

The Glass House Estate New Canaan, Connecticut

The iconic Glass House is one of the nation's great modern architectural landmarks. Built by famed architect Philip Johnson, and inspired by Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, the house's exterior walls are made of glass with no interior walls, a radical departure from houses of the time. Situated on 49 bucolic acres in New Canaan, Connecticut, the Glass Estate is now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and is open to the public. The centerpiece of the estate is the Glass House itself, which served as Johnson's weekend retreat. Completed in 1949, the house is a rectangular prism, with the walls entirely made of plate-glass sheets from floor to ceiling, framed by stock H-beams. The interior is entirely open with an off-center brick cylinder containing a fireplace and bathroom.



Also on the estate is the brick Guest House, built at the same time, and the Pond Pavilion (1962), a pre-cast concrete structure that recalls the form of a Classical temple. Nearby is the concrete-block tower in the form of irregular ascending stairs that Johnson erected in honor of his friend Lincoln Kirstein, a founder of the New York City Ballet. In 1965 Johnson designed and built a semi-subterranean gallery to showcase his paintings, including works by Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns, and in 1970 he constructed a gallery for his sculpture collection. Other elements of the estate designed by Johnson include the Studio, the chain-link "Ghost House" (an homage to Frank Gehry), and an abstract gatehouse that Johnson referred to as "Da Monsta."



The various components on the property illustrate John's playfulness, his admiration for other architects and artists, and his stylistic virtuosity, with the International Style, Neo-Classicism, Post-Modernism, and Abstract Expressionism all represented.

AHS historian Bruce Clouette prepared the National Historic Landmark nomination of the property.

