de combate' en la discusión actual dominada por problemas de historicismo y eclecticismo mientras que era y, además, se veía profundamente implicado en la herencia de la tradición clásica?

El tema de esta edición es la primera parte de la carrera de Mies antes de que salió de Europa en 1938, con destino a los Estados Unidos, cuando ya había construido bastante para establecer su nombre en el gran canón. Se puede dividir la primera mitad de su carrera en dos partes, aproximadamente en el año 1922. En su ensayo biográfico, Sandra Honey explica que hasta entonces Mies fue un oficial expertísimo, construyendo edificios de un estilo escueto, adusto, y clásico que debía mucho a Muthesius, Berlage y, sobre todo, a Schinkel y a las producciones de la oficina de Peter Behrens. Parece que el cambio decisivo vino cuando Walter Gropius se negó a presentar el proyecto de Mies para la Casa Kröllner en su 'Exposición para Arquitectos Desconocidos' de 1919. Según Mies, Gropius se justificó de la siguiente manera: 'No podemos presentarla, estamos buscando algo completamente distinto'.

Un tal criticismo solo puede formar períodos bien arreglados en la historia pero no una visión completa de conjunto. Su inmersión en el ambiente creador del Berlín pos Versalles, junto con su propio sentimiento del espíritu de la época, dan una contribución estimable al cambio que ocurrió. Y también había el enfoque fundamentalista dentro de él—siempre fueron grandes las preguntas para Mies: ¿qué es la estructura, un cercado, el espacio? Sus antecedentes sugieren que fue una busca particular, realizada de una manera entusiástica a pesar de la falta de apoyo de Gropius.

Pero, a volver a la consideración paradójica que recibe Mies ahora, quizás es tan difícil de entenderle a causa de ese fundamentalismo. Los Smithson han dicho que: 'Mies es grande, pero Corb comunica.' Otros han descrito su arquitectura como la del silencio.

Sin embargo, si Mies se encargó de solucionar, y con éxito, algunos de los más fundamentales problemas, esas soluciones serían en forma de arquetipos, que podrían ser copiados porque son convincentes. Pero, de esta manera, Mies lleva la culpa de todos los rascacielos de muros como cortinas, de todas las rejas de viviendas y de todos los interiores sin carácter. Por haber investigado ciertos problemas fundamentales Mies se abre, casi de hecho a una tal acusación. Su propia obra está, sin embargo, liada indisolublemente a la tradición clásica por lo cual sus primeros edificios testifican claramente.

A diferencia de Le Corbusier, Mies no comunicaba bien. El hecho de que no le gustaba hablar en público, su poca producción de obras escritas facilita su consideración como solo un monomaniaco resuelto en construir sus propias ideas indiscutibles. Pero el enfoque a su obra fue casi el de un inventor. Fue el primero en investigar verdaderamente un rascacielo totalmente vidriado, el primero en incorporar máquinas de una manera tranquila y calmada—basta con considerar los motores que alzaban y bajaban el muro enorme de vidrio del salón de la Casa Tugendhat—y el primero en organizar una verdadera manifestación del Estilo Internacional a Weissenhof en 1927.

La grandeza de Mies yace, por lo menos, en su capacidad de buscar el margen de experimentación en la arquitectura. La confianza necesaria debe haber surgido no tanto de la lectura intensiva de historia o de filosofía—aunque fue ciertamente hombre de cultura de la manera de los que solo podían existir en el Berlín del período de entreguerras—como del saber de como construir. Ciertamente James Gowan, uno de los arquitectos más hábiles, amplió este punto haciendo la observación de que mientras que esto era verdad, parece que fuera unido con una cierta despreocupación por las calidades específicas del solar, porque los edificios de Mies tienen carácter de soluciones universales. Si eso se realiza, como dice Paul Rudolph, prescindiendo de proble-

mas, está también unido, como observa Gowan, 'a los dos materiales más arriesgados, el vidrio y el acero.'

Adrian Gale discute este problema en su ensayo, hablando en el papel de uno que hizo una especie de aprendizaje en la oficina de Mies. Para él no se trata tanto de 'la finalidad de la propiedad' como de un deber moral de buscar la expresión más económica de una percepción idealizada. Entonces la Casa de Farnsworth, quizás es la última afirmación, un espacio cercado con un armario muy grande dentro del plano para crear otros tipos de espacio.

La economía del gesto es seguramente lo que hace de Mies un arquitecto tan difícil de entender. Sobre todo cuando estamos en una época en la cual la profesión de arquitecto parece estar inundada de una tal riqueza de adorno y articulación. Sin embargo, lo que es evidente en su obra, es una referencia clara hacia atrás a esa idea de la arquitectura que insiste en que el espacio debe yacer en el origen de toda producción.

ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN is internationally recognised as being foremost among a small number of publications providing up-to-date information on architecture of the present and past. Each issue presents an in-depth analysis of a theme of relevance to architectural practice today, whether it be the work of an important new architect, a currently influential figure or movement, or the emergence of a new style or consensus of opinion. The high standard of writing, editorial selection and presentation has made *Architectural Design* one of the world's most progressive architectural magazines and essential reading for anyone interested in the art of architecture.

Themes covered recently by *Architectural Design* include the polemical work and projects of **Leon Krier**, the theoretical writings and teaching of the Russian Constructivist **Iakov Chernikhov**, the **UIA Exhibition in Cairo**, cross-currents of **American Architecture** and the collection of architectural works in the recently opened **German Architecture Museum**. Forthcoming issues include the first detailed history of the **Architecture School of Venice**, the **Vienna: Dream and Reality Exhibition** coordinated by **Hans Hollein**, and **Tradition: Convention and Invention** by **Lucien Steil**.

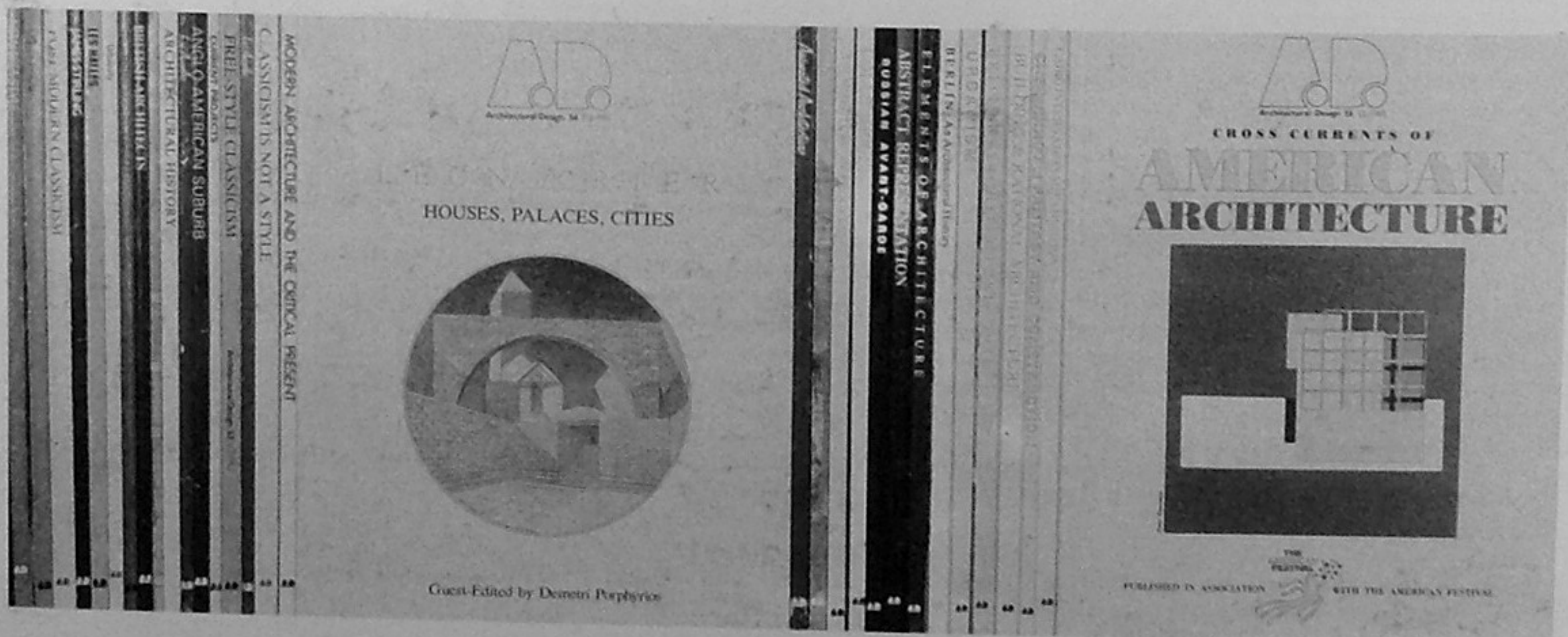
ART & DESIGN is already acknowledged as the best and only new monthly magazine covering the whole spectrum of the arts. Each issue contains editorial features on the latest developments in art, architecture, design, fashion, music and photography, together with a roundup of news covering products, books, salerooms, gossip, record reviews and extensive listings of both public and private galleries.

In addition to the high quality of editorial features by well-known contributors who are experts in their field, the current issues each contain a free original lithograph by a notable contemporary artist. *Art & Design* is available nationally from newsstands each month, or to make sure you get your copy you can take out a joint subscription to *Art & Design* and *Architectural Design* by completing the subscription form opposite.

Features in *Art & Design* have recently included: **Art** – R.B. Kitaj, Robert Motherwell, Howard Hodgkin and David Hockney; **Architecture** – Melvyn Bragg interview with Richard Rogers, Hampshire County Architects, Koski Solomon Partnership; **Fashion** – Bill Gibb, Jasper Conran, Jean Muir and Spring/Summer '86 previews; **Photography** – The Bauhaus, Lee Miller and Eileen Agar. In addition *Art and Design* also carries special promotional features and other related topics.

A subscription will give you annually six issues of *Architectural Design* and twelve issues of *Art & Design* at a saving of over £20 or \$50 on their value if purchased individually. To take advantage of this value-for-money offer, and to ensure that you get your copy regularly, fill in the form opposite and return it to:

Subscription Department
AD EDITIONS LTD
7/8 Holland Street
London W8
☎ 01-402 2141



ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN + ART & DESIGN



AD ART & DESIGN

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Complete the subscription form opposite and return it with your remittance to:

Subscriptions Department
AD EDITIONS LTD
7/8 Holland Street
LONDON W8

All major credit cards accepted



Architectural Design + Art & Design

Please send me one year's subscription to both magazines
UK £45.00/Europe £55/Overseas US\$79.50. Special discount for registered students £5.50/US\$10

- Payment enclosed by cheque/postal order/draft
- Please charge my credit card account no: (all major cards accepted)

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Expiry date

Signature

Name

Address.....

.....

.....



