

Architecture today has expanded in every direction, stretching its definition inside out. Almost unrecognizable to some, former devotees now blink with cloudy nostalgia longing for a return to the field they fell in love with: a sophisticated practice emphasizing clarity through detail, uncompromising in its vision of a unified art intersecting form, program, and technology. Mies, are you still out there?

No answer. After the brief honeymoon of architectural modernism came the long coming to terms with its fallout. When the world started to realise that one could not draw together disparate cultures and lived realities into a cohesive globalist glue united by formal principles and open floor plans, practice and pedagogy were left grasping for straws. The search for the next Bauhaus, and the question of if it should even be found, has been diffuse and laced with confusion.

Where to from here, when one's learned imagination conflicts with reality? Architects split their strategies. Some expand their roles in worldmaking, intervening in the most complicated contexts one can imagine to cultivate infrastructures of solidarity and moments of lightness. More find renewed meaning in shape-language, while others delve headfirst into vernacularism. Many post on the internet. Few agree on much except that utopia is further away than ever, and that we have to align on some fronts very soon or risk the profession continuing to deflate in the background as the world falls apart.

It is in this context that OPEN26 forensically investigates a crisis of faith across scales. Mies Didn't Come Home That Night takes its starting point in the potential of utopian thinking and its complications: what good is hope, desire, and idealism in the face of chaos, conflict, and tension? The festival invites global and local architects and academics to share their reflections on a broken promise, as we try to find not only a way to wake up from the dream into the nightmare, but hold and work through both with grace and tenderness.

The title is a thinly veiled reference to Robert Wilson's performance *Anna Didn't Come Home That Night*, which was staged at the then Museum of Decorative Art in 2000.

CURATOR
Karen Kjaergaard

CO-CURATORS
Aysha Amin, Ida Bjerga & Aria Gilani

"I'm working on architecture as a language... and you have to have a grammar in order to have a language. And grammar is discipline... and then you can use it, you know, for normal purposes and you speak in prose. And if you are good at that, you speak a wonderful prose. And if you are really good, you are a poet."

— Mies van der Rohe, A Special Kind of Order, interview for film, February 1958



