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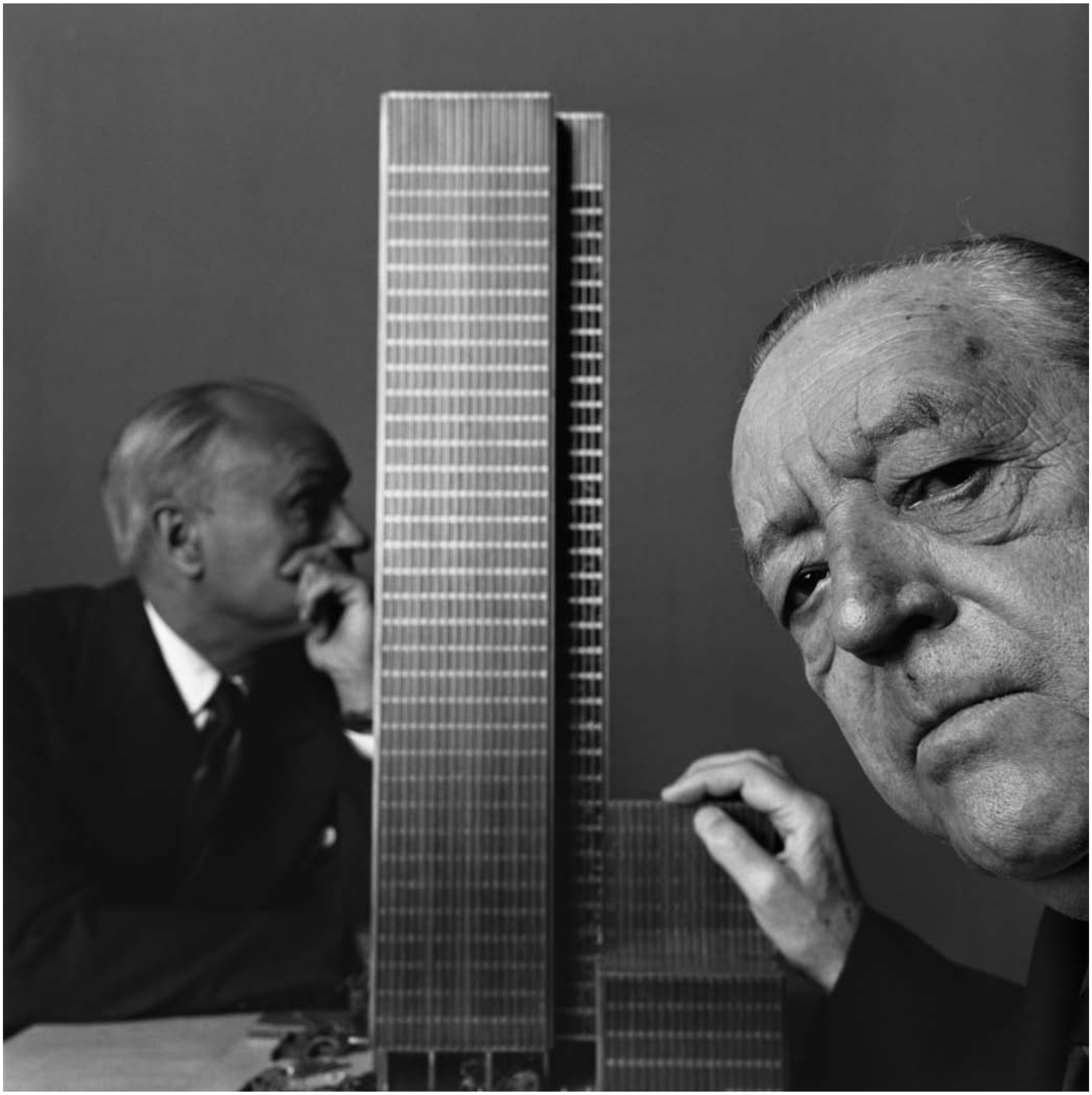

Figure 1 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, New York, 1955 (Copyright by The Irving Penn Foundation)

An Army of Soldiers or a Meadow

The Seagram Building and the "Art of Modern Architecture"

FELICITY D. SCOTT
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Lecturing on the occasion of *Transformations in Modern Architecture*, an exhibition that opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art on 21 February 1979, Arthur Drexler recounted a conversation with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe that had taken place in the architect's Chicago apartment almost two decades earlier. Having asked Mies "how do you spend your day?" in the hope of gaining insight into his design process, Drexler received an unexpected, if moving, response: "We get up in the morning," Mies said, "and we sit on the edge of the bed and we think 'What the hell went wrong?'"[1] By 1960, Drexler continued, Mies was "not the only one who thought that something had gone wrong." Yet it was Mies himself whom many blamed for the repetitious proliferation of curtain-wall office towers and the rising hostility toward modern architecture for "contributing to the environmental dysfunctions [it] was supposed to end." At stake, Drexler suggested, was the discipline's response to a question inaugurated in the eighteenth century concerning "the relationship between technique and art . . . or as Colin Rowe would put it, science and people." More specifically, the challenge appeared to be whether an architecture born of modernity's rationalizing processes could resolve dualities of art and technology in order both to improve human existence—to "make human beings happier" and facilitate progressive social change—and to restore the "unity of culture" seemingly shattered beyond repair by historical transformations.

Drexler then turned to an ongoing misperception among both supporters and detractors of Miesian modernism: most believed that the anticipated "victory of science and technology" was supposed to lead to an objective architectural "truth" based upon the functional, material, and structural logics of a building. Even Philip Johnson, who was responsible for Mies's first retrospective exhibition at MoMA in 1947, along with its accompanying monograph, and who consistently championed the German émigré's work for its aesthetic qualities, its "subtle beauty," recalled his own misunderstanding. Having asked Mies why, on the fascia of a building, "the girder [was] expressed the same depth as the beam [when] it should be deeper because it is carrying more weight," the older architect responded abruptly: "Don't be so literal minded."[2]

Attempting to redress this misperception, Drexler did not simply reiterate the modernist trope that industrial technology possessed aesthetic appeal. Proclaimed by Mies in 1922 with the publication of his Glass Skyscraper in *Frühlicht*,[3] this commonplace of modernism was seen by many to be exemplified by American steel framing systems, and it reached an apparent apotheosis in the headquarters for the Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. at 375 Park Avenue, designed by Mies in association with Johnson (Figure 1).

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The curator insisted that something beyond an industrial machine aesthetic was at stake in Mies's work, but that there had been a failure to communicate its cultural aspirations. This was apparent to Mies himself by 1960, if not well before: "We showed them what to do," he explained to Drexler, and he went on, "Why don't they do it?"

Drexler's career at MoMA was in many regards inextricable from that of Mies. And by the end of the 1970s he was able to conclude that "what went wrong"—what was not adequately communicated about Mies's manner of negotiating the nexus of art and technology—was in fact "very much part of what made Mies a *great* architect."[4] In the first instance he pointed to the failure to translate the Miesian aesthetic into general practice, as Mies had hoped, since architects "passionately emphasized [their] slightest innovations or refinements."[5] Additionally, Drexler presciently recognized the degree to which the Seagram tower could not simply be understood as a fulfillment of the modernist dream of glass-and-steel skyscrapers or of Mies's long-standing desire to harness the "facts" of the age within his architecture. Harboring certain industrial archaisms and aesthetic conceits that remained at odds with modernizing logics, the tower had come to function within architectural discourse as a sort of switching point, a symptom of modernism's ever-more complete integration within the globalizing and spectacular forces driving what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have called postmodernization, forces at once social, economic, technological, aesthetic, informatic, and geopolitical.[6] Indeed, beyond its status as an important modernist work, the Seagram tower was also implicated both in the more familiar story of the rise of historicist postmodernism and debates over architectural "meaning" as well as in the less semantically oriented postindustrial counterpart to these debates—the ever-more extensive regulation of the environment through networks of information technology and of its human population through behaviorist research. These fields were then increasingly at the forefront of shaping relationships between technique and art, between science and people.

"A Modern Museum Piece"

Commissioned in 1954 and completed in time for the corporation's centennial in 1958, the Seagram Building stands as an important landmark not only in Mies's career and the story of the Seagram company, but also in the history of American architecture.[7] It was, and remains, one of the most famous, most meticulously analyzed, and oft-cited modern buildings in the world. Even before its completion, the project enjoyed significant publicity and public attention, especially on account of its unusual use of metal; as early as October 1956, the *Empire State Architect* heralded the appearance of a "Bronze Monument in the Sky," with *Architectural Forum* announcing the following February, "A New Patina on Park Avenue." In April 1957 the Seagram company publicized their new venture with a sixteen-page color advertising supplement to the *New York Times* (Figure 2). It presented "the world's first bronze skyscraper" as a "monumental symbol of confidence in the strength of the industrial and business future of America," with New York positioned as the "center of international commerce and influence."[8] Distinctive features included a special under-floor duct system that would distribute "maximum power outlets for electrical business machines," and television master antennae connected by coaxial cable connections to each floor. Another "major innovation in modern office building design" was the incorporation of "closed circuit television equipped for color," a communication technology that was to "make possible the holding of conventions, sales meetings and inter-city staff conferences by simultaneously linking participants throughout the country."[9] The report even boasted that the Seagram tower incorporated the same

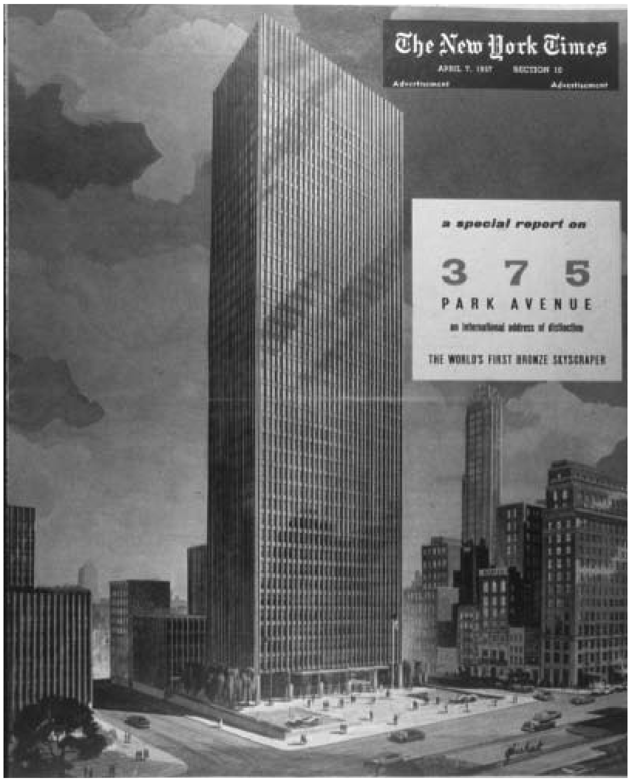

The New York Times
APRIL 7, 1957 SECTION 10
Advertisement Advertisement
a special report on
3 7 5
PARK AVENUE
an international address of distinction
THE WORLD'S FIRST BRONZE SKYSCRAPER

Figure 2 "A Special Report on 375 Park Avenue" (from *New York Times*, 7 April 1957, cover of advertisement, reproduced with permission of Vivendi S.A.)

ceramic tiles as the White House, implicitly connecting it to the locus of political power.

Among advertisements for Bethlehem Steel, the General Bronze and Franklin Glass Corporations, Lightolier, and other businesses involved with the building's construction, was a small article entitled "Model of a Model Skyscraper." This depicted the installation at the front of the construction site during the previous year of a 14-foot model of the tower (Figure 3). This detailed miniature "used 10,500 separate pieces of material and took five months to construct," and had been created to satisfy the curiosity of "interested spectators," who were also greeted on the sidewalk by audio recordings that explained the building's construction.[10] Another article recounted a different form of simulation, explaining how in July 1956 General Bronze had "set up controlled laboratory conditions at its Garden City proving grounds" to test a mock-up of a two-story section of the building against hurricane conditions.[11]

The *Times* supplement called attention to other noteworthy characteristics. As explained by Fred N. Severud, a partner in the firm in charge of structural engineering—Severud-Elstad-Krueger Associates—and author of the 1954 book *The Bomb, Survival and You*, the tower's design had taken into account lessons derived from government reports detailing the effect of U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[12] Among the design's civil defense measures were to be a concrete spine rising through the first seventeen floors; provision for the "quick installation of baffles that will, in effect, complete enclosure of the elevator lobbies and turn them into temporary havens of refuge"; and "pre-designed [basement] shelter areas to protect occupants, should the remote possibility of an atomic attack occur."[13] Fueled by Cold War anxieties, the dystopian counterpart to New York's preeminence as the center of international commerce and influence was the looming threat of being targeted by Soviet attacks.[14] Finally, another short essay, "A Modern Museum Piece," announced the tower's inclusion in the MoMA exhibition *Buildings for Business and Government*.

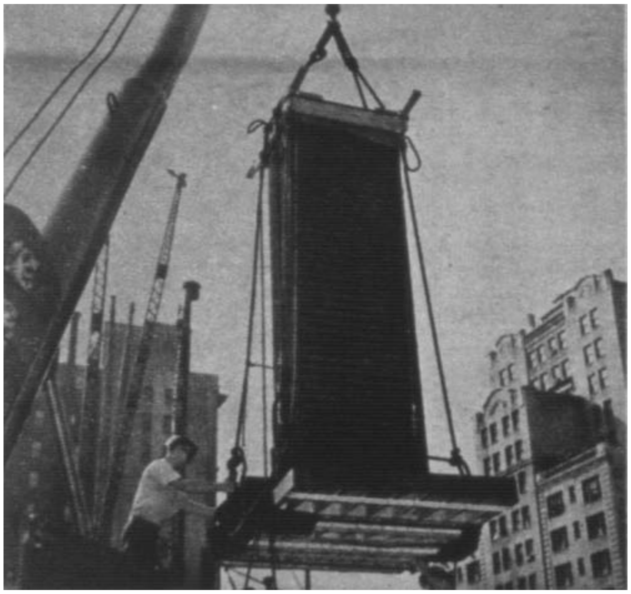


Figure 3 Model of Seagram Building being installed at construction site, 375 Park Avenue, New York (from "A Special Report on 375 Park Avenue," reproduced with permission of Vivendi S.A.)

Curated by Drexler, *Buildings for Business and Government* opened on 27 February 1957. Along with the Seagram tower, the exhibition put forward four other recent works to demonstrate progressive patronage of architectural modernism: Eero Saarinen & Associates' General Motors Technical Center; Skidmore Owings and Merrill's Chase Manhattan Bank; Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber's St. Louis Air Terminal; and Edward Durrell Stone's U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.[15] As Drexler suggested to Phyllis Bronfman Lambert, then Director of Planning for the Seagram Building, it was "really a series of one-man shows." Each embodied one of America's strengths: corporate, technical, financial, transportational, and geopolitical.[16]

Following Philip Johnson's departure from MoMA in 1954 to enter private practice and collaborate on the Seagram project, Drexler had been promoted to the position of director of the Department of Architecture and Design, hence assuming a certain institutional mandate. Writing to Seagram's president, Samuel Bronfman, in 1956, he explained, "Since it was founded the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design has championed the *art* of modern architecture." Along with photographs, a model of the thirty-eight-story tower along with its five-story "bustle" at rear, and samples of the travertine, granite, and sidewalk paving, Drexler requested for his exhibition "at least 4 complete panels, in bronze, including the spandrel and the gray glass."[17] Installing the panels between horizontal mirrors on the floor and ceiling, he presented the Seagram Building's façade as an infinite regression, an endless multiplication of its modular components (Figures 4, 5).

As *Interiors* reported under the heading "A Design Tour de Force Destroys Walls to Turn Illusion into Reality," Drexler's installation created the "sensation of tangible reality of [a] 38-storey building." Theatrically lit within a darkened gallery, the mock-ups of each project—when juxtaposed with enlarged photographs, other material samples, and highly detailed models—had a profound effect: by the time the visitor left the third-floor gallery, the reporter Betsy Darrach claimed, "he will have literally and figuratively felt the reality" of the buildings. Yet that simulated reality entailed a perceptual paradox. "The gallery in which this material is displayed has virtually ceased to exist," Darrach noted in the first instance. "Its space and dimensions have been destroyed by a uniform blackness that turns walls and ceiling and floor into shadowy unreality. Distances becoming infinite and scale transcends the assumptions of reason." The author went on to describe how, in terms reminiscent of accounts of phantasmagoria, the abstractions had somehow been endowed with a heightened sense of reality: "In a sense they are more real than they are ever likely to be in actual experience."[18] Drexler's crafting of this environment, with its calculated immersion of the viewer, marked a departure from the more conventional presentation of drawings, photographs, and models in his earlier MoMA shows, such as *Built in USA: Post-War Architecture*, co-curated with Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1953. A closer precedent for the simulation of a modernist space in the museum's gallery was Mies's design for his own 1947 show, replete with large-scale photomurals (Figure 6). As Charles Eames explained of Mies's installation, if "history, examples and chronology can be found in [Johnson's] monograph . . . the exhibition itself provides the *smell and feel* of what makes it, and Mies van der Rohe, great."[19]

Reviewing the completed building the following year, Drexler suggested, "the Seagram tower ought to be appraised as a work of art."[20] "Deceptively rational," he reported, it "produces an emotional impact with the force of a Biblical revelation." To which he added, "This cannot be conveyed by photographs."[21] Drexler soon offered

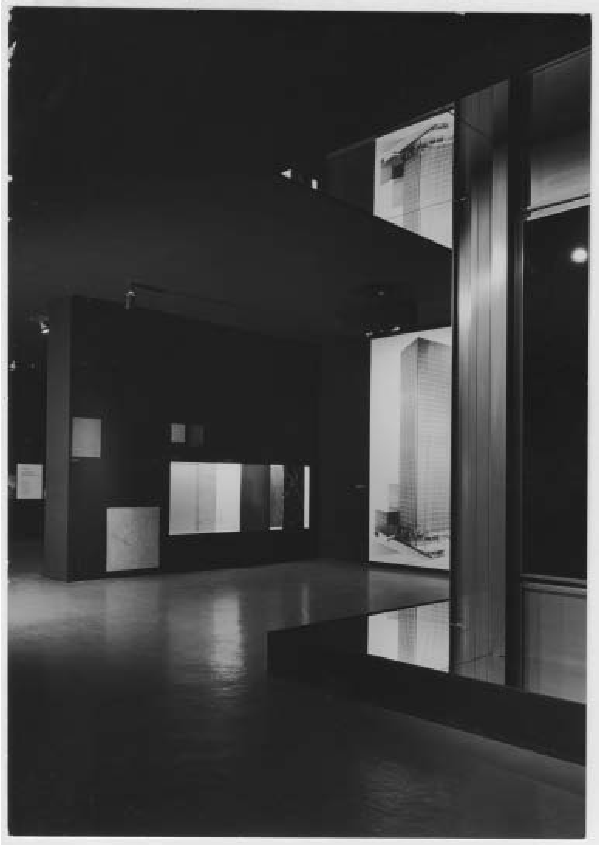


Figure 4 Installation view, *Buildings for Business and Government*, 25 Feb.–28 April 1957, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

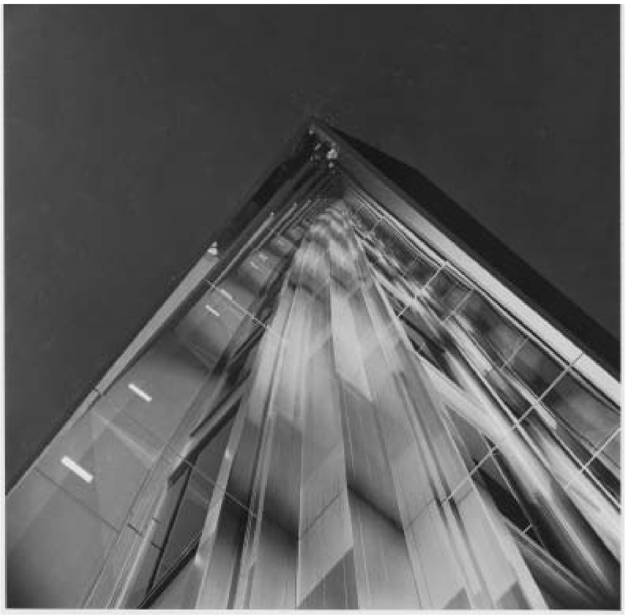


Figure 5 Installation view, *Buildings for Business and Government*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

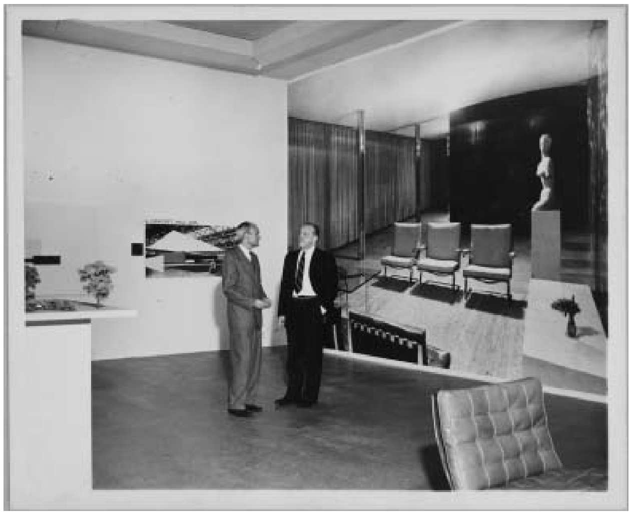


Figure 6 Philip Johnson and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the galleries of the exhibition *Mies van der Rohe*, 16 Sept. 1947–25 Jan. 1948, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

slightly more detailed accounts of this forceful aesthetic. "For Mies," he proposed two years later, in his modest monograph on the architect for George Braziller, "the aesthetic experience . . . serve[s] an intermediate term within the sequence of an argument. Mies builds as if logic, universal truth and technology were all real things. He makes us believe in them, by the intermediary of art—of sense perceptions placed in the service of ideas."[22] Mies himself had long spoken of the cognitive dimension of engaging a viewer's sense perceptions within his or her milieu, a built environment he understood to be marked by historical contingencies (what Mies called "facts").[23] As the architect wrote as early as 1928, *Baukunst* was "not merely a technical problem nor a problem of organization or economy." Rather, it comprised "man's spatial dialog with his environment and demonstrates how he asserts himself therein and how he masters it."[24] In this back and forth between the conceptual and perceptual dimensions of the work, Drexler recognized the contours of what the architect referred to as the "artistic value of technical means." Those technical means, as the curator later acknowledged, now extended beyond techniques of construction to include techniques of reproduction and dissemination. Mies's commentary on the Seagram Building spoke to how this nexus of aesthetics, perception, economics, and technology could constitute a "spatial dialog," in this case with corporate America.

Package or Pyramid

Asked if he had a "preconceived idea" for the Seagram commission, Mies responded bluntly "No." "[I] collect the facts—all the facts—as much as I can get, and then I study these facts and then I act accordingly."[25] Called upon to "explain" the building while lecturing at the Architectural League, he again insisted that it emerged from administrative and programmatic parameters.

> When we got the job we tried to read the building code. That was impossible. Then we asked for the best office manager. . . . How do they want to work? How do they want to live in this place. And he gave us some sizes of offices . . . So we decided on a unit of four-feet-seven. . . . Four-feet-seven and multiplication of that . . . gave us [the] skeleton structure . . . And then we made just a roster of [this] 27 feet [bay] and put it on this side. And, curiously enough, it worked. . . . [W]e had nothing to do with it.[26]

As pointed out by many observers, Mies's typically laconic story of the building's immanent nature failed to account for the unprecedented 90-foot setback, the use of luxurious materials (including bronze and a specially tinted pink-gray glass), the non-standard—actually 4 ft. 7½ in.-curtain-wall module, and the dull glow of its spectacularly orchestrated perimeter nightlighting, to name but a few of its deviations from the corporate modernism of the time.[27] Mies did, however, leave a few clues about the roles of perception and of history. Interviewed by John Peter, he remarked: "I set [the building] back so you can see it."[28] And to Peter Carter he stated, "We see things with different eyes, because it is a different time."[29] Johnson, too, would acknowledge the primacy of the perceptual considerations in making the plaza, recalling Mies's remark, "I never dreamt people would want to sit there" (Figure 7).[30] A reader of Aloïs Riegl, Oswald Spengler, and Heinrich Wölfflin, among others, Mies understood

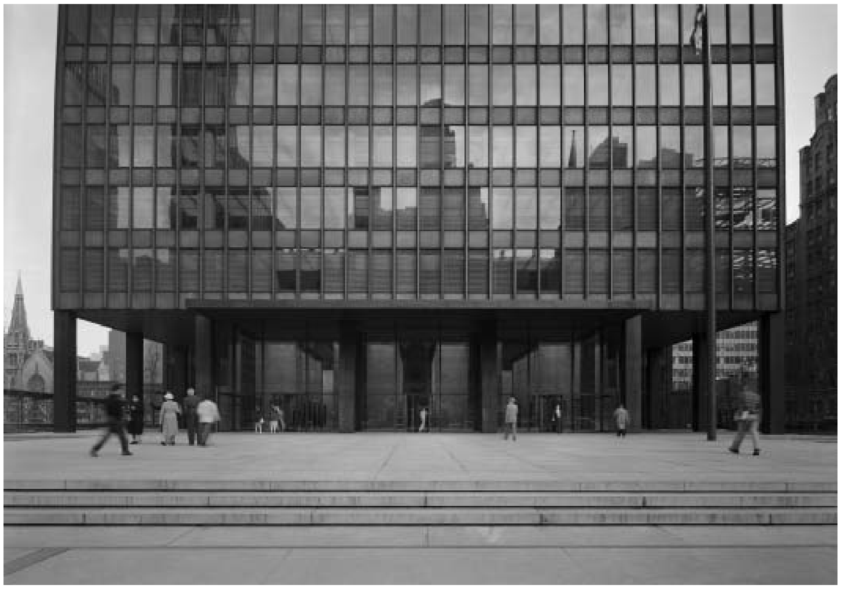


Figure 7 Mies with Johnson, Seagram Building, New York, 1954–58 (photo: Ezra Stoller © Esto. All rights reserved)

that perceptual modalities were historically specific.[31] Like many of his contemporaries from Weimar Germany, he had recognized that new technology—whether steel and glass construction or forms of reproduction such as photography and cinema—altered the conditions of viewing. "Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods," Walter Benjamin had famously argued, "so too does their mode of perception."[32] Mies's architecture sought to capture the "technical means" and the "facts" of his age within an aesthetic assemblage in order to engage the perceptual apparatus of the modern viewer in its historical and corporeal specificity. But some technical means associated with new information technology, and in turn some historical facts of postwar America, seemed to have remained opaque to him.

Working in the New York urban context during the 1950s, and hence at the hub of corporate America, Mies might have felt a particular urgency for this "mastery" of the environment, an urgency that could have been exacerbated by the nearby presence of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's Lever House of 1952, designed by Gordon Bunshaft, diagonally across Park Avenue (Figure 8). Many accounts of the Seagram Building compared the two towers, often puzzling over the strange temporal disjunction across which Mies's first major office building in the United States responded to another corporate tower—itself modeled on his steel and glass paradigm. For instance, British architects Alison and Peter Smithson distinguished the Seagram Building, which to them embodied a "genuine technological culture," from what they regarded to be the illusions perpetrated by Lever House.[33] It was this promise of a technological culture, seemingly inherent to the use of industrial materials and particularly steel, that as they explained in *Without Rhetoric* had proven so appealing to Europeans as quintessentially American, as "truly hints of *une architecture autre*."[34] Lever House

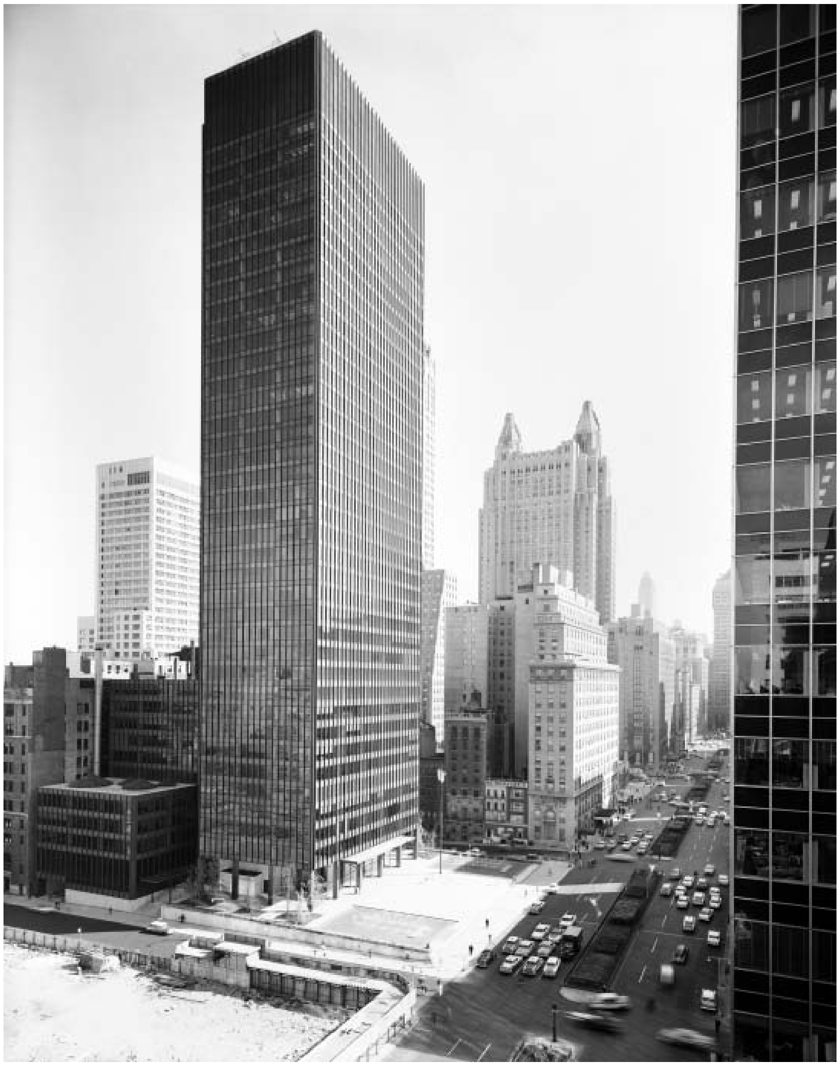


Figure 8 Mies with Johnson, Seagram Building; corner of Lever House, at right, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, Gordon Bunshaft (photo: Ezra Stoller © Esto. All rights reserved)

had "become a universal model" because its "banality" and illiteracy with respect to technology made it easy to copy; "it was not frightening, it made no demands." But, they continued, "Lever house did not 'make Mies acceptable' for Mies still had secrets and these frightened; Lever House had none."[35]

In attempting to engage that technological culture in his design, Mies paid particular attention to the façade's scale. Studying options for sculpture on the plaza, he worked with drawings that were almost fifteen feet long.[36] Interviewed during its construction, he addressed the question of scale, and noted, by example, an Egyptian pyramid would lose its impact if only fifteen feet high. When the interviewer asked if the walls of the Seagram Building would have such an effect, Mies interrupted, "Oh, I'm quite sure, yes I'm quite sure." "That slab," he continued, "you see that is a mass," and he finally offered something of an explanation: "That is not an individual thing, you know, thousands of windows, you know—good or bad—that doesn't mean anything. . . . That [mass] is like an army of soldiers or like a meadow . . . you don't see the details any more, you know—when you see the mass. . . . And I think that is the quality of this tower."[37] Asked if the building would be "understandable"—if it would "just hit you," Mies responded: "Yah, there is no question." While at first it may appear that he was talking solely of scale, his attention to detail in the design of the curtain wall, particularly its proportions and the specially fabricated bronze I-beam sections, suggests that his motivation was in the perceived relationship between the individual module and the "mass."[38] In Philip Johnson's account, "Mies thought that you have to have a regular module and he went crazy at the Seagram Building . . . because he couldn't find out the exact inches of the module."[39]

It was not then the sheer size of Mies's tower that would "just hit you." Indeed it was no larger than many other office buildings on Park Avenue. Rather, unlike the "package-like quality of Lever House," with its flat curtain wall and standard-size module, the House of Seagram had a strange material, even "monumental" character.[40] In the words of one journalist, it was a "noble brown cigar among shabby cigarettes."[41] In Lewis Mumford's opinion, its nearby "rival," Lever House, looked "more package than pyramid," appearing "curiously transitory and ephemeral when one turns from one to the other."[42] When compared to Seagram, "everything else now looks like a jumped-up supermart," Peter Smithson suggested.[43] Indeed, Mies's other buildings had been described as producing a similar "emotional impact," as noted by Drexler, who had earlier written of Lake Shore Drive: "if these buildings provoke the emotional response to urban life so well described by Franz Kafka, it is because 860 Lake Shore Drive is Metropolis defined."[44] Recalling his first encounter with a Mies building, Walter McQuade noted, "It was like a thump in the chest. . . . Not just flavor, but force."[45] The Barcelona Pavilion had a similar effect on Peter Behrens who, as Mies recalled, had remarked "Mein Herz ging auf" ("my heart leapt up").[46] Like the "energy from a battery"[47] or that "percussive effect" noted within Benjamin's description of shock aesthetics, Mies buildings heightened the affective experience of city viewers.[48] None did this better than the Seagram tower. In 1958 William Jordy described being "struck" by the "impact" of the building.[49]

According to the accounts of many initial observers, as one moved across the Seagram plaza the eye scanned and registered the mass of the building, seeing not just the details but also the dense articulation of modular parts and tinted glass in a complex three-dimensional matrix. Jordy suggests that this entailed a scanning effort: "We look up automatically. The verticality of the windows and the unbroken run of their projecting I-beam mullions through 38 storeys encourage the act by which we measure the scale of the building and seize its unity." The grid, he also noted, "never asserts itself at the expense of the wall, never disintegrates into blinding streaks of light as does the bright-work of Lever House." Yet even if the effect of raking light was never blinding, Jordy noted that sunshine on the Seagram façade could produce such "brilliance [that] it can elude visual grasp." "Since the Seagram wall is shadowy," he continued, "we cannot grasp it at a glance." Although Jordy, as a critic, was prompted to "peer for its refinements," the Seagram Building was difficult to fix upon visually.[50] By reducing the surface area comprising metal to a minimum, by maximizing the area of reflective, tinted glass, and by increasing the depth and hence shadow-casting of the façade through the use of carefully designed I-beams, Mies produced myriad changing impressions.[51] With each step across the plaza, what otherwise appeared as a rigid order would be transformed as reflected images and shadows shifted within the façade, in response to the movements of the viewer and the passage of time.

The I-beams on the Seagram façade were widely regarded as ornamental or symbolic supplements and thus as symptoms of Mies's disloyalty to functionalist rationality. Drexler himself commented on Mies's "decorative" use of I-beams at 860 Lakeshore Drive as early as 1952, in his essay for *Built in USA*, implicitly situating its effect as a result of motion. "Seen head on," he explained, "a façade appears like a mirror striped with railroad tracks. Seen at an angle the same façade looks like an enormous portiere of narrow steel beams. The two buildings in conjunction seen from almost any angle, present combinations of surface density ranging from a seemingly opaque massing of vertical steel beams to an open cage filmed over with glass." Far from critical of this "decorative" character, Drexler saw the nonstructural use of steel as an important new aesthetic development in modernism.[52]

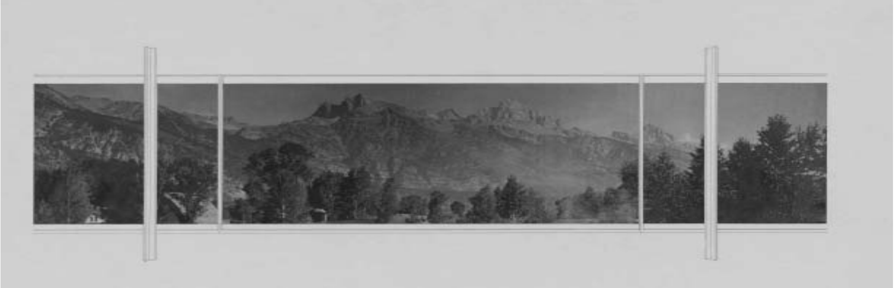


Figure 9 Ludwig Mies, Resor House, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, 1937–38, unbuilt; interior perspective of living room (view through north glass wall), pencil and photograph on illustration board (Mies van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gift of the architect; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Alive, Changing, New

If Mies frequently acknowledged the I-beam's technical capacities, albeit with some irony, he too pointed to its perceptual qualities. "The shape of the mullions . . . that is a very strange affair," he explained of the bronze sections. "I tried many shapes, but the 'I' beam shape was the best. When it is hit by light by the sun, you don't get only one shadow . . . you get two kinds of shadow . . . the one the color shade and the other is the real shadow . . . what the light does. And it was more readable . . . you could see it better."[53] Johnson seconded Mies's interest in the "exquisite shadows." "That H column, which makes that shadow, was an absolute revolution . . . because it gave you [a] third dimension."[54] Mies's likening of the façade to a phalanx of soldiers or a sea of meadow grasses suggests that it was not the structure that produced the visual effect, either in its totality or its parts. For him the grid-structure was an historical imperative, "a pure given and in itself undifferentiated," and within its interstices, when perceived in movement or duration, another form of reception became possible.[55] As the lines of order receded into that highly articulated and shadowy surface, the viewer was free to make his or her own connections, to differentiate among the soldiers and the grasses. Here perhaps was an actualization of Mies's long-standing desire "to become master of the unleashed forces and build them into a new order, an order that permits free play for the unfolding of life."[56] When a viewer looked onto the Seagram Building the surface was, to recall Mies's earlier ambitions for *Baukunst*, alive, changing, new—an ever-changing image like the cinema, or perhaps television.[57] That Mies was responsive to the latter was attested to by Edward Duckett, who recalled that he "had the largest television screen of anybody I knew."[58]

During the 1970s, Manfredo Tafuri argued that in Mies's houses nature had been relegated to "a spectacle to be enjoyed only on condition that it be kept impalpably remote," a "distant spectacle" that was "easily replaced by a photomontage."[59] Neil Levine has observed that in one of Mies's photo collages of a project for Helen and Stanley Resor in Jackson Hole, Wyoming (1937–38), the editing of a photograph of the actual landscape in fact appears to bring the mountains closer (Figure 9).[60] Another photo collage, substituted for this edited "real" view, includes a still from a Hollywood movie, replete with cowboys on horseback—bringing an even more distant image into the house. While not by Mies's hand, a four-panel photo collage was also prepared for the *New York Times* supplement by Helmut Jacoby. Two sections presented the view from offices; the third a view through the elevator core; the fourth showed "Park Avenue coming into panoramic view" from the foyer, depicting the sweeping view across the plaza to McKim, Mead and White's Racquet and Tennis Club (1918) and, further to the right, Lever House (Figure 10).

In his review of the Seagram Building for *Architectural Record*, Drexler suggested that such photo collages might correspond to the visitor's experience of the building. Referring to the effects of the perimeter lighting, and the careful orchestration of the relative inside and outside lighting levels by means of an "astronomical clock," he explained: "In the offices this lighting . . . has the curious effect of making New York City seem like a photographic mural mounted on the other side of the glass (Figure 11).[61] Jordy also noted this peculiar quality of converting the view into a snapshot, suggesting that it might have a comforting effect on occupants not accustomed to the dizzying height and hence great distance:

> There are those who have complained of giddiness at the openness of their aerie, even though the air-conditioning units provide a balustrade, partly physical, partly psychological, blocking contact with the window. The positive quality of the mullions affords further reassurance, while their columnar like division of the panorama imposes an order and foreground to the view which the fetish for "picture window" denies. The mullions also

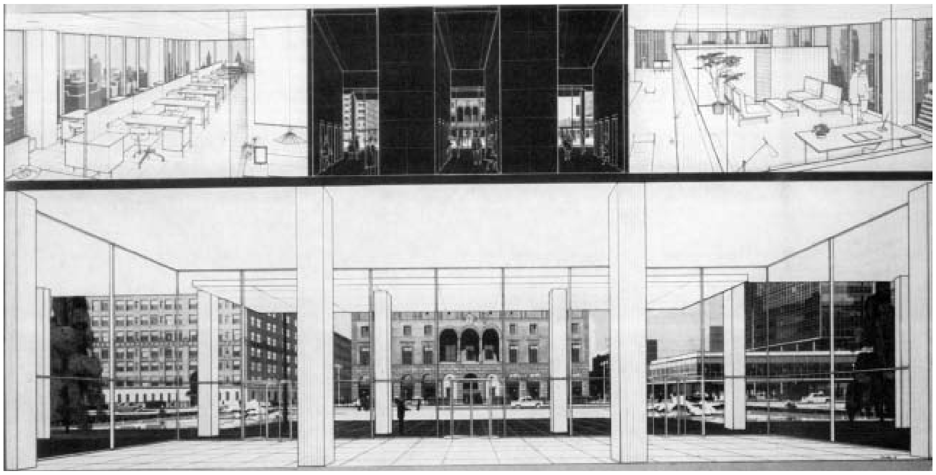


Figure 10 Helmut Jacoby, Photocollage of interior views of Seagram Building, 1957 ("A Special Report on 375 Park Avenue," reproduced with permission of Vivendi S.A.)

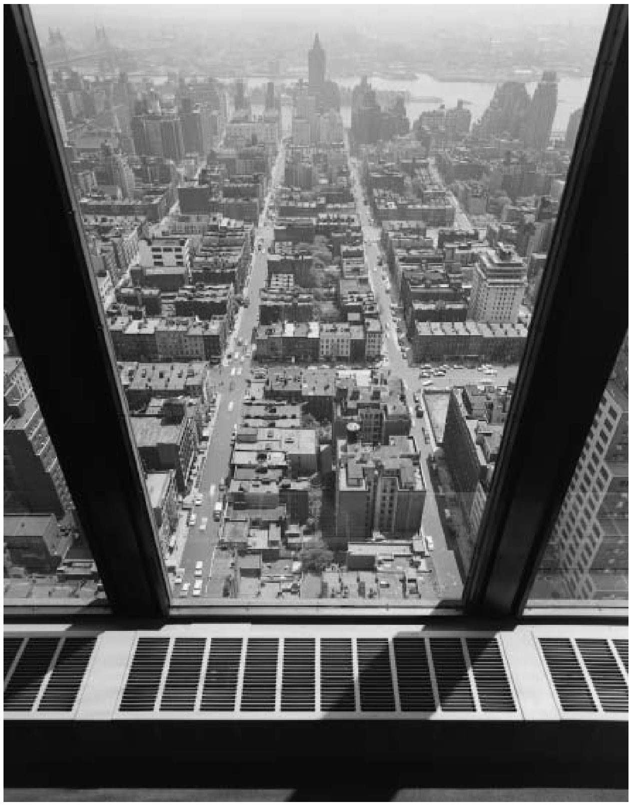


Figure 11 View from a window of the Seagram Building, designed by Mies with Johnson (photo: Ezra Stoller © Esto. All rights reserved)

> give a tangible framework to which the view can cling. . . . The city appears as an image of itself, somewhat as though it were a photographic mural pasted against the outside surface of the glass.[62]

Mies's windows, it seems, had the effect of bringing a distant view closer, domesticating that view by seeming to reproduce it, as did television—in German, *Fernsehen*.

By the time of Seagram, Mies's conception of what the life "unfolding" that occupants of his building were looking out onto, might have had a related new dimension. Interviewed for *The Listener* in 1959, he described the Farnsworth house as a device through which to view ever-changing nature. Notoriously indifferent to Dr. Edith Farnsworth's sense of exposure, Mies explained that the house "is, I think, not really understood." After spending a full day in the house, he recalled becoming increasingly aware of the colors of nature: "These absolutely change and I would say it is beautiful."[63] And he went on to connect this experience to the contemporary city, where, "Even in our tall glass buildings, when you are in an apartment, you see the sky, and even the city, changing every hour. I think that is really new in our concept."[64] The temporal dimension in the experience of his buildings was conceived as streaming images. Franz Schulze noted that "The dweller feels little impulse to move inquiringly about within but rather prefers to sit and look."[65]

In a 1982 lecture at the Arts Club of Chicago, Drexler confessed that he had always "associated Mies's architecture . . . with a climate of despair," a quality he attributed to the impact of Oswald Spengler. Although hesitant to do so, Mies had acknowledged his debt to Spengler's thinking.[66] Important to Drexler was that Mies's work did not simply acquiesce to Spengler's teleology of decline but had picked up on his conceptualization of distance and time, in particular the collapsing of distance. "In Spengler's view," Drexler recalled, "if you could understand a given culture's concept of distance—and 'distance' was the word he used, not 'space'—and time, you would be able to enter into the imagination of that culture." Spengler, he continued, "thought that each culture gave birth to its own outer world." "[O]ur world," he noted in particular, "is distinguished by its will to conquer distance."[67]

In "Habitats for American Cosmopolites," Charles Genther had made related observations in 1963, reflecting on the geopolitical significance of this space-vanquishing propensity. "The cosmopolitan American is one whose taste for communication has not been satiated by the transatlantic cable, radio, and television, and whose desire to conquer and consume space is not satisfied by the DC-3 or the DC-8. He now probes outer space."[68] Genther regarded such "annihilation of distance" and "desire for the long view" to be long-standing cultural desires. Looking out onto Chicago from his twenty-sixth-floor 860 Lake Shore Drive apartment, Genther recounted that the Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki had exclaimed: "Only Americans can live without definition in the middle distance" (Figure 12). After noting that young children experienced none of the vertigo that had vexed so-called "window dwellers," he went on to recall,

> John Cage, the composer, was seated with Mies in one of the glass houses during a storm. We were talking about the fact that this simple and elegant definition of space without the deification of the architect permitted other personalities to blossom and, in effect, let the whole world in. Just then a great flash of lightning tore open the sky and lit up the Michigan Avenue towers that have been called the most hedonistic architecture in the world. Cage said: "See what I mean? Wasn't it clever of Mies to make the lightning?"[69]

Here, Genther recognized, was not simply an "inflexibly transparent box" but a carefully calibrated openness.

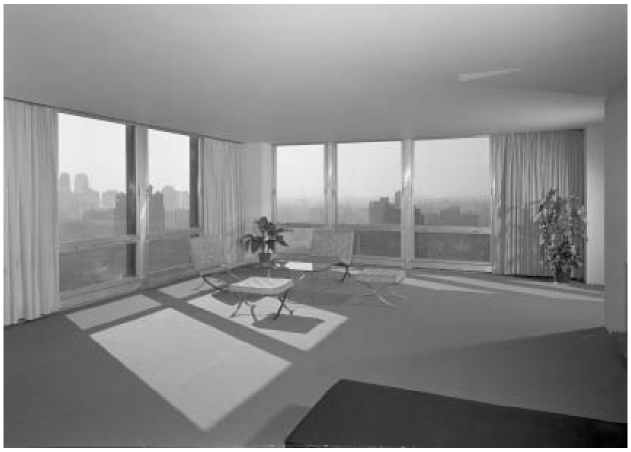


Figure 12 Interior view of corner windows, Genther apartment, 860 North Lake Shore Drive, designed by Mies, view ca. 1952 (photo: Hedrich Blessing. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum, HB-15692-A)

Curtain Wall Salesmen

In May 1957, while the Seagram Building was under construction, the *Architectural Review* published a now-famous issue entitled "Machine Made America." Although Mies was identified as a founding father of the curtain wall office tower, the editors stressed that the typology's translation into a reproducible vernacular had been marked by a notable decline in design quality. While Mies, they explained, had continued to develop his aesthetic, "a giant ghost has followed it at a safe and not-quite-comprehending distance—the curtain wall industry," and the commercialization of his technique and his aesthetic had "facilitated the visual acceptance of a repetitive, endless grid facade." Some had eluded this trap. Eero Saarinen and Bunshaft, for instance, had "effectively bridged the gap between one man's vision and an industrial product."[70] That is, they had more adeptly (than others) negotiated the economic and industrial imperatives of postwar capitalism. Johnson, too, would successfully attain his own manner of declension of the Miesian idiom, as exemplified in his own house in New Canaan of 1949 and, later, the University of St. Thomas in Houston (1957). As testified to by members of Mies's staff, Johnson would come to the office, pull out little index cards on which to sketch details and say "What's new boys?"[71] This mimesis would come to an end as he would famously "whither away" in non-Miesian directions soon after Seagram's completion, retroactively reading the tower itself as "a great exercise in Schinkelesque classical design."[72]

In a 1958 interview with Peter Carter, Mies spoke of being copied: "And sometimes people say . . . how do you feel if somebody copies you and so on." He explained, "I say, that is not a problem to me. . . . We hope only that he use it right."[73] When Mies "showed them what to do," hoping to foster something like a vernacular of the industrial age, his ambition was not to codify a particular use of glass and steel technology. Rather, it was to demonstrate that architecture remained a cultural practice that was imbricated within, and should be marked by, transforming forces of modernity. "I really believe, more and more," he stressed to Carter, "that architecture is closely related to the driving and sustaining forces of an epoch and can, at its best, be nothing more than an expression of these forces."[74] Here Mies was reiterating his belief, maintained since the 1920s, that even in industrial times built form, understood as an expression of "the vital force of life," should be allowed to unfold or emerge without being "held back by administrative regulations."[75] "One affirms modern life in thousands of ways. One uses all technical innovations," he explained of this imperative. Yet the building arts remained shackled by "preconceptions" and notions of "eternal value," and "refuse[d] to draw consequences . . . from these changes." For, as he argued in a particularly Marxist turn of phrase, which echoed Benjamin's writings, the "change of the ideological superstructure takes place often very much later and much slower than the changes in the societal ground."[76]

What, then, to come back to Mies's lament, had gone wrong? Iterations of his curtain wall office tower were proliferating at a great pace and had indeed forged something of a vernacular. In 1959 Paul Rudolph exclaimed, "Today Park Avenue has exploded," forecasting that by 1961 "the area from Grand Central to the sixties will be almost completely rebuilt with billboard-like buildings, each shouting for as much attention as possible." To Rudolph this repetition of curtain-walled towers produced a strange effect. "The alignment of curtain walled buildings alongside our endless streets suggests large rolls of wallpaper pasted on. Driving around New York is rather like flipping through the pages of the window manufacturer's catalogs," the architect wrote.[77] In 1965 Peter Blake reiterated Rudolph's complaint in "Slaughter on Sixth Avenue," noting that "Sixth avenue looks a bit like a *collage* made up of pages from Sweet's catalog." "In terms of surface aesthetics," he noted, pointing to its commercial tone, "it has become a giant sample case for a curtain wall salesman."[78] In 1961 the plaza of the Seagram Building provided the catalyst for rewriting the New York zoning code to give FAR (floor area ratio) bonuses for the provision of open space. The effects of this new code and the multiplication of curtain wall varieties, each striving for a novel effect, were spectacularly visible by the mid-sixties. If a Miesian "skin and bones" architecture had proliferated rapidly, the results of this translation into general practice were not what Mies might have hoped. In the shift from a complex technical matrix to a billboard-like image, something had gone awry.

Yet it was not, of course, easy to copy Mies, at least not successfully. As Lewis Mumford observed of the Seagram Building: "this is not just another business building but a singular monument," adding that "its aloof, aristocratic qualities are not likely to be often repeated in a city where—to resort to the classic confession of the realty financier—'money does not look ahead more than five years.'"[79] Interrogating Mies during his "On Trial" series, Reyner Banham suggested that even Mies's most prominent or successful followers, such as Saarinen, Bunshaft, and Arne Jacobsen, were "like the impatient birds in the fable of the nest-building lesson, [who] had dashed off without waiting to hear the whole story, and settled for an earlier version."[80] For Banham in 1962, the current withering of Mies's "fan-club" could be attributed to the misleading notion that the architect's work was idealist in orientation. Mies, as Banham put it, had unwittingly sponsored "a world-wide network of admirers, cherishing the vision of an absolutist on the point of creating a building that would be an ideal Cartesian grid, sustained by pure logic and transparent to the light of intellect."[81]

Banham went on to insist that Mies's work sought no such "Platonic ideal." There was, he proposed, stressing the work's immanent logic, no "ultimate goal."[82] Thus in contradistinction to those who "hailed him as a Machine-Age Messiah," Banham argued that Mies had merely used an "established Chicago vernacular" and "made no great technological contribution." Unlike the inventiveness of Buckminster Fuller, Mies was better understood as a beachcomber who had "walked along the shores of technology and made architecture from what he picked up along the way."[83] While Mies's work might seem to offer easy answers, it was, Banham concluded, "valueless in repetition," for Mies "is not a Machine Aesthete, he is a craftsman of technology." Moreover, in departing from his usual practice of using off-the-shelf components, in the Park Avenue tower Mies was found wanting: "Compared with the steel and aluminium detailing of 860 Lakeshore or 900 Commonwealth," Banham argued, "the cladding of the Seagram Building, made up from bronze specials, looks gimmicky and unconvincing."[84]

If evoking an aesthetic of technology, the Seagram Building was definitely not a standard, mass-produced object; it transgressed the basic economic principles or "facts" of the age. As any curtain wall salesman would have instantly recognized, its bronze wall system would be quite out of place in the Sweet's catalog, not only on account of its material cost and custom qualities, but also for needing to be rubbed by hand with lemon oil, initially to remove "construction grime" and subsequently to ensure an even patina.[85] As Jordy noted, "Where Lever House and practically all metal and glass buildings are designed for a perpetual present, the Seagram Building is the first major metal and glass skyscraper consciously designed to age as masonry buildings age," to which he later added, "an architectural property as appropriate for Seagram's whisky as sheen for Lever's soap."[86] Indeed, a stark transformation is apparent if one compares the brazen metallic color of the Seagram façade in the late 1950s, as it graced the cover of architectural periodicals, to its now darkened condition. That the Seagram Building was designed to improve with age—like a good whisky—was confirmed by Mies: "In stainless steel you have this shiny color and it will get no patina . . . and bronze will have a patina."[87] But far from ensuring a timeless quality, the patina in fact provides testimony to the building's duration in time. If bad copies of Mies's aesthetic entailed inevitable "depreciation," the slowly changing Seagram façade defied repetition while demonstrating the possibilities of expressing a building's persistent yet contingent nature, connoting the uniqueness of each historical moment. As a reader of Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1944), Mies understood that each moment of temporal unfolding would be distinct and therefore pure repetition was impossible.[88]

Courtly Drama

Only a few years after its completion, Seagram's uniqueness was again making news. It was quite literally put on trial. If in 1957 the building could be championed by MoMA as a demonstration of enlightened patronage and celebrated as an example of "what gifted architects can do when they are free from the utilitarian and financial considerations that hamper most commercial buildings," by 1963 the New York City Tax Commission had focused a less approving eye on its extravagant cost—more than double that of a conventional speculative building of comparable size.[89] Indeed it posed a challenge to the commission; for although the Seagram Building cost $43 million to construct—$5 million for land, 38 for the structure—it was evaluated at only around $17 million in real estate terms.[90] To correct this discrepancy an additional amount was added to the real estate levy in an unprecedented attempt to tax what was deemed Seagram's "prestige" or "monumental" value. Assessing the building at around 150 percent of its market value (a value conventionally based on net rental income), the Tax Commission in effect added a luxury tax totaling approximately $400,000 per year.[91] The Seagram company fought this new tax in court, but the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court ruled against them in May—a decision that forcefully mobilized the architectural community. *New York Times* critic Ada Louise Huxtable speculated that it "may turn out to be the worst thing to hit the city, architecturally speaking, sort of an atom bomb."[92] "The power to tax architecture on its quality," an editorial by Douglas Haskell and Peter Blake announced in *Architectural Forum*, "is the power to prevent it."[93]

The crux of the matter was the discrepancy between the building's cost and its market value. As Huxtable put it, wryly citing the court's ruling, "That difference, in the judges' concurring opinion, 'is never satisfactorily explained, and does not do much credit to the sagacity of the corporate managers.'" That difference, and the source of supposed corporate incompetence, Huxtable confirmed, was architectural excellence: the question being how to estimate its value and to tax it.[94] In his written concurring opinion, Justice Aron Steuer pointed to the Seagram tower's noteworthy architecture and striking materials, and to the fact that it was known by its name, not by its street address. Arguing that the plaza had led to a reduction in rental space, with "the space involved being employed in distinctive decorative effects," he concluded that "its construction involves a cost materially in excess of utilitarian standards."[95] Thus while hailed previously as a symbol of American business, this "prestige (monumental) building" was now seen to have transgressed central tenets of return on capital investment, having an "extra-commercial aspect." As reported in the *New York Times*, Judge Steuer turned to Thorstein Veblen's late-nineteenth-century thesis of conspicuous consumption to explain Seagram's excess: "Such buildings, he went on, 'contribute to the owner's prestige' and 'exemplify the economic theory "Doctrine of Conspicuous Waste" described by Thorsten Veblen as designed to impress observers with the owner's 'pecuniary strength.'"[96]

Huxtable made a similar association when addressing the question of patronage. She hypothesized, with perhaps less irony than warranted by her analogy, that "Louis XIV would have been hard-pressed to explain Versailles to the City Tax Commission," noting in addition that "unfortunately, the source of its capital expenditures led to the Revolution, but our corporate kings build their monuments on more solid ground." "Today," she continued, situating architecture's future squarely in the hands of multinational capitalism, "the large corporation is the only possible patron for the great commissions in art and architecture that will distinguish our time. If the law discourages this, the city, and the century, will suffer. The New York Tax Commission has taken a perilous, extra-legal step into the field of architectural criticism. It may turn out to be architectural annihilation." Protesting the Appellate Court's decision, the Seagram corporation petitioned for permission to appeal in part on this basis, citing the threat of "relegat[ing] the skyline of New York to one of steel and glass matchboxes" as well as the effect it would have upon "the willingness of owners and builders in the future to perform this kind of public service."[97]

Acknowledging the widespread public concern, the courts granted the corporation the right to appeal, and on 16 March 1964, a group of concerned institutions filed a brief of *Amici Curiae* with New York State's highest court, the Court of Appeals in Albany, in support of Seagram's, hoping to overrule the "discriminatory tax on aesthetic quality," or tax on "architectural merit." The ambition of their case was to demonstrate that "the additional or new values stated by the Court" either did not exist or if they did they were "incapable of measurement." "There will remain as the only value created by the excess cost, an outstanding aesthetic quality," the document insisted, "which can not be and in the public interest should not be subject to a real property tax."

If it were decided to proceed with the punitive tax, the question remained, how to assess the economic value of that elusive quality, good architecture, and by what matrix could its dollar figure be estimated and by whom? "And who is to determine the cash value of a building measured by its artistic merit?" the brief queried rhetorically. "Are we to have a jury of artists and architects to advise the Tax Department? Would not the standards again be wholly subjective, and since people of artistic temperament are known to be highly individualistic, would not we have as many opinions as there were members of the advisory panel?"[98]

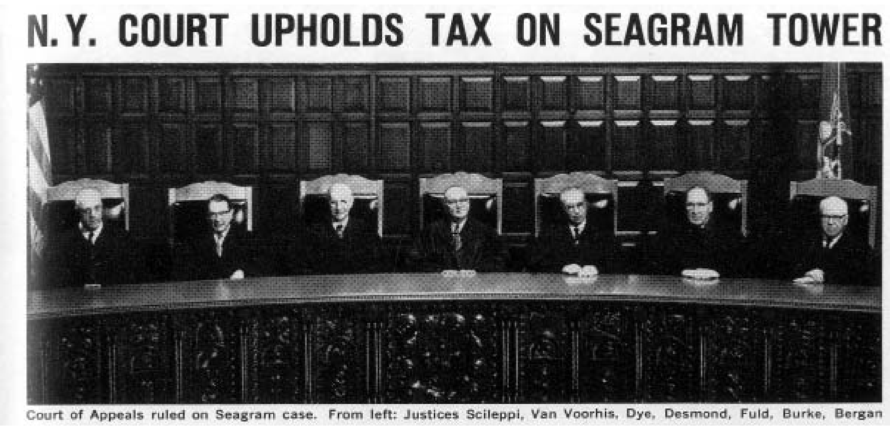
The brief of *Amici Curiae* reiterated the argument that such a tax would suppress private and corporate patronage, and it maintained that architecture of high quality should be understood as a benevolent gift, which contributed to the public interest. Extending Huxtable's invocation of Louis XIV, architectural patronage was described as a tradition of public spiritedness dating from earlier precedents such as Rameses II, Pericles, Hadrian, Henry III of England, the Medici, and Pope Julius II, and extending through to Andrew Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, and the Rockefellers in America. As implied by this list, the promotion of New York as a world power was very much part of the petition, which went on to argue, "With 150 years of rapid expansion behind it, New York City faces a century of world leadership in international affairs, in finance and in business." Noting the unprecedented "concentration of power, influence and leadership," the brief made explicit the connection between an architecture of empire and economic and cultural strength: "Here are all the elements of a great flowering of our culture and our economy. They could foretell the truly imperial city of the future."[99]

It was to defend sponsorship of the arts that Arthur Drexler spoke on behalf of MoMA as one of the "impartial" expert advisors. In a text entitled "Worldwide Preeminence of American Architecture," he explained,

> When the Museum of Modern Art was founded, its Directors and Trustees shared the belief that if the public were given a chance to see the best work of our time, it would develop an informed and enthusiastic appreciation. The Museum thought then, as it does now, that its role as an educational institution could be particularly effective if it could encourage informed judgment on the part of those who commission buildings. It seemed plausible then, as it does now, that a mercantile society could learn how to use its wealth for the benefit of the community, and that our own businessmen could function as patrons of the arts of their own time no less effectively than did the businessmen of Venice in their day.

That "this desirable situation has actually come about," and with it the worldwide preeminence of American architecture, was a testament, he proposed, not only to architectural talent but also to the "intelligent support of business and government." The court's decision "to penalize excellence" was a profound threat to this achievement. Drexler warned of a future when "To have one's building included in a Museum of Modern Art exhibition by virtue of its excellence will be tantamount to inviting punitive taxation."[100]

In June 1964 the Appeals Court upheld the Tax Commission's stance, and the Appellate court's earlier verdict in a 4-3 decision (Figure 13). Chief Judge Charles S. Desmond agreed that the Seagram Building somehow "includes a real property value not reflected in commercial rental income."[101] As reported in *Architectural Forum*, "Since Seagram benefits from having its name associated with its world-famous tower . . . the court said, the building must be regarded more as a real estate investment in Seagram's own business than as a commercial headquarters and rental building."[102] The aesthetic merit of the building, that is, was now deemed to function as a form of promotion for the business. No longer suspected of being evidence of managerial incompetence, the costly, luxurious materials and the


N.Y. COURT UPHOLDS TAX ON SEAGRAM TOWER

Court of Appeals ruled on Seagram case. From left: Justices Scileppi, Van Voorhis, Dye, Desmond, Fuld, Burke, Bergan

Figure 13 Court of Appeals judges ruling on the Seagram case, Albany, New York; from left: Justices Scileppi, Van Voorhis, Dye, Desmond, Fuld, Burke, Bergan (from *Architectural Forum*, July 1964, 5)

masterful "architecture" were now judged to possess taxable value as advertising.

The Art of Modern Architecture

In 1974, to mark the publication of the second issue of its journal *Oppositions*, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies launched their program of evening forums with a session dedicated to Mies. "Mies's historical reputation is undergoing what could be called a bad period," William Ellis recalled in his account of the event, "Forum under Glass." Despite the "well meaning" presence of Arthur Drexler, Philip Johnson, and Ludwig Glaeser, along with Colin Rowe and some practicing architects, the event did not "produce expert analytical opinion to counter certain negative intuitions" or identify "the source of whatever disenchantment presently surrounds the work of Mies."[103] The "problem of Mies," Ellis noted, had "deteriorated . . . into what might be termed the 'misfortune of Mies,'" a misfortune we might now call postmodernism.

Discussion at the forum centered on Mies's contribution to the "spatial revolution" of modernism's "Heroic Period," a contribution summarized as the "elegant renditions of the separation of the functions—structure and screening." Rowe, Ellis recounted, argued that early modernists "held. . . that it would be necessary only to begin in terms of a Spirit of the Age, and then things could proceed on their own." For Rowe, rehearsing what we might call the doctrine of *l'architecture pour l'architecture*, even a theology of architecture, the value of the free plan was divorced from socio-political or economic factors; to him it was "a beautiful thing that is almost useless."[104] Drexler's contribution to characterizing the free plan included a slight shift, the importance of which might well have been undetectable to the audience. "Neither a technical necessity nor a functional inevitability, [the free plan] was devised, Drexler said, 'for wholly conceptual purposes.'"[105] To Ellis, it was precisely the conceptual drive of the work and Mies's single-minded commitment to it in his American career that had led to his status as a figure of derision by the 1970s. Alluding to Rowe, Ellis noted, "Things have not 'proceeded very well' on their own."[106]

The Institute's focus on Mies might well have been prompted by the forthcoming exhibition at MoMA, *Mies van der Rohe: Five Projects*. This focused on unbuilt work from the early 1920s, including the Friedrichstrasse skyscraper project for Berlin Mitte of 1921, the Glass Skyscraper project of 1922, and the Concrete Office Building project of 1923.[107] After preparing this small show of drawings, Drexler evidently continued to have Mies on his mind while working toward the more ambitious exhibition, *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, which opened the following October.[108] As the belated catalog eventually made clear, the show was staged as a provocation to architecture during its "post-Miesian phase." Drexler's essay, "Engineer's Aesthetic: Truth and its Consequences," turned to Mies in the context of attempting to denaturalize architecture's representational tools, questioning the assumption that drawings and models correspond to a "truth." Architects, Drexler posited, "may accept enthusiastically the idea that among the 'instruments of thought' language conditions and may even control what may be thought, but the proper instruments of their own thinking—drawings and models—remain largely unexamined." Pointing to the assumption that a model embodied "reality" in miniature, he remarked, "Like the architecture it represents the model is thought to be 'objective,' meaning that it corresponds to 'facts,' which are taken for 'truth.'"[109] Such literal-minded assumptions, Drexler insisted, failed to account for artistic mediation.

Drexler staged his argument by juxtaposing two seemingly irreconcilable images of Mies's Glass Skyscraper project (misdated 1921); first, an abstract charcoal drawing that rendered "the vertical mass of the skyscraper as if it were an irregularly fluted column made up of an unidentifiable opaque substance" and, second, what he referred to as a photomontage of a glass model (actually a single photograph), stressing that it was shot "from an angle that minimizes reflections on its faceted surfaces and emphasizes transparency" (Figures 14, 15). In the unlikely context of an exhibition about the Parisian Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Drexler offered a succinct reading of the complex representational status of Mies's images. Neither from the drawing nor from the model, he observed, "would one deduce what Mies claimed to be the point: 'I discovered by working with actual glass models that the important thing is the play of reflections and not the effect of light and shadow as in ordinary buildings.'"[110]

On the one hand, Drexler explained, the "abstract fragment of a shadowed surface" which characterized the drawing only hinted at the project's status as architecture "by the dark patches, one of which may recall a sloping roof if we already know it represents a building." That we were looking at a drawing of architecture was, however, made explicit by the caption "GLAS-HOCH-HAUS inscribed at the bottom." But even if such supplements marked it as architectural, from "the elevation drawing alone," Drexler continued, "one might not deduce the material and certainly not reflectivity as the determinant of form." On the other hand, if the photograph of the model allowed one to deduce that the material was glass, it would most likely lead to the assumption that "transparency, not reflectivity, is the determinant." Moreover, if the model exhibited a "diagrammatic

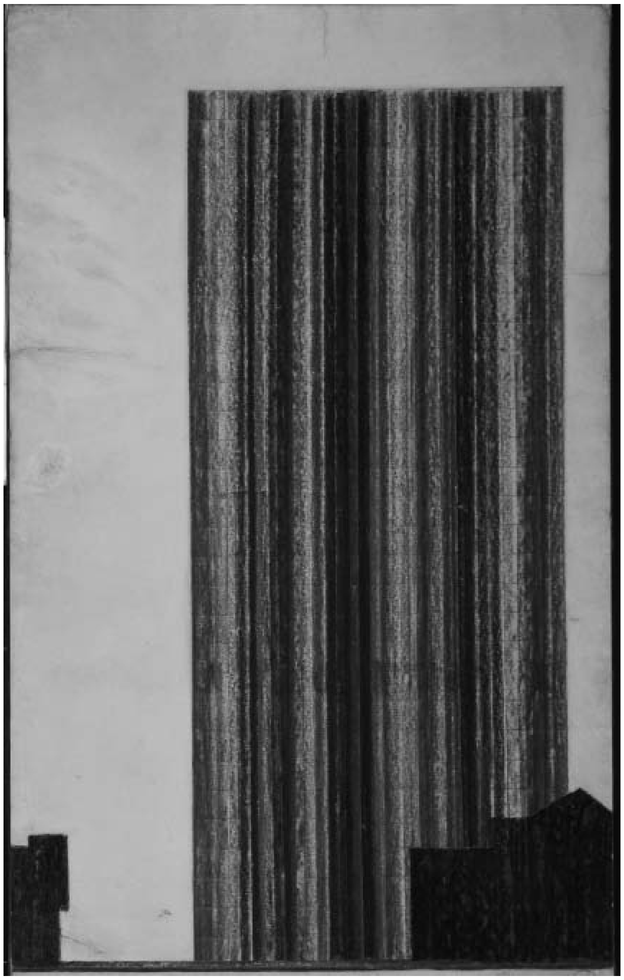


Figure 14 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Glass Skyscraper, 1922, elevation (schematic view); charcoal, brown chalk, crayon on brown paper (Mies van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gift of George Danforth, Chicago; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

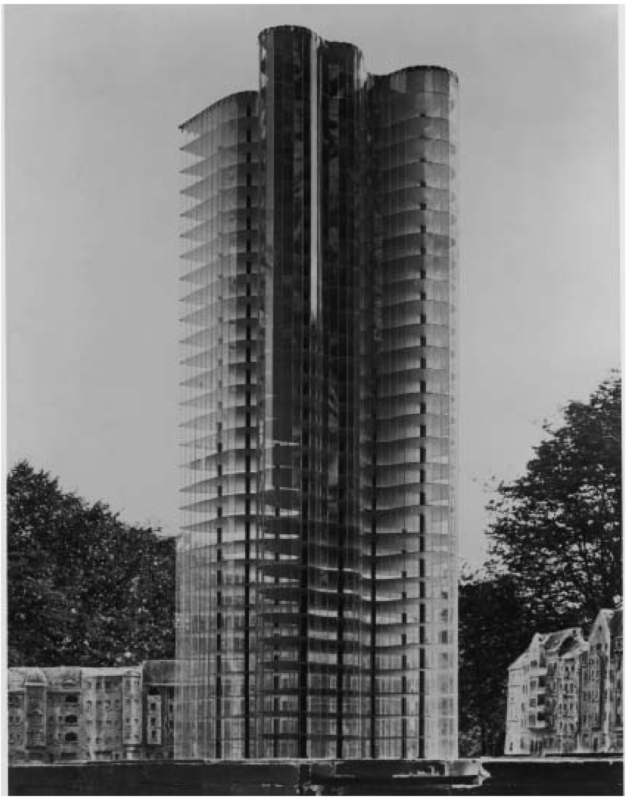


Figure 15 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Glass Skyscraper. Berlin, 1922, photo of lost model (Mies van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

transparency," this quality was starkly juxtaposed against rough, opaque models of "old buildings of Hansel and Gretel quaintness" as well as against a "background of over-scaled trees." The combination, he wrote, "describe[s] with seeming truthfulness an architecture impossible to realize, let alone inhabit."[111] If there was a "truth" to these ambiguous images, it did not lie in the domain of semantic transparency.

Alluding to later work, such as the Seagram tower, Drexler then offered a remarkable conclusion about architectural representation:

> When Mies actually built glass skyscrapers, neither reflectivity nor transparency determined their form, but rather "the effect of light and shadow as in ordinary buildings." Neither the beautiful drawings nor the photographed model conveys information as to what a glass building would really be like; their purpose, and their compelling power, is to persuade us that we ought to see and admire the particular qualities of certain kinds of images. More obviously than the model, the drawing does not "represent." It makes the act of drawing substitute for the real condition of a proposed architectural form. That we are persuaded to seek comparable effect in real buildings reminds us that "art is not truth."[112]

That is to say, such images do not transparently communicate information about built architecture. Rather, they operate in a different epistemological register and, we might say, in a dislocated conceptual and perceptual space, a space in which their cultural logic might however become evident. In this Drexler's remarks seems to preempt Hélène Lipstadt's remarkable reading of "self-sufficiency of the drawing as pure conception."[113]

"What Went Wrong?"

Transformations in Modern Architecture, mounted at MoMA in 1979, was Drexler's carefully couched and ironic reading of "what went wrong" (Figure 16). The unorthodox curatorial ambitions and installation format as well as the critical reception of the exhibition have been addressed elsewhere.[114]

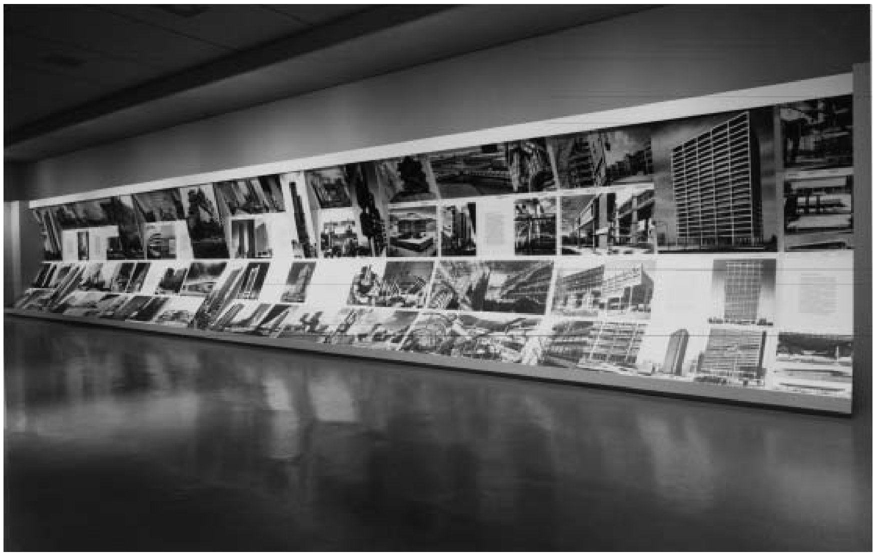


Figure 16 Installation view of the exhibition *Transformations in Modern Architecture*, 21 Feb. 1979–24 April 1979, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Unlike conventional curatorial practice, it set out *not* to champion important work but to trace a story of decline. Wryly portrayed as the unwitting products of the copying and exaggerating of modernist traits, the galleries were wallpapered with hundreds of photographic reproductions of work dating from the previous two decades, each building striving for novelty. Having opened his lecture on the occasion of the show by citing Mies's melancholy reflection, Drexler went on to reassess the reception of this modernist figure.

Unlike the use of photographs in *Buildings for Business and Government*, and in sharp contrast to the 1947 show of Mies's work, the photographs did not aim to simulate modernist spaces but rather to evoke the media environments within which architecture increasingly circulated. Drexler pointed to this when noting, "In the recent period it might be said that manifestoes and publicity have overtaken the production of architecture, outrun it." He implicated himself, emphasizing the legacy of the Museum's codification of the International Style (1932) and its updating in *Buildings for Business and Government* (1957). Since 1957, however, the optimistic perception of both business and government had changed. Over the last twenty years, Drexler recalled, referring to the war in Vietnam and Cambodia, the assassination of two Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, and the events of 1968, "We had not only the first war we didn't believe in but the first war we lost. We had three assassinations and as part of the general political and social upheaval we had a major disruption in education and it concerns us tonight in the teaching of architecture."[115] Indeed, the corporate and state sectors were no longer regarded as the driving forces and benevolent guardians of the much vaunted American Way of Life, but as institutions that maintained the privileges of the few through the oppression of the many, in the form of neocolonial aggression, suppression of liberal and minority political voices, and the organization of an educational system that fed students into the military-industrial complex.

Later in his lecture Drexler turned to the question of architects' involvement in commercial real-estate development, which he now recognized to be an important but pernicious aspect of the global apparatus of American capitalism. Referring to Bunshaft's office tower at 140 Broadway, New York (1965–68), he wryly explained its economic determinants: "it has to be cheap. The question is how to build this with the simplest, cheapest, smoothest, flattest skin. In this case the solution, which has since been very widely imitated, is to do a flat surface that looks as if it has been printed—like a package." There had been, he recalled, earlier emulations of the image of a Miesian skyscraper, such as Pietro Belluschi's Equitable Building in Portland, Oregon of 1948, with its "absolutely flat façade."[116] At that time, he recalled, "Those of us who were under the spell of Mies van der Rohe's structuralism thought it was a rather pointless operation." However, he added, recognizing that the architect's role in corporate work was to satisfy the demands of capital: "I changed my mind. The particular building problem that the architect was called on to solve was in fact to design a package—a package of rentable space—and he has done precisely that." It was now across the smooth, reflective surfaces of those multiplying towers, and in the indefinite and shifting spaces between them, that Drexler saw the actual realization of what Mies had been striving for since the 1920s: an architecture that was not held back by administrative regulations but which expressed the facts of its age.[117]

In 1950 Mies had stated that buildings should be the "Fulfillment and expression of something *immanent*."[118] Asked by Peter Blake in the 1960s if "it [was] excusable for an architect to react to his time by being different from his time," Mies reiterated that the architect's role was to harness (not resist) contemporary forces: "No, I think it isn't. I believe he cannot, so that makes it hopeless to try."[119] But as Blake noted only a few years later, Mies was slightly out of sync with American consumerism, a position the critic read idealistically as resistance to capitalist forces. Rejecting the promotion of novel forms by the "news makers," Mies stated, "They say they are bored with my objectivity. Well, I am bored with their subjectivity!"[120] Mies's position was not, however, a negative one. Much earlier, in response to Frank Lloyd Wright's use of the term "negation" to describe his 1947 MoMA retrospective, Mies had retorted, "About 'Negation'—I feel that you use this word for qualities that I find positive and essential."[121] The contradiction between Mies's commitment to an art derived from the immanent economic and technical forces of its time and his rejection of American consumerist logics revolved around his inability or unwillingness to recognize the structural transformation that forces of capitalism had undergone—those presented as the "facts" informing his work.

It was because it did more than meet the economic mandates of speculative real-estate investment that the Seagram Building had been classified by the Tax Commissioner as a "specialty"—like the Stock Exchange and Madison Square Garden—whose value could not be established using a rental return formula. Taxes on these buildings, Huxtable explained, perhaps inadvertently pointing to the real crux of the matter, "are figured in replacement terms, using construction or '*reproduction*' cost."[122] Here, in a building whose history comprised multiple forms of "reproduction"—including not only its physical assembly on Park Avenue but also the careful construction of its media image in newspapers and magazines and also in models and mock-ups, on- and off-site, photocollages, large-scale photographic installations, and even simulated curtain walls in the space of the gallery—we can begin to identify the contours of what might have gone wrong with a Miesian "spatial dialog."

The Seagram Building emerged into a media environment that no longer operated according to a modern or industrial paradigm, but which functioned at the very forefront of postmodernization. This was no longer a milieu of avant-garde negation and shock aesthetics—whether in photography, photomontage, print, cinema, or architecture. It was not the metropolitan condition exemplified by Weimar Berlin, or an international space. Rather, the Seagram Building took its place in a global network—embodying that desire for the "annihilation of distance" noted by Genther—within which appropriated fragments—of mass culture and architecture—were beginning to circulate in new ways, through new channels, in new formats, and at very new speeds. It was a territory organized increasingly by the totalizing logics of the Cold War, by the globalizing forces of multinational corporations (such as Seagram), and by the spread of American consumer culture and corporate architecture, while simultaneously being regulated at home by the ever more extensive reach into domestic space of corporate television networks. This environment was also the site of new forms of governing and techniques of power premised on ever more detailed information about humans and their milieus, and on ever-more precise management of both that environment and its human populations.

The Seagram Building in fact became quite literally inscribed within the story of the increasing regulation of the environment by information derived from the human and social sciences when, during the 1970s, it starred in William Whyte's The Street Life Project and in his 1979 film *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. In 1972, under the title *A Day in the Life of the North Front Ledge at Seagram's*, Whyte and his team mounted two surveillance cameras on the roof of the Racquet and Tennis Club, across Park Avenue, to record the site at ten-second intervals from early morning to dusk (Figures 17–19). They tabulated the data from this time-lapse

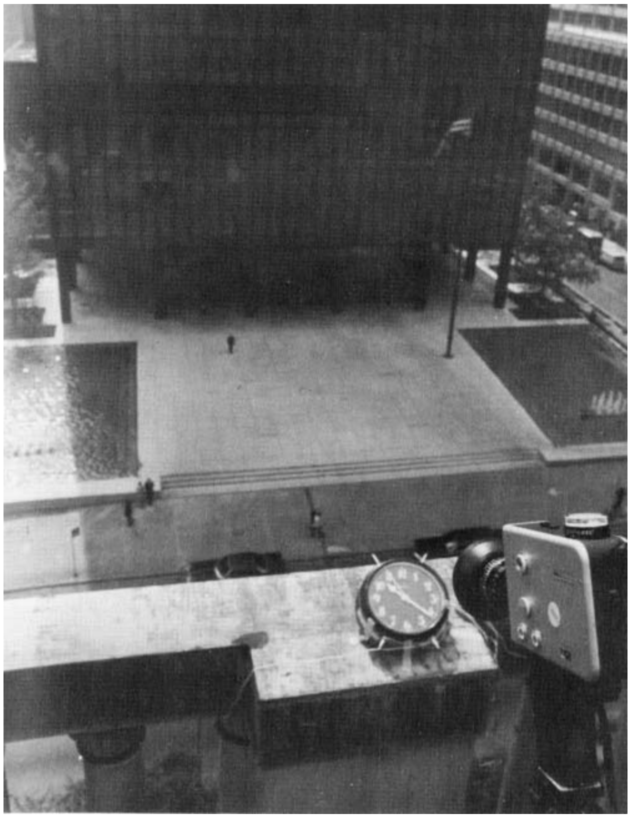


Figure 17 William H. Whyte, camera set up for *A Day in the Life of the North Front Ledge at Seagram's*, 1972. (copyright © Estate of William H. Whyte; reprinted by the permission of the Albert LaFarge Literary Agency)

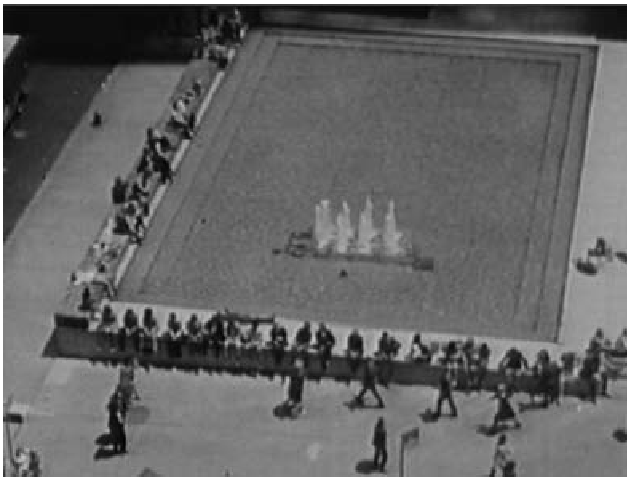


Figure 18 Whyte, film still, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, 1979. See *JSAH* online for film clip

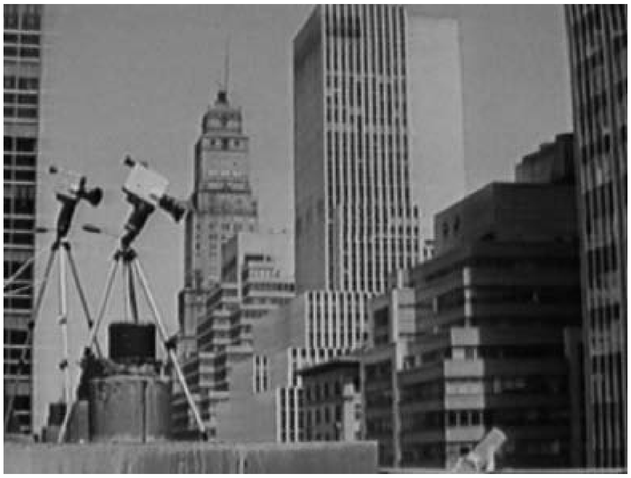


Figure 19 Whyte, film still, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

study about the behavior of "sitters," constructing chronological charts of the numbers, locations, and durations of sitting throughout the day. In turn, they used this information to formulate hypotheses about the use of public space, concluding from a time-coded study that "capacity" was self-regulating.[123] From here, and with additional information from "telephoto photography," it was only a short step to translating this knowledge into proposed environmental guidelines and an amendment to the zoning code, intended to undo the 1961 code reform inspired by Seagram itself. Collaborating with the Urban Design Group, Whyte and his team suggested a "small park bonus," whereby, instead of including a plaza in front of or beside his building, a developer would be allowed additional floor space by providing a small park on a nearby street. Replete with a detailing of desired amenities, such as benches, cafés, lighting, retail frontage, trees, fountains, etc. (detailed in linear feet, lumens, etc., per square foot of park), the amendment was adopted by unanimous vote by the city's Board of Estimate in May 1975 and (expanded to include residential development) became part of the zoning code in December 1977.[124] Encompassing small outdoor parks as well as indoor spaces such as atriums, this zoning reform would have a marked effect on the urban environment, and its "suburban" conception of nature soon entered critical art practice with Dan Graham's ironic *Video View of Suburbia in an Urban Atrium* (1979–80).[125]

In 1978, to mark the Seagram Building's twentieth anniversary, Phyllis Lambert curated *The Seagram Plaza: Its Design and Use* in collaboration with Ludwig Glaeser, curator of MoMA's Mies van der Rohe Archive; Martha Beck, director of the Drawing Center; and Noel Manfre, curator of collections for Joseph E. Seagram & Sons. The exhibition, held in the Seagram Gallery, included historical views of Park Avenue; drawings, models, and photographs of Mies's design—including his famous study for Henry Moore sculptures in the plaza; a Walker Evans photograph, and photographic documentation of a series of performances and sculpture placements, staged in front of the tower. The latter included a fifth-century Olmec Head, Barnett Newman's *The Broken Obelisk* (1963–67), Louise Nevelson's *Atmosphere and Environment XII* (1969–70) in Cor-ten steel, Jean Dubuffet's *Milord La Chamarre* (1973–74), and Marilyn Wood and the Celebration Group's *Celebration in City Places: The Seagram Building and its Plaza* (performed 29 and 30 September 1972), among other works (Figure 20).[126] In addition, the exhibition presented a series of documents from Whyte's study; two study

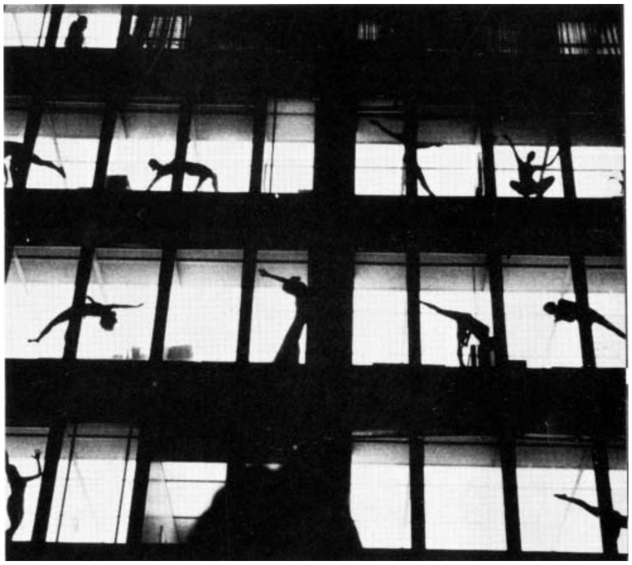


Figure 20 Marilyn Wood and the Celebration Group, *Celebrating the Seagram*, 1972 (photo: Robert Wood)

sheets—*Standing Patterns* and *Sighting Map*—and a large chart for *A Day in the Life of the North Front Ledge*, as well as two time-lapse films.

Whyte was soon engaged as a consultant on one of the first major buildings to benefit from the new legislation, Philip Johnson's notorious AT&T Corporate Headquarter. And, further closing the circle with Mies's work, in fall 1978 the IAUS hosted *Philip Johnson: Processes*, an exhibition staged as an encounter between Johnson's Miesian Glass House in New Canaan and the "apparently opposed" postmodern tower.[127] Here the legacy of the Mies tower was imbricated not only with a rising postmodern tide but also within two intertwining strands of the emergent postmodernization: the legitimization of behavioral research—such as Whyte's study—as a tool of environmental design and the architecture of multinational capital and global communications—the AT&T network, cast in the semantic guise of historicist postmodernism. This congruence would not have been lost on Drexler.

Although it does not seem that Mies sought alterity from the vicissitudes of corporate America and the historical forces underpinning the global expansion of capitalism, his model of a spatial dialog would (had it sought to be avant-garde) have little possibility of traction within the variegated, dispersed, and rapidly transforming logics of regulatory control, except perhaps to train its subjects' cognitive and perceptual habits to function more effectively within the machinations of an information society.[128] In this sense, Saarinen, Bunshaft, and Jacobsen (to whom Johnson might be added) were not, to recall Banham's remark, "like the impatient birds in the fable of the nest-building lesson, [who] had dashed off without waiting to hear the whole story." Indeed, they did not need to hear that old lesson, for they had already recognized new forces knocking at the door and were shaping their work accordingly. They did not, unfortunately, move to articulate new strategies of critical refusal within this environment or seek to produce progressive social change; rather they worked to ensure their architecture's effective integration in the globalizing networks of capital.

Recognizing his role in this story of corporate modernism's "worldwide" expansion, Drexler closely followed its machinations. In his 1983 exhibition *Three New Skyscrapers* he presented Johnson/Burgee Architects' International Place at Fort Hill Boston (completed 1987) along with two more distant architectural nodes within the globalized network: SOM and Bunshaft's National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (1983) and Foster and Associates' Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Headquarters in Hong Kong (1979–86). "Skyscrapers are machines for making money," he wrote in the catalog, adding in a distinctly wry but melancholy tone, "They exploit land values to the point of rendering cities uninhabitable, but that is no reason to stop building them: in a free society capitalism gives us what we want, including our own demise."[129]

Notes

1. Although substantially revised, this research was initially presented as "Seagram's Plane of Immanence" at the Society of Architectural Historians' Fifty-Second Annual Meeting in Houston in April 1999, with my travel kindly funded by a Spiro Kostof Annual Meeting Fellowship. I want to sincerely thank Detlef Mertins and Phyllis Lambert, the organizers of the panel on Mies, as well as the fellowship committee members for their support, and in addition to thank Detlef for his valuable feedback and encouragement. This article is dedicated to him. My research on the Seagram Building originated in the context of a masters thesis at Harvard University, completed in 1994, and I want to thank K. Michael Hays and George Baird for their support. I also want to thank Pierre Adler, formerly curator of the Mies van der Rohe Archive in the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art, for assisting me with research many years ago. Finally, I am enormously grateful to both the anonymous reviewer and David Brownlee, editor of *JSAH*, for their insightful and incisive comments on this article.
Arthur Drexler, "Transformations in Modern Architecture," lecture delivered at the Museum of Modern Art, 10 April 1979 on the occasion of exhibition #1250, *Transformations in Modern Architecture*, on view 21 Feb.–24 April 1979. Sound Recordings of Museum-Related Events, 79:29, The Museum of Modern Art Archives (henceforth: MoMA Archives).

2. Philip Johnson, "Whither Away—Non-Miesian Directions" (1959), rpt. in *Philip Johnson Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 229.

3. As Mies famously wrote, arguing for glass walls, "Only skyscrapers under construction reveal the bold constructive thoughts, and then the impression of the high-reaching steel skeletons is overpowering. With the raising of the walls, this impression is completely destroyed; the constructive thought, the necessary basis for artistic form-giving, is annihilated and frequently smothered by a meaningless and trivial jumble of forms." Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Skyscrapers," in *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 240.

4. Drexler, "Transformations in Modern Architecture."

5. Arthur Drexler, *Transformations in Modern Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1979), 9.

6. See Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri, "Postmodernization, or the Informatization of Production," in *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 280–303.

7. The story of the commission is something of a legend. Faced with a "rendering of a very mediocre building" designed by Pereira and Luckman, Phyllis Lambert returned from Paris in July 1954 to convince her father, Samuel Bronfman, then president of the Seagram corporation, of the responsibilities businesses must assume with respect to their corporate architecture. Having assured him of "the validity of the new architectural thinking that started to mature in the twenties," she was given the task of choosing an architect. Aided by Johnson, she undertook intensive research and settled on Mies, who was commissioned in November and who invited Johnson to collaborate on the project. Lambert, recognizing that "the person who had chosen the architect must stay with the job to fight for the concept," remained involved as Director of Planning. Phyllis Bronfman

Lambert, “How a Building Gets Built,” *Vassar Alumni Magazine* (February 1959), 13–19. See also “Monument in Bronze,” *Time*, 3 March 1958, 52–55, which opens with the observation “Corporations are not expected to have souls, but the men who run them often strive to give them personality and prestige”; and Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947).

8. “A Special Report on 375 Park Avenue: An International Address of Distinction; the World’s First Bronze Skyscraper,” *New York Times*, 7 April 1957, Section 10, 3.

9. “Quality Services, Facilities Highlight 375 Park Avenue,” in “A Special Report,” 2.

10. “Model of a Model Skyscraper,” in “A Special Report,” 7.

11. “‘Hurricane’ Used to Test First Bronze Skyscraper,” in “A Special Report,” 10. See also “Synthetic Hurricane Winds Used to Test Strength of Structure,” *New York Times*, 22 July 1956, R1.

12. Fred N. Severud, and Anthony F. Merrill, *The Bomb, Survival and You: Protection for People, Buildings, Equipment, A Progressive Architecture Book* (New York: Reinhold, 1954).

13. “Concrete Spine Designed by Severud-Elstad-Krueger Firm,” in “A Special Report,” 14. These measures were not implemented.

14. On the reflection of U.S. wartime bombing practices back onto the conception of American cities as targets, see Peter Galison, “War Against the Center,” *Grey Room* 04 (Summer 2001), 6–32.

15. Drexler introduced the catalog for the show by announcing, “Modern architecture in the United States has begun to enjoy a new kind of patronage,” going on to suggest that the U.S. had been “emboldened perhaps by its present role in world affairs.” Arthur Drexler, *Buildings for Business and Government* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1957), 5, 6. See also Arthur Drexler, “Buildings for Business and Government in America,” *Zodiac* 1 (Oct. 1957), 119–38, where he refers to the massing of the building as “not unlike the composition of a German church, with a steeple often too large for the nave set squarely behind it like the bustle of a Victorian gown,” 137.

16. Letter from Arthur Drexler to Phyllis Lambert, 17 Oct. 1956. Curatorial Exhibition Files, MoMA Archives.

17. Letter from Arthur Drexler to Samuel Bronfman, 10 Dec. 1956. MoMA Archives.

18. Betsy Darrach, “A Design Tour de Force Destroys Walls to Turn Illusion into Reality,” *Interiors*, May 1957, 132–35. The article is signed “B.D.” and at the time Darrach was managing editor.

19. Charles Eames, “Museum of Modern Art Exhibit,” *Arts and Architecture* 64 (1947), 27.

20. Arthur Drexler, “The Seagram Building,” *Architectural Record* 124, no. 7 (July 1958), 140.

21. Drexler, “Buildings for Business and Government,” 137.

22. Arthur Drexler, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe* (New York: George Braziller, 1960), 9, 10.

23. See, for instance, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “Building Art and the Will of the Epoch!” (1924) and “Lecture” (1926), in *The Artless Word*, 245–47 and 252–56, respectively.

24. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “The Preconditions of Architectural Work” (1928), in *The Artless Word*, 299–301.

25. Untitled interview transcript. The Papers of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (hereafter Mies Papers), box 62, file “Interviews with Mies.” Although not labeled, I believe this is the transcript of a 1958 interview with Peter Carter since parts of it were published as Peter Carter, “Mies van der Rohe, an Appreciation on the Occasion, this Month, of His 75th Birthday,” *Architectural Design* 31 (March 1961), 95–121 (hereafter Carter, “Interview”).

26. Transcript of conversation with Mies van der Rohe at the Architecture League in New York organized by Philip Johnson, page 4. Ellipses in original unless in brackets. Mies Papers, box 62, file “Interviews with Mies.”

27. An article in “A Special Report” entitled “Franklin Glass New Boon to Architecture,” reported that Franklin Glass was pioneering a new “pot” process to facilitate the customizing of the glass to match the anticipated aging of the bronze on the façade. The color is variously referred to as pink-gray or bronze.

28. John Peter, “Mies van der Rohe,” in *IDCAA—Sources and Resources of Twentieth Century Design* (Aspen, 1966).

29. Carter, “Interview.”

30. “Philip Johnson,” in *Conversations with Architects*, ed. John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz (New York: Praeger, 1973), 11–48.

31. This is evident from the collection of Mies’s library housed at the Special Collections department of the library of the University of Illinois at Chicago. I thank that department for sending me a list of this collection. Mies’s library is also discussed in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*.

32. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (2nd version, 1936), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 104. As recounted in a remarkable essay of Detlef Mertins, Mies knew Benjamin, if only in passing, from the circle around the magazine *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*, founded by filmmakers Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling. Detlef Mertins, “Architectures of Becoming: Mies van der Rohe and the Avant-Garde,” in *Mies in Berlin*, ed. Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 111.

33. Alison and Peter Smithson, *Without Rhetoric: An Architectural Aesthetic, 1955–1972* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), 27. The Seagram tower, Peter Smithson noted in another context, “certainly communicates a dream of a controlled, spacious, machine-age environment, even at the popular level.” Peter Smithson, “Footnote on the Seagram Building by Peter Smithson,” *Architectural Review* 124 (Dec. 1958), 382.

34. Smithsons, *Without Rhetoric*, 24.

35. Ibid., 26–27.

36. This is recounted in a typescript document detailing a 1977 exhibition, “The Seagram Plaza: Its Design and Use,” directed by Phyllis Lambert in collaboration with Ludwig Glaeser, curator of the Mies van der Rohe Archive at MoMA.

37. Carter, “Interview,” 32.

38. The question of the “masses” had long been a preoccupation of Mies, and was addressed to the philosophical problem of the universal and particular, as exacerbated in an age of mass production. In a notebook dated circa 1927 he wrote, in his usual broken, aphoristic style: “Man and technology. Gigantic (masses) form. In the gigantic the differentiated for the masses or against the steel arm. To internalize the masslike. To spiritualize the technological.” Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “Lecture Notes,” in *The Artless Word*, 268.

39. Philip C. Johnson, “History is a Way of Getting an Effect Quicker than You Should,” *Domus* 726 (April 1991), 32.

40. William H. Jordy, “Seagram Assessed,” *Architectural Review* 124 (Dec. 1958), 374–82.

41. “Gin Palace,” *The Observer*, Sept. 15, 1958.

42. Lewis Mumford, “The Lesson of the Master,” *American Institute of Architects Journal* 31, no. 1 (Jan. 1959), 23.

43. Cited in “Seagram’s Bronze Tower,” *Architectural Forum* 109 (July 1958), 67. The author noted, “Most New Yorkers expected Seagram to be as shiny as a brass button when completed; instead, it has the warm solidity of an old penny—and will get more of that quality as it weathers.”

44. Arthur Drexler, “Post-War Architecture,” in *Built in USA: Post-War Architecture*, ed. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 21.

45. Walter McQuade, "Obituary," *Architectural Forum* 131 (Oct. 1969), 90.

46. Cited by Howard Dearstyne in "Miesian Space Concept in Domestic Architecture," in *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture: Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Wright, A Verbatim Record of a Symposium Held at the School of Architecture from March to May 1961* (New York: Columbia University; Wittenborn and Co., 1963), 135.

47. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 328.

48. Telling the story of the modern urban dweller's subjection to a complex array of experiences, Benjamin articulated two tactile qualities: the effect of shock and that of habitual reception. "The Dadaists turned the artwork into a missile," he explained. "It jolted the viewer, taking on a tactile [*taktisch*] quality." And this shock effect was extended in the tactility and irrepressible temporality of film, a medium "based on successive changes of scene and focus which have a percussive effect on the spectator." Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 119–20.

49. Jordy, "Seagram Assessed," 376.

50. Ibid., 381, 376.

51. As Jordy and others note, Mies had "specified a lip on the underside of the I-beam to sharpen the shadow." Ibid, 381.

52. Drexler, "Post-War Architecture," 21–22. In 1958 Jordy read the I-beams as appropriated elements from mass culture. They have since been credited with cultural meanings ranging from Kurt Forster's recognition of the Carolingian cathedral doors in Aix-la-Chapelle to Neil Levine's reading of them as readymade signifiers of industrial America. See: William H. Jordy, "The Laconic Splendor of the Metal Frame: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 860 Lake Shore Apartments and His Seagram Building," in *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 221–77; Kurt W. Forster, "Crown of the City: The Seagram Building Reconsidered," *Skyline*, Feb. 1982, 28–29; and Neil Levine, "'The Significance of Facts': Mies's Collages up Close and Personal," *Assemblage* 37 (Dec. 1998), 70–101.

53. Untitled typescript for documentary film on Mies van der Rohe based on interviews, page 9. Ellipses in original. Mies Papers, box 62, file "Interviews with Mies."

54. Johnson, in *Conversations with Architects*, 18.

55. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "The New Time" (1928), in *The Artless Word*, 309–10.

56. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "The Preconditions of Architectural Work" (1928), in *The Artless Word:* 299–301.

57. As Mies explained in his 1923 text "Bürohaus" published in the first issue of *G*, "Building Art is the spatially apprehended will of the epoch. Alive. Changing. New." Translated and reprinted in *The Artless Word*, 241. For important recent readings of the Seagram Building in relation to media including film and television see: K. Michael Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsmen, or, Mies's Abstraction Once Again," in *The Presence of Mies*, ed. Detlef Mertins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 235–48; and K. Michael Hays, "Abstraction's Appearance (Seagram Building)," in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997), 276–91, along with Reinhold Martin's decisive response "Atrocities. Or, Curtain Wall as Mass Medium," *Perspecta* 32 (2001), 66–75.

58. William S. Shell, "Impressions of Mies: An Interview on Mies van der Rohe, His Early Chicago Years, 1938–1958, with Former Students and Associates Edward A. Duckett and Joseph Y. Fujikawa," brochure (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1988), 30.

59. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, ed. Pier Luigi Nervi, trans. Robert Erich Wolf, English ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979). On Mies's arrival in the U.S. and the importance of the Resor House project, see Cammie McAtee, "Alien # 5044325: Mies's First Trip to America," in *Mies in America*, ed. Phyllis Lambert (New York: Whitney Museum, Canadian Center for Architecture, 2001), 132–91.

60. Levine, "'The Significance of Facts.'" A series of these photocollages was exhibited at MoMA in January 1966 for the Society of Architectural Historians.

61. Drexler, "The Seagram Building," 140. On Mies's work and attempt to patent a photomural technique, see Dietrich Neumann, "'Wallpaper with Arctic Landscapes': Mies van der Rohe's Patents for Wallpaper Design and Printing Technology, 1937–50," in *Mies and Modern Living*, ed. Helmut Reuter and Birgit Schulte (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2009). I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing me to this.

62. Jordy, "The Laconic Splendor of the Metal Frame," 273. Taking stock of extant criticism of the building, Thomas Creighton noted of Seagram's occupants at the time that "many do, quite seriously, experience a sense of vertigo. The sheer tower forms a sheer precipice, which to some tenants is rather terrifying." Thomas Creighton, "Seagram House Re-Reassessed," *Progressive Architecture* 40 (June 1959), 143. The *Chicago Daily News* of 5 November 1966, noted of Mies's glass towers, that "If the pro-Mies dweller finds life in a glass cube open and exiting . . . the floor-to-ceiling glass walls of the Miesian type give some people a feeling they're falling and others a feeling of being spied upon."

63. Mies van der Rohe and Graham Shankland, "Architect of 'the Clear and Reasonable,'" *The Listener*, 15 Oct. 1959, 621. On Mies's relation to Edith Farnsworth, see Alice T. Friedman's remarkable reading, "People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson," in *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 126–59.

64. "Architect of 'the Clear and Reasonable,'" 622.

65. Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 257.

66. Arthur Drexler, "Transcript of a Lecture Delivered by Arthur Drexler at the Arts Club of Chicago in 1982," 3, 7. Transcribed by Pierre Adler, December 1986. Mies Archive. On Drexler's thinking about Mies and Spengler, see also "Unfinished Modern: A Lecture Series in Two Parts: Part One: The Devaluation of Architecture," The Formica Lecture Series, The Architectural League, 11 April 1984, The Asia Society.

67. Drexler, "Transcript of a Lecture delivered by Arthur Drexler," 5. In "Unfinished Modern" Drexler notes that Mies owned Spengler's *Decline of the West* and had notated a passage concerning distance. In addition to mentioning the endless boulevards of our modern world cities and the peaks of far-off mountains, Drexler cited the following passage, seemingly in his own translation: "These among our perceptions reveal that our view of the universe amounts finally to a deep believe [*sic*] in the irrestible [sic] direction of time. In analogizing the horizon with the future our age identifies itself with the third dimension of experienced space," 17.

68. Charles Genther, "Habitats for American Cosmopolites," in *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture*, 124.

69. Ibid., 126. On John Cage's reception of Miesian architecture, see Branden W. Joseph, "John Cage and the Architecture of Silence," *October* 81 (Summer 1997), 81–104.

70. Ian McCallum, ed., "Machine Made America," *Architectural Review*, May 1957, 339.

71. Recounted by Joseph Fujikawa in *Impressions of Mies.*

72. Johnson, "Whither Away," 230.

73. Carter, "Interview." Ellipses in original.

74. Peter Carter, "Mies," *Twentieth Century*, Spring 1964, 142–43.

75. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Lecture" (1926), in *The Artless Word*, 255.

76. Ibid., quotations inverted. Benjamin would make a similar remark in "The Work of Art," arguing "Since the transformation of the superstructure proceeds far more slowly than that of the base, it has taken more than half a century for the change in the conditions of production to be manifested in all areas of culture," 101.

77. Paul Rudolph, "The Changing Face of New York," *AIA Journal* 31 (April 1959), 8.

78. Peter Blake, "Slaughter on Sixth Avenue," *Architectural Forum* 122, no. 3 (June 1965), 15, 17.

79. Mumford, "The Lesson of the Master," 21. In 1959 Johnson, too, would wryly note: "It is going to be rather hard for you people to build an office building without regard for the Seagram Building." Johnson, "Whither Away," 231–2.

80. Reyner Banham, "On Trial 6: Mies van der Rohe," *The Architectural Review* 132, no. 786 (August 1962), 126.

81. Ibid., 125.

82. Ibid., 127.

83. Ibid., 128.

84. Ibid.

85. See "Bronze Building to Get 2 Beauty Baths a Year," *New York Times*, 9 March 1958, R4. The use of lemon oil for this purpose was reiterated in "Monument in Bronze."

86. Jordy "Seagram Assessed," 381. This is repeated, with the noted addition, in Jordy, "The Laconic Splendor," 262.

87. Typescript for documentary film on Mies van der Rohe, Mies Papers, box 62.

88. See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell, Modern Library ed. (New York: Random House, 1944). "Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere," he explained, "a register in which time is being inscribed," 20. On Mies's understanding of Bergson and becoming, see Mertins, "Architectures of Becoming."

89. "Modern American Architecture is Finding a New Kind of Patronage," 1–2.

90. This is reiterated in many accounts. See, for instance, "N.Y. Court Upholds Tax on Seagram Tower," in *Architectural Forum* 121 (July 1964), 5–6.

91. For the most concise account of the city's tax mechanism, see Walter McQuade, "Architecture," in *Nation*, 25 May, 1963, 448–50.

92. Ada Louise Huxtable, "Another Chapter in 'How to Kill a City,'" *New York Times*, 26 May 1963, 107.

93. Douglas Haskell, and Peter Blake, "Editorial: How to Ban Architecture," *Architectural Forum* 118 (May 1963), 97. The editors refer to the ruling as "grotesque," and noted that the judges had argued "that Seagram accumulated certain advantages in building this structure, among them fame." See also "New York Courts Uphold Tax on Quality," *Architectural Forum* 118 (May 1963), 57; "How to Make Another City Ugly," *Life* (16 Aug. 1963); Allan Keller, "City Hails Seagrams, Crowns it With Taxes," *New York World Telegram*, 2 Oct. 1963; *Time*, 7 June 1963; *Newsweek*, 10 June 1963; and *Real Estate Forum*, June 1963. Peter Blake would also address the events in *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 28–29. For a counter-argument, see George Lefcoe, "The Real Property Tax and Architecture: A Note on the Seagram Case," *Land Economics* 41, no. 1 (Feb. 1965), 57–62.

94. Huxtable, "Another Chapter," 107. Huxtable wrote: "The logical, legal mind holds that no successful business man with sources of expert advice would ever erect a building at greater cost than practical market value, without realizing a specific, measurable profit from his action." It was this profit which, as she put it, "must surely be able to be translated into dollars and cents in real estate investment terms, and it is, therefore, taxable." That Seagram's did not conform to conventional real estate norms had been noted earlier. "Seagram, to be sure, is a very special kind of real estate project: it was not built primarily as an investment intended to produce a fast money return; it was built to produce a long-term return in public good-will, institutional advertising, and—only incidentally—in cash. This distinction is important. For if Seagram were judged as a fast-return real estate investment, it would obviously have to be judged a failure." "Seagram's Bet on Elegance," *Architectural Forum* 109 (July 1958), 76.

95. Decision in the case of Supreme Court, Appellate Division, First Department, New York in the Matter of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc., Petitioner-Appellant, *v*. The Tax Commission of the City of New York, and the individual members thereof, Respondent. 5 March 1963. Case 18 A.D.2d 109, 238 N.Y.S.2d 228. I would like to sincerely thank attorney Cathy Bowman for her assistance in accessing this court document and, especially, for being such an insightful interlocutor about this case.

96. Justice Aron Steuer, cited in Huxtable, "Another Chapter." See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; New York: Penguin Books, 1994). McQuade's account of the citation of Veblen has slightly different wording. A *Times* editorial a few days later noted in addition that "The new zoning law's provisions for 'bonuses' to builders who provide space and arcades will be completely nullified, for who will make such a gesture and risk producing a superior or 'prestige' structure when he will be punished for it? If a way is being sought to condemn the city to perpetual architectural mediocrity, the Tax Commission has found it." 21 May 1963, 30. See also Walter Bilitz, "Report from New York: Court Ruling Puts Price on Excellence of Architecture," *Chicago Tribune*, 7 July 1963, 24.

97. Lawyers for Joseph E. Seagram and Sons., cited in Edith Evans Asbury, "Seagram Tower to Appeal on Tax," *New York Times*, 17 May 1963, 35.

98. Brief of *Amici Curiae*, submitted by Paul Windels to the Court of Appeals, State of New York in the Matter of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. against The Tax Commission of the City of New York, March 1964. Expert testimony in the document came from MoMA, the Regional Plan Association, the American Institute of Architects, the Municipal Arts Society, the National Academy of Design, the Architectural League, National Institute for Architectural Education, National Sculpture Society, and many more.

99. Brief of *Amici Curiae*, 16.

100. Arthur Drexler, "Worldwide Preeminence of American Architecture." 14 Feb. 1964, published in Amici Curiae. This question of patronage, and further comparisons with historical conditions, had also been played out in the reception of "Buildings for Business and Government." See, for instance: "Modern American Architecture is Finding a New Kind of Patronage," *New York Times*, 3 March 1957, 1–2; and "Display of American Architecture," *New York Times*, 27 Feb. 1957, 23, which likened the work to "public edifices of the past such as the Colosseum, the Gothic cathedrals, or the Place Vendôme."

101. Cited in "Seagram Building Denied Tax Credit by Appeals Court," *New York Times*, 11 June 1964, 35.

102. "N.Y. Court Upholds Tax on Seagram Tower," 5. The article went on to note that the Pepsi Cola Headquarters had been spared the same fate when deemed "not in the same category as the Seagram building," 6.

103. William Ellis, "Forum under Glass," *Oppositions* 3 (May 1974), 121.

104. I am paraphrasing, of course, Walter Benjamin's remark on "*l'art pour l'art*, even a theology of art," in "The Work of Art," 106.

105. Drexler, cited in Ellis, "Forum under Glass," 121.

106. Mies's reputation would, however, subsequently take a positive turn. In the early 1990s Rosalind Krauss could recognize the presence of many Mieses—a poststructuralist Mies, a postmodernist Mies and even a politically correct one—in recent literature. Rosalind Krauss, "The Grid, the /Cloud/ and the Detail," in *The Presence of Mies*, 132–47. This reception was importantly expanded by the other contributions to *The Presence of Mies*, and in turn developed by the remarkable and comprehensive 2001 duo of New

York exhibitions and their catalogs: *Mies in Berlin*, organized by Terrence Riley and Barry Bergdoll for MoMA, and *Mies in America*, curated by Phyllis Lambert and organized jointly by the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

107. The two other projects were the Concrete Country House Project of 1923 and the Brick Country House Project for Potsdam-Neubabalsberg of 1924. The exhibition was on view from 8 Nov. 1974 through 23 Feb. 1975.

108. On "The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts" see also: Felicity D. Scott, "When Systems Fail," in *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics after Modernism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 59–88; and Barry Bergdoll, "Complexities and Contradictions of Post-Modern Classicism: Notes on the Museum of Modern Art's 1975 Exhibition *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*," in *The Persistence of the Classical: Essays on Architecture Presented to David Watkin*, ed. Frank Salmon (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2008), 202–17.

109. Arthur Drexler, "Engineer's Architecture: Truth and Its Consequences," in *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, ed. Arthur Drexler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 15.

110. Although not noted in Drexler's text, he is citing Mies's 1922 text "Skyscraper."

111. Drexler, "Engineer's Architecture," caption on page 22. For an excellent reading of this model and its variations see Spyros Papapetros, "Malicious Houses: Animation, Animism, Animosity in German Architecture and Film—From Mies to Murnau," *Grey Room* 20 (Summer 2005), 6–37.

112. Drexler, "Engineer's Architecture," 24.

113. Hélène Lipstadt, "Architectural Publications, Competitions, and Exhibitions," in *Architecture and Its Image: Four Centuries of Representation: Works from the Collection of the Canadian Centre for Architecture*, ed. Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 109–37.

114. See Scott, "When Systems Fail."

115. Drexler, *Transformations*, 7.

116. Drexler doesn't name the building, simply referring to a Pietro Belluschi building from the 1940s.

117. In her obituary for Mies, Huxtable returned to this figure of copying, and hence to Mies's role in this transformation. See Ada Louise Huxtable, "Soaring Towers Gave Form to an Age," *New York Times*, 19 August 1969, 28.

118. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Architecture and Technology" (1950), in *The Artless Word*, 324.

119. Peter Blake, in *Four Great Makers*.

120. Peter Blake, *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Structure* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), 111.

121. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to Frank Lloyd Wright, 25 Nov. 1947. Wright had used the term in reference to the Barcelona pavilion. "I said that the Barcelona pavilion was your best contribution to the original 'Negation' and you seemed to be still back there where I was then." Frank Lloyd Wright to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 25 Oct. 1947, page 1, Mies Papers, box 60, file "Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1944–69."

122. Huxtable, "Another Chapter in 'How to Kill a City,'" 107. Emphasis added. On this juncture, see Beatriz Colomina, "Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction," in *Architectureproduction*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 6–23.

123. William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York: The Conservation Foundation, 1980), 68–74. This includes an appendix on time-lapse filming, including noting further behavioral research methods, such as Gerald Davis, and Virginia Ayers, "Photographic Recording of Environmental Behavior," in *Behavioral Research Methods in Environmental Design*, ed. W. Michelson (Stroudsberg, Pa.: Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, 1975). See also William H. Whyte, "Please Just a Nice Place to Sit," *New York Times Magazine*, 3 Dec. 1972, 20–24.

124. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, 74. Appendix B: Digest of Open-Space Zoning Provisions in New York City details the specifications of these amendments.

125. Dan Graham's installation took place in the atrium of the Citicorp Building in New York in August 1980 as part of a series of video installations curated by Barbara London for MoMA. "Something of a 'vest-pocket' urban park in a high-rise office building," Graham explained of his site, "Citicorp's atrium suggests suburban arcadia in the midst of the city." Dan Graham, *Dan Graham: Buildings and Signs* exh. cat. (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, 1981), excerpted in Dan Graham, *Dan Graham: Works 1965–2000* (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2001), 188.

126. These installations on the plaza took place from April 1966 through 1976, and also included an Easter Island Head (ca. 900), Marvin Torffield's *Moving to the Beat* (1967–73), Mark di Suvero's *Praise to Elohim Adonai* (1966), Horia Damian's *The Hill* (1976), and even a performance by the brass band of the 22nd Regiment of Quebec City. See "The Seagram Plaza: Its Design and Use." See also Marilyn Wood, "Celebrating the Seagram Building," *Design and Environment* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1972), 24–27.

127. The exhibition was on show at the Institute from 12 Sept. to 31 Oct. 1978 and included a catalog: Kenneth Frampton, ed., *Philip Johnson: Processes, The Glass House, 1949 and The AT&T Corporate Headquarters, 1978* (New York: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1978).

128. See Paulo Virno, "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment" and "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paulo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 13–36 and 189–210, respectively.

129. Cited in "An Arthur Drexler Sampler," *MoMA* 43 (Spring 1987), 2–5.