

Christian Bjone

Almost Nothing

100 Artists Comment on the Work
of Mies van der Rohe



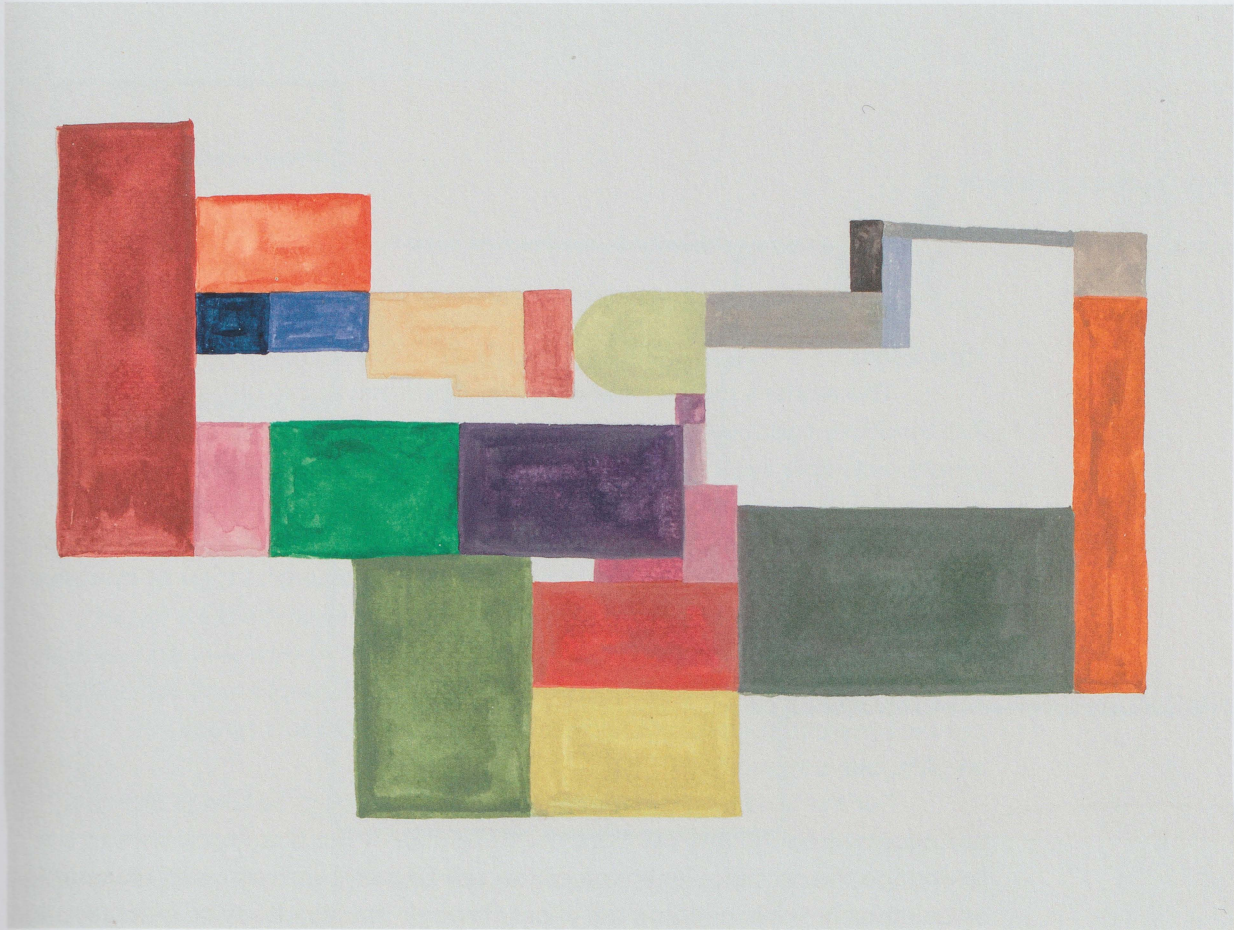
Julie Langsam

I would like to label Julie Langsam's recent art series, *Building Plans*, as revisionist history in that the geometric order of the structure's plans are used as the basis for the start of an extension of the world of modern abstraction. Here the rigorous and graphically precise plans of Mies are softened with a watercolor selection of random colors. The image is at first glance wildly out of sync with the ideas behind the base drawing, almost a historical critique of the rigid rational order of the Modern movement. But there is a strange precedent for this direction, which can be seen in the Bauhaus artist Oskar Schlemmer's ceiling mural for the Jena Municipal Theater by the architect Walter Gropius in 1922. Schlemmer's mural was a loose grid of varying colors that sat within the outline created by the buildings beams. The end of the story is that on final review Gropius ordered the ceiling mural to be painted over in a light grey, infuriating Schlemmer. I would like to think of Langsam's artwork in this series as part of the tradition shown by Schlemmer that finally found its time. Julie Langsam notes:

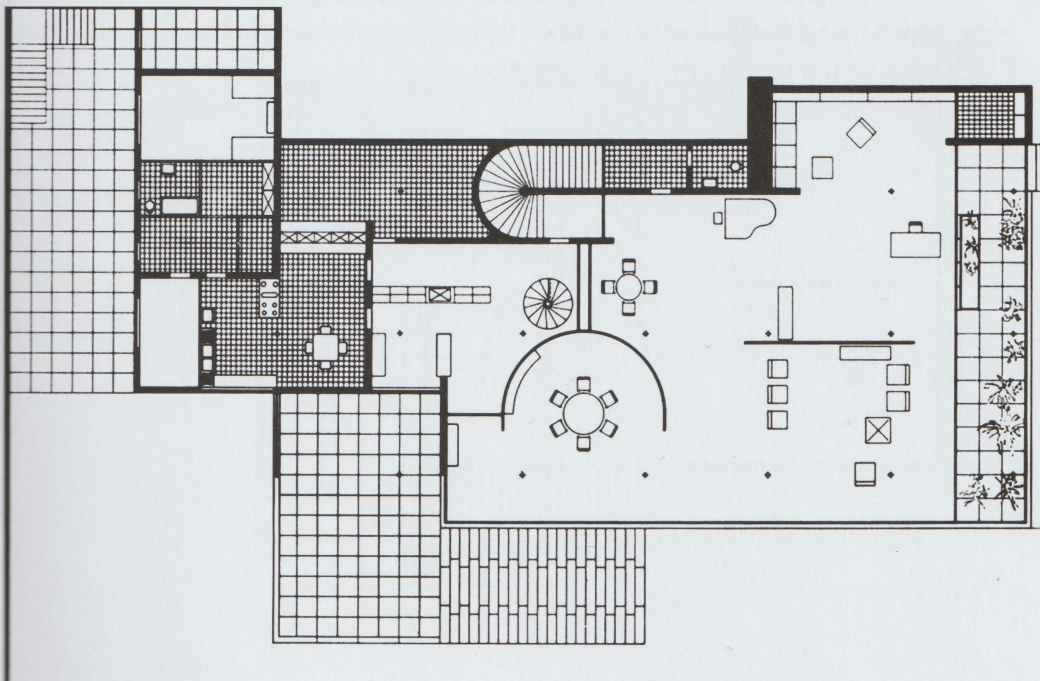
I am interested in how these iconographic paintings are understood not as the original objects themselves, but as the distorted images of them that we are used to seeing in book, slides and magazines. I call this process "slippage" which manifests in the sometimes subtle, sometimes drastic, color shifts from painting, to book, to copy, to print and finally, back to my own painting.¹

1 Artist Statement, website:
www.julielangsam.com,
accessed January 2019.

Tugendhat House (1930)



Julie Langsam, *Mies Floorplan: Tugendhat Villa*, color determined by chance, 2013



Mies, Tugendhat House, 1930



Julie Langsam, *Mies Landscape (Farnsworth House)*, 1999

These two portraits of the Farnsworth House are grouped together even though they have nothing to do with each other, in materials, imagery, or ideas. Nevertheless, both, at first glance, are solid attempts of a landscape with the Mies building sited within. And at a second glance they are both extreme distortions of the building and its surroundings with the artist's intent to push for their own interpretation of the perfect white modern object on the flood plains of Plano, Illinois.

Julie Langsam

Julie Langsam's oil painting is part of a series of works that she entitles *Architect Landscapes*, which isolate famous buildings (in fine detail) at the bottom frame of the canvas, lost within desolate surroundings and a glorious sunset sky. Yet the one building in this series whose site actually matches these painted severe horizontal surroundings would be Mies's Farnsworth House. Unintentionally this is the most accurate view of all the buildings she has selected. The emotive quality that these paintings elicit is the fragility of culture against the wider world. I cannot but see the building painted here seeming like a white ship on the distant horizon overwhelmed by the vastness of the sea and sky.