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## **Broken Glass: Mies van der Rohe, Edith Farnsworth, and the Fight over a Modernist Masterpiece**

by [Alex Beam](#)

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Scandalous romantic liaisons involving powerful architects are legendary (e.g., Stanford White and Evelyn Nesbit, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Borthwick Cheney). Yet as *Boston Globe* columnist Beam (*American Crucifixion*) ably demonstrates, despite the entanglement of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Edith Farnsworth, and their subsequent acrimonious litigation, this architect-client relationship bore a singularly elegant house, an uninterrupted expanse of horizontal space sandwiched between two floating, pristinely finished slabs. Drawing on the Edith Farnsworth papers at Chicago's Newberry Library, Beam tells the story of the mythic architect and his long-suffering client breathlessly, but with a keen sense of architectural history. His research is thorough, even though the prose of the quotations is often more polished than the author's. (Awkward and hyperbolic constructions recur, such as "not a settle downer" and "took forever to build.") Sparse black-and-white images of the house illustrate the text adequately; will complement but not supersede Franz Schulze's *Mies van der Rohe*.

Reviewed by [Paul Glassman, Yeshiva Univ. Libs., New York](#) , Feb 01, 2020