

Mies & the Inheritance of Modernism

Exhibition at SCHUNCK* Glaspaleis

Heerlen, The Netherlands, 10 April – 7 August 2016

At the occasion of the 130th anniversary of the birth of Mies van der Rohe, on 27 March 2016, the exhibition *Mies & The Inheritance of Modernism* was opened on 10 April 2016, in SCHUNCK*, Heerlen, The Netherlands. The project was focused entirely on the re-evaluation of the modernist architectural heritage. The central question which led the whole project was: how much do we value the inheritance of modernism and how should we deal with it? The exhibition was contextualized by an international program in which symposia, lectures, film screenings, excursions and guided tours provided a deeper knowledge. During a 4-month period, SCHUNCK* Glaspaleis radiated modernism and created, to some extent, a new supra-regional and international focus and mindfulness (*Achtsamkeit*) both for visitors, residents and politicians. The surprising awareness of visitors about the importance of their own region, but also the understanding of the cultural-historical value of modernist buildings as well as the great respect and honest recognition of the very accurately restored

masterpieces, testify to this rising awareness. The project was developed with a dual structure: an international and a regional perspective on modernist inheritance.

International Perspective of the Exhibition

The main focus of the exhibition was on the international part, which showed, on the basis of five selected masterpieces by Mies van der Rohe, the renovation processes as well as the possible concepts of preservation and brought at the same time the main representatives of this period to the attention of the public.

The 5 selected masterpieces were:

- Haus Tugendhat, Brno.
- Crown Hall, Chicago.
- 860–880 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago.
- Robert F. Carr Memorial Chapel, Chicago.
- *Verseidag*, Krefeld.

Didactically simple and arranged on a central axis, the exhibition in the museum (level-1) was subdivided in four different zones.

Introductory Zone/Oeuvre Survey, CV

On entering, the visitor was given a sort of introduction to Mies van der Rohe and the specific topic of the exhibition.

The information on Mies van der Rohe was based on a short CV with a number of key dates and an oeuvre overview of the complete built works of Mies van der Rohe. Each of the 79 buildings was briefly described on an information panel with a photo and core data. This provided the general public with a differentiated picture of his realized works and also made it possible to place the five selected projects in their context. Two museum texts served as an introduction to the theme of the exhibition.

Film Zone/Video-installation
"INTER/VIEW"

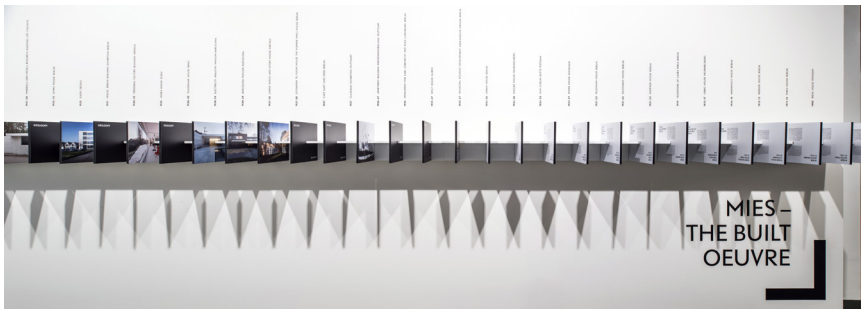
The wall high video-installation, 20 m long, was one of the core pieces of the exhibition, apart from the "laboratory" space. It provided the visitor with an introduction and accessibility to the theme. The visitors could learn here about the daily use of the five buildings that were central to the exhibition. The moving image at 1:1 scale, provided an impressive virtual tour of the buildings themselves, especially because there were no artificial interventions. The methodology for this "visual inspection" was to show the buildings, without any embellishment, in their real daily functionality and in all their facets. This panorama transformed the museum space into an aesthetic and spatial Mies van der Rohe world – quiet and concentrated on the essential.

Research Zone/Laboratory Space

In the research area "the laboratory" the renovation processes of the five buildings were shown. Based on an axes structure (horizontally five projects and vertically three thematic axes) a comparative analysis could be shown in a simple and easy way. The visitor had the choice to approach the various processes via the project axis or the theme axis. The five selected examples showed the whole spectrum, from selective interventions to core refurbishments. On so-called "labor tables", designed specifically for the exhibition, different working practises and interventions were demonstrated. The size of the tables was well suited to bring the different types of material to the imagination. The conceptual questions, the approach as well as the current process were made



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clear to the visitor through pictures, (original) drawings, texts, research studies, models and original material samples. Depending on the visitor's interest, there were three distinct layers of immersion. Replicas of original Mies van der Rohe construction/renovation drawings were presented on A2-size boards for further consultation, thereby giving each project an extra dimension.

Object Zone/Installation Large Artefacts

The object zone was an impressive installation of large-scale original elements and objects from the five buildings. This zone emphasized explicitly the matters of physical materiality.

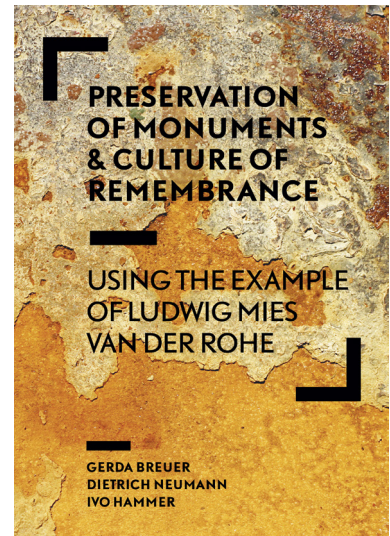
Among others, the exhibition intended to stress the importance of the material, especially when maintaining and preserving the modernistic inheritance! It's one of the main difficult matters in these kind of restorations. The large amount of material specimens on the "labor tables" has also managed to demonstrate this to a certain extent.

Regional Perspective of the Exhibition Showcase - Ground Floor

In the large showcase of SCHUNCK* situated at the market square, right in front of the entrance - the regional part of the exhibition was shown. A preliminary study demonstrated that there are more than 100 modernist buildings in the region. A rich inheritance of which the region was unaware!

The 40 buildings that were selected for the exhibition, are all very important for the character of the cityscape and of indispensable value for the identity and image of the Parkstad region. Situated close to the city center, the showcase translated the knowledge and questions concerning the use, value and treatment of the inheritance of modernism to the local situation in Heerlen and Parkstad Limburg.

The underlying intention to let the visitors make the projection from international to regional, was incredibly successful.



Publication | Essay Book

Accompanying the exhibition, a small essay book was published – Gerda Breuer, Dietrich Neumann, Ivo Hammer, *Preservation of Monuments & Culture of Remembrance. Using the Example of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, Herlen, Schunck, 2016 – mainly reflecting on (inter) national elements of remembrance, using the example of Mies van der Rohe. The essays related directly to the themes of the exhibition and complemented them from a different angle. Simultaneously, the book reflected on the current restoration practise of modernist monuments and the accompanying problems.

Andrea Croé

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More Information

Curator & Project leader: Andrea Croé, SCHUNCK* Heerlen.
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Scientific advisory board: Gunny Harboe, Harboe Architects, Chicago; Ivo Hammer, conservator-restorer, Vienna.