



“The entire modern movement – looked at as an intellectual movement dating from Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, going through the Werkbund, Bauhaus, Le Corbusier to World War II – may be winding up its days.

There is **only one absolute today and that is change**. There are no rules, surely no certainties in any of the arts. There is only the feeling of a wonderful freedom, of endless past years of historically great buildings to enjoy.

I cannot worry about **a new eclecticism**. Even Richardson who considered himself an eclectic was not one. **A good architect will always do original work**. A bad one would do bad ‘modern’ work as well as bad work, that is imitative with historical forms.

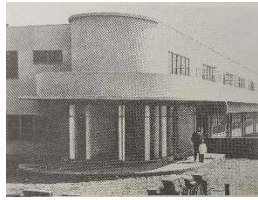
Structural honesty seems to me one of the bugaboos that we should free ourselves from very quickly. The Greeks with their marble columns imitating wood, and covering up the wood roofs inside! The Gothic designers with their wooden roofs above to protect their delicate vaulting. And Michelangelo, the greatest architect in history, with his Mannerist column!

No, our day **no longer has need of moral crutches** of late 19th century vintage. If Viollet-le-Duc was what the young Frank Lloyd Wright was nurtured on, Geoffrey Scott and Russell Hitchcock were my Bibles.

I am old enough to have enjoyed the International Style immensely and worked in it with the greatest pleasure. I still believe Le Corbusier and Mies to be the greatest living architects. But now the age is changing so fast. Old values are swept away by new with dizzying but thrilling speed. Long live Change!

The danger you see of a sterile academic eclecticism is no danger. The danger is the opposite, the sterility of your Academy of the Modern Movement.”

This was an excerpt of a letter written by Philip Johnson on Dec. 6, 1961 to Dr. Joedicke, a historian and critic of contemporary architecture and his concern for **a new eclecticism sweeping through architecture, ending the modern movement**.



The Russel Hitchcock that Johnson spoke of in this letter, was also a historian, who had written an article in 1928 that caught Johnson's eye. The article was in a journal his mother had given him, trying find a direction for Philip, who had dropped out of studying Greek philosophy from Harvard.

The article was about a recent project (Hook of Holland Housing, 1931) by the architect **J.J.P. Oud and the clean, modern forms** peaked Johnson's architectural interests.



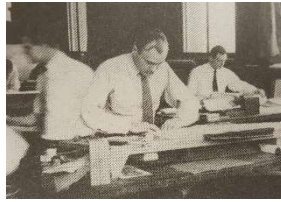
Learning this, his mother connected him with Alfred Barr, who had given a lecture on modern architecture and was starting a new museum of modern art (MoMA) in New York the following year (Nov.7, 1929) with Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. He asked Johnson if he would like to be the **Director for a Department of Architecture**.

He also connected him with Russel Hitchcock and the two of them set off across Europe, visiting and photographing all the latest works of modern architecture. They visited the **Bauhaus in Dessau**, the **Weissenhof development in Stuttgart**, J.J.P. Oud's work Hitchcock had written about and Johnson had read.

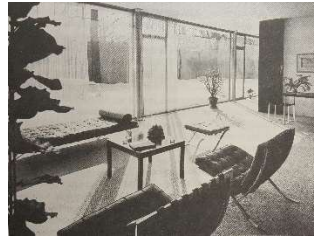
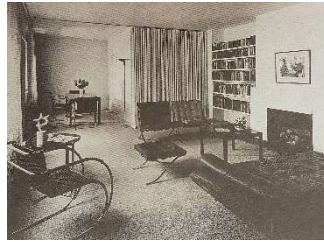
Unfortunately, one oversight, their journies did not take them to Barcelona, to see Mies' German Pavilion.



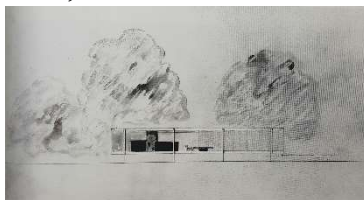
After two years of travel and documentation, Johnson and Hitchcock mounted the innugural show at the newly formed MoMA museum, titled **Modern Architecture: International Exhibition** (Feb. 10, 1932), featuring works of the new modern architects, which included **Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier**, the **Tugendhat house by Mies**, the **House on the Mesa by Wright** and **Pinehurst by Oud**.



The show included a companion book titled, [The International Style: Architecture since 1922](#), which was the textbook on modern architecture, when Johnson returned to Harvard in 1940 at the age of 34, to get his degree and license in Architecture.



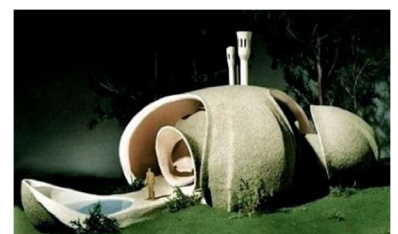
Throughout the 1930s and 40s, Johnson continued his work at the museum mounting shows, while designing private residences on the side, all the while, a loyal supporter of Mies and his work. **1930 NY apartment**, furnishings designed by Mies and Lilly Reich and featured in the 1932 exhibition. **1940 Hidden House**, **1942 Cambridge House**, **1949 Glass House**.



Johnson began work on the design of a house for himself in the mid-1940s, ultimately working through **79 schemes and 27 variations** on design parti.

However, it was a trip to Chicago in 1946, visiting Mies to organize a solo show of his work at the museum (Sept. 1947), that Johnson came across a sketch and model for a house made of glass. A **one room glass house**, rendered in watercolor over a simple pencil sketch, a transparent box seemingly suspended over the horizon line. The white steel structure held off the ground, atop piers. When Johnson saw this he realized instantly, an all-glass **belvedere (beautiful scene)** could be built.

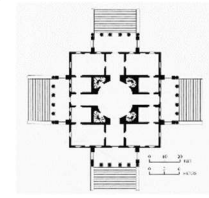
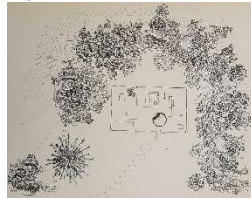
By midsummer 1947, he produced an eighth scale model of his own.



He decided to build his glass house in New Canaan, Connecticut, because a group of his classmates, known as the **Harvard Five**, already had houses there. The group was made up of Johnson, **John Johansen**, **Eliot Noyes**, **Landis Gores** and their teacher **Marcel Breuer**.



On a 5 acre parcel (eventually expanded to 49 acres) of overgrown farmland with a gradual slope descending from Ponus Ridge Road, near New Canaan. The western **edge falls off steeply 80 feet**, a natural retaining wall of boulders left behind by departing glaciers millennia ago. Century-old oaks frame a view to the west of the Rippowan Valley, carved by a meandering stream at the bottom.



A **door on each elevation**, facing each cardinal direction, referencing Palladio's Villa Rontonda (1592), **identically symmetrical on all four sides**, to capture the full 360 degree view of the surroundings. Both featured a circular feature inside, although Johnson offset his asymmetrically where the interior takes on a more modern arrangement.



Like the Rotunda, the Glass House has **no roof overhangs** and is set upon a **56'x32'** two step **podium made of textured ironspot brick** from Ohio, becoming the interior floor, layed in a herringbone pattern (over an innovative radiant heating piping).

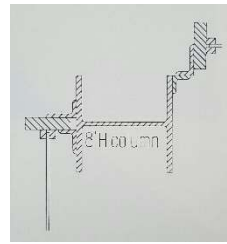


Penetrating the roof plane, the **brick cylinder anchors the glass box**, as Wright's hearth did the Prairie houses. An **allusion** to "a burnt wooden village (he) saw once where nothing was left but the foundations and chimney of brick."



I-beams delineate the corners and cornice, with wood framed for the roof deck.

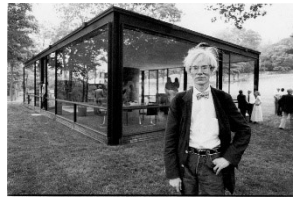
A belt of steel divided the glass with a chair rail, functional for his tipsy guests, yet referential of **a classical wainscot**.



Ground was broken on March 20, 1948 and construction began. Full-sized drawings of the **steel details for mullions, cornice, corner posts, and door jambs**, with specifications for **18 ft. sheets of glass** were sent to New York for fabrication.



Eight months later, it was finished on New Year's Eve of 1949, at a cost of \$60K, four times that of an average home.



Even before the glass plates were in place, rumors of an all-glass house lured on-lookers, flocks of uninvited visitors blocked traffic on the road. Editors and reporters in New York referred to it as Johnson's **'private' residence**, the publicity far exceeding Johnson's hopes.



Inside, an area **rug, a "raft"**, defined the seating area. The furnishing a Meis/Reich arrangement reverent of the Barcelona pavilion. The **grouping defined an intimate space**, without the need for partitions, just as Wright had done with the chair backs of the Robie dining room set.



However, unlike Wright's houses where every furnishing, patterned window, light fixture, and door knob was designed to be made by hand, Johnson's glass house was **furnished almost entirely of factory-made materials**, and the work of another designer (Mies).



Johnson had **neither the training nor experience in the study of architecture**, either **academically or in professional practice**. Most of the drafting and model making was at the hand of Landis Gore. However, he did have an **eye for aesthetics** and where Wright set out to deconstruct the architectural box, **Johnson deconstructed architecture while building a box**. [2018.11.15 8:12am oo]

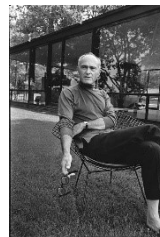


With no walls on which to hang artwork, Johnson designed a metal frame easel to display an old-master painting (Nicolas Poussin's **The Burial of Phocion**, 1648-49, recommended purchase by Alfred Barr), a **reference point for his new form of classicism**.



The painting depicted an **idealized Roman landscape**, with temples and rolling hills, capturing the way Johnson saw the landscape of the glass house. Here is clear evidence of his taste, despite any doings in glass and steel. Philip Johnson was a **classist at heart** and his references to that effect in this architectural statement, stood in direct **opposition to the modernist credo to deny any historical precedent**.

"It seems I cannot be but Classically inspired; symmetry, order, clarity above all."



Here was a house whose design spoke to the individual inhabiting it, defined by his **persona, his tastes, his intimacies**. No strict adherence to any Meisean vigor of a common language that takes precedence over the particular, nor Corbusier's manifesto or Wright's Prairie credo - Johnson's **intimate house exposed in glass**, was the first stone cast at the walls of architecture as a disciplined art: **style over ideology, the visual artist over the scholarly architect**.



Obliquely opposite the painting was a sculpture, **Two Circus Women** (Elie Nadelman), a paper-mâché figural piece of two embracing woman, the generous **curves and textured surfaces of their bodies** "the foil" which the **hard lines and machine smoothness** of the house needed. Wright repositioned it during a visit, saying "Philip, leave perfect symmetry to God!"



As in the Barcelona pavilion, Corbusier's Citroen house, and Wright's Prairies, a curtain was hung from a track on the ceiling, a **flexible curtain wall**. Like the **shoji screens** of the Japanese pavilion, it extended around the entire glass perimeter. Far from a blackout shade, the **translucent natural fabric**, woven from the tropical pandanus Palm, reverent **Semper's woven mat** walls, cut the glare and peering eyes.

[Low bar of the kitchen, southeast corner, 6 ft high row of cabinets concealed bed]



Parallel to the glass house, but offset as in the shifting planes of the abstract neo-plastic painters, stood a guest house 90 feet away. Built at the same time as the glass house, the guest house was the **physical solid extracted, creating the glass house void**.



Three porthole windows face away on the rear, in contrast to the rectilinear geometry of the glass house. The space between the two structures define a **Miesian courtyard**. The guest house contained the mechanical systems providing heat, power and water, connected underground, enabling the glass house to remain **pure art like the Barcelona pavilion, void of the practicalities of architecture**.

"I'd rather live in the nave of Chartes Cathedral and go out doors down the street for the john."

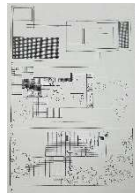
[10 MINUTE BREAK]



Schedule vuoto visit.



Despite the exhibition of the concept for a house made of glass in the exhibition of Meis' work in 1947, Johnson was able to usurp all the press, by getting the first one built.



Located on 9 acres of alluvial farmland near Plano, Illinois, the Farnsworth house completed in 1951. The plan evolved from the Barcelona pavilion (1929) and Tugendhat house (1930).

Within the Tugendhat house, we see the **Barcelona furniture arrangement, set against the freestanding wall**. The **three spaces defined by the eight column grid**, the seating now **shifts to the flanks, balanced by a new circular freestanding wall**.

The Barcelona **reflecting pools have become exterior terraces**, with the same formal arrangement, scale, and processional approach.

In the Farnsworth house, the **tripartite composition has shifted to a pairing of positive and void**. What Johnson had done with the brick guest house, Mies has done with the house and terrace.



The flat **cantilevering roof, casting the Japanese shadow** of inside space, establishes the **formal solid, juxtaposed with the terrace void**.

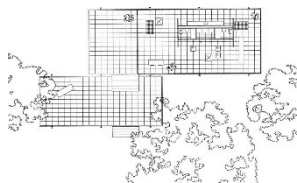


The house sits completely off the terrace, as it is held off the ground, as if **weightless to float freely in space, reminiscent of the neo-plastic paintings**.



The pure geometry of Keisler's **floating planes in the City of Space** are finally realized. **Sightlines through** flow as easily as space.

The 1947 exhibition of Meis' work described the Farnsworth house as having the **purity of a cage**, while Johnson viewed his Glass House as a stripped down post and lintel frame that constituted a **classical eight column loggia**.



A **single room, without movable windows or partitions**, it could work for a bachelor, but not the typical American family. As foreign to a sense of dwelling, as the Japanese pavilion was in 1893. A **different concept of living**, which regards **cooking, eating, sleeping as casual variations of one central activity**, rather than separate activities in themselves.

One woman visiting the house said to Johnson, "Well, it may be very beautiful, but I certainly couldn't live here." To which Johnson quipped, "I haven't asked you to, madam."



Johnson not only opened his house to the press, but he was **an open book**, available to answer all questions. He permitted photographers to take pictures. His life, as you would expect of a man **living in a glass house**.

He understood the general public would be preoccupied with the oddity, vulnerability, and voyeuristic possibilities of a glass house. He focused instead on the need to curate the critical reception within the smaller realms of the architectural community and the museum world.

He had seen how Gropius and Breuer, upon arriving in the United States, designed and built houses for themselves as a means of exhibiting their brand of new architecture, demonstrating for a conservative client base the new things they could do. Just as Wright had done with his home, a laboratory and showcase.

Here Johnson was demonstrating **a new way of living, in the modern world**, where a future would be more **transparent, exposed, open to public eye**.

Expecting a glass house to invite the casting of critical stones, Johnson did not leave the house to speak for itself, he wrote of the house as a curator and critic, in the most prestigious journal of the day - Architectural Review, titled **House at New Canaan, Connecticut** (Sept. 1950), reminiscent of Wright's Ladies Home Journal advertisement, A Home in a Prairie Town.

Looking not to boast his originality, rather Johnson **sited his sources of inspiration, seeking acceptance into the architectural community**, to be viewed on par with the more scholarly architects and critics.



The geometry referenced the **abstract painted rectangles of Malevich** and Theo van Doesburg, and Meis' rectangular arrangements of courtyard houses. Including a photograph of the Farnsworth model, as the house was yet built (1951). "The idea of a glass house comes from Meis van der Rohe. My debt is therefore clear. He sited Meis' discovery in working with glass models, that reflectivity was more significant than light and shadow.



A masterpiece of understatement, also borrowing a page from Meis' demeanor, the article **offered no manifesto**, his text consisted solely of captions, **written in first person as a welcoming host showing a visitor around the house**. However, Johnson was claiming a place along architecture's timeline.

In Oct. 1949, House & Garden magazine said the house was an **assault on tradition in the eyes of the defenders of the Colonial House**. The residents of Fairfield County had not yet recovered, however the result is truly an original building of timeless elegance and classic simplicity. A conclusive **demonstration of the fact that modern building techniques have come of age**.



Arthur Drexler in Architecture Opaque (Interiors & Industrial Design, 1949) described the glass house as **a Victorian bell jar**, the kind of glass bell used to protect Victorian clocks. Johnson responded by inviting Drexler to join his department at MoMA.

Reflectivity was not just in the glass, but in the reflection necessary to live in a glass house.

"It is the thinking time that's important time in architecture."

Feels like the outdoors, like a glade in the woods.

"It's the only house in the world, where you can **watch the sun set and the moon rise at the same time**. And the snow. It's amazing when you're surrounded at night with the falling snow. It's lighted, which makes it look as though you're rising on a celestial elevator.

After seeing the glass house, in 1955 Wright remarked to Johnson, "**Little Philip, all grown up, an architect, and actually building his houses out in the rain.**" A comment welcoming him to the architecture club, remembering an incident 25 years before when Wright was visited by a prospective client during a driving rain, entering one of Wright's houses saw a number of containers around catching drip from the leaky roof. Mrs. Lloyd Jones said, "**This is what happens when you leave a work of art out in the rain.**" The Barcelona pavilion was designed and built as a work of art, not a functioning piece of architecture. Like Mies, Wright and Corbusier approached design with the same aspirations, functionality always came second. **Johnson too, was not a functionalist, but soon he would strip the work of art too.**

In May 1951, Peter Blake, Johnson's one time assistant, now on the staff of Architectural Forum, addressed him with a questionnaire on the future developments of American architecture:

1. **Which of the current leaders in architecture has given the younger generation the most to go forward on?**
2. How does modern U.S. architecture differ from contemporary work in Europe and Latin America?
3. What are the chief obstacles to the architectural renaissance currently underway in the U.S.?

In a letter replied a week later, Johnson answered:

1. **Mies has given the most for the younger students, since he is the easiest to copy well.** Wright is the most difficult, the Michelangelo of our time, inventing a new style every time he designs.
2. Difficult to compare, since so little is done in Europe. Latin America has one half of one percent Corbusier label and then nothing.
3. No obstacles except the various theories of functionalism, which keep people's eyes turned away from the art of architecture.

This exchange reveals Johnson's affinity for Mies - not simply admiration, but because of **Johnson lack of formal training, he was very much a freshman designer, still impressionable and with a limited toolset of skills.**



Was always fond of being called Meis van der Johnson, felt it proper as a student of architecture to imitate the great genius of the older generation. But now at the end of the 1950s, the glass house under his belt, establishing him on the architectural stage, he was ready to move on. As he stated, "I grow old, and bored."



On Jan.8, 1979, Johnson was on the cover of Time magazine, holding a model of the AT&T building, as if a Moses tablet, ushering in the new commandments of a new age of architecture. Anticipating the embrace by the American corporation bored with glass boxes, Johnson was sanctioning a new eclecticism of design, the final nail in the coffin of architecture.

That same year he received the inaugural Pritzker Architectural Prize, the Nobel prize in architecture, given only to living architects. Johnson had become the Dean of American Architecture, his buildings diverse in style, dispersed around the country.

END OF ARCHITECTURE



In 1925, Corbusier published a book titled, Toward an Architecture. It redefined the book, redefined the manifesto, redefined architecture. 75 years later (2001), Rem Koolhaas, a Dutch architect published a book titled, The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping. His book was an update of Corbusier's book, defining a new age of architecture, one he calls Junkspace. (buildings: 1973-1993)



"Because we abhor the utilitarian, we have condemned ourselves to a lifelong immersion in the arbitrary. Air-conditioning has launched the endless building. Conditioned space inevitably becomes conditional space. There are no walls, only partitions. There is no form, only proliferation.



Regurgitation is the new creativity. All materialization is provisional. The joint is no longer a problem, an intellectual issue. Where as detailing once suggested the coming together, possibly forever, of disparate materials, it is now a transient coupling, waiting to be undone, unscrewed, a temporary embrace with a high probability of separation, no longer the orchestrated encounter of difference, but the abrupt end of a system, a stalemate.



Instead of development, it offers entropy. Change has been divorced from the idea of improvement. There is no progress, like a crab on LSD, culture staggers endlessly sideways. The ground is no more.



There are too many raw needs to be realized on only one plane. The absolute horizontal has been abandoned. Transparency has disappeared, to be replaced by a dense crust of provisional occupation.



All perspective is gone. To show respect, symmetries are maintained and helplessly exaggerated, ancient building techniques are resurrected and honed to irrelevant shine, quarries reopened to excavate the 'same' stone. Communities not out of shared interests or free association, but out of identical statistics and unavoidable demographics, an opportunistic weave of vested interests.



Instead of public life, public space, what remains of the city once the unpredictable has been removed. The death of God (and the author) has spawned orphaned space, authorless, yet surprisingly authoritarian. Mankind is browbeaten into submitting to the most harshly engineered plotline, the dictatorial is no longer politics, but entertainment. Organizing hermetic regimes of ultimate exclusion and concentration.



We have added nothing, just reconfigured. Color has disappeared to dampen the resulting cacophony. We're united in sedation. Why can't we tolerate stronger sensations? Dissonance? Awkwardness? Genius? Anarchy? Trees are tortured, lawns cover human manipulation so like thick pelts, or even toupees. Entire mountains are dismembered to provide ever greater quantities of authenticity.



Real space edited for smooth transmission in virtual space, crucial hinge in an infernal feedback loop. Because we spend our life indoors - like animals in a zoo. TV screen is a substitute for a window, real life is inside, while cyberspace has become the great outdoors. The cosmetic is the new cosmic. 'Identity' is the new junk food for the dispossessed, globalization's fodder for the disenfranchised.



If space junk is the human debris that litters the universe, Junk Space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet. The built product of modernization is not modern architecture, but Junkspace, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, it's fallout. Junkspace is the sum total of our current achievement, we have built more than did all previous generations put together.



We do not leave pyramids. According to a new gospel of ugliness, there is already more Junkspace under construction in the twenty-first century than has survived from the twentieth. Architecture disappeared in the twentieth century. The product of an encounter between escalator and air-conditioning, conceived in an incubator of Sheetrock.



Junkspace is beyond measure, beyond code. Because it can not be grasped, Junkspace cannot be remembered. It is flamboyant, yet unmemorable, like a screen saver, its refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia. Junkspace does not pretend to create perfection, only interest. Rabbit is the new beef."



How can architecture persist when the conditional is the norm, when there is no form, only proliferation, and when spaces search for function like hermit crabs looking for a vacant shell? Landscape has become Junkspace, foliage as spoilage. Architecture is dead by this terminal hollowness.