

## 1927 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: On form in architecture

This famous letter to Dr Riezler, editor of the Werkbund journal *Die Form*, was published in the journal's second year. If the Stuttgart Weissenhof settlement is a built manifestation of a new style, the inescapable sign of a new will in architecture, then Mies van der Rohe's letter on form in architecture may be looked upon as a still open question: Will life fill the new houses? Will this new architecture be taken up and carried by life, so that a new feeling for life is born of the community-living that takes place in them? The letter throws a bridge across to the theses of Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde and might be said to reconcile the opponents of 1914.

**I do not oppose form, but only form as a goal.** 

And I do this as the result of a number of experiences and the insight I have gained from them.

Form as a goal always ends in formalism.

**For this striving is directed not towards an inside, but towards an outside.**

But only a living inside has a living outside.

**Only intensity of life has intensity of form.**

**Every How is carried by a What.**

The unformed is not worse than the over-formed.

The former is nothing; the latter is mere appearance.

**Real form presupposes real life.**

But not something that has already existed, nor something thought out.

Here lies the criterion.

We do not evaluate the result but the starting point of the creative process.

Precisely this shows whether the **form was discovered by starting from life, or for its own sake.**

That is why I consider the creative process so essential.

**Life is for us the decisive factor.** 

In all its fullness, in its spiritual and real commitments.

Is not one of the Werkbund's most important tasks to illuminate, to make visible, the spiritual and real situation in which we stand, to order its currents and thereby to lead the way?

Must we not leave everything else to the creative powers?