Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Egon Eiermann: The Dictate of Order
Author(s): Immo Boyken and Hans J. Oestmann
Source: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun., 1990), pp. 133-153
Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the Society of Architectural Historians
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/990473
Accessed: 21/01/2015 10:24

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Egon Eiermann: The Dictate of Order

IMMO BOYKEN Institut für Baugeschichte, University of Karlsruhe

A comparison of the works of two of Germany's most important architects, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Egon Eiermann, reveals two similar but subtly different approaches to theory and design in the years following World War II. While there is no evidence of a close personal relationship between the two architects, their theoretical views were largely compatible. Both believed in the "universal validity" of predetermined architectural forms, and they adhered closely to the principle of architectural "order." Eiermann's designs, however, are never as rigid as those of Mies, and he made many more allowances for technology and human need in his buildings. As a result, Eiermann's architecture is characterized today by a certain charm that sets it apart from the strict formalism of Mies van der Rohe.

WITH THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY and concomitant resumption of building activities in Germany in the early 1950s, the younger generation of architects momentarily felt at a loss. What could orient them toward the formulation of a new architecture? What kind of style could guide them? The caesura produced by the National Socialist cultural policy had been too strong to allow an immediate connection with the architecture before 1933. The trends of foreign architecture had remained largely unknown due to the self-imposed isolation of Germany and its almost perfect censorship of the press. Architects such as Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Karl Schneider, Martin Wagner, and Ludwig Hilberseimer, who could have been able to bring about a new era, had left their home country and tried to establish new existences abroad. Those who stayed in Germany included the architects of the school of Paul Bonatz, Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Schmitthenner, and German Bestelmeyer, whose buildings had complied with the National Socialist ideology and who considered the traditional languages of architecture to be the right way to the new frontier; and those architects who had identified with the architectural concepts of the National Socialists and who tried to use their ideas as a further basis for the new architecture. Finally, there were architects like Richard Döcker, Max Taut, Otto Bartning, Rudolf Schwarz, Otto Ernst Schweizer, and Egon Eiermann, who did not submit to the demands of the regime and were able to escape its stylistic currents. Open to an architecture that entered from abroad, they were looking for new directions. They did so, however, not in a collective movement of renewal but as individuals, each one in his own way, so that a uniformity of style or a common language of architecture did not become visible.

That variety of styles is in contrast to the insecurity of style that characterizes some architecture today, which has come about under entirely different conditions—not so much because of a tentative searching for something new as because of the abundance of theories, forms, and ideas. One may ask if it is even possible to find binding, generally accepted architectural concepts in a rapidly advancing time like the second half of our century—concepts that do not become limiting recipes but that are true guidelines, capable of inducing genuine thinking and producing creations of the first rank.

Such a guideline may have crystallized in the works of two architects to whom "order," as an overall principle, meant everything: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), who had emigrated to the United States, and Egon Eiermann (1904–1970), half a generation younger, who belonged to those who,

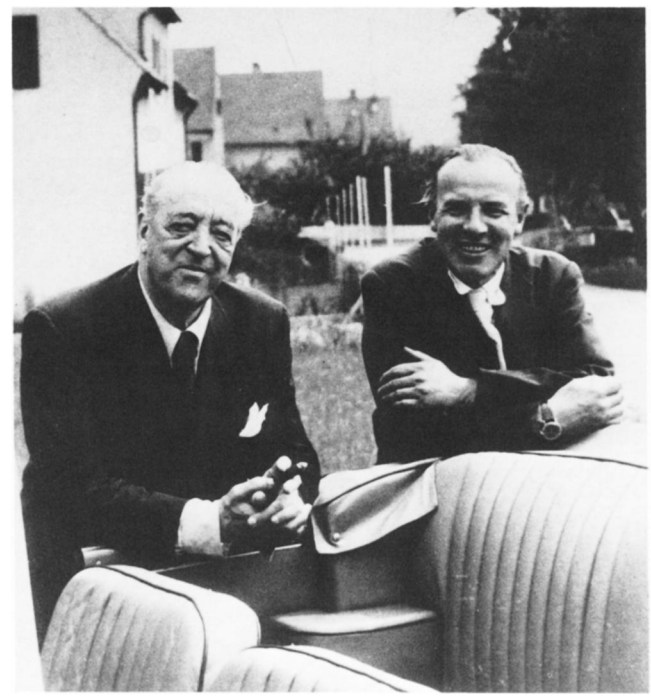

Fig. 1. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Egon Eiermann in Pforzheim, 1953 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

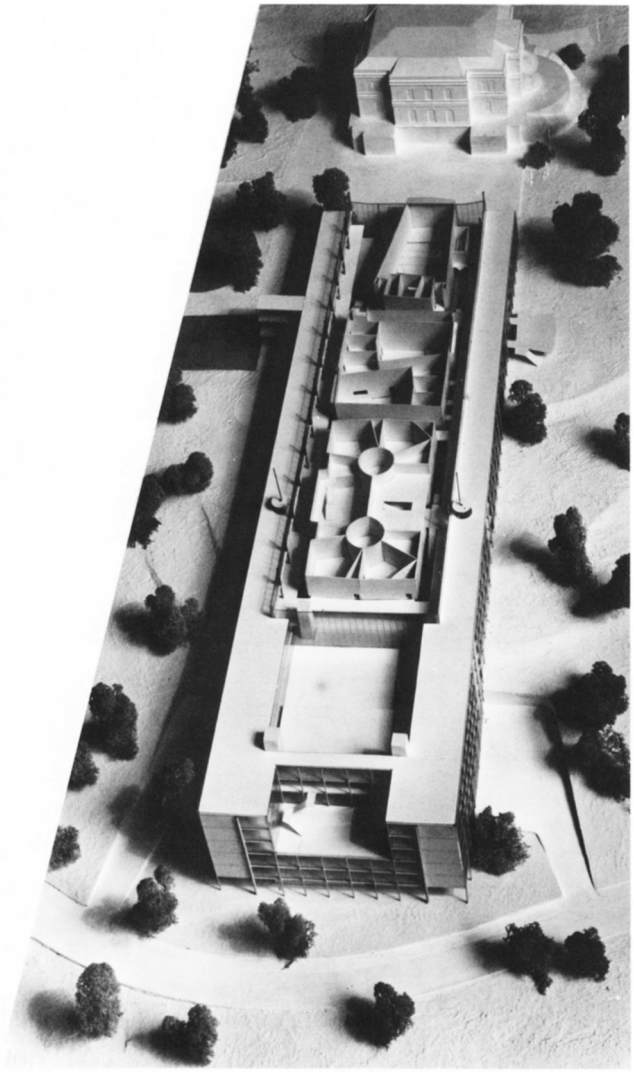

Fig. 2. Egon Eiermann, Radio Transmission and Office Building of the Süddeutscher Rundfunk, Stuttgart, 1948–1951. Model of the executed design. View into the first story with the irregularly cut broadcasting halls. There are offices and minor rooms in the side wings, which are independently constructed for acoustical reasons, and which serve as sound protecting barriers against noise from outside (Foto Hennenlotter, Karlsruhe; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

willingly or unwillingly, had remained in Germany (Fig. 1).[1] Eiermann felt both a personal and a professional affinity for Mies. The primacy of the principle of order drew them together and at the same time set them apart from many of their colleagues. Still, their individual interpretations of order, in the

1. This study would not have been possible without access to the literary and architectural inheritance of Egon Eiermann, which is conserved in the architectural collection of the University of Karlsruhe, founded and administered by Professor Dr. -Ing. Wulf Schirmer. The collection also includes unpublished texts of and about Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, photographs of Eiermann and others, and the Richard Döcker–Egon Eiermann correspondence. These materials are uncatalogued.

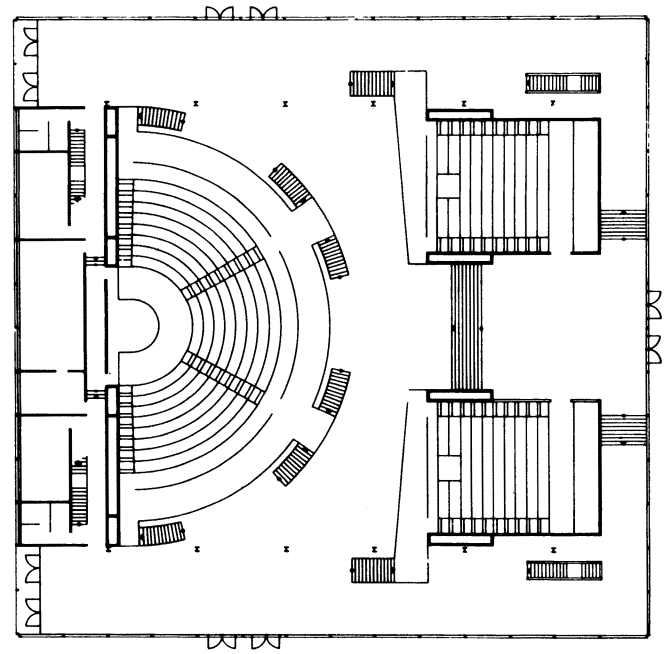

Fig. 3. Egon Eiermann, Great Lecture Hall (Auditorium Maximum) of the University of Saarbrücken, 1951–1952. Project (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

context of other aspects of architecture, led them to different architectural results.

The terms of the debate

Meeting Mies van der Rohe in Chicago in 1950, Erich Mendelsohn summed up his impression of Mies's latest building: "He has found a formula and obviously made up his mind to stick to it to the end: block-like and academic, a rigid system of principles that will quickly and painlessly destroy the new hope of a free humanity . . . , Prussian strictness without Schinkel's charm, a clear sky without the sun, and dead like Julius Caesar."[2]

In 1947, Egon Eiermann joined the Karlsruhe Technische Hochschule, and in the same year Richard Döcker succeeded Paul Schmitthenner as professor for urban planning and design

Eiermann's work is presented comprehensively in *Egon Eiermann. 1904–1970: Bauten und Projekte,* ed. W. Schirmer, with contributions by I. Boyken, R. Büchner, B. Eiermann, and K. Lankheit, Stuttgart, 1984. In it the complete buildings and projects of Eiermann mentioned in this study are shown and described in detail.

Plans, photographs, and specifications of buildings and projects of Mies van der Rohe are taken from the following books: P. C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe,* the Museum of Modern Art, 1947 (3d edition, 1978); L. Hilberseimer, *Mies van der Rohe,* Chicago, 1956; W. Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965; W. Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Villen und Landhausprojekte,* Essen, 1981; F. Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: Leben und Werk,* Berlin, 1986.

2. E. Mendelsohn, *Briefe eines Architekten,* ed. O. Beyer, Munich, 1961, 122.

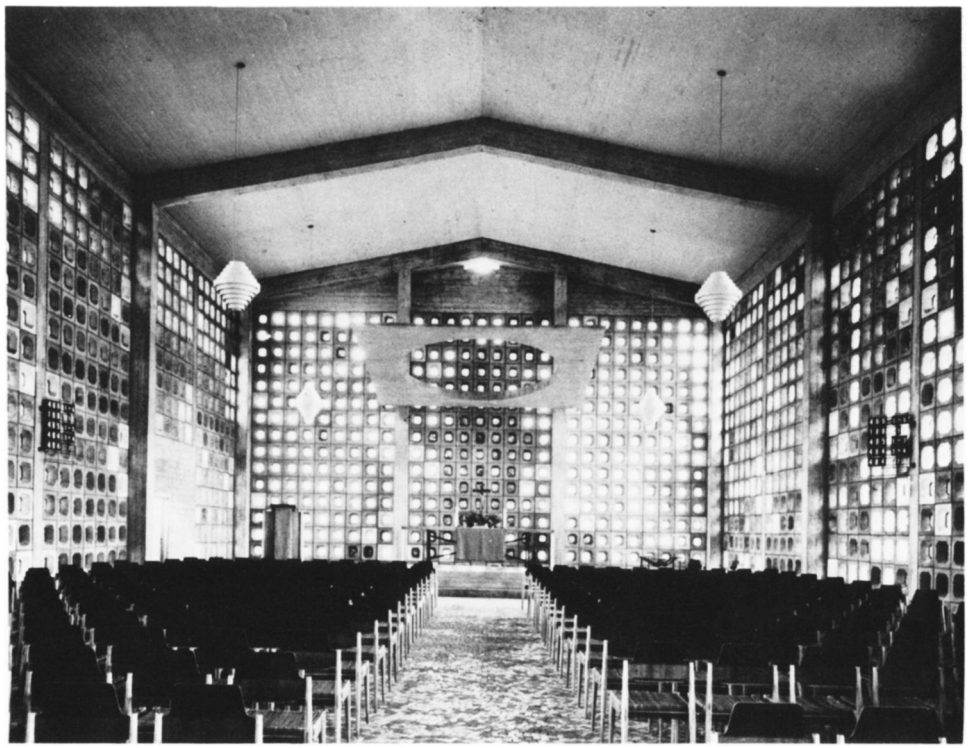

Fig. 4. Egon Eiermann, Matthäuskirche, Pforzheim, 1952–1956. Interior toward the altar (Artur Pfau, Mannheim; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

at the Stuttgart Technische Hochschule.[3] In 1952, Eiermann published his projects for the Radio Transmission and Office Building of the Süddeutsche Rundfunk in Stuttgart and for the Great Lecture Hall of the University in Saarbrücken (Figs. 2 and 3). The publication of Eiermann's works provoked Döcker to deal extensively with basic questions of architecture in a letter to his Karlsruhe colleague:

> I believe that there are two basic conceptions, one that regards the building as an abstract thing and is oblivious of the rest of the world; the other that gets an idea from the situation and the connection between the building and the landscape, an idea that leads up to a solution.
>
> Two conceptions, I say, though I would like to add, of course, that only one of them, the second, can be supported today. Today? Most likely this also holds true for tomorrow, or stated even more clearly, from today onward, i.e., in the future. You represent, you believe in, and you work according to the first of the two opinions mentioned above. This became evident when I analyzed your Saarbrücken design and your Radio Transmission Building.
>
> For someone adhering to the second, that is, the other view, this first view is completely incomprehensible, because it lacks the overall view of interrelationships and because only one idea, one view of the "building," is served up on a tray. This is what almost all architects have done from the Renaissance up to Theodor Fischer, Hans Poelzig, Peter Behrens, Paul Bonatz, and . . . Paul Schmitthenner, including the modern ones: Höger, Kreis, Lodders, Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and—you, to mention only a few names just running through my mind. . . . Creating architecturally [*Baulich gestalten*], however, has to be defined differently—today it should and can rise and be developed only from looking at the whole. A quadrangular or, say, a polyangular or a rounded building can be erected anywhere, which really means nowhere; you can even achieve an effect with it—but you can't create or shape the world; this seems acceptable only if you want to strain after Baroque or Renaissance effects, which is no longer advisable today. This easily leads to something trendy and decorative, and neither has anything to do with building in the sense of creating [*Gestalten*].[4]

In the light of Döcker's analysis, can the buildings of Mies van der Rohe and Eiermann be called "created" [*gestaltet*], in respect to a "free humanity," and developed "from looking at the whole"? Or are they "formulas," "block-like and academic," "rigid systems," "abstract things [that] can be erected anywhere"? The question is whether Döcker's kind of architectural creating, likewise represented by the works of Hugo Häring, Hans Scharoun, and even Erich Mendelsohn,[5] was Mies's

3. *Richard Döcker, 1894–1968* (BDA-Architekturgalerie 1), Stuttgart, 1982; W. Durth, *Deutsche Architekten: Biographische Verflechtungen, 1900–1970,* Braunschweig, 1986, 341–356.

4. A letter from R. Döcker to E. Eiermann, Karlsruhe 26 October 1952 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe). Cf. Mies van der Rohe's and Döcker's designs for the National Theater in Mannheim, in *Die neue Stadt,* VII, 4, 1953, 154–163; here Döcker's argument is made visible in a particular project and is seen in relation to Mies's design for the same project.

5. H. Lauterbach and J. Joedicke, *Hugo Häring, Schriften, Entwürfe, Bauten,* Stuttgart, 1965; P. Pfankuch, *Hans Scharoun, Gebaute und visionäre Architektur* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, 1969; Erich Mendelsohn, *Das Gesamtschaffen des Architekten,* Berlin, 1930.

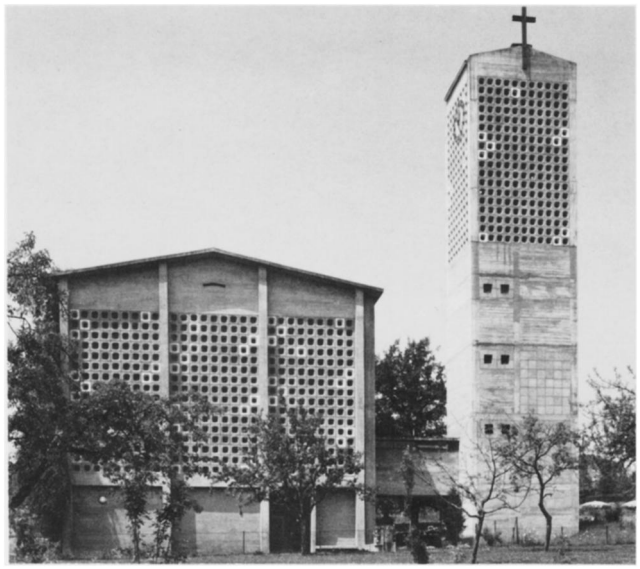

Fig. 5. Egon Eiermann, Matthäuskirche, Pforzheim, 1952–1956, Exterior, altar side (Artur Pfau, Mannheim; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

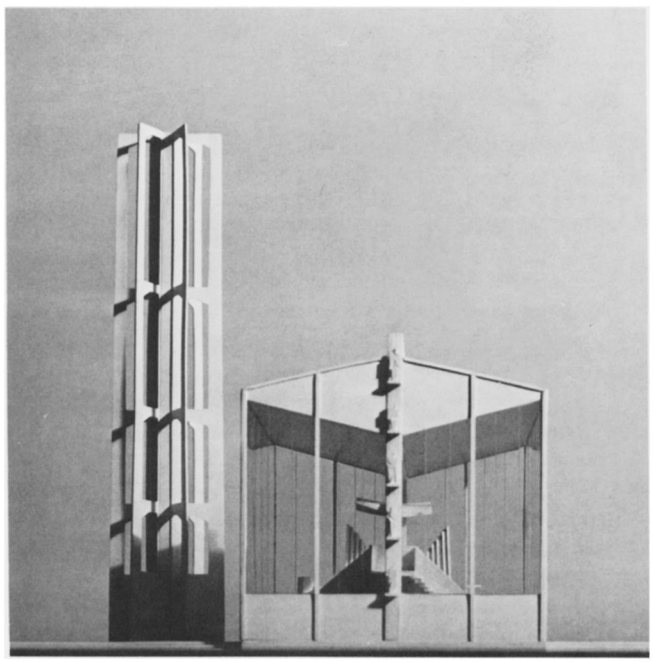

Fig. 6. Egon Eiermann, St. Nicolai-Kirche, Hamburg, 1953. Project. The transparent model allows a direct view into the church. The sanctuary was to be totally enclosed by colored glass and to present itself in dimmed light (Foto Hennenlotter, Karlsruhe; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

or Eiermann's particular concern at all; rather, was the ever-repeated application of an approved and reliable principle the essential criterion for the formulation of their architectural concept?

Some observations may speak in favor of the latter. In the oeuvres of both Eiermann and Mies van der Rohe, one can find the same conceptions repeatedly applied to different purposes

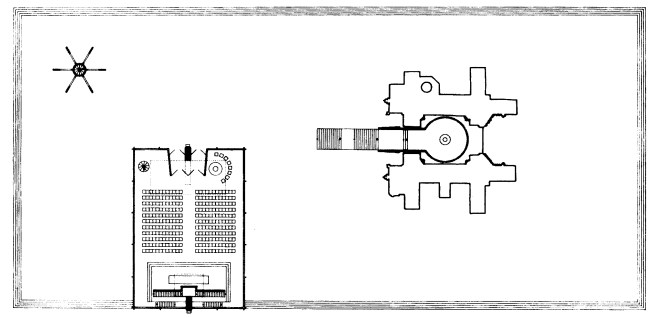

Fig. 7. Egon Eiermann, St. Nicolai-Kirche, Hamburg, 1953. Project. Plan with the old tower on the right and the new church and bell tower on the left (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

and different topographical and climatic conditions throughout a number of years. Eiermann's sacral buildings, among his most distinguished works,[6] may serve as an example. His Matthäus-Kirche in Pforzheim (1952–1956) can be regarded as the archetype for all his church buildings and projects to come: a plain body of a reinforced concrete construction visible from outside as well as inside, a light-flooded hall, in which windows and wall of equivalent value become one unit; a wall of light encompassing the room (Figs. 4 and 5). With this design, Eiermann had found an ideal conception, and he pursued it throughout a period of nearly 30 years. On this basis he designed the church of St. Nicolai in Hamburg in 1953 (Figs. 6 and 7); one year later he planned the reconstruction of the Karlsruhe Evangelische Stadtkirche by Friedrich Weinbrenner (Fig. 8).[7] In 1957–1963, for the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin, he designed in succession the rectangular project, the round project, and the octagonal structure that was finally built (Figs. 9 and 10). Finally, in 1964, he designed the Evangelische Kirche in the former concentration camp of Dachau (Fig. 11). Essentially the same design is employed for different conditions. A comparison of the first design for the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche with the Pforzheim building is particularly striking: the one a church in the center of a metropolis, the other in a rural suburb on a green meadow. Each is distinctive in itself, yet both are based on the same conception.

Mies van der Rohe found an ideal form in the great roof supported by columns, a structure that allowed any possible ground plan variation and thus any possible function within a completely glass-confined space. In 1957 he planned an office building for the Bacardi Rum Company in Santiago, Cuba (Fig. 12); in 1960–1963, a museum for the Georg Schäfer Art Col-

6. I. Boyken, "Die Architektur Eiermanns nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Egon Eiermann, 1904–1970,* 59–71; idem, "Egon Eiermann, 1904–1970: Kritische Gedanken zu seiner Architektur," *architectura, Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst,* XIV, 1984, 67–82.

7. M. Koebel, *Friedrich Weinbrenner,* Berlin, n.d. (about 1920); A. Valdenaire, *Friedrich Weinbrenner,* Karlsruhe, 1926 (newly edited by W. Schirmer, Karlsruhe, 1973).

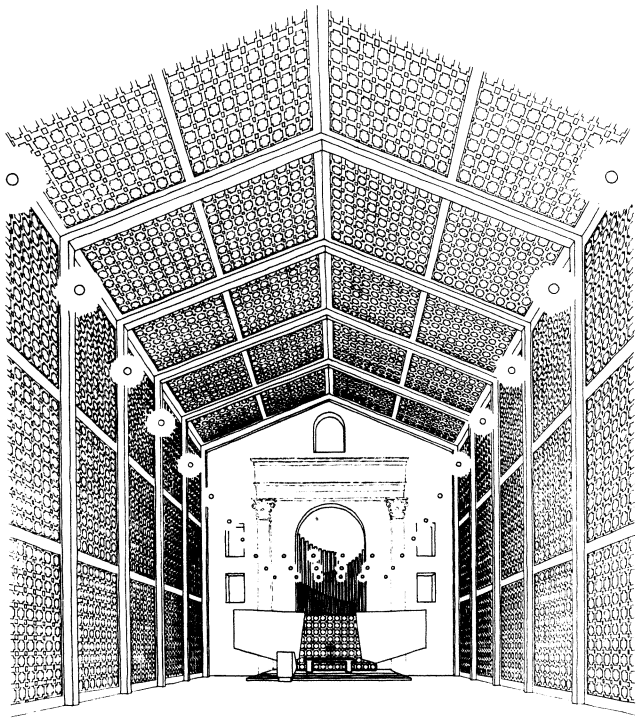

Fig. 8. Egon Eiermann, Reconstruction of the Evangelische Stadtkirche, Karlsruhe, 1954. Project. Interior toward the altar (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

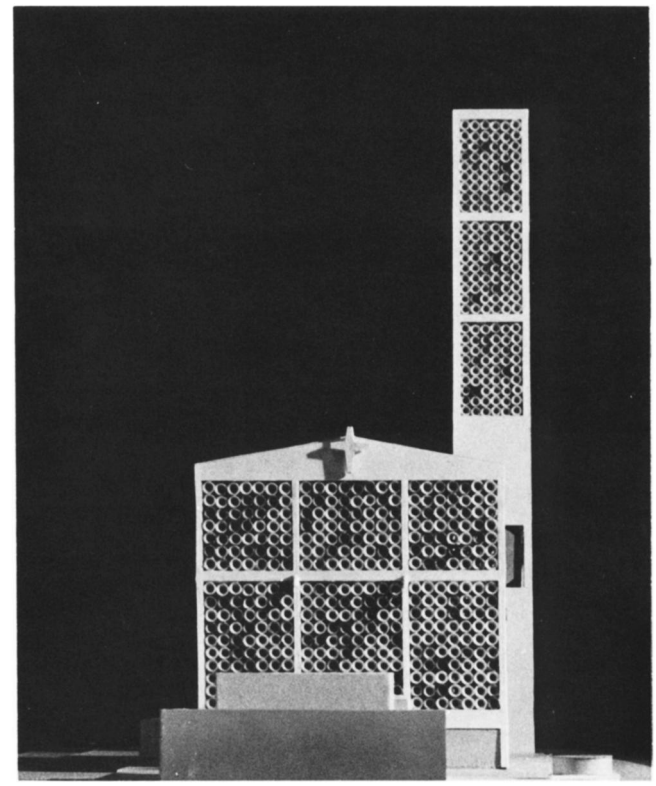

Fig. 9. Egon Eiermann, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, Berlin, 1957–1963. First competition design. Exterior, altar side (Artur Pfau, Mannheim; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

lection in Schweinfurt (Fig. 13); and finally, in 1962–1967, the National Gallery in Berlin (Fig. 14). Despite their different materials—reinforced concrete in Santiago, steel in Schweinfurt and in Berlin—the projects were barely distinguishable as to their form, whose architectonic idea might be traced back to the Fifty-by-Fifty House of 1950 (Fig. 15), a glass building with concrete roof on four exterior columns, or ultimately to the German Pavilion at the International Exposition in Barcelona in 1929.

In 1960, when asked about such coincidences, Mies answered: "Surely it is neither necessary nor possible to invent a new kind of architecture every Monday morning."[8] In 1965, he said, "[I believe] that the art of building has little or nothing to do with the invention of interesting forms or with personal inclinations. True architecture is always objective and an expression of the inner structure of the epoch in which it is rooted."[9] On another occasion, he stated that:

> If you wanted to invent something every day, we would get nowhere. It takes nothing to invent interesting forms, but it demands a lot to study something thoroughly. I often use an example of Viollet-le-Duc in my teaching. He showed that the 300 years' development of the Gothic cathedral was above all the thorough study and improve-

Fig. 10. Egon Eiermann, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, Berlin, 1957–1963. On the right, the foyer with the sacristy, offices, and library, accessible to the public; on the far left, the chapel for church holidays for smaller groups (Horstheinz Neuendorff, Baden-Baden; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

8. L. Mies van der Rohe, "Grosse Dinge sind niemals leicht," address on the occasion of the Gold Medal Award of the American Institute of Architects in San Francisco, April 1960, in *Bauwelt,* LII, 1961, 366.

9. Mies van der Rohe, preface to Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe,* 5–6.

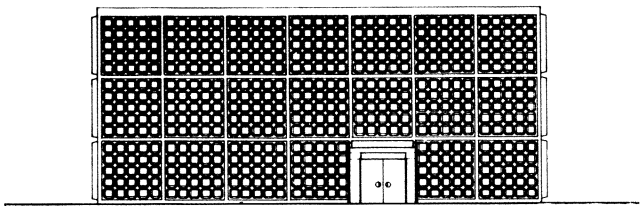

Fig. 11. Egon Eiermann, Evangelische Kirche in the former concentration camp of Dachau, 1964. Project (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

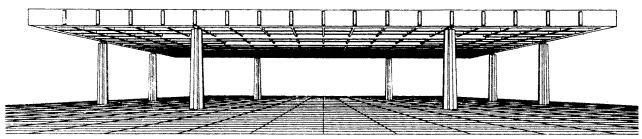

Fig. 12. Mies van der Rohe, Bacardi Office Building, Santiago, Cuba, 1957. Project (from Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965, 202–203).

> ment of the same type of construction. We restrict ourselves to those constructions which are possible at the moment and try to clarify them in every detail. Thus we mean to lay the foundations for the future development.[10]

In an earlier speech Mies had said: "The construction does not only determine its form, but it is the form itself. Where real construction goes together with real contents, real works will spring up; works, true and genuine. And they are necessary. They are necessary in themselves as members of a real order. One can only bring into an order what is structured in itself. Order is more than organization. Organization is answering a purpose. Order, however, is providing sense."[11]

Eiermann most certainly would have underscored these words, for he says in a similar way that he confessed to not being an adherent to a great design that then could be realized only with more or less great difficulty: "I am for a close, careful working out, in the truest meaning of the word working out of plans, and I acknowledge them only when all functions—not only the spatial-aesthetic ones, but also those of economy, of construction, of organization, and of all technical requirements—cooperate in an optimal harmony, a harmony which is not necessarily linked to the proficiency of an architect, however highly skilled he may be."[12]

Eiermann envisaged new possibilities of creating, particularly in "the ordering [of complicated building tasks] in comprehensive forms."[13] For him it was hardly possible to slide into the "trendy and decorative," as it was called by Döcker,[14] as a result of a designing out of a repertoire of certain geometrical forms that had nothing to do with building in the sense of creating, or form-making; it was hardly possible for him, at least in the early 1950s, as he was still conscious of the "painful façade humbug"[15] of the architecture propagated by the National Socialists. Thus, Döcker's ideas and criticism of the projects in Stuttgart and Saarbrücken were for Eiermann no standard for the quality of an architecture. This becomes clear in his return letter to Döcker, in which he expressed his uneasiness about the insufficient integration of the constructive element into so-called organic form. "The constructive," Eiermann wrote, "has a certain order, namely that one of regularity and simplicity, even of the series, which goes directly against the organic order."[16] A few years earlier, he had stated: "To work out and to create the typical pattern in every planning, to carry on the concepts of the buildings to abstractions, this proves to be the true and style-forming principle of our time, with regard to the universality of tasks that architects confront."[17]

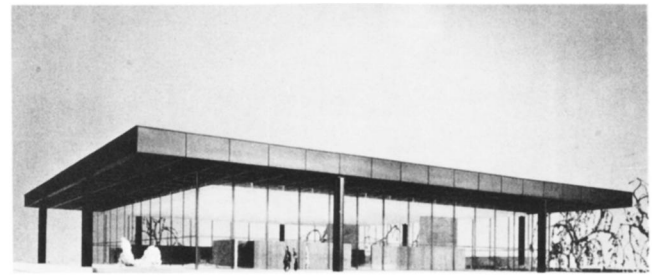

Fig. 13. Mies van der Rohe, Schäfer Art Museum, Schweinfurt, 1960–1963. Project (from Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: Leben und Werk,* Berlin, 1986, 312).

For this reason, as he explained in his letter to Döcker, Eiermann could not understand architectural conceptions like those of Hans Scharoun, whom he had indeed "admired," but in whose works he missed "the link to the ordinary." Nor could he accept the houses of Hugo Häring, in whose conception he found neglected both the constructive element and the "rectangular forms that have to be applied to modern buildings of the future, too, as some practical aspects do require this." Nor could he appreciate Erich Mendelsohn and his Schocken department store in Stuttgart in the 1920s; the "particular perfection of its formal image," which Richard Döcker had emphasized, was rejected by Eiermann, who disqualified the building

10. C. Norberg-Schulz, "Ein Gespräch mit Mies van der Rohe," *Baukunst und Werkform,* XI, 11, 1958, 615–616.

11. Excerpt from a speech of Mies van der Rohe, undated, about 1950, in F. Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe: Das kunstlose Wort. Gedanken zur Baukunst,* Berlin, 1986, 388–390.

12. Letter from Eiermann to Ulrich Conrads, Berlin, undated, but about September 1966 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

13. "Egon Eiermann, Otto Haupt, Hugo Häring, Alfons Leitl, Gespräch über organische Baukunst," *Baukunst und Werkform,* V, 5, 1952, 10–14.

14. See Döcker's letter cited above, n. 4.

15. Prefatory note of A. Leitl in "Egon Eiermann, Das Theater in Dessau und die Baukunst von heute," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst und Städtebau,* XIX, 6, 1935, 225; and *Bauwelt,* XXVI, 19, 1936, 1.

16. Letter from Eiermann to Döcker, Stuttgart, 6 January 1953 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

17. Eiermann, "Entwurf für Die Funkhausbauten von Radio Stuttgart," *die neue Stadt,* III, 12, 1949, 382–388.

Fig. 14. Mies van der Rohe, National Gallery, Berlin, 1962–1967 (from *Bauwelt,* LVI, no. 13, 1968, 1209).

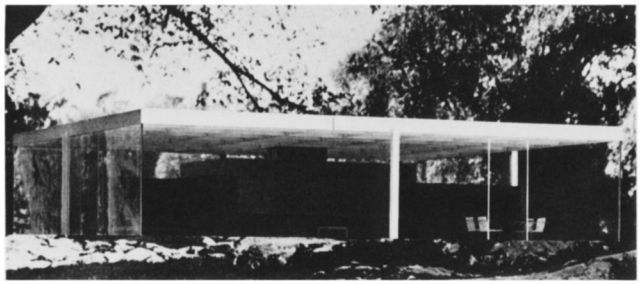

Fig. 15. Mies van der Rohe, Fifty-by-Fifty House, 1950. Project (from Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: Leben und Werk,* Berlin, 1986, 268).

as "pure formalism," and "in its kind similarly bad as the buildings . . . in the capital of the movement."[18] Further, he could not approve of Le Corbusier or Alvar Aalto, whose architecture was not born under the sign of universal validity. A decade after his exchange with Döcker, he wrote to another colleague:

> You must determinedly raise your voice against the unreasonable use of the formal language of Aalto, Scharoun, and similar individualists with their poetic spaces of undeniable beauty, who have to pay dearly for exactly this beauty by neglecting all necessary and good constructions. In a way, of course, you envy them their freedom and diversity of thoughts, that are translated into buildings, and in those well-known critical hours that you spend in restless solitude alone with yourself you tend to regard your own work really as incomplete . . ., but I am not the leopard that can change his spots. . . . I teach that building is right only when it bears the character of universal validity and not of the particular, because otherwise the way into disorder and chaos inevitably lies open.[19]

18. See the letter cited above, n. 16. Eiermann refers to Döcker's lecture "Das Formbild der Planfiguren—Entscheidung und Folgen," published in *Die Bauzeitung,* no. 4, unpaginated. Eiermann's role during the pulling down and reconstruction of the Schocken warehouse, later Merkur and Horten, in Stuttgart is described in *Egon Eiermann,* ed. Schirmer, 162.

19. Letter from Eiermann to F. W. Kraemer, Braunschweig, 6 May 1963 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

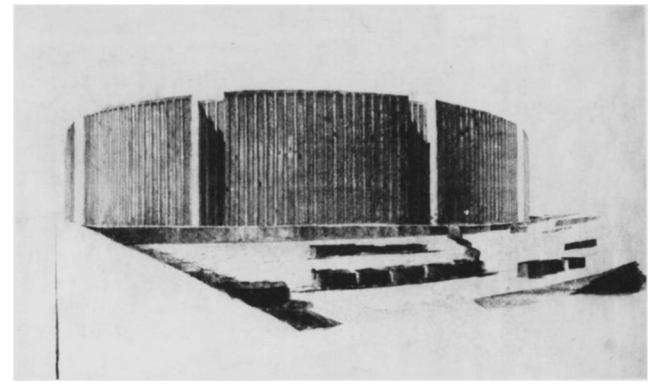

Fig. 16. Egon Eiermann and Fritz Jaenecke, Court Building (Justizgebäude), Berlin, 1930. Project (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

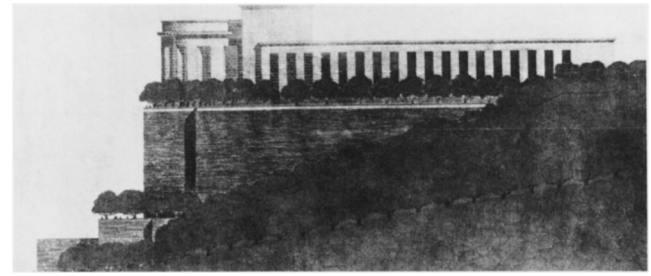

Fig. 17. Mies van der Rohe, Bismarck Memorial, Bingerbrück, 1910. Project (from Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe,* The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1947 [3d ed., 1978], 17).

Eiermann and Mies: the personal connection

Eiermann must have understood Mies van der Rohe, who was congenial to him, and whose buildings he knew very well from his time as a student and an architect in Berlin. When Mies's Tugendhat House was being built in Brno, Eiermann had completed his first projects—a transformer station and a competition design for a Court Building in Berlin (Fig. 16), the latter in cooperation with his friend Fritz Jaenecke. His designs reveal influences of his teacher Hans Poelzig as well as of Mies van der Rohe in the big form of the building and in the façades. They can be compared with Poelzig's House of Friendship in Istanbul and its niche architecture, his fire station in Dresden, and his radio building in Berlin,[20] and with Mies's competition entry for a Bismarck memorial in Bingen am Rhein, with its apse-like prow and its array of pillars (Fig. 17). The Bismarck Memorial must have been well known to the Poelzig disciple, all the more since the teacher had also taken part in this competition; among the students these early works were surely discussed in a critical way.[21]

20. T. Heuss, *Hans Poelzig, Bauten und Entwürfe,* Berlin, 1939 (newly published, Stuttgart, 1985), 163, 98–99, 138–139.

21. Heuss, *Hans Poelzig, Bauten und Entwürfe,* 202–203; and *Hundert Entwürfe aus dem Wettbewerb für das Bismarck-National-Denkmal auf der Elisenhöhe bei Bingerbrück-Bingen,* Düsseldorf, 1911, Figs. 77, 80.

Fig. 18. Mies van der Rohe receives the certificate of the honorary doctoral degree from Konrad Wachsmann in Chicago, 1951 (Jordan Joel Bernstein, Chicago; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

Eiermann seems to have felt a strong personal sympathy with Mies, whom he regarded with adoring respect even in his later years. In a letter of the early 1960s, which he addressed to Mies but never posted (perhaps out of the feeling that he might have trespassed the boundaries of Mies's personality), [22] he recalled his childhood encounter with Peter Behrens:

> This dates back well over fifty years: It was a house on an unpaved street, not far from the Neubabelsberg railway station (if you walked through a grove of pine trees), which Peter Behrens had rented then. It was owned by the sculptor Encke, who had created the sculptures on his Petersburg embassy. I was a playmate of his children. My parents' flat was located not far away in the same street. The atelier—I only remember as far as a child can—was located behind the house, a real shack, a wooden hut, maybe an enlarged carriage house. There was a big skylight somewhere. And when we children sneaked there in the evening, when all had left and we could be sure that the father was not present either, then we examined the drawing boards and all that was there, and we saw the big plaster models of the embassy and the huge corner of a big house that was to become the Mannesmann office building in Düsseldorf, as I got to know later on. . . . Only once did I meet Behrens later, on his way to the station: a man of an imposing figure, wonderful to look at, and an almost unfriendly refinement. The face, however, had an expression of a lonesome man, a man to whom architecture was his destiny, his need, but at the same time an endless pain. A Seigneur, a man with the sense of greatness, of noble proportions and of a clear, self-imposed, and inviolable order. There was no ingratiation. Distance everywhere, architecture as a discipline and majestic duty. This was your teacher, and I am sure that this man has influenced and shaped your sense of greatness and proportions.[23]

Eiermann depicts Behrens as a man who devoted his life entirely to architecture, who lived within art and suffered from it, who was almost completely detached from the ordinary things of life. Yet might not the picture of Mies van der Rohe, and the picture of Eiermann himself, appear behind that of this lonesome, refined, and uncompromising man, to whom architecture was both need and pain? How much of himself may be concealed in these observations of the skeptic who suffered from the "exacting actuality . . . and the terrible realities [of building]"[24]—of a character who hid himself behind an apparently carefree and robust nature and a brilliant rhetoric.

In 1950, at the proposal of Eiermann,[25] an honorary doctoral degree was conferred on Mies van der Rohe by the faculty of architecture of the Technische Hochschule in Karlsruhe, "in recognition of his accomplishments in the development of the new architectonic form."[26] Konrad Wachsmann, who was friendly with both Mies and Eiermann since his time in Berlin, presented the certificate of honors on behalf of the Karlsruhe faculty in the course of a celebration in Chicago (Fig. 18) and read, at its author's request, from Eiermann's personal letter: "[Thank you] for the admirable achievements in the field of architecture with which you have enriched our life and work. You can be convinced that the German academic youth educated at our university will take your development and seriousness of endeavor as an example. Therefore, take your nomination not only as a sign of the gratitude of the older generation but also as a sign of the German youth of today, who sincerely regret that on account of deplorable events you can be their teacher only from afar."[27]

A few years later, Mies stayed in Germany and was the guest of the University of Karlsruhe. Eiermann led him into his office, showed him his works, including his Pforzheim Matthäus-Kirche, which was then being built, and later made the following note: "Yesterday Mies continued his journey. We had some magnificent days together. We were together in Pforzheim and in the office for hours. He knew everything in detail, and we parted in cordial friendship."[28]

However cordial Mies may have been, the initiative seems always to have come from Eiermann. Except for printed notes of thanks, no letters from Mies to Eiermann survive in Eier-

22. Mies is depicted by Schulze as a character not easily affable, *Mies van der Rohe,* passim.

23. Letter from Eiermann to Mies van der Rohe (manuscript), undated (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

24. Incomplete manuscript of a letter from Eiermann, 1961 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

25. Letter from Eiermann to K. Wachsmann, Chicago, 27 June 1950 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

26. Words on the document of the degree conferred on Mies van der Rohe (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

27. Letter from Eiermann to Mies van der Rohe, Chicago, 5 January 1951 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

28. Incomplete manuscript of a letter from Eiermann to an unidentified person, 1953 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

mann's archive that would suggest a closer personal relationship.[29]

The definition of order

Mies and Eiermann understood each other in their view of architecture, in their wish "to set out something fundamental in unequivocal clarity."[30] Their common point of view can be seen clearly in the field of sacral building. In modern religious buildings, especially in the 1950s,[31] some formal aspects were overemphasized, and buildings were overcharged with symbols; still, like any other building, a church must also submit to certain functional, constructive, and technical conditions.

Around 1950, Mies van der Rohe planned and built the Chapel at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago (Fig. 19), and Eiermann planned and built the Matthäuskirche in Pforzheim (Figs. 4 and 5). A contemporary critic labeled Eiermann's church a "product of stubborn technicism, lacking, it is true, the usual fantastic ideas, but also any spark of imagination."[32] The same criticism might as well have been directed at Mies's chapel. The critic, however, identifies exactly what both Mies van der Rohe and Eiermann were striving after: a clear architectural form, free of any decoration or any "dramatic elaboration of a simple state,"[33] which would obscure the architectural truth and transgress the boundary of what one can intellectually comprehend. For both architects, Scharoun, Häring, and Mendelsohn had crossed that boundary.

"We reject any aesthetic speculation, any doctrine, and any formalism,"[34] Mies had formulated as early as 1923. Similarly, for buildings of reinforced concrete—according to Eiermann, a "pulpy-dirty mass, lacking character and demagogically deformable"[35]—Mies accepted only skeleton construction and, presumably alluding to Mendelsohn's Einstein observatory in Potsdam, "neither pastry nor dreams of armored tanks." So did Eiermann, who regarded Le Corbusier's pilgrimage church, Notre Dame du Haut near Ronchamp, as just "pastry." According to Eiermann, "[It was] not architecture, but an ingenious sculpture with the advantage of being accessible like the Statue of Liberty in New York. You may excuse me, but architecture

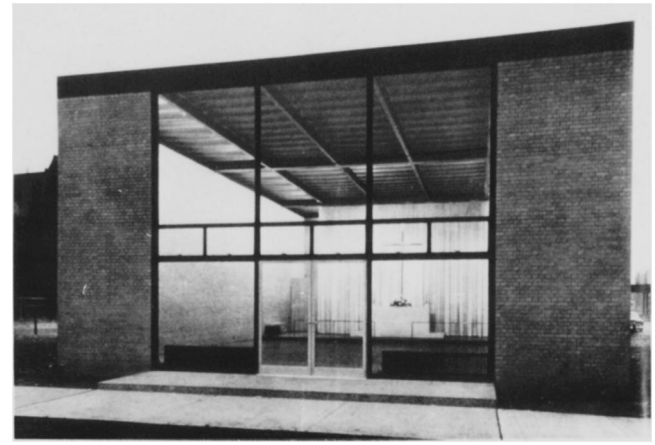

Fig. 19. Mies van der Rohe, Chapel, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, 1949–1952 (from Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Mies van der Rohe,* Chicago, 1956, 1960).

is not architecture if even one of its many elements—in Ronchamp, the principle of clarity of construction—is sacrificed to the spatial idea. Good architecture is generally understandable and is made on the basis of universally valid laws of economy and human society."[36]

In Karlsruhe, Mies was questioned about his basic architectonic principles, especially in relation to Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work had been followed with greatest interest in postwar Germany.[37] He responded:

> Frank Lloyd Wright is an extraordinarily gifted man, and in my view a great genius with a phenomenal imagination. . . . [He] plays with the concept of the organic. I suspect that this is a late flower of Art Nouveau. . . . He says, it is organic and fits America. He always invents words and calls it prairie house, and so forth, and these houses mostly fit into the landscape very well, but otherwise I regard them as playing around, and I do not believe that something will come out of it. With 1,000 houses he has demonstrated all that can come into a man's mind. That is really subjective, and I do not believe that a subjective solution is binding for other people in any way. As I believe that only an objective solution of these questions and an objective tendency for the future can be of importance, we try hard to treat these questions objectively: this is the absolute center of our work. We have imagination, too. We do not spend it on forms of images, but we put them into clear forms, and I think that, if there should be significant architecture in the future, it will be of structural character, because in my opinion this is connected with the fact that there is technology. I think that technology will not allow any other than structural forms.[38]

Mies van der Rohe's and Eiermann's churches could be only well-ordered, of "structural character," with construction vis-

29. Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe,* mentions Mies's visit to Germany and Karlsruhe, but the name of Eiermann does not appear in that detailed biography.

30. H. Hildebrandt, about Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in Hildebrandt, *Die Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft), Wildpark-Potsdam, 1924, 294.

31. H. Schnell, *Der Kirchenbau des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland,* Munich and Zürich, 1973.

32. "Problematik im Kirchenbau," *Baumeister,* LII, no. 12, 1955, 836–839.

33. From an unpublished tape recording of a lecture by Eiermann at the Karlsruhe Technische Hochschule in the winter semester 1963–1964 (in the possession of the author).

34. Mies van der Rohe, "Bürohaus," *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung,* I, 1923, 3.

35. "Präzision auf Widerruf," *Der Spiegel,* XXVI, no. 41, 1972, 196.

36. Eiermann, "Unsere Freiheit morgen," 1963, unpublished.

37. Boyken, Review of Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe* (Berlin, 1910), Tübingen, 1986, in *architectura, Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst,* XVII, no. 1, 1987, 97–101.

38. From a lecture by Mies van der Rohe at the Karlsruhe Technische Hochschule in the summer semester, 1953; unpublished shorthand minute (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

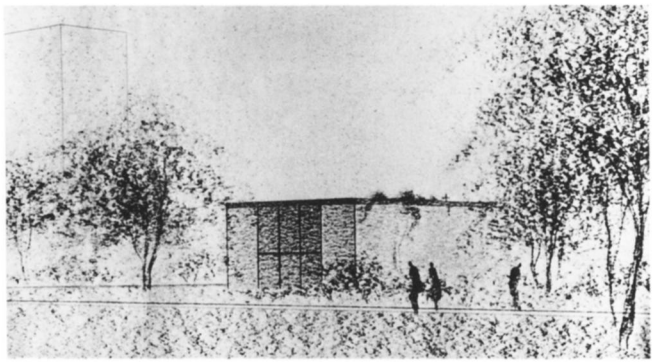

Fig. 20. Mies van der Rohe, Chapel, Illinois Institute of Technology, preliminary study (The Museum of Modern Art, New York).

ible from outside as well as inside. In describing his design, Eiermann said, "[This is a building whose] simple form is not [to be reduced to] a lack of imagination or even an expression of monotony, but an expression of something common to all people and understood by all people, that is, of something non-individual and universally valid. It is an expression of the unfashionable and timeless. The building is but a substantialization of something that has happened in the architect's mind. You have to reject any incidental effect, because the effect is not rooted in the intelligible."[39]

And Mies wrote about his chapel:

> I chose an intensive rather than an extensive form to express my conception, simply and honestly, of what a sacred building should be. By that I mean a church or chapel should identify itself, rather than rely upon the spiritual associations of traditional fashion in architecture, such as Gothic. But the same motives of respect and nobility are present in both instances. . . . Architecture should be concerned with the epoch, not the day. . . . [The chapel] is done as things should be done today, taking advantage of our technological means. . . . Too often we think of architecture in terms of the spectacular. There is nothing spectacular about this chapel; it was meant to be simple; and in fact, it is simple. But in its simplicity it is not primitive, but noble, and in its smallness it is great—in fact, monumental. I would not have built the chapel differently if I had had a million dollars to do it.[40]

Eiermann's and Mies's words are interchangeable as to their meaning, and each could be projected onto the other's work. Mies certainly would not have objected to the placement of the warm-air ducts exactly beneath the altar base of the Pforzheim church with their outlets at the sides, because it was inappropriate for a church room, or because it would offend the sensibilities of a religious man. Similarly, Eiermann would not have

39. From the specifications of the competition design (second stage) for the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin; unpublished (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

40. Mies van der Rohe, "A Chapel. Illinois Institute of Technology," *Arts and Architecture,* LXX, January 1953, 18–19; quoted in Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 392.

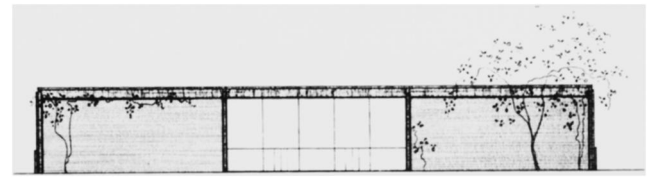

Fig. 21. Mies van der Rohe, Library and Administration Building, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, 1944. Entrance façade (from Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965, 80).

rejected the IIT chapel that looked like an industrial hall—the only concession to its religious character being the altar cross of chromium-plated steel (and, in an early sketch, Fig. 20, a signet-like cross on the roof). If one compares its outer form with, for example, the Library and Administration Building of IIT (Fig. 21), it becomes a "value-free, universal" module, as a "matrix . . ., which in Mies's eyes was pitilessly determining modern architecture irrespective of whether it was a church, a house, a theater, a block of flats or a university building."[41]

Technical and functional necessities did not contradict idealistic values, either for Mies or for Eiermann: they belonged to their credo in the same way as the showing of the construction, the demand for "absolute truthfulness and the rejection of any formal swindle."[42] (Truthfulness, however, was not so broadly understood as, for example, by Bruno Taut, who, in his own house in Dahlewitz near Berlin, not only led the pipes visibly along the walls but also made them stand out with contrasting paint—consequently including considerations of color and effect.)[43]

Order and function

Are Mies's and Eiermann's buildings a mere result of their functions, mathematically derived, as it were, from their technical and constructive conditions? Neither Mies nor Eiermann can be called a functionalist. The fulfillment of function as a primary demand—most consistently followed by Hugo Häring[44]—did not matter a great deal to them, though some of their words may be interpreted as though it did. The constantly repeated idea is that of order, of the universal validity of architecture, of its ability to be replicated. These premises are hardly reconcilable with pure functionality; rather, they contradict it.

"The complete building [is] a single big room," Mies wrote. "We believe that this is the most economical and most practical

41. K. Frampton, *Tradition und Moderne im Werk von Mies van der Rohe. Vorbild und Vermächtnis* (Exhibition catalogue), Frankfurt a.M., 1986, 35–52, esp. 48.

42. Mies van der Rohe, "Gelöste Aufgaben. Eine Forderung an unser Bauwesen," *Bauwelt,* XIV, no. 52, 1923, 719.

43. B. Taut, *Ein Wohnhaus* (Reihe der Kosmos-Hausbücher), Stuttgart, 1927.

44. Lauterbach and Joedicke, *Hugo Häring: Schriften, Entwürfe, Bauten.*

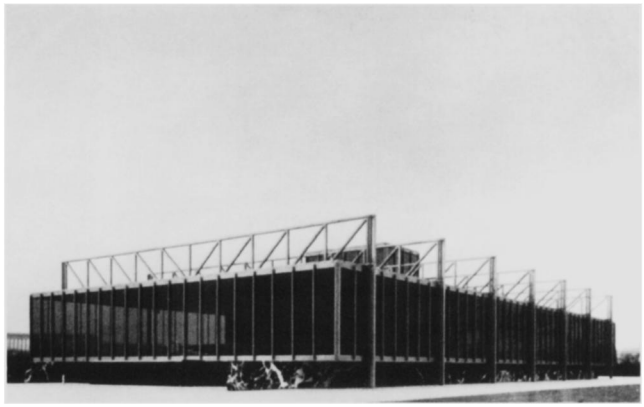

Fig. 22. Mies van der Rohe, National Theater, Mannheim, 1953. Project (from Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Mies van der Rohe,* Chicago, 1956, 189).

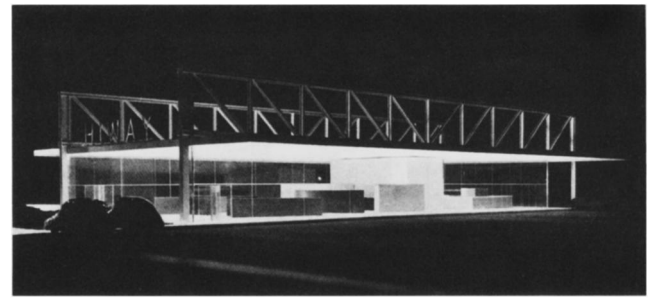

Fig. 23. Mies van der Rohe, Drive-in Restaurant for Joseph Cantor, Indianapolis, 1946. Project (from Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe,* The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1947 [3d ed., 1978], 169.)

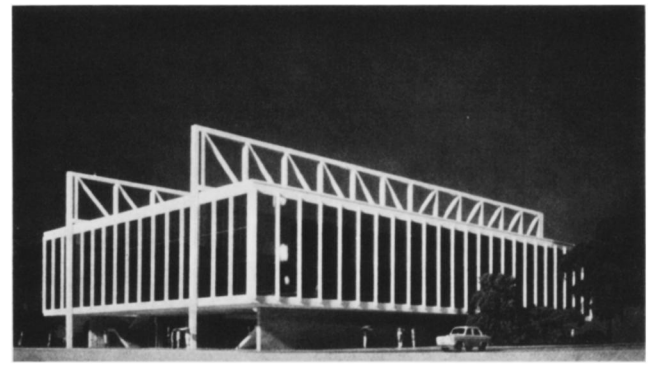

Fig. 24. Mies van der Rohe, Bank Building, Des Moines, Iowa, 1959. Project (from *Bauwelt,* LII, no. 13, 1961, 379).

way of building today. The purposes that the building serve change continually, and we can't afford to knock down the building every time. Therefore we revised Sullivan's formula 'form follows function' and constructed a practical and economical room, and we fitted its function in."[45]

Mies consequently designed "a single big room" for the Bacardi Office Building in Santiago, the Schweinfurt Museum, and the National Gallery in Berlin (Figs. 12, 13, and 14), without concealing the apparent unsuitability of this type of building for the various purposes. The love of a certain idea seems to be dominant here, which at first had to be made "suitable" by giving it a theoretical basis. Mies had to do this in order to be able to justify himself before (as well as to remain consistent to) his own concept of work, his own principal conception of architecture.

In Mies's competition design for the National Theater in Mannheim in 1952 (Fig. 22), exterior, wide-span trusses made possible the creation of a "practical and economical room" where various functions could be "fitted in."[46] But is it equally appropriate to use that structural form for the drive-in restaurant project for Joseph Cantor in Indianapolis of 1946, or for the bank building in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1959 (Figs. 23 and 24), where the exterior trusses span the length (not the width) of the buildings? Does it also apply to the Architecture Building at IIT or the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, of the early 1950s? The striking trusses or girders might be considered an "interesting form"[47] that Mies regarded as unimportant to invent. Earlier, Mies had set forth goals of "the simplicity of construction, the clarity of the tectonic means, and the purity of the material which will become the pillars of a new beauty."[48] In the exterior clear-span structures, the construction certainly is recognizable from the outside, and the constructive idea as a program is made visible. But surely the simplicity of construction would have been even more simple if the roof-cum-ceiling had been set on the wide-span trusses instead of suspended beneath them, so that the construction would have been recognized from inside rather than from outside.

Mies's subtle description of the glass skyscraper project of 1922 can be taken as another example of the rationalization of a design: its curved ground-plan figure appears arbitrary when looked at superficially; "and yet it is the result of a number of experiments with the glass model. The lighting of the interior of the building, the effect of the entire building complex in the street, and finally the play of the desired light reflections were a determining factor for the curves."[49]

Similarly, Eiermann explains his competition design for a church with community hall in Mülheim an der Ruhr (Fig.

45. Norberg-Schulz, "Ein Gespräch mit Mies," 615–616.

46. Beneath the building lot on the Goetheplatz there was a large underground air raid shelter, which, according to the terms of the competition, was to be preserved, but which could not be used for the new building because of the results of ground examinations. This condition possibly influenced Mies's conception.

47. Norberg-Schulz, "Ein Gespräch mit Mies," 615–616.

48. Mies van der Rohe, "Was wäre Beton, was Stahl ohne Spiegelglas?" 1933 (Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 378).

49. Mies van der Rohe, untitled contribution about multistoried buildings, *Frühlicht. Eine Folge für die Verwirklichung des neuen Baugedankens,* ed. Taut, I, no. 4, 1921–1922, 122–124 (new edition by Ulrich Conrads, Berlin, Frankfurt a.M., and Vienna, 1963, 212–214).

25), the only project in his oeuvre that shows seemingly freely chosen forms. These are rationally designed, according to Eiermann: "The extraordinary conception follows, in its structure, geometrical-mathematical laws, which in their strictness are submitted to the same conditions as those forms developed from a circle, rectangle, square, or polygon."[50]

Eiermann readily adopted the idea of putting different functional units, structurally independent of each other, into a vast glass hall, thus making them recognizable in their order and their value from both outside and inside. In contrast to Mies, however, he chose an interior clear-span structure, which he considered as more reasonable with regard to both construction and statics. This makes his buildings look cubical, much stricter in their form than Mies's projects. In his later works, however, this strictness was counteracted by the segmenting of the façade with the help of surrounding corridors, which were to become a kind of trademark of Eiermann's architecture.[51] He followed this system in planning the Radio Transmission Buildings in Stuttgart in 1948–1951 (Fig. 2), the Lecture Hall Building for Saarbrücken University in 1951–1952 (Fig. 3), the Social Studies University in Linz, Austria, in 1961, and a plenary hall for the German Bundestag in Bonn in the 1960s—projects that hardly differ in their basic conception. In 1968 he used this idea as a basis for a study for his own house, which he imagined as a hall measuring 30 m. × 50 m., where every family member was to live in a separate house or even in a caravan. Finally, the scheme served him in his last task, the Office and Training Center of the German Olivetti Company in Frankfurt am Main (Fig. 26). Its low-rise buildings contain rooms of different functions—the reception hall, the cafeteria with kitchen center, the offices, and the training rooms. It shows the mature translation of the draft idea into reality: a clear-span structure covering factory-like halls, with door-high partitions so that the impression of vastness is not disturbed.[52]

Eiermann went yet another step beyond Mies: he developed a spatial raster, or framework, in which different buildings with their different functions could be installed. This spatial structure, in the competition design for the Castrop-Rauxel City Center in 1965–1966 (Fig. 27), was to form a great superstructure that avoided emphasizing any one of the buildings and enclosed the building cubes as a whole. Eiermann wrote:

> My idea was to create coverings like halls with the help of a pergola sort of network of spatial, square and cubical constructions, similar to industrial halls or big glass houses, and to work all the buildings into them as sub-units with their different purposes. . . . I would like

50. From the specifications for the competition design; unpublished (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

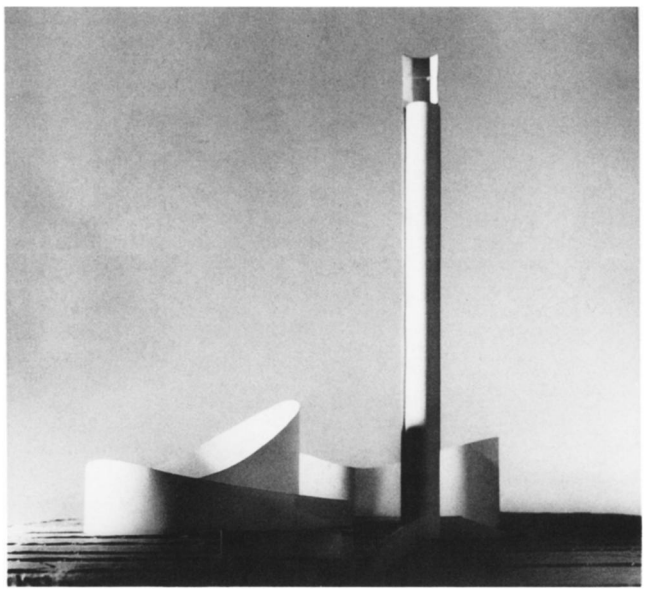

Fig. 25. Egon Eiermann, Johanniskirche and Community Hall, Mülheim/Ruhr, 1960. Project (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

51. Boyken, in *Egon Eiermann, 1904–1970,* ed. Schirmer; idem, "Egon Eiermann, 1904–1970," 140–251.

52. Eiermann, "Entwurfs- und Baubeschreibung," *Bauwelt,* LXII, no. 13, 1973, 519–522.

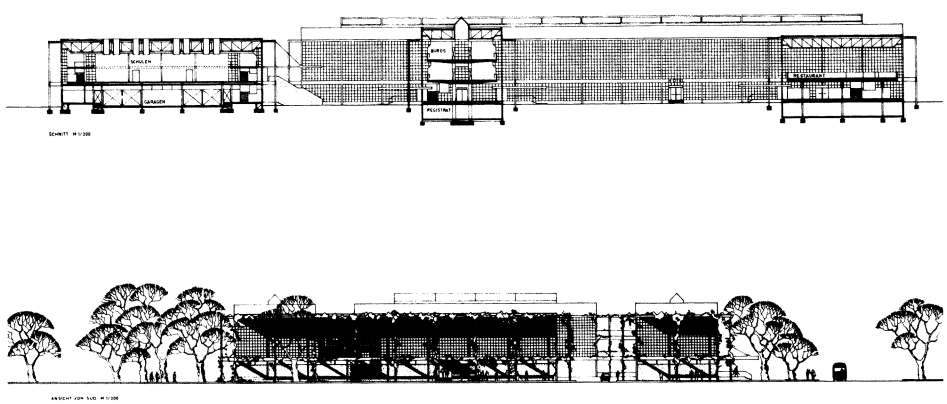

Fig. 26. Egon Eiermann, Office and Training Center, German Olivetti Company, Frankfurt am Main, 1968–1972. Preliminary design, longitudinal section and lateral view (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

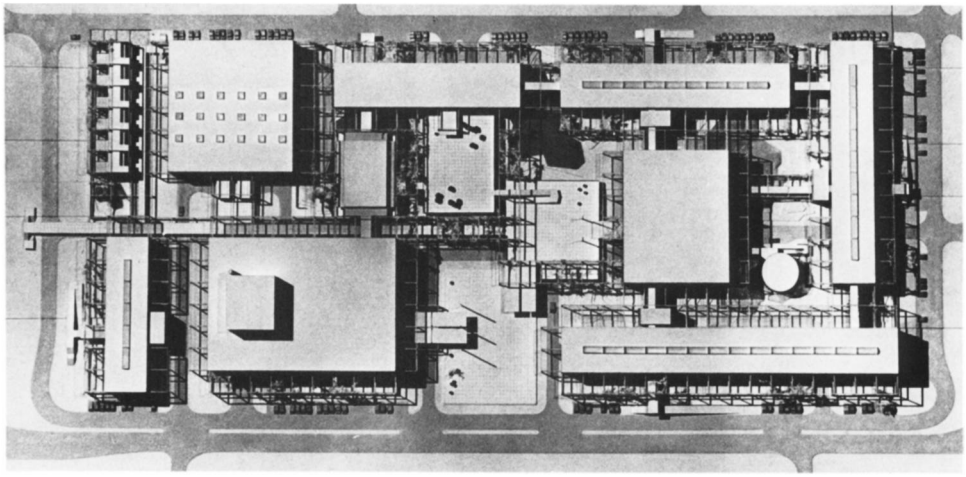

Fig. 27. Egon Eiermann, City Center Castrop-Rauxel, 1965–1966. Project model. Lower left, the public health office and theater (with stage tower); above them a block of flats and multifunctional hall. Right, city hall, including three office buildings for the city council. Lower center, opposite the main entrance, the city council canteen, including a restaurant and a smokers' foyer for the theater building (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

to compare these sub-units with big machines in factory halls. In this way a great architectural unity is to be created both outside and inside, and the danger of any of the buildings standing out from the others in terms of its purpose, function, and size is to be precluded.[53]

Architecture under the primacy of universal validity and order? Even for his own house with office, Eiermann could imagine that the idea of the spatial raster would be applicable. In a study dating from the last years of his life, he integrated two L-shaped buildings into a bower entwined by plants, the "green raster," as he noted on his sketch (Fig. 28).

With his "thematic rows of solitary buildings," Mies had attained a "stylistic form"—"final formulations," as Rudolf Hillebrecht wrote in his obituary, and a further refinement did not appear to Hillebrecht as feasible.[54] In 1950, Erich Mendelsohn had dismissed such final formulations as "formula," as a "rigid system of principles."[55] with the structural principles of the clear-span hall and the spatial raster, Eiermann had found his own way, the "way of order through sub-units."[56] In 1952, Richard Döcker had regarded such units as abstract things and not as creations.[57]

Order and aesthetic concerns

Architecture [*Architektur*] or art of building [*Baukunst*]? The "final formulation" and order as a characteristic on the one hand,

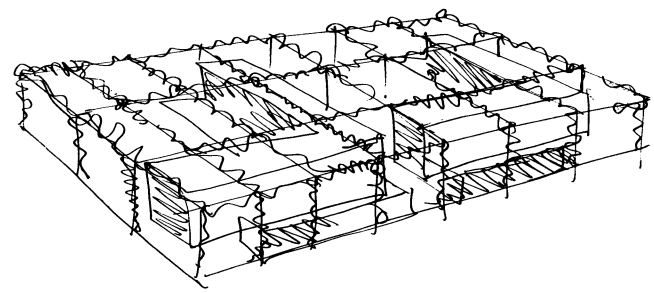

Fig. 28. Egon Eiermann, Eiermann House (with office?), Karlsruhe, 1967–1968. Project. Study sketch by Eiermann (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

creation and the aesthetic on the other? In a dispute with Egon Eiermann, Hugo Häring clearly defined the two terms. Wherever technology was dominant and where geometry and the right angle were prevalent, said Häring, that was to be called architecture. Eiermann: "So you want to say that wherever something is formed by the laws of geometry, that is architecture. The art of building only begins where building transcends this field of order." Häring: "Transcends and proceeds into the field of the organic. Only there does the art of building exist, where the creator is able to liberate from the mere compulsion to create for a certain use, where he does not allow the compulsion of technology to force something upon him."[58]

But "architecture" was exactly what Mies and Eiermann had done in the eyes of Mendelsohn and Döcker, and, reading between the lines of their criticism, one can see that the architectural concepts of both were beyond art and also aesthetic concerns, beyond what Häring meant with the "art of building."

53. From the specifications for the competition design. Unpublished (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

54. R. Hillebrecht, "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 27.3.1886-17.8.1969," *Orden Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste. Reden und Gedenkworte,* no. 10, Heidelberg, 1970–1971, 47–53.

55. Mendelsohn, *Briefe,* 122.

56. "Egon Eiermann, Otto Haupt, Hugo Häring, Alfons Leitl," 10–14.

57. See Döcker's letter cited above, n. 4.

58. "Egon Eiermann, Otto Haupt, Hugo Häring, Alfons Leitl," 10–14.

Presumably Mies would have contradicted it, Eiermann certainly not. On the contrary, he continually emphasized that he rejected any kind of thinking by the architect in the categories of art and aesthetic. Technology was the prerequisite of any reasonable building, he said to Häring, and this was his basis for planning a building. "And if we form them technically correct, they will look fully convincing. I always put technology first . . . only then, or rather, in close connection with the solution of the technical problems, can a further important step within the developmental process be reached."[59]

Mies did not necessarily accept art and aesthetics as the starting points of his thinking, either. He believed that technology would not allow any other forms than the structural ones. To him structure in connection with technology was something like a new, still unknown continent: One would have to discover it and settle down in it.[60] He referred to the physicist Erwin Schroedinger, who had said, "The creative force of a universally valid principle consists in its general usefulness," and this was exactly that Mies meant when talking of structure in architecture. Structure was no specific solution, but a general idea;[61] consequently he closely studied Friedrich Dessauer's *The Philosophy of Technology* and marked passages that he understood as significant to himself and his work: "Architecture itself is stamped by the nature of technology. The lines of the Greek temples, of the Romantic and the Gothic style are technical lines, inspired, as it were, by the static forces of pressures and tensions."[62] "Within the basic process of the invention of a technical work the aesthetic does not play any role."[63]

Nevertheless, Mies had not excluded the aesthetic from his architecture, in contrast to Eiermann, who did so at least verbally. Mies spoke of the art of building, the aesthetic, and the beautiful. Even in his Berlin days, he stated that beauty in architecture, which is a necessity and an aim in our time as it was in other times, can be achieved in the process of building only if one focuses on more than the mere purpose.[64] He explained his position in a radio speech in 1931, when he said: "The aesthetic complements the structure of the buildings, or rather, it happens within and through it. But not in the sense of mere supplementing, but in the sense of a creation in process."[65] Later, in the United States, he acknowledged the value of the aesthetic even more clearly: "It is obviously not the task of the art of building to invent forms. The art of building is more and something else. That wonderful phrase reveals that the real building is its essence and art means its completion."[66] Finally, in 1965, in his "Guideline for Education in the Art of Building," he stated: "The art of building is still rooted in its simplest forms in the utilitarian domain, yet, passing all stages of value, it is reaching up into the highest sphere of the spiritual, into the sphere of pure art."[67]

With these thoughts, Mies is not too far away from Hugo Häring—perhaps even influenced by him, for they worked together in the same office rooms in Berlin at the time when the Garkau estate and the Barcelona Pavilion were created.[68] Häring, and even Erich Mendelsohn, presumably would have stressed that the building itself was the essential content of art and that the process of building reached up into the sphere of pure art. Eiermann certainly would not have agreed. He categorically rejected any aesthetic component in his work, and interdependence of building and art: "Architecture has nothing to do with art. This is an erroneous demand. Architecture is a mere reflection of what has to be done by any engineer, just as any scientist in his field has to work in the same way."[69]

Still, Eiermann did not completely identify architecture as a science. The subtle role of intuition emerges in a letter to a colleague:

> I don't give a damn . . . for artistic intuition. I claim that the real world of building leaves room only for a small amount of artistic intuition. Everyone who has a profound knowledge of things like that and who suffers from artistic intuition will admit that it takes a lot of reflective processes of a highly intellectual kind to evade the so-called artistic intuition only laymen in our profession are dreaming of. . . . I can only believe . . . in the artistic intuition of the architect if he is additionally ready and able to deal in an outstanding way with the conditions and states of the society he works for and he lives in. In this attitude, heading so to say towards the future, lies the essence of this kind of intuition that can be called prophetic . . . rather than artistic. Everything else is pretentiousness and fiddling about, and the characteristic of these types is not real artistry, but an enrichment of the world with trendy trifles.[70]

Though Eiermann did not particularly emphasize "artistic intuition," he let it pass at least as far as the work of architects are concerned. Yet to him it was not a decisive impulse for an architectural concept to be realized. He understood architecture

59. Ibid.
60. See the lecture cited above, n. 38.
61. Mies van der Rohe, "Ich mache mir niemals ein Bild. Aus Interviews mit Ludwig Mies van der Rohe während seines Londoner Aufenthaltes im Mai 1959," *Bauwelt,* LIII, no. 32, 1962, 884.
62. F. Dessauer, *Philosophie der Technik,* Bonn, 1927 (Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 353).
63. Ibid. (Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 335).
64. Mies van der Rohe, "Schön und praktisch bauen! Schluss mit der kalten Zweckmässigkeit," 1930 (Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 370).
65. Mies van der Rohe, radio speech, 1931 (Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 375).
66. Undated speech of Mies van der Rohe, cited in n. 11.
67. Mies van der Rohe, "Leitgedanken zur Erziehung in der Baukunst," in Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe,* 52–53.
68. "Egon Eiermann, Otto Haupt, Hugo Häring, Alfons Leitl," 13.
69. "Der Architekt fordert: Exakte Formulierung des Programms. Interview mit Egon Eiermann," *Die Führungspraxis, Zeitschrift für Unternehmer und leitende Angestellte,* VI, no. 7, 1966, 37–42.
70. Letter from Eiermann to Professor H. Wittmann, Karlsruhe Technische Hochschule, 25 November 1954 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

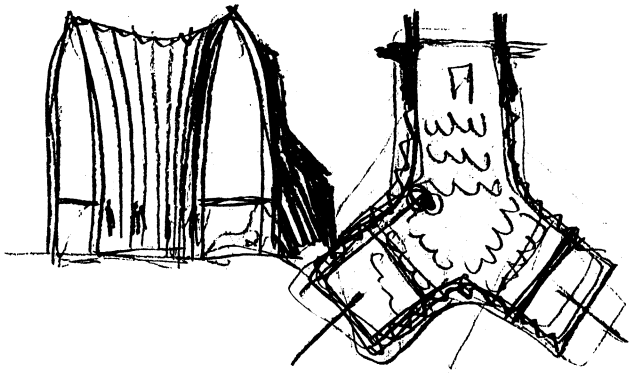

Fig. 29. Egon Eiermann, St. Nicolai-Kirche, Hamburg, 1953. Project. Study sketch by Eiermann (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

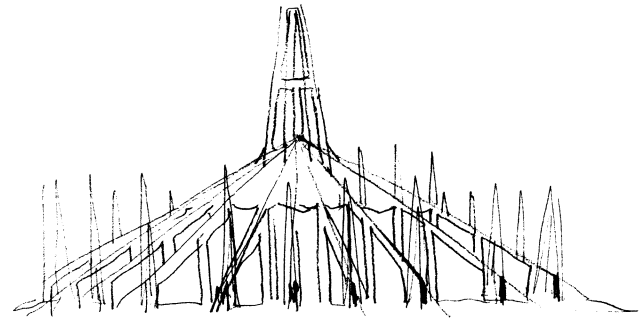

Fig. 30. Egon Eiermann, Evangelische Kirche in the former concentration camp of Dachau, 1964. Project. Study sketch by Eiermann (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

as a discipline, founded on the consistent application and mastery of technical as well as functional rules and demands, ruled by reason and not (so much) by emotion. However, to build "emotionally" might not have been so far away from him as he had always claimed in public—one may derive this from the context of his disclaimer, "but I am not the leopard that can change his spots."[71] One can suspect it in the only "amorphous" design in his oeuvre, the atypical Mülheim church (Fig. 25), yet even here he insists on the rationality of its form. It may be understood as a kind of escape from himself. But, in principle, Eiermann regarded his task as the one of the objective activity of collecting and structuring; its criterion was the transparency of order, from urban development to the smallest building.[72] This is what he wrote as a comment on his mail-order warehouse for the Josef Neckermann KG in Frankfurt am Main, a building which had made him popular in America, in part on account of its unbelievably short planning and building period of not more than two years.

Eiermann kept a tight rein on his architecture. Perhaps a barrier was erected by his own creative imagination, as a self-imposed limitation. His preliminary studies often show evidence of a transformation from an initial idea of an almost expressionistic nature to the simple design defined by Eiermann as "true" and "ordered"—as in the St. Nicolai-Kirche in Hamburg (Figs. 6 and 29) or the Evangelische Kirche in Dachau (Figs. 11 and 30).

Eiermann had called Le Corbusier's pilgrimage church in Ronchamp a sculpture that one could enter, belonging to art and not to architecture, because "one of its elements [had been] sacrificed to the spatial idea."[73] In Ronchamp the sacrificed element was the "clarity of construction." Similarly, he would

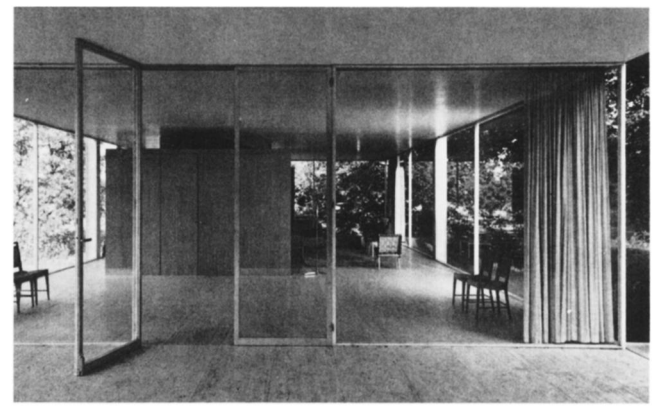

Fig. 31. Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois, 1946–1951. View from the terrace into the living room (from Wolf Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Villen und Landhausprojekte,* Essen, 1981, pl. 21.1).

have had to reject Mies's Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois (Fig. 31), as an accessible sculpture, because here another element was sacrificed to the idea of space, this time the one of function, of habitability. The Farnsworth House is art, if the lack of function is characteristic of art. The house is less a home than a monument. "Houses are built to live in, not to look at,"[74] Lord Byron had noted down once. The opposite could be said to apply to the Farnsworth House—an "abstract thing," as Richard Döcker had reproached Eiermann, "served up on a tray,"[75] that forms a contrast to the landscape in which it is built; it could be anywhere.

And what about Eiermann? He went in the same direction but turned off whenever man as the user was in danger of being neglected. Asked in his last years whether the man or the function was in the center of his thoughts when planning a house, he answered: "Of course every architect facing this question will beat his breast because of his moral alibi and will place the man before the function. I do not care about it." But he also

71. See the letter cited above, n. 19.

72. Eiermann, "Der Neubau der Josef Neckermann KG in Frankfurt," *Baukunst und Werkform,* XIV, no. 12, 1961, 690–722.

73. See the manuscript cited above, n. 36.

74. Lord Byron, *Selected Letters and Journals,* London, 1982 (German edition, Frankfurt am Main, 1985).

75. See the letter cited above, n. 4.

Fig. 32. Mies van der Rohe, Riehl House, Neubabelsberg (Berlin), 1907. Garden front (from Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: Leben und Werk,* Berlin, 1986, 33).

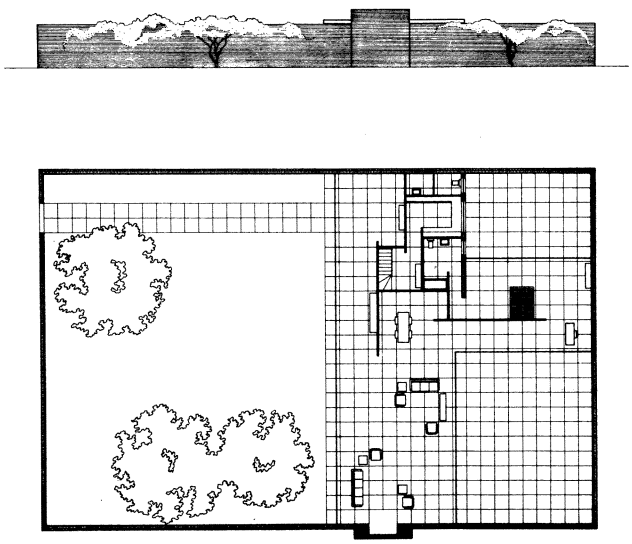

Fig. 33. Mies van der Rohe, House with Three Courts, 1934. Project. Elevation and plan (from Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965, 41).

said: "The good function of a house mainly depends on the fact that the man working in it is functioning, i.e., that he does the work he has to do to feed his family, which he does not do voluntarily, as cheerfully as he possibly can. To convey cheerfulness is still another good function of a house."[76] These words refer to his last two office buildings, yet they are more far-reaching and more generally meant; they reflect an essential aspect of his basic architectural concept.

In the Farnsworth House, the occupant had been reduced to a scale figure and had not been able to "function"—a conflict that finally led to the famous dispute between the client and architect.[77] As early as 1931, the discussion of whether or not

76. "Hoch oder flach? Interview mit Egon Eiermann," *Der Erfolg. Aktuelle Büro- und Betriebsorganisation,* XVII, no. 3, 1968, 25.

77. Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe,* 261 ff. Schulze, 267, recounts an anecdote in which Mies literally used Dr. Farnsworth as a scale figure at the house.

Fig. 34. Mies van der Rohe, Krupp Office Building, Essen, 1959–1963. Project (from Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965, 176–177).

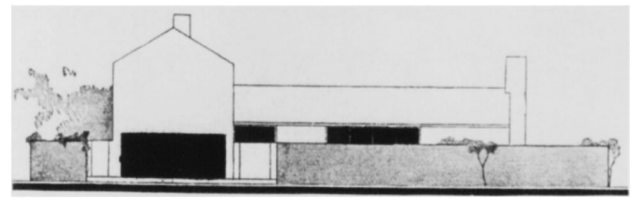

Fig. 35. Egon Eiermann, House for a Lady, 1937. Study. View from the street (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

one could live in Mies's Tugendhat House in Brno was publicly carried out in *Die Form,* the renowned magazine of the Deutsche Werkbund.[78] Similarly, it is hard to imagine the project for the Bacardi Office Building in Santiago as a setting for people working at desks, among filing cabinets and the necessary accessories like telephones and wastepaper baskets. The Schweinfurt Museum is less a gallery conserving small pictures of the German Romantic period than a glass palace commanding respect, a temple distant from man, less attractive than repellent. The Berlin National Gallery (in the vicinity of the architectural counter-point of the Philharmonie building by Hans Scharoun) is obliged to display its permanent collection in the basement.

Order and nature

The contrast between architecture and nature has a long tradition in Mies's work and can already be noticed in his first building, the Riehl House in Potsdam, of 1907 (Fig. 32). It was obviously influenced by Peter Behrens's crematorium in Delstern near Hagen. Set against sloping ground, the main body of the building rises above its monumental base like a rider on a horse's back.[79] Mies pursued the separation of architecture from

78. W. Riezler, "Das Haus Tugendhat in Brünn," *Die Form, Zeitschrift für gestaltende Arbeit,* VI, no. 9, 1931, 321–322; J. Bier, "Kann man im Haus Tugendhat wohnen?" op. cit., no. 10, 1931, 392–394; "Die Bewohner des Hauses Tugendhat äussern sich," op. cit., no. 11, 1931, 437–439. In the third of these articles, the Tugendhats spoke as advocates for the functionality of the house.

79. The Riehl House is appreciated in architects' circles because of the unusually clear proportions of its garden front. Around 1913, it

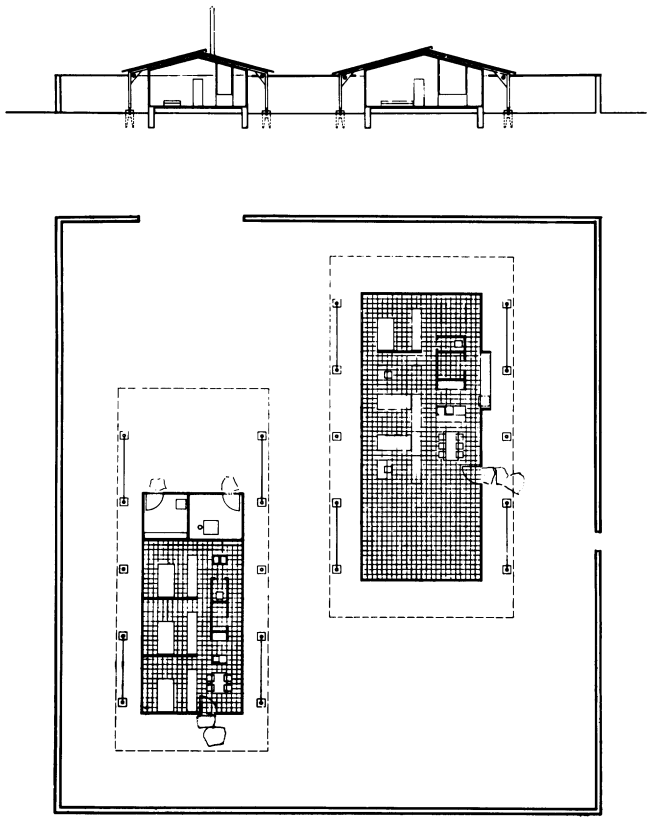

Fig. 36. Egon Eiermann, Eiermann House with Office, 1958. Project. Section and plan (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

the surrounding landscape throughout his career—for example, in the House with Three Courts, surrounded by a closed wall, of 1934 (Fig. 33); the Court House with Garage, designed in the same way and year; the Caine House of 1950, erected on a rectangular base; the Fifty-by-Fifty House one year later (Fig. 15); and the project for the Krupp Office Building "Auf dem Hügel" in Essen 1960–1963 (Fig. 34), which does not take into account the character of the sloping ground but rises from a base especially constructed as a new building ground. The bases or areas surrounded by walls serve within a given site as a kind of lot within a lot. With them Mies created for himself clearly limited areas, which were able to correspond to his preliminary ideas. They were not primarily derived from the conflict with the environment but rather from themselves, mainly independent of the quality of a particular site. The designs become independent and interchangeable; they become objective and universally valid. This is particularly evident in the halls of the Bacardi Office Building in Santiago, the Museum in Schweinfurt, and the Berlin National Gallery (Figs. 12, 13, and 14).

In Eiermann's work one can also find bases and areas surrounded by walls as a means of order, the principal guideline. They are applied not only within a certain building complex but beyond it, to order buildings of various purposes—houses, office buildings, churches. They effect a mutual transfer of certain patterns rooted in Eiermann's demand for universal validity.

inspired the design of a single-family house by the significant Stuttgart architect Paul Schmohl: see the illustration in *Bauzeitung für Württemberg, Baden, Hessen, Elsass-Lothringen,* X, no. 13, 1913, 100.

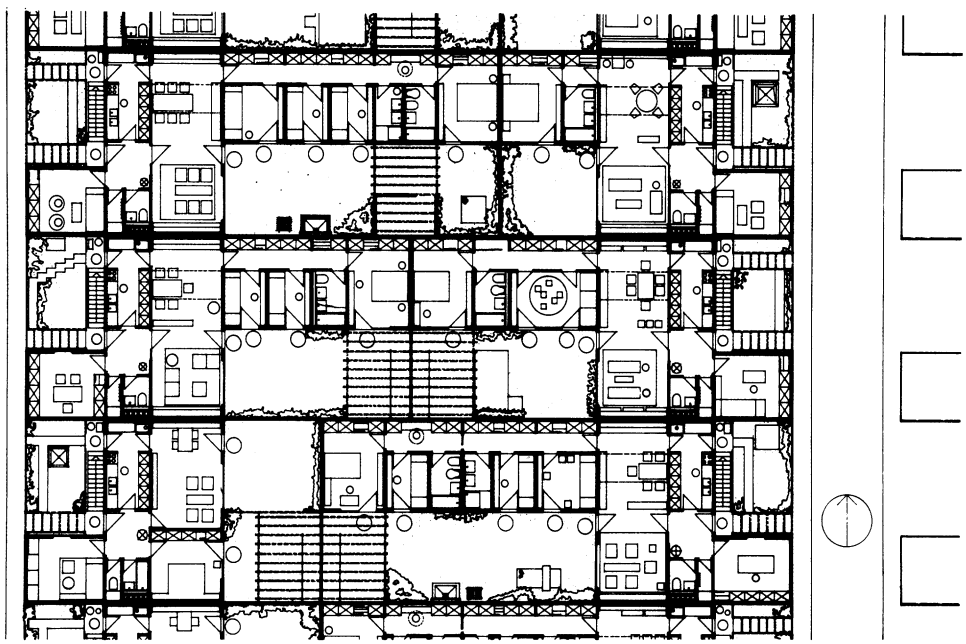

Fig. 37. Egon Eiermann, Prefabricated atrium houses for the Neckermann Eigenheim GmbH, 1964–1965. Project. (A few model houses were actually built.) Plan showing the various possibilities of combination of different types of houses (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

The idea occurs as early as 1937 in the project for a House for a Lady (Fig. 35), where the site (in a Berlin suburb of free-standing villas) is surrounded by a high, nearly closed wall, which isolates the house from its environment. The design for his own house and office in Karlsruhe of 1958 is based on a similar concept: a flat site on which two rectangular buildings are arranged, the whole fenced in by a high wall (Fig. 36). The houses with gently sloping roofs can hardly be seen over the top of the wall from the outside; they lie hidden, without reference to the environment. From the inside, no view out is possible. One is separated from the outer world, "isolated like in a monastery," as Eiermann put it. Eiermann's Neckermann atrium house types of 1964–1965 are based on the idea of assembling houses of different sizes with their gardens in a closed complex by means of a story-high wall around the lots, comparable to Mies's project of a group of court houses of 1931 (Figs. 37 and 38). In the competition design for the enlargement of the Saarbrücken University in 1951–1952, the auditorium, the assembly hall, the library, the institute buildings, and the botanical garden are united on a cross-shaped base. In the design of the St. Nicolai-Kirche at Hamburg, new church, new bell tower, and old tower are composed on a five-step-high base (Fig. 7). The ensemble of old and new buildings of the Hagen town hall design of 1957–1958 is similarly united. The nave of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche—in the first competition design of 1957—was planned to be built on a base nearly four meters high and surrounded by a wall; in the final design, steps provide the boundary for a platform of reduced height (Fig. 10). The buildings of the Social Studies University in Linz, Austria, of 1961, were to form a forum determined by bases of different levels. Finally, the institutes and the collective facilities of the Biochemical Center of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft of 1966, situated among villages near Munich, are united in a square area 465 m. on a side and surrounded by a nearly continuous wall about 1.80 m. high (Fig. 39).

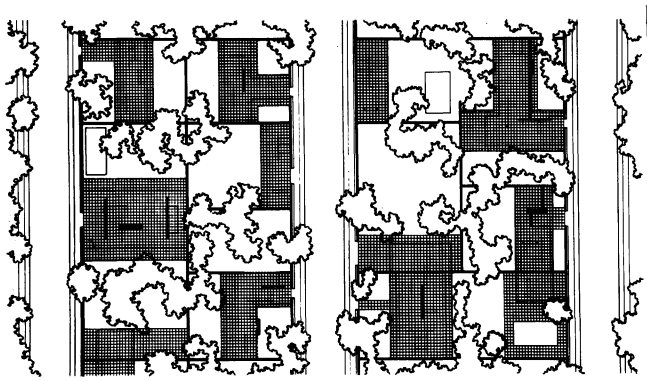

Fig. 38. Mies van der Rohe, Group of Court Houses, Berlin, 1931. Project (from Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Die Kunst der Struktur,* Zürich and Stuttgart, 1965, 49).

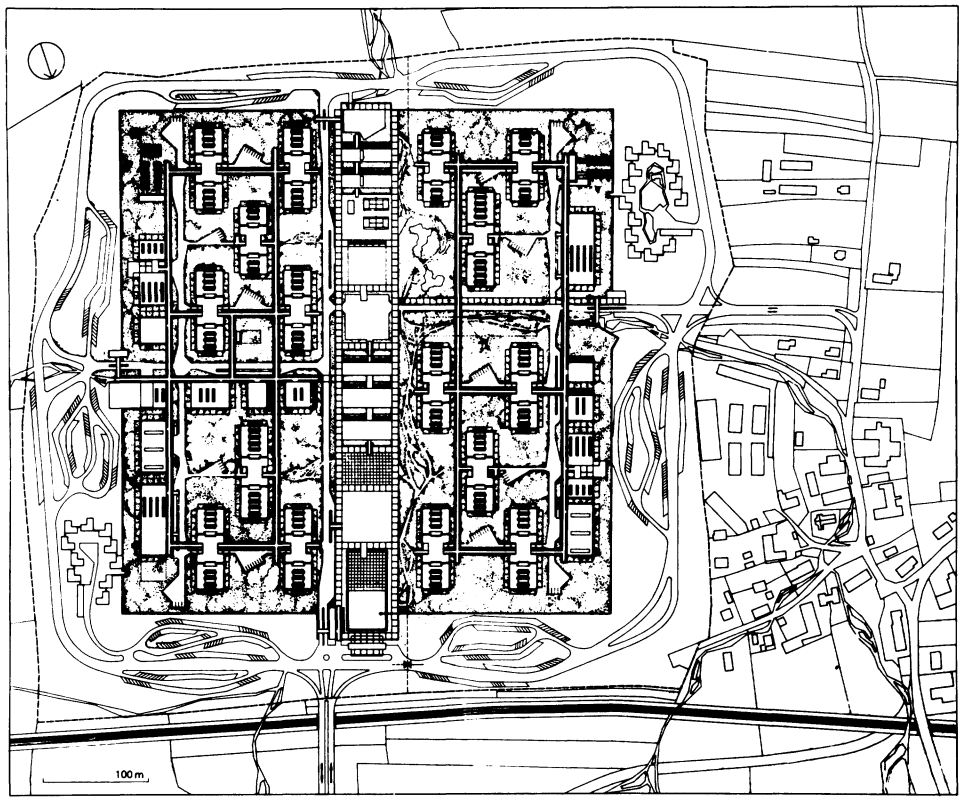

Fig. 39. Egon Eiermann, Biochemical Center for the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Martinsried near Munich, 1966. Project. Site plan (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

Fig. 40. Egon Eiermann, Mail Order Warehouse for the Josef Neckermann KG, Frankfurt am Main, 1958–1961 (Horstheinz Neuendorff, Baden-Baden; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

Fig. 41. Egon Eiermann, Office Building for the German Embassy, Washington, 1958–1964 (J. Alexander Studio, Wheaton; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

Order and architectural drama

Despite their tendency to isolate themselves from the surrounding landscape, despite their "monastery-like" self-withdrawal, Eiermann's designs do not reach the repellent rigor of Mies's designs. Apart from a few projects (for example, his warehouses and their façades, which determined his architectural thinking for some time),[80] Eiermann's architecture is always characterized by a trait of amiability—that kind of charm Mendelsohn missed in Mies van der Rohe. The "dramatic elaboration of a simple state"[81] that Eiermann had so emphatically denied is not entirely foreign to his work. The demand for universal validity in architecture, for objectivity, does not seem to be realized so uncompromisingly as with Mies, who believed that the impact of his work on others was due to its rationality: everyone could assimilate it without becoming an imitator, because it was totally objective.[82] Objectivity is not so highly developed in Eiermann's work, even if Eiermann himself thought so:

"I would like to emphasize clearly," he once stated, "that I do not appreciate the kind of architecture that tries to produce sensations by a constant production of novelties. My work consists in developing certain experiences and pieces of knowledge I have collected in the course of my work to a certain standard, i.e., in the sense of the term of universal validity, to develop them further and to carry them on to such a perfection that excludes any experiments."[83]

In the Neckermann mail-order warehouse in Frankfurt am Main, the emergency stairs and air-conditioning units are not at all "rational" or "quite objective"; they appear as though applied to the façade and must be really regarded as a "dramatic use of such prosaic elements," as contemporary critics recognized (Fig. 40).[84] Not less "dramatic" is the smart architecture of the office building of the German Embassy in Washington of 1958–1964, which is reminiscent of ship building (Fig. 41),

80. Boyken, in *Egon Eiermann, 1904–1970,* ed. Schirmer; Boyken, "Egon Eiermann 1904–1970," 162–163.

81. See the lecture cited above, n. 33.

82. Mies van der Rohe, "Ich mache mir niemals ein Bild," 884.

83. Letter from Egon Eiermann to Regierungsbaudirektor Mertz, Berlin, 10 April 1961 (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

84. In 1983, the ten best buildings in the world were chosen by the editors of *Architectural Forum* and published on posters. They included, among others, Eiermann's mail order warehouse, Mies van der Rohe's, Bacardi Building in Mexico City, Eero Saarinen's Dulles International Airport in Washington, Le Corbusier's Assembly Building in Chandigarh, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Marin County Center in California. The editors wrote about Eiermann's warehouse: "The Josef Neckermann mail order warehouse and office in Frankfurt . . . is unusually bold and sophisticated in design. Across the length (860 feet) of the warehouse's reinforced concrete skeleton, the architect makes dramatic use of such prosaic elements as outside stairs, air conditioning equipment, and even corridors. These elements tie together the separate sections of the building and give the inside storage floors continuous, uninterrupted space for greater working efficiency and fire safety as well."

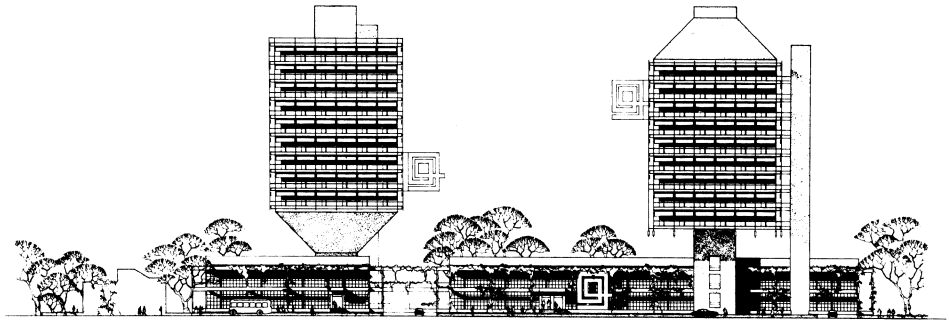

Fig. 42. Egon Eiermann, Office Building and Training Center, German Olivetti Company, Frankfurt am Main, 1968–1972. Preliminary design. In contrast to the executed design, the office tower was initially designed as hanging construction (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

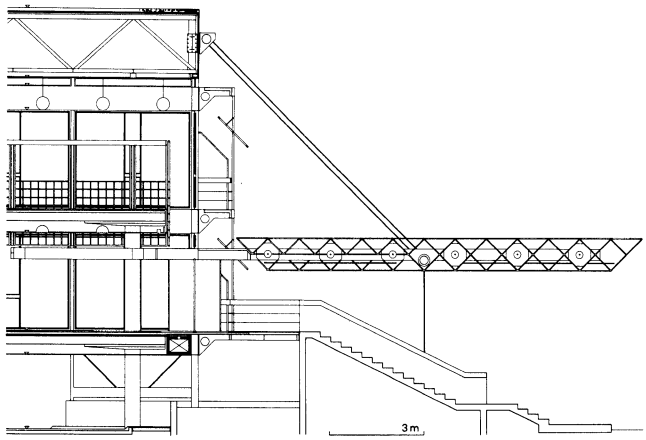

Fig. 43. Egon Eiermann, Office Building and Training Center for the German Olivetti Company, Frankfurt am Main, 1968–1972. Section of the low-rise building and the canopy of a constructive skeleton consisting of a long stretched steel frame, which reaches into the interior of the building. The inner part of this frame forms a counterweight to the protruding outer part, which is suspended from steel cables (The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

or the chalices of the Frankfurt Office Building and Training Center of the German Olivetti Company (Fig. 42), even though Eiermann presented the forms as the only possible solution resulting from specific local conditions.[85] Eiermann's own interpretation of his architecture would certainly be too one-sided, too much oriented toward his principal concept, to prove its validity as a whole. Rudolf Hillebrecht saw his work more comprehensively and more exactly: "[Eiermann] had the ability to analyze a complex of problems," Hillebrecht explained,"and to fight for the solution of a single problem from the view of the whole and to integrate them into one unit that covered and comprised all its elements. He had an unusual awareness of duty and of responsibility toward the task and a self-discipline that made him serve his task by learning to rule its elements."[86]

85. Eiermann, "Entwurfs- und Baubeschreibung," 519–522.

86. Hillebrecht, "Egon Eiermann 29.9.1904–19.7.1970," *Orden Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste. Reden und Gedenkworte,* no. 10, Heidelberg, 1970–1971, 135–142.

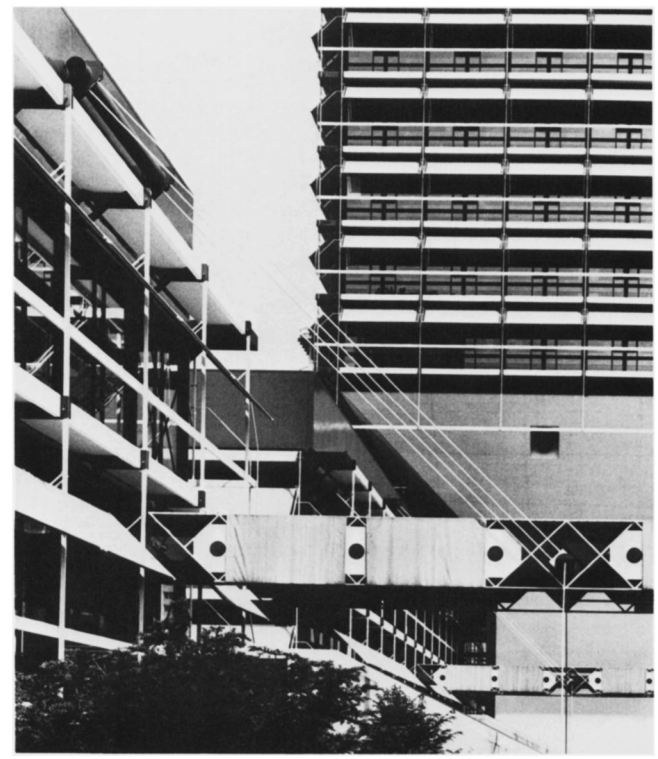

Fig. 44. Egon Eiermann, Office Building and Training Center for the German Olivetti Company, Frankfurt am Main, 1968–1972. The canopy. The two diagonal white round rods anchor the roof to the ground (Atelier Kinold, Munich; The Architectural Collection of the University of Karlsruhe).

To Eiermann, the "technical commandment" did not mean the "only available rule that could prevent the world from sliding into kitsch," as Kenneth Frampton claims with regard to Mies's "latent idea of technology as the demiurge of the age."[87] Eiermann conceded priority to technology, and he said it clearly enough in his dispute with Häring.[88] Apart from that, he also knew how to use an effect skilfully, and he did use it.

87. Frampton, *Tradition und Moderne,* 47.

88. "Egon Eiermann, Otto Haupt, Hugo Häring, Alfons Leitl," 10–14.

The double glass walls of the Berlin Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche are striking when artificially lighted.[89] His canopies often stand in extreme contrast to the clear forms of the buildings—for example, in Pforzheim, where the "stilts" end a few centimeters below the canopy and are declared as flagpoles for church holidays; or at his own house in Baden-Baden, where the segmenting architecture of the canopy contrasts with the plain surface of its façade; or at the Frankfurt Olivetti buildings, where their overemphasis of form borders on mannerism (Figs. 43 and 44). This is the point where Mies and Eiermann go different ways. Eiermann's work may even be seen as the reverse of Ludwig Hilberseimer's estimation of that of Mies: "Architecture is always bound to the useful. Mies van der Rohe has been able to transcend this limitation, to elevate his buildings to a level seldom attained, and to impart to them a value which symbolizes the best in our age."[90]

Translated by Hans J. Oestmann

89. The inner room of the church is enclosed by two parallel walls of reinforced concrete elements with colored glass, which are separated by a zone 2.20 m. wide, intended to form a barrier against street noise. In this zone, spotlights are installed to light the inner and outer walls.

90. Hilberseimer, *Mies van der Rohe,* 178.