

# The Museum of Modern Art

## LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE A Biography

Ludwig Mies (van der Rohe was his mother's maiden name) was born in the ancient city of Aachen (Aix la Chapelle), on Germany's border with Belgium, one hundred years ago. As a child he attended the cathedral school, and at the age of thirteen he began trade school, where he spent two years. By the time he was fifteen Mies had completed his formal education. From his father, a master mason and proprietor of a small stone-cutting shop, he learned the possibilities and limitations of masonry construction.

At nineteen Mies moved to Berlin to learn more about wood-construction techniques and to become an apprentice to Bruno Paul, the leading furniture and cabinet designer. In 1907 he left Paul's office to build his first house, and from 1908 until 1911 worked for the progressive architect Peter Behrens, with whom Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier had also studied. In 1913 he opened his own architectural office in Berlin, launching his career as an independent architect.

Following his service during World War I Mies returned to Berlin, the most active art center in postwar Germany, and proceeded to demonstrate his vision as a designer. Five of his projects from the 1920s established his genius as a pioneer in modern architecture: the Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper (competition entry, 1921), the Glass Skyscraper (proposal, 1922), the Concrete Office Building (1922), the Concrete Country House (1923), and the Brick Country House (1924). His innovations were not developed in isolation, since there was intellectual quickening in the arts throughout Europe immediately after the war. Several radically new movements were emerging, including

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de Stijl in Holland, Suprematism and Constructivism in Russia, Dada in Zurich, and Cubism in France. Architecture was increasingly influenced by painting and sculpture as the boundaries between the artistic disciplines became progressively less rigid.

In 1926 Mies became the first vice-president of the Deutscher Werkbund, an influential organization founded by industrialists and architects to improve German architecture and design. In addition to designing, he organized exhibitions, wrote articles, and was even briefly involved in publishing a cultural magazine, G, named for the initial letter of Gestaltung (creative force). In 1929 Mies designed the German Pavilion for the International Exposition at Barcelona, as well as the famous Barcelona chair, both of which were recognized as touchstones of modernism. Shortly after completing the Barcelona Pavilion, he secured his international reputation with the Tugendhat House in Brno, Czechoslovakia. That same year he was appointed director of the Bauhaus School at Dessau, which he moved to Berlin two years later and ultimately closed in 1933 because of Nazi pressure. By 1937 in Germany the period of experimental architectural projects had ended.

In 1938, upon his appointment as director of the school of architecture at the Armour Institute (now Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago, Mies moved to the United States. At IIT he designed a comprehensive campus plan and individual buildings in which structural clarity was the dominant theme. Before settling in the United States he received a commission from Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Resor, to whom he was recommended by Alfred Barr, Jr., to design a house in Wyoming. In 1944 Mies became an American citizen and in 1947 had his first exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, organized by Philip Johnson.

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By the mid-1950s Mies was the most influential architect in the United States. The architecture that he produced in this country involved the development of highly rationalized building types based on the design of structure. Following the IIT campus, he designed the important all-glass house for Dr. Edith Farnsworth (1945) and the twin apartment towers on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. In 1958 he designed the Seagram tower on Park Avenue, New York (in collaboration with Philip Johnson), which is still one of the most admired buildings in the world. His last major work, the New National Gallery in Berlin, was completed between 1962 and 1967. Mies van der Rohe died in Chicago in 1969, having transformed the history of modern architecture.

on our definition of sculpture.

Rosalind Krauss, who co-edited the exhibition with Laura Rosenstock, assistant curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, has written an analysis of the intellectual and conceptual principles that are the essence of Serra's sculpture. Ms. Krauss is a professor at the City University of New York and the author of Passages in Modern Sculpture (1977) and The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (1985).

Art critic Douglas Crimp has contributed an essay that investigates Serra's public projects and his redefinition of site specificity. Laura Rosenstock edited the volume, provided the introduction, and prepared its chronology, selected bibliography, and lists of Serra's exhibitions, films, and videotapes.

No. 13A Richard Serra is available clothbound at \$45.00 and paperbound at \$22.50. (184 pages)

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