

The Ship of Theseus

Identity and the Barcelona Pavilion(s)

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Built in 1929 and demolished in 1930, the Barcelona Pavilion was rebuilt on the original site in 1986. Is it the “same” building? Many architects and critics question the reconstruction’s authenticity, dismissing it as a “fake.” Why the pavilion has inspired such doubt is an important topic because it relates to the very definitions of architecture. What determines a building’s identity—form, function, context, material, or something else? As a historically important work that has existed in more than one instance, the Barcelona Pavilion offers an extraordinary opportunity to consider this question. Examining the distinctions between the two structures highlights conventional standards of critical evaluation, exposing architecture’s core values and interrogating the very concept of preservation.

But if I’m not the same, the next question is, who in the world am I?

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)¹

One of the most confounding puzzles of philosophy concerns the ship of Theseus. During its long voyages, the legendary Greek hero’s vessel requires extensive repairs, and eventually every board and plank is replaced so that not a scrap of the original material remains. With its constitution completely changed, is it the same ship?² Answering this question depends on what is meant by “same,” a surprisingly elusive term. This topic is central to the philosophy of identity:

how much can a thing vary before it becomes an altogether different thing? What characteristics of an object are indispensable to its definition?

Modern architecture’s ship of Theseus is the Barcelona Pavilion. Built in 1929 and demolished in 1930, the pavilion was rebuilt with exacting quality and detail on the original site in 1986 (Figures 1-3, 5-6). Is it the “same” building?

When the second pavilion appeared, architects, historians, and critics were deeply ambivalent. Some hailed it as a revived masterpiece, some condemned it as an impostor, and others confessed to be dumbfounded. “[T]his building is not supposed to exist,” asserted Paul

Figure 1. *Opposite page, top:* Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 and 1986 (photographed 2009). Viewed from the northeast. The German tricolor flag flew over the 1929 pavilion; the flag of Barcelona flies over the current structure. (*Left:* Photograph by Berliner Bild Bericht. *Opposite page, right:* Photograph by Pepo Segura. Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

Figure 2. *Opposite page, middle:* Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 and 1986 (photographed 2009). North courtyard with George Kolbe sculpture, *Alba* (“Dawn”). The original cast was plaster; the current cast is bronze. (*Left:* Photograph by Berliner Bild Bericht. *Right:* Photograph by Pepo Segura. Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

Figure 3. *Opposite page, bottom:* Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 and 1986 (photographed 2009). View across the podium reflecting pool from the southeast. (*Left:* Photograph by Berliner Bild Bericht. *Right:* Photograph by Pepo Segura. Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

Goldberger.³ The architects of the reconstruction—Ignasi Solà-Morales, Cristian Cirici, and Fernando Ramos—admitted their own “tremor of doubt,” writing that rebuilding such a familiar landmark was a “traumatic undertaking.”⁴ During the planning stage, Philip Johnson pondered, “The problem before us is should a dream be realized or not? We have made such a myth of that building. Shouldn’t it be left in the sacred vault of the memory bank?”⁵

The apprehension is not easily explained. The similarities between the two pavilions far outnumber the differences, and the construction quality of the reconstruction is far superior to the hastily erected original. Yet, without much elaboration, many critics have rejected the second pavilion as inauthentic, even while lauding its meticulous execution. A review in *Progressive Architecture* concluded, “Any faithful reproduction remains just that: a copy, a facsimile.”⁶ Routinely referred to as a “replica,” even by



the architects themselves,⁷ the 1986 pavilion is widely considered not quite legitimate but not quite illegitimate, either. Martin Filler wrote that “we must regard this admirable effort as something other than the real thing.”⁸ Questioning the pavilion’s authenticity continues to this day. In 2017, Anna and Eugeni Bach, commissioned to create an installation at the pavilion,

described it as “a replica so faithful to the original that it is often difficult to remember its true nature.”⁹ More than one recent source has dismissed it as a “fake.”¹⁰

Why the pavilion has inspired such doubt is an important question because it relates to the very definitions of architecture. What determines a building’s

identity—form, function, context, material, technique, or something else? The Barcelona Pavilion offers an extraordinary opportunity to study this question because it is a historically important work that has existed in more than one instance. Examining the distinctions between the two pavilions highlights conventional standards of critical evaluation,

exposing architecture's core values and interrogating the very concept of preservation. What is being preserved—the material artifact, an image, an idea, or a legacy—and are there aspects of a building that simply cannot be preserved at all? According to the Oxford Dictionaries, to preserve is to “maintain (something) in its original or existing state.”¹¹ Has the Barcelona Pavilion maintained its original state or not?

The Identity of Identity

How to determine the identity of a thing has been a subject of considerable philosophical inquiry throughout history. Aristotle, often acknowledged to have originated the philosophy of identity, noted that while all things have a potentially infinite number of properties, some are of greater consequence than others. He distinguished between properties that may vary without affecting identity (“accidents”) and those that may not (“essence”): “The essence of each thing is what it is said to be in virtue of itself.”¹² This distinction is fundamental to the Barcelona Pavilion(s). While there are clear differences between the 1929 and 1986 structures, there are also clear differences in any single building at different points in time, since materials weather, finishes dull, parts get replaced, and context changes. The important question is which variations might threaten identity. In other words, what comprises the *essence* of the Barcelona Pavilion, and does its reconstruction violate these qualities?

Aristotle listed four fundamental “causes” (*aitia*) of any object—form, matter, origin, and purpose.¹³ *Form* encompasses all the dimensional and spatial aspects of a thing; in the case of a building, this includes size, shape, and setting. The 1986 pavilion carefully matches these conditions by occupying the original's footprint, revealed when excavation uncovered the old column footings. These remnants, along with a rediscovered paving plan, allowed the layout to be verified.¹⁴ Even the immediate context of the site on

Barcelona's Montjuïc hill has been restored to a state similar to that of the 1929 fair.¹⁵

According to Plato, Aristotle's teacher, the essence of a thing ultimately consists of form apart from matter.¹⁶ Philosopher Peter Pesic describes the second ship of Theseus with the same language Martin Filler uses to dismiss the second pavilion: “We recognize the ship... by comparing it with the form we already know, its original archetype, as the real thing.”¹⁷ What Filler refers to as “the real thing” would be the pavilion's form, and in fact, like many observers, he specifically applies the term “Platonic.”¹⁸ In the reconstruction, writes one historian, the pavilion “is now as close to its original form” as possible.¹⁹ In Platonic terms, then, essence survives. Aristotle, however, insisted on the unity of form and matter, and in this sense the reconstruction returns the pavilion to Aristotelian reality. The structure is said to have “reacquired [its] material presence” in 1986.²⁰

Yet, physical presence may be exactly what troubles some critics. The prevalent view of the original pavilion was that it was “purely spatial,” as Vincent Scully described it in 1961.²¹ Its walls are commonly called “planes,” geometry separated from substance.²² Published floor plans often have no context or orientation—space without place. In 1936, George Howe praised the pavilion as the apex of “abstract design.” Claiming that it had been “liberated of all the purely material restrictions which usually govern architecture,” he declared that tangible presence was not essential to the pavilion: “Its disappearance is perhaps prophetic of a period when we shall have reduced the time element of our lives to a complete abstraction and nothing will remain to architecture but pure conceptual space.”²³ The pavilion was not a “real thing” after all—it was an ideal, a “complete abstraction.”

What does historic preservation mean when the thing to be preserved is an abstraction? This philosophical quandary may explain why much of the criticism of the reconstruction seems illogical. For example,

Filler protests the differences in color between the old and new stones, especially the onyx, but there are no color photographs of the original (Figure 5). He complains about the specific material selections, yet he admits they were necessary for longevity and that the quality of construction is better.²⁴ Twisted logic reflects a deeper insecurity—not about the pavilion's materials, but about its very existence. The reconstruction allowed viewers to experience for themselves, unmediated, a broad range of space, time, light, and color for the first time in half a century (Figures 7–8). But by bringing form and matter together again, it spoiled the fantasy. A ghost with a body is no longer a ghost.

According to identity theory, material changes do not necessarily jeopardize an object's authenticity. While Aristotle renounced Platonism by emphasizing both form and matter in the recognition of objects (“Is there . . . a house apart from the bricks?”), he nevertheless felt that form was an *essential* quality and matter *accidental*.²⁵ An oak table could be refitted with maple wood and still be considered the same table.²⁶ In any building that is renovated, parts are replaced without endangering the overall identity of the place. Unless an arbitrary restriction is made on the number of parts that may be exchanged, theoretically the entire structure may change materially without losing its essence. Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye was substantially refurbished after being badly damaged during World War II. “Could one speculate,” asks Juan Pablo Bonta, “that because parts of the physical fabric have been replaced, the villa as it stands is no longer the same work of architecture?” If renovation threatens authenticity, he decides, “we should stop restoring architectural masterpieces—a patently absurd conclusion.”²⁷

Although the original pavilion had been celebrated for its “expert craftsmanship,”²⁸ research prior to the reconstruction revealed that it had been a flimsy patchwork. On

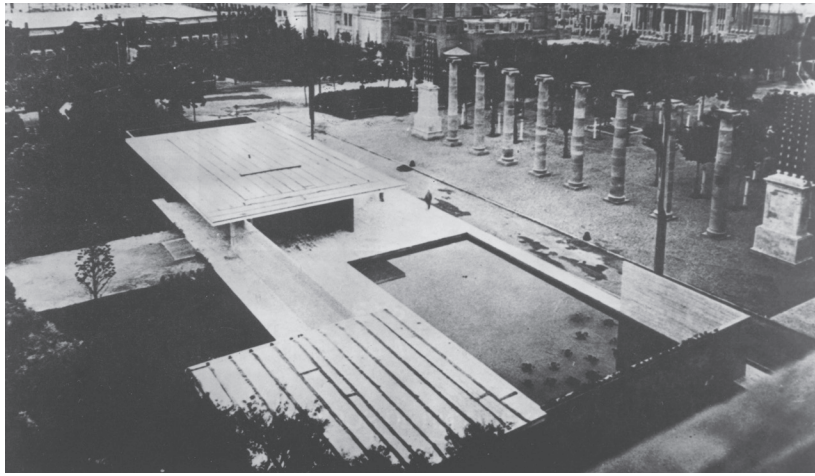


Figure 4. Barcelona Pavilion, 1929. Aerial view of the pavilion from the southwest. Patchwork construction is visible on some surfaces. The backs of the end walls (foreground) are faux-painted stucco. (Photograph courtesy of Museum of Modern Art.)

some surfaces, faux-painted stucco substituted for stone, and the plaster finish throughout the ceiling was inconsistent and splotchy (Figure 4). The pavilion was a pasteboard illusion, and the viewpoints, cropping, and airbrushing of the famous photographs masked its flaws.²⁹ Even the Kolbe sculpture was plaster (Figure 2).³⁰ For years, the travertine podium was thought to be continuous at the perimeter, partly because floor plans approved by Mies illustrated it as such, but in reality it was sheared off abruptly at the northeast corner.³¹ The canonical images and texts preserve a version of the pavilion that never existed: it was a mirage, a phantom of itself.³²

Hence, the reconstruction is not, in fact, “as close to its original form” as possible—it is close to its fabled form, the idealized version of popular imagination. Preservationists define a *reconstruction* as depicting “the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving [structure] for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.”³³ If the original pavilion never matched our mental image of it, what “specific period of time” does the reconstruction depict? “To restore a building,” insisted Viollet-le-Duc, the great preservation theorist of the early modern period, “is not only to preserve it, to repair it, or to rebuild, but to bring it back to a state of completion such as may never have existed at any given moment.”³⁴

Is the 1986 pavilion a *re*-construction of something or an original in itself, a first construction of something previously unbuilt but felt to be lost?

Philosophically, emulating form and place should be enough to establish identity, according to some theorists. Umberto Eco recounts that the twelfth-century Abbey of Saint Guinness was scrupulously restored stone by stone:

[F]rom the point of view of materials the abbey we see today no longer has anything to do with the original, but from the point of view of architectonic design it is the same one. If we favor the criterion of the identity of form over that of identity of materials, and if moreover we introduce the criterion of “homolocality” (the modern abbey stands exactly in the same place as the original abbey), from a tourist’s point of view (and to a certain extent from that of an art historian) we are led to say that this is the same abbey.³⁵

The condition of *homolocality* seems essential to both identity theory and preservationist standards (“in its historic location”). If the materials of the original pavilion—faux-painted stucco included—were discovered and reassembled in the original form but in a different place—say, a Nebraska cornfield—which pavilion would be considered authentic? Like London Bridge in Arizona, would the

old pavilion in a new place be deemed a disappointing novelty, while the new pavilion in the old place became an architectural pilgrimage? Or would it be the other way around?

Like the ship of Theseus, the abbey’s parts and pieces were replaced slowly, seamlessly, so there was never a time when it ceased to exist in its recognized form, which remained constant even as matter varied. Yet, in the case of the pavilion, there is a long gap in time between the first iteration, which disappeared in 1930, and the second, which (re)appeared in 1986. This fifty-six-year interruption is certainly a principal reason the pavilions are considered separate structures. Nevertheless, a standard philosophical argument demonstrates that identity does not rely on so-called temporal continuity: if a repairman takes apart a clock, leaves it in pieces for a while, then puts it back together again, it is not likely to be considered a different clock, regardless of how long it was disintegrated.³⁶ In 1871, the Church of Santa Maria della Spina in Pisa, a favorite of John Ruskin, was disassembled and rebuilt at a level one meter higher to avoid flood damage.³⁷ Despite this pause, the identity of the later church has not been questioned. If the Barcelona Pavilion had been rebuilt immediately after being pulled to pieces in 1930, presumably its authenticity would not be doubted—even if some or all of its materials were replaced. In theory, a temporary separation of form and matter should not threaten the pavilion’s identity, which should survive even a half-century hiatus.

Artworks and Artifacts

The Barcelona Pavilion long has been considered a masterpiece of modern architecture and a work of art, a status that drove the desire to rebuild it.³⁸ Identity theory becomes more complicated when considering things perceived to be artworks,



Figure 5. Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 and 1986 (photographed 2009). View of the onyx wall in the Throne Room. (Top: Photograph by Berliner Bild Bericht. Opposite page: Photograph by Pepo Segura. Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

as opposed to common artifacts. Not long after the original pavilion was demolished, Walter Benjamin wrote that the authenticity of an artwork—its “aura”—is defined by a unique and tangible presence, which is lost under two conditions: translation (the transfer from one medium to another, such as architecture to photography) and multiplication (the loss of individuality): “The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence.”³⁹ While the legendary photographs of the original pavilion brought about both conditions, the 1986 pavilion reinstated individuality in the original

medium.⁴⁰ Filler’s comment that the reconstruction is not “the real thing” is ironic, since the word *real* stems from the Latin *res*, meaning “thing,” connoting exactly what Benjamin emphasizes—tangible presence.

Considering the differences between original works, copies, and forgeries, the philosopher Nelson Goodman distinguished between *autographic* works and *allographic* works:

Let us speak of a work of art as *autographic* if and only if the distinction between original and forgery of it is significant; or better, if and only if even the most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine. If a work of art is autographic, we may also call that art autographic. Thus painting is autographic, music nonautographic, or *allographic*.⁴¹

Even exact copies of a Rembrandt are still considered copies—“simply imitations or forgeries, not new instances”—while all performances of a Mozart symphony are considered authentic, new instances of the work: “in music, unlike painting, there is no such thing as a forgery or a known work.” Architecture, Goodman speculates, seems comparable to music, in that it is created second-hand from notations, such as a score or a set of plans: “Any building that conforms to the plans and specifications . . . is as original an instance of the work as any other.”⁴²

Architecture may be more complex than Goodman suggests, as Remei Capdevila-Werning points out: generic buildings such as tract housing are allographic in that any instance is considered authentic, while the effect is different for “masterpieces of architecture”; an exact replica of the Taj Mahal “would



only be a copy,” and the Parthenon in Nashville is “simply a copy of the one in Athens.”⁴³ Hence, architecture, she contends, oscillates between the autographic and the allographic, sometimes in single structures, such as the Barcelona Pavilion: “The main argument for rebuilding the 1929 pavilion was its stature as a unique work of modern architecture. Being a unique work entails considering that the Barcelona Pavilion is autographic and, hence, that the 1986 pavilion is a replica of the 1929 one.”

On the other hand, she explains, because the 1986 Pavilion was built from painstakingly prepared notations, it becomes allographic, according to Goodman’s framework. At the 1986 dedication, Mies van der Rohe’s daughter announced that “for a second time, the German Pavilion of Barcelona has been given to the world.” Capdevila-Werning notes, “Only a work that is not unique can

be given ‘for a second time’ and still continue to be the same; only allographic works can be reproduced and maintain the same identity, which compels us to affirm that the building recovered in 1986 is the same as the one erected in 1929.” Finally, given the shoddy construction of the 1929 version, the newer pavilion arguably is a closer approximation of the original intent, in which case it could be considered the primary pavilion, superseding the earlier structure. This raises doubts, however: “Our intuitive reluctance to conclude that the 1929 pavilion is not the Barcelona Pavilion points to the need to shift the identity criterion again, from allographic to autographic, and recognize that the pavilion’s identity is not totally defined by a plan.”

In this view, the pavilions are simultaneously different and the same, caught in a philosophical vortex, bouncing back and forth

between autographic and allographic, the two structures vying to usurp the other’s identity. “This array of possibilities,” Capdevila-Werning concludes, “does not have to be interpreted as a failure in the process of identifying works, but as evidence of the inherent complexity and richness of architecture.”⁴⁴

At minimum, Capdevila-Werning demonstrates that dismissing the 1986 pavilion outright as a “facsimile” or “replica” does not hold up to philosophical scrutiny. However, the application of Goodman is intriguing but inconclusive. First, the examples of the Taj Mahal and the Parthenon are new instances constructed in different places, while the earlier structures still exist in the original locations. No one claims that the Parthenon in Nashville assumes the identity of the one perched on the Acropolis in Athens. A perfect copy of the Taj Mahal built in Tampa



Figure 6. Barcelona Pavilion, 1929 and 1986 (photographed 2009). View across the podium from the southwest. The left-hand image is the only widely published photograph of the original structure shot in the afternoon, after the sun has crossed behind the pavilion. (Top: Photograph by Berliner Bild Bericht. Opposite page: Photograph by Pepo Segura. Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

would not persuade us that it is the authentic Taj Mahal. However, if the original were replaced on its historic site by that perfect copy, would we question its authenticity?⁴⁵ If it happened instantaneously, no one would be the wiser, while a gap in time—whether a day, a year, or half a century—might raise doubt, although such a temporal breach has not undermined the identity of other structures, such as Santa Maria della Spina. The structure itself is the same in the two cases (whether appearing instantly or after a lapse in time), so it is merely our perception that changes.

Second, the claim that the pavilion must be autographic because its identity cannot be fully captured

using notations overlooks similarly important structures built without the designers' supervision. A 2010 survey of leading architects ranked Le Corbusier's Saint-Pierre Church in Firminy, France, as one of the "most significant" works of the twenty-first century—even though it was designed in the middle of the previous century and built four decades after the architect's death.⁴⁶ Constructed exclusively from notations, it is the definition of allographic, yet it is hailed as a masterwork. With Mies's own work, construction began or was completed posthumously on several important projects, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (1972) in Washington, DC, and the Brown Pavilion of the Museum of Fine Arts (1974) in Houston, Texas.

As Capdevila-Werning herself notes, when editors confront different editions of literary works, they are forced to choose an authoritative version without the writers'

input. Similar choices are made by preservationists when restoring any historically significant building—including the Parthenon itself, which has undergone extensive repairs over the past few decades. Arguably, the Barcelona Pavilion is no different, and any building is allographic the way a symphony is—reinterpreted successively as it is "performed" through preservation. The reconstruction architects in fact compare the process of interpreting the plans to a modern performance of a Bach oratorio.⁴⁷

Yet, when Capdevila-Werning acknowledges "our intuitive reluctance to conclude that the 1929 pavilion is not the Barcelona Pavilion," she hints that the question at stake is not just about the work's historical importance or "uniqueness"—it is about authorship. "Autographic" suggests a signature, something created by one's personal hand, and



“masterpiece” implies the presence of a “master.”⁴⁸ Highlighting the role of the artist in an artwork is equivalent to Aristotle’s third “cause”—the origin or agent, such as an artisan. A common reason to distrust the authenticity of the 1986 pavilion is the absence of the original architect in the process; Filler’s criticism at the time focused almost exclusively on whether Mies would have made similar choices: “Mies would take strong exception to...,” “Mies wanted it to read as...,” etc.⁴⁹ In the late 1950s, Oriol Bohigas attempted to rebuild the pavilion with Mies, who would have faced the same challenges of durability and constructability that the 1986 builders did. If he had specified similar or even identical materials and details as they did three decades later, would the authenticity of the new pavilion have been questioned? “Without Mies, without his being responsible,” Bohigas lamented in 1958, “we would

no longer be able to think seriously about reconstructing the pavilion.”⁵⁰

Perhaps more than any other work of modern architecture, the identity of the Barcelona Pavilion is fraught with hagiography.⁵¹ Mies has been called “a god among architects,” and his daughter’s description of the 1986 pavilion as being “given to the world...for a second time” sounds less like reconstruction than resurrection.⁵² Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor comes to mind: returning from the dead, Jesus is compelled to remain silent, as “He hasn’t the right to add anything to what He has said of old.”⁵³ The Gospel is the Gospel, complete and intact; any editing would undermine the original Word. If “God is in the details,” as Mies supposedly proclaimed, would altering those details be heretical—even if altered by God himself?⁵⁴ Is the reconstruction’s reunion of form and matter a kind of transubstantiation, or is it a desecration?

It was 1968, a year before Mies’s death, when Roland Barthes first published “The Death of the Author,” insisting that authorial intent is irrelevant to the experience and understanding of a work: “a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.”⁵⁵ Even those rare critics, such as K. Michael Hays, who place the original pavilion in its historical milieu still maintain that the architect’s “authorial motivation” is essential.⁵⁶ Despite the concerns of Filler and others about what “Mies wanted,” a Barthesian view of the pavilion holds that Mies’s interpretation is no more authoritative than anyone else’s—perhaps less so.⁵⁷ He approved of the idea of a reconstruction, and whether he would have made exactly the same decisions about its details is irrelevant: material changes were inevitable.



Figure 7. Some of the earliest published photographs of the reconstruction revealed color and light qualities at times of day never seen before in print. (From *Progressive Architecture* [August 1986]; Photograph courtesy of Lluís Casals.)

Unstuck in Time

The pavilion's relationship to the path of the sun has not been discussed thoroughly in the most widely read texts on the pavilion, possibly because pre-reconstruction reviewers and critics seemed not to know the structure's orientation.⁵⁸ The canonical documentation tells only a partial story: published floor plans typically have not indicated context or the direction of north, and the famous photographs, shot mostly during a single morning in late spring, 1929, fix on a fleeting moment.⁵⁹ In these images, the pavilion is stuck in time.

Because the length is oriented nearly north–south and the main plaza space faces east, an abrupt Manichean shift from light to dark occurs around solar noon. Suddenly the main surfaces seen from the plaza side are thrown into shadow, and by late afternoon most of the pavilion is shrouded in shade. The effect is exaggerated by expansive faces of travertine, which are extremely bright when exposed to sunlight. The colors of the other stones shift markedly throughout the day, along with reflections in water and glass.

The original structure lasted through three seasons, from May through January, so days drew progressively shorter and the sun fell lower in the sky: by autumn, the long backdrop was dark by mid-morning. As a public stage set, it received frontal light only a fraction of the time, so most visitors' experiences would have been markedly different than the photographs capture. The original pavilion was a theatrical prop, evidently intended to be seen only at certain times of day and year.⁶⁰ In reality, it is a place defined by darkness as much as light.

The reconstruction allowed viewers to experience a broad range of light for the first time since 1930. In 1986, some of the first published images rendered it in softer tones, later in the day. Color alone must have been a shock to many readers.⁶¹ Could unfamiliar qualities of light have influenced judgments about authenticity?



8:00 a.m. CET / 7:00 a.m. GMT



10:00 a.m. CET / 9:00 a.m. GMT



12:00 p.m. CET / 11:00 a.m. GMT



2:00 p.m. CET / 1:00 p.m. GMT



4:00 p.m. CET / 3:00 p.m. GMT



6:00 p.m. CET / 5:00 p.m. GMT

Figure 8. Shadow studies, taken in two-hour increments, May 29, 2018. The third image approximates the original photograph from 1929 (Figure 3, *left*). Hours are noted in Central European Time (CET) and Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Spain followed GMT until World War II and now follows CET. From 1918 to 1936, it

inconsistently adopted Daylight Saving Time (DST), so times indicated could be off by an hour for 1929-1930. Later in the year, the original pavilion was shrouded in shade by mid-morning. (Photographs by Michele Currel, commissioned by the author.)

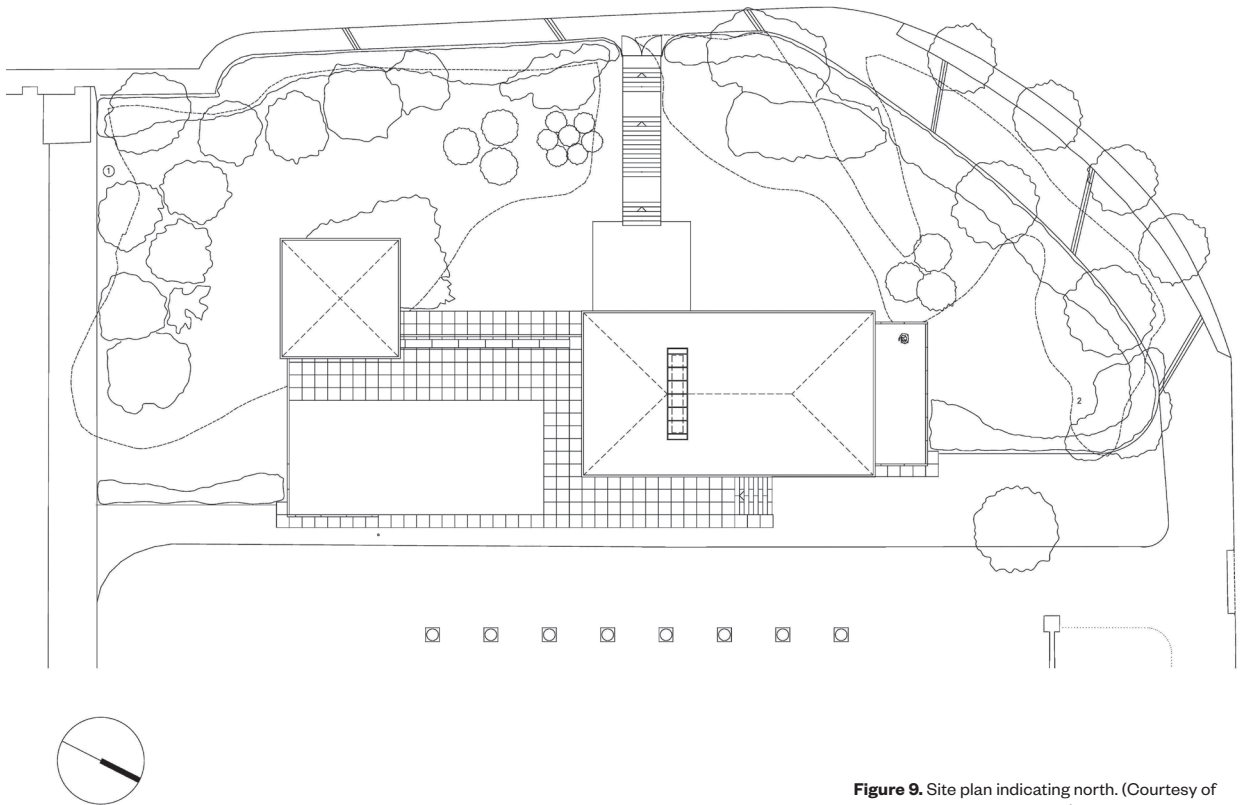


Figure 9. Site plan indicating north. (Courtesy of Fundació Mies van der Rohe.)

Will of an Epoch

Opinions on the authenticity of the reconstruction generally dwell on the pavilion as a physical artifact. Of Aristotle's four "causes," the final is *purpose*—"that for the sake of which a thing is done," its reason for being. Why were the pavilions built at all?

The primary purpose of world's fairs, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and grew in scale and stature well into the twentieth, was spectacle—to broadcast nations' cultural, economic, and political might. "A principal means whereby government and private bodies presented their vision of the world to the masses," explains historian Peter Greenhalgh, "the exhibitions illustrated the relation between money and power . . ." ⁶² Nearly all the participants were colonial powers, and the exhibits typically included exotic objects acquired from foreign lands as "trophies or booty." ⁶³ Unlike displays dedicated to industry or arts, national pavilions conveyed these imperialistic sensibilities without any content, for the structures themselves were the message and the medium. The 1929 German National Pavilion, intended to broadcast an image of the homeland, nevertheless was composed largely of exotic materials from abroad—Roman travertine, Tinian marble, Vert antique from the French Alps, and Moroccan onyx doré, considered "one of the world's rarest and costliest marbles." ⁶⁴ In fact, Mies rejected a proposed German stone because it was not "noble" enough. ⁶⁵ While he claimed that modern architecture demanded new, industrially manufactured components, the German Pavilion was full of extravagant ancient stones extracted from other cultures, in the tradition of the *Wunderkammer*, a chamber of curiosities, the spoils of empire. ⁶⁶

Planning for the Barcelona International Exposition had begun in 1914 but was postponed until after World War I, and Germany, which had been barred from participating in

the 1925 Paris exposition, initially was not included. The Weimar Republic was eager to establish its legitimacy in foreign affairs, and Barcelona was its first significant opportunity. The pavilion was intended specifically to give "voice to the spirit of a new era," according to Georg von Schnitzler, the German commissioner to the exhibition. ⁶⁷ "Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space," Mies famously declared, and Philip Johnson described the pavilion as "a landmark of that period the way Chartres was a landmark of the medieval cathedral." ⁶⁸ The canonical interpretation of the pavilion as "complete abstraction" purged all political meaning: after Mies fled Germany, the pavilion was increasingly recast as "alien to any deep political commitment." ⁶⁹ But visitors in 1929 understood its function as propaganda, calling it "a symbol of Germany's post war *Kultur*" and "representative architecture, like an obelisk or a triumphal arch." Schnitzler announced, "This is the peaceful home of a Germany at peace!" ⁷⁰

Yet, Germany was anything but peaceful at the time. The Weimar period was defined by extreme volatility: An "integral feature of the era," writes historian Detlev Peukert, is "the paradox, rarely explained," combining "the hopeful picture of avant-garde cultural achievement and the bleak picture of political breakdown and social misery." ⁷¹ Many Germans did not accept the authority of the Weimar government, and Mies recounted later, "Building would remain a socially and politically charged activity." ⁷² As the pavilion was being razed, Germany itself came apart, falling into social and economic catastrophe. If the project represented Germany at that time—its stated purpose—the official view of its commissioners and most architects and historians has been that aesthetic purity signified cultural and technological progress. "We do not want anything but clarity, simplicity, honesty," Schnitzler insisted. "You will find

the most visible expression of this in this Pavilion." ⁷³

While the pavilion was meant to signify peace and progress, it equally embodied the precarious circumstances that created it.

Post-reconstruction reviews of the pavilion emphasize dizzying surface and spatial effects, which some critics have questioned as "revisionary" readings. ⁷⁴ In actuality, these views echo the earliest accounts: "Such is the German Pavilion: the architecture of reflections," one reviewer concluded in 1929. "And this, precisely, is the soul of the new Germany." Sunlight was said to "splinter into a thousand flecks of scattered reflections." ⁷⁵ Such surface effects coincide with commercial and cultural trends in 1920s Germany, a fact that does not appear in the canonical literature of the pavilion. As Janet Ward recounts, the "culture (or cult) of surface" that today defines all visual and consumer culture first arose in the cinemas, storefronts, electric signage, and other forms of consumerist spectacle in the Weimar era, presaging the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Ward labels the entire period *Fassadenkultur*, a culture of facades. ⁷⁶ The pavilion's luminous milk-glass vitrine (Figure 3) has been described in mystical terms, but it also seems directly lifted from Berlin's cinemas and shop windows of the time (Figure 10). ⁷⁷

The entire effect of the pavilion could be described as an amalgam of images from both "high" and "low" culture, observers comparing it to everything from a Roman temple to a circus tent. ⁷⁸ The mix of luxurious stones and industrial glass and steel—palace meets factory—threw off many critics in 1929 and foiled later historians' attempts to fit the pavilion neatly into the nascent International Style. ⁷⁹ In one sense, the underlying podium serves the purpose of a classical crepidoma, conveying stability through connection to the earth, but here the platform is hollow, not solid, and cut short



Figure 10. Weimar *Fassadenkultur*. Budapester Strasse, Berlin, 1926. Cinema, shop windows, light boxes, reflective surfaces, horizontal canopies. (Photograph courtesy of Ullstein Bild via Getty Images.)

at the ends, thwarting its role as a visual foundation. It appears more as a stage set, an obvious function for political theater, and early concept sketches make this apparent (Figure 11). The proscenium effect of the front elevation (Figure 1)—wing walls, apron, backdrop, side stair, even a red curtain—evokes theaters or cinemas but also fairgrounds and carnivals. With many of the earmarks of popular fairs—edge location, blurred boundaries, elided space, ephemeral construction, transparency and veiling, illusory materials, etc.—the pavilion conjures Mikhail Bakhtin’s depiction of the carnival as a “world upside down,” a subversive social space: “these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished.”⁸⁰ Set off from the main

space of the exposition, the pavilion was literally a sideshow.

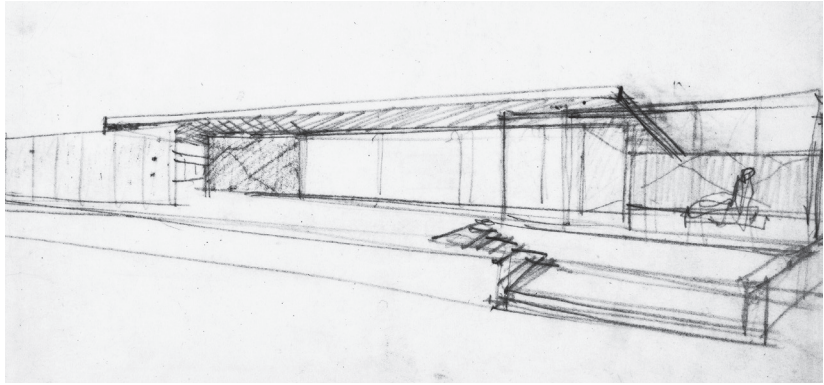
Carnivals and fairs originated as festivals of the dead, and with over two million Germans lost in the war, grief weighed heavily on Weimar society and culture.⁸¹ The year the pavilion came down, Mies submitted a concept for the Neue Wache Memorial to fallen soldiers, in which he proposed the same polished Tinian marble.⁸² After visiting the pavilion, Rubió Tudurí called it a “somber . . . commemorative structure,”⁸³ and others have described it as “numinous” (religious or spiritual), a term most associated with funerary places, “the space of absence.”⁸³ A million dead lie buried nearby, in Barcelona’s main cemetery on the Montjuïc, also notorious for political executions, even after 1929.⁸⁴ In this light, the pavilion’s stepped platform also evokes images of scaffolds, another form of political

spectacle and a common theme in German cinema of the 20s.⁸⁵ One commentator recently described the pavilion as “halfway between a film set and a mausoleum,”⁸⁶ but actually it is both, simultaneously. The pavilion conflates sacred and profane, hallows and gallows.

Early reviews of both the 1929 and 1986 pavilions focused on two specific phenomena—reflective surfaces (glass, polished stone, water) and labyrinthine space (pinwheel movement, bounded but unenclosed rooms) (Figure 5).⁸⁷ Combined, these qualities form a reflective labyrinth, a strange aesthetic condition for a space dedicated to “clarity, simplicity, honesty,” and one that channels two traditions—one “low,” one “high.” The first, a mirror maze, echoes carnivals again. During the early twentieth century, Barnumesque fairs were popular in Germany, stemming largely from

Figure 11. Top: Barcelona Pavilion, early sketch, 1929, attributed to Mies van der Rohe. From the outset, the pavilion resembled a theatrical stage set with platform and proscenium. (Image courtesy of bpk Bildagentur / Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.)

Figure 12. Bottom: Fairground pavilion, Oktoberfest, Munich, 1926. Barnumesque fairs were popular in Germany during the early 1900s. Planar facade, cheap painted materials, stepped platform, proscenium, flags. (Photograph by Georg Pettendorder. Courtesy of Stadtarchiv München.)



rampant “Americanism”⁸⁸ The fairs were escapist diversions, and the spatial disorientation of distorted mirrors (*Zerrspiegel*) may be linked through the pavilion, as a symbol of Germany, to the instability of Weimar culture.⁸⁹ The viewer, notes Josep Quetglas, is “cradicated through reflections.”⁹⁰ The second tradition, a hall of mirrors (*Spiegelsaal*), channels the parlors of European palaces such as the Amalienburg, and the pavilion housed its own “Throne Room,” where the king and queen of Spain presided during the opening ceremonies (Figure 5). The most famous hall of mirrors, the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles—also home to a legendary labyrinth—served as the site of both the formation of the German Empire (1871) (Figure 13) and its disintegration with the Treaty of Versailles (1919).⁹¹ More than any other single space, the Galerie des Glaces witnessed the fate of modern Germany, the pavilion’s symbolic subject.

On one level, the commingling of “high” and “low” could merely indicate an early-modern architect drawing consciously or unconsciously from myriad traditions for an important but rushed commission he confessed he did not understand. “I did not know what a pavilion should be,” Mies recalled. “It was very strange . . .”⁹² But the conflation smacks of the bourgeois, the mixture of democratic and aristocratic values.⁹³ During times of social instability, the differentiation between “high” and “low” culture becomes unsettled, because cultural distinctions coincide with class distinctions—when one fractures, the other follows.⁹⁴ A labyrinth is

the very emblem of such confusion. In German cinema throughout the 1920s, similar motifs—distorted reflections, carnivals, showmen’s stages, mazes, striking shadows, etc.—were seen to be expressions of the Weimar struggle between chaos and order.⁹⁵ The German Pavilion’s uneasy collage of patrician and popular forms was anything but politically meaningless.⁹⁶

This view portrays the pavilion’s sociopolitical conditions in metaphorical terms, but those conditions had a more direct impact on the structure. Mies was hired in May 1928, but thorough planning did not begin until September, only eight months before opening, and development was uneven. Delays stemmed both from equivocation about whether Germany would be invited to the exposition and from Germany’s own indecisions

about whether to include a national pavilion. German officials were said to be “caught by surprise,” so the architect had to design the pavilion “almost overnight.”⁹⁷ Mies remembered, “If the British and the French had not had a pavilion, there would have been no pavilion in Barcelona erected by Germany.”⁹⁸ Due to its uncertain diplomatic position, Germany entered the expo late and began planning for the national pavilion even later, largely to compete with Britain and France (incidentally its enemies during the war). Germany’s political anxieties led to a frenzied development schedule and slapdash construction. In other words, the pavilion’s house-of-cards physical condition was itself a direct consequence of Weimar politics.

This is evident most clearly in the pavilion’s centerpiece, the onyx



Figure 13. Anton von Werner, *The Proclamation of the German Empire*, third version, 1885. Painting depicting the coronation of Wilhelm I as German emperor, Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 1871. Theatrical platform, steps, red and green marble, distorted reflections, flags. (Public domain.)

wall (Figure 5). The search for its material did not occur until that winter, just a handful of months before the pavilion opened, as Mies recalled later:

There was not much time, very little time in fact. It was deep in winter, as you cannot move marble in from the quarry in winter because it is still wet inside and would easily freeze to pieces. So we had to find dry material. I looked round the huge marble depots, and in one I found an onyx block. This block had a certain size and, since I had only the possibility of taking this block, I made the pavilion twice that height.⁹⁹

Pulled from a Hamburg showroom, where it was destined to be carved into vases for a steamer ship dining room, the onyx block, a virtual

found object, became the structure's built-in yardstick, its unique unit of measure ruling the pavilion's dimensions and proportions. Visually, the lavish pinkish-gold wall was the most distinctive part of the architecture, often compared to an altarpiece.¹⁰⁰ It also determined the very form of the building through the heights of the roof, the walls, the columns, and the interior. According to Aristotle, form is part of an artifact's "essence," while materials are "accidental"; but in this case a unique material specimen governed the building's form. The onyx was essential to the pavilion: "I had only the possibility of taking this block."

Germany's political circumstances caused the late start that required using ready-made stone and therefore also directly shaped the pavilion itself—through the size of the onyx slabs.¹⁰¹ In his

criticism of the reconstruction, Filler questions whether Mies would have approved of the color and pattern of the new onyx, but such quibbling overlooks a far more crucial point—the original specimen, lost after 1930, defined the shape of the structure. Without it, the pavilion is a reliquary with the wrong relic.¹⁰² This is possibly the single most significant difference between the two structures.

The 1986 pavilion came about through its own sociopolitical influences. In 2001, Xavier Costa, then the chief curator of Architecture and Art Programs for the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, told me that the decision to rebuild

the pavilion was motivated largely by Spain's return to democracy. The Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, six years after the Barcelona International Exposition, and in 1939 Franco took control of Spain and established dictatorship, which lasted until his death, in 1975.¹⁰³ Much like the Weimar Republic, the City of Barcelona sought ways to reestablish its prewar cultural reputation.¹⁰⁴ The reconstruction of the pavilion was planned to coincide with the centennial of Mies's birth but also to reaffirm the region's cultural status. In the six years between the reconstruction and the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona's economy soared. The city, like the pavilion, was said to be "born again."¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

If we use identity theory to examine the pavilions as physical artifacts, their differences present little philosophical justification for questioning the authenticity of the reconstruction. A pristine phoenix, its form and quality arguably are closer to the prevailing understanding of the building than the original structure was. According to preservationists, a reconstruction "re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes," especially when "such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property."¹⁰⁶ These purposes are validated by the fact that, since 1986, understandings of the pavilion have broadened significantly while echoing those who visited the original structure. One dictionary definition of *preserve* is "to keep alive or in existence; make lasting."¹⁰⁷ Certainly the reconstruction does this by offering a tangible presence, a spatial and temporal experience previously unavailable. "The primary goal of preservation," notes the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, "is to prolong the existence of cultural property."¹⁰⁸

To contend that the two built versions of the Barcelona Pavilion are

essentially the "same" is partly to say that they have equal right to be called by that name. How things are named is a key aspect of identity theory: at any given time, we are justified in calling something by a particular name only if we can give a reason for supposing it to be identical with what we formerly addressed by that name.¹⁰⁹ Yet, arguably the title "Barcelona Pavilion" most commonly refers to the version invoked in fictional notations and narratives.¹¹⁰ Since that version never physically existed, the name expresses identity without an object, a reference without a referent. The official names of the two built structures aptly convey their historical distinctions: the "German National Pavilion" (1929) and the "Mies van der Rohe Pavilion" (1986). One highlights the patron, the other the architect. Both are politically motivated.

The aim of preservation is not merely to maintain material artifacts—it is to appreciate the cultural heritage of the built environment, heritage that depends on both aesthetic and historical conditions. Far from being a "complete abstraction," each of the two built pavilions is explicitly a product of its sociopolitical context. The design and construction of the 1929 pavilion evolved directly out of the situation in Germany at the time. Officially, it was intended to look forward, as an expression of postwar enlightenment and optimism, but in reality, it was stuck precisely in that moment in time, forever frozen in the famous photographs. The 1986 pavilion, however, was motivated by looking backward, to a brighter time in Spain's history. Filler might have been correct all along when he called the new structure "a museum of itself."¹¹¹

In the built pavilions, physical variations are relatively inconsequential, but differences in political motives and circumstances are significant. This should not necessarily delegitimize the reconstruction, but it should underscore the fact that form, material, and meaning cannot be disentangled easily.

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Notes

- 1 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1869), 19.
- 2 For a thorough discussion of the ship of Theseus, see Peter Pesic, *Seeing Double: Shared Identities in Physics, Philosophy, and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 15ff. For additional reading on identity theory, see Andrew Brennan, *Conditions of Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); and David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).
- 3 Paul Goldberger, "Mies Masterpiece's New Incarnation," *New York Times*, March 26, 1987, C22. Goldberger compares the reconstruction to Shangri-La, as if it is a fantasy or hallucination.
- 4 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Cristian Cirici, and Fernando Ramos, *Mies van der Rohe: Barcelona Pavilion* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1993), 38–39.
- 5 Philip Johnson, quoted in Michael Brenson, "Mies Pavilion to Rise Again," *New York Times*, April 1, 1983.
- 6 Warren A. James, "Barcelona," *Progressive Architecture* 67, no. 8 (August 1986): 62.
- 7 Solà-Morales et al., *Mies van der Rohe*, 38–39.

- In his study of the mythology of the 1929 photographs, George Dodds refers to the 1986 pavilion as a “full-size replica.” *Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion* (New York: Routledge, 2005), x.
- 8 Martin Filler, “Barcelona Reborn: Mies van der Rohe’s 1929 Pavilion, Rebuilt on its Original Site,” *House & Garden* 158, no. 12 (December 1986): 216.
- 9 Anna and Eugeni Bach, *Mies Missing Materiality*, Fundació Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona, November 8–28, 2017, <http://miesbcn.com/project/mies-missing-materiality/>.
- 10 Fabrizio Gallanti, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” *Interwoven*, 2017, <http://kvadratinterwoven.com/hidden-in-plain-sight>. See also Lola García, “Top 5 Fake Monuments in Barcelona,” *OK Apartment Barcelona*, November 26, 2013, http://www.barcelonacheckin.com/en/r/barcelona_tourism_guide/articles/fake-architecture.php.
- 11 Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. “preserve (v.),” accessed June 12, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/preserve>.
- 12 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VI: 2 and VII: 4, in *A New Aristotle Reader*, ed. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 280ff.
- 13 Aristotle, *Physics* II: 3, in *A New Aristotle Reader*, 98ff.
- 14 Solà-Morales et al., *Mies van der Rohe*, pt. II.
- 15 One notable omission from the original context is the gigantic Ionic colonnade that stood to the east, opposite its twin at the far end of the Gran Plaza de la Fuente Mágica, the core of the exposition (Figure 4). The colonnade is considered by some to have been crucial to the perception of the pavilion. See Josep Quetglas, *Fear of Glass: Mies van der Rohe’s Pavilion in Barcelona* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2001), 37ff.
- 16 Plato, *Republic*, VII, bk. VII, 514a–521d.
- 17 Pestic continues, “What is *real* has a kind of inner integrity; the ship of Theseus is real if it maintains its original, authentic form. Such a form, however, is not an individual but a universal that transcends any specific material ship.” *Seeing Double*, 17 (see n. 2).
- 18 Filler, “Barcelona Reborn,” 217. Fritz Neumeyer writes that the pavilion “led an ideal architectural existence as a Platonic object with nothing other than itself to display.” *Mies van der Rohe: German Pavilion, International Exposition, Barcelona, Spain, 1928–29 (reconstructed 1986), Tugendhat House, Brno, Czech, 1928–30* (Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita, 1995), 8.
- 19 Franz Schulze in *The Mies van der Rohe Archive* 2, ed. Arthur Drexler (New York: Garland, 1986), 219.
- 20 Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe*, 2.
- 21 Vincent Scully, *Modern Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (1961; New York: Braziller, 1984), 28.
- 22 Playing with the perception of the pavilion as form independent of matter is the intent of the Bachs’ installation, *Mies Missing Materiality*, which covered all the surfaces in white vinyl panels “to strip it of all materiality,” transforming the pavilion into what the architects considered a one-to-one scale model of itself. *Mies Missing Materiality*, 20 (see n. 9).
- 23 George Howe, “Abstract Design in Modern Architecture,” *Parnassus* 8, no. 5 (October 1936): 30.
- 24 Filler, “Barcelona Reborn,” 219–20.
- 25 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 299 (see n. 12).
- 26 See Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance*, 125 (see n. 2).
- 27 Juan Pablo Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation: A Study of Expressive Systems in Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1979), 25.
- 28 Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947), 58.
- 29 See Dodds, *Building Desire*, 9ff (see n. 7).
- 30 Rosa Ma Subirana Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe’s German Pavilion in Barcelona, 1929–1986* (Barcelona, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1987), 96. In the reconstruction, the sculpture is bronze.
- 31 For a thorough analysis of the published floor plans, see Wolf Tegethoff, *Mies van der Rohe: The Villas and Country Houses* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), 70ff.
- 32 In *Building Desire*, Dodds portrays the original photographs as a third pavilion, insisting that while all three are “equally ‘authentic,’ they are not all equal” (120). Yet, his entire thesis is that the photographs take primacy: “The rebuilding of the pavilion does not so much enable us to walk freely and unencumbered through the real thing, as it has given us fresh insights into the photographs from 1929 and their often tenuous relations to occupiable space” (38). He maintains that if the original pavilion had not disappeared, its continued presence would have “destabilized” the power of the photographs (120). In 2002, Dodds told me he had not visited the reconstruction and did not plan to.
- 33 US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, “Standards for Reconstruction,” accessed January 30, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-reconstruction.htm>.
- 34 Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: Norton, 1999), 20.
- 35 Umberto Eco, “Notes on Referring as Contract,” in *Kant and the Platypus: Essays on Language and Cognition*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Harvest, 1997), 323.
- 36 Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance*, 91.
- 37 John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (1885; Oxford University Press, 2012), 392.
- 38 In 1947 Philip Johnson hailed the pavilion as “an original work of art” and “one of the milestones of modern architecture”: “it is lamentable that it existed for only one season.” *Mies van der Rohe* (1947), 58. In 1954, Oriol Bohigas argued that the pavilion should be rebuilt because of its status as “the most important, culturally transcendent work built in Spain in recent centuries.” Quoted in Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe’s German Pavilion*,
58. In 2017, a survey of leading architects ranked the pavilion the third “most important and influential” building of the twentieth century. See Thom Mayne, Eui-Sung Yi, and Val Warke, *100 Buildings* (New York: Rizzoli, 2017), 14–15.
- 39 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217–51.
- 40 Jean-Louis Cohen remarks, “The rediscovered colour seems rather forced, because the pavilion has assumed the aura of authenticity in the black and white of the photographs. To some extent this reverses Walter Benjamin’s thesis. . . . However, the recreated opportunity of passing through the space of the pavilion makes two-dimensional reproductions pale by comparison.” *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: E & FN Spon, 1996), 52. Neil Levine is less convinced: “A replica of the building has replaced the photograph as the agent of preservation. The question is whether ‘more’ or ‘less’ has been preserved.” “Building the Unbuilt: Authenticity and the Archive,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, no. 1 (March 2008): 15.
- 41 Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1968), 112–13. Juan Pablo Bonta was the first to apply Goodman’s theories to the pavilion—even before the reconstruction was built. See Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 24–25.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 Remei Capdevila-Werning, *Goodman for Architects* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 80.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 93–99.
- 45 A standard critique of Goodman is that under certain conditions an artwork can be both singular and multiple, unique and not unique. Etching is autographic while producing multiple instances. Theoretically, if every molecule of a painting were perfectly cloned, it would shift from singular to multiple while remaining autographic. See Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 108ff.
- 46 Matt Tyrnauer, “Architecture in the Age of Gehry,” *Vanity Fair* (August 2010), <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/08/architecture-survey-201008>.
- 47 Solà-Morales et al., *Mies van der Rohe*, 39 (see n. 4).
- 48 Museum historian Tony Bennett writes that “the masterpiece is ‘the quintessential complete and finished object’ . . . a self-subsistent singularity existing outside the orders of time.” *The Birth of the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 44. Calling the pavilion a “masterpiece” portrays it as the product of the architect alone, disconnected from its context.
- 49 Filler, “Barcelona Reborn,” 219–20 (see n. 8). He acknowledges that “Mies neglected to consider” certain construction details.
- 50 “Wonderful News: Mies van der Rohe Offers to Rebuild the Famous 1929 Pavilion,” *Destino* 1080, April 19, 1958, 36–37; reprinted in Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe’s German Pavilion*, 58–59 (see n. 30).

- 51 Of his 1947 monograph on Mies, Philip Johnson later said, "I thought of it as hagiography, exegesis, propaganda—I just wanted to show that Mies was the greatest architect in the world." Quoted in Tegethoff, 71.
- 52 "God" quotation from Rowan Moore, "Mies by Detlef Mertins Review—'Definitive' Biography," *The Guardian*, April 27, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/apr/27/mies-van-der-rohe-detlef-mertins-biography-review>.
- 53 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (1880; New York: Dover, 2005), 225–27.
- 54 "Although the reconstruction architects might not have regarded Mies an infallible oracle," muses Filler, "neither did they try to make him into a ventriloquist's dummy." "Barcelona Reborn," 219–20. Dodds compares the reconstruction to the practice of idolatry, the fashioning of material effigies meant to resummon the gods. *Building Desire*, 63, n. 119 (see n. 7).
- 55 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (1977; Glasgow: Fontana, 1982), 146.
- 56 K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *Perspecta* 21 (1984), 27.
- 57 Reflecting on the pavilion, Rafael Moneo notes that an architect "does not control his or her works completely" and "only partly governs" a building's meaning. *Introduction to Fear of Glass*, by Quetglas, 9 (see n. 15). Mies himself insisted, perhaps disingenuously, that buildings are not "the works of individual architects. Who asks for the names of these builders?" In Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (1947), 186 (see n. 28).
- 58 See Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 208 (see n. 27).
- 59 Of the original fourteen photographs, only one was taken after noon: the view from the southwest corner of the plaza, facing north (Figure 6, photo on the left). This image was relatively rarely published in the most widely read monographs and histories between 1932 and 1986 (notably Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (1947), 68; and Scully, *Modern Architecture*, pl. 77 (see n. 21). The version published is printed lightly, possibly through dodging, rendering the shadows softer.
- 60 Dodds maintains that Mies saw the temporary pavilion as merely a maquette to generate the photographs—an image-making machine. *Building Desire*, 120 (see n. 7). Surrealist photographers of the period used similar techniques, and the pavilion's reversal of dark and light is reminiscent of the "solarization" techniques of Man Ray, with whom Mies was acquainted. See Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social & Aesthetic History of Photography* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 268.
- 61 Dodds suggests that color in the pavilion (e.g., the red curtain) may have been intended only to influence how the black-and-white photos would read, a technique Mies would have learned from German cinema: "We can look at the reconstruction, much as one looks at an old motion picture recently colorized." *Building Desire*, 118.
- 62 Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Visions: The "Expositions Universelles," Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 27.
- 63 Burton Benedict, "Rituals of Representation: Ethnic Stereotypes and Colonized Peoples at World's Fairs," in *Fair Representations: World's Fairs and the Modern World*, ed. Robert W. Rydell and Nancy E. Gwinn (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 29–31.
- 64 Caroline Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden: Modernity and the Picturesque," *AA Files* 20 (1990): 49. The onyx alone reportedly accounted for 20 percent of the original construction cost. Kurt Andersen, "His Was the Simplicity that Stuns," *Time* 127, no. 9, (March 3, 1986): 77.
- 65 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Carsten Krohn, *Mies van der Rohe: The Built Work* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2014), 76.
- 66 On Mies's views about industrial materials, see "The Industrialization of Building Methods" (1924), printed in Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (1947), 184–87. On the Wunderkammer, see Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 40, 73, 93 (see n. 38).
- 67 Georg von Schnitzler, quoted in Nicolau Maria Rubió Tudurí, "The German Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe at the Barcelona Exhibition," *Cahiers d'Art VIII–IX* (1929): 409–11; reprinted in Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion*, 42 (see n. 30).
- 68 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 93. Philip Johnson quoted in Brenson, "Mies Pavilion to Rise Again" (see n. 5).
- 69 Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 158 (see n. 27). Even today, the pavilion is thought "to hold the chaos and strife of Europe in the 1920s at a distance, providing an alternate space that might allow the modern subject to escape into its cool lines . . ." Sreenjaya Ria Banerjee, "Reclaiming Space: Buildings in Modernist Literature and Film" (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2014), 30.
- 70 On the pavilion and Germany's postwar *Kultur*, see Tudurí, "The German Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe," 42. Schnitzler quotation from Helen Appleton Read, "Germany at the Barcelona World's Fair," *Arts* (October 1929): 112–13.
- 71 Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), xiii.
- 72 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge: MIT, 1991), 429.
- 73 Georg von Schnitzler, quoted in Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion*, 31–32 (see n. 30).
- 74 Rosalind Krauss, "The Grid, The /Cloud/, and The Detail," in *The Presence of Mies*, ed. Detlef Mertins (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 133–34.
- 75 The same review called it a "labyrinth of large planes." Ángel Marsa and Lluís Marsillach, *La montana iluminada*, 1929; reprinted as Epigraph to Quetglas, *Fear of Glass*, 15 (see n. 15). Tudurí noted, "Some of this glass, in a dark and neutral shade, reflects objects and people, so that what can be seen through the glass mingles with what is seen in reflection" (42). Bruno Taut's only remark about the pavilion focused on its reflective surfaces. *Modern Architecture* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1929), 194.
- 76 Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2, 9.
- 77 "[T]he luminous court . . . has an ineffable quality. Its light seems to emanate magically from within . . ." Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden," 50 (see n. 64).
- 78 "Seen from its main approach, the Pavilion, atop its substantial podium, has the effect of a Roman temple . . ." Dirk Lohan, remarks at the opening of the reconstruction, 1986, quoted in Torrent, *Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion*, 61. In 1980, Manfred Tafuri compared the pavilion to theatrical scenery, a circus tent, and a labyrinth—all in a single paragraph. *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Garde and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acerno and Robert Connolly (1980; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 111. The word *pavilion* originally referred to a tent, related etymologically to *papillon*, "butterfly," a winged thing.
- 79 Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson confessed to having trouble placing the pavilion in the 1932 exhibition, in part because of its overt references to "great styles of the past," which they saw as an exception to the rule. *The International Style* (1932; London: Norton, 1966), ix–x, 48. In 1986, remarking on the reconstruction, John Morris Dixon called the pavilion "an icon of the Modern movement, which believed in discarding all architecture of the past—and would have scorned the commemorative rebuilding of a structure from half a century past." "Paradoxes of Restoration," *Progressive Architecture* (August 1986): 11.
- 80 Mikhail Bakhtin, quoted in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 7. The canonical view failed to see the pavilion's relationship to "architecture of the past."
- 81 Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 272. For the origin of fairs, see T. F. G. Dexter, *The Pagan Origin of Fairs* (Cornwall, UK: New Knowledge Press, 1930).
- 82 Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 137–38 (see n. 62).
- 83 For "somber," see Tudurí, "The German Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe," 42 (see n. 68). For "numinous," see Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden," 49. For "space of absence," see Richard A. Etlin, *Symbolic Space: French Enlightenment Architecture and Its Legacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 172.
- 84 Brad Epps, "Barcelona and Modernity," in *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City*, ed. Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana (Liverpool,

- UK: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 156.
- 85 Bennett uses Michel Foucault's writings on scaffolds to show the similarities between museums and public executions as spectacles of political power. *The Birth of the Museum*, 60ff (see n. 48). In Weimar film, see the famous gallows scene in G. W. Pabst, *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, 1927. Death and grief were pervasive themes in Weimar film. Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).
- 86 Adam Jasper, "A Virtual Look into Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion," *ArchDaily*, September 18, 2015, <https://www.archdaily.com/773846/a-virtual-look-into-mies-van-der-rohes-barcelona-pavilion>.
- 87 See especially Caroline Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden"; and Robin Evans, "Mies van der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries," *AA Files* 19 (Spring 1990): 60. Incidentally, Theseus's return from Crete after slaying the Minotaur in the labyrinth is the voyage that spawned the philosophical paradox of his ship.
- 88 Peukert, *Weimar Republic*, 178ff (see n. 72).
- 89 A distorted mirror is a common metaphor for Weimar politics. Stephan Malinowski, "Politische Skandale als Zerrspiegel der Demokratie. Die Fälle Barmat und Sklarek im Kalkül der Weimarer Rechten," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 5 (1996), 46–65.
- 90 Quetglas, *Fear of Glass*, 129 (see n. 15). Bennett describes "fun house" mirrors as undermining self-identity and subverting conventional relationships between body and space. *Birth of the Museum*, 237–41.
- 91 Schulze notes that Mies's youth, in the early days of the empire, was a time of great national pride, and during his boyhood in Aachen he was particularly enamored with the Palatine Chapel, the coronation hall for German kings for 600 years. His 1910 concept for the Bismarck Memorial was a proto-fascist glorification of the first chancellor of the German Empire. Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, 5ff, 31ff.
- 92 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in H. T. Cadbury-Brown, "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: an address of appreciation," *Architectural Association Journal* 75, no. 834 (July–August 1959): 27.
- 93 In 1929, Tuduri noted the pavilion's "pronounced sentimental tendency": "It may appear surprising to encounter sentiment in a very modern and very technical work of architecture, but we must acknowledge that architecture can only with difficulty escape from the social influences giving rise to it." "The German Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe," 42.
- 94 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social of The Judgement of Taste*, transl. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
- 95 Siegfried Kraacauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). The links between Mies's work and Weimar cinema are significant. See Lutz Roberts, "Modern Architecture in the Age of Cinema: Mies van der Rohe and the Moving Image" (PhD dissertation, School of Architecture, Princeton University, 2012).
- 96 Even a critic as astute as Robin Evans overlooked this aspect of the pavilion, noting that while Weimar artists wrote of the political "ground shaking beneath my feet" (George Grosz), "it was not visible in Mies's architecture. Insulated from seismic disturbance, the pavilion gives no indication of it . . ." "Mies van der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries," 67. Dodds notes, "Mies's interest was not statecraft . . . but stagecraft." *Building Desire*, 119 (see n. 7).
- 97 For an account of the planning, see Solà-Morales et al., *Mies van der Rohe*, 7ff (see n. 4). For "caught by surprise," see Ludwig Glaeser, quoted in Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 155 (see n. 27). For "almost overnight," see Sarah Booth Conroy, "Brief Splendor of Mies van der Rohe's Enduring Pavillion," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1979/10/14/brief-splendor-of-mies-van-der-rohes-enduring-pavillion/8e03117c-36fi-4off-a1c3-1f3bc1736e15/?utm_term=.fd2d2e07d5c.
- 98 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Cadbury-Brown, "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe," 28.
- 99 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 151.
- 100 Glaeser refers to "the onyx wall, which identified the ritual center." Quoted in Bonta, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, 208. See also Dodds, *Building Desire*, 132.
- 101 The onyx slabs have a presumably unintended similarity to Surrealist *objets trouvés*, which evolved directly out of artists' disillusionment with World War I and represented the crisis of the traditional art object by shifting the relationships between artisan and artifact to that of producer and consumer. See Diane Waldman, *Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object* (New York: Abrams, 1992).
- 102 The word *relic* stems from "remains," such as the bones of a saint or martyr. Cynthia Hahn's description sounds very much like the pavilion: "The reliquary, while framing the relic and thus creating an interior, also joins together the relic and reliquary, simultaneously destroying any clear sense of interior and exterior and fusing the contained and the containing." *The Reliquary Effect: Ensbrining the Sacred Object* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 12.
- 103 Had Mies been successful in rebuilding the pavilion in the 1950s, it would have been under Franco's regime. "If the devil himself offered Mies a job," said Philip Johnson, "he would take it." Quoted in Elaine S. Hochman, *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich* (New York: Fromm, 1990), 53.
- 104 Xavier Costa, conversation with the author, 2001. Also see his "Moments and Situations: The Pavilion and Its Archive," in *Muntadas On Translation: Barcelona Pavilion Intervention*, ed. Xavier Costa (Barcelona: Actar and Mies van der Rohe Foundation, 2009).
- 105 Margot Hornblower, "The Most Dynamic City in Europe?" *Time* 135, no. 24 (June 11, 1990), 86.
- 106 National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, "Four Approaches to the Treatment of Historic Properties," <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-reconstruction.htm>.
- 107 "Preserve." Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/preserve> (accessed July 9, 2018).
- 108 The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), *Definitions of Conservation*, <http://www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/governance/definitions-of-conservation-terminology.pdf>.
- 109 John Searle, "Proper Names and Descriptions," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 489.
- 110 The origin of the common name "Barcelona Pavilion" has not been thoroughly traced before. Two years after the demolition of the original, the project appeared in Hitchcock and Johnson's *The International Style* (1932) under the name "Barcelona pavilion," without a capitalized second initial. That book was a follow-up to the Museum of Modern Art exhibit, *Modern Architecture*, and in his essay in the accompanying catalog, Johnson makes several references to the "Barcelona Pavilion" (both words capitalized). Alfred H. Barr Jr., Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Philip Johnson, and Lewis Mumford, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932), 115ff. By capitalizing both words, Johnson converts the more casual allusion to a proper noun, a practice he continued in his 1947 monograph, which popularized both Mies and the pavilion. With the rise and fall of the Third Reich, the renaming suppressed the pavilion's associations with German nationalism.
- 111 Filler, "Barcelona Reborn," 216 (see n. 8).