Public access description

The New National Gallery of Art in Berlin was Mies van der Rohe's last great building, opening a year before his death. The gallery's compositional effect refers to ancient temples, an impression that arises from the way in which Mies's signature 'cruciform' columns are carefully proportioned and spaced to recall classical columns. Mies became deeply preoccupied with the relationship between three aspects of architecture - function, space and structure. The challenge was how to unite these in ways that would express the very essence of the 20th century.

The vast overhanging steel roof of the gallery encloses an uninterrupted void within, which when combined with the perimeter curtain glass walling creates a noble statement on architectural transparency, volume and light. Aesthetic principles aside, Mies's design for this glass and steel pavilion had a practical purpose too. Due to the interior space being almost completely unobstructed, it was possible to allow a free arrangement of artworks, display panels, and wall dividers to suit any particular exhibition format. The underlying principle was that buildings in an era of rapid and continual change should not be designed to fit rigidly around any particular set of functions, but instead should be as flexible as possible, with a minimum of fixed elements. From the 1920s onwards, Mies's designs had been dedicated to this quest for a particular kind of space - open and flowing rather than closed and cellular.

Descriptive line

Architectural design (plan) for the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, by Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, 1968

Physical description

Photochemical print

Dimensions

Height: 820 mm, Length: 1110 mm

Museum number

E.3684-2007

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O141164/plan-of-the-neue-nationalgalerie-architectural-print-mies-van-der/