

Architectural and politics

[Design](#), [Architecture](#)



Architectural and politics: the Barcelona Pavilion When architects refer to design, they cast it as a mental activity that is concerned with arranging forms, spaces, programs, material and meaning. When they talk about buildings, they often describe it as narrative showing a supposed view and journey through space. Buildings are designed with diverse meanings and reasons, some social while others can be political. In the twentieth century, several buildings in the world were designed and constructed with political meaning some of which influence people's lives until today. An example of a building built with political meaning in the twentieth century is the Barcelona Pavilion, which was designed in 1929 (Unwin 23-30). It was built 20 years before Farnsworth house, which was identified as a noteworthy work of architecture in the twentieth century. The Pavilion was designed by Mies Van der Rohe a German. Despite the building being in existence for more than eighty years, its power and influence has grown rather than dissipated in the more than eighty years of its existence. Barcelona Pavilion's broad context in Europe between the two world wars in which Germany was involved as the principal protagonist was infinitely more stimulating politically than that of the previous Farnsworth house built in Illinois, which was peaceful.

Compared to other Pavilions of other countries, Barcelona Pavilion was built as a symbol of the nation that had reinvented itself as a contribution to an international exposition (Unwin 23-30). After the social cultural mayhem of the First World War, which is historically known as the Weimar Republic, the Pavilion was seen as a symbol of a newly rediscovered republic. These social cultural challenges and conditions coupled with the short duration, which the project had to be designed, provoked Mies to produce one of the most

Starling works of Architecture in history. Few years after the Pavilion was built, the National Socialist Movement and its leader Adolf Hitler who was a dictator took over power. They rejected modernism as an expression of German identity in favor of Monumental Classicism and austere for public and governmental buildings and domestic building derived from traditional folk architecture. Mies moved to United States in 1937 where he negotiated a site for design, and he oversaw and supervised the construction of the pavilion. He was given a platform to bring to realization the architectural ideas he had been exploring in the past decade. These ideas concerned the use of new construction technique and materials, as well as the re-invention of the architectural space. After the World War one horrors, there were ideas that promised a new cultural language of architecture, new way of making sense to the world (Unwin 23-30). Mies development of this idea was influenced by his self education in classical architecture and philosophy and fed by contemporary archeological discoveries. He exploited the fresh possibility of materials such as steel and large sheet of glass put together without applied ornaments. Mies also used more traditional materials such as travertine a sedimentary rock quarried in Italy, polished marble from Greece and north-west Italy and rare Onyx from North Africa (Simon Unwin 28). Regardless of whether or not the political aspiration of Mies was ever met, the Barcelona pavilion has influenced many architects over the year on how individual architect can broadcast ideas through the medium of architecture that aspire to philosophical propositions. The Barcelona pavilion was dismantled immediately after the exposition and for half a century that preceded, its existed only in black and white photographs and some design

drawings. However, in 1986, moves were made to recreate it and the building now stands in its original site, in Barcelona (Unwin 23-30). The Barcelona pavilion is one of the most mysterious, engaging and hence most expansively discussed buildings in all architectural writing. Some scholars have argued that the building should be called The German Pavilion in Barcelona. This is because it was being constructed as a temporary structure for the International exhibition in Barcelona of 1929. Although it was temporal, they argue that it was still made of permanent materials such as marble, glass, steel and travertine (Unwin 23-30). In conclusion, an analysis of the pavilion shows that work of architecture may be startlingly fresh and yet based in ancient ideas and that the design of a building may be philosophical proposition in itself expressed in the composition of elements and how the space is organized rather than in words. Many architects have admired the architectural work of Mies which he also used to pass a political message that influenced the world order. However, some criticizes the building as one that did not have any real program, and it was whatever Mies chose to make of it. Works Cited Unwin, Simon . *Twenty Buildings Every Architect Should Understand*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.