

# Mies's Statues and Lilly Reich

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Sometime during 1926, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the interior designer Lilly Reich initiated a professional as well as personal relationship in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Immediately thereafter, nude female statues began to figure prominently — even focally — in a series of Mies's canonical works. Virtually nothing during Mies's twenty years of practice prior to this liaison would have predicted the arrival of these anthropomorphic presences.<sup>2</sup> Reich's singular success in bridging both the office and domestic spheres of Mies's life allowed this unexpected development. While Mies had been married for 13 years when he met Reich and had sought out previous extramarital affairs,<sup>3</sup> it was only after finding a joint collaborator/companion that he could open himself to overt gestures of human sensuality in his architecture. In parallel with the appearance of these nudes, telling changes in Mies's attitudes toward material, surface and color also rapidly occurred.

Reich proved to be a quietly forceful partner, one able to reach even someone of "natural reticence" like Mies.<sup>4</sup> By 1926 her autonomous artistic reputation as a "pioneer of modern design" and "one of the most respected practitioners in Germany" was becoming widely known, though Mies's aggrandized persona rapidly subsumed her own dawning fame. Prior to her involvement with Mies, Reich's exhibition designs had been recognized for over a decade, and she had been elected to the Werkbund's Board of Directors, the first woman ever to have received this honor.<sup>5</sup> Not just the depth of her personal commitment to Mies but the inherent quality of her own work gave her a larger sway over him than anyone else during his long career. From an artistic standpoint Lilly Reich was quite likely the only significant personal relationship which Mies, that "lonely seeker of truth" in the words of Walter Gropius,<sup>6</sup> ever had.

Reich's arrival in Mies's professional life — an entrée much enhanced by their personal relationship — was an unique event of considerable import for the career of this most solitary of Modern masters, and thus provides a highly controlled opportunity for the study of influence within the design process of one of the seminal figures of the age. More specifically, though, and also more poignantly, Mies's later exclusion of her from his life allows us to probe the persistence and depth of *mnemonic* influence. To watch her impact rise and then regress over several decades and to identify the traces of her which remain or wane can remind us of how the memories that leaven architecture are not just of places and of things, but of people, too.

## FOUR WORKS, FOUR GRADATIONS

After meeting Reich, Mies realized four seminal commissions in five years, each containing a single female statue. These four works — the Stuttgart Glass Room of 1927, the Barcelona Pavilion of 1929, the Villa Tugendhat of 1930, and the Berlin Building Exhibition

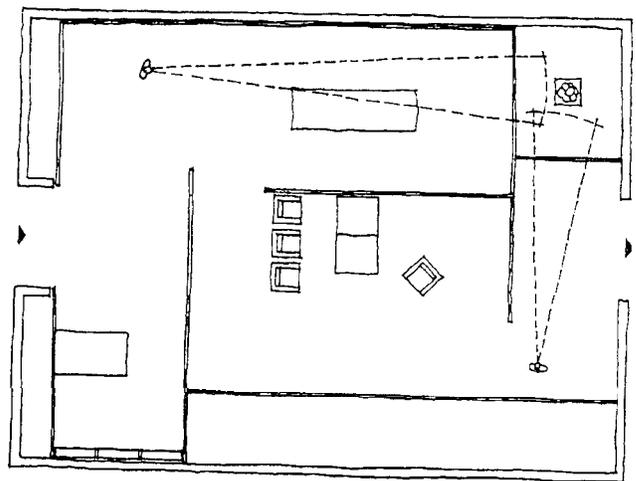


Fig. 1. Plan of the Stuttgart Glass Room by Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, 1927, with *Torso of a Girl, Turning* by Wilhelm Lehmbrock. Diagram by author.

House of 1931 — established Mies's fame as a *builder* within the European avant-garde, in contrast to the visionary renown he had already achieved with his earlier, theoretical projects.<sup>7</sup> Mies's inclusion of statues in these four canonical built works has elicited considerable scholarly study, yet Reich's generating role as "statuary" Muse has not been previously described or explicated.<sup>8</sup> While the degree of Reich's direct professional involvement in these realized works varies considerably, ranging from undocumented to total, the importance of her aesthetic influence in all is beyond doubt.<sup>9</sup> The sudden appearance of statues marks Reich's arrival in Mies's professional life, while the subtle transformation in the demeanor of the selected statues and in how they were spatially used gauges the steady progress in the two designers' personal involvement. The *accessibility* of the female images in these projects slowly increases in revealing gradations.

From the start these statues occupy crucial positions. The earliest debuted as the spatial pivot of both entry into and exit from Mies and Reich's Glass Room Exhibit of 1927 in Stuttgart [Fig. 1]. The bust, entitled *Torso of a Girl, Turning* by Wilhelm Lehmbrock, stands on a pedestal in a glazed corner zone.<sup>10</sup> Subdued in demeanor, its subtle rotating movement nonetheless controls our passage through the exhibit. As Karin Kirsch has noted, upon entry the Lehmbrock terminates the first deep vista into the space and turns us with its glance toward the main area. It briefly disappears from view as we move to the exhibit's central zone. As we leave it returns to axially

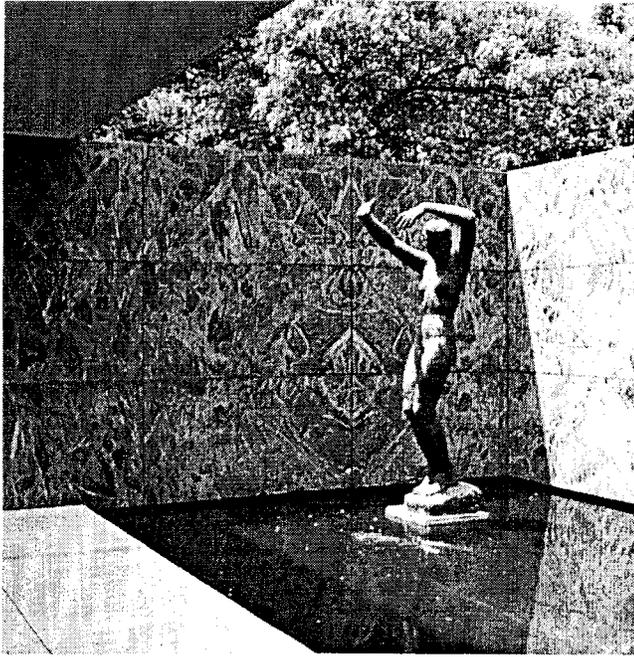


Fig. 2. *Dawn* by Georg Kolbe, Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe, 1929 (reconstructed 1986). Photo by author.

complete another vista and direct our attention toward the exit." Most important to note, though, in tracing Mies's attitude toward this sculpture, is that from both these angles the Lehmbrock remains inaccessible, lying always behind a layer of glass. While powerfully placed, it is wholly encased. Views into its glazed capsule are different from either side. Upon entry it is seen in full volume behind clear, highly reflective glass, floating in a diffuse, white field. Upon exit it is silhouetted behind "mouse" gray glass — a dark and rather ghostly image. In neither case can we approach it (much less touch it), but rather only admire its varying qualities scopically through differing transparencies.

In the 1929 Barcelona Pavilion, the female presence — a full-figure sculpture by Georg Kolbe entitled *Dawn*<sup>12</sup> — is no longer vitreously enclosed [Fig. 2]. This second sculpture serves as more than a compositional pivot; it is "a potent focus of visual attention at the innermost point of the Pavilion."<sup>13</sup> Instead of greeting or dismissing us, the statue itself now presumably justifies our long wander in these labyrinthine passages. Further, while this statue — like the Lehmbrock — is first glimpsed within its walled space behind glass, we are now invited inside the statuary's quadrant. Moving around on either side of the glass wall we find ourselves within the open courtyard with it. Frustratingly, however, it still cannot be approached due to its placement in a large, distancing pool of water. Its arcing motions are introspective, almost somnambulist.<sup>14</sup> Though our passage into the courtyard may have triggered its gestures, it paradoxically pushes us back without truly acknowledging us.<sup>15</sup>

In the third project, the Villa Tugendhat of 1930, the Lehmbrock torso from the Glass Room returns [Fig. 3]. No less prominent here than was the Kolbe at Barcelona, the Lehmbrock at Tugendhat stands before Mies's onyx wall. One of the Villa's few remaining preliminary design sketches reveals how the existence of a female bust in this precise position was an important part of the building's initial conception; from the beginning the Tugendhat statue was intended as a palpably reachable entity.<sup>16</sup> It forthrightly inhabits the same spatiality as us. Mies exactly matched its eye-level to our own.<sup>17</sup> Subtleties that still counter this increased accessibility, though, must be noted. As a torso, the statue of necessity rests on a high pedestal, retaining a slight aesthetic distance from us. Further, its demure, sideways glance, which silently directed our turns at Stuttgart,



Fig. 3. *Torso of a Girl, Turning* by Wilhelm Lehmbrock, Villa Tugendhat by Mies van der Rohe, 1930. Photo by author.

seems to exist here only to prevent us from directly addressing it.

In the fourth and final of these projects — the Berlin Building Exhibition House of 1931, another Kolbe nude work, *Frauenstatue*, was placed upon an outdoor terrace [Fig. 4].<sup>18</sup> Mies gave the courtyard of the Berlin Building Exhibition House a pool very much like that at Barcelona, yet in Berlin he moved the sculpture from the water up onto the paving with us. Thus reachable as at Tugendhat, the statue's sense of accessibility is now further enhanced by the lowness of the vestigial platform on which it stands, its strong directionality downward off this platform, and the openness of its direct, forward glance. If this statue were to take the next step forward in space which its motion anticipates, any remaining spatial distinctions between viewer and viewed would vanish.<sup>19</sup> The statue's demeanor is monumentally placid, almost somber.

In addition, though, to noting the heightened potential for interactivity on the terrace in this case, it is crucial to also observe how this last statue is sensed from within the house. As was Mies's lifelong design custom, he provided separate sleeping zones for the husband and wife within the master's suite.<sup>20</sup> While the view of the statue from the wife's side is remote and partially shielded by vegetation in Mies's drafted plan, the husband's sleeping space opens with glazed walls diagonally on two sides toward this terrace, focusing upon the sculpture. The man's writing desk is positioned to reinforce this view, almost touching the glass. In addition, then, to having the opportunity for direct accessibility to the sculpture on the terrace the man can also — if desired — withdraw behind the framing device of the glass, returning to the purely voyeuristic formulation of the Stuttgart Glass Room. There is a reversal of roles, though, compared to the interaction through glass at Stuttgart. At Berlin it is the inanimate female statue which seems ready to roam freely, while it is the animate viewer who retreats to a static position in a vitreous cell.

The last two of these projects were places of true *domesticity*.

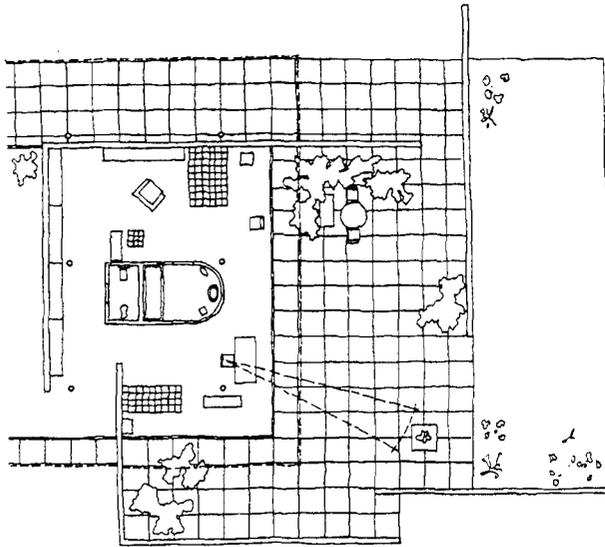


Fig. 4. Plan of the Berlin Building Exposition House by Mies van der Rohe, 1931. Diagram by author.

Surely it is no coincidence that it was in these where the nude female statues came within reach. The Tugendhat and Berlin Building Exposition Houses — unlike the rather corporate Stuttgart Glass Room and the civic Barcelona Pavilion<sup>21</sup> — were designed fundamentally as environments of intimacy. Mies and Reich had begun sharing a domestic flat soon after starting their collaborations.<sup>22</sup>

Since virtually nothing is known about how or why Mies (as well as Reich?) selected these specific statues,<sup>23</sup> to posit this sequence is admittedly to infer a structure from what might only be chance. Taciturn as always, Mies never mentioned these presences, much less what they meant to him. Still, as a group, these statues at least speak decisively of Mies's taste in figural sculpture — a taste that further leads one straight to Reich. All of the statues selected were of a genre that remained conservative for the Weimarera, exhibiting a "quietness of form" showing more debt to the work of the French master Aristide Maillol than to the emotionalism of German Expressionism. The Lehmbruck and the two Kolbes which Mies selected drew liberally from Maillol's figural language, partaking in the Frenchman's "firm, rounded forms" and celebrating his vision of "the vaguely sensual, passive, monumental woman."<sup>24</sup> Physically, these words could easily apply to Lilly Reich, who was full-bodied in figure and "physically plain" in features, though always immaculately groomed. As Mies's biographer notes: "[Reich] disdained all suggestion of flounce."<sup>25</sup> These statues likewise exude restraint; while undeniably sensual, none exalts the gratuitously ravishing.<sup>26</sup> Some photos of Reich from the early thirties when compared to the Kolbe at Barcelona show an eerie resemblance of face and even of expression [Fig. 5].<sup>27</sup>

### A MORE SENSUOUS PALATE

Paralleling Mies's acceptance of a restrained eroticism in these "statuary" projects is his transition to a richer, more colorful, less quotidian material palate. Reich's flair for the sleek introduced Mies, a stonemason's son, to a whole new sense of surface. While Mies employed coarse limestone and granite before meeting her, polish now replaced the chisel, and tautly thin slabs supplanted his blocky ashlar.<sup>28</sup> Mies ceased using exposed brick in projects where Reich had a hand, and if he used it when working alone it henceforth became more smooth.<sup>29</sup> Gone forever was the brutally raw clinker brick Mies used just before meeting Reich in his Liebknecht-Luxemburg Memorial. Sheen — from lustrous marble, chromium plate and mirrored glass — appeared everywhere. Along with this



Fig. 5. Comparison images. Kolbe's *Dawn* and Lilly Reich. Cropping and composite by author.

heightened sheen also came soft, earthy textures — silks, luxuriously grained woods, and pleated and tufted leathers.<sup>30</sup> In the four statuary projects the hues, too, intensified with new sophistication. Reich's interest in color, evidenced by her exhibition displays of hundreds of linoleum samples in sharp primaries and diaphanous pastels, entered Mies's *oeuvre* at the Stuttgart Glass Room. Bright red flooring, warmebony walls, and varying translucencies and tints of green glass expose her touch. The cream and orange of Mies's subsequent *onyx doré* walls, cross woven with rose and gray veins, seem unimaginable without her. Reich's material, surface and color sensibilities read as forcefully in her and Mies's collaborations as do the human figures.

Commonalties in how Mies and Reich approached material can help explain their initial empathy for each others' work. Contemporaries considered Reich's modernist attitude toward the presentation of materials in exhibitions to be revolutionary in its forthrightness and spontaneity.<sup>31</sup> Her exhibits sought integrity through corporeality, incorporating immensely long planks of rare wood, freestanding cylinders of Lucite, and delicately draped bolts of cloth. Contemporary newspaper reports praised the "exemplary objectivity" of her display methods.<sup>32</sup> This probity resonated with preexisting tendencies in Mies's aesthetic. Mies, too, had a taste for directness — a quality much accentuated by his entry into the *neue Sachlichkeit* milieu. Prior to Reich, this had led him to the elemental and blunt, as his frank celebrations of the unrelieved rough surface textures of concrete, stone and brick in his early visionary projects amply show.<sup>33</sup> In this way Mies and Reich's decade-long collaboration began as a productive episode in mutual reinforcement. What Reich decisively added, however, to Mies's material palate — in parallel with the sculptures — was sensuousness.<sup>34</sup> This affected every material he touched thereafter, even those with which he had substantial priorexperience in his theoretical works. Take glass, for example. Before meeting Reich the curtain walls in his renderings appeared to be heroically rough and grainy, as if they had been etched and mottled by the coarsening dust of time.<sup>35</sup> In study elevations of his 1922 curving Glass Skyscraper, the curtain wall reads like an undulating slab of gritty sandstone. Mullions are applied like broken wire.<sup>36</sup> After working with Reich at Stuttgart his way of understanding the vitreous would never be the same.<sup>37</sup> Facts were central to both Mies's and Reich's aesthetics, but his were of the base and hers were of the surface. With glass, she showed him how ephemerality could function as an absolute.

The adhesion of Reich's surface sensibility to Mies's planar elements seasoned the trend toward greater formal abstraction in his spaces, and enhanced their experiential richness. It distinguished his otherwise increasingly neo-platonic, orthogonal arrays of walls from similar, contemporaneous planar matrices like those of the Dutch *de Stijl* movement. In contrast to the abstractly coded coloring and lack of refractive ambiguities in Rietveld's or van Doesburg's

compositions, Mies's planar fields became mirrored spectacles of earthy elegance. Barcelona particularly has been viewed this way. One of the visiting critics in 1929 described the effect of Mies's veneered walls as "precise like a machine" yet "polished like a diamond."<sup>38</sup> In the recently reconstructed Pavilion, Caroline Constant notes how the reflectance of the materials can "simulate the temporal flux of nature,"<sup>39</sup> and for K. Michael Hays the "fragmentation and distortion of the space is total."<sup>40</sup>

With statues and surfaces, then, Reich enriched Mies's work in two related ways: the human figures gave literal sensuality, and the surface treatments gave the architectural planes a potentially sensorial reverberation of this. After emigrating to America and leaving Reich in Germany, Mies would expend great effort in understanding these two developments, making exacting probes of what meaning the statues and exotic veneers could have in his American work. One he would retain and the other he would allow to gradually wane.

## COURT HOUSES AND MNEMONIC REDUCTION

As revealing as it is to trace Reich's increasing impact on Mies, it is even more fascinating to watch her memory persist after they grew apart. The particulars of why their relationship cooled are unknown. Mies's practice fell idle once Modernism was rejected by the Nazis, and, grudgingly, he succumbed to the temptations of potential work abroad. After a series of preparatory visits, he left permanently without Reich for the U.S. in 1938. Franz Schulze, Mies's biographer, speculates that: "[Reich's] professional thoroughness, turned by love for him into personal solicitude, finally caused him to retreat from her. Mies cherished nothing in his life more devoutly than his independence, and when he emigrated to the U.S. he closed her out of his life."<sup>41</sup> Reich did visit him in Chicago before World War II began, though friends report that Mies did little to encourage her to stay.<sup>42</sup> Her spirit was hurt, and she never saw him again.<sup>43</sup> Reich endured the War alone in Germany, devotedly tending Mies's papers and effects until most were lost when her studio was bombed in 1943.<sup>44</sup> She died a sudden and untimely death in Berlin in 1947. After her passing, Mies had more than two decades yet to live and reflect upon their collaboration.

While the war progressed an ocean away, Mies commenced a focused study of the statues and lush materials. Tellingly, the venue he selected was *domestic*. In Chicago he produced his definitive series of Court House renderings — a typology first explored by him in Germany.<sup>45</sup> The final American variant suggestively was redrawn not long after the definitive break with Reich.

Little — almost nothing — is encountered within these ascetic perspectives. It is as if an exhaling breath has expelled all trace of daily inhabitation from within. What remains is a strident contrast between the crisply drafted, linear precinct and, poignantly, an occasional collage of a statue or veneered screen. The tenuous position of the statue and screen inclusions vis-a-vis the space is reinforced by their literally "pasted on" character. They could easily be moved about — or removed. The luxuriousness that clothed so much of the space in the statuary projects is here compacted onto a lonely plane or two, typically rendered in wood,<sup>46</sup> with the figure standing carefully clear — never brushing against these infinitesimally thin, scrim-like surfaces. Rarely, in fact, does the figure enter a view that contains a screen.<sup>47</sup> In these precincts Mies isolates the twin impacts of his collaboration with Reich. To examine the screen and figure most clearly, he draws them independently. The bounding brick walls blinker off the remainder of the world; the inward focus is absolute.

Ultimately these terse Court Houses distill to triadic environments, formed of the three interrelated factors of reticulate space, human figure and veneered screen — with the screen as the arbitrating element. Looking first at a drawing with just the abstracted space and the figure can help clarify this dynamic. Such a drawing reduces to a tangibly — indeed supremely — voluptuous sculpture resting upon an incessantly mechanical floor grid. It is as if Mies were trying

to identify the ultimate emblems of the rational and sensual, wall them up together, and suggest that they can coexist but never cross-fertilize. An unbridgeable dichotomy confronts us. Now moving to one of the drawings with just reticulate space and veneered screens, and placing it beside the drawing with just space and figure, it becomes clear that this first impression is too simplistic. Rather than a dichotomy, Mies has posited a dialectic. The screen is a *precise* blend of the rational space and the sensual figure. The screen simultaneously mimics not only the sculptural figure's sinuous patterning, deep tonality and organic vivacity, but also the drafted space's mechanically straight profiles, sharply rectangular corners, and theoretically infinite thinness and weightlessness. These planes manage to mediate the antithetical contrast of grid and figure.

In this triadic, dialectical formulation, Mies inspired the abstracted space and Reich the curvaceous figure, while the blended plane was a collaboration between their characters. Quite likely this is the core truth of their professional relationship. For Mies, it was a clarifying discovery born of the reductionism prevalent in mnemonic processes. Only after she was definitively gone could he see it, draw it, and understand it.

Again, since the taciturn Mies said nothing of these things, such a formulation must remain speculative. It is buttressed, though, by noting how Mies treated brick in these Court House renderings. Simply the fact that brick appeared with statues in these courts is noteworthy, as brick was absent from his European statuary projects. That the brick was drawn with pencil, like the grid, is even more interesting. Why did he not represent the brick through collage? Brick — one would suppose — could have functioned effectively as a mediator of the rational and sensual. Such a "pasted on" collage zone of brick could have been earthy, colorful, and tonal, and also could have been straight, sharp cornered and rectangular. Why, instead, does the brick always cleave in graphic technique toward the linear, rationally drafted space of the grid? This happened because brick — before, during and after Reich — was exclusively his; it was never lush, she never cared for it, and it never appeared when he was in close collaboration with her. Thus when their collaboration came under Mies's later scrutiny, and an accounting of what had happened in his European works was being made, Mies naturally saw his "old friend" brick as part of his abstracted space. In these perspectives, he carefully distinguished the brick from the sensuously clothed screens that represented his and Reich's coalescent activity by drawing the brick rather than making it out of collage.

## AMERICA WITHOUT STATUES: ABSENCE AND PRESENCE

By the time Mies finished his theoretical Court House studies, his American practice was ascending. Throughout the earliest commissions, Mies drew dozens — probably hundreds — of human figures. Sometimes they are obviously real people, but mostly they are stylized statues.<sup>48</sup> Typically they are dark, like the heavily toned collage figures in his final Court House renderings. Significantly, though, they only appear in the drawings of his American commissions, and never actually find their way into the realized works. Even when it was clear that an obvious place for statuary had been set aside in the planning phase, as in the Seagram Plaza, the figures fail to materialize in fact.<sup>49</sup> Further, even his drawing of them waned as time went by.

True, the vast and countless plazas Mies provided, as at Seagram's, could be interpreted as expressing a desire to encourage real people to now mount the increasingly reticulate and abstract stage of his architecture. If a throng of living humanity would come forward, stone surrogates would no longer be necessary. Yet one wonders upon looking at the largely uninhabited and rather lonely swathes he often drew late in America whether he ever was really seeing these plazas quite this way. Certainly the general public's own reticence, as time has told, to actively use these bare and windy spaces suggests

that this vision, if indeed Mies held it, was manifest naïveté. And Mies was not really naïve. Instead we should consider the possibility that these sublimely open swathes of plaza suggest the depth and extent of his self-imposed isolation after crossing the Atlantic. As raised plinths typically cut off from the surrounding life of the city by gravely scaled steps, these plazas hardly welcome casual use. Solitude, both professional and personal, must have been something he wanted; it is felt powerfully in these plazas.

Here it is important to mention the words "professional" and "personal" in unison. Mies had many close colleagues in America, and rapidly after moving there began yet another lasting and satisfying affair.<sup>1</sup> Never, though, would anyone bridge his professional and personal lives as did Reich. This specific loneliness, intentionally sought, is the cryptic meaning encoded within the "statue-less" and depopulated plazas in his late work. The statuary memory of Reich did live on in America, but as a profound absence rather than presence. If Mies seemed less visibly hurt by the end of the Reich affair than did Lilly, the uncanny<sup>51</sup> emptiness that somehow haunts these plazas nonetheless suggests that the memory of her as human figure had an intense — perhaps overly intense — meaning for him. A forced forgetting has wiped these architectural slates too conspicuously clean.

What did not disappear was the veneer of luscious material. Increasingly his American work explored the promise of these episodic accents from his Court House renderings.<sup>2</sup> This method of incorporating sensuality became a signature in his later career. Marble and travertine in lobbies, freestanding wood dividers in galleries, and polished granite benches sliding around the periphery of his vast plazas — these were the elements that added a quiet, material sumptuousness to his American architecture's pragmatism, and made his fundamentally reductive late work still so attractive to his status-seeking, corporate clientele of the 50's and 60's. Respecting the attitude toward the compaction and isolation of the collage elements in the Court House renderings, he carefully detailed these exotic surfaces to maintain a discreet distance from the surrounding, rationalized structural enclosure, setting them off with deep reveals where literal separation was not possible. Alongside these stones and woods, the rarest silks and leathers continued to be seen.

In this case, the memory of Reich created presence not absence. Material elegance helped maintain Mies's long-standing reputation as "a poet among the rationalists"<sup>3</sup> even as his overall compositions became increasingly rigidified and cold. Reich helped him understand that humanity always needs the sensual, no matter how mechanically driven the age. Long after his rejection of her, he still remembered her lesson.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Precisely how Mies met Reich is unknown. Mies's biographer states that they were in correspondence by 1925, and had met personally by 1927, during the preparations for the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart. [Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe, A Critical Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 138-139.] Sonja Gunther dates their "acquaintance" to between 1924-26 [Sonja Günther, *Lilly Reich, 1885-1947. Innenarchitektin Designerin Ausstellungsgestalterin* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), p. 10].

<sup>2</sup> A figure of Bismarck with smaller flanking groups of statuary terminated the central axis of Mies's unrealized *Schinkelschüler* Bismarck Monument Project of 1910. These pieces, though, were more a reflection of the honorific nature of the project than an indication of Mies's affection for sculpture. The statuary in this gigantic project is remarkably muted — almost begrudging — in scale and extent. Schinkel, who Mies deeply admired, had a pronounced taste for statuary, yet in no other of Mies's *Schinkelschüler* works did Mies include any statues. For example, Mies's Kröller-Müller house project of 1912, where one

might expect extensive use of statuary given the pergolas, garden walls, and courtyards, contains none. A sole urn, geometrical in flavor, marks the entry yard.

<sup>3</sup> Mies married Ada Bruhn in 1913, and she bore him three daughters in three years. Mies was notoriously unfaithful to her from the beginning, and early in the marriage this drove her to occasionally contemplate suicide. Later, she came to rationalize and accept his unconventional behavior as being a necessary adjunct to his artistic temperament. [Schulze, pp. 75-76.]

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Reich's autonomous reputation has only recently reemerged from behind Mies's. The most important work in English, from which the above quotations are taken, is: Matilda McQuaid, *Lilly Reich, Designer and Architect* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), p. 9. Sonja Günther's recent work, in German, is a comprehensive account of Reich's career [Günther, 1988]. Further information in English can be found in: Sandra Honey, "Who and What Inspired Mies van der Rohe in Germany," *Architectural Design* (No 3/4), XLIX (1979): 99ff. Reich, who first became known in Berlin after 1911 as a couturier and interior designer with considerable expertise in fine materials and textiles, went on to become an accomplished window dressing and furniture designer, as well as ultimately a pioneering woman figure in the area of exhibition design in Germany and an architect in her own right. Having completed her early training with designers who had studied under Henry van de Velde, a founder of the German Werkbund, Reich quickly became involved in numerous Werkbund exhibitions before and after World War I. She was elected to the membership of the Werkbund in 1912, and to its Board of Directors in 1920, six years prior to meeting Mies. [McQuaid, pp. 10-14 & 60.]

<sup>6</sup> Walter Gropius, *Apollo in the Democracy, The Cultural Obligation of the Architect* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> His fame prior to meeting Reich was derived primarily from five theoretical works — the Concrete Country House, the Brick Country House, the Concrete Office Building, the Glass Skyscraper, and the Friedrichstrasse Competition project. During the time of collaboration with Lilly Reich, Mies did realize his 1927 Corbusian-inspired housing block at Weissenhof and his 1930 Esters and Lange brick villas in Krefeld. These other built works, however, played much less of a role in the subsequent development of his avant-garde reputation than did the contemporaneous four works with statues. These four, in tandem with his theoretical projects, attained seminal status in critical considerations of his career and of Modernism as a whole. Mies's brick Wolf House at Guben, finished in 1927, was designed and begun in 1925 before he had met Reich.

<sup>8</sup> A previous, detailed study of these statuary projects and an attempt to relate them to Mies's later works in America — especially his Farnsworth House — are found in: Paulette Singley, "Living in a Glass Prism: The Female Figure in Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Domestic Architecture," *Critical Matrix: The Princeton Journal of Women, Gender and Culture* (Volume 6, No. 2, 1992), pp. 47-76. Viewing these works predominantly from feminist and Freudian standpoints, Singley discusses at length the importance of statuary for Mies within these four early projects, but does not address the trend of these statues toward greater accessibility or their possible roles as reverberations of Reich's increasing presence in Mies's life, either physically or professionally. Rather, Singley sees these statues as all equally "Captured, mounted, and displayed as compliant objects of passive contemplation . . ." and regards Reich's professional involvement in these projects as limited to that of furniture collaborator [pp. 53-54].

<sup>9</sup> Reich's participation in all aspects of the Stuttgart Class Room is well documented. [Karen Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), pp. 27-29.] Her involvement at

Barcelona, in contrast, is undocumented to such an extent that the major monograph on the building mentions her name only regarding the furniture. [Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Christian Cirici, & Fernando Ramos, *Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion*, 3rd ed., (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, S. A., 1996), p. 18.] Kenneth Frampton, however, sees Reich's influence in many of the materials used within the Pavilion. [Kenneth Frampton, "Modernism and Tradition in the Work of Mies van der Rohe, 1920-1968" in *Mies Reconsidered* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), pp. 44-45.] While little more is known of Reich's specific activities in creating the interiors of Tugendhat due to the loss of that project's correspondence, her "essential participation" in the Villa is nonetheless beyond question. [Günther, p. 25.] Grete Tugendhat fully acknowledged Reich's involvement, writing: "All of the color schemes were tested in place by Mies van der Rohe in collaboration with Ms. Lilly Reich." [Quoted in: Peter Lizon, *Villa Tugendhat in Brno, An International Landmark of Modernism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee College of Architecture and Planning, 1996), p. 57.] Of the Tugendhat commission, Sandra Honey has written: "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." [Sandra Honey, "Mies in Germany" in: Frank Russell, ed., *Mies van der Rohe, European Works, Architectural Monographs 11* (London: Academy Editions, 1986), p. 19.] Given the paucity of actual documentation of Reich's activities at Tugendhat, the Villa is not listed in Sonja Günther's comprehensive catalogue of Reich's works. [Günther, pp. 77-78.] Reich's involvement in Mies's work at the Berlin Building Exhibition extended to being given a house commission of her own immediately adjacent to Mies's. Reich and Mies also collaborated extensively on a fifth important commission during this time frame — the Silk and Velvet Café at the Exposition de la Mode in Berlin, of 1927 — mentioned above by Honey. The most ephemeral of all these projects, it contained no fixed surfaces of any kind and also no sculpture.

<sup>10</sup> For information on the various states of this statue by Lehbruck, see: Dietrich Schubert, *Die Kunst Lehbrucks* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), pp. 195-196 & Plate 167. Lehbruck produced many earlier versions of this slightly elongated maiden, such as the shorter half-figure cement cast *Torso der Knienden* of 1911, which was housed after the War in Nationalgalerie in East Berlin, and the terra-cotta *Büste der Knienden* of 1911 in the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. All the variants of this statue were portraits of Lehbruck's wife, see: Reinhold Heller, *The Art of Wilhelm Lehbruck* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1972), pp. 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> Kirsch, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> This statue's title is also variously translated as *Morning*. It is one of a series of sculptures of standing dancers made by Kolbe. Mies's initial plans for the Pavilion showed the possible inclusion of three sculptures, though in the end this was reduced to only the one Kolbe. Ignasi de Solà-Morales speculates that the Kolbe was chosen for the courtyard because it may have been "more accessible, and possibly cheaper, than some other piece specially commissioned or chosen from a private collection." [de Solà-Morales, p. 20.]

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> For an alternative discussion of the meaning of this statue's motions, see: José Quetglas, "Fear of Glass: The Barcelona Pavilion," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Architectureproduction, Revisions: 2 Papers on Architectural Theory and Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), pp. 145-148. Despite the poetic power of Quetglas's virtuoso description of the Kolbe sculpture and his comparison of its gestures and expression to those of the tragic woman on the staircase in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, the Kolbe sculpture's elegant,

dance-like motion is more suggestive of a somnambulist than of someone being terrorized. Transitory emotion is suspended in this sculpture, the woman's gestures exuding an eerie timelessness wholly unlike the impassioned, fervid events in Eisenstein's film.

<sup>15</sup> In a large, unfinished presentation rendering of the Barcelona Pavilion, Mies showed a reclining sculpture in the pool. Its gestures, or lack thereof, would have admittedly read very differently from the Kolbe's. For a reproduction of this drawing and a discussion of the possible sculpture shown, and for speculations as to why a vertical figure was ultimately chosen see: Wolf Tegethoff, Mies van der Rohe, *The Villas and Country Houses* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), p. 81 and plate 10.6.

<sup>16</sup> For an illustration of this sketch, see: Arthur Drexler, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art, Volume 2* (New York: Garland, 1986), Plate 2.191.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the implications of the horizon in establishing this eye-level, see: Randall Ott, "The Horizontal Symmetry of Mies van der Rohe," *Dimensions* (Vol. 7, 1993), pp. 115-116.

<sup>18</sup> The version of this statue that Mies most likely used — a version which appears as white in all photos — was a preparatory plaster cast. The interior location of the exhibition house would have allowed for the use of such a plaster version even on the "outdoor" courtyard terrace. For a photograph of a bronze impression of this statue, dating to 1929, see: Rudolf G. Binding, *Vom Leben der Plastik, Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1933), p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Here is where my interpretation of statuary and its meaning in Mies's canonical works diverges most fully from that of Singley, who characterizes this statue as "petrified in a garden." [Singley, p. 51].

<sup>20</sup> This separation of sleeping areas occurred in all the large brick villas — the Wolf, Esters and Lange houses — and also in the master's suite at Tugendhat. Irene Kalkofen, the Tugendhat governess, comments on this arrangement extensively in a taped interview held in the Mies van der Rohe Archive at the Museum of Modern Art, and describes how unusual many of the other family members felt this was. [Irene Kalkofen taped interview with Ludwig Glaeser, 5/24/77.]

<sup>21</sup> Barcelona has a domestic scale, though there is nothing else domestic in the actual conception or realization of the commission. Its public nature is manifest in its position on the major cross axis of entire exhibition grounds. The building was included in Tegethoff's study of Mies's villas primarily because of its importance for Mies's overall career development. [Tegethoff, p. 69.]

<sup>22</sup> Their cohabitation began at the time of the Weissenhofsiedlung in an apartment located in Stuttgart. [Schulze, pp. 138-139.]

<sup>23</sup> Nothing is known about how the Lehbruck came to be used at Stuttgart, though Mies was friends with Lehbruck prior to the artist's tragic suicide in 1919. [Ludwig Glaeser, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Drawings in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1969), Introduction, unpaginated.] de Solà-Morales speculates that the selection of the Kolbe for Barcelona must have been made at the last moment. [de Solà-Morales, p. 20.] The preparatory sketch for Tugendhat, in contrast, suggests that Mies had the Lehbruck in mind there from the start. Nothing is known of the procurement of Frauenstatue for Berlin.

<sup>24</sup> For all these quotes describing formal interactions of these sculptors with Maillol, see: Stephanie Barron, *German Expressionist Sculpture* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Art Museum, 1983), pp. 132 & 142. Throughout his career Mies favored Maillol's figural formulation, and gravitated toward Maillol's own works and toward those of others obviously inspired by

- Maillol. For example, Mies's taste for Maillol was clear to the Tugendhats. Grete Tugendhat assumed Mies's early design sketch showed a sculpture by Maillol, writing: "After awhile, finally, we had a drawing of the Great Room showing the only piece of furniture: a sculpture in front of the onyx wall. It looked like a statue by Maillol. However, we later choose a torso by Lehbruck. We liked this sculpture very much and it hurt exceedingly to learn that, during the Nazi era, it disappeared without a trace." [Quoted in Lizon, p. 56.] The cement version of the statue used at Tugendhat did indeed survive the War and today is in the collection of the Moravian Gallery, Brno. A much more reddish, terra-cotta version was recently placed in the renovated Villa. For Lehbruck's relationship to Maillol, see: Barron, p. 142. Many of Lehbruck's earliest statues, circa 1906-09, were directly inspired by this important French master. The *Torso of a Girl, Turning*, of 1913-14, still looks back to Maillol, even though it was sculpted several years after Lehbruck had already experienced a breakthrough toward his own highly personal handling of the figure in other works. The torso displays only the slightest indication of the elongation of human form that characterizes Lehbruck's rapidly maturing expressionist manner, a quality which had already first appeared in Lehbruck's work as early as 1911 in his *Kneeling Woman* and culminated in his momentous yet spare sculptures formed as a traumatic reaction to World War I, such as his *Seated Youth* of 1915-16 and *Fallen Man* of 1916-17. In comparison to such authoritatively expressionist works, the *Torso of a Girl Turning* adheres retrospectively to the less meditative stance and more voluptuous plasticity of Maillol. Only the girl's constricted waist, lengthened neck, and diverted glance hint of the emotive revolution that was by then well underway in Lehbruck's other works. For Kolbe's relationship to Maillol, see: Barron, p. 132, and Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg, "Sculpture," in Eberhard Roters, ed., *Berlin, 1910-1933* (Secaucus: Wellfleet Press, 1982), pp. 141-142. Kolbe's works of the time of Barcelona and Tugendhat were known for their "gentle, contemplative aesthetic." While Kolbe had a brief flirtation with the raw emotions of German Expressionism after 1919, he quickly returned to his more idealized visions, of which the sculptures at Barcelona and the Berlin Building Exhibition are exemplary.
- <sup>25</sup> Quotes from Schulze, p. 139. Schulze further notes that Reich "kept herself as carefully groomed as one might expect of a professional couturière."
- <sup>26</sup> Mies was known to appreciate full-bodied women. He would describe the woman of one of his affairs prior to Reich as "The Horse," saying "Yes, I know she's no beauty. But she's a dancer and we are fine together. and it is great fun." [*Ibid.*, p. 75.]
- <sup>27</sup> Compare, for example, the photos in Schulze, p. 198, and Quetglas, p. 147. Schulze notes the character of the environment "in the liberal circles of Weimar Germany, where a taste for mannish features was commonplace." [Schulze, p. 139.] The mannish faces of Kolbe's sculptures in particular are very apparent, and have parallels with Reich's appearance.
- <sup>28</sup> Massive, coarse stone figured prominently in Peter Behrens German Embassy in St. Petersburg, for which Mies was site manager. In his own works before Reich, hlies drew stone in heavy courses, as in the Bismarck monument and the Kröller-Müller House.
- <sup>29</sup> Why Reich did not participate in the Esters and Lange brick villas is unknown. For mentions of Reich in relation to the villas, see: Julian Heynen, *A place for Art, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Haus Lange — Haus Esters* (Krefeld: Krefelder Kunstmuseen. Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1995), pp. 11 & 18. Perhaps at this early stage in Mies and Reich's relationship, their collaborations were restricted to interior projects centering around exhibition venues, as in the Stuttgart Glass Room. Reportedly, the commission for these two villas came to Mies through Reich. The ladies of both families were clients of Reich's couture salon. [Tegethoff, p. 61.]
- <sup>30</sup> Frampton, pp. 45-46.
- <sup>31</sup> As Matilda McQuaid has commented: "In her [Reich's] most eloquent displays, she allowed the materials and contents to act as the primary design feature as well as the subject of the exhibition itself." [McQuaid, p. 9.] Mies, being familiar with her prior exhibition designs, appointed her to design the interior exhibits in the large, downtown halls of the Werkbund enterprise at Stuttgart, which were associated with the famous housing development on the periphery of town. [McQuaid, p. 22.] Mies and Reich directly collaborated on the design of the Plate-Glass Hall and the German Linoleum Hall. Reich also designed interiors for Mies's apartment building in the housing section of the exhibit. [Kirsch, pp. 60-62.]
- <sup>32</sup> Magdalena Droste, "Lilly Reich: Her Career as an Artist," in McQuaid, p. 52.
- <sup>33</sup> The factual rendition of concrete and brick in Mies's avant-garde works of the early twenties is obvious. The stone of his historicist Bismarck monument of 1910 is equally factual in character, every block being shown with care and individuality.
- <sup>34</sup> Sandra Honey has written of Tugendhat that: "they [Mies and Reich] gave a demonstration of an elegance, combined with a sensuousness, that Mies alone failed to achieve either before or after their collaborator. The stylishness of this classic modern interior can be attributed to Lilly Reich." [Honey, p. 19.]
- <sup>35</sup> This can be seen in the drawings of the Friedrichstrasse skyscraper proposal and the Concrete Country House.
- <sup>36</sup> The existing model photographs of this project, however, do portray glass as "slick," perhaps mostly due to the literal use of Plexiglas necessitated by the model.
- <sup>37</sup> Some roughness in the representation of glass lingers on, for example in the Tugendhat charcoal design sketches, but the drawings of the Adam Building Project of 1928 already start to show a new crispness, cleanness, and sheen-like purity of reflection.
- <sup>38</sup> Carlo Enrico Rava, "Il padiglione di Mies van der Rohe a Barcelona," *Domus* (March 1931).
- <sup>39</sup> Caroline Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden: Modernity and the Picturesque," *AA Files* 20 (1990), p. 48.
- <sup>40</sup> K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *Perspecta* 21 (1984), p. 24.
- <sup>41</sup> Schulze, pp. 139 & 216. Reich faced the same gradual yet inexorable withdrawal that Mies's wife had undergone several decades before.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233. Reich did maintain "a long and dutiful correspondence with hlies."
- <sup>43</sup> Of the situation after Mies's emigration, Schulze additionally speculates that Reich "suffered in spirit for it, and it can be argued that [Mies] never found a collaborator who rounded out his own formative talents as effectively as she did." [*Ibid.*, p. 139.]
- <sup>44</sup> McQuaid, p. 40.
- <sup>45</sup> These drawings were made with the assistance of Mies's early students at the Armour (later Illinois) Institute of Technology shortly after his permanent arrival in the United States. Most were drafted on standard American 30 in. x 40 in. stock, and date to approximately 1939. For a summation of the complicated dating and attribution issues of these drawings, see: Tegethoff, p. 123. This set of presentation drawings cannot be attributed precisely because they are assumed to have been produced under Mies's direction rather than by his hand and exist in various versions by various people. They represent, as Ludwig Glaeser has written, "elaborations on hlies's earlier studies of Court Houses" in Germany, of which a copious number of freehand sketches survive. [Glaeser, Introduction, unpaginated.]
- <sup>46</sup> Mies did experiment with subtle variations in these screens. Occasionally he would substitute a modernist painting for the organic veneer. This reinforces the supposition that he was

seeing these screens as sensual accents. At times he would pair a painting with a wooden panel, as if to explore which was more effective in this role. In his later architecture, he never actually used paintings in this way, but always relied on material veneers.

<sup>47</sup> Of the extant renderings, only one shows a statue and a veneered surface together.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, they occur as real people in his numerous sketches of the I.I.T. campus, and as obvious statues in his sketches of pairs of reclining figures near the pools of the Seagram plaza.

<sup>49</sup> The lack of statuary is particularly noticeable in the designs of his urban, multi-structure compositions like the Toronto Dominion Bank and the Chicago Federal Center. The abstract, large red Calder which was added later to the Chicago plaza appears in none of Mies's renderings. At the New National Gallery in Berlin, several truly figural statues of course appear in the lower

outdoor sculpture court, and another abstract Calder occupies the plaza. Again, Mies's design drawings show none of these.

<sup>50</sup> Schulze notes at length Mies's relationship with Lora Marx, saying "Unlike Lilly, she [Marx] played no role in his creativity, as either inspiration or irritant." [Schulze, pp. 233-235.]

<sup>51</sup> Vidler describes the uncanny as "the fundamental property of the familiar to turn on its owners." [Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 7.]

<sup>52</sup> Brick, recalling his European works without Reich, appeared with force in some of his first American buildings, as at I.I.T., but then gradually lost its fascination for him. The relationship of exotic veneers to his grid-like, structural space became his focus instead.

<sup>53</sup> Juan Pablo Bonta, *Architecture and its interpretation, a study of expressive systems in architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), p. 140.