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المرحلة الرابعة

مادة الرواية الحديثة

Modernist Figures

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LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE (1886-1969)

Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, along with Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, is one of the twentieth century's most influential architects. Despite having no architectural training, his influence can be seen in cities the world over, from Anchorage to Adelaide, and the term 'Miesian' is now used to compliment the simplest, most elegant examples of Modernist architecture.

Mies was born the son of a stonemason in Aachen, Germany. As a teenager, he worked on construction sites with his father, before going on to design furniture with Bruno Paul. From 1908 to 1911, Mies worked in the office of architect Peter Behrens, who specialized in building modern industrial buildings. In Behren's office were Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, later to become director of the Bauhaus. After the First World War, all three would shape the emerging Modern Movement.

In 1921, Mies produced his Glass Skyscraper proposal, which although never built, shows how he was already formulating the techniques of 'glass box' buildings which he would perfect after his relocation to the United States in 1937. The steel frame of the building in his proposal would be visible through acres of glass like a skeleton barely concealed by a taut layer of skin.

This emerging love of purity of form can also be seen in Mies' seminal German Pavilion, commissioned as Germany's stall at the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona. Here, a marble roof appears to float above a collection of travertine and marble slabs. Using subtle steel columns to support the roof, Mies was able to connect the roof and ground with expansive glass 'walls'. The whole effect is a building zen-like in its simplicity, an astonishing contrast to the ornate architecture of the time.

Mies left Germany when it became clear that, unlike their Italian counterparts, the German fascists would never wholeheartedly embrace Modernist architecture. He had succeeded Walter Gropius as Bauhaus

director, but the Nazis had closed the school for good in 1933. He settled in Chicago where, as director of the city's School of Architecture, he was to perfect the art of building minimalist, elegant, and often expensive homes for wealthy patrons and corporate clients. His famous phrase "less is more" perfectly captured his steadfast devotion to pure Modernist design, and encapsulated the Modernists' search for rational solutions to the complicated problems of urban existence.

After becoming an American citizen in 1944, Mies' first major project in the US was at the Illinois Institute of Technology campus (1939-1956). His work here is a classic example of his 'glass box' design: simple cubes, framed in steel and covered in glass, became the homes of various Institute faculties. His Farnsworth House of 1951 (a private commission for a wealthy doctor), saw the lessons of Barcelona translated into a living home. His stunning twin Lake Shore Drive Apartment blocks in Chicago remain the ultimate expression in luxury high-rise living.

By now, corporate America was keen to offer Mies the opportunity to build his pure glass cuboids on their expensive slices of real estate. The most celebrated example was the headquarters for the whisky company Seagram. Completed in 1958, this 38-storey masterpiece was clad in bronze, with its plaza keeping the rest of New York at arm's length. The effect is an incredibly elegant addition to Manhattan's jumble of towers, and the Seagram Building remains the epitome of 20th-century corporate Modernism.

The simplicity of Mies' buildings was deceptive, however. It took a lot of effort to make skyscrapers like the Seagram building look uncomplicated, and the forest of inferior imitations that sprang up across the globe in the 1960s and 70s did much to undermine Modernism's reputation. Nevertheless, Mies' ability to create simple, refined modern monuments is appreciated, even by critics of Modernism, to this day.

GERTRUDE STEIN (1874-1946)

Gertrude Stein was born the youngest of five children in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, to JewishAmerican parents. When she was six months old, her family went to Europe: first to Vienna, then to Paris. She thus learned

several other languages before learning English. The family returned to America in 1880 and Gertrude Stein grew up in Oakland and San Francisco, California. In 1888 Gertrude's mother died after a long battle with cancer, and in 1891 her father died suddenly. Her oldest brother, Michael, became the guardian of the younger siblings. In 1892, Gertrude Stein and her sister moved to Baltimore to live with relatives. Her inheritance was enough for her to live comfortably. With little formal education, Gertrude Stein was admitted as a special student to the Harvard Annex in 1893 (it was renamed Radcliffe College the next year), while her brother Leo attended Harvard. She studied psychology with William James and graduated magna cum laude in 1898. Gertrude Stein studied medicine at Johns Hopkins for four years, leaving with no degree after having difficulty with her last year of courses. Her leaving may have been connected with a failed romance with May Bookstaver, about which Gertrude later wrote. Or it may have been that her brother Leo had already left for Europe.

In 1903, Gertrude Stein moved to Paris to live with her brother, Leo. They began to collect art, as Leo intended to be an art critic. Their home became the venue for their Saturday salons as a circle of artists gathered around them, including such notables as Picasso, Matisse, and Gris, whom Leo and Gertrude Stein helped bring to public attention. Picasso himself even painted a portrait of Gertrude Stein (see above).

In 1907, Gertrude Stein met Alice B. Toklas, another wealthy Jewish Californian, who became her secretary, amanuensis, and lifelong companion. Stein called the relationship a 'marriage', and love notes made public in the 1970s reveal more about their intimate lives than they discussed publicly during Stein's lifetime. By 1913, Gertrude Stein had become separated from her brother, Leo, and in 1914 they divided the art that they had collected together. As Pablo Picasso was developing a new art approach in cubism, Gertrude Stein was developing a new approach to writing. She wrote *The Making of Americans* from 1906 to 1908, but it was not published until 1925. In 1909 she published three stories under the title *Three Lives*, followed later by *Tender Button* (1915) which has been described as a 'verbal collage'.

Stein's writing brought her further renown, and her home and salons were frequented by many writers as well as artists, including many American

and English expatriates. She tutored Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway, among others, in their writing efforts. During World War I, Stein and Toklas continued to provide a meeting place for the modernists in Paris, but they also worked to aid the war effort, delivering medical supplies and financing their activities by selling pieces from Stein's art collection. In 1922, Stein was awarded a medal of recognition by the French government for her service. After the war, it was Stein who coined the phrase 'lost generation' to describe the disenchanted English and American expatriates who were part of the circle that had centered around her. In 1925, she spoke at Oxford and Cambridge in a series of lectures designed to bring her to wider attention, and, in 1933, she published her book, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the first of Gertrude Stein's writings to be financially successful. In this book, Stein took on the voice of Toklas in writing about herself, only revealing her authorship near the end.

As World War II approached, the lives of Stein and Toklas were changed: In 1938 Stein lost the lease on the house Paris house and, in 1939, the couple moved to a country home. They later lost that house too, and moved to Culoz. Though Jewish, feminist, American, and intellectual, Stein and Toklas were protected from the Nazis during the 1940-45 occupation by well-connected friends. For example, in Culoz, the mayor did not include their names on the list of residents given to the Germans. Stein and Toklas moved back to Paris before the liberation of France. Stein planned to move back to the United States after the War, but discovered that she had inoperable cancer; she died on July 27, 1946. In 1950, her novel about lesbian relationships, written in 1903, was published. Alice B. Toklas lived until 1967, writing a book of her own memoirs before her death. Toklas was buried in the Paris cemetery beside Gertrude Stein.