

## Mies van der Rohe

The passing of a giant in the arts scarcely ripples the surface of a world preoccupied with novelty and the merchandising of a new "*avant garde*" every Monday morning. Mies van der Rohe, in his own words, was not a "Monday-morning architect." His "*avant garde*" lasted a half-century and is still going strong. His values—order, clarity, rationality, discipline and an uncompromising adherence to absolute standards of art and excellence—are unfashionable today. His death impoverishes a world that will probably not notice in its race to turn those values upside down. Esthetically and intellectually, he was a patrician, and patricians are sadly out of style.

Curiously, his kind of man has gone out of style in a society for which he largely created both style and setting. The miraculous, skin-and-bones, crystalline towers that are synonymous with the twentieth century are his legacies. Of the three architectural giants of our time, all of whom are gone now—Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Mies—his is probably the most enduring mark and influence. But he would have been too modest to say so; his truths were self-evident, and his monolithic calm matched the silent strength of his buildings. Now, with everyone doing his own thing and panache equated with vulgarity, we have a singularly styleless society.

One must go to Chicago—Mies's adopted city—to see more than tokens of his tough and elegant work or cut-rate adaptations of his world. There he trained a generation of students in the classical discipline of an art grounded in the facts of structure, so that it could transcend them. These buildings soar to greatness in a city less than great at their feet—but then, Mies was never a sociologist. He was an artist. Sociology without art is meat without salt, life without love. While the Monday-morning men come and go and the ludicrous arguments continue about whether modern architecture is here to stay and what its relevance to society should be, the world has had, and lost, a master. Artists never go out of style.