

The Crisis of Monumentality: Mies van der Rohe and the Nazi Competitions

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“One must know that this world is formed and that this form matters.”

—Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1932¹

Mies van der Rohe’s competition projects for the Nazis - The Reichsbank of 1933, and the Brussels Pavilion of 1935 - interrogate architecture’s ability to remain autonomous from the political context in which it is embedded. A close formal examination of these two entries de-conceals many formal indeterminacies, uncovering Mies’ transitional state of mind during this period. Ambiguous, contradictory and antipodal rhetorical readings of the two projects destabilize the role politics may have served in the conception of these works.

INTRODUCTION

The presidency of Donald J. Trump places sharp focus on the role politics plays in our decisions to chase or deny capital based on moral objections to a client’s or sovereignty’s ethics. The architectural community largely ignored Trump’s call for proposals for a border wall to Mexico. At this place and time in America the ethical boundaries regarding collaboration with authoritarian leaning leaders are polarized and clear. The non-satirical proposals for Trump’s border wall competition bring immediacy to questions of rhetorical consequence in current practice. Mies van der Rohe’s competition projects for the Nazis interrogate architecture’s ability to remain autonomous from the political context in which it is embedded.

Mies submitted two major competition entries for the Third Reich, one for a central bank and the other for a German pavilion in the Brussels Expo. Both projects occurred in the formative years of the Reich’s power prior to an established aesthetic propaganda (large, foreboding, monumental stone altars to the thousand-year Reich). Mies quickly learned that modernism, no matter how tailored it was towards the Reich, lacked the decorum required for their civic architecture. A close examination of these two entries de-conceals many formal indeterminacies, uncovering Mies’ transitional state of mind during this period. Ambiguous rhetorical readings of the two projects destabilize the role politics may have served in the conception of these works.

PROJECT I: THE REICHSBANK

FRONT AND BACK ELEVATIONS

With the Reichsbank project of 1933 (fig. 1) Mies attempted to synthesize monumental and modernist rhetoric. This competition, submitted during the first year of the Third Reich’s power, had both a monumental “classicist” front façade, where one would enter the public bank, and a functionalist “modernist” office façade on the backside (towards the Spree Canal). The front elevation reveals classical hierarchy: dominant frontality, imposing facade proportions, central main entrance, large opaque expanses of wall and bilateral symmetry. With little visible articulation, the façade skin appears taut, except in the centralized setback of the covered top-level loggia, which is bookended in such a way as to contain it - consistent with the overall closed form of the composition.²

However, this façade was not strictly classical; the modern infects the monumental front where the ribbon windows wrap around the upper levels - dematerializing the corners, and emphasizing horizontality. Heavy, expansive, opaque walls near the base reinforce solidity, impenetrability and permanence, but their imposing monumental surfaces are undercut by two thin clerestory ribbons near the base. Peter Eisenman suggested that these structurally undermining windows became, “a sign (not a symbol) of the absence of the floor plane.”³ This simple inversion - replacing rootedness with flotation - disrupts the original impression. The front elevation becomes both monumental/classical and modernist/ethereal.

On the rear façade, Mies replaced the symmetry of the front façade with non-hierarchical seriality (fig.2); one reads the insistent wrap-around ribbon windows, which prioritize the repetitive function of office work over the civic grandeur of customer transactions.⁴ The spacing of the bar buildings correspond to daylighting needs, while the ribbon windows are a throwback to both the Concrete Office Building project of 1923, and Mendelsohn’s Schocken Department Store in Chemnitz of 1929. According to a former employee, Sergius Ruegenberg, Mies asked Mendelsohn for the window proportions of the Schocken store during the Reichsbank competition.⁵ Extant progress plans of the top-level show expansive open terraces below the thin roof canopy on the two outermost wings, further dematerializing the autonomy of the corners, which is absent on the front.

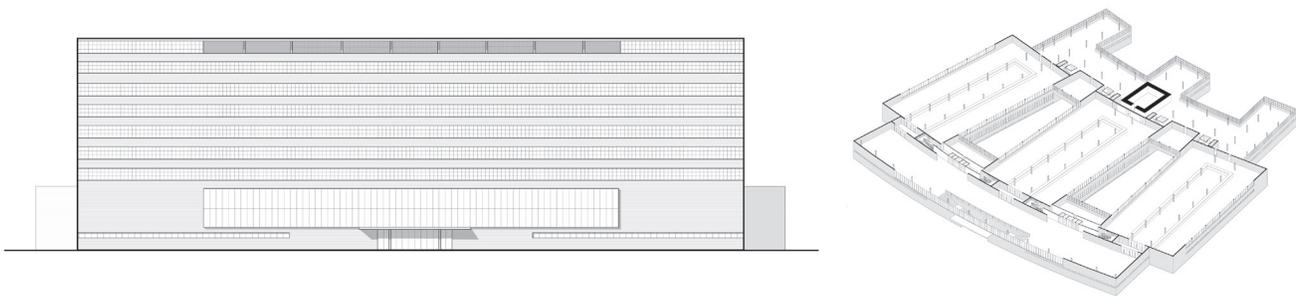


Figure 1: M.V.D.R. The Reichsbank Competition, 1933. Left: Front Facade. Right: Isometric Plan of main banking floor. Images by Author.

At the back, this threat of future serialized replication by the discrete office wings suggested an alternative monumentality; one that may have reflected the Regime's goal of permanence conquest and control, but without the expected classicized hierarchy evident on the front.

Materially, factory standard glass and red brick (not edified stone) used throughout the Reichsbank subverted traditional expectations of monumental architecture, particularly when considering Speer's meditations on *Ruin Value*.⁶ *Ruin Value* required a design to imagine the aesthetic quality of its future state of decay. This becomes problematic with the materials of modernism, which were lightweight and aged quickly.⁷ To the Fascists a brick and glass façade (standardized, mass produced, cheap, not "crafted") on a civic building would appear indecorous.

PLAN

The impetus to use a curving scheme stemmed from the irregularly shaped site. Early sketches show Mies trying a sliding asymmetrical arrangement in an attempt to reconcile the programmatic requirement of three equally sized banking halls within the kinked six-sided site. This, along with the expected aesthetic of a civic banking institution (in contrast to a museum, factory, or an expo pavilion), led Mies to the rationalized bilaterally symmetrical form. The final radially symmetrical gesture fits this bilateral scheme on the kinked site, binding the discrete programs into one unified form.⁸ These double symmetries suggested an overabundance of controlled obedience within the proposal, reinforcing potential fascist undertones. In contrast to Mies' avant-garde work (such as the Barcelona Pavilion), the Reichsbank had an overarching centripetal, rather than centrifugal, form; an introverted architectural conception that clarified its formal autonomy in a smooth outer wrapping. "Free columns" were bound closely to this skin and suppressed from view on the outside, weakening the dialectical autonomy between structure and infill. Rather than reading this as a strategy that frees the façade (the way the free plan works in the Barcelona

Pavilion), this prevents the form from accumulating textures and shadows. The resultant stern convex form bounces, rather than absorbs, its context.

In short, the Reichsbank simultaneously reinforces and undermines monumentalized form: symmetry is tempered by seriality, opacity is tempered by equal stripes of transparency, closed form is tempered by the outreaching wings in the back, bilateral symmetry is tempered by the quiriness of the radial gesture and the free plan is tempered by its bound proximity to the façade.

THE CRISIS OF MONUMENTALITY

The Reichsbank competition began before the Nazis took power and clarified their architectural propaganda, which explains why several modernists, such as Walter Gropius, Heinrich Tessenow, Hans Poelzig and Bruno Taut submitted their own proposals (assuming that the government would be receptive to modern entries). Soon Mies would discover his brand of modernism was not "appropriate" for Nazi civic architecture. Modernist tropes included functionalism, economy and mutability; National Socialist architecture required permanence and symbolic subjugation. In short, they required buildings that dwarfed the individual in order to maximize control. Modernist rhetoric, which stressed individual empowerment and progressive ephemerality, could not meet these wishes.

Did Mies' mixture of modernist and monumentalist expression propose alternate paths for the rhetorically liberating effects of modernism to enfold into the totalitarian project of the new regime? Was it, conversely, a subtle critique or expression of frustration at the incongruity of a modernist and Fascist union?

An apt, but more direct, parallel is evident in Hans Scharoun's Baensch House of 1935, built in Berlin during the Nazi Regime. For political reasons Scharoun was obligated to express a traditional vernacular on the front facade, but on the backside – where, supposedly, the government wasn't looking – Scharoun broke open the form and façade with sheets of glass, maintaining a modernist open relationship with nature. As in the Reichsbank, the closed front was well-behaved and the open backside was liberated, serving both the spiritual and pragmatic needs of the occupants, untethered by state control.⁹ This could

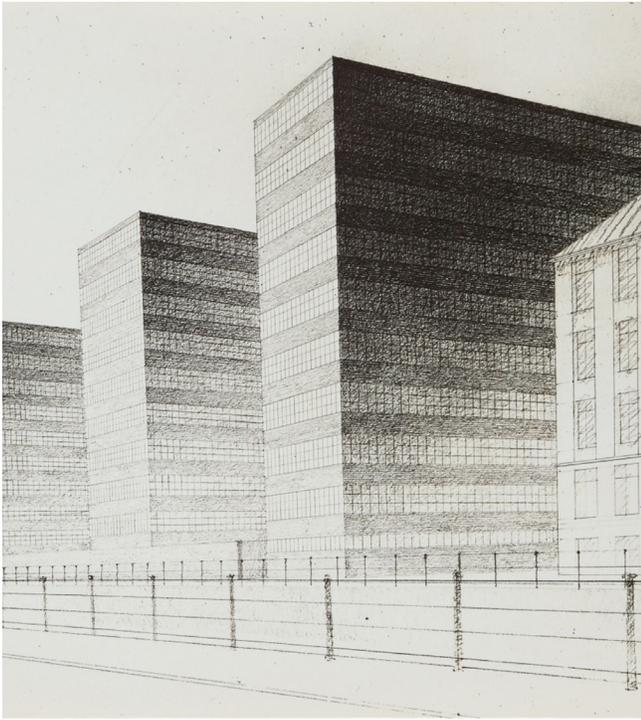


Figure 2: M.V.D.R. Reichsbank. Charcoal Rendering of rear facade.

be considered a masking rather than an exposed synthesis of opposing narratives.

In summation, it is difficult to read the Reichsbank as clearly monumental/classical or as purely lightweight/modernist; it is a Janus. The motivations that led Mies to this final direction remain conflicted, although Mies understood that he would not secure work without the support of those in power with the capital to invest in architecture. Tension arises when a modernist compulsorily advances new agendas that are antithetical to the modernist project. This irresolution leads to an ambiguity of intention. Either the building was a compromise towards monumentality - to stay employed as an architect in Germany under a new regime - or it was a new way forward that suggested a synthesis between the monumental and the modern (shades of which reoccur in Mies' American work). Both of these options would be considered unsuccessful, not only because Mies failed to convince the Nazis of an alternative to neoclassical bombast, but because he did not resolve the antipodal architectural philosophies. Perhaps the duality between modern and monumental remained intentionally unresolved as a stubborn yet subtle critique of the capricious Reich. Detlef Mertins perceives this trepidation within the menacing shadows of the final project charcoal renderings (fig.2):

"Perhaps Mies did seek to express the character of the new National Socialist state: not the character conveyed by its propaganda but rather its true character – soulless, empty and inhuman."¹⁰

PROJECT II: BRUSSELS PAVILION

In the Reichsbank project the tenets of modernism espoused by Mies van der Rohe's avant-garde work of the 1920's were subsumed by monumental form and strict symmetry. In his second competition for the Nazis, the German Pavilion competition project of 1934 for the Brussels International Expo of the next year, Mies flipped this scenario, returning to his earlier modernist method of spatial configuration (fig. 3). In the floor plan drawing, monumental and symmetrical are suppressed within an overall centrifugally oriented free plan. As in earlier projects, such as the Barcelona Pavilion and the Villa Tugendhat, there is clear autonomy between structural columns and walls. Along with these freestanding walls the plan accommodates 3 playful geometries: circle, rectangle and square. These closed shapes weave through the regularized column grid. However, this sense of autonomy between components is only the initial impression. An analysis of the surviving working sketches for the competition elucidates hidden conflicts and double-readings embedded in the design, reinforcing ambiguity over clarity.

EXTERIOR IMAGE

The extant project drawings (The original final competition boards were destroyed by the Nazis) oscillate between differentiated readings of the building. The most refined surviving exterior rendering contradicts the impression of freedom in the floor plan (fig.4). Instead, this sketch emphasizes monumentalized symmetry with the main entrance as axial focus (similar to the front façade of the Reichsbank). The still visible construction lines reinforce this; the vanishing point is directly on center with the front entry and is further framed by two enormous flagpoles. A reluctantly drawn diminutive Nazi eagle (required in the competition brief) completes the hierarchy. Peripheral asymmetrical elements are visible, but do little in changing this initial symmetrical reading.¹¹

INTERIOR RENDERING

The furthest resolved surviving interior sketch plays similar games (fig.4). This view looks towards an internal courtyard; The Hall of Honor. Four columns frame a dark rectangular carpet. These are bookended by two low but thick walls. Beyond these walls a dark gridded facade limits the extents of the view. An absent shaded portion of the ceiling plane indicates an opening to the sky. There is an overwhelming impression of stripped down monumental symmetrical space, reminiscent of the gloomy interior rendering of Mies' competition to fit out the interior of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's New Wache. This carefully curated framed view offers little indication this scene is occurring within a free-plan.

However, this foreboding emptied space is alleviated by the delicate detailing of the cruciform columns as they stop short of the ceiling, creating the impression that the roof is at risk of floating away.¹² At first glance the three farthest walls appear to be composed of rectangular panels of stone, again, shaded in a similar fashion as the New Wache Memorial drawing.

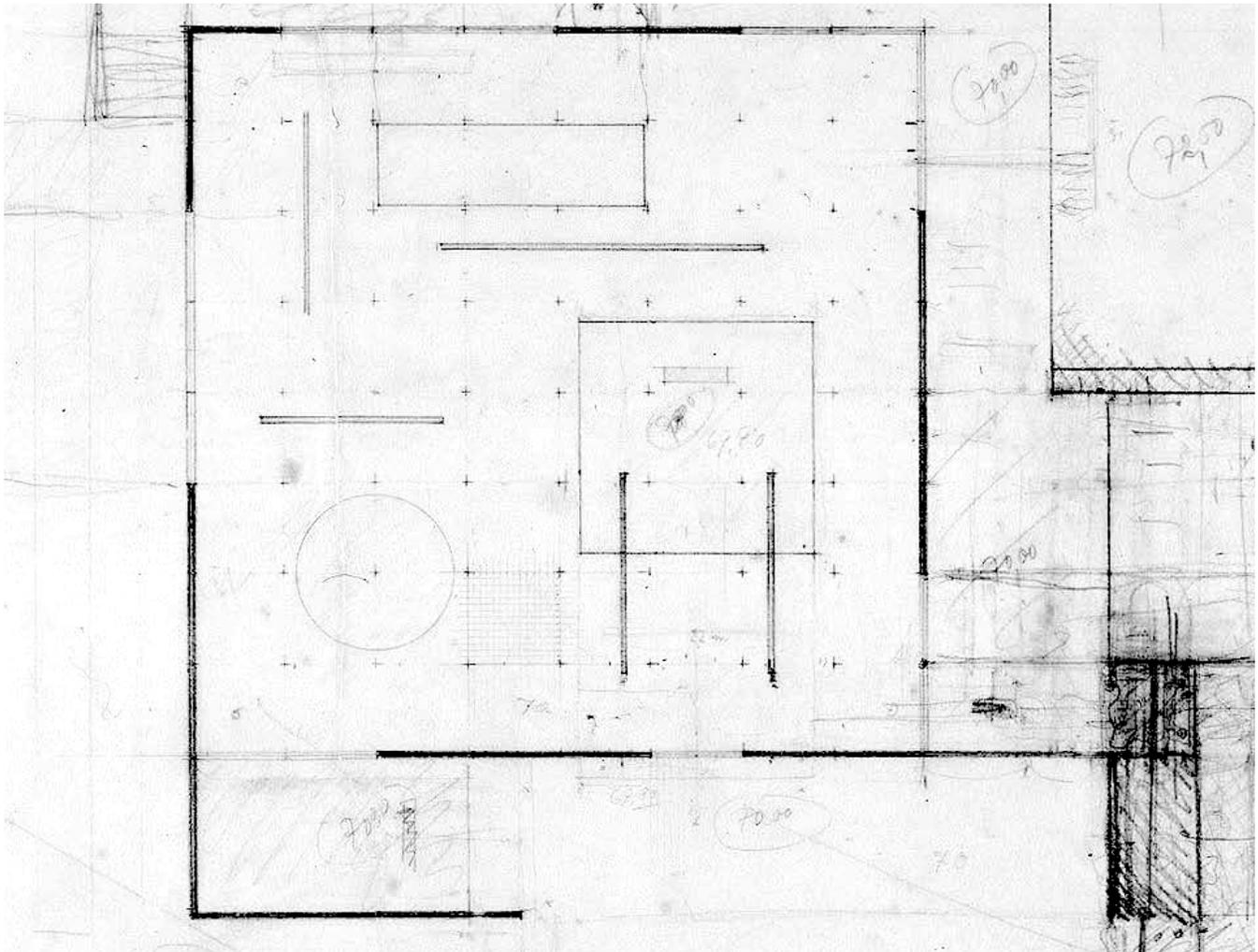


Figure 3: M.V.D.R., Project for the German Pavilion for the Brussels Worlds Fair, 1934. Main Plan

These are actually glass walls, which reveal certain asymmetrical forms in heavy shadow beyond. To the right, the back-glass wall exposes a view to the outside. This evolving and modified reading demonstrates Mies' attempt to marry the modern with the monumental in a more ambiguous way than in the Reichsbank. Here he is attempting simultaneous and shifting rhetoric.

Decorative elements and furniture in this interior drawing are tentatively classical. Hidden in plain sight is a massive swastika on the marble wall to the right. The uncommon ninety-degree orientation of the tines and the symbols light-weight sketchiness make it hard to spot despite its size. The ceremonial table near the left wall is a razor thin pane of (black?) glass resting upon compressed Ionic columns. These legs are over-proportioned, crushed by the weight of gravity, as if submerged in the deep ocean and compressed to maximum density. This compacted proportionality is oddly countered by the floating thin black table-top. It becomes a

condensed metaphor for the whole project, more an openly unresolved duality than a synthesis between monumental and modern. Like a figure-ground optical illusion, these curated views of the project constantly oscillate between competing and contradictory formal interpretations.

REVISITING THE PLAN

Returning to the surviving floor plan drawing (fig.3) - keeping the simultaneity of closed monumentality and open lightness presented in the renderings in mind - doubts about the free plan emerge. The façade fenestration seen in the plan incorporates both open corners of glass (dematerializing the edge) and closed "traditional" windows bound on both sides by brick walls. Furthermore, closed windows are divided by vertical mullions into 3 bays, while open cornered windows are always divided in two (three refers to classical completion, two refers to modernist open-ended seriality);⁴³ Two corners are closed and two are open. Once again this demonstrates simultaneous rhetoric; a combination of strategies demonstrated most clearly in comparing the closed corners of Peter Behrens' AEG Turbine Factory and the open corners of Walter Gropius' Fagus Factory.

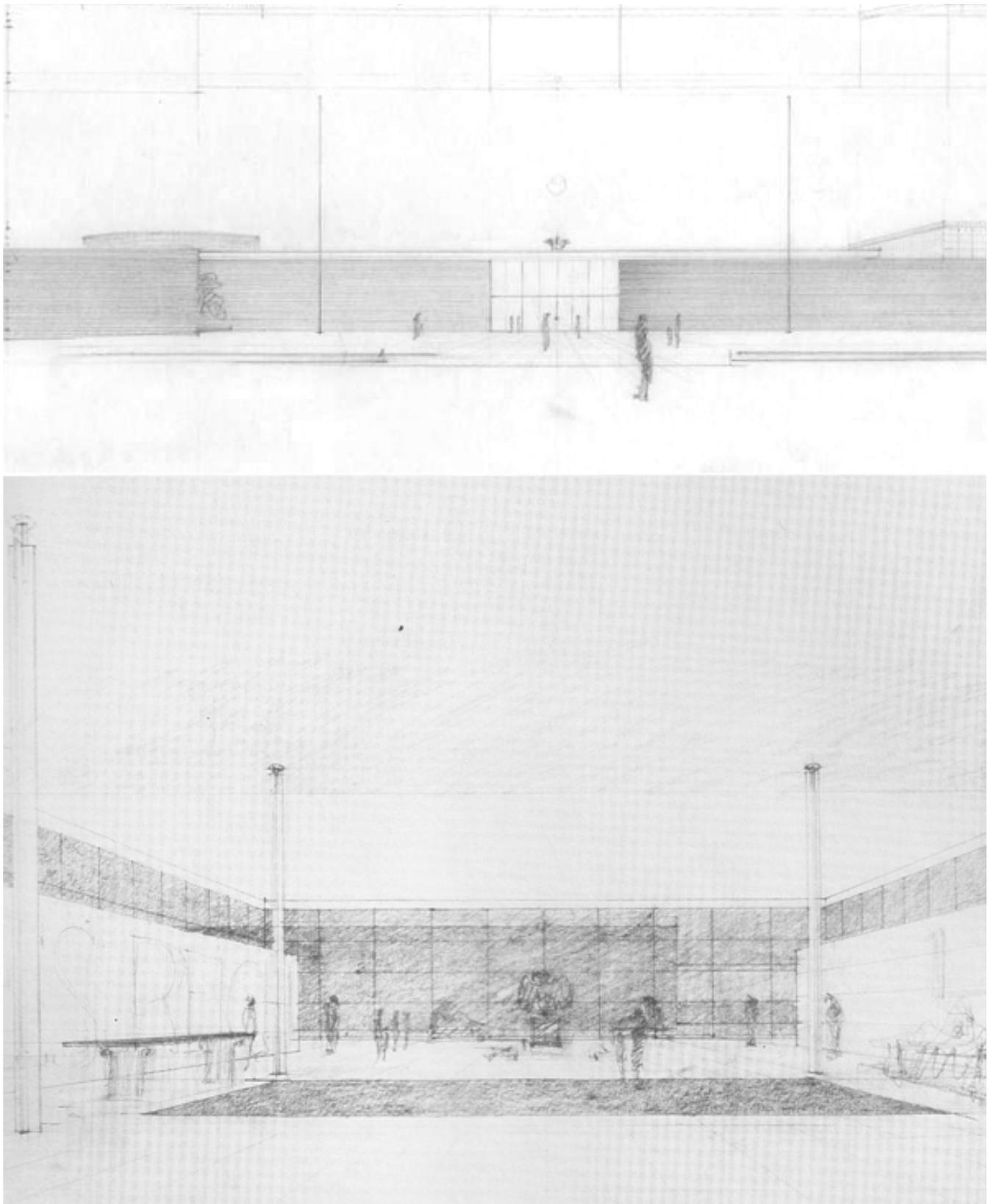


Figure 4: M.V.D.R. German Pavilion for the Brussels World's Fair. Top: Exterior Sketch. Bottom: Interior View (Collection of Dirk Lohan).

The relationship of the slender walls to the columns are similar to the Hubbe House; walls slide past columns reinforcing the autonomy between structure and infill, yet these walls are oriented symmetrically between columns (the midpoint of the wall is at the midpoint between two columns in all but one wall in the pavilion). In the same fashion, the circular, square and rectangular geometric enclosures are simultaneously autonomous-from yet bound-by the column grid: The center of the circular room lands at a column, the square room is equally inset from a 9-square column grid and the rectangular geometrical solid conforms similarly.

FIGURE-GROUND FORMALISM, OR THE CRISIS OF DETERMINACY

The Brussels Expo project (and to a more lopsided degree the Reichsbank) had both a textually free and bound plan, both open and closed form, both classical and modern language and both monumental and ethereal rhetoric. This figure-ground formalism expressed indeterminacy and unclear motivations. Several provocative questions result: was this an attempt to create simultaneity, or a failure to synthesize a consistent architectural stance? In the curated images of the exterior entrance and interior Hall of Honor, was Mies attempting to exaggerate the monumental and symmetrical portions of the building while downplaying the moments of openness found elsewhere in the free-plan? Was this a strategic way to win the project, and curry favor with the strict Fascists, while slyly adhering to his modernist roots (shades of Scharoun)? Was he demonstrating this difference or merely proposing an alternate rhetoric for classicized Fascist monumentality?

Or, was this project a metaphor for his otherness from the Nazis; a daring presentation of modernism to a group hostile to what it represents? The Fascist decorative ephemera required by the project brief added no intrinsic value to the architectural statement; the pavilion would be formally unharmed by their exclusion.¹⁴ Was Mies stubbornly ignoring the politics altogether and continuing his subversive explorations of the free plan (Hubbe and Lange House projects)?

Hitler vehemently rejected Mies' entry for the German Pavilion, reportedly throwing it over his chair and stepping on it while reviewing other proposals.¹⁵ The original competition boards have vanished. Mies never worked on civic projects for Hitler's Reich again, finally fleeing to Chicago four years later, after several fits and starts. His proposal for open and universal space – that countered lightness with monumentality – offered the Nazis no legitimate propagandistic resolution. The Reich required imposing unambiguous formalism to legitimize their cause, while subjugating the masses.

THE ARCHITECT AND THE TYRANT

In the context of the budding tyrannical political landscape in which these projects gestated these questions have an

important ethical component; Mies risks looking complacent and willing to assist the Fascists in their propaganda, even in the face of overwhelming immorality. But, as Franz Schulze points out:

“This was, after all, a man who within eight years' time had designed a monument to a pair of Communist martyrs, a throne for a Spanish king, a pavilion for a moderate socialist government, and another for a militantly right-wing totalitarian state!”¹⁶

Mies' willingness to create architecture for any government or movement demonstrates his allegiance to only one thing: architecture. Mies was trying to survive in difficult financial times (in America at this time even Frank Lloyd Wright was struggling for commissions), while attempting to maintain his influence on the German architectural landscape. He was reluctant to emigrate from a country he loved, even if it now betrayed universal values of human decency. This conflict is laid bare and expressed in these chimerical projects, which oscillate between resolution and tension.

Mies' avowed stance against involving himself in politics ran against many of the liberal leaning socialist and democratic factions of the modern movement. The stated social justice aspect of modernism was largely absent in the high-profile projects Mies created in the 1920's. Architectural priorities are a constantly moving target, and Mies sought a higher calling in his work that distanced itself from a specific time and place, resulting in the general solution. Mies' priority toward the formalist, spiritual and idealistic superseded the more immediate problems of current political occupation, current users, hyper-functionalism and positivist determinism, which were transient, and did not outlast the architecture (ironically this goes back to ruin value, but from a different angle and with different outcomes).¹⁷ This distinction, whether ethically appropriate or not, serves to clarify Mies' priority to create architecture autonomous from the circumstances of its creation.¹⁸

POST-SCRIPT: TRUMP'S BORDER WALL: MUTUALLY REINFORCING DUALITIES IN THE ABSENCE OF AMBIGUITY

One of the founding provocations for re-examining the formal aspects of Mies' Nazi competition projects came about after learning of the proposals submitted for the border wall to Mexico by Donald Trump. Obviously, there are more differences than similarities between the call for the wall and a call for a Bank and Expo Pavilion by a canonized architect, therefore a parallel comparison is tenuous. The wall had no serious submissions by major architects, it was almost exclusively composed of small business contractors. High profile architecture firms stood in solidarity against the project, notably coming out against a statement of cooperation by the AIA at the start of Trump's presidency.¹⁹ The program,

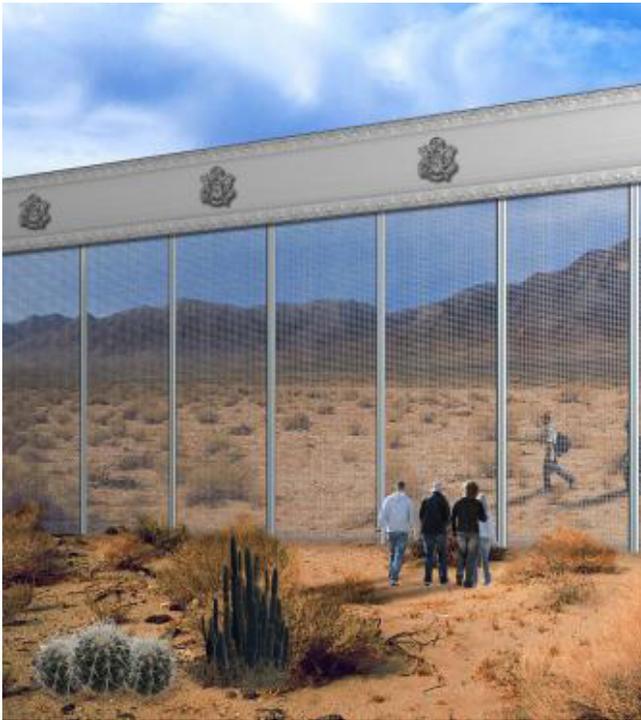


Figure 5: Proposal for Donald Trump's Border Wall Competition by The Penna Group, 2017.

scale and use is clearly different, yet there are still potent fundamental questions relevant to this proposal that echo Mies' projects: where is the ethical line in the sand? At what point does a firm reject a project based on objections to the call? And - most relevant to our present discussion - what formal devices are exploited to reify the wall as symbolic, rather than merely utilitarian?

In particular, the proposal submitted by the Penna Group (fig.5) has several formalistic devices that remind me of the rhetoric that has been dealt with in dictatorships, and particularly in the stripped-down traditional motifs of fascist architecture.²⁰ Serious proposals for a wall don't merely solve functional and economic means, they also serve as symbol. The wall represents the exclusionary power of the United States government. The rhetoric of fascist architecture, regardless of program, sought the same; to assert symbolic monumentalized dominance over the "other" it intended to intimidate, while simultaneously communicate protection for its own citizens.

This rhetoric encrusts a "pragmatic" wall with the sinister symbolic overtones of superiority, surveillance, xenophobia, and inhospitality.

The heavy-duty mesh wall is emblazoned on the top with the United States Seal (shades of the Nazi eagle tacked on in the Brussels drawings). Proportions are tall and overwhelming, conveying an intimidating rhetoric. The grain of the partitions is vertically oriented, exaggerating the height. Ornamentation

along the top panel edges (U.S. side only) points back to the re-appropriated empirical mythos of Ancient Rome (oddly adopted more by the German Fascists than their Italian counterpart).²¹ The renderings on either side of the wall show a differing front and a back condition. The side towards the states is see-through, bright, metallic and comparatively lightweight in presence compared to the opaque, black, and undecorated Mexican side. The people in the rendering on the Mexico side are shrouded and carrying backpacks. There isn't a whiff of irony or self-consciousness in this design.

There is simultaneity in the design, but rather than resulting in ambiguity - as in the Reichsbank and Brussels Pavilion - the dualities present in the Penna group proposal reinforce identical rhetoric. The wall is both closed (centripetal) and open (centrifugal) in its endlessness. Instead of the reading of the wall in the Brick Country House Project as an infinite extension toward nature, the Mexico wall is an infinite boundary, reaching outwards not as a collaboration with nature, but as barrier. It is both an opaque wall (on the Mexican side) and a transparent mesh fence (on the American side). The mesh is both about visibility and surveillance, there is no desire for reform, engagement or collaboration. Instead, there is authoritarian visibility. The proposed one-way glass mirror facing the Mexican side reiterates both the control of observation and the oppression of opacity.

While a portion of other submissions were refreshingly absurdist critiques - plainly meant to be seen as such - there were no veiled satires in the vein of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. The difference between the serious proposals and the protest proposals is clear; there is no in-between, no figure-ground formalism, no ambiguity. This leads back to a broader question concerning the lack of clarity in Mies' proposals for the Nazis; If, in the end, the rhetorical determination of these projects is intentionally obscured, ambiguous, or even antipodally dualistic, then how can they represent any specific political stance? If these projects were not made for the paragon of evil that the Third Reich represents they would still be interesting as autonomous architectural statements in the sequence of Mies' career.

In hindsight, Mies' participation in these competition projects may contain a frustrating lack of moral clarity, but they raise complex dialogic questions between politics and the problems of meaning within architectural creation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Quote from Mies van der Rohe from 1932 found in: Neumeier, Fritz. *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 312.
- 2 In the surviving image of the model it is evident that the back façade has open balconies on the top level that dematerialize the corners at the top of the building. This back balcony is present in a few of the preliminary plan drawings of the top level, but it is also clear in the model photograph. Because it is not bookended by the façade in the same manner as on the front, the balcony dematerializes the form, which further reinforces the closed-front/open-back dialectic suggested here.

- 3 Peter Eisenman originally makes this point in reference to the clerestory window in the Concrete Country House project of 1923, which has the same undercutting effect. Eisenman, Peter. "miMISes READING: does not mean A THING," in *Mies Reconsidered*, ed. John Zukowsky (Chicago, IL: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1986), 87.
- 4 Ludwig Hilbersmeier suggests that these dual readings are essentially a result of the two programs smashing into each other: "The project for the Reichsbank is of particular interest. As it was a commercial as well as a public building, there was need to give it a special significance. The device used is the large high lobby, reached by 2 flights of stairs rising from the entrance hall at street level. The height of the lobby provides space for a huge window, three times as high as the others, creating a contrast which gives this building the character of monumentality adequate to its function." Hilbersmeier, L. *Mies van der Rohe* (Paul Theobald and Company. Chicago, IL.: 1956), 110.
- 5 Pommer, Richard. *MVDR and The Political Ideology of the Modern Movement in Architecture*. From, *Mies van der Rohe Critical Essays* edited by Franz Schulze (New York, NY.: MOMA, 1989), 120.
- 6 "This idea of buildings or stones as capable of speaking, and doing so across time, was shared by Speer, who drew up what he called a 'Theory of Ruin Value' (Speer, 1995: 97). This was based upon consideration of how buildings from Classical Antiquity had decayed over time yet retained a capacity to impress and generate feelings of awe over the centuries. His theory thus aimed to take into account the ways in which buildings would decay and to set out principles that would ensure that even as they did so they would remain capable of acting as 'bridges of tradition' (Speer, 1995). That is, that they would retain sufficient of their shape and qualities even as they fell into ruin to remain able to 'speak'. Not only, then, was there an intention that the structures as built would be capable of effects, calculations were made about how agency might be made to continue into the distant future." From, Macdonald, Sharon. *Words In Stone?: Agency and Identity in a Nazi Landscape*. Page 10: <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/sociology/words%20in%20stone.pdf>
- 7 Mies used stone in the Barcelona Pavilion and the Tugendhat House, but he subverted its heaviness in three important ways: First, he presented the stone as incredibly thin panels. The thinness negates the monumental quality of the stone. Second, he put stone panels near columns. This is a reminder that it is not holding anything other than its own weight. Third, the stone is very glossy, further dematerializing it. Stone is used in traditionally monumental ways in the New Wache proposal and in his later skyscraper elevator cores.
- 8 Note: It's specious to automatically assume symmetry means fascism or totalitarianism. The finished Reichsbank by Heinrich Wolf was a sprawling rambling building strictly conforming to the eccentrically shaped site. Localized symmetries abound in the plan, but the part to whole relationship is not monolithic. Monumentalism and totalitarian expression were achieved in other ways, chiefly through the now familiar stripped down proportionally overblown classicist facades of Speer and Troost. It is therefore not entirely conclusive that Mies used symmetry to reify the goals of the Reich. He may have merely found a clean solution to the programmatic demands within the wedged site. A closer analysis of the relationship between the bilateral and radial symmetry of this plan will need to be saved for another paper.
- 9 The contrast is obviously much more pronounced in the Baensch house. Peter Blundell Jones suggests that part of Mies leaving Germany was more based on his inability to adapt his modernist conception to the specific restrictions imposed by Fascism. Scharoun had a mutable style that could adapt to contingencies - not only site, context, client and zoning, but also propagandistic restriction. This is fraught with ethical questions. Should our designs adapt this freely to the needs of the state? From, Jones, Peter Blundell. *Hans Scharoun* (London, UK.: Phaidon, 1997), 10-13. Ironically, when Mies was given the same opportunity to build a Modernist house for Ulrich Lange in 1935 he rejected the Nazi's suggestion that it should be masked from the street by an earthen berm. Thus, the house was never built. From, Schulze, Klaus. *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (Chicago, IL.: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 195.
- 10 Mertins, Detlef. *MIES*. (New York, NY.: Phaidon, 2014), 216.
- 11 This drawing and the interior view discussed later have several variants in the archive, demonstrating the importance of these views to Mies. Because of the attention given to them, it is worth assuming that these were the views used in the now vanished presentation drawings.
- 12 In the Barcelona Pavilion and the Tugendhat house the chrome-clad cruciform columns negate the load bearing conception of the column by reversing its immanence into immateriality (similar to the mass-alleviation-through-bundling found in late Gothic cathedrals). This results in the impression that the columns are in tension, which directly contradicts the primary compressive load patterning expected of columns. The pause at the capital (or anti-capital) in the Brussels Pavilion project takes this even further, reinforcing an illusion of tethering and load subversion. Robin Evans, speaking about the only surviving sketch by Mies of the Barcelona Pavilion, notes: "...two vertical lines that indicate a column are drawn so close together that they look more like a stretched cord than a compressed column - wherein lies the clue." Evans, Robin. "Mies van der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries." *AA Files* No. 19 (Spring 1990): 56-68.
- 13 It's relevant to refer back to Colin Rowe's analysis of classical and modern villas in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* to clearly elucidate this point: "At the Malcontenta [Palladio], as already noted, the facades are divided vertically into three principal fields, those of the portico and the flanking walls, and horizontally the same situation prevails in the sequence, basement, piano nobile, attic; but at Garches [Le Corbusier], in spite of the comparable structural parti, it is always a situation if not of one, at least of two or, alternatively, of four fields of interest with which we are presented. Rowe, Colin. *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1987), 11.
- 14 Celina R. Welch absurdly suggests that the overall form of the free-plan is a deconstructed Swastika. First, a deconstructed swastika is not a swastika. Second, the pinwheel form has many pre-Nazi precedents including Frank Lloyd Wright's Willits house and Mies' Brick Country House to name a few. There is nothing beyond a superficial indication that the plan is itself a swastika.
- 15 Welch, Celina R. *Mies van der Rohe's Compromise with the Nazis in Workshop 3* (Weimar, 1993), 107
- 16 Schulze, Klaus. *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (Chicago, IL.: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 169,170.
- 17 This quote is not an apology for Mies, it points out that politics were not the foremost priority for Mies when choosing a project. "In short, a split had arisen in the ranks of the modernists between those who asserted its positivist and materialistic tenets more strongly in the face of difficult times, and the those who, like Mies, turned back more and more to its idealist and formalist underpinnings." *ibid*: Pommer, 116
- 18 This autonomy would achieve its full conception in the post-war free-span projects, particularly the Mannheim Theatre project and the Chicago Convention Center. Mies attempted to clear out the architecture and prescriptive program to allow for future use, future politics and future rhetoric.
- 19 <https://qz.com/835990/let-us-not-be-complicit-in-building-trumps-wall-us-architects-vow-not-to-help-president-donald-trump/>
- 20 You can find the Penna Group Proposal Brief here: http://www.pennagc.com/projects_border_wall_other.html
- 21 Or colonialism, for that matter, which, again, is too large a topic to tackle here.