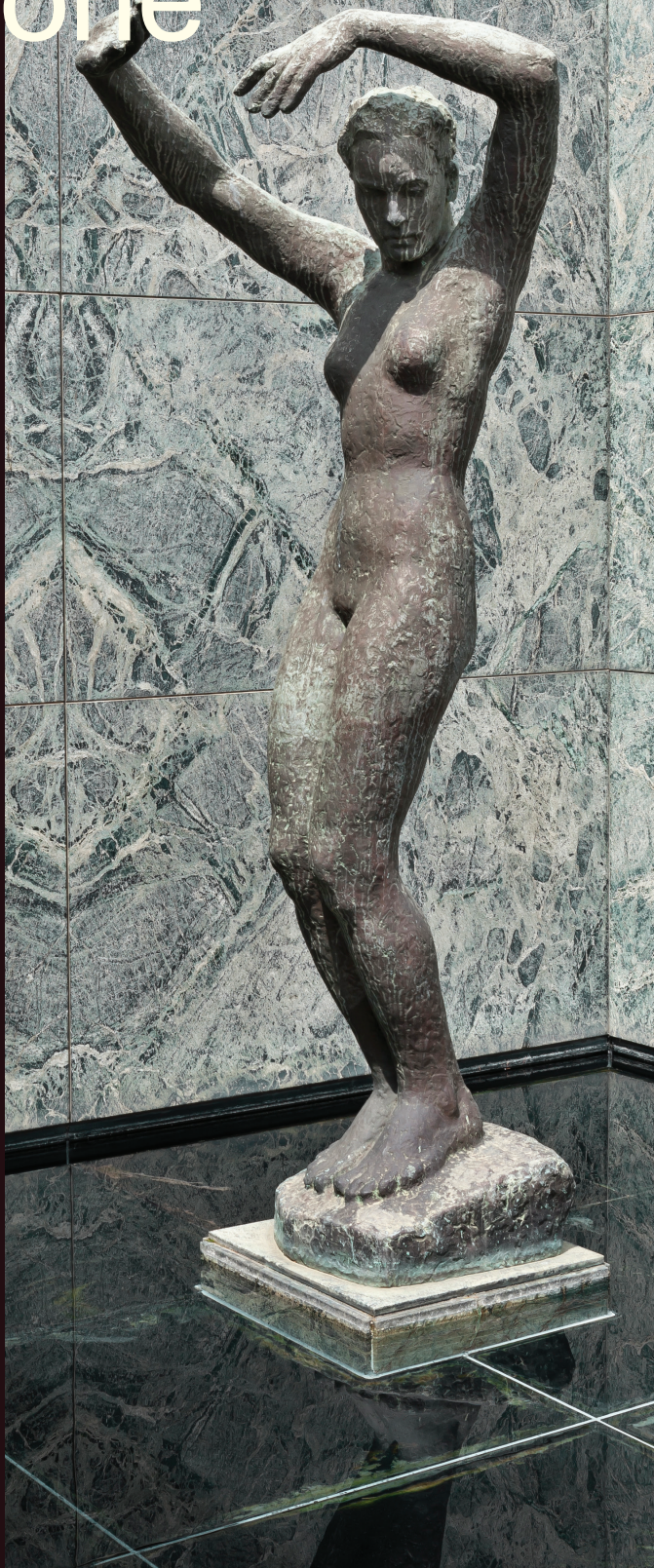


# Lehmbruck Kolbe Mies van der Rohe



ENGLISH

# Lehmbruck Kolbe Mies van der Rohe

## Artificial Biotopes

Three protagonists of early twentieth-century modernism are brought together in the exhibition. With their figurative sculptures, the artists Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919) and Georg Kolbe (1877–1947) created a new image of humankind that carried mental and natural, as well as abstract qualities. In the 1920s, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) designed radically modern architecture. His houses are functionally and aesthetically well-thought-out *Gesamtkunstwerke*. He saw an ideal in an open floor plan that no longer keeps rooms closed, but rather forms an organic system of walls and materials.

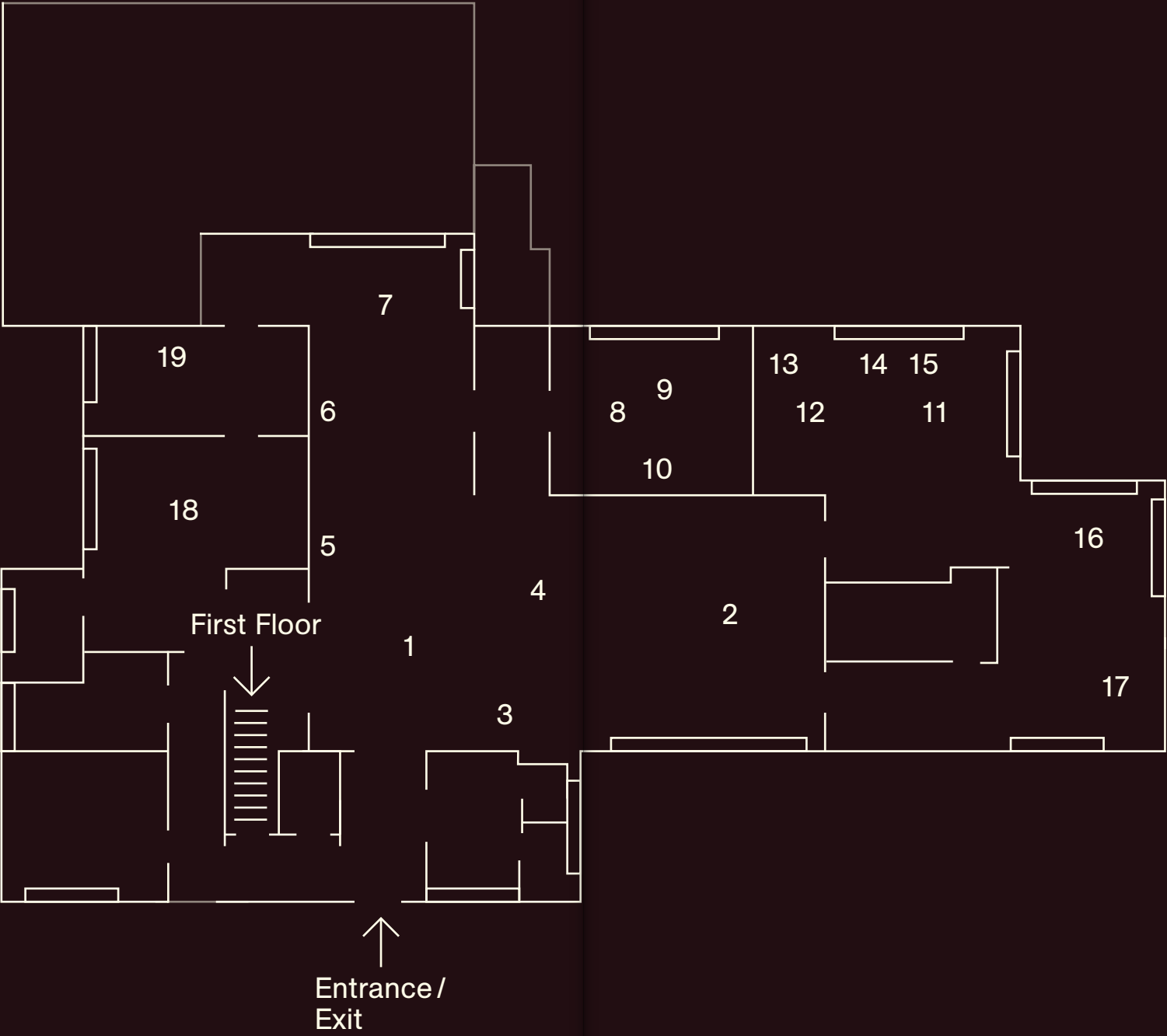
Mies van der Rohe repeatedly integrated sculptures by both Lehmbruck and Kolbe into his main European work created in the 1920s. A famous example is the sculpture *Morning* by Kolbe in the Barcelona Pavilion of 1928/29, which has become an icon of modernism. During this period, an architectural language determined the genre of sculpture. A human body was built and composed of abstract geometric volumes. There was a fundamental search for a new relationship that could combine objective and functional architecture with autonomous sculpture. Mies van der Rohe was one of the few to consistently include figurative sculpture in his architectural concepts. Here, it is often interpreted as a surrogate for the inhabitant of the house, but its function is far more complex. For Mies van der Rohe, like other modernist artists, was inspired by a scientific, universal worldview. New findings, especially from the field of life sciences, led to a view of reality as an organic whole. Forms and processes in nature were compared with aesthetic and mechanical aspects of technical devices, even with the structure of society.

The figurative sculptures by Lehmbruck and Kolbe thus stand not only as works of art in Mies van der Rohe's architecture, but also as living bodies that are part of an organic entity. In this sense, eight sculptures by Wilhelm Lehmbruck and seven by Georg Kolbe enter into a dialog with Haus Lange, which itself becomes an exhibit as an organic body.



# Haus Lange Ground Floor Works 1-19

Garden



## 1 Haus Lange, 1927–1930, Krefeld

Haus Lange and the neighboring Haus Esters were designed and built between 1927 and 1930 by the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The clients were the Krefeld-based textile manufacturers and art collectors Hermann Lange and Josef Esters. Mies van der Rohe designed the building, the garden, and many of the interior details partially together with Lilly Reich, his partner at the time. The structure, which is composed of interlocking cubes, the building materials, the permeability between the building and the garden, and the landscaping—all this forms an organic system that can be broken down into the many individual aspects cited here.

## 2 Georg Kolbe *Morning*, 1925 Toned plaster, 273 × 75 × 100 cm Exhibition copy after the only preserved original, 1985 Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

In 1929, Mies van der Rohe installed Kolbe's *Morning* in the water basin of the Barcelona Pavilion, thus creating a site with a special expressive power. Numerous photographs of the 1929 presentation and the complete reconstruction of the pavilion attest to the enduring impact of the ensemble. The dialog between the larger-than-life female figure, sculpted in plaster in the original installation, and the carefully combined surfaces of standing water, glass, chrome, and colored natural stone is emblematic of both artists' sensitivity with regard to the interplay of sculpture, architecture, and nature. Kolbe originally created *Morning* for a grassed area in the Ceciliengärten housing estate in Berlin.

## 3 Georg Kolbe *Large Striding Figure*, 1929 Plaster, 200 × 55 × 67 cm Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Although this larger-than-life figure takes a striding pose, it appears static and at the same time determined with its hanging arms and upright torso. Mies van der Rohe used the *Striding Figure* for his model house at the Deutsche Bauausstellung (German Building Exhibition) in Berlin in 1931, where it stood directly next to a water basin. There, she looked across the water into a garden area with planters and defined the differences and simultaneous interplay of the human body, modern architectural space, and cultivated nature.

## 4 Design in Haus Lange

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich developed many details of the interior for Haus Lange, as well as a furnishing plan, parts of which were adopted by the Lange family. Inspired by the black carpet used in the Barcelona Pavilion, the armchair and carpet here form a room within a room, as well as the scaled-down cell of a living community. The Barcelona armchair (1929) is a reproduction from the 1950s. The black carpet was defined in size and quality for the exhibition.

## 5 Raoul Francé

Raoul Heinrich Francé (1874–1943) was a botanist and microbiologist, as well as a natural and cultural philosopher. After completing his studies of botany in Budapest, he founded a biological institute in Munich and devoted himself to popularizing the biological sciences. Francé was a convinced vitalist and advocated a biocentric, organic worldview. His numerous writings influenced many modernist artists and architects and were taught in the preliminary courses at the Bauhaus. Of his approximately seventy publications, Mies van der Rohe owned roughly forty-five works, which are now preserved in the Special Collections Department of the University of Illinois at Chicago. The projected quotations have been extracted from books such as *Die Kultur von morgen* (The Culture of Tomorrow, 1922), *Bios* (1921–24), *Richtiges Leben* (Proper Living, 1924), and *Der Organismus* (The Organism, 1928), and reproduce passages of text that Mies van der Rohe annotated in his own handwriting.

## 6 Dining Room

Green Tinos marble is a natural stone from Greece. It is mainly used for interiors. Mies van der Rohe used the grained, intensely green marble as a polished top surface for the sideboard in the dining room. The body was made of veneered walnut. Partially recessed into the wall niche, the massive piece of furniture seemingly floated above the floor. The sideboard was located where a section of the original top is now displayed. Tinos marble was used repeatedly by Mies van der Rohe, including in the famous Barcelona Pavilion.

- 7 Georg Kolbe  
*Assunta*, 1919/21  
Bronze, 195 × 40 × 50 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

*Assunta*, the Assumption of the Mother of God into heaven, found an expressionistic interpretation as a large bronze statue by Georg Kolbe, strongly stylized in her human form. Kolbe developed his bodies modeled on nature primarily in the classical bronze casting process. For him, this degree of abstraction is rather unusual, and the figure is considered the culmination of his expressionist phase. It was originally planned to place the figure in a mausoleum, but this design was later discarded. From then on, castings of the *Assunta* were occasionally used as garden and park figures, despite the religious background.

## 8 Lady's Room

In the lady's room, the wall display case and shelf, door, window frame, and radiator cover are made of Makassar ebony (veneer). The striking texture of this wood gives the small room warmth and a direct reference to nature. According to a plan drawing, the wall display case was intended to contain several potted plants. Mies van der Rohe thus also added aspects of a winter garden to the lady of the house's place of retreat.

- 9 Wilhelm Lehmbruck  
*Torso of a Girl, Turning*, 1913/14  
(Torso of the Striding Woman)  
Cast stone, red tinted,  
97,3 × 46 × 33,5 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin.  
Permanent loan from the  
family estate

From 1910 onwards, Lehmbruck worked on many sculptures in series. He executed the torso of *Girl, Turning* in several stone casts, which he varied in color and surface texture. In each version of the sculpture, the aesthetic qualities thus created unfold their effect in light and space in different ways. In the exhibition, one variant almost has the appearance of shiny polished bronze, while the other is matte and vibrant red. In 1927, Mies van der Rohe integrated the sculpture into the so-called "Glass Room," a model apartment at the Stuttgart Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling).

## 10 The Plants in the Wall Display Case

In the 1920s, succulents and cacti were integral elements of modern interiors. In the paintings of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), they determine the arrangements of objects in still life motifs. The prickly plants stand metaphorically for the turbulent life in the Weimar Republic. In 1925, the art critic Alfred Wortmann also remarked about the "newly awakened love for the abstract, geometrical plants": "Are cacti not vegetal crystals, living architecture? Sphere and cylinder, measure and number?" (*Kunstblatt*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1925, 30 [translated])

- 11 Wilhelm Lehmbruck  
*Torso of the Large Thinker*, 1913/14  
Red cast stone on a gray artificial  
stone plinth, 125,7 × 46 × 34 cm  
Kunsthalle Mannheim,  
Donation Sally Falk 1921

Lehmbruck left only the torso in this cast of his *Large Thinker* from 1913. Her elongated and almost inhumanly stylized body, compared by contemporaries to a jointed manikin, appears even more lifeless in the reddish, polished cast stone version. The torso is an orderly composition of abstracted body parts that follows an idea of the human body as a tectonically assembled construct.

- 12 Wilhelm Lehmbruck  
*Girl's Head on a Slender Neck*  
(*Head of the Thinker*), 1913  
Bronze, 39,9 × 26,7 × 16,8 cm  
Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

The head of the *Thinker* is characterized by geometric simplification and elongation, especially of the neck and forehead. It is not a portrait, but rather a type. Lehmbruck reduced the head to a minimum of essential features, which for him expressed musing, being absorbed in thought. Like the whole figure of the archetype, the *Large Thinker*, the head seems to be mentally absent and withdrawn from reality.

## 13 Curtains

Mies van der Rohe preferred to work with floor plans that were as open as possible. To these ends, he staged fine silk fabrics as flexible wall elements that defined the space. Textiles were also used prominently instead of walls in Café Samt und Seide in Berlin, which he designed together with Lilly Reich in 1927. Mies also chose a sober functionalism for window curtains. While textile window coverings at the turn of the century still consisted of heavy, opaque fabrics and trimmings, in the 1920s sheer, finely pleated curtains made of transparent, unadorned voile became a new element of modern interior design. No longer lavishly draped, strict vertical folds alone give the fabric a sense of movement.

## 14 Living Room with Windows

A massive system of steel beams—a structural engineering achievement of the modern age—made it possible to cut large window areas into the façades. They open up the cubic structure and create a sense of permeability between the building and the garden. The four windows facing the garden can be lowered to the basement by means of a mechanism.

## 15 Windowsills

The windowsills, as well as the benches and wall plinths on the rear terraces, are made of smoothed travertine. This is a limestone tuff formed from freshwater springs by natural chemical reactions, such as those found in thermal springs with their sinter basins. Together, the travertine windowsills and the wooden window frames form a permeable membrane between interior and exterior. At the same time, the garden views become framed pictures of nature.

## 16 Wilhelm Lehmbruck *Standing Female Figure*, 1910/11 Cast stone, dark green foundation, gray varnish, 196 × 58 × 48 cm Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf. On long-term loan from the Friends of the Kunstpalast

For his first larger-than-life sculpture, Lehmbruck chose the classical antique mode of a sensual female nude with inclined head in *contrapposto*, in which the body weight rests on one supporting leg. He realized the first version in plaster in 1910 and also tested the effect of the figure in marble and cast stone. The figure was created in the same

year that Lehmbruck moved from Düsseldorf to Paris and drew inspiration from the works of modern French sculptors such as Auguste Rodin and Aristide Maillol. This is also presumably the time when Lehmbruck and Mies van der Rohe became acquainted with each other in Paris—a friendship that both developed further in Berlin in 1915/16.

## 17 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was an active thinker and pioneer of a “new age.” The autodidact read and studied a broad spectrum of theoretical writings, from philosophy and theology to the natural sciences. Starting in the early 1920s, Mies van der Rohe repeatedly took a stand with his own words. Based on his writings, it is possible to trace an architectural thinking that starts from technical and economic requirements and ultimately arrives at a holistic conception of architecture. For Mies van der Rohe, the “art of building” was a “vital process.” The quotations seen here follow this path, starting from the essay *Bürohaus* (Office Building) from 1923 to his manifesto *Baukunst als Ausdruck geistiger Entscheidung* (Building Art as the Expression of Spiritual Decisions) from 1928.

## 18 Kitchen

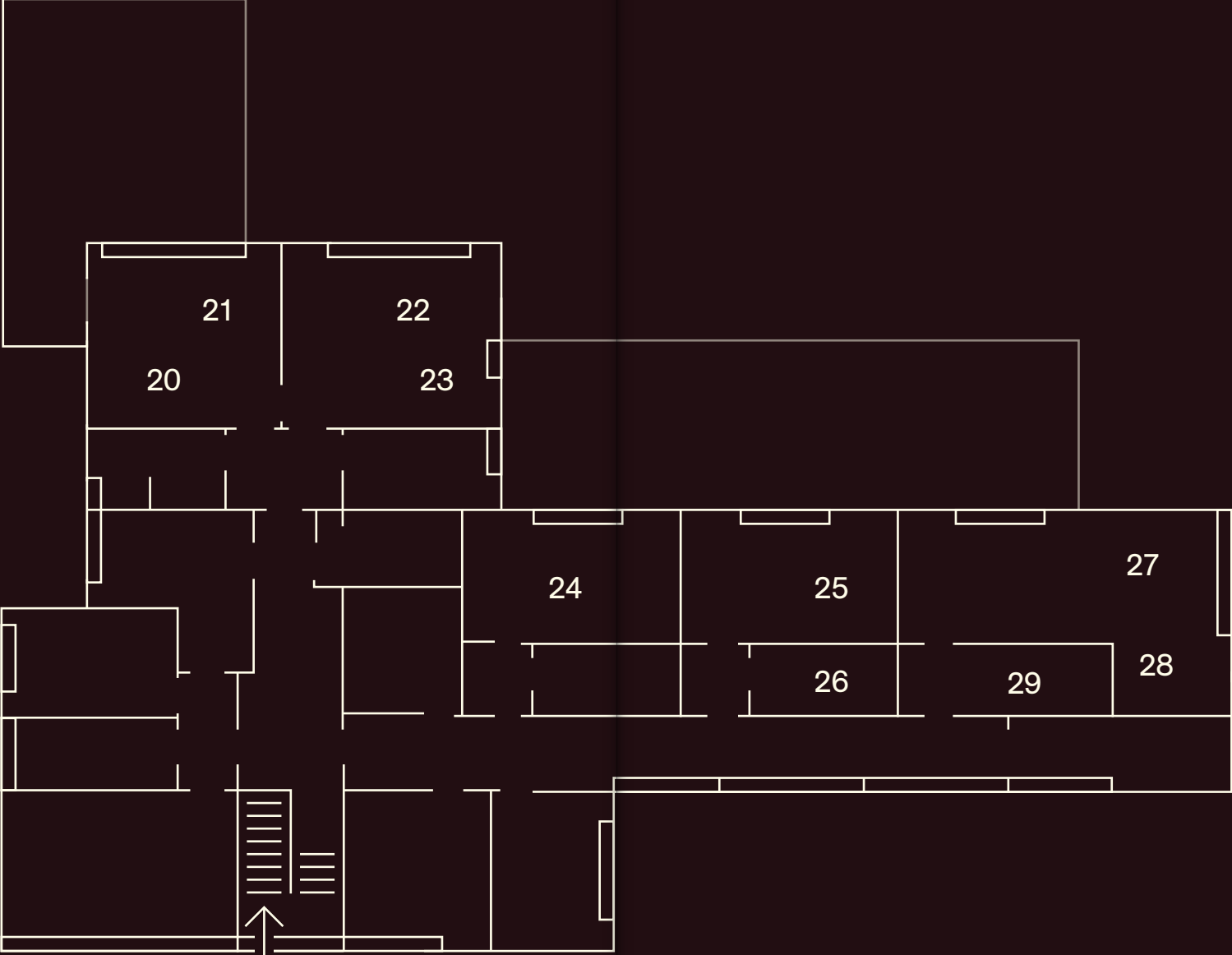
The kitchen and pantry clearly reveal the principle of order, that permeates the house in various ways. The tiled backsplash with its square pattern makes the surface appear as a lattice wall. The mathematical grammar of the grid recurs in the parquet flooring of the hall and on the terrace. With its nested cubes, the entire structure of the house ultimately follows this system of order.

## 19 Wilhelm Lehmbruck *Bust of Mrs. L.*, 1910 Bronze, 80 × 55 × 31 cm Kunstmuseen Krefeld

Wilhelm Lehmbruck’s wife Anita was the model for the bust created in Paris. The surface of the work reveals traces of modeling, yet the body appears lifelike. Since his time in Paris, the artist experimented with the effects of different materials, serial production, and the fragment—that is to say, a partial piece of a human body. He produced the *Bust of Mrs. L.* in both cast stone and bronze. The Krefeld version is a posthumous bronze cast, acquired by the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum from the famous Galerie Flechtheim.

# Haus Lange First Floor Works 20–29

Garden



Ground Floor

- 20 Georg Kolbe  
*Young Man*, 1926  
Bronze, 124 × 31 × 27,5 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Kolbe first created the *Young Man* in a larger version from 1926. The artist staged the figure in his newly built residence and studio building, the Sensburg in Berlin, in the sculpture courtyard opening onto the garden. In private letters, Kolbe referred to the sculpture of the slender youth as his “guardian.” Although appearing upright and static, the surface of the work is modeled to evoke a great sense of movement. The Sensburg was built by the architect Ernst Rentsch and the Bauhaus student Paul Linder in the International Style. As with Haus Lange, cubic structures and a brick façade define the ensemble. Georg Kolbe repeatedly collaborated with architects, including important representatives of modern architecture such as Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, and Hans Poelzig.

- 21 Georg Kolbe  
*Young Woman*, 1926  
Toned plaster, 132,5 × 38 × 31 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Kolbe created his *Young Woman* in 1926, the same year as the *Young Man*. Both figures share their upright posture and calm expression. At this stage of his work, the artist was searching for ways to represent a human ideal that combined physical beauty and spiritual poise. A bronze cast of the figure stood outside Kolbe’s home, the Sensburg in Berlin. The green hue of the plaster visible here possibly refers to the fact that Kolbe intended a greenish patina for the bronze as well, thus emphasizing the connection to the natural environment.

- 22 Georg Kolbe  
*Torso of a Somali*, 1912  
Bronze, 156 × 37 × 30 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

In Kolbe’s oeuvre – unlike that of Lehmbruck – the torso is a rare phenomenon. He first created the *Somali* in 1912 as a small, full-figure nude and took up the type once again in a larger dimension as a partial body without head and arms. The slender bronze torso of the *Somali* appears fragile and, despite its upright posture, gains an almost dance-like dynamism through the positioning of the legs. The torso was often described as “plant-like” in contemporary descriptions. It is assumed that the model for the sculpture was an African. Kolbe was

also interested in non-European cultures, as was typical of his time. He had traveled to North Africa on several occasions.

## 23 Curtains

Mies van der Rohe preferred to work with floor plans that were as open as possible. To these ends, he staged fine silk fabrics as flexible wall elements that defined the space. Textiles were also used prominently instead of walls in Café Samt und Seide in Berlin, which he designed together with Lilly Reich in 1927. Mies also chose a sober functionalism for window curtains. While textile window coverings at the turn of the century still consisted of heavy, opaque fabrics and ornaments, in the 1920s sheer, finely pleated curtains made of transparent, unadorned voile were a new element of modern interior design. No longer lavishly draped, strict vertical folds alone gave the fabric a sense of movement.

- 24 Georg Kolbe  
*Call of the Earth*, 1925/32  
Bronze, 74,5 × 69 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

The female nude *Call of the Earth* testifies to Georg Kolbe’s interest in dance, to which he devoted himself many times when modeling fleeting moments of moving bodies. The dynamics of the sculpture designed to be viewed from all sides expressively engages the space surrounding it. The sculpture was conceived by the artist as a large mourning figure after his wife Benjamine Kolbe died in 1927. Its three-dimensionality contrasts with Kolbe’s upright and still figures. *Call of the Earth* is one of the most famous sculptures by the artist.

- 25 Wilhelm Lehmbruck  
*Bather*, 1913  
Cement cast, height 92 cm  
Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf

The motif of bathers follows a pictorial tradition in sculpture and painting that goes back thousands of years. Lehmbruck traveled to Rome in 1912 and presumably saw ancient sculptures there that conveyed to him this type of Venus. She rises from the water and covers her naked body shamefully with her arms. In Krefeld, a version of Lehmbruck’s *Bather* was in Hermann Lange’s collection and adorned the main hall of his house on Wilhelmshofallee.



## 26 Rubber Tree

With its large, smooth leaves and simple structure, the rubber tree is the ideal plant for a time striving for objectivity and constructive clarity. It is the exact opposite of Impressionistic colorfulness and natural romanticism. The rubber tree can also be found as a solitary element in Mies van der Rohe's model houses and interiors.

## 27 Wilhelm Lehmbruck *Torso of a Girl, Turning, 1913/14* (Torso of the Striding Woman) Cast stone, 95 × 50 × 37 cm Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Haubrich Donation 1946

From 1910 onwards, Lehmbruck worked on many sculptures in series. He executed the torso of *Girl, Turning* in several stone casts, which he varied in color and surface texture. In each version of the sculpture, the aesthetic qualities thus created unfold their effect in light and space in different ways. In the exhibition, one variant almost has the appearance of shiny polished bronze, while the other is matte and vibrant red. In 1927, Mies van der Rohe integrated the sculpture into the so-called "Glass Room," a model apartment at the Stuttgart Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling).

## 28 House Plants

Today, potted plants in the home are taken for granted; however, they have only been part of the interior since roughly two hundred years. Until and into the nineteenth century, middle-class apartments were rather dark and hardly heated. Sufficient living conditions for houseplants were only created with large windows and pipe heating systems. With a wide assortment of plants, especially from distant countries, private lush jungles were created until the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast, in the 1920s the houseplant was more likely to be placed as a solitary element in the objectively and functionally designed home. Besides cacti and succulents, preferred plants included rubber trees, African lindens, agaves, monstera, sansevierias, and others. Such potted plants were integrated into the model houses and apartments designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

## 29 Wilhelm Lehmbruck *Head of a Girl, Turning, 1913/14* (Head of the Striding Woman) Cast stone, 43 × 29 × 19 cm Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl

In Paris in 1913/14, Lehmbruck created this fragment after the figure *Girl, Turning*. The artist chose a stone cast that appears as though made from terra-cotta, a natural and popular material for sculptural design since antiquity. The girl's facial features are stylized, and the basic shapes of the head look like individual geometric components. The deconstruction of the human body corresponds to a modern process with which many French painters and sculptors experimented in the early twentieth century. In doing so, Lehmbruck strove for a new formal concentration, with which he sought to express the spirituality of human nature.

# Haus Lange Garden Works 30–38



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Haus Lange

Exit

31

30

Wilhelmshofallee

## 30 Country House in Brick

*Neues Bauen* (New Building) is also often referred to as “White Modernism.” In contrast to the white wall, the clay brick wall always has something earthy and natural about it. In his main European work, brick was a material favored by Mies van der Rohe for the façades of private houses. The architect’s interest in the brick Gothic style of northern Germany certainly contributed to his choice of this building material. In the 1920s, bricks were generally considered an archaic and thus modern building material.

## 31 The Garden

Haus Lange was built as a country house in a neighborhood (Jentges landholding) that was to be laid out as a garden city in the 1920s. Mies van der Rohe had the flat plot of land partially filled, thus creating different ground levels. A front garden, a terrace and rose garden, a leisure garden, as well as a kitchen garden embed the building in a cultivated natural landscape. In this modern garden, the plant becomes both a raw material and a building material.

## 32 Garage Courtyard

The east side with the garage courtyard reveals the anchoring of the house in the ground. The house emerges from the ground and reveals its stately size, which is not visible from the street. From here, one reaches the basement, where technical installations such as the heating and drop-window mechanism, as well as storage rooms are located. The basement thus forms the energetic powerhouse of the residential building.

## 33 Hedges

Through the cut, the beech hedge forms walls that define a rectangular space. Ideally, it shows how plants were used as “building material.” The section enclosed here served an area for drying laundry.

## 34 Terraces

On the south side, different terrace areas mediate between architecture and nature. They form a transition zone between inside and outside. The tiled floor with its grid structure reveals the mathematical principle of order that lends structure to the organism of Haus Lange.

## 35 Roses

From the late nineteenth century onwards, the crossbreeding of roses made the flower cold hardy, perennial, and rich in color. Among roses, the floribunda best characterizes the taste of modernism by forming colored areas and bodies. Mies van der Rohe had a preference for roses and always included a rose bed in the gardens of his early house designs. For Haus Lange, he used floribunda, as well as standard and rambling roses. The latter in particular emphasized the flowing transition between architecture and nature that he strove for.

## 36 Perennials

The perennial bed at the lower wall defines an area and mediates between the various ground levels of the property. The Berlin-based gardener Karl Foerster (1874–1970) made a significant contribution to the use of perennials in the early twentieth century. Mies van der Rohe occasionally collaborated with Foerster. Planted here are bergenias and snowball shrubs.

## 37 Lawn

The lawn plays an important role in the modern leisure garden. It creates space and gives the garden a clear structure. At the same time, it is functional and practical to maintain with the lawn mower. In the garden of Haus Lange, the wide, central lawn contrasts with the sculptural volumes of the clusters of trees and shrubs at the edge of the plot.

## 38 Clusters of Trees

In the modern garden, clusters of trees are actually an exception, since they are all too reminiscent of a natural, romantic landscape garden. Groups of trees create sculptural volumes in the garden and now serve primarily to structure and frame the garden area. The expression of the foliage is far more important than an inflorescence. In this sense, Mies van der Rohe also used clusters of trees to frame both the plot and the house. With their foliage, maple, silver linden, copper beech, yew, holly, sycamore, and cedar offer a varied play of shapes and colors. Rhododendron bushes condense the groupings.

## Colophon

Lehmbruck Kolbe Mies van  
der Rohe  
Artificial Biotopes

Kunstmuseen Krefeld  
Haus Lange  
18.04.–29.08.2021

Director  
Katia Baudin

Exhibition Curator  
Sylvia Martin

Curatorial Assistant  
Waleria Dorogova

Texts  
Sylvia Martin  
Waleria Dorogova

Design  
Mevis & van Deursen  
with Robert Milne

## Visit

Haus Lange Haus Esters  
Wilhelmshofallee 91–97  
D-47800 Krefeld

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum  
Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1  
D-47798 Krefeld

## Opening Hours

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum  
Haus Lange  
Tue–Sun 11 am–5 pm

Haus Esters  
closed  
29.03.–07.10.2021



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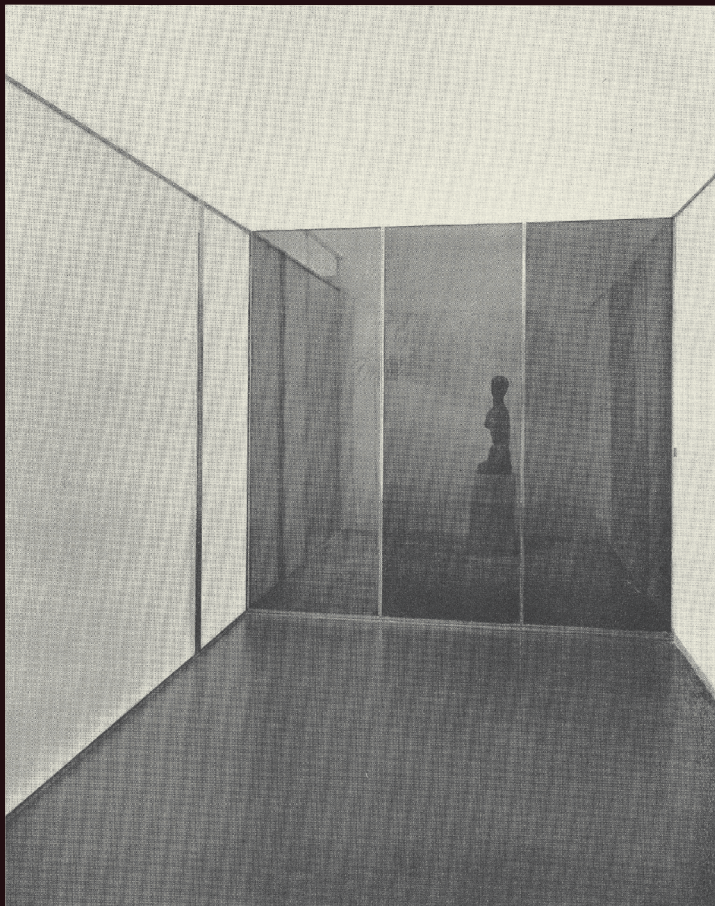
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Cover: Georg Kolbe, *Morning* in the  
Barcelona Pavilion, 2016, Georg Kolbe  
Museum, Berlin, photo: Enric Duch  
Back cover: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe  
and Lilly Reich, *Glass Room* at the  
Stuttgart Werkbund exhibition, 1927  
For L. Mies van der Rohe:  
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Artificial Biotopes  
18 April–29 August 2021  
Haus Lange Krefeld