

1912
Kröller-Müller House
Wassenaar, the Netherlands

Mrs. and Mrs. A. C. Kröller commissioned Peter Behrens to design a large country house, with a formal gallery space for Mrs. Kröller-Müller's collection of modern art. After she rejected the Behrens design, she invited his assistant, Ludwig Mies, to take over the job. Like Behrens' project, Mies's design is in the manner of stripped classicism, asymmetrical, and virtually free of ornament. No floor plan survives, but Mies sketched a plan from memory about twenty years later, when he was teaching at the Bauhaus in Dessau. The sketch, shown here, was preserved by one of his students, Howard Gearstyne, who is believed to have made the notes identifying the various rooms.

Mrs. Kröller-Müller (born Helene E. L. Müller) was advised in artistic matters by the critic H. P. Bremmer, whose own candidate for the project was Hendrik Berlage. After Mies's design was submitted Mrs. Kröller-Müller again had doubts as to the merit of the project. Her husband, just as he had done with the rejected Behrens design, ordered the construction of a full-scale mock-up of canvas and wood, mounted on railroad tracks, on the actual site. Bremmer rejected Mies's design; Berlage's design was also rejected; and in 1938 Henry Van de Velde finally got his version built.

The model was lost and only the bleak photograph of Mies's canvas house survives in the Mies Archive. Frustrating as this experience must have been, it gave the twenty-six-year-old Ludwig Mies an opportunity to see a work of his at full scale. Its brief existence seems to have been prophetic of much of his European production.

