(Dis)Orientation: The Queer Subject within Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion

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Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion produces an experience of disorientation. The surfaces of the Pavilion are made predominantly out of glass and reflective materials, its walls stretch occupants' perceptions of the Pavilion's interior space, and its strange phenomenology disrupts their ability to orient themselves in familiar ways therein. Occupants' first views of the Pavilion are confounding as its façade reflects them in the landscape around them. Once inside the Pavilion's interior, occupants' attention is directed multiple ways: through transparent glass walls to the entrance platform they just ascended, to the landscape around the Pavilion, and to the small courtyard enclosed within the Pavilion's structure. Moving through the Pavilion, the disorientation of these initial perceptual experiences continues as occupants traverse and discover amalgamations of real and reflected spaces. Together, transparency and reflection within the Pavilion challenge occupants' ability to confidently orient themselves within its volume. In this paper, I argue that the perceptual disorientation produced by the Barcelona Pavilion has affinities with Sara Ahmed's theory of queer phenomenology. I further contend that Ahmed's definition of queerness as an identity characterized by productive experiences of disorientation is analogous to occupants' experiences within the Barcelona Pavilion as they become queer subjects within the disorienting effects of its space. [1]

I acknowledge that producing a disorienting experience for occupants was not Mies' intention in the Barcelona Pavilion; the connection I make between queer subjectivity in the pavilion and the disorienting effects of its architecture is entirely my own. Rather, Mies was a modernist architect concerned with the supremacy of the architectural form and the primacy of materials. The Pavilion originated when Georg

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[1] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 29.

von Schnitzler, the commissioner of the German Trade Fair Authority, asked Mies to take on the artistic direction of the German division at the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition. Schnitzler was interested in Mies' architectural sensibilities after observing the success of the Weissenhoff Estate, a collection of houses Mies commissioned for a 1927 exhibition in Stuttgart.[2] Schnitzler saw in Mies' style an opportunity to represent Germany as a modern nation of clarity, honesty, and simplicity.[3] "Architecture," Mies said, "is the will of an epoch translated into space."[4] In breaking with historical tropes and ornamentation, Mies sought to make visible within architecture Germany's technological advances and efforts to modernize.

In striving to reflect the combined experience of new technologies as both efficient and formally pure, Mies' design for the Barcelona Pavilion is as spare as it is complicated. The structure of the Pavilion consists of a roof held up by eight chromed pillars under which walls of glass and marble create a mostly enclosed space (Fig. 1). Because glass and marble are not load-bearing materials, these walls are not structural, but they direct movement through the Pavilion and provide views beyond the edges of it's interior. Three of the glass walls are transparent from inside the Pavilion and reflective from its outside. As visitors approach the Pavilion, they can see their own form reflected in its façade (Fig. 2). From inside, occupants can see out to the landscape from which they have just come in and into the Pavilion's two courtyards. These vertical, transparent, and reflective panes disrupt occupants' perception of where their

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[2] Alexander von Vegesack, Matthias Kries, eds, *Mies van der Rohe: Architecture and Design in Stuttgart, Barcelona* (Geneva: Vitra Design Museum, 1998), 158.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Alden Whitman, "Mies van der Rohe Dies at 83; Leader of Modern Architecture," *The New York Times*, August 19, 1969, accessed April 12, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0327.html.

body stands in the Pavilion and their sense of the boundary between the Pavilion's interior and exterior spaces (Fig. 3).

The spatial confusion produced by the Pavilion's glass walls is further complicated by reflections on the highly polished marble walls in the interior. Reflections on the multicolored mineral veins of these walls add texture to the reflections visible throughout the Pavilion. The mineral veins of the marble also disrupt the sense of spatial order within the Pavilion by introducing organic shapes into the otherwise straight lines and right angles of its architecture (Fig. 4). The fluid movement of the water in the two pools in the Pavilion's courtyards also contrasts with the angularity of the Pavilion's structure. At particular times of day and from specific viewing angles, their highly reflective surfaces vibrantly reflect the sky, making the Pavilion appear to float in space (Fig. 5).

Standing in the pool of the small courtyard is the only sculptural element Mies included in the Pavilion: a life-size female nude called *Sunrise* by German sculptor Georg Korb (Fig. 6). Her hands are raised and her head tilts downward as the sun strikes the figure's face. *Sunrise* seems to be reacting to the sun with a posture Josep Quetglas suggests reminds occupants that light is at the root of their struggle with the confusing sightlines and the endless reflections of the Pavilion.[5] Like the doubled views of the Pavilion in the pool of the main courtyard, the small pool doubles the image of *Sunrise.* The figure and her reflection seem to be adrift together, unattached to the architecture around them. Standing unmoored in the space of the Pavilion, *Sunrise* becomes both a companion to and a metaphor for the occupants of the Pavilion, who also move unanchored throughout its architecture.

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[5] Josep Quetglas, *Fear of Glass: Mies van der Rohe's Pavilion in Barcelona* (Basel and Boston: Birkhaüser-Publishers for Architecture, 2001), 149.

As a whole, the Barcelona Pavilion is made up of a combination of reflected and physical spaces that keep occupants adrift by simultaneously opening new views of its volumes while returning occupants to places within the Pavilion where they have already been. In order to experience the impact of the space of the Pavilion, occupants are forced to move past its mirrored and transparent surfaces. As they move, they come to understand which volumes are flat and which are dimensional. As they approach the panoramic views of the landscape around the Pavilion, occupants also come to see the ways interior space and exterior space blend together within it. With the absence of opaque surfaces and clear spatial order, occupants of the Pavilion move without finding a resting place, continuously following a potentially endless trajectory. This combination of newness and circular motion creates an arresting disorientation for occupants of the Pavilion.

In his essay *Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form*, architectural historian K. Michael Hays describes the Barcelona Pavilion as an instance of *critical architecture*. For Hays, critical architecture is that which is "resistant to the self-confirming conciliatory operations of a dominant culture and [is] yet irreducible to a purely formal structure disengaged from the contingencies of place and time."[6] With this description, Hays' critical architecture seeks to disrupt normative standards for architecture that describe architecture as either *an instrument of culture* or as *an autonomous form*. These categorically different approaches to meaning in architecture reflect a divide between humanist and modernist ideologies that has existed in art and architectural discourse for some time.

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[6] K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *Persepecta* 21, 1984: 15.

According to Hays, one side of this debate "describes artifacts as instruments of the self-justifying, self-perpetuating hegemony of culture, [whereas] the other side treats architectural objects in their most disinfected pristine state as containers of a privileged principle of internal coherence."[7] In shaping critical architecture in the wake of this divide, Hays suggests that this binary dynamic misses the point of architecture, which is that architecture is an object known through phenomenological experience. According to Hays, both of these strictly humanist or modernist readings of architecture are overly concerned with characteristics that are observed when structures are interpreted to be discrete objects in the world. Of greater concern within assertions of critical architecture are the connections the structure creates with the world around it. Instrumental to these connections are the effects the architectural object has on its occupants via their phenomenological experiences within it. From Hays' perspective, meaning in architecture derives significantly from experiences occupants have within its space as their experiences enhance and complicate their relationship with the world.

For Hays, the Barcelona Pavilion is situated in the world through the transparency and reflectivity of its walls. These walls connect occupants of the Pavilion to the world around it via the lines of sight they produce through its constructed space. Hays argues that these walls keep the Pavilion from having a logical center. Without a central focal point, occupants move through its space continuously without a clear point of orientation to guide their movement. Absent of a clear center or trajectory through the space, Hays calls the Pavilion a "labyrinth that denies us access to [an] ideal moment of organization…" and says that "the work itself is an event with temporal duration, whose existence is continually being produced."[8] Without such guidance, the

[7] Ibid, 17.
[8] Ibid, 24.

Pavilion offers no place for occupants to begin orienting themselves within the space. Occupants are, instead, left to navigate independently within it and without any obvious point of orientation.

Hays further argues that the disorientation of the Pavilion is also a result of the deceptive relationship between the simplicity of its structure and the complexity of its effects. He writes: "[the roof] solicits the viewer to walk through [the Pavilion, though] the limpid harmony of [its] exterior is confounded in the experience of the spatial succession of [its] interior."[9] For Hays, the continuous slab of the Pavilion's roof suggests a straightforward trajectory through the space, while the confusing mix of reflections and physical spaces prevents its occupants from moving with such clarity.

Hays asserts that the disorientation occupants experience within the Barcelona Pavilion results from both the absence of a logical center within it and from the ambiguous understanding provoked by its structure and its walls. These assessments acknowledge that occupants' ability to successfully orient themselves in space depends on the presence of clear starting points from which orientation can begin and on clear trajectories through space along which orientation can continue. The absence of these orienting devices results in the disorientation Hays describes as a defining characteristic of the Pavilion.

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others,* Sara Ahmed similarly uses the absence of orienting devices to characterize disorientation as a defining quality of experience, although Ahmed's project focuses on experiences of conceptual disorientation within structures of identity rather than experiences of physical orientation within architectural structures. The productiveness each finds in disorientation creates lucrative discursive ground between these projects.

[9] Ibid, 22.

Despite the differences between the contexts of Hays' and Ahmed's assessments of disorientation, the ways each shapes how disorientation is produced are remarkably similar. Both articulate the need for clear points of origin and clear lines of direction through a given structure – physical or conceptual – in order to remain oriented. More importantly, Hays and Ahmed both assert that the disorientation that results from the absence of such points and lines generates new possibilities for generative connection to the world that are not found in situations that produce normative orientations. Combining Hays' approach to disorientation in the Barcelona Pavilion with Ahmed's approach to disorientation in queerness, therefore, unearths new possibilities for understanding subject formation in architecture and physical space.

In explaining Ahmed's discussion of queerness and disorientation, it is important to acknowledge that there is a genealogy of queer discourse. Ahmed's place in this genealogy follows a number of essential texts within that discourse, most notably Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, Eve Sedgwick's *Tendencies,* José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, and Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*. Together, these works have produced a school of thought that calls for reconsiderations of categories of gender and sexuality and that proposes queerness as more than a descriptive term for bodies and relationships. From their discursive perspective, queerness is a position from which one perceives the world. It is important to highlight these works in explaining Ahmed's project, as they set the stage for understanding the connections Ahmed makes between queerness and disorientation.

Fixed categories of gender and sexuality are rooted in binary approaches to identity that structuralist thought categorizes as distinctions between *the self* and *the other*. These separations are significantly rooted in Cartesian philosophy. Descartes asserts that the self is constituted by the mind and exists separately from the body and

other objects in the world.[10] The Cartesian self is positioned opposite the Cartesian other. With this separation between self and other, the self impacts the world but is not reciprocally effected by the world. Instead, the self remains distinct from and unchanged by its interactions with its environment.

For post-structuralists, however, the impermeable distinction between self and other disappears as the self is considered to emerge directly from its environment. In post-structuralist thought, the overwhelming force of the world shapes the individual. Through this shaping, the binary dynamic that constitutes the edges of the self and the other dissolves. For Michel Foucault, individuals in this territory of dissolved boundaries are considered *subjects*, formed by being subjected to the forces present in the contexts within which they live.[11] In Foucault's theory, the forces of an environment (whether that environment is physical or conceptual) impact subjects, and the nuances of those environments produce nuances of subjectivity.[12] Post-structuralist subjects, therefore, refer to individuals whose identities are considered to have a direct relationship to the contexts from which they emerge.

In *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler brings Foucault's notion of a subject together with J. L. Austin's notion of *performative utterances* to articulate what she calls a *performative subject*. For Austin, performative utterances refer to instances where the description of an act is indistinguishable from its execution.[13] Combining this idea with Foucault's notion of the subject, Butler argues that all subjectivities, or all identities, are

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[10] Edwin McCann, "Cartesian Selves and Lockean Substances," *The Monist* 69, no. 3, 1986: 460.
[11] Robert M. Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 14.
[12] Ibid, 52.
[13] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975), 6.

defined through their enactment. All identities are, therefore, inherently performative. In describing performativity in *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes: "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration."[14] Gender is, therefore, not a singular act but a series of repeated behaviors. Butler further asserts that all ideals of gender are socially conceived, as they do not emerge from lived examples of their ideals.

In arguing that gender categories are socially constructed, gender becomes a flexible category of identity. Here, Butler opens for critique the typically inflexible distinctions considered to be between what constitutes male and female genders. Without lived examples of pure manhood or womanhood, each expression of male or female gender includes qualities of both masculinity and femininity. Manhood or womanhood only exists as each individual expresses it. In this way, gender comes to reflect Austin's notion of a performative utterance in that each gender only becomes what it is through the expression of different gendered characteristics. When gender is considered to be a performative utterance, concrete distinctions between genders begin to crumble, and limits on the categories male and female become flexible, and divisions between those categories appear less distinct.

Eve Sedgwick uses this flexibility between male and female gender categories to articulate a queer identity that is rooted in gender fluidity.[15] In *Tendencies,* she uses the term *queer* to describe identities that are more than failed articulations of idealized genders and models of sexuality. She describes queer as referring to "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of

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[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xv.
[15] Eve K. Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.

meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically."[16] For Sedgwick, queer describes a complex identity that is formed through more than one guiding model. Queer identity includes both alignment and misalignment with others. It is an identity that is more about possibility than it is about concrete definition. In using the term queer as a positive descriptor of an identity, Sedgwick legitimizes a queer identity as an identity all its own and presents queer identity as one that, at its core, embraces unstable distinctions and celebrates its place outside of normative social categories. By articulating queerness as a productive category of identity, Sedgwick introduces language through which queerness can become its own ideal, or, perhaps, anti-ideal, rather than an identity that can only be described through its failure to meet the ideals of other categories.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Muñoz suggests that as Sedgwick establishes queer as a category of identity all its own, queerness becomes a new way of approaching binary dynamics in the world that extends far beyond descriptions of gender and sexuality. For Muñoz, the potential latent in queerness is inspired by Ernst Bloch's description of what he calls *concrete utopias.* Muñoz explains that Bloch's concrete utopias are "the realm of educated hope" that "dwell in the region of the not-yet," and that are "above all… marked by an enduring indeterminacy."[17] Following Bloch, Muñoz describes queerness as "a longing that propels us onward."[18] It is this enduring indeterminacy and longing, he argues, that turns queerness into a way of viewing the world that is characterized by the freedom and flexibility. Utopia is a site

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[16] Ibid.
[17] José E. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 3.
[18] Ibid, 1.

of endless possibility. It is a place one is always approaching. At the crux of the utopian vision is faith and investment in what is to come. Proposing queerness as a kind of utopian vision broadens notions of queerness to include the potential that post-structuralists suggest comes with moving beyond the limitations of binary structures. Outside of these structures, there is always a place for what is possible, and, in the light of utopian aspirations, queerness becomes about endless potential rather than disappointment in one's failure to meet the ideals of normative structures. Muñoz's project introduces the possibility of interpreting queerness as a position or perspective, and this helps understand Ahmed's articulation of the queerness of disorientation.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith Halberstam also rebuts notions of queerness as a failure to meet cultural standards of gender and sexuality by offering failure itself as a theoretical place from which to embark on Muñoz's queer pursuit of utopia. In this text, Halberstam follows Muñoz's investment in the potential latent in the temporal qualities of queerness by suggesting that when queer subjects fail to adhere to dominant models of identity, this does not produce devastating failures; they are productive failures that push past normative standards of not only gender and sexuality, but also standards of human development and success within capitalist structures.[19] Halberstam frames queerness as an opportunity to find freedom from the constraints of these systems through failing to succeed within them. Queerness becomes a tool and a symbol for liberation and possibility within failure.

Using examples of failure in popular culture that lead to unexpected adventures and dynamic characters, Halberstam argues that to fail within a normative system produces freedom to move differently within that system, to explore endless other

[19] Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 88.

systems, or to search for life outside of those systems all together.[20] With Halberstam's presentation of queerness, it turns failure into a productive force that, like Muñoz's realm of the endlessly possible, expands notions of queer subjectivity into increasingly complex relationships with time and space. In associating queerness with constructive failure, Halberstam's project helps us understand the failure of orientation that Ahmed describes as a productive disorientation in both physical and conceptual space.

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed confronts the problem of disorientation within a queer experience. Over the arc of her project, Ahmed seeks to queer phenomenology by focusing on disorientation itself as a way of being in the world that is not limited to, but can be seen through, queer identity and experiences. For Ahmed, queer identities are disoriented relative to normative identities. In queering phenomenology, this disorientation becomes more than just a failure of orientation; it becomes a productive force for subject formation in both physical and conceptual spaces.[21]

The verb *disorient* can be defined as "to displace from a normal position,"[22] and this definition applies to Ahmed's theory of queer phenomenology. For Ahmed, normal positions can be physical or conceptual, as both shape subjects within them.[23] Employing Ahmed's theory to the Barcelona Pavilion, I argue that subjects within the Pavilion lack physical positions of normativity due to the absence of clear starting points and lines through its spaces. With Ahmed's theory, occupants of the Pavilion become disoriented subjects in physical space, and disorienting architecture induces a disoriented subject.

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[20] Ibid, 89.
[21] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 92.
[22] *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Also available at http://www.oed.com/.
[23] Ibid, 13.

Subjects who are displaced from normative positions within the conceptual space of gender and sexuality also become disoriented subjects, as they lack conceptual positions of normativity due to their positions outside of normative models of gender and sexuality. Transgender folks, genderqueer people, butch lesbians, femmes, bears, twinks, and fags are all queers who are displaced relative to cisgender heterosexuality. These queer identities beget disoriented subjects. As disorienting architecture and queer identity both produce a disoriented subject, I suggest that it is possible to use the characterization of a queer subject to articulate a disoriented subject in space with the same depth and complexity described in Muñoz's assessment of queerness as a concrete utopia and Halberstam's description of a queer subject as a product of productive failure.

Ahmed further shapes notions of orientation through Edmund Husserl's description of orientations as starting points from which individuals begin to understand their place in the world.[24] For Husserl, the writing table is the place from which the writer begins to build his (or her) relationship to the world. Because queerness is about what is peripheral to the normative, the starting point for a queer subject is essentially any point in a given context that is found outside of normative starting points. As queer subjects are defined through their displacement from normative positions, queer subjects have no place as concrete as Husserl's writing table from which to orient themselves. For the queer subject, orientation is, therefore, disorientation. By this definition of orientation, there is no one place from which a queer disorientation emerges. Queer disorientation instead emerges from the edges and spaces outside of normative orientations, and queer subjects are found in those peripheral positions, sites, and spaces.

[24] Ibid, 37.

Ahmed also describes disorientation as queer orientation by means of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description of orientation as the way one turns in space to reorient oneself in response to a changing world.[25] Framing disorientation as part of efforts to remain oriented suggests that orientation and disorientation are equally formative spatial experiences and can be read for their subject-shaping potential. They produce their own subjects. Though orientation and disorientation are certainly related, the two exist separately within Ahmed's framework and produce independently substantial subjectivities. As Ahmed asserts that orientation reflects standards of normativity and disorientation reflects queerness, the disoriented subject in space becomes a queer subject relative to its normatively oriented counterparts.

Using Ahmed's assertion of queerness as productive disorientation, I seek to interpret the disoriented subject in the physical space of the Barcelona Pavilion as a queer subject. I distinguish between the disoriented subject and the queer subject because the disoriented subject is characterized only by his or her physical experience in space, rather than broader interpretations of the discursive implications of spatial disorientation. The characterization of a queer subject in space, on the other hand, shapes the subject through the possibility for new connections provoked by the experience of disorientation. My articulation of a queer subject in space, therefore, recognizes the subject within the Barcelona Pavilion as productively shaped by the experience of disorientation. In turning the disoriented subject in physical space into a queer subject, the disoriented subject also shifts from a tragic figure defined by his or her inability to find normative orientation to a figure characterized by the freedom to explore new ways of perceiving and relating to space. The queer subject is, instead, one

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[25] Ibid, 165.

that is forced to use disorientation as a catalyst for trying new approaches to spatial relationships and is forced into new perceptual experiences.

The subject in the Barcelona Pavilion is an especially effective example of a queer subject in space because of the continuous sense of disorientation produced by its reflective and transparent walls. As Hays points out, while the architectural layout of the Pavilion is rather simple, these walls make its volume appear to be much larger and more complexly arranged. As occupants move through the deceptive spaces produced by these walls, the walls also confuse occupants' ability to develop a clear understanding of their own position within them. In the Pavilion, occupants are without the concrete positions normative orientations require. Occupants are, instead, left to develop their own understanding of and relationship to the Pavilion as they circulate through its space.

These effects may, at first, create uncomfortable experiences within the Pavilion's walls; the proposition of a queer subjectivity within them suggests that discomfort can be a precursor to previously unconsidered understandings of how one perceives space and how one is affected by the phenomenological relationships one has with objects and others in the world. This movement through uncomfortable states of disorientation to new ways of relating to space and understanding perceptual experiences is precisely what Ahmed characterizes as queer phenomenology. Within queer phenomenology, disorientation is not a failure of orientation, but a generative way of existing in the world. By characterizing occupants of the Pavilion as queer subjects rather than just disoriented subjects, occupant's experiences become infused with this potential and productivity.

Because the body is central to assertions of queerness, it must be emphasized that the queerness of the subject in the Barcelona Pavilion does not reside in the architecture

itself but in the disorienting effects of phenomenological relationships between the architecture and its occupants. I do not argue that the Barcelona Pavilion is a queer space. I propose that the queer subject is produced by the effects of the Barcelona Pavilion. As occupants move through the Pavilion, queerness resides in their experiences of its disorienting architecture. When occupants leave the space of the Pavilion, they cease to occupy the position of a queer subject.

Similarly, the queer subject position describes the effect architecture has on its subjects. Therefore, queer subjectivity does not describe the sexual or gender identity of the individuals who occupy the queer subject position. Rather, the queer subject is one who is subjected to and shaped by the disorienting effects of the Barcelona Pavilion and one who is brought closer to the world outside as they continuously move through its spaces. The constitution of a queer subject within the Barcelona Pavilion is not connected to the specific genders or sexualities of its occupants. Instead, the queer subjects within the Pavilion are its occupants who have been subjected to the disorientation of its architecture. This queer subject is, however, formed through disorienting experiences within the Pavilion and his or her subjectivity is a product of his or her interaction with its disorienting spaces.

Articulating the queer subject in the Barcelona Pavilion creates important new connections between art, architecture, and queer discourse. Muñoz, Halberstam, and Ahmed have built upon the works of Butler and Sedgwick to create a queer discourse that goes beyond describing queer bodies and relationships. Their collective projects have shown queerness to be a nuanced experience wrought with generative possibility that goes far beyond simple comparisons to cisgender heterosexuality. I argue that works like the Barcelona Pavilion that produce queerness outside of representations of bodies, relationships, and political histories have the potential to make Muñoz's,

Halberstam's, and Ahmed's points corporeal and to foster understanding of queerness through visual and phenomenological experiences. Using the Barcelona Pavilion as a model of a space that produces queerness through phenomenological relationships to architecture, queer subjects can be found in art and architecture in ways that have much to offer both art historical discourse and visual and phenomenological understandings of queerness.

Queer subjects in art and architecture have, so far, been produced via representations of queer bodies and relationships, or via the biographies of their makers. Catherine Opie's portrait series, for example, uses the style of Renaissance painter Hans Holbein the Younger to present contemporary images of queer subjects in unprecedented ways. These images insert queer identity into art historical discourse on portraiture. Opie's images are beautiful and vibrant, and they have led to increased recognition of queerness as a rich and complex mixture of identities and expressions of selfhood. While these works have been immeasurably important to representing queerness in art and to the visual culture of queerness, their focus on representing queer subjects makes queer subjectivity something that the viewer can only observe objectively. In articulating the occupants of the Barcelona Pavilion as queer subjects themselves, the purpose of this paper is to show that the nuances of queer subjectivity can be felt in art and architecture in ways that representation alone cannot enable.

Philip Johnson's Glass House engages with queer subjectivity in a historically significant way, but one that operates differently than either Opie's images or the Barcelona Pavilion. Architectural historian Alice Friedman describes the Glass House as both a critique of the politics of American domesticity and sexuality and a bold retort to

the pressures Johnson faced to pass as heterosexual.[26] In Friedman's analysis, the queerness of the Glass House resides in its historical and biographical context.[27] The queerness of the Barcelona Pavilion, however, resides in its phenomenology and the ways it shapes its occupants experiences within its architecture. Mies' biography or the political context of the Pavilion are irrelevant to its production of a queer subject.

While Opie's portraits make queer subjects visible within art discourse, Johnson's Glass House makes the politics of queer identity and censorship in America part of the history of modern architecture. Both of these works are essential to a queer history of art and architecture as their forms disrupt normative treatments of the body in images and architectural objects. However, neither creates queer subjects of their viewers. The Glass House comes close as it makes its occupants vulnerable to the gaze of the outside world, but it does not elicit the degree of disorientation required for the production of a queer subject. The Barcelona Pavilion produces this disorientation. Even though Mies had no intentions for creating a queer subject within his Pavilion and the notions of queerness that this paper uses to produce the queer subject did not exist until decades after the Pavilion was built, its architecture serves as a model for how architecture can produce a queer subject outside of figurative representation, political history, or biographical narrative.

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[26] Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 130.
[27] Ibid.

Fig. 1. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,
German Pavilion, Exterior, 1929,
Architecture, Barcelona, Spain.
Available from: ARTstor, http://www.artstor.org
(accessed October 31. 2014).

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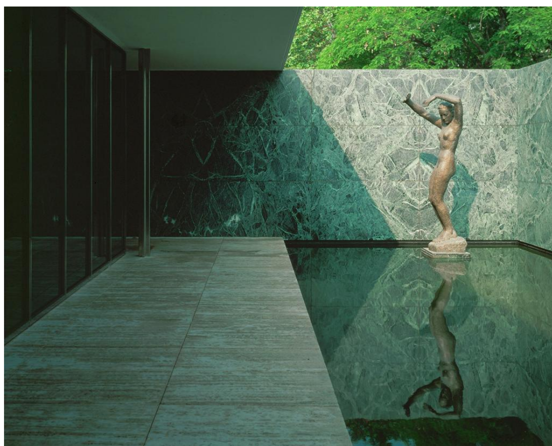

Fig. 6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,
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