

Barcelona Pavillion - Sacha Nunnick

The Barcelona Pavilion, a work of the modern Movement, has been the inspiration of several generations of Architects. The Pavilion was designed by Ludwig Mies Van Dee Rohe and Lilly Reich as the German National Pavilion for the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition, its purpose, showcasing architecture from around the world. Ludwig positioned the Pavillion such that it went directly to the palace to make moving between the two structures easier. The Pavilion served as King Alphonso XII's formal welcome space when he arrived at the exhibition. Mies Van Der Rohe was hired for the German Pavilion in 1928 after his 1927 Exhibition earned him recognition. The original structure was dismantled in 1930, however, it was rebuilt on the original site by a team of three architects in 1986. However, the idea of meticulously rebuilding the pavilion is of interest itself and demonstrates the social impact it had on architecture and the modern movement.

The Barcelona Pavillion idea was minimal in terms of structure and design. Mies wanted to emphasise and differentiate between structure and enclosure for the Pavillion. His free plan and floating roof idea were used to carry out the concept. The floor plan is simple. The structure is on top of the travertine raised plinth. It consists of covered, semi covered and open spaces throughout the plan. The plan provides free movement throughout the space. The section of the space is equally as simple demonstrating the floating roof and wall panels that are specifically placed and show the covered and open spaces. The Pavillion interior is split into three major sections, each of which has a specific purpose. A central water feature is surrounded by a number of columns that support the ceiling and is located in the centre of the first area, which is an open foyer. The central area design fosters a feeling of fluidity and openness while acting as a transition place between the building's interior/exterior. The second area is a lengthy narrow hallway that circles the outside of the structure. Glass walls surround the area, which contains several items of Mies Van Der Rohe furniture, including the well-known Barcelona Chair. The primary exhibition space is a sizable, open room in the last area. A number of floor to ceiling glass walls in this area blur the line between interior and exterior, allowing the two to merge seamlessly.

The reconstruction pavilion is made from glass, steel and four different kinds of stone - Roman travertine, green alpine marble, green marble and golden onyx. The materials used are of the same characteristics of the ones used originally by Mies. The originality of the materials used showcase the modernity of the structure shown through their geometry, precision and how they are assembled. The pavilion neatly displays the juxtaposition of manmade and natural materials through the use of steel and glass against the marble. The materials are opulent and demonstrate great wealth, something modernists detested. The pedestal and exterior of the "pantheon" are made of white travertine stone, dark green. The main internal partition wall is made of warm, rust coloured onyx and the enclosures at the entry and around the smaller of the two pools are covered in the marble. The steel columns are conveyed as being chrome plated, cruciform in shape and with a contemporary fluting effect. The pavilion is spacious and airy. The glass panel wall provides an enormous amount of light into the building and the use of light clouds in the structure adds to its open modern effect. The Barcelona Pavilion's lighting scheme is a crucial component of the building's general composition. Natural light is emphasised in the building's design, and the internal and exterior spaces are seamlessly integrated. The wide floor-to-ceiling glass walls let in plenty of natural light, giving the interior space a feeling of transparency and openness.

Artificial lighting is used sparingly, and the lighting fittings are made to match the building's simple style. The pavilion's main artificial lighting sources are hidden linear LED lights that are built into the roof structure and used to highlight the structure of the building. To create a feeling of continuity and balance, the fixtures are positioned to provide uniform illumination throughout the interior area. Another key component of the lighting plan is the centre water feature. Underwater lighting fixtures provide a soft, reflective illumination that improves the tranquilly and serenity of the feature.

Mies was able to build a building that came to represent what Modern architecture should be: clean, uncomplicated in appearance, with no apparent reference to past historical styles, and using modern technology to explore new methods of construction. Mies was freed from traditional design constraints (i.e., no one had to live or work in the building, and the only "exhibits" were a few chairs designed by Mies- which tourists today love to lounge in). The Pavilion's basic emptiness was a groundbreaking design element in and of itself. The building doesn't look to be hard or industrial despite having perfect vertical and horizontal lines, yet it was made feasible by new technology and techniques for using steel and concrete. Mies' famous maxim, "less is more," seems entirely appropriate in this space, which is amazingly calm and meditative. It also features two reflecting pools, Georg Kolbe's classical and curved female statue, and Mies' geometry.

The Pavilion was intended to serve as a self-portrait through architecture, a democratic, culturally progressive, prosperous, and utterly pacifist representation of the new Weimar Germany. Georg von Schnitzler, the commissioner, stated that it should "give voice to the spirit of a new century." With the creation of the "Free plan" and the "Floating room," this notion was put into practice. Mies wanted this building to become "an ideal zone of tranquillity" for the weary visitor, who should be invited into the Pavilion on the way to the next attraction. The Pavilion's structure was to serve as the exhibit since it lacked a dedicated exhibition area. Any access to the site would require passing via the Pavilion, which was built to "block" all access. Due to the site's minor slope, visitors would enter by ascending a few stairs and leave at ground level in the direction of the "Spanish Town."

As a tribute to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's ground-breaking work and a masterpiece of modern architecture, the Barcelona Pavilion stands as a conclusion. Its refined simplicity, use of premium materials, and seamless fusion of interior and outdoor spaces established a new benchmark for modernist architecture and had an impact on future generations of architects. The Pavilion had a short physical existence, but its influence on building history endures to this day. Its legacy reminds us of the ability of creative design to influence our built world and motivate future generations.

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