Barcelona, November 2020.

Fundació Mies van der Rohe presents, from 19 November to 10 December 2020 at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion, the results from the artistic residency that Ben Weir undertook at Casa Vilaró (1928-30 arch. Sixte Illescas) in the framework of the programme Artists in Architecture. Reactivating Modern European houses coordinated in Barcelona by the architect Ariadna Perich.

This European programme, promoted along with BOZAR and the University of Naples Federico II, with the support of the European Commission – Creative Europe, invited six artists to six unique houses in Europe with the aim of revitalising them, stimulating debate on the heritage value of domestic architecture and preventing time from turning initially pioneering projects into relics. In Barcelona’s case, it was carried out in Casa Vilaró, a relationist work by architect Sixte Illescas where Ben Weir lived for a few days, documented on it and thought about the way in which these heritage pieces travel through time in the difficult balance between remaining intact and preserved as if they were a museum piece but also adapting to the requirements of the new uses that circumstances require.

‘It is important to think, speak and act to protect our modern heritage, the one that has most inspired the current generations of artists and architects, but also the most fragile because of the lack of knowledge that the great public has about it’ Anna Ramos, director of the Fundació Mies van der Rohe.
Ben Weir, in his role as a researcher, an interpreter and a translator, offers this house an alternative life by conceptualising it in an artistic project and captures the fragments of the alterations made to Casa Vilaró in models on a scale of 1:10.

These pieces are now installed in the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion, together with the projection of an interview with the author and a newspaper edited by Ariadna Perich that, with pictures, an essay by Ben Weir and other texts, documents the reflections to which the project has led. By visiting the installation, the visitors can also take home a copy of this publication in a newspaper format for free.

Ben Weir’s proposal was chosen amongst the projects that requested taking part in the programme Artists in Architecture. Re-activating Modern European houses. For the artistic residence in Casa Vilaró, Fundació mies van der Rohe relied on a jury of experts Teresa Grandas, exhibitions curator at MACBA, Lluís Nacenta, director of Hangar, a center for production, research and visual arts, Rebeca Franquesa representing the property of Casa Vilaró and Ariadna Perich, coordinator of the Artists in Architecture project at Fundació Mies van der Rohe. This jury chose the artist and architect Ben Weir, a Belfast resident, because of his specific interest and critical attitude towards architectural modern heritage, which is visible in various projects that have generated an interesting artistic production.

ABOUT BEN WEIR
Ben Weir is an artist and a graduate of architecture from both the University of Ulster Belfast and the Glasgow School of Art. He has completed a post-academic work period at the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht.

Ben works within the discipline of architecture, and does so by creatively side-stepping established modes of architectural practice in order to unlock discussions on diverse issues relating to architecture. The work comes, in part, out of frustration, disillusionment, and anger. It comes as a reactionary protest against the misguided attitude of private developers and city councils towards our built heritage, the rise of privately-owned public-space undermining our collective understanding of a ‘shared city,’ and the ever-diminishing agency of the urban artefact. His work is, however, inherently optimistic.

Through drawing, writing and built spatial-interventions, Weir blends fiction, humour, commentary and critique in an intuitive manner that discusses the situation of the contemporary city. This is most often his native Belfast: post-industrial, post-conflict, swallowed by neoliberal profit-led redevelopment, with ever-mounting loss of architectural heritage and a broken planning system. By dissecting, re-presenting and interrogating the urban artefact, often through additive processes, Weir calls into discussion larger themes of value systems, authority, decision making and accountability.

ABOUT THE PAVILION
The Barcelona German Pavilion was designed by Lilly Reich and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as the German national pavilion for the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition that was held in Montjuïc. This symbolic piece of work of the Modern Movement has been exhaustively studied and interpreted and has inspired the work of several generations of architects. Built from glass, steel and different kinds of marble, the Pavilion was conceived to accommodate the official reception presided over by King Alfonso XIII of Spain along with the German authorities.

After the closure of the Exhibition, the Pavilion was disassembled in 1930. As time went by, it became a key point of reference not only in Mies van der Rohe’s own career but also in twentieth-century architecture as a whole. Given the significance and reputation of the Pavilion, thoughts turned towards its possible reconstruction.

In 1980, Oriol Bohigas promoted this initiative from the Urban Planning Delegation of the Barcelona City Council, and architects Ignasi de Sola-Morales, Cristian Cirici and Fernando Ramos were the ones appointed to the research, design and direction of the reconstruction of the Pavilion. Works began in 1983 and the new Building was inaugurated in 1986 on its original site.
Fundació Mies van der Rohe was created in 1983 by Barcelona's City Council with the initial aim of carrying out the reconstruction of the German Pavilion. In addition to preserving and disseminating knowledge about the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion, the Fundació promotes debate and awareness on contemporary architecture and urban Planning issues.

Find on the following link:
https://mies.link/ArtistsinArch_Pavilion

→ Press release (CAT, ESP, ENG)
→ Pictures of the intervention ©José Hevia
→ Publication in digital format

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